



AMERICAN
BATTLEFIELD
TRUST ★ ★ ★
PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING.

**You don't want to miss this opportunity to
help save 140 acres at Stones River and Fort Heiman.**

Dear Friend and Fellow Patriot,

“What if?” It’s a question historians can’t help but ask.

What if Gen. Braxton Bragg’s Confederate forces had attacked Union troops earlier on December 31, 1862? What could they have achieved at Stones River with just one more hour of daylight?

Perhaps they would have seized the opportunity to close in like a jackknife’s blade. Stones River, perhaps, could have been a Confederate victory, recapturing the Confederacy’s momentum in the West.

This is one of the most tantalizing “what if” questions of the entire Western theater.

I’m sure you know the context. Just weeks earlier, Union forces under the command of Gen. Ambrose Burnside had been repulsed by Gen. Robert E. Lee’s army at Fredericksburg. Gen. Grant and Gen. Sherman also suffered an equally demoralizing defeat at Chickasaw Bayou shortly thereafter. With the Emancipation Proclamation set to take effect in mere days, it was a bad time for the Union to be stumbling. The Union was desperate for victory.

Lincoln needed a win, and on January 2, 1863, he got one at Stones River. The Union began the new year with renewed hope that it could win the war.

Obviously, my “what ifs” are an exercise in speculation, but I bring them up because battles are so often won or lost in the 11th hour. This was true for many Civil War battles, and it’s true for the battles you and I fight to save our country’s hallowed ground.

Today, you and I can save multiple historically significant tracts — two at Stones River, TN, and one at Fort Heiman, KY. This deal amounts to nearly 140 acres of irreplaceable battlefield land and would mark a huge win for battlefield preservation.

The value of these properties is an astounding \$21 million. Yes, you read that right ... \$21 million! But before you ask, “*David, have you lost your mind?*” I’m happy to report that with state and federal matching funds from the American Battlefield Protection Program, the State of Tennessee Civil War Sites Preservation Fund, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky, along with contributions from partners and a very generous landowner donation of value, we’ve reduced the amount we need to \$377,205 to close these deals.

That makes these transactions affordable!

Of course, I know that raising \$377,205 is not a given. It's going to take all of us working together to get there. But consider this ... if you take what we need to raise against the value of the land we can save, **every dollar you give is effectively being multiplied 57 times!**

I can count on one hand the number of times we've had a match ratio this sizable, and I'm really hoping you take advantage of it by making a generous donation today. It's not often your gift of \$50 is worth \$2,850, or your gift of \$100 is worth \$5,700.

As I mentioned earlier, there are two tracts at Stones River. The larger of these tracts is comprised of 122 acres of hallowed ground. There, men from both the Union and Confederacy fought with ferocity and courage, spilled their blood, and in many cases, gave their lives.

This large, pristine tract is a rarity at Stones River, which is situated in Murfreesboro, TN, one of the fastest-growing communities in the nation. In recent years, the owner has been flooded with offers from developers seeking to buy it for residential, commercial, and mixed-use development. The value of this land has increased almost daily, and given this hot real estate environment, it's not hyperbole for me to say *I can't think of a more threatened situation.*

But at the 11th hour, the Trust was able to convince the property owner that our offer, **not those from developers**, would preserve this hallowed ground so that generations of Americans of all ages could walk in the footsteps of the soldiers who fought, bled, and died there, and could appreciate the significance of what transpired there — but only if it was preserved.

Speaking of last minute — let me tell you the story of how the Trust secured the smaller tract of land at Stones River.

We found out the privately-owned property was going up for auction just *one week before the sale*. This 16-acre tract is adjacent to the Stones River National Battlefield, and if lost to development, it would be disastrous for the park and the battlefield.

We decided we had to try to acquire it at the live real estate auction. As soon as the auction started, developers began driving up the price, and things weren't looking good. **Then at the last minute, at the 11th hour, one of our partners supplemented our bid, and we won!**

Of course, none of these last-minute “heroics” would be possible without the ongoing support of dedicated Trust members like yourself. And so I'm calling on your generosity again to help raise the \$377,205 we need to close these deals.

Time and time again, I have asked you and your fellow Trust members to consider the importance of what we do and to make your most generous gift; and time and time again, you have come through for us.

I'm confident the more you recall the importance of what happened at Stones River, the more inclined you'll be to help preserve its hallowed ground.



Of the major battles in the Civil War, Stones River had the highest percentage of total casualties.
© Rob Shenk, American Battlefield Trust



Morning light breaks over Stones River National Battlefield, where Union forces struggled to hold their ground in one of the war's bloodiest engagements. © Buddy Secor, American Battlefield Trust

Welcome to Hell's Half Acre.

The Battle of Stones River ranks among the most important battles of the entire Civil War. Over three days of fighting, more than 23,500 men fell as casualties, making it the 7th bloodiest battle of the War, ranking between Shiloh and Antietam. It also contributed to 1862 being the bloodiest year by far in American history up to that point!

