



Battle of Nashville: Map Activity

Federal engineers worked hard to create accurate maps to mark the positions of troops, cities, towns, railroads, rivers, roads, hills, and any other important features. These maps are excellent sources for understanding the geography of Civil War battles, and are also some of the best maps for recording the geography of southern towns in the 1860s.

This map of the Battle of Nashville was created in 1863 by a topographic engineer named George H. Blakeslee of the 169th Illinois Infantry, and then added to in 1864 in red and black ink. Look closely at the map for clues to answer the following questions. Then compare this map to a modern map of Nashville to see if any of the features and landmarks from 1863-1864 are still present today.

Read between the lines:

There are lots of lines and labels on this map, and no legend. How can you tell which are the rivers, streams, railroads, and roads? Do you recognize the names of any of these features? Have you traveled on any of these transportation corridors? What do all these rivers, streams, railroads, and roads tell you about Nashville's location and importance during the Civil War?

Connect the dots:

Those circles that look like small holes are actually hills. Look at the positions of the picket line (which shows the outermost position of Union soldiers, represented by the red dashed line) and the fortified line (which shows where forts and breastworks were located, represented by the red bracketed line). Why do they seem to follow the line of hills? Using the scale on the right side of the map, measure how long the fortified line extended. (Note: the scale measures two miles, with the first mile divided into fourths.) What was the line protecting? Next, try to find some of the forts that are labeled by name or number (look at the key at the top left). Where are these forts located and why? Did these forts help protect Nashville for the Union during the Battle of Nashville in 1864?

Put it all together:

In what ways would a Union soldier use a map like this one? Why would Northerners need to produce maps of Nashville during the Civil War? And why would Southerners not need to do so?

Zoom in for a closer look:

Having trouble reading some of the smaller words? The Library of Congress Web site allows you to zoom in and get a clearer look at every little detail. Just go to [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/gmd:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(g3964n+cw0429400\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/gmd:@field(NUMBER+@band(g3964n+cw0429400))) and click on the thumbnail image of the map to be taken to the Zoom View feature.

For a digital copy of this map and the digital link to the Zoom View feature, go to the Teaching with Primary Sources across Tennessee Web site, at <http://www.mtsu.edu/tps>, and click on “Lesson Ideas & Units.”



(example of zoom detail)

Map title and information:

Nashville—Tenn. and vicinity 1863 / G.H. Blakeslee, Topo. Eng. Courtesy of Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.