

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

# THE CIVIL WAR BEGINS



OPENING CLASHES, 1861



Cover: Detail from *Capture of Ricketts' Battery* by Sidney E. King,  
courtesy of William V. Fleitz, Manassas Battlefield Park

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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.

RICHARD W. STEWART  
Chief Historian

## THE CIVIL WAR BEGINS OPENING CLASHES, 1861



By the winter of 1860–1861, the United States found itself on the precipice of civil war. For decades, divergent views on slavery had led to a growing chasm in the nation and an inability to arrive at any sort of permanent political compromise. The Kansas–Nebraska Act of 1854, which stipulated that residents of a territory could vote to enter the Union as a slave state or free state, had only stoked the fires of discord, bringing open warfare to Kansas that threatened to spill into the neighboring states and territories. Then, in October 1859, one year before the presidential election, John Brown, financed by northern abolitionists, seized the Federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry in the slave-holding state of Virginia in an attempt to ignite a slave uprising. Though Federal troops quickly suppressed the outbreak, emotions were high on both sides as the nation went to the polls in November 1860. By a small electoral vote margin, Abraham Lincoln, a Republican from Illinois, became the sixteenth president of the United States. In a matter of weeks, the country came apart at the seams. The country continued to lose cohesion as the lame duck administration of President James Buchanan failed to control events. Meeting in Charleston on 20 December, South Carolina delegates voted to secede. Other states followed. Mississippi seceded on 9 January 1861, Florida on 10 January, Alabama on 11 January, Georgia on 19 January, Louisiana on 26 January, and Texas on 1 February.

Events continued to move quickly. On 9 February, delegates from the seceded states met in Montgomery, Alabama, to lay the foundation of the newly formed Confederate States of America. The convention chose Jefferson F. Davis, a U.S. senator from Mississippi, as president, and Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia as vice president. A Kentucky native, Davis graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1828, fought in

the Mexican War, and later served as secretary of war. In his inaugural address on 18 February, Davis said that “henceforth, our energies must be directed to the conduct of our own affairs, and the perpetuity of the Confederacy which we have formed.”

### *Strategic Setting*

Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office on 4 March 1861 in the shadow of the unfinished Capitol building. In his own inaugural address, the president declared that he had no intention of abolishing slavery in states where the institution existed. Proclaiming he would not initiate a war, Lincoln informed Southerners, “In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in *mine*, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail *you*. You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors.” Maintaining that the Union was perpetual, Lincoln promised to enforce the laws as well as to “hold, occupy, and possess” Federal property within the seceded states.

Despite President Lincoln’s pledge, states leaving the Union seized U.S. arsenals, forts, and mints. Only a few installations—among them Fort Sumter at Charleston, South Carolina; Fort Zachary Taylor in the Florida Keys; and Fort Pickens in Pensacola, Florida—remained in Federal hands. On 9 March, Lincoln convened his first cabinet meeting to discuss whether the forts should be abandoned. While the Florida forts were not in grave danger, South Carolina state troops had surrounded Fort Sumter. Secretary of State William H. Seward argued that reinforcing Sumter was not worth the risk of starting a war and encouraging other slave states to secede. Postmaster General Montgomery Blair offered the cabinet’s lone voice in favor of reinforcing Fort Sumter. Blair asserted that evacuation would weaken Lincoln’s presidency and give an important symbolic victory to the newly formed Confederacy. Hoping to buy time for pro-Union Southerners, Lincoln decided to maintain the garrisons rather than abandoning them or sending reinforcements.

If Lincoln temporized, it was not solely from a desire to avoid violence: the United States Army was not prepared for war. Less than 1,000 of the 16,000-man Regular Army, most of whom were manning coastal defenses or arsenals, were stationed in the eastern United States. The remaining troops,

spread across six military departments west of the Mississippi River, were too far away to have an impact. In fact, the U.S. Army's ability to move against the South declined for some months as key leaders left the service's ranks. Of the 1,080 officers on active duty at the end of 1860, 286 either resigned or were dismissed and entered Confederate service. Many of the officers casting their allegiance with the South were regimental or department commanders with years of experience and skill. Of the 900 U.S. Military Academy graduates who left the military before 1860, 114 returned to the Union Army and 99 to the Confederate Army. In fact, the Regular Army soon found itself outnumbered as the South began forming well-organized and ably officered units equipped with hundreds of cannon and 159,000 small arms seized from arsenals and forts in the seceding states.

The winter and spring of 1861 found both sides recruiting and mobilizing for war. Because both sides used their state militias as the foundations of their armies, large numbers of troops were successfully fielded in a short period of time. Southerners created the Army of the Confederate States of America on 6 March. Multiple calls for one-year volunteers by the Confederate government soon raised the number of men bearing arms to one hundred-eighty-two thousand. Federal mobilization began on 15 April when President Lincoln called on the Union states to provide seventy-five thousand militiamen for three months. On 3 May he issued a proclamation calling into service 64,748 three-year volunteers for the Army and 18,000 for the Navy, bringing the aggregate force, including an increase in the Federal Army, to 181,461—of whom 75,000 were serving for only three months.

The burgeoning volunteer armies forced both Lincoln and Davis to appoint generals who otherwise might not have been qualified. Lincoln used military appointments to gain wider backing for the war from diverse factions. To obtain support from Democrats, he appointed Benjamin F. Butler and Daniel E. Sickles. To gain backing from German Americans, he commissioned Franz Sigel and Carl Schurz. Still, Lincoln was not lavish with these political appointments. The majority of the first forty volunteer units to be formed were commanded by regulars on active duty, U.S. Military Academy graduates, or those who held volunteer commissions in the Mexican War.

To lead the Confederate troops, Davis appointed eighty-nine generals, about half of whom were professionals. Employing somewhat different criteria, Davis chose generals based on personal relationships rather than attempting to strengthen ties with a particular faction. However, Davis never conferred higher responsibilities than brigade command on unproven volunteer officers.

In 1861 the geographic situation appeared to favor the South. Borrowing from the antebellum U.S. Army system, Davis divided the Confederacy into eight departments. He dispersed his military forces around the Confederacy's perimeter in the hope that the sheer size of the new nation would work in its favor by making it difficult for Federal commanders to coordinate multiple thrusts into Southern territory. The Southerners planned to counter Federal offensives by transferring troops from unthreatened areas to reinforce any department under attack. A successful defense of Confederate borders would demonstrate that the new nation could protect its sovereignty, increasing its chances of international recognition. (*See Map 1.*)

Demographics and industry, on the other hand, favored the North. The 1860 census revealed that 5,582,222 whites and 3,521,110 slaves made up the population of the eleven states that would eventually secede. The remainder of the Union, including Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, and Maryland, numbered 21,907,405 whites and 432,586 slaves. As a result, the Union could call on four million military-age white males while the corresponding figure for the Confederacy was one-fourth of that number. The Union also had ten times the industrial capacity including almost all of the shipbuilding yards and foundries. Transportation capabilities were similarly skewed. The Confederates retained control of only 20 percent of the estimated one thousand Mississippi River steamboats. On land the North had 22,085 miles of railroads, nearly three times as many as the 8,541 miles available to the Confederacy. These advantages were important to the North because riverboats and railroads were about to become key components of logistics and maneuver. One train car carried the equivalent of twenty wagonloads of military supplies while a large riverboat could transport enough materiel to sustain forty thousand men and eighteen thousand horses for two days.

The responsibility for arranging the North's advantages into a coherent plan fell to Lt. Gen. Winfield S. Scott, general in chief of the U.S. Army. Commissioned in 1808, the 74-year-old Virginian

commanded troops in battle during the War of 1812, Second Seminole War, and Black Hawk War, before rising to the position of commanding general. During the Mexican War, Scott led the southernmost of two American armies to victory at Cerro Gordo, Contreras, Churubusco, and Molino del Ray before capturing Mexico City. On the eve of Lincoln's inaugural address in March 1861, Scott sent the president a memorandum outlining four potential courses of action. Only one option suggested military force. The remaining options were imposing an economic blockade on the South, accepting a diplomatic compromise, or allowing the South to secede.

Scott's memorandum reflected a widely held Federal assumption that Southerners had been led into secession by a phalanx of radicals and that a hard war strategy directed against civilians would be counterproductive. Accordingly, Scott's military option aimed to minimize bloodshed and violence. Arguing against a full-scale invasion of the South, Scott proposed a two-pronged offensive, starting with a blockade of the Southern coastline and along the Mississippi River. With the seaboard and internal waterways in Union hands, Scott called for "a powerful movement" of sixty thousand Federal soldiers down the Mississippi River—one column on riverboats and another by land—to divide and conquer the South.

After some deliberation, Lincoln accepted portions of Scott's proposal and, on 19 April, ordered the blockade of the Confederate coastline. Outrage emerged in Northern quarters at what the press called Scott's Anaconda Plan, with its too-slow squeeze of the enemy states. Some journalists and politicians called for an immediate attack on Richmond, Virginia, a major city, and a quick decisive end to secession and war. The critics thought that one sharp battle in Virginia ought to be enough to snuff out the illusions of Southern nationhood.

## *Operations*

### **FORT SUMTER**

After voting for secession, South Carolinians prepared themselves for Federal attack. The state's economic livelihood depended on goods passing through Charleston, a thriving seaport with a population of fifty thousand. In order to prevent Federal troops from shutting down the flow of trade, secessionists sought to take over the seacoast defenses around Charleston.



**MAP 1**





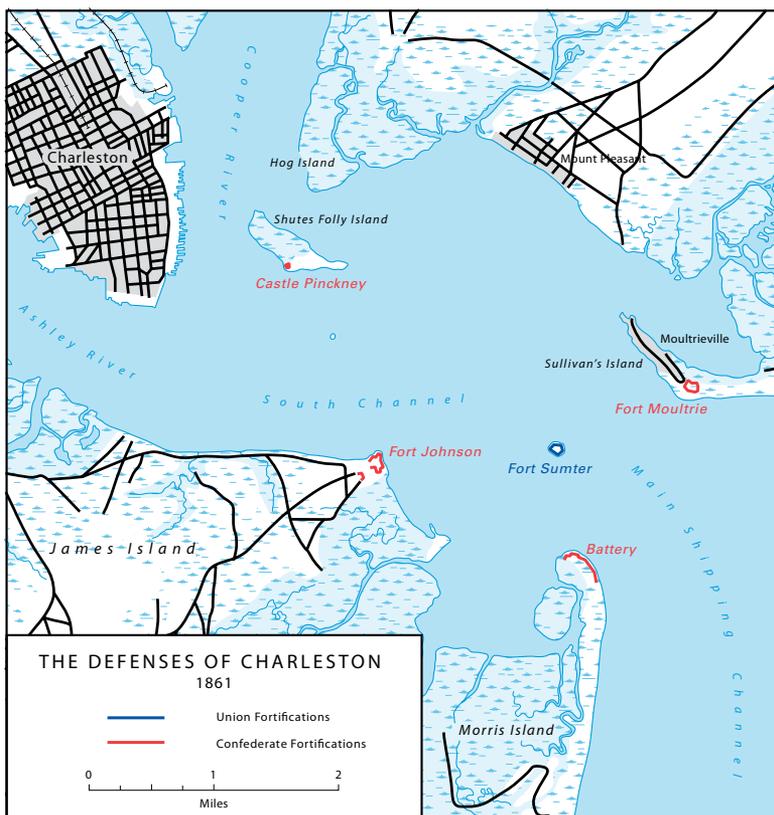
*Looking from Fort Moultrie toward Fort Sumter, 1865 (Library of Congress)*

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Fort Sumter was the most formidable of the fortifications ringing the city. Sited on top of an artificial island built at the mouth of Charleston Harbor, its five-sided brick walls towered sixty feet over the water. Fort Moultrie, a brick fort on Sullivan's Island mounting fifty-five cannon, was located about one mile across the harbor from Fort Sumter. Castle Pinckney, a small masonry War of 1812-era fort with twenty-two cannon, stood nearly a mile offshore on Shutes Folly Island. A colonial-era installation, Fort Johnson, stood on nearby James Island (*Map 2*).

The eighty-four strong U.S. Army garrison stationed at Fort Moultrie constituted the Federal military presence in South Carolina when the state seceded. The garrison's ranking officer, Maj. Robert Anderson, had been in charge for little more than a month. President Buchanan's secretary of war, John B. Floyd a Virginian with secessionist leanings, handpicked Anderson because he held proslavery views. Yet Anderson chose country over cause following South Carolina's secession. Although his officers were concerned about a surprise assault on Fort Moultrie, Anderson refused to act without orders.

Secretary Floyd dispatched instructions to Anderson authorizing him to capitulate if confronted with overwhelming force.



## MAP 2

Faced with the distasteful prospect of surrender, Anderson decided to evacuate Moultrie's garrison to Fort Sumter. The operation took place on the night of 26 December. A detachment under 1st Lt. Jefferson C. Davis remained behind until the rest of the garrison arrived at Sumter. On completion of the clandestine transfer, Lieutenant Davis' men spiked all of Moultrie's guns, set fire to the carriages of fourteen 32-pounder cannon, and chopped down the flagpole before departing. The South Carolinians did not learn of the abandonment until the following day. The Southerners took possession of Forts Johnson and Moultrie and Castle Pinckney soon afterward.

On 1 March 1861, President Davis dispatched Brig. Gen. Pierre G. T. Beauregard to take command of the troops at Charleston.

