

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

THE VIRGINIA CAMPAIGNS

MARCH – AUGUST 1862



Cover: *Detail from The Charge of the Fifth Regulars at Gaines' Mill, 27th of June, 1862*
by *William Trego* (U.S. Cavalry Museum, Fort Riley)

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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.

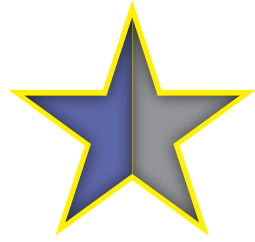
Most civil wars do not spring up overnight, and the American Civil War was no exception. The seeds of the conflict were sown in the earliest days of the republic's founding, primarily over the existence of slavery and the slave trade. Although no conflict can begin without the conscious decisions of 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.

CHARLES R. BOWERY JR.
Executive Director



THE VIRGINIA CAMPAIGNS MARCH–AUGUST 1862

Since the Civil War began in April 1861 at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, both the United States government and the rebellious Confederate States of America had placed a premium on controlling the Commonwealth of Virginia. Home to the Confederate capital at Richmond, and adjacent to the Federal capital at Washington, D.C., Virginia's strategic importance was undeniable. The Civil War's first major engagement, the Battle of Bull Run, had taken place on Virginia soil near Manassas Junction on 21 July 1861. Elsewhere in 1861, Union forces had won victories in Missouri, Kentucky, and North Carolina, yet in Virginia the Confederacy had remained defiant, and it was on Virginia that all eyes focused. By year's end the Federal government's failure to capture Richmond had discouraged Northerners and buoyed the spirits of rebellious southerners. Anxious to end the bloodshed, President Abraham Lincoln hoped that 1862 would be the year in which Federal forces swept into Virginia, captured Richmond, and put an end to the insurrection. In this he was destined to be disappointed.

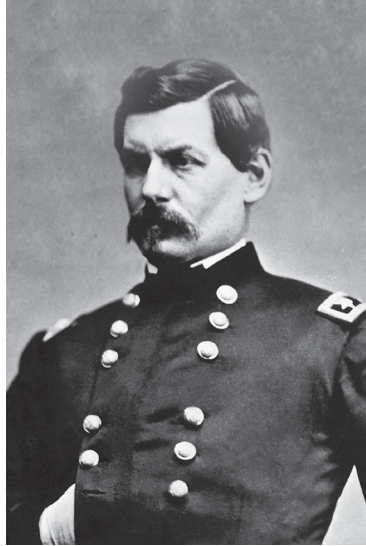
Strategic Setting

By January 1862, Federal authority in Virginia was confined to the state's western mountains—essentially the area of the modern state of West Virginia, Fort Monroe at Hampton Roads,

and a sliver of ground around Alexandria opposite Washington, D.C. Otherwise the Potomac River separated the opponents. The Federals controlled the Maryland side of the river, while the Confederates encamped at Manassas and Centreville, Virginia, thirty miles west of Washington. Confederate pickets guarded the Virginia side of the river, while a battery at Aquia, Virginia, interdicted U.S. shipping downstream of Washington. Both sides had fortified their positions.

The Federal force guarding Washington was Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac. The energetic general was known as "the Young Napoleon."

A 35-year-old Pennsylvanian, McClellan was a distinguished graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and a veteran of the Mexican War. In 1856 he had served as an official U.S. Army observer of the Crimean War. In 1861 his success in restoring Federal control of the mountains of western Virginia had propelled him to command the Army of the Potomac in the wake of the Union defeat at First Bull Run. Later that fall President Lincoln had made him the commanding general of the entire U.S. Army. A superb organizer and motivator of men, McClellan was a vain man and tended to be



General McClellan
(Library of Congress)

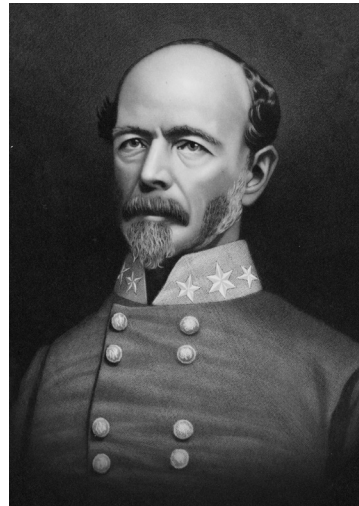
a secretive and controlling manager. This made for sometimes frosty relations with his superiors in the War Department and with President Lincoln. Under McClellan the Union Army of the Potomac numbered over 105,000 men at the start of 1862, making it the largest American army ever fielded up to that time.

Opposing McClellan at Centreville were the 45,000 men of General Joseph E. Johnston's Army of the Potomac, oddly enough bearing the same name as McClellan's army. The 55-year-old Virginian was one of the Confederacy's early heroes, as his timely rail movement to Manassas had contributed to

the Confederate victory at Bull Run. An 1829 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, Johnston had spent several decades on the frontier in the artillery and cavalry, and had also fought in the Mexican War. At the time of Virginia's secession from the Union he was a brigadier general and Quartermaster General of the U.S. Army. He had promptly resigned and followed his state into the Confederacy, and in the summer of 1861 he had become the fourth-ranking officer in the Confederate States Army. A formal man, Johnston enjoyed wide respect among his soldiers and the Southern populace. However, squabbles with the Confederate War Department over supplies and unit organization hurt his relations with Richmond. In the fall of 1861 Johnston had fallen into a bitter dispute with Confederate President Jefferson Davis over rank, which irreparably soured relations between the two men.

The Union and Confederate armies were organized along similar lines. The three main combat branches were infantry, cavalry, and artillery. The majority of infantry and cavalry regiments had an authorized strength of approximately 1,000 men, divided into ten companies. The main exceptions were the regulars of the 11th–19th Infantry, each of which had two battalions. In practice, most units on campaign numbered between 300 and 500 men due to illness, battlefield losses, and desertions. Two or more (usually three or four) regiments made up a brigade, and two or more brigades comprised a division. In 1862 both sides introduced corps-level commanders for the first time in American military history. The Union called these formations corps and numbered them, whereas the Confederacy referred to this level of command as wings. The Confederate army tended to have slightly larger divisions but in general matched

General Johnston
(Library of Congress)



its Union counterpart in terms of organization. One significant difference was that Confederate cavalry massed into one division, whereas Federal cavalry regiments were distributed in brigades among the several corps. Union artillery batteries (four or six guns each) were organized into regiments for administrative purposes but fought dispersed; Confederate batteries of four guns each were administratively independent organizations. Both armies attached batteries to individual brigades and divisions, while retaining a general reserve for massing of firepower. Federal equipment and ordnance were generally better and more uniform than those employed by the Confederates. It was not uncommon to find a Confederate infantry regiment with obsolete weapons or a battery containing three or four different types of cannon.

McClellan's army had a small core of regulars, but most of the troops of both sides were volunteers and militia. Most Union troops enlisted for three years or the duration of the war, whichever came first. Confederates enlisted for one year in the spring of 1861 and elected their company-grade officers. Their one-year commitments meant that the Confederate armies stood ready to dissolve due to expiring enlistments just as the 1862 campaign got underway. The Confederate Congress responded by passing a conscription act, the first national draft in American history. The law held Confederate soldiers in the army for three additional years, and gave them a chance to reelect their officers. These changes took effect in April 1862, and stalled Confederate operations during that month.

The senior leaders of both armies were generally professionally trained officers. Most had studied at West Point and had served in the Mexican War or on the western frontier. Few officers, however, had experience handling large formations before the outbreak of the Civil War. Confederate general officers ranked as brigadier generals, major generals, or generals; their U.S. Army counterparts could rise no higher than major general. A considerable number of Confederate officers were graduates of the Virginia Military Institute and the Military College of South Carolina (The Citadel). Regimental and company officers tended to be appointed as much on political influence and recruiting prowess as on professional training; often they learned the drill and tactics alongside their men. No uniform basic training program existed for either army,

although both sides used the same standard drill manuals from the 1850s.

Compared to a modern staff structure, Civil War headquarters were considerably smaller. A commander's staff in the 1860s consisted of deputies for personnel, ordnance, medical, provost, and subsistence. Higher-level staffs also had an engineer section that covered mapmaking and other support. General officers were authorized aides, one for a brigade commander and up to four for an army commander, and these could be supplemented by "volunteer aides." A Civil War commander was in effect his own operations officer and intelligence officer at the same time, which placed a strain on the senior leaders.

General McClellan's plan to capture Richmond in the spring of 1862 was influenced by Virginia's topography. The two capitals stood one hundred miles apart. The Virginia theater was further compressed by the Allegheny Mountains to the west and the Chesapeake Bay to the east. Several major rivers—the Rappahannock, Rapidan, Pamunkey, York, Chickahominy, and James—flowed eastward across any potential axis of advance toward Richmond from the north. A strong Union garrison held Fort Monroe at the mouth of the James and York Rivers. The United States Navy controlled the Chesapeake Bay and could thereby support land operations. To the west, the Shenandoah Valley ran from the southwest to the northeast, providing an abundant source of provisions and giving Confederate forces a route into central Maryland and Pennsylvania.

A lack of good, all-weather, macadamized roads tied both armies to railroads, primarily for their supplies. The Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad ran from Aquia Landing near Fredericksburg to the rebel capital. Another line, the Orange and Alexandria, went from Alexandria into central Virginia, while the Virginia Central connected Richmond with Staunton in the Shenandoah Valley. Several smaller lines fed into these three major railroads, extending their reach. Union armies could also be securely supplied by water using the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's eastern rivers.

As McClellan examined the map, he shrank from the hard fighting, heavy casualties, and logistical problems inherent in an overland campaign to Richmond. He also believed that his enemy outnumbered him. McClellan therefore proposed to move by sea to Urbanna, a tobacco port on the Rappahannock

River, where he could establish a base and advance toward Richmond. Lincoln favored an overland campaign but deferred to McClellan's judgment. He approved McClellan's Urbanna plan on 8 March with the proviso that the general keep sufficient forces around Washington to make the city "entirely secure."

Before the first Union troop transports could sail, General Johnston upset the Federal plan. Wary of a possible flanking maneuver, he abandoned Centreville and Aquia in early March and retreated to Gordonsville on the Virginia Central Railroad. McClellan moved his army forward to Centreville on 10 March and discovered that the Confederate position was weaker than he had thought. Moreover, his troops found within the former Confederate defenses several "Quaker guns," painted logs made to look like cannons. Embarrassed in the press, he returned to Washington and recast his campaign. The Union Army of the Potomac would now move by ship to Fort Monroe and advance on Richmond from the east. Lincoln approved this plan, and McClellan's lead elements embarked on 17 March for Tidewater Virginia, where over the next four weeks the Army of the Potomac assembled.

During this time the Union high command underwent a major change. Frustrated by McClellan's slow progress and uncooperative demeanor, on 11 March, Lincoln relieved "Little Mac" as general in chief of the U.S. Army but kept him as the Army of the Potomac's commander, ostensibly so he could concentrate on his Richmond campaign. Lincoln and Edwin M. Stanton, his new secretary of war and former attorney general, assumed the overall direction of the war themselves. In the wake of this reshuffling, the spring campaigns in Virginia got underway.

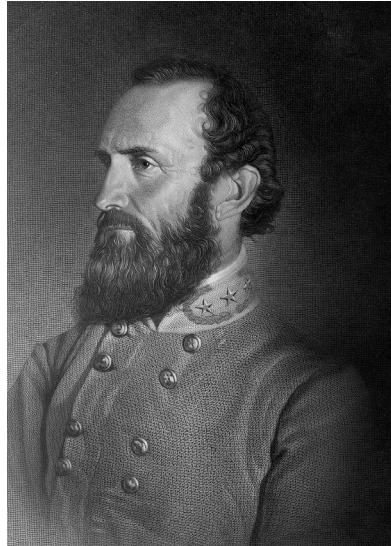
Operations

THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY CAMPAIGN

Events in the Shenandoah Valley cast a long shadow over the Richmond campaign. The Valley itself was of limited strategic value to the Union as an avenue of invasion, but it had to be secured to block a Confederate thrust into Maryland and threats to Washington from the west. Bounded by the Allegheny Mountains to the west and the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east, the Shenandoah Valley was split in half by Massanutten Mountain, which ran from Conrad's Store to Strasburg.

Massanutten Mountain could only be crossed in one place, via a gap east of New Market. The Valley's rivers flowed from south to north; thus a march toward the Potomac River took armies "down the valley." Staunton was situated at the Valley's top, while Martinsburg and Harpers Ferry sat at the bottom. The macadamized Valley Pike connected the major localities in between.

In the spring of 1862 about 6,000 Confederates of the Army of the Valley defended the Shenandoah Valley at Winchester. Their commander was Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Jackson, nicknamed "Stonewall" for his heroic stand at the Battle of First Bull Run. Jackson was a West Point classmate of McClellan's, a veteran of the Mexican War, and a professor at the Virginia Military Institute when war broke out. He answered to General Johnston on administrative and most operational matters, but also received orders directly from the Confederate War Department in Richmond. Opposing him in and around Harpers Ferry, were over 20,000 Federals of the V Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks, a Massachusetts political appointee and former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.



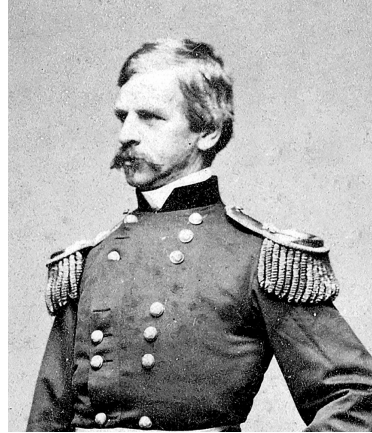
General Jackson
(Library of Congress)

Banks received from McClellan a dual mission: secure the Shenandoah Valley and shield Washington. President Davis and his military adviser, General Robert E. Lee, ordered Jackson to tie down as many enemy forces in the Valley as possible to ease the pressure on Johnston's army from McClellan's massive host approaching Richmond.

In early March Banks' troops pushed south from Harpers Ferry. Jackson accordingly withdrew his Confederates south from Winchester on 11 March, and the Federals occupied the town the next day. On 15 March the Federal War Department created a new

Mountain Department in western Virginia under the command of Maj. Gen. John C. Frémont, a fiery abolitionist, explorer, and politician. Frémont's mission was to organize Federal forces in western Virginia and campaign in southwest Virginia and eastern Tennessee. While Banks continued to report to McClellan, Frémont answered only to the War Department, a situation that created a divided command structure for the rest of the campaign in the Shenandoah Valley.

