

# Manassas

Manassas  
National Battlefield Park  
Virginia

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



On a warm July day in 1861, two great armies of a divided nation clashed for the first time on the fields overlooking Bull Run. Their ranks were filled with enthusiastic young volunteers in colorful new uniforms, gathered together from every part of the country. Confident that their foes would run at the first shot, the raw recruits were thankful that they would not miss the only battle of what surely would be a short war. But

any thought of colorful pageantry was suddenly lost in the smoke, dirt, and death of battle. Soldiers on both sides were stunned by the violence and destruction they encountered. At day's end nearly 900 young men lay lifeless on the fields of Matthews Hill, Henry Hill, and Chinn Ridge. Ten hours of heavy fighting swept away any notion the war's outcome would be decided quickly.

In August 1862, Union and Confederate armies converged for a second time on the plains of Manassas. The naive enthusiasm that preceded the earlier encounter was gone. War was not the holiday outing or grand adventure envisioned by the young recruits of 1861. The contending forces, now made up of seasoned veterans, knew well the reality of war. The Battle of Second Manassas, covering three days, produced far

greater carnage—3,300 killed—and brought the Confederacy to the height of its power. Still the battle did not weaken Northern resolve. The war's final outcome was yet unknown, and it would be left to other battles to decide whether the sacrifice at Manassas was part of the high price of Southern independence, or the cost of one country again united under the national standard.

## First Manassas (First Bull Run)



Gen. Irvin McDowell, Federal commander at the First Battle of Manassas.



Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard, commander of the main Confederate army at Manassas.



Gen. Joseph E. Johnston. His Confederate troops helped turn the tide of battle.



The Stone Bridge, where the opening shots of First Manassas were fired.

Cheers rang through the streets of Washington on July 16, 1861, as Gen. Irvin McDowell's army, 35,000 strong, marched out to begin the long-awaited campaign to capture Richmond and end the war. It was an army of green recruits, few of whom had the faintest idea of the magnitude of the task facing them. But their swaggering gait showed that none doubted the outcome. As excitement spread, many citizens and congressmen with wine and picnic baskets followed the army into the field to watch what all expected would be a colorful show.

These troops were 90-day volunteers summoned by President Abraham Lincoln after the startling news of Fort Sumter burst over the nation in April 1861. Called from shops and farms, they had little knowledge of what war would mean. The first day's march covered only 8 kilometers (5 miles), as many struggled to pick blackberries or fill canteens.

McDowell's lumbering columns were headed for the vital railroad junction at Manassas. Here the Orange and Alexandria Railroad met the Manassas Gap Railroad, which led west to the Shenandoah Valley. If McDowell could seize this junction, he would stand astride the best overland approach to the Confederate capital.

On July 18th McDowell's army reached Centreville. Five miles ahead a small meandering stream named Bull Run crossed the route of the Union advance, and there guarding the fords from Union Mills to the Stone Bridge waited 22,000 Southern troops under the command of Gen. Pierre G.T. Beauregard. McDowell first attempted to move toward the Confederate right flank, but his troops were checked at Blackburn's Ford. He then spent the next two days scouting the

Southern left flank. In the meantime, Beauregard asked the Confederate government at Richmond for help. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, stationed in the Shenandoah Valley with 10,000 Confederate troops, was ordered to support Beauregard if possible. Johnston gave an opposing Union force the slip and, employing the Manassas Gap Railroad, started his brigades toward Manassas Junction. Most of Johnston's troops arrived at the junction on July 20 and 21, some marching from the trains directly into battle.

On the morning of July 21, McDowell sent his attack columns in a long march north toward Sudley Springs Ford. This route took the Federals around the Confederate left. To distract the Southerners, McDowell ordered a diversionary attack where the Warrenton Turnpike crossed Bull Run at the Stone Bridge. At 5:30 a.m. the deep-throated roar of a 30-pounder Parrott rifle shattered the morning calm, and signaled the start of battle.

