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'HE WAS SO WELL PROVIDED FOR THAT HE
COULD SWEEP THE WORLD FOR GAIN': THE
SUPPLY OF SHERMAN'S ARMIES DURING THE
ATLANTA CAMPAIGN, 1864

Jack Britton McCarley



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"HE WAS SO WELL PROVIDED FOR THAT HE COULD SWEEP THE WORLD FOR GAIN";

THE SUPPLY OF SHERMAN'S ARMIES DURING THE ATLANTA CAMPAIGN, 1864

A THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the
Degree Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University

1982

By

Jack Britton McCarley

Director

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FOREWORD

The following study is in some ways not a traditional treatment of the American Civil War. Consequently, it is the purpose of this introduction to prepare any potential reader for what lies ahead. Civil War historians have long written of the "American Iliad," as it is sometimes called, as if it simply appeared, from a military perspective, out of nowhere, with no preceding experiences which influenced its course nor any consequences which resulted from it. In short, "tunnel vision" has been a characteristic trait of many chroniclers of the War of the Rebellion.

This work, therefore, attempts to go beyond the usual limits of Civil War history to examine what effects the preceding three hundred years of European and American military history had on the effort of General William Tecumseh Sherman to feed, clothe, arm, and accoutre his bluecoats during the Atlanta Campaign of 1864. And further, the results of this experience on later attempts by Americans and Europeans to feed their armies in time of war are briefly traced through World War One, when all western armies came to rely on their own internally administered and organized supply systems to fill their armies' material needs.

Because this study endeavors to take the so-called long view of the Atlanta Campaign and how it fits into the whole of western military history, it may be helpful to read it in a certain order.. Read the first chapter in its entirety, and then peruse the last four pages of the text. In this way, the long view will become apparent. Next, go back and read all of

chapters two through six. The result should be a much clearer understanding of the supply of Sherman's armies during the Atlanta Campaign.

And finally, to all but the most dedicated of military historians, a logistical study would seem to be endlessly boring and inconsequential. In truth, however, logistics or supply has had more effect on military history than is commonly recognized, and the first few pages of chapter one should firmly establish that fact. Hence, it is a further purpose of this work to dispel some of the widely held myths concerning the way in which Sherman's blue columns were provisioned on their march to Atlanta and how the ultimate Union victory was in one way at least due greatly to a superb supply network.

To Mr. Grant, whose consistent help and advisement over the years has proved invaluable

To Mr. Marshall, whose keen eye was greatly appreciated

To all my teachers, who taught me how and why

To the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Georgia, whose generous scholarship provided the necessary funds

And to all those whose labor and thoughts have contributed more than mere words can convey

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	

To my parents, who made it all possible

To June, who is making and will make it all possible

To Willie, who discovered my interest, and to Danny, who nurtured it

To the "crew," who understand the period and its people

To Dr. Grant, whose consistent help and advisement over the years
has proved invaluable

To Dr. Matthews, whose keen eye was greatly appreciated

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As examination of the successful Union system reveals that it was based on centuries of military experiences, and its background should be explored in order to understand more fully its operation.

In his *The Art of War* (1848), Henri Antoine Jomini, the French military historian-theorist who greatly influenced Civil War generals, set forth the five "primary military" branches of war. They were: strategy, grand tactics, engineering, tactics, and logistics.¹ Of these, the last, logistics, has received the least amount of attention from military historians, most of whom may be grouped in the traditional "line and trumpet" school of military writers, whose imagination is not readily engaged by the seemingly "dry as dust" problems of logistics.

The term logistics, which can be freely interchanged with supply, is derived from the Greek word *logistikos*, meaning "skilled in calculation," and in Roman and Byzantine times, there was an army official known as the *logista*, whose duties involved a great deal of mathematical calculation.

¹Henri Antoine de Jomini, *The Art of War* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1848), v. II.

²Ibid.

³Robert M. Gaskely and Richard M. Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1945 United States in World War II Series* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1959), p. 3.

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

An important factor in the victory of William Tecumseh Sherman in the Atlanta Campaign in 1864 was his ability to supply his three Union armies. Without the logistical system devised by Sherman and his staff, the fate of the Confederate forces would have been much longer in doubt. An examination of the successful Union system reveals that it was based on centuries of military experiences, and its background should be explored in order to understand more fully its operation.

In his The Art of War (1838), Henri Antoine Jomini, the French military historian-theoretician who greatly influenced Civil War generals, set forth the five "purely military"¹ branches of war. They were: strategy, grand tactics, engineering, tactics, and logistics.² Of these, the last, logistics, has received the least amount of attention from military historians, most of whom may be grouped in the traditional "drum and trumpet" school of military writers, whose imagination is not readily engaged by the seemingly "dry as dust" concerns of logistics.

The term logistics, which may be freely interchanged with supply, is derived from the Greek word logistikos, meaning "skilled in calculation." And in Roman and Byzantine times, there was an army official known as the logista, whose duties involved a great deal of mathematical calculation.³

¹Henri Antoine de Jomini, The Art of War (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1862), p. 11.

²Ibid.

³Robert W. Coakely and Richard M. Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943 United States in World War II Series (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1955), p. 3.

After centuries of subsequent development, the expression today embraces the area not only of supply but also of transportation, hospitalization and evacuation, service, and a host of other functions which provide for an army's material needs.⁴

Most military historians, however, write as if armies were somehow automatically and magically clothed, armed, and fed. James A. Huston, one of the few military historians to deal with the question of supply in United States military history, wrote:

Too often in military history one is disposed to follow in close detail the movements of corps and divisions and companies on the battlefield without inquiring how they got there. Great armies appear, fullblown, from nowhere, do battle, then disappear. If they are brought to life, we must see how they lived.⁵

In a recent revisionist work by Martin Van Creveld entitled Supplying War: Logistics From Wallenstein to Patton, the author dealt more directly with the traditional neglect shown to logistical matters:

While absolutely basic, this kind of calculation does not appeal to the imagination, which may be one reason why it is so often ignored by military historians. The result is that, on the pages of military history books, armies frequently seem capable of moving in any direction at almost any speed and to almost any distance once their commanders have made up their minds to do so. In reality, they cannot, and failure to take cognizance of the fact has probably led to many more campaigns being ruined than ever were by enemy action.⁶

⁴James A. Huston, The Sinews of War: Army Logistics, 1775-1953 Army Historical Series (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1966), p. viii. Hereinafter cited as Huston, Sinews.

⁵Ibid., p. ix.

⁶Martin Van Creveld, Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 1-2. Hereinafter cited as Van Creveld, Supplying War.

Given this traditional neglect of supply, it is time for military historians to begin to look at what factors limit an army's operations, that is, how it is supplied while moving, and how the course of the campaign is affected by the success or failure of the supply arrangements.⁷ Thus, with these considerations in mind, it is the purpose of this study to examine the most successful of all logistical efforts in the Civil War--the Atlanta Campaign--and the developments in preceding centuries which paved the way to Sherman's masterpiece of supply during the summer of 1864.

In order to understand the technological and organizational factors which determined the course of supply efforts during the Civil War, it is necessary to look at some previous successful and unsuccessful supply attempts in European and American military history. During the seventeenth century, well-developed bureaucratic states did not exist in Europe. Therefore, armies were not provisioned by magazines established for the storage and issuance of supplies, because these structures required a great deal of administrative and organizational talents, both of which were absent in that period. Instead, they lived by purchasing or requisitioning provisions from the countryside. Under this system, commissaries attached directly to the army were sent out to organize the resources of a town or region so that the supplies were ready for the troops when they arrived. Also, sutlers contracted with the armies to provide certain material items and eventually to supply arms, food, and fodder, the cost of which was deducted from the soldiers' pay. In many cases, wars were begun for the primary purpose of moving an army out of its own country

⁷Ibid., p. 3.

and into that of an enemy, in order to live off his resources. In most movements, armies were tied to major rivers for transportation, primarily because it was easier to move bulky supplies by water than overland in wagons. Throughout the centuries prior to the American Civil War, the quantity of ammunition carried on a campaign was not critical, because battles were so infrequent that large stocks of shot, shell, musket balls, and gunpowder were not needed.⁸ The best practitioners of this general supply system were the Swedish general Gustavus Adolphus, the Imperial commander A. W. von Wallenstein, and Maurice of Nassau.⁹

The system for supplying the needs of armies in the eighteenth century did not change markedly. Usually, a letter threatening destruction of the town was sent by a general prior to the arrival of his troops. Fully believing the commander's threat, the townspeople hurriedly gathered the "requested" provisions. Although payment was not assured, usually the supplies were paid for in cash when the army arrived. Afterwards, the troops were quartered in the town until the fodder, which was always quickly exhausted, ran out. Then the army gathered in what provisions remained and moved on to a new town. During these marches, a regular transport service was not used because wagons were supplied by contract or carts were requisitioned from peasants. As in the previous century, water transportation, for which barges were primarily used, was vital. This logistical system worked so well and so easily that it was not until 1783 that the first army-organized supply corps was set up by the Austrians. They turned to this arrangement only because their troops, like most soldiers in the

⁸Ibid., pp. 35, 57, 63.

⁹Ibid., pp. 7-13.

eighteenth century, tended to be "the scum of the earth, enlisted for drink,"¹⁰ often deserted when assigned to supply parties sent to scour the countryside for provisions. One of the most prevalent myths about armies of this period is that they lived off supplies stored in magazines. Only about ten percent of an army's commissary needs were supplied by magazines, because lengthy storage of food and fodder was not feasible and transportation was not organized well enough to deliver the provisions to the army in the field quickly or efficiently. The other ninety percent of an army's commissary requirements were provided by purchase or direct requisition when on the march.¹¹

Less than a century later, the Atlanta Campaign of 1864 was nearly a complete break with that earlier supply system. With the exception of forage, which was gathered in tremendous quantities from the local countryside by both the Union and Confederate armies, General Sherman's armies lived off the great chain of supply bases from Louisville, Kentucky to Nashville and Chattanooga, Tennessee, all of which were connected by railroads. Also, the Atlanta Campaign is particularly noteworthy for the astonishingly large amount of ammunition that was used. The recently developed rifled-musket and rifled artillery and the daily contact of the opposing forces which characterized the campaign caused the great increase in ammunition expenditure over previous centuries.

The earlier campaigns of Napoleon Bonaparte, however, produced some important changes in logistics. Beginning in 1805, Napoleon bypassed his regular supply organization and communicated directly with his corps commanders

¹⁰Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 17-34.

concerning matters of supply and transportation. Corps staff officers with the titles of ordonnateur and commissionnaire de guerre were responsible for the procurement of provisions.¹² Usually monetary contributions were levied for the purchase of supplies which were collected in advance along the army's line of march. Receipts were given which could be redeemed at a later date when they were presented to French authorities. In addition, baggage was kept to a minimum, even for officers. With this streamlined system, Napoleon's armies made very rapid marches, which contributed significantly to their success on the battlefield.¹³

Each marshal practiced a great deal of personal freedom in feeding his troops along the line of march by using his ordonnateur to organize a region's resources. Thus, local authorities were told how much supplies they were to deliver to Napoleon's troops and their animals and where to deliver them.¹⁴ This system worked well as long as the French marched through rich agricultural land. During the campaigns in Poland, Spain, and Russia, however, the French troops experienced much hardship because of the poor farms of those countries.¹⁵

The most thoroughly planned of Napoleon's military adventures was the invasion of Russia in 1812. Because of his experiences in Poland, Napoleon organized a transport service for his army which was intended primarily to carry food. He even went so far as to stockpile rations in anticipation

¹²Ibid., p. 43.

¹³Ibid., pp. 73-74.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 52-53.

¹⁵David Chandler, The Art of Warfare in the Age of Marlborough (New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1976), p. 129.

of the approaching campaign. Despite his extensive preparations, Napoleon's supply system broke down in Russia for a variety of reasons. First, French army wagons were too heavy for the primitive roads of Russia, which were turned into virtual quagmires by heavy thunderstorms. Second, the Vilnya River, which the French planned as a supply route, proved to be too shallow. Third, lax discipline led to wanton plundering of supplies from the countryside rather than orderly and systematic requisitioning. Fourth, as a result of the plundering, local inhabitants fled before the advancing French troops and could not be hired for supply administration purposes as was customary. And fifth, the retreating Russian forces destroyed anything that could be used by the advancing French. Even though this campaign was well provided for in advance, it could not succeed without the availability of local supplies.¹⁶

The military exploits of Napoleon in Russia in 1812 had some similarities and some marked differences to Sherman's march to Atlanta. Like Napoleon, Sherman began his campaign with enormous stockpiles of provisions which could be drawn on during the campaign. And, rainy weather caused the supply wagons of both of these great commanders to become mired down in muddy roads. Sherman, however, could rely on railroads to keep his troops supplied and moving forward despite the weather. On one occasion though, during June, 1864, weather brought the Union forces in Georgia to a halt, and despite the railroad, they had to wait for the onset of good weather before resuming the campaign. Napoleon had no choice but to wait for drier weather to resume his march to Moscow.

¹⁶Van Creveld, Supplying War, pp. 61-65.

The problem of rain affected the two campaigns differently. As Napoleon's troops advanced farther and farther into Russia and their supply system became more and more strained, discipline broke down and plundering for provisions ensued. Though Sherman's men plundered some, examples of this conduct were few, and the perpetrators were usually caught and dealt with severely by officers. As the Russian troops withdrew before the French in 1812, they destroyed much that could have been of use to Napoleon. General Joseph E. Johnston's army in Georgia did the same as Sherman advanced, but the practice was not as widespread or as thorough because the Union advance was too rapid to permit complete destruction of crops, the railroad, and other useful resources.

Napoleon's troops and those of Sherman relied on local supplies of fodder to supplement their respective armies' issue of forage. Unlike Napoleon, however, Sherman was travelling through largely undeveloped land enabling the Union forces to procure enough fodder on nearby farms to meet their needs. Both the French and the Union armies issued receipts for their requisitions, but Sherman never resorted to direct levies of money as did Napoleon.

It thus appears that the European tradition of supply during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was one primarily of organized plunder. Instead of relying on a supply apparatus organized and administered by their own armies, commanders either took or bought what they needed from local inhabitants. This practice was made necessary by the lack of well-developed bureaucracies in the nations of Europe and was made possible by the fact that much of the continent had been farmed for centuries and food was in abundance, with countries like Poland and Spain being the exception.

American Civil War commanders were familiar with these European military experiences and were influenced by them. In addition, the logistical efforts in several American military campaigns were studied. These efforts should be examined in order to understand the conditions under which American armies labored during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For the most part they were determined by the fact that, beginning in earliest colonial times and extending well into the nineteenth century, the fairly well populated coastal areas furnished the provisions of war, and the roads in this region were serviceable. In the interior, however, a near virgin wilderness with very few roads and mostly dirt tracks existed, severely limiting the size of armies.¹⁷

The British Saratoga Campaign, one of the most important movements in the American Revolution, lasted from early summer through early fall of 1777. It was designed to permit the British to cut off the seat of rebellion in New England by advancing south from Montreal and seizing the Hudson River valley. The principal British army in the operation, which involved a three-pronged drive to secure the Hudson, was that of General John Burgoyne. Opposing him were the Continental forces under General Phillip Schuyler. Considering his line of march through the wilderness of northeastern New York, Burgoyne's supply arrangements were imbalanced. He had too much baggage and too little transportation, thus diminishing his mobility severely. As one military historian, Don Higginbotham, wrote:

There was the cumbersome 138-piece artillery train, most of which might profitably have been left in Canada; the seemingly endless string of baggage

¹⁷Maurice Matloff, ed., American Military History Army Historical Series (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, rev. ed., 1973), p. 38.

vehicles, actually two-wheeled carts made of unseasoned wood, over thirty of them laden with Burgoyne's resplendent wardrobe and store of champagne; and the usual horde of women, children, dogs, and sutlers.¹⁸

As a result, Burgoyne's progress southward was slow, and his army consumed its supplies too quickly.

The British began auspiciously by capturing Fort Ticonderoga and with it a large quantity of supplies, but thereafter the campaign did not go in their favor. At one point, they were forced to send a mounted raid into Vermont to secure badly needed provisions and animals. Burgoyne's basic problem was that as he advanced southward, his supply line lengthened and his undersized and poorly equipped transportation system could not bring forward the needed provisions. Schuyler, on the other hand, began collecting supplies for the expected invasion from Canada as early as the fall of 1776. In addition, the timely arrival of shipments of French muskets, uniforms, artillery, gunpowder, and tents contributed tremendously to American victory in the campaign.¹⁹ Also, the American logistical network worked as well in the Saratoga Campaign as at any time during the war. The supplies that were collected the previous fall and the French equipment proved sufficient to keep the northern army amply provided for.²⁰

Before the campaign ended, General Horatio Gates replaced Schuyler, and the American force grew to 23,000 with the arrival of thousands of militia. Thus, when Burgoyne surrendered his force on October 18, 1777, his supply had not only failed but he was outnumbered by three-to-one. In

¹⁸Don Higginbotham, The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789 The Wars of the United States Series (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), p. 188.

¹⁹Huston, Sinews, pp. 48, 57.

²⁰Ibid., p. 57.

the Saratoga Campaign, the British opted for an overland march through the wilderness of upper New York, rather than the usual method of using their control of the sea to launch and provide for a campaign, a decision which cost them an army.²¹

Though Sherman's march to Atlanta was not conducted in the same kind of wilderness as Burgoyne's Saratoga Campaign, the Union commander was also operating in an underdeveloped region. Unlike Burgoyne, Sherman was able to handle the situation by utilizing a vast network of railroads, which in all fairness to Burgoyne were not available in his time, by bringing along enough wagons to transport his provisions, and by putting all excess baggage in storage.

The late 1780s and early 1790s furnish another example of military action with significant logistical features. During the early years of this period, settlers began to move into the Northwest Territory in large numbers to carve farms for themselves out of this frontier wilderness. As a result, the Indians and the frontiersmen clashed, indiscriminate killing by both sides followed, and the United States government opted for war against the Indians to settle the issue. The first expedition set out in September, 1790 under the command of Colonel Josiah Harmer, whose troops were primarily militiamen from Kentucky and Pennsylvania with a small contingent of Regulars. His objective was to strike the Indians in the upper Maumee and Wabash valleys. Harmer's supply system was ruined by a combination of human negligence and bad weather. Contractors failed to deliver supplies; militiamen came to camp without the provisions that were supposed to be furnished by their state governments;

²¹Ibid., p. 83.

and frost killed the standing grass that was intended for the horses of the pack train. These logistical defects seriously hindered the campaign and resulted in two defeats for Harmar in October near present-day Fort Wayne, Indiana, ending the government's first attempt to subdue the Indians.²²

The next punitive expedition began in August, 1791 with territorial governor Arthur St. Clair in command. His goal was to construct a string of military posts deep into Indian country, stretching northward from his base of operations at Fort Washington near Cincinnati, Ohio. Again, logistical support was faulty, and St. Clair was not a strong enough leader to overcome the difficulties. The Army's quartermaster for the campaign was Samuel Hodgdon, who did not arrive until September 10, after the fighting had begun, and who was guilty of "mismanagement and negligence"²³ throughout, according to James H. Huston. As in Harmar's previous campaign, the late arrival of supplies and poorly trained and equipped reinforcements, the added strain of the many camp followers on the limited provisions, the cold weather which again killed the standing forage, and the lack of troop discipline combined seriously to impede the ability of St. Clair to move his troops effectively and efficiently in the wilderness conditions. After establishing Fort Hamilton on the banks of the Miami River to serve as his forward depot, St. Clair marched farther northward and built Fort Jefferson in late October. But when the Indians defeated the American troops on November 3, St. Clair was forced to retreat to Fort Washington. The disaster

²²Ibid., p. 87. Francis Paul Prucha, The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783-1846 The Wars of the United States Series (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969), pp. 17-22. Hereinafter cited as Prucha, Sword.

²³Huston, Sinews, p. 88.

resulted in a committee of inquiry convened by the House of Representatives, which exonerated St. Clair but placed much of the blame for the defeat on the Quartermaster Department.²⁴

The Army was expanded in 1792 and given a new designation, the Legion of the United States. General Anthony Wayne, who made a name for himself in the Revolution, accepted command of the Legion, and he began to assemble and train his troops during the summer of 1792. Drilling his troops incessantly for the next two years, Wayne gathered supplies and improved his lines of communication. Secretary of War Henry Knox even went so far as to recommend that beef cattle be used as pack animals to transport rations. As the food off their backs was eaten, they could be slaughtered and consumed; in essence, they would serve as walking meat rations. Wayne and his quartermaster, however, rejected the idea.²⁵ Still, after two years of preparation, Wayne was not able to accumulate enough rations at his forward base at Fort Greenville to begin a campaign.

After fruitless negotiations with the Indians and facing the possibility of another march in fall weather, which contributed to the defeat of both Harmar and St. Clair, Wayne launched his campaign during the summer of 1794. Along his line of march, he built Forts Recovery and Defiance to cover his rear and facilitate the northward flow of supplies. Wayne finally cornered the Indians on August 20 in a wooded area northwest of Fort Defiance on the Maumee River, where a tornado had uprooted the trees. The resulting Battle of Fallen Timbers eliminated the Indian threat in the

²⁴Ibid., pp. 87-88. Prucha, Sword, pp. 22-28.

²⁵Prucha, Sword, p. 33.

