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The Battle of Perryville, KY - Oct. 8, 1862

Part 1 – The Prelude

(from our Little Round Table Discussion Group meeting on April 23, 2026)

Kentucky was seen by both the North and the South as an important state to keep within their control. Each prized its manpower, waterways (especially the Ohio River, a natural boundary line), its food production, and its large supply of horse flesh (the greatest in the country).

As the Civil War began, Kentucky itself was divided in its allegiance. It had strong ties to both the Southern states and to Northern states, and its government split its loyalty, just as the country had split its government. The sitting governor, Beriah Magoffin, was a Southern sympathizer, while the state legislature was primarily pro-Union. This led to the decision for the state to remain neutral, and declaring whichever side first occupied any of its territory would be considered the enemy force. Though both sides made inroads onto Kentucky soil, it was not until September 3, 1861, that a large force of Confederates under Gen. Leonidas Polk occupied Columbus, KY on the Mississippi River that the neutrality was officially broken in favor of the Union. Two days later, Gen. Ulysses Grant seized Paducah, KY.

Confederate sympathizers in the legislature set up a temporary capital in Bowling Green in Nov. 1861, but it never exerted any real power inside the state. However, it was enough for the Confederate states to recognize Kentucky, and to add a star representing KY to its national flag.

The Confederates:

Following the failures of the Confederate Army of Mississippi at Shiloh and Corinth in the spring of 1862, Confederate President Jefferson Davis relieved commander P.G.T. Beauregard and replaced him with Gen. Braxton Bragg. This army was then renamed The Army of Tennessee.

Kentucky's Southern sympathizers in Richmond called for the Confederacy to occupy Kentucky, saying that the population was ripe to support the South. General Edmund Kirby Smith, commander in East Tennessee, also pressed for an invasion of the state, also believing that its citizens would flock to the Confederate flag and army if it would just come for them. Following a July, 1862 cavalry raid into Kentucky, Gen. John Hunt Morgan declared to Gen. Smith that "The whole country can be secured, and 25,000 or 30,000 men will join you at once."

Braxton Bragg's character flaws are well known. At times he was decisive in his decision making, and at times he allowed subordinates to sway him to their will. In this case, Kirby Smith, for his own personal desire to make a name for himself, swayed Bragg to his idea of a combined invasion of Kentucky, promising that when the two combined, he would be

subordinate to Bragg. Bragg then moved the infantry of his 30,000-man Army of Tennessee from Tupelo, MS by rail through Mobile, AL, then on to Montgomery and up to Chattanooga, TN. His cavalry, artillery, and supply wagons moved overland by road through Rome, GA.

Though he had promised to become a subordinate to Bragg when the two armies joined up to fight the Federals, Kirby Smith cherished his independent Department of East Tennessee command, which reported directly to Richmond. His dodging of his promise during the fall campaign did much to damage the chances for a successful outcome.

Smith and Bragg met in Chattanooga on July 31 to plan the campaign. Smith's newly renamed Army of Kentucky (which would include two brigades from Bragg's army) of 21,000 men would secure the eastern flank at Cumberland Gap, driving off the Federals there. He would then join Bragg, and the two together would deal with Gen. Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio, which was strung out across northern Alabama/southern Tennessee trying to reach Chattanooga, by cutting off his supply line in central Tennessee and defeating his then weakened army there in central TN. They would then march north into Kentucky. Any efforts by Union Gen. Grant to reinforce Buell would be stopped by the combined armies of Gens. Sterling Price and Earl Van Dorn with attacks in northern Mississippi.

Van Dorn was supposed to release the troops of John C. Breckinridge, a prominent Kentuckian, for the campaign into the state, to bolster recruitment there. But Van Dorn willfully delayed his departure, and so Breckinridge played no part in the campaign.

On August 9, Smith informed Bragg that he was changing the plan, and would only put a holding force at the Gap while moving further into eastern and central Kentucky. Leaving Knoxville, TN on August 13, Smith moved into Kentucky. Bragg having no authority at this point to stop him from doing so, made plans to move north himself from Chattanooga through central Tennessee towards Kentucky, beginning on August 27.

Kirby Smith won a complete victory at Richmond, KY on August 29-30, and moved on towards Lexington, occupying it on September 2nd, and then Frankfort on the Sept. 3rd. He then lost his nerve, taking a defensive stance and calling out again to Bragg for additional reinforcements.

