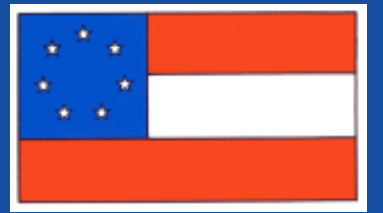




WELCOME TO CAMP LAUREL HILL



Gateway to the Northwest

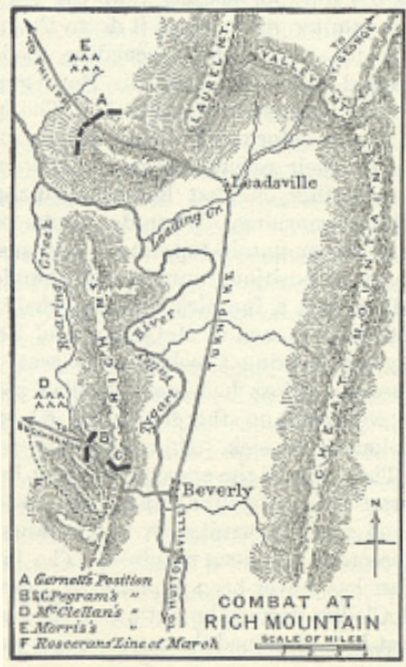


Confederate forces retreated from this area after the “Philippi Races” (June 3, 1861), first land battle of the Civil War. At Huttonsville, 26 miles south, Confederate General Robert S. Garnett took command of the Army of the Northwest. His goal was to reclaim “Western” Virginia.

General Garnett identified two mountain passes as the “gates to the northwestern country.” The first was at Rich Mountain, 20 miles south. The second was here, on the Beverly-Fairmont Turnpike, at Laurel Hill. Leaving 1,300 men at the stronger post at Rich Mountain, Garnett began to fortify Camp Laurel Hill on June 16, 1861 with the remainder of his 5,300 Confederates.

“Heavy entrenchments are dug around the entire camp, containing an area of one hundred acres. It is, perhaps, the most substantial and complete work of its kind ever built in this country.”

A Soldier at Laurel Hill



Confederate fortifications at Laurel Hill (A) and Rich Mountain (B). These turnpike passes were key to General Garnett’s defense.

By early July, Federal troops threatened. Maj. General George McClellan led three brigades toward Rich Mountain. Meanwhile, a brigade under Union General Thomas A. Morris marched to Laurel Hill.

On this ground, Garnett’s Confederates skirmished with a nearly equal force of the enemy. From July 7 - 11, 1861, gunfire echoed from these ridges. Here soldiers of the blue and gray received their baptism of fire.

On the evening of July 11, General Garnett learned that the Confederates had been defeated at Rich Mountain. He feared that the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike - his vital supply line to the Shenandoah Valley - had been severed. Abandoning Laurel Hill near midnight, Garnett’s army struck east, in a daring bid to escape. On July 13, at a lonely river crossing known as Corricks Ford (Tucker County), pursuing Federals captured most of the Confederate supply wagons and killed General Garnett. Demoralized Confederates fled across the mountains to Monterey, Virginia.

Events here in 1861 made General George McClellan a national hero, and solidified Union control of “Western” Virginia. To counter the Confederates in Richmond, a delegation of Unionists in Wheeling formed the “Restored Government of Virginia.” By 1863, the state of West Virginia was born.



Confederate General Robert S. Garnett - the first general killed in the Civil War

“Our Confederate command under General Garnett confronted that of the Federals under General Morris ...and during that time skirmishing between them, with slight loss, was almost continuous.”

French Harding, 31st Virginia Infantry C.S.A.



Union General Thomas A. Morris. His diversion at Laurel Hill resulted in defeat of the Confederate Army of the Northwest.



“We are anxious to meet the foe, for we have them to whip, and the sooner we do it, the sooner we will be able to return to the dear loved ones at home.”

John B. Pendleton, 23rd Virginia Infantry C.S.A.

