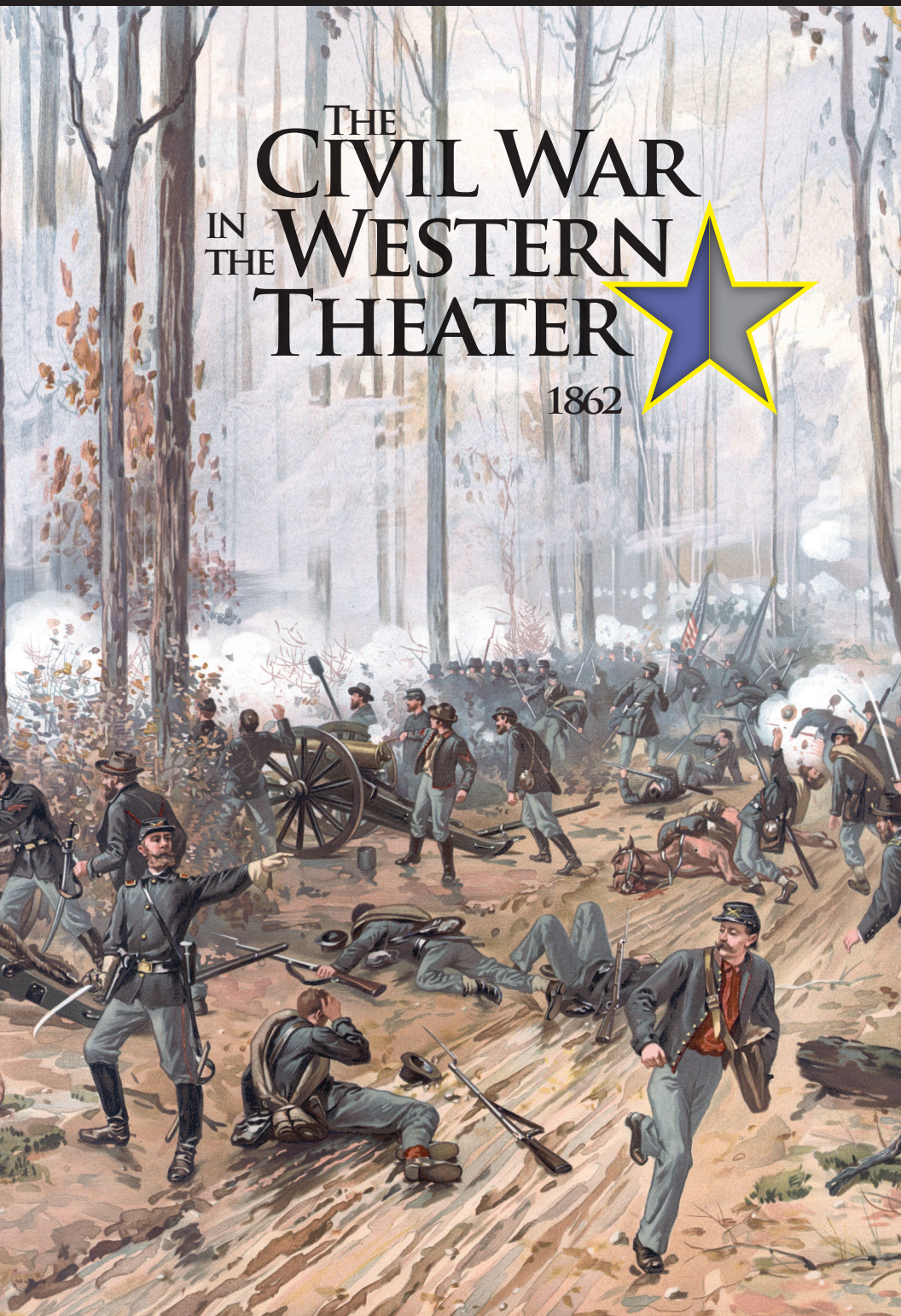


★ THE U.S. ARMY CAMPAIGNS OF THE CIVIL WAR ★

THE CIVIL WAR IN THE WESTERN THEATER

1862



Cover: *Illustration based on Battle of Shiloh, c. 1888, depicting the fight at the Hornet's Nest, by Thure de Thulstrup (Library of Congress)*

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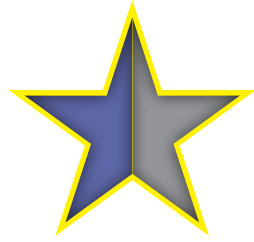
THE
CIVIL WAR
IN
THE WESTERN
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1862

by
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Center of Military History
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Washington, D.C., 2014



INTRODUCTION

Although over one hundred fifty years have passed since the start of the American Civil War, that titanic conflict continues to matter. The forces unleashed by that war were immensely destructive because of the significant issues involved: the existence of the Union, the end of slavery, and the very future of the nation. The war remains our most contentious, and our bloodiest, with over six hundred thousand killed in the course of the four-year struggle.

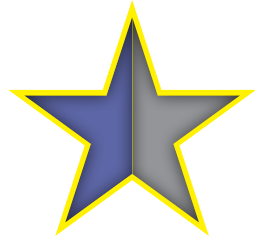
Most civil wars do not spring up overnight, and the American Civil War was no exception. The seeds of the conflict were sown in the earliest days of the republic's founding, primarily over the existence of slavery and the slave trade. Although no conflict can begin without the conscious decisions of those engaged in the debates at that moment, in the end, there was simply no way to paper over the division of the country into two camps: one that was dominated by slavery and the other that sought first to limit its spread and then to abolish it. Our nation was indeed "half slave and half free," and that could not stand.

Regardless of the factors tearing the nation asunder, the soldiers on each side of the struggle went to war for personal reasons: looking for adventure, being caught up in the passions and emotions of their peers, believing in the Union, favoring states' rights, or even justifying the simple schoolyard dynamic of being convinced that they were "worth" three of the soldiers on the other side. Nor can we overlook the factor that some went to war to prove their manhood. This has been, and continues to be, a key dynamic in understanding combat and the profession of arms. Soldiers join for many reasons but often stay in the fight because of their comrades and because they do not want to seem like cowards. Sometimes issues of national impact shrink to nothing in the intensely personal world of cannon shell and minié ball.

Whatever the reasons, the struggle was long and costly and only culminated with the conquest of the rebellious Confederacy,

the preservation of the Union, and the end of slavery. These campaign pamphlets on the American Civil War, prepared in commemoration of our national sacrifices, seek to remember that war and honor those in the United States Army who died to preserve the Union and free the slaves as well as to tell the story of those American soldiers who fought for the Confederacy despite the inherently flawed nature of their cause. The Civil War was our greatest struggle and continues to deserve our deep study and contemplation.

RICHARD W. STEWART
Chief Historian



THE CIVIL WAR IN THE WESTERN THEATER, 1862

The contest for the Western Theater in 1862 was monumental in scope and importance. Containing an area of about 230,000 square miles—roughly the size of France—the Western Theater extended from the Appalachian Mountains in the east to the Mississippi River in the west, and from the Ohio River in the north to the Gulf of Mexico in the south. Seven states—Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, eastern Louisiana, and western Florida—lay within its boundaries. The region was vital to the Confederacy. Not only was it rich in human and agricultural resources, but it also contained the Confederacy’s largest city (New Orleans, Louisiana), important ports (New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama), and critical industrial and railroad centers (Nashville and Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia). Home to the mighty Mississippi River, towns such as Memphis, Tennessee; Vicksburg, Mississippi; and Port Hudson and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, controlled a water transportation system that was the lifeblood of both the South and the Midwest. Last but not least, the region served as the geographical bridge that linked the eastern Confederate states with the Trans-Mississippi West, home to the Confederate states of Arkansas, Texas, and western Louisiana, and to Missouri, which Southerners still hoped to seize. In short, the Confederacy could not survive unless it controlled the Western Theater. Conversely, the Federal government could not prevail unless it conquered the region (*Map 1*).



MAP 1

Strategic Setting

The Mississippi River had figured prominently in the North's strategic planning from the outset of the war. In May 1861, then-General in Chief of the U.S. Army Winfield Scott had drafted the so-called Anaconda Plan. Scott had proposed that the Federal armed forces squeeze the life out of the Confederacy by blockading the Southern coastline and launching an amphibious thrust down the Mississippi. He had argued that his plan would end the war with minimal bloodshed, conveniently ignoring the fact that it would take years for the North to build a sufficient navy. President Abraham Lincoln thought the Anaconda Plan had merit, but he knew that the Army would have to play a far more active role than Scott had envisioned—especially in Kentucky and Missouri—where Unionist and secessionist forces were already maneuvering for power.

Lincoln was determined not only to keep the two crucial border states in the Union, but to rescue eastern Tennessee. One senator, Andrew Johnson, and one congressman, Horace Maynard, from that region remained in Washington to represent their Unionist supporters. In July 1861, following the Union defeat at Bull Run, Virginia, Lincoln sketched out a strategy for the Western Theater that involved securing Missouri and launching a two-pronged offensive from Cairo, Illinois, to Memphis, and from Cincinnati, Ohio, into eastern Tennessee.

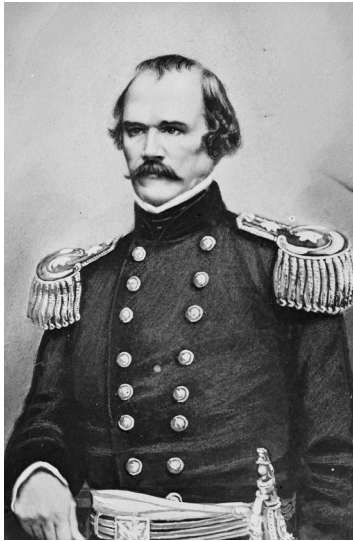
On 4 August, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, the Army of the Potomac's new commander, presented his own strategic plan for the West that accorded with Lincoln's wishes yet proved more elaborate. He recommended a grand campaign involving two western armies—one based in Kentucky and the other in Missouri. The first army would divide into two columns in order to capture eastern Tennessee and Nashville. They would reunite at Chattanooga and proceed to Atlanta and then Montgomery, Alabama. After gaining control of Missouri, the second army would launch an amphibious expedition down the Mississippi River and seize New Orleans. All that remained was for the president to find generals willing and able to put these ambitious plans into action.

In the meantime, Confederate President Jefferson Davis sought to demonstrate the viability of his new nation. This meant protecting the territory, populace, and economic infrastructure—above all, slaves—of the eleven Confederate states. To do this,

Davis adopted a strategy of territorial defense, stationing forces at critical points along the perimeter of the Confederacy. In the West, this involved occupying a defensive cordon across southern Kentucky, stretching eastward from Columbus on the Mississippi River to Bowling Green, and from there to the Cumberland Gap on the border with Tennessee and Virginia. The Confederates also built fortifications along the Mississippi at Island Number 10; New Madrid, Missouri; Fort Pillow, Tennessee; Memphis; Vicksburg; and Port Hudson; and on the Gulf Coast at Mobile and Pensacola, Florida. Davis chose an old friend, General Albert Sidney Johnston, to command the Confederate forces in the West. Johnston established his headquarters at Bowling Green and assembled a 34,000-man force to defend the approaches to Nashville.

Johnston's opponent in Kentucky was a fellow native of the Bluegrass State, Brig. Gen. Robert Anderson of Fort Sumter fame. Lincoln had appointed Anderson commander of the Department of Kentucky on 28 May 1861. Following the Federals' entry into the state in early September, Lincoln urged Anderson to move against the Confederates, but the general refused on the grounds that he lacked the resources. On 7 October, Lincoln replaced Anderson with his second-in-command, Brig. Gen. William T.

General A. S. Johnston
(Library of Congress)



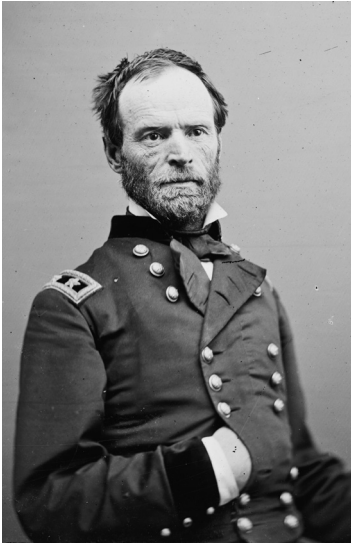
Sherman. General Sherman proved no more aggressive than Anderson, reporting that his 45,000-man force was too inexperienced and disorganized to mount a successful campaign. The responsibilities of high command soon overwhelmed Sherman. At one point, he informed the secretary of war that he needed at least two hundred thousand troops to mount offensive operations, prompting one Northern newspaper to declare him "insane."

Sherman lasted barely a month before Lincoln directed the new general in chief of the U.S. Army, General McClellan, to replace him with Brig. Gen.

Don Carlos Buell. McClellan instructed Buell to make capturing Knoxville, in eastern Tennessee, his top priority—not only to liberate the Unionists there, but also to cut the railroad linking Virginia to the Volunteer State. McClellan left the expedition to Buell's discretion, and the latter replied that he could not supply his army with a logistical pipeline that ran through two hundred miles of mountainous wilderness. Instead, Buell proposed that he launch the main assault on Nashville and make a diversionary attack on Knoxville—a proposal that neither Lincoln nor McClellan found satisfactory.

The president and the general in chief not only had to contend with the stalemate in Kentucky, but they also had to deal with the crisis in Missouri stemming from Maj. Gen. John C. Frémont's incompetence. In September, Lincoln had to revoke Frémont's unauthorized proclamation freeing all slaves in Missouri; the general had since allowed his department to slide into a condition bordering on anarchy. On 4 November, Lincoln replaced the "Great Pathfinder" with Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, an experienced staff officer whose reputation as a military scholar had earned him the nickname "Old Brains." Assuming command of the Department of Missouri on 19 November, Halleck imme-

General Sherman
(Library of Congress)



General Buell
(Library of Congress)



diately declared martial law. From his headquarters in St. Louis, he began to ferret out corruption and incompetence. The cleanup effort would occupy him for several months.

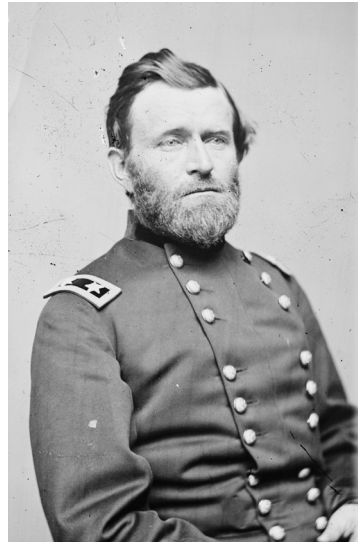
The divided Union command structure contributed to the difficulties in developing a coherent strategy. Halleck's geographic department included Missouri, Arkansas, Illinois, and the sliver of Kentucky west of the Cumberland River. Buell's command, the Department of the Ohio, included Ohio, Indiana, and all of Kentucky east of the Cumberland River. Buell had proposed that Halleck support his offensive by sending a strong force into western Kentucky, and he refused to move until he received such assistance. The truth was that neither Buell's nor Halleck's forces were ready to launch offensive operations, but both men were slow to admit this to McClellan.

Halleck's most aggressive subordinate, Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, had already attempted to establish a forward base on the Mississippi and failed. Grant was a U.S. Military Academy graduate and a Mexican War veteran who had left the Army in 1854 amid allegations of alcoholism. The outbreak of the Civil War found him working in his father's leather goods shop in Galena, Illinois. In June 1861, Grant accepted Illinois Governor Richard

General Halleck
(Library of Congress)



General Grant
(Library of Congress)



Yates' offer of a colonelcy in the state volunteers and command of the 21st Illinois Infantry. On 7 November 1861, Grant led a division-size force in a minor action at Belmont, Missouri, just across the Mississippi from Columbus, Kentucky. Although forced to withdraw from the battlefield, he displayed two traits that would stand him in good stead throughout the war: clear thinking and coolness under fire.

