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 Bentonville Battlefield
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Tour stops at several battlefield locations give visitors a close-up look at where major actions took place.

Visitor Center tour stop: Begin your driving tour here.

- Bentonville Driving Tour

Confederate High Tide tour stop: View the portions of the battlefield where the Confederates had their greatest success on the first day of the battle.

- Confederate High Tide
- Union Artillery at the Morris Farm

Morgan's Stand tour stop: This is where some of the fiercest combat of the battle took place.

- Fighting at the Cole Plantation: the "Battle of Acorn Run"
- Fighting South of the Goldsboro Road: the "Bull Pen"
- Confederate Line Crossing the Goldsboro Road

N.C. Junior Reserve tour stop: Young boys aged 17 and 18 saw action against the Federals here.

- Confederate North Carolina Junior Reserve Line

Mower's Charge tour stop: At this location the Federals almost captured the Confederate commander in the final hours of the battle.

- Mower's Charge Reaches Johnston's Headquarters
- Hardee's Counterattack
- Village of Bentonville

Hours:

Apr.–Sept.: Mon.–Sat. 9 A.M.–5 P.M.

Closed Sundays

Oct.–Mar.: Tue.–Sat. 9 A.M.–5 P.M.

Closed Sundays/Mondays

Call for holiday schedule.

Admission is free.

Groups are requested to make advance reservations.

15,000 of these brochures were printed at a cost of \$935.11 or \$0.062 each.

Scene of the Last Major Confederate Offensive of the Civil War

North
Carolina
**HISTORIC
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Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources



Above: Joseph E. Johnston, Right: William T. Sherman

The Battle of Bentonville, which took place during the three days of March 19–21, 1865, was the last full-scale action of the Civil War in which the Confederate army was able to mount an offensive. This major battle, the largest ever fought in North Carolina, was the only significant attempt to defeat Gen. William T. Sherman after he left Georgia. Departing from Savannah in January 1865, Sherman had met little resistance on his march northward. Union forces advanced through South Carolina, capturing Columbia and devastating the countryside. Only North Carolina lay between Sherman's army and Gen. U. S. Grant's forces in Virginia, and Confederate forces in the Carolinas were widely scattered. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston was ordered to unite these troops and attempt to prevent Sherman from combining his army with that of Grant.

With less than half as many men as Sherman's sixty thousand, Johnston knew his only chance for success lay in the possibility of finding Sherman's army divided. Miserable road conditions forced Sherman to divide his command into two wings, and on March 18 Johnston learned that the sections had become separated by a half-day's march. Sensing the opportunity to strike one of the wings with his force of about twenty thousand, the Confederate general moved his troops into position near the village of Bentonville.

On the evening of March 18, Johnston organized his forces into a sickle-shaped line along the Goldsboro road and waited for the advancing Federals. The follow-

ing day Sherman's left wing stumbled into Johnston's trap. Initial Confederate attacks overran large sections of Federal lines. One Union division managed to hold on despite being surrounded by Confederate adversaries. Failing to completely crush the Union lines, Johnston's Confederates pulled back into positions held earlier in the day. Sherman's right wing arrived on the battlefield early on March 20, ending Johnston's hope of dealing with a smaller Union force.

Nearer and nearer they came. . . . When not over forty or fifty paces from us, the order so anxiously awaited was given, and a sheet of fire blazed out from the hidden battle line . . . that was demoralizing and fatal to the enemy. They battled, reeled, and staggered, while we poured volley after volley into them, and great gaps were made in their line, as brave Federals fell everywhere. . . .

—A Confederate soldier's account of a Union assault, March 19, 1865

For two days the opposing forces faced each other. Cannon and rifle fire were constant. On March 21 a Federal advance commanded by Gen. J. A. Mower approached within two hundred yards of Mill Creek bridge, Johnston's only line of retreat, before being driven back. That evening Johnston's weary troops abandoned their positions and withdrew toward Smithfield.



Federal forces observed but did not pursue the Confederates. Johnston failed to halt the Union advance, and Sherman's army marched on to Goldsboro, where supplies awaited the tired troops. On April 26, at the Bennett Place near Durham, Johnston surrendered to Sherman, ending the Civil War in the Carolinas.

The Battle of Bentonville was fought over an area of six thousand acres. More than four thousand men were reported killed, wounded, or missing during the three-day battle. During the confrontation, wounded Union soldiers



were taken to the farm home of John and Amy Harper, where a field hospital was established. Some wounded Confederates were likewise treated at this facility.

A dozen surgeons and attendants in their shirtsleeves stood at rude benches cutting off arms and legs and throwing them out of the windows, where they lay scattered on the grass.

—Remembrances of Bentonville by

Lt. Col. William Hamilton, Ninth Ohio Cavalry

The Harper House still stands at Bentonville Battlefield and is furnished as a field hospital. A Confederate cemetery and a section of Union trenches are also located on the site. Reminders of the battle



are on exhibit in the visitor center along with an audiovisual program about the battle. Roads in the area are marked with plaques highlighting events of the Battle of Bentonville.