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THE HUNTSVILLE HISTORICAL REVIEW

Huntsville, Alabama

Volume 2

October, 1972

Number 4

Editor

Elbert L. Watson

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CONFEDERATE ACTIVITIES IN AND AROUND HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

From the Papers of
The Late Rev. James Monroe Mason, D.D.

It is probable that no complete history of the operations of the Confederate Cavalry in connection with the Army of Tennessee will ever be written. The area of country over which they were scattered, extending from the Alleghany Mountains to the Mississippi River; the nature of the service in which they were engaged, requiring them to act whether upon the raid, the scout or the vidette post, not as a compact body but in small detachments; and the fact that the nature of the country prevented their being used upon the great historic battlefields, all conspire to render the task of the historian who shall make the attempt, extremely difficult. Yet no soldier who followed the fortunes of Forrest or of Wheeler should be willing to admit that the services rendered by this branch of the Army were less important, the hardships endured less severe, the dangers encountered less deadly, or the casualties fewer than in any other branch. Doubtless, there were many cavalry regiments the list of whose killed and wounded, in the incessant skirmishes, was as great as that of the most famous infantry regiments that ever stormed a battery or crossed bayonets with the foe. While no historian may ever succeed in so grouping all these as to present a fitting companion picture to the great infantry and artillery

battles, yet much may be done in the way of personal reminiscence to rescue the memory of our Cavalry service from undeserved oblivion. And if a connected history is ever written its material can be gathered in no other way. It is with a view to accomplishing something in this direction that I have undertaken my present task. Being only a soldier in the ranks, I shall attempt to recite only that which I saw and participated in from June 20th, 1862 to May 9th, 1865, the former being the date of my enlistment and the latter of my discharge by parole at the surrender of Forrest.

In April 1862 the writer was a schoolboy in Huntsville, Alabama. On the morning of the 11th of that month Huntsville was occupied by the Federal Army under Gen. O. M. Mitchell. The school was disbanded, and the building seized for military uses.

Soon after this event I undertook in company with a schoolmate to pass through the lines of the enemy and make my way to Southern Alabama. Being under military age, we had no trouble in getting permission to go for a few days to visit friends in the country, but having spent more than the specified time in a vain attempt to evade the enemy's pickets and cross the Tennessee River, we were afraid to return home. We communicated our fears to the friend at whose house we were staying, and he informed us of a small band of Confederate cavalry that was being organized in the mountains of Madison and Jackson counties, and advised us to place ourselves under their protection.

At this time there were many Confederate soldiers lurking in this section. A company of the 7th Alabama Infantry whose term of service had expired, reached their homes only a few days before the arrival of the Federal Army and were hiding about to avoid arrest. There were several from other commands who were at home on furlough or on account of wounds or sick-

ness, and many persons of military age, who had not yet joined the army, were also compelled to conceal themselves in order to avoid imprisonment. Gen. Bragg who was then maturing his plans for the march into Kentucky, gave to Frank B. Gurley of Forrest's Regiment a commission as a Captain of Cavalry, and ordered him to organize these men into a cavalry company, and operate in rear of the enemy. When we reached his camp he had collected only about one dozen men. This number was rapidly increased to new recruits, and within a week or ten days it had swelled to fifty or sixty.

Though not members of this band my friend and I being under their protection while awaiting an opportunity to go south, were compelled to move with them from place to place. At length seeing no opportunity of carrying out our original purpose, we, on the 20th of June entered our names on the Company's roll, being respectively 16 and 15 years of age.

The service assigned to this company was both difficult and dangerous. The Tennessee River, with an average width of about eight hundred yards, turns to the Southwest below Chattanooga and entering Alabama near Bridgeport pursues this course to Guntersville, about fifty miles, thence turning again to the Northwest, it passes out of Alabama at the Northwestern corner of the State. The northern bank of this river was in the possession of the enemy, and was closely picketed. In the four counties of Alabama lying north of this bend there was a large Federal Army, numbering perhaps twenty thousand, who occupied every town and hamlet of importance, and a due portion of the force was cavalry, engaged continually in scouting. This was the field of our operations. Our dangers were increased by the presence of a few unauthorized bands of Guerillas in the same region, whose operations gave the enemy presumptive evidence that

all the Confederates in their midst were connected with these irregular bands in consequence of which we were indiscriminately outlawed. Our commander therefore was compelled to discriminate nicely between the methods of war that were legitimate and illegitimate, and to exercise continually such control over the passions of his men as would prevent their wreaking cruel vengeance upon such of the enemy as fell into their hands. The rendezvous of the company was in the mountain region along the border of Madison and Jackson counties. In the fastnesses of these mountains we found a safe asylum after every contact with the enemy, and from here as occasion was presented we furnished information of the enemy's movements to the Confederate forces south of the river.

There were frequent skirmishes between small detachments of our company, and scouting parties of the enemy, and from time to time many of the enemy were captured, and either sent south of the river, or released on parole. I shall not attempt, after so many years, to record each of these small engagements. A few affairs of greater magnitude I will relate.

The first of these was not creditable either to our discipline or to our courage. Soon after the company was organized, we started upon some errand the nature of which I do not now recall. Our route lay to the south, as if we would strike the river in the neighborhood of Guntersville. It was necessary to cross the railroad along which lay the largest bodies of the enemy. To avoid observation we made a night march. Many of the men had never been under fire, and as we approached the point of greatest danger there was an evident feeling of trepidation, which increased as we advanced. Just before day we discovered that we were in close proximity to a cavalry camp. The company was halted for a moment, but before the position or strength of the enemy could be ascertained, the bugles

sounded reveille. In an instant there was a panic. Vainly the officers commanded a halt and attempted to form the company in order. Both men and horses were so completely possessed by fear as to be uncontrollable. Many a man who at a later day showed the most admirable coolness and courage in the midst of real dangers, was now terror-smitten and turned and fled. As is usual in such cases, as soon as the stampede began the contagion spread like fire in stubble. Soon we were all in headlong flight. Every bush and tree was magnified into an enemy; every fleeing horseman thought the comrade just in his rear was a federal cavalryman about to deal a saberstroke. We ran until daylight revealed to us our folly. In the meantime we had become badly scattered and many days passed before the command was reunited. It is but just to state that at this time many of us had no arms.

On another occasion we received information of a wagon train approaching Huntsville on the Fayetteville turnpike, and accompanied by a small escort. By a night ride we succeeded in surprising and dispersing this party, and capturing a quantity of supplies, such as were needful.

Soon after this, we were ourselves surprised, in daylight, at a point near New Market, in Madison County, and suffered a loss of one man badly wounded and several captured. Despite our surprise and discomforture we retreated in good order, and escaped among the mountains.

While these events were taking place, Captain Hambrick of Forrest's Regiment succeeded in crossing the Tennessee River with his company, and united with us. Our entire force at this time consisted of two companies, mustering about one hundred and fifty men. Thus reenforced, we were enabled to act with greater boldness, and to undertake some enterprises of greater magnitude than any we had previously at-

tempted. The enemy were using the Memphis and Charleston R. R. for the purpose of moving troops and supplies. Even when our numbers were small we had several times interfered with their use of this railroad, by removing rails at different points, so that they were forced to station garrisons near each other all along the railroad from Huntsville to Stevenson. One of the stations occupied by a garrison was the Flint River bridge, twelve miles east of Huntsville. This covered, wooden bridge was converted into a block house, and furnished with bullet proof gates at each end.

