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EAST TENNESSEE, LINCOLN, AND SHERMAN*

By JESSE BURT

PART II

In February, 1862, Halleck placed Sherman in charge of the District of Cairo with headquarters at Paducah, Kentucky, a key to the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers. Although he was determined to keep free of politically motivated actions in performing his duty, it is probably fair to say that Sherman was helped by family political influences. General Halleck wrote Sherman's father-in-law (a respected adviser to President Lincoln), "As evidence that I have every confidence in General Sherman, I have placed him in command of Western Kentucky—a command second only in this department—I have seen newspaper squibs charging him with being crazy, etc. This is grossest injustice."⁴⁸

His western Kentucky assignment terminated the first phase of Sherman's East Tennessee relationship: the charge of insanity, partly evoked by Sherman's attitude toward East Tennessee, was unfounded in the eyes of the Federal military. The Cairo position brought him into association with General Ulysses S. Grant, also a member of Halleck's staff, who, in February of 1862, and with help from the navy, captured Forts Henry and Donelson on the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers, opening the way to Nashville. At this same time General Buell, whose command jurisdiction ended where Halleck's began at the Cumberland River, was moving his forces down the Louisville and Nashville line also in the Nashville direction.

Buell occupied Nashville in late February, 1862, as A. S. Johnston's Confederate Army of Tennessee retreated to Murfreesborough (Murfreesboro) and finally toward Mississippi, fighting en route at Shiloh (or Pittsburgh Landing) on the Tennessee River where Johnston was killed. Andrew Johnson, arriving in Nashville in March as brigadier general of volunteers and military governor of Tennessee, was given

*Adapted from an address delivered before a joint meeting of the East Tennessee Historical Society and the East Tennessee Civil War Round Table in Knoxville, May 25, 1962. Part I was printed in *Publications* No. 34 (1962).

⁴⁸ To confirm the point that Sherman's family connections may have helped him see Halleck to Ewing, February 15, 1862, Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 217.

the task of restoring Tennessee to the Union; Buell was expected to hold Nashville and proceed at the same time with an East Tennessee move. Before any move could be executed, however, his Department of the Ohio was placed under the united command of General Halleck (whose Missouri army had achieved the first notable victories in the West at Forts Henry and Donelson, and had engaged in the emergency at Shiloh).

However costly a policy, the holding of East Tennessee (identified by the Richmond *Enquirer* as the keystone of the Southern arch) continued to influence the movements of Johnston's permanent successor, General Braxton Bragg.⁴⁴ Memphis was occupied by the Union in June. Thus by the summer of 1862 both Middle and West Tennessee, the Confederate sections of the state, were held by Union armies. East Tennessee, the Union section, remained in possession of the Confederates, a condition which consistently furnished a public issue in the North. William G. Brownlow added to the Civil War propaganda repertory by regaling large audiences with well-colored accounts of his experiences while imprisoned by the Confederate army at Knoxville, of fatal beatings of Union men, of kickings of bridge burners' corpses, and even hinted that there had been assaulting of Union women. Brownlow cried, "In God's name I call upon President Lincoln and upon his cabinet and army officers to say how long they will allow a loyal people, true to the Union and to the government of their fathers, to suffer in this way." *Parson Brownlow's Book*, issued in Philadelphia in 1862 to become a best seller (100,000 copies), had a publisher's introduction which exclaimed:

The Unionists of East Tennessee! A term now significant of long suffering, of devotion to a principle of faith in the noblest traits of a state or people struggling for existence in the midst of terrors which struck humanity by their very magnitude.

In the same year of 1862 readers in St. Paul and Davenport could

⁴⁴ For discussion of Grant-Sherman relationship consult Jacob B. Cox, *The March to the Sea* (New York, 1882), 3; Howard K. Beale (ed.), *Diary of Gideon Welles*, 3 vols. (New York, 1960), I, 438; W. F. G. Shanks, *Personal Recollections of Distinguished Generals* (New York, 1866), *passim*; W. T. Sherman, "The Grand Strategy of the Last Year of the War," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, ed. by Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, 4 vols. (New York, 1887-88), IV, 247-59; Macartney, *Grant and his Generals*, 295 ff. For convenient compilation of the official correspondence consult U. S. Army, *Ft. Henry and Ft. Donelson Source Book* (Fort Leavenworth, 1923); for organizational changes, Fry, *Operations of the Army under Buell*, 12. The standard work on its subject is C. R. Hall, *Andrew Johnson, Military Governor of Tennessee* (Princeton, 1916). For Confederate movements see Horn, *Army of Tennessee*, 122-61; Richmond *Enquirer*, n.d., quoted in Dykeman, *The French Broad*, 79.

buy a local paperback publication *Alleghania* which asked, "Will not the Government recognize relief to the Loyal South as the first great emergency, and the most urgent expediency to the suppression of the rebellion?" Harvard University President Thomas Hill, upon reading in 1862 the Reverend Hermann Bokum's Philadelphia publication, *Testimony of a Refugee from East Tennessee*, said that Bokum awakened him to the Civil War as a "great and portentous fact." Bokum's memoirs were translated into German. They may have been read by many German-Americans who were refugees from the 1849 wars in Europe and steadfast supporters of President Lincoln and the Union.⁴⁵

After action at Shiloh and Corinth, Buell's forces were ordered by General Halleck to march toward Chattanooga and repair the Memphis and Charleston Railroad on the way. However, in a masterly feat General Bragg in July moved the Army of Tennessee by rail from Tupelo, Mississippi, to Chattanooga in time to discourage Union hopes of easily taking that major rail junction. For the next several months Bragg maneuvered into Kentucky and Buell countermarched to protect Louisville. After an engagement with Bragg at Perryville, Kentucky, on October 8, 1862, Buell was removed from command of the Army of the Ohio in part because, his former chief of staff says, charges of slowness about East Tennessee were especially "pressed."⁴⁶ East Tennessee now was returned to the Department of the Cumberland.

Buell's successor as commander of the reactivated Department of the Cumberland was Major General William S. Rosecrans, who had important Ohio connections and was probably appointed to the command for political as well as military reasons. The Democrats had used the slowness of Union army moves toward East Tennessee as an election issue; Republican leaders grumbled, "Buell's slows cost us votes"; the Copperhead peace movement in the Mid-west was finding an issue in the long delay of Lincoln's East Tennessee hopes. Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, a native of Cincinnati and a Democrat, wrote to Rosecrans:

For months and months the country has witnessed with pain and indignation . . . the mishap of movement which has characterized Buell. . . .

⁴⁵ Coulter, *William G. Brownlow*, 239; *Parson Brownlow's Book*, *passim*; Humes, *Loyal Mountaineers*, 344-45. For discussion of the German-Americans see Randall, *Lincoln, the President*, I, 131. A copy of the German edition of Bokum's memoirs is in the Tennessee State Library.

