

Tennessee River, just south of the Kentucky-Tennessee boundary. Together with Fort Donelson it constituted the most important link in the first line of Confederate defense in the Mississippi Valley. Early in 1862, to gain control of the Mississippi Valley and split the Confederate states in two, the North planned the capture of the forts. General Ulysses S. Grant, in command of about 17,000 men on transports, and Commodore Andrew Foote, commanding a flotilla of gunboats, moved up the river to Fort Henry, which was defended by about 3000 men under General Lloyd Tilghman. On the morning of February 6, Foote attacked the fort alone, because the transports bearing Grant and his men were delayed. The garrison of the fort was enabled by the delay to withdraw by land to Fort Donelson, 19 km (12 mi) distant on the Cumberland River, leaving a small artillery detachment that returned the fire of the Union gunboats for more than an hour, until forced to surrender.

"Fort Henry." Microsoft® Encarta® 2006 [CD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2005.

- Capture of Fort Donelson, Tennessee (February 13 – 16, 1862) – Rebel generals Floyd, Pillow, Buckner and Forrest are there (Lee calls Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest the best officer on either side), vs. Grant; Floyd, Pillow leave; Buckner signals to Grant; Grant will only accept unconditional surrender; Buckner submits. Grant a war hero – the North's first GREAT victory

Unconditional Surrender of Fort Donelson created jubilation throughout the North and silence in Dixie. It was the North's first major victory of the Civil War, opening the way into the very heart of the Confederacy.

Days earlier Grant's plan to capture Forts Henry and Heiman on the Tennessee River succeeded. Upon taking possession of the forts the Union army stepped out briskly as Grant focuses his sights on Fort Donelson.

February 14th, 1862 dawned cold and quiet. Early in the afternoon a furious roar broke the stillness. Foote's Union gunboats arrived at Fort Donelson and began exchanging "iron valentines" with the Confederate heavy artillery. The gunboats suffered such damage that the decks became slippery with blood. The strong artillery bombardment from the Cumberland River bluff crippled the ironclads forcing them to retreat.

At daybreak the following morning, on a snow covered battleground, Southern forces launched a vigorous attack but failed to escape the clutches of Grants army. On February 16th General Buckner felt compelled to accept Grants ultimatum, "No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted." The gate was open for a Union invasion into the Confederate Heartland.

Fort Donelson National Battlefield (National Park Service), <http://www.nps.gov/fodo/>, last visited February 20, 2006.

*John Buchanan Floyd (1806-1863), American politician and Confederate army officer. . . was elected to the Virginia state assembly in 1847 and served as governor of Virginia from 1849 to 1852. For aid in the election of James Buchanan as president of the U.S., Floyd was appointed secretary of war in 1857. He advocated states' rights, but opposed secession. The secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1860, the occupancy of Fort Sumter on December 26, and Buchanan's refusal to order its evacuation turned Floyd into a strong secessionist, and he resigned on December 29. Floyd was persecuted following his withdrawal. Buchanan accused him of misusing \$870,000 of government funds, but the government could not sustain the charge. He was also **accused of having strengthened the South by transferring arms from northern arsenals**, a charge quashed by a congressional committee.*

Appointed a brigadier general in the Confederate army in 1861, Floyd was ordered to command Fort Donelson in Tennessee. He arrived there after General Ulysses S. Grant had brought it under siege. Pinned within their own lines and outnumbered almost two to one, Floyd and his associates, generals Gideon Pillow and Simon Buckner, were unable to agree on how to defend the fort. Floyd and Pillow, having successively relinquished command, escaped with 1200 men by steamer on the Cumberland River. (Buckner later surrendered the fort.) Confederate president Jefferson Davis stripped Floyd of command for deserting his post, but Floyd was subsequently appointed a major general by the Virginia Assembly.

"John Buchanan Floyd." Microsoft® Encarta® 2006 [CD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2005.

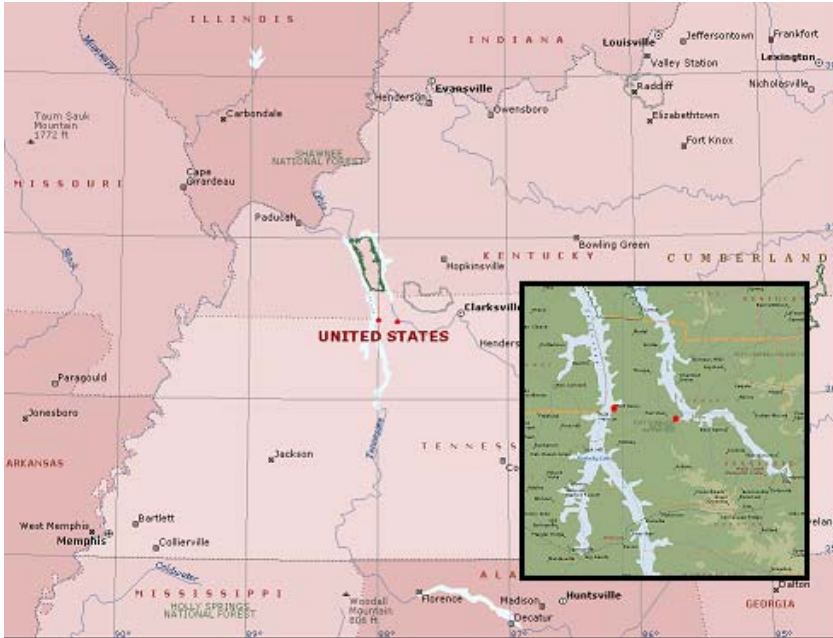


Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, 18th
President of the United States

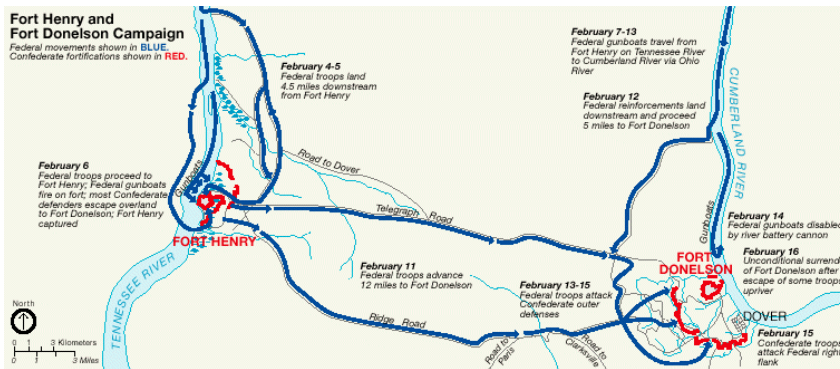
For more information about the capture of Fort Donelson, visit <http://www.civilwarhome.com/donelsoncapture.htm>.



Gen. John Buchanan Floyd, CSA



Forts Henry and Donelson are located just south of the Kentucky border in Tennessee. Recall that Kentucky was "neutral" at the outbreak of the Civil War.



Campaign maps of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, from http://www.civilwaralbum.com/donelson/donelson_map4.htm

- Other Union victories followed:
 - Fall of Nashville – first CSA state capitol to fall
 - Battle of Pea Ridge (March 7 – 8, 1862) – CSA loses Missouri
 - Capture of Island No. 10 (April 7, 1862) – Union proceeding down Miss. River
 - Capture of New Orleans (April 24 – 25, 1862) – South's largest city falls

So, the Confederates have lost Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, and New Orleans to Union forces.



Island No. 10 was captured by John Pope – who later faced General Lee at Antietam.