When Capt. Hambrick united with us, Bragg's army had already turned the enemy's flank, and were upon the march to Kentucky. Part of our duty now was to obstruct the retreat of the force in North Alabama, and a plan was matured for capturing and burning this bridge. Our scouts learned that the doors were kept open during the daytime and that many of the garrison amused themselves bathing in the river. We hoped to be able to get near enough to capture this bridge by a sudden dash. We dismounted in the woods and approached as near as we could under cover. Many of the Federal soldiers were bathing in the river, others were amusing themselves in various ways. We felt that the prize was almost in our grasp. Just then the sentinel on duty discovered us and fired; those of the garrison nearest the bridge rushed to their arms; the bathers in the river grabbed their clothing and ran into the bridge and the heavy doors closed with a bang. Those of our party whose guns were of long enough range amused themselves by firing a few shots. Our plan had failed, and we drew off. The progress of Bragg's army through East Tennessee now began to necessitate the removal of large bodies of Federal troops from West Tennessee and Mississippi to East Tennessee. Their line of march lay just along the

line of Tennessee and Alabama. Learning of their passage through the country we moved in that direction for the purpose of interfering as much as possible with their progress, and observing their movements. While watching what is locally known as the Ginn Spring road, we learned that a Federal General, ignorant of our proximity had passed with an escort of only four or five hundred cavalry. He was several hours in advance of us, but the prize was too alluring to be easily relinquished, and we followed upon roads parallel to his line of march. At night he encamped at Rock Springs. It was night when we reached the neighborhood of his camp. Nearly the whole night was spent in securing guides, and getting the necessary information as to the location of the camp. When these were secured the night was far advanced and a plan was hastily communicated to the men for surprising the camp and capturing the General.

We approached as near as was prudent on horseback, dismounted and divided into two parties to attack on opposite sides. One of these parties reached its position at a fence about one hundred yards from the camp, and found the Federals already astir. They waited patiently for the preconcerted signal. Before the other party was ready for the attack the Federals had mounted and begun their march.

This officer who came so near to falling into our hands was General George H. Thomas.

We had followed him further than we could prudently go, and turned again in the direction of our rendezvous. We marched rapidly by the most obscure roads and without halting to eat or rest, about nine o'clock in the morning crossed again the Ginn Springs road at a point about six miles north of New Market. As we crossed this road we observed that troops had been passing. We were halted and formed in line parallel to the road in the open woods. Captain Gurley,

mounted on a large grey mare turned down the road in the direction from which the Federals had come and rode two or three hundred yards to see if others were near at hand. We saw him wheel and start back at a gallop, and in another moment we saw four cavalymen in close pursuit. As soon as he reached our position he turned and ordered a charge. The Federals discovered us at the same moment and fled. Our column entered the road, left in front, which threw Gurley's own company in advance. We had pursued about a quarter of a mile when we ran into a body of cavalry, among whom we discharged our double barrel shotguns with fatal effect. Those of us in front passed many of them, and left them to be captured by the men behind us. As we became intermingled with them in their flight we emptied several saddles. Next we passed a wagon camp by the roadside, and then entered a long lane.

Everything in front of us was panic-stricken. In the lane we overtook a buggy containing two Federal officers. Firing on these as we came up with them, one was wounded and the other surrendered and hastily stating that the wounded officer was Gen. McCook, appealed to us for help. Capt. Gurley who was with the head of the column stopped and caused the General to be carried into a house nearby, where he expired in a short time. The fatal shot had passed through his body from the rear, coming out near the buckle of his sword belt. By whose hand the fatal shot was fired is not known, as three or four were firing at the same instant. During the pause which occurred at the killing of Gen. McCook, this writer with one other companion pressed forward and for a considerable distance kept close to the rear of the fleeing Federals. As we reached the end of the land a Federal officer just in front of me, threw himself from his horse and fled into the woods. Being determined to kill or capture him,

if possible, I turned my horse into the woods, being at a full run. About twenty feet from the road my horse ran under a swinging grapevine which caught me about the middle of the body. I was suspended for a moment in midair with my feet entangled in the stirrups until the saddle girth broke and I fell heavily to the ground. Just after I left the road my companion overtook and captured several musicians on foot, these being the first infantryman encountered.

While I was hastily repairing the effects of my disaster several of our comrades passed, and about one hundred yards further on these were saluted with a volley fired by an infantry column which had hastily formed across the road. At this volley they turned and fled, except one whose horse, being beyond control carried him into and through the column of infantry, and he escaped with no greater harm than a slight wound in his horse.

Though we had now discovered the presence of a large force of infantry we took advantage of their demoralization and deliberately returned over the ground that had been covered in the melee, and gathered up the spoils of our victory. These consisted of a considerable supply of arms and other material of war, and a large number of prisoners, though many of the latter not being placed under guard as soon as captured, escaped to the woods and soon rejoined their friends.

Some parties who passed over the entire distance of our pursuit and claimed to have counted the dead gave the number as twenty-one, including General McCook. Among our prisoners was Capt. Brock of Gen. McCook's staff. Most of the prisoners were Germans and could not speak English.

As soon as we had gathered up the spoils we retreated to our stronghold in the mountains.

As soon as the demoralized troops of Gen. McCook were reorganized they began to execute their vengeance

upon the defenceless inhabitants of the country. Every house within several miles of the scene of strife was burned to the ground. Even the family who had sheltered and ministered to their unfortunate commander in his dying moments suffered the common fate. These citizens were wholly innocent of complicity with us. The community was one in which we had not been before, nor had we been in communication with the people. It is to be hoped that this terrible vengeance was but the venting of the blind fury of the common soldiers, and that it was not authorized by the officers in command.

Among the trophies of this fight, was the sword which was presented to Gen. McCook by the Congress of the United States, which bore upon its blade an inscription commendatory of his gallantry.

The immediate results of this skirmish were highly beneficial to the inhabitants of that section, excepting those who were in the immediate vicinity and who suffered as above described. It put an end to the depredations of straggling parties, and forced the enemy to keep in compact bodies in marching.

To those who were the immediate actors, it brought another benefit. Through the Federal officer who was captured, communications were opened with the Federal authorities, and our officers were enabled to show their commissions and obtain for us recognition as regular Confederate troops with all the rights of belligerents. In a few days our prisoners were paroled and these paroles were recognized by the Federal authorities.

The reputation of a brave, skillful and honorable officer of the Confederate Army demands that I, a participant in this affair, and a witness of the fatal wounding of Gen. McCook, should so far depart from the thread of my narrative as to relate the remote effects of this affair upon Capt. F. B. Gurley. The

reports of this skirmish that reached the north caused great indignation. It was stated that Gen. McCook fell by the hand of Gurley himself, after he had surrendered. One report was that he was murdered while lying sick in an ambulance. Capt. Gurley was represented as a Guerrilla and a desperado.

In 1863 this officer was captured. Instead of being treated as a prisoner of war, he was incarcerated in the Tennessee State Penitentiary and held there until the close of the war, when in the general prison delivery he was released. He returned to his home in Madison County, Alabama. In the first election after the war he was honored by his fellow citizens with the office of Sheriff of his county. While holding that office the malice of political opponents trumped up the old charges against him and he was arrested, heavily ironed, incarcerated in jail, tried by a military court for murder, and sentenced to death. In all these proceedings there was great haste, and the conviction was entirely upon ex parte evidence. A reprieve was granted by the President until he could himself investigate the evidence, and after a careful hearing of the same he overruled the sentence and set Capt. Gurley at liberty.

The question "Who Killed Gen. McCook?" can never be answered, but this writer does not believe, nor does Capt. Gurley that he (Gurley) fired the fatal shot.

It is certain that the McCook fight was as great a surprise to us as it was to the enemy. We accidently ran into the enemy. We fought without premeditation, deliberation, plan or purpose. Our success was wholly due to the fact that (to use one of Gen. Forrest's expressions) "We got the bulge on them." Had we known what lay before us it is probable that we would have retreated without firing a gun. Or had we with deliberate purpose made a cavalry charge upon a

Division of Federal Infantry would have shown us as courageous and well disciplined as the noted "Light Brigade" whose charge into the valley of death at Balaklava will live in history, in story, and in song as long as humanity retains its admiration of valor and heroism. As I am the first participant in this affair who has ever published an account of it from the Confederate standpoint, I have thought it but just to enter into these details, that a gallant and honorable officer may be vindicated from alleged crime, and that the affair itself may be put upon record by one of the few participants who still survives.

Of the four Confederates who were nearest Gen. McCook when he fell, one was killed in the cavalry attack on Fort Donelson February 3, 1863, another was killed in battle near Kennesaw Mountain, Ga., June 9th, 1864. The other two were Capt. Gurley and the writer.