⁴⁶ Fry, *Operations of the Army under Buell*, 12-79, 85.

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It has come to be believed that his heart was not in the war. . . . These views I know are not yours. You are for earnest, vigorous and decisive action and now have an opportunity which other generals apparently have thrown away. . . . Now . . . for East Tennessee—the proud central fortress—the keys of the whole position of the rebellion.

However, Rosecrans spent the latter part of October and all of November in organizing the Army of the Cumberland, leading Chase on December 11 to warn, "I have heard a great deal of conflict about your tarrying at Nashville. Perhaps you should not have gone to Nashville at all, but have pushed directly for East Tennessee." Although protesting that he was not yet fully ready, Rosecrans in late December moved out of Nashville and engaged Bragg's army near Murfreesborough in the hard fought battle of Stone's River.⁴⁷

The year 1862 saw continued development of the two major theaters of operations: in the East and in the West. Sherman along with Grant helped to produce the main successes in the West, such as the occupation of Memphis and West Tennessee and the beginning of the West's river war with the purpose of gaining Mississippi River control. Sherman's 1861 detour of the Union army from the East Tennessee goal of President Lincoln was continued as 1862 policy by his successors Buell and Rosecrans.

Rosecrans rested his Army of the Cumberland for several months after the Stone's River fighting in late 1862 and then in the spring of 1863 began the maneuvers which forced General Bragg to withdraw south. On September 18, 19, and 20, they fought at Chickamauga in north Georgia. Rosecrans retired to Chattanooga which had been occupied by the Union on September 9. Bragg's Confederate army, having been reenforced just prior to Chickamauga by Lieutenant General James Longstreet's First Corps (sent by circuitous railroad route from the Army of Northern Virginia), burned the Nashville and Chattanooga bridge over the Tennessee River and broke Rosecrans' supply line. Then Bragg occupied positions on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge and brought Rosecrans under siege.

One of Lincoln's private secretaries, John Hay, notes in his diary that the news of Rosecrans' defeat at Chickamauga gave Lincoln a

⁴⁷ For background see William M. Landers, *The Edge of Glory, A Biography of General William S. Rosecrans* (New York, 1961); McKinney, *Education in Violence, passim*; Chase to Rosecrans, in Landers, *Edge of Glory*, 186, 196. For Rosecrans' reluctance to march out of Nashville see his Report on the Battle of Murfreesborough, *Senate Executive Document*, No. 2, 38 Cong., Special Sess. (1863), 3.

severe insomnia attack. General Oliver O. Howard tells of a September, 1863, conference with Lincoln in Washington, before the Chickamauga disaster, in which the President, pointing to the Cumberland Gap region on his wall map, said:

General, if you come out of this horror and misery alive, and I pray to God that you may, I want you to do something for those mountain people who have been shut out of the world all these years. I know them. If I live I will do all I can to aid, and between us perhaps we can do the justice they deserve. Please remember this, and if God is good to us we may be able to speak of this later.⁴⁸

General Howard always thought that East Tennessee as a personal cause was stronger to Lincoln than designs of military strategy.

Knoxville also was giving Lincoln special anxiety in the fall of 1863. General Ambrose Burnside with the reactivated Army of the Ohio occupied Knoxville in early September (a few days before Rosecrans occupied Chattanooga). Two independent commands, the Army of the Ohio at Knoxville and the Army of the Cumberland at Chattanooga, were now involved in the East Tennessee military problem, and Lincoln may have been weighing the potential hazards of the situation when he said, "East Tennessee can be no more than temporarily lost so long as Chattanooga is firmly held."⁴⁹

Lincoln and his advisors were groping for a solution to East Tennessee's military difficulties. Certain procedures were undertaken to aid Rosecrans at Chattanooga. In late September Sherman (now a brigadier general in the regular army and in Grant's Army of the Tennessee) commenced with the Fifteenth Corps a river-and-land journey from Big Black River near Vicksburg via Memphis to aid Chattanooga. At the order of Halleck, who had been called to Washington as general-in-chief in July of 1862, Sherman undertook on the way from Memphis the repair of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad to help in supplying the western theater armies. Also in this period two corps from the Army of the Potomac in the eastern theater boarded trains at Manassas Junction, Virginia, for Bridgeport, Alabama, to reenforce additionally the beleaguered Army of the Cumberland at Chattanooga.

⁴⁸ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 31, Pt. 1, pp. 670 ff; Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants, A Study in Command*, 3 vols. (New York, 1942-44), III, 223-37; Howard, *Autobiography*, I, 452-53; Kincaid, *Wilderness Road*, 342.

⁴⁹ Harold S. Fink, "The East Tennessee Campaign and the Battle of Knoxville in 1863," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 29 (1957), 79-117; Lincoln to Burnside, September 27, 1863, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 30, Pt. 3, p. 905.

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This force of about fifteen thousand commanded by General Joseph E. Hooker was transported in six hundred boxcars through six states (some 1,200 miles in less than seven days) and became one of the largest reenforcement missions of the war. General Howard as commander of the Eleventh Corps was with this detachment from the Army of the Potomac.⁵⁰

An October 15 letter to Lincoln from Knoxville expressed the alarm which was there:

In the name of Christianity and humanity! in the name of God and liberty! for the sake of their wives and children and everything they hold sacred and dear on earth! the loyal people of East Tennessee appeal to you and implore you not to abandon them again to the merciless dominion of the rebels by a withdrawal of the U. S. forces from upper East Tennessee.

Lincoln in reply said, "You do not estimate the holding of East Tennessee more highly than I do. There is no absolute purpose of withdrawing our forces from it, and only a contingent one to withdraw them temporarily for the purpose of not losing the position permanently." Lincoln added, "I am in great hope of not finding it necessary to withdraw them at all, particularly if you raise new troops rapidly for us there." He followed up this advice to the civilians by asking Burnside about the results of recent recruiting. Burnside answered that he had so far recruited nearly 3,000 [*sic*] men for the three years' service and armed some 2,500 [*sic*] Home Guards (apparently in the Knoxville area).⁵¹

The Union tendency after Chickamauga, despite reactions of urgency from time to time, was toward reducing the importance of East Tennessee as a military administrative problem. The hero of Vicksburg, General U. S. Grant, was on October 27 named supreme commander of the Union forces in the West. Halleck in Washington three days later prepared at the request of General Grant an official summary of the government's position, stating in part, "It has been the constant

⁵⁰ Rawlins to Sherman, September 26, 1863, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 30, Pt. 3, p. 864; Sherman to Hooker, September 27, 1863, *ibid.*, 904. Carl Schurz, *Reminiscences*, 3 vols. (New York, 1907-08), III, 55, gives September 25 as the date when the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps were detached from the Army of the Potomac to go under Hooker's overall command to Bridgeport, where they arrived on October 1-2. For the details see John Richards Boyle, *Soldiers True, 111th Regiment Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteers* (New York, 1903), 148.

