

The

SHILOH

Campaign

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INTRODUCTION

Shiloh represented the nation's first bloodletting on the scale that was to become typical of major Civil War battles. Perhaps its best-known statistic is that more Americans died in that two-day battle than had died in all the battles in all the nation's previous wars put together. Shiloh also represented the Confederacy's first great counteroffensive in the western theater, the first attempt to regain all that was lost in the opening debacles of forts Henry and Donelson, and it was also very likely the Confederacy's last, best hope to turn the tide in the West and save the Southern heartland for the Rebellion. There would be other attempts thereafter, but each would be more desperate and have less chance of success than the one before, until finally such efforts at creating a turning point in a war that, it seemed, simply would not turn concluded in John Bell Hood's disastrous foray to Franklin and Nashville. If the Confederacy was to turn the tide of the war in its favor, it had few better chances than Shiloh.

In a sense, the Shiloh campaign began with the fall of Fort Donelson, February 16, 1862, or at least in the immediate aftermath of that great Union victory and almost irremediable Confederate disaster. The fall of forts Henry and Donelson opened the Tennessee River to Union boat traffic, including gunboats, all the way to northern Alabama, and the Cumberland River to the head of navigation above Nashville. This cut Confederate east-west communication and effectively gave Union forces control of all of Kentucky and half of Tennessee. The next Union goal was the rail-junction town of Corinth, Mississippi. Situated in northeastern Mississippi, Corinth lay at the crossing of the Mobile & Ohio Railroad—the most important north-south line in the Confederate heartland—with the Memphis & Charleston Railroad—probably the most important rail line in the Confederacy. The Memphis & Charleston ran east and west between the cities of its name, but its greatest significance was that it joined at Chattanooga with the East Tennessee & Virginia Railroad, thus forming a continuous line of rails between the Confederacy's main eastern and western armies. Its loss would cripple the Confederacy's ability to shift men and supplies, both from one end of the front to the other and within the confines of the northern Mississippi theater of the conflict.

Like many significant military goals, the importance of Corinth was readily apparent to informed observers of the strategic situation. Several Confederate generals, including western-theater commander Albert Sidney Johnston, recognized the need to concentrate Confederate forces there. On the Union side, Gen. Henry W. Halleck, recently elevated to command of all the Union armies in the West, also recognized the desirability of having Corinth and began laying his plans to take it. The way in which Halleck designed to capture Corinth and the way that Johnston chose to defend it set the stage for the battle of Shiloh.

Halleck was methodical, thorough, and very cautious. He determined to unite the three Union armies between the Appalachians and the Mississippi into a single grand force that would crush all resistance in its way. John Pope's Army of the Mississippi, which had previously cooperated very successfully with Union naval forces on the river of that name, would come east to join Halleck's campaign. Gen. Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio, which had recently occupied Nashville, would likewise join in the advance. Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee, which had won the victories at the forts that had made Pope's and Buell's smaller successes possible, would be the largest component. The three armies would rendezvous at a point on the Tennessee River as close as possible to Corinth, which was about twenty miles from the river's nearest point. The Army of the Tennessee, which was already operating near the lower reaches of that river, would be the first to ascend it and to establish a position on its banks at which the other armies were to join it.

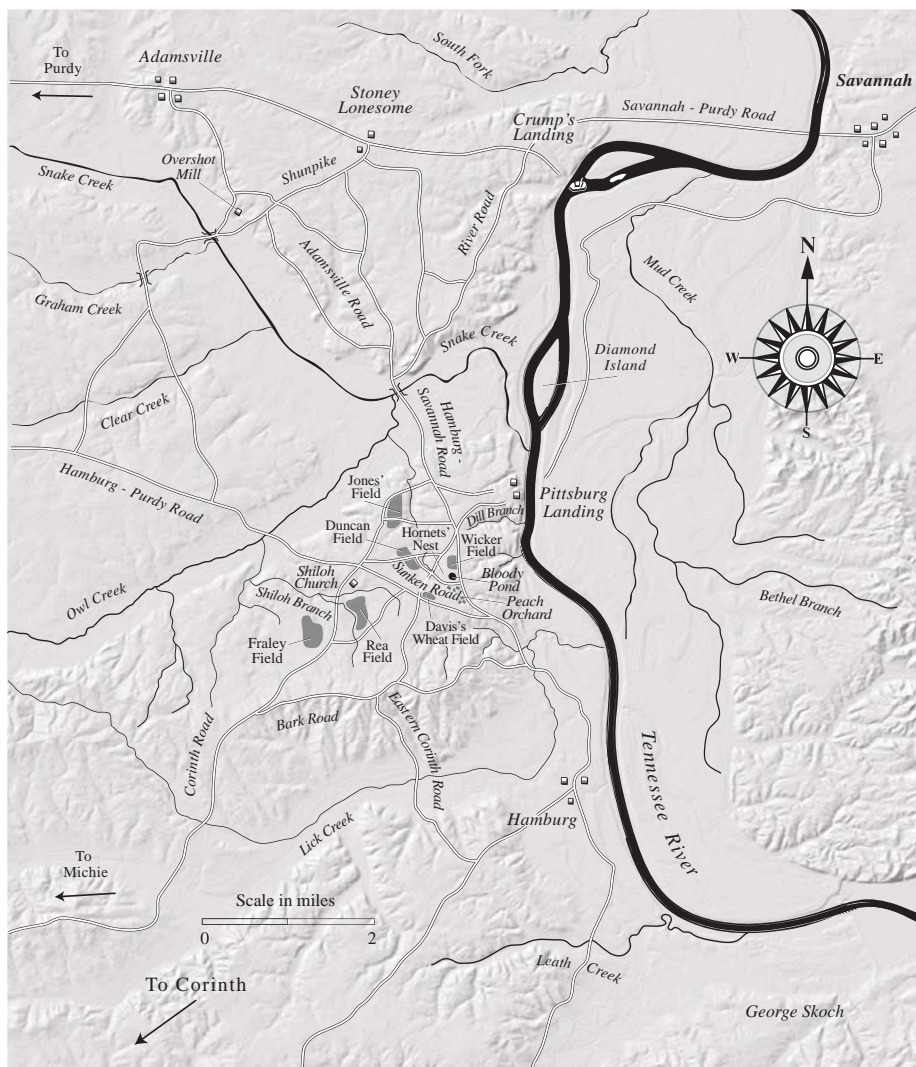
Halleck had a low opinion of Grant and was jealous of the success his junior had achieved. He did his best to claim credit for Grant's victories but was annoyed that those triumphs had won Grant promotion over other officers whom Halleck much preferred. Grant's aggressive style of warfare unnerved Halleck—raising for him the specter of the equally undesirable outcomes either of Grant blundering into a defeat or of his forging ahead to a victory that would further eclipse his commander. Halleck therefore was especially eager to rein Grant in after forts Henry and Donelson. He briefly relieved Grant of command on contrived charges but had to reinstate him when Grant's congressman prompted Washington to demand explanations of Halleck, which Halleck knew full well he could not produce.

Stuck with Grant, at least for the time being, Halleck ordered his renowned subordinate to resume command of the Army of the Tennessee's expedition up its namesake river, to encamp that force somewhere along that river's banks near Corinth, and, above all, not to do anything at all that might bring on a battle. There Grant and his army were to remain inert, doing nothing that might tend to diminish Halleck's glory or contribute to

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winning the war, while Pope's and Buell's army made their way to join them. Grant's subordinates had already selected a position for the army at Pittsburg Landing and Crump's Landing, on the west side of the Tennessee, and the nearby village of Savannah, on the east bank, where Union troops had begun arriving in mid-March 1862.

