

WILLIAM TECUMSEH SHERMAN, ULYSSES SIMPSON GRANT, AND THE
IMPORTANT MILITARY CAMPAIGNS THAT DEFINED THEM

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Submitted to the Boards of Study in History and Language and Culture

School of Humanities

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College

State University of New York

May 2021

Accepted

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When it comes to the Civil War, many people tend to have a narrow view on events that took place during the war and how certain events led to certain outcomes that ultimately led to the Union victory over the Confederacy in the war. One such instance of this is there are people that think that the combination of the Battle of Gettysburg and the Siege of Vicksburg as the turning point in the war. Granted, these two military campaigns were important wins for the Union in the war that would help lead to their eventual victory. However, it is also worth noting that the war lasted nearly two years after these victories by the Union. The Confederacy still had a lot of fight left in them, despite these two crippling losses the Confederate States still felt that they could beat the Union. This was evident in the fact that the last two years of the war produced the most casualties for both sides, and the Confederacy continued to fight the Union with great ferocity in numerous military engagements after these two events including in the Battle of Chattanooga and the Battle of Chickamauga. A deeper look, however, leads to the idea that General Sherman's actions in the State of Georgia in 1864 was the true turning point in the Civil War. Through the Atlanta Campaign, the March to the Sea, and in part the subsequent Campaign in the Carolinas, General William Tecumseh Sherman dealt a crippling blow to the Confederacy that they would never recover from. Scholarly sources, as well as the memoirs of Ulysses Simpson Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman affirm this concept. Because as a result of these events, Sherman and his army effectively demoralized the Confederacy, and it was around this time that the Confederate States of America started losing the will to continue fighting the Union. It was then that they started to truly realize that they were not going to win the war. This also resulted in a record number of desertions in the Confederate armies that were fighting on battlefronts throughout the South, and the Confederacy was not fighting with the same grit and ferocity that they had exhibited earlier in the war. In the end, General Sherman and

his army ultimately would help to drive the final nail in the coffin on the South and their aspirations to form a new nation built on the backs of slaves, General Sherman with the blessing of his friend and confidant General Ulysses Simpson Grant, as well as his actions before, during, and after his campaign throughout the state of Georgia would all but guarantee the Union's victory in the Civil War.

General Sherman During the Early Part of the War

At the outset of the war, Sherman joined up and fought in the First Battle of Bull Run where "Sherman led one of the few Union brigades that performed relatively well during a long, hard day of fighting that ended in a stunning Confederate victory. As one of the North's few even moderately successful commanders that day. Sherman was promoted to brigadier general and placed in charge of Union forces in Kentucky"¹. While in Kentucky, Brigadier General Sherman would overly exaggerate to Washington the number of soldiers required to stave off Confederate forces from overtaking Kentucky, which during this time was a border state (a slave state that remained loyal to the Union). As a result, he was replaced by Brigadier General Don Carlos Buell, and sent to St. Louis where he was also deemed unfit to serve and placed on leave. This could be attributed to his family's long history of mental illness, and the fact that Sherman had it rough growing up with his father's abrupt death as well as other family tragedies. Sherman oftentimes would have mood swings and at times exhibited erratic behavior. Although by February of 1862, Sherman recovered sufficiently to be placed back on active duty where he would serve under General Ulysses Simpson Grant. As Ian Cuthbertson notes in the introduction to the Sherman Memoirs the two men became close friends and gradually relied on each other

¹ Ian M. Cuthbertson, *The Memoirs of William T. Sherman* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005), XIII.

more and more as the war dragged on “Grant quickly became Sherman’s best friend and his most loyal and ardent supporter. Although both men had flaws, Grant helped stabilize the brilliant but erratic Sherman, while Sherman stood firmly beside Grant through the heavy criticisms that were all too often heaped upon him, including repeated charges that he was a drunkard and careless with the lives of the soldiers under his command. Together, they would forge the Army of the Tennessee into the North’s most consistently successful command”². Both men were in many respects meant for each other, and their friendship would help them overcome their debilitating weaknesses. Grant was a drunk while Sherman was a looney, they both relied on each other during their moments of weakness to rise above their personal demons. This unique and special bond that they shared helped the Union win the war as noted by O’Connell when he wrote that “Sherman and Grant, Grant and Sherman. The names are linked inextricably. They should be, since it was this alliance that eventually won the Civil War in the field. At the end they were the strategists in charge, a unique team. Other generals in the war worked well together-Lee and Stonewall Jackson are obvious examples-but always in the conventional commander-subordinate mold. Sherman and Grant were different; their relationship was more complex”³. During this time in the war, both generals would be challenged tremendously by the relentless and determined Confederate forces during the Battle of Shiloh. General Sherman’s forces would be right in the thick of the battle and they sustained heavy casualties despite the two imposing factors of having inclement weather throughout most of the battle, as well as Confederate forces relentlessly attacking them. As explained by General Grant in his memoirs “Some two or three miles from Pittsburgh landing was a log meeting-house called Shiloh. It stood on a ridge which

² Cuthbertson, *Sherman Memoirs*, XIV-XV.

³ Robert L. O’Connell, *Fierce Patriot: The Tangled Lives of William Tecumseh Sherman* (New York: Random House, 2014), 94.

divides the waters of Snake and Lick creeks, the former emptying into the Tennessee just north of Pittsburgh landing, and the latter south. This point was the key to our position and was held by Sherman. His division was at the time wholly raw, no part of it ever having been in an engagement; but I thought this deficiency was more than made up by the superiority of the commander”⁴. General Sherman oversaw a critical part in the Union’s operations during the Battle of Shiloh and he proved throughout this hard-fought battle that he was a man who was not afraid in the slightest of getting his hands dirty. As written by James McPherson in his book *Battle Cry Of Freedom*, “Sherman was everywhere along the lines at Shiloh, shoring up his raw troops and inspiring them to hurl back the initial assaults-with staggering losses on both sides. Sherman himself was wounded slightly (twice) and had three horses shot under him”⁵. In the decades following the war, General Grant vividly recounted these events in his memoirs by emphasizing the idea that almost losing Sherman was gut-wrenching to think about and would have been a horrible loss for the Union army. He was relieved that Sherman did not die because from his point of view “A casualty to Sherman that would have taken him from the field that day would have been a sad one for the troops engaged at Shiloh. And how near we came to this! On the 6th Sherman was shot twice, once in the hand, once in the shoulder, the ball cutting his coat and making a slight wound, and a third ball passed through his hat. In addition to this he had several horses shot during the day”⁶. But Sherman’s forces held the line and did not back down to the aggressiveness of the Confederate soldiers as written by McPherson “After the initial shock, Sherman performed this day with coolness and courage. The next twelve hours proved to be the turning point of his life. What he learned that day at Shiloh-about war and about himself-

⁴ Ulysses S. Grant, *President U.S. Grant Personal Memoirs* (USA: Feather Trail Press. 2010), 150.

⁵ James McPherson, *Battle Cry Of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 409.

⁶ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 152.

helped to make him one of the North's premier generals"⁷. They played an important role by holding out until reinforcements under the command of Don Carlos Buell arrived and pushed back the Confederate forces. According to John Cannan in his book *War in the West: Shiloh to Vicksburg, 1862-1863*, General Grant would go on to say that "Shiloh was the severest battle fought at the West during the war, and but few in the East equaled it for hard, determined fighting. I saw an open field, in our possession on the second day, over which the Confederates had made repeated charges the day before, so covered with dead that it would have been possible to walk across the clearing, in any direction, stepping on dead bodies, without a foot touching the ground. On our side National and Confederate troops were mingled together in about equal proportions, but on the remainder of the field nearly all were Confederates"⁸. The Union achieved a major victory where they drove back the Confederate forces, and they were able to advance into Northern Mississippi. But it would come at a heavy cost, the battle was the bloodiest battle fought up to that point in the war, both sides sustained heavy casualties with nearly twice as many casualties as all previous battles in the Civil War combined. In his memoirs, General Sherman vividly recounts the Battle of Shiloh stating "The Battle of Shiloh had been fought, as described, on the 6th and 7th of April; and when the movement of the 8th had revealed that our enemy was gone, in full retreat, leaving killed, wounded, and much property by the way, we all experienced a feeling of relief. The struggle had been so long, so desperate and bloody, that the survivors seemed exhausted and nerveless; we appreciated the value of the victory, but realized also its great cost of life"⁹.

The Siege of Vicksburg

⁷ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 409.

⁸ John Cannan, *War in the West: Shiloh to Vicksburg, 1862-1863* (New York: Gallery Books, 1990), 58-59.

⁹ William T. Sherman, *The Memoirs of William T. Sherman* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005), 237.

Following the Battle of Shiloh, General Grant subsequently set his sights on capturing the Confederate stronghold in Vicksburg, Mississippi because as Grant put it “Vicksburg was important to the enemy because it occupied the first high ground coming close to the river below Memphis. From there a railroad runs east, connecting with other roads leading to all points of the Southern States. A railroad starts from the opposite side of the river, extending west as far as Shreveport, Louisiana. Vicksburg was the only channel, at the time of the events of which this chapter treats, connecting the parts of the Confederacy divided by the Mississippi”¹⁰. As Grant notes in his memoirs, the Confederate forces were well-fortified in the points that they held between Vicksburg and Port Hudson, it would not be easy to defeat the Confederate stronghold entrenched in this vital opening that they held at the mouth of the Mississippi River. In December of 1862, Sherman led an army of roughly 32,000 men in an assault on the Chickasaw Bluffs as part of Grant’s two-pronged plan to swiftly capture the Confederate stronghold in Vicksburg. Sherman had his reservations about Grant’s plan, but he willingly followed Grant’s orders and went through with the plan. As he recounts in his memoirs, Sherman went through with the plans orchestrated by Grant saying that “The distance from Oxford to the rear of Vicksburg is little greater than by the circuitous route we afterward followed, from Bruinsburg to Jackson and Vicksburg, during which we had neither depot nor train of supplies. I have never criticized General Grant’s strategy on this or any other occasion, but I thought then that he had lost an opportunity, which cost him and us six months’ extra-hard work, for we might have captured Vicksburg from the direction of Oxford in January, quite as easily as was afterward done in July, 1863”¹¹. However, this would ultimately fail because Grant lost communication with Sherman and could not effectively coordinate the plan that he originally devised. He

¹⁰ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 185.

