

"The Vortex of Hell"

From Richmond to Manassas in 1862



"The name of every officer, non-commissioned officer, and private who has shared in the toils and privations of this campaign should be mentioned... I would that I could do justice to all of these gallant officers and men in this report. As that is impossible."

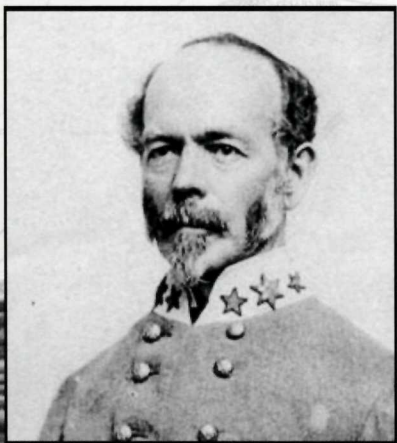
~ Confederate General James Longstreet

1862 - The Peninsula Campaign

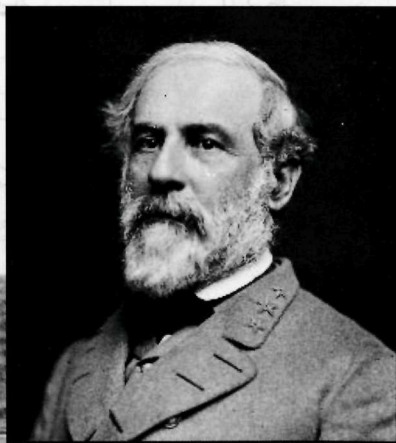
In the second year of the Civil War, Northern hopes were again raised for a quick victory. However, Union Gen. George B. McClellan made little progress beginning a spring campaign in 1862, resulting in a restless public and press. Finally forced into action, McClellan decided to move his massive Army of the Potomac by water to Fortress Monroe in Virginia and from there advance up the James River Peninsula to take the Confederate capital of Richmond.

Gathering a force of some 63,000 men around Richmond, Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston determined to stop the approaching Federals. On May 31st, in the two day Battle of Seven Pines, also known as the Battle of Fair Oaks, the Confederates were repulsed, and Johnston was severely wounded, but McClellan was delayed and unable to take Richmond. Command of the Army of Northern Virginia was then given to Gen. Robert E. Lee. Within two weeks, Lee strengthened the defenses of Richmond and the morale of the troops greatly improved.

By June 25th, Lee had assembled a force of about 90,000 men, including Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's victorious command, newly arrived from the Shenandoah Valley. The next day, with trusted generals and determined troops, Lee launched a great counteroffensive. In a series of desperately contested operations, known as the Seven Days' Battles, McClellan was forced back upon Harrison's Landing on the James River, losing all the ground he had gained. Though the campaign was costly in Confederate casualties, Lee saved Richmond and cloaked his army with a sense of invincibility.



Johnston



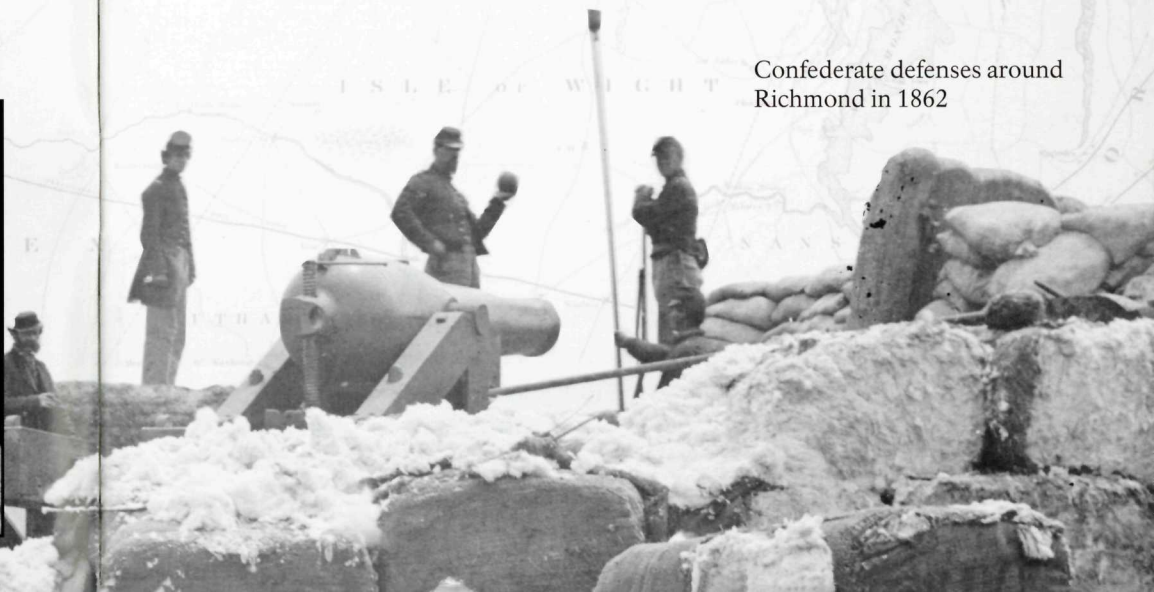
Lee

While fighting raged near Richmond, on June 26th a new Union army was created from three separate commands that had been previously operating independently in northern Virginia. Maj. Gen. John Pope was assigned to command this new force, christened the "Army of Virginia."

By mid-July, Pope's new army was beginning to take shape and move southward across Virginia. Even though McClellan's huge army remained at Harrison's Landing and the movement would weaken Richmond's defenses, on July 13th, Lee dispatched Jackson's wing of the army north to confront Pope and protect the vital railroad junction at Gordonsville. Lee remained with the other wing, under the command of Gen. James Longstreet.

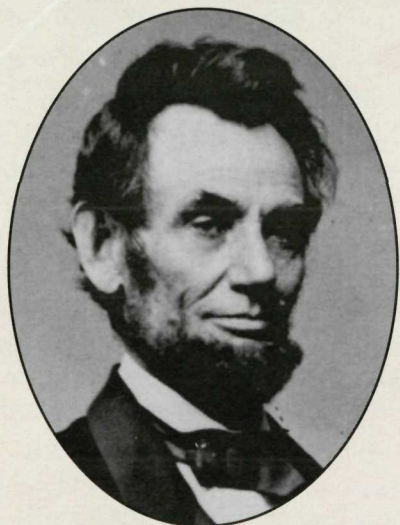
On August 3rd, McClellan received orders from Washington to abandon the Peninsula and join forces with Pope. Reluctant to do so, McClellan slowly and incrementally began moving his army by water. The movement of Union troops at Hampton Roads caught the eye of a recently captured Confederate cavalry officer who was being exchanged. Upon his release and arrival in Richmond on August 5th, John S. Mosby reported his observations to Lee. It became evident that McClellan no longer posed any immediate threat to Richmond. This opened an opportunity for Lee to concentrate his entire army against John Pope.

