



# **Twenty-five Hours to Tragedy: The Battle of Spring Hill and Operations on November 29, 1864: Precursor to the Battle of Franklin**

*Jamie Gillum*

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Twenty-five Hours to Tragedy: The Battle of Spring Hill and Operations on November 29, 1864 - Precursor to the Battle of Franklin is a compilation of eyewitness testimony linked by narrative telling the story of the great missed opportunity by the Confederate Army of Tennessee on November 29, 1864. Led by General John Bell Hood, a Confederate envelopment around Columbia, Tennessee left Union Major General John McAllister Schofield's Fourth and Twenty-third Army corps strung out and beyond supporting distance of their wagon train. One lone division that had been sent to Spring Hill to protect the Union Army's wagon train found itself confronting nearly 25,000 Confederate soldiers by mid-afternoon. While Union Major General David S. Stanley did all in his power to stop the Confederate attack, it seemed nothing could save them. Suddenly the fog of war set in, and as the sun sank on the western horizon, the Confederate high command found itself paralyzed with inaction, indecision, poor judgment and finally darkness. This maneuver forced General Schofield to conduct a harrowing forced march to Spring Hill past nearly 22,000 highly motivated Rebel soldiers within a few hundred yards of Columbia-Franklin Pike as darkness cloaked the field. While the Federals marched into a set Confederate trap that was never fully sprung, Confederate commanders stumbled through the starlight, and the Union army slipped past the lion's den. The next day brought about the Battle of Franklin - a direct result of Confederate inaction and miscommunication the night before at Spring Hill. Twenty-five Hours to Tragedy is the largest and most in depth account of the actions that took place at Spring Hill. This account adds more testimony and sheds even greater light on a night filled with confusion and disappointment for the Confederate high command. Told by over one-hundred-and-fifty eyewitness participants, the accounts are linked by narrative that place the reader on the field in the midst of enthusiastic Confederate and anxious Union soldiers. The events of November 29, 1864 sealed the fate of the Confederate Army of Tennessee. Only twenty-five hours after the Confederate Army's arrival on the battlefield of Spring Hill, the decision to assault the heavily defended fortifications at Franklin was made. It was a decision that would not have to be made had the Confederates followed through with their plans at Spring Hill. Follow the armies in their race to Spring Hill, the combat there and the critical decisions that led to the Federal escape and a total Confederate command breakdown in the most devastating blunder of the American Civil War.

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