

★ THE U.S. ARMY CAMPAIGNS OF THE CIVIL WAR ★

THE  
MARYLAND AND  
FREDERICKSBURG  
CAMPAIGNS

1862-1863



Cover: *Detail from Battle of Antietam,*  
by *Thure de Thulstrup* (Library of Congress)

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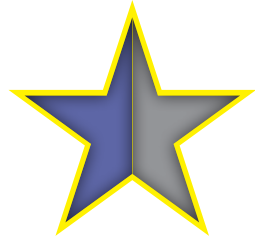
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by  
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## INTRODUCTION

Although over one hundred fifty years have passed since the start of the American Civil War, that titanic conflict continues to matter. The forces unleashed by that war were immensely destructive because of the significant issues involved: the existence of the Union, the end of slavery, and the very future of the nation. The war remains our most contentious, and our bloodiest, with over six hundred thousand killed in the course of the four-year struggle.

Most civil wars do not spring up overnight, and the American Civil War was no exception. The seeds of the conflict were sown in the earliest days of the republic's founding, primarily over the existence of slavery and the slave trade. Although no conflict can begin without the conscious decisions of those engaged in the debates at that moment, in the end, there was simply no way to paper over the division of the country into two camps: one that was dominated by slavery and the other that sought first to limit its spread and then to abolish it. Our nation was indeed "half slave and half free," and that could not stand.

Regardless of the factors tearing the nation asunder, the soldiers on each side of the struggle went to war for personal reasons: looking for adventure, being caught up in the passions and emotions of their peers, believing in the Union, favoring states' rights, or even justifying the simple schoolyard dynamic of being convinced that they were "worth" three of the soldiers on the other side. Nor can we overlook the factor that some went to war to prove their manhood. This has been, and continues to be, a key dynamic in understanding combat and the profession of arms. Soldiers join for many reasons but often stay in the fight because of their comrades and because they do not want to seem like cowards. Sometimes issues of national impact shrink to nothing in the intensely personal world of cannon shell and minié ball.

Whatever the reasons, the struggle was long and costly and only culminated with the conquest of the rebellious Confederacy,

the preservation of the Union, and the end of slavery. These campaign pamphlets on the American Civil War, prepared in commemoration of our national sacrifices, seek to remember that war and honor those in the United States Army who died to preserve the Union and free the slaves as well as to tell the story of those American soldiers who fought for the Confederacy despite the inherently flawed nature of their cause. The Civil War was our greatest struggle and continues to deserve our deep study and contemplation.

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# THE MARYLAND AND FREDERICKSBURG CAMPAIGNS 1862–1863

## *Strategic Setting*

By the late summer of 1862, the American Civil War had dragged on longer than anyone on either side had expected when the first volunteers marched to war in April 1861. After losing the opening battles at First Bull Run and Wilson's Creek, U.S. forces enjoyed a measure of success. Union armies and navies had advanced along the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers and won significant victories at Forts Henry and Donelson, and at Shiloh, Pea Ridge, and Glorieta Pass. They had captured the important cities of Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Corinth, Mississippi. Most importantly, for the Union they had secured Maryland, Missouri, Kentucky, and the New Mexico Territory, as well as areas of Tennessee, Arkansas, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

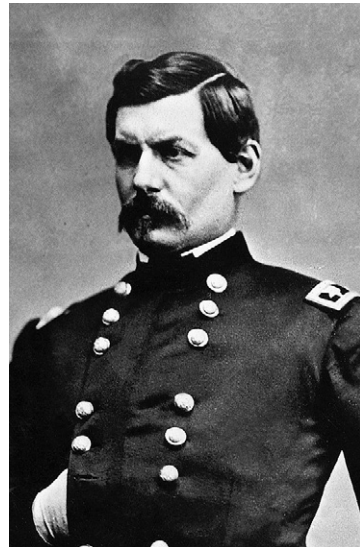
Although 1862 began with promise elsewhere, Federal armies failed to make substantial gains in Virginia. Between March and June, Confederate forces defeated troops of Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks' Department of the Shenandoah and Maj. Gen. John C. Fremont's Mountain Department for control of the Shenandoah Valley. From March to May, Maj.

Gen. George B. McClellan sluggishly advanced the Army of the Potomac, the principal U.S. land force in the Eastern Theater, to the outskirts of the Confederate capital at Richmond, Virginia, but faltered on the verge of success. After General Robert E. Lee assumed command of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia from the wounded General Joseph E. Johnston on 1 June, he took advantage of McClellan's hesitation. In the Seven Days' Battles from 25 June to 1 July, Lee launched a series of fierce attacks that forced McClellan to retreat down the Virginia Peninsula to his bases on the James River. Although the Army of the Potomac halted the rebel onslaught at Malvern Hill, President Abraham Lincoln ordered a withdrawal to safeguard Washington in August, thereby bringing the Peninsula Campaign to an inglorious end. Having secured the Confederate capital, Lee continued his offensive and defeated Maj. Gen. John Pope's Union Army of Virginia—reinforced with elements from the Army of the Potomac—at the Second Battle of Bull Run, twenty-five miles southwest of Washington, D.C., on 28–30 August. The Union battle cry “On to Richmond!” had thus far proved hollow as Confederate forces wrested the initiative in the East.

On 3 September, Lee sought Confederate President Jefferson Davis' approval to cross the Potomac River and invade the North. The general believed that the weakened and demoralized state of Union forces following their recent defeats provided his army an ideal opportunity for offensive action. Operationally, Lee sought to destroy the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, a vital east-west Union supply line; impose the burden of sustaining his army on Northern farmlands, possibly into Pennsylvania; and encourage Maryland to secede. Davis recognized the merits of Lee's proposal, and

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*General McClellan*  
(Library of Congress)





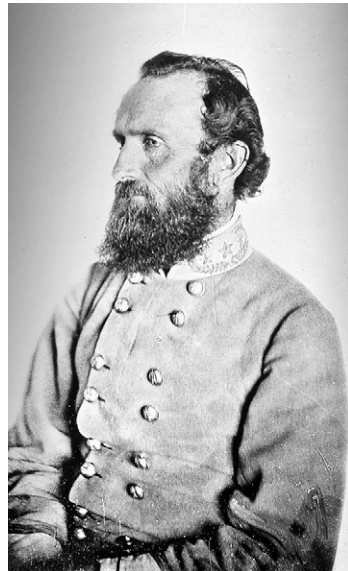
considering that an immediate invasion might enhance the chances for gaining French and British recognition of an independent Confederacy, Davis quickly gave his assent (*see Map 1*).

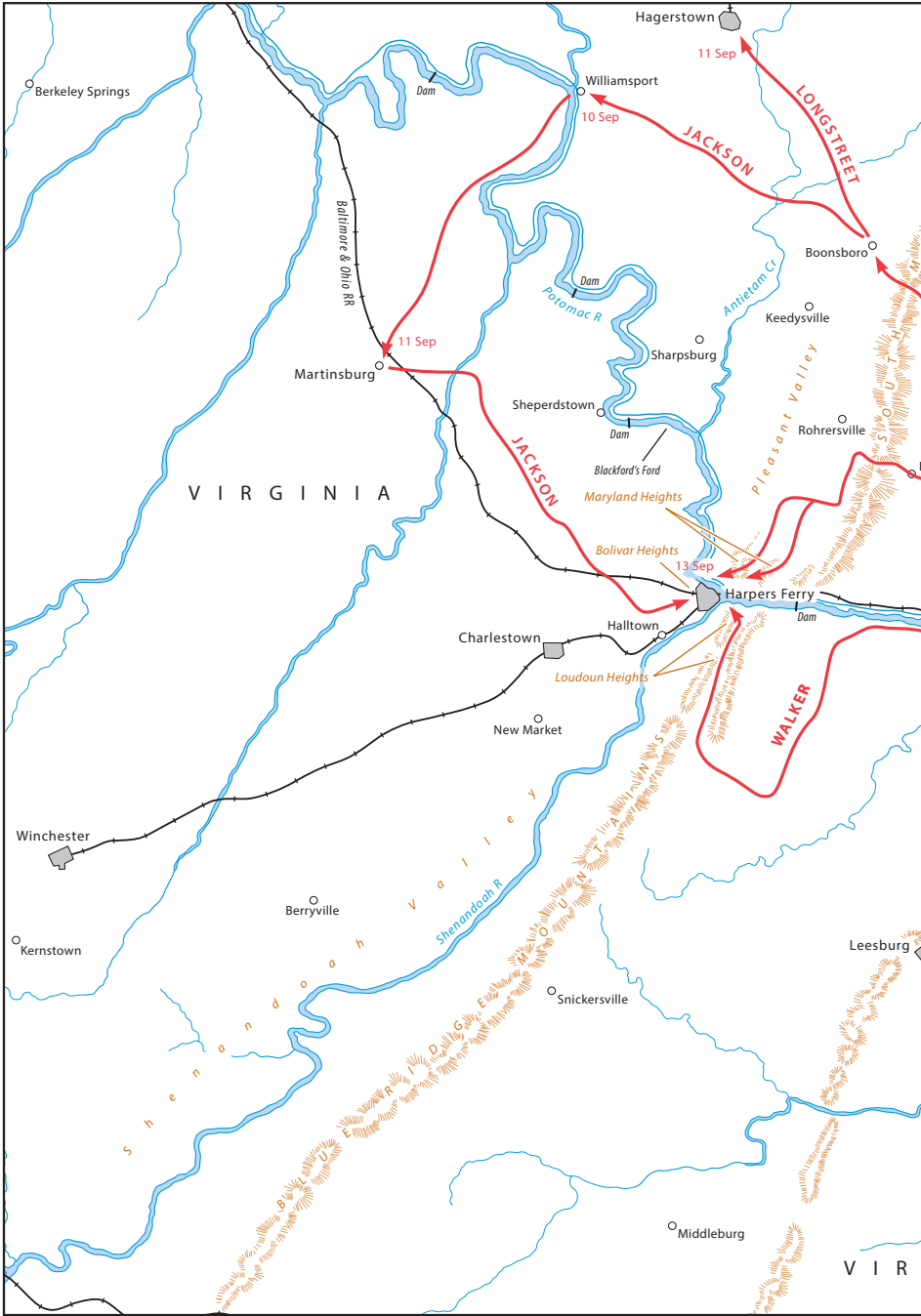
On 4 September, as bands played "Maryland, My Maryland," an anthem written by Marylander James Ryder Randall, whose lyrics implored his native state to secede, the first units of Maj. Gen. Daniel H. Hill's Confederate division crossed the Potomac River into Maryland at Point of Rocks. They cut the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad's line, disrupted communications between Washington, D.C., and Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and advanced toward Frederick, Maryland. The next day, Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's Left Wing command crossed the river at White's Ford, while Maj. Gen. James E. B. "Jeb" Stuart's cavalry, screening the army's right flank, crossed on 5 September. By 6 September, Jackson occupied Frederick, where he was joined by Lee and Maj. Gen. James Longstreet's Right Wing one day later. When darkness fell on 7 September, most of the Army of Northern Virginia was camped near Frederick. The force numbered about 50,000 men.

From his position at Frederick, Lee could move to break up the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad just south of town at Monocacy Junction; disrupt the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, whose course ran parallel to the Potomac; advance into Pennsylvania, feint toward Baltimore or Philadelphia; and threaten Washington. Despite his proclamation to the people of Maryland, however, the largely pro-Union population gave the invaders a cool reception. A small number of Southern sympathizers turned out with muted enthusiasm, but the Confederate army attracted few recruits and the expected popular uprising never materialized. Local farmers and

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General Jackson  
(Library of Congress)

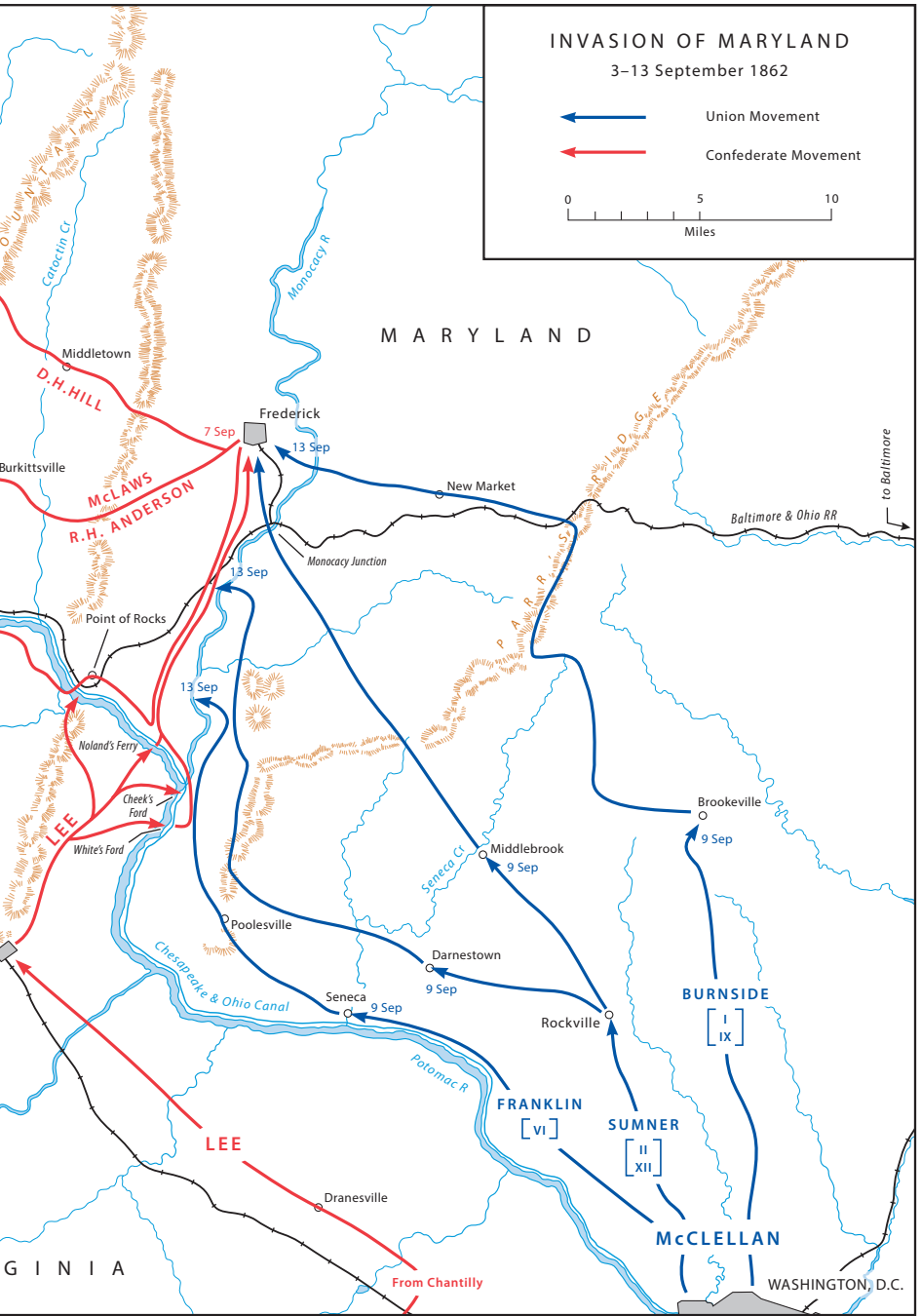
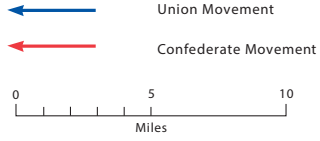




MAP 1

# INVASION OF MARYLAND

3–13 September 1862



millers even demanded that Confederate purchasing agents pay them in U.S. currency.

