



The Tennessee Campaign:
Stones River to Chattanooga
December 1862 to November 1863

Part IV: The Siege of Chattanooga

Presented by Howard Leemon

Tennessee

Tennessee



The Importance of Tennessee

- Tennessee had been a vital part of the Confederacy from the beginning, providing soldiers, horses, mules, food and other essential materials for the war effort
- The railways and the rivers provided important fast transport options
- Chattanooga in the south was a major rail hub on the Tennessee River close to the border with Georgia
- It was also the gateway through the mountains into the heartland of the South
- Strategically, and for reasons of morale, Chattanooga was at least as important as Richmond - for both sides
- Nashville, the capital, had fallen to the Union forces early in 1862 and Union forces controlled the Mississippi River on the western border of the state

The Tennessee Campaign so far (1)

- MG William Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland had narrowly defeated Gen. Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee at Murfreesboro in January 1863
- He had then paused to rebuild his army and his supplies
- June/July, Rosecrans drove Bragg out of Middle Tennessee, across the Tennessee River and back to Chattanooga through a combination of deception and brilliant flanking manoeuvres
- He had then paused again to rebuild his supplies
- 3 September, MG Ambrose Burnside had entered Knoxville, cutting the direct rail link from Chattanooga to Richmond
- By 9 September, Rosecrans' army had crossed the Tennessee River unopposed and Bragg had vacated Chattanooga without a fight
- Rosecrans was now preparing to surround and destroy Bragg's army

The Tennessee Campaign so far (2)

- Since October 1862, Bragg's army had been in retreat all the way from Kentucky
- It was demoralised, and his subordinates were disillusioned
- Reinforcements under LTG James Longstreet were sent from Virginia
- Rosecrans had overplayed his hand by widely separating his 3 corps
- Suddenly recognising the danger he recalled them
- They only just came together near Chickamauga Creek as serious fighting began on 19 September
- Divisions were fed into battle as they arrived but the resulting disorganisation led to disaster on 20 September when Longstreet's Left Wing hit a gap in the line and nearly half the army, including Rosecrans and corps commanders Crittenden and McCook, was forced from the field

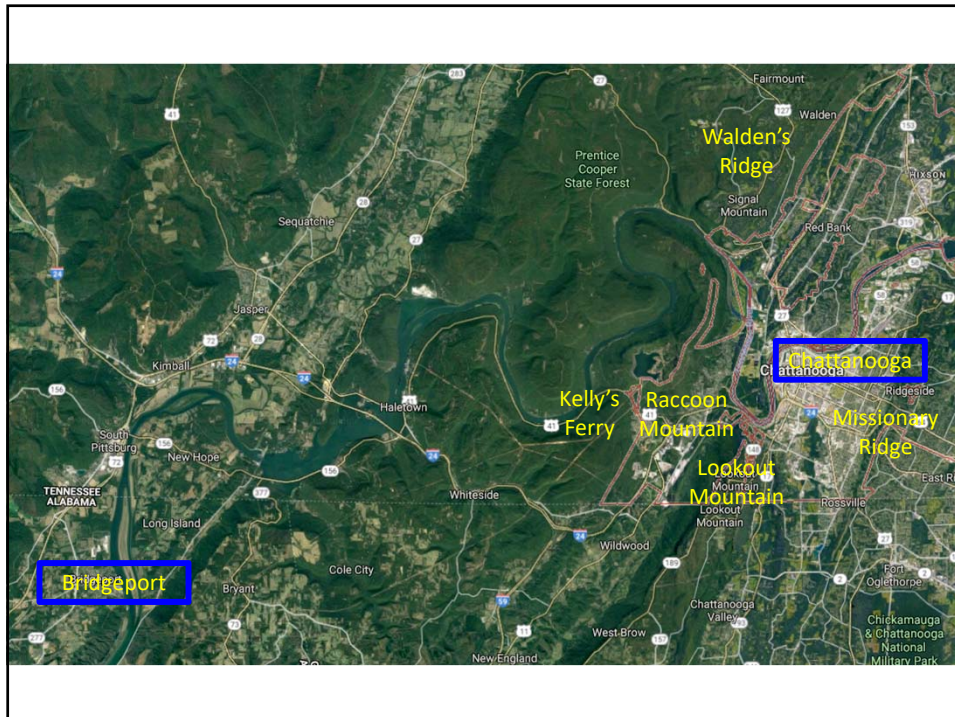
The Tennessee Campaign so far (3)