The general's mission was clear: prevent reinforcements from reaching Sumter and, if Davis ordered, bombard the fort. From a prominent Creole family, Beauregard graduated second in his West Point class of 1838. He distinguished himself during the battles of Contreras and Churubusco in the Mexican War, ending the war with the rank of brevet major. During the secession winter of 1860–1861, Beauregard served as the superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy before being dismissed from that post.

On 5 March, President Lincoln received a letter from Anderson outlining the situation at Fort Sumter. At full capacity, Sumter accommodated 650 men, and its three-tier artillery emplacements held 135 guns. Only forty-eight cannon were mounted, however, twenty-five were aimed at Fort Moultrie. Built to confront an enemy fleet, the walls facing the city were much weaker than those facing seaward. As a result, the South Carolinians were able to site their guns against the portion of the fort least likely to withstand incoming shot. In addition to the fort's vulnerability to direct attack, the garrison did not have enough food to endure a prolonged siege.

Gustavus V. Fox, a private citizen and former naval officer, went to the White House with a proposal to resupply Sumter using tugboats and warships. The tugboats would tow launches filled with reinforcements and provisions into the harbor while the warships provided covering fire in the event of Confederate opposition. On 29 March, after several weeks of deliberation, President Lincoln ordered Fox to prepare the expedition. Simultaneously, Lincoln held another meeting in which all cabinet members, with the exception of Secretary Seward and Secretary of the Interior Caleb B. Smith, voted to reinforce Anderson. Instead of sending troops and military items, however, Lincoln decided to dispatch only nonmilitary provisions.

On 7 April, Beauregard notified Anderson that because of the "delays and apparent vacillations" of Lincoln's government concerning the evacuation of Fort Sumter, all communications and supply transfers from Charleston to Sumter would be immediately halted. On 11 April, Beauregard sent two aides, Col. James Chesnut Jr. and Capt. Stephen D. Lee, to demand Sumter's evacuation. Anderson refused, maintaining "my sense of honor, and of my obligations to my Government, prevent my compliance." Chesnut and Lee delivered Anderson's reply to Beauregard, who

then telegraphed it to President Davis. In response, Confederate Secretary of War LeRoy P. Walker ordered Beauregard not to “needlessly” bombard Sumter. Instead, he instructed Beauregard to pursue Anderson’s peaceful surrender. If, however, Anderson refused the terms of a peaceful evacuation or if he opened fire on the Confederates’ position, Walker authorized Beauregard to “reduce the fort.” Beauregard proceeded as instructed. He sent his aides back to Sumter shortly after midnight. They presented Anderson with a written letter from Beauregard stating, “If you will state the time at which you will evacuate Fort Sumter, and agree that in the mean time you will not use your guns against us unless ours shall be employed against Fort Sumter, we will abstain from opening fire upon you.”

The Confederates waited while Anderson considered this new proposal. When the Union officer returned, Anderson informed Chesnut and Lee that he wanted to avoid “useless effusion of blood,” and if provided adequate transportation would evacuate Sumter by 1200 on 15 April—as long as he did not receive new instructions from Washington or “additional supplies.” Aware of the relief expedition’s imminent arrival, Beauregard regarded Anderson’s reply as unacceptable. Instead of returning to Beauregard’s headquarters, Chestnut’s negotiating party went to Fort Johnson. Shortly after 0300 on 12 April Chesnut and Lee sent a final message to Anderson. The message read, “By authority of General Beauregard, commanding the Provisional Forces of the Confederate States, we have the honor to notify you that he will open fire of his batteries on Fort Sumter in one hour from this time.”

Twenty minutes after the deadline expired, a single shell from Fort Johnson exploded over Sumter. Within minutes Confederate cannon and mortars sited around the harbor began pouring a steady fire on the Federal installation. The Northerners returned fire, directing a barrage against Fort Moultrie, as well as field works constructed on Morris and James Islands, but with little effect. Just after midday, the garrison spotted the silhouettes of several warships and steamers on the horizon. The flotilla, however, stayed outside the harbor rather than approach the beleaguered fort.

On the morning of 13 April, a shell from Fort Moultrie exploded in Fort Sumter, setting the barracks on fire. Around 1200, the battered fort’s flagstaff was shot down.



*The interior of Fort Sumter after its evacuation by Major Anderson on 14 April 1861 (National Archives)*

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The Confederates, believing the flag's disappearance signified surrender, ceased fire. Louis T. Wigfall, ex-U.S. senator from Texas, rowed out to Sumter without Beauregard's knowledge to accept Anderson's sword, only to discover the garrison did not intend to capitulate. Shelling resumed when the Stars and Stripes reappeared. Within two hours, however, Wigfall persuaded Anderson to initiate a cease-fire. Lee and Chesnut rowed out to Sumter to discuss terms with the Federal commander. Shortly after 1400 on 13 April, Anderson informed Beauregard that he would leave the fort.

On 14 April, Anderson and the Federal troops under his command evacuated Fort Sumter after firing a grand salute. Midway through the hundred-gun salute, a powder charge exploded, killing Pvt. Daniel Hough and seriously wounding five others. Hough became the only casualty, Union or Confederate, killed in the fight. Beauregard waited until the Federals evacuated Sumter before entering it. As his men embarked aboard Fox's waiting ships, Anderson heard the South Carolinians cheering as they took possession of the battered fort. The Union flotilla bearing Anderson's men departed on the morning

of 15 April. After their arrival in New York, the men found themselves hailed as staunch defenders of the Union. Lincoln rewarded Anderson by promoting him to brigadier general on 15 May 1861.

The bombardment of Fort Sumter ignited war frenzy throughout the nation. Four states from the upper South seceded from the Union in the weeks after Fort Sumter. Virginia led the second wave of secession on 17 April. Arkansas seceded on 6 May, North Carolina on 20 May, and Tennessee joined the Confederacy on 8 June. Only four slave-holding states—Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, now referred to as “border states”—remained in the Union. Preventing the border states from seceding became one of Lincoln’s highest strategic priorities during the upcoming months.

#### INTO VIRGINIA—BULL RUN

In May 1861 the Confederate capital moved from Montgomery, Alabama, to Richmond, Virginia. Richmond became a strategic target, not only because of its industrial capability, but also because of its political importance. The two capitals, separated by one hundred miles, now figured prominently in both sides’ strategies. The *New York Times* headlined “The Nation’s War Cry” and declared, “Forward to Richmond! Forward to Richmond!” Ultimately, Lincoln recognized that a growing segment of the Northern population, led by the abolitionist base of the Republican Party, would not stand for lengthy inaction. He ordered Federal armies to launch an offensive into Virginia.

More than Richmond beckoned the Union Army. Thirty miles southwest of Washington, D.C., Manassas Junction, with its convergence of two lines—the Orange and Alexandria, and the Manassas Gap—held the key. The Orange and Alexandria line, which served as the principal north-south rail line in Virginia, would allow the Confederates to transfer troops from other regions to protect Richmond and the Shenandoah Valley. The Manassas Gap line connected northern Virginia with the westernmost region of the state. By maintaining a military presence in western Virginia, the Confederates would be able to interdict rail lines ferrying Federal troops and supplies between the East Coast and the Midwest. Control of the junction itself would allow the Confederates to shift troops swiftly between northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley.

**TABLE 1—CONFEDERATE ARMY OF THE SHENANDOAH**

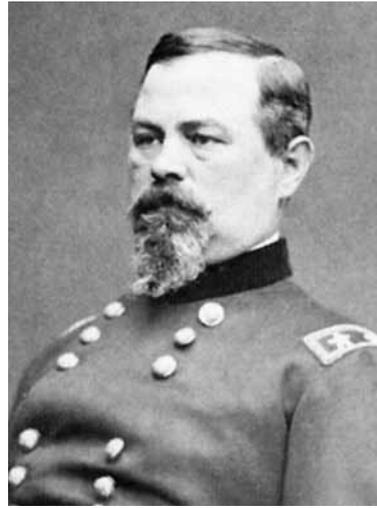
Unit	Commander	Composition
1st Brigade	Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Jackson*	5 Inf rgts, 1 Arty battery
2d Brigade	Col. Francis S. Bartow	3 Inf rgts, 2 Inf bns, 1 Arty battery
3d Brigade	Brig. Gen. Barnard E. Bee Jr.*	4 Inf rgts, 1 Arty battery
4th Brigade	Col. Arnold Elzey*	3 Inf rgts, 1 Inf bn, 1 Arty battery

\* U.S. Military Academy Graduate

On 23 May, Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston assumed command of the Confederates defending the northern entrance to the Shenandoah Valley. His 10,600-strong command was known as the Army of the Shenandoah (*Table 1*). The Shenandoah warranted a sizable military presence for a couple of reasons. First, it served as one of the most important sources of food and draft animals within the Confederacy. Second, flanked on either side by mountain ranges, the valley offered a naturally protected route, well to the east of major rivers, that either army could use to threaten the other's capital. As a result, President Davis placed a high premium on protecting the region. Johnston's army also included the 1st Virginia Cavalry, commanded by U.S. Military Academy graduate Col. J. E. B. Stuart, and a separate artillery battery.

On the day Johnston assumed command, Virginia voted to secede from the Union. On learning of the news, Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Jackson's brigade at Harpers Ferry blockaded a stretch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, seizing fifty-six locomotives and hundreds of railcars for Confederate use. Jackson's actions struck a nerve because the line served as the primary link connecting the Midwest states with the Northeast. The Federals responded on 24 May by crossing the Potomac River to capture Alexandria, Virginia. Although the Unionists did not meet opposition from Confederate troops, a civilian innkeeper killed Col. Elmer E. Ellsworth, the commander of the 11th New York. Seconds later, one of Ellsworth's men bayoneted the civilian. Popular with the press and President Lincoln, the entire North mourned Colonel Ellsworth.

The seizure of Alexandria drew a strong reaction from Southerners. President Davis appointed General Beauregard to lead the Confederate forces in northern Virginia. He arrived at



*General Johnston (left); General McDowell (National Archives)*

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Manassas on 2 June to assume command of six thousand men. Following his arrival, General Beauregard received a steady stream of new regiments that swelled his fighting strength. In mid-June Beauregard told Davis that the time was ripe for concentrating all available Confederate forces at Manassas, destroying the Northern Army, moving on Washington, and achieving “an early peace by a few well-delivered blows.” Though finding Beauregard’s proposal “brilliant and comprehensive,” Davis turned him down because he did not want to expose the Shenandoah to Union attack. Although scornful of the Confederate president’s failure to approve a move northward, Beauregard continued to improve the Manassas defenses.

By late June, Beauregard reorganized his command, designated as the Army of the Potomac, due largely to its increase in size to twenty-two thousand officers and men (*Table 2*). Beauregard’s force also included a reserve of two infantry regiments, an artillery battery, and a battalion of cavalry led by Brig. Gen. Theophilus H. Holmes; a mixed force of South Carolina infantry and cavalry organized into a “legion” commanded by Col. Wade Hampton III; and a battalion of Virginia cavalry under Maj. Julian Harrison.

Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell, a 42-year-old Ohioan from the 1838 West Point class, was called on to wrest control of

**TABLE 2—CONFEDERATE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC**

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Commander</b>	<b>Composition</b>
1st Brigade	Brig. Gen. Milledge L. Bonham	6 Inf rgts, 1 Cav rgt, 2 Arty batteries
2d Brigade	Brig. Gen. Richard S. Ewell*	3 Inf rgts, 1 Cav bn, 1 Arty battery
3d Brigade	Brig. Gen. David R. Jones*	3 Inf rgts, 1 Cav troop, 1 Arty section
4th Brigade	Brig. Gen. James E. Longstreet*	5 Inf rgts, 1 Cav troop, 1 Arty section
5th Brigade	Col. Philip St. George Cocke*	4 Inf rgts, 1 Inf bn, 1 Cav troop, 2 Arty batteries
6th Brigade	Col. Jubal A. Early*	3 Inf rgts, 1 Arty battery
7th Brigade	Col. Nathan G. "Shanks" Evans*	1 Inf rgt, 1 Inf bn, 2 Cav troops, 1 Arty battery

\* U.S. Military Academy graduate

Manassas Junction from the Confederates. A veteran of the Mexican War, McDowell later returned to the U.S. Military Academy as an instructor of tactics. He had been serving as a major on General Scott's staff when war broke out. His active duty status, coupled with the political influence exerted by fellow Ohioan and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, led to McDowell receiving a promotion to brigadier general on 14 May 1861. Two weeks later, General McDowell assumed command of all Federal troops south of the Potomac, designated as the Department of Northeastern Virginia.

Upon taking charge, McDowell organized his army of approximately thirty-two thousand officers and men into five divisions (*Table 3*). McDowell sought to delay engaging the Confederates citing the need to train his volunteer soldiers, and General Scott agreed. Northern sentiment, nevertheless, called for an offensive in what many naively believed would be the first, and only, battle of the war. President Lincoln responded to the demands for action by prodding his generals into battle. The new president expressed his own opinion on the need to provide the Army with more training by telling McDowell, "You are green, it is true; but they are green also; you are all green alike."

