

The Bandy Heritage Center for Northwest Georgia

Atlanta Campaign Driving Tour

New Hope Church, Pickett's Mill, and Dallas

Tour Stops Section #9

The Battle of New Hope Church

Following the failure to check Sherman's advance at Cassville, Johnston fell back to a new position centered on the Allatoona Mountains. This position offered excellent defensive positions from which he could repulse any attack and protect the Western & Atlantic Railroad at the narrow Allatoona Pass. Well aware of the possible strength of this position due to his pre-war knowledge of the area, Sherman declined to offer Johnston the opportunity. Sherman devised a new plan to flank Johnston out of this position and force him to fall back to the Chattahoochee River. Employing a strategy similar to that at Resaca, Sherman once more sent McPherson and his Army of the Tennessee to the west and south to threaten Johnston's left flank while Thomas and the Army of the Cumberland, accompanied by Schofield's XXIII Corps, took a more direct route toward the right of Johnston's position. These coordinated advances would force Johnston out of the Allatoona Mountains by threatening to impose Sherman's force between Johnston and Atlanta.

Sherman put his plan in motion on May 23, 1864. He provisioned his army with 20 days of rations as they separated themselves from the supply line of the Western and Atlantic Railroad. After crossing the Etowah River west of Kingston at Woolley's Bridge, McPherson's force moved south toward Dallas. Possession of this town would put McPherson astride both the Acworth Road and the Atlanta-Marietta Road. An eastward advance along either of these roads would place McPherson in position to threaten the rear of Johnston's lines at Allatoona. Meanwhile, Thomas and Schofield crossed the Etowah at Milam's and Gillem's bridges on May 23 and camped that night in the valley of Euharlee Creek. Resuming the march on May 24, Thomas's and Schofield's forces would converge in the area surrounding Old Burnt Hickory Post Office.

With Major General Joseph Hooker's XX Corps in the lead, Thomas, accompanied by Sherman, moved southeast from Old Burnt Hickory Post Office on May 25 through the tangled wilderness of forest and brush that masked the course of Pumpkinvine Creek. The intent was to reunite Thomas's command with the Army of the Tennessee moving east from Dallas. This consolidated force would then pry Johnston out of the Allatoona mountains. Acting on intelligence supplied by Joseph Wheeler's Cavalry Corps, Johnston realized that Schofield's XXIII Corps, slowly extending itself eastward from Old Burnt Hickory towards Allatoona, was a bluff to hold him in position. He ascertained Sherman's plan to threaten his left flank and rear and quickly moved to counter the threat. Taking advantage of a shorter interior route, Johnston ordered Hardee and Polk to shift west and consolidate in the area surrounding Dallas and block McPherson's advance. By the evening of May 23, Hardee was in place east of Dallas with Polk concentrated on his right near Lost Mountain. Leaving Allatoona on the morning of May 24, Hood, accompanied by Johnston, extended the right flank of the Confederate position by concentrating his forces around the crossroads of New Hope Church.

Emerging from the wilderness of the Pumpkinvine Creek valley on the morning of May 25, Hooker's lead elements were surprised to find their way blocked by the maze of breastworks and trenches surrounding the New Hope Church community. Struggling through the dense undergrowth, Brigadier General John Geary's Second Division encountered Hood's heavily defended lines and ordered his men to fall back and begin constructing their own breastworks. Geary's request for reinforcements brought up the divisions of Major General Daniel Butterfield and Brigadier General Alpheus Williams. The dense forest and rough terrain surrounding the small clearing around New Hope Church prevented Hooker from deploying his forces across a wide front or supporting them with artillery. Forced to concentrate in a narrow deployment, Hooker sent forward his divisions as a battering ram to break through Hood's line.

Vastly outnumbered by Hooker's combined force of 16,000, Hood's soldiers took advantage of their deep and solid trench line to inflict maximum damage upon the densely packed Federal formation. Unable to maneuver through the heavy woods and choking underbrush, Hooker's advance was crushed by the concentrated infantry and artillery fire that overlapped his narrow columns. The Confederate fire power, accompanied by an intense thunderstorm, proved too much for the resolve of the advancing Union force. Appropriately named the "Hell Hole" by survivors, the battle at New Hope Church forced Sherman to alter his strategy to turn the left of Johnston's line and shift his attention to his opponent's right in an attempt to get between Johnston and the Western and Atlantic Railroad.