Bragg and Buell were now in a footrace to see who could reach Louisville, KY first. But Bragg was distracted to deal with the capture of Union forces at Munfordville, KY when one of his subordinates was repulsed while attacking the garrison there against orders. Bragg felt he could not bypass the place in his rear having had his troops defeated. Though he was able to force the garrison to surrender without a battle, this delay allowed Buell to reach Louisville first, with Bragg's army occupying ground to the city's southeast near Bardstown, KY on Sept. 22.

Bragg then decided to meet Smith in Frankfort, the state capital, in order to gain full control of all forces in Kentucky, so he could face Buell on more equal terms. He would also attend the inauguration of the new Confederate governor of Kentucky, which was to take place on Oct. 4. On Sept. 28, he left one of his two wing commanders, Gen. Leonidas Polk, in command of the army. It was an unfortunate decision. Nothing much happened until Oct. 3, when a large

Federal force approached the Confederate army out of Louisville on three roads. This caused Polk to withdraw eastwards from Bardstown.

Bragg, still unsure of Buell's plans, assuming he would probably move directly on Frankfort. This was reinforced by reports of a Federal force moving on the road from Louisville to Frankfort. Bragg, believing that this was, indeed, Buell's main force, and having already detached a division from Polk's wing north to Versailles, KY, closer to Frankfort, ordered the remainder of his army to begin moving north.

Poor and incomplete communications between Bragg and his subordinates caused confusion as to where the Federals actually were, and at what strengths. Bragg then began issuing additional orders, only to counter those orders with new orders to concentrate at Harrodsburg. Kirby Smith then informed Bragg that he was going to remain where he was to protect Lexington instead of joining Bragg.

Meanwhile Bragg received incomplete reports from his cavalry and Gen. Hardee of a Federal force approaching his army from the west of Perryville with Hardee calling for additional support. Believing this to be only a diversionary force, he gave orders to Polk to deal with this supposedly small force and then march north towards Frankfort. During the evening and night of Oct. 7, Polk sent his one division available towards Perryville, which moved into line east of the Chaplin River.

The Federals:

Following their victory at Shiloh on April 6-7, the overall Western Theater Federal commander, Gen. Henry Halleck, took 51 days to march the 20 miles from Pittsburg Landing, TN, to Corinth, MS, which was then abandoned by the Confederate army on May 29. Rather than keep his 100,000-man army concentrated, he split up his forces, scattering those of Gen. Grant's Army of the Tennessee across western TN and northern MS, while sending Gen. Buell's Army of the Ohio east towards Chattanooga, very slowly rebuilding the rail supply lines prior to his intended taking of the city.

In July Halleck was recalled to Washington City to become General-In-Chief of the Armies, leaving Grant and Buell to their separate, independent commands.

With the summer dry season falling into a drought, supplying Buell's army by the falling levels of the Tennessee River became impossible as he moved eastward, making the rail lines critical, even as they were continually being broken by Confederate raids. At some point, he was forced to cut rations, a very unpopular decision to his men, already worn down by their efforts. In addition, the men were unhappy with Buell's decision to not allow foraging (Who, like McClellan in the East, hoped to "win the hearts and minds" of Southerners under a more gentle occupation.) Other Federal armies were under no such orders, and Buell's men resented it, often ignoring the order.

In late June, Col. Phil Sheridan, leading a cavalry recon mission, discovered that the Confederates had abandoned their base at Tupelo and were moving to Chattanooga, while another Confederate army under Gen. Sterling Price was moving into Mississippi to oppose Grant.

On August 20, Buell learned that Bragg's Army of Tennessee was crossing the Tennessee River in force.

Buell was now forced to abandon his advance on Chattanooga in order to counter Bragg's move towards either Nashville or Kentucky, either of which could cut his supply lines back to Louisville. Cutting rations even further, he force-marched his army to Nashville, TN in early September, and then on towards Louisville. His hungry and worn-out army was not happy with its commander at all. Some took out their frustrations on the towns and citizens of northern Alabama and all the way through Tennessee as they retreated north.

Having reached Nashville in early September and letting his troops recover somewhat for a week, Buell then concluded that he must continue on to Louisville due to Kirby Smith's presence in central Kentucky, nearer to Louisville and Cincinnati than he was, and both defended only by green troops or militia. Scarce rations were again cut, to ¼ rations, and off they marched. Confederate cavalry harassed them along the way.

