

Kentucky's Civil War Heritage Map

Both sides in the American Civil War considered Kentucky a key to victory. Lincoln is reported to have said that he hoped to have God on his side, but he must have Kentucky.

From Cumberland Gap in the east to Columbus in the west, fighting raged for control of crucial mountain passes, navigable rivers, and railroad junctions. The war divided Kentucky more tragically than any other state; for Kentuckians, it truly was a brothers' war.

And one of the war's climactic battles took place in the state, at Perryville. Along with the battle of Antietam in Maryland two weeks earlier, Perryville represented the failure of the Confederacy's two-pronged effort to gain the support of these important border states and to persuade European powers, as well as the Lincoln administration, to recognize the Confederacy as an independent nation that could not be conquered.

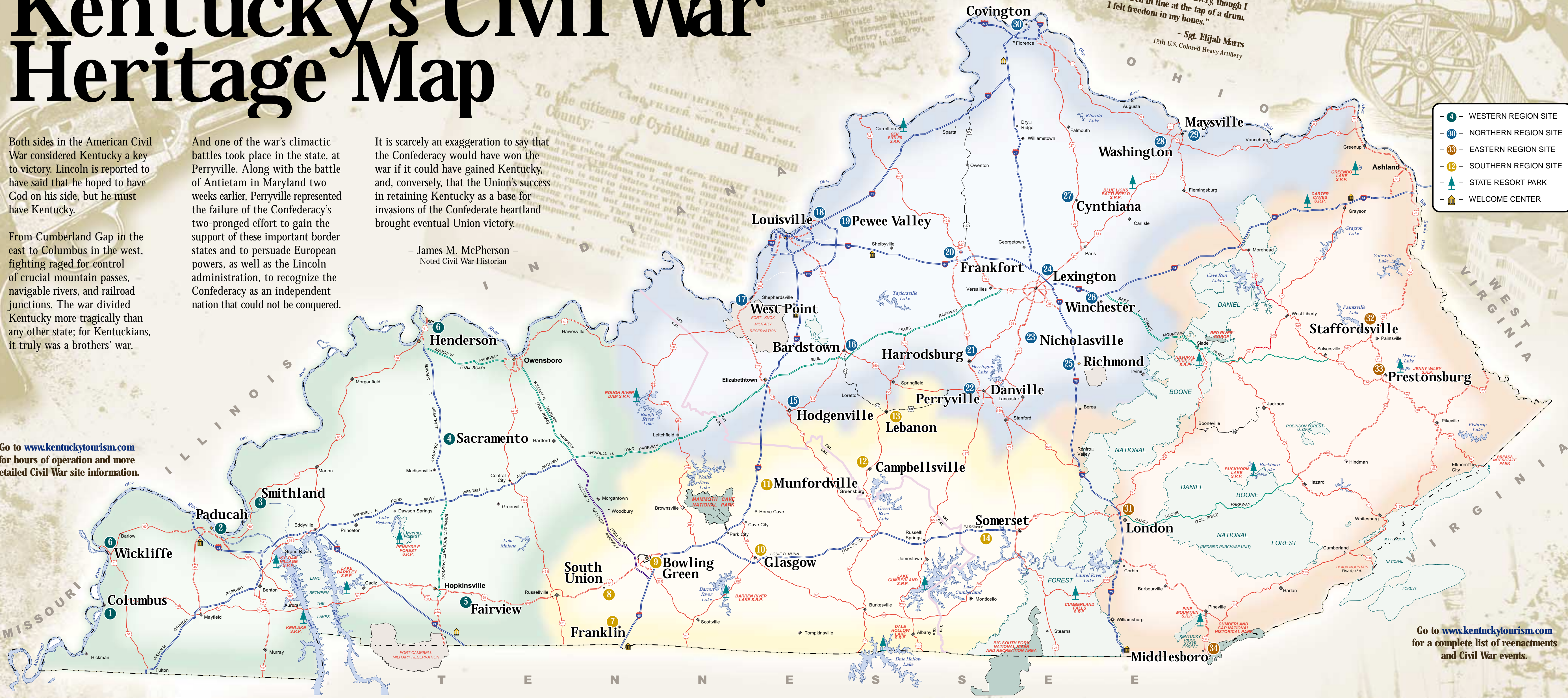
It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the Confederacy would have won the war if it could have gained Kentucky, and, conversely, that the Union's success in retaining Kentucky as a base for invasions of the Confederate heartland brought eventual Union victory.

— James M. McPherson —
Noted Civil War Historian

"...this is better than slavery, though I do march in line at the tap of a drum. I felt freedom in my bones."
— Sgt. Elijah Marrs
12th U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery

Go to www.kentuckytourism.com for hours of operation and more detailed Civil War site information.

Go to www.kentuckytourism.com for a complete list of reenactments and Civil War events.



December 20, 1860
South Carolina secedes from the Union. In January 1861, ten other states follow.

April 12, 1861
Confederates open fire on Fort Sumter, at 4:30 a.m., commencing the Civil War. Kentuckian Major Robert Anderson surrenders the garrison the next day at 2:30 p.m.

September 18, 1861
Kentucky's Pro-Union legislature calls for the expulsion of the Confederates and gives command of the state volunteers to now General Robert Anderson, who won his fame by defending Fort Sumter.

October 21, 1861
To counter the Confederate victory at Barbourville, federal forces repel an attack on Wildcat Mountain in Laurel County.

August 29, 1862
The Confederate offensive into Kentucky encounters Union troops as they move north from Big Hill to Richmond.

October 8, 1862
Fighting north from the Cumberland Gap, as part of the 1862 "Kentucky Campaign," General E. Kirby Smith controls much of central Kentucky. While General Braxton Bragg, thwarted in his efforts to capture Louisville by Union General Don Carlos Buell, moves into central Kentucky to link the two armies.

January 1, 1863
On this date, President Lincoln enacts the Emancipation Proclamation.

April 14, 1865
John Wilkes Booth mortally wounds President Abraham Lincoln. He dies the following morning and Andrew Johnson is sworn in as the 17th President of the United States.

November 6, 1860
Kentuckian Abraham Lincoln is elected 16th President of the United States.

February 9, 1861
Confederate Jefferson Davis is elected as the first President of the Confederate States of America.

September 6, 1861
Union troops under the command of General Grant move into Paducah and Smithland.

September 19, 1861
The first engagement of the war in Kentucky occurs at Barbourville.

November 18, 1861
Some 115 delegates from 68 counties assemble in Russellville to establish the Provisional Government of Kentucky, and Bowling Green is designated as the capital. Kentucky's Confederate government remains in exile during the majority of the war.

July 4, 1862
Confederate General John Hunt Morgan leads 875 officers and men westward from Knoxville on his first major raid into Kentucky.

September 17, 1862
Confederate forces commanded by General Robert E. Lee and Union forces commanded by George McClellan meet at Antietam near Sharpsburg, Maryland, in the single bloodiest day of the war.

September 22, 1862
President Abraham Lincoln published the Emancipation Proclamation.

December 22, 1862
General John Hunt Morgan and 3,100 men cross the Cumberland River. This highly successful, 12-day adventure became known as Morgan's "Christmas Raid."

November 8, 1864
President Abraham Lincoln is reelected. His Vice President is Andrew Johnson of Tennessee.

April 9, 1865
General Robert E. Lee surrenders the once great army of Virginia to General Grant at Appomattox Court House.

December 18, 1865
The Secretary of the State announces the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, officially abolishing slavery.

1860 1861 1862 1863 1864 1865