

The Bandy Heritage Center for Northwest Georgia

Atlanta Campaign Driving Tour

From Tunnel Hill to Resaca

Overview

After their humiliating defeat on the slopes of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge on November 24-25, 1863, the dispirited forces of General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee fell back through Ringgold Gap to establish new lines, refresh, and refit in the vicinity of Dalton, Georgia. After losing the confidence of his troops and the loyalty of his subordinates, Bragg resigned his command and traveled to Richmond, Virginia, to serve as Confederate President Jefferson Davis's military advisor. Davis then appointed General Joseph E. Johnston as the new commander of the Army of Tennessee. Despite Davis's longstanding personal animosity toward Johnston as well as his doubts about the general's military acumen and judgment, Davis hoped Johnston could salvage the Confederacy's deteriorating situation in the Western Theater.

Johnston arrived in Dalton in December 1863 and immediately established a strong defensive position in the mountainous terrain north and east of the town. He would eventually command a revitalized 50,000-man army organized into three army corps. Commanded by Lieutenant Generals William J. Hardee, John B. Hood, and Leonidas Polk, Polk's corps, initially stationed at various points in defense of northern Alabama, would not fully unite with Johnston's other forces until the action in Resaca.

Meanwhile, significant changes had taken place within the Union command at Chattanooga. After the decisive victory at Missionary Ridge, General Ulysses S. Grant was summoned east to assume command of all Federal armies. In his place, Grant appointed Major General William Tecumseh Sherman as commander of all forces in the Western Theater. Sherman's 100,000-man Army Group consisted of three armies--the Army of the Cumberland, under the command of Major General George Thomas; the Army of the Tennessee, led by Major General James B. McPherson; and the XXIII Army corps designated as the Army of the Ohio, commanded by Major General John M. Schofield.

After consulting with Grant, Sherman devised a campaign based on movement and maneuver rather than headlong assaults against Johnston's strong entrenchments. At Dalton, Sherman intended to use the mountains and ridges of north Georgia to shield and obscure his intentions from Johnston and outflank his works to gain access to the Western and Atlantic Railroad. Schofield's troops would move south from their camps around Cleveland, Tennessee, and attack Johnston's northernmost lines in Crow Valley and the eastern slopes of Rocky Face Ridge. To the Army of the Cumberland fell the task of forcing passage of Buzzard Roost Gap in Rocky Face Ridge, northwest of Dalton. While these demonstrations took place, McPherson's Army of the Tennessee would advance out of northeast Alabama, use the heights of Taylor's Ridge to shield their movements, and seize undefended Snake Creek Gap, which provided access to the Western and Atlantic Railroad at Resaca. These moves would trap Johnston between Sherman's overwhelmingly superior numbers.

Tour Stops Section #1

The Army of the Cumberland at Tunnel Hill and Dalton

The IV Corps of the Army of the Cumberland, commanded by Major General Oliver O. Howard, began its advance on May 7, 1864, with the immediate objective of securing the Western and Atlantic Railroad tunnel in the village of Tunnel Hill. Howard's Corps marched south on the Tunnel Hill Road while Major General John Palmer and his XIV Corps advanced from Ringgold via the main wagon road (present-day US Hwy 41). These combined forces drove Confederate cavalry under General Joseph Wheeler from Tunnel Hill to Mill Creek Gap.

Directions:

From Ringgold, Georgia, travel south on US Hwy 41. At the intersection of US 41 and GA Hwy 2, you will come to the Old Stone Presbyterian Church. Erected in 1850 from locally quarried sandstone, this building served as a hospital for both Union and Confederate forces during the Atlanta Campaign. From this intersection you can continue on US Hwy 41 and follow the course of the XIV Corps to Tunnel Hill. Continuing east on GA Hwy 2, turn left on Keith Road to Catoosa Springs. The mineral-rich waters of the springs made it an excellent site for both Confederate and Union hospitals. The IV Corps camped on these grounds May 4-6, 1864.

Returning to GA 2, turn left and proceed to the intersection of Tunnel Hill Road and turn right. Here you will see a Georgia state historical marker commemorating the beginning of the Atlanta Campaign. From this point, the IV Corps turned south on its approach to Tunnel Hill. Traveling south on Tunnel Hill Road, you will cross over Interstate 75 and enter Whitfield County. At this point, Tunnel Hill Road becomes Lee Chapel Road. Lee Chapel Road ends at the intersection of GA Hwy 201 (Varnell Road). Turn right on GA Hwy 201, and travel for two miles until it ends at Main Street. Turn right on Main Street, turn left on Oak Street, cross over the railroad tracks, and turn left on Clisby Austin Road.