¹¹ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 304-305.

explains in his memoirs that “This interruption in my communications north-I was really cut off from communication with a great part of my own command during this time-resulted in Sherman’s moving from Memphis before McClernand could arrive, for my dispatch of the 18th did not reach McClernand. Pemberton got back to Vicksburg before Sherman got there”¹². Grant realized too late the flaws in his plan and could not notify Sherman in time that he had called off his initial plan to try and capture Vicksburg. General Grant wrote in his memoirs regarding this failure that “Sherman’s attack was very unfortunate, but I had no opportunity of communicating with him after the destruction of the road and telegraph to my rear on the 20th. He did not know but I was in the rear of the enemy and depending on him to open a new base of supplies for the troops with me”¹³. In the end, Grant and the Union army had no choice but to besiege Vicksburg, because it was well-fortified, and the Confederate army stationed there was not going to go quietly. Sherman points out in his memoirs that during this time “Good roads were constructed from our camps to the several landing-places on the Yazoo River, to which points our boats brought us ample supplies; so that we were in a splendid condition for a siege, while our enemy was shut up in a close fort, with a large civil population of men, women, and children to feed, in addition to its combatant force. If we could prevent sallies, or relief from the outside, the fate of the garrison of Vicksburg was merely a question of time”¹⁴. After months of laying siege to Vicksburg, the Confederate Army under the command of General John Pemberton finally surrendered on July 4 of 1863. As General Grant notes in his memoirs, the capturing of Vicksburg “with its garrison, ordnance and ordnance stores, and the successful battles fought in reaching them, gave new spirit to the loyal people of the North. New hopes for the final success

¹² Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 192.

¹³ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 192.

¹⁴ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 313.

of the cause of the Union were inspired. The victory gained at Gettysburg, upon the same day, added to their hopes. Now the Mississippi River was entirely in the possession of the National troops; for the fall of Vicksburg gave us Port Hudson at once. The army of northern Virginia was driven out of Pennsylvania and forced back to about the same ground it occupied in 1861”¹⁵.

Although General Sherman interestingly points out in his memoirs the idea that the Union victory at Vicksburg “was not measured by the list of prisoners, guns, and small-arms, but by the fact that its possession secured the navigation of the great central river of the continent, bisected fatally the Southern Confederacy, and set the armies which had been used in its conquest free for other purposes; and it so happened that the event coincided as to time with another great victory which crowned our arms far away, at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania”¹⁶. As a result of this crucial victory, the Union obtained full control over the Mississippi River, and they were effectively able to divide the Confederacy and break up important supply lines. General Sherman elaborated on these achievements in his memoirs by pointing out that after the Confederates lost control of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, The Union gained full control of the Mississippi River and formed a line of separation between the Confederate States through their control of the Mississippi. This in conjunction with the Union victory up north in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania dealt a pair of debilitating losses to the Confederacy however, their will to continue fighting did not die with these losses, the Confederate States of America were not at all ready to wave the white flag just yet.

At the outset of the Vicksburg Campaign, General Grant had sent General Sherman to capture General Joseph Johnston’s army. As McPherson states in his biography on the Civil War,

¹⁵ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 248.

¹⁶ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 318.

“Sherman received orders ‘to move against Johnston’s army, to break it up, and to get into the interior of the enemy’s country as far as you can, inflicting all the damage you can against their war resources’¹⁷. In some respects, it was similar to how Grant would go after Lee later in the war in that Sherman strived to root out and capture Johnston’s army even if it was the last thing he did. However, it is worth noting that according to McPherson, “While Grant and Lee sought to destroy or cripple each other’s army, Sherman and Johnston engaged in a war of maneuver seeking an advantage that neither found. While Grant continually moved around Lee’s right after hard fighting, Sherman continually moved around Johnston’s left without as much fighting. Differences in terrain as well as in the personalities of commanders determined these contrasting strategies’¹⁸. Following the Union victory at Vicksburg, Johnston and his army moved eastward towards Jackson, Mississippi to avoid at all costs Sherman and his formidable army that both outnumbered and outgunned him. General Johnston knew that his army was no match in a head on battle with Sherman’s army. As a result, General Johnston’s army marched rapidly eastward towards Jackson, Mississippi. As mentioned by Sherman in his memoirs “On the 10th of July we had driven the rebel army into Jackson, where it turned at bay behind the intrenchments, which had been enlarged and strengthened since our former visit in May’¹⁹. This would be the first step in Grant’s broad strategy to make the South pay dearly for ever going to war with the North. As Charles Flood points out in his book about the friendship between Sherman and Grant, “Grant began planning the overall exploitation of the position in which the campaign had placed the forces under his command, while Sherman headed east to find and attack Joseph E. Johnston. His men found themselves marching day after day through the blazing heat of a Mississippi

¹⁷ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 722.

¹⁸ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 743.

¹⁹ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 316.

summer”²⁰. Sherman would go after Johnston with great ferocity, although at the same time he strived to avoid any unnecessary casualties in his quest to capture Johnston and his army. As a result, Flood expands on this point by saying that “Although Sherman had twice the number of soldiers Johnston had, his troops were thrown back with losses he did not wish to repeat. He decided to put Jackson under siege, lobbing shells at the enemy every few minutes, but before he could encircle the city, Johnston slipped his army away on the night of July 16”²¹. As a result, Sherman would move back west to Vicksburg so that his men could rest, because during this period it was in the middle of the dog days of the hot summer months, that made pursuing Johnston’s army in cat and mouse fashion physically debilitating and almost unbearable, especially in the South. This would loom large given the fact that there would be a string of important battles that would be fought in Tennessee the following year.

The Battle of Chattanooga

Going into 1864, the Confederacy still had plenty of fight left in them, they were not ready to give up on their aspirations for their own nation, quitting was not in their vocabulary. This was especially evident in the ferocity that they showed when they fought the Union army in Tennessee in the Battle of Chickamauga and the Battle of Chattanooga. In the Battle of Chickamauga in Chickamauga, Tennessee the Confederate army under the command of General Braxton Bragg handed the Union army under the command of General William Rosecrans a disastrous defeat. As written by General Sherman in his memoirs, that “While we were thus lying idle in camp on the Big Black, the Army of the Cumberland, under General Rosecrans, was moving against Bragg at Chattanooga; and the Army of the Ohio, General Burnside, was

²⁰ Charles Bracelan Flood, *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship that Won the Civil War* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 190.

²¹ Flood, *Grant and Sherman*, 190.

marching toward East Tennessee. General Rosecrans was so confident of success that he somewhat scattered his command, seemingly to surround and capture Bragg in Chattanooga; but the latter reinforced from Virginia, drew out of Chattanooga, concentrated his army at Lafayette, and at Chickamauga fell on Rosecrans, defeated him, and drove him into Chattanooga”²².

However, Flood notes in his book *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship that Won the Civil War*, that at Chickamauga, General William Rosecrans was saved from total annihilation thanks in large part to the heroism by Major General George Thomas. Because of General Thomas’s intervention, who became known as “the Rock of Chickamauga,” this would allow for the Union forces to retreat north to Chattanooga to regroup and prepare for the next battle in Chattanooga. Although as Grant notes, with the Confederate victory at Chickamauga, the Confederate forces gained a strong of strategic locations as they set their sights on Chattanooga as their next target. “Bragg followed and took possession of Missionary Ridge, overlooking Chattanooga. He also occupied Lookout Mountain, west of the town, which Rosecrans had abandoned, and with it his control of the river and the river road as far back as Bridgeport”²³. He also points out that with their defeat at Chickamauga, the Union army had their work cut out against the General Bragg’s army. Grant vividly recounts that prior to the Battle of Chattanooga, “The National troops were now strongly entrenched in Chattanooga Valley, with the Tennessee River behind them and the enemy occupying commanding heights to the east and west, with a strong line across the valley from mountain to mountain, and with Chattanooga Creek, for a large part of the way, in front of their line”²⁴. General Grant would take direct command over the Union forces in Chattanooga, and he knew full well the importance of holding Chattanooga because as Flood points out

²² Sherman, *Memoirs*, 332.

²³ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 257.

²⁴ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 257.

“Chattanooga was a vital communications hub, the principal southern rail center, an X that connected lines running southwest-northwest and northwest-southeast. If Chattanooga, only recently taken by Union forces, were recaptured by the Confederate Army, it would be both a great strategic loss for the Union and a rejuvenation for Southern morale after the defeats at Gettysburg and Vicksburg”²⁵. General Grant notes specifically in his memoirs the Union positions in Chattanooga and the geographical features of the area that they were dealing with stating that “Chattanooga is on the south bank of Tennessee, where the river runs nearly due west. It is at the northern end of the valley five or six miles in width, through which Chattanooga Creek runs. To the east of the valley is Missionary Ridge, rising from five to eight hundred feet above the creek and terminating somewhat abruptly a half mile or more before reaching the Tennessee”²⁶. Going into this important battle, General Sherman and his forces would play a pivotal role in this crucial battle.

