

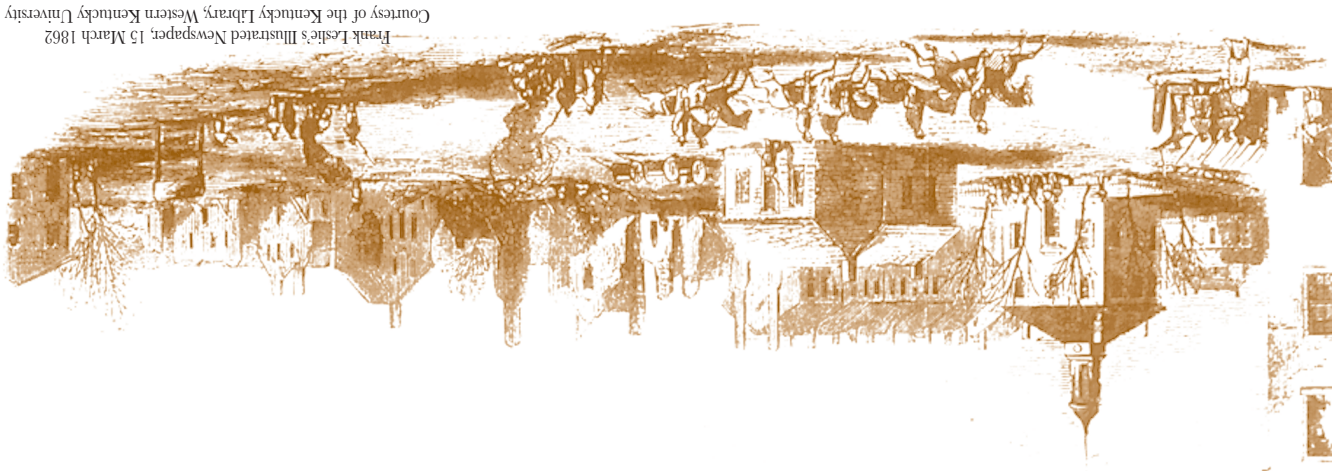
The new year brought serious worries to the Confederate occupation force. Union victories at Middle Creek and Mill Springs in Eastern Kentucky in January and General Grant's victories at Forts Henry and Donelson to the west in February 1862 made Bowling Green no longer defensible for the Confederates. Union General Don Carlos Buell advanced his army of the Ohio southward from the Green River. Under the command of General Ormsby Mitchell, Bowling Green was bombarded from across the Barren River. The Confederate army evacuated the city, and by 14 February 1862, the city fell into Union hands. Federal troops controlled Bowling Green and Kentucky for the rest of the war.

By 1864, there was a vigorous effort by the federal government to recruit and enlist slaves in Kentucky. Bowling Green and seven other military camps were designated to receive and protect those recruits.