**TABLE 3—UNION ARMY DEPARTMENT OF NORTHEASTERN VIRGINIA**

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Commander</b>	<b>Composition</b>
1st Division	Brig. Gen. Daniel Tyler*	3 Bdes (Sherman, Richardson, Keyes) w/4 Inf rgts; 1 Bde (Schenck) w/3 Inf rgts; 4 Arty batteries
2d Division	Col. David Hunter*	1 Bde (Burnside) w/4 Inf rgts; 1 Bde (Porter) w/3 Inf rgts, 1 Inf bn, 1 Marine bn, 1 Cav bn; 2 Arty batteries
3d Division	Col. Samuel P. Heintzelman*	3 Bdes (Franklin, Willcox, and Howard) ea w/4 Inf rgts; 2 Arty batteries
4th Division	Brig. Gen. Theodore Runyon	8 Inf rgts
5th Division	Col. Dixon S. Miles*	2 Bdes ea w/4 Inf rgts; 3 Arty batteries

\* U.S. Military Academy graduate

As McDowell's forces were assembling in and around Washington, two other Union armies were preparing to conduct offensive operations against the northern Shenandoah Valley. Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson's Union Army of the Shenandoah had orders to retake Harpers Ferry. A native of Ireland, the 69-year-old Patterson had served in the U.S. Army during the War of 1812 and Mexican War. When Confederate troops under General Johnston captured Harpers Ferry, they not only seized the Federal arsenal but also severed the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Once the danger of Maryland joining the Confederacy diminished, General Scott ordered Patterson to turn his attention to opening the line running through Harpers Ferry.

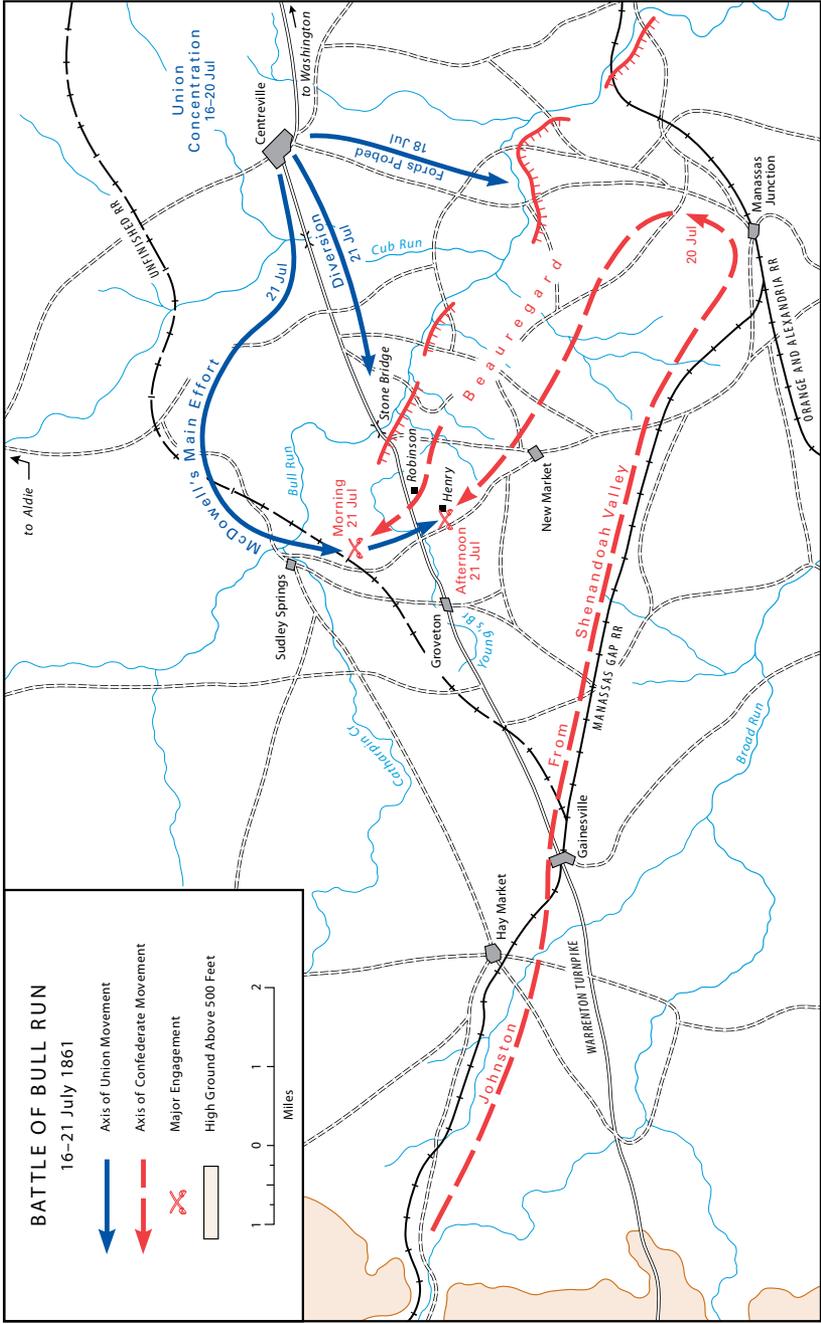
When Patterson's 17,000-man force approached on 13 June, the Confederates abandoned Harpers Ferry after destroying the empty arsenal, railroad, and all public buildings. However, it took several days before Patterson decided to push a single division across the Potomac to occupy the desolated town. In the meantime, Scott changed his mind about the thrust of the upcoming campaign. Rather than operate on the periphery of Virginia, Scott placed greater emphasis on threatening Richmond while protecting Washington. As a result, Scott

ordered the regulars under Patterson's command to march at once to Washington.

Deprived of his best-trained troops, Patterson was reluctant to face the Confederates in open battle. After pulling out of Harpers Ferry on 18 June, Patterson moved to Williamsport, a small town on the northern bank of the Potomac near Hagerstown, Maryland. On 2 July, Patterson once more crossed the Potomac into Virginia after brushing aside a Confederate force guarding the ford at Falling Waters. The Federals marched eight miles the following day until they reached Martinsburg, where Patterson ordered his army to hold in place.

Farther to the west, Union troops under Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan were deployed to safeguard the railroad junction at Grafton, Virginia. In mid-June, McClellan had ordered his troops southward to interdict the vital Parkersburg-Staunton Turnpike. Confederates under Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett reacted by establishing defensive positions at Rich Mountain and Laurel Hill, while also planning a flanking movement along the Wheeling branch of the turnpike to threaten Grafton. A standoff ensued for several weeks as both sides prepared to attack. McClellan struck first on 11 July, defeating the Confederates at Rich Mountain and forcing them to retreat from Laurel Hill. General Garnett died two days later in a skirmish at Corrick's Ford.

On 15 July, Patterson pushed his command south from Martinsburg and halted at Bunker Hill, nine miles north of Winchester. This movement was intended to shift Richmond's attention away from events taking place to the east. On the following day, McDowell moved on Manassas Junction. Shortly after midnight, Johnston received dispatches directing him to move to Manassas as soon as possible. Before Johnston could reinforce Beauregard, he had to evade Patterson. On 18 July, he ordered Colonel Stuart to deploy his 1st Virginia Cavalry to screen the army's movement through Ashby's Gap to Piedmont, where the infantry would be sent to Manassas via the railroad with Jackson's brigade in the lead. The Confederate cavalry and artillery units marched via the road network to Manassas. The thirteen thousand troops under Patterson advanced so slowly on Winchester that Johnston not only found it possible to begin moving eastward without Federal interference, but he also had time to form a fifth brigade, commanded by U.S. Military Academy graduate Brig. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith, using five recently arrived regiments (*Map 3*).



MAP 3

Awaiting reinforcements from Johnston in the Shenandoah Valley and troops from Richmond, Beauregard assumed a defensive position along Bull Run, a small stream north of Manassas Junction. Covering eight miles, Beauregard defended an area from Union Mills Ford to the Stone Bridge, where he positioned six brigades to protect the multiple crossings of Bull Run. Ewell held the far right flank at Union Mills Ford, to Ewell's left was Brig. Gen. David R. Jones at McLean's Ford, Brig. Gen. James E. Longstreet defended Blackburn's Ford, Brig. Gen. Milledge L. Bonham covered Mitchell's Ford, and Col. Philip St. George Cocke held the crossing at Ball's Ford. Col. Nathan G. "Shanks" Evans defended the Stone Bridge at the far left of the Confederate line on the Warrenton Turnpike. Beauregard placed Col. Jubal A. Early's brigade in reserve equidistant between McLean's, Blackburn's, and Mitchell's fords.

At 0900 on 18 July, the lead elements of McDowell's army arrived at Centreville. Receiving extra rations of food and supplies, soldiers eagerly looked forward to seeing combat in the opening battle of the war. Pvt. Elisha Hunt Rhodes of the 2d Rhode Island stated, "We shall probably have the chance to pay our southern brethren a visit upon the sacred soil of Virginia very soon. Well I hope we shall be successful and give the Rebels a good pounding." While waiting for the remainder of his army to come up and to plan for an offensive, McDowell searched for an undefended crossing of Bull Run. Finding that the Confederates occupied a position south of Bull Run, McDowell ordered Brig. Gen. Daniel Tyler's 1st Division to conduct a reconnaissance on the Confederate right flank but not to initiate an engagement. When Tyler reached Blackburn's Ford, he reported observing an artillery battery but "no great body of troops." In fact, unbeknownst to Tyler, Longstreet's brigade held a defensive position at the ford. Tyler ordered his artillery forward, followed by skirmishers from Col. Israel B. Richardson's brigade and the 1st Massachusetts. When Longstreet's artillery responded to the Union demonstration, Tyler sent in more men from Richardson's brigade.

By 1600 the demonstration had ended. Tyler sustained eighty-three casualties in the firefight, while the defenders lost sixty-eight. In his report on the engagement, based on statements made by two prisoners, Longstreet estimated his opponent's losses at "nine hundred to two thousand." As a result,

Beauregard felt the clash brought “special prestige” to his troops while damaging the morale of the newly recruited Union forces. Once McDowell learned of the fight at Blackburn’s Ford, he was furious with Tyler because he had disobeyed orders not to initiate an engagement. McDowell’s public rebuke of Tyler, however, had the effect of squelching initiative throughout the Federal command.

After finding no success at Blackburn’s Ford, McDowell now planned to envelop the Confederate left flank. Maj. John G. Barnard, McDowell’s chief engineer, explored the potential crossings of Bull Run upstream from Blackburn’s Ford. Because the Stone Bridge constituted the most obvious crossing, McDowell believed it would be heavily defended. Barnard found two potential alternates: Poplar Ford, one mile north of the Stone Bridge, and Sudley Ford, two miles north of the bridge. After scouting the routes over a two-day period, Barnard assured McDowell that Sudley Ford, unguarded by the Confederates, would serve as a viable point to envelop the Confederate flank.

Settling on Sudley Ford, McDowell devised a plan to cross Bull Run and smash the Confederate left flank. McDowell planned to set three divisions in motion to accomplish this objective. The attack would begin with a demonstration against the Stone Bridge by Tyler’s division. As Tyler’s men conducted a feint against the Confederates defending the bridge, Col. Samuel P. Heintzelman’s and Col. David Hunter’s divisions would cross Bull Run at Poplar Ford and Sudley Ford, respectively. Once across Bull Run, Heintzelman’s and Hunter’s forces, numbering thirteen thousand, would move south along the Manassas-Sudley Road to assault Beauregard’s left flank. McDowell also planned for diversions at Mitchell’s Ford and Blackburn’s Ford, south of the Stone Bridge, to pin down the remainder of the Confederate forces while the flanking operation took place. The Union forces were to cross Bull Run just after dawn on 21 July.

As Major Barnard searched for a way to outflank the Confederate position, General Beauregard designed his own plan to attack McDowell. Beauregard assumed that General Johnston would march part of his command overland from Winchester through Ashby’s Gap to Aldie, where it would be in a position to fall on McDowell’s right flank. Anticipating a

strong Federal reaction to Johnston's appearance, Beauregard planned to launch his own assault across Bull Run to strike McDowell's force in the rear, thus catching the Federals between two Confederate armies. In anticipation of the assault, Beauregard began shifting brigades south of the Stone Bridge. General Jackson and his Virginians arrived on the evening of 19 July, bringing word that Johnston's army intended to travel by train to Manassas rather than marching to Aldie. Jackson's report had no effect on Beauregard's chosen course of action. Beauregard continued to reposition forces until only two brigades, Coker and Evans, remained north of Ball's Ford. The remaining eight brigades, including Jackson, Bee, and Bartow, were clustered between Manassas Junction and McLean's Ford. The new arrivals raised the number of Confederates opposing McDowell to almost thirty thousand troops.

General Johnston arrived at 1200 on 20 July. Johnston, senior in rank to Beauregard, assumed command of all Confederate forces at Manassas. Although Johnston's arrival rendered Beauregard's plans moot, Beauregard continued to press for an immediate attack against McDowell. Johnston, who mistakenly believed Patterson would follow him to Manassas Junction, approved Beauregard's proposal to attack McDowell before the two Federal armies joined. Johnston, who had not slept since 17 July, asked Beauregard to put together a draft plan while he rested. Beauregard delivered the plan to Johnston at 0400 on 21 July. Although Johnston agreed with the proposal, he suggested one modification. Rather than participating in the main assault, Johnston wanted Bee's and Jackson's brigades retained in a central location as a reserve in case the Federals launched a counterattack against Beauregard's left flank. Beauregard agreed to the suggestion, adding Colonel Hampton's legion to the reserve on his own initiative. Mounted couriers bearing orders to the attacking brigades left the Confederate headquarters a short while afterward.