Northwest Territory, and the Treaty of Greenville, signed in 1795, officially ended the conflict.²⁶

As pointed out, the first two expeditions under Harmar and St. Clair met with defeat because of a combination of bad weather, the wilderness conditions in the Northwest Territory, and negligence on the part of contractors, state governments, and the Quartermaster Department in providing rations and equipment. Wayne, however, avoided a similar fate by patience and diligence in training and providing for his troops. And he had the good sense to conduct the campaign during the summer, when he did not have to worry about frost killing the standing forage. The result was the victory at Fallen Timbers.

Like Wayne, Sherman spent months meticulously planning and preparing for his march to Atlanta. He was also aided by a first-rate quartermaster in the person of Lieutenant-Colonel James L. Donaldson. One of the keys to Wayne's success was the string of forts constructed to protect his supply line. Similarly, Sherman's ultimate victory was due in part to the fortifications which protected his railroad supply line.

The Creek War of 1813-1814 was an obscure but important part of the War of 1812 and offers some useful insights into the role of the individual in overcoming a potentially disastrous logistical situation. The harsh treatment of a group of Creeks who, on their return from Canada, killed several white frontiersmen proved to be the spark that touched off a smouldering situation and resulted in the split of the Creek Nation and its plunge into civil war in 1812. The United States became involved when on August 30, 1813, white settlers at Fort Mims in the Mississippi Territory

²⁶Ibid., pp. 28-42. Huston, Sinews, pp. 88-89.

north of Mobile were massacred by members of one of the warring Creek factions. In the meantime, the United States entered into conflict with the British. It was commonly believed by many Americans that any British landing on the Gulf Coast would find willing and able allies in the Creeks. Therefore, the decision was made to launch a campaign to subdue the Creeks. The first two expeditions, one moving from Georgia and the other from the western portion of the Mississippi Territory, ended in failure because of supply difficulties. The next attempt was made by General Andrew Jackson.

On October 4, 1813, Jackson began to raise a militia force to tame the Creeks. The expedition marched southward and reached the Tennessee River near Huntsville, where a supply depot appropriately named Fort Deposit was built. When supplies did not come, Jackson sent Major William B. Lewis, his quartermaster, back to Nashville, Tennessee to move the provisions along. Lewis found that food was not arriving as planned because its procurement was handled on a contract basis. This arrangement did not work satisfactorily during the War of 1812.²⁷ In the meantime, Jackson turned the troops loose to live off the villages of friendly Indians.²⁸ With fall coming to an end, "a less ambitious and cautious commander," wrote Robert V. Remini, "might have paused before leading a winter campaign across the Lookout Mountains in Alabama, particularly when he had neither sufficient supplies nor any organized commissary to obtain them. Not Jackson. He could not wait."²⁹ Jackson marched his troops deeper

²⁷Huston, Sinews, p. 103.

²⁸Robert V. Remini, Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767-1821 (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1977), p. 192. Hereinafter cited as Remini, Course.

²⁹Ibid.

into wilderness territory and established Fort Strother as a base of operations on the Coosa River. Two quick victories over the Creeks followed at Tallushatchee and Talladega in early November.

With the onset of cold weather, the low level of the Tennessee River prevented the arrival of supplies from Nashville. As a result, Jackson again subsisted his troops off the countryside, and the wilderness they were in provided very little food.³⁰ Also, the enlistments of many volunteers were running out, and they were determined to return home, where food and winter clothing awaited them. Brandishing a musket and threatening to shoot the first man who tried to leave, Jackson "convinced" his soldiers to remain despite their expired enlistments.

Finally on November 17, after continued grumbling from the troops, Old Hickory agreed to take the militia contingent of his force and march to Fort Deposit to check on the supply situation, while the volunteers remained at Fort Strother to keep the dying ember of the campaign alight. After only a few miles march, Jackson and the militia met the long-awaited supply column, and the men gorged themselves on the beef and flour which were meant for the entire command. After marching back to the fort and telling of the feast, the volunteers threatened mutiny because they had not benefited from the unexpected meal. Again, Jackson threatened to shoot the mutineers in order to gain control of the situation.³¹

From the middle of November on, the flow of supplies to Fort Strother was regular, thanks to the efforts of Major Lewis back in Nashville. The situation improved steadily, and by February, 1814 the arrival of fresh

³⁰Huston, Sinews, p. 111.

³¹Remini, Course, p. 198.

volunteers from Tennessee together with the addition of the 39th United States Infantry brought Jackson's force up to 5,000. Not wishing to lose this advantage, Old Hickory began the offensive which culminated in the total defeat of the Creeks at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend on March 27. The resulting Treaty of Fort Jackson, signed on August 9, ended the Creek War.

In Andrew Jackson's case, the force of will cannot be denied. He decided that his campaign against the Creeks would succeed despite the fact that it was plagued by supply problems, forced to move through an untouched wilderness while literally hacking out a line of march, and threatened by several mutinies; and it did!

Jackson used his great willpower to keep his campaign going. With it he overcame tremendous adversities. Sherman used his own forceful personality in a different way to achieve the same end as Jackson. Final authority concerning all quartermaster duties and all matters relating to the military railroads rested with Sherman. In essence, Sherman used his force of will to prevent adversity from occurring.

During the Mexican War of 1846-1847, the march of General Zachary Taylor's army into northern Mexico was one of the most successful and innovative examples of logistical support prior to the Civil War. The campaign took place in the vicinity of the Rio Grande River and southwestward to the Mexican towns of Monterrey and Saltillo. On June 14, 1845, at the behest of the federal government, General Taylor began to transfer his troops, whose personal baggage allowance was severely limited during the entire campaign, from Fort Jesup on the Louisiana frontier to the Gulf coast of Texas, there to back up President James K. Polk's assurances of protection

from Mexico for Texas which was recently annexed by the United States. After embarking at New Orleans, the bulk of Taylor's troops travelled aboard steamships and sailing vessels to Corpus Christi at the mouth of the Neuces River, while the dragoons (soldiers who travelled on horseback and fought primarily on foot) rode overland through San Antonio to rendezvous with the rest of the command. By late August, all of Taylor's soldiers had arrived, and reinforcements joining them in September brought his strength up to 4,000. Corpus Christi was occupied for seven months, and the job at hand, according to James A. Huston, was "immediate supply for the troops and the build-up of the stores and transportation facilities for the support of possible military operations."³²

When negotiations with Mexico broke down in January, 1846, President Polk ordered Taylor to secure the Rio Grande which Texas claimed as its southern boundary. The two hundred mile sun-baked trek to Port Isabel, at the mouth of the Rio Grande, began on March 8, while supply ships preceded the troops and unloaded provisions to set up a supply base. After the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma in early May and a quarrel with the Quartermaster Department over the absence of pontoon bridging equipment, Taylor finally invaded Mexico proper by seizing Matamoros on the south side of the Rio Grande on May 18, five days after war was declared by Congress. This city was quickly developed into the Army's principal supply depot in northern Mexico, while the offensive to capture Monterrey, one hundred and thirty miles distant by way of Camargo on the San Juan, was planned. From mid-July till the end of August, the supplies to fuel this operation

³²Huston, Sinews, p. 138. K. Jack Bauer, The Mexican War, 1846-1848 The Wars of the United States Series (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1974, p. 89. Hereinafter cited as Bauer, Mexican.

arrived steadily, but the influx of reinforcements put a strain on Taylor's provisions.³³

On August 19, the march to Monterrey began when the army advanced to Camargo, where an advanced depot was established. Because of the shallowness of the Gulf around the mouth of the Rio Grande, shallow-draft vessels had to be used to ferry provisions to the barrier islands just offshore. From there, they were conveyed by small schooners and wagons to Matamoros where the river steamers transported them upriver to Camargo. This was the first use of such river vessels by the Army in supplying its troops. A year earlier, General Thomas S. Jesup, Quartermaster General of the Army, suggested the construction of a railroad to connect the Brazos River, farther north on the Texas coast, with the Rio Grande. There is no doubt that this railroad would have worked miracles in supplying Taylor's army, but the proposal was not followed through because of the lack of funds. Becoming impatient with the slowness of the Quartermaster Department in stockpiling provisions for this offensive against Monterrey, Taylor sent some of his own staff officers back to the United States to purchase or charter more steamboats to shuttle supplies from Matamoros to Camargo. They returned with 12 of these vessels, and by late July the flow of provisions was sufficient not only to provide for Taylor's army but also to prepare for a march farther into Mexico.³⁴

The only problem holding the army back was the lack of enough mules and wagons for overland transportation of supplies. Because the wagons were of several types and thus could not be cannibalized for spare parts

³³Huston, Sinews, pp. 138-140.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 140-141.

when they broke down, only 180 of them were used. As a result, 1,900 packmules, each with a carrying capacity of 300 pounds, were used as the principal means of transporting provisions. These animals had quite a variety of items to carry: "tents, tentpoles, kettles, mess pans, axes, picks, coffee mills, ammunition chests, and all the other gear,"³⁵ as well as extra rations not carried by the men. Due to the relatively small number of packmules and the arid and barren country between Monterrey and Saltillo, which contained only small amounts of standing forage, the size of Taylor's force was limited to 6,000, most of which was infantry. Along the line of march, the only commodity that was in abundance was beef, which was purchased from the inhabitants. Flour to be issued as the bread ration was carried by the pack animals and wagons. All the preparations were arranged by the regimental quartermasters, whose additional duties entailed "buying forage, distributing clothing to the men, buying fresh food to supplement the ration, and keeping the regimental accounts."³⁶ After a short march from Camargo to Cerralva, during which additional provisions were gathered locally, Taylor was ready to move against Monterrey on September 12.³⁷

The army arrived at Monterrey on September 19, and after five days of fighting, the Mexicans were forced to retreat. Taylor's next objective, the city of San Luis Potosí, was roughly two hundred and fifty miles south of Monterrey. In thinking over the possibility of marching there, Taylor admitted, "the great question of supplies necessarily controls all the operations in a

³⁵Ibid., p. 143.

³⁶Ibid., p. 142.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 141-142.

country like this."³⁸ The region that would have to be marched through was barren and offered no provisions for local procurement. To attempt such an operation would necessitate a force of 20,000 men, half of them Regulars, to be able to guard the doubled length of the supply line and to do battle with the Mexican Army at the same time.

The next and last major engagement for Taylor's army was on February 22 and 23, 1847. In the Battle of Buena Vista, the Mexican Army of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna was defeated and retreated through the same unfertile country to San Luis Potosí that Taylor had contemplated traversing. In the process, Santa Anna's soldiers suffered miserably from lack of provisions. This example and the habit of regular Mexican cavalry and mounted partisan units of attacking pack trains on the extended American supply lines convinced Taylor to remain in the vicinity of Monterrey and Saltillo. Had he made the attempt to march to Mexico City, his supply line would have stretched for over one thousand miles back to Camargo. Instead of trying to carry out such an impossible operation, Taylor advocated holding a defensive line in northern Mexico while Mexico City was taken by way of Vera Cruz, which was done by General Winfield Scott.³⁹

Throughout General Zachary Taylor's campaign in Mexico, the American troops under his command were well uniformed, equipped, armed, and fed. And when compared to some of the United States Army's previous logistical efforts (i.e., Harmar's and St. Clair's expeditions and the early stages of the Creek War), the achievement seems even greater. The steam vessels

³⁸Ibid., p. 144.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 143-144. Bauer, Mexican, pp. 218-221.

and packmules employed in the Mexican War were also novel features in logistical support.⁴⁰

Taylor's use of steamboats for supply in northern Mexico presaged their successful use by Sherman during the Atlanta Campaign. Also, Taylor employed the Mexican towns of Camargo and Monterrey as temporary depots in advance of the main depot at Matamoros. This arrangement was very similar to the depot system used by Sherman in 1864. But, as well as Taylor's troops were supplied, Sherman would do better.

The logistical aspects of the campaigns in Europe during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries were limited primarily by such factors as the transportation systems available and the distribution of rich farming regions. Armies tended to follow the course of navigable rivers because the river vessels available during those centuries could carry much larger quantities of supplies than wagons travelling overland. When not following major rivers, these same armies by necessity campaigned in areas where food was plentiful.

Similar factors limited military operations in North America. For most of the period under consideration, American armies marched and fought in untouched wilderness, where the modes of transportation severely limited their movements. For instance, Burgoyne attempted to traverse the unsettled wilds of northern New York with too much baggage and too little reliable transportation. As a result, his army could not sustain itself and was forced to surrender. On the other hand, the American Generals Schuyler and Gates drew on stockpiled provisions from the well-developed

⁴⁰Ibid., Huston, Sinews, pp. 144-146.

lower Hudson Valley, and they triumphed. The first two expeditions against the Indians in the Northwest Territory failed primarily because not enough attention was given to supplying troops as they marched through the wilderness. The campaign directed by Wayne succeeded because he gave much attention to provisioning and training his troops. The early stages of Jackson's march against the Creeks were plagued by massive supply problems resulting from the difficulties inherent in providing logistical support over hundreds of miles in undeveloped territory. Through this troubled period, Old Hickory kept his army together as much by personal intervention and sheer will as anything. When the supply problem cleared up, total victory over the Creeks resulted. Taylor's campaign in Mexico was unique in several respects. Transportation technology, which had not advanced beyond the use of horses, wagons, and sailing ships for centuries, had so advanced that an army could be kept well fed, clothed, and armed even in the inhospitable environs of northern Mexico. Ocean-going steamships and shallow-draft river steamboats made much of this logistical success possible. And the innovative use of the packmule to transport supplies overland was an equally important component in providing for Taylor's army.

The Atlanta Campaign incorporated many elements from earlier campaigns. For instance, much reliance was placed on river transportation of supplies which was done by the relatively new and roomy steamboats. Since the campaign took place in an underdeveloped region with no navigable rivers, railroads were used to carry supplies as far forward as possible. From the nearest railhead, the shipment of provisions to the front was completed in the traditional army supply wagon. Sherman himself was in overall control of the entire supply system, and his months of preparation did as much

as battle to secure victory.

In war, regardless of how good a general may be in terms of strategy and tactics, if he cannot fill the material needs of his troops, he cannot be successful. As James A. Huston noted:

the evidence seems to point to the really great logistician as being the commander who has the judgement--indeed the genius--to take into account realistically all available resources, at home, in the theater, or wherever they are found, and to balance his requirements and his mission so that his objective may be gained in the least possible time with the least possible loss of men and supplies.⁴¹

The more immediate problem and indeed "the final measure of achievement," Huston continued, "must be the success with which men and materiel are delivered to the fighting front."⁴² In light of this evaluation, and the European and American supply efforts discussed earlier, the degree of success of General William T. Sherman's logistics in the Atlanta Campaign will be determined.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 153.

⁴²Ibid., p. 154.

CHAPTER II

"SHERMAN WILL MOVE IF HE HAS TO EAT HIS MULES,"

SEPTEMBER 19, 1863 - MAY 5, 1864

Though the Atlanta Campaign began on May 5, 1864, the logistical preparations that assured success for Sherman's armies commenced during the late summer of 1863. The Battle of Chickamauga on September 19-20 of that year ended in defeat for the Union Army of the Cumberland under Major-General William S. Rosecrans, whose troops, save a rearguard contingent under the personal command of Major-General George H. Thomas, retreated headlong northward the few miles to Chattanooga, which they had captured only a few days before. There they were put under siege by the Confederate Army of Tennessee commanded by General Braxton Bragg, the victor at Chickamauga.¹

The situation quickly became critical. Though "forage and subsistence for some time still remained in the wagons"² of Rosecrans' army, he had to feed roughly 45,000 men, 3,000 wounded soldiers, and some 50,000 horses and mules. In the haste of the retreat from Chickamauga, the troops' blankets and overcoats had been left behind, and cold weather was approaching. The Union supply line, the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, had been interrupted by Confederate cavalry, thus necessitating an overland route to the farthest point southward from Nashville that the railroad reached.

¹Mark M. Boatner, III, The Civil War Dictionary (New York: David McKay Company, 1959), pp. 149-153. Hereinafter cited as Boatner, Dictionary.

²The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (128 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. 3, Vol. IV, p. 879. Hereinafter cited as OR, and series, volume, and part numbers will be given as an arabic numeral for the first, a roman numeral for the second, and an arabic numeral for the third, with the page number as an arabic numeral.

The route chosen extended sixty miles through the Sequatchie and Tennessee Valleys and over Walden's Ridge, a very difficult way for wagons even in the best of weather. The onset of fall rains in October, however, and the frequent raids on the wagon trains by Confederate cavalry all but ended this tenuous but last line of supply open to Rosecrans' army. The consequences were dire. The Union soldiers in Chattanooga were put on half rations, and "the animals of the train [10,000 of whom died from lack of forage³], starved to death, lined the roadside, the horses of the artillery died at the picket ropes."⁴ Beginning in late September, steps were taken to rescue Rosecrans' beleaguered soldiers from imminent starvation. The Eleventh and Twelfth Corps, then serving with the Army of the Potomac in the East, were transferred in toto by rail to Chattanooga. Portions of the Union troops in Memphis, Tennessee and Vicksburg, Mississippi were moved by way of the Tennessee River to Bridgeport, Alabama. In mid-October, Rosecrans was relieved, and Major-General Ulysses S. Grant was put in overall command of the newly-created Military Division of the Mississippi, embracing the Departments of the Cumberland, the Ohio, the Tennessee, and the Arkansas, which included all the troops then converging on Chattanooga as well as those already there.⁵ These emergency measures could not have come sooner, because as one Union Army officer who witnessed the situation observed, "the tenure of Chattanooga by the United States was by the merest thread."⁶

³Huston, Sinews, p. 233.

⁴OR, 3, IV, p. 879.

⁵Boatner, Dictionary, pp. 141-142, 555.

⁶OR, 3, IV, p. 880.

The first effort to clear a permanent supply line was made by the contingent from the Army of the Potomac, commanded by Major-General Joseph Hooker. The operation in late October took four days to complete and opened what became known as the "Cracker Line," named after the hard cracker bread ration of the Union Army. The result was the free movement of small steamboats on the Tennessee River as far as Kelly's Ford. There on the morning of October 30, 1863, tons of forage and 40,000 rations arrived for the starving animals and men of Rosecrans' former command, the Army of the Cumberland, now under the able leadership of General Thomas. The Confederate siege, however, was not broken. In a three-day series of battles beginning on November 23, Grant's forces swept Bragg's Confederates first from Orchard Knob, a small hillock menacingly close to Chattanooga, then Lookout Mountain which overlooked the city, and finally the main stronghold of the besiegers, Missionary Ridge. Having lost their bid to recapture the important communication center of Chattanooga, the Southerners retreated southward to Dalton, Georgia, where they went into winter camp. Soon after, Bragg was relieved and was replaced by General Joseph E. Johnston, who would be Sherman's opponent during the first half of the Atlanta Campaign. With Chattanooga now safe, the Federals there began a winter of refitting their armies and supply lines in preparation for the next year's campaign.⁷

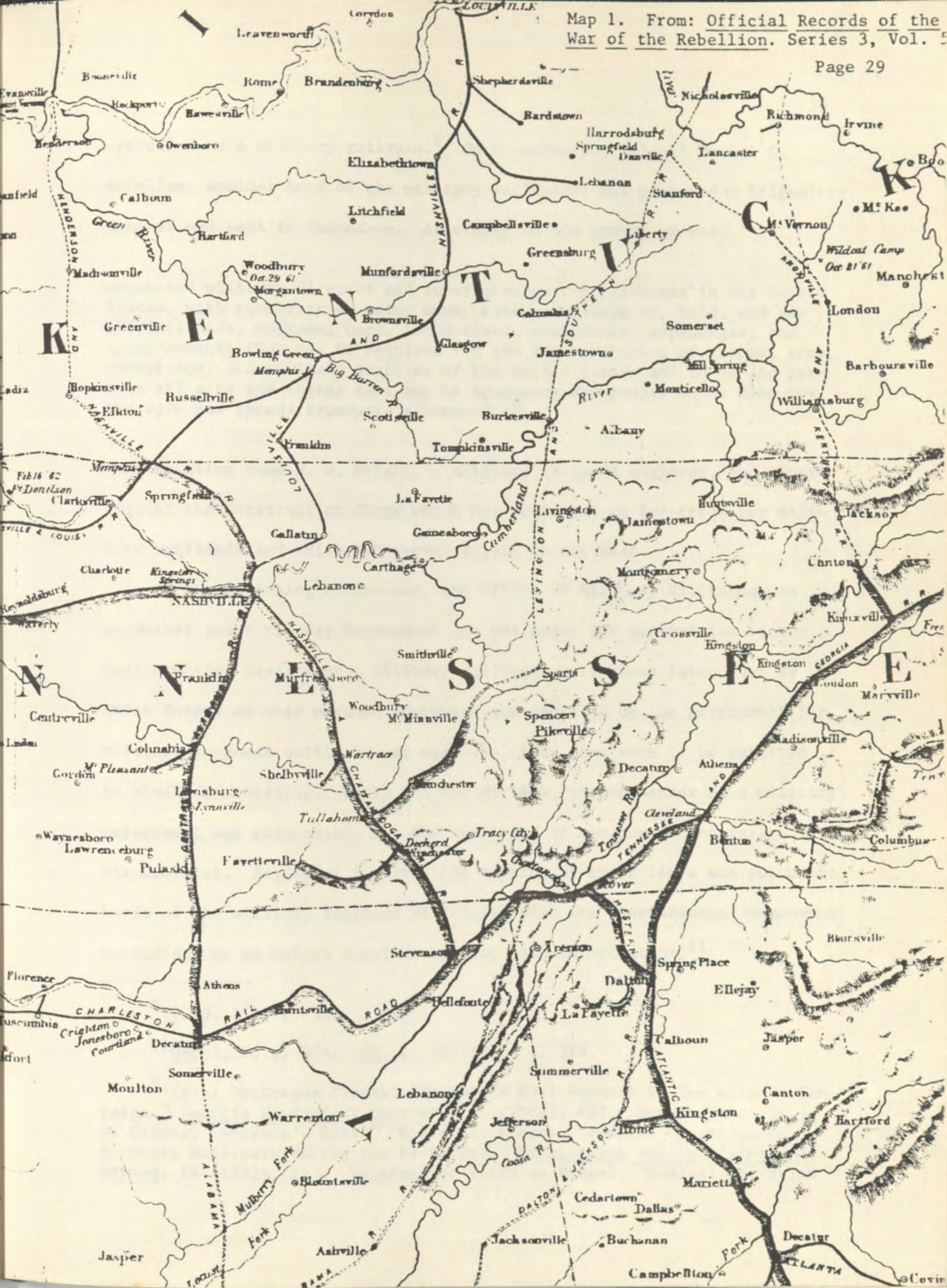
Just a few days after the Battle of Chickamauga, Quartermaster-General of the Army Brigadier-General Montgomery C. Meigs, a native Georgian, was sent from Washington to Chattanooga to oversee the revamping of the supply

⁷Huston, Sinews, p. 233. Boatner, Dictionary, pp. 142-147.

network which would later support Sherman's march to Atlanta. Meigs' first task was to reorganize the upper echelons of the supply network in the Military Division of the Mississippi, which encompassed the area west of the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River and Arkansas. Brigadier-General Robert Allen, chief quartermaster of this command, was ordered to Louisville, Kentucky, where he would set up the base of operations and principal depot. Lieutenant-Colonel James L. Donaldson took command of the advance base of operations at Nashville, Tennessee. The chief quartermaster of the three Union armies in the vicinity, those of the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and the Ohio, were, respectively, Major Langdon C. Easton, Lieutenant-Colonel J. Condit Smith, and Lieutenant-Colonel G. W. Schofield.⁸ The transfer of these exceptional quartermaster officers was the first step toward restoring efficient supply in the Western Theater.