South of Bowling Green, Buell's army could see the dust cloud of Bragg's army to the east. The men were ready to take on the Confederates, but Buell stopped for five days in Bowling Green before moving on, refusing to fight at that time, and recalling the troops he had left back in Nashville. News spread about the surrender and parole of the garrison at Munfordville, whose men passed through Buell's army on their way north, and the men blamed Buell for not moving faster to their aid.

Buell's army began arriving in Louisville on Sept. 25 through the 29th. He quickly began resupplying his veterans and reorganizing them and integrating them with the newly arrived green regiments from the Northwest states and those survivors of the defeat at Richmond (with the exception of two fully green brigades, which would have unfortunate consequences in the coming battle), giving him a force of 25 brigades in three corps. At the same time, he had to deal with continuing complaints from state governors and local and departmental military commanders.

On Sept. 29, one of those commanders, Gen. Jefferson C. Davis, murdered Gen. Bull Nelson, one of Buell's corps commanders, who had been sent ahead to Louisville to see to the fortifying of the city, the result of an ongoing dispute between the two. This left a hole in Buell's command structure, which he chose to fill with newly appointed Gen. Charles Gilbert, who until less than a month before was a mere captain who had never led more than a company of men. This decision would have strong consequences during the soon to come battle of Perryville.

On that same day, orders from Washington City were received by both Buell and Gen. George Thomas, his second in command, relieving Buell of command of the Army of the Ohio and appointing Thomas in his place. Thomas refused the promotion, citing Buell's impending readiness to move from Louisville against Bragg, and that such a change at that time would be harmful to the campaign. Washington relented.

On Oct. 1, Buell began his movement, ordering a veteran division (Sill's) of McCook's corps and a green division to move on the most direct route from Louisville towards Frankfort, hoping to misguide Bragg as to his real first objective, while his three corps marched in a three-pronged attack towards Bardstown, moving out of Louisville on that same day.

The drought, even with occasional rain storms, made the marching difficult, but particularly on the new, inexperienced regiments. There was much straggling, with many men requiring to be placed in ambulances to continue on. Confederate cavalry from both Bragg's and Smith's armies skirmished with the Federals all along the way.

The Federals converged on Bardstown on Oct. 5, only to find the Confederates had evacuated the town ahead of them. New orders came on the 6th to aim for Perryville.

Lack of water became even worse, as the retreating Confederates had drunk up all the available water on the routes. Thirst became the greatest problem for the Federals, followed by unrealistic orders not to forage by some officers, including 3rd Corps commander Gen. Gilbert, which only served to lower morale even further.

As the Federals march on, Confederate cavalry began firing on them from concealed positions along the roadways, further slowing progress, but being unable to prevent the Federal advance.

By the evening of Oct. 7, Gilbert's 3rd Corp had closed to just west of Perryville on the Springfield Rd. But both McCook's 1st Corps on the Mackville Road and Crittenden's 2nd Corps on the Lebanon Road were still too back for Buell to initiate his intended morning attack.

That same evening, Buell came across some Federal stragglers gathering food from a garden, and ordered them to stop and return to their regiment. Some of the soldiers "disagreed" with him and an argument began, ending with one of the men grabbing the bridle of Buell's horse and giving it a hard yank. This caused the horse to rear back and fall backwards onto Buell. Though not badly hurt, he could neither sit up nor ride, and so was placed in an ambulance. This would have ramifications on Buell's take on the fighting the next day.

During the night, Gen. Gilbert sent brigade commander Col. Phillip Sheridan forward to see about securing the pools of water that had been seen in Doctors Creek, near Peters Hill. He sent two companies forward to feel out the area, flanking the Confederate troops on the hill, and continuing on towards Bottom Hill to the east, where heavy fire caused them to withdraw. But now they knew where they could get at least some water.

Battle of Perryville, KY

Oct. 8, 1862

Part 2: The Battle

(from our Little Round Table Discussion Group meeting on May 28, 2026)

Preliminary Moves:

The night of Oct. 7, Gen. Buell, travelling with his 3rd Corps, commanded by Gen. Gilbert, approached Perryville on the Springfield Pike and encamped about 3.5 miles to the west of the town at the Dorsey House. From fighting with Confederate cavalry and reports that the Confederates were near the town, and not at Harrodsburg to the NE as expected, he determined to make an assault the next morning at 10 am, and orders were hurriedly sent out to 1st and 2nd Corps the evening of the 7th, which were lagging behind on different roads to his north and south, to march at 3 am to be in position to make the attack. Unfortunately, his staff failed him, with neither Corps receiving its orders to move until six to eight hours later.

