

Union Army Camp, Nashville



Thus, after ten days, and they were days of much anxiety to many; were we turned over to the Federal authorities. The agony was over, and so far nothing had occurred which seemed to justify the course of those who had so frantically torn themselves from their homes when the news of the reverse to the Confederate arms at Fort Donelson reached here.

February 25, 1862
Eye-Witness Account
"The Great Panic"

1100 Fort Negley Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37203
615.862.8470

www.nashville.gov/Parks-and-Recreation/Historic-Sites/Fort-Negley.aspx

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Tuesday-Friday: Noon - 4:00 p.m.

Saturday: 9 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

And by Appointment

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Tuesday-Thursday: Noon - 4:00 p.m.

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And by Appointment

Fort Negley Park is open daily dawn to dusk for self-guided walking tours



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Fort Negley

Visitors Center



OCCUPIED NASHVILLE



"THE GREAT PANIC"

The events of February 1862 represent a time in American history unique to Nashville.



Nashville: Athens of the South

At the beginning of the Civil War, Nashville was the largest and most important city south of the Ohio River, with the exception of New Orleans. Settled in 1780, Nashville's population had expanded to nearly 30,000 and the city had become an established commercial market. Goods flowed to and from the city by river and rail. As a center for education and culture Nashville earned the nickname *Athens of the South* in the 1850s.

By mid 1861, some manufacturing firms had converted for the military production of weapons and gray uniform cloth. By July, the Confederate army had established an armory, an arsenal and a training camp. Control of Nashville quickly became a military necessity for both sides. Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River and Fort Henry on the Tennessee were built by the Confederacy to block Union advance farther south.

Special Dispatches sent between February 12 and 15, 1862 reported certain Confederate victory at Fort Donelson. Nashvillians went to bed the night before the fall of Fort Donelson feeling victorious and secure.

On Sunday, February 16, that confidence was shattered as people learned of the defeat of the Confederate Army at Fort Donelson.

For nearly two weeks, the citizens of Nashville awaited the Union Army. On February 25, the city became the first captured Confederate capital and the Union's most prized occupied city.

The Nashville Chattanooga Railroad
Harper's Weekly, April 4, 1863



“THE GREAT PANIC”

THE EVENTS OF SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16 THROUGH TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25



"The Surrender of Fort Donelson [sic]
February 16, 1862"
Harper's Weekly
March 1, 1862

Pastors dismissed their congregations and panic broke out in the streets of Nashville as citizens questioned an uncertain future.

Governor Isham Harris and the State General Assembly left by rail for Memphis with the State Archives. Prominent secessionists fled.

A regiment of Missouri troops patrolled the streets dispersing mobs overcome with fear. Makeshift hospitals prepared for Fort Donelson's wounded. General Johnston and public officials debated holding the city at the risk of civilian safety.

Sunday, February 16, began as any other day in Nashville, but as the morning wore on, rumors of total defeat at Fort Donelson reached the city

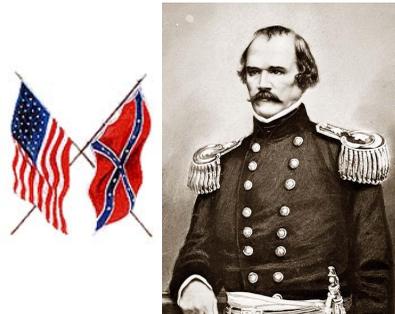
initiating "The Great Panic." One eye witness later published an account of the crisis.

A reign of terror and confusion ensued, the like of which was never witnessed in Nashville... We found the town in perfect tumult – a furor that lashed into a phrenzy [sic] those who were regarded perfect models of the calm and passionless – and the wave was spreading with fearful rapidity. Not a man was there in all the goodly city who stepped forth to tell the people that there was no cause for alarm to which they had given way.

In Public Square, General Barrow and Mayor Cheatham informed the crowd of General Johnston's decision to surrender the city and advised the people to remain at home in pursuit of daily activities. Mayor Cheatham fully expected to meet Buell and his army under a flag of truce before the day's end.



Gen. Don Carlos Buell



Gen. Albert S. Johnston

On the morning of February 17, city authorities closed the post office, businesses and newspapers.

Over the next few days, wet and hungry Confederate soldiers flooded the city bringing with them rumors of an impending battle in Nashville. Generals Johnston, Pillow and Floyd

agreed to preserve Confederate forces by pulling out of the city.

Bedlam ensued as General Floyd halted the distribution of government supplies to civilians for shipment to the front lines.

Retreating Confederates burned potential military targets and looted government warehouses and private property.

Exodus from the city continued, men rode on top of train cars packed with women and children.

Hospitals, filled with wounded soldiers, fell into confusion. John B. Lindsley, Chancellor of the University of Nashville, called upon citizens for help. Doctors and surgeons volunteered their services and citizens donated cots and linens. Of the 400 sick and wounded soldiers left in Nashville, more than 200 died in one day.

On February 20, General Floyd withdrew leaving Colonel Nathan Bedford Forrest in command of the remaining forces. Samuel D. Morgan, an avid secessionist, disassembled his percussion cap factory and moved it behind Confederate lines.



*Order Out of Chaos: Nathan Bedford Forrest,
Nashville, Tenn., February 22, 1862*
Mort Kunstler, 2007

The next day, a mob gathered at the quartermaster's warehouse following a report of distributing supplies to the poor. When the goods did not materialize, the mob became riotous.

Mayor Cheatham's attempts to maintain order failed and the crowd stormed the depot. In response, the city's steam engine sprayed the crowd with water.

Torrential rains and flooding south of Nashville closed bridges and forced people from their homes.

General Ulysses S. Grant, headquartered at Fort Donelson, declared martial law in Tennessee.

At his inauguration as President of the Confederate States of America in Richmond, Jefferson Davis received word of General Johnston's actions in Nashville.

On the morning of February 25, Federal troops commanded by Brig. Gen. W.B. Hazen arrived in Nashville. After negotiating the terms of surrender, Mayor Richard B. Cheatham gave control of Nashville to General Don Carlos Buell.

Over the next several days, the Federal army secured the city, restored order, reopened commerce and distributed supplies.

For the citizens of Nashville, the wait finally ended and a long Union occupation began.

During the occupation, Union forces transformed Nashville into a vital forward base of operations in their campaign to capture Chattanooga and Atlanta. Union forces occupied Nashville until 1867.