Buell's force would be the first to join the Army of the Tennessee, and it should have arrived much sooner than it did. Halleck wanted Buell to put his army in steamboats and take it to Pittsburg Landing by river, in the same



Map 1. Shiloh—overview of the battlefield.

way the Army of the Tennessee had traveled. Buell, however, had other ideas, and he persuaded Halleck to let him march his army overland from Nashville to Pittsburg Landing, a distance of about 140 miles. It was a bad decision. Roads were poor, and Buell was never a fast-moving commander at the best of times. His slowness, coupled with Halleck's insistence that the war, or at least Grant's army, stand still until all was prepared to his liking, had the effect of surrendering the initiative to the Confederates and leaving the Army of the Tennessee sitting exposed to a Rebel counterstroke. Compounding the vulnerability of Grant's army, Halleck's stringent orders against doing anything that might tend to bring on a battle practically forbade the Army of the Tennessee from patrolling aggressively toward Corinth so as to detect the approach of an enemy force.

This played directly into Johnston's hands. The Confederate general had come under severe criticism since the fall of forts Henry and Donelson on his watch. He retained the confidence of his close friend Confederate president Jefferson Davis as well as that of his troops, and he was determined to regain what the Confederacy had lost in the West. He ordered the concentration of his previously scattered forces at Corinth, and Davis lent his aid by ordering reinforcements to him from several less seriously threatened sectors including some ten thousand men under Braxton Bragg from Pensacola. By late March, Johnston had at Corinth an army of about forty-two thousand men. What he needed to do with them was, as Davis pointed out in a letter about that time, too obvious to require explanation. He must strike and destroy Grant before Buell could join him, then do the same to Buell, and finally Pope. It was tall order, but Halleck's enforcement of Union inaction and Buell's tedious march gave Johnston the opportunity to try.

Johnston needed as much time as possible to organize and drill his newly assembled collection of mostly green, untested units into a cohesive army, so he determined to wait until the last possible moment, when Buell had almost reached Grant, before launching his attack on the Army of the Tennessee at Pittsburg Landing. On April 2, he learned from scouts that Buell's army was within a few days' march of joining Grant, and he issued orders for his army to march the following morning. His plan was for his army to proceed to the vicinity of Pittsburg Landing on April 3 and attack Grant early on the morning of April 4. Poor roads, bad weather, undisciplined troops, and poorly conceived orders, drawn up by Johnston's second-in-command, P. G. T. Beauregard, made the march much slower than planned. On the evening of April 3, with his army still far from being in position to launch an attack, Johnston had to postpone the assault to the morning of the fifth. Then the following evening, with preparations still not complete, he had to order yet another delay, shifting the planned attack to Sunday morning, April 6.

Johnston's conduct of the Shiloh Campaign, from the fall of forts Henry and Donelson until his own death on the battlefield of Shiloh, is the subject of the current volume's opening chapter, written by John R. Lundberg.

Federal units on the front lines of the encampment at Pittsburg Landing detected the presence of Johnston's army but could not convince their superiors, especially General William Tecumseh Sherman, of the threat. A Union patrol made contact with the Confederates in the predawn hours, sparking a firefight that merged into the broader battle when the entire Rebel army advanced to the attack around 7 A.M. Each Union division had time to get under arms, form its line, and advance some distance in front of its camps before engaging the enemy. A couple of divisions even waited for some time in position before the tide of battle reached them. None of the Union troops were caught in their tents or bayoneted in their blankets as some overheated newspaper accounts claimed, but the strategic surprise for the Union generals was complete. The Army of the Tennessee was not entrenched (entrenchment was not customary at that stage of the war), and throughout much of the day, it was unable to form a continuous, coherent battle line from one side of the field to the other. Gaps in the Union line were often the means by which Confederate attackers were able to drive the Federals out of otherwise strong and stoutly defended positions.

One of the most significant of these gaps was near the left end of the Union line, near the river, between Brigadier General Stephen A. Hurlbut's Fourth Division and a detached brigade of Sherman's Fifth Division under the command of Colonel David Stuart. The gap there was ultimately the main factor that allowed the Confederates to drive the Federals in a large section of the battlefield out of the positions they had held for a good part of the day and back to Grant's final line of resistance. However, the fight that Stuart put up on the extreme Union left served to delay that event for several hours and was a key factor in the Army of the Tennessee's survival that day. Alexander Mendoza analyzes the crucial fight of Stuart's brigade in chapter 2 of the current volume.

While Confederate pressure during most of the day pressed most heavily on both ends of the Union line, only a relatively small number of Confederate brigades assailed the center. This is ironic in view of the fact that the center was the scene of the famous "Hornets' Nest," where, as legend has it, the fiercest fighting took place. In chapter 3 of the current volume, Timothy B. Smith examines the validity and origins of that legend.

Throughout the first day of the battle, the Fifth Division of the Army of the Tennessee, commanded by Major General Lew Wallace, on orders from Grant, was attempting to make its way to the battlefield from a position only six miles away by road. Yet, it did not arrive until night had fallen, and the

firing had ceased. In chapter 4, I analyze the reasons for Wallace's delayed arrival and the lingering effects on Wallace's Civil War career.

The Battle of Shiloh was fought on the ground it was because of the proximity of the river. The river had brought the Army of the Tennessee to Pittsburg, and Union power continued to be especially strong on this inland waterway in the form of the brown-water arm of the U.S. Navy. Especially during the latter stages of the fighting on April 6, Union gunboats on the Tennessee added the fire of their heavy cannon to the defensive barrage being put out by the artillery on Grant's final line of resistance. In chapter 5 of this book, Gary D. Joiner sizes up the important role of the gunboats in the campaign and battle of Shiloh.

Controversy has long surrounded Beauregard's order to his forces to break off the attack on the evening of April 6. While such controversy can be couched in terms of "Lost Cause" wistfulness—in this case, the persistent assertion that the Confederacy would certainly have won the war if not for the unaccountable foolishness of this or that individual—it need not be examined in such a spirit. The question for military historians is whether the rather small chance of achieving a stupendously large result—the capture of Grant and his army—would have been worth the losses that would likely have resulted from a continuation of the assault. In chapter 6 (originally published in the *Journal of Southern History*), the late Grady McWhiney argues that a realistic chance of success existed and that Beauregard was premature in calling a halt. One need not agree that Grant's lines were likely to be broken that evening to believe that given the astronomical stakes involved, Beauregard ought to have continued his efforts until nightfall necessarily put a close to operations.

In some ways, at least from the Confederate point of view, Shiloh was a turning point where the course of the war stubbornly refused to turn. Johnston had struck his hardest blow at Grant, aiming to destroy his army and begin the process of regaining all the Confederacy had lost in the West by the fall of forts Henry and Donelson. The result was the bloodiest battle in American history to date. Grant's army and reputation were damaged, but both would survive. Johnston did not. Once Halleck arrived at Pittsburg Landing and gathered in the forces of Buell and Pope, his combined army of a hundred thousand men advanced slowly and steadily toward Corinth, more or less as Halleck had been planning to do all along, and compelled its evacuation at the end of May. What did the Battle of Shiloh mean to the average Confederate soldier in the ranks? What did the men write to their wives, parents, or sweethearts back in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, or the rest of Tennessee, giving the Southern home front

its impression of the great battle? Charles D. Gear explores this question in chapter 7.

In the final chapter of the current volume, Brooks D. Simpson examines the Grant-Sherman relationship—how it was affected by the Battle of Shiloh and what impact it had on the future careers of both men. In doing so, he casts doubt on some of the long-held beliefs about the relationship as well as some of its more famous anecdotes.

Much more could be written on the Battle of Shiloh. Two or three volumes this size could easily be put together, with each chapter adding to knowledge about one of the most important clashes fought on the North American continent. This volume represents a start, however, toward a fuller understanding of one of the key events in deciding the outcome of the Civil War with all its momentous issues, above all, the future of human slavery. The authors hope that other scholars will be inspired to take up the further study of the western theater of the war, where such decisions were ultimately made.