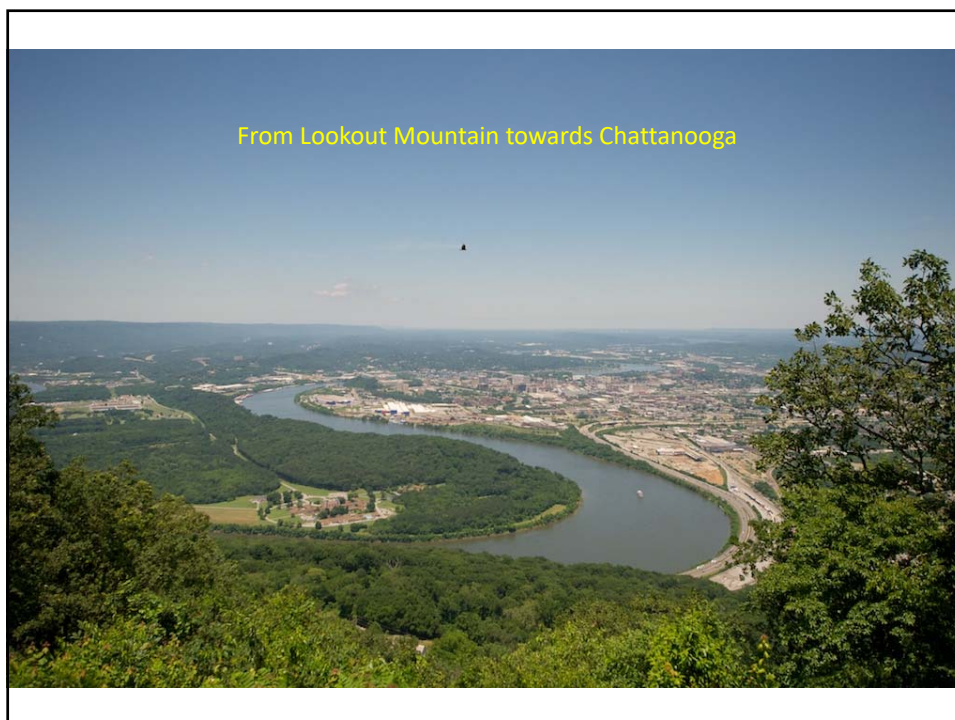
- The remaining Union troops fought on under MG George Thomas with vital support from MG Gordon Granger's Reserve Corps and assorted units that made their way to Horseshoe Ridge/Snodgrass Hill to continue fighting
- In the late afternoon, Rosecrans sent orders to Thomas to pull back to Chattanooga which he did, with some difficulty
- By 22 September, the Union army was back in Chattanooga, having lost more than a quarter of its fighting capability

The Terrain

The Terrain

- Chattanooga is situated in a bend of the Tennessee River which “protects” the town to the north and the west
- To the southwest is Lookout Mountain, a ridge that extends from the river southwards for 85 miles
- It reaches a peak of 1800 feet high with only a narrow gap between it and the river
- To the west of Lookout Mountain is Raccoon Mountain, another ridge running parallel to it
- 2 miles to the east is Missionary Ridge running north to south reaching a height of nearly 500 feet, with a small gap at Rossville
- In the valleys between are substantial creeks that run into the river
- Control of the high ground could prevent access to the town from the south and the east







The High Ground

The High Ground (1)

- On the night of 20 September, after pulling back from Chickamauga, Thomas's troops held the Rossville Gap and positions on Missionary Ridge
- Over the next 2 days they moved into the defences of Chattanooga which had been prepared by the Army of Tennessee during July and August
- And yet the sometimes problematic doctrine of "seizing the high ground" was well established in both armies
- So why did Rosecrans surrender both Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge without firing a shot?

The High Ground (2)

- Maybe he did not believe that he had enough troops
- When the Confederates established their siege lines, the perimeter was estimated to be 11 miles long (7 miles not including Lookout Mountain)
- Maybe he was expecting close pursuit by the Confederates and believed that he didn't have time to prepare adequate defences on the high ground
- Or maybe he was "confused and stunned, like a duck hit on the head" as later described by Lincoln
- Certainly the defences of Chattanooga were compact and strong, only 3 miles long and anchored at both ends on the river
- The problem was re-supplying the army
- They had only 10 days rations and had used or left behind at Chickamauga huge quantities of ammunition, artillery and other vital supplies

The High Ground (3)

- There were substantial supplies available at Bridgeport and Stevenson to the southwest which still had rail access to Nashville
- But the supply routes to Chattanooga from the south and west were highly vulnerable
- Possession of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge would choke off the land routes south of the river and along the river itself
- The Union forces still had a steamboat and a pontoon bridge giving access to the north bank of the Tennessee
- Unfortunately, this connected with a difficult, extremely narrow path across Walden's Ridge to the north which was subject to the worsening weather and potential Confederate cavalry raids
- This route was nearly 60 miles long and mules could consume all the feed they could carry during the journey

The Confederate “pursuit”

The Confederate ‘pursuit’ (1)

- Surprisingly, until the following morning (21 September), the Confederates weren’t fully aware of the scope of the victory at Chickamauga
- Forrest made an early morning reconnaissance and reported back that the Federals were “evacuating as hard as they can go” and urged Bragg to move forward immediately
- All his fellow generals agreed with him and made the case strongly to Bragg
- To support the case, a Confederate captive who had escaped during the retreat was brought in to tell his story
- But Bragg could not be persuaded to pursue the enemy that day
- In fact, Forrest had not noticed or did not report that Thomas had organised a strong defence of the Rossville Gap and that the Union cavalry (and Wilder’s mounted infantry) were well positioned to defend against any attacks along the roads leading to Chattanooga

The Confederate 'pursuit' (2)

- Considering the massive casualties on the Confederate side including among the brigade and regimental commanders and the artillery horses and the shortage of vehicles, (the troops from Virginia hadn't brought any), Bragg's refusal to budge is perhaps understandable
- As well, there were prisoners, wounded of both sides and huge quantities of materiel left behind by the Union forces to be recovered
 - 51 guns, 23,281 small arms, 2381 rounds of artillery ammunition and 135,000 rifle cartridges plus many other useful items
- Despite all these justifications, his failure to pursue Thomas on the Monday morning would be used against him by his many opponents long into the future
- He finally gave orders to move in the afternoon but the army relied heavily on using the railway line to move their supplies
- It was not until the Wednesday (23 Sept) that the army finally arrived in front of Chattanooga

The Confederate 'pursuit' (3)

- Bragg had 3 options, if a direct assault against a strongly fortified line was ruled out. He could:
 - Outflank the Federals by crossing the Tennessee either below or above the city, gaining their rear and threatening their supply line
 - Leave a small force in place to watch while taking the bulk of the army to attack Burnside in Knoxville, or
 - Attempt to starve the Federals by establishing a siege line
- Longstreet favoured a combination of the first two while they still held the initiative and any potential Federal reinforcements were far away
- Bragg was concerned about the lack of pontoons for a river crossing and the shortage of wagons and ammunition and went with the third option
- But his troops were thinly stretched out over a 7 mile front which did not even extend north to the river from the tip of Missionary Ridge
- In any case, Bragg had more important battles in mind

