

TRENTON

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The city of Trenton, located on Highway 11, is the county seat of Dade County Georgia. This area is shown on the New Home, GA/AL/TN quadrangle (101-SE) of the U.S. Geological Survey maps.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Shortly after the creation of Dade County, on December 21, 1840, the Georgia Legislature made the town of Salem the county seat of the county. The same act incorporated the town, giving it five commissioners to be elected by the people. The following year, due to some churches and camp grounds using the name "Salem," the Legislature acted to change the name of the town to Trenton. The old name went to the New Salem community on top of Lookout Mountain. On the eve of the war, in 1860, Trenton was a rapidly growing and prosperous community.

As the county seat of Dade County, Trenton became a landmark and an objective of General William Rosecrans when he moved the Federal Army of the Cumberland toward Chattanooga in the summer of 1863. Two divisions of General Thomas' 14th Army Corps, commanded by Generals Reynolds and Brannon, entered Dade County by way of Murphy's Hollow and moved to Trenton. General Philip Sheridan's division of General McCook's 20th Army Corps also came by Trenton.



Campaign Trail Marker at Trenton.

The first marker on the Chickamauga Campaign Trail at the Veteran's Memorial Park west of the Court House at Trenton, Georgia.

On September 6th, General Rosecrans set up his headquarters in Trenton. The general and his staff occupied the Emanuel Mann house in the town. "General Rosecrans headquarters came up [to Trenton] tonight," wrote Private William Bluffton Miller, of K Company, 75th Indiana Infantry Regiment, "Trenton is a small town and is almost deserted. It is in Lookout Valley. The country surrounding the town is level but mountains any way I look. I don't think I would want to live in this country as I can not get out without climbing. If we should have to retreat, we could hold some of the places in our rear."

General Sheridan's division came over Sand Mountain and also passed through Trenton. "At 10:15 A.M. we resumed our march," one of his men wrote, "and passed through the little village of Trenton. Eight or ten houses, besides an ordinary court-house, was all the town contained. From Trenton we passed on, going directly



The Dade County Court House in Trenton, Georgia.

On the same day, Lieutenant A. Piatt Andrew, III, of the 21st Indians Artillery Battery, wrote a letter to his sister Weck. "You have noticed that we are no longer in Tennessee," he pointed out. "Last Tuesday we crossed the [Tennessee] river at Shellmound and Thursday crossed the mountain and yesterday entered Trenton. It is a small place some fifteen or twenty miles southwest of Chattanooga. When and where we next move someone must tell you who knows, for I don't. Rebel citizens say we are gone up, that Bragg will capture us all, etc., but we think they are slightly mistaken I was out in the country this morning looking for horses, but I was not very successful, only finding one horse which would be of any service. The citizens have run their horses in the mountains. Hence the show is very poor General Rosy' is in town. We will leave soon, I think."

The next day, September 8, 1863, Private Solomon M. Deacon, Company K of the 87th Indian Infantry Regiment, wrote a letter to his sister, Sallie: "We are no in camp within 10 miles of Chattanooga in a southwesterly direction, and near Trenton, the county seat of Dade County. I was at Trenton yesterday, and such a county town was never seen in the Northern states. There was but ten or twelve houses in the town and but two or three of them of any respectability, but it corresponds with the surrounding country and abominable institutions of the Confederacy. Desolation seems to be the fate of this country and in that channel it seems fast to be wending its way."

By September 10, 1863, Chattanooga had been occupied by General Crittenden's 21st Army Corps, and during the afternoon General Rosecrans moved his headquarters from Trenton to Chattanooga. Reynolds and Brannon's divisions marched south from Trenton to cross Lookout Mountain at Johnson's Crook with the rest of the Federal Army. In the Battle of Chickamauga on September 19 and 20, 1863, Rosecrans was badly defeated by the Confederate Army. The Federals withdrew to Chattanooga and the siege of that city began.

When General William T. Sherman was bringing his Army of the Tennessee to relieve the siege of Chattanooga in November 1863, he wanted, in so far as possible, to deceive the Confederates as to his true route and purpose. To this end he sent his brother in law, General Hugh Ewing, with a division, to invade Dade County from Bridgeport. Ewing's instructions were to light numerous fires

General Ewing carried out his instructions well. He made his headquarters in Trenton, and sent detachments out all around the county to burn and pillage. On November 22, Confederate General Stevenson reported from Lookout Mountain: "No report from scout sent to Trenton. Cavalry ordered there last night. The enemy burned some houses in the night, and I think left at [the] same time."