“I MUST SAVE THIS ARMY”**ALBERT SIDNEY JOHNSTON AND
THE SHILOH CAMPAIGN**

John R. Lundberg

On the evening of February 15, 1862, General Albert Sidney Johnston received intelligence from General John B. Floyd that Floyd had won a great victory at Fort Donelson. Encouraged by this information, Johnston went to bed at midnight at his headquarters near Edgefield, Tennessee, on the Cumberland River across from Nashville. Just before daybreak, an aide awakened him with news that Donelson and its garrison would be surrendered at dawn. Stunned and bewildered, Johnston exclaimed, “I must save this army,” and throughout the rest of the early morning hours marched the forces under his command into Nashville.¹

This alarming predawn incident on February 16, 1862, marked the beginning of the Shiloh Campaign for Johnston. Just weeks earlier, he had been hailed by Jefferson Davis and the rest of the South as the man who would save the Confederacy. But after the fall of forts Henry and Donelson, almost everyone in the Confederacy except Davis turned on this erstwhile savior. Many modern historians have picked up on this theme, almost vilifying Johnston as a highly overrated commander responsible for early Confederate defeat in the West. Yet, Johnston has also had his defenders, who persist that he indeed was the commander that Davis had hoped for and that his efforts to save Tennessee were undermined by inexperienced and insubordinate officers. The Shiloh Campaign is so important to the outcome of the Civil War and the debate over Johnston so heated that periodically it is necessary to reevaluate the issue in light of current scholarship and what is now known about the campaign.²

Johnston has been unjustly criticized for much that occurred in the Shiloh Campaign. Despite his failings in the Henry-Donelson Campaign, Johnston’s conduct between the fall of Fort Donelson and his death at Shiloh evinced

all of the potential credited to him by Davis and an admiring public when he took command in the West. Johnston's execution of the retreat from Nashville and junction with Beauregard at Corinth was nothing short of brilliant. Contrary to the claims of some historians, Johnston never lost confidence in himself or his plans at any point during the campaign. His primary flaw remained his somewhat naïve trust of his subordinates, most of whom failed him time and again. Johnston's dependence on these subordinates doomed the Confederate effort at Shiloh when they disobeyed or ignored his orders. Because Johnston had learned he could not trust his subordinates, he began near the end of the campaign to take command in person as often as possible, and this ultimately led to his death at the head of a charge on the first day of battle.

Other than perhaps Robert E. Lee, no soldier of the old army stood higher in the country's expectations than Albert Sidney Johnston. Union General Winfield Scott even favored Johnston to command all U.S. forces at the outbreak of the war. Johnston led a distinguished military career between his graduation from West Point in 1826 and the outbreak of the Civil War. At West Point, Johnston compiled an enviable academic record, graduating eighth in the class before winning an appointment as a brevet second lieutenant in the infantry. After serving in the Black Hawk War of 1832, Johnston resigned his commission and returned home to care for his ailing wife. She died shortly thereafter, and Johnston moved to Texas, where he took part in the Texas Revolution and became the senior general in the Army of the Republic of Texas. Johnston went on to serve as Secretary of State of the new Republic and then led a regiment of Texas volunteers in the Mexican War. In 1849, he reentered the U.S. Army as major and paymaster to the military posts in Texas. Six years later, he received a promotion to colonel and was given command of the Second U.S. Cavalry Regiment, a unit whose officers included, among others, Robert E. Lee, Earl Van Dorn, and George H. Thomas. Johnston then assumed command of the Department of Texas and in 1857 headed the U.S. forces dispatched to deal with the Mormons. The Mormon expedition garnered him a promotion to brevet brigadier general, and after its conclusion, he took command of the Department of the Pacific with headquarters in San Francisco.³

Though born in Kentucky, Johnston adopted Texas as his home state because of his service during the Texas Revolution. When he received word of Texas's secession, Johnston resigned his commission to join the Confederacy. In the fall of 1861, Jefferson Davis faced a dilemma; he had no officer to command Department No. 2, the vast expanse of Confederate territory west of the Appalachian Mountains. Johnston, who had just arrived from the west

coast, seemed the perfect choice, and on September 10, Davis issued orders appointing him to the command. Davis and Johnston were old friends from their days at West Point and then as comrades-in-arms in northern Mexico when they fought in the Mexican War, and the president entertained the utmost confidence in the adopted Texan. For four months after Johnston's appointment to the western command, little occurred to shake that assurance, as Johnston's defensive line held against minor Union probes. Then in mid-February 1862 came the twin debacles of Henry and Donelson.⁴

Ulysses S. Grant's victory at Fort Donelson handed Johnston with an awkward strategic situation. After the fall of Donelson, the Union army stood in between the two primary wings of Johnston's forces. At Columbus, Kentucky, General Leonidas Polk remained with approximately fourteen thousand men under the direct command of General P. G. T. Beauregard, with whom Johnston had split command of the Confederate forces in Department No. 2.⁵ After Donelson's fall, Beauregard moved his headquarters to Jackson, Tennessee, and after lengthy verbal sparring with Polk, succeeded in ordering him to bring his men south into Tennessee in order to concentrate forces in the Mississippi Valley. Beauregard also sent messages to Generals Braxton Bragg in Mobile, Mansfield Lovell in New Orleans, and Van Dorn in Arkansas to join him. Lovell responded by sending some of his men, as did Bragg, but Van Dorn refused the direct orders given him. Instead, he launched an offensive against Union Major General Samuel Curtis in northwest Arkansas.

Meanwhile, Johnston had personal command of the eastern half of Department No. 2's forces, approximately seventeen thousand men who had been stationed at Bowling Green, Kentucky, only weeks before. Johnston's Confederates had faced approximately seventy thousand Federals in two armies under Generals Don Carlos Buell and Grant. From Donelson, Grant prepared to move up the northward-flowing Tennessee River into southern Tennessee while Buell moved south from central Kentucky toward Middle Tennessee. At the direction of the Union's new western theater commander, Major General Henry W. Halleck, Grant and Buell planned to unite their forces in southern Tennessee before moving on into northern Mississippi. To stop them, Johnston had to do something quickly.⁶

Immediately following the news of Donelson's fall, Johnston's primary concerns revolved around Nashville. The Tennessee capital stood second only in prominence to New Orleans in the western Confederacy and served as Johnston's logistical and strategic headquarters. However, with Donelson gone, Johnston immediately decided that Nashville should be abandoned for a point farther south. At this point, Johnston had apparently not yet decided

whether he should abandon the Mississippi Valley and fall back on Chattanooga or whether he should make a stand somewhere in northern Alabama or Mississippi. In any event, he hedged his bets by retreating with his forces out of Nashville southeast toward Murfreesboro, giving the impression at least that he would fall back on Chattanooga. On Sunday and Monday, February 16 and 17, the Confederate army slipped across the Cumberland, through Nashville and out on the Murfreesboro Pike. The next day, Johnston himself ignominiously departed the capital by buggy to join his men.⁷

Up to this point, Johnston had had few options in the campaign. Nashville was obviously untenable with Grant and Buell sweeping down from the north and northwest. The first real decision he made, however, did not bode well for the campaign. After the fall of Donelson, Johnston had graciously received that garrison's erstwhile commander, General Floyd, perhaps without realizing Floyd's almost criminal behavior in the surrender of the garrison. When Johnston abandoned Nashville on February 18, he put Floyd in charge of evacuating the supplies and munitions from the city. No sooner had the last soldier in Johnston's column departed than stragglers and civilians began looting the commissary stores. By Tuesday, February 20, Floyd's efforts to stop the riots and looting had proven almost as thorough a failure as his command of ill-fated Fort Donelson. Then, Nathan Bedford Forrest arrived with his Tennessee cavalry regiment. Forrest formed his men in ranks and charged the rioters three times, finally restoring order. Floyd then completed his task by evacuating the much-needed supplies south toward the retreating army. Johnston's first decision had been a poor one; had Forrest not arrived in the nick of time, it is likely that none of the precious stores in Nashville would have been saved.⁸

Some historians have maintained that with the presence of Beauregard in western Tennessee, command of the Confederate forces in the West began to slip from Johnston's fingers. In his *Army of the Heartland*, historian Thomas Lawrence Connelly states, "When Johnston left Nashville, his control of the troops was visibly slipping from his grasp." As proof, he cites that Johnston moved his army west toward Beauregard's force rather than east toward Chattanooga. Connelly states that Beauregard "drew" Johnston out of Middle Tennessee and into the Mississippi Valley by encouraging him to come to Corinth with his column.⁹