The Federals, however, had already stolen a march on Beauregard and Johnston. At 0230 on 21 July, the three Federal divisions began marching out of their camps near Centreville. Leading the procession, Tyler's forces reached the high ground opposite the Stone Bridge at 0500. Tyler committed Brig. Gen. Robert C. Schenck's brigade to the diversionary mission, leaving Col. William T. Sherman's and Col. Erasmus D. Keyes'



*Looking south across the ruins of the Stone Bridge over Bull Run. The Van Pelt farm is located on the high ground to the upper right. (National Archives)*

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brigades in place near Blackburn's Ford. Tyler ordered the firing of a 30-pounder Parrott rifle to signal the beginning of the demonstration to Hunter and Heintzelman. Evans' brigade held the Confederate position at the Stone Bridge. Approximately eleven hundred men, including Col. John B. E. Sloan's 4th South Carolina, Maj. Chatham Roberdeau Wheat's 1st Special Battalion Louisiana Volunteers, two guns from the Lynchburg Artillery, and two troops of cavalry, made up the defending force. Evans deployed his command in a line behind the crest of Van Pelt Hill, named for property owner Alexander Van Pelt, thereby concealing his position from the Union force's view. In addition to the troops arrayed behind Van Pelt Hill, Evans deployed Wheat's battalion near a ford just north of the Stone Bridge and two companies of South Carolinians on both sides of the bridge itself.

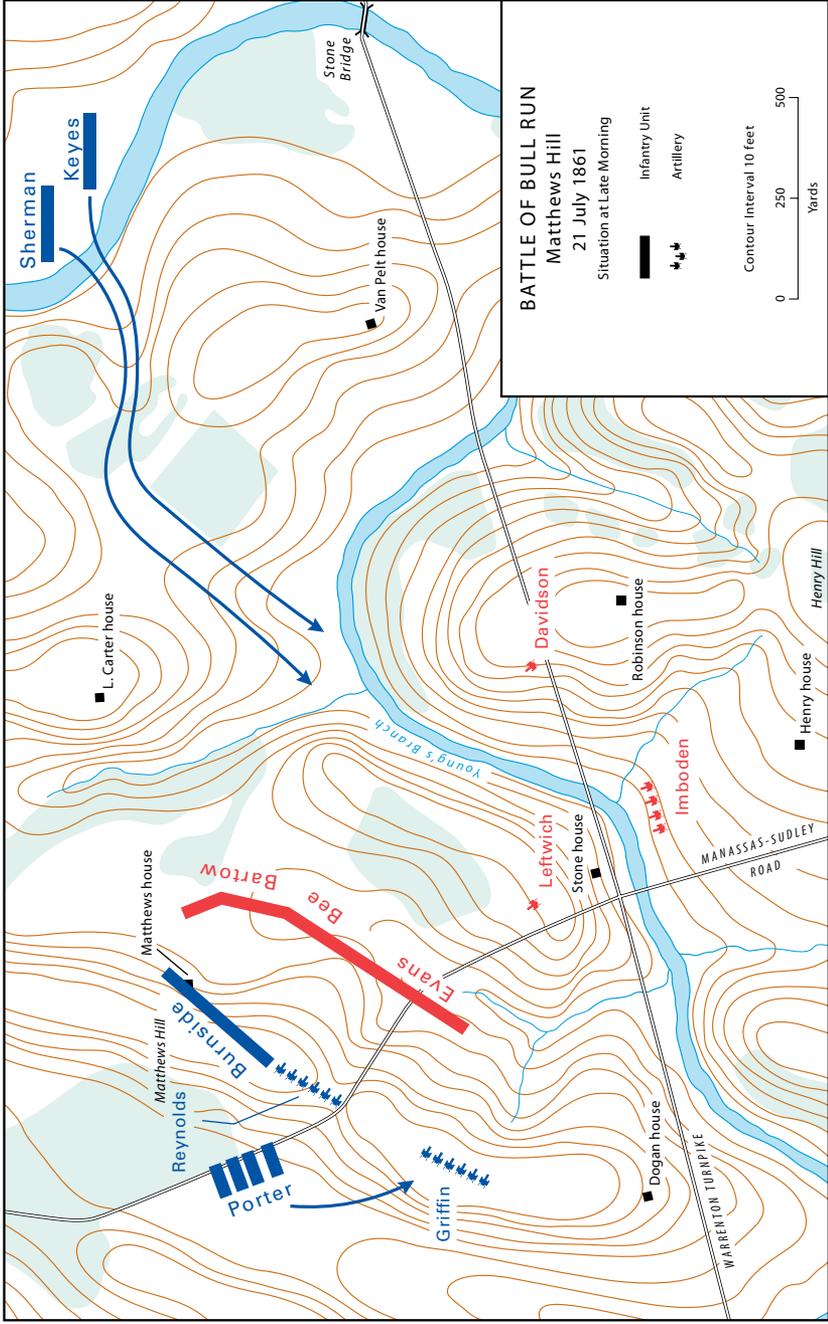
When Tyler's artillery opened its cannonade, Evans directed his gunners not to return fire. After an hour of "brisk fire," Evans realized that the movement on his front did not constitute a deliberate assault but a mere demonstration. Colonel Evans kept his main body under cover, relying on skirmishers to reply to the Federal fire. Disconcerted by reports indicating

the Confederates were offering little resistance, McDowell set up a temporary headquarters on Warrenton Turnpike where he could keep a close eye on events taking place south of the flanking movement.

Capt. Edward P. Alexander, manning a signal station on Wilcoxon's Hill, noticed Federal infantry and artillery moving eight miles to the north about 0830. He sent a message to Evans, "Look out on your left. You are turned." Leaving the South Carolinians nearest the bridge in place, Evans ordered the remainder of his brigade, nearly nine hundred men, to establish a defensive position farther to the west. Fortune favored Evans as the advancing Federals were delayed by unexpected obstacles. Burnside's men, for example, found a narrow path instead of a trafficable road. Moving in halting fashion, the Federal column required three more hours than originally allotted to reach Sudley Ford. To make matters worse, the guide leading Heintzelman's 3d Division could not locate Poplar Ford. As a result, Heintzelman fell in behind Hunter as the latter moved toward Sudley Ford. Instead of entering the fight with two divisions advancing abreast, the Federals were attacking in a column of divisions on a single brigade front.

The problems encountered by Burnside and Heintzelman allowed Evans to reposition his forces in a wooded ravine below the crest of Matthews Hill by 0920. Evans positioned his supporting artillery to the south of his battle line, with 2d Lt. Lincoln C. Leftwich's 6-pounder located near the Manassas-Sudley Road and Warrenton Turnpike intersection and 1st Lt. George S. Davidson's 6-pounder deployed north of the Robinson house on Henry Hill. The two cavalry troops were assembled on either flank of Leftwich's cannon. The redeployment, although timely, produced the first of several incidents of mistaken identity during the battle when the 4th South Carolina opened fire on Wheat's battalion as both units marched toward Matthews Hill (*Map 4*).

At 0930, Burnside's men, led by two companies of skirmishers, passed over the crest of Matthews Hill. They could see Wheat's battalion and a company of the 4th South Carolina firing at each other. The skirmishers announced their presence with a volley directed at the Louisianans. The gunfire spurred Burnside to order forward Capt. William H. Reynolds' battery of six 13-pound James rifles. Reynolds, taking position behind



**MAP 4**

the crest, opened fire on the Confederate guns located to the south. Company F, 2d Rhode Island, joined the skirmishers as Wheat organized a counterattack against the Federals. Wheat's men scrambled toward the crest only to encounter a volley from three companies of Rhode Islanders. Wheat's troops retreated, reorganized themselves, and launched a second assault that proved a greater success. The Federal skirmishers fell back on the main body of the 2d Rhode Island. From the top of the hill, Wheat's men glimpsed the rest of Burnside's brigade forming into a battle line.

The entire Union brigade did not move forward because Colonel Hunter restricted the number of troops Burnside could commit. The Federal brigade commander settled on sending the 2d Rhode Island into the fight. As the Rhode Islanders struggled with Wheat for control of Matthews Hill, Hunter's trailing brigade under Col. Andrew Porter arrived. Hunter directed Porter to take his brigade on a wide westward swing to occupy the adjacent Dogan Ridge. Porter's move to the west would take several hours, leaving the fight in Burnside's hands for the time being. Moments later, Hunter received a neck wound that led to him passing command to Burnside. Burnside exercised his new found authority by feeding more troops into the immediate fight. When he attempted to deploy the 71st New York and 2d New Hampshire, however, both regiments had great difficulty forming up. Burnside then sent his reserve, the 1st Rhode Island, to assist Reynolds and the 2d Rhode Island. The 1st Rhode Island advanced to a point where it covered the left flank of the 2d Rhode Island. The New York and New Hampshire regiments, after sorting themselves out, joined the Rhode Islanders about thirty minutes later.

Confederate resistance, coupled with Northern command and control difficulties, allowed Evans to check the Federal advance for ninety minutes. As more Union troops arrived, it became increasingly difficult for the Confederates to hold off Burnside. Spotting Capt. John D. Imboden's four-gun battery unlimbering on Henry Hill, Evans rode off to seek assistance. He discovered four regiments from the brigades of General Bee and Colonel Bartow deployed nearby. Evans urged Bee to send him reinforcements. Leaving the 7th Georgia behind to secure Henry Hill, Bee and Bartow led three regiments, plus two companies of the 11th Mississippi, to Matthews Hill.

Burnside's brigade now faced more than twenty-eight hundred Confederate defenders.

The fighting on Matthews Hill grew fiercer as both sides committed additional troops. Bartow deployed the 8th Georgia on the right flank where it began to inflict casualties on the 71st New York. In an effort to counter the new Confederate threat to his left flank, Burnside positioned a battalion of U.S. regulars, commanded by Maj. George Sykes, to support the New Yorkers. The regulars were soon joined by the 1st Minnesota. By this time, Colonel Porter's brigade arrived on Dogan Ridge. By extending Burnside's line across the Manassas-Sudley Road, Porter's brigade found itself in a position to envelop the Confederate left. At the same time, McDowell's orders for Tyler's command to cross Bull Run were also being executed. Tyler directed Sherman to lead his 3,400-man brigade across a ford located north of the Stone Bridge to a position on the left flank of Burnside. Colonel Keyes' brigade followed behind Sherman. The appearance of Sherman on Van Pelt Hill alerted Evans to the emerging threat on his right flank.

With both flanks threatened and little prospect of reinforcements, Evans, Bee, and Bartow had little choice but to retreat. The disorganized remnants from all three Confederate brigades fell back across the Warrenton Turnpike and Young's Branch toward the reverse slope of Henry Hill. Burnside used the respite to pull his battered brigade back as Col. William B. Franklin's command took up position on Matthews Hill. Meanwhile, Sherman continued moving west until he reached a point just north of Matthews Hill where he halted behind Porter and Franklin. Keyes' brigade took up a position between Matthews Hill and Van Pelt Hill as it awaited further orders.

Beauregard and Johnston abandoned thoughts of an offensive against Centreville as the sound of battle to the north continued. Beauregard sent orders to Ewell, Jones, and Longstreet to "make a strong demonstration" between Union Mills and Blackburn's Ford while he began shifting other brigades northward. The Hampton Legion, in the process of detrainning at Manassas Junction, received orders to support Evans, Bee, and Bartow. Once the new orders were issued, Johnston and Beauregard rode to Henry Hill. They arrived in time to witness the Hampton Legion cover the Confederate retreat from Matthews Hill.

Fortunately for the defenders, Jackson had repositioned his brigade on Henry Hill on his own initiative. General Beauregard originally sent Jackson's command to the Stone Bridge, where Evans' command had been deployed. Instead of remaining there, Jackson marched his brigade to Henry Hill, where he met a frantic General Bee, who stated that the Federal troops were pushing the Southern forces back. From a tactical standpoint, Henry Hill offered an expansive vista relatively devoid of vegetation, except a tree line on the south slope. A modest frame house once owned by Dr. Isaac Henry stood there. A few hundred yards to the east was the Robinson house, owned by a free black farmer.

Soon after arriving, Jackson encountered Captain Imboden moving his guns to the rear. Jackson directed Imboden to join the batteries he had already positioned near the Robinson house. With the addition of Imboden's cannon, the fire support available to Jackson increased to thirteen guns. The Confederate gunners obtained a measure of protection by positioning their cannon just behind the crest of the hill. Jackson deployed his regiments near the Robinson house along a tree line on the reverse slope. He positioned two regiments, the 4th and 27th Virginia, behind the artillery. Next he located the 5th Virginia to the right of the guns. Finally, the 2d Virginia was positioned to the immediate left of the artillery line and the 33d Virginia on the far left. By placing his men on the slope facing away from the Federals, their dispositions were concealed. Jackson also ordered Colonel Stuart's cavalry to secure his left flank.

The Union high command took little concerted action following the Confederate rout from Matthews Hill. Cautious in exploiting his victory, McDowell used this opportunity to regroup. Although McDowell issued no orders, some Federal commanders decided on their own to press the fight. When the 27th New York of Porter's brigade arrived on the field, an unknown officer ordered it to follow the retreating Southerners. Without stopping to rearrange their formation, the New Yorkers plunged down Matthews Hill toward a stone farmhouse at the base of Henry Hill. Imboden ordered his cannon to fire on the Federals, causing the New Yorkers to shift to the left to escape the incoming shells. The commander of the 27th New York then spotted a gray-clad regiment approaching from the south-east. Riding out to meet the newcomers, Col. Henry W. Slocum

shouted, “What regiment are you?” The query prompted the unknown unit, which proved to be the Hampton Legion, to unleash a volley after unfurling its colors. The New Yorkers and South Carolinians began trading shots, with the latter gaining the upper hand. The Northerners fell back several hundred yards before resuming a long-range exchange with Hampton’s troops.

