

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

This volume narrates the major battles and campaigns of the conflict, conveying the full military experience during the Civil War. The military encounters between Union and Confederate soldiers and between both armies and irregular combatants and true noncombatants structured the four years of war. These encounters were not solely defined by violence, but military encounters gave the war its central architecture. Chapters explore well-known battles, such as Antietam and Gettysburg, as well as military conflict in more abstract places, defined by political qualities (such as the Border or the West) or physical ones (such as rivers or seas). Chapters also explore the nature of civil–military relations as Union armies occupied parts of the South and garrison troops took up residence in southern cities and towns, showing that the Civil War was not solely a series of battles but a sustained process that drew people together in more ambiguous settings and outcomes.

AARON SHEEHAN-DEAN is the Fred C. Frey Professor of Southern Studies at Louisiana State University and the chairman of the History Department. He teaches courses on nineteenth-century US history, the Civil War and Reconstruction, and Southern history. He is the author of *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War*, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia*, *Concise Historical Atlas of the U.S. Civil War*, and is the editor of several books.

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The Cambridge History of the American Civil War provides the most comprehensive analysis to date of the American Civil War. With contributions from over seventy-five leading historians of the Civil War, the three-volume reference work investigates the full range of human experiences and outcomes in this most transformative moment in American and global history. Volume I is organized around military affairs, assessing major battles and campaigns of the conflict. Volume II explores political and social affairs, conveying the experiences of millions of Americans who lived outside the major campaign zones in both the North and South. Volume III examines cultural and intellectual affairs, considering how the war's duration, scale, and intensity drove Americans to question how they understood themselves as people. The volumes conclude with an assessment of the legacies of the Civil War, demonstrating that the war's impact on American life shaped the country in the decades long after the end of the war.

VOLUME I

Military Affairs

EDITED BY AARON SHEEHAN-DEAN

VOLUME II

Affairs of the State

EDITED BY AARON SHEEHAN-DEAN

VOLUME III

Affairs of the People

EDITED BY AARON SHEEHAN-DEAN

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VOLUME I
Military Affairs

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Edited by
AARON SHEEHAN-DEAN
Louisiana State University



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AARON SHEEHAN-DEAN is the Fred C. Frey Professor of Southern Studies at Louisiana State University and the chairman of the Department of History. He teaches courses on nineteenth-century US history, the Civil War and Reconstruction, and Southern history. He is the author of *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War, Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia*, *Concise Historical Atlas of the U.S. Civil War*, and is the editor of several books.

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Note on the Text

In nearly all cases in these volumes, military officers are identified with the highest rank they earned during the war. In addition, all spelling, punctuation, and varying forms of emphasis in quotations from primary sources are in the originals.

Introduction: *The Cambridge History of the American Civil War*

AARON SHEEHAN-DEAN

The Civil War was America's great national trauma. Like the Napoleonic Wars in nineteenth-century Europe and World War II in the twentieth, the Civil War birthed a new civic order. Politics, economic and social life, and cultural expression all assumed a new cast for the war's participants and their children. Even a century and a half later, after industrialization, urbanization, the dramatic expansion of America's military and political power in the world, and generations of cultural change, the war's impact is plain to see. The structure of the national government and the nature of American federalism took their modern shape as a result of the war. Americans' sense of sectional identity emerged more clearly defined after the conflict and continues to shape politics and cultural life. The only genuine American philosophical tradition, pragmatism, emerged among postwar thinkers as a response to the horrors of the conflict. The war ended the long-standing system of racial bondage even as white Americans met the efforts of black Americans to achieve full and meaningful freedom with apathy, intransigence, and, in some cases, violent resistance.

In all of these areas of life, the Civil War altered the course of historical change but did not solely redefine it. Because wars conflate public and private drama – individual deaths and family crises happen in the context of momentous national events – they often acquire more power in retrospect than they actually possessed. The dramatic potential of wars means that they figure prominently in literature. Just like writers, playwrights, and filmmakers, historians have been drawn to telling stories about war. That narrative appeal generated in some historians a posture that suggested military conflict was the only important kind of historical change. This, in turn, propelled a shift toward social and cultural history, toward the lived history of everyday life without the overdetermined action of war. Combined with a growing skepticism about war itself, arising from the covert military actions of the Cold War and the Vietnam conflict, historians of the 1960s and 1970s deemphasized the

Civil War in national history or scaled back the claims for how much change the war made. Scholars today are fortunate to live at a moment when we can incorporate various analytical approaches – cultural, social, economic, political, and military – into the histories we write and hopefully capture something of the capaciousness of life. The resulting perspective has reframed the Civil War in terms that recognize the changes it entailed but also respects its limits.

Regardless of disciplinary trends, all history begins by appreciating how participants understood their experiences, and people who lived through the Civil War recognized that theirs were momentous times. People first measured the war's impact in terms of how it addressed the problems that sparked it to life. Most people agreed that, in Abraham Lincoln's words, "slavery was somehow the cause of the conflict." Even the famous Confederate guerrilla leader John Singleton Mosby frankly confessed, "I always understood that we went to war on account of the thing we quarreled with the North about. I never heard of any other cause of quarrel than slavery."¹ Lincoln blurred the precise nature of that "somehow" in order to facilitate postwar sectional healing. Nineteenth-century Americans saw less ambiguity than Lincoln admitted, though they disagreed among themselves. Black Americans had always opposed slavery, but the first generation of white abolitionists used conservative, legalistic measures to emancipate individuals rather than mounting a direct challenge to the system itself.² In the 1820s, free people of color in the North demanded an immediate end to slavery and this call fueled the more radical second phase of American abolition that scared slaveholders into the defensive posture that produced secession.³ Only a small number of white Americans began the war as outright abolitionists, but many more shifted from a nominal antislavery position to that of eager advocates of wartime emancipation. In the words of a popular Northern song, "Hurrah! Hurrah! We bring the jubilee! Hurrah! Hurrah! The flag that makes you free!" At the conflict's end, and for many decades following, Northerners celebrated the virtue of ending slavery. They had reason to cheer. The Thirteenth Amendment overturned two and a half centuries of slaveholding in North America and forced the reshaping of

1 John Singleton Mosby quoted in John Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 26.

2 Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

3 Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).

political, economic, and social relations across the nation and within the South in particular. Henry Turner, a free black minister in Washington, D.C. remembered the day when Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation as a transformative event: “It was indeed a time of times, and a half time,” he wrote, “nothing like it will ever be seen again in this life.”⁴

White Northerners came more easily to celebrate the preservation of the national union. The act of secession cast in doubt the global future of democracy itself. Reunion, a goal that hindsight renders as a foregone conclusion, emerged as a triumphant political accomplishment, a validation of democracy that benefited not just the United States but the world. This is what made the United States, as Lincoln explained it, “the last best hope of earth.” Vermont Private Wilbur Fisk expressed the same sentiment as his commander-in-chief, writing in 1864 that the North fought to preserve “the faith of the world in the intelligence and virtue of the common people, and their ability to govern themselves and maintain national unity without being rent asunder by internal strife and discord.”⁵

If Northern victory repudiated secession, and recent work suggests that the legal response to secession remained ambivalent long after the war, the emerging shape of that national government engendered greater disagreement.⁶ Republicans did not envision the New Deal state, but they hoped to use the organized wartime state to promote economic development. This posture, combined with the Democrats’ continuing strength below the Mason–Dixon line, ensured a regional split in economic experience and development that lasted well into the next century. Southerners did not oppose all state power – they used it to police moral issues such as alcohol and divorce – but they resisted any governmental policy that might weaken the edifice of white supremacy upon which they built the postwar world.⁷ The ideological and geographic differences between political parties reshaped American politics. Democrats, and Southern Democrats in particular, dominated all branches of the federal government before the war. After it, Northern Republicans monopolized the White House and Congress for

4 Henry M. Turner quoted in James M. McPherson, *The Negro’s Civil War: How American Blacks Felt and Acted during the War for the Union* (1965; New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), p. 50.

5 Emil and Ruth Rosenblatt (eds.), *Hard Marching Every Day: The Civil War Letters of Private Wilbur Fisk, 1861–1865* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1983), pp. 205–7.

6 Cynthia Nicoletti, *Secession on Trial: The Treason Prosecution of Jefferson Davis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

7 Gaines Foster, *Moral Reconstruction: Christian Lobbyists and the Federal Legislation of Morality, 1865–1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

decades. The one place where the federal government exercised unrivaled authority was in the West. The Homestead Act and Pacific Railroad Act, both passed in 1862 and possible only because of the absence of Southern Democrats from Congress, organized the white settlement and infrastructural development that enabled the rapid growth of the region in the postwar decades. Just as important, US Army leaders directed the power of a larger, better-trained, and better-equipped postwar military against western Indian communities to clear space for white settlers.

Hardest to assess yet perhaps most important because of their long-term nature were the cultural changes wrought by the war. Most prominent among these was the hardening of sectional animosities. The South of 1861 was a fragile and unlikely nation but the shared experience of suffering and loss welded the white South together by 1865. Fear and anger over the racial and economic uncertainty of the postwar world compelled many Southerners to overlook the visible seams of their ad hoc wartime nation and, over time, most came to regard the South as a natural place of its own. In the aftermath of the Civil War, Southerners joined the majority of the world's population who had, at some point in their past, lost a war. The split in the historical experience between the North and South only disappeared with the US defeat in the Vietnam War over a century later. This divergence only exacerbated the cultural alienation that each side perceived.

In order to understand the outcomes of the Civil War we also need to consider what did not happen because of a Confederate victory or any mediated settlement of hostilities, as European powers came close to demanding. The 1864 Democratic platform called for an immediate "cessation of hostilities." With a peace settlement short of absolute Northern victory, slavery would have survived in much of the South. Even at the war's end, three and a half million African Americans remained enslaved. If the Confederacy had successfully broken up the United States, secession fever would likely have spread rather than sputtering out. The western states might have pursued their own Pacific orientation. The Midwest could well have sought separation from what a later generation of Populist reformers would deride as the tyranny of eastern banks. The Confederacy started disintegrating in its opening moments, when western Virginia effectively seceded from the Old Dominion. Later in the war, Jones County, Mississippi residents fought to remove themselves from the Confederacy. These instances, and the future ones surely to come in the absence of Union victory, fulfilled Lincoln's prophecy that secession nullified self-government and democracy itself. Instead, by securing the integrity of the United States,

Lincoln enabled its subsequent growth. It would be too much to draw a straight line from Northern victory in the Civil War to the global hegemon of the twentieth century but the conclusion of the war indisputably shaped the landscape of power around the world as well as in North America.

History began its modern incarnation as a professional discipline working as a handmaiden to nation-building and state creation. The central role of the Civil War in US history reveals the success of that enterprise. For today's college students, most of whom learn across fifteen-week semesters, 1865 is almost always the breaking point in the introductory US history survey class. US history textbooks, for high school and college, use the Civil War to divide early American history from modern American history. Professional historians today have divorced themselves from the practice of state-building and even Civil War historians, despite the importance of our slice of the timeline, have grown more critical about the role played by the conflict. This skepticism draws strength from our ability to see the ways that previous generations of historians bent the story of the war toward the attitudes, prejudices, and interests of their day. As white Americans reunited in the 1880s and 1890s, historians endorsed a view of the war, known as the Lost Cause, that deemphasized slavery and emancipation as causes and outcomes of the war, stressed the bravery of Confederate and Union soldiers, and incorporated the conflict into an expanding tale of American greatness. Union veterans advanced the Cause Victorious, which celebrated emancipation and the preservation of the Union. In his memoir, Ulysses S. Grant characterized the Confederate purpose in language that many Northern veterans would have endorsed – “that cause was, I believe, one of the worst for which a people ever fought, and one for which there was the least excuse.”⁸ African Americans, both north and south, created their own memory of the war, conveyed in both popular ceremonies, like Juneteenth and Emancipation Day celebrations, and academic histories like that written by W. E. B. DuBois. Our ability to see these competing interpretations and to frame them in their own context lends an important humility to contemporary efforts to understand the war. We continue to do so but always with the knowledge that we possess our own vantage point.

The three volumes of the *Cambridge History of the American Civil War* convey a broad swath of the human experience of civil war in America. The first volume narrates the major battles and campaigns of the conflict. The military encounters between Union and Confederate soldiers and

8 Ulysses S. Grant, *Memoirs and Selected Letters* (New York: Library of America, 1990), p. 735.

between both armies and irregular combatants and true noncombatants structured the four years of war. These encounters were not solely defined by violence – occupation and garrison duty were typically nonviolent, often dull administrative work at odds with the supposed glamor of soldiering – but military encounters gave the war its central architecture. The iconic and determinative clashes between Union and Confederate armies created a new geography. Before the war, locals knew Antietam and Gettysburg, Chickamauga, and Missionary Ridge, but after the war every American knew these names. At the same time, because much of the military conflict occurred outside the Virginia and Tennessee corridors that defined the war's geography, one section of this volume is devoted to places. Some of these places are abstract – defined by political qualities (like the Border or the West) or physical ones (such as rivers or seas) and they all encompass parts of multiple states – but they cohered as distinct spaces because of their war experience. These chapters remind readers that the Civil War was not solely a series of battles. It was also a sustained process that drew people together in more ambiguous settings and outcomes.

Millions of Americans (indeed, most of the North) lived outside the major campaign zones so they experienced the war through the political and social dimensions of the conflict and through secondary exposure to military events through newspaper reporting and letters home from soldiers. The second volume conveys this world, for both North and South. It explores the affairs of state that carried Americans into conflict and guided their understanding of the conflict as it occurred. Because the US Civil War occurred between two democracies with vibrant media networks but long before the creation of the modern military-industrial complex, regular people played a much larger role in the conflict. The politics of military leadership played out in the newspapers of both sections. Governors and congressmen assumed a major role in steering the personnel decisions, strategic planning, and methods of fighting, much larger than that played by twentieth-century politicians. Regular people also played roles in direct military action, as guerrilla fighters, as nurses and doctors, and as military contractors (both near, as sutlers in soldiers' camps, and far, as suppliers of equipment to the armies). Many Civil War prison camps were located near major metropolitan areas in the North and South, with the result that residents of these areas knew about the camps and interacted with captured officers, who occasionally had liberty to visit adjoining towns. The US government expanded the system of war bond finance that had been used to pay for previous conflicts to include individual bond purchase. Famously embodied by Philadelphia financier Jay Cooke,

whose firm marketed millions of dollars' worth of bonds, this system of finance drew Northerners into a financial relationship with the war's outcome that amplified their routine civic connection to the conflict. The vibrant two-party system of the antebellum decades conditioned Americans of both regions to be deeply involved in politics. The war raised new issues – from emancipation and the draft to the nature of fighting and the suspension of habeas corpus – that shifted the partisan dynamics, especially in the North with its fledgling Republican Party and the Democrats, for the first time acting as an opposition party. The impact of the Civil War also spread beyond the country's boundaries. Anxious Canadians, hopeful British reformers, and concerned Brazilian slaveholders all watched the war with great interest, and its conclusion helped steer debates over democracy, slavery, and nationhood in countries around the world.

Just as important as politics were the ways that the war reshaped Americans' spiritual, cultural, and intellectual habits. The conflicts of the previous decades – against Mexicans, Indians, and the British – did not inspire the kind of existential crisis that the Civil War engendered. The war's duration, scale, and intensity drove Americans to question how they understood themselves as people. The rise of social history as a discipline in the 1960s gave historians the tools to unpack the social and cultural perspectives carried by residents of the past. Civil War historians put these skills to use in the 1980s and 1990s, uncovering how the war changed attitudes about gender, religion, ethnicity, and race. The experiences of Northerners and Southerners differed profoundly and the chapters in the third volume distinguish the varied impacts of the conflict in different places on people's sense of themselves. With most white men of military age serving in the army, white Southern women found themselves performing much of the labor that drove Southern households. Some took jobs in factories, others in new government bureaus. With a lower proportional enlistment rate in the North, changes in gender roles and ideology there came more by choice, with Northern women seizing new opportunities, especially in teaching and nursing. But in both regions, the scale of death and disability forced many families into new configurations of domestic and paid labor. For black Americans, especially in the South, the changes were greater still. Despite the Union's inconsistent policy on emancipation, many enslaved people seized their freedom from the chaos of war, sometimes as whole families and at other times piecemeal. After escaping from his Missouri master and joining the Union army, Spotswood Rice told his daughters, "Dont be uneasy my children I expect to have you. If Diggs dont give you up this Government will and I feel

confident that I will get you.”⁹ Rice’s confidence came from his role as a volunteer in the Union army. Other people, especially soldiers, found their faith in secular institutions broken by the war’s violence. Some found their religious faith broken as well. Americans wrestled for decades with refashioning their spiritual and philosophical foundations after the war.

Like the war’s participants, Americans of later generations struggled with the war’s meaning, for themselves, their region, and the nation. The concluding section of Volume III draws on recent work in the field of memory to consider the various legacies of the Civil War, from the legal and institutional to the cultural and intellectual. These legacies have varied over time as Americans reinterpret the Civil War in light of their times. In the wake of World War I’s futile carnage, historians came to see the Civil War as unnecessary. After the fascistic horror of World War II and the continuing intransigence of white southerners to accept black people as equal citizens, the potential of war as a productive agent of social change returned. Attuned to the human dimensions of slavery, American historians came to regard the ending of slavery as a goal worth the cost of even so bloody a war. The recent writing on Civil War memory has usefully blurred the lines between the war and reconstruction, challenging us to distinguish military action from regular political change, a worthy goal in an increasingly global and public world. Future generations will undoubtedly challenge existing interpretations. However they come to understand the war, whatever conclusions they draw, the Civil War will remain a touchstone of American life.

9 Spotswood Rice quoted in Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland (eds.), *Free at Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom, and the Civil War* (1992; Edison, NJ: The Blue & Grey Press, 1997), p. 480.

PART I

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MAJOR BATTLES AND
CAMPAIGNS

The Battles of Virginia, 1861

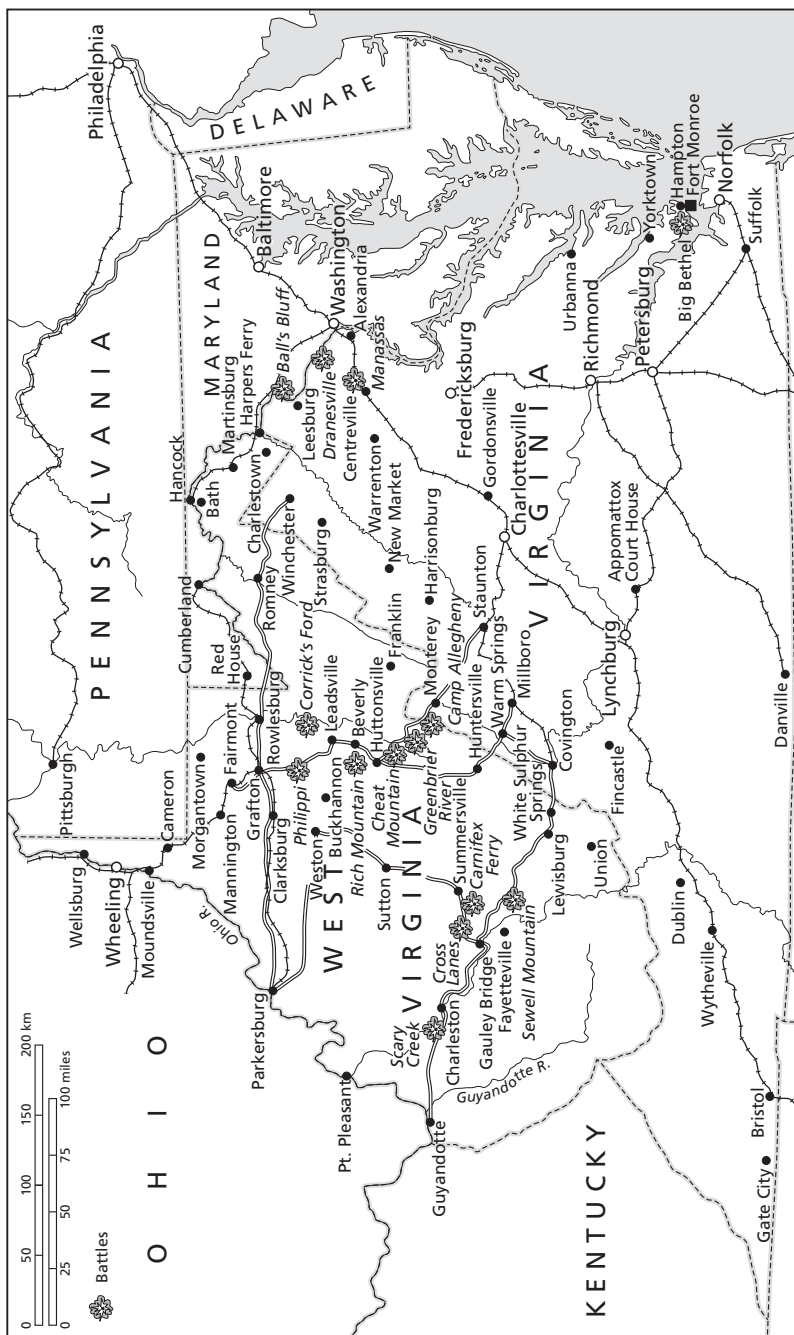
HUNTER LESSER

As the Southern states cascaded toward secession, Virginia, the “mother of presidents,” stood at the precipice of Civil War. Virginia was the pivotal state. The first battles of the Civil War, after Fort Sumter’s nearly bloodless fall, were fought on the soil of Virginia. Four anguished years would pass before the war ended on her doorstep, at a rural courthouse called Appomattox.

The national debate over slavery that divided America also divided Virginia. The western counties of the state were isolated from the east by mountainous geography, by culture, and by economics. Unjust taxation and representation were factors, but slavery was the catalyst – only 4 percent of Virginia’s nearly half a million slaves resided in the west. With fewer slaves in their midst, residents were less willing to defend the institution than Virginians in the eastern part of the state. In many ways, the political conflict between eastern and western Virginia echoed the divisions between North and South.

The Old Dominion also possessed strategic value that ensured it would be the focus of attention throughout the war. Virginia, the most populous state in the South, was home to a US armory at Harpers Ferry, America’s premier naval shipyard at Norfolk, and the Tredegar Iron Works, a key cannon foundry at Richmond. Recognizing Virginia’s importance to the future nation, the Confederacy moved its capitol from Montgomery, Alabama, to Richmond, little more than 100 miles from the seat of government in Washington, D.C.

The secession of seven Southern states placed the question of disunion before Virginia. Governor John Letcher called for a state convention in Richmond on February 13, 1861 to determine Virginia’s fate. A minority of the delegates favored disunion until the bombardment of Fort Sumter, South Carolina on April 12–13. President Lincoln’s subsequent call for 75,000 ninety-day volunteers to “suppress” the rebellion turned the sentiment in Virginia away from the Union. At the Richmond Convention on April 17, a fiery



2.1 Virginia, 1861. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

speech by former governor Henry Wise led to a vote of 88–55 for secession. State militiamen, under the control of Wise, were sent to capture the US Armory and Arsenal at Harpers Ferry and the Gosport Naval Yard at Norfolk.¹

2.1 Organizing for War

On April 23, Robert E. Lee took command of the military forces of Virginia. Lee had been offered the Union command by his mentor, General-in-Chief Winfield Scott, but had turned it down. It was the most difficult decision of his life. As a native Virginian, Lee explained, “I cannot raise my hand against my birthplace, my home, my children.” More than 300 US Army officers from southern states followed his example.

Lee labored in the defense of Virginia on four fronts. To the north, a large Union army was massing at Washington, D.C. To counter this threat, Lee concentrated forces at nearby Manassas Junction, under General P. G. T. Beauregard. To guard against an advance up the Shenandoah Valley, Lee sent Colonel Thomas J. Jackson to command a detachment at Harpers Ferry. Lee ordered the erection of batteries and took other steps to combat the threat of Union naval forces in the east; the enemy held Fort Monroe at the tip of a peninsula formed by the James and York rivers, a water route leading directly to Richmond. Lastly, Federal forces in Ohio under Major General George McClellan posed a threat of invasion from the west. Movement was difficult through that mountainous region, but Federal authorities coveted the vital Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the many loyal Unionists in “Western” Virginia. Accordingly, Lee sent Colonel George Porterfield, a Mexican War veteran, across the Alleghenies to muster Confederate troops.

In June, when the Confederate government moved to Richmond, Lee’s state command was subsumed and he became an advisor to Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Meanwhile, Union commands organized under generals George McClellan in the west (Ohio), Robert Patterson in the north (Pennsylvania), and Irvin McDowell in the east (Washington, D.C.).²

The loyal Unionists of “Western” Virginia sent urgent pleas for protection to 34-year-old Major General George McClellan, new commander of the

1 George E. Moore, *A Banner in the Hills* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), pp. 1–6, 44–5.

2 Douglas Southall Freeman, *R. E. Lee: A Biography*, 4 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1934), vol. 1, pp. 441–2, 472–90, 503–4, 530–1.

Department of the Ohio in Cincinnati. McClellan urged caution, yet Ohio governor William Dennison pledged to protect his state “beyond rather than on her border.” Meanwhile, Dennison, John Letcher of Virginia, and other state governors mustered armies of volunteers.

While the armies organized, loyal Unionists in the western counties of Virginia protested the passing of the secession ordinance at Richmond. Mass meetings at Clarksburg, Wheeling, and other points revealed that the Union sentiment was strong in many localities. Yet Virginians were sharply divided by loyalty, even in the western counties. A large assembly of “Southern Rights” men met in Clarksburg mere days after the Union mass meeting held in that town. These divisions only deepened as war engulfed the region.

Nonetheless, on May 13–15, more than 400 loyal Unionists gathered in a convention at Wheeling, the largest city in the western part of the state (pop. 14,000). Wheeling, a hotbed of Union sentiment, was located in the panhandle bordered by Ohio and Pennsylvania, more than 350 miles northwest of Richmond. Fueled by a booming iron and glass industry, Wheeling, like other northwestern Virginia towns, was more tightly linked to the economic networks of Pittsburgh and Baltimore than cities in the Deep South. It was one of the few places in Virginia where Unionists could meet without fear of reprisal. The Wheeling delegates passed strong resolutions denouncing secession. They urged citizens to vote against the secession ordinance in a May 23 statewide referendum. Their loyalty to the Lincoln government stemmed from strong cultural and economic ties to the Union, limited slavery, and resentment of the eastern aristocrats who ruled the state from Richmond.³

The initial Federal foray into Virginia came on May 24, the day after citizens ratified the Ordinance of Secession. President Abraham Lincoln sent the 11th New York “Fire Zouaves” across the Potomac River to occupy Alexandria. Their commander, the handsome, 24-year-old Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, pulled a Confederate flag from the roof of the Marshall House Hotel. He was promptly killed by a shotgun blast from the proprietor. Ellsworth’s body lay in state at the White House; he was a personal friend of Lincoln, and an instant martyr to the North.

Less noted was the death of T. Bailey Brown, the first Union soldier killed by a Confederate. Brown died two days earlier in a confrontation along the B&O Railroad at Grafton in western Virginia. Brown had been a member of

3 Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, OH: Robert Clarke Co., 1895), vol. 1, pp. 32–3, 46; Moore, *A Banner in the Hills*, pp. 56–62.

the “Grafton Guards,” Company B of the 2nd Virginia Infantry – a *Union* regiment formed on Confederate soil.

2.2 The First Campaign: Western Virginia

Confederate destruction of two bridges on the vital B&O Railroad triggered the “First Campaign” of the Civil War. As a result of the destruction, on May 27, 1861, Union major general McClellan sent US troops across the Ohio River on steamboats into Virginia. Their mission, according to a broadside issued by McClellan, was to “restore peace and confidence, to protect the majesty of the law, and to rescue our brethren from the grasp of armed traitors.” McClellan informed President Lincoln that he hoped to “secure Western Virginia to the Union.”

Union soldiers boarded cars on the B&O Railroad at Wheeling and Parkersburg and steamed toward the rail junction at Grafton, 100 miles east. In a symbolic move, Colonel Benjamin Kelley’s 1st (US) Virginia Infantry led the advance. On June 3, Union forces led by Kelley drove Confederate Virginians under Colonel Porterfield from Philippi, 13 miles south of the railroad, in a nearly bloodless clash known as the “Philippi Races.” No one died in the fracas at Philippi, although Colonel Kelley was seriously wounded and a young Confederate named James Hanger lost his leg to a cannonball, becoming the war’s first amputee. Hanger later patented an artificial limb; his company remains America’s largest seller of prosthetics. The Union victory at Philippi became known as the “first land battle” of the Civil War.⁴

Across the state, Union scouts clashed with local militia on June 1 at Fairfax Court House on the Virginia Peninsula near Newport News, Confederates triumphed on June 10 with a higher body count at the Battle of Big Bethel. Fort Monroe, a massive masonry structure held by Federal troops on the tip of the Virginia Peninsula, was a natural staging area for incursions against Richmond. Federal troops under Major General Benjamin Butler left camps near that fortress to strike Confederates under Colonel “Prince John” Magruder. In the confused clash that followed, Butler lost eighteen killed and fifty-three wounded, in part due to friendly fire from mistaken identity.

The *Richmond Dispatch* called Big Bethel “one of the most extraordinary victories in the annals of war,” a claim matched by Union major general

4 Clayton R. Newell, *Lee vs. McClellan: The First Campaign* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 1996), pp. 76, 85–100.

McClellan in praise for Philippi. Two days after Big Bethel, Union colonel Lew Wallace's 11th Indiana Infantry captured Romney on the Northwestern Turnpike, just 40 miles west of the Shenandoah Valley town of Winchester. This move triggered a Confederate withdrawal from Harpers Ferry. These early skirmishes received widespread press coverage and exaggerated importance. They boosted the morale of soldiers North and South, reassuring many that their cause was just and that the conflict would be neither prolonged nor terribly bloody.

As Federal troops invaded Virginia, citizen delegates gathered at a Second Wheeling Convention. There, after contentious debate on June 11–25, they established the “Restored Government” of Virginia – a Union government to contest the Confederate one installed at Richmond. The advance of Union troops in the western counties provided cover for their act, and the Lincoln administration pledged support. Virginia's US senators James Mason and Robert M. T. Hunter resigned to join the Confederate Congress; Unionists John Carlile and Waitman Willey were admitted to replace them. Fairmont attorney Francis Pierpont became the new Union governor. Pierpont was assisted by a rump legislature; all were appointed or elected in some fashion, but the Restored Government was “extralegal” in every way. Confederates refused to recognize the new state government and targeted its officials for reprisals.⁵

During that time, Confederate general Robert Garnett left his post as Robert E. Lee's trusted adjutant-general and crossed the Alleghenies to take command of the “Army of the Northwest.” General Garnett, one of the most talented officers in the Confederacy, was doubtful of his new assignment. Lacking the resources and numbers to match McClellan, he muttered to a confidant: “they have sent me to my death.”⁶ Garnett hastily reorganized the Confederate Army of the Northwest and advanced to fortify two key turnpike crossings at Rich Mountain and Laurel Hill – points he considered the “gates to the northwestern country.”⁷ Garnett's force numbered fewer than 5,000 men – hardly enough to hold back McClellan's 19,000-man Union juggernaut.

5 United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 2, pp. 77–82, 91–2 (hereafter cited as OR; all references to series 1 unless otherwise noted); *Richmond Dispatch*, June 12, 1861; Moore, *A Banner in the Hills*, pp. 79–88.

6 Mary Boykin Chesnut, *A Diary From Dixie*, Ben A. Williams (ed.), (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949), p. 126.

7 OR, 2: 198–9, 209–10, 236–8.

On June 20, Major General McClellan boarded a train at Cincinnati and departed for the theater of action in western Virginia. Citizens lined the railroad tracks to cheer him, but upon crossing into Virginia, the young general noted that some turned away in dissent. It was a troubling sign of the divided loyalties that plagued the region. In response, McClellan left much of the "Army of the Ohio" to guard the vital railroad in his rear. The young general advanced slowly on two fronts. He informed General-in-Chief Winfield Scott that he hoped to dispose of Garnett by pulling a flanking maneuver that mimicked Scott's victory at Cerro Gordo in the Mexican War.

McClellan seemed confident of success, but as he neared the Confederate defenses, doubt crept into his mind. "I realize now the dreadful responsibility on me – the lives of my men, the reputation of the country & the success of our cause," he confided in a letter to his wife; "I shall feel my way & be very cautious." On July 7, Union general Thomas Morris of Indiana marched on General Garnett's headquarters at Laurel Hill. Morris had instructions to "amuse" the main Confederate force, holding them in place while McClellan advanced with three brigades against the 1,300 Rebels fortified at "Camp Garnett," 18 miles south at Rich Mountain.

