

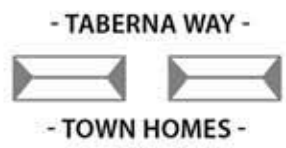
New Bern Battlefield

SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR

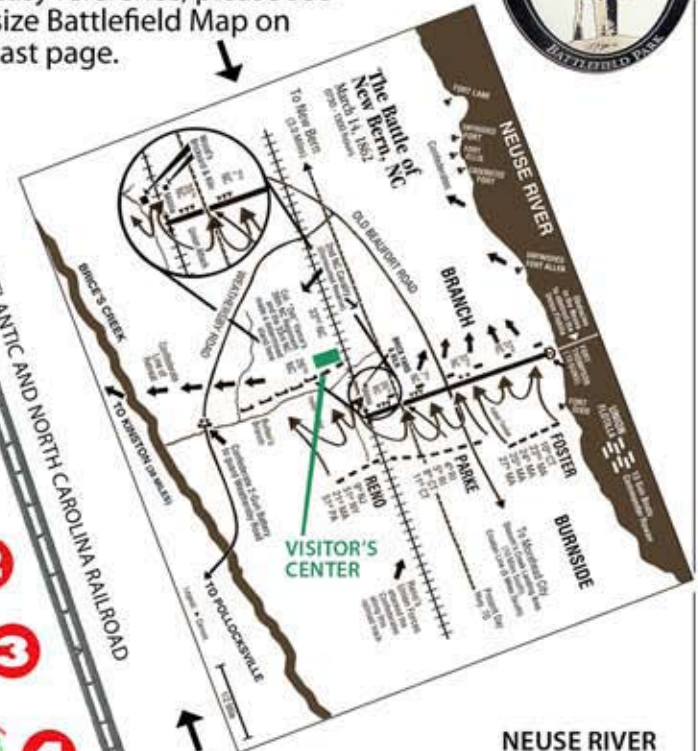
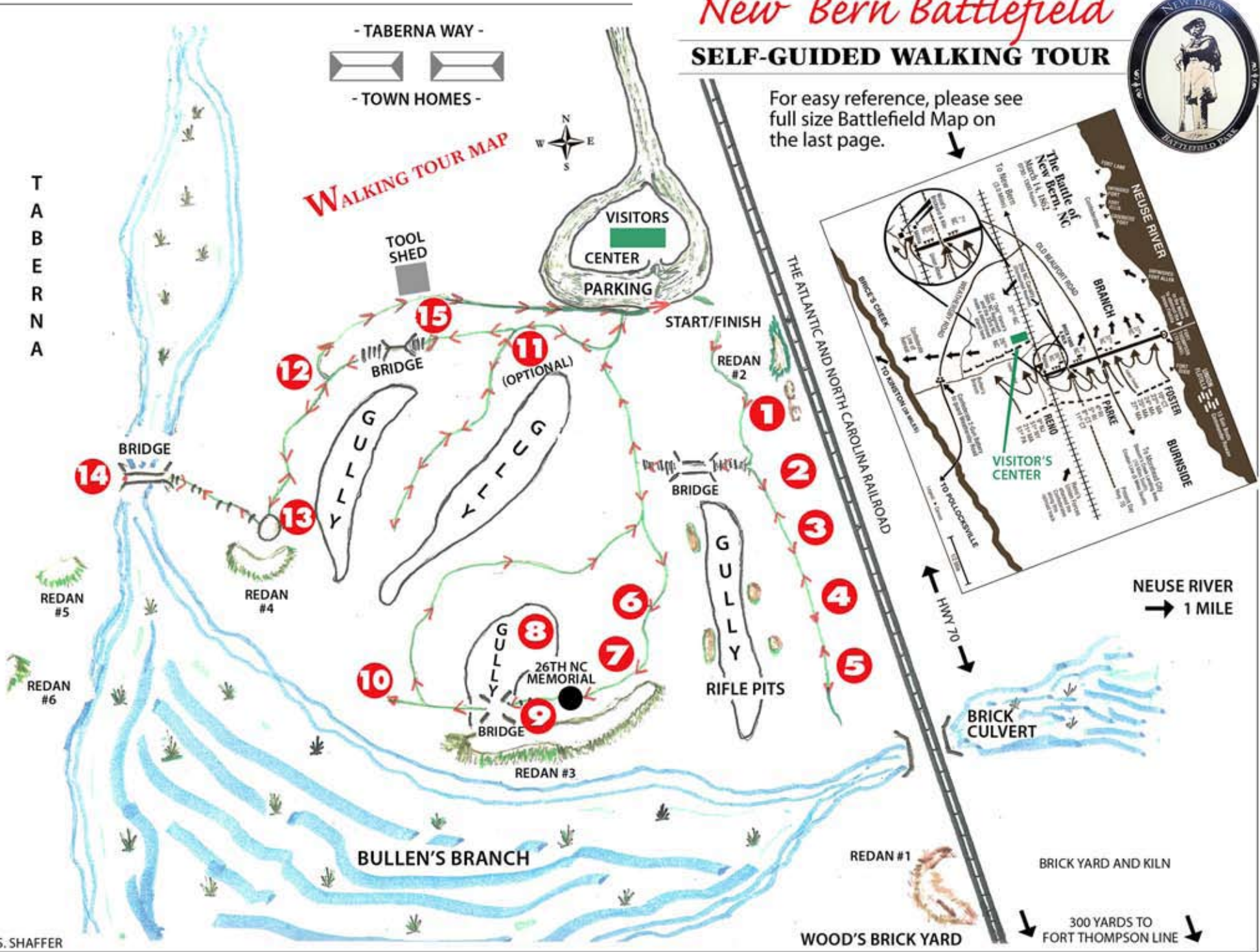