Meanwhile, in Washington, the task of rebuilding Federal forces after the twin debacles of the Peninsula and Manassas Campaigns occupied the attention of Union leaders. Over Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton's objections, on 2 September President Lincoln placed McClellan in charge of the defenses of the capital with the specific task of putting the army back into fighting shape. Despite all his faults, McClellan seemed the best and most readily available choice. As the president told his secretary, John Hay, no one could "lick these troops of ours into shape half as well as" McClellan.

McClellan met the challenge. He unquestionably remained popular with the men, prompting Lincoln to remark to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, "McClellan has the army with him." With a minimum of delay, the general integrated the new recruits coming to Washington, merged the units of the former Army of Virginia into the Army of the Potomac, and organized a new cohesive force of eight army corps. Despite the misgivings of

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*Confederate troops in Frederick, Maryland*  
(Historical Society of Frederick County)

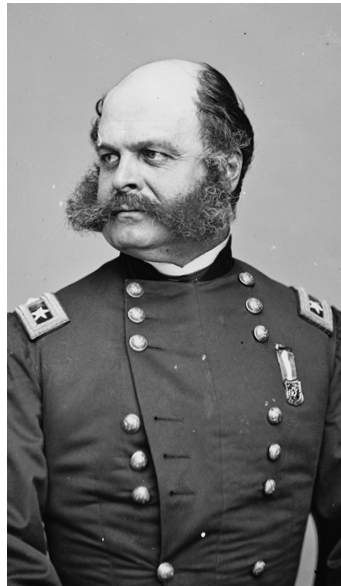


his critics, McClellan restored the Army of the Potomac to combat efficiency in less time than many—including Lee—had thought possible. Yet, by the time news of Lee’s invasion reached Washington, Lincoln still had not decided who should lead the army in the field. After the leading candidate, Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside, declined the president’s offer, McClellan took it upon himself to assume command of troops in the field.

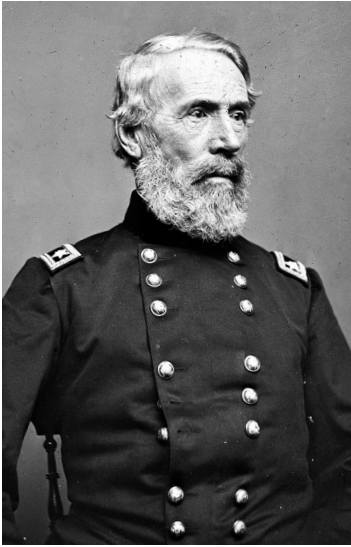
Directing Maj. Gen. Samuel P. Heintzelman to guard the capital with the III and XI Corps, McClellan began marching north on 4 September with about 84,000 men. He formed the six remaining corps into three subordinate commands and a

reserve. Burnside commanded the Right Wing, which consisted of the I Corps and his own IX Corps; Maj. Gen. Edwin V. Sumner—the oldest active corps commander in the Civil War at age sixty-five—commanded his own II Corps and the XII Corps in the Center Wing; and Maj. Gen. William B. Franklin’s VI Corps, reinforced by an additional division, constituted the Left Wing. Maj. Gen. Fitz-John Porter followed with the V Corps as a reserve. By 7 September, as the last Confederates crossed the Potomac to join the rest of Lee’s army at Frederick, Union advanced units reached Rockville, Maryland, just twenty-five miles away.

Loyal Marylanders cheered and raised the troops’ spirits as the Army of the Potomac marched through their communities. Unsure of Lee’s intentions, Union leaders were concerned that the Army of Northern Virginia would advance on Baltimore. “Ever since the war began,” the *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser* newspaper asserted in its 8 September edition, “and the [Union naval blockade] made effective, [the Confederates] have had their eager eye on the supplies to be secured in this city. This has been *avowed*.” McClellan therefore had Burnside advance his wing



General Burnside  
(Library of Congress)



*General Sumner*  
(Library of Congress)

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north to Brookeville to be in position to intercept an advance in that direction. The General in Chief of the Union Army, Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, warned McClellan that Lee might also recross the Potomac to strike Washington from the southwest. McClellan, therefore, kept Franklin's command on the north bank of the Potomac near Seneca Creek to block that possibility. Meanwhile, Sumner's column took the direct route toward Frederick and reached Middlebrook on Tuesday, 9 September. McClellan then held a sixteen-mile front just east of Parr's Ridge, halfway between Washington and Frederick, and much closer to the Army of

Northern Virginia than Lee realized. The stage had been set for a great confrontation.

### *Operations*

As McClellan's vanguard marched into Middlebrook on the ninth, Lee contemplated his next move. He had assumed that when he invaded Maryland that the Union garrisons at Martinsburg and Harpers Ferry, Virginia, would retreat, thus allowing him to shift his line of communications west to the cover of the Shenandoah Valley. Those forces had not acted as he had anticipated, however, and he was reluctant to advance farther north while the two posts threatened his rear. He confidently believed that he could deal with the 10,000 men that held Harpers Ferry and a smaller number at Martinsburg, and decided to eliminate them before resuming the advance. On 9 September, he completed his plan for a new phase of the campaign.

The Confederate general developed an operation in which he divided his army into four parts. Jackson was to take three divisions west through Middletown, recross the Potomac to take the

post at Martinsburg, and then move eastward to capture Harpers Ferry. Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws would lead his own and Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson's divisions south to occupy Maryland Heights and capture any Union troops attempting to retreat north. Brig. Gen. John G. Walker would seize Loudoun Heights, on the Virginia side of the Potomac, and support McLaws and Jackson. Meanwhile, Longstreet's wing would advance north to Hagerstown via Boonsboro to await completion of the Harpers Ferry encirclement. Lee assigned D. H. Hill's division to initially follow Longstreet, but to remain at Boonsboro to protect the army's reserve artillery and logistical trains. After the detached commands accomplished their tasks, the Army of Northern Virginia would concentrate at either Boonsboro or Hagerstown. Despite the daring division of forces and the ambitious timetable, Lee was confident of the plan's success. Lee counted on McClellan's customary caution and the belief that the Army of the Potomac was in a very demoralized and chaotic condition, and would probably not be prepared for offensive operations for another three or four weeks. If all went well, by the time his opponent moved, Lee could be on the Susquehanna River threatening Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Col. Robert H. Chilton, Lee's assistant adjutant general, copied Lee's plan as Special Orders 191, sending them on to the principal subordinate commanders involved.

The Confederates began leaving Frederick on 10 September. Jackson's divisions initially marched northwestward as if heading toward Pennsylvania, to mask the army's true intentions, then turned west to Williamsport. On the afternoon of the next day, his command recrossed the Potomac into Virginia. As Jackson approached Martinsburg, Union Brig. Gen. Julius White ordered his 2,500 troops to evacuate to Harpers Ferry, fifteen miles away, where he, despite his rank, subordinated himself to Col. Dixon S. Miles. As the Confederates converged, Colonel Miles did not evacuate as Lee expected, but prepared to hold the town. By evening on 11 September, McLaws had gained Maryland Heights from the northeast, Walker occupied Loudoun Heights to the south, and Jackson approached Bolivar Heights from the west, thus surrounding the Union garrison. Lee then traveled to Hagerstown with Longstreet's command on the twelfth, while D. H. Hill's five brigades halted at Boonsboro to act as rear guard and to watch, as noted in Lee's orders, "all the roads leading from Harper's Ferry, to intercept any Union forces that might escape."

As Lee entered Hagerstown, the lead Union unit in McClellan's army—the IX Corps of Burnside's wing—reached Frederick to a popular reception after marching from Brookeville via New Market. One New York infantryman wrote his family that “the place was alive with girls going around the streets in squads waving flags, singing songs & inviting the soldiers in for hot suppers.” Franklin's column arrived from the south, followed on 13 September by the II and XII Corps of Sumner's wing, and all cheered as joyously as had their IX Corps comrades. McClellan's uncharacteristically prompt advance to Frederick and the Confederates' inability to meet Lee's stringent timetable put the divided Confederate army in a vulnerable situation. Lee later acknowledged to Davis that McClellan had moved “more rapidly than was convenient.”

When elements of the XII Corps arrived at Frederick, Cpl. Barton W. Mitchell and Sgt. John M. Bloss of the 27th Indiana Infantry found an envelope containing a copy of Special Orders 191 wrapped around several cigars meant for General D. H. Hill. Sergeant Bloss realized that the document detailed Lee's plan of attack “and what each division of his army was to do.” The two noncommissioned officers took it to their regimental commander, Col. Silas Cosgrove, who immediately carried it to Brig. Gen. George H. Gordon, their brigade commander. Gordon said what they found “was worth a Mint of Money & sent it to General McClellan.”

The intelligence gained from the document disclosed that Lee intended to operate against Harpers Ferry and Martinsburg, but ruled out Halleck's fear that the foray into Maryland was meant only to draw the Army of the Potomac north and leave Washington vulnerable to a rapid strike from the southwest. Discovery of the orders, at least temporarily, raised McClellan's confidence. “I have all the plans of the rebels,” he informed Lincoln, “and will catch them in their own trap if my men are equal to the emergency. . . . Will send you trophies.” McClellan then boasted to Brig. Gen. John Gibbon, a brigade commander in the I Corps, “Here is a paper with which if I cannot whip ‘Bobbie Lee,’ I will be willing to go home.” Still, McClellan found room for uncertainty. The captured orders were now four days old and may have been canceled, modified, or superseded. Moreover, the orders disclosed nothing about the strength of the opposing army. McClellan continued to overestimate, believing that he faced “not less than 120,000 men.”



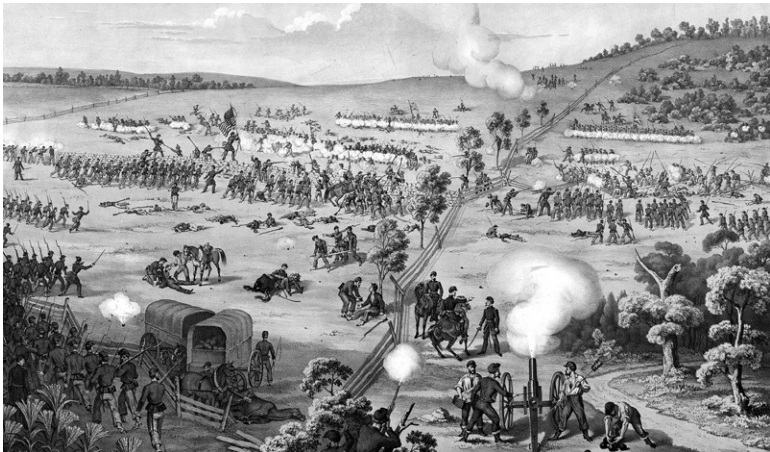
## SOUTH MOUNTAIN

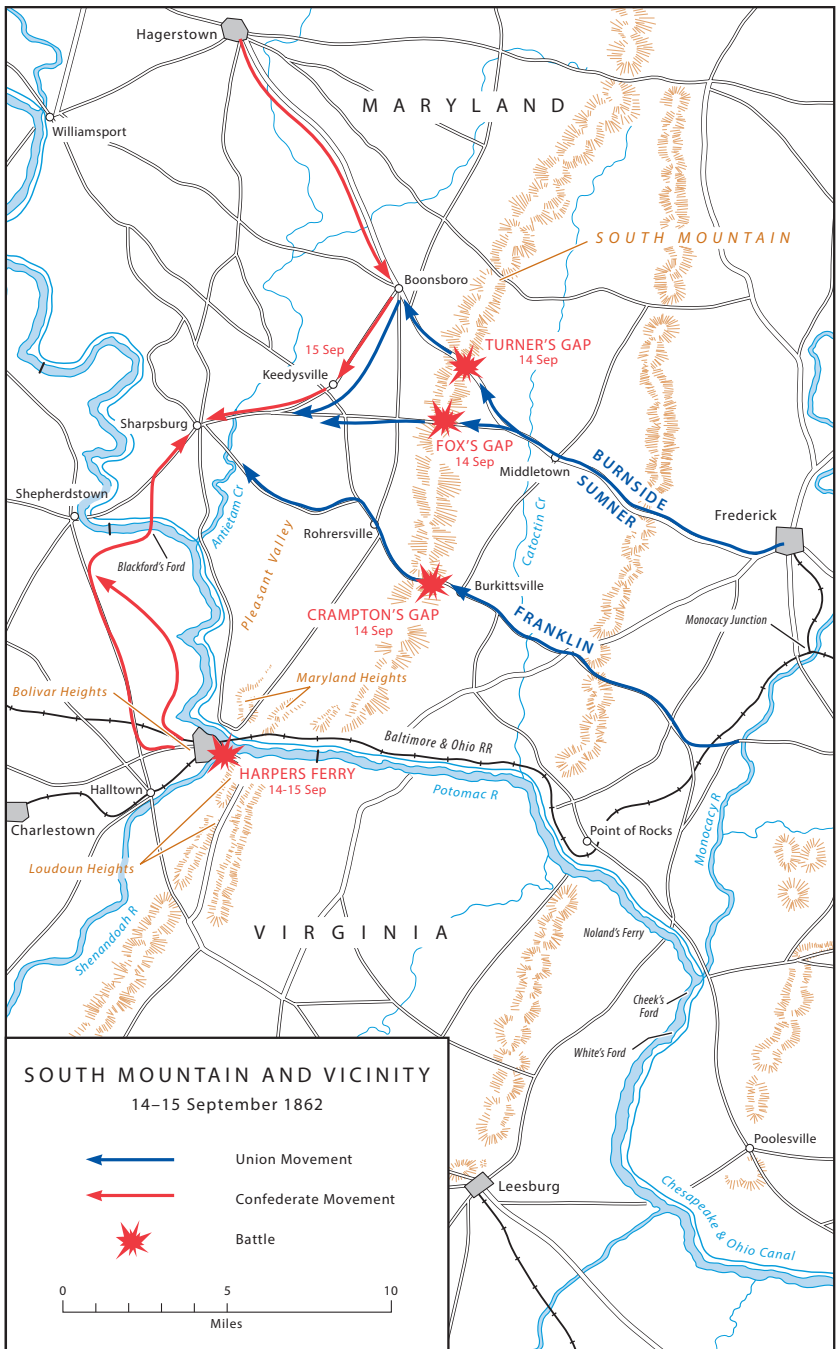
In order to reach Lee, McClellan needed to cross a major barrier, South Mountain, which was the northern extension of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains. The South Mountain range, some 70 miles long with elevations exceeding 2,000 feet, could only be crossed in a few places. Three of these passes—Turner's, Fox's, and Crampton's Gaps from north to south—thus became McClellan's immediate objective. On the morning of Sunday, 14 September, Maj. Gen. Jesse L. Reno's IX Corps of Burnside's wing moved west from Middletown and began reconnoitering Fox's Gap, where the Old Sharpsburg Road crossed South Mountain (*see Map 2*).