Confederate defenses around Richmond in 1862



Union Command Trouble

President Abraham Lincoln - In his first year in office, things had not gone well for Lincoln. The 1861 defeats at Manassas and Ball's Bluff had been major setbacks for the army and his administration. Struggling to find the right general to lead the army, Lincoln hoped that 1862 would bring a victorious end to the war. By spreading responsibility to a new General-in-Chief, Henry Halleck, and the commanders of two armies, McClellan and Pope, he encouraged them to cooperate, advance, and win.



Lincoln



Halleck

General Henry Halleck - Known as "Old Brains," Halleck had written a popular textbook on warfare and was considered an authority on military strategy. However, much of his success on the western battlefields in the spring of 1862 were due to the efforts of his subordinates. Nevertheless, Lincoln called him to Washington to be his top military advisor and coordinate the two eastern armies. However, Halleck's timidity and poor communication skills would be serious liabilities.

General George B. McClellan - Welcomed as the savior of the Union when he took command of the armies after the First Battle of Manassas, McClellan managed to squander most of that good will by displaying noticeable arrogance and an aversion to sustained attack. His defeat in the Peninsula Campaign further damaged his reputation and left the door open for other generals to shine. McClellan, though, still in command of the Army of the Potomac, was eager to regain position and again feel the admiration of the Union.



McClellan



Pope

General John Pope - Serving under Halleck in the West, Pope scored victories on the advance to Memphis, Tennessee. Picked to command the new Army of Virginia, Pope displayed a blustery and blunt style. Publicly insulting McClellan, Pope proclaimed that his army would always be on the offensive and he had no need for "lines of retreat." This rhetoric was embraced by the newspapers, but left many officers in his own army eager to see him fail.

Taking the War to the People

As Pope led his army deeper into Virginia, he introduced a series of general orders that many found shocking. Up until this point, the armies had sought to conduct the war in such a way as to protect civilians and do little harm to property. To Pope, this “velvet-footed advance” was counter-productive. He wanted to intimidate and defeat not just the Confederate army, but the Southern people as well.



Pope’s orders dictated that local civilians could be held liable for damage done by Confederate partisans. He demanded oaths of loyalty from male civilians within Union lines. Pope also permitted his men to live off the land, requisitioning food and supplies from the farms and towns they passed.

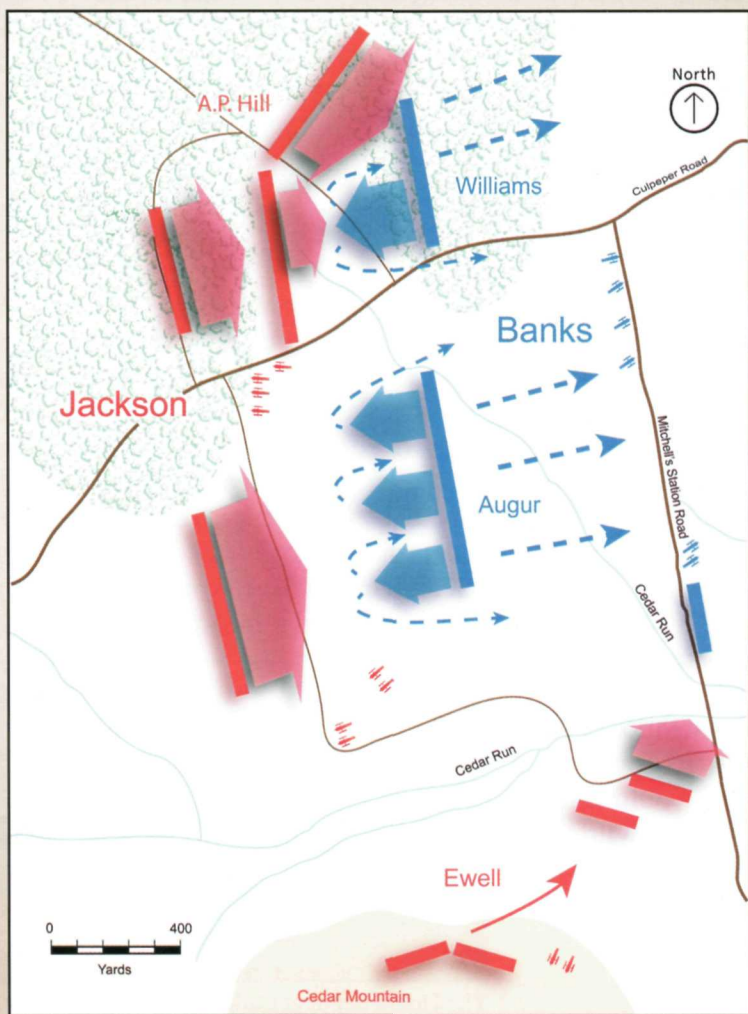
To Confederate leaders, this approach to war was vile and dishonorable. Upon hearing of Pope’s methods, Lee himself called Pope a “miscreant” and declared that he “must be suppressed.”

(Left) Mother and daughter during the Civil War
(Below) Image of Virginia refugees in 1862



Cedar Mountain

While McClellan was moving his army back to Washington, Jackson saw an opportunity to strike Pope as he was trying to concentrate the three corps of his army near Culpeper, Virginia. Crossing the Rapidan River, Jackson moved north and on August 9th clashed with Pope's 2nd Corps under Nathaniel Banks at Cedar Mountain, five miles south of Culpeper. Jackson's command, strengthened by Gen. A.P. Hill's Light Division, severely pressed the Union lines. However, the timely arrival of Union reinforcements from Irvin McDowell's 3rd Corps late in the day forced Jackson to withdraw back across the Rapidan. The Confederates suffered 1,276 casualties in the fighting and intense heat at Cedar Mountain. Union losses totaled 2,381 killed, wounded and missing.