During the imprisonment of Capt. Gurley, though I was in a distant place, I communicated with him through friends and offered to share with him the hardships of persecution. This offer he magnanimously declined. I then put all the information in my possession at the command of Hon. D. C. Humphries and Mr. Benjamin Jolly of Huntsville, Ala., who placed it before President Johnson, and secured amnesty both for Capt. Gurley and myself.

In consequence of the exaggerated rumors as to our strength, which were circulated among the enemy after this skirmish, they seldom moved from their garrisons except in large numbers, and we had the whole country open to us, and moved about with great freedom. Our scouts frequently fired on the enemy's pickets, and thus kept up the impression as to our strength. In this way a general engagement was prevented, our safety secured, and the country relieved from the depredations of stragglers.

The office of the Adjutant General, U. S. Army, has submitted the following details of the military career of Brigadier General Robert L. McCook:

The records show that one Robert L. McCook was mustered into service 8 May 1861 at Camp Harrison, Ohio, as colonel of the 9th Regiment Ohio Infantry, was appointed Brigadier General of Volunteers 20 March 1862, was shot by Guerillas 5 August 1862 near New Market, Alabama, while riding sick in an ambulance enroute to Decherd, Tennessee, and died from his wounds 6 August 1862. At the time of muster into service, he stated that he was 31 years of age.

The facts of the engagements as recorded by a responsible eye-witness and participant in the action, directly contradicting the report filed in the Adjutant General's office, should be of interest to all students of Confederate history.

HUNTSVILLE'S GREEN ACADEMY 1812-1862

By O. C. Skipper

The legislature of the Mississippi Territory in the early years of the nineteenth century had to concern itself with problems of constituents who were creating home sites from a wilderness from which the former occupants, for most part, had recently been expelled. The education of the youth required legislative assistance, hence on November 25, 1812, the legislature authorized the establishment of Green Academy, the first chartered school in Madison county (Alabama); the second in the territory.¹

After authorizing the Academy, the legislature appointed fifteen trustees, and in January, 1814, added five more. Still the school seems to have existed merely on paper. Thinking perhaps that more Trustees were needed, the lawmakers added six in November, 1818. The enlarged Board was authorized to select a site for the school, erect buildings, elect teachers, and fill vacancies in the governing body. The legislature was farsighted in establishing the Academy and in providing it with a board of prominent citizens, but it gave it "no splendid and munificent endowment."²

In 1816, however, the lawmakers began to provide financial assistance for the Academy, granting it \$500. A decade later they allowed the school to receive all fines and forfeitures collected in Madison county for

five years. The legislators agreed to permit the Trustees to raise up to \$4,000 by lottery and exempted the property of the school from territorial and local taxes. Apparently the lottery was never used, but in 1818 the Academy received additional aid in the amount of \$2,000 from the profits derived from the sale of shares in the Planters and Merchants Bank in Huntsville. Meantime, "subscription papers" were circulated locally and were "liberally filled."³

The school may have been operating for some time in makeshift quarters. By August 3, 1821, however, the Board had accumulated \$2,500, which the Trustees considered adequate to erect a suitable building. Without mentioning a teacher or teachers, the Trustees appealed to the people to patronize the Academy. The lack of adequate support was "a standing reproach to the citizens of the area."⁴ While construction proceeded the school would continue to operate, but neither it nor any similar institution in Madison County met the expectations of the people.⁵ Of these only Green had been incorporated or had received state support.

Ten years after the Academy was chartered and following several years of haphazard operation, it entered a new era of life. On December 30, 1822, the Trustees paid John Brahan and his wife Mary \$600 for four acres of land at the northeast corner of the intersection of East Clinton and Calhoun streets.⁶ A local paper carried a glowing opinion of the proposed location of the school, stating that it would be in a "pleasant grove," on a beautiful eminence about a quarter of a mile from town. The situation was one of the most "eligible possible." Almost surrounded by mountains, it was regarded as one of the healthiest spots in North Alabama, adjacent to one of the wealthiest and most populous areas in the western world.⁷

There was to be a separate building for small boys in an English School. The other buildings would ac-

comodate up to 100 students in a Classical School. These three one-story brick structures were arranged to form a small quadrangle. This plan was thought to pose less danger from fire, and provide a playground in the center. The two principal buildings had three thirty by twenty-four feet rooms, each with two fireplaces. There were also four additional rooms eighteen by eighteen feet, each with a separate fireplace. For the school principal the Trustees planned to provide a dwelling, including a kitchen and a "green garden."⁸ His pay, derived from tuition, would amount to at least \$1,000 a year, the Trustees promised. Initially the appointment would be for only a year; but after the principal proved himself, he could expect a contract for a longer period of time.⁹

In 1824-1825 there were between thirty and forty students of varying ages and accomplishments who had to be arranged into classes. To gain admission, a boy had to be prepared to study English grammer, arithmetic, and elementary geography.

The tuition was considered reasonable. The Classical School in November, 1823, charged ten dollars a quarter payable in advance to the treasurer, Lemuel Mead. For students in the "higher studies," including "vulgar arithmetic," the charge was twenty-five dollars a quarter. In addition students paid two dollars for repairs, water and fuel. In August, 1850, tuition in the English School was six dollars and seven dollars and fifty cents in the Classical School.¹⁰

A committee of the Board delegated in August, 1823, to secure a teacher for the Classical School announced that an "unexceptionable moral character" was an essential qualification. The candidate's attachment to his profession and the power to excite in his pupils ardent and active effort for their own improvement were considered as important as knowledge of the subject taught. He would offer Greek and Latin Classics,

and such a course in science as was usually taught in the best academies.

The quest resulted in the selection of Andrew Wills, a Scotsman and graduate of the University of Aberdeen, and a teacher in Fredericksburg, Virginia, since 1819. He had submitted in support of his application, impressive testimonials concerning his moral character, assiduous habits, accomplishments as a classical and scientific scholar, and skill as an instructor. With A. E. Russell assisting, the Academy resumed operation after a short vacation, in the autumn of 1823.¹¹ The Committee thought it had made a fortunate selection; others shared this view. A group of trustees in January, 1825, extolled Wills for "assiduity, morality, and learning," and the Alabama Republican in its issue of January 4, 1825, referred to the "rapid growth and flourishing condition of the infant seminary." The enrollment was about sixty. Messrs. Wills and Russell were noted as "men of literary and scientific acquirements."¹²

Wills soon assumed additional duties, which he assured his patrons would not interfere with his school work. In writing for the Democrat, he revealed a glaring lack of restraint that resulted in his dismissal from Green and within a few months, to his murder.¹³ The Trustees who forced his resignation, charged him with poor discipline and unsatisfactory performance of his students on public examinations. More pertinent, he had become involved in the political controversies of the region. He compounded his errors in writing slanderously against one political faction, only soon to join that element and to dump his venom on the faction he had lately extolled.

Forced from the principalship of the Academy as a result of partisan political writings, he became editor of the Democrat. His faction claimed credit for the election of John McKinley over Clement Comer

Clay to the United States Senate in 1826. Wills aggravated the bitterness between the political factions by publishing an attack on John White McClung, a law partner of Clement Comer Clay. The victim murdered the writer; Clay gained an acquittal for his law partner.¹⁴

In seeking a successor to Wills in August, 1825, a committee of the Trustees specified no qualifications for the principal, but promised him a house, and with an assistant of his choice that he would receive all of the Academy's income of some \$1,400, less the sum required to keep the school buildings in repair. On at least two occasions, the principal arranged for and initially paid for repair work.¹⁵

When the Messrs. Crawfords took charge of the school in 1827, its condition was notably poor. Tuition had not been collected in some time, enrollment was small. Its situation soon improved, however, for in March, 1831, Principal Crawford was assisted by John A. Gretter, a graduate of the University of Virginia, and William T. Allen, a graduate of Centre College. More students could be accommodated than hitherto; instruction could be offered in "every department of literature." Board, including "washing, lodging, etc., could be arranged with respectable families in town from \$45 to \$50 per session of five months."¹⁶

In the autumn of 1836, the Trustees recommended the Academy to the public, because Principal F. Dean, a graduate of Union College, came highly recommended for character and scholarship. He would offer the usual Classical and English branches. Dean was still principal of the Academy a decade later.¹⁷

Securing a principal seems to have been the most difficult task confronting the Trustees. In August, 1850, they advertised in the National Intelligencer and in similar publications, and sought the assistance of the Alabama delegation in Congress.

