

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

Joseph Eggleston Johnston

By **Stephen Cushman**, University of Virginia

The highest ranking United States officer to resign and serve the Confederacy, Joseph Eggleston Johnston was born February 3, 1807, near Farmville, Virginia, the seventh child, and seventh son, of Peter Johnston, who served during the Revolution in the brigade of Henry (“Light-Horse Harry”) Lee, and Mary Valentine Wood, a niece of Patrick Henry. Information about Johnston’s early life, spent in Abingdon, Virginia, is relatively scarce before his nomination to West Point by Secretary of War John C. Calhoun. In June 1825 he entered the United States Military Academy as a member of the class of 1829, which included Robert E. Lee, who graduated second to Johnston’s thirteenth in a class of forty-six. At West Point Johnston excelled in the study of French and earned few demerits. He admired Lee greatly and served under him as a cadet officer when Lee was named Adjutant of the Corps, although his admiration for his classmate was mixed with competitive rivalry, as it would be throughout his career.

Upon graduation Johnston received his commission as second lieutenant in Company C, Fourth United States Artillery, and was assigned to Fort Columbus on Governor’s Island in New York harbor until the summer of 1831. In the fall of 1831, in the aftermath of the slave rebellion led by Nat Turner, he was assigned to Fort Monroe, on the Virginia coast, where he was a student in the Artillery School of Practice. In June 1832 Company C of the Fourth U. S. Artillery left with General Winfield Scott for the Black Hawk War in Illinois, but Johnston did not see action in this conflict. Instead, he waited at Fort Dearborn (Chicago) while the war ended with the Battle of Bad Axe, August 1-2, 1832, fought in what later became Wisconsin. Having come back to Fort Monroe in November 1832, Johnston left again with Company C almost immediately, this time assigned to Charleston, South Carolina, during the nullification crisis, and returned to Fort Monroe in the spring of 1833. He spent the winter of 1834 in central Alabama to help keep the peace between Creeks and whites on the frontier, again without seeing action. Appointed to Winfield Scott’s staff as aide-de-camp in January 1836, Johnston began active campaigning in March in the Second Seminole War. Promoted to first lieutenant in July 1836, he remained in Florida until the spring of 1837, when he resigned from the army. He hoped to become a civil engineer.

With the panic of 1837 many construction projects halted, and many engineers were unemployed. Finding work with the Topographical Bureau in Washington, Johnston returned to Florida in the fall, the only civilian in an expedition assigned to survey the coast from St. Augustine to Key West. In January 1838 the expedition, under

the command of Navy Lieutenant Levin M. Powell, collided with Seminoles on the Jupiter River. Fighting as a civilian, Johnston received a wound on his scalp; he also distinguished himself with his courage and leadership. In March 1838 he became one of the first white men to enter the Florida Everglades, where he saw more fighting against the Seminoles. Having returned to Washington in April, he joined the army again in the summer, this time as first lieutenant in the Corps of Topographical Engineers, soon breveted to captain for his bravery and service during the Second Seminole War. Assigned to surveying projects along the international boundary between the United States and Canada (1840) and the Sabine River on the Texas-Louisiana border (1841), Johnston returned to Florida in 1842 as Assistant Adjutant General on the staff of William A. Worthen. On July 10, 1845, he married Lydia Mulligan Sims McLane, sister of his fellow officer Robert McLane and fifteen years younger than her new husband, in Baltimore. Their long marriage, the closest and most important relationship in Johnston's life, proved childless.

