

# Forts Henry and Donelson

*Essential Questions: What were the outcomes of the Battles of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson? What was the significance of these battles?*

## The Fort Henry Campaign, February 1862

In early 1862, as the Union army struggled in the East, General Ulysses S. Grant and Flag-Officer Andrew H. Foote requested permission to go down the Tennessee River into northwest Tennessee. The purpose of the expedition was to capture Fort Henry, which overlooked the western section of the Tennessee River. Henry was not as strong a fort as other Southern strongholds on the Mississippi.<sup>1</sup> Yet the Tennessee River cut Tennessee in half and dipped into Alabama, making it a crucial avenue for an advance into the Deep South. Also, capturing Fort Henry opened up the way to Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River.

By February, Grant and Foote were on the move. The roads were too muddy for travel by Grant's large army, so Grant was ordered to steam down the Tennessee River with Foote's fleet. On February 5, Foote's transports deposited Grant's 15,000 soldiers below Fort Henry. The plan involved the ironclad riverboats pounding the fort from one side with Grant approaching overland from the other. When the steamers approached the fort, an artillery duel began. The ironclads were so effective that Confederate General Lloyd Tilghman surrendered in a little over an hour. Grant's troops had not even arrived. Fort Henry was in Union hands along with "seventeen heavy guns, General Lloyd Tilghman and staff, and 60 men."<sup>2</sup> Also, the river belonged to the Federals all the way to Alabama. Foote's gunboats sailed down to Muscle Shoals and back harassing the Confederate navy along the way.<sup>3</sup>

## The Fort Donelson Campaign, February 1862

Grant planned to attack Fort Donelson the same way he had attacked Fort Henry. Foote would wear down the Confederate defenses from the river on the east. Grant would capture the fort from the west with foot soldiers. The idea was then to march on and occupy Nashville.

By February 13, the Grant's entire force of 15,000 men was in front of Donelson, gunboats and all. Foote and his navy attacked on the 14th hoping for the same result as Henry. Fort Donelson, however, proved formidable and well-equipped. After damaging a handful of Foote's vessels, Confederate gunners had repulsed the attack. Grant then decided to hold his lines and wait for the boats to be repaired.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 393.

<sup>2</sup> *O.R.*, *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>3</sup> *O.R.*, *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>4</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 7, p. 159.

The Confederates in Donelson, however, led by General John Floyd, Tennessee politician Gideon Pillow, and General Simon Bolivar Buckner, decided that the best thing they could do was try to break out of the fort and fight off Grant's army. On the morning of February 15, while Grant was away visiting an injured Andrew Foote, Confederate forces attacked on the Union right. The rebels shoved the Federal force back over a mile. Heavy casualties were inflicted on both sides. In confusion and exhaustion, however, the Confederates were ordered by Pillow to retreat back to their entrenchments. Considering that the Union men were out of ammunition, the Confederate force might have broken out of the Donelson siege if they had kept up the attack.<sup>5</sup>

When Grant returned and saw that the Confederates had pulled back, he assumed they were more demoralized than the Union's defeated force. "Taking advantage of this fact," Grant later reported, "I ordered a charge upon the left (enemy's right)..."<sup>6</sup> By nightfall, Grant's men had retaken all the ground they had lost. The following morning, while Grant prepared to attack, General Buckner sent Grant a note under a flag of truce, offering to end the fighting and discuss surrender terms. Grant replied that he would accept "no terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender."<sup>7</sup> Buckner, trapped with his men in the fort, had no choice. That same day Grant filed a report to his superiors: "I am pleased to announce to you the unconditional surrender this morning of Fort Donelson, with 12,000 to 15,000 prisoners, at least forty pieces of artillery, and a large amount of stores, horses, and other public property."<sup>8</sup> U.S. Grant's terms for Buckner's surrender earned him a nickname that stuck throughout the war: "Unconditional Surrender" Grant.

The capture of Forts Henry and Donelson, were significant because they provided the Union its first foothold in the South. It also provided a much-needed morale boost to Northerners, who had been disappointed by the lack of progress in Virginia. After capturing the forts, Grant and his army moved deeper into Tennessee--all the way to the town of Pittsburg Landing, home to a small church called Shiloh. It was there, in the spring, that Grant would clash with Confederate Generals Albert Sidney Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard in one of the bloodiest battles of the war.

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<sup>5</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 400-01.

<sup>6</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 7, p. 159

<sup>7</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 402.

<sup>8</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 7, p. 159

# Battle of Shiloh

*Essential Questions: What was the outcome of the Battle of Shiloh? What was the significance of the Battle of Shiloh?*

After victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, the Union army in the West seemed ready to defeat the Confederates anywhere they were. The Union Army of the Tennessee, led by Ulysses S. Grant, pushed deep into the state with the idea of linking up with Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio and pursuing the rebel army in Mississippi. The Confederates wanted to force Grant out of Tennessee. Grant moved his army to a small port called Pittsburgh Landing located on the western section of the Tennessee river. A small church named Shiloh, meaning "place of peace" in Hebrew stood nearby. It was there that the Confederates attacked on April 6, 1862. After two days of hard fighting, 20,000 men were either killed or wounded.<sup>1</sup> It was, up to that time, the largest battle to ever take place in the Western Hemisphere.

