

**THE BATTLE OF
FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE,
30 NOVEMBER, 1864**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649750085

The battle of Franklin, Tennessee, 30 November, 1864 by John K. Shellenberger

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JOHN K. SHELLENBERGER

**THE BATTLE OF
FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE,
30 NOVEMBER, 1864**

PREFACE

This monograph on the Battle of Franklin was read first at a meeting of the Minnesota Commandery of the Loyal Legion, December 9, 1902. Written after an exhaustive investigation begun many years before, the straightforward truth was told without fear or favor. The disgraceful and costly blunder with which the Battle of Franklin opened should have been investigated by a court of inquiry. The only action taken, however, was the deposing of General Wagner, the junior in rank and the weakest in influence among the generals implicated, from the command of his division, with the statement that the blunder was due to his disobedience of orders. With this action the matter was hushed up.

I have no personal grudge against General Schofield, whose obstinate reliance on his ability to foresee what General Hood would do, was the prime cause of the blunder. My feeling towards him is the same that any honest student will experience when he becomes convinced that an undeserved promotion was secured by dishonest methods. I began my investigation with no thought of him but to secure evidence to disprove statements that I knew to be false, dishonoring the brigade to which I belonged. These had been made by General Cox in *The March to the Sea—Franklin and Nashville*, and by Cap-

tain Scofield, a member of Cox's staff, in a paper entitled "The Retreat from Pulaski to Nashville," published in the second volume of *Sketches of War History*, issued by the Ohio Commandery of the Loyal Legion.

"Misery loves company," and these two officers of the twenty-third corps, undoubtedly working in collusion, sought to mitigate their misery by putting two brigades of the fourth corps into the same class with their corps, whose battle line had proved unequal to the strain of the two brigades passing over it when driven in from the front by the assaulting rebel army. That part of Cox's line broke in a panic at the sight of what was coming and abandoned a good line of breastworks before firing a single shot. Cox and Scofield wished to make it appear that the two brigades also became panic stricken and that they never stopped running until they were stopped by the river. That they were both capable of deliberately bearing false witness needs no other proof than that furnished by themselves - by Cox in the contradictory statements made in his two official reports of the Battle of Franklin, and by Scofield in his false map of Spring Hill, which he claimed was drawn to scale, but which he had forged to uphold his claim for extraordinary services rendered by the regiment to which he belonged in the Battle of Spring Hill the day preceding the Battle of Franklin.

The discovery of the discreditable part played by General Schofield in the Battle of Franklin was the greatest find of my investigation. There is not a bit of doubt that he remained heedless at his headquar-

ters in Franklin while the enemy was engaged in preparations for assault in plain sight of our front. If he had given the proper attention to the important reports of General Cox, delivered in person, and of Colonel Lane, delivered by Captain Whitesides, he would have ridden to the front, which he could have done in less than ten minutes, to see for himself what was going on there. One look must have convinced him of the mistake he was making as to General Hood's intention. He then might have remedied the blunder he made, when he ordered Wagner's division into the position occupied by the brigades of Lane and Conrad. Yet his blunder went on to its logical finish and many hundreds of Union soldiers were needlessly killed, wounded, or captured; the army, on the crumbling brink of destruction, was saved by the independent action of Colonel Opdycke, one of the brigade commanders.

In 1890 the *National Tribune* published my article on the Battle of Franklin, containing the same charges against Schofield that are made in this pamphlet. Among many letters then received was one from General Stanley in which he wrote that he was surprised at the accuracy with which I had stated my points. One of the most important of those points was the statement of Doctor Cliffe, which is confirmed by General Stanley's official report:

From one o'clock until four in the evening the enemy's entire force was in sight and forming for attack, yet in view of the strong position we held, and reasoning from the former course of the rebels during this campaign, nothing appeared so improbable as that they would assault. I was so confident

in this belief that I did not leave General Schofield's headquarters until the firing commenced.

The headquarters mentioned were at Doctor Cliffe's house. In my personal interview with him, I found him a very reluctant witness. He was evidently proud of having entertained two major-generals and showed no inclination to say anything against either of them. He had told his story to a few of his intimate friends and one of them had repeated it to me. It was not until I had told him what I had heard and who my informant was that I could get him to talk. He then confirmed what I had already heard and added a few additional particulars, the most important one being his statement that Cox was at his house conferring with Schofield shortly before the battle began.

A thousand copies of the *Tribune* article were obtained and a copy was mailed to every member of the Ohio Commandery and to many others, including General Schofield. Many members of the Ohio Commandery were residents of Cincinnati or Cleveland. At that time Schofield was commanding the army and was a resident of Washington City. He took notice of this article by getting Washington correspondents of Cincinnati and Cleveland papers to write letters in his praise. Those letters contained nothing to refute the specific charges made in the *Tribune*, but dealt in glittering generalities about the important services rendered by Schofield during the war. Moreover in his *Forty-six Years in the Army*, while devoting many pages to the Battle of Franklin, Schofield has nothing to say about his

failure to give some personal attention to the very extraordinary situation that developed right under his nose, so to speak. The audacity he displayed in claiming credit for the victory, while in Washington soon after the battle and finding that the administration was ignorant of its details, was a brilliant stroke of genius of its kind—but not such genius as any lover of his country will wish to see encouraged among the ambitious officers in our army.

Cox was with Schofield in Washington and must have rendered invaluable assistance. No doubt each certified to the meritorious services of the other and Cox got his share of the reward in his promotion to the command of the twenty-third corps. Is it any wonder that two such able but unscrupulous men, while working together, with no one present to question their claims, should score such a success in deceiving President Lincoln? Was it for the meritorious services Schofield rendered, while sitting idly in Doctor Cliffe's house, utterly indifferent to the reports coming to him of the preparations of the enemy for assault; and was it for the gallantry he displayed when he skedaddled to the fort across the river as soon as the firing began, thereby abandoning the conduct of the battle to his subordinates, that they claimed the promotion he was given? If he had received the award his conduct that day so justly merited, would it not have come in the verdict of a court-martial such as he declares in his book ought to have been given to Wagner, Lane, and Conrad? "According to the established rules of war these three commanders" and Schofield and Cox "ought to have

been tried by court-martial and, if found guilty, shot or cashiered for sacrificing their own men and endangering the army."

If any of the blame attached to General Stanley, he washed it away gallantly with the blood of his wound.

JOHN K. SHELLENBERGER.

Hampton, Virginia, November 5, 1915.

THE BATTLE OF FRANKLIN

Any facts or information concerning the Battle of Franklin coming my way has always been devoured with a greedy interest, and because of this interest, I have given far more research to this battle than to any other in which I was engaged. On account of the open character of the battle-field, the limited area, where the fighting raged, and my presence in the midst of that area, the leading features of the battle came under my personal observation, but wherever that observation was wanting for giving a clear account I have supplied the deficiency with information gathered from other reliable sources.

I was commanding Company B, Sixty-fourth Ohio regiment, Conrad's brigade, Wagner's division, Fourth corps. Wagner's division was the rear guard on the retreat to Franklin, and about mid-forenoon of November 30, 1864, arrived on top of the Winsted Hills, two miles south of Franklin. Halting there long enough to snatch a hasty breakfast, the division then hurried into battle line to delay the columns of the enemy, in close pursuit, by compelling them to deploy. The position was held as long as possible without bringing on a battle and then Wagner began to retire slowly towards Franklin. The town lies nestled in a little valley in a bend of Harpeth River. A stand was made to get the artillery and the long