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Joshua Robert Smith
Minnesota State University - Mankato

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The Chattanooga Campaign: Death of the Confederacy

By

Josh Smith

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

History

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

June 2013

The Chattanooga Campaign: Death of the Confederacy

Josh Smith

This Thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

_____ Dr. Kathleen Gorman _____
Advisor

_____ Dr. Matt Loayza _____
Committee Member

_____ Dr. Lori Lahlum _____
Committee Member

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“The Chattanooga Campaign: Death of The Confederacy” by Josh Smith, is submitted for the fulfillment of Master of Arts degree in History from Minnesota State University Mankato in June 2013. The purpose of this work is to demonstrate the importance of the Chattanooga Campaign. The campaign was important to the war because the Confederate loss opened the deeper Southern states to the advancing Union Armies. Due to the ineptitudes and failures of their leader, Braxton Bragg, the Army of Tennessee was forced to relinquish their hold on east Tennessee. Bragg’s failures were equally matched by the insubordination he received from his subordinate officers, Leonidas Polk, William Hardee, and James Longstreet. These men failed to work together and consequently Tennessee was lost to the Union. Chattanooga was a major rail hub and industrial city in the South. Its loss was devastating to the South because it could not afford to lose the important commodities that the city offered. By examining the official records, diaries, memoirs, and secondary sources, it becomes clear that Chattanooga was more than just a city to the South, it was their last bastion of hope that they could win the war. This thesis aims to illustrate the importance of this campaign by showing what the South lost and North gained from the campaign. Throughout the year 1863, the South had many devastating losses and Chattanooga was the final one. Bragg and his army had failed during the campaign, and the once dominant Confederacy began to crumble.

Introduction

In the fall of 1863, General Braxton Bragg and his Army of Tennessee retreated from their entrenchments around Chattanooga, Tennessee, and into Northern Georgia where they spent the fall and winter of 1863-64. This marked the final campaign for Bragg as commander of the Army of Tennessee, and it was an utter disaster. The loss of Chattanooga opened the “heart” of the Confederacy to the Union Army and was the final blow to the Confederacy in 1863, following the losses at Gettysburg and Vicksburg earlier that year. The Chattanooga Campaign had been the last chance the Confederacy stood against the Union Army, and it failed. With Bragg’s defeat the Union Army could penetrate deeper into the Southern states.

Chattanooga lies in a valley below Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge and along the Tennessee River, which separates the city and Lookout Mountain. The town itself was industrial as well as a rail hub for the Confederacy, with railroads that led from Virginia to western Tennessee and northern Mississippi. Almost every major railroad in the South ran through the town, making it a vitally important town during the war. With the lack of railroads in the Confederacy, the loss of such an important rail town created further difficulties supplying and moving troops.¹

Not only was the city itself important, but the area in which Chattanooga sat held importance as well. Chattanooga lies in the southeastern corner of

¹ Peter Cozzens, *Shipwreck of Their hopes: Battles for Chattanooga* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 15-17.

Tennessee, which held vital farmland in the valley of the Appalachian Mountains. The valleys provided food for the Confederacy and the mountains provided protection to the deeper parts of the South from the Union Armies. Cities, such as Chattanooga, were where food was processed and shipped all throughout the Southern states. The city only had a population of twenty-five hundred, but it was the third largest rail hub in the South, behind only Atlanta and Richmond. This greatly increased the importance of Chattanooga and East Tennessee to the Confederacy.²

The Appalachian Mountains run along the East Coast of the United States from the Northeast to the Southeast, and provided much of the Confederacy with protection from Union invaders. The only way through these mountains was the rivers and small trails that had been carved out by early settlers. Chattanooga sits adjacent to the Tennessee River. This made Chattanooga a direct target for the Union Armies once Abraham Lincoln and his generals set their sights on penetrating the lower Southern states. In taking Chattanooga, the Union Army broke past the mountain chain that protected the states like Alabama and Georgia.

To the Confederacy, Chattanooga was more than just a city: it was the last bastion of hope that Georgia, Alabama, and other lower Southern states were protected from the Union. After the defeats at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, the Confederacy lost support both at home and abroad. The walls were closing in on

² Ibid

the fledgling country and the Confederacy could not stand to lose any more vital cities, especially ones that protected the deep South and supplied its army.

Tennessee comes in contact with most of the Confederate states, making it an important state to control. This was something that both the Confederate and Union governments realized. Tennessee had access to rivers, railroads, and food supplies that connected and supplied the South. From early on Tennessee was a battleground, and its fate helped decide that of the South. The trouble with Tennessee was that it was not unanimous in support for the Confederacy. Throughout the entire state, largely in Middle and Eastern Tennessee, there were pro-Union factions. Because of this Tennessee was one of the last states to leave the Union, seceding in May 1861.³

Eastern Tennessee was important to the campaign because of its rich farmland, and because it divided the Northern troops in Kentucky from those in Tennessee. Eastern Tennessee was key in keeping General William Rosecrans, General Don Carlos Buell, and General Ambrose Burnside from linking up and marching on the deeper South. In order to keep the Union Army at bay, the eastern part of the state had to be held. The Confederacy had already lost large chunks of the state and it was important to hold onto what they still had, but this was easier said than done.⁴

The Confederate government knew that it needed to hold the eastern portion of Tennessee in order to have continued success as a country, but did

³ David J. Eicher, *The Longest Night: A Military History of The Civil War* (New York and London: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 72.

⁴ Woodworth, 53

not want to put the same effort into it as they did the war in the East. To many in the Confederacy, the war in the East was important to them because they believed that was where the war was to be won or lost. General Robert E. Lee was the believed strongly in this. He constantly requested troops from the West but never once offered or allowed troops to be taken from his command to the West. Lee even proposed leaving only a small token force in the West and sending Bragg's troops to Virginia. To Lee the West supplied manpower and nothing more. He, along with others, believed that the East was superior to the West. Furthermore: both capitol cities were in the East, which insured that both governments focused a majority of their attention on that front.⁵

During his time as General of the Army of Tennessee, Braxton Bragg dealt with insubordination from numerous officers. Bragg was constantly questioned and disobeyed by his junior staff. Leonidas Polk, William Hardee, and later James Longstreet were some of his main foes. They believed, due to his blunders throughout the campaign, that Bragg was unsuitable to lead the Army of Tennessee. Though Bragg had been disliked beforehand, it escalated during the Chattanooga Campaign. His constant retreating, indecisiveness, and blaming others did not help his case. The constant undermining of Bragg had a direct effect on his command. How can one expect an army to properly function let alone win a campaign when the leadership is constantly undermined? It is astonishing that Bragg and his men even won a single contest, and it is no

⁵ Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 104-105.

surprise that they lost vast territory in eastern Tennessee with hardly a shot fired.⁶

In less than a few months Bragg and the Army of Tennessee retreated all the way back into Chattanooga from Murfreesboro, and eventually into northern Georgia after the failed siege of Chattanooga. General Rosecrans had effectively pushed the Confederate army from eastern Tennessee, often without firing a shot. The only glimmer of hope Bragg gave the Confederacy during the entire campaign was the victory at the Battle of Chickamauga in North Georgia. It was not enough to save Chattanooga or the rest of eastern Tennessee. Eventually Bragg conceded Chattanooga and retreated into Dalton, Georgia where he was replaced by General Joseph E. Johnston.⁷

The campaign was the last action for General Bragg, and it perfectly illustrated what disunion and disloyalty to leaders can do. During the entire campaign Bragg made poor decisions and dealt with disloyalty from Polk and Hardee. The fight for Chattanooga and East Tennessee was the last chance for the Confederacy to regain momentum in the war and they failed. After Chattanooga fell it was only a matter of time before the Confederacy surrendered.

There were really only three major battles during the entire campaign, which lasted from spring to fall 1863. The three important engagements were Chickamauga, Lookout Mountain, and Missionary Ridge with Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain being part of the Battle for Chattanooga. What is most

⁶ Connelly, 21-22

⁷ Woodworth, 62-63

interesting about this entire campaign is there was little-to-no action until the Army of Tennessee retreated into Chattanooga, and then subsequently into North Georgia. The inability of the Army of Tennessee to stop the Union caused problems for Bragg. The problems came from the Confederate government and his subordinate officers.⁸

Chattanooga was the last strong defense for the lower Southern states, and it is hard to comprehend how Jefferson Davis and other Confederate leaders did not place more emphasis on this region. The Union Army exposed some of the South's valuable industrial areas by breaking through the Appalachian Mountains. In Augusta and Atlanta, Georgia, there were gun powder and munitions manufacturers that were critical to the South's war efforts.⁹

The Union needed to get at the deeper areas in the South, and bring the war to the homes of those people. The most important aspect of the Chattanooga Campaign for the Union was the opening of the Appalachian Mountains and North Georgia. If the Union Army had not broken Bragg's siege and established a strong foothold in the area, the events in the following year, 1864, would be postponed. The most crucial event following the Union victory at Chattanooga was Sherman's March to the Sea. By establishing the Union Army in the area, Sherman was able to focus on his next goal, bringing Hell on earth to the population of Georgia.¹⁰

⁸ Eicher, 592-593.

⁹ Connelly, 104-105

¹⁰ Cozzens, 395-398

After close examination, it is clear that the Chattanooga Campaign was important for both the Confederacy and the Union. This campaign illustrated the skill of the Union leaders, while showing the ineptitude and refusal of the Southern leaders in the Army of Tennessee to work together. It is easy to say that the Union was superior in numbers and that is how they won, but what this campaign does well is illustrate how leadership can make or break an army. If Polk, Hardee, or Longstreet had listened to Bragg, then the outcome of the campaign might have been different.

Many scholars believe the only way for the South to have won the war was to be defensive. By doing this, the Confederacy could have held off the Union which had huge advantages in industrial capacity and population. The geography of the South was well-suited for a defensive war. The Appalachian Mountain chain runs through much of the region and creates a natural barrier. Another advantage for the South in a defensive war was its coastal defenses. The majority of the United States Naval forts were located in Confederate territory, and naturally when the states left the Union those forts became part of the Confederacy. Finally, by fighting a defensive war the South could use its army more efficiently. A defensive war needed far fewer soldiers than an offensive one. This was critical because the South had a much smaller population than the North. The only problem with a defensive war is the

morale. The hardest part about fighting a defensive war is always receiving the attacks and never giving them, which tests the morale of soldiers.¹¹

Had the South stuck to its original plan of a defensive war, the outcome could have been different. That is not to say the South would have won, but it does mean that their best chances lay in defending their homeland rather than seeking to prove their military superiority by invading the North. The North knew the South's best chance was a defensive war and so they sought to bring the Southern states to their knees by slowly strangling them from sea to land. This was known as the "Anaconda Plan."¹²

By Spring 1863 the war still favored the South, but some of the momentum had shifted toward the North. The South had still won the majority of the encounters, but the North had reached a crucial stalemate with the South at Antietam in late 1862. The Battle of Antietam was the beginning of turning the tide in the war. General Kirby Smith's failed invasion of Kentucky also favored the North. By the time 1863 rolled around the South had been ejected from Northern soil twice. By late 1863 the war was completely in the North's hands. Union Armies had won crucial victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. While one of the South's greatest losses during that year came in the loss of General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson at the Battle of Chancellorsville. Though the South won the battle, friendly fire killed one of the war's best generals.¹³

¹¹ John Keegan, *The American Civil War: A Military History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 83-84

¹² Keegan, 84

¹³ Eicher, 256

The losses suffered by the Confederacy during 1863 are important for showing how the war turned in favor of the North. Up until this point the South had dominated the war. After 1863 it was only a matter of time before the war would end. The South had lost too much and could no longer support a war of this magnitude. The loss of Chattanooga meant the loss of railroads and manufacturing, which the South could not afford to lose more of. If Bragg and his men had stopped Rosecrans and his army, the Confederacy would have been able to hold on for longer.

When the Army of Tennessee retreated back into Middle Tennessee in Fall 1862, the Union Army was beginning its plan of strangling the Southern states into submission. New Orleans had already fallen and Union soldiers slowly made their way up the Mississippi River and cut the Confederacy in two. During early spring 1862 the war had taken a drastically bloody turn. The Battle of Shiloh took the lives of 23,000 soldiers. Shiloh was the bloodiest two days in United States history at the time and awakened people to the severity of the war. Shiloh would stand as the bloodiest two days in the war until Chickamauga. The North could withstand the severe losses but the South could not. Battles like Shiloh earned General Ulysses S. Grant the nickname "The Butcher." Grant was one of the generals who helped turn the tide of the war in the North's favor. Along with General William T. Sherman, Grant gave the Union much needed victories in the West and later in the East.¹⁴

¹⁴ Eicher, 555-557

The South enjoyed great success against the North throughout the first half of the war. Starting with the Battle at Manassas (First Bull Run) in 1861, the Southern army proved they were a force to be reckoned with and the realization that this war was not going to end in a few weeks began to sink in for both armies. One of the critical issues facing the Union was the leadership of its army. At the outbreak of the war the United States Army was commanded by Winfield Scott who was aging and could not ride his horse without assistance. His tenure as commander was short lived, and in November 1861 the army came under the command of General George B. McClellan.¹⁵

General McClellan was the complete antithesis of Winfield Scott: he was young and often compared to Napoleon due in large part to his ego. McClellan was a good general, but was cautious to the point that at times President Lincoln demanded that he go to battle. McClellan fought only when he believed that victory could be achieved and that his men were in capable condition to fight. He became notorious for drilling and camping. Though he did have success on the battlefield, most of McClellan's tenure as commander was spent in camp. Eventually Lincoln had it with the general and sought to replace him. Lincoln knew he needed a general who was willing to fight and not stay in camp constantly asking for more men, supplies, and time.¹⁶

The next Union Army commander was Henry Halleck, who served as commander from July 1862 to March 1863. Halleck was placed in command after the Peninsular Campaign. Lincoln hoped that Halleck would be more assertive in

¹⁵ Ibid, 84

¹⁶ Ibid

going to battle than McClellan, but he was wrong. Halleck was a planner just as his predecessor had been. Though he experienced success at the Battle of Antietam, his unwillingness to pursue Lee and his army displeased Lincoln. In the end Halleck was no better suited as General of the Union army than McClellan had been in Lincoln's eyes. Lincoln was still looking for a leader who would fight. He need not look further than to the war in the West where Ulysses S. Grant was winning battles and making a name for himself.¹⁷

Ulysses S. Grant commanded in the West during the early parts of the war. He experienced success at Shiloh and Vicksburg before he was made the General-in-Chief of the Union army in 1863. It was at the siege of Vicksburg where Grant earned the nickname "Unconditional Surrender" Grant, after he refused to accept anything less from the Confederate troops inhabiting the fort. Grant was the fighter Lincoln had been seeking. Grant was different from other generals due to his understanding of what it took to win the war. Grant, with the help of Sherman, sought to bring "Hell on earth" to the states that seceded from the Union. He wanted to punish the South for their actions and sought make the war as brutal as he could. Grant would stopped at nothing to win the war, and was exactly what Lincoln was looking for in a general. He was also exactly what the Union needed to win.¹⁸

The leadership of the Confederate army was, at least in the beginning, better than that of the North. At the outset of the war the Confederacy did not have a formal General-in-Chief, but it did have many qualified individuals for the

¹⁷ Eicher, 304

¹⁸ Eicher, 624-625

job. P.G.T. Beauregard, Robert E. Lee, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, and others were more than qualified to be in charge of the army. President Jefferson Davis was in charge of the Confederate Army in the beginning and took advice in large part from Robert E. Lee. Davis, a veteran of the Mexican-American War, believed himself more than capable to command. Davis took advice from Lee and even Bragg, after the latter was removed from command.¹⁹

Many of the South’s generals were commissioned in the United States military prior to the outbreak of the war. Robert E. Lee was even offered the job of General-in-Chief of the Union Army before he joined the Confederacy. His home state of Virginia seceded and consequently he resigned from the United States Army and joined the Confederacy. Lee placed his home state before the Union, like so many of his fellow Confederate comrades.

Lee was not officially declared the Commander-in-Chief of the Confederate army until January 1865, although he had been in charge of arguably the most important branch, the Army of Northern Virginia, prior. The promotion was rather late, since the war ended a few months later. Unlike the North, the South’s leaders were better prepared for the war. The Union leaders would become superior later in the war, but, as stated before, the initial advantage lay with the Confederacy.²⁰

The largest blows to the South came in the loss of great generals, like Stonewall Jackson, and the infighting between commanders. What Northern generals did better than their Southern counterparts was work together. The only

¹⁹ Keegan, 42-49

²⁰ Ibid, 145-146

way to win a war is to work together and that is exactly what the South did not do. Looking at the Chattanooga Campaign makes it clearly evident that this was one of the South's biggest problems. When it came to one of the most important times during the war, not even those fighting together could put aside their differences to work for a common goal. Ultimately, this cost the South.

Almost as soon as the Civil War ended, people began writing about it. People wanted to write about their experiences, the outcomes, justifications, and countless other topics on the war. To this day the American Civil War is one of the most written about topics in American history. Throughout the years following the war, the way it has been examined has changed.

The first writings about the Chattanooga Campaign came from participants such as generals and other field commanders who wrote accounts of the battles and campaigns. These are an excellent primary source when looking at battles, but it is important to read these accounts through a "lens." This is because in many of the accounts those writing were trying to explain and exonerate their actions on the battlefield. A prime example of this comes from Rosecrans after the Union loss at Chickamauga and their subsequent retreat back into Chattanooga. In his accounts, General Rosecrans tries to explain that his actions were just. At the same time he attempts to place blame elsewhere. According to Rosecrans, "It is proper to observe that the battle of Chickamauga was absolutely necessary to secure our concentration and cover Chattanooga. It was fought in a country covered with woods and undergrowth and wholly unknown to us." These two sentences show Rosecrans justifying the battle and the loss.