Tour Stops Section #9 Continued

Directions:

The original routes taken by the Army of the Cumberland and the XXIII Corps after they crossed the Etowah River and advanced to New Hope Church no longer exist; therefore, detours must once more be taken to follow the approximate path of their march. From the locations of the Army of the Cumberland's camps near Stilesboro and Raccoon Creek southwest of Cartersville, go east on GA Hwy 113 to the intersection of GA Hwy 61. Turn right on Hwy 61 and go south into Paulding County. Approximately 1.5 miles south of the county line at the intersection of Harmony Grove Church Road is the former location of Sligh's Mill, where Schofield's XXIII Corps camped on May 24 and 25. Four miles farther south is the crossroads of Old Burnt Hickory Post Office. Here the IV and XX Corps of the Army of the Cumberland camped on May 24. Continue south on GA Hwy 61 to Dallas. Turn left on East Memorial Drive (GA Hwy 381). After approximately 3.5 miles, you will arrive at New Hope Church. At this small crossroads you will see the remains of Confederate trenches and a pavilion with a marker and map illustrating the conflict at this site. One-half mile south of this crossroads on Bobo Road is the site of Johnston's headquarters during the battle.



New Hope Church



Confederate Trench at New Hope Church

Tour Stops Section #9 Continued

The Battle of Pickett's Mill

During the night of May 25, Sherman strengthened and extended his line to his left in anticipation of operations to impose his army between Johnston and the railroad. Major General George Thomas placed Major General Oliver O. Howard's IV Corps on Hookers' left and Schofield's XXIII corps fell in on Howard's left. Meanwhile to the west, McPherson's Army of the Tennessee advanced on May 26 to link up with Thomas's right flank but failed to do so due to the conditions created by the heavy rain and rough terrain. Establishing a line two miles east of Dallas, McPherson managed to cover the gap between his and Thomas' commands with a screen of pickets. Johnston, unaware of the gap, was unable to take advantage of this opportunity to split Sherman's line.

By the early morning of May 27, Howard's IV Corps was in motion, seeking the right flank of Johnston's line. Once again the rough terrain and lack of roads delayed Federal moves through the heavily wooded country. Late afternoon on May 27 found Howard on the west bank of Pickett's Mill Creek. Through a clearing in the woods, Howard observed evidence of freshly dug trenches and assumed he had found Johnston's vulnerable flank. Believing the works to be lightly held, Howard deployed his forces in a deep column similar to Hooker's formation at New Hope Church. As at New Hope Church, this formation would result in disaster for the Federal command.

Shadowing Howard's advance through the woods, Johnston shifted Major General Patrick Cleburne's division to his extreme right. It was Cleburne's men that Howard saw through the trees. Cleburne placed his men on a ridge overlooking the valley of Pickett's Mill Creek, and his line quickly became a fortress of interlocking infantry and artillery positions with clear fields of fire that Howard's men would have to cross. At 4:30 Howard, supported on his left by Brigadier General Richard W. Johnson's division of the XIV Corps, ordered the attack upon what he erroneously believed to be hastily thrown up breastworks. Led by Brigadier General William B. Hazen, the 2nd Brigade of Brigadier General Thomas J. Wood's Third division surged forward in their tightly massed ranks. Funneled into a deep ravine by their narrow front, Hazen's men were repulsed with disastrous results by Brigadier General Hiram Granbury's Texas Brigade, which held the ridge at the top of the ravine. Falling back, the survivors of Hazen's first line huddled at the bottom of the ravine. Meanwhile, units from Hazen's second line veered to their left to avoid the fury of Granbury's defenders. Reaching the top of the ridge, they found themselves on Cleburne's right. Surging into a cornfield located behind Cleburne's line, these men were driven back down the ridge by the timely arrival of the brigades of Brigadier General Daniel C. Govan and Brigadier Mark P. Lowery.

At 6:00 pm, Hazen received permission to withdraw his battered command, and the Federal assault continued piecemeal by unsupported attacks on the edges of the ravine by the brigades of Brigadier Generals William Gibson and Frederick Kneffler. These assaults failed as disastrously as Hazen's attack. Word finally reached Howard after sundown that Sherman had decided to cancel any further assaults upon Johnston's line, and Howard pulled his men back from contact and ordered the construction of secure earthworks. From Dallas to New Hope Church to Pickett's Mill, the opposing forces of Sherman and Johnston would remain locked in position until early June, when Sherman finally began to shift his army in the vicinity of Acworth to put him back in contact with the Western and Atlantic Railroad.

Tour Stops Section #9 Continued

Directions:

From New Hope Church, continue northeast on GA Hwy 381 (Dallas Acworth Hwy) to Pickett's Mill Road. Here near the location of Brown's Mill, Schofield's XXIII Corps advanced from Sligh's Mill to provide support to the Army of the Cumberland during its action at New Hope Church and Pickett's Mill. Turn right on Pickett's Mill Road to the Pickett's Mill Battlefield Historic Site. Within the boundaries of the park, you will find the Visitor Center and Museum, the ravine where Hazen's Brigade made their futile assault upon Granbury's line, and the cornfield that marked the height of Hazen's limited success.



