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Property Type: Battle of Bristoe

Summary Description

Bristoe Battlefield district, which is approximately 1.8 square miles in area, is located in central Prince William County. All of the land is privately owned. Gently rolling hills, which are primarily in farmland, make up the topography. Kettle Run and Broad Run form the west and east boundaries, respectively. Nokesville Road and a line about 1,400 feet south of the railroad tracks make up the north and south boundaries, respectively. These boundaries encompass what was the Battle of Bristoe battlefield. The small present-day community of Bristow is centered around the junction of Bristow Road and the railroad tracks, as was Bristoe Station during the 1860s. All of the existing buildings or structures on the battlefield postdate the Civil War and are noncontributing properties. The district's environment and land uses are much the same as they were during the war. The physical and visual integrity of the Bristoe Battlefield is excellent. The views are expansive; the setting is parklike and peaceful. The major threat to the district is development.

Description

Bristoe Battlefield encompasses approximately 1,162 acres of land, all of which is privately owned. The district is bounded on the north by Nokesville Road (Highway 28) and Chapel Springs Road, on the west by Kettle Run, and on the east by Broad Run. Except in the southeastern corner of the district, the southern boundary line is approximately 1,400 feet south of and parallel to the railroad tracks. In the southeast corner, the boundary angles towards the southeast and skirts the southern edge of a knoll adjacent to Broad Run. Bristow Road (Highway 619) cuts through the District in a north-south direction. Aden Road (646) crosses the northwest corner. The small, rural town of Bristow (which was called Bristoe Station in the 1860s) is centered at the junction of Bristow Road and the railroad tracks.

Gently rolling terrain characterizes the district. Elevations range from 165 feet to 270 feet above mean sea level. The highest elevations are located in the center and southeast corner of the district. That portion south of Nokesville Road, east of Bristow Road, north the railroad tracks, and west of Broad Run is forested

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with pines and some hardwoods. This forested area has dense stands of vegetation and was cultivated as recently as twenty years ago. The western edge of the district near the Kettle Run drainage is also in dense forest. Occasional stands of woods are located throughout the district, especially along the lower drainage areas. Altogether, about one-third of the district is wooded. The remainder of the district is in agriculture.

There are two cemeteries within the district boundaries. The first, the Carr Cemetery, is delineated on county plat maps (#92-01-48B) and has recently been enclosed by a chain link fence. The second dates to the early years of the Civil War and consists of the graves of men from the 10th Alabama who died while encamped in the Bristow area in August and September 1861. It is an unmarked and unplatted cemetery. Until a few months there were still headstones associated with some of the graves. Because he is worried that someone will steal the stones, the property owner has since moved the headstones to his yard. Although the area is wooded and low, dense vegetation obscures much of the ground surface, there are still many obvious grave depressions. One unmarked headstone is on the ground.

The Bristow area has changed little since the Civil War. The present-day roads and railroad bed are basically in the same location as they were during the Civil War. In fact, there were actually more roads in the 1860s (Davis et al. 1983:Plate XLV, No.7). Portions of the old roadbeds are sometimes visible on low-altitude aerial photographs. According to a map drafted by a Union cartographer (Davis et al. 1983:Plate VIII), most of what is now the Bristow Battlefield was in agriculture. The one area that does not show fields is in all likelihood the wooded area referred to in accounts of the battle (i.e., where Colonel Thomas Smyth of the Union army moved onto the Confederate side of the battlefield, which is described in the significance section below). Most of that wooded area is now plowed.

None of the existing houses or structures in the district are known to have been standing at the time of the war. From one report, we know that there was a small building used as a hotel (most likely near the railroad tracks) in August of 1862 (Gordon 1880:136). There is also a reference to surrounding houses and farms and an Irish hut, not too far from the railroad tracks (Gordon 1880:181). At the time of the Battle of Bristoe in October 1863, there were

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only one house and a few chimneys standing (W.P.A. 1976:148). The house may have been the Dodd house. Henderson (1987:168) places the Dodd house on the west side of Bristow Road and 100 yards north of the railroad. A map compiled by a Union map maker after the October 14th battle shows the Dodd House on the east side of Bristow Road and a short distance north of the railroad tracks (Davis et al. 1983, Plate XLV, No.6). This same map showing the Dodd house also shows what is presumably the railroad station just to the east of Bristow Road and north of the railroad tracks. The Dodd house appears to be just north of the station.

It is likely that some of the houses that predate 1900 were built upon the foundations of homes that stood prior to and in the early years of the war; for example, the Davis-Beard house located at 10726 Bristow Road. Twelve houses in the district are known to have been constructed before 1900, and all except one is located along Bristow Road. The house at 10717 Bristow Road (#92-01-0064), which has a stone foundation and was constructed prior to 1900, is in the approximate location of the Dodd house as it was mapped by the Union cartographer. There is also a wooden structure (presumably being used for storage) behind the house that appears to be older, and it may actually be on the house site. None of the houses in the vicinity of the location given by Henderson are reported to have been built prior to 1900. Archaeological investigations would be useful in determining what still remains of the Dodd house and exactly where it was located. Also, it would probably be very productive to conduct archaeological studies to identify what remains of the station itself. The parcel (#92-01-0062) where the station is suppose to have been is vacant.

As noted above, all of the standing structures in the district are believed to postdate the Civil War. For this reason, they are all considered to be non-contributing structures. The standing structures include single-family houses, barns, silos, and many miscellaneous storage structures generally associated with farms. The line between barns and storage structures is blurred and storage structures range from fairly substantial structures to small sheds. There are 33 single-family dwellings located primarily along Bristow and Nokesville roads. There are approximately 18 barns, 4 silos, and 52 storage buildings. In addition, there is one small post office building (Parcel #92-01-65), two markets, one of which is closed, and a small commerical stand at the junction of Aden and Nokesville Road. According the

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county land records, four apartments are located on Parcel #93-01-43. In general, the houses and more substantial farm buildings are in good repair. Most of the storage buildings in the district are in poor condition. The old Carr house (#92-01-48A), which probably dates to the late 1800s, and its associated outbuildings are in a bad state of disrepair. The structures are no longer accounted for in the tax records, although they are still on the county maps.

Currently, the integrity of the Bristoe Battlefield District is very good. The views are much like they were during the battle and it is easy to visualize how the Battle of Bristoe progressed in terms of movement of regiments and placement of artillery. The present-day land uses are the same as they were during the Civil War. There are more homes, but even their positioning along the major roads, and especially the concentration of buildings near the junction of Bristow Road and the railroad, is illustrative of the settlement pattern in the 1860s.