For easy reference, please see full size Battlefield Map on the last page.

WALKING TOUR MAP



T
A
B
E
R
N
A



NEUSE RIVER
→ 1 MILE

HWY 70

BRICK CULVERT

BRICK YARD AND KILN

WOOD'S BRICK YARD

300 YARDS TO FORT THOMPSON LINE

New Bern Battlefield Park

SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR

Welcome to the New Bern Battlefield Park

Conveniently located about five miles south of the historic town of New Bern, just off of Route 70 East at the entry point to the Taberna homes development, this unique portion of the civil war Battle of Newberne (the period spelling) site is preserved in its original, natural state. It's approximately 26 acres are a Federally designated site of historical significance, owned by the New Bern Historical Society. Indeed, these acres comprise that core area of the battle where the Union breakthrough of the Confederate line occurred.

Here, men fiercely fought for their beliefs, and they suffered dearly, more than one thousand of them, in these woods and swamps, in the muck and mire, far from their homes and loved ones, some never identified nor returned.

The men of that generation having perished on these grounds; our recollection of their dedication and sacrifice shall forever live in our memory. These are the ancestors of our country, and you walk this hallowed ground where they gave up their young lives.

"Nothing creates an emotional connection between present and past like walking in the footsteps of our Civil War soldiers."

Jeff Shaara, author of "Gods and Generals"

Before you begin, please:

Remain on the trails and bridge structures at all times. The earthworks are in pristine condition today after 150 years because they have been undisturbed by man and nature. Be cautious as you walk in sturdy shoes and aware that Cotton-mouth Water Moccasin and Copperhead vipers are residents here. Also, mosquitoes, ticks and chiggers are plentiful. Finally, trespassing on the Atlantic & North Carolina Railroad can result in a hefty fine.

With that said, please begin your tour of the core of the battle area where the most severe fighting took place -- the weakest point or "gap" in the Confederate line of defense, the point of the Union breakthrough, and where the majority of casualties, approximately 1,000+, for both opponents occurred on 14 March 1862.

The Battle for Newberne, 14 March 1862

Engaging Forces: The Burnside Expedition moving against Newberne was composed of three brigades of thirteen infantry regiments, three unattached units, and U.S. Army and Navy gunboats. This earliest example of a joint operational army-navy force numbered approximately 12,000 men. The Confederate forces comprised six infantry regiments, a militia unit, and artillery batteries - approximately 4,500 men. Confederate naval forces had been defeated by the U. S. naval force in the battle of Roanoke Island, February 1862.

