

“Oh Lordy!”

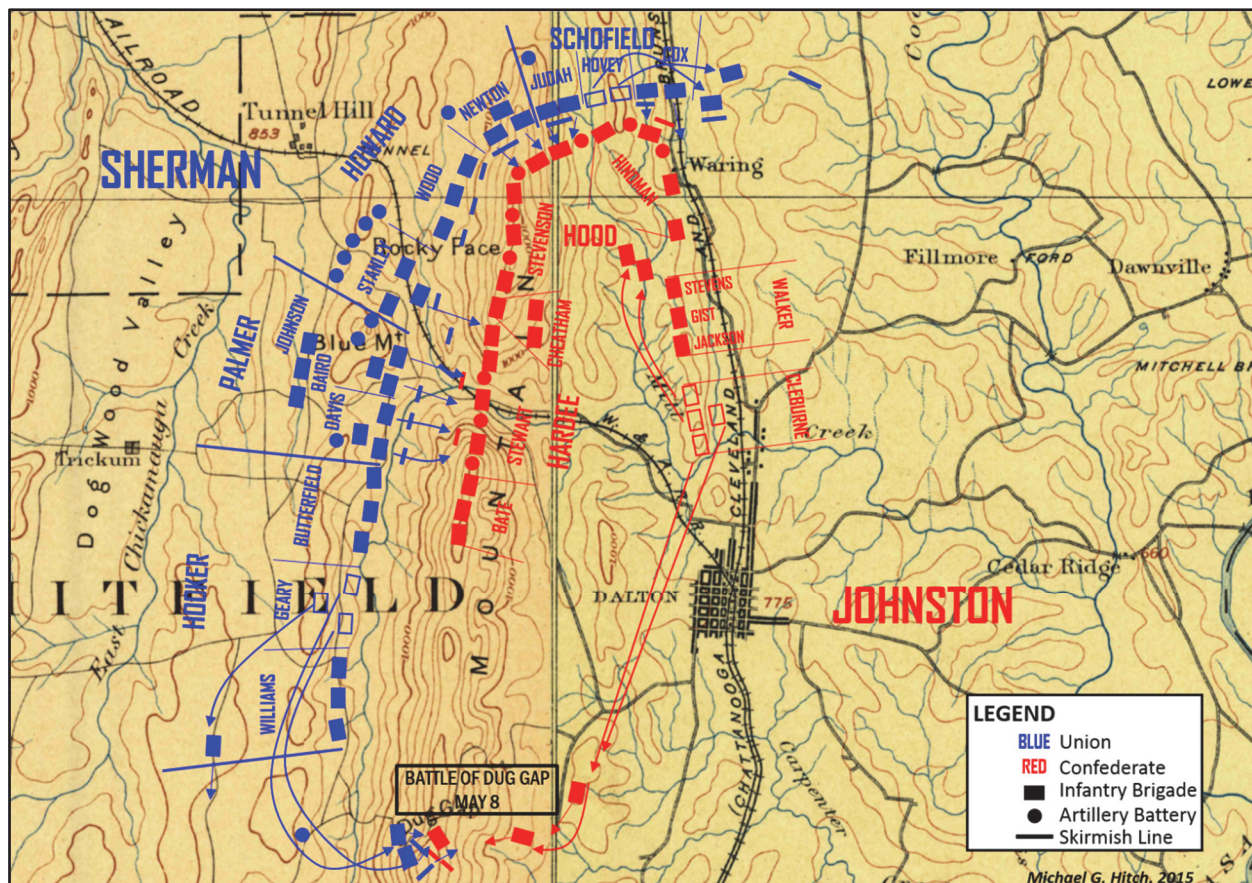


Figure 28 - Battles of Rocky Face Ridge and Dug Gap near Dalton, GA. Note the position of Gist's brigade (including the 16th South Carolina and Young Hitch) occupying the center of Walker's Division. They are situated atop Hamilton Mountain and out of the main lines of battle. (Michael G. Hitch map, 2015).