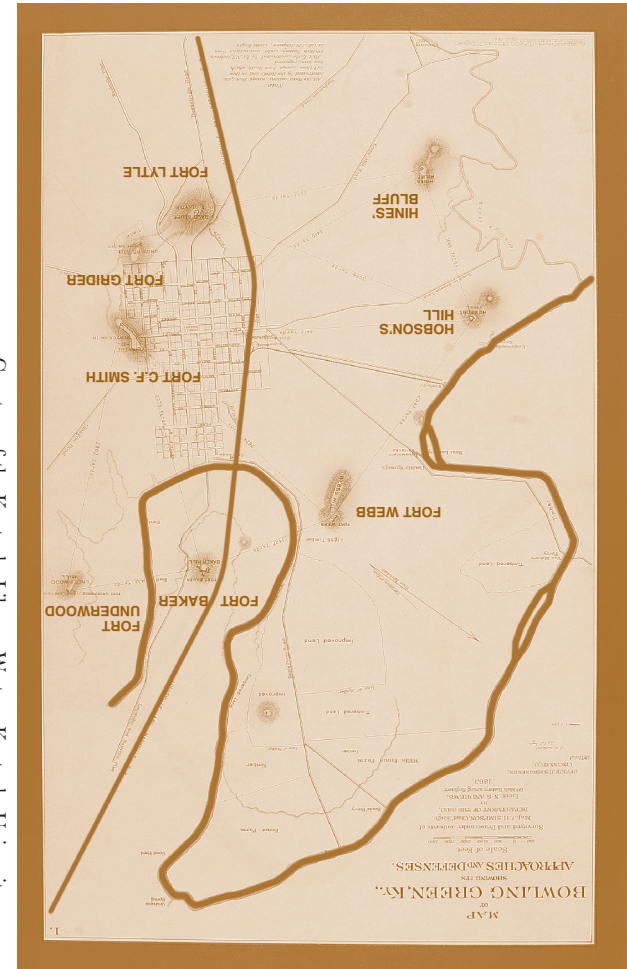
Both sides wanted control over Bowling Green and Warren County. The county's productive farms and its ample quantities of fresh water promised plentiful supplies for an army. The center of a reliable and defensible transportation network made Bowling Green one of the state's most strategic cities. The Louisville-Nashville Railroad, a system of roadways, and the Big Barren River could be relied upon to move men and supplies quickly and efficiently. Cannon placed on the fortified hills around the city could easily defend these transportation routes. Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston, commander of the Confederate defenses between the Appalachian Mountains and the Indian Territory, chose Bowling Green as his headquarters. A pro-Confederate state government formed in Russellville, the county seat of neighboring Logan County, in November 1861. It declared Kentucky to be a "free and independent state" and made Bowling Green the Capital of the Confederate State of Kentucky. By late 1861, Bowling Green became the heart of the Confederacy's efforts in Kentucky.

Kentucky was of such great strategic importance that Abraham Lincoln stated in an 1861 letter, "I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game." With Kentuckians divided between North and South, the state adopted a policy of neutrality at the beginning of the Civil War. The status ended in early September 1861, when Confederate troops under General Leonidas Polk seized the Mississippi River town of Columbus, Kentucky. The Union army under General Ulysses S. Grant responded by taking the cities of Paducah and Smithland, Kentucky. Fully realizing its importance to the Southern cause, Confederate General Simon Bolivar Buckner lead approximately 5000 troops to occupy Bowling Green on 18 September 1861.

(L) The Public Square in Bowling, (R) The Area Confederates Burned As They Retreated



The Civil War in Bowling Green



Courtesy of the Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University

Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 15 March 1862
Courtesy of the Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University

In cold, bleak, rainy, father and brother on horseback and mother with little children in old carriage several negro women... perched on top of fence things and some feed we went down the hill as some of the officers and their wives stood in the door of our home laughing at the comical procession we made.

Jose Underwood's diary entry about the evacuation of her home, Mt. Air (Apr.), for the use of Confederate troops.



Sergeant Elijah P Marrs

The African American Experience

Slaves by the hundreds made the break from their owners to enlist in the Union army. Their families, no longer welcome on the property of their masters, flooded Bowling Green and the other camps but the government was not prepared. The majority of these slaves lacked food and adequate clothing. The 12th United States Colored Artillery took care of these refugees, sending many to Camp Nelson in Jessamine County until 1866.

Unfortunately, the General Government did not provide them with clothing, and as some of these poor people were driven from their homes without even a second garment, their condition was pitiable (sic) in the extreme, as in four week's time many of them were unable to hide their nakedness.

Former slave, Sergeant Elijah P. Marrs, writing about his experiences assisting black refugee families of soldiers

Recommended Further Reading:

- Jose Underwood's Civil War Diary**
Nancy D. Baird, editor, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky), 2009
- The First Year of the Civil War in Bowling Green**
Elizabeth Coombs, Kentucky (Privately printed), 1962.
- Map of Bowling Green, KY Showing Its Approaches and Defenses, 1863**
Reprinted by Landmark Association, 2000.
- The Confederate Dead at Bowling Green, Kentucky**
Steven L. King, (Privately printed), 1997.