Connelly's conclusion rests on faulty logic. It would only stand to reason that Johnston would want to unite his forces rather than keeping them divided, and there is no reason to see this as an abdication of his command. Connelly's claim that Johnston moved into Beauregard's "territory" also makes little sense, because Johnston never relinquished command of the

department; he merely divided the field command. Furthermore, the assertion that command was slipping from his fingers ignores that both Johnston and Beauregard seem to have concluded, independently and more or less simultaneously, that Corinth would be the best place to reorganize.¹⁰

Critics have also charged that Johnston relinquished his command by staying with the eastern half of his forces rather than directing the operations from a more central location. It appears that Johnston stayed with the eastern wing in order to raise the soldiers' morale himself and keep them in line. By staying with his army, Johnston began a pattern of behavior that lasted through the rest of the campaign. Because his subordinates had failed him before, at Columbus with Polk, at Donelson with Floyd and Gideon J. Pillow, and again with Floyd at Nashville, Johnston seems to have felt that the only way to see that his orders were carried out and to hearten his men was to take command personally.¹¹

Johnston's subordinates, including Bragg and Beauregard, urged him to form a junction of the two wings of the army in northern Alabama or Mississippi. Despite the hardships entailed by this move, Johnston remained optimistic. General W. C. Whitthorne, the Adjutant General of Tennessee, visited Johnston's headquarters at Murfreesboro and later recalled that Johnston "at once inquired as to the feelings and views of the people of Tennessee . . . but concluded, by saying 'General Whitthorne, go tell your people that, under the favor of providence, I will return in less than ninety days and redeem their capital.' I remember well his confident tone, his smile, and the earnestness of his manner."¹²

On February 23, Johnston took over the immediate command of his seventeen thousand men at Murfreesboro and five days later began moving them south toward Shelbyville, Tennessee. Along the way, Johnston organized his forces into three compact divisions under Generals William J. Hardee, George B. Crittenden, and Gideon J. Pillow, with a reserve brigade under Major General John C. Breckinridge. Johnston also carefully masked his movements with the cavalry at his disposal, primarily the commands of Forrest and John Hunt Morgan. The Confederate troopers succeeded in preventing Union discovery of Johnston's true destination.¹³

Johnston's men, especially the Kentuckians and Tennesseans, resented what they viewed as a retreat, but Johnston's discipline and morale helped keep their spirits high. One soldier wrote, "When the line of march was taken up, and the heads of the columns were still turned southward, the dissatisfaction of the troops broke out into fresh and frequent murmurs. Discipline, somewhat restored at Murfreesboro, had been too much relaxed by the scenes witnessed at Nashville, to impose much restraint upon them.

. . . Officers and men concurred in laying the whole burden of blame upon General Johnston." Another soldier said, "But everything went on with a regularity and a degree of order that seemed to have been the result of circumstances working in entire harmony with the plans of a great general, instead of having been adverse at every step; and he reached Corinth with so little loss of men or [am]munition as to mark him one of the first administrative minds of his age in the country."¹⁴ Gradually, as they moved south, Johnston restored the confidence of his men and performed nothing short of a miracle in restoring his forces to fighting trim. Major Jeremy F. Gilmer, the chief engineer who had failed Johnston at Donelson, noted that the general "expresses confidence that better fortunes await us."¹⁵ Colonel St. John R. Liddell wrote while at Murfreesboro, "At all events, I was satisfied that Johnston's clear head was grasping the state of things rapidly. . . . He listened to, and yet was not confused by, the various opinions of his subordinates."¹⁶ From Shelbyville, Johnston proceeded south to Fayetteville, Tennessee, and then crossed the Tennessee River at Decatur, Alabama.

During the march, President Davis worked hard defending Johnston from his critics. On March 12 from Richmond, he began an informal letter to his favorite general in the West: "We have suffered great anxiety because of recent events in Kentucky and Tennessee. . . . In the mean time, I made for you such a defense as friendship prompted, and many years of acquaintance justified; but I needed facts to rebut the wholesale assertions made against you. . . . I respect the generosity which has kept you silent, but would impress upon you that the question is not personal but public."¹⁷

On March 18, Johnston replied from Decatur, explaining that he had not had the time to reply to Davis with a full report of the Henry-Donelson fiasco. After giving a sketch of what had occurred, Johnston informed Davis,

I ordered the command to Murfreesboro. . . . The weather was inclement, the floods excessive and the bridges washed away; but most of the provisions and stores were saved, and conveyed to new depots. This having been accomplished, though with great loss, in conformity with my original design I marched southward and crossed the Tennessee at this point, so as to cooperate or unite with Beauregard for the defense of the valley of the Mississippi. The passage is almost completed, and the head of my column is already with General Bragg at Corinth. The movement was deemed too hazardous by the most experienced members of my staff, but the object warranted the risk. The difficulty of effecting a junction is not wholly overcome, but it approaches completion. . . . I observed silence, as it seemed to me the best way to serve the cause and the country. . . . The test of merit in

my profession with the people is success. It is a hard rule, but I think it right. If I join this corps to the forces of Beauregard . . . then those who are now declaiming against me will not have an argument.¹⁸

Johnston's letter is notable for several reasons. First, he withheld censure of generals Floyd and Pillow for the Donelson fiasco. He also failed to criticize any of his other subordinates for their complicity in the disasters. Second, the silence he maintained in the face of criticism is remarkable, especially considering the penchant of other generals in the western theater to gripe incessantly and take recriminations against them personally. Third, that few thought it possible for Johnston to effect a junction with Beauregard says much about Johnston's audacity and skill.

On March 25, Johnston completed the concentration of his forces with Beauregard at Corinth. His gamble had paid off. In the face of overwhelming odds, Johnston had succeeded in uniting his forces in the face of the enemy to meet Grant and Buell head on. Despite this accomplishment, many have criticized Johnston for not directing all of his forces from a more central location. Yet, Johnston had good reasons for acting as he did. His subordinates conjectured that a junction at Corinth would be nearly impossible for the column marching south out of central Kentucky, and Johnston in all likelihood felt that he could best serve his cause by remaining with that column to hearten the men and see to it personally that the junction at Corinth was completed effectually.

By March 25, Johnston had reached Corinth and joined Beauregard, making their effective total forty-two thousand men. Johnston then made what, on the surface, seemed like a foolish decision. Instead of immediately taking command himself, he offered command of the army to Beauregard, and Johnston volunteered to move his departmental headquarters to Memphis or Holly Springs. This decision was not a hasty one, and many of Johnston's friends even begged him not to offer Beauregard the command. Confederate Governor George W. Johnson of Kentucky wrote, "You must not do this. I beg that you will not do it, both for your own fame and the good of the country. If I hear that you are resolved in this course, I will despair of our cause. It will sink under the curse of Heaven, upon a people, who joined like wolves . . . to hunt down the noblest and purest man it has been my good fortune to know."¹⁹

Despite these pleadings, Johnston did offer Beauregard the command, but the Creole graciously turned it down. Instead, Johnston named him second-in-command. Historians have debated ever since Johnston's motivations in making this unusual move. His critics have argued that Johnston had lost

confidence in himself, but as the letter of Governor Johnson implies, Johnston probably felt that the people and soldiers had lost confidence in him and that the cause and the army would best be served by a change in command. At the time, wild rumors also swirled about that Davis was about to relieve Johnston of command, showing that the president had lost faith in him. Johnston had already shown a high respect for Beauregard by splitting the command with him in early February and felt that the Confederacy might best be served if he stepped back. Johnston clearly never lost confidence in himself and perhaps even anticipated Beauregard's response. Additionally, Beauregard had taken much control since his arrival, and perhaps the offer constituted a passive-aggressive move on Johnston's part to reassert command over the army. Historian Stanley Horn notes, "At any rate he [Johnston] seems not to have insisted on his offer once Beauregard refused it, so it may have been nothing more than a perfunctory gesture which Beauregard magnified into an admission of weakness."²⁰ With Beauregard's refusal, Johnston set about organizing his forces to face Grant's Federals.

