

## Kentucky's Civil War: Floyd County's Battle of Middle Creek



*Historical Marker #85 commemorates the Battle of Middle Creek, fought near Prestonsburg on Jan. 10, 1862. Crucial in the struggle to control the Big Sandy Valley, future U.S. president James Garfield won an early Union victory at Middle Creek.*

In early 1862, Garfield was ordered to drive rebel troops from Eastern Kentucky. After pushing the rebels from Prestonsburg, he attacked Humphrey Marshall's Confederates near the mouth of Middle Creek.

The fighting was intense as Union troops scaled the ridges toward the southern position. Marshall's four cannons were largely ineffective, but the firepower made an impression. Garfield later wrote, "the whole hill was enshrouded in such a volume of smoke as rolls from the mouth of a volcano [sic], [and] thousands of gun flashes leaped like lightning from the cloud."

In an example of the fratricidal nature of the war, enemy Kentuckians fought one other. After a decisive bayonet charge by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Kentucky Union Infantry, the arrival of Northern reinforcements dissuaded the Confederates from continuing the battle.

The Union victory helped give the Federals control of Eastern Kentucky for most of 1862. The fight also put James Garfield in the spotlight. Garfield, who became the 20<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, was assassinated in 1881.

Photo: Brig. Gen. James A. Garfield, Library of Congress