Through the greater part of the Academy's history, students were required to pay their tuition and fees to the Treasurer, a local businessman and Trustee. He collected dues for a term in advance, receiving ten percent of the sum collected for his services. When J. J. Fackler gave up the post in December, 1845, Samuel Coltart took over for about ten years. William Echols succeeded him, then Septimus Cabaniss held the office for some months. The Board carefully audited the accounts of the Treasurer. Finally in July, 1859, the Board took a step that it should have adopted much earlier. It made the joint principals, Charles O. Shepherd and A. E. Russell, joint treasurers. Each official was placed under a bond of \$1, 800.

Cabaniss was long a prominent member of the Board. After serving as secretary, then treasurer, he became president and may have held that office when Federal troops ended the operation of the Academy during the Civil War. But even Cabaniss, along with several other prominent Trustees, became victims of the rule under which an unexcused absence from a meeting was penalized by a fine of one dollar.

The record of the Academy for holding teachers was very poor, but probably comparable to that of similar schools of the day. Also like other schools, Green sometimes employed ministers as teachers. The faculty was probably never larger than in 1845 when J. M. Davidson was principal. His wife taught history, geography, and chronology; P. L. Blake taught mathematics and lower English; and J. H. Finney tutored in mathematics and the Classics. The school year was divided into quarters, beginning September 1, November 15, February 15 and May 1. Students might enter at any time by paying for the time attended. Tuition in the Academic Department was ten dollars; six in the preparatory division. In addition the student paid a matriculation fee of fifty cents.

Principal Davidson assured patrons that teachers were impelled to superior effort by their interest, sense of duty, and concern for the reputation of the school.

Teacher tenure continued to be short and uncertain. For example during the 1850's about ten different men held the principalship. Of these only A. E. Russell merits being singled out, and he only because he was on and off the faculty from the early 1820's until the school was destroyed by Federal troops during the occupation of the town in 1862. The Trustees seem to have been concerned primarily with securing a principal. Some applicants for the place were spurned at one time only to be chosen at another, no reason being given in the official minutes for the actions. The next problem that seemed to have been of major concern for the Trustees was checking the books of the Treasurer. No objection to the work of that official was recorded in the extant minutes. The Board was more often concerned with the repair of Academy buildings than it seems it should have been.

No concern was ever hinted in the minutes over the procession of principals and teachers of their choice. The Board experimented, apparently successfully, with the use of joint-principals, and in the closing months of the school's life, the principals became joint-treasurers.¹⁹

Inasmuch as tuition was the only source of teacher's salaries, and enrollment hovered around fifty students, patronage was a matter of real concern for teachers. The Principal, on at least one occasion, assured patrons that the instructors were much interested in the mental and moral needs of the students. At no time, however, did a spokesman for the Academy boast of a teacher's training, long service in the school, or generally recognized success. A special instructor was employed for boys under the age of ten. Friends of the school thought highly of its "large and well-selected

library that was open at all times to students. "20

The Trustees vented optimism when the Academy opened on August 28, 1853. Dr. Charles G. Smith was principal; J. T. Dunklin assisted as an instructor, probably in the higher branches, elementary and intermediate students were provided for; the academic buildings had been repaired recently. Even though the Board was made up of prominent men of the town, the Trustees were still impelled to levy the fine for unexcused absences to promote good attendance.

The later fifties, like the early years of the decade, witnessed a succession of principals and teachers in the Academy. Undaunted the Board enriched the curriculum by adding higher branches of mathematics and civil engineering. John R. Gwaltney, Master of Arts from the University of Virginia, was principal in September, 1856; he was promised an annual salary of \$1,000, the same that his predecessors had received thirty years earlier. From that meager sum that he was allowed to spend more than \$300 to repair the buildings and improve the grounds. On May 5, 1858, the Board chose a committee to settle accounts with Gwaltney, "late Principal of Green Academy." In the same meeting Charles O. Shepard was chosen principal. In July of the following year Shepard and A. E. Russell were "unanimously" elected joint-principals as well as joint-treasurers for the scholastic year beginning September 5, 1859, and ending June 15, 1860.

Early in 1862, G. W. Turner was chosen to assist Principal A. E. Russell. In addition he was allowed to offer military training at no extra cost. This innovation may have encouraged federal troops to destroy the Academy during their occupation of the town in 1864.

The Board seems to have been especially interested in fostering excellence among the students. It offered

a prize to the student who stood highest in general department, to the one who stood first in proficiency, and a third prize to the student who ranked second in general department and in proficiency. The winners were determined by reports of teachers and observations by Trustees. The Board agreed in November, 1859, to select four books to be awarded for excellence in declamation.

The Board decided on February 13, 1860, that public examinations should be held at the close of each session. The student was required to submit to this exhibition, or have his connection with the Academy severed. The teacher was required to keep a record of the performance of each of his students, and make that record open for public inspection. There were also "exhibitions" for original compositions and declamations. The Trustees proposed to award a suitably inscribed gold medal to the winner in declamation.

Green Academy the first state chartered school in northern Alabama, and for a time the only one to receive financial support from the state stood alone for many years in offering advanced education in its region. Its alumni included most of the prominent men of the area. It had no peer in its field until the State University was established in Tuscaloosa.²¹

¹Acts, Mississippi Territorial Legislature, 1812, 1814, 1816, 1818.

²Alabama Republican, August 3, 1821. Newspapers cited in this study are on microfilm in the Huntsville Public Library.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.; The Reverend John Allen, a Presbyterian minister, came to Huntsville in 1820 to teach in Green Academy.

⁵Alabama Republican, August 3, 1821.

⁶Deed B K Vol. 1 J 114-116; Alabama Republican, August 5, 1823, August 26, 1825.

⁷Alabama Republican August 3, 1821, August 5, 1823, August 26, 1825.

⁸The Democrat, November 11, 1823.

⁹Alabama Republican, August 4, 1823. Actually appointments varied one or more terms. Net income for the year beginning September 7, 1856 was \$1,084.05. (The treasurer's was \$120.45).

¹⁰The Democrat, November 11, 1823; unidentified newspaper clipping dated November 11, 1831, in Huntsville Public Library; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, August 10, 1850. The Minutes for August 1, 1850, to February 3, 1860, inclusive are extant, and were kindly lent to me by Professor Frances C. Roberts of The University of Alabama in Huntsville.

¹¹The Democrat, op. cit.

¹²Alabama Republican, January 4, 1825.

¹³The Democrat, January 19, 1826; Alabama Review, VI, (July, 1953), 198.

¹⁴Alabama Review, VI, 98, 198, 205, 209.

¹⁵Unidentified newspaper clipping, dated August 26, 1825, in Huntsville Public Library; Minutes of the Trustees, August 19, 1850.

¹⁶Southern Advocate, August 20, 1828; March 25, 1831; unidentified newspaper clipping, Huntsville Public Library

¹⁷Southern Advocate, October 18, 1836, December 26, 1846; Minutes of the Trustees, August 10, 1850.

¹⁸The Democrat, September 1, 2, 146; Minutes of the Trustees, August 14, 1850.

¹⁹Minutes of the Trustees, August 10, 26, 1850; January 27, April 26, May 3, 1851; January 1, 1852; April 10, 1853; July 28, 1853; December 23, 1853; January 28, February 5, August 2, 1854; July 14, 1855; January 30, February 2, February 13, 1856.

²⁰Southern Advocate, October 22, 1850, January 29, 1851; Minutes of the Trustees, August 9, 1856; July 28, 1853; July 14, 1855; The Democrat, February 12, 26; March 12, April 2, 1862.