Nearly two years later, as a topographic engineer on Winfield Scott's staff, Captain Johnston entered the Mexican War at Vera Cruz in March 1847. Having completed the envelopment of Vera Cruz from the landward side, Scott sent Johnston to governor Juan Morales with an invitation to surrender before bombardment commenced. Morales politely declined, bombardment followed, and Vera Cruz surrendered on March 27, 1847, both Johnston and fellow staff-officer Robert E. Lee participating in the formal ceremony two days later. Wounded by grapeshot while reconnoitering Santa Anna's position at Cerro Gordo on April 12, Johnston was hospitalized at Jalapa and rejoined the army at Puebla, having been breveted to lieutenant colonel and skipping the rank of major altogether. When Scott moved westward from Puebla toward Mexico City in August 1847, Johnston was second-in-command of the Regiment of Voltigeurs and Foot Riflemen, Colonel Timothy Patrick Andrews commanding. The Voltigeurs joined the 11th and 14th Infantry Regiments in a brigade commanded by Major General George P. Cadwalader. In the subsequent campaign against Mexico City, the Voltigeur lieutenant colonel performed effectively at the battles of Contreras, Churubusco, and Molino del Rey. For his part in the storming of Chapultepec, he was breveted to colonel. Dimming the luster of his achievements, however, was the grievous news, delivered to him by Lee, that Johnson's beloved nephew Preston, serving in the First Artillery commanded by John Bankhead McGruder, had been killed on August 14, 1847. The pain of this loss remained with Johnston for the rest of his life.

Having returned from the Mexican War in 1848, Johnston was assigned the next year to survey a possible railroad route between San Antonio and El Paso, Texas. After a leave of absence from fall 1852 until fall 1853, he spent two years as supervisor of navigation improvements on the Arkansas, Illinois, Mississippi, and Ohio Rivers. Eager to leave the Topographical Engineers, Johnston sought assignment to one of four new regiments authorized by Congress at the urging of Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, two of infantry, two of cavalry. In March 1855 he found himself with the rank of lieutenant colonel and second-in-command of the new First Cavalry Regiment under Colonel Edwin Vose "Bull" Sumner. Moving from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Laramie in September

1855, Johnston formed a close friendship with one of the First Cavalry captains, George Brinton McClellan, with whom he corresponded frequently and frankly after McClellan resigned from the army in the fall of 1856. During that year of clashes between free-state and pro-slavery men in Kansas, the First Cavalry saw duty as a peacekeeping force in that territory, an assignment Johnston found deeply distasteful. After an interlude at Jefferson Barracks, south of St. Louis, he returned to Kansas on assignment to survey its southern border in anticipation of statehood. From May 3 to August 26, 1858, he served as Acting Inspector-General of the Utah Expedition, under the command of Albert Sidney Johnston. As the 1850s drew to a close, he traveled to Vera Cruz once again, this time in the company of his brother-in-law, Robert Milligan McLane, whom President James Buchanan had appointed Minister to Mexico in March 1859. Johnston's official assignment was to assess possible military routes across the country; his unofficial mission was to help McLane in negotiations with Mexican President Benito Juarez, from whom Buchanan wanted to buy Chihuahua and Sonora in exchange for official recognition of his government by the United States.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Johnston's own account of his career, *Narrative of Military Operations Directed, during the Late War between the States, by Joseph E. Johnston, General, C.S.A.* (1874), joins the biographical story. Unlike many Civil War generals who wrote memoirs--among them (in chronological order of publication) William Tecumseh Sherman, John Bell Hood, Ulysses S. Grant, Philip Henry Sheridan, James Longstreet, Edward Porter Alexander—Johnston devoted none of his book to his life before 1861, the year he turned fifty-four. Instead, he began his narrative abruptly with the sentence, “The composition of the convention assembled in Richmond in the spring of 1861, to consider the question of secession, proved that the people of Virginia did not regard Mr. Lincoln's election as a sufficient cause for that measure, for at least two-thirds of its members were elected as ‘Union men.’”¹

Johnston spent no time discussing the causes of the war, as he certainly could have done in an informed way after his service with the First Cavalry in Kansas, and he did not use the word “slavery” in his book. What did interest him, and interested him intensely, was what he felt could be “proved” by his narrative, always in his own defense. The appearance of this word in his first sentence, along with its legalistic tone, foreshadowed much to come in his narrative and reflected many of the complexities of his personality and career. On the second page of the book—the same on which he announced, “No other officer of the United States Army of equal rank, that of brigadier-general, relinquished his position in it to join the Southern Confederacy” (*Narrative*, 10)—he made short work of any debate about the right to secede: “apart from any right of secession, the revolution begun was justified by the maxims so often repeated by Americans, that free government is founded on the consent of the governed, and that every community strong enough to establish and maintain its independence has a right to

