

CAROLINAS CAMPAIGN DRIVING TOUR

Fayetteville to Johnston County



After making his famous “March to the Sea” to Savannah, Georgia, in late 1864, Union Gen. William T. Sherman cast his eyes northward toward the Carolinas and a possible link-up with Gen. U.S. Grant, who was then tightening his noose around Gen. Robert E. Lee at Petersburg, Virginia. Sherman’s army of 60,000 entered South Carolina in February 1865 and moved quickly north, burning the capital at Columbia and destroying and looting countless civilian farms and plantations.

Entering North Carolina the first week in March, Sherman marched toward Goldsboro, an important railroad junction sitting on what had been “Lee’s Lifeline.” Union forces quickly captured Fayetteville and burned the arsenal there. Confederate resistance at Averasboro was swept aside. Confederate commander Gen. Joseph Johnston managed to assemble a force large enough to put up a fight at Bentonville, March 19-21, but the weight of Sherman’s advance eventually overwhelmed him.

Johnston withdrew, his army ending up west of Raleigh. After more than a week of negotiation near Durham, Johnston surrendered his troops April 26, 1865.



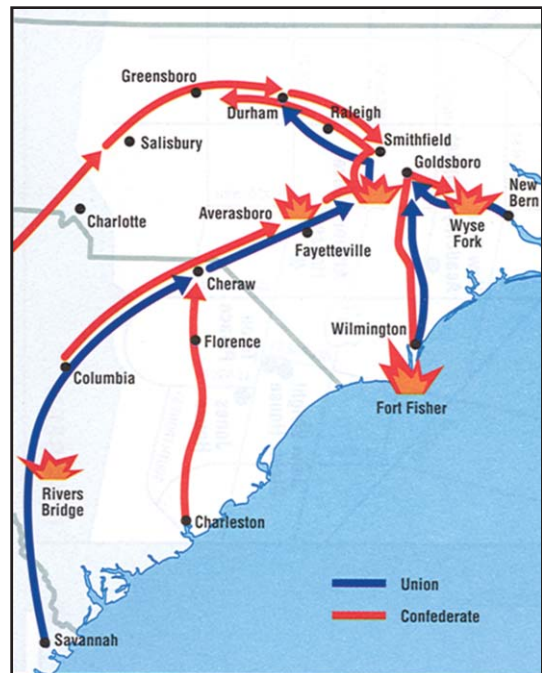
Gen. William T. Sherman



Gen. Joseph E. Johnston

The Driving Tour

Sherman gathered his army at Cheraw, South Carolina, in late February 1865 then moved north. The Union commander announced his entry into North Carolina from the tiny Laurel Hill Church, still standing near the town of the same name on the Old Wire Road. Continuing north toward Fayetteville, Sherman stopped at Bethel Church, also still standing. Both churches retain their wartime appearance.



Civil War Trails sites:

Fayetteville Arsenal ★ Sign located in the Museum of the Cape Fear Historical Complex, 801 Arsenal Ave., Fayetteville - Sherman destroyed the arsenal here March 11, 1865. It was one of his first objectives after entering North Carolina. The history of the arsenal, some of the ruins, and outlines of some of the original structures are preserved here.

Edward J. Hale House ★ Trails sign on Hay Street, 50 yards from the intersection with Fort Bragg Road, in Fayetteville. The home of the pro-Southern editor still stands here near the arsenal but the offices of his Fayetteville Observer were burned by Sherman’s soldiers.

Sandford House ★ 225 Dick St. in Fayetteville. Local tradition has it that this house, home to John Sandford, was used as a barracks for Sherman’s troops during the occupation of the town. Later, the building was owned by John Daingerfield, who was a clerk at the Harpers Ferry arsenal during John Brown’s 1859 Raid and came to town when some of the equipment there was transferred to the local arsenal after the war began.

Market House ★ Trails sign northeast corner of Market House Square, Green and Person streets, Fayetteville. This stately landmark and town centerpiece, dating from 1832, was the scene of a brief cavalry action as Union forces entered Fayetteville.

Old Bluff Church ★ Trails sign 13 miles north of Fayetteville off US 301 at Dunn and Old Bluff roads. Most of Sherman's left wing (about 30,000 troops) marched past this church on March 14 on their way north from Fayetteville. They encountered increasingly strong resistance culminating in the Battle of Averasboro on March 15-16.

Battle of Averasboro (March 15-16) ★ Well-developed and preserved battlefield four miles south of Dunn along Route 82 features museum, cemetery and short driving tour interpreted stops. Civil War Trails sign at the museum. Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10am-5pm, Sunday 1-5pm.

Sherman's Left Wing Departs ★ Trails sign at Longbranch Road and Norma Drive, one-half mile west of I-95 (exit 71). After the fighting at Averasboro, Sherman continued his advance toward Goldsboro, passing this point.

Route to Bentonville ★ Trails sign at the East Pointe Shopping Center, corner of Routes 55 and 421. Sherman's left wing passed by this point March 17 while Johnston, then at Smithfield, searched for a way to slow the Union advance.

Battle of Bentonville ★ (March 19-21) Nicely preserved and interpreted Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site offers audio-visual programs, a bookstore and driving tour information at the visitor center. Tours of the nearby Harper House, used as a hospital after the battle, are available. Trails sign on site.

Merging of the Armies ★ Trails sign one mile north of the state battlefield visitor center on Devil's Racetrack Road. Dug-in Confederates here and near here held off Union attacks March 20-21 after Sherman's wings reunited.

Village of Bentonville ★ Trails sign three miles north of the state battlefield visitor center on Devil's Racetrack Road. This tiny wartime community was a focus for Confederate activity early in the battle. It was the site of Johnston's headquarters and of hospitals serving the wounded from both sides. A Union attack March 21 near here was held back, but the Confederates retreated toward Smithfield that night.

Hannah's Creek Bridge ★ Trails sign four miles north of the state battlefield visitor center on Devil's Racetrack Road at the Howell Learning Center. Confederates held this position the evening of March 21 as most of Johnston's army left the Bentonville area bound for Smithfield. Union soldiers were on their heels. Skirmishing here hastened the Southern retreat.