McDowell's new plan depended on speed and surprise, both difficult with inexperienced troops. Valuable time was lost as the men stumbled through the darkness along narrow roads. Confederate Col. Nathan Evans, commanding at the Stone Bridge, soon realized that the attack on his front was only a diversion. Leaving a small force to hold the bridge, Evans rushed the remainder of his command to Matthews Hill in time to check McDowell's lead unit. But Evans' force was too small to hold back the Federals for long.

Soon brigades under Barnard Bee and Francis Bartow marched to Evans' assistance. But even with these reinforcements, the thin gray line collapsed and Southerners fled in disorder toward Henry Hill. Attempting to rally his men, Bee used Gen. Thomas J. Jackson's

newly arrived brigade as an anchor. Pointing to Jackson, Bee shouted, "There stands Jackson like a stone wall! Rally behind the Virginians!" Generals Johnston and Beauregard then arrived on Henry Hill, where they assisted in rallying shattered brigades and redeploying fresh units that were marching to the point of danger.

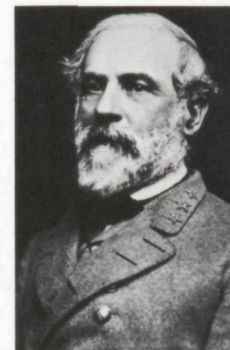
About noon, the Federals stopped their advance to reorganize for a new attack. The lull lasted for about an hour, giving the Confederates enough time to reform their lines. Then the fighting resumed, each side trying to force the other off Henry Hill. The battle continued until just after 4 p.m., when fresh Southern units crashed into the Union right flank on Chinn Ridge, causing McDowell's tired and discouraged soldiers to withdraw.

At first the withdrawal was orderly. Screened by the regulars, the three-month volunteers retired across Bull Run, where they found the road to Washington jammed with the carriages of congressmen and others who had driven out to Centreville to watch the fight. Panic now seized many of the soldiers and the retreat became a rout. The Confederates, though bolstered by the arrival of President Jefferson Davis on the field just as the battle was ending, were too disorganized to follow up their success. Daybreak on July 22 found the defeated Union army back behind the bristling defenses of Washington.

## Second Manassas (Second Bull Run)



Gen. Thomas J. Jackson, whose steadfastness influenced the outcome of both battles.



Gen. Robert E. Lee. His bold strategy made Second Manassas a Confederate victory.



Gen. John Pope, whose overconfidence resulted in Union defeat.



The Stone House, a landmark of both battles.

After the Union defeat at Manassas in July 1861, Gen. George B. McClellan took command of the Federal forces in and around Washington and organized them into a formidable fighting machine—the Army of the Potomac. In March 1862, leaving a strong force to cover the capital, McClellan shifted his army by water to Fort Monroe on the tip of the York-James peninsula, only 160 kilometers (100 miles) southeast of Richmond. Early in April he advanced toward the Confederate capital. Anticipating such a move, the Southerners abandoned the Manassas area and marched to meet the Federals. By the end of May, McClellan's troops were within sight of Richmond. Here Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate army assailed the Federals in the bloody but inconclusive Battle of Seven Pines. Johnston was wounded, and President Davis placed Gen. Robert E. Lee in command. Seizing the offensive, Lee sent his force (now called the Army of Northern Virginia) across the Chickahominy River and, in a series of savage battles, pushed McClellan back from the edge of Richmond to a position on the James River.

At the same time, the scattered Federal forces in northern Virginia were organized into the Army of Virginia under the command of Gen. John Pope, who arrived with a reputation freshly won in the war's western theater. Gambling that McClellan would cause no further trouble around Richmond, Lee sent Stonewall Jackson's corps northward to "suppress" Pope. Jackson clashed indecisively with part of Pope's troops at Cedar Mountain on August 9. Meanwhile, learning that the Army of the Potomac was withdrawing by water to join Pope, Lee marched with Gen. James Longstreet's corps to bolster Jackson. On the Rapidan, Pope successfully blocked Lee's attempts to gain a tactical advantage, and then withdrew his men north

of the Rappahannock River. Lee knew that if he was to defeat Pope he would have to strike before McClellan's army arrived in northern Virginia. On August 25 Lee boldly started Jackson's corps on a march of over 70 kilometers (50 miles), around the Union right flank to strike at Pope's rear.