Nowhere in this document does he mention his order that opened a hole in the Union line that effectively lost them the battle. In examining other battle accounts from General George Thomas and others, it becomes clear that Rosecrans was at fault for the loss.²¹

Historians began to write about the great leaders of the war as the number of surviving veterans dwindled. Books were written about Lee, Grant, Sherman, and many other major and minor military leaders of the war, including leaders of the Chattanooga Campaign. There have been books written about Bragg, Longstreet, and General George H. Thomas, who came to be known as the “Rock of Chickamauga.” These works show the greatness of these leaders to a generation who never knew them. In *Rock of Chickamauga: The Life of General George H. Thomas*, Freeman Cleaves writes, “He had put on his uniform and had taken his oath. Solid and immovable he would not desert.” In this sentence Cleaves shows the true character of Thomas. Cleaves is making it clear to the reader that Thomas was a good and noble man who stood by his commitments. These books began appearing in the 1930s and 40s, when there were not many people from the war still alive.²²

It did not take long for historians to exhaust the subject of leaders in the war, so they moved on. The next focus was on the individual branches of the Union and Confederate Armies. They took a look at the smaller divisions in both

²¹ William Rosecrans, *Chickamauga, The Price of Chattanooga* ed. John Fitch (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincot, 1864), 704-716.

²² Freeman Cleaves, *Rock of Chickamauga: The Life of General George H. Thomas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1948), 3-6, 66-67.

armies. Historians had already looked at the armies in a larger context, and now it was time for them to examine the smaller and less written about divisions.

For the Chattanooga Campaign both the Confederate and Union Armies have been discussed in detail. In 1998 Woodworth, in *Six Armies in Tennessee*, examines the fight for Eastern Tennessee by both the Confederacy and Union. Woodworth is trying to gain an understanding of how and why the campaign played out as it did. According to Woodworth, "The struggle for Tennessee greatly influenced the outcome of the war. Coming on top of the better known victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, the Union's successful culmination of these operations left the Confederacy in desperate condition." Woodworth clearly places great emphasis on the campaigns in Tennessee and the armies that fought them. The goal of works like this is to show that the war was won and lost by more than just the large armies fighting in Virginia.²³

Autumn of Glory by Thomas Lawrence Connelly and *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes: The Battles for Chattanooga* by Peter Cozzens are examples of other books focusing on smaller branches fighting in the war. Each of these books examines individual components of the Confederate and Union Armies, and how they played a crucial role in the outcome of the Chattanooga and Eastern Tennessee campaigns. These works show the importance of the smaller divisions and their leaders in the army. "The Chattanooga Campaign also cemented the triumvirate that would win the war: Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan,"

²³ Woodworth, xiii

writes Peter Cozzens.²⁴ Many important generals gained recognition for their accomplishments during the Chattanooga Campaign.

How The North Won: A Military History of The Civil War by Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones is a prime example of where historians were headed by the 1980s. By this time the South had been immortalized as the glorious underdog taking on the mighty Union, and works like Hattaway and Jones' sought to debunk that myth. They argue that the Confederate leaders were inept and lucky more than they were actually skilled. The best example of this comes in their description of the Seven Days Battle. Many historians see this as one of the most daring battles fought in the war, but Hattaway and Jones view it as a matter of sheer luck for the Confederacy. "The southern effort during the 'campaign will always,' Douglas Freeman wrote, 'remain a tragic monument to defective staff work."²⁵ Hattaway and Jones also contend that it was the Union that had the superior leadership and won because of it, rather than superior numbers and supplies.²⁶

In the case of the Chattanooga Campaign, Hattaway and Jones were not wrong: it was the Southern leadership that ultimately doomed the entire campaign. Apart from General Rosecrans actions at Chickamauga, the Union Army's leadership was greatly superior to that of the Confederacy. Works like these are important, because they challenge what everyone else was saying

²⁴ Cozzens, 391; Connelly, 3-9

²⁵ Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How The North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 194-201.

²⁶ Ibid

about the subject. These works properly point out that there are many reasons and opinions how and why the North won the war.

Examining the lives of individual soldiers became the method of study for historians in the 1990s. We are better able to gain an understanding of war through the eyes of the common soldier. Books like *Shipwreck of Their Hopes* and *Autumn of Glory* make it clear that disdain for Bragg not only came from Hardee, Polk, and Longstreet, but also the common soldiers. It was hard for Bragg's men to have faith in him after he had failed them so many times. In *Autumn of Glory* Connelly states, "By mid-January Bragg's popularity and the army's morale seemed at a new low. The outcry over Kentucky had not abated, and after Murfreesboro, dislike of Bragg was widespread in the army."²⁷ Repeatedly the Army of Tennessee had prepared to face the Union army of the Cumberland, but at the last minute Bragg decided to fall back to a supposedly better position. At this point Bragg's popularity within the army was shrinking even lower and morale was going along with it. This allowed Hardee, Polk, and Longstreet to undermine Bragg more easily.²⁸

Studying soldiers lives is important. As are the study of how politics, culture, and even geography played a role in the war, however examining the Civil War is about more than just the war itself. Like any other war, the Civil War affected more than those directly involved. Both Confederate and Union generals discussed strategy with their respective governments, putting the outcome of the war largely in the hands of these governments. The war was fought across the

²⁷ Connelly, 73

²⁸ Connelly, 19-23; Cozzens, 28-31

country and by people from all different countries, making culture and geography play a significant role. Geography and politics played an especially crucial role in the Chattanooga Campaign.

Because Chattanooga lies on a river bend in a valley between part of the Appalachian Mountain range, the geography of the region is important. The Confederate Army was able to keep the Union Army under siege at Chattanooga with a smaller force by stationing artillery and infantry divisions on the surrounding hills and mountains. This meant that the Union Army had no choice but to either fight their way out or surrender. They chose to fight. Geography also played a role in the protection of states like Georgia and Alabama. The Appalachian Mountains form a barrier that the Union Army had to cross in order to reach cities like Atlanta. Chattanooga was the perfect place to establish a foothold in the area because it sits in a valley between the mountains and has the means, by both river and rail, to be accessible by both men and supplies.²⁹

Though geography played a key role in the Chattanooga Campaign, nothing was more influential to the campaign than politics. Both the Northern and Southern governments were in contact and control of much of their respective armies. This could be good or bad, and in the case of the Army of Tennessee it was a bad thing. The war in the East preoccupied Jefferson Davis and his war department, leading Bragg and the Army of Tennessee being of less importance to the Confederate leaders. They felt that the Eastern armies deserved more attention than those in the West, because of their supposed importance. The

²⁹ Cozzens, 15-17

importance of the East, as stated earlier, was in large part due to its proximity to both capital cities, larger population, and the belief that the war would be won or lost in the East rather than the West. As a result, Davis considered Bragg and the Army of Tennessee less important to securing a Confederate victory.³⁰

Politics played a role in the Army of Tennessee by way of the junior officers. Hardee, Polk, and Longstreet sought to remove Bragg from command by disobeying his orders and writing to Davis about the ineptitude of their leader. General Hardee went as far as to write Davis about the decision to retire from Murfreesboro. The General wrote that he agreed with the decision to retire, but also that he felt compelled to let Davis know that the officers in the Army of Tennessee felt it was time for Bragg to be relieved of his command. Hardee stated, "I feel that frankness compels me to say that the general officers, whose judgment you have invoked, are unanimous in the opinion that change in the command of this army is necessary."³¹ Luckily for Bragg, Davis believed in him and had no other real options for his successor. Hardee, Polk, and Longstreet used both military and political means in their attempt to get Bragg ousted as commander of the army. They wrote to Davis, other generals, and even recorded the military actions so that Bragg looked inept. In their defense, Bragg did have many blunders during the campaign, but they were overwhelmingly the result of something Hardee, Polk, and later Longstreet did or said.³²

³⁰ Keegan, 65-66.

³¹ Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, *General William J. Hardee: Old Reliable* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1965), 148.

³² Woodworth, 32-34

When examining any campaign or battle of any war, it is important to look at all the factors that played into the results. Throughout the war, politics, geography, and culture played crucial roles. Battles are important to knowing what happened, but it takes more than military actions to understand why events transpired as they did. The Chattanooga Campaign is no different in this aspect. Politics, culture, military strategies, and geography all played crucial roles in the outcome of this campaign.

This work aims to examine the military events of the Chattanooga Campaign, while illustrating that the outcome was due to a variety of events. Chattanooga represented a last lifeline for the Confederacy. The infighting and ineptitude of the Southern leaders caused one of their last vital cities to fall into the enemies hands. The goal is to show the importance of Chattanooga to the South, and that its loss was the beginning of the end. By looking at military events, political influences, geography, and the all important insubordination by Bragg's junior officers, it becomes easier to understand how and why Bragg lost the campaign.

Chapter 1: Fall 1862-Summer 1863

Fall 1862 saw General Braxton Bragg and his Army of Tennessee retreating back into Eastern Tennessee after a failed invasion of Western Kentucky. In the late fall Bragg, with General Smith, entered Kentucky with roughly 40,000 men. The invasion took place around Perryville in the western part of the state. General Kirby Smith believed invading Kentucky would garner support from its inhabitants, but he was wrong. Instead, Smith and Bragg were greeted by General Don Carlos Buell and the Union Army. Buell repelled the Confederate attack by the sheer size of his army. General Kirby Smith believed the Union was not attacking with their full force, yet the Confederates were still forced to retreat.³³ Many Kentucky residents did not support the rebellion. According to historian John Keegan, "Kentucky was probably the most borderline of all the border states, counted by both sides as part of their governed territory with regiments and large numbers of young men in both their orders for battle."³⁴ This made the invasion of Kentucky rather difficult for both armies. They had to be aware of where they were and whom they could trust, which made for a difficult invasion for the South. Eventually Bragg and his army had to retreat back

³³ *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C., 1880-1900), Ser. 1 Vol. XVI pt.2, 959, hereinafter cited as *Official Records*.

³⁴ Keegan, 157-158

into Tennessee rather shortly after the initial invasion took place. The situation in Kentucky was not unlike that in Eastern Tennessee.³⁵

Bragg's army found itself looking to hold Eastern Tennessee after failing in Kentucky. The Confederacy could not stand to lose any more territory to the North, especially places that grew valuable food stores. The goal of the Army of Tennessee was to hold the area around Murfreesboro, and try to retake Knoxville from the Union Army. By late October 1862 the Army of Tennessee was trying to mount an offensive that was hastily and poorly planned. The Confederate government wanted Bragg and his army to maintain their hold on East Tennessee around Murfreesboro, while planning to attack and recapture Nashville.³⁶

The first obstacle for the Army of Tennessee to overcome was their lack of organization. In November Bragg reorganized his army into three corps led by Leonidas Polk, William Hardee, and Kirby Smith, but by December it would be dispersed. To bring more balance to Hardee and Polk's corps, Bragg broke up Patton Anderson's division between the two and assigned John Breckenridge's division to Hardee. This only brought more confusion to the army. Another cause for the organizational issues was the entire army was spread out and lacked cohesion. This was especially true for Bragg's cavalry. Upon taking over the Army of Tennessee, Bragg established a new cavalry system. In it, General Nathan Bedford Forrest, Colonel John Morgan, and Colonel Joseph Wheeler all commanded a segment of the cavalry with orders to interrupt the Union

³⁵ Connelly, 31-32;

³⁶ Connelly, 14

communication system. The entire Confederate Cavalry was spread out away from the army disrupting the Union Army, leaving the Southern Army oblivious to Union movements.³⁷

According to Union Brigadier-General of Volunteers Thomas J. Wood, "My people captured last evening a very intelligent negro who belonged to a Texan Ranger who was killed in the attack on the stockade on the 29th. This negro gives a very intelligent account of General Forrest's movements for the last two weeks. He says Forrest left his train at Decatur, in Meigs County, on the Tennessee River, two weeks ago, since which time he has been roaming around, hunting for small parties and trains to capture, and subsisting on the country."³⁸ It was evident, even to the Union, that the Confederate Cavalry was roaming around the countryside making the Confederate Army blind to their movements. Without the cavalry nearby, Bragg had little scouting reports of Rosecrans movements. This also helped to thin Bragg's army even more.

By the time Bragg had reentered Tennessee he began making plans to retake Nashville from the Union. The government and army officials were in favor of this plan, but Bragg was ill prepared. By October 23 the Confederate Army had yet to make a move on Nashville and seemed it would not do so any time soon. At this time Bragg even admitted to the Confederate government that his army was so unorganized that he could not even estimate its strength. Upon learning this information the government requested Bragg's presence in Richmond to discuss his plans. While away, Bragg left Leonidas Polk in charge with a vague

³⁷ Connelly, 26

³⁸ Official Records XVI, 901

instruction on how to handle the situation. In his correspondence to Polk, Bragg sent maps with the instruction to lead as he saw fit.³⁹ This was the only instruction given. Polk was to take a position he thought desirable. This illustrates how vague Bragg's perception of the entire situation was, and how he trusted a man that he should not have.⁴⁰

Along with disorganization, Bragg dealt with the lack of supplies that his men were receiving. By fall 1862 the Army of Tennessee was on the verge of collapse from sheer lack of necessary supplies. They were poorly fed, and dressed, and the men were flat out exhausted. Though they were camped on rich farmland, the Army of Tennessee was essentially starving due to its lack of food. This was because the majority of crops grown in the area were being shipped to Lee's army in Virginia. Essentially Bragg and his men were defending an area in which they could draw no necessary sustenance. Even clothes and other basic military essentials were being shipped out of Middle Tennessee to Virginia. These conditions made for an improperly supplied army, whose morale was only shrinking.⁴¹

The Army of Tennessee was starving, yet their government would not allocate them proper supplies. Eventually the army resorted to scavenging and foraging for food, but it did not take long for them to exhaust the region's supply. The problem the South faced was the lack of food grown in the region. The food stores they had were not enough to support both armies and a civilian population

³⁹ Official Records XXIII pt.2, 684-685

⁴⁰ Woodworth, 8-11

⁴¹ Connelly, 17

in the area, and on top of this the government took what food there was away for disbursement in the Virginia theater.

The situation in the Western Theater was in complete chaos. It was absolutely irrational that Bragg's men were starving and half clothed in an area that could more than adequately supply them. The Confederate government put so much emphasis on the war in the East, that those fighting in the West suffered tremendously. This was one of the major downfalls of the entire campaign and apart from poor leadership, affected the outcome. The Army of Tennessee always came second to Lee and the armies in the East.

Not until December 31, 1862 did the Union and Confederate Armies engage in battle at Stones River. Bragg decided to take the defensive and stand his ground at Murfreesboro. This was a bad decision because the town offered a poor defense against the Union Army and could be easily flanked, pushing the Confederates out of the town. Upon entering Murfreesboro, Bragg spread the army out over a fifty-mile stretch, and formed a defensive line. The line was to protect and defend the roads leading into the town. Unfortunately for Bragg and the army, this merely weakened the army as well as threatened to cut off part of it. Making a successful stand at Murfreesboro was out of the question after Bragg ordered his men to spread out in such a poorly defensible area.⁴²

William Rosecrans and the Army of the Cumberland opposed Bragg and the Army of Tennessee. Rosecrans took command for the Union after Major General Don Carlos Buell was relieved of duty because he did not pursue the

⁴² Eicher 419-428

Confederate Army into Tennessee quickly enough. Shortly after replacing Buell, Rosecrans was given an opportunity to show his fighting spirit to the leaders in Washington. Upon learning of the movement of troops from Bragg's army to Mississippi, Rosecrans planned to attack the Confederate Army. On December 26, 1862 the Army of the Cumberland left Nashville and headed towards Murfreesboro.⁴³

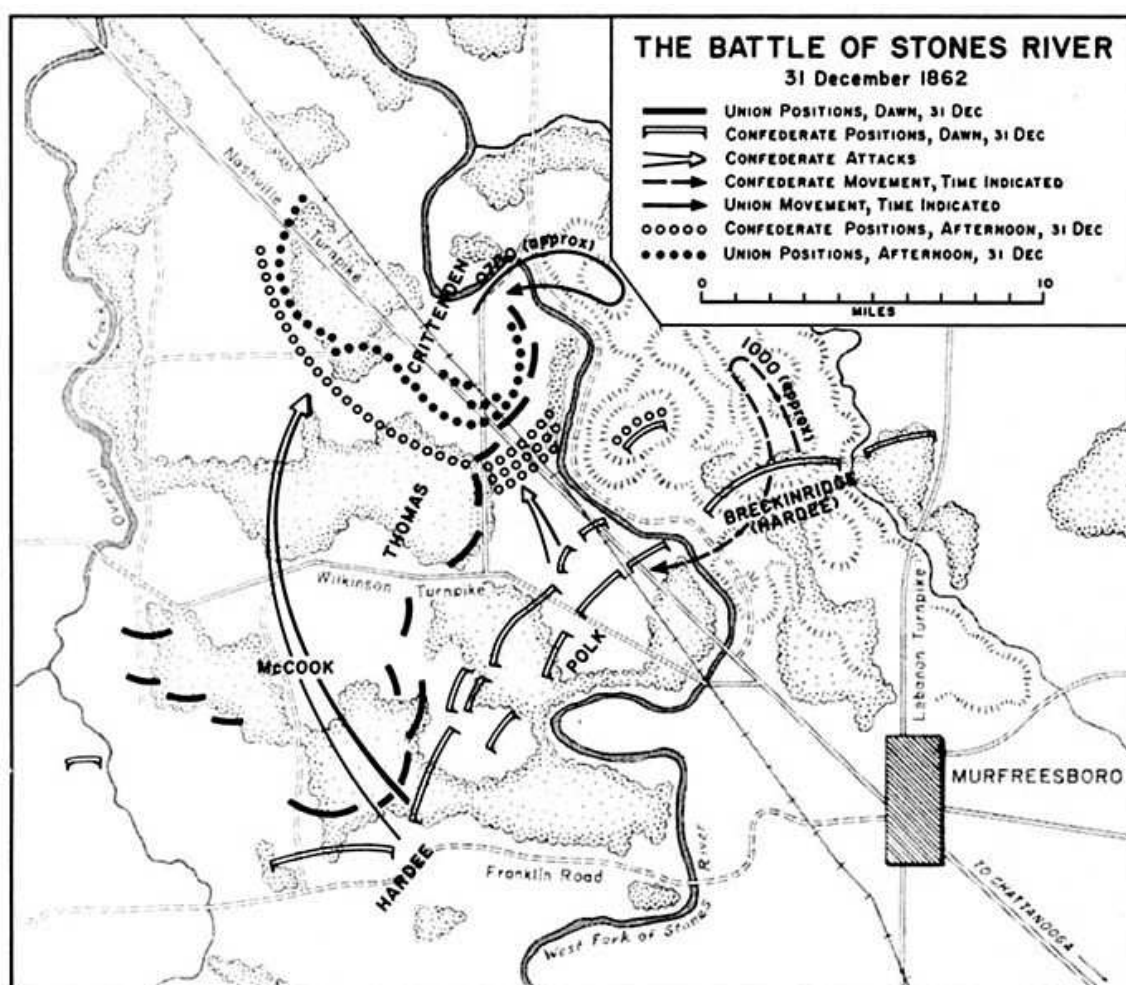
The Battle of Stones River lasted from December 31 to January 2 and was one of the most important battles in Middle Tennessee. The first day of battle the Confederates pushed the Union right flank back to the Nashville Turnpike. Here the Union troops were able to hold their ground. After the first day's fighting, Bragg believed that the Union Army would retreat and ordered his troops to stay in place rather than to continue pressing the Union right flank. By the late afternoon Bragg ordered an attack of the Union left flank by General John Breckenridge. Breckenridge and his men were nearly successful in breaking the Union left flank, but were stopped by Union artillery.⁴⁴

