

History 225

Re: Notes w/ Sherman's Georgia Campaign

Source: Lee Kennett, Sherman's March Through Georgia(1995)

1. Georgia and the Confederacy

This was (and still is) the largest state east of the Mississippi. Some 50,000 square miles of real estate.

By 1864 the state had hardly been touched by Union troops other than a few unsuccessful cavalry raids. Compare to most of the South east of the Mississippi, Georgia was an oasis.

The key city in Georgia was Atlanta. The second most important city in the Confederacy next to Richmond. Atlanta was critical to the Confederacy's war machine.

Georgia was without equal in quality and variety of the war material it turned out:

Augusta--site of the Confederate States Powder Works. An ultra-modern facility that turned out 1400 tons of high-quality powder from April 1862 until Sherman came to town in 1864. The powder was better than anything the North produced and Union troops complained about this during the war.

Macon: Confederate States Ordnance Laboratories. This was a vast complex of over 100 buildings manufacturing new munitions and weapons.

Atlanta was the great railroad hub of the SW. (Initially called "Terminus") where 44 trains passed through or originated on a daily basis.

Atlanta had the only rolling mill outside of Richmond to roll steel into railroad lines and for shaping steel for war ships. It was the home of the Spencer & Bear pistol factory. And the Cook & Brother rifle factory (resettled from NO)

Atlanta was the hospital center for the SW with hospitals scattered throughout the city. The city had four newspapers and a theatre.

Since 1861 the population of the city had increased threefold so that in 1864 it had a population of at least 10,000. Not counting all the refugees who flocked to the city to get away from Sherman's army as it moved south from Tennessee.

Most people in Georgia by 1864 had never seen a blue uniform. Since the war had not come this way farming was not interrupted. Georgia had become the granary of the Confederacy (or the corncrib).

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Because of its remoteness from the war the Confederacy located Camp Sumter (Andersonville) just north Americus Americus certain it would be secure from Union raiders and if POWs did escape they would never reach Union lines before capture.

II. The Host

A. Phase I of the Sherman campaign

Sherman started the campaign from, Chattanooga, Tennessee, with an Army of about 100,000 men. (This was several thousand larger than Meade had at Gettysburg. He was going up against Joe Johnston (not Lee) with an Army of perhaps 60,000.

Sherman took the army into North Georgia (od Cherokee Georgia) beginning in April/May 1864. The area was mountainous, rough country, with few good roads and made even more difficult because of the dense wooded terrain.

Sherman studied the whole campaign before he set out but still north Georgia was reactively terra incognito--there were no good maps of this part of the state.

Impact of the Western & Atlantic Railroad. This was key because the Dalton 100 hundred miles to Atlanta. Make point that armies in the Civil War were often names after rivers--Army of the Potomac, Tennessee(both Union and Confed.), Ohio, Cumberland--because they were critical to logistics--moving masses of men and material from place to place. In the north Georgia campaign it was the W & A rr.

Sherman's plan was to take his army right along the W & A rr to Atlanta. This was about 100 miles as the crow flies. Most of the army was made up of Midwesterners--Hoosiers, Buckeyes, Suckers(Illinois?), and Wolverines. There was one regiment of Alabaman (The First Calvary); and a ^N of Indians with the Wisconsin troops. There was only one element of men from the Army of the Potomac in the 12th Corps.

Say something about the Western Army as opposed to the Army of the Potomac.

To move an army of this size and provide it with food, medicine, ammo, and forage for the draft animals over one rail line was a risky piece of business. This phase of Sherman's march was not a walk on the beach.

Provisions over the rails had to be cut to the bare minimum. Forage for the horses and mules was relegated to what

*3000 of
4 Corps
Sherman
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could be taken from the countryside. North Georgia was not rich in forage and the animals during the movement south to Atlanta suffered a great deal. Horses ended up eating bark off the trees, dry leaves and chewed away at their bridles and the picket lines.

The men were on half-rations and this was what could be carried in trains--hardtack, preserved meat, coffee and sugar. Before they reached Atlanta scurvy broke out in the ranks.

This phase I of the campaign was an eerie type of war. It was series of flanking movements by both armies. Johnston's army was not large enough to launch frontal assaults against Sherman but yet it had to try and prevent his from reaching Atlanta. For weeks both armies maneuvered by trying to outflank the other.

"In the Ditches" Movement at night. Soldiers on either side were behind fortification lines all day and were expected to abandon these and move south during the night. Neither side saw much of one another--phantom armies nor did they get much sleep.

Most contact was between the pickets on either side.

The destruction to the countryside was horrendous-- imagine a front 5 to 10 miles wide all dug up with trenches and fortifications. In Cobb County alone it was estimated that there were 200 miles of trenches and rifle pits. (explain that the distance from Dalton to Atlanta was 100 miles but the armies in their maneuvering turned this distance into almost 200 miles).