⁵¹ J. L. Williams and N. G. Taylor to Lincoln, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 30, Pt. 4, p. 401; Lincoln's reply, *ibid.*, 448-49; Burnside to Lincoln, October 20, 22, 1863, *ibid.*, Series I, Vol. 31, Pt. 1, pp. 681, 701.

desire of the government, from the beginning of the war, to rescue the loyal inhabitants of East Tennessee from the hands of the rebels, who fully appreciated the importance of continuing their hold on the country." Buell and then Rosecrans failed to carry out their East Tennessee assignments. Burnside ignored at Knoxville instructions from Washington which were repeated "some fifteen times" to coordinate his movements with those of Rosecrans. At no time had the government wanted East Tennessee operations divided into distinct parts as had ensued at Chattanooga under Rosecrans and at Knoxville under Burnside. "In other words the main object of the campaign was the restoration of East Tennessee to the Union, and by holding the two extremities of the valley to secure it from rebel invasion."⁵²

General Grant, as head of the Military Division of the Mississippi, arrived to relieve Chattanooga on October 23. He impatiently awaited Sherman's arrival, saying of his mood at the time, "The situation seemed desperate and nothing could be done until Sherman could get up." Sherman was under the special orders from General Halleck to rebuild the Memphis and Charleston to the east as he marched toward Chattanooga. In late October he had reached Iuka, Mississippi, near the Alabama line and the Tennessee River, when he received the orders from General Grant to drop the Memphis and Charleston work, cross the Tennessee, and hurry eastward with all dispatch to Bridgeport. Sherman tactfully explained to General Halleck that the abandonment of the railroad work was required by Grant because of the emergency. Halleck could not take offense at this reason given by Sherman, who was negotiating his way into a new situation in which what Grant thought had controlling import. The respected Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston in this period of Union reorganization was insisting to General Bragg that, "Where Grant is, we must expect the great Federal effort."⁵³

Notwithstanding the impression of instantaneous obedience that he sought later to give, Sherman proceeded to Chattanooga only when he was satisfied he was ready. His handling of his situation makes a good contrast to Rosecrans, who had been nagged into marching toward Murfreesborough before he felt his army was prepared.

⁵² Halleck to Grant, October 20, 1863, quoted in Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 355-56.

⁵³ U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 2 vols. (New York, 1885-86), II, 48-49; J. E. Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations* (New York, 1874), 294.

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On October 27 when ordered by Grant to hurry on, Sherman was at Iuka, one hundred and fifteen miles from Memphis. (He later explained his slow pace resulted from having to repair the railroad under the harassment of a group of Confederate cavalry). Apparently to escape the cavalry he took his infantry across the Tennessee, but only after Grant gave him the order from Chattanooga. He said afterwards that he was "literally" following Halleck's special order, but when he heard from Grant he "instantly" crossed the river. However, Sherman much earlier had asked the navy and the U. S. quartermasters to send gunboats and transports to Eastport, Mississippi (the farthest point up river for large boat navigation, near Muscle Shoals). These vessels were used in what actually was an extremely well-managed technical operation encompassing thousands of soldiers. In other words, Sherman gave forethought in north Mississippi to what he might have to do.⁵⁴

Although Grant as supreme commander in the West was sent to Chattanooga, the value of a coordinated East Tennessee military operation was generally unappreciated in the North, perhaps due to misunderstanding of East Tennessee geography. As an example, *Harper's Weekly*, as late as October 24, 1863, continued to talk of East Tennessee in vague and rather romantic terms. The front cover was given to an artist's conception of happy scenes in Knoxville when General Burnside and his army arrived. Reproduced prominently in the same issue was the letter (originally printed in the *Albany Evening Journal*) of a young officer in Knoxville who said of the people there, "I have seen widows and orphans whose husbands and brothers and fathers have been murdered because they were Union men—*no other crimes* alleged. I never knew what the *Love of Liberty* was before." Chattanooga, although a focal point for the presence of western theater commander, Grant, now holder of unprecedented military power, received less attention and deliberation in the North than did Knoxville.

Even after crossing the Tennessee, Sherman was unhurried in his move on Chattanooga. By Grant's order small steamers brought Sherman one million three hundred and thirty-three thousand rations at Fayetteville on November 8. Sherman stopped at Winchester until thirty thousand new horse and mule shoes were delivered on November 11,

⁵⁴ Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 357, 360, 371; Sherman to Adjutant General, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 31, Pt. 3, pp. 89-90.

via the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad.⁵⁵ After his horses and mules were shod, he moved down to Bridgeport, saw his divisions suitably encamped; then, on the night of November 13 without pausing for sleep, Sherman departed for Chattanooga to talk with General Grant.

A small steamer—perhaps part of the “Cracker Line” recently devised to supply the Army of the Cumberland—carried Sherman up the Tennessee to Kelly’s Ferry, where one of Grant’s personal horses awaited for his remaining eight-mile ride to Chattanooga. When Sherman arrived, Grant gave him a cordial greeting and a cigar and offered him the seat of honor (an old high-backed rocker), which Sherman declined saying that the seat of honor always belonged to General Grant. Grant replied that he always respected old age: Sherman was about two years older. The two generals talked through the night and in the morning inspected Grant’s position. Sherman could see easily the Confederate soldiers on Missionary Ridge.

“Why, General Grant, you are besieged,” he later quoted himself as having said.

“It is too true.”

Afterwards Sherman remarked, “Up to that moment I had no idea that things were so bad.”

Sherman rode back to Kelly’s Ferry to find that the small steamer he had taken the night before had gone its way. The local army commander found a rough boat and detailed four soldiers to row General Sherman to Shell Mound where a better boat and fresh rowers were procured. Sherman at times did some rowing. In his memoirs Sherman remembered to credit the soldiers for the fair-sized effort of rowing him to Bridgeport, but in his contemporary report he oversimplified considerably, “I rowed a boat.” He made no mention of the two crews of rowers. Years later in his memoirs Grant said that Sherman rowed a boat from Kelly’s Ferry to Bridgeport, apparently to illustrate Sherman’s formidable energy.⁵⁶

By November 23, 1863, Sherman had crossed the Tennessee River at Brown’s Ferry and followed a route hidden by hills from Con-

⁵⁵ For the supply operations see *ibid.*, 64-65, 74, 96.

