



# BIRD'S MILL AND WORTHENS' GAP

## CHICKAMAUGA CAMPAIGN HERITAGE TRAIL

Bird's Mill was built on West Chickamauga Creek during the 1840's by Philemon Bird, a member of a

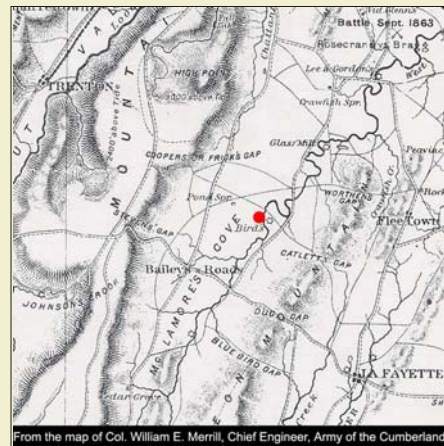


BIRD'S MILL FOUNDATION STONES

prominent and wealthy Georgia family. The mill was constructed well away from the creek on a long mill race that was dug by hand to bring the water to it. Bird owned a large number of slaves, and extensive property. He built Glass's Mill in Walker County, and subsequently purchased and rebuilt the old Brainerd Mission Mill and a 1,000 acre farm in Hamilton County, Tennessee that was also called Bird's Mill. His wife was a free Negro woman, said to be part Cherokee, who was named Wicker. They raised a family consisting of several daughters and a son named Sam. Wicker Bird died a few

years before the war. In 1860, Philemon Bird purchased a young enslaved African girl named Mary in Tennessee and she became his second wife. They had one son. When the war started, Bird grew concerned for the safety of his new wife and family. To avoid the passing armies and the potential for battles, he left his mills in the care of resident millers and took his family to a safe area further south.

Located nearby, Worthens' Gap was a major passage way through Pigeon Mountain. This gap was also used for troop movements during the Chickamauga Campaign. On the night of September 9, 1863, General Hindman



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

led his men through Worthens' Gap to his staging area in preparation for the battle at Davis Crossroads.

During the Chickamauga Campaign, Bird's Mill became a focal point for Federal troop movements. There was significant skirmishing around the mill from September 16 to 18. "The morning of the 18th..." wrote T. J. Wright, 8th Kentucky Infantry Regiment [Federal], "we hastily formed and took position behind a slight eminence just in the rear of our bivouac fires. The pickets kept up a lively skirmish for several hours, the artillery from both sides throwing shells lively, theirs principally passing harmlessly over our line."

On September 18, Captain Alfred L. Hough, a Pennsylvania soldier serving on General Negley's staff, was camped at Bird's Mill, and wrote a letter to his wife. "There has been skirmishing along our whole line during our movements to get into position, and even yet they are feeling of us at all points, and as I write at this moment, the firing of artillery is quite sharp towards



BIRD'S MILL FORD

our left, which may possibly be the beginning of a battle."

The fighting moved further to the north, and there was no further action in the Bird's Mill area. After the war, Philemon Bird brought his wife Mary and children back to the area. After his death, the mill ceased to be used and it fell into disrepair. A county road and bridge were built directly over the mill site. Retaining walls were built with stones taken from the old mill house. The mill race is so large that most local residents think it a natural stream.

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<http://www.ChickamaugaCampaign.org>