The next step, the reorganization and repair of the United States Military Railroad network in the West, was necessary before the accumulation of supplies could begin. (See Map 1 on page 29 for railroads.) The backbone of this system was two railroads: The Louisville and Nashville, which remained under private ownership but gave priority to military traffic, and the Nashville and Chattanooga, which was operated solely by the Army. To supplement the work of these two lines, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, on October 22, 1863, authorized the building of a railroad from Nashville westward to the Tennessee River. The work would be done under the authority of Andrew Johnson, Military Governor of Tennessee. After its completion in May, 1864, this road was turned over to the government for

⁸OR, 3, IV, pp. 879-881.



operation as a military railroad.⁹ On November 30, Colonel Daniel C. McCallum, nominal head of the military railroads, was promoted to Brigadier-General and sent to Tennessee. According to his orders he was

appointed military director and superintendent of railroads in the United States, with authority to enter upon, take possession of, hold, and use all railroads, engines, cars, locomotives, equipments, appendages, and appurtenances that may be required for the transportation of troops, arms, ammunition, and military supplies of the United States and to do and perform all acts and things that may be necessary and proper to be done for the safe and speedy transport aforesaid.¹⁰

With McCallum came W. W. Wright, a military railroad engineer, and a portion of the Construction Corps which was organized to lay track for military railroads and which had served solely in the East.

At the beginning of the war, the Office of Military Railroads was organized under the War Department and put under the supervision of the Quartermaster Department. Military railroads were those taken over by Union forces as they marched southward and operated by the government for military purposes until the war was over, when they were to be returned to civilian ownership. Until the end of 1861, the commander of a military department was responsible for the operation of the government railroads in his district. Beginning in 1862, the running of these lines was put in the hands of the military railroad officials, with the Quartermaster Department providing the necessary supplies to keep them in operation.¹¹

⁹OR, 3, III, p. 910.

¹⁰OR, 3, V, p. 974. OR, 1, XXXII, 2, p. 329.

¹¹Errol MacGregor Clauss, "Sherman's Rail Support In The Atlanta Campaign," Georgia Historical Quarterly, L (1966), 413. Hereinafter cited as Clauss, "Sherman's Rail." Robert E. Riegel, "Federal Operation of Southern Railroads during the Civil War," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, IX (1922), 128. Hereinafter cited as Riegel, "Federal Operation."

McCallum's first job was to survey the railroads in his command and determine their present state of repair. On the Nashville and Chattanooga, which he found in very bad shape, trains could travel only eight miles-per-hour; and even with this precaution, accidents were still frequent. McCallum recommended that it would "be true economy to relay the whole line with new rail,"¹² because "the track was laid originally on an unballasted mud roadbed in a very imperfect manner, with a light U-rail on wooden stringers, which were badly decayed, and caused almost daily accidents by spreading apart and letting the engines and cars drop between them."¹³ The total of five hundred and nineteen miles under his supervision included: the unfinished seventy-two miles of the Nashville and Northwestern from that city to the Tennessee River; the Nashville and Chattanooga stretching for one hundred and fifty-one miles; the Nashville and Decatur to Decatur, Alabama and the Eastern Division of the Memphis and Charleston, combining for one hundred and eighty-five miles to Stevenson, Alabama, where it joined the Nashville and Chattanooga; and one hundred and eleven miles of unnamed track extending from Chattanooga to Knoxville, Tennessee. Over this immense network of rails, which had to transport the food and supplies for three Union armies, there were only 70 locomotives and 600 cars. McCallum advised that 200 locomotives and 3,000 cars would be necessary before any campaign southward into Georgia could be attempted.¹⁴ With the challenge before him, Daniel McCallum began to reorganize and to rebuild the military railroads that would make Sherman's Atlanta Campaign possible.

¹²OR, 1, XXXII, 2, p. 144.

¹³OR, 3, V, p. 982.

¹⁴OR, 1, XXXII, 2, pp. 144-145.

The two departments of the United States Military Railroad were the Construction Corps and the Transportation Corps, and they were organized in the Western Theater to run, maintain, repair, and construct the government railroads. Originally, soldiers had been detailed to work on the railroads, but by 1864, all of the men employed in these two corps were civilians who were provided with room and board in addition to being paid a wage.¹⁵ When McCallum was first ordered to Tennessee, one division of the Construction Corps came with him. Its leader, W. W. Wright, was designated as "chief engineer of U.S. military railroads in the Military Division of the Mississippi."¹⁶

By the end of November, 1863, the Corps had repaired the Nashville and Chattanooga to Bridgeport, three weeks ahead of schedule and made possible in part by efficient organization.¹⁷ As later reorganized and expanded, the Construction Corps consisted of six divisions and attained a maximum strength of 5,000 men. Each division operated independently so that any one could respond to an emergency quickly by rail, wagon, or on foot. The divisions were broken down into subdivisions, and the two most important of these were the bridge-builders and the track-layers. The Transportation Corps was run by Colonel Adna Anderson as "general superintendent of transportation on U.S. military railroads in the Military Division of the Mississippi."¹⁸ His corps was organized entirely from railroad men in

¹⁵Riegel, "Federal Operation," p. 132.

¹⁶OR, 1, XXXII, 2, p. 372.

¹⁷Thomas Weber, The Northern Railroads in the Civil War (New York: Columbia University, King's Crown Press, 1952), p. 188. Hereinafter cited as Weber, Northern.

¹⁸OR, 1, XXXII, 2, pp. 371-372.

the West and was responsible for managing and maintaining the locomotives and cars, or rolling stock. Its maximum strength was 12,000, and it was divided into three divisions.¹⁹ The largest facilities for maintaining the rolling stock were located at Nashville and Louisville, with smaller ones at Stevenson and Huntsville, Alabama, and Knoxville. At Nashville, there were extensive storehouses for spare parts, and repair shops which could handle 1,000 cars and 100 locomotives at a time.²⁰

Even with all the reorganization and repair carried out by McCallum, Wright, and Anderson, not enough cars and engines were on hand to build up the enormous amount of supplies needed for the anticipated summer campaign. The first of several measures taken to correct this situation came in March, 1864. Upon authorization from President Lincoln, Secretary Stanton ordered locomotive manufacturers to sell their products only to the military railroad service. Though government prices were lower than those on the open market, the response was enthusiastic. From February through May, a total of 30 locomotives and 675 cars were delivered to McCallum at Nashville. Despite this welcome increase in the amount of rolling stock, quartermaster and commissary stores were still not building up as fast as they were needed to prepare for the campaign.²¹

March brought several changes in the command structure of the Union Army in the Western Theater, which finally corrected the supply situation and allowed provisions to accumulate.

Early in March, Grant was promoted to Lieutenant-General and given command of the entire Union Army. On his way to Washington to assume his

¹⁹OR, 3, V, pp. 982-984.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 985-986 and 3, IV, p. 965.

²¹OR, 3, V, pp. 984-985 and Clauss, "Sherman's Rail," pp. 413-414.

duties, he and Sherman travelled together as far as Cincinnati, Ohio, where they plotted the strategy for the campaigns of 1864. The plan they discussed was to be a coordinated effort on three fronts beginning in early May to finish the destruction of the South. Grant would direct the Army of the Potomac in the East in its continuing effort to defeat General Robert E. Lee and capture the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. In conjunction with Grant, Sherman was also given a promotion and put in charge of the Military Division of the Mississippi on March 18. He would command the center of the grand Union advance and attempt to destroy General Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee and capture the important Confederate communication and manufacturing center of Atlanta. General Nathaniel P. Banks, commanding the Union forces on the lower Mississippi River, was given the task of taking the port of Mobile, Alabama, one of the South's remaining outlets to foreign markets.

When he returned to Nashville on March 25, Sherman's task was to secure his lines of supply and communication and to organize his Armies of the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and the Ohio for the campaign in Georgia. In summarizing his dilemma, he admitted that

the great question of campaign was one of supplies. Nashville, our chief depot, was itself partially in hostile country, and even the routes of supply from Louisville to Nashville by rail, and by way of the Cumberland River, had to be guarded. Chattanooga (our starting-point) was one hundred and thirty-six miles in front of Nashville, and every foot of the way, especially the many bridges, trestles, and culverts, had to be strongly guarded against the acts of a local hostile population and of the enemy's cavalry. Then, of course, as we advanced into Georgia it was manifest that we should have to repair the railroad, use it, and guard it like wise.²²

²²William Tecumseh Sherman, Memoirs of General William Tecumseh (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1891), Vol. II, pp. 8-9. Hereinafter cited as Sherman, Memoirs. All future references to this work are from Volume II.

Sherman's first step in resolving his great question of supplies was to tour the campsites of his armies and to instruct their commanders to begin preparations for the impending march southward.²³ He returned again to Nashville on April 2 and was immediately faced with a problem concerning civilians, for whom he did not have a great deal of respect. The inhabitants of eastern Tennessee, especially those around Chattanooga, were very impoverished, and the commanding officers of posts in that vicinity had no choice but to give food to the people or see them perish from starvation. Upon hearing of this situation, Sherman put an immediate stop to it, "for a simple calculation showed that a single railroad could not feed the armies and the people too, and of course the army had the preference."²⁴ Left with no choice, these people turned to their own resources and managed to feed themselves. This seemingly trivial incident is important for two reasons. First, it showed that Sherman would not let anything, not even providing for genuinely hungry people, stand in the way of feeding his troops so that the campaign could begin as soon as possible. Second, it revealed the essential supply problem that Sherman faced throughout the buildup and the course of the Atlanta Campaign. That is, the single railroad to which he referred, the Nashville and Chattanooga, was his primary line of communication and supply. In order to allow it to perform its task, he instituted changes that brought him badly needed locomotives and cars, auxiliary railroads, and alternate river supply routes.

Responding to complaints from the commanders of the Armies of the Tennessee and the Ohio, Generals James B. McPherson and John M. Schofield,

²³Ibid., p. 7.

²⁴OR, 1, XXXVIII, 1 p. 62.

respectively, that the Army of the Cumberland was receiving preferential treatment in terms of supplies, Sherman stated that he "took supreme control of the roads myself, placed all three army commanders on equal footing, and gave to each the same control, so far as orders of transportation for men and stores were concerned."²⁵ After writing to Grant on April 2 complaining that the two railroads from Nashville to Chattanooga were barely carrying enough provisions to subsist the troops and certainly not enough to accumulate a large quantity, Sherman issued an order four days later to rectify the situation. All railroad cars were to be used exclusively for the transportation of essentials, such as rations and ammunition. Soldiers returning to their units, from furlough or hospitals, were to be organized into temporary detachments and used to drive to the front the herds of beef cattle which would provide fresh meat to the army during the campaign. To further facilitate the flow of supplies through Nashville by rail, all posts within thirty miles of that city were to convey their supplies by wagon only. On April 10, as a final measure, all civilian freight and passengers were prohibited on the railroads south of Nashville. Sherman estimated that these changes "nearly or quite doubled our accumulation of stores at the front, and yet even this was not found enough."²⁶

Finally deciding to seek the opinion of others in resolving his dilemma, Sherman met with his master of railroad transportation, Colonel Anderson, his chief quartermaster at Nashville, Lieutenant-Colonel Donaldson, and

²⁵Sherman, Memoirs, p. 9.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 9-10. F. Y. Hedley, Marching Through Georgia (Chicago: Donohue, Henneberry and Company, 1890), p. 71. Hereinafter cited as Hedley, Marching. OR, 3, IV, p. 965.

his chief commissary, Brigadier-General Amos Beckwith. They discussed the needs of an army 100,000 strong with 35,000 animals. They concluded that 130 box cars, each with a capacity of 10 tons, would have to arrive daily at the fighting front to meet just the bare needs of the troops and their animals. Even with this number of cars, only 5 pounds of oats or corn and no hay could be given to the horses and mules each day, which was far below the prescribed allotment of 26 pounds of forage daily for horses and 23 pounds for mules.²⁷ In order to provide for his animals, Sherman "expected to find wheat and corn fields,"²⁸ from which he could make up the difference in forage by direct requisition of civilian crops. At the time of this meeting, only 60 locomotives and 600 cars were available, and at least 100 of the former and 1,000 of the latter were needed. To solve this problem, Sherman authorized Anderson to hold in Nashville cars arriving from Louisville. In this way, rolling stock would be built up to a level sufficient to meet the Army's needs.²⁹

The equipment of three railroads was impressed. Of 21 locomotives seized, 17 came from the Louisville and Nashville, 2 from the Louisville and Lexington, and 2 more from the Kentucky Central. Each of these railroads lost 120, 15, and 60 cars, respectively, of the total of 195 impressed.³⁰ In response to this blatant breach of the rights of property, James Guthrie, president of the Louisville and Nashville, complained directly

²⁷ Revised Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1861 (Philadelphia: J. G. L. Brown, Printer, 1861), p. 166. Hereinafter cited as Army Regulations, 1861.

²⁸ Sherman, Memoirs, p. 11.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ OR, 3, V, p. 985.

to Sherman. He was told to do as Sherman had done, that is, to hold cars coming into Jeffersonville, Indiana, regardless of which railroad they belonged to. The eventual result was that rolling stock from as far away as Michigan was seen with the Union forces in the Carolinas in 1865. As a last measure, Sherman demanded, in the same way that he had done with the military railroads, that Guthrie suspend all civilian traffic for ten days to expedite the movement of supplies to Nashville and Chattanooga.³¹ Finally, Guthrie gave whole-hearted cooperation by arranging with General Allen, chief quartermaster in Louisville, for the use of a ferry boat to transfer rolling stock quickly from Jeffersonville over the Ohio in order to facilitate the accumulation of cars and locomotives for the Army.³²

By May, 1864, things began to come together for Sherman's railroad network. The Nashville and Chattanooga had been repaired by the end of November of the previous year. The Nashville and Decatur, which had been repaired by soldiers detailed from the command of the former railroad executive Brigadier-General Grenville M. Dodge, and the Eastern Division of the Memphis and Charleston were opened to traffic in March. The Chattanooga and Knoxville, previously unfinished and unnamed, was completed on April 13. The Nashville and Northwestern, which had been turned over to McCallum on February 17 by General Grant for completion, was finished in May. It was originally built to provide an alternate route for supplies destined for Nashville by water during the summer and fall, when the

³¹Armin E. Mruck, "The Role of the Railroads in the Atlanta Campaign," Civil War History, VII (1961), 266.

³²Erna Risch, Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps, 1775-1939 (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Quartermaster General, Quartermaster Historian's Office, 1962), pp. 402-403. Hereinafter cited as Risch, Quartermaster Support. Sherman, Memoirs, p. 11.

Cumberland River was too low for steamboats to ascend. It ran for seventy-two miles from Nashville to Johnsonville on the Tennessee River. During all seasons of the year, the Tennessee could handle steamboat traffic. Not satisfied with just two railroads leading into Nashville, Sherman authorized the building of a third route during the summer of 1864. This line was pieced together from two small railroads, the Edgefield and Kentucky and the Memphis, Clarksville, and Louisville. It terminated at a point on the lower Cumberland River, to which steamboats could ascend even in the dry season. And finally, the Western and Atlantic, the road in Georgia which Sherman would use to move supplies directly to his front lines, was repaired as far south as Ringgold, where a major Union supply depot was constructed.³³ In all, the railroad mileage in operation in the Military Division of the Mississippi during 1864 varied from seven hundred and forty-four to one thousand and sixty-two miles.³⁴

The degree of efficiency brought to Sherman's supply system can be measured by the organization of the trains. Four trains of 10 cars each travelled together as a group, and they were limited to a speed of ten miles-per-hour. Four of these groups arrived in Chattanooga per day. Each car had a capacity of 10 tons, thus resulting in an accumulation of 1600 tons daily. It would have taken 36,800 six-mule-team wagons, each with a capacity of 2 tons, travelling twenty miles daily to have equalled the work of the railroads. Considering the roads in Tennessee and Georgia in the mid-nineteenth century, this was an impossibility.³⁵

³³Weber, Northern, pp. 195-198. OR, 3, V, pp. 937-951.

³⁴OR, 3, V, p. 297.

³⁵Sherman, Memoirs, p. 399. Clauss, "Sherman's Rail," p. 414.

Extensive provisions were made for rolling stock and track away from the centers of repair at Nashville, Chattanooga, and other places. Along the Nashville and Chattanooga, for example, 45 new water tanks were built. These were often constructed inside blockhouses, which were garrisoned by a small detachment of soldiers responsible for protecting the track and the water tank. Blockhouses were also built to protect bridges. Sidings long enough to accommodate 8 freight trains were built every eight miles. Most sidings were provided with telegraph stations, which tremendously improved communications.³⁶ The operators were equipped with devices called pocket "sounders." If the railroad and the station were attacked, the operator would flee and climb the nearest, safe telegraph pole which did not have cut wires. The sounder would be attached to the wire, and a signal for help could be sent to the nearest garrison.³⁷ In addition to these arrangements for the security of the railroad lines, detachments of the Construction Corps were quartered at various points along the trunk lines and especially along the Western and Atlantic as Sherman's armies marched deeper into Georgia. They would set up temporary supply centers and stock them with crossties, spikes, bridge timbers, and rails. Anytime a break occurred, either as the result of an accident or raids by Confederates, crews would start to repair it from both ends, with the aid of construction trains that carried the needed materials. In this way, rail communication would be restored very quickly.³⁸ The final measure of the system

³⁶Sherman, Memoirs, pp. 398-399. OR, 3, V, p. 584.

³⁷Hedley, Marching, pp. 74, 77.

³⁸James A. Huston, "Logistical Support of Federal Armies in the Field," Civil War History, VII (1961), 42. Hereinafter cited as Huston, "Logistical." Clauss, "Sherman's Rail," p. 415.

for protecting the railroads was the fortification of key towns and cities. By June, 1864, Chattanooga, for example, was protected by sixteen earth-works ranging from redoubts and forts to batteries and lunettes.³⁹

Next to the railroads, Sherman relied on steamboats to carry supplies in bulk. Even though the average Ohio River steamer could carry 500 tons, this form of transportation was hampered by the seasonal hazards of low water and ice. During the siege of Chattanooga by Confederate forces, General Grant appointed Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis B. Parsons as Chief Quartermaster of Western River Transportation with headquarters in St. Louis. Parsons immediately instituted administrative improvements in the handling of river transportation which allowed the surprisingly low number of 66 steamboats to supply Grant's troops during the winter of 1863-64.⁴⁰ With the coming of spring, Parsons introduced changes in the system of chartering steamboats which saved the government an estimated \$3,000,000. Thus, from February to May, 1864, exactly 158,016 tons of freight were transported quickly and efficiently to Nashville on 614 steamboats and barges.⁴¹ These supplies were eventually transported by rail to Sherman's troops and contributed enormously to their success in the Atlanta Campaign.

After the reestablishment of railroad communication with Chattanooga, few provisions were shipped there on the Tennessee River, because of the difficulties involved in unloading supplies downriver from the impassable Muscle Shoals of northern Alabama and then reloading them upriver on different vessels in order to complete the trip to Chattanooga. Nevertheless,

³⁹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, pp. 639-640.

⁴⁰Risch, Quartermaster Support, p. 410.