Interested in learning more about many of these sites?

This tour is mobile-friendly on the Visit Bowling Green KY Travel App, available free on iOS and Android. Enjoy GPS enabled directions and accompanying audio files including more detail and entertaining stories about many of these locations.

The accompanying *Civil War Discovery Trail Audio Tour* is also available for purchase in the Visitors Bureau gift shop, or the files can be downloaded free off the website at www.visitbgky.com/civilwar.



For more information about the Bowling Green area, call 270-782-0800 or 800-326-7465 or go to VisitBGKY.com

Also visit the Bowling Green Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (I-65, Exit 22) or the Info Center in the National Corvette Museum (I-65, Exit 28).

Paid in part by the Kentucky Department of Tourism
800-225-TRIP, www.kentuckytourism.com



1 ■ LOST RIVER CAVE, HISTORICAL MARKER AND 2 WAYSIDE EXHIBITS, 2818 NASHVILLE ROAD (US 31W)

Lost River Cave and Valley served as a camp for both Union and Confederate troops in this area. Lost River offered a natural water supply and the beauty of the cave provided a diversion from the ugliness of war. On one of his “lightning raids” into Kentucky, John Hunt Morgan allegedly hid in the cave when escaping from pursuing troops. There is an admission fee for Lost River Cave’s underground boat tour while walking trails are free to enjoy upon checking in. For more information, call 270-393-0077 or visit www.lostrivercave.org.
From I-65, take exit #22, US 231, heading north 0.7 miles turn left at intersection #9 on Cave Mill Rd./Dishman Ln. 3 miles turn right on US 31W. North 0.1 miles turn right into visitor parking at Lost River Cave

Also visit Octagon Hall, about ten miles south of Lost River cave on US 31W. This is the site where the Confederate army camped after evacuating Bowling Green.

2 ■ “JONESVILLE” HISTORICAL MARKER, WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY (WKU) CAMPUS

This marker denotes the original site of Jonesville, an African American community that was founded in 1867 by Charles L. Jones, an emancipated slave. This reconstruction era settlement grew to include several hundred residents, an elementary school, businesses, and two churches.
Turn right on US 31W. North/Nashville Rd. 1.9 miles turn left at roundabout on BUS 231/University Rd. 0.5 miles continue straight at US 68/80/Ave. of Champions intersection

The marker is just ahead on the right and permitted parking on the left. There is room for a short-term pull-off.

3 ■ THE KENTUCKY BUILDING & “CONFEDERATE STATE CAPITAL OF KENTUCKY” HISTORICAL MARKER, US 68

This building houses the Kentucky Library, the Kentucky Museum and the Civil War and Southern History Research Collection. In addition to the vast resources including manuscripts, books, newspapers and artifacts, the Museum hosts a permanent Civil War exhibit, “A Star in Each Flag: Conflict in Kentucky.” A small admission fee is charged at the Museum. The marker is located outside the opposite corner of the building from the parking area. For more information, call 270-745-2592 or visit www.wku.edu/kentuckymuseum.
0.7 miles continue on US 68/80/University Rd./Kentucky St., destination on right just after split Visitor parking is available in lots on the right and directly across the street.

4 ■ FORT LYTLE, WKU CAMPUS

Once known as Fort Vinegar, this fort is located at the summit of the hill on Western Kentucky University’s campus. The Confederate army began construction of this fort during its occupation of Bowling Green, but it was completed by Union forces. Old Fort Lot has ample parking with metered spots for busy weekdays.
Continue north on Kentucky St. 0.2 miles turn right on Alumni Ave., turn right at stop sign to continue on Alumni Ave.; turn right on College St.; turn right on College Heights Blvd. Turn left on Hilltop Dr. at Gordon Wilson Hall; turn left on Faculty House Dr., just past Van Meter Hall, to reach Old Fort parking lot.