Before you now is the Western and Atlantic Railroad tunnel through Chetoogeta Mountain, the objective of Howard's IV Army Corps. The house in the open field to your right is the Clisby Austin House, which served as Sherman's headquarters May 7-12, 1864.



The Old Stone Presbyterian Church was used as a hospital by both the Union and Confederacy

Tour Stops Section #1 continued

After securing Tunnel Hill, Thomas's army advanced to Rocky Face Ridge. The IV Corps formed the left flank of the army, the XIV Corps formed the center, and Major General Joseph Hooker's XX Corps moving south from Ringgold occupied the right flank of the army from their position in Dogwood Valley. While the IV corps engaged Rebel forces on the crest and northern end of Rocky Face Ridge, Palmer's XIV faced the task of clearing Confederate forces from Mill Creek Gap, also known as Buzzard's Roost. Both the Western and Atlantic Railroad and the main wagon road passed through this gap. All attempts to force passage of the gap on May 8 and 9 were repulsed by Rebel forces entrenched on both the northern and southern slopes of the gap. To add to their defenses, Confederate troops successfully dammed the waters of Mill Creek, which ran through the gap and created an artificial lake, further impeding the Federal assault.

Directions:

Continuing south from Tunnel Hill on US Hwy 41 for approximately 4 miles, turn right into the parking lot of the Georgia State Patrol Barracks. Here you will find the Mill Creek Pavilion erected by the National Park Service. From this location, you can view the northern and southern slopes of Mill Creek Gap. As you exit the pavilion, turn left and go back north on US 41 for .50 miles to a gravel shoulder. From here a trail leads to the old highway bridge over Mill Creek and marks the site of the dam constructed by Confederate troops to flood the gap.



The Western & Atlantic Railroad tunnel at Tunnel Hill

Tour Stops Section #2

Schofield's XXIII Corps (Army of the Ohio) in Crow Valley

As the Army of the Cumberland engaged Johnston's army at Rocky Face Ridge, Sherman's smallest independent force menaced Johnston's position from the north. Moving from the Cleveland, Tennessee, area, the XXIII Corps took positions on the east side of Rocky Face ridge. They moved south through Crow Valley on May 7 to threaten Johnston's line, which ran from the base of the ridge eastward and curved south to protect the approaches to Dalton. Deploying two of his divisions abreast of the road through the valley, Schofield's early advance against scattered cavalry opposition went smoothly. Soon, his forces were stopped by the strong defenses of Major General Carter Stephenson's Division of Hood's Corps. Concentrated infantry fire supported by artillery positioned on Potato Hill effectively blocked Schofield's advance.

Directions:

Returning to Tunnel Hill on US 41, take GA 201 north towards Varnell. After crossing under I-75, turn right on New Hope Church Road. After 1.2 miles, turn left on Crow Valley Road. At this point, the road passes through Harris Gap, site of Schofield's headquarters. From Crow Valley Road, turn on to Reed Pond Road. At the intersection of Reed Pond Road and Reed Road, turn right on Reed Road to trace the path of the XXIII Corps through Crow Valley. Proceed south to the flashing yellow traffic light. This marks the intersection of Poplar Springs Road. Turn right on Poplar Springs Road to the parking lot of Poplar Springs Baptist Church. Poplar Springs Road parallels Stephenson's Confederate line across Crow Valley. From the church parking lot, the steep hill to your north and east is Potato Hill, site of the concentrated artillery fire that halted Schofield's advance.

Leaving the church parking lot and turning left (west), Poplar Springs Road intersects with Crow Valley Road and gives a panoramic view of the valley as well as the eastern slopes of Rocky Face Ridge. Return to the church and turn right on Haig Mill Road. Following the shore of Haig Mill Lake, turn left onto Old Haig Mill Road to the site of Ault's Mill. This mill, now covered by the waters of Haig Mill Lake, marks the southern terminus of Johnston's northern defenses and the site of Lieutenant General William J. Hardee's headquarters.