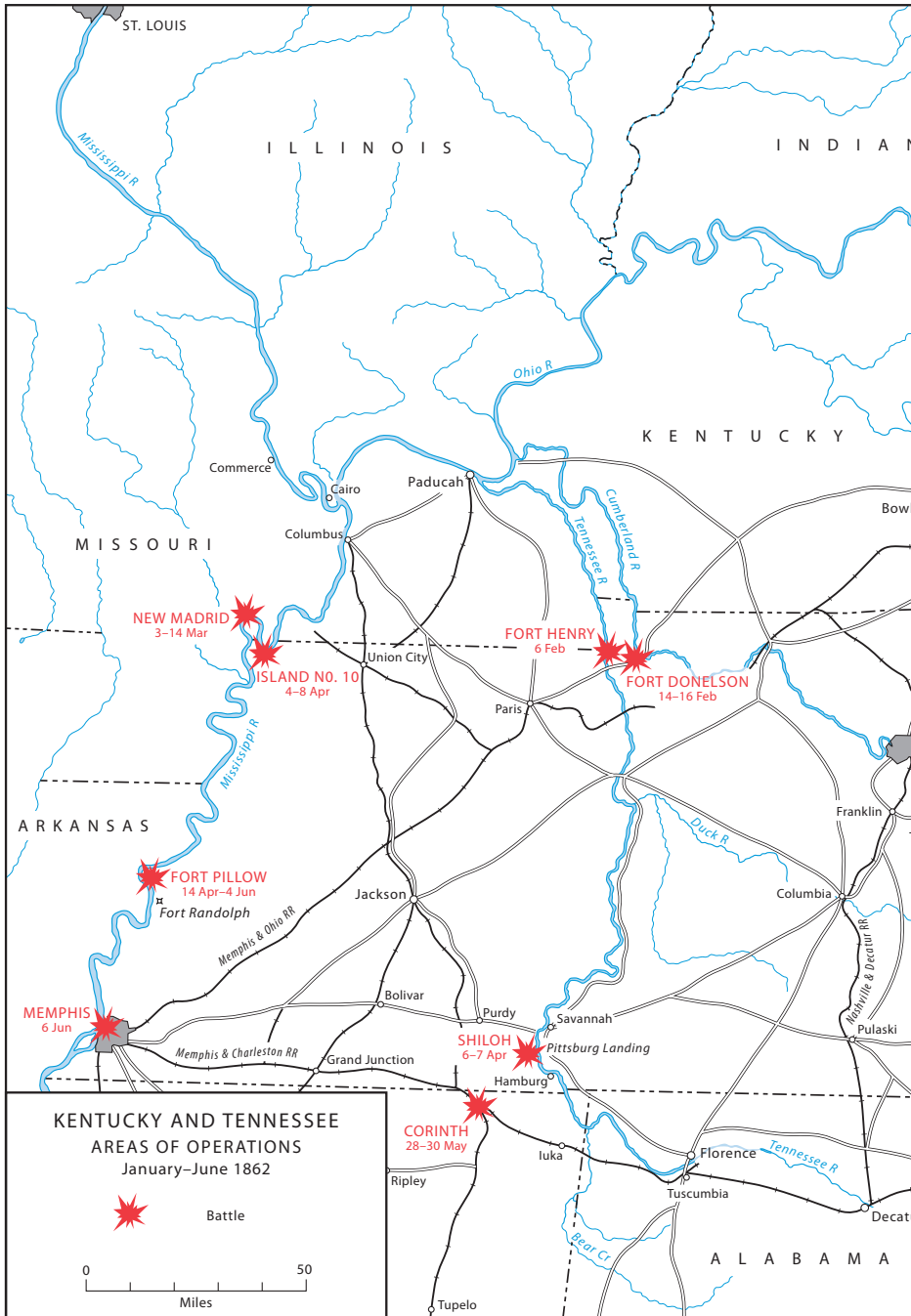
In December 1861, while Buell and Halleck prepared to strike from the north, Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler opened a southern front by occupying Ship Island, Mississippi, a narrow strip of land about sixty miles southeast of the Mississippi River. Butler considered several possible objectives from Alabama to Texas, including New Orleans. But he would need at least three months to accumulate troops and supplies before he could launch an expedition.

In January 1862, while Butler prepared for his upcoming campaign, Grant proposed to Halleck that he bypass the Mississippi River and launch an amphibious expedition up the Tennessee River to capture Fort Henry, using it as a springboard for a deeper thrust into Southern territory. Grant noted that the offensive "would have a moral effect on our troops" and that it would outflank the Confederates at Columbus, forcing the defenders to abandon their stronghold on the Mississippi. Halleck gave his approval, having already presented a similar plan to McClellan. While Grant gathered the necessary troops and supplies, Buell at last yielded to Lincoln's and McClellan's entreaties for action.

Operations

OPENING GUNS IN THE WEST

As the New Year opened, Buell ordered his 1st Division commander, Virginia native Brig. Gen. George H. Thomas, to attack Confederate forces under Brig. Gen. Felix K. Zollicoffer along the Cumberland River near Mill Springs in southeastern Kentucky (*Map 2*). Meanwhile, a second Union force commanded by Brig. Gen. William "Bull" Nelson occupied nearby Prestonsburg, Kentucky. The Confederate commander in the area, Brig. Gen. Humphrey Marshall, was attempting to establish Confederate government there but could make little headway. Marshall's efforts soon drew a Federal expeditionary force of 3,000 men under a



MAP 2

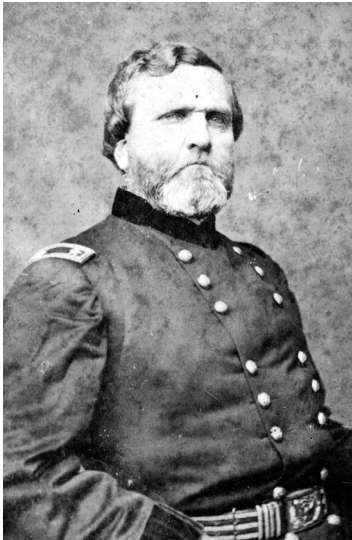


future U.S. president, Col. James A. Garfield. On 10 January 1862, Garfield defeated Marshall at Middle Creek. Buoyed by his victory, Garfield continued toward the Cumberland Gap with the intention of cutting the railroad line that linked Knoxville with Virginia.

Alerted to the Federals' approach, Zollicoffer established a defensive position near Mill Springs, protecting the Cumberland Gap. Thomas marched his division to Somerset, Kentucky, where he maneuvered Zollicoffer out of a strong position and forced him to retreat south of the Cumberland River. In the meantime, Maj. Gen. George B. Crittenden arrived to take command of the Confederate force. On 19 January, the two forces fought the Battle of Mill Springs. The battle involved roughly four thousand troops on each side and resulted in about seven hundred total casualties. The Union force won a narrow victory at Mill Springs, and the Confederates lost Zollicoffer, who was killed after blundering into the Federal lines at dusk. Poor roads and the onset of winter weather prevented Thomas from capturing the Cumberland Gap and liberating the eastern Tennessee Unionists.

Following hard on the heels of the Union Army's successful operations in eastern Kentucky, Grant launched his campaign to capture Fort Henry in order to puncture the Confederate defensive

General Thomas
(Library of Congress)



cordon across southern Kentucky and open the Deep South to invasion. The Federal offensive marked the start of a joint Army-Navy partnership that would play a crucial role in Union victory in the West.

The naval commander in this operation was Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote, who led a flotilla of thirteen steam transports, four ironclads, and two timberclad gunboats. His transports ferried 17,000 of Grant's infantrymen up the Tennessee River from Paducah, Kentucky, and landed them downstream from Fort Henry on 5 February. Heavy rainfall caused the river to rise rapidly,

flooding the interior of the fort and compelling the defenders to evacuate, but not before they damaged one of the Federal vessels. Grant entered the fort on 6 February and captured a handful of Confederates, including the commander, Brig. Gen. Lloyd Tilghman. The Tennessee River now lay open to Federal navigation all the way to northern Alabama.

Grant's next objective was Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River about fifteen miles to the east. Fort Donelson guarded the river approach to Nashville and was a far more formidable fortification than Fort Henry. On 5 February, the Fort Henry garrison arrived there, raising the number of defenders to 13,000 Confederates under Brig. Gen. John B. Floyd. Grant led his four divisions overland to Donelson, while Foote's flotilla moved up the Cumberland River to engage the water batteries. After a sharp artillery duel on 14 February, Foote's battered gunboats had to turn back. Early the next morning, the Confederates launched a sortie and succeeded in opening the road to Nashville, but they delayed their escape and enabled Grant to close the gap with a series of counterattacks. Under suspicion by the Federals for his actions as secretary of war during the prewar secession crisis, General Floyd feared retribution, and he and his second-in-command, Brig. Gen. Gideon J. Pillow, abandoned the fort rather than surrender. Col. Nathan Bedford Forrest likewise escaped with his cavalry. The task of surrendering the Fort Donelson garrison thus fell to Brig. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner. In answer to Buckner's request for terms, Grant gave his immortal reply: "No terms except immediate and unconditional surrender can be accepted."

Buckner surrendered to Grant on 16 February, and with the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson, the Confederate western defensive perimeter collapsed on itself. Outflanked, Johnston evacuated Bowling Green and fell back to Nashville. Deciding that he lacked the strength to oppose General Buell's Army of the Ohio, Johnston withdrew the bulk of his force to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on 17–18 February, leaving Floyd's Virginia brigade to hold the state capital. Floyd abandoned Nashville on 23 February and moved southeast to Chattanooga while Johnston headed to Corinth via Huntsville, Decatur, and Tusculumbia, Alabama. On 25 February, Buell's army marched unopposed into Nashville, making it the first Confederate state capital to fall into Federal hands. In the meantime, Maj. Gen. Leonidas Polk evacuated the "Gibraltar of the West" at Columbus, leaving Island Number 10, New Madrid, and



General Polk
(Ohio State University)

Fort Pillow as the remaining Confederate defenses on the central Mississippi.

As February 1862 came to a close, Jefferson Davis lamented to his old friend General Johnston: “We are deficient in arms, wanting in discipline, and inferior in numbers. Private arms must supply the first want, time and the presence of an enemy, with diligence on the part of commanders, will remove the second, and public confidence will overcome the third.” It thus fell to General Johnston to gather his scattered forces and defend the Confederate heartland against invasion.

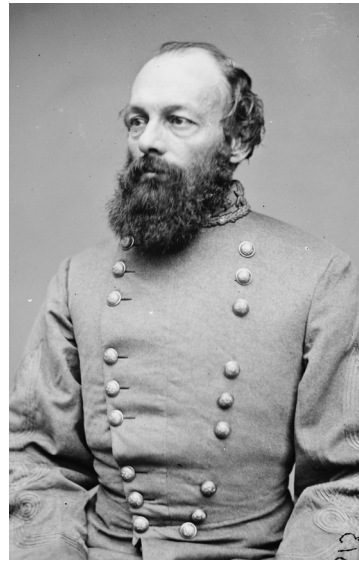
THE CONFEDERATE STRATEGY OF CONCENTRATION

The string of disastrous defeats in Kentucky and Tennessee demonstrated to President Davis the folly of the perimeter defense strategy. There simply was too much territory for the available manpower to defend. Worse yet, the geography of the region conspired against the defenders, with navigable river systems reaching deep into the heartland. At a meeting in Richmond in mid-February, Davis and his advisers decided on a new strategic approach, that of concentrating forces powerful enough to strike back at Federal invasions. Confederate Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin drafted the appropriate orders in Davis’ name and passed them on to the department commanders. In a letter to Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg, the commander at Pensacola, Benjamin wrote, “The heavy blow which has been inflicted on us by the recent operations in Kentucky and Tennessee renders necessary a change in our whole plan of campaign.” Bragg’s forces would evacuate the fortifications along the Gulf Coast due to “the necessity of abandoning the seaboard in order to defend the Tennessee line, which is vital to our safety.” In his

orders to Maj. Gen. Mansfield Lovell, the commander of the garrison at New Orleans, Benjamin wrote, “We must dismiss all ideas of scattering our forces in defense of unimportant points and concentrate them at vital lines.” This was a clear acknowledgment that the Confederacy did not have the resources to defend every square mile of its territory. Instead, Southern armies would have to exploit the advantages of interior lines and existing rail systems, trading space for time and seeking opportunities to launch counteroffensives against the Union invaders.

The formulation of Confederate strategy was complicated by internal dissension, particularly in eastern Tennessee. When Maj. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith took command of the Army of East Tennessee at Knoxville in March 1862, he soon discovered that the local populace stood largely against him. In a report to General Samuel Cooper, the Confederate adjutant general, Smith said that he found eastern Tennessee to be “an enemy’s country, and the people, where removed from the immediate presence and fear of Confederate troops, in open rebellion.” Most of the thirty-two counties that comprised Smith’s command were pro-Union, and opposition strengthened when the spring elections put Unionists into many local government offices. In response, Smith declared martial law and suspended the writ of habeas corpus on 8 April. These measures, combined with the passage of the Confederate Conscription Act on 16 April, triggered an exodus of military-age males to Kentucky. Only the local suspension of conscription prevented the situation from worsening. Union commanders proved no more successful than their Confederate counterparts in asserting control over fractious eastern Tennessee. In March 1862, President

General Smith (Library of Congress)



Lincoln appointed longtime eastern Tennessee resident Andrew Johnson as military governor of the state with the rank of brigadier general, but this move proved controversial. Believing that “treason must be made odious and traitors punished and impoverished,” Johnson took a hard line toward secessionists. Whether a less confrontational approach might have been more successful remains an open question, but Johnson’s vindictive policies alienated large numbers of moderate Tennesseans.

CLEARING THE MIDDLE MISSISSIPPI: ISLAND NUMBER 10 TO MEMPHIS

The fall of Columbus provided Halleck with an opportunity to retake the central section of the Mississippi River. The first step in this operation was the capture of Island Number 10, so-called because it was the tenth island south of the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi Rivers at Cairo, Illinois. Commanding a sharp bend in the Mississippi, Island Number 10 served as a formidable choke point, bristling with over fifty pieces of artillery and several thousand troops. The island’s defenses formed an integrated network with batteries at nearby New Madrid and along the Tennessee side of the river.

General Pope (Library of Congress)



Brig. Gen. John Pope had the task of reducing Island Number 10. He began his expedition in late February, gathering a force of 12,000 infantry and cavalry on the Missouri shore near New Madrid. The town surrendered without a fight on 13 March as the defenders evacuated their fortifications. Pope’s force, christened the Army of the Mississippi, grew to 18,000 men but was stranded on the west bank of the river without Foote’s Western Flotilla to ferry it to the Tennessee side. Foote could not run his vessels past the island’s batteries without the risk of heavy loss, so he and

Pope decided to bypass Island Number 10 entirely. Using flooded bottomlands on the Missouri side of the river, they dredged a canal—dubbed the New Madrid Channel—twelve miles downstream and beyond reach of the island batteries. Foote managed to pass enough boats through this channel to ferry Pope's army to the east bank on 7 April. Two Federal ironclads, the USS *Carondelet* and the USS *Pittsburg*, also ran past the island to provide fire support for the impending assault. The gunboats' accurate fire soon silenced the batteries on the Tennessee shore. Pope then cut off the garrison's line of retreat, resulting in the surrender of some four thousand Confederates on 8 April. The successful expedition against Island Number 10 chipped away at Confederate control of the Mississippi and boosted Pope's career. Soon afterward, he received a promotion to major general and an army command in Virginia.

The next Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi was Fort Pillow, a forty-gun bastion located on the Tennessee side of the river about fifty miles north of Memphis. Foote's naval force arrived opposite the fort on 14 April and began a bombardment that lasted for several weeks. On 9 May, Flag Officer Charles H. Davis replaced the ailing Foote as commander of the Western Flotilla. The next day, Confederate vessels of Flag Officer James E. Montgomery's River Defense Fleet attacked the Federals near Fort Pillow. The Southern rams surprised two of Davis' ironclads and grounded them before withdrawing beyond range of the remaining Union flotilla. This proved to be a minor setback for the Federals, as work crews soon raised and repaired the damaged gunboats. Advancing Union forces under General Halleck compelled the Confederates to evacuate Fort Pillow on 4 June, and Davis' flotilla took possession of the fort on the following day.

Davis soon found his naval force augmented by the U.S. Ram Fleet—seven civilian steamers converted into ram ships under the command of an enterprising civil engineer-turned-Army officer, Col. Charles Ellet Jr. Davis and Ellet attacked the River Defense Fleet at Memphis on 6 June, destroying seven of the eight Confederate vessels engaged and forcing the defenders to evacuate the city. Ellet was severely wounded during the battle and died of blood poisoning two weeks later; however, the Federals had regained control of the Mississippi River all the way to Vicksburg.

THE BATTLE OF SHILOH

As events were unfolding in eastern Tennessee and along the Mississippi River, a decisive engagement occurred along the banks of the Tennessee River in southwestern Tennessee. After having broken through the Confederates' perimeter defenses in southern Kentucky and northern Tennessee, Grant and Buell, both now major generals, moved to join forces for a thrust into the Deep South. By April 1862, Grant's Army of the Tennessee and Buell's Army of the Ohio were converging on Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, about twenty miles north of the important rail junction at Corinth, Mississippi. Seeking to implement the new concentration strategy, Johnston arrived at Corinth and hurried to collect a sizable force before Grant and Buell could combine. In addition to the soldiers under his immediate command, Johnston was joined by the troops under Bragg, Polk, and Maj. Gen. William J. Hardee, amounting to 45,000 officers and men—the largest Confederate field army yet formed in the Western Theater. Johnston named his expanded force the Army of the Mississippi.

The bulk of Grant's army camped on a rough, triangular plateau at Pittsburg Landing on the west bank of the Tennessee River. The surrounding terrain consisted of dense forests interspersed with small farms and steep ravines. Grant established his headquarters seven miles to the north at the Cherry mansion in Savannah. Appointed by Grant as camp commandant, Sherman (now a major general) established his headquarters near a one-room log church called Shiloh, an Old Testament place name meaning "peaceful." The five divisions of the Army of the Tennessee at Pittsburg Landing numbered roughly forty thousand soldiers. A sixth division totaling 7,500 men was camped near Grant's headquarters.