⁴¹OR, 1, LII, pp. 705-706

a boatyard was set up at Bridgeport, which is above Muscle Shoals, and the construction of steamers and gunboats was begun. Lieutenant-Commander Le Roy Fitch of the Navy and Captain Arthur Edwards, Army assistant quartermaster, were put in charge of the operation. The Quartermaster Department was responsible for procuring the iron-plating, timber, and machinery, and the laborers and mechanics were hired in the North. Despite delays in delivering materials, the 4 gunboats, each named after a Union general, were completed by mid-July and turned over to the Navy for operation. They were used to patrol the Upper Tennessee to Knoxville and to protect supply depots along the river. In addition to the gunboats, 13 steamers were built which transported limited quantities of supplies back and forth from Chattanooga to Knoxville.⁴² Though not as valuable overall as the railroads, steamboats and gunboats were important to Sherman in transporting supplies and keeping the rivers open as lines of communication.

The final means of transporting supplies to Sherman's troops was by wagon train. Since the Quartermaster Department controlled the transportation of the Army, wagons and the animals to pull them came under its jurisdiction. At the beginning of the war, army wagons were pulled either by mules or by horses. It was soon realized that horses were not fit for such strenuous service, and thereafter mules were used exclusively. On a good road in good weather, a team of 6 mules could pull 4,000 pounds of cargo, but the average was only 2,500 pounds. The payload could include forage, baggage, rations, hospital stores, and ammunition. For example, the regulation

⁴²Risch, Quartermaster Support, p. 414. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies (31 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1927), Ser. 1, Vol. XXVI, pp. 295, 326, 382, 476.

wagon could carry 1,400 marching rations, eight days grain for the mules, or 25 boxes of infantry ammunition. Throughout the early years of the war, wagons were divided into headquarters, regimental, and general supply trains. The first two tended to carry baggage, and the latter transported rations, ammunition, and the remaining provisions necessary for field service but too heavy to be conveyed any other way. The general supply trains fluctuated greatly in terms of size and tended to increase as supply lines lengthened. When the war began, 6 wagons were allotted to each regiment of infantry, but by 1864, this number had been reduced to 2. Sherman was very much aware that the Army's marches had frequently been hindered by too many wagons and too much baggage. In preparation for the Atlanta Campaign, he took strict measures to solve this nagging problem.⁴³

Sherman was not one to put limitations on what his men carried without doing likewise himself. In setting an example for his troops, he announced:

My entire headquarters transportation is one wagon for myself, aides, clerks, and orderlies. I think that this is as lowdown as we can get until we get flat broke, and thenceforward things will begin to mend. Soldiering as we have been doing for the last 2 years, with such trains and impediments, has been a farce, and nothing but absolute poverty will cure it.⁴⁴

For the campaign, each regiment was limited to 1 wagon for baggage and 1 ambulance for transporting the wounded. The typical contents of a regimental baggage wagon were included in a circular from Brigadier-General

⁴³Risch, Quartermaster Support, pp. 420-424. Huston, "Logistical," p. 39.

⁴⁴OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 20.

William B. Hazen of the Army of the Cumberland to his unit;

During the coming campaign but one wagon will be allowed each regiment. In this must be carried 10 days' forage for the team and horses of officers, and such cooking utensils and officers' blankets and clothing as are indispensable. Officers will at once see that there are no trunks, mess-chests, or boxes carried, except 1 box for each regiment, in which there must be blanks and stationery sufficient to make the required company and regimental reports and returns, which in the future will be required on the march.⁴⁵

In addition, the officers of a company of infantry were allowed 1 packmule to transport their personal possessions.⁴⁶

Individual soldiers and officers could carry only clothing, food, and ammunition on themselves. James F. Hedley, adjutant of an Indiana infantry regiment, detailed the equipment of the private soldier:

Each man carried his gun and accoutrements, forty rounds of ammunition in his cartridge-box, and one hundred and sixty more in his pockets, knapsack, or haversack. His blanket and light rubber blanket were made into a long roll, the ends tied together, so as to admit of being carried upon the shoulder. This roll generally contained an extra shirt, a pair of socks, and a half-section of a 'dog tent,' or piece of light ducking, which, when buttoned to the half carried by a comrade, made a very fair shelter for two men. Occasionally a soldier carried an extra pair of pants or an overcoat, but this evidence of extravagance was regarded with contempt by most of the men. Knapsacks were often discarded entirely. The provision issued to the soldier was a much abridged ration, but it brought up the total weight of his burden to good thirty pounds, or more, no light load to carry for days at a time, in all weather, and over all kinds of road. He habitually had a three days' supply of hardbread and fat pork, and this was to last from seven to ten days in case of necessity.⁴⁷

Hedley's "much abridged ration" was what the Army called the marching or short ration. For one man for one day, it consisted of 12 ounces of pork

⁴⁵William B. Hazen, A Narrative of Military Service (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1885), p. 247.

⁴⁶Sherman, Memoirs, p. 15.

⁴⁷Hedley, Marching, p. 81.

or bacon, or 22 ounces of salted or fresh beef, 16 ounces of army or hard bread, and a few ounces of coffee. By the Army's calculation, this was all that a soldier needed while on the march.⁴⁸ The allowances concerning transportation discussed above pertained only to infantry units. Unlike the cavalry and the artillery, which usually had ample transportation because of the very nature of their equipment and service, the infantry walked everywhere and therefore had to be allotted its transportation carefully. The excess baggage that was eliminated from the marching columns was delivered to camps set up near Chattanooga specifically for storage purposes.⁴⁹

Headquarters units were allowed only 1 tent, which was usually a wall-tent fly that had to be erected on poles cut from the woods at the end of the day's march, and no tent furniture.⁵⁰ General George H. Thomas, who commanded the Army of the Cumberland, was the only senior officer who did not follow these orders. He indulged in an elaborate headquarters arrangement with many large tents. To soldiers and officers alike, Thomas' headquarters was known sarcastically as Pap Thomas' Travelling Circus. In preparing for the Atlanta Campaign, Sherman's armies were so well provisioned that he doubted "if any army ever went forth to battle with fewer impedimenta, and where the regular and necessary supplies of food, ammunition, and clothing were issued, as called for, so regularly and so well."⁵¹

The network which allowed Sherman's legions to be so well supplied was the depot system. The city of Louisville, Kentucky was the principle

⁴⁸Army Regulations, 1861, pp. 244-245.

⁴⁹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 3, p. 90.

⁵⁰Sherman, Memoirs, p. 22.

⁵¹Ibid.

depot or base of operations, which is defined as a "place accessible to transportation to the front and rear, and sufficiently remote from the battle areas to be relatively secure from hostile action."⁵² The city's logistical facilities were organized by General Robert Allen. Louisville was set up to function as a funnel, through which all supplies from the North passed on their way down the Louisville and Nashville Railroad to the next base.

The main supply depot for the armies in the field and the next stop on the railroad was Nashville. This city was turned into a vast warehouse by Lieutenant-Colonel Donaldson. It was equipped with enormous storage facilities, so that it alone could sustain Sherman for six months should communications with Louisville be severed.⁵³

Serviced by the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, Chattanooga was the location of the advance depot. Here, under the direction of Lieutenant-Colonel Easton, 12 warehouses were built. In these structures, provisions were temporarily accumulated before being sent to the fighting front.⁵⁴

The last stop along the railroad for supplies was the string of temporary and field depots. These were set up on the railroad as close to the front line as possible. Here provisions were transferred to army wagons which delivered them to the soldiers in the trenches. When the army would advance, a temporary depot could either be moved with the troops or

⁵²Huston, "Logistical," p. 36.

⁵³Risch, Quartermaster Support, p. 430. Clauss, "Sherman's Rail," pp. 415-416.

⁵⁴Duncan K. Major, Jr. and Roger S. Fitch, Supply of Sherman's Army During the Atlanta Campaign (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1911), p. 12. Hereinafter cited as Major, Supply of.

left to function as a field depot which served to facilitate the forward movement of supplies. The first temporary depot for the Union Army in the Atlanta Campaign was located at Ringgold, Georgia on the Western and Atlantic Railroad. When Sherman took his army farther south, Ringgold was converted to a field depot and remained in operation throughout the campaign. As commanding officer of the military division, Sherman retained ultimate control of all depots in order to insure the smooth operation of his logistical support.⁵⁵

By the time the campaign began, the depot system had allowed an incredible accumulation of supplies. At Jeffersonville, Indiana, just across the Ohio River from Louisville, 10,000,000 rations were stored.⁵⁶ At Nashville alone, "five months' supplies of all kinds"⁵⁷ were stockpiled, which included rations enough for 150,000 men and 60,000 animals.⁵⁸ Also at Nashville were facilities for packing hogs and pickles, and bakeries that used 550 barrels of flour daily.⁵⁹ Likewise, the warehouses of Chattanooga bulged with the mass of supplies that arrived there. A total of 100,000 rations for thirty days and clothing to last six months arrived before the commencement of the march against Atlanta.⁶⁰ With such a reserve of provisions, Sherman resolved to keep twenty days' supply of rations in

⁵⁵Risch, Quartermaster Support, p. 427.

⁵⁶Huston, Sinews, p. 235.

⁵⁷OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 4.

⁵⁸Risch, Quartermaster Support, p. 432.

⁵⁹Huston, Sinews, p. 235.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 234.

his wagons at all times.⁶¹ This precaution was taken so that the troops could remain supplied even if Confederate cavalry raids or a railroad accident should cut communications with the depots in the rear.

The final link in Sherman's logistical chain was the medical service. To remove wounded soldiers from the field, the Ambulance Corps was created in March, 1864. It was run by soldiers detailed solely for that duty. The ambulances were two-wheeled vehicles which could hold 10 to 16 soldiers. They were supplied and maintained by the Quartermaster Department. Ambulances could carry nothing but the wounded and medical supplies, and no one but Ambulance Corps personnel could assist the wounded.⁶²

As with the quartermaster department, the medical departments of the three armies operated separately. Each maintained its own hospitals and hospital trains, furnished its own medical supplies, and transported its own wounded from field hospitals to army general hospitals in the rear. The hospitals of the Army of the Tennessee were located in Rome and Marietta, Georgia. The one at Rome had 3,000 beds, while the other at Marietta had full laundry and kitchen facilities. As in other logistical areas, the Army of the Cumberland was the best equipped medically, with several well supplied hospitals in Chattanooga and Nashville. When it came to medical aid, the soldiers of the Army of the Ohio fared the worst. Only after their wounded were told there was no room for them in the army hospitals in Chattanooga did they establish one of their own in Knoxville.⁶³

⁶¹Huston, "Logistical," p. 42.

⁶²Errol MacGregor Clauss, "The Atlanta Campaign, 18 July-2 September, 1864" (diss., Emory Univ., 1965), p. 183.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 184-185.

As the campaign progressed, a general hospital to accommodate the wounded of all the armies was set up first at Allatoona, Georgia and then moved to Marietta. Hospital trains conveyed the wounded to the rear. First, they were taken daily to designated collection points along the Western and Atlantic Railroad. Sometimes, empty boxcars would transport the men, but more often than not, passenger cars converted so that the wounded could be treated enroute were used.⁶⁴

The efforts of Sherman's quartermaster officers to accumulate rations for the campaign were a tremendous success. During the winter of 1863-64, however, the food available directly to the troops was not always abundant. According to Surgeon Edward D. Kittoe, Medical Inspector for Sherman, "scurvy naturally prevailed to some extent in most regiments."⁶⁵ In the majority of cases, the condition was mild, and during the last few weeks before the campaign, "vegetables were issued free"⁶⁶ to clear it up. The serious cases were sent to the rear until they could recover and rejoin their units. For the most part, however, medical officers reported the soldiers to be in excellent health and eagerly awaiting the opening of hostilities.⁶⁷

By May 5, the Union forces under Sherman totalled 98,797 troops and 254 artillery pieces,⁶⁸ and by late June, he had 28,300 horses, 32,600

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 186.

⁶⁵OR, 1, XXXVIII, 1, p. 117.

⁶⁶OR, 1, XXXVIII, 2, p. 148.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 148, 334. OR, 1, XXXVIII, 1, p. 117. OR, 1, XXXVIII, 3, pp. 50-51.

⁶⁸OR, 1, XXXVIII, 1, pp. 62-63. Sherman, Memoirs, p. 24. Thomas L. Livermore, Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America: 1861-65 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), p. 119.

mules, 5,180 wagons, and 860 ambulances.⁶⁹ In order to lead his enormous army effectively, Sherman moved his headquarters to Chattanooga and prepared to take the field and command his troops personally.⁷⁰ To travel with him in the field, he appointed a personal staff of six high ranking officers: Brigadier-General William F. Barry as Chief of Artillery, Captain Orlando M. Poe as Chief Engineer, Lieutenant-Colonel Langdon C. Easton as Chief Quartermaster, Brigadier-General Amos Beckwith as Chief Commissary, Captain Thomas G. Baylor as Chief of Ordnance, and Surgeon Edward D. Kittoe as Medical Inspector.⁷¹ To relieve him of the tedium of paperwork, Sherman located his general headquarters at Nashville. But at all times, he was connected with his office by telegraph so that he could respond immediately to any developments at the front or in the rear.⁷²

With all the preparations that went into readying William T. Sherman's three armies grouped near Chattanooga for the Atlanta Campaign, it appeared that nothing could go wrong with the logistical system. Fortunately for the war effort and thus the restoration of the Union, nothing did. However, should some mishap have caused him to be separated from his sources of supply, Sherman harbored no illusions concerning feeding his troops. He had carefully studied the returns of the Census of 1860 and tax documents compiled by the Comptroller of the State of Georgia,⁷³ and as he wrote to a

⁶⁹Major, Supply of, p. 102.

⁷⁰Sherman, Memoirs, pp. 30-31.

⁷¹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, pp. 23-24.

⁷²Sherman, Memoirs, p. 31.

⁷³Ibid.

fellow officer in early 1864, "when the provisions, forage, horses, mules, wagons, etc., are used by the enemy, it is clearly our duty and right to take them also, because otherwise they might be used against us."⁷⁴ With seven months of preparation behind them, Sherman's troops moved out of their camps on the morning of May 5, 1864 to challenge Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate Army of Tennessee for supremacy in Georgia.

to get into the interior of the enemy's country as far as you can, inflicting all the damage you can against his war resources." To carry out his mission, Sherman had at his disposal the Union Armies of the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and the Ohio, under Generals Thomas, McPherson, and Schofield, respectively. These troops were located at various points on the route from Chattanooga to the Confederate winter camp at Dalton. Thomas' Cumberlanders were encamped around the small town of Ringgold, on the railroad about sixteen miles south of Chattanooga. McPherson's troops were situated on the Chickamauga battlefield at Lee and Gordon's Mill on Chickamauga Creek. Among these soldiers was Major-General Joseph Hooker's Twentieth Corps of the Army of the Cumberland. Near the Georgia-Tennessee border, Schofield's Army of the Ohio was positioned. (See Map 2 on page 33 for movements of armies from May 5 - May 23, 1864.)

In preparation for the campaign, Johnston ordered the construction of defensive lines composed of elaborate earthworks and located them on advantageous ground south of his initial line at Rocky Face Ridge, astride the Western and Atlantic Railroad a few miles north of Dalton. Sherman planned

⁷⁴Rachel Sherman Thorndike, ed., The Sherman Letters: Correspondence Between General and Senator Sherman From 1837 to 1891 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 230. Hereinafter cited as Thorndike, Sherman Letters.

CHAPTER III

"SIR, I GIVE YOU 48 HOURS OR A POSITION IN THE FRONT RANKS,"
MAY 5 - MAY 23, 1864

General Grant's orders for the part that Sherman's armies would play in the multiple Union offensives of 1864 came in early April. "You I propose to move against Johnston's army," he wrote, "to break it up, and to get into the interior of the enemy's country as far as you can, inflicting all the damage you can against his war resources."¹ To carry out his mission, Sherman had at his disposal the Union Armies of the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and the Ohio, under Generals Thomas, McPherson, and Schofield, respectively. These troops were located at various points on the roads from Chattanooga to the Confederate winter camp at Dalton. Thomas' Cumberlanders were encamped around the small town of Ringgold, on the railroad about sixteen miles south of Chattanooga. McPherson's troops were situated on the Chickamauga battlefield at Lee and Gordon's Mill on Chickamauga Creek. Among these soldiers was Major-General Joseph Hooker's Twentieth Corps of the Army of the Cumberland. Near the Georgia-Tennessee border, Schofield's Army of the Ohio was positioned. (See Map 2 on page 53 for movements of armies from May 5 - May 23, 1864.)

In preparation for the campaign, Johnston ordered the construction of defensive lines composed of elaborate earthworks and located them on advantageous ground south of his initial line at Rocky Face Ridge, astride the Western and Atlantic Railroad a few miles south of Dalton. Sherman planned to use his largest army, that of Thomas, to entrench in front of Johnston's

¹Sherman, Memoirs, p. 26.



positions and thus hold the Confederates in place. At the same time, Schofield's and McPherson's armies would threaten the flanks of the Army of Tennessee, hopefully forcing it out of its stronghold, or cutting its railroad supply lines, or both.² In order to maintain the Union line of supply, the Construction Corps of the United States Military Railroad would repair the Western and Atlantic as the Federals progressed southward. By the end of the campaign, the Union supply line totalled four hundred and seventy-two miles of railroad from Atlanta to Louisville.³

With his forces poised and ready for action and his plan in mind, Sherman gave the signal for the campaign to begin on May 5, and his armies marched south to confront the Confederates at Rocky Face. The advance to this natural mountain fortress was by two routes. Schofield approached by way of Red Clay, Georgia, approximately ten miles north of Rocky Face. Thomas followed the course of the railroad from Ringgold to Tunnel Hill. From May 7-9, unsuccessful demonstrations were made against Johnston's superbly constructed trenches. While this action was taking place, the railroad was repaired as far as Tunnel Hill, where trains arrived on May 9.⁴ Here the tracks passed through a ridge by means of a tunnel which gave rise to the name of the town. On first sight, W. W. Wright, head of the Construction Corps, admitted that "fears being entertained by some that the tunnel had been mined by the enemy, a locomotive was run through it

²Jacob D. Cox, Atlanta Campaigns of the Civil War, Vol IX (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882), p. 50. Hereinafter cited as Cox, Atlanta.

³Weber, Northern, p. 199.

⁴Sherman, Memoirs, p. 32. OR 1, XXXVIII, 4, pp. 56, 104.

to test the matter, but it was found to be all safe."⁵

Sherman hoped to meet Johnston in the decisive battle of the campaign in the vicinity of Tunnel Hill,⁶ but the Southerner would not oblige. Thus an alternative had to be sought, because a frontal assault on Rocky Face would be disastrous for Sherman. One possibility lay in a move that was already under way. While the fighting at Rocky Face was in progress, McPherson was leading his troops through Snake Creek Gap to attempt to cut the Western and Atlantic at Resaca, a small railroad village fifteen miles south of Johnston's Rocky Face position. Hopefully, this maneuver would force the Confederates to retreat to the Oostanaula River in order to preserve their supply line from Atlanta. When McPherson's advance units skirmished with a Confederate cavalry brigade, he ordered his whole command to retreat into the gap, thinking that the enemy was in full force before him and claiming that provisions were too low to continue on.⁷

With his assaults at Rocky Face blunted and McPherson stalled in Snake Creek Gap, Sherman formulated a new plan for forcing Johnston to retreat southward. He proposed to leave Major-General Oliver Otis Howard's Fourth Corps of Thomas' army and some cavalry units to launch a diversionary attack on Buzzard Roost Gap, where the railroad passed through the mountains next to Rocky Face Ridge, in order to pin down the main Confederate force ensconced on its craggy slopes. At the same time, the rest of Thomas'

⁵OR, 3, V. p. 951.

⁶OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 70.

⁷Ibid., p. 106.

troops and Schofield's army would join McPherson in Snake Creek Gap and march directly eastward and sever the Western and Atlantic at Resaca.⁸

In order to accomplish this goal, detailed arrangements had to be made concerning supplies. According to orders issued to Wright on May 11,

Cars will be run here [Tunnel Hill] to supply the daily wants of the troops left here, but the main portion of the supplies will be left at Ringgold, which point will be defended at all costs. In case the enemy should detect the diminution of force here and attack, it has instructions to withdraw in the direction of Ringgold. You will keep a locomotive and construction train at this place, so that in case this retrograde movement becomes necessary, you can take up rails at intervals, so as to make a repair train necessary to replace them; this that the enemy may not use the railroad to facilitate his movement in pursuit. A few rails should at once be removed from some point east of the tunnel, that can again be put down when we want it done.⁹

In addition, a construction train was sent to Varnell's Station on the Georgia Railroad which connected Dalton, on the Western and Atlantic, to East Tennessee. Rails were taken up and shipped back to Chattanooga in order to prevent the Confederates from using this line to support a march against Chattanooga while Sherman's troops were pushing through Snake Creek Gap.¹⁰ With the safety of the railroad provided for, Sherman began to improve the road through Snake Creek Gap so it could accommodate the thousands of soldiers, wagons, and animals that would use it.

Brigadier-General Jacob D. Cox, one of Schofield's division commanders, described the pass as "a wild and picturesque defile, five or six miles long. Hardly a cabin was to be seen in its whole length. The road was only such a track as country wagons had worn in the bed of the stream or

⁸Ibid., pp. 113-114.

