

THE GREAT
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
NATIONAL MUSEUM
WASHINGTON, D.C.

NATIONAL MILITARY PARK
GEORGIA • TENNESSEE

CHICKAMAUGA CHATTANOOGA

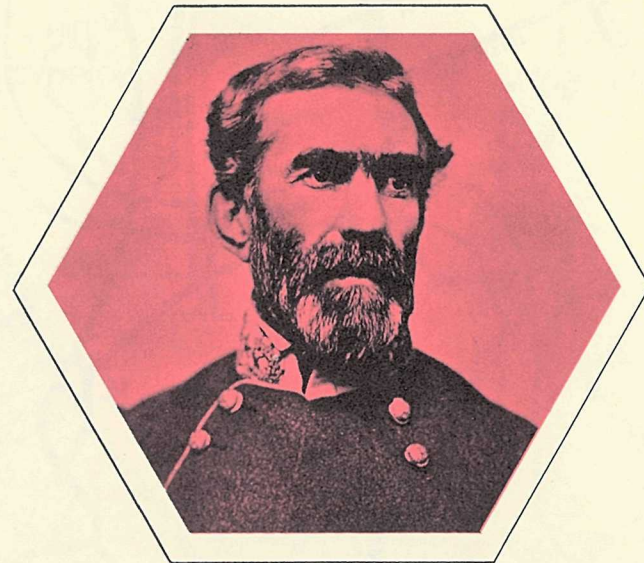
On these fields and hills Union and Confederate armies clashed during the fall of 1863 in some of the hardest fighting of the Civil War. The prize was Chattanooga, key rail center and gateway to the heart of the Confederacy. In September at Chickamauga, 11 miles below Chattanooga, Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg attacked and drove from the field Gen. William S. Rosecrans' battle-toughened Federals. A Union disaster, the battle was also a hollow Confederate victory, for a hesitant Bragg failed to pursue his routed enemy. Two months later a reinforced Union army under Gen. Ulysses S. Grant broke the Confederate siege lines around Chattanooga in a series of battles that prepared the way for Sherman's sweep through the South.



William S. Rosecrans

Late in June 1863 Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland, some 58,000 strong, moved out from Murfreesboro and advanced on Bragg's 43,000 Confederates dug in 20 miles southeast to defend the road to Chattanooga. Six months earlier the same two armies had clashed at Stones River. After a 3-day struggle, Rosecrans pushed Bragg out of Murfreesboro and forced him to retire southward. Then came a lull, as Rosecrans resisted all urgings to attack Bragg. Only when the fall of Vicksburg loomed in mid-

1863 did he finally start south. His goal was Chattanooga, gateway to Georgia and a hub for rail lines to all parts of the Confederacy.



Braxton Bragg

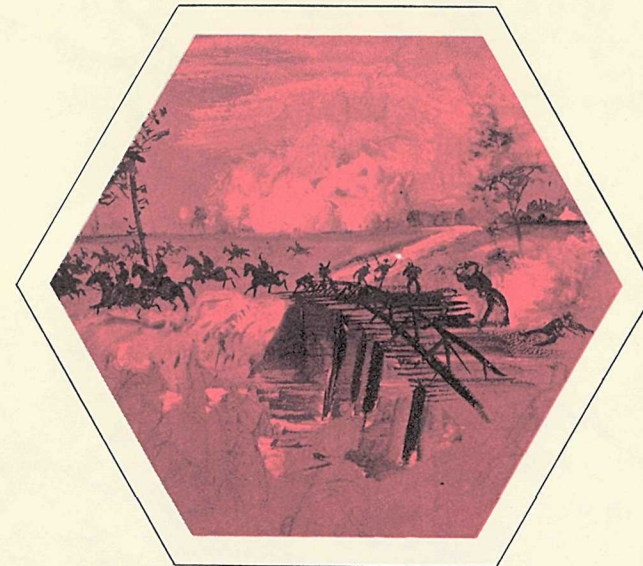
When Rosecrans did get underway, he handled his campaign with skill. The terrain favored the Confederates, but by feints and flanking marches he maneuvered Bragg out of his strong position and forced him to abandon central Tennessee and retreat across the Tennessee River into Chattanooga. There Bragg dug in again, guarding the river crossings to the northeast where probes had led him to expect the major attack. He little thought that Rosecrans would attempt to cross the high mountain barrier south of the city to get at the Confederates' exposed southern flank.