The most immediate threat to the district's integrity is development, which is quickly progressing south along Bristow Road. The area of the district south of Nokesville Road, east of Bristow Road, and north of the railroad easement is already zoned Light Industrial. The small triangle of land between Kettle Run, Aden Road, and Nokesville Road is zoned Heavy Industrial. The remainder, about two-thirds of the district, is zoned Agricultural. These zoning categories (particularly Agriculture), however, can be changed with the approval of the Board of County Supervisors.

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Summary Significance Statement

The Bristoe Battlefield represents a significant Civil War battle: the Battle of Bristoe. The battle occurred on October 14, 1863, a few months after Gettysburg. Over 100,000 men, Union and Confederate, participated in the Bristoe Campaign. This exceeds the number of troops involved in the First Manassas Campaign. After the battle at Gettysburg, the future course of the Civil War in Virginia was under examination in both Richmond and Washington. There were new situations that had to be dealt with and there were fewer men. With the death of so many of his best generals, including Stonewall Jackson, General Robert E. Lee was left with less capable corps commanders.

General A. P. Hill commanded the Confederate army at the Battle of Bristoe. His Third Army Corps was in advance of the rest of the Confederate army when he spotted Major General Sykes's Fifth Army Corps resting to the east of Broad Run. To seize what seemed to be a great opportunity, A. P. Hill ordered an immediate attack. Hill had misread the Union's strength and more importantly the positioning and proximity of the reinforcement Confederate troops. After the battle, the South had over 1,300 dead, wounded, and missing soldiers; the North lost approximately 600. The 27th North Carolina lost from one third to one half of its men. The Union troops did retreat towards Washington, but only temporarily. The Confederate troops soon moved to the south and Union forces reoccupied Bristoe Station. The deficiencies displayed by the Confederate military command at the Battle of Bristoe would be repeated as the Civil War moved south to the Richmond area. Lee, upon viewing the battleground where the dead lay, curtly instructed Hill to "bury these poor men and let us say no more about it." The soldiers were buried where they fell. At least some were reburied in their native states in the years after the war. How many is not known. Bristoe and Manassas are the only two Civil War battlefields in Prince William County.

In addition to the Battle of Bristoe, a very significant engagement occurred in the Bristoe Battlefield district shortly before the Battle of Second Manassas. On August 27, 1862, General Joseph Hooker, of the Union army, was lured into a battle at Bristoe Station, which had been occupied by Stonewall Jackson's army the previous day. As a result, Hooker was delayed in getting to the Manassas battleground, giving the Confederate leaders time to

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consolidate their army and to position themselves advantageously . During the war there was also a number of skirmishes in what is now defined as the district. Several were led by Colonel John Singleton Mosby.

Historical Background

The boundaries of the Bristoe Battlefield have been drawn to encompass the area in which the Battle of Bristoe took place. This was the most significant Civil War event in the Bristoe Station area, but there were other events that also occurred within the district prior to and after October 14, 1863. Having a railroad station along what was a major supply line of both armies and the presence of a major thoroughfare (Bristoe to Brentsville Road), almost guaranteed that the hamlet of Bristoe Station would see a lot of military activity during the Civil War. The military engagements and skirmishes before and after October 14, 1863, are briefly described below. A more detailed discussion of the Battle of Bristoe then follows.

During the Battle of First Manassas, many of the woman and children stayed in the Bristoe Station area (W.P.A. 1976:147). In August 1861, shortly after the battle, the Confederate army established a number of camps in the area. The 6th North Carolina, for example, marched to Camp Jones at Bristoe Station on August 3, 1861, where the "men settled down to the usual routine of Confederate soldiers stationed in a permanent camp" (Iobst and Manarin 1987:28). (In September 1861 the 6th North Carolina would move south to the Potomac area, where they provided support to the batteries of the Potomac Blockade, including Cockpit Point.)

There were many deaths in the Bristoe military camps during August and September 1861. Typhoid fever, among other diseases, was prevalent. The 6th North Carolina reported six deaths in one week (Iobst and Manarin 1987:33). It is during this period that many of the 10th Alabama infantry, who were also encamped at Bristoe Station, died and were buried in the unmarked cemetery described in the "Description" section above. In addition to sickness, there was very little food in Camp Jones. "Among those who suffered were the 'poor helpless negroes' belonging to some of the officers and men (Iobst and Manarin 1987:33)."

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- (1) Camp Jones
- (2) location of station house
- (3) 10th Alabama

S. Cockpit

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After the Bristow camps were disbanded, Bristoe Station was only occasionally occupied by groups of Confederate soldiers, such as military police units. Without the direct presence of the military, sutlers were allowed to establish their businesses, which included selling whiskey and supplies to soldiers passing through Bristoe Station.

With the withdrawal of Confederate troops from Northern Virginia in March 1862, the Bristoe area came under Federal control. Union troops physically occupied the hamlet in the summer of 1862, when Major General Pope's army was concentrated in Culpeper about 25 miles to the west. The army was using the Orange and Alexandria Railroad as its supply line to Washington, D.C.

Pope's westward troop movement had been halted by the Confederate army, and on August 26, 1862 (only a few days before the Battle of Second Manassas), General Thomas J. Jackson's Confederate troops marched around Pope's army to Bristoe Station, where advance units succeeded in capturing the station.

At about 6:00 P.M., and as General Jackson's column of infantry was filing into Bristoe Station, a train could be heard approaching from the direction of Culpeper. The train engineer, spotting the troops lined up along the railroad bed, sped up, and under a barrage of bullets passed safely through Bristoe. Before the next train arrived, the railroad tracks were removed for a short distance beyond the station. The next train, with twenty empty cars, derailed and fell down a steep embankment. A third train suffered the same fate. A fourth train came into sight, but then stopped and backed towards Culpeper. (Gordon 1880:136-137)

The following morning (August 27), Jackson moved his army to Manassas Junction, leaving behind three of General Ewell's brigades to stop any Union troop movement along the Orange and Alexandria railroad towards Manassas Junction. The engagement that was to occur later this day contributed significantly to what was to be a major defeat for the Union army a few days later at the Second Battle of Manassas. It delayed General Hooker's arrival at the Manassas battlefield, giving the Confederate army an opportunity to move its troops into a strong battle position.

