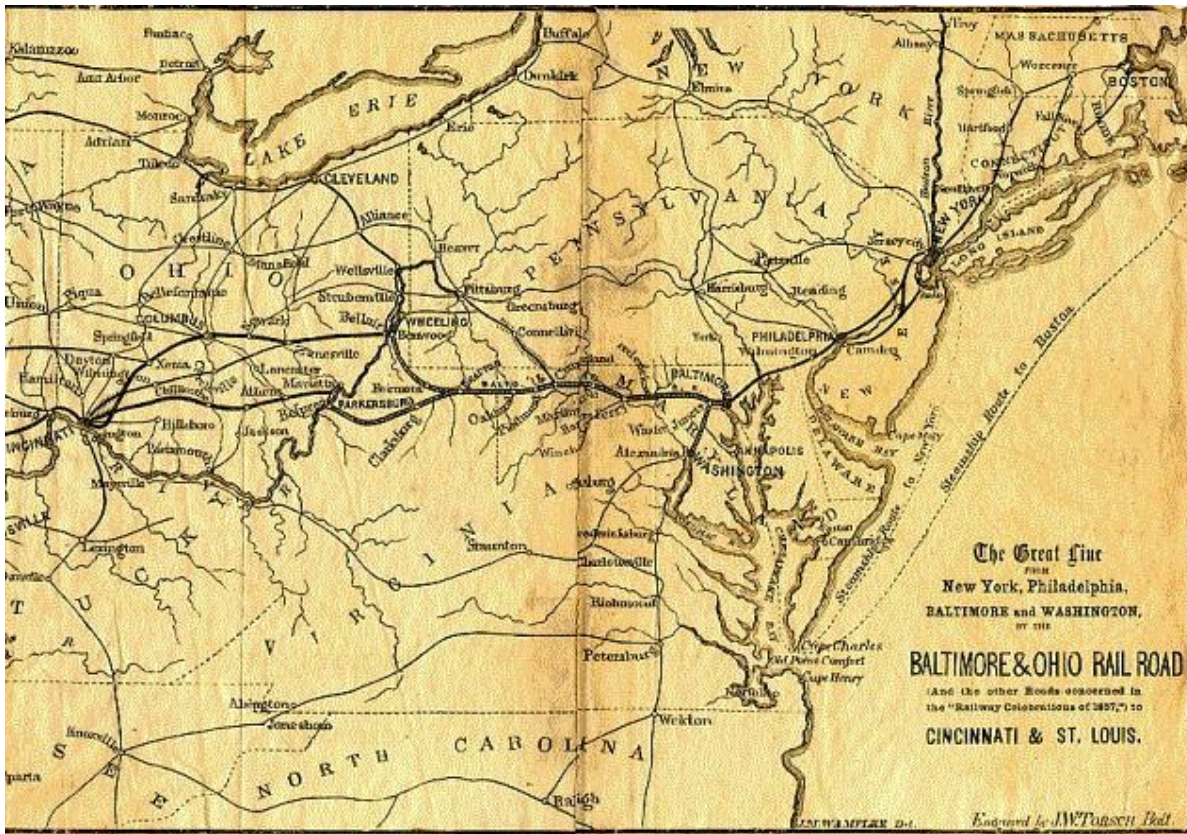


# RICH MOUNTAIN BATTLEFIELD



## The Battle of Rich Mountain

In the early days of the American Civil War, control of transportation routes through western Virginia was a strategic goal of both Union and Confederate planners.



Following their hasty retreat from Philippi in June of 1861, Confederate troops under the command of Gen. Robert S. Garnett fortified two key passes. The more southerly of these, Camp Garnett, consisted of earth and log entrenchments overlooking the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike at Rich Mountain, just west of Beverly.

