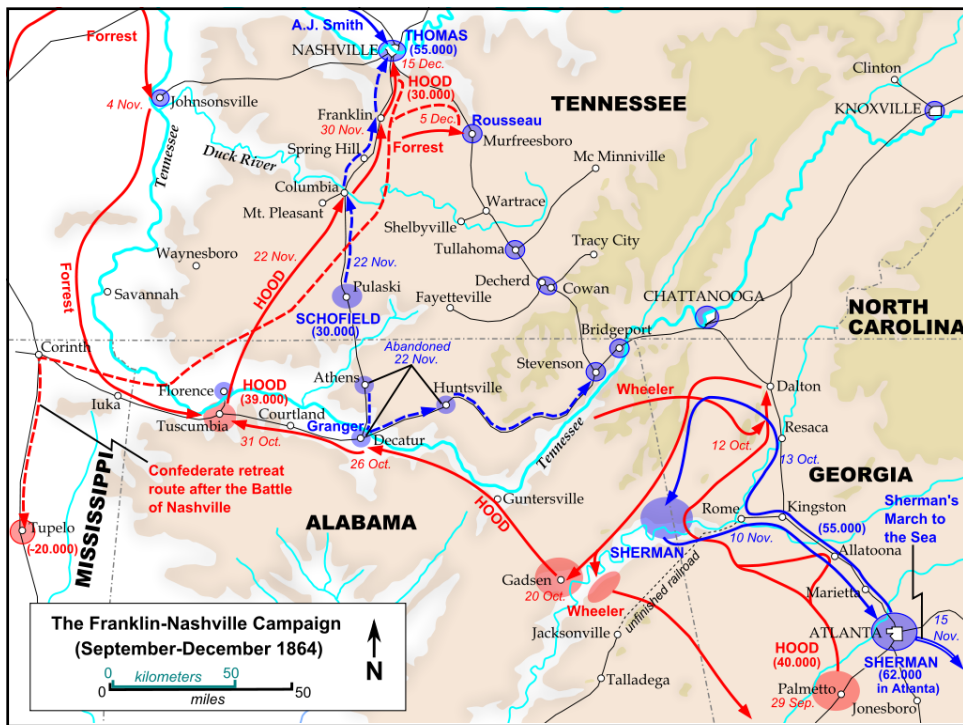
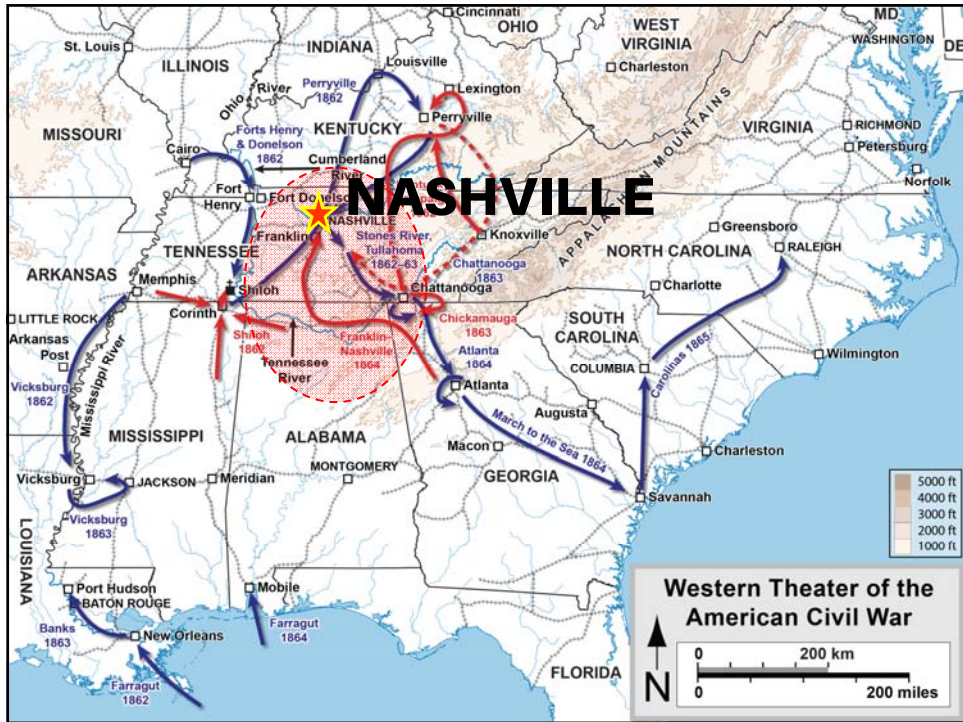
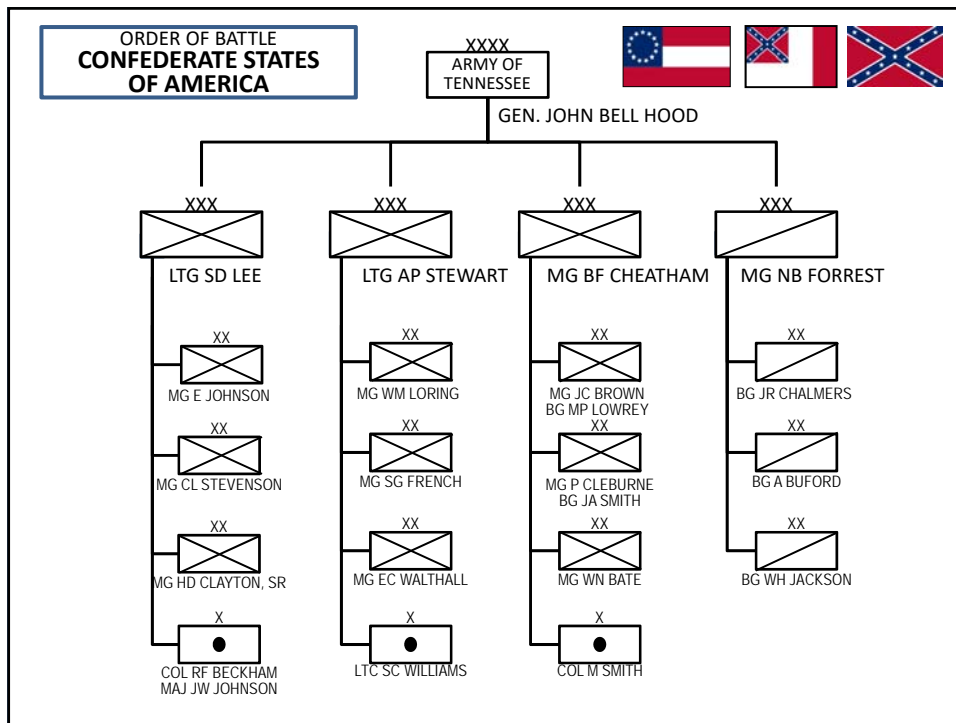


