

The Atlanta Campaign

VOLUME 3:

From the Chattahoochee to Peach Tree Creek,
June 28–July 20, 1864

David A. Powell

Unedited Excerpt



Savas Beatie
California

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First edition, first printing

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Powell, David A. (David Alan), 1961- author.

Title: The Atlanta Campaign / by David A. Powell.

Description: El Dorado Hill, CA : Savas Beatie LLC, 2026. | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Contents: Volume 3: From the Chattahoochee to Peach Tree Creek, June 28--July 20, 1864 -- | Summary: "The Atlanta Campaign in 1864 was second only to Ulysses S. Grant's Overland Campaign in Virginia for scope and drama. This multi-volume study of the campaign for Atlanta breaks new ground and promises to be this generation's definitive study of one of the most important and fascinating confrontations of the entire Civil War"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024002600 | ISBN 9781611218015 (v. 3 ; hardcover) | ISBN 9781611218022 (v. 3 ; ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Atlanta Campaign, 1864.

Classification: LCC E476.7 .P695 2024 | DDC 973.7/371--dc23/eng/20240118

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024002600>



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Introduction

While no single battle, event, or campaign can lay claim to being the “turning point” of the American Civil War, William T. Sherman’s months-long effort to defeat the Confederate Army of Tennessee and capture the city of Atlanta is one of the more important stepping stones on the road to Federal victory. Ultimately, Sherman’s success severely crippled both the Confederacy’s will and ability to wage war. When the Atlanta Campaign opened in May of 1864, the South fielded powerful, well-equipped armies in Virginia and Georgia. By the time Sherman captured Atlanta on September 1, the Confederacy had fewer than eight months to live. The campaign widely viewed as the main effort that year—Ulysses S. Grant’s confrontation with Robert E. Lee in Virginia—deadlocked outside Petersburg and Richmond, while in the months following the fall of Atlanta, Sherman’s Federal armies ranged at will across Georgia to the sea, and then north into the Carolinas, devastating the Confederate heartland.

Although there are other general histories and a multiplicity of titles studying individual aspects of the Atlanta Campaign, this multi-volume study examines the entire struggle from a detailed operational perspective. It relies on deep research across a broad spectrum of primary and secondary sources, which bring out a detailed analysis of the campaign’s generalship while highlighting the perspectives of the men in the ranks who experienced the fighting from the ground up. Once finished, *The Atlanta Campaign, Volume 3: From the Chattahoochee to Peach Tree Creek, June 28 to July 20, 1864*, will have documented the entire campaign up to and including the Confederate decision to evacuate the city of Atlanta on the night of September 1 and its subsequent occupation by the Federals.

Volume 1 addressed the groundwork underpinning the campaign and the first three weeks of fighting from Dalton to Cassville and ended with Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston’s retreat across the Etowah River. During those weeks Johnston

pursued a Fabian strategy by drawing the Federal army south, believing that Sherman would grow weaker from detachments and casualties while his own army would be steadily reinforced. In doing so, however, Johnston surrendered both the mountainous terrain of North Georgia and two of the three most defensible rivers: the Oostanaula and the Etowah. This first phase of the campaign was marked by several heavy skirmishes, one large battle at Resaca on May 14 and 15, and a great deal of maneuvering as Sherman eschewed direct assaults in favor of flanking movements. Leveraged out of position after position, Johnston repeatedly retreated.

Volume 2 covered the second phase of the campaign from May 23 to June 27, 1864. It was a difficult time for both sides. On May 23, Sherman cut his army loose from its supply line, the Western & Atlantic Railroad, and gambled that he could cross the Etowah and move to Marietta quickly enough to outflank and isolate Johnston north of Kennesaw Mountain. Doing so would allow Sherman to bypass the rugged defensive terrain at Allatoona Pass.

That gamble failed. Johnston nimbly sidestepped west to insert his army between Sherman and Marietta. The result was a trench warfare slugfest along what came to be called the New Hope Line, or, by the Federals, simply the Hell Hole. Combats at New Hope Church, Pickett's Mill, and Dallas were bloody but inconclusive. The ten-day stalemate there ended on June 4, when Johnston fell back and Sherman was forced to return to the railroad.

Hostilities resumed on June 10 amid sustained rains. More trench warfare followed, everything slowed to a crawl by the precipitation, the roads turned to quagmires of mud and the streams overflowing. Though Sherman had hoped Johnston might fall back across the Chattahoochee River, much as he had the Oostanaula and the Etowah in May, Johnston instead began a careful series of withdrawals to interim defensive positions: the Lost Mountain Line, the Mud Creek-Brushy Mountain Line, and finally, Kennesaw. On June 15, believing that this time Johnston was surely headed for the Chattahoochee, Sherman ordered an all-out pursuit. The Federals barely advanced a mile before grinding to a halt in front of fresh Rebel earthworks. His Federals had made steady progress, forcing the Rebels back to Kennesaw Mountain by June 20, but Sherman simmered with frustration. He lashed out at subordinates and complained about their supposed recalcitrance to his superior Grant, whose own campaign in Virginia was stymied in in the Petersburg trenches.

