

MACON IRON WORKS



CHICKAMAUGA CAMPAIGN HERITAGE TRAIL

During the war, the Macon Iron Works were built near the Trenton spring. The company was chartered in Macon, Georgia in 1862. "Mr. J. Cowles



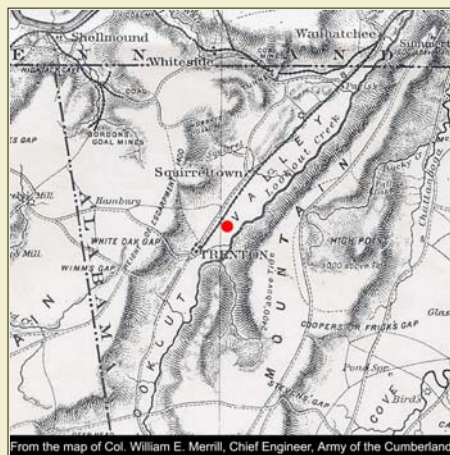
RUINS OF THE FURNACE

and his associates, of Macon," James A. Nisbet wrote on October 3, 1862, "have secured a large iron estate, and propose organizing a company to do work on a large scale for the Confederate government, under a liberal contract. Messers. Cowles, Elam, Alexander, Asa Thompson and A. M. Lockett, who are interested in this last purchase, are known to the people of Georgia as a whole team in the way of enterprise and capital combined."

This facility was in the final stages of construction when the Federal Army of

the Cumberland occupied Dade County in September 1863. The presence of slag on the site is evidence that at least some iron had already been made there. On September 4, 1863, General George Thomas reported: "Negley's division still in camp at Brown's Spring. He reports having sent forward a reconnaissance of two regiments to scour the country toward Chattanooga, and secure some captured stores near Macon Iron-works."

The Saturday, September 5th diary entry by Private Bliss Morse, 105th Ohio Infantry Regiment, states: "We marched five miles to Trenton, Geo. And



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

camped near a foundry which is being built." In a letter to his mother, he added: "We laid there [Squirrel Town Spring] until m. [noon] of the 5th when marched to this place [Trenton]. A RR [railroad] runs through to Chattanooga. Our camp is on a rebel farm. The owner was a quartermaster for them and he had stores of salt, flour, pork, pepper, and whiskey. There is a new furnace here which the owners left as we came up. They hid their horses in the woods and the boys found them."

When General William T. Sherman brought his Army of the Tennessee to relieve the siege of Chattanooga in November 1863, he sent his brother in law, General Hugh Ewing, with a division, to invade Dade County as a distraction. General Ewing carried out his instructions well and on November 20, 1863 reported to Sherman from Trenton, saying: "I am destroying the iron-works, and hope by morning to see them all fall to lawless ruin." The same day, Ewing ordered Captain Cassell, Division Engineer, to begin the work of destroying the iron works: "You will proceed at once to destroy the machinery and stacks of all iron-works in Lookout Valley, using

fire, or powder. Make the work thorough, also destroy all tanneries and machinery of mills attached to the iron-works." He issued similar instructions to General Course who was camped near the Empire Iron Works south of Trenton. In his final report on his action in Dade



IRON SLAG FROM THE FURNACE SITE

County, Ewing stated: "While in the valley we destroyed the iron-works, breaking to pieces the engines and machinery and leveling the stacks to the ground." In spite of this claim, the destruction was much less than complete and remains of both furnaces are still present.

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