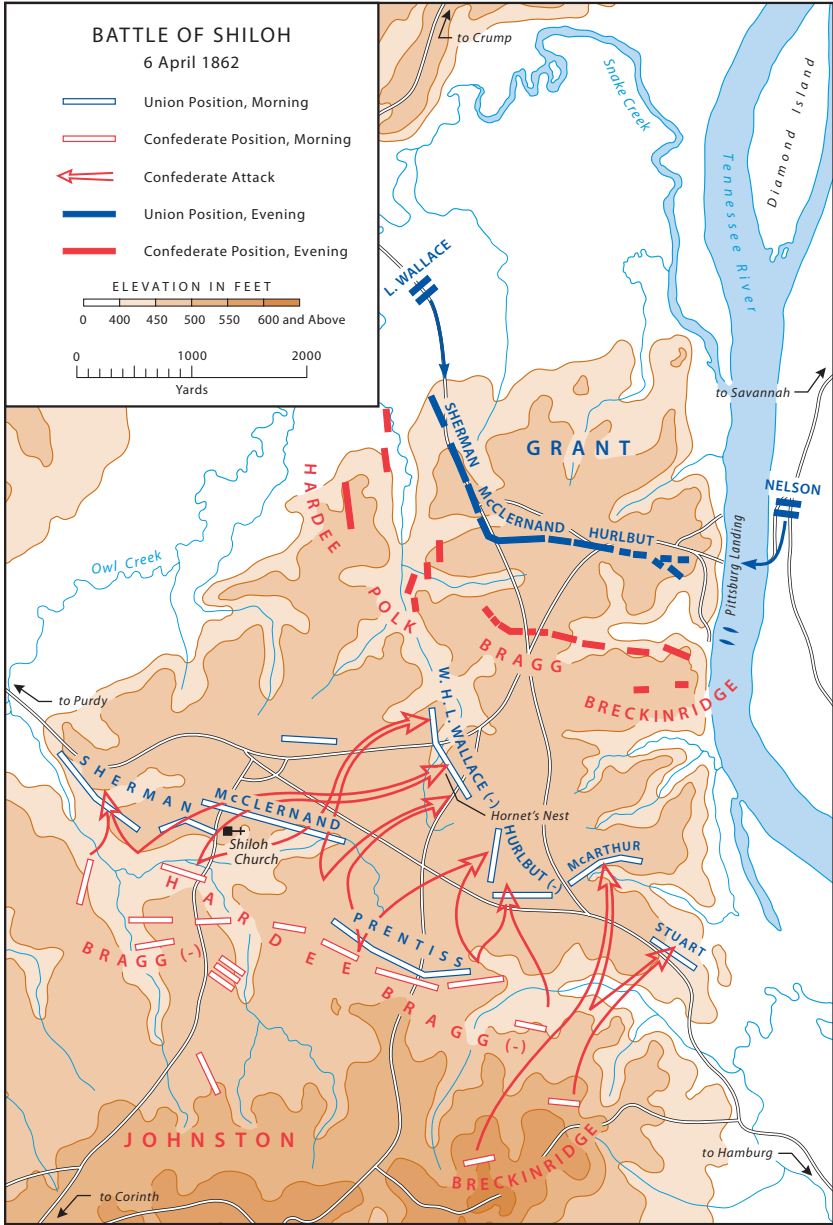
During preparations for the move on Corinth, Grant had received a letter from General Halleck containing some serious allegations. Among them were accusations that Grant had failed to prevent widespread plundering at Fort Donelson, had made an unauthorized trip to Nashville, and had neglected to send Halleck regular reports. On 24 March, Grant had fired off a reply, assuring his superior that he had done all he could to prevent plundering at Donelson and that he had traveled to Nashville solely to confer with General Buell. Grant had then noted that he had sent Halleck daily reports, whereas during the two weeks since the fall of Donelson, he had not received one word

of instruction from Halleck. He had then blamed “designing enemies” for spreading false reports about his conduct. In the end, Halleck chose to ignore the accusations, for he realized that Grant was far too valuable to shelve over mere rumors.

On 2 April, General Johnston issued Special Order 8, outlining the Confederate march to Pittsburg Landing and the subsequent attack. Because most of his troops had little or no combat experience, Johnston planned to keep large-unit battle maneuvers to an absolute minimum. His first two corps, under Hardee and Bragg, would attack in successive lines of battle, one behind the other. Polk’s corps and Brig. Gen. John C. Breckinridge’s small Reserve Corps would follow in column of brigades to reinforce Hardee and Bragg as needed. Johnston intended for his army to attack the Federal left flank anchored on the Tennessee River, drive it from its base of operations at the landing to the banks of Owl Creek, and then destroy it. At first glance, the plan appeared sound, yet it failed to take into account the broken terrain over which the assault would occur—a difficulty compounded by the fact that the Confederate high command had no reliable maps of the area.

The Confederate march to Shiloh began on 3 April, with Johnston expecting to attack two days later. But heavy rains compelled him to postpone the assault until Sunday, 6 April. As they neared Pittsburg Landing, Confederate skirmishers collided with Federal pickets, giving Union commanders ample warning of an attack, but they chose to disregard it. Mindful of his reputation for skittishness, Sherman did not wish to appear as an alarmist. When one of his regimental commanders, Col. Jesse J. Appler of the 53d Ohio, reported that a “line of men in butternut clothes” had opened fire in his sector, Sherman sent him the following reply: “Take your damned regiment back to Ohio. There are no rebels closer than Corinth.” In fact, they were a good deal closer than that. On the night of 5–6 April, Hardee’s men slept on their arms less than two miles south of Sherman’s camps.

The Battle of Shiloh began before dawn on Sunday, 6 April. Col. Everett Peabody, who commanded a brigade in Brig. Gen. Benjamin M. Prentiss’ division, sent a skirmish line of the 25th Missouri Infantry into the Fraley cotton field in search of Confederates. The Union skirmishers encountered the 3d Alabama Battalion on picket duty, and a firefight ensued. Around 0630, Hardee’s mile-long line of battle emerged from the tree line and began pushing back the Missourians. The skir-



MAP 3

mishers were soon joined by the rest of Peabody's brigade, and the Federals conducted a fighting retreat to their camps (*Map 3*).

Hearing the opening shots of the battle, Johnston mounted his horse. "Tonight we will water our horses in the Tennessee River," he told his staff, and then rode out to find his army's right flank. Johnston had decided to forgo overall direction of the battle in favor of leading the Confederate assault on the right, where he believed his direct intervention would have the greatest impact. He entrusted deployment of the reserves to his second in command, General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, who remained in the rear on the Corinth Road.

Sherman's and Prentiss' divisions bore the brunt of the Confederate onslaught. Caught by surprise, most Federals abandoned their camps without a fight and fled north. Some of the men fought bravely but were overwhelmed by superior numbers. Among the Union casualties was Colonel Peabody, who was wounded three times before the fourth bullet killed him around 0900.

The Confederate attack soon bogged down as units lost cohesion advancing across broken terrain and as soldiers broke ranks to loot the Union camps. In the bivouac of the 18th Wisconsin Infantry, General Johnston encountered a lieutenant loaded down with spoils. "None of that, sir," Johnston roared, "we are not here for plunder." Seeing the mortification on the young officer's face, Johnston picked up a battered tin cup. "Let this be my share of the spoils today," the general told the lieutenant, and then continued on his way.

With the rout of Prentiss' division, the triumphant Confederates appeared to have an open path to Pittsburg Landing. But reports of a Union division beyond the Confederate right



General Beauregard
(National Archives)

flank induced General Johnston to order a halt while he shifted two brigades to the extreme right. The Union “division” proved to be an isolated brigade commanded by Col. David Stuart—hardly a threat to the Confederate assault but an unexpected obstacle nonetheless. In any event, the Confederates waited for the brigades of Brig. Gens. James R. Chalmers and John K. Jackson to march into position and attack. They easily drove back Stuart, but the delay enabled the Federals elsewhere on the battlefield to rally.

On the Union right, Sherman recovered from his nasty surprise and conducted a stout defense of the ridgeline around Shiloh Church. He deployed his two remaining brigades in a V-shaped line, augmented by artillery, and held four Confederate brigades at bay for almost two hours. Once again, superior Confederate numbers overwhelmed the Federal defenders. Sherman’s troops slowly fell back to the Crossroads—the intersection of the Corinth-Pittsburg and Hamburg-Purdy roads—where Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand’s division formed on Sherman’s left to bolster the Union center.

On the Union left, the divisions of Brig. Gens. Stephen A. Hurlbut and W. H. L. Wallace marched from their camps near Pittsburg Landing and deployed along a narrow wagon trace bordering the Bell and Duncan fields, a path that became known as the Sunken Road. Wallace went into position on the right to support Sherman and McClernand, while Hurlbut attempted to buttress Stuart’s brigade on the left. The road passed through a thicket of oak trees and underbrush that soldiers dubbed the Hornet’s Nest because of the incessant whiz of bullets and shrapnel. The remnant of Prentiss’ division fell back to this point and formed a salient between Wallace and Hurlbut.

Starting at 1200, Bragg launched no fewer than eight frontal assaults against the Hornet’s Nest. Col. Randall L. Gibson’s Louisiana brigade alone attacked four times into the dense thickets and lost one-third of its strength. While Bragg hammered away at the Hornet’s Nest, General Johnston led four Confederate brigades in an assault on Brig. Gen. John McArthur’s brigade anchoring the Federal left flank. Although the Southerners drove McArthur back, their success proved costly. About 1415, while following the Confederate line of battle, General Johnston received a wound in the right leg. At first he seemed unaware of the injury, but the bullet had severed an artery, and he soon bled to death—a possible

victim of friendly fire. With the loss of Johnston's leadership, the Confederate advance on the right sputtered out.

The Federals manning the Sunken Road position managed to hold out until late afternoon, when the collapse of Union forces on either flank left them isolated. As the rest of the Federal line fell back, the Confederates surrounded the Hornet's Nest salient and captured over two thousand Union soldiers, including General Prentiss. General Wallace was mortally wounded while trying to escape. But the desperate stand at the Hornet's Nest bought precious time for Grant—who had arrived at Pittsburg Landing about 0900—to cobble together a strong defensive line on the high ground around the landing. Sherman held the right of the new line, McClernand anchored the center, and the remnants of several Union units manned the left. Grant buttressed the line with over fifty pieces of artillery, as well as the big guns of the timberclads USS *Lexington* and USS *Tyler* anchored nearby.

General Beauregard, meanwhile, learned of Johnston's death and assumed command of the Army of the Mississippi. At nightfall Beauregard called a halt to the Confederate offensive, confident that he could finish off Grant's army in the morning. This decision spurred a postwar debate over the "lost opportunity at Shiloh." Johnston's advocates maintained that he would have pressed the attack against Grant's final line and won the battle. In making their case, they conveniently ignored the strength of Grant's position and the arrival of reinforcements at Pittsburg Landing, including General Nelson's division of Buell's army and Maj. Gen. Lew Wallace's division of Grant's army. Johnston's apologists also failed to take into account the grit and determination of the Union commander. That night, Sherman found Grant standing under a large oak tree, holding a lantern and smoking an ever-present cigar. "Well, Grant, we've had the devil's own day," Sherman said. "Yes," Grant replied between puffs. "Lick 'em tomorrow though."

Although most soldiers in Grant's army remained on the battlefield, several thousand of their comrades fled to Pittsburg Landing and cowered along the bluffs. One of Buell's men, Pvt. Ebenezer Hannaford of the 6th Ohio Infantry, described the chaotic scene that greeted him as his transport drew up alongside the landing:

Wagons, teams, and led horses, quartermaster's stores of every description, bales of forage, caissons—all of the paraphernalia

of a magnificently appointed army—were scattered in promiscuous disorder along the bluff side . . . thousands of panic-stricken wretches swarmed from the river's edge . . . , a mob in uniform. . . . Men were there in every stage of partial uniform and equipment; many were hatless and coatless, and but few retained their muskets and their accouterments complete. Some stood wringing their hands, and rending the air with cries and lamentations, while others in the dumb agony of fear, cowered behind the object that was nearest them in the direction of the enemy. . . . There was a rush for the boat when we neared the landing, and some wading out breast deep into the stream, were kept off only at the point of a bayonet.

During the night, a heavy rain drenched both the combatants and the battlefield. Grant ordered the gunboats on the Tennessee River to maintain a steady bombardment of the Confederates; many of the shells burst in the no-man's-land separating the two armies, where hundreds of the wounded still lay, adding to their misery. The Confederates, meanwhile, huddled inside the tents abandoned by the Federals earlier that day.

Thanks to the arrival of reinforcements, Grant could shift to the offensive on 7 April. Both he and Buell launched dawn attacks. General Lew Wallace's fresh division led the way on the Union right flank, closely followed by the bloodied divisions of Sherman, McClernand, and Hurlbut in the center. Buell's Army of the Ohio—with General Nelson's division in the lead—advanced on the left, driving south from Pittsburg Landing and reaching the Sarah Bell cotton field before the attack stalled in the face of heavy Confederate musketry and artillery fire. Sherman's and McClernand's divisions reached the Crossroads by midday, where a fierce Confederate counterattack across Water Oak Pond and Woolf's Field succeeded in driving the Federals back a short distance. But the Union troops soon rallied and, thanks to their numerical superiority, resumed the advance. Realizing that he was heavily outnumbered, Beauregard deployed General Breckinridge's corps as a blocking force to enable the main body of his army to withdraw down the Corinth Road. Breckinridge held his position until 1700, when he joined the retreat. The Federals followed the Confederates a short distance before halting for the night.

On the morning of 8 April, Grant sent Sherman on a reconnaissance-in-force to determine if any Confederates remained in

the area. Sherman led two of his brigades and two battalions of cavalry, and he was soon joined by Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Wood's division of Buell's army. Sherman's advance collided with a small force of Confederate cavalry under the command of Colonel Forrest at a clearing known as Fallen Timbers. Forrest ordered a charge to halt the Federal pursuit. During the melee, Sherman was almost captured, and Forrest was severely wounded but made a daring escape after being surrounded. Following the charge, Forrest's cavalry fell back, and Sherman reported to Grant that the Southerners were retreating toward Corinth.

The Battle of Shiloh was over, but more than three thousand Union and Confederate dead had to be buried. The Federals suffered over thirteen thousand casualties (about 20 percent of the 65,000 engaged) and the Confederates almost eleven thousand (roughly 25 percent of 45,000 engaged)—including General Johnston, the only Confederate army commander to be killed in action. Shiloh's casualty count exceeded that of all previous American wars combined. The carnage shocked Northerners and Southerners alike, shattering any lingering illusions that the war would be a relatively bloodless affair.

The Northern press portrayed Shiloh as a senseless blood-bath, with some reporters alleging that the attacking Confederates had bayoneted Union soldiers while they were still in their tents. Grant bore much of the blame for the so-called debacle. His critics accused him of being unprepared for the Confederate onslaught, and some of them spread malicious rumors that he had been drunk during the battle. Letters urging Grant's removal flooded the White House, but President Lincoln stood by the much-maligned general: "I can't spare this man; he fights."

Grant's standing dipped further still when Halleck arrived at Pittsburg Landing a few days after the battle and assumed personal command of both his and Buell's armies. In doing so, Halleck relegated Grant to second-in-command, a meaningless position since he no longer led troops in the field. Halleck also added General Pope's Army of the Mississippi to his force, which now numbered over one hundred thousand officers and men—roughly double the size of Beauregard's army. Even so, Halleck was determined not to be caught by surprise while on the march to Corinth, ordering his troops to fortify their camps at the end of each day. The ever-cautious Halleck moved at a snail's pace, taking four weeks to advance just twenty miles.

In the meantime, Beauregard and his generals decided that Halleck's army group was simply too large to defeat. Worse yet, the water supply at Corinth had become contaminated, and the thousands of sick and wounded overwhelmed the local inhabitants' ability to care for them. Beauregard therefore decided to evacuate the rail junction, and on 29 May, he departed with the Army of the Mississippi for Tupelo about fifty miles to the south. Halleck occupied Corinth the following day.

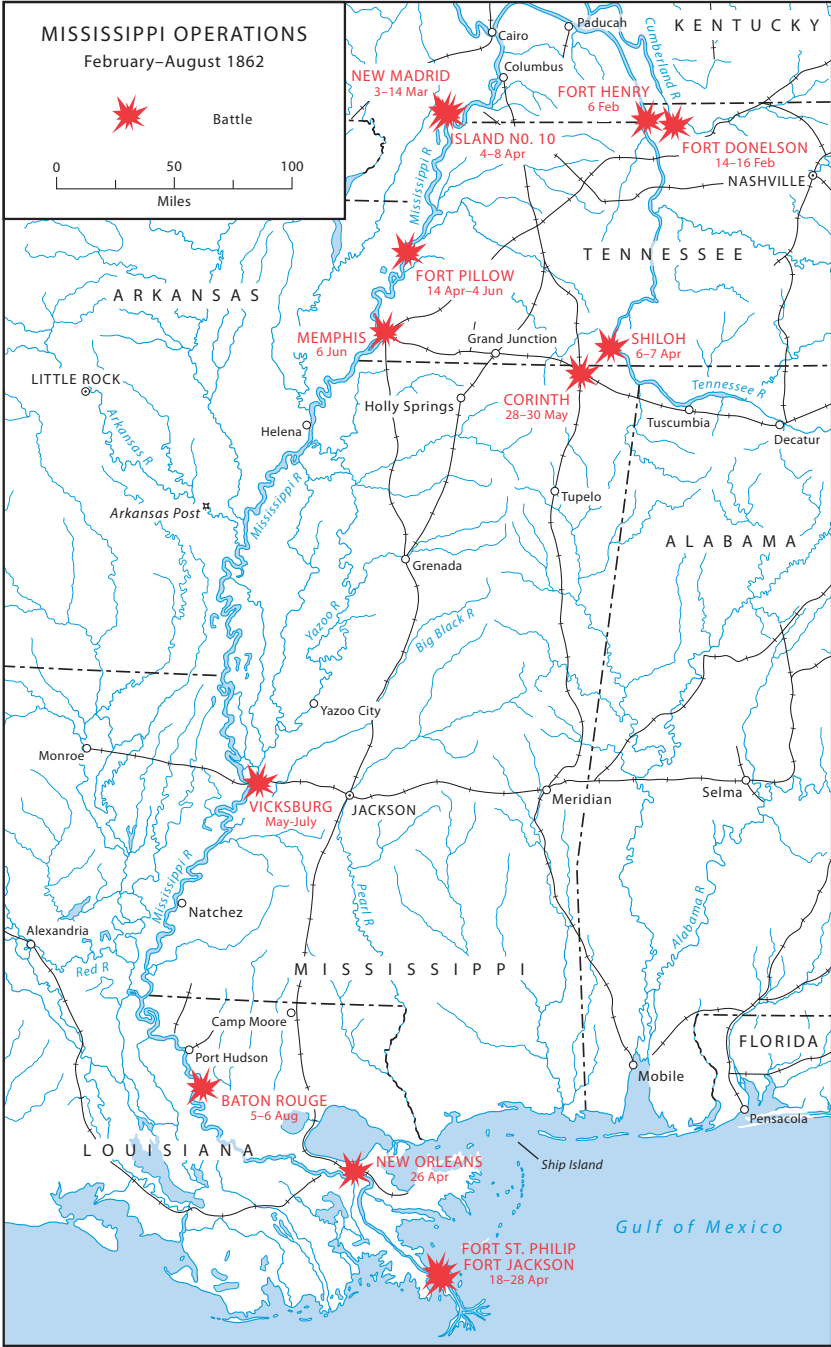
THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI: NEW ORLEANS, VICKSBURG, BATON ROUGE, AND PORT HUDSON

While Grant invaded the Confederate heartland from the north, other Federal forces had mobilized to attack it from the south via the Gulf of Mexico. The first major target was New Orleans, the Confederacy's largest city and its premier seaport. In February 1862, the War Department had appointed General Butler commander of the Department of the Gulf with the mission of capturing New Orleans with a joint Army-Navy force. Butler was a Massachusetts political general whose status as a leading War Democrat made him a valuable ally of the Lincoln administration. Although Butler was a relative novice as an Army officer, his naval counterpart, Flag Officer David G. Farragut, was a seasoned professional with over fifty years of service. Farragut commanded the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, which consisted of forty-three vessels, including his flagship, the USS *Hartford*, and twenty mortar schooners commanded by his stepbrother, Cdr. David D. Porter. By April, Butler had assembled more than fifteen thousand troops at Ship Island for the attack on New Orleans (*Map 4*).