III. Effects on the Civilian Population

A. In Phase I or passing through Cherokee Georgia foraging on the countryside was nothing like it would be around Atlanta and then w/ the March to the Sea simply because the opportunities were limited. This was not the great open areas of the state that describes Atlanta and the 280 miles to Savannah. This was a poor area but the impact on the citizenry was horrendous nevertheless.

Foraging by Sherman

Foraging by Johnston's army

Foraging/plundering/ looting by stragglers from both armies. But unattached guerrilla bands of southerners. Deserters from both armies; draft dodgers from the Confederate army who lived in the woods to avoid the provost marshall; and runaway slaves.

Then the flood of refugees from the war as it moved slowly and inexorably toward Atlanta. (see map)

*Number of
Towns or
places
Add Shes*

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B. Deportation Orders

Protection of the W & A

Insight into Sherman's single-minded approach to war. He wrote Stanton that he wanted to deport all those interfering with the movement of the army outside the country--to So. America and Madicascar!!!! He would finally settle on north of the Ohio. There wer'nt many who were deported but some north Georgians did get arrested and sent north.

B. Siege of Atlanta (July through August)

The circle of desolation--a radius of 20 miles all around the city was picked clean by Union and Confederate armies. A crow approaching the city would have to carry its own provisions).

The flood of refugees from Atlanta. By the time Sherman reached the city all but about 3,000 of the population had fled causing more humnan hardship.

Union General Geary (calvary) said "We take everyting from the people without remorse."

The burning of the city. After Atlanta fell Sherman called back to the more than 60,000 Union troops who had been left behind to guard the W & A railroad and the occupied towns north of Atlanta.

Sherman order the occupying forces at Rome, Georgia, that before they left the city to "Destroy . . . by fire or otherwise bridges, foundries, shops of all kinds or description, barracks, warehouses, and buildings especially adapted to military use." (There were opened ended orders to destroy the town). Nothing was left of Rome but a pile of ashes.

As they retreated south the army tore up the W & A railroad--a hundred miles of track from Dalton to Atlanta.

Cassville--cultural center of Georgia. Two womens' colleges

Kingston

Cartersville

Marietta, --a beautiful town

All of these suffered the same fate as Rome.

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IV. Onto Savannah (280 miles from Atlanta)

When Sherman left Atlanta to continue in his words "to smash things generally. . . . to show the South the terrible character of our people" there was nothing between him and the rest of the state except the Georgia militia (Mention the Griswoldville affair) and Confederate calvary (under Joe Wheeler).

The only real nightmare for Sherman and his army of 60,000 was weather. If the rains came and the roads washed away his army, stripped to bear essentials in ammo and food, might just bog down in that Georgia red clay (molasses) and never make it to Savannah for reprovisioning.

Governor Brown and the Georgia state legislature knew it could not count on help from Lee in Richmond. So the governor and the legislature called for a levee en masse--every man from 16 to 55 to turn out and save the state from the Vandals. Their was virtually no response.

Georgians now wanted only one thing: to see the Hordes pass through their state as quickly as possible. Resistance would only hold up the Union force and it would forage and loot what little they had.

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Re: Notes/Outline

What we are really talking about is a campaign of terror across the South--especially those areas of the South that had not been touched by the war in any significant fashion to this point.

Moreover, if Sherman could take a Union army of 60/70,000 foragers through the heart of Dixie without being destroyed or forced to retreat by Confederate forces then the message to the South was indelibly clear--the war was lost.

Sherman's campaign--with orders to his troops to "forage liberally"--set loose through Dixie an army of three columns of Union soldiers across a fifty mile front.

part of the Army

Sherman's columns maneuvered around Confederate General Johnston's smaller force along the ridges of rocky Face and Buzzard's Roost, through Ickett's Mill, Dug Gap, Lost Mountain, Trickum, Altoonne Pass, Gilgale Church, Big Shanty, Nickajack Gap, Gravelley Plateau, Sweet Mountain, Little Pumpkin Vine Creek, Rough and Ready, Blackjack Mountain, Stop and Swap, and Casville. Casville, Georgia, was the first Georgia town to fall victim to Sherman's campaign of "terror." He stopped long enough to burn it to the ground--it was the seat of ante-bellum culture in northern Georgia.

Some plantations were burned down. Some by mistake and some by design in the early stages of the March.

The groundswell of romantic legends about Sherman's march. The story of the Cecilie Stover plantation. Hundreds of plantations that were spared because Sherman had courted a southern belle of the household.

Or that the occupants were Masons--as was Sherman.

As the March proceeded the so-called rules of engagement were more liberally interpreted. What started out as orders to "forage liberally," were conditioned by stern injunctions that this was to be done in a disciplined and organized fashion. Civilians were not to be stripped of everything so they would be depleted of all essentials for survival.

Much of the order and discipline went by the wayside. Sherman's foragers turned into "bummers," These were men who broke away from formation for days and did just about anything they pleased as the Union columns penetrated deeper into Georgia.

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