Along the Rappahannock

Certain McClellan was no longer a threat, Lee left Richmond with Longstreet's wing on August 13th to join Jackson. His plan was to destroy Pope's army while it remained between the Rapidan and Rappahannock Rivers. Once Lee concentrated the two wings of his army, he would have 55,000 men against the 46,000 men of Pope's army. Pope's center remained at Cedar Mountain, his right at Robertson's River, and his left near Raccoon Ford on the Rapidan. The Confederates established a signal station on Clark's Mountain south of the Rapidan opposite Pope's left.

Upon his arrival, Lee was quick to appreciate the advantage this topography afforded him. Massing his troops behind Clark's Mountain he might move under its protecting screen, fall upon Pope's left at Somerville Ford, and cut off his retreat to Washington. The opportunity held bright possibilities of success. August 18th was set as the date for the initiation of the movement but unforeseen delays postponed the movement until the 20th. Worse still for the Confederates, Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's adjutant, Maj. Norman Fitzhugh, was captured on the morning of August 18th bearing a copy of Lee's orders. Stuart himself barely escaped capture by Federal cavalry making a scouting expedition south of the Rapidan.

Thus warned, Pope withdrew his army and took up strong defensive positions behind the Rappahannock on August 19th. His army stood fast while a frustrated Lee, following closely, sought an opening and made a series of feints and demonstrations over the next five days. In the meantime, on the dark, rainy night of August 22nd, Stuart's cavalry raided Catlett Station on the Orange & Alexandria Railroad with the intention of cutting Pope's supply line. The bridge at Catlett proved too wet to burn but Stuart was rewarded in the capture of Pope's headquarters baggage. A dispatch book revealed that 20,000 troops were within two days' march of the front. Within five days other expected reinforcements would swell Pope's numbers to over 100,000 men. Lee realized the window of opportunity to destroy Pope's army would vanish if he did not act swiftly.

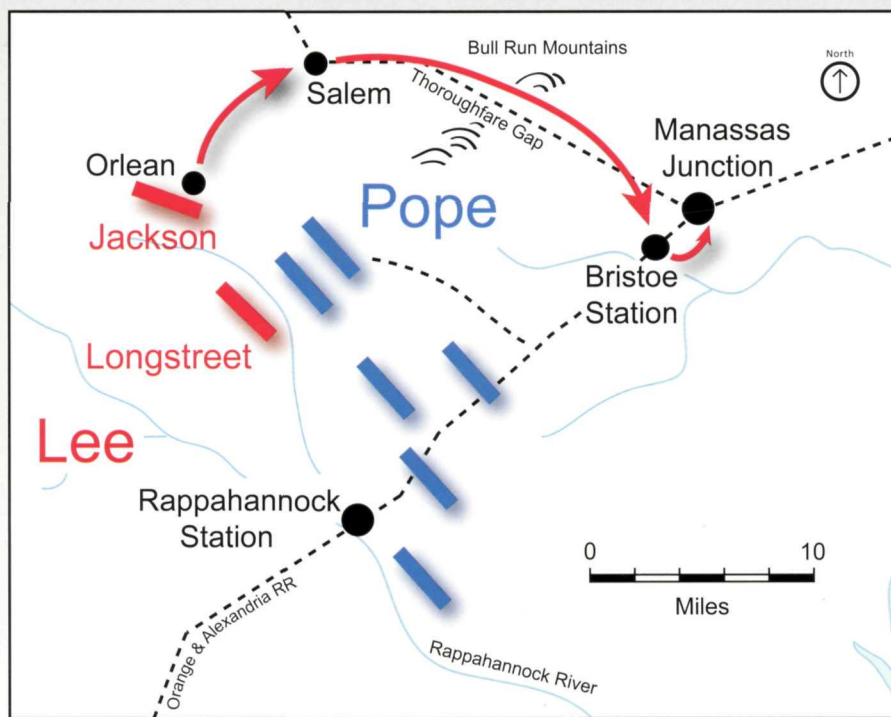


The Union depot at Catlett Station in 1862

A Daring Move: Jackson's Flank March

The situation was desperate and demanded a bold move. Quickly, Lee made an unorthodox but audacious decision. Despite the growing strength of the Union army, Lee elected to divide his forces. Jackson with Stuart's cavalry, comprising about 25,000 men, was to be sent on a wide flanking movement around Pope's right to destroy his communications with Washington. Commenting on this decision, a Jackson biographer later said "we have record of few enterprises of greater daring."

With Lee and Longstreet covering the line of the Rappahannock, Jackson began his march from Jeffersonton on the morning of August 25th. Passing through Amissville and crossing the upper Rappahannock at Hinson's Mill, Jackson's column proceeded to Orlean and bivouacked for the night at Salem. The next day Jackson pushed eastward through Thoroughfare Gap, Haymarket and Gainesville, reaching Bristoe Station on the Orange & Alexandria Railroad about sunset. Never did the "foot cavalry" better deserve its name. In two days it had covered approximately 55 miles. That night Jackson sent two regiments of Isaac Trimble's brigade, supported by Stuart's cavalry, to capture Pope's huge supply depot at Manassas Junction. The task was accomplished with little effort in the early morning hours of August 27th.



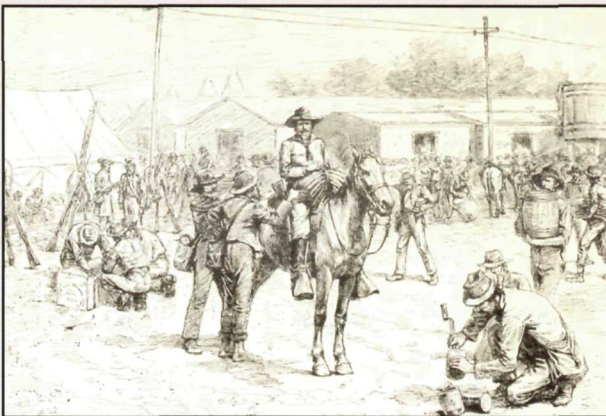
Manassas Junction and Bristoe Station (Kettle Run)

The next day Jackson left Gen. Richard Ewell's division to cover their rear at Bristoe and moved with the rest of his command to Manassas Junction. There then followed a scene of feasting and plunder the like of which has seldom been witnessed. Knapsacks, haversacks, and canteens were filled with articles of every description. Added to vast quantities of quartermaster and commissary supplies were innumerable luxuries from sutler stores, including expensive liquors and imported wines. An eyewitness wrote, "To see a starving man eating lobster salad & drinking rhine wine, barefooted & in tatters was curious; the whole thing is indescribable." What could not be eaten or carried away was finally put to the torch. With the destruction of these supplies one of the chief objectives of the campaign had been accomplished.