Principal Commanders: Brig. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside (Union)
Brig. Gen. Lawrence O'Bryan Branch (Confederate)



Estimated Casualties:

Numbers vary and are approximate. Union: 92 killed, 380 wounded, 1 missing. Confederate: 64 killed, 101 wounded, 413 captured or missing.

Results:

Union victory; capturing several installations, more than forty guns, several vessels and naval stores, and Union force occupation of Newberne until the end of the war.

On 11 March 1862, approximately 12,000 men of a joint Army-Navy force commanded by Brig. Gen. Ambrose Burnside departed Roanoke Island flushed with pride in their victory there. They would rendezvous on 12 March with the Union naval gunboats of Commander Stephen C. Rowan at Hatteras Inlet, and from there sail on to one of the earliest examples in U.S. military history of an amphibious landing of a joint force -- its objective, the town of Newberne, NC; the state's second oldest and second largest town, having a port second only to Wilmington.

Late in the afternoon of the same day, after an uneventful passage up the Neuse River, the Union flotilla anchored for the night at a place called Slocum's Creek, adjacent to land known today as the Marine Corps Air Station at Cherry Point. Confederate scouts watched the U.S. Navy vessels, and long into the night listened to the songs of the soldiers and sailors accompanied by regimental bands.

During the early morning of 13 March, the Union troops were landed at Slocum's Creek. The gunboats of the Union Navy pushed north along the west shoreline of the river Neuse toward Newberne, delivering galling suppressive fire (An early example of a rolling barrage) against Confederate river defense as they advanced ahead of the Union ground force march, and supported those forces during the land battle the following day. The opposing forces encamped approximately a little more than one mile apart in a steady rain lasting through that night.

Early on 14 March, the Union's joint army and navy force approached the Confederate defenders -- approximately 4,500 ill-equipped, untrained and inexperienced troops under the command of Brig. Gen. Lawrence O'B Branch at their earthwork defenses some five miles south of the town. There was no Confederate naval force to oppose the Union flotilla numbering approximately twenty navy gunboats and many army gunboats and troop transport vessels -- more than 50 vessels moved up the Neuse. The Union ground forces of Brig. Gen. John G. Foster, First Brigade; Brig. Gen. Jesse L. Reno, Second Brigade; and Brig. Gen. John G. Parke, Third Brigade, and several unattached units, engaged the Confederates for approximately six hours and were victorious.

Preamble

For your orientation, the stage should now be set for that portion of the battle that took place in this area. What happened here was something akin to a battle within a battle.

It is three hours into the battle that commenced at about 0730 hours. You are standing in the north end of the gap or the pivotal point of the battle where the battle turned. Extending east a mile from the railroad before you, along the Confederate main line of defense to Fort Thompson that anchors that line on the Neuse River, the battle has been at a virtual stand-still for some three hours. Now, using the intelligence information gathered about ten days earlier, Union General Reno's Second Brigade will launch an advance through a weak point of the Confederate line -- the gap as it is called. The gap was formed when the Fort Thompson Line could not be continued across the railroad track and westward because of an impassable swamp, but was pushed north along the railroad to a point some four hundred yards on the west side of the railroad. Thus, the area on either side of the railroad and extending from where the Fort Thompson Line intersected the railroad south of here to approximately where you are standing comprised the gap -- a weak point in the Confederate primary line of defense. Interestingly, while the railroad linking the port of Beaufort through New Bern, a strategically located river port town and second largest town in North Carolina, to Goldsboro where it intersected other major rail lines were the objectives of the Union forces, this gap was so very weakly defended.

● STOP #1

Completed in 1858, the Atlantic & North Carolina Railroad lies today on its original rail bed, although the rail bed is approximately four feet higher than the original to accommodate modern railroad equipment. The Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad provided 96 miles of rail between Goldsboro to New Bern to Beaufort Harbor. Besides the strategically located river port city of New Bern, this railroad was a very important objective for the Burnside Expedition for it intersected several other railroads to transport men and materiel north. One of those very important railroads was the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad that carried important freight north from the major port of Wilmington northward.