Johnston wrestled with problems of his own. Constant retreat was wearing on the army, which spiked desertions, while the unrelenting rain spiked sick lists. Pressure from President Jefferson Davis in Richmond to end those retreats mounted, as did complaints from increasingly nervous Georgia and other Deep South politicians. Atlanta, now merely 30 miles to the rear, was a vital rail hub and

a critical part of the Confederacy's war-making infrastructure. Warehouses were crammed with supplies and ammunition. Its capture would be a serious blow.

That frustration, however, induced Sherman to change tactics. If he could not outflank the Rebels, he would go through them. Johnston's army was holding a line more than nine miles in length, so the Confederate defenses had to be thinly manned somewhere. Sherman decided on a series of frontal assaults. Eight brigades from the IV, XIV, and XV Corps, in all some of the Yankees' toughest fighters, simultaneously assaulted both Pigeon Hill and Cheatham Hill.

Sherman was wrong. The Rebels handily swatted back each attack at a cost to Sherman of nearly 2,500 men against Johnston's roughly 500. Southern morale soared, while for those who wore the blue, it correspondingly plummeted. That same day on the Union far right, however, Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield's XXIII Corps slipped across Olley's Creek and turned east toward Nickajack Creek to threaten Johnston's lifeline: the Western & Atlantic south of Marietta. Had Sherman finally broken the June stalemate?

This current volume, the third of five installments, begins the day after the Federal defeat at Kennesaw, when Sherman again opted for maneuver over assault. It spans June 28 through July 20 and includes the Battle of Peach Tree Creek. By July 2, Federal moves around the Confederate left toward the Chattahoochee River forced Johnston to retreat again, abandoning the impregnable Kennesaw line. Sherman forced Johnston out of yet another position at Smyrna on July 5, and then levered him out of the River Line and across the Chattahoochee by July 9 before shifting his focus to threaten Atlanta from the east.

This part of the story includes not only the ongoing campaign between the respective armies, but the rising concern of the Confederate government over Johnston's tactical decisions that culminate in that general's last-minute replacement by Lt. Gen. John Bell Hood just 72 hours before the July 20 Peach Tree Creek fighting.

As did the previous volumes, this study also grapples with significant questions central to understanding the campaign. First among them is President Davis's decision to remove Johnston and replace him with Hood. While that decision irrefutably changed the campaign, did it improve the Confederacy's chances of success or worsen them? What effect did Hood have on the overall workings of the Army of Tennessee? Similarly, I explore the impact of Federal leadership at the senior levels, especially during the Battle of Peach Tree Creek. The bulk of the fighting there was borne by Joe Hooker's Federal XX Corps, and though it was a victory, not every Federal commander excelled on that field.

Army Strengths: July 1864

By the end of May, Johnston's stated strategy appeared to be working. Sherman's frontline combat strength had declined. By Sherman's own estimate, he led just under 85,000 troops across the Etowah, which he termed his "Rubicon." Thanks to reinforcements, Johnston's own numbers had swelled to about 74,000, a much different ratio than the two-to-one odds faced by the Army of Tennessee at Dalton in early May. The near-constant rain and difficult conditions of June, however, hurt the Confederates worse than the Federals. Because of reinforcements and a better rate of return for recovering sick and wounded, Sherman's force increased while Johnston's manpower declined.

June was a costly month for both armies. From their first contact on May 25 at New Hope Church to the bloody clash at Kennesaw Mountain on June 27, the month was punctuated by a series of costly actions. The Federals attacked multiple times at New Hope Church, Pickett's Mill, Gilgal Church, and Kennesaw Mountain. The Rebels launched assaults at Dallas and Kolb's Farm. In addition to the roughly 9,000 Federals and perhaps 4,000 Confederates who fell in these combats, thousands more men on each side were drained out of the ranks by illness due to the foul weather and constant exposure.

Federal Strength

The "effective strength" of Sherman's combined force on June 30, 1864, totaled 106,070 officers and men in seven infantry corps and four cavalry divisions, though not all those troops were at the front. Below are those figures broken down by command, presented in two categories: "effectives" as shown in the official records, and "Present for Duty" (PFD) as shown on the original returns in the national archives, further limited to those troops at the front. Though individual corps and divisional totals sometimes vary, the overall totals are very close. Despite his losses, Sherman's available strength had climbed from late May, when he listed his strength as about 85,000 men. Clearly the Federals did a remarkable job of maintaining their combat strength. Note that Federal fighting strength—the number of men available for combat, would be about 10% less than either "Effectives" or "PFD."¹

1 U.S. War Department. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 128 Vols. (Washington D.C.: 1880-1901), Series I, Volume 38, pt. 3, 115-116, hereafter OR; June returns, RG 94, NARA.

Formation	“Effectives”	PFD
IV Corps	14,956	15,169
XIV Corps	19,607	20,243
XX Corps	14,672	15,131
XV Corps	11,788	12,129
XVI Corps (Left Wing)	10,744	10,744*
XVII Corps	9,262	8,450
XXIII Corps	12,906	13,698
First Cavalry Division (McCook)	2,408	2,065
Second Cavalry Division (Garrard)	4,352	4,535
Third Cavalry Division (Kilpatrick)	2,717	guarding rear
Stoneman’s Cavalry Division	2,658	3,841
Totals	106,070	106,005

*Original returns not found, figure taken from official records.