⁹Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 123.

along the foot of the mountain."¹¹ Major-General Daniel Butterfield's division of Hooker's Twentieth Corps was equipped with axes and shovels and sent to work on the road. They were to widen it so that wagon traffic could travel in both directions. In this way, supplies would move with speed to the front. Also, paths were cleared along the edge of the road so that infantry could march without getting in the way of the wagons.¹² With this overland supply route now capable of meeting the needs of the troops, the quartermasters issued ten days' rations to the armies,¹³ and the decisive move to capture Resaca began.

Johnston was informed of the presence of the bulk of Sherman's troops within a few miles of Resaca by Confederate detachments in the vicinity. He quickly withdrew the Army of Tennessee from Rocky Face on May 13 and deployed it in defensive positions on the north side of the Oostanaula River, just outside Resaca. There he was joined by advance elements of Lieutenant-General Leonidas K. Polk's Army of Mississippi which had been summoned by Confederate President Jefferson Davis to help Johnston turn back the Union forces in northern Georgia. The Confederate retreat from Dalton was so quick that the railroad could not be destroyed. Advancing south through Dalton, General Howard's Fourth Corps secured the railroad as far as Tilton, six miles north of Resaca. The track was in such good shape that the Construction Corps was able to repair it to Dalton on May 13

¹¹Cox, Atlanta, pp. 35-36.

¹²OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, pp. 113-114, 116.

¹³James A. Connolly, Three years in the Army of the Cumberland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 207. Hereinafter cited as Connolly, Three Years.

and to Tilton two days later, a distance of twelve miles from Tunnel Hill.¹⁴

Dalton was immediately converted into the new field depot in order to provide a place closer to the front than Ringgold for stockpiling provisions and loading them on wagons to be sent directly to the troops. As a result, Snake Creek Gap was abandoned as a supply line, but it had provided a vital, natural passage through the mountains for troops and supplies.¹⁵ Without such a route, the flanking maneuver that forced Johnston back from Rocky Face would not have been possible; thus, a direct assault on the original Confederate mountain fortress at Rocky Face might have been necessary. Because of the high priority given cars loaded with ammunition, these were sent forward on the railroad to "the very rear of the army."¹⁶ The work of the Construction and Transportation Corps was so efficient throughout the campaign that trains would arrive very near the front, usually within hours of the arrival of the troops. The resulting boost in the morale of the Union soldiers was tremendous, and as one Federal general maintained, "perhaps nothing produced more moral effect upon the enemy than hearing the whistle of the locomotives in the rear of the lines."¹⁷

Beginning on May 13, the Union troops spent three days in assaulting Johnston's lines protecting Resaca and the railroad bridge over the Oostanaula River. The Battle of Resaca ended in a stalemate. During the course of battle, Sherman decided to flank the Confederate position at Resaca by means

¹⁴OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, pp. 163, 189.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 200.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Cox, Atlanta, p. 61.

of a pontoon bridge across the Oostanaula at Lay's Ferry, a natural crossing several miles downriver near the town of Calhoun. On May 14, two bridges were put down at the ferry under the supervision of Captain C. B. Reese, Chief Engineer of the Army of the Tennessee.¹⁸ As a result, Johnston abandoned his positions that night and withdrew across the Oostanaula, destroying the railroad bridge as he left.

During the next day, elements of McPherson's army skirmished with Confederates who tried to contest the crossing. The defense of the ferry was successful, and by May 17 all of McPherson's troops were on the south side of the Oostanaula. In the meantime, Thomas had crossed on three improvised bridges at the railroad crossing, and Schofield was over the Coosawatee River east of Resaca, at Fite's and Field's Ferries.¹⁹ Upon their arrival in Resaca on May 16, the Federals found the remains of Johnston's hasty withdrawal. Subsistence stores, artillery, and small-arms left behind were captured. Work on the railroad began immediately, and trains arrived in Resaca the same day. The town was designated as the new advance depot, and all empty wagons returning from the front were directed there to pick up their next load of supplies.²⁰ Before the campaign could continue, the railroad bridge over the Oostanuala had to be virtually rebuilt, and in this task, the first real challenge to Wright and the men of his Construction Corps was presented.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 46. Sherman, Memoirs, p. 35.

¹⁹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 219. J. Willard Brown, The Signal Corps, U.S.A. in the War of the Rebellion (Boston: U.S. Veteran Signal Corps Association, 1896), p. 524.

²⁰OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, pp. 216, 218.

Just after the last Confederates crossed the Oostanaula on May 15, advance units of the Union forces arrived and were followed so quickly by Construction Corps workers that the work to rebuild the bridge began immediately. This effort, however, "was somewhat delayed because the iron rods were so hot that the men could not handle them to remove the wreck"²¹ that obstructed the track. After assessing the damage to the bridge, Wright estimated that it would require four days to repair. Sherman replied, "Sir, I give you 48 hours or a position in the front ranks."²²

In an attempt to comply with Sherman's orders, Wright abandoned the usual practice of drawing on pre-cut bridge timber stockpiled in the rear of the army. Instead, timber "was cut in the vicinity and sent by rail to the framers and raisers at the site, the work being done from both ends"²³ of the bridge. It took Wright's men seventy-two hours to complete the work, and Sherman forgave the engineer for taking an extra day. The first important obstacle to extending the life-sustaining railroad and continuing to use it as the principal means of supply had been overcome in an amazingly short period of time, and once again, the blare of locomotive whistles was heard near the front.

While the Oostanaula railroad bridge was being mended, several events of importance took place. After the Oostanaula line was given up, the Confederates retreated first to Adairsville, which they in turn abandoned on May 18, and withdrew to Cassville, seven miles north of the Etowah River and on the Western and Atlantic Railroad. There Johnston was prepared to

²¹OR, 3, IV, p. 957. OR, 3, V, p. 951.

²²Weber, Northern, p. 201.

²³Ibid, pp. 202-203.

fight, but after consultation with two of his corps commanders who were opposed to the idea, he decided to retreat again. On the night of May 19, the Army of Tennessee crossed the Etowah and took up a defensive position in the Allatoona Mountains overlooking the river. In the meantime, the town of Rome, located at the confluence of the Etowah and Oostanaula Rivers and downstream from Resaca, was occupied. The quantity of stores captured there was enough to subsist its Federal garrison for two weeks.²⁴ As soon as Sherman's troops arrived at the Etowah, they found the railroad over it destroyed, but the Confederates left intact the stone pillars which would greatly facilitate the rebuilding of the bridge. In the haste of their retreat, the Confederates had neglected to destroy all of the regular bridges over the river, and soon the Union troops located and secured the unguarded crossings.²⁵

Now fifteen days into the campaign, Sherman's bluecoats had pushed back their counterparts in gray a total of fifty-three miles, over half the distance from Rocky Face Ridge to Atlanta. In so doing, the Federal forces had secured crossings of two major rivers and had put nearly fifty miles of track back in working order, including repairing one large railroad bridge. After all this effort, Sherman decided to give his troops a rest on May 20 before marching farther. During this time, "the railroad was repaired and pressed to its utmost capacity to accumulate supplies."²⁶ On the same day, the railroad was repaired to Kingston. There a branch line ran thirteen miles to Rome. Resaca was retained as the advance depot,

²⁴OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 264.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 250, 257-258.

²⁶Cox, Atlanta, p. 58.

but in anticipation of future needs, Kingston was garrisoned by 1,000 men from the Army of the Cumberland. Supplies were loaded onto army wagons at Resaca and transported to Kingston and Rome, where they were stockpiled for the next advance. In addition, the track was repaired an extra five miles to Cass Station, near the village of Cassville, but trains did not travel farther south than Kingston.²⁷

Toward the end of the advance that ended at the Etowah River, the Federals were several miles ahead of their railroad service, and consequently, rations began to run low. With the railroad now repaired to the immediate rear of the troops, provisions to last for twenty days were issued to each division for the next march.²⁸ By May 22, with his railroad in good order and his troops reprovisioned, Sherman discussed his plans by letter with his brother, Senator John Sherman:

We occupy Rome, Kingston, and Cassville. I have repaired the railroad to these points and now have ordered the essential supplies forward to replenish our wagons, when I will make for Atlanta, fifty-nine miles from here and about fifty from the advance. Johnston has halted across the Etowah at a place called Allatoona, where the railroad and common road passes [sic] through a spur of the mountain, making one of those formidable passes which gives an army on the defensive so much advantage, but I propose to cross the Etowah here and go to Marietta via Dallas.²⁹

Several aspects of protecting Sherman's ever extending supply line were crucial to his success thus far. As the Federals advanced and the Confederates withdrew, Johnston "was picking up his detachments as he fell back," Sherman explained, "whereas I was compelled to make similar and

²⁷OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 288. OR 3, V, p. 951.

²⁸Cox, Atlanta, pp. 59-60, 63. Sherman, Memoirs, p. 38.

²⁹Thorndike, Sherman Letters, pp. 234-235.

stronger detachments to repair the railroads as we advanced, and to guard them."³⁰ In addition, with the arrival of Polk's army, Johnston had three infantry corps under his command with a combined strength of approximately 65,000. In order to insure the better protection of the Western and Atlantic and the Nashville and Chattanooga, the backbone of Sherman's supply system, the duty of guarding all this track was given to General Thomas in mid-May.³¹ The decision was made with the knowledge that Thomas' command, the Army and Department of the Cumberland, numbered roughly 100,000 troops and was therefore far more capable of performing the extra duty than either of the smaller Departments of the Ohio or the Tennessee.

Guerillas were another vexing problem for the Federals. Raids by guerillas were far more frequent than those by regular Confederate cavalry. Usually they were not serious enough to stop the flow of supplies, but frequent interruptions were almost a daily occurrence. Concerning attacks on the railroad lines, Superintendent McCallum of the United States Military Railroad referred to the Western and Atlantic as being "more infested with guerillas than any other line during the war."³² Frequently, a few rails were taken up in order to derail a construction or supply train and other railroad workers were shot at.³³ Supply wagons were also the object of guerilla activity. During the morning of May 24, a wagon train near Cassville was attacked and "some twenty wagons burned, and about the same number

³⁰Sherman, Memoirs, p. 39.

³¹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, pp. 188, 216-217.

³²OR, 3, V, p. 584.

³³OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, pp. 259, 275.

driven off."³⁴ The action was attributed to Major-General Joseph Wheeler's Confederate cavalry corps serving under Johnston, but it is just as likely that the raid was carried out by irregular, partisan cavalry that constantly lurked around the Union supply routes, looking for an opportunity to strike.³⁵ Later in the campaign, Sherman authorized retaliatory measures against the guerillas which were brutal.

Another recurrent problem for Sherman was that of forage for his animals. The grain ration for the horses and mules was provided primarily by the railroad, but almost all the hay and even some of the grain had to be requisitioned directly from local farms. Cavalry commanders especially were constant in their demands for more forage, because their units were often separated from the regular supply sources.³⁶ The hay, as well as any other item needed by the Army which could not be provided by its own supply network, or anything that would be of use to the Confederates, might be taken by detachments under the direct supervision of officers.³⁷ Though abuses were few, they did occur from time to time and were as much abhorred by the Army as by the populace. For example, Brigadier-General Milo S. Hascall, a division commander in Schofield's army, was shocked at the sight of "houses and barns on fire."³⁸ With the exception of hay, the overwhelming bulk of the regular supplies for Sherman's soldiers during

³⁴Ibid., pp. 303-304, 306.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 85, 207, 219, 249.

³⁷Ibid., p. 291.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 297-298.

the Atlanta Campaign was furnished by the United States Military Railroad and the Quartermaster Department. In fact, while visiting the Union troops in the field in Georgia, Brigadier-General Robert Allen, Chief Quartermaster of the Military Division of the Mississippi, was assured by Sherman that "no army in the world was ever better provided."³⁹ Thus, with their supply wagons replenished, Sherman's troops took up the line of march again on May 23.

time. Second, and more importantly, the movement was designed to menace Johnston's left flank and force him to withdraw from the Allatoona Mountains in order to preserve his lines of supply and communication.¹ The area around Dallas was generally poor agriculturally and densely wooded, with few good roads. Since Sherman was leaving behind the railroad and the depot at Kingston, he depended on the twenty days' rations in his supply wagons.² (See Map 3 on Page 67 for movements of armies from May 23 - July 17, 1864.)

Beginning on May 25, three days of sharp fighting began around New Hope Church, a small community a few miles north of Dallas. And with this action came the rain that would dominate all the movements of the Union and Confederate forces for the next month. In just a few days, the roads became nearly impassable, and their condition was worsened by the constant movement of wagons and animals. According to one Union soldier from a New York infantry regiment, "the wagons would sink in the mud up to their axles and they could not be moved by the mules alone. The men had to take a hand, pry up the wheels and cut-tray (which means to lay down logs

¹Sherman, *Memoirs*, p. 43.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 299.

CHAPTER IV

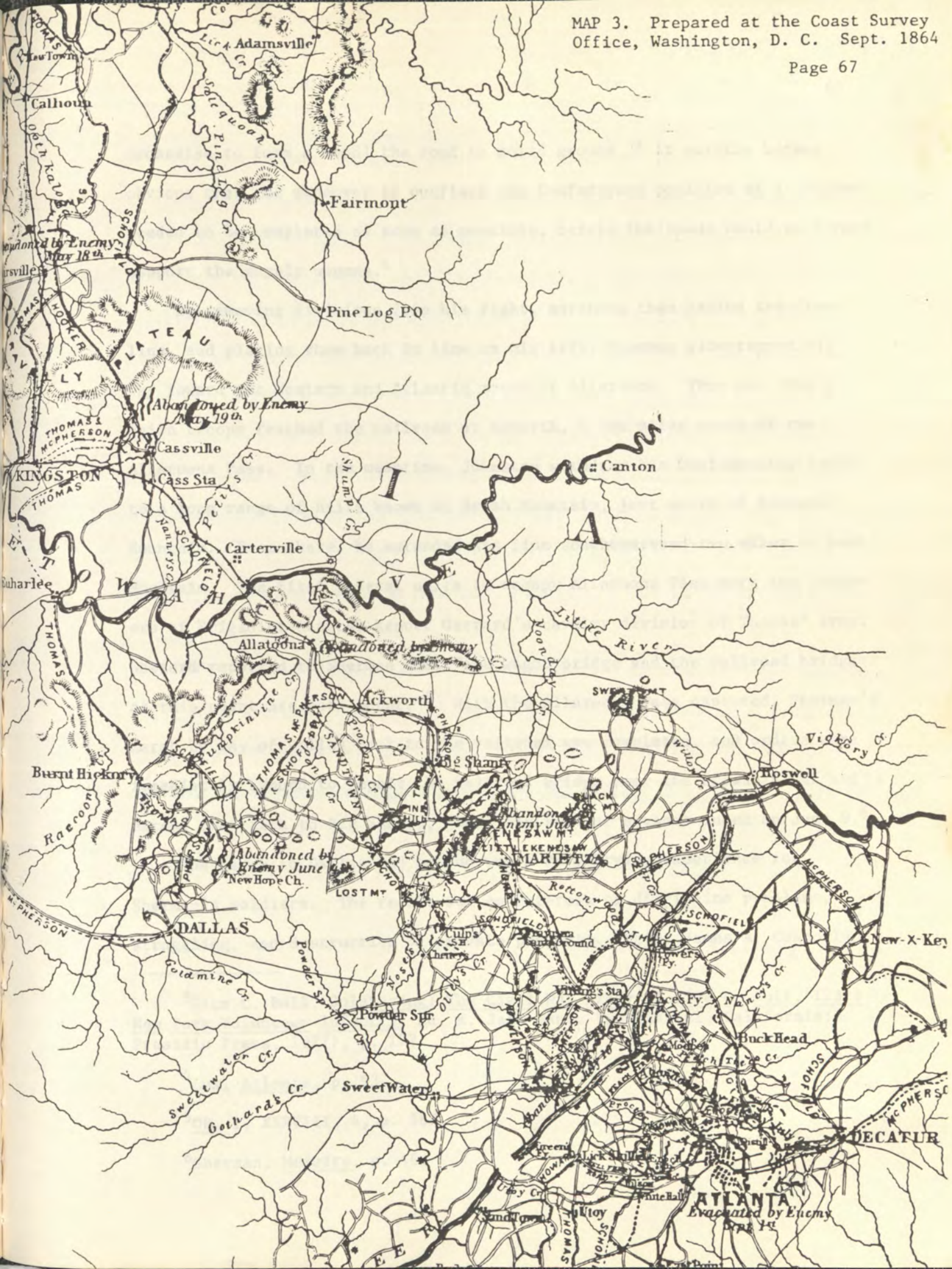
"IT BEATS ALL HOW MUCH IT RAINS HERE,"
MAY 23 - JULY 17, 1864

Sherman decided to march to Dallas, which is approximately thirty miles northwest of Atlanta, for two reasons. First, he intended to use the town as a springboard, from which to threaten both Marietta and Atlanta at the same time. Second, and more importantly, the movement was designed to menace Johnston's left flank and force him to withdraw from the Allatoona Mountains in order to preserve his lines of supply and communication.¹ The area around Dallas was generally poor agriculturally and densely wooded, with few good roads. Since Sherman was leaving behind the railroad and the depot at Kingston, he depended on the twenty days' rations in his supply wagons.² (See Map 3 on Page 67 for movements of armies from May 23 - July 17, 1864.)

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¹Sherman, Memoirs, p. 43.

²Ibid., p. 42.



crosswise to form a road] the road to solid ground."³ It quickly became obvious that the maneuver to outflank the Confederate position at Allatoona needed to be completed as soon as possible, before the roads would no longer support the supply wagons.⁴

By removing divisions from his right, marching them behind the front line, and placing them back in line on his left, Sherman sidestepped his way toward the Western and Atlantic south of Allatoona. Thus one June 1, Union troops reached the railroad at Acworth, a few miles south of the Allatoona Pass. In the meantime, Johnston withdrew his Confederates south to a long range of hills known as Brush Mountain, just north of Kennesaw Mountain. From there, he extended his line southwestward ten miles to Lost Mountain. The first Federal units to occupy Allatoona Pass were the troopers of Brigadier-General Kenner Garrard's cavalry division of Thomas' army. Garrard reported to Sherman that "the wagon bridge and the railroad bridge at this point are both burnt."⁵ With the Allatoona Pass captured, Sherman's march by way of Dallas back to the railroad was completed, and orders were immediately issued to repair the railroad bridge over the Etowah River and to extend the track to Big Shanty, where the Federal advance ended on June 9.⁶

The march to Dallas and beyond was a very trying experience for Sherman's soldiers. The result was an outbreak of discipline problems, straggling, and destruction of private property. Major James A. Connolly

³Rice C. Bull, Soldiering: The Civil War Diary of Rice C. Bull, 123rd New York Volunteer Infantry, ed. K. Jack Bauer (San Rafael, California: Presidio Press, 1977), p. 122.

⁴Cox, Atlanta, p. 93.

⁵OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 387.

⁶Sherman, Memoirs, p. 46.

of the 123rd Illinois infantry wrote to his wife that the behavior of some soldiers "had degenerated into the most outrageous pillaging, but not in the presence of officers."⁷ Immediate and successful measures were taken to correct this situation. From his headquarters near Dallas on June 4, Sherman issued Special Field Orders Number 17 which declared that "the only proper fate of such miscreants is that they be shot as common enemies to their profession and country, and all officers and patrols sent to arrest them will shoot them without mercy on the slightest impudence or resistance."⁸ No soldiers were ever shot in accordance with these instructions, but their issuance illustrates an integral part of Sherman's character. That is, he endured hardship stoically during the fighting around Dallas, and his soldiers were expected to do likewise. The reason for the desertion and pillaging was the supply problems created by the intense and continuing rain.

Though Sherman's armies began the march to Dallas with a stockpile of twenty days' rations, not all of it could be carried at once in the wagons. When the rains came, the regular transportation of supplies to the front was hindered. The men never went hungry for any extended period of time, but they did not have the usual amount of food. The quartermasters kept the meat ration up to specifications by driving along beef cattle which could be slaughtered on the spot, but bread was in short supply in some camps.⁹

⁷Connolly, Three Years, p. 216.

⁸OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 406.

⁹Cox, Atlanta, p. 93.

The animals, however, did suffer. The old problem of forage was made even worse by rain which delayed the arrival of grain. Forced to turn to local supplies which were inadequate in both quality and quantity, Union officers complained that the animals of their commands were dying of starvation. For example, Colonel Edward M. McCook, commanding a division of cavalry in the Army of the Cumberland, reported the condition of his horses on June 2. "The green wheat and leaves," he maintained, "the only food we can procure, neither strengthens nor nourishes them. I tell you their condition now so that you may not rely upon the division as serviceable, for it certainly is not."¹⁰ In order to correct the problem, the animals of all units were allowed to graze on private property, and forage was gathered from local farms to such an extent that for miles around no hay could be found. The burning of houses and barns reported by General Hascall, was the result of soldiers who disobeyed orders to spare farmers' dwellings and outbuildings. Some commands even seized from farmers mules and horses which were given a government brand and distributed for use in the army.¹¹ Despite the temporary shortages, Sherman's troops were still pleased with their provisioning, and Major Connolly boasted that he was part of "an enormous army, well fed, clad and armed, in the very heart of Dixie."¹²

The only way for Sherman to restore his supply line so that trains once again would run virtually to the front lines was to rebuild the Etowah

¹⁰OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, 387.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 351, 397. Henry C. Morhous, Reminiscences of the 123rd Regiment, N.Y.S.V., Giving a Complete History of Its Three Years Service in the War, (Greenwich, New York: People's Journal Book and Job Office, 1879), p. 93.