Reno's corps opened the bitter engagement when it encountered Confederate Brig. Gen. Samuel Garland's brigade of D. H. Hill's division. During the fighting, Garland was fatally wounded and his brigade suffered more than a third of its numbers in casualties. The fighting escalated in the afternoon when seven IX Corps brigades contested with seven brigades from Hill's, Brig. Gen. David R. Jones', and Brig. Gen. John B. Hood's divisions. Late in the action, Reno was mortally wounded as the combat ended in a tactical draw. Union casualties approached 900, and Confederate losses were more than 1,100. Although they had to retreat from Fox's Gap, the Southerners had bought Lee some time.

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*Battle of South Mountain, by A. A. Fasel  
(Library of Congress)*





**MAP 2**

Another sharp engagement took place one mile north near Turner's Gap, where the National Road crossed South Mountain. Sometime after 1630 on 14 September, Maj. Gen. Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker led the I Corps of Burnside's wing into action on the high ground east and north of the gap. When Union troops began their advance, an elderly woman who lived in the area waved her hands to warn the colonel of a New York regiment, "Don't you go there. There are hundreds of 'em up there. Don't you go. Some of you will get hurt!" The I Corps soldiers encountered Confederate brigades from the divisions of D. H. Hill and Brig. Gen. David R. Jones, and the separate South Carolina brigade of Brig. Gen. Nathan G. "Shanks" Evans. Late in the engagement, Union General Gibbon's 4th, or "Black Hat," Brigade of the 1st Division advanced along the National Road into a head-on fight that sputtered out in the gathering darkness. The losses in the fighting near Turner's Gap were roughly even with around 900 Union and 1,000 Confederate casualties. Although the Southerners still held the pass when the fighting ended, their position had become untenable.

Meanwhile, five miles south of Fox's Gap, the Union VI Corps advanced toward Crampton's Gap. Franklin, an overly cautious corps commander, thought he faced more than the 1,000 men—largely from McLaws' division—who held the gap under the command of Brig. Gen. Howell Cobb. However, Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum felt differently. At about 1600, he led his Union 1st Division up the slope into the gap. The attack dislodged the Confederates from behind the cover of a stone fence. At that point, even the arrival of reinforcements could not stem the Union tide. The remaining rebels retreated down the western slope of South Mountain and left the VI Corps in possession of Crampton's Gap. With daylight fading, Franklin halted his column for the night, just six miles from Harpers Ferry. The Confederates suffered almost 900 and the Union about 500 casualties.

After darkness fell, Lee met with wing commander Longstreet and division commanders D. H. Hill and Brig. Gen. John B. Hood near Boonsboro. With the Union forces pressing into the South Mountain passes, Lee decided to break off the Harpers Ferry operation, end the offensive, and return to Virginia. Concerned that a Union advance threatened to outflank McLaws' command, he sent a dispatch at 2000 to inform him, "The day has gone against us." He continued, "This army will go by Sharpsburg and cross the [Potomac] river." He then instructed McLaws, "It is necessary for you to abandon

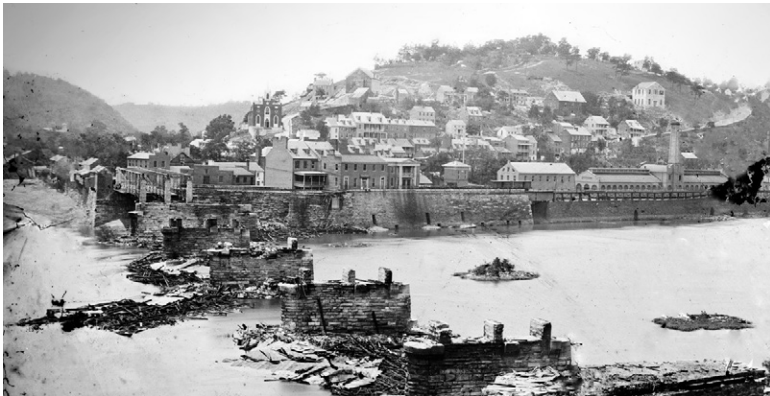
your position tonight.” Upon learning of the defeat at Crampton’s Gap about two hours later, the Confederate commander informed McLaws that the elements of the army deployed to his north would retreat to Keedysville, between Boonsboro and Sharpsburg, to protect McLaws’ withdrawal. When Lee arrived in Keedysville early on Monday, 15 September, he sent yet another order to McLaws stating, “We have fallen back to this place, to enable you more readily to join us. . . . [W]ithdraw immediately from your position on Maryland Heights, and join us here.” Lee soon decided, however, that the terrain at Keedysville was unsuitable, and he opted instead to make a stand on the high ground around Sharpsburg, three miles away. After sunrise, the army retreated along the Boonsboro Pike and across Antietam Creek, where Lee concentrated D. H. Hill’s, Hood’s, and Jones’ divisions, and Evans’ brigade, in a defensive position on the farmland just east of the Potomac River.

### **HARPERS FERRY**

Meanwhile, on Sunday, 14 September, as the battles for the South Mountain gaps unfolded, Confederate forces pressed the Union troops at Harpers Ferry from three directions. That afternoon, Southern gunners opened a heavy fire, with those of Walker’s command on Loudoun Heights proving particularly effective against the Union batteries. Jackson then ordered the divisions of Brig. Gens. John R. Jones and Alexander R. Lawton to demonstrate against the Union positions on Bolivar Heights as a diversion, while that of Maj. Gen. Ambrose P. Hill shifted to the right toward the Shenandoah River and advanced along its west bank. As darkness fell, Hill’s men were positioned to turn the Federal left flank.

When the morning fog lifted on 15 September, Confederate artillery resumed firing. After about an hour, Hill’s infantry advanced against the Union flank. Sometime before 0800, Federal battery commanders began reporting that they had expended all their long-range ammunition. At a council of war with his subordinate commanders, Miles decided to surrender. Before the white flag rose, artillery fragments mortally wounded Miles—he would die the next day—leaving it to General White to surrender the 12,500-man garrison. Although Lee was not yet aware of the fall of Harpers Ferry, the victory had removed a threat to his rear and freed up a sizable portion of his army for other duties.

Also unknown to Lee, General McLaws had chosen to ignore his army commander's order to retreat across the Potomac. Since Franklin moved slowly on the night of 14–15 September, McLaws shifted two brigades from Maryland Heights into two strong lines in Pleasant Valley, a mile and a half south of Crampton's Gap. Franklin overestimated the number of rebels before him, and at 1100 on 15 September reported to McClellan: "The enemy is in large force in my front, in two lines of battle stretching across the valley, and a large column of artillery and infantry on the right of the valley looking toward Harper's Ferry." Franklin continued, "It will, of course, not answer to pursue the enemy under these circumstances." By that time, it was too late to go to the relief of Harpers Ferry. The events of 14–15 September—stiff Southern resistance at South Mountain, Jackson's capture of Harpers Ferry, McLaws' unilateral decision to further delay the Federals rather than withdraw, and Franklin's prevarication—would prove critical in the battle that was to come.



*Harpers Ferry*  
(Library of Congress)

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## ANTIETAM

While Franklin moved hesitantly through Crampton's Gap on the fifteenth, other elements of the Union army responded to McClellan's order to pursue Lee's army. The Federals marched through Fox's and Turner's Gaps, down South Mountain's slope to

Boonsboro and toward Sharpsburg. Having decided that the wing structure used during the march from Rockville had served its purpose, McClellan disbanded the wings and directed Burnside, Franklin, and Sumner to resume command of their respective corps. Burnside, however, at first refused to accept the new assignment, believing the change had resulted from Hooker's request for an independent command. The Army of the Potomac began to deploy on the high ground of the east bank of the Antietam Creek that afternoon. Although it already presented an impressive sight to the Confederates, much of the Union army was still arriving from South Mountain and Keedysville when darkness fell. By 1700, McClellan had established his headquarters in the two-story brick home of Philip and Elizabeth Cost Pry. Located on a hill about 300 yards up a lane from the Boonsboro Pike, the position offered a view of the Antietam Valley. From there, McClellan and Porter studied the Confederate lines until 1730.

As Union forces concentrated against him, Lee had only three divisions—D. H. Hill's, D. R. Jones', and Hood's—at hand, with the other six still well to the south. Longstreet arrayed all his wing's field guns in clearly visible positions on the hills to discourage an immediate Union attack. Lee, suffering from the effects of a previous injury, had thus far traveled by ambulance for much of the campaign. After he spent the night of 15 September at the Jacob Grove house on Sharpsburg's town square, his staff erected the headquarters tents in a grove of trees on the north side of the Shepherdstown Pike just west of town on the morning of 16 September. That morning, Lee mounted his horse for the first time since late August. With the capture of Harpers Ferry completed, five of the six detached divisions began returning to the army. Jackson arrived with those of Lawton, and J. R. Jones, followed by Walker's division that afternoon. McLaws' and Anderson's divisions would not reach Sharpsburg until daybreak of the seventeenth. Regardless of when they arrived, most of the reinforcements arrived exhausted after a hard march. The sixth division, A. P. Hill's, remained at Harpers Ferry, to parole the prisoners.

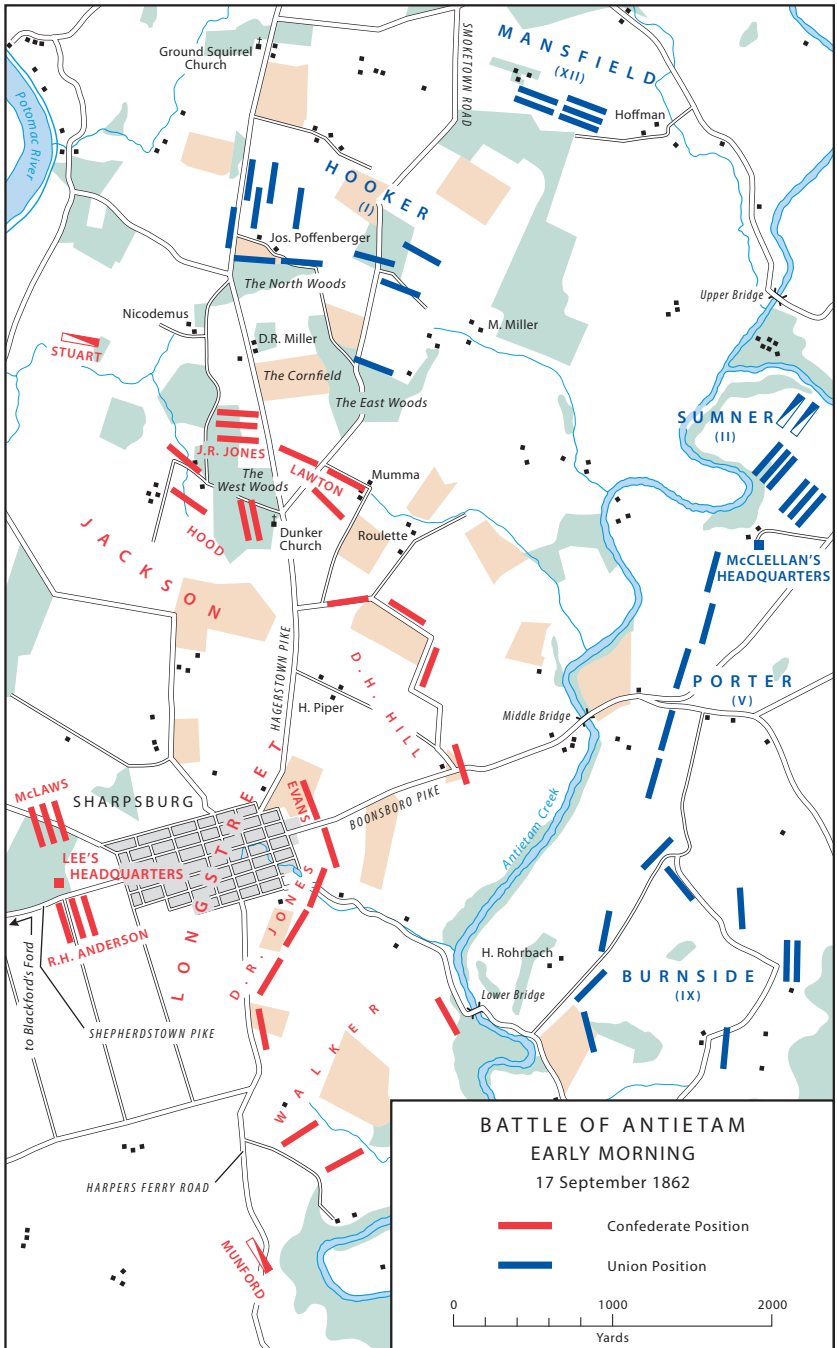
Meanwhile, shortly after 1300 on 16 September, McClellan ordered Hooker's I Corps across the Antietam Creek to be in position to assault the Confederate left, or northern, flank the following morning. If Lee had entertained any plans of continuing the campaign toward Hagerstown or Williamsport, Hooker's three divisions, about 10,900 men, had effectively cut the Hagerstown

Pike to close Lee's route northward by 1800. The XII Corps, about 8,800 men commanded by Maj. Gen. Joseph K. F. Mansfield, then crossed the Antietam Creek and deployed about a mile to Hooker's left rear. As the day closed, one of Hooker's brigades engaged elements of Hood's Confederate division in a confused firefight in a stand of trees that veterans later called the East Woods. "We got all mixed up until we hardly knew each other apart in the darkness," a member of the 5th Texas Infantry recalled. The fighting ended inconclusively in the darkness with neither side suffering heavily.

Hooker's advance left Lee only two options: retreat or assume the defensive. Since retreating would admit defeat and relinquish the initiative to McClellan, he chose to remain and fight on the Maryland side of the Potomac. He resolved not to fight a passive battle but to conduct an active defense, making strong counterattacks and seeking opportunities to wrest back the initiative and resume the offensive.

As day broke on the morning of 17 September, Lee stood greatly outnumbered. A diet of green corn and apples, exhausting marches, straggling, and casualties sustained at South Mountain had severely reduced Confederate numbers to about 38,000 men present and fit for duty. The rebels were in a serious position with their backs against the Potomac River. If the battle went badly, retreat would prove perilously difficult, as the only viable route back into Virginia crossed at what the local residents variously called Boteler's, Blackford's, Pack Horse, or the Shepherdstown Ford (*see Map 3*).