At around this time, General Grant made a slew of important changes in the leadership of the Union army. Flood states in his book that “In this reorganization, directed specifically by Lincoln, Grant would have three subordinates. Sherman would take over Grant’s position as commander of the Army of the Tennessee. Stanton told Grant that he could replace the defeated Rosecrans as commander of the battered Army of the Cumberland that was now at beleaguered Chattanooga, and Grant decided to give that command to George Thomas, “the Rock of Chickamauga.” The third force, the Army of the Ohio, would continue under the command of Ambrose Burnside”²⁷. Grant notes in his memoirs, Sherman’s army would help to supplement the Union forces that were in Chattanooga with the numbers that they needed “Sherman’s force

²⁵ Flood, *Grant and Sherman*, 196.

²⁶ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 260.

²⁷ Flood, *Grant and Sherman*, 201.

made an additional army, with cavalry, artillery, and trains, all to be supplied by the single track road from Nashville”²⁸. General Grant ordered General Sherman and his forces to attack General Bragg on the right flank in order to weaken his other flanks “The plan for battle was for Sherman to attack the enemy’s right flank, form a line across it, extend our left over South Chickamauga River so as to threaten or hold the railroad in Bragg’s rear, and thus force him either to weaken his lines elsewhere or lose his connection with his base at Chickamauga Station”²⁹. To do this, Sherman’s army was to cross the Tennessee River in full view of the enemy as noted by Grant when he states in his memoirs that “To carry out this plan, Sherman was to cross the Tennessee at Brown’s Ferry and move east to Chattanooga to a point opposite the north end of Mission Ridge, and to place his command back of the foot-hills out of sight of the enemy on the ridge”³⁰. General Grant also commended that General Sherman, and his forces crossed the Tennessee River with great efficiency and effectiveness. Grant then states in his memoirs that “Sherman continued his crossing without intermission as fast as his troops could be got up. The crossing had to be effected in full view of the enemy on the top of Lookout Mountain. Once over, however, the troops soon disappeared behind the detached hill on the north side, and would not come to view again, either to watchmen on Lookout Mountain or Missionary Ridge, until they emerged between the hills to strike the bank of the river”³¹. General Grant explains that this was a deceptive tactic so that Bragg’s forces would not realize until it was too late what would transpire. After crossing the Tennessee, Sherman and his forces were able to effectively execute on General Grant’s plan which was to overwhelm General Bragg’s right flank and cause him to reinforce that flank by weakening his other flanks. General Grant vividly recounts this in his

²⁸ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 266.

²⁹ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 268.

³⁰ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 269.

³¹ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 271.

memoirs, stating that “Sherman now threatened both Bragg’s flank and his stores, and made it necessary for him to weaken other points of his line to strengthen his right. From the position I occupied I could see column after column of Bragg’s forces moving against Sherman. Every Confederate gun that could be brought to bear upon the Union forces was concentrated upon him”³². This genius ploy devised by General Grant and executed by General Sherman played a vital part in securing the Union’s victory at Chattanooga. General Sherman vividly recounted the Battle of Chattanooga in his memoirs when he stated that “I must do justice to the men of my command for the patience, cheerfulness, and courage which officers and men have displayed throughout, in battle, on the march, and in camp. For long periods, without regular rations or supplies of any kind, they have marched through mud and over rocks, sometimes barefooted, without a murmur. Without a moment’s rest after a march of over four hundred miles, without sleep for three successive nights, we crossed the Tennessee, and then turned more than a hundred and twenty miles north”³³. Overall, it was a great victory for the Union because not only did they pushback General Bragg’s army, but they also won this battle against immense odds. General Grant explains in his memoirs that “The victory at Chattanooga was won against great odds, considering the advantage the enemy had of position, and was accomplished more easily than was expected by reason of Bragg’s making several grave mistakes: first, in sending away his ablest corps commander with over twenty thousand troops; second, in sending away a division of troops on the eve of the battle; third, in placing so much of a force on the plain in front of his impregnable position”³⁴. Following this crucial victory by the Union, General Grant and General

³² Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 277-278.

³³ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 371.

³⁴ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 280-281.

Sherman would gradually devise a plan of inflicting total war on the South that would demoralize the Confederacy and make them pay dearly for starting the war in the first place.

Following the Union victory at Chattanooga, General Sherman went on a sweep through the South in Mississippi and Alabama burning through towns, destroying farms, factories, bridges, railroad tracks, trains, and other resources that the Confederacy could have been able to use to their advantage. One of the most noteworthy examples that historians consider to be a prelude to his actions in Georgia and the Carolinas is the Meridian Campaign in Meridian, Mississippi where he inflicted total war on the people of Meridian in the months leading up to his attack on Georgia. When it comes to Sherman's acts of total war during the final two years of the war, it is also important to mention Grant as well because everything that Sherman did during this part of the war was done with Grant's blessing. Flood expands on this concept in his book by saying "When Grant had told Sherman right after Vicksburg to set out after Joseph E. Johnston "and inflict on the enemy all the punishment you can," he had already demonstrated at Jackson that he regarded all kinds of supplies as legitimate military targets, and Sherman's burning of Randolph, Tennessee, and his Meridian Campaign had shown that he too was ready to lay waste anything and anyplace that could sustain the enemy's ability and will to resist. Both men were ready to engage in what became known as total war"³⁵. During this time, it is also worth noting that it was especially during this part of the war that the friendship between Grant and Sherman was most evident, because they relied on each other to remain steadfast in their fight against the Confederacy and they helped each other through their moments of weaknesses. R.L. O'Connell stresses in his book *Fierce Patriot: The Tangled Lives Of William Tecumseh Sherman*, that Even though Grant remained in charge of Sherman for the duration of

³⁵ Flood, *Grant and Sherman*, 238.

the war, and Sherman wanted it to be this way because he was a man who did not care much about rank or status. Both men remained great friends and could rely on each other for strategizing their battle tactics because they always had each other's back. Nobody but Sherman was better at describing this relationship than Sherman himself because in the way that Sherman put it, "He stood by me when I was crazy and I stood by him when he was drunk; now, sir, we stand by each other always." For two vulnerable men, it was a unique and effective shield against attack, but it was also strong because it was based on mutual dependence"³⁶. As the war came to an end, General Grant went to Virginia to lead the Army of the Potomac against Robert E. Lee's Confederate forces, while Sherman was left on the western front to command the Army of the Tennessee. However, even though Sherman and Grant would part ways they continued to rely on each other for support, they continued to remain in touch through telegraphs and letters, and they continued to coordinate their strategies with one another in an effort to end the war as soon as humanly possible. Although it is also important to mention as well that an overlooked aspect of General Sherman's military skills that helped him be a crafty and successful leader was his ability to read maps, his understanding of geography was an important asset. As O'Connell explains "no matter how befuddling the swamp or forest or mountain range, if Sherman had been there, he remembered it exactly. And since he had seen so much of the South, he became a kind of human geolocation system. It was an awesome military talent, but at the time he was developing it, it was nearly invisible to those around him. It may not have even struck Sherman as that unusual; it was simply something he did and assumed others shared"³⁷. Ultimately, it was

³⁶ O'Connell, *Fierce Patriot*, 94-95.

³⁷ O'Connell, *Fierce Patriot*, 26.

these attributes of Sherman's skills and leadership abilities that played a vital role in the success that he would have at the tail end of the war.

The Atlanta Campaign

Prior to the Atlanta Campaign in the summer of 1864, there were numerous changes in leadership that occurred in the Union army. The most noteworthy being Ulysses Grant gaining the rank of Lieutenant General of the Union army in its entirety, while William Sherman became the Union commander in the Western Theater with his command of the Army of the Tennessee. Grant would head to Virginia to confront Lee's forces while Sherman would be tasked with wreaking havoc throughout the South while also pursuing Johnston's army. Sherman was now left in command of the West, with the added bonus of having a formidable army that was well-rested, battle tested, and ready for combat. With this great army under his command, he began to orchestrate a military campaign to attack the State of Georgia from the Federal base in Chattanooga, Tennessee. It was during this time that he was beginning to develop his idea of imposing total warfare on the Confederate civilian population and the armies. General Sherman felt the need to inflict total war on the Southern people so that they would lose their incentive to continue contributing to the war effort against the Union. He felt that this was the only way to win the war given the point at which it had gotten in the war, the war had been dragging on for years with no end in sight, and the everyone became sick of fighting this bloody and costly war. Burke Davis in his book *Sherman's March: The First Full-Length Narrative of General William T. Sherman's Devastating March through Georgia and the Carolinas*, affirms these sentiments that Sherman held by stating in his book that "This theme became almost an obsession with the compulsive Sherman. He declared that the people of the South bore "a collective responsibility," and that the war was not merely an armed uprising. "It is about time the North understood the

truth,” he wrote. “The entire South, man, woman and child, is against us.” Even so, the complex man whose name was to symbolize the terrors of total warfare had a keen realization of the sufferings he was to impose upon the Southern people”³⁸. Even though Sherman deserves an immense amount of credit for orchestrating this total war campaign throughout the South, it is also worth noting that Sherman’s friendship with Grant played a pivotal role in his plans coming to fruition; because Sherman and Grant relied on each other for support, Sherman and Grant devised these plans together, and Sherman could not have undertaken these escapades that he went on without Grant’s approval.