⁵⁶ Cigar and rocking chair anecdote told in Howard, *Autobiography*, II, 474; Grant-Sherman dialogue, Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 361; Sherman’s boat trip, Grant, *Memoirs*, II, 58; Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 363.

federate lookouts on Missionary Ridge in order to reach North Chickamauga Creek. He recrossed the Tennessee to open Grant's offensive by striking the north end of the ridge, since Grant thought that the sight of another army would goad life into the entrenched Army of the Cumberland. However, many experts maintain that Sherman's field work at Missionary Ridge on November 25 was less than outstanding in its quality. Thomas with the Army of the Cumberland drove the Confederates from the center of Missionary Ridge; Hooker and the Army of the Potomac detachment broke the Confederate hold on Lookout Mountain. General Bragg lifted the siege of Chattanooga and successfully withdrew the Army of Tennessee toward Dalton in north Georgia.

Grant was well satisfied with Sherman's work (Sherman actually had attacked a hill separated from the Ridge and had encountered the crack Cleburne Confederate division) and gave him the important task of following, with Thomas, the retreating enemy. On Grant's orders Sherman had Howard (now a member of his staff) tear up portions of the Cleveland-Dalton division of the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad and portions of the Western and Atlantic in north Georgia.⁵⁷

In November, following a visit by President Davis to Bragg's army, General Longstreet was detached from Bragg to attack Burnside at Knoxville. Longstreet was accompanied at least part of the way to Knoxville by the presidents of the East Tennessee and Virginia and the East Tennessee and Georgia railroads. William G. Brownlow, home in Knoxville after a lengthy lecture tour in the North, wrote President Lincoln, "We beg you not to let East Tennessee be abandoned by our troops."

With the siege on Chattanooga lifted, with Sherman, Thomas and Grant busy in north Georgia (Sherman and Grant were conferring repeatedly), the *New York Times* speculated about what General Grant might do next. A telegram from the White House to Grant gave the answer, "Well done. Many thanks to all. Remember Burnside."⁵⁸ By this message Knoxville was given sufficient importance to cancel any

⁵⁷ H. V. Boynton, *Sherman's Historical Raid, The Memoirs in the Light of History* (Cincinnati, 1874), 65-88; cf. Charles William Moulton, *The Review of General Sherman's Memoirs* (Cincinnati, 1875), *passim*. For discussion of the Chattanooga operations, Donald Davidson, *The Tennessee*, 2 vols. (New York, 1948), II, 64-73; Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country* (New York, 1952), 245-51.

⁵⁸ Brownlow to Lincoln, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 31, Pt. 3, p. 277; *New York Times*, December 1, 1863; Lincoln to Grant, telegram, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 31, Pt. 2, p. 25.

ideas Grant may have had of organizing a general, heavy-scale pursuit of Bragg's force.

A third time choosing Sherman as his preferred agent in East Tennessee operations, Grant ordered him to take an enlarged force of approximately thirty thousand men and with the help of General Howard and General Carl Schurz (he had come from Virginia with Hooker) to aid Burnside at Knoxville. An Army of the Cumberland corps commanded by General Gordon Granger was at Grant's order already underway to Knoxville. Grant said to Sherman, "Granger is on the way to Burnside's relief, but I have lost all faith in his energy and capacity to manage an expedition of the importance of this one. I am inclined to think, therefore, that I shall have to send you."⁵⁹

At Cleveland in the early morning of December 3, 1863, as recounted in his memoirs, General Schurz was amused by a profane tirade Sherman uttered to General Howard about the East Tennessee weather. Schurz, who shared the feeling, realized that Sherman by implication was taking to task the need for the Knoxville expedition. On the same day Sherman sent to Grant a note giving his views of the operation. In compressed and ungrammatical language he said in part:

Recollect that East Tennessee is my horror. That any military man should send a force into East Tennessee puzzles me. Burnside is there and must be relieved, but when relieved I want to get out, and he should come out too.

I think, of course, its railroad should be absolutely destroyed, its provisions eaten up or carried away, and all troops brought out.⁶⁰

On the same day that Sherman reminded Grant of his temporary assignment in the Knoxville expedition, General Robert E. Lee in Virginia, writing to President Davis, surveyed recent Georgia and Tennessee developments with "some anxiety." Longstreet's Knoxville expedition was nullified by Union destruction of the Cleveland-Dalton section of the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad, which meant that reenforcing and supplying him would be difficult. The vital consideration now was Chattanooga and its railroads. From Chattanooga "the

⁵⁹ Grant to Sherman, November 29, 1863, quoted in Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 366-67. For the developing circumstances consult *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 30, Pt. 4, pp. 175-565; also Grant to Sherman, October 24, November 29, 1863, *ibid.*, Vol. 31, Pt. 1, p. 713, Pt. 2, p. 49.

⁶⁰ Sherman to Grant, December 1, 1863, *ibid.*, Pt. 3, p. 297; Schurz, *Reminiscences*, III, 80.

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enemy may penetrate Georgia and get possession of our depots of provision and important manufactories." The safety of major Confederate points on the Atlantic seaboard depended on these facilities in Georgia. Lee did not mention Sherman by name although Grant, first in calling him to Chattanooga to open the offensive, then sending him into north Georgia, having him break railroad as he went, and finally ordering him to relieve Burnside, placed reliance definitely on Sherman as his preferred agent. This role in East Tennessee was of substantial importance in the military career of William T. Sherman.⁶¹

Having been informed by a Burnside courier that Longstreet had just lifted the Knoxville siege, following the failure of his assault on Fort Sanders, Sherman stopped his expedition at Maryville on the night of December 5. Probably few single Confederate corps extracted from the Union such a show of force as had Longstreet's: opposed in the Knoxville operation by Sherman, Granger, and a detachment of Union cavalry, as well as by Burnside, he was outnumbered, probably, by about five to one. After resting Sherman left his organization behind and rode into what he called the "mountain town" of Knoxville. In commenting later on his Knoxville experiences, he said that, instead of starving conditions as rumored, he found that Burnside set a well-appointed table featuring roast turkey. Actually, the Burnside staff had exerted particular effort to have an appropriate dinner for General Sherman.⁶²

After a brief inspection Sherman left Knoxville and the pursuit of Longstreet to Burnside and Corps-commander Granger, who also had arrived in Knoxville at about this time. Sherman's march had been for the purpose of relieving Burnside. He lacked the authority to attach his force to Burnside's Army of the Ohio. There would have resulted at Knoxville an arrangement of two armies with two different commanders, plus Granger, to dispose of Longstreet. President Lincoln had only recently unified East Tennessee by creating a three-army command for Grant. The instigator of the main Union effort was Grant at Chattanooga, facing Bragg (soon succeeded by Joseph E. Johnston) in north Georgia. At Sherman's request Burnside wrote a letter to him on December 7, explaining that with Granger's corps at Knoxville there

⁶¹ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 31, Pt. 3, pp. 779-80.