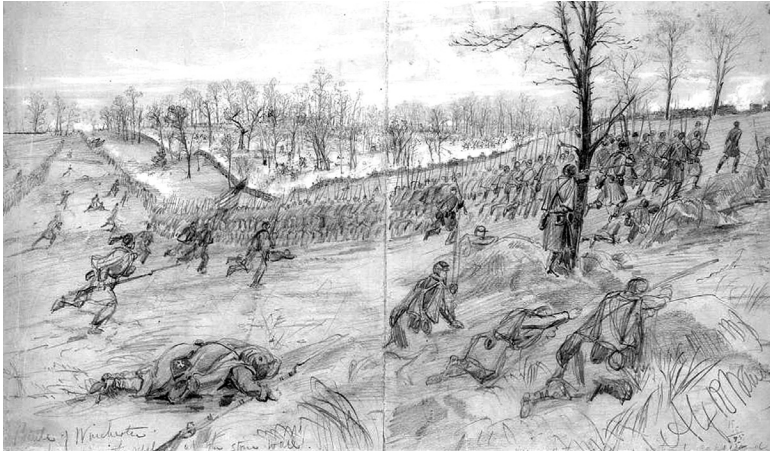
Jackson continued his retreat south to Mount Jackson to await developments. Banks pursued up the Valley to Strasburg but soon returned to Winchester on 20 March after having found no Confederates in his front. Believing the first part of his mission complete, he left only Brig. Gen. James Shields' division of 10,000 men around Winchester as a covering force, and sent Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams' division toward Manassas Junction to link up with McClellan's army. Confederate intelligence agents discovered



General Banks
(National Archives)

these moves, prompting General Johnston to write to Jackson on 19 March: "It is important to keep that army in the Valley, that it should not reinforce McClellan. Do try to prevent it by getting and keeping as near as prudence will permit." (*See Map 1.*)

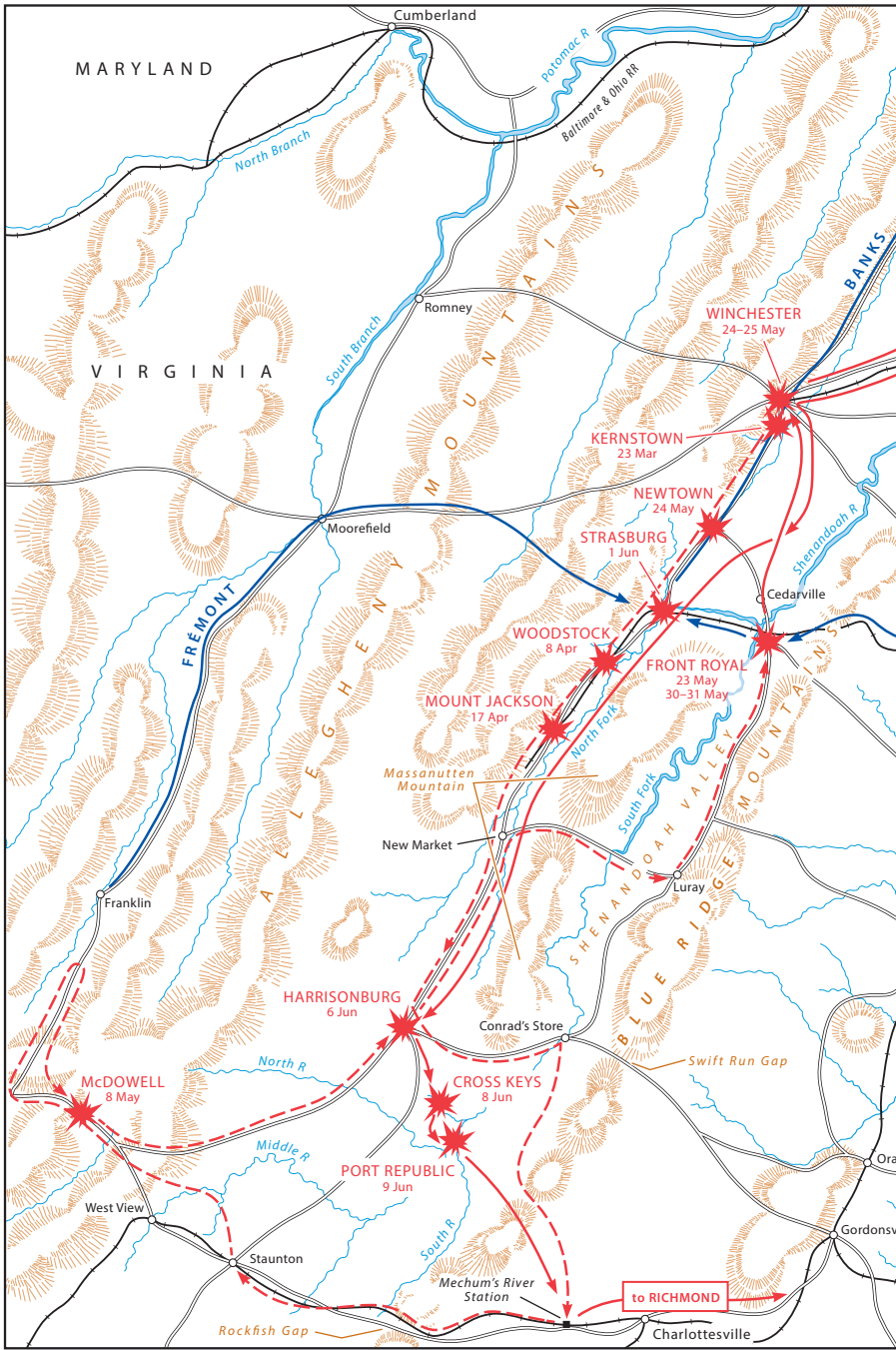
Based on these orders, Jackson's troops marched northward on 22 March toward Winchester, forty miles away. At this time Banks was en route to Washington for a conference with McClellan and the War Department, and Shields had his division deployed loosely around Winchester. He detailed a brigade under Col. Nathan Kimball to advance south along the Valley Pike at dawn on 23 March to meet Jackson's advance at Kernstown, two miles south of Winchester. After initially driving back the Confederates on the Valley Pike, Kimball regrouped and called for reinforcements. Jackson tried to flank Kimball to the west, while the Federals stayed on the defensive.



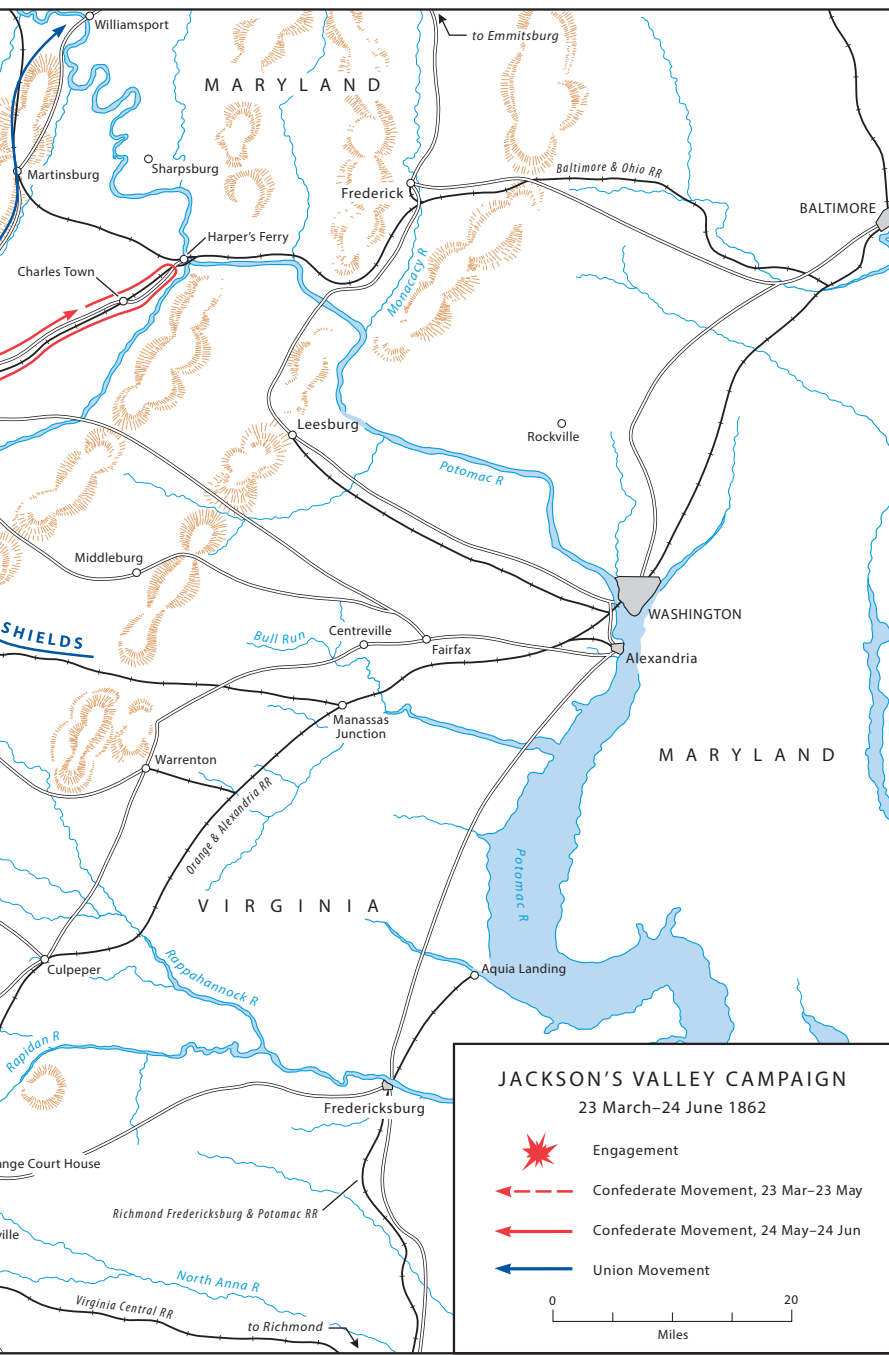
Battle of Winchester [*Kernstown*], Decisive Charge Upon the Rebels at the Stone Wall, by Alfred Waud (Library of Congress)

After his bluecoats repelled the Confederate attacks on their right, Kimball ordered a general advance that drove the Army of the Valley from the field in confusion. Darkness ended the pursuit as the Confederates streamed southward. Jackson's army of 4,000 left 718 men on the field while inflicting 590 Union casualties out of 6,000 engaged.

News of the clash at Kernstown alarmed Union officials in Washington. Even though Jackson had been defeated, with the Army of the Potomac in motion and Johnston's army located on a direct route to Washington, the possibility of a general Confederate counteroffensive could not be overlooked. General Banks hurried to rejoin his command, while Williams' division turned around and went back toward Winchester. General McClellan was still in Washington, and a concerned Lincoln asked him for a detailed tabulation of what troops would be left to defend the capital. McClellan replied on 1 April, just as he boarded a steamer for Fort Monroe. His letter claimed that Washington's garrison of untried artillerymen and local militia along with Banks' troops was sufficient to meet Lincoln's requirements. Secretary Stanton, however, concluded that "the President's order has not been fully complied with," after he looked into the number and distribution of the troops left to secure Washington. President Lincoln concurred, and



MAP 1



canceled the movement of Maj. Gen. Irvin McDowell's 40,000 troops to the Peninsula, instead posting it at Manassas and later Fredericksburg to help shield Washington.

Meanwhile, Banks concentrated at Winchester, and then set his command in motion after Jackson's Confederates. On 26 March Banks' command moved south to Strasburg and Fisher's Hill, effectively shielding the lower valley from Confederate incursion. Banks paused there to resupply, but his quartermasters proved unable to keep up with the change in direction back to the Valley, and for most of April the Federal supply line functioned poorly. Rain, muddy roads, and Confederate bridge demolitions exacerbated Banks' logistical problems. Adding to the confusion, Stanton made General Banks' force independent of McClellan, with Banks now reporting directly to Washington as commander of the new Department of the Shenandoah, an arrangement that further fragmented the Union command in Virginia.

Despite these logistical issues, the War Department in Washington ordered Banks to press up the Valley. Banks stripped his men of all tents and baggage except essential supplies and three days' rations. On 1 April he pushed his troops southward. After a skirmish at Woodstock on 8 April, the Confederates fell back to Mount Jackson to defend the Valley Pike bridge over the north fork of the Shenandoah River. On 15 April Banks' troops arrived at Mount Jackson, having covered only thirty miles in fourteen days.

Jackson again drew away but left a delaying force along the river. When his men reconnoitered the river, Brig. Gen. Nathan Kimball—recently promoted in reward for Kernstown—recalled they found it “much swollen by rains, rendering it impossible to ford. There being one bridge, it now became the center of contest.” On the morning of 17 April the Confederates set fire to the bridge as Banks' Federals advanced toward it. Suddenly, three companies of Ohio and Michigan cavalry thundered up the Valley Pike, crossed the bridge under fire, and extinguished the flames. Kimball's infantry surged across and drove the Confederates farther south. After pausing to regroup, Banks' troops reached Harrisonburg on 25 April. Despite their successes, the Federals were exhausted and still poorly supplied.

Jackson's Army of the Valley retreated eastward from Harrisonburg to Conrad's Store and Swift Run Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains, from which post Jackson could either move to Richmond or attack Banks if the Union forces moved south



General Ewell
(Library of Congress)

from Harrisonburg. Jackson regrouped and reorganized his men while he awaited Federal movements. Reinforcements from Richmond and central Virginia, chiefly an infantry division under Maj. Gen. Richard S. Ewell, increased his force to 12,000 men.

Up to this point Banks had accomplished his mission of driving Jackson up the Valley. Meanwhile, in the Mountain Department, General Frémont's newly organized command included 19,000 troops available for duty. President Lincoln directed him to push southward from Wheeling into

eastern Tennessee, a pro-Union area he was anxious to liberate. Frémont decided to take Brig. Gen. Louis Blenker's reinforced infantry division through the Allegheny Mountains to Staunton, and then march southward into Tennessee along the railroad running between Staunton and Knoxville. Simultaneously, Brig. Gen. Jacob D. Cox would lead another Union force south from Charleston and meet Frémont along the way.

Execution of Frémont's operation soon ran afoul of the region's difficult mountain geography. Transportation and terrain delayed the arrival of Blenker's division, and it took that unit five weeks by road and rail to transit west from Washington to Petersburg (West Virginia), from which Blenker planned to move southward immediately. When his troops arrived, they were in no condition for a major campaign; their appearance was so pitiful that Frémont's chief of staff declared the men needed ten or twenty days rest before doing anything else. Frémont did get some of his forces in motion, and by early May a small brigade of 3,000 men under Brig. Gen. Robert H. Milroy was headed toward Staunton, by way of McDowell, a hamlet in the Allegheny Mountains of Highland County. This move threatened the Virginia Central Railroad, a vital part of the Confederate logistical network.

A second major Federal development in late April was Banks' overconfident assessment of the strategic situation. Shortly after he arrived in Harrisonburg, Union scouts informed Banks that Jackson was moving over the Blue Ridge Mountains toward Gordonsville, thus leaving the Valley. Confederate prisoners confirmed this information. On 22 April Banks wired to Washington that "Jackson has abandoned the valley of Virginia permanently." In response, on 3 May the War Department ordered Banks to set up a defensive position at Strasburg with Williams' division and detach Shields' large command to Fredericksburg for eventual movement to McClellan's army. These orders pulled Banks' force northward just as Frémont's troops began moving toward Staunton on 12 May.

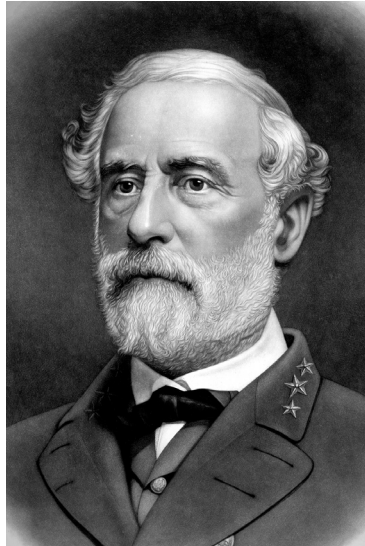
Meanwhile Jackson carefully watched these developments. President Davis and General Lee had reinforced Jackson with Ewell's 8,000 soldiers, hoping he could further distract from McClellan's advance toward the Confederate capital. In late April, Lee and Jackson corresponded about the best course of action—hit Banks directly, go after Milroy at McDowell and then turn on Banks, or march on Strasburg and get in Banks' rear. Lee left the decision to Jackson.

Jackson chose to attack Milroy's column first "for if successful I would afterwards only have Banks to contend with," Jackson later recalled. At this point Milroy and his brigade were at McDowell, twenty-two miles west of Staunton. These Federals were opposed by 3,600 infantry under Brig. Gen. Edward Johnson posted on the railroad at Westview, seven miles west of Staunton. To deceive Banks and Frémont, on 1 May the Army of the Valley set out on a march southeast over the Blue Ridge to Mechums River Station on the Virginia Central Railroad, where the troops entrained on 4 May. Ewell's division stayed at Swift Run Gap to watch Banks' Federals in the Valley, while Johnson's scouts kept Jackson informed of Milroy's dispositions. At Mechums River Station many soldiers assumed Richmond was their destination until the trains started west toward Staunton. The army then marched west from that town toward McDowell. Jackson's vanguard arrived at McDowell on the morning of 8 May and reinforced Johnson's small brigade atop Bull Pasture Mountain, three miles east of McDowell. Jackson then sent Johnson's brigade to occupy Sitlington's Hill, a spur of the mountain overlooking the town.

Milroy detected Jackson's approach, and took up a defensive position at McDowell. Brig. Gen. Robert C. Schenck's brigade joined Milroy with 3,000 troops from Franklin on 8 May, after covering thirty-four miles of mountain roads in twenty-three hours. Meanwhile Milroy's infantry put up a bold front through aggressive skirmishing and artillery fire against Sitlington's Hill. "I found Milroy," Schenck later reported, "with his small force in the village at the foot of the mountain, defending himself against the enemy occupying the heights above, shut in, in fact, in a sort of amphitheater. The only easy way of escape from the position was down . . . the road by which I had arrived."

The combined force of Federals numbered over 6,000 men, facing an equal number of Southerners. The Union commanders decided to make a spoiling attack on the afternoon of 8 May against the Confederate positions on Sitlington's Hill. After a four-hour battle in rugged terrain, Milroy withdrew his regiments off the hill back to McDowell. His men had inflicted 499 casualties with a loss of 256 of their own men. In the early morning hours of 9 May Schenck withdrew both brigades northward toward Franklin, where Frémont met him with reinforcements on 13 May. Jackson followed the bluecoats for two days, then broke off his pursuit and returned to Staunton. Having repelled Frémont's advance in the Alleghenies, Jackson could now turn on Banks' force in the Shenandoah.

