

From the editors of

Civil War Times  
ILLUSTRATED

# *Hood's Nashville Campaign*

The Full Story of Franklin and Nashville,  
Cavalry Operations, Human Interest Stories.  
By Leading Experts--Lavishly Illustrated





## *Editorially Speaking*

**THIS** special edition of *CIVIL WAR TIMES Illustrated* has been prepared in co-operation with the Davidson County Civil War Centennial Committee, sponsor of the Centennial commemoration of the Battle of Nashville, December 11-16, 1964. It is going to this magazine's subscribers across the country as their December 1964 issue. And it will serve in lieu of an official program for the Centennial commemoration.

We have looked beyond these immediate uses in an effort to produce a work of lasting value and interest. We hope that this special treatment of Hood's desperate attempt to reverse the tides running against the Confederacy will be read and enjoyed for many years.

We have relied exclusively on persons in the Nashville area for the various articles in this edition and for technical advice on maps and illustrations. Without their hard work and encouragement, we could not have produced this edition.

We are especially grateful to James Hardin, who, as executive secretary of the Davidson County Committee, devoted many hours to liaison work and to obtaining illustrations; to Dr. J. L. Farringer, Jr., assistant chairman, for his advice and encouragement; to Paul H. Beasley and C. Buford Gotto for their invaluable terrain studies; to Lanier Merritt for illustrations from his remarkable collection and his caption information; and to Bill Witsell for photography work.

Two officials of the Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission deserve our special thanks. Stanley F. Horn, chairman, helped plan this edition and wrote the main article. Colonel Campbell H. Brown, executive director, wrote an article and assisted with map work.

In addition, we are grateful to Allen D. Sloan of Route 1, Spring Hill, Tenn., for his studies of the terrain around his farm which had an important bearing on the controversial Spring Hill operation; to Mrs. Gertrude Parsley, reference librarian of the Tennessee State Library and Archives, for her help in illustrating this edition; and to Ralph McDonald, young Nashville artist, for his cover illustration.

**REGULAR READERS** of *CIVIL WAR TIMES Illustrated* may recall that we dedicated our Gettysburg Campaign issue to the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association and our Atlanta Campaign issue to Wilbur G. Kurtz, Sr., a local artist-historian. This special Nashville Campaign edition is dedicated to the men who are often overlooked: the ordinary soldiers of both armies who struggled against each other in miserable weather a century ago at Nashville. Their fortitude and courage will long remain an example to heritage-conscious Americans.

*Robert H. Fowler*

**CIVIL WAR TIMES Illustrated,**  
302 York St., Gettysburg, Pa.



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# Civil War Times ILLUSTRATED

A non-partisan magazine of American History



## Special Nashville Campaign Edition

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The cover illustration for this special edition of *CIVIL WAR TIMES Illustrated* is by Ralph McDonald, a Nashville artist. It depicts the struggle for a hill salient west of the Granny White Pike on the afternoon of December 16, 1864, the second day of the Battle of Nashville. Colonel William M. Shy, commanding the 20th Tennessee, was shot in the head and the position was overrun by Federals attacking from three sides. The area is now called Shy's Hill in honor of his heroic defense. McDonald, a Confederate descendant, based his painting on a careful study of the terrain and contemporary descriptions of the action. He was aided in his research by James Hardin and members of the Confederate Historical Society of Nashville.

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Hood emplaced his ragged army before this heavily fortified city and practically dared Thomas to come out and fight. The Federal general took his time in accepting the challenge, but when he did the result was:

## NASHVILLE--the Most Decisive Battle of the War

*By Stanley F. Horn*



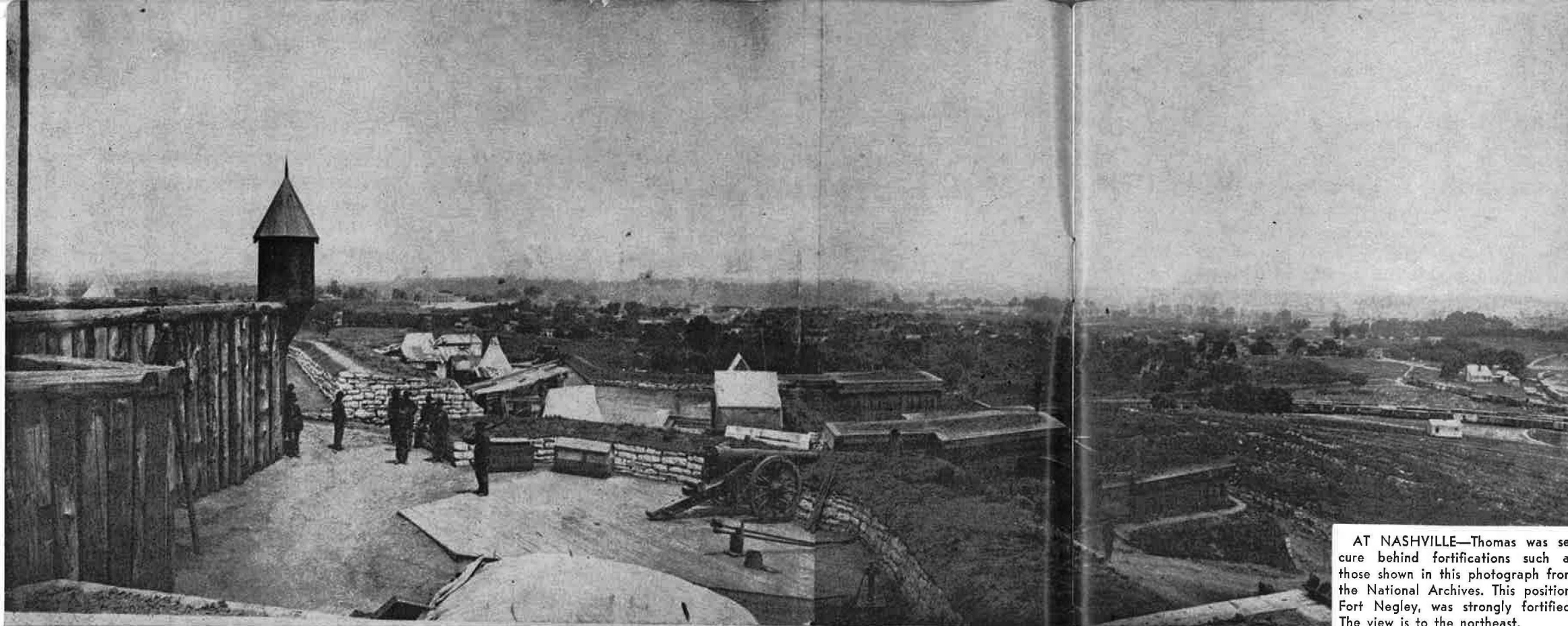
ONE distinguishing feature of the Battle of Nashville was that it was thoughtfully planned by both sides, and was fought in accordance with those plans. It was not an accidental collision of opposing armies, as at Gettysburg, nor was it the climax of complicated pre-battle military maneuvers as at Chancellorsville or Chickamauga. Neither was there the element of surprise, as at Shiloh. Thomas had decided to leave his fortifications and attack the Confederates in theirs at the first opportunity, and had worked out and explained to his subordinates his detailed plans and tactics for the action when it was launched.

Whatever the other reasons for Hood's failure to win the battle, surprise was not among them. When he advanced his army from Franklin to the environs of Nashville he had no idea of attacking Thomas in his fortified position. His declared plan, fatuous though it proved to be, was to place his army in defensive entrenchments to await attack by Thomas in the hope that such an attack could be repulsed and Nashville captured by a counter-charge. The only question in his mind was as to just when and where Thomas' attack would be made. That he was not at all surprised when Thomas did move is shown by the fact that at 2 a.m. on the morning of December 15 he sent a message to General J. R. Chalmers, commanding the cavalry on his left, warning him that the Federal attack would fall on him in a few hours—a warning which also indicated that Hood had some remarkably accurate information.

**THOMAS**, always careful in his planning, several days before the battle had issued to his corps commanders detailed orders for an attack at daylight on December 10. With the abrupt change in the weather, with snow, sleet, and freezing temperatures making this movement impossible on that date, he notified the corps leaders on the 9th that "it is found neces-

THIS SKETCH, made by George H. Ellsburry for the Jan. 14, 1865 issue of "Harper's Weekly," purports to show "Charge of Third Brigade, First Division, Sixteenth Corps, at the Battle of Nashville, Tennessee, December 15, 1864." The Battle of Nashville got little attention in the illustrated papers of the day. (Kean Archives, Philadelphia.)





AT NASHVILLE—Thomas was secure behind fortifications such as those shown in this photograph from the National Archives. This position, Fort Negley, was strongly fortified. The view is to the northeast.

sary to postpone the operations designed for tomorrow morning until the breaking of the storm." Thomas, however, specifically instructed that everything be prepared to carry out the attack as planned as soon as the weather would permit.

On the morning of the 14th, when a welcome rise in the temperature and a warm sun rapidly melted the ice and frozen ground, Thomas completed his plans to attack the next morning. At 3 p.m. he called his corps commanders into a council of war at his headquarters to discuss these plans. They were the same as those for the previously postponed attack. But to make sure that there could be no misunderstanding, Thomas handed to each commander his Special Field Orders No. 342, outlining precisely what each of the units was expected to do.

Overlooking nothing, Thomas had also been closely in touch with Commander Fitch, in charge of the naval forces guarding the river approaches to the city. Thomas wanted to make sure that the Confederates would not cross the Cumberland, bypassing Nashville (which they had no intention of doing), but it was characteristic that he proceeded with such caution.

**HOOD**, too, had not been idle during the two weeks preceding the battle. Acutely aware of the disparity in numbers between his 23,000 men and the 55,000 combat troops of the Federal commander, he tried desperately but fruitlessly to increase his strength. Hood was actually destined to fight the Battle of Nashville with fewer men than he had at the close of the action at Franklin. In a move that has been

characterized by military critics as one of Hood's greatest blunders, he had detached two brigades of infantry and two divisions of cavalry (nearly a quarter of his total force) under General Forrest to operate against the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad and the Federal garrison at Murfreesboro. From Hood's standpoint, containing the Murfreesboro garrison doubtless was a military necessity, but it now appears that this might have been done with fewer men. Certainly Hood could have better guarded his flanks if he had retained his full cavalry force at Nashville, especially if that cavalry had been under the magnetic leadership of Forrest.

In addition to his vigorous though unsuccessful efforts to increase his strength, Hood was alert in taking all possible steps to have his command at the peak of its efficiency and preparedness. Regular and frequent rollcalls were employed to discourage straggling, and commanding officers were instructed to have their entire lines examined late each evening and early each morning to observe the enemy and ascertain if any changes in their own positions should be made.