After Jackson's departure, the remaining Confederate brigades positioned themselves with their backs to Broad Run. The Bristoe

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to Brentsville road was to their west. Lawton's Brigade was to the south of the railroad tracks, Hayes Brigade was just to the north of the tracks and Early's Brigade was to the right of Hayes's Brigade. Confederate batteries were placed to the right of Early's troops (probably on the ridge just north of Nokesville Road and outside the district) and south of the railroad on a ridge near the Bristoe to Brentsville road. The 6th and 8th Louisiana regiments were sent to the west to destroy the bridge over Kettle Run and to provide notice of a Union advance. (Gordon 1880:174-177)

General Pope, who was still unaware of the degree to which his lines had been breached by Jackson's army, decided to send General Hooker's division to Bristoe Station to assess the situation. About 2:30 P.M. on August 27 Hooker's troops advanced to within one-half mile of Bristoe Station. With the Union approach, the two Louisiana regiments fell back and rejoined the main Confederate line in front of Broad Run. The Union's main offensive formed to the west of the Bristoe to Brentsville Road. The 5th New Jersey was south of the railroad bed, and the 2nd New York and 8th New Jersey regiments were north of the tracks, with the latter regiment located furthest to the north. The troops opened up fire and the exchange lasted an hour. (Gordon 1880:175-179)

The 115th Pennsylvania regiment was then sent in to provide some relief to the 2nd New York regiment, which was under the heaviest attack. As they came into the open from a wooded area, the 115th Pennsylvania was caught by both infantry and artillery cross-fire. "Officers and men went down like nine-pins (Gordon 1880:179)." The 115th reformed and taking advantage of an opening, joined the 5th New Jersey (who were south of the tracks) in flanking a Confederate battery. Most of those operating and defending the battery escaped capture, as did the guns. Ten or twelve Confederate soldiers, however, were taken prisoner. In the meantime, General Hooker, who was with the 6th and 7th New Jersey regiments, was sweeping in towards the northern end of the Confederates battle line. (Gordon 1880:179-180)

Having been instructed by Jackson to pull back to Manassas Junction if hard pressed, General Ewell moved back to the eastern side of Broad Run leaving behind their dead and wounded, knapsacks, and other equipment.

In successive lines of battle the Confederate troops withdrew to Manassas Junction. (Gordon 1880:183)

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In this engagement at Bristoe, the Union army lost about 300 killed and wounded. The Confederates reported their loss to be "small" or "comparatively slight." Gordon (1880:183) believed it to be more than 300.

Following Pope's defeat at the Battle of Second Manassas a few days later, Bristoe Station once again came under the temporary control of the Confederate military. On September 25, 1862, after the Northern and Southern armies had moved into Maryland, a U.S. cavalry unit met with no opposition at Bristoe. There was a cavalry skirmish at Bristoe on October 14. From that time until the Battle of Bristoe on October 14, 1863, there was little military activity at Bristoe Station. In 1864 there was a cavalry skirmish on February 1 and again on March 16 when Colonel John S. Mosby tried to cut the Union's supply line. His attempt failed, however. The final military event at Bristoe Station occurred on April 15, when three members of Mosby's command ambushed Union guards near the station and Broad Run. Mosby's men killed one Union soldier and captured four horses.

The Battle of Bristoe

Over 100,000 men participated in the Bristow Campaign, which began west of Culpeper on October 10, 1863. It was during this campaign, that General Lee and General Meade had to begin dealing with new strategic military policies and the deficiencies that had developed after two years of war. Both the North and South had recently reduced the size of their armies in Northern Virginia. General Longstreet's Corp, about one-third of Lee's infantry, had been sent to Tennessee, marking a significant change in the Confederate's grand military strategy. The XI and XII Corps of Meade's Army had also been sent to the west, indicating a shift in Federal policy. Additionally, Meade, and especially Lee, had to conduct their operations with corps commanders who were not as skilled as those in earlier years of the war. Meade, who had failed to pursue and capture Lee at Williamsport shortly after Gettysburg, was also in disfavor among many of the Washington politicians. Lee had suffered a tremendous loss of officers and troops at Gettysburg, and his influence was greatly diminished in Richmond. He also had severe health problems. These problems set the stage for what was

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to happen at Bristoe; and, in turn, the events of Bristoe would portend what was to develop in the last years of the Civil War.

The following description is based on Henderson's 1987 account (pp. 169-190) of the battle. Refer to the district maps (1"=200') for information on troop movements during the battle.

On October 10, 1863, the Confederate army began a flanking movement around the Union army's right flank. To avoid what had happened to General Pope the previous year, General Meade began withdrawing his troops from the Warrenton area towards Manassas Junction.

General A. P. Hill's Third Corps, which was in advance of the main Confederate army, reached Bristoe Station on the afternoon of October 14. Upon sighting Union troops (General Sykes's Corps), Hill decided to attack immediately. General Ewell, with whom General Lee was traveling was miles away. In addition, two of Hill's three divisions were at least several miles to the rear.

Hill called upon General Henry Heth, whose division was nearby, to form a line of battle. Heth's men formed on both sides of Bristow Road a mile and a half north of Bristoe and just under one mile west of Milford. John R. Cooke's Unattached Brigade, the most recent reinforcement to the Army of Northern Virginia (some 2,500 men), formed in a pine wood on the west of Bristow Road. Cooke formed the 48th, 27th, 15th, and 46th North Carolina regiments from left to right. In order to keep their new uniforms fresh, most of Cooke's men removed their uniforms and donned their old tattered clothes.

W. W. Kirkland's Brigade of about 1,500 men formed on the left of the road on Cooke's left. Heth put Henry H. Walker's Brigade, about half the size of Kirkland's, about one hundred yards behind Kirkland in line of battle. Altogether around 4,700 men formed a line of battle. On Hill's orders, J. J. Archer's and J. R. Davis's brigades remained in reserve. There were also several hundred slaves, servants, cooks, teamsters and white camp followers in the woods between Walker and Archer. They moved to the rear for protection. (170)

The abandoned fields over which Cooke, Kirkland, and Walker would proceed were interrupted by patches of pine trees filled with thick undergrowth. Hills and ridges could conceal large bodies of men.

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At no time could any of the general officers leading the advance observe the whole line of battle.

Obeying A. P. Hill's orders, a battery from Poague's Artillery Battalion opened fire on the enemy's rear guard from an eminence behind Kirkland's left flank. It was almost 2:00 P.M. Heth's brigades resumed their advance, which had been stopped so that the troops could realign themselves.

Word then came that enemy troops had been spotted on the west side of Broad Run. Cooke passed this on immediately to Heth with the warning that his right flank must be protected before he could advance across Broad Run. Heth sent a courier galloping to A. P. Hill with this news. Hill replied by courier that Anderson's Division was coming up. Anderson would form on Cooke's right and take care of any problems with the enemy in that sector. In the meantime, Hill ordered Heth to move across Broad Run as directed.

The enemy troops proved to be the leading unit of Warren's II Corps moving from Catlett's Station to Bristoe, the 1st Minnesota Infantry. The 1st Minnesota's route had brought them to a ridge which ran parallel to and immediately south of the tracks in the Bristoe area. From the ridge they could see Bristoe and to the north of the tracks, Cooke's and Kirkland's brigades in motion. At about the same time, a scout arrived to report the presence of a large force of Confederate soldiers in the area.