At the Battle of Rich Mountain on July 11, 1861, civilian guide David Hart led a Union brigade under General William Rosecrans to victory against 310 resolute Confederates on the mountain crest behind Camp Garnett. McClellan had pledged to launch a frontal attack to support Rosecrans, but did nothing as the battle raged. This timidity would become a hallmark of McClellan's generalship throughout the war. Nonetheless, the Confederates under Colonel John Pegram vacated Camp Garnett that night and fled through the woods toward Beverly.⁸

With Union forces threatening him front and rear, General Garnett abandoned Laurel Hill after midnight and marched south toward Beverly with the rest of his army. Confused scouts reported that McClellan already held the Staunton–Parkersburg Turnpike at Beverly – thus blocking the Confederate line of retreat to the Shenandoah Valley. The report was false, but it caused Garnett to turn back and strike north, in a daring bid to escape. With the remainder of his force, about 3,000 Confederates, Garnett hoped to circle across the Alleghenies and regain the turnpike at Monterey, Virginia – a rugged detour of nearly 150 miles.

8 Stephen W. Sears (ed.), *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989), pp. 32, 46.

A Federal strike force led by regular army Captain Henry W. Benham was already in pursuit. Benham's men caught up to General Garnett's wagon train along Shavers Fork of Cheat River at the Battle of Corrick's Ford on July 13, 1861. A few hundred yards downstream, Garnett was killed on the riverbank in a rear-guard action, becoming the first Civil War general to fall. The badly demoralized remnant of his Confederate army abandoned their wagons on rough mountain roads, but many reached safety days later at Monterey. The pathos of General Robert Garnett's death proved titillating to reporters like Whitelaw Reid of the *Cincinnati Gazette* who followed the armies. "Never before had I so ghastly a realization of the horrid nature of this fraternal struggle," Reid penned at the scene. Many believed that Garnett had thrown away his life, mortified by his failure and humiliating retreat.⁹

As the armies dueled at Rich Mountain on July 11, Major General McClellan ordered 3,000 Federals under General Jacob Cox of Ohio to launch an invasion of the Kanawha Valley, 150 miles south. Cox's force advanced up the scenic Kanawha River by steamboat, an experience he called "the very romance of campaigning."¹⁰ But the romance was short lived; Confederates under ex-Virginia governor Henry Wise battled Cox to a standoff on July 17 near Charleston at Scary Creek. Badly outmanned, General Wise withdrew and abandoned the Kanawha Valley by late July, burning bridges on the James River and Kanawha Turnpike as he fled east toward Lewisburg. It was not a retreat, Wise insisted, merely a "retrograde movement." Nonetheless, coupled with General Garnett's defeat, almost one-third of the landmass of Virginia had been forfeited to the Union.

Union general George McClellan basked in triumph – his army had driven the Confederates out of western Virginia, killed their commander, and captured nearly a thousand enemy soldiers. Although McClellan revealed some troubling traits during the First Campaign – undue caution and a willingness to exaggerate enemy numbers among them – all was overlooked in the brilliant glow of victory. Taking headquarters at the home of a Rebel sympathizer in the village of Beverly, McClellan wired telegrams to Washington, D.C. with sensational news of his success: "*I have the honor to inform you that the army under my command has gained a decisive victory . . . We have annihilated the enemy in Western Virginia . . . The troops defeated are the*

9 W. Hunter Lesser, *Rebels at the Gate: Lee and McClellan on the Front Line of a Nation Divided* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2004), pp. 109–19, p. 116.

10 Jacob D. Cox, "McClellan in West Virginia," in Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (eds.), *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (New York: Century, 1884–9), vol. 1, pp. 138–42, p. 138.

crack regiments of Eastern Virginia . . . Our success is complete & secession is killed in this country." McClellan embellished his deeds, but his use of the telegraph was itself a marvel – the first time this nascent technology had ever been used by an American army in the field. Newspaper headlines trumpeted the stunning news throughout the North. Almost overnight, George McClellan became the North's first battlefield hero: a "Young Napoleon."¹¹

2.3 The Campaign of First Manassas

While McClellan secured western Virginia, an army of 22,000 Confederates under General P. G. T. Beauregard, the dapper hero of Ft. Sumter, gathered near the railroad at Manassas Junction, just 25 miles southwest of Washington. The Northern public clamored for Union General-in-Chief Winfield Scott to "crush" this threat to the nation's seat of government. Scott had proposed an "Anaconda Plan" to envelop the Confederacy with a blockade by sea and a fleet of gunboats coursing up the Mississippi River. But with the new Confederate capitol at Richmond merely a hundred miles south of Washington, the Rebels seemed to taunt the North. The masthead of Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* led with a regular headline: "Forward to Richmond! Forward to Richmond!"

Union general Irvin McDowell commanded the Department of Eastern Virginia with 35,000 men, many of them ninety-day volunteers. President Lincoln urged McDowell to move south before their enlistments expired. When McDowell warned that his recruits were inexperienced and unready, Lincoln reminded him: "you are green, it is true, but they are green also; you are all green alike."¹²

On July 16, General McDowell began his advance. As part of the plan, General Robert Patterson's 18,000 Union troops near Harpers Ferry were to prevent 11,000 Confederates under General Joseph Johnston in the Shenandoah Valley from joining Beauregard. On July 18, five days after Confederate General Garnett's death at Corrick's Ford, McDowell reached Centreville, 5 miles north of Manassas.

The Confederates were expecting him. General Beauregard had been alerted to McDowell's advance by a network of spies in Washington, headed by the socialite Rose O'Neal Greenhow. The sluggish Federal advance met stiff resistance around Blackburn's Ford, on a torpid stream known as Bull

¹¹ Beuhring H. Jones, *Southern Literary Messenger* (Richmond, VA: Macfarlane & Fergusson, 1863), vol. 37, no. 2, 96.

¹² T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 21.

Run. In the meantime, General Johnston's Confederate army had slipped away from the 69-year-old General Patterson's command and boarded trains for Manassas. Like McClellan's novel use of the telegraph, the movement of troops by railroad into battle suggested that a new industrial war was at hand. Their arrival boosted Beauregard's force to nearly equal that of McDowell.

Ruling out a costly frontal assault, General McDowell sent the bulk of his army on a march around the Confederate left flank. Beauregard's Confederates were stretched along a 6-mile front on the south bank of Bull Run. The enemy blow was expected to come near the railroad to the east; therefore Beauregard had positioned most of the army on his right flank.

On July 21, the Battle of Manassas began in earnest as Federal brigades splashed across Sudley Ford on the enemy left flank and engaged a brigade led by Confederate colonel Nathan "Shanks" Evans, who had marched west to contest them. On Matthews Hill, Confederate brigades under Colonel Evans, General Bernard Bee, and Colonel Francis Bartow held back three times their number for almost two hours. As Union brigades under Colonel William T. Sherman and Brigadier General Erasmus Keyes crossed Bull Run near the Stone Bridge, Evans, Bee, and Bartow were forced to fall back across the Warrenton Turnpike to Henry House Hill.

Generals Johnston and Beauregard rallied the broken Confederate lines on Henry House Hill, where General Thomas J. Jackson and his brigade stood resolute "like a stone wall." Here was born the legend of "Stonewall" Jackson and the Stonewall Brigade. During that brutally hot afternoon, the battle raged fiercely around Henry House Hill, where other leaders would first earn fame: William T. Sherman, Ambrose Burnside, Oliver O. Howard, "Jeb" Stuart, Wade Hampton, and more. Among the many killed in the fierce fighting here were General Bernard Bee, Colonel Francis Bartow and Judith Henry, the first civilian battle fatality of the war.

These early volunteers wore a confusing mix of uniform colors – even the national flags carried by the opposing armies could be mistaken at a distance (General Beauregard later designed a new Confederate battle flag to rectify the problem). Uncertainty sparked by the mismatch of uniforms allowed the blue-clad 33rd Virginia Infantry to advance and crush a Union battery pounding Henry House Hill. That blow and the timely arrival of Confederate general Johnston's fourth brigade turned the tide of battle.

Beauregard sent in fresh reserves and ordered a countercharge. Confederates surged forward with a strange blood-curdling scream – the notorious Rebel yell. The weary Union forces yielded; their retreat soon became a rout as soldiers crowded frantically over the narrow stone bridge

across Bull Run. Adding to the panic were civilian spectators who had come out to enjoy a picnic and witness the war's end; all now joined the mob in its flight back to Washington. President Jefferson Davis arrived on the battlefield at the point of victory, but his Confederate army was too tired and disorganized to pursue the enemy.

The Battle of First Manassas dashed any expectations of a short, bloodless conflict. Casualties were severe by the standards of 1861 – some 400 Confederates and 500 Federals were dead, and more than 2,500 wounded or missing, making it the deadliest battle in North America up to that time. The Confederates also captured thirty-eight cannon and nine battle flags.¹³

As news of the disaster at Bull Run reached Washington, the Union high command was in an uproar. President Lincoln spent a nervous night at the White House listening to accounts of the battle. General-in-Chief Winfield Scott looked west to George McClellan, the young general who had won the first Union victories of the war. On July 22, an urgent telegram reached McClellan's headquarters in the little town of Beverly with instructions to "come hither without delay."¹⁴ George McClellan, the "Young Napoleon," was called to Washington – summoned to save the Union.

McClellan left western Virginia by train, detouring through Pennsylvania to avoid the Confederates between his army and the Capitol. The "Young Napoleon" entered Washington like a conquering hero, courtesy of his newly won reputation in the western mountains. McClellan quickly restored order to the Capitol and began to assemble the gargantuan Army of the Potomac – the largest military force ever assembled on the American continent. It would be the *second* army McClellan had organized in a matter of months.

2.4 Summer and Fall in Western Virginia

Upon McClellan's departure, Union general William Rosecrans took command of the "Army of Occupation, Western Virginia." With their enlistments ending, the ninety-day volunteers returned home. Rosecrans, left with some 11,000 men, now went on the defensive. Rumors abounded that the Rebels intended to reclaim western Virginia. Fortifications were erected to block Confederate movements on the key turnpikes leading west from the

¹³ OR, 2: 316–25, 484–504; James B. Fry, "McDowell's Advance on Bull Run," in Johnson and Buel (eds.), *Battles and Leaders*, 1, pp. 167–93; G. T. Beauregard, "The First Battle of Bull Run," in Johnson and Buel (eds.), *Battles and Leaders*, 1, pp. 196–227. For casualties see OR, 2: 327–8, 570–1.

¹⁴ OR, 2: 752–3.

Shenandoah Valley. Cheat Summit Fort, Camp Elkwater, and Fort Pendleton guarded strategic mountain passes on the Staunton–Parkersburg Turnpike, the Huttonsville–Huntersville Turnpike, and the Northwestern Turnpike.

Posted as a military advisor to Confederate President Davis in Richmond, General Robert E. Lee was mortified by his absence from the battlefields and the death of his friend, General Garnett. Lee soon departed for the mountains of western Virginia. His mission was to coordinate an offensive with the independent Confederate commands of generals William Loring, Henry Wise, and John Floyd. Their goal was to regain the ground lost to Union forces under McClellan.

On July 29, Lee and his small staff detrained at Staunton and rode west into the Alleghenies. Their destination was General William Loring's headquarters at Huntersville, the Pocahontas County seat. Reaching Huntersville on August 3, Lee found Loring, the newly appointed commander of the Army of the Northwest. Loring was a veteran army officer with extensive combat experience. He had lost an arm in the Mexican War, had outranked Lee in the old army, and did not welcome his oversight.

General Lee urged a rapid movement against the enemy, but Loring preferred to gather supplies for the army, which would soon swell to nearly 11,000 Confederate volunteers. On August 6, Lee rode 28 miles north to Valley Mountain and began to reconnoiter the Federal defenses. He examined the works on Cheat Mountain, and at Camp Elkwater in the Tygart Valley below. These two fortifications blocked key turnpikes through the western mountains.

On August 12, General Loring finally joined Lee with the bulk of the Army of the Northwest. The two generals planned an offensive, but incessant rain, bitter cold, and sickness intervened. "In all my experience of the war, I never saw as much mud," recalled one veteran. The mountain roads became almost impassible. It was difficult for the Confederates to haul supplies over the Alleghenies from railroads in the Shenandoah Valley, 70 miles east. Encamped on the mountain heights, both armies were stunned by ice and falling snow in mid-August. "The cold too has been greater than I could have conceived," confessed General Lee. "In my winter clothing and buttoned up in my overcoat, I have still been cold." The wicked weather aggravated outbreaks of measles and typhoid fever, resulting in many deaths on both sides.

Mercifully, the skies cleared in early September and the muddy turnpikes firmed up enough to move. Three Confederate brigades marched through the wilderness to surround the fortress on Cheat Mountain, guarding the

vital Staunton–Parkersburg Turnpike. On the morning of September 12, Lee launched an assault of the works. But Lee's plan quickly unraveled. Colonel Nathan Kimball's defenders took the initiative, drove the Confederates back and forced them to withdraw. Lee narrowly avoided capture behind enemy lines; his tent mate and aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Colonel John A. Washington of Mt. Vernon, was shot dead in an ambush.¹⁵

Failing at Cheat Mountain, General Lee rode 75 miles south to the Kanawha theater of operations. Here Confederate generals John Floyd and Henry Wise held the ground with their independent commands: the little Army of Kanawha and the Wise Legion. In a situation all too common at the outbreak of war, their commissions had been granted for political prowess, rather than military talent. Wise and Floyd, both former governors of Virginia, were ancient political rivals. Despite pleas from Richmond, the two generals refused to cooperate, or even to share the same camp. The two old foes quarreled like schoolboys, even while Union general William Rosecrans marched against them from the north – threatening the Confederates with annihilation.

General Floyd, the senior officer by mere days due to his commission, entrenched on a bluff above the Gauley River. It was a reckless move, with the rollicking river in a deep canyon at his back. Wise criticized Floyd's choice of terrain and ignored orders to support him. Nonetheless, on August 26, Floyd surprised and routed the 7th Ohio Infantry at breakfast less than 3 miles north in the Battle of Cross Lanes. A jealous General Wise warned President Davis that Floyd was “dangerously” overconfident, thanks to that little “battle of knives and forks.”¹⁶

As Wise and Floyd feuded, Union general Rosecrans led three brigades 120 miles south from the B&O Railroad at Clarksburg. His goal was to join General Jacob Cox near the southern terminus of the Weston and Gauley Bridge Turnpike and drive the Confederates under Wise and Floyd out of western Virginia.

Confederate general Floyd, dug in above the river at Camp Gauley, called on Wise for reinforcements, but was rebuffed once again. Meanwhile, the Federals under General Rosecrans closed in. On the afternoon

¹⁵ US Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, “Rosecrans's Campaigns,” 37th Congress, 2nd sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865), vol. III, pp. 7–8; Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, I, pp. 541–78; OR, 5: 184–93; John H. Worsham, *One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry*, James I. Robertson, Jr. (ed.), (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1964), p. 17; Clifford Dowdey (ed.), *The Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), p. 70.

¹⁶ OR, 5: 128–65.

of September 10, Rosecrans ordered a reconnaissance of Floyd's defenses. Thick woods hid the Confederate works; newly minted Union general Henry Benham blundered into them and opened the Battle of Carnifex Ferry. Floyd held out against three to one odds until nightfall, and then vanished into the gorge and across the Gauley River, leaving Rosecrans mystified but victorious. Floyd fell back to Sewell Mountain, more than 30 miles south on the James River and Kanawha Turnpike west of Lewisburg. Here Floyd hoped to join up with the command of General Wise. However, these bickering Confederate generals still camped nearly 12 miles apart.¹⁷

On September 21, the mild-mannered General Lee rode into this hornet's nest of political strife. Failing in his efforts to unite the feuding generals, Lee had Wise ordered back to Richmond. As September closed, 8,500 Union troops under Generals Rosecrans and Cox faced nearly 9,000 Confederates under Lee at Sewell Mountain. Now strongly entrenched on the mountain crest, Lee awaited an attack on October 6, but his expectations were dashed when the rising sun revealed that the army under Rosecrans had vanished. Overnight, the Federals had withdrawn on the muddy James River and Kanawha Turnpike, content to return to their supply base at Gauley Bridge in preparation for winter. Federal troops maintained control of the region, holding it for much of the war.

On October 30, General Lee left the western mountains and returned to Richmond. By mid-November, General Floyd and the Army of Kanawha decamped and followed him back across the Alleghenies. Lee's first campaign ended in failure. Critics claimed he had been outwitted and outgeneraled. His plans were too complex for the raw troops and bickering commanders at hand. Southern newspaper editors mocked him as the "great entrencher" and "Granny Lee." Although the campaign had been a "forlorn hope" for Lee, it offered valuable lessons in leadership. It also marked the first appearance of his trademark beard, and the discovery of a warhorse – the legendary "Traveller."

2.5 Toward West Virginia

A public referendum added injury to the insults heaped upon Lee. On October 24, the loyal Unionists of Virginia's western counties approved the creation of a new state. "West Virginia" was carved out from forty-eight counties of the Old Dominion and would be officially admitted to the Union

¹⁷ Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, pp. 579–85.

on June 20, 1863. The northern tier of counties expressed strong Unionist sentiment but the southern tier, especially around Charleston, tended to support the Confederacy in 1861 and throughout the war. President Lincoln, sidestepping the question of constitutionality (new states were supposed to be created with the consent of the original states from which they were carved), signed the West Virginia statehood bill as an “expedient” act of wartime.¹⁸

The First Campaign closed with action on the Staunton–Parkersburg Turnpike in the mountains west of the Shenandoah Valley. On October 3, General Joseph J. Reynolds led 5,000 Union soldiers against 1,800 Confederates under General Henry R. Jackson in a lively artillery duel known as the Battle of Greenbrier River. Dug in at Camp Bartow (named for the fallen hero of Manassas), General Jackson claimed victory. Union general Reynolds retreated 12 miles to Cheat Summit Fort and called his effort an “armed reconnaissance.”

As snow blanketed the mountains, the two armies settled into winter quarters along the Staunton–Parkersburg Pike, the Federals at Cheat Summit Fort and the remainder of the Confederate Army of the Northwest at Camp Allegheny, about 20 miles apart. These elevated outposts – each more than 4,000 feet above sea level – caused the armies to suffer terribly from bitter cold, ice, and snow.

Informed that the demoralized Confederates at Camp Allegheny would offer little resistance, Union general Robert Milroy attacked on December 13 with nearly 2,000 Federals. Some 1,200 Confederates under General Edward “Allegheny” Johnson defeated Milroy in one of the coldest and most hotly contested actions of 1861. The two commands remained in their icy lairs for the duration of the winter. In April 1862 the armies moved east, joining in Stonewall Jackson’s storied Shenandoah Valley campaign.¹⁹

2.6 Final Actions in Eastern Virginia

Back in Washington, D.C., Union major general George McClellan had been busy drilling and reviewing the Army of the Potomac during the mild

18 Freeman, R. E. Lee, pp. 588–604, 644–7; Cox, “McClellan in West Virginia,” pp. 142–7; Richard Orr Curry, *A House Divided: A Study of Statehood Politics and the Copperhead Movement in West Virginia* (Pittsburgh, PA: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), pp. 86–130.

19 OR, 5: 220–36, 456–68; Lesser, *Rebels at the Gate*, pp. 223–69.

summer and fall of 1861. But McClellan's gargantuan army failed to advance. Meanwhile, the Confederates held outposts within sight of Washington, and planted batteries on the lower Potomac to hinder travel up the river to the Capitol.

The Northern press, Congressional Republicans, and the Lincoln administration all pressed for action. McClellan seemed unwilling to move. He was cautious and wildly overestimated enemy strength and numbers, traits that had been overlooked during the First Campaign. Adding to his troubles, a vacated Confederate position on Munson's Hill southwest of Washington revealed large cannon to be nothing more than painted logs – harmless "Quaker guns." Republicans began to doubt McClellan's competence and even his loyalty. The young general's daily bulletins proclaiming "All quiet on the Potomac," issued to calm the Northern public after Manassas, were now used to mock McClellan.

Forced into action, McClellan looked for a quick victory. He ordered a reconnaissance across the Potomac River and a "slight demonstration" by Union general Charles P. Stone toward the Confederates under Colonel Nathan "Shanks" Evans at Leesburg, 40 miles upriver from Washington. General Stone's advance units crossed the Potomac River from Maryland into Virginia near a hundred-foot escarpment known as Ball's Bluff.

As skirmishing broke out on October 21, Colonel Edward Baker ferried his brigade across the river to render aid. Baker was a Republican senator from Oregon and a close friend of Lincoln. His crossing was slowed by the handful of small boats available. Baker took command without previous combat experience. He blundered unprepared into the fight and was killed late that afternoon – the only sitting member of Congress ever to fall in battle. Disorganized Federal forces were driven back over the bluff into the Potomac River; more than 200 were killed, drowned, or wounded and over 700 captured in their attempt to escape. The bodies of Union soldiers floated downriver to Washington in the days after the fight.

The Battle of Ball's Bluff was a Union disaster with major political implications. Angry Republicans searched for a scapegoat. In December, Congress established a Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War to investigate. Republicans dared not blame the fallen Baker, one of their own, but instead fingered General Stone.

Major General McClellan soon realized that *he* was the real target of their probe. Republicans had grown increasingly distrustful of McClellan (a Democrat) since his November appointment as general-in-chief. McClellan – fearing for his own head – allowed General Stone to be arrested

for disloyalty and imprisoned for the debacle at Ball's Bluff. No charges were ever filed against Stone, although he served almost six months in prison. The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War would remain a forum of political intrigue for the duration of the conflict. Its members occasionally criticized Lincoln but expended most of their venom on Democratic generals.²⁰

The last action of note in Virginia during 1861 was the Battle of Dranesville in Fairfax County on December 20, an accidental clash between foraging parties led by Confederate general J. E. B. Stuart and Union general Edward Ord. Stuart, with about 1,800 Confederate infantry, cavalry, and artillery, pushed north from Centreville to escort a large train of army wagons in search of hay. At the same time, Ord moved west from Langley with a brigade of Pennsylvania Reserves. The two forces met early in the afternoon along the Leesburg Pike at Dranesville. After a spirited clash of infantry and artillery, Stuart secured his forage wagons and withdrew. General Ord's brigade returned to Langley with wagonloads of corn and hay. This little victory was the first for Union forces in the east, giving a much-needed boost to northern morale. Combat closed as the armies settled into winter quarters.²¹

2.7 Conclusion

The first year of war taught hard lessons to the armies in Virginia. Idle boasts that "one Southern man is equal to three Yankees" would soon ring hollow. The expectations of a brief, nearly bloodless war were dashed. Volunteer citizen soldiers first "saw the elephant" of battle – even if they sometimes skedaddled. Raw recruits were slowly honed into veteran fighting commands. With time, many self-serving politicians were thinned from the ranks, as men of talent and experience stepped forward to lead the armies.

The 1861 battles in Virginia, although large and costly by prewar standards, would pale in comparison to the long and bloody conflict that lay ahead. Yet the early battles had potent and long-lasting political effects. They determined future fields of combat, along with the armies and statesmen who would contend for them. They introduced tools of modern warfare such as the rifled musket, the conical Minié ball, and the use of railroads and the telegraph.

20 James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 361–3; OR, 5: 290, 293–308; Craig L. Symonds, "Land Operations in Virginia in 1861," in W. C. Davis and J. I. Robertson, Jr. (eds.), *Virginia At War: 1861* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005), p. 42.

21 OR, 5: 474–81, 490–4.

The early battles offered valuable lessons in military logistics. In particular, the mountainous terrain of Virginia's western counties proved too rugged for the movement and supply of large armies. "It was easy," wrote Union general Jacob Cox of western Virginia, "sitting at one's office table, to sweep the hand over a few inches of chart showing next to nothing of the topography, and to say, 'We will march from here to here.'" But it was another thing entirely to make the march. That mountainous region was destined to become a guerrilla battleground – a stark reminder of its sharply divided loyalties. "Bushwhackers" roamed the hills and hollows, killing and robbing soldiers and civilians alike.²²

Virginia was a proving ground for armies and leaders in 1861. A surprising number of the war's leading lights and fabled regiments cut their teeth on combat within her borders. Promising figures such as Elmer Ellsworth, Robert Garnett, Francis Bartow, and Edward Baker would not survive the test. The first year of war saw the meteoric rise of George McClellan and the near demise of Robert E. Lee, but their fortunes reversed in 1862. It would be one of the great ironies of the Civil War.

Thanks to McClellan's early victories and bold action by loyal Unionists at the Wheeling Conventions of 1861, forty-eight western counties would be lost to the Old Dominion and the Confederacy two years later as the new State of West Virginia. But the war continued unabated. The events of 1861 set the stage for bloodier and more decisive combat on the soil of Virginia in the years ahead.

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²² Sears, *Civil War Papers of George McClellan*, p. 37; Jacob Dolson Cox, *Military Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1900), vol. 1, p. 145; Symonds, "Land Operations," p. 28.

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The Battles of Tennessee, 1862

TIMOTHY B. SMITH

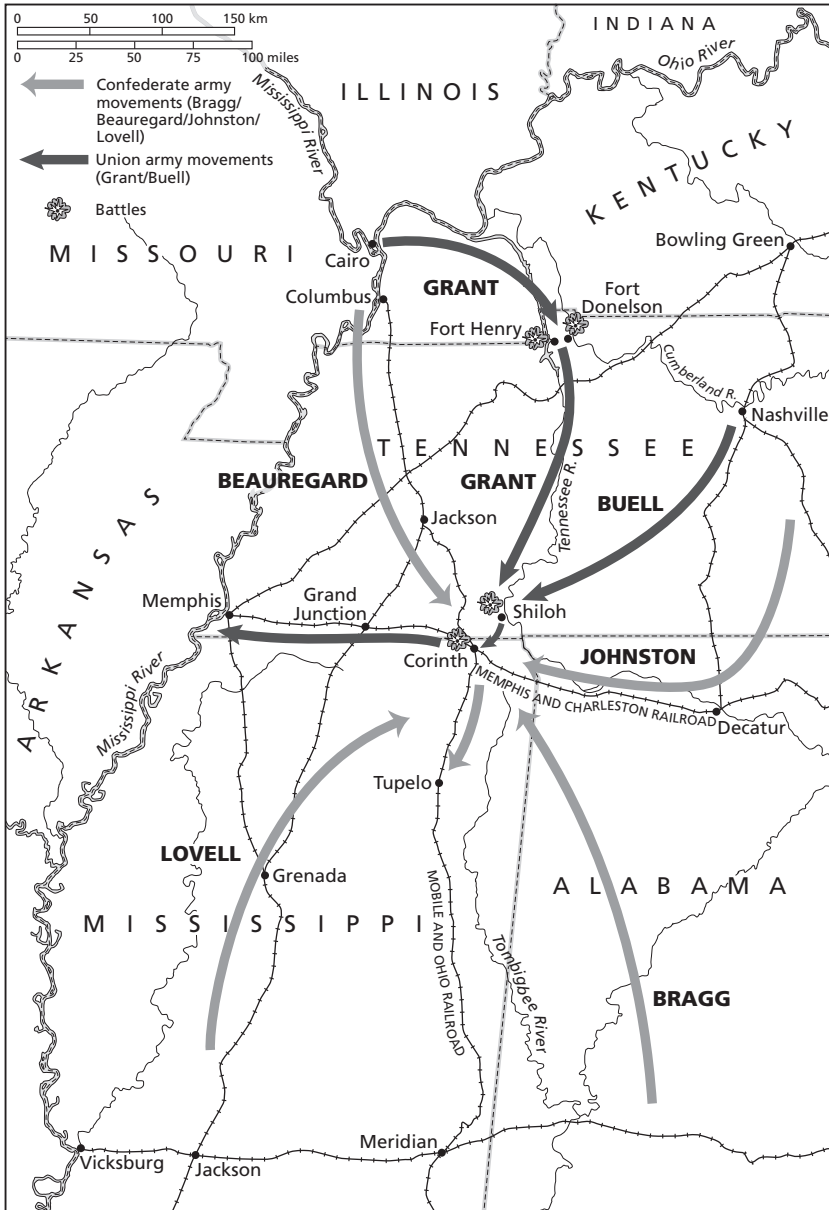
"Where is the proper place to break it?" asked Major General Henry W. Halleck of his officers as they peered at the Confederate line drawn on a map of the western theater. It was a cold December 1861 evening and several officers, including George W. Cullum and William T. Sherman, had gathered to discuss strategy. It was an obvious question that begged to be answered as the men examined the long Confederate defensive line that ran from the Mississippi River to the mountains of eastern Kentucky and Tennessee near the Cumberland Gap. Halleck was one of the main Union generals Abraham Lincoln had tapped to find the best possible route of advance through this enemy defensive line and into the heart of the Confederacy, and he was certainly aware of the enormity of the task.¹

Because of the length of the Confederate line, it would not be easy breaking it, much less maintaining that break and exploiting it. One reason was the split Union command; Henry Halleck and Don Carlos Buell were the two Federal generals who fronted this line. Halleck commanded the Union Department of the Missouri, which was headquartered in St. Louis and was responsible for operations on the river and in its valley and adjoining territory to the east and west. To the east was Buell, who commanded the Department of the Ohio. With headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky, Buell confronted the Bowling Green and Cumberland Gap areas, and President Lincoln was pushing hard for operations against the latter, but from a more political than military desire; Lincoln hoped to aid the vast numbers of Unionists in the East Tennessee mountains. What would be gained politically, however, was very different from what could actually be done on the ground in the mountainous and difficult terrain.²

1 William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman: Written by Himself*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1875), vol. 1 p. 220.

2 For Halleck, see John F. Marszalek, *Commander of All Lincoln's Armies: A Life of General Henry W. Halleck* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); for Buell, see Stephen D. Engle, *Don Carlos Buell: Most Promising of All* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

The Battles of Tennessee, 1862



3.1 Tennessee, 1862. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

Making the task of breaking the Confederate line harder was the fact that the enemy had it defended at the most important points. General Albert Sidney Johnston, commanding Confederate Department Number Two, could not array men in a line of battle for the entire 400-mile length of the expanse from the Mississippi River to the Appalachian Mountains, but he could garrison the most important points along the line and use those as bases for mobile operations against any Union thrust. Therefore, Johnston had garrisons at Columbus on the Mississippi River, at the forts on the twin rivers in west Tennessee, at Bowling Green on the railroad, and out near the Cumberland Gap. At times, there were sizable troop numbers in between these larger garrisons such as at Russellville and Camp Beauregard, Kentucky, but the main defensive efforts came from the stationary locations with earthworks rather than mobile armies moving across the land. Still, the main problem for Johnston was too few troops. None of these locations was adequately manned and long stretches in between had few soldiers. Johnston consequently opted for a game of smoke and mirrors, hoping to convince the Federals that he had more force than he actually had.³

The placement of the Confederate bastions studding the western defensive line was not haphazard. Each of the major garrisons sat on an important transportation byway that led directly into the Confederacy. For example, the Columbus defenses atop the high bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River effectively halted all river traffic. Similarly, Forts Henry, Heiman, and Donelson on the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers in western Tennessee blocked those routes, and the Bowling Green garrison, although sitting on a river, mainly prevented Federal traffic on the important Louisville and Nashville Railroad. The eastern garrisons likewise protected the Cumberland Gap and the paths through the mountains into East Tennessee. Accordingly, while only one railroad moved through the Confederate western defensive line, three major rivers did so, piercing the line and allowing access if opened to penetration deep into the interior of the Confederacy. The dominant concern for Confederate defenders was thus enemy approach by water. Even more disturbing for Johnston, this defensive line was a hollow shell; there was rarely anything behind it for hundreds of miles to act as a second, third, or fourth line of defense. A break in the line would likely prove fatal.⁴

3 For Johnston, see Charles P. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston: Soldier of Three Republics* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1964).

4 For the early Confederate defense, see Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861–1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967).