By the end of the first day's battle, the Army of Tennessee clearly had the advantage over the Army of the Cumberland. Overnight saw a change in the momentum of the battle. At the end of the first day's fighting, the Union Army fortified themselves into their position on a hill just east of Stones River. According to Rosecrans' official report of the battle, their initial goal was to hold the right flank while the left crossed the river and headed into town that way. "The plan of the battle was to open on the right and engage enemy sufficiently to hold

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Keegan, 176-177; Eicher, 419-428

him firmly, and to cross the river with our left," wrote Rosecrans.⁴⁵ This was thwarted by the full frontal attack made by the Rebels on the Union right flank. The strong Confederate attack made Rosecrans change his strategy, and he decided to reinforce the right wing of his army with his left. Rosecrans and the Union Army were able to successfully repel the Confederate attacks by doing this.⁴⁶



Battle of Stones River⁴⁷ b

⁴⁵ *Official Records* XX pt.1, 184

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ "Battle of Stones River" (30 June 2013) <http://www.history.army.mil/books/AMH/Map10-25.jpg>

Fortifications and reinforcements helped lead to a successful second day for the Union. At 4 A.M. on January 2, Bragg ordered Breckinridge to attack the Union line. Breckinridge believed this to be a suicidal attempt. Ignoring his officers pleas, Bragg continued with his plan to attack the well fortified Rosecrans. The attack was a failure, the Union artillery was able to decimate the Confederate Army from across Stones River. By the end of the day it was obvious that the assault had been a failure. Not long after, Bragg realized that the Army of the Cumberland had been reinforced and the Army of Tennessee stood no chance against a reinforced and well fortified enemy. By January 3 Bragg ordered the retreat from Murfreesboro and into Tullahoma.⁴⁸ A couple days after the attack and retreat Bragg wrote, "Unable to dislodge the enemy from his intrenched position, and learning of re-enforcements to him I withdrew from his front night before last."⁴⁹ Bragg believed that he stood no chance against Rosecrans in his current position, so he ordered the retreat.

The Battle of Stones River was only the first of the losses for the Confederacy during the campaign. Additionally, this battle provides a good depiction of how superior Union movements would trump any supposed advantage the Confederates had. At Stones River, the Army of Tennessee was beaten because Bragg assumed that he had won, though he had only pushed the Union Army back. During the entire war the lack of enemy pursuit often came back to haunt those who believed they had won. For Bragg, this was why he and his army were unsuccessful at Stones River. If Bragg had continued his attack

⁴⁸ Eicher, 424-428

⁴⁹ *Official Records* XX pt.1, 662

against Rosecrans instead of letting him fortify and reinforce his position, then the Confederacy would have stood a better chance at victory.

After Stones River the Army of Tennessee retreated into the town of Winchester. In his accounts of the Battle of Stones River, Bragg blamed much of the loss on his subordinates. According to his accounts, "The Failure of Major-General McCown to execute during the night an order for a slight change in the line of his division, and which had to be done the next morning, caused some delay in the general and vigorous assault by Lieutenant-General Hardee."⁵⁰ It is important to note that Bragg does not blame the entire loss on his subordinates, but rather shows their inability to execute orders cost them a victory. The failure to execute orders plagued the Army of Tennessee and cost them dearly. Bragg's subordinates disobeyed him because they were trying to make him look bad. He believed that some sought to acquire his position, while others were simply covering their own mistakes. He was correct in both assumptions. Bragg states that his reasoning for retreating from Stones River was necessary in order to save his army. He felt that to fight another day, the army needed to survive and retreat to a better defensive location, especially, since the Union had become so well fortified and reinforced.⁵¹

If the Battle for Chattanooga signaled the end of the Confederacy, the loss at Stones River was the beginning of that end. Stones River was not the opening Bragg or any of the Confederate leaders had hoped. It is interesting though that despite the loss, Bragg was still confident and believed the army accomplished

⁵⁰ *Official Records XX pt.1, 664*

⁵¹ *Ibid*

more than they had lost. He listed the capture of prisoners and artillery pieces as positives, while also noting that during the battle Nathan Bedford Forrest and his cavalry were successful in raids into Western Kentucky. This is interesting because one would believe the extra fighting force of Forrest and his men would have been greatly welcomed by Bragg and his men. Instead Bragg justifies the absence of Forrest. This is because of the success of Forrest's raid in West Tennessee and North Kentucky.⁵²

The Chattanooga Campaign started with the Battle of Stones River, and the importance of this loss can not be underestimated. This battle set up the rest of the campaign. After Stones River, Bragg and his army knew exactly how quickly the Union Army could reinforce and supply itself. They gained a complete understanding of what they were up against, and this began to make Bragg a little nervous. The campaign was one of the most important for the Confederacy during the entire war, but they were unable to hold their initial position in Tennessee and slowly relinquished the rest of the state one part at a time. They blew their chance at stopping the Union.

When it became overwhelmingly evident that the Confederate Army stood little chance against the Union, Bragg and his staff decided that it was in their best interest to retreat and abandon Murfreesboro. In doing so they gave up seventeen-hundred wounded and sick men, along with medical personnel. By mid-afternoon on January 3 the Confederate Army began pulling out of Murfreesboro. In another example of poor leadership, Bragg had not planned for

⁵² *Official Records XX pt.1, 672*

a retreat and thus had no idea exactly to where his army would be retreating. Not planning a retreat was not uncommon during the war, but most of the time generals had an idea of what their next moves were to be in multiple scenarios. Bragg did not plan appropriately and it was evident in his actions when the decision to retreat was made. Despite this lapse, the army ultimately decided to retreat into the Shelbyville area.⁵³

Shortly after arriving in Shelbyville, Bragg decided that it was best to push onto Winchester and form a defensive line along the Duck River. The Army of Tennessee held this position for six months. During this time the army established headquarters at Winchester, Tullahoma, and Shelbyville. The army spent their time here drilling and bolstering its ranks in preparation for the Union's attack. During the encampment along the Duck River the dissatisfaction of Bragg's actions came about again. Bragg was being judged and scrutinized for his actions at Murfreesboro which caused him to call a meeting with his commanders and discuss the retreat from Murfreesboro. Bragg stated that if the accusations that he was not supported were true, he would retire as commander. The commanders concluded that, "Under existing circumstances the general interest required that Gen. Bragg ask to be relieved."⁵⁴ Bragg then asked each general to provide written proof that they had supported the retreat. Hardee's response was that while he supported the retreat, Bragg should still be removed. Hardee was no longer holding back his discontent for Bragg. The inactivity

⁵³ Connelly, 66-68

⁵⁴ Hughes, 148

allowed them plenty of time for this, and Bragg did not help himself with his inaction and uncertainty either.⁵⁵

While the Confederate Army was encamped along the Duck River, Rosecrans and the Union Army entered Murfreesboro and began making it their headquarters. The Union was busy establishing supply lines and entrenching themselves within the city, while planing their next move. Rosecrans was trying to find the best possible way to confront Bragg and his army. A full frontal attack at Shelbyville did not seem the wisest choice, so Rosecrans decided to look to the gaps between the mountains. He considered using Bell Buckle or Liberty's Gap, which would bring him squarely into contact with Hardee's division. His other options were to go around the Confederate Army, but this would take more time and be far from the reach of railroads. President Lincoln prodded Rosecrans to take action, but Rosecrans felt that he needed additional time. Like McClellan, Rosecrans did not take action until he felt it was the right time.⁵⁶

It was not until June that Rosecrans and the Union Army made their advance on the Confederate line. Rosecrans waited for what he considered the right time to attack. Bragg could do nothing but wait for an attack because of his placement of troops. There were a couple of problems with this strategy. First the positions held along the Duck River by the Southern army made for a poor defensive line. Bragg had stretched his already thin army too much, while also sending troops to Mississippi, weakening them even more. In all his planning,

⁵⁵ Grady McWhiney, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat* (New York and London:Columbia University Press, 1969), 374-375; Hughes, 148

⁵⁶ Woodworth, 16-17

Bragg had not picked the strongest of defensive lines. The biggest area for concern for Bragg was his right flank, which could be flanked by routes from McMinnville through the Cumberland Mountains or by way of Manchester and Hoover's Gap. Because of these poor defensive positions, the Confederate Army was really unable to stand a chance against Rosecrans and the advancing Union Army.⁵⁷

Though the six months spent along the Duck River had their advantages, they did cause some major holes to appear in the Army of Tennessee. These included the resurgence of the anti-Bragg coalition and the demoralization of the soldiers. The inactivity during these six months led to restlessness and resentment from the soldiers. Even the newspapers began criticizing Bragg. The *Chattanooga Rebel* was one of the hardest on Bragg. It reported trouble for the army just three days after the Battle of Stones River. The paper heavily criticized Bragg, stating that he was not popular within the army, he had alienated his officers, and that his own troops felt no affection or confidence towards him. One of the biggest criticisms of Bragg was the retreat from Murfreesboro where the paper stated he retreated, "against the advice of his general officers."⁵⁸ Articles like this made Bragg even more paranoid and convinced him of the need to rid the army of the anti-Bragg faction. What he did not understand was that it had already spread too far.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Eicher, 496-498

⁵⁸ Hughes, 148

⁵⁹ Connelly, 74

Each of the issues presented to Bragg represented another obstacle for the Confederacy to overcome. As the war went on it became increasingly evident that the South was just not ready for a war of this magnitude. They lacked proper armaments, industry, mills, population, and support. In many ways the South was not unified enough for the war.⁶⁰ This was obvious in army divisions like the Army of Tennessee, where soldiers were starving and leadership qualities were questionable at best. During these critical times the Confederacy crumbled under the pressure they faced. It was not one large issue that brought the Confederacy to their knees, but rather a culmination of small ones. The year 1863 marked the beginning of the end for the South and much of it was due to their own failures.

The size of Rosecrans' army concerned Bragg the most. He believed that Rosecrans had an army of nearly 70,000 strong, it was only 56,000, but Bragg's own army was only some 30,000 strong and spread out along the Duck River from Wartrace to Columbia, fifty miles apart. The capability for Rosecrans to quickly reinforce himself was also worrisome to Bragg. General Buell was located in Nashville, just under sixty miles from the line established along the Duck River. Rosecrans had the ability to add additional troops within a day. The Army of Tennessee did not have this luxury, and Bragg had been petitioning Richmond for additional troops for months. With the inability to add additional troops while Rosecrans could, Bragg seemed to have lost his nerve to fight. He was anxious

⁶⁰ Keegan, 9-13

about the impending battle to come and felt that he needed to ask his junior officers on their opinion.⁶¹

On June 29 Bragg called Hardee and Polk into a conference to discuss their opinions on the best course of action. This was a poor decision for Bragg because neither of these men believed him to be a competent leader and sought instead, his removal. Polk was convinced that if they were to stay in their current positions, they risked being trapped just as John C. Pemberton was currently at Vicksburg. Polk's immediate answer was to retreat. When Bragg asked him what he proposed, Polk replied, "There wasn't a moment to be lost in their retreat."⁶² Hardee felt that Polk's suggestion of retreat should be considered, but he offered another plan as well. This plan was to station large detachments along key points of the railroad. This was a viable option, but would deplete an army that was already insufficient to begin with. After conferring with both men, Bragg chose to heed the advice of Polk and retreat from the Duck River area.⁶³

By the morning of June 30 Bragg learned of activity in his rear by Union infantry and cavalry, part of which had been able to cut his communications with Chattanooga. It was time for action from Bragg, and it had to happen quickly and efficiently to not have his army destroyed or captured. Bragg's intelligence discovered a Federal column advancing from Manchester. This Union advance was coming along the north bank of the Duck River and sought to take control of bridges at Bethpage and Estill Springs. At this point that Bragg ordered Joseph

⁶¹ Connelly, 93, 112-113; Eicher, 496; McWhiney, 375

⁶² Woodworth, 39

⁶³ Ibid

Wheeler to find out what Rosecrans' left flank was doing. Bragg ordered Wheeler to do this because he was left in the dark about this part of his enemy's actions.⁶⁴

During this time the Union Army was designing their plan for their assault on the Confederate line at Elk River. Rosecrans' basic plan was to render the Rebel entrenchments useless and secure their line of retreat if possible, while driving them from their entrenchments onto ground more suitable to the Union. The Union Army was going to do this by feinting an attack towards Shelbyville, but actually attack from Manchester. From June 25-30, Union troops had successfully deceived the Confederate Army and established themselves in Manchester. From here the Union Army began to advance on the Confederate positions along the river.⁶⁵

By mid-afternoon on June 30 Bragg believed that he was no match for Rosecrans and the advancing Union Army. This, in large part, could be seen as his loss of nerve, but most likely came from his corps of commanders who believed that their best option was to retreat. Polk suggested a retreat to the city of Cowan and to make a stand there at the base of the mountain. At 3:00 p.m. on June 30 Bragg gave the official orders to retreat from their positions along the river at nightfall. The order came exactly twenty-four hours after his initial meeting with Polk and Hardee. Had Bragg and his men elected to stay, they would have been met by the advancing Cumberland Army the next day, but

⁶⁴ Connelly, 131

⁶⁵ *Official Records* XXIII pt.1, 403-408

instead they chose to flee. If the army could not have beaten the Union here, they stood little chance to do so in any other area they fought.⁶⁶

Because the Army of Tennessee were so well entrenched in the area, they should have stood a respectable chance at beating the Army of the Cumberland. They were easily outflanked by the Union Army, but did not retreat into a better area for defense. The Army of Tennessee was well enough entrenched and fortified along the river that this was easily one of their best chances to turn the campaign in their favor, but they failed to do so. The Southern army gave up their best position of the entire campaign, and if they could not win here, they might as well give up.

By the morning of July 1, the Army of Tennessee was headed southeastward in retreat. Bragg had decided to fall back from Tullahoma, across the Elk River some eight miles away. Not until nightfall was the entirety of Bragg's army across the Elk River, due in large part to the poor conditions of the roads. After crossing the river, the Army of Tennessee quickly established their line. Hardee was to hold the right at Bethpage Bridge and Polk the left at Allisonia Bridge. This new line was hastily established and Bragg knew he must fight here or continue to fall back to a better area. Soon enough he realized that he must continue on past Elk River. The river would be able to be forded by Rosecrans at numerous locations, which would allow Hardee's right side to be easily flanked. Bragg decided to continue his retreat after realizing this.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *Official Records XXIII pt.2*, 895; Woodworth, 40

⁶⁷ Connelly, 132

Elk River was not falling as quickly as Bragg believed it would, which slowed Rosecrans' army significantly from their already sluggish pace. Had Bragg and his commanders foreseen this, it is reasonable to suspect they could have made a successful stand at Elk River. This was not to be the case though and the Army of Tennessee continued to push on after their short stay.

By this time Bragg had lost nearly half of Middle and Eastern Tennessee to the Union without much of a fight. To the Confederate government, and his own generals, it seemed as though Bragg was just giving up. This began to infuriate those that had put so much trust in him. To them, their commander was beginning to finally show his true colors. The importance of this campaign was evident to those around it, but it seemed as if they were doing little to win it. They had already given up wounded soldiers, supplies, and valuable land to the advancing Union Army, and could not afford to give up any more. Looking at this campaign from a historical view, it is evident that by late June 1863 there was little to nothing that the Army of Tennessee could do to stop the advancing Army of the Cumberland, and their commanders were certainly not going to help their cause.

In the morning hours of July 2 Bragg gave the order to retreat from the Elk River into the town of Cowan, which sits at the base of the Cumberland Mountains. Throughout the night of July 1 and even into July 2, Bragg constantly questioned his decision and changed his mind a few times. One of these changes came at dawn when Bragg ordered the army to stop at Decherd, but shortly after he changed his mind back to the original plan and continued on to

Cowan.⁶⁸ How could they possibly trust a man who did not even trust his own opinions?

Upon reaching Cowan, it became evident that staying there was not the final plan. Bragg began giving the orders for a further retreat shortly after reaching the town. This time their aim was Chattanooga. When Hardee and Polk advised a retreat from Elk River, it was their understanding that they were only retreating to Cowan where the army would make a stand, but this was not to be their final stop. Shortly after arriving in Cowan, Bragg gave the order for further retreat into Chattanooga. Bragg's reasoning for the retreat to Chattanooga was this, "We were now back against the mountains, in a country affording us nothing, with a long line of railroad to protect, and half a dozen passes on the right and left by which our rear could be gained. In this position it was perfectly practicable for the enemy to destroy our means of crossing the Tennessee, and thus secure our ultimate destruction without a battle. Having failed to bring him to that issue, so much desired by myself and troops, I reluctantly yielded to the necessity imposed by my position and inferior strength, and put the army in motion for the Tennessee River."⁶⁹

At this point Bragg had given up Middle Tennessee with hardly a fight. After he decided to retreat to Chattanooga, Bragg gave the government his reasoning by explaining that at Cowan his back was to the mountains, he had short rations, and he could not force Rosecrans to attack him. While the first two were a little true, the last was clearly to make himself look better. Often Bragg

⁶⁸ *Official Records XXIII pt.2*, 895; Woodworth, 38-39

⁶⁹ *Official Records XXIII pt.1*, 584

had run from a fight against Rosecrans and he hid behind excuses so that he would not look bad.⁷⁰

When looking at Bragg's reasoning for retreating further to Chattanooga, it becomes clear that he was only justifying his actions and that these were merely excuses. By the early afternoon of July 2, Rosecrans was bearing down upon Bragg. He had already crossed the Elk River and routed Wheeler's division away from Allisonia. The Union Army was able to do this by crossing the river just downstream from the Confederates location. Bragg was witnessing the first hand the loss of valuable territory and he continually made excuses to justify his actions.