Johnston delegated the task of organizing and training the army to Beauregard and Bragg. To Beauregard, he gave the task of organizing the various commands into three army corps and a reserve force, while he appointed Bragg his chief of staff with the task of getting the men into fighting trim. After the war, Beauregard claimed that he came up with the plan of organization of what became known as the "Army of Mississippi." However, Beauregard himself admitted that he conferred with Johnston beforehand; his organization of three corps and a reserve force closely resembled Johnston's earlier organization at Murfreesboro. It is possible that Beauregard came up with corps designations for the four parts of the army to spite Jefferson Davis, who had earlier denied his request to organize the Confederate forces in Northern Virginia into corps in the fall of 1861. Johnston placed Polk in command of the First Corps, which consisted of 9,163 men in four brigades. Bragg took command of the Second Corps, in addition to his duties as chief of staff. The Second Corps constituted the largest of the three, with 13,589 soldiers in six brigades. General Hardee took command of the Third Corps, a smaller force with 6,789 men in three brigades. Finally, Johnston designated Crittenden to command the reserve force with 6,439 men in three brigades. On March 31, under orders from Bragg, Hardee went to Crittenden's headquarters at Iuka (near Corinth) and arrested him, along with Brigadier General William H. Carroll, for drunkenness and dereliction of duty. Major General John C. Breckinridge replaced Crittenden as commander of the reserve.²¹

Bragg found himself with the far more difficult tasks of maintaining discipline, arming and properly equipping the soldiers, and in general working

them into fighting shape. In appointing Bragg chief of staff, Johnston for the first time in his Confederate career showed an aptitude for choosing the right man for the right task. Despite his character flaws that would become apparent later as commander of the Army of Tennessee, no one ever doubted Bragg as an organizer and administrator.

He faced an almost impossible situation, especially providing ammunition for the widely varied armaments the Confederate volunteers brought with them. In a typical plea, Hardee sent a message to Bragg on April 1: "I am greatly in want of 73,000 Enfield cartridges and 6,000 Minie. I have 1,060 Enfield guns and only 31,000 cartridges. . . . I learned this evening that 47,000 Enfield cartridges would be here tomorrow, and this is all the Ordnance Department had, and this was subject to your order. Can I [have] ammunition when it arrives?"²²

"Rifles," ranted Bragg to Johnston, "rifled and smooth bore muskets, some of them originally percussion, others hastily altered flint locks by Yankee contractors, many still with the old flint and steel, and shot guns of all sizes and patterns, held place in the same regiment." The new chief of staff considered the entire Confederate army at Corinth a disorganized mob, "a heterogeneous mass in which there was more enthusiasm than discipline, more capacity than knowledge, and more valor than instruction. . . . The task of organizing such a command in four weeks and supplying it . . . was simply appalling." Despite the appalling, heterogeneous mass of men, Bragg managed, in a month, to bring the soldiers in the Army of Mississippi to the point of being a reasonably well-organized, disciplined, and supplied force capable of giving battle. In retrospect, Albert Sidney Johnston's choice of Bragg as chief of staff proved to be the most insightful and effective appointment he made during the Shiloh Campaign.²³

As soon as Johnston reached Corinth, he decided, even before the organization of the army began, to attack Grant at Pittsburg Landing along the west bank of the Tennessee River before Buell could effect a junction with him there. Before Buell's arrival, Grant and Johnston possessed roughly the same number of men, and Johnston determined that the only way to stop the Federal incursion would be to defeat them in detail. After the war, Beauregard again took credit for convincing Johnston to attack Grant before Buell arrived, but this is clearly the strategy Johnston had adopted by concentrating his forces at Corinth in the first place. Furthermore, in a March 17 letter to Bragg, Beauregard advocated a "defensive-offensive" course of action by which Grant could be drawn away from his base and attacked. In light of this correspondence, it seems that Beauregard may not even have agreed with Johnston's decision to attack at all.²⁴

In the meantime, both Lee and Davis wrote to Johnston supporting his plan of action. Writing from Richmond, Virginia, on March 26, Lee expressed sympathy with Johnston in the criticism he was then facing. He also voiced his approval of Johnston's action in combining his forces with Beauregard at Corinth. "I need not urge you," he added, "when your army is united, to deal a blow at the enemy in your front, if possible, before his rear gets up from Nashville. You have him divided, and keep him so, if you can. Wishing you, my dear general, every success and happiness, with my earnest prayers for the safety of your whole army."²⁵ Davis concurred with Lee's opinion and urged Johnston to strike Grant quickly before Buell could join him. Johnston needed no urging, but this correspondence reveals the high regard that Davis and Lee still held for Johnston. "My confidence in you," Davis wrote to his western commander, "has never wavered."²⁶

Even though Johnston had decided to attack, he still wanted Van Dorn to join him with his twenty thousand men from the Trans-Mississippi Department. Despite orders from Beauregard and then from Johnston for Van Dorn to march for western Tennessee, the Trans-Mississippi general launched his own offensive in another direction in late February. At the Battle of Pea Ridge, in northwestern Arkansas on March 7–8, Van Dorn's Confederate army met defeat at the hands of a smaller force under Union Major General Curtis. After this defeat, Van Dorn retreated to Van Buren, Arkansas, near Fort Smith. Beauregard had originally intended Van Dorn to relieve the Confederate garrison at New Madrid, Missouri, but since the town had already fallen, Van Dorn wrote to the Creole and requested instructions. Beauregard received this communication while at Jackson, Tennessee, on March 23 and again urged Van Dorn to move east. Van Dorn did not receive Beauregard's new orders until March 27 and at that time began marching his troops the two hundred miles to Des Arc, Arkansas, on the White River, where they could board boats for Memphis and thence overland to Corinth. However, the roads proved so terrible that Van Dorn estimated it would take him three weeks to reach Johnston and Beauregard.²⁷ Again, one of Johnston's subordinates had failed him by disregarding orders. Short of Van Dorn's arrival, Johnston decided to attack when he received word that Buell was approaching Grant's encampment at Pittsburg Landing.

Shortly before 10 P.M. on April 1, Johnston received a forwarded communication through Beauregard from General Benjamin F. Cheatham, one of his division commanders, posted twenty miles north of Corinth. Cheatham warned that a part of Grant's forces was threatening his position, and Beauregard scribbled on the communication, "Now is the moment to advance, and strike the enemy at Pittsburg Landing." Around the same time, Johnston

received intelligence from Nathan Bedford Forrest that Buell's army was not far from Pittsburg Landing. Johnston wired Davis and informed him of the developments: "Confederate forces, 40,000 ordered forward to offer battle near Pittsburg. . . . Hope engagement before Buell can form junction." At the same time, Johnston issued an order to his commanders to be ready to move within twenty-four hours. At 1 A.M. on April 3, Johnston gave the order to begin the advance.²⁸

He delegated the responsibility of planning the march to Beauregard, which turned out to be his second error of the Shiloh Campaign. Beauregard immediately issued verbal orders to the four corps commanders with a promise that written orders would reach them on the march. Two roads—the Ridge Road and the Monterrey Road—led from Corinth to where Grant's army was encamped around Pittsburg Landing. These two routes converged five miles from Pittsburg Landing, and lateral roads connected the two along the entire route. Beauregard intended the three corps to bivouac on the night of April 3 in the vicinity of a farmhouse known locally as Mickey's, with the attack to take place at dawn on April 4. As Johnston and Beauregard understood their enemy's position, Grant's army remained encamped with Lick Creek to the south, Owl Creek to the north, and the Tennessee River to the east, with the two roads leading into the camp from the west. Beauregard and Johnston intended the main attack to fall on the Union left, to cut them off from Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee, and crush them against Owl Creek.²⁹