These rivers and the railroad illustrated the changes the Civil War brought to warfare. Combat was drastically changed with the transportation and communication developments of the Industrial Revolution. Communication was now divorced from physical travel, and thus news was able to be relayed instantaneously across wide expanses. Because of the transportation revolution, mostly the result of the steam engine, travel was also now much faster and more efficient on both land and water. Railroads provided access to interior areas where rivers and dug canals did not go and allowed for heavy loads of troops, supplies, and equipment to be transferred quickly and easily. Because the western theater was more heavily endowed with rivers along the critical Confederate defensive line, the steamboat more importantly allowed quick and decisive movement over long stretches. In fact, these rivers would provide the major pathways into the heart of the Confederacy.⁵

Federal commanders knew they had some advantages when it came to rail and water transportation, including several new ironclad gunboats that were about to enter their service. Halleck and Buell also had the advantage of being able to pick and choose when and where they would strike along the line. The Confederates had some advantages as well, however, including the fact that the Union forces opposing them did not enjoy unity of command and in fact were not willing to work together. Another positive factor for the Confederates was a rickety but able rail network behind much of this thin defensive line that allowed Johnston and his commanders to transfer troops quickly to meet threats. But to take advantage of this railroad, Johnston would have to continue his smoke and mirrors game to be able to concentrate at the needed time and place once the Federals decided where they would strike. It would be a major test of the ability of each side's commanders to see who could probe and react faster.⁶

With so many variables at work, Henry Halleck was open to any advantage he could get, even if that meant moving away from his main objective of opening the Mississippi River and capturing its great valley. Winfield Scott had promoted just such a move in his famed Anaconda Plan, and Halleck's department straddled that river. Yet the Gibraltar at Columbus was not

5 For the Industrial Revolution's effect, see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

6 For the western theater, see Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012) and Steven E. Woodworth, *Decision in the Heartland: The Civil War in the West* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008).

assailable from the river, and even the expected ironclad gunboats would be hard pressed to tackle the bastion given that it sat on 200-foot bluffs and could rain down fire on the unprotected wooden decks of the gunboats. Accordingly, Halleck opened his mind to taking Columbus from the land side, which would obviously negate the problem of the river defenses as well. But doing that on an isolated tactical level would net little more than just Columbus, and the entire process would have to be repeated over and over as the Confederates fell back to additional bastions on the Mississippi River such as Island No. 10, New Madrid, or Fort Pillow. These previously constructed fortifications served as the only real instance of a defense in depth on this mostly hollow defensive shell in the Confederate west.⁷

A much more inviting possibility existed if Halleck was willing to forgo a Mississippi River-centric attitude. A hundred miles or so to the east, the Tennessee River flowed roughly parallel with the Mississippi River. While the Mississippi River had a defense in depth along its stretch in Tennessee, there was nothing south of Forts Henry and Heiman on the Tennessee River that could stop Federal movement by water. Moreover, moving down the Tennessee River all the way into the cotton states would, in addition to frightening much of the Confederacy, place the Federals within a stone's throw, figuratively, of one of the truly important Confederate railroad hubs of the western Confederacy. The trunk line Memphis and Charleston Railroad crossed the trunk line Mobile and Ohio at Corinth, Mississippi, just 20 or so miles inland from the Tennessee River, and the idea of taking that site began to appear in Halleck's communications as early as February 1862. Although the Tennessee River made a great bend to the east at that point away from the Mississippi Valley, that was far enough for the Federals to penetrate southward to flank all the Confederate defensible areas along the Mississippi River.⁸

Opening the Tennessee River to Mississippi and Alabama and taking the Confederate rail hub at Corinth would provide other important dividends as well, such as breaking the Confederate logistical network and forcing it to then rely on the next tier of rail lines far to the south around Jackson and Meridian, Mississippi. Although out of Halleck's department, a strong

7 James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 333–5.

8 United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 7, pp. 661, 672 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).

movement would also turn the Confederate forces in the opposite direction, causing the Bowling Green and East Tennessee garrisons to fall back to the cotton states. No enemy armies could operate on exterior lines of communication with Federal army and navy forces holding a broad river between them. Making it worse for the Confederates facing Buell in Middle and East Tennessee, they could be trapped behind either the Tennessee or Cumberland rivers, both of which turned in a huge bowl to the east. If trapped behind either of these, the Confederate defenders of Middle Tennessee could be run down and destroyed or at the least deprived of crossing points by the Federal navy.⁹

Although Halleck was in command of the Mississippi department, he realized going around Columbus and the other fortifications on that river made sense. He also realized by simply reading a map that he could, once Corinth and Memphis were taken, return to the Mississippi River and its valley for future operations because there was no high ground, due to the existence of the vast Mississippi Delta stretching far inland, available south of Memphis and north of Vicksburg at which the Confederates could again interdict river traffic.¹⁰

Consequently, as Halleck and his commanders were plotting strategy that December 1861 night, he was open to alternatives. His subordinates were thinking the same thing, responding to his question concerning where to break the line with, “*Naturally* the center.” Halleck drew a perpendicular line at the center of the Confederate defenses with a blue pencil, and Sherman marveled how “it coincided nearly with the general course of the Tennessee River.” Halleck informed them, “that’s the true line of operations.”¹¹

While Halleck and company were deciding on the correct approach, other officers likewise recognized the benefits of a movement along the Tennessee River. The first recorded mention of such a plan came from Colonel Charles Whittlesey in November 1861: “will you allow me to suggest the consideration of a great movement by land and water up the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers?” Others chimed in with similar plans, but a pair of unknowns that carried clout because of their positions were also anxiously lobbying for a movement into Tennessee by January 1862. Lieutenant

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ For a geographical analysis of the approaches to Vicksburg, see Warren E. Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days: A Geographer’s View of the Vicksburg Campaign* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2000).

¹¹ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 1, p. 220.

General Ulysses S. Grant arrived at his new command post in civilian dress and had to convince the colonel in charge to defer to him. Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote, for his part, had to beg for flag rank to be on the same level as army general officers. Grant and Foote became kindred spirits and repeatedly asked Halleck to turn them loose against the twin river fortifications.¹²

Halleck was warming to the idea, despite showing disdain for Grant when he arrived in St. Louis to promote the plan. "I was received with so little cordiality that I perhaps stated the object of my visit with less clearness than I might have done," Grant later wrote, "and I had not uttered many sentences before I was cut short as if my plan was preposterous. I returned to Cairo very much crestfallen." Historian John F. Marszalek has noted that "Halleck was, in fact, reacting not to Grant's plan, but to Grant himself." Like all other commanders under orders from Lincoln himself to move by February 22, Halleck became convinced, soon writing that "this line of the Cumberland or Tennessee is the great central line of the Western theater of the war." Word of lowering river stages as well as enemy reinforcements coming from Virginia finally caused Halleck to consent more quickly than he would have liked, telling Grant and Foote to prepare for operations in late January. Grant did so hurriedly but was not completely free of worry until he set sail from Paducah about a recall in early February. Once away from all communication, Grant knew Halleck could no longer call his expedition back.¹³

The result was a splendid array of modern warfare. Thousands of troops assembled into two divisions under Illinois congressman John A. McClernand and former West Point commandant Charles F. Smith. Arrayed on steamboats that lit up the river, the Federals landed near Fort Henry on the Tennessee River. McClernand wrote that "our camp, marked distinctly by its numerous fires, ranging along the crest and down the slopes of lofty hills and in the valley toward the river, together with the many transports and gunboats which had come up and formed the foreground, exhibited a most grand and imposing spectacle." With them were the new ironclads, which would attack on the river while the infantry, artillery, and cavalry descended

¹² OR, 7: 440; United States Navy Department, *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894–1922), series 1, volume 22, p. 391 (hereafter cited as ORN); Timothy B. Smith, *Grant Invades Tennessee: The 1862 Battles for Forts Henry and Donelson* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2016), pp. 35, 37, 52–4.

¹³ U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Webster and Co., 1885), vol. 1, p. 234; Marszalek, *Commander of All Lincoln's Armies*, p. 116; OR, 8: 509.

on the forts. Never before in the Western Hemisphere had ironclad warships attacked a fixed land fortification frontally. This was history in the making and would perhaps also be a death blow to the South.¹⁴

Grant and Foote planned their attack for February 6. The land units marched out of their camps at 11:00 a.m., and the gunboats began their advance some two hours later. Because of recent rainy weather, as well as a huge thunderstorm the night before, the roads on both sides of the river were almost bottomless pits of mud and the army was tardy. The good news was that they were not needed, as Foote's gunboats pounded the fort into submission in a little over an hour. Most of the Confederate garrison from both Forts Henry and Heiman fled eastward to Fort Donelson, leaving only the Confederate commander, Brigadier General Lloyd Tilghman, and a small contingent of artillerymen, all of whom surrendered. It was a major victory, and almost bloodless. A few Confederates perished, and the main casualties on the gunboats came when a shot hit one of the boilers on the USS *Essex*, scalding numerous sailors and pilots.¹⁵

Fort Henry thus fell easily, in fact without the support of land units, which slogged in through the mud later in the day to take possession of Henry and Heiman. The Federals wasted little time exploiting the victory and illustrated just what a hollow shell the Confederate defense was. Halleck ordered, and Foote quickly complied, that naval units move up the Tennessee River, certainly to the critical railroad bridge at Danville and thence as far as they could go beyond that point. Lieutenant Seth L. Phelps led his three timber-clad gunboats up the river immediately after the fort fell and soon reached the mechanical bridge, which was damaged by retreating Confederates. Phelps quickly had it working and moved on through, but the actual major goal was by then accomplished – that of splitting the two wings of the Confederate western defense by cutting the railroad that connected them. Now, a broad river separated the two, with Federal naval units commanding that river. Moreover, as no Confederate defenses existed south of Fort Henry, Phelps roamed all the way into Mississippi and Alabama for the next several days, being stopped only by the shallow water at Muscle Shoals near Florence, Alabama. His trek through the South demonstrated the Union control of the river as well as Federal ability to move troops into that area. Arriving only 20 or so miles from Corinth, Mississippi, and the all-important railroads, Phelps's raid sent shock waves throughout the Confederacy.¹⁶

¹⁴ OR, 7: 127. ¹⁵ Smith, *Grant Invades Tennessee*, pp. 108–28.

¹⁶ For Phelps and the raid, see Jay Slagle, *Ironclad Captain: Seth Ledyard Phelps & the U.S. Navy, 1841–1864* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1996).

The Confederate high command responded to the obvious crisis. Jefferson Davis began to order troops northward from unthreatened garrisons on the Gulf Coast; troops from Braxton Bragg's department at Pensacola and Mobile moved northward as a result of Fort Henry's loss. Likewise, troops from Mansfield Lovell's garrison at New Orleans also moved north. Yet the reinforcements would only go so far northward because the original line was hopelessly shattered. Leonidas Polk at Columbus could not maintain his position with Federal ability to move so far in his rear; talk of evacuating Columbus began as early as February 7. Johnston's forces at Bowling Green and farther eastward, some of which had already been defeated at a minor battle at Mill Springs in January, likewise had to fall back at least to Nashville and perhaps beyond. If the Federals operated on the Cumberland River as they had on the Tennessee, then Nashville was in jeopardy and Johnston had to get his forces south of the Cumberland River before Nashville fell or he would be cut off. Significantly, the only thing standing between the Federals and Nashville was Fort Donelson at Dover.¹⁷

Although all eyes were on a continued movement up the Tennessee River, Grant realized that Fort Donelson had to be neutralized first, threatening Nashville in the process. He had the fort partially invested by February 12, but with more troops and gunboats on the way, Grant slowed down proceedings and began to think in terms of siege operations. Meanwhile, the Confederates played right into Grant's hands. Johnston was more worried about getting his army across the Cumberland River than of keeping Fort Donelson, which was obviously the key to holding Nashville. As a result, he settled for sending a few troops and several mediocre generals to Fort Donelson when the situation actually required firm leadership. As Johnston biographer Charles P. Roland wrote, "There lay the rub; for this defense had to be all or nothing at all." Johnston put the entire garrison in danger with a sloppy command structure of John B. Floyd, Gideon J. Pillow, and Simon B. Buckner. The three could agree on little, but somehow managed to make a coordinated assault on the Union right on February 15 trying to break out. Pillow and Buckner drove the Federals back, fighting McClellan's troops amid the bitter temperatures and snow that had recently fallen, but Lew Wallace's newly organized division stalled the advance. Still, the attack was enough to allow the Confederates to escape along the Forge Road, but Pillow then made a dreadful decision to return to the original lines, which allowed Grant to retake his lost positions and once more hem in the

¹⁷ Smith, *Grant Invades Tennessee*, pp. 129–53.

Confederate army. An attack on the far Union left by Charles F. Smith's division late in the day allowed the Federals to capture some of the outer Confederate defenses, leaving little doubt about what would happen the next day.

Indeed, the Confederate commanders inside Fort Donelson had little choice but to surrender. Floyd and Pillow unceremoniously fled, leaving Buckner to surrender, which he did on February 16 in accordance with Grant's statement that "no terms except unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted." Grant thus captured a Confederate army containing 15,000 men, threatened Nashville even as Johnston was crossing the river, and became a national hero. Other ramifications were that Confederate civilians and politicians were frightened to no end over the possibility of the undefended rivers allowing access to the cotton states, with numerous Alabama and Mississippi citizens showing their concern over the developments. Indeed, concern ranged all the way to Europe as the defeats caused Confederate commissioners in those countries hard times to explain why Britain, France, and Spain should support this new Confederacy after it suffered so significant a defeat.¹⁸

Perhaps the largest results came on the strategic front. Later Union movements captured Clarksville farther up the Cumberland River and then Nashville, although Johnston had by then managed to get his army across and also succeeded in getting them out of the bowl of the Tennessee River. In the meantime, Polk and Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard were withdrawing from Columbus and the reinforcements sent northward from Bragg and Lovell were concentrating as well. The most logical place for concentration was at Corinth, where the two railroads crossed. Johnston, with much urging from Beauregard, soon ordered the army to assemble there and by April Johnston had some 50,000 men in and around the town.¹⁹

The Federals similarly kept their eyes on the important railroad town, quickly shifting their forces from Fort Donelson back to the Tennessee River and thence southward up the river. Halleck continued his belief that the Tennessee River was "the great strategic line of the Western campaign." By this time, however, Grant had been relieved of command of the

18 OR, 7: 124, 161; Smith, *Grant Invades Tennessee*, pp. 351–75; Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, p. 291; James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy*, 2 vols. (Nashville, TN: United States Publishing Company, 1906), vol. 11, pp. 193–4, 197–9, 202–6.

19 Timothy B. Smith, *Shiloh: Conquer or Perish* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2014), pp. 24–37.

expedition because Henry Halleck did not trust him. Halleck was not concerned, because he had gained something he had lobbied hard for: complete command of the western theater. As of March 11, Halleck commanded both Buell and Grant, as well as John Pope's army on the Mississippi River. He soon sent the bulk of his forces southward toward a concentration near Corinth. Grant's Army of the Tennessee moved along the Tennessee River itself to Savannah and Pittsburg Landing, where a reinstated Grant soon joined them, while Buell's Army of the Ohio marched overland from Nashville. Once his armies were concentrated around Savannah, Halleck himself planned to go down and lead the combined force against Corinth and its railroads.²⁰

Both armies accordingly came together in the 20 or so miles of the Corinth to Pittsburg Landing corridor, where all assumed the climactic battle would take place. Halleck noted in March, "There will probably be a big battle somewhere in that vicinity." Indeed, but it would come more quickly and in a different place than almost anyone expected, because Albert Sidney Johnston, P. G. T. Beauregard, and Braxton Bragg had all agreed that it was time to act.²¹

Johnston and company decided to march northward from Corinth and attack Grant's army at Shiloh before Buell's troops could arrive. That way, they would have to fight only one enemy army instead of waiting to face the combined armies of Buell and Grant. Johnston realized that he had concentrated all the available forces he could in the short time he had while Grant's strength would grow almost double within that same period. If the Confederates waited to get more reinforcements from the trans-Mississippi, those reinforcements would be matched and even outnumbered by Buell's arrival and perhaps others. For the Confederates, early April presented the best chance at parity that they likely would ever have, and the gamble had to be taken to defeat one army at a time. Johnston accordingly ordered the Army of the Mississippi to march. His watchword, "conquer or perish."²²

Unfortunately for Johnston, confusion, weather, and the inexperience of both troops and commanders delayed forward movement. Because of the delay, Beauregard wanted to turn around and head back to Corinth, arguing the enemy would be "intrenched to the eyes." Johnston would have none of

20 OR, 10(2): 24, 28–9. 21 OR, 7: 661, 672, 674; OR, 8: 629, 634, 673; OR, 10(1): 566.

22 William Preston Johnston, *The Life of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston: His Service in the Armies of the United States, The Republic of Texas, and the Confederate States* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1879), p. 584.

it and ordered the attack, stating dramatically, "I would fight them if they were a million." But hunger, fatigue, short tempers, and disorganization continued working against the Confederates' chances. Most significantly, no unity of command was evident beyond Johnston's determination to attack. In fact, in the upcoming fight, Johnston told Beauregard to remain in the rear while he went ahead and led from the front. He thus allowed Beauregard, who had been wielding more and more power in recent weeks, to assume more control over the battle than Johnston maintained. The two would work at cross purposes. Nevertheless, by the end of April 5, the corps were aligned in succeeding lines of battle within a mile of the Union camps near Shiloh Church. The attack would take place at dawn, April 6, 1862.²³

Also working against Confederate chances of success was the loss of total surprise. Few Federals expected to fight a major battle that day at that place, so strategically or operationally the Confederates surprised them. But a nervous Union brigade commander, Everett Peabody, sent out a patrol early on April 6 that discovered the Confederate army. Having been warned by his division commander Benjamin Prentiss not to bring on an engagement, Peabody soon faced Prentiss's wrath when the patrol had to fight the lead elements of William Hardee's corps in Fraley Field. Prentiss incorrectly scolded: "You have brought on an attack for which I am unprepared, and I shall hold you responsible." Peabody had not brought on the battle – it was coming anyway. But his patrol provided warning of the assault and allowed the Federal army to the rear to prepare and meet the Confederate advance in line of battle. Peabody's patrol not only began the Battle of Shiloh, but it also began it far in front of the main Union camps.²⁴

Terrain also played a major role in dooming the Confederate advance. The first major Southern attacks came at Shiloh Church, where the valley of Shiloh Branch shielded three brigades of William T. Sherman's division. As the fighting swelled down the line eastward toward the Tennessee River, the land became much more level before turning again to ravines nearer the river. This terrain provided the Confederate attackers much better ground in the center, where Prentiss's division held the line. Without the aid of vast creek bottoms to shield their line, the Federals broke on Prentiss's front, the division going from 5,400 that morning to no more than around 500 organized soldiers at their next line. The Confederates continued to fan out

23 Ibid., p. 569; Alfred Roman, *The Military Operations of General Beauregard in the War between the States, 1861–1865: Including a Brief Personal Sketch of His Services in the War with Mexico, 1846–8*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1883), vol. 1, p. 278.

24 Smith, *Shiloh*, p. 86.

eastward toward the river in an attempt to turn the enemy flank and drive them away from the river and into the swamps to the northwest, but there they again met terrain impediments and the advance slowed. Consequently, the major Confederate success came in the center along the Eastern Corinth Road where they managed to punch through the initial Federal line made up of six brigades of Sherman's and Prentiss's divisions. Prentiss's two brigades were mauled and the camps overrun, allowing the Confederates who had not stopped to plunder the camps to wheel and attack Sherman's left flank near Shiloh Church, driving that division back not by frontal assault but because they were outflanked. Lying dead in the captured camps of Prentiss's division was one of the true heroes of the battle, brigade commander Everett Peabody.²⁵

As the battle shifted out of the creeks and onto the higher ground along the Hamburg–Purdy Road, a second phase of fighting erupted as the Confederate commanders restarted their advance. But it was 11:00 a.m. before they were able to do so, some six hours after the battle had begun. Moreover, it had taken nearly the entire Confederate army to leverage half the Union army out from the creeks and ravines on the southern portion of the battlefield. Now, the rearward Union divisions of John A. McClernand, W. H. L. Wallace, and Stephen A. Hurlbut had taken strong positions, allowing the retreating soldiers of Sherman's and Prentiss's divisions a line on which to rally. It was here that the fighting grew to enormous size all across the battlefield. A fully engaged Confederate army assaulted a fully engaged Union army made up primarily of fresh, veteran divisions that had not been involved before. Accordingly, fighting raged at the famous places such as the Crossroads, Peach Orchard, and Hornet's Nest.²⁶

This second phase saw the heaviest fighting on the western side, where Sherman and McClernand fell back from the Crossroads but then counter-attacked before falling back once more. Still, the net result was the western flank retreating north of Tilghman Branch. At the same time, the eastern flank under Hurlbut also fell back north of Dill Branch amid heavy fighting, the most notable event on this eastern flank being the death of the Confederate commander, Albert Sidney Johnston, who despite the cloud he was under was mourned throughout the South. While the flanks fell back, the center of the Union line held out longer. With a small contingent of Prentiss's troops in action, W. H. L. Wallace held the center with two brigades. He and Prentiss did not fall back with the rest of the army but

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–7. ²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 150–2.

remained in action, prompting the Confederates who had driven back the flanks to now encircle the Hornet's Nest. At the last possible moment, Wallace began to lead his troops to the rear, but he was mortally wounded and left for dead. By that time, the Confederate wings had joined in the rear and Prentiss, now the ranking officer, surrendered with around 2,200 defenders of the Hornet's Nest, mostly Wallace's troops, around 5:30 in the afternoon.²⁷

Veterans of the Hornet's Nest later argued that their stand saved the day and allowed Grant to build a third line of defense, but in actuality Grant was already preparing this line around 2:30 p.m. His plan was to trade space for time, establishing successive lines of battle to force the enemy to attack over and over. Grant realized that if he could make it to nightfall he would survive. Lew Wallace's division would be there by then, although having marched confusedly from Crump's Landing several miles to the north. More importantly, the lead elements of Buell's army would be there too. The hard fighting and successive lines had held throughout the day and delayed the Confederate surge to the point that it was only an hour before sunset when they approached Grant's third and final major line of the day. The exhausted Confederates could not mount a major thrust, especially through the deep ravines shielding the line and with masses of artillery and infantry arrayed on the high ground to the north of the ravines. Gunboats in the river also provided noisy support. Only a few Confederate brigades even attempted to cross Tilghman and Dill branches, and a coordinated assault was not possible. As the sun sank in the west, Grant knew he had survived.²⁸

But he had not won. A lesser commander than Grant would have retreated from this trap, and most of his officers counseled that he do so. Yet Grant retorted, "Retreat? No! I propose to attack at daylight, and whip them." To William T. Sherman he responded, "lick 'em to-morrow, though." With Wallace's division now on the battlefield and Buell's troops being funneled in all night, Grant chose to counterattack and win instead of withdrawing as George McClellan kept doing on the peninsula and Joseph Hooker did at Chancellorsville. It was when Grant decided to stay and fight that he won the battle.²⁹

Preparations in the Union army went forward all night for the attack at daylight, while in the Confederate high command a feeling of accomplishment predominated. Not knowing that Buell had arrived, and not believing the captured Prentiss who told him so, Beauregard assumed all he would

27 Ibid., pp. 153–216. 28 Ibid., pp. 243–7. 29 Ibid.

have to do the next morning was mop up the remnants of Grant's army huddled along the river. In actuality, what the unprepared Confederates faced the next morning was a vicious assault from both Union armies.³⁰

The second day was a reverse of the first. The Federals now negotiated the difficult terrain of Dill and Tilghman branches as they advanced southward at daylight. The unprepared Beauregard was in no position to counter that thrust, however, and he let slip from his grasp a golden opportunity to stall or even halt the Union attack at the most difficult terrain on the battlefield, much as Sherman had done to the initial Confederate attack the day before at Shiloh Branch. Because the Confederates offered little early resistance, however, Buell was able to easily move across and form south of Dill Branch. Similarly, Lew Wallace was able to push aside limited Confederate resistance and traversed Tilghman Branch, with the tired and bloodied remnant of the Army of the Tennessee slowly filling in the space between them.³¹

It was not until the Federals moved onto the high ground south of the initial creeks that Beauregard was able to form a line. He later wrote that the firing "assured me of the junction of his forces, and soon the battle raged with a fury which satisfied me I was attacked by a largely superior force." Consequently, the major fighting of the second day erupted on the same ground where the majority of the first day's fighting had taken place, again with the Peach Orchard, Hornet's Nest, and the Crossroads seeing action like that of the day before.³²

On the Federal left, Buell's divisions of "Bull" Nelson and Thomas L. Crittenden encountered stiff resistance in the Peach Orchard and Wheat Field, even suffering reverses from Confederate counterattacks pushed forward under William J. Hardee's leadership. In fact, Buell made little headway until later in the afternoon. In the center, Alexander M. McCook's division of Buell's army fought the Confederates of John C. Breckinridge's corps in the Hornet's Nest, but again made little headway. It was only on the Federal right where Lew Wallace managed to outflank the Confederate line at Jones Field that success occurred. The Confederates on the left under Braxton Bragg and Leonidas Polk had to fall back to a new line along the Hamburg-Purdy Road, although the right of the line remained in its original position. A second flanking maneuver from Wallace in the same area caused this second line to withdraw, however, and the Confederate army fell back to a more compact third line around Shiloh Church.³³

30 Ibid., pp. 247–51. 31 Ibid., pp. 252–74. 32 OR, 10(1): 387. 33 Smith, *Shiloh*, pp. 329–86.

There, in mid-afternoon, Beauregard ordered a retreat. His men had fought hard for two days and were nearing exhaustion. The few reinforcements he received failed to staunch the advance of so many fresh Union legions. Beauregard wisely withdrew behind Shiloh Branch, leaving a rear guard to contest the valley much as Sherman had done the morning before in the opposite direction. The Federals did not test the final Confederate line and allowed Beauregard to retreat in relative peace. Thus ended the battle, at the expense of some 23,746 official casualties, although the number most certainly was higher. The shock that engulfed both nations at news of such massive casualties was very real; never before had casualties of this magnitude occurred in this war or any prior to it in the Western Hemisphere. Americans had to hearken back to the days of Napoleon to make sense of such carnage. Unfortunately, this was only the beginning.³⁴

After such a frenzied battle, both sides spent the next few weeks reorganizing. Beauregard withdrew to Corinth to protect the railroads, calling in more reinforcements from all across the South. The biggest influx of troops was the trans-Mississippi army under Earl Van Dorn. All had hoped Van Dorn would reach Corinth in time to aid the effort at Shiloh, but the deplorable Confederate transportation system prevented that, and it was only in early May when all of Van Dorn's troops arrived. Similarly, the Federals had to clean their camps, burying the dead and caring for the wounded. An astounded Henry Halleck arrived within days to take over the mess he believed Grant had caused, and he also brought in a third force, John Pope's Army of the Mississippi. As a result, almost all major bodies of troops on both sides in the western theater were congregated in the Shiloh–Corinth vicinity for the long-awaited struggle for the Confederate railroads at Corinth.³⁵

As he prepared to advance, Halleck reorganized his forces. Pope and Buell retained their commands, but he made Grant his second-in-command and gave the Army of the Tennessee to one of Buell's division commanders, George H. Thomas. Halleck also created a reserve corps, in which he stuck many of the political generals such as Lew Wallace and John A. McClelland. The most flagrant change involved Grant, who Halleck considered sloppy and inefficient. He had tried to remove him after Fort Donelson but had not succeeded. With

³⁴ OR, 10(1): 108, 396.

³⁵ For Van Dorn, see Robert G. Hartje, *Van Dorn: The Life and Times of a Confederate General* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967); for Pope, see Peter Cozzens, *General John Pope: A Life for the Nation* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2000).

outright removal out of the question, Halleck did the next best thing: he promoted Grant to a meaningless position and then ignored him.³⁶

Halleck began his move toward Corinth in late April, with the Army of the Mississippi under Pope on the left, Buell's Army of the Ohio in the center, and Thomas's Army of the Tennessee on the right. Each army moved relatively quickly, Halleck himself boasting on May 3, "I leave here [Pittsburg Landing] to-morrow morning, and our army will be before Corinth to-morrow night."³⁷

Pope made the most headway, in fact too much. He temporarily crossed Seven Mile Creek early in May and met some resistance, so he returned on May 8 in force. Some 4 miles from Corinth itself, he was much too close for the Confederates, who planned an elaborate attack to lop off this portion of the forces facing them. Beauregard planned for Bragg to attack frontally west of Seven Mile Creek and Van Dorn's trans-Mississippi command to hit Pope's flank, thereby cutting it off from retreat and eliminating it. The resulting battle at Farmington on May 9 did not develop according to plan, however. Bragg attacked, but Van Dorn was delayed and did not get into the fight. Still, it was a vicious little battle, which Pope survived and then withdrew to safety.³⁸

The fight at Farmington had a dramatic effect on Halleck. Until May 9, he had sent confident messages to Washington with notices of an upcoming fight: "We expect a terrible battle, but our men will fight well, and all are determined to have a victory." After Farmington, he became timid and began to fortify every position he gained, writing "we are gradually advancing on Corinth, but as the enemy is strongly intrenched, and his number equal if not superior to ours, it is necessary to move with great caution." Thus, what many historians describe as Halleck digging his way to Corinth did not, in fact, happen until May 10 when Halleck was within 4 miles of the town. He had covered the original 15 or so miles quickly and aggressively, but because of the fight at Farmington Halleck became anxious and began to move deliberately. The result was a series of slow moves forward by all three Union armies, sparking at times small skirmishes such as at the Russell House and Serratt's Hill. Still, a closer line within several hundred yards of the Confederate defenses was taken by May 28.³⁹

36 For Thomas, see Brian Steel Wills, *George Henry Thomas: As True as Steel* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2012).

37 OR, 10(1): 665.

38 Timothy B. Smith, *Corinth 1862: Siege, Battle, Occupation* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2012), pp. 38–45.

39 OR, 10(1): 665–7; Smith, *Corinth 1862*, pp. 45–81.

Beauregard and his commanders could see what was happening. Halleck was getting close enough to bombard the defenses and Corinth itself with siege guns, which by May 28 he was already emplacing. Beauregard had tried another flanking attack on May 22, but bad weather counteracted it. By late May, Beauregard and his officers talked about evacuating Corinth, which all could see was impossible to hold against so many Federals besieging it. The hope was to save the army though they were losing the place. Elaborate orders went out and quite a lot of trickery took place, such as placing dummy cannon in the fortifications and having troops cheer empty trains that arrived in Corinth to haul away the supplies and sick. Listening and watching, the Federals fell for every ruse. Most important in convincing Halleck and his commanders that they were about to be attacked was a Confederate show of force as the Federals took up their May 28 line. Beauregard sent brigades out to Phillips and Bridge creeks, which shielded the Confederate fortifications on the east, to provide a screen while his army withdrew from the town.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the Confederates removed as much as they could both west toward Memphis and south toward Tupelo. By the night of May 29, after a delay of a day to remove more stores, Beauregard led the army southward, leaving Corinth undefended except by drummers and buglers who were to sound attack noises and stoke campfires to keep tricking the enemy. The Federals braced for an attack but soon realized the ruse and entered Corinth early on May 30. A minor pursuit southward and small skirmishing followed, but the campaign was mostly over. Anti-climactic though it was, Corinth, and its extremely important railroads, were in Federal hands.⁴¹

The capture of Corinth, the capstone to the entire Tennessee River campaign, had larger ramifications than just the capture of the town and its railroads. The social implications were large. The Federals learned how to deal with Confederate civilians throughout the campaign, first after moving into Tennessee to Forts Henry and Donelson and then continuing up the Tennessee River to the cotton states. The culmination came with the long-term occupation of Confederate territory and especially cities such as Corinth, which remained under Federal control until voluntarily given up in January 1864. The occupation provided many avenues of change for civilians and soldiers alike, but perhaps the most substantial was the emphasis on introducing former slaves to freedom; the Corinth contraband camp was

⁴⁰ Smith, *Corinth 1862*, pp. 63–81. ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 82–100.

a model endeavor, and out of it even came several African American military units.⁴²

Obviously, however, the military effects were most noteworthy. The campaign fit importantly within the larger Mississippi Valley operations. As everyone realized, Corinth's capture outflanked Memphis, which fell to Union gunboats on June 6, less than a week after Corinth was evacuated. Halleck soon sent troops back to the river at Memphis as well as eastward toward Chattanooga, implementing the Jominian theory of capturing and holding territory. Such movement brought the main Union effort back to the river itself and allowed easy Federal movement over the next few months all the way down to Vicksburg, the first high ground south of Memphis that the Confederates could defend. Ironically, then, the capture of Corinth, which was not even on the river or on one of its tributaries, unlocked access to vast stretches of the Mississippi River and its valley.⁴³

While the February to May 1862 Tennessee River campaign took place far from the Mississippi Valley, it was enormously effective in gaining control over that western region. It netted huge amounts of Confederate territory for the Union, broke the back of Confederate defense in the west, crippled the Confederate western logistical network, opened the vast majority of the Mississippi River itself, made Grant a hero, and fostered a winning attitude among Union supporters. While not commonly seen as a united campaign, the three efforts at Forts Henry and Donelson, Shiloh, and Corinth were one Tennessee River campaign, which was a major stepping stone to eventual possession of the Mississippi River and its great valley. One would be hard pressed to find a more important single campaign in the entire war, perhaps with the exception of the nine-month Vicksburg campaign. And that campaign's capture of the Mississippi River sat squarely on the Tennessee River campaign's shoulders.⁴⁴

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The Battles of the Trans-Mississippi, 1861–1863

WILLIAM L. SHEA

Several important military operations took place in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, and the Indian Territory (Oklahoma) during the first two years of the Civil War. Historians sometimes dismiss the struggle in the trans-Mississippi as a sideshow having little to do with the “real war” east of the Mississippi River, but in fact it was an integral and often significant part of the larger conflict. Operations in the trans-Mississippi usually were smaller in scale than those in other theaters, but they shaped the course of events on both sides of the Great River.