Advised of the disruption to his supply line, Pope immediately saw an opportunity to crush Jackson in his rear. Ordering his forces to abandon their strong positions along the upper Rappahannock, Pope planned to concentrate his entire strength against Jackson. McDowell's and Sigel's corps, together with Reynolds' division were to move to Gainesville, while Reno's corps, with Kearny's division of Heintzelman's corps, was to concentrate at Greenwich. By these dispositions Pope hoped to intercept any reinforcements coming to Jackson by way of Thoroughfare Gap. With Hooker's division of Heintzelman's corps, Pope moved along the railroad

toward Manassas Junction.

Pope did not realize it, but his actions were exactly what Robert E. Lee had hoped for.



(Left) Sketch of Jackson's men looting Union supplies

"Jackson's first order was to knock out the heads of hundreds of barrels of whiskey, wine, and brandy. I shall never forget the scene. Streams of spirits ran like water through the sands of Manassas and the soldiers on hands and knees drank it greedily from the ground."

~ Major W. Roy Mason

Jackson had been sent behind Pope's lines in a deliberate attempt to draw the Union army away from the Rappahannock and give the Confederates a better opportunity to strike Pope under more favorable conditions. Following the same path Jackson had taken, Lee put Longstreet's wing in motion. His object was to reunite with Jackson before Pope could bring the full weight of his army against him. On the afternoon of August 27th, Hooker attacked at Bristoe. After stubbornly resisting Hooker's advance, Ewell retired in textbook fashion to Manassas where he rejoined Jackson. Pope, now convinced that Jackson's entire command was at Manassas, issued new orders for his army to converge there. He then boasted, "If you will march promptly and rapidly at the earliest dawn of day upon Manassas Junction we shall bag the whole crowd."

During the night, however, Jackson abandoned the junction and took a position north of Groveton, near the old Manassas battlefield, to await the arrival of Lee and the rest of the army. An unfinished railroad grade ran directly in front a ridge and the alternating cuts and fills of the railroad grade offered a ready-made fortified position with excellent cover and concealment for Jackson's men.

When Pope arrived at Manassas Junction at midday on the 28th, he found it deserted and reduced to a smoldering ruin. During the afternoon Confederate stragglers picked up on the road to Centreville suggested that Jackson was trying to escape in that direction. Pope dispatched new orders to his subordinates, then converging on the roads to Manassas, directing them instead to Centreville. These new orders reached Gen. Rufus King's division of McDowell's corps about 5:00 p.m., shortly after it had passed through Gainesville and had turned southward from the Warrenton Turnpike for Manassas. King counter-marched his column back to the turnpike and turned it eastward toward Centreville. The head of this Federal column reached the little crossroads community of Groveton totally oblivious of the fact that they were being watched.



Train wreckage at Bristoe Station

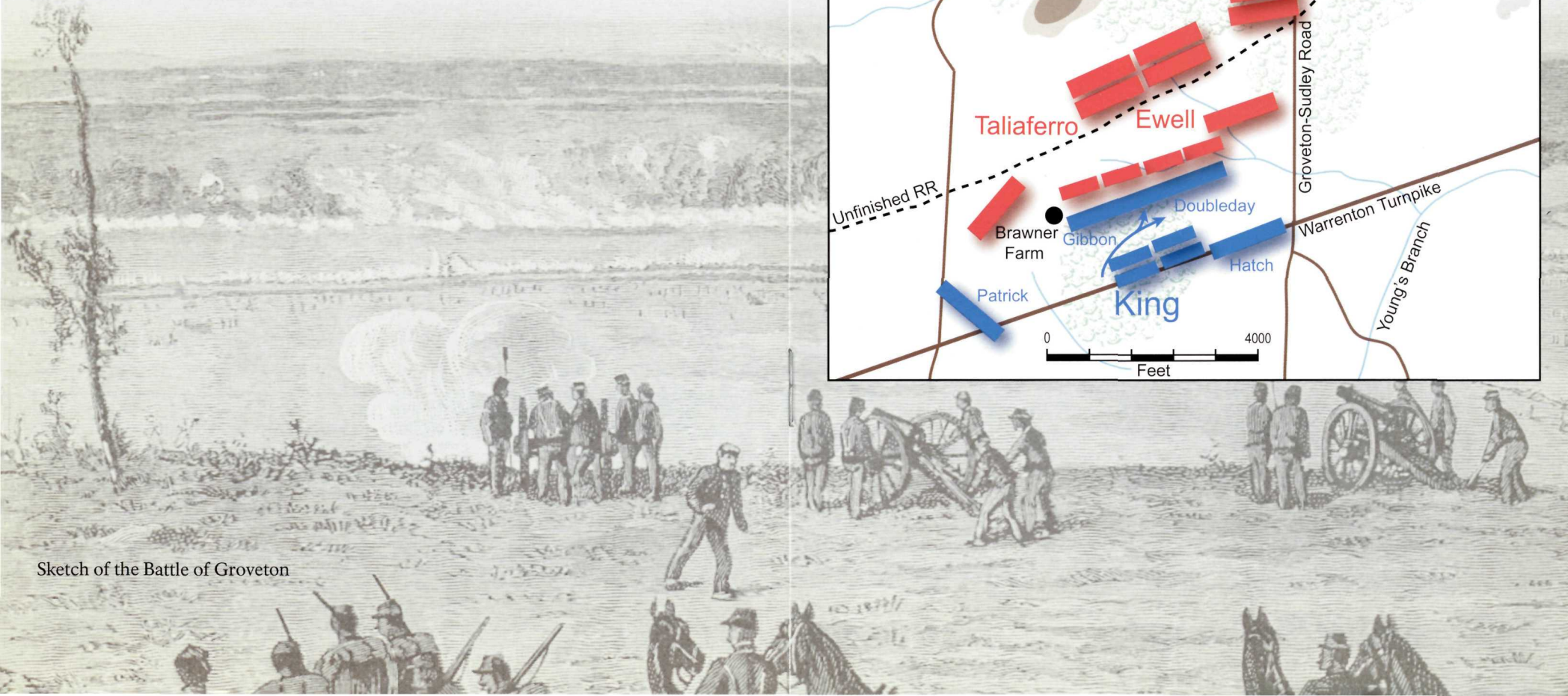


Manassas Junction in 1862

Brawner Farm (Battle of Groveton)