Reinforcements

Charles A. Dana



- Born 1819 in New Hampshire
- Journalist
- Managing Editor of the New York Daily Tribune
- Strong abolitionist
- In 1862 was appointed special Investigating Agent of the War Department
- His job was to investigate fraud and corruption in the Union Army particularly among the quartermasters and contractors
- He was sent to check on reports of Grant's drinking problem during the Vicksburg campaign
- Instead, he became an admirer and strong supporter of Grant
- As Assistant Secretary of War, he was then sent to check/spy on Rosecrans
- He sent regular reports to Stanton throughout the Tennessee Campaign
- But he was not a neutral observer

Edwin Stanton



- Born 1814 in Ohio
- Successful legal career
- Democrat
- Very briefly Attorney General under President Buchanan
- Strongly opposed to secession
- Was appointed Lincoln's 2nd Secretary of War with a view to improving efficiency and ending corruption in contracting
- Lincoln's 1st Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, had been notorious for lax management and corruption
- Stanton was domineering, incorruptible, hard working, efficient
- He worked well with Lincoln and grew to admire him having been contemptuous of him when they had met before the war

Reinforcements (1)

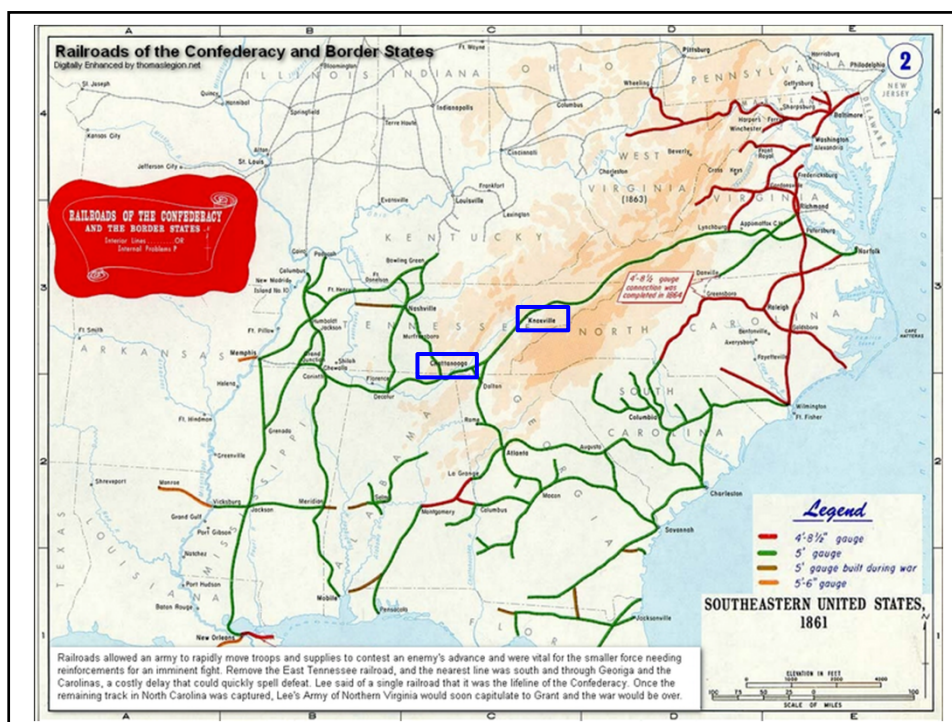
- Dana's first report was made before he knew about Thomas's stand
- "Chickamauga is as fatal a name in our history as Bull Run"
- This caused serious concerns in Washington
- Dana then proposed that, with reinforcements of 20,000 to 30,000, Chattanooga "can be held by this army for 15 to 20 days"
- Without them, they would be forced to abandon Chattanooga
- Grant was ordered to send troops from Mississippi but they would take time to arrive
- Stanton devised a remarkable plan to meet the immediate need for troops but it would need Lincoln's approval

Reinforcements (2)

- At midnight on 23 September, Stanton summoned Lincoln, Halleck and a few cabinet members to a secret meeting in the War Department
- They all feared he was going to announce yet more bad news
- Instead, he proposed to immediately move 20,000 troops from the Army of the Potomac by rail from Washington to Nashville and Chattanooga
- The plan struck Halleck and Lincoln as dangerous and impractical
- Lincoln argued that “You can’t get one corps into Washington in the time time you fix for reaching Nashville”
- Besides, that would reduce the capacity of Meade’s Army of the Potomac to move against Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia
- Stanton argued that Meade wasn’t going to make such a move any time soon so it wouldn’t make a difference

Reinforcements (2)

- For a bit of theatre, Stanton now summoned Col. McCallum, the director of the Department of Military Railroads, and Lincoln asked him how long it would take to implement this proposal
- McCallum asked for a moment to “make a few figures”
- His conclusion, after a period where he carefully consulted multiple railway timetables, was that “I can complete it in seven days”
- Of course, Stanton had briefed him earlier in the evening and he had already worked out his answer!
- Having received Lincoln’s approval, Stanton set to work
- In fact, he had already started before the meeting
- Railway officials had been summoned to Washington and arrived the next day



Reinforcements (3)