Jackson's men joined with Ewell's division at Conrad's Store and moved against Banks who had been forced to spread his weakened command across the Valley north of Massanutten Mountain. By 13 May Banks' main force occupied Strasburg with 5,000 men, while another 1,000 Federals under Col. John R. Kenly guarded the Union line of communications to the east at Front



General Lee
(Library of Congress)

Royal. General Shields' division was already east of the Blue Ridge heading for Fredericksburg. With its 16,000 men, Jackson's Army of the Valley could expect an advantage wherever it struck.

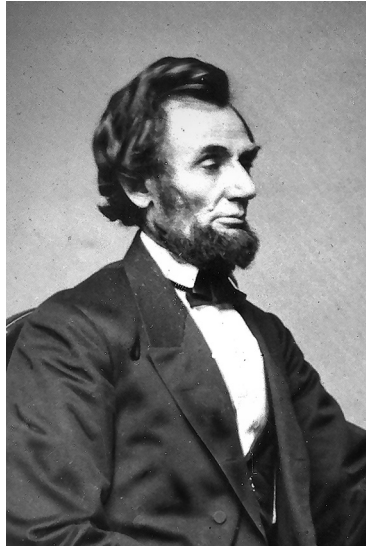
After a short rest at New Market, General Jackson set off down the Valley. Abandoning the Valley Pike, he turned his army east over Massanutten Mountain, and then headed north to Front Royal. On 23 May, over 4,000 Confederate troops surprised Kenly's Federals and drove them through the town in disorder. The Northerners attempted to make a stand on Camp Hill and later at Guard Hill, but as they retreated north to Cedarville, two Confederate cavalry charges routed the entire Union force, and almost 900 Federals surrendered.

When Banks learned about the Front Royal defeat that night, he realized that his mission had changed from defending the Valley to saving his army. Believing the Confederate force to be small, he delayed packing his supplies until the morning of 24 May. While on the road for Winchester he learned that the entire Army of the Valley was nearby and moving in his direction. "It was determined, therefore, to enter the lists with the enemy in a race or a battle, as he should choose," Banks wrote later.

The Confederates caught up with Banks' column at Newtown, eight miles south of Winchester on the Valley Pike. Jackson's vanguard struck from the east, drove away the wagon guards, and captured fifty of Banks' wagons full of supplies and arms. This haul, which the Confederates promptly put to use for their army, gave the Federal commander the unfortunate nickname of "Commissary Banks." The two armies skirmished as Banks' men retired northward to Winchester, reaching the town that night. On 25 May, Banks sent his remaining wagons north and made a stand outside Winchester to buy time. The Union troops held off Confederate attacks until their right flank was overrun, which caused the entire Union position to collapse. General Banks rallied his fleeing men as they hurried through the town, and managed to save most of his wagons from the Southern cavalry as the Federals headed for the Potomac at Williamsport. Still, Jackson's army captured 1,750 Union prisoners in and beyond Winchester, including sick and wounded Union soldiers left in hospitals.

In Washington, President Lincoln and Secretary Stanton reacted quickly to this new Confederate surge. After ensuring Washington's security, Lincoln ordered Frémont's troops at Franklin to march to Harrisonburg, which would place them in

the Confederate rear. Shields' division had just arrived in Fredericksburg, but on 25 May Lincoln turned it around and sent it back toward the Valley. McDowell's large corps, preparing to march from Fredericksburg to Richmond to join McClellan's army, also received orders to move to the Valley. Lincoln saw an opportunity to trap Jackson's army around Winchester, and sought to place Shields, McDowell, and Frémont in positions to crush the Southern force. By the end of May, Union Brig. Gen. Rufus Saxton had 7,000 men at Harpers Ferry, and Banks' 7,000 men were still at Williamsport. Shields had



President Lincoln
(Library of Congress)

11,000 men twenty miles east of Front Royal, and Brig. Gen. John W. Geary maintained a small Federal force of 2,000 men at Middleburg east of the Blue Ridge. The Confederates were near Harpers Ferry, dangerously exposed to the prospect of converging Federal forces. On 29 May Lincoln directed Shields' division to Front Royal and Strasburg. Frémont's army, on half-rations since the battle of McDowell, faced a road from Franklin to Harrisonburg that was stoutly defended by Confederate cavalry. Instead of proceeding to Harrisonburg, Frémont moved northeast to Moorefield on his own initiative, reaching there on 29 May with nearly fifteen thousand troops. His command was so badly strung out on the march that he paused for a day to rest his weary soldiers. As his men rested, Frémont received new orders from Lincoln to move to Strasburg and join Shields' division. Lincoln now tried to create a pincer movement to block Jackson's retreat, but both jaws of the pincer were independent of each other.

Effective reconnaissance by his cavalry kept "Stonewall" Jackson aware of the threat to his rear at Strasburg. His closest units stood thirteen miles away at Winchester, while others

near Harpers Ferry were over thirty miles from Strasburg. Jackson immediately set about escaping the trap, dispatching his cavalry to delay the Federals while his infantry marched up the Valley Pike.

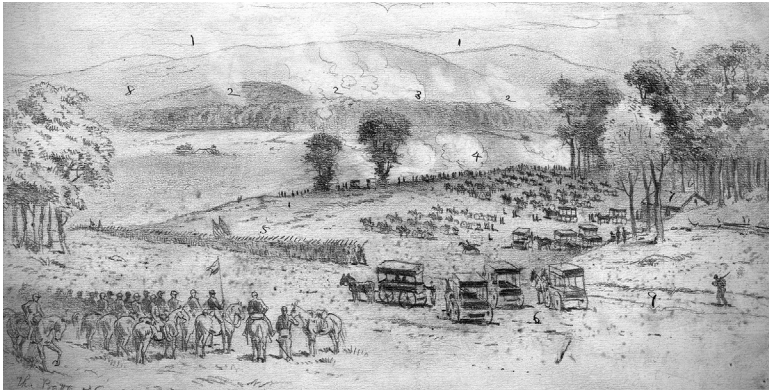
When he received his new orders directing a push to Strasburg, Frémont stripped his army of all baggage and impedimenta except ammunition and a few days' rations. On 31 May he marched east but ran afoul of poor roads and Ewell's Confederates. Ignorant of the overall Federal plan, Frémont chose to deploy and skirmish, but his troops were held up again on 1 June, northwest of Strasburg.

Meanwhile Shields advanced his division on 30 May, and by dusk Kimball's brigade had retaken Front Royal from the Confederates. Shields' troops spent the night in Front Royal, and the next day found that the Confederates blocked their route westward. Kimball's men skirmished with the enemy, while General Shields took no further action. He later disingenuously claimed he "would have occupied Strasburg, but dare[d] not interfere with what was designed for Frémont." This command confusion delayed the Federals as much as any Confederate action.

The Federal pincers finally closed on 2 June when the vanguards of Frémont's and Shields' columns met near Strasburg. By then it was too late—Jackson's force had escaped up the valley, while the Federals had to be content to nip at his rear guard. Frémont's men chased the Confederates along the Valley Pike, while Shields' division headed south on Massanutten's east side, seeking to get in front of the Army of the Valley and trap it between the two Federal commands. General McDowell was left to the rear at Front Royal, while Banks was at Harpers Ferry.

Jackson's army turned and fought a sharp engagement with Frémont's troops at Harrisonburg on 6 June, then moved southeast to Port Republic on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, where Jackson hoped to take a central position against the converging Federal columns. Frémont moved his troops southeast on the Port Republic Road from Harrisonburg on 8 June in pursuit of Jackson, but ran across Ewell's Confederate division posted astride the road on a ridge near the hamlet of Cross Keys. Fighting raged most of the day, during which Frémont was repulsed. Ewell withdrew from the field that night to Port Republic, leaving only a brigade to watch the enemy. On the

following day, Jackson's united command defeated two brigades of Shields' division north of Port Republic after heavy fighting. Frémont failed to reach the field in time to support Shields' troops. In just over two hours, Jackson had won a convincing victory. Frémont withdrew his command to Harrisonburg, while Shields marched north along the Shenandoah River toward Front Royal, leaving the Confederate Army of the Valley to disengage south toward the Virginia Central Railroad. These movements brought the Shenandoah Valley campaign to a close.



The Battle of Cross Keys, Sunday June 7th [sic] 1862, by Edwin Forbes
(Library of Congress)

On 9 June, the day of Jackson's victory at Port Republic, Lincoln corrected his error of employing multiple, independent armies and reorganized the Union forces in the Shenandoah Valley into a unified command with a single mission. The president concluded in a message to his commanders that "Richmond is the principal point for our active operation." Correctly deducing the Confederate goal of diverting Federal forces to the Valley, he wrote "we should stay on the defensive everywhere else, and direct as much force as possible to Richmond." He severed the Mountain Department's western section so Frémont could focus on operations in the Shenandoah. Banks' troops moved to Front Royal, while McDowell's corps returned to Manassas and Fredericksburg. These redeployments showed Lincoln's belated maturation as a strategist; never again would he allow himself to be as distracted from the main objectives of a campaign as he was by Jackson in

1862. Lincoln also began his search for a single commander to unite these forces into one army.

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST RICHMOND

While Union and Confederate forces maneuvered in the Shenandoah Valley, the Union Army of the Potomac attempted to claim the major prize—Richmond. McClellan had a powerful army to accomplish his task. Initially, McClellan organized his forces into four army corps—the I Corps under McDowell, the II Corps under Brig. Gen. Edwin V. Sumner, the III Corps of Brig. Gen. Samuel P. Heintzelman, and Brig. Gen. Erasmus D. Keyes' IV Corps. In May, he created two additional corps, the V Corps under Brig. Gen. Fitz John Porter and the VI Corps under Brig. Gen. William B. Franklin. Moving in stages by water from Alexandria to Fort Monroe by 1 April 50,000 men had arrived there, with another 50,000 on the way. The army itself was confident that McClellan's planned advance via Yorktown to Richmond would meet with success.

Opposing McClellan initially was a force of 10,000 Confederates under Maj. Gen. John B. Magruder, who dug in across the peninsula between the York and the James east of Yorktown. His command, known as the Army of the Peninsula, had been in the area for nearly a year since the Battle at Big Bethel in June 1861. Magruder, known as "Prince John" for his flamboyant dress and manner, energetically prepared to defend against the Federal advance. Using impressed slaves to build fortifications across the peninsula from Yorktown to the James River, his men also dammed several waterways to increase the area's considerable wetlands to channel a Union attack. Magruder also enhanced his position with deceptions that included marching his men in circles and dragging branches behind horses to stir dust and give the appearance of greater numbers to the enemy. In other places he used Quaker guns to produce a similar illusion. He also called for reinforcements, and Johnston's army moved toward Yorktown from Gordonsville.

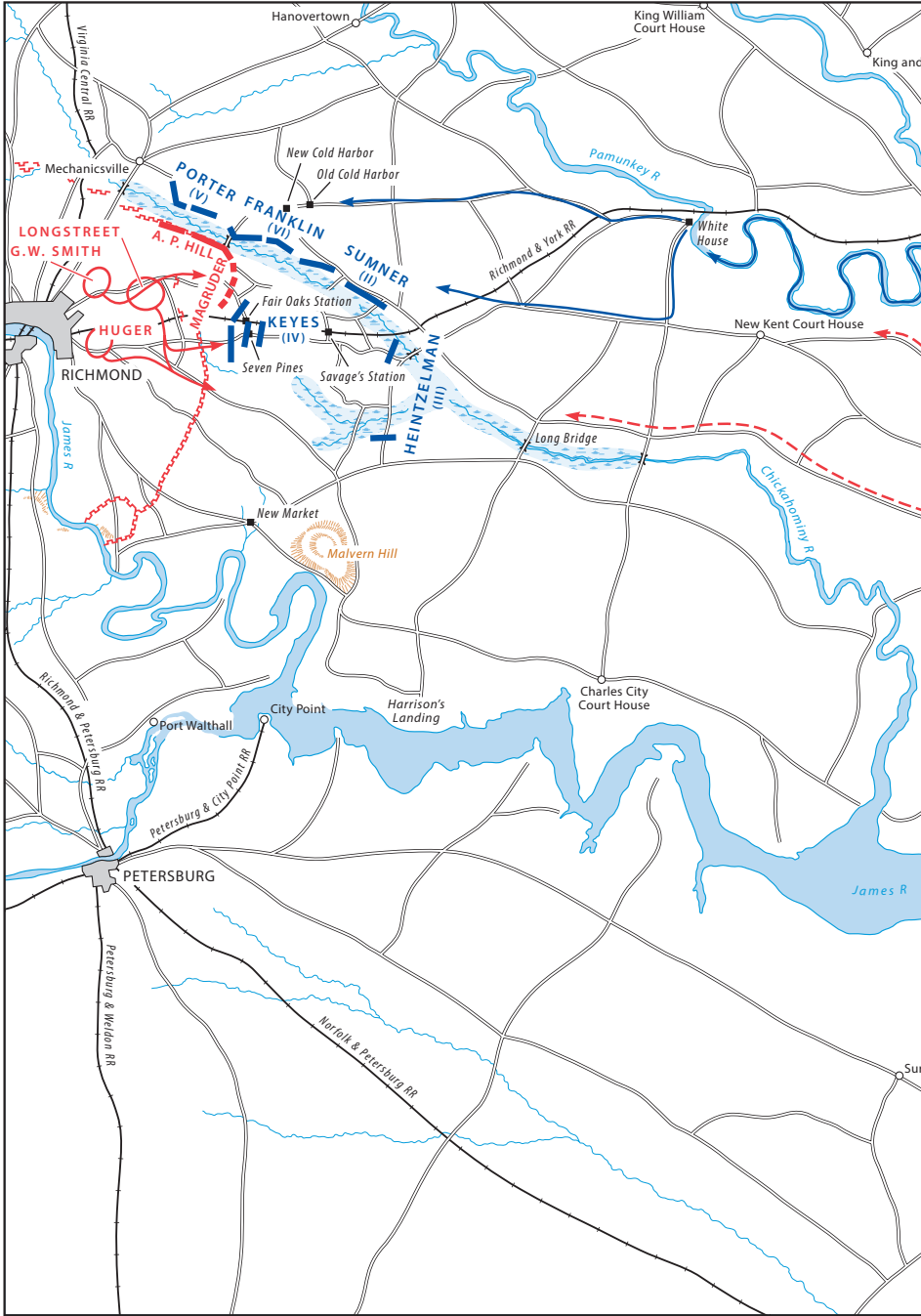
General McClellan's state of mind negatively impacted his campaign against Richmond. His private letters at this time reveal a man who preferred maneuver over battle and seemed to doubt whether the Confederates would fight at all. McClellan came to detest Lincoln, Stanton, and the Washington bureaucracy, writing on 1 April, "Officially, I am glad to be away from that sink of

iniquity.” The commanding general called Lincoln’s decision to cancel McDowell’s orders to join him in early April “the most infamous thing that history has recorded.” On 18 April he made an alarming admission: “The great trouble I have is a want of good staff officers. . . . Many of my aides are excellent but the trouble is in the Chiefs of Departments whose lack of experience I am obliged to supply by personal labor.” This attitude toward his staff—many of whom he had personally appointed—did not change, and several times during the campaign McClellan’s health suffered due to overwork.

McClellan’s infantry first probed the Yorktown lines on 5 April, and found them more formidable than expected. Poor maps combined with rainy weather hampered Union operations, so McClellan decided to besiege the Confederate position. Meanwhile Johnston’s Confederate Army of Northern Virginia marched down the peninsula and reinforced the Yorktown defenses. On 12 April Magruder’s Army of the Peninsula was absorbed into General Johnston’s army, and on 17 April Johnston arrived on the scene. He had 62,000 men holding Yorktown and a secondary defensive line at Williamsburg.