Rosecrans' ruse worked. In early September his army suddenly crossed the river below the city, and Bragg had to relinquish his position in order to maintain rail communications southward. As Rosecrans' army, now divided into three groups, crossed Lookout Mountain, over 40 miles of rough terrain separated its flanks. Though the parts were not within supporting distance of one another, Rosecrans' daring maneuver might have been safe if the Confederates had been retreating, as he assumed they were.

Yet Bragg was not retreating. He was, instead, preparing a shrewd counterstroke. Moving to Lafayette, Ga., where reinforcements were arriving from Virginia and Mississippi, he concentrated his forces and awaited a chance to strike his opponent in detail. At this point, faulty execution balked his tactics, as twice the failure of subordinate commanders to carry out orders allowed vulnerable Union detachments to escape, a lesson not lost on

Rosecrans. By moving up the east side of Chickamauga Creek, Bragg now sought to turn the Union left and seize the roads to Chattanooga, hoping thus to drive Rosecrans back into the mountains and reoccupy the city.

Meanwhile, Rosecrans saw that the situation had changed and hurried to unite his scattered forces at Chickamauga Creek. On September 18 the Confederates began forcing the bridges and fords over the creek, and by late that night most of Bragg's army was across. Early the next morning the two armies faced each other west of the creek along a line of several miles. Fighting began just after dawn with a skirmish on Rosecrans' left.



A skirmish at a Chickamauga Creek bridge before the battle.

This action quickly developed into a general battle that spread south for nearly 4 miles. The armies fought desperately all day, often hand-to-hand through thick woods broken occasionally with cultivated fields. Gradually the Confederates pushed the Federals back to the LaFayette road, but were unable to close it. When darkness came, the exhausted armies stopped to rest and reorganize. Neither could claim victory, both had suffered heavy losses.

The next morning the Confederate right renewed the attack, but the Union position would not yield. As the day wore on, Rosecrans shifted one of his divisions, leaving a gap in his ranks. Before the line could be repaired, three divisions under Gen. James Longstreet smashed into the hole, cutting Rosecrans' army in half and sweeping his entire right and part of his center from the field. Only the Union left, now anchored on Snodgrass Hill, held its position, aided by fragments from retreating units.

On this hill stood Gen. George H. Thomas, new field commander after collapse of the line forced Rosecrans to

flee. He coolly formed a new defensive line to protect his flank, and here his men repulsed Longstreet's onslaughts the rest of the afternoon, earning for Thomas the nickname, "Rock of Chickamauga." After covering the army's retreat, this force withdrew in good order to Chattanooga.



George H. Thomas

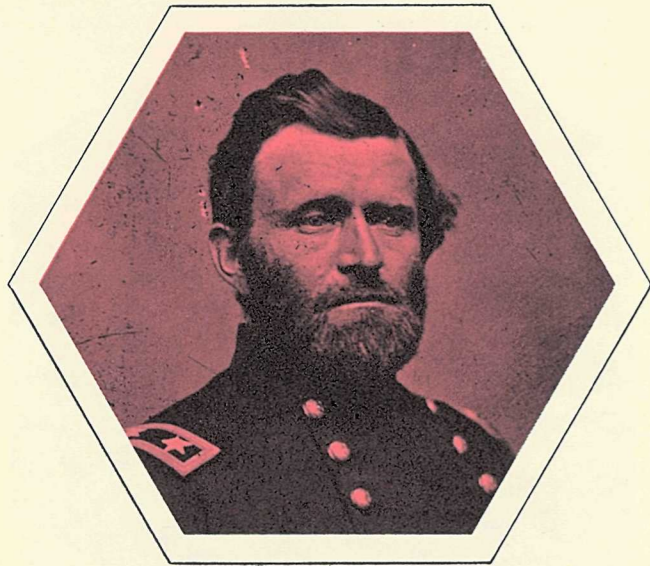
The Confederates had won, but they had won dearly. Bragg's losses in killed, wounded, and missing totaled over 18,000 of the 66,000 troops engaged. Rosecrans lost 16,000 out of 58,000.