¹²Connolly, Three Years, p. 218.

River railroad bridge. Major-General George Stoneman, commanding one of the cavalry divisions that seized the Allatoona Pass, sent word to Sherman on June 2 stating that the railroad was undisturbed from the bridge as far south as Acworth. He also reported that the Confederates did not destroy the bridge's stone piers.¹³ Had they been demolished, it would have been next to impossible to rebuild the span quickly. By the morning of June 6, Wright and all of his Construction Corps had arrived, and work began immediately. The trains sent to retrieve the bridging timber, prepared earlier and stored along the railroads, were delayed. In order to keep the completion of the bridge on schedule, timber was cut nearby and dragged to the site by hand and with the assistance of oxen which were provided for that specific purpose by the Commissary Department. Despite the delays, the bridge was completed at noon on June 11, five and one-half days after it was begun. The structure was six hundred feet long and sixty-seven feet high, and as soon as the track was clear, trains were run to Big Shanty, on the railroad within sight of Kennesaw Mountain.¹⁴

On the day the Etowah bridge was completed, an amusing incident occurred involving the first train to arrive in Big Shanty. The engine was uncoupled from the cars, and the engineer decided to show the Confederates that their attempt to delay the Federals by destroying the bridge was not successful. He ran the engine forward to a water tank very near the skirmish line which was within range of the Confederate artillery.

¹³OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 388.

¹⁴OR, 3, V, pp. 954, 959. L. H. Eicholtz, Division Engineer, United States Military Railroad to Washington Townshend, June 27, 1864, in the collection of the Atlanta Historical Society, Atlanta, Georgia. MS 101F

According to one Union soldier, the engineer "tooted and tooted the whistle for all it was worth. You could hear the men cheer for miles."¹⁵ The whistle was answered by Confederate artillery. The engineer, however, coolly drew water from the tank for his thirsty engine and withdrew, without once being struck by the enemy's missiles.¹⁶

While the railroad bridge was being rebuilt, all supplies in Kingston and Resaca were shipped to the Etowah and unloaded. There they could be transported quickly across the river on the new road bridge and later placed in the depot under construction at Allatoona, while Resaca and Kingston were discontinued as points of supply. In the meantime, Major-General Frank P. Blair's Seventeenth Corps, which had been guarding the military railroads in northern Alabama, arrived at the Etowah River on June 6. A pontoon bridge was laid across the river, and the corps joined Sherman's main force, while one of its brigades was detached to guard the men working on the Allatoona depot.¹⁷

Sherman left no doubt about the importance of the new supply center. In a message to one of his division commanders he stressed: "I regard Allatoona of the first importance in our future plans. It is a second Chattanooga."¹⁸ To fortify the pass, earthen redoubts were built at its eastern extremity under the direction of Captain O. M. Poe, Sherman's

¹⁵Theodore F. Upson, With Sherman to the Sea (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), p. 113. Hereinafter cited as Upson, With Sherman.

¹⁶Sherman, Memoirs, p. 51.

¹⁷OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, pp. 426, 427. Cox, Atlanta, p. 94.

¹⁸OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 141.

chief engineer. In addition to the units assigned to the work, extra laborers were gathered by arresting stragglers from the front line commands and putting them to work on the redoubts.¹⁹ In mid-July, Brigadier-General John E. Smith's division of the Fifteenth Corps arrived at Allatoona from northern Alabama, where it too was assigned to railroad guard duty. Rather than being sent to the front, the division was split up and sent to garrison not only Allatoona Pass but also other important railroad strongholds.²⁰ With his railroad supply route secure once again and repaired to his skirmish line, Sherman was nearly ready to continue the campaign.

At the same time as the work progressed on Allatoona, Sherman created the Military Division of the Etowah, under the command of Major-General James B. Steedman. It encompassed the territory from Bridgeport, Alabama to Allatoona and included Cleveland, Tennessee and Rome, Georgia.²¹ The division was organized "so that the protection of Sherman's communications might be systematized under a responsible head."²² Steedman's duties included keeping railroad and telegraph communications open with the front and shifting around the railroad garrisons to provide the best safety for the track and the wires. In addition, a reserve force was to be kept ready to respond to an attack anywhere along the railroad.²³ To give further

¹⁹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 427.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 532, 543. OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 113.

²¹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, 453.

²²Cox, Atlanta, p. 142.

²³OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 453.

protection to the trains themselves, 1,000 men were detailed from Major-General John M. Palmer's Fourteenth Corps to ride on the trains as guards.²⁴

In addition to worrying about the possibility of Wheeler's cavalry or guerilla bands striking his railroads, Sherman also had to think about neutralizing the highly successful Confederate cavalry command of General Nathan Bedford Forrest. From his camps in northern Mississippi, Forrest was always a threat to cross the Tennessee River and break up the railroads leading south from Nashville to Chattanooga. Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his military advisor, General Braxton Bragg, however, would not allow Forrest the opportunity to strike Sherman's rail communications. This mistaken decision resulted from the steady devotion of Davis to his policy of defending all of the Confederacy's border with the North, rather than concentrating his forces on the various Union armies operating against the South. As one Civil War historian, George Edgar Turner, has so ably summarized: "So, while Sherman worried and Forrest lunged against the leash which held him off Sherman's extended line, Davis and Bragg huddled over the corpse of the long-dead Mississippi defense and let Sherman press on toward Atlanta."²⁵

Sherman had already sent two Union cavalry expeditions to subdue Forrest, but both were defeated. Finally in mid-July, 1864, after the abortive Red River Campaign, Major-General Andrew J. Smith was ordered by Sherman to assemble two divisions, then serving in Louisiana, from the

²⁴Ibid., p. 544.

²⁵George Edgar Turner, Victory Rode the Rails: The Strategic Place of the Railroads in the Civil War (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1953), p. 330. Hereinafter cited as Turner, Victory.

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Corps. With these troops, Smith marched into Mississippi and defeated Forrest at Tupelo on July 14.²⁶ Wheeler's cavalry was busy in guarding Johnston's flanks and was not a threat either. The guerillas, however, were as active as ever.

Guerilla raids on the Western and Atlantic occurred daily, and Steedman was constantly receiving urgent messages from his beleaguered railroad garrison commanders. For example, Colonel J. H. Moore, commanding the garrison at Resaca, reported on June 19 that "fifteen cars, loaded with forage, were burned, but not wholly destroyed. Engine not much damaged; road slightly injured. Rebels approached from the west; left in same direction. A force of fifty men, a large estimate. It was a motley band of brigands. Road will be clear. They captured 12 prisoners."²⁷ All the breaks were small and quickly repaired by W. W. Wright's efficient and hard-working Construction Corps. The soldiers at the front lines were aware of what was going on to the rear, and their contempt for such irregular warfare is shown in a statement by Major Connolly of the 123rd Illinois. "I suppose," he wrote in a letter to his wife, "they imagine their 'critter companies' are making havoc with our railroad line which supplies us with rations. But all their efforts are futile."²⁸

After weeks of enduring constant harassment by partisan groups, Sherman authorized severe and brutal measures for dealing with them. One

²⁶Sherman, Memoris, p. 52.

²⁷OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 532.

²⁸Connolly, Three Years, p. 223.

favorite tactic of the guerillas was to place an explosive torpedo, which is similar to a modern land-mine, on the track to blow up a passing train. Sherman sent specific instructions to General Steedman on how to handle guerillas and other saboteurs:

The use of torpedos in blowing up our cars and the road after they are in our possession, is simply malicious. It cannot alter the great problem, but simply makes trouble. Now, if torpedos are found in the possession of any enemy to our rear, you may cause them to be put on the ground and tested by wagon-loads of prisoners, or if need be, citizens implicated in their use. In like manner, if a torpedo is suspected on any part of the road, order the point to be tested by a car-load of prisoners, or citizens implicated, drawn by a long rope. Of course an enemy cannot complain of his own traps.²⁹

Steedman responded with a general order to provide better protection for all means of supply transportation going to the front. He authorized the arrest and trial of any civilians found too close to the railroad track or garrisons and also ordered patrols to check all track, bridges, and tunnels on a daily basis. And finally, any body of guards accompanying supplies or equipment heading to the front could be augmented, if a garrison commander felt that the force was not sufficient to protect its charge.³⁰ Even with these additional measures, the attacks persisted. Sherman was eventually driven to authorize the execution of captured guerillas. On July 9, he declared: "Don't spare the rascals at work to destroy our road. I approve the severest measures."³¹ Five days later, he ordered that "if guerillas trouble the road or wires between Kingston and Acworth, they

²⁹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 579.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 634-635.

³¹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 97.

should be shot without mercy."³²

On June 9, two days before the Etowah railroad bridge was completed, the Union forces began to advance again. Ten days' supplies were accumulated for the march. Beginning on June 12, for the first time during the campaign, Sherman's three armies drew supplies from separate locations. This move was made to achieve greater efficiency in delivering supplies to the front lines. The Army of the Tennessee drew its provisions from the depot at Big Shanty, the Army of the Ohio from Allatoona, and the Army of the Cumberland from Acworth.³³

From June 11-19, Sherman's troops took up the fight against Johnston's men along the ten-mile long Brush Mountain - Lost Mountain line. On the nineteenth, the Confederates withdrew to the Kennesaw Mountain line which was roughly five miles in length and in the shape of an arc, protecting the town of Marietta and its depot. The Federals were entrenched opposite the entire length of the Confederate line. Here, Johnston would hold Sherman at bay for two weeks. At Kennesaw, as had been the custom for several weeks, the rain came down in torrents. In a communiqué to Washington on June 21, Sherman reported that "this is the nineteenth day of rain, and the prospect of clear weather as far off as ever. The roads are impassable, and fields and woods become quagmires after a few wagons have crossed, yet we are at work all the time."³⁴ There were several east-west roads directly behind Sherman's armies but very few north-south thoroughfares which could be used to deliver supplies to those

³²Ibid., p. 141.

³³OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, pp. 428, 466.

³⁴Ibid., p. 544.

troops farthest from the railroad, that is, Thomas' right and Schofield's army. Consequently, routes to these units had to be improvised, and they quickly became as useless from the effects of the rain as the original roads. The soldiers and animals of Sherman's armies never lacked the essential supplies at Kennesaw; in fact, Sherman issued a special field order on June 26 informing commanders that rations were being issued "from 50 to 75 per cent over the effective strength."³⁵ But, the incessant rain and poor road conditions did not allow an extension of the line southward to flank Johnston's entrenched position again.³⁶ Grumbling about the disagreeable weather, one Union soldier remarked: "It beats all how much it rains here."³⁷

Opposing Johnston's Kennesaw position, Sherman placed McPherson's army on the north end of the Union line on the low range of hills known as Brush Mountain, directly opposite Kennesaw Mountain. This position was made very strong in order to protect the railroad which was in working order all the way to McPherson's skirmish line.³⁸ Continuing the line southward was Thomas' army, with that of Schofield on the southern extremity of the Union forces and slightly refusing Sherman's right flank. Heavy skirmishes were a daily occurrence, but nowhere were any substantial gains achieved that would force Johnston to retreat. As the delay continued, Sherman became increasingly worried about his railroad supply line. In a message to Thomas, he revealed his

³⁵Ibid., pp. 601-602. Connolly, Three Years, pp. 223-224.

³⁶Cox, Atlanta, pp. 104, 117. Sherman, Memoirs, pp. 51-52.

³⁷Upson, With Sherman, p. 115.

³⁸Sherman, Memoirs, p. 56.

uneasiness: "I believe he [Johnston] holds on to await till the last moment the result of his cavalry raids to our rear."³⁹ No large body of regular Confederate cavalry was yet dispatched to break up the railroads supplying Sherman, and the limited damage caused by the persistent partisan raids was quickly and easily repaired. But the worry caused by the stalemated situation provided the impetus for Sherman's next move.

After the thwarted attempt to turn the Confederate left on June 22 at the Battle of Kolb Farm, Sherman decided to abandon his usual tactic of the flanking march and attack Johnston head-on. The decision was made partly because the state of the roads did not yet permit the heavy traffic necessary for a march around the Confederate left flank, even though the weather had cleared on the twenty-second, and by the battle on the twenty-seventh, the temperature had risen to well over one hundred degrees. Three attacks were launched on the morning of June 27, one each against the two peaks of Kennesaw Mountain on the Confederate right and one against Johnston's center at a point called the "Dead Angle." All three were repulsed, and the result was 2,500 Union casualties. At the same time as these assaults, Brigadier-General Jacob D. Cox's division of Schofield's army probed far to the south and occupied a position which threatened the Western and Atlantic south of Marietta. At the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, Sherman learned his lesson about the futility of assaulting an entrenched position directly. With the roads now hardening fast and Cox's division in a threatening position, Sherman decided on a bold move. He would take up the railroad back to Allatoona and guard the pass and depot with a portion of

³⁹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 535.

Garrard's cavalry. Then he would send McPherson's army to flank the Kennesaw line along the same route as Cox. For this maneuver, the supply wagons would carry ten days' rations.⁴⁰

As early as June 22, preparations were begun for the march, and from then until July 2, supplies were accumulated. Throughout this period, Schofield complained that his troops were not receiving enough provisions, for he was farther from his depot at Allatoona than the other two armies were from theirs. The situation worsened when scurvy broke out in the Army of the Ohio around June 30.⁴¹ By the time the flanking march began, however, the supply discrepancies and scurvy were corrected, and all of Sherman's armies were primed and ready to go.

On the night of July 2, McPherson left his position on Sherman's extreme left, and his trenches were occupied by Garrard's troopers in an attempt to keep the Confederates from realizing what the Federals were doing. Soon, however, Johnston learned of the Union move, and he abandoned his positions on Kennesaw, and withdrew to Smyrna, on the railroad four miles south of Marietta. Thinking he could catch Johnston in the confusion of crossing the Chattahoochee River and destroy him, Sherman ordered all his armies to pursue the Confederates. The next two days were spent skirmishing with the Confederate rear guard. Finally, on July 4, Johnston occupied an exceptionally strong line of earthworks that had been prepared ahead of time to protect the Western and Atlantic railroad bridge across the Chattahoochee. With his plan to wreck Johnston foiled, Sherman pondered his

⁴⁰Sherman, Memoirs, pp. 61-62.

⁴¹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 4, p. 645. OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, pp. 20-22.

next move. In the meantime, the Union lines of supply and communication would have to catch up with the armies.

On July 3, just as the pursuit of Johnston to the river began, Sherman ordered Wright to commence repairs on the railroad so that it could keep the Union troops well provisioned. Construction trains summoned from the area of Buzzard Roost were delayed by a guerilla raid but reached Big Shanty on the morning of July 5 and started working immediately. In only one day, the two small breaks near Marietta and Vining's Station were repaired, and trains ran to the latter place.⁴² Because Sherman felt he would spend several days probing the Chattahoochee for suitable crossings, he directed that a new field depot be established at Marietta so that supplies could be stockpiled there for transfer to army supply wagons. To assist the Quartermaster Department in unloading provisions in Marietta, three regiments, each with an average strength of 330 men, were detailed from each army.⁴³ In addition, a brigade of infantry was encamped near Kennesaw Mountain to guard the railroad and to defend Marietta in case of attack. Buildings in Marietta itself were altered to function as forts for the added protection of the town and the depot. Finally, the Military Division of the Etowah was extended to include Kennesaw Mountain.⁴⁴

On July 7, the Federal troops crossed the Chattahoochee River at two places. A detachment from Schofield's army used pontoon boats and surprised a Confederate unit at Soap Creek which empties into the Chattahoochee from

⁴²OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 65. OR, 3, V, p. 954.

⁴³OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 113.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 43, 62-63, 113, 141-142.

the west bank about five miles north of Vining's Station. Once across, they fortified their position in anticipation of a counterattack which never came. Meanwhile, Garrard's troopers crossed the Chattahoochee at Roswell, a small manufacturing town also on the west bank of the river and twelve miles north of Vining's Station. During the next two days, Major-General Greenville M. Dodge's Sixteenth Corps crossed at Roswell, and Major-General Howard's corps of Thomas' army followed suit at Power's Ferry, two miles south of Soap Creek. So, by July 9, large portions of Sherman's forces were on the east or Atlanta side of the Chattahoochee at three places, and Johnston's position on the west side had become untenable. That night, he withdrew across the river and burned the railroad bridge and three other neighboring bridges, two of them pontoon and one of the trestle variety. When Sherman informed Washington of the situation on July 11, he was in control of both banks of the Chattahoochee and he predicted that now would "commence the real game for Atlanta, and I expect pretty sharp practice, but I think we have the advantage, and propose to keep it."⁴⁵

From July 10-16, the Federals prepared for the final phase of the campaign, the actual fight for Atlanta itself. During these days, Sherman's soldiers busied themselves "in strengthening the several points for the proposed passage of the Chattahoochee, in increasing the number and capacity of the bridges, rearranging the garrisons to our rear, and in bringing forward supplies."⁴⁶ Provisions were accumulated at Chattahoochee, Allatoona,

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 113-114.

⁴⁶Sherman, Memoirs, p. 71.

and Marietta, with some even collected as far forward as Vining's Station.⁴⁷ To provide additional capacity to the depot, a sidetrack was added at Allatoona to accommodate more railroad cars. At the front, because of the yet uncertain hold of the Union forces on the east bank of the Chattahoochee, supply wagons were allowed to cross the river only to unload their cargo. As soon as this task was completed, they were returned to the west bank, where they could be more easily protected.⁴⁸ With these preparations, Sherman figured that if the railroad were broken by cavalry action between Nashville and Chattanooga or between Chattanooga and Allatoona, his armies could live on stockpiled supplies from the closest depot and continue the struggle for Atlanta.⁴⁹ With everything in readiness, Sherman's troops began the general advance against Atlanta on July 17.

⁴⁷OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, pp. 137, 150.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 120, 122.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 150.

CHAPTER V

"THE SINGLE THREAD THAT CONNECTS US WITH HOME AND SUPPLIES IS BROKEN,"
JULY 17 - SEPTEMBER 2, 1864

Sherman's plan for subduing Atlanta called for a general advance along the railroad and from the various crossings of the Chattahoochee in order to cover the line of supply and not expose it to any sudden lunges by Confederate cavalry. At the same time, the Union right would extend southward on the east side of the city in an attempt to sever the Georgia Railroad, leading east to August. Thus, Johnston would be faced with the unenviable decision of protecting either Atlanta or the Georgia road, for his numbers did not permit both.¹ (See Map 4 on Page 85 for movements of armies from July 17 - September 2, 1864.)

For the move on the city, each of Sherman's armies "was supplied by a separate route in order to avoid unnecessary confusion."² Because the railroad bridge over the Chattahoochee had not been rebuilt, all supplies had to be picked up at points on the west bank of the river and transported by wagon over the pontoon bridges and unloaded at the Federal camps. McPherson drew his provisions from Marietta by way of Roswell. Schofield's supplies came from Smyrna, while those of Thomas were loaded at Vining's Station.

On July 18, without previous warning, from Richmond, General John B. Hood succeeded Johnston in command of the Army of Tennessee. The growing dissatisfaction of Confederate President Jefferson Davis at Johnston's

¹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 108. Cox, Atlanta, p. 146.

²Clauss, "Rail Support," p. 416.



seeming inability to arrest the progress of Sherman brought the sudden change. Hood was known throughout the Union and Confederate armies as a fighter, but he also had a reputation for brashness and foolhardiness in battle. Grievous wounds suffered at Gettysburg and Chickamauga, which led to the incapacity of his right arm and the amputation of his left leg, respectively, were the grim testament to his unthinking courage. Hood wasted no time in changing Johnston's strategy of recent months.

On July 20, he attacked portions of the Army of the Cumberland as they were crossing Peachtree Creek, a westerly-flowing stream north of Atlanta that empties into the Chattahoochee River. The Battle of Peachtree Creek resulted in many more Confederate casualties than Federal. Two days later, after the advance of McPherson's troops on the east side of Atlanta cut the Georgia Railroad, Hood sallied forth from the city's defenses in another attempt to pick off a portion of the Union armies. This time, Hood employed Sherman's favorite maneuver -- the flanking march. During the night of July 21, General William H. Hardee's Confederate corps marched around the left flank of McPherson's army. Throughout the next day, Hardee's corps and that of Confederate General Stephen D. Lee assaulted the Union lines, in some cases from front and rear simultaneously. But McPherson's troops held, and again Hood's casualties far outweighed those of Sherman. This engagement, called the Battle of Atlanta, did result in one tremendous loss for the Union.

While riding to an endangered portion of his line, General McPherson was shot and killed by Confederate skirmishers. The death of one of the Army's most promising officers was a great blow to Sherman. More often than not, McPherson's troops had composed the flanking columns that had led to

success after success for the Federals during the campaign. In consultation with Thomas and Schofield, it took Sherman five days to decide on McPherson's successor. The final choice was Major-General Oliver Otis Howard, who was in command of the Fourth Corps of the Army of the Cumberland. For the remainder of the campaign, Howard performed admirably, and the effectiveness of the Army of the Tennessee was not diminished.