²¹The Democrat February 12, 1862; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, May 23, August 10, 1850; September 7, 1856; May 5, 1858; July 18, November 4, 1859; February 1, 2, 1860. Edward Chambers Betts, Early History of Huntsville, Alabama, 1804-1870 (Montgomery, The Brown Printing Company, 1916), 40. W. P. Mills, "Sketch of Huntsville" in William Hunt's Directory and Business Mirror, Vol. 1, 1859-1860.

JOHN BELL HOOD'S TENNESSEE CAMPAIGN IN 1864

By Elbert L. Watson

John Bell Hood, a young man of thirty-three, assumed command of the Confederate Army of Tennessee on July 17, 1864, with a reputation of bravery, rashness, and utter recklessness. True to his character as a fighter, Hood made an impressive attempt to hold Atlanta against General W. T. Sherman, who was placing a Federal noose around that beleaguered city. After six weeks of almost constant fighting, Hood's army, on September 4, slipped out of the doomed city to Lovejoy's Station, twenty miles due south. That he was able to keep his army intact through its strenuous siege is quite noteworthy---a fact that Sherman carefully overlooked in sending his joyous report of Atlanta's capture to President Lincoln.

The fall of Atlanta sent shock waves of despair across Richmond as the Confederate government pondered what could be done to blunt the Yankee thrust into the Deep South. A strong undercurrent of feeling by subordinate commanders against Hood was also causing political reverberations which, if not checked, might force the downfall of Jefferson Davis's government. The President's serious concern with the situation was quickly revealed by his arrival on September 25 at Palmetto, Georgia, where the army was resting. By taking a personal hand in the deteriorating

state of affairs, he hoped to reinvigorate the Army of Tennessee, settle the internal differences, and thus turn the tide of battle.

So fired up was Davis over the possibilities for rallying the men, that on the twenty-sixth he admonished the troops: "Be of good cheer, for within a short while your faces will be turned homeward and your feet pressing Tennessee soil."¹ At Augusta, on October 3, his enthusiasm again compelled him to declare: "We must beat Sherman. We must march into Tennessee. . . and . . . push the enemy back to the banks of the Ohio."² This bold statement did not go unheard or unheeded. Sherman was grateful for the information since it simplified his own plans for Hood. As he later remarked: "To be forewarned is to be forearmed."³

Before concluding his tour, Davis effected several significant changes in the army's personnel, hoping that an improved atmosphere would develop within the military ranks and among the citizenry. To allay hostility toward Hood, he brought General P. G. T. Beauregard from Lee's army to command the newly created "Military Division of the West," which embraced Hood's department and that of General Richard Taylor. There was one catch: Beauregard's function was primarily to advise rather than command. He could confer but was not authorized to establish policy or direct military movements. Hood, thus, was still captain of his own destiny and clearly had Davis's imprint upon his future course.

On September 28, Hood began moving the army northward along the lines of the Confederate retreat into Georgia to throw himself across the Federal army's communications line. The following day, Sherman dispatched the capable and trusted George H. Thomas to Nashville to organize Middle Tennessee defenses, in the event of hostile movements in that direction. Then he set out in pursuit of the mobile

Confederates, who were inflicting surprisingly heavy damage to his supply lines. After striking a strong blow against the heavily defended garrison at Allatoona, Hood swung westward almost to the Alabama line, then dropped back and hit Resaca and Dalton, where he captured 1,000 men. Finally, he swept southwestward down to Rome and across the Chattahoochee River into Alabama.

HOOD'S ARMY OF TENNESSEE AT GADSDEN

Beauregard, meanwhile, arrived in Jacksonville, Alabama, about October 14 to make the town a new distribution depot, the old base having been at Jonesboro, Georgia. There on the seventeenth he announced his appointment as commander of the Military Division of the West, and issued a proclamation calling for renewed dedication by Southerners against the enemy. He also ordered the hasty completion of the Selma Railroad from its Blue Mountain terminus to Jacksonville.⁴ Colonel William H. Forney of the tenth Alabama Regiment was appointed post commandant.

Once across the Alabama line, Hood marched directly to Gadsden, a small village of 400 residents.⁵ There, on October 20, he spread his army out to thoroughly protect his position if an attack came from any direction. B. F. Cheatham camped in the area now bounded by Fourth, Fifth, Broad and Chestnut Streets; Stephen Lee in the North Gadsden section; Arnold Elzey across the Coosa; and A. P. Stewart on Black Creek. Over 2,000 men arrived barefooted, but most of these were outfitted with new supplies transferred over from Jacksonville.

In Gadsden Hood informed Beauregard for the first time of his ambitious plan to invade Middle Tennessee. The idea, Hood later wrote, crystallized with him while the army lay in bivouac near Lafayette, Georgia,

on October 15-16. He proposed to cross the Tennessee River near Gunter'sville; cut Sherman's communications at Stevenson and Bridgeport; and intercept and rout Generals Thomas and John Schofield before they could reach Nashville in sufficient force. He was "imbued with the belief" that he could cross the Cumberland River and move into Kentucky between Hazelgreen and Richmond. With the Cumberland Mountains at his rear he could threaten Cincinnati while recruiting his army from Tennessee and Kentucky. If Sherman headed south---as Hood believed he would---the Army of Tennessee would have sufficient time to reinforce itself up to the approximate strength of the Federal army. If victorious in his next encounter with Sherman, Hood could then hasten through the gaps of the Cumberland Mountains and strike Grant's rear in Virginia. If Sherman decided to reinforce Grant before engaging the Confederates in Kentucky, then Hood's alternative was to try to reach Grant's rear before Federal reinforcements arrived. This move, Hood believed, "would defeat Grant, and allow General Lee, in command of our combined armies, to march upon Washington or turn upon and annihilate Sherman."⁶

Such was the grandiose stratagem which Hood presented to Beauregard at the Gadsden Baptist Church where they met for two days. As tactfully as possible, Beauregard cautioned Hood that the plan, although basically a sound one, could succeed only if it were swiftly executed. He stressed that there was not sufficient time for Hood to transfer his base to Tusculum, Alabama, near the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Hood, however, contended that ample supplies were available in Middle Tennessee, and with his pontoon bridges he could cross a river anywhere if forced to retreat. Beauregard's anxiety with Hood's capability to guide this ambitious plan was understandably overshadowed by the fact that he knew that Davis and Brax-

ton Bragg, the President's personal military advisor, both agreed with it.⁷ So, having fulfilled his role as counselor, Beauregard went through the formality of placing his official approval upon the plan. One of his ideas was included: General Nathan Bedford would come from West Tennessee to provide Hood's cavalry screen.

When the announcement was made that the army was heading for Tennessee, there arose from the different encampments wave after wave of Rebel yells piercing the autumn breezes and signaling an improvement in the mood of the weary soldiers. At that moment John Bell Hood enjoyed his finest hour in his brief service as Commander of the Army of Tennessee. One soldier wrote that the "words were like magic. Hood was forgiven, Johnston was forgotten and a memorable march began."⁸ Another observer exultantly informed Alabama Governor Thomas Hill Watts that "Hood has shown great caution, and stands now very high in the estimation of the army. He outgeneraled, fooled, and bewildered Sherman. We will leave soon in a northerly direction and reach Middle Tenn. (sic) in a week."⁹ Not even the wretched, rain-drenched morning of October 22 could dampen the soldiers' highspirited march out of Gadsden. A correspondent for the Montgomery Daily Mail described the impressive scene which remained with this report:

The army has moved. The troops are gone. The last train has disappeared, and the last soldier has taken his farewell peep of the south side of the Coosa. The shadows of night creep slowly over the scene, and the stars look down in vain for the camp-fires that answered but yesternight their own resplendent glitter. You may hear indeed the clink of a few rusty chains, which are left behind; you may see indeed dim outlines of a few old wagons, that did not cross the stream, and now and then you may meet a stray quart-

ermaster groping about in the gloom; but the great caravan with its wild menagerie has passed beyond the stretch of eye and ear.¹⁰

Sherman also had a plan which equaled Hood's in both its conception and prospect for the success of the Federal armies. He would march across Georgia to the Atlantic Coast, foraging and pillaging the countryside as he went. Once his new supply base was established, he would turn northward and join Grant near Richmond against Lee. Although he followed Hood to Gaylesville, Alabama, twenty miles above Gadsden, Sherman felt that this phase of the campaign was little more than a useless expenditure of his time. "To pursue Hood is folly," he notified Thomas, "for he can twist and turn like a fox and wear out any army in pursuit."¹¹ He nonchalantly waited until October 25, when he sent a heavily enforced corps to test the Confederate strength. Commanded by Peter J. Osterhaus, the Federals encountered small pockets of Joseph Wheeler's men from Leesburg on down to Turkeytown Valley. At the latter point, Wheeler decided to make a stand.