After Chickamauga, Bragg allowed four important days to slip by before pursuing the Union army. When finally underway, he found the Army of the Cumberland so well entrenched in Chattanooga that a frontal assault would have been disastrous. Stunned by his own losses, and refusing to believe that he had won a fine victory, Bragg settled down to siege operations, content to try to starve the Union army into surrender.

Bragg's tactics capitalized on geography. Confederates took up positions on the high ground overlooking Chattanooga and in the valleys west and south of the city. He now controlled almost all traffic into Chattanooga. His troops held the rail lines, and his guns on the heights dominated the river. Only a roundabout wagon road over the ridge behind the city lay outside his grasp. Confederate raids on this road in early October underscored the Union plight.

Starvation seemed inevitable. The Federal soldiers were first reduced to half rations, then to quarter. Guards kept hungry troops from stealing the feed for horses and mules. One regiment even "killed and ate a dog which wandered into camp." Ten thousand horses and mules were killed or died. In Chattanooga during the siege all fared poorly.

Washington, realizing that a trapped army had to be rescued, responded by sending both new command and reinforcements. Nearly 37,000 troops under Gen. Joseph Hooker and part of Grant's Vicksburg force under Gen. William T. Sherman hurried toward Chattanooga in late September and early October. Thomas replaced Rosecrans, and Grant became overall commander.



Ulysses S. Grant

To break the Confederate grip Grant first had to open a supply line over Raccoon Mountain into Chattanooga. During the night of October 26-27 he boldly sent 1,500 soldiers floating down the Tennessee from the city. Undetected in the dark night, they slipped by Moccasin Bend and landed at Brown's Ferry on the west side of the river. After driving back Confederate pickets, they quickly threw a pontoon bridge across the water.

Hooker's advance from the east coincided with this attack. His men cleared the Confederates out of Lookout Valley, and the "cracker line" was soon established. From then on supplies moved unhindered by boat upriver to Kelly's Ford and on to Chattanooga by wagon.

As the Federals built up their army, the Confederates dissipated theirs. Early in November Bragg sent Longstreet with 15,000 men to take Knoxville and capture Gen. Ambrose Burnside's army. Bragg hoped that Longstreet could defeat Burnside and get back to Chattanooga before a Union thrust there. The move did little more than frighten Washington, but it fatally weakened the Confederates. Longstreet was still sparring with Burnside at Knoxville days after battle had ended at Chattanooga.

Grant arrived in Chattanooga on October 23. By mid-November he was ready to break the siege. His forces

outnumbered Bragg's by 56,000 to 46,000, but the latter's defensive position more than compensated for numerical inferiority. The Confederate line arched from Lookout Mountain across Chattanooga Valley and along Missionary Ridge to its northern end. A small detachment held the difficult terrain around Lookout Mountain, while in the valley and along the ridge infantry and artillery were strongly posted. Bragg had every reason to think that his position was impregnable. But his opponent was a general with a plan.

On November 23 Grant set his forces in motion. To gain maneuvering room and test Confederate strength, he sent three of Thomas' divisions forward to seize a small hill, named Orchard Knob, that stood about a mile in front of Missionary Ridge. In a minor action they drove the Confederate skirmishers and advance guard off the hill and back to the ridge. Occasional artillery exchanges ended the day's fighting.

Then Grant launched his power strikes at the ends of the Confederate lines.

On the night of the 23d Sherman began bridging the river close to the mouth of South Chickamauga Creek. By late the next afternoon all his men had crossed over and were engaged with Confederate outposts on the north end of Missionary Ridge.

As Sherman moved into position to assault Bragg's right, Hooker led three divisions against the Confederates on Lookout Mountain. Pressing along the mountain slopes from the west, the Federals gradually drove back the defenders. The fighting was heaviest at Cravens farm, where Confederates made a stubborn stand. When finally dislodged, they retreated to a new line 400 yards back. At this point low clouds rolled in over Lookout Mountain—as they often do today—and the fighting ended.