**ON DECEMBER 10** Hood issued a circular order stating that it was "highly probable that we will fight a battle before the close of the present year," and urging that the troops be "kept well in hand at all times." When the battle began, the order said, the corps commanders were to park all their wagons, except the artillery, ordnance, and ambulances, in the vicinity of Brentwood. In addition to these precautions, corps commanders were to fortify their flanks

"with strong, self-supporting detached works" to facilitate defense.

Hood, in taking his position before Nashville, placed Stephen D. Lee's corps in the center, A. P. Stewart's on the left, and Cheatham's on the right. The Confederate entrenched line, hastily constructed under adverse weather conditions, was about four miles long, much shorter than the Federal defensive fortifications. The Confederate right wing rested on a deep cut on the Nashville & Chattanooga railroad between the Nolensville and Murfreesboro Turnpikes. Slightly in advance of the main line at this point was a small lunette occupied by the 300 survivors of the brigade of General Granbury, who had been killed

at Franklin. The main Confederate line extended westward across the Nolensville Pike to the principal stronghold of the right flank on Rains's Hill. Extending on to the west, Hood's line ran across high ground, crossing the Franklin Pike where the present battlefield monument stands. Thence the line continued back of Brown's Creek, crossing the Granny White Pike at a sharp angle with the road, then on to Hood's main salient, known as Redoubt No. 1, which crowned the high hill just east of the Hillsboro Pike and north of the present Woodmont Avenue. Here Hood's line turned sharply back southward at almost a right angle to Redoubt No. 2, east of the pike, and on to Redoubt No. 3 across the pike to the west. Further support for Hood's left was supplied by two more detached works west of the pike—Redoubts No. 4 and No. 5—work on which had been delayed by the bad weather and which were incomplete on December 15 when the battle started. Hood's engineers had originally placed his main line in a somewhat more advanced location, but it was considered too close to the Federal works on the left; therefore the engineers established the stronger line to the rear, with its redoubts. This line was occupied as the main line on December 10, the abandoned entrenchment in front of the main salient on the left being lightly occupied as a skirmish line.

**AT 4 A.M. ON** December 15 the brassy blare of reveille bugles was heard all along the Federal lines, and the movements preliminary to the day's action began. A heavy blanket of fog hung over the city and its environs, and there was a spectral quality to the pre-dawn activities as the troops started to move.

As scheduled, the first movements were on the left, where General J. B. Steedman commanded. Shortly

**DEFENDING NASHVILLE**—This Library of Congress photograph is looking west from Fort Casino. Note the long breastworks thrown up in front of the tents; also, the long line of stacked muskets.





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*Stanley F. Horn is a leading authority on the Confederate Army of Tennessee and the war in Tennessee. He is author of "The Army of Tennessee," published by the University of Oklahoma Press, "The Decisive Battle of Nashville," Louisiana State University Press, and other works on the Civil War. He is chairman of the Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission and is a regular contributor to this magazine.*

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after 4 o'clock Wood's IV Corps and Schofield's XXIII Corps marched out of the works into their battle positions. As soon as they were out of the line, General Charles Cruft's provisional division of recruits and others was placed in the works commanding the approaches to the city by the Granny White, Franklin, and Nolensville Turnpikes. General John F. Miller's garrison troops occupied the works to the Lebanon Pike on the left; and a little later Colonel James L. Donaldson's armed quartermaster's force, and others under his command, were placed in the works from the right of Cruft to the river on the right, covering approaches to the city by the Hillsboro and Harding Pikes. This rearrangement of Thomas' force provided a continuing defensive line all around the city, manned by troops not taking part in the actual fighting, thus relieving for combat the approximately 55,000 men who were moving out to the attack.

General Steedman, after looking to the establishment of the reserve defensive line in his rear, marched out at 6:30 a.m. with his three brigades under Colonels T. J. Morgan, C. R. Thompson, and C. H. Grosvenor, to make his scheduled attack on the Confederate right. Delayed by the fog, it was 8 o'clock before his 7,600 men made contact with the enemy. Cheatham's advanced skirmish line fell back, but the main Confederate line and the lunette occupied by the 300 men of Granbury's brigade held firm. The assault by Morgan's 3,200 men failed.

Later in the day some of Morgan's men took over a brick house at a safe distance and cut loopholes in the house and brick outhouses from which their sharpshooters kept up a desultory fire on the Confederate line. Colonel Thompson's report shows that after his brigade's preliminary skirmish his men "retired to our position in line," where they were content to remain the rest of the day.

The Federal officers who took part in this action against the Confederate right asserted that they had led Hood to think this the principal point of attack, and even alleged that by their attack they had pinned down Cheatham's corps in its breastworks until the day's fighting was ended. Actually, Hood recognized Steedman's attack as a feint, and during the afternoon withdrew most of Cheatham's force from that flank to strengthen his strongly assailed left—and ap-

parently Steedman was unaware that the troops he attacked in the morning had left his front.

**DURING THIS** more-or-less sham battle on the Federal left, the main purposeful movement of Thomas' force was developing on the right. There was some confusion in the initial movements of the infantry and cavalry, and it was nearly 10 a.m. before the infantry corps of Smith (about 15,000 men) and the cavalry corps of Wilson (something over 12,000, of whom 9,000 were mounted) were able to start their big sweep against the Confederate left. But when this movement did get under way it was irresistible.

Wilson, whose cavalry on the right was to provide the deciding force in the battle, handled his part of the assignment with efficiency and a thorough attention to detail. A young West Pointer who had graduated into the Engineers, he was quick to learn from experience and was rapidly developing into a first-rate cavalry commander. When he returned from the final conference with Thomas on the afternoon of the 14th, he assembled his division and brigade commanders and explained that the plan of battle called for them to advance on the right of the infantry, turn and envelop the Confederates' left flank and, if possible, strike their rear. To avoid misunderstanding, Wilson personally showed each officer on a map, exactly the ground over which he was to advance, orally reiterated his instructions, and then supplied each with a written copy of the orders.

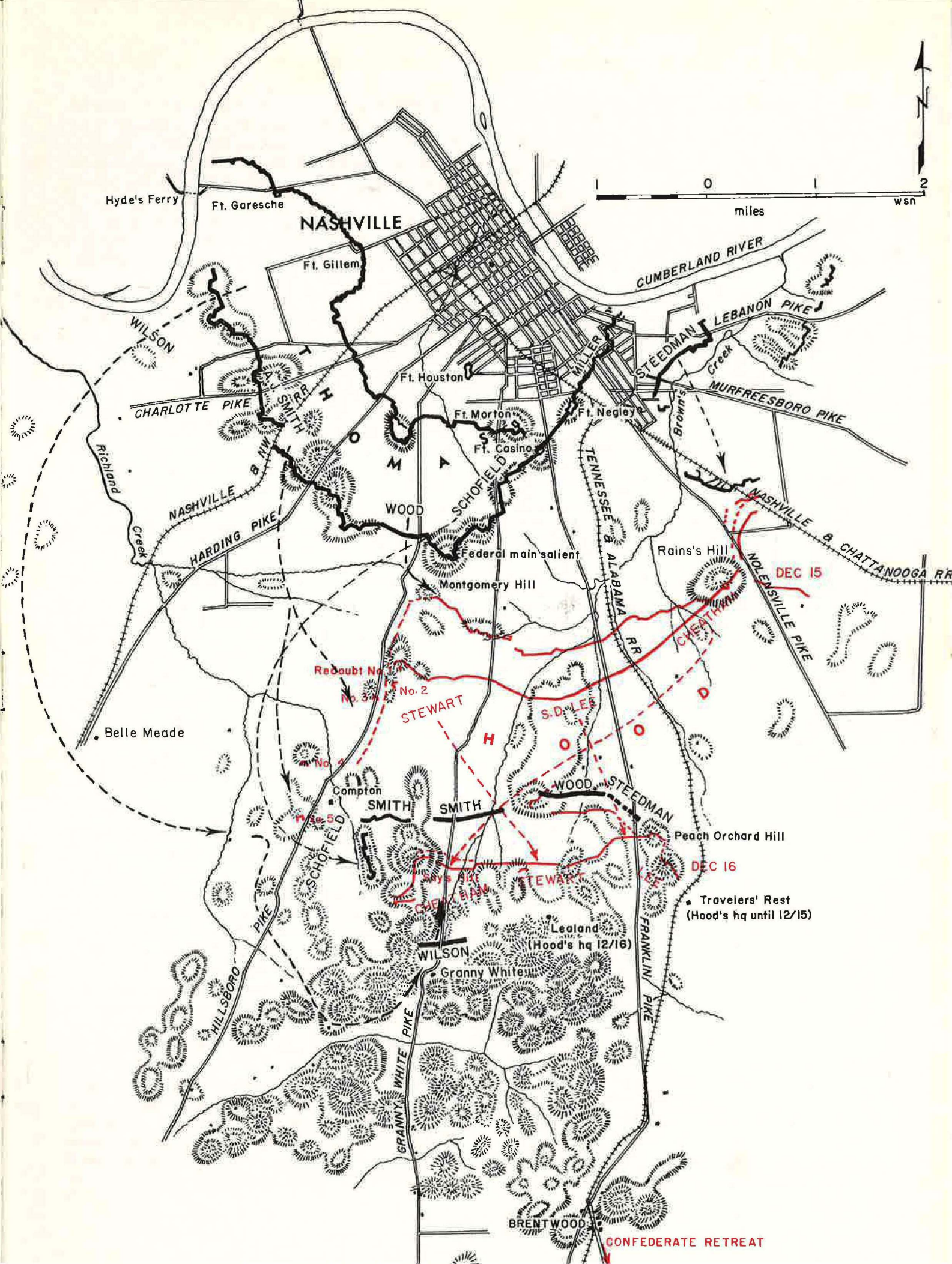
As a final touch, Wilson conferred with General A. J. Smith (with whose corps he was to cooperate) to correlate their activities so as to avoid any confusion in the initial movements. There was confusion nevertheless. Wilson, in his subsequently published recollections, elaborates on the delay caused by what he considered Smith's (or McArthur's) bungling, as McArthur's division, contrary to what Wilson thought was the arrangement, crossed Wilson's front instead of his rear in getting into position to move out the Charlotte Pike. In spite of this delay, the movement, once started, proceeded like well-oiled clockwork.