Cowan was the preferred location to retreat for Polk and Hardee after Elk River, because they believed that it offered a good location for fighting. Writing to General William Mackall, Polk said, "In reply to your question, shall we fight on the Elk or take post on the mountain near to Cowan, I say take post near the mountain at Cowan. I think as many trains as possible should be sent over the mountain."⁷¹ Polk believed that this was the best place for their defense. The routes to Cowan would funnel the Union troops into the town and offered the Army of Tennessee a prime location to fight. Also the town had two good routes of retreat by way of University Place through the mountain or heading south through the Crow Creek Valley, should things go ill for the Southern army. This was just as good a location for fighting as the Confederate Army was going to find in the area. Like Duck River before, if the army could not make a proper

⁷⁰ Woodworth, 39-42; Connelly, 132-133

⁷¹ *Official Records* XXIII pt.2, 895.

stand here, then it might as well surrender. Polk and Hardee wholeheartedly believed that Bragg planned to fight at Cowan and that is why they suggested a retreat in the first place. They were wrong and the army would not stop retreating until it reached Chattanooga.⁷²

The order to retreat to Chattanooga was given quickly. Bragg simply decided that a retreat was their best plan, without discussing it with his fellow officers. The orders simply stated, "It is ordered by General Bragg that you move your corps to Chattanooga without delay," in a correspondence between General Mackall and General Polk.⁷³ It was becoming increasingly clear to them that their leader had no plans to fight, and that he was quickly running out of area to retreat to. Much of this his commanders could be held responsible for, but regardless Bragg should have fought before he reached Chattanooga. The last thing his corps commanders, or the Confederate government, wanted was for them to be backed into Chattanooga. This was a vital city, and as such the Army of Tennessee should have stopped the Army of the Cumberland well beforehand.⁷⁴

During a war the last thing an army, or country for that matter, wants is for the enemy to be at the door of important cities. The army should stop the enemy troops before they reach the city, because once they are there it is too late. Once the Union caught up with the Confederate Army at Chattanooga all they had to do was put the city under siege. This was exactly what the Confederacy wished

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ William W. Mackall. "BRIDGEPORT, July 5, 1863. Lieutenant-General POLK." In *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies XXIII*, 900.

⁷⁴ Connelly, 133

to avoid. They did not want and could not afford another situation like Vicksburg, having the Confederate Army would once again be under siege. The Confederate government did not want Bragg to retreat to Chattanooga, and neither did his commanders. If they were going to stop Rosecrans and the Army of the Cumberland, they had to do so before Chattanooga.

By July 4 the Army of Tennessee had reached the Tennessee River and slowly began crossing it and entering Chattanooga, which sits in the bend of the river just below Lookout Mountain. Though Bragg's army had made it to the town relatively unscathed, they had also made a key mistake in their retreat. When retreating from Cowan, Bragg forgot to order Wheeler to destroy the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. There was a lot of confusion in the orders Bragg gave during the retreat. Repeatedly Wheeler, Polk, Cheatham, and Hardee had to wait extended periods of time for orders, and many of the time those orders were unclear. This helped lead to the roads to the city not being properly blocked. The tunnel through the mountain was left untouched as they retreated as well. By not destroying these key railroad lines Bragg allowed Rosecrans a relatively easy approach to Chattanooga. They had destroyed some minor bridges, but the important ones were left alone. This is another clear error in leadership. Had Bragg ordered these routes destroyed, he would have bought himself critical time in which to better prepare for the approaching army.⁷⁵

As the campaign wore on, Bragg continually made critical errors such as the ones mentioned above. The main problem with these errors was the timing of

⁷⁵ Connelly, 134; *Official Records* XXIII, 899-901

them. Continually Bragg gave up valuable goods, soldiers, and land. Many leaders had to do this during the war, but most put up a better fight about it. Bragg gave up these crucial items with hardly a fight, which is different from most other leaders during the war. The most crucial error Bragg made was bringing the enemy to the doorstep of one of the last important cities in Tennessee held by the Confederacy. A siege of another important city was the last thing any leader wanted, and yet Bragg had set himself up for it. Most other commanders in the war avoided sieges, but Bragg seemed to welcome them. Chattanooga was a major rail hub and industry center that the Confederacy could not afford to give up, especially after the losses at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. By retreating to the city, he had essentially brought the hungry wolves to his door.

The first weeks of July were a trying time for the Confederacy. By this time the losses at Gettysburg and Vicksburg had demoralized their country and had allowed for the complete focus in the Western theater on the Army of Tennessee. Throughout the campaign so far, the only thing that had slowed Rosecrans' advancing army was rain and mud. The Army of Tennessee had abandoned several well fortified positions and eventually brought the fight to Chattanooga.

Chapter 2: Retreat to Chattanooga and North Georgia

One problem Bragg faced throughout his tenure as commander of the Army of Tennessee were his corps commanders. These men, led by William Hardee and Leonidas Polk, did not see Bragg as fit to lead the army and sought to remove him. They did this by any means necessary, and at times even took steps that were detrimental to the Confederacy. By the time the army reached Chattanooga, Hardee and Polk were more than ready to oust their commander. Prior to retreating to Chattanooga Bragg's officers had already stated their belief that he needed to be relieved. General Hardee was the most outspoken one, calling for Bragg's removal by name.⁷⁶

For Hardee and Polk suggesting that Bragg retreat into Chattanooga only helped further their agenda. Neither of them believed that Bragg was competent to run the Army of Tennessee. There had been anti-Bragg sentiment earlier but it was really during the six months encamped along the river that those against Bragg gained an even stronger foothold in the army. In their accounts of the Battle at Stones River both Polk and Hardee made sure to illustrate the incompetence of their leader. This occurred before the encampment along Duck River. According to Hardee's correspondence with Bragg on January 12, 1863, "In reference to the retreat, you state that the movement from Murfreesboro was resisted by you for some time, after advised by your corps and division commanders. No mention of Retreat was made to me until early morning of the

⁷⁶ Hughes, 147-148

3d January.”⁷⁷ This was merely a disagreement, but it shows that Bragg did not consult all of his generals in discussing the retreat. This made Bragg look incompetent, which was what Hardee wanted.

Shortly after Hardee and Polk advised Bragg to retreat, Hardee wrote Polk a note in which he seriously considered overthrowing Bragg and taking command of the army. Hardee wrote, “I have been thinking seriously of the condition of this army. What shall we do? What is Best to be done to save this army and its honor? I think we ought to counsel together. Where is Buckner?”⁷⁸ It is clear that many of the corps commanders in the Army of Tennessee did not trust Bragg and wanted him gone. Bragg only added fuel to the fire by ordering his army to retreat. This time it was going to take more than the Confederate Government to keep his commanders in line.

It is important to understand that the feelings against Bragg spread farther than Hardee and Polk. Other corps commanders, such as Benjamin Cheatham, Patrick Cleburne, and John Breckenridge, were also unhappy with Bragg’s leadership. What made their plans against Bragg so effective, was that Bragg did not fully understand who was against him. One of their ways to make Bragg look bad was to ignore his orders. Polk and Hardee were especially good at this. While the army was visited by Jefferson Davis’ aide-de-camp, William Preston Johnston, Polk and Hardee told him that the army had lost faith in Bragg. Johnston was the son of Albert Sidney Johnston, a friend of President Davis, and

⁷⁷ *Official Records XX pt.1*, 683

⁷⁸ Woodworth, 41

was close to both Bragg and Polk. His relationship with both Bragg and Polk led to a report that did not properly indicate the true trouble the army was in.⁷⁹

Throughout the war, Bragg was saved by those who favored him. The events above are a prime example. Bragg was friends with or supported by many in the Confederate government and this continually helped his military career. This favoritism also led to tensions within his command. To Polk, Hardee, and others, Bragg was not competent to lead. They believed that he was making mistakes, which cost the Confederacy, the relinquishing of Middle and Eastern Tennessee being the most recent mistake.

As the campaign progressed, the anti-Bragg faction took greater steps to try to remove Bragg. By writing to the Confederate government, disobeying orders, and having secret meetings, these corps commanders were able to hinder the progress of the army. That is what is so confusing. One might not like their leader, but to win a campaign, let alone a war, everyone has to work together. In the Army of Tennessee this was not the case. There was so much dissension and disloyalty, that the army could not function. It is easy to blame Bragg, because he failed in crucial situations, but many of his mishaps were due to his subordinate officers disobeying him. For the Army of Tennessee the disloyalty and leadership issues were only beginning. In just a few more weeks the leadership problems would reach an apex with the arrival of James Longstreet and his division.

⁷⁹ Connelly, 87

In late July and early August 1863 Bragg and the Army of Tennessee withdrew into the town of Chattanooga. It was here that the General hoped to bolster his army again and be able to hold off Rosecrans. Bragg was not the only one petitioning the Confederate government for more troops. Leonidas Polk also wrote James Seddon, the Confederate Secretary of War, asking for more available troops. On July 26 Polk requested use of Buckner's troops. These extra men would put the Army of Tennessee at an estimated strength of 70,000 to 80,000, and would allow them to move upon Rosecrans. Polk sought to recapture the lost territory and drive the Union Army out of the area. These were farfetched ideas, but they convey the attitude that the Army of Tennessee needed more men and needed to go on the offensive rather than sit and wait for Rosecrans to attack.⁸⁰

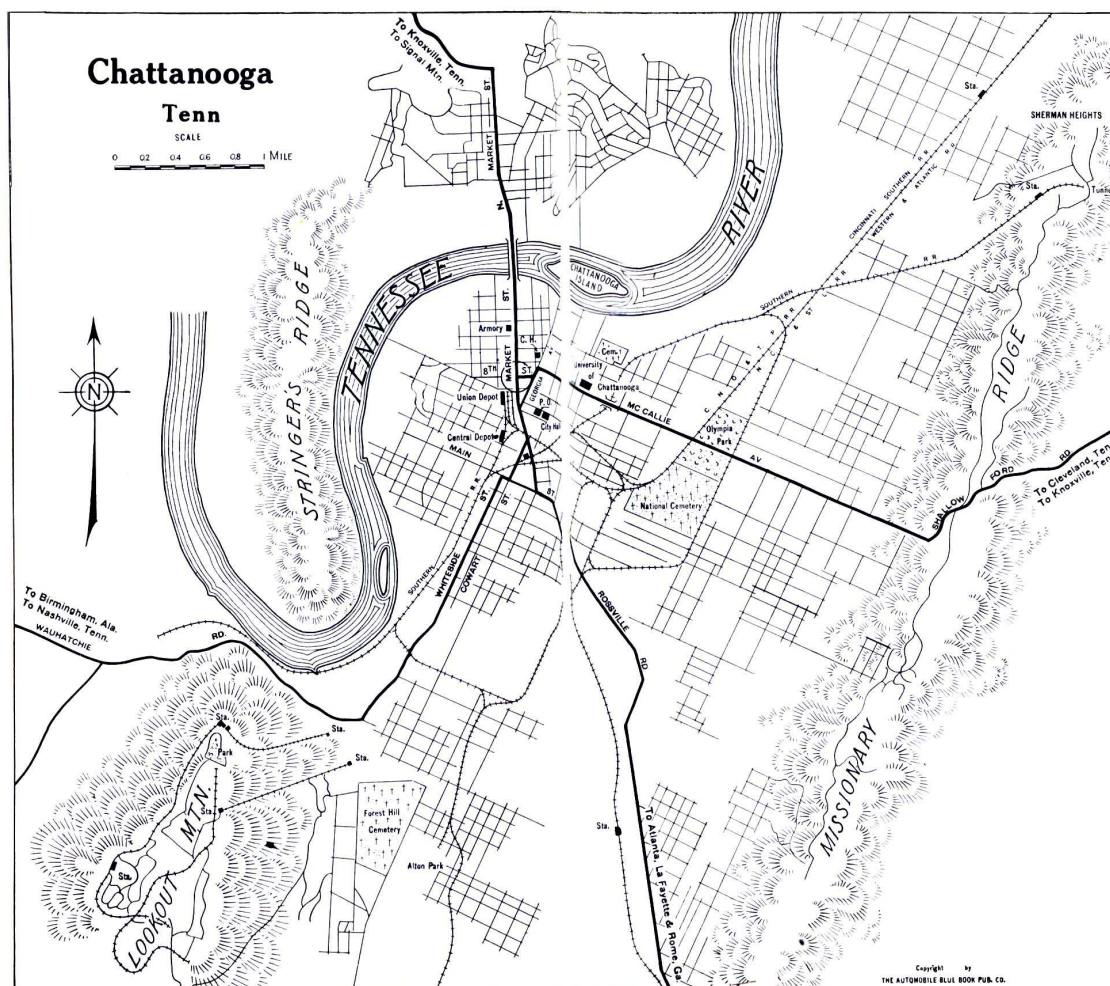
After driving the Confederacy from their line at Duck River, Rosecrans and the Union Army were gathering their strength for offensive operations to begin in late August. At this time the Union Army had an estimated strength of 60,000 to 70,000 men, making Polk's request for more troops even more important. Rosecrans made his base in the Cowan-Decherd area while waiting to strike Chattanooga. From this point the Federal troops could attack the Rebels from multiple points. Rosecrans had his sights on taking the city.⁸¹

Chattanooga seemed a prime defensive location for Bragg and his army due to the terrain. The city was surrounded by mountains and there were few large roads by which an army could travel that entered the town. Both the main

⁸⁰ *Official Records* XXIII, 933

⁸¹ Connelly, 138,145

front of the Cumberland Mountains and Walden's ridge protected the city, which also lay on the Tennessee River. These natural barriers into the city led Bragg and the army to believe that Chattanooga would make for the perfect defensive area. To his west, Bragg had Sand, Lookout, Missionary Ridge, Pigeon and Taylor's Ridge protecting his left flank and offering little in viable roads usable by the Union.



City of Chattanooga⁸²

At first glance Chattanooga seemed like an impregnable defensive position for the Army of Tennessee, but due to the layout of the terrain it was open to a wide frontal assault by Rosecrans. From their base in the Cowan-Dechard area, the Union Army could move on the Confederate position and break their lines, while remaining relatively the same distance from their base. The entire front resembled a triangle with the base being Rosecrans advancing. This allowed the Union to approach from various fronts without greatly distancing

⁸² "City of Chattanooga" (30 June 2013) <http://mapas.owje.com/img/Mapa-de-la-Ciudad-de-Chattanooga-Tennessee-Estados-Unidos-1919-10912.jpg>

themselves from their supply line. Bragg had little knowledge of how and where the Union troops would advance. His approach was still precarious, but Rosecrans had multiple options in how the army would advance. This made Chattanooga less impervious than was initially believed.⁸³

The most important objective for the Army of Tennessee during their time in Chattanooga was their reinforcement. By the time Bragg's army had entered the city, they were facing a foe that was between 60,000 to 70,000, while the Army of Tennessee were under 40,000. Until this point Bragg and Polk believed that the addition of Johnston's troops would allow for an offensive against the Union. On August 2 Bragg wrote of Johnston's troops possibly joining him, "With the most of his force, if I correctly estimate them, I should look for success if a fight can be had on equal terms."⁸⁴ At this point Bragg and his commanders were optimistic about the addition of troops and making an offensive against Rosecrans. Their optimism would only last a short time though, until word from Hardee informed them that Johnston's army was smaller than anticipated.

By August 5, Bragg again wrote Richmond, but this time he informed them of their impossible goal. Bragg stated that it was unsafe to attack Rosecrans in his current position because of the lack of troops available. Even with the addition of Johnston and Buckner's troops, the Army of Tennessee could only muster 40,000. Rosecrans had 60,000 readily available men, with an additional 30,000 more if needed with Burnside returning to Kentucky from Mississippi. With the disparity in numbers, Bragg believed that it would be rash to attack the Union.

⁸³ Connelly, 145

⁸⁴ *Official Records* XXIII pt. 2, 948

To Bragg, all the enemy had to do was, “avoid battle for a short time and starve us out.”⁸⁵ Upon receiving Bragg’s message, President Davis agreed. Davis wrote to Secretary of War Seddon, “However desirable a movement may be, it is never safe to do more than suggest it to a commanding general, and it would be unwise to order its execution by one who foretold failure.”⁸⁶ At this point Bragg’s strategy had to change, he now had to prepare for a defensive fight.