Potato Hill, site of artillery fire that blocked Schofield's advance

Tour Stops Section #3

Hooker's XX Army Corps at Dogwood Valley and Dug Gap

While the IV and XIV Corps of the Army of the Cumberland occupied Johnston's attention north and northwest of Dalton, Thomas's Third Corps, the XX Army Corps under the command of Major General Joseph Hooker, began its move to lengthen Thomas's line to the south and west and apply pressure to Johnston's southern defenses by forcing passage of Dug Gap in Rocky Face Ridge, 5 miles south of Mill Creek Gap. Hooker moved south from Ringgold and split his command to facilitate passage through the gaps in Taylor's Ridge, which ran parallel and west of Rocky Face Ridge. Sending Brigadier General Alpheus Williams's First Division through Nickajack Gap, Hooker accompanied his Second and Third Divisions, commanded respectively by Brigadier General John Geary and Major General Dan Butterfield, through Gordon Springs Gap, 4.5 miles south. After successfully crossing Taylor's Ridge, Hooker's command reunited in the valley of East Chickamauga Creek and Dogwood Valley. From these positions, the First and Third Divisions moved northeast to link up with Palmer's XIV Army Corps and form the right flank of the Army of the Cumberland. Geary's Second Division moved south to approach Dug Gap from the west. Seizure of Dug Gap would force Johnston to retire from his Dalton position in order to protect his supply and communication lines or at least weaken his defenses to counter the threat. On May 8, 1864, Geary's troops reached Babb's Settlement at the base of the gap. From this position, Geary ordered the brigades of Colonel Charles Candy and Colonel Adolphus Buschbeck to assault the heights of Dug Gap. Repeated attempts ended in failure due to the difficulty of the terrain and the spirited defense of the Arkansas and Kentucky soldiers occupying the heights of the ridge. At one point, the defense entailed rolling large boulders down on top of the Federal ranks. Although none of the three assaults (Mill Creek Gap, Crow Valley, Dug Gap) that Sherman ordered against Johnston's lines was successful in achieving its tactical objectives, together the assaults did achieve their strategic goal of masking McPherson's advance against Snake Creek Gap.

Directions:

From Ringgold, go south on GA Hwy 151 (Old Alabama Hwy) approximately 6 miles to East Nickajack Road. This road follows the route of Williams's First Division over Taylor's Ridge to the valley of East Chickamauga Creek. After crossing into Whitfield County, this road becomes Houston Valley Road. Houston Valley Road intersects with GA 201. Turning left on 201 will bring you to the village of Rocky Face, west of Mill Creek Gap.

Continuing south on GA 151, cross into Walker County. There is no direct road through Gordon Springs Gap, but this area can be accessed through a slight detour. Turn right at the intersection of GA 151 and GA 136. After crossing Taylor's Ridge, turn left on N. Dick Creek Road. When you cross back into Whitfield County, this road becomes Lower Gordon Springs Road. Turn right on Gordon Springs Road and proceed to the intersection with GA 201. From here turn left (north) to follow the route of Butterfield's Third Division. Turn left on Dunagin Road to the site of Dr. Anderson's house, Hooker's headquarters during his movements in this area. From the Anderson house, turn north onto Trickum Road and then left onto Houston Valley Road to bring you to Rocky Face.

From the intersection of Gordon Springs Road and GA Hwy 201, go south on Hwy 201 approximately one mile to Joe Robertson Road just north of the Whitfield/Walker County line. Turn left on Joe Robertson Road. From Joe Robertson Road, turn left onto Mill Creek Road. Just north of Mill Creek Baptist Church, turn right on Babb Road. From this road you can see the steep heights and rough terrain that doomed the federal assault on Dug Gap. (To view the battle site from the Confederate perspective, take Dug Gap Battle Road, past the Northwest Georgia Convention and Trade Center in Dalton, to the battlefield park site. A short trail to the top of the ridge opens up to a view of the existing Confederate breastworks, as well as Dogwood Valley and Taylor's Ridge.)



Dug Gap from Babb's Settlement

Tour Stops Section #4

McPherson's Army of the Tennessee at Snake Creek Gap

Leaving their camps at Lee and Gordon's Mills on May 7, the XV and XVI Corps of the Army of the Tennessee marched south, shielded from observation by Taylor's Ridge, in their advance to Snake Creek Gap. This gap passes between Mill Creek Mountain and Horn Mountain, the southernmost extensions of Rocky Face Ridge, and provides direct access to Resaca, 15 miles south of Dalton. Seizing Resaca would trap Johnston in his Dalton defense lines, also cutting him off from his Atlanta supply base. McPherson made camp on May 7 at Chestnut Flat near the village of Catlett. This location placed him in close proximity to Gordon Springs Gap and Ship's Gap, both of which crossed Taylor's Ridge. On the evening of May 7, Brigadier James Veatch's Fourth Division of Major General Grenville Dodge's XVI Corps advanced from Chestnut Flat and captured Ship's Gap at 9:00 pm. The following day the remainder of the XVI Corps followed the Fourth Division through Ship's Gap. Major General John Logan's XV Corps, crossing the ridge at Gordon Springs Gap on May 8, united with the XIV Corps in Armuchee Valley. Together these forces marched unopposed to the crossroads village of Villanow at the entrance to Snake Creek Gap.