Though not defeated, the Confederates found their position endangered by the Union advance. Rather than risk being cut off from the main force on Missionary Ridge, Bragg evacuated his troops from both the mountain and the valley below. The next morning when the Federals scaled the palisade, they found the heights deserted.

When battle resumed on November 25, Union fortunes looked bright. Sherman faced Confederate Gen. Pat Cleburne's veterans on the right. Hooker commanded Lookout Mountain, in good position to assault Bragg's left. Thomas held the center at Orchard Knob.

As Grant planned it, Sherman would deliver the major blow, while Hooker and Thomas applied pressure on their parts of the line to keep Bragg from shifting troops to aid Cleburne. Sherman's failure to carry Cleburne's works flawed this scheme. For 8 hours, from early morning until mid-afternoon, his men pounded the Confederate entrenchments without success. Hooker, too, ran into

trouble. Replacing burned bridges over Chattanooga Creek delayed him 5 hours, and it was late afternoon before he reached Missionary Ridge.

To relieve the situation on the flanks, Grant sent the Army of the Cumberland forward to attack the rifle pits at the base of Missionary Ridge. In a rush Thomas's men carried the trenches, then—without waiting for further orders—surged up the hillside in one of the great charges of the war and broke the Confederate line. Soon the whole center collapsed, and gray-clad veterans fled in retreat down the back slope. Only Bragg's right held firm, but at nightfall it too withdrew to cover the general retreat across Chickamauga Creek. The next day Cleburne blunted the Union pursuit, and the army safely escaped.

The results of the battle were momentous. Union victory raised the siege, and the beaten Confederates fell back into Georgia. Nearly all of Tennessee now came under Federal control. The next spring Chattanooga became the springboard for Sherman's invasion of the heartland of the Confederacy.

THE MELANCHOLY AFTERMATH

	strength	casualties	percent
CHICKAMAUGA*	Union: 58,222	16,170	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1,657\text{-K} \\ 9,756\text{-W} \\ 4,757\text{-M} \end{array} \right.$ 28
	Confederate: 66,326	18,454	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 2,312\text{-K} \\ 14,674\text{-W} \\ 1,468\text{-M} \end{array} \right.$ 28
CHATTANOOGA*	Union: 56,360	5,824	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 753\text{-K} \\ 4,722\text{-W} \\ 349\text{-M} \end{array} \right.$ 10
	Confederate: 46,165	6,667	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 361\text{-K} \\ 2,160\text{-W} \\ 4,146\text{-M} \end{array} \right.$ 14

* Based on Livermore, *Numbers and Losses*.

