**The Fall of Atlanta & Sherman’s March**

At the beginning of spring 1864 the war was at a tipping point. Union troops were spread thin defending captured cities and towns. The three-year enlistment period for Union volunteers was up – 136,000 reenlisted but another 100,000 headed for home. States made up the difference with conscripts and paid bounty soldiers, but many of these men showed little dedication to the cause once in the heat of battle.

From May through August of 1864 the forces of General Grant in Virginia and Pennsylvania and Sherman's forces in Georgia were engaged in nearly constant warfare with southern forces. As Grant and Lee fought their way through Pennsylvania and Virginia, Union casualties were horrific. In seven weeks from the beginning of May, 65,000 Union soldiers were dead, wounded, or missing. Public opinion in the North began to turn against Lincoln; Confederate leaders began to hope that if they could hold out until the November election, they might negotiate for peace with a new president.

Sherman's Atlanta campaign ended those southern hopes. He outmaneuvered Confederate troops sent to intercept him and began a siege of the city. On September 1, 1864, after several costly battles, Gen. John Bell Hood ordered the evacuation of Atlanta and withdrew his battered Army of Tennessee. Union troops marched into the city and took command. The effect on both North and South was immediate and significant. Atlanta was one of the few major manufacturing centers for the southern war – its factories, foundries, and munitions plants were supplemented by a complex of railroad lines running out from the city. Southern diarist Mary Chestnut lamented that "We are going to be wiped off the earth."

Sherman then took a bold risk. He wanted to "move through Georgia, smashing things to the sea" and take the port of Savannah.. "I can make the march," he wrote, "and make Georgia howl." On the night of November 15, Bluffton and his fellow soldiers who were camped east of Atlanta witnessed a great fire, deliberately set to destroy businesses and industrial sites. As the troops marched away from the city the next morning, the railroad depot was destroyed behind them. Union forces, however, were in high spirits. As the regiment left Atlanta, one member of the 75th noted: “It was a charming November morning. The [Fourteenth] Corps. . .with swinging, regular step, arms glistening in the sunlight, and colors unfurled to the balmy breezes, was as fine a picture as eyes ever saw.”

Sherman's forces wreaked havoc as they went, and purposely so. The general believed that "We cannot change the hearts of the people of the South, but we can make war so terrible . . . that generations would pass away before they would again appeal to it." The 75th Indiana was part of the process, destroying Georgia railroads as they marched. Foraging parties, soon nicknamed “ Sherman's bummers,” confiscated large amounts of rations from southern farmers and homeowners.

By early December Sherman's forces reached Savannah. On December 20, the Confederates withdrew from the city and Unions forces occupied it the next day. Sherman's troops had marched through one of the most important states in the Confederacy, split it in two, destroyed its communications and transportation lines, and decimated its towns and farmlands.

1. What were the challenges facing the North in 1864?
2. Why was Atlanta important to the South? Describe the effects of Sherman taking Atlanta.
3. What did Sherman mean when he said he would “Make Georgia howl?”
4. What was the outcome of Sherman’s march? (Think lasting impact.)

**Marching Through Georgia**

Bring the good ol' Bugle boys! We'll sing another song,

Sing it with a spirit that will start the world along,

Sing it like we used to sing it fifty thousand strong,

While we were marching through Georgia

Hurrah! Hurrah! We bring the Jubilee.

Hurrah! Hurrah! The flag that makes you free,

So we sang the chorus from Atlanta to the sea,

While we were marching through Georgia.

How the darkeys shouted when they heard the joyful sound,

How the turkeys gobbled which our commissary found,

How the sweet potatoes even started from the ground,

While we were marching through Georgia.

Yes and there were Union men who wept with joyful tears,

When they saw the honored flag they had not seen for years;

Hardly could they be restrained from breaking forth in cheers,

While we were marching through Georgia.

"Sherman's dashing Yankee boys will never make the coast!"

So the saucy rebels said and 'twas a handsome boast

Had they not forgot, alas! to reckon with the Host

While we were marching through Georgia.

So we made a thoroughfare for freedom and her train,

Sixty miles of latitude, three hundred to the main;

Treason fled before us, for resistance was in vain

While we were marching through Georgia.