Believing Resaca to be unguarded and vulnerable, McPherson ordered Logan and Dodge forward on May 9 to seize the wagon and railroad bridges over the Oostanaula River. Emerging from their lines overlooking Camp Creek Valley, the men of the Army of the Tennessee met unexpected and stubborn resistance from Confederate cavalry and infantry. They were also surprised by the extensive network of trenches encircling Resaca. These works were occupied by the men of Brigadier James Cantey's division of Polk's Corps. These were the first units of Polk's command, summoned from their scattered outposts in northern Alabama, to join Johnston's forces in Georgia. McPherson was unsure of the size of the forces opposing him, and he worried about the possibility of being isolated so far from the bulk of the Federal forces. He, therefore, pulled his lines back within Snake Creek Gap and advised Sherman that he did not possess sufficient forces to destroy the railroad bridge and hold Resaca. McPherson strengthened his defenses and waited three days for the rest of Sherman's army to join him. Leaving Howard's IV Corps to hold Johnston in place and occupy Dalton, Sherman ordered Thomas on May 11 and Schofield on May 12 to march south and join McPherson at Snake Creek Gap for a full assault on Resaca.

Directions:

From Lee and Gordon's Mills at the south end of the Chickamauga National Military Park, take US Hwy 27 south five miles to Rock Springs. At the Rock Springs Post Office, turn left on GA Hwy 95 (Old Tavern Road). From this intersection, go south 7 miles to the crossroads community of Catlett. Here in the fields bordering Little Chickamauga Creek is Chestnut Flat, site of McPherson's camp on May 7. Turn left on Cooper Road to its junction with GA Hwy 151. This intersection marks the entrance to Gordon Springs Gap, which crossed Taylor's Ridge looming before you. There is no road through the gap. From here turn south on GA Hwy 151. Three miles south on GA 151 and past the intersection with GA Hwy 136 is Old Villanow Road. Turn left on Old Villanow Road to trace the movement of the XVI Corps through Ship's Gap. The road no longer passes completely through the gap to connect with GA Hwy 136. The road is closed to vehicle traffic one mile from the junction with Hwy 151, but it is possible to proceed on foot up the road bed to the base of the gap. Returning to Hwy 151, go north to GA Hwy 136 and turn right. Once over the crest of Taylor's Ridge, you enter Armuchee Valley. The intersection of GA 136 and N. Dick Creek Road marks the point of the reunification of the XVI and XV Corps. Two miles further on GA Hwy 136 brings you to Villanow.



View of Gordon Springs Gap

Tour Stops Section #5

The Battle of Resaca

By May 12, Sherman had withdrawn his army from their positions surrounding Dalton and concentrated his forces in Snake Creek Gap. Johnston, realizing that Sherman had shifted his army, now faced the threat of being cut off from Atlanta. On May 12, he ordered his army to fall back to Resaca before Sherman's army could seize Resaca and the all-important Oostanaula River bridges. Johnston placed his army in a semi-circle on the ridges west and north of the town. Polk's Corps, its left resting on the Oostanaula south of Resaca, formed the left flank of the defense. Hardee's men formed the center of Johnston's position. John B. Hood's Corps filed into line on Hardee's right and defended the right flank of the army. Hood's position extended to the Conasauga River.

Moving out from Snake Creek Gap on May 13, McPherson's XV Corps formed the left of the Federal line. As Thomas's and Schofield's Corps followed out of the gap, they shifted north and extended Sherman's lines until they roughly paralleled Johnston's position. The XX and XIV Army Corps of the Army of the Cumberland formed the center of the Federal line with the XXIII Corps, under Schofield, taking the left flank of the army's position. Howard's IV Corps, arriving from Dalton on May 14, took position on Schofield's left and held the extreme left of the Federal position.

Sherman's main assault on Resaca began on May 14. On the Union right, McPherson's men successfully drove Polk's troops from their positions overlooking Camp Creek Valley, forcing Polk to construct a new line closer to the Oostanaula bridges. Meanwhile, Schofield's XXIII Corps and Thomas's XIV Corps began their attack on the center of Johnston's line. The rough terrain of Camp Creek Valley, combined with the tenacious defense mounted by Hardee's men, prevented any major gains from these attacks. Learning from cavalry reports that the extreme left of the Federal line was vulnerable, Johnston ordered Hood at 3:30 to attack the exposed flank, turn the position, and roll up the Federal left flank. Realizing his precarious position on the extreme left of the line, Howard had earlier in the day requested reinforcements to extend his line to a more secure position against the Conasauga River. In response to his request, Thomas ordered Major General Joseph Hooker to send Brigadier General Alpheus Williams's First Division to Howard's assistance. Hood's men surged over the Federal earthworks as Federal regiments gave way and streamed to the rear. As disaster loomed for Howard's forces, the leading brigade of Williams's Division arrived and blocked Hood's advance. Disorganized by this sudden appearance of fresh defenders and unable to reform their lines in the growing darkness, Hood's men fell back to their original position, giving up their hard-fought gains.