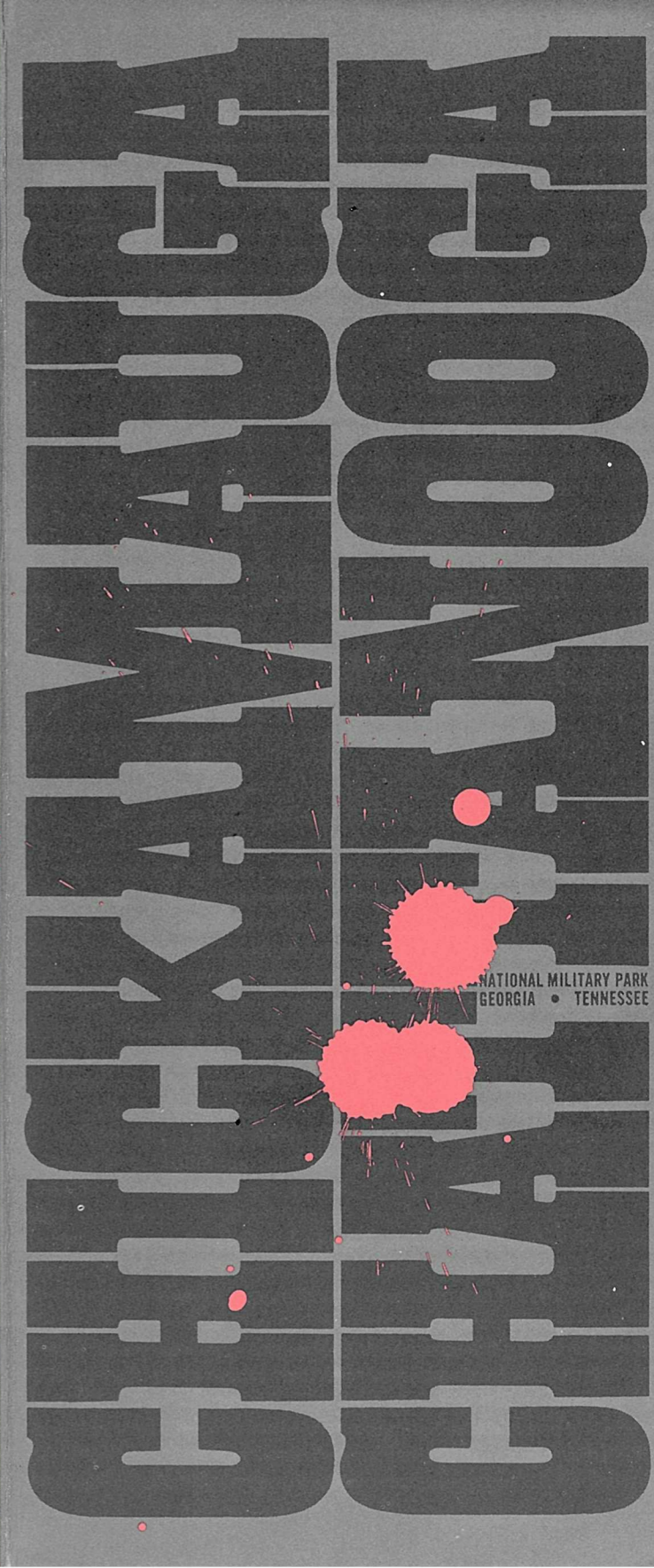
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U.S. DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR
National Park Service



ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park consists of several separate areas near Chattanooga.

Chickamauga Battlefield, 7 miles south of Chattanooga on U.S. 27, includes almost the entire scene of this battle. The park visitor center, near the northern boundary, is a focal point for orientation and information. It is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

Point Park and Lookout Mountain Battlefield. From Point Park, on the northern tip of Lookout Mountain, there is a comprehensive view of the whole area. The Ochs Museum there depicts both the siege and battle of Chattanooga. Nearby are the restored Cravens House, picnic grounds, and several miles of hiking trails. Point Park is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Missionary Ridge. This battle is commemorated by a series of park areas along the summit. They can be reached by way of Crest Road. Orchard Knob, where Grant had his headquarters, and Signal Point—both detached points of interest—are located on the map below.