- The route was 1,233 miles across the Alleghenies mountains, and the Ohio River where there were no bridges and via tracks that were not connected
- 4 divisions (XI and XII Corps) were ordered up from Virginia
- MG Joseph Hooker was put in command with corps commanders MG Oliver O. Howard and MG Henry Slocum
- The first train departed Washington 5 pm 25 September with departures every hour following
- 23,000 men, 1,100 horses, 9 batteries, hundreds of wagons, tents and supplies were shipped to Tennessee
- The first troops reached Bridgeport on the night of 30 September with the transfer mostly complete by 2 October
- It was the longest and fastest movement of this number of troops before the 20th Century

Joseph Hooker

- Born 1814 in Massachusetts
- Career soldier, West Point graduate
- Aggressive, brave combat commander
- Outstanding administrator
- But his HQ was like “a bar-room and a brothel”
- Had conspired against his superiors
- Despite that he succeeded Burnside as commander of the Army of the Potomac
- Was defeated heavily by Lee at Chancellorsville in May 1863
- Was replaced by Meade 3 days before Gettysburg
- Slocum (XII Corps) refused to serve under him at Chattanooga
- The solution was to have Slocum keep the railways safe with one division
- Howard (XI Corps) and divisional commander John Geary (XII Corps) would be directly under Hooker



Rosecrans

Rosecrans (1)

- McCook and Crittenden were quickly removed from command for leaving the field at Chickamauga
- Thomas remained in command of the XIV Corps
- The XX and XXI Corps were combined with the Reserve Corps into a new IV Corps under the command of Gordon Granger
- 11 divisions were reorganised into 6, 3 in each Corps
- The problem remained of what to do with Rosecrans who had also left the field
- Instead of going to support Thomas, he had sent his Chief of Staff, James Garfield, while he went to Chattanooga to prepare the defences
- This was not a good look for a commander
- The problem for Lincoln was that Rosecrans and Garfield were both from Ohio and Ohio was vital in upcoming elections

Rosecrans (2)

- Elections for Governor were coming up in 9 northern states
- The Copperheads or Peace Democrats had strong candidates running in Ohio and Pennsylvania
- The Copperheads, named (by Republicans) after a poisonous snake, were in favour of immediate peace talks with the South and were strongly opposed to emancipation
- One of their leaders, Clement Vallandigham, was on the ballot for the Democrats in Ohio, even though he was in exile in Canada
- The elections in Ohio and Pennsylvania were to be held on October 13
- Until then, Lincoln could not risk a move against Rosecrans

Rosecrans (3)

- 2 October Joseph Wheeler's Confederate cavalry struck an 800 wagon supply train coming over Walden's Ridge
- Their orders were to "kill the mules and burn the wagons" which they set about doing for 8 hours
- But they also found whiskey in the sutler's wagons which distracted them and reduced their effectiveness
- A Union cavalry brigade under Col McCook was able to drive them off and rescue a few mules and wagons
- Wheeler then continued north to Murfreesboro but he was relatively unsuccessful as most of the Union cavalry had been sent to this area because there was no feed for the horses in Chattanooga
- By 9 October he was back with Bragg
- It was his first positive contribution since his Christmas ride in 1862
- Its success probably sealed Rosecrans' fate

Bragg attacks

Bragg attacks (1)

- With the Army of the Cumberland under siege, Bragg could now focus his attentions on his real enemies
- 29 September, LTG Leonidas Polk and MG Thomas Hindman were sacked for being derelict in their duties – Polk for failing to attack at dawn on 20 Sept and Hindman for his failure in McLemore's Cove
- Divisions that were from a single state such as Cheatham's all-Tennessee division were broken up to disrupt informal power blocks being formed and mixed up with other state's units
- MG Simon Buckner was demoted effectively to divisional command
- Bragg also criticised LTG DH Hill and recommended he be suspended from command for "his want of prompt conformity to orders"
- Polk, Hill and Longstreet had already met secretly and agreed to complain to Richmond about Bragg's mismanagement

Bragg attacks (2)

- Polk wrote directly to his close friend, President Davis, but his letter did not arrive in time to prevent his removal by Bragg
- Longstreet wrote to Secretary of War, Seddon
- "Our chief has done but one thing that he ought to have done since I joined his army. That was to order the attack on the 20th. All other things that he has done he ought not to have done. I am convinced that nothing but the hand of God can save us or help us as long as we have our present commander."
- He also referred to Chickamauga as "the most complete victory of the war – except perhaps, the first Manassas." (Bull Run)

Bragg attacks (3)

- For a long time Bragg had allowed 2 separate cavalry corps under Wheeler and Forrest, because Forrest had long refused to serve under Wheeler
- 28 September, while on an expedition towards Knoxville, Forrest received orders from Bragg to return and hand over his command to Wheeler
- Forrest responded with fury but was reassured in a personal interview with Bragg that he would get his troops back after Wheeler's raid on the Union supply lines and he was granted 10 days leave to visit his wife
- A few days into his leave he received another order, issued immediately after that meeting, that Wheeler would be given command of all the cavalry of the Army of Tennessee
- Forrest stormed back to Missionary Ridge and confronted Bragg finishing with "If you every again try to interfere with me or cross my path, it will be at the peril of your life"
- He sought and obtained a transfer away from Bragg's army as he was too valuable to the Confederates to discipline

Bragg attacks (4)

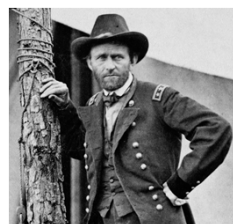
- 4 October, a petition calling for Bragg's removal was signed by 12 generals, including Longstreet, and sent to President Davis
- 6 October, Davis left Richmond for the long trip to Chattanooga
- 9 October he met with Bragg privately and later with Bragg and his 4 corps commanders - Longstreet, Hill, Buckner and Cheatham
- When he asked for suggestions, Longstreet ventured that Bragg "could be of greater service elsewhere than at the head of the Army of Tennessee"
- The other generals concurred and made their own contributions
- But none of them wanted to take over from Bragg
- And Davis did not want Joe Johnston, the most suitable candidate without a current command, who he blamed for the loss of Vicksburg
- Davis agreed to remove Hill and replace Polk with Hardee