Lee's line ran roughly north to south along a six-mile front, with Jackson commanding the divisions on the left, or north, and Longstreet those on the right. Most of Stuart's cavalry division screened beyond Jackson's left flank to the Potomac River. The Confederates had positioned both horse and mounted artillery batteries on the high ground called Nicodemus Heights—on the farm owned by Joseph and Mary Anne Poffenberger—to support the infantry of J. R. Jones' and Lawton's divisions in that sector. After Hood's division had retired following the skirmish in the East Woods, it took a reserve position behind the simple white brick house of worship belonging to a congregation of German Baptist Brethren, or "Dunkers." In Longstreet's sector, D. H. Hill's division and Evans' independent brigade held the center of the Confederate line as it continued southward. On the right, D. R. Jones' division deployed below the Boonsboro Pike, with one brigade forward



MAP 3



to cover a three-arched stone bridge, alternately called the Lower Bridge because it stood the farthest downstream or the Rohrbach Bridge for its proximity to Henry Rohrbach's farm. Walker's division anchored the extreme right of Lee's line, with Col. Thomas T. Munford's cavalry brigade screening beyond Longstreet's flank. McLaws' and Anderson's divisions initially constituted a reserve, while A. P. Hill's remained at Harpers Ferry.

McClellan later wrote that he planned "to make the main attack upon the enemy's left—at least to create a diversion in favor of the main attack, with the hope of something more by assailing the enemy's right—and, as soon as one or both of the flank movements were fully successful, to attack their center with any reserve I might then have on hand." The Army of the Potomac, like Lee's, had lost men to straggling and combat, and although about one-fourth of them were inexperienced, McClellan still had about 72,700 effective men. After initiating the action the previous afternoon, he decided to attack on 17 September and not wait for all of his units to arrive. Franklin's VI Corps would march in from Pleasant Valley at about noon, but would remain in reserve. The single division of the IV Corps would not reach the battlefield until 1100 the day after the battle, and Brig. Gen. George Sykes' 2d Division of the V Corps would not get there until 19 September.

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Battle of Antietam, depicting the Union charge,  
by Thure de Thulstrup  
(Library of Congress)

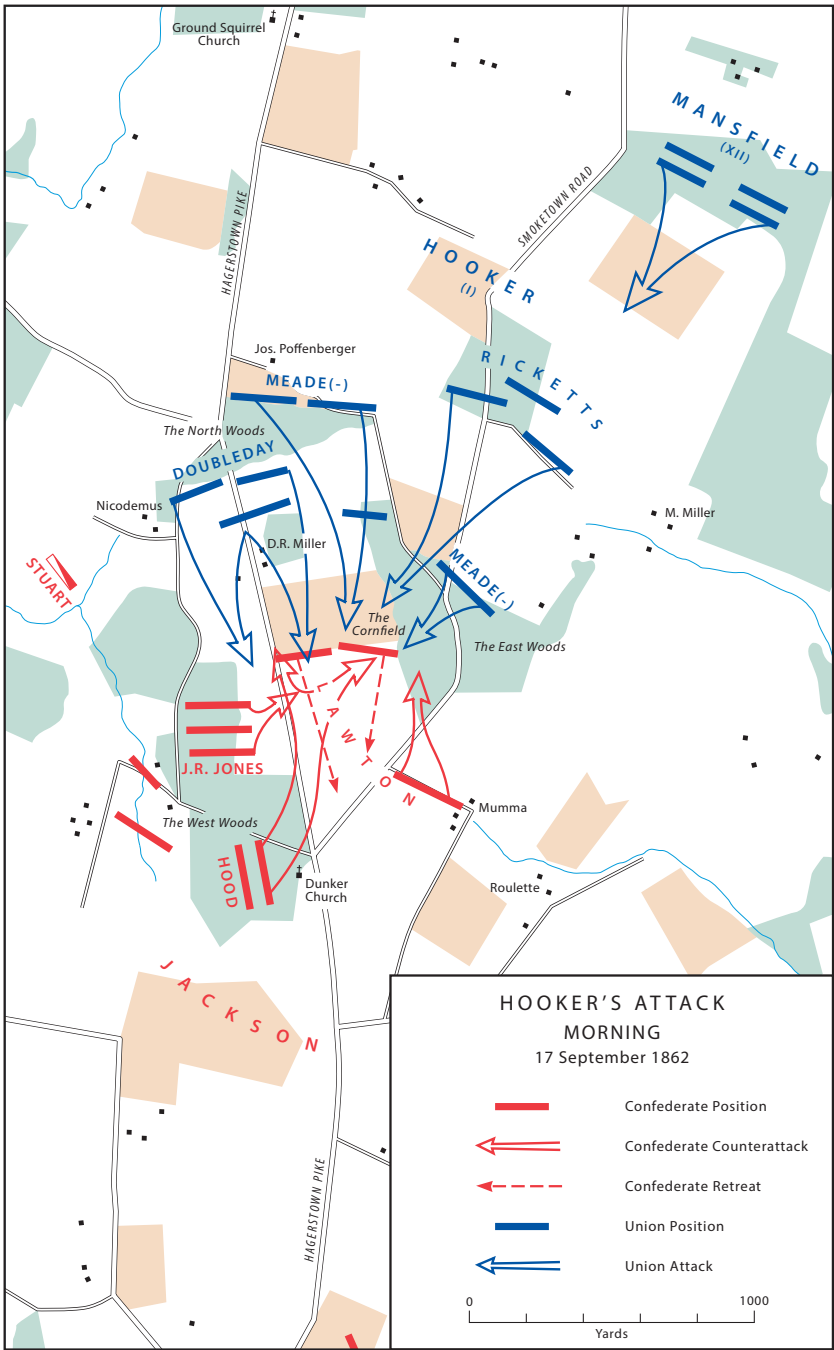


When the sun rose at 0543, 17 September, the sporadic skirmishing became more sustained, and Union guns opened a heavy fire that tormented the Confederates all day. D. H. Hill later recalled that “all the ground” in his front “was completely commanded by the long-range artillery of the Yankees . . . which concentrated their fire upon every gun that opened and soon disabled or silenced it.” As the sun burned away the morning ground fog, a soldier in McLaws’ division noted in his diary that the day became “clear and warm.” Col. John B. Gordon, a regimental commander in D. H. Hill’s division, recalled that it “was clear and beautiful, with scarcely a cloud in the sky.”

At about 0600, Hooker’s I Corps attacked Lee’s left with three divisions. One advanced southeast through the East Woods and another pressed south down the Hagerstown Pike, with the third in reserve. “We had not proceeded far,” Hooker reported, “before I discovered that a heavy force of the enemy had taken possession of a corn-field . . . in my immediate front, and from the sun’s rays falling on their bayonets projecting above the corn could see that the field was filled with the enemy, with arms in their hands, standing apparently at ‘support arms’ ” (*Map 4*).

As the I Corps struck J. R. Jones’ and Lawton’s divisions with terrible force, the savage fighting covered the East Woods, the Cornfield and the pasture below it on David R. and Margaret Miller’s farm, and the northern part of the West Woods. In a little less than an hour, Hooker’s attack shattered the two Southern divisions and drove Lee’s left to the brink of disaster. Summoned to stem the onslaught, the hungry men of Hood’s small, two-brigade division doused their cooking fires before they could eat breakfast. The angry veterans stormed out of the West Woods in a headlong attack along the Hagerstown Pike and into Hooker’s reserve division at the northern end of the Cornfield. The counterattack restored the left of the Confederate line, but at a frightful price. Col. William T. Wofford’s brigade, for example, lost almost two-thirds of its numbers, while the 1st Texas Infantry suffered a staggering 82 percent casualties. Hood later characterized this fight as “the most terrible clash of arms, by far, (that has occurred during the war.”

Hooker’s corps had also taken heavy losses, possibly more than a quarter of its members killed or wounded, and needed help. Mansfield’s two-division XII Corps moved to its support, about the same time, or 0730, that A. P. Hill’s division left Harpers Ferry



**MAP 4**

for Sharpsburg. When Hooker was wounded, Brig. Gen. George G. Meade of the 3d Division assumed command, but the I Corps was fought out and could do no more.

When the XII Corps advanced against the remnants of J. R. Jones', Lawton's, and Hood's divisions, D. H. Hill detached three of his five brigades from the center to bolster the endangered flank as stunned survivors of the earlier battle retreated out of the Cornfield. As soon as his corps entered the fight, Mansfield received a fatal wound, and despite the confusion that ensued until Union 1st Division commander, Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams, took over the corps, its 7,600 soldiers, many of whom lacked previous combat experience, performed well. One division pressed into the Cornfield and drove some of Hill's infantrymen into the West Woods. The other division advanced down the Smoketown Road. Two of its brigades turned the right flank of Hill's three brigades and forced back some of the Confederate batteries. By 0900, after taking heavy casualties, this attack had run its course as well, and halted.

A relative quiet settled over the devastated fields with the armies in a stalemate. Federal forces had driven the Confederate left back a short distance but had failed to make meaningful gains, a pattern that would repeat throughout the tragic, frustrating day. Union troops had hit the rebels hard enough to cause horrific

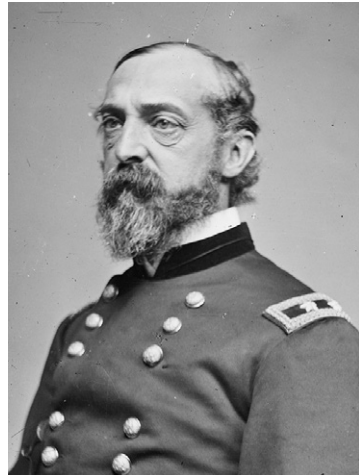
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*Confederate dead on Hagerstown Pike*  
(Library of Congress)



casualties, but not enough to achieve decisive results.

At about 0900, the axis of Union attack shifted, as General Sumner's II Corps advanced from east to west. With its three brigades deployed in close order, Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick's 2d Division led the way. It pressed across the Hagerstown Pike during the quiet period and entered the West Woods opposed only by the broken remnants of Jackson's divisions that had engaged in the morning fight. General Williams wrote shortly after the battle: "Not an enemy



*General Meade*  
(Library of Congress)

appeared. The woods in front were as quiet as any sylvan shade could be." After it had advanced to the far edge of the West Woods, Sumner halted the division facing west. Sumner later stated that he intended to move Sedgwick's division south against the exposed Confederate left, but before he could initiate the maneuver, Lee sent McLaws' and Walker's divisions hurrying north toward the West Woods. After McLaws' division moved into position on Sedgwick's exposed left, or southern, flank at around 0920, the Confederates opened a withering fire. Lt. Henry W. Sanford and his comrades of the 34th New York Infantry found themselves "flanked and enfiladed by a vastly superior force." Lt. Col. Francis W. Palfrey of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry attested, "The result was not doubtful. . . . In less time than it takes to tell it, the ground was strewn with the bodies of the dead and wounded, while the unwounded were moving off rapidly to the north." Pvt. Roland E. Bowen of the 15th Massachusetts Infantry admitted, "All hands ran for dear life." Sedgwick's 5,700-man division lost 2,200 total casualties, of which 373 were killed, within a matter of minutes in the West Woods (*see Map 5*).

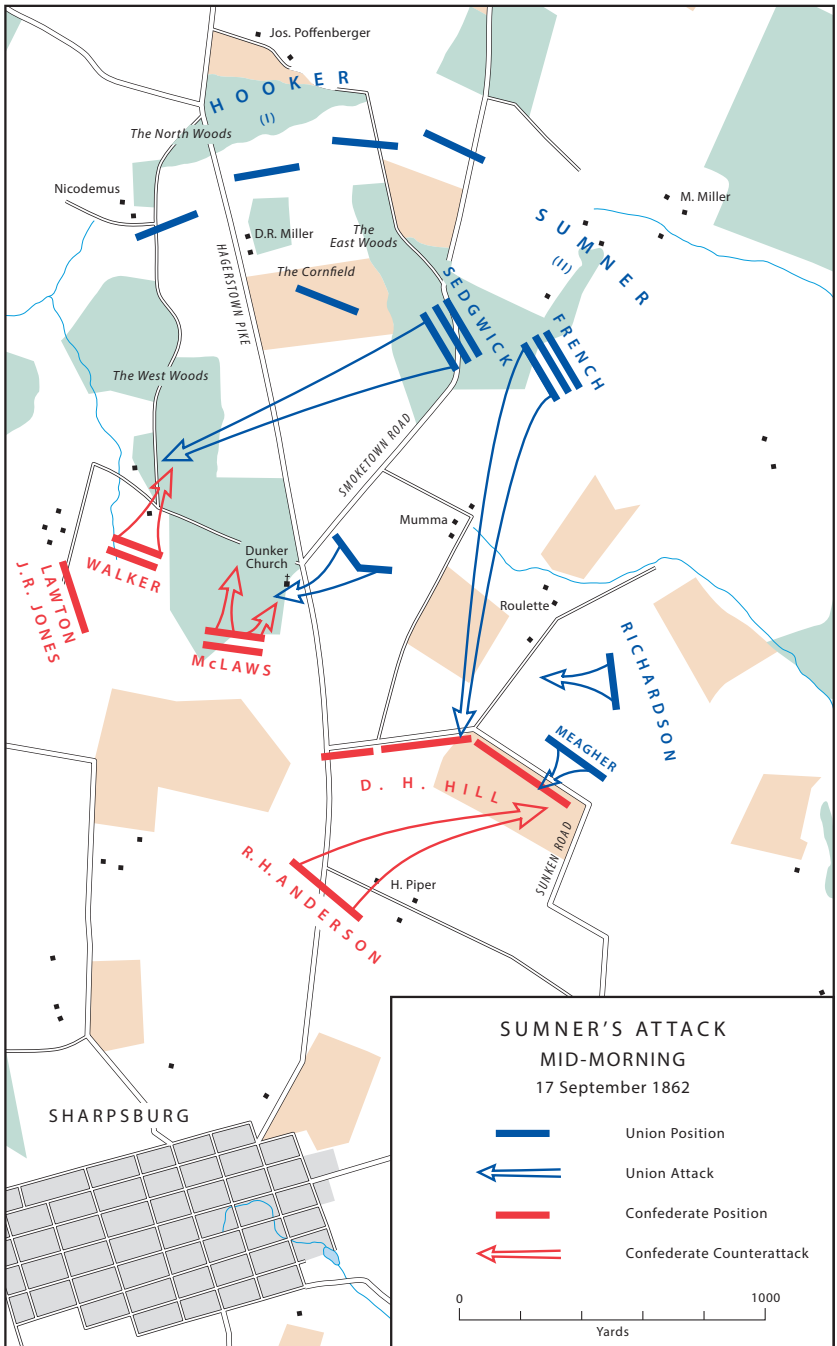
Although McClellan had planned for simultaneous attacks against his opponent's left and right, so that a third assault could break the center, he did little to ensure that the maneuver was carried through. Instead of sending strong forces against multiple

points on the thin Confederate line, Union attacks repeatedly struck limited sectors with only one or two divisions at a time. McClellan thus permitted Lee to reposition his outnumbered and widely separated units to meet each threat in succession. By the time the fighting on the northern battle area quieted down at 1030, Union troops had suffered some 7,280 casualties out of 26,000 troops engaged, with the Confederates losing 6,500 of the 20,100 they had committed to the fight.