1. What do the song lyrics tell us about Sherman’s men foraging and supplying themselves?
2. How does the song describe people Sherman’s men meet in the South?

**“Oh God, the time of trial has come!”**

*Dolly Sumner Lunt was born in Maine in 1817 and moved to Georgia as a young woman to join her married sister in Covington, Ga. where she met and married Thomas Burge, a plantation owner. When her husband died in 1858, Dolly was left alone to manage the plantation and its slaves. Dolly kept a diary of her experiences as Sherman's army approaches her home:*

November 19, 1864

Slept in my clothes last night, as I heard that the Yankees went to neighbor Montgomery's on Thursday night at one o'clock, searched his house, drank his wine, and took his money and valuables.

Saw Mrs. Laura in the road surrounded by her children, seeming to be looking for some one. She said she was looking for her husband, that old Mrs. Perry had just sent her word that the Yankees went to James Perry's the night before, plundered his house, and drove off all his stock, and that she must drive hers into the old fields. Happening to turn and look behind, as we stood there, I saw some blue-coats coming down the hill. Oh God, the time of trial has come!

I hastened back to my frightened servants and told them that they had better hide, and then went back to the gate to claim protection and a guard. But like demons they rush in! My yards are full.

To my smoke-house, my dairy, pantry, kitchen, and cellar, like famished wolves they come, breaking locks and whatever is in their way. The thousand pounds of meat in my smoke-house is gone in a twinkling, my flour, my meat, my lard, butter, eggs, pickles of various kinds - both in vinegar and brine - wine, jars, and jugs are all gone. My eighteen fat turkeys, my hens, chickens, and fowls, my young pigs, are shot down in my yard and hunted as if they were rebels themselves. Utterly powerless I ran out and appealed to the guard.

'I cannot help you, Madam; it is orders.'

...Alas! little did I think while trying to save my house from plunder and fire that they were forcing my boys [*slaves*] from home at the point of the bayonet. One, Newton, jumped into bed in his cabin, and declared himself sick. Another crawled under the floor, - a lame boy he was, - but they pulled him out, placed him on a horse, and drove him off. Mid, poor Mid! The last I saw of him, a man had him going around the garden, looking, as I thought, for my sheep, as he was my shepherd. Jack came crying to me, the big tears coursing down his cheeks, saying they were making him go. I said:

'Stay in my room.'

But a man followed in, cursing him and threatening to shoot him if he did not go; so poor Jack had to yield.

...Sherman himself and a greater portion of his army passed my house that day. All day, as the sad moments rolled on, were they passing not only in front of my house, but from behind; they tore down my garden palings, made a road through my back-yard and lot field, driving their stock and riding through, tearing down my fences and desolating my home - wantonly doing it when there was no necessity for it.

...As night drew its sable curtains around us, the heavens from every point were lit up with flames from burning buildings. Dinnerless and supperless as we were, it was nothing in comparison with the fear of being driven out homeless to the dreary woods. Nothing to eat! I could give my guard no supper, so he left us.

My Heavenly Father alone saved me from the destructive fire. My carriage-house had in it eight bales of cotton, with my carriage, buggy, and harness. On top of the cotton were some carded cotton rolls, a hundred pounds or more. These were thrown out of the blanket in which they were, and a large twist of the rolls taken and set on fire, and thrown into the boat of my carriage, which was close up to the cotton bales. Thanks to my God, the cotton only burned over, and then went out. Shall I ever forget the deliverance?

**November 20, 1864.**

About ten o'clock they had all passed save one, who came in and wanted coffee made, which was done, and he, too, went on. A few minutes elapsed, and two couriers riding rapidly passed back. Then, presently, more soldiers came by, and this ended the passing of Sherman's army by my place, leaving me poorer by thirty thousand dollars than I was yesterday morning. And a much stronger Rebel!"

1. How does this account of Sherman’s march differ from “Marching Through Georgia?”
2. After reading this account, what do you think were the mental and emotional effects of Sherman’s March.
3. Some people think Sherman’s march was too severe, while others think it was the only way to subdue the South. What do you think?