● STOP #2

Just ahead and to the right of where you are standing is Confederate Redan #2 and entrenchments constructed by men of the 26th North Carolina. Straight ahead on the opposite or east side of the tracks are additional earthworks (not observable from this point).

● STOP #3

Redan #2 was emplaced here and extended some 120 yards toward Bullen's Branch to refuse an enemy flanking movement. In this area the 5th Rhode Island Infantry Regiment would swing left to face the 33rd North Carolina Regiment on either side of the railroad.

● STOP #4 (The gap)

From this point near the railroad, look several hundred yards (405 yards) south to a point where the Fort Thompson Line terminates at the east side of the railroad, across from which lies a deep swamp. This is the area called the "gap," a vulnerable and weak area where the Confederate line of defense had to be moved north some 400 yards because of the swamp. Here the 26th North Carolina redans extended the line westward from a point approximately 150 yards behind you. The 21st Massachusetts moving up the railroad surprised and drove off unarmed Confederate artillerymen attempting to mount two cannon at a lunette astride the railroad. The newly formed, inexperienced, ill-equipped militia was charged with the responsibility to hold this important point, a fatal flaw. The Bay Staters eventually routed the militia and the 35th North Carolina. The 33rd North Carolina attempted to secure the gap. The 7th and 37th North Carolina regiments in turn re-took the position and drove the 21st Massachusetts back.

The 4th Rhode Island, the lead element of General Parke's Third Brigade, moved against the Confederates who had shortly before re-occupied the earthworks at the end of Fort Thompson Line next to the railroad several hundred yards south of here. The 5th Rhode Island and the 8th Connecticut regiments quickly followed in support. The 7th and 37th North Carolina regiments fell back.

● STOP #5

Closer, at approximately one hundred yards, is a curved earthwork (Redan #1) on the west side of the railroad. Farther south from that point is Wood's Brickyard and Kiln areas on either side of the railroad. Several buildings, including the brick storage and kilns, were located on the east side of the railroad, while associated structures were situated across the tracks on the west side. The militia unit commanded by Colonel H.J.B. Clark was ordered to loop-hole the walls of the kilns and houses there and hold against the Union drive north along the railroad. Evidence of these structures has been found. During and after the battle, several of these buildings were used to treat the wounded and secure Confederate prisoners. The original brick railroad culvert through which flows Bullen's Branch can be easily seen from this point.

- At this point you should reverse your course and return up the hill to the path, turn left and down onto the bridge where you will walk across the gully and up the steps at the other side.

● STOP #6

Here continues the western extension of the Fort Thompson line of defense with Redan #3 just ahead. Major Abner B. Carmichael commanded the left wing of the 26th North Carolina, comprising companies A, D, G with part of Company C. These units were heavily engaged here with units of Union General Jesse L. Reno. Near this spot, Carmichael and Colonel Clark M. Avery, commander of the 33rd North Carolina Regiment, were discussing the worsening situation when Carmichael died instantly of a rifle shot to the head. It is thought that a Union shooter observed through the fog and heavy powder smoke a small North Carolina flag attached to his cap -- made for Carmichael by a lady friend in New Bern.

● STOP #7

Here you stand on one of several hillocks extending as fingers into and above Bullen's Branch. Colonel Zebulon Vance, commanding the 26th North Carolina, was ordered by General Lawrence O'Bryan Branch, the commander of the Confederate forces, to extend the Fort Thompson Line westward. In a very short period of time, using crude tools, the men of the 26th North Carolina built 10 or more redans. Union intelligence was unaware of their presence when Union General Reno crossed Bullen's Branch. The latter meandered through the area on its way west to Brice's Creek. It was dammed somewhere west of this point to a depth of some forty inches of cold water. To further inhibit the advance of their enemy the Confederates felled trees on both sides of the railroad each for a distance of up to 325 yards toward the enemy and sharpened the exposed, interlocking branches. This field fortification is known by the French word -- abatis. The 51st New York, 51st Pennsylvania, and the 9th New Jersey pushed through this area.

