



Rebel Underground

Sons of Confederate Veterans
Major John C. Hutto Camp # 443
Jasper, Alabama

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The January meeting of the Major John C. Hutto Camp
in Jasper, Alabama will be

Sunday, 15 January 2023 at 2:00PM

Meeting will be at the
First United Methodist Church's Adult Center

Speaker - Dr. Brandon Beck
Lee & Jackson, The Early Years

Family, friends & guest are welcome

**Patrick Cleburne Makes A Stand:
Ringgold Gap, November 27, 1863
Col. (Ret.) Ed Lowe**



Maj. Gen. Patrick Cleburne, CSA

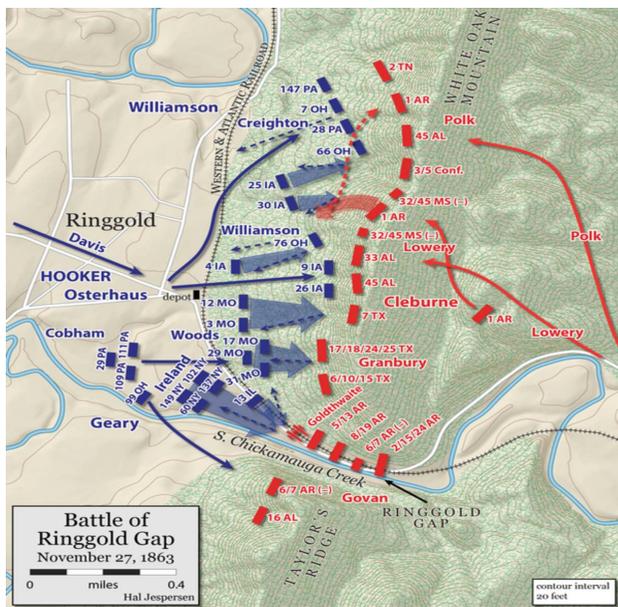
division, a division that had performed solidly against repeated attacks by Sherman along the northern end of Missionary Ridge.

Union Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, newly minted as commander of the Military Division of the Mississippi in October 1863, urged his field commanders to follow up the victory at Missionary Ridge in Chattanooga, Tennessee, taking place on November 25, 1863. Grant wanted to finish the job of destroying Gen. Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee. Subsequently, Grant unbridled Major Gens. William Sherman and George Thomas, with Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker's command to pursue Bragg's defeated soldiers as they fled south. For Bragg and his dispirited army, he needed to gain time and space to allow his army to escape through the gap at the small town of Ringgold, Georgia, toward Dalton to more formidable defenses. Bragg turned to his reliable and tenacious division commander, Irish-born Maj. Gen. Patrick Cleburne and his

Cleburne Heads South

Cleburne's 4,000-plus-man division made its way south. Just a few days after the retreat from

Chattanooga, Cleburne received a set of instructions from Bragg. Finding himself on the northern bank of the East Chickamauga Creek, a Bragg courier informed the division commander that he was to take a position at Ringgold Gap and “to hold his position at all hazards, and to keep back the enemy until the transportation of the army is secured, the salvation of which depends upon him.” The instructions also directed Cleburne to cross the creek to the south side and then bivouac, placing the creek between Cleburne and any pursuing Federal forces.



However, given the cold weather that had moved in, Cleburne recognized having his soldiers cross over and then attempt to gain rest was almost an impossible task, increasing the possibility of soldiers getting ill and declining his numbers. Therefore, Cleburne elected to remain on the northern side of the creek for his soldiers to rest for a few hours. Once it was time to move, Cleburne had volunteers cross over and build fires so his soldiers might warm and dry off after crossing. For the crossing, the water was painfully cold. One soldier described “thin sheets and crystals of ice were dancing over the water.” Meanwhile, Cleburne had moved forward to Ringgold to assess the situation in the early morning hours of November 27, 1863.