Thomas and Schofield planned to press forward on May 15 to follow up on their meager gains of the previous day. The remaining units of Hooker's XX Corps were shifted to the left of the Federal line and engaged Hood's men in inconclusive fighting on the morning of May 15. None of these actions resulted in any significant change other than to increase the casualty lists. McPherson, using the positions from which he forced Polk's men on May 14, concentrated his artillery on the Conasauga bridges. As these actions occupied Johnston's attention at Resaca, Sherman once more engaged a flanking action to force Johnston from a strong defensive position.

On May 14 Sherman dispatched Brigadier Thomas Sweeney's Second Division of the XVI Army Corps to find a crossing over the Oostanaula south of Resaca. A crossing in this area would allow Federal forces to outflank Resaca and once more threaten Johnston's communication and supply line. Lay's Ferry, at the confluence of Snake Creek and the Oostanaula River, provided an excellent opportunity for this action. Crossing the Oostanaula by pontoon boat, Sweeney began deploying his men to advance on the Confederate rear below Resaca. False reports of a strong Confederate defense force crossing the river and threatening to cut him off from the rest of the Federal force caused Sweeney to pull his troops back across the river. Using the same tactics on the morning of the May 15, Sweeney once more crossed the river and was reinforced by additional units from the XVI Army Corps. News of this successful threat to his position caused Johnston to cancel orders for planned counter attacks by Hood's Corps on the northern end of his defenses. Sensing the precariousness of his position Johnston gave the orders to withdraw south once more and build a new line of defense.

Tour Stops Section #5 Continued

Directions:

From Villanow, continue on GA Hwy 136 through Snake Creek Gap. At the intersection of GA Hwy 136 and Hall Memorial Road, McPherson's XV and XVI Army Corps emerged from the gap and began deploying for their advance against Polk's position overlooking Camp Creek. Continuing toward Resaca .05 mile further to Fain Brown Road. This road parallels Polk's first position before he was forced back to a new position closer to the railroad bridge over the Oostanaula River. From here is a clear view of Camp Creek Valley and the route of Sherman's forces as they left Snake Creek Gap and extended their lines to the north. Continue on GA 136 to the junction with US Hwy 41 and turn left. This will bring you to the town of Resaca. Just south of this intersection is the site of the Western & Atlantic Railroad Bridge over the Oostanaula River. The National Park Service Pavilion, dedicated to the Battle of Resaca, lies 1.75 miles north of the intersection. Turn right at the pavilion on Confederate Cemetery Road. At the end of the road lies the Resaca Confederate Cemetery. Established in 1866 by Miss Mary J. Green, this cemetery contains the bodies of 450 unidentified Confederate soldiers. On May 14 this position marked the extreme right of Johnston's defensive line. Six hundred yards north of the cemetery, Major General A.P. Stewart's division of Hood's Corps attacked Stanley's division of the Federal IV Army corps near Nance's Spring. On May 15, Stewart renewed the attack on Williams's First Division of the XX Army Corps but failed to dislodge them from their position. Returning to US Hwy 41, turn right; then make an immediate left onto Rooker Road. The wooded ridge opposite the Georgia Historical Marker is the location of the junction of Hardee's and Hood's defensive lines. Return to US Hwy 41 and turn left. One-half mile north, turn right on Chitwood Road. Here Hood's defensive line crossed the wagon road from Dalton. Hindman's division extended to the left towards Hardee's Corps and Camp Creek Valley. Stevenson's division occupied the center astride the road and Stewart's division extended eastward to the Western & Atlantic Railroad and the Conasauga River.

One-half mile west of the intersection is Camp Creek Valley, site of Schofield's XXIII Army Corps' failed May 14 assaults. On a ridge 225 yards east of here was the location of Confederate Captain Martin Van Den Corput's 5-gun Cherokee Battery. In heavy fighting on May 15, this battery was captured by men from the Second and Third Divisions of the XX Army Corps. Continuing east on Chitwood Road, you will see the ridges and heavy woods to your left marking the positions of Hood's Corps on May 14 and 15. One-half mile east of US Hwy 41 is the John Green House (Disc 2, #124). From this point on May 14, Stewart's division attacked the extreme right of the Federal line and nearly succeeded in turning the flank of the Union line.