Despite these seemingly simple plans, Beauregard's written instructions to the corps commanders were extremely complicated, completely unsuitable to green, untried troops. The results were predictable. Hardee's Corps, which Beauregard intended to spearhead the assault, blocked in the road by the wagons and artillery of Polk's corps, did not even get out of the streets of Corinth until mid-afternoon on April 3. Hardee's men rested on the road that night and did not reach Mickey's until the morning of April 4, twelve hours late. Braxton Bragg had even more problems. He had only reached the hamlet of Monterrey, halfway between Corinth and Pittsburg Landing, by noon on April 4. At an informal 5 P.M. conference at Monterrey, Johnston and Beauregard agreed to push the assault time back to the morning of April 5.³⁰

Johnston realized that morale would play a key role in the coming battle. On April 3, he issued a circular to the "Soldiers of the Army of Mississippi." He began by telling them, "I have put you in motion to offer battle to the invaders of your country. With the resolution and disciplined valor becoming men fighting, as you are, for all worth living or dying for, you can but march to a decisive victory over agrarian mercenaries, sent to subjugate and despoil

you of your liberties, property, and honor. Remember the precious stake involved. Remember the dependence of your mothers, your wives, your sisters, and our children on the result. . . . With such incentives to brave deeds, and with the trust that God is with us, your generals will lead you confidently to the combat, assured of success."³¹ Johnston also rode from regiment to regiment along the line of march, encouraging the men. Speaking to a Louisiana regiment, Johnston said, "I'm glad to find you in such good spirits. I think we will beat the Yankees out today." To another unit, he advised, "Aim low; today you will have warm work to do." Everywhere Johnston went, the men broke into cheers, belying the claim that they had lost confidence in him and making it unlikely that he would have lost confidence in himself.³²

Rain poured down in torrents on the night of April 4. Added to the inexperience of the troops, the rain caused massive confusion and delay. As Hardee's men moved into position less than a mile from the encamped Federals, the men began to discharge their weapons to see if their powder was still dry. When deer popped from the woods, the men would raise a shout that could be heard for miles. The attack, which depended on surprise, now seemed destined to fail. Finally by mid-morning on April 5, Hardee had his men in position. Meanwhile, Bragg couldn't get his last division into place for hours. In frustration, Johnston exclaimed, "This is perfectly puerile! This is not war! Let us have our horses." The commander and some of his staff members then rode off to find the missing division. Eventually, they found it, blocked in the road by some of Polk's wagons and artillery. Clearing the jam, Johnston sent the division forward. It was already 4 P.M. The attack clearly could not now take place on April 5. Reluctantly, Johnston pushed the time for the assault back again, to the morning of April 6.³³

Much of the blame for the seventy-two-hour delay in launching the assault at Shiloh can be laid on the inexperience of the men and officers and the deplorable weather, but a greater degree of responsibility rests on the shoulders of Beauregard. Johnston seriously erred in placing him in charge of drawing up the plans for advance. Beauregard's plans were clearly unsuited for untried troops on this scale, and this serious oversight contributed more to the delay than did the rain and raw troops.

Beauregard also erred in issuing specific attack orders. His orders were unique in that they called for an advance with a single corps occupying the entire front line, while the other three corps followed at intervals of about one thousand yards. This cumbersome attack scheme proved difficult for several reasons. First, with a corps spread out over a front that stretched several miles, it would be nearly impossible for a corps commander to maintain control and contact with his entire line. Second, such an arrangement

provided no extra strength at the point Johnston and Beauregard ostensibly wished to strike hardest—the Union left-center. Third, this plan necessarily entailed the early entanglement of men from the different corps as they advanced at different speeds across the battlefield. In all, it was a terrible plan, but Beauregard issued orders to the corps commanders that Hardee would lead off, with Bragg behind him, Polk behind him, and Breckinridge with the reserve bringing up the rear.³⁴

Controversy has followed this attack scheme ever since. In his telegram informing Davis of the advance on April 3, Johnston indicated that Polk would advance on the left, Hardee in the center and Bragg on the right, with Breckinridge in reserve.³⁵ Such a plan of action made much more sense than that drawn up by Beauregard; Bragg's corps numerically possessed the most men and would be in position to smash the Federal left, as planned. Meanwhile, Polk's command had the fewest soldiers, next to the reserve, and would keep the Union right occupied while Hardee did the same in the center. Breckinridge could then be brought up in whatever sector he was most needed. Why Johnston's plan was never carried out is not entirely clear. Supporters of Johnston after the war claimed that Beauregard simply ignored Johnston's plan and issued his own orders, but in all likelihood, in the rush of the moment, Johnston and Beauregard probably did not have time to compare notes, and Johnston did not fully realize Beauregard's tactical thinking, or lack thereof, until it was too late. In any event, it is clear that Johnston made a serious error in judgment by placing the details for the advance and assault in the hands of Beauregard. Once again, a key subordinate had failed him.³⁶

About 4 P.M. on April 5, Beauregard arrived at Bragg's headquarters near the intersection of the Corinth and Bark roads and began discussing the state of affairs. Breckinridge's command still lagged in the rear, and many of the men had exhausted their rations. Beauregard and Bragg also assumed that Grant had been alerted to their presence by the noisy displays of Hardee's men earlier in the day. The two generals agreed that the offensive should be canceled and the army returned to Corinth. Polk arrived next at this council of war and began exchanging heated words with Beauregard about the necessity of going through with the attack. This exchange lasted for some time before Johnston arrived and inquired as to the nature of the discussion. He was taken aback and utterly flabbergasted at the notion that the army should retreat. Beauregard, who at this point had clearly lost his nerve, exclaimed to Johnston, "Now they will be entrenched to the eyes." Johnston, though, stood firm, finally retaking the reins of control. Retreat, he stated, "will never do." Polk, for once, made a sound decision in concurring on this point, and Johnston broke off the conversation: "Gentlemen, we shall attack at daylight

tomorrow.” As he walked away, he stated to a staff officer, “I would fight them if they were a million.”³⁷ In these decisive remarks, Johnston continued to show confidence in himself, his plans, and his men, as had been his pattern throughout the campaign.

Historian Larry Daniel records this conversation in his book *Shiloh* but downplays its importance, stating that Johnston remained “pathetically insecure.” On the contrary, it is clear that Johnston retained his self-confidence throughout the campaign. His actions continued to evince a robust confidence in himself, even if at times he did not feel that this confidence was shared by his men, civilians, or the government in Richmond.³⁸

At 8 P.M., the Confederate generals again gathered around a fire. By this time, Bragg had changed his opinion, leaving Beauregard the only commander who favored retreat. After some perfunctory conversation, the meeting broke off at 10 P.M. In his defense, Beauregard’s objections did have some merit. It certainly appeared as if the Federals should have gotten wind of the Confederate attack because of the rash behavior of the troops. Nevertheless, again it seems that Beauregard overestimated the training of the soldiers. A retreat to Corinth would have sent morale plummeting and relegated the Confederates to a wait-and-see policy while Grant and Buell united for a crushing blow. Despite the risks, Johnston clearly made the right decision in proceeding with the attack, notwithstanding the Creole’s objections. As they fell asleep that night, Johnston, his subordinates, and many of his men felt that the next day would decide the war.

The Battle of Shiloh began at 5:00 A.M. on April 6 when a Federal reconnaissance party from the Twenty-fifth Missouri Infantry ran into the Third Mississippi Infantry Battalion of Hardee’s Corps in front of the Union right-center. Johnston ordered a general advance for 6:30 A.M., and the forty thousand Confederates moved forward, taking Grant’s men by surprise in their camps. For various reasons, the Federals had not been alerted to the Confederate presence, and the element of surprise remained intact as screaming Confederates charged through the tents of the Union army. Even though the Confederates had achieved strategic surprise in that Grant’s men had neither entrenchments nor a coherent defensive alignment, they did not achieve tactical surprise because by the time they reached the Union camps, all of the Federal units were already under arms. As he rode toward the front after the skirmishing began, Johnston stopped Colonel John Marmaduke of the Third Arkansas Infantry and said, “My son, we must this day conquer or perish.” As the battle began, Johnston instructed Beauregard to remain in the rear and funnel troops toward the front. Johnston decided to lead from the front astride his horse, Fire Eater.³⁹

Why Johnston chose to lead from the front has been a matter of conjecture ever since. Because Beauregard had drawn up the plan of attack, perhaps Johnston felt that Beauregard should take care of the administrative details while he, Johnston, tried to correct the Creole's faulty battle plan by directing the Confederate effort on the right, fulfilling his original battle plan. His subordinates had failed him so many times that Johnston probably supposed that he had to lead from the front, on the spot, in order to get anything done right.