Osterhaus stretched out a strong line of skirmishers across the Valley and rushed two brigades down the right road. With Wheeler thus preoccupied, a third column slipped forward under cover of woods along Lookout Slope, breaking the Rebel left flank. Confederate casualties were heavy, but Wheeler managed to orderly retreat back into Gadsden. Still thinking that the main army was in town, Osterhaus did not press his advantage and instead retired to Turkeytown.

On the twenty-sixth Sherman finally discovered that Hood was gone, and promptly left the task of blunting the Confederate movement to Thomas. Then he turned his face beyond Atlanta to his coveted goal--- the sea.¹²

FRUSTRATION AT SPRING HILL: DISASTER AT FRANKLIN

Hood's advance into Tennessee was beset with trouble and bad timing from the beginning. He left Gadsden in such haste that he forgot his pontoon bridge stretched across the Coosa River. He had second thoughts about crossing the Tennessee River at Gunterville and moved west through Decatur to Tuscumbia, his new supply base. Beauregard, who remained in Gadsden two days to clear up final details, knew nothing of this change of direction until he arrived in Gunterville to rejoin the army.¹³ Hood claimed that he bypassed Gunterville because he learned that Forrest was still in West Tennessee, and could not reach that section because the swollen Tennessee River was too high to cross. More likely Hood realized as he moved north that he was coming dangerously close to Sherman's encampment at Gaylesville. This precarious position meant that he might be caught between Sherman pursuing from the south and Thomas coming down from Tennessee. Whatever his reason for the change, he lost precious time and abandoned his previous plan to destroy Sherman's communications at Bridgeport and Stevenson.¹⁴ Here is graphically illustrated Hood's character and intellectual capacity as a Military Commander. He could conceive the strategy, but lacked an innate ability to properly execute the plan.

After several more irritating days of delay in Tuscumbia, the army crossed the river to Florence on November 13. Forrest arrived the next day, but almost another week passed before all the army's units were ready to start the hard drive into Tennessee. By then North Alabama's brilliant autumn hue was giving way to a drenching cold rain which turned the roads into muck and mire. Hood's physical condition also worked to his detriment. In addition to the personal

discomfort caused by a lame arm and stump of a leg, he was painfully beset with rheumatism. This condition made it necessary for him to take heavy dosages of medication to alleviate his physical afflictions.

At Nashville, Thomas was feverishly gathering up an army from Federal garrisons scattered across Tennessee and adjoining states. He was cheered to hear that A. J. Smith was enroute from Missouri. Young James Harrison Wilson, his new cavalry commander, was regarded as a leader who was capable of holding the renowned Forrest at bay. Earlier, Thomas sent Schofield and 23,000 men of the Twenty-Third and Fourth Corps down to Pulaski to ascertain the exact nature of the Confederate advance. Schofield was to retard the movement as long as possible to give Thomas ample time to organize his forces. The stage was set for one of the most poignant dramas of the Civil War.

In contrast to his timidity at Guntersville, Hood became bold when he saw an opportunity to seize Columbia, Tennessee, and throw himself between Schofield and Thomas. He rushed his three corps ahead in divergent directions. Benjamin F. Cheatham swung off west through Waynesboro; A. P. Stewart took the right on the Lawrenceburg road; and Stephen D. Lee followed the country roads between the two main arteries. Forrest's cavalry, numbering about 8,000, cleared the route with apparent ease.

Schofield, to his chargin, did not learn of Hood's intentions until the head of the Confederate column reached Lawrenceburg. Both armies were now about an equal distance from Columbia, but Schofield, in a forced march, won the race just in time to prevent Forrest from seizing the Duck River bridge and cutting him off from Thomas. Expecting Hood to attack, Schofield threw up a strong breastworks south of the river. But Hood showed restraint and put his army in battle formation while he contemplated his next move. "The

situation," he later recalled, "presented an occasion for one of those interesting and beautiful moves upon the chessboard of war, to perform which I had often desired an opportunity."¹⁵

Hood correctly surmised that if Schofield were not assaulted, the Federals would quickly cross to the north bank of the Duck. This was precisely what Schofield did on the twenty-eighth. At about the same time, Forrest rushed his cavalry across the river about eight miles from Columbia, and sent Wilson reeling backward northeast beyond Rally Hill and Hurt's Crossroads toward Triune, fifteen miles southeast of Franklin. With the lines of communication effectively broken between Wilson and Schofield, the latter was left blinded to Hood's strategy of blocking him at Spring Hill, twelve miles north on the Columbia-Franklin Pike.¹⁶

With the Federal cavalry indisposed and Schofield waiting on the north side of the river for the Confederates to appear, Hood personally led his army on the night of the twenty-eighth to a pontoon bridge crossing at Davis's Ford, five miles above Columbia near Rally Hill Pike, a good country road which led to Spring Hill. In Columbia, Lee thundered away with his artillery to create the illusion that the Confederates were preparing to attack from that point. As Hood rode along with his troops that golden fall morning, he was confident that Stonewall Jackson's mantle of military greatness was about to fall upon his shoulders. His crossing, apparently undetected, had filled his men with renewed enthusiasm, and made him optimistic that Schofield would be destroyed or captured at Spring Hill.¹⁷ What happened within the next twenty-four hours remains today as one of the great mysteries of the Civil War.

Early on the morning of November 29, Wilson finally got a courier through to warn Schofield to flee

into Franklin without delay.¹⁸ Caught on the horns of a dilemma, the beleaguered Schofield sent General D. S. Stanley ahead with two divisions to hold Spring Hill and protect the trains. When Stanley was within two miles of the town, he was notified that Forrest, fresh from his previous day's success against Wilson, was sweeping in from the east. George D. Wagner's division, with Colonel Emerson Opdycke's brigade in the vanguard, sped forward in double-quick time. With little more than minutes to spare, they arrived in time to prevent Forrest's troops from occupying the town.

Although Stanley held Spring Hill, the Confederate position was not immediately jeopardized because the main body of Federal troops was still a considerable distance down the pike. Hood knew this because he could hear Lee's cannons booming away at Columbia. At about 3 p.m. Hood's advance units approached Spring Hill. Blocking the way was a single division under Wagner, tiring because of the forced morning march and sharp clashes with Forrest throughout the afternoon. Up to this point, Hood, with shrewdly calculated moves, had played his game to near perfection. The objective of destroying Schofield's army was within his grasp! He could clear the chessboard with one final move: push Wagner aside, straddle the pike, and hit the hopelessly exposed Schofield from front and rear. But strangely the attack in force never came, and, while a tragic comedy of errors went on among the Confederate commanders, the entire Federal army slipped practically unmolested into Franklin.