MILITARY
HISTORY
NASHVILLE
15-16 DECEMBER 1864







The Battle of Nashville

15-16 December 1864

Slides by Howard Lemon

The US Civil War in 1864 (1)

- The Union was vastly superior in numbers of troops and industrial might but the Union armies lacked leadership and coordination
- By the second half of 1863 the tide had turned in favour of the Union but the Union war effort was still disjointed
- In March 1864 Lincoln put Ulysses S Grant in charge of all the Union forces
- Grant was one of the few generals that had been consistently successful
- His strategy was simple: to apply superior force to key points *at the same time*

The US Civil War in 1864 (2)

- 4 May: Grant launched the “Forty Days” towards Richmond, Virginia
- 4 May: Sherman launched his army from Chattanooga towards Atlanta, Georgia
- Other parts of his strategy did not work out so well
- 16 Jun: After 3 major battles, each of which he “lost”, Grant laid siege to Petersburg near Richmond
- 2 Sept: Atlanta surrendered to Sherman
- 8 Nov: Lincoln re-elected
- 15 Nov: Sherman started his “march to the sea”, leaving George Thomas to deal with John Hood’s Army of Tennessee

MG George Henry Thomas, USA

- Age 58, born in Virginia of a slave-owning family
- A “traitor” in the South, suspect in the North
- Methodical, unflappable battlefield commander
- The “Rock of Chickamauga”
- His troops stormed Missionary Ridge in Chattanooga
- Despite his many successes, Grant believed that Thomas was too slow and didn’t have a lot of confidence in him



