

Civil War November, 1863

Overview: November 1863 is best remembered for what was to become the most famous speech made during the American Civil War - the Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln. Again, as in October 1863, the weather dictated what senior commanders could do in the field.

November 2 President Lincoln was invited to make a speech at the dedication of the new cemetery at Gettysburg. Jefferson Davis visited Charleston and publicly stated that he believed the city would not fall.

November 3 Sherman continued his march to Chattanooga. Unwilling to rely on a single rail line from Decatur to Nashville for his supplies, he ordered that it was rebuilt as double tracked.

November 4 General Bragg, supported by Jefferson Davis, rid himself of General Longstreet and his 20,000 men who were sent to support Confederate troops at Knoxville.

November 7 General Meade, commander of the Army of the Potomac, attacked Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Several Confederate redoubts were captured at Kelly's Ford on the Rappahannock River and 1,629 prisoners were taken.

November 8 Meade continued his assault on Confederate positions but by now they are no more than skirmishes as opposed full-scale assaults.

November 9 Lincoln visited the theatre to see a play called "The Marble Heart" that starred John Wilkes Booth.

November 14 Sherman arrived at Bridgeport at the head of 17,000 men. His men had covered 675 miles in just fourteen days. Sherman was told by Grant not to expect any help from the Army of the Cumberland, as it would maintain its defensive position rather than an offensive one.

In the South, the Confederate Government ordered the use of force in its efforts to collect taxes. This included the confiscation of property and was primarily directed at farmers in North Carolina who were refusing to pay their taxes.

November 15 Sherman started his campaign against Chattanooga. Accepting Grant's advice, Sherman viewed the role of the Army of the Cumberland to be solely defensive.

November 16 Longstreet finally reached Knoxville. However, lacking heavy artillery, Longstreet was unable to besiege the town, which was well defended by Union troops commanded by General Burnside.

November 18 Lincoln left Washington DC en route to Gettysburg.

November 19 The dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg took place. 15,000 people assembled there. The dedication started with a two-hour speech by Edward Everett as to the course of the battle. Lincoln spoke after Everett and for only ten minutes and received polite applause. Some in the gathering were unaware that he had even spoken. 'The Times' in London considered Everett's speech to have been very good while the President's was a disappointment. His speech was carefully prepared and not, as was once thought, put together on the train journey from Washington to Gettysburg. Lincoln himself said "the world will little note, nor long remember what we say here."

November 20 Sherman's advance on Chattanooga was delayed by heavy rain.

November 21 With better weather, Sherman prepared for his attack on Chattanooga.

November 23 Unionist troops took Orchard Knob just outside of Chattanooga. The capture of this position gave them a height advantage over Confederate positions around Chattanooga.

November 25 Sherman started his main assault against Confederate positions around Chattanooga, especially the men based on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. By 3 PM the positions held by the Army of Tennessee had fallen. Seven Congressional Medals of Honor were awarded for the Union assault on Missionary Ridge. One went to Lieutenant Arthur MacArthur, the father of Douglas MacArthur.

November 26 The Army of the Potomac threatened an attack on Richmond.

Bragg withdrew his forces from the Chattanooga area To Dalton, Georgia, having lost 10% of his men – 6,667 out of 64,000. Bragg was not to know that Sherman's army had suffered a similar percentage of casualties – 5,824 out of 56,000 men. By withdrawing, Bragg kept his army as an effective fighting unit. However, Sherman's army was free to advance on Atlanta.

November 27 The Army of the Potomac meets that Army of Northern Virginia at Mine Run

November 30 An attack on the Army of Northern Virginia was cancelled at the last minute when Meade decided that Lee's men were too well dug in.