July through early September saw the Confederate occupation of Chattanooga becoming more and more inept. The tensions between the generals still flared and the entire Confederate department in Eastern Tennessee was in shambles. By August 21 it seemed as if the Union Army was coming from everywhere. Rosecrans was beginning to make his move on the city. On the morning of August 21 Rosecrans stationed two divisions of Thomas’ corps near Battle Creek, and part of his cavalry had beaten Forrest’s men back to Yankeetown and Kingston. He had gained a foothold closer to Chattanooga. Rosecrans had still not officially decided where his army would cross the Tennessee River, but he was looking below Bridgeport, where the Confederacy would not expect.⁸⁷

Chattanooga could not be held if Rosecrans could gain a strong foothold across the Tennessee River. Bragg knew this and yet he did little to protect the bank from Yankee occupation. All the Union needed to do was station a small force on Walden’s ridge and from there bombard the city. In this position there

⁸⁵ *Official Records* XXIII pt. 2, 952-953

⁸⁶ *Ibid*

⁸⁷ *Official Records* XXX pt. 3, 99

was little the Confederate Army could do. Bragg knew this but did little to stop it. He conceded the river crossings west of the city. Two of these crossings, Kelly's and Alley's ferries, were the most opportune places for the Union to cross the river. By late August both of these crossings stood unguarded and just downstream from Bridgeport, and the ferries at Stevenson were not picketed. This was done even though Bragg knew that Rosecrans had repaired the route to Stevenson.⁸⁸

Rosecrans began making his move on Chattanooga and on August 29 had began crossing the river at Bridgeport and several other points just west of town. Bragg gained knowledge of these crossings but paid little attention to them, believing that Rosecrans was still northeast of the city. One of the reasons for this poor intelligence was the lack of cavalry. Bragg had no cavalry covering his front and barely 500 guarding along the river, making him virtually blind to Rosecrans' movements. Poor placement of troops and lack of quality leaders had again cost the Army of Tennessee. On August 31 it was reported that the Union was crossing the river at Caperton's ferry near Stevenson. With little to no resistance, the Federal troops were able to move over Sand and Lookout Mountain.⁸⁹

Rosecrans was not the only Union commander to be making a move in Tennessee at the time. General Burnside was also advancing into the state from Kentucky. With much regret Bragg ordered Buckner back to Hiwassee. Buckner's small force was no match for Burnside and risked being cut up if engaged in this

⁸⁸ Connelly, 164-165

⁸⁹ Connelly, 170

position. In his letter to Richmond, Bragg acknowledges his poor offensive position. He could not afford to leave his communication and supply lines, which made him a sitting duck for the Union Army. Still, Bragg sought to bring the enemy to an engagement that favored him and spare no effort to beat him. Davis replied to this by agreeing with Bragg and suggesting that they attack the weaker of the advancing armies first, and once they are conquered going after the second branch. In the meantime though he suggested Bragg try to operate against Rosecrans' communications line.⁹⁰

Rosecrans was now focusing on Bragg's weak left flank, where Bragg had placed Buckner and Forrest. On September 7 President Davis was informed that Burnside was in Knoxville and Rosecrans was just beyond the mountains and approaching cautiously towards the city.⁹¹ By September 9 the Union Army had taken Bragg's left and rear, while threatening his communications. Bragg feared the loss of communication and was willing to sacrifice the city to keep them.⁹² There had been a turnout of civilians from Georgia to help fight against the Yankees, but even with them Bragg and the Army of Tennessee stood little chance. Bragg had improperly placed his men and had poor intelligence of Rosecrans movements. The Army of Tennessee stood little chance because of these problems.⁹³

When Bragg and the Army of Tennessee retired into Chattanooga, it was because it offered superior protection, food stores, supply and rail lines, and

⁹⁰ *Official Records* XXX pt.2, 31

⁹¹ *Official Records* LII pt.2, 523

⁹² *Official Records* XXX pt.2, 22

⁹³ *Official Records* 52 pt.2, 523

good communications lines. To the outside observer Chattanooga was an impenetrable city that was protected by mountains and rivers, but, if improperly defended, it could easily be taken. The lack of organization and the disunion between leaders, again cost the army valuable men, supplies, and territory. Bragg was on the brink of again having to retreat due to improper tactics.

Jefferson Davis wrote Bragg on September 8 persuading him not to give up the Cumberland Gap. Davis knew it was important for the army to hold the area and he could not afford Bragg giving it up. Davis acknowledged that Rosecrans planned to force Bragg to evacuate Chattanooga, but he requested that he not. He wanted Bragg to fight Rosecrans. In his letter, Davis punched holes in Bragg's argument of retreating from Chattanooga due to Rosecrans' superior force. He suggests sending a force against Burnside and keeping him from joining Rosecrans. Davis stated, "Your dispatch has been considered; the position of Rosecrans and your opinion of his purpose indicates his plan to be to cause you to evacuate Chattanooga and then make his junction with Burnside. Your success must depend upon fighting the enemy in detail. If you cannot strike Rosecrans because of intervening mountains and distance, do not these reasons enable you to detach a sufficient force to crush the small army with which you report Burnside to have advanced to Knoxville and Loudon? This suggestion is based on your report."⁹⁴ Bragg wanted to retreat but Davis wanted him to fight, and used his own reports against him.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *Official Records* LII pt.2, 524

⁹⁵ *Ibid*

Davis' appeal to Bragg to fight was to no avail, and by September 9 Bragg was preparing to leave Chattanooga. He had come to the realization that Rosecrans was in a superior position and that his army stood little chance in their current state. Bragg and the Army of Tennessee began to abandon the town and would never again occupy it. On September 11 Bragg wrote from Dalton, Georgia that the Union Army had entered Chattanooga and had easily overtaken the small garrison he left behind. Bragg's next plan was to find proper supplies for his army in North Georgia, and begin to ascertain what Rosecrans' next steps were.⁹⁶

Like Murfreesboro, Cowan, Duck and Elk River, and the rest of Eastern and Middle Tennessee, Chattanooga was now in the possession of the Union. The city was just the last in line to fall due to Bragg's poor defensive strategy. At this point the general had little confidence in himself and placed what little he still had in the wrong men. Polk still led a strong anti-Bragg faction within the army, and within a short amount of time General James Longstreet's division would join them and cause even more chaos for Bragg. Losing Chattanooga to the Union Army was the biggest mistake of the entire campaign. Now the Union controlled one of the last railway and industrial towns in the South. They had also now broken through the Appalachian Mountains and were ready to strike into the Confederate underbelly. From this point on there was little Bragg or any Confederate leader could do to turn back Rosecrans.

⁹⁶ *Official Records XXX pt.2, 22*

The retreat from Chattanooga led the Army of Tennessee into the mountains and foothills of North Georgia on the La Fayette Road. Here they spent the next couple of weeks scouring the Georgia countryside looking for Rosecrans. Eventually the two armies found each other at the Battle of Chickamauga, but first they spent time in complete blindness as to where their enemy was.⁹⁷

North Georgia, like Eastern Tennessee, contains part of the Appalachian Mountain chain and is thickly covered in woodland. There are not many routes through these mountains and with all the underbrush in the woods, it is often hard to see far distances. The roads were very steep and rough, which made it difficult to move an army. One of the first goals of the advancing Union Army was to better the roads to make travel easier for themselves and those to come. According to Union reports the small Confederate divisions that remained in the vicinity of Chattanooga were timid, "The enemy attempted an ambush at the cross-roads, but was frightened off by an effort I was making to get into his rear."⁹⁸ These factors played a critical role in the first couple of days after the Confederate retreat. As Bragg's army retreated into North Georgia, General Thomas and his division were in pursuit.⁹⁹

The route the Union Army sought to pursue the Rebels was by way of McLemore's Cove. They made their way through gaps in the foothills and mountains that littered the terrain. These gaps included Dug Gap, Cooper's Gap,

⁹⁷ Connelly, 176

⁹⁸ *Official Records* XXX pt.3, 408

⁹⁹ *Ibid*

Blue Bird Gap, and Catlett's Gap. Bragg's army was located in La Fayette, which there were three main entrances into. The goal for the Southern army was to plug these gaps and not allow the Union through. This was easier said than done. At the beginning Bragg had little idea of what to do. His cavalry was spread out, from Dalton to LaFayette, and there were many unclear reports as to the actual movements being made by the Union Army. It was not until September 9 that Bragg finally began to understand the situation he was in. If he did not act fast he stood a good chance of being trapped on his route of retreat.¹⁰⁰

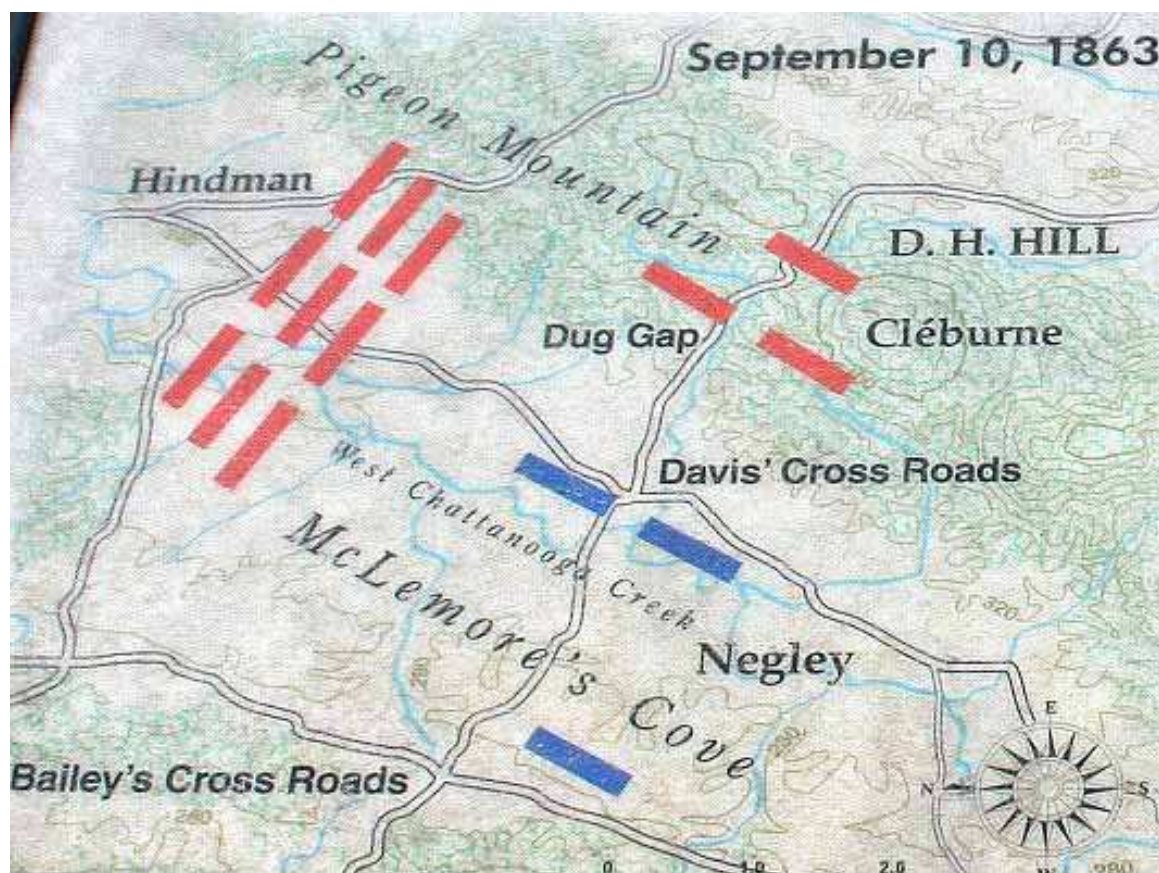
By noon on the ninth, Bragg had received intelligence that placed the Federal troops in Will's Valley. The reports were mixed about the strength of the enemy, but gave a clear indication that this was the route they were taking. The Union Army was reported to have anywhere from 4,000 to 40,000 men in the area. Because he was getting mixed reports and had no idea until noon of the actual Union location, Bragg could not give orders to attack. He could only give orders to protect gaps and the Confederate rear.¹⁰¹

Once the Union movements became clearer to Bragg, he began plotting how they would entrap the pursuing Union Army. The plan was for General Thomas Hindman to take his division to Worthen's Gap on Pigeon Mountain, and then work southward towards the cove until he reached Davis' crossroads. While this was happening, General Cleburne was to take his division of Hill's corps through Dug Gap and across Pigeon Mountain, meeting up with Hindman at the crossroads. From here the two divisions would join to attack the Union Army that

¹⁰⁰ Connelly, 174-175; *Official Records* XXX pt.3, 409-411

¹⁰¹ *Official Records* XXX pt.4, 629-630

was believed to be at the base of Lookout Mountain. There was trouble from the beginning with this plan. Hindman had left headquarters and covered the first half of the distance to his goal, but at roughly four miles away he stalled. Hindman had heard the gaps were blocked and waited until he heard from the other division.¹⁰²



McLemore's Cove¹⁰³

The other hinderance came when the courier carrying the orders from Bragg had trouble finding Hill. He did not receive his orders until five hours after they had been given, and upon receiving them gave numerous reasons as to why they could not be followed. This cost the army precious time and is just

¹⁰² Connelly, 175-177

¹⁰³ "McLemore's Cove" (30 June 2013) <http://img.groundspeak.com/waymarking/b6764b32-32a4-4945-b1c5-ddd8c42783ac.jpg>

another prime example of poor leadership and how they did not obey Bragg's orders. Due to Hill's complaints, Bragg then ordered Buckner's corps to move instead of Hill. This delayed the army further, and only helped the Union to gain more ground in pursuit.¹⁰⁴

By September 10 the Union Army was on the road to Rome, Georgia and was simply overpowering the smaller Confederate Army who was in desperate need of reinforcements. Reports were being sent to Bragg of the Union Army located in Steven's Gap towards the Davis' Crossroads, as well as in Dug Gap. They were reported to have a strength of 11,000 by civilians in the area. Hindman discussed this with Buckner and Anderson and they believed the best course of action was to fall back to Catlett's Gap towards La Fayette.¹⁰⁵ The fear of the Union Army had cost the Army of Tennessee again by causing its leaders not to move. It was becoming imperative that the Confederate Army stop the advancing Federal troops. If they were unable to do so soon, the Union would overtake the Army of Tennessee and the deep South would be open to them.

As September wore on, the Army of Tennessee's problems only increased. The lack of obedience from Hindman and Hill had kept the army from slowing or stopping the enemy's advance. The Army of Tennessee was now in a bind. Bragg had little idea of the exact movements of the Union Army, in large part due to his dispersed cavalry, and his leaders were not obeying orders. He and the army were in desperate need of reinforcements and better leadership.

¹⁰⁴ Connelly, 177-178

¹⁰⁵ *Official Records XXX pt.4, 634-636*

They would get the extra troops soon enough, but with them came more problems for Bragg's command.

Part of the problem for Bragg was Hindman, who continually refused to follow the general's orders on the tenth through the eleventh. The rest of Bragg's orders were contingent on waiting for Hindman's attack. The attack did not come until thirteen hours after the initial orders for it were given. The commands sent to Hindman were vague and did not directly order an attack, and allowed Hindman to do as he pleased or felt was right, instead of what was ordered. The orders stated, "General Bragg orders you to attack and force your way through the enemy to this point at the earliest hour that you can see him in the morning Cleburne will attack in front the moment your guns are heard."¹⁰⁶ Hindman continually called for a meetings with Cleburne and the other generals involved in the attack around Pigeon Mountain, and they agreed with Hindman to disregard Bragg's orders and seek a different area for the assault. It was not until thirteen hours after receiving Bragg's dispatch that Hindman finally ordered the advance on the word from scouts that said the Federals were retreating towards Steven's Gap.¹⁰⁷

Bragg did not know if Thomas' entire division was located in McLemore's Cove, but he was insistent on entrapping those who were there. The basic plan was for him to trap Thomas in the cove by plugging up the gaps that surrounded it. Polk, Hindman, and Cleburne's division were to move to the cove through Dug Gap, Rock Spring, and Catlett's Gap. Though he was experiencing resistance

¹⁰⁶ *Official Records XXX pt.2, 28-29*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*

from his subordinates, Bragg was also hesitant to making the attack on McLemore's Cove. His hesitation came from not fully understanding where Rosecrans was and what his movements were. All Bragg was certain of was that Crittenden's division was separate from Rosecrans. This was why on the eleventh Bragg and his men spent much of the day waiting on Hindman's attack that came later than ordered.¹⁰⁸

Bragg and his subordinates were frantically writing Richmond asking for more troops. They knew that Rosecrans army greatly outnumbered theirs, and if they were to stand a chance, they needed more men. Samuel Jones wrote the Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon stating, "I cannot too strongly express my conviction of the importance of having additional troops in this section of country."¹⁰⁹ Jones felt that there were not enough troops in Eastern Tennessee and those that were there did not meet the requirements they needed to stand against the Union. Jones felt that the men he had could not hold his position. Though Jones was located north of Chattanooga his plea for more troops was for the entire part of Eastern Tennessee. Without them it would be a one sided fight. On September 13 General Joseph Johnston indicated troops from Virginia were on there way.¹¹⁰

On the afternoon of September 11 a division of Crittenden's corps reached Lee and Gordon's Mill along the Chickamauga creek. General Frank Robinson tried to stop their advance, but was unsuccessful in doing so. By 3 a.m. he was

¹⁰⁸ Connelly, 185-186; *Official Records XXX* pt.4, 641-642

¹⁰⁹ *Official Records XXX* pt.4, 644

¹¹⁰ Ibid

forced to retreat from the north bank of the creek. At this point Bragg's plans for the assault changed and he focused now on Lee and Gordon's Mill rather than McLemore's Cove. Bragg sought to capture this lone division, just as he had Thomas' at the Cove. He ordered generals Cheatham, Hindman, and Walker to proceed to the mill by the Gordon Mill's, Pea Vine, and Ringgold roads. The attack was to begin as soon as possible and would start from the left wing. This time Bragg was looking to do what he failed to at the cove, but without the hindrance from Hindman.¹¹¹

The morning of September 13 Polk began advancing towards Lee and Gordon's Mill looking for the enemy. Cheatham's division skirmished with the Union troops shortly after noon but it was only a minor engagement. Later in the afternoon it was discovered and confirmed that Crittenden's division had escaped the trap Bragg tried to set. His escape can be attested to the hesitance that Bragg had, and also to the poor defense along the Pea Vine Road by which they escaped. This was the second time in a week that Bragg tried to trap a Union division and failed. His best opportunities to attack Rosecrans divided army had both been squandered. From this point on Bragg would have to face the full strength of Rosecrans army, not just a small division.¹¹²

This was the last time the Confederate and Union Armies engaged until the Battle of Chickamauga five days later. On September 14 and 15 Bragg reported little to no encounters with the enemy. His reports indicate that even though the Confederate Army sought out the enemy, they were nowhere to be

¹¹¹ *Official Records XXX pt.4, 645*

¹¹² *Official Records XXX pt.2, 76*

found and retired before any engagement could begin. Bragg was trying to make himself look better than he was at this point. He failed to properly strike when he had the opportunity, and now was making it seem as if he was seeking an enemy that was running from him. He later indicated that his goal was to turn them back to Chattanooga. Bragg would shortly find out that his opportunity to do this would come sooner than later.¹¹³

Throughout early September Bragg continually failed the Confederacy. First he relinquished Chattanooga, one of the last key cities in the Confederacy, to the Union with hardly a fight. Secondly he had squandered the opportunities that had presented themselves to him as a divided Union Army, not once but twice. His subordinates were again causing much of the problems for Bragg, but he had little option other than these men. Part of Bragg's problem were his lack of troops. Rosecrans army greatly outnumbered his and he desperately needed reinforcements. These extra troops would arrive just in time for the Battle of Chickamauga.