Bragg attacks (5)

- This compromise satisfied nobody, morale dropped further and desertions increased
- The troops were not much better fed than the Federals but even the troops could see there was no real strategy to Bragg's actions
- Before Davis left, he and Bragg discussed a plan for the army to cross the river to outflank Rosecrans
- Bragg's preference was upstream but Longstreet's alternative proposal to cross downstream and take Bridgeport was accepted
- Bragg agreed that he would do that when the weather was right
- Davis also sowed a seed with Bragg by suggesting that Longstreet could be sent to attack Burnside at Knoxville if appropriate
- As the weather wasn't right, no move was made to cross the river
- Then, Davis received the news that the Federals had crossed the river, despite the weather

Grant

Ulysses S. Grant



- Born 1822 in Ohio, West Point graduate
- Served in the Mexican–American War
- Resigned from the army suddenly in 1854
- Unsuccessful in civilian life
- Rejoined the army at the start of the war
- Developed a reputation as a fighting general who didn't complain and demand more resources, which made him popular with Lincoln
- In 1864, as a national hero, he was promoted to LTG and given command of all the Union armies
- He was a great strategist and planner and had no fear of defeat
- Forced Lee's surrender at Appomattox leading to the end of the war
- Served 2 terms as President from 1868 and strongly supported Emancipation and Reconstruction
- While personally honest, his administration was notoriously corrupt

Grant (1)

- After the completion of his remarkable campaign leading to the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, Grant had had little to do except be feted as a national hero, while his army was dismembered for peripheral operations
- In early September he visited New Orleans to discuss future operations west of the Mississippi
- Grant was a noted horseman and, as often happened, he was given a mount that was "vicious but little used" as a challenge
- There are various versions of what happened, but Grant was thrown from his horse (Grant recalled that a locomotive whistle startled the horse) and was knocked unconscious with his leg crushed and his hip possibly dislocated
- He was back in Vicksburg by mid-September but required crutches for 2 months

Grant (2)

- After Chickamauga, Stanton requested that Grant send reinforcements to assist Rosecrans
- Within a day, Sherman and one division set off by steamer to Memphis
- Another would follow shortly afterwards
- He would collect another 3 divisions along the way but it would take several weeks before he could get them all to Chattanooga
- In early October, Grant received an order to proceed to Nashville via Cairo to supervise the movement of troops
- When he reached Cairo on 16 October he received a mysterious summons to Louisville to meet an official of the War Department
- The 'official' was actually Stanton who needed to speak to Grant privately

Grant (3)

- Stanton handed Grant two written orders from Lincoln
- The first put Grant in charge of a brand-new Department of the Mississippi consolidating the Armies of the Ohio (Burnside), the Tennessee (Sherman) and the Cumberland (Rosecrans) with his headquarters in the field
- The second order was identical except that Rosecrans would be replaced by Thomas
- Grant was given the choice as to which he wanted to accept
- With the Republican candidates for Governor in Ohio and Pennsylvania having been elected a few days previously, there was no longer any political need for Lincoln to retain Rosecrans
- Overnight, Stanton received a message from Dana saying that Rosecrans intended to abandon Chattanooga
- This message was almost certainly incorrect and possibly deliberately misleading

Grant (4)

- Grant's opinion of Rosecrans had swung wildly while they had worked together and afterwards
- At times he had viewed Rosecrans very favourably, but abandoning Chattanooga would be a disaster
- He chose the order replacing Rosecrans with Thomas and cabled Thomas to "Hold Chattanooga at all hazards. I will be there as soon as possible."
- Thomas's response was typically matter of fact: "We will hold the town till we starve."
- The ration for each soldier was now down to "four cakes of hard bread and a quarter pound of pork" every three days (quarter rations) so starvation was not far away
- And Thomas had barely enough powder for one day's hard fighting

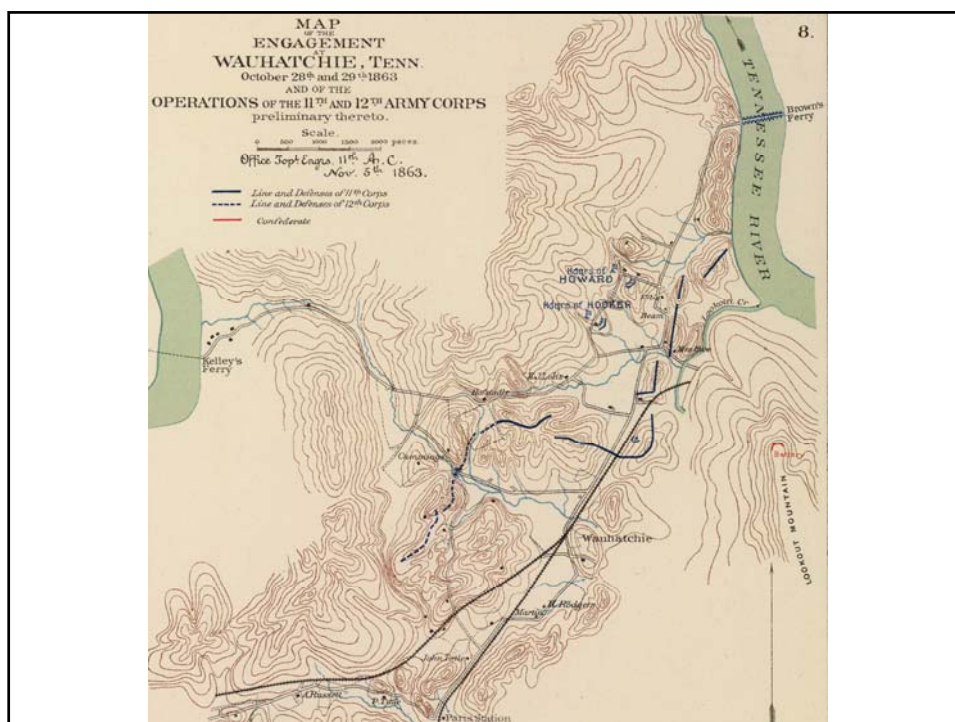
Grant (5)

