

15th Infantry Regiment August 1863 and Middle Tennessee

August 1863 was the calm before the storm. Having settled into camps near Cowan Station, Tennessee, in July after the successful Middle Tennessee Campaign, the 15th Infantry and the other regiments of the Regular Brigade remained there for more than a month. When not drilling, they were kept busy in repairing roads and stockpiling supplies for the final advance over the Cumberland Plateau. Crossing the high ground and the Tennessee River beyond would allow the Union forces in Tennessee to finally close on their objective: the key rail center of Chattanooga.

The advance toward Chattanooga got underway on 16 August 1863, and by the 21st of that month the 15th Infantry was in Stevenson, Alabama, on the Tennessee River. Stevenson was the advanced supply depot for the Army of the Cumberland, and its final position for the last push to Chattanooga. The Army of the Cumberland began crossing the Tennessee River via a pontoon bridge at Bridgeport, Alabama on 29 August, an operation that took most of the next week, but the 15th Infantry remained in Stevenson for the time being. Bloody riots against the draft had erupted earlier that summer in New York, and the War Department was sending regular troops to that city to maintain order. The Army of the Potomac's Regular Division had arrived there in mid-August. It was rumored that the Army of the Cumberland's Regulars would soon follow. While the remainder of the Army of the Cumberland closed on Chattanooga and then advanced deep into North Georgia, the Regulars remained on the west bank of the Tennessee and guarded the rail lines between Bridgeport and Stevenson.