



General Sherman's Famous March to the Sea Began In Alabama – Not Georgia!

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Sherman's army on the march | LOC

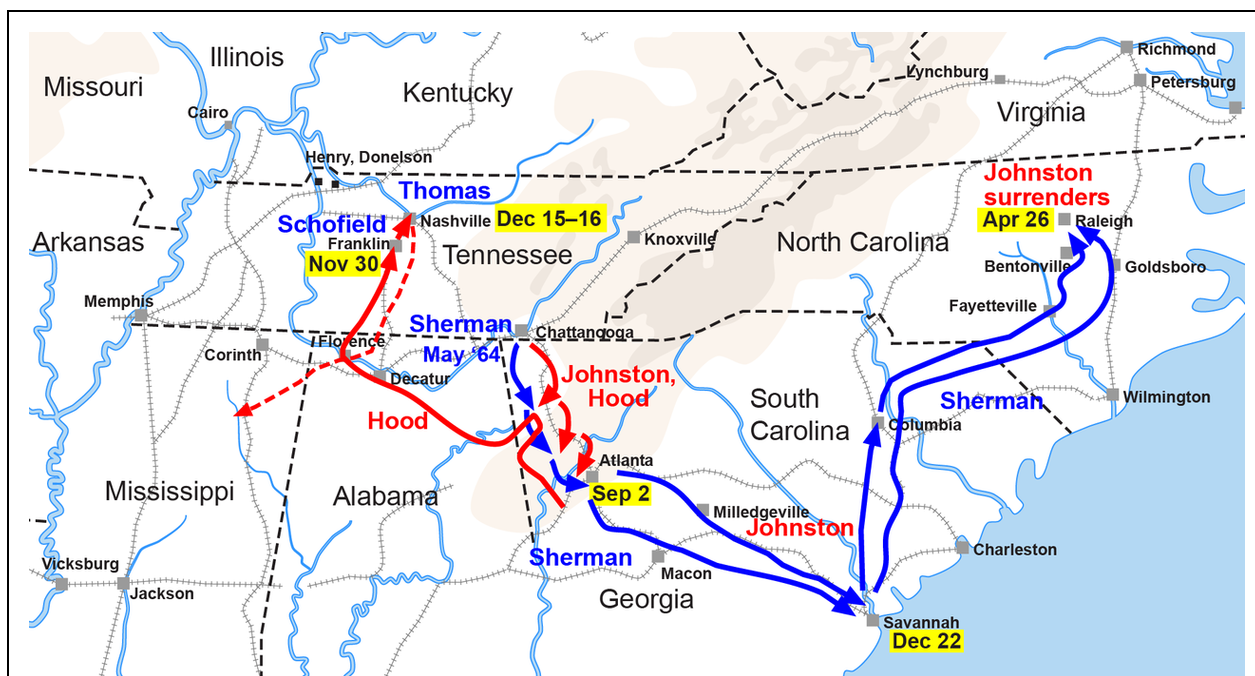
As the Confederates retreated from Atlanta after the fall of that town in September 1864, eventually, the 40,000-man Army of Tennessee moved toward Gadsden, Alabama, which is located in the northeastern part of the state. Later, they marched from Gadsden into middle Tennessee, where the battles of Franklin and Nashville were fought in November and December of that same year.

Following closely behind the retreating Southerners, Union Gen. William T. Sherman, commanding an army of over 60,000, moved from Atlanta to Summerville, Georgia, and then elements of his army began marching into Cherokee County, Alabama, around October 10, 1864. General Sherman headquartered at Dr. Lawrence's house in Gaylesville. While his men roamed this rich agricultural area, they were "living high on the hog." Also, they were ordered to "forage for 1.5 million rations of bread, coffee, sugar and salt and 500,000 rations of meat." These supplies were to be confiscated from the farms and homes of the citizens of Cherokee and surrounding counties. While in the area, Cornwall Iron Furnace, located near Cedar Bluff, Alabama, on the Chattooga River, was partially destroyed.

While at Gaylesville, Sherman would decide to redirect his forces east and discontinue pursuing the Confederate Army. On October 22, 1864, Sherman wrote to Gen. Ulysses Grant from Gaylesville, "perfecting arrangements to hold Tennessee ... and push into Georgia ... make desolation everywhere, destroy factories at Macon, Milledgeville and Augusta (GA) and bring up 60,000 on the seashore at Savannah ... I will subsist on the bountiful cornfields and potato patches as I am now doing luxuriously."

In other words, the supplies he took from northeastern Alabama would be what fed his troops for the initial first segment of their long journey east across the entire state of Georgia. Sherman moved from Gaylesville to Rome, Georgia, on October 29, and his army continued east, capturing Savannah before Christmas.

So, Sherman's March to the Sea actually began in Alabama and not Georgia.



Map of Sherman's march to the sea

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