- Grant set out for Chattanooga on 20 October reaching Stevenson that evening
- There he met with Rosecrans who made "some excellent suggestions as to what should be done. My only wonder was that he had not carried them out."
- He then started the difficult journey to Chattanooga via Walden's Ridge through the rain and mud, past the burnt out wagons and slaughtered mules, all the while having to be lifted onto and off his horse
- He arrived on 23 October where he received a cool reception from Thomas, possibly because Thomas was loyal to Rosecrans and felt he had been treated unfairly, but it may have gone back to West Point days
- This coolness would continue even as they worked closely together over the next month to lift the siege

The Cracker Line

The Cracker Line (1)

- Thomas set up a briefing for Grant about a plan to break the siege developed previously under Rosecrans, but not implemented
- Chief Engineer BG William “Baldy” Smith had identified geographical features of the area that could be used to their advantage
- A brigade would float down the river in pontoon boats under cover of darkness to Brown’s Ferry to surprise the Confederate garrison there
- At the same time a second brigade would cross the river, march across Moccasin Point out of sight of Confederates on Lookout Mountain and be ferried across the river by the other troops and secure Brown’s Ferry
- The plan depended on a near simultaneous link up with Hooker bringing his troops up from Bridgeport through Lookout Valley
- This would open a supply line (which became known as the “Cracker Line”) from Kelly’s Ferry that was much shorter and was out of firing range of Lookout Mountain







The Cracker Line (2)

- Typically for Grant, he quickly assessed the plan, approved it and put Thomas and Smith in charge of making it happen immediately
- He also realised that its success did not depend on Hooker's arrival
- Making a bridgehead at Brown's Ferry would allow them to hold Lookout Valley against Confederate attacks
- The river-borne force was put under the command of BG William Hazen, a proven fighter, while the land force was put under the command of BG John Turchin, the "Mad Russian"
- 3.00 am 27 October the boats floated silently 9 miles downstream past Lookout Mountain and arrived at Brown's Ferry at 4.30 am
- Within 10 minutes of the last boat arriving, the Confederate pickets had been captured and the Union troops were digging in
- A Confederate regiment under Col Oates counterattacked in the darkness unsure of the Union numbers and were slaughtered while Oates was wounded

The Cracker Line (3)

- Hooker's troops arrived at 3.45 pm the next day and the link up was complete
- There was still a risk of a Confederate response
- Hooker was not overly concerned
- He had left a division back down in the valley to protect his rear but it was some miles away
- Now he let the 2 divisions with him settle down for the night wherever was comfortable - "bivouacked haphazardly" was the description

The Battle of Wauhatchie

The Battle of Wauhatchie  	
Belligerents	
 United States (Union)	 Confederate States (Confederacy)
Commanders and leaders	
MG Joseph Hooker • MG Oliver O. Howard, XII Corps	LTG James Longstreet • BG Micah Jenkins, Hoods' Division
Units involved	
Hooker's Command • Infantry Divisions: BG Adolphus von Steinwehr (XII Corps), BG Carl Schurz (XII Corps), BG John Geary (XI Corps)	Longstreet's Corps, Hood's Division • Infantry Brigades: Col John Bratton, BG Evander Law, BG Jerome Robertson, BG Henry Benning
Casualties and losses	
78 KIA: 327 WIA: 15 CIA/MIA 420 casualties	34 KIA: 305 WIA: 69 CIA/MIA* 408 casualties (or 900+) * Union reports 153 dead, 100+ captured

Hooker's Command

MG Joseph Hooker

➤ **XI Corps** under MG Oliver O. Howard

✧ BG Adolph von Steinwehr

- Col Adolphus Buschbeck – 134th NY, 154th NY, 27th PA, 73rd PA
- Col Orland Smith – 33rd MS, 136th NY, 55th OH, 73rd OH

✧ MG Carl Schurz

- BG Hector Tyndale – 101st IL, 45th NY, 143rd NY, 61st OH, 82nd OH
- Col Włodzimierz Krzyzanowski – 58th NY, 119th NY, 141st NY, 26th WI
- Col Friedrich Hecker – 80th IL, 68th NY, 75th PA

➤ **XII Corps**

✧ BG John W. Geary

- Col George Cobham - 29th PA, 109th PA, 111th PA
- BG George Greene – 78th NY, 137th NY, 149th NY

Longstreet's Corps

LTG James Longstreet

- Hood's Division under BG Micah Jenkins
 - ✧ Jenkins' Brigade under Col John Bratton
 - 1st SC, 2 SC Rifles, 5th SC, 6th SC, Hampton's (SC) Legion, Palmetto (SC) Sharpshooters
 - ✧ Robertson's Brigade under BG Evander M. Law / BG Jerome B. Robertson
 - 3rd AR, 1st TX, 4th TX, 5th TX
 - ✧ Law's Brigade under BG Evander M. Law / Col James L. Sheffield
 - 4th AL, 15th AL (Col. William Oates), 44th AL, 47th AL, 48th AL
 - ✧ Benning's Brigade under BG Henry L. Benning
 - 2nd GA, 15th GA, 17th GA, 20th GA