The Confederates struck first on the morning of December 31, 1862 (though, again, we can only wonder what if they had attacked an hour earlier), smashing Gen. Alexander McCook's Union right wing and driving it back into chaos for several miles.

Though barely 34 years old at the time, Confederate Gen. Patrick Cleburne commanded a division that was part of the initial attack. Cleburne drove his troops aggressively into the Federal flank, contributing to the early Confederate success. His performance was characteristically sharp and enhanced his reputation for tactical skill and personal bravery that would eventually earn him the nickname "Stonewall of the West." Perhaps it causes you to ask the same question as me: what if the Confederates had just one more hour? Could Cleburne and his troops have broken the Union army and ended the battle?

As you know, the Union army bent but did not break, largely due to the stubborn fighting of Gen. George Thomas's troops in the center, who held the line around a cedar thicket which the soldiers named "Hell's Half Acre."

Gen. Bragg launched a final assault on January 2 that was repulsed by Union artillery, causing heavy Confederate losses. Bragg then withdrew southward, ceding the field and giving the North a much-needed morale boost.

The Battle of Stones River captures the truly national character of the Civil War, with troops from more than 20 states converging within just a mile of the battlefield tracts we are working to preserve. Confederate forces came from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Union soldiers represented Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee (eastern Unionist regiments), and Wisconsin. Few places better illustrate the full geographic reach and human scale of the Western Theater.

More than 30 years ago, in 1993, the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, a congressionally appointed panel of experts, assessed Stones River Battlefield. They ranked the battlefield at the highest level of military importance, but deemed it a Priority IV.1 or "poor integrity" site, effectively giving up on making it a preservation priority.

But we never give up! And, together, we've made incredible progress at Stones River, preserving this important battlefield for generations. *You* are a part of saving its history.

Our work at Stones River started years ago and included many key properties. Many of you may remember supporting our 2020 acquisition of the 42-acre former General Electric Corporation tract. GE had built a plant on the battlefield that operated until a tornado destroyed it in 2009. GE decided not to rebuild and put the property up for sale.

The Trust made an offer and pleaded our case for battlefield preservation, but GE was more concerned with getting the highest price it could than saving America's hallowed ground and accepted an offer from O'Reilly Auto Parts.

For a number of reasons, O'Reilly did not pursue its plan to build a warehouse on the property and put it back on the market. O'Reilly received offers from several developers. But, in a rare magical moment of corporate benevolence, the auto parts company agreed to sell the property to us for — get this — less than they had originally paid for it!

Our members showered O'Reilly with gratitude, flooding their offices with postcards expressing their thanks. Perhaps you even sent one yourself. Now it's time to secure these valuable battlefield tracts at Stones River.

Saving Fort Heiman

That same congressionally appointed panel of experts that scored Stones River a "poor integrity" battlefield ranked Fort Heiman even lower — a Priority IV.2 "lost integrity." *Lost?* I don't think so.

Fort Heiman was a Confederate earthwork constructed hastily on the high bluffs of the Kentucky side of the Tennessee River. It was built to protect the poorly positioned Fort Henry on the Tennessee side of the river. When Grant advanced with 15,000 troops in early February 1862, the fort's position was untenable. On February 4, Gen. Lloyd Tilghman, who was in charge of both forts, evacuated Fort Heiman. Union troops arrived to find warm stew still on the fire.

The fort's significance exceeded its bloodless capture. Its fall helped crack the entire Confederate defensive line in the West, triggering retreats from Kentucky and setting in motion the chain of events leading to Shiloh.

Today, I am seeking your help in preserving nearly 1.5 acres at Fort Heiman, a unit of the Fort Donelson National Battlefield that witnessed maneuvers and combat during the Battles of Fort Henry and Jacksonville. While a small parcel of land, preserving it is critical to protecting its earthworks and expanding public access to the site's cultural resources.

It's the 11th hour!

Think about it: 140 acres of hallowed ground where men fought and died, on battlefields considered low priority or even "lost" over thirty years ago, all ready to be rescued at the 11th hour. And they won't be rescued by anyone, except you and me.

It is only through your generous support that the Trust can do this important work, and you have my undying gratitude for that.

We're working to save every acre we possibly can, and with your help and the help of our local, state, and federal government partners and friends, we'll continue to make the kind of progress no one would have ever dreamed possible over 30 years ago.

Please make your most generous gift today, and don't forget that it will be multiplied 57 times to help the Trust bring these three tracts into the fold once and for all. To make your gift online, please visit battlefields.org/stones.



With deep appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David N. Duncan". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

David N. Duncan
President

P.S. We have a rare opportunity to secure 140 acres of highly threatened and extremely valuable battlefield land. We're in the 11th hour and hoping to raise the \$377,205 needed to save land at Stones River and Fort Heiman. Thanks to so many partners, your gift will go 57 times farther! Please make your best gift today so that generations can walk these battlefields you helped save and ask the same "what if?" questions as they ponder the courage and bravery of the men who helped define this great nation.