

## **Fighting Breaks out all over the South**

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With the failed attempts by Jubal Early's Army of the Valley to capture Washington, D.C., the Confederate force was on the retreat by July 13, 1864. Sent by General Grant to catch Early's army, Major General Horatio Wright followed Early across the Potomac with the Federal Sixth and Nineteenth Corps. Fifteen thousand Federals moved on Early's position and light skirmishing took place at Rockville, Maryland, that same evening. This marked the end of the last Northern invasion by a Confederate force for the rest of the war. Further south in Georgia, Union forces of General Andrew J. Smith were moving on Confederate troops near Tupelo, Mississippi. Meanwhile in Richmond, Jefferson Davis begins to consider whether or not to replace General Joseph Johnston with the aggressive John Bell Hood.

On July 14, the Battle of Tupelo began when the Federal soldiers of A.J. Smith were in prepared defenses awaiting a Confederate attack. In command of the Confederate forces was General Stephen D. Lee, who had given Nathan Bedford Forrest, the "Wizard of the Saddle" as he was known, a large part of the field command. Unknown to Forrest and his left wing of the Confederate forces, the opposite right wing had moved against the Federal lines of A.J. Smith. For two hours the Confederate advanced. Their efforts never came to fruition and the battle ended with a staggering loss of 1,347 Confederates compared to 674 Federals. In the east, Jubal Early was once again back in Virginia, near Leesburg, having crossed the Potomac safely at White's Ford. Deciding it would be foolish to pursue Early into Virginia, Wright and his forces

remained north of the Potomac on July 15 while Early himself remained positioned in Leesburg until the following day.

General Joseph Johnston was, by 1864, the only, and in many cases, the best, hope of the Confederate western forces. As he devised his strategies, Johnston decided upon a defensive strategy of remaining behind strong fortifications, waiting for Federal attacks, and then effectively chewing them up in their assaults. This was possibly the only saving grace the Confederates had against Sherman's vast numerical superiority. Fortunately for the North, yet very unfortunate for the South, Jefferson Davis was growing increasingly tired of Johnston's inactivity in terms of the offensive and his constant giving up of ground. On July 16, Davis wired Johnston to firmly request a detailed plan of action against the Federals. Johnston replied that he was purely on the defensive and that his plans depended heavily on Sherman's plans. Johnston is quoted as stating, "As the enemy has double our number, we must be on the defensive. My plan of operations must therefore, depend upon that of the enemy." This defensive that Joseph Johnston had devised was the last hope for the Confederacy to hold on to what remained of the Confederates in Georgia.

On July 17, 1864, Jefferson Davis made the decision to relieve Johnston of command. The telegram stated, "...as you failed to arrest the advance of the enemy to the vicinity of Atlanta, far in the interior of Georgia, and express no confidence that you can defeat or repel him, you are hereby relieved from the command of the Army and the Department of Tennessee, which you will immediately turn over to General Hood." General John Bell Hood was an impetuous and aggressive general. On July 18, 1864, Hood began to plan a daring attack against Sherman's forces near Peachtree Creek. This

would be the first in a series of assaults on the Armies of the Tennessee, the Cumberland, and the Ohio in an attempt to destroy them in a piecemeal fashion. That same day, President Lincoln called for a new round of volunteers, 500,000 strong. The ranks of the Army of the Potomac in Virginia had to be filled in order to gain complete victory. The following day on July 19, Hood's Army of Tennessee prepared their attack, focusing mainly on the Army of the Cumberland at Peachtree Creek and then turning later to the other Armies of the Tennessee and the Ohio. This would be another failed maneuver for the Confederates. For the Union in the West, a glimmer of victory could be seen at the end of the tunnel, while in the East, the war seemed to have no end for some time yet to come.