General Lovell commanded the Confederate garrison that defended the Crescent City. While Butler gathered his force on Ship Island, Lovell declared martial law, collected whatever

General Butler
(Library of Congress)





MAP 4

supplies he could obtain from Baton Rouge, the state capital, and saw most of his manpower siphoned off by General Johnston's troop buildup prior to Shiloh. By April, Lovell's force had dwindled to just three Confederate regiments and a few thousand state militia troops.

On 18 April, ten days after the conclusion of the Battle of Shiloh, Farragut deployed his mortar boat flotilla with the intention of reducing Forts Jackson and St. Philip, the two bastions that guarded the Mississippi about sixty miles south of New Orleans. Commander Porter's twenty 13-inch mortars hammered the forts with 227-pound projectiles for five days but failed to silence the Confederate artillery. Farragut, meanwhile, grew impatient and decided to risk running his ships between the forts. On the night of 23–24 April, Farragut succeeded in getting seventeen of his vessels safely past the strong-points, and then he defeated the Confederate River Defense Fleet, which included ten gunboats and the ironclad CSS *Louisiana*.

The naval battles of New Orleans and Memphis destroyed most of the Confederacy's naval power on the western rivers. The Confederates lost all fourteen of their rams, twenty of twenty-five gunboats, and six of seven ironclads either built or under construction. Henceforth, the Confederates would have to rely almost exclusively on shore batteries to challenge Union control of the waterways.

Realizing that his motley force was no match for the Union armada, Lovell evacuated the city on 24 April. His troops boarded trains and then rode eighty miles north to Camp Moore, sixty miles northeast of Baton Rouge. On 25 April, Farragut's ships anchored along New Orleans' waterfront, and on the next day, a detachment of marines entered the city. Butler's infantry marched into New Orleans on 1 May. Both the Crescent City and the lower Mississippi were now in Union hands.

The Federals' next objective was Vicksburg, the second-largest city in Mississippi and a major trading center perched on a high bluff about 280 river miles north of New Orleans. In late April, the Confederates stepped up efforts to hold their last bastion on the Mississippi. Beauregard sent his engineer, Capt. David B. Harris, to begin fortifying the Hill City, providing him with slave labor to speed construction. To deal with the threat posed by Farragut's naval squadron, Harris started with the river battery system. As work got under way, Brig. Gen. Martin L. Smith arrived on 12 May to assume command of the garrison's 3,600 men and 18 heavy guns.

Six days later, Farragut arrived off Vicksburg with his flotilla, carrying a 1,500-man expeditionary force under Brig. Gen. Thomas Williams. On 26 May, following Smith's refusal of Farragut's surrender demand, the Federals began shelling the city, and they maintained a sporadic bombardment through mid-June. In the meantime, infantry reinforcements arrived doubling the size of Williams' command, and Porter's mortar boats added their firepower to the naval bombardment. On 28 June, Farragut took eight of his vessels past Vicksburg's river batteries to join forces with Davis' Western Flotilla and the U.S. Ram Fleet under Lt. Col. Alfred W. Ellet, who had succeeded his late brother Charles as the ram ships' commander.

On the same day that Farragut ran past the Vicksburg batteries, Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn, the former commander of the Trans-Mississippi District, assumed command of the Hill City's defenses. While conscripted slaves and Confederate soldiers labored on the fortifications in the brutal midsummer heat and humidity, crews in Yazoo City fifty miles to the northeast worked feverishly to complete the ironclad CSS *Arkansas*. Van Dorn urged the vessel's skipper, Lt. Isaac N. Brown, to attack at once. On 14 July, the *Arkansas* left port, and it entered the Mississippi the next day. The Confederate ironclad caught the Federals by surprise and ran straight through the Union fleet, firing as it went. Although battered by return fire, the *Arkansas* managed to reach the docks at Vicksburg.

Despite the presence of the *Arkansas*, the Federal fleet still controlled the Mississippi River, but General Williams' infantry force was too small to capture Vicksburg by direct assault. Williams therefore put his troops to work digging a canal across the peninsula at DeSoto Point opposite Vicksburg. In the meantime, both Halleck and Butler indicated that they had no troops to

General Van Dorn
(National Archives)



spare, leading Farragut and Williams to break off the expedition. Davis' Western Flotilla headed north to Helena, Arkansas, while Farragut's fleet sailed south, dropping off Williams' infantry at Baton Rouge before returning to New Orleans. The "Gibraltar of the Confederacy" remained in Southern hands.

Once assured of Vicksburg's safety, Van Dorn determined to retake Baton Rouge. He sent Maj. Gen. John Breckinridge's division south to Camp Moore. Illness soon whittled Breckinridge's force from 4,000 to 2,500 effectives, putting him on an equal footing with Williams, but on 5 August, the Kentuckian launched his offensive anyway. The Confederates initially drove back the Federals, and Williams was killed while leading one of his regiments. But the Union soldiers rallied, and as Confederate casualties mounted, Breckinridge's attack ground to a halt. When his naval support—namely the ironclad *Arkansas*—failed to materialize because of engine trouble, Breckinridge broke off the assault and withdrew late that afternoon. The Battle of Baton Rouge cost each side about four hundred casualties. On 6 August, as the Union ironclad USS *Essex* approached, the crew of the *Arkansas* burned their crippled ship rather than surrender it.

Shaken by the apparent close call at Baton Rouge and by rumors that the Confederates were planning to attack New Orleans, Butler withdrew the Union garrison from the state capital on 21 August. Van Dorn, however, had no intention of attacking New Orleans. Instead, he ordered Breckinridge to Port Hudson, 250 miles downstream from Vicksburg on the winding Mississippi. Situated on top of an eighty-foot bluff, the river batteries at Port Hudson enjoyed a notable advantage over their counterparts at Vicksburg. Union ships attempting to run past Vicksburg's guns from the north would be moving with the current—thus doubling their speed—whereas at Port Hudson, they would have to struggle upstream against the current, greatly extending their exposure to fire from land-based artillery.

In July 1862, the Confederates had controlled only the Mississippi in front of Vicksburg, but the addition of Port Hudson enabled them to control 250 miles of the river. This crucial stretch included the mouth of the Red River in Louisiana, providing the Confederates with an excellent route connecting western Louisiana and Texas to the rest of the Confederacy. As for Baton Rouge, the Federals returned there in December and occupied it for the remainder of the war.

NEW ORLEANS UNDER FEDERAL OCCUPATION

By mid-1862, the Union Army occupied middle and western Tennessee, northern Mississippi, and southern Louisiana—an area roughly the size of the United Kingdom. This meant that Halleck and his subordinates had to divert much of their manpower to occupation duty. These responsibilities assumed increasing importance as Lincoln and many of his generals came to believe that the rebellion could be defeated only by subjugating the Confederacy.

New Orleans ranked as the largest and one of the most important Confederate cities occupied by Union forces during the war. General Butler, the Crescent City's first occupation commander, proved adept at balancing military concerns with civic responsibilities, but his harsh suppression of pro-Confederate sentiment earned him an unflattering moniker—"Beast." When a local resident tore down the U.S. flag from a Federal building, Butler had the man arrested, court-martialed, and hanged for treason. Insults of Union troops by the city's female population compelled Butler to issue General Order 28—the so-called Woman's Order, which stated that a woman who spat on or otherwise insulted Federal soldiers would be "treated as a woman of the town, plying her avocation." He punished disloyal residents with incarceration on Ship Island; by September 1862, the fort held over sixty Southern political prisoners. Butler's draconian policies indicated that he was not a man to be trifled with. As a result, peace and stability returned to a city that had been seething with unrest and discord when he assumed command. By the end of 1862, New Orleans was once more a thriving port city, providing a significant source of revenue for the Union war effort.

"Perhaps in no other occupied city of the Confederacy," writes historian Earl J. Hess, "did the residents need the Federal government so much, yet acknowledged its help so little, as in New Orleans." Because the Department of the Gulf was the only functioning government agency there, Butler assumed responsibility for providing the city's inhabitants with food, sanitation, and law and order. He declared martial law shortly after his arrival and had his men serve as a police force pending establishment of a pro-Union constabulary. Butler also distributed food to needy residents and hired civilians to clean streets and rebuild levees. But he had little sympathy for the fugitive slaves who entered his lines. When one of his subordinates, Brig. Gen. John W. Phelps, began recruiting runaway slaves as soldiers, Butler nullified the contro-

versial measure and instead employed former slaves to harvest cotton on abandoned plantations.

The general used the Second Confiscation Act to enrich the Federal government—and himself—by appropriating the property of disloyal residents, thus earning another nickname—“Spoons”—in recognition of the silverware that allegedly formed the bulk of his loot. In a few short years, Butler’s efforts as war profiteer enabled him to increase his net worth from \$150,000 to over \$3 million.

THE FEDERALS THREATEN CHATTANOOGA

In mid-1862, Unionist eastern Tennessee continued to occupy a prominent place in Lincoln’s strategic thinking. While Grant’s Army of the Tennessee rested at Pittsburg Landing in the aftermath of Shiloh, Halleck ordered Brig. Gen. Ormsby M. Mitchel to strike out for Chattanooga with his 7,400-man division. In addition to capturing a vital transportation hub, Halleck intended for Mitchel’s Chattanooga expedition to protect the eastern flank of his own operations and to disrupt Confederate communications along the Tennessee-Alabama border (*Map 5*).

On 11 April, the aggressive Mitchel captured Huntsville, and by the end of the month, he had seized over one hundred miles of the Nashville and Chattanooga and Memphis and Charleston railroads. Mitchel’s achievement earned him a promotion to major general, and it gave him an opportunity to accomplish one of Lincoln’s most cherished objectives—the liberation of eastern Tennessee. On 29 May, Mitchel sent a small expeditionary force under Brig. Gen. James S. Negley to capture Chattanooga. When Negley reached his objective on 7 June, he conducted a reconnaissance and discovered that the Confederate defenses were too strong to carry by direct assault, so he brought up his artillery and shelled the city until 1200 of the following day.

The commander of the Confederate Department of East Tennessee, General Kirby Smith, arrived at Chattanooga on 8 June and immediately concentrated his forces there in expectation of an attack, but much to his relief, the Federals withdrew on 10 June and returned to Huntsville. Among the units that Smith summoned to Chattanooga was Brig. Gen. Carter L. Stevenson’s division guarding the Cumberland Gap. On 18 June, Union Brig. Gen. George W. Morgan captured the gap following Stevenson’s evacuation. Although Morgan had to abandon the gap in September in

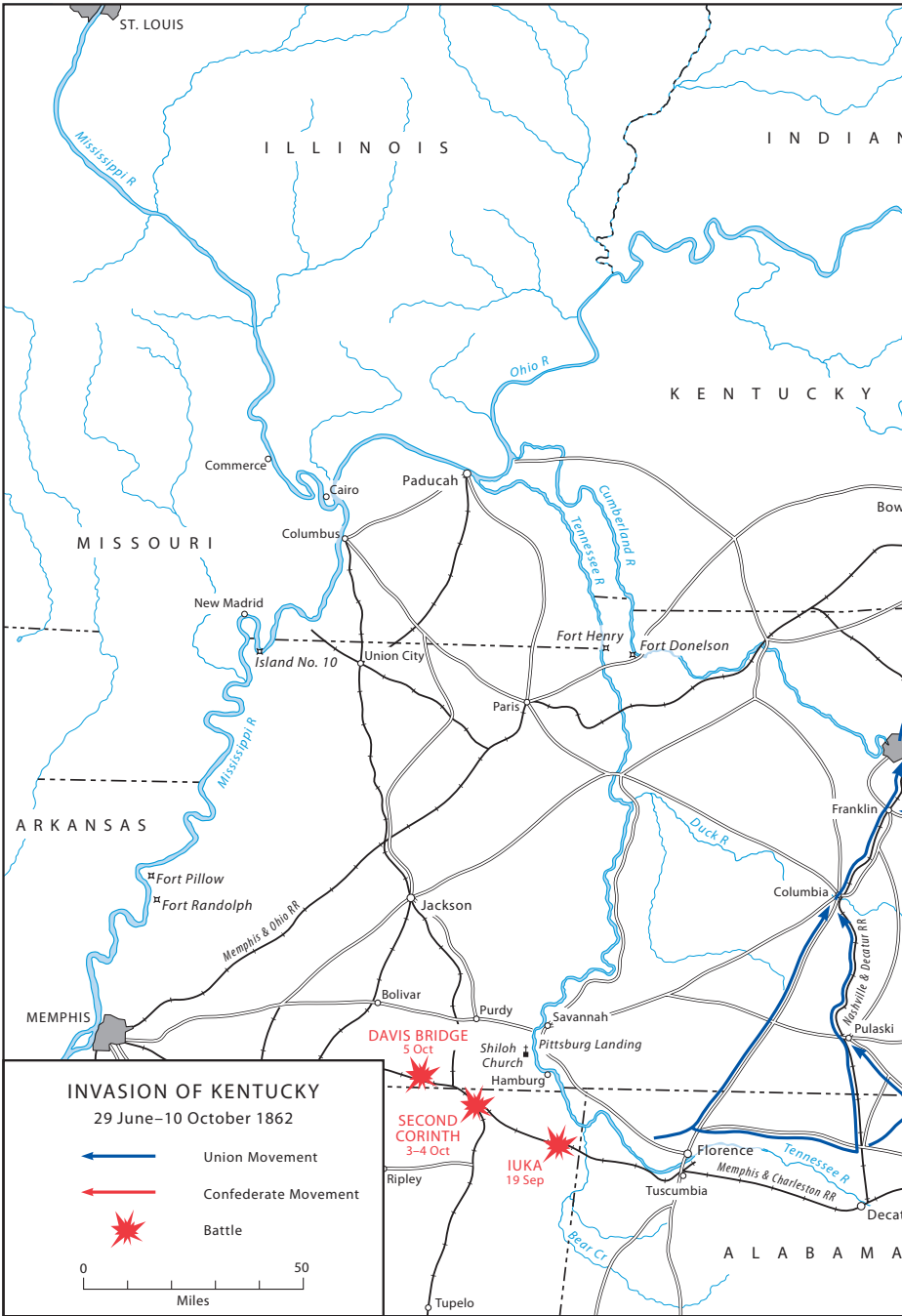
the face of a superior Southern force, the Federal operations in eastern Tennessee revealed just how tenuous the Confederates' control of that region was.