McClellan’s intelligence organization detected Johnston’s arrival at Yorktown but misread the size of his army. At this time the Army of the Potomac used balloons for aerial reconnaissance and employed an intelligence organization headed by the renowned Allan W. Pinkerton, a former Chicago detective. Balloonists often could tell enemy positions but revealed little about his strength or intentions. Pinkerton demonstrated a penchant for telling his chief what he wanted to hear, which meant McClellan consistently overestimated the enemy strength, and was accordingly overcautious in his operations. (*See Map 2.*)

For the next four weeks both armies remained in their positions and traded artillery fire. An anxious Lincoln wrote to McClellan on 9 April, cautioning him that time was not on his side. “It is indispensable to you that you strike a blow. . . . The country will not fail to note—is now noting—the present hesitation to move upon an intrenched enemy, is but the story of Manassas repeated.” The letter closed with the imperative “*you must act.*” On 16 April a Vermont brigade from the IV Corps probed the Confederate line along the Warwick River at Dam Number 1; after finding a weakness it broke into the Confederate position but withdrew for lack of reinforcements. General Johnston later inspected the Dam

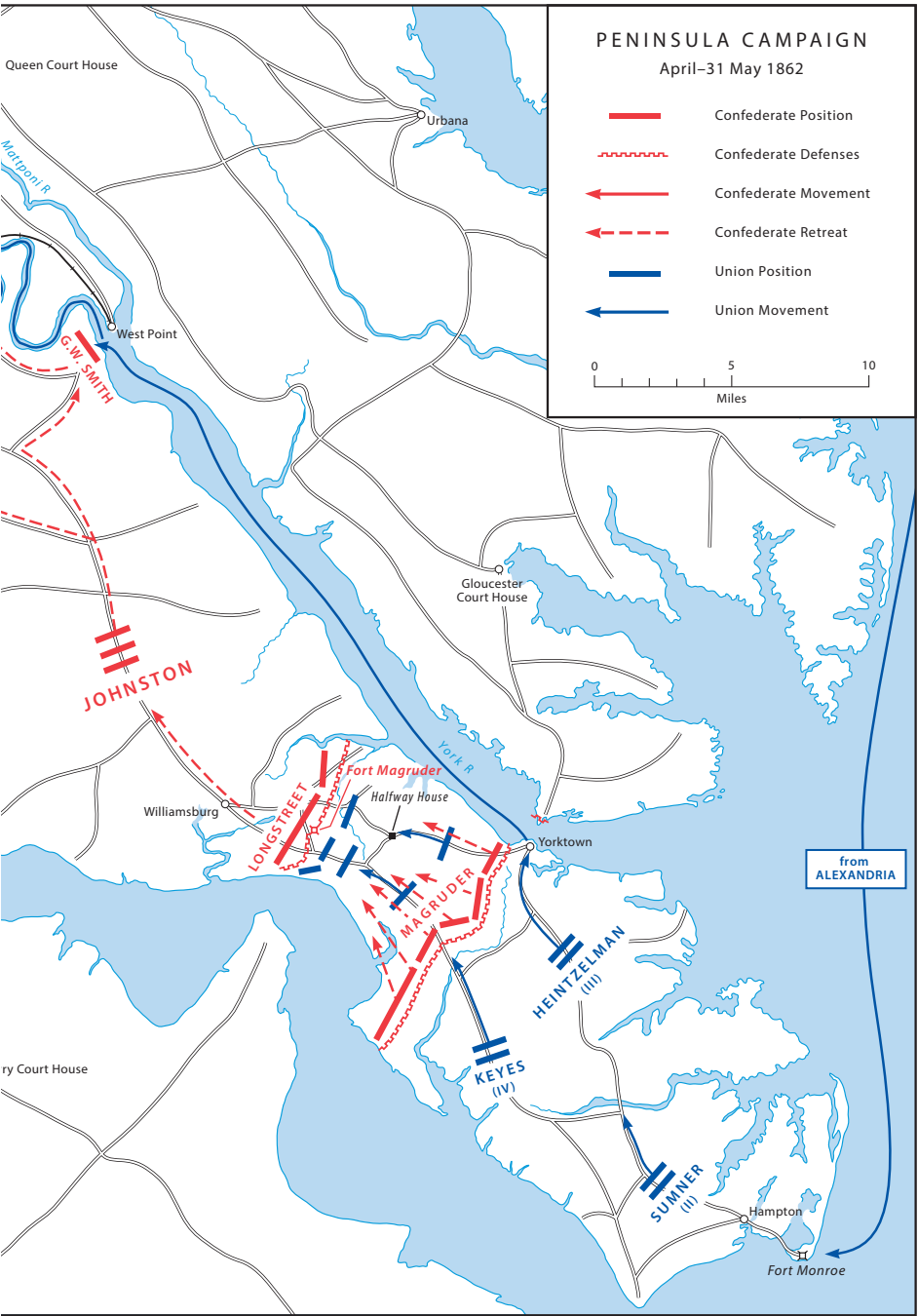
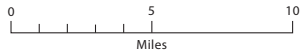


MAP 2

PENINSULA CAMPAIGN

April–31 May 1862

- Confederate Position
- - - Confederate Defenses
- ← Confederate Movement
- - - ← Confederate Retreat
- Union Position
- ← Union Movement



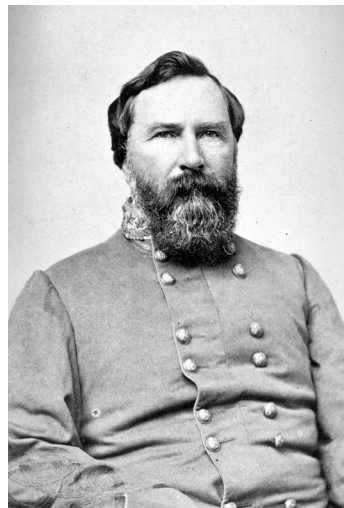
Number 1 position and declared it so vulnerable that “no one but McClellan could have hesitated to attack.”

McClellan’s siege preparations continued, and he planned to start reducing the Confederate fortifications on 5 May. On the other side of the lines, Johnston worried about his own position at Yorktown. He doubted his army’s ability to hold out against the obviously superior Federal firepower being positioned against his lines. Moreover, the Confederate flanks by the York and James Rivers were vulnerable to Union Navy gunfire, and the possibility of an amphibious turning movement could not be overlooked. Federal shelling near Yorktown on 1 May amplified Johnston’s concerns. After a council of war that night, he directed that his army abandon its defensive works and withdraw toward Richmond starting the next day. Much of the rebel army’s heavy ordnance had to be left behind. On 2 May the supply trains and leading troops started west, while the rear guard left the following evening.

The Confederate withdrawal caught McClellan off guard. He ordered General Sumner to take the II Corps and III Corps in pursuit and sent for transports to embark a force to move up the York and block the Confederate line of retreat. Muddy roads slowed Johnston’s retrograde movement and forced him to pause at Williamsburg to defend a thin line of works outside the town. They consisted of fourteen small forts anchored by the imposing Fort Magruder in the center astride the major roads from Hampton and Yorktown. On 5 May, Federal cavalry and two infantry divisions attacked this line held by Maj. Gen. James Longstreet’s Confederate troops. Both sides were reinforced during the day, and after heavy fighting, the Confederates withdrew farther up the Peninsula during the night.

On 7 May General Franklin’s Union division arrived at Eltham’s Landing, near West Point on the York River, in an effort to envelop the Confederates’ north flank on

General Longstreet
(Library of Congress)

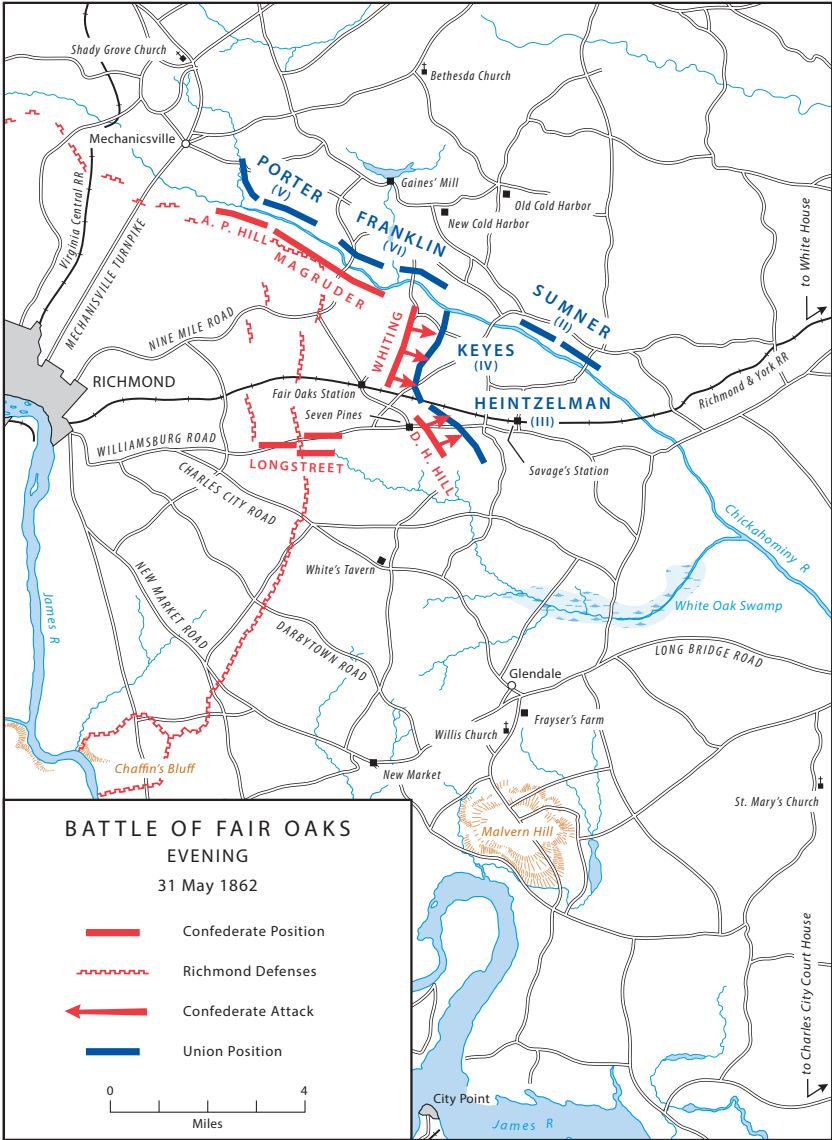


the Peninsula. This maneuver also threatened the Southern army's supply trains as they retreated west. Johnston had foreseen such an operation, and he detached two brigades from Maj. Gen. Gustavus W. Smith's division to block Franklin's threat. Strong attacks prevented Franklin from interfering with the Confederates' withdrawal toward Richmond.

McClellan continued his plodding march toward Richmond despite Lincoln's calls for a more aggressive pace. As the Army of the Potomac drew closer to the capital, both belligerents sensed the campaign was approaching its climax. McClellan remained convinced he was outnumbered and beseeched Washington for reinforcements. In response the War Department ordered McDowell's I Corps to march overland from Fredericksburg to Richmond. Meanwhile Johnston deployed his army six miles east of Richmond to oppose McClellan's advance, using the swampy Chickahominy River as a natural defense.

Logistical considerations now weighed on General McClellan. He had to decide which river—the York or the James—to use for his main line of supply. The York was completely in Federal hands and safe for Federal shipping, but control of the James remained uncertain. In the end, McClellan established his base at West Point on the York and used the railroad leading west toward Richmond to supply his army. This decision made geography a critical consideration. The Chickahominy River ran east of Richmond in a northwest-southeast direction and separated West Point from the Confederate capital. To shield his line of communications and threaten the city, McClellan chose to straddle the river with his army. It was a calculated risk, because one wing could be defeated without the prospect of quick reinforcement from the other, especially in times of high water levels. Most of the Union troops stayed north of the Chickahominy, but the III and IV Corps deployed south of it near Seven Pines and Fair Oaks Station. McClellan later defended this deployment scheme by stating that he expected McDowell's force to arrive from the north, but on 25 May President Lincoln had ordered it back toward the Shenandoah Valley to face "Stonewall" Jackson's threatening maneuvers.

Although Johnston's retreat up the Peninsula alarmed Davis and Lee, Johnston also probed the Federal positions for an opportunity to attack. He decided to strike at the two Federal commands south of the Chickahominy, Keyes' IV Corps and Heintzelman's III Corps. On the rainy morning of 31 May he set 42,000 Confederates



MAP 3

in motion against Keyes' position at Seven Pines and Fair Oaks Station (*Map 3*).

Several roads radiated eastward from Richmond toward the Federal lines. These were, from north to south, the Mechanicsville Turnpike, Nine Mile Road, Williamsburg Road, Charles City Road, Darbytown Road, and New Market Road. Johnston's complex plan called for Longstreet's reinforced division to march east on the Nine Mile Road and hit Keyes' right while Maj. Gen. D. H. Hill's division attacked along the Williamsburg Road and fixed the enemy in their front. Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Huger's division would try to turn the Federal left south of Seven Pines.

The operation soon went awry because of haphazard staff work and poor leadership. Longstreet took the wrong road and came up behind Hill. The coordinated attack scheduled for the morning turned into a series of fierce frontal assaults by Hill's men against the Union lines. Beginning at 1300, they ultimately routed Brig. Gen. Silas F. Casey's inexperienced Federal division of the IV Corps and pushed the IV Corps into the III Corps. Heintzelman called for help, and McClellan ordered General Sumner to rush reinforcements from his II Corps southward across the Chickahominy to assist beleaguered Union troops at Seven Pines. After a difficult march in deep mud, Sumner's lead division under Brig. Gen. John Sedgwick arrived on the Federal right about 1630.

At Confederate army headquarters, poor reporting from the front made the situation appear confused. Johnston sought to regain control of the battle and personally led Maj. Gen. W. H. C. "Chase" Whiting's division down the Nine Mile Road. Expecting to hit an open flank, the Confederates instead crashed into Sedgwick's waiting troops. Renewed Southern attacks failed to crack Sedgwick's line, and a Federal counterattack took 200 Confederate prisoners. While watching the action, Johnston was seriously wounded and carried off the field. Darkness ended the fighting for the day, and both sides slept on the battlefield.

As the next senior officer, General Smith took command of the Confederate forces and renewed the attack against the IV Corps on 1 June at Fair Oaks Station. The reinforced Federal line north of the Richmond and York River Railroad held firm, and that afternoon the Confederates withdrew back to Richmond. The Army of the Potomac sustained 5,000 casualties of 34,000 engaged, while the Army of Northern Virginia lost 6,000 men, including the army's commander, out of about 39,000 engaged. This debacle

represented the nadir of Confederate fortunes before Richmond in 1862.

General McClellan had been ill during Seven Pines and was unable to direct his army until 1 June. The next day he wrote to his wife, complaining of exhaustion and ill health, and also admitting, “I am tired of the sickening sight of the battlefield, with its mangled corpses and poor suffering wounded! Victory has no charms for me when purchased at such cost.” Meanwhile, late in the day General Lee assumed command of the Army of Northern Virginia by order of President Davis, who lacked confidence in Smith’s emotional state and command abilities.

The opposing lines now settled into a lull, and despite the urging of his engineer officers to advance toward Richmond and put the Chickahominy River behind him, McClellan held the Army of the Potomac astride the Chickahominy and ordered his men to dig in. McClellan begged Washington for more troops, claiming that the Confederate army contained nearly 200,000 men, rather than the 70,000 actually under Lee’s command.

In contrast to McClellan, who preferred to remain at his headquarters, Lee visited his new command and personally scouted the lines. The Confederate commander improved the Richmond fortifications but positioned his troops forward of those defenses to preserve the army’s opportunity to maneuver. Reacting to McClellan’s passivity, on 11 June Lee detached two infantry divisions to Jackson’s Army of the Valley for use against Frémont and Shields. Once those operations concluded, Lee expected Jackson to “move rapidly to Ashland by rail or otherwise . . . and sweep down between the Chickahominy and the Pamunkey cutting up the enemy’s communications” in concert with a general offensive by the Army of Northern Virginia.

Also on 11 June Lee sent his cavalry commander, Brig. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart, to scout McClellan’s right flank north of the Chickahominy. While on this reconnaissance mission, Stuart ran into a Union cavalry brigade that blocked his return, so the Confederate horseman had his column ride entirely around the Army of the Potomac, raising havoc in the Union rear and embarrassing McClellan. Upon Stuart’s return to Confederate lines, Lee learned that the Federal north flank was “in the air” in the vicinity of Mechanicsville, and only Porter’s V Corps was positioned north of the Chickahominy, as the others had shifted to the south side of the river. Here was an opening for a counteroffensive.

General Lee took advantage of the Federal commander's inactivity. The Army of the Valley (Jackson's command retained this name until early August) started toward Richmond on 18 June. Jackson proceeded to Richmond ahead of his men to confer with Lee, who had decided to concentrate his offensive against Porter's 20,000 men north of the Chickahominy. Leaving Magruder and Huger with only 25,000 men south of the Chickahominy River, the remaining Confederate forces—60,000 in all—would move against Porter's position near the hamlet of Mechanicsville. Lee desired Jackson to get behind Porter's troops and cut his supply lines. If all went according to Lee's plan, the V Corps would be surrounded and crushed before it could be rescued. The attack was scheduled for 26 June to give Jackson time to get his troops in position (*Map 4*).