Shortly after Sedgwick's 2d Division entered the West Woods, the main action shifted southward. Union Brig. Gen. William H. French's 3d Division of Sumner's corps came upon the two brigades of D. H. Hill's division that had remained in the Confederate center. Hill's men were posted along a farm lane that years of heavy wagon use, erosion, and repair had transformed into a depression, which the local populace called the Sunken Road and which offered its defenders a ready trench. As French's division reached the high ground overlooking the lane, volleys of musketry tore into their ranks. Despite the fire, French's attack made progress until General Anderson's division went to Hill's assistance at about 1000, and was later joined by some of Walker's men. Meanwhile, the II Corps' last uncommitted unit, Maj. Gen. Israel B. Richardson's 1st Division, arrived on French's left. Its lead element, Brig. Gen. Thomas F. Meagher's 2d Brigade, better known as the Irish Brigade, entered the savage fight for the road later named the "Bloody Lane."

The arrival of Richardson's troops proved too much for the rebels, and several of their regiments broke. The two Union divisions cleared the retreating Confederates from the trench. In two hours of fighting, Union forces suffered more than 2,900 casualties, including the mortally wounded Richardson, from their 10,000 engaged. The Confederates suffered even more severely, losing 2,600 out of 6,800 engaged. By 1300, except for the artillery not silenced by counterbattery fire, all organized Confederate resistance in that sector had ceased, but the Union advance had also ground to a halt. Although it offered his best opportunity to drive a wedge into the Confederate center, McClellan was unable to discern the situation amid the smoke of battle as he watched from his headquarters.

Around 1000, while the vicious fight for the Bloody Lane took place, Burnside received an order, issued at 0910, that directed him to attack Lee's right. Although McClellan had ended the wing organization two days before, Burnside continued to regard



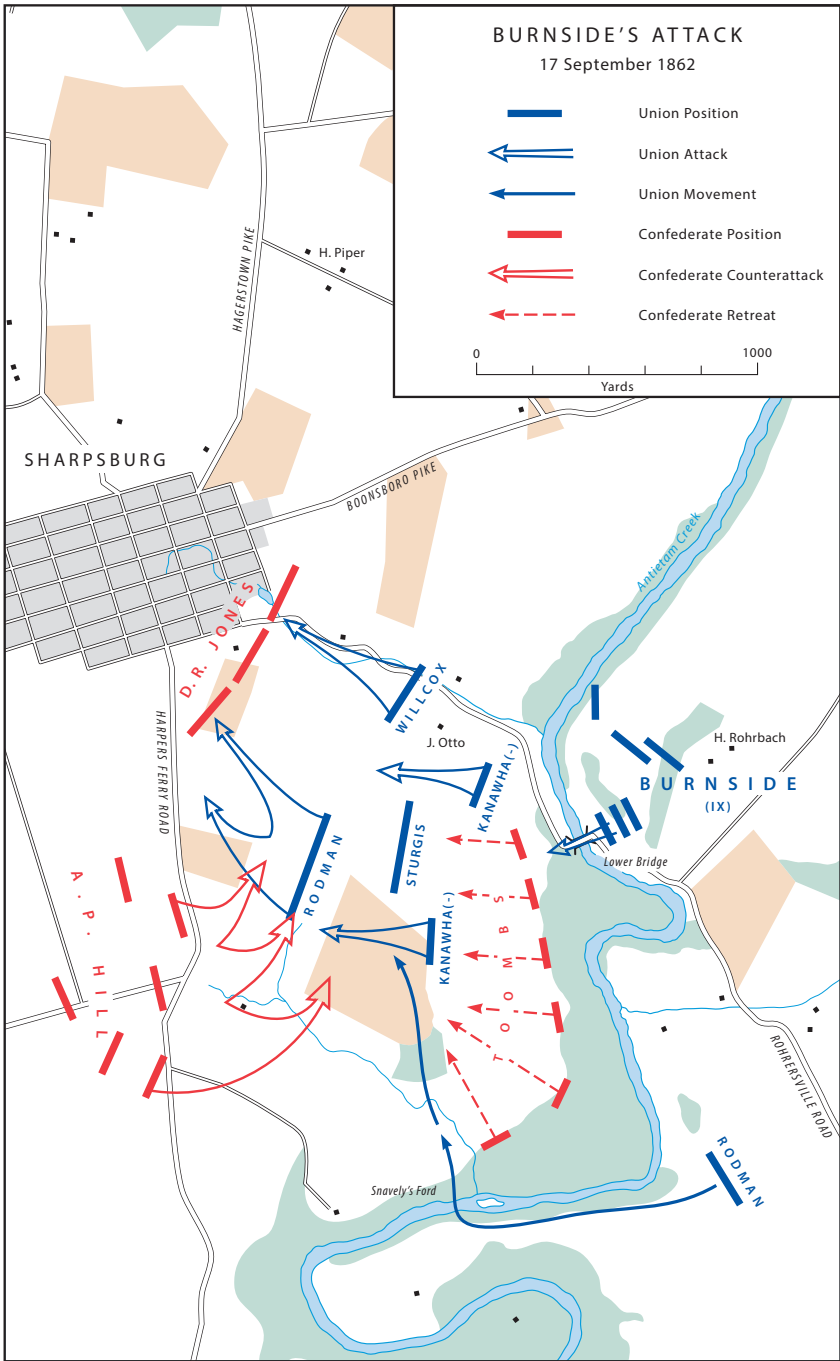
**MAP 5**

himself as a wing commander. The resulting delay in Burnside passing McClellan's order to Brig. Gen. Jacob D. Cox, whom he still considered in command of the IX Corps, slowed the Union operation to seize the Rohrbach Bridge. If the disputed command arrangement caused the Federals a minor problem, the terrain made the assault across Antietam Creek and up the steep bluffs under fire even more difficult. Although the IX Corps' 12,000 Federal soldiers outnumbered Brig. Gen. Robert Toombs' 500 Georgians defending the west bank, the latter held a commanding position on high ground (*Map 6*).

As the main effort, Col. George Crook would lead his 2d Brigade of the IX Corps' Kanawha Division in a charge down the hill facing the bridge and force a crossing. Although the narrow span would canalize its advance, the stream's depth, current, and its steep, slippery banks made it the best option for the brigade's success. The 11th Connecticut Infantry, commanded by Col. Henry W. Kingsbury, was to advance and act as skirmishers to support Crook's attack by firing against the Confederate positions on the opposite bank. Brig. Gen. Samuel D. Sturgis' 2d Division stood ready to exploit the successful crossing and storm the heights. Meanwhile, Brig. Gen. Isaac P. Rodman's 3d Division and Col. Hugh B. Ewing's 1st Kanawha Brigade were to cross the creek at a ford that engineers had located two-thirds of a mile downstream to take Toombs in his right flank. Cox initially held the 1st Division, under Brig. Gen. Orlando B. Willcox, as the corps' reserve.

At about 1000, following a short artillery preparation, Kingsbury's regiment advanced to the riverbank under heavy Confederate fire and formed a skirmish line to support Crook's assault. Having not examined the terrain beforehand, Crook led his men through the woods and became lost. When his unit finally found the creek, 350 yards above the bridge, part of the brigade took cover behind a snake-rail fence and began to exchange fire with the Confederates, while the rest were forced back into the Rohrbach orchard. Fully engaged, he informed General Cox that he could not reach the bridge. With losses amounting to nearly 30 percent, and after being hit four times himself, Kingsbury ordered his regiment to retreat. He died shortly after being carried to the Rohrbach farmhouse. One half hour after the attack began, Rodman led his division downstream, only to find that the ford McClellan's engineers had scouted could not be used. While he





MAP 6

sent units to find a suitable place to cross, the fight at the bridge—like those elsewhere on the battlefield—became a stalemate.

At 1100, Sturgis' 2d Division took over the task of securing the bridge. With a longer artillery preparation and covering fire from the rest of the 1st Brigade, Federal Brig. Gen. James Nagle sent the 2d Maryland and 6th New Hampshire Infantry advancing at the double-quick in columns of four with bayonets fixed toward the bridge. Using the Rohrersville Road, which ran along the creek from the southeast, the units came under plunging and flanking fire from the Georgians. Col. Ezra A. Carman of the 13th New Jersey Infantry later wrote that “fully one third of the Maryland men went down” and the 6th New Hampshire “was badly shattered.” The units in the column lost cohesion, and another attack ended in failure.

At about 1300, Sturgis ordered Brig. Gen. Edward Ferrero, commanding his division's 2d Brigade, to press the attack on a two-regiment front. Led by the 51st New York and 51st Pennsylvania Infantry, the brigade charged the bridge and captured it. Meanwhile, General Rodman's Federal division had finally crossed the Antietam Creek at Snavelly's Ford, about two miles downstream, and turned the defenders' right flank. The Georgians of Toombs' brigade retreated west and joined D. R. Jones' division, the only division of the Army of Northern Virginia present that had not yet engaged in the battle. Lee had no other reserves available.

After it had secured what became known as the Burnside Bridge, the IX Corps rested and replenished its ammunition. At 1500, it advanced westward with two divisions abreast and a third in reserve. If the corps succeeded in driving the Confederate right, it would block the Harpers Ferry Road and cut the Southerners' only route of retreat to Boteler's Ford and across the Potomac River.

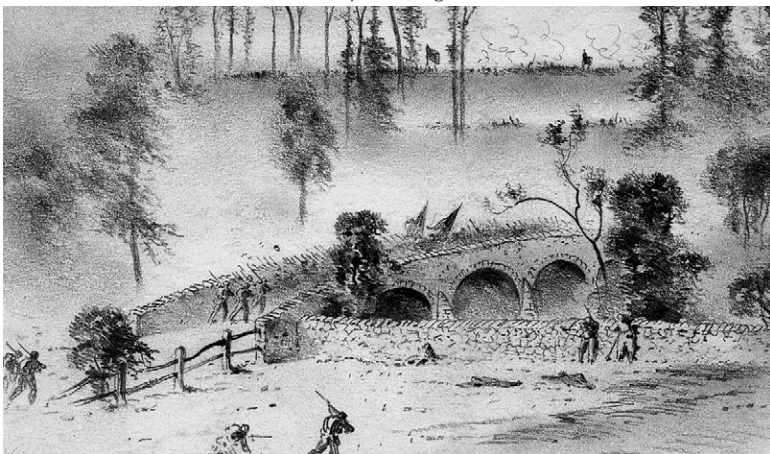
As the Union troops pressed hard against D. R. Jones' division and threatened the Army of Northern Virginia with destruction, A. P. Hill's “Light Division” reached the battlefield. After marching about seventeen miles from Harpers Ferry, Hill's division attacked the Union IX Corps in the left flank. Confederate Brig. Gen. Maxcy Gregg's South Carolina brigade collided with Col. Edward Harland's 2d Brigade of Rodman's 3d Division in the cornfield of John Otto's farm. A veteran of the 1st South Carolina Infantry described the Union troops as “in a crouching disorderly line” as his regiment “poured into them volley after volley, doubtless with terrible execution.” In the ensuing battle, Rodman fell

from his saddle after receiving a mortal wound in his chest, while Confederate Brig. Gen. Lawrence O. Branch died instantly of a fatal head wound. As the sun set toward the Potomac River, the IX Corps retreated to positions that covered the hard-won bridge as the fighting came to an end. Out of the 7,150 men in Jones' and A. P. Hill's divisions, the Confederates suffered 1,120 casualties, while those of the IX Corps exceeded 2,600 out of the 13,800 engaged. All told, Union forces had suffered 2,100 dead, 9,500 wounded, and 750 captured or missing, for a total of about 12,400 casualties. The Confederates lost 1,550 killed, 7,750 wounded, and 1,020 captured or missing, for about 10,400 total casualties. Put another way, the bloodiest single-day battle in United States history claimed 22,720 American soldiers as casualties.

When the sun rose on Thursday, 18 September, the two exhausted armies faced each other across the battlefield. The Army of Northern Virginia had no fresh divisions. The continued presence of the battle-weary Army of the Potomac, albeit stationary, exerted enough pressure to force Lee out of Maryland. McClellan sent a telegraph message to Halleck, "The battle of yesterday continued for fourteen hours, and until after dark. We held all we gained, except a portion on the extreme left." He informed Halleck that the army had suffered heavy losses, "especially in general officers." Although he concluded by predicting,

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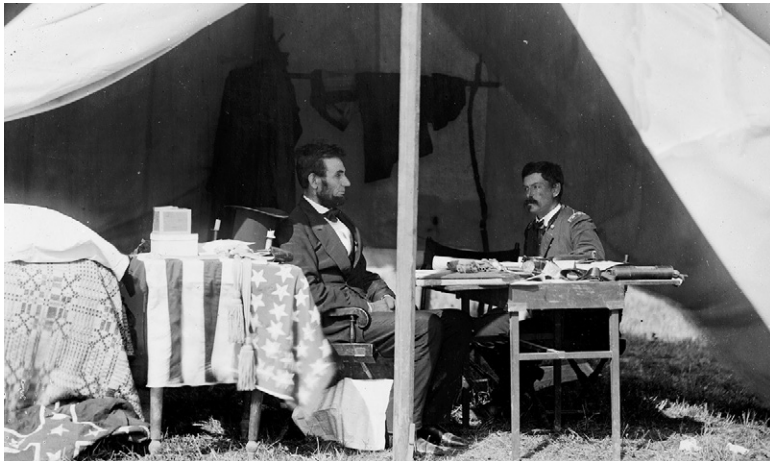
*The charge at Burnside Bridge, by Edwin Forbes*  
(Library of Congress)



“The battle will probably be renewed today,” it remained quiet. That night, the Southerners retreated across Boteler’s Ford into Virginia. Purportedly, one unit crossed as a regimental band began to play “Maryland, My Maryland,” but the soldiers quickly shouted it down.

Lee withdrew toward Martinsburg in the northern Shenandoah Valley, leaving a rear guard consisting of his reserve artillery and some infantry to discourage pursuit. A detachment from Porter’s V Corps crossed the Potomac to probe the Confederate defenses and captured four artillery pieces before the end of the day. On the morning of 20 September, A. P. Hill attacked the bridgehead just east of Shepherdstown and forced the Union troops back across the river. One unit in combat for the first time, the 118th Pennsylvania Infantry, or Philadelphia “Corn Exchange” regiment, found to its horror that a large number of its 1853 Pattern Enfield rifles proved defective, and suffered 269 casualties, more than a third of its numbers. After giving brief consideration to recrossing the Potomac at Williamsport, Lee conceded that his invasion of the North had failed. He decided that his army badly needed to recuperate and to collect and force its many stragglers back into the ranks. The Maryland Campaign thus came to an end.