¹¹³ *Official Records XXX pt.2, 22*

Chapter 4: Chickamauga and Siege of Chattanooga

On September 19-20 the Confederate and Union Armies fought what was to become the bloodiest two days of the entire American Civil War. Between the two days, this North Georgia battlefield became the final resting place for 35,000 individuals. Much of the battle raged around Chickamauga Creek, which in Cherokee means “river of blood,” and on those two days it was just that. The battle was a great victory for the Confederacy, also their last, and would turn Rosecrans advancing army back to Chattanooga. For a brief moment the hopes of the South were once again rejuvenated, but that would be short lived. Chickamauga was a resounding defeat for the Union, and would ultimately cost Rosecrans his job. Until this point the Union Army had handily defeated the Confederates at every turn, and now it was the Confederacy’s turn to taste victory.

On September 18 the Union Army was spread throughout North Georgia, located at Lee and Gordon’s Mill, Glass’s Mill, and part still near McLemore’s Cove. On the 18th skirmishing began between Rebel infantry and cavalry and Union General Wood located at Gordon’s Mill. Bragg was focusing on the Union left at Gordon’s and Reed’s Mills located between Gordon’s Mill and Ringgold. It was unclear to the Union if the Confederacy planned on attacking their left with

great force or if this was some feint to trick them. Orders for the Union commanders were for them to hold their ground and prepare for an assault.¹¹⁴

Until the 18th Bragg's orders for the army were to stay in place, until it became clear to him exactly where the Union Army was located. The initial plans for the day were for General Walker's division to move to Alexander's Bridge and cross the Chickamauga, General Buckner was to move on Thedford's Ford and cross the creek there, General Polk was ordered to engage the enemy at Gordon's Mill, and General Pegram's cavalry would cover the front. Bragg ordered these to start at 6:30 A.M. On the night of the 18th Buckner was located just across the river and had briefly skirmished with the Union before the retreated, while General D.H. Hill found Owen's Ford abandoned by the Union and was anticipating a large attack the next morning.¹¹⁵

All along the Chickamauga Creek there was small skirmishing between the two armies. According to the reports Bragg was receiving, the Union had successfully retreated from their position but where expected to make a counter assault the next day. Much of the skirmishing was done by the Confederate cavalry, because of their ability to scatter and move quickly. Buckner and other generals did not want to scatter their divisions, but rather concentrate them in anticipation for the next days events. At the end of the day Bragg's orders to Wheeler were to protect the left flank. He was not sure exactly where the Union would attack the next day and wanted to make sure his left flank was properly

¹¹⁴ *Official Records XXX pt.1, 65*

¹¹⁵ *Official Records XXX pt.4, 662-665*

defended.¹¹⁶ After the previous failures, Bragg wanted to ensure that he took the proper steps for a victory. He was getting his army ready for one of the roughest battles of the war.

By midday on September 18, many of the Union pickets along the creek had been driven back. Thanks to prisoners and civilians it was ascertained that the Union camp was located opposite Owen's Ford. After learning this Bragg began to focus even more of his army on the left where he anticipated much of the fighting to take place. General Hill was to take his place on Polk's left, while Wheeler was ordered behind Hill's division and to protect the left flank. The cavalry was protecting the troop movements.¹¹⁷

After a day full of skirmishing and many movements, it was clear that the coming day would include a major battle between the two armies. Along the creek the soldiers camped and waited for the next days fight. Though the night was cold, few fires were allowed. The night was eerie and the wind blew, making it for a ominous night for what was to come.¹¹⁸

The Battle of Chickamauga began at roughly 10 a.m. when the Confederate Army attacked the Union left. Rosecrans positioned his troops so that Crittenden was concentrated around Lee and Gordon's Mill, General Thomas was spread from Negley south at Crawfish Springs, Reynolds was located to his north at the Widow Glen's house, Baird's division was located in Kelly's Field to the north, and Brannan was farther north yet. Rosecrans ordered

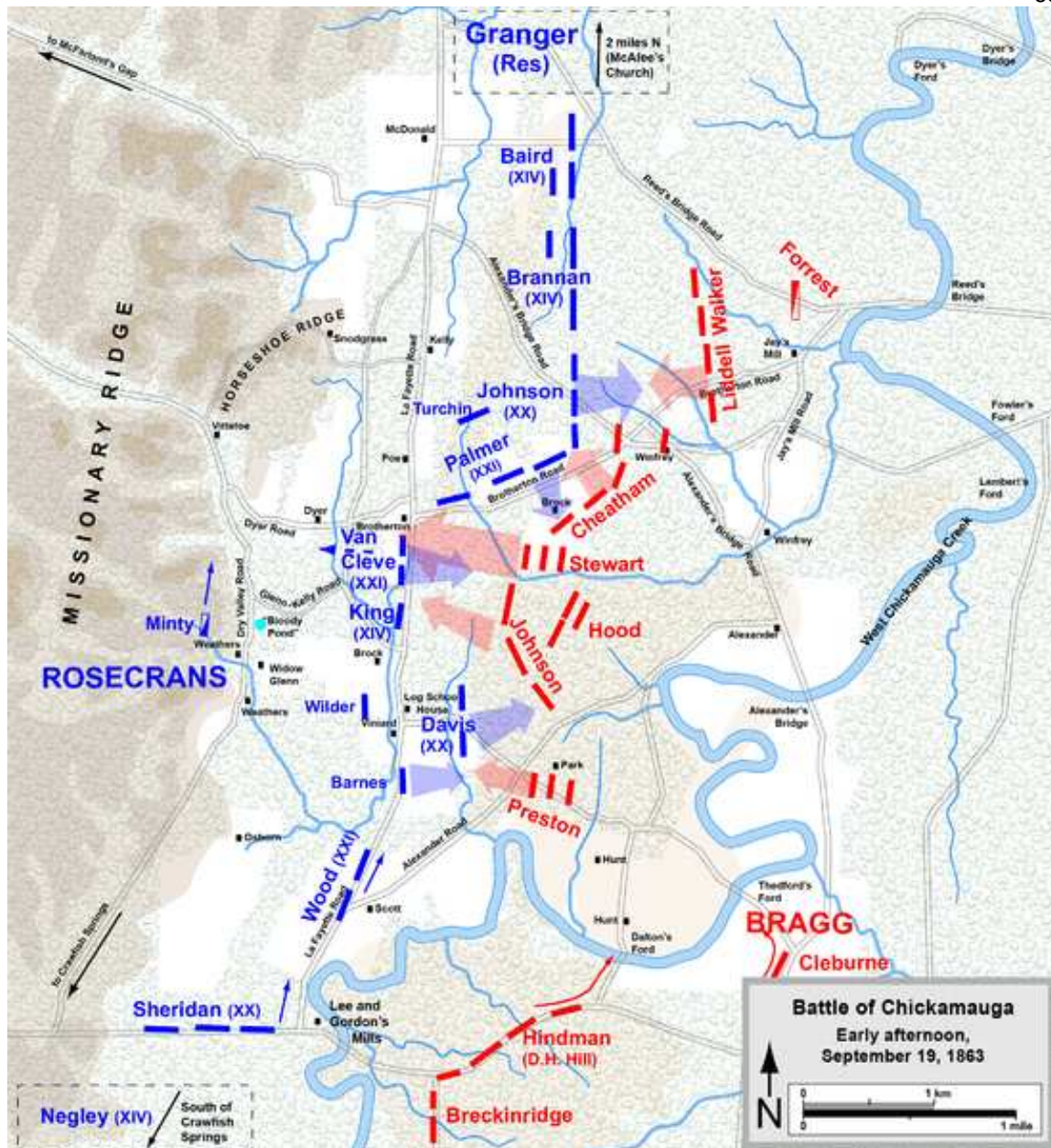
¹¹⁶ *Official Records XXX pt.4, 666*

¹¹⁷ *Official Records XXX pt.4, 667*

¹¹⁸ Connelly, 200

General Johnson to the left in assistance to General Thomas. When he learned of the focused attack on his left. By noon Rosecrans had ordered Thomas to form a line from northwest to southeast, hugging the mountain and protecting his right. Rosecrans was anticipating that Bragg would try to turn Thomas on his left by the Ringgold Road.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Eicher, 581; *Official Records XXX* pt.1, 66; Rosecrans, 710



Battle of Chickamauga Morning September 19¹²⁰

By 11:30 a.m. Union troops received news that General John S. Starkweather and Colonel Benjamin Scribner were attacked by surprise. Starkweather and Scribner's divisions were located south of the other federal units and their attack meant that the Confederate troops were now behind the

¹²⁰ "Battle of Chickamauga Morning September 19" (30 June 2013)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chickamauga_Sep19_1.png

Union. Men from both of the divisions scrambled away in the hopes of not being killed or captured. Four hundred men from Scribner's division surrendered, and the Confederate Army were also able to capture the Union field hospital and its wounded. The disorganization of this particular instance is a prime example of the nature of the Battle of Chickamauga. The smoke, underbrush, and overall lack of organization made this one of the most hectic battles of the war.¹²¹

The battle began to shift to the right during the middle of the afternoon on the nineteenth. Around 1 p.m. Brock Field, located between the Winfrey and George Brotherton House, began to see heavy action. Rosecrans began moving his available troops to support his right. He ordered General McCook to move two of Sheridan's brigades to the right and leave just one at Gordon's Mill. The Brock Field was becoming the heated center of the battle, where the Union and Confederates fought a confused fight, with both gaining little advantage. Later in the afternoon the heavy action shifted from the Brock Filed northeast into the Winfrey Field.¹²²

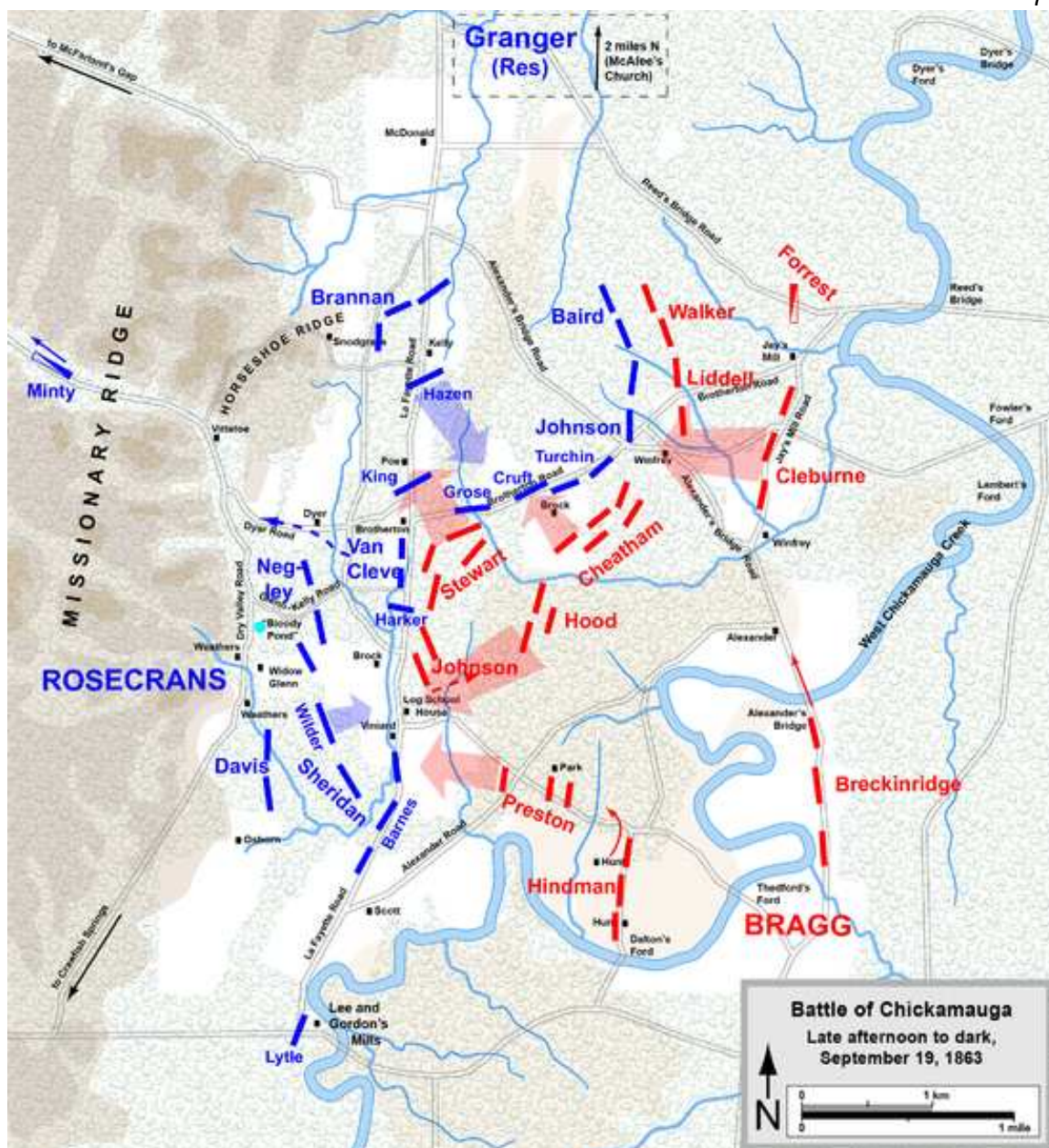
Action was heating up in the Viniard Field at the same time as it was in the Winfrey Field. In Viniard field the fighting between the Confederate and Union Armies was intense. It was similar to the fighting in the Brock Field. Both armies fought and struggled with one another, but neither gained anything substantial. The two armies fought for two hours, but by 5:30 p.m. the Union Army still held the western edge of the field. The Confederates had failed to fully dislodge their enemy. To the west of the Viniard Field, the two armies fought against one

¹²¹ Eicher, 582

¹²² Eicher, 583; *Official Records* XXX pt. 1, 67-68

another around the Brotherton House. Initially this area of combat was like the Brock and Viniard Fields, but eventually the Union troops gave way to the waves of Confederate attacks. One by one the Federal units collapsed as the Confederates advanced towards the La Fayette Road.¹²³

¹²³ Eicher, 583-584



Battle of Chickamauga Late Afternoon September 19¹²⁴

Late in the evening, around 6 p.m., one of the last attacks of the day took place in the Winfrey Field. Union brigades of Baldwin, Willich, and Dodge took on the Confederate brigades of Col. James Deshler, General Lucius Polk, and Sterling Wood. In the dwindling daylight the Confederates marched across the

¹²⁴ "Battle of Chickamauga Late Afternoon September 19" (30 June 2013)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chickamauga_Sep19_3.png

field and attacked the Union troops located in the woods. The fighting was intense and the soldiers could barely see through the smoke and dark. The fighting in the Winfrey Field late on the 19th was considered by many to be some of the fiercest fighting in all the Western arena. The Confederate attack began to falter as the fighting went on. Eventually the two sides retired for the night with little gained.¹²⁵

The first day at Chickamauga was intense and confusing. Neither side could claim an advantage over the other. At the end of the first day both sides began taking care of the day's wounded and preparing for another round of battle to come the next day. General Thomas had his men build log breastworks around Kelly's Field. Around midnight Thomas and the other Union commanders were summoned to Rosecrans' headquarters for a meeting about the day's events and what their next move was. General Thomas urged the abandonment of the right side and focus on the left. Rosecrans heeded Thomas' idea but only a little. The Union right was only moved back ever so slightly. If they had fallen any further back the Union would have given up their field hospitals at Crawfish Springs and their current headquarters. Rosecrans did not want to do either, so he only pulled his right back slightly. The largest fear for the Union that night was the reinforcement of Confederate troops by General James Longstreet's division, which were on their way. Currently the two armies were equally matched with 60,000 to 62,500 soldiers fighting for either side. Rosecrans knew that

¹²⁵ Eicher, 585

Longstreet's additional 17,000 troops could mean disaster for the Union. As the night wore on the Union rested and prepared for the coming fight.¹²⁶

As the Union were reinforcing and moving their line, the Confederates were waiting for Longstreet's reinforcements to arrive. By 11 p.m. all of Bragg's army had finally crossed onto the western bank of the Chickamauga Creek. Bragg's army now had its back to the Chickamauga with a three mile defensive line stretching from Reed's Bridge on the north to Lee and Gordon's Mill on the south. During the night Bragg reorganized his army into two wings. One was commanded by Polk and the other by Longstreet. The right wing, under Polk, consisted of Cheatham's division, Walker's reserve corps, and Hill's corps. The left, Longstreet's wing, was made up of Buckner's corps, Hindman's division, and Polk's corps. The problem with the reorganization, even though organization was desperately needed, was that Longstreet would not arrive to the battlefield until midnight and he was expected to lead an attack at dawn. He also knew little of the terrain. The Confederate Army lay in wait for the coming battle cold and half asleep, listening to the cries of the wounded and sounds of trees being cut down by the Federals.¹²⁷