**THE CONFEDERATES**, to meet this attack, had only a token force between their solid left wing on the Hillsboro Pike and the river—a distance of about three miles. Chalmers, in command of the single division of Forrest's cavalry left with Hood, had one brigade

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**BATTLE OF NASHVILLE**—This map by Col. W. S. Nye is a simplification of the official Federal map shown as Plate LXXIII (1) of the Atlas to the Official Records. While it contains some minor inaccuracies, it was chosen because it shows the roads as they existed in 1864. The troop locations have been made by Stanley Horn, as well as the directions of attack of the several Federal corps. These are not the exact routes followed, but give the general axes or directions of movement. The engagements on December 15 and December 16 are shown. The place shown as Traveler's Rest was the Overton house.







## ... Thomas Under Pressure

**EVER SINCE** Hood's arrival in front of Nashville, the authorities in Washington had been nagging Thomas to move out and assault him. Goaded by President Lincoln and Secretary Stanton, General Grant urged Thomas to move immediately against the Confederates, regardless of his state of preparedness.

Immediately after the Battle of Franklin, Thomas reported to General Halleck that he planned to remain on the defensive in the Nashville fortifications until Wilson could recruit and remount his cavalry. This was reported to Lincoln, and on December 2 Stanton telegraphed Grant: "The President feels solicitous about the disposition of General Thomas to lay in fortifications for an indefinite period 'until Wilson gets equipments.' This looks like the McClellan and Rosecrans strategy of do nothing and let the Rebels raid the country. The President wishes you to consider the matter."

Thus nudged by the armchair strategists, Grant directed Thomas to attack Hood "before he fortifies," commenting that "After the repulse of Hood at Franklin, it looks to me that instead of falling back to Nashville, we should have taken the offensive against the enemy where he was."

**THOUGH** this long-distance needling must have nettled Thomas, he patiently explained that after Franklin he did not have sufficient force to take the offensive, but that he expected to in a few days. Conscious of the vital need for more cavalry, he was bending every energy to accumulate enough horses to remount the unmounted cavalymen. Every horse in Nashville and its environs was impressed—carriage horses, work horses, plow horses, even the performing horses of a stray circus that happened to be in town at the time.

Telegrams flew back and forth between Thomas and Grant. At length, on December 6, Grant sent Thomas a point-blank order to attack at once. Thomas replied that he would do so; but on the 8th he wired apologetically that he had not been able to concentrate his troops and get their transportation in order. Thereupon Grant, his patience exhausted, asked Halleck to relieve Thomas and put Schofield in command of the force at Nashville. An order to this effect was drawn up in the War Department on the 9th, but before sending it Halleck wired Thomas that Grant was much dissatisfied at his delay. Thomas replied to Halleck that "a terrible storm of freezing rain" had just come on, rendering an attack impossible; but that he was willing to "submit without a murmur" if it were decided to relieve him. Grant then asked Halleck to suspend the order.

On the 11th Grant telegraphed Thomas: "If you delay attack longer, the mortifying spectacle will be witnessed of a Rebel army moving for the Ohio, and you will be forced to act, accepting such weather as you find. . . . Delay no longer . . ." Thomas respectfully replied: "I will obey the order as promptly as possible, however much I may regret it, as the attack will have to be made under every disadvantage. The whole country is covered with a perfect sheet of ice and sleet." To Halleck, Thomas telegraphed: "The weather continues very cold and the hills are covered with ice. As soon as we have a thaw, I will attack Hood." On the morning of the 14th there was a welcome rise in temperature, the frozen ground began to melt, and Thomas began to put the final touches on his long-deferred plans to attack Hood. In the midst of these preparations he received another querulous telegram from Halleck, telling of Grant's anxiety, to which Thomas replied simply: "The ice having melted away today, the enemy will be attacked tomorrow morning."

**WHAT HALLECK** did not mention in his telegram was that on the preceding day, the 13th, Grant had ordered Major General John A. Logan to proceed from Washington to Nashville and take over the command from Thomas. Then Grant had concluded that the situation at Nashville was so fraught with possibilities of great disaster that he had better give it his personal attention; and so he started for Nashville himself. He was in Washington on his way to Nashville when he got news of the battle. Logan was then at Louisville.—Stanley F. Horn

patrolling the distant right wing of the Confederate line. The remaining brigade, Rucker's, was placed on high ground behind Richland Creek near the Charlotte Pike, and Colonel David C. Kelley, with Forrest's "Old Regiment" and a battery of four guns, was to Rucker's left on the high banks of the river. As a sort of outpost of observance between the actual left wing of his line and Rucker's cavalry, Hood had put Ector's depleted infantry brigade (about 700 men) on a ridge west of Richland Creek, north of the Harding Pike, with pickets out front.

Rucker's brigade, where Chalmers was in person, first tasted fighting early in the morning when they were shelled by Fitch's gunboats. The gunboats were soon driven off by Kelley's artillery, however, and Rucker was not molested further until about 11 a.m. when R. W. Johnson's division of Wilson's cavalry came sweeping out the Charlotte Pike. Rucker's resistance was sufficiently tenacious to give his cannoners time to limber up and displace to the rear; but when the guns had been withdrawn, Chalmers ordered the brigade to fall back farther out the Charlotte Pike, where until nightfall he resisted Johnson's efforts to dislodge him.

**MEANWHILE**, General Kenner Garrard's division of Smith's infantry corps had moved out from the works on the Harding Pike, and passed by the left flank to connect with the right of Wood's corps, which was to serve as the pivot of the big turning movement as the right wing wheeled to the left. McArthur's division, after shaking off the few skirmishers in front of Ector's position, formed on Garrard's right; and Smith's third division, under Colonel J. B. Moore, moved out the Harding Pike and formed in rear of Smith's center to act as a reserve to either flank. Once in position outside the breastworks, Smith's veteran infantry swung forward, carrying out their instructions to "touch the left and guide right." Thus advancing and wheeling gradually, the corps was soon in a position south of the Harding Pike and almost parallel to it. Obviously, Ector's skeleton brigade could offer only a show of resistance to this powerhouse drive. In fact, Ector had orders to fall back to the Confederate main line along the Hillsboro Pike when attacked, and this he had done with alacrity.

General Thomas J. Wood, who commanded the Federal center at Nashville, had the largest corps in Thomas' army—13,256 "present for duty equipped." Wood was an old Regular Army officer, having graduated from West Point in 1845 and served in the Mexican War. He had served with the Army of the Ohio and the Army of the Cumberland since October 1861, and was regarded as a sound and competent, though not especially brilliant, general officer. When Stanley was wounded at Franklin, Wood succeeded to the command of the IV Corps.





**SPECTATORS**—This photograph was made from the northwest corner of the Capitol grounds while the battle was in progress on the first day. The men squatting near the center of the picture seem more interested in the photographer than in the battle. Thousands of civilians watched the battle on the first day. (National Archives.)

With characteristic efficiency and care for details, Wood on the evening of the 14th had briefed his division commanders, explaining to them the next day's intended movements, and had handed to each of them a copy of the orders for the 15th: Reveille was to sound at 4 a.m.; the troops were to breakfast, break camp, pack up everything, and be ready to move at 6 a.m. The orders are interesting as an indication of just how an army corps prepared to move into battle. The exact movement and position of each division were detailed; and, leaving nothing to chance or guesswork, the orders specified:

The pickets on post will advance as a line of skirmishers to cover the movement. The formation of the troops will be in two lines—the front line deployed, the second line in close column by division, massed opposite the interval in the front line. Each division commander will, so far as possible, hold one brigade in reserve. Five wagon-loads of ammunition, ten ambulances, and the wagons loaded with the intrenching tools will, as nearly as possible, follow immediately after each division; the remaining ammunition wagons, ambulances, and all other wagons will remain inside of our present lines until further orders. One rifle battery will accompany the Second Division, and one battery of light 12-pounders will accompany each of the other divisions; the rest of the artillery of the corps will maintain its present positions in the lines.

With only minor fog-induced delay, Wood's men had gone into their designated positions when they moved out of the works early in the morning. From then until shortly after noon the main body of the corps remained inactive, waiting for the adjustment and advance of Smith's and Wilson's forces on their right. Wood's skirmishers, however, had been pushed forward and soon became sharply engaged with the Confederate skirmish line, keeping up a brisk but inconclusive action. Since early morning the guns in Fort Negley and the other forts, as well as the batteries in position along the whole Federal line, had

been thundering their salvos, arousing a replying artillery fire from the Confederate positions. This booming of the big guns, Wood commented in a conservative understatement in his official report, "added interest to the scene."

**THE BATTLE** of Nashville was fought before an exceptionally large "gallery" of civilian as well as military spectators. A participant recalled that "citizens of Nashville, nearly all of whom were in sympathy with the Confederacy, came out of the city in droves. All the hills in our rear were black with human beings watching the battle, but silent. No army on the continent ever played on any field to so large and so sullen an audience."

Shortly after noon, when Smith's wheeling line of infantry had been brought around to a point where it served as a continuation of the right of Wood's line, Wood ordered his men forward. The great sweep of some 40,000 men got under way, and Stewart's men holding Hood's left flank knew that their hour of trial had arrived, as they heard what one of them described as "the sharp rattle of fifty-calibre rifles, sounding like a cane-brake on fire." In somewhat more poetic language, Wood said in his report:

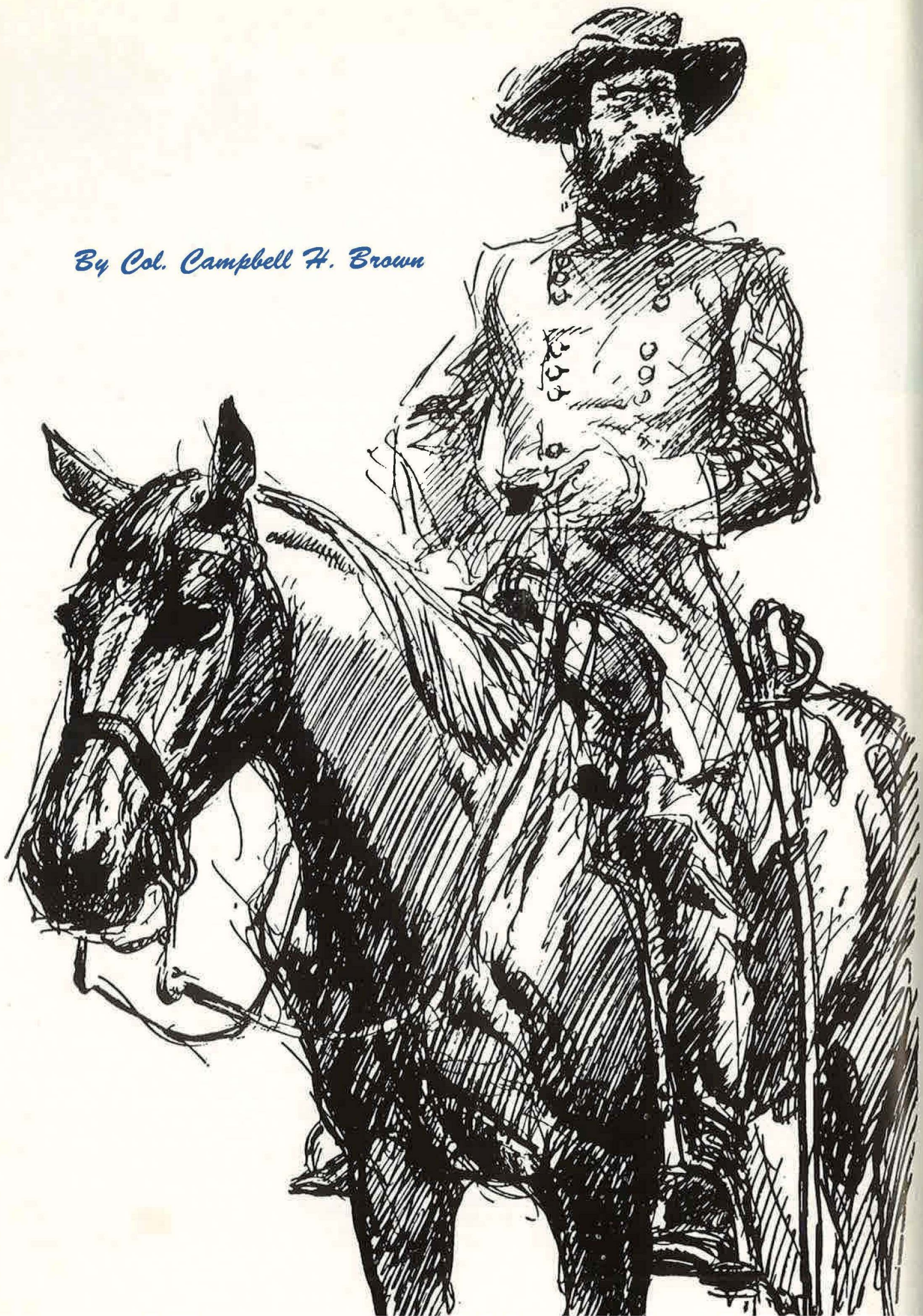
"When the grand array of the troops began to move forward in unison, the pageant was magnificently grand and imposing. Far as the eye could reach, the lines and masses of blue, over which the nation's emblem flaunted proudly, moved forward in such perfect order that the heart of the patriot might easily draw from it the happy presage of the coming glorious victory."

Wood's third division (Beatty), as it swung forward on the shortest arc of the big wheel, was confronted with the works on Montgomery Hill, salient of the advanced skirmish line which had been Hood's main line before that line was moved back on the 10th. From the viewpoint of the attacking Federals, the position looked formidable, but it was actually manned by only a few skirmishers placed there before the battle.

Continued on Page 31



*By Col. Campbell H. Brown*





# To Rescue the Confederacy

**This was the purpose of Hood's ill-fated invasion of Tennessee in November and December of 1864. With luck and better generalship, he might have trapped Schofield at Spring Hill, taken Nashville with its hoard of Federal supplies, and marched to the Ohio River.**



HE Campaign for Atlanta, which resulted in Sherman's capture of the city from General John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee, spawned two separate campaigns.

After some maneuvering in pursuit of Hood, Sherman moved back to Atlanta, burned it, and started his army south and east "to move through the bowels [of the Confederacy] and make a trail that would be visible for fifty years."

Hood, whether the idea was his own or Jefferson Davis', had an equally ambitious plan. It was to cross the Tennessee River, advance rapidly, overwhelm or bypass the scattered Federal garrisons in Tennessee, move through lightly held Kentucky, cross the Ohio River and go even as far as the Great Lakes, splitting off the Middle West from the rest of the United States and making the Yankees agree to a negotiated peace. As an alternative, he might swing east up the Ohio Valley and effect a junction with General Lee's Army of Northern Vir-

*Col. Campbell H. Brown is a graduate of Virginia Military Institute and has served in both the Marine Corps and the Army. He is the executive director of the Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission. Colonel Brown is the grandson of Major Campbell Brown, who served as assistant adjutant general on the staff of Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell, in the Army of Northern Virginia. A resident of Franklin, Tenn., he has made a close study of Hood's operations in the Nashville Campaign.*

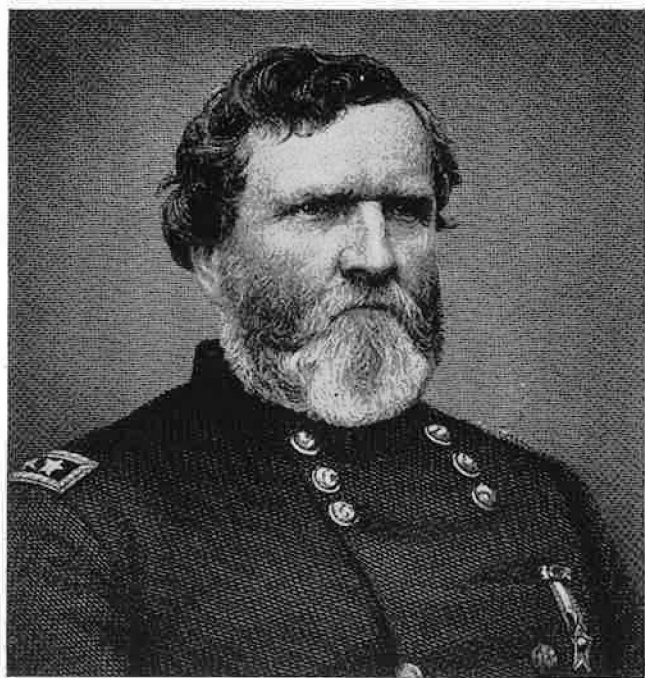
ginia. Together, the two armies would crush Grant and then turn and ruin the exhausted Sherman, then emerging from the swamps of inland Georgia.

Either of these plans had a remote chance of success. But as things worked out, Hood had no opportunity to develop either.

**AFTER THE FINAL ATTEMPT** at Jonesboro to drive Sherman from Atlanta, Hood moved to Lovejoy Station, 20 miles southwest. Here the army reorganized, then moved west and north to Palmetto where President Jefferson Davis and Brigadier General Howell Cobb, ex-Governor of Georgia, visited it. Davis addressed the army on September 26. This speech was published in a Macon newspaper; Sherman had the entire speech telegraphed to the War Department. Davis promised the Army of Tennessee that it was not only going home, but it would plant its banners on the banks of the Ohio. Sherman was grateful for the information; now he could go about his own plans.

ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE—John B. Hood in his prime is depicted in this drawing by the late John W. Thomason, Jr. By the time of the Nashville Campaign, Hood had lost one leg and the use of one arm. Reprinted with the permission of Charles Scribner's Sons from LONE STAR PREACHER, Page 132, by John W. Thomason, Jr., copyright 1941, John W. Thomason, Jr.





GEN. GEORGE H. THOMAS—The "Rock of Chickamauga" was chosen to protect Nashville against Hood while Sherman marched for the sea. (Kean Archives.)

He left the defense of Tennessee in the capable hands of Major General George Henry Thomas. A Virginia-born officer of the Old Army, he had been major of the cavalry regiment whose lieutenant colonel was Robert E. Lee. At secession he remained loyal; thereafter his sisters, at mention of his name, would draw themselves up primly and announce, "We have no brother." He had never failed in an operation, beginning with his victory at Fishing Creek in January 1862, and in 1864 he commanded Sherman's largest army in the Atlanta Campaign.

To help Thomas, Sherman sent the IV Corps, under David S. Stanley, the XVI Corps, under Andrew Jackson Smith, and the XXIII Corps, under John McAllister Schofield. The IV Corps had been part of Thomas' Army of the Cumberland; Schofield's XXIII had been practically an army in itself—The Army of the Ohio. There would be a delay, though, before the XVI could come to Tennessee. General Sterling Price was making things unhappy for the Federal command in the Trans-Mississippi Department, and Smith was to go there before coming to Tennessee to help Thomas.

**TO BEGIN** his new campaign, Hood moved northward toward Chattanooga; Sherman moved with him. Soon the two armies were back where they had been a hundred days before. Stevenson's division stormed Corse's Union blockhouse position at Allatoona and was repulsed; somebody wrote a song about the action, "Hold the fort, for I am coming"; a sort of "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition" thing. Hood continued to move toward the Alabama line, apparently

seeking a crossing over the Tennessee, and at the same time arranging for stores to make his move north. Hood, unlike Sherman, had no efficient supply line, and no stockpiles. He had to accumulate a backlog the hard way, mostly from Mississippi, using that part of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad still in Confederate hands, and supplementing this with slow and costly wagon hauls. So the Army of Tennessee moved toward its railhead at Cherokee, Alabama, a good day's march from Decatur.

While this was going on, the Confederate regional command system was rearranged to put Hood under a higher commander. Davis created a new department, the Military Division of the West, and placed Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard in command. He was to have command over Hood's army, and the forces around Mobile and in Mississippi under Lieutenant General Richard Taylor. Beauregard actually did very little commanding. His last prominence in command had been at Shiloh in April 1862, after the death of Albert Sidney Johnston. Following the withdrawal to Corinth and thence to Tupelo, for reasons of health he had turned over command to Braxton Bragg. His subsequent service had been somewhat static, barring a very able defense of Charleston, and recently distinguished action against Butler near Richmond.