After defeating the Confederates at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, Grant continued to chase the rebels. He knew the defeated rebel army was regrouping around Corinth, Mississippi, and it was Grant's intention to build up his own forces and strike the enemy there. So, even with the "weather cold and roads impassable," Grant went south toward Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River. Grant estimated the Confederate strength at Corinth to be between 50,000 and 60,000.<sup>2</sup> When he arrived at Pittsburg Landing, Grant did not order his soldiers to entrench, but instead waited patiently for Major-General Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio to arrive from the north. When they were united, they would have a mass of 75,000 men who were confident and ready to crush the smaller rebel force.<sup>3</sup> Although Grant had heard rumors of a Confederate force advancing on his location, he thought it was only a rumor. "I have scarcely the faintest idea of an attack (general one) being made upon us," Grant reported, "but will be prepared should such a thing take place."<sup>4</sup>

At Corinth, Generals Albert Sidney Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard were not content to dig in and wait for Grant's advance. Instead, Johnston decided to march back into Tennessee and drive Grant from the state. General Braxton Bragg brought up 15,000 men from the Gulf Coast to join the attack. In all, the Confederates had 42,000 men.<sup>5</sup> Knowing that Buell was seeking to

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<sup>1</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 413.

<sup>2</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. II, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 406.

<sup>4</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. I, p. 89.

<sup>5</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 406.

link up with Grant's army, Johnston moved out in early April, ordering his troops "forward to offer battle near Pittsburg."<sup>6</sup>

After slight delays, Johnston's advance troops reached Grant's advance troops, and the two forces skirmished on April 5 with a small handful of casualties. Grant did not take the Confederate threat seriously. With the element of surprise on his side Johnston sent his army charging at the Union line on the morning of April 6, 1862. According to Beauregard, the rebel soldiers advanced like an "Alpine avalanche."<sup>7</sup> The southerners pushed back Union forces all along the front, which stretched six miles. Grant, still at headquarters awaiting Buell, heard the gunfire at breakfast and reached the battlefield around 9 a.m.<sup>8</sup>

The fighting proved incredibly fierce. Two large, inexperienced armies clashed and butchered each other. Bullets ripped through leaves and severed tree limbs. Smoke blanketed the field. Many soldiers, Union and Confederate, seeing action for the first time, fled horrified from the fight. In the midst of the chaos, however, the Confederates managed to push the Federals back past Shiloh church and then to Pittsburg Landing and the river. It looked as if the Union might be routed. But at the middle of the action, along a sunken road, General Benjamin M. Prentiss and group of brave soldiers held a small part of the collapsing Union line. The Confederates labeled this area the "Hornets' Nest."<sup>9</sup> Upon Grant's order, and despite being outnumbered four to one, Prentiss held the sunken road for most of the day. Just before sunset, when Prentiss feared that "further resistance must result in the slaughter of every man" in his command, he surrendered his depleted force of 2,200 men.<sup>10</sup> The Confederates had, as Beauregard described, won a "complete victory" on April 6, but it did so at a heavy cost.<sup>11</sup> General Albert Sidney Johnston, Commander of the Army of the Mississippi (Confederate), took a bullet to his leg and bled to death. The Confederacy, it was said, would "mourn his loss, revere his name, and cherish his manly virtues."<sup>12</sup>

For the Union, the defeat of April 6 was a setback. But, in the middle of the night, Buell's army arrived. By the morning, three more divisions were ready for action. Overall, Grant commanded 25,000 more men on the morning of April 7.<sup>13</sup> With renewed confidence, Grant ordered his army to attack. Beauregard and his men were caught completely by surprise as they relaxed at the former Union camp they had captured the day before. Grant's force swept the Confederates all the way back to the lines they possessed at the beginning of April 6. There, they stiffened and resisted. The hard fighting of the previous day resumed as if it had never quit. Beauregard saw that if he pressed the fight, his army would be destroyed. He therefore ordered a retreat. The Confederates, outnumbered and dispirited, fell back.

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<sup>6</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. II, p. 387.

<sup>7</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. I, p. 386.

<sup>8</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 409.

<sup>9</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 410.

<sup>10</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. I, p. 279.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 384.

<sup>12</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. I, p. 409.

<sup>13</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 410.

April 7 proved a complete turnaround from the events of April 6. Instead of the complete Confederate victory which Beauregard had bragged about, his battered army staggered back into Mississippi. The Union victors, tired and bogged down in a downpour, did not offer a serious pursuit. Shiloh was over, and 20,000 men were dead or wounded. There were more casualties than all other Civil War battles up to that point combined.<sup>14</sup> Yet, no ground had been gained. The Union remained at Pittsburg Landing, and the Confederates went back to Corinth.