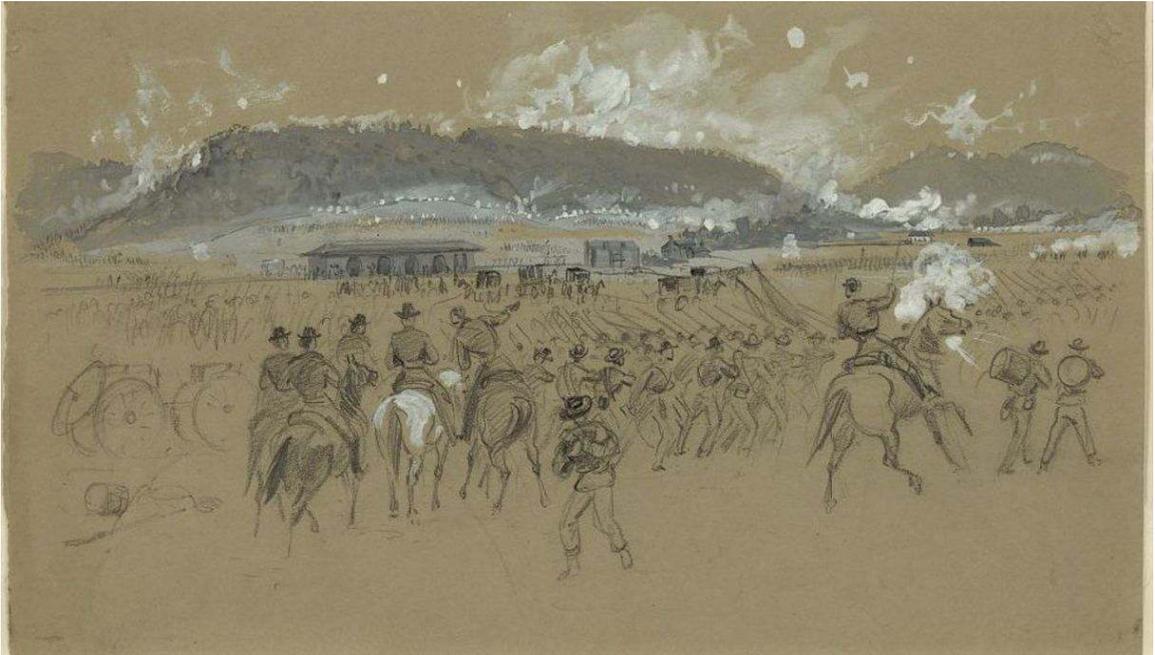
Closing in on Ringgold

Roughly 20 miles south of Chattanooga, Ringgold housed about 2,000-3,000 residents. The Western & Atlantic Railroad, South Chickamauga Creek, and a small wagon trail split between the two, leaving a gap as Cleburne highlighted about “a half mile through.” The meandering creek behind the gap that leads to Dalton is covered by “three bridges, or three fords” which led Cleburne to conclude, “A most dangerous position to be caught in if the enemy should succeed in turning either flank.” Serving as a sentinel of the town stood White Oak Mountain and Taylor’s Ridge. The ground to the west was fairly open, level ground. However, the terrain to the rear of the gap could prove challenging to a retreating army, something both Bragg and Cleburne recognized.

Not wanting to expose his position until the last minute, Cleburne arranged a defense-in-depth approach. Keeping a strong force within the gap, somewhat layered, Cleburne covered both sides to his left and right, and two Napoleon guns of Semple’s battery were within the gap. “Silence reigned, for Cleburne wanted to lay a trap,” as one soldier described it. He had forward troopers from the Ninth Kentucky Cavalry and Thirty-Third Alabama Infantry to help warn of Federal approaches into the area. No more than 30 minutes had passed after Cleburne established his defensive perimeter before Hooker’s forces made their presence known. A few shots by his screening force and the Confederates made a hasty retreat back to the main Confederate defensive position.

Hooker had gathered intelligence from residents and contrabands that Bragg’s command was in disarray, with low morale. Though his artillery was way to the rear, the ambitious former commander of the Army of the Potomac, Hooker eagerly pressed forward. Writing afterward,

Hooker said a quick movement “would be crowned with a rich harvest of material, without waiting for my artillery, the skirmishers advanced.” Leading the way was Brig. Gen. Peter Osterhaus’s division, described by one artillery officer as advancing “with the beautiful order and precision characteristics of well-drilled troops.”