During the Battle of Atlanta, one aspect of the fighting foreshadowed events to come. General Joseph H. Wheeler's Confederate cavalry corps accompanied Hardee on his flanking march. Instead of participating in the attack on McPherson's front line divisions, Wheeler's troopers rode farther eastward and struck the Army of the Tennessee's supply wagons parked at Decatur, situated on the Georgia Railroad about five miles east of Atlanta. The wagon park was defended by the brigade of Colonel John W. Sprague who, with the assistance of another brigade of Federal infantry, successfully defended the wagons in his charge. Sprague "got his teams harnessed up, and safely conducted his train to the rear of Schofield's position, holding in check Wheeler's cavalry till he got off all his trains, with the exception of three or four wagons."³ In about three weeks' time, Wheeler would begin a similar operation but for much higher stakes.

With the Georgia Railroad irreparably cut and the Western and Atlantic already in Union hands, Sherman began a series of movements designed to sever Hood's two remaining railroad supply lines, the Atlanta and West Point and the Macon and Western. Both of these lines met at a small town six miles southwest of Atlanta known as East Point. From there, they continued as a single track into the city. The maneuver called for the

³Sherman, Memoirs, p. 80. Cox, Atlanta, p. 171.

Army of the Tennessee to leave its position astride the Georgia road and march behind the Armies of the Ohio and the Cumberland to the west side of Atlanta. A thrust at the two open railroads could be organized there. Because of the uneasiness caused by Wheeler's attack on Decatur, all of Sherman's supply wagons, except those few directly attached to each division, were grouped for safety behind Thomas' army in the center of the Union position. They could leave this area only when going to pick up and deliver supplies.⁴

The march concluded in the Battle of Ezra Church on July 28. This small Methodist house of worship was the scene of the last of Hood's sallies from the defenses of Atlanta. Here, as with the two previous battles, Confederate losses were far higher than those of the Union troops. In the short space of eight days, Hood had bled his army to exhaustion. The result was the retreat of his badly demoralized troops into the defenses of Atlanta and the beginning of the month-long siege of the city.

During the movement that resulted in the action of Ezra Church, began the rebuilding of the railroad bridge over the Chattahoochee. By order of General Thomas, the work, which "presented the most formidable engineering problem that had yet confronted the [Construction] Corps during the campaign,"⁵ commenced on July 23. The endeavor was supervised by the Corps' most outstanding engineer, E. C. Smeed, and carried out by the First and Third Divisions of bridge builders.⁶ Work on the structure was stopped at noon the next day, because a defeat in battle on the west side of Atlanta

⁴OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, pp. 269, 331.

⁵Clauss, "Rail Support," p. 417.

⁶OR, 3, IV, p. 958.

could have resulted in a retreat that would leave potentially a finished railroad bridge in Confederate hands. Construction started again on August 2 and ended three days later.

On August 5, railroad service to the camps was resumed, and Union Army supply wagons rolled regularly to within three miles of Atlanta. The job had required four and one-half days in all, and the bridge itself was 780 feet long and 92 feet high. The timber required to complete the span was gathered in the surrounding woods, and the stone piers left standing by the hastily withdrawing Confederates were used to support the framework.⁷ Despite the short time required to complete the bridge, "no night work was done upon it whatever, but the men worked from daylight till dark, with one hour intermission at noon for dinner."⁸ At the time of its completion, the bridge was the largest yet built by the Construction Corps and a fitting example of the efficient and superb work done throughout the campaign by the men of the United States Military Railroad.

Also concurrent with the fighting at Ezra Church was the first of several Union cavalry raids launched to sever Hood's remaining railroads. The raiding force was composed of the commands of Major-General George Stoneman and Brigadier-General Edward M. McCook. The plan called for them to strike the Macon and Western about twenty miles south of Atlanta at Jonesboro. Before the expedition began, Stoneman asked Sherman to allow him to continue on to the Confederate prisoner-of-war camp at Andersonville, Georgia after the destruction of the railroad for the purpose of freeing the Union soldiers incarcerated there. Though he

⁷Clauss, "Rail Support," p. 417.

⁸OR, 3, V, pp. 951-952.

considered it a risky adventure, Sherman agreed.

The raid began on July 28, and rather than joining McCook on the railroad, Stoneman rode to Macon, where he was captured. Instead of liberating the prisoners at Andersonville, he became one of them. McCook reached the railroad but was chased away by Wheeler's Confederate troopers before he could finish the job of wrecking the track. Some of McCook's men were eventually captured, while the rest limped back to Marietta. The railroad was quickly repaired, and the flow of supplies to Hood was not interrupted. Sherman was so disgusted with the performance of his cavalry that he decided to use it "hereafter to cover the railroad, and use infantry and artillery against Atlanta."⁹

Because of the mobile defense provided for the army by the cavalry, Sherman became very worried for the safety of both his wagon trains and his railroads during the absence of Stoneman and McCook. To provide better protection for his wagons, Sherman ordered them placed behind the center of his forces or on the west bank of the Chattahoochee.¹⁰ He expressed his concern for the railroads in a communique to Brigadier-General Joseph D. Webster in Nashville. "The enemy," Sherman wrote, "will surely be on our railroad very soon."¹¹

Coupled with the possibility of a Confederate effort to break their line of supply, the Federals were running low on ammunition. The tremendous expenditures in the three battles initiated by Hood's sallies from Atlanta's

⁹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, pp. 340, 446.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 256.

¹¹Ibid., p. 321.

trenches, the ongoing siege of the city, and the skirmishing so characteristic of the entire campaign caused Sherman to issue orders regulating the firing of his artillery. For example, each army commander was directed on August 1 to allow his artillery batteries only ten to fifteen shots directly at the city of Atlanta from 4 p.m. till dark.¹² In addition, Sherman decided to extend his earthworks toward East Point in order to stretch Hood's defending lines to the breaking point because the Confederate works were too formidable, "and we cannot spare the ammunition for a bombardment."¹³ The need to conserve his supply of ammunition would be a nagging problem for Sherman through the end of the campaign.

After the Battle of Ezra Church, when Sherman's armies were grouped on the west side of Atlanta, the depot at Roswell was no longer needed. The bridge over the Chattahoochee connecting the depot with the line of supply to the Army of the Tennessee was destroyed on August 6, and from that time, Howard's troops drew their provisions entirely from the stores at Vining's Station.¹⁴ The destruction of the bridge was reported the next day by Marietta's garrison commander, Brigadier-General John McArthur. His message to Sherman also warned of clouds of dust which had been seen east of Roswell.¹⁵ These could indicate a move by Hood's cavalry to break the Western and Atlantic Railroad. Because the Union cavalry division of Brigadier-General Kenner Garrard was operating in the vicinity of Roswell

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 324, 325.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 308.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 238, 406.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 417.

and presumably would have reported sighting any dust clouds, Sherman did not believe that Confederate horsemen were riding to threaten his supply line to Chattanooga. Sherman, however, did not dismiss the possibility. He cautioned McArthur to be vigilant, because soon "the enemy will attempt by his cavalry to strike our road."¹⁶

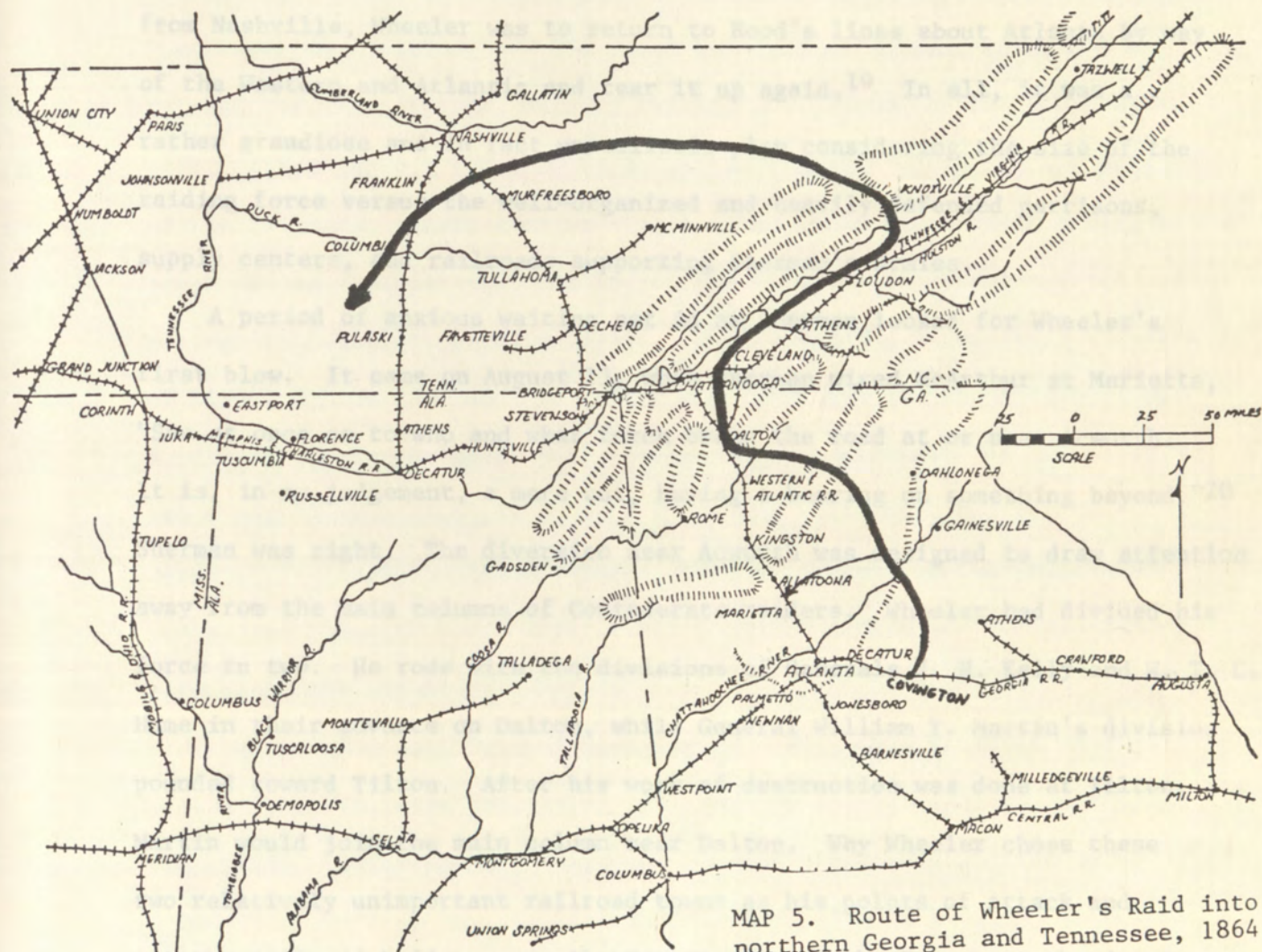
Sherman did not have to wait long for the fulfillment of his prediction. On August 11, Garrard sent an urgent message that "a large part"¹⁷ of Hood's cavalry was in the vicinity of Covington, east of Decatur, and that they were reported to be assembling for a raid into Tennessee and possibility on into Kentucky. One of Sherman's greatest fears since the beginning of the campaign, that the Confederate cavalry would be turned loose to break his railroad supply line, was about to be realized. (See Map 5 on page 93 for Wheeler's Raid.)

The recent and ineffective Union cavalry raids had convinced Hood that he could safely detach his own horsemen to operate on the Union rail lines.¹⁸ Hood ordered Wheeler to assemble a force of approximately 4,000 troopers at Covington, well to the east of the area occupied by the contending armies and thus, he hoped, beyond the watchful eyes of the Union cavalry patrolling near Roswell. Wheeler's mission was to ride north and tear up the Western and Atlantic as he advanced. He would then cross the Tennessee

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 459.

¹⁸Stanley F. Horn, The Army of Tennessee (Indianapolis, Indiana: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1941), p. 363. John Bell Hood, Advance and Retreat: Personal Experiences in the United States and Confederate States Armies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), pp. 197-198. Hereinafter cited as Hood, Advance.



MAP 5. Route of Wheeler's Raid into northern Georgia and Tennessee, 1864

From: Thomas Lawrence Connelly's
Autumn of Glory, 1971. Page 2.

River near Chattanooga and ride to destroy the Nashville and Chattanooga and the Nashville and Decatur railroads, while leaving 1,200 men behind to harass any crews attempting to repair the track in Georgia and to break it again should it be mended. After destroying the railroads leading south from Nashville, Wheeler was to return to Hood's lines about Atlanta by way of the Western and Atlantic and tear it up again.¹⁹ In all, it was a rather grandiose and in fact unrealistic plan considering the size of the raiding force versus the well-organized and heavily defended garrisons, supply centers, and railroads supporting Sherman's armies.

A period of anxious waiting set in as Sherman looked for Wheeler's first blow. It came on August 13, when Sherman wired McArthur at Marietta, "See at once as to who and what force broke the road at or near Acworth. It is, in my judgement, a mere cut, having a bearing on something beyond."²⁰ Sherman was right. The diversion near Acworth was designed to draw attention away from the main columns of Confederate raiders. Wheeler had divided his force in two. He rode with the divisions of Generals J. H. Kelly and W. T. C. Hume in their advance on Dalton, while General William T. Martin's division pounded toward Tilton. After his work of destruction was done at Tilton, Martin would join the main column near Dalton. Why Wheeler chose these two relatively unimportant railroad towns as his points of attack and not the railroad bridges over the Oostanaula and the Etowah or the depot at Allatoona is puzzling. Perhaps he and Hood believed that striking lightly guarded towns would make the work of wrecking the railroad easier, especially considering the small size of Wheeler's forces and the recent exhausting

¹⁹John P. Dyer, "Fightin' Joe" Wheeler (University, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1941), pp. 187-188. OR, 1, XXXVIII, 3, p. 957.

²⁰OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 486.

encounter with their Union counterparts south of Atlanta.²¹

The first indication of any danger to Dalton came to Sherman on August 14. That morning he received a message from Colonel Green B. Raum, commanding the garrison at Resaca. "Dalton has been attacked," Raum warned, "and reported captured."²² The Union garrison at Dalton, commanded by Colonel Bernard Laiboldt, engaged Wheeler's troopers for two hours before being driven through the town to an earthwork constructed for the defense of the railroad. There they were approached three times under a flag of truce by the Confederates, calling on the Federals to surrender. In his message to Laiboldt, Wheeler urged: "To prevent the unnecessary effusion of blood, I have the honor to demand the immediate and unconditional surrender of the forces under your command at this garrison."²³ Laiboldt retorted: "I have been placed here to defend this post, but not to surrender."²⁴ After the third refusal, Wheeler brought up two artillery pieces and began to shell the earthwork and continued the bombardment throughout the night.²⁵

On the same day, General Steedman in Chattanooga received an urgent message from Laiboldt telling of the siege of the garrison at Dalton and requesting reinforcements. Steedman hurriedly gathered a force of about 2,000 infantry from the vicinity and directed them to be ready to move at a moment's notice. At 6 p.m., they were loaded onto railroad cars

²¹Ibid., p. 957. Hood, Advance, pp. 197-198.

²²OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 503.

²³OR, 1, XXXVIII, 1, p. 324.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

and headed south toward Dalton. The train was halted, however, by other trains fleeing northward away from Wheeler's Confederates.²⁶

Early the next day, August 15, Wheeler broke off his siege of Dalton because of the absence of expected reinforcements from Martin's division and began to withdraw north toward Tunnel Hill. When Laiboldt quickly organized his men to attack the retreating Confederates, Steedman heard the firing and was relieved to know that Dalton was still holding out. He continued on to the town, unloaded his troops, and helped Laiboldt's men drive Wheeler's force away. Steedman could not pursue, however, because he had no cavalry with him. One unusual feature of the fighting to relieve Dalton was the use of several companies of the Fourteenth Regiment United States Colored Troops by Steedman.²⁷ Their participation in the operation against Wheeler was the only instance of the employment of black troops in battle in Georgia during the Atlanta Campaign.

On August 16, instead of crossing the Tennessee River near Chattanooga and attempting to cut the railroads south of Nashville as ordered, Wheeler rode into East Tennessee toward Knoxville. Sherman could not have been more delighted. In a message to Washington, he wrote, "Wheeler cannot disturb Knoxville or Loudon [Tennessee]. He may hurt some of the minor points but, on the whole, East Tennessee is a good place for him to break down his horses, and a poor place to steal new ones."²⁸ At the same time that Laiboldt and Steedman were engaging Wheeler, another force of infantry numbering about 2,000 was being assembled in Cartersville from regiments

²⁶OR, 1, XXXVIII, 2, p. 495. OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 504.

²⁷OR, 1, XXXVIII, 1, p. 324. OR, 1, XXXVIII, 2, pp. 495-496.

²⁸OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 547.

sent from Rome and Marietta. Like Steedman's group, they were loaded onto a train and sent north to aid in the expulsion of Wheeler from Georgia.²⁹

Sherman sent word with Brigadier-General John E. Smith, in command of the expedition from Cartersville, to force Wheeler into the mountains of North Carolina in order to wear down his horses in the rough terrain.³⁰ Wheeler managed to sidestep his pursuers and continue up the Tennessee Valley, but he left behind a detachment of 200 picked men to disrupt any attempts to repair the railroad and frequently to re-break it.³¹ When he reached the vicinity of Knoxville, Wheeler turned his divisions westward, crossed the mountains, and headed for the railroads below Nashville. In early September, he managed to tear up seven miles of the Nashville and Chattanooga but was quickly chased out of Tennessee by a combination of Union forces in the area.

Later that month, Wheeler and General Nathan B. Forrest launched another raid, this time against the Nashville and Decatur and tore up nearly thirty miles of that line. This railroad, however, was no longer used by Sherman for the transportation of supplies to the front. Instead, since June, only empty trains returning to Nashville from the front had used it. Wheeler's and Forrest's actions in Middle Tennessee came so late and were so ineffective that they did not alter the course of the Atlanta Campaign.³²

²⁹Ibid., pp. 514, 517. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, An Artilleryman's Diary (Wisconsin History Commission: Original Papers, No. 8 (Wisconsin History Commission, 1914), p. 239. Hereinafter cited as Jones, Artilleryman's Diary.

³⁰OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 513.

³¹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 3, p. 958.

³²Weber, Northern, pp. 204-205. S. M. Bowman and R. B. Irwin, Sherman and His Campaigns; A Military Biography (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1865), p. 215. Hereinafter cited as Bowman and Irwin, Sherman.

Since the cavalry was considered the eyes of the army and thus used primarily to keep the opposing commanders informed about the movements of the enemy, "Wheeler could only annoy Sherman; his absence might destroy Hood."³³

For all his efforts, Wheeler failed to do much harm to the Western and Atlantic. His raiders broke the railroad near Acworth and destroyed a few miles of track in the vicinity of Dalton and the same north of Tunnel Hill.³⁴ Still, the damage did give the Union soldiers some worry. In response to the situation, Private Jenkin Lloyd Jones, an artillerist in the garrison that protected the Etowah River bridge, wrote: "The single thread that connects us with home and supplies is broken."³⁵ Despite the ever-present guerillas and the detachment of 200 men left by Wheeler, the repair of the railroad and telegraph lines commenced immediately. By August 18, all the damage was repaired and full communication with Chattanooga was restored. So, from the first break on the fourteenth until the restoration of uninterrupted rail traffic on the nineteenth, operation of the Western and Atlantic and its supporting telegraph service had been interrupted for only five days.³⁶

Together with the strain on supplies occasioned by the three battles between Sherman's and Hood's armies in late July and the resulting siege of Atlanta, the temporary break in the rail line to Chattanooga caused a flurry of orders cautioning commanders to be economical in their use of provisions. A circular from Brigadier-General William F. Barry, Sherman's

³³Bowman and Irwin, Sherman, p. 209.

³⁴OR, 1, XXXVIII, 3, p. 958.

³⁵Jones, Artilleryman's Diary, p. 240.

³⁶OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, pp. 558-559, 566, 569, 588.

chief of artillery, on August 15 cautioned battery commanders that "all unnecessary or doubtful expenditure of field artillery ammunition be prohibited, and the strictest economy in its use be"³⁷ practiced.

Sherman calculated that he had two weeks worth of supplies on hand. If these provisions were husbanded carefully, he could continue with his plans to cut Hood's remaining railroads despite a possible lengthy interruption of the flow of supplies from Chattanooga. In this way, with both the Federal and Confederate lines of supply broken, Sherman felt that he could subsist long enough on his accumulated provisions to force Hood to evacuate Atlanta.³⁸ In one instance, however, the Federals were not frugal with supplies. In mid-August, Sherman brought down from Chattanooga four 4.2 Inch Parrott rifles. With these guns, he intended to shell the city of Atlanta directly and thus demoralize the remaining citizens. The guns began firing on August 10 with about 4,000 rounds on hand. Three days later, the gun crews had exhausted their ammunition and any extra to be found. Not until the eighteenth, when more projectiles could be secured, did the big guns resume their destructive work.³⁹

As early as August 16, in the midst of Wheeler's raid, Sherman drew up a plan for a movement which would result in the end of the campaign. It called for all surplus and unfit men, horses, wagons, and other excess material to be sent to the west side of the Chattahoochee River and placed within the extensive earthworks used by Johnston in mid-July. In this way, they could be more easily protected from attacks by Hood's infantry or the

³⁷Ibid., p. 519.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 505. 528. 541.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 447. 473, 571, 594.

remainder of his cavalry. To protect this position, the Twentieth Corps would be detached from the main body of the army and entrenched on the east bank of the Chattahoochee, covering the railroad bridge and Pace's and Turner's ferries.