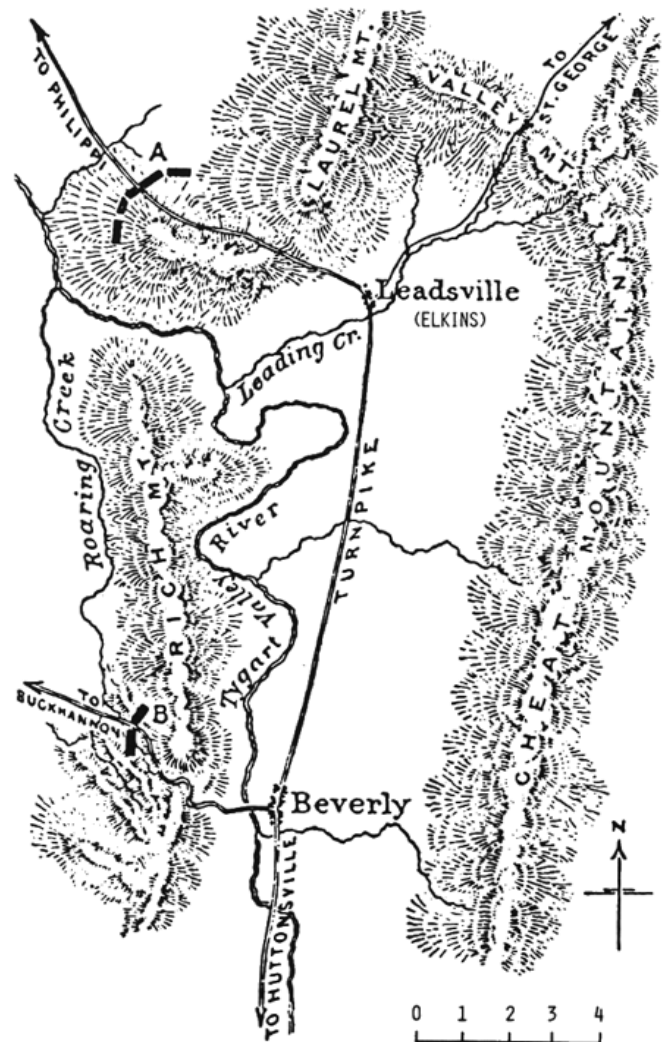
Major General George B. McClellan, charged with securing the loyal counties of western Virginia and protecting the area's vital B & O railroad for the Union, brought over 5000 troops and 8 cannons to Roaring Creek Flats, about 2 miles west of the Camp Garnett entrenchments.

Confederate Lt. Col. John Pegram was in command of Camp Garnett with about 1,300 men and 4 cannons. He sent a small party to protect his rear at the Joseph Hart homestead at the pass where the Pike crossed the summit of Rich Mountain. On the morning of July 11, the force at the pass consisted of 310 men and one cannon.

Meanwhile in the Union camp, General McClellan was hesitant to make a frontal attack on Camp Garnett Joseph Hart's 22-year-old son, David, volunteered to lead a flank attack to the summit.

In the early morning of July 11, Brigadier General William S. Rosecrans with almost 2,000 men, set out with young Hart up the mountain. They struggled through the dense woods, delayed by missed directions and drenched by rain.

About 2:30 pm on July 11, the Federal column encountered enemy skirmishers on top of Rich Mountain. The surprised Confederate outpost at the pass took cover behind rocks and trees, and with the help of their one cannon, held off the Federal attack for over two hours. But badly outnumbered, they eventually gave way, and General Rosecrans' troops took possession of the field.



A - Garnett's Position

B - Heck's Position

0 1 2 3 4  
SCALE OF MILES

Battles and Leaders of The Civil War, 1887

Colonel Pegram, realizing that the enemy was in his rear, ordered the withdrawal of his remaining forces from Camp Garnett during the night.

On the morning of July 12, General Rosecrans' entered the abandoned Camp Garnett and sent word to General McClellan that the enemy had been routed. General McClellan promptly sent a telegram to Washington claiming a great victory for his army. This communication secured McClellan's reputation as a winning general and led to his appointment as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

The Confederates were forced to give up their works at Laurel Hill and fought a disastrous retreat eastward to Corrick's Ford and across the Allegheny wilderness. Later, fighting at Cheat Summit prevented any serious Rebel comeback, and battles in the Kanawha Valley claimed even more territory for the Wheeling government. The Federals retained control of most of northwestern Virginia, and except for scattered raids, the Confederacy was banished from the area and its vital railway for the rest of the war.

Two years after the Battle of Rich Mountain, the State of West Virginia was admitted to the Union.

*For an additional and more detailed account of the battle, see its page on the WV Division of Culture and History site:*

[http://www.wvculture.org/history/journal\\_wvh/wvh28-1.html](http://www.wvculture.org/history/journal_wvh/wvh28-1.html)

*Contents copyright 1995-2011 Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation*