

Sherman's Feint Tour

When William T. Sherman and his sixty-three thousand, lean, mean soldiers entered South Carolina in late January and early February 1865, there was virtually nothing to stop them. Confederates made small, desperate stands behind the Salkehatchie and North Edisto Rivers (See *The Dead Generals Tour* for details on these battles at Broxton Bridge and Orangeburg, South Carolina), but their depleted regiments were simply no match for whole Union armies. Sherman's army was so overwhelming, Confederate General Joseph Johnston compared it to the one commanded by Julius Caesar.

South Carolina was open, and Sherman's men made the most of it. They took their revenge on the first state to secede from the Union at every tiny farm, large plantation, and small town from Savannah to Columbia. Hardeeville, Estill, Pocotaligo, Barnwell, Bamberg, Blackville, Orangeburg, Midway, Lexington, and countless other crossroads villages suffered from the looting and burning of the Union invaders.

In Barnwell, as Federals looted her home, a woman complained: "We expect civil treatment from gentlemen." A Union soldier replied: "There are no gentlemen in the Union Army. We are all convicts turned out to

This tour starts in Blythewood, South Carolina, just north of Columbia on I-77. It then follows Sherman's original route to Winnsboro, a town occupied by his whole army. It travels to a monument erected to a slave killed by Federal soldiers before moving on to Chester, the site of a Confederate cemetery. The tour continues to Union, where the table the Ordinance of Secession was signed on and another general's grave are located. From there, the tour proceeds to Rock Hill, the site of one of the last Confederate cabinet meetings and the location of a monument to loyal slaves.

Total mileage:
approximately 155 miles.

end the rebellion.” The woman then said: “Then officers will treat us like ladies.” The soldier ended the conversation with a chilling: “You’ll find the officers are worse than the men.”

And it was so. Letters and reports from Federal officers made it clear that they believed South Carolina was a “hellhole of secession,” and that they cared little what their men did. Even Union chaplains approved of the punishment the army doled out to the civilians of South Carolina. After the war, Sherman said that he did all he could to protect private property, but he couldn’t be held responsible when his men ignored his orders. He claimed he personally damaged only one piece of private property during the whole campaign, a chair that he broke up to feed a fire.

Some soldiers did worse than burning and looting. Occasional violence against civilians was always possible during the march, particularly at the hands of Sherman’s “bummers,” the foragers who operated in front of the main regiments. One story describes how a detachment of Confederate cavalry were riding near Aiken when they came upon a grief-stricken farmer. His daughter had been raped and killed by Federal soldiers. The Confederates captured the seven Federals and cut their throats, leaving them in a ditch with a note pinned to their chests describing their crime. Sherman ordered his officers to respond by executing an equal number of Confederate prisoners for every Union soldier found butchered.

Sherman knew his force was larger than anything the Confederates could muster on their best day. In fact, Sherman’s sixty-three-thousand-man army was more than twice as large as Robert E. Lee’s army, which was trapped in Petersburg, Virginia, by Union General Ulysses S. Grant.

Still, Sherman wanted to be careful. He was deep in hostile territory, hundreds of miles from supplies and any other Union forces. He had to keep the Confederates guessing what he would do next.

After leaving Columbia, Sherman’s next objective was either Raleigh or Goldsboro in northeast North Carolina. However, to keep Confederates in North Carolina from concentrating their forces in the northeast part of the state, he decided to “feint” directly north of Columbia in the direction of Charlotte, North Carolina. A feint is a military movement that fakes the army’s true direction.

After three days in Columbia, Sherman’s men headed north. In their

path lay the little town of Winnsboro, South Carolina. When the Federals left Columbia a smoldering ruin on February 20, 1865, there was no reason for civilians in their path to believe a better fate awaited them.

Sherman's Feint Tour begins at Exit 27 on I-77 in the town of Blythewood, just north of Columbia.

At Exit 27, turn west off I-77 onto S.C. 555. Within a few hundred yards west of the interstate, pass Sandy Level Church on the right, which was there during the war. At 0.9 mile after leaving the interstate, turn right, or north, onto Syrup Mill Road. This is the same route Sherman and his right wing, made up of the thirty thousand men in the 17th and 15th Corps, took on the way to the town of Winnsboro, about 13 miles away. The left wing, the 20th and the 14th Corps, used another road.