¹ Joseph E. Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations, Directed, during the Late War between the States, by Joseph E. Johnston, General, C.S.A.*, Indiana University Press 1959 ed. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), 9. Pagination is the same in both editions, and subsequent page references to this work will appear parenthetically in the text.

assert it” (*Narrative*, 10). At issue here for Johnston was nothing so esoteric as the tenth amendment in the Bill of Rights and what it did or did not authorize a state to do, and he ignored the hypothetical possibility that a community strong enough to establish and maintain its independence might choose to do so for morally appalling reasons; for him what mattered was might, the might to assert independence, which in itself made right and conferred rights.

More important to Johnston than debating secession was defending himself against the charge of perjury for breaking his oath of allegiance to the United States. Arguing that the “acceptance of an officer’s resignation absolves him from the obligations of his military oath as completely as it releases the government from that of giving him the pay for the grade he held” and that when “the contract between the government and himself is dissolved by mutual consent, as in the cases in question, he is no more bound, *under his oath*, to allegiance to the government, than to obedience to his former commander” (*Narrative*, 11; emphasis original), Johnston spent more lines of print attempting to prove himself right in resigning from the United States Army in order to join that of the Confederacy than he did in attempting to prove Virginia right in seceding from the Union.

What Johnston’s opening pages left out, as he moved on to recount a meeting with Jefferson Davis in early May 1861 in Montgomery, Alabama, and then his assignment to command at Harper’s Ferry, which he reached on May 23 and where he replaced Colonel Thomas Jonathan Jackson as commander, was the backstory of his rise to Quartermaster General of the United States Army with the rank of brigadier general. Despite his two brevets in the Mexican War, the War Department recognized Johnston as only a lieutenant colonel, not a full one, arguing that the brevets had moved him two grades up from captain, whereas Johnston understood that he had skipped the rank of major altogether. Secretary of War William L. Marcy denied Johnston’s appeal of March 1849, and, more important for the history of the Confederacy, so did Secretary of War Jefferson Davis six years later. The disagreement between the two men anticipated the later debilitating feud between them. The situation changed for Johnston in May 1860 when Secretary of War John Buchanan Floyd, also from Abingdon, Virginia, and brother-in-law of Johnston’s nephew, chose Johnston to fill the vacant post of Quartermaster General over Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnston, and Charles F. Smith. With Floyd’s selection, Johnston became the first West Point graduate promoted to brigadier general in the regular army. It was a short-lived moment of triumph for him, as his discontent about rank, seniority, and the responsibilities of command would recur and trouble his service to the Confederacy.

That service fell into four phases: in Virginia from May 1861 through his wounding at the battle of Seven Pines on May 31, 1862; as commander of the Department of the West, from November 1862 to July 1863, overseeing an area between the Appalachians and the Mississippi in which Major General Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee, Major General John Clifford Pemberton’s Army of Mississippi, and Major General Edmund Kirby Smith’s smaller force in eastern Tennessee were all operating

initially;² as commander of the Army of Tennessee from December 27, 1863, until his replacement by Major General John Bell Hood on July 17, 1864, before the battles around Atlanta; and as commander of the same army once again from February 25, 1865, through his surrender to William T. Sherman in North Carolina on April 26, 1865.