Johnston's actions during the battle are somewhat difficult to track but can be reasonably pieced together using various sources. Johnston made his headquarters on the night of April 6 along the Bark Road and rode forward after the first sounds of firing at 5:15 A.M. At this time, Johnston spoke to Brigadier General Randall Gibson, just to the west of Bark Road. Sighting his son's friend, he said, "Randal, I never see you but I think of William. I hope you may get through safely this day, but we must win a victory."⁴⁰ At this point, Johnston became concerned about Greer's Ford to the east on Lick Creek and decided to send reinforcements to that point in case Buell's army should arrive and flank his army. Riding west from Gibson, he addressed the First Tennessee Infantry, sending five companies of the regiment east toward Lick Creek.⁴¹

By 7 A.M., Hardee's assault had begun to falter, and Johnston ordered Bragg to bring his corps into action. Soon, Bragg's men had become entangled with Hardee's men as they struggled forward through the woods. As S. A. M. Wood's Confederate brigade charged into the camps of Colonel Everett Peabody's brigade around 7:30 A.M., they absorbed a volley from the Federals, and the Fifty-fifth Tennessee and Third Mississippi battalions broke and ran, stampeding the Seventh Arkansas of Thomas Hindman's brigade. Johnston personally assisted Hindman and Wood in rallying their regiments and sending them back to the front.⁴² From Peabody's position, Johnston rode east, toward the Confederate right. Seeing the widening gap on the right as Bragg's men advanced northwest away from the Tennessee, Johnston, at 8:30 A.M., ordered up General James Ronald Chalmers's brigade to press the attack. After setting Chalmers in motion, Johnston moved back toward the center to direct the advance there.⁴³

Johnston entered Rea Field just in time to see Brigadier General Patrick Ronayne Cleburne's brigade come reeling back at about 9 A.M. after a bloody repulse. Speaking to Brigadier General Charles Clark, whose brigade was coming up behind Cleburne, Johnston instructed him merely to keep his men in place. From Clark, Johnston proceeded back east toward the Federal camp of Colonel Madison Miller's brigade just after Adley Gladden's and Chalmers's Confederate brigades had routed the occupants.⁴⁴ Riding into the

captured bivouac at roughly 9:15, Johnston discovered some of the undisciplined troops looting the camp. Recognizing the need to press the advance, Johnston berated a young officer who had stopped to collect spoils. Then, noting both the youth and the contrition of the officer, Johnston softened, picked up a tin cup, and said, “Let this be my share of the spoils today.” He then encountered a group of Federal prisoners who begged for their life. Johnston replied by assuring them that the Confederates would not kill prisoners. Then he rode on to confer with Hardee. From Miller’s Camp, Johnston watched Chalmers’s brigade disappear over the ridge and exclaimed to those around him, “That checkmates them.”⁴⁵ Johnston assumed that Chalmers’s men were in place to cut off Grant’s men from Pittsburg Landing. In reality, Chalmers’s brigade was much too far west to accomplish this goal.

For the first three hours of combat at Shiloh, Johnston had ridden along his line from left to right and back again, conferring with various commanders and observing enemy positions. At approximately 10:30 A.M., he received a note from one of the engineers on his staff, Captain Samuel H. Lockett, roughly mapping out the enemy positions.⁴⁶ By this time, a hard knot of Federal resistance had started to develop in the Union right-center in what became known as the Hornets’ Nest, its successful defense facilitated by the fact that the assaulting Confederate lines in this sector had become extremely thin due to transfers of various brigades to other sectors on the left and right. Riding into a nearby ravine, Johnston dismounted, studied Lockett’s map for a while, listened to the battle, and determined that he had to see to it personally that his men broke through the Hornets’ Nest. To this end, he ordered up the two brigades under Breckinridge still being held in reserve. Johnston then rode to the right in advance of Breckinridge’s men to inspire his troops in the critical sector of the battlefield.⁴⁷

When he neared the front, Johnston encountered a group of wounded men, mostly Union, left unattended. He instructed his own personal surgeon, Dr. D. W. Yandell, to remain with the prisoners and care for them. Yandell objected, but Johnston overruled him, stating that he would send for him if needed. Johnston then proceeded with the rest of his staff, placing units in line and inspiring the morale of the troops, especially those on the right. When Breckinridge’s two brigades came up around 1 P.M., Johnston personally placed them in front of the Peach Orchard, where the Union troops in that sector had anchored their left flank—just to the Confederate right of the Hornets’ Nest. As the men of the Second Confederate Regiment moved into position, Johnston told them that with a few more charges, the day would be theirs.⁴⁸ At 1:30, Johnston began placing Brigadier General John S. Bowen’s brigade into position.⁴⁹

By 2 P.M., the Confederate assault had begun to falter, and Breckinridge approached Johnston in the rear to inform him that he could no longer prevail on the Forty-fifth Tennessee to advance. Johnston sent Tennessee Governor Isham Harris, who was on staff, to address the regiment. Soon, Breckinridge approached him again and informed him that he could not prevail on Bowen's brigade to advance. Johnston decided to do it himself. He rode to the ravine where the brigade, in line of battle, was sheltering from Union fire. Riding up and down the line, he impressed on the men the urgency of the moment. As he rode along the line, he touched their bayonets with the tin cup he had picked up in Miller's camp. "Men of Missouri and Arkansas," he said, "the enemy is stubborn. I want you to show General Beauregard and General Bragg what you can do with your bayonets." Then, impetuously, Johnston cried, "I will lead you!" and the regiments rushed forward with the army commander at their head. The men carried the position in front of them, and Johnston fell back mid-charge. What is clear is that Johnston received some close calls during the charge when a bullet tore off the sole of one of his boots, and Fire Eater sustained two slight wounds. He shouted to Harris, "They didn't trip me up that time!" in reference to his boot sole, which he flapped to show Harris the damage. Johnston then sent the governor off to the right to redirect a brigade in the correct direction.⁵⁰

When Harris returned, he found Johnston almost alone, with most of his staff carrying messages to different parts of the field. The governor saw Johnston reel in the saddle. Asked if he was wounded, Johnston replied, "Yes, and I fear seriously." Leading Fire Eater to a nearby ravine, Harris and a Captain Wickham of Johnston's staff helped their commander dismount. Unaware of the wound in Johnston's leg, Harris tore the general's clothing, searching for a wound. Finding none, he tried to administer some brandy, but it simply ran out of Johnston mouth. The general was losing consciousness. Soon, other members of Johnston's staff arrived just in time to see their venerated commander expire from loss of blood. A Minnie ball had penetrated behind his right knee and severed the popliteal artery. Johnston bled to death within fifteen minutes. Ironically, he had a tourniquet in his pocket that Dr. Yandell could have utilized to save his life had Johnston not selflessly sent him to care for enemy wounded.⁵¹

Would the Confederates have won Shiloh had Johnston not been killed? Probably not. Beauregard's faulty plan of attack probably ensured that they would lose. The real loss to the Confederate cause by the death of Albert Sidney Johnston came in the long run, when a series of ineffective commanders blundered through command of the Army of Tennessee while Federal forces systematically destroyed Confederate resistance in the West. Johnston

certainly had his failures in the Shiloh Campaign, primarily his willingness to trust his subordinates too much, but he had shown by Shiloh that he was beginning to overcome this defect in his leadership. Compared to his performance in the Henry-Donelson Campaign, the Shiloh Campaign showed vast improvement in Johnston's abilities as a field commander, particularly his strategic vision. Had he continued to improve at this rate, he might conceivably have become as great a field commander as Lee or Jackson and could have greatly enhanced the Confederate war effort in the West. His death at Shiloh lengthened the odds against Confederate success in the West and thus ultimately in the war as a whole. After the war, Jefferson Davis wrote of Johnston's death at Shiloh, "In his fall the great pillar of the Southern Confederacy was crushed, and beneath its fragments the best hope of the Southwest lay buried."⁵²

Notes

1. Charles Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston: Soldier of Three Republics* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 298. Johnston had already anticipated that he would have to withdraw from his Bowling Green line with the assault on Fort Donelson, placing his army opposite Nashville. William Preston Johnston, *The Life of General Albert Sidney Johnston: His Service in the Armies of the United States, the Republic of Texas, and the Confederate States*, with a new introduction by T. Michael Parrish (1879; repr., New York: Da Capo, 1997), 501. Colonel William Preston Johnston was the son of the general.