Confederate Strength

The Armies of Tennessee and Mississippi (the latter comprising Lt. Gen. Leonidas Polk’s command that functioned as one of Johnston’s three corps) did not fare equally well. Despite significantly fewer casualties, sickness, captures, and desertion siphoned off manpower. The retreats from Kennesaw Mountain and across the Chattahoochee illustrated the seriousness of this drain. Below, the strengths are for both June 30, just before leaving the Kennesaw line, and July 10, the day after slipping across the Chattahoochee. All numbers are Present for Duty (PFD) totals.

Formation	June 30	July 10
Headquarters	547	557
Hardee’s Corps	18,107	16,567
Hood’s Corps	15,970	15,492
Army of Mississippi (Loring/Stewart)	14,380	13,354
Cavalry Corps	8,929	8,409
Jackson Cavalry Division	3,960	3,970
Artillery Reserve	854	847
Georgia Militia	1,500 est.	2,000 est.
Totals	64,257	61,196

Despite the lack of a major battle during this period, Confederate numbers shrank by 3,551 officers and men during the first ten days of July, the equivalent of nearly an entire division of infantry.

June 28 to July 2: “Hell with the lid off”



June 27 had been a ghastly day for the men of both armies. The battle of Kennesaw Mountain might have been only a single-day affair, producing only a modest percentage of the death and suffering wrought by Grant's and Lee's titanic struggles in Virginia, but it left an indelible impression on those who fought there.

Tuesday, June 28, 1864, dawned “hot and sultry,” according to Col. Emerson Opdycke of the 125th Ohio. After their grueling ordeal charging the Rebel works just north of Cheatham Hill the day before, the men of Brig. Gen. John Newton's Second Division of the IV Corps fell back behind the lines currently manned by Col. William Grose's Third Brigade of Maj. Gen. David Stanley's First Division, also of the IV Corps. Opdycke was burdened by grief and anger. Upon visiting his division's field hospital, he wrote: “My brave men are cheerful under the severest wounds: I took each by the hand and tried to encourage them. I left all smiling, while my heart ached for them. [A]fter such a scene one can hardly help crying out, ‘How long O Lord, how long?’” As for yesterday's attack, he could only note: “Miserable blunders were made.”¹

On the XV Corps front, after lying within 200 yards of the Confederate lines on Pigeon Hill for most of the day, Maj. Gen. John Logan, after dark, ordered the three assaulting brigades—those of Brig. Gens. Giles A. Smith, Joseph Lightburn, and Charles C. Walcutt—to disengage and return to their former positions. Once back in the rear, Cpl. Edward Schweitzer of the 30th Ohio, one of Lightburn's men, recorded that they spent the 28th “laying around and resting the best way we can. We rec'd a large mail but nothing for me. The boys have commenced

1 Glenn V. Longacre and John E. Haas, *To Battle for God and the Right: The Civil War Letterbooks of Emerson Opdycke* (Urbana, IL: 2003), 190-191.

2 *The Atlanta Campaign: From the Chattahoochee to Peach Tree Creek*

writing this afternoon.” One of those writers was Lt. Thaddeus Capron of the 55th Illinois, in Giles Smith’s brigade, who grumbled that “the entire fight amounted to about this, that we lost about 500 men in the charging party and gained no particular advantage.”²

To Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman insisted that “the assault . . . was no mistake. I had to do it. The enemy and our own army and officers had settled down into the conviction that the assault of lines formed no part of my game, and the moment the enemy was found behind anything like a parapet, why everybody would deploy, throw up counter-works and take it easy, leaving it to the ‘old man’ to turn the position.” To reinforce this belief, Sherman also downplayed his casualties, informing Halleck that “our loss on the 27th will not exceed 1,500. As usual, the first reports were overstated.” Most of the army disagreed. Looking back, Grenville Dodge opined that “there was no one in [our] army that believed we could overcome their very heavy intrenchments and fortifications.”³

On June 28, Sherman received a piece of good news: Halleck informed him that he no longer needed to prevent Johnston from reinforcing the Confederates in Virginia. Halleck reported that Grant “does not think that Lee will bring any additional troops to Richmond, on account of the difficulty of feeding them.” In essence, Sherman now had greater freedom of action—and fully intended to use it.⁴

Although Sherman was already contemplating another flanking move, the Federals continued to methodically examine the Confederate lines for weak points, hoping to bring up artillery and force a breach by “regular approaches,” i.e., siege work. Thomas reported that “both Generals Howard and Palmer think they can find favorable positions on their lines for placing batteries for enfilading the enemy’s works,” continuing the “bite and hold” tactics of mid-June that had so effectively driven Johnston from Pine Mountain and the Mud Creek line. Sherman despised this slow and tedious siege work, but it promised greater success at less cost than another direct assault. It also meant hard, dangerous labor for the men

2 U.S. War Department. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington DC: 1880-1901), Series I, vol. 38, pt. 3, 179, hereafter *OR*; June 27, Edward E. Schweitzer Diary, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA; Thaddeus H. Capron, “War Diary of Thaddeus H. Capron,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, vol. 12, no. 3 (October 1919), 384.

3 *OR* 38, pt. 4, 635, and pt. 5, 91; “Personal Biography of Grenville Mellen Dodge,” I:221, Grenville Mellen Dodge Papers, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

4 *OR* 38, pt. 4, 629.