The men of the 1st Minnesota moved off the ridge, crossed the tracks, and then formed a regimental line on the north side of the railroad perpendicular to the tracks. Their position was about one-half mile west of Bristoe. As they moved forward, the 1st Minnesota ran into the rear of the 46th North Carolina, the right flank regiment of Cooke's North Carolina brigade which was still heading towards Broad Run. The shots exchanged between the 1st Minnesota and the 46th North Carolina around 2:15 p.m. opened the infantry phase of the battle of Bristoe Station.

The other regiments in the same brigade as the 1st Minnesota regiment (Heath's brigade) moved to the west. They took up position on the south side of the rails just west of the railroad bridge over Broad Run, where there was good cover provided by an embankment. The 82nd New York, 15th Massachusetts, and the 19th Maine lined up from east to west.

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First Lieutenant T. Fred Brown's Battery B, First Rhode Island Light Artillery moved forward to support the infantry troops. After one false start, the battery finally set up on a knoll just to the east of Broad Run and south of the tracks.

General Warren, who commanded the Second Army Corps, had been two miles west of Bristoe at 2:00 P.M. when he heard Poague's guns open on the rear guard of Sykes's Fifth Corps. Warren, followed by his staff, galloped to the front, where he began directing the arriving Union troops to form a line of battle in the railroad cuts and fills near Bristoe. Heath's brigade moved slightly to the west, placing the right flank of the Union infantry about 150 yards west of Broad Run). Brown was ordered to return to the west side of Broad Run but was unable to because of the strength of the enemy's fire. Brown's subsequent enfilading fire against Kirkland's Brigade as it advanced would contribute significantly to the Union victory.

Mallon's Third Brigade began arriving as the Union troops were adjusting their line. Mallon led the 42d and 59th New York, the 7th Michigan, and the 19th and 20th Massachusetts. Mallon put the 59th New York on the skirmish line to the north of the railroad tracks. The 59th New York quickly ran into the 46th North Carolina and the 1st Minnesota, which the men linked up with. The 1st Minnesota and 59th New York effectively screened the march of Mallon's brigade as it moved ahead along the railroad. Mallon halted, placing his brigade at Bristoe Station. A short distance east of the station Mallon's right linked up with the left of Heath's brigade. Mallon's left extended a short distance west of Bristow Road. Part of the brigade found cover behind the railroad embankment. In front of the station itself, the center of Mallon's line, the railroad ran on level ground. There were no cuts or fills to offer natural protection. Here Mallon established his brigade headquarters. Once in position, Mallon sent out the 7th Michigan to join the 59th New York and 1st Minnesota on the skirmish line north of the railroad.

The skirmishing between Cooke's right flank regiment and the skirmishers from Heath's and Mallon's brigades led to a redirection of the Confederate advance. They began angling to the southwest. Walker could not see the two North Carolina brigades as they

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altered their course so he continued moving to the southeast and crossed Broad Run before discovering his isolation.

Joshua T. Owen's Third Brigade was the next Union brigade to arrive. It include the 89th, 111th, 125th, and 126th New York regiments. Owen recalled "after my column was unmasked by the woods through which we had been marching...I received orders to march my brigade by the left flank and on the double-quick, and to occupy the deep cut on the railroad. This was accomplished under a heavy fire of artillery and infantry" (Quoted in Henderson 1987:177).

Captain William A. Arnold's Battery A, First Rhode Island Light Artillery arrived almost concurrently with Owen. Arnold place his battery of six 3-inch ordnance rifles on the side of the ridge behind Owen. Meanwhile, Captain John G. Hazard, chief of artillery attached to the Second Army Corps, sent another newly arrived battery, Captain R. Bruce Ricketts combined Batteries F and G, First Pennsylvania Light Artillery, and sent them to the vertex of the ridge one-quarter of a mile south of Bristoe Station.

There was now about three thousand Union soldiers on the battlefield. The Union strength lay in their position in the railroad cuts and fills and with their artillery support.

Kirkland's Brigade was east of Bristoe Station facing Heath's brigade and to the right of Mallon's brigade. Cooke's much larger brigade faced Mallon's center and left at Bristoe Station itself. Cooke's right extended west of Bristow Road and was opposite the sector of the line occupied by Owen's brigade. Altogether, the Confederate line, some four thousand men, extended for over one-half mile.

As Cooke and Kirkland advanced, between 2:30 and around 2:45 P.M., a range of low hills two to five hundred feet north of the railroad protected sections of their lines from view from the railroad. Once over the last of these hills, a barren open field devoid of natural protection gradually descended to the railroad and the Union line. Beyond Cooke's right (to the west) timberland extended north for several hundred yards from the railroad. By 2:45 p.m. the exchange of fire at Bristoe had become intense. The union skirmishers fell back to the Union line of battle on the railroad.

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Cooke's and Kirkland's brigades halted and opened fire at long range on the Union main battle line, which responded in kind.

Cooke then realized that he had made an error. Cooke believed the Union soldiers with whom his men were fighting were skirmishers ahead of a larger force. As a result, he ordered his men to advance and occupy the railroad cut before the main Union line could take it. Kirkland followed on his left. By the time Cooke realized the railroad cut was already filled with Union troops, he and Kirkland were already under such severe fire. They had little alternative but to charge or retire and suffer heavy losses in the process.

Cooke fell wounded and Colonel Edward D. Hall of the 46th North Carolina took command. General Kirkland fell about the same time as Cooke. Colonel T. C. Singeltary of the 44th North Carolina assumed command of Kirkland's Brigade. Colonel Hall knew the men in the Confederate line could not remain out in the open exchanging rifle volleys with an enemy force with ample protection. They must retreat or charge, and Hall ordered the charge. Singeltary did the same. (180)

The final stage of the advance, the charge, lasted no more than fifteen to twenty minutes. The 27th North Carolina of Cooke's Brigade took the lead in the final charge. It had been trained to advance on the double quick. Union soldiers were told to hold their fire until the Confederates were close. Many regimental commanders ordered their men to lie down until the enemy reached point blank range. Then the soldiers stood up and delivered well-aimed volleys. In some places on the Union line the men were several ranks deep. Those in the front fired, while men behind them loaded. In spite of this, with the 27th North Carolina leading, Cooke's Brigade managed to charge within forty yards of Mallon's and Owen's line. Men in grey fell at every step from rifle and artillery fire.

The 27th took 460 men into battle and came out with 290 still standing. Two color bearers went down. Colonel Mallon, who put his headquarters near the station, fell mortally wounded as he tried to restore his brigade line, which had been breached for a few minutes by the Confederates. Lieutenant Colonel Ansel D. Wass of the 19th Massachusetts assumed command of Mallon's Brigade.

