

# **Hood's Fall 1864 Tennessee Campaign: Columbia, Spring Hill, Franklin, and Murfreesboro**

*A BGES Field University Program*  
with Hal Litchford and Jamie Gillum  
**August 6-10, 2025; from Franklin, Tennessee**

After the Battle of Decatur, Lt. Gen. John Bell Hood continued moving the Army of Tennessee west in search of a place to cross the Tennessee River and to launch his invasion of Tennessee. By October 30, the Army's vanguard reached Tuscumbia, opposite Florence, Alabama, on the river's north bank. Hood established Tuscumbia as his base of operations and shifted his supply depot there. However, the supply line remained long and tortuous.

Maintaining his characteristic reluctance to share strategic details, Hood failed to communicate a clear plan or objective for the invasion to his superiors. His poor—or nonexistent—communication with his immediate superior, Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard, caused ongoing frustration. On November 2 and 3, Beauregard, determined to clarify Hood's intentions and assess his readiness, traveled to Tuscumbia for a face-to-face meeting. He had hoped the invasion would commence November 9, but a combination of factors—including the Army's overextended and inefficient supply line, chronic inclement weather, and the time required for Maj. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry to return from West Tennessee—delayed Hood's advance until November 21.

This delay was a godsend to Union Maj. Gen. George Thomas. As Gen. William T. Sherman embarked on his March to the Sea, he dispatched Thomas to Nashville to organize Tennessee's defenses. Throughout early November, Thomas scrambled to consolidate his forces, particularly his cavalry. On November 4, Sherman detached Maj. Gen. David Stanley's IV Corps, which established a defensive position in Pulaski along the Nashville & Decatur Railroad. A week later, on November 13 and 14, Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield's XXIII Corps—also detached from Sherman—reinforced Stanley at Pulaski, with Schofield assuming overall command of both corps.

The Confederate Army of Tennessee's first objective was Columbia, some 75 miles from Florence. Hood's chosen route via Mount Pleasant bypassed Schofield to the west, turning the opening phase of the Tennessee Campaign into a desperate race for Columbia—one that Schofield barely won. After holding Columbia for two days, Schofield withdrew across the Duck River and established a new defensive line on the north bank. In response, Hood attempted a flanking maneuver at Spring Hill, but his plan inexplicably collapsed, leading to the pivotal Battle of Franklin the next day. Following Franklin, Hood advanced to the outskirts of Nashville, then inexplicably weakened his army by detaching Maj. Gen. William Bate's infantry division and most of Forrest's cavalry on a futile mission to Murfreesboro and Fortress Rosecrans.

Join Hal and Jamie as we trace Hood's Army from Florence, Alabama, through Middle Tennessee to the outskirts of Nashville. We will examine the events, difficulties, and decisions of both Hood and Schofield that defined the Army of Tennessee's advance. How did Schofield win the race to Columbia? What really happened at Spring Hill? What strategic options did Hood

have before and after the Battle of Franklin? Why did he deplete his forces in front of Nashville by sending Bate and Forrest? And much more.

## **Itinerary**

### **Wednesday, August 6, 2025**

Meet Hal at our host hotel at 6 p.m. for a one-hour overview of the sites, events, and historical context of the tour. Program materials will be distributed (or the next morning for late arrivals).

Dinner is on your own.

### **Thursday August 7, 2025**

We will leave our hotel at 7:30 a.m. for the Florence area, then turn north to follow the paths of Hood's advance toward Columbia from November 21 through November 28, as well as Schofield's responses. Hood's three corps, under Maj. Gens. Benjamin F. Cheatham, S. D. Lee, and A. P. Stewart, marched on separate roads before uniting at Henryville, 16 miles south of Mt. Pleasant. We will explore some of the rural roads once used by the Army of Tennessee, many of which still traverse their original wartime routes.

From there, we will sidestep 18 miles east to Pulaski to visit the site of the Union IV and XXIII Corps' camp. The opening moves and countermoves of both armies were mainly cavalry actions, with Forrest commanding significantly larger numbers and holding the upper hand. We will visit three key cavalry engagement sites—Butler Creek, Fouche Springs, and the little-known yet pristine Campbellsville battlefield—where these early clashes unfolded.