Meanwhile, Gen. Joseph Wheeler, commanding Confederate cavalry on the left of Gen. Hardee's line and engaging the Federals on the Springfield and Lebanon roads beyond Perryville, reported to Gen. Bragg that Federal forces were before him, and that he needed reinforcements. Bragg then ordered Gen. Polk to take Cheatham's division back from Harrodsburg to Perryville to "deal with that diversionary force" of Federals before bringing the whole army to join Withers' division (the other half of Polk's wing), now at Versailles, where Bragg believed the real battle against Buell would take place, finally combined with Gen. Kirby Smith's army. (Bragg had been able to recall the two brigades he had sent to Smith earlier in the campaign.)

A mile and a half ahead of Buell's HQ, at the base of Peters Hill, ran Doctors Creek, with visible pools of water still in it. Very early in the morning of the 8th, Buell ordered Brig. Gen. Speed Fry to occupy the supposedly unoccupied hill and hold it. Fry took the veteran 10th Indiana Infantry quietly forward. They reached the base of the hill with no enemy response (though the 7th Arkansas had been seen there the day before, and actually was still there). Two companies were then sent around the north end of the hill and advanced further east to see if they could find out where the Confederates were. They found them atop Bottom Hill in strength when fired upon, and withdrew back to their regiment.

Fry's report then made it back to Buell, who ordered that a brigade be sent forward in the early morning to take the hill and hold it. Gilbert so ordered Division commander Gen. Sheridan, who sent an all-green brigade, commanded by Brig. Gen. Dan McCook (who had never commanded his brigade in battle before), supported by four guns at Buell's suggestion, forward to do the job against the supposedly unoccupied hill.

McCook then learned that the hill was, indeed, still occupied, and so Fry went forward with him to coordinate, moving one of McCook's four regiments to the left (north) to support his own 10th Indiana, while two of his three remaining regiments sent out two companies each as skirmishers up the hill, only to be met with heavy gunfire from the 7th Arkansas.

Battle for Peters Hill

Fry then sent skirmishers up the northern slope of Peters Hill to flank the 7th Arkansas, as the bulk of McCook's regiments also scaled the hill. The 7th Arkansas fled the hill through woods and corn fields back to Bottom Hill, where Confederate Gen. Liddell reinforced them with the 5th Arkansas near Bull Run. Federal skirmishers were sent down the hill into the Bull Run valley and the Federal guns were positioned.

There followed about an hour of artillery counterbattery fire, with the four better Federal guns finally getting the best of the mostly smaller eight Confederate guns. The 5th and 7th Arkansas then advanced to retake the hill. The Federal guns opened up on them at 200 yards, and the Federal infantry at 100 yards (with the artillery now firing double canister), driving them back to their starting point.

McCook, believing himself badly outnumbered, sent back for reinforcements. Both Sheridan and Gilbert came forward to see what was happening. McCook was ordered to hold position, and Gilbert tardily ordered Gen. Gay's cavalry to clear the woods in front of the hill. Gay came up, saw the lay of the land, and refused to advance. Sending back to Gilbert for further instructions, Gilbert ordered him again to take the woods.

Gay tentatively sent out his cavalry, but they were pinned down in the valley between the hills. The 2nd Michigan Cavalry, armed with Colt repeating

rifles, then made a desperate charge towards Bottom Hill, breaking the Confederate line and driving them over the crest. But a new line had been formed on the reverse slope, and its fire drove the Federals back over the hill and into the woods. Gen. Liddell then called for reinforcements, which were promised but denied by Gen. Polk and never arrived.

Sheridan, now realizing the fight was much bigger than he'd imagined, brought up a second, mostly veteran brigade. The all-German 2nd Missouri was sent forward to clear the woods and valley, and with support reached over and beyond Bottom Hill. The Confederates now realized they couldn't hold without the additional reinforcements, which were denied by Gen. Polk, commanding in the absence of Gen. Bragg, who then ordered Gen. Liddell to withdraw, and now began his "defensive-offensive" instead of trying to drive off what was believed by Bragg to be only a diversionary force.