As the Union soldiers marched toward Winnsboro, they saw smoke on the horizon. This was the work of the bummers, who were already burning the town. The men started double-quick marching in order to reach Winnsboro before the bummers had destroyed not only the buildings in town, but more importantly, the food.

More than thirty buildings in Winnsboro were burned before the Union soldiers could put out the flames. Still, it could have been worse. Citizens wrote of bummers having "snowball fights" with flour, and of ham hocks that were soaked with fuel and set ablaze before the regular Federal regiments moved into town. However, most of the town escaped destruction, as more than two hundred antebellum homes still stand today.

At 8.7 miles from the interstate, Syrup Mill Road runs into S.C. 34. About 6 miles to the right is Ridgeland, a small town briefly occupied by Confederate troops as they retreated northward. Several fine houses in the city were ransacked by Sherman's men, but most survive today. Turn left, or northwest, from Syrup Mill Road onto S.C. 34 and drive towards Winnsboro. S.C. 34 intersects with Business U.S. 321 just outside of the town limits. Follow Business U.S. 321 North into Winnsboro.

At 3.8 miles after turning onto S.C. 34 is Fairfield Animal Hospital on the left. In the war, this large house was known as Sweet Briar. The bummers quickly surrounded the house and rode repeatedly through its gardens, trampling the flower beds. Although the foodstuffs had been hidden, a young slave girl showed the Federals where everything was stored. The

Brigadier General John Bratton. The exact location of his grave cannot be given, as the older part of the cemetery where Bratton is buried is padlocked.

Bratton was Winnsboro's doctor when he enlisted as a private in the 6th South Carolina Regiment. He was later elected colonel of that regiment. Wounded and captured at the Battle of Seven Pines, Bratton was imprisoned for a few months until he was exchanged. He was promoted to brigadier general in June 1864, just a month after his mentor, Confederate Brigadier General Micah Jenkins, was accidentally shot and killed by Confederate troops during the Battle of the Wilderness. Bratton was in command of the largest Army of Northern Virginia brigade surrendered at Appomattox. Bratton left medicine after the war for politics, winning election as a congressman. He was defeated in his bid for governor in 1890. He died in 1898.

Retrace your route to Congress Street. Turn right, or south, onto Congress Street and drive one block to College Street. Turn left, or east, onto College Street and cross over the railroad tracks. At the next block, turn left onto Zion Street, then turn right onto Bratton Street after driving one block. On the corner of Zion and Bratton Streets is Wynn Dee, a house that was built prior to 1777. This house was the pre-war home of John Bratton.

During the Federal occupation of the town, a rusty Revolutionary War saber was discovered in a trunk in the basement of the Bratton house. The women who were staying at the house were threatened with arrest for hiding weapons. Wynn Dee was set on fire, but the flames were extinguished by some loyal servants. Federal soldiers rode their horses through the house, pulling down a hallway staircase.

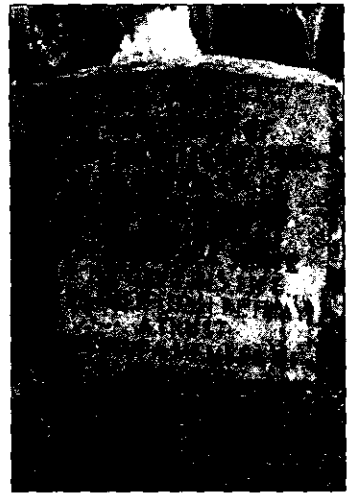
Retrace your route back to Congress Street, or Business U.S. 321. Turn right, or north, and drive out of Winnsboro on Business U.S. 321, which will merge with U.S. 321 on the north side of town. Drive about 15 miles north on U.S. 321 to Hopewell Church Road, which intersects from the right. Before reaching Hopewell Church Road, you will pass two exits from U.S. 321 for the small town of Blackstock, South Carolina. Turn right, or east, onto Hopewell Church Road, also designated S.C. 12-36. Drive 2 miles and pull into the parking lot for Hopewell Reformed Presbyterian Church.