As we approach Columbia along Hood's route, we will stop at the antebellum St. John's Church, built by Leonidas Polk on his ancestral family grounds. Here, the beleaguered cavalry on Schofield's right made a final stand. In this area, we will also pass by several surviving mansions where Confederate generals were feted and entertained while facing Schofield's army in Columbia. On the outskirts of Columbia, we will visit the site where Brig. Gen. Jacob Cox's brigades repulsed Hood's lead cavalry elements just in time to prevent a breakthrough.

Next, we will stop at Elm Springs, located on Schofield's initial defensive line and now the final resting place of Forrest and his wife, Mary Ann Montgomery Forrest. Time permitting, we will take in the National Confederate Museum. We will continue with an examination of Schofield's decision to abandon Columbia on the evening of November 27 and reestablish his defensive line on the far side of the Duck River.

The day will end as we follow the Duck River upstream to Huey Mills, east of Columbia, where Forrest crossed on November 28 to initiate Hood's Spring Hill maneuvering.

We will return to the hotel between 5:30 and 6 p.m.

Lunch is provided, but dinner is on your own.

### **Friday August 8, 2025**

Departing at 8 a.m., we will spend the entire day exploring and studying the Spring Hill Affair. Our tour leader today is Jamie Gillum, one of the foremost authorities on Spring Hill and the author of *Twenty Five Hours to Tragedy*.

On November 29, the corps of Cheatham and Stewart, along with one division of Lee's corps, began a flanking march to the east. They crossed the Duck River at Davis Ford—roughly 5 miles from Columbia—and headed toward Spring Hill, 17 miles away. Hood left two divisions of Lee's corps and most of the army's artillery at Columbia to pin Schofield in place on the Duck River's north side.

Anticipating Hood's movements, Schofield sent his supply trains (800 wagons) and artillery (40 guns) to Springfield during the day, escorted by two divisions of Stanley's IV Corps. Although Maj. Gen. Patrick Cleburne's division and elements of Forrest's cavalry engaged in fighting throughout the afternoon, the Confederates failed to seize the Columbia Turnpike. As a result, Schofield's forces marched past their bivouacked enemy, at times only a few hundred yards to a half-mile away. We will explore in detail the reasons for this failure.

Our day begins where we left off Thursday—with Forrest's opening moves. Union Maj. Gen. James H. Wilson, recently transferred from the Army of the Potomac to assume command of Thomas' cavalry, had joined Schofield outside Pulaski during the army's withdrawal to Columbia. Spring Hill was Wilson's first opportunity to lead his cavalry units—and his first encounter with Forrest. It did not go well. We will trace Forrest's tactical maneuvers, which effectively outmaneuvered Wilson's cavalry, rendering them irrelevant to the battle at Spring Hill.

Next, we will closely examine the movements and timing of both the Army of Tennessee and Schofield's forces, including a boots-on-the-ground analysis of the terrain features. These physical details help clarify the sharper conflicting postwar accounts of Confederate generals who sought to explain Schofield's escape and absolve themselves of blame.

We will visit Oaklawn, Hood's headquarters on the evening of November 29, and spend time at Rippa Villa, where Hood took breakfast on November 30 and was reportedly "as wrathful as a rattlesnake." The day will conclude as we follow the underappreciated rear-guard action of Brig. Gen. Emerson Opdyke's 125th Ohio ("Opdyke's Tigers") during Schofield's retreat to Franklin. Along the way, we will cover the short-lived interdiction of Schofield's trains at Thompson's Station by Brig. Gens. Ross and Armstrong's cavalry troops.

We will return to the hotel by 5 p.m.

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

### **Saturday August 9, 2025**

Leaving the hotel at 8 a.m., today is dedicated to Franklin. To set the stage, the number of Confederates killed at the Battle of Franklin (1,750) was equal to or greater than the number of Union soldiers killed at Shiloh, Seven Days, Fredericksburg, Stones River, Chancellorsville, or Chickamauga. This disparity is even more striking given the relatively small number of troops engaged at Franklin and the fact the battle lasted only a few hours.

Hood began his pursuit of Schofield on the morning of November 30, but his advance was repeatedly slowed by the effective rear guard of Opdyke's Tigers. Since he started from

Columbia, Lee's two divisions and the artillery were unable to join the rest of the Army of Tennessee before the battle. Today, we will explore not only the well-known events around the Carter House but also the lesser-known fierce fighting on the Confederate left and right, as well as Forrest's cavalry maneuvers and clashes.