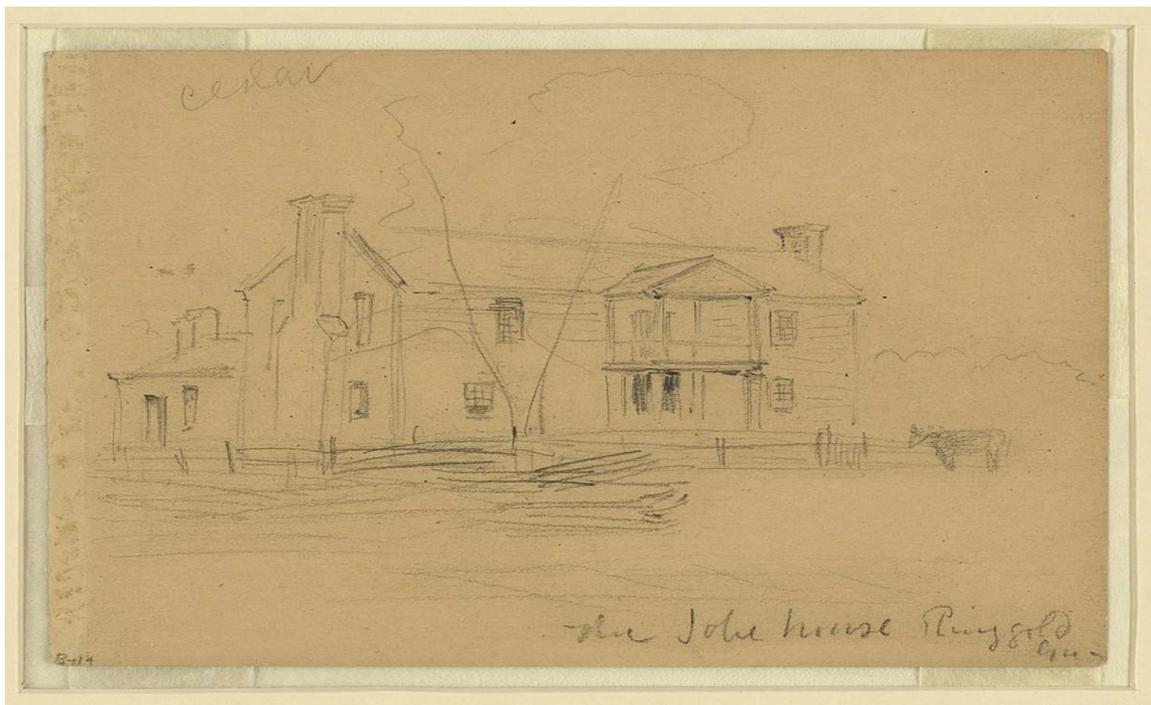


Drawing of Battle of Ringold Gap | Library of Congress

“Give It To ’Em!”

Drawing the Federals in, closing to within 150 yards, Cleburne turned to his officer commanding his two artillery pieces and confidently stated, “Now, Lieutenant, give it to ’em!” Pushing aside the brush and shrubs, the two Napoleons unleashed a devastating fire of both shell and canister fire upon the shocked Union soldiers approaching. Successive discharges left this approach against Cleburne’s center and left safe, for the meantime. The Federals then concentrated their movement against Cleburne’s right and White Oak Mountain, beginning the steep ascent to where Confederates waited.

Quick thinking and timely reinforcements by Cleburne and his subordinate commanders helped stabilize the situation on the mountain, causing one Confederate commander to state, “the most glorious triumph I ever witnessed on a battlefield.” Brig. Gen. Lucius Polk observed that the Federal troops continually drifted obliquely to the left up the mountain, an attempt to turn Cleburne’s right flank. Time after time Federal soldiers struggled up the mountain, as one Confederate soldier exclaimed, “only to be shattered and hurled back into the valley.” Col. James Williamson, a brigade commander attached to Hooker’s Corps grew frustrated with the lack of support to his left or right and said that “I found it would be folly to try to carry the hill until I should be re-enforced.” With timely reinforcements and as the attack on White Oak Mountain faded, Cleburne’s center and left flank drew the attention of Hooker’s men.