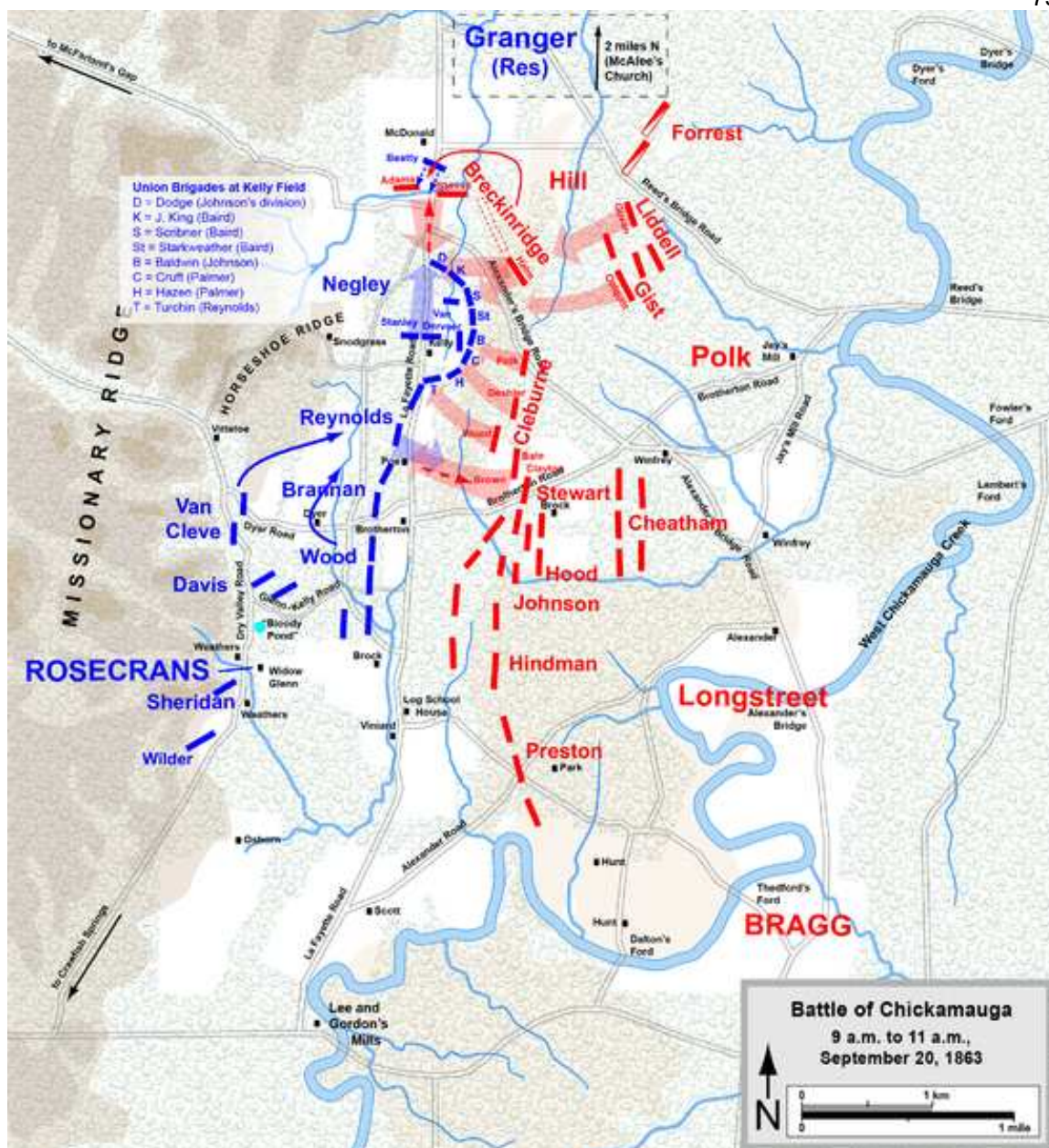
The second day's fighting began around 9:30 a.m. instead of at dawn as had been ordered. The dawn attack had been postponed due to blunders made by both Polk and Hill. General Hill could not be found and got the orders late, and Polk seemed more concerned with his breakfast than beginning the attack. Shortly before 10:00 a.m. Breckinridge's three brigades began moving towards

¹²⁶ Cleaves, 162-163; Eicher, 585; *Official Records* XXX pt.1, 68-69; Rosecrans, 711-712

¹²⁷ Connelly 207-208; Eicher, 585

the La Fayette Road. They came square into contact with General Absolom Baird's division and the fighting began. Fighting around the McDonald house began as General Daniel Adam's troops began firing upon the Illinois men that surrounded the house. Heated battle began in Kelly's Field where the Union troops had erected the log earthworks the night before. Late in the morning Rosecrans was losing control of the situation. The main Confederate attack was happening all along the Union left and General Thomas was in need of reinforcements. Rosecrans ordered the withdrawal of troops on the right to be sent in support of Thomas. Those on the right were to spare as many men as possible to support the left.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Connelly, 219-221; Eicher, 587; *Official Records XXX* pt.1, 70



Battle of Chickamauga Morning September 20¹²⁹

At 10:45 a.m. General Rosecrans committed his biggest blunder of the entire war. Rosecrans had been told that the right of General Joseph J. Reynolds was exposed leaving him susceptible to attack. The general then ordered Brigadier-General Van Wood to close on Reynolds as fast as he could. Wood, who

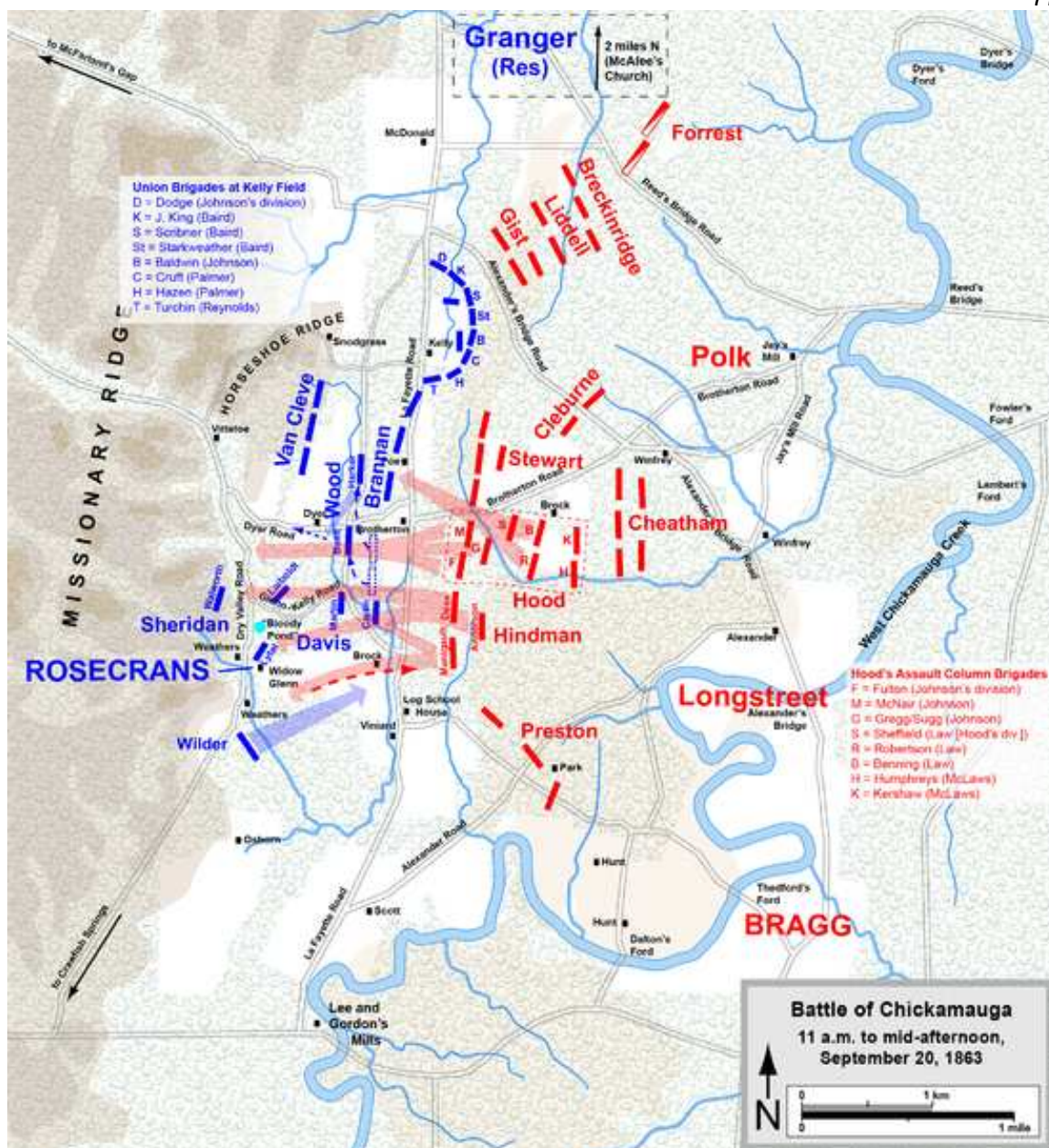
¹²⁹ "Battle of Chickamauga Morning September 20" (30 June 2013) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chickamauga_Sep20_1.png

had been scolded by Rosecrans before for not immediately following an order, began to withdraw his division and move to help Reynolds. Rosecrans ordered Wood to move his men to plug a hole that did not exist. Ironically, by moving Wood, Rosecrans actually created a hole in the Union line. The orders sent to Wood were unclear, but Rosecrans still blamed him in his after battle report for not understanding him. Rosecrans' orders told Wood to "close up" on Reynolds, but he apparently did not mean to withdraw from the line. This unclear order changed the outcome of the battle for the Union. Wood's movement opened the middle of the Union line where Confederate General Longstreet was planning to attack shortly.¹³⁰

Just as Wood's division was moving, Longstreet's plan to attack near the Brotherton House in the Union center was unfolding. Thousands of Confederate soldiers poured through the newly created gap as the last of Wood's men were leaving. The charge was met with little resistance, and the Union soldiers who did stay quickly dispersed into the woods as the Confederate charge continued their way. The Union retreat was disorganized and panicked. Men were dropping everything and running for their lives. The charge had been a complete success, collapsing the southern part of the Union line.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Cleaves, 166-167; Eicher, 588; Rosecrans, 713

¹³¹ Eicher, 589; Rosecrans, 713



Battle of Chickamauga Afternoon September 20¹³²

The Union cause was all but lost at Chickamauga by noon and early afternoon. Most of Rosecrans' army, including the general himself, had begun to pull out of the area. One of the few Union divisions that remained on the battlefield was General Thomas'. He received word from Rosecrans to pull out,

¹³² "Battle of Chickamauga Afternoon September 20" (30 June 2013)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chickamauga_Sep20_2.png

but Thomas chose to stay and fight. By noon he began ordering the erection of barricades on Horseshoe Ridge. It was here that General Thomas would gain his nickname as the “Rock of Chickamauga.” On Horseshoe Ridge, also called Snodgrass Hill, Thomas made a stand against the advancing Confederate Army that helped protect the retreating Union troops. The Confederate assault lasted late into the day but was never able to break through Thomas’ line, even though Longstreet continued to put pressure on Thomas’ men. As the fighting began to subside in the late evening, General Thomas and the last of the Union Army at Chickamauga began their retreat back to Chattanooga.¹³³

The victory at the Battle of Chickamauga came at a crucial time for the South. They had just lost two important battles and desperately needed a victory for their cause. The victory also made it seem as if Bragg was not as inept as he was once believed to be. This was a great victory for him and the Army of Tennessee. Bragg’s army finally turned back the advancing Union Army. Now the defeated Union Army headed back to Chattanooga with their tails tucked between their legs and their morale at a new low. Chickamauga had cost both armies a combined 35,000 casualties making it the bloodiest two days of the war. This victory came at a key moment for the Confederacy, but they would be unable to add to it. Chickamauga would be the last major victory in the war for the South, and was the only victory for Bragg’s army in the entire campaign.

After their defeat the Union Army retreated back to Chattanooga. Rosecrans’ army fled from the field of battle leaving their wounded, small arms,

¹³³ Cleaves, 169-172; *Official Records* XXX pt.4, 675; Rosecrans, 714-715

and artillery. Bragg and his fellow Confederate officers were unaware of the Union's complete retreat to Chattanooga until the morning of September 21. Bragg sent Forrest and his cavalry in pursuit of the enemy on the morning of the 21st. They were in pursuit on the La Fayette Road headed towards Rossville, Georgia. Around 11:30 a.m. Forrest sent a report to Polk indicating that the Union were cutting timber as they went and were fortifying their position. From his place on Missionary Ridge Forrest had a complete view of Lookout Mountain, the Tennessee River, and Chattanooga. In his message to Polk, Forrest also insisted the Confederates move upon the Union position quickly.¹³⁴

It was initially believed that the Union were retreating beyond Chattanooga after Chickamauga. Forrest had seen trains leaving the town from his post on Missionary Ridge and intelligence that followed offered the same belief. On September 23 Bragg's army began to move on Chattanooga, and when they arrived it seemed the Union had not retreated. New reports indicated that they had bolstered the defenses left by the Rebel Army earlier. Bragg had to decide what his plan of attack was. He could flank the Union defense, attack the enemy head on, or establish a siege line and starve the Union into surrender. Bragg believed that Rosecrans' army was larger than it was, and he learned that General Grant's troops were in route to Chattanooga from Vicksburg.¹³⁵

On September 29 Bragg finally decided upon a strategy. He decided to wait for the accumulation of supplies, pontoons, and transportation to cross the

¹³⁴ James Lee McDonough, *Chattanooga: A Death Grip on The Confederacy* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1894), 20-21.; *Official Records XXX pt.4*, 675

¹³⁵ Connelly, 232; *Official Records XXX pt.4*, 689-691

Tennessee River to attack the city. Until then he would hold the city under siege. His army was to occupy Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain, both of which overlooked the city. Bragg made another key mistake in not occupying the valley west of Lookout Mountain allowing for a small trickle of supplies to reach the besieged Union Army.¹³⁶

The Confederate Army was entering one of its most crucial moments. If they could starve out Rosecrans and retake Chattanooga, they could retake the city and continue to hold off the Union from the deep South. If they were to fail, the Union would still maintain their hold of the city and be able to advance from it into the deeper Southern states. This situation was not only critical for the Army of Tennessee, but also for the entire Confederacy. The victory at Chickamauga raised spirits within the South, but a failure at Chattanooga would again demoralize and seal the South's fate. Bragg needed to keep the Union from getting supplies and reinforcements for long enough that they either left or surrendered. Throughout the siege he dealt with hostility and disobedience from Longstreet, Polk, and others in his high command. This disobedience eventually cost him.

During the siege of Chattanooga the conflict between Bragg, Polk, Longstreet, and Hardee came to a head. Here, on the banks of the Tennessee River, the Army of Tennessee faced a near mutinous internal crises. At this time Bragg planned to attack two of his leading generals, Polk and Hindman. Polk he held responsible for the failure to attack at dawn on September 20, and Hindman

¹³⁶ Connelly, 233-234

he held responsible for the McLemore's Cove incident. Like many of Bragg's plans, this one was ill timed. Much of the animosity towards Bragg came from Longstreet. The reason for this, as many speculated, was that Longstreet was after Bragg's job. Longstreet did nothing to quell these rumors, and in fact openly spoke of Bragg's poor conduct at Chickamauga. He is quoted as saying, "In my judgment our last opportunity was lost when we failed to follow the success at Chickamauga, and capture or disperse the Union army."¹³⁷ He would openly state what he would have done had he been in command.¹³⁸

As the last days of September faded into October, the Army of Tennessee was in full siege mode. They were entrenched around the town and stationed above it on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. Mid October brought rains to East Tennessee that turned the Chickamauga and Chattanooga Creek valleys into lakes of mud. This greatly decreased the amount of supplies to the Union Army. On October 18 General Rosecrans was relieved of his duty as the commanding general of the Army of the Cumberland. General Ulysses S. Grant would arrive shortly and take his place as the army's leader. The conditions inside Chattanooga were horrendous. General Grant messaged General Thomas, who was in charge of Chattanooga until Grant arrived, to hold the city at all costs. Thomas replied, "I will hold the town till we starve."¹³⁹ Starve is exactly what the Army of the Cumberland was doing inside the city. By mid-October the Union men were on one-half rations, which were only getting smaller and

¹³⁷ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960), 466

¹³⁸ Connelly, 238; McDonough, 27-28

¹³⁹ Cozzens, 8

smaller. The animals had it even worse than the men. All along the roads to Chattanooga animal carcasses were laying about, rotting and smelling awful.¹⁴⁰

The first order of business for Grant when he arrived in Chattanooga was to open the so called "Cracker line." Opening the Cracker Line allowed for much needed supplies to make their way into the city. It was dubbed the Cracker Line because of the food supplies that it would bring in once opened. For the siege to properly work the Confederates hoped to keep this line from ever opening. If the Union were able to get the needed supplies to the city, then the siege would be over and it would only be a matter of time before the Union would be able to break out of Chattanooga. Bragg ordered General Longstreet to place some of his sharpshooters on the left bank of the river, between Raccoon Mountain and Walden's Ridge. Their goal was to keep the Union from using Halley's Trace to transport supplies. In his official report Longstreet indicated that he sent the sharpshooters along with the entire command of General E.M. Law, but he only sent two of Law's five brigades. This came back to haunt Bragg and the Army of Tennessee.¹⁴¹

Brigadier General William Farrar "Baldy" Smith was the general who found the key to opening up of the Cracker Line. Smith arrived in Chattanooga before Grant and immediately began looking for the perfect area to cross and open the line. He believed the opportunity to open up the Cracker Line lay near the eastern base of Raccoon Mountain. On October 18 General Smith discussed his idea with Rosecrans and the two decided to go check it out the next morning.