Meanwhile, Gen. Gilbert, who had ridden forward again to Peters Hill, was appalled that Sheridan had occupied Bottom Hill, saying that he was under orders not to bring on a general engagement, and so ordered Sheridan to withdraw his troops back to Peters Hill.

Command Errors in Both Armies

While the Peters Hill action was taking place, Buell's other two corps began to move up. Due to the tardy arrival of their orders, 1st and 2nd Corps were slow in advancing from the northeast and southeast, respectively. The lead units of Gen. McCook's 1st Corps began arriving at its designated location just before 10 am, while the lead units of Gen. Crittenden's 2nd Corps took far longer to approach the corps' jumping off point.

Given this information, Gen. Buell decided to postpone his attack until the morning of the 9th, nursing his wounds back at the Dorsey House, not taking into account that the Confederates might not placidly await his plans.

As McCook's two divisions moved into position, it took them until 1:30 pm to get fully there, being placed mostly piecemeal. More telling, neither division had all of its brigades in position to support its others. Worst of all, Terrell's brigade, the greenest and most inexperienced of all the brigades,

having marched all night without rest, food, or water, was placed in the most important position of all, atop The Knob at the army's extreme left flank.

In addition, the northern units were facing to the NE, while the southern units faced to the SE, leaving a significant gap in their center between them.

On the Confederate side, Bragg sat in Harrodsburg expecting to hear firing from Polk's ordered dawn attack to clear out the "diversionary force" at Perryville before moving the army north. Hearing nothing, he decided to go there to see what was happening. Upon arriving, he learned of Polk's "defensive-offensive" choice instead of following his orders. Greatly unhappy, he repeated his orders to attack immediately and began inspecting Polk's battle line, finding it woefully insufficient. He then began ordering units into a stronger line, believing that he was positioning his right flank beyond the Federal left in order to roll it up, only to realize that the still-approaching Federals were extending their lines further north than he knew. He then ordered Cheatham's division from his extreme left to his far right (north) onto Walkers Bend. Errors to his orders also occurred on his extreme left, with unfortunate consequences later in the day. He had also heard nothing from Wheeler's cavalry on the Lebanon Road, where they alone opposed Buell's slow-moving 2nd Corps.

By 2 pm on the 8th, Bragg had advanced most of his army (13,000 men) west across the Chaplin River, except for Cheatham's division still atop Walkers Bend on the far north of his line. (About 3,500 more infantry and cavalry were left either in or around the town to watch the 42,000 men of the Federal 2nd and 3rd Corps while he attacked the 13,000 of McCook's 1st Corps). At this point, some of Bragg's artillery opened up on the Federals of McCook's Corps' SE facing units, answered by their supporting guns. This was the first indication that the Confederates were not retreating through Harrodsburg, but attacking at Perryville. This artillery duel lasted about an hour, until 3 pm, as forces on both sides continued to adjust position and the Confederates began to advance to contact.

Fighting on the Federal 1st Corps' Left:

The Knob:

2:00 pm: Cheatham moves his three brigades off of Walkers bend and is met by skirmishers of the 33rd Ohio, which are driven back to their regiment on the left of Harris' Brigade on the left of the Mackville Rd. Cheatham believes he is north of the Federal left flank. He moves forward under cover of woods and terrain, intending to strike with brigades in column.

Cheatham then advances two of the three available regiments of Donelson's Brigade in front, with one in support, believing them to be striking the far right of the Federal line, south of The Knob. The 16th TN moves faster than 15th TN, where it is hit by infantry and heavy artillery fire from the south and west. Dropping into a trough in the land to escape the guns, and now joined the 15th TN, they are then hit in the flank by a third battery to the north on The Knob, the true left flank of the Federal army.

2:10 pm: Cheatham now understands that he is not on the Federal flank, and swings one of his other two brigades (Maney's) north to hit The Knob, just as the remains of Donelson's attack are ordered to shift to the right, as well.

2:30 pm: Donelson, without two of his regiments, no artillery support, and heavy casualties, withdraws, possibly as far back as his start point just below Walkers Bend.

Maney's Brigade, having been hidden by a ridge and wood line, advances towards and up the slope of The Knob to the surprise of the Federals. Gen. Terrill now works to have his guns shift back to the east, nearly forgetting about anything else than saving his guns, leaving it to his aides to position his infantry.