The friendship between William Tecumseh Sherman and Ulysses Simpson Grant was crucial in these military campaigns that Sherman would subsequently undertake because of their reliance on one another and the fact that they found much in common with each other. Because as Flood points out, “Both of them failures before the war, the two men, alike in some ways and so different in others, discovered their talents and strengths in the crucible of the great national crisis. They formed a partnership in which, often after significant differences of opinion, each resolutely and successfully supported the decisions and movements of the other. Both were formidable leaders, but it was their combined abilities and coordinated campaigns that proved literally irresistible and played such a major part in winning the Civil War”³⁹. They relied on each other for both emotional and strategic support. This was evident through letters that they exchanged with one another and the fact that they uttered each other’s names in their memoirs with great reverence. This was because:

Grant thought that Sherman was entertaining, and thoroughly enjoyed his company; when they were together, Grant, usually reserved in manner, relaxed as he did with no other

³⁸ Burke Davis, *Sherman’s March: The First Full-Length Narrative of General William T. Sherman’s Devastating March through Georgia and the Carolinas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 17-18.

³⁹ Flood, *Grant and Sherman*, 400.

officer. Sherman was often baffled by the depths from which Grant pulled forth his successful military movements, but he came to see that Grant was a master of what he did. Each saw in the other a friendly, trusted partner who quickly grasped the other's ideas and made it possible to implement them for their mutual benefit and for the success of the cause to which they were dedicated. Each saw a man who wanted victory far more than he wanted promotion or fame; each saw a soldier's soldier. Whether they were campaigning together or communicating by letter and telegraph at times when their headquarters were several hundred miles apart, each knew that the other made him more than he was before they met⁴⁰.

These attributes that both men shared played right into the dynamics that went behind the strategic planning that Sherman would execute in Georgia and beyond.

This camaraderie that both generals shared played immensely into the strategic planning behind the Atlanta Campaign and in the campaigns that followed in that General Grant specifically instructed Sherman to defeat the Confederate Army of Tennessee under the command of General Joseph Johnston, and to advance into the State of Georgia. Because both generals concluded that it would demoralize both the people of Georgia and the Confederate States of America in their entirety. To do this Sherman would need an extraordinary amount of manpower and well-qualified generals under his command executing his marching orders. Throughout this period, Sherman had the pleasure of having both qualities in his army. The generals under his command had impeccable qualifications and had showed throughout the war valor and courage with the necessary manpower to effectively execute Sherman's directives. As Brooks Simpson explains in his book *America's Civil War*, "The Union general-in-chief had directed William T. Sherman to advance against Joseph E Johnston's Army of Tennessee and, hopefully, the railroad center of Atlanta. Sherman's force of 98,000 was distributed among three field armies: George H. Thomas's Army of the Cumberland (60,000); the Army of the Tennessee (25,000), led by James B. McPherson; and some 13,000 in the Army of the Ohio, commanded by

⁴⁰ Flood, *Grant and Sherman*, 401-402.

John M. Schofield. Against his force Johnston had some 50,000 men, with 15,000 more soon to join him, deployed in northern Georgia”⁴¹. Because of this immense manpower, Sherman and his forces were required to travel light in order to progress execute their goals in a timely manner as explained by Miles “the infantry traveled even lighter than usual. Each man carried his rifle and ammunition, a rubber poncho and blanket, haversack, canteen, tin cup, and eating utensils. Three men constituted a mess. They slept together in one tent, and at reveille one fetched water, the second cooked breakfast, and the third packed their gear. Each regiment had pack mules that carried the cooking and camping equipment, and food was brought in daily by foragers. When that was scarce, rations were secured from supply wagons”⁴². Despite this though, Sherman and his army headed into Atlanta, Georgia with a formidable force that would strike one of many crippling blows to the South.

The reason why Sherman with Grant’s blessing chose to attack Atlanta was because it was an important strategic location for the Confederacy in the South. McPherson corroborates this in his book by saying that “Atlanta was indeed a great prize. Its population had doubled to 20,000 during the war as foundries, factories, munitions plants, and supply depots sprang up at this strategic railroad hub”⁴³. Atlanta with its immense population as well as being an industrial powerhouse had been largely unaffected by the war. Because of this the South at-large looked at Atlanta as their symbol of resistance against the Union and sought to protect it through any means at their disposal. James McPherson affirms this point in his book when he said that “Because the South invested so much effort in defending the city, Atlanta also became a symbol of resistance and nationality second only to Richmond. As the Petersburg front stabilized to

⁴¹ Brooks Simpson, *Americas Civil War* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2013), 175.

⁴² Miles, *To the Sea*, 46.

⁴³ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 751.

trench warfare, concern in the Confederate capital shifted to Georgia, where mobile warfare resumed as the rains ceased”⁴⁴. Because of this, Sherman had the objective to burn through Atlanta, while also having the longstanding goal of capturing General Johnston’s army.

As Sherman and his forces starting marching through Georgia and into Atlanta in May of 1864, they had to deal with constant skirmishes with Confederate forces militia in the area as well as General John Bell Hood’s forces that were tasked with protecting Atlanta. However, they were unable to prevent the Union army from advancing onto Atlanta. McPherson explains this in his book by saying that “On August 30 he sent two corps against the enemy at Jonesborough twenty miles south of Atlanta. They found the Yankees too strong and were repulsed with heavy loss. Next day Sherman counterattacked and mauled the rebels. To avoid being cut off and trapped, Hood evacuated Atlanta on September 1 after destroying everything of military value in it. Next day the bluecoats marched in with bands blaring Union songs and raised the American flag over city hall. Sherman sent a jaunty wire to Washington: “Atlanta is ours, and fairly won”⁴⁵. Despite this resistance, Sherman and his forces continued to push forward and along the way they destroyed and burned anything that the Confederacy could potentially have used to their advantage including bridges, factories, railroads, farms, and warehouses. While also capturing food, livestock, ammunition stores and other supplies for the army to use. Miles points out in his book that Sherman’s army had more in store for the people of Georgia because as he put it “An extraordinary event was in the making. A Confederate army had left a destructive Federal force deep in Southern territory without opposition. Hood marched into Tennessee, hoping to recapture not only the Volunteer State but also Kentucky, but Sherman was left free to

⁴⁴ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 751.

⁴⁵ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 774.

plow through the unprotected heart of the South”⁴⁶. During this moment in time, while Sherman was succeeding in inflicting his total war strategy on the South, up north in Virginia, Grant would have a more difficult time of things with his stalemate against Lee. It is also worth noting that according to Miles what made this the Western Army under the command of General Sherman was successful because of the leadership throughout the army. Sherman successfully eliminated the burdensome political appointees and incompetent regular army officers that were present in the army. The officers and generals that remained were young and talented in military matters. Many of these officers and generals rose through the ranks, and because of this they were more concerned with the well-being of soldiers under their command. The effectiveness of Sherman’s leadership would show in the extraordinary amount of destruction that he inflicted on Atlanta. In many parts of Atlanta, as explained by Miles, there was complete and total destruction. With countless decaying animal carcasses that remained scattered across the entire landscape. Along with an estimated three thousand exhausted horses and scrawny cattle that were butchered with axe blows and left to rot in Atlanta’s ruins. Ultimately, the leadership of General Sherman would show up in more ways than one, and the best example of his leadership abilities were present in the Atlanta Campaign.

Another important part of the Atlanta Campaign that in many respects speaks volume to the leadership abilities that General Sherman had was present when he sent General Thomas back to Tennessee to defend Chattanooga from General Hood’s army. This was because as McPherson explained, the Army of Tennessee under the command of General Hood did not give up the fight after losing control of Atlanta. Instead, as the result of a visit from Jefferson Davis, the aggressive Hood planned to attack Sherman’s army from the rear, to try and cut his supply

⁴⁶ Miles, *To the Sea*, 26.

lines through the rail lines that branched out from Chattanooga that his army heavily relied on, and then chip away at their leisure the fragments of the weakened and starving Yankee army. As a result of this aggressive strategy on the part of General Hood, General Sherman made a very bold move to send General Thomas and the over 20 thousand soldiers under his command back to Tennessee to defend their base of operations and supply lines in Chattanooga from Hood's army. Miles also points out in his book that "Sherman would "destroy Atlanta, and then march across Georgia to Savannah and Charleston, breaking railroads and doing irreparable damage." He recognized the dangers inherent in such an undertaking, adding that "in a country like Georgia, with few roads, and innumerable streams," an inferior force could delay and harass his army into impotence. Still, he felt confident the Rebels were incapable of impeding the movement"⁴⁷. However, despite the boldness of this strategy, it would pay huge dividends because General Thomas's forces were able to hold firm at Chattanooga and successfully repel General Hood's advancing forces. Which was vital given the rail lines that branched out from Chattanooga and provided Sherman's forces with much needed supplies as they marched through Georgia.

However, despite the effectiveness that Sherman exhibited in the destruction that he inflicted on Atlanta and the State of Georgia, many historians point out the fact that Sherman rarely exhibited disciplinary measures against soldiers that stepped out of line in the field of battle. Davis affirmed this in his book saying that this was a major flaw that was present in his style of leadership throughout the war. His ambivalence regarding the disciplining of soldiers stemmed from his total war philosophy. The idea that the war must be made so terrible in order to completely demoralize the enemy. In some respects, it is a stain on his record because many

⁴⁷ Miles, *To the Sea*, 21.

people think that he went too far in getting his message across to Atlantans and people in the Confederacy. According to Miles in his book *To the Sea*, “Some blamed Sherman for not exercising sufficient control over his men. On this occasion at least, he had taken to the streets to organize parties to extinguish unauthorized fires, but the conflagration was beyond control. Atlanta burned throughout the night and smoldered for days. The smoke was visible for twenty miles, and the stench of burned buildings, meat, bedding, and a hundred other scorched items was evident almost as far”⁴⁸. Despite the fact that these actions by Sherman were a stain on his record, they do not take away from the importance of his actions in Georgia and afterwards and the fact that they contributed to the end of the long and bloody Civil War between the Union and Confederacy.