Return to US Hwy 41 and turn right. After crossing into Whitfield County, turn right on Nance Spring Road. On May 14, Williams's First Division of the XX Army Corps followed this route in their redeployment to the far left wing of the Federal line to bolster Howard's IV Army Corps. Their timely arrival prevented Stewart's men from turning the Federal flank. Follow Nance Spring Road .25 miles to Nance Spring on your right. On May 15 the XXIII Army corps shifted to this position where it extended Sherman's line to the Conasauga River. From here Brigadier General Alvin Hovey's First Division supported Williams's Division during Stewart's renewed attack. As part of Sherman's pursuit of Johnston's army after the Resaca battle, the XX Corps and the First and Second Divisions of the XXIII Corps moved from this position on May 16 southeast to the Coosawattee River. Return to US Hwy 41, turn left, and retrace your route to the intersection with GA 136. Turn right. After 1.5 miles, turn left on Hall Memorial Road. This road follows the route of Sweeney's Division to the Oostanaula crossing at Lay's Ferry. The ferry lies 1.5 miles south of the historical marker located at the intersection of Hall Memorial Road and GA Hwy 136C and is no longer accessible. Turn left on 136C and proceed to Calhoun. After 2 miles, turn right on GA Hwy 156 (West Line Street). Turn right on Herrington Bend Road and stop at the intersection with Hunt Road. In the fields between Herrington Bend Road and the Oostanaula River to your right is the location of the Battle of Lay's Ferry, where Major General William Walker's division of Hardee's Corps unsuccessfully attempted to halt Sweeney's crossing on May 15.



Resaca Confederate Cemetery

Tour Stops Section #6

Johnston's Withdrawal to Adairsville and Sherman's Pursuit

The evening of May 15 found Johnston once more making hurried plans to withdraw south. He ordered the destruction of the Oostanaula bridges to delay Sherman's pursuit and allow his wagon trains to safely retire. Hardee had the task of blocking McPherson's threat to Johnston's left flank. McPherson, following up on Sweeney's crossing at Lay's Ferry, maneuvered his troops west of Calhoun in order to interdict the retreat. On the heights above Oothcalooga Creek, west of Calhoun, the combined divisions of Generals Walker, Bate, and Cleburne successfully held off McPherson's advance on May 16 at the Battle of Rome Crossroads and provided Johnston with a 24-hour respite, which he used to withdraw his forces to Adairsville.

Having repaired the damaged bridges by the afternoon of May 16, Sherman found the direct road south inadequate to support passage of the full army. To alleviate the traffic jam, he assigned the main road south to Thomas and the Army of the Cumberland. McPherson was to continue west of Calhoun and move his army to Adairsville. Schofield's XXIII Corps, along with Hooker's XX Corps, moved east and south to the crossings over the Coosawattee River. Sherman planned for his full army to consolidate at Adairsville; from there he would move to Kingston where he believed Johnston would mass his troops.

Moving east from their positions along the Conasauga River, the XXIII and XX Army Corps crossed the river at Fite's and Hogan's ferries south of Tilton. Their line of march led them south and east through the tangled wilderness to their assigned crossing points on the Coosawattee River. Making his headquarters at Harlan's Crossroads on May 16, Schofield directed his troops to cross at McClure's Ferry. Upon arriving at the ferry, Schofield's columns found their way blocked by Hooker's First and Second Divisions. Hooker, unsatisfied with his assigned crossing point at Newton's Ferry, shifted his crossing without authorization. Schofield diverted his division two miles south to Field's Ferry. Upon arriving at this crossing, Schofield's men were once more delayed by Hooker's Third Division crossing the Coosawattee at this point. As a result of these delays, Schofield was unable to get his force across the river until May 18. After crossing the river, Hooker turned west and rejoined the Army of the Cumberland at Calhoun. Finally able to cross the river, Schofield's divisions continued south in their sweeping arc east of Calhoun, their immediate target being Sonora Post Office. From there they moved to Mosteller's Mills northeast of Adairsville with the intent of finally reuniting with Sherman's full army.