The Confederates advance up the slope until they run into a rail fence line entangled by bushes and briars, unable to get through. They are taken under heavy fire, and so decide they must advance. Breaking through and around the fence, they move up the hill.

2:50 pm: Just as the green 105th Ohio takes position near his guns, Gen. Terrill orders his green 123rd Illinois to make a bayonet charge down the hill to slow the Confederate advance. As expected, it fails badly and they fall back with heavy casualties. About the same time, Division commander Gen. Jackson is killed on The Knob.

3:00 pm: Confederate artillery finally arrives and fires on The Knob. Gen. Terrill now orders the 105th Ohio to make a bayonet charge as other green units come to reinforce. It also fails. The Confederates make one last desperate charge, and the Federal line breaks, falling back to a skirt of woods and a rail fence below The Knob, where Terrill attempts to rally them. The Confederates capture seven of the eight guns. Now, at 3:30 pm, Cheatham's Confederates stared down another ridge, with a veteran brigade and two more batteries. The flank was not yet turned.

Starkweather's Hill:

3:30 pm: Cheatham brought up his last brigade (Stewart's) to the left of Maney's survivors, and they moved down the slope under Federal artillery fire, and into a cornfield in which the green Federal 21st Wisconsin had been positioned, with its line disrupted by those men running from The Knob. Neither side could see the other's men through the eight-foot-tall corn, but suddenly the 21st saw the Confederate flags above the corn at point blank range, and let fly two volleys, killing many of the Confederate officers leading their regiments. The fighting became hand to hand, and the outnumbered Federals fell back to their brigade line as best they could.

3:45pm: With Donelson's brigade rejoining the fight again, Cheatham's division engaged Starkweather's three remaining (all veteran) regiments and 12 guns, with support from Webster's Brigade from Jackson's Division (which had been positioned separately to the SW from the rest of its division), plus whatever could be reformed from Terrill's defeated brigade. The Federals were able to drive back Cheatham's two separate assaults. After a short lull, Cheatham then decided to use the 1st TN to flank around the Federal right in the next attack. Starkweather saw this developing, while also seeing Rousseau's Division's two other brigades to his right (south) beginning to give way. The time was now 4:15 pm.

Bragg and Buell:

Gen. Bragg was on a bluff to the east of the fighting, on the right bank of the Chaplin River, observing the taking of The Knob and the early difficulties in his center. He was completely ignorant of the fact that he could see only a small part of a second Federal corps (possibly assuming it was a part of the corps he was attacking), or that there was a third corps on the Lebanon Road being held up by Wheeler's cavalry, who had sent no information that they were engaged.

Gen. Buell was still at his headquarters at the Dorsey House, about 2.5 miles west of the fighting, completely ignorant of the fact that a major battle was taking place due to an acoustic shadow effect from the west to east wind and the hilly terrain that only allowed him to hear some of the artillery firing. Assuming that it was simply "shelling the woods", he ordered Gen. Gilbert to order it stopped, assuming it was Gilbert's men doing it. The order was sent by an aide to Sheridan. Gilbert then decided he should go look for himself, only to be told by Buell not to go, but to stay for dinner which was almost ready. Gilbert agreed and stayed. No report of the fighting came back to Buell.

Fighting on the Federal 1st Corps' Right:

2:30 pm: Gen. Hardee's wing's attack began with Gen. Jones' green brigade of Gen. Anderson's divided division leading off across Doctors Creek, past the Widow Bottom's cabin to a ridge. His movements were shielded from the fighting to the north by a ridge running east to west, and there were two more ridges in front of him, but the shorter middle ridge made the Federal position on the far ridge appear to be on that middle ridge directly before him (an optical illusion that also fooled his supporting artillery). Only one regiment was armed with rifle muskets, all the others with smoothbores, so that regiment was sent ahead as skirmishers.

When the skirmishers crested the steep-sided middle ridge, they discovered that the Federals were on the next ridge over. Calling back to their brigade commander for new orders, they were told to go forward, after which Gen. Jones reportedly disappeared.

The brigade went over the steep-sided middle ridge directly into heavy infantry and artillery fire, was torn to pieces, and forced to withdraw, too used up to be of any value for the rest of the battle.