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Nearby, General Alexander S. Webb had his horse shot out from under him.

Breckenridge Long, who was with Kirkland's Brigade, provides a vivid, first-hand account of the battle from a field soldier's perspective.

There throbbed thru the column that undefinable quiver that is always felt on the eve of action and with one accord and without orders every man silently and carefully brought his gun down and carefully noted to see if the lock was right and if the tube was clean (we only had muzzle loaders) and when the aid came hurrying along, no one was surprised at the order to forward into line left in front, for we knew that we were on the point of making history again. . . . In plain view was Sykes Army Corps at rest on the field. Quietly, all the Artillery of our division came into line on the crest of the hill, in all about 40 pieces. On our right was Cooke's Brigade composed of 5 North Carolina Regiments as was ours. Then as all the guns were _____ and ready for action there came a rush of horses through the thicket that almost ran me down and the bugler beside Lieut. Genl. A. P. Hill raised his bugle and gave the signal that sent the _____ shells from forty brass and iron monsters among the thousands of unsuspecting men as they lay on the grass. The sight was grand and at the same time was amusing to us as we saw the mass of men spring to their feet and start to run. The wagons started to run for dear life and then their men ran like a flock of sheep with no semblance to an army. I never laughed more in my life. This was the first time we had been in action since Gettysburg and our men were in _____ prime eager to meet the enemy. There was never a better army mustered than Lee then had. After the guns had fired a dozen rounds the bugle sounded cease firing then quietly sounded the charge and we sprang forward laughing and gay down the hill.-- Say what is that on my right flank. Look there dashes a battery. Another appeared and still another. We saw that they were making for three knolls and if they got there would enfilade our line. Instantly the bugle sounded right turn and a mad race began for the knolls that lay beyond the R.R. embankment. We raced, men swore and yelled and raced and yelled and swore. The horses were ahead. See they are unlimbering the guns. We ran and yelled and men swore. Officers swore and cried shoot

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damn you shoot kill every man of them before they can shoot the guns. Shoot they did and swear and race, but our guns could not reach the men and now see the smoke as it belched forth and hear the shriek and crack of the shells and the thuds of the shot as they crash into our ranks, but on we rush yelling, cussing and plunging as the shells shriek, the guns roar and the smoke belches. Now our guns can reach. Our shots begin to tell. The men serving the guns begin to fall, the horses are behind the hill and safe. Now we are getting nearer and begin to do effective work. Horrors what is that blaze from the RR embankment. Shrieks and groans and yells. Hell has broke loose from behind that embankment. Not 60 yards away come a blaze -- a roar that sends a hail of lead and a _____ of death among us that no humans can stand and live. Seek the woods as the bugle sounds retreat. Our line halts staggered. My dear friend Du?pre two years my junior on Genl Kirkland's staff rushes up to me, put his hand on my shoulder and says, order is to fall back. Horror! A shell takes most of his head off. I catch him as he falls heavily against me, lay him down on the grass and thrust my hand into his breast pocket snatch forth a batch of letters, snatch his watch and thrust it into my own pocket then catch [his] hands to fold them over his bosom. His chin I see it still moving - - feel for handkerchief to tie his hands across his bosom, find none then see all the men in dead run for woods and follow them. As soon as I reach woods form co[mpany] into line and count 44 men. 61 wounded, see major and report to him that I had 44 men ready for a second charge. 36 were killed or wounded, only 6 killed outright. Battle lasted only ten or twelve minutes but the loss of the two brigades under fire was 50% being the hottest fight I saw in four years. I commanded Co E 44 NC in that fight.

At 3:00, as Kirkland's and Cooke's brigades were locked in combat along the railroad, McIntosh's Artillery Battalion struggled to set up five guns near Bristow Road and about five hundred yards north of Bristoe Station. Once they were in place, McIntosh's gunners aimed at the Union infantry line along the railroad. Soon overwhelming Union artillery fire landed on McIntosh's weak and dangerously advanced gun position. Men and horses went down in mass.

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The men of the 11th and 52d North Carolina momentarily broke Heath's line near the Union right and crossed to the south side of the railroad. The exultant Confederates poured a deadly fire into Heath's right rear. At this point Brown's Battery B, First Rhode Island Light Artillery on the east side of Broad Run proved to be invaluable. Brown's fire drove the two Confederate regiments back to the north side of the tracks and subsequently helped to force all of Kirkland's men back.

As Thomas A. Smyth's Second Brigade (14th Connecticut, 1st, Delaware and the 10th, 12th and 108 New York regiments) was falling into line next to Owen's brigade at about 3:10, men from Carnot Posey's and E. A. Perry's brigades swarmed across the tracks and enveloped Smyth's left. Just then, John C. Caldwell's Division came up the tracks from Catlett Station. Caldwell ordered Battery G, First New York Light Artillery to place two guns on the railroad bed and parallel to the tracks. Close-range fire from these guns and Caldwell's infantry drove the Confederates back across the tracks. Once in place Caldwell's division filled out the Union battle line to the west for three-quarters of a mile, almost up to the railroad bridge over Kettle Run. Caldwell positioned Colonel Paul Frank's brigade on the right of his division front, Colonel Patrick Kelly's "Irish" brigade in the center, and Colonel John R. Brooke's brigade on the left. About 3:15 p.m. Caldwell sent part of Mile's brigade to support Ricketts's and Brown's batteries.

Between 3:15 and 3:30 p.m. the remnants of Cooke's and Kirkland's Brigades retreated under heavy rifle and artillery fire. Losses continued to mount up. Cooke's first and second regiments on the right, the 46th and 15th North Carolina, fell back in good order. The 27th North Carolina retreated in "honorable confusion." Kirkland's Brigade fell back at the same time.

Colonel Hall halted the retreat of Cook's Brigade about four hundred yards north of the railroad. After restoring some degree of order, Hall fell back another two hundred yards. There, Cooke's Brigade joined with J. J. Archer's and J. R. Davis's units, which had been held in reserve. About the time Cooke's and Kirkland's brigades retreated, Walker Brigade finally caught up, after a long detour across Broad Run. The survivors of Kirkland's Brigade rallied behind Walker and then the brigade moved further to the rear behind Poague's guns.

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Pogue's Battery had been ordered closer to the front during the fighting near the railroad tracks. Pogue's battery now stood seven hundred yards north of the railroad and about two hundred yards northeast of McIntosh's five guns. After Cooke's and Kirkland's retreat, McIntosh's five guns remained in place between the battle lines. The battery was left with no infantry support.