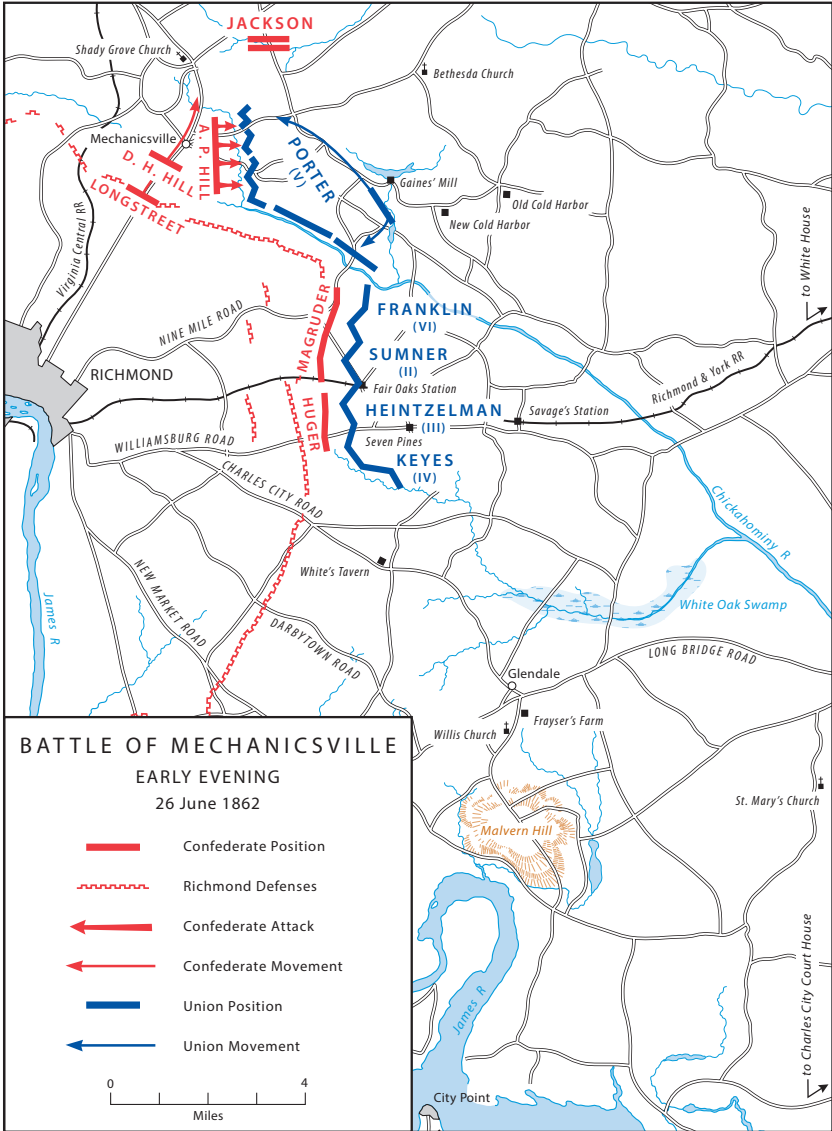
The Union V Corps contained three divisions under Brig. Gens. George W. Morell, George Sykes, and George A. McCall. Sykes' division consisted almost entirely of U.S. Regular infantry and artillery. Porter's troops held strong lines along the Chickahominy and Beaver Dam Creek, a swampy stream astride Old Cold Harbor Road and Old Church Road. They were dug in and had made good use of the creek's steep banks and nearby hills to aid their defense.

Jackson's troops were moving toward Porter's position by 0300 on 26 June but soon met Federal skirmishers and roadblocks through the swampy terrain. The humid climate wore down and dehydrated Jackson's weary men. For most of the Army of the Valley's soldiers 26 June 1862 was spent marching, then bivouacking at 1700 north of Mechanicsville near Shady Grove Church, without seeing the enemy or firing a shot.

Along the Mechanicsville Turnpike, Lee waited in vain to hear Jackson's guns, which would signal a general attack on the Union lines behind

General Porter
(Library of Congress)





MAP 4

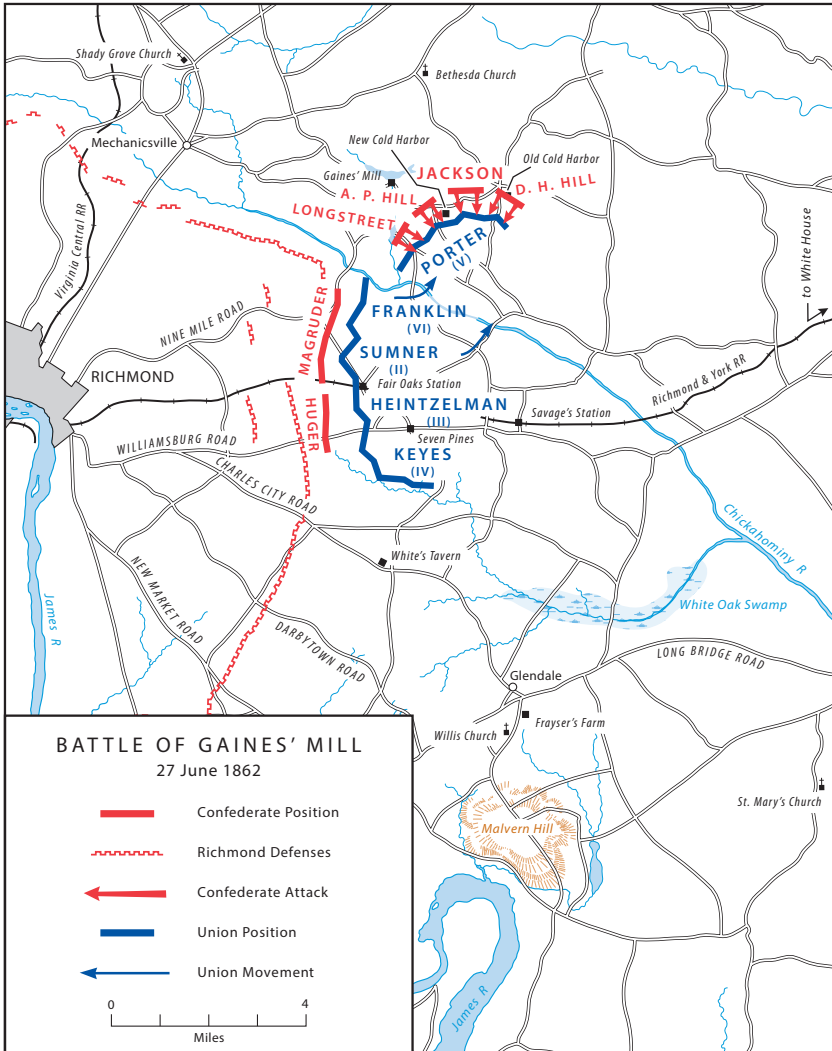
Beaver Dam Creek. Three divisions under Generals Longstreet, A. P. Hill, and D. H. Hill stood poised to attack. Neither Lee nor Jackson sent couriers or staff officers to communicate with the other that day, so Lee was unaware of the Army of the Valley's slow progress. Finally at 1500, without orders from Lee, A. P. Hill sent his men forward. McCall's Federals were ready and, from their strong defenses, opened a fire that Porter later stated "strewed the road and hill-side with hundreds of dead and wounded, and drove the main body of the survivors back in rapid flight to and beyond Mechanicsville." The Confederates re-formed and attacked again, but most of A. P. Hill's men never made it across Beaver Dam Creek. Darkness ended the fighting; Porter counted only 350 casualties while inflicting 1,300 on the Confederates.

That night McClellan, who had been on the battlefield for most of the day, conferred with Porter. Upon hearing news of Jackson's arrival near the battlefield after dark, McClellan ordered the V Corps to fall back eastward toward the Chickahominy. In the early morning hours of 27 June, Porter's 20,000 men retired two miles to a ridge near Gaines' Mill overlooking the vital crossroads at both Old Cold Harbor and New Cold Harbor. Porter's flanks rested on the river, while the steep valley of Boatswain's Creek covered part of his corps' front. By 1000 the Federals were positioned in a one and a half mile arc and had fortified their line. Fearing an attack from Richmond against his lines south of the Chickahominy—in reality a bold front put up by General Magruder—McClellan chose to send only Brig. Gen. Henry W. Slocum's VI Corps division of 7,000 men to bolster Porter's lines.

Lee and Jackson met on the morning of the 27 June and laid plans to attack Porter with their combined strength of about 60,000 men. They sought to move quickly before McClellan recognized the Confederates' weakened position south of the river and either attacked Richmond or reinforced Porter. While Lee's divisions approached the V Corps from the north, the Army of the Valley would move to Old Cold Harbor and hit the Federals from the northeast (*Map 5*).

The Confederates began their attacks on the V Corps at 1400 with the divisions of Longstreet and A. P. Hill, which advanced against the Union center under a murderous fire. General Porter had a panoramic view of the action, reporting that "brigade after brigade seemed almost to melt away before the concentrated fire of our artillery and infantry; yet others pressed on, followed by

supports as dashing and brave as their predecessors, despite their heavy losses.” D. H. Hill subsequently committed his division on Longstreet’s left, but it too failed to crack the Federal line. By 1600 the Confederate attacks had all been repulsed with heavy casualties.



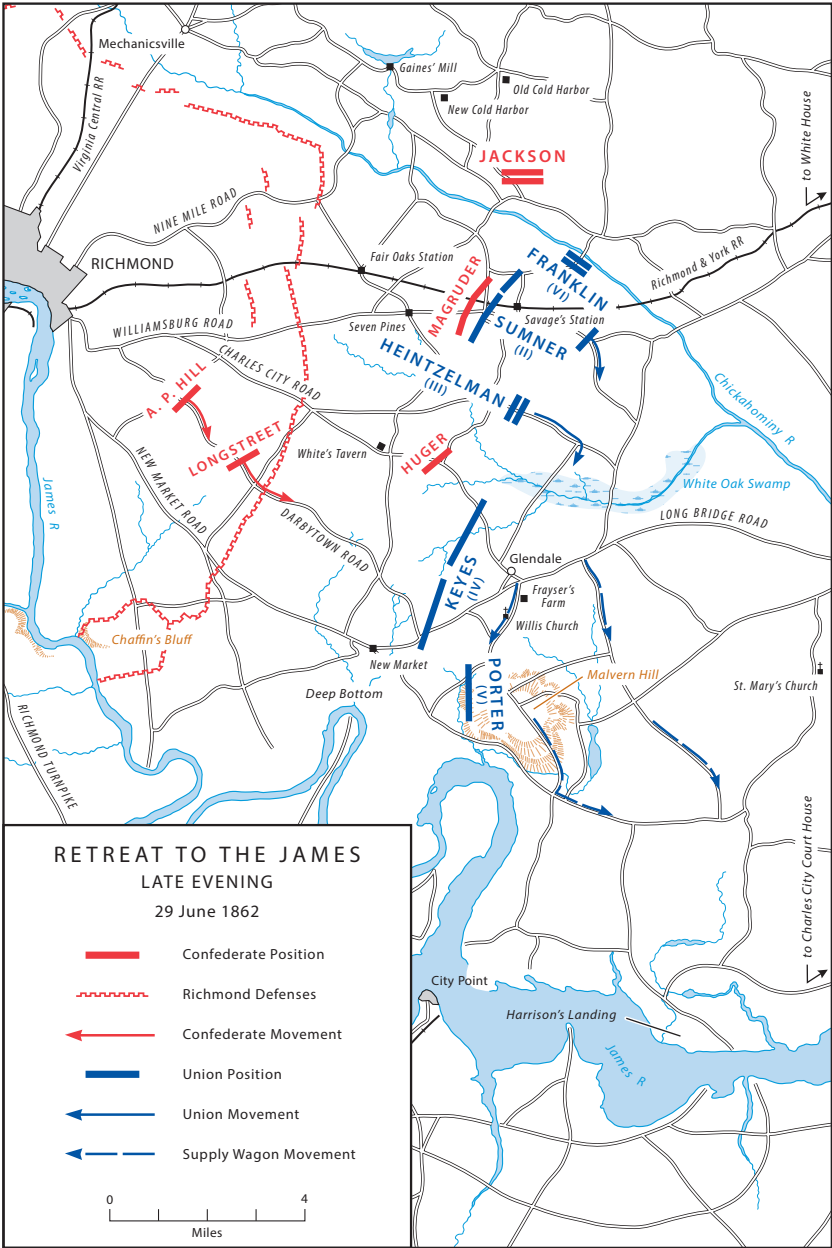
MAP 5



The Charge of the Fifth Regulars at Gaines' Mill, 27th of June, 1862,
by William Trego
(U.S. Cavalry Museum, Fort Riley)

During the lull, Porter reinforced his lines with Slocum's division, his only reserve troops. Wary of additional Confederate assaults, he asked McClellan for reinforcements. Meanwhile two of Jackson's divisions, under Ewell and Brig. Gen. Charles S. Winder, finally got into position opposite Porter's right after a confused and circuitous march. They attacked at 1700 against Sykes' regulars, who held firm against determined assaults. After an hour of fighting, a lull descended on the battlefield, and by this time Porter's exhausted command was running low on ammunition.

With the sun setting, Lee decided to launch his entire force simultaneously against the Federals and win the day by strength of numbers. By 1830 he had amassed 50,000 Confederates to assault Porter's line, the largest single attack Lee's army would make in the war. Spearheaded by Brig. Gen. John B. Hood's brigade, the Confederates swarmed toward the Union position and broke into the V Corps' lines all along the front, capturing much of Porter's artillery. Increasing darkness and a desperate Union charge by Brig. Gen. Philip St. George Cooke's cavalry brigade halted the



MAP 6

Confederate advance, enabling the Federals to withdraw from the field and march toward the Chickahominy River bridges, which they destroyed after crossing.

The Battle of Gaines' Mill was the largest and bloodiest of the Seven Days Battles, and it was an unquestioned defeat for McClellan's army. Porter's command suffered almost 7,000 casualties, including 2,800 prisoners, and had to leave the field. Lee's army, however, suffered about 9,000 men killed, wounded, and missing. Strategically, Porter's retreat exposed McClellan's supply line to West Point and forced him to change his logistical base to the James River. The battle was important to the Confederates' morale as General Lee's first tactical victory as the army's commander (*Map 6*).

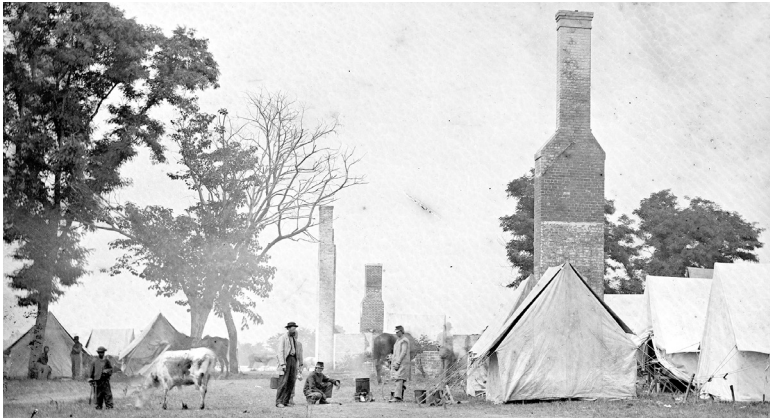
Late on the night of 27 June, General Porter rode to army headquarters a mile south of the Chickahominy for a conference with General McClellan and the other corps commanders. McClellan—ill and exhausted—informed his subordinates that he would change the army's base of supplies from the York to the James, and he directed that the army's wagon trains start south via the road passing White Oak Swamp, Glendale, and Malvern Hill to Harrison's Landing on the James River. The troops would follow in their wake. The commanding general remained a passive figure, showing little offensive initiative, waiting for Lee to dictate the events of the campaign. McClellan's orders reflected this mindset—he ordered all his corps to begin the movement to the James the next day, 28 June, with Keyes' corps in the lead, then Porter's battered brigades, followed by the rest of the army. The huge supply base at the White House plantation near Eltham's Landing was abandoned.

Both armies were in motion on 28 June. McClellan spent the day directing the movement of his supplies and trains from Savage's Station southward, leaving his corps commanders to plan and execute their individual parts of the retreat. Lee remained north of the Chickahominy with his main body, probing to discover McClellan's intentions. When late in the afternoon Lee discovered that McClellan was moving south, he determined to catch the Army of the Potomac north of White Oak Swamp and Glendale and defeat McClellan's column in detail. He ordered the commands of Huger and Magruder to attack the next day at Savage's Station, while Jackson's troops harried the Union retreat from the north. A. P. Hill and Longstreet moved their divisions

across the Chickahominy to strike the Union flank to the south. Poor staff work hindered Lee's understanding of the situation and hampered execution of his plans—themes that would recur over the next several days.