3:30 pm: Jones' brigade was replaced by Gen. Brown's veteran brigade, who discovering the problem facing them, hunkered down on the crest of the middle ridge and began exchanging fire with the Federals for an extended time. This led to both sides running short of ammunition and forced to collect rounds from the dead and wounded to continue the fight. The Confederates were then resupplied from nearby wagons, but the Federal wagons were a mile to the rear, so some units were required to fix bayonets and lie down, staying where they were with no rounds for the next half hour.

They were, along with their artillery support, able to damage the supporting Federal artillery enough that it was withdrawn and replaced with an infantry regiment. This would have serious consequences soon.

3:30 pm: Gen. Buckner's division now brought up the Confederate left to attack up the Mackville Road, near H. P. Bottom's house on Doctors Creek, to the NW towards the Dixville Crossroads (The meeting point of the Mackville and Benton Roads, Bragg's ultimate goal), which would fully cut off McCook's Corps. Three of his four brigades would make this attack in column, while a fourth was sent north to support Gen. Brown's stalled brigade.

While advancing to Doctors Creek, the lead brigade (Johnson's) came under fire from behind on their left and rear. Two regiments were turned to attack those guns, only to discover that they were Confederate guns. The brigade was then reformed and advanced.

Defending was Gen. Lytle's mostly veteran brigade of Rousseau's Division, supported by six guns. Lytle had sent his 42nd Indiana down into the creek earlier to get what little water was available there, and as Buckner appeared on its east bank, they were left down in the creek bed, with steep walls on either side, and their guns stacked on the west bank. Many got away, but many did not.

Johnson's brigade reached a stone wall just west of the Bottom house, and were taken under heavy fire, pinning them down, while also running low on ammunition.

3:45 pm: Buckner's second brigade (Cleburne's) moved up to the stone wall, allowing Johnson's brigade to pull back, and continuing the fight. The Federals were also having to switch out regiments low on ammunition for new ones, then repeating the process.

4:00 pm: Buckner, looking for a way to get around Lytle, saw Gen. Adams' brigade of Anderson's division to his south, supporting a battery, and ordered him to swing around the left of Lytle's brigade.

4:15 pm: Adam's brigade advanced just as Cleburne's did also, but just as Cleburne moved out, he was hit from the rear by his own artillery fire, due to the fact that most of his men were wearing captured Federal sky-blue trousers they had taken after the battle at Richmond, KY in September. They then again advanced, placing their flag bearers in line with their skirmish line, fooling the Federals into thinking that was their main battle line, who opened fire on them, only to then be rushed by the main line before they could reload. This, along with Adam's flanking attack, cause Lytle's brigade to break and run. This also caused Harris' brigade to their left to give way, as well, but these retired in good order.

All of McCook's 1st Corps was now collapsing back towards the Dixville Crossroads.

The time was 4:30 pm.

Buell Finally Figures It Out:

4:00 pm: A staff officer from McCook's 1st Corps arrives at Buell's headquarters and informs him that they have been "seriously engaged for several hours, with both flanks turned and seriously pressed", and asking for help. A shocked Buell then orders two brigades from 3rd Corps to move north to assist, leaving at 4:30 pm and expected to arrive by 5:30 pm.

Sherman deals with Powell:

4:15 pm: Gen. Powell's brigade of Anderson's split-up division, the only Confederates now on the Springfield Pike, were ordered by Gen. Bragg to take the supposedly unsupported guns on Peters Hill that were taking his main attack's left flank under fire. His three regiments advanced from Bottom Hill towards Peters Hill, running into Gens. Sheridan's and Mitchell's divisions. They were quickly sent packing back to the town of Perryville, followed by Carlin's brigade of Mitchell's division, whose artillery shelled the town and Powell's men back across the Chaplin River, setting buildings on fire, then occupying the western part of the town, but not strong enough to take the part of town east of the river, which was defended by Gen. Smith's fresh brigade and now also by Powell's men. Gen. Mitchell asked to be given orders to take the town and turn the Confederate flank, but Gen. Gilbert refused, fearing a trap.

The Dixville Crossroads Climax:

4:15 pm: Starkweather, realizing he can't hold where now he is, orders a withdrawal to the next ridge back, a half mile in front of the crossroads, fronted by a stone wall, knowing that he has to hold there at all costs. He is only able to withdraw six of his twelve cannon due to loss of horses, and infantrymen are tasked with moving what guns they can to the new position. They withdraw in good order, as do Gen. Harris' brigade to the south, while Gen. McCook tries to rally the remnants of Terrill's and Lytle's brigades for the effort. During this time, Gen. Terrill is killed.