“In the pages of history the hard won field of Shiloh [sic] will have a name among the great battlefields of the world,” stated the *Memphis Daily Appeal*.<sup>15</sup> That publication, however, reported on what it believed to be an overwhelming Confederate victory and not a Union triumph. Regardless of the victor, the Battle of Shiloh was significant because it changed the nation’s expectations. Instead of a quick, bloodless campaign, Shiloh showed that the war would be a bitter, bloody struggle. Shiloh foreshadowed what the war would become, for the next three years would see battle after battle of a similar, horrendous magnitude.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

<sup>15</sup> *Memphis Daily Appeal*, April 9, 1862.

## Battle of Stones River (Murfreesboro)

*Essential Question: What was the outcome of the Battle of Stones River? What was the significance of the Battle of Stones River?*

The fall and early winter of 1862 was a difficult time for the Union army and northern morale. Although he had stopped a rebel invasion, General George B. McClellan had failed to cut off the fleeing Confederates and destroy Robert E. Lee's army after the Battle of Antietam. Instead, Lee's rugged fighting force slipped quietly back into Virginia where it would continue to cause frustration for the Federal army. In December, the Union Army of the Potomac, commanded by General Ambrose Burnside, was soundly defeated at Fredericksburg. Also, General Ulysses S. Grant, the hero of Fort Donelson and Shiloh, had failed to capture the Mississippi River post at Vicksburg. This failure was largely due to rebel cavalry raiders, such as Nathan Bedford Forrest and Earl Van Dorn, who ran circles around Grant's plodding army cutting communication lines and confiscating supplies. Although a Confederate invasion of Kentucky had been repulsed at Perryville, General Don Carlos Buell seemingly refused to deploy his Army of the Cumberland to attack Confederate General Braxton Bragg's Army of the Tennessee. In October, therefore, Buell was replaced by William S. Rosecrans. Lincoln made it clear that if Rosecrans wanted to keep his job, he had better march against Bragg.<sup>16</sup> In essence, the Union needed a victory, and Lincoln hoped Rosecrans would provide it.

In December, President Jefferson Davis visited Bragg's headquarters at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Citizens of the small town showered the beloved president with balls and dinners. While there, Davis sent a large number of Bragg's men westward to slow Grant's approach to Vicksburg. Nevertheless, Bragg considered using his weakened force to recapture Nashville. When he received news that Rosecrans was advancing from Nashville, however, Bragg decided to stay put and prepare for his enemy's arrival. In the meantime, he dispatched "Fighting Joe" Wheeler's cavalry to harass Rosecrans. Wheeler rode around Rosecrans, tore apart supply wagons, and stole ammunition.<sup>17</sup>

The Union, however, continued to advance. By December 30, Rosecrans was in place along the Nashville Turnpike just northeast of Bragg, who was positioned by a creek called Stones River. Both Rosecrans and Bragg planned to attack the next morning. "A fierce battle is expected to-morrow [sic] by the full force of both armies," predicted Confederate Governor of Tennessee, Isham G. Harris.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 579.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 579.

<sup>18</sup> *Chattanooga Daily Rebel*, January 1, 1863.

That night, as soldiers from both sides bent over their campfires tensely anticipating battle the next morning, the army bands entered into a contest of their own. Trying to outplay one another from across the front, the Union band's version of "Yankee Doodle" was countered by a Confederate concert of "Dixie." When the Union piped "Hail Columbia," the Confederates answered with "The Bonnie Blue Flag." Finally, one band played "Home Sweet Home," a song enjoyed by both armies. Both bands eventually played the song together with thousands of troops singing in union.<sup>19</sup> This small tinge of camaraderie proved joyful and wistful at the same time, as the following morning, the same soldiers would butcher one another.

In the early hours of New Year's Eve, Bragg struck first by charging Rosecrans's right where many soldiers were eating breakfast. The rebels pushed back the Union flank through a thick cedar wood and out into a cotton field. The battle continued there. Many of the Confederates, overwhelmed by the sound of guns, stuffed their ears with cotton.<sup>20</sup> Fighting was terribly fierce as the Southerners tried to bend back the Union flank and get between Rosecrans and Nashville, cutting his supply and escape route. Rosecrans, however, coolly rode up and down the battle line wearing a blood-splattered uniform. The blood belonged to a staff-officer whose head had been blown off by a cannonball.<sup>21</sup>

When Rosecrans examined the battlefield and the Confederate thrust against his right, he called off his own attack plans and concentrated on defense. As reinforcements came up to fill the torn Union line, the rebels continued to sweep back the Federals. All would have been lost had it not been for a sturdy division commanded by Brigadier General Philip Sheridan. Sheridan had predicted Bragg's intent and therefore positioned his men in defensive positions at 4:00 a.m. In some exceptionally savage combat, Sheridan was able to hold the rebels at bay. All three of Sheridan's brigade commanders were killed. His division lost a third of its men. The Confederates, as well, suffered heavy losses.<sup>22</sup> After the initial assault, Rosecrans found his right side bent back at a right angle. At that angle was a dense patch of wilderness called the Round Forest. Bragg thought the area of strategic importance and ordered a division, under former Vice President of the United States John C. Breckinridge, to cross Stones River from the east and charge the position. The division charged but, after a murderous engagement, fell back. At an enormous cost to themselves as well as the enemy, the Federals held. Afterward, Round Forest became known as "Hell's Half-Acre."<sup>23</sup> Near Murfreesboro, the year 1862 had concluded with a "very obstinate and bloody" fight.<sup>24</sup>

Following December 31, Southern newspapers declared a great victory. Bragg, in a dispatch, talked about he had driven the Union troops from every position except the extreme

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<sup>19</sup> James L. McDonough, "Stones River, Battle of," *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War*, Vol. IV, ed. David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2000), 1877.

