

Battle of Cheat Mountain

The Battle of Cheat Mountain was a Civil War battle fought near the Randolph-Pocahontas County line on September 12, 1861. It was an important loss to the Confederacy, with Gen. [Robert E. Lee](#) coming into Western Virginia to give support to Gen. William W. Loring, commander of the Army of Northwestern Virginia. The large concern was for the safety of the Virginia Central and the Virginia & Tennessee railroads. Brig. Gen. Joseph J. Reynolds was in command of U.S. forces, with headquarters at Elkwater, and a strongly fortified post on top of [Cheat Mountain](#) in Randolph County. Confederate forces were gathered at Valley Mountain.



To begin the Confederate assault, Gen. H. R. Jackson was to create a diversion along the [Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike](#) in front of the Cheat Mountain fortification, while Col. Albert Rust and his troops took a back route up the mountain. Gen. S. R. Anderson was to lead a detachment along a trail discovered by Lee. The sound of Rust's gunfire was supposed to announce the start of the assault, but continued rainfall and the discovery of his troops by enemy pickets led to the abandonment of the initial plan of attack. Lee then ordered an advance against Elkwater. Col. John A. Washington, Lee's aide-de-camp and the last owner of Mount Vernon, was killed while scouting for Lee at Elkwater. General Reynolds's troops easily repelled the Confederates, described as being "too wet and too hungry to fight." Lee finally attempted a flanking movement around the federal right, but this, too, ended in defeat.

Written by [R. F. Hendricks](#)

Citations

1. Moore, George E. *A Banner in the Hills*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963.
2. Cohen, Stan. *Civil War in West Virginia*. Charleston: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1979.