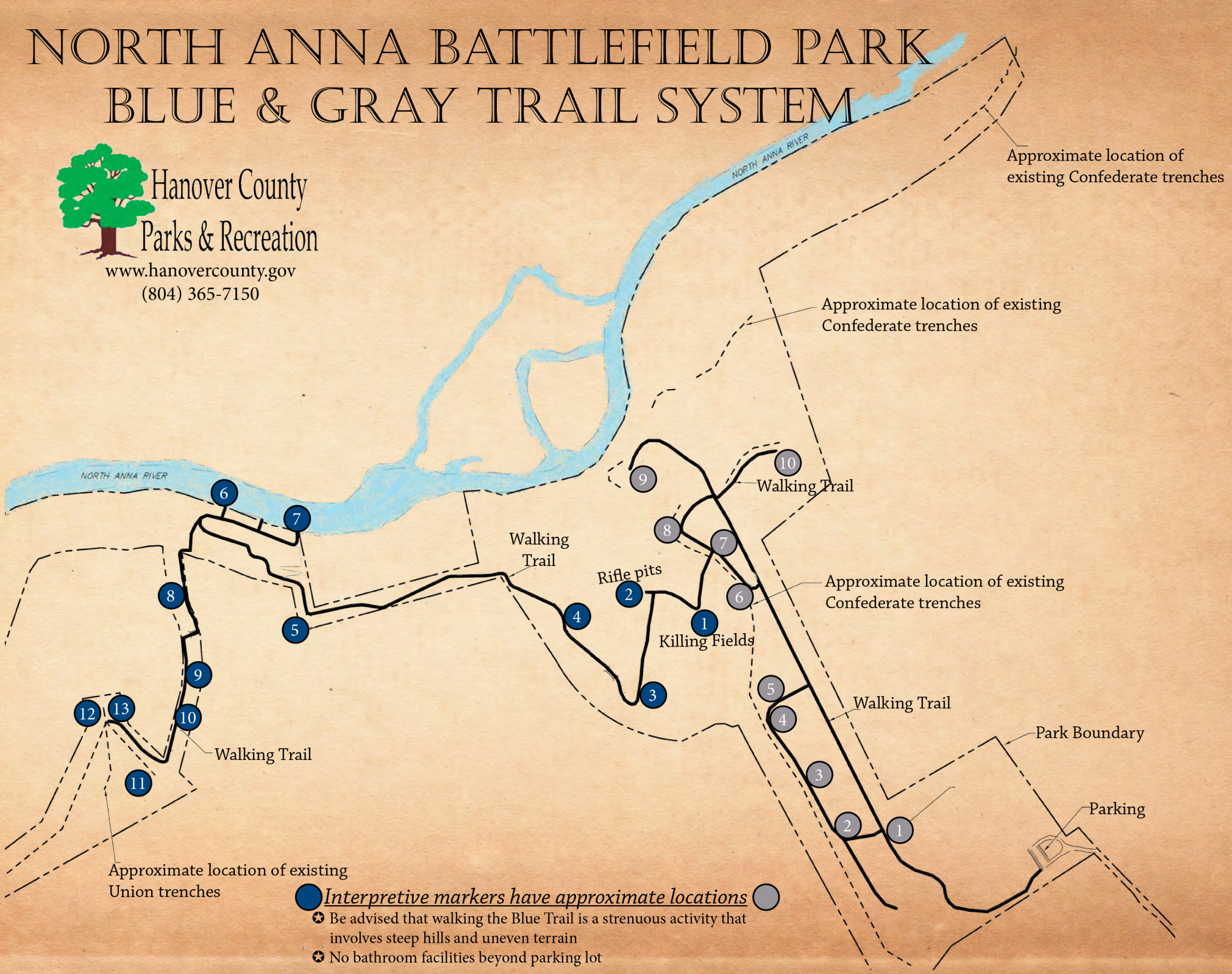
NORTH ANNA BATTLEFIELD PARK
BLUE & GRAY TRAIL SYSTEM



The Fight for Ox Ford
Gray and Blue Walking Trails

Gray Trail, 10 Stops

Stop 1. The Ox Ford Road, May 23, 1864
At 11:00am, Confederate artillery and infantry units moved along Ox Road in front of you to cover the vital Ox Ford crossing of the North Anna River.

Stop 2. Colonel David Weisiger's Virginia Regiments
These five regiments began constructing these trenches on May 24 and continued for the next two days. An open field lay beyond the trench line.

Stop 3. Battle of the Skirmish Line, May 24, 2 to 4pm
400 yards in front of these trenches, 300 Confederate sharpshooters from Weisiger's Virginia and Colonel John Sanders' Alabama Brigades delayed units of the Union Fifth Corps for two hours so these works could be finished.

Stop 4. One Brigade Alone, May 24, 3 to 4pm
The first unit of the Union Ninth Corps to cross the North Anna River was Brigadier General James H. Ledlie's brigade. He was to advance along the river and clear Confederate troops from Ox Ford. He ordered the 35th Massachusetts forward across an open field to test the Confederate line. They were easily routed. Ledlie was new to his command, and was drunk.

Stop 5. The Heart of Dixie, May 24, 3:45pm
These trenches were manned by Brigadier General Nathaniel Harris' Mississippi Brigade. Soldiers went out here to capture several men of the 35th Massachusetts' Infantry.

Stop 6. "Come on to Richmond", May 24, 6pm
Against the order of his division commander, the drunken Ledlie ordered his brigade to assault the trenches before you. When the Federals were within 200 yards, Confederate troops opened with artillery and rifle fire. At the same time a thunderstorm began. Some Confederate troops stood on these entrenchments and shouted "Come on Yank, come on to Richmond".