⁶² Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 380-81, 368; McKinney, *Education in Violence*, 299; Fink, "The East Tennessee Campaign," *loc. cit.*, 112-17.

was no need for Sherman to remain. It was appropriate that he should rejoin Thomas and Grant at Chattanooga since "General Grant has weakened the forces immediately with him in order to relieve us." Sherman said of Granger, "His was the force originally designed to reenforce Burnside and it was eminently proper it should join in the stern chase after Longstreet."⁶³

By order of General Grant, to be certain Confederate forces had departed middle East Tennessee, Sherman leisurely marched through the good farm country between the Little Tennessee and Hiwassee rivers. He wrote to Grant:

We have eaten and are eating up much meat, meal, flour, etc., and though we try to forage on the enemy, I fear we take much of Union people. But we try and discriminate by receipts. . . .

If you want me to destroy railroad, mills, machinery, or anything, send me word.

Grant replied, "I do not think it advisable to destroy mills or any property in East Tennessee except what may be required for military purposes."⁶⁴

Although evidently lacking major importance from the military point of view, the heavy effort of the Knoxville expedition was soon revealed by the White House as an essential undertaking. On December 7 President Lincoln in a public paper announced that the Knoxville march had successfully concluded military operations of "high national consequence." Its effect was to round off the East Tennessee campaign so that "the Union forces cannot hereafter be dislodged from that important position." The President asked that the people on December 8 "render homage and gratitude to Almighty God" for the accomplishments in Tennessee. On this date the *New York Times* said in an editorial that the firm possession of East Tennessee affirmed President Lincoln's leadership: "President Lincoln has been one of the very few men in the United States who has steadily and always appreciated the essential military importance of East Tennessee."

The high significance of East Tennessee to President Lincoln was reported in the *New York Times* on December 10, 1863. Lincoln's ten per cent plan for restoring the southern states to the Union was announced. The uncontested occupation of both Chattanooga and

⁶³ Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 381, 383; Johnston, *Narrative*, 294; Burnside to Sherman, December 7, 1863, Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 382; Sherman to John A. Rawlins, December 19, 1863, *ibid.*, 381.

⁶⁴ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 31, Pt. 3, pp. 380-82.

Knoxville demonstrated in tangible fact the theory of the divided South and gave prestige to Lincoln's leadership.

But the war was moving on and the Knoxville country, though having shared fully the "high national consequence" was becoming a backwater sector to the Union military. This was the status tacitly given Knoxville by Grant's December 14 order to Sherman telling him to station a few of his cavalry on the line of the Hiwassee and bring his infantry to Chattanooga. Next Grant moved his headquarters to Nashville and ordered Sherman to join him there for a talk about the next, and Grant thought the last, big campaign of the war. While Grant seemingly was content with the existing arrangement in the Knoxville area, Halleck continued to send him telegrams relating Lincoln's "anxiety" over Longstreet, who remained in upper East Tennessee. In part to calm Halleck, Grant in late December visited Knoxville and Cumberland Gap and inspected supply roads to Knoxville in Kentucky. He was tempted to organize a major valley campaign in order to deal conclusively with Longstreet.⁶⁵

The year 1863 saw the development of strong Federal military efforts in both the eastern and western theaters. The first week of July produced Gettysburg and Vicksburg. Lee's invasion of the North failed; Grant's river war succeeded. Sherman rose from corps commander under Grant to field commander of the Army of the Tennessee when Grant as supreme commander in the West went from Vicksburg to Chattanooga. Due to the reliance Grant placed on him, Sherman in the latter part of the year became prominent in the successful East Tennessee military operations. In his skillfully executed role as Grant's preferred lieutenant, Sherman helped to simplify the East Tennessee problem by reducing it to the area between the Hiwassee River and the Georgia boundary and centering at Chattanooga. It seemed clear in December, however, that President Lincoln conceived of East Tennessee in more generalized terms of geography.

To afford Grant security for the proposed upper East Tennessee campaign, Sherman in early 1864 conducted a damaging raid on the

⁶⁵ A summary is in Grant to Halleck, January 15, 1864, *ibid.*, Vol. 32, Pt. 2, pp. 99-101. See also Grant to Stanton, December 24, 1863, *ibid.*, Vol. 31, Pt. 3, p. 479; Halleck to Grant, December 26, 1863, *ibid.*, 496-97. Temple in *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 514, states, "The failure to drive Longstreet out of the country was the greatest calamity that ever befell the people of Upper East Tennessee." For Sherman's December movements see his *Memoirs*, I, 387; for the winter of 1863-1864 in the Knoxville country, W. B. Hazen, *A Narrative of Military Service* (Boston, 1885), 241 ff.

Meridian, Mississippi, rail junction with the purpose of preventing shipment of troops and supplies to any Confederate force which might march into East Tennessee in opposition to Grant.

In March, 1864, however, promoted to lieutenant general and made commander of all the land forces of the United States, Grant moved his headquarters to the Army of the Potomac for direct operation against Lee. The new western plan, timed with Grant's 1864 spring offensive in Virginia, was for Sherman to campaign against General Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee for Atlanta.⁶⁶

In 1864 East Tennessee relief societies organized in Philadelphia and Boston with contributions from many other places in the North raised approximately \$250,000. At an East Tennessee rally in Boston's historic Faneuil Hall on February 10, 1864, Edward Everett epitomized the East Tennessee Unionists as patriots who had "stood at the post of danger; on whom the storm of war first broke, and on whom from that day to this, it has beat with wildest fury." Perhaps due to his leadership Boston citizens gave \$100,000 for East Tennessee relief. However, there was generous support in other parts of New England, particularly in Maine, whose governor led East Tennessee relief drives.

In the same year a sixty-four-page volume of poetry published in Philadelphia re-told the story of the East Tennessee bridge burners and related in general the distress of East Tennessee Unionists:

Relief delayed but promised long,
To rid our suffering land of wrong,
Had blunted expectation's sense,
And chilled the feelings once intense
Until alternate doubt and fear
Refused to trust that aid was near.

Perhaps poetess Anna Dorsey began the composition of *They're Coming, Granddad: A Tale of East Tennessee* as early as 1864. The theme of this later Washington imprint, which could be recited to a musical background, dealt with endurance under stress, self sacrifice, and patriotism.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ For the Meridian raid see Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 388-405. For Grant's promotion and the plan for the West with Sherman as his successor see General Orders, No. 98, O.R., Series I, Vol. 32, Pt. 3, p. 58. Johnston had succeeded Bragg; Hood was to succeed Johnston in command of the Army of Tennessee.