In front of the church is a small stone monument to Burrel Hemphill. The monument reads: "In memory of Burrel Hemphill, killed by Union soldiers Feb. 1865. Although a slave, he gave his life rather than betray a trust. He was a member of Hopewell." According to his family, Hemphill was a slave of Robert Hemphill, who owned twenty-two hundred acres near the church. When the Federals arrived, the Hemphill family fled, and Burrel was left in charge of the plantation. Burrel buried the family silver in the woods, but was caught by Union soldiers on his return. According to his grandson, who witnessed the incident, Hemphill refused to tell the Union soldiers where to find the loot. The angry Federal soldiers dragged Burrel to a spot near the church, hanged him, then shot his body for target practice.

Burrel Hemphill's murder was not unusual. It is ironic that Sherman, who freed thousands of slaves during his march, allowed his men to harm hundreds of Blacks. Official records and personal accounts detail the rapes and murders of slaves all along the march. The most notorious and best-documented case of mistreatment occurred when Union General Jefferson C. Davis's corps was marching through Georgia. They came upon rain-swollen Ebenezer Creek, about 35 miles west of Savannah. The Federals told all of the escaped slaves who were following them to stand to one side while the soldiers marched across the pontoon bridge. As the last soldier crossed, the Federals pulled up the bridge behind them. Hundreds of slaves were now on the wrong side of the creek, with Confederate cavalry in hot pursuit. Some of the slaves dove into the creek and were drowned. Most of them were captured by the Confederates and returned to their owners. Sherman did not even reprimand his general for the deaths of the slaves.

Retrace your route to U.S. 321. Turn right, or north, onto U.S. 321 and drive about 10 miles into Chester, South Carolina. Follow Business U.S. 321 when it intersects with U.S. 321. Continue on Business U.S. 321 to the intersection with Business S.C. 9. Three miles to the east on S.C. 9, in an inaccessible private cemetery, is the resting place of Confederate Brigadier General John Dunovant.

Dunovant was one of the few generals during the war who had served in the Mexican War and worked his way up through the ranks. He was a sergeant in the Mexican War who received a commission as a captain in



Monument to slave at Hopewell

second floor of the American Federal Bank. In the museum collection is the table on which South Carolina's Ordinance of Secession was signed. Attorney Benjamin Arthur from Union agreed to write out the Ordinance since he had the best handwriting of all the delegates. Arthur requested that he receive the table as a reward for his good penmanship. The museum also displays two Confederate battle flags from companies raised in Union.

Continue west on Main Street to the intersection with Pinckney Street at a traffic light. Turn right, or north, onto Pinckney Street and drive two blocks to Forest Lawn Cemetery, at the corner of North Pinckney Street and Wedgewood Court. Turn right onto Wedgewood Court and drive one block, then turn left onto the access road into the cemetery.

Park on the access road in the rear of the cemetery. Walk toward three tall obelisks near a small cluster of trees. The obelisks are near the front center of the older part of the cemetery. Here, under a crypt-like monument beside a berry tree, lies Confederate Brigadier General William Henry Wallace.

A lawyer and legislator who supported secession, Wallace enlisted as a private in the 18th South Carolina Regiment in 1861, but was soon named lieutenant colonel. Wallace handled himself well during the war. A military disaster, over which he had no control, made Wallace famous among Southern officers. On the night of July 30, 1864, four companies of his regiment were blown to bits when four tons of gunpowder exploded beneath them in the trenches of Petersburg. The gunpowder had been placed there by a team of Pennsylvania coal miners who tunneled under the Confederates.

Wallace survived the explosion and was promoted to brigadier general. He surrendered with Lee at Appomattox. After the war, Wallace resumed his political and legal career. He served three more terms in the state house and then became a circuit judge. He died in 1901 at the age of seventy-four.

There is a sadness to Wallace's grave. Beside him lay his wife and three infant daughters. If the Wallaces had any children who lived to be adults they are not buried in the family plot.

Retrace your route to Pinckney Street and turn left, or south. Cross to

Main Street and continue driving south on Pinckney Street for several blocks until reaching the intersection with Sardis Road at a traffic light. Tabernacle Church is on the northeast corner of this intersection. To the right is a highway road sign giving the distance to Rose Hill. Turn right, or west, onto Sardis Road. Drive about 8 miles southwest from this intersection to Rose Hill, the antebellum home of Governor William H. Gist. This is now a South Carolina state historic site.