The major events of the Virginia phase of Johnston's service were his evacuation of Harper's Ferry and the battle of First Manassas-Bull Run (July 21, 1861); his withdrawal of his army from Centreville in March 1862; and the battles of the Peninsula campaign through Seven Pines. Convinced from the outset that Harper's Ferry was indefensible, and having sent several anxious communications to Richmond to this effect, Johnston started his Army of the Shenandoah from Harper's Ferry to Winchester on June 15, 1861, his officers including Edmund Kirby Smith (staff), Thomas Jonathan Jackson, Barnard Bee, Ambrose Powell Hill, and James Ewell Brown Stuart. After a month of facing Union Brigadier General Robert Patterson without a major engagement—Patterson's job was to appear to threaten the Shenandoah Valley in order to keep Johnston from joining Beauregard at Manassas—word came to Johnston at Winchester that Beauregard's Army of the Potomac had been attacked and he should proceed to join him at once. Over the next five days, the Army of the Shenandoah made slow progress via the Manassas Gap Railroad, Johnston himself not arriving at Manassas until about midday on July 20.

Especially important for students of Johnston in the context of Confederate victory at Manassas the next day are two moments in his *Narrative*, one before the battle, one after.³ Having left Winchester on July 18, Johnston was, not surprisingly, worried about his rank in relation to Beauregard, a brigadier general, and he wrote Jefferson Davis asking for clarification of who would be in charge upon his arrival at Manassas. Davis's reply reached him the day he arrived: "You are a general in the Confederate army, possessed of all the powers attaching to that rank" (*Narrative* 38-39). Although Johnston would have been gratified by the confirmation of his rank, in fact he could not boast that his undisputed superiority as a full general necessarily enhanced the quality of his tactics or leadership in the battle. He admitted as much in acknowledging the fortuitous nature of events leading to Confederate victory: "Instead of taking the initiative and operating in front of our line, we were now compelled to fight on the defensive, a mile and a half behind that line, and at right angles to it, on a new and un-surveyed field, with no other plans than those suggested by the changing events of the battle" (*Narrative*, 47-48). The second salient feature of his narrative of First Manassas-Bull Run was that

² After the fall of Vicksburg, Davis removed Johnston from command of the Department of the West and limited his responsibilities to Mississippi, southern Alabama, and a small section of western Tennessee. During this period Johnston reduced the size of his own command to send reinforcements to Braxton Bragg at Chattanooga. See Craig Symonds, *Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography* (New York: Norton, 1992), 219-20, 243-4.

³ For an overview of the battle, see David Detzer, "Bull Run, July 21, 1861," *Essential Civil War Curriculum*, <http://www.essentialcivilwarcurriculum.com/assets/files/pdf/ECWCTOPICFirstBullRunEssay.pdf>, accessed August 21, 2015; for Johnston's role in the battle, see Johnston, *Narrative*, 39-57, and Symonds, *Joseph E. Johnston*, 112-24.

Johnston spent six pages rebutting charges in the press that he failed to follow up and capture Washington (*Narrative*, 59-66). By the end of the Manassas chapter, the pattern of Johnston's defensiveness and self-justification was firmly established.

Tension between Davis and Johnston intensified in the late summer of 1861 when Davis nominated five officers as full generals in the Confederacy, listing them in order of superiority: Samuel Cooper, Albert Sidney Johnston, Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston, and P. G. T. Beauregard. Johnston called this action "altogether illegal" (*Narrative*, 71) and sent a letter of protest to Davis on September 12, 1861. Johnston's account of Davis's response to the letter was accurate and to the point: "It is said that it irritated him greatly, and that his irritation was freely expressed. The animosity against me that he is known to have entertained ever since was attributed, by my acquaintances in public life, in Richmond at the time, to this letter" (*Narrative*, 73). The two men did not trust, cooperate with, or forgive each other as long as they lived.