From the standpoint of General Grant, he remains steadfast with what many historians have to say about the Atlanta Campaign including in terms of the number of men that Sherman had and what the two main goals of the campaign were. According to Grant “With these three armies, numbering about one hundred thousand men in all, Sherman was to move on the day fixed for the general advance, with a view of destroying Johnston’s army and capturing Atlanta”⁴⁹. Grant also hammers home the point in his memoirs that the leadership abilities of the generals involved in this campaign especially Sherman played a pivotal role in the success of this campaign in that as mentioned by General Grant in his memoirs “The campaign to Atlanta was managed with the most consummate skill, the enemy being flanked out of one position after another all the way there. It is true this was not accomplished without a good deal of fighting- some of it very hard fighting, rising to the dignity of very important battles- neither were single

⁴⁸ Miles, *To the Sea*, 35.

⁴⁹ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 309.

positions gained in one day. On the contrary, weeks were spent at some; and about Atlanta more than a month was consumed”⁵⁰. He also greatly emphasizes the destruction that Sherman and his forces inflicted on Atlanta and the efficiency in which this army operated as they marched through the first half of Georgia and into the City of Atlanta:

Atlanta was destroyed so far as to render it worthless for military purposes before starting, Sherman himself remaining over a day to superintend the work, and see that it was well done. Sherman’s orders for this campaign were perfect. Before starting, he had sent back all sick, disabled and weak men, retaining nothing but the hardy, well-inured soldiers to accompany him on this long march in prospect. His artillery was reduced to sixty-five guns. The ammunition carried with them was two hundred rounds for musket and gun. Small rations were taken in a small wagon train, which was loaded to its capacity for rapid movement. The army was expected to live on the country, and to always keep the wagons full of forage and provisions against a possible delay of a few days⁵¹.

These aspects of the Atlanta Campaign that General Ulysses Grant talks about in his memoirs were intriguing given the commonality that they share with the concepts brought up by historians that look back on this event. However, Grant also tends to go into great depth on some other aspects that also defined the Campaign in Atlanta.

A major aspect that General Grant further expands on in his memoirs that greatly defined this portion of General Sherman’s escapades in the greater Georgia area was Sherman’s decision to send General Thomas and his battalion back to Tennessee to repel General Hood’s forces that attempted to retake Chattanooga from the Union. He touches on this by saying “On the 29th Sherman sent Thomas back to Chattanooga, and afterwards to Nashville, with another division (Morgan’s) of the advanced army. Sherman then suggested that, when he was prepared, his movements should take place against Milledgeville and then to Savannah. His expectation at the

⁵⁰ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 311.

⁵¹ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 387.

time was, to make this movement as soon as he could get up his supplies”⁵². However, he also mentions a few pages after these baseline points that Sherman made this decision not knowing that General Hood would actually go into Tennessee and try to retake Chattanooga. Saying that “Sherman thought Hood would follow him, though he proposed to prepare for the contingency of the latter moving the other way while he was moving south, by making Thomas strong enough to hold Tennessee and Kentucky”⁵³. So Grant inherently implies that this decision on the part of Sherman was a bold decision that paid off tremendously. Especially because he then affirms in his memoirs the fact that after allowing Sherman to send Thomas and his forces back to Tennessee “Sherman’s army after all depletions, numbered about sixty thousand effective men. All weak men had been left to hold the rear, and those remaining were not only well men, but strong and hardy, so that he had sixty thousand as good soldiers as ever trod the earth; better than any European soldiers, because they not only worked like a machine but the machine though”⁵⁴.

The general then concludes the part of his memoir where he talks about the length of the Atlanta Campaign and the far-reaching implications that this General Sherman’s actions would have on the war and the general public. He writes in his memoirs that “The campaign had lasted about four months, and was one of the most memorable in history. There was but little if anything in the whole campaign, now that it is over, to criticize at all, and nothing to criticize severely. It was creditable alike to the general who commanded and the army which had executed it. Sherman had on this campaign some bright, wide-awake division and brigade commanders whose alertness added a host to the efficiency of his command”⁵⁵. He then points out the fact that President Lincoln and Congressional Republicans would emerge victorious in

⁵² Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 383.

⁵³ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 385.

⁵⁴ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 384.

⁵⁵ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 315.

the upcoming election of 1864 in large part because of General William Sherman's actions in Georgia prior to Election Day. General Grant points this out when he said in his memoirs that "The news of Sherman's success reached the North instantaneously, and set the country all aglow. This was the first great political campaign for the Republicans in their canvass of 1864"⁵⁶. However, as much as what General Grant had to say about the Atlanta Campaign in his memoirs was fascinating, what General Sherman had to say in his own memoirs was even more intriguing.

General Sherman's views on what transpired during the Campaign in Atlanta as written in his own memoirs are interesting because in many respects it affirms what historians had to say about this event; but in other ways what he has to say in his memoirs go much more in-depth on the concepts that were brought up in General Grant's memoirs. General Sherman goes where no other person could in his memoirs, by telling his story and going into specifics on aspects of this event that only he would have had full knowledge of. At the outset, in his section on the Atlanta Campaign he states in his memoirs that "After my return to Nashville I addressed myself to the task of organization and preparation, which involved the general security of the vast region of the South which had been already conquered, more especially the several routes of supply and communication with the active armies at the front, and to organize a large army to move into Georgia, coincident with the advance of the Eastern armies against Richmond"⁵⁷. The general does a great job at explaining the process and means through which his forces obtained the supplies they needed for this ambitious military campaign into Georgia that would last for months:

⁵⁶ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 315.

⁵⁷ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 396.

The great question of the campaign was one of supplies. Nashville, our chief depot, was itself partially in a hostile country, and even the routes of supply from Louisville to Nashville by rail, and by way of the Cumberland River, had to be guarded. Chattanooga (our starting-point) was one hundred and thirty-six miles in front of Nashville, and every foot of the way, especially the many bridges, trestles, and culverts, had to be strongly guarded against the acts of a local hostile population and of the enemy's cavalry. Then, of course, as we advanced to Georgia, it was manifest that we should have to repair the railroad, use it, and guard it likewise. General Thomas's army was much the largest of the three, was best provided, and contained the best corps of engineers, railroad managers, and repair parties, as well as the best body of spies and provost-marshal. On him we were therefore compelled in a great measure to rely for these most useful branches of service⁵⁸.

General Sherman talks about how there was a pressing need for things such as food, ammunition, weapons, medical supplies, and tents for shelter. All of which needed adequate transportation to both accommodate the size of the army and the long distance that they would travel as they went into Georgia. Sherman points this out in his memoirs when he says "Accordingly, on the 6th of April, I issued a general order, limiting the use of the railroad-cars to transporting only the essential articles of food, ammunition, and supplies for the army proper, forbidding any further issues to citizens, and cutting off all civil traffic; requiring the commanders of posts within thirty miles of Nashville to haul their own stores in wagons; requiring all troops destined for the front of the march, and all beef-cattle to be driven on their own legs"⁵⁹. Because of the size of his army, William Sherman explains in his memoirs that there was a need to portion out the supplies that his army had at their disposal in order to last them during their long and extensive journey into Georgia. "Each division and brigade was provided a fair proportion of wagons for a supply-trains, and these were limited in their loads to carry food, ammunition, and clothing. Tents were forbidden to all save the sick and wounded, and one tent only was allowed to each headquarters for use as an office. These orders were not

⁵⁸ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 398.

⁵⁹ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 399.

absolutely enforced, though in person I set the example, and did not have a tent, nor did any officer about me have one”⁶⁰.

General Sherman also touches on his decision to send General Thomas back to Tennessee to protect their supply lines by saying “General Thomas was at Nashville, with Wilson’s dismounted cavalry and a mass of new troops and quartermaster’s employees amply sufficient to defend the place. The Fourth and Twenty-third Corps, under Generals Stanley and Schofield were posted at Pulaski, Tennessee, and the cavalry of Hatch, Croxton, and Capron, were about Florence, watching Hood”⁶¹. However, it is interesting to note that even with Thomas in Tennessee, Sherman continued to coordinate his operations and tactics with Thomas which is evident when he wrote in his memoirs. Although, it is also worth noting that the way General Sherman talks about General Thomas in his memoirs speaks great volume to the abilities of Thomas as a General under his command, as well as the fact that Sherman relied heavily on General Thomas in his military operations during this pivotal moment in the Civil War.

Another concept that Sherman brings up in his memoirs that are not necessarily touched on by General Grant or historians is the importance of the railroads that his army used in their supply lines. As he states in his memoirs “I remember the railroad trains going to the rear with a furious speed; the engineers and the few men about the trains waving us an affectionate adieu. It surely was a strange even-two hostile armies marching in opposite directions, each in the full belief that it was achieving a final and conclusive result in a great war; and I was strongly inspired with the feeling that the movement on our part was a direct attack upon the rebel army and the rebel capital at Richmond”⁶². Not only was it important for Sherman and his army to

⁶⁰ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 414.

⁶¹ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 558.

⁶² Sherman, *Memoirs*, 560.

have access to the railroads that they used as a part of their supply lines. But it was also equally important for them to destroy the rail lines that the Confederacy relied on for their own supply lines. As Sherman wrote in his memoirs “On the 12th of November the railroad and telegraph communications with the rear were broken, and the army stood detached from all friends, dependent on its own resources and supplies. No time was to be lost; all the detachments were ordered to march rapidly for Atlanta, breaking up the railroad en route, and generally to so damage the country as to make it untenable to the enemy”⁶³. Although as much as maintaining their own supply lines while disrupting the enemy supply lines was very much important, it was even more important that the men under his command had the necessary skills in order to carry out these important operations.