The Spring Hill affair remains unexplained, although it constitutes one of the most thoroughly explored and researched sagas of the war. Part of the confusion lies in the fact that at first none of the major Confederate officers involved wanted to talk about it. A decade or so after the war when some finally did decide to put their views down on paper or in speeches,

they filled reams of material with charges and counter-charges. To use the vernacular, no one seemed willing to take the rap for being the goat at Spring Hill. In Hood's book, for instance, he contended that he ordered Cheatham to capture and hold the pike whatever the cost.¹⁹ To this accusation, Cheatham denied that such an order was issued to him by his commander.²⁰

That night the Army of Tennessee bivouacked about 100 yards from the pike, still untraversed by Schofield. Hood, in considerable pain with his physical infirmities, retired to the Absalom Thompson mansion, three miles to the east. About 3 a. m., a Confederate private appeared there to excitedly tell Hood that the enemy was moving in great confusion on the pike. Governor Isham G. Harris of Tennessee, who was an eyewitness to this report, in later years recalled that Hood directed Major A. P. Mason, his adjutant general, to order Cheatham to "move down on the road immediately and attack the enemy."²¹ Thereupon Hood and Harris went back to sleep. Apparently, Mason fell asleep too for he told Harris the next morning that the order had not been sent to Cheatham.²² Stanley Horn's pungent quip on this amazing night scene is a gem:

General Hood was asleep. Governor Harris was asleep. Major Mason was asleep. But General Schofield was not asleep. With his heart in his throat, he was quick-steeping the army silently down the turnpike, within sight of the camp-fires of the slumbering Army of Tennessee.²³

Hood was in a towering rage the next morning when he awakened and found that Schofield had slipped through his grasp. While breakfasting at Major Nathaniel Cheairs' home on the Columbia-Franklin Pike, he leveled verbal blasts at subordinates for what was obviously his own mishandling of the previous day's actions. Several of the officers, in turn, sharply blamed each other. It was a scene which did not bode

well for the luckless Army of Tennessee that fateful day. With Hood and his generals at each others throats, there seemed little possibility that any clear thinking would emerge to yet save the Tennessee campaign from complete failure. But on one point they all concurred: Schofield must be caught and punished before he could get into Nashville.

This electrifying mood spread from the officers to the lowliest privates of the Army of Tennessee that sunsplashed morning as it headed up the pike toward Franklin. Stewart led the way followed by Cheatham then Lee. Shortly after noon Stewart swung off to the right, but Cheatham continued along the pike until three that afternoon, when the head of his column crested Winstead Hill. Before him in pastoral beauty lay the town of Franklin nestled within the bend south of the Harpeth River. From the top of Winstead Hill into the town two miles away was open, softly rolling field. Within the few hours left to him before Hood's arrival, Schofield had done a thorough job of preparing his defenses. His entrenchments made a wide crescent in front of Franklin from the north bend of the river across the pike eastward until they touched the river again south of the town. So it was much more than the placid beauty of the Harpeth River Valley that greeted the Confederate vanguard that golden fall afternoon. A solid line of Federal soldiers brandishing glistening steel waited in stoic silence for the pursuers to appear.

Unfortunately, the mood which separated Hood from his generals at breakfast did not subside during the eighteen mile march from Spring Hill. As these men stood on the hilltop trying to devise their strategy, they were impressed by the formidable military force they saw awaiting them. Forrest argued against a frontal assault, favoring instead the use of his cavalry and a strong infantry division to flank the Federals

from their works. Cheatham reportedly told Hood: "I do not like the looks of this fight; the enemy has an excellent position and is well fortified."²⁴ Cleburne concurred in this observation. But despite the misgivings of his officers, the obvious disadvantage to the Confederates in attacking across the open field, Hood, without further discussion, ordered Cheatham and Stewart to drive the defenders into the river at all cost.

The assault began when Cheatham and Stewart were in position, although Lee with most of the artillery was still not present. At 4 p.m. the troops started out under the receding sun, their bayonets gleaming and flags flying in the gentle autumn breeze. There was a brief moment of success at first when Cleburne's and John C. Brown's divisions overran an outpost about one-half mile directly in front of the main Federal line. The outnumbered men fled panic-stricken back through their own works into Franklin and to the river. With their own soldiers pouring into their entrenchments, the Federals could not open fire until Cheatham's weary attackers were within 100 yards of the main works. Though nearly exhausted, the Confederates' momentum carried them into the entrenchments behind the Union center, where they momentarily gained possession of both the works and the guns. Their energy, however, was exhausted by the long run, and they were captured, killed, or forced back onto the field when Colonel Opdycke rushed forward his fresh brigade from its reserve position at the rear of the Carter House, the command post.

The breakthrough into the Federal center was the high tide of the battle for the irresistible Southerners. From then on they met an immovable object from Federal lines, massed four deep behind the works. An additional hazard to the attackers was an Osage orange fence, which was difficult to cross and made them

extremely vulnerable to nearby rifle fire and cannon shot. But despite the veritable holocaust through which they charged, the rugged Confederates fought with a reckless abandon which bespoke of their common determination of conquer or die. Again and again the gray tide surged up to the Federal works, only to be repulsed with staggering losses.

Death garnered in some of the Army of Tennessee's finest commanders who fought side by side with their men that bloody afternoon. Generals Cleburne, States Rights Gist, John Adams, O. F. Strahl, and H. B. Granbury died instantly and were left on the porch of the McGavock House.²⁵ General John C. Carter died later. Five other generals were wounded and one captured. Fifty-three regimental commanders were also killed or wounded.

The death struggle subsided in its intensity when the evening shadows finally chased away the receding sunset. Intermittent fighting, however, continued until midnight when Schofield got his army on the road northward to Nashville, eighteen miles away. The morbid scene which greeted Hood that morning of December 1 was ghastly beyond description. Dead men were stacked in heaps across the works which they had so valorously stormed. Confederate losses of approximately 6,000 men killed and wounded were staggering to the imagination. In comparison, Schofield's casualties totaled approximately 2,300. Thomas Robson Hay regarded the great destruction to the Confederates as being made in "an unnecessary and bloody fight, waged in an effort to make up for the hesitation of the day before at Spring Hill."²⁶ But the error of Spring Hill could not be corrected, and the frustration which had prevailed throughout most of Hood's Tennessee Campaign was only one problem which his army now faced. Lack of morale, coupled with the depletion in the ranks and among the officers,



JOHN BELL HOOD, After the Civil War
(Brady Collection), National Archives

demanded prompt attention as Hood contemplated his next move.

THE CURTAIN FALLS AT NASHVILLE

Despite his losses, Hood was not dissuaded from his ultimate objective at Nashville. Had he been more prudent he would have known that the game was almost over, and he could lessen the weight of his cross only by retreating to either the Duck or Tennessee rivers. Whether rash or resolute is the best term by which to describe Hood, his venture northward to Nashville following the slaughter of his army at Franklin is difficult to understand. Schofield's army, safely out of reach, was moving into the works at Nashville, where it met the troops of A. J. Smith who also arrived on December 1. Thomas now had under his command 55,000 eager, well fed and equipped troops ready to throw against the battered gray army of 23,000 men coming relentlessly up the pike.'

Thomas, one of Hood's instructors at West Point, was a methodical, quiet man who gave meticulous attention to planning strategy before attempting its execution. At Nashville he did his usual thorough job of preparing his defenses and deploying his troops south of the city in two lines running east and west. The inner one was seven miles long and extended along the edge of the town. The outer line stretched nine miles across a range of hills in what is now a residential section of the city. Thus entrenched, Thomas impatiently waited for his opportunity to strike a lethal blow against his former student.

In one respect, Hood's sagacity of moving his army immediately to Nashville caused Thomas to think that his opponent was stronger than was actually the case. A brief trip through the depleted gray army, however, would have convinced Thomas that there was nothing

to fear. Hood's hastily constructed entrenchments, lacking men to fill them, were no match for that outer Federal defense. Simply stated, Hood's strategy was to put Nashville under a siege and dare Thomas to come out and fight. He thought that from his defensive position it was possible for him to repel an attack and drive the Federals back into their works. He did not seem to realize that the siege itself was adversely affecting his shivering army, which lacked the basic necessities of provisions, clothing and fuel.