Johnston displeased Davis again in March 1862, when he withdrew his Army of the Potomac from Centreville, leaving behind vast stores of military supplies, in order to take up what he considered a more defensible position behind the Rapidan River. When his old friend McClellan began moving up the peninsula between the York and James Rivers with more than 100,000 soldiers in early April, Johnston moved his force of 70,000 to take up a position behind the Warwick River, with his left at Yorktown. Steadily retreating back up the peninsula before McClellan's superior force, Johnston fought him at Williamsburg (May 4) and Eltham's Landing (May 7), finally crossing the Chickahominy on May 16. Two weeks later, with his back to Richmond, Johnston attacked McClellan at the battle of Seven Pines, called Fair Oaks by the Union (May 31-June 1, 1862).⁴ Although he claimed it a victory, in fact Johnston mismanaged the battle, failing to convey his plans to his subordinates clearly and losing track of developments during the first day. To cover up his errors, he falsified his report and asked Major General Gustavus Woodson Smith, one of his division commanders, to do likewise. Most important for the course of events in Virginia, Johnston was wounded late in the day on May 31, first by a musket ball and then by artillery shell fragments. He was out of the war for nearly six months; Robert E. Lee replaced him.⁵

Reporting for duty again on November 12, 1862, Johnston was assigned by Davis to command the Department of the West, and he left Richmond for Tennessee on

⁴ For more on Johnston in the Peninsula campaign and the battle of Seven Pines, see Johnston, *Narrative*, 108-46, and Symonds, *Joseph E. Johnston*, 140-74.

⁵ At issue here was James Longstreet's performance on May 31, 1862. Johnston intended for Longstreet to move east toward Fair Oaks Station on Nine Mile Road, but Longstreet apparently misunderstood Johnston's orders and advanced instead along the Williamsburg Road, to the south, where he became entangled with Benjamin Huger's men. In the end the confusion meant that only five of Longstreet's thirteen available brigades did any fighting on May 31. The evidence strongly suggests that the error was Longstreet's, but Johnston blamed Huger instead, perhaps because he realized that he himself bore responsibility for Longstreet's misunderstanding. After the battle Johnston asked Smith to omit references to Longstreet's mistake and in his *Narrative* and blamed Confederate failure on Seven Pines on Huger, who was relieved by Lee on July 12, 1862. See Symonds, *Joseph E. Johnston*, 172-4.

November 24 to establish his headquarters at Chattanooga. This phase of Johnston's service was hampered by his own uncertainty and anxiety about the nature of his assignment. Whereas Davis imagined that he was giving Johnston responsibility and authority to shift troops, as need arose, between Braxton Bragg in Tennessee and General John C. Pemberton in Mississippi, sending them over the six-hundred-mile circuitous railroad route through Mobile, Alabama, Johnston felt reluctant to pull rank on Bragg by taking soldiers from his army; he also balked before the logistical nightmare of trying to move troops by a route that took several days over a single fragile railroad line. Meanwhile, Johnston's preference was to strengthen Pemberton in his effort to hold Vicksburg by combining Pemberton's forces with those of Edmund Kirby Smith, who was deeply loyal to Johnston, and Major General Theophilus Hunter Holmes, who commanded the Trans-Mississippi Department in Arkansas. But Davis's division of western command had placed Holmes beyond Johnston's jurisdiction. Further complicating and compromising Johnston's authority was Davis's requirement that Bragg and Pemberton send all their reports to the president directly, rather than to Johnston, with the result that the commanding general often lacked information he needed.

Whether or not Davis deliberately put Johnston in this difficult position in order to set him up for failure, as some of Davis's enemies suspected, Johnston compounded his problems by insisting too rigidly on the limits of his authority. Ulysses S. Grant showed during the last year of the war that it was possible for a commanding general to supervise the operations of one particular army closely while also exercising control over other armies distributed over a large geographical area. But Johnston did not have Grant's capacity for this kind of expanded command, and Davis did not allow him the same degree of autonomy that Abraham Lincoln allowed Grant. To make matters worse, Johnston and Davis quarreled constantly about their different understandings of what would be best, Davis eventually sending Johnston to Vicksburg to support Pemberton and confront Grant. In a letter of May 24, 1863, he wrote Johnston, "I hope you will soon be able to break the investment [of Vicksburg], make a junction & *carry in munitions*," and one week later he wrote to Lee, "Genl. Johnston did not, as you thought advisable, attack Grant promptly, and I fear the result is that which you anticipated if time was given."⁶