The Confederate trenches at the Dead Angle on Cheatham Hill, with the Illinois Monument just beyond, marking the high water mark of Daniel McCook's assault. *Brad Butkovich*

on both sides, now positioned so close together that their trenches, in some cases, lay only a stone's throw apart.⁵

At the very tip of the assault force, Jefferson C. Davis's XIV Corps division endured the worst of it. Unlike their comrades in the IV and XV Corps, the morning sun found Davis's two lead brigades—those of Cols. Daniel McCook (now commanded by Col. Caleb Dilworth after McCook's fatal wounding) and John G. Mitchell—stubbornly clinging to the slopes of Cheatham Hill, scant yards from the Rebel defenses. Sergeant Henry Pratt of the 34th Illinois later marveled that “the 52d Ohio and 22nd Ind[iana] . . . actually built their works but 27 yards in front of the rebel works, with as good soldiers as the world ever saw. The left of the 98th Ohio . . . was 35 yards from the enemy.”

Lacking entrenching tools, Davis's men resorted to throwing up makeshift defenses with cups, plates, and bayonets. They were aided by the fact that the closest point of approach, directly in front of the salient, lay along a stretch of dead ground, since the Rebel trenches there had been laid out on the natural rather than the military crest of Cheatham Hill. This shelter allowed Dilworth's regiments to shift slightly, adapting to the best cover. At nightfall, tools were brought forward: “Like proper beavers we worked,” recalled Sgt. Robert Rogers of the 125th Illinois, “erecting breastworks to protect us on the morrow.” By daylight they had two lines

⁵ *Ibid.*, 610-611.

of defenses, the forward trench protected by head logs, and felt more confident of holding their position.⁶

Tuesday morning, wrote Capt. James T. Holmes of the 52nd, “the air was full of the odor of blood and powder and fresh earth and wounds and death.” The scratched-out defenses, combined with the dead space, provided a modicum of protection so long as the men lay prone, but the slope remained a deadly place. Lieutenant Colonel Allen Fahnestock’s 86th Illinois, after spending much of the night retrieving their dead and wounded, relieved the 125th Illinois “in the front line before daylight, keeping up a brisk fire all day long. . . . We threw out 15 feet in front of our works two picket posts.” The day’s work cost the 86th one killed and one wounded, while in the 22nd Indiana Cpl. Charlie Knight recorded that “we had two men wounded in my Co., John McCain and Walter Manning, both in the head. Hoped [their wounds] to not be very dangerous.”⁷

The proximity of the lines produced some unusual adaptations. Each side took to throwing rocks over the parapets of their foes’ defenses, though this stone hail was more effective from the Confederate side. Several Federals were injured by rocks and other improvised missiles. Sergeant Nixon Stewart of the 52nd Ohio related how, about suppertime, they could hear a command, “clear and distinct. ‘Make Ready. Take aim. Fire.’” Then, he recalled, “over came stones and clubs, pick handles and frying pans, and woe be to the man who was unprotected. Many on our line were struck and disabled. Capt. [Henry O.] Mansfield [Company E] was crippled for life. Serg. Major Wm. Freeman was struck with a pick handle, went to the hospital, and never returned to duty.” Confederate Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Cheatham, fearing that same proximity would allow the Federals to overwhelm his lines in a night assault before his men could react, “requested fireballs—balls of cotton . . . soaked in tar, turpentine, or grease”—to be issued. These could then be set alight and rolled into no man’s land as illumination.⁸

Lieutenant Thomas Maney of the 1st Tennessee heard that “Cheatham had ordered hand grenades at troughs, that we might roll the missiles into their works, but we did not get them” before the Rebels evacuated this line several days later. The

6 Henry C. Pratt, “After Assault at Kennesaw,” *National Tribune*, July 28, 1910; Robert M. Rogers, *The 125th Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry. Attention, Battalion!* (Champaign, IL: 1882), 92; James T. Holmes, with Garth D. Bishop, ed. *Movements and Positions in the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain: The Memoir of Colonel James T. Holmes, 52nd Ohio Infantry* (Jefferson, NC: 2018), 68-70.

7 Holmes, *Movements and Positions in the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain*, 59; June 28, Allen Fahnestock Diary, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL; June 28, Charles R. Knight Diary, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

8 Nixon B. Stewart, *Dan McCook’s Regiment, 52nd O.V.I. A History of the Regiment, its Campaigns and Battles. From 1862 to 1865*. (Alliance, OH: 1900), 126-128; Earl J. Hess, *Kennesaw Mountain Sherman, Johnston, and the Atlanta Campaign* (Chapel Hill, NC: 2013), 178-182.

most ingenious innovation on the Federal side was "the refracting sight," also called "gun glasses"—small mirrors that could be attached to a rifle-musket, allowing a soldier to fire at the enemy without exposing his head above the parapet. "A large chestnut tree," hollow on the downslope side, also made an excellent sniper post. Sergeant Stewart estimated that during the nearly six days the brigade lay on this line, they fired "two hundred rounds of ammunition to the man." Captain James L. Burkhalter of the 86th Illinois observed that there was "much firing during the day [the 28th], in which the rebs could not raise a head above their own trenches without drawing a volley from us, but the memory of Monday's debacle stays." Confederate Samuel Robinson of the 1st Tennessee, a member of the "Rock City Guards," recalled that by the end of this period "the head-logs and cheveaux de frise had . . . been literally shot to pieces with bullets."⁹