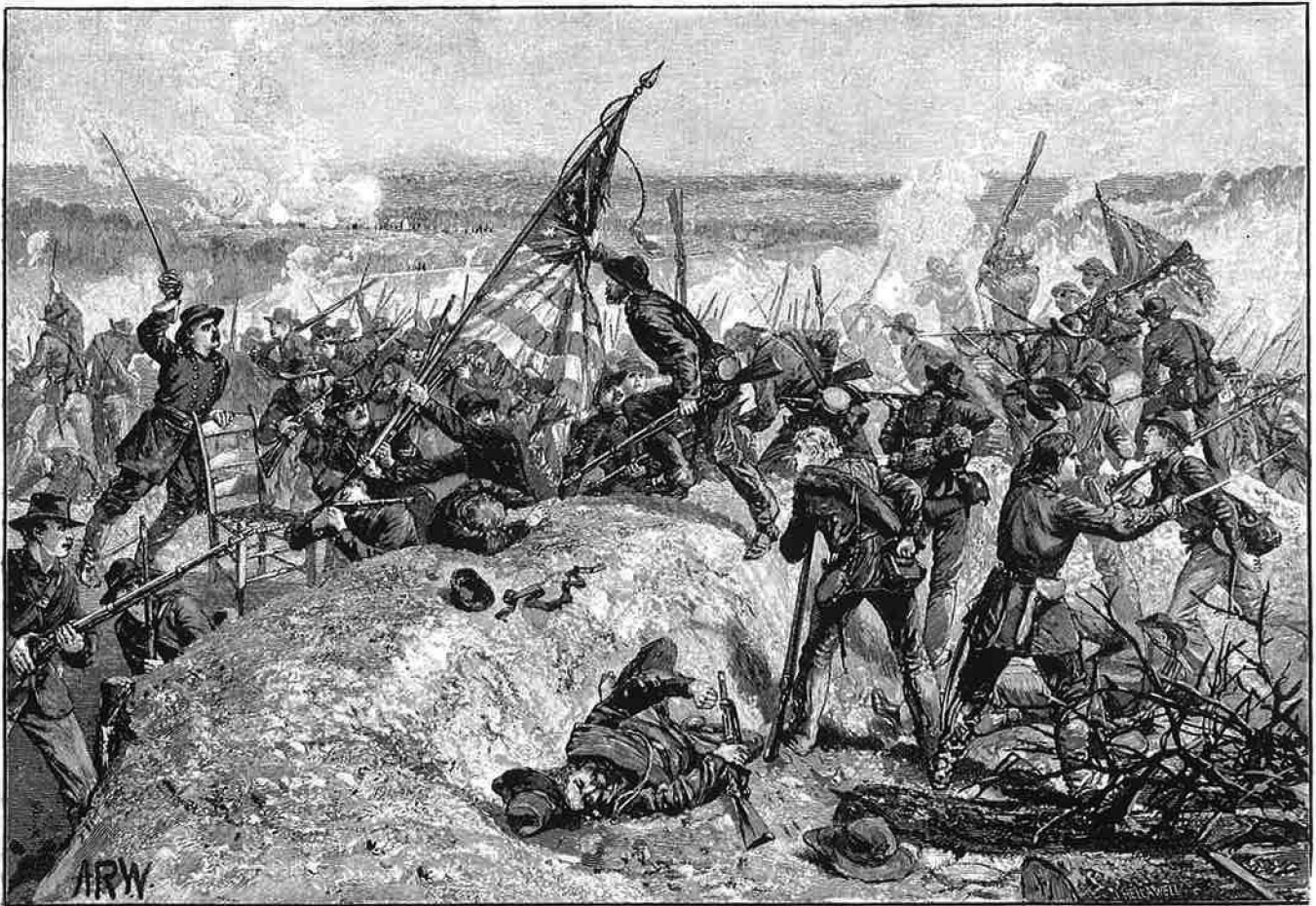
So now he turned up with Hood's army, and apparently learned of Hood's plans for the first time. He seems not to have been impressed by the scheme; however, after telegraphic exchanges with Richmond, he established headquarters at Selma and moved over to the Gadsden area to be in closer touch with Hood.

Neither commander seems to have relished this arrangement. Hood soon moved his army, without notifying Beauregard, to the Florence area, to be nearer to his railhead. He could better cross the Tennessee here, since upriver gunboats could not get at him. Sherman, tired of chasing the Army of Tennessee, began moving back to Atlanta. Hood put down a pontoon bridge across the Tennessee and began crossing his army. Beauregard, who had by that time moved his command post to Florence, remained there.

**IN TENNESSEE** the Federal command had followed closely Hood's movements. Stanley's IV Corps had moved to Chattanooga, then to Pulaski. (Smith's XVI Corps was still in Arkansas.) Schofield's XXIII Corps had moved first to Chattanooga, then had been hurriedly trundled up to Johnsonville as a result of Forrest's brilliant raid. Finding at Johnsonville only a discomfited garrison, a large acreage of smoking ruins, and sunken ships in the river, Schofield began returning his corps to Pulaski. It was there, except for most of Ruger's division, when Hood crossed the Tennessee.

Once across the river, Hood waited for Forrest, who arrived on November 17 in miserable weather, with





ON October 5, 1864 in a preliminary to the Nashville Campaign, Stevenson's division of Hood's army assaulted a Federal position at Allatoona, Georgia protecting Sherman's supply line to Atlanta. This drawing by Alfred R. Waud appeared in "Mountain Campaigns in Georgia." It shows the capture of the colors of the 39th Iowa at Allatoona. (Kean Archives, Philadelphia.)

Brisk cavalry action marked the Confederate advance from the Alabama line to the Columbia area. On the right, the divisions of Buford and Jackson drove Hatch's cavalry division through Lawrenceburg and Campbellsville and back on Pulaski.

On the left, Rucker's brigade of Chalmers' division, with Forrest himself present, chased Horace Capron's brigade through Henryville and Mt. Pleasant to the southern outskirts of Columbia, where the cavalry slammed up against intrenched infantry.

Schofield, thanks to the alertness of Major General Jacob D. Cox, 3d Division, XXIII Corps, had Columbia safe. Cox, by forced marches from the Pulaski Pike (US 31) along a road which ran east and west about three miles south of Columbia, had moved his people at the double to positions astride the Mt. Pleasant Pike (US 43) just north of Bigby Creek, and had them lightly fortified by 7:30 on the morning of the 24th, when Forrest drove Capron's harried troopers into his lines. The remainder of the XXIII Corps and the IV Corps followed the Pulaski Pike into the town, taking up positions prolonging Cox's line eastward; this line, after crossing the Pulaski Pike bent northward to Duck River. Cox's sector, from the area now occupied by the Maury County Hospital, bent northward and westward to the river below the town.

Continued on Page 44

the jaded veterans of the Johnsonville and earlier Middle Tennessee and North Alabama raids.

On November 22, Hood started north. Alexander P. Stewart's corps headed for Lawrenceburg, Benjamin F. Cheatham's corps toward Waynesboro, while Stephen D. Lee took his corps toward a point between those two towns. Hood himself was with Stewart.

**THOMAS CONTINUED** to build up his force. He was heartened to learn of the impending return of the XVI Corps from Arkansas. He had a new cavalry commander, the remarkable young James Harrison Wilson, who had served under Grant. As the invasion became imminent, Wilson moved to Pulaski to take personal charge of the cavalry operations there. His corps was not completely ready but it had greatly improved, even in the short time since Forrest's raid.

The orders originally given Schofield, at Pulaski, gave him the option of moving north and entrenching at Columbia. But with Hood approaching, Thomas ordered him to Columbia, leapfrogging his units as a precaution against an attack along his line of march.



*'Would to God I had never witnessed such a scene' as . . .*

# ... Bloody FRANKLIN

**Hood wasted 6,000 casualties, including five generals killed, in a series of headlong assaults on Schofield's lines in this tragic prelude to Nashville.**

*By Hugh F. Walker*



HE Battle of Franklin is a "compact" among Civil War battles. In number of men and the time and space covered, it was fought upon a small scale. Yet Franklin ranks as one of the great spectacles of the war in the West.

Years afterward survivors of Franklin recalled the battle with a sort of painful revulsion, as though the very memory evoked agony. "My flesh trembles and creeps and crawls when I think of it today," wrote Sam Watkins of Columbia, Tennessee. "My heart almost ceases to beat at the horrid recollection. Would to God that I had never witnessed such a scene!"

General Jacob D. Cox, commander of the Federal battle line, put his finger on the thing that made men, especially Confederates, want to forget the battle.

"Hood had more men killed at Franklin, than died on one side in some of the great conflicts of the war," he noted. "His killed were more than Grant's at Shiloh, McClellan's in the Seven-Days Battle, Burnside's at Fredericksburg, Rosecrans' at Stone's River or at Chickamauga, Hooker's at Chancellorsville, and almost as many as Grant's at Cold Harbor."

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*Hugh F. Walker is feature editor of the Nashville "Tennessean" and a long-time student of the war in Tennessee.*

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Captain Robert Banks of the 37th Mississippi, marching across the field on the morning after the battle, wrote of "that sickening, blood-curdling, fear-kindling sight . . . The hell of war was depicted cruelly in the ghastly upturned faces of the dead."

The long, narrow, iron-fenced Confederate cemetery at Franklin is a reminder of that tragic November 30, 1864. Here the fallen sleep under chaste lines of silent stones and sighing cedar trees—424 dead from Mississippi alone.

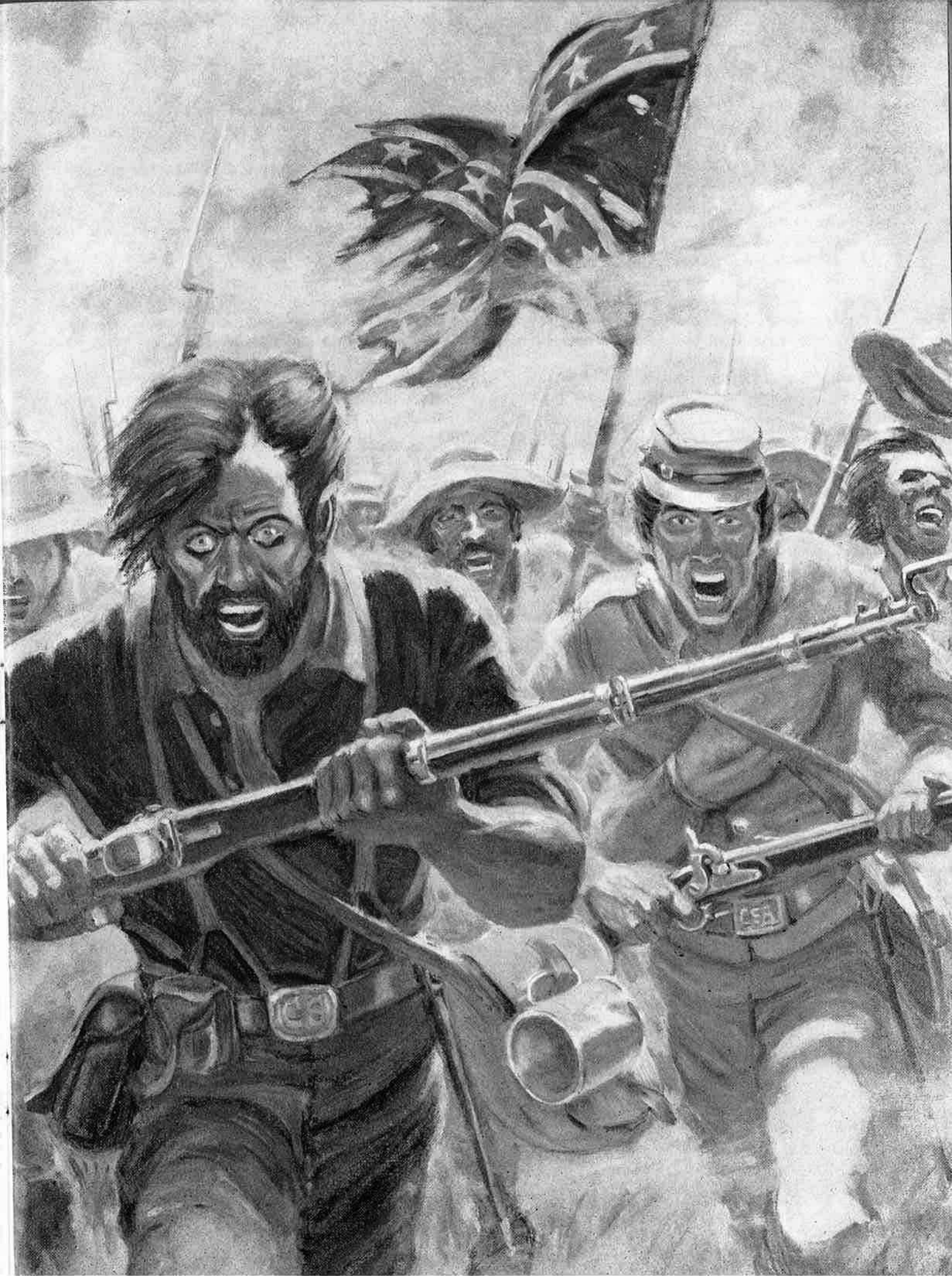
**THE STAGE** for battle was set at dawn of that autumn day when Major General John M. Schofield, with two Federal corps, the IV and XXIII, arrived in Franklin, with the advance of Hood's Confederate Army of Tennessee hard on his heels.