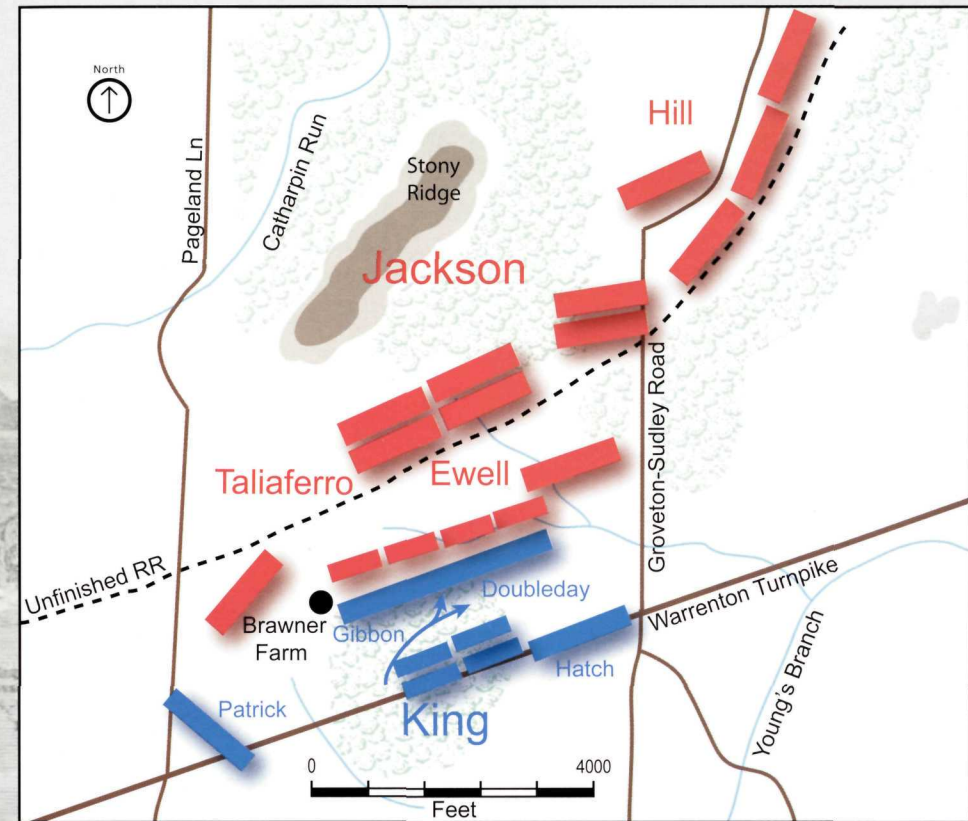
The first blows of the Second Battle of Manassas were struck in the fading hours of daylight, August 28th. The action was officially termed the “Engagement near Gainesville,” though sometimes it is referred to as Brawner Farm or the Battle of Groveton.

About 5:30 p.m., Jackson looked down on the Warrenton Turnpike and observed Gen. King’s division advancing eastward toward Centreville. To allow them to pass might well forestall the main objective of the campaign, which was to bring Pope to battle before McClellan’s reinforcements could reach him. Yet to attack now would likely bring down the weight of Pope’s entire army upon his troops before Longstreet could join him. Jackson hesitated only a moment. Then with the softly spoken order, “Bring out your men, gentlemen,” he hurled units of Gen. William Taliaferro’s division, later reinforced by Ewell’s troops, at the “Black Hat Brigade” of Gen. John Gibbon.



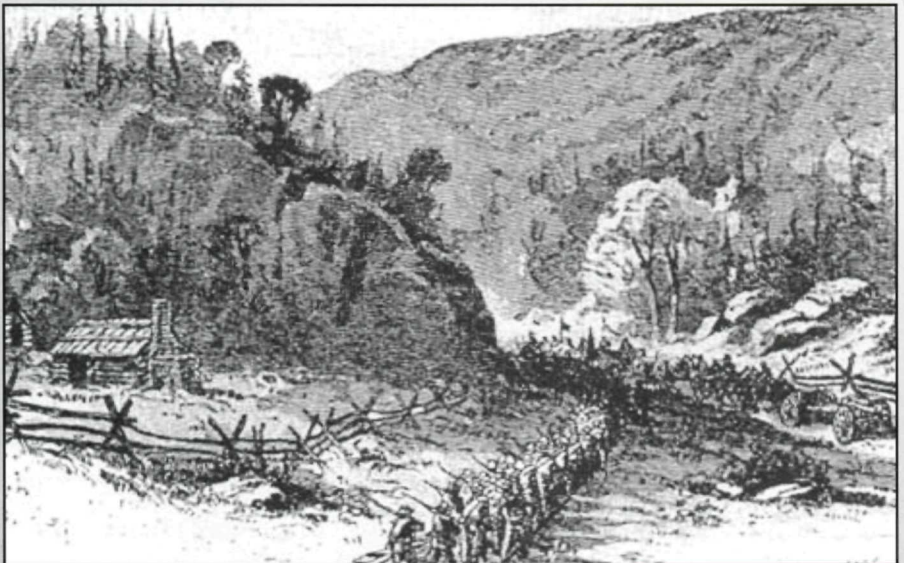
Sketch of the Battle of Groveton

Fighting with valor that would soon change their name to “The Iron Brigade,” Gibbon’s four regiments advanced onto the Brawner Farm. There, supported by two regiments of Gen. Abner Doubleday’s brigade, they held a line within 100 yards of five Confederate brigades. For two and a half hours, the fighting continued without cessation. As darkness closed upon the field, Gibbon slowly withdrew. The Union side suffered 1,100 casualties out of a fighting force of 2,800. The famous “Stonewall Brigade” of Virginians was reduced to 350 men after beginning the fight with 635.



