

# TRION FACTORY

## CHICKAMAUGA CAMPAIGN HERITAGE TRAIL



In late August 1863, the Federal Army of the Cumberland began moving toward Georgia. On the extreme right of the Federal lines, the XX Army Corps, commanded by Major General Alexander M. McCook began advancing across Lookout Mountain with Alpine, Summerville, and Rome, Georgia as the objective line of march.



GENERAL JOE WHEELER

Federal cavalry regiments commanded by Major General David S. Stanley reconnoitering far in front of the main body of the XX Army Corps, arrived in Chattooga County on September 1, 1863 and skirmished with Confederate cavalry commanded by Major General Joseph Wheeler at Tap's Gap (present-day Cloudland) and at Neal's Gap on Lookout Mountain. Over the next ten days as more Federal forces entered Chattooga County, there were cavalry skirmishes at Melville (present-day Lyerly), Alpine, Dirttown, and Summerville.

On September 11th, Federal commander Major General Alexander M. McCook in Alpine orders aggressive reconnaissance "at all hazards" toward Lafayette on the Summerville-Lafayette road and the Broomtown road.

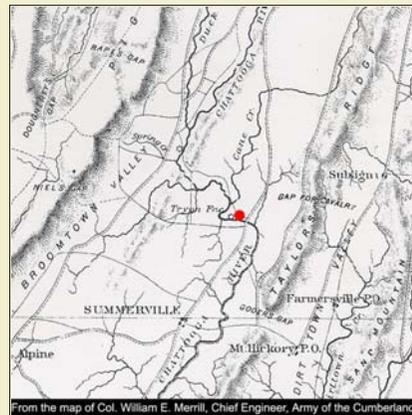
On September 11th Confederate General Wheeler wrote this letter at this site to General Hill near Lafayette:

HDQRS. CAVALRY CORPS,  
NEAR TRION FACTORY  
Summerville and LaFayette Road,  
September 11, 1863

Lieut. Gen. D.H. Hill, Commanding Corps:

**GENERAL:** After having ascertained that the force of the enemy reported to have gone toward Rome had not crossed the Coosa River or gone toward Rome, but had only crossed a short distance over the Chattooga River, I returned to this point.

I left a picket at Dirt Town and one of the Melville and Rome road south of the Chattooga River with orders should they be pressed by the enemy to fall back on



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

Rome, reporting to me and also to the commanding officer at Rome. I now have seven regiments of General Wharton's command with me, diminished, however, by various scouts, pickets, and other details. I have several scouts in among the enemy this side of the mountain. The scouts I sent out during last night had orders to report directly to you.

This evening the enemy's cavalry was 4 miles the other side of Summerville. Scouts sent to Neal's Gap have not yet reported to me. As I do not know anything about the movements of our army, I shall have to depend upon you for such instructions as you see proper.

Very respectfully, general, your obedient servant,  
**JOS. WHEELER**  
Major-General

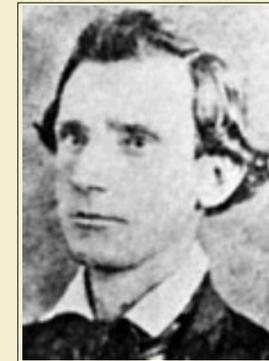
September 12, 1863--Confederate forces withdraw from Trion toward Lafayette.

September 13, 1863--Federal cavalry occupy Trion; the commander writes this letter:

HEADQUARTERS FIRST  
DIVISION  
Trion Factory, September 13, 1863 10  
o'clock

Major W. H. Sinclair, Assistant Adjutant-General

I drove their pickets from here this morning again, have made a move on this side of the river and sent the Fourth Indiana toward them soon and move from



BRIGADIER GENERAL JOHN A. WHARTON

here by 1 o'clock to join your column, unless the regiment sent forward return sooner. I thought it better to send only this small force the other side of the river, because the country there is bad to handle a large force in, and the force in front of me I stated in my last dispatch is larger than I could whip. One regiment can accomplish all that the whole division could.

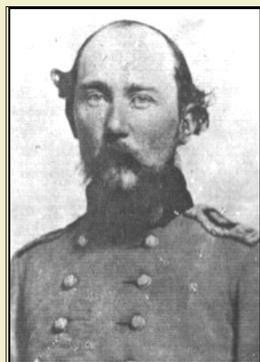
I will send you couriers as I head from the front. Send back by these instructions whether to join you at once or wait. I am still impressed with the belief that the enemy's infantry are in force the other side of the Coosa, at Lafayette, and their cavalry on this side.

**E.M. McCOOK,**  
Colonel, Commanding

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<http://www.ChickamaugaCampaign.org>

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GENERAL BENJAMIN HARDIN HELM

**HEADQUARTERS  
FIRST DIVISION, Trion Factory,  
September 13, 1863 12 p.m.**

**Maj. W. H. SINCLAIR:**

Wheeler's force, that left for Lafayette yesterday on my approach, returned at 2 o'clock this morning to the cross-roads, at junction of Ringgold and Lafayette roads. I cannot, of course, drive them off. They made a stand 3 miles from here, the regiment I spoke of attacking them. I move at once to join you. The road to Lafayette this way is bad. As their cavalry is here, I think, with our forces joined, we may get nearer Lafayette. I will leave a squadron at the junction of the Trion Factory and Broomtown Valley roads to protect that flank.

**E.M. McCook  
Colonel, Commanding**

**AT FORKS OF  
TRION AND  
LAFAYETTE  
ROADS  
[September 13,]  
1863 2 p.m.**

**Colonel McCook,  
Commanding  
Cavalry;**

**COLONEL:**

**General Crook directs me to say we went on to Lafayette this morning captured their infantry picket and got all the desired information. Some of my scouts reported a heavy column of infantry cavalry, and artillery passing toward Summerville, on the Lafayette road. If you come in contact with this party, fall back slowly and watch their movements, and report to General Stanley. He may go to Alpine tonight, and may camp at the Big Spring, about 9 miles from Alpine. Please communicate with me as soon as you get this what you have seen and learned and what you will do.**

**Respectfully yours,  
W. M. SINCLAIR  
Assistant Adjutant-General**



This image shows the remains of the Civil War era covered bridge at Trion Factory, Georgia around 1892. The stone pier in the center of the river is today but a pile of rocks in the middle of the Chattooga River behind the Trion Cemetery.

September 14, 1863--Confederates reoccupy Trion, this time with a brigade of infantry. Helm's Brigade was commanded by Brigadier General Benjamin Hardin Helm. General Helm was killed in battle five days later at Chickamauga. General Helm was Mary Todd Lincoln's brother-in-law. Abraham and Mary Lincoln mourned the loss of her Confederate relative upon hearing of his death at Chickamauga.

September 15, 1863--At this site on the Summerville-Lafayette road, near the covered bridge across the Chattooga River, the battle of Trion Factory took

place. Confederate cavalry and infantry repulsed a brigade of Federal cavalry. Confederate General Joseph Wheeler's records show the Confederate loss was 7 men; Federal loss was 55 men. The dead were buried on the battlefield beside the road (now Trion Cemetery). Trion Factory (now Mount Vernon Mills) is still in operation.

September 19-20, 1863--The Battle of Chickamauga.



GENERAL ALEXANDER MCCOOK

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