



Rebel Underground

Sons of Confederate Veterans
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Jasper, Alabama

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The Major John C. Hutto Camp's March Camp Meeting
will be in Jasper, Alabama on
Sunday 15 March 2026 at 2:00 pm

The Last Guns of the Confederate Army of Tennessee
by Alex Norikane



The Battle of Nashville (December 15—6, 1864) devastated the once-formidable Army of Tennessee—its artillery reduced from 108 guns to just 49 by campaign's end. |Harper's Weekly (public domain)

As disastrous as the Battle of Franklin had been for the Confederate Army of Tennessee's infantry, the Battle of Nashville proved equally—if not more—devastating for its artillery. The corps entered the autumn 1864 campaign with 108 cannons and emerged with only 49. With no reserve supply of captured pieces and “production at the government foundries [...] shut down for months,” the veteran artillery arm was wrecked beyond repair.

Principal Confederate commanders



Lt. Gen.

John Bell Hood



Maj. Gen.

Benjamin F.
Cheatham



Lt. Gen.

Stephen D. Lee



Lt. Gen.

Alexander P.
Stewart



Maj. Gen.

Nathan
Bedford
Forrest

By the end of 1864, as the surviving Southern artillerymen of the Army of Tennessee huddled in winter camps at Columbus, Mississippi, it was decided two-thirds of the remaining men would be sent to Mobile, Alabama, to help defend the port city against an anticipated Federal attack. The remaining third would proceed to Macon, Georgia, to be refitted for a proposed spring campaign.

The Corps Divided

Six artillery battalions were earmarked for Mobile under senior artilleryman Colonel Melancthon Smith, while the battalions of Majors Thomas R. Hotchkiss, John W. Johnston, and George S. Storrs were ordered to Macon for reorganization. At the special request of General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, commanding the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, René T. Beauregard's South Carolina battery was exchanged with a Georgia battery in Johnston's battalion so the general might have his son's command within his department.

In late January 1865, the breakup of the army's artillery corps began in earnest. On January 31, 300 artillerymen left Columbus by rail, arriving in Mobile on February 2.

Nearly 1,000 others, delayed by transportation shortages, remained stranded in Columbus until February 3. Over the next month, the cannons assigned to Mobile were distributed among the city's defensive works. These former Army of Tennessee artillery units took part in the subsequent Union campaign along the eastern shore of Mobile Bay. Some were captured on April 9 at Fort Blakeley; the remainder evacuated their positions the following day.

Meanwhile, the 27 cannons comprising the battalions of Hotchkiss, Johnston, and Storrs moved slowly toward Georgia. Some had no horses and others had no ammunition. All were destined for refitting at the artillery camp in Macon under the command of Major General Arnold Elzey.

As Union forces advanced into South Carolina, Confederate troops concentrated at Augusta, Georgia. By the third week of February, Augusta had become a major transportation and supply hub—the rendezvous point for thousands of Confederates returning from furlough or detached duty, and a conduit for movement east into the Carolinas by much of the reorganized Army of Tennessee.

Scattered Surrenders

The bulk of the army reached North Carolina by March 16. After a series of engagements against Sherman's larger forces, the Army of Tennessee capitulated on April 26, 1865. The artillery units that had rejoined the main army were included in that surrender. Six days earlier, the batteries left in Georgia had been captured by an advancing Union cavalry corps. A week later, the remnants of the artillery sent to Alabama surrendered at Demopolis.

The scattered locations of these final surrenders underscored the destruction wrought at Nashville upon the Army of Tennessee's artillery corps. Broken up, reassigned as infantry, stranded without guns or horses—or fighting from North Carolina to Alabama in a cause already lost—the cannoners nevertheless did their duty to the end.

About the Author

Alex Norikane is a freshman at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, VA. He is majoring in history with a specialization in the Civil War. In addition to keeping up with his course work, Alex is also currently researching several orders of battle.

HUTTO CAMP OFFICERS

Commander	James R. Blackston
1 st Lt. Cmd	Trent Harris
2nd Lt. Cmd	Jeremy Jackson
Adjutant	John McGraw
Chaplain	Thomas Foster
Judge Advocate	Cherokee Brasher
Communications	Tony Pennington
Facebook	Brandon Prescott - Jeremy Jackson
Quartermaster	Billy Kinchelow
Flag Committee Chairman	Trent Harris
Newsletter Editor	James Blackston

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