Thoroughfare Gap

Earlier that afternoon, about 3:00 p.m., G.T. Anderson's brigade, leading Longstreet's column, reached Thoroughfare Gap in the Bull Run Mountains to find their way blocked on the eastern side of the gap by Federal infantry and artillery under Gen. James B. Ricketts. McDowell had taken the liberty of sending Ricketts' division to the gap upon being alerted by his cavalry of Longstreet's approach. After initial skirmishing at the eastern entrance to the gap, Anderson deployed his Georgia regiments on the steep slopes of Mother Leathercoat Mountain, behind Chapman's Mill on the north side of the gap. Henry Benning moved the Georgia troops of his brigade into position on the high ground of Pond Mountain south of the gap. For several hours they successfully resisted the probes made by Ricketts' division. Possession of the mill changed hands three times. In an attempt to break the impasse, Evander Law's Confederate brigade made a flanking maneuver, scaling the steep cliffs of Mother Leathercoat Mountain. Law's skirmishers ultimately gained a foothold on the flank of Ricketts' artillery about sunset. With his flanks in peril, Ricketts disengaged and fell back to Gainesville.



Sketch of Confederates marching through Thoroughfare Gap in 1862

As the battle waned, Longstreet sent Wilcox's division by way of Hopewell Gap in an effort to outmaneuver his opponent. Wilcox's column reached Antioch Church, east of Hopewell Gap, about midnight, long after Ricketts had withdrawn. That night, without informing Pope of their intentions, King and Ricketts independently decided to move towards Manassas Junction.

The fight at Thoroughfare Gap was confined to a relatively small area due to the topography of the area. Limited numbers were engaged on both sides. Federal casualties were roughly 90 killed and wounded while Confederate losses were not more than 25 men. Despite the small scale of this battle, it had a decisive impact on the campaign as it enabled Longstreet to reunite with Jackson the following day.



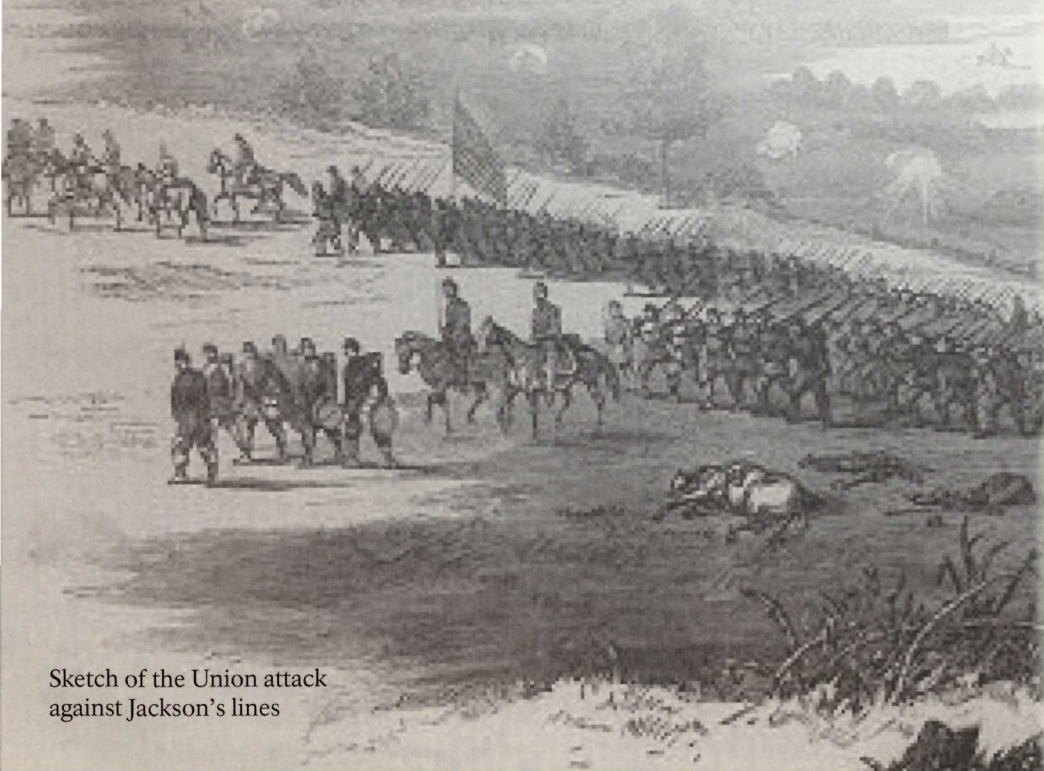
Photograph of Chapman's Mill, taken in 1937

The Unfinished Railroad

By dawn on August 29th, Jackson had placed his three Confederate divisions along the unfinished railroad; the troops extending from Sudley Church to near the Brawner Farm. Jackson's right stretched out to connect with Longstreet's men approaching from Thoroughfare Gap.

Pope, giving little thought to Lee's objectives, was convinced that Jackson was attempting to flee. He issued orders for all available elements of his army to intercept Jackson and strike him. Pope began the day with a series of uncoordinated and unsuccessful attacks against Jackson's line by Gen. Franz Sigel's corps, moving northwest of the Stone House. Jackson calmly watched the Federal attacks break against his position and waited for Lee and Longstreet.

Around midday, Longstreet's 28,000 men arrived and began to take position on Jackson's right – largely south of and nearly perpendicular to the turnpike. Although Lee's immediate impulse was to attack, Longstreet wanted to wait. There were unknown numbers of Federals threatening his right, and he preferred receiving an attack to delivering one. Unsure of how many of McClellan's army had reinforced Pope, Lee consented.