4:30 pm: Gens. Maney's and Stewart's worn-down brigades top the crest of Starkweather's now abandoned position and move towards his new line. The concentrated firepower that hits them drives them back and over the ridge, and a counterattack by Starkweather's brigade sends them retreating back to The Knob. The remaining six guns are recovered, and Starkweather withdraws back to his new position, without opposition. McCook's left flank is now secure.

On the Federal right, Col. Webster's green brigade, the last fully intact brigade remaining there, formed up north of the Mackville Road on a ridge, with the Russell House just to their south, with six guns in support (One of

his four regiments was kept in reserve, as its colonel had deserted them.). At least two of his regiments had weapons that did not work properly, but were placed in line anyway. Their line gave in quickly, and Gen. Webster was killed.

5:00 pm: With darkness falling, remnants of Harris', Lytle's, and other units were reformed into a line by Gen. Rousseau on the heights behind the Russell House near the crossroads for a final stand.

Four exhausted Confederate brigades from three different divisions, with gun support, reformed and advanced, but two of them were halted, one by lack of ammunition and the wounding of their commander, the other from receiving unexpected cannon fire from Peters Hill after the repulse of Powell's brigade. The remaining two moved towards the crossroads, but the right brigade began receiving nearly point-blank artillery fire. Low on ammunition and physically spent, they halted, then withdrew.

5:15 pm: It was then that the first of the 3rd Corps reinforcements arrived on the field and hit the Confederates left flank brigade, causing it to withdraw down the slopes.

5:45 pm: Gens. Polk and Hardee then committed their last available reserve brigade as darkness began to fall with a nearly full moon. They pressured 3rd corps' brigade back slightly, but could not advance against them, the fighting becoming a stalemate by 6:30 pm.

6:30 pm: At this point, Gen. Polk chose to ride forward and inspect the situation. In the darkness, someone yelled out "Cease fire, you are firing upon friends!" When the firing stopped, he rode forward to the other line and asked who they were. Informed that they were a Federal unit, he bluffed his way back to his own line, and had them fire three unanswered volleys into the Federals, driving them back. As the Confederates prepared to take the crossroads, they heard cheers from the Federal side signaling the arrival of the second 3rd Corps reinforcement brigade. With darkness falling hard upon the field, Polk called a halt to the fighting. The Battle of Perryville was over.

The Aftermath:

Troops from both sides remained on the field in the 1st Corps area in the darkness. Small groups of men searched for their wounded. Some spent their time stripping enemy dead of their equipment and clothing.

Gen. Bragg now realized that almost the entire Army of the Ohio was, indeed, at Perryville, and he had only engaged a third of it with his full force. In the early morning hours of Oct. 9th, The Army of Tennessee began its retreat to Harrodsburg to meet up with Kirby Smith's Army of Kentucky, hoping to make a stand there. Realizing that his supply situation was far less than he needed, and his casualties already too high, Bragg ordered a retreat through the now abandoned Cumberland Gap and back to Knoxville.

Gen. Buell was slow to pursue Bragg, allowing him to get away unhindered. His decision at the start of the campaign to leave behind almost all of his medical wagons and supplies in order to speed up his advance now caused severe hardship upon his troops. He was slow in bringing them up after the battle, as well. Nearly every house, barn, building, church, and school in Perryville and the surrounding towns became hospitals.

The last temporary hospital in the area did not close until March, 1863.

Gen. Buell was relieved of command and replaced by Gen. Rosecrans. The Army of the Ohio was renamed the Army of the Cumberland under war department restructuring. Buell never commanded troops again. In June of 1864, he was offered a position under Gen. Sherman, but he refused due to be unwilling to serve under a junior officer. He resigned from the army in June of 1864.

The Battle of Perryville is considered by some to be the High Water Mark of the Confederacy in the Western Theater. Other than the ultimately hollow victory at Chickamauga, Confederate forces in the West did not win another victory of substance throughout the rest of the war.

Perryville Casualties:

Federal: 845 Killed, 2,635 Wounded, 515 Captured or Missing. Total = 4,211

Confederate: 510 Killed, 2,641 Wounded, 251 Captured or Missing. Total = 3,401

Total Casualties: 7,612

(Note: Total Killed does not take into account those mortally wounded who died in the days and months following from their wounds.)