The trans-Mississippi was a tough place to fight a war. Much of Arkansas and Missouri was only a generation removed from the frontier, and most of Kansas and the Indian Territory was still occupied by nomadic Indians and herds of bison. Distances were vast, roads were primitive, and bridges were rare. Railroads were short and limited to the more settled parts of Missouri. Violent weather was a threat in any season. Terrain was difficult and sometimes impassable. Civil War armies routinely marched across eastern states, gobbling up hams and haystacks as they went, but the rocky highlands, soggy bottomlands, endless prairies, and scattered towns and farms west of the Mississippi River provided far less sustenance for man and beast. Nowhere else in the United States, as it then existed, did geography have so great an impact on military operations, and nowhere else was logistics so often the difference between success and failure. A team and wagon were nearly as valuable as an artillery piece.

The flashpoint for military operations west of the Mississippi was Missouri, the oldest and most populous state in the region and home to the bustling commercial and manufacturing center of St. Louis. The political and military situation in Missouri during the opening months of the Civil War was highly fluid and not a little confusing. Missouri was a slave state, but only a small percentage of the population owned slaves or advocated secession. The vast

The Battles of the Trans-Mississippi, 1861–1863



4.1 The trans-Mississippi Theater, 1861–1863. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

majority of Missourians were opposed or at least indifferent to slavery and had no desire to become part of another country. But while secessionists were outnumbered, they had the initial advantage of dominating the state government.

Governor Claiborne F. Jackson was determined to lead Missouri out of the Union and into the Confederacy, by political means if possible, by force of arms if necessary. His chief ally was Sterling Price, commander of Missouri's new secessionist militia. Price was a popular politician but a mediocre soldier and his state guard was deficient in training, discipline, arms, equipment, and logistical support. Nevertheless, it provided Jackson with a paramilitary force at the outset of hostilities.

In February 1861 Jackson called a special convention to consider secession, but the delegates declined to take any action. Jackson then ordered part of the state guard to assemble outside St. Louis at a place soon to be called Camp Jackson. The governor intended to seize the US arsenal in the city, but he underestimated his opponents. Brigadier General Nathaniel Lyon, Union military commander in St. Louis, was a zealous nationalist determined to keep Missouri in the United States no matter the cost. With the help of local political leaders and the support of the Lincoln administration, Lyon assembled a force of 8,000 men, a mix of US Army regulars, ninety-day regiments from neighboring states, and Unionist volunteers from the German immigrant population in St. Louis.

While Jackson waited, Lyon acted. On May 10 he captured the militiamen at Camp Jackson without firing a shot and marched them to the arsenal. A secessionist-led riot erupted while the column made its way through the congested streets of St. Louis and more than 100 civilians and soldiers were killed or injured. This event, dubbed by secessionists the "Camp Jackson Massacre," hardened attitudes on both sides.

A month later Lyon launched an ambitious campaign to crush secessionism throughout Missouri. The Army of the West, as Lyon styled his military force, spread out from St. Louis and occupied nearly every important town in Missouri, including the state capital of Jefferson City. Lyon's complex operation was the first true military offensive of the Civil War, and the first to incorporate steamboats and railroads as primary movers of men and materiel.

Price put up only feeble resistance. After a nearly bloodless skirmish at Boonville on June 17 and a more serious clash near Carthage on July 5, he abandoned the Missouri Valley and fled into the southwest corner of the state. Lyon followed but once he turned away from the river and the rails, he had to rely on teams and wagons for logistical support. Nevertheless, the Federals reached Springfield in mid-July. After advancing an astonishing 260 miles, much of it atop the rugged and inhospitable Ozark Plateau, Lyon was on the verge of an improbable triumph.

Price fell back toward the Arkansas state line. In desperation he appealed to Brigadier General Benjamin McCulloch for help. McCulloch commanded a force of 8,700 Confederates in northwest Arkansas called the Western Army. He recognized that the state guard was a buffer between Union and Confederate forces in the trans-Mississippi. So long as Price remained in the field in Missouri, Lyon posed no immediate threat to McCulloch in Arkansas. The distant Confederate government recognized that as well and authorized McCulloch to use his own judgment as to what course of action he should follow.

McCulloch concluded that he could best protect Arkansas and the adjacent Indian Territory by sustaining the secessionist cause in Missouri. In early August he led his Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas troops across the state line and joined forces with Price. Price was so relieved he placed himself and the state guard under McCulloch's command for the duration of the emergency. McCulloch proposed an immediate counterstroke, a move Price endorsed. The combined Confederate and state guard armies, 12,100 strong, moved to Wilson's Creek, just south of Springfield, and prepared to attack.

Unknown to the Confederates, the Army of the West in Springfield had serious problems. The Federals had outmarched their supplies. Uniforms and shoes were in tatters, men and animals were malnourished, and disease was rampant. If all that were not bad enough, the army was about to melt away. Demoralized by the rigors of the campaign, the ninety-day volunteers from Illinois, Iowa, and Kansas announced their intention to depart when their enlistments expired. Lyon should have fallen back to the railhead at Rolla and resumed offensive operations at a later date, but he refused to consider even a temporary withdrawal.

At this critical moment President Abraham Lincoln appointed a new overall military commander in Missouri, Major General John C. Frémont. A worse choice for such an important assignment can hardly be imagined. Frémont had been the Republican Party presidential candidate in 1856, but his political connections failed to make up for his incompetence as a military leader. Vain and self-absorbed, he was indifferent to the fate of the Army of the West because he viewed Lyon as a competitor for military glory.

Lyon, meanwhile, decided to strike the Confederates before his army shrank any further. He did not expect to win a decisive victory with only 5,300 men but hoped to rock the Confederates back on their heels and buy time. At the last moment Major General Franz Sigel, Lyon's principal subordinate, proposed to lead 1,100 men around the Confederate right flank while the rest of the Union army, roughly 4,200 men, attacked the

Confederate center. Sigel argued that the Confederates might break and run if they were caught in a pincers at the crack of dawn. Lyon grasped at this straw even though it meant dividing his already outnumbered force.

Once again Lyon got the jump on his opponents. The Army of the West approached the Confederate encampment at dawn on August 10, 1861 and went into action. Lyon attacked from north to south on both sides of Wilson's Creek. McCulloch was indeed surprised, as Lyon had hoped, but he responded quickly and brought the Union advance to a halt. Meanwhile, Sigel attacked from the southeast. His small detachment gained ground at first, but McCulloch rushed troops to the scene and drove the Federals away in disorder. Sigel panicked, abandoned Lyon, and fled to Springfield.

The struggle degenerated into a stand-up fight between Lyon's main body and Price's state guard west of Wilson's Creek. As the August sun rose and the temperature soared, opposing lines of infantry and artillery swayed back and forth across an elevated expanse of rolling countryside known forever after as Bloody Hill. The outnumbered Federals could not hope to win such an uneven contest, but Lyon refused to withdraw. He was killed rallying his troops. By late morning both sides were exhausted and down to their last bullets. When the state guard fell back in search of ammunition, the Federals slipped away to Springfield.

Wilson's Creek was the second major battle of the Civil War, following First Manassas in Virginia on July 21, and the first in the West. By any measure it was a costly affair. Six hours of fighting resulted in 1,317 Union and 1,222 Confederate casualties (758 Missouri State Guard and 464 Western Army). The total of 2,539 killed, wounded, and missing represented roughly 15 percent of all the troops engaged, a heavier toll than anyone had expected. Losses in the smaller Union army came to nearly 25 percent. Because First Manassas was larger and took place outside Washington it has received more attention from journalists and historians, but Wilson's Creek was the more intense fight.

The Confederate tactical victory had only a modest impact on the strategic situation in Missouri. The Federals withdrew to Rolla and the Confederates reoccupied Springfield, but little else changed except for a temporary shift in momentum. Price urged McCulloch to lead the combined armies north to the Missouri River, but McCulloch refused because he could not sustain the Western Army so far from its supply base at Fort Smith, Arkansas. McCulloch also was wary of moving into an area where the Federals had steamboats and railroads at their disposal. Finally, McCulloch wanted nothing more to do

with the pompous and posturing Price, whom he had come to dislike and distrust. McCulloch returned to Arkansas to await developments.

Price defiantly set out alone. On September 20 he captured a small Union garrison at Lexington on the south bank of the Missouri River. The victory rattled Unionists and produced a surge of volunteers for the state guard, but Price had little time to celebrate. As McCulloch had foreseen, Union forces closed in on Lexington by river and rail and sent Price scuttling back to Springfield. Nearly all of the new volunteers returned home within a few weeks. The Lexington affair generated headlines but little else.

Frémont now entered the fray himself. He assembled a sizable Union force and reached Springfield on October 27. Price again fell back toward the Arkansas state line and called on McCulloch for help. McCulloch again led the Western Army into Missouri. What might have happened next is anybody's guess because the Union offensive screeched to a halt in early November when President Lincoln relieved Frémont from command. Frémont's failure to support Lyon and his dubious financial machinations in St. Louis contributed to his undoing, but his proclamation on August 30 declaring martial law in Missouri and emancipating slaves owned by secessionists was the fatal misstep. Not only did Frémont exceed his authority, but he also upset a delicate political applecart. Lincoln had avoided taking any action against slavery that might push the so-called Border States (the slave states of Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware) into the arms of the Confederacy. He disavowed Frémont's proclamation and dismissed its author. Lincoln was right to remove the inept Frémont, but the decision to remove him in mid-campaign was another blunder. The Federals withdrew from Springfield for a second time and returned to Rolla. Price reoccupied the town while McCulloch resumed his vigil in Arkansas.

Cold weather was fast approaching and Price placed the state guard in winter camps around Springfield. He constructed no defenses because he did not anticipate any more military activity until spring. Meanwhile, Governor Jackson had a final moment of relevance. In November a secessionist rump of the Missouri state legislature met in Neosho and passed an ordinance of secession. The highly dubious proceeding satisfied the Richmond government, which welcomed Missouri to the Confederacy, but it had no effect on the course of events in the trans-Mississippi. In reality, most of Missouri and most Missourians remained in the United States.

Lincoln's selection of Frémont to direct the war in the trans-Mississippi had been a mistake, but his choice of Frémont's successor was inspired. Major

General Henry W. Halleck was an able administrator and strategist who transformed the Union war effort in the trans-Mississippi. Halleck recognized that every Union soldier in Missouri standing on the defensive against Price was one less soldier available for upcoming offensive operations on the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Mississippi rivers. He believed Price had to be neutralized before the spring campaigning season began. And so on December 25, 1861, Halleck placed Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis in command of the newly organized Army of the Southwest, a force of roughly 12,000 men, and directed him to destroy Price's army or drive it out of Missouri. "We must have no failure in this movement against Price," he warned Curtis. "It must be the last."¹

Curtis proved to be the most successful Union general in the trans-Mississippi and one of the most successful in the entire war. He was a West Point graduate who had prospered in civilian life as an engineer, attorney, and politician. Curtis understood that his troops would have to travel light and forage vigorously if they were to carry out a successful campaign atop the Ozark Plateau in winter. On January 3, 1862, after a week of frantic preparations, the Army of the Southwest set out from Rolla. For the next six weeks the Federals inched their way toward Springfield despite appalling weather.

Price was flabbergasted when a Union army appeared before Springfield in the dead of winter. For the third time in six months he called on McCulloch for help, but McCulloch was in Richmond and the Western Army was under orders to remain in Arkansas. If McCulloch would not or could not join him in Missouri, Price saw no option but to join McCulloch in Arkansas. On February 13 the state guard abandoned Springfield for the third and last time and fled south in a condition bordering on panic.

Curtis understood that the primary objective of his campaign was the neutralization of the state guard, not the occupation of territory. After taking possession of Springfield, he followed after Price, determined to bring him to battle. For four days the two armies hurried south on Telegraph (Wire) Road, a primitive highway that connected the major towns in southwest Missouri and northwest Arkansas. This was the only sustained pursuit of one army by another in the Civil War. The men and animals of the state guard had been cooped up in winter camps for weeks and were unprepared for a forced march in such dreadful conditions. "I felt like I was dying, I was so chilled,"

1 United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 8, p. 506 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).

recalled a state guardsman. “The snow was all over us, and our clothes frozen on our bodies.”² Dead horses and mules, abandoned wagons, and cast-off weapons and equipment lined the roadside. Straggling was epidemic and the Federals collected more frostbitten prisoners than they knew what to do with.

The hard-pressed state guard tumbled into Arkansas on February 16, 1862, and joined forces with the Western Army. The next day the Confederates checked the pursuing Federals in a sharp rear-guard action 6 miles south of the state line at Little Sugar Creek. The respite allowed the combined armies to fall back to Cross Hollows, a large cantonment several miles farther south. Price hoped to rest his weary men and animals, but McCulloch returned from Richmond at precisely this time and advised Price that Cross Hollows was indefensible. The combined armies continued south until they reached the safety of the Boston Mountains, the rugged southern edge of the Ozark Plateau. On February 24 the long retreat finally ground to a halt 120 miles south of Springfield.

The Army of the Southwest crossed the state line on February 17, one day behind the state guard. Curtis informed Halleck that “The flag of our Union again floats in Arkansas.”³ Following the skirmish at Little Sugar Creek, Curtis stopped to rest his command and consider his options. The campaign was a resounding success but Curtis was 220 miles south of Rolla and his supply line was at the breaking point. Moreover, he now faced the same combined force that had overwhelmed Lyon six months earlier at Wilson’s Creek. After leaving garrisons in Springfield and other points along Telegraph Road, the Army of the Southwest was down to 10,500 men.

Despite the unpromising situation, Curtis chose to stand his ground in northwest Arkansas. He had driven Price out of Missouri and had no intention of letting him back in. Steep bluffs run along the north side of Little Sugar Creek and form the southern escarpment of a tableland called Pea Ridge. Curtis thought the bluffs would make an excellent defensive position should the Confederates turn on him. Curtis then divided his army to facilitate foraging. He led half of his force south to Cross Hollows while Franz Sigel, his second-in-command, took the other half to McKissick’s Creek west of Bentonville. In an emergency the Union army would reunite atop the bluffs. If Price tried to return to Missouri, he would have to go through Curtis.

2 Samuel J. McDaniel Memoir, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

3 Samuel R. Curtis to Henry W. Halleck, February 16, 1862, Letters sent from Headquarters of the Army of the Southwest, RG 393, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

"Shall be on the alert, holding as securely as possible," Curtis assured Halleck.⁴

The deteriorating military situation in the trans-Mississippi caused President Davis to make a change at the top. Despite plenty of evidence to the contrary, Davis believed a West Point education was an essential qualification for high command. Neither McCulloch nor Price met that standard, so Davis placed Major General Earl Van Dorn in overall command of the trans-Mississippi. Davis made many poor personnel decisions and this was one of his worst. Van Dorn was out of his depth as an army commander. Moreover, his selection did nothing to resolve the animosity between McCulloch and Price, who no longer were on speaking terms. The inability of Confederate generals to put aside personal differences and work in harmony was a recurring theme in the trans-Mississippi.

Upon arriving in the Boston Mountains on March 2, Van Dorn announced that the Army of the West, as he styled the combined armies, would launch an immediate counteroffensive. He turned McCulloch's Western Army into McCulloch's division and Price's state guard into Price's division but made no other changes. Van Dorn did not take the time to familiarize himself with the quite different generals and armies awkwardly joined together under his command, nor did he pause to consider the geography of the Ozark Plateau and its potential impact on military operations. At the last moment he ordered Brigadier General Albert Pike in the adjacent Indian Territory to mobilize his Confederate Indian forces and join in the advance. Pike complied but the Indians played only a marginal role in the coming operation.

Van Dorn's plan was simple. He would defeat the Federals in detail by relying on speed and surprise. The Army of the West would hurry north to Bentonville, turn west and crush Sigel at McKissick's Creek, then turn back to the east and do the same to Curtis at Cross Hollows. The Federals would cooperate in their own destruction by conveniently remaining blind and inert. With the Union army out of the way, the victorious Confederates would press on into Missouri. "I must have St. Louis – then huzzah!" crowed Van Dorn.⁵ He did not anticipate any difficulties so he did not plan for any contingencies.

The Confederate counteroffensive began on March 4. The Army of the West, 16,000 strong, was the largest Confederate force ever assembled west of the Mississippi River. Van Dorn had a three to two advantage in

⁴ OR, 8: 589.

⁵ Emily Van Dorn Miller (ed.), *A Soldier's Honor, with Reminiscences of Major General Earl Van Dorn* (New York, 1902), pp. 62–3.

manpower and a four to three advantage in artillery over Curtis. The march north started off well enough but within a few hours a late winter storm buried the column in snow and sleet. Van Dorn had marched without a supply train to ensure a rapid advance and now his men and animals suffered terribly without tents, bedding, cooking equipment, and additional food and forage. Progress slowed to a crawl and surprise was lost. Arkansas Unionists (of whom there were many) made their way to Cross Hollows and informed Curtis of the Confederate advance. Curtis ordered his forces to concentrate as planned. The Federals moved quickly despite the miserable conditions and gathered atop the Little Sugar Creek bluffs on March 5–6. They set to work clearing fields of fire and constructing rifle pits and artillery redoubts.

When night fell on March 6 Van Dorn was in Bentonville. He realized that his attempt to surprise and defeat the Federals in detail had failed. An assault on the Little Sugar Creek fortifications was out of the question, and a return to the Boston Mountains seemed the only reasonable course of action. Then Van Dorn learned of an obscure lane that meandered around the right flank of the Union fortifications. He impulsively decided to make a night march and take the Federals in the rear. McCulloch and Price urged Van Dorn to let the weary men and animals rest for a few hours, but he insisted on marching at once. Progress was slow and hundreds of men fell out of the ranks. At sunrise on March 7 the Army of the West finally reached Telegraph Road 4 miles north of the Union fortifications. Exhilarated by the success of his flanking movement and oblivious to the condition of his command, Van Dorn turned south to strike the Federals from behind.

Curtis learned of the Confederate flanking movement and initiated a 180-degree change of front, that is, he turned his army around. Front-line infantry, artillery, and cavalry units changed places with rear area medical, commissary, and quartermaster units. By mid-afternoon the Army of the Southwest faced north instead of south. This audacious maneuver was unique in American military history and was the key to Union victory. The “armed mobs” that fought at First Manassas and Wilson’s Creek the previous summer could not have carried out such a complex movement, but by the beginning of 1862 the volunteer armies of the Civil War were evolving into efficient military organizations. Citizens were becoming soldiers. Curtis was a beneficiary of this development.

The fighting on March 7 consisted of two separate engagements on the broad tableland of Pea Ridge. Leetown, 2 miles west of Telegraph Road, was a clash between McCulloch’s division and a Federal force co-commanded by

Colonel Peter J. Osterhaus and Colonel Jefferson C. Davis. McCulloch blundered into a Union skirmish line and was killed. The next two officers in the Confederate chain of command were killed or captured shortly afterward. In military parlance, McCulloch's division was "decapitated." Some Confederates made unsupported attacks that came to naught, but most milled around for hours awaiting orders that never came. All were so tired they could hardly think straight. The sporadic fighting ended at sunset when the leaderless fragments of McCulloch's division withdrew in disorder.

The much larger clash at Elkhorn Tavern was a different story. Van Dorn, Price, and the state guard advanced south on Telegraph Road expecting to wreak havoc in the Federal rear. Instead, they collided with a blocking force led by Colonel Eugene A. Carr. The Federals occupied the northern escarpment of Pea Ridge and kept the Confederates at bay for hours. Late in the afternoon Price finally reached the high ground near the tavern and Carr fell back. A breakthrough seemed possible and Price sent his state guard forward, but the attackers were mowed down by massed artillery. Fighting sputtered out as darkness fell.

During the bitterly cold night of March 7–8 Curtis reinforced Carr with every available man from Leetown and Little Sugar Creek. He made certain his troops had food, water, ammunition, blankets, and an opportunity to rest. Thanks to Van Dorn, the exhausted Confederates were without food or shelter and their reserve ammunition train was nowhere to be found.

The next morning, March 8, Curtis commenced the largest artillery bombardment of the Civil War up to that time. Union gunners fired more than 3,600 rounds in the space of two hours. "It was a continual thunder, and a fellow might have believed that the day of judgement had come," observed an Iowa soldier.⁶ The Confederate line disintegrated as dazed, wounded, and terrified men made their way to the rear. Curtis then ordered his infantry to advance in what he described as the "most terribly magnificent sight that can be imagined."⁷ Van Dorn rode off while the battle still raged and left his men to fend for themselves. By noon the Confederates were gone and Curtis rode among his troops shouting "Victory! Victory!"

Pea Ridge cost the Federals 1,384 casualties, 13 percent of the 10,250 troops engaged. Confederate casualties are less certain because Van Dorn falsified reports to mask the magnitude of his defeat. The Army of the West suffered serious attrition en route to Pea Ridge. Perhaps only 12,000 to 13,000 of the

6 "Union" letter in *Daily Democrat and News* [Davenport, IA], April 2, 1862.

7 Samuel R. Curtis to Henry B. Curtis, March 13, 1862, Samuel R. Curtis Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

original 16,000 Confederates took part in the battle, and up to 2,000 of these were killed, wounded, or captured, a probable casualty rate close to 15 percent.

The chaotic Confederate retreat was nearly as costly as the battle. During the week-long odyssey discipline broke down and thousands of weary, famished troops wandered away in search of food or simply went home. Most deserters were Arkansans and Indians who had little attachment to the Confederacy and who seemed content to sit out the war. The bedraggled column that reached the Arkansas River in mid-March was only a shadow of the impressive army that had opened the campaign.

Van Dorn refused to acknowledge that he had lost the battle. “I was not defeated, but only foiled in my intentions,” he insisted to anyone who would listen.⁸ He soon received orders to move his entire force to Corinth, Mississippi, to join a concentration of all Confederate armies west of the Appalachian Mountains. The purpose of this grand design was to overwhelm Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant’s army camped at Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River. Anxious to redeem himself, Van Dorn hastened eastward but reached Corinth too late to participate in the Battle of Shiloh on April 6–7, 1862.

When Curtis learned that Van Dorn had taken his army across the Mississippi River, he invaded Arkansas in earnest. The Army of the Southwest reached Batesville in the north-central part of the state, lunged toward Little Rock, then turned southeast toward Helena. Faced with an impossible logistical situation, Curtis decided to sever his supply line with Rolla and live off the land. He was the first Union general to take such a radical step. Grant’s celebrated sweep around Vicksburg was nearly a year in the future, and Major General William T. Sherman’s epic march across Georgia was more than two years ahead.

Curtis seems not to have envisaged his march across the vast alluvial plain of eastern Arkansas (the “Delta”) as a form of strategic economic warfare, at least not initially, but it certainly had that effect. Union troops foraged and pillaged on an unprecedented scale and consumed or wrecked nearly everything of military or commercial value. Curtis attempted to have his men distinguish between loyal and disloyal citizens and take only what they needed, but that proved unworkable. He then insisted that his men issue receipts for the property they confiscated or destroyed, but a slip of paper must have been cold comfort for anyone victimized by foraging parties.

8 OR, 8: 791.

The Federals spared dwellings but burned mills and seized crops, livestock, wagons, tools, and, sometimes, personal possessions. "Desolation, horrid to contemplate, marks every section of the country through which the army has passed," wrote an Illinois soldier.⁹ He did not exaggerate. Arkansas was among the first Confederate states to experience hard war.

The passage of the Union army also sounded the death knell for slavery. The First Confiscation Act, established in August 1861, permitted Federal troops to seize the property (including slaves) of persons who served in or supported the Confederate military. Curtis ignored the finer points of the law and engaged in widespread emancipation on his own authority and according to his own rationale. Deep in hostile territory and out of contact with his superiors for many weeks, Curtis was effectively a free agent. "I give captured slaves their freedom on the ground that they became captured captives and therefore subject to my disposal," he scribbled in his private journal.¹⁰ It was the only explanation he ever offered. The Federals commandeered printing presses in every town and cranked out stacks of official-looking emancipation forms. When the army moved on, thousands of liberated men, women, and children gathered up their meager possessions and followed, "freedom papers" in hand. Curtis never expressed abolitionist sentiments, yet he carried out one of the earliest and largest instances of military emancipation in the Civil War.

A makeshift Confederate force tried but failed to stop the Federals at Cache River on July 7. Five days later the long, dusty column of soldiers and freedmen reached Helena on the west bank of the Mississippi River. After establishing a waterborne supply line with St. Louis and setting up camps for the freedmen, Curtis called Halleck's attention to the fact that the Army of the Southwest, smallest and westernmost of all the Union armies, was "farthest south."

The occupation of Helena brought to a close the longest and most successful Union operation of the Civil War up to that time, and by far the most important campaign ever carried out in the trans-Mississippi. During the first half of 1862 the Army of the Southwest marched more than 700 miles from Rolla to Helena, crossed some of the most difficult terrain in the United States, won a major battle against imposing odds, demonstrated that an army could sustain itself in hostile territory, and carried out military emancipation on an unprecedented scale.

⁹ F.O.W. letter in *Beacon* [Aurora, IL], June 12, 1862.

¹⁰ May 26, 1862 entry in Samuel R. Curtis Journal, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

When Van Dorn led the Army of the West to the east side of the Mississippi River he effectively abandoned Arkansas, Missouri, and the Indian Territory. Without informing the Confederate government, Van Dorn carried away nearly everything of military value: men, animals, arms, ammunition, stores, equipment, and machinery. Outraged political leaders complained to General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, the ranking officer west of the Appalachians. Beauregard dispatched Major General Thomas C. Hindman to rectify the situation. Beauregard must have considered Hindman to be a one-man army because he did not provide him with a single soldier. Nevertheless, he chose well. Hindman was one of the most dynamic Confederate commanders ever to serve in the trans-Mississippi.

Hindman reached Little Rock on May 31, 1862, and announced that “I have come here to drive out the invader or to perish in the attempt.”¹¹ That was no rhetorical flourish; Hindman meant it. Acting on his own authority, he declared martial law, ignored ineffectual state and local governments, fixed prices, subsidized manufacturing, and generally brought order out of chaos. He rigorously enforced the Conscription Act, which dragged thousands of unwilling citizens into military service, and implemented the Partisan Ranger Act, which established home guard companies for local defense. In less than seventy days Hindman raised, armed, and equipped an army from scratch and established a rudimentary logistical base in the least populous and least developed part of the Confederacy. It was an extraordinary achievement.

President Davis, however, was disturbed as much by Hindman’s lack of a West Point education as he was by Hindman’s unorthodox and sometimes extralegal methods. Having learned nothing from the Van Dorn fiasco, Davis again selected a West Pointer to oversee the trans-Mississippi and keep Hindman in his place. It was another poor decision.

Lieutenant General Theophilus H. Holmes was weak and indecisive, hardly the man to reverse declining Confederate fortunes west of the Mississippi, but when he reached Little Rock on August 11 and saw what Hindman had accomplished, he established a working arrangement with his strong-willed subordinate. While Holmes stayed in the capital city and dealt with political and administrative matters, Hindman went to Fort Smith and took command of the new Trans-Mississippi Army. Hindman wanted to reestablish a Confederate presence in Missouri before the onset of winter. Holmes did not think the embryonic army was ready for an offensive but in typical Holmesian fashion he allowed Hindman to

¹¹ *OR*, 13: 830.

proceed. Hindman led his command north across the Boston Mountains and reoccupied northwest Arkansas and northeast Indian Territory. He then edged across the state line into southwest Missouri and paused to see how the Federals would react.

Curtis, now a major general, was the new Union commander in St. Louis, Halleck having been called to Washington. He responded aggressively to reports of renewed Confederate activity in southwest Missouri. He instructed Brigadier General John M. Schofield to assemble a new force, the Army of the Frontier, and drive the Confederates away. During the fall of 1862 Schofield and Hindman maneuvered back and forth atop the Ozark Plateau. Small battles flared at Newtonia in Missouri, Old Fort Wayne in the Indian Territory, and White River and Cane Hill in Arkansas. The last, on November 28, was a running fight in the Boston Mountains that drove the Confederates back to Fort Smith. Hindman's premature effort to effect a lodgement in Missouri had failed, just as Holmes had anticipated.

With winter closing in, an ailing Schofield left one division at Cane Hill in northwest Arkansas to keep an eye on the Confederates at Fort Smith. He led the other two divisions back to Wilson's Creek near Springfield to ease the logistical situation. Schofield then traveled to St. Louis for medical treatment. Command of the Army of the Frontier passed to Brigadier General James G. Blunt at Cane Hill, while Brigadier General Francis J. Herron assumed control of the force at Wilson's Creek.

Neither Blunt nor Herron seemed to notice that the Union divisions at Cane Hill and Wilson's Creek were more than 100 miles apart, while only 35 miles separated the division at Cane Hill from the Confederate army at Fort Smith. But Hindman noticed and acted to take advantage of this golden opportunity. In early December the Trans-Mississippi Army set out for Cane Hill in the Boston Mountains. Hindman planned to pass around Blunt's left, then turn sharply and move into his rear, cutting off any possibility of escape. Progress was slow on the winding mountain roads and the Federals detected the approaching Confederates with time to spare.

But instead of falling back, the only sensible move, Blunt unaccountably chose to stand his ground. "I do not intend to leave this position without a fight," he growled.¹² Blunt called on Herron for support and Herron responded with alacrity. He led his two divisions south on Telegraph Road at an extraordinary pace, more than 110 miles in three days on a primitive road in freezing conditions. It was the most remarkable forced march of the

¹² OR, 22(1): 805.

war and it wrecked Hindman's plans. On Sunday, December 7, 1862, Herron's column collided with the Trans-Mississippi Army 7 miles northeast of Cane Hill. Forced to stop and confront this unexpected threat, Hindman abandoned his attempt to trap Blunt at Cane Hill. Instead, he established a strong defensive position on a broad hill called Prairie Grove and awaited Herron's approach. The initiative now rested with the Federals.

Surprised but undeterred at finding the Trans-Mississippi Army in his path, Herron made three piecemeal assaults against Hindman's hilltop position. All were driven back with heavy losses. Several disorganized Confederate counterattacks also failed and by the middle of the afternoon fighting sputtered out. Herron was contemplating a withdrawal when, to his great relief, Blunt's division arrived from Cane Hill and joined the fight. When Blunt heard the roar of battle to his rear earlier in the day, he quickly puzzled out what had happened and marched to Herron's relief. The number of combatants at Prairie Grove is uncertain because stragglers dribbled into the fight all day long. The best guess is that between 7,500 and 8,000 Union soldiers and up to 11,000 Confederate soldiers took part in some capacity.

Blunt sent his own infantry forward but his assault fared no better than Herron's earlier efforts. Then, like Curtis at Pea Ridge, he blasted Hindman's position with artillery fire. "Of all the shelling that ever had been done, men that had been in battle before said this was the most severe," wrote a shaken Confederate. "The Cannon Balls and Bomb Shells was as thick as hail seemingly."¹³ The Confederates somehow held their ground and even managed to launch a final twilight counterattack, but to no avail. Out of food and ammunition, the Trans-Mississippi Army slipped away under cover of darkness and returned to Fort Smith.

The next morning Hindman, Blunt, and Herron met and discussed care of the wounded and related matters. They also agreed to call the engagement Prairie Grove, the only time in the Civil War a battle was named by mutual agreement of the opposing commanders. Prairie Grove was a costly tactical draw but from a strategic standpoint it was another Union victory. Hindman's attempt to destroy Blunt's division and alter the balance of power in the trans-Mississippi had failed.