Col. William W. Averell, who assumed brigade command on Porter’s wounding, exercised the initiative to send a larger force against Henry Hill. Averell ordered the 8th and 14th New York to take the high ground occupied by Jackson’s artillery. When the two regiments reached the Warrenton Turnpike, they were diverted to the left, toward the Hampton Legion, by an unidentified staff officer. As the Unionists marched along the turnpike, they were showered with shells by the Confederate guns on Henry Hill. Both New York regiments broke after withstanding a few minutes of punishment. The appearance of more Federal infantry, however brief, persuaded the Hampton Legion to pull back to Henry Hill.

General Tyler now decided to launch a coordinated assault against Henry Hill. At 1230, Tyler ordered Keyes to ford Young’s Branch to seize the Confederate cannon visible near the Robinson house. Leaving behind two regiments as a reserve, the Federal brigade commander ordered the 2d Maine and 3d Connecticut up the grassy slope toward the Robinson house. The Union advance inadvertently flanked Bee’s 7th Georgia and the Hampton Legion, now positioned on the extreme right of Jackson’s line. The unexpected attack triggered a mass exodus of panicked Georgians and South Carolinians heading for the rear. Their sudden departure exposed the 5th Virginia, which exchanged volleys with the Northerners rather than retreat. The fire grew so intense that Keyes decided to withdraw. After pulling back from Henry Hill, Keyes turned his attention eastward to securing the Stone Bridge in the hopes of opening up the turnpike for Schenck’s brigade. Schenck, remembering McDowell’s rebuke to Tyler from the previous day, remained on the far bank of Bull Run.

Upon learning that four of the flanking column’s five brigades had crossed Bull Run, McDowell issued orders to resume the offensive. Along with Tyler’s two brigades, in theory, this gave McDowell a striking force of eighteen thousand troops. Burnside’s brigade, however, remained behind while its regiments replenished

their ammunition. McDowell also ordered Maj. William F. Barry, his chief of artillery, to reposition two batteries one thousand yards forward onto the western spur of Henry Hill. Barry selected the two batteries on Dogan Ridge—Capt. James B. Ricketts' Battery I, 1st Artillery (six 10-pound Parrott rifles), and Capt. Charles Griffin's Battery D, 5th Artillery (four 10-pound Parrott rifles and two 12-pound howitzers)—for the task. Both Ricketts and Griffin protested the orders to advance without waiting for infantry support. Ricketts noted, "I saw at a glance that I was going into great peril for my horses and men." Leaving behind an inoperable cannon belonging to Griffin, both batteries whipped their teams forward at a gallop. Griffin's five guns unlimbered just north of Henry house while Ricketts established his battery on Griffin's right.

The shift from Dogan Ridge to Henry Hill placed Griffin and Ricketts well within range of Confederate artillery near the Robinson house. Jackson's thirteen cannon began dueling with the eleven Federal guns near Henry house. A mere 350 yards separated the opposing cannon. For over thirty minutes, the Confederate and Union batteries traded shells. The Southern guns were difficult to hit because they were placed just behind the crest. On the other hand, the Union gun crews were exposed on an open hilltop. Many Federal shells overshot their targets while the Southern gunners inflicted casualties on the men and horses of both Union batteries.

After ordering Griffin and Ricketts forward, Barry sought to provide them with infantry support. The Marine battalion and 14th New York from Averell's brigade were told to support Griffin. During the movement to Henry Hill, however, the Federal infantry was showered with Confederate shells. The New Yorkers, after braving the gauntlet of Confederate fire, formed a line of battle behind Griffin's cannon. The marines attracted such a storm of incoming fire that they broke three times before streaming off the battlefield in disarray. Barry then sent the 1st Minnesota and the 11th New York forward in support of Ricketts. In an effort to avoid some of the shells directed at Ricketts, the 11th New York occupied a position behind and slightly south of the battery. The Minnesotans fell in on the right flank of the New York regiment.

The 11th New York soon encountered soldiers from the 33d Virginia, commanded by Col. Arthur C. Cummings, positioned

on Jackson's left flank. Viewing the Virginians, who were wearing civilian clothes, the Federal troops were unsure of their allegiance. To complicate matters further, in the rush to mobilize troops, Federal units were not uniformly dressed in blue; soldiers in the 11th New York, for instance, were dressed in colorful Zouave uniforms, which were also worn by some Confederate units. The Virginians clarified the matter by opening a deadly volley on the New Yorkers. Unnerved by the nearness of the enemy and the loss of their regimental commander, the New Yorkers headed for the rear. The Minnesotans lasted a bit longer, trading volleys with the Confederates before retiring in good order to a nearby wooded area.

The scene was now set for the arrival of Confederate cavalry on the field of battle. Colonel Stuart's 1st Virginia Cavalry spent the morning reconnoitering Bull Run before taking position behind the battle line to await orders. After waiting until midafternoon for an opportunity to enter the battle, Stuart received orders to take his regiment where "the action was hottest." Stuart arrived with two companies of horsemen as the New Yorkers and Minnesotans were retreating. As he prepared to charge, Stuart paused for a moment to determine if the retreating soldiers were Confederates. The answer came in a few seconds when the Stars and Stripes were observed at the head of the column. Stuart ordered his men to charge the Union force. While the charge shattered the 11th New York's formation, the Southern cavalry lost eighteen horses and twenty-nine men in return. After the mounted unit retired, the 1st Minnesota continued marching to a point four hundred yards behind its original position.

Unable to make much progress in the ongoing artillery duel, Griffin moved a section of two pieces into position to the right of Ricketts' battery. By doing so, Griffin hoped to enfilade the line of Confederate guns confronting Ricketts and the rest of his battery. However, the move also served to place Griffin's men within two hundred yards of the 33d Virginia. No sooner had Griffin assumed his new position than he noticed a line of infantry forming up to his right front. Major Barry rode up as Griffin's gunners were preparing to open fire on the unknown unit. Barry ordered Griffin to hold his fire. Before the Unionists could identify the body of troops, the Confederates blasted the pair of cannon with a point-blank volley. While several Federals



*General Bee (left); General Jackson*  
(National Archives)

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were hit, their horses positioned just to the rear suffered even more. The surviving artillerymen departed, leaving the section unmanned and immobilized. At the same time, the remainder of Griffin's battery began withdrawing from its position north of Henry house.

The Confederates did not have long to enjoy their victory. Coming under pressure from the 14th New York and resurgent elements of the 1st Minnesota, the 33d Virginia fell back through the 2d Virginia, which also began to retreat. The jubilant Federals surged past the recaptured cannon until they received a blast of canister from the opposing Confederate guns. Some of the attackers retreated a short distance while others attempted, without success, to haul away Griffin's abandoned cannon.

In response to the situation confronting Colonel Cummings, General Jackson ordered the 4th and 27th Virginia to counterattack the advancing Federals. Both Virginia regiments, supported by the 49th Virginia Battalion, 2d Mississippi, and 6th North Carolina, a late arriving element of Bee's brigade, advanced on Ricketts' battery. The Federal artillerymen poured canister into the attacking ranks but were compelled to abandon their guns. While defending his guns, Ricketts was wounded in

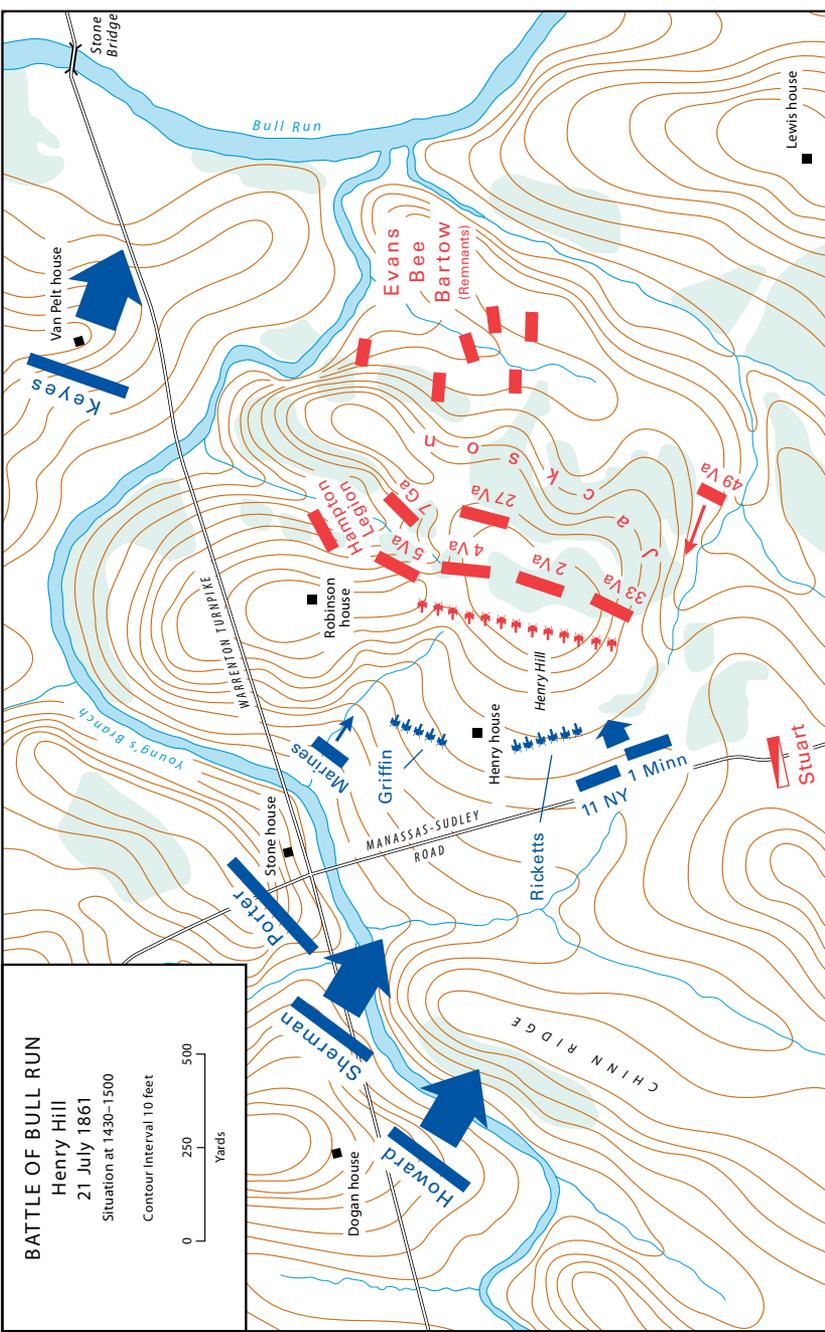
the thigh and taken prisoner. Although the Federals were able to draw off some caissons and limbers, the Virginians captured all six Parrott rifles.

Soon after the counterattack started, the 6th North Carolina found itself confronted by a detachment from the 14th New York guarding Griffin's recaptured cannon. After driving off the New Yorkers and seizing the guns for a second time, the North Carolinians continued northward. A bullet soon felled the North Carolina regiment's commander, precipitating its retreat back to the start line. The other attacking Confederate units found themselves confronted by the 1st Michigan of Col. Orlando B. Willcox's brigade, supported by the 5th and 11th Massachusetts from Franklin's brigade. Although the 5th Massachusetts broke after coming under heavy fire, the 11th Massachusetts, clad in gray uniforms, succeeded in retaking Ricketts' battery. The Federal onslaught also succeeded in forcing back the 4th and 27th Virginia, along with the 49th Virginia Battalion.

General Bee, still occupied with re-forming his shattered brigade, realized that Jackson needed help. Bee pointed up the hill toward Jackson while delivering one of the most well-known exclamations recorded during the Civil War: "Look, men, there is Jackson standing like a stone wall! Let us determine to die here, and we will conquer! Follow me!" The name "Stonewall" Jackson and the nickname of the "Stonewall" Brigade were born. Trailing behind Bee, the 4th Alabama began moving up the reverse slope of Henry Hill.

General Beauregard, unwilling to cede control of Henry Hill, ordered yet another counterattack. Under Beauregard's personal direction, Colonel Hampton's South Carolina Legion, flanked by the 5th Virginia, lunged toward the silent Federal guns. General Bee, at the head of the 4th Alabama, and Colonel Bartow, leading the 7th Georgia, also participated in the counterattack. The Confederate assault drove back the 11th Massachusetts, although at some cost. The latest Southern effort resulted in the deaths of Bee and Bartow. Bee was the highest-ranking officer to die in the battle. The Confederates remained on Henry Hill as the Federals fell back across the Manassas-Sudley Road. (*See Map 5.*)

By 1500, the Federal situation had become increasingly desperate. McDowell deployed about half of his army to the



**BATTLE OF BULL RUN**  
 Henry Hill  
 21 July 1861  
 Situation at 1430–1500  
 Contour Interval 10 feet

0 250 500  
 Yards

**MAP 5**

fight on Matthews Hill and Henry Hill but failed to reinforce the initial success by committing more troops. In the attempt to strengthen his position, McDowell sent in Sherman's and Howard's brigades. Moving his men down the Manassas-Sudley Road and across the Warrenton Turnpike, Sherman filed into the melee taking place on Henry Hill. The Federal assault began like previous efforts, with a single regiment, rather than an entire brigade, making the attack. The 13th New York marched partway up the hill where it became embroiled in a firefight with the Hampton Legion. Sherman then ordered the gray-clad 2d Wisconsin forward. Mistaken for Confederates by other Union troops, the regiment retreated after taking fire from both front and rear. A third regiment from Sherman's brigade, the 79th New York, reached Henry house before being repulsed. Sherman then ordered a fourth attack. Under cover of two cannon the 69th New York, joined by the 38th New York on its right, charged up the corpse-strewn slope. In the ensuing struggle, the 69th secured Ricketts' cannon, but its triumph proved short-lived, for within moments the 8th and 18th Virginia recaptured the guns for the final time. The Confederates had finally secured Henry Hill after two hours of heavy fighting.