<sup>20</sup> "Battle of Stones River Campaign," *Tennessee Civil War Sourcebook, 1862*, Part IV, ed. James B. Jones (Nashville, TN: Tennessee Historical Commission, 2005), 173.

<sup>21</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 580.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 580.

<sup>23</sup> McDonough, "Stones River, Battle of," 1879.

<sup>24</sup> Nashville *Dispatch*, January 1, 1863.

left. “With the exception of this point,” Bragg said, “we occupy the whole field.”<sup>25</sup> Whether or not victory could be declared, one thing was certain: the fighting had been costly. “The bloodiest day of the war has closed,” declared a Chattanooga newspaper.<sup>26</sup> Rosecrans, however, refused to withdraw; more blood was to come.

On New Year’s Day, after a small fight, a Union division moved east of Stones River and occupied a formidable hill. The following day, Bragg ordered Breckinridge to again cross the river and attack a strong Federal position. Breckinridge, under protest, carried out his orders. His division ran through the Union line. But on the other side of the river was a ridge blanketed in Yankee guns. The cannons opened fire and tore Breckinridge’s division to shreds. After losing a third of his men, Breckinridge pulled back.<sup>27</sup> The following day, January 3, Rosecrans’s army was reinforced. Seeing the strengthened enemy in front, Bragg thought it wise to retreat. The Confederates abandoned Murfreesboro and fled south to Tullahoma. The two armies suffered an estimated 24,645 combined casualties.

The Battle of Stone’s River is significant because it gave the Union the victory it so badly needed.<sup>28</sup> After the first day, the situation looked dire for the Yankees and promising for the rebels, but the Federals stood firmly, and forced Bragg and his Army of Tennessee to withdraw. General Rosecrans, triumphant at last, began to plan an expedition to capture the Southern railroad hub of Chattanooga. He would not get there, however, for over six months.

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<sup>25</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 20, pt. I, p. 662.

<sup>26</sup> *Chattanooga Daily Rebel*, January 2, 1863.

<sup>27</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 582; McDonough, “Stones River, Battle of,” 1879.

<sup>28</sup> McDonough, *Ibid.*



# Battle of Chickamauga

*Essential Questions: What was the outcome of the Battle of Chickamauga? What was the significance of the Battle of Chickamauga?*

Branching off the Tennessee River north of Chattanooga and snaking its way down across the Georgia line is a small waterway called Chickamauga Creek. It was by that creek in early autumn 1863 that two large armies, the Union Army of the Cumberland and the Confederate Army of Tennessee, clashed with one another. Two days of savage fighting, resulted in 34,000 casualties. Chickamauga proved the costliest battle of the western theater and second only to Gettysburg as the bloodiest struggle of the Civil War.

Throughout the summer of 1863, Union General William S. Rosecrans had chased Braxton Bragg's Confederate army out of Middle Tennessee. "I have now to repeat," Rosecrans communicated to Edwin Stanton, U.S. Secretary of War, "that the rebel army has been forced from its strong intrenched [sic] positions at Shelbyville and Tullahoma, and driven over the Cumberland Mountains."<sup>29</sup> Eventually, Bragg was forced to hunker down in Chattanooga, an important Confederate railroad hub linking the Deep South to Virginia. After a summer of defeat, the morale in Bragg's army floundered. Abraham Lincoln, therefore, urged Rosecrans to dislodge Bragg and make headway into Georgia. Taking time to secure his supply train, Rosecrans advanced south on August 16 with the intention of crossing the Tennessee River and getting south of Chattanooga into Georgia to destroy the railroad from Atlanta. His 60,000 men had no trouble getting across the river and to the south of Bragg.<sup>30</sup>

"No effort will be spared to bring him (Rosecrans) to an engagement whenever the chances shall favor us," reported Bragg on September 4.<sup>31</sup> On September 8, he and his Army of Tennessee abandoned Chattanooga and crept into Georgia. In Georgia, their spirits sank. "The case demands great activity," Confederate President Jefferson Davis said in the hope that Bragg would turn around and attack Rosecrans and push him back into Tennessee.<sup>32</sup> On September 10, Rosecrans and the Federals entered Chattanooga. In the meantime, a force under Confederate General James Longstreet had been dispatched from Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and sent south to bolster Bragg. By the time the reinforcements arrived, Bragg's army was

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<sup>29</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 23, pt. II, p. 518.