The Battle of Wauhatchie (1)

- Bragg had not solved the problem of Longstreet who was the most senior and most experienced subordinate and had a semi-independent command
- Longstreet had no inclination to pay attention to any orders from Bragg
- Bragg had received reports of Sherman's progress and he was now receiving reports that Hooker was preparing to cross the river
- Longstreet had been given responsibility for the area between Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain as well as Lookout Valley north and west to the river but he didn't do any reconnaissance or take any of the reports seriously
- In fact 3 regiments had just been recalled from Lookout Valley by Jenkins (while Law was on leave) for reasons unknown
- This left only 2 in Lookout Valley, in particular, the 15th Alabama under Col. William Oates at Brown's Ferry, to resist the 2 brigades led by Baldy Smith

The Battle of Wauhatchie (2)

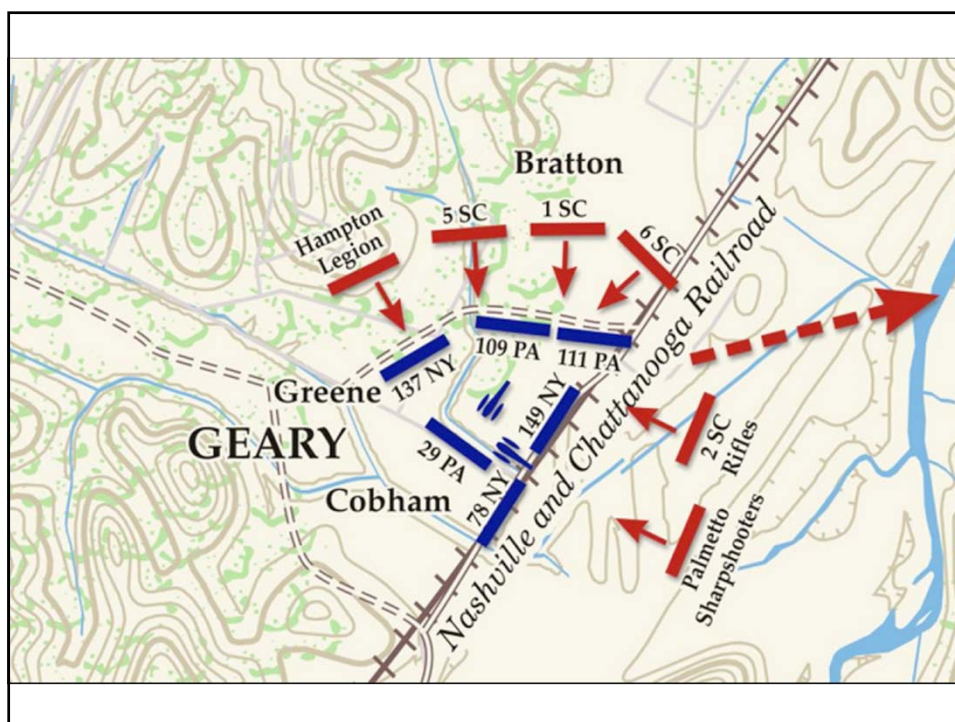
- Longstreet received the news of the capture of Brown's Ferry with indifference
- He firmly believed that it was just a feint and the real attack would come from Trenton, much further south
- Bragg ordered him to retake Brown's Ferry, which he ignored
- On the morning of 28 October, Bragg and Longstreet met on Lookout Mountain where they were astonished to see Hooker's troops marching up from Bridgeport towards Wauhatchie
- They were further astonished to see a small division (1500 troops, 4 guns) under the command of BG John Geary detached to guard the crossroads at Wauhatchie along with a large supply train
- Geary had grave misgivings about making his preparations in full view of Lookout Mountain
- He ordered his 2 brigades to bivouac on their arms and had his pickets out

The Battle of Wauhatchie (3)

- Bragg still wanted Longstreet to attack Brown's Ferry but Longstreet saw the opportunity to cut Hooker's troops off by defeating Geary
- This would leave even more hungry Federal mouths to feed
- He proposed a night attack to which Bragg consented
- His planning was erratic - he failed to give either Jenkins or Law clear orders and he ignored the nasty rivalry between the two
- After dark, Jenkins ordered Law to take 2 brigades to the high ground to the east of the road to Brown's Ferry so that he could attack the flank of any units of the XII Corps coming to the aid of Geary
- Col. Bratton would command Jenkins' Brigade (1800 men) for the attack on Geary
- Benning's Brigade would be held in reserve to protect Law's left and to reinforce Bratton
- The attack was scheduled for 10 pm