BG* John Schofield, USA

- Age 33, born in New York, moved to Missouri
- Deputy to Thomas at Nashville
- Capable commander
- Political, ambitious and quarrelsome
- Held a grudge against Thomas from his time at West Point



* 29 Nov 1862-13 Mar 1865 was commissioned as a Major General, US Volunteers

General (temp.)* John Bell Hood, CSA

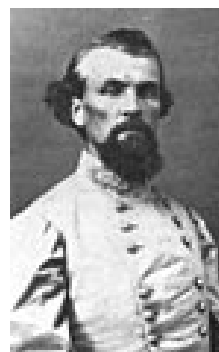
- Age 33, born in Kentucky but moved to Texas
- Brave and aggressive brigade commander
- Hot-headed and reckless
- Lost the use of his left arm at Gettysburg
- His right leg was amputated at Chickamauga
- Had to be tied to his horse
- Replaced the more experienced Joe Johnson 6 weeks before Atlanta fell



* 18 Jul 1864-23 Jan 1865 given temporary rank of General, CSA. Reverted to his permanent rank of Lieutenant General after 23 Jan 1865.

MG Nathan Bedford Forrest, CSA

- Cavalry commander (Confederate), age 43
- Wealthy slave trader, enlisted as a private
- No military education
- Brilliant tactician
- Developed new doctrines for mobile forces
- Feared by all the Union generals
- Even now a controversial figure

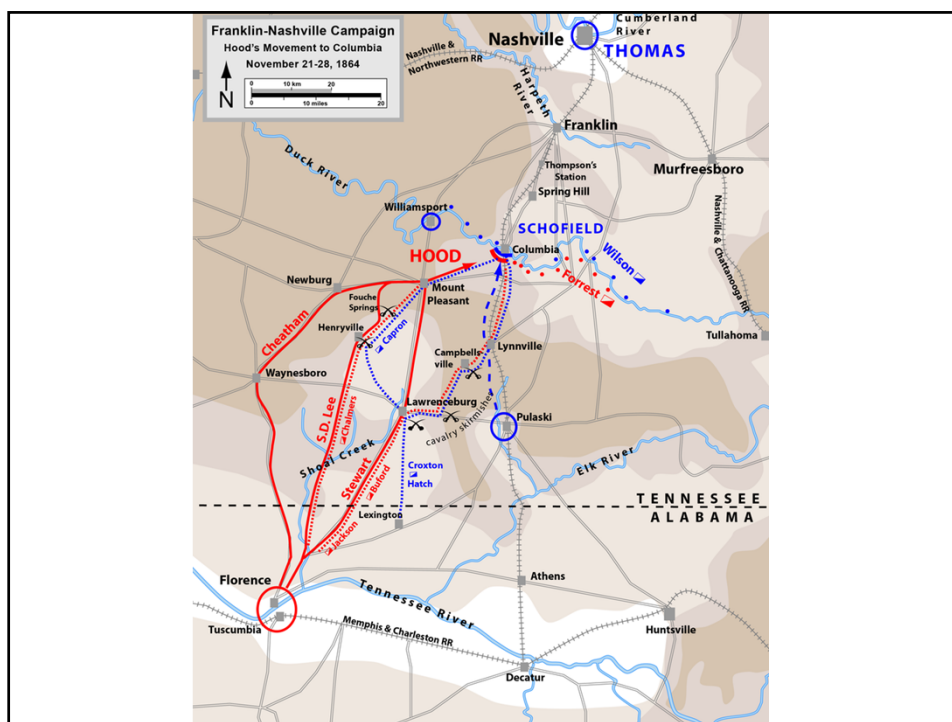


The Franklin-Nashville Campaign (1)

- When Sherman left Atlanta, Hood manoeuvred to cut his supply lines to force him back from his march
- But Sherman didn't have a supply line
- He planned to live off the land and to destroy everything else in his path
- Grant had proven this could work in the Vicksburg campaign