ADMINISTRATION

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

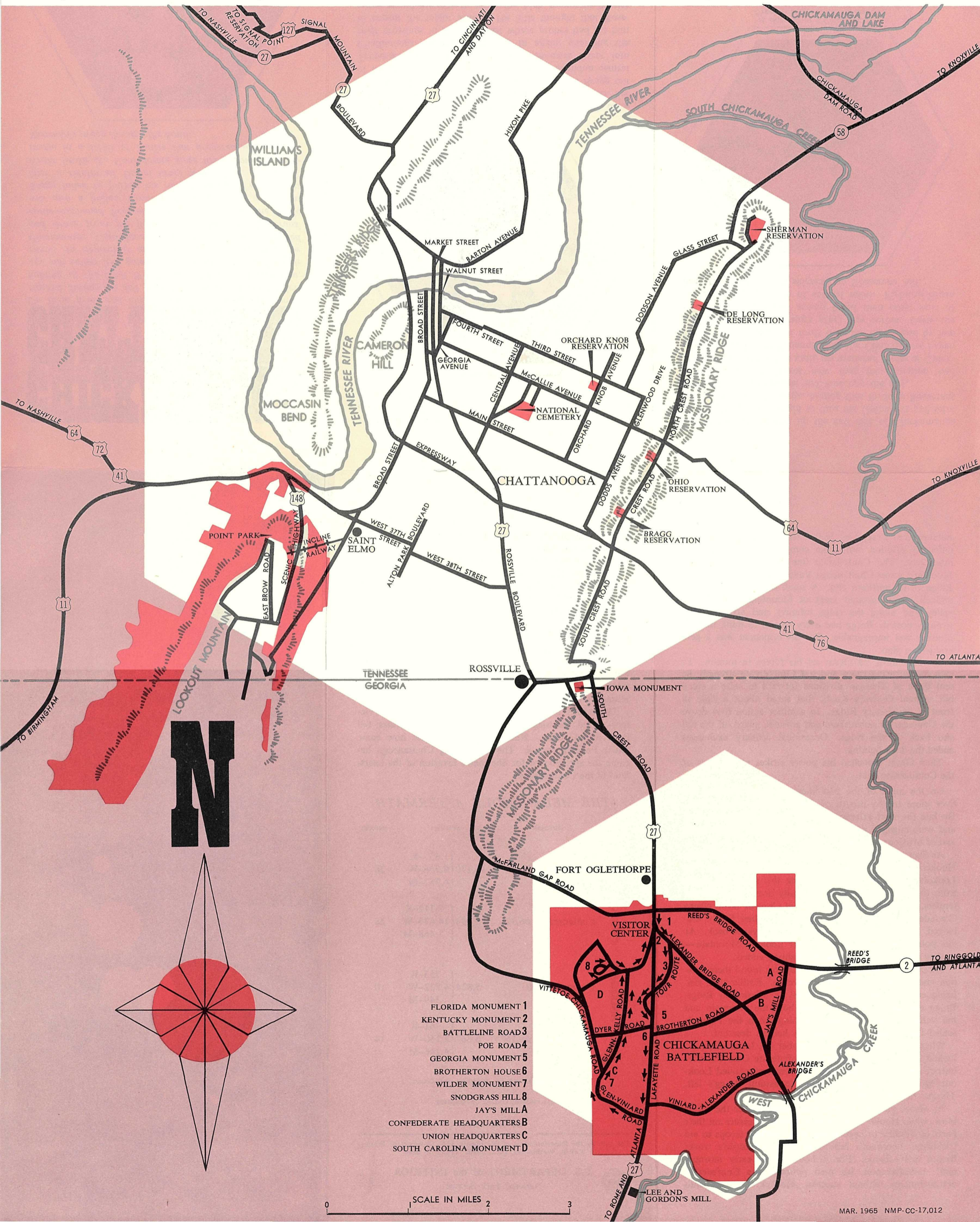
The National Park System, of which this park is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of the people.

A superintendent, whose address is Fort Oglethorpe, Ga. 30742, is in immediate charge of the park.

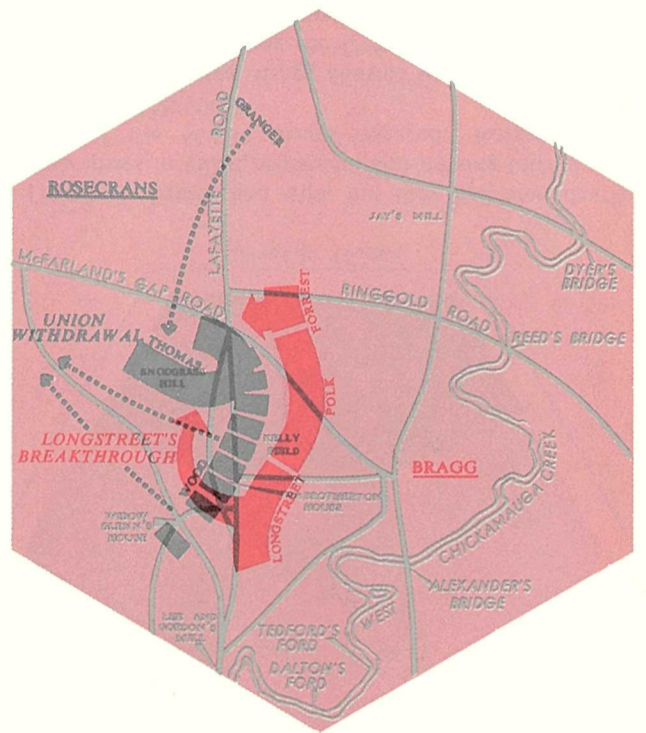
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—bears a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