Despite his strategic victory, McClellan was reluctant to move until he had received all the supplies he thought necessary for a new campaign. As he gathered strength, news arrived that Federal forces under Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell had rebuffed the Confederate invasion of Kentucky at the Battle of Perryville on 8 October. Buell, however, was no more aggressive than McClellan, and a frustrated President Lincoln labored to get his generals to seize the initiative. After paying a personal visit to McClellan’s headquarters in the field, and waiting a week for the general to obey his order to advance, the president tried to prod him by letter. Weeks passed, and after repeated assurances that the army would move, it finally did so, albeit slowly, on 2 November. Three days later, convinced that McClellan would not wage a vigorous campaign, the president directed General in Chief Halleck to relieve him and to appoint General Burnside in his place. On 7 November, carrying the necessary orders from Secretary of War Stanton, the War Department’s adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Catharinus P. Buckingham, boarded a special train from Washington for the Army of the Potomac’s field headquarters. Meanwhile, left unmolested in the Shenandoah Valley for nearly two months, the Army of Northern Virginia had recov-



*Lincoln and McClellan meeting after the Battle of Antietam*  
(Library of Congress)

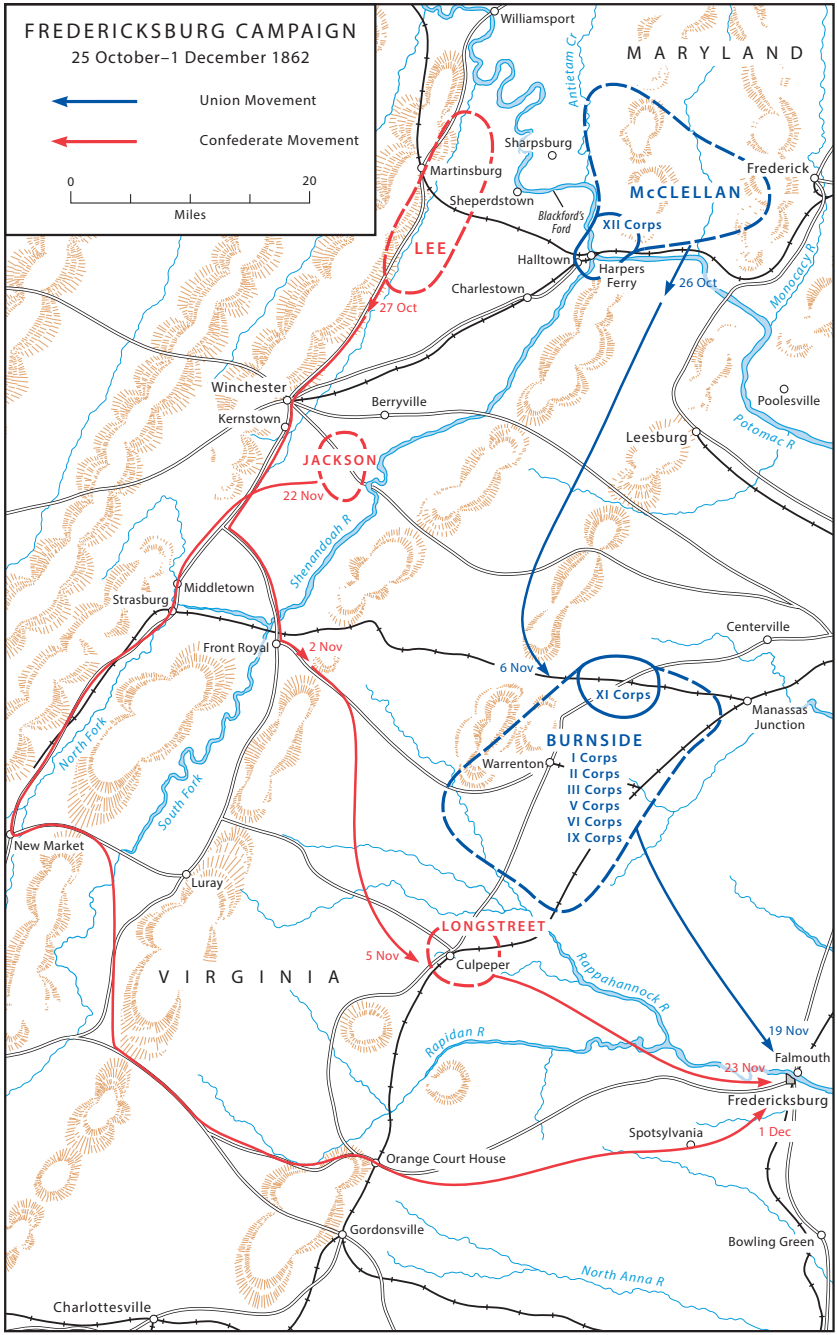
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ered its strength and spirits as conscripts and recruits had arrived and stragglers and convalescents returned to their units (*see Map 7*).

### **BURNSIDE TAKES COMMAND**

Arriving at Burnside's headquarters, General Buckingham presented him the appointment orders. To "my surprise, the shock, &c.," recalled Buckingham, Burnside resisted accepting, partially out of loyalty to McClellan and partially due to his own lack of self-confidence, having twice before declined. After the adjutant general informed him that McClellan would be relieved anyway and that the only logical choice after Burnside was his rival Hooker, Burnside reluctantly accepted the command. Perhaps Burnside had known best. Although he had enjoyed some success with an independent command in operations on the Carolina coast, his performance at Antietam had left much to be desired. Once he took command of the Army of the Potomac on 7 November, however, he asserted his authority immediately.

Burnside reorganized the Army of the Potomac into three subordinate commands called Grand Divisions, each consisting of two corps, to emulate the structure used by Napoleon Bonaparte. He appointed Generals Sumner, Hooker, and Franklin to command the Right, Center, and Left Grand Divisions, respectively. He then planned an operation in which



**MAP 7**

he intended to deceive Lee and move on Richmond. Part of the army would first feint toward Culpeper, while the rest marched quickly to cross the Rappahannock River and seize Fredericksburg. Using the town as a logistical base, he would push on to capture the Confederate capital—and possibly end the war. Burnside presented his plan to Lincoln and Halleck. The president and the general in chief preferred that Burnside advance rapidly against Lee's scattered forces along the line McClellan had initiated, but they reluctantly approved the new army commander's plan. Burnside issued the necessary orders for the delivery of pontoon bridges and stockpiles of supplies for the upcoming campaign to the ports of Aquia Harbor and Belle Plain on creeks off the Potomac River about fourteen and ten miles north of Fredericksburg, respectively.

The plan initially enjoyed surprising success. Burnside had completely deceived Lee, compelling him to rush most of his army south of the North Anna River in an effort to get in position from which he could block the way to Richmond. When Sumner's Right Grand Division arrived at Falmouth on the Rappahannock opposite Fredericksburg on the night of 17 November, only a Confederate cavalry regiment, four infantry companies, and a light battery of artillery—about 400 men in all—defended the city. However, the pontoon bridges had not yet arrived, and with the water level too high for wagons and artillery to ford the river, Union forces could not exploit the opportunity the situation presented. When the rest of the Army of the Potomac arrived two days later, Hooker suggested crossing at United States Ford, just a few miles upriver. Burnside, aware of the problems McClellan had experienced when a river had divided his forces on the Virginia Peninsula, worried that the high water would only permit part of his army to cross, and so he chose to wait.

Lee used the delay to his advantage and moved the first units of his army to the high ground behind the Rappahannock, instead of some twenty miles to the south along the North Anna, as he initially intended. Although uncomfortable with this deployment behind Fredericksburg, President Davis rejected Lee's suggestion to hold the more tenable line farther south and closer to the capital, lest it be viewed as a retreat before the advancing enemy. In consequence, Lee ordered "Stonewall" Jackson to move his Left Wing of the army with all possible speed from the Shenandoah Valley to join him on the Rappahannock.

Bad roads, poor planning, a shortage of draft horses, and miscommunication with the Quartermaster Department further delayed the arrival of Federal pontoons at Falmouth until 25 November. By that time, Confederate forces had prepared positions that covered all the key crossing points. In the town of Fredericksburg, Brig. Gen. William Barksdale's Mississippi brigade of 1,600 men dug rifle pits and cut loopholes in houses and other buildings to contest the Union engineers' bridging operation. Meanwhile, President Lincoln met with Burnside aboard a steamer at Aquia Harbor to discuss the army's next move. The president proposed moving two smaller forces to Port Royal and the Pamunkey River southeast of Fredericksburg to threaten Lee's flank and rear. Burnside argued, with Halleck's support, that such a move would be logistically more difficult and require too much time and an unnecessary amount of coordination between forces to prove successful. Instead, Lincoln, Halleck, and Burnside examined the possibility of crossing at Skinker's Neck, about twelve miles downstream from Fredericksburg. An engineer officer reconnoitered a suitable and lightly defended crossing site. However, the plan came to naught when Burnside learned that elements of Jackson's wing of the rebel army had begun to arrive in the area, and they would now oppose a crossing. With his 120,000 men facing 73,000 Confederates across the Rappahannock, the Union commander realized that he had lost all the advantages his army's quick advance had achieved.

Burnside's subordinates offered alternative courses of action, which were considered and discussed for days, allowing the Confederates even more time to improve their robust defenses. As the first week of December drew to a close, with discontent in Washington as well as within the ranks increasing, retiring into winter quarters was not a politically feasible option. Burnside had to attack Lee before the weather grew any worse. Where and how remained the questions.

On the evening of 9 December, Burnside called his subordinate commanders together at General Sumner's headquarters at Chatham Manor to present his plan of attack. The army would cross at three sites simultaneously. Sumner's Right Grand Division would cross via two pontoon bridges at the northern end of town and on a third at the southern end of the city. Once across, Sumner would clear Fredericksburg and advance



to dislodge the Confederates from their defensive positions on Marye's Heights, which dominated the Telegraph and Plank Roads. Franklin's Left Grand Division would cross using two bridges about two miles below town near the mouth of Deep Run and take control of the Richmond Stage Road. Burnside planned to hold Hooker's Center Grand Division in reserve, ready to exploit the success of either of the other two. The chief of artillery, Brig. Gen. Henry J. Hunt, placed the army's 312 guns, with 147 of them on the advantageous high ground of Stafford Heights, to support the crossing.

Burnside offered very few specifics on what he expected them to do next, and when his subordinates expressed a lack of confidence in the plan, he rebuffed their criticism. Despite the lack of detail, they reluctantly agreed to execute the plan to the best of their abilities. Units began moving into position on the evening of the tenth.

#### FREDERICKSBURG

With so many men, horses, and equipment in motion, maintaining secrecy became impossible. At 0300 on the morning of 11 December, soldiers from the 50th New York Volunteer Engineers regiment began moving their heavy pontoon boats down the muddy banks of Stafford Heights and into the icy waters of the

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*Union artillery battery at Antietam*  
(National Park Service)



Rappahannock. Alarm guns sounded on the opposite bank, sending Confederate soldiers scrambling to their rifle pits and fortified cellars. As the unarmed engineers struggled to erect their bridges, rebel sharpshooters took them under fire. As the light increased and fog dissipated, the heavy musketry of the rest of Barksdale's Mississippians drove the engineers back. With Union infantry able to offer little support, the engineers retreated, regrouped, and tried again (*see Map 8*).

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Battle of Fredericksburg, *Laying the Pontoon Bridges*, by Thure de Thulstrup  
(New York Public Library)



At noon, Burnside ordered Hunt to support the engineers with as many heavy artillery batteries as possible to suppress the resistance. The cannonade provided temporary relief and damaged many of the town's structures, but as soon as the firing ceased, the rebels returned to their positions and continued harassing the bridge builders. Finally, at 1400, volunteers from the 7th Maine and 19th Massachusetts Infantry crossed the Rappahannock in three pontoon boats. They established a beachhead and drove the defenders from the riverbank, taking several dozen prisoners. The rest of the units and the 20th Massachusetts Infantry followed across in short order, and the three regiments began to clear the Mississippians from Fredericksburg.

Union infantrymen took heavy casualties as they fought street by street and house to house, but they forced Barksdale's

Confederates to retire to Marye's Heights. With the infantry having secured a lodgment, the engineers completed all three of Sumner's bridges—collectively referred to as the upper bridges—with much less interference; and Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard's 2d Division of Maj. Gen. Darius N. Couch's II Corps and Willcox's IX Corps crossed by nightfall. As Sumner's lead elements entered the damaged town, frustrated and vengeful soldiers began looting the abandoned and destroyed houses. When stories of the depredations reached the Confederate lines, many swore revenge.

The Union troops of Franklin's Left Grand Division encountered much less resistance farther down the river. Since Lee had expected them to cross at Skinker's Neck and Port Royal, their actual crossing near Deep Run caught him somewhat by surprise. Union troops built and began crossing the three lower bridges by 1600. However, Franklin neither moved to assist Sumner's crossing at Fredericksburg nor brought over the remainder of his units. Instead, believing he had to coordinate further forward movement with that of the Right Grand Division, he waited for Burnside's orders. As a result, both assaulting grand divisions had not entirely crossed until the next day, which allowed Lee to again reposition forces to meet them after learning Burnside's intent.