Directions:

Return to Calhoun on GA Hwy 156, turn right on River Street, then turn right on Oothcalooga Street (Spur 53). At the intersection with Crest Drive, you will be on the heights overlooking the Oothcalooga Creek valley. In the open field before you McPherson's threat to Johnston's supply trains was blocked at the Battle of Rome Crossroads. Reverse your direction and follow Oothcalooga Street to Wall Street (US 41) in downtown Calhoun. Turn left and go north on US 41 to the split with GA Hwy 225. Take Hwy 225 north past New Echota State Park. Approximately 3 miles past New Echota, you will arrive at West Pine Chapel Road. This is Harlan's Crossroads, site of Schofield's headquarters on May 16. Turn right on West Pine Chapel. Drive one mile further to Pine Chapel Road. Turning right will bring you to the site of McClure's Ferry, where Hooker's unauthorized crossing delayed Schofield. Return to West Pine Chapel Road and turn right on Owens Gin Road. Owens Gin Road crosses the Coosawattee at the site of Field's Ferry. Here Schofield was finally able to cross the river on May 18. Continue south on Owens Gin Road to the intersection with GA Hwy 156. Here Owens Gin Road becomes Cash Road. At Big Spring on Cash Road, Schofield's troops made their camp on May 18. The XXIII Corps followed this route south to Sonora Post Office. From Sonora, they moved south and west to Adairsville.



Big Spring

Tour Stops Section #7

From Adairsville to Cassville

While falling back to Adairsville, Johnston ordered Hardee to hold his position in the Oothcalooga Valley and delay the advance of Sherman's army. Due to the width of the valley, Hardee was unable to offer more than token resistance at the site of the stone house of Robert C. Saxon. Holding out until midnight on May 17, Hardee's force abandoned the position and continued their retreat. Upon arrival at Adairsville, Johnston made plans to fall back to Cassville. Hood's and Polk's Corps took the direct route south following the present route of US Hwy 41. Hardee's Corps took the road from Adairsville to Kingston; from there he turned east and rejoined Johnston's command at Cassville. The first elements of Sherman's army arrived in Adairsville around noon on May 18. By the end of the day, the full forces of the Army of the Cumberland and the Army of the Tennessee were on hand at Adairsville, while Schofield's Army of the Ohio was en route from Mosteller's Mills.

Once again, lack of adequate roads forced Sherman to split his forces in pursuit of Johnston. Believing Johnston to be consolidating at Kingston rather than Cassville, Sherman ordered Thomas to advance to Kingston. McPherson was to follow Thomas but detour to the west toward Barnsley's Plantation and then approach Kingston from the west, falling in on Thomas's right flank. Schofield, designated a supporting role in the upcoming assault on Kingston, was to move south from Adairsville and then turn to approach Kingston from the east. Johnston saw this division of Sherman's forces as his opportunity to deal a crushing blow to one of Sherman's scattered commands. He would ambush Schofield's isolated army at Cassville before it could unite with the bulk of Sherman's army and then use the ensuing confusion to deal with Sherman's other forces as they came up in support of Schofield.

On May 19, Johnston placed Polk's Corps behind Two Run Creek, northwest of Cassville, intending to use this force to block Schofield's advance while Hood's corps moved north on Polk's right to spring the trap on Schofield's left flank as he advanced through Cassville. While on a raid against the railroad south of Cassville, Brigadier General Edwin McCook's First Cavalry Division encountered the rear of Hood's column moving north. Fearing the threat of a larger undetected force in his rear, Hood halted his northern advance and turned east to counter this possibility. As a result, he was unable to deal the crushing blow to Schofield that Johnston had envisaged. Meanwhile, after discovering that Johnston was not at Kingston, Thomas pushed Hooker's XX Corps toward Cassville. Butterfield's Third Division encountered the left of Polk's line at the site of the Cassville Female College. Polk withdrew from this position and reformed his lines on a ridge east of the town. Hood, fearing exposure on both of his flanks, pulled back to new positions north of the town. In a war council the evening of May 19, Johnston's corps commanders convinced Johnston of their inability to hold this position at Cassville, and once more a general retreat was ordered. Johnston would make a new stand in the Allatoona Mountains. The area surrounding Allatoona provided excellent defensive ground upon which Johnston hoped Sherman would foolishly expend and waste his overwhelming numerical superiority. Sherman, familiar with the Allatoona area from his prewar travels, had no intention of accommodating Johnston's plans, and he shifted his army south and west to once more flank Johnston out of a strong position.