The scene was set for failure, and failure soon followed with Pemberton surrendering Vicksburg to Grant on July 4, 1863.⁷ In the wake of the surrender, finger-pointing took center stage, Johnston blaming Pemberton, Pemberton and Davis blaming Johnston. Mutual recriminations culminated in Davis's lengthy letter of July 15, 1863, which Johnston reprinted in his *Narrative*, numbering its thirty-four paragraphs "for precision of reference" in answering and refuting Davis's charges against him over the next ten pages (*Narrative*, 241-52). During the rest of the summer and fall of 1863, Johnston found himself with little of importance to occupy him, as the major focus of the

⁶ Jefferson Davis to Joseph E. Johnston, May 24, 1863, and to Robert E. Lee, May 31, 1863, in William J. Cooper, Jr., ed. *Jefferson Davis: The Essential Writings* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 302-3; emphasis in original.

⁷ For more detail on Johnston's operations in Mississippi, see his *Narrative*, 175-210, and Symonds, *Joseph E. Johnston*, 204-18.

war in the west moved away from Mississippi into Tennessee, where he no longer had authority.

Following Union victories over the Army of Tennessee at the battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge (November 24-25, 1863), Bragg retreated to Dalton, Georgia, and submitted his resignation to Davis, who after a long meeting with his advisors reluctantly assigned Johnston to replace him as of December 27, 1863, much to the satisfaction of Texas Senator Louis Trezevant. Wigfall and other supporters of Johnston in Richmond. After a winter spent boosting the morale of his soldiers by giving them better food, working to find them clothing and shoes, granting them furloughs, and focusing on drill and discipline, Johnston hoped that with the spring campaign of 1864 he would be able to repulse the advance of William T. Sherman's three armies, totaling 100,000 men, and launch a counterattack into Tennessee, as the authorities in Richmond had been urging him to do. Instead, over the next two months, Johnston steadily ceded territory to Sherman's flanking movements all the way to Atlanta. During the first phase of Sherman's Atlanta campaign, which corresponded roughly to Grant's Overland campaign through Spotsylvania, Johnston fought his numerically superior enemy around Dalton (Rocky Face Ridge, May 5-11) and at the battle of Resaca (May 13-16), which ended with Johnston's withdrawal across the Oostanaula River. On the south side of the river Sherman then flanked Johnston out of Calhoun, Adairsville (where Johnston received the sacrament of baptism from his corps commander, Episcopal bishop Leonidas Polk), and Cassville, the Army of Tennessee withdrawing across the Etowah River on May 20.

Johnston's steady retrograde movement produced, and continues to produce, two very different assessments. His supporters, among them Grant in his memoirs, credit the wisdom of his tactics, as he maneuvered skillfully to slow and deplete Sherman's numerically superior host, part of which could pin down the Army of Tennessee while the other part moved to flank it. His detractors—chief among them Davis, Bragg (Davis's friend and, during the Atlanta campaign, his military advisor), and the ambitiously double-dealing Hood (who wrote letters to Richmond criticizing Johnston for failing to attack Sherman, when in fact, at least three times between Dalton and the Chattahoochee River, Johnston had ordered Hood to attack, and Hood had found reasons not to do so)—were convinced that Johnston lacked the will to fight. Johnston's own strategy was to draw Sherman deeper from his base in Chattanooga and use cavalry to attack his overextended supply lines. But he lacked sufficient cavalry forces to carry out this plan, and his appeals to Richmond for more were denied, in part because of inaccurate reports that exaggerated the numbers in the Army of Tennessee.