On 12 December, Burnside issued verbal instructions for a simultaneous attack on both flanks of the Confederate line. He envisioned that Franklin, supported by Hooker, would lead the main effort and attack the Confederate right anchored on Prospect Hill and take control of Hamilton's Crossing. A transportation hub, the latter feature was the location where the Mine and Military Roads joined with another road to cross the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad and connect with the Fredericksburg–Bowling Green–Richmond Stage Road. Sumner's Right Grand Division would conduct a secondary effort by assaulting the left of Lee's line to take Marye's Heights and drive the enemy off the high ground. Burnside, however, did a poor job of communicating this concept to the two commanders most responsible for the plan's execution. Franklin received a handwritten order early in the morning of 13 December that offered only an ambiguous explanation of Burnside's intent. The order stated for him to “send out at once a division at least to pass below Smithfield and seize, if possible, the height near Captain Hamilton's, on this side of the Massaponax, taking care to keep it well supported and its lines of retreat open.” After waiting all

# BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG

13 December 1862

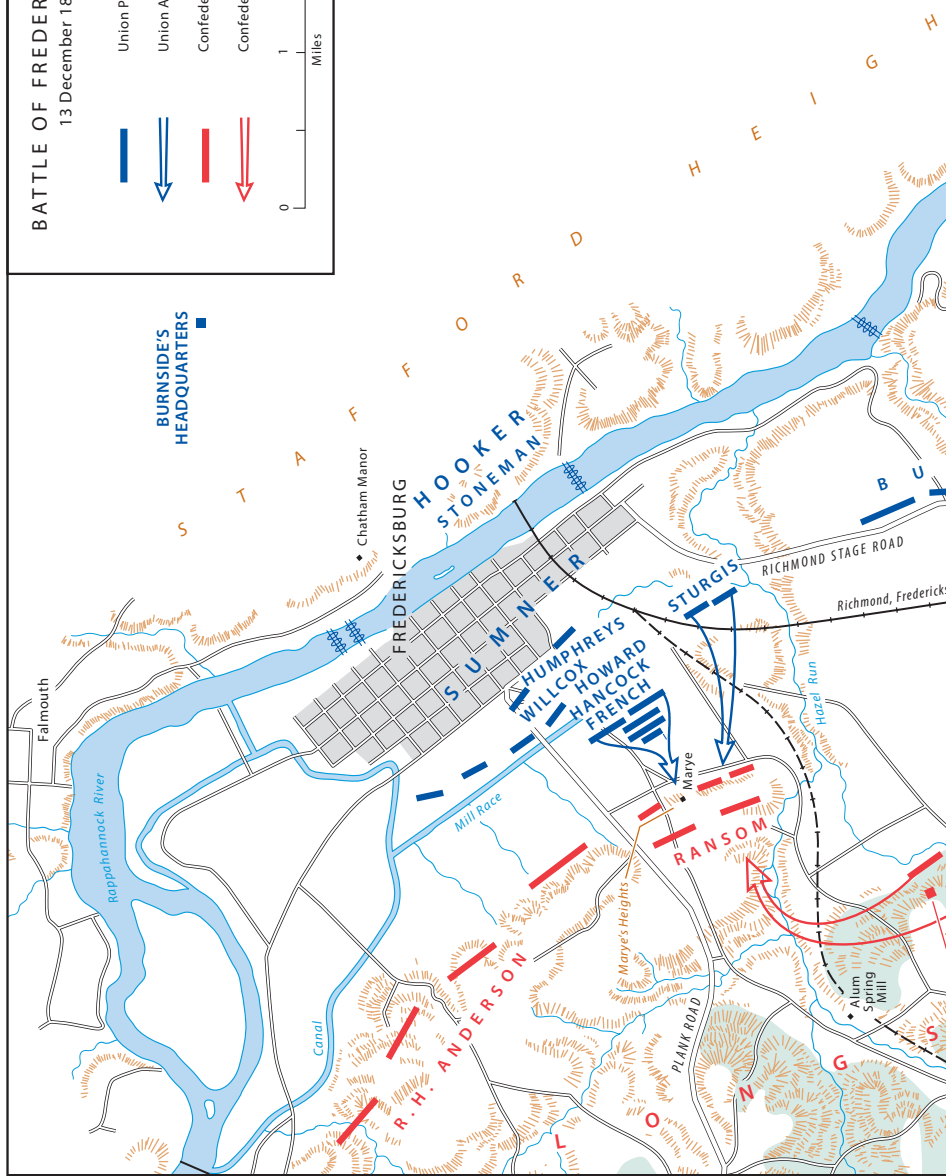
Union Position

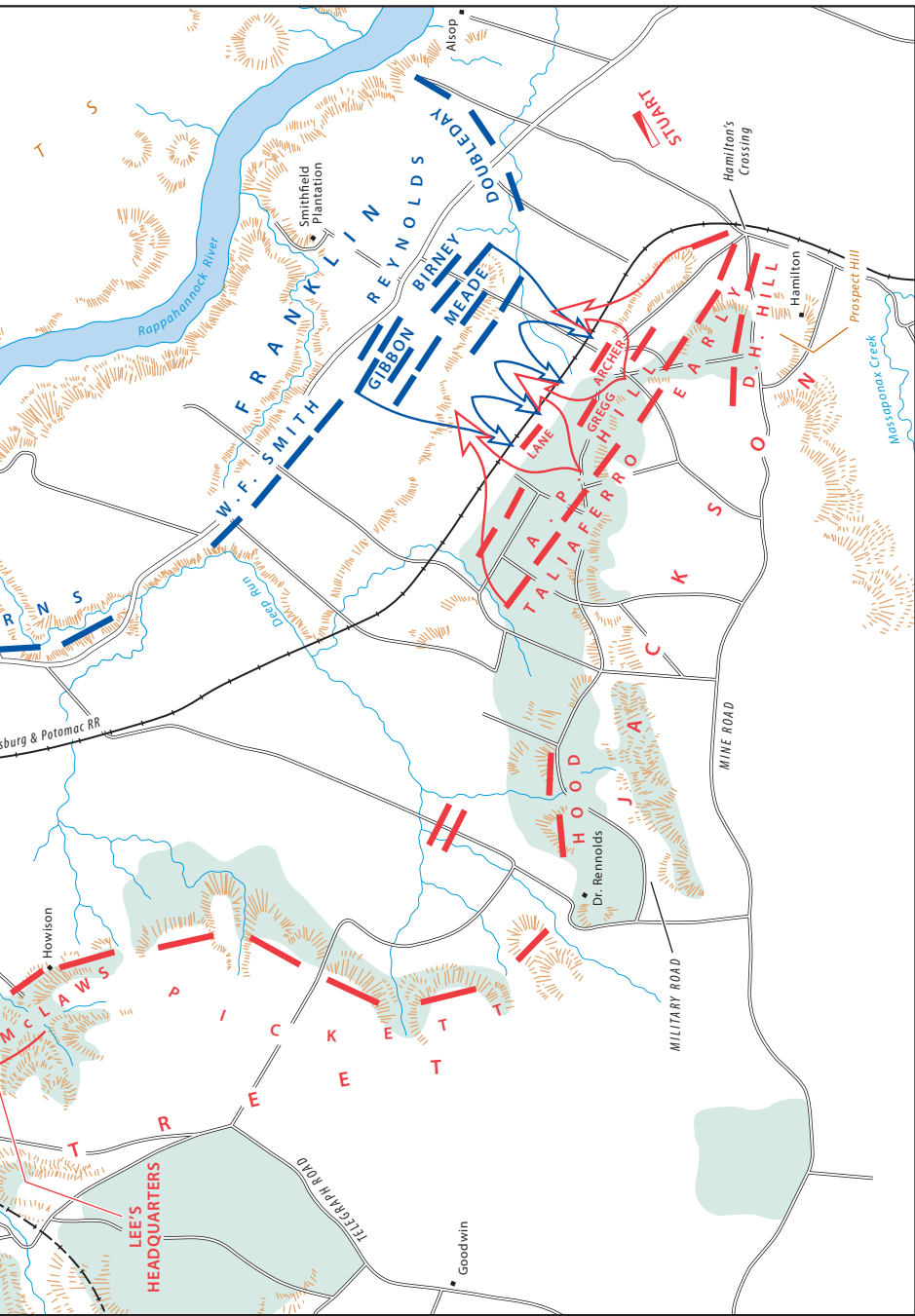
Union Attack

Confederate Position

Confederate Counterattack

Miles





MAP 8

night for the order, Franklin did not take the time to pursue clarification and moved forward according to his own interpretation, albeit as cautiously as possible.

Just as the heavy fog lifted at 0900 on 13 December, Franklin followed Burnside's orders and called for the I Corps commander, Maj. Gen. John F. Reynolds, to send forward one division toward the Confederate position. The veterans of Maj. Gen. George G. Meade's 3d Division marched forward from the Richmond Stage Road to begin the attack, with General Gibbon's 2d Division to his right and Brig. Gen. Abner Doubleday's 1st Division to his left in support. They advanced against nearly 40,000 Confederate troops of Jackson's wing spread along the wooded ridge from Hamilton's Crossing to just south of Fredericksburg, and General Stuart's cavalry protecting their right flank between Massaponax Creek and the Rappahannock River. On the far right of his line, Jackson had deployed his men up to four brigades deep with several batteries of artillery covering the open approaches from the river.

As Stuart observed Meade's Pennsylvanians forming to assault the Confederate position, Maj. John Pelham proposed posting one artillery section far forward so that its enfilading fire would slow the Union advance. After Stuart approved his artillery commander's recommendation, the major rushed two of his guns to the Richmond Stage Road and opened fire on the left flank of Meade's advancing troops. By skillfully moving each piece after it fired, the Confederate gun crews avoided counterbattery fire, while they inflicted severe casualties and delayed the Union advance for nearly an hour. Pelham ignored several orders to retire until the exhaustion of all his ammunition and increasingly effective retaliatory fire compelled him to do so, thus earning him the nickname, "the Gallant Pelham."

Once Pelham withdrew, Meade pushed his troops forward again, but when they moved within 1,000 yards of the enemy line, heavy Confederate artillery fire from the ridge slowed his advance once again. Union batteries soon replied in earnest, initiating an intense artillery duel. For over an hour, Federal cannons from along the Richmond Stage Road and from across the river endeavored to silence the rebel guns. The Union cannonade ceased when the Pennsylvanians resumed their advance, only to be hindered by the marshy ground and dense undergrowth they had to cross in front of the Confederate lines. The terrain, however, provided them a serendipitous tactical opportunity.

Confederate division commander Maj. Gen. A. P. Hill chose not to defend this section of his line due to its impassability, but he neglected to tell his subordinate Brig. Gen. Maxcy Gregg. Believing there to be other Confederate troops to his front, Gregg had ordered his brigade to stack arms at their position along the Military Road so that they would not accidentally fire on other units of Hill's division. When Meade's Pennsylvanians stormed through his line, Gregg told his men not to fire for fear of hitting fellow Confederates. Attacking Union infantry inflicted heavy casualties on the South Carolinians and mortally wounded Gregg. Meanwhile, Union Col. William Sinclair's 1st Brigade wheeled right and surprised Brig. Gen. James H. Lane's unsuspecting rebel brigade, while Brig. Gen. Conrad F. Jackson's 3d Brigade wheeled left and shattered the line of Confederate Brig. Gen. James J. Archer's brigade. Meade's assault had punctured a gap several hundred yards wide in Jackson's line and placed the entire Confederate position on Prospect Hill in jeopardy.

The advantage would prove short-lived. "Stonewall" Jackson rushed the divisions of Brig. Gen. Jubal A. Early and Brig. Gen. William B. Taliaferro into the breach to halt Meade's advance. Officers rallied the broken Confederate brigades and joined the counterattack. Meanwhile, the three brigades of Union General Gibbon's 2d Division that had advanced as far as the railroad embankment on Meade's right began to lose ground as Confederate pressure mounted against them. An enraged Meade repeatedly sent messages to the rear calling for support from Brig. Gen. David B. Birney's 1st Division of Brig. Gen. George Stoneman's III Corps, which had just crossed the river. Birney, however, remained idle, on the premise that Meade exercised no command authority over him. He asserted that he would only obey orders from either Stoneman or Reynolds.

The Confederates now had the momentum and pushed Meade's and Gibbon's divisions back. As the retreat became increasingly chaotic, some Union troops surrendered. The Confederates pressed forward until Birney's Federal division finally arrived and collided with Lawton's brigade of Georgians, commanded at the time by Col. Edmond N. Atkinson. The battle surged back and forth between the rail line and stage road with such intensity that the soldiers called the area the "Slaughter Pen." Despite the heavy casualties, the Union soldiers fought their way back to the railroad embankment by 1400. Union troops had suffered 4,830 casual-

ties in the failed assault, but still maintained a tenuous toehold in front of Prospect Hill. Franklin sent positive reports to Burnside regarding the progress of the attack that conveyed a false sense of hope for the second phase of the plan.

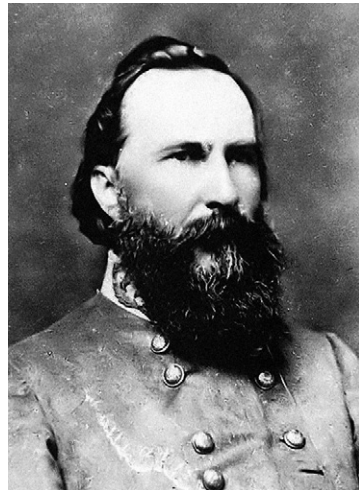
At the same time the morning fog had lifted to allow Franklin to launch his attack on the Confederate right, Sumner had begun his attack on the Confederate left. The Union troops filed through the streets of Fredericksburg and formed into line of battle just beyond the town. They observed the enemy defenses on a low-rising ridge known as Marye's Heights across 500 yards of open plain in their front. About one-third of the way lay a deep canal, known as the Mill Race, which required the army to cross via a series of narrow foot bridges in column before re-forming in ranks for the assault. At the far end of the field, Confederate forces waited. The plain over which they had to march offered the attackers little protection, except for a handful of random farm structures and the occasional topographical rise. The advancing troops would have to brave both small arms and artillery fire from the Confederates who crowned the heights with more than a dozen artillery batteries and several ranks of infantry positioned in a sunken road behind a stone wall that sat at the base of the hill.

Burnside believed that Lee had weakened his position on Marye's Heights in order to shift forces to contend with Franklin's attack to the south. Once Sumner's men penetrated Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's wing on Marye's Heights, they would split the Army of Northern Virginia in two and force it to retreat in disarray as the Army of the Potomac continued to press toward Richmond. Burnside decided to remain at his headquarters on the opposite side of the river, allowing Sumner to coordinate the assault. Sumner chose General French's 3d Division of General Couch's II Corps as the lead element in the grand attack.

The 1st, or "Gibraltar," Brigade of French's division,

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*General Longstreet*  
(Library of Congress)





commanded by Brig. Gen. Nathan Kimball, marched through the town and over the Mill Race bridges in column and deployed into line of battle in the open fields west of Fredericksburg. The brigade was immediately struck by Confederate artillery fire, killing several men from the 88th New York Infantry. Undeterred, Kimball's troops fixed bayonets and advanced toward the enemy position on Marye's Heights until they were met by a hail of Confederate artillery and rifle fire. Kimball lost over one-quarter of his men dead and wounded, and the attack stalled just one hundred yards in front of the stone wall. Union Col. James Andrews' 3d brigade followed. It endured the same horrific fire and lost nearly half of its men, but got no farther. French then sent in his 2d, and last, Brigade under the command of Col. Oliver H. Palmer to the aid of the rest of his division. Confederate musketry forced Palmer's men to seek cover in the swales and small buildings that dotted the open plain. Seeing his attack falter, French called for reinforcements to help his troops continue the attack.

Couch ordered Union Brig. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock's 1st Division to support the stalled assault. Riding fearlessly among his men, Hancock urged Col. Samuel K. Zook's 3d Brigade to press forward, but it too faltered under the heavy fire in front of the stone wall. Minutes later, General Meagher's 2d, or "Irish," Brigade marched courageously into the fray with sprigs of boxwood stuck in their forage caps and green flags flying in remembrance of their native homeland. In one of the most valiant charges of the battle, the Irishmen pushed through the withering fire to within a few dozen paces of the Confederate position before being hurled back. Brig. Gen. John C. Caldwell's 1st Brigade, the last of Hancock's division, pushed its way through the survivors of the previous assaults and struggled to maintain formation in the face of the Confederate fire, and losing more than half of its men in the process. Hancock's men came the closest to reaching the stone wall, but it cost them nearly 42 percent casualties in the hopeless effort.