Gist built the home in 1832, naming it Rose Hill after the rose garden he planted for his wife. The garden still exists in back of the house. Gist also planted the magnolia trees and boxwoods in front of the house. The plants are laid out in a maze pattern popular in English-style gardens in the 1860s.

Gist, a planter and slave holder, was an ardent secessionist. It ran in the family. His cousin was Confederate Brigadier General States Rights Gist, a name that was somewhat common for men born during the 1830s.

William Gist was South Carolina governor the two years before the state seceded, and he lobbied hard for secession during his term of office. He often visited other governors to ask for their support. He finally made his case, but too late for him to have the honor of being governor when South Carolina finally left the Union on December 20, 1860. Gist signed the Ordinance of Secession as just another private citizen.

There is one odd thing about Gist's signing of the Ordinance. In 1776, a proud John Hancock signed the Declaration of Independence in very large letters so King George of England could read it. Former Governor Gist's signature on South Carolina's Ordinance of Secession is one of the smallest ones on the document. The man spent his entire term of office lobbying for secession, but his signature is tiny compared to other names.

The Gist family cemetery is on Sardis Road about 1.0 mile further south of Rose Hill, set back in the woods, but accessible from the road. The Gists had twelve children, but only four survived to adulthood. One of their adult sons was killed while leading the 16th South Carolina Volunteers during the Battle of Knoxville, Tennessee.

Retrace your route on Sardis Road back to Union. Continue to the intersection with Pinckney Street and turn left. Follow Pinckney Street to Main Street, which is also S.C. 49. Turn right and follow S.C. 49 back to

Lockhart. When S.C. 49 intersects with S.C. 9 in Lockhart, turn east on S.C. 9. and drive to Chester. Drive through Chester to the intersection of S.C. 9 and I-77. The total distance from Rose Hill to I-77 is about 45 miles.

Drive north on I-77 for about 20 miles. Take Exit 85 off I-77 to S.C. 160. Drive east on S.C. 160 toward the town of Fort Mill, South Carolina.

At 1.3 miles from the interstate, on the left, is the large, rambling, brick house of Colonel William Elliott White. On April 27, 1865, Confederate President Jefferson Davis accepted the resignation of his treasury secretary, George Trenholm, at this house. The resignation occurred during a cabinet meeting held on Davis's flight south from Richmond. The normally dour Davis showed he had a sense of humor when Trenholm resigned. When Davis told Postmaster General John Reagan that he was also being appointed treasury secretary, Reagan wondered aloud if he could handle both jobs.

"Don't worry, there's not much left for the secretary of the treasury to do. There's but little money left for him to steal," Davis laughed.

Davis himself spent the night in the nearby house of the Springs family. With all the Yankees in the world chasing them, Davis, Reagan, Secretary of State Judah Benjamin, and Secretary of War John C. Breckinridge spent more than an hour on their hands and knees playing a game of marbles with the two young Springs boys. The Springs boys were amazed that these powerful men knew all the rules about marbles.

At 2 miles from the interstate, S.C. 160 intersects Main Street. Turn north onto Main Street. At the corner of Main Street and S.C. 160 is Confederate Park, a small park with four statues and a cannon.

The Confederate statue, erected in 1891, may have the wildest-looking eyes of any statue ever erected. The pupils are large and deep set. The soldier's eyelids appear to be missing. He is also missing his canteen. Perhaps thirst has driven this Confederate to his agitated state.

Next to that statue is a monument to Confederate women. A relief shows a woman with her hands clasped in prayer. At her feet is a furled flag. The sides of the monument feature some extremely bad poetry about "heroines among the gloom of war" and two lines from a song of the period: "Many are the hearts who are weary tonight wishing for the war to cease."