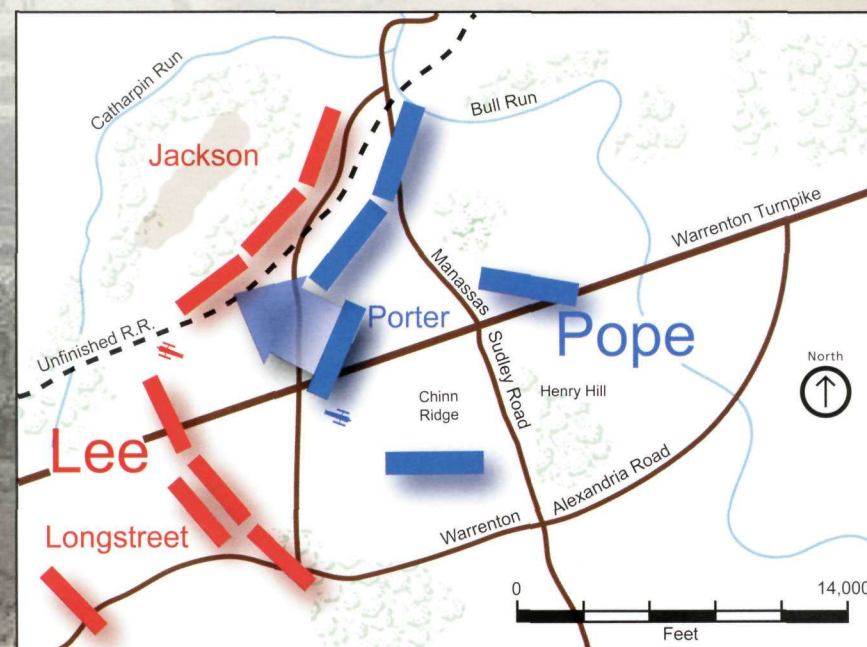


Sketch of the Union attack against Jackson's lines

At 2:00 p.m., Heintzelman's corps reached the battlefield to continue to assault Jackson's position. Gen. "Fighting Joe" Hooker's division relieved Sigel's depleted brigades as Pope continued to simply throw his available troops incrementally at the railroad embankment to keep Jackson at least occupied or at best break Jackson's line east of where a back country lane crossed the grade. Had all the Union troops attacked Jackson at once, the story might be quite different. Great holes were torn in Jackson's left and center, but skillful shifting of Confederate reserves drove the Union troops back with heavy losses. At about 3:00 p.m., Gen. Cuvier Grover's brigade of Hooker's division made a gallant bayonet attack, losing 25 percent of his men. Col. James Nagle's brigade also created a big gap, but his troops were driven back with losses nearing 40 percent.

Meanwhile, Pope remained confident that Longstreet's Confederates were nowhere near the battlefield and still believed that Jackson was attempting to retreat. Based on this misunderstanding, Pope planned another assault on Jackson's position for the next day with Gen. Fitz John Porter's corps at its head. Gen. John Reynolds' division would support the attack and other Union divisions under McDowell were assigned to pursue Jackson when he retreated.

That night Pope wired Washington that he had achieved a great victory. Tomorrow he would pursue and finish off Jackson; or so he thought.



Pope's plan for Porter's attack

Porter's Attack

Preparations took time, and it was past noon on the 30th before Porter had his troops assembled and ready to move. Some 7,000 Union men in a thick blue battle formation about a half mile wide began to push slowly west and north. Unfortunately for them, they were moving into the jaws of a trap.

The Confederate army was deployed in a large obtuse angle, the apex being just north of the turnpike. The left, or north, side was held by Jackson, still firmly posted behind the railroad grade. Though weakened, he still possessed some 18,000 formidable infantry. Concealed on the right, or south, side of the angle was Longstreet with 28,000 fresh soldiers, ready to fight. Longstreet had positioned a massive concentration of artillery in the angle between the two wings. It was into these two jaws that McDowell's "pursuit" was moving.

South of Groveton, Reynolds' men almost immediately encountered enemy fire. Reynolds, seeing evidence of Longstreet, was sure that he faced a large Rebel force extending beyond his left. McDowell ordered Reynolds to shift his three brigades back to the vicinity of Chinn Ridge to guard against any threat to the Federal rear.

Painting of the Union attack at "Deep Cut"



For the Union cause it was a tragic blunder because it created a big gap in the Union lines immediately south of Groveton and left Porter's left flank dangling and naked. Despite Porter's better judgment, he launched the attack around 3:15 p.m. From the cover of the woods east of the Groveton-Sudley Road, about 5,000 men surged across the road, over a fence, and into open fields. Confederate artillery, concentrated on a ridge a half mile to the west, opened a deadly fire down the length of the Union lines. Thirty-six guns rained case shot and shrapnel over the field. Still the Federals swept onward, almost to the crest. Men on both sides reloaded and fired at a frenzied pace. Jackson was forced to call for reinforcements from Longstreet. In a desperate moment, some of his men, out of ammunition were reduced to throwing rocks at Federals less than 20 yards away. Longstreet responded to Jackson's call for support with additional artillery fire from a battery he deployed along the turnpike.

But it was the Northerners who withered. They could neither pierce Jackson's defenses or remain where they were in the open. Retreat was the only sensible choice. Porter's units were beaten and fell back in a rush. As one of Jackson's brigade commanders described it, "the whole field was covered with a confused mass of struggling, running, routed Yankees."

Longstreet's Assault

With the Federals facing Jackson in disarray and their left exposed, Lee sprung the trap, and the jaws began to close. Longstreet, anticipating Lee's order, unleashed his nearly 30,000 men. The long gray lines of infantry, eager to join the fight, swept forward in a furious assault. Gen. John Bell Hood's Texans led the advance, their colors gleaming red in the evening sun. Above the thunderous roar of artillery and the noise of battle could be heard the shrill cries of the rebel yell echoing through the Groveton valley. So intense was the excitement that only with the greatest difficulty could the officers restrain their men. Moving up in support came the divisions of Generals Richard Anderson, James Kemper, and D. R. Jones.

The small Federal units were no match for the advancing Confederates. Gen. G. K. Warren's brigade was virtually destroyed by the immense Southern wave. The 5th New York Infantry, "Duryee Zouaves", dressed in their trademark red trousers, white leggings, wide sash about the waist, short blue jackets and tassled skull caps, bought time in a brief fight. In fewer than ten minutes, the unit lost 124 men killed and 223 wounded out of 490 men present.

To make matters worse for the Federals, as the Confederate assault began, Reynolds' division had again been put in motion, ordered north of the turnpike to cover the retreat of Porter's men. The Federal left and rear was now even more vulnerable. Only a small Ohio brigade from Sigel's corps was left to hold the Chinn farm. With the collapse of Warren's line, Pope desperately began shifting reserve brigades from Sigel's corps and Ricketts' division to the high ground south of the turnpike on Benjamin Chinn's farm. A thin Union line quickly formed on Chinn Ridge. Longstreet hit it with a quick succession of blows by frontal and flanking attacks. The overwhelmed Federal lines eventually crumbled, but they successfully slowed down Longstreet's advance and bought time for Pope to establish a defensive position on Henry Hill. Finally, with sunset approaching, their energy spent and no reserves left, the victorious Southerners were forced to halt. Reynolds' Pennsylvanians and a division of regulars from Porter's corps, reinforced by regiments from Sigel's, Reno's and McDowell's commands, made a final stand on Henry Hill, poignant with memories of the First Battle of Manassas. There, with neither time nor reserves available for Lee to strike the knockout blow, the fighting ended at dark.

