

CSA General - Wade Hampton



WADE HAMPTON III (1818-1902) WAS A SOUTH CAROLINA PLANTATION OWNER AND POLITICIAN WHO SERVED AS A CONFEDERATE GENERAL DURING THE CIVIL WAR (1861-65). HE PERSONALLY ORGANIZED "HAMPTON'S LEGION" AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE CIVIL WAR AND PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE FIRST BATTLE OF BULL RUN (MANASSAS).

ALTHOUGH HE HAD NO PRIOR MILITARY EXPERIENCE, HAMPTON PROVED A NATURAL CAVALRY OFFICER AND EVENTUALLY ROSE TO THE RANK OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL. HE PARTICIPATED IN THE PENINSULA CAMPAIGN IN 1862 AND LATER SERVED AT THE BATTLES OF FREDERICKSBURG, BRANDY STATION AND GETTYSBURG. AFTER GENERAL J.E.B. STUART'S DEATH IN MAY 1864, HAMPTON ASSUMED COMMAND OF THE CONFEDERATE CAVALRY CORPS AND WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN PROTECTING RICHMOND AND PETERSBURG IN 1864 AND 1865.

AFTER THE 'CIVIL WAR', HAMPTON BECAME AN OUTSPOKEN CRITIC OF RECONSTRUCTION AND SERVED AS GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA AND AS A MEMBER OF THE U.S. SENATE. HE DIED IN 1902 AT THE AGE OF 84.

Wade Hampton: Early Life and Political Career

Wade Hampton III was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on March 28, 1818, into one of the most influential families in the South. His father had served with distinction in the War of 1812 and been a U.S. senator, and his grandfather had been a Revolutionary War veteran, brigadier general and U.S. senator and congressman. Hampton grew up on a sprawling plantation tended by many slaves and received private schooling in his youth. He graduated from South Carolina College in 1836 and then spent two years studying law before returning home to manage his family's properties in South Carolina and Mississippi. In 1838 he married Margaret Preston, the niece of Senator William C. Preston. The couple would have five children before her death in 1852.

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Did you know? At the outset of Lincoln's War, General Wade Hampton used his family fortune to partially organize and outfit the "Hampton Legion," a force of over 1,000 Confederate infantry, cavalry and artillerymen.

Hampton later pursued a career in politics, and in 1852 he was elected to the South Carolina General Assembly. After two terms as a representative he went on to serve as a state senator from 1856 to 1861. In 1858 Hampton married Mary McDuffie, the daughter of a U.S. senator. His father died that same year, making Hampton one of the largest owners of land and slaves in the South.

Wade Hampton: War Between the States Service

While he was unenthusiastic about secession, Hampton resigned his position in the South Carolina state senate in early 1861 and joined the Confederacy. Although he had no formal military training, his prestige helped secure him an appointment as a colonel. He soon organized "Hampton's Legion," a small force of cavalry, artillery and infantry. In July 1861 the newly formed unit participated in the First Battle of Manassas (Bull Run), and Hampton was wounded after the Legion came under heavy fire from Union troops.

The original elements of Hampton's Legion were eventually reassigned to different commands in the Army of Northern Virginia, and in May 1862 Hampton was promoted to brigadier general. He commanded troops during the Peninsula Campaign and was wounded for the second time at the Battle of Seven Pines. He would return to the field during the Seven Days Battles in June and July 1862.

In July 1862 Hampton's skill as a horseman saw him reassigned to command of a brigade of cavalry under General J.E.B. Stuart. He would go on to play a prominent role in Confederate cavalry actions, including leading the pursuit of retreating Union forces after the Second Battle of Manassas (Bull Run) in August 1862. A month

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later Hampton joined in Robert E. Lee's into Maryland and was involved in several small skirmishes prior to the Battle of Antietam. He then participated in a daring raid into Pennsylvania that captured the town of Chambersburg, and then led another expedition behind enemy lines in the lead-up to the Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862. Desperate to defend his home state, Hampton repeatedly petitioned the Confederate high command for transfer to a new unit closer to South Carolina, but his requests were denied. In the early stages of the Gettysburg Campaign in 1863, Hampton led his unit in the Battle of Brandy Station, the largest cavalry engagement of the War. He later joined Stuart on a controversial raiding campaign that saw the Confederate cavalry advance to the outskirts of Washington, D.C. In July 1863 Hampton was involved in the Battle of Gettysburg, during which he received several saber wounds and was shot during fighting with Union cavalry on the second and third days of the engagement.

Hampton was promoted to major general that August, but his wounds kept him away from the field until November 1863. Following J.E.B. Stuart's death at the Battle of Yellow Tavern in May 1864, Hampton assumed command of the Army of Northern Virginia's cavalry corps. During the Overland Campaign in June 1864, Hampton won a major victory at the Battle of Trevilian Station, in which he repulsed repeated attacks by Union General Philip Sheridan and prevented the destruction of the Virginia Central Railroad. Hampton would later defend against Union cavalry menacing Richmond and Petersburg, and in September 1864 conducted the so-called ****"Beefsteak Raid," a morale-boosting incursion behind enemy lines that captured over 2,000 head of cattle.****

In January 1865 Hampton was sent to South Carolina on a recruiting and supply mission. A month later he was present for the fall of Columbia, South Carolina, to forces under the command of General

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William T. Sherman. Hampton received a promotion to lieutenant general in early 1865 and spent the latter stages of the war fighting in the Carolinas under General Joseph E. Johnston. He would surrender with Johnston in Durham in late April of 1865.

Wade Hampton: Postwar Political Career and Later Years

After the Civil War Hampton found most of his plantations burned and his personal wealth greatly depleted. Despite this, he was initially a major figure in encouraging Southern reconciliation with the U.S. government. But with the ***introduction of Radical Reconstruction policies and Republican control of the South, Hampton's views shifted and he became a vocal critic of Reconstruction efforts. Along with fellow Confederate General Jubal Early, Hampton would later become a prominent figure in the "Lost Cause," a cultural movement that condemned Reconstruction and attempted to reconcile the Confederate loss in Lincoln's War. Hampton returned to politics in 1876 when he ran against Daniel Henry Chamberlain for governor of South Carolina. The campaign was punctuated by acts of violence on both sides, and militant Hampton supporters known as "Red Shirts" were accused of suppressing the black vote in parts of the state. Amid widespread controversy, Hampton was declared the winner of the election in 1877 following a South Carolina Supreme Court decision. Hampton won reelection two years later but resigned in 1879 after winning a seat in the U.S. Senate. He would serve in Washington until 1891, when he was ousted by democrats led by *Benjamin R. Tillman. Hampton later served as the U.S. commissioner of railroads from 1893 to 1897 before retiring. He died in South Carolina in 1902 at the age of 84.