● STOP #8 (The 26th North Carolina Memorial)

The 26th North Carolina re-enactment group commemorated the bravery and devotion of the men of the 26th North Carolina who fought at the Battle of Newberne with their donation of this 11.5-ton pink Salisbury granite memorial. On the front of the memorial appears the Great Seal of North Carolina together with the State's motto in Latin "Esse Quam Videri" meaning "To be rather than to seem." This motto is taken from an essay on friendship written by Cicero.

● STOP #9 (At the bridge just ahead.)

Union troops of the 9th New Jersey, the 51st New York, and the 51st Pennsylvania, Second Brigade, joined by the 21st Massachusetts, punched through the abatis in the swampy bottomland of Bullen's Branch; precipitating the rout of the Confederate forces, their withdraw from the field, and march to Kinston some thirty-nine miles to the west.

● STOP #10 (At the bench overlooking Bullen's Branch.)

You are in a good position to inspect the structure of a redan and their positioning. A redan is a simple field work developed from the lunette, originally a half-moon-shaped outwork; with shorter flanks became a redan. The V-shaped salient angle of the redan faced toward an expected attack, and consisted of two faces joined to form a salient angle. Logs were commonly placed atop the redan, then loop-holed beneath the log through which holes the soldier could fire with his head protected. The topography of the multiple hillocks above Bullen's Branch was most suitable for this simple fortification. Look west from a point directly behind the bench. In the distance (approximately 150 yards) find Redan #4.

● **STOP #11** (Optional Stop - at the end of this hillock)

This is another good vantage point to better understand how the Confederates employed the terrain to their advantage, and constructed redans on these finger-like extensions some thirty feet above Bullen's Branch to thwart the advance of the Union forces. From this place you can see the west end of Redan #3 to the left, and Redan #4 at your right.

This battle lasted approximately six hours. Pandemonium reigned along the front line extending more than a couple of miles westward from the river Neuse. The Union naval flotilla of some thirteen gunboats shelled the shoreline and beyond. Thousands of rounds of ammunition were exchanged. It was cold and wet, the mud was deep, the men were tired and hungry. While the Union troops, numbering about 12,000, had "seen the elephant," that is; fought their first battle on Roanoke Island in February, none of the fewer Confederate forces numbering 4,500 had ever been in battle. And, they were ill-equipped, not well trained, and, in most instances, led by officers similarly inexperienced. The unwavering advance of the left wing of the Union force collapsed the Confederate line.

● **STOP #12**

In this area the 26th and 33rd North Carolina retreated from the field. They were the last to leave their lines and march to Kinston where they re-grouped.

● **STOP #13**

Here at Redan #4 is near the beginning of the Confederate right wing (26th North Carolina) whose commander, Lt. Col. Henry King Burgwyn, was charged with the responsibility for anchoring the extreme right of the Fort Thompson Line at Weathersby Road (modern day Old Airport Road). Burgwyn and his artillery element, dismounted cavalry, and independent infantry companies would see no action during either the battle or the retreat. You can use the two stakes on the right to view the slope up to Redan #5.

● **STOP #14**

From this vantage point at the west end of the bridge, you will see Redan #5 and possibly, through the foliage, Redan #6 to the right or southwest, and gain further appreciation for how difficult the fight was for both sides. Additional redans have been discovered, each emplaced as the others atop hillocks overlooking Bullen's Branch.

As you face about to return to the last action near the Visitor Center, try to imagine the sounds of this ferocious battle: the constant and sharp crack of thousands of rifles and muskets firing, the deafening booming of cannon, the cries for water of the wounded, the writhing and long, high-pitched neighing of wounded horses, the rush of panicked men retreating, the double-quick attack of Union troopers, and the sight, the smell, the emotional fog brought on to envelope the whole of the battle area -- a grotesque scene.

● **STOP #15** (Looking straight across the Visitor Center parking lot.)

The fire of the 5th Rhode Island significantly impacted the 33rd North Carolina and the left wing of the 26th North Carolina regiments. In this area the commander of the 33rd, Col. Clark M. Avery, decided to move farther north to the railroad, and then north diagonally in a westerly direction to avoid being flanked. Poor communication caused only part of his regiment to receive General Branch's orders to withdraw. The 25th Massachusetts, supported by a battery, called upon Col. Avery and about 150-200 men of his regiment and a company of the 26th North Carolina to surrender -- and this they did near this place.