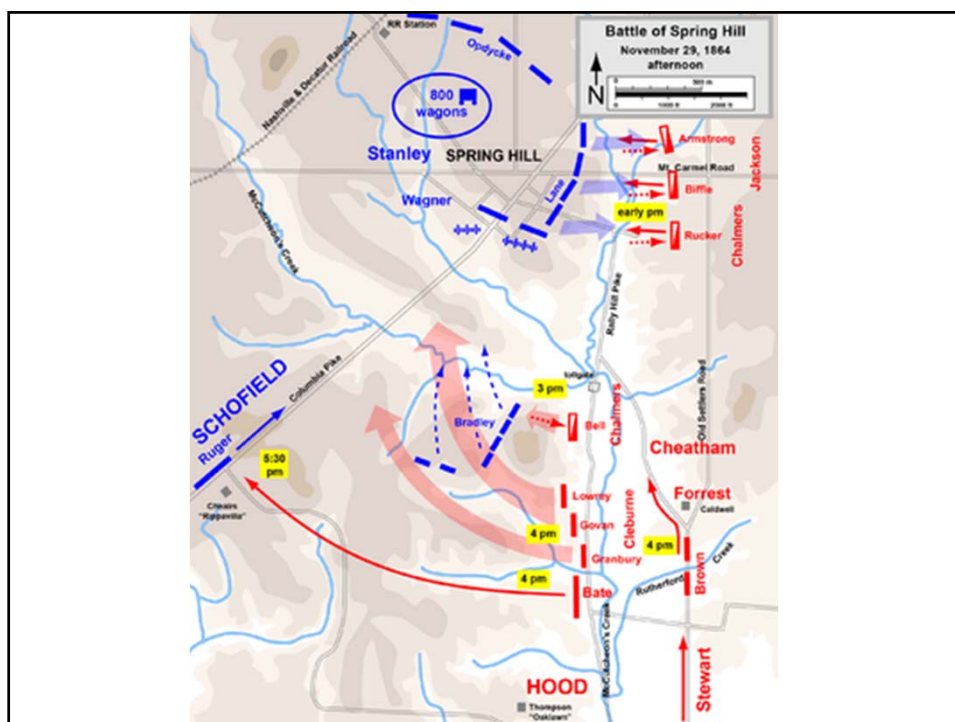
The Franklin-Nashville Campaign (2)

- Hood had 39,000 troops in the Army of the Tennessee
- Thomas had 55,000 troops at Nashville while Schofield had 30,000 at Pulaski, 75 miles to the south
- No one was quite sure what Hood intended (go east after Sherman? go north towards Nashville? go further north?)
- Forrest kept his movements well screened
- Hood wanted to cut him off and defeat Schofield and Thomas separately
- Thomas recognised the danger and called Schofield to Nashville
- The race was on!