THE CONFEDERATE OFFENSIVE OF 1862

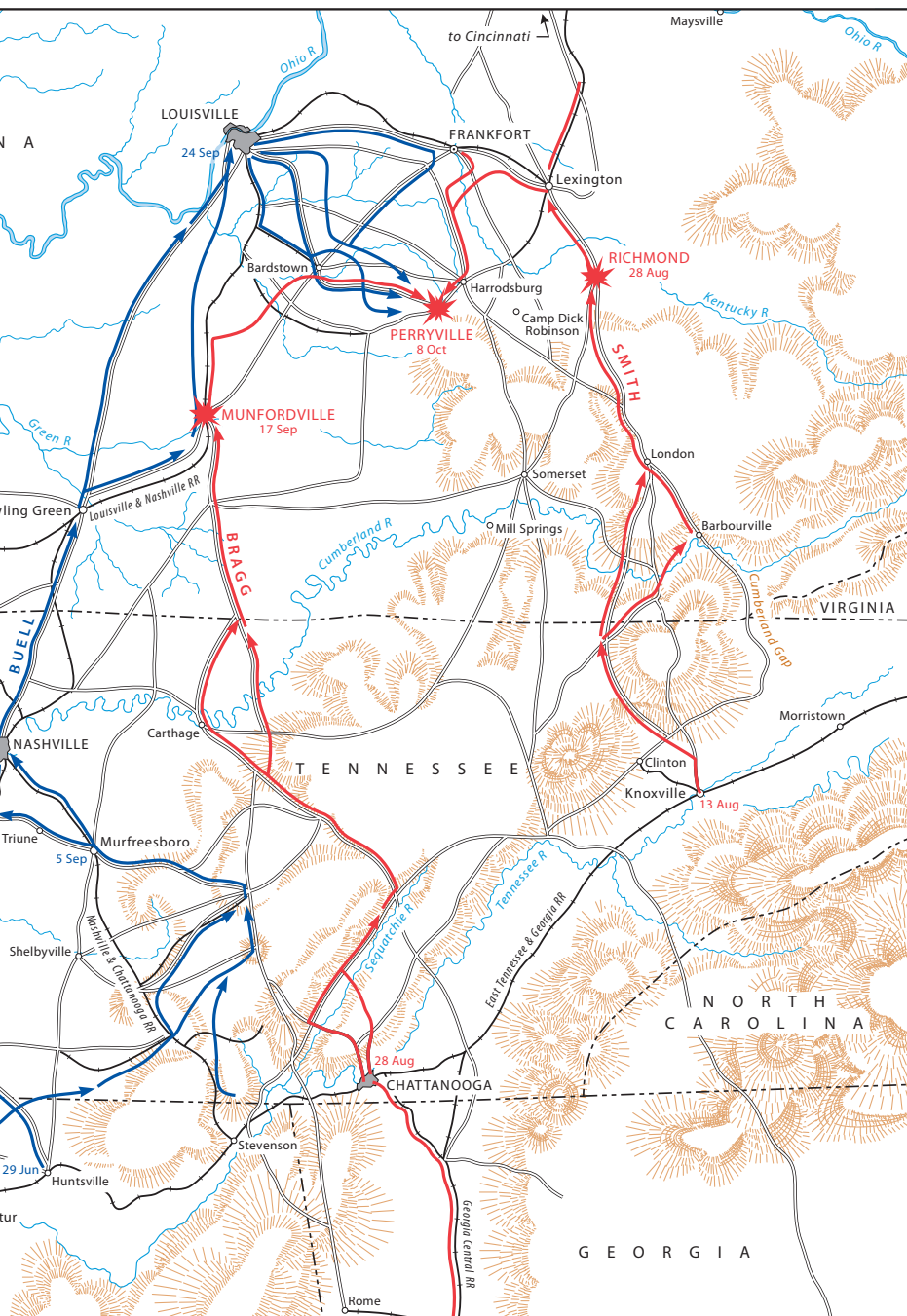
The Confederacy's strategic high tide occurred during the late summer of 1862. For the first and only time, President Davis managed to persuade his principal army commanders—Generals Robert E. Lee and Bragg—to act in concert. In the East, General Lee used the momentum gained from his victory at Second Bull Run to mount his first invasion of the North. On 5 September, the Army of Northern Virginia crossed into Maryland. An aggressive Federal response—sparked by General McClellan's return to active command and by a Union soldier's discovery of a copy of Lee's campaign plan—induced Lee to concentrate his scattered forces at Sharpsburg in western Maryland. On 17 September, the armies of Lee and McClellan fought a battle along Antietam Creek, resulting in over twenty-two thousand casualties—the bloodiest day in American history. Although a tactical draw, the Battle of Antietam was a strategic victory for the North, because it compelled Lee to return to Virginia and enabled President Lincoln to issue his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, declaring all slaves in Confederate territory free as of 1 January 1863.

While Lee's army marched into Maryland, General Bragg led the Army of the Mississippi into Kentucky. President Davis held high hopes for the western offensive, which the Confederacy's influential Kentucky bloc had been clamoring for since General Johnston's withdrawal from the Bluegrass State. A native Kentuckian himself, Davis counted on Bragg to install a pro-Confederate government in Kentucky and to bring its considerable resources into the Southern fold. Bragg's expedition would provide the added benefit of sparing Tennessee farms from the ravages of war during the fall harvest. Above all, Davis intended for the invasions of Maryland and Kentucky to give Confederate armies the opportunity "to feed upon the enemy and teach them the blessings of peace by making them feel in its most tangible form the evils of war."

Bragg had commanded the Army of the Mississippi since June. Davis chose him to replace Beauregard after the latter had left the army on unauthorized sick leave. Bragg's excellent Mexican



MAP 5

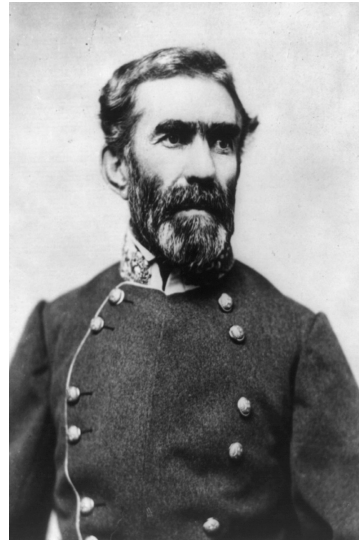


War record and standing as a friend and adviser of Davis ensured him high rank in the Confederate army—and he soon proved that he was more than capable. As the garrison commander at Pensacola, Bragg had earned a reputation as a tough disciplinarian who could transform raw recruits into first-rate soldiers. His talent as drillmaster paid ample dividends at Shiloh, where his troops demonstrated that they were among the best in Johnston's army. After Shiloh, Davis rewarded Bragg's efforts by promoting him to full general.

Bragg spent late June and most of July moving his 30,000-man force from Tupelo to Chattanooga by rail, the first long-distance transfer of an entire field army during the war. In the meantime, he posted garrisons at Tupelo under Maj. Gen. Sterling Price and at Vicksburg under General Van Dorn to defend those two important points, instructing them to join him in Kentucky as soon as possible. By the end of July, Bragg had concentrated his forces and was ready to move northward. His army would travel light, for he planned to live off the land.

While Bragg prepared for the invasion of Kentucky, Brig. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest and Col. John Hunt Morgan led cavalry raids against Federal outposts in middle Tennessee and eastern Kentucky, destroying supplies, capturing soldiers and horses, and otherwise tying down thousands of Union troops. Morgan's raid into Kentucky spread panic as far afield as Washington, D.C., where Lincoln complained to Halleck—the general in chief of the U.S. Army since 23 July—about the “stampede” in his native state. A Mexican War veteran and a Lexington, Kentucky, businessman before the war, Morgan hoped that his three-week excursion would arouse prosecessionist enthusiasm in Kentucky. President Davis was even more optimistic, expecting Morgan's raid

General Bragg
(Library of Congress)



and Bragg's "liberation" of the Bluegrass State to generate thousands of Confederate recruits.

On 31 July, Bragg met with Smith at Chattanooga and developed a plan that was as complex as it was ambitious. Not content merely to liberate middle Tennessee and eastern Kentucky, Bragg intended to drive as far north as the Ohio River. Bragg and Smith would move in parallel columns, with Bragg feinting on Nashville and then advancing into central Kentucky, while Smith jumped off from Knoxville and headed into southeastern Kentucky.

Buell arrived at Huntsville on 29 June with most of his Army of the Ohio, joining the intrepid Mitchel. At the time, Bragg's army was in transit from Tupelo, and eastern Tennessee remained vulnerable to a combined strike by Generals Buell, Mitchel, and Morgan. But Buell refused to act until he had an adequate supply line, and the opportunity soon passed. Meanwhile, Morgan bided his time at Cumberland Gap and Mitchel resigned in frustration.

Fortunately for the cautious Buell, the absence of a unified command structure prevented the Confederate army's invasion of Kentucky from unfolding as a coordinated attack. In any event, it is doubtful that Bragg would have been equal to the position of supreme commander. To be fair, the North Carolinian boasted a wealth of experience from his years in the prewar Regular Army, and he had demonstrated unquestioned bravery on the battlefields of the Mexican War. Bragg also possessed considerable skill as strategist, logistician, and administrator, but at Shiloh, he had displayed a lack of tactical acumen. Worse yet, he was a less than inspiring leader whose acerbic manner stemmed in part from a variety of physical maladies that made the strain of large-scale military operations difficult to endure.

Although Bragg was the senior Confederate officer from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River, he could not issue orders to General Smith, because as a fellow department commander, Smith was his equal. Despite public pronouncements to the contrary, Smith refused to act in concert with Bragg, instead maintaining direct communications with President Davis throughout the summer and even suggesting that Bragg's line of march conform to his. Yet another independent Confederate commander, General Marshall, was supposed to cooperate with Bragg and Smith, but he too had his own agenda—a grandiose plan that involved striking out from western Virginia, capturing Maysville, Kentucky, closing the Ohio River, and threatening

Cincinnati. There was just one problem: Marshall's 5,000-man force was too small for such an expedition.

General Smith was the first Confederate commander to assume the offensive, setting out on 13 August and capturing Barbourville, Kentucky, five days later. Bragg began his advance on 28 August, after notifying Price and Van Dorn that he expected to meet them on the Ohio River. From his headquarters at Huntsville, Buell noted the advance of the Confederate columns while fending off a flurry of dispatches from Halleck urging him to act without further delay. Realizing that the Confederates planned to invade Kentucky, Buell sent Maj. Gen. William Nelson to Louisville to organize the defense of the Bluegrass State. "Bull" Nelson managed to antagonize most of his subordinates with his brusque manner—none more so than Brig. Gen. Jefferson C. Davis, who shot and killed him over a personal insult. Though arrested and indicted for manslaughter, Davis was released and returned to duty later that fall.

Although Buell could have captured Chattanooga after Bragg and Smith had departed, he deemed protecting Nashville a higher priority because it served as his army's supply base. Thanks to his extreme caution, the Confederates held the strategic initiative during the early stages of the Kentucky campaign. On 28 August, Smith's newly christened Army of Kentucky routed a Federal force composed mainly of raw recruits under the command of Brig. Gen. Mahlon D. Manson, at Richmond, Kentucky. The victory at Richmond enabled the Confederates to capture Lexington and Frankfort, the state capital. As the Army of Kentucky marched into Lexington, the Southerners received a hero's welcome from the town's large pro-Confederate element. Smith's advancing column also cut General Morgan's supply line, compelling the Federals to abandon the Cumberland Gap on 1 September. Two weeks later, Bragg captured Munfordville, Kentucky, after accepting the surrender of the 4,000-man Union garrison.

In late August, Buell concentrated his army at Murfreesboro in middle Tennessee. By early September, he was shadowing Bragg's fast-moving column, passing through Nashville and Bowling Green en route to Louisville. At one point, he approached to within fifteen miles of Bragg's army. All the while, Halleck prodded Buell to quicken his pace. "I fear that here as elsewhere you move too slowly," Halleck scolded, "and will permit the junction of Bragg and Smith before you open your line to Louisville. The immobility of your army is most surprising. Bragg in the last two months

has marched four times the distance you have.” Buell nevertheless managed to reach Louisville on 24 September, before Bragg could attack the city. His arrival shifted the strategic initiative to the Federals.

President Lincoln, meanwhile, had lost all patience with Buell's faintheartedness. He directed Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton to replace Buell with Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas, the Army of the Ohio's second-in-command. Reluctant to assume command on the eve of battle, Thomas urged Halleck to rescind the order, noting that Buell was preparing to attack Bragg when the dispatch arrived. A few days later, Lincoln decided to give Buell another chance and canceled the order relieving him of command.

Bragg had to endure his own frustrations. He could not coax General Smith into joining him for an assault on Louisville, and so far, fewer than three thousand Kentuckians had flocked to the Confederate colors. “I regret to say we are sadly disappointed at the want of action by our friends in Kentucky,” Bragg lamented. “We have fifteen thousand stand of arms and no one to use them. Unless a change occurs soon we must abandon the garden spot of Kentucky to its cupidity.”

With Buell's army ensconced at Louisville, Bragg decided to halt his drive on the Ohio River. On 28 September, he left the Army of the Mississippi in order to confer with General Smith, placing General Polk in temporary command. Bragg spent a week away from the army even though he believed that a battle was imminent. After meeting with Smith in Lexington, he traveled to Frankfort to install Richard Hawes as the Confederate governor of Kentucky. On 4 October, he staged an elaborate inauguration ceremony but had to cut short the celebration when Union artillery began booming in the distance. News soon arrived that the Federals had approached to within ten miles of the state capital. That night, Bragg abandoned Frankfort and hurried to rejoin the Army of the Mississippi. He ordered Smith and Polk to concentrate at Harrodsburg, where he established his headquarters on 5 October.

Bragg met with Smith on 6 October, and the two generals decided that the Army of Kentucky should protect the Confederates' rich store of supplies in the Bluegrass region to the east. On 7 October, Bragg received word from General Hardee, the commander of the army's Left Wing (Bragg had divided his army into two corps-size units that he called wings),

that the Federals were pursuing him so closely that he had to deploy at Perryville. Bragg also received conflicting reports regarding the location and intent of Buell's army. Unfortunately for Bragg, most of his cavalry was screening the rear of Polk's and Hardee's columns, leaving him without accurate intelligence of the Federals' movements. Convinced that Hardee faced only a small Union force that could be easily crushed, Bragg directed Polk, the commander of the Right Wing, to march to Hardee's assistance. The order came as Polk's two divisions were approaching Harrodsburg; the footsore troops simply faced about and retraced their steps toward Perryville. Polk's lead division would not reach its destination until early the next morning.

The Federal force bedeviling Hardee was the III Corps led by Maj. Gen. Charles C. Gilbert. Recently promoted from captain to acting major general, Gilbert became III Corps commander largely on the strength of recommendations from the two men who had refused the command. Contrary to Bragg's belief, Gilbert's corps outnumbered the entire Confederate force converging on Perryville. During the day, Hardee's rear guard—consisting of Col. Joseph Wheeler's Confederate cavalry—barely fended off the Union cavalry that constituted Gilbert's advance guard.

THE BATTLE OF PERRYVILLE

The two armies moved into position north and west of Perryville, confronting each other along a north-south axis. The Confederates had their backs to the town and were facing west. Hardee deployed three brigades of Maj. Gen. Simon B. Buckner's division one mile north of Perryville. Buckner's fourth brigade and Brig. Gen. J. Patton Anderson's division arrived that afternoon and deployed on Buckner's right. About midnight, three of the four brigades of Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Cheatham's division of the Right Wing reached Perryville. Polk arrived with Cheatham's advance, bearing orders from Bragg to attack the Federals that morning, but he chose to delay the attack in the belief that he was outnumbered. Polk was right: the Confederates had almost seventeen thousand men at Perryville, while the Union III Corps alone numbered twenty-two thousand soldiers, with an additional thirty-three thousand Federal troops on the way.

Accompanying Gilbert's III Corps along the Springfield Pike, Buell reached the battlefield on 7 October with the intention of attacking the Confederates early the next morning. But the rest of his army—Maj. Gen. Alexander M. McCook's I Corps and Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden's II Corps—reached the vicinity of Perryville too late to meet his timetable. The two corps consisted mostly of green troops unaccustomed to hard marching, and passing through a drought-stricken region only worsened their plight. As a result, the Union columns strayed far from their intended route in search of water. Buell therefore rescheduled the attack for 9 October to give his exhausted men a day to recuperate. He also issued orders to his subordinates to avoid a general engagement on 8 October.

As his army converged on Perryville, Buell was thrown from his horse and injured severely enough to prevent him from riding. He established his headquarters at the Dorsey house about three miles west of Perryville and remained there for the next two days. His top priority was to defeat Bragg's army, but the drought also made the Perryville area a valuable objective because of its water sources west of town.

The search for water led to a skirmish along the banks of Doctor's Creek on 8 October. In the early morning darkness, soldiers of the 10th Indiana and the 7th Arkansas ventured into no-man's-land and then collided as they scoured the dry creek bed for pools of water. The creek meandered through the sector occupied by Brig. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan's division of the Union III Corps. Gilbert ordered Sheridan to drive off the Arkansans and seize Peters Hill along the Springfield Pike. Sheridan's thirsty soldiers not only captured the hill, but also seized Bull Run Creek. Concerned that the Confederates might overrun Sheridan's isolated position, a nervous Gilbert recalled him to the main Federal line.

As Bragg rode toward Perryville on the morning of 8 October, he became concerned when the noise of battle failed to reach his ears. Concern turned to anger when he learned of Polk's decision to postpone the morning assault. Bragg established his headquarters at the Crawford house about one mile northeast of town and then conducted a personal reconnaissance of the ground. Observing that the Federal left flank appeared to be resting on the Mackville Road, he ordered Polk to shift Cheatham's division to the north, across the Chaplin River, and launch an assault

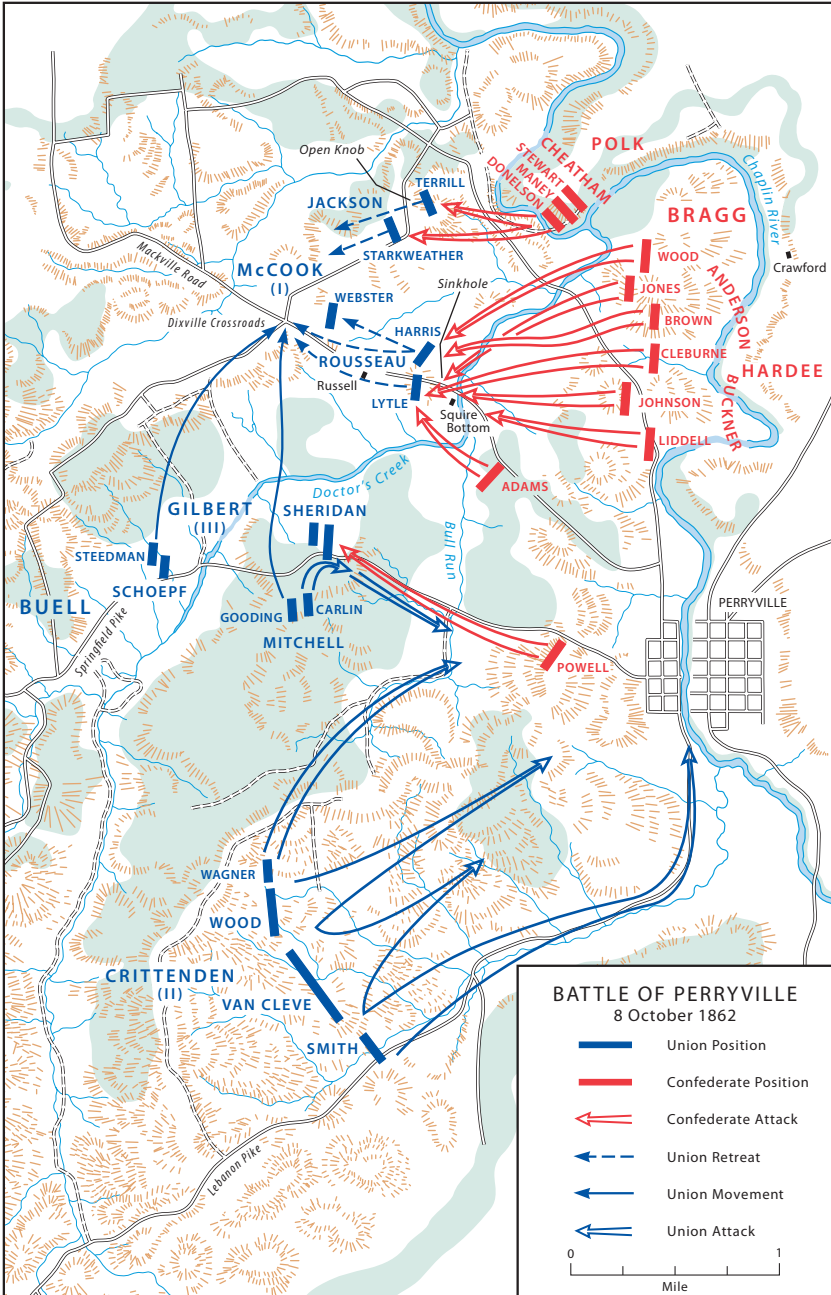
against the Federals' open left flank. Starting at 1230, Cheatham's artillery subjected the Federals to an intermittent shelling, while Confederate cavalry commanded by Col. John A. Wharton drove off Union skirmishers across the river from Cheatham's staging area at Walker's Bend (*Map 6*).

