

Chickamauga Battlefield

CHICKAMAUGA AND CHATTANOOGA
NATIONAL MILITARY PARK
GEORGIA AND TENNESSEE

What happened at Chickamauga differed little from many other battles of the Civil War. Opposing armies bore down on one another, clashed, and moved on, leaving a wake of destruction and bitterness which would endure for years. For the people who lived along Chickamauga Creek, the war must have seemed like a dream, for no one had expected it to come here. So the Dyers, Vittoes, Kellys, Brothertons, and Snodgrasses worked the hard, poor soil of northern Georgia, probably thinking more of the fall harvest than on the struggles and fighting. But by the end of September 1863 their farmland had become a battleground on which about 4,000 men lost their lives.

It was the railroads that drew the armies to Chickamauga. Rail lines branched out from Chattanooga, then a city of 2,545 people, to Memphis, Nashville, Atlanta, and Knoxville. This east-west communications and transportation junction was crucial to the South's survival. For the Union, it was the key to splitting the Confederacy. If Chattanooga could be taken, Atlanta, and eventually a route to the sea, would be within the grasp of the Federal armies. Chickamauga was the first step to Chattanooga.

After the Battle of Stones River, early in 1863, the Union Army of the Cumberland faced the Confederate Army of Tennessee for six months in middle Tennessee. The Union commander, Gen. William S. Rosecrans, slowly made preparation

to advance southeast, too slowly, in fact, for President Abraham Lincoln and Henry Halleck, general-in-chief. They continually urged him to cease making excuses and move out.

In late June 1863, Rosecrans finally put his 58,000 man force into motion. Through a series of daring tactical maneuvers, he forced Gen. 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 well to the southwest with his main force and advanced into the mountains. Outflanked, Bragg withdrew toward LaFayette, Ga., 26 miles 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.



George H. Thomas prevented the Union defeat at Chickamauga from becoming a complete rout. Born in Southampton County, Va., Thomas was graduated from West Point in 1840. During the Mexican War, he served under Braxton Bragg. When the Civil War broke out, Thomas stayed with the Union and at Chickamauga found himself facing his old commander.

On the afternoon of September 18, as the Confederates were making their final maneuver to trap the Union forces, the two armies made contact near Reeds Bridge. Hurriedly and unexpectedly, the battle of Chickamauga got underway. Fighting resumed on the 19th, and for the next two 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



The Brotherton House

became tangled in the massive undergrowth. After charge and countercharge, the battlelines extended some four miles along LaFayette Road (now U.S. 27). The Confederates had gained ground that day but failed to cut the Federals off from Chattanooga.

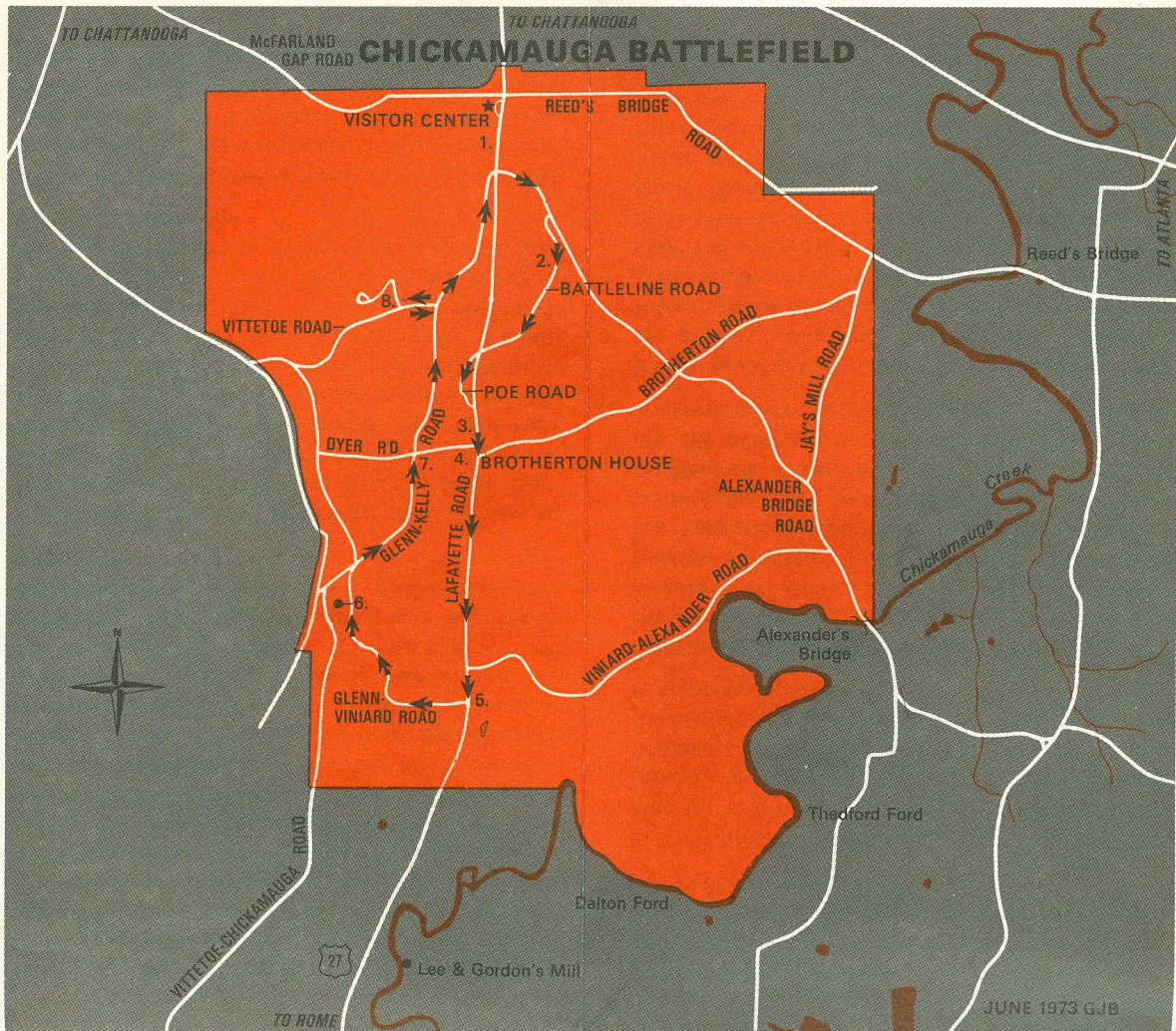
On September 20 Bragg continued his strategy of trying to knife between the Union force and the city by attacking on his right. As Rosecrans rushed troops to his left to counter the Confederate assaults, a gap opened momentarily in the Union

