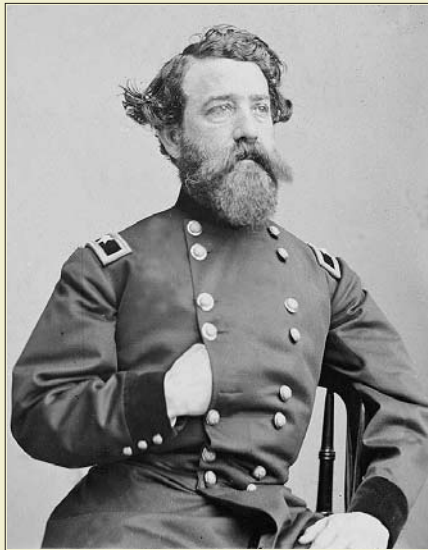


FORT McCOOK



CHICKAMAUGA CAMPAIGN HERITAGE TRAIL

After the Shiloh Campaign in the spring of 1862, Confederate forces under General Braxton Bragg concentrated in the Chattanooga area. The Federal Army, under General Don Carlos Buell occupied north Alabama. Fearful of a Confederate attack, General Buell sent two divisions, under



GENERAL JOHN M. BRANNAN

Generals Alexander McCook and Thomas Crittenden, to fortify the west side of the Tennessee River at the mouth of Battle Creek. The position was designated Fort McCook and General Alexander McCook was placed in command. On the basis of faulty intelligence, General McCook became convinced that the anticipated Confederate

offensive was directed at the recapture of Nashville. General Buell, therefore, began shifting his units to the Cumberland Plateau in an effort to block Bragg. General McCook left Battle Creek for the Altamont and Tracy City area. Colonel Leonard A. Harris, with two regiments and a small cavalry detachment, was left in charge of Fort McCook. He was instructed to gather all possible information concerning the Confederate troop movements. Colonel Harris was subsequently directed to send one of his infantry regiments and all his artillery to General McCook on the Plateau.

On August 27, 1862, Confederate General Samuel B. Maxey crossed the Tennessee River at Bridgeport and moved north toward Fort McCook. After a brief skirmish, the Federals were forced to fall back into the fort.



From the map of Col. William E. Merrill, Chief Engineer, Army of the Cumberland

Maxey placed his artillery on the east side of the river, opposite the fort, and began a heavy bombardment. The Federals withdrew during the night. In assessing the significance of Fort McCook, General Maxey stated, "The work out of which the enemy was shelled is a splendidly constructed field work, and admirably executed; [it] is the key to the Sequatchie Valley, and its possession completely breaks the enemy's chain up the Tennessee River."

For a time, the Confederates occupied Fort McCook, calling it Fort Maxey. The Confederates then moved up the valley to invade Kentucky.

It was called Fort Thomas during the Chickamauga Campaign when occupied by General John M. Brannan's division of Thomas' 14th Army Corps. General Brannan had his men build a pontoon bridge over Battle Creek, and began using scrap lumber to construct rafts to get the division over the river. "I commenced to cross with the entire division and completed the crossing on the 2d of September, with the ammunition and baggage trains, having previously sent the supply train by way of Bridgeport. The crossing was rendered most tedious and protracted from having no



GENERAL ALEXANDER McCOOK AND HIS STAFF

transportation further than the rafts hastily constructed from such lumber as we could pick up, rendering it necessary in many instances to partially unload the wagons before placing them on the rafts."

General Brannan lost one of his men during the crossing. The private was attempting to hold on to a mule while crossing on one of the rafts. The mule became upset and in thrashing about struck the man on the head. The unfortunate soldier was dragged overboard and drowned. He was buried with military honors beside the river at Battle Creek.

Please visit our website at:
<http://www.ChickamaugaCampaign.org>