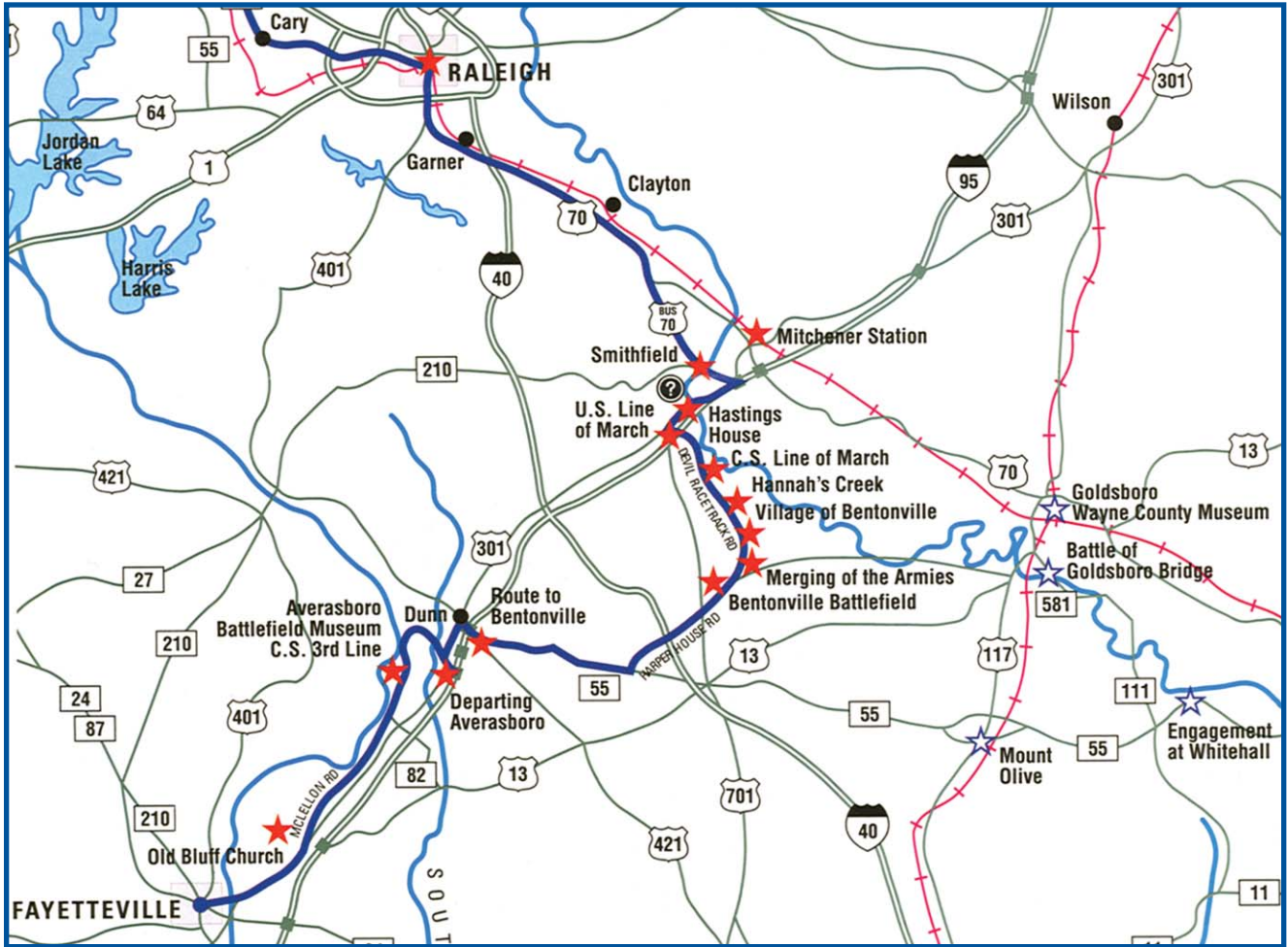
Confederate Line of March ★ Trails sign seven miles north of the state battlefield visitor center on Devil's Racetrack Road. This is the main road used March 19 by Johnston as he deployed his Confederate army south from Smithfield before the Battle of Bentonville. Part of Johnston's army used this "wretched road" on its retreat from the battlefield three days later.

Union Line of March ★ Trails sign at the North Carolina Highway Patrol station on Route 301, one-half mile north of I-95. Elements of the Union X Corps marched by this spot after leaving Goldsboro (April 10) heading northwest toward Raleigh.

Hastings House ★ Trails sign at the corner of Front and E. Johnston Streets in Smithfield. This 1854 home served as headquarters for Confederate Gens. Johnston and Bragg mid-March 1865. From here, Johnston ordered the concentration of forces and the attack March 19 at Bentonville. Johnston returned after the battle, resting his battered army.

Occupation of Smithfield ★ Trails sign at the Johnston County Courthouse, Second and Market Streets. Confederates withdrew from Smithfield April 11, and the town soon was occupied by Union infantry. Sherman established his headquarters at the courthouse, announcing Lee's surrender from its steps.

Mitchener Station ★ Trails sign at the corner of Buffalo and Old Beulah roads, 1.5 miles north from the Route 70 bypass. The last reviews of Johnston's Confederate army occurred here April 4 and 7. The troops were urged to "fight till Hell freezes over!" by North Carolina Gov. Zebulon B. Vance. A week later, the army pulled out toward Raleigh.



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