Lieutenant Colonel James W. Langley of the 125th Illinois had been serving on the staff of his friend and mentor, Maj. Gen. John M. Palmer (under whom he had read law back in Illinois), when Col. Oscar Harmon was killed on June 27. Langley returned to the regiment that evening and assumed command. "The assault, . . . was a failure," admitted Sergeant Rogers of the 125th, "but this did not prove, by any means, that we were whipped." On June 28, after studying the situation, Langley conceived the idea of tunneling under the Rebel salient just 200 feet away, planting a mine, and detonating it—ideally on July 4 for one of the "grandest pyrotechnic displays that had ever occurred in those parts." That very morning, Langley and Cpl. Joseph Frankenberg crawled forward "to a tree some twenty yards in advance" of the Union line and dug "a small pit." The duo hauled forward "empty cracker boxes" with a rope, filled them with dirt, and used them to build a barricade—"to protect their scalps," wryly noted Confederate Pvt. H. K. Nelson, observing the labor. By this means, the 125th's entire front advanced twenty yards, allowing work to commence on the tunnel.¹⁰

In the meantime, the dead men still littering the stretch of ground between the lines continued to fester in the heat. The smell and the grisly spectacle were becoming overwhelming. "Though we had rations," recalled Lieutenant Maney, "we had lost all appetite owing to the condition of the unburied dead." On the evening of the 28th the Federals received a flag of truce from the Confederates, offering an armistice to allow the men of John Newton's division to collect and

9 Stewart, *Dan McCook's Regiment*, 128; Hess, *Kennesaw Mountain*, 178-179; Tuesday, June 28, 1864, James L. Burkhalter Diary, ALPL; Samuel Roberts, "Battle of Kennesaw Mountain," *The Annals of the Army of Tennessee and Early Western History*, vol. 1 no. 3 (June 1878), 115.

10 Rogers, *The 125th Regiment*, 98. H. K. Nelson, "Dead Angle, or Devil's Elbow, GA." *Confederate Veteran*, vol. 11 (July 1903), 321.

bury their dead. Lieutenant Colonel Willis Blanche of the 57th Indiana passed the message up the chain of command, but according to Sgt. Asbury Kerwood (who penned the 57th's regimental history), that offer was refused: "Gen. Howard believed that it was only done to throw us off our guard, in order that they could make a night attack." Conversely, Brig. Gen. Nathan Kimball reported that his brigade officer of the day, Maj. Luther M. Sabin of the 44th Illinois, and the Rebel counterpart for Daniel Govan's Brigade, Lt. Col. William H. Martin of the 1st/15th Arkansas, were able to negotiate a four-hour truce commencing at 9:00 a.m. the next morning. Martin, the same officer who had organized the impromptu ceasefire to rescue Union wounded from groundfires on the 27th, was able to convince the Federals of his side's good faith.¹¹

On the XIV Corps front, Colonel Langley requested a truce from Col. Horace Rice of the 29th Tennessee, one of A. J. Vaughan's regiments. After similar negotiations, their ceasefire also took effect at 9:00 a.m. A key sticking point in these talks was whether either side could collect the hundreds of dropped weapons and other useful military equipment littering the field. Rice wanted the Confederates to be able to gather them in; Langley naturally resisted. In the end, they agreed to let fate settle the matter—the rifles would remain on the field until one side or the other retreated, leaving the other in undisputed possession of the terrain. Rather than insist, and thus tacitly admit that his side might soon fall back, Rice conceded the point. With that settled, unarmed sentries were posted to keep the two sides out of each other's works while the Federals went to work collecting and burying their dead and the few wounded who had not yet been retrieved or expired. The condition of these poor souls was shocking. "The sight," wrote Corp. Charles Wetherbee, a member of the 34th Illinois, "was horrible. . . . The wounded had been lying there twenty-four hours, not only were their wounds full of maggots but their mouths and ears were also full of them, and we could not look at the poor fellows without the tears coming into our eyes."¹²

The dropped weapons were not completely left undisturbed. During the earlier impromptu armistice on June 27, initiated by Colonel Martin to rescue the Union wounded from being burned up, Capt. Robert D. Smith (Patrick Cleburne's ordnance officer) gathered what he could. "I succeeded in getting 90 Rifles from the field," he recorded, "7 of them were Henry's patent (16 shooters)." On the

11 T. H. Maney, "Battle of Kennesaw Mountain on Kennesaw Line. Reminiscences of T. H. Maney, of First Tennessee Infantry," *Confederate Veteran*, vol. 11, no. 4 (April 1903), 159; Asbury L. Kerwood, *Annals of the Fifty-Seventh Regiment Indiana Volunteers* (Dayton, OH: 1868), 264. Colonel Blanche's name was also sometimes spelled Blanch, without the final "e."

12 Rogers, *The 125th Regiment*, 99; D. W. Carter, *Unholy Rebellion: The Civil War Diary of Charles Adams Wetherbee* (Lulu Publishing, 2017), 338.