Sherman could then abandon his trenches before Atlanta and march in a wide arc south and then southeastward. In so doing, he would sever the Atlanta and West Point Railroad at the towns of Red Oak and Fairburn. After this job of destruction was completed, the march would be continued to Jonesboro, where the Macon and Western, Hood's last supply line, would be broken. With no railroads remaining to connect him to the rest of the Confederacy, Hood would have no choice but to give up Atlanta. Finally, communication would be maintained between the Union forces on the west side of the Chattahoochee and Sherman by defending the bridges at Sandtown, on the river ten miles downstream from the railroad bridge, and the depots at Allatoona and Marietta would be reinforced against the possibility of cavalry attack.⁴⁰

Although it was a complex plan calling for a great deal of coordination among the various units, the present state of Hood's Confederates, demoralized and diminished in numbers from the heavy fighting in July and the resultant siege, offered a very good chance for success. Even more important, the bulk of Hood's cavalry was away on a useless raid in Tennessee, and any movements of the Union forces would be hard to detect without plenty of horsemen for scouting duty.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 546.

⁴¹Sherman, Memories, p. 104.

As the orders trickled down to division level, each unit was directed to select its best wagons in which to carry 100 rounds of musket ammunition for each man. Also, these same wagons were to carry fifteen days' forage of 6 pounds of grain per day for each animal and fifteen days' rations for the troops, in addition to the three days' quantity carried by each man in his haversack.⁴¹ Such orders as these were typical of the campaign and reflected the great amount of forethought and organization put into every move by Sherman and all his officers on every level.

Before Sherman could complete his preparations for the march to Jonesboro, he was approached by Brigadier-General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick, who commanded a division of cavalry, about the possibility of yet another raid on Hood's railroads. Sherman agreed, hoping that a successful operation would force Confederate evacuation of Atlanta and prevent him from having to execute the risky and delicate maneuver he was planning. From August 18-22, Kilpatrick conducted his raid and did manage to break the Macon and Western near Jonesboro. On his return, Kilpatrick bragged that his effort had been a success and that ten days would be required to repair the tracks. The next day, however, trains were running into Atlanta as usual, and Sherman "became more than ever convinced that cavalry could not or would not work hard enough to disable a railroad properly, and therefore resolved at once to proceed to the execution of my original plan."⁴²

With the defense arrangements at the Chattahoochee completed and his army trimmed down to 60,000 seasoned veterans, Sherman began the

⁴¹Ibid., p. 566.

⁴²Sherman, Memoirs, p. 104.

final march of the campaign on August 26.⁴³ As Sherman suspected, Hood believed that the Federals were retreating because the Confederates did not have sufficient cavalry to warn otherwise. Also, not having heard anything from Wheeler, Hood believed that the raid had succeeded in destroying Sherman's railroad supply line and that the Union troops were retreating across the Chattahoochee for lack of food.⁴⁴ Hood could not have been more wrong. So, while the Federals advanced on Jonesboro and dangerously exposed their left flank to Atlanta, no attempt was made by the Confederates to take advantage of the situation.

During the march, Sherman's armies experienced a few supply problems, some of which were not new. The nagging problem of dwindling supplies of ammunition recurred. The rifled-muskets of the infantry were to be fired "only when absolutely necessary," and artillery rounds were to be used only in "case of absolute necessity" and even then "carefully expended."⁴⁵ The bland diet of the army and the scarcity of vegetables caused many soldiers and even some officers to contract scurvy. They remedied this condition on the march by gathering green corn from nearby fields and preparing it in the usual way by roasting it over a fire. Hence the name "roasting ears" was used to describe this welcome break from the daily fare of salt pork and army bread.⁴⁶ As always, forage was hard to obtain in

⁴³OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, pp. 482, 678.

⁴⁴Cox, Atlanta, p. 197. Sherman, Memoirs, p. 105.

⁴⁵OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, pp. 752, 761.

⁴⁶Sherman, Memoirs, pp. 106-107. Connolly, Three Years, p. 252. The troops of both the Union and Confederate armies picked any fresh fruits and vegetables they could find along the line of march. This practice continued throughout the entire Atlanta Campaign, and it was done to prevent scurvy which had been a problem in Sherman's armies, especially before the campaign began. For further information, see: Upson, With Sherman, p. 122. Jones, Artilleryman's Diary, pp. 230-231. Connolly, Three Years, p. 216.

sufficient quantities. What corn the soldiers did not pick was collected for the horses and mules, and some extra grain came by way of Sandtown from stocks in the rear of the army.⁴⁷

Sherman's advance intersected the Atlanta and West Point Railroad at Fairburn and Red Oak as scheduled. At each place, Federal infantry thoroughly wrecked the railroad on August 29. By the thirty-first, they had crossed the Flint River, west of Jonesboro about two miles, and had brought the town and the railroad under direct artillery fire. That day and the next, September 1, the Battle of Jonesboro was fought against two of Hood's corps that were rushed south to try to keep Sherman off the Macon and Western. In the meantime, detachments of Confederate cavalry tested the position of the Twentieth Corps at the Chattahoochee but found the troops too strongly entrenched about the railroad and ferries.⁴⁸ During the night of September 1-2, the defeated Confederates at Jonesboro withdrew south along the railroad seven miles to Lovejoy Station.

Realizing that his last railroad was cut by the defeat at Jonesboro, Hood ordered the destruction of whatever his men could not carry or would be of use to the Federals, and then he joined the rest of the army at Lovejoy. The explosions heard during the night resulting from Hood's work of destruction caused Sherman to fear for the safety of the troops defending the railroad who, he felt, might be under assault by the Confederate forces remaining in Atlanta. With dawn on September 2 came welcome news from Major-General Henry W. Slocum, then commanding the Twentieth Corps. Atlanta

⁴⁷OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, pp. 639, 697.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 691-692.

was in Union hands! Sherman briefly opposed the new Confederate line at Lovejoy, but deciding against further continuation of the campaign, he marched his army back to Atlanta to enjoy its hard-won victory and to receive a much-needed rest and refitting.

On September 3, Colonel Wright was directed to repair the railroad into Atlanta, and with a division of the Construction Corps held at the Chattahoochee for that task, the track was mended and trains arrived in the conquered city the same day.⁴⁹ Sherman then sent to Washington his famous message: "So Atlanta is ours, and fairly won."⁵⁰ The apt words of one Civil War historian, George Edgard Turner, describe the Atlanta Campaign: "The railroads had sustained the victor, and the loss of them had ended the resistance of the vanquished."⁵¹

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 781. OR, 3, V, p. 952.

⁵⁰OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 777.

⁵¹Turner, Victory, p. 335.

CHAPTER VI

"THE GREAT QUESTION OF THE CAMPAIGN WAS ONE OF SUPPLIES"

The logistical effort by the Union armies during the Atlanta Campaign may be broken down into three distinct phases. During the first phase, which extended from May 5-20, the Union supply line was extended through the rugged mountains of northwest Georgia and across two major rivers, the Oostanaula and the Etowah. The second phase ended with the crossing of the Chattahoochee River on July 10. It witnessed tremendously heavy rains, which hindered the movement of supplies through the dense forests, and fierce fighting against the fortified Confederate lines at Dallas, Kennesaw Mountain, and the Chattahoochee River. The final phase, ending with the surrender of Atlanta on September 2, saw the costliest fighting. The unsuccessful raid on the Western and Atlantic Railroad by Wheeler's cavalry was the single biggest supply problem during the final weeks of the campaign.

General Sherman left no doubt about what had been uppermost in his mind during the Atlanta Campaign. "The great question of the campaign," he declared in his memoirs, "was one of supplies."¹ And the single most important factor in maintaining the steady flow of provisions to the front was the railroad. Brigadier-General Daniel C. McCallum, who was Director and General Manager of the United States Military Railroad, worked closely with Sherman in providing the rail transportation so vital to the Union victory in Georgia. In determining the value of the railroads to the campaign, he recalled:

¹Sherman, Memoirs, p. 8.

Over this single line of railroad the provisions, clothing, and camp equipage of the men, forage for animals, arms, ammunition, and ordnance stores, re-enforcements, and all the varied miscellaneous supplies required for a great army engaged in an active campaign, were sent to the front, and by it were returned the sick, wounded, disabled, and discharged soldiers, refugees, and freedmen, captured prisoners and materials deemed advisable to send to the rear.²

After the war, in his memoirs, Sherman determined the importance of railroads to his campaign by calculating the amount of wagon transportation he would have needed to replace the railways. To supply the three Union armies in Georgia would have required 36,800 army supply wagons, each pulled by 6 mules and carrying 2 tons of cargo, and each travelling twenty miles daily. Pausing to consider his figures, Sherman asserted that such a task would have been "a simple impossibility in roads such as then existed in that region of country."³ The fact that the rains of June combined with the rough dirt roads to bring Sherman's 5,000 supply wagons almost to a halt, makes his assertion even more credible.

A summary of the achievements of McCallum's railroads will outline their contribution to the success of Sherman in the campaign. The three principal railroads, the Louisville and Nashville, which was privately owned and run, the Nashville and Chattanooga, and the Western and Atlantic totalled four hundred and seventy-three miles. Over these trunklines each day came 160 cars each hauling 10 tons for a total of 1600 tons. This tonnage "exceeded the absolute necessity of the army for one day."⁴ From November 1, 1863 to September 14, 1864, a total of 298,528 tons of freight

²OR, 3, V, p. 987.

³Sherman, Memoirs, p. 399.

⁴Ibid.

and approximately 140,000 troops was delivered in the Military Division of the Mississippi. Return traffic was also important. During the same time, 50,000 tons of freight and 100,000 men, including Confederate prisoners, sick and wounded soldiers, and veterans returning home, travelled on empty trains returning to pick up more provisions.

The important railroads through central Tennessee, which were contained in the Department of the Cumberland, experienced a tremendous growth in track mileage and rolling stock. The number of miles of track increased from one hundred and twenty-three to nine hundred and fifty-six, the number of cars from 350 to 1,500, the number of locomotives from 30 to 165, and the number of cars dispatched per day from 40 to 150. The size of the train crews also grew accordingly.⁵ In all \$21,500,000 were spent on the railroads in the Military Division of the Mississippi during the months preceding the campaign and those encompassed by it.⁶

It was not enough to run the trains on time and deliver freight; the constant repair of existing lines and construction of new ones was also necessary. The retreating Confederate forces and mounted Southern guerillas destroyed some track. For example, as the Union forces advanced southward along the Western and Atlantic, W. W. Wright's Construction Corps was required to rebuild twenty-two and a half miles of track and four thousand and eighty-one linear feet of bridges.⁷ From December, 1863 to August, 1864, Wright's men used 6,000,000 board feet of bridge timber and

⁵OR, 3, IV, p. 883.

⁶OR, 3, V, pp. 298, 589.

⁷Ibid., p. 987.

500,000 cross-ties and were paid \$1,222,767.41 for their labor.⁸

Evidence of the superb work of the Construction Corps is shown in a reported conversation between two Confederate soldiers as they sat atop Kennesaw Mountain in late June and saw the smoke from the engines pulling carloads of supplies to the depots provisioning Sherman's troops. As recorded in Sherman's memoirs from a postwar conversation with Joseph E. Johnston, the exchange began with one Confederate announcing to his comrades:

'Well, the Yanks will have to git up and git now, for I have heard General Johnston himself say that General Wheeler had blown up the tunnel near Dalton, and that the Yanks would have to retreat, because they could not get no more rations.'

'Oh, hell!' replied a listener, 'don't you know that old Sherman carries a duplicate tunnel along?'⁹

In terms of the various kinds of supplies shipped to the front aboard the trains, preference was given first to ammunition, followed in order by clothing, provisions for the men, and forage for the horses.¹⁰ Even on a typical day, tremendous amounts of supplies were sent to the front lines. On June 1, for example, 78 railroad cars left Chattanooga and headed for Sherman's camps. Four of these contained ammunition, 24 carried subsistence stores, 48 were loaded with forage, and 2 transported Quartermaster stores.¹¹

⁸OR, 3, IV, pp. 959-960.

⁹Sherman, Memoirs, p. 151.

¹⁰OR, 1, XXXVIII, 5, p. 351.

¹¹Edward L. Hartz, Assistant Chief Quartermaster, Army of the Cumberland, Quartermaster Department, United States Army, Letterbook, May 3, 1864 to July 18, 1864, in the collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. MS 82-226, p. 26. Hereinafter cited as Hartz, Letterbook.

The variety of items included in a typical shipment of Quartermaster stores was staggering. For example, on June 15, 93,000 articles were sent to the depot at Allatoona. These included 10,000 pairs of trousers, 15,000 shirts, 5,000 pairs of drawers, 20,000 stockings, 20,000 bootees, 2,000 knapsacks, 2,000 canteens, 2,000 haversacks, 500 rubber blankets and ponchos, 1,000 shelter tents, 1,000 woolen blankets, 2,000 pairs of cavalry trousers, 1,000 jackets, 1,000 fatigue blouses, 2,000 shovels, 2,000 spades, 1,000 picks and handles, and 1,000 axes and handles.¹² A shipment of Quartermaster stores might also include nails and shoes for horses and mules, wagon wheels, various pieces of harness equipment, and wagon grease.¹³

As mentioned numerous times, forage was a continual problem for Sherman. From November 1, 1863 to April 14, 1864, a total of 2,122,145 bushels of corn, 3,382,200 bushels of oats, and 20,000 tons of hay was issued at the Nashville depot.¹⁴ These enormous quantities notwithstanding, Sherman was still forced to supplement forage issued by the Army with that procured locally throughout the campaign. The number of animals and wagons was also great. Between November 1, 1863 and September 1, 1864, a total of 41,122 horses, used primarily by the cavalry and the artillery, 38,724 mules, and 3,795 wagons was issued.¹⁵

Although much of the long forage or hay eaten by the animals of Sherman's armies came from the countryside, great quantities were shipped on the

¹²Ibid., p. 145.

¹³Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁴OR, 3, IV, p. 883.

¹⁵Ibid.

railroad. A representative shipment came on July 4. A total of 982,500 pounds of grain was transported which left 3,436,900 pounds of grain and 2,280 pounds of hay remaining in Chattanooga.¹⁶ As these figures show, most of the grain issued during the campaign came from the Army's stocks, while the vast majority of the hay was procured locally and receipts given which could be presented later to Union authorities for reimbursement.

One key element that is often overlooked in Sherman's supply system was the steamboat. First used in the Mexican War, its carrying capacity exceeded that of the typical train of railroad cars. The average river steamboat of the Civil War period could transport 200 tons of freight, while a train of 10 cars, each with a capacity of 10 tons, could manage only 100 tons.¹⁷ During the season of navigation on the Cumberland River, from February to May, 1864, a total of 614 steamboats and barges carrying 158,016 tons of freight docked at Nashville. At 50 to 60 cents per 100 pounds, the cost of transporting this freight was nearly \$2,000,000.¹⁸ Supplies carried by steamboat also found their way to Nashville up the Tennessee River and then along the connecting line of the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad. By making connections with railroads in northern Alabama, upriver from Muscle Shoals, steamboats were able to deliver supplies in limited quantity directly to Chattanooga by way of the Tennessee.

The total figures for the amount of Quartermaster stores issued from November 1, 1863 to September 1, 1864 from the Nashville depot are listed below:

¹⁶Hartz, Letterbook, p.394.

¹⁷Sherman, Memoirs, p. 399.

¹⁸OR, 1, LII, p. 706.

Sibley tents.....	4,350	Drawers.....	574,538
Hospital tents.....	2,117	Stockings.....	975,201
Wall tents.....	3,006	Shoes.....	445,355
Shelter tents.....	131,848	Boots.....	178,532
Trousers:		Blankets:	
Infantry.....	397,112	Woolen.....	182,300
Mounted.....	145,581	Water-proof..	107,715
Greatcoats.....	112,843	Hats.....	253,136
Coats.....	64,999	Caps.....	75,436
Blouses.....	342,590	Knapsacks.....	116,016
Shirts.....	466,854	Canteens.....	163,402 ¹⁹

During the same time period, the Quartermaster depot at Nashville spent \$14,000,000, exclusive of the money spent in connection with the military railroad service.²⁰

In most previous campaigns, both by European and American armies, the expenditure of ammunition was not excessive. During the Atlanta Campaign, however, ammunition was used at an enormous rate. The reason lies in the fact that even though full-scale battles were few, they were very intense, and skirmishes with the Confederates were a daily occurrence. The total consumption of small-arms ammunition was 22,137,132 rounds. Broken down further, 21,340,222 of the rounds were for the rifled-muskets, the standard single-shot infantry weapon; the remaining 796,910 rounds were fired from all other small-arms combined.²¹ These figures dispel forever the commonly held notion that the Union troops used tremendous numbers of repeating arms during the Atlanta Campaign. The number of artillery rounds fired is on a par with the small-arms. In all, 149,670 rounds

¹⁹OR, 3, IV, p. 883.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹OR, 1, XXXVIII, 1, p. 126.

were expended; of these, 97,464 were from rifled guns and 52,206 from smoothbore pieces.²² Thus, it can be seen that rifled artillery, a product of the industrial revolution in the United States, had eclipsed the traditional smoothbore guns, at least in Sherman's armies.

The Atlanta Campaign, and the Civil War in general, embodied the use of many recent inventions, such as the railroad, the telegraph, the steamboat, and rifled artillery, which helped bring victory to Sherman's blue columns. The whole Union effort in Georgia during the summer of 1864 is best summarized by one of Sherman's division commanders, Brigadier-General Jacob D. Cox:

The campaign as a whole will remain a most instructive example of the methods of warfare which may be said to be the natural outcome of modern improvements in weapons, and in means of transportation and communication when used in a sparsely settled and very difficult if not impracticable country.²³

The European tradition of supplying armies during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries was one of well-organized plunder. The continent had been farmed for many centuries, and in most areas there was plenty of food to support both the contending armies and the general population: witness the campaigns of the Swede, Gustavus Adolphus during the Thirty Years War and most of the expeditions of Napoleon Bonaparte. Another reason for this state of affairs was the lack of bureaucratic states with armies that had organized and internally administered supply systems. By contrast, Americans, from colonial times through the Indian

²²Ibid.

²³Cox, Atlanta, p. 210.

wars of the late nineteenth century, most often operated in at best underdeveloped and usually wilderness conditions. Thus, American troops and their enemies, with the exception of the Indians, learned to live off supplies provided by their armies out of necessity, because the countryside could not meet all their needs. Pertinent examples include the Saratoga Campaign of 1777, the wars against the Indians of the Northwest Territory, the Creek War of 1813-1814, and General Taylor's march in northern Mexico during the Mexican War.

By the mid-nineteenth century, two recent developments provided key innovations to the practice of war. These were the rise of bureaucratic states and the ongoing industrial revolution. The first provided organization for much of society, including armies. Army regulations clearly delineating the functions of the various military departments, including that of supply, date from the mid-eighteenth century and stem partly from the growing concern of the rising middle class in Western society to protect its property from the traditional deprivations visited on the populace for centuries by European armies. The second development, the industrial revolution, provided such technological innovations as the railroad, the steamboat, and the telegraph. These three inventions allowed armies to support themselves in the underdeveloped regions so typical of North America with efficient means to transport provisions with speed and in tremendous quantities over great distances. The Atlanta Campaign is an excellent example of how these developments came together.

Sherman used the steamboat-railroad-telegraph connection and the organizational framework for supply provided in army regulations to meet the daily needs of his men and animals. With the lone exception of

gathering a portion of his forage from local sources, this system worked to perfection. One fact which presaged a fundamental change in the supply of armies was the expenditure of ammunition by the Union troops during the Atlanta Campaign. From early May to Early September, 1864, infantrymen fired an average of 63 rounds, while each artillery piece averaged 623 rounds. This volume of ammunition consumption was higher than in previous European and American campaigns and compared favorably with other Civil War campaigns.²⁴

After the Civil War, the supply system of the United States Army reverted to what it had been during the Mexican War. That is, the Army was fighting in a rugged wilderness, the Great Plains and other undeveloped areas of the West, and using the traditional army wagon and the pack-mule as the principal means of supplying the troops. But the railroad and especially the steamboat were retained. In particular, contrary to popular belief, the example of the extremely successful use of the railroads during the Civil War was not absorbed in Europe. So, during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, the Prussian military railroad service broke down after the initial mobile phase of the war during the first few months. As a result, thousands of Prussian troops had to be detailed to gather in local wheat and vegetable crops and were assigned the duty of preparing the food for consumption by their army.²⁵

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the development of repeating and automatic arms and gasoline

²⁴Van Creveld, Supplying War, pp. 35, 57, 63, 102-103, 104, 110-111, 181. Huston, Sinews, pp. 157-158, 190-193. OR, 1, XXXVIII, 1, p. 126. Sherman, Memoirs, pp. 24, 136.

²⁵Van Creveld, Supplying War, pp. 75-108.

and oil burning engines brought the methods of supplying troops in Europe and the United States into line with each other. No longer could Europeans put off organizing a supply system that provided all of their armies' needs, food, ammunition, and gasoline included. By contrast, the United States Army could fall back on its tradition of provisioning its troops through its own logistical organization. Thus, beginning with World War One, the armies of Western Europe came to rely exclusively on their own supply network, and their American counterpart fitted easily into this development.²⁶

The Atlanta Campaign of 1864 stands as a key phase in the evolutionary process of armies relying on themselves for all their supplies. In essence, Sherman utilized the rise of bureaucratic states and the products of the industrial revolution to wage what is widely considered to be the single most important campaign of the American Civil War, and his effort was a vital link in the chain leading to the reliance of modern armies on their own supply networks to fill their material needs.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 231-237.

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