⁶⁷ Thomas W. Humes, *Report to the East Tennessee Relief Association at Knoxville* (Knoxville, 1865), *passim*; [Thomas A. R. Nelson], *Secession or Prose in Rhyme and East Tennessee, a Poem* (Philadelphia, 1864). There are a few Civil War East Tennessee items in Tennessee Imprints File, Tennessee State Library.

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Although probably less dramatic and more difficult to detail, East Tennessee relationships during this period also involved Confederate sympathy. The prevailing political attitudes in several East Tennessee counties reflected Confederate rather than Union control of local government. The presence of Longstreet's corps in upper East Tennessee for several months after he retreated from Knoxville, the activity in East Tennessee of Confederate cavalry leader John Hunt Morgan, and the operations of the Confederate Champ Ferguson may suggest civilian cooperation and support. It is said that throughout the war in many East Tennessee counties there were raids and counterraid by local partisans. Even though the Union held Knoxville and Chattanooga much of East Tennessee remained contested ground.⁶⁸

Early in 1864 President Lincoln had a conversation with young, politically influential Major General John M. Schofield concerning the strong appeal of East Tennessee's loyalty to the Union. When Schofield asked for an assignment where he might make a name as a fighting general, Lincoln suggested the Knoxville command of the Army of the Ohio as desirable. Schofield, who went to Knoxville thinking an opportunity had come, promptly developed a plan for marching the Ninth Corps of the Army of the Ohio against Longstreet in upper East Tennessee. Before his plan could get in operation Grant ordered the Ninth Corps to join the Army of the Potomac in the East. "I felt disappointed at the time," Schofield said later, explaining that Grant took away from him the only corps that was ready for action.

Disenchantment soon followed disappointment. Sherman's tight administrative control of the Knoxville sector, once he succeeded Grant as head of the Military Division of the Mississippi, caused Schofield to complain many years later about "what was done and not done in East Tennessee." The policy of disdaining Longstreet aggrieved Schofield, who thought that "like Sherman" he might enhance his chances in East Tennessee. Instead, he soon understood his position: just one of three subordinate army commanders. (Thomas was with the Army of the Cumberland at Chattanooga and McPherson with the Army of the Tennessee then at Huntsville, Alabama).⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Davidson, *The Tennessee*, II, 114-17.

⁶⁹ John M. Schofield, *Forty-Six Years in the Army* (New York, 1897), 116, 118, 124; for organization and locations of Sherman's armies see *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 38, Pt. 1, pp. 89-117; Schofield to Sherman, April 27, 1864, *ibid.*, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, p. 686; Thomas to Sherman, April 24, 1864, *ibid.*, 555.

Tennessee Military Governor Johnson protested to President Lincoln about Sherman's administration of East Tennessee affairs and suggested that, because of Sherman's unpopularity there, General Thomas should be given exclusive authority in the section. In April, 1864, Sherman took over the management of the Nashville and Chattanooga and the Nashville and Northwestern railroads, further offending Johnson, who had placed their control with a Nashville Unionist, Michael Burns. Johnson called the seizure dictatorial, but President Lincoln declared it necessary to efficient management. By better organization, or "programming" of railroad supply movements, Sherman by the end of April was moving daily more than two thousand tons of supplies to Chattanooga, in contrast to the previous six hundred ton average. No general of Sherman's astuteness would ignore the supply factor after the object lesson of Rosecrans at Chattanooga in 1863. Later Sherman was to say that the Atlanta Campaign would have been impossible without the use of railroads.

The Atlanta Campaign, requiring a three-army command of ninety-eight thousand men and thirty-two thousand horses and mules, was to start from Chattanooga on May 5, 1864. The quantity of food and forage which had to be accumulated in advance at Chattanooga almost dismayed Sherman, who knew that a man had to have three pounds of food a day and an animal twenty pounds. Food was just one item which had to be provided. During the Atlanta Campaign preparation certain railroad repairs were completed in Middle Tennessee: over one hundred miles of the Nashville and Chattanooga track were renovated (using a quantity of re-rolled iron earlier taken up from the East Tennessee and Georgia); approximately one hundred and twenty miles of the Nashville and Decatur were re-built to provide an alternate connecting route to Chattanooga; seventy-eight miles of the Nashville and Northwestern west to the Tennessee River were newly constructed.⁷⁰

In addition to supervising these railroad improvements, Sherman, reasoning that all rations received at Chattanooga were essential for

⁷⁰ Jesse Burt, "Sherman, Railroad General," *Civil War History*, II (March, 1956), 45-53; *id.*, "Sherman's Logistics and Andrew Johnson," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, XV (September, 1956), 195-216; Sherman, *Memoirs*, II, 389; Eva Swantner, "Military Railroads During the Civil War," *The Military Engineer*, XXI (July, August, 1929), 310-17.

the forthcoming Atlanta Campaign, in late April prohibited the issuance of army rations to distressed East Tennessee civilians. He also visited the headquarters of the three armies under his command for talks at Chattanooga with Thomas, at Huntsville with McPherson, and at Knoxville with Schofield. Sherman's orders to Schofield after the Knoxville visit suggest that he left much less discretion to Schofield than to the seasoned McPherson and Thomas. He advised Schofield to keep his own counsel, make civilians (apparently refugees) feed themselves, and beware of strangers. Schofield years later complained that Sherman's instructions to him in reality meant he was required to obey without back talk. Sherman warned all three of his generals to beware of getting entangled in side issues, but especially impressed the point on Schofield.

Schofield was directed to forget Longstreet: Sherman first scoffed that he did not believe Longstreet was in East Tennessee at all; then he told Schofield that Longstreet could only rejoin Lee in Virginia. Arguing that Chattanooga must be the one forwarding point at which to accumulate Atlanta Campaign supplies, Sherman had little need for Knoxville. In late April he ordered Schofield to engage General Jacob Cox of his command in East Tennessee railroad dismantlement. Cox began his destruction at an undesignated point about one hundred miles above Knoxville, removing sections of the railroad track and keeping at least part of the rails for possible military use. Cox later said vaguely that several miles of railroad were removed in this manner. The East Tennessee rails conceivably were utilized to repair Middle Tennessee railroads supplying the Atlanta Campaign, but the contemporary records are not clear on this point. Sherman warned Schofield, "I don't want you to get drawn too far up the valley now." Any inclination he may have had in that direction was ended when Sherman, severing Knoxville from his main organization, directed Schofield to move his headquarters to Cleveland.⁷¹

On May 4 Sherman was in Chattanooga, prepared to begin. The Atlanta Campaign was only twenty-four hours away. A message came to Sherman from President Lincoln, who said that certain East Tennesseans had protested that Sherman's order prohibiting issuance of

⁷¹ Sherman to Schofield, March 18, 21, April 1, 24, 1863, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 32, Pt. 3, pp. 88, 101, 102, 213, 475; Jacob B. Cox, *Atlanta* (New York, 1882), 17.

army rations to civilians was harsh and would impose affliction. Therefore, Lincoln said, "Anything you can do consistent with your military duty for those suffering people I shall be glad of. . . ."