Two days later, Jackson's veterans seized Pope's supply depot at Manassas Junction. After a day of wild feasting, Jackson burned the Federal supplies and moved to a position in the woods at Groveton near the old Manassas battlefield.

Pope, stung by the attack on his supply base, abandoned the line of the Rappahannock and headed toward Manassas to "bag" Jackson. At the same time, Lee was moving northward with Longstreet's corps to reunite his army. On the afternoon of August 28, to prevent the Federal commander's efforts to concentrate at Centreville and bring Pope to battle, Jackson ordered his troops to attack a Union column as it marched past on the Warrenton Turnpike. This savage fight at Brawner's Farm lasted until dark.

Convinced that Jackson was isolated, Pope ordered his columns to converge on Groveton. He was sure that he could destroy Jackson before Lee and Longstreet could intervene. On the 29th Pope's army found Jackson's men posted along an unfinished railroad grade, north of the turnpike. All afternoon, in a series of uncoordinated attacks, Pope hurled his men against the Confederate position. In several places the northerners momentarily breached Jackson's line, but each time were forced back. During the afternoon, Longstreet's troops arrived on the battlefield and, unknown to Pope, deployed on Jackson's right, overlapping the exposed Union left. Lee urged Longstreet to attack, but

"Old Pete" demurred. The time was just not right, he said.

The morning of August 30 passed quietly. Just before noon, erroneously concluding the Confederates were retreating, Pope ordered his army forward in "pursuit." The pursuit, however, was shortlived. Pope found that Lee had gone nowhere. Amazingly, Pope ordered yet another attack against Jackson's line. Fitz-John Porter's corps, along with part of McDowell's, struck Starke's division at the unfinished railroad's "Deep Cut." The southerners held firm, and Porter's column was hurled back in a bloody repulse.

Seeing the Union lines in disarray, Longstreet pushed his massive columns forward and staggered the Union left. Pope's army was faced with annihilation. Only a heroic stand by northern troops, first on Chinn Ridge and then once again on Henry Hill, bought time for Pope's hard-pressed Union forces. Finally, under cover of darkness the defeated Union army withdrew across Bull Run toward the defenses of Washington. Lee's bold and brilliant Second Manassas campaign opened the way for the south's first invasion of the north, and a bid for foreign intervention.



# Manassas



The Stone Bridge



The Stone House



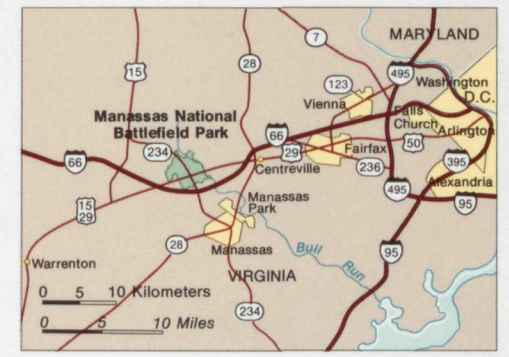
Stonewall Jackson Monument on Henry Hill.



New York Zouave Monument



Dogan House



## Touring First Manassas Battlefield

The following descriptions of the several points of interest on the battlefield will help you understand the first major land battle of the Civil War. Each is keyed by number to the map directly below.

**Caution:** Two heavily traveled highways divide the park. Use extreme caution driving across or turning onto and off of these highways.

The Warrenton Turnpike, an important commercial highway before the war, played a major part in both battles. U.S. 29 follows the historical roadbed. The Sudley-Manassas Road crossed the turnpike at the Stone House. Va. 234 follows that old roadbed.

**1 Stone Bridge** Here the first shots of the battle were fired on the morning of July 21, 1861. During the evening a portion of the Union army retreated across this bridge. A trail here leads to Farm Ford, where Union troops under Col. William T. Sherman crossed Bull Run during the morning. The bridge was destroyed when the Confederates abandoned the Manassas area in March 1862. For the next 20 years a

simple wooden bridge spanned the stream at this point. The present span is a reconstruction.