"The fighting was desperate beyond description," declared Herron and the casualty list reflected that assessment. The Army of the Frontier suffered 1,251 casualties, a rate of about 16 percent. The larger Trans-Mississippi Army lost

13 J. S. Duncan (ed.), "A Soldiers Fare Is Rough: Letters from A. Cameron in the Indian Territory," *Military History of Texas and the Southwest*, vol. 1 (1974): 51.

at least 1,483 men or 13 to 14 percent. A significant number of Confederate casualties were deserters, mostly Arkansas conscripts. Hundreds of such men switched sides and joined the Army of the Frontier after the battle. Most Confederate soldiers remained steadfast, of course, but all were disheartened by the outcome of the brief campaign. "I am in very low spirits lower than I ever was," wrote one of Hindman's men after the battle. "I don't have any hope of the Confederacy gaining her independence by fighting."¹⁴

Three weeks later, on December 27–31, the Army of the Frontier crossed the Boston Mountains and briefly occupied Van Buren on the north bank of the Arkansas River. The operation was aimed at Hindman's fragile logistical system. The Federals burned steamboats and warehouses along the Van Buren waterfront, and panicked Confederates torched additional steamboats and warehouses at nearby Fort Smith. Irreplaceable stockpiles of food, clothing, blankets, and other stores were lost. His supplies gone, Hindman withdrew to Little Rock with the remnants of his army. Nearly a thousand liberated slaves accompanied the Union army back to northwest Arkansas, another instance of large-scale military emancipation. The Van Buren raid was the first army-size raid into the interior of the Confederacy. Vastly larger raids would eventually devastate Confederate states east of the Mississippi River and help bring the war to a close.

The Prairie Grove campaign was the last serious Confederate attempt to regain control of Missouri. The government in Richmond continued to claim the state as one of its own, but Missouri provided far more men and materiel for the Union than for the Confederacy.

By the end of 1862 the trans-Mississippi had experienced eighteen months of destructive warfare. Large swaths of Missouri, Arkansas, and the Indian Territory were devastated and partially depopulated. Civil institutions ceased to function and social order broke down. The chaos led to the worst refugee crisis in American history. Perhaps it was fortunate that in early 1863 the focus of military activity temporarily shifted eastward.

Vicksburg was the only remaining Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River by the end of 1862. In December Grant launched a two-pronged offensive against the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy." He led the main body of the Army of the Tennessee through central Mississippi while Sherman, his most able subordinate, steamed down the river with the rest of the army. Grant hoped his direct approach would distract the Confederates and allow

¹⁴ Dan P. Thomas Letter, Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park, Arkansas.

Sherman to slip into their rear undetected. The sixty transports packed with 33,000 men were escorted by Rear Admiral David D. Porter's powerful flotilla of ironclads, timberclads, rams, and other naval vessels.

The Federal armada turned into the Yazoo River, just above Vicksburg. Sherman disembarked his troops and prepared to move inland, unaware that the Confederates had detected his approach and rushed reinforcements to the scene. On December 29, 1862, the Federals stormed a Confederate position near Chickasaw Bayou and were repulsed with heavy loss. Unwilling to return to Memphis, Sherman and Porter cast about for something worthwhile to do with their enormous force. They were surprised when Major General John A. McClernand arrived and announced that he was now in command of the expedition by order of the president, yet another instance of Lincoln meddling in military affairs.

McClernand decided to attack Arkansas Post. In an attempt to keep the Union navy from pushing up the Arkansas River to Little Rock, Holmes had constructed a fort at a place called Arkansas Post. Fort Hindman, the official name, was the most formidable Confederate bastion in the trans-Mississippi. The earthen structure was 100 yards square, mounted three heavy guns and several lighter guns, and was partially clad with iron rails. Lighter earthworks and swampy terrain protected the landward side of the fort. Holmes expected Fort Hindman to deter the Federals. Instead, it attracted them.

In early January 1863 McClernand, Sherman, and Porter made their way back up the Mississippi and turned into the Arkansas. Brigadier General Thomas J. Churchill, the commander at Arkansas Post, prepared his garrison for a desperate fight. The assault on the fort and its outworks took place on January 9–11, 1863. Sherman's troops overran the landward defenses at considerable cost. Porter's gunboats steamed to within point-blank range of the fort and opened fire. The bombardment wrecked the fort and silenced its guns. Several gunboats were hit in return but none suffered serious damage. Churchill surrendered.

The Battle of Arkansas Post was one of the largest combined operations of the war. Two days of intense combat cost the Union army and navy 1,092 men or 3 percent of the force engaged. Confederate losses were catastrophic. The Federals bagged a small army: 4,791 prisoners and an immense quantity of firearms, artillery, ammunition, stores, camp equipment, animals, and wagons – material the Confederates could not easily replace. Another 150 defenders were killed or wounded.

The disasters of Prairie Grove and Arkansas Post, barely five weeks apart, dealt the reeling trans-Mississippi Confederacy a heavy blow. President Davis

placed Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith in overall command and demoted Holmes to running affairs in Arkansas. The capture of Arkansas Post opened the way to Little Rock for the Federals, but McClernand's moment in the spotlight was over. Grant was back in charge and he ordered the victors of Arkansas Post to return to the Mississippi River. Vicksburg had priority over all else. Little Rock would have to wait.

As Grant tightened the noose around Vicksburg in the spring of 1863, President Davis pressured Holmes to do something to help the beleaguered city. Holmes, of course, had few men to send and no way to get them across the Mississippi River. He eventually decided to attack Helena. The town had been in Union hands for nearly a year and was ringed with defensive works, but Holmes believed the garrison could not withstand a determined attack. The loss of Helena might compel Grant to look to his rear and detach troops from Vicksburg. That, in turn, might give the Confederate defenders an opportunity to break out. It was a long shot, to be sure, but nothing else seemed remotely feasible. Helena was an especially appealing target from the Confederate perspective because it was a magnet – and a haven – for runaway slaves. The town contained several camps for freedmen and a recruiting center and training camp for US Colored Troops. The existence of such places deep inside the Confederacy was intolerable.

Holmes assembled 7,646 men and set out for Helena. The town is located on the only high ground on the west bank of the Mississippi between the Missouri bootheel and the Gulf of Mexico, and the Federals took maximum advantage of the terrain. They strengthened and expanded existing earthworks and felled trees across all likely avenues of approach. When Holmes arrived in front of the town, Major General Benjamin M. Prentiss and the 4,129 Union soldiers of the Army of Arkansas (including a sizable number of black troops) were dug in and prepared for a fight.

In the early morning hours of July 4, 1863, the Trans-Mississippi Army opened an uncoordinated frontal assault. The Confederates were surprised by the timber barricade, but they pressed on and overran a Union fort atop aptly named Graveyard Hill. Union artillery, including the heavy guns of the gunboat *Tyler* in the Mississippi River, blasted the hill and drove the Confederates away. Holmes called off the assault after six hours of costly fighting and returned to Little Rock with his much-reduced army. A week later he learned that Vicksburg had surrendered while his men were

assaulting Graveyard Hill. Holmes resigned and command passed to Price, who was now a Confederate major general.

The Battle of Helena accomplished nothing except to demonstrate once again the folly of attacking fortifications. It cost the entrenched Union defenders 220 men or 5 percent of the troops engaged. The Confederate attackers lost 1,636 killed, wounded, and missing, a 21 percent casualty rate. After so much bloodletting, it was uncertain whether the Confederates could maintain their wavering hold on the trans-Mississippi.

In the summer and fall of 1863, following the capture of Vicksburg, the Federals carried the war deep into Arkansas and the Indian Territory. Grant sent Major General Frederick Steele to Helena to lead the heavily reinforced Army of Arkansas, now 10,500 strong, to Little Rock. Low water in the Arkansas River prevented a waterborne movement, so Steele advanced overland across eastern Arkansas. The mid-summer march was a nightmare and men fell ill by the hundreds.

Price dared not risk an engagement so soon after the Helena debacle. He had about 7,750 men, but many were ill and all were demoralized. He hoped the rigors of a summer campaign would prove too much for the Federals, but just to be on the safe side he constructed a line of fortifications on the north bank of the Arkansas River. Little Rock, however, is on the south bank of the river, which meant that the eastern approach to the city was wide open should the Federals somehow get across the river. A clash at Bayou Meto (Reed's Bridge) on August 27 halted Steele's advance for a week. During the lull the Confederates fell back and occupied the fortifications.

Steele chose not to attack Price's fortifications but to sidestep them. He threw a pontoon bridge over the Arkansas and hurried troops to the south bank with instructions to take Little Rock. Price belatedly sent men to the scene but the Federals pushed them aside at Bayou Fourche on September 10, 1863, and advanced toward the city. Outflanked and in danger of being cut off, the Confederates abandoned their fortifications and hurried across the Arkansas on their own pontoon bridges. They passed through Little Rock and marched away to the southwest, never to return. The Federals entered the city close on their heels and raised the Stars and Stripes over the capitol building and the US arsenal. Little Rock was the fourth Confederate state capital captured by Union forces, after Nashville, Baton Rouge, and Jackson.

During the forty-day campaign Steele and his men encountered more resistance from the environment than from the Confederates. Skirmishes

and small battles cost the Army of Arkansas 137 soldiers, but that figure does not include the large number of men prostrated by disease. Confederate losses are unknown but probably were proportional.

After securing Little Rock, Steele moved to occupy the rest of the Arkansas Valley. He sent Colonel Powell Clayton and 550 men to Pine Bluff, a town halfway between Little Rock and Arkansas Post. Six weeks later, on October 25, 1863, the Confederates made an unexpected appearance. Major General John S. Marmaduke and 2,300 men rushed into Pine Bluff and almost took the Federals by surprise. Clayton and his men stacked cotton bales around the Jefferson County Court House and created an impromptu fort. Stymied by this unorthodox tactic, the Confederates burned down part of the town and withdrew. The Federals suffered thirty-nine casualties; the Confederates lost 101 men. Five freedmen were killed while assisting the Federals. Hundreds more freedmen were carried off by the Confederates, their fate unknown. Pine Bluff was one of the few urban battles of the Civil War, and the only serious Confederate attempt to contest Union occupation of the Arkansas Valley.

While Steele and Price decided the fate of central Arkansas, troops were on the move in western Arkansas and the Indian Territory. Following the close of the Prairie Grove campaign, Blunt returned to Kansas with his division. In July 1863 he returned to the Indian Territory because the Union garrison at Fort Gibson was threatened by a Confederate force on the south side of the Arkansas River. Blunt and 3,000 white, black, and Indian Union soldiers struck the Confederates on July 17, 1863. Brigadier General Douglas H. Cooper's 5,700 white and Indian troops put up a stiff fight despite being saddled with inferior arms and defective powder. After several hours of sporadic combat in extreme heat the Confederates withdrew. Blunt lost seventy-seven men, Cooper 134. Honey Springs was unique in that the number of black and Indian soldiers engaged in the stand-up fight was greater than the number of white troops. After driving Cooper away, Blunt turned east and captured Fort Smith on September 1. He raised the national flag over the US military post of the same name, then he sent a cavalry force to inform Steele in Little Rock of developments in the Indian Territory and to demonstrate that the Arkansas Valley was in Union hands.

When the war began the Missouri River was the "front" between contending forces in the trans-Mississippi. After two years of military operations the "front" was the Arkansas River, 300 miles to the south. During those two years the Confederates lost their hold on all of Missouri, most of Arkansas,

and half of the Indian Territory, an immense area more than twice the size of Pennsylvania. The capture of Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Fort Smith, and other towns along the Arkansas brought the period of continuous military operations in the trans-Mississippi to an end. Fighting went on, of course, but regular armies and formal battles no longer held center stage. The day of the guerrilla had dawned.

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The Peninsula Campaign

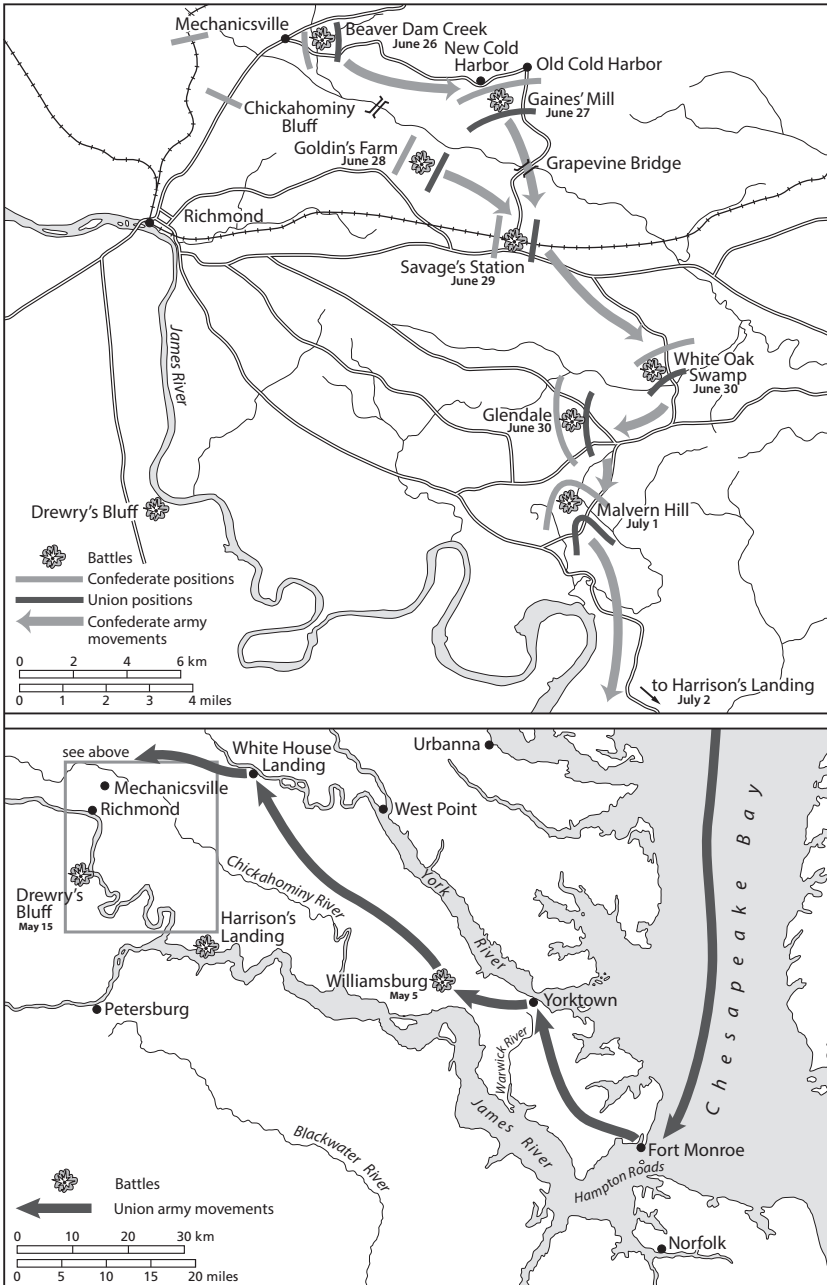
GLENN D. BRASHER

In spring 1862, Major General George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac floated down the Chesapeake Bay, landed at Fort Monroe, and marched up the Virginia Peninsula toward the Confederate capital. This campaign was the largest amphibious operation of the war and saw perhaps Confederate general Robert E. Lee's best chance to destroy an entire Union army. Arriving outside Richmond, Federal troops enjoyed superior numbers, yet during a week of almost continuous fighting Lee used aggressive attacks to drive McClellan away. No Union army would get as close to Richmond for two more bloody years, and Southerners discovered the leader whose subsequent victories helped build and sustain Confederate nationalism. Most important, the campaign led to using emancipation as a means of saving the Union.

Historians have long undervalued the campaign's role in emancipation, with most works on the subject focusing on the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia's leadership, arguing that the campaign's largest impact was Lee's ascension to command. The most comprehensive book on the event, Stephen Sears's *To the Gates of Richmond*, adds a well-supported analysis of George McClellan, arguing the campaign caused the Union commander's contentious relationship with the Lincoln administration to become even more strained. Less well developed is that Lee's rise and McClellan's demise help explain why emancipation became a Union war aim, with primarily only scholars such as Mark Grimsley, Gary Gallagher, Jim Marten, and myself stressing this aspect of the campaign.¹

1 Stephen W. Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond* (Norwalk, CT: Easton Press, 1996); Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Gary W. Gallagher, *The Richmond Campaign of 1862; The Peninsula & the Seven Days* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Glenn David Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign & the Necessity of Emancipation: African Americans and the Fight for Freedom* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012); James Marten, "A Feeling of Restless Anxiety: Loyalty and Race in the Peninsula Campaign and Beyond," in Gary

The Peninsula Campaign



5.1 The Peninsula campaign. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd. Military movements from Glenn Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign and the Necessity of Emancipation* (UNC Press, 2012).

Yet there is a less appreciated, but perhaps bigger reason why the campaign was pivotal. During the Peninsula campaign, African Americans played important roles for the Union and Confederate militaries, influencing strategy and helping shape the campaign's results. These activities helped convince Lincoln that emancipation was a military necessity and played a role in preparing Northerners to accept it.

This was far from the case at the start of the Civil War. Before and after the firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861, the new president repeatedly disavowed a war for emancipation, insisting his only aim was the Union's preservation, a sentiment in line with the majority of Northerners. As the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* grudgingly noted on May 18, "The war is not an anti-slavery crusade of the North against the South. Had this so much as been hinted at in the President's [call for troops] not a regiment would have volunteered."²

Lincoln's early war pronouncements were largely designed to keep the Border States from joining the rebellion, but were consistent with positions many Republicans had long promoted. Party leaders aimed for slavery's ultimate extinction, but understood the Constitution protected it in states where it existed. Therefore, their antislavery strategy was to prevent the institution from spreading to western territories, stop using the government to support the system, and to encourage gradual and compensated emancipation. This platform led to Lincoln's 1860 election victory (and the Deep South's reactionary secession) and he consistently maintained this position until the Peninsula campaign's aftermath.

Yet events, especially along this historic land southeast of Richmond (home to Jamestown, the first permanent British settlement in North America and birthplace of American slavery, Williamsburg, the colonial capital of Virginia, and Yorktown, site of the climactic battle of the American Revolution), quickly challenged the administration's commitment to not touch slavery in the seceded states. At Union-held Fort Monroe in Virginia, three enslaved men fled to Northern lines in May 1861. When their owner tried to reclaim them, Major General Benjamin Butler refused to allow it, explaining that Virginia secessionists had used the men as laborers on their fortifications. Because the Confederacy used this "property" to wage war against the United States, Butler famously reasoned, the men could be confiscated as "contraband of war." Lincoln approved, further allowing

W. Gallagher (ed.), *The Richmond Campaign of 1862: The Peninsula and the Seven Days* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 121–52.

2 *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 18, 1862.

Butler to shelter the men's families. African Americans soon began fleeing to Union lines throughout the South.

Meanwhile, Congress was working on legislation to allow the Union army to confiscate Rebel property. After the Federal defeat in July 1861 at Manassas, Radical Republicans used reports that the Confederacy had impressed slaves into building fortifications (and had perhaps even forced them into combat) to convince most of Congress that slaves should be liable for confiscation. The president signed the Confiscation Act into law, allowing commanders to shelter and employ enslaved runaways who had been working for the Confederacy. The law did not expressly free them, however.

Furthermore, the Manassas loss led to Lincoln's promotion of George B. McClellan. The arrogant 34-year-old officer had recently cleared western Virginia of Rebel forces and now Lincoln needed him to whip the Army of the Potomac back into shape and restore its morale. McClellan accomplished these tasks in remarkably short time, all the while overseeing the construction of fortifications that made Washington an impregnable city. These competent accomplishments led to his promotion to general-in-chief of all Union armies on November 1, 1861. In hindsight, this appointment was one of Lincoln's bigger mistakes, as McClellan's relative youth, perfectionism, and conceit caused him to view his critics as intellectual inferiors. Rather than conciliating or compromising with such people, the young general believed either he would prevail by ignoring their concerns, or that they would destroy him by thwarting his plans.

A staunch Democrat, the new commander agreed with Lincoln about the need to avoid pushing more states into rebellion by acting against slavery, embracing a conservative war policy. McClellan believed a powerful slaveholding aristocracy (long styled by many as the "slave power") had manipulated the southern population into secession, a cause to which Northerners felt most Southerners were only halfheartedly committed. McClellan therefore suggested building and moving vastly overwhelming forces into the South, crushing any hope that the Confederacy could overcome the United States' materiel and military might. Equally important, Union armies should maintain a "rigidly protective policy" regarding civilian property (particularly slaves), dispelling Southern dogma that secession was necessary to maintain slavery and other rights. This display of force and respect for property rights, he believed, would convince the Southern masses that secession was hopeless and unwarranted. "I know that I express the feelings and opinions of the President when I say that we are fighting only to preserve the integrity of the union," McClellan explained. The armies should "not widen the breach

existing between us and the rebels” and should “make it apparent to all that their property (including slaves), their comfort, and their personal safety will be best preserved by adhering to the cause of the union.”³

McClellan knew this conservative approach would frustrate the radicals in Lincoln’s administration, legitimately worrying that they would try to pull Lincoln away from supporting him.⁴ Thus to keep the president on his side, McClellan needed unqualified military successes to legitimize his strategy and keep Lincoln patient. The Peninsula campaign soon tested the relationship between the president and the general-in-chief, revealing that Lincoln was perhaps overly concerned for Washington’s safety, while McClellan, much to the detriment of his nonemancipationist strategy, was not.

In late 1861, radical pressure on Lincoln increased. Major General John C. Frémont, former Republican presidential nominee and commander of Union troops in Missouri, proclaimed all slaves owned by rebellious masters in that state were now free. Abolitionists rejoiced, but were outraged when Lincoln quickly revoked the order, publicly admonishing the general. Frémont’s measure did not conform to the Confiscation Act because it did not limit its mandate to slaves actually laboring for the Confederacy. The president also feared Frémont’s order would offend slave owners in other border states and put the weighty question of emancipation into the hands of military commanders, allowing them to overrule civilian authority.⁵

Thus far, most radicals did not view Lincoln negatively. The president’s antislavery sentiments had long been clear, and he had supported Butler’s contraband policy and signed the Confiscation Act. However, Lincoln’s rebuke of Frémont angered emancipationists, leading to aggressive attacks on the president, efforts to educate the northern public about the need for emancipation, and criticism of McClellan’s conservative strategy. Beyond the moral imperative to free the slaves, radicals insisted the government should do it as a “military necessity” under constitutionally granted war powers. They pointed out that Southerners were using enslaved laborers to build entrenchments and insisted that the Rebels were even coercing some blacks into combat. If the war continued, radicals maintained, the South would use

3 Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, p. 32; McClellan to Don Carlos Buell, November 7, 1862, in Stephen Sears (ed.), *Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan: Selected Correspondence, 1860–1865* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989), pp. 125–6, 131–2.

4 Ethan Rafuse, *McClellan’s War: The Failure of Moderation in the Struggle for the Union* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp. 122–3.

5 David Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), pp. 314–17; Phillip Shaw Paludan, *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1996), p. 87.

their enslaved population in these capacities in ever-growing numbers. Additionally, if the North were to free the slaves, it would not only take strength away from the South, but it would add that strength to the Union cause.⁶

Still, most Northerners believed twenty-one million Yankees could defeat nine million Southerners even if they were using slaves in military roles. In late 1861 there was little reason to believe otherwise. In a December message to Congress, Lincoln indicated he was also not ready to accept the “military necessity” argument, and this sentiment was widely praised across the North. Even the president’s hometown *Illinois State Journal* lauded his conservative approach that seemingly aligned with McClellan’s strategy. “This is as we expected,” the Republican paper claimed. “Mr. Lincoln . . . questions the present expediency of a law which would go to the extent of a general emancipation measure.”⁷

Yet McClellan still felt the radicals could lure the president to their side, as two of their endeavors took root at the end of 1861. First, congressional radicals introduced a second confiscation bill that would allow the seizure of all Rebel property, including slaves, whether that property was being used in the war or not. Slaves confiscated under the provisions of the act would be free. Second, recent military disasters and the radicals’ conviction there were not enough antislavery officers in the army led to Congress’s creation of the infamous Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. Controlled by radicals, the seven-man panel summoned officers to the Capitol basement, aggressively interrogating them about military setbacks and McClellan’s conciliatory policy. Because both the committee and the proposed Second Confiscation Act took aim at his conservative strategy, they haunted McClellan and convinced his paranoid-prone mind that his critics in Washington sought to engineer his demise.⁸

6 Brasher, *Peninsula Campaign & Necessity of Emancipation*, pp. 63–6. Abolitionists and many Radical Republicans believed the Constitution’s emergency war powers gave the president the authority to emancipate slaves as a means of winning the war, often describing emancipation as a “military necessity.” This position heavily depended on arguments made by John Quincy Adams twenty years earlier. For a detailed discussion of the origin, legal justifications, and evolution of this principle, see James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861–1865* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014).

7 Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols., Roy P. Basler (ed.), (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953–5), vol. v, pp. 48–52 (hereafter cited as *CWL*); *Illinois State Journal*, December 5, 1861.

8 Bruce Tap, *Over Lincoln’s Shoulder: The Committee on the Conduct of the War* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1998), pp. 11–17, 101–8.

Concerned but undaunted, McClellan developed a bold plan to capture the Confederate capital. He envisioned using the Chesapeake Bay to bypass the South's well-placed entrenchments in northern Virginia, disembarking his troops somewhere east and possibly south of Richmond. While musing over potential landing sites, McClellan hired famous spy Allan Pinkerton to head up his military intelligence department. Pinkerton and his staff interviewed Confederate deserters, prisoners, and especially enslaved runaways for information that might prove useful. As McClellan's campaign progressed, intelligence gleaned from African Americans would increasingly shape and influence the Army of the Potomac's drive toward Richmond.

This reliance on black Southerners was true from the outset, as one of Pinkerton's interviews was with William Ringgold, a free black man who had worked for months on a ship transporting Rebel troops to the lower Virginia Peninsula on the York River. Before returning to his Maryland home, Ringgold had also traveled along the York River Railroad into Richmond. He identified for Pinkerton Southern regiments and their positions on the Lower Peninsula, pinpointed formidable river batteries at Gloucester and Yorktown, and explained there were no other artillery positions farther west up the river all the way to West Point. He further described Rebel entrenchments on the peninsula that would significantly hamper any army advancing toward Richmond by that route. However, Ringgold painted West Point and the York River Railroad as lightly defended prizes. If an army could land by water at Urbanna they would face only an 18-mile march to West Point. From there they could use the railroad (which Ringgold accurately insisted was also lightly guarded) to deliver heavy siege artillery to Richmond's outskirts.⁹

Pinkerton obtained other information about the region, but Ringgold's was the most detailed, playing an important role in McClellan's choice in landing spots. After receiving Pinkerton's report, the general outlined a route from Urbanna to West Point and then on the York River Railroad as the best path to the Rebel capital. However, as a back-up plan, McClellan considered landing farther south at Fort Monroe. This would require dealing with the Rebel artillery batteries at Yorktown and Gloucester, as well as the entrenchments on the peninsula. But once those obstacles were overcome, Ringgold's information revealed that the York River would be open all the way to West Point, thus the army could still easily take the landings there and use the York River Railroad for the final push on Richmond.

9 Pinkerton to McClellan, December 2, 1861, *George B. McClellan Papers*, Library of Congress Manuscripts Division, Washington D.C. (hereafter cited as *McClellan Papers*).

In early March 1862, however, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and General Joseph E. Johnston decided that Rebel positions in northern Virginia were overextended and thus they abandoned the Manassas defenses, reconcentrating south of the Rappahannock River. Learning of the Confederate army's unexpected movement southward, McClellan's characteristic paranoia caused him to suspect that Johnston had somehow discovered the Urbanna plan and thus he settled on landing at Fort Monroe. At the end of the month, the Army of the Potomac began its amphibious shift to the Virginia Peninsula.

President Davis's military advisor, Robert E. Lee, had directed the construction of the entrenchments Ringgold observed on the peninsula and they were locally overseen by Confederate major general John B. Magruder. This defensive line stretched the approximately 10-mile width of the lower Virginia Peninsula, incorporating the Warwick River and connecting to the old Revolutionary War siege lines around Yorktown, which Rebel engineers refashioned to meet their needs. By April 1862, the works Ringgold observed had become much stronger and easier to defend with fewer men. McClellan and Pinkerton failed to get up-to-date intelligence on the Confederate fortifications because the original plan had been to land at Urbanna, not farther south at Fort Monroe. Because of strong pressure from the Northern public, and especially the Lincoln administration, McClellan acted quickly when deciding to shift the campaign to the peninsula, giving him no time to gather much intelligence beyond Ringgold's now dated observations.

By April 4, McClellan had about 90,000 men on hand on the Lower Peninsula ready to advance, but his plans quickly unraveled. Poor roads and bad weather stalled the movement, and one column ran into unexpectedly strong fortifications on the Warwick. Further, that river bent in a direction not indicated on the maps (toward Yorktown and across his front) and the Rebels had a strong line of entrenchments on the other side of it. Most frustrating, McClellan received a telegram stating that Lincoln was worried he had gone to the peninsula without adequately providing for Washington's defense. The general had been less than honest when detailing for the president how many troops in northern Virginia would be available to defend the capital after his departure for the peninsula. McClellan, for his part, had full faith that the defenses he had constructed around the city made the capital perfectly safe. Yet when Lincoln discovered McClellan's deliberate miscalculations he refused to allow more troops to leave. Therefore, one entire corps under the command of Major General Irvin McDowell would not be arriving to reinforce his army as McClellan expected. Reliant on

Pinkerton's famously erroneous overestimates of Confederate troop strength on the peninsula, the general believed that without McDowell's corps, he did not have enough men on hand to capture the Confederate works across the York River at Gloucester, thus the loss of these troops complicated his plans.¹⁰

Rather than adapt to the loss of these expected forces, McClellan lost composure and characteristically detected a conspiracy. He knew radicals were calling for emancipation as a "military necessity," were seeking to pass the Second Confiscation Act, and that they loathed his anti-emancipation sentiments and strategy. Rather than accept Lincoln's reasoning about Washington's defense, McClellan feared the president's actions indicated the radicals and their Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War were influencing the commander-in-chief. McClellan therefore erroneously concluded the withholding of McDowell's corps was an emancipationist plot to ruin his campaign, believing that until radicals could get public support for emancipation, they intended to prolong the war and "would not permit me to succeed." In a letter to his wife, McClellan went so far as to describe the administration and the radicals as "traitors" willing to sacrifice the Union in an attempt to eliminate slavery.¹¹

Even without McDowell, McClellan heavily outnumbered the Confederates, but he refused to attack. Besides his overestimation of Magruder's numbers, the fortifications in his front were imposing. Faced with such obstacles, McClellan decided on a siege, planning to break the Rebel lines with a massive artillery bombardment. Yet as he landed more troops and artillery on the peninsula, the month-long delay allowed the Confederates to move most of the forces available in northern Virginia to the peninsula, strengthening Magruder's defenses. The opportunity McClellan had for quickly overwhelming the Confederates was lost, causing Northern frustration (especially among Republicans) with the Army of the Potomac's slowness.

The stalemate seemed particularly vexing in contrast to Union successes elsewhere. Since the fall of Tennessee's Forts Henry and Donelson back in February, the Federal navy had taken most of the Mississippi River, Nashville and Memphis had fallen, and Union troops possessed many of the coastal islands of South Carolina. Most recent, Ulysses S. Grant had won

¹⁰ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, pp. 35–9; Rafuse, *McClellan's War*, pp. 203–5.