29th, despite "it being strictly prohibited" to bring in weapons, Sergeant John Ferguson of the 10th Illinois slyly observed how "many of our boys would watch their chance and put their foot through the strap . . . and walk slowly, dragging the gun after them. In this way a good many guns were taken off." Sergeant Levi Ross of the 86th Illinois, serving with the brigade ordnance staff, "took charge of three loads of surplus arms of fallen soldiers," turning them over to the departmental ordnance staff at Big Shany the next day.¹³

Confederate estimates of the number to be buried ran from high to extreme. Lieutenant R. M. Hooker of the 12th Tennessee in Vaughan's command recalled that "they left several thousand dead on a space of ground 200 yards square." Private William E. Reynolds of the 29th Tennessee, posted as a guard to prevent fraternization during the truce, observed dead "men in piles, three or four deep, in a space not over twenty or thirty yards wide and less than one hundred yards long. I was informed," he added, "that there were a thousand dead Yankees removed from this little spot." Private Roberts offered a more precise (but still inflated) figure, claiming that 385 dead men were removed from in front of Maney's works, while Lt. Col. George W. Gordon of the 11th Tennessee put the number buried in front of both brigades—Maney's and Vaughan's—at "800." In reality, the combined number killed in action for all five Federal brigades attacking here came to fewer than 350, less than half of Gordon's estimate; but the carnage was fearful enough. Initially the truce was to last four hours, but when it became "apparent that the task could not be completed within the period named, an extension was granted and the truce continued until five o'clock."¹⁴

Orders to avoid fraternizing were widely ignored by both sides, starting at the top. Major Generals Patrick Cleburne, Benjamin F. Cheatham, and Thomas C. Hindman—all accompanied by members of their staffs—strolled easily among the Federals. Cheatham hardly appeared like a general, wearing "coarse gray pants tucked into unpolished boots, a blue flannel shirt and rough felt hat." He looked, thought Sergeant Rogers, like "a 'Johnny' gone to seed." At one point he was "the center of a large crowd, talking, laughing, and occasionally taking a drink from the inevitable canteen." Corporal Wetherbee described how "one of the boys, while on

13 Jill K. Garrett, ed. *Confederate Diary of Robert D. Smith* (Columbia, TN: 1997), 142; Janet Correll Ellison, ed., *On to Atlanta: The Civil War Diaries of John Hill Ferguson, Illinois Tenth Regiment of Volunteers* (Lincoln, NE: 2001), 55; June 30, Levi Ross Diary, ALPL.

14 Mamie Yearry, *Reminiscences of the Boys in Gray, 1861-1865*. 2 vols. (Dallas, TX: 1876), 1: 348; M. Todd Cathey and Gary W. Waddey, "Forward My Brave Boys!" *A History of the 11th Tennessee Volunteer Infantry, CSA* (Macon, GA: 2016), 178; Roberts, "Battle of Kennesaw Mountain," 116; Charles A. Partridge, *History of the Ninety-Sixth Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry* (Chicago: 1887), 371. For actual Federal losses, See David A. Powell, *The Atlanta Campaign*, vol. 2.



Union Brig. Gen. James D. Morgan commanded a brigade in Jefferson C. Davis's Division. *The Photographic History of the Civil War*

the rebel works, asked a rebel soldier for a chew of tobacco. After he got it [another] rebel soldier asked him if he knew who it was that gave him the chew, and he said 'no.' The rebel said, 'It was General Cheatham.' That," observed Wetherbee, "was the only pleasant thing that happened during the truce." This helpful Rebel was probably Colonel Rice of the 29th Tennessee, who was clearly growing increasingly irritated by the boisterous familiarity blooming

between his divisional commander and these impertinent Yankees. Finally, when "one son of the Emerald Isle" threw his arm "around the General's neck," Rice had enough. He "touched the man on the arm and inquired if he knew to whom he was speaking. 'One of your boys, I suppose,' came the reply. 'That,' said Colonel Rice, at the same time raising his voice, 'is Maj. Gen. Cheatham.' A forty-pound shot thrown into their midst could not have produced a greater sensation."¹⁵

At least two Federals recorded Cheatham's opinions on the outcome of the war. Sergeant Lyman Widney of the 34th Illinois recalled that Cheatham "expressed deep regret that so many brave men on both sides should be slaughtered. . . . 'It is useless on your part. We do not expect to whip you and you cannot whip us; so you will get tired of the war after a while and let us alone.'" Sergeant Rogers heard something similar, hearing Cheatham opine "that the war would be settled by treaty, as neither party could conquer." However, "he was satisfied that [Federal occupation] had so completely revolutionized Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, and Louisiana that they would never form part of the Confederacy." He also "admitted that he was only fighting

15 Robert I. Girardi, ed. *Campaigning with Uncle Billy. The Civil War Memoirs of Sgt. Lyman S. Widney 34th Illinois Volunteer Infantry* (Vancouver, BC: 2008), 254; Rogers, *The 125th Regiment*, 99; Carter, *Unholy Rebellion*, 338; John Berrien Lindsley, ed., *The Military Annals of Tennessee. Confederate. First Series: Embracing a Review of Military Operations, with Regimental Histories and Memorial Rolls, Compiled from Original and Official Sources* 2 vols. (Nashville, TN: 1886) 1: 437.

from principle, and not for the love of the Southern Confederacy . . . [but having] cast his lot, he did not like to 'back down.'"¹⁶