Stop 7. "Save yourselves if you can," 6 to 7pm
Seeing that Ledlie's Brigade was unsupported, the 12th Mississippi came out of its trenches and charged down the slope to your front. The 8th and 11th Alabama from Sander's Brigade, to your left, attacked the Union right flank. The Union line broke and ran for safety. Lieutenant Colonel Charles Chandler, 57th Massachusetts, fell mortally wounded. He told soldiers trying to help him "save yourselves if you can".

Stop 8. The Inverted V, May 23, 6:45pm
This is the tip of General Lee's famous "Inverted V' defensive position. The trenches on your left ran 1.5 miles to Little River. Those on the right went 2 miles to a bend in the North Anna River. This position was unassailable, and key to Lee's defense.

Stop 9. One More River to Cross, May 24-26
By the evening of May 24, Grant realized Lee was not retreating, and his army was divided in three parts, one on either side of these entrenchments, and one across the river. Lee intended to strike Hancock's Corps on the east side but was too sick to lead the attack.

Stop 10. Artillery Duel, May 25-26
Union artillery fired at least 3,000 rounds at these positions. On the evening of May 26, Grant pulled the Army of the Potomac back from the North Anna River and again moved around the right flank of the Army of Northern Virginia.

Blue Trail, 13 Stops

Stop 1. Men from Massachusetts, May 24, 1864, 6:45pm
The soldiers in Ledlie's Brigade were unable to advance and tried to take cover in this ravine. When the 12th Mississippi Infantry came out of their earthworks and charged, Federal troops ran for the woods behind them.

Stop 2. Like the Coming of a Cyclone, May 24, 6:00-6:30pm
These fighting pits were used by the 2nd Georgia Battalion to guard fords over the river, and to fire into the flank of Ledlie's advancing brigade.

Stop 3. Run for Safety, May 24, 6:45pm to 7:30pm
In the mix of Union and Confederate regiments, plus a thunderstorm, a number of Federal soldiers were captured. Although they survived the battle, many later died in prison at Andersonville, Georgia.

Stop 4. Grant Reacts, May 25-26
The repulse of Ledlie's assault alerted Grant that Confederates held Ox Ford in strength and the Union Army was in danger. Grant ordered pontoon bridges constructed, and corps commanders to stop and dig in.

Stop 5. Ledlie's Legacy, May 24
Ledlie was not reprimanded for his performance here but promoted to brigadier general. Later, at the Battle of the Crater, he was found hiding in a bunker during an attack and driven from the Army in disgrace.

Stop 6. Night of Agony, May 24-25
Ledlie's men reached safety after uniting with the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division. The sight of these beaten soldiers motivated the new men to construct breastworks.

Stop 7. River War, May 25-27
Sharpshooters and skirmishers fought a deadly battle along the North Anna River and the 3rd Georgia captured some Union pickets on May 27.

Stop 8. Reinforcements Arrive, May 24-25
Crawford's Division, 5th Corps, joined Crittenden's Division in the afternoon. Both were isolated that night and began the earthworks you see. Two brigades of the 6th Corps marched in as reinforcements.

Stop 9. Death Under Trees, May 25
At daybreak, General Warren advanced the 5th Corps, located the Confederates and dug in opposite A.P. Hill' line. Hill waited for attack orders that never came. Fighting on the skirmish line was vicious.

Stop 10, Deadly Skirmishing, May 25
Since May 5, the 56th Pennsylvania Infantry had lost all field grade and staff officers, and all 10 captains. 1 LT Charles Baker of Company A commanded the regiment.

Stop 11. Griffin's Artillery, May 25
General Griffin, 5th Corps, reinforced his skirmish line with 16 cannons. Confederate sharpshooters failed to silence the guns.

Stop 12. Dig, Dig, and Dig Some More
The earthworks here form a unique pattern known as the "V's". The defensive line is like a horseshoe with the flanks anchored on the steep riverbanks. Once completed, Lee lost any chance of a successful attack. Fierce skirmish battles took place in the woods behind you.

Stop 13. Stalemate. May 26-27
Grant recognized the strength of Lee's position and told Washington an attack would be too costly. On the night of May 26-27, the Union Army re-crossed the North Anna River and began another turning movement around the confederate right flank.

GRAY TRAIL DETAILS:
Total distance to walk to each stop is 2,232 yards. Walking time is 31 minutes. Walking time + 4 minutes at each stop totals 71 min. Total distance round trip, returning from Stop 10 to parking lot is 3,598 yards or 2.04 miles. Total round trip walking time is 88 min. Distance from Stop 7 directly to Parking Lot: 1,021yards or.58 miles, 13 min. Distance from Stop 10 directly to Parking Lot: 1,366 yards or .77 miles, 17 min. Note-mile (=) 1,760 yards or 5,280 feet,

BLUE TRAIL DETAILS:
Beginning at Stop 7 on the Gray Trail, the total distance of the Blue Trail to each stop is 2,514 yards or 1.4 miles. Walking time is 32 min. Walking time + 4-minute stop at each sign totals 84 min. Total distance to return to start of Blue trail (skipping 366 yard round trip to Stops 6 & 7) is 2,148 yards; walking time is 26 min. From start of Blue Trail directly to the Parking Lot is 1,021yards &13 min. Round trip distance for the Blue Trail, starting and ending at the parking lot, is 6,704 yards or 3.8 miles. Round trip walking time is approximately 136 minutes.