

Savannah and Nashville

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On December 7, 1864, General George Thomas's decision to not attack John Bell Hood's forces outside Nashville, Tennessee, on the previous day was met with increasing frustration by General Grant. Grant expressed to Edwin Stanton his intention to remove Thomas from command if he did not move to attack Hood soon. Meanwhile in Georgia, General Sherman's "March to the Sea" was beginning to near its end. His troops, raiding across the Deep South, encountered resistance at Jenk's Bridge along the Ogeechee River and at Buck Creek and Cypress Swamp near the town of Sister's Ferry, GA.

The following day, Sherman's troops were getting closer and closer to their objective. Soldiers reported smelling the Atlantic Ocean. Minor fighting arose at Ebenezer Creek near Bryan Court House, GA. Meanwhile the situation surrounding Thomas's unwillingness to assault the Confederates outside Nashville did not improve. Grant was afraid of the possibility of Hood striking across the Ohio River. In complaining to Halleck in Washington about the matter said Grant, "If Thomas has not struck yet, he ought to be ordered to hand over his command to Schofield." While Halleck was reluctant to agree with Grant, he agreed that it was ultimately up to Grant to make the final call. Grant urged Thomas into battle once more; Thomas replied that his cavalry would not be ready until December 11.

On December 9, 1864, Sherman's men still marauding towards Savannah entered into more light skirmishes towards the immediate south of the city at Ogeechee Canal between Eden and Pooler stations, Monteith Swamp, and Cuyler's Plantation. Grant,

growing increasingly impatient with Thomas' inaction at Nashville finally issued an order to replace him with General Schofield. Showing restraint, he suspended that order when Thomas declared he had planned to attack the very next day, however freezing rain had halted his advancement. Thomas blamed the delay on the need to concentrate his men, horses, and other supplies needed for the assault.

On December 10, 1864, Sherman's March to the Sea finally reached its destination. Surveying the city of Savannah, Sherman discovered that the Confederates held it tightly with nearly 18,000 men. Sherman decided to surround the city instead of directly assaulting the causeways left open purposely by the Confederate defenders. In order to make contact with the Union naval vessels offshore he discovered he had to go through Fort McAllister along the Ogeechee River. The following day, Sherman's army prepared to both fully envelope the city of Savannah and launch its assault on Fort McAllister.

The next day December 13, Sherman watched the assault upon Fort McAllister from a rice mill across the Ogeechee River. The fort, held by Major G.W. Anderson and 230 men, was attacked by W.B. Hazen and his division from the U.S. Fifteenth Corps. Anderson's men suffered only 35 casualties and killed 24 Union troops and wounded 110 before surrendering Fort McAllister to the Union. Finally, Sherman was able to directly communicate with the Union naval fleet on the Ogeechee River. Fresh supplies could now reach Sherman's men who had, for months, been living off the daily take of their foragers. Communication was also reestablished with the North. Sherman and his army came out of the wilds and marched into military history!