General Webb soon noticed that McIntosh's guns lacked infantry support. He ordered Wass, who had just inherited command of Mallon's Brigade, to capture the five guns. The guns were hauled back by hand ropes to the Union lines along the railroad.

To the left of Owen, General Hays ordered Smyth's brigade forward. Smyth was to protect the left of Colonel Wass' brigade and probe the woods in their front for signs of the enemy. Smyth proceeded cautiously through the forest in front of his position. When Smyth reached a point around two to three hundred yards north of the railroad he emerged into open fields. To the east, Smyth saw the men from Wass's brigade advance and capture the five guns from McIntosh's Battalion. Smyth could see Confederate troops rushing forward to save the guns, but it was too late. Still at long range, Smyth's brigade opened fire on Carnot and Poseys brigades, which were beginning to advance on Smyth. The Confederates halted and returned Smyth's fire. Although the rifle fire was at extreme range, both sides sustained casualties. The time was a little past 3:30 P.M. Shortly thereafter, Smyth received orders from General Hays to fall back to the railroad. Wass's men did the same. At about 4:00 P.M. Colonel Samuel S. Carroll's First Brigade arrived from the west. Carroll's brigade positioned itself near the bridge over Kettle Run, about one and one-fourth miles west of Bristoe Station.

Ironically, even though they had just forced Kirkland's and Cooke's brigades back with great loss, the Union forces were in a dangerous situation. These two brigades were but a small part of the Confederate army, which was believed to be nearby. In contrast, Warren's Corps was the Union rear guard, isolated and alone. Another Confederate attack might come at any moment and in overwhelming force. Night was over two hours away. Within that time, the Union II Corps might be destroyed. It was prudence which dictated withdrawing Smyth's and Wass's brigades to behind the railroad embankment.

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By 4:00 P.M. General Heth had Davis's, Archer's, Walker's, and Cooke's brigades formed a line of battle some five hundred yards north of Bristoe. Heth's right rested not far west of the Bristow Road. Perry's and Posey's brigades were put in line on Heth's right. Next, and further east, came Mahone's Brigade and then the brigades of A. R. Wright and John Caldwell Calhoun Saunders. Cadmus Wilcox's Division of Hill's Corps also came up at 4:00 P.M. and formed in the rear of the other troops. At about the same time, General Lee, who was with Early's Division, came on the battle field. Early's brigades formed on the right of the Confederate line opposite that segment of the railroad held by Caldwell's division. Rodes's and Johnson's division came up after Early and positioned themselves further to the Confederate right. The extreme Southern right was on the railroad and on both sides of Kettle Run a mile and a half west of Bristoe.

Shortly after 4:00 P.M., part of the Confederate line, particularly Ewell's units, moved closer to the railroad. Warren became concerned for the security of the Union left, the sector held by Caldwell's division and S. S. Carroll's brigade. Captain Nelson Ames's Battery G, First New York went over to the Union left near Kettle Run. Two of Gregg's horse artillery batteries, Battery A, Fourth United States under Lieutenant Horatio B. Reed and the Sixth Battery, New York Light Artillery under Captain Joseph W. Martin helped bolster the Union left. Hazard moved Brown's Battery B, First Rhode Island Light Artillery back across Broad Run to a position on the ridge immediately south of the railroad next to Arnold's Battery. Lieutenant Frank S. French's Battery I, First United States went into action next to Brown and Arnold's. Soon, eighteen guns stood in line behind the position of Owen's brigade (close to one-quarter mile west of Bristoe).

In reply to the Union artillery preparations, General A. L. Long, Ewell's chief of artillery, placed Captain W. A. Tanner's Battery of Jones's Battalion in position on Hill's right front. One section of a battery in McIntosh's Battalion assisted Jones. Additionally, two Confederate batteries took up position immediately north of the railroad and west of Kettle Run. There they duelled with Ames's, Reed's, and Martin's Union batteries assigned to protect the Union left. The weakness of the Confederate artillery, particularly opposite the Union center and right, allowed the Union gunners from Brown's, Arnold's, Ricketts's, and French's batteries the opportunity to concentrate on the Southern infantry. As the Union

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shells began to explode in the midst of their ranks the Confederate infantry in the battle line flattened out on the ground. General Carnot Posey probably fell at this time.

During this artillery bombardment, portions of Rodes's Division crossed the Orange and Alexandria railroad immediately west of Kettle Run with the intent of turning the Union left. Colonel J. Irvin Gregg's brigade, perhaps the last Union unit to reach the Bristoe Station area, arrived in the vicinity of the railroad bridge over Kettle Run after 5:00 P.M. and found the bridge in the hands of at least one brigade of Rodes's Division. Rodes's infantry men were supported by two artillery batteries probably from Jones's Battalion. Their presence forced Irvin Gregg to work his way around to the Union rear south of Bristoe Station on the Brentsville Road.

The fighting at Kettle Run bridge concluded the engagement known as the Battle of Bristoe. Cooke had 700 men killed, wounded, or missing. Kirkland had 602 casualties. Cooke's Brigade had a 27 percent casualty rate and Kirkland's Brigade stood at 40 percent. Cooke's 27th North Carolina suffered the most severely; between half and two-thirds of its men fell. Thirty-three of the 27th North Carolina's 36 officers were killed, wounded, or captured (Robertson 1987:239). Cooke's loss of 166 as prisoners and Kirkland's loss of 277 indicated a collapse of morale in the brigades and the impossible conditions with which they were faced. Many men, especially on Kirkland's front, hid in some ruined buildings near the railroad and surrendered when the two Confederate brigades retreated. Scores of enlisted men and officers from Cooke's Brigade hugged the ground in front of the Union lines and surrendered when they had the opportunity. (Henderson 1987:182-183) A. P. Hill's total losses were 1,378 (Robertson 1987:239). In contrast the Union troops reported about 600 casualties for the entire battle.

Around 6:30 P.M., near dark, Lee met with Hill to receive a verbal report on the disaster that had overtaken Cooke's and Kirkland's brigades. According to one report, Lee displayed "a great deal of bitter feelings in what he said to Gen. Hill," and that Lee reproached Hill in "the most bitter terms." Darkness eventually spread over the bleak scene. "I am convinced," Hill wrote in his report, "that I made the attack too hastily, and at the same time that a delay of half an hour, and there would have been no enemy to

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attack. In that event I believe I should equally have blamed myself for not attacking at once." The Richmond newspapers excoriated Hill. Lee, however, avoided strong words of censure in his official report of the campaign. The Confederate State's Secretary of War James A. Seddon wrote: "The disaster at Bristoe Station seems due to a gallant but over hasty pressing on of the enemy." President Davis added: "There was a want of vigilance." (quotes in Henderson 1987:190)

Rain fell on the wounded as they lay on the battlefield. The Union artillery continued its bombardment after dark, but it was sporadic. Later, after the gunfire ended, both sides could hear the screams and groans of the wounded. Because of the closeness of the Union troops, the Confederates had great difficulty collecting many of Cooke's and Kirkland's wounded. On the Union side, medical attendants carried their wounded back to the corps field hospital located in a barn on the Porter farm near Bristow Road.