<sup>30</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 670.

<sup>31</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. II, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

roughly the same size as Rosecrans. With his ranks swollen, Bragg decided to act. He decided to go north, advance on Rosecrans, and “turn on him in the direction of Chattanooga.”<sup>33</sup>

Bragg sent false deserters to the Union army who reported that the rebels were retreating. Bragg hoped the Yankees would relax in the thought that the rebels were pitiful and defeated. Bragg then planned to attack and destroy Rosecrans. Yet, for a week, Bragg tried and failed to get attacks organized. Each time, his subordinates failed to carry out orders. In the meantime, Rosecrans caught wind of what the Confederates were up to and positioned his own force along the West Chickamauga Creek.<sup>34</sup> But when Longstreet’s troops began to arrive on September 8, Bragg had more men than Rosecrans. Longstreet’s advance columns were led by John Bell Hood, whose arm hung in a sling following a wound sustained at Gettysburg. Bragg planned to attack as soon as possible. He told his troops that they “should march against the enemy and crush him.”<sup>35</sup> The following morning, on September 19, the two armies collided, and the fight began.

Bragg proved insistent in his aim to destroy Rosecrans’s left flank. Wave after wave of rebel assaults were pushed back by the Union corps commanded by George H. Thomas. The fighting was furious and the losses heavy on both sides. Thomas’s men held back the rushing Confederates all day. “We drove the enemy in front of us steadily to-day [sic],” Thomas reported.<sup>36</sup> His corps, however, had been damaged badly. On the evening of the 19th, he messaged Rosecrans: “I should very much like to have [re-enforcements sent] up to support my left.”<sup>37</sup>

The following morning, September 20, Bragg reorganized his strategy. Instead of an all-out offensive against Rosecrans’s left, Bragg imagined an attack in which his army would advance in steps at coordinated times to hit all of the Yankee line in tandem. On Bragg’s order, the first piece of the chessboard went into motion, but it was soon apparent that the attack would not be coordinated properly. Bragg’s subordinates again failed him, so just before noon, Bragg called off the attack and commanded Longstreet to attack the Union front “with everything he had.”<sup>38</sup> Longstreet advanced. Rosecrans, as he had all day, moved divisions here and there attempting to fill any holes in his line. Somehow, during the chaos of battle, Rosecrans had moved a division from the line to fill a hole where one did not exist. Meanwhile, he had created a hole where that division had been. Longstreet and his veterans from Virginia charged directly into this hole and found themselves breaching the Federal line and rolling up its flank. Union soldiers on both sides of the hole fled in terror. Longstreet overran one-third of Rosecrans’s entire army and sent them dashing back toward Chattanooga. As Union soldiers, Rosecrans included, raced from the field, George Thomas formed a new line to make a last stand. “The hardest fighting I have seen to-day is now going on here,” said Brigadier General, and future

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>34</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 671-72.

<sup>35</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. II, p. 76.

<sup>36</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. I, p. 134.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>38</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 672.

U.S. President, James A. Garfield.<sup>39</sup> As they had done the day before, Thomas's men withstood repeated Confederate attacks before themselves dropping back toward Chattanooga. For his stand and his leadership, Thomas was thereafter nicknamed the Rock of Chickamauga.<sup>40</sup>

The rebels had won an overwhelming victory. The Union had been pushed back to Chattanooga. Bragg, however, did not push the advantage and destroy Rosecrans before he could reach fortified Chattanooga. Looking over his army, however, Bragg was horrified at the 20,000 casualties they had suffered. His inability to follow up the victory, however, would haunt Bragg as his own leadership would be called into question. On the Union side, Rosecrans realized what a complete failure he had suffered at Chickamauga. "We have met with a severe disaster," he reported. "The extent of it is not yet known."<sup>41</sup> Rosecrans would make it to the fortifications of Chattanooga. Bragg would follow him there and place the town under siege. Chickamauga is significant both because it led to the Battle of Lookout Mountain (Chattanooga) and because of the huge number of casualties on both sides. The *Memphis Daily Appeal* called the battle "one of the most desperate struggles that has been witnessed during the war."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. I, p. 141.

<sup>40</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom.*, 672-73.

<sup>41</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. I, p. 142.

<sup>42</sup> *Memphis Daily Appeal*, September 21, 1863.