Concerned for his seven-mile-long wagon train, Schofield two days before had requested pontoons and bridging equipment from General George H. Thomas

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**ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE**—The wild fury of the Confederate attackers at Franklin is illustrated by this original oil painting by Frederic Ray, art director of CIVIL WAR TIMES Illustrated. Hood's men made 13 separate assaults on the Federal lines.







at Nashville. But the equipment had not arrived; moreover, of the two bridges across the Harpeth River one was destroyed and the other damaged.

The tired Federal commander considered his situation. The river could not be crossed by the wagon train without many hours of preparation. His men had marched all night, having started on the afternoon of the 29th from Columbia, and were exhausted. Schofield made a quick decision. He would throw up a line of fieldworks south of Franklin and fight, if he must, with his back to the Harpeth River. At the same time he would find means to pass his wagon train across the stream to the Federal fortifications at Nashville, 20 miles to the north.

The town of Franklin, then merely a village, lies in a curve of the Harpeth with the opening to the south. From the river the land rises gently southward for a mile, where it reaches an elevation 40 feet above the square at a point marked then and now by the Carter house, chief landmark of the battle. Through what were then open fields and meadows, so slightly rolling as to appear almost flat, the plain continues another mile and a half to the Winstead Hills. This open field upon which the battle was fought has been likened to the left hand, held palm up and pointed south. The palm represents the village, the little finger and thumb the Harpeth River. The three fingers, from the left, represent the Lewisburg, Columbia, and Carter's Creek Pikes entering the town from the south. The Tennessee & Alabama Railroad also came up from the south, east of the Columbia Pike, and crossed the Harpeth just east of the town and the turnpike bridge.

**SCHOFIELD'S** works at Franklin were constructed so as to protect his river crossing and line of retreat to Brentwood and Nashville. He directed Cox to throw up a line of fieldworks extending from the river and railroad cut on the left, across the three pikes and bending northward toward the river on the right, the whole about two miles long. Cox's own division was the first to take position in this line, with Brigadier General James W. Reilly temporarily in command. Its three brigades extended from a knoll at the railroad cut westward to the Carter cotton gin and the Columbia Pike. Cox set up his headquarters in the Carter house dooryard.

The Federal line was extended westward to the Carter's Creek Pike by two brigades of Brigadier General Thomas H. Ruger's division under Colonels S. A. Strickland and O. H. Moore, and northwest toward the river by a broken line of light works held by Brigadier General Nathan Kimball's three-brigade division from the IV Corps. As they took position along this line the Federals threw up an earthwork with a ditch in front, topped by headlogs with a three-

inch space for rifles. On the left a light abatis of bois d'arc or osage orange was cut from a hedge in front and added to the defenses.

West of the Columbia Pike Ruger's line was strengthened by light logs cut from a locust thicket growing in his front. Except for this grove and the bois d'arc hedge, the ground in front was open and almost level.

**UPSTREAM** and to the left of Schofield's line the Harpeth was fordable at several places, and the Federal commander expected Hood to launch a flanking attack from that direction. He therefore placed two brigades of Brigadier General George D. Wagner's division, IV Corps, three-quarters of a mile south of the main line to observe Hood's advance. In event of a frontal assault it was to fall back within the main



**FRANKLIN BATTLEFIELD**—This is how the battlefield looks today from where Hood's headquarters stood. On Nov. 30, 1864, eighteen Confederate brigades advanced on both sides of the road to attack Schofield's army which was drawn up in front of Franklin. (Photograph by Bill Witsell.)

works, but if a flank movement developed, it would swing eastward and check Hood until a new line of battle could be formed.

To guard further against the expected flank movement, Schofield moved a battery of 3-inch rifled guns into Fort Granger, on Figuers' Hill, north of the river near the railroad crossing. This old earthwork, built by Federals earlier in the war, commanded the railroad cut and the ground in front of Cox's division. To its immediate protection was assigned Brigadier General Thomas J. Wood's division of the IV Corps.

Having arranged protection of front and flank, Schofield began work on the bridges, and by mid-morning his train began moving slowly across the Harpeth. With this concern eased, the general went to the village home of a Union sympathizer and slept

briefly. The exhausted troops, having thrown up the works and eaten their breakfast, dozed on the line in the autumn sun. And it was upon this quiet scene that the head of Hood's army came into view, shortly after noon.

**BITTER** after his failure at Spring Hill and spoiling for a fight, Hood came over and through the Winstead Hills with two corps, Lieutenant General Alexander P. Stewart's and Major General Benjamin F. Cheatham's, to which was soon added Major General Edward Johnson's division of Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee's corps. His artillery, except for a battery for each corps, was still in the rear. His cavalry, under the redoubtable Major General Nathan B. Forrest, consisted of three divisions under Brigadier Generals James R. Chalmers, Abraham Buford, and

he could "flank the Federals out in 15 minutes." And despite Hood's denial, there is evidence that Major General Patrick R. Cleburne, his ablest division commander, did not favor the head-on assault.

But Hood was adamant. "No, no," he said. "Charge them out!"

Hood's attitude in this situation is usually ascribed to his crippled physical condition and his bitter disappointment at Spring Hill, where Schofield had escaped him the day before. But the reasons for it go deeper than this, and deserve study. They emerge from the pages of his *Advance and Retreat*, written after the war.

**IN** the first place, on the morning of the 30th there was bitter feeling between Hood and his officers. Furthermore, the commanding general entertained a poor opinion of his soldiers—the kind words he later lavished on them came after the battle. He felt, and said so, that this army was a cut below Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, where Hood had first won fame as a brigade commander. He conceded that the western troops had the potential to fight as well as Lee's men. But they had been ruined by the leadership of Joe Johnston from Dalton to Atlanta, fighting behind breastworks and falling back. And at Spring Hill he had been irked to see that after a forward march of 180 miles his men were still "seemingly unwilling to accept battle unless under the protection of breastworks."

Hood could see the Federal works at Franklin. He knew they were strong, that the ground was open before them, and that his losses would be heavy. But he did not hesitate to order the charge. He thought, among other things, that it would improve the morale of his army. No other conclusion can be reached from reading his account.

**ANOTHER REASON** for Hood's love of the charge is less substantial, but does provoke speculation. He was, he said, a member of the "Lee and Jackson" school which sought to strike the enemy, and despised breastworks except under special circumstances.

As a young man Hood had served on the frontier under Robert E. Lee, and was a devoted admirer of the great Confederate. Lee had earnestly advised the young officer not to marry until he could marry well, and Hood took his advice to heart. "He perhaps thought I might form an attachment for some of the country lasses," Hood wrote, "and therefore imparted to me his correct and at the same time aristocratic views."

While convalescing from wounds in Richmond, Hood became a social lion. Dyer wrote that he was received in the best society, his crutch thumped in almost every drawing room of the city, and he

William H. Jackson, numbering perhaps 6,000 men, and Horn states that Hood had about 20,000 infantry up for the battle—roughly the same number as the Federals had waiting to receive the attack.

Hood's enemies had said the year before in Richmond that he had "the heart of a lion and a head of wood," and his biographer, Dyer, remarked that the general "never was able to think of battle except in terms of long lines of men charging to glory across an open field." These caustic comments, though perhaps exaggerated, nevertheless seem to fit Hood at Franklin. He was to spend the rest of his life explaining away his mistakes on that battlefield.

**HIS** first error was the decision to form his two corps in line of battle immediately, and charge the Federal works. Cheatham "did not like the looks of the fight," and Forrest strongly advised a flanking movement to the right across the Harpeth. Given a supporting infantry column, the cavalryman asserted,



courted four girls. It was not until after the war, however, that he "married well" and settled in New Orleans.

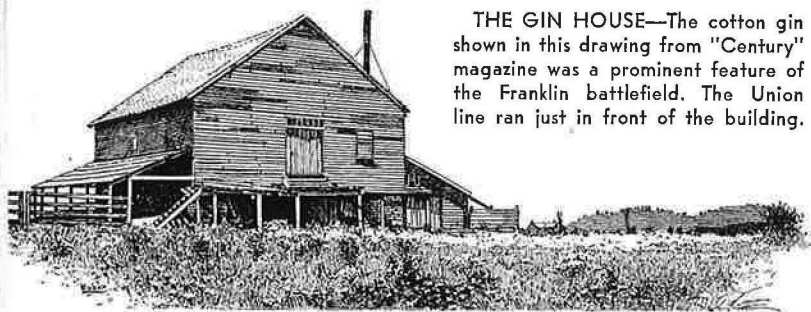
Hood's ideas of aristocracy and the "school of Lee and Jackson" may have had little to do with the charge at Franklin, but Wintringham in his *Weapons and Tactics* has some interesting remarks on this. A myth of cold steel, he wrote, was a shock weapon that conservative commanders could understand, and this "social myth included the proposition that courage, discipline, and will power of peculiar and exclusive sorts had to be possessed by officers leading troops in modern battle. The need to cultivate these qualities during a whole lifetime was the justification for maintaining an exclusive caste of professional officers."

**BE THIS** as it may, Hood ordered the charge. And he did it without artillery preparation to soften up Federal defenses, having no more than two batteries available as his two corps formed in line of battle.