Unknown to Bragg, General McCook's I Corps had arrived on the field and was extending Buell's line northward. When Cheatham's division attacked at 1400, the Confederates struck McCook's position on Open Knob rather than an open flank. Cheatham's brigades attacked from right to left, starting with the Tennesseans of Brig. Gen. Daniel S. Donelson's brigade. Donelson's men were astonished to discover that the hill was defended by Brig. Gen. William R. Terrill's infantry brigade and Lt. Charles C. Parsons' artillery battery of Brig. Gen. James S. Jackson's division. Subjected to a withering crossfire, Donelson's Tennesseans suffered heavy casualties: the 16th Tennessee Infantry entered the battle with 370 soldiers and lost 219. During the attack, General Jackson was killed; General Terrill assumed command of the division.

Polk ordered Brig. Gen. George E. Maney's brigade to Donelson's support. General Maney's troops overran Open Knob, capturing most of Parsons' guns and sweeping Terrill's men before them. One of Maney's soldiers, Pvt. Sam Watkins of the 1st Tennessee Infantry, described the combat on this part of the field:

Such obstinate fighting I never had seen before or since. The guns were discharged so rapidly that it seemed the earth itself was in a volcanic uproar. The iron storm passed through our ranks, mangling and tearing men to pieces. The very air seemed full of stifling smoke and fire, which seemed the very pit of hell, peopled by contending demons. . . . Bayonet thrusts and blows from the butts of our guns crashed on all sides. . . . The earth ran red with blood. . . . Our men were dead and dying right in the very midst of this grand havoc of battle.

From Open Knob, the Confederates next struck Col. John C. Starkweather's brigade of Brig. Gen. Lovell H. Rousseau's division. Drawn up behind Terrill's position, Starkweather's Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin regiments suddenly found themselves exposed as Terrill's fugitives streamed to the



MAP 6

rear. General Terrill was mortally wounded while rallying his troops on Starkweather's line and died later that day. About 1515, Brig. Gen. Alexander P. Stewart's brigade of Cheatham's division crossed Chaplin River and filed into position between Maney's brigade on the right and Donelson's brigade on the left. Altogether they launched three bloody assaults against Starkweather's position. On the third try the Confederates nearly broke through, inducing Starkweather to withdraw his brigade to a ridgeline several hundred yards west of Open Knob. The three Confederate brigades attacked the new Union position, but Starkweather's men held, and the northern end of Buell's line was saved. Historian Kenneth W. Noe calls the three hours of savage fighting here "the high water mark of the Confederacy in the western theater."

The Confederate attacks on the Federal center, meanwhile, achieved mixed results. This stemmed in part from the arbitrary way in which Bragg chose to modify Polk's deployment of his army. Bragg had intended for his attack to proceed from right to left, with Cheatham's division stepping off first, followed by Buckner's and Anderson's divisions. To strengthen both the Confederate right and center, Bragg split Anderson's division into two separate parts. He placed the brigades of Brig. Gen. Daniel W. Adams and Col. Samuel Powell west of Perryville. About a half mile to the north, he deployed Anderson's other two brigades—under Brig. Gen. John C. Brown and Col. Thomas M. Jones. Between the two segments of Anderson's division, he deployed three brigades of Buckner's division. Brig. Gen. Sterling A. M. Wood's brigade of Buckner's division took position between Jones and Cheatham on the far right. General Anderson remained with Adams' and Powell's brigades throughout the battle, in effect relinquishing command and control of Brown's and Jones' brigades.

Shortly after 1430, Colonel Jones heard firing off to the north and gave the order for his brigade to attack. He did so without orders from either Hardee or Anderson and before the brigades on his left were ready to step off. Jones' three Mississippi regiments crossed Doctor's Creek and advanced toward the section of the Union line held by General Rousseau's two remaining brigades under Cols. Leonard A. Harris and William H. Lytle, supported by Capt. Peter Simonson's battery. As the Mississippians approached a large sinkhole, the Federals suddenly came into view, and the combined firepower of Union musketry and artillery drove the

Confederates back with heavy losses. Jones' troops made repeated attempts to enter the sinkhole but were repulsed each time. By the end of the day, Jones' brigade had sustained losses totaling 50 percent of the unit's effective strength.

Following Jones' withdrawal, General Brown led his three regiments toward Harris' position. Although subjected to intense small-arms fire, Brown's Floridians and Mississippians did not have to endure the devastating canister fire of Simonson's six guns, which withdrew because the battery had run low on ammunition and had suffered heavy losses in men and horses. Brown's assault ground to a halt just shy of the sinkhole, and the Confederates engaged the Federals in a lengthy firefight that depleted both sides' ammunition supplies. Brown succeeded in replenishing his stocks, whereas Harris was unable to obtain ammunition for his men.

General Buckner, meanwhile, sent forward Wood's brigade to support Brown's assault. General Wood was wounded during an artillery bombardment, so Col. Mark P. Lowrey of the 32d Mississippi assumed command of the brigade. Lowrey led his six regiments into the gap between Donelson's brigade on the right and Brown's brigade on the left. The appearance of Lowrey's Alabamians and Mississippians on his left flank, as well as increasing pressure on his right, compelled Colonel Harris to withdraw his brigade to safer ground. Brown's brigade at last crossed the sinkhole and occupied Harris' vacated position. Neither Brown nor his second-in-command led the way, for both were severely wounded during the firefight.

Rousseau's southernmost brigade under Colonel Lytle formed the right flank of McCook's I Corps, occupying a ridge that overlooked Doctor's Creek near the Squire Bottom house. About 1500, Buckner sent two of his three remaining Confederate brigades into action against Lytle. Brig. Gen. Bushrod R. Johnson's brigade was the first to advance, angling to the front and left in order to take full advantage of the broken terrain to shield them from Federal fire. That same terrain also caused Johnson's ranks to become disorganized, and they began receiving friendly fire from a Confederate battery that mistook them for retreating Federals. Johnson's Tennesseans managed to suppress the fire by charging the offending battery. Resuming the advance, they halted at a stone fence within a few hundred yards of Lytle's position and hunkered down. The Confederates exchanged fire with the Federals and then withdrew after exhausting their ammunition.

The second of Buckner's brigades—Brig. Gen. Patrick R. Cleburne's—subjected Lytle's brigade to a frontal assault, while General Adams' brigade of Anderson's division struck Lytle's right flank. The Confederates drove Lytle's men back to a depression behind their position. During the rout Colonel Lytle was wounded and captured. As the afternoon wore on, remnants of Rousseau's shattered Union division drifted back to McCook's headquarters at the Russell house, a half mile to the rear.

While the situation deteriorated on the left, the Federal center—where Gilbert's III Corps troops heavily outnumbered the Confederates opposing them—offered Buell's army its best chance for victory. But the lack of communication and coordination that plagued both sides was on full display here. Buell remained at his headquarters throughout 8 October because an "acoustic shadow" prevented him from hearing the din of battle just a few miles to the east. As a result, he exercised no command and control for most of the day, leaving his corps commanders to fight the battle as they thought best. While McCook's I Corps sustained heavy attacks along its entire front and was driven back for over a mile, Sheridan's III Corps division stood by on Peters Hill a few hundred yards to the south and provided no assistance.

In the meantime, one of Sheridan's three brigades came under attack. Late that afternoon, Powell's Confederate brigade assaulted the Union brigade commanded by Col. Daniel McCook Jr., General McCook's younger brother, inducing Sheridan to request assistance from Brig. Gen. Robert B. Mitchell, another of Gilbert's division commanders. Mitchell ordered Col. William P. Carlin's brigade to reinforce Sheridan. Carlin's four regiments swept around Sheridan's right flank, broke Powell's line, and chased the fleeing Confederates into Perryville. Col. George D. Wagner's brigade of Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Wood's II Corps division formed on Carlin's right and joined the pursuit. Having driven Powell's men into town, the two Union brigades halted on the outskirts of Perryville and awaited further orders.

Not wishing to risk an attack in town against a Confederate force of unknown strength, Gilbert ordered Mitchell to withdraw Carlin's brigade to Sheridan's line. Mitchell was furious: reconnaissance indicated that the Union II and III Corps faced only Wheeler's cavalry and some demoralized infantry, giving the Federals an excellent chance of turning Bragg's left flank and cutting off his line of retreat. Instead, Gilbert chose to hold his

ground and do nothing. Mitchell was not far off the mark in his assessment. At the very least, a Union assault on Perryville would have taken considerable pressure off McCook's embattled I Corps by compelling Bragg to shift troops from his right to his left.

The final stage of the battle occurred at Dixville Crossroads, where the Mackville and Benton roads intersected a few miles west of Perryville. By sunset elements of five I Corps brigades had rallied around the Russell house, which had been converted into a Union Army hospital. The Federals were driven there by a Confederate pincer movement, consisting of Cheatham's assault from the northeast and Anderson's and Buckner's attacks from the southeast. Although Starkweather had blunted Cheatham's attack short of the crossroads, Anderson's and Buckner's assault maintained its momentum. After Cleburne's and Adams' brigades had run out of steam, Buckner's two remaining brigades under Brig. Gen. St. John R. Liddell and General Wood took up the advance. The Confederates' initial target was Col. George P. Webster's brigade of Jackson's I Corps division, which was supported by Capt. Samuel J. Harris' battery.

Wood's Alabamians and Mississippians attacked first, and Webster's Indianans and Ohioans repulsed them with heavy losses. But the Confederates rallied at the base of the hill and renewed the assault. By then, Harris' battery had run out of ammunition and had to withdraw. During the struggle, Webster was mortally wounded and died soon afterward. The previous night, Webster had sat with Generals Terrill (his fellow brigade commander), Jackson (his division commander), and Sheridan, speculating on the coming battle. At one point, Terrill assured the group that the chances of all four of them dying in battle were slim. Terrill was right—Sheridan did survive the Battle of Perryville, but he was the only one of the four men who did so.

Wood's brigade drove Webster's troops back toward the crossroads. Starting at 1430, General McCook made repeated requests to Sheridan and other III Corps commanders for reinforcements. McCook's appeals rose up the chain of command to Buell. He ordered Gilbert, who had spent most of the afternoon at army headquarters, to dispatch just two brigades to I Corps' assistance, indicating that he did not credit reports that McCook was locked in a life-and-death struggle.

Gilbert first sent Col. Michael Gooding's brigade of Mitchell's division to Dixville Crossroads. Gooding's four regiments arrived

just as Liddell's Arkansas brigade began its attack at sunset. Around this time, General Rousseau reportedly exclaimed, "Will that sun never go down!" Gilbert then sent a second III Corps brigade—Brig. Gen. James B. Steedman's of Brig. Gen. Albin Schoepf's division—to McCook's assistance.

In the fading light, the Arkansans became confused as to the identity of the troops in their front and ceased firing. General Polk took it upon himself to ride out and verify who the soldiers were. He questioned the commanding officer, Lt. Col. Squire I. Keith, and learned that he had come face-to-face with the 22d Indiana Infantry. Polk managed to bluff his way out of the predicament by impersonating a Union officer. He ordered the Indiana soldiers to cease fire and then rode back to inform Liddell of his discovery. Liddell ordered his men to open fire, and the Arkansans poured a series of point-blank volleys into the 22d Indiana's ranks, killing Colonel Keith and claiming nearly two-thirds of the regiment's three hundred soldiers as casualties. The survivors streamed to the rear and were soon joined by Gooding's other three regiments. During the rout, the Arkansans captured Colonel Gooding and occupied Dixville Crossroads. General Steedman's five regiments were all that stood between Liddell's brigade and Buell's headquarters. At nightfall the Arkansans prepared to advance, but Polk called off the attack despite Liddell's vehement protests.

The Battle of Perryville was over. That night, the medical personnel of the two armies attempted to collect and care for their wounded. Both sides faced an overwhelming task, and they had to rely heavily on the local populace for assistance. The Federals suffered over forty-two hundred casualties—the losses falling most heavily on McCook's battered I Corps, which lost almost one-third of its personnel—and yet they amounted to less than 10 percent of the Army of the Ohio's total strength. The Confederates sustained thirty-four hundred casualties, 20 percent of Bragg's force at Perryville. According to Private Watkins of the 1st Tennessee, the battlefield "presented a strange scene. The dead, dying, and wounded of both Armies, Confederate and Federal, were blended in inextricable confusion. . . . It was like the Englishman's grog—'alf and 'alf . . . no battle fought during the whole war equaled it for stubborn resistance. In fact, it was the hardest battle of the war." A lieutenant in the 59th Illinois returned to Dixville Crossroads—the scene of some of the battle's

deadliest fighting—in search of wounded comrades. It seemed to him that “there were not ten square feet of ground on which there were not one and sometimes two or three dead men lying.” The lieutenant found a comrade who had been wounded in the hip, gave him a drink of water, and then watched him die a few minutes later.

Though hard-fought by both sides, the Battle of Perryville proved to be indecisive. Bragg could claim a tactical victory, but he also realized that this success had gained him little and had come at a terrible cost. That evening, he learned that Buell’s entire army was at Perryville and that he was heavily outnumbered. Although several of his subordinates urged him to attack the next morning, Bragg knew that retreat was his only viable option. The lukewarm response of Kentuckians to his proclamations convinced him that nothing more could be gained by remaining in the Bluegrass State, and with winter approaching, it was time to return to Tennessee. On the night of 8–9 October, Bragg’s army set out for Harrodsburg and joined General Smith’s Army of Kentucky there on 10 October. The two Confederate armies headed south, drawing supplies at Camp Dick Robinson and then marching to the Cumberland Gap, arriving on 18 October. By the time Bragg’s weary veterans reached Knoxville a few days later, most of the men were famished and in rags.

Buell, for his part, was unaware that his army had fought a major battle at Perryville until it was over. Keenly aware of his numerical superiority, he was eager to attack the Confederates the next morning but soon learned that Bragg’s army was on the march. He maintained a show of pursuit with an occasional skirmish to keep the Confederate columns moving. Once certain that Bragg was abandoning Kentucky, Buell led his army to Nashville, contrary to Lincoln’s desire that he pursue Bragg into eastern Tennessee. Buell justified his decision by asserting that the Tennessee state capital was undoubtedly Bragg’s next objective.

THE BATTLES OF IUKA AND SECOND CORINTH

While the Maryland and Kentucky campaigns were under way, General Price led his Confederate Army of the West from Tupelo toward Nashville. In obedience to Bragg’s orders, Price was threatening middle Tennessee to prevent General Grant—the commanding general in western Tennessee following

Halleck's promotion to general in chief of the U.S. Army—from reinforcing Buell's army. On 14 September, Price's force captured Iuka, Mississippi, rescuing a supply depot the Union garrison had set aflame before evacuating the railroad town and falling back to Corinth twenty-three miles to the northwest. Price requested General Van Dorn to join him at Iuka with his command. Their objectives were to distract Grant by cutting his lines of communication and, if possible, march north to join Bragg in Kentucky.

Grant responded swiftly to Price's threat. Despite the loss of troops to Buell's Army of the Ohio, Grant still commanded a sizable force, though it was widely scattered guarding railroads and supply depots. Along with his Army of the Tennessee, he retained the Union Army of the Mississippi under General Pope's replacement, Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans. In the fall of 1862, Grant's army group numbered about fifty thousand officers and men.

On 16 September, Grant sent two assault columns to Iuka. Maj. Gen. Edward O. C. Ord's eight thousand troops from the Army of the Tennessee approached from the northwest, while Rosecrans' nine thousand soldiers from the Army of the Mississippi advanced from the southwest. Grant accompanied Ord's column but exercised

General Rosecrans
(Library of Congress)



little tactical control over the two widely separated forces. About 1630 on 19 September, Price attacked Rosecrans' column one mile south of town and drove back the advance a few hundred yards before the Union line stabilized. After a short but sharp battle involving twenty-eight hundred Federals and thirty-two hundred Confederates, Price broke off the engagement and retreated toward a junction with Van Dorn. An acoustic shadow caused by a strong north wind prevented Grant and Ord from hearing the noise of battle just a few miles to the south, so the northern column played no part in the fighting. The Battle of

Iuka cost the Federals 790 casualties compared to the Confederates' 525. Whereas Price ultimately failed to join Bragg or hinder Buell's pursuit, Grant also failed to prevent Price's junction with Van Dorn and their combined attack on Corinth.

