

# Chickamauga and Chattanooga

NATIONAL MILITARY PARK • GEORGIA-TENNESSEE

For nearly 6 months after the battle of Stones River (December 31, 1862, to January 2, 1863) the Union Army of the Cumberland faced the Confederate Army of Tennessee in Middle Tennessee. The Union commander, William S. Rosecrans, made preparations to advance southeast to Chattanooga, gateway to Georgia and a hub for rail lines to all parts of the Confederacy.

Finally, during the last week of June 1863, Rosecrans put his 58,000-man force into motion. Through a series of daring tactical maneuvers he forced Braxton Bragg's Confederate army to abandon its positions and withdraw across the Tennessee River to Chattanooga.

Until early September Bragg awaited attack by the Union forces, which he felt sure would be directed at Chattanooga. Instead, Rosecrans feigned an attack on the city, while he crossed the Tennessee with his main force well to the southwest and advanced into the mountains. Outflanked, Bragg withdrew toward Lafayette, Ga., 26 miles to the south to await reinforcements and an opportunity to strike the scattered Union army.

Bragg twice put his troops in motion in an effort to destroy isolated segments of Rosecrans'

troops, but succeeded only in warning the Federal commander of the danger. When the Union force began to concentrate, Bragg moved north around the enemy to seize the road to Chattanooga and sever Rosecrans' communication routes. By September 18th the Confederates had been reinforced with troops from East Tennessee, Mississippi, and Virginia, bringing their strength to more than 66,000 men.

On the afternoon of September 18, as the Confederates were making their final maneuver to trap the Union forces, the two armies made contact. Hurriedly and unexpectedly, the battle of Chickamauga got underway. Fighting resumed on the 19th, and for the next 2 days men in blue and gray struggled in the dense woods of north Georgia. The first day was characterized by confusion on both sides as soldiers became tangled in the massive undergrowth. After charge and countercharge, the battlelines extended some 4 miles. The Confederates had gained ground that day but failed to cut the Federals off from Chattanooga.

On September 20 Bragg continued his strategy of trying to knife between the Union force and the city by attacking on his right. As Rosecrans rushed troops to his left to counter the Confed-

erate assaults, a gap opened momentarily in the Union center. At this moment James Longstreet, who had massed three Confederate divisions there, ordered his men to charge. The attack pierced the Union defenses and drove Rosecrans, along with half his army, from the field. With Rosecrans gone, command of the remaining Union troops devolved on George H. Thomas. Hastily redeploying a number of brigades, he formed a new line almost at right angles to his original position. Thomas held his ground despite heavy attack until dusk, when he managed to withdraw most of his troops. In this action, Thomas earned his nickname, "The Rock of Chickamauga."

The Confederates had won the great battle of Chickamauga, but their price for victory was more than 18,000 casualties. Rosecrans lost 16,000.

After Chickamauga, Bragg allowed 1 vital day to slip by before pursuing the Union troops. When he found them, they were so well entrenched in Chattanooga that a frontal assault would have been disastrous. So the Confederates invested their opponents, attempting to starve them into surrender. The Army of the Cumberland's situation was critical.

## Chickamauga Chattanooga

While the Union army was under siege, reinforcements hurried toward Chattanooga to save the besieged troops. Gen. Joe Hooker moved out from near Manassas Junction with 20,000 men, and Gen. W. T. Sherman arrived from Vicksburg with 16,000 more. Thomas replaced the defeated Rosecrans, and U. S. Grant became overall commander.

During the night of October 26-27, the Federals opened a shorter supply line into Chattanooga, gradually resupplying and reinforcing the Union army. At the same time Bragg weakened the Confederate forces by sending Longstreet's 15,000 men to Knoxville to oppose the Union army occupying that city. But still Bragg occupied a formidable position.

From Lookout Mountain on the south, the Confederate line crossed Chattanooga Valley to Missionary Ridge and ran for 7 miles to its northern extremity. On November 23, two months after the siege began, Grant began his break-out. To gain more maneuvering room and test the Confederate strength, Grant sent three of Thomas' divisions to attack a small outpost at Orchard Knob, a comparatively low hill a mile in front of Missionary Ridge. That night after taking Orchard Knob, Sherman's troops crossed the river north of the city and occupied a hill facing the Confederate right on Missionary Ridge.

The next morning, November 24, Hooker, with three divisions, assaulted Lookout Mountain. Greatly outnumbered but with a number of cannon on the mountain, the Confederates still felt secure. This morning, however, the gunners on top could not see through the clouds to support their comrades on the slopes below. The Confederates wavered, but held until darkness and then withdrew to Missionary Ridge.

On the 25th Grant launched Sherman against the Confederate right and sent Hooker from Lookout Mountain to attack the left. Thomas, in the center at Orchard Knob, was held in reserve. Sherman's initial attack was stopped, and Hooker lost 3 hours in crossing Chattanooga Creek. To relieve the pressure on Sherman, Grant ordered Thomas' Army of the Cumberland forward to attack the rifle pits at the base of the ridge. This objective was quickly taken. Next, a few soldiers, then more, and finally the whole army, without further orders, scaled the heights. Upward they surged into the face of the enemy in one of the great charges of the war. Against such momentum the Confederate line collapsed, and Bragg's men fled to the rear. It was not until the following day that the Confederate rearguard halted the Union pursuit.

Union armies now had control of Chattanooga and nearly all of Tennessee. The following spring

Sherman used Chattanooga for his base as he started his march to Atlanta and the sea.

### 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 the main point for orientation and information.

*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 area, and several miles of hiking trails.

*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.

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### ADMINISTRATION

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Fort Oglethorpe, Ga. 30742, is in immediate charge.

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