¹¹ George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story: The War for the Union, the Soldiers Who Fought It, the Civilians Who Directed It and His Relations to It and to Them* (New York: Charles Webster and Co., 1887), p. 151; Sears, *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan*, p. 235.

a big victory at Shiloh in Tennessee. It appeared to many Northerners that the only obstacle in the way of ending the war was the peninsula's fortifications. McClellan, the *New York Herald* optimistically claimed, was poised to deliver "the coup de grace to this rebellion" and that "the issues of the war are reduced to this single siege."¹²

Thus much of the news concerned the besieged Rebel defenses, and it was not lost on Northerners that enslaved laborers had done most of the work on the lines that protected Confederate troops from receiving a fatal blow. "General McClellan finds himself near Yorktown in front of . . . a labyrinth of rifle pits, forts and batteries," the *New York Herald* explained, because for months Magruder had overseen the construction of the Confederate defenses "with his army and his trench digging negroes." Northern soldiers and newspaper correspondents observed black laborers improving the Confederate works, and it was even claimed that the South was using blacks as artillery gunners, picket guards, and sharpshooters. The *Philadelphia Public Ledger* claimed "all the slaves in the entire [area] have been collected" to work on the lines, and the *Philadelphia Press* reported, "Negroes [can] be seen swarming around certain points like bees."¹³

After a month, McClellan was finally ready to bombard the Confederate works, but his plans were thwarted once again. Runaway slaves warned that the Rebels were leaving, and on May 4 balloon reconnaissance confirmed it. Union soldiers advanced into Yorktown's entrenchments without firing a shot. Joseph Johnston had ordered the withdrawal because he believed the Union navy would eventually turn his flanks, which was a legitimate concern. A position closer to the Confederate capital, he told President Jefferson Davis's military advisor Robert E. Lee, would stretch Union supply lines, protect the Confederate flanks, and bog the Union army down in the disease-infested Chickahominy swamps. Davis and Lee initially disagreed, but Johnston eventually got his way. The withdrawal ruined McClellan's plans and crushed northern hopes for a decisive battle at Yorktown as in the Revolution.

As Confederates withdrew, the peninsula's notoriously poor roads slowed them, forcing Johnston to send Lieutenant General James Longstreet back to Williamsburg to hold off the rapidly pursuing Federals. Placing troops in a series of previously constructed forts, Longstreet created a defensive line centered on Fort Magruder, covering the junction of two roads southeast of

¹² *New York Herald*, April 12, 1862.

¹³ *New York Herald*, April 23, 1862; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 16, 1862; *Philadelphia Press*, April 24, May 2, 1862.

Williamsburg. When two Union corps under Brigadier General Erasmus Keyes and Major General Edwin “Bull” Sumner arrived, they planned an assault. During the discussion, sixteen slaves who had worked on the Rebel fortifications came into Federal lines and according to Keyes, “encouraged the belief that some of the enemy’s works on his left were not occupied.” Later in the day, one black man led Major General Winfield Hancock’s brigade on a hidden path to the empty works, placing the Yankees in a protected position on the Rebel flank. Unfortunately, Sumner insisted an attack from that direction was too dangerous (most likely because it would be out of his immediate control).¹⁴

The two armies fought the Battle of Williamsburg on May 5 in a steady rain, and Sumner’s unimaginative attack on the Confederate defenses quickly stalled. The Rebels then launched a ferocious counterattack that would have turned the Union left had it not been for the timely arrival of General Phil Kearny’s division. The flamboyant one-armed general rode up with reins between his teeth, brandished his sword above his head, and yelled, “Don’t flinch, boys! They’re shooting at me, not at you!” This bravado steadied the soldiers, turning back the Rebel assault.¹⁵

Meanwhile on the Union right, Hancock was disheartened to receive withdrawal orders. Risking a charge of insubordination, he delayed carrying out the order for most of the day, but at shortly past five o’clock he reluctantly began abandoning the position. Just then, Hancock saw Confederates moving in his direction. Longstreet had finally noticed the threat to his left and dispatched Daniel Harvey Hill’s brigade to protect it. Sumner had wasted the opportunity for a surprise attack on the Rebel flank, but now Hancock saw the chance to repulse a Confederate assault, shouting to his men, “You must hold this ground, or I’m ruined!”¹⁶

The Rebels charged, and as Union officer Hiram Burnham reported, “We poured a volley into them which thinned their ranks terribly. Blinded and dismayed they still pressed on, firing wildly at random.” From their protected position, Hancock’s fire sent “death and destruction in their midst.

14 United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 11, part 1, p. 512 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted); Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, pp. 73–4.

15 Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, p. 77.

16 OR, 11(1): 538, 540–1, 550–1; Glenn Tucker, *Hancock the Superb* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960), pp. 82–7; David M. Jordan, *Winfield Scott Hancock: A Soldier’s Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 43–4.

They wavered, they faltered, [and] they halted.” Hancock then dramatically ordered a charge. Rushing forward, the soldiers bayoneted a few Rebels as the rest wildly fled. Hancock’s men completely routed the Confederates, bringing in the first Rebel flag captured by the Army of the Potomac. Peninsula slaves had made the brigade’s success possible by pointing out the tactical advantage that placed the Yankees in a protected position on the enemy’s flank.¹⁷

The battle established Winfield Hancock’s reputation. In a telegram to Lincoln, McClellan claimed, “Hancock was superb today.” Much to Kearny’s chagrin, the Northern press focused on Hancock’s success. “The conduct of General Hancock and his Brigade . . . has excited universal admiration,” the *New York Times* maintained. “A standard of colors . . . was captured and is now on its way to Washington.”¹⁸ Hancock quickly ascended to higher command, famously defending against Pickett’s Charge at Gettysburg. The military intelligence delivered by enslaved runaways helped launch his illustrious career.

The Army of the Potomac then set out to secure West Point, the terminus of the railroad that ran from the York River to Richmond. McClellan also hoped to cut off some of the retreating Confederates. Accordingly, Union Major General William Franklin’s division sailed up the York, landing across the river from West Point. From there, they were to move southward to the main road that a portion of the Rebel army was using to retreat from the Lower Peninsula. These plans unraveled when the famed Texas Brigade and a few other Confederate regiments led by the aggressive Lieutenant General John Bell Hood attacked the Federals. The resulting skirmish swayed through thick woods, with both sides advancing and retreating. The Yankees ultimately held their ground and Hood withdrew, but Franklin was unable to cut off any of the main body of retreating Rebels.

Still, the Army of the Potomac secured West Point. As McClellan’s original plan envisioned, Union supplies now moved smoothly up the York and Pamunkey rivers to White House Landing, where they were placed on railroad cars and delivered to Union troops establishing lines in front of Richmond. McClellan took longer than expected to reach this destination, but was on the verge of capturing the Rebel capital. Concurrently, the Second Confiscation Act was floundering in Congress because the success Union armies were achieving on the peninsula and elsewhere made it seem

17 Brasher, *Peninsula Campaign & Necessity of Emancipation*, pp. 129–30.

18 Tucker, *Hancock the Superb*, p. 89; *New York Times*, May 7, 16, 1862.

unwarranted. McClellan might yet prevail over the radicals, possibly ending the war with slavery essentially intact.

Meanwhile, Federal naval forces also moved on the Rebel capital. When Johnston abandoned the Lower Peninsula, Southern troops evacuated Norfolk, joining the forces gathering to defend Richmond. Thus the Federals gained control of the James River all the way to a point 7 miles below Richmond. From there, Confederate fortifications at Drewry's Bluff prevented the US Navy from getting closer to the city. Overlooking a sharp river bend was a large redoubt 110 feet above the water boasting three heavy cannon and five naval guns. Here impressed slaves and soldiers filled the water with logs, stones and iron, drove piles into the river bottom, sank several sloops and schooners into the channel, and left only a small opening, which passed directly under the guns on the bluff. On May 15, three US ironclads and two wooden gunboats attacked the position. Stalling before the river obstructions, they entered a virtual shooting gallery, receiving artillery fire from the bluff and musketry fire from sharpshooters along the bank. After three and a half hours of severe pounding, the ships backed off. The repulse meant that naval forces were unable to capture the Rebel capital; McClellan's army would have to do it.

With the Army of the Potomac establishing lines just 8 miles outside Richmond, Northern newspapers reported on how Virginia's enslaved community was aiding the Union cause. As at Williamsburg, blacks provided road directions in an increasingly unfamiliar and hostile environment and warned of Rebel positions and troop movements. Congressional radicals pointed this out to support the Second Confiscation Act. Michigan representative F. C. Beamen, for example, insisted that enslaved Virginians were "waiting patiently for an opportunity to serve their country, and have repeatedly communicated to the Government information of the highest importance." Yet unless they had worked on Confederate fortifications, as Minnesota representative William Windom pointed out, the First Confiscation Act did not liberate all the "slaves who have come within our lines and brought valuable intelligence of the designs and movements of the enemy." Further, even more slaves "would have gladly built our fortifications, saved our soldiers many a weary day's labor, and rendered us the most efficient aid" if they had been offered emancipation as the reward.¹⁹

Yet this could constitutionally only be done as a war measure, and thus it would have to be deemed a "military necessity." Was it? As the opponents of

¹⁹ *Congressional Globe* (hereafter referred to as *CG*), 46 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Blair and Rives, 1834–73), 37th Congress, 2nd sess., 2244; *CG*, 37th Congress, 2nd sess. appendix, 204.

the Second Confiscation Act pointed out, the Union army's advance on the peninsula, coupled with the North's consistent successes in the western theater, made the "military necessity" argument seem questionable. During spring 1862, US troops were everywhere advancing, and the Confederates were seemingly falling back to their last ditch. Further, Lincoln still seemed to agree that emancipation was unneeded. True, he had recently supported several emancipationist endeavors: the prohibition of slavery in Washington and in the western territories, as well as a treaty with Britain to more effectively suppress the international slave trade. Perhaps most dramatic, he pressured the Border States to accept compensated emancipation and persuaded Congress to approve funding for it. Nevertheless, none of this indicated a change in Lincoln's thinking about slavery in the seceded states. In fact, these efforts were consistent with what he had always believed: that the government should stop slavery's spread, withdraw support for it, and promote compensated emancipation. Otherwise, the federal government could not constitutionally touch slavery in the Southern states. Contrary to McClellan's fears, the radicals had not yet lured Lincoln to their emancipationist position.²⁰

Yet as Union soldiers constructed fortifications in stifling humidity, they bitterly complained about the fact that impressed slaves had largely built the South's formidable defenses. They were also well aware that black Virginians were more than willing to work on Union lines, and thus the soldiers grew increasingly frustrated that the military was not employing the enslaved community in this capacity. Pennsylvania soldier J. R. Sypher later recalled soldiers frustrated with digging "knee-deep in the mud after exhausting marches and sleepless watchings, while all around them" were slaves willing to labor on the lines. Refusing to employ them on Union trenches, Sypher maintained, was an "absurdity." Those pushing for the Second Confiscation Act echoed these complaints in the Northern press and on the floors of Congress. Enslaved Virginians "build fortifications for the rebels, why not for us?" Representative Windom asked. "They relieve rebel soldiers of nearly all the fatigue duties of war. Why should they not aid ours?"²¹

On the other side of the lines, General Joseph Johnston faced increasing pressure from civilians and the Confederate government alike to abandon his thus far defensive strategy and finally launch an aggressive attack. The general's retreats from northern Virginia and the Lower Peninsula had

20 Brasher, *Peninsula Campaign & Necessity of Emancipation*, pp. 179–80.

21 J. R. Sypher, *History of the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps* (Lancaster, PA: Elias Barr, 1865), pp. 156–7; CG, 37th Congress, 2nd sess., 2244.

brought the Yankees to Richmond's door, and with the enemy entrenching and effectively receiving enormous supply shipments, President Jefferson Davis feared Johnston did not have the stomach for anything more than strategic retreat.

On May 31 Johnston finally responded by striking McClellan's left in the Battle of Seven Pines. Yet his plan involved complicated and questionable maneuvers that his officers (hindered by an awkward command structure) failed to effectively coordinate. The two-day melee did not drive away the Yankees but had two major results. First, McClellan shifted troops to his left, leaving Brigadier General Fitz John Porter's V Corps disconnected from the rest of the army by the Chickahominy River. Second, and more important for the future direction of the war, Johnston received a severe bullet wound in his shoulder and a shell fragment knocked him from his horse. President Davis quickly replaced the defensive-minded commander with Robert E. Lee.²²

Thus far, Lee's Civil War career had been unremarkable, not foretelling the aggressiveness with which he would lead the Rebel troops he quickly labeled the Army of Northern Virginia. In 1861, his seemingly inept maneuvering of forces in western Virginia failed to attain Confederate control of areas lost to Union troops under McClellan. Lee was then reassigned the important but mundane task of constructing defenses and organizing troops to defend the South Atlantic Coast. Davis's appointment of him as his top military advisor did not help Lee's reputation, as Southerners grew weary of watching Confederate forces fall back from northern Virginia and now retreat up the peninsula to the outskirts of Richmond. The public's perception of Lee was that he was most effective at overseeing the construction of defensive works and that McClellan had already bested him. In the first year of the war in both the eastern and western theaters, Southerners disdainfully watched as Union troops gobbled up one fortification after the other, or as Rebel troops retreated from such works. Proudful Southerners hungered for an aggressive commander that would stop entrenching and falling back and would instead strike the enemy.²³

Ironically, Lee turned out to be just that man. Upon taking command, he quickly reorganized his army to streamline its command structure, reassigned officers he had little faith in, and decided on offensive operations

22 Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, pp. 139–40, 145.

23 Ibid., p. 25; Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could Not Stave Off Defeat* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 128–31.

against McClellan. On June 13 he sent Brigadier General James Ewell Brown Stuart's cavalry to reconnoiter McClellan's position north of the river, resulting in the famous "Ride around McClellan" that revealed the V Corps' isolated position. Lee then decided to depend on his largely slave-built fortifications to keep Richmond secure from McClellan's roughly 120,000 soldiers, while around 65,000 of his own men would strike Porter's isolated V Corps.

Meanwhile, McClellan grew increasingly frustrated by Lincoln's refusal to send reinforcements. In particular, the general still coveted McDowell's 35,000 men stationed at Manassas, as well as Major General Nathaniel Banks' 8,000 soldiers in the Shenandoah Valley. Yet Lincoln continued to worry about the safety of Washington, especially after Lee sent Lieutenant General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson into the Shenandoah Valley to exploit those fears. After a series of successful engagements, Jackson drove Banks across the Potomac River, apparently threatening the US capital. Lincoln was alarmed, refused to send McClellan reinforcements, and encouraged him to "either attack Richmond or give up the job and come to the defense of Washington."²⁴

Lee and Jackson brilliantly manipulated Lincoln's fears, but McClellan understood the situation. All his military intelligence indicated that Jackson's campaign was merely a decoy. He explained to the president, "The object of the movement is probably to prevent reinforcements being sent to me. All the information obtained from balloons, deserters, prisoners, and [black Southerners] agrees in the statement that the mass of the Rebel troops are still in the immediate vicinity of Richmond, ready to defend it."²⁵ Unworried by Stonewall's movements, McClellan continued to follow his own timetable.

As McClellan's soldiers dug in, Lee recalled Stonewall from the Shenandoah Valley to hit Porter's corps from the north while he crossed the Chickahominy to strike it from the west. Because McClellan's supply line, the Richmond–West Point Railroad, lay north of the river, if Lee's assault could bag Porter, it would cut McClellan off from his base at White House Landing. While Lee prepared, the War Department informed McClellan they had no reliable intelligence on Stonewall Jackson's location. Fortunately for the general, many enslaved African Americans around Richmond did. One runaway warned that the Confederates would soon cross the Chickahominy near Mechanicsville. An enslaved man from Richmond reported hearing that

²⁴ OR, II(1): 32. ²⁵ Ibid.

Jackson was about to attack the Federal rear. Other runaways claimed to have seen troops, supposedly Jackson's, just to the northeast of Porter's position. Finally, a fugitive came into Union lines and confirmed that Jackson seemed about to attack Porter.²⁶

This information allowed McClellan to correctly interpret Lee's intentions. Because McClellan would never contemplate such an aggressive attack unless he outnumbered his opponent, the general concluded Lee enjoyed a large numerical advantage. His immediate concern was saving the V Corps, and on June 25 he crossed to the north side of the Chickahominy to arrange a defense, placing a division behind a strong position at Beaver Dam Creek. General Porter sent cavalry off to the north and west to look for Jackson, and detailed axe men to fell trees to obstruct the roads leading to his position.²⁷

As Lee's men frontally attacked Union lines on June 26, Jackson failed to attack Porter's flank and rear. Many things explain Stonewall's failures that day, especially extreme fatigue, but his primary problem was the obstructions placed in his path. For example, he was delayed nearly an hour by a burned bridge. Union cavalry also harassed his troops and he insisted on deploying skirmishers each time he encountered them. Without having to deal with a flank attack by Jackson, Union troops effectively repulsed the Rebels charging their front at Beaver Dam Creek. Once again, information supplied by the enslaved community had led to Union success.²⁸

Still, Lee's aggressiveness caused McClellan to believe the Confederates heavily outnumbered his army, and he decided to withdraw from the north side of the river. Abandoning the position meant giving up the railroad and river supply line that his entire plan had been based upon, requiring the movement of the whole army south to the James River. The overly timid McClellan had surrendered the initiative to the aggressive Lee.

As they moved toward the Chickahominy River, the V Corps took a defensive position to fight off Lee and Jackson's combined attack. The resulting Battle of Gaines' Mill on June 27 was the largest either army had fought up to that time, as Lee committed nearly 60,000 men in mostly disjointed frontal assaults. Porter's greatly outnumbered men stubbornly and heroically held their ground until late in the day when one last and finally

26 Fitz John Porter to Randolph B. Marcy, June 24, 1862, *McClellan Papers*; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, p. 189; OR, 11(1): 51; 11(3): 257.

27 Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, p. 197; Brasher, *Peninsula Campaign & Necessity of Emancipation*, pp. 182–3.

28 Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, p. 197; Brasher, *Peninsula Campaign & Necessity of Emancipation*, pp. 182–3.

well-coordinated Rebel attack (spearheaded by the famed Texas Brigade) sent the Federals scurrying headlong across the river. The victory was Lee's first as commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, featuring an aggressive and successful frontal assault vastly larger than his famed "Pickett's Charge" at Gettysburg a year later. Although a tactical victory, it came at the cost of nearly 8,000 casualties, failing at the primary objective of destroying the Federal V Corps.²⁹

Still, the Army of the Potomac was in full flight, running for the James River as the Rebels attempted to destroy the Federals before they reached safety. Another aggressive Rebel attack followed Gaines' Mill, but a rear-guard action at Savage's Station helped hold off the Confederates. Over the next few days, Lee maneuvered several widely dispersed columns to trap the Yankees, repeatedly forcing them to fend off attacks and in the process capturing large amounts of supplies and prisoners. Lee's best chance to destroy the Army of the Potomac came on June 30 at a crossroads known as Glendale where he brilliantly had several columns of men converging on the Federals in front, left, and rear. Nevertheless, the dispersed units and their commanders failed to cooperate properly (especially the fatigued Jackson and his men), allowing the Yankees to slip the trap and to set up a formidable defensive position on a large plateau called Malvern Hill.

With imposingly steep bluffs on the right, and formidable swamps on the left, the only approach to the Federal position was via the gentle slopes in its front, which Union artillery quickly dominated. Despite (or perhaps because of) McClellan's absence from the battlefield (he was already on the James), the next day the Federals relied on their superior artillery under the command of Colonel Henry Hunt, as well as near flawless troop deployment that took advantage of the terrain, to repulse repeated, aggressive, and poorly coordinated Rebel frontal assaults. Handing Lee close to another 6,000 casualties, the Army of the Potomac tactically won the last of seven consecutive days of combat (afterward known as the Seven Days battles).

Many Union officers felt the army should have followed up the tactical victory at Malvern Hill with an offensive of their own (especially the intrepid Phil Kearny), but McClellan had already decided to reach the safety of naval gunboats on the James River. Thanks largely to roads and directions pointed out by the enslaved population, by July 3 the bulk of the Army of the Potomac safely reached Harrison's Landing on the James River. Naval guns protected

29 Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, pp. 210–48; Brasher, *Peninsula Campaign & Necessity of Emancipation*, p. 185.

them from further assaults by General Lee, but McClellan had failed to capture Richmond. His grand campaign ended in shambles.

In just seven days, Lee's aggressiveness saved the Confederate capital and restored Southern morale (ironically, only one of his battles had been a tactical victory and Malvern Hill had been a solid defeat, all resulting in close to 21,000 Rebel casualties compared to about 16,000 Federals). Yet more important, while trying to coordinate the pursuit of McClellan's army and the Malvern Hill assaults, Lee learned which officers he could rely upon, and those who needed weeding out. The result was the forging of the mighty Army of Northern Virginia that went on to a string of stunning victories, helping to build the Confederate nationalism that allowed the South to fight on for close to three years despite inferior resources. Lee's widely celebrated Christian values and aggressive military tactics came to embody the Confederate population's perceptions of themselves as a nation, instilling faith that God's support and General Lee's leadership would ultimately prevail over the Yankees, no matter how bleak any immediate military situation might seem.³⁰ This is perhaps one of the biggest reasons the Civil War lasted as long as it did, ultimately resulting in the destruction of the Southern economy and infrastructure.

The campaign also changed the direction of the war in an even more profound way. From their base at Harrison's Landing on the James River, Union soldiers repeatedly and angrily commented on the dispirited and physically fatigued condition of their army. In their minds, the Rebels hit them so energetically because the Confederacy had been using slaves to build entrenchments, thus their soldiers were not as worn out from fatigue duty as Union soldiers. "Fighting and marching does not wear the soldiers half so fast as ditching and fatigue duty," one Indiana soldier explained to his hometown paper, "and the prevalent opinion in the army is in favor of negroes doing that kind of work" for the Union.³¹

Politicians quickly took up this argument. New York's conservative Republican political boss Thurlow Weed, for example, insisted that had the government emancipated the slaves when the war started, "at least a half a million of slaves who have been at work in the Rebel armies, would have been relieving our worn-out troops from exhausting drudgery – thus *weakening* the enemy, and *strengthening* ourselves in corresponding degree."

30 Gallagher, *Confederate War*, pp. 85–96. 31 *Indianapolis Journal*, July 28, 1862.

Reprinting Weed's letter, the *Washington Chronicle* added, "There is no resisting such an argument as this."³²

Congress was still debating the Second Confiscation Act, and radicals used the failed Peninsula campaign to demonstrate the Confederacy's effective use of impressed slaves. They also argued that the aid that blacks had given to the army in the form of military intelligence deserved to be rewarded with freedom, and that this aid could be expanded if the Second Confiscation Act was passed. Many moderates and conservatives were now joining the radicals in making such arguments. The *New York Commercial Advertiser* observed that emancipation sentiment in Congress had "made a greater advance since the Army of the Potomac found its new base on the James, than during the whole fifteen months since [Fort] Sumter fell."³³

Because of the momentum created by the failed campaign, Congress coupled the confiscation bill with a new Militia Act authorizing the president to recruit African Americans as military laborers, and possibly as soldiers, with freedom as the reward. "The question must now be decided whether [blacks] shall be employed only to aid the rebels," Ohio's conservative senator John Sherman told Congress. "Shall we avail ourselves of their services, or shall the enemy alone use them?"³⁴

The Peninsula campaign's failure turned out to be the last push Congress needed to pass the Second Confiscation Act. True, other factors played a role in the growing rejection of McClellan's conservative strategy, not the least of which was that after fifteen months of war there was no evidence of widespread unionism in the South.³⁵ Yet as Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner pointed out, Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act "under pressure from our reverses at Richmond." The new law mandated that all slaves owned by Rebels were free, whether the Confederates had used them in military service or not. Unfortunately, this opened the door for masters to possibly reclaim their slaves if they could prove in court that they were never disloyal to the Union. This had the potential for clogging up the courts, but, in the meantime, it did lead to freedom for many African Americans behind Union lines, with the potential for even more as the Union army moved farther into Rebel territory.³⁶

32 *Boston Daily Journal*, July 12, 1862; *Washington Chronicle*, July 13, 1862.

33 *New York Commercial Advertiser*, quoted in *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 15, 1862.

34 CG, 37th Congress, 2nd sess., 3198–9. 35 See Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, pp. 67–95.

36 Charles Sumner, *The Selected Letters of Charles Sumner*, 2 vols., Beverly Wilson Palmer (ed.), (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990), vol. 1, p. 122. For a discussion of the weaknesses of the Second Confiscation Act, see Silvana R. Siddali, *From Property to*

Moreover, in the wake of McClellan's failure there was a perceptible shift in public opinion on emancipation. While home in Ohio, Senator Sherman wrote his brother the general, "You can form no conception at the change of opinion here as to the negro question. Men of all parties now understand the magnitude of the contest . . . and agree that we must seek their aid and make it the interest of the negroes to help us."³⁷

McClellan also sensed the shift in public opinion. Refusing to consider his retreat as anything more than a "change of base," like many Democrats he blamed the administration for failing to reinforce him. Believing the Confederates heavily outnumbered his army, he insisted the radicals had sabotaged his campaign in an effort to promote emancipation. When Lincoln tried to push the general into another advance on Richmond, McClellan insisted he needed at least 50,000 more men, and preferably more, a request Lincoln informed him was "simply absurd." Desperate to keep the president committed to a conservative strategy and away from the radicals, when Lincoln visited the Army of the Potomac on July 8 McClellan decided to lecture him on the need to resist the increasing demands for emancipation. He handed Lincoln the famous "Harrison's Landing letter," advising the "abolition of slavery should [not] be contemplated for a moment."³⁸ Lincoln offered no response, but over the next two months demonstrated he had radically changed his thinking.

Upon returning to Washington, the president continued to ask McClellan to advance, and the general responded by continually asking for reinforcements. By then Lincoln's patience had long since been exhausted. The new and aggressive Rebel commander, Robert E. Lee, was now dictating events. Counting on McClellan's inaction and Lincoln's paranoia about his capital's safety, Lee drove his army north, appearing to threaten Washington again. As the Southern general expected, in early August the president recalled the Army of the Potomac from the James River to provide reinforcements in northern Virginia, leaving Richmond in perfect safety.

With hindsight, Lincoln's withdrawal of the Army of the Potomac from Harrison's Landing was debatably the president's biggest strategic mistake of the war, resulting from his unfounded fears for Washington's safety,

Person: Slavery and the Confiscation Acts, 1861–62 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), pp. 233–4.

37 Rachel Sherman Thorndike (ed.), *Correspondence between General and Senator Sherman from 1837 to 1891* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), pp. 156–7.

38 Sears (ed.), *The Civil War Papers of George McClellan*, pp. 333–45; Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, pp. 74–5; Paludan, *Presidency of Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 140–2; Rafuse, *McClellan's War*, pp. 231–3.

uncertainty of Lee's movements, and his understandable frustration with McClellan. Perhaps it would have been better to have left the army in the safe position it was in (complete with secure supply lines) and replaced McClellan with someone less timid. Lee would have been forced to defend his capital, leaving Washington in safety and giving the Army of the Potomac the chance to defeat Lee with his back against Richmond, as it later did, all without the horrific carnage that Grant's 1864 Overland campaign took to reach essentially the same point McClellan reached with far fewer casualties.

As events actually unfolded, however, the war took a dramatic turn that it may not have taken had a more aggressive commander been in charge of the Army of the Potomac in 1862. Before Lincoln's abandonment of the peninsula, he revealed he was ready to embrace a more radical war policy. McClellan's worst fears were realized, but his own failures (which he pinned on the radicals) were to blame. Secretary of the navy Gideon Welles recalled that less than two weeks after the Peninsula campaign ended in early July, Lincoln said he "had about come to the conclusion that it was a military necessity, absolutely essential for the salvation of the Union, that we must free the slaves or be ourselves subdued." Welles maintained that the failed campaign had swayed the president into this new course of action, recalling him saying that, "slaves were undeniably an element of strength" to the Confederacy not only because they worked the land, but also "because thousands of them were in attendance upon the armies in the field . . . And the fortifications and entrenchments were constructed by them." Lincoln concluded, "we must decide whether that element should be with us, or against us."³⁹

Four days later, Lincoln signed the Second Confiscation Act into law, but he also had something bigger in mind. On July 22 he informed his cabinet of his intention to release the Emancipation Proclamation. Such a step would supersede the weaknesses of the Second Confiscation Act because it would free all slaves in states that were in rebellion whether their masters were proven Rebels or not. Court proceedings would definitely not be required. Secretary of State William Seward convinced Lincoln to wait until after a victory so that it would not appear as an act of desperation. Lincoln agreed, and that victory would not come until September at Antietam. Yet Lincoln had firmly resolved on a course of action long before then.

39 Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson*, 3 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), vol. 1, pp. 70–1; Gideon Welles, "The History of Emancipation," *The Galaxy*, vol. 14 (December 1872): 842–3.

Of course, many Northerners continued to reject the “military necessity” argument even after the Peninsula campaign, and Lincoln’s enemies (like McClellan) later accused him of engineering and conducting the war primarily as an emancipationist crusade. His response was clear: “It is and will be carried on so long as I am president for the sole purpose of restoring the Union. But no human power can subdue this rebellion without using the emancipation lever as I have done.” As for the timing, Lincoln said: “Many . . . urged emancipation before I thought it was indispensable.” Thus, the timing of his July 1862 decision seems to indicate that it was the failed campaign that convinced him it was “indispensable.” In the final measure, this is the primary significance of the 1862 Peninsula campaign.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ CWL, VII, pp. 506–7; Francis Bicknell Carpenter, *Six Months in the White House with Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1866), p. 77.

The Shenandoah Valley Campaigns of 1862 and 1864

KATHRYN J. SHIVELY

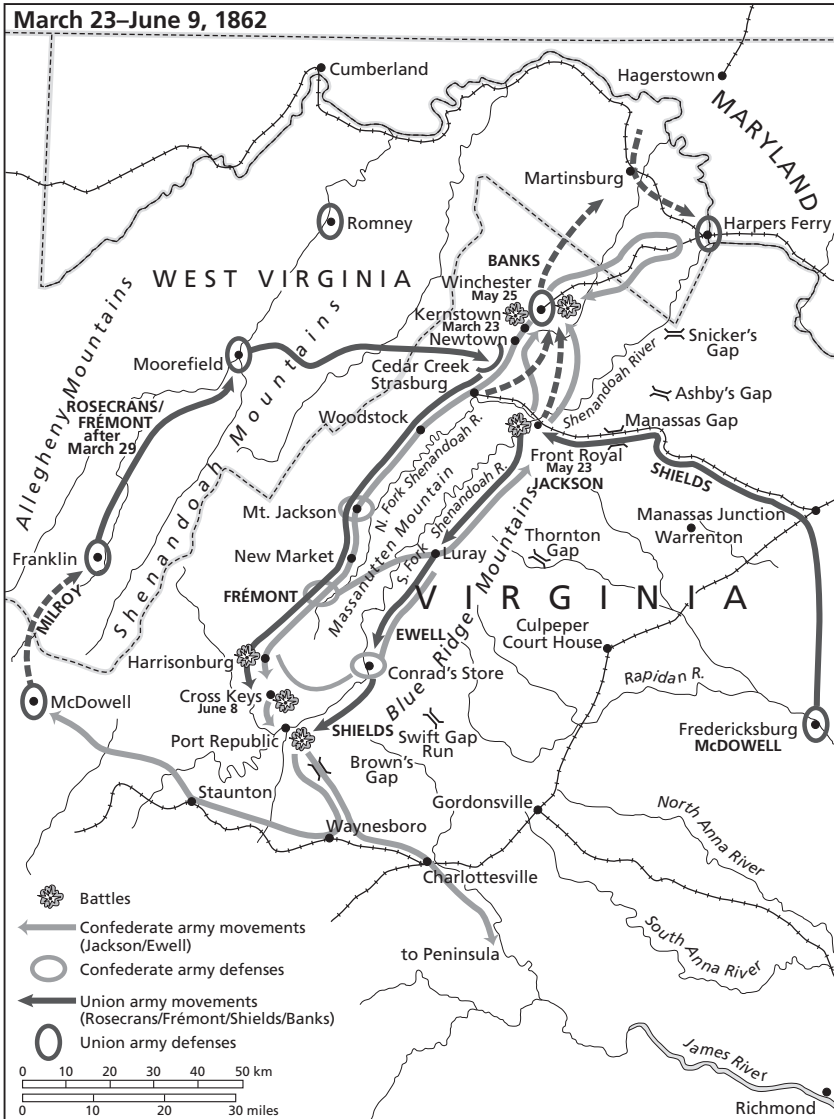
Stationed in the Shenandoah Valley in spring 1862 2nd Massachusetts Infantry captain Henry N. Comey marveled at “the most fertile land I have ever seen . . . It is no wonder that the rebels are defending [it] so well.” Yet the landscape was as intimidating as it was bucolic: “We were fenced in by huge walls on both sides of us and cut off from communication except from the north.”¹

Running southwest to northeast between the Allegheny and Appalachian Mountains in western Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley commanded attention from invaders and defenders alike. Though the Shenandoah remained peripheral to the primary campaigns in the eastern theater, it held logistical and strategic values for both sides.² If the United States could obtain the agricultural heartland of Virginia it could deprive its enemy of food; secure Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Washington from a major avenue of Confederate advance; safeguard the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad, one of the North’s principal west-east supply lines; maintain the Federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry; and cut Southern supply lines. Alternatively, if the Confederacy could defend the valley, it protected a vital source of grain and livestock, a conduit for offensive campaigning into Northern territory, and a strategic site to draw attention from the dominant fighting in eastern Virginia. Indeed, when the Shenandoah Valley fell to the United States in 1864 its loss hastened overall Confederate defeat.

