

Mill Springs National Cemetery  
9044 West Highway 80  
Nancy, Kentucky 42544

## Description

The Mill Springs National Cemetery, established in 1862, is located in Pulaski County, eight miles west of Somerset. The site is rectangular in shape. The main entrance is located near the center of the south side and is protected by a wrought iron gate supported by stone piers, with a pedestrian gate on the left side. The gates were constructed circa 1868. A steel pipe service gate is situated near the northwest corner of the cemetery. Only a portion of the original three-foot stone perimeter wall remains. The wall, constructed circa 1868, is covered with a heavy coping set in cement and extends from east of the main entrance gate to the northeast corner of the cemetery. Wrought iron fencing encloses the area from west of the main entrance to the southwest corner, and the remainder of the cemetery is enclosed by farm-type wire fencing. The flagpole is located in Section B. The service building is situated on the north side of the cemetery, and a committal service tent is located just east of the service building. Graves are marked with upright marble headstones.



The brick and concrete service building, containing public restrooms, was constructed in 1936. The roof is slate.

## Noted Burials

There is one Medal of Honor recipient buried in the cemetery: Brent Woods, Sergeant, Company B, 9<sup>th</sup> U. S. Cavalry. He is buried in Section A, Grave 930, and his grave is marked with a special marker inscribed with an enlarged gold-leafed replica of the medal of the United States Army and the words "MEDAL OF HONOR."

## Civil War Activity in Area

In late 1861, while the Confederate government was being established, the military stalemate began to resolve itself. The first important moves began in the southeastern region of rugged mountains, heavy timber, and swift streams where the Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia boundaries converge. General Felix Zollicoffer, a Tennessee journalist and politician, had been ordered into eastern Tennessee on July 26, 1861. Brigadier George H. Thomas became Zollicoffer's opponent on September 15 when he assumed command of the Federal forces centered at Camp Dick Robinson in Garrard



County. By November, he began to shift his troops westward, leaving behind small detachments in strong defensive positions to hold the mountain passes. He arrived at Mill Springs on November 29, 1861. His army, consisting of about 4,000 men, could be supplied there by steamboat from Nashville. Zollicoffer had warned General Albert Sidney Johnston that 1,000 of his men were without weapons and many of the others carried ancient flintlock muskets or shotguns. Identical shortages existed throughout Johnston's command, and he could do little to remedy Zollicoffer's situation. Expected reinforcements were detained in Tennessee, supplies continued to be inadequate, and General Johnston provided little guidance for the developing crisis. President Jefferson Davis complicated the situation by appointing George B. Crittenden, a son of the senator, to command and relegating Zollicoffer to head the Army's First Brigade.

By January 1862, when Crittenden arrived to assume command, Thomas's army had become so much stronger that the best chance of success for the Confederates lay in holding their defensive positions until Thomas came to them. The Union army began its advance, moving slowly over roads no better than quagmires, the infantry averaged only five miles a day, and the artillery and supply wagons could not keep up with them. By January 27, Thomas was at Logan's Crossroads, still several miles from Somerset and some nine or ten miles north of the Confederate fortifications. Since his rear guard was lagging far behind, Thomas ordered Brigadier General Albin Schoepf to come to him so that they could attempt to carry out Buell's order to capture or disperse the Confederate force.

Crittenden knew of Thomas's approach, but he thought that swollen streams would prevent Schoepf from joining Thomas for at least a day or two. Although they had only 4,000 soldiers, Crittenden proposed to a council of war on January 18 that they attack Thomas before he was reinforced. Zollicoffer may have objected, but the Confederates started their advance soon after midnight. The crackle of gunfire signaled contact with the enemy on the morning of January 19.



The 10th Indiana Infantry and Colonel Speed F. Fry's 4th Kentucky regiment withstood the early Confederate assault until Thomas could get up reinforcements. During the early morning, Zollicoffer rode into the Union lines. He thought he was among Confederate units and his raincoat concealed his own identity. He told Colonel Fry that they were firing on their own men. Colonel Fry was giving the order to cease fire when a Confederate staff officer yelled that he was the enemy. General Zollicoffer was immediately shot out of the saddle.

Some Confederates began to drift away from the fighting, but a savage charge by the 20th Tennessee and 15th Alabama regiments temporarily stabilized the line. Thomas checked the Confederates at the rail fence that had been Fry's pulpit. The men fought viciously at such close range that some seized rifles across the fence and attempted to wrestle them away from their owners. Thomas poured in more troops, and he was finally able to get some artillery into action. Some three hours after the first shots, the Confederate left was broken. Despite heavy casualties, the Mississippi and Tennessee regiments that had already fought so gallantly protected the retreat and prevented a disaster. Both sides had used about 4,000 men. The Confederate losses were reported as 125 killed, 309 wounded, and 95 missing. The Union casualties were 40 killed, 207 wounded, and 15 missing. Since the dead Zollicoffer had become a hero,

Crittenden was blamed for the debacle. Although not found guilty of any charge, his military usefulness was ended, and he resigned his commission in October 1862 and spent the rest of the war in various minor positions.

Approximately one mile from the national cemetery, a stone marker commemorates the grave of the Confederate casualties who were buried where they fell. Although General Zollicoffer's body was returned to his home in Tennessee, a monument near the mass grave commemorates the spot where he was killed.

The cemetery was originally designated as the "Logan's Crossroads National Cemetery," In the 1880's, Secretary of War Robert Lincoln changed the name of the cemetery to "Mill Springs National Cemetery" to reference the most common name for the battle that had created the need for the cemetery.