While the fighting still raged along the Sudley Road, J.E.B. Stuart sent Beverly Robertson's cavalry brigade eastward along the Balls Ford Road in an attempt to cut off the Federal line of retreat. As the Confederate troopers neared Bull Run they were caught by surprise by a Federal cavalry brigade under Gen. John Buford. The Federals initially repulsed Robertson's leading regiment but in the melee that followed on the grounds of the Lewis farm, Portici, Buford's men soon found themselves outnumbered and hastened across Lewis Ford. Stung by the Federals, Robertson did not press a pursuit and lost an opportunity to hinder Pope's escape. This clash proved to be the largest cavalry engagement of the war up to that point in time.

"Quarrels of the Generals"

Some of Pope's greatest failures can be traced to a fundamental lack of trust and communication with some of the officers under his command. The best example of this is the interaction between Pope and Porter. Porter, loyal to his former commander, McClellan, did not respect Pope and was little interested in helping him earn victories and fame. Pope's arrogance and his own prejudices against other generals sealed his fate. Conflicts and backstabbing disabled the command structure of the Army of Virginia and eventually cost Pope his job. President Lincoln summed up the sad situation well:

"Pope did well, but there was an army prejudice against him, and it was necessary he should leave. We had the enemy in our hands on Friday and if our generals, who were vexed with Pope, had done their duty...all of our present difficulties and reverses have been brought upon us by these quarrels of the generals."

Union Retreat

Union troops with poignant memories of the First Battle of Manassas the year before, assembled on Henry Hill. With courage and gallantry that matched the crisis of battle, they hurled back repeated Confederate assaults that continued until dark. The successful defense of Henry Hill made possible Pope's retreat over Bull Run to the strong defenses of the Centreville plateau.

It soon became evident, however, that a second debacle at Bull Run had occurred. The battle had cost 14,462 Union casualties. Lee had defied the odds and achieved a great victory, but the battle had been expensive for the Confederacy too: 9,474 Southerners had fallen, a loss of 17 percent.

"A regiment of cavalry, marching by twos, and sandwiched in the midst of which were Pope and McDowell with their staff officers. I never saw a more helpless-looking headquarters... Between them they are responsible for the lives of many of my best and bravest men. They have done all they could (unintentionally, I hope) to ruin and destroy the country."

~General George B. McClellan

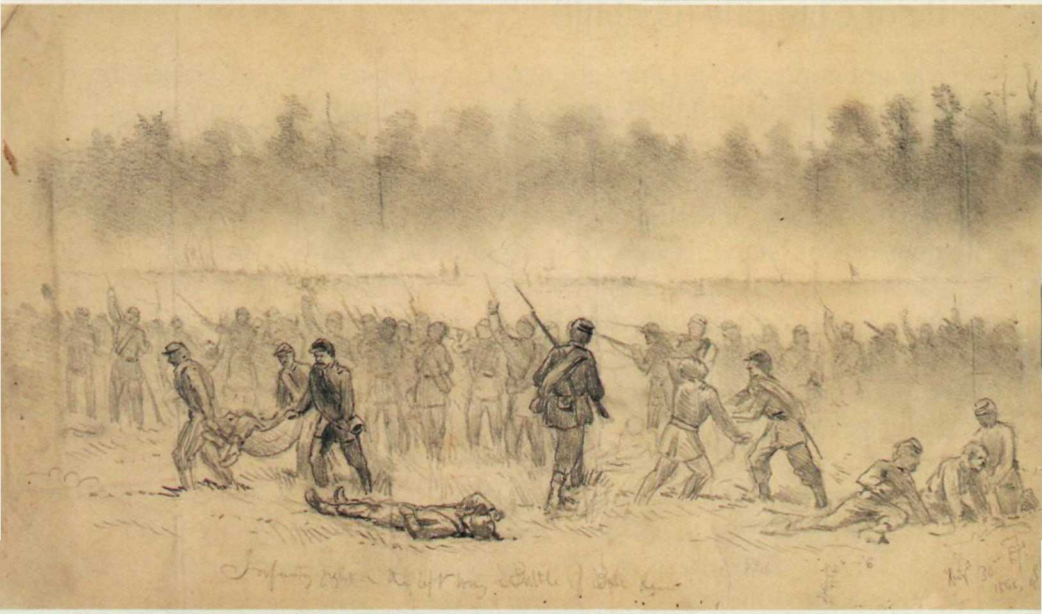
Battle of Chantilly (Ox Hill)

Lee was not content to let Pope escape. Considering Pope's Centreville position as unfavorable for an attack, Lee again divided his army and sent Jackson east in an effort to turn the Federal right and cut Pope's line of retreat to Washington. Rain and mud hampered Jackson's progress and Federal cavalry detected the movement, alerting Pope to the danger. The divisions of Generals Isaac Stevens and Phil Kearny turned to check Jackson's advance as Pope began to retreat from Centreville to the fortifications surrounding Washington. A sharp fight erupted in the midst of a torrential thunderstorm late on September 1st as Stevens and Kearny intercepted Jackson near Chantilly. The outcome of the short battle was inconclusive and only added to the number of casualties. Among the dead were Generals Stevens and Kearny, a severe loss for the North. Jackson, however, was stopped and Pope resumed his retreat to Washington.

Although Lee was unable to completely destroy Pope's army in the field, its demise came shortly after its return to Washington. President Lincoln disbanded the Army of Virginia and its troops were integrated into McClellan's Army of the Potomac. This was the Union army that would be challenged with confronting Lee, just days later, when he invaded the North and began the Maryland Campaign.



(Above) Illustration of Kearny's charge at the Battle of Chantilly
(Background) Sketch of Pope's retreat through Centreville



“The Sesquicentennial of the Civil War is a time to commemorate those who fought and died during this pivotal era in American history. At the same time, it is an opportunity for us to renew our commitment to the ongoing march for freedom and equality for all people.”

~ Ken Salazar, US Secretary of the Interior

This series of booklets allows us to tell stories “beyond the battlefield” and examine how this terrible conflict affected ordinary people and the communities around them. Thank you for your support and interest.

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