After the Battle of Iuka, the Federals resumed their occupation duties in northern Mississippi and western Tennessee. Grant established his headquarters at Jackson, Tennessee, while Rosecrans returned to Corinth and Ord to Bolivar, Tennessee. Sherman, meanwhile, served as the military governor of Memphis. Grant once more dispersed his forces in order to guard supply depots and lines of communication. At Corinth Rosecrans had about twenty thousand troops. They used an elaborate system of field fortifications that consisted of an outer ring of earthworks the Confederates had dug after the Battle of Shiloh and an inner ring of entrenchments the Federals had built that included a half-dozen artillery redoubts.

On 28 September, Van Dorn and Price combined their forces at Ripley, Mississippi, about thirty miles southwest of Corinth. Van Dorn assumed command of the 22,000-man force and named it the Army of West Tennessee. Price retained command of his "army," calling it Price's corps. Van Dorn set his sights on Corinth in the belief that it had never been more vulnerable. Although this was true, Rosecrans' force alone equaled the Confederates, and the fortifications at Corinth were formidable.

On 3 October, Van Dorn's army struck the Union outer works and slowly drove back the defenders in fierce, close-quarters fighting amid stifling heat and humidity. By nightfall, the Federals had withdrawn to the inner ring of works. On 4 October, another sweltering day, Van Dorn opened with an early morning artillery bombardment. Price's two divisions then attacked from the north. On the Confederate left, Brig. Gen. Louis Hébert's division, led by Brig. Gen. Martin E. Green, captured Battery Powell after a desperate struggle, opening a quarter-mile gap in the Union line. But the Federals launched a fierce counterattack that the exhausted Confederates could not repulse, and by 1145, the fort was once more in Union hands.

In the center, Brig. Gen. Dabney H. Maury's division assaulted Battery Robinett in what proved to be the day's heaviest fighting. The deadly fire of the fort's three 20-pounder Parrott rifled cannons stopped Brig. Gen. Charles W. Phifer's brigade cold. Brig. Gen. John C. Moore's brigade struck next, with the 2d Texas

Infantry attacking on the Confederate right. The commander of the 2d Texas, Col. William P. Rogers, was killed within a few yards of the bastion along with fifteen of his men. Although Moore's Confederates overran the fort, a Federal counterattack drove them off in vicious hand-to-hand combat.

Col. William H. Moore's brigade of Hébert's division, meanwhile, dashed into Corinth, joined by elements of Generals Phifer's and Moore's brigades. Fighting block-by-block, they swept toward the railroad depot in the center of town. Federal forces under Brig. Gen. David S. Stanley halted the Confederate advance at the Tishomingo Hotel near the depot. Colonel Moore was mortally wounded as the fighting raged around the two buildings. While the 17th Iowa Infantry fired down on the Confederates from a ridge on the north side of town, the 5th Minnesota Infantry unleashed several devastating volleys into their faces. The Federals then drove the Southerners out of Corinth, while enfilading fire from Battery Robinett hastened their retreat. On the Confederate right, General Lovell's division stood by as the assault unfolded and took no part in the action.

*Confederate dead at Battery Robinett, Corinth
(The Photographic History of the Civil War)*



The second Battle of Corinth was over. It had cost Rosecrans about twenty-five hundred casualties and Van Dorn over forty-two hundred killed, wounded, and captured. By late afternoon, Van Dorn's army was in full flight. Rosecrans waited until the morning of 5 October to begin his pursuit. In the meantime, a Federal force under General Ord marched east from Bolivar to assist Rosecrans. A few miles above the Tennessee border, elements of Maj. Gen. Stephen A. Hurlbut's Union division intercepted Price's column just west of Davis Bridge on the Hatchie River. The Federals drove the Confederates back across the bridge, but Van Dorn's scouts found another crossing point, and the Confederates made their escape that night. The Union force at Davis Bridge suffered 560 casualties; among the wounded was General Ord, who turned over command to General Hurlbut; the Confederates sustained about 500 casualties. Following the battle, Van Dorn led his army to Holly Springs, Mississippi, having failed in his bid to recapture Corinth. Worse yet, he left Bragg unsupported in Kentucky and enabled Grant to shift to the offensive in Mississippi.

ONE GENERAL FIRED, ANOTHER UNDER FIRE

During and after the Kentucky campaign, General Buell's support in Washington steadily eroded. The process began with Buell's failure to liberate eastern Tennessee in the summer of 1862 and continued with the deliberate pace of his march into Kentucky, which cost him General Halleck's favor. The bloody indecisiveness of Perryville, followed by Buell's halfhearted pursuit of Bragg, finally exhausted the president's patience. On 24 October, Lincoln relieved Buell from command, and he redesignated the Army of the Ohio as the XIV Army Corps.

Buell's replacement was General Rosecrans. A true original in an army filled with eccentric generals, Rosecrans was a devout Catholic who kept a priest on his personal staff. A workaholic, he routinely drove much younger staff officers to exhaustion. Hailed by many of his contemporaries as the war's only true military genius, Rosecrans was a skilled strategist and a superb organizer. He also had a knack for making himself popular with his men; hence his nickname—"Old Rosy." In the heat of battle, Rosecrans could be an inspirational figure, riding into the thick of the fight and urging his men on; but he could also lose his temper or become agitated. The loss of self-control sometimes led him to make poor decisions at critical moments. Despite

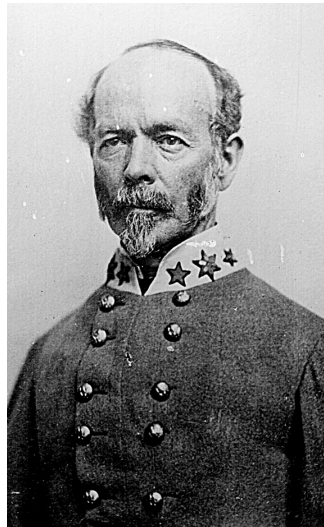
his flaws, Rosecrans would place an indelible stamp on his new command, which he designated the Army of the Cumberland.

For the South, the outcome of Bragg's Kentucky campaign came as a bitter disappointment. The Confederacy's strategic high tide had generated thousands of casualties but had failed to improve its fortunes. Summoned to Richmond by Davis to report on the Kentucky expedition, Bragg briefed the Confederate president and defended his conduct of the campaign, well aware that he had numerous critics both inside and outside the army. Davis informed Bragg that Polk and other subordinates accused him of incompetence and were calling for his removal. Believing that Bragg was not the incompetent his detractors claimed he was, Davis decided to leave him in command. In maintaining the status quo, however, Davis failed to address the rift that had developed between Bragg and his generals—a rift that would only worsen over time.

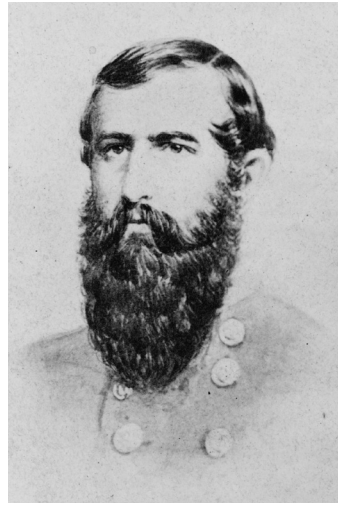
After a brief stay at Knoxville, Bragg moved both his and Smith's armies to Murfreesboro. With Davis' authorization, he consolidated the Army of Kentucky with the Army of the Mississippi and designated his new command the Army of Tennessee, which numbered about forty-five thousand men. Bragg appointed Generals Smith, Polk, and Hardee—three of his chief detractors—as his corps commanders; they also received promotions to the newly created rank of lieutenant general. Smith, however, refused to serve under Bragg and was soon transferred elsewhere. Bragg established a separate mounted arm for his army, and he named Brig. Gen. Joseph Wheeler as his chief of cavalry.

On 24 November, President Davis appointed General Joseph E. Johnston as the commander of the Department of the West, a sprawling territorial command that included Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and eastern Louisiana.

General J. E. Johnston
(National Archives)



Johnston had recently returned to duty after being severely wounded in the Battle of Seven Pines six months earlier. The two main field armies within his department were Bragg's Army of Tennessee and Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton's Army of Mississippi. In December, Pemberton's army numbered fewer than thirty-five thousand men. He stationed two-thirds of his troops in northern Mississippi and placed the remainder at Vicksburg and Port Hudson.

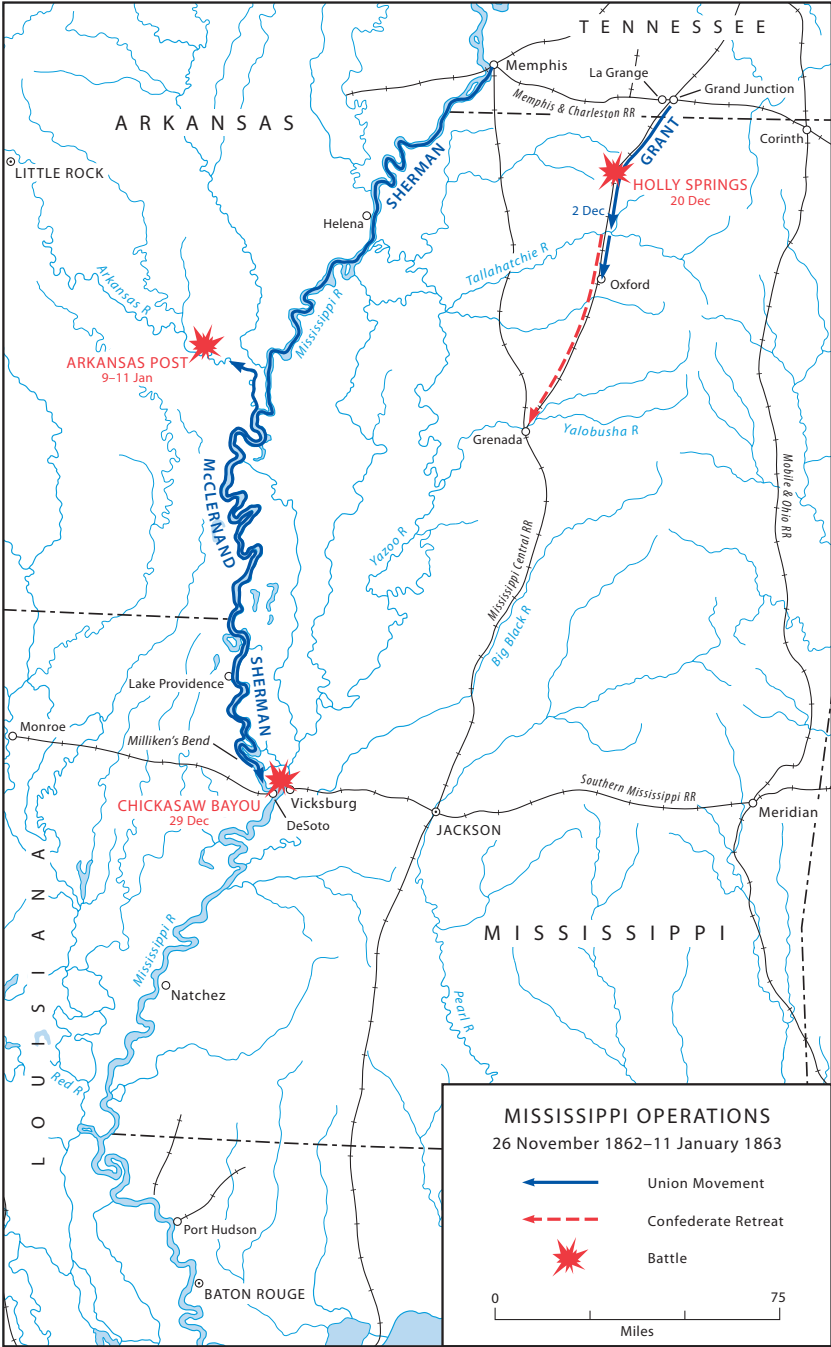


General Pemberton
(Library of Congress)

GRANT MOVES ON VICKSBURG

As Johnston settled into his new assignment, General Grant made preparations for his next campaign. The objective was Vicksburg, the last great Confederate bastion on the Mississippi River. He had 17,000 men at Corinth, 7,000 at Memphis, and 24,000 dispersed from Mississippi to Illinois. To free veteran troops for the drive on Vicksburg, he used new regiments for garrison duty. In early November, Grant began advancing toward Grand Junction, Tennessee, where the Mississippi Central and the Memphis and Charleston Railroads intersected. He arrived there on 8 November and detailed work crews to rebuild the railroad. Within a few days, repairs had progressed far enough to enable him to begin accumulating troops and supplies there (*Map 7*).

Grant left Grand Junction in late November, advancing southward along the railroad and repairing the track as he went. He halted at Holly Springs long enough to establish a forward supply base there and then reached Oxford by early December. To this point, Pemberton had seen fit to fall back without a fight, refusing to risk a general engagement so far from Vicksburg. But Grant's success came at a price. As the Federals pushed farther and farther south, their supply line grew ever longer, requiring more and more troop detachments to repair and guard the railroad. In December, two Confederate cavalry raids exposed the vulnerability of Grant's supply line, which now stretched almost two hundred miles.



MAP 7

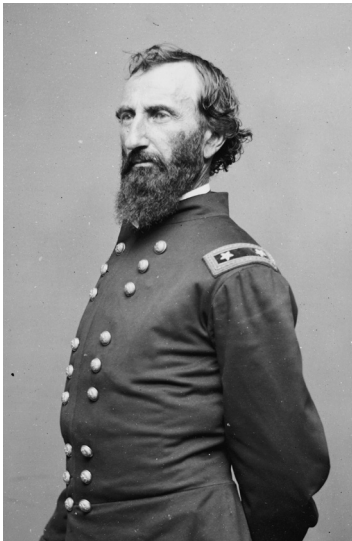
On 20 December, General Van Dorn attacked the Federal depot at Holly Springs, destroying a large stockpile of supplies and capturing fifteen hundred Union prisoners, while Forrest tore up railroads in western Tennessee. These operations led Grant to make two crucial decisions. First, he decided to cease relying on the railroad as his lifeline and have his army live off the land instead. Second, Grant shifted his operational focus from the Confederate heartland to the Mississippi River. He had already entrusted Sherman, his favorite subordinate, with a river-borne expedition to capture Vicksburg in the belief that a two-pronged offensive would overwhelm the Confederates. After the Holly Springs raid, Grant held his army along the Yalobusha River line near Grenada to keep Pemberton occupied while Sherman launched his attack on Vicksburg.

Grant's decision to place Sherman in command of the operation stemmed from his desire to deny General McClelland a long-coveted independent command. A political general and an influential War Democrat from Lincoln's home state of Illinois, McClelland had met with the president in October and obtained permission to raise a force to open the Mississippi River. Determined to keep the ambitious McClelland firmly

under control, Grant secured Halleck's permission to press McClelland's new regiments into service as part of Sherman's expeditionary force. When McClelland caught wind of the expedition, he hurried south from Springfield, Illinois, in order to assume command. But he was too late.

Sherman's expedition left Memphis on 20 December and picked up an additional division at Helena, Arkansas. The convoy consisted of sixty transports with a gunboat escort from R. Adm. David D. Porter's Mississippi River Squadron. On the day after Christmas, the Federals reached their destina-

General McClelland
(Library of Congress)



tion about ten miles north of Vicksburg, near the point where Chickasaw Bayou flowed into the Yazoo River. Over the next two days, Sherman's four divisions numbering thirty thousand men went ashore. They found the Confederates dug in along Walnut Hills. Led by Brig. Gen. Stephen D. Lee, the defenders were growing stronger by the hour. On Christmas Eve, General Pemberton had begun sending Lee reinforcements from the Yalobusha River line, and when he reached Vicksburg on 26 December, he sent the bulk of the Vicksburg garrison as well, raising the total of Lee's force to fifteen thousand.

Sherman launched the assault at 1200 on 29 December, and it was a disaster from the start. Although the Federals outnumbered the Confederates by two-to-one, Sherman managed to deploy just six of his ten brigades, and only four became fully engaged. The Battle of Chickasaw Bayou cost the Federals roughly eighteen hundred casualties. The Confederates, in contrast, lost 187 men and denied Sherman a lodgment within reach of Vicksburg.

A furious McClernand met Sherman's convoy while it was returning to Memphis. By virtue of seniority and Lincoln's authorization of his independent river campaign, McClernand assumed command of Sherman's expeditionary force and named it the Army of the Mississippi. Acting on Sherman's suggestion, he launched an expedition up the Arkansas River, capturing Arkansas Post on 11 January 1863. McClernand intended to continue upriver and seize Little Rock, but Grant recalled him to Memphis. McClernand appealed to Washington for support. Halleck instead authorized Grant to absorb McClernand's "army" into the Army of the Tennessee and remove the political general if he saw fit; Grant chose to let him command the XIII Corps. In the meantime, Grant moved his headquarters to Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, fifteen miles northwest of Vicksburg, indicating that the Mississippi River would be the focus of his operations in 1863.