On 29 June the Army of the Potomac continued its march toward the James. Porter's V Corps held Malvern Hill, while Keyes' IV Corps extended the line north. The II, III, and VI Corps were at Savage's Station on the Richmond and York River Railroad, covering the last withdrawal of the army's stores. Per McClellan's orders, all supplies that could not be moved were destroyed. McClellan also left behind in the army's general hospital thousands of men who were too seriously ill or wounded to be moved.

Ruins of the White House
(Library of Congress)

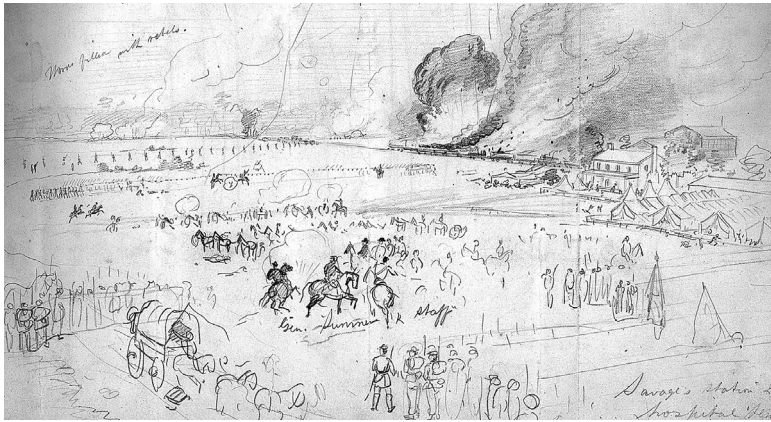


During the morning Magruder advanced east along the Williamsburg Road to probe the Union line at Savage's Station. Lee had ordered Magruder and his 14,000 men to attack and fix the Union rear guard in place while Jackson's army hit their northern flank and Huger's command clawed southward toward White Oak Swamp. Instead, Magruder halted his men when they encountered the first Federal outposts of Sumner's II Corps. After wasting hours in a futile effort to concentrate more troops, Magruder finally attacked Savage's Station in the late afternoon. After a short but sharp engagement, both sides disengaged. Sumner's troops

also delayed Huger's advance, while Jackson's command remained oddly idle all day north of the river repairing bridges and did not get into the fray.

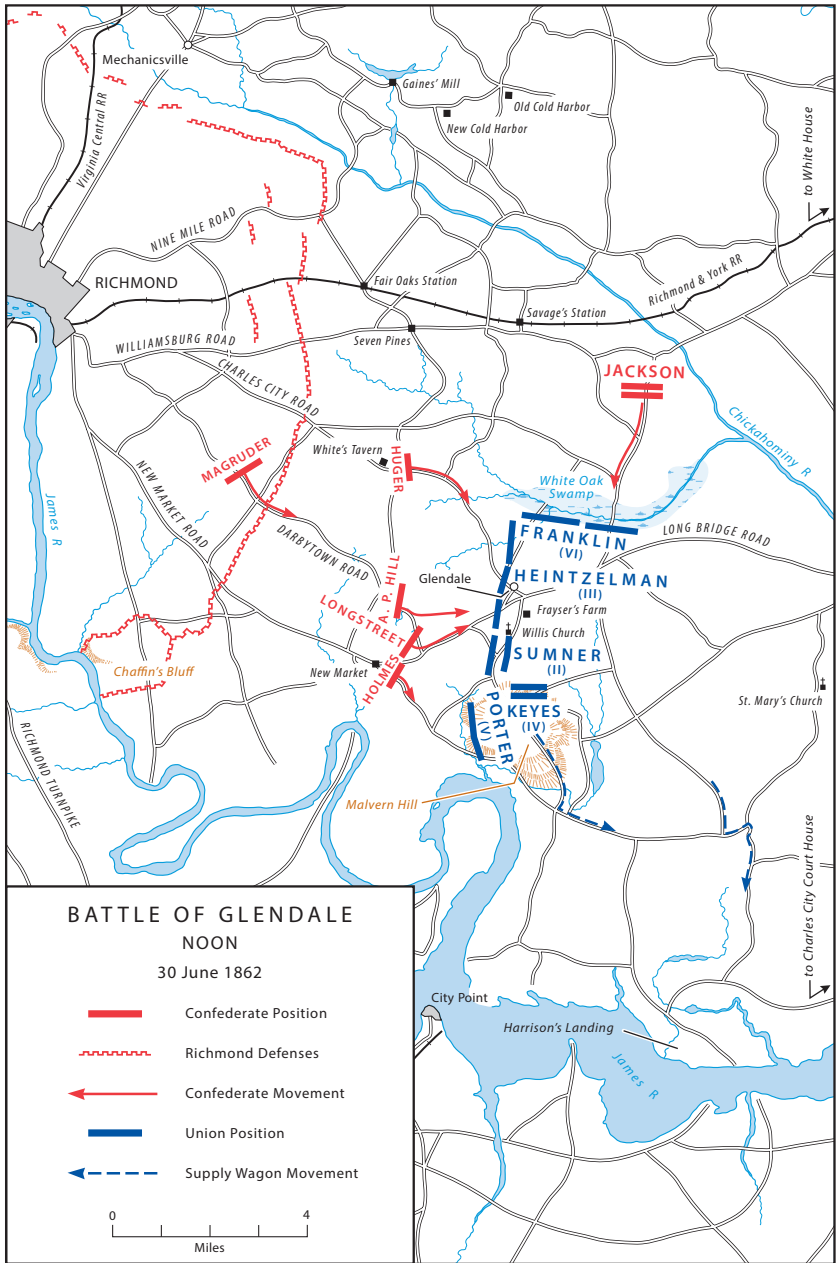
The Confederates had missed a golden opportunity to hit McClellan's retiring column on 29 June. Had Magruder attacked as ordered, he would have held a considerable part of the Federal army in place and opened the way for Huger to get in its rear. Instead, he had fought only mixed elements of the II and VI Corps, under the overall command of General Sumner as senior officer.

Commencement of the Battle of Savage's Station, Sunday June 29,
by Alfred Waud
(Library of Congress)



Federal command confusion had opened up gaps in the line after Heintzelman had decided on his own initiative to withdraw the III Corps in the afternoon and McClellan had acceded to Slocum's request to withdraw his division late in the day. Having escaped from a precarious position, the Federals spent the night retiring southward in a rainstorm.

The road to the James River headed south from Savage's Station for five miles before crossing White Oak Swamp two miles north of the Glendale crossroads. All Federal troops and trains had to pass the intersection and travel south along the Willis Church Road. Congestion necessitated a pause at Glendale on 30 June. McClellan set up a defense of two divisions under General Franklin covering the swamp, posting the rest of his available troops west of Glendale to defend the road network. He issued



MAP 7

no further orders and rode south to the James. At 1600 McClellan boarded the gunboat *Galena* on the James River. By seniority, General Sumner took charge at Glendale (*Map 7*).

Hoping to capture the stalled Federal supply trains and cut off Franklin from the rest of the Army of the Potomac, Lee sent Magruder and the division of Maj. Gen. Theophilus H. Holmes southward toward Malvern Hill while A. P. Hill, Longstreet, Huger, and Jackson converged on the Glendale intersection. The plan miscarried. Cannon fire from Federal batteries on Malvern Hill and gunboats on the James handily repulsed Holmes' inexperienced North Carolinians, while Magruder spent the day marching and countermarching in response to changing orders from General Lee. Huger found the Charles City Road blocked by trees felled by Federal pioneers, spent the day cutting a new path through thick forest, and took no part in the battle. Jackson likewise moved cautiously and his advance stalled at White Oak Swamp, about two miles north of the intersection. This left only the divisions of A. P. Hill and Longstreet advancing up the Darbytown and Long Bridge roads toward Glendale, where fierce and often hand-to-hand fighting erupted between the attackers and the Union divisions of Brig. Gens. Philip Kearny and Joseph Hooker, and General McCall. Thanks to Jackson's passivity, General Sumner was eventually able to transfer General Sedgwick's division from White Oak Swamp

Battle at White Oak Swamp Bridge, by Alfred Waud
(Library of Congress)



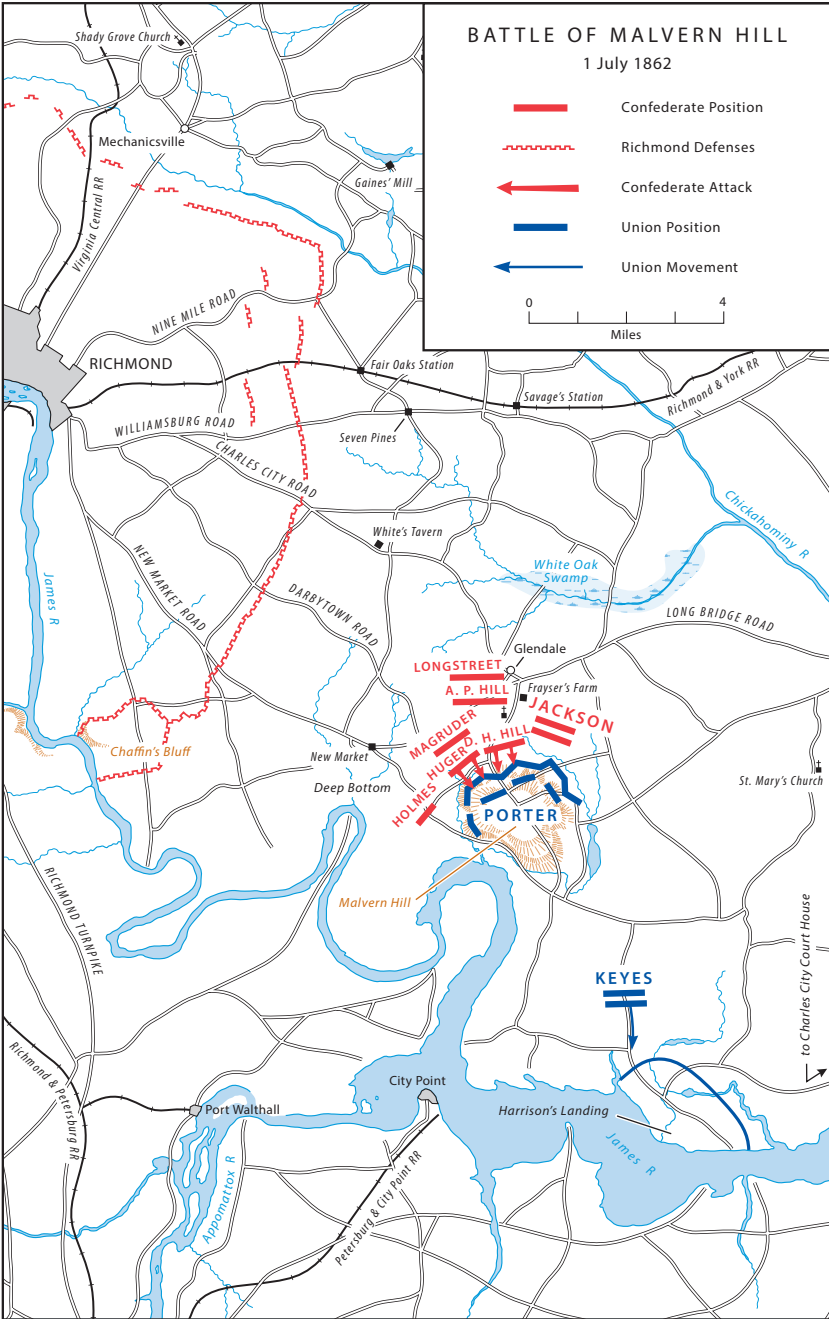
to Glendale to reinforce the hard-pressed Federals. Heavy fighting continued until 2030, but when darkness fell, the intersection remained in Union hands. During the night Sumner withdrew three miles down the Willis Church Road to Malvern Hill.

After being dispersed for days in retreat, the Army of the Potomac was now fused into one compact mass. The Federal position on the northern end of Malvern Hill on 1 July was strong. McClellan created a U-shaped line, with Porter's V Corps holding the left and center and Brig. Gen. Darius N. Couch's IV Corps division and Sumner's entire II Corps to the right and right rear. Open ground several hundred yards to their front gave the Union troops excellent fields of fire. After inspecting the line in the morning, McClellan retired to a Navy ship along the James River where he would remain for most of the day. He turned over control of the field to General Porter, despite the fact that General Sumner outranked Porter.

Central to the Union defense was Brig. Gen. Henry J. Hunt's reserve artillery, which combined with the various corps and divisional artillery batteries to stud the line with 107 cannon. Hunt set up an intricate fire plan that allowed him to concentrate thirty or more cannon onto one target. Most of the Federal gunners under Hunt's control were highly trained regular artillerists from the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th Artillery.

The Confederates approached Malvern Hill on 1 July from three directions. General Holmes' division skirmished along the River Road, while Magruder's command came onto the field from the northwest via Carter's Mill Road. Jackson's men marched via the Willis Church Road and deployed northeast of the Federal line. Lee planned a converging attack on the Federals and wanted to use his artillery first to soften up the position. The fire of Hunt's cannon suppressed many of the Southern batteries, and infantry probes toward Malvern Hill met with bloody repulses. Confederate shelling, however, had a cumulative effect. Most of their cannon fire overshot the main Federal battle line, striking the army's infantry reserves. The situation caused Sumner to pull his infantry back to a sheltered swale and to order Porter to follow suit. Porter refused to abide by Sumner's command and instead shifted some of his troops along the line to take the place of Sumner's departing regiments. (See *Map 8*.)

Lee witnessed these movements and interpreted them as a Federal retreat. Several of his subordinates also reported the same



MAP 8

information, prompting Lee to order an immediate attack. As General Porter recalled, “About 5:30 . . . the enemy opened upon [us] with artillery from nearly the whole of his front, and soon afterward pressed forward with his columns of infantry first on one [flank], then on the other, or both.”

Lee envisioned this charge as a grand coordinated assault, but it did not develop as expected. The Southern attacks were uncoordinated and piecemeal, and suffered high losses from the combined salvos of Hunt’s batteries. Salvos from Federal gunboats along the James River also tore into the Confederates, leading one southern officer to describe the scene as “not war, but murder.” Nonetheless, the steady Confederate pressure eroded Porter’s line to the point where his infantry wavered. Porter called up Hooker’s III Corps division and used it to launch a successful countercharge. By dark the battle lines had stabilized back in their starting positions, although firing continued into the night.

Just before 2100 a jubilant Porter reported to McClellan: “We have driven the enemy beyond the battlefield . . . we will hold our own and advance if you wish.” Instead McClellan, concerned about Stuart’s cavalry operating east of Malvern Hill and threatening communications between that point and the James, ordered a retreat to Harrison’s Landing, nine miles from Malvern Hill. The Federals withdrew during the night, and by dawn only a small

Battle of Malvern Hills fought on Tuesday July 1st, by Alfred Waud
(Library of Congress)



rearguard force of cavalry and infantry held the hill. A New York soldier later summed up the army's mood as it trudged through the rain to Harrison's Landing: "The withdrawal of General McClellan's army from Malvern Hill, a position that seemed to be impregnable, was a surprise to the men in the ranks, and for the first time in the campaign they became discouraged." Confederate casualties at Malvern Hill were about 5,600, while the Union lost 3,000 men.

Malvern Hill was the last of the Seven Days Battles. In the week of 25 June through 1 July 1862, 85,000 Confederates and 90,000 Federals battled outside the Confederate capital; the fighting cost 20,000 Confederate casualties against 16,000 losses for the Union. "I doubt whether more severe battles have ever been fought," wrote McClellan on 1 July, although he personally witnessed little of the action. Lee's troops followed the retreating Federals and reconnoitered McClellan's position at Harrison's Landing. A probe by Stuart's cavalry demonstrated the strength of the Union defenses, and Lee opted not to attack. The Confederates pulled back to the vicinity of Malvern Hill, exhausted and bloodied but successful in their bid to protect Richmond.

THE ROAD BACK TO BULL RUN

Union failures in the Shenandoah Valley and the Virginia Peninsula led the president to reevaluate both the war and the men leading it. Clearly the conflict was going to be longer and harder than everyone had hoped, and Lincoln concluded that if the Union was to prevail it would have to resort to more stringent measures. The War Department had stopped recruiting in May feeling confident that victory was near, but after realizing this mistake Lincoln called for an additional 300,000 volunteers in July. Meanwhile, Radical Republican politicians in Congress began pushing for tougher measures against the Confederate States. Some even suggested that McClellan's timidity in the field and his orders to respect the property of rebellious civilians bordered on treason.