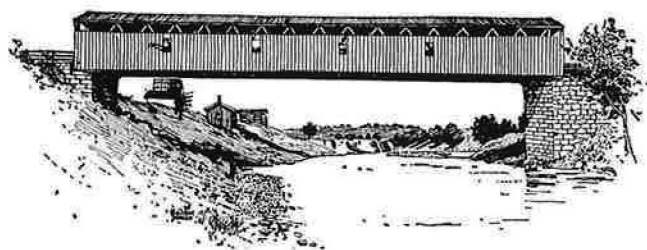
Hood's next error was to divide his cavalry into two equal parts, ordering Chalmers' division and Colonel Jacob B. Biddle's brigade to the left flank, beyond Major General William B. Bate's infantry. Forrest himself, with Buford's and Jackson's divisions, took position on the right flank, covering the right of Stewart's corps, and facing the fords on the Harpeth.

Cox suggests that Hood threw Chalmers to the left because he was concerned by the possible approach of a Federal brigade under Brigadier General Joseph Cooper, which had been ordered to march to Franklin from Centerville. But we can nowhere find that Hood even knew of this brigade—which never got near the battlefield—much less took precautions against it. Hood's orders indicate that he did not expect the cavalry to take a major offensive role, but merely to follow up the successes of the infantry and harass Schofield as he fled across the Harpeth.

**THE CONFEDERATE CHARGE** came just before four o'clock. It was one of the great spectacles of the war. Eighteen brigades of infantry moved forward in line of battle across the gently rolling plain, the line converging and moving in on itself as the field narrowed in front of the five Union brigades behind their works.



**THE GIN HOUSE**—The cotton gin shown in this drawing from "Century" magazine was a prominent feature of the Franklin battlefield. The Union line ran just in front of the building.



**HARPETH RIVER BRIDGE**—The railroad through Franklin to Nashville crossed the Harpeth River on this covered bridge. Fort Granger was built by the Federals (on the right of this view) to protect this crossing. (From "Century" magazine.)

Horn mentions that a long line of rabbits scurried across the field before Hood's lines, kicked from their burrows by hurrying feet. Coveys of quail were flushed from their coverts. Federal soldiers, watching behind cocked guns, were impressed by the grand array moving on their defenses, battle flags waving in the late afternoon sun.

The detached brigades of Colonels Joseph Conrad and John Q. Lane, of Wagner's division, were hit first. The day before, this division had held off half the Confederate army at Spring Hill, and its commander rashly decided they could do it again. Wagner did not retreat as ordered, and his two brigades remained in line to fire into the charging divisions of Cleburne and Major General John C. Brown.

The Confederates, checked momentarily, fell back to reorganize. During this interval both Stewart on the right and Bate on the left reached the main Federal defense line.

**NOW** Cleburne and Brown came on again, harder than ever, and on their flanks Wagner's men could see long lines of Confederates hurrying by. Too late, the Federals turned and ran.

Now it was a footrace to the Federal main line. One writer remarked that the old soldiers in Wagner's brigade got away but the recruits were captured, being afraid to run under enemy fire. No such technicality deterred the veterans, however, and they ran straight down the pike, through the main line at the Carter house, and on into Franklin, where they finally paused on the river bank. Wagner, furious, tried hard to rally them, but was swept backward by the mass of men.

Federal artillery on the Columbia Pike had been unable to fire at the charging Confederates without blasting Wagner's fleeing fugitives, and the same was true of Reilly's and Strickland's brigades near the pike. As a result, the Federals held their fire until the pursuing troops were almost on top of them before they opened up. "It seemed to me," a charging Confederate officer wrote after the battle, "that hell itself had exploded in our faces."





**BATTLE OF FRANKLIN**—Here, at about 3:30 p.m. on November 30, 1864, Hood demonstrated again the folly of moving across level, open ground to attack steady troops protected by fieldworks. Stewart's corps, shown ready for the charge, had approached north along the Columbia Pike to Henpeck Lane (not shown) .6 mile below the Harrison house, turned right to the Lewisburg Pike, thence north to deployment on the line shown. Cheatham's corps deployed to the left of the pike and moved up abreast. Lee's corps, not shown, was in reserve. Parts of Chalmers' cavalry division, on the left, and Jackson's, on the right, participated dismounted. The

remainder of the cavalry on the right crossed the river to the right of Stewart's position and confronted Wilson's Federal cavalry.

The chief Federal defense was effected by Cox's and Ruger's divisions, and, to a lesser extent, Kimball's. Wood's division, then under Beatty, was in general reserve and guarding the river crossings north of the town.

The Harrison house was where Hood held his last conference, before the battle, with his chief subordinates, and where Hood issued his order for the attack. Forrest then roughly told Hood he lacked good sense.





**THE CARTER HOUSE**—The Union line at Franklin ran through the yard of the Carter House which has been restored and is operated as a museum. The rear and south side of the brick building are pitted with scores of minie balls. (Tennessee State Library and Archives.)

Some of the men in Reilly's and Strickland's brigades, caught up in Wagner's disaster and misunderstanding their orders, joined in the pell-mell rush to the rear, and Cleburne's and Brown's men poured through the gap on the pike near the Carter house. They took the guns just to the left of the road, but providentially for the Federals they could find no primers, and the guns remained silent.

Suddenly the crucial point of the battle was at hand, with Confederates 50 yards inside the Federal works. For a few minutes Hood was on the verge of victory.

But the break did not spread. Instead it was plugged up by the third brigade of Wagner's division, commanded by Colonel Emerson Opdycke, which had been held in reserve 200 yards behind the main line north of the Carter house. Opdycke's men, needing no orders, charged into the break and fought hand-to-hand with the exhausted, outnumbered Confederates. In a few minutes Confederates inside the works were dead or prisoners and the lines had been restored, though in some places to the rear of the original line of works.

**THE DESPERATE CHARACTER** of the fighting from the cotton gin to the Carter house has been well described by participants who survived the battle. Writers on both sides noted that men charging into the holocaust of fire walked bent forward, like men breasting a strong wind, heads bent down and caps shielding their eyes from the leaden hail of death.

Of the many brief descriptions of the fighting the following, taken by Crownover from Thatcher's *Hundred Battles*, are the best.

#### **Colonel Wolf, a Federal officer:**

I saw a Confederate soldier, close to me, thrust one of our men through with the bayonet, and before he could draw his weapon from the ghastly wound his brains were scattered on all of us that stood near, by the butt of a musket swung with terrible force by some big fellow whom I could not recognize in the grim dirt and smoke that enveloped us.

#### **A member of the 100th Ohio Infantry:**

I saw three Confederates standing within our lines, as if they had dropped down unseen from the sky. They stood there for

an instant, guns in hand, neither offering to shoot nor surrender—dazed as in a dream. I raised my gun, but instinctively I felt as if about to commit murder—they were hopeless, and I turned my face to the foe trying to clamber over our abatis. When I looked again the three were down—apparently dead; whether shot by their own men or ours, who could tell?

Again and again, as daylight faded into twilight and darkness, the divisions of Cheatham and Stewart renewed their charges. But the high tide of battle, for them, had been reached. They met a solid sheet of flame and lead where the Federal lines, massed four deep behind their works, stood to their guns. As one writer put it, irresistible Confederates came up against immovable Federals.

In some places Hood's men collected in the ditches in front of the works, where they were unable to advance or retreat in the face of certain death. Men held inverted muskets over the parapet and fired blindly into the ditch, exposing only the hand that held the gun.

**THE BATTLE** was by no means confined to the Federal center. On the left and right things had gone even less well for the Confederates. Forrest's two divisions on Stewart's right pushed back the Federal cavalry early in the fight and crossed the Harpeth. Here, upstream from Figuers' Hill, the dismounted cavalry of both armies fought a pitched battle. The Federals had the advantage of Wood's infantry in support, but this IV Corps division was not engaged. Details of the fight are lacking, but the upshot of it was that Brigadier General James H. Wilson's cavalry could not be dislodged from Schofield's flank, and Forrest's two divisions, having expended most of their ammunition, pulled back across the Harpeth.

### **A Return to the Carter House**

**MANY YEARS AGO** an aged veteran of Schofield's corps visited the Carter House at Franklin—the first time he had been there since November 30, 1864. Standing on the back porch of the house, and pointing to the door of the family room on the south side, he said: "I was standing in that doorway, making myself as small as I could, while the battle was going on. Rebels at the breastworks started shooting at me. Those minie balls you see in the woodwork there were aimed at me. I returned their fire as fast as I could shoot and reload my rifle, but I didn't have much room, all scrouched up in that doorway, and every time I pulled my ramrod out of the gun barrel it knocked against the wood in the top of the door-frame."

The little dents made in the wood by the sharply withdrawn ramrod were (and still are) plainly to be seen.

"After a little while," he went on, "it got so hot I decided I'd better get inside the house and out of the Rebels' sight. I knocked on the door, but no one opened it. I then tried the doorknob, but it was locked from the inside. But I just had to get into the house, so I broke out the bottom panel of the door with the butt end of my rifle, and crawled through into the room. I tell you I stayed right there till the battle was over and it was safe to come out again." Immediately after the battle, Colonel Carter replaced the broken-out door panel with a piece of sheet-iron, and the patched door, along with the ramrod dents and the imbedded minie balls in the woodwork, may still be seen by today's visitors to the battle-scarred Carter House.

—Stanley F. Horn.



## A Confederate's Recollection Of the Battle of Franklin

*The memoirs of Captain William C. Thompson, 6th Mississippi, part of which appeared in our November 1964 issue, contain the following account of what he saw during the Battle of Franklin:*

ON THE MORNING of November 30 we marched to Franklin, some 20 miles. We fought our way, pressing the Federals to where we could overtake their baggage wagons. They would shoot their fine army mules, cut the spokes out of their wagon wheels, and thus render this transportation useless to us. All this just to keep us from getting their equipment. The Federals also were burning many fine dwellings on the way. It was a sad sight to see helpless women and children looking on, crying to see their homes and all their possessions reduced to ashes.

We reached Franklin at 4 p.m., where the Federals made a stand. General Hood prepared for the fight. Loring's division, composed of Scott's, Featherstone's, and Adams' brigades, was the main element of Hood's force. My regiment still belonged to Adams' brigade.

We went into the fight by brigades in column. General Scott was in front, Featherstone following close, then Adams. The brigades being thus arranged, I could see the movements to the front of us. Scott's brigade charged the Federal fortifications but failed to take the works. Featherstone came to his support and their combined forces made a second assault and again failed. Then Adams' brigade joined forces with the other two and made a third advance.