▲ GRIDER HOUSE PRIVATE RESIDENCE, 1320 PARK STREET

The Confederate Army captured this antebellum home owned by a Union sympathizer. A garrison of soldiers was stationed to protect this house, which served as Kentucky’s Confederate Capitol Building. It was the residence of the Confederate Governor, and provisional government meetings took place there as well. This hill also contained a “lunette fort” and three mounted cannons.
0.2 miles follow one-way lane down from hilltop, turning left on Colonnade Dr.; turn left on Normal/State St. 0.1 miles turn right on 14th Ave. 0.1 miles turn left at Park St. Go ½ block, 1320 Park St. on right. No public parking.

6 ■ “COLLEGE HILL” HISTORICAL MARKER, MAIN & PARK STREETS AT ENTRANCE TO RESERVOIR PARK

Fort C.F. Smith was located south of town on College Hill, now known as Reservoir Hill. Still visible are some of the earthworks constructed under the command of Colonel Benjamin Harrison, who later became President. This was the largest and most elaborate fort in the Bowling Green defensive system. It was described as a large “bastion fort” and was designed to mount up to 25 cannon. A historical marker is located at the corner of Main and Park Streets and a wayside exhibit is located to the right of the picnic pavilion at Fort C.F. Smith.
0.4 miles turn right at 4th stop sign onto Main Ave. Continue 0.2 miles around reservoir Parking available near picnic pavilion.

7 ■ CIVIL WAR OCCUPATIONS” HISTORICAL MARKER, MAIN AVENUE IN FOUNTAIN SQUARE PARK

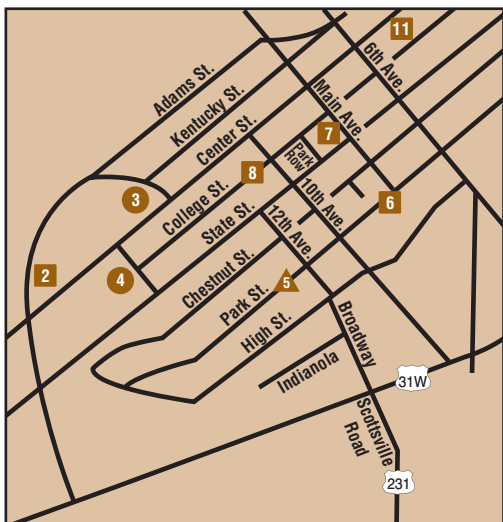
The marker describes the occupation of this area by both Confederate and Union troops. There is also a stone monument in Fountain Square Park that recognizes Bowling Green as the Capital of the Confederate State of Kentucky.
Turn around and return down Main Ave. for 0.2 miles Continue 0.1 miles on Main Ave., keep left to circle Fountain Square Park Parking available all around the square.

8 ■ “WARREN COUNTY’S CHIEF USA CIVIL WAR OFFICERS” HISTORICAL MARKER, WARREN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 429 10TH AVENUE EAST

This marker recognizes Warren County’s Chief Union Civil War Officers and lists those who received the Confederate Medals of Honor in 1863.
From the square, walk or drive one block south on College St. to the Warren County Courthouse at the corner of College and 10th Streets.

9 ▲ “BAKER HILL” HISTORICAL MARKER AND WAYSIDE EXHIBIT, US 31W, PRIVATE PROPERTY

Fort Baker stood on a hill north of the city on Barren River to defend Bowling Green against the troops coming from the north and east. From here, Union General Ormsby Mitchel launched his bombardment of Bowling Green while the Confederate army evacuated the city. A Wayside Exhibit is located across US 31W near the entrance to Weldon Peete Park.
From the square, turn left at State St./US 31W/Old Louisville Rd. 1.4 miles to Fort Baker on left There is room for a short-term pull-off on left or park on right at Weldon Peete Park.



