

Chickamauga Staff Ride Guide

Edward P. Shanahan

The battle of Chickamauga, 19-20 September 1863, was the bloodiest two-day battle of the Civil War and the largest battle in the western theater. Fought just south of Chattanooga, Tennessee, in northwestern Georgia, the battle was a culmination of a campaign that began in the summer in middle Tennessee. Maj. Gen. William Stark Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland, in a masterfully executed campaign of maneuver, forced the Confederate Army of Tennessee, under General Braxton Bragg, to retreat southward behind the Tennessee River and into Chattanooga.

Rosecrans then paused for six weeks to prepare for the next phase of the operation, which was to dislodge General Bragg from Chattanooga. Once again, through the skillful use of deception and maneuver, Rosecrans managed to outflank Bragg's defenses. While the deception operation took place upstream, northwest of Chattanooga, Rosecrans swept downstream to the southwest with the bulk of his army, crossing the Tennessee River at four different locations, virtually unopposed. The Army of the Cumberland then advanced eastward on a broad front in three widely separated columns across cross-compartmented terrain. These movements put the Union forces in a position to threaten the Confederate's line of communication southward with Atlanta and forced Bragg to abandon Chattanooga.

General Bragg, though fooled and forced to evacuate the city, was not beaten and still had a powerful fighting force in being to strike back, if given the opportunity. While General Rosecrans took up the pursuit, Bragg concentrated his troops, looking for the chance to counterattack. On two occasions Bragg attempted to destroy the separated wings of his Union pursuer, but his overcautious subordinates failed each time. However, Rosecrans, realizing the danger to his army and his own line of communication, concentrated his forces and moved northward, back toward Chattanooga. During this phase of the campaign, the two opposing armies collided for two days (19-20 September 1863) along the Chickamauga Creek, struggling in a titanic battle that left 34,000 soldiers killed, wounded, or listed as missing.

Today, the Battle of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park preserves much of the original battlefield in over 5,000 acres of fields and

forests, with an excellent trail system, numerous monuments, markers, and interpretive plaques. The well-preserved battlefield makes an excellent laboratory for the field study phase of a staff ride and for a study of the profession of arms.

The information that follows is provided to assist individuals and organizations interested in designing and conducting a Chickamauga staff ride.

One publication to consider is William Glenn Robertson's *The Staff Ride*, published by the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH). This book provides guidance for planning, organizing, and conducting staff rides. Copies are available through the U.S. Army Publications Distribution Center-Baltimore, 2800 Eastern Boulevard, Baltimore, MD 21220-2896. The CMH publications number is CMH Pub 70-21. The Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-6900, has published another valuable publication, the *Staff Ride Handbook for the Battle of Chickamauga, 18-20 September 1863*. It provides a systematic approach to the study of the battle and is designed as a resource for individuals preparing or leading a staff ride to the battle site. The Chickamauga guidebook is available from the Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. A third reference, published by the Office of the Command Historian, U.S. Army Reserve Command, Atlanta GA 30331-5099, is the author's *Chickamauga Staff Ride Briefing Book*, which complements the staff ride handbook and provides numerous maps.

The two best, modern published books that treat the battle in a comprehensive manner are Glenn Tucker's *Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West*, published by Morningside Press (1961) and Peter Cozzen's 1992 study, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga*, from the University of Illinois Press. Both works contain comprehensive bibliographies. In the U.S. Army War College guide series to Civil War battles, see Matt Spruill's *Guide to Chickamauga* (1993), from the University of Kansas Press. All three of these books are available at the park's Visitor Center.

Before the actual field study phase at Chickamauga, a staff ride leaders' reconnaissance is in order to become familiar, not only with the battle and the

principal personalities, but also with the terrain and the routes. The author highly recommends a "dry run" for staff ride leaders to finalize the route, develop a time schedule, and become familiar with the actual sites of important events.

The park and Visitor Center staff can provide information about the battlefield, as well as advice and assistance to groups wishing to visit the park. Prior coordination should occur between the park staff and the ride leaders before the day of the staff ride. The Visitor Center has books, maps, brochures, and other invaluable information concerning the battle for the

staff ride leader. For additional information, call (706) 861-6897, or write to Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park, P.O. Box 2128, Fort Oglethorpe, GA 30742.

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Editor's Journal

This first issue for 1995 begins with Louis Keefer's article on one of the Army's less well known projects during World War II, the Army Specialized Training Program. This issue also contains the very first Chief's Corner by the Center's new Chief of Military History, Brig. Gen. John W. Mountcastle. In addition, an author and title index of the 1994 issues, the second to the last of Edward Bedessem's excellent World War II chronologies, and the last of our excerpts from Stetson Conn's book, *Historical Work in the United States Army, 1862-1954*, are included.

Working with these features led to a reflective mood and recalled to mind some of our colleagues who passed away during the past year. Frank W. Pew (former Deputy Chief Historian, U.S. Army Forces Command) and Carlin Franklin Cannon, Jr. (former Command Historian, U.S. Army Transportation Center and School, Fort Eustis, Va.) received notice in issue no. 30 (Spring 1994). Since then, the Army history community lost George Thompson (coauthor of *The Signal Corps: The Test*) in April; and two former Center of Military History historians, Moreau Chambers (June), and Detmar H. Finke (July). As I look forward to another year of publication, I cannot help but recall these fellow Army historians and their contributions to our profession.

Arnold G. Fisch, Jr.

The 1995 Symposium of the Admiral Nimitz Museum Set

The 1995 symposium of the Admiral Nimitz Museum, will be held 18-19 March 1995 in San Antonio, Texas. The theme of this year's symposium is 1945—Crucible of Deliverance: Prisoners of War and the A-Bomb. Interested readers should write to the Admiral Nimitz Museum, P.O. Box 777, Fredericksburg, Texas 78624. Phone (210) 997-4379, or FAX (210) 997-8220.