The next day Sherman rode out from Chattanooga toward the north Georgia hills to begin the Atlanta Campaign. A distance of thirty miles separated his right, Schofield, from McPherson, his left; Thomas was at the center. Some time during this day Sherman in animated prose, constituting his definition of the nature of military duty, answered the presidential inquiry about his ration policy. He advised that his duty had to be precise and had to be limited to the immediate responsibility of providing rations and supplies for an immense army. The railroad from Nashville to Chattanooga was taxed to bring supplies to the forwarding point. Sherman declared, "I will not change my order." As an alternative he suggested that the President test out those who were making complaint: "I advise you to tell the bearers of the appeal to hurry to Kentucky and make up a caravan of cattle and wagons and come over the mountains by Cumberland Gap and Somerset, to relieve their suffering friends, on foot, the way they used to do before a railroad was built."

It might be interesting to speculate whether Sherman in this reference to Cumberland Gap was thinking back nearly three years when his attitude toward a Cumberland Gap expedition helped to produce the charge that he was insane. At any rate his order held. The New York correspondent, Shanks, said in another connection that Lincoln sometimes was amused by Sherman's independence. The refusal to change his order may have appeared amusing. On the other hand, General Cox said later that the order was "judiciously relaxed" when a good reservoir of supplies was obtained.⁷²

After entering Atlanta in early September, 1864, Sherman gave his grand army a rest period. At about this same time General Schofield, giving temporary Army of the Ohio command to Cox, went on leave. Sherman, however, did not remember giving a leave to Schofield. For three days General Josiah Webster, Sherman's chief of staff who had remained in Nashville, tried unsuccessfully to locate Schofield in answer

⁷² Lincoln to Sherman, May 4, 1864, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 38, Pt. 4, p. 25; Sherman to J. D. Webster, May 4, 1864, *ibid.*, 26; Sherman to Lincoln, May 5, 1864, *ibid.*, 33. For Sherman's original order see *ibid.*, Vol. 32, Pt. 3, p. 420. See Shanks, *Recollections*, 186; Cox, *Atlanta*, 22.

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Pt. 4, p. 25; Sherman
May 5, 1864, *ibid.*, 33.
Shanks, *Recollections*,

to inquiries from Sherman. He was at length found in Louisville and ordered back to Georgia by Sherman. When he learned that two major generals with army troops from Knoxville and Cumberland Gap stations had recently joined an East Tennessee expedition undertaken by Military Governor Johnson's militia, Sherman ordered the U. S. army elements to return to their posts, which were in Schofield's Department of the Ohio. Sherman had already given his opinion of the Tennessee militia to General Webster: "I never dreamed of their being a part of my military command, and have never reckoned them anything but a political element."⁷³

As the Georgia operations progressed Sherman's supply line lengthened (Louisville-Nashville-Chattanooga-Atlanta, three states, roughly five hundred miles). Sherman could obtain some of the necessary food in the countryside, but he needed for his great army many other things. In October of 1864 at Atlanta he revealed to his cavalry leader, General James H. Wilson, that he was troubled by the long supply line to the rear:

I am a damn sight smarter than Grant. I know a great deal more about war, military history, strategy, and grand tactics than he does; I know more about organization, supply, and administration, and about everything else than he does. But I tell you where he beats me, and where he beats the world. He don't [*sic*] care a damn about what the enemy does out of his sight, but it scares me like hell.

The Confederate Army of Tennessee now commanded by General John Bell Hood had evacuated Atlanta and after feinting at Chattanooga marched to attack Sherman's supply complex at Nashville in December. Sherman said in a celebrated statement that "the batch of devils," or Hood, Joseph E. Wheeler, and Nathan Bedford Forrest, might destroy his supply system.⁷⁴

Finally, Sherman made his controversial decision to cut loose from the rail line by marching from Atlanta to Savannah, drawing subsistence from the country. Previously he campaigned in more-or-less orthodox style, supplied by railroad, but as he later said, the March to the Sea

⁷³ Sherman to Webster, June 6, 1864, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 39, Pt. 2, p. 80. For brief discussions of affairs in East Tennessee in 1864-1865 see Hall, *Andrew Johnson*, 157-58; Thomas B. Alexander, *Thomas A. R. Nelson* (Nashville, 1956), 112-13; *id.*, *Political Reconstruction in Tennessee* (Nashville, 1950), 59-66.

⁷⁴ Macartney, *Grant and his Generals*, 295; Sherman, *Memoirs*, II, 152. For background consult John Bell Hood, *Advance and Retreat* (New Orleans, 1880); Schofield, *Forty-Six Years*, 161; Thomas Robson Hay, *Hood's Tennessee Campaign* (New York, 1929); Stanley F. Horn, *The Decisive Battle of Nashville* (Baton Rouge, 1956), *passim*.

shifted the base of supply from a fixed point in the rear to the hostile country. Before partially burning Atlanta, Sherman returned the army sick and wounded to Chattanooga. The Western and Atlantic from Dalton to Atlanta was destroyed by Sherman's order. He sent Thomas and later Schofield to defend Nashville, but he made no sizable reinforcement of Union garrisons in East Tennessee.⁷⁵ Thus Sherman, the Union commander in the West, definitively abandoned East Tennessee.

The main military events in 1864 were the campaigns by Grant in the East and Sherman in the West, or more precisely the Southeast. Coming at the opportune time when Lincoln sought re-election, perhaps the most widely heralded Union victory was the Sherman occupation of Atlanta. The invasion of Georgia from the Chattanooga starting point bore out General Lee's prediction that the Union, with East Tennessee effectually eliminated as a strategic element, could be expected to turn next to Georgia.

Sherman's decision in November, 1864, to march from Atlanta to the Atlantic Ocean closed the relationship involving East Tennessee, Lincoln, and Sherman which had begun in the fall of 1861. This relationship was influential in the conduct of the Civil War, the history of Tennessee, the administration of President Lincoln, and the career of General Sherman.

The Grant-Sherman military team was tested and proved finally in East Tennessee and together the two generals brought Union victory in climactic grand offensives. One of these, the Atlanta Campaign, owed inception to Union possession of the Chattanooga rail junction, which reduced the military resources of the Confederacy and therefore hastened the end of the war.

