

## Tour the Park

The Park's 33 acres cover only a portion of the original battlefield. Most of the entire battlefield has long been developed and is no longer accessible to the public. The Park has many well marked trails and takes you among the fighting positions, called redans, occupied by the 26<sup>th</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> NC Regiments. Interpretive panels throughout the park tell the story of the battle, the people who fought here, and its impact on New Bern.

The Gateway Plaza sign panels (Park Stop #5) explain Burnside's campaign, Branch's defense, and how the battle unfolded hour by hour. The Visitor Center sign panels (Park Stop #1) cover the occupation of New Bern and subsequent Confederate attempts to retake the town. The trails and redans have sign panels that explain what happened in those individual areas. The Living History Area sign panels (Park Stop #6) cover general topics of Civil War interest.

The trails that you will be walking will take you through the sites of combat during the battle - please be respectful of the park by not walking on the redans and not littering. The New Bern Historical Society does not receive any governmental funding for operation of the park and is supported solely by the generosity of its members and donations by visitors. Please consider making a donation in the depository located at the Visitors Center or online.



**Our work continues!  
Be a part of the action!**

**VOLUNTEER or DONATE!**

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## The Battle of New Bern

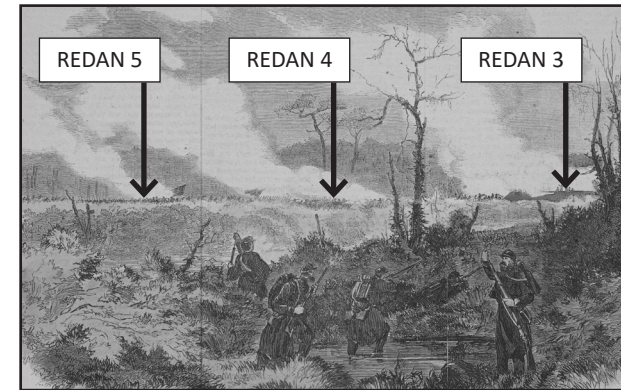
After the start of hostilities in the Civil War, a key Federal objective was disrupting the Confederate's supply chain, from ports to critical railroad lines. New Bern figured prominently in these plans as it was located along the railroad connecting Fort Macon and the port of Beaufort with the rail hub at Goldsboro. Seizure of New Bern would give Federal forces control of significant agricultural areas and supply lines to the Confederate's Army of Northern Virginia.

On March 13, 1862, 11,000 Federal troops led by General Ambrose Burnside and supported by 13 gunboats under Commander Stephen Rowan, landed at Slocum's Creek near today's Havelock and advanced to New Bern. The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (General Foster) moved on the right along the Old Beaufort Road with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade (General Reno) on the left via the railroad. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade (General Parke) followed behind Foster in reserve. Rowan's gunboats advanced upriver shelling the shoreline just ahead of the Federal advance.

Awaiting the Federal forces were 4,000 Confederate troops commanded by General Lawrence Branch, positioned along a line running from Fort Thompson on the Neuse River to Wood's Brickyard adjacent to the railroad tracks (the "Thompson Line") and westward from the railroad along the Bullen Branch of Brice's Creek.



Federal assault by Foster's 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade



Federal assault by Reno's 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade

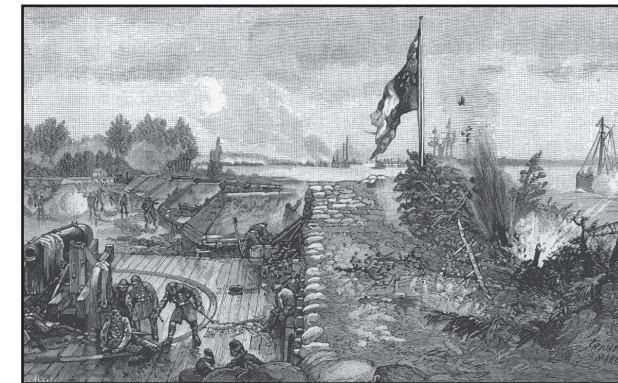
The battle began around 7:30 AM on March 14<sup>th</sup> and raged on until just after noon. Federal and Confederate casualties were about 1,085 men killed, wounded, or captured. The Federal Army occupied New Bern for the remainder of the Civil War and it served as a base of operations for further attacks directed by Burnside and his successors. Federal forces created a series of strong fortifications around the town with many of the buildings in New Bern being used as hospitals, staff offices, and troop quarters.

Approximately 10,000 slaves and free blacks sought refuge in New Bern during the Federal occupation. From this group of refugees, one of the first U.S. Colored Troop regiments, 1<sup>st</sup> NC Colored Volunteers (later redesignated the 35<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Troops), was formed. They would go on to fight with the Federal Army through the war's end.

Confederate forces tried three times but failed to recapture the town. The presence of Union forces in New Bern required the Confederacy to continually divert troops to the railroad's defense that might have been better utilized elsewhere.

## Self - Guided Tour

# New Bern Battlefield Park



Fort Thompson during the battle

**New Bern Historical Society**