The war made peculiar relationships. For much of 1863, Pvt. Sylvester Noble (Vett to his family and friends) and his comrades in the 14th Michigan were stationed in the prosperous town of Franklin, Tennessee, the seat of Williamson County, about twenty miles south of Nashville. Now, as he mingled with the Rebels during the truce, he encountered to his delight several Tennesseans from Franklin—where Company D of the 1st Tennessee had been recruited. He soon found "men . . . whose families I am quite intimately acquainted with. They haven't had letters for most a year, so I told them all the news and am going to write to F—to . . . let them know that nearly all their friends are well, for I know they are anxious. Sallie [a young woman of his particular acquaintance] happens to have no relations in the army, so she can't have a chance to mourn their loss, etc., but I saw her 'sweetheart.' That will tickle her I know."¹⁷

Cheatham's rough appearance might not have been entirely without artifice; possibly it was a form of disguise—albeit one spoiled by Colonel Rice. Aside from Jefferson C. Davis, who helped arrange the truce, the highest-ranking Federal officer to come forward was Brig. Gen. James D. Morgan. His brigade had not attacked on June 27, and now still occupied the main Union trench line about 300 yards to the rear of Dilworth's and Bradley's advanced positions. Sergeant Ferguson of the 10th Illinois noted that "our Generals were nearly all there convercing with the Rebel officers but none went in their real uneforms. They borrow[ed] coats of officers of lower rank. . . . General Morgan took a spade and pick, and went with the detail buirring the dead. No one would ever suspect him of other than a private, but while he was to work he kept looking around and notising all the particulers about the Rebel works."¹⁸

There was no similar agreement on John Logan's XV Corps front. There, where three of his brigades assaulted Pigeon Hill, defended by elements of Maj. Gens. Samuel French's (Army of Mississippi) and William H. T. Walker's (Hardee's Corps) divisions, the Federal losses were also substantial. Though they did not break the enemy lines, the attackers entrenched within "100 yards" of the Rebel main line. On the morning of the 28th, Brig. Gen. Peter J. Osterhaus's First Division of the XV Corps held this line, having replaced Morgan L. Smith's division overnight. Though there was no formal truce, Osterhaus reported that "all subsequent

16 Girardi, *Campaigning with Uncle Billy*, 255; Rogers, *The 125th Regiment*, 99.

17 Donald W. Disbrow, ed. "Vett Noble of Ypsilanti: A Clerk for General Sherman," *Civil War History*, vol. 14, no. 1 (March 1968), 31.

18 Ellison, *On to Atlanta*, 55.

operations” were limited to “artillery practice and sharpshooting.” In his journal for the 28th, he admitted that “the Rebs are remarkably quiet notwithstanding [our] skirmishing and shelling them.”¹⁹

Captain Charles D. Miller of the 76th Ohio noted that both sides kept up “a brisk fire,” adding that the lines “were so close together that it was almost sure death to any man who exposed himself.” Sergeant Burke Wylie of the 31st Iowa certainly agreed. Wylie had arrived at the front after a week’s hiatus, traveling to Chattanooga for supplies. Upon his return, he was dismayed to see that “our works and the enemy’s are very close together. . . . The Rebs can look right down upon us (with disgust) and we can return the compliment in the shape of 20 lb. shells. They cannot depress their guns enough to shell us very badly.” Still, there were casualties. Miller noted that the 76th lost at least one man killed, Pvt. William Little of Company A; and another, Pvt. Caton Hill of Miller’s own C Company, so badly wounded that “he was never fit for service afterwards.”²⁰

With the burial work complete and the truce concluded, both sides there also returned to the business of war—which, in McCook’s brigade sector, also meant more digging. That evening, Colonel Fahnestock of the 86th Illinois noted, “we threw up another line of breastworks as far as our picket posts with Cracker Boxes and old Barrells, filling them with dirt. We also commenced tunnelling to blow up the Rebble works.” It was a difficult task, recalled Maj. James T. Holmes of the 52nd Ohio, given the “crude tools for underground work” at their disposal; but they made substantial progress. By July 1, the tunnel was sixteen feet deep and only “twenty or thirty feet” from completion. They tried to conceal their purpose by hauling the excess dirt to be “‘wasted’ down the hill to the left and up over our works, but so sharp were the eyes of the rebels” that they soon figured it out, given the slight difference in color between the topsoil and the substrata.²¹

The Rebels certainly expected as much. Even as he visited the salient on June 29 during the truce, Capt. Robert Smith observed that he would “not be surprised to hear that this salient angle . . . ha[d] been undermined and blown up. The enemy can do it with all ease in thirty-six hours.” Those Tennesseans charged with defending the place resorted to a technique as old as siegecraft:

19 OR 38, pt. 3, 133, 179; June 28, Peter J. Osterhaus Diary, Missouri Historical Society.

20 Stewart Bennett and Barbara Tillery, eds., *The Struggle for the Life of the Republic: A Civil War Narrative by Brevet Major Charles Dana Miller, 76th Ohio Infantry* (Kent, OH: 2004), 172-173; “Brother Robert,” June 29th, 1864, E. Burke Wylie letters, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City. Wylie was sent to Chattanooga for supplies between June 21 and 28. His trip was not without excitement (see Chapter 2).