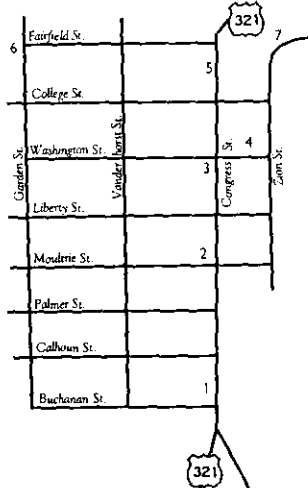
Next to the women's monument is one "dedicated to the faithful slaves" who "guarded defenseless homes, women and children in the struggle for principles for our Confederate States of America." One side of the monument shows a woman holding a child. The other side shows a man sitting on a log with a sickle in his hands. In the background are sheafs of wheat.

The last monument is to the Catawba Indians. The names of Indians from the area who fought for the Confederacy are listed. The Catawbas did not have their own regiment, as the Cherokees in western North Carolina did.

Just a few miles north of Fort Mill is where Sherman's feint towards Charlotte reached its northernmost point. Federal cavalry burned a railroad bridge over the Catawba River, which separates North and South Carolina, then turned east toward Chesterfield and Cheraw to link up with the rest of Sherman's army. The feint had worked. The Confederates in North Carolina had no idea where Sherman was going. They would soon find out.

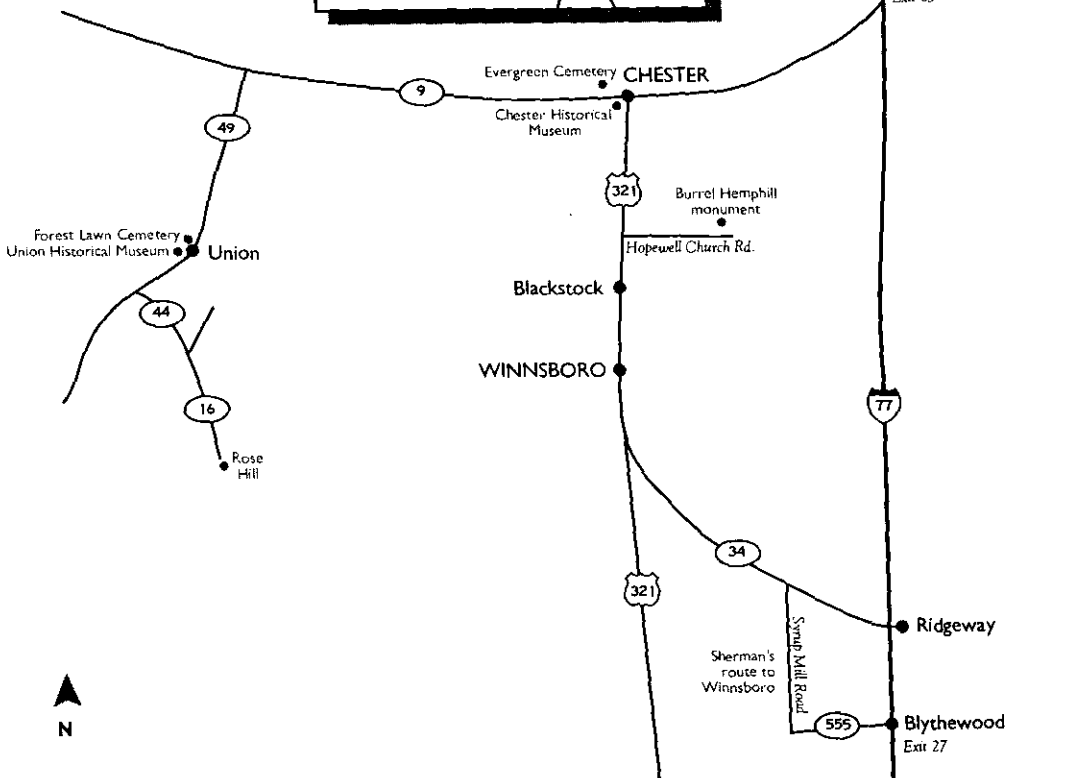
This concludes the Sherman's Feint Tour.

WINNSBORO DETAIL



SITES

- 1 Obear House
- 2 Ketchin Building
- 3 Fairfield County Courthouse
- 4 Town Clock
- 5 Obear; Williford House
- 6 St. John's Episcopal Church Cemetery
- 7 Gen. John Bratton's house



SHERMAN'S FEINT TOUR