

GEORGIA

BATTLEFIELDS

Published by Georgia Battlefields Association, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to preservation of Georgia's Civil War history and sites. Contact newsletter editor by e-mail: info@georgiabattlefields.org

Chattanooga & Ringgold overview by Larry Peterson

In preparation for our annual tour, Georgia Battlefields Association asked long-time GBA member Larry Peterson, author of several books in the [Command Decision series](#), to provide an overview of the fighting for Chattanooga. Larry's narrative follows.

After the only major victory obtained by the Confederate Army of Tennessee at Chickamauga on September 18-20, 1863, for many reasons that army, commanded by Gen. Braxton Bragg, failed to aggressively pursue Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans' U.S. Army of the Cumberland as it retreated into the confines of Chattanooga. Bragg then established a semi-siege of Rosecrans' troops entrenched within that most important railroad hub.

President Abraham Lincoln and his administration immediately dispatched two corps under Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker to aid the Chattanooga garrison. Lincoln also established a new Military Division of the Mississippi, consolidating three western departments and appointing Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant as commander. Grant wasted no time traveling to the beleaguered city, quickly replacing Rosecrans with Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas as commander of the Army of the Cumberland. Grant ordered Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, now commanding the Army of the Tennessee in the Vicksburg area, to proceed to Chattanooga as well. Grant further ordered the establishment of a dependable supply line, dubbed the "Cracker Line," which became a reality after the capture of Brown's Ferry, west of Chattanooga.

Meanwhile, Bragg, with the concurrence of President Jefferson Davis, focused his attention on eliminating his critics among the Army of Tennessee senior commanders and reassigning units to more supportive generals. He diminished his command over time while Grant increased his.

With supplies now flowing into Chattanooga, Grant awaited the arrival of his preferred subordinate Sherman and the Army of the Tennessee. Hooker and his two corps approached on October 28 and fought a small night battle at Wauhatchie, southwest of Chattanooga. Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's two divisions, which had been sent as reinforcements from Virginia in September, failed to defend Lookout Valley, including Wauhatchie, which resulted in Bragg sending Longstreet to capture Knoxville. This further reduced the size of Bragg's command.

Upon the arrival of Sherman's Army of the Tennessee, Grant assigned it to roll up the Confederate right flank stationed on northern Missionary Ridge. Grant also authorized Hooker to assault Lookout Mountain. The resulting fighting there on November 24-25, dubbed the "Battle Above the Clouds," was a U.S. victory, but Sherman failed to make adequate use of the terrain and was unable to successfully roll up the Confederate right flank, protected by Maj. Gen. Patrick Cleburne's division. With Sherman unable to achieve his objective, Hooker was ordered to advance from Lookout Mountain and roll up the Confederate left flank on Missionary Ridge, but he was delayed enroute by swollen Lookout Creek.

Therefore, Grant ordered a diversionary advance by Thomas' command to the base of Missionary Ridge. From his headquarters atop the ridge, Bragg made several major mistakes. First, he waited to establish a defensive line until November 23, believing the ridge to be unassailable. Second, the main line was on the topographical crest, not the military crest. Third, he had advance lines at both the base of and partially up the western face of ridge.

When Thomas's divisions reached the base of the ridge on the afternoon of November 25, they believed their position was untenable due to potential Confederate fire from above. However, the Confederates retreating from their advance lines interfered with fire from their main line, while Thomas's men—without orders—began following the Confederates up the ridge. Unprepared for such an attack, Bragg's line was broken in several places, which led to a precipitous withdrawal, giving Grant a major victory and the U.S. control of Chattanooga. After a delaying action on November 27 at Ringgold, the Confederates retreated to Dalton where they spent the winter rebuilding, while Grant was promoted to commanding general of all U.S. Army forces and developed plans for the spring campaigns of 1864, which included Sherman's advance into the interior of Georgia and his September 1864 capture of Atlanta.

GBA annual tour, 18-21 April 2024: Chattanooga & Ringgold

Focus for the 2024 tour is the October and November 1863 fighting for Chattanooga.

Guide: Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park (CCNMP) historian Jim Ogden.

Price: Unlike our usual two-and-a-half-day tours, this will be a three-and-a-half-day tour: All day Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, plus Sunday morning. The **price of \$580** includes bus transportation, handouts, three lunches and three dinners (Thursday through Saturday). If you can't join us for whole tour, send an e-mail (be sure to include your phone number) to info@georgiabattlefields.org, and we will correspond with you about a reduced price.

Hotel: TownePlace Suites, 6801 Ringgold Rd, East Ridge TN 37412, 423 933 2700. **Note change from phone number provided in 2023 newsletters.** Hotel is just on the Tennessee side of the boundary with Georgia. Take I-75 exit 1 and go east on Ringgold Road (US 41) a little over a half mile. Hotel is on the north (left) side of the road. Hotel price includes breakfast.

Schedule

Wednesday (17 April): GBA representatives will be in the hotel lobby Wednesday evening to hand out maps and answer questions. Dinner on your own.

Thursday (18 April): The situation in mid-October 1863. Lookout Mountain, Bridgeport, Sequatchie Valley, Walden's Ridge, Brown's Ferry, Wauhatchie. Reception dinner at hotel.

Friday (19 April): Lookout Mountain, Cravens House. Dinner at [Sugar's Ribs](#).

Saturday (20 April): Orchard Knob, Missionary Ridge (several stops). Dinner venue is the Coolidge National [Medal of Honor Heritage Center](#).

Sunday (21 April): Ringgold.

For more details on the significance of the sites, see [October 2023 newsletter](#).

Registration: See our web site [tours page](#) and click the link to register. Use PayPal or a credit card to complete registration online, or you can mail a check payable to Georgia Battlefields Association to **315 S. 5th St., Griffin GA 30224-4343**.

If you have any trouble registering or paying online, contact us at info@georgiabattlefields.org.

Come join us for a comprehensive tour led by Jim Ogden, an unmatched guide.

Society for Women and the Civil War conference in Atlanta 26-28 July

The [Society for Women and the Civil War](#) will hold its [annual conference](#) in Atlanta in 2024. Kennesaw State University's [Center for the Study of the Civil War Era](#) is a cosponsor partner organization for the conference. Hotel will be the [Courtyard by Marriott Kennesaw](#). Georgia Battlefields Association provided input for the planning of events and tours.

The conference agenda will focus on the lives and roles of women during the Atlanta Campaign and will feature presentations on Friday (26 July) afternoon, a buffet dinner that night, and a key-note presentation after dinner. Saturday (27 July) will include a guided tour of special collections at the [Atlanta History Center](#), a boxed lunch, a tour of Roswell sites associated with the mill workers who were shipped north after U.S. cavalry occupied the town in early July 1864, a visit to the [Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History](#), and a visit to [Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park](#) for a presentation and tour. Saturday's dinner will again be a buffet, followed by a trivia contest. Sunday (28 July) morning will include three presentations, and the conference will close between noon and 1 p.m. Register for the conference [here](#).

Gone With the Wind 85th anniversary screening April 7th, 8th, and 10th

See it on the big screen as originally intended. Click [this link](#) to find a theater near you.

Georgia Battlefields Association

315 S. 5TH ST

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www.georgiabattlefields.org

April 2024