## Battle of Lookout Mountain (Chattanooga)

*Essential Questions: What was the outcome of the Battle of Lookout Mountain?*

*What was the significance of the Battle of Lookout Mountain?*

In the fall of 1863, following the defeat at Chickamauga, General William S. Rosecrans and his Army of the Cumberland retreated back to Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Confederates, led by Braxton Bragg, slowly pursued and laid siege to the city in the hope that they could starve Rosecrans into surrender. The standoff at Chattanooga came at the end of an exhausting struggle for the city which had lasted since the summer. The Confederates had been forced from Chattanooga and into northern Georgia. Bragg's army then regrouped and attacked Rosecrans's Federals as they advanced south. In late September, the campaign had its explosive moment at Chickamauga where combined casualties reached 34,000. After such a horrific fight, both armies were battle-weary. Bragg, struggling with conflict in his own high command, dreamed of a triumphant recapture of Chattanooga. Rosecrans, on the other side, seemed lost in a haze of disorientation. He had fled Chickamauga while one of his own generals, George H. Thomas, who became known as "The Rock of Chickamauga," stayed and fought and averted an overwhelming Union disaster. President Lincoln said Rosecrans was "confused and stunned like a duck hit on the head."<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the commanders of both fatigued armies were themselves plagued with troubles. These details set the stage for the critical fight at Chattanooga and the Battle of Lookout Mountain.

At the start of the siege, the rebels occupied the heights around the city, notably Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain. In the west, they guarded the river roads. The only route for Union supplies to reach the army was over the Cumberland Mountains. Even if the heights could be crossed, the area teemed with Confederate cavalry who stalked the land in pursuit of Union supply wagons.<sup>44</sup> With the Union Army of the Cumberland on the verge of destruction, Lincoln took action. He founded the Division of the Mississippi, which covered the area from the Mississippi River to the Appalachian Mountains, and placed at its head the hero of Vicksburg, General Ulysses S. Grant. Before Grant had even entered Tennessee, he ordered Thomas to replace Rosecrans. Shortly after Grant's arrival in Chattanooga, Union troops skirmished and opened a gap west of the city and began to receive supplies. Soldiers dubbed this route the "cracker line."<sup>45</sup> Once Grant had secured a route for supplies, he decided to attack and break the rebel siege of Chattanooga.

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<sup>43</sup>James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 675.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 676.

For three weeks, the two armies faced each other and did not blink. During that time, the Confederates made a critical mistake. Jefferson Davis had deemed it “essential” to wipe out the Yankees in Chattanooga, but he also desired to recapture Knoxville, which was occupied by Union General Ambrose Burnside.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, Davis and Bragg decided to send Longstreet and his men, who had dutifully occupied Lookout Mountain up until that time, north to Knoxville to dislodge Burnside. There, late in November, Longstreet would be soundly defeated at Fort Sanders. Bragg was left with fewer men to fight Grant. By contrast, the Army of the Cumberland (Union) had added 37,000 men since the defeat at Chickamauga.

On November 24, Grant attacked. Grant had planned to attack both ends of Bragg’s army. He intended to leave the center alone and only use Thomas’s men as a threat. On the morning of the 24th, Grant ordered Hooker’s men to scramble up the slope of Lookout Mountain, which lay on the Confederate left flank. The Yankees struck at the relatively easy lower section of the mountain and chased the few Confederates guards up the slope to the peak. Through fallen trees and over boulders and crags the two forces clashed. Fog blanketed the peak at times and gave rise to stories which depicted a legendary “battle above the clouds.” Hooker’s soldiers claimed the mountain after suffering less than 500 casualties. In response, Bragg pulled back his men to Missionary Ridge.<sup>47</sup>

Earlier that day, Grant had ordered an assault on a hill north of Missionary Ridge. However, he discovered the hill was not part of the Missionary Ridge. Grant then ordered a “limited assault” against Missionary Ridge by troops led by George H. Thomas. Thomas instead charged the entrenched Confederate lines with 23,000 men.<sup>48</sup> Thomas’s army ripped through the battle-worn rebels. Then, seeing they were in range of Confederate gunners on the Missionary Ridge heights, they continued the assault. The bluecoats stormed upward, all the while chanting “Chickamauga! Chickamauga!” and the terrified rebel defenders turned and ran. Bragg was puzzled by the “bad conduct in veteran troops who had never before failed in any duty assigned them.”<sup>49</sup> Some Union troops referred to their victory as a “miracle at Missionary Ridge.”<sup>50</sup> Whatever had happened, one fact was certain: the Confederates had been sorely beaten, and Bragg’s army had been kicked out of Tennessee.

The Union victory at Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge was significant for several reasons. First, it proved redeeming for Northern morale and catastrophic for Southern optimism about winning the war. Second, the victory at Chattanooga showed Grant to be the top commander of Union forces, a title that would be bestowed upon him officially the following spring. Third, the Confederate defeat placed the rebels on the defensive for the remainder of the war and opened up the Deep South to Union invasion. Lastly, the loss at Chattanooga once again dashed Confederate morale and made winning the war more improbable.

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<sup>46</sup> Bruce Catton, *Never Call Retreat, The Centennial History of the Civil War*, Vol. 3 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), 260-61.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 262-63; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 677-78.

<sup>48</sup> McPherson, *Ibid.*, 678.

<sup>49</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 31, pt. II, p. 666.

<sup>50</sup> McPherson, *Ibid.*, 680.