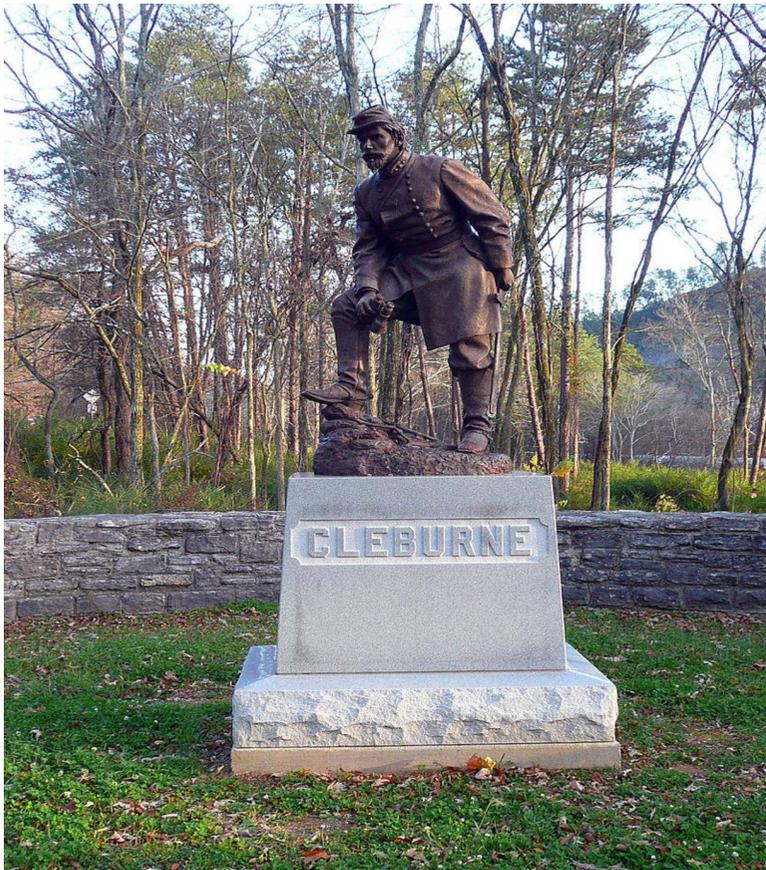
Sketch of Jobe Farm, where Union troops sought shelter during the Battle of Ringgold | LOC

“Remember Burnside”

Resembling a defense-in-depth, like the assaults against White Oak Mountain, Hooker’s attack against this portion of the Confederate line also failed to achieve any notable success. Lacking any sustained artillery support, Hooker called off any further attacks and waited for the guns to arrive. Col. David Ireland of the 137th New York Infantry recalled that as the newly arrived guns opened up, his soldiers “wanted to rise up and cheer and charge.” However, as the Confederates silently withdrew, Grant made his presence at Ringgold and assessed the situation. The day before, November 26, Grant had received a message from President Lincoln congratulating his victory in Chattanooga; however, the president closed with two words, a strong reminder to Grant: “Remember Burnside.” Grant directed Hooker to call off any further assaults into the gap. He did, however, order Hooker to send out a reconnaissance, just to let the Confederates know they were still present in large numbers.

Withdrawal from Ringgold Gap

Around noon, Cleburne had received a positive message that the army’s trains were safely through the passage, and out of danger. Cleburne could begin his withdrawal from Ringgold Gap. Moving the guns first, then the infantry, the skirmishers were the last to leave. At around 2 p.m., Cleburne ordered the last bridge burned as his soldiers crossed over. Cleburne’s division, according to his report, had sustained only “20 killed, 190 wounded, and 11 missing.” Hooker sustained over 500 casualties. Reflecting on Cleburne’s defense at Ringgold Gap, author/historian Peter Cozzens concluded, that rarely “was a unit commander in the Army of Tennessee better served by his subordinates than was Cleburne here at Ringgold gap.”



Statue of Cleburne in Ringgold
| public domain

HUTTO CAMP OFFICERS

Commander	James R. Blackston
1 st Lt. Cmd.	Trent Harris
2nd Lt. Cmd.	Jeremy Jackson
Adjutant	John McGraw
Chaplain	Barry Cook
Judge Advocate.	Cherokee Brasher
Communications.	Gene Herren
Facebook	Brandon Prescott
	Jeremy Jackson
Quartermaster	Barry Cook
Newsletter Editor	James Blackston

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