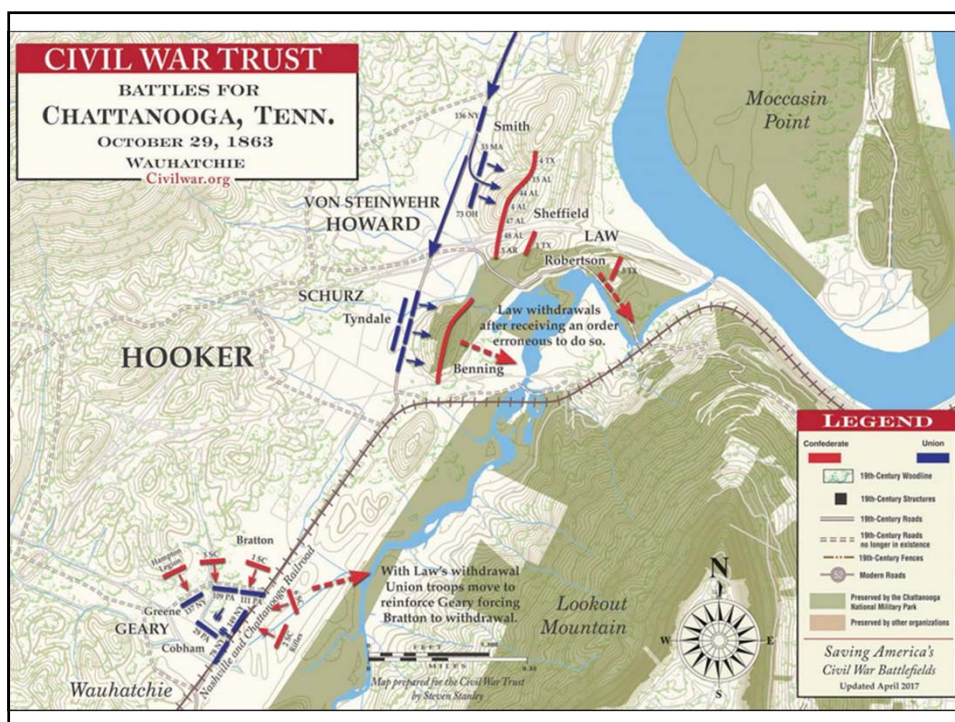
The Battle of Wauhatchie (4)

- In fact Bratton's brigade did not get going until midnight
- There were heavy clouds and visibility was very poor
- Some of the troops thought they were attacking a lightly guarded baggage train
- When they encountered Geary's pickets, the noise brought the Federals to the ready and heavy fighting ensued
- Geary's artillery was quite exposed and suffered from sharpshooters
- 22 out of 28 artillerymen, including Geary's son, 37 out of 48 horses were shot
- The fighting lasted until 3.00 am with neither side gaining any advantage but Geary's men were running low on ammunition
- Then Bratton was handed an order from Jenkins to withdraw as Hooker's troops were coming up in his rear
- As it happened, this was not strictly accurate



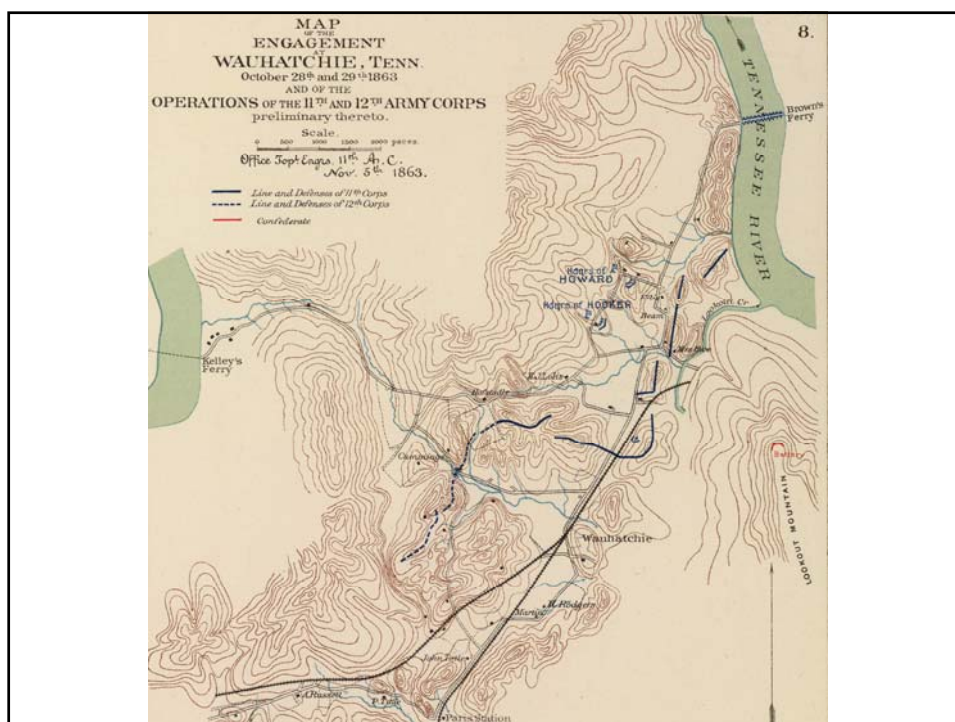
The Battle of Wauhatchie (5)

- Hooker was woken by the sounds of battle from the south
- He was now terrified that he might lose Geary's whole division
- Shurz was given orders to move his men "double-quick" to Wauhatchie
- When Law's troops started firing, Hooker sent Orland Smith's Brigade of von Steinwehr's Division to attack Laws' position
- All was chaotic and yet more troops were directed to attack Law
- Tyndale's Brigade of Shurz's division continued south until it was diverted to attack Benning's position
- Howard had been left out of any decision making and he continued on his way with a small escort of cavalry arriving at 4.00 am after the fighting had died down
- By that time, Law had received orders to withdraw
- Geary had lost 216 (14%) men and Bratton 356 (20%) for no gain



The Battle of Wauhatchie (6)

- Grant was disgusted and seriously considered relieving Hooker of his command because of the near disaster that could have been easily avoided by better planning and organisation
- Longstreet sent too small a force to attack Geary whose numbers were only slightly smaller while he had the advantage of having a prepared position in the dark
- The Cracker Line was opened and “never afterward disturbed”
- One legend arose from the battle
- The teamsters ran away and 200 frightened mules raced through the Confederate lines who supposedly ran away from a “cavalry” charge
- The Union troops penned the poem of “The Charge of the Mule Brigade” and recommended that the mules be “breveted as horses”
- In fact, it only caused a small disorder but it did allow time for Federal troops to plug a gap in the line



To be continued ...

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