10 ■ “DEFENDING THE L&N RAILROAD” WAYSIDE EXHIBIT, RIVER WALK PARK, E. RIVERVIEW DRIVE

On this side of the Barren River, there once stood a fortified stockade to defend the L&N Railroad Trestle. The original trestle was destroyed by the Confederates to prevent the Union army from entering Bowling Green by rail. After the trestle was repaired by the Union army, a defensive stockade was also built to protect this important river crossing.
Return south on Old Louisville Rd. 0.5 miles, turn right on E. Riverview Dr./31W 0.1 mi., parking on right Wayside Exhibit located near trestle.

11 ■ “JEFFERSON DAVIS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY” MARKER, PIONEER CEMETERY

Bowling Green’s first Public Cemetery is the final resting place for soldiers from the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War and the Civil War. Many slaves, their owners and other townspeople are buried in the large section of land without headstones. The United Daughters of the Confederacy erected the Jefferson Davis Memorial Highway marker in 2015.
Turn right onto on E. Riverview Dr./31W, take immediate left on College St. 0.3 miles cross 5th Ave., cemetery on right Street parking and cemetery access available on College St. Marker is just inside on the left.

12 ■ “A CIVIL WAR DEFENSE LINE,” HISTORICAL MARKER AND WAYSIDE EXHIBIT, ROLAND BLAND PARK

This spot marks the end of a defensive rifle trench, first proposed by the Confederates then completed by the Union Army. This trench began next to the L&N Railroad tracks and then zig-zagged its way to the center of this park. This rifle trench represented additional defense for the L&N Railroad itself, as well as another defensive position halfway between Forts Webb and C. F. Smith.
Continue down College St. to stop sign, turn right on E. 6th Ave. Pass cemetery, turn right on Center St. 0.1 miles parking on left Marker & Wayside Exhibit located just past pavilion.

13 ■ HISTORIC RAILPARK & TRAIN MUSEUM, 401 KENTUCKY STREET

After confiscating ten locomotives and 200 boxcars in Nashville, General Buckner arrived in Bowling Green with 5,000 Confederate soldiers in mid-September 1861. The next February, Confederate forces burned the train depot as they evacuated Bowling Green before the Union advance. This Train Station, built in 1925, lies on the track bed of the original L&N Rail line. Permanent exhibits include: “The Great Locomotive Chase,” with a replica of the first Congressional Medal of Honor ever awarded for stealing the Confederate locomotive known as ‘The General,’ and “Lincoln, the Civil War and the Railroad” containing rare Matthew Brady Civil War Railroad photos. For more information call 270-745-7317 or visit www.historicrailpark.com.
Turn around and return down Center St. for 0.1 miles; turn right on E. 6th Ave. Turn right at stoplight onto Kentucky St./Louisville Rd./BUS 68/80 0.1 miles turn left into Historic Railpark & Train Museum.

14 ■ RIVERVIEW AT HOBSON GROVE HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUM & “HOBSON HOUSE” HISTORICAL MARKER, 1100 WEST MAIN AVENUE

Construction of Riverview began in 1857 but was not completed until after the Civil War. During the occupation by both Confederate and Union troops, the house’s foundation and stone walls of the basement were used as an ammunition depot for the entire fortification system in Bowling Green. Today this house is fully restored and open to the public (closed in January) for a small admission fee. Interpretive panel by parking lot. For more information call 270-843-5565. www.bgky.org/riverview
Turn right on Kentucky St. from Railpark At stoplight, turn right on Veterans Memorial Ln./US 68 W/KY 80 0.7 miles turn right on W. Main Ave. 0.3 miles turn left on Jackson St. Take an immediate right and enter “Hobson Grove Park” (Marker at entrance) Continue up drive to Riverview.

