

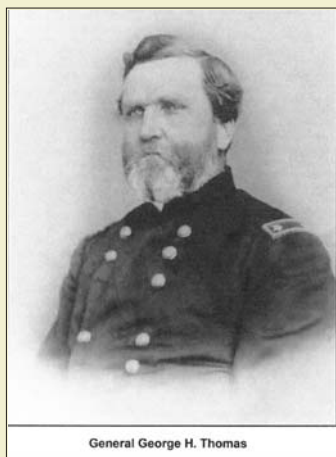


# ROSSVILLE GAP



## CHICKAMAUGA CAMPAIGN HERITAGE TRAIL

A major objective of General Braxton Bragg's Confederate Army of Tennessee during the Chickamauga Campaign was to block the Federal Army from Chattanooga.



General George H. Thomas

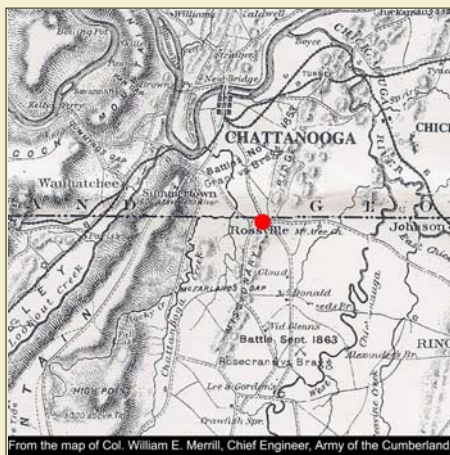
Similarly, General William Rosecrans' Federal Army of the Cumberland made every effort to keep this line open.

Because the Gap at Rossville provided easy passage through the barrier of Missionary Ridge, it took on a great significance during the campaigns of Chickamauga and Chattanooga in the fall of 1863.

Dawn on September 21st found the Federals in Rossville arrayed in line of battle under the command of General George H.

Thomas. Defending the gap was General James Negley's division and Colonel Daniel McCook's Brigade. Behind Negley's men were the other three divisions of the Fourteenth Corps massed in and around Rossville. To the north of Negley's position, deployed along the crest of Missionary Ridge, were two divisions of the twenty-first Corps and one division of the Reserve Corps. Stretching in a line due west of Rossville was the Twentieth Corps. Picketing the Ringgold and LaFayette Roads to the south of Rossville Gap were elements of Union General Robert H.G. Minty's cavalry brigade.

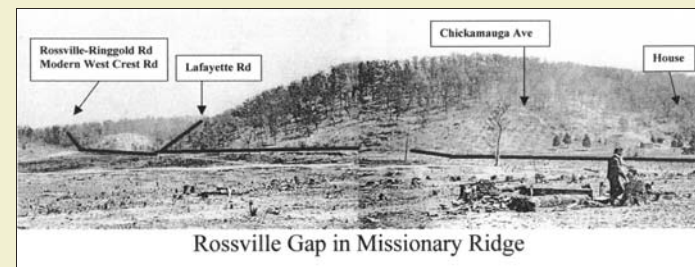
Around 9 A.M. on the 21st, Minty's men along the Ringgold Road encountered Confederate cavalymen from General John



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

Pegram's command. On the LaFayette Road another force of several hundred Southern horsemen led by Generals Nathan Bedford Forrest and Frank Armstrong drove Minty's men northward. At some point south of Rossville Gap, Forrest and Armstrong rode onto the crest of Missionary Ridge. From this vantage point General Forrest could see "Chattanooga and everything around." Upon returning to his command along the LaFayette Road, Forrest wrote his much-discussed order to General Leonidas Polk, (later forwarded to General Braxton Bragg), in which the cavalryman suggested that the Confederates "press forward as rapidly as possible."

In hopes of flanking the Federals out of Rossville Gap, General Forrest dismounted several units from Colonel George Dibrell's brigade and sent them up Missionary Ridge, one quarter mile south of Rossville Gap, around 10:00 A.M. In a fight lasting approximately thirty minutes, the Southern cavalymen repeatedly charged a Union line held by General John Beatty's brigade. When the Confederates eventually retreated down the slopes, they left behind several men killed and wounded, some of them within thirty feet of the Federal position.



Rossville Gap in Missionary Ridge

Later in the afternoon General Forrest brought up his horse artillery to shell the Federal positions along the ridge. Union batteries, massed on a knoll within Rossville Gap and along the crest of Missionary Ridge north of the Gap, responded to the Confederate guns. The Southern artillery fire managed to drive Edward King's U.S. Regulars back into the Gap in a state of confusion, but otherwise caused little damage to the entrenched Federals.

Beginning around 8:00 P.M. on the 21st, Union Army commander William Rosecrans started pulling his army back toward Chattanooga. This withdrawal from Rossville continued unopposed throughout the night. By the predawn hours of September 22nd, the final Federal Pickets in Rossville had fallen back toward Chattanooga.

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