On 8 July, President Lincoln visited the Army of the Potomac at Harrison's Landing. He found the army in good spirits, with many officers and men preferring to renew the advance on Richmond. The army commander, however, was not as optimistic. Sensing the push for sterner measures, McClellan presented Lincoln with a letter in which he advocated that the government continue to adhere to "the highest principles known to Christian

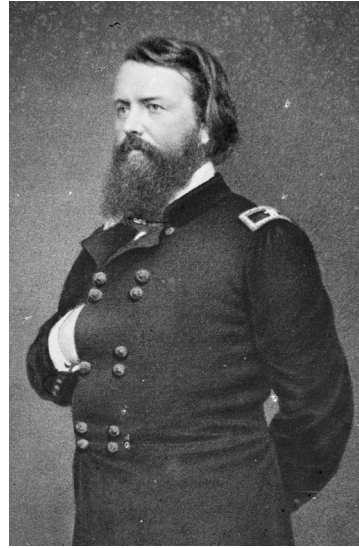
Civilization” in waging the war. Although the government had to destroy the political and military forces of the Confederacy, the general argued that the conflict should not devolve into “a war upon [the] population.” Rather, the North should respect the rights and property of Southerners, to include the right to own slaves. Lincoln shared McClellan’s fear about allowing the war to degenerate into an internecine struggle, but he had come to the conclusion that the South needed to feel the burden of rebellion, and the North needed a cause that made its sacrifices worthwhile. He read and pocketed the letter without reply.

The following week Lincoln made two important decisions about the war’s conduct. On 11 July he appointed Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck as general in chief of the U.S. Army, rebuffing McClellan’s desire to be reinstated to that post. Halleck was a noted soldier-scholar who had directed several victorious campaigns in the Western Theater, although he was not what soldiers would call a “battlefield general.” He assumed his new duties on 22 July 1862. On the same day, Lincoln unveiled a preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet. He did so in the belief that freeing the slaves in the Confederacy “was a military necessity absolutely essential for the salvation of the Union.” The members of his cabinet counseled him to wait for a battlefield victory before making such a bold addition to the war’s aims, so that the move would not appear to be an act of desperation.

The president agreed and shelved the measure for the time being. Convinced by the miscarried Shenandoah Campaign of the disadvantages of divided command, President Lincoln made another change in the summer of 1862, when he consolidated Union forces in the Shenandoah Valley and Northern Virginia into the Army of Virginia. To command the new army, Lincoln appointed Maj. Gen. John Pope, a Kentuckian with a reputation for aggressiveness and a solid combat record in the Western Theater. Pope assumed command on 26 June, the same day as the start of the Seven Days Battles but remained in Washington as Lincoln’s military adviser until Halleck arrived. In the meantime, he organized his command remotely via telegraph. He commanded three corps: the I Corps under Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel, who replaced Frémont; the II Corps under Banks; and the III Corps under McDowell. All three corps commanders were senior in rank to General Pope. Three cavalry brigades—one each attached to the three corps—and two reserve infantry divisions under General



General Halleck
(Library of Congress)



General Pope
(Library of Congress)

Cox and Brig. Gen. Samuel D. Sturgis rounded out the force. Using the Orange and Alexandria Railroad as a supply line, the Army of Virginia's mission was to secure northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley, to threaten the Virginia Central Railroad, and to draw enemy forces away from Richmond and the Army of the Potomac.

Unlike McClellan, Pope believed in a hard-nosed type of warfare. He issued a series of general orders to his army that permitted confiscation of Confederate property and called for reprisals against civilians who harassed Union troops and sheltered guerrillas. He required oaths of allegiance among civilians in Northern Virginia and promised execution for all captured guerrillas.

General Pope also penned a strongly worded address to his new command on 14 July:

I have come to you from the West, where we have always seen the backs of our enemies . . . from an army whose business it has been to seek the adversary and to beat him when he was found; whose policy has been

attack and not defense. . . . I presume that I have been called here to pursue the same system and to lead you against the enemy.

He then exhorted his men to “study the probable lines of retreat of our opponents, and leave our own to take care of themselves. Let us look before us, and not behind. Success and glory are in the advance, disaster and shame lurk in the rear.”

Lincoln approved of Pope’s directives and his stated aggressiveness, reflecting as they did the evolution of his own thinking. Pope’s bombastic words also generated a favorable response among the army’s junior leadership. The reaction of some of the more senior officers was less enthusiastic. Along the James, McClellan and his commanders were horrified—Pope’s address and orders repudiated everything McClellan espoused in his Harrison’s Landing statement to Lincoln. General Porter spoke for many in the Army of the Potomac when he stated, “I regret to see that General Pope has not improved since his youth and has now written himself down as what the military world has long known, an ass.”

In Richmond, President Davis and General Lee viewed Pope’s appearance as a serious threat. Pope’s pronouncements infuriated Lee, who described the Northern general as a “miscreant,” and he wrote a stern letter to Halleck protesting Pope’s harsh treatment of civilians. Confederate leaders also feared a two-pronged attack on Richmond, with the Army of Virginia sweeping down from the north as the Army of the Potomac advanced against Richmond from Harrison’s Landing. Jackson shifted his army to Gordonsville to counter Pope’s threat in mid-July.

Meanwhile, General Halleck visited the Army of the Potomac in early August to confer with its commander. Since moving to the James, McClellan had been begging for reinforcements while his army suffered heavily from the heat and swampy climate. At least 12,000 soldiers were sick and unavailable for duty at any one time. After inspecting the troops and meeting with McClellan, Halleck decided that a renewed campaign against Richmond was impractical. On 4 August he ordered McClellan’s army back to Fort Monroe for relocation to Aquia and Alexandria and a junction with Pope’s Army of Virginia near Culpeper. McClellan demonstrated toward Malvern Hill on 7 August, and then started a methodical march to Fort Monroe a week later. Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside’s IX

Corps, consisting of troops freshly transferred from the Carolinas, moved to Aquia and Fredericksburg by water via Fort Monroe. On 13 August Pope received orders to hold his position in northern Virginia and wait for the Army of the Potomac to arrive before taking the offensive. These decisions yielded the initiative in Virginia to the Confederates (*Map 9*).






General Pope concentrated his army around Culpeper, north of the Rapidan River. Meanwhile Lee sent A. P. Hill's division to Jackson with orders to attack Pope if possible. Jackson's column of 24,000 men was already on the move, and on 9 August it encountered Banks' corps at Cedar Mountain, south of Culpeper. Banks attacked with 8,000 men and drove the Confederates back in disorder. As the Federal advance faltered, A. P. Hill's division arrived on the field and counterattacked, regaining all of the lost ground. Reinforcements from Sigel's corps stabilized the Federal line, and darkness ended the fighting. The Federals lost 2,400 men, while the Confederates sustained 1,400 casualties. Jackson withdrew his men across the Rapidan.

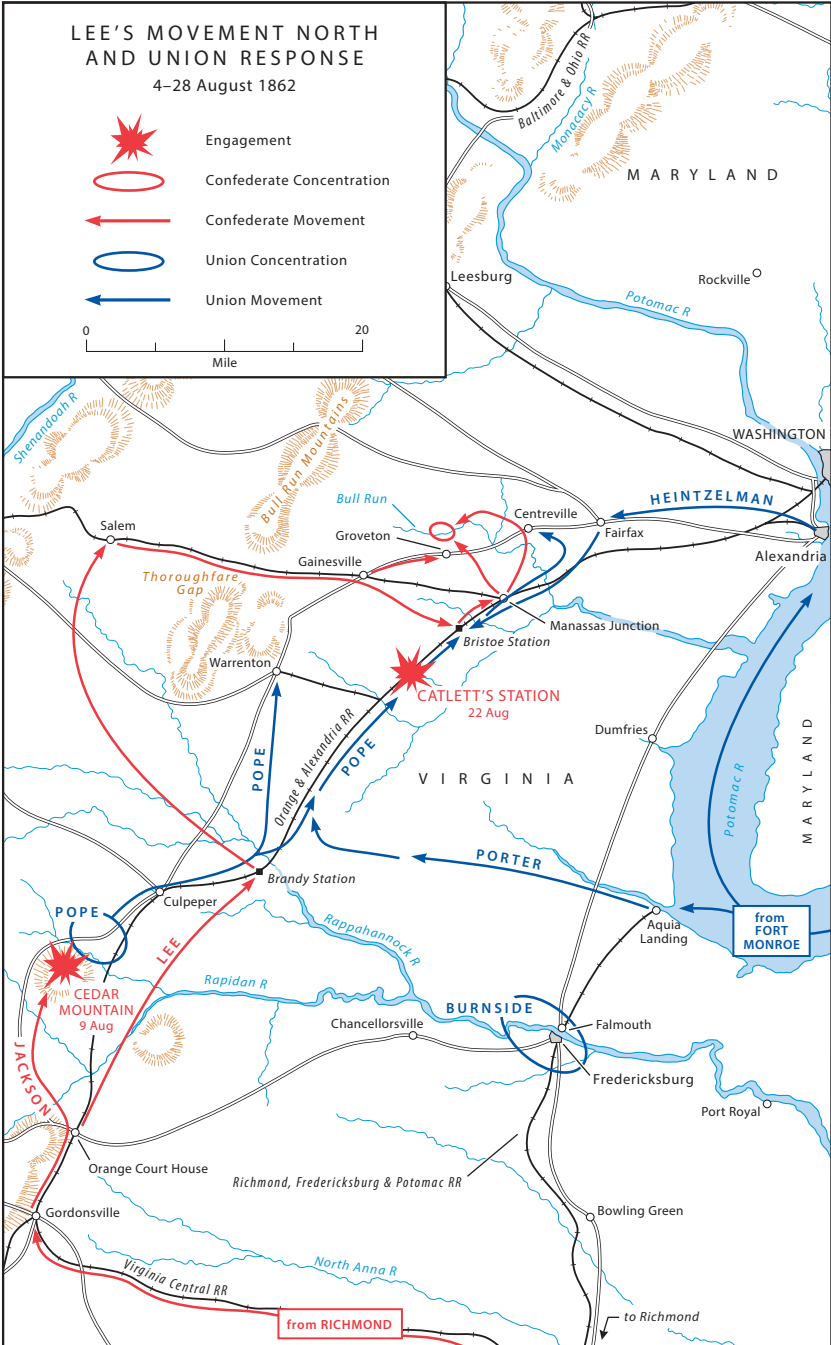
Once Lee detected McClellan's withdrawal from Harrison's Landing, he sent the bulk of his army to Gordonsville to unite with Jackson's forces. Lee arrived there on 15 August and promptly reorganized his 55,000-man Army of Northern Virginia into two corps-sized wings. Longstreet led the Right Wing, while Jackson's Army of the Valley became the Left Wing. General Stuart's cavalry division completed the force.

Lee knew he needed to move fast before the two Federal armies united and faced him with overwhelming odds somewhere north of Richmond. He wanted to cut off the Army of Virginia from Washington and destroy it if possible. Pope's weak point was his divergent lines of communications, both of which needed protection; one ran northeast via the railroad to Alexandria, while the other led southeast along the roads from Culpeper and Warrenton to Aquia and Fredericksburg. Lee first planned to hit Pope's left to sever his link with Fredericksburg and trap him between the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers, but he canceled the offensive after Pope's cavalry captured the movement order in a raid. Seeing the danger in Lee's plan, Pope withdrew the Army of Virginia north of the Rappahannock to the vicinity of Warrenton. There he was joined by two IX Corps divisions under Maj. Gen. Jesse L. Reno. Lead elements of the Army of the Potomac also began to arrive near Pope's army, in the form

LEE'S MOVEMENT NORTH AND UNION RESPONSE

4-28 August 1862

-  Engagement
-  Confederate Concentration
-  Confederate Movement
-  Union Concentration
-  Union Movement



MAP 9

of Heintzelman's III Corps from Alexandria and Porter's V Corps from Fredericksburg.

By this point Pope had effectively parried Lee's thrusts, but all was not well on the Federal side. The addition of Reno's, Heintzelman's, and Porter's corps brought Pope's strength to 70,000 men but also caused problems. The Army of Virginia's administrative staff was weak and inexperienced, and consequently supplies often failed to materialize. The Army of the Potomac formations arrived with little transportation, ammunition, or rations, and their requirements added to the quartermasters' burden. Union cavalry regiments effectively screened the front, but constant activity without adequate rest exhausted the Union troopers, reducing their effectiveness in providing information to Pope. In addition, Confederates in Tennessee had invaded Kentucky, preventing General Halleck in Washington from effectively managing the junction of Pope's and McClellan's armies.

Stuart's Confederate cavalry rode around Pope's right flank and raided the Orange and Alexandria at Catlett's Station on 22 August. Based on Stuart's success, Lee decided to strike Pope's rear in greater force. While Longstreet's men kept up a front along the Rappahannock River, Jackson's Left Wing would march around Pope's right on 25 August, use the Bull Run Mountains to screen the march, and aim for the Army of Virginia's supply base at Manassas Junction. Stuart would screen this movement with his cavalry, and Longstreet's Right Wing would follow Jackson's route a day later. It was a bold division of troops in the face of a superior enemy force.

Jackson's men marched as planned on 25 August. The next day the Confederates moved eastward through the Bull Run Mountains at Thoroughfare Gap and that evening descended on Bristoe Station and then Manassas Junction, ripping up the rail line and availing themselves of the vast quantity of Pope's supplies stored there. Ewell's division pushed southward to block the railroad and defend against a Federal counterattack.

Federal cavalry detected the Confederate movements but could not keep up with them due to exhaustion and Stuart's effective screening tactics. Pope believed Lee was headed to the Shenandoah Valley until his quartermasters reported interruptions along the rails at Bristoe Station and Manassas Junction. At 2000 on 26 August the telegraph to Washington went dead—clear evidence that something was amiss. General McDowell recom-

mended the army strike Jackson and try to defeat Lee's divided army in detail. Pope agreed, and ordered the bulk of his army to march toward Manassas Junction the next day. Heintzelman's newly arrived troops stood near Bristoe Station to fix Jackson's force in place, while the other Federal units concentrated for battle. For the next four days Pope demonstrated an increasing fixation with finding and destroying Jackson's Left Wing to the exclusion of all else—including the whereabouts of the rest of Lee's army.

Pope's grand plan ran afoul of his supply problems. The closest unit to Bristoe Station was General Hooker's division of Heintzelman's corps, which had little transportation and insufficient ammunition. Hooker's Federals skirmished with Ewell's division on 27 August but could do no more without support. Meanwhile, north of Manassas Junction, the Confederates destroyed the strategic rail bridge over Bull Run.

Pope ordered his entire army to Manassas Junction to "bag the whole crowd" of Confederates now in his rear. Early on 28 August the Confederates left Manassas Junction, burning everything they could not move. Jackson's troops marched north to the old Bull Run battlefield and an unfinished railroad bed to await the arrival of Longstreet's wing, expected on 29 August. By early afternoon on 28 August Jackson's Left Wing was in place along the railroad bed, which offered a superb fortification. The Confederates deployed in depth, with the division of Brig. Gen. William B. Taliaferro on the right, Ewell's division in the center, and A. P. Hill's division holding the left. Hill's line stopped just short of Bull Run at Sudley Springs; Stuart's cavalry guarded the far left along Bull Run itself.

