The U.S. Army in the Civil War

1860

December 20  South Carolina seceded from the Union, the first state to do so.

1861

February 9  The Confederate States of America was formed.

March 4  Abraham Lincoln was sworn in as 16th President of the United States.


April 19  President Abraham Lincoln announced the blockade of all Southern ports.


July 26  Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan assumed command of the Union Army of the Potomac.

August 10  Confederate troops routed the heavily outnumbered Union forces under Col. Franz Sigel at the Battle of Wilson’s Creek, Mo.

November 1  President Lincoln appointed McClellan as general-in-chief of all Union forces.

November 6  Jefferson Davis was elected president of the Confederate States of America.
1862

February 6  Union forces under Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant defeated Confederates in the Battle of Fort Henry, Tenn.

February 12-16 Siege and surrender of Fort Donelson, Tenn. to Union forces under Grant.

February 28 – April 8 The Union Army of the Mississippi under Brig. Gen. John Pope besieged and conquered Island No. 10, opening the Mississippi to the Union.

March 7-8 As a result of the Battle of Pea Ridge, Ark., Confederate forces were driven from Missouri.

March 8-9 In an attempt to break the Union naval blockade, the ironclad CSS Virginia engaged the USS Monitor. Although the battle ended inconclusively, the Confederacy was unable to dislodge the Union blockade. The battle therefore amounted to a Union strategic victory.

March 17 McClellan began the Peninsula Campaign toward Richmond, Va. with over 120,000 men.

April 6-7 Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant’s Army of the Tennessee defeated Confederates at the Battle of Shiloh, Tenn.

May 1 Union troops under Maj. Gen. Benjamin Franklin Butler occupied New Orleans.

May 31 – June 1 In the Battle of Seven Pines outside of Richmond, Va., Confederate forces under Johnston stopped the Army of the Potomac’s march towards Richmond.

July 11 President Lincoln appointed Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck as general-in-chief of all Union forces.

August 28-30 The Second Battle of Bull Run, Va. (or Second Manassas) ended in a Union defeat.

September 5 Gen. Robert E. Lee with 45,000 men of the Army of Northern Virginia crossed the Potomac into Maryland.
September 17  At Antietam near Sharpsburg, Md., Union troops under McClellan fought Lee’s invading Army to a standstill. Antietam remains the single bloodiest day in American military history.

September 22  President Lincoln issued a Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.


October 28  Union forces under Maj. Gen. William Rosecrans defeated Confederate troops at the Battle of Stones River, Tenn.

November 7  President Lincoln replaced McClellan with Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

December 13  At the Battle of Fredericksburg, Va., Union forces were soundly defeated, suffering over 12,000 casualties in repeated frontal assaults on fortified Confederate positions.

1863

January 1  President Lincoln issued the final Emancipation Proclamation, announcing the freedom of all slaves in Confederate territory.

January 26  President Lincoln replaced Burnside with Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

January 29  Grant assumed command of the Army of the West, with orders to capture Vicksburg, Miss.

March 3  Congress enacted conscription for males between the age of 20-45, but exempting those paying $300 or providing a substitute.

April 30 – May 6  At the Battle of Chancellorsville in Spotsylvania County, Va., Confederate forces under Gen. Lee decisively defeated Union forces twice their size under Maj. Gen. Hooker.

May 18 – June 4  Grant’s Army of the Tennessee besieged and captured Vicksburg, Miss., cementing Union control of the Mississippi
river.

June 3    Marching into Pennsylvania, Gen. Lee began his second invasion of the North with 75,000 Confederate troops.


July 1-3   In the Battle of Gettysburg, Pa., Union troops stopped the Confederate drive north. It was the bloodiest battle of the war, with Confederate casualties at 28,000 and Union losses at 23,000.

July 18    African American troops of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment under Col. Robert G. Shaw vainly attacked Fort Wagner, S.C., suffering over 50% casualties, including Shaw.

August 21  Confederate guerilla leader William C. Quantrill and 450 bushwackers raided the town of Lawrence, Kan., killing nearly 200 boys and men.

September 19-20  Confederate forces defeated Union troops at the Battle of Chickamauga, Ga., ending the Union offensive southwards.

November 19  Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.

November 23-25  Grant’s victory over Bragg at the Battle of Chattanooga, Tenn., drove the Confederates out of Tennessee.

1864

March 9    President Lincoln appointed Lt. Gen. Grant commander of all Union armies. Sherman took over from Grant in the West.

May 5-7    The Wilderness, Spotsylvania County, Va. In the first battle of Lt. Gen. Grant’s Overland Campaign into Virginia, both sides suffered heavy casualties.

May 8-21  Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse, Va. In the second battle of Grant’s Overland Campaign, the Union lost over 18,000 men, and Lee over 10,000.
May 31 – June 12 | Thousands of Union soldiers were killed in repeated frontal assaults on fixed Confederate positions at Cold Harbor, Va.

June 9 | Union forces under Grant began the 9-months siege of Petersburg, Va., including a series of engagements in trench warfare.

July 30 | Union troops detonated a mine underneath Confederate defenses during the siege of Petersburg, Va., but failed to exploit the element of surprise created by the explosion. Instead, Union troops became trapped in the crater, and suffered nearly 4,000 casualties.

September 2 | Atlanta, Ga., fell to the Union forces of Lt. Gen. William T. Sherman.


November 8 | President Lincoln was re-elected.


December 21 | Union forces under Maj. Gen. Sherman captured Savannah, Ga., ending their march to the sea through Georgia.

**1865**

March 1 | The Union victory at the Battle of Five Forks, Va. forced Gen. Lee to abandon Richmond and Petersburg.

April 3 | Union forces captured Petersburg, Va.

April 3 | Richmond, Va. surrendered to Union forces.

April 13  Union troops occupied Raleigh, N.C.

April 14  John Wilkes Booth, a Confederate sympathizer, shot President Lincoln at Ford’s Theater in Washington, D.C.

April 26  Johnston surrendered to Sherman at Bennett Place near present-day Durham, N.C. With a total of over 89,000 soldiers, it was the largest surrender of the war.

May 10  Union forces captured Confederate President Jefferson Davis at Irwinville, Ga.

May 23-24  Marking the end of the Civil War, nearly 150,000 Union soldiers participated in the Grand Review of the Army in Washington, D.C.