## Johnsonville

*Essential Question How did Forrest's actions at Johnsonville effect the war in Tennessee?*

After the fall of Atlanta in September 1864, John Bell Hood tried to draw Sherman's forces into Tennessee by threatening their supply lines. As part of this plan, Nathan Bedford Forrest moved his forces to Johnsonville on the Tennessee River near the Kentucky line. Johnsonville was the site of a Union supply depot guarded by United States Colored Troops. On November 4, 1864, Forrest's forces attacked. The Union commanders burned the transports, barges and gunboats docked there to prevent Forrest's men from capturing them. The fire spread to the warehouses along the dock. Before Union reinforcements could arrive from Nashville, Forrest retreated under the cover of darkness.

Forrest estimated that the supplies and vessels destroyed were worth \$6.7 million, although the Union estimates were much lower. The attack at Johnsonville led to rumors of an Confederate invasion in the mid-west, but ultimately did little to change the outcome of the war. Forrest and Hood had hoped that the destruction of the supplies would stop Sherman's advance through Georgia. However, the raid did not stop Sherman or prevent Hood's defeat at Nashville in November.

Source: Ashdown, Paul. "Battle of Johnsonville." *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*. Tennessee Historical Society. 2018. Web. 5 June 2019.

## Battle of Franklin

*Essential Questions: What was the outcome of the Battle of Franklin? What was the significance of the Battle of Franklin?*

While George Tecumseh Sherman marched his army across Georgia to the sea, Confederate General John Bell Hood, a hero at both Gettysburg and Chickamauga (where he lost his right leg), pushed his Army of Tennessee into a campaign where he hoped to recapture the Volunteer State, move into Virginia, link up with Robert E. Lee, and annihilate both Sherman and Ulysses S. Grant. Bell's plan was overambitious and, in a sense, delusional. One historian has even written that Bell's plan "seemed to have been scripted in never-never land."<sup>51</sup> Moving northward into Tennessee with 40,000 men, Bell tangled with the Federal Army of the Ohio led by Generals John M. Schofield and George H. Thomas. In late November, 1864, Hood faced Schofield at Franklin just south of Nashville. The Battle of Franklin was a disaster for the Confederacy both in terms of casualties and morale.

At the start of his campaign, Hood had little problem advancing through Tennessee. He had sent ahead cavalry, commanded by General Nathan Bedford Forrest, to ride around the enemy and cause chaos much like Stonewall Jackson had in the Shenandoah in 1862. After a small skirmish, Union forces held off rebel attacks but abandoned Columbia and looked to be heading north for the fortifications at Nashville. "The enemy evacuated Columbia last night and are retreating toward Nashville," Bell alerted the Confederate War Department. "Our army is moving forward. I have had no difficulty about supplies, and anticipate none in the future."<sup>52</sup> By the end of November, Schofield had positioned his army at the crossing of the Harpeth River at Franklin, which sat fifteen miles south of Nashville.<sup>53</sup>

Hood had taken over the Army of Tennessee from Joseph Johnston during the defense of Atlanta. For this reason, Hood believed that the army had been trained only to fight on the defensive and did not possess an attacking spirit. Therefore, to test his troops' bravery, Hood ordered a frontal assault against Schofield's entrenched position. Hood's subordinates protested the attack, but he thought their complaints were evidence of the army's lack of fighting spirit. Nevertheless, the Confederates faced a larger, well-protected enemy supported by artillery batteries. On the other hand, the rebel artillery had yet to make it to Franklin with the rest of the army. And, yet, despite all of these disadvantages, Hood stood firm on his order to attack. So, on November 30, the assault commenced.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 811.

<sup>52</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 45, pt. I, p. 1254.

<sup>53</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 812.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

Across the field stormed twenty-thousand Confederates, many of them barefoot. Contrary to what Hood believed about his army's offensive capability, his soldiers charged courageously and reached the Union ranks. There, savage hand-to-hand combat broke out, and the rebels were pushed back. The fighting continued well after dark as Hood's army tried again and again to break Schofield's line. Finally, near midnight, the Union troops fell back and moved toward the fortifications of Nashville.

While on the surface, the battle appeared a Confederate victory (they had driven off Schofield, after all), the heavy toll taken by Hood's army transformed Franklin into a grievous defeat. The Army of Tennessee (Confederate) had lost almost 7,000 men, nearly three times as many as Schofield's Army of Ohio (Union). Twelve Confederate generals had been killed. The ones lucky enough to survive were exhausted and crestfallen. As a fighting force, Hood's army had been rendered insignificant. And yet Hood still lived in a land of delusion. He ordered a proclamation to be read at the head of each regiment.

*The commanding general congratulates the army upon the success achieved yesterday over our enemy by their heroic and determined courage. The enemy have been sent in disorder and confusion to Nashville, and while we lament the fall of many gallant officers and brave men, we have shown to our countrymen that we can carry any position occupied by our enemy.*<sup>55</sup>

Hood would follow the Union army to Nashville and besiege the city. A Union newspaper in Knoxville described Hood's campaign. It read, "Hood, without any base of supplies, without any matured plans of operation, and with the recklessness of a fool, attacked our forces in their strong works at Franklin,"<sup>56</sup> The Battle of Franklin is significant because it crippled Hood's army. Never again would the Confederates be able to challenge the Yankees for superiority in Tennessee.