General Sherman brings up another important concept present in his army during this time in regard to the overall skill of the men in his army. His soldiers were the kind of soldiers that had been there, done that, and were not in the slightest afraid to get their hands dirty. They had great loyalty to General Sherman, and the general would reciprocate in his care for their overall well-being. According to the general in his memoirs, “The most extraordinary efforts had been made to purge this army of non-combatants and of sick men, for we knew well that there was to be no place of safety save with the army itself; our wagons were loaded with ammunition, provisions, and forage, and we could ill afford to haul even sick men in the ambulances, so that all on this exhibit may be assumed to have been able bodied, experienced soldiers, well armed, well equipped and provided, as far as human foresight could, with all the essentials of life, strength, and vigorous action”⁶⁴. Sherman also points out that as they marched into Georgia,

⁶³ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 561.

⁶⁴ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 563.

there were groups of soldiers that played a pivotal role in that they would go out to search for food and other supplies that they needed in order to continue their trek through Georgia.

Sherman goes in-depth on this concept in his memoirs when he wrote that “The skill and success of the men in collecting forage was one of the features of this march. Each brigade commander had authority to detail a company of foragers, usually about fifty men, with one or two commissioned officers selected for their boldness and enterprise. This part would be dispatched before daylight with a knowledge of the intended day’s march and camp; would proceed on foot five or six miles from the route traveled by their brigade, and then visit every plantation and farm within range”⁶⁵. These groups of soldiers would go out and forage for food and other supplies would go out to various parts of Georgia to collect a whole host of things. According to General Sherman, “They would usually procure a wagon or family carriage, load it with bacon, cornmeal, turkeys, chickens, ducks, and everything that could be used as food or forage, and would then regain the main road, usually in advance of their train. When this came up, they would deliver to the brigade commissary the supplies thus gathered by the way”⁶⁶. He also points out that even though these soldiers knew that they were taking extraordinary risks by carrying out these foraging expeditions. He writes that “Although this foraging was attended with great danger and hard work, there seemed to be a charm about it that attracted the soldiers, and it was a privilege to be detailed on such a party. Daily they returned mounted on all sorts of beasts, which were at once taken from them and appropriated to the general use; but the next day they would start out again on foot, only to repeat the experience of the day before. No doubt, many acts of pillage, robbery, and violence, were committed by these parties of foragers, usually called

⁶⁵ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 572.

⁶⁶ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 572.

“bummers;”⁶⁷. These “bummers” were a major flashpoint for criticisms levied by historians against General Sherman’s actions in Atlanta, specifically regarding his lack of discipline of many of the soldiers in his army, since a number of these “bummers” went too far in the process by which they collected food and other supplies. However, whether they went too far in their actions or not one thing is for certain in that the actions of these and other soldiers under General Sherman’s command played a profound and consequential role in bringing about the eventual end to the Civil War.

Sherman’s March to the Sea

After Sherman and his forces triumphed in their quest to capture the City of Atlanta and burn it to the ground, the people of Georgia and the Confederate citizenry at large started to realize the price of rebellion against their brethren in the North. However, General Sherman and his superior army was not done in making Georgia an example for all the Confederacy to see. Because according to Lee Kennett in his book *Marching Through Georgia*, “Beyond Atlanta lay the rest of Georgia, indeed most of it. Georgia was then and is today the largest of the eastern states, with some fifty-nine thousand square miles of territory; a Northern officer, translating those fifty-nine thousand square miles of territory to forty million acres to be subjugated, concluded that the Union army had its work cut out for it. An invader coming from Chattanooga to Atlanta would have traveled over a hundred miles without penetrating a third of the state”⁶⁸. Despite this, General Sherman and his army persevered through these difficult obstacles with great motivation because even after the Campaign in Atlanta the Confederacy refused to back down. Simpson expands on this point in his book writing that “It was time that they

⁶⁷ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 572.

⁶⁸ Lee Kennett, *Marching Through Georgia: The Story of Soldiers and Civilians During Sherman’s Campaign* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 11

learned what war was all about. “War is cruelty and you cannot refine it,” Sherman believed. Now he intended to show Southern whites exactly what he meant. To march an army through the Confederate heartland, he told Grant, would demonstrate the irresistible power of Union military might to all observers: “This may not be war, but rather statesmanship”⁶⁹. Sherman carried these sentiments into the City of Savannah, and his soldiers at large were very much supportive of his belief in total war. McPherson affirms this concept when he wrote in his book that “Sherman’s soldiers shared their leader’s total-war philosophy. Acting on it, they put the torch to everything of military value (by a broad definition) that Hood had left standing in Atlanta and marched out on November 15.”⁷⁰. Not only did they share this belief in total war as much as General Sherman, but this combined with the fact that they met extraordinarily little resistance was a recipe for total war because as noted by McPherson “No enemy stood between Sherman’s army and Savannah 285 miles away except several thousand Georgia militia and 3,500 rebel cavalry commanded by Joseph Wheeler”⁷¹. Because of this feeble resistance the people of Georgia realized how inevitable the fate of their city was to the point that “Southerners wrecked bridges, burned provisions, toppled trees and planted mines on the roads ahead of the Yankees, but this accomplished little except to make them more vengeful. In truth, nothing could stop the bluecoats’ relentless pace of a dozen miles a day”⁷². This would lead to the outright destruction of Savannah as well as morale within the Confederate army and more importantly the citizenry.

The destruction of Savannah was so extraordinary because the entire city was engulfed in extensive flames from Union soldiers that intended to make an example of the city for all the Confederacy to see. So much so that according to Simpson, “Federal fire proved so heavy that

⁶⁹ Simpson, *America’s Civil War*, 189.

⁷⁰ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 809.

⁷¹ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 809.

⁷² McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 809.

one Confederate private remarked that as his regiment advanced, “we instinctively pulled our hat brims down as though to protect our faces.” Still the Rebels came on, meeting their foes in hand-to-hand combat. “Blood actually ran in the ditch and in places saturated our clothing where we were lying down,” one private remembered. Some 6,000 Confederates fell killed or wounded. Six Rebel generals were killed; five more were wounded; one fell prisoner. Fifty-five of Hood’s regimental commanders were among the casualties”⁷³. However, what was more important than the immense damage inflicted on the city was the toll it took on the overall morale within the Confederacy. Simpson expands on this point by saying that even though Sherman’s March to the Sea caused serious damage and destruction on the Confederacy’s military capabilities. The damage that it inflicted on the Confederate morale was overwhelmingly more devastating. The march to the sea accomplished what Sherman expected it would in that his army of roughly 60,000 men marched virtually unmolested through the State of Georgia and foiled the hopes that Southern whites had for independence from the Union. General Sherman and his army of roughly 50 to 70 thousand strong swept through Savannah with great ferocity, and their actions did not go unnoticed because even President Lincoln took notice of their actions from November to December of 1864. Because as McPherson notes in his book:

As the Yankees closed in on Savannah in mid-December the 10,000 rebel soldiers defending it decided that discretion was the better part of valor and escaped before they could be trapped in the city. Sherman sent one of his sportive telegrams to Lincoln: “I beg to present you, as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah, with 150 heavy guns and...about 25,000 bales of cotton.” The president responded with “many, many thanks” to Sherman and his army for their “great success,” especially when “taking the work of Gen. Thomas into the count,” which had brought “those who sat in darkness, to see great light”⁷⁴.

⁷³ Simpson, *America’s Civil War*, 191-192.

⁷⁴ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 811.

However, as much as the March to the Sea was an important event, McPherson had some interesting points to bring up about the March to the Sea and the events that following saying that “Even more important, perhaps, than the destructive vengeance of Sherman’s army in spreading this demoralization was its stunning logistical achievements”⁷⁵. Ultimately, the March to the Sea was a great stepping off point for Sherman and his army as they went into the Carolinas and inflicted immense destruction in those two states which also played a pivotal role in the Union emerging victorious.

The role that General Grant played in Sherman’s March to the Sea is intriguing given the fact that many historians say that Grant rejected Sherman’s proposition to march on Savannah, that he eventually relented and reluctantly supported the march, and that Sherman had to convince him to give his approval. In some respects, this is true because Grant did outright reject Sherman’s proposition numerous times however, according to Grant in his memoirs it is worth noting that deep down Grant agreed with Sherman’s plans and that he waited to officially give his approval so that it could be the right time in his view. As he states, “On the 2d of November, as stated, I approved definitely his making his proposed campaign through Georgia, leaving Hood behind to the tender mercy of Thomas and the troops in his command. Sherman fixed the 10th of November as the day of starting. Sherman started on that day to get back to Atlanta, and on the 15th the real march to the sea commenced”⁷⁶. As noted by Sherman and historians, Grant also affirms that other noteworthy towns and cities were destroyed along the way to Savannah, as well as factories and other valuable supply lines that Georgia provided to the Confederacy. Another noteworthy aspect of the march that Grant points out is that “On the 23d Sherman, with

⁷⁵ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 827.