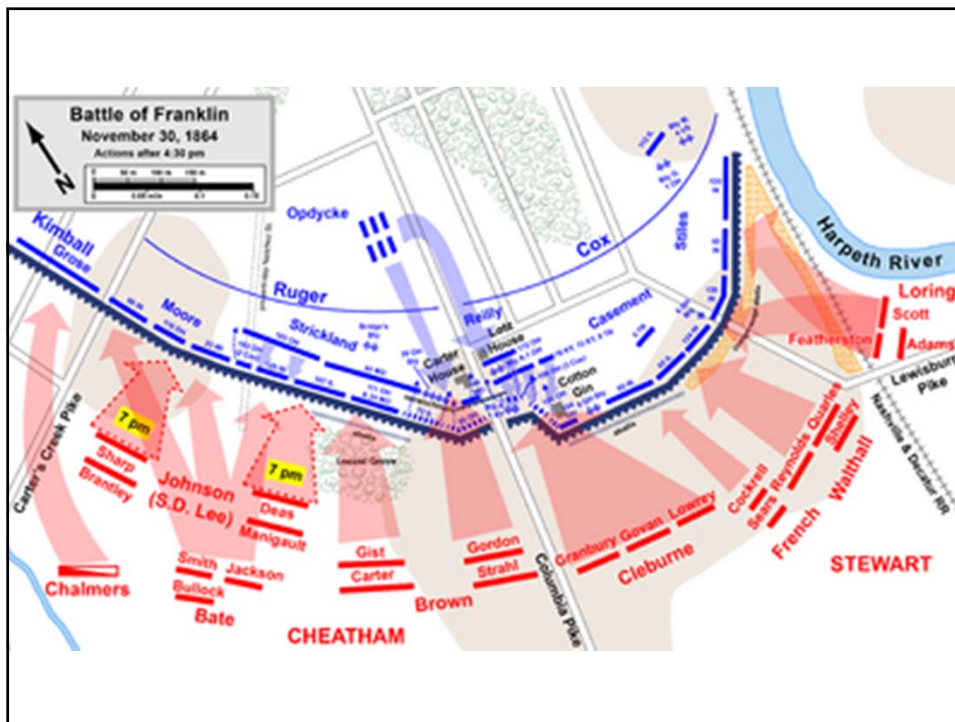
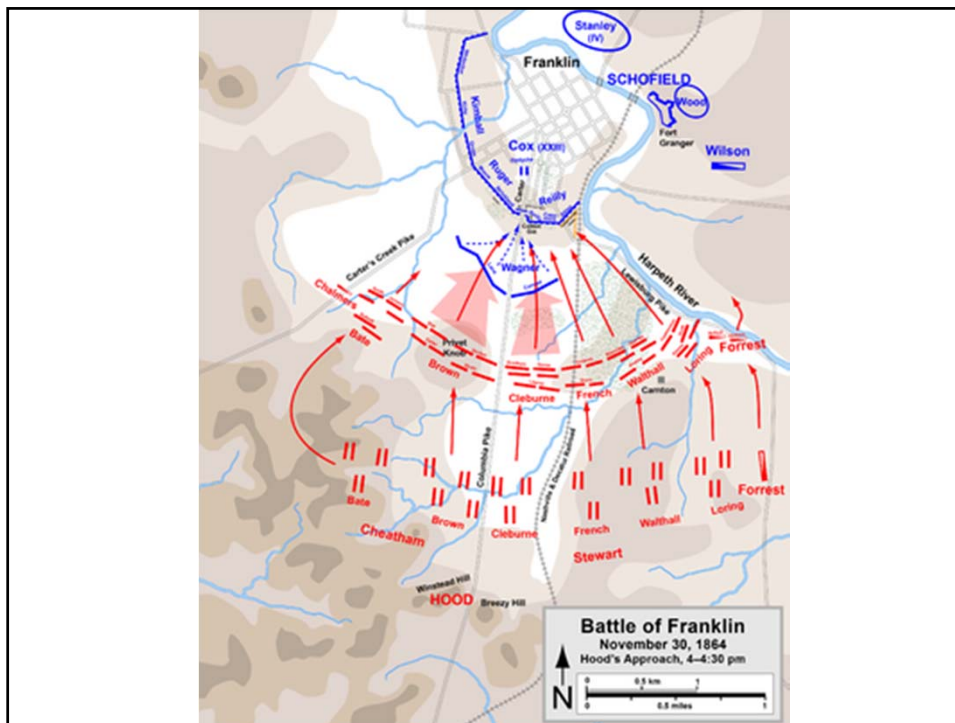
The Franklin-Nashville Campaign (3)

- Schofield reached and crossed Duck River at Columbia first
- Thomas ordered Schofield to hold the crossing which he did from 24-29 November
- Hood wanted to hold him there while he outflanked him
- Hood set his trap at Spring Hill
- Schofield realised he was in danger and marched north
- During the night Schofield marched his army straight through the trap while the Confederates slept!
- Hood was furious



The Franklin-Nashville Campaign (4)

- Hood now chased Schofield to Franklin leaving most of his artillery to follow
- Schofield reached Franklin in the morning of 30 November but the bridges were damaged so he fortified quickly
- Hood arrived in the late afternoon and ordered an immediate frontal assault which continued into the night
- The fighting was ferocious hand to hand combat but it was a disaster for Hood's army
- He lost 6000 troops including 14 generals and 55 regimental commanders



The Franklin-Nashville Campaign (5)

- By the next morning Schofield had crossed the river and was soon safely in a well fortified Nashville
- 2 Dec: Hood arrived with his depleted army, dug in along a 4 mile front on high ground and waited for Thomas to attack
- However, Hood sent Forrest off to damage railways and attack the garrison at Murfreesboro
- Forrest did not return until after the fighting at Nashville was over
- For the battle, Hood now had only 26,500 against Thomas's 55,000 combat troops

Thomas's problems (1)