Our day begins at Winstead Hill, which overlooks Franklin from the south. There, we will discuss the battle in broad terms, Hood's intentions and tactical options, and the Army of Tennessee's movements from Spring Hill. Likewise, we will examine Schofield's options when he arrived at Franklin with the Harpeth River at his back and only the railroad bridge still standing.

We will take a fresh look at the key role of Opdyke and his brigade—not only as Schofield's rear guard but also as the improbable shock troops who sealed the Confederate breach of the Union line around the Carter House. Additionally, we will take a deep dive into the lesser-known but brutal fighting on the Confederate right flank, where the Army of Tennessee suffered its highest casualties.

Our stops include the Carter House and its battle-scarred outbuildings, the McGavock property—the site of the only privately owned Confederate cemetery—and Carnton, where the bodies of four Confederate generals killed in the battle were laid out.

We will return to the hotel by 5 p.m.

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

### **Sunday August 10, 2025**

Today, we will leave the hotel at 8:30 a.m. to follow Hood's advance from Franklin to the outskirts of Nashville, as well as the detachment of Bate's infantry and Forrest's cavalry to Murfreesboro, culminating in the Battle of the Cedars—also known as the Third Battle of Murfreesboro.

Schofield was able to bridge the Harpeth River and use a ford to begin crossing the wagons before and during the battle on November 30. The rest of the army withdrew across the river on the night of November 30–December 1, abandoning the battlefield. Hood's pursuit was impeded, as he controlled the field and was therefore responsible for the dead and wounded of both sides. The Confederates suffered over 6,200 casualties at Franklin. The depleted Army of Tennessee marched to within 3 miles south of Nashville and, by December 3, had established a thin, 4-mile defensive line below the city, with both flanks exposed.

In the meantime, Hood turned his attention east 30 miles to Murfreesboro and Fortress Rosecrans. Initially, he believed the Union army had abandoned the fortress. He dispatched Bate's Division, a battery of the Washington Artillery, and 150 cavalry troopers from Franklin to Murfreesboro with orders to destroy the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad. Hood also ordered Forrest to destroy the railroad from Nashville southeastward.

On December 2, Bate's force left Franklin. During the movement, he received alarming intelligence that Fortress Rosecrans was occupied by a sizable Union force. Uncertain of his next move, he requested further instructions from Hood. Hood's strategic objectives remained unclear, and his revised orders to Bate were ambiguous. They suggested that Bate should not only destroy the railroad but also prevent the Fortress Rosecrans garrison from reinforcing

Thomas in Nashville. Hood reinforced Bate with two additional infantry brigades and dispatched Forrest, along with the majority of his cavalry, to assume command of the combined forces. In doing so, Hood inexplicably weakened his main line around Nashville for little strategic gain. Historian Stanley Horn described this decision as Hood's "masterpiece of folly."

Bate's infantry arrived in front of Murfreesboro on December 4, before Forrest could join him. Bate attempted but failed to capture a key blockhouse 3 miles from Murfreesboro, where the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad crossed Overall Creek. There, his forced clash with a federal cavalry reconnaissance party, reinforced by a "flying column" under the command of Maj. Gen. Robert H. Milroy.

Forrest's cavalry arrived on December 5. On December 7, Milroy sallied from Fortress Rosecrans with another "flying column" consisting of two brigades of infantry, supported by artillery and cavalry. He encountered the Confederates along Wilkinson Pike on part of the old Stones River battlefield. The result was a Confederate rout. Bate's depleted and demoralized division managed to rejoin the main army in time for the Battle of Nashville. However, Hood ordered Forrest to remain before Murfreesboro, depriving him of both his best cavalry leader and the majority of the Army of Tennessee during the decisive battle.

Today, we will follow the Army of Tennessee to its first defensive line outside Nashville and retrace Bate's exact route from Franklin to Overall Creek. We will also track Forrest's advance from Nashville to Murfreesboro along the axis of the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad. The railroad still follows the same 1860s right-of-way, meaning the locations of the blockhouses Forrest captured remain unchanged. We will visit and interpret what remains of the battlefield where the Battle of the Cedars—the clash at Overall Creek—took place.

We will return to the hotel before 5 p.m.

Lunch is provided.