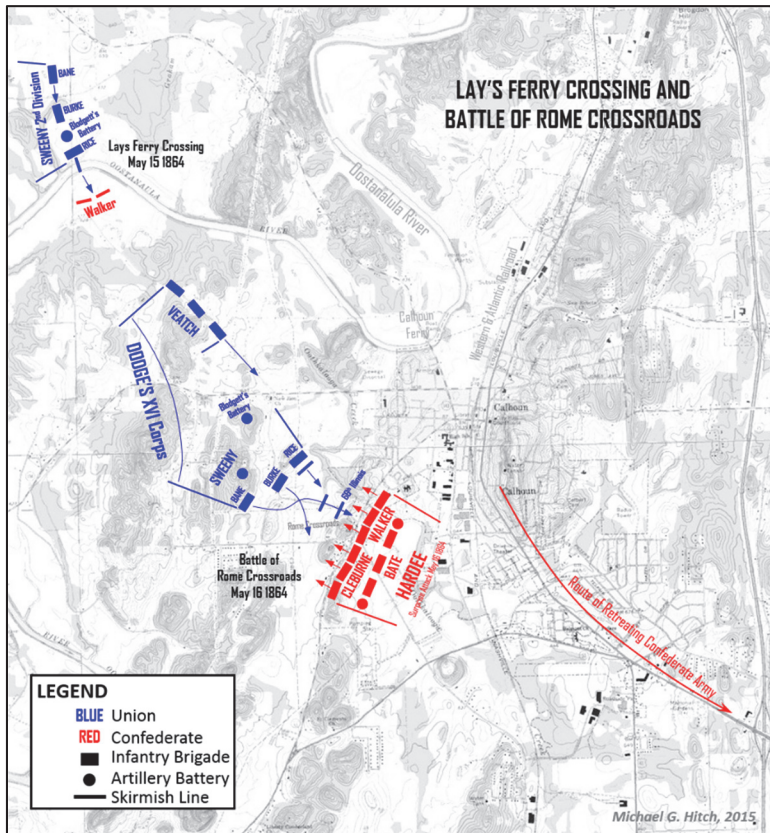
The Army had moved southeastward towards Atlanta after various confrontations with the enemy in early-to-mid May 1864 and since Young's letter to Mary on May 7. Within this time, the Battle of Rocky Face Ridge had occurred on May 7 and Dug Gap on May 8 1864. In **Figure 28**, we see illustrations of Rocky Face Ridge and Dug Gap with the Confederate line perched all along the brim of the ridge. The Dug Gap action was a small affair with Rocky Face Ridge much larger and, used as a decoy to allow McPherson's army to sneak through Snake River Gap. In the Figure, we can see where Young Hitch and the 16th South Carolina were located with Gist's brigade, on Hamilton Mountain to the rear of the primary action and did not see much of the direct conflict.

As the Battle of Rocky Face Ridge was concluding, the Army of Tennessee retired back to Resaca, Georgia on May 13 where it circled the town and entrenched in there. Gist's brigade had marched toward Resaca in advance on May 9 and was held in reserve there on May 10.

The Battle of Resaca was waged on May 14-15 followed by skirmishing at Lay's Ferry on May 15 and then the "battle" of Rome's Crossroads on May 16. The 16th regiment was engaged in heavy skirmishing

at Lay's Ferry on May 14 but were held in reserve while the battle occurred at Resaca on May 15²³⁹. The Rome's Crossroads affair was more of a heavy skirmish but Hardee's corps and the 16th South Carolina regiment were involved in the skirmishing at both Lay's Ferry and Rome's Crossroads with the corps on the offensive at the latter. Federal General Corse later described the offensive by Hardee's corps at Rome's Crossing on May 16:

"...without any warning, the enemy sprang up from cover in line of battle, and charging the thin skirmish line drove it, in some confusion, back across the Rome Road...it was here that Colonel