A refugee from Dade County went to Athens, Georgia, and provided an account of the destruction of Trenton to the editor of the Athens Southern Banner. "We learn the following from a gentleman, citizen of Dade County: The Court House and jail were burned a short time previous to the Missionary Ridge fight, by order of Gen. Grant [actually General Hugh Ewing of Sherman's Corps], who was there at the time. Our informant says the town of Trenton is completely demolished. The Federals have taken nearly all the provisions. To destitute families, the Yanks will furnish rations provided they will take the oath. Quite a number have taken the oath, and several men are working for the enemy in the coal mines. Several soldiers of our army, residents of that county, came home, and after laying about home awhile went over to the enemy."

For the rest of the war, there were Federal occupation forces stationed at Chattanooga, Whiteside, and Bridgeport. These units made frequent patrols into Dade County and to Trenton. The extent of war time destruction, together with more recent commercial and residential development, have been such that today the only war time structure remaining in Trenton is the O'Neal house on the northwest end of town.

A few years ago the local camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, in conjunction with the local post of the American Legion and the Dade County Commission, developed the Veteran's Memorial Park on the west side of the court house. In this park, the local camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans have erected a large stone monument on which is engraved the names of every man from Dade County who served in the Confederate Army.

References: Official Records of the War of the Rebellion Archive and files Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Raymond Evans, The Civil War in Dade County

Significant Views: The only wartime view of Trenton is the O'Neal House described above. The Confederate Monument can be seen at the Veteran's Memorial Park on the west side of the County Court House.

Setting: The setting for modern Trenton is that of a small rural town. The court house sits in the center of the town and everything else is centered around the town square that contains the court house. The Veteran's Memorial Park is located on the west side of the Court House.

Documented Structures, Sites and Features: As was stated above, the only wartime structure is the O'Neal House located on the north west end of the town.

Presumed Wartime Features: The wartime Trenton was a thriving commercial center for the

southward up the valley two miles; our brigade in front, and the 73rd [Illinois Infantry] in front of the brigade."

General James Negley described Trenton as follows: "Trenton is situated in Lookout Valley, Dade County, Georgia, a rich agricultural district; 25 miles long and two miles wide. Forage and farm products in abundance. A small creek runs through Trenton. The village is small, about 100 tenements and 300 souls." On September 7, 1863, 1st Lieutenant Edward W. Williams, 100th Indiana Infantry Regiment, wrote: Trenton "has two churches, three stores, courthouse, mill, and blacksmith shop. We captured the [railroad] station, one hundred bushels of fine salt, belonging to the state of Georgia, and intended for distribution among the families of the [Confederate] soldiers."

and create such a disturbance that the Confederates would think that Sherman was bringing his entire army in that direction with the intention of striking the Confederates by moving up Lookout Mountain and Rosecrans had earlier done. In the meantime, while the Confederates were thus distracted, he would bring the army directly to Brown's Ferry by way of Whiteside.

Colonel James Cooper Nisbet had returned to Dade County for a visit to his home at the same time General Ewing's Federals came off Sand Mountain. "As I rode into Trenton," he later wrote, "I saw two old citizens watching a signal flag that was being waved in the White Oak Gap on Sand Mountain opposite the town. After greetings, they asked me if I knew what that flag meant, and said they had heard that morning that there was a force of Yanks advancing from Bridgeport, Alabama, which had camped on Sand Mountain the previous night. While we were talking, a regiment of cavalry was seen in the gap. They wound down the mountain road, and then a Battery appeared, halted and planted a gun on an open bench, and directly a shell came shrieking over us. I was cut off from going home via the valley road. I watched a blue regiment of cavalry until they reached the outskirts of the town."

surrounding farms that was located with the Court House near the railroad depot. There were numerous military camps from both armies in the area.

Original Terrain: The terrain has been much altered from road building, as well as by commercial and residential development.

Related Sites: O'Neal House and White Oak Gap.

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