⁷⁶ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 386-387.

the left wing, reached Milledgeville. The right wing was not far off: but proceeded on its way towards Savannah destroying the road as it went. The troops of Milledgeville remained over a day to destroy the factories, buildings used for military purposes, etc., before resuming its march”⁷⁷. However, Grant later writes in his memoirs something interesting that historians do not mention, which is that as Sherman and his forces advanced into Savannah; Sherman was in communication with the Union naval fleet to coordinate the attack on Fort McAllister which was a vital fortification that protected the City of Savannah:

On the 10th of December the siege of Savannah commenced. Sherman then, before proceeding any further with operations for the capture of the place, started with some troops to open communication with our fleet, which he expected to find in the lower harbor or as near by as the forts of the enemy would permit. In marching to the coast he encountered Fort McAllister, which was necessary to reduce before the supplies he might find on shipboard could be made available. Fort McAllister was soon captured by an assault made by General Hazen’s division. Communication was the established with the fleet. The capture of Savannah then only occupied a few days, and involved no great loss of life. The garrison, however, as we shall see, was enabled to escape crossing the river and moving eastward⁷⁸.

As much as this is intriguing, what is also noteworthy is that General Grant also does not hesitate to give General Sherman credit for his success in the March to the Sea. Stating that “it was clearly Sherman, and to him also belongs the credit of its brilliant execution. It was hardly possible that anyone else than those on the spot could have devised a new plan of campaign to supersede one that did not promise success”⁷⁹. What General Grant had to say about Sherman’s March to the Sea was remarkably interesting, however, what General Sherman’s memoirs go into greater depth on these and other aspects that were present in this pivotal moment in the war.

⁷⁷ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 388.

⁷⁸ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 390.

⁷⁹ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 393.

Throughout his memoirs, General Sherman provided a more unique and intriguing view on the March to the Sea and its ramifications. What was interesting off the bat was the fact that according to Sherman in his memoirs, he justified attacking Savannah because of the presence of Fort McAllister and the benefits to capturing this important fortification. As he writes in his memoirs, “I supposed, as a matter of course, that a fleet of vessels would soon pour in, ready to convey the army to Virginia, and as General Grant’s orders contemplated my leaving the cavalry, trains, and artillery, behind, I judged Fort McAllister to be the best place for the purpose”⁸⁰.

Although another interesting point that the general brought up that is worth noting is the fact that he did not consider the March to the Sea to super important, but merely a change in his base of operations to a more convenient location. As the general states in his memoirs, “I only regarded the march from Atlanta to Savannah as a “shift of base,” as the transfer of a strong army, which had no opponent, and had finished its then work, from the interior to a point on the sea-coast, from which it could achieve other important results. I considered this march as a means to an end, and not as an essential act of war. Still, then, as now, the march to the sea was generally regarded as something extraordinary, something anomalous, something out of the usual order of events”⁸¹. These are some interesting points that Sherman brings up about his reasoning behind his march into Savannah after capturing Atlanta. However, the manner in which he describes the City of Savannah itself is even more intriguing.

General Sherman does a great job at describing the City of Savannah and its land features, although this is not very surprising given the fact that William Sherman was always a great map reader and as a map reader determining land features was a vital part of this skill that

⁸⁰ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 593.

⁸¹ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 608.

he had. As he writes in his memoirs, “The city was built on a plateau of sand about forty feet above the level of the sea, abutting against the river, leaving room along its margin for a street of stores and warehouses. The custom-house, court-house, post-office, etc., were on the plateau above”⁸². As much as his ability to read maps was an important quality present in General Sherman, his ability to determine the amount of people that he was up against and their views on the war. “It was estimated that there were about twenty thousand inhabitants in Savannah, all of whom had participated more or less in the war, and had no special claims to our favor, but I regarded the war as rapidly drawing to a close, and it was becoming a political question as to what was to be done with the people of the South, both white and black, when the war was actually over. I concluded to give them the option to remain or to join their friends in Charleston or Augusta, and so announced in general orders”⁸³. This was what General Sherman and his men were up against in Savannah, and as he explains in his memoirs they intended to send a message that was loud and clear for all the Confederacy to hear. His men were greatly determined and well prepared to send this message to the Confederacy though the sheer numbers that he still had in his army and the abundance of supplies that they had “sixty thousand and seventy-nine men, and sixty-eight guns. The trains were made up of about twenty-five hundred wagons, with six mules to each wagon, and about six hundred ambulances, with two horses each. The contents of the wagons embraced an ample supply of ammunition for a great battle; forage for about seven days, and provisions for twenty days, mostly of bread, sugar, coffee, and salt, depending largely for fresh meat on beeves driven on the hoof and such cattle, hogs, and poultry, as we expected to gather along our line of march”⁸⁴. Although what is most fascinating about Sherman’s recounting

⁸² Sherman, *Memoirs*, 620.

⁸³ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 625.

⁸⁴ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 661.

of this event was what he had to say about the iconic message that he sent to President Lincoln after capturing the city. Where he says that “This message actually reached him on Christmas-eve, was extensively published in the newspapers, and made many a household unusually happy on that festive day; and it was in the answer to this dispatch that Mr. Lincoln wrote me the letter of December 28th, already given, beginning with the words, “Many, many thanks,” etc., which he sent at the hands of General John A. Logan”⁸⁵. In the end, these were some of the many aspects present in this pivotal moment in the war that proved to be an important turning point that led to the eventual end to this horrible and bloody war.

The Campaign in the Carolinas

With the capture and destruction of Savannah, Georgia, General Sherman, and his generals under him that commanded a tired but still 50 to 60 thousand strong army contemplated their next move with General Grant and Washington D.C. During this time, Sherman’s successful completion of the march into Savannah strengthened the great friendship that he already had with Ulysses Grant. This was especially important considering the fact that Grant had spent a significant amount political capital with President Lincoln in getting him to convince the chief executive to approve the operation at a time when some of the lieutenant general’s senior staff opposed it. According to Noah Andre Trudeau in his book *Southern Storm: Sherman’s March to the Sea*, “Sherman actually passed two tests in Grant’s way of measuring things. The first was his demonstration of professional competence in managing the campaign. The second was the public manner in which he resisted the kinds of boosters who would have had him competing with his friend’s accomplishments”⁸⁶. Because of this important and

⁸⁵ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 622.

⁸⁶ Noah Andre Trudeau, *Southern Storm: Sherman’s March to the Sea* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 544.

beneficial friendship between the two generals, they were able to come to a mutual agreement that was beneficial to the Union cause while also continuing to advance the idea of destroying the morale of the South that Grant and Sherman came up with. As O'Connell says in his book, Sherman spent most of the morning hours writing a response to General Grant; it was lengthy, but also effective. Because he responded by saying that he would be willing to come up to Virginia with his army. However, since it would take a long time to bring together the right number of ships, he responded by saying that he might as well spend that time doing something productive, by capturing Savannah. He also pointed out in his response that sailing all the way up to Virginia would require at least four weeks. While on the other hand, a healthy and vindictive march through Columbia in South Carolina, and then on to Raleigh in North Carolina would take just six weeks and be more productive. Sherman did this because at first Grant wanted Sherman to ship his army up to Virginia so that their forces could combine against General Lee's weakened and debilitated army. According to Simpson "As Sherman refitted his army in Savannah, he contemplated his next move. Grant initially urged him to ship his men north to Virginia to help close out Lee. Sherman countered with the proposal of yet another march, this one through the Carolinas toward Virginia. He won his point when Grant realized the difficulties and delays involved in transporting Sherman's command north via water. Instead, the general-in-chief decided to assist his subordinate's advance by ordering the seizure of Wilmington, North Carolina, the last functioning Confederate port"⁸⁷. Ultimately, however, Grant would allow Sherman to attack the Carolinas in part because he did not have enough ships to bring Sherman's army up to Virginia. While he also wanted to continue advancing his total war philosophy on the South, but also because the Carolinas carried their own unique significance to the war. This was

⁸⁷ Simpson, *America's Civil War*, 194.

because both North and South Carolina were largely unscathed by the wrath and destruction of the war. But also, it was partly because South Carolina was the first state to secede from the Union, while North Carolina was the last state to secede from the Union. During this time, this was also one of many moments in the war where William Sherman like all great generals was a man who strategized because as Simpson points out “Sherman always calibrated his acts according to the purpose he wished to achieve and the behavior of his foe”⁸⁸. This ability that Sherman had to effectively strategize his tactics against the Confederacy was an important factor that led to both his success in these military campaigns and ultimately the Confederacy’s defeat in the war.

As Sherman’s army advanced into South Carolina the Confederacy continued dealing with a record number of desertions in their armies on all battlefronts. O’Connell wrote in his book that “During the last stages of the March to the Sea, desertions from the Army of Northern Virginia skyrocketed to the point that Longstreet’s corps had more pickets in the rear than in the front, as soldiers bolted to protect their homes or at least find their families. The Confederacy was an idea, and Sherman trampled it relentlessly-its symbols, its institutions, its pride-bled the life out of it, and replaced it with hopelessness”⁸⁹. Because of this, as well as the fact that the Confederacy continued to suffer crushing defeats at the hands of the overpowering Union forces the Confederate forces in the Carolinas did not stand a chance against Sherman’s army that outnumbered, outgunned, and outmaneuvered them. Simpson expands on this point in his own book by saying that “The Confederate high command looked on helplessly as Union forces advanced into what remained on the Confederate heartland. Two decisions, one reflecting what

⁸⁸ Simpson, *America’s Civil War*, 195.