TIMETABLES OF BATTLE

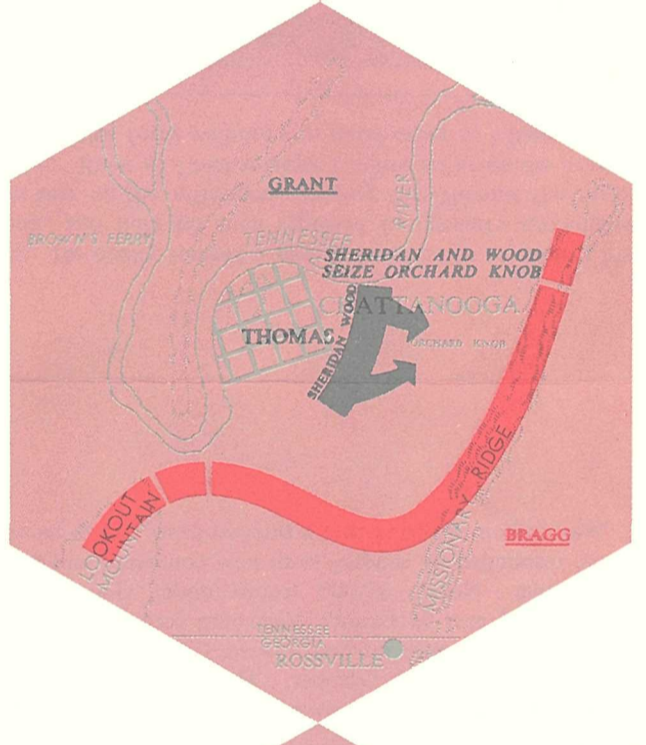
CHICKAMAUGA	CHATTANOOGA
September 20: 9:30 a.m.	November 23: 2 p.m.
11 a.m.	November 24: 8 a.m.
11:10 a.m.	November 25: 7 a.m.
2 p.m.	10 a.m.
3:30 p.m.	3 p.m.
7:30 p.m.	4 p.m.
	9 p.m.



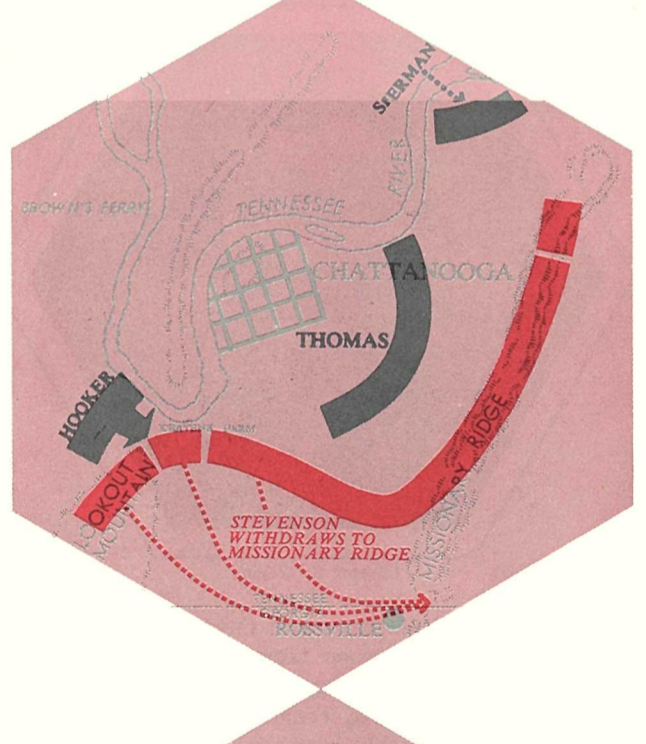
CHICKAMAUGA: SEPTEMBER 20, 1863



CHATTANOOGA: NOVEMBER 23, 1863



CHATTANOOGA: NOVEMBER 24, 1863



CHATTANOOGA: NOVEMBER 25, 1863