¹⁴⁰ Connelly, 247; Cozzens, 8-15

¹⁴¹ Connelly, 256-257; *Official Records* XXXI pt.1, 216

The following morning Rosecrans and Smith set out from Chattanooga towards Brown's Ferry. When they arrived the two generals spent the next hour looking over the area. Smith liked what he saw and decided that this was the best position for the Union to cross. The road that crossed the river ran through a gap in the foothills and followed along Lookout Creek. Smith believed that this would be a good strategic place to cross and establish a foothold on the other side of the river.¹⁴²

General Grant arrived in Chattanooga on October 23, 1863, taking command of the Army of the Cumberland. The following morning Thomas, Smith, and Grant rode to Brown's Ferry to continue making plans for the crossing. Shortly after noon the group returned to Chattanooga where Grant approved the crossing site. He allowed for Smith and Thomas to do it as they saw fit. Immediately Thomas wired General Hooker to send his corps to cross the Tennessee River at Bridgeport. The plan was simple but dangerous. Every available pontoon and flatboat would be used to transfer the two brigades and three batteries of artillery from Chattanooga to Brown's Ferry nine miles away. The movement would be done at night under the cover of the darkness. The brigades were led by General William Hazen and John Turchin, while the three artillery batteries would be commanded by Major John Mendenhall.¹⁴³

The crossing took place on the night of October 26 and into the morning hours of the 27. Longstreet had not properly prepared himself for any assault the Yankees would make. He believed that the attack on Brown's Ferry was only a

¹⁴² Cozzens, 41-43

¹⁴³ Cozzens, 53-56

cover for the real Union assault to take Lookout Mountain via Johnson's Crook. In roughly ten minutes, on the morning of October 27, the Yankee brigades had successfully crossed the Tennessee River and taken Brown's Ferry. They had caught the Confederate Army by surprise and successfully opened the Cracker Line. This was the beginning of the end of the siege of Chattanooga. The Confederate Army no longer held the upper hand.¹⁴⁴

Blame for the Brown's Ferry incident could be rested solely on the shoulders of James Longstreet who had not heeded prior warnings nor did he place a proper defense in the area. After the incident Longstreet simply shrugged it off and ignored several warnings about Hooker's advancing army. By the morning of October 28 the situation had gotten even more out of hand. Bragg and Longstreet met atop Lookout Mountain where they discussed plans for going forward. The two came to the conclusion of a night attack on Brown's Ferry. The attack was nothing but a bumbling disaster. Confusion between Bragg and Longstreet caused problems for the assault. Longstreet was uncertain on the number of troops, and Bragg believed Longstreet was going to attack Hooker's main force at Brown's Ferry. Longstreet halted three miles shy of Brown's Ferry and waited there instead of continuing on.¹⁴⁵

Longstreet and his men did not even reach the Lookout Valley until about midnight at which point they found no rear guard to attack. Longstreet then ordered for his men to round up any wagons or stragglers and he headed back to his headquarters. Around 2:30 Longstreet received word that Law's brigade had

¹⁴⁴ Connelly, 258; Cozzens, 60-63; Longstreet, 472-474.

¹⁴⁵ Connelly, 259-260; Longstreet, 474-475

been attacked. It was a short encounter. Shortly after the encounter the Confederate troops fell back and conceded Bridgeport to the Union. With the failure at Bridgeport the Union had completely opened the Cracker Line. Now nothing stood in their way to bring in much needed supplies. This loss caused the Confederate Army to rethink its plan of siege. With the new route open across Raccoon Mountain, the Union Army could now receive reinforcements as well as supplies. Hooker was already in Chattanooga and General Sherman and his army were only a short distance away. It became quickly evident that a siege would no longer work.¹⁴⁶

Not long after the failed Bridgeport night attack, General Longstreet and his division were sent to Knoxville to take on General Burnside. Grant and the Army of the Cumberland were waiting for the arrival of General Sherman before they were to proceed with an attack on Bragg's army. Grant wanted to attack Bragg's right flank and drive him from Missionary Ridge. He initially wanted to attack on November 7, but was swayed by General Thomas and General Smith to wait for Sherman. Grant then planned for the attack to take place on November 21, but this also would be pushed back because Sherman's army had only reached Brown's Ferry by the twentieth and a constant rain did not allow for the attack. Grant's assault would not take place until November 24.¹⁴⁷

With Sherman not arriving until the twentieth, General Thomas suggested that Hooker's division be strengthened for an assault on Lookout Mountain. On November 23 General Thomas set out for the fortified Confederate position that

¹⁴⁶ Connelly 261-262; Longstreet, 476

¹⁴⁷ Connelly, 270; McDonough, 106-108

ran north to south and was located a mile and a half to the east. The first engagement occurred at Orchard Knob where General Thomas and his 25,000 men easily dispersed the small Confederate pickets who were on the hill. Thomas was successful on his first day and set his sights on Lookout Mountain for the following day.¹⁴⁸

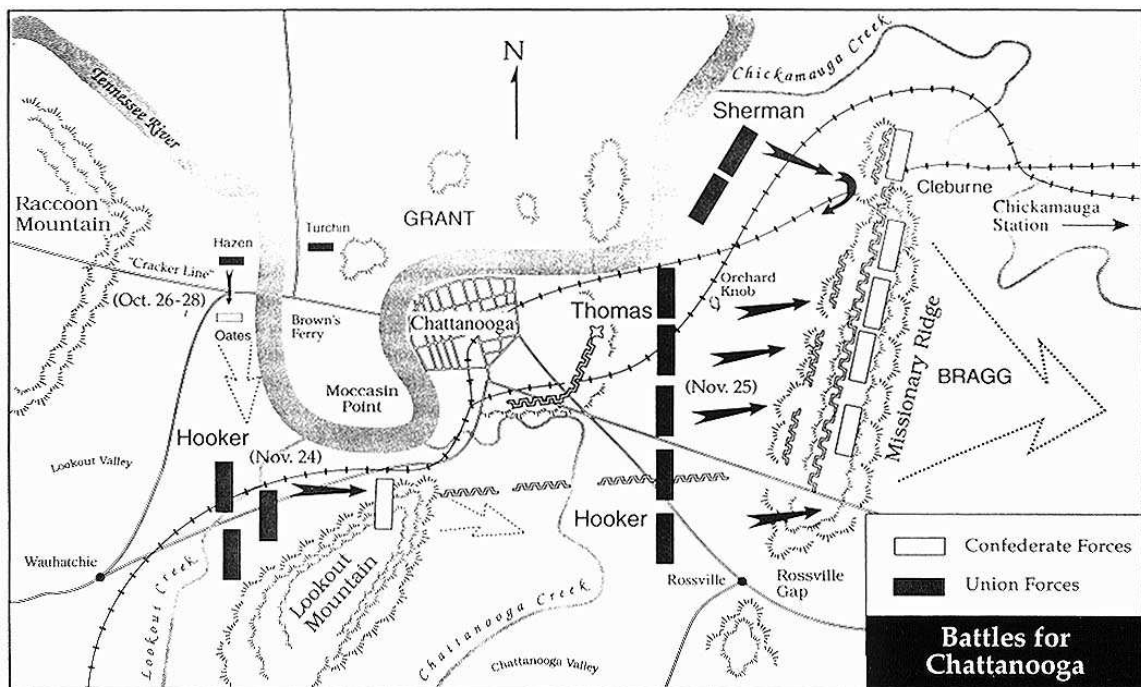
During the night of November 23 General Sherman's men began ferrying across the Tennessee River where the river and the Chickamauga Creek met. Sherman began by sending a boat of thirty men across and they successfully captured the Confederate picket. Within minutes a thousand more Yankee soldiers were crossing the river. Over the course of the next couple of hours the number of Yankees across the river continued to grow. Ultimately Sherman spent the night just shy of Missionary Ridge, and did not attack until the 25th.¹⁴⁹

At 8:00 in the morning on November 24 General Hooker's men began their ascension of Lookout Mountain. Hooker began the attack by sending his own Army of the Potomac division led by General Geary. The troops quickly arrived to the Confederate pickets placed at the bottom of the mountain. It was too cloudy for the Confederate battery on top of the mountain to help those below, and the Confederates on the mountain were outnumbered four or five to one. They were no match for the advancing Union Army. The Confederate Army still made it a tough fight for the Union, with stone breastworks and holding the high ground. As the Union Army climbed, the incline of the mountain made the Confederate artillery ineffective because they could not be aimed low enough to

¹⁴⁸ McDonough, 113-115

¹⁴⁹ Cozzens, 6; McDonough, 118-119

fire at the enemy. The Confederate soldiers then began lighting the fuses on the shells and hurling them down the mountain. They also took to throwing rocks and anything else they got their hands on. This did nothing to slow the onslaught of Yankee soldiers.¹⁵⁰



Battle of Chattanooga¹⁵¹

By 12:15 General Geary's command had cleared the valley below and taken the crest of the mountain. In the process of taking the mountain the Union Army had captured 2,000 prisoners, taken two artillery pieces, and now occupied the white house on top of Lookout Mountain, which General W. C. Whitaker established as his headquarters. To the east of the house the Confederate Army was amassing under General Walthall. The General and his brigade were able to stabilize the Confederate position atop the mountain, but were no match for the

¹⁵⁰ McDonough, 131-135

¹⁵¹ "Battle of Chattanooga" (30 June 2013) <http://chattanoogaandbeyond.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/chattanooga.jpg>

advancing Union. For the rest of the day there were small skirmishes along the Confederate line lasting into the night. The Union Army now held the mountain from the white house on top, to the Tennessee River below. The Confederates only held one important strategic point now, Missionary Ridge. Around 2:00 a.m. the Confederate Army retreated from Lookout Mountain and made their way to Missionary Ridge.¹⁵²

Losing Lookout Mountain was a significant blow to the Army of Tennessee. They held the high ground and the rugged terrain made it difficult for the Union soldiers to advance. For all intensive purposes there was no reason that the South should not have been able to stop the Yankee movement. The problem was that the Confederate forces on the mountain were already stretched too thin. Bragg improperly placed his troops along the mountain, and had not left enough men to defend it. Bragg had moved some of the men to Missionary Ridge prior to the battle, which only weakened Lookout Mountain's defenses even more. The blunders that plagued Bragg throughout the campaign continued at Chattanooga. He made the wrong call at the wrong time and it cost him dearly. Now Bragg's only chance at stopping the Union was at Missionary Ridge.

Late in the day on November 24, General Stevenson was ordered to make his way from Lookout Mountain to Missionary Ridge. The Battle of Missionary Ridge was the end of the Chattanooga campaign and was another failure for the Confederacy. The only bright spot on the day were the actions of General Cleburne, who had been called back from departing Chickamauga train station

¹⁵² McDonough, 139-149; *Official Records* XXXI pt.2, 109-111

on the twenty-third. The Rebels established their line along the crest of the ridge with Breckinridge, divisions of Stewart, Bate, and Anderson, along the main part of the ridge. Hardee's corps was located on the north side of the ridge and under the command of Cleburne and Walker. The north end of the ridge was Sherman's target, which he attacked at dawn.¹⁵³

Sherman's attack did not start until mid-morning on the 25th at Tunnel Hill. General High B. Ewing and General John M. Corse's brigades led the attack on the Confederate position. For the next hour Corse sent attacks forward, only to be repelled again and again. Sherman's attack on Tunnel Hill was unsuccessful because of Cleburne's strong stand. In the meantime Hooker was having his own troubles with the Confederate left, and would not pose a real threat until late afternoon. This allowed Bragg to focus more support to Cleburne. Sherman continued to advance his troops on Cleburne's position with little success. Grant ordered support for Sherman's troops from Howard and Baird's divisions. General Hooker would not make contact with the Confederate left until 3:00 thanks to the burned bridges and destroyed roads the Confederates left. Grant became concerned about the success of the day and ordered an assault on the middle of the Confederate line to take the rifle pits.¹⁵⁴

The charge on the ridge was led by General Thomas' army with the divisions of Baird, Wood, Sheridan, and Johnson. Shortly after 3:00 six cannons were fired, signaling the beginning of the charge. As Grant and Thomas looked on from Orchard Knob, the Union Army charged into the rifle pits. They scattered

¹⁵³ Eicher, 609; *Official Records XXXI pt.2*, 678

¹⁵⁴ Eicher, 610; *Official Records XXXI pt.2*, 116

the Confederates, and then continued to charge up the ridge. This was not ordered by anyone and took the Union commanders by surprise. The Yankee soldiers continued their charge up the ridge and drove the Confederates from it. In the process, the Confederates lost 37 field guns, roughly 2,000 prisoners, and endured heavy casualties. The charge had been a complete success after the failures earlier in the day. Around 4 in the afternoon the entire Confederate left had collapsed, but their right remained strong. General Cleburne continued to stave off the attacks by Sherman's army. After the left broke, Bragg placed the remaining brigades on the right in support of Cleburne.¹⁵⁵

The Confederate right held through the day and night, but the left, along with the ridge, had been lost. At 1 a.m. the order was given to abandon the valley at once and make their way south. The Army of Tennessee had suffered its final defeat under the command of General Braxton Bragg and retired into the town of Dalton, Georgia for the remainder of the year. The retreat was made by way of Rossville and headed south. Generals Hardee and Breckenridge would begin the march for Dalton at daylight, while General Cleburne's division remained in Ringgold defending the rear. Once the army was in Dalton, they were given five days rations and allowed to rest from the previous two day's fighting.¹⁵⁶

The Union Army pursued Bragg to Dalton on the 26 and heavily pressed the rear guard. Cleburne's men had seen heavy action for the past two days, and properly held off the advancing enemy twice. Bragg sent word to General Johnston that he needed his help. The heavy losses they sustained on the 24th

¹⁵⁵ Eicher, 612-613; *Official Records XXXI* pt.2, 679

¹⁵⁶ *Official Records XXXI* pt.2, 679-680

and 25th made it hard for Bragg's army to hold their position without the aid of Johnston. General Johnston established a line just three miles from Dalton in order to help Bragg. For the next few days the armies would skirmish in and around Ringgold and Dalton. Finally on December 2 General Johnston's army repelled the Union from the area.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ *Official Records XXXI pt.2, 679-683*

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The Army of Tennessee made its winter camp in Dalton, and it was here their failed leader was finally replaced. On December 2, 1863 General Braxton Bragg was relieved of his command. The best description of his departure comes from the diary of Mary Chesnut, wife of Confederate General James Chesnut, who wrote, "The army will be relieved to get rid of him. He has a winning way of earning everybody's detestation."¹⁵⁸ The detest for Bragg had reached even the wives and other civilians in Dixie. No one was sad to see Bragg leave, not even his soldiers. Bragg was replaced by General Johnston shortly and the army remained in Dalton for the remainder of 1863.¹⁵⁹

The Chattanooga Campaign of 1863 came to a close just how it had started, with a loss and retreat. At the beginning of the year the Confederacy held East Tennessee, but by fall had lost all of it to the Union. This was a devastating blow to the Confederacy because of the industrial and agricultural aspects of the region. Now that the Confederate Army had retired to Dalton, nothing stood in the way of the Union Army from accessing the deep South. Bragg had allowed the Union to take much of Tennessee with hardly a fight. He continually failed at key moments, and was detested by his corps commanders. The end of the campaign brought his replacement as well as embarrassment to the Confederacy.

¹⁵⁸ Mary Boykin Chestnut, *A Diary From Dixie* (Gloucester: D. Appleton & Company, 1961), 259.

¹⁵⁹ Cozzens, 396-397

The importance of the Chattanooga Campaign comes from the fact that now the Union held one of the last remaining industrial and rail cities in the South. Union troops had breached the Appalachian Mountains and exposed the “heart” of the South. The loss of Chattanooga fell on the heels of the losses at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, and was the final straw for morale in the Confederacy. After the Chattanooga Campaign it was only a matter of time before the Confederacy folded. The South was no longer able to support a war of this magnitude, while losing such important areas, industry, and rail lines. To Southerners, Chattanooga was just as vital as Richmond or Atlanta. It was only second to those two cities in the amount of rail lines it contained, and the Confederacy could not afford to lose any more railroads. The Confederacy stood one final chance at stopping the Union and prolonging the war, and they failed. Their defeat in the Chattanooga Campaign was the final nail in their coffin.

From Western Kentucky to North Georgia, Bragg did not take advantage of situations that favored him. Multiple times he failed to establish a proper defensive line, such as at Duck and Elk River, Chattanooga, and Murfreesboro. His ineptitudes as a leader cost the Army of Tennessee and the South crucial victories. Throughout the campaign Bragg drew the ire of his fellow commanders and on multiple occasions they sought to have him relieved of duty. Generals William Hardee, Leonidas Polk, and James Longstreet believed that Bragg was a poor leader for the army and were key members in the movement to rid the army of him. These generals were trying to help the Army of Tennessee, but more often than not their plans hurt the army just as much as Bragg did.

The Chattanooga Campaign was the final for Bragg as commander of the Army of Tennessee. It was also one of the worst executed campaigns for the Confederacy in the war. Bragg gave up much of Middle and Eastern Tennessee to General Rosecrans and the Army of the Cumberland with hardly a fight. The loss of the city and the area in which it was located meant the loss of valuable farm land, railroads, and population. All three of these the South was in short supply. Bragg lost the confidence of his fellow officers all the way down to Southern citizens by the end of this campaign. At the end of the campaign morale in the Confederacy was low as a result of the losses at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga.

The Chattanooga Campaign was one of the most important campaigns during the war. Its loss meant that the Union now had access to deeper parts of the South than they had ever had before. General James Longstreet put it best when he said, "The successful march of General Rosecrans army through Georgia would virtually be the finishing stroke of the war."¹⁶⁰ It would be Sherman and not Rosecrans who made the march, but regardless Longstreet understood the importance of the Union gaining a foothold at Chattanooga and breaking through the Appalachian Mountains. It was the beginning of the end for the Confederacy.

Chattanooga was a city of only 2,500 people, but its importance to the South was much more than its population. The city was an important rail hub that was centrally located in the South. By losing it to the Union, the Confederacy lost

¹⁶⁰ Longstreet, 433

their ability to transport men, supplies, and other essential war time goods to much of the South. The city was also home to some of the South's industry, making it even more important. Losing a city that contained railroads and industry would further weaken the South. They already had a limited amount of each, which was smaller than the North's, and by 1863 could not afford to lose any more.

It is understood that the city of Chattanooga, and the campaign, were important to the South, but its importance is often understated. Gettysburg, Vicksburg, the Shenandoah Valley, and Chancellorsville often take precedence to the Chattanooga Campaign. This campaign was just as important to the South as the others, but garners less attention because it did not take place in Virginia. After the loss of Chattanooga, victory for the Confederacy was out of the question. Chattanooga was the final breaking point for the South, and after its loss it was only a matter of time before the Confederacy folded.

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