15 ■ HINES BOATLANDING PARK, BOATLANDING ROAD

The Big Barren River was a major contributing factor to making Bowling Green a strategic location for both armies. The river offered a plentiful supply of fresh water for the troops and it was an ideal way to move men and supplies quickly and efficiently. The cannon of Fort Baker protected this area. Nearby was one of several military hospitals located in the Bowling Green area. This small park beside the river offers opportunities for fishing, boating and picnics. Interpretive panel on site. A Wayside Exhibit is located overlooking the Barren River on the Greenways Trail.
Return to Jackson St. and turn left 0.2 miles turn left on Church St. 0.2 miles turn right on Power St. 0.4 miles turn left on Boatlanding Rd. 0.1 miles turn left at Boatlanding Park. Wayside Exhibit located up hill to left.

16 ■ FORT WEBB PARK & “FORT WEBB” HISTORICAL MARKER, BEECH BEND ROAD & COUNTRY CLUB DRIVE

Now located in a city park, this fort has retained its original configuration since the time it was constructed by the Confederate army. A historical marker and an interpretive panel explains its unusual earthworks which were described as a “lunette fort with embankments” and mounted three cannon. This marker also includes a map of Civil War fortifications in Bowling Green.
Turn left on Boatlanding Rd. 0.1 miles turn left on Hwy 185/ Richardsville Rd. 0.2 miles turn right on Garvin Ln. (or turn left here to see a restored one-lane bridge) 1.7 miles turn right on Beech Bend Rd. (or turn left here to see Beech Bend Park) 0.8 miles turn right at Country Club Dr. (not a private drive) 0.2 miles to Fort Webb on the left.

17 ■ “MT AYR & FORT UNDERWOOD,” WAYSIDE EXHIBIT, KERIEAKES PARK

Atop Underwood Hill to the northeast stood Mt. Ayr, the home of the Underwood family. Being supporters of the Union cause, the family was forced to evacuate their home in order to house Confederate Officers. Near the home, Fort Underwood was constructed to defend the Barren River and the Glasgow Road. Fort Underwood was described as a “lunette fort” and mounted six cannon.
Return on Country Club Dr. to Beech Bend Rd.; turn right 0.7 miles, continue on 31W Bypass 0.6 miles turn left on 234/Fairview Ave. 0.5 miles left into park 0.1 miles split right at pavilion; turn left after small lot to continue to rear of park 0.1 miles right into parking lot Wayside exhibit is next to disc golf course map.

18 ■ MT. MORIAH CEMETERY, ST. JOSEPH’S LANE

Mt. Moriah Cemetery is an African-American graveyard established in the late 1870s. It includes several graves of Union soldiers. To locate the graves of Civil War soldiers, look for rectangular monuments with the inscription in a carved “shield.” Common abbreviations are “C. Inf.” for Colored Infantry, “Col” or “Col’d” for Colored, “USCC” for U.S. Colored Calvary, “USCHA” for U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery, “USCI” for U.S. Colored Infantry and “USCT” for Colored Troops. Charcoal or other types of “rubblings” of monuments causes deterioration of old stone. Instead, please use photographs as your souvenir.
Return to take a right on 234/Fairview Ave. Take first right on St Joseph Ln. and continue to the rear Entrance is to the left of St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery.