After dark the number of campfires indicated that Lee had his whole army on the field facing one Union corps. Warren issued instructions for a withdrawal and stressed that no officer's command should be above a whisper. As the Union infantry quietly crossed over Broad Run, they could hear the commands of the Confederate officers, the voices of the Southern enlisted men in familiar talk around the campfires, the calling of their sentinels, and the groans of their unattended wounded in front of the railroad tracks. By midnight the last men in Warren's corps had crossed to the east side of the run.

At Bristoe Station the rain grew in intensity after dawn. Advancing through the cold rain, miserable and thoroughly drenched grey clad Confederate skirmishers discovered that the enemy had departed. The battlefield was a somber scene. Walking the battlefield H. J. Mugler recalled that within a concentrated area "I witnessed such destruction of men, artillery horses, and artillery carriages as I never witnessed during the whole war" (quoted in Henderson 1987:192).

Riding under leaden skies and cloaked in rain gear on Thursday morning, October 15, Lee and A. P. Hill surveyed the ground where Cooke's and Kirkland's men had fought the day before. What was said remains in dispute. "General Lee, who, after sadly viewing Cooke's and Kirkland's unburied dead, censured A. P. Hill with the

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relatively mild reproof: 'Well, well general, bury these poor men and let us say no more about it'" (Henderson 1987:192-193). General A. L. Long, present at Bristoe and one of Lee's early biographers, gave posterity this version. Others support Jed Hotchkiss's contention that Lee displayed considerable anger during his colloquy with Hill.

One eyewitness account of the meeting between Lee and Hill on Thursday morning records that Lee remained in ill humor throughout his conversation with Hill, that Lee spoke sharply to General Hill and that Lee told Hill to send immediately for his Pioneer Corps to bury these 'unfortunate dead.' Recognizing this rebuke Hill replied that it was all his fault. Lee reputedly responded heatedly: 'Yes it is your falt [sic]. You committed a great blunder yesterday. Your line of battle was too short, too thin and your reserves were too far behind.' Robert Thursten Hubbard of the Fourth Virginia Cavalry wrote that Hill displayed anger on hearing Lee's rebuke and asked if there were any further instructions, to which Lee replied with a modified version of Long's 'bury these poor men' reproof, but with an angry tone of voice. (Henderson 1987:193)

Lee had given up chasing Meade.

The Battle of Bristoe was a defeat for both armies, but especially for the Confederate army. Meade had lost the territory to Lee's army, but he was already withdrawing from that region when the battle occurred. Lee, on the other hand, lost many more men at a time when he could ill afford for this to happen. That they had died in such an unnecessary and precipitous attack only made the situation worse. Additionally, Lee could only hold the Bristoe area for a few days before having to return it to the Union forces. Without a doubt, it was the low point of A. P. Hill's military career.

Just as the Battle of Bristoe was militarily inconclusive so are the opinions of the historians writing about the battle. For example, according to Henderson (1987:207), Meade's mastery of the defensive battle and the strategic withdrawal, prevented Lee from achieving any significant results from the Bristoe Campaign. He (1987:208) also contends that the Confederates were too slow to develop the battle and coordinate the movements of commands on

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separate roads. They were poorly led and piecemeal in charging, and the artillery did little to help the infantry. In addition, the Confederate army was too far from its supply lines, which the Union leaders knew, and they could not hang onto the territory that they had so dearly paid for in lives.

Robertson (1987:239-240), on the other hand, points out that, if the Bristoe Campaign is viewed in its entirety, Lee did force the Union army into retreat. He also destroyed tons of Union supplies and miles of the vital Orange & Alexandria Railroad and killed, wounded or captured 2,292 Union soldiers. Bristoe was the setback in an otherwise successful campaign.

Almost seven months later, the two armies would meet again in battle at the Wilderness, where the Union army would suffer 16,000 casualties and the Confederate army over 11,400 casualties.

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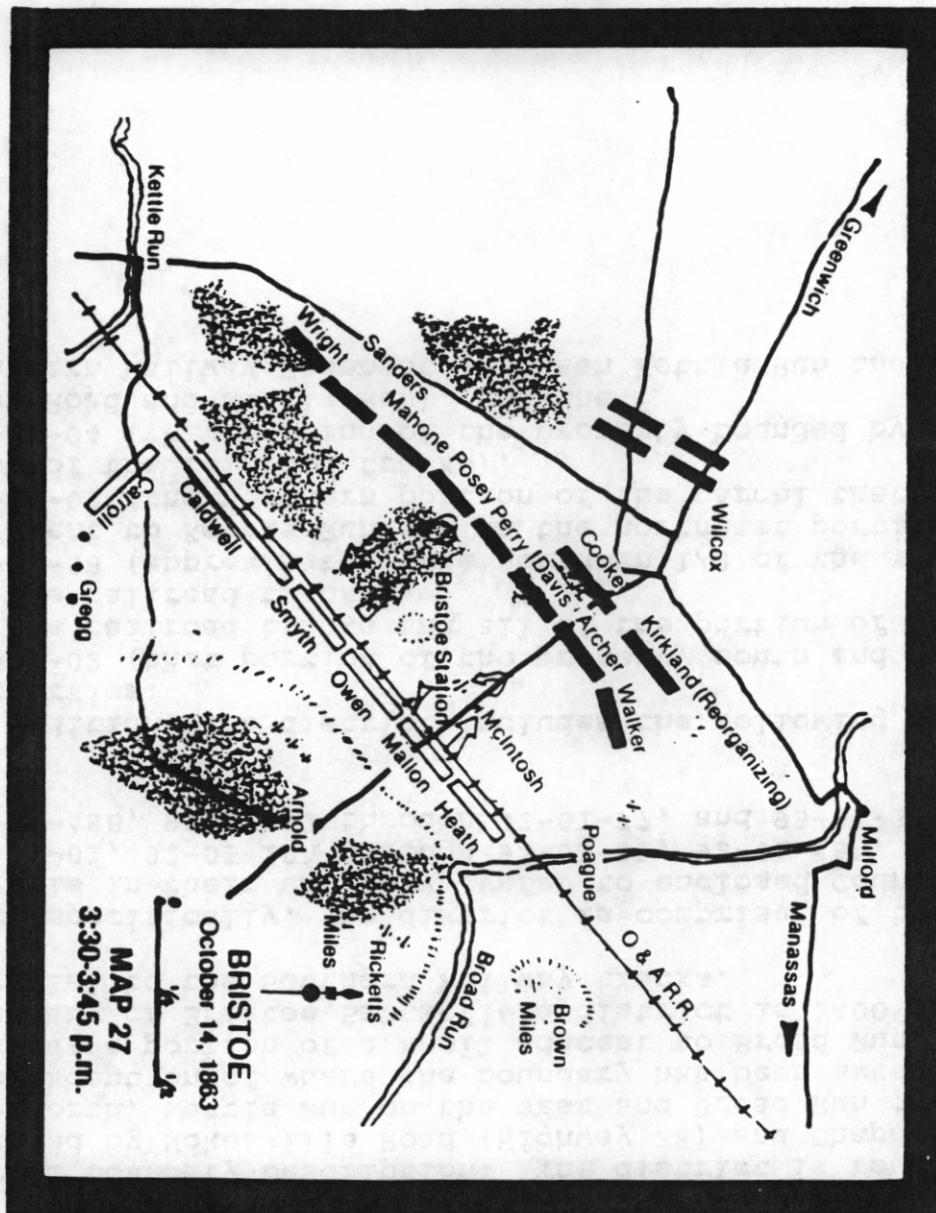
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Verbal Boundary Description: The district is roughly bounded by Nokesville Road (Highway 28) and Chapel Springs Road on the north, Kettle Run on the west and Broad Run on the east. With the exception of where the boundary has been extended south to include a portion of a knoll adjacent to Broad Run, the southern boundary of Bristoe Battlefield district is 1400 feet south of and parallel to the Southern Railway tracks.