Tour Stops Section #7 Continued

Directions:

Returning to Calhoun, proceed south on US Hwy 41; at the Gordon County/ Bartow County line, detour to your right onto Old US 41. Here at the county line stood the 8-sided stone house built by Robert C. Saxon in 1856. On the grounds of the house on May 17, Cheatham's division of Hardee's Corps mounted a rearguard defense against the advancing troops of the Army of the Cumberland. Holding out until midnight, Hardee's troops then fell back with the rest of the retreating army. The house was burned on May 18 by troops from the Seventy-Third Illinois Regiment. Retuning to present-day US Hwy 41, continue south to Adairsville. At the intersection of US 41 and GA Hwy 140, turn left. After crossing the railroad bridge, turn left onto Hall Station Road. Hall Station Road traces the route of Thomas's and McPherson's advance on Kingston. At Rock Fence Road, turn right. This road leads to Barnsley's Plantation, established in 1858 by Godfrey Barnsley, site of McPherson's camp from May 18 through the 23. From this position, McPherson's Army of the Tennessee formed the right flank of the Federal Army. From the intersection at Rock Fence Road and Barnsley Gardens Road, turn left and return to Hall Station Road. At this intersection, continue south on Hall Station Road. The Army of the Cumberland continued south on this route until reaching Kingston, where Sherman mistakenly thought Johnston would be making a defensive stand. From Kingston, travel west on GA Hwy 293 toward Cassville. Just past the interchange with GA Hwy 20/US Hwy 41, turn left onto Mac Johnson Road. One-half mile north of the Interchange you will pass the site of General Leonidas Polk's headquarters. Continue north on Mac Johnson Road, turn left on Jewell Road and then left again on Cassville Road. You will now be at the National Park Service Pavilion, dedicated to the "Affair at Cassville." Return to Jewell Road and then turn left on Mac Johnson Road. At the intersection of Mac Johnson Road and Alisha Circle is the position of the Confederate line at 5:00 pm on May 19 after Polk withdrew from his original position at Two Run Creek. Continue on Mac Johnson Road and turn right on Cassville Road. Turn left on Joree Road and then right on Willow Lane. Willow Lane meets US Hwy 41 at the former site of the Cassville Female College. It was here that the artillery and infantry of Major General Daniel Butterfield's Third Division drove Polk's men back to the ridges east of Cassville. Turn right on to US Hwy 41. You will quickly come to Two Run Creek, site of Polk's first defensive line, which was crucial to Johnston's plan to ambush Schofield.



Plaque dedicated to the "Affair at Cassville"

Tour Stops Section #8

Crossing the Etowah

After pulling back from Cassville, Sherman shifted his armies west and south to cross the Etowah and advance toward the town of Dallas. This movement would allow him to once more flank Johnston out of a strong defensive position, this time in the mountains surrounding Allatoona. McPherson, advancing from his camp at Barnsley's Plantation, would march south and cross at Woolley's Bridge, east of Kingston. The Army of the Cumberland and Schofield's XXIII Corps were assigned to cross the Etowah at Gillem's Bridge and Milam's Bridge. As at the crossings of the Coosawattee River, Hooker's XX Corps once more interfered with Schofield's crossing at Gillem's Bridge, forcing him to shift his crossing to a new position. By May 24, all of Sherman's armies were across the Etowah and converging in the area of Burnt Hickory Post Office. Prior to crossing the Etowah, Schofield was directed to monitor Johnston's army in their southerly retreat. Making camp south of Cassville on May 21, units of Schofield's force burned the Cooper Iron Works on the Etowah River south of Cartersville.

Directions:

From Two Run Creek return south on US Hwy 41 to the junction with US Hwy 411. Take US 411 west towards Rome. In approximately 5 miles, turn left on Hardin Bridge Road. This road crosses the Etowah River at the site of Gillem's Bridge. Continue on Hardin Bridge Road and turn left on Euharlee Road. After passing through the village of Euharlee turn right on to Milam Bridge Road. Milam Bridge Road ends at the former site of Milam's Bridge. This bridge is no longer in use. Returning to Euharlee Road, turn right and proceed 2.5 miles to the intersection of GA Hwy 113. Turn right on GA 113. On the banks of Raccoon Creek, Geary's Second Division of the XX Army Corps drove away Confederate cavalry on May 24. This protected the left flank of the Army of the Cumberland as it advanced south to Burnt Hickory Post Office. Two miles further west is the town of Stilesboro. Stilesboro served as the rallying point for all units of the Army of the Cumberland after they crossed the Etowah River. From Stilesboro, reverse direction and take GA Hwy 113 east to Cartersville. Turn right on Tennessee Street (GA Hwy 293). Turn left on Old River Road and go to the end of the road to Cooper Furnace Park at the base of Allatoona Dam. Here you will see the remains of the Cooper Furnace, which Schofield's troops burned on May 21.



Cooper's Furnace in Bartow County