

A 2021 BGES Weekend Warrior Program: Death of an Army: The Battle of Nashville and the Hood's 1864 Tennessee Campaign Part 4

The Army of Tennessee was a shadow of its former self when it finally arrived before Nashville. A high price had been paid to get here and General Hood now set about doing everything he could to try to even the odds looming against him and his army. In Nashville, General George Thomas was working to make sure that wouldn't happen as he fended off prodding from the Union high command to act immediately. Both sides would endure frigid weather leading up to the moment that Thomas did roll forward on the afternoon of December 14, in a series of well calculated blows the Rock of Chickamauga became the Sledgehammer of Nashville as the Confederate flank collapsed and fled. Hood however was not going to give up that easily and formed his army along a new defensive line on the hills to the south of Nashville. December 15th dawned with new obstacles for Thomas, but again he masterfully handled it and delivered a crushing blow to the Confederate left at Shy's Hill, the collapse that followed soon infected the entire army as it fled once and finally from Nashville, beginning a long retreat that would be the final chapter for the storied Army of Tennessee. Though the battlefield of Nashville is now largely gone, there are still points that can be visited to gain insight into this important engagement.

The retreat from Nashville would see some harrowing experiences for the Army of Tennessee, but also some extraordinary feats that saved what was left of the army from complete annihilation. Under the skilled leadership of Nathan Bedford Forrest a combined force of infantry, artillery and cavalry were able to protect the retreat of the Confederates from the swarms of Union cavalry aggressively led by General James Wilson, who was determined to not give the Confederates any peace. A series of small but sharp engagements would be fought as the Confederates desperately tried to make their escape from the state. We will visit the sites of some of those sharp and brutal fights as we follow the retreat into oblivion of the ill-fated Army of Tennessee.

Friday, December 3, 2019

Meet at 6 PM in at the headquarters hotel where Lee will recap the campaign through the bloody battle of Franklin. The lost opportunity at Spring Hill had broken Hood's momentum and put the Federals in position where they could anticipate support from the garrison at Nashville. We will break in time for you to have dinner on your own

Saturday, December 4, 2021

Depart the hotel at 8:15 where we will head to Fort Negley, and its commanding view of the surrounding area. Constructed through the efforts of slave labor, Negley was a significant fortification in the larger scheme of the defense of the capitol city of Tennessee. When Nashville fell the first of the Confederate state capitols was redeemed for the Union. Since then, Nashville had become a major supply depot which received supplies from Louisville and which also supported Union operations within Tennessee down to Chattanooga and also Sherman's armies as they advanced towards Atlanta. Hood had hoped to negate Sherman's successes by preying on the Western and Atlantic Railroad and depriving the advanced Union forces of their supplies. Sherman had replied by dividing his forces and sending George Thomas back to Nashville while sending the smaller Army of the Ohio under John Schofield back to an intermediate position watching the crossings of the Tennessee—it was that prize that Hood had failed to nab at Spring Hill—now he was toe to toe with a well supplied and ensconced Federal army in front of this point. From Negley we will discuss the Union positions and fortifications while considering Hood's deployments.

From Fort Negley we will go to some of the few remaining sites in the large metropolitan area. Granbury's Lunette is stop one where we will discuss the fighting and defense there on December 14th. From there we are going to Redoubt #1 where the Confederate left is anchored and will collapse forcing Hood to fall back. With a difficult day having pushed Hood out of his first position we will go to Traveler's Rest, his Headquarters to discuss the repositioning of his wounded force for the second day of fighting.

Hood just flat out did not have enough combat capable troops at this point and our next two stops: Peach Orchard Hill and Stewart's stone wall reflect the best of the Confederates' defensive opportunities. This however was not enough to stop the surging Federal troops and we will move over to Shy's Hill where once again, as on the 14th, Hood's left collapses ending the battle of Nashville. We finish this day at the Battle of the Barricades—some say the last battle at Nashville while others call it the first rear guard action in Hood's retreat. Lunch will be included but dinner is on your own.

Sunday, December 5, 2021

0815 depart the hotel. What do you do when your momentum is broken, your combat capability at an ebb and your safe spot is more than 100 miles south? We start today in downtown Franklin, a city that had been shattered over the past two plus weeks. The devastation of the November 30th bloodbath and the debris of the passage of two armies through the town headed north now would experience the contra flow of movement to the south. Like Lee after Gettysburg, Franklin was a central logistics base and safe haven where the wounded were being serviced and the supplies for Hood were gathered.

As Hood goes so goes his army and we experience a series of rear guard actions, the first of which we will talk about and visit is Hollow Tree Gap. Just as Lee found at Monterrey

Pass and Boonsboro, sometimes terrain could be a great aid or a death trap. We pass through Franklin again headed to the West Harpeth River where another engagement is fought on December 17th. The Army of Tennessee continues to move along what is today Route 31 and next encounters the river crossing at Columbia. After a brief interpretative stop there we will continue to the next fight at Richland Creek

Hood will eventually take his army to Tupelo, Mississippi where it can recruit itself and prepare for another deployment but its days as the premier western Confederate army have passed, its limited combat capacity diminished further by desertions, and detachments to aid Dabney Maury near Mobile and to resist Sherman heading towards Virginia across the Carolinas. Our last stop on the retreat will describe the battle at Anthony's Hill. From there we will summarize the rest of the retreat, the crossing of the Tennessee and the repercussions for all the principals. It is a sad story and perhaps a degree too Quixotic to have had a real chance, but it did have a brief opportunity. In the end this is a fitting end to a hard fighting unit destroyed by combat at the end of a bitter conflict.

About the Faculty:

Lee White is an interpretative ranger at the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. Lee has participated in three other BGES programs on Hood's 1864 Tennessee Campaign. An active part of the *Emerging Civil War* cohort of new Civil War historians, he has written or co-authored several books including:

Bushwacking on a Grand Scale, The Battle of Chickamauga and Let us Die Like Men, The Battle of Franklin.

Hotel Information:

We will base this program out of Franklin and I will send the hotel details as soon as they are available. I expect this to happen by November 4th

Transportation:

The servicing airport is Nashville (BNA). There is limo service to and from the airport and Franklin.

Recommended Reading:

You will be provided with handouts upon arrival. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program. If you register through AmazonSmile a portion of your purchase price will be donated to the Blue and Gray Education Society.

Winston Groom, **Shrouds of Glory**

James McDonough: **Nashville: The Western Confederacy's Final Gamble**

Stanley Horn: **The Decisive Battle of Nashville**

Thomas R. Hay: **Hood's Tennessee Campaign**

Stephen M. Hood: **The Lost Papers of Confederate General John Bell Hood**

Mark Zimmerman: **Guide to Civil War Nashville**

BGES 2021 Registration Form
*Death of An Army: The Battle of Nashville and
the Long Retreat to the Tennessee River*
A 2021 BGES Weekend Warrior Program
Presented by Lee White
December 3-5, 2021

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes two lunches, maps, the academic program, support of a professional historian and tour transportation. We will also provide snacks and bottled water.

_____ Registration \$550

_____ Current BGES member \$495

_____ Check enclosed

Charge my (circle one) MC VISA AMEXP Discover \$_____

Exp: _____ CVV: _____

Signature: _____

Mail to BGES Seminars, PO Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24531, or fax credit card registrations to 434-432-0596 . You may also register on line at www.blueandgrayeducation.org.