During our division attack the Federals had a battery planted on the right of Duck [Harpeth?] River that we could not reach. This battery damaged us severely, using canister. The Confederate troops were being mowed down, losing thousands. At the same time the whole division was suffering from galling musketry fire delivered by the enemy entrenched in our immediate front.

Just after the three brigades combined, and in the midst of the enemy artillery fire, I was shot through the right leg. The ground about me was covered with the fallen. I managed with the assistance of the litter men to get to a point where the bullets were not flying so thick. I remained there for the remainder of the night. Suffering great pain, I was also hungry and cold, having had nothing to eat since early morning. That meal was only a piece of corn bread cooked in the ashes of our camp fire. I had but one thin blanket; I lay on part of it and drew the other part over me. The ground beneath was frozen.

MORNING FOUND ME so bad off that I cared little whether I lived or died. I was carried to an operating table where I suffered the torture of having my wound probed for the bullet. The pain was intense but I asked Dr. Aills not to give me chloroform. I said I preferred the pain to the ill effects of this drug. So I gritted my teeth and held on while the doctor dug out the metal. I was then transported to the hospital in Franklin.

On arrival I was put in the officers' ward. Being told that I was the second Thompson to be admitted, I found that my brother, Captain Arthur J. Thompson, had also been in the Battle of Franklin as commander of his company in the 7th Mississippi Infantry Battalion. He had lost his leg just below the knee, besides suffering other wounds. I practically forgot my own pain in my efforts to comfort him.

That afternoon a Mrs. Baugh visited our ward. She stopped by my bed and during our conversation insisted on taking my brother and me to her house. Because of the overcrowding at the hospital she easily obtained permission. She drove us to her house, five miles west of Franklin, where we received the kindest of care.

*This memoir was made available by Bill Thompson, a grand-nephew of William Candace Thompson and a former reporter for the Nashville "Banner."*

repeaters in Casement's brigade, Cox mentions that two companies in the 12th Kentucky of Reilly's brigade were armed with "revolving rifles," and other troops are mentioned as having breechloading rifles—weapons that could be fired much faster than the standard muzzleloaders.

ACCORDING to one source (H. M. Field), much the same thing happened on the Confederate left. Field, writing in 1890, toured the field with S. A. Cunningham, Major Joe Vaulx of Nashville, Moscow B. Carter and Sam Ewing of Franklin, all of whom had seen the battle. These men said Bate's division was the first to strike the Federal line, where it had to take the whole defensive fire, and had to withdraw. When it is considered that Brown, on Bate's left, had been slowed by Wagner, as had Cleburne, and that Bate could not see Stewart's brigades from his position, all this seems possible. It is also hard to see how such men as Vaulx and Cunningham could have been mistaken as to Bate's premature attack. Carter repeats it, and Field sets it down as a matter of fact. But nowhere else do we find it reported. If it occurred, it explains how Ruger's men, between Bate's first and second attacks, also had time to direct an oblique fire eastward across the field.

THE CONFEDERATE LOSS in general officers is a notable feature of the battle. Adams, Granbury, Gist, Strahl, and Cleburne were killed outright, and Carter mortally wounded. Gordon was captured, and Brown, Manigault, Quarles, Cockrell, and Scott were wounded. Included in the casualties were 53 regimental commanders.

By way of comparison it is notable that Pickett's total loss at Gettysburg was 2,882, while at Franklin the Army of Tennessee lost over 6,000 in dead and wounded. Pickett's men had the advantage of artillery preparation, Hood's did not; Pickett's charge was totally repulsed, while the charge of Brown and Cleburne penetrated deep into the breastworks; Pickett, once repelled, retired from the field, while the Army of Tennessee renewed its charge time after time.

Though it failed to crush Schofield, the Army of Tennessee convinced its commander, that November 30th, that it would fight without protection of breastworks. "Never," Hood reported, "did troops fight more gallantly." They had shown that the men, as well as their commander, belonged to "the school of Lee and Jackson"—an aristocracy of valor in the best tradition of the American fighting men.

BRIGADIER GENERAL O. F. Strahl, soon to die, summed up the Battle of Franklin when he said, just before the charge:

"Boys, this will be short, but desperate." And so it was.



*Paul H. Beasley, a teacher in the Nashville school system, is an authority on Civil War history of the Nashville area. C. Buford Gotto likewise has a long background in local historical research. Both men are active members of the Confederate Historical Society of Nashville.*

Donelson, Clarksville, Murfreesboro, and Chattanooga during late 1862 and throughout 1863. Later he served as Chief Engineer at Washington, D.C. and was killed in June 1864 while leading a charge at Petersburg.

**NASHVILLE** became a powerful fortress because of its geographic location. It was the great arsenal and supply depot for the operation of splitting the Confederacy through the heart of its rich agricultural region. Generals Grant and Sherman, in charge of this phase of strategy, early realized the necessity of holding the city and making it as nearly impregnable as possible. These defenses were vital in protecting and guaranteeing the safety of enormous supplies coming daily by river and rail and essential in sustaining Sherman's great invasion force in the hard-driving Georgia Campaign. Even after Sherman left his Atlanta base in the heralded "March to the Sea," this mass of stores with its necessary rail transport facilities had to be protected in case he encountered difficulty.

In October 1864, when the Federal authorities realized that General Hood was leading the Confederate Army of Tennessee toward middle Tennessee and Nashville, they at once assigned General Zebulon B. Tower, a West Point graduate, to Nashville to extend and strengthen the system of defenses started by Captain Morton. Whatever the validity of postwar criticisms of Hood, the Federals considered the Tennessee Campaign a serious threat at the time to their great arsenal on the Cumberland River.

General Tower had been engaged before the war in building coastal defenses. He fought in Virginia and was severely wounded at Bull Run. He served as Superintendent of West Point early in 1864. He came to Nashville in November of that year as Chief Engineer and his performance, bordering on the miraculous, made the city the best fortified spot on the North American continent.

General Tower expedited the completion of Captain Morton's system of forts and also began work on additional defenses. For this work, he had under his direction the highly skilled railway construction workers, the men of the quartermaster's department, many Nashville citizens, and hundreds of conscripted slaves. The bends of the Cumberland River on the north and east, which constituted a natural barrier to Confederate maneuver, were patrolled by a squadron of Federal gunboats under Lieutenant Commander LeRoy Fitch.

**THERE WAS** a single line of defense starting at the Cumberland River on the east, where the Nashville General Hospital now stands. From there it ran across the University of Nashville campus through South Nashville to Forts Negley and Casino, where it branched off in two directions. The inner line extended from Fort Morton to the Taylor farm, now the site of Vanderbilt University. From here it ran northward to the hill site of the Washington Junior High School. Thence it extended to Fort Gillem (later called Fort Sill) at the site of Jubilee Hall of Fisk University, then to Fort W. D. Whipple, and finally to Fort Garesche (named for Colonel J. P. Garesche, who had been decapitated at the Battle of Murfreesboro) near the Cumberland River. The outer line ran from Fort Casino southwesterly across the Granny White Pike over the tops of the high hills, crossing Belmont Boulevard and continuing to the top of a high hill east of the Hillsboro Pike near its intersection with Linden Avenue. The line then crossed the Hillsboro Pike to the high point called Love Circle Hill, across Harding Pike to a hill west of Centennial Park, then across Charlotte Pike over several knobs to the Cumberland River near the site of the Tennessee A. and I. University on Centennial Boulevard.

The forts were located on hills which studded the 20 miles of breastworks, trenches, and rifle pits. All forts bristled with heavy guns supported by underground magazines and all supplies necessary to withstand a lengthy siege. These great barriers were so skillfully located that they supported each other as well as covering all practical approaches to the city from the south and west. The field works joining the hilltop forts consisted of artillery embrasures at strategic places, earth forts, and trenches and breastworks protected by abatis to impede attacking infantry. The once pastoral scenes through which these ugly scars of war made their abrupt angles had been cleared of all trees and buildings to provide clear paths of fire for the guns of fort and trench.

**AFTER A CENTURY**, the once strong defense lines of Nashville have all but disappeared in the continuing spread of the city's residential and industrial growth. On a hill southwest of the city reservoir, faint remains of Federal trenches may still be observed. This hill, now the site of a television tower, is west of Twelfth Avenue South and north of Ashwood Avenue. The W.P.A.-restored Fort Negley has not been maintained and is badly neglected. However, the crest of the hill does provide an excellent vantage point for viewing the southeastern portion of the battlefield.

That the defenses of Nashville were awesome and effective was best indicated by the fact that General Hood, who had a reputation for rashness, dared not make a direct assault on these lines. He had probably hoped to find weak spots but had learned from his spies that there were no weaknesses. So Hood established his investing lines slightly out of range of the big forts and the strength of the defensive lines was never really tested. The fortifications had served their purpose. General Tower and Captain Morton had succeeded in protecting the great Nashville supply base from capture or destruction.

**VIEW OF FORT NEGLEY**—Looking to the west, this Library of Congress photograph shows the Franklin Pike below the strongpoint and in the distance, Fort Casino.





December 11, 12, 13, 1964



COMMEMORATION  
PROGRAM



**R**everential appreciation and pride is a quality of the people of Nashville. It is out of sincere and respectful hearts that we brush aside one hundred years to commemorate the devotion, courage and patriotism of the Americans who fought each other so tenaciously in defense of their convictions in the fields about Nashville.

These exercises and rewritten history are commended to young and old to re-inspire you with those attributes that made our forebears the loyal patriots they were. In these days of anxiety we need to rekindle brightly those fires of patriotism to surely light the paths into the future. For unless we move with certainty and confidence, motivated by the magnificent heritage left us by God-loving forefathers, we cannot decisively impress those who would destroy this great and unselfish nation of ours.

To this lofty ideal many people dedicated themselves in this "Labor of Love" to make these days of remembrance noble and meaningful. Another cardinal purpose is to implant anew in the hearts of our people the desire to honor the memory of those stalwart men and women, boys and girls, who endured those difficult times with unflinching fortitude and developed our beloved United States of America. It is our prayer that future generations will not forget, and will continue to respect the memory of those to whom we pay honor during this Commemorative Centennial.

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This program prepared and presented under the auspices of the Davidson County Civil War Centennial Committee. Mr. Paul H. Beasley, Program Chairman, with the cooperation of Mr. C. Buford Gotto in research and Mr. James A. Hardin, design and illustration.

To the many people who have contributed to the preparation of this program we express our sincere thanks and appreciation.



In recognition of this commemorative event the symbol as shown on the cover and above was designed by Mr. James Hardin of the Centennial Committee. Among other uses it will be the design used on the medallion which all participants of the re-enactment and officials will receive.

In its simplicity it intends to salute the common soldier of the War Between the States and their patriotism, devotion and courage. Above all it is dedicated to the memory of those who fought here.