Between the Etowah and Chattahoochee Rivers, the Atlanta campaign turned bloodier, with Johnston beating back Sherman's frontal assaults at the battles of New Hope Church (May 25), Pickett's Mill (May 27), and Kennesaw Mountain (June 27). After this last battle Sherman abandoned frontal assaults and returned to flanking, finally causing Johnston to withdraw across the Chattahoochee during the night of July 9. As he explained it later, his plan to defend Atlanta included attacking Sherman when the

Federal army tried to cross Peachtree Creek (*Narrative*, 350-51). But with the withdrawal across the Chattahoochee, Davis had seen enough and ordered Johnston to turn over command of the Army of Tennessee to Hood.⁸ He did so and went first to Macon, Georgia, to join Lydia, subsequently moving with her to Vineville, Georgia, Columbia, South Carolina, and Lincolnton, North Carolina. During this time Johnston was inactive, suffering from a case of shingles while in Macon; traveling to Richmond in December 1864 to defend himself against Davis's criticisms of his report on the North Georgia campaign; and eventually moving north to Lincolnton as Sherman approached Columbia.

After the fall of Atlanta in September 1864, the disastrous Tennessee battles of Franklin (November 30) and Nashville (December 15-16), the completion of Sherman's March to the Sea, and the opening of his Carolinas Campaign in late January 1865, public and military opinion turned so sharply against Hood that Davis had little choice but to replace him. He had no enthusiasm for recalling Johnston, but he had no good alternatives. Furthermore, in January 1865 both houses of the Confederate congress passed a bill—in effect a vote of no-confidence in Jefferson Davis—that gave Robert E. Lee the powers of general-in-chief and recommended the assignment of Johnston to command of the Army of Tennessee. On February 22, Lee issued orders assigning Johnston to command of the Department of South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia and the Department of Tennessee and Georgia. (The two departments split Georgia, the coast belonging to the former, the western part to the latter. North Carolina was added in early March.) Initially, Johnston felt angered by his assignment, sensing that he had been given the thankless job of surrendering to Sherman and taking the blame for it. But when Wigfall told him that it was Lee who had engineered the assignment, and that his old classmate still had full confidence in him, his attitude changed.

Assuming command at Charlotte, North Carolina, on February 25, 1865, Johnston assembled what forces he could to oppose Sherman and directed his last battle at Bentonville (March 19-21), where his vastly outnumbered soldiers fought bravely and well. But news of Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox on April 9 confirmed that the end had come for the Confederate States of America. On April 17 Johnston met Sherman, in later life a good friend, for the first time at the farmhouse of James and Nancy Bennett, located between the opposing lines on the Hillsborough Road west of Durham Station, North Carolina. Sherman had just received a telegram about the assassination of Lincoln, which he handed to Johnston at the farmhouse. Against the backdrop of this disruptive news, the two men negotiated for two days, signing a memorandum of agreement on April 18. On April 24 Sherman received word from Washington that Andrew Johnson and Edwin Stanton had rejected the surrender terms, which exceeded his military authority, and on April 26 Johnston surrendered on the same terms offered to Lee by Grant at Appomattox. On May 2 at Greensboro, North Carolina, he issued General Orders No. 22, his farewell to the Army of Tennessee.

⁸ Johnston defended his performance at length in *Narrative*, 349-69. For more objective assessment, see Albert Castel, *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), esp. 561-2.

After the war the fifty-eight-year-old Johnston had to find a new livelihood, now that the life of a soldier was no longer available to him after thirty-five years of military service. Drawing on his pre-war experience surveying for railroads, he served from May 1866 to November 1867 as president of the Alabama and Tennessee River Rail Road Company, later renamed the Selma, Rome and Dalton Railroad, which soon failed. In 1868 he turned to the insurance business, establishing Joseph E. Johnston and Company, headquartered in Savannah, Georgia, as agent for a British company. With money he earned from this venture, he was able to turn to writing *Narrative of Military Operations*, published in 1874 by the New York house D. Appleton and Company, which also published Sherman's far more successful memoirs the next year. For all the persistent self-justification in Johnston's book, his final chapter firmly rejected the developing mythology of the Lost Cause, asserting in striking contrast to earlier Confederate memoirist Jubal Early, "The cause of the subjugation of the Southern States was neither wealth and population, nor of devotion to their own cause on the part of the people of those states... They had ample means, which, unfortunately, were not applied to the object of equipping great armies, and bringing them into the field" (*Narrative*, 421-2). Johnston's self-justifications outraged his enemies, especially John Bell Hood, whose *Advance and Retreat: Personal Experiences in the United States and Confederate Armies* appeared posthumously in 1880, and Jefferson Davis, who published *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* in 1881; in many cases the carping tone of his *Narrative* disappointed, or even alienated, his friends as well.