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<sup>55</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 45, pt. II, p. 628.

<sup>56</sup> *Brownlow's Knoxville Whig, and Rebel Ventilator*, December 7, 1864.



# Battle of Nashville

*Essential Questions: What was the outcome of the Battle of Nashville? What was the significance of the Battle of Nashville?*

Confederate General John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee had been devastated by Union forces at Franklin. Nevertheless, in December of 1864, Hood and his limping troops pursued the Union Army to Nashville. Once there, Hood ordered entrenchments dug and had his army place Tennessee's capital under siege. Facing Hood was General George H. Thomas, Union hero at Chickamauga. For a time, the two did nothing but dig in and wait for the other to make a move. When Thomas finally struck, he did so with a daring and military brilliance that dashed any Confederate hope of regaining Tennessee. The Battle of Nashville represents the Confederacy's last hope for success in the western theater.

In early December, after suffering nearly 7,000 casualties at Franklin, John Bell Hood dragged his army of 40,000 men to the outskirts of Nashville where they besieged the city and 60,000 Union soldiers under George H. Thomas. Hood hoped to receive reinforcements from across the Mississippi River, but the Union navy patrolled the waters and kept any reinforcements west of the river.<sup>57</sup> Hood waited for Thomas to attack.

However, bad weather prevented Thomas from doing so. Thomas's inaction not only dismayed Hood but worried Union leadership as well. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton complained that Thomas had adopted the "McClellan and Rosecrans strategy of do nothing and let the rebels raid the country." Ulysses S. Grant also voiced displeasure at Thomas's perceived halfhearted approach at Nashville. "If Hood is permitted to remain quietly about Nashville, you will lose all the road back to Chattanooga, and possibly have to abandon the line of the Tennessee," Grant wrote Thomas. "Should he attack you it is all well, but if he does not you should attack him before he fortifies."<sup>58</sup>

On December 15, 1864, as the fog lifted from the cold ground, Thomas ordered 50,000 soldiers, including members of the United States Colored Troops (USCT), to smash into Hood's 25,000 men. Thomas distracted Hood by launching sporadic attacks on his right side, while pounding Hood's left. Hood was confused and postponed reinforcing his left for most of the day. By the time he sent reinforcements, it was too late. As night fell, Hood's battered left side gave way, and his entire force fell back two miles south and reformed in a much shorter defensive line.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 813.

<sup>58</sup> *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 45, pt. II, pp. 15-17.

<sup>59</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 813-15; Richard M. McMurry, *John Bell Hood and the War for Southern Independence* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 179.

The following day, December 16, Thomas's army again surged forward with members of the USCT leading the charge at Overton's Hill. Thomas was one of the few Union generals who believed that black troops could fight as well as white troops and gave the USCT a chance to prove themselves in battle. Another innovative aspect of Thomas' plan was to have his cavalry dismount and then attack using repeating rifles. These weapons fired seven shots compared to the single shot muzzle-loading rifles of the infantry. Amidst rain and a dark sky, Confederate units crumbled. Thousands of defeated troops threw down their weapons to either flee or surrender.<sup>60</sup> Rebel commanders tried to make a new line at Brentwood, but, as Tennessee Private Sam Watkins wrote, "the line they formed was like trying to stop the current of Duck river with a fish net."<sup>61</sup> Hood's army was in shambles.

"Hood can't make another day's such fight, while Thomas is in good condition to press him," Union Secretary of War Edwin Stanton reported.<sup>62</sup> For weeks, the pursuit raged southward, as Union cavalry tramped through thick mud and chased remnants of the Army of Tennessee into Alabama and Mississippi. Confederate armies would never challenge for Tennessee again. The Confederate defeat at Nashville was significant because it utterly destroyed any hope for Confederate victory in the western half of the Confederacy. Hood's failure in Tennessee, combined with Sherman's capture of Savannah, made December 1864 a completely disastrous month for the Confederacy.

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<sup>60</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 815.

<sup>61</sup> Sam R. Watkins, *Co. Aytch, or, A Side Show of the Big Show* (Chattanooga, Tennessee: The Times Printing Company, 1900), PDF e-book, 217.

<sup>62</sup> *New-York Tribune*, December 19, 1864.

## Civil War Battles

*Read the first and last paragraphs of the articles on Forts Henry and Donelson, Stones River, Shiloh, the Chattanooga Campaign, Johnsonville, Franklin and Nashville, then summarize the key information in the boxes below. Record the location of the battles, the outcome (which side won?) and the significance (importance) of each battle.*

<p style="text-align: center;">Forts Henry and Donelson</p> <p>Location:</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Significance:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Shiloh</p> <p>Location:</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Significance:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Stones River</p> <p>Location:</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Significance:</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Chattanooga Campaign</p> <p>Location:</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Significance:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Franklin</p> <p>Location:</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Significance:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Nashville</p> <p>Location:</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Significance:</p>