Pope's advance on Manassas Junction captured only Confederate stragglers. Learning that some of the enemy had moved to Centreville, on 28 August Pope directed his army there. Some of his exhausted units had to do considerable countermarching as a result of these orders. According to an Ohioan in Sigel's corps, "The marching on the 28th was tiresome in the extreme. The weather was intensely hot, the roads were exceedingly dusty, and the supply of water for the troops, already worn by the demands of the campaign, was scanty." On his own initiative General McDowell, near Gainesville and Thoroughfare Gap, sent an infantry division and his cavalry brigade to hold the gap, but Longstreet's Right Wing forced its way through late in the day. Meanwhile Brig. Gen. Rufus King's four-brigade division of

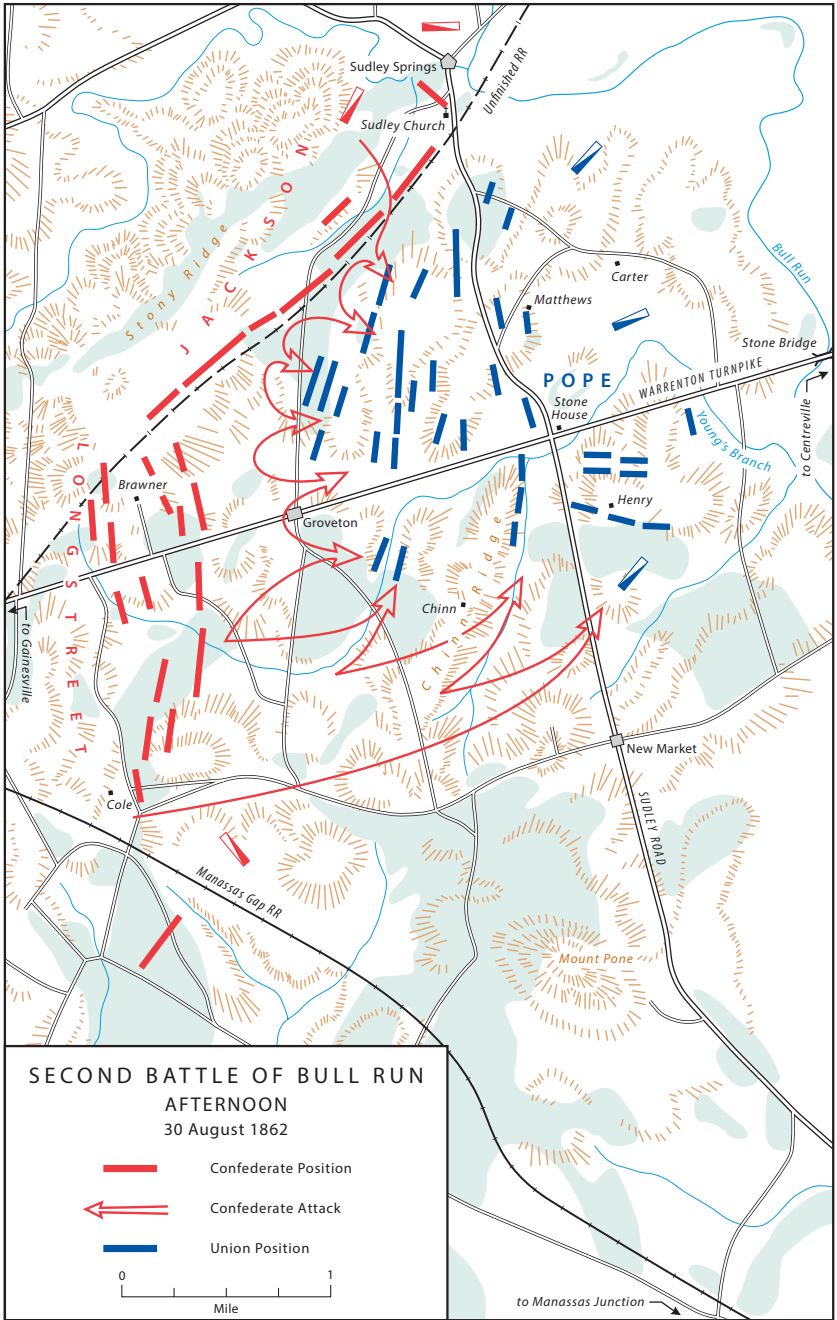
McDowell's corps marched east along the Warrenton Turnpike toward Centreville (*Map 10*).

King's infantry unexpectedly found the Confederates about 1730 at the Brawner Farm, two miles west of the intersection of the Warrenton Turnpike with the Sudley Road. As King's troops marched along the pike, the Confederate Stonewall Brigade charged forward, striking Brig. Gen. John Gibbon's brigade of Wisconsin and Indiana troops. Gibbon's well-drilled soldiers turned and fought with Jackson's men for ninety minutes, trading point-blank volleys only a few dozen yards apart. Jackson sent word to General Ewell for reinforcements. As his men went forward Ewell suffered a wound that cost him his leg. Brig. Gen. Alexander R. Lawton assumed command of Ewell's division. Gibbon's men held on, supported by two New York regiments from Brig. Gen. Abner Doubleday's brigade. The confused fighting raged until after dark, and both sides disengaged about 2100.



The Brawner Farm
(Library of Congress)

The struggle at the Brawner Farm clearly established Jackson's location for Union commanders and that night King reported the battle to McDowell and conferred with his brigade commanders. All of them decided to pull back rather than face an unknown number of Confederates the next day. At 0100 on 29 August King's division withdrew to Manassas Junction. Pope now faced a critical decision. The road to Washington was open; to accomplish his mission, all he needed to do was march his forces to Centreville and defend behind Bull Run until the rest of McClellan's army arrived.



MAP 10

Instead Pope, possibly trapped by his earlier words, decided to attack Jackson's troops. In a flurry of orders he sent Sigel's corps toward the intersection of the Sudley Road and the Warrenton Turnpike to attack the Confederates, supported by Reno's and Heintzelman's corps. He ordered McDowell's corps to attack from Groveton and Gainesville eastward, not realizing that this corps had moved south during the night. Pope ignored the movements of Longstreet's wing or the necessity of holding Thoroughfare Gap, ensuring that Lee's army could reunite. McDowell compromised Pope's understanding of the situation by failing to forward information about Longstreet's advance through Thoroughfare Gap.

On the morning of 29 August Sigel's corps probed Jackson's position along the railroad bed. By early afternoon Heintzelman's and Reno's troops had arrived, and Pope decided to test the Confederate line. Beginning at 1400 and lasting until dusk, a series of brigade and division-sized attacks from Heintzelman's, Reno's, and Sigel's corps pounded A. P. Hill's division on Jackson's left, cracking and bending the line at times. Poor Union coordination delayed reinforcements, while the Confederate defense in depth ensured that any breakthrough quickly received a counterattack. Despite this repeated and steady pressure over several hours, Jackson's wing held firm. Meanwhile Longstreet's wing arrived on the field at noon, taking up position on Jackson's right.

South of the fighting, a different drama took place that afternoon as McDowell and Porter marched their troops up from Bristoe Station. Pope ordered them to advance toward Gainesville and to link up with the remainder of the Army of Virginia in front of Jackson. His order then went on to say, "as soon as communication is established between this force and your own, the whole command shall halt. . . . If any considerable advantages are to be gained by departing from this order it will not be strictly carried out." Pope also said he expected Longstreet to arrive on the night of 30 August or the next day, discussed possible lines of retreat, and admitted, "It may be necessary to fall back behind Bull Run at Centreville to-night. I presume it will be so, on account of our supplies."

Upon finding Longstreet's wing deployed across their front, McDowell and Porter decided to hold position. As skirmish fire flared along his Right Wing's front, Lee ordered an attack several times, but on each occasion Longstreet demurred. At 1800 instructions from Pope arrived for Porter to attack; Pope expected the

blow to land on Jackson's right flank, but in reality, it meant the V Corps would attack Longstreet frontally. Porter chose not to move, as he was obviously outnumbered and his troops were not yet ready for offensive action. This decision eventually resulted in Porter's court-martial and dismissal from service in 1863, as Pope and his sympathizers in Congress made him the scapegoat for the Union defeat.

During the night of 29–30 August, Pope conferred with his corps commanders at the Stone House, at the intersection of the Sudley Road and the Warrenton Turnpike. He deferred all decisions until morning and issued no orders. Early on 30 August, reports of Confederate troop movements convinced Pope that Lee was retreating, leading him to order a pursuit. The Army of Virginia quickly realized its commander's error when it discovered Jackson's men still in place. Pope stubbornly refused to believe he faced any more Confederates than Jackson's Left Wing. He called up Porter's V Corps and committed it to an all-out attack against Jackson's right flank, hoping to envelop the Confederate position. Porter would be supported by McDowell's corps, which meant that virtually all of the forces on Pope's left were committed to the offensive. These preparations consumed the rest of the morning and part of the afternoon of 30 August.

At 1500 on 30 August, Porter attacked toward the railroad bed with two divisions under Generals Morell and Sykes. Their objective was a low-lying area called the Deep Cut, defended by Taliaferro's Confederate division and part of Lawton's division. General Longstreet observed the assault from a nearby hill: "It was a grand display of a well-organized attack, thoroughly concentrated and operating cleverly." Morell's division led the assault, followed by Sykes' regulars in support. As Morell's infantry advanced, Confederate artillery flayed the Union flank so effectively that Porter held back Sykes' division for fear of adding to the slaughter. Morell's Federals, plus part of McDowell's corps, swept up to the cut and opened a fierce firefight with the Confederates. When one of Taliaferro's rebel units ran low on ammunition, the order came down the line: "Boys, give them rocks!"

Jackson committed his reserves and called for reinforcements from Longstreet, who instead responded by increasing his corps' artillery fire on the Federals in front of Jackson's lines and by preparing his own wing to attack. The combined weight of the Confederate reserves and the shelling forced the Federals back in

disorder. General McDowell stripped the Federal far left of troops to cover Morell's retreat. Pope's grand gambit had failed.

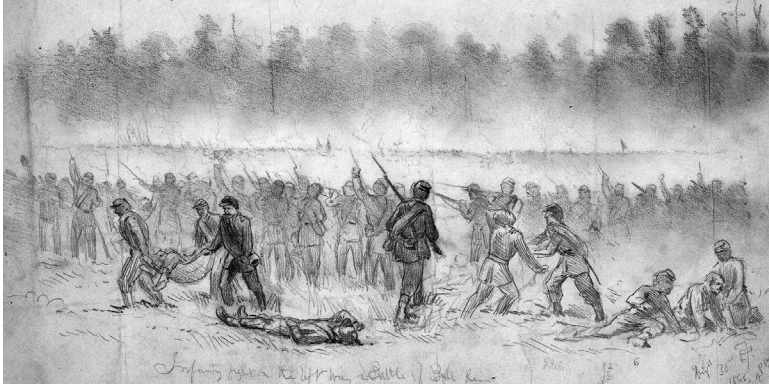
Lee and Longstreet both saw the opportunity to crush Pope's left flank and moved to exploit it. Longstreet's men were in motion even before Lee's attack order was delivered. Five divisions in a line stretching a mile and a half jumped off at 1600. They aimed for Henry Hill, two miles east of their position. It was the key to the Sudley Road and the Warrenton Turnpike intersection and Pope's retreat route to Centreville and Washington.

The 5th and 10th Regiments of New York state volunteers of Col. Gouverneur K. Warren's small infantry brigade guarded the Federal left. Longstreet's sweep caught them by surprise. "The attack was so sudden that the deployed companies of the Tenth had barely time to discharge their pieces once before the Confederates were upon them," noted an officer in the 10th New York. Attacked from three sides, the two regiments were quickly overwhelmed. Longstreet's advance continued, forcing Pope to pull back his right and center while he hurriedly stripped his line of units to stop the Confederate onslaught. Several Union brigades marched into Longstreet's path and were crushed, but not before slowing the Confederate momentum. The Federals pulled together a line along Chinn Ridge, a half mile west of Henry Hill, in an effort to delay the Confederates. Three brigades with artillery formed facing west along the ridge, but they had scarcely gotten into position when Hood's Confederates attacked. "Hood's Texas brigade . . . came forward with tremendous dash and force," recalled an officer in the 55th Ohio, "but they failed to break the stern front of the Buckeye troops, and fell back in disorder." Other Confederate units swept in from the south, and soon the Federals were flanked out of their position. Jackson's wing moved forward against the retreating Union formations to his front at 1800, too late to effectively disrupt the Federal withdrawal. Nonetheless, Longstreet's momentum put the Confederates on the cusp of victory.

Like the Battle of Bull Run in July 1861, the Second Battle of Bull Run climaxed at Henry Hill, where Sykes' regular division deployed, joined by elements of McDowell's and Sigel's corps. Longstreet concentrated his men and hammered the Federal line with successive massed attacks against the western and southern slopes of Henry Hill. Sykes' left flank bent back and nearly collapsed, but in the dying light of the afternoon, the Confederates failed to exploit the opportunity for victory. Reno brought some

of his troops from the right and added weight to the defense. The Union center held by General Milroy's troops cracked, but Federal artillery fire and a hasty counterattack by one of Reno's brigades prevented a breakthrough. Darkness ended the fighting with the Federals still holding Henry Hill.

That night Pope chose to retreat. His defeated army slipped across Bull Run in the darkness, destroying the Stone Bridge over Bull Run behind them. At Centreville on 31 August, Pope met Franklin's and Sumner's corps of McClellan's army. General McClellan had been slow in sending them to the battlefield, preferring, as he had proposed to Lincoln on 29 August, to "leave Pope to get out of his scrape & at once use all our means to make the Capital perfectly safe." Pope's forces spent a rainy day camped at Centreville.



The Battle of Groveton or Second Bull Run, by Edwin Forbes
(Library of Congress)

Lee decided to try one more time to cut off Pope from Washington with a maneuver around the Union right flank. On 31 August he sent Jackson's wing northward to the Little River Turnpike, which led directly to Pope's rear at Chantilly. Federal pickets detected this movement on 1 September, and Pope immediately directed his men to head for the Washington defenses, thirty miles away. In the afternoon, Jackson's wing made contact with Union forces posted at Chantilly, which resulted in a sharp battle in a severe thunderstorm as two of Jackson's divisions attacked Brig. Gen. Isaac I. Stevens' IX Corps

division. After some initial Confederate successes, Stevens led a counterattack in which he was killed at the head of his troops. The arrival of Maj. Gen. Philip Kearny's division on the field dissuaded the Confederates from renewing their offensive, and the fighting sputtered on until dark. Late in the day Kearny mistakenly rode into Confederate lines and was killed while trying to escape capture.

The sacrifice of Kearny and Stevens enabled Pope to complete his withdrawal into the Washington defenses on 2 September. His army had sustained over 14,000 casualties out of 70,000 engaged at Second Bull Run and Chantilly, while Lee's army had faced him with 55,000 men and lost 9,000. These two battles capped a dynamic seventy-day period in which the Confederates had driven Union forces back to the same lines they had held in March 1862.

Lee's army regrouped on 3 September at Centreville, and within days marched north across the Potomac into Maryland beginning a raid that ultimately led to the Battle of Antietam on 17 September. Meanwhile in Washington, Lincoln relieved General Pope and disbanded his army. McClellan absorbed the Army of Virginia's units into the Army of the Potomac and followed Lee into Maryland on 7 September. For a brief period, the fighting in Virginia had subsided.

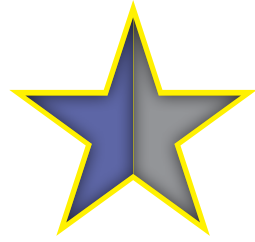
Analysis

During the spring and summer of 1862, the Union Army fought some of its largest battles to date in Virginia. The Union soldiers often fought well, but erratic senior leadership hobbled their operations and led to defeat. Poor coordination and communication hampered Federal efforts in the Shenandoah Valley, while McClellan's unsteady direction of the Richmond campaign had created opportunities for Confederate victory. "We are at a loss to imagine whether this is strategy or defeat," mused a Massachusetts sergeant after the Seven Days Battles. Nevertheless, the Army of the Potomac generally remained confident in McClellan. In contrast, Pope received near-universal condemnation after his failure at Bull Run. "All the fatigues . . . of the campaign were endured by the men . . . without confidence in the leading generals," stated a Massachusetts officer. Pope's strong pronouncements upon his ascension to command had made him look foolish. Perhaps the best that can be said for his performance is that the Army of Virginia had reached Washington despite several Confederate attempts to destroy it.

Lincoln's tenure as commander in chief from 11 March to 22 July stands as one of the few times in American history when a president has exercised direct operational control over U.S. forces. It proved to be a failure, as Jackson skillfully eluded the Federal net and distracted the War Department during a critical phase of McClellan's advance on Richmond, with negative effects on the Army of the Potomac's operations and McClellan's state of mind. To his credit, Lincoln realized his limitations and, in July, found a new general in chief of the U.S. Army, General Halleck.

Politically, the Virginia defeats demoralized the United States. "For the first time," stated the *New York Tribune's* Washington bureau chief on 1 September, "I believe it possible that Washington may be taken." The seventy-day period from 26 June to 2 September, in which the Confederates wiped out all Federal gains in Virginia since March, stunned the nation. News of Second Bull Run provoked serious debate in London and Paris about whether the time was right for Britain and France to recognize the Confederacy's independence and mediate an end to the war. By late summer the country's spirits had sunk to a low point.

The Virginia campaigns in 1862 also showed that victory over the Confederacy would not be quick or easy, and that tougher measures would be required. Although not officially announced until the fall, President Lincoln had come to accept the need for more radical policies—to include the emancipation of slaves in Confederate territory—largely because of the battles that had occurred in Virginia in the summer of 1862. The nature of the conflict was beginning to evolve from the gentleman's war of McClellan to the hard war of Pope that ultimately found its most determined practitioners in Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman. The Virginia 1862 campaigns thus represent a key military and political turning point in the Civil War.



THE AUTHOR

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He served as director of the General George Patton Museum and Center of Leadership in Fort Knox, Kentucky, from 2009 to 2013, and became the MacArthur Memorial director in September 2013.



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For more information on the U.S. Army in the Civil War, please read other titles in the U.S. Army Campaigns of the Civil War series published by the U.S. Army Center of Military History (www.history.army.mil).

PENINSULA 1862

VALLEY 1862

MANASSAS 1862