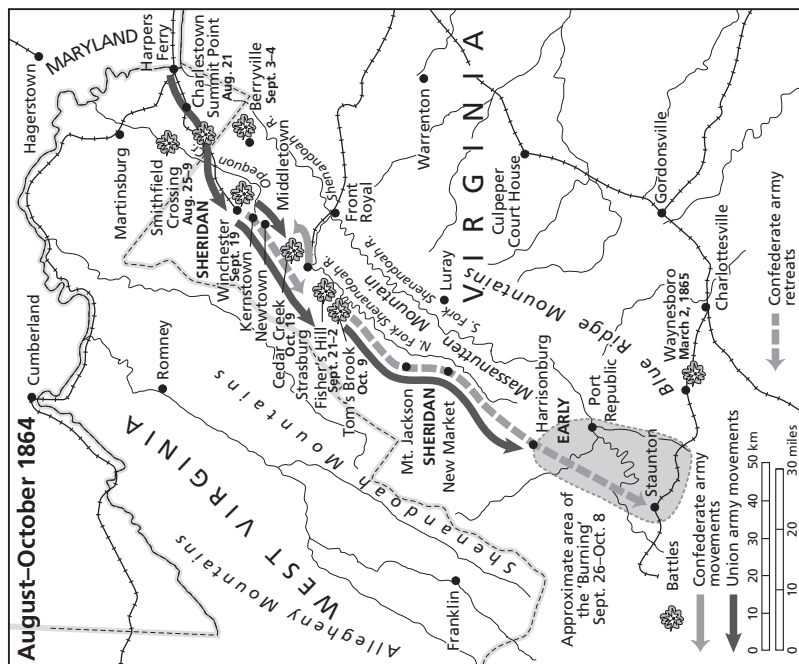
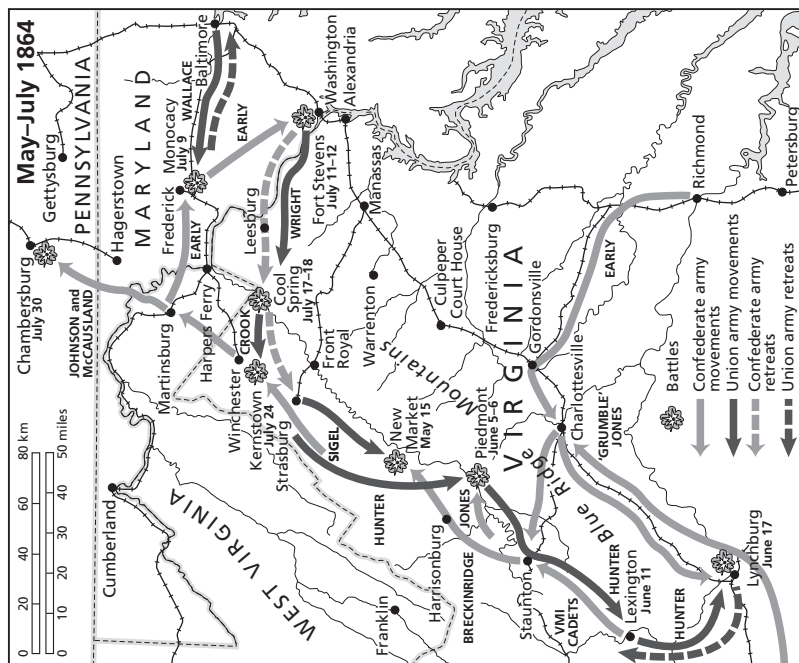
While the valley saw skirmishing between Union and Confederate supporters throughout the war, the 1862 and 1864 campaigns waged by Confederate lieutenant general Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson and Major

1 Henry N. Comey, *A Legacy of Valor: The Memoirs and Letters of Captain Henry Newton Comey, 2nd Massachusetts Infantry*, Lyman Richard Comey (ed.), (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2004), pp. 44–5.

2 Gary W. Gallagher (ed.), *The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. ix–xii.



6.1 The 1862 Shenandoah Valley campaign. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd. Military movements from Kathryn Shively Meier, *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia* (UNC Press, 2013).



6.2 The 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaign. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

General Jubal A. Early attracted contemporary and postwar attention that stood out disproportionately from the campaigns' strategic outcomes. Jackson's success elevated him to enduring mythological status, while Early's failure prompted him to craft the foundational arguments of Confederate collective memory.³ Because US military strategy in the two campaigns involved targeting infrastructures vital to the Confederate war movement, such as agriculture, livestock, and slavery, Confederate valley residents groomed a disdain for Yankees that long outlived the war. Wartime events in the Shenandoah and its associated postwar memory must therefore occupy a prominent place in Civil War studies.

6.1 The 1862 Shenandoah Valley Campaign

The 1862 campaign dawned amid disappointments to both the Union and Confederacy. US president Abraham Lincoln had waited months for his general-in-chief, Major General George B. McClellan, to initiate an attack on the Confederate capital of Richmond, but McClellan proved secretive, petulant, and sluggish. With the advent of the spring campaigning season, Lincoln and his secretary of war, Edwin M. Stanton, hoped to balance the need to supply troops for the Richmond offensive with their desire to protect the capital. As the events of March and early April 1862 unfolded, the pair made critical decisions to strip McClellan of power, reorganize military departments in the Shenandoah region into three independent commands directly under their supervision, and divert troops from the Richmond campaign to the valley. These actions slowed down McClellan still more.

The Confederacy likewise reeled from its own misfortunes in leadership. Promising generals, such as Albert Sidney Johnston, P. G. T. Beauregard, and Joseph E. Johnston, all underperformed in early 1862.⁴ The Confederacy faced compounding losses in Tennessee, Kentucky, along the Atlantic seaboard, and at key points on the Mississippi River, including the fall of New Orleans. Momentum began to favor the United States. Given the gloomy political backdrop of Confederate conscription, finalized on April 16, 1862, Confederate president Jefferson Davis and Joseph E. Johnston, the commanding general tasked with defending Richmond, hoped to salvage morale with battlefield victories.

3 Gary W. Gallagher, *Lee and his Generals in War and Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1998), p. 189; Gallagher (ed.), *Shenandoah Valley Campaign 1864*, p. xiv.

4 Gallagher (ed.), *Shenandoah Valley Campaign 1864*, pp. x–xi.

Meanwhile, Davis's commander of the Valley District, Stonewall Jackson, who had earned a reputation as a capable commander at First Manassas, was disgruntled by a winter of personal and professional reverses. In the Romney Expedition of January 1862 Jackson managed to disrupt the B&O Railroad, occupy Romney, and clear the lower (northern) Shenandoah of Federals. But Jackson returned to the comfort of Winchester only to have his occupying force at Romney under Major General William W. Loring mutiny and successfully solicit a reassignment to Winchester. Loring charged that his men had suffered deprivation, sickness, and exposure. One Virginia infantryman, William F. Brand, reported, "If we are kept in this mountainous Country long one fourth of the army will be in the hospital."⁵ Unsympathetic to his troops' plight and enraged by his officers' insubordination, Jackson offered his resignation, which he later withdrew. The incident served as testament to Jackson's rigid leadership style and its potential for negative effects on his soldiers. During the subsequent Shenandoah Valley campaign, however, Jackson's bold and daring marches would earn loyalty from his men and catapult him to fame across the Confederacy.

Though scholars identify different beginnings of the 1862 Valley campaign, the earliest maneuvers began when McClellan ordered Major General Nathaniel P. Banks's V Corps to invade the Lower valley in late February, forcing Jackson to retreat to Mount Jackson.⁶ In response to Lincoln's mandate to protect Washington, McClellan then relocated Banks's command to Manassas Junction on March 13, leaving just Brigadier General James Shields's division to hold Winchester. Confederate general Joseph E. Johnston ordered Stonewall Jackson to pin down Banks and prevent reinforcements to McClellan's offensive on Richmond.

Based on faulty intelligence provided by Confederate chief of cavalry Colonel Turner Ashby, Jackson attacked what he believed to be the rear guard of Banks's retreating army on March 23 at Kernstown. In fact, Jackson's mere 3,500 men confronted Shields's division of 10,000 troops. Closely engaged, Jackson could only opine to a staff officer that "We are in for it,"

5 Private William F. Brand, 5th Virginia Infantry, to Kate, January 10, 1862, Papers of William Francis Brand, 1856–9, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

6 Scholar Peter Cozzens sees the campaign as part of a continuum from the beginning of 1862; see Peter Cozzens, *Shenandoah 1862: Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Gallagher cites its origins with the Battle of McDowell on May 8, 1862; Gallagher (ed.), *The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), p. xiii.

and hope his men could last until sunset to allow a withdrawal.⁷ The battle resulted in approximately 590 US casualties and 718 Confederate casualties.⁸ Unable to accept his own contribution to defeat, Jackson arrested Brigadier General Richard B. Garnett for ordering a retreat after the brigade had run out of ammunition. The arrest contributed to increasing turmoil among Jackson's troops. Despite these setbacks, Jackson's attack produced strategic gains for the Confederates; Banks returned to the Valley to face the Confederates, depriving Lincoln of his protective force for Washington.

Jackson then used the lull in military action to capitalize on his home advantage, ordering chief topographical engineer Jedediah Hotchkiss on March 26 to "make me a map of the Valley, from Harpers Ferry to Lexington, showing all the points of offense and defence." This mandate would later yield spectacular dividends as Jackson used his superior knowledge of terrain and geography to great advantage. Meanwhile Jackson's troops continued to suffer, encamped in the spring mud, ailing from sickness, and simmering over conscription. Wrote one Stonewall brigade soldier in April: "Our encampment is worse than any barnyard."⁹

In late March and early April, Lincoln, frustrated with McClellan's inaction toward both Richmond and the Shenandoah, seized control of Valley operations, implementing changes that ultimately helped the Confederacy. He demoted McClellan from general-in-chief so that McClellan could focus on plans for an invasion of the Virginia Peninsula via Fort Monroe. Additionally, Lincoln created the Department of the Rappahannock, reserving 40,000 troops under Major General Irvin McDowell, who had previously supported McClellan, and the Mountain Department for Major General John C. Frémont in the Alleghenies with 8,000. Banks and his subordinate Shields also continued to operate in the Lower valley with 20,000. Thus would Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton directly administer a fragmented field command.

Now acting as military advisor to President Davis in Virginia, General Robert E. Lee sought to alleviate McClellan's pressure on Richmond. He

7 Robert G. Tanner, *Stonewall in the Valley: Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's Shenandoah Valley Campaign, Spring 1862* (1976; Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1996), p. 132.

8 Numbers and casualties cited in this chapter are from E. B. and Barbara Long, *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac, 1861–65* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971) unless otherwise noted.

9 Cozzens, *Shenandoah 1862*, p. 220; Major Frank B. Jones, 2nd Regiment Stonewall Brigade Infantry, Diary [April 10, 1862, entry], Frank B. Jones Diary, March–June 1862, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia (now housed at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond, Virginia).

ordered Richard S. Ewell's division to reinforce Jackson, bringing Confederates in the Valley to as many as 19,000, and pressed Jackson to prevent Banks and Frémont from joining McDowell or McClellan.¹⁰ Maneuvering to Swift Gap Run and then through Staunton toward McDowell, where an advance element of Frémont's army under Major General Robert H. Milroy (3,000) had descended the Alleghenies, Jackson's movements in late April and early May convinced Banks and Lincoln that the Confederates had vacated the Valley altogether. On May 1 Lincoln moved Banks to Strasburg and sent Shields to Fredericksburg to unite with McDowell, intending for the latter pair to move together on Richmond. Yet what Jackson had in mind, a plan Ewell found reckless, was to unite his 8,000 with Major General Edward "Allegheny" Johnson's 3,500, reserving Ewell at Swift Gap Run with another 8,000. Heavy rains and wind delayed Jackson, encumbering his men and allowing the Federals to fully realize Confederate movements. Despite the fact that Jackson occupied the high ground at McDowell on May 8 Milroy's outnumbered force achieved a tactical victory, inflicting approximately 500 Confederate casualties at a cost of 250 Federal losses; however, finding McDowell indefensible, Milroy withdrew to Franklin. Confederate newspapers basked in Jackson's perceived brilliance at this strategic gain.¹¹

Jackson presumed that he and Ewell could now turn their attention to Banks, but Jackson's superior, Johnston, intervened to recall Ewell to the peninsula. Dismayed, Jackson appealed directly to Lee, who offered a clear mission in the valley: Jackson and Ewell were to draw Shields back to the Shenandoah from Fredericksburg and prevent both Shields and Banks from reinforcing McClellan.¹² Reunited in Luray, Jackson and Ewell advanced anew toward Winchester. On May 23, a vanguard of the Confederate 1st Maryland, reeling from a mutiny related to the new conscription policy, overwhelmed the US 1st Maryland, a garrison that Banks had dispatched to Front Royal. Jackson nearly blocked Banks's withdrawal to Winchester on May 24, but poor coordination between Jackson and Ewell and Confederate pillaging of Union wagons enabled the Federals to escape that night. To save

10 Gallagher (ed.), *Shenandoah Valley Campaign 1862*, p. xiii, estimates Jackson's reinforced army at 17,500, while Cozzens, *Shenandoah 1862*, p. 256, estimates it at 19,000.

11 United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 12, part 1, p. 281 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted); Cozzens, *Shenandoah 1862*, pp. 255–8, 274.

12 Cozzens, *Shenandoah 1862*, p. 277.

his wagon trains, Banks took a stand south of Winchester the following day with just 6,500 against Jackson's 16,000, who, while more numerous, had not been permitted to sleep or, in some cases, to sit for most of the night.¹³ With 2,019 US casualties to 400 Confederate at the First Battle of Winchester, Banks predictably retreated, but to his good fortune, Jackson's exhausted men could not pursue.

As Jackson advanced on Winchester, Lincoln formulated a plan to squeeze the Confederates in a vise between McDowell, Frémont, and Banks. Countermanding McDowell's deployment to the peninsula, Lincoln ordered McDowell with 20,000 to advance on Strasburg from Front Royal by way of the Manassas Gap Railroad. McDowell openly protested this "crushing blow," writing that cooperation between Frémont and him was "not to be counted upon" and that he was "entirely beyond helping distance of Banks." At the same time, Lincoln insisted that Frémont advance toward Harrisonburg from Franklin, though hideous weather and the weary state of Frémont's troops forced a revision of the route through the Alleghenies to Strasburg. Frémont could scarcely stomach his men's suffering from exposure and lack of supplies: "For the last three days the weather has been terrible; constant blinding storm of snow, mixed with rain, which freezes to trees," he lamented. McDowell's weary army reached Front Royal on May 31 in the midst of a "furious storm"; he then failed to advance. The next day, June 1, Ewell blocked Frémont with minimal effort outside of Strasburg, and Valley troops endured yet another deluge, this time assaulted by "hailstones as large as hens' eggs."¹⁴

The last gasps of the Union effort occurred when Shields tried to cut off Jackson, assuming the Confederates would exit the Valley through Swift Gap Run. Instead Shields got bogged down by another "heavy rain-storm which lasted several days . . . sweeping off all the bridges on the Shenandoah."¹⁵ Moreover, Jackson never intended to retreat; rather, he left Ewell to neutralize Frémont, while he attacked Shields. The two decisive Confederate victories of the campaign followed. At Cross Keys on June 8 Ewell bested Frémont, who was too far to the rear to properly direct the action, while Jackson succeeded at Port Republic on June 9 after suffering egregiously heavy losses from committing his troops piecemeal. Casualties at Cross Keys amounted to 664 Union and 287 Confederate, while Port Republic saw 1,000 Union and 816 Confederate.¹⁶ Both sides spent a miserable June 10 weathering

13 Ibid., p. 331. 14 OR, 12(3): 220, 219; (1): 283, 316–17. 15 OR, 12(1): 283.

16 Casualties estimated by National Parks System, "Cross Keys," June 8, 1862, www.nps.gov/abpp/shenandoah/svs3-5.html, accessed October 6, 2017; "Port Republic," June 9, 1862, www.nps.gov/abpp/shenandoah/svs3-6.html, accessed October 6, 2017.

yet another downpour, while Frémont learned that the actions of the previous two days had been entirely unnecessary; Lincoln had already ordered an end to the campaign.¹⁷ The main Federal forces withdrew, conceding the Valley to Stonewall Jackson.

On June 16 Robert E. Lee, who had replaced the wounded Johnston as field commander opposing McClellan, recalled Jackson to Richmond. Jackson and his spent army would deliver a shockingly poor performance at the subsequent Seven Days campaign. Yet they had achieved a remarkable victory for the Confederates in the Valley. From March to mid-June the “foot cavalry” had traversed approximately 650 miles. Jackson had done Lee a tremendous service in buying him time to improve on the Richmond defenses and by prompting Lincoln to divert precious manpower to the Valley. The deferment of Federals to meet Jackson’s threat contributed to McClellan’s timidity in pursuing Richmond and ultimately contributed to the failure of that vital campaign. Casualties had proven fairly light by the war’s standards. The Federals suffered between 4,000 and 5,450, more than half of whom had been captured, while the Confederates lost between 2,750 and 3,200.

In the wake of the 1862 Valley campaign Jackson’s reputation soared, temporarily elevating him to the most famous general in the Confederacy at a time when Confederate morale desperately needed a boost. Several Confederate newspapers lauded that Jackson “has probably accomplished more . . . than ever was achieved by any other General of ancient or modern times” and that “his campaign during the Spring will compare favorably even with the almost incredible achievements of Napoleon.”¹⁸ Yet ultimate victory obscured an uneven performance. Jackson had pushed his men to the breaking point, and the cracks showed long before the Seven Days. Historian Peter Cozzens estimates that nearly one-third of the Valley Confederates melted away during the campaign by straggling or deserting. Even Shenandoah civilians commented on Jackson’s “disregard of [his men’s] physical endurance.”¹⁹ In individual battles Jackson had proven overzealous in committing his troops, neglecting to concentrate forces. This tactical error was especially transparent at Port Republic, a victory dearly bought from an inferior force, and at McDowell, where he fumbled against a smaller Union force despite occupying the high ground.

17 Cozzens, *Shenandoah 1862*, pp. 474, 480, 499, 510.

18 “The Achievements of Stonewall Jackson,” *The Charleston Mercury*, June 18, 1862, reprinted from *The Richmond Whig*.

19 Cozzens, *Shenandoah 1862*, pp. 508, 510.

Jackson's success, aided by his breakneck pace of campaigning and Hotchkiss's maps, came by striking at a fragmented enemy, which could not adequately locate the Confederates or coordinate with one another. Lincoln and Stanton exerted direct control over a situation they scarcely understood and the weather thwarted, contributing to feelings of powerlessness, frustration, and confusion on the parts of Union commanding generals. While Frémont delivered a thoroughly lackluster performance, his men also suffered the worst environmental impediments, crossing mountainous terrain with scant supplies in unrelenting storms. Frémont and Banks never managed to coordinate, while Shields had attempted to mask his own incompetence with bravado. The reputations of these Union generals fared poorly in defeat. All three armies were subsumed into Major General John Pope's new Army of Virginia, which was constituted June 26, 1862. Frémont resigned, and Shields never again served in combat.

6.2 The 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign

The 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaign involved higher political stakes and changed armies. The year would see a US presidential election, its outcome substantially dependent upon Union battlefield victories or losses. The troops who formed the nuclei of the opposing armies, the Union VI Corps and the Confederate II Corps (formerly belonging to the now deceased Stonewall Jackson), had both been severely punished in the spring Overland campaign, which directly preceded the Valley campaign. VI Corps lost its beloved commander, Major General John Sedgwick, whom Horatio Wright succeeded, while II Corps saw its shattered leader, Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell, replaced by Jubal Early. The weaknesses in these armies showed in the summer and fall of 1864.

Lincoln's war-long search for a suitable general-in-chief had finally culminated in the promotion of Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant on March 9, 1864 to full command of all Union forces. Grant's new strategy involved multiple, simultaneous attacks across the South, including in the Shenandoah. To the west, Union armies would move against Atlanta and Mobile, preventing Confederate reinforcements to Virginia operations. In Virginia the Army of the Potomac, commanded by Major General George G. Meade but accompanied by Grant in the field, would grind down Lee's Army of Northern Virginia near Richmond with support from the South by Major General Benjamin F. Butler's Army of the James. Meanwhile, in western Virginia Major General Franz Sigel's Army of the Shenandoah would move

against Lynchburg; auxiliary forces would raid Saltville and sever the Virginia Tennessee Railroad.²⁰ In all cases cooperating generals were instructed to cut Confederate interior lines, including railroads and communications, and destroy targets of military value, such as agriculture, stock, and industry.

Spring 1864 bore little fruit for Grant in Virginia. His Overland campaign against Lee resulted in stalemate and staggering casualties, and Northern morale suffered. By mid-June Lee and Grant hunkered down to a siege in Petersburg, Butler stalled at Bermuda Hundred, Confederate major general John C. Breckinridge halted Sigel at New Market on May 15, and Saltville remained in Confederate hands. Only Brigadier General George Crook successfully fulfilled his mandate to cut the railroad, but even he had fallen back to West Virginia.²¹

When Grant replaced Sigel with Major General David Hunter, the Union outlook improved as Hunter moved energetically southward up the Valley. Hunter first defeated a Confederate force, including civilian boys and old men who rallied to protect their homes, at the Battle of Piedmont on June 5, 1864. He then joined Crook at Staunton to number approximately 18,000. There on June 12 Hunter burned Virginia Military Institute and the home of former Virginia governor John Letcher, both of symbolic importance to the Confederate cause, before continuing to Lynchburg, a supply and hospital center.²² Confederate newspapers decried what were perceived as outrageous attacks on personal property, and Davis pushed Lee to respond with force. Lee, for his part, recognized the imminent threat to supplies but feared weakening his force before Grant's much larger army at Petersburg.

Lee first dispatched Breckinridge, who was bedridden after being crushed beneath his horse at the Battle of Cold Harbor. Then, on June 12, 1864, Lee initiated the 1864 Valley campaign with instructions to Jubal Early to head a new, independent operation with a modest army of 14,000, deemed the Army of the Valley. Three long years of war had robbed Lee of trusted lieutenants: Stonewall Jackson perished in spring 1863, James Longstreet lay seriously wounded, and Richard Ewell had broken down. Early, a profane but brave commander of whom Lee was very fond, was the best available officer for the job. Early was to defeat Hunter, clear the Valley of Federals, and threaten

20 Scott C. Patchan, *Shenandoah Summer: The 1864 Valley Campaign* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 2009), p. 5.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

22 William G. Thomas, "Nothing Ought to Astonish Us: Confederate Civilians in the 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign," in Gallagher (ed.), *Shenandoah Valley Campaign 1864*, pp. 227, 231; Patchan, *Shenandoah Summer*, p. 6; Gallagher (ed.), *Shenandoah Valley 1864*, p. ix.

Washington. In addition to securing supply lines for the Army of Northern Virginia and relieving pressure on Shenandoah civilians, the Confederates had an important chance to damage US morale in time to affect the 1864 presidential election. Lee also hoped that “by threatening Washington and Baltimore Genl Grant would be compelled to either weaken himself so much for their protection as to afford us an opportunity to attack him, or that he might be induced to attack us,” breaking the stalemate at Petersburg.²³ The 1864 Shenandoah campaign developed in two phases, the first of which reflected favorably upon Early. Dangerously vulnerable to being outnumbered, he capitalized on a period from June to mid-September in which the United States failed to concentrate manpower on an ancillary campaign.

By June 15 Early detached from the Army of Northern Virginia and successfully repulsed Hunter at the Battle of Lynchburg from June 17 to 18 with a strong defensive position, resulting in 950 US casualties and 500 Confederate. Early briefly chased the Federals, who retreated into the mountains of West Virginia, but on June 22 called off the pursuit to carry out Lee’s remaining instructions. The Army of the Valley marched down (northward) the entire length of the Shenandoah, bypassing Federal garrisons at Martinsburg and Harpers Ferry, to cross the Potomac into Maryland on July 5–6. In Maryland Early ransomed Hagerstown, Middletown, and Frederick, threatening to raze them unless he received monetary compensation for the damage Hunter had inflicted on Valley private property. After receiving new orders from Lee, Early sent a major portion of his cavalry on a raid toward Baltimore to disrupt communications and railroad lines before attempting to liberate Confederate prisoners at Point Lookout. The prisoners were intended to reinforce Early and then augment Lee’s dwindling force, but the mission proved unsuccessful.²⁴

Near Frederick, Union major general Lew Wallace halted Early’s advance at the Battle of Monocacy on July 9. Wallace’s small force of 5,800, joined by Brigadier General James B. Ricketts’s division of VI corps, which had been hastily summoned from Petersburg, initially repulsed Brigadier General John McCausland’s Confederate cavalry, whom Early had ordered to outflank the Federals; however, Major General John B. Gordon’s infantry and Rebel artillery soon turned the tide. US casualties

23 Robert E. Lee to Secretary of War James A. Seddon, July 19, 1864, in Clifford Dowdey and Louis Manarin (eds.), *The Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), p. 823.

24 OR, 37(1): 160, 768; Benjamin Franklin Cooling, III, *Monocacy: The Battle that Saved Washington* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Company, 1997), p. 55.

totaled 2,000, while Confederates suffered 700. Despite Confederate victory, the sharp fight, summer heat, and dust delayed Early a day, long enough for the US capital to receive reinforcements.²⁵

As Lincoln's private secretary, John Hay, observed, the president was "not in the least concerned about the safety of Washington," but was rather consumed with "whether we can bag or destroy this force in our front." Based on the assessment of Chief of Staff Halleck, there was "no force here fit to go to the field"; therefore, the president suggested, but did not order, that Grant leave a force at Petersburg to hold Lee and personally direct an attack in Washington against Early. Though Grant intuited that such a show of strength was neither necessary nor wise, Lincoln's reasoning had basis. Union morale had reached its nadir, imperiling his chances for reelection. Grant, however, countered that a realignment against Early would only worsen morale. Instead he promised "a whole corps, commanded by an excellent officer," Major General Horatio Wright and VI Corps, bolstered with a division of XIX Corps (6,000 strong).²⁶

The Confederates reached the outskirts of Washington near Silver Spring on July 11, as Grant rushed up the rest of the VI Corps from City Point and diverted the XIX Corps, which had been traveling from Louisiana to Petersburg. Early's skirmishers and artillery tested the defenses in the vicinity, which included three forts – Fort Stevens, Fort DeRussy, and Fort Slocum – initially manned by home guards, convalescent troops, and civilians.²⁷ By the time Early was ready to attack on July 12, Federal veterans occupied the ground and repulsed him, prompting a Confederate withdrawal the following day. President Lincoln had turned out to watch the action at Fort Stevens, and "a man was shot at his side."²⁸

For the rest of July Early's Army of the Valley threatened the United States along the Potomac River, skirmishing in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and along the B&O Railroad. Confederate morale soared. On July 24 Early defeated Crook at Second Kernstown, producing 1,200 US casualties and 500 Confederate, and pursuing Crook all the way back to the Potomac. In an

25 Jeffry D. Wert, *From Winchester to Cedar Creek: The Shenandoah Campaign of 1864* (1987; revised edition, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), p. 8.

26 John Hay, July 11, 1864, diary entry, *Inside Lincoln's White House: The Complete Civil War Diary of John Hay*, Michael Burlingame, and John R. Turner Ettlinger (eds.), (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), p. 221; OR, 37(2): 155–6.

27 Wert, *Winchester to Cedar Creek*, p. 9; Benjamin Franklin Cooling and Walton H. Owen, *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington* (1988; new edition, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), p. xi.

28 Hay, July 12, 1864, diary entry, *Lincoln's White House*, p. 222.

iconic moment of the war on July 30 Early ordered McCausland's troopers to burn Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, when the city refused to pay \$100,000 gold, or \$500,000 in cash, in ransom. The Confederate cavalry razed at least 400 buildings.²⁹ The first phase of the Valley campaign had been an unqualified success for the Confederates. It embarrassed Lincoln's political prospects, severely damaged Federal spirits, and provided Valley farms and property with a respite. Yet while Early had attracted Union troops to the area, he had been unable to deliver a decisive blow or weaken Grant's hold on Petersburg.

In early August US civil and military command reviewed their inadequate responses to Early's raid. Grant consolidated under a single command the four departments endangered by Early's army – West Virginia, Middle, Susquehanna, and Washington – but haggled with civilian leadership over the right commander. He finally advocated for Major General Philip H. Sheridan, the young but energetic cavalry commander of the Army of the Potomac. Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah, composed of three infantry corps – Wright's VI, Major General William Emory's XIX, and Crook's Army of West Virginia – and a cavalry corps under Major General Alfred Torbert, would number 43,000 strong, a significant proportion of its 8,000 cavalrymen equipped with repeating Spencers. It would dwarf Early's Army of the Valley, with fewer than 9,000 infantrymen and artillerymen and between 3,500 and 4,000 cavalrymen, all told fewer than 13,000. Grant ordered Sheridan to drive Early south and reduce the logistical capacity of the Valley: "Nothing should be left to invite the enemy to return." Yet he also urged restraint against private property: "It is not desirable that the buildings should be destroyed."³⁰

The second phase of the 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaign began on August 7 when Sheridan inaugurated what historian Gary W. Gallagher deems "a true second front in Virginia."³¹ On the sweltering summer day of August 9 Sheridan made haste to Berryville, which lay between the Opequon and Shenandoah rivers, to threaten Early's right flank and rear, forcing a Confederate withdrawal through Winchester to Fisher's Hill. By August 14 Sheridan repositioned north of Strasburg to probe Cedar Creek but was chastened by multiple reports of Confederate reinforcements from Lee; thus, Sheridan withdrew to Hallsboro. Sheridan later explained in his memoirs that he "deemed it necessary to be very cautious," for both Grant and the authorities in Washington had impressed on him the consequences of risking

²⁹ Wert, *Winchester to Cedar Creek*, p. 8.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 9, 16, 29; Gallagher (ed.), *Shenandoah Valley 1864*, p. 9.

³¹ Wert, *Winchester to Cedar Creek*, p. xiv.

a major defeat. Early mistook Sheridan for a timid general and pushed back into Winchester. The actual reinforcements Early received, a mixed force under Lieutenant General Richard H. Anderson composed of Major General Joseph B. Kershaw's infantry division, Lieutenant Colonel Wilfred E. Cutshaw's artillery, and Major General Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry, bringing his army to perhaps 15,200 total, still paled in comparison to Sheridan's force.³²

For the remainder of August Sheridan puzzled over Confederate numbers, while Early labored to affirm Sheridan's apprehension by marching and countermarching the Army of the Valley. The approach strained Early's men, forced to subsist in an area destitute of food and supplies. To prod Sheridan Early took a risk that did not deliver; on August 25 and 26 he feigned an invasion of Maryland, leaving only Anderson's men to guard Charlestown. Sheridan spurned the bait, but neither did he attack Charlestown when he could have finished Anderson.³³ Following minor skirmishes the two forces faced each other astride the Opequon. Thus far Early had kept the Federals at bay with an inferior force and little help from his cavalry, whom he had grown to despise. Lincoln bemoaned Sheridan's inaction and the political consequences of military stasis, authoring a blind memo on August 23, which read, "It seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will not be re-elected."³⁴

The winds changed for the United States in September. On September 2 Sherman finally took Atlanta, shifting Lincoln's prospects for reelection and elevating Union morale. Sheridan's patience also paid off; Lee recalled Anderson's men to the more crucial Petersburg front on September 15. Sheridan also reorganized, creating an effective battalion of scouts under his staff member Major H. K. Young.³⁵ Meanwhile, Sheridan and Grant independently decided on action. Bypassing Chief of Staff Henry Halleck in Washington, Grant arrived in Charlestown for a brief, in-person consult with Sheridan, and the two decided Sheridan would move to flank Early's force on September 18 before dawn. The mere rumor of Grant's visit energized the Federals.

