



Battle of Nashville **By Darrell Osburn ©1996**



[pic of Sherman, pic of Hood]

As the Union Army of General William Tecumseh Sherman was tearing up Georgia, from Atlanta to the sea, Confederate General John Bell Hood realized that his own army was unable to stop it.

[1] [CS marchby]

So General Hood decided on an invasion of his own, into Tennessee.

Hood's army, the Army of Tennessee, had always fought gallantly but had never been able to deliver a knockout blow.

Hood had recently led his army into a series of costly and sometimes disastrous battles around Atlanta and at Franklin, Tennessee.

Hood now had left only about 24,000 men.

[2] [US in fort, troops marching in, reinforcing]

Behind strong defensive positions in Nashville, Union General George H. Thomas was collecting an army of about 55,000 soldiers.

[3] [pic of Thomas, close on concerned US faces]

It was said that General Thomas had a look that could freeze skulkers in their tracks. Many Union soldiers feared General Thomas more than they feared the Confederate army!

[4] [CS marchby, take defensive positions]

Hood's army arrived just south of Nashville on Dec. 5th, 1864.

[5] [Hood and other CS officers scan strong US position with binoculars]

When Hood realized that he was outnumbered more than 2 to 1, and the Yankees were protected by good fortifications, the southern general wisely decided against a frontal attack.

[6] [Hood and his officers look at map, which contains the strategic situation]

Hood now found himself in a very difficult position. He knew he could not win if he attacked Thomas' superior force. He knew he could not side-step Nashville and lead his army north, because Thomas would attack him on the flanks or rear, while his army on the march was vulnerable. He could not even retreat because he believed his demoralized army would probably melt away.

[7] [CS troops work on building fortifications on a hill]

The only option left to Hood, was to fortify a line of defenses just south of Nashville and hope that Thomas would attack him.

The rebels had lost faith in their commander's ability to lead and win.

[8] [new venue-Grant's US troops in trenches, mortars and cannons fire, wounded soldiers being taken away in stretchers, Grant is angry when he reads reports]

Meanwhile, President Abraham Lincoln and General Ulysses S. Grant were very nervous. General Grant had Robert E. Lee's army pinned down in Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia. But Grant was concerned that Hood would give General Thomas the slip and move to reinforce Lee's army, which would upset everything.

It seemed to Grant that the North was finally getting ready to defeat the South, so Grant repeatedly ordered Thomas to attack Hood immediately.

[9] [cut back to Thomas' camp-supplies and reinforcements coming in]

But Thomas refused to do so until everything was ready. Thomas' Army of the Cumberland was stocking up on horses for their cavalry, and food and ammunition for the entire army.

[10] [US officers planning, Thomas looks around as the weather moves in, throws up his hands, as though there is nothing to do but wait]

Thomas planned his attack carefully to assure success. But just when he was ready, a massive winter storm of freezing rain coated the landscape with ice. Movement was impossible and Thomas now had to wait for the ice to melt.

[11] [cut back to Grant's trenches, cannon and mortars going off, - Grant writing orders on paper and handing them over, Grant orders a 2-star general to go to Tennessee]

Grant would not tolerate any further delays and dispatched General John Logan to Tennessee to relieve Thomas of command and take over the army.

[12] [Grant's staff gather his gear and prepare to leave]

Grant became so disgusted with the delays that he set out to take over Thomas's army himself.

[13] [US troops form in battle lines]

But by Dec. 15th the ice had melted and before General Logan could get there, Thomas attacked Hood.

[14] [pan the CS defensive lines]

The Confederate line stretched nearly 5 miles.

[15] [US black soldiers move forward in battle line]

On Dec. 15th, at 6 o'clock in the morning, Thomas launched a diversionary attack of black soldiers against the Confederate right flank.

[16] [pan the main US forces, ready to attack]

General Thomas believed that the left flank was the weaker end of the rebel line, and Thomas was determined to send his heaviest attacks against the weakest spot.

[17] [US forces advance, cannons fire on both sides, pyros, both sides fire volleys]

[18] [US troops, formed and stationary, are in reserve]

One Union corps was held in the center to support whichever flank might manage a breakthrough.