Burke, commanding the 2nd brigade, was severely wounded in the leg, and Captain Taylor, 66th Illinois infantry, shot through the head, being instantly killed while trying to steady his men. All the time of this charge by the enemy, a rebel battery opened upon some empty caissons and the main road pursued by the troops, now filled with ambulances removing wounded, creating quite a stampede among camp followers, etc., who had by accident ventured too near the front..."²⁴⁰

We see that Hardee's corps, with Young Hitch participating, mustered up an effective back offensive against the Northern army, especially the 66th Illinois who was in pursuit. After these events, Johnston's army retired to near Adairsville, Georgia on May 17 and then back to near Cartersville, Georgia on May 19. See **Figure 29** for action at Lay's Ferry and then Rome's Crossroads,

Figure 29 - The action that occurred on the retreat from Resaca. Lay's Ferry provided some minor skirmish action for Walker's Division on May 15 followed by more meaningful heavy skirmishing, especially with the 66th Illinois at Rome Crossroads near Calhoun on May 16 1864. (Michael G. Hitch map, 2015)

Georgia. **Figure 30** shows the troop movements after that from Adairsville back towards Cassville.

Sherman had hotly pursued Johnston's army southward after Resaca, where Johnston hoped to find a good defensive position south of Calhoun. Not finding anything he liked, Johnston continued to Adairsville while the Rebel cavalry skillfully carried out a rearguard defensive action. On May 17, skirmish fire continued throughout the day and evening as the North's Major General O.O. Howard's IV Corps ran into the entrenched infantry of Hardee's corps (and the 16th South Carolina), about two miles

²³⁹ South Carolina's Military Organizations During the War Between the States; Volume III, The Upstate, Robert S. Seigler, The History Press, Charleston, SC, 2008; page 175.

²⁴⁰ The Campaign for Atlanta, William R. Scaife, McNaughton & Gunn, 1993, page 40.

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north of Adairsville. Three Union divisions prepared for battle, but Major General Thomas halted them due to the approach of darkness and Sherman then concentrated his men in the Adairsville area to attack Johnston the next day.

Johnston had originally hoped to find the valley at Adairsville suitable to deploy his men and anchor his lines with the flanks on hills. The valley proved to be too wide, however, so Johnston disengaged and withdrew.²⁴¹ In these general skirmishes, there were approximately 200 Union casualties and an unknown amount on the Rebel side.

Figure 31 shows this movement and the placement of Young Hitch’s Hardee’s Corps just south of Cassville, Georgia on May 19 1864 and where they stayed until another retirement to near Allatoona Pass on May 19-20 then to near and just to the southeast of Dallas, Georgia by May 25²⁴². This fits perfectly with Young’s indication of being near Cartersville at the time he wrote the letter of May 22. In fact, they were between Cassville and Cartersville before they then backed up southward to Dallas and then, almost due east towards Marietta, Georgia where, by June 1864, they were stationed near Kennesaw Mountain.

In Young Hitch’s letter of May 22 1864, we can see, and practically feel, with his words, the excitement of the activity that has been happening and the anticipation of more to come. He writes:

“I am yet alive & tolerably well. I have no strange news to write any more than we have had heavy skirmishing with the Enemy in the day & hard marching of a night. We are at a halt now & have been ever since Friday Evening but may be on the march again before morning. We have been in some pretty tight places. The yankeys made us ly low behind our breastworks the other day. They threw the shells in amongst us in a hurrah. One of co. (I) got wounded comeing off of the field. A portion of the 16 has had some verry heavy skirmishing with the Enemy. We lost a noble young Liut at Resaca & some wounded.”