The Ravine - - The Site of Hazen's Attack



Granbury's Line

Tour Stops Section #10

The Army of the Tennessee at Dallas

As part of his efforts to consolidate and strengthen his lines, Sherman ordered McPherson to close the gap between his position before Dallas and the right flank of Thomas's Army of the Cumberland. Johnston, believing this to be part of a general withdrawal from the Dallas-New Hope-Pickett's Mill line, ordered Hardee on May 28 to push forward to test the vulnerability of McPherson's position and exploit any weakness that developed. Major General William Bate's division received the assignment to probe the Federal line. Assisted by units from Brigadier General William Jackson's Cavalry Division, Bate's plan was to test the far right of Major General John A. Logan's XV Corps, which extended north and south of the town of Dallas. If Logan weakened his line before Dallas to counter this threat, Bate would advance to break Logan's line. At 3:45 on May 28, the dismounted troopers of Brigadier Robert Anderson succeeded in overrunning positions in the Union line, but this breach was sealed by counterattacks from Brigadier General Peter Osterhaus' First division. Realizing the strength of Logan's position, Bate cancelled his orders for a general advance upon the Federal lines. Unfortunately for the men of Brigadier General Joseph Lewis's Kentucky "Orphan Brigade," the word came too late to stop their unsupported assault against Logan's trenches. As their reward for the advance to within yards of the Federal line, the "Orphans" lost 51 percent of their 1100-man force.

After a day's delay to guard against a further attack, McPherson finally began his withdrawal from the Dallas area as part of Sherman's overall shift to the east. The first week of June found Sherman's army concentrated in the Acworth-Big Shanty area. To counter this move, Johnston abandoned the Dallas-New Hope-Pickett's Mill line for new positions south of Acworth in the vicinity of Pine Mountain. Further maneuvering during the first weeks of June would eventually result in the confrontation on the slopes of Kennesaw Mountain.

Directions:

Woolley's Bridge over the Etowah River no longer exists, so a detour must be made to follow McPherson's route to Dallas. From Kingston, go south on Hardin Bridge Road to its intersection with US Hwy 411/GA Hwy 2.D. Turn right on Hwy 411 and go west 2.5 miles to Macedonia Road. Turn left on Macedonia Road and go south 7 miles to the intersection with Old Alabama Road, just north of the Taylorsville community. Turn right on Old Alabama Road, and after 0.5 miles turn left on Sewell Road. Continue on Sewell Road into Polk County. Turn right on Taylorsville Road and continue into the town of Aragon. In the town of Aragon, Taylorsville Road becomes 1st Street. Go west on 1st Street to the intersection with GA Hwy 101. This intersection marks the location of Peek's Spring. The XVI Corps, under the command of Major General Grenville Dodge, made camp on the evening of May 23 at this spring. Turn left on GA Hwy 101, and go south 1 mile to Creekside Street. Here on the banks of Euharlee Creek Major General John Logan's XV Corps camped on the evening of May 23.

Continue south on GA Hwy 101 into the town of Rockmart. GA Hwy 101 merges into US Hwy 278. Take US Hwy 278 toward Dallas. Two miles south of Rockmart, turn right onto GA Hwy 101 into Paulding County. Two miles south of the county line, turn left onto Gold Mine Road. Gold Mine Road merges into US Hwy 278 (Jimmy Campbell Parkway). Turn left on Business Hwy 6 (West Memorial Drive) from Hwy 278 and continue into the town of Dallas. At the intersection of West Memorial Drive and Merchants Drive, turn right on to Merchants Drive. Turn right on to Nathan Dean Boulevard. Stay on Nathan Dean Boulevard, cross Hwy 278, and stop at the intersection of Vernoy Akins Road. The route following Merchants Drive to Nathan Dean Boulevard to Vernoy Akins Road roughly parallels the line of Federal entrenchments constructed by McPherson's soldiers after their occupation of the town of Dallas. Along this route at the location of the US Post Office is the site of the Orphan Brigade's disastrous attack upon the Federal lines on May 28. Retracing the route back from Vernoy Atkins Road on Nathan Dean Boulevard, turn right on Hardee Street. Just past the intersection, on your left you will find remnants of the center of the Federal line. Continue east on Hardee Street until it merges with Merchants Drive. Near this location, the Confederate line crossed the Atlanta Marietta Road. The line continued south to its terminus on Nathan Dean Boulevard at the site of Paulding County High School.



Federal Trenches at Dallas