More specifically, the district is comprised of the following land parcels in their entirety (refer to enclosed County map, 1"=200').: 80-01-01, 92-01-20A through 92-01-31, 92-01-48A, 92-01-48B, 92-01-62 through 92-01-77, and 93-01-31 through 93-01-37.

In addition, the district includes the following partial lots and properties:

- 80-01-02 (that portion of the property south and within 1400 feet of the railroad tracks and all of the portion of the parcel north of the railroad tracks),
 - 80-01-08 (approximately the northern 1/2 of the ridge located adjacent to Kettle Run and in the northeast portion of the parcel),
 - 80-01-09 (the northern portion of the parcel that is within 1400 feet of the railroad tracks),
 - 81-01-04 (that portion of the property bounded by Nokesville Road, Aden Road and Kettle Run), and the
- Southern Railway Easement (between Kettle Run and Broad Run.



French's III C

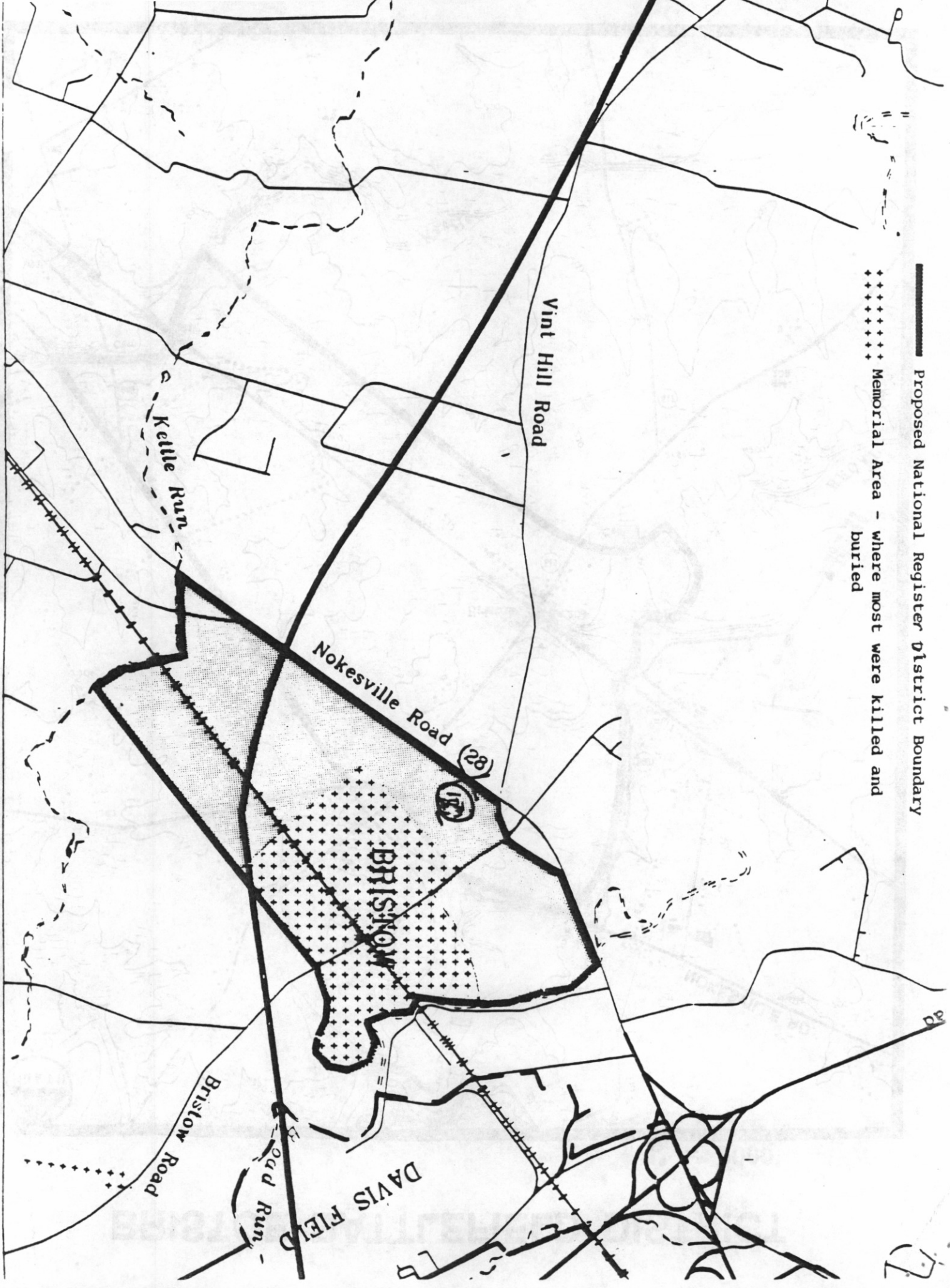
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To the I positioned t left of Color of the enem being driver could not id woods Smyt necticut, Tw One of the Seventh Mic

Proposed National Register District Boundary

Memorial Area - where most were killed and buried



BRISTOE BATTLEFIELD DISTRICT

1" = 2000'