The two Virginia regiments, drawn from Cocke's brigade, represented the first of thousands of fresh Confederate troops heading into the fight. General Johnston, having abandoned the original plan to attack Centreville, methodically stripped the Southern Bull Run defenses of men and cannon. As each new Southern regiment arrived at Henry Hill, the tactical momentum swung further in favor of the defenders. McDowell, on the other hand, did not have a similar source of fresh reserves. Six of seven available Federal brigades had taken part in the fight for Henry Hill. The seventh brigade, commanded by Howard, did not make its appearance until sometime after 1500. By that point, McDowell sought to shift the fight west of Henry Hill. McDowell ordered Howard to envelop the Confederate left after securing Chinn Ridge.

Howard approached Chinn Ridge as Johnston dispatched seventeen hundred men from Col. Arnold Elzey brigade, led by General Smith, to occupy the same piece of ground. Elzey's brigade, which detrained at Manassas Junction around 1600, represented the last of the reinforcements from the

Shenandoah Valley. The 2d and 8th South Carolina were the first Confederates to spot the Federals moving onto Chinn Ridge, which ignited a firefight between the opposing sides. Smith soon received support from Colonel Early's brigade, which had been positioned at Blackburn's Ford, and from Colonel Stuart's cavalry. Firing rapidly into Howard's advancing brigade, these Confederates halted the Federal attack. When Howard ordered his command to fall back several hundred yards to reorganize, his subordinates misinterpreted the directive as an order to retreat. The Federal brigade disintegrated after a Confederate battery opened fire on Howard's men at 500-yards range.

The unexpected collapse of Howard's brigade forced McDowell to admit he had lost the battle for Manassas Junction. McDowell ordered Major Sykes' battalion of regulars—the only force he considered reliable at this stage of the battle—to cover a retreat by the entire army. At the same time, Johnston ordered a battalion of cavalry, along with Capt. Delaware Kemper's Alexandria Light Artillery Battery, to pursue the withdrawing Unionists. About two miles east of Bull Run, the tiny Confederate force caught up with the Federal army. Kemper directed one of his cannons to fire a shot at a crowd of wagons and troops crossing Cub Run Bridge. The bursting shell, which overturned a wagon to block the bridge, led to wholesale panic among the Northerners. One modern historian noted, "Frenzied soldiers detoured around the bridge in wild confusion. Men splashed through the creek and climbed the steep muddy bank on the opposite side. Equipment became entangled, much of which the troops tossed aside." Unable to pass over the bridge, the Federals abandoned fourteen artillery pieces and dozens of wagons, caissons, and limbers.

Despite the blocked bridge, most of the surviving Federals were able to withdraw to a defensive position at Centreville by sunset. Shortly after 1600, Major Barnard sent a telegraph to the capital: "The day is lost. Save Washington and the remnants of this army. . . . The routed troops will not reform." As the roar of the artillery fell silent, President Davis arrived at the battlefield. He rode toward Sudley Ford where he found Johnston and received the details of the day's fight. Near midnight on 21 July, Davis sent a dispatch to Richmond: "Night has closed upon a hard-fought field. Our forces have won a glorious victory."

On 4 August, General McDowell submitted his official report on the engagement. In the document, McDowell maintained that

his troops fought bravely but were defeated because well-rested Confederate forces were defending familiar ground while tired Federal troops were engaged “out on the open fields.” In the wake of the embarrassing rout, President Lincoln began searching for a replacement for McDowell. Though the Confederates defeated their opponents in the first major battle on Virginia’s native soil, they were not able to capitalize on their victory because of their own disorganization and exhaustion. Despite a lingering belief that the victory had proven incomplete, Beauregard and Johnston succeeded in defending Manassas Junction and protecting Richmond.

The war’s first battle foreshadowed the carnage to come. Combined losses reached nearly five thousand men. McDowell reported a loss of 2,896, including 460 killed, 1,124 wounded, and 1,312 captured or missing. The 1,982 Confederate losses included 387 killed, 1,582 wounded, and 13 missing. The Confederates also captured 27 artillery pieces, 500 rifles, 500,000 rounds of ammunition, numerous limbers and wagons, and a significant amount of military stores. Capt. James B. Fry, acting assistant adjutant general for McDowell, summarized the mood of the country after the U.S. Army’s large-scale baptism of fire, “The first martial effervescence of the country was over. . . . The South triumphant and confident; the North disappointed but determined.”

## THE FIGHT FOR MISSOURI

In the period before and following Bull Run, both sides sought to bring uncommitted border states into the fold without appearing as the aggressor. When pro-Southern Marylanders attacked a Massachusetts regiment passing through Baltimore on 19 April, the incident provided Lincoln with sufficient pretext to send Northern troops into the state. With Maryland secure, Federal forces occupied neighboring Delaware. Kentucky, however, steadfastly maintained its neutrality in the wake of the events taking place in Maryland and Delaware. Pro-Union Kentuckians tried to persuade Federal military commanders not to invade the state in an effort to preempt a similar move by the Confederates.

The lack of similar restraint by both sides, however, resulted in a state of armed conflict within Missouri. At the time of South Carolina’s secession, Missouri’s pro-Southern

governor, Claiborne F. Jackson, attempted to maintain a veneer of neutrality. Despite Governor Jackson's preferences, the majority of delegates attending a special state secession convention voted to remain in the Union. While the governor remained bound by that decision, he believed public opinion would shift in favor of secession. Missouri Unionists rallied under the leadership of U.S. Congressman Francis P. Blair Jr. Chief among Blair's military supporters was Capt. Nathaniel Lyon, a Regular Army officer responsible for securing the St. Louis arsenal. A Connecticut native, Lyon graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1841. Lyon fought in the Seminole and Mexican Wars, spent a tour of duty in California, and had been stationed in neighboring Kansas during the turbulent 1850s.

In response to Governor Jackson's support of pro-secessionist groups, the Lincoln administration authorized Lyon to begin mustering Missouri Unionists on 18 April. Meanwhile, Governor Jackson wrote President Davis asking for cannon captured at the Baton Rouge arsenal to be secretly shipped to Missouri. Citing the Militia Act of 1858, Jackson also summoned the pro-Southern state militia to assemble at St. Louis for its annual training. On 10 May 1861, Lyon preempted the governor's attempt to muster a pro-secessionist military force by seizing Camp Jackson, a militia bivouac situated six miles outside of St. Louis. Lacking a suitable enclosure to hold the seven hundred prisoners, Lyon decided to issue them paroles at the Federal arsenal. As the group moved into St. Louis, a mob of secessionists lined the streets and taunted Lyon's men. In the midst of the harassment and pelting of rocks and bottles, someone within the crowd opened fire. Lyon's troops returned fire. Two of Lyon's men were killed in the exchange, as well as three captive secessionists and twenty-eight citizens. The proslavery press in Missouri immediately labeled the incident as the "Camp Jackson Massacre."

The day after the clash between Lyon's troops and the pro-secessionist mob, the legislature established the Missouri State Guard. Responsible to the governor and loyal to the state, these troops were not mustered into service as part of the Confederate armies, although some transferred to Confederate units later that fall. Governor Jackson appointed Sterling Price to the rank of major general to command the

State Guard. A Virginia native, Price fought in the Mexican War and later served as Missouri governor from 1852 until 1856. Although Price began forming “divisions” consisting of a mix of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, a pervasive lack of weapons and equipment hampered his efforts to turn his command into a viable military force.

On 11 June, Lyon and Blair met with Jackson and Price at the governor’s suite at the Planter’s House hotel in St. Louis. Lyon, recently promoted to brigadier general, informed Jackson and Price that he would not acquiesce on any issue of Federal authority in Missouri. The meeting reached a climax when Lyon declared, “Rather than concede to the State of Missouri for one single instant the right to dictate to my government in any manner however important, I would see you, and you, and you, and every man, woman, and child in the state, dead and buried!” Accepting Lyon’s message as a preemptive declaration of war, Governor Jackson called for fifty thousand volunteers to defend the state.

Making good on his word, Lyon initiated a campaign to capture Jefferson City, the state capital, and to break up Price’s “hostile organizations.” Learning of Lyon’s intentions to move on the capital, Governor Jackson abandoned Jefferson City on 13 June after ordering the State Guard to organize at Boonville, a small town on the Missouri River to the northwest. Accompanied by seventeen hundred men, Lyon marched into Jefferson City two days later and raised the Union flag above the abandoned capitol building. Leaving three companies to hold Jefferson City, Lyon embarked the remainder on steamboats. Just prior to Lyon’s arrival, Price left Boonville to join the remainder of his forces assembling at Lexington.

Lyon marched to Boonville after landing below the town on 17 June, where he engaged the State Guard troops under the command of Col. John S. Marmaduke. The Union forces routed their opponents in a brief clash that produced fewer than a hundred casualties for both sides. Having gained control of the Missouri River and thwarted Governor Jackson’s efforts to bring the state into the Confederacy, Lyon now sought a decisive victory over the Missouri State Guard. Receiving reinforcements from Kansas and Iowa, Lyon’s army numbered nearly twenty-four hundred. His forces moved out from Boonville on 3 July to seek out Price’s command in southwestern Missouri.

Meanwhile, Price also strengthened his army. He retained command of the Missouri State Guard, which consisted of seventy-one hundred troops organized into five “divisions” (a term denoting the congressional district where soldiers were recruited and not the size of the command) and a separate cavalry regiment. Reinforcements from outside Missouri arrived in the form of a 2,200-man contingent of Arkansas State Troops under Brig. Gen. Nicholas B. Pearce and a 2,700-strong Confederate brigade led by Brig. Gen. Benjamin McCulloch. The former consisted of three infantry regiments, nearly four hundred cavalymen, and two artillery batteries while the latter possessed two regiments of Arkansas mounted infantry, an infantry regiment apiece from Louisiana and Arkansas, and a combined south Kansas–Texas cavalry regiment. All told, the “Western Army,” as termed by McCulloch, consisted of twelve thousand troops (including two thousand unarmed Missouri State Guard members) and fifteen cannon.

Although Price contributed the majority of the troops, Arkansas and Missouri placed their units under McCulloch’s command, a role that he accepted with reluctance. Recognizing that Missouri’s internal politics demanded Price play a major role in the upcoming campaign, McCulloch consulted with the Missourian on all matters of strategy. Although the duo quarreled over many issues of varying importance, Price and McCulloch agreed their first priority would be to reestablish a prosecessionist government in the state and destroy Lyon’s Unionist forces.

The first clash between Lyon and Price took place on 5 July when a 1,100-man Federal force led by Colonel Sigel encountered 4,000 state guardsmen under Brig. Gen. James S. Rains. After receiving information of nearby enemy troops from pro-Union citizens, Sigel planned to attack the secessionists in their encampment at Lamar, Missouri. After a 22-mile forced march on 4 July, Sigel’s troops bedded down for the night at Carthage, a small community eighteen miles south of Lamar. Alerted by a clash between a Confederate commissary detail and Federal pickets, Rains opted to launch an attack against Carthage the following morning. In the meantime, Sigel broke camp prior to dawn on 5 July heading for Lamar.

The Federal column reached a point five miles north of Carthage when it encountered Confederate cavalry. Outnumbered



*General Lyon (left); Colonel Sigel, pictured here as General  
(National Archives)*

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by the Unionists, the Southern horsemen gained time for Rains by forcing Sigel to form a line of battle before falling back. When a local guide brought news of Rains' presence, Sigel decided to fight rather than retreat. The battle began at 0830 when the Federal cannon opened fire, eliciting a prompt reply from the opposing Confederate batteries. The 45-minute exchange produced much confusion and few casualties. The contest ended when Rains deployed his cavalry against Sigel's flanks, forcing him to retreat to avoid being surrounded. Dividing his command into two sections, Sigel's men moved in alternating rearward bounds to safety as the poorly coordinated Confederate pursuit faltered. Federal casualties totaled eighteen killed, fifty-three wounded and five missing, while incomplete State Guard reports placed Confederate losses at twelve killed, sixty-four wounded, and one missing.