- Sherman had taken the best troops and most of the horses
- 3 year enlistments had run out and many experienced troops had returned home to be replaced by new recruits
- Thomas needed to rebuild his cavalry because of the fear of Forrest
- Supplies were difficult to obtain in Tennessee
- Even though he had twice the numbers his army was not ready yet to support an attack Hood
- Then the ice storm hit 8-12 Dec
- Thomas couldn't move but neither could Hood

Thomas's problems (2)

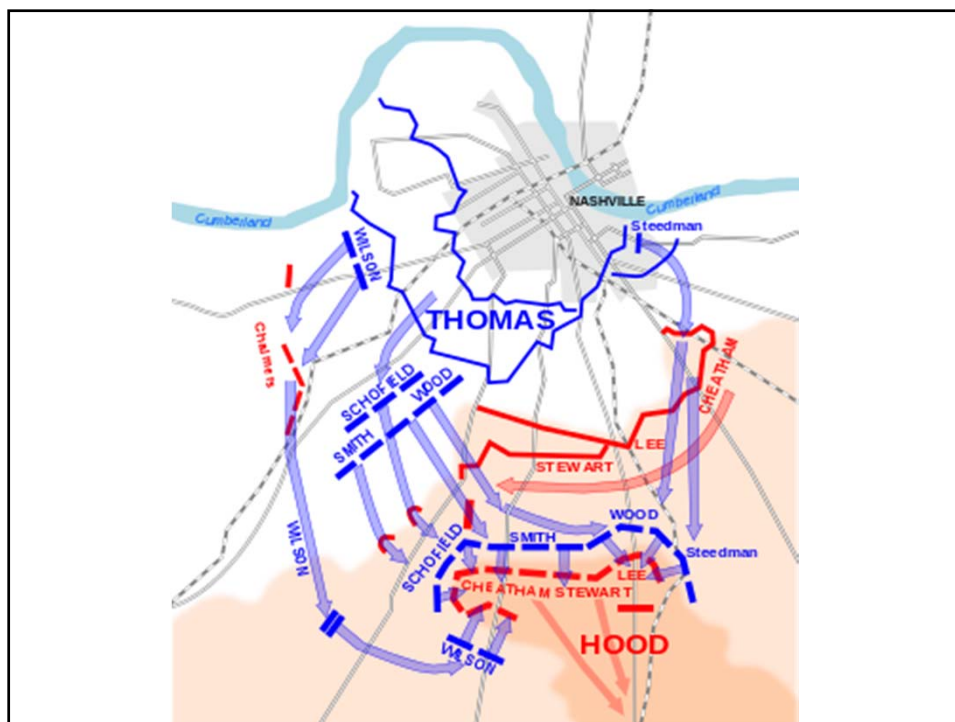
- Grant and the leaders in Washington worried that Hood could continue north and demanded that Thomas move immediately
- Thomas resisted this pressure while he prepared his troops for the upcoming battle
- He then discovered that Schofield was undermining him, sending negative reports to Grant
- Grant decided to replace Thomas and sent Logan to take over
- Then he decided to come himself, but before he got far ...
- The weather cleared, Thomas set his plan in motion and the Army of Tennessee was completely destroyed over 2 days

The Battle of Nashville – 15 Dec

- Thomas planned for a classic double envelopment
- Threaten Hood's right flank while swinging hard against his left
- Despite the planning, there was morning fog and chaos when the troops started to move
- The assault did not begin until around noon
- Near to dusk the left gave way but there was not enough light for Thomas to press home the advantage
- The Union troops stayed where they were overnight

The Battle of Nashville – 16 Dec

- During the night Hood moved his defensive line back a mile or two and made it more compact and much stronger
- In the morning Thomas's troops had to locate the new Confederate defensive line was before they could get ready for a repeat of the first day's tactics
- Again the main assault did not begin until the afternoon
- The Confederate right held but the left started to give way
- Seeing this, Thomas gave Schofield the direct order "Please advance your entire line" and he had to obey
- The collapse turned into a rout



The Battle of Nashville – The Aftermath

- The Confederates fled southwards and the Union troops chased for 2 weeks
- Heavy rain and the timely return of Forrest hampered the pursuit
- But the Army of Tennessee would never fight again
- Hood resigned early in 1865
- Grant acknowledged Thomas's achievement although he was critical of the way the pursuit had been handled
- But prior to the battle his major worry had been that Hood would skirt around Nashville and head north!