In an effort to further secure Newberne from the Union forces, in particular from U.S. Navy gunboats, the Confederates emplaced three lines of underwater obstructions -- the first line extended across the Neuse River from Fort Thompson. The second line was laid farther north across the Neuse from Fort Lane at a place on the shoreline called Fort Point. A third line has been found in the record about three miles north of the city where Bachelor's Creek flows into the Neuse.

Each of these lines of obstructions included an assortment of sunken vessels lashed together. Also used were the so-called "Yankee Catchers" -- stout posts set in the river bottom at forty-five degree angles down-river and topped with pointed iron caps. Other devices were frame torpedoes which consisted of four or five posts capped with explosive heads and set at an angle into a frame secured to the river bottom. Yet another type of torpedo or "infernal device" was a simple keg with floatation devices at either end and filled with gunpowder detonated by fulminate of mercury contact fuses when struck by an enemy vessel. This so-called keg torpedo and other explosive devices for use as land mines were invented by Gabriel James Rains and his younger brother, George Washington Rains, both native New Bernians!

Now that you have toured this the last phase of the Battle of Newberne, you may wish to proceed to the eastern portion of the Fort Thompson Line where the battle began, but was stalled by a strong Confederate defense. You will find there a large area map mounted at the north-west corner of the Craven County Fairgrounds that depicts the positions and movements of the combatants. If you go, exit the battlefield where you entered, turn right onto Taberna Way, then right at the intersection onto Highway 70 east and proceed approximately two-tenths of a mile to the entry point across the median into the Fairgrounds on the left, and park to the left where you see the large battle map. Thank you for visiting the New Bern Battlefield Park.