⁸⁹ O’Connell, *Fierce Patriot*, 186.

might have been, the other accepting what was once thought to be unthinkable, reflected desperation rather than hope”⁹⁰. Another factor that also cut against the Confederate forces in South Carolina was their inability to strategize and determine where Sherman’s forces would attack until it was too late. O’Connell delves into this aspect of the conflict by saying “South Carolinian conventional wisdom, already jolted that anyone should invade the state at this time of year from this direction, no doubt assumed Charleston would be Sherman’s target, given its role at the start of the Civil War. On the other hand, many considered Columbia to be one of the most secure places in the South, with families on the coast stashing their valuables there for safekeeping. They failed to consider that not only was the city a munitions manufacturing center, it was the capital of the first state to secede from the Union”⁹¹. Because of this Sherman and his forces were able to capture and burn through Columbia and many other parts of the Carolinas largely unimpeded “From beginning to end, Sherman’s boys were hard on the state-burning portions of Gillisonville, Grahamville, Hardeville, McPhersonville, Springfield, Lawtonville, Barnwell, Blackville, Midway, Orangeburg, and Lexington on the way to Columbia, then torching parts of Camden, Winnsboro, Lancaster, Chesterfield, and Cheraw on their way to the North Carolina border”⁹². General Sherman’s army went through the Carolinas with great ferocity to the point that “in North Carolina the end really was in sight, and that required a different approach. Sherman let it be known he wanted his marchers to “deal as moderately and fairly by the North Carolinians as possible and fan the flame of discord...between them and their proud cousins of South Carolina”⁹³. With the capture and destruction of South Carolina and huge swaths of North Carolina, Sherman effectively played a large part in bringing this long, costly,

⁹⁰ Simpson, *America’s Civil War*, 195.

⁹¹ O’Connell, *Fierce Patriot*, 174.

⁹² O’Connell, *Fierce Patriot*, 176.

⁹³ O’Connell, *Fierce Patriot*, 176.

and bloody war to a close. Because as always near the end of a war, the options regarding what military strategies and tactics that should be employed become clearer. Looking back on this moment in the war, it was obvious that Sherman was going straight towards Virginia by marching through the Carolinas. Which helped to end the war, this would have effectively put Lee's army in a giant pincer that would have forced his army to retreat from Petersburg and fight in the field of battle where they would have been crushed by the two armies. All in all, though, these would be some of the many points that Ulysses Grant greatly expanded upon in his autobiography.

In General Grant's Memoirs, the general affirmed in great depth that initially he wanted General Sherman and his army to take ships up to Virginia, but that he eventually conceded to the idea of Sherman's army marching into the Carolinas. "Seeing that it would require a long time to collect the transports, he suggested the idea then of marching up north through the Carolinas. I was only too happy to approve this; for if successful, it promised every advantage. His march through Georgia had thoroughly destroyed all lines of transportation in the State, and had completely cut the enemy off from all sources of supply to the west of it. If North and South Carolina were rendered helpless so far as capacity for feeding Lee's army was concerned"⁹⁴. Another interesting aspect of the Carolinas Campaign General Grant mentions that is worth noting is the fact that General Sherman's army went into the Carolinas with less food and supplies in comparison to their long and extensive march through Georgia. "Sherman would now have to march through a country furnishing fewer provisions than that he had previously been operating in during his march to the sea. Besides, he was confronting, or marching toward, a force of the enemy vastly superior to any his troops had encountered on their previous march;

⁹⁴ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 402.

and the territory through which he had to pass had now become of such vast importance to the very existence of the Confederate army, that the most desperate efforts were to be expected in order to save it”⁹⁵. However, this did not deter Sherman or his men in the slightest, they made do with what they had and what they were able to collect from towns and cities that the “bummers” pillaged along the way. They went into Columbia, South Carolina, and inflicted similar results on this city as they did with Atlanta, Savannah, and other cities previously. Grant points out that “He remained in Columbia until the roads, public buildings, workshops and everything that could be useful to the enemy were destroyed.”⁹⁶. Grant also notes though, that along the way Sherman did not lose sight of capturing General Johnston’s army, this was still an objective that he had. However, the difference was that now as Sherman’s forces advanced through South Carolina and into North Carolina, they were chasing after a much more inferior army in comparison to what they were facing months earlier. As Grant wrote in his memoirs “I presume, however, that Johnston did not have in all over 35,000 or 40,000 men. The people had grown tired of the war, and desertions from the Confederate army were much more numerous than the voluntary accessions”⁹⁷. Sherman was effectively chasing down Johnston’s army, while burning through the Carolinas, while also getting ready to go through Virginia to meet up with Grant’s forces. Because as Grant elaborates “Sherman was no longer in danger. He had Johnston confronting him; but with an army much inferior to his own, both in numbers and morale. He had Lee to the north of him with a force largely superior; but I was holding Lee with a still greater force, and had he made his escape and gotten down to reinforce Johnston, Sherman with the reinforcements he now had from Schofield and Terry, would have been able to hold the

⁹⁵ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 403.

⁹⁶ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 408.

⁹⁷ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 409.

Confederates at bay for an indefinite period”⁹⁸. It was getting to be evident that the war would end with the Union emerging victorious because as Grant wrote near the end of his section on the Campaign in the Carolinas

Then, too, Sherman knew that if Lee should escape me I would be on his heels, and he and Johnston together would be crushed in one blow if they attempted to make a stand. With the loss of their capital, it is doubtful whether Lee’s army would have amounted to much as an army when it reached North Carolina. Johnston’s army was demoralized by constant defeat and would hardly have made an offensive movement, even if they could have been induced to remain on duty. The men of both Lee’s and Johnston’s armies were, like their brethren in the North, as brave men can be; but no man is so brave that he may not meet such defeats and disasters as to discourage him and dampen his ardor for any cause, no matter how just he deems it⁹⁹.

Although as much as General Grant had some interesting points to make about the Campaign in the Carolinas and the end of the Civil War, General Sherman also had his own intriguing views on how these events unfolded.

William Sherman’s perspective of the Carolinas Campaign was interesting given that like in many other places he fought in during the Civil War, his map reading abilities and his interpretation of land features that he came across were very noteworthy in his description of the events. His vivid description of the South Carolina countryside is something to marvel at given that he describes it as “in a state of nature, with innumerable swamps, with simply mud roads, nearly every mile of which had to be corduroyed. In our route we had captured Columbia, Cheraw, and Fayetteville, important cities, and depots of supplies, had compelled the evacuation of Charleston City and Harbor, had utterly broken up all the railroads of South Carolina, and had consumed a vast amount of food and forage, essential to the enemy for the support of his own armies”¹⁰⁰. While this is an interesting evaluation of the surroundings that his army had to deal

⁹⁸ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 409.

⁹⁹ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 409.

¹⁰⁰ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 696.

with, General Sherman also affirms what General Grant said in his memoirs when he wrote about how Sherman's forces had to deal with less supplies than before and had to forage for more food and other essentials. "The question of supplies remained still the one of vital importance, and I reasoned that we might safely rely on the country for a considerable quantity of forage and provisions, and that, if the worst came to the worst, we could live several months on the mules and horses of our trains"¹⁰¹. As during the Atlanta Campaign and the March to the Sea, in Columbia, South Carolina, Sherman's army captured and destroyed the city with its farms, factories, railroads and other vital installations. It is interesting to see what he had to say about the railroad that his army destroyed while in South Carolina. Because he says that "As soon as we struck the railroad, details of men were set to work to tear up the rails, to burn the ties and twist the bars. This was a most important railroad, and I proposed to destroy it completely for fifty miles, partly to prevent a possibility of its restoration and partly to utilize the Campaign of the Carolinas was the most important out of all the military escapades that his army was involved in at the tail end of the war. While people might disagree, there might be some validity to this point given that he says later in his recounting of this campaign that "Thus was concluded one of the longest and most important marches ever made by an organized army in a civilized country. The distance from Savannah to Goldsboro' is four hundred and twenty-five miles, and the route traversed embraced five large navigable rivers, viz., the Edisto, Broad, Catawba, Peedee, and Cape Fear, at either of which a comparatively small force, well handled, should have made the passage most difficult, if not impossible"¹⁰². He also expands on this point by touching on the unprecedented rate at which his army was sweeping through the Carolinas. Saying "We had in mid-winter accomplished the whole journey of four hundred and twenty-five miles in fifty

¹⁰¹ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 664.

¹⁰² Sherman, *Memoirs*, 695.

days, averaging ten miles per day, allowing ten lay-days, and had reached Goldsboro' with the army in superb order, and the trains almost as fresh as when we had started from Atlanta"¹⁰³.

Overall, these concepts that General Sherman brought up about the Campaign in South Carolina and North Carolina were interesting concepts that in some respects, shed some light on how the bloodiest war on American soil was finally brought to a conclusion.

All in all, General William Tecumseh Sherman proved to be an extremely consequential figure in how the history of the Civil War unfolded. Because through his extraordinary leadership abilities and his friendship with General Ulysses Simpson Grant, he helped to bring about a Union victory in the Civil War. His actions in Georgia with the Atlanta Campaign and the March to the Sea, as well as the subsequent Campaign in the Carolinas speak great volume to this. Although more importantly, contrary to popular opinion, his actions in the State of Georgia alone proved to be the true turning point in the Civil War. Because despite what historians say about the combination of the Battle of Gettysburg and the Siege of Vicksburg being the turning point, what they conveniently leave out is the fact that the war went on for two more long and bloody years. The Confederacy had no aspirations of giving up, they still had an extraordinary amount of fighting spirit. General Sherman effectively broke the fighting spirit of the Confederacy with the controversial but profound decisions that he made in executing this total war philosophy upon the South as he swept through Georgia, and subsequently South Carolina and North Carolina. At the end of the day though, through the words of various historians, as well as the firsthand recounting of these and other events in the respective memoirs of Ulysses Simpson Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman, they prove the importance of General

¹⁰³ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 696.

Sherman's actions during the latter part of the Civil War and the vital role that he played in bringing about an end to this horrible war.

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