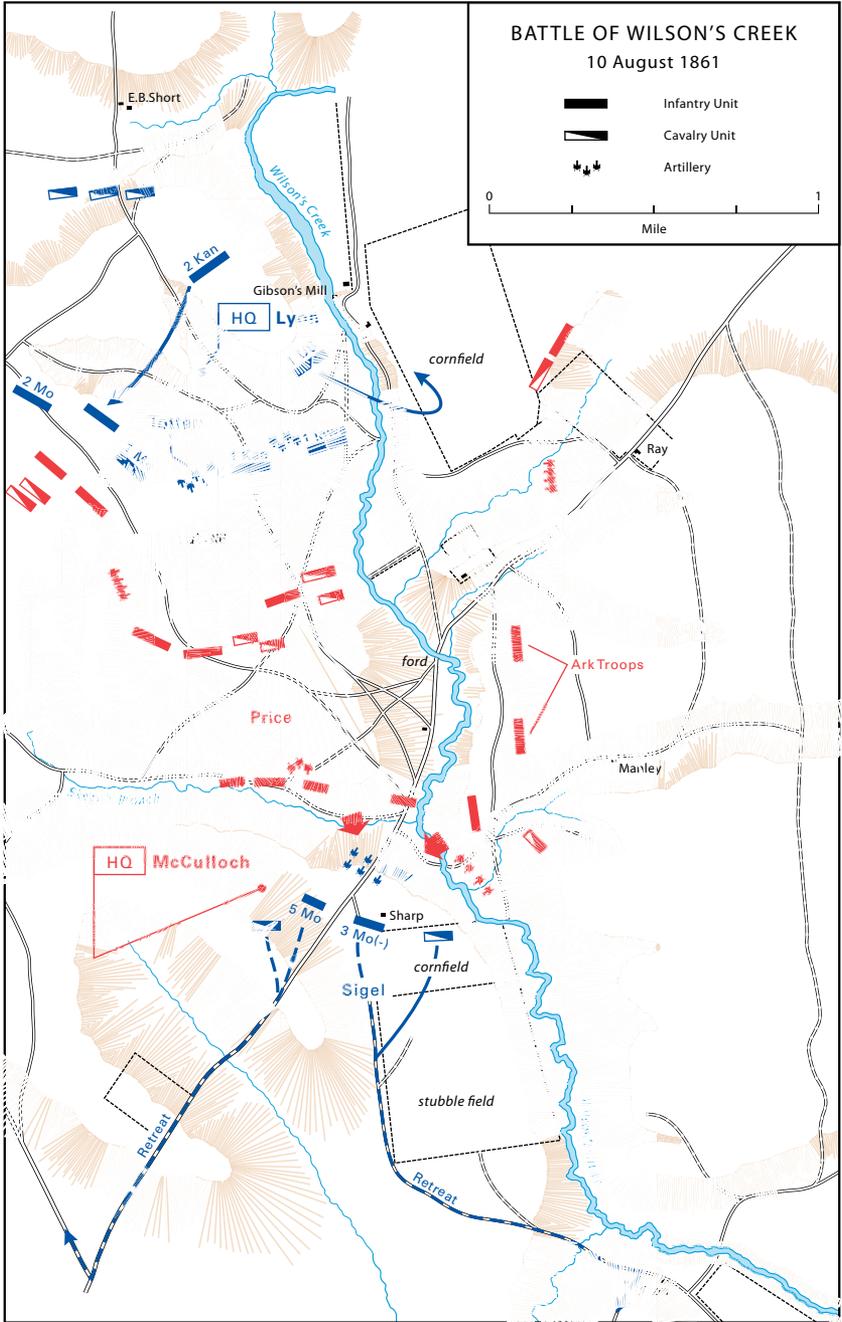
Not to be deterred, Lyon prepared for a larger push into southwestern Missouri. Based on his belief that Price had not yet linked up with McCulloch, Lyon wanted to destroy the Southerners before they united. Though his forces lacked the supplies for a prolonged campaign, Lyon led four brigades totaling fifty-five hundred officers and men south from Springfield. He left behind twelve hundred troops—two companies of the 1st U.S. Cavalry,

a Missouri Union Home Guard regiment, and two cannon—to secure Springfield. On 2 August, Lyon’s forces assaulted advance elements of the Confederate force at Dug Springs. Although the Union attack triggered the precipitate flight of three thousand Missouri state guardsmen, Lyon ordered a retreat on learning other Confederate forces were nearby. Rather than pursue Lyon, the Southerners settled into an encampment along a two-mile front of the valley of Wilson’s Creek.

Though recognizing his inferiority in numbers, Lyon decided to launch a spoiling attack before the Confederates attacked Springfield. At a commander’s meeting on 8 August, Lyon proposed to march to Wilson’s Creek with the entire army. Colonel Sigel suggested that the Union forces should be divided into two columns, one under his command and the other under Lyon. By splitting into two columns, Sigel explained, Lyon’s troops could launch simultaneous strikes from different directions against the Confederates. Although Lyon rejected the proposal at first, by the following day he directed Sigel’s brigade to move along a circuitous southern route against the Confederate position while Lyon attacked from the north with the remainder of the Union force. By agreeing to Sigel’s proposal, Lyon changed his original plan of buying enough time for his army to escape to defeating the combined forces of McCulloch and Price.

Ignoring an approaching rainstorm, Lyon’s army broke camp on 9 August at 1830. Blankets were wrapped around cannon and wagon wheels to deaden their sound. Union cavalry troopers with the mission of intercepting any prosecessionist civilian or Southern soldier preceded both columns. Lyon’s column consisted of forty-three hundred men from Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri while Sigel’s eleven hundred soldiers were all Missourians. After marching five miles west of Springfield before turning south across the prairie, Lyon’s column reached its objective about 0100. He instructed his men to rest for several hours before launching the attack. By daybreak, Sigel’s command had also reached a position where it could see the Confederate camps (*Map 6*).

McCulloch and Price’s original plan called for an early morning attack on Springfield with four converging columns that would envelop Lyon’s forces. While the Confederates had planned to break camp at 2100 the previous evening,



**MAP 6**

McCulloch postponed the march due to torrential rains and thunderstorms. The Southerners, who started breaking camp in preparation for the attack, decided against reestablishing a security screen on receiving word of the postponement. Not until just after daybreak on the morning of 10 August, did Price belatedly receive information from some frightened teamsters that Union troops were nearing Wilson's Creek.

Responding to the reports of nearby Union troops, a 300-man regiment of cavalry under Col. Dewitt C. Hunter rode out to encounter Lyon's vanguard north of a prominent wooded ridge known as Oak Hill. Arraying his horsemen across Oak Hill's northernmost spur, Hunter sent back word to Col. James Cawthorn, commander of the cavalry brigade belonging to the 8th Missouri State Guard Division. The appearance of Hunter's troops brought the Federals to a temporary halt, buying time for Cawthorn to raise the alarm. Although his leading regiments encountered enemy cavalry, Lyon realized his sunrise attack had caught the Southerners by surprise. Just before 0500, Lyon ordered his artillery to open fire on Hunter's dismounted troopers. The Union general then instructed his lead brigade to seize Oak Hill.

As Hunter retreated under pressure from the advancing Federals, his men joined Cawthorn's 900-man brigade on Oak Hill. Lyon's 1st Kansas and 1st Missouri regiments soon forced the Southern horsemen from the wooded crest of the hill. Six cannon from Capt. James Totten's company of the 2d U.S. Artillery were then placed between the two regiments. The 1st Iowa, along with a battalion apiece of regular infantry and the 2d Missouri, took up positions on the left. A company of the 2d Kansas and the remainder of the 2d Missouri moved up on the right (western) flank. Lyon retained the bulk of the 2d Kansas as a reserve. The Union position on Oak Hill formed a shallow arc from the northwest through Totten's battery before bending back to the northeast after crossing Wilson's Creek. Looking far to the south and east, the Union troops could see furious activity erupting within the Confederate and Arkansas State Troops camps. The appearance of Federal troops on Oak Hill also spurred at least one Confederate battery into opening fire on the now visible attackers.

News of the unexpected appearance of Union troops reached McCulloch and Price as they discussed the attack on

Springfield over breakfast at Price's headquarters. The first messenger brought news that the Federals were "approaching with twenty thousand men and 100 piece of artillery." A second courier announced that the main body of Lyon's army had arrived at Wilson's Creek. McCulloch ordered Price to deploy his Missouri State Guard, camped along the base of Oak Hill's southern slopes, to repel Lyon's assault.

Price soon found himself struggling to rally Cawthorn's unit while attempting to assemble his infantry and artillery. Located out of sight of the crest behind a dense belt of trees, Price's men formed into a line of battle without suffering serious losses to incoming fire. As the Missourians were assembling, McCulloch deployed two regiments from his brigade to turn back a battalion-size force of regulars attempting to advance east of Wilson's Creek. McCulloch's success allowed Price to concentrate against Lyon's force on Oak Hill without having to worry about his flanks.

Meanwhile, Sigel positioned his force to assault the Confederates from the rear. As Sigel heard the sounds of muskets from Oak Hill at 0530, he ordered his artillery to open fire on McCulloch's brigade encamped to the south of the Missouri State Guard. The bursting shells caught the Southerners—including two thousand unarmed Missourians and dozens of camp followers—completely unaware. Hundreds of men ran in every direction as the Federal shells exploded in their midst. Capitalizing on the artillery barrage, the 3d and 5th Missouri, supported by a company of dragoons, advanced along the western bank of Wilson's Creek. The dragoons took almost one hundred prisoners during the attack. As one modern battle account noted, the Federal brigade commander "had moved a great distance in almost complete secrecy, opening his surprise attack at exactly the moment intended. The effect upon the enemy had been devastating. . . . But the ability of the Federals to exploit such remarkable success would depend on what Sigel did next."

By 0630, Price launched a counterattack designed to regain control of Oak Hill. At the same time, General Lyon ordered the 1st Missouri and part of the 1st Kansas to resume their southward advance. The two forces collided halfway down the southern slope of Oak Hill. The simultaneous assaults degenerated into a lengthy short-range firefight amid

thick trees and brush. The impasse broke when two misoriented Missouri State Guard units accidentally outflanked the opposing battle line. When the 1st Missouri shifted to face this new threat, it came under fire from several directions. The 1st Kansas also found itself under renewed attack, which pushed the Federals back to the crest. This success allowed Price to regain the initiative, forcing Lyon on the defensive for the remainder of the battle. Lyon responded by committing his reserve, the 2d Kansas, a move that succeeded in halting the Confederates.

With the situation on Oak Hill stabilized, McCulloch headed south to organize a counterstroke against Sigel's troops. After observing the Union force for some time, McCulloch noticed the terrain dipped sharply in front of the Federal battery supporting Sigel's brigade. While the Union cannon could fire on distant targets, sloping ground prevented the guns from engaging Southern forces to their immediate front. In addition to the poor field of fire, only an understrength battalion from 3d Missouri supported the Federal gunners. The remainder of Sigel's brigade deployed along a road intersection located to the rear of the battery. As a result, the crews of four Union guns and 250 infantrymen found themselves opposing a Confederate counterattack originating from the low ground south of McCulloch's abandoned camp.

McCulloch took personal command of the impending assault on Sigel. Leading several companies of Louisiana infantry, McCulloch encountered some skirmishers a short distance in advance of the Federal battery. After firing a few shots, the Federals fell back on their main body. The skirmishers reported to Sigel that they had seen Lyon's men advancing toward their position. Sigel responded by instructing his artillery to remain silent until positive target identification could be made. Moving through the low ground, the Louisianans emerged directly in front of the Federal cannon. The Northern gunners opened fire but missed. The discharge of the Federal cannon, however, drew counterbattery fire from Southern guns. Two of the Union guns replied to this incoming fire as the Missouri State Guard launched its own attack against Sigel's force. With the Federals diverted by this new threat, the Louisianans swarmed up to the edge of the plateau, unleashing a point-blank volley at the opposing artillerymen and their support. Although

Sigel exposed himself “recklessly” while attempting to rally his command, within moments his entire brigade fragmented into small knots of running soldiers, despite the fact that the brigade outnumbered the Southerners three to one. The fight ended in a Southern victory by 0845.

About 0900, having assembled thirty-five hundred men and ten artillery pieces on Oak Hill, Lyon stood ready to receive another counterattack. Price’s Missouri State Guard did not disappoint him. A Southern battle line emerged in front of the Union defenders a second time, igniting a fierce exchange of fire. While directing his men on the front line, a bullet hit Lyon’s calf, causing him to temporarily leave the field to receive medical treatment. Back on the field, Lyon was hit a second time when a bullet grazed the side of his head. At this point, the confusion of battle resulted in the 1st Iowa pulling back, leaving a gap in the Federal line. Determined to continue the fight, Lyon returned to the field leading the Iowa men back into the fray. Moments later, a bullet hit Lyon in the chest. Although he lingered on for several hours, Lyon became the first Union general officer to die in the Civil War.

Price struggled to coordinate the movements of his troops as the fighting continued. Sensing his men were beginning to falter, Price requested assistance from McCulloch. When a mounted charge by Texas and Arkansas cavalry scattered some opposing Federal infantry, Price used that respite to order his men to fall back. Maj. Samuel D. Sturgis, the senior Regular Army officer present, assumed command after the mortal wounding of Lyon. After routing Sigel, McCulloch concentrated his efforts on aiding Price at Oak Hill. The Arkansas State Troops, which remained unengaged up to this point, now moved to assist the Missourians. Their arrival added about one thousand fresh troops to the Confederate assault force. The combined Southern forces launched a third attack against Oak Hill. Lacking news from Sigel, Major Sturgis gave the order to retreat after holding off the Confederate attack for about an hour. Starting at 1200, the Federal troops began withdrawing to Springfield. Their exhausted opponents did not pursue. The battle of Wilson’s Creek had ended. Lyon lost 258 men killed, 873 wounded, and 186 missing, representing 25 percent of his force. Twelve percent of McCulloch’s force, including 277 killed, 945 wounded, and 10 missing, also fell. With the Federal

forces in disarray, McCulloch and Price were now able to move freely throughout western Missouri.

#### **FROM BELMONT TO PORT ROYAL**

As Federal and Confederate armies both struggled for control of Missouri, the Union Navy set about enforcing the blockade announced by President Lincoln. The Federal admirals divided their forces patrolling the Atlantic into the North and South Atlantic Blockading Squadrons, with their operational boundary aligned with the border between the North and South Carolina coastline. Two additional squadrons, designated as East Gulf and West Gulf, patrolled the Gulf of Mexico. However, the Federal warships sailing along the Atlantic coast were limited to operating out of Hampton Roads, Virginia, and Key West, Florida. These bases were hundreds of miles from key Confederate ports such as Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans. As a result, Federal warships spent as much time sailing to their assigned areas of operation as they did on patrol. In addition, the Carolina and Georgia coastlines were filled with dozens of minor inlets and natural harbors that provided safe haven to blockade runners. The Unionists would have to expand their fleet significantly in order to watch over major Confederate ports and long stretches of enemy coastline. The increase in the size of the Northern fleet would, in turn, require more extensive base facilities.