[19] [CS cannons drive back the main US attacks]

Somehow, a Confederate battery was able to hold off Thomas' main attack for 2 hours.

[20] [US troops eventually take the hill, CS troops fight desperately, but are either driven off, are killed or are taken as prisoners]

[21] [cut to Thomas, who is overjoyed, but his officers tell him the battle is not yet won]

The Confederate left was finally overwhelmed and Thomas believed his victory was complete. Thomas ordered his men to halt for the night, but Thomas' generals knew that Hood was a stubborn, scrappy fighter. They told General Thomas that the battle was not over yet.

[22] [cut to US officers with binoculars and telescopes scanning the new venue]

[23] [new venue-pan CS forces thick on top of a different set of hills]

The next morning, the Yankees found the rebels in a shorter, stronger, more compact formation, about two miles south of the previous day's action.

There were Hood's men drawn up in a battle line, ready to fight again.

[24] [US officers planning, cut to US forces advancing toward hill]

General Thomas decided to use the same plan that worked so well yesterday. He sent another diversionary attack against the Confederate right on Overton Hill.

[25] [US forces forming for another attack]

But the Yankees, who were they exhausted and disorganized for yesterday's battle, could not launch the main attack against the rebel left until about 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

[26] [US forces are driven back after heavy firing, cut to CS troops double-quicking toward their own right flank to reinforce it]

Thomas's attack on Overton Hill was repulsed. Now Hood shifted men from his right flank to support his left flank.

[27] [cut to Thomas and his staff looking through binoculars-Thomas is thrilled]

This was Thomas' opportunity to hit the weakened Confederate left.

[28] [US forces advance, both sides cannon fire, etc. musket volleys, etc.]

The blue troops advanced steadily against the gray lines.

[29] [cut to the CS left flank, US cavalry get in behind the rebs and shoot a lot of them down]

Dismounted Union cavalry, armed with repeating rifles, got in behind the men on Hood's left flank and laid down a deadly fire.

[30] [CS army breaks in panic, many run away]

Although the Confederate right still held firmly, the troops of the left and center started to panic and their line began to disintegrate.

[31] [US troops and officers cheering]

General Thomas said the cheering was the voice of the America people.

[32] [Thomas is thrilled, smiling and pumping his fist]

General Thomas was thrilled to have won the Battle of Nashville. To everyone he saw, he yelled, "Didn't I tell you we would lick 'em? Didn't I tell you?"

[33] [CS battered marchby, many wounded, all are discouraged]

[34] [CS cavalry hold back the US troops]

Hood had no choice but to retreat south. Rear-guard actions by some of Hood's men held the Union forces at bay, and eventually, the withdrawal of the southern army was well-covered by Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry.

[35] [CS battered marchby]

The remnants of Hood's brave Army of Tennessee finally reached safety in Mississippi.

It was nearly the only time in the Civil War that a Confederate army had been driven in panic from a battlefield.

General Hood of Texas, who had already lost an arm and a leg in service to the Confederacy, was whipped, and he knew it.

His army had again been badly beaten and was falling apart. Hood's spirit was broken. He resigned his command a few weeks later, and was not offered another command.

[36] [Dead all over the field, wounded being tended to, CS prisoners being herded]

After years of fighting, the Union forces had at last broken the Confederate Army of Tennessee.

In the Battle of Nashville, the northern forces lost a total of about 3,000 killed, wounded, captured or missing.

The southern army had even higher losses. Hood lost about 6,000 killed, wounded, captured or missing.

[37] [cut to Civil War ships, 38 cut to Grant's trenches, 39 cut to US marchby, 40 cut to the CS dead on the battlefield]

The Union fleet's blockade had finally isolated the South from the rest of the world. General Lee was pinned down in Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia. Sherman was devastating Georgia, and yet another Confederate army in the west was cut off from the east.

Now, with the virtual destruction of Hood's army, most Southerners began to believe that the Confederacy's days were numbered.

Props- fortifications, tent, wagons, supplies, binoculars, pen and paper, 10 cannons and mortars, Army of Tennessee flags, cavalry-both sides, cigar for Grant.