**William T. Sherman**

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William T. Sherman is best remembered as the general who declared "War is Hell." In 1864, he swept across the Confederacy, burning houses and crops, killing livestock, and bringing the hardships of the Civil War home to Southern citizens. His strategy, cruel at first glance, helped break Confederate morale and hastened the war's end. These practices were later applied to Native Americans of the plains region with similar results. Throughout the postbellum period, he also championed a more professional officer corps and established several military schools for that purpose. Brilliant, mercurial, and usually at odds with the press, Sherman is regarded by many as history's first modern general.

William Tecumseh Sherman, who went by his childhood nickname of "Cump," was born in Lancaster, Ohio on February 8, 1820. His father, an Ohio Supreme Court justice, died when Sherman was nine years old, and he was raised in the home of Sen. Thomas Ewing. In 1836, Sherman began attending West Point, graduating four years later as a second lieutenant in the Third U.S. Artillery. In this capacity, Sherman joined Col. Thomas Childs and fought in the final phases of Florida's Second Seminole War during 1840-1841. He rose to first lieutenant in November 1841 and completed tours of duty at Fort Moultrie and Augusta, Georgia.

When the Mexican-American War broke out in 1846, Sherman sought a combat assignment but ended up on recruiting service. The following year, he served in California on the staff of Gen. Stephen Watts Kearny but saw no fighting. In 1850, Sherman transferred east to become a captain in the commissary department but, dissatisfied with his career, he resigned from the army in 1853.

Sherman went to San Francisco to work as a banker but lost heavily when his firm went bankrupt during the Panic of 1857. He then moved to Leavenworth, Kansas to work as a lawyer, but this effort also failed. In October 1859, he finally found employment as superintendent of the Alexandria Military Academy in Louisiana, where he remained for a year and a half. Although he was an admirer of the South and had many Southern friends, Sherman quit his post when the Civil War broke out in April 1861 and returned north.

Through the influence of his brother, John Sherman, a U.S. senator, Sherman was reinstated as colonel of the newly raised 13th U.S. Infantry. He commanded a brigade in the army of Gen. Irvin McDowell and, after fighting well at the First Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861, was promoted to brigadier general. Thereafter, Sherman transferred to Kentucky, where he succeeded Fort Sumter hero Gen. Robert Anderson as head of that department. However, Sherman quickly developed poor relations with the press, and when his remark that it would take 200,000 men to attack rebels in Tennessee was quoted out of context, many journalists accused him of insanity or suffering from a nervous breakdown. Sherman's high strung, insecure outbursts did little to diffuse these rumors, and in November 1861, he was replaced by Gen. Don Carlos Buell.

Political connections preserved Sherman's commission and landed him on the staff of Gen. Henry W. Halleck at St. Louis. A few months later, Halleck appointed him commander of the District of Cairo, Illinois, where he forwarded supplies to a rising leader, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, during his successful operations against Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862. The two men took an immediate liking to one another—so much so that Sherman forsook his seniority to command a division in Grant's Army of the Tennessee.

Sherman subsequently accompanied Grant's expedition down the Tennessee River where, on April 5-6, 1862, he fought conspicuously at the bloody Battle of Shiloh. Discounting reports of nearby Confederate troops, he failed to entrench his men, and they were nearly overrun by Confederate general Albert S. Johnston. Nevertheless, Sherman fought bravely, was wounded, and had several horses shot from under him. For helping repulse the Confederates on the second day, he was commended by Grant in his official report.

Consequently, Sherman was promoted to major general of volunteers and rendered useful service during the approach to Corinth that May. Grant then ordered him north to secure Memphis as a base for Union operations. Sherman ruthlessly suppressed Confederate guerrilla operations and, in his first display of total war, authorized retaliatory burnings of farms and homes to discourage resistance. This harsh policy had the desired results.

In December, Sherman participated in the decisive Vicksburg Campaign, commanding the right wing of Grant's advance. The advance was severely hampered by the cavalry raids of Confederate general Nathan Forrest, and Sherman's attack on Chickasaw Bluffs on December 29 was bloodily repulsed. Amidst unfavorable press reports, Sherman was replaced by Gen. John A. McClernand and assigned to command the XV Corps as a subordinate. Swearing he would hang the next reporter that annoyed him, Sherman partially regained his reputation by capturing the batteries of Arkansas Post on January 11, 1863, which further facilitated operations around Vicksburg.

Sherman enjoyed even greater success in May when he attacked and defeated the army of Confederate general Joseph E. Johnston at Jackson, Mississippi, paving the way for Grant's investment of the city. Following Vicksburg's surrender in July, Sherman succeeded Grant as commander of the Army of the Tennessee. Grant then dispatched him to relieve Gen. William S. Rosecrans at Chattanooga where, on November 24, he helped signally defeat the Confederate Army of Gen. Braxton Bragg. Sherman's good performance garnered him national acclaim and the gratitude of Congress.

In December, Sherman advanced to relieve Gen. Ambrose Burnside, who was besieged in Knoxville by Confederate general James Longstreet, forcing a Confederate withdrawal. In March 1864, when Grant was called east to be general in chief of the entire Union Army, Sherman again succeeded him to lead the Military Division of the Mississippi. He was now responsible for the Civil War in the West and implementing Grant's plan to end the war decisively.

Under the scheme put forward by Grant, Sherman would advance from Chattanooga across Georgia to Atlanta and then Savannah, cutting the Confederacy in half and separating the Upper South from the Deep South. Grant, meanwhile, would advance on Richmond, pinning the redoubtable Confederate general Robert E. Lee to the defense of his capital.

Beginning in May, Sherman, engaged in a masterful game of maneuver with Johnston, who was embedded in the mountains of western Georgia. As the Confederates slowly gave ground, Sherman lost patience, attacked Johnston frontally at Kennesaw Mountain on June 27, and sustained heavy losses. However, the Union advance convinced Confederate president Jefferson Davis to replace Johnston with the more aggressive John B. Hood, who immediately went on the offensive. Sherman beat off Hood's attacks and slowly enveloped Atlanta. When Hood abandoned the city to avoid being trapped, Sherman captured it on September 2 and declared "Atlanta is ours and fairly won."

Sherman then burned Atlanta to deny its use to the enemy, along with substantial public and private property. He subsequently cut his own supply line and advanced on Savannah. During Sherman's March to the Sea, he cut a swath of ruin 60 miles wide across the state, destroying anything that the Confederate Army could use. Savannah fell on December 21, and Sherman presented it to President Abraham Lincoln as a Christmas present. For a second time, Sherman received the gratitude of Congress.

In February 1865, Sherman defeated Confederate general Wade Hampton at Columbia, South Carolina, took the city, and leveled it. Sherman met Johnston again in North Carolina, where the heavily outnumbered Johnston gave ground and was defeated at Bentonville on March 19-20. On April 26, soon after Lee's April 9 surrender to Grant essentially brought the war to a close, Johnston surrendered to Sherman at Durham under terms so generous that Radical Republicans in Congress questioned Sherman's loyalty to the Union. Press criticism so angered Sherman that he threatened to boycott the proposed grand victory march in Washington, D.C. if the comments were not retracted.