Rather than improve existing bases, an ad hoc strategy board convened in July 1861 by Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles recommended the seizure of bases in Confederate territory. This approach offered two advantages. First, the acquisition of new bases reduced the number of harbors available to Southern blockade runners, and second, by occupying bases in Confederate territory, the Federals would gain coaling and repair facilities much closer to major Southern ports. With bases closer to their patrol areas, Northern naval vessels could remain on station longer. The Navy, however, lacked the ground forces to seize these bases. In early August, General Butler, commander of the Federal garrison at Fort Monroe, Virginia, solved the Navy's problem by volunteering Army troops and supplies to support the Navy's initial assault on the Southern coastline.

Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, the easternmost point in the Confederacy, lay within sight of the Gulf Stream, which moves

along the Atlantic coast at a speed of three knots. Merchant ships sailing between northern ports and the Caribbean would reduce the time of their homeward journeys by following the stream northward. For months Southern raiders, either privateers or state-owned vessels, had been lurking inside the Outer Banks near Cape Hatteras, protected from both the weather and from Federal men-of-war, until unsuspecting merchant ships appeared. Watchers stationed at the Hatteras lighthouse had been signaling the raiders, who then dashed out to seize the merchant vessels before Federal warships could react.

In response, Secretary Welles designated the Outer Banks as the initial operational objective for the Federal Navy, and Federal forces prepared for the war's first joint Army and Navy operation. General Butler assembled 880 troops drawn from the New York "Naval Brigade," 9th and 20th New York, and the 2d U.S. Artillery to assist the Navy in capturing Hatteras. The naval component, commanded by Flag Officer Silas H. Stringham, consisted of three gunboats, one revenue cutter, and four larger warships. Stringham's flotilla, accompanied by a pair of transports carrying Butler's forces and a tugboat, departed from Hampton Roads on 26 August. The Federal ships arrived off Cape Hatteras on the following day.

To protect the Outer Banks from Federal attack, the state of North Carolina built fortifications overlooking its four main inlets—Beaufort, Ocracoke, Hatteras, and Oregon—deep enough for ocean-going vessels to enter the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds. The North Carolinians began constructing Fort Hatteras in late May, followed by Fort Clark in mid-July, to protect the Hatteras Inlet. Fort Hatteras, sited on the seaward face of Hatteras Island, defended the Atlantic approaches while Fort Clark, located about a half mile to the southeast, defended the sound and the landward side of Fort Hatteras. Fort Hatteras mounted eight of twenty planned cannon, only four of which faced seaward, while Fort Clark possessed five of seven planned pieces. Six companies from Col. William F. Martin's 7th North Carolina Volunteers garrisoned both forts.

The battle opened early in the morning of 28 August with the Federal vessels bombarding Fort Clark. As the fleet shifted course to the northeast, the warships began pummeling Fort Hatteras. Eschewing tactics developed during the age of sail, Flag Officer Stringham ordered his steam-powered warships to

keep moving during the bombardment. After passing Hatteras, the warships continued east before sailing in a long continuous loop ending with a northerly approach toward the inlet. The Confederates found hitting moving targets at long range very difficult. In addition, the fuses for the Southern ammunition proved faulty, causing the shells to explode before reaching the circling ships.

The Federals were not always so fortunate. When Butler attempted to send a force ashore, rough surf capsized several small boats. Stringham called off the landing attempt, leaving the few soldiers ashore to their own devices for the time being. The Confederates, however, did not attempt to launch a counterattack against the small group of bedraggled Federals huddling near the beach. At 1300 after expending all available ammunition, the garrison of Fort Clark withdrew to Fort Hatteras. The Union landing party hastened to seek shelter inside the abandoned fortification.

During the night of 28–29 August, the Southerners received reinforcements from nearby Fort Ocracoke. Flag Officer Samuel Barron, Southern commander of the coastal defenses of North Carolina, arrived at Fort Hatteras and assumed command from Colonel Martin. Expecting more reinforcements from New Bern, Barron opted to hold Fort Hatteras. The next morning the Federal gunships reopened fire on Fort Hatteras from more than two miles offshore. During the bombardment, additional troops from the 9th and 20th New York were put ashore near Fort Clark. A light fieldpiece that landed with Federal reinforcements repelled attempts by Confederate steamers to ferry more troops to Fort Hatteras. After enduring a constant barrage of shells “bursting over and in the fort every few seconds,” Barron consulted with his officers who all agreed further resistance would prove futile. Butler’s terms were unconditional; he demanded the garrison’s “full capitulation.” Barron accepted, surrendering Fort Hatteras and 715 men. The Confederates also lost one thousand rifles, thirty cannon, and considerable supplies.

The capture of Forts Clark and Hatteras brought the North a much-needed boost soon after McDowell’s defeat at Bull Run. Offering a “Congratulatory Order,” one Federal officer commented, “This gallant affair will not fail to stimulate the regulars and volunteers to greater exertions to prepare themselves for future and greater achievements.”

Northern euphoria resulting from the capture of the Hatteras forts lasted barely seven weeks. On 21 October, a force of Union troops under Col. Edward D. Baker, a serving U.S. senator from Oregon commanding a brigade of Pennsylvanians, crossed the Potomac approximately thirty-five miles north of Washington. Brig. Gen. Charles P. Stone, the division commander, ordered Colonel Baker to send a small force across the river to attack a Confederate camp reported near Ball's Bluff. While the 400-man raiding party crossed undetected, the Federals retreated in the face of a surprise attack launched by a group of Confederates. Both sides sent in reinforcements, which led to a prolonged firefight lasting until late afternoon. Colonel Baker, who joined his men after the engagement began, died when a Confederate soldier shot him with a pistol. News of Baker's death produced a panicky retreat to the Potomac, where dozens of Federals were shot or drowned while recrossing the river.

Of the 1,720 Union soldiers at Ball's Bluff, 49 were killed, 158 wounded, 553 taken prisoner, and 161 missing and presumed drowned. On the Confederate side, 1,709 participated in the fighting, with 36 killed, 117 wounded, and 2 captured. The lopsided outcome of the battle, when coupled with Baker's death, resulted in the creation of the United States Congress Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. The committee's first order of business involved a cross-examination of all officers involved in the Ball's Bluff affair, a process that led to the imprisonment of General Stone on unsubstantiated charges of criminal incompetence.

Having gained control of a base on Hatteras Island for use by the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, the Union Navy looked to secure a similar base for the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron. To kick off the campaign, Flag Officer Samuel Du Pont launched an attack on Port Royal, South Carolina. Part of a string of islands located midway between Savannah and Charleston, Port Royal was not only a heavily trafficked harbor, but also a vital economic and slave-trading center. In late October, Du Pont's expedition of seventy-four vessels carrying twelve thousand men departed from Hampton Roads.

On the morning of 7 November, the Federal offensive against Port Royal began. Two Confederate fortifications, Forts Beauregard and Walker, protected the entrance to the harbor.

Like Stringham, Du Pont divided his fleet into two parallel columns to maintain a continual fire on both Confederate forts. Shortly after the bombardment began, the USS *Mohican* dropped anchor after discovering a position from which it could enfilade Fort Walker without fear of return fire. Several other ships followed suit, countering Du Pont's tactical plan. The anchored ships inflicted heavy damage on Fort Walker, forcing its occupants to flee by late afternoon. The garrison of Fort Beauregard slipped away after noticing that Walker's guns had fallen silent. Port Royal was in Federal hands.

While the Federal Navy secured enclaves along the southern coastline, little action occurred between the opposing armies in the east. In early September, however, Confederate forces under Maj. Gen. Leonidas K. Polk launched an unsanctioned invasion of Kentucky, opening the way for Federal soldiers under Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to occupy Paducah. The Federals soon gained the upper hand by committing more troops than were available to the Southerners. After consolidating his position in Kentucky, Grant initiated a campaign against Confederate forces in southeastern Missouri. On 5 November, Grant learned that Confederate forces from Columbus, Kentucky, had crossed the Mississippi River into Missouri near the small town of Belmont. Learning the Confederates were building a fort near Belmont, Grant decided to move his forces downriver aboard two steamers to destroy the enemy camp.

At 0800 on 7 November, Grant's five regiments, totaling just over three thousand men, disembarked from a point roughly three miles above Belmont. Just north of Belmont, Confederate pickets opened fire on Grant's men. More Southerners joined the fight as the Federals continued advancing toward the camp. Around 1400, the defenses collapsed when the Confederate commander, Brig. Gen. Gideon J. Pillow, ordered an ill-timed counterattack. Grant's men pursued the disorganized enemy to Camp Johnston, where they captured several cannon and spiked others. Confederate reinforcements from Kentucky arrived via steamboat a short while later, forcing Grant to conduct a fighting withdrawal to his waiting transports. Though the battle contributed little to the overall strategic situation, one historian later noted, "The discovery of an audacious general who would go looking for a fight downriver delighted Lincoln. Belmont brought Grant's name forward at a time of reorganization of the army."

By the fall of 1861, especially after the Federal defeat at Bull Run, hopes for a short war were shattered. To command the growing Union Army, the president sought the services of the victor at Rich Mountain in July, General McClellan. McClellan had established himself as a man of competent abilities. Born into an elite Philadelphia family, McClellan enrolled in the University of Pennsylvania at the age of thirteen. In 1842, at age fifteen, McClellan entered the U.S. Military Academy after receiving special permission to attend because he did not meet the minimum age requirement. A dedicated and diligent student, McClellan graduated in 1846, ranking second in his class of fifty-nine cadets. He received a commission as a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. McClellan experienced his baptism of fire during the Mexican War at the battles of Churubusco and Chapultepec. In 1858, McClellan resigned his commission to embark on a railroading career. After receiving a major general's commission in the Regular Army, McClellan assumed command of Federal forces within the Department of the Ohio one month after the Fort Sumter bombardment. At age thirty-four, McClellan outranked everyone in the U.S. Army except General Scott.

After the demoralizing defeat at Bull Run, President Lincoln summoned McClellan to Washington to assume command of an army composed of new three-year recruits. McClellan arrived on 26 July and began to organize the newly designated Army of the Potomac. A rivalry soon developed between McClellan and Scott, whom McClellan privately referred to as the "old general." McClellan diligently worked to build his army while simultaneously minimizing Scott's influence. On 1 November, Scott offered his resignation, which Lincoln accepted. Later that day the president appointed McClellan as general in chief of the Union Army. When Lincoln cautioned McClellan of the strains of occupying both the general-in-chief position as well as commander of the Army of the Potomac, the general replied, "I can do it all."

Through the remainder of 1861, McClellan trained the Army of the Potomac while it held a defensive line outside of Manassas. Recruits continued to fill the Northern ranks until his army numbered one hundred-twenty thousand men by October. With a Union Army now twice the size of the Confederate forces in Manassas, public figures in the North

again pressed for an offensive. McClellan resisted their calls, believing instead, as he methodically prepared his troops for battle, that he controlled the “destinies of this great country.” Yet at the end of 1861, all remained quiet along the Potomac.

### *Analysis*

The opening phase of the Civil War witnessed two significant strategic miscalculations by the Confederacy. First, the South precipitated armed conflict when it would have been better served by postponing a war in order to build up its industrial base and war-making capabilities using goods flowing into blockade-free ports. Invading Kentucky was also a mistake. The state declared for the Union, undermining the South’s strategic position by opening up pathways for Federal troops to move down the Mississippi River or march overland into Tennessee.

On the positive side, Southern forces performed well on the battlefield. Anticipating that one decisive engagement in the east would end the war, Lincoln and many Northerners clamored for an early offensive into Virginia. The Confederate victory at Bull Run on 21 July ended Northern expectations for a short war. The Union defeat also forced Lincoln to re-evaluate his military leadership and led to McClellan’s appointment to command the newly renamed Army of the Potomac. The ascension of General McClellan to the dual positions of commander of the Army of the Potomac and general-in-chief took place as opportunities for military operations in the east ended with the onset of winter.

Meanwhile, Union armies suffered mixed results on far-flung battlefields west of Virginia. On 10 August, Southern troops gained control of western Missouri when McCulloch and Price defeated Lyon at Wilson’s Creek. Grant’s raid on Belmont in early November began shifting the strategic initiative in the west back to the Union forces, although some Northerners characterized it as a defeat. The battle also brought an offensive-minded commander to the attention of the Northern public and political leadership. Although neither Wilson’s Creek nor Belmont ended well for the Union, Lincoln’s generals did succeed in preventing Missouri from joining the Confederacy.

By the end of December 1861, approximately 325,000 Confederate soldiers were arrayed against 527,000 Union troops. Despite early military reverses, the Lincoln administration did

not concede the Confederacy's right to exist. In fact, Northern military leaders were planning to launch multiple offensives into Southern territory as soon as the weather favored combat operations, including another invasion of Virginia with the aim of capturing Richmond. As Federal forces grew more experienced and competent, they would gain key victories in 1862 that helped to shape the outcome of the Civil War.



## THE AUTHOR

Jennifer M. Murray received her Ph.D. in history from Auburn University. She worked as a historian for the Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office and is currently an assistant professor at the University of Virginia's College at Wise.



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