There was only desultory action for two weeks between the two armies, but within the Confederate lines a feeling grew that a storm was brewing.²⁷ It broke on December 15 when Thomas threw his troops forward along the entire line. Generals James Steedman and Thomas Wood combined forces to pin down the Confederate right and center under Cheatham and Lee respectively. On the left flank, eight full divisions under Schofield, Smith and Wilson started a turning movement against Stewart. The mighty blue wave soon flowed past some small detached forces operating beyond the main Confederate line. Five detached redoubts which had been erected to protect the line were swept aside, and a general Confederate retreat ensued as first one division, then another was flanked out of position. Night found the entire army reeling southward along muddy Granny White Pike.

General Thomas, obviously elated over the day's success, hastily concluded that the Confederates were in full flight and the battle was over. Schofield, however, knew of Hood's indomitable fighting spirit and expected him to be there "ready to fight, in the morning."²⁸ He was quite right! During the night engineers scraped out some breastworks two miles south of the first line. The forces were also shifted. Lee's corps took up the right wing on Peach Orchard Hill east of Franklin Pike. Stewart's corps, mauled the first day,

moved into the center, and Cheatham anchored the left flank, whose main salient was on the northernmost hill known today as Shy's Hill.²⁹ The entire line, well protected with hills, was shorter and somewhat stronger than the previous one.

At dawn Thomas moved out with the same basic plan which had worked so well the previous day. Throughout the rainy morning, the superior Federal artillery blasted away at the entire line, especially the flanks. Seeing Lee heavily engaged and believing him to be in trouble, Hood made a tactical error by moving A. J. Smith's division (formerly Cleburne's) from left to right. This seriously weakened the embattled left, where Wilson and his dismounted cavalymen finally worked their way around the flank and got astride Granny White Pike. The men on Shy's Hill were thus boxed in from three directions. When the last Confederate parapet there was leveled about 4 p. m., the Federal infantry was ordered to attack. Outnumbered, the defenders gamely held on until they were literally overrun by the mighty blue host storming up the slopes. About half of the Confederate command on Shy's Hill was wiped out before the inevitable break came. The schism quickly spread from the left into the center, until the hills and fields were filled with a muddy mass of Confederate gray streaming south toward safety. Having fought its heart out at Franklin and Nashville, the Army of Tennessee, cold and hungry, had degenerated into a mob. Hundreds of barefooted men stumbled blindly through the darkness, their footprints leaving a trail of blood down the frozen Franklin Pike. Even Hood understood now that his ambitious campaign was over. "I was seated upon my horse not far in the rear when the breach was effected," he wrote "and soon discovered that all hope to rally the troops was vain."³⁰ Commenting on this, Dyer wrote "For once Hood was clearly and unmistakably right."³¹ Ten days later

the reeling, harassed army finally stopped its flight south of the Tennessee River. The high hopes which had wafted into the autumn breezes along with the Rebel yells at Gadsden, lay strewn throughout the blood-stained hills and valleys of Middle Tennessee.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TENNESSEE CAMPAIGN

The climatic Battle of Nashville was the last engagement of material import between the Confederate and Federal armies. When the Army of Tennessee set out from Gadsden in October, it numbered approximately 35,000 troops. That number had dwindled to 15,000 when it arrived in winter quarters at Tupelo, Mississippi, two and one half months later. Its effectiveness as a fighting organization, of course, was destroyed. Only Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was left to deal with the awesome power of the Federal military might. The collapse of Hood's Tennessee Campaign meant that Sherman could immediately join Grant and together they could crush Lee at Richmond. Lee, however, seeing the uselessness of continued resistance, surrendered four months later in dignity before his army was torn to shreds.

One thing which should be said of Hood's Tennessee campaign is that it had at least a chance for success. Along with that slim chance, went several excellent opportunities which could have turned the disaster into a magnificent personal triumph for Hood. From a Confederate standpoint, the tragedy is that the affair was blundered practically from beginning to end. Hood, as Commander-in-Chief, must bear the major responsibility for the catastrophe. But had the campaign turned to his advantage on one of the lost opportunities, it is conceivable that the outcome of the Civil War would have been affected. It should be remembered that at that time a strong peace movement was under-

way throughout the North. Undoubtedly, the clamor for a negotiated peace would have increased had Hood succeeded with his original plan. Southern independence might have become a reality and the course of American history changed. When one ponders these and other possibilities growing out of the ill-fated Tennessee campaign, it is clear that Hood's effort sealed the issue once and for all.

¹Thomas Robson Hay, Hood's Tennessee Campaign (New York, 1929), 23. There is no knowledge that final plans for the invasion of Tennessee were made at the time of Davis's impulsive statements. The fact that the statements were made, however, indicates that the idea had been long entertained and discussed within the Confederate government.

²Ibid.

³William T. Sherman, Memoirs (New York, 1875), 141. Most of Sherman's information came from spies who heard the Davis speeches. Sherman concluded that the fall of Atlanta had caused Davis to lose "all sense and reason. . . He made no concealment of these vain-glorious boasts, and thus gave us the full key to his future designs."

⁴Alfred Roman, The Military Operations of General Beauregard, 2 vols. (New York, 1884), II, 281.

⁵For a small village, Gadsden had its share of Civil War activity. In May, 1863, a young citizen of fifteen years, *Emma Sansom*, led General Nathan Forrest to an abandoned ford on Black Creek to continue his pursuit of a Federal raiding party commanded by Colonel Abel Streight.

⁶John Bell Hood, Advance and Retreat, (Indiana University Press, 1959), 268. The sweep through the mountains is reminiscent of Stonewall Jackson's dramatic movements.

⁷Jefferson Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, 2 vols. (New York, 1881), II, 482-83. President Davis later denied that he approved Hood's plan.

⁸Washington B. Crumpton, A Book of Memories, 1842, 1920, (Montgomery, Alabama, 1921), 93.

⁹V. S. Murphy to Watts, Gadsden, Alabama, October 21, 1864, in the Thomas Hill Watts Official Papers, Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

¹⁰October 25, 1864, 1.

¹¹The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, XXIX, 3, 378.

¹²Sherman, op. cit., II, 162. Sherman is reported to have said: "If he (Hood) will go to the Ohio River I'll give him rations. The nearer the rebels come to us the easier it will be to kill them." Beauregard finally caught up with Hood in Tuscumbia.

¹³Roman, op. cit., II, 291-92.

¹⁴Hay, op. cit., 58 and Dyer, op. cit., 282.

¹⁵Hood, op. cit., 283.

¹⁶Sims Crowover, "The Battle of Franklin," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, Vol. XIV, December, 1955, 296.

¹⁷Horn, op. cit., 386.

¹⁸Campbell H. Brown, "To Rescue the Confederacy," Civil War Times Illustrated, Vol. III, No. 8, December, 1964, 44; Hay, op. cit., 83.

¹⁹Hood, op. cit., 284-86. Hood is in error when he claims that at 3 p. m. and two miles away he could see Federal troops and wagons moving up the pike. The pike was clear at this time, Wagner having passed hours earlier, and Schofield was still near Columbia.

²⁰Quoted in Stanley Horn, The Army of Tennessee (New York, 1941), 286.

²¹Edwin L. Drake, The Annals of the Army of Tennessee, (Nashville, 1878), 49-50.

²²Ibid., 50. Horn, op. cit., 390, quotes from an unpublished manuscript of Major Campbell Brown, Spring Hill, Tennessee, who told of a conversation with Governor Harris on May 5, 1868.

²³392.

²⁴Irvin A. Buck, Cleburne and His Command (Jackson, Tennessee, 1959), 280.

²⁵Cleburne, who was killed while personally directing his men in a charge, had reined in his horse at the little Episcopal Church at Ashwood the previous day. There for long minutes he admired the Gothic structure and quiet burial ground, and remarked that it was "almost worth dying for, to be buried in such a spot." It was there that he was first buried. Buck, op. cit., 280.

²⁶Hay, op. cit., 130.

²⁷Dr. J. W. Harmon "Memoirs," 60.

²⁸Quoted in Horn, op. cit., 415.

²⁹The hill was named for Colonel William Shy who commanded the forces there. Colonel Shy was killed with a shot in the head as the Federal troops gained the hill's crest in the late afternoon.

³⁰Hood, op. cit., 303

³¹301.