center. At this moment near the Brotherton House, Gen. 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 Gen. George H. Thomas. Hastily redeploying a number of brigades along the crest of Snodgrass Hill, 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 one 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. And the resolution of this crisis would have a great deal to do with the outcome of the war.



A TOUR OF CHICKAMAUGA BATTLEFIELD

The major points of interest on the battlefield can be reached by following the 7-mile automobile tour, which is marked by arrows. Along the route, low, triangular cannonball monuments mark the sites of corps and army headquarters. The cast iron plaques indicate troop movements. As you read the text on the markers and look over the top of them you will be viewing the scene which confronted the participants of that particular regiment during the battle. Large triangular cannonball monuments stand where eight brigade commanders died during the battle.

Tourstop markers along the route will also help you understand the different phases of the Battle of Chickamauga. Numbers 1 through 8 on the map correspond to markers on the Battle of Chickamauga, the Battle Line, Mix-up in the Union Command, the Confederate Breakthrough, the Cost of Chickamauga, Wilder Tower, Retreat of the Union Right and Snodgrass Hill.

Throughout the battlefield are monuments erected by the States to honor the men who went into battle here. Unique among them is the single monument Kentucky put up to her soldiers who fought in the Union and Confederate armies.

The star (★) on the map locates the visitor center where staff historians can answer your questions.

Visitor Center. Exhibits and audiovisual programs explain the battle and its place in the Civil War. Also in the center is the Claud E. and Zenada O. Fuller Collection of American Military Arms. The 355 weapons include several rare or unique items.

Battleline Road. The Confederate right wing established its line 75 to 250 yards east of this road. During the second day, Union troops occupied the line along the road.

Poe Road. This is a continuation of the Union defense line of the second day. Metal markers at the gun batteries give details of each unit's moves.

Brotherton House. Longstreet turned the tide of battle when a gap appeared in the Union line at this point. He sent his veterans into the breach and the Union right defense line collapsed.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Chickamauga Battlefield is one of several separate units within the national military park. Visits to these other areas will round out the story of Civil War action in the Chattanooga area.

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.



Union generals watch the progress of the Battle of Chickamauga in this etching made from a sketch by J. F. Hillen, a Civil War artist.

The collection was given by the Fullers to the National Park Service in 1954. Outside is an artillery display, illustrating the various cannons used by the light field artillery during the Civil War.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

We have made efforts to make your visit a safe one, but there are still hazards that require your vigilance. Be cautious and use common sense while hiking, climbing, and going up and down stairways.



CHATTANOOGA AND VICINITY

ADMINISTRATION

Chickamauga Battlefield is a part of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park which 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.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

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