In the winter of 1876-77 Johnston moved from Savannah to Richmond, where he was elected, as a Democrat from Virginia, to one term in the United States House of Representatives from 1879 to 1881. During the first administration of Grover Cleveland, who wanted to fill government posts with prominent southerners, Johnston served as U. S. Railroad Commissioner from 1885 to 1889, when Benjamin Harrison defeated Cleveland's bid for reelection. During his tenure in this position, Lydia, whose health had been declining steadily, died in 1887 at the age of sixty-five. Although no death affected him as much as this one, other deaths were part of his life during these years. In 1885 he was an honorary pallbearer at both Grant's and McClellan's funerals, and on February 19, 1891, in New York he performed the same ceremonial function at Sherman's. A month later, on March 21, Joseph E. Johnston died of complications from pneumonia at his Connecticut Avenue home in Washington, DC, at the age of eighty-four. The reconciliatory lore soon developed that his final illness originated in a cold he caught at Sherman's funeral because he insisted on removing his hat, despite raw, rainy weather, as a sign of respect for his old adversary. He was buried next to Lydia in Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore, where they had married nearly forty-six years earlier.

Joseph Eggleston Johnston

Born	February 3, 1807, near Farmville Virginia
Died	March 21, 1891, Washington D.C.
Buried	Green Mount Cemetery, Baltimore, Maryland
Father	Peter Johnston
Mother	Mary Valentine (Wood) Johnston
Career Milestones	<p>1829 Graduated from West Point and commissioned second lieutenant 1836 campaigned in the Second Seminole War, promoted to first lieutenant 1845 married Lydia Mulligan Sims McLane 1847 Campaigned in the Mexican American War 1847 Wounded at Cerro Gordo, brevetted to lieutenant colonel, brevetted to colonel 1855 Appointed lieutenant colonel in the newly formed 1st US Cavalry 1860 Promoted to brigadier general and appointed Quartermaster General of the United States Army May 1861 appointed brigadier general in the Confederate States Army, appointed commander of the Army of the Shenandoah at Harpers Ferry. July 21, 1861 led his army at the Battle of First Bull Run August 1861 promoted to general ranked behind Samuel Cooper, Albert Sidney Johnston and Robert E. Lee. Appointed to command the Department of the Potomac, the Confederate army of the Potomac and the Department of Northern Virginia April 1862 Led the defense of Richmond in the Peninsula Campaign, wounded on May 31 at the Battle of Seven Pines and began recuperation from his wounds November 1862 appointed commander of the Department of the West. Following the fall of Vicksburg, removed from command of the Department of the West, responsibility limited to Mississippi. December 1863 appointed commander of the Army of Tennessee and fought Sherman in the Atlanta Campaign. Relieved July 1864 by Hood February 1865 appointed commander of the Army of Tennessee relieving Hood. Fought his last battle at Bentonville against Sherman April 26, 1865 surrendered the Army of Tennessee to Sherman 1866-1867 President Alabama and Tennessee River Railroad 1868 founded an insurance company Joseph E. Johnston and Company 1874 published his <i>Narrative</i> elected to the US House of Representatives for the term 1879-1881 1885-1889 Commissioner of Railroads under Grover Cleveland 1885</p>

	Honorary Pallbearer for the funerals of Grant and McClellan 1887 Lydia died 1891 Honorary Pallbearer for the funeral of Sherman Died March 21, 1891.
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