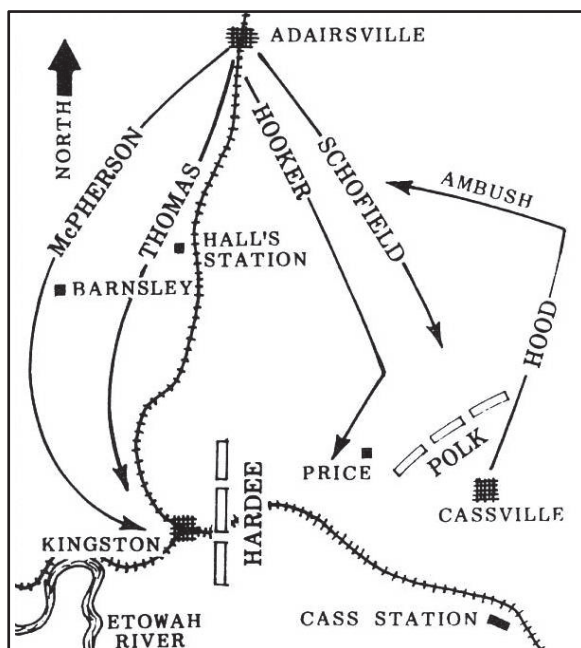


Figure 30 - The route of Johnston's retiring army from Resaca back towards Cassville on May 17-19, 1864. (Public Domain Map, www.americancivilwar.com)

He notes that they had halted their movement Friday evening (which was May 20) but that they may be back marching again “before morning”, which would be May 23. He also writes that, during the daylight hours, there has been heavy skirmishing followed by hard marching at night. This accounts for the

²⁴¹ See www.americancivilwar.com.

²⁴² Ibid.

known activities from the historical record of the fighting during the time and the jostling Johnston did with his army to try and gain a foothold at some location to defend.

When Hitch pens, *"The yankeys made us ly low behind our breastworks the other day. They threw the shells in amongst us in a hurrah. One of co. (I) got wounded comeing off of the field,"* he is probably referring to the action near Cassville, Georgia on May 19 1864. We see that there was plenty of gun fire as well as artillery and one person in Young's Company I, 16th South Carolina regiment was wounded. Then, Hitch goes immediately into a description of what had happened at the Battle of Resaca previously on May 14-15 1864, *"A portion of the 16 has had some verry heavy skirmishing with the Enemy. We lost a noble young Liut at Resaca & some wounded."* The 16th could complain no more about the lack of action, as there was heavy fighting in Resaca in which they lost "some wounded" and a bright, young lieutenant.

Young continues with,

"Our regt has been verry fortunate so fare in not getting into a regular Engagement. But in the last two weeks we have been several times as I thought right into a regular Engagement. Wee have had the rear to bring up different times & have been placed in the front line of battle But have been verry agreeably disappointed in not having the Enemy to advance on us."

This clearly indicates that the 16th had not yet been in a "formal" battle engagement where it can be assumed this meant being formally lined up as a unit and marched directly across the field to an approaching enemy. Rather, the 16th had been engaged in "heavy skirmishing" that would be less formal activity but no less hazardous. They were, however, "several times" in the past two weeks in situations where a formal engagement looked imminent but did not pan out as such. The 16th was "very agreeably disappointed" that the enemy did not advance when they were ready to engage.

He writes no more about the battles in his May 22 letter but states that colleagues (William Berry) Scruggs is well as is (Little) Berry (Edwards). He asks that Mary Hitch tell Caroline (e.g., Caroline Edwards Scruggs, wife of William B. Scruggs) that her husband is "well & hearty." He then remembers Mary's constant worry that he is eating well enough when he states that "Johnson" (e.g., General Joe Johnston) is feeding them pretty well as they have been marching and, his Division has been self-dubbed, "Walker's Cavalier".

The final portion of the letter is a rather moving and poignant passage,

"Mary...I do hope that we may have the pleasure of spending a few more days on Earth together. It appears to me that I would be a happy man to be at home to enjoy home & family as I once could do. But I must ask you to forgive the ill treatment that I have given you. Mary I am allmost getting weaned from home in a heap of respects. But still I can call many of our ups & downs to my mind & it is company to me to think of them. Mary you ma wonder if Young aint badly scared in time of Battle. Mary it makes me feel verry little indeed but it sorter wears off after awhile. I try to put my whole trust in my Creator believing him to be able to save me."