### **About the Faculty**

Hal Litchford is a lifelong student of the Civil War. A native of Nashville with family roots in rural Middle Tennessee, he spent countless hours exploring battlefields in Tennessee and the Western Theater. He subsidized his undergraduate education at Vanderbilt University by working part-time job as a tour guide for the Battles of Nashville and Franklin. During his graduate studies at the University of Virginia, he discovered the Eastern Theater and developed a deep attachment to the military history of Central Virginia—especially the Shenandoah Valley. After earning his J.D. from UVA, he moved to Orlando, where he has practiced law for over 40 years. He is the founder of Orlando's first Civil War Round Table (CWRT) and a longtime collector of Civil War books, arms, and artifacts. Now winding down his legal career, Hal is transitioning into writing articles and monographs on various Civil War topics, including lost and misplaced battlefields. He is also actively involved in battlefield preservation and educational organizations, and he has resumed leading tours of Civil War battlefield and sites. He is currently writing a book on the initial stages of Hood's Tennessee Campaign—the advance from Florence to Columbia.

**Jamie Gillum**

Jamie Gillum is a native Tennessean who lives on the Spring Hill Battlefield. He served fifteen years in the U.S. Marine Corps infantry, attaining the rank of Gunnery Sergeant and earning three Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medals as well as a meritorious promotion. He graduated at or near the top of his classes in professional education, including Non-Commissioned Officers' School and Platoon Sergeant School, where he finished first in Infantry Tactics, with an emphasis on preservation.

For ten years, Jamie worked at the Carter House in Franklin, Tennessee, serving as a docent and assistant military historian. An avid amateur historian with a voracious appetite for detail, he published the first volume of a trilogy on the history of the Sixteenth Tennessee Volunteer Infantry Regiment, C.S.A., in 2011. In 2014, he completed a twenty-year study of the Battle of Spring Hill, Tennessee. Most recently, his works on the Battle of Perryville, Kentucky, strongly suggest that current interpretations of the battle are incorrect. He currently works in the hospitality industry.

Some of Jamie's published works include:

- *The History of the Sixteenth Tennessee Infantry Regiment: We Were Spoiling for a Fight, Vol. 2.* ISBN: 978-1461112907.
- *The History of the Sixteenth Tennessee Infantry Regiment: No Hope of Getting Out Alive.* ISBN: 978-1480291249.
- *Twenty-five Hours to Tragedy: The Battle of Spring Hill and Operations on November 29, 1864: Precursor to the Battle of Franklin.* ISBN: 978-1470106812.
- *Understanding the Battle of Perryville: The Discovery of the Hafley Cabins and Its Impact on Historiography of the Battle.* ISBN-13: 979-8827637868.

## **Hotel Information**

The headquarters hotel is the Hampton Inn, Franklin/Nashville, Tennessee, 7141 South Springs Dr., Franklin, Tennessee. Call 615-771-7225 for reservations. Ask for the Blue and Gray Education block. The rate is \$129 plus tax. Cutoff date for the block rate is July 5, 2025.

## **Transportation**

The servicing airport is Nashville International Airport (BNA). It is 20 miles to the hotel and is easily accessed by I-40, I-440, and I-65.

## **Recommended Reading**

Bearss, Edwin C. "The History of Fortress Rosecrans," Washington, D.C.: National Park Service Department of the Interior Report, 1960 (accessible at [fortress-rosecrans-history.pdf](#))

Belcher, Dennis W. *The Cavalries of the Nashville Campaign.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2020

Gillum, Jamie. *Twenty Five Hours to Tragedy.* Spring Hill, TN: 2014

Jacobson, Eric A.; Robert, A. Rupp. *For Cause and For Country: A Study of the Affair at Spring Hill & the Battle of Franklin*. Franklin, TN: O'More Publishing, 2013 (2d. edition)

Scales, John R. *The Battles and Campaigns of Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest*. El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, LLC, 2017

Sword, Wiley. *The Confederacy's Last Hurrah: Spring Hill, Franklin and Nashville*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993

**Optional Reading**

Davis, Stephen. *Into Tennessee and Failure*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2020

Hood, Stephen M. ("Sam"). *John Bell Hood: The Rise, Fall and Resurrection of a Confederate General*. El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, LLC, 2013

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Name (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration includes four lunches, maps, the academic program, support of professional historian(s), tour director, and transportation. We will also provide snacks and cold bottled water.

\_\_\_\_\_ Current BGES member: \$975

\_\_\_\_\_ Non-BGES member: \$1025

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