THE BATTLE OF STONES RIVER

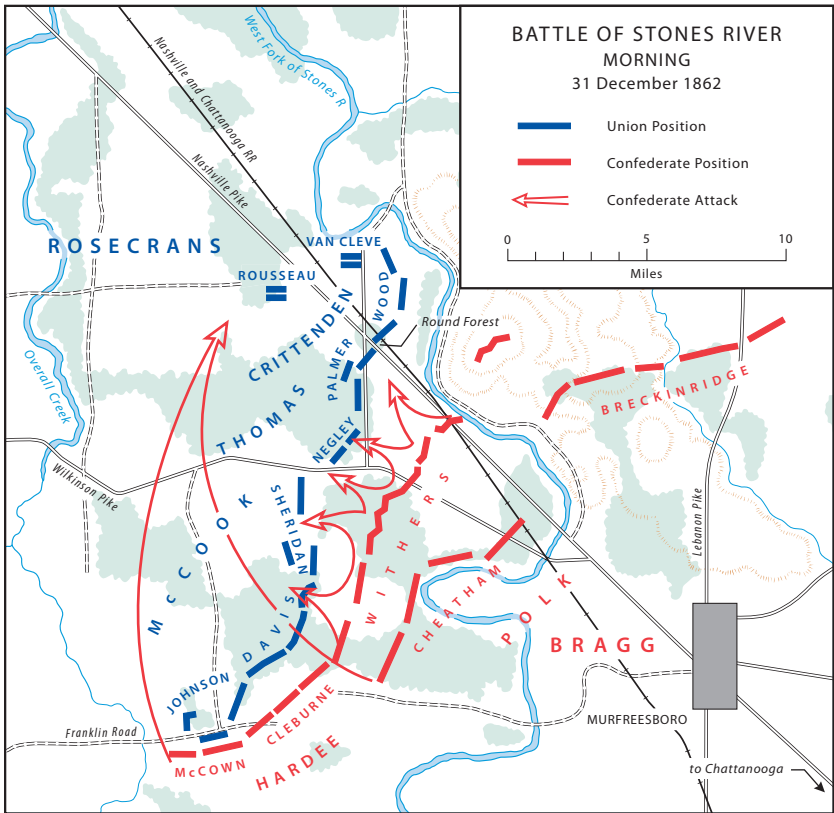
While Grant and Sherman maneuvered unsuccessfully against Vicksburg, General Rosecrans had spent his first two months as commander of the Army of the Cumberland restoring his soldiers' damaged morale. Many men had not been paid in months, there were shortages of food and other supplies, and

desertion was rife. An able administrator, Rosecrans ensured that his troops received their pay on time and were well supplied, and he took steps to see that they were properly trained. He also reorganized the army into three wings, or corps: the Right Wing under General McCook, the Center under General Thomas, and the Left Wing under General Crittenden. Each wing consisted of three divisions. Rosecrans appointed General Stanley as his cavalry commander in the hope that Stanley could infuse the army's mounted division with some of the hard-hitting aggressiveness that his former infantry division had displayed at Corinth. In late December, the Army of the Cumberland totaled over fifty-five thousand troops.

A portion of Bragg's army was deployed at Triune about ten miles south of Nashville, while the remainder camped at Murfreesboro about thirty miles to the southeast. Following General Smith's departure, Bragg decided to organize his army into two infantry corps—Polk's corps, which consisted of two divisions, and Hardee's corps with three divisions. General Wheeler commanded the army's four cavalry brigades. During a visit to the army a few weeks earlier, President Davis had directed Bragg to transfer General Stevenson's 7,500-man division to Vicksburg, reducing the Army of Tennessee's numerical strength to roughly 38,000.

On 26 December, as Sherman was debarking at Chickasaw Bayou, the Army of the Cumberland marched out of Nashville toward Murfreesboro, with the Confederates at Triune retreating before them. Rosecrans was embarking on a winter campaign because President Lincoln desperately wanted a victory to offset the Union debacle at Fredericksburg, Virginia, earlier that month, and to add credibility to the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation on New Year's Day 1863. Halleck put the matter to Rosecrans bluntly: "The Government demands action, and if you cannot respond to that demand some one else will be tried."

The Federals marched through incessant rain and sleet—the three wings advancing on parallel routes while the lead elements skirmished with Wheeler's cavalry. On 30 December, Rosecrans found Bragg's army drawn up about three miles west of Murfreesboro. By dusk he had maneuvered the Army of the Cumberland into position along a four-mile line. McCook anchored the right, with the divisions of Brig. Gens. Richard W. Johnson, Davis (since returned to active duty), and Sheridan



MAP 8

deployed from south to north. Thomas held the center, with General Negley’s division on the front line and General Rousseau’s division in reserve. On the left, Crittenden covered the army’s line of communication—the Nashville Pike and the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad—with the divisions of Brig. Gens. John M. Palmer, Thomas J. Wood, and Horatio P. Van Cleve, and his wing extended Rosecrans’ line northward to Stones River (*Map 8*).

On the Confederate side, Bragg’s army was deployed in two lines, defending the northern and western approaches into Murfreesboro. The two divisions of Hardee’s corps under Maj. Gens. John C. Breckinridge and Patrick R. Cleburne held the right of Bragg’s line east of Stones River. On the west side of the river, Hardee’s third division under Maj. Gen. John P. McCown anchored the left flank, while Polk’s

corps held the center, with Maj. Gen. Jones M. Withers' division in front and General Cheatham's division in support.

Both Rosecrans and Bragg planned to attack on 31 December, and each intended to strike the other's right flank. Under Rosecrans' plan, the Union Center and Left Wing would begin crossing Stones River at 0700 and attack about an hour later. Bragg, meanwhile, ordered Cleburne's division to move to the left that night in order to join McCown's division in a dawn assault, to be followed by Polk's two divisions in close succession. The Confederate line would thus execute a giant right wheel, driving the Federal right flank against the river and folding up Rosecrans' line like a jackknife.

As it developed, Bragg struck first. Shortly after 0600, McCown's and Cleburne's divisions attacked the Federal right along the Franklin Road. The Confederate onslaught caught the troops of Johnson's division cooking and eating breakfast. Most of them panicked and fled northward, with the Southerners taking more than two thousand prisoners. Cleburne's division then slammed into Davis' division, which briefly held until McCown turned the Federals' open right flank. In just over an hour, the Confederates had routed two of McCook's three divisions. As at Perryville, the unfortunate McCook had to bear the brunt of a ferocious Southern assault.

At 0730, Withers' and Cheatham's divisions of Polk's corps advanced across a cotton field and struck Sheridan's division, whose commander had the foresight to wake his men early in order to prepare for a dawn attack. Withers and Cheatham launched repeated assaults on Sheridan's center and right flank and were repulsed each time. But the rout of Davis' division enabled the Confederates to sweep around Sheridan's right flank and into the rear. Assaulted on three sides, Sheridan's division fell back fighting to a point north of Wilkinson Pike, where a thicket of cedar trees and an outcropping of large rocks provided some natural cover. Sheridan deployed his troops on the right of Negley's division. The new Federal line was V-shaped, with Negley forming the angle.

Rosecrans and his staff were back at the Nashville Pike when they heard musketry to the south. At first they paid it no mind, but reports from McCook indicated a catastrophe on the army's right flank. Rosecrans immediately canceled the attack on the left and recalled the units that had already crossed the river. He then sent Rousseau's, Wood's, and Van Cleve's divisions to the front and, with his staff, rode there as well. With Col. John Beatty's brigade

leading the way, Rousseau's division advanced into "a cedar thicket so dense," recalled Beatty, "as to render it impossible to see the length of a regiment." As Beatty's troops formed on Sheridan's right flank, Rousseau ordered the colonel to hold his position "until hell freezes over."

Five Confederate brigades launched piecemeal assaults through the dense woods, and Southern batteries pounded the Union position with artillery fire, but the Federals held. Private Watkins of the 1st Tennessee Infantry was among those wounded in the fighting amid the cedars. He could not recall ever seeing "more dead men and horses and captured cannon, all jumbled together, than that scene of blood and carnage . . . on the [Wilkinson] pike." All three of Sheridan's brigade commanders lay dead or dying, and almost one-third of his men were casualties. Survivors of the fight nicknamed that bloody ground the "Slaughter Pen."

As Negley's and Sheridan's men began to run out of ammunition, the Confederates turned Rousseau's right flank and caused the troops of that division to break to the rear across open fields between the cedars and the Nashville Pike. Nearly surrounded, Negley and Sheridan ordered their men to fall back, and the three Union divisions rallied along the pike. Rosecrans was in the thick of it, helping to rally Rousseau's division and directing Van Cleve's division to deploy on the Union right.

Realizing that the new line needed time to coalesce along the Nashville Pike, Rosecrans decided to send the army's regular brigade forward to keep the Confederates occupied. The brigade commander, Lt. Col. Oliver L. Shepherd, led his 1,400 soldiers of the 15th, 16th, 18th, and 19th U.S. Infantry regiments to Negley's old position, where they met the Confederate line of battle. Although heavily outnumbered, the regulars stood their ground and bought the Federals on the pike the time they needed to form their line. But the cost was severe: during the brief but bloody fight, nearly one-half of the regular brigade was killed, wounded, or captured.

The Confederates emerged from the cedars around 1200 and ventured into the fields. McCown's division advanced toward the Union center, closely followed by Cleburne's division, which attacked the Federal right. Massed Union batteries poured a devastating combination of shell, spherical case, and canister into McCown's ranks, driving the survivors back into the woods.

After twenty minutes of close-quarters combat, Cleburne's men shoved back Van Cleve's division, only to reel before a counter-attack that Van Cleve launched a short time later. During the fighting, General Van Cleve was severely wounded, and Col. Samuel Beatty assumed command of the division. At 1500, General Hardee ordered his exhausted troops to halt for the day. He later explained that "it would have been folly, not valor" to continue attacking the Federals' strong Nashville Pike line.

Starting at 1130, the Confederates made repeated assaults on the Union left, the only part of Rosecrans' line that remained in its original position. The key to the Nashville Pike line was a four-acre cedar brake known as the Round Forest. Straddling the pike and the railroad, the Round Forest stood on a slight elevation and thus commanded the surrounding countryside. Should it fall, the rest of the Federal line would become untenable. Col. William B. Hazen's brigade held the Round Forest, supported by the other two brigades of Palmer's division. As the day wore on, the clump of cedars earned a new nickname: "Hell's Half Acre."

General Chalmers' Mississippi brigade launched the first assault against the Round Forest position, advancing across a cotton field into a hailstorm of lead—the noise so deafening that some of Chalmers' dazed men stuffed cotton into their ears. Hazen's troops easily repulsed the Mississippians. During the attack, Chalmers' brigade lost a third of its strength, including General Chalmers, who was wounded in the head. As soon as Chalmers' terrified survivors had passed through their ranks, Donelson's Tennessee brigade stepped off next. The Tennesseans suffered even heavier casualties than their Mississippi comrades: the 8th Tennessee Infantry took 474 men into the battle and lost 306—a casualty rate of 65 percent. The losses included the regiment's commanding officer, Col. William L. Moore, who was killed in action.

After the repulse of Chalmers and Donelson, it should have been evident to the senior leaders of the Army of Tennessee that piecemeal assaults on the Round Forest salient were doomed to failure. But such was not the case. As he had done at Perryville, Bragg chose to remain far to the rear during the fighting. Because of an erroneous report of a large Federal force north of town, Bragg held Breckinridge's five-brigade division on the east side of the river throughout the morning. Only at 1400 did

Breckinridge's fresh brigades begin to enter the fight, but General Polk deployed them as they arrived—one at a time. Adams' brigade stepped off first, advancing only a short distance before being driven back by a "terrible fire," as one Confederate officer described it. Over the next two hours, Polk sent forward three more of Breckinridge's brigades, and each one came streaming back after sustaining heavy losses. Colonel Hazen was moved to remark on the "dreadful splendor" of the futile assaults.

As Rosecrans rode forward to get a better view of the Round Forest fight, a shell decapitated his chief of staff, Lt. Col. Julius P. Garesché, spattering the general's uniform with blood and brains. Soon afterward, nightfall brought the fighting to an end. The Federals' Nashville Pike line had held. That evening, Rosecrans summoned his commanders to a meeting. Although they failed to reach a consensus on whether to fight or fall back, General Thomas had no doubt about what to do: "This army does not retreat." Rosecrans agreed and directed his subordinates to fortify their positions and "prepare to fight and die here."

Bragg and most of his commanders were confident that Rosecrans had experienced enough fighting and that he would be gone by the next morning. General Wheeler, Bragg's cavalry commander, reported seeing a long wagon train bound for Nashville, indicating that a Federal retreat was already under way. Although this intelligence seemed to confirm Bragg's assumptions, he was mistaken. Rosecrans was merely sending his wounded men and empty wagons back to Nashville—the wagons to be filled with supplies and then returned to the front.

The two armies spent a cold and rainy New Year's Day 1863 skirmishing and reconnoitering. That afternoon, Van Cleve's Union division of Crittenden's wing crossed Stones River and occupied a ridge that overlooked Polk's line. On 2 January, Bragg decided to drive the Federals off the ridge, and he sent Breckinridge's division back across the river to retake the high ground. Breckinridge deemed the charge suicidal and urged Bragg to cancel the attack, but the commanding general was adamant. The Kentuckian's reaction was mild compared to that of his brigade commanders—especially Brig. Gen. Roger W. Hanson, who had to be talked out of shooting Bragg.

At 1600, as the gray sky darkened and sleet pelted down, Breckinridge ordered his division to advance. On the front line, General Hanson led the Orphan Brigade—Breckinridge's former

command—officially known as the 1st Kentucky Brigade. The unit had received its nickname because the Bluegrass State still clung to the Union, making its soldiers “orphans.” Breckinridge’s men advanced rapidly, and after a close-quarters firefight, swept the Federals off the ridge; General Hanson fell mortally wounded during the assault. The Confederates pursued the Federals down the reverse slope and onto the open ground near the river.

General Crittenden, meanwhile, ordered his chief of artillery, Capt. John Mendenhall, to open fire with his fifty-seven cannons, which were lined up on a bluff across the river. The roar of the Union guns shook the ground, and the devastating fire shattered the gray ranks. Federal reinforcements then launched a counterattack that recaptured the ridge and sent the Confederates fleeing. As Breckinridge rode among the survivors of the Orphan Brigade, he exclaimed, “My poor Orphans! My poor Orphans!” In just forty-five minutes, Breckinridge’s division had suffered fourteen hundred casualties.

The repulse of Breckinridge’s division marked the end of the Battle of Stones River (also known as Murfreesboro). The three days of fighting cost the Federals 13,249 casualties, while the Confederate loss was 10,266. Each side lost roughly one-quarter of the troops engaged. On 3 January, Union reinforcements and supplies from Nashville reached Rosecrans’ army. That night, Bragg evacuated Murfreesboro, and the Federals occupied the town two days later. The Confederates had to abandon the rich farming region of middle Tennessee to the Federals, who built a fortified supply depot at Murfreesboro known as Fortress Rosecrans. The 225-acre complex remained in operation for the rest of the war. After the defeat at Stones River, the Army of Tennessee’s anti-Bragg faction became even more vocal in its denunciation of the commanding general, but neither Davis nor Bragg’s immediate superior, General Johnston, would replace him. This meant that the army’s senior leaders would spend more time squabbling among themselves than fighting the Federals.

Rosecrans’ victory came on the heels of Union defeats at Fredericksburg and Chickasaw Bayou, and as the Emancipation Proclamation took effect. As far as President Lincoln was concerned, the timing could not have been more fortuitous. Months after the battle, Lincoln confessed as much to Rosecrans. “I can never forget, whilst I remember anything,” he wrote, “that about the end of last year, and the beginning of this, you gave us

a hard earned victory, which, had there been a defeat instead, the nation could scarcely have lived over.”

Analysis

By the close of 1862, the Union was winning the war in the Western Theater. Federal forces occupied much of the Confederate heartland—western and middle Tennessee, northern Mississippi, and eastern Louisiana—including the cities of Memphis, Nashville, and New Orleans. General Grant had emerged as the Union Army’s most successful general, and General Halleck’s transfer to Washington, D.C., left him free to conduct operations as he saw fit. Much of Grant’s success stemmed from the effective partnerships he had formed with General Sherman and with naval commanders such as Foote and Porter. Likewise, President Lincoln had supported Grant during the dark days after Shiloh and ensured that he had enough men and materiel to conduct his operations. On the other hand, Lincoln had to remove General Buell because of his reluctance to fight. His replacement, General Rosecrans, won a much-needed victory at Stones River, but it remained to be seen if he would wage war with sufficient aggressiveness.

Conversely, the year 1862 was a disastrous one for the Confederate forces in the West. The collapse of the unwieldy defensive perimeter in Kentucky opened the Southern heartland to Union invasion, forcing the senior commander in the West, General Albert Sidney Johnston, to adopt a strategy of concentration in order to fight the Federals on roughly equal terms. At Shiloh, Perryville, and Stones River, the Confederates struck first and succeeded in driving back the Federals, but each time, the soldiers in blue ultimately held their ground and compelled the Southerners to retreat. The losses that the two armies incurred in these battles were costly—but the more populous North could bear the burden more readily than the South. A succession of bloody battles that had begun so promisingly, only to end in defeat, left the Army of Tennessee’s senior leadership bitterly divided over General Bragg’s fitness to command, and neither President Davis nor the later commander in the West, General Joseph E. Johnston, seemed willing to intervene.

But the war in the West was far from over. The Confederates still held Vicksburg, Port Hudson, and a 250-mile stretch of the

Mississippi River, as well as Chattanooga and Atlanta, two of the South's largest manufacturing and transportation centers. The Army of Tennessee had proved its toughness and tenacity on some of the war's bloodiest battlefields, and Confederate cavalry under Forrest, Morgan, and Wheeler had shown that it could ride circles around the Union mounted arm. Should the war in the West settle into a stalemate, the Confederacy might yet stave off defeat long enough to exhaust the North's will to fight.

The Union, meanwhile, had expanded its war aims—it was now fighting to free the South's slaves and was recruiting freedmen to serve in its armed forces. As they pushed deeper into the Confederacy, Federal armies began to live off the land, making Southern civilians feel “the hard hand of war”—a policy the North would apply with increasing severity as the war dragged on.



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HENRY & DONELSON 1862

MISSISSIPPI RIVER 1862-1863

SHILOH 1862

MURFREESBOROUGH 1862-1863