The history of Tennessee, the first Confederate state to be generally occupied by the Union, was also influenced by the East Tennessee, Lincoln, and Sherman relationship. The Federal army found necessary the destruction of the East Tennessee railroad and the improvement of Middle Tennessee railroads, actions of considerable influence in the postwar recovery of Tennessee and especially in the development of

⁷⁵ For discussion of orthodox methods of supply see O. J. Matthijs Jolles (translator), *On War* by Karl von Clausewitz (New York, 1943), 287-90; for methods developed by the French army in the Revolutionary War for living off the country see *ibid.*, 290-93; for Sherman's reenforcement pattern, Sherman, *Memoirs*, II, 167-69.

Nashville as a transportation center.⁷⁶ Perhaps the encouragement of Lincoln and the sympathy and aid of so many northern citizens sustained the loyalty of East Tennesseans to the Union. The postwar development of the Republican party in East Tennessee may partly be attributed to the unique relationship of East Tennessee and President Lincoln in the Civil War. The giving of the Morrill Act land grant to East Tennessee University, predecessor of The University of Tennessee, and the establishment of Lincoln Memorial University, in which General O. O. Howard took a leading role, and U. S. Grant University (now the University of Chattanooga) are additional results of East Tennessee's Unionism.⁷⁷

East Tennessee tested the leadership of President Lincoln, but at the same time rallied Union morale and so strengthened him. The order to Grant to "Remember Burnside" qualifies as a dramatic application of presidential power and suggests that Lincoln controlled even U. S. Grant at the time of his unprecedented military power. While Lincoln thought of East Tennessee in rigorously strategic terms, he interrupted Sherman during the critical starting hours of the Atlanta Campaign to ask him how he justified his policy toward distressed East Tennesseans. In other words, East Tennessee during the Civil War was seldom absent from the mind of Abraham Lincoln.

East Tennessee put Sherman also to the test. He viewed East Tennessee in the manner of an almost self-righteously professional soldier in extraordinary times. Sherman, for all his flamboyant exaggerations, refused to think of East Tennessee as anything more than a military problem. Nevertheless, it was this region, though the object of his dislike, which contributed to his achieving an outstanding military reputation. Finally, events in East Tennessee were of immense significance in the history of the Civil War.

⁷⁶ For postwar developments see S. J. Folmsbee, "The Radicals and the Railroads," in *Tennessee*, ed. by Hamer, II, 659-73.

⁷⁷ S. J. Folmsbee, *East Tennessee University, 1840-1879*, in *University of Tennessee Record*, LXII (1959), 71-88. For discussion of the founding of Lincoln Memorial University see Kincaid, *Wilderness Road*, 339-45; for U. S. Grant University, Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, *The University of Chattanooga: Sixty Years* (Chattanooga, 1947), 63-73.

GENERAL BURNSIDE'S KNOXVILLE PACKING PROJECT

By PALMER H. BOEGER

Just after Union General Ambrose E. Burnside occupied Knoxville with the Twenty-third Corps, about the first of September, 1863, Colonels James R. Ellis and E. R. Goodrich, two officers in the Commissary Department, approached the commander with an extraordinary idea for handling his supply problem. The Twenty-third had had a difficult time packing supplies all the way from Camp Nelson, near Nicholasville in central Kentucky. Ellis had had to substitute pack mules for some of his commissary wagons, and officers had put shoulder to wheel side by side with enlisted men to move the guns and supply wagons. The road back to Camp Nelson was lined with broken wagons and dead mules. Soon the questionable mountain roads would disappear under the pounding of the winter rains. So why not buy a lot of hogs in Tennessee and Kentucky, drive them to Knoxville, and pack a supply of pork for the army behind the front lines? The grease might be turned into soap and candles. It was thought that eastern Tennessee should be able to supply a million and a half pounds of pork and perhaps 300,000 bushels of corn. Thirty thousand hogs would do the job for Burnside, argued Ellis and Goodrich. Eastern Tennessee possibly could not produce 30,000 hogs but 20,000 might easily be driven down from Kentucky. The Ninth Corps, marching through Cumberland Gap to reenforce the Twenty-third Corps, had driven 2,000 Kentucky hogs and 600 beef cattle over the mountains behind its supply train. In mid-October a squad of butchers had slaughtered most of those porkers and salted the meat. Therefore, Ellis and Goodrich were confident and insistent that it could be done. Anxious for his army's subsistence, Burnside readily agreed to the hog scheme.

Knoxville had one packinghouse, which when Ellis promptly examined it, proved to be a ramshackle board shack, badly run down and without any sort of equipment; but it would do after a little revamping. Butcher's tools might be imported from the north. Ellis informed Colonel Charles L. Kilburn at the Commissary Department's Cincinnati depot of the Knoxville scheme. Kilburn was a doubtful

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quantity but, as supervising commissary over all subsistence operations in the departments of the Cumberland and the Ohio, he had to be told. A West Pointer with ten years' experience at subsisting armies, Kilburn was inclined to counsel caution. As suspected at Knoxville, Kilburn frowned on the hog venture. Burnside having approved the project, however, Kilburn could not officially oppose it.¹

In mid-September Ellis advertised for hogs. Although the government, he promised, would pay top market prices, he received no response. Goodrich, who was to have general charge of the project, was delayed in Ohio. He had been appointed to the military commission which tried Clement L. Vallandigham, the notorious "copperhead." When Goodrich reached Knoxville at the end of the month, he promptly advertised for bids from local parties who might want to do the slaughtering. Only one Knoxville pork packer responded to the advertisement and his offer was high: 52 pounds of pork to 100 pounds of pig, the government furnishing both salt and barrels. Worse, Burnside's headquarters heard that this Knoxville porkman had packed hogs for the Confederates in 1862. Goodrich, nonetheless, sent the Knoxville bid to Cincinnati, and Ellis made a second try to find some hogs for the house.²

When Kilburn consulted some Cincinnati packers concerning the Knoxville packer's bid, he learned that they thought the price was enormous. Therefore, he informed Goodrich that he should run the Knoxville packinghouse himself. Expecting to be called on for help, Cincinnati packing circles immediately buzzed with anticipation. The *Daily Commercial* reported two Cincinnati packers preparing facilities to pack pork at Knoxville. Because of Ellis's failure to find any hogs in East Tennessee, Goodrich hired William R. Hacker and a Mr. Daniels to go to Kentucky to buy hogs and to drive them to Knoxville. Both of the new agents were Kentuckians who had come to Knoxville on the heels of the Federal army in September. Kilburn had heard of Hacker. So had Washington subsistence headquarters. Six months earlier the hog drover had sent in a claim for \$400 worth of fresh beef

¹ James M. Ellis to Charles L. Kilburn, November 22, 1863, Box 157, in Record Group 192, Records of the Commissary General of Subsistence (The National Archives, Washington, D. C.). All manuscripts hereafter cited are in this collection.

² *Ibid.*; E. R. Goodrich to Kilburn, October 12, 1863, Box 157.