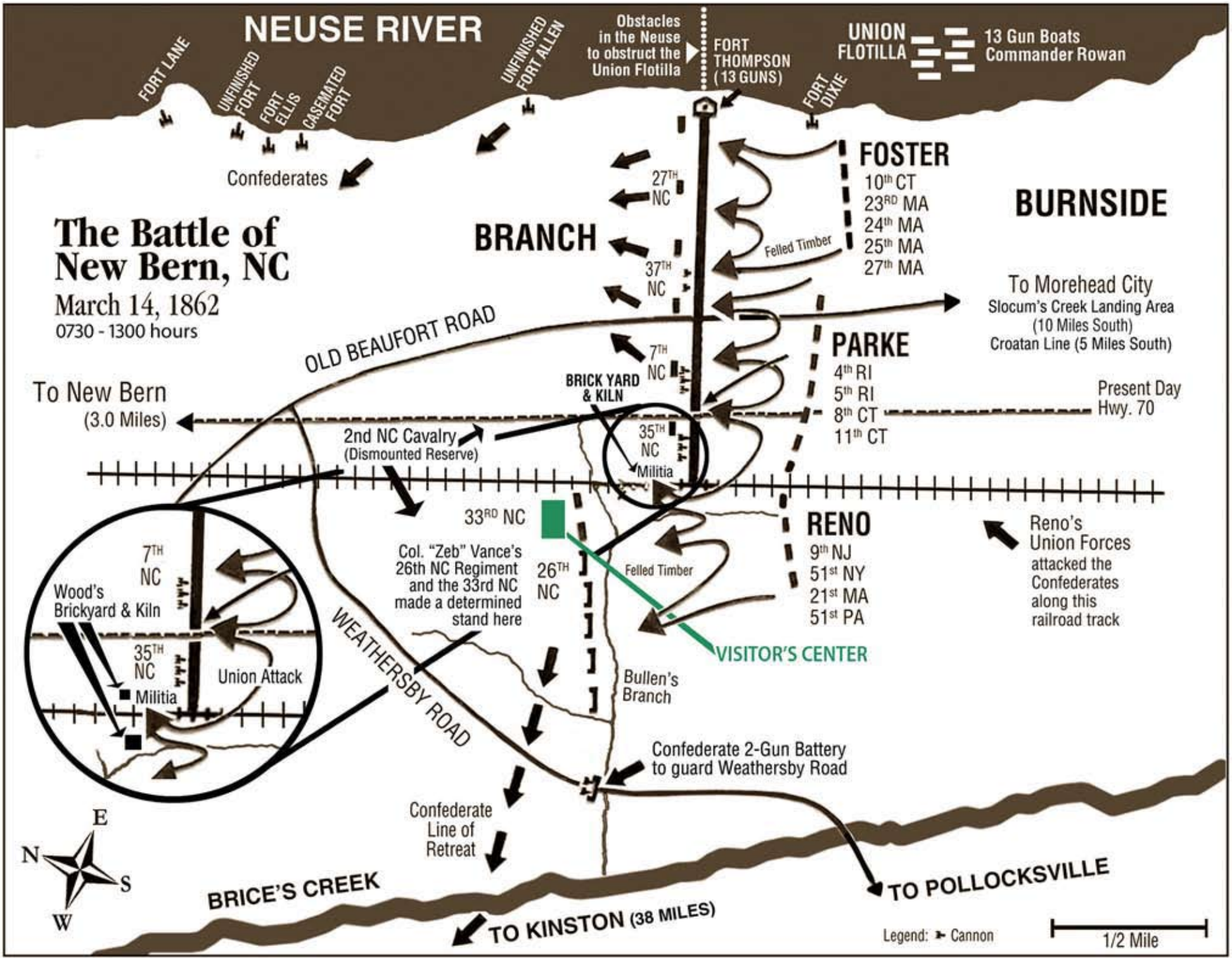
**NEW BERN'S FUTURE WILL BE SECURED THROUGH
HONORING ITS PAST**

The New Bern Battlefield Park is owned and operated by the
New Bern Historical Society.

The Attmore-Oliver House
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New Bern, NC 28560
Phone: 252-638-8558, Fax: 252-638-5773
www.newbernhistorical.org

The Battle of New Bern, NC

March 14, 1862
0730 - 1300 hours



NEUSE RIVER

FORT LANE

UNFINISHED FORT

FORT ELLIS

CASEMATED FORT

UNFINISHED FORT ALLEN

Obstacles in the Neuse to obstruct the Union Flotilla

FORT THOMPSON (13 GUNS)

UNION FLOTILLA

13 Gun Boats
Commander Rowan

Confederates

BRANCH

27TH NC

37TH NC

7TH NC

FOSTER

10TH CT

23RD MA

24TH MA

25TH MA

27TH MA

BURNSIDE

To Morehead City
Slocum's Creek Landing Area (10 Miles South)
Croatan Line (5 Miles South)

PARKE

4TH RI

5TH RI

8TH CT

11TH CT

Present Day Hwy. 70

To New Bern (3.0 Miles)

OLD BEAUFORT ROAD

BRICK YARD & KILN

2nd NC Cavalry (Dismounted Reserve)

33RD NC

Col. "Zeb" Vance's 26th NC Regiment and the 33rd NC made a determined stand here

26TH NC

RENO

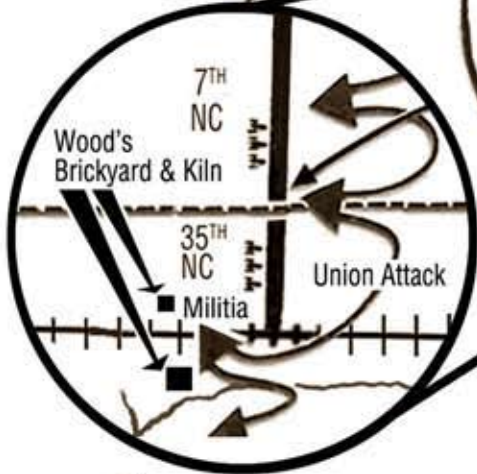
9TH NJ

51ST NY

21ST MA

51ST PA

Reno's Union Forces attacked the Confederates along this railroad track



Felled Timber

VISITOR'S CENTER

Bullen's Branch

Confederate 2-Gun Battery to guard Weathersby Road

WEATHERSBY ROAD

Confederate Line of Retreat

BRICE'S CREEK

TO KINSTON (38 MILES)

TO POLLOCKSVILLE



Legend: Cannon

1/2 Mile