**2 Sudley Church** The wartime structure that stood on the site of the present church served as a field hospital during both battles. North of here at Sudley Ford, part of McDowell's army crossed Bull Run to attack the left flank of the Confederate position.

**3 Matthews Hill and Stone House** The fighting began on Matthews Hill as Evans' men tried to stop the Union advance from Sudley. The Confederates were soon forced back, but they held this high ground long enough for fresh Southern troops to establish a strong position on Henry Hill. The Stone House, at the foot of Buck Hill, was originally a tavern stop on the Warrenton Turnpike. It was converted to a field hospital by the advancing Union army. When the Federals were forced to retreat, the doctors and their patients were captured by the Confederates. The house has been restored to resemble a Civil War-period hospital, and is open daily during the summer. A trail leads from the Stone House to Matthews Hill.

**4 Henry Hill** The fighting raged here all afternoon as both sides sought to control the hill. A self-guided walking tour starts at the Henry House and covers the fighting in detail. The large equestrian statue of Stonewall Jackson dominates the high ground near the spot where he received his famous nickname.

**5 Chinn Ridge** In the late afternoon, Col. Oliver O. Howard's Union brigade was attacked in this area by Confederates under Cols. Jubal Early and Arnold Elzey. Howard's retreat led to the rout of McDowell's whole army.

## Touring Second Manassas Battlefield

The following sites figured prominently in the outcome of the Second Battle of Manassas. Each brief description is keyed by number to the map immediately below.

**1 Battery Heights** Over these open fields Stonewall Jackson's troops attacked part of Gen. Rufus King's division on August 28, 1862, opening the Battle of Second Manassas. For one-and-a-half hours the two lines stood resolutely only 46 meters (50 yards) apart, inflicting casualties amounting to almost one third of those engaged.

**2 Stone House** This landmark of First Manassas also served as a field hospital during Second Manassas. General Pope's headquarters during the fighting on August 30 was on Buck Hill directly behind the building. This site can be reached by a foot trail.

**3 Sudley Church** This site marks the extreme left flank of Jackson's line during the battle, held by the troops of Gen. A.P. Hill. This area provides a good idea of how the terrain looked in 1862.

**4 Jackson's Line (Unfinished Railroad)** Along this line, stretching from Sudley Church on the north to a point about 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) southwest of this spot, Jackson's command awaited attack by the Union army. The bed of the unfinished railroad made an excellent defensive position. When the Union attacks came on August 29 and 30, Jackson's line bent but never broke. The trail across the road from the parking area follows the position that Jackson's troops occupied. The monument on the trail at the "Deep Cut" was erected in 1865 to honor the soldiers who fought here.

**5 Dogan House** This log and frame building, the last surviving structure of the village of Groveton, and one of only two Civil War-era houses remaining on the battlefield, was originally an overseer's house for the Henry Dogan plantation. Caught between the battlelines when Jackson's men moved into this area on August 28, the house was repeatedly struck by cannon fire on the 30th. Nearby Groveton Confederate Cemetery contains the remains of about 50 known and 225 unknown Confederate soldiers.

**6 New York Avenue** On the afternoon of August 30, Longstreet's corps hit Pope's left flank, rolling it up and sending the Union army in retreat. A futile stand here by the 5th and 10th New York Regiments ended in a Union slaughter. In five minutes the 5th New York had 123 men killed, a greater loss than any other single regiment in any other battle of the Civil War.

**7 Chinn Ridge** For over an hour on August 30 the troops holding the Union left fought desperately on this ridge, temporarily stemming Longstreet's counterattack. A marker along the tour road here identifies the spot where Daniel Webster's eldest son, Fletcher, commanding the 12th Massachusetts Regiment, was killed.

**8 Henry Hill** Here parts of McDowell's, Porter's, Sigel's, and Reno's corps made a final stand against Longstreet's victorious advance on August 30 and prevented a complete rout of the Union army.