21 June 29, and July 2, Allen Fahnestock Diary, ALPL; James T. Holmes, *52d O.V.I. Then and Now* (Columbus, OH: 1898), 187.

"placing a drum on the ground, and on its head some small pieces of gravel. The digging . . . caused the head of the drum to vibrate, and make the gravel move." On July 1, "SPECIAL," the correspondent for *The Memphis Appeal*, boasted that "the enemy is reported to be trying the Vicksburg plan of undermining Cheatham's works. . . . As everyone knows he is the last man to sit down quietly and wait for them to finish a work of this description, we may expect to hear of someone being hurt should the report prove correct."²²

South of Cheatham Hill, where the lines were farther apart, the firing was more sporadic. Joseph Hooker's XX Corps held this sector of the Union line, with Brig. Gen. John W. Geary's Second Division on the left, connecting to Palmer's XIV Corps; their most advanced position was at the now-demolished Springer farmstead. Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams's First and Maj. Gen. Daniel Butterfield's Third Divisions were farther to the right, their lines somewhat intermixed and separated from Geary's command by the marshy bottoms of John Ward Creek, which had proved a significant obstacle. Geary's men faced the two southernmost brigades of Cheatham's Division, while Butterfield and Williams squared off against Hood's Corps, primarily Thomas Hindman's Division. Though the skirmishing was less intense here, it remained dangerous and provoked the usual alarms. Writing home on June 29, correspondent FAIR PLAY (a member of the 22nd Wisconsin in Col. John Coburn's brigade of Butterfield's division) noted that "not ten minutes ago, [Pvt.] Edward Harkins, Co. A, was struck while apparently secure behind our breastworks on the second line." FAIR PLAY further explained that just last night (June 28) "the rebels, worried by our skirmishers, made a show of advance nearly at midnight . . . and there was hurrying in hot haste . . . for a few moments, when all again became quiet." In that scramble "Corp'l [John G.] Kramer [was] shot severely while putting on his knapsack."²³

The XX Corps suffered another casualty on June 29: General Butterfield, who took convalescent leave. Butterfield was a wealthy, well-connected New York lawyer and businessman; his father was John Butterfield of the Overland Mail Company, and a good friend was Alexander Seward, son of the former New York senator and current Secretary of State, William H. Seward. Though Butterfield had once unsuccessfully applied to West Point, he had only pre-war militia experience—but that was sufficient to propel him to command of the 12th New York Regiment

22 Garrett, *Confederate Diary of Robert D. Smith*, 143; Rogers, *The 125th Regiment*, 98-99; Richard A. Baumgartner and Larry M. Strayer, *Kennesaw Mountain, June 1864: Bitter Standoff at the Gibraltar of Georgia* (Huntington, WV: 1998), 176-177.

23 Map X—C, Bearss troop movement maps, June 27 to June 30, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Kennesaw, GA. FAIR PLAY, "From the 22d Wisconsin," *Boscobel* (WI) *Broad-Axe*, July 20, 1864. Corporal Cramer (as he appears in the roster) died of his wounds on July 1, at Acworth.

in 1861. He went on to serve as a brigade, divisional, and corps commander in the Army of the Potomac before Joe Hooker chose him as chief of staff in spring 1863, a post he retained under George Meade after Hooker was relieved three days before the Battle of Gettysburg. Butterfield was most famous throughout the army for two things: composing the bugle call “Taps” and devising the Army of the Potomac corps badge system, which spread to the western theater when the XI and XII Corps traveled west in 1863. He was also embroiled in a rancorous feud with General Meade concerning Butterfield’s less-than-supportive testimony during Meade’s hearings before the Congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War over the previous winter.²⁴

As early as June 22, the date of the Battle of Kolb’s Farm, Butterfield informed General Hooker that he was suffering from “constant diarrhea,” but would try to remain on duty. By June 29, having also developed a “debilitating fever,” he could go on no longer and was granted a 30-day convalescent leave. By this stage of the war, Butterfield and Hooker were good friends, with the former acting as a restraining influence on his commanding officer’s periodic intemperate outbursts, especially those directed toward William T. Sherman, whose relationship with Hooker had been difficult since their mutual antebellum service in California. Before he left, Butterfield cautioned Hooker to “not speak in the presence of others” as he was wont to do in front of his subordinates: “you can ill afford to have your proud reputation as a soldier tarnished” by undermining confidence in their superiors, especially Sherman. It would remain to be seen whether Hooker would heed that advice.²⁵

With his departure, the corps lost a competent soldier. The animosity between Sherman and Hooker did not seem to tarnish Butterfield’s standing; George Thomas recommended him for a corps command, while upon learning of Butterfield’s illness, Sherman wrote: “I regret exceedingly that you are forced to leave, as we cannot well spare you.” In his absence, Brig. Gen. William T. Ward took over the division. That promotion became permanent when, in July, Butterfield—still unwell—received a 30-day extension. He was finally fit for duty at the end of August, but by the time he reported himself ready to take the field, Atlanta had fallen, General Hooker himself had left the XX Corps, and there was no command

End of Unedited Excerpt

24 Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge, LA: 1964), 82. For more on Butterfield, see James S. Pula, *Union General Daniel Butterfield: A Civil War biography* (El Dorado Hills, CA: 2024).

25 Pula, *Daniel Butterfield*, 193-194.