

## Battle of Resaca

During the first week of May, 1864, General William T. Sherman (US) ordered General James McPherson's (US) forces to cut off General Joseph E. Johnston's (CS) supply lines to Atlanta by destroying the Western & Atlantic Railroad in Resaca. On May 9th, General Johnston (CS) had only 4,000 troops at Fort Wayne (present Fort Wayne Historic Site) to defend the village and railroad bridge against General James McPherson's (US) 23,000 troops. Due to the actions and strong fortifications of the Confederate forces, the Federals retreated and dug in at Snake Creek Gap. The failure of the Federal forces to cut off the Confederate Army at this point is judged as one of the greatest mistakes made during the entire Atlanta Campaign.

By May 13<sup>th</sup>, the entire armies of General Sherman (US) with 105,000 troops faced off with General Johnston's (CS) 55,000 troops as skirmishing occurred along the line around Resaca.

On May 14, the Federal forces attacked sections of the heavily fortified Confederate front. Federal forces sustained overlooking the Oostanaula River (near I-75 exit 320) with heavy losses at Camp Creek Valley (present Battle of Resaca Battlefield Historic Site,) but the Confederates' counter-attack (reenactment site near Chitwood Road) by General John Bell Hood (CS) did not succeed in breaking the Federal lines. Later in the day, the Federal forces were successful in pushing the Confederates out of their fortifications

On May 15, General Hood (CS) was ordered to once again attack the northern flank of the Federal lines. Prior to Hood's attack, General Johnston (CS) had received word that the Federals were possibly crossing the Oostanaula River near Calhoun. General Johnston (CS) cancelled General Hood's attack, but Hood never received the word and continued the assault which resulted in heavy losses. After the failed Confederate assault, the Federals responded and captured Hood's (CS) four gun battery know as the Cherokee Artillery. These were the only Confederate cannon captured during the entire Atlanta Campaign. Late on May 15, General Johnston (CS) learned that the Federals had indeed crossed the river near Calhoun at Lay's Ferry and his line of supply and possible route of retreat were in danger. General Johnston (CS) silently withdrew his entire army across the Oostanaula River. Straw was put down on the bridges to muffle the noise of the troop movements.

On May 16, the Federals discovered that the Confederate forces had withdrawn during the night. The Battle of Resaca had no clear-cut victor with approximately 5,500 reported casualties between the two great armies. Actual casualties are estimated to be as high as 8,000. Resaca was the first major battle of the Atlanta Campaign.

The Battle of Resaca in 1864 stands the test of history for many firsts in Georgia. It was the first battle in which Federal forces used their superior numbers to flank around the ends of the Confederate Army forcing it to retreat and reform to fight again. Resaca was the first battle in which the eleven to fourteen year-old boys from the Georgia Military Institute actually fought. Numerically more than 160,000 troops fought making the Battle of Resaca the only battle in the entire history of the State of Georgia with this amount of troops fully engaged without reserves by both armies in a single battle.

Prior to the actual battle, the Village of Resaca played a major role transporting troops and supplies along the Western & Atlantic Rail Road, the Great Locomotive Chase, Fort Wayne, and hospital location.

At the end of the Civil War in Georgia, the surrender of all Confederate forces still operating in Georgia was worked out under a flag of truce at Resaca and the actual stacking of arms occurred two weeks later in Kingston, Georgia.

The community was occupied by Federal forces from after the war and during Reconstruction. The local non-combatant citizens of the community suffered greatly.

The effects of the battle on the land and surrounding community are still very evident today. To date, Gordon County and the Friends of Resaca have worked in partnership to protect approximately 1,100 acres of the huge historic battlefield in three locations. The new Resaca Battlefield Historic Site contains 540 acres, the Fort Wayne Historic Site contains 70 acres, and Gordon County holds the conservation easement on the 488 acre tract known as the Chitwood Farm.

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