2. The most complete biography of Johnston is Charles P. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston: Soldier of Three Republics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964; with a new introduction by Gary Gallagher, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001). Roland also published a smaller volume, *Jefferson Davis's Greatest General: Albert Sidney Johnston* (Abilene: McWhiney Foundation, 2000). For a pro-Johnston stance, see Johnston, *Life of General Albert Sidney Johnston*. For other interpretations of Johnston in the campaign, see Gabor Borritt, ed., *Jefferson Davis's Generals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Thomas L. Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee 1861–1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); Larry Daniel, *Shiloh: The Battle That Changed the Civil War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997); Stephen D. Engle, "'Thank God He Has Rescued His Character': Albert Sidney Johnston, Southern Hamlet of the Confederacy," in *Leaders of the Lost Cause*, ed. Gary Gallagher and Joseph T. Glathaar (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole, 2004), 133–64; Stanley Horn, *The Army of Tennessee* (1941; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953); James McDonough, *Shiloh: in Hell before Night* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977); Wiley Sword, *Shiloh: Bloody April* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), and Steven E. Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), and "When Merit Was Not Enough: Albert Sidney Johnston and Confederate Defeat in the West, 1862," in *Civil War Generals in Defeat*, ed. Woodworth (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999) 9–28.

3. Roland, *Jefferson Davis's Greatest General*, 14–15. Confederate legislation of September 1861 established a list of five individuals who initially held the rank of full general in the Confederate service. The first on the list was Adjutant General Samuel Cooper, considered too old for field command, followed by Albert Sidney Johnston, Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston, and P. G. T. Beauregard. Johnston's line rank as brigadier general made him the ranking officer from the old army who had resigned his commission to join the Confederacy.

4. *Ibid.*, 20–21.

5. Johnston split the department with Beauregard in a council of war on February 7, 1862. Beauregard was assigned all of the troops and territory between the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers, and Johnston had command of everything from the Tennessee River to the mountains in east Tennessee. Johnston, *Life of General Albert Sidney Johnston*, 500.

6. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 301. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ed. Robert N. Scott, 128 vols. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1884), 10.2:91. (This source is hereafter referred to as "OR." All references are to series 1 unless otherwise noted.)

7. Daniel, *Shiloh*, 41.

8. *Ibid.*, 43. Despite Forrest's efforts, Johnston lost 575,000 pounds of pork, 500 barrels of whiskey, 10,000 pairs of shoes and boots, 500 tents, and over 50 cannon. In Johnston's defense, Floyd apparently misled those around him as to whose idea the surrender at Donelson was. In his memoir, Colonel St. John Richardson Liddell of Johnston's staff came away with the impression that Simon Bolivar Buckner had urged surrender over the objections of Floyd and Pillow. Liddell, *Liddell's Record*, ed. Nathaniel C. Hughes Jr. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 52–53.

9. Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 138.

10. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 306. Connelly's bias is shown in the very title of part 5 of *Army of the Heartland*, "The Beauregard Interlude." Liddell wrote at Murfreesboro, "Here the conclusion is almost universal that he [Johnston] is totally unfit for the position he holds in the Confederate army, and if he does nothing to retrieve his character very soon, he will be regarded as hopelessly embicile [*sic*]." Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 137. After the war, Liddell wrote, "I knew enough of Johnston's private views and the efforts he had quietly made to avert disasters, not to abandon myself to such want of confidence. I must confess, though, that my faith for the moment was somewhat shaken." Liddell, *Liddell's Record*, 54.

11. Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 138; Woodworth, "When Merit Was Not Enough," 10.

12. Johnston, *Life of Albert Sidney Johnston*, 506.

13. *Ibid.*, 510.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Gilmer quoted in Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 303–304. Gilmer failed to carry out Johnston's orders to strengthen the Henry and Donelson defenses and also failed to construct defenses at Nashville as ordered.

16. Liddell, *Liddell's Record*, 59.

17. OR, vol. 7, 257–58.

18. *Ibid.*, 258–61.

19. Roland, *Jefferson Davis's Greatest General*, 52.

20. Horn, *Army of Tennessee*, 120. For Colonel William Johnston's view on his father's actions, see Johnston, *Life of Albert Sidney Johnston*, 549–551. It is curious that Beauregard should consider Johnston's offer a sign of weakness, because just weeks earlier Beauregard, alarmed by the split of his forces from Johnston by the fall of Donelson, offered his command to his subordinate Braxton Bragg. Bragg, of course, declined.

21. Horn, *Army of Tennessee*, 119, 446. *OR*, 10.2:379.

22. *OR*, 10.2:379.

23. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 314–15.

24. *Ibid.*, 312–13.

25. Johnston, *Life of Albert Sidney Johnston*, 552–53.

26. Davis to Johnston, March 26, 1862, *OR*, 10.2:365.

27. Daniel, *Shiloh*, 98–99.

28. Roland, *Jefferson Davis's Greatest General*, 59–60.

29. *OR*, 10.1:392–97. In reality, the Tennessee River runs roughly north to south here, with Lick Creek to the east, Owl Creek to the West, and the roads leading into the encampment from the south. In general at Shiloh, the Confederates attacked facing north.

30. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 318–19.

31. *OR*, 10.1, 396–97.

32. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 320.

33. *Ibid.*, 319; Woodworth, "When Merit Was Not Enough," 24.

34. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 321.

35. *OR*, 10.2:387.

36. Woodworth, "When Merit Was Not Enough," 25. Historian James McDonough notes regarding Beauregard's plan, "The Confederates may well have lost the opportunity to break the Union army at Shiloh when they adopted this program of battle." McDonough, *Shiloh*, 73.

37. Daniel, *Shiloh*, 128.

38. *Ibid.*

39. McDonough, *Shiloh*, 86–87, 98–99. Why the Confederates took Grant's army by surprise is beyond the purview of this article. For a more complete explanation, see McDonough, *Shiloh*.

40. Johnston, *Life of Albert Sidney Johnston*, 582.

41. Daniel, *Shiloh*, 145.

42. *OR*, 10.1:577, 591.

43. *OR*, 10.1:532, 536, 545, 548.

44. *OR*, 10.1:414–15.

45. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 332. *OR*, 10.1:404.

46. Most of the other sources mentioning Lockett's note state that Johnston received it at 9:30, but there are several facts that militate against this time frame. First, Federal resistance in the Hornets' Nest had not yet started to develop by 9:30. Second, Johnston was busy watching Chalmers's Brigade advance at this time. Third, in his official report, Johnston's aide-de-camp Colonel William Preston stated that Johnston received Lockett's report at "half past 9 or 10. . . ." This indicates that time was very confused and that Johnston probably received the communication at 10:30 A.M. *OR*, 10.1: 404.

47. *OR*, 10.1:335.
48. *Ibid.*, 335; *ibid.*, 621.
49. *OR*, 10.1:554, 621.
50. McDonough, *Shiloh*, 153. Johnston led the charge of Bowen's Brigade at approximately 2:15 p.m.
51. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 337–38.
52. Jefferson Davis, *Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, vol. 2 (New York: Appleton, 1881), 67.