North Carolina as a Civil War Battlefield, November 1864–May 1865

By winter 1864 the Union was poised to strike North Carolina from several vantage points. General William T. Sherman completed his March to the Sea in late December and turned his attention north, toward North Carolina. The Union high command also turned their attention to the Cape Fear region, particularly Fort Fisher and Wilmington, long neglected in favor of numerous failed attempts to subdue Charleston, which the Union viewed as the very seat of dominion secession. With the Army of Northern Virginia entrenched around Petersburg and Richmond, the Union realized they could force them out if they could cut off their main source of supplies through Wilmington.

In December 1864 the Union assembled a joint operation to attempt the reduction and capture of Fort Fisher. The plan called for the navy to bombard the fort, while the army landed a force to the north to cut the railroad and cut the naval supply lines. Once the fort was subdued, the plan was to advance to Wilmington, and seize the line of supply to the Army of Northern Virginia. However, the plan was poorly conceived, overstretched and poorly executed, and the resulting battle was a tremendous loss for the Union.

As the operations around Fort Fisher were going on,брошьярьы General Joseph E. Johnston, commanding all Confederate forces in North Carolina, moved his army from Goldsboro to the line of the Goldsboro Road. Johnston had also heard of Sherman's invasion, and moved his forces to the line where the army would cross the Cape Fear River. The Union attacked, and after a hard day's fighting, they were repulsed.

On March 18, Johnston's forces were on the defensive, and were ordered to evacuate Wilmington, the last Confederate supply point. The navy's ironclad Monitor rammed CSS Neuse, whose batteries were put out of action. The remaining Confederate forces were ordered to evacuate Wilmington, and move to Goldsboro to join forces with Johnston. The resulting battle at Goldsboro was a tremendous loss for the Confederates, and the Union forces were able to capture the city and take control of North Carolina.

By the end of May 1865, the war in North Carolina was over. The remaining Confederate forces were either surrendered or destroyed, and the Union had secured control of the state. The war in North Carolina was a major victory for the Union, and helped to bring an end to the Civil War.
Map of Civil War battles in North Carolina, including railroads and major towns.

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