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Topographical Sketch of the Battle Field of Stone River Near Murfreesboro, Tennessee December 30th 1862 to January 3rd 1863. Major General W. Rosecrans Commanding the Forces of the United States General Braxton Bragg Commanding The Forces of the Enemy -- Sheet No. 1. . . .

Stock#: 43438
Map Maker: United States Bureau of
Topographical Engineers /
Mergell
Date: 1863
Place: n.p.
Color: Color
Condition: VG
Size: 18 x 13 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Extremely rare field copy of C.S. Mergell's Battle Plan, showing the positions and movements of the Union and Confederate Troops at the Battle of Stone River on December 31, 1862.

The map incorporates a detailed analysis of the Battle and a color coded presentation of the location of both armies, including:

- Right Wing of the Fourteenth Army Corps (Orange)
- Center of the Fourteenth Army Corps (Blue)
- Left wing of the Fourteen Army Corps (Red)
- Right Wing of the Army of Tennessee (Yellow)
- Left Wing of the Army of Tennessee (no color given)

The map is a photo-reduced map, printed in the field, specifically for use by a "Commandant," as noted on the printed label on the verso. The reproductive process can be ascertained by noting that the original map originally drafted in at least two sheets, as the vertical line down the center is not perfectly aligned in this image.

As indicated on the verso, the map was created by the Army of the Cumberland, in the field office supervised by William Merrill and issued in the field to senior officers on a very limited basis. The



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Topographical Department of the Army of the Cumberland, under the direction of Col. William E. Merrill, was chiefly responsible for providing the field maps necessary for the various battles. Thomas B. Van Horne in his *History of the Army of the Cumberland* (1875) notes that

The army was so far from Washington that it had to have a complete map establishment of its own. Accordingly, the office of the chief topographical engineer contained a printing press, two lithographic presses, one photographic establishment, arrangements for map-mounting, and a full corps of draughtsmen and assistants.

The lithographic presses were needed to make multiple copies of a map. However, the weight of the presses and stones made transporting them difficult, necessitating that they remain in a central depot near the front lines. As stated by Van Horne, the topographic engineers in the field had available to them a mobile

fac-simile [sic] photo-printing device invented by Captain Margedant, chief assistant. This consisted of a light box containing several india-rubber baths, fitting into one another, and the proper supply of chemicals. Printing was done by tracing the required map on thin paper and laying it over a sheet coated with nitrate of silver. The sun's rays passing through the tissue paper blackened the prepared paper except under the ink lines, thus making a white map on black ground. By this means copies from the drawing-paper map could be made as often as new information came in, and occasionally there would be several editions of a map during the same day. The process, however, was expensive, and did not permit the printing of a large number of copies; therefore these maps were only issued to the chief commanders.

The map notes that it was created by Survey under the direction of Nathaniel Michler, Captain of the Topographical Engineers, by Major John F. Weyss and assistend by Captains W. Starling, D.P. Thurston and J.W. Stinchcomb. The map itself was drawn by C.S. Mergell.

The Stone River Campaign commenced on December 26, 1862, when the Army of the Cumberland, under the command of William S. Rosecrans, left Nashville to engage the Army of Tennessee, commanded by Braxton Bragg. By the night of December 30, 1862, two armies were poised for battle. After several days of conflict, General Bragg ordered the Army of Tennessee to retreat on January 3, 1863. Two days later, the battered Union army marched into Murfreesboro and declared victory.

The present map was apparently prepared in the field shortly after Bragg's retreat. It provides a date of



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January 3, 1863 for the conclusion of the conflict, so it must have been prepared thereafter. However, the book plate on the verso, indicating that the map was a field map issued by Capt. Merrill, U.S. Engineers to the Commanding Officer of the 1st Brigade, 1st Division, 21st Army Corps., and that

This map is issued officially and is to remain with the Commandant. In case of a change of Commanders this map must be turned over to the officer holding the position mentioned above.

{{ inventory_enlarge_link('43438') }}

As such, the map was most likely issued to either Colonel George P. Buell, commanding the Brigade, or General Thomas J. Wood, commanding the Division.

This is the first time we have ever seen this type of field issued, photographically reproduced battle plan. Moreover, we cannot locate any other examples of printed Merrill label on the verso.

Detailed Condition:

Laid on linen and folded, with paste down label on verso (see link).