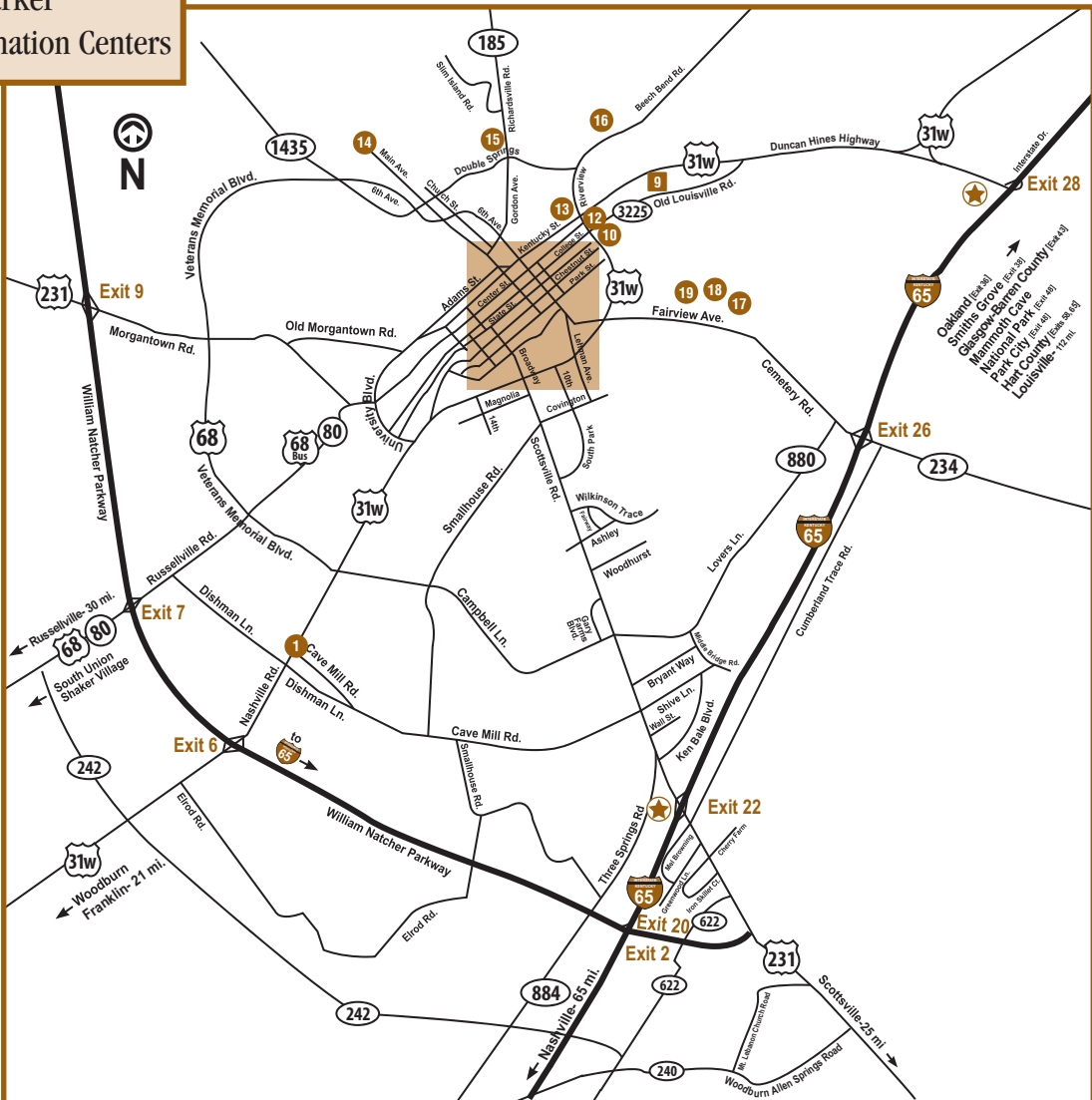
19 ■ “HOME OF THOMAS HINES” HISTORICAL MARKER & CONFEDERATE MONUMENT WAYSIDE EXHIBIT, 1209 FAIRVIEW AVENUE

The Confederate Monument, located in Fairview Cemetery’s older section, was dedicated in 1876 before a crowd of 12,000. Several hundred bodies, moved to this site, are believed to be buried in concentric circles around the obelisk carved from local limestone. Outside the cemetery gates, a historical marker identifies Thomas Henry Hines, a Butler County native and Confederate spy who was known as the most dangerous man of the Confederacy.
Return to take a right on 234/Fairview Ave. Take first right into Fairview Cemetery Marker located immediately to right of entrance; parking where available. Monument is inside on the right about halfway back

KEY

- Public
- ▲ Private
- Historical Marker
- ★ Visitor Information Centers

Bowling Green Area Map



Downtown Bowling Green THE DISTRICT