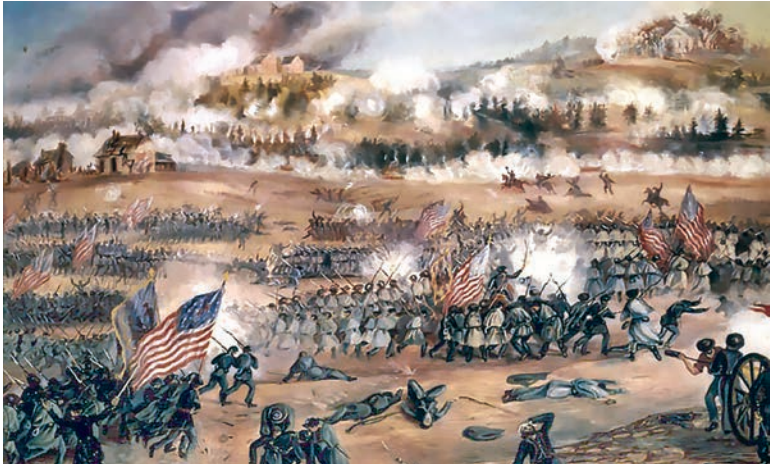
After watching from the cupola atop the Fredericksburg town hall, General Couch surmised that another frontal assault across the same ground to relieve the first two divisions would prove equally futile. Instead, he committed his 2d, and final, Division under General Howard to attack the enemy position at different locations along the stone wall from north of Hanover Street, in an attempt to turn the Confederate left. But when French and

Hancock desperately called for relief for their pinned-down forces, Couch rescinded the original orders and rushed Howard's division to their assistance. Col. Joshua T. Owen's 2d, or "Philadelphia," Brigade threw itself into the fray only to discover that the troops that they had rushed to support had melted away under enemy fire. The men immediately dropped to the ground to avoid a similar fate. Brig. Gen. Alfred Sully's 1st Brigade and Col. Norman J. Hall's 3d Brigade pushed forward to positions on Owen's right and exchanged fire with the Confederate defenders as they held their ground, but could make no gains.

The Confederate brigade under the command of Brig. Gen. Thomas R. R. Cobb maintained a murderous rate of fire from behind the stone wall into the repeated Federal assaults. Still, Lee and Longstreet worried that their position might crumble under the sustained attack. Longstreet therefore shifted part of Brig. Gen. James B. Kershaw's brigade from its position south of the town and Brig. Gen. Robert Ransom's brigade just to its north to support Cobb's men. At about the same time, Cobb fell mortally wounded, and Kershaw took command of that sector. With the recent reinforcements, the Confederate defenders now stood four ranks deep as they continued delivering their deadly fire.

Responsibility for carrying the position at Marye's Heights now passed to the other corps of Sumner's Grand Division, the IX Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. Orlando B. Willcox. From its position at the southern end of Fredericksburg, General Sturgis' 2d Division rushed into the assault. Sturgis sent forward General Ferrero's 2d Brigade. It failed to make serious headway, but despite being composed of mostly new recruits, the brigade tenaciously held the ground it did manage to take. Sturgis then pushed his heretofore uncommitted 1st Brigade, under General Nagle, farther to the left of the main attacks to strike the enemy's right flank from an angle. But as Nagle's men filed in adjacent to Ferrero's, they took to the ground because standing upright invited certain death. Suffering just over 1,000 casualties, Sturgis' division had come to a halt in a matter of minutes. Although each Union attack had failed, Longstreet feared that the persistent assaults would eventually succeed. To meet a renewed threat, Lee shifted more troops from less engaged sectors to the line at the foot of Marye's Heights.

Exasperated by the situation in front of Marye's Heights, Burnside mulled options to try to break the stalemate. At 1400, Burnside ordered Franklin's Left Grand Division to attack the



The Union attack on Marye's Heights during the Battle of Fredericksburg, 13th December 1862, by *Frederick Carada* (Bridgeman Art Library)

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Confederate right at Prospect Hill with every available unit. Success would render Longstreet's position at Marye's Heights untenable and cause the whole rebel line to collapse. The demoralized Franklin, having lost faith in both the plan and his commander, chose to ignore the order, and replied that eight of the nine divisions available were already engaged. Franklin's refusal demonstrated that Burnside was quickly losing control of the situation. On the opposite side of the field, "Stonewall" Jackson sought to change the course of the battle with a counter-attack to trap Franklin's Union forces against the Rappahannock River. Intense Union artillery fire, however, convinced Jackson to cancel the plan.

Meanwhile, General Hooker, commander of the Center Grand Division, arrived at the scene to assess the situation and to prepare his units to support Sumner's attack. He observed the results of the earlier efforts against Marye's Heights, consulted with Couch and Hancock, and concluded that any further assaults would prove senseless. He returned back across the river to give Burnside his assessment personally. Meanwhile, his subordinate commanders continued to move reinforcements behind the Union line. Brig. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys' 3d Division from the V Corps hurried across the pontoon bridge and through the streets

of Fredericksburg to form into line of battle for an attack on the stone wall. On the left, Brig. Gen. Charles Griffin's 1st Division deployed to relieve Sturgis' stalled attack.

Griffin led the three brigades of his division, reinforced with a fourth from Brig. Gen. Amiel W. Whipple's 3d Division of III Corps, to relieve Ferrero's brigade, still pinned down in front of the stone wall. Many of Griffin's troops had heard false reports that Sturgis' division had pushed the Confederates off the heights and charged the enemy position, not expecting to meet any resistance. The Southerners leveled a devastating blast into Griffin's brigades and compelled them to halt and lie down next to Sturgis' survivors. Shortly thereafter, just north of Hanover Street, Humphreys deployed his regiments, many of which were composed of recent recruits, as they crossed the Mill Race under deadly fire from Confederate artillery. Humphreys rode forward to inspire his inexperienced troops, encouraging them not to halt and fire, but to continue pressing forward and to give the enemy the bayonet. Surviving troops from the previous attacks, still lying prone, shouted for them to go to the ground as well, lest they be killed. Their comrades' warning and the murderous Confederate fire thwarted the momentum. After suffering over 1,000 casualties, and having two horses shot dead from under him, Humphreys ordered his troops to withdraw to the canal ditch to reorganize. After Humphreys' assault faltered, Hooker returned to the Fredericksburg side of the river having failed to convince Burnside that Marye's Heights could not be taken.

Back on the left of Sumner's Grand Division, Willcox desperately sought to overcome the resistance that had stymied the assault of his IX Corps. He called Col. Rush Hawkins, commander of his 3d Division's 1st Brigade, which had been guarding the middle pontoon site, into battle. Fortunately for Hawkins' troops, the setting sun reduced visibility and therefore the accuracy of the Confederate fire. Hawkins' men, many of whom were inexperienced, soon found it difficult to move across the swampy ground around Hazel Run under fire. The resulting confusion prompted Hawkins to withdraw his troops. As Humphreys' attack faltered, the V Corps commander ordered General Sykes' 2d Division forward to hold a defensive line at the Mill Race. Although Hooker had decided not to continue the assault, Sykes' men would block

any attempted Confederate counterattack and cover the withdrawal of Howard's and Humphreys' forces.

Burnside finally crossed the river that evening to survey the battle lines. Despite the carnage that surrounded the scene of his army's debacle, he was encouraged by the numerous units that still maintained a foothold in front of the stone wall. Receiving reports, such as that from Sturgis telling him that "our men are only eighty paces from the crest and holding on like hell," contributed to his optimism. He returned to his headquarters and gathered his commanders to plan a new attack. He announced that the assault on Marye's Heights would resume the morning of the fourteenth, spearheaded by his former command, the IX Corps, which he would personally lead in the charge. Sumner vehemently protested, arguing the plan's futility. As other corps commanders joined in Sumner's disapproval, the army commander finally conceded failure and canceled the attack. As the Union units that had not attacked dug entrenchments to defend against a possible Confederate counterattack, their comrades in front of the heights waited impatiently for orders.

Sunday, 14 December, proved uneventful. Aside from scattered firing, the battle did not resume. As the sun set, a Union messenger brought the recall order from Burnside's headquarters. The Union troops formed ranks under the cover of darkness and conducted an orderly march back to Fredericksburg, leaving their dead and many wounded comrades on the field. On the afternoon of the fifteenth, Burnside sent a party of officers under a flag of truce to negotiate a time to bury the dead and recover the wounded who had managed to survive.

Late in the evening of 15 December, the Union army withdrew back across the pontoon bridges to its camp on the opposite side of the Rappahannock, with units of the II and V Corps defending Fredericksburg as a rear guard. The next morning, these too were ordered back across the river, leaving no Federal troops on the Confederate side of the Rappahannock. By the afternoon of 16 December, the entire Army of the Potomac was back in the same position from which it had begun the battle less than a week before and had nothing to show for its efforts. The Battle of Fredericksburg was over.

The list of casualties for the Union forces was staggering. The Army of the Potomac had suffered 12,653 casualties, over half of them sustained in the attacks against Marye's Heights.

The Confederates suffered just over 5,400. The battle had been a catastrophic defeat for the nation and the Lincoln administration. Burnside publicly accepted responsibility for the loss, although he continued to believe that one last push would have carried Marye's Heights. Despite the losses that wrecked many units, however, the continued and repeated assaults on Lee's left flank had arguably prevented the Confederate commander from wresting the initiative, and possibly inflicting an even deadlier blow on the Army of the Potomac as it stood with the Rappahannock River at its back.

Eager to redeem himself, Burnside developed a new plan to defeat the Confederates. This time, the Army of the Potomac would move several miles up the Rappahannock, cross the river, and advance along a course that put him behind the Confederate entrenchments at Fredericksburg. As Burnside prepared his army to move on 30 December, he received a message from President Lincoln who lamented about not being informed of the new plan. This puzzled Burnside because he had not told anyone in Washington about it. Without his knowledge, two general officers from Franklin's Right Grand Division had taken leave and traveled to the capital. In an audience with the president, they had complained about Burnside's incompetence and divulged the latter's new campaign plan. Burnside immediately canceled the operation.

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*Fredericksburg as seen from across the Rappahannock*  
(Library of Congress)



Three weeks later, with Lincoln's tepid support, Burnside again committed to the flanking march. As soon as the Union army began its movement on 20 January 1863, an icy rain-storm descended that lasted three days. The deluge inundated the roads and made them impassable. With men, wagons, and artillery mired in deep mud, the army could barely move. A frustrated Burnside halted the infamous "Mud March" and ordered the army back to camp. Glumly the army reversed course, enduring the taunts of rebel sentries posted along the opposite bank of the Rappahannock. By that time, Burnside had completely lost the confidence of nearly all his subordinates, as well as the soldiers in the ranks.

Disparaging comments and rumors about Burnside spread like wildfire after the Mud March. General Hooker gave the most pointed criticism as he questioned his superior's competence in the press. Incensed, Burnside issued General Orders 8 on 23 January, which condemned Hooker and any other officer who disparaged his leadership and recommended that they be dismissed from the service. Burnside traveled to Washington and demanded that Lincoln either remove the offending officers or accept his resignation. The president chose the latter, and replaced the maligned Burnside with Hooker on 25 January 1863.

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*Burnside's Mud March, by Alfred R. Waud*  
(Library of Congress)



## *Analysis*

Although the Battle of Antietam had ended in a tactical draw, strategically it was a great victory for the Union. The Army of the Potomac had fended off a Confederate threat to the U.S. capital at Washington, D.C., had prevented the rebels from penetrating into Pennsylvania, and had forced the Army of Northern Virginia out of Maryland. In the wake of the Confederate retreat, Union forces had reoccupied Harpers Ferry and restored Federal control of the vital east-west transportation and supply corridors represented by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, and the National Road. Not only had Lee failed to achieve any tangible gain, but he also had actually lost something most precious—the reputation of invincibility that had troubled Northerners and buoyed Southerners over the past several months. Unfortunately, McClellan’s slowness to exploit Lee’s repulse did little to bring the war closer to a successful conclusion.

If McClellan had a terminal case of what Lincoln termed “the slows,” the president was not about to allow the victory of Antietam to go unexploited. For months, Lincoln had been looking for an opportunity to change the nature of the war. Not wanting the government to appear to be acting out of desperation, members of his cabinet had persuaded him not to act until a victory framed the scheme he wished to implement in a positive light. Antietam had finally provided the occasion Lincoln was looking for. On 22 September, five days after the battle, President Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. In it, he declared that all slaves in any state or part of any state that was still in rebellion at the end of one hundred days—namely on 1 January 1863—would be “then, thenceforward, and forever free.” He considered the measure a military necessity for ending the rebellion. Although it would require an amendment to the Constitution to finally abolish the “peculiar institution,” Lincoln stated that with the proclamation “it became clear that the Confederacy stands for slavery and the Union for freedom.” The proclamation gave the North a moral cause larger than simply preserving the Union, struck at the underpinnings of the Confederate economy, greatly strengthened the diplomatic position of the United States, and discouraged European governments from ever recognizing, assisting, or intervening on behalf of the rebels. The Battle of Antietam thus became one of the turning points, not only in the war, but in America’s





First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Lincoln,  
*by Francis Bicknell Carpenter*  
(U.S. Senate Collection)

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social and political history. Yet, the proclamation by itself could not end the war. Indeed, unless Northern armies successfully penetrated the Confederacy, not a single slave would be freed. Ultimately, then, preservation of the Union and the termination of human bondage in North America would rest on the same factors that had determined the course of the conflict thus far—weapons, courage, and leadership.

The Battle of Fredericksburg illustrated just how true this was. After the events of September 1862 inspired optimism in the North, the Battle of Fredericksburg three months later represented the nadir of the Union war effort. Burnside's indecisiveness and poor judgment, coupled with the one-sided casualties, squandered what advantage the success at Antietam had gained. The defeat even led some Northerners to urge Lincoln to delay implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation—something he refused to do. Meanwhile, the results boosted Confederate morale, burnished Lee's already legendary reputation, and gave the South hope that its rebellion might succeed.

Militarily, the Fredericksburg Campaign held positive and negative consequences for both armies. The demoralizing losses it had suffered at Marye's Heights and in the Slaughter Pen notwithstanding, the Union army had neither retreated in

disorder nor lost its cohesiveness. For all his faults, McClellan had succeeded in creating a tool well-tempered for battle. It only awaited someone skilled enough to wield it effectively. Burnside had misused the instrument. It remained to be seen what General Hooker could do with it during the coming year.

On the other side of the Rappahannock, tactical victory at Fredericksburg had not transformed the war for the South. The Federal army remained encamped on the north bank of the river, occupying much of Northern Virginia and situated within striking distance of the Confederate capital at Richmond. Although the victory had lifted Southern spirits, Lee's soldiers would endure a harsh winter at Fredericksburg with inadequate supplies for their already deficient forces. With Northern arms gaining more strength every month and with the Emancipation Proclamation now threatening the very foundations of Southern life, it was becoming even clearer to General Lee and President Davis that remaining on defense would not achieve a Confederate victory. The South would have to take the war to the North if it was going to protect its resources and shake Northern confidence sufficiently to persuade its antagonist to end the conflict on terms acceptable to the Confederacy. By halting the Army of the Potomac's drive on Richmond in December 1862, the Battle of Fredericksburg had set the stage for a second Confederate invasion of the North in 1863, a campaign that would irrevocably change the course of the American Civil War.



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ANTIETAM 1862

FREDERICKSBURG 1862