US prospects further improved when Sheridan learned that Early had divided his army by sending Major General Robert E. Rodes's and Gordon's divisions to Martinsburg. Early, still lacking confidence in his cavalry, had indeed sent half his infantry and a cavalry brigade to disrupt

32 Wert, *Winchester to Cedar Creek*, pp. 32–6. 33 Ibid., p. 38.

34 Abraham Lincoln's "Blind Memorandum," Library of Congress Blog, <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2014/08/abraham-lincolns-blind-memorandum>, accessed October 6, 2017.

35 Wert, *Winchester to Cedar Creek*, pp. 40–1.

repairs on the B&O Railroad, when this was a task traditionally reserved for cavalry alone. Sheridan revised his plan to attacking Major General Stephen D. Ramseur's and Brigadier General Gabriel C. Wharton's divisions before Early could reunite his troops. Early, however, received his own intelligence: Grant had met with Sheridan, a sure sign that a Federal attack was imminent. The Confederate general scrambled to pull his army back together, but this meant defending at Winchester rather than the best defensive terrain in the area at Fisher's Hill. On September 19 Union brigadier general James Wilson's cavalry division crossed the Opequon at Spout Spring to inaugurate the Battle of Third Winchester before dawn. Sheridan began with a blunder, funneling 20,000 troops through Berryville Canyon to meet Ramseur's isolated men rather than selecting multiple avenues of advance. In the narrow passage Federals became entangled with their wagons, while Ramseur and supporting artillery put up stiff resistance, allowing for Early to consolidate his lines before the main Federal assault at noon.³⁶

In the largest battle of the Shenandoah Valley Early's brigade commanders Gordon and Rodes, the latter of whom was killed by shrapnel, fought the Federals to a temporary standstill only to be flanked by Crook, who backed the Rebels into the streets of Winchester. A charge from Torbert's superior cavalry sent the Army of the Valley into retreat, though Early reconstituted an impressive defensive line at Kernstown, saving his wagons and most of his artillery. The casualties were staggering, with Confederate losses at 3,610 (23%) and Union losses at 5,020 (20%). Winchester devolved into a hospital. The death of Rodes, Early's ablest commander of his largest division, forced a reshuffling of Confederate command, which rattled morale among the rank and file. Ramseur would now lead Rodes's men, while the capable Colonel John Pegram, who had joined the division in August, would lead Ramseur's troops. Major General of Cavalry Fitzhugh Lee had also been wounded, further weakening the subpar Rebel horsemen. As a final blow, the eminently popular Major General John Breckinridge, who had commanded Gordon's and Wharton's divisions, was reassigned to southwest Virginia on September 21.³⁷

The Rebel Army of the Valley retreated 20 miles to better ground at Fisher's Hill near Strasburg. With a force now outnumbered four to one by Sheridan, Early strung out his thin lines from east to west across an imposing

36 Ibid., pp. 44–5, 51, 74. For more on the Battle of Winchester, see Scott C. Patchan, *The Last Battle of Winchester: Phil Sheridan, Jubal Early, and the Shenandoah Valley Campaign, August 7–September 19, 1864* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2013).

37 Robert E. L. Krick, "A Stampede of Stampedes," in Gallagher (ed.), *Shenandoah Valley 1864*, pp. 162–3.

elevation cut through by ravines. The Confederate position was anchored strongly on the right by the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and with conspicuous weakness on the left by dismounted cavalry on Little North Mountain. Early's choice of dispositions could be construed a command error, for his right, where he placed Wharton's experienced infantrymen and strong artillery, enjoyed formidable terrain by the Valley Pike. Early also sent away his best cavalry under Colonel Thomas T. Munford to prevent Union troopers from rolling up the Confederate right and rear. Yet one must also calculate, as did the Rebel commander, the depleted state of his troops and his primary need to protect the Valley Pike and Upper (southern) Valley from invasion.³⁸ Early's artillery dominated all major approaches, and signal stations on Massanutten and Round hills provided fine views of avenues of advance. Early's best hope was "that the enemy would be deterred from attacking me in this position, as had been the case in August"; Early, however, now faced a Federal army emboldened by success. Sheridan possessed at least 35,000 men, while Early had little more than 8,000.³⁹

Midday on September 21 Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah advanced from Strasburg, first gaining the prominence of Flint Hill with Wright's VI Corps. Crook suggested his second successful flanking maneuver of the campaign on Early's left, quietly advancing through ravines and timber to dodge the Confederate signal stations. When on September 22 Crook's men careened down the side of Little North Mountain into Major General Lunsford L. Lomax's dismounted cavalry, the Rebels broke rank and fled.⁴⁰ As Sheridan advanced his other divisions, the Confederate infantry catastrophically collapsed from west to east, losing fourteen artillery pieces. A strong Confederate rear guard and the advent of night prevented the Federals from a full pursuit, while Confederate cavalry under Brigadier General Williams C. Wickham at Milford in the Luray Valley secured Early's rear, possibly saving the army from destruction. The Confederates suffered 1,235 casualties, including Lieutenant Colonel Alexander "Sandie" Pendleton, Early's chief of staff (and that of Stonewall Jackson before him), to just 528 Union casualties.⁴¹

To many, including Sheridan, Early's Army of the Valley appeared finished. A growing consensus of Early's own men, Confederate newspapers, and government officials, especially Virginia governor William "Extra Billy"

38 Ibid.

39 Wert, *Winchester to Cedar Creek*, pp. 109–11; Krick, "A Stampede of Stampedes," p. 163. For more on the battle of Cedar Creek, see Theodore C. Mahr, *The Battle of Cedar Creek: Showdown in the Shenandoah, October 1–30th, 1864* (Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, 1992).

40 Wert, *Winchester to Cedar Creek*, p. 169. 41 Ibid., p. 132.

Smith, advocated for Early's removal, but Lee demurred. Not only did Lee continue to admire Early, but Lee also failed to comprehend the staggering numerical superiority of Sheridan's force despite Early's reports. "One victory will put all things right," Lee supposed. Once again Lee offered Early reinforcements from Petersburg – Kershaw's division with Lieutenant Colonel Wilfred E. Cutshaw's artillery, while Major General Thomas Rosser took command of Fitz Lee's cavalry division.⁴²

Meanwhile Sheridan and Grant navigated their own gulf in understanding. While Grant advocated an attack on Charlottesville and the Virginia Central Railroad, Sheridan preferred to concentrate on fulfilling Grant's mandate to target Valley infrastructure and agriculture. Not only did his army require more supplies, Sheridan argued, but he was plagued by guerrilla attacks, particularly by John Singleton Mosby's 43rd Virginia Battalion. Though Sheridan attempted to address partisan attacks with Captain Richard Blazer's scouts and detachments from Washington under Major General Christopher C. Augur, neither had neutralized Mosby's rangers by direct pursuit or by burning supplies.⁴³ Though guerrillas played largely auxiliary roles in the eastern campaigns, to the extent that Mosby's men redirected Sheridan from destroying the Virginia Central Railroad, they may have helped delay the fall of Petersburg. Moreover, the so-called "Gray Ghost" terrorized the margins of Sheridan's force, "constantly turning up where he was least expected and least desired."⁴⁴

Sheridan's choice to initiate what came to be called "the Burning" rattled Shenandoah civilians. From September 26 to October 5 the Army of the Shenandoah burned crops in Harrisonburg, Port Republic, and Staunton – a campaign of exhaustion far more intensive than that of previous US Valley armies. On October 5 Sheridan ordered a retrograde march from Staunton to Strasburg, targeting infrastructures, including mills, tanneries, crops, and barns, and slaughtering livestock. Early attempted to arrest the destruction with Rosser's and Lomax's cavalry at the October 9 Battle of Tom's Brook. There US cavalry under Torbert routed the divided Rebel troopers at the cost of 350 Confederate casualties, plus numerous wagons, ambulances, horses, and artillery pieces to just fifty-seven Union casualties.⁴⁵

⁴² Ibid., p. 139. ⁴³ Ibid., p. 149.

⁴⁴ Major John Scott, *Partisan Life with Col. John S. Mosby* (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1867), p. 365.

⁴⁵ William Miller estimates Union casualties at closer to sixty-nine. William J. Miller, *Decision at Tom's Brook: George Custer, Tom Rosser, and the Joy of the Fight* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2016), p. 226.

Unwilling to concede defeat and under pressure from Lee, Early pursued Sheridan. After a brief engagement at Stickley's Farm on October 13, the Rebels settled into their former Fisher's Hill works.⁴⁶ Though the movement gave Sheridan pause, he considered it highly unlikely that Early would attack and agreed to a brief trip to Washington on October 15 to discuss his army's next assignment. He favored returning to Petersburg, while Grant continued to advocate for an advance on Gordonsville and Charlottesville. Horatio Wright served as the Army of the Shenandoah's commander in Sheridan's absence.

The Army of the Shenandoah sprawled across a series of ridges between Cedar Creek and Middletown, through which the Valley Pike passed. Wright's VI Corps dug in near Middletown, where Sheridan had deemed a Confederate blow most likely, Emory's XIX Corps entrenched on a crest above Cedar Creek, and Crook's former Army of West Virginia along with Colonel J. Howard Kitching's Provisional Division – fresh reinforcements numbering 6,000 – occupied ground to the east farther down the pike.⁴⁷ Kitching's green command, paired with Brigadier General Rutherford B. Hayes's veterans, lay divided from Crook by Union ambulances and wagons and rolling terrain. While the position was invulnerable to frontal attacks the left could be flanked if the Rebels could cross the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and Cedar Creek without being detected, which appeared highly unlikely.

Prodded by Lee's reminder that "I have weakened myself very much to strengthen you," Early took that risk. Perhaps also impelling Early's determination was Lee's misguided presumption that Early's failures resulted from the tactical error of committing troops piecemeal, as Jackson had done in 1862. Early, acutely aware that his major challenge remained his numerical disadvantage but failing to grasp the extent to which his men had begun to doubt his generalship, calculated that a surprise flanking attack was his best chance. Because his arthritis prevented him from performing reconnaissance on the Massanutten, he sent Gordon, Gordon's brigadier general Clement A. Evans, and topographical engineer Jedediah Hotchkiss to observe Sheridan's dispositions from atop Signal Knob. The officers and Early agreed to a night march around the Union exposed left flank followed by a concentrated assault by the whole army for the Battle of Cedar Creek on October 19.⁴⁸

Among the most skillfully planned and executed offensives of the war, Gordon's division, in single file along a pig's path, crossed the North Fork of

46 Wert, *Winchester to Cedar Creek*, pp. 168–9. 47 Ibid., pp. 170–1. 48 Ibid., pp. 173, 175.

the Shenandoah twice to reach Crook's left flank undetected in the fog, while Kershaw's division, accompanied by Early, advanced across Cedar Creek, followed later by Wharton's division and the Confederate artillery. The attack came off perfectly before sunrise, achieving a rout of the Federals; however, Union commander Wright, who suffered a painful chin wound, put up enough resistance to save the Union baggage train at Belle Grove, while his subordinate Brigadier General George Getty admirably defended Cemetery Hill and the Valley Pike. Getty's pocket of resistance prompted Early to concentrate against Cemetery Hill, critically committing Wharton's fresh troops there rather than urging them onto the pike, their original objective. Historian Jeffry Wert faults Early's judgment on this point, as well as that of his subordinates, Ramseur and Pegram, who missed opportunities to press forward to the pike in Middletown. It took massed Confederate artillery to dislodge Getty, granting Wright's army time to reform to the north. Meanwhile, Wright made the wise decision to order his cavalry to concentrate to the far left of his lines.⁴⁹

By 10:00 a.m. the superior Union cavalry halted the Confederates east of the pike and north of Middletown. Early's infantry turned to plundering of the abandoned Union camps. Deprived of supplies for some time, the Confederates had also been ordered to leave their canteens behind to achieve the morning surprise attack and now indulged their thirst. Famously, Gordon later recounted meeting with Early, possibly around 10:30, to press for attack, but the troops were in such disarray that this would not have been possible for hours.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Sheridan arrived on the scene to the immense cheers of his troops, having ridden vigorously from Winchester.

Sheridan's counterattack began about 3:00 p.m., turning the tide of the battle. Union cavalry pounded the Confederate right and left, scattering Gordon and Kershaw on the left and putting pressure on Ramseur's division at the center. At 4:00 p.m. Sheridan ordered a general advance, which Ramseur's men bore until Ramseur fell mortally wounded. The Confederates were forced to withdraw along the pike and back through the Union camps that they had plundered that morning. Fatefully, the bridge at Spangler's Mill collapsed, resulting in the loss of much of Early's artillery and wagons. By dark the Confederates had withdrawn to Fisher's Hill, the Federal cavalry having captured 48 cannon, more than 200 wagons, over 1,200 prisoners, and at least ten Confederate battle flags. Casualties amounted to 5,700 Union and 2,900 Confederate, rendering the battle the second

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 205–6. 50 *Ibid.*, pp. 216–18.

bloodiest in the Shenandoah Valley.⁵¹ Symbolically, Early's army had been defeated.

Lee recalled the majority of Early's veterans to Petersburg, though the remnant carried on, demoralized and undersupplied through the winter. On March 2, 1865, Sheridan defeated the last of the Army of the Valley at Waynesboro, capturing 1,500 Rebels and gaining complete control of the Valley. Sheridan's command returned to Grant. The loss of the Valley confronted Lee with a critical shortage of food at Petersburg. He unsuccessfully attempted to break the stalemate on March 25 at Fort Stedman, and four days later Grant initiated the offensive that concluded at Appomattox. On March 30, 1865, Lee relieved Early of command with gentle reproof: "I have reluctantly arrived at the conclusion that you cannot command the united and willing co-operation" of the soldiers and the public, "which is so essential to success."⁵² Early's military career terminated in crushing disappointment.

6.3 Civilians and Occupation

Throughout the war, as Union and Confederate armies vied for dominance and partisans disrupted daily life, Shenandoah civilians learned to live in continual fear for their safety and possessions. The Valley was home to a mixed community of secessionists, Unionists, free blacks, and enslaved people, all of whom struggled to protect their livelihoods as their fates reversed many times in a single season.⁵³ Winchester, one of the largest and best-studied Valley towns, changed hands as many as seventy-two times over the course of the war, according to local historians. Located in the northern Valley, Winchester boasted a particularly robust Unionist population, as the region retained stronger economic ties to northern markets despite the presence of slavery. Nevertheless, the town became famous for vocal secessionist resistance to frequent Union occupations, most notably from female residents, whom US soldiers termed "devils."⁵⁴ Further dividing

51 National Park Service, "The Battle of Cedar Creek," www.nps.gov/cebe/learn/historyculture/the-battle-of-cedar-creek.htm, accessed October 6, 2017.

52 Jubal A. Early, *A Memoir of the Last Year of the War for Independence in the Confederate States of America*, Gary W. Gallagher (ed.), (1866; reprint edition Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2001), p. 139.

53 Thomas, "Nothing Ought to Astonish Us," p. 226. The region contained 17 percent of Virginia's slave-owning households.

54 Gallagher (ed.), *Shenandoah Valley 1864*, p. ix; Richard R. Duncan, *Beleaguered Winchester: A Virginia Community at War, 1861–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2007), pp. xvi, 12–14, xviii.

the town was a sizable enslaved population who were keenly aware of the struggle for their future.

Union generals Banks, Milroy, Sigel, Hunter, and Sheridan subjected Winchester civilians to varying degrees of emancipation, confiscation, and destruction. Enslaved people tended to welcome US occupiers as emancipators, often fleeing to Union lines to offer their services as spies, guides, or soldiers. Some Federals even helped newly freed people reclaim goods from their masters when they became refugees. Confiscation and burning were usually restricted to items and structures of military value, such as crops, livestock, and barns, while seizure of private property was subject to quartermaster approval. Occasionally, however, Union soldiers targeted or threatened private houses, most commonly in retaliation for claims that Shenandoah civilians were abetting guerrilla activity. It could be difficult for Federals to distinguish between Unionist and Rebel property; for instance, after Sheridan's friend and aide-de-camp, 1st Lieutenant John R. Meigs, was killed (Sheridan falsely presumed by guerrillas), Sheridan ordered Dayton burned, countermanding the order after he discovered mainly Unionists lived there.⁵⁵

While Federal policy curtailed the punishment of secessionists and their property, Confederate civilians experienced day-to-day occupation as frightening and harsh. Secessionists were forced to take the oath of loyalty to the United States to receive passes to travel for food and supplies, contributing to material difficulties when they refused. Some civilians, including the elderly, were hanged for harboring guerrillas or imprisoned for loyalty to the Confederacy.⁵⁶ Even when the worst punishments were not carried out, threats of burning and violence produced a bitterness in Valley residents that would long outlast the Civil War.

A handful of influential secessionist women living in the Shenandoah significantly shaped public perceptions of Yankee invaders, particularly those of German ancestry, as indiscriminately attacking civilians and private property, which rarely occurred. For instance, Mary Greenhow Lee, an ardent Confederate nationalist and prolific diarist, devoted her attention to spying, stealing supplies, smuggling mail, nursing Confederate soldiers, and circumventing Union soldiers' orders. Referring to the German invaders as "a horrid looking set," who "filled the air with their jargon and curses," she refused to treat Yankees with civility. When Sheridan had her exiled from Winchester in February 1865, she took up residence in Baltimore and

55 Duncan, *Beleaguered Winchester*, pp. 243–4, 106, 111, 140, 209. 56 *Ibid.*, pp. 144–7, 232.

eventually served as manager and secretary of the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.⁵⁷ Similarly, Confederate spy and memoirist Maria “Belle” Boyd took an active role in disrupting Union activities, even shooting a drunken Federal who insulted her and her mother on the street. Dubbed by the Union press “the Siren of the Shenandoah,” she was arrested numerous times in 1862 through 1864 and eventually fled to England, where she composed her memoirs. Postwar she returned to the South to lecture on her experiences as a spy, sensationalizing Union occupation.⁵⁸

6.4 Postwar Memory

The Shenandoah Valley became the cradle of the postwar Confederate memory, known as the Lost Cause, in part, because of the sustained suffering its occupants had endured. As scholar Caroline E. Janney has argued, Ladies’ Memorial Associations (LMAs) were the original “creators and purveyors of Confederate tradition in the post-Civil War South.” Indeed, Winchester resident Mary Dunbar Williams and her sister-in-law, Eleanor Williams Boyd, organized the first LMA in order to properly bury the numerous Confederate dead in the region less than one month after Lee surrendered.⁵⁹ Moreover, the first major Lost Cause text, Jubal Early’s 1866 memoir, was a defense of his actions in the 1864 campaign. The combined efforts of Shenandoah LMAs and Major General Early established the foundation for the most pervasive and enduring Lost Cause arguments, including deifying Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, vilifying Yankee generals as corrupt and inept, celebrating the superiority of Confederate soldiers and women, and arguing that the Confederacy had lost the war solely because of inferior manpower and materiel but had not forfeited its honor or principles.

Immediately following the Confederate surrenders in 1865 Shenandoah residents began to plow up “decomposing bodies and bleached bones” as they sought to replant. The US government reinterred only Federal soldiers’ bodies, leaving the Confederate dead in shallow mass graves.⁶⁰ Valley

57 Sheila R. Phipps, *Genteel Rebel: The Life of Mary Greenhow Lee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), pp. 119, 192, 217.

58 Belle Boyd, *In Camp and Prison* (London: Saunders, Otley and Co., 1865), p. 2; Wilmer L. Jones, *Behind Enemy Lines: Civil War Spies, Raiders, and Guerrillas* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade, 2001), p. 58.

59 Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies’ Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 2, 39.

60 William A. Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865–1914* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 49, 53.

women vowed to correct this injustice and cast Confederate sacrifice in a positive light.⁶¹ LMAs thus “established Confederate cities of the dead” and sustained “white southern solidarity” through the creation of Memorial Days, which involved pro-Confederate speeches and fanfare.⁶² Unlike their white male counterparts, white Southern ladies were regarded as apolitical and could openly memorialize their failed country and celebrate their heroes, namely Robert E. Lee and the 1862 savior of the Valley, Stonewall Jackson. Additionally, the individual writings of Valley ladies, such as Mary Lee and Belle Boyd, sustained Lost Cause arguments long after their generation had passed away.

Though the ladies reserved special adulation for Jackson, they did not fail to recognize Early’s efforts. The special relationship that developed between the Winchester LMA and Early was particularly influential on the Lost Cause. At the end of the war Early vigorously set out to redeem his reputation as a failed general. He defended some of his more controversial actions, such as the burning of Chambersburg, as retaliation for the fact that Federals had violated female honor by destroying personal property in the Valley. He declared in his 1866 memoir, “I had often seen delicate ladies, who had been plundered, insulted, and rendered desolate by the acts of our most atrocious enemies . . . There was a mute appeal to every manly sentiment of my bosom for retribution.”⁶³ Early believed that the ladies of Winchester had never forsaken him even in the bleakest winter of the 1864 campaign: “When many of my countrymen . . . judged me harshly, the ladies of [Winchester], who knew the tremendous odds with which I had to contend, attached no blame to me.” And he praised their efforts to bury the dead who “fell while fighting under my command – among them being a number of valued personal friends.”⁶⁴ In turn, Valley LMAs recognized Early as an honorary member.⁶⁵

When Early self-published *A Memoir of the Last Year of the War for Independence*, he donated all proceeds to the Ladies’ Memorial Associations, chiefly those of the Shenandoah Valley. His text contained the majority of the most enduring Lost Cause arguments. Early’s efforts to redeem his own reputation after losing the Shenandoah grew into the collective memory that rescued the Confederacy from historical infamy. Thus, we must consider the 1862 and 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaigns central to how Americans remember the Civil War.

61 Ibid., p. 39. 62 Janney, *Burying the Dead*, p. 2. 63 Early, *Memoir*, p. 120.

64 Ibid., p. 71; *Register* [Shepherdstown, W VA], October 20, 1866.

65 *Spirit of Jefferson* [Charles Town], December 25, 1866.

Though the Shenandoah Valley was always secondary in its strategic importance to the main campaigns, its agricultural bounty, logistical import, and sustained experience with occupation, retaliation, and battles meant that its Civil War history has assumed an outsized significance in postwar memory. The specters of Jackson's perceived invincibility, Early's disappointments, plundering Yankees, Sheridan's burning, social unrest, and the numerous dead continue to fuel Lost Cause arguments today.

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The Second Bull Run Campaign

JOHN HENNESSY

Few campaigns and battles of the Civil War better reflect the complicated relationship between the military and the political, war policy and practice, and the incessant quest to find balance between them all than Second Manassas. The Second Manassas campaign of the late summer of 1862 resulted in the largest battle fought on North American soil until that time. It came at a time of growing urgency – even anxiety – for the Confederacy. The still-new commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, Robert E. Lee (just thirteen weeks in command at the time of the battle), took to the field seeking an antidote to Confederate defeats elsewhere in the South and the turgid warfare of earthworks and siege fortifications that had characterized campaigns in both Virginia and the western theater that summer.

In the first campaign entirely of his own design, Lee confronted an immense challenge: two Union armies operating in Virginia that, if left unchecked and undamaged, threatened to merge into what would be an overwhelming force. And, Lee quickly realized, one of those armies, John Pope's newly formed Army of Virginia, seemed determined to practice war in ways not yet seen in Virginia. Over five weeks in August and September 1862, Lee sculpted a masterful campaign intended to defeat Pope's new approach – motivated not only by the desire for military victory, but also by the practical need to discredit the harsher policies of war that John Pope brought into the field with him.

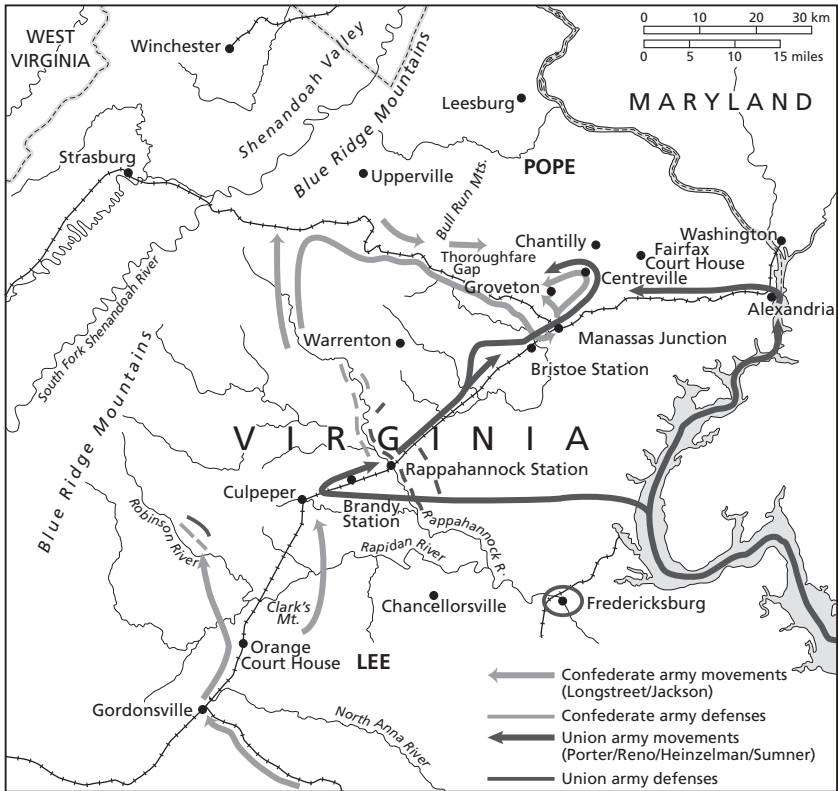
Union major general John Pope arrived in Washington, D.C. on June 24, 1862 – just twenty-three days after Lee had taken command of his army and just two days before the Confederate general commenced his successful assault on McClellan's Army of the Potomac in front of Richmond (the Seven Days battles followed). Pope brought with him from his service in Missouri and Mississippi a solid record of success and achievement mingled with a reputation for self-interested braggadocio and a penchant for criticism of fellow officers. His victory at Island No. 10 on the Mississippi garnered

warranted laurels and a promotion to major general. When summoned to Washington, Pope commanded the Army of the Mississippi, and he had played a prominent role in the recent capture of the rail center at Corinth, Mississippi. These successes fueled high hopes and expectations for Pope in the eastern theater.

Despite successes in the west that gobbled up rail centers, forts, and territory, the Northern public gauged the progress of war as it played out near the nation's major media centers, in the east. And there, in the summer of 1862, the war spun along bloodily, but unproductively. McClellan's army sat stymied, and ultimately defeated, in front of Richmond. And in central and northern Virginia, three other Union commands flailed about wildly, alternating between retreat and advance, trying vainly to quell Confederate lieutenant general Thomas J. Jackson in his various dashes down and up the Shenandoah Valley. In early summer, Lincoln concluded that the war effort in Virginia needed new direction. He summoned Pope to gather under one general the three commands that had roamed central and northern Virginia: Irvin McDowell's (at Fredericksburg), John Frémont's (in the Shenandoah Valley), and the battered command of Nathaniel Banks (also in the Shenandoah). Pope called his amalgamated command "the Army of Virginia."

More than just prior military successes in the west and dire imperatives in Virginia inspired Lincoln to bring Pope to the east. The sputtering Union war effort inevitably begged challenges from the public and politicians alike over how the war ought to be prosecuted and who was best suited to prosecute it. Beyond the obvious and traditional topics of who should command – McClellan was obstreperous and cautious, some suggested – that spring and summer the debate increasingly raged over the nature and purpose of war itself. Should the end of slavery be made a formalized aim of the war (enslaved people themselves were already pouring into Union lines by the thousands)? Should Southern civilians, whose support for war helped make it happen, suffer its consequences in more obvious and odious ways? Had the North been too conciliatory in its practice of war so far?

The answers that mattered most that summer emanated from the White House and halls of Congress: Yes, the North had been too conciliatory, and the nation needed a more vigorous war, harder on civilians, embracing the abolition of slavery rather than its continued protection by the federal government. McClellan had demonstrated by his own acts and words and by those of his operatives in the press and Congress that he opposed harder war in Virginia. His most loyal subordinate and sometime proxy with the

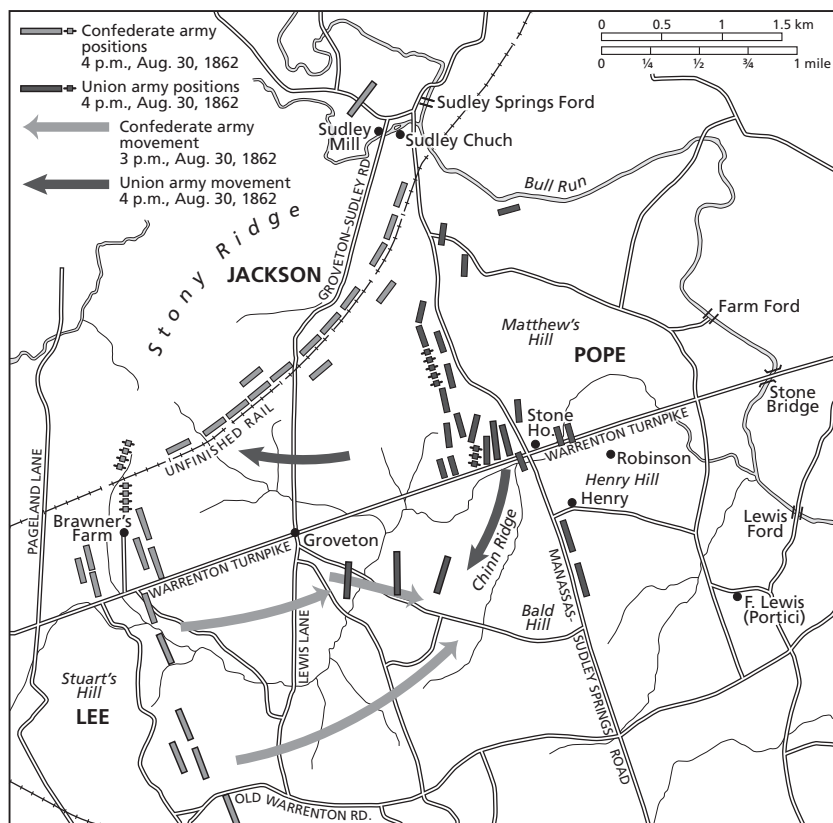


7.1 Second Bull Run. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

press and politicians, Fitz John Porter, expressed the philosophy plainly, “We will . . . reconquer the country in a manner which will develop Union feeling and cause Virginia to rejoin us.” Pope, on the other hand, embraced emancipation as an aim of the war and had practiced hard-war policies during his time in Missouri. “War means desolation and death,” he declared, “and it is neither humanity nor wisdom to carry it out upon any other theory. The more bitter it is made for the delinquents, the sooner it will end.” In coming to the eastern theater, Pope rode a tide of hard-war sentiment in Washington that meshed neatly with his own.¹

¹ Fitz John Porter to Manton Marble, May 21, 1862, Manton Marble Papers, Library of Congress; Pope letter quoted in Wallace J. Schutz and Walter N. Trenerry, *Abandoned by Lincoln: A Military Biography of General John Pope* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press,

The Second Bull Run Campaign



7.1 (cont.)

The distance of time shows us that Pope came to Virginia not just to win a military campaign, but to change the nature and practice of war in Virginia. His personality enhanced his status as an interloper. "He smoked incessantly and talked imprudently," wrote one Union newspaperman, who noted that Pope inspired mistrust "by his much promising and love of gossip." Pope's personality and politics provoked physical resistance from the Confederates and a verbal and political backlash from more conservative elements within the Union army itself – notably McClellan and much of the high command of the Army of the Potomac, who largely

1990), p. 177. For a narrative and analysis of the Second Manassas campaign, see John J. Hennessy, *Return to Bull Run: The Campaign and Battle of Second Manassas* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

embraced the principles of conservatives who opposed hard-war measures. The debate over war aims and policies fractured both the body politic of the North and armies in the field, casting the coming campaign into a political tumult that would long outlive John Pope's time in Virginia.²

Pope began his tenure as the commander of the Army of Virginia with a series of proclamations and orders that signaled new policies and his disdain for the light-fingered form of war he saw as McClellan's way. Many historians once conflated these orders with Pope's obnoxious personality and his personal antipathy for McClellan, but clearly they were a calculated message from both Pope and the administration that the war in Virginia would henceforth be conducted on new rules. Pope ordered his army to take more from the land in central and northern Virginia. (Lincoln also issued a similar order to all Union armies that permitted the taking of "any property, real or personal, which may be necessary or convenient for . . . supplies or for other military purposes," including slaves.) Pope's directives required Southern males within Union lines to take the oath of allegiance or be sent south. And Southern civilians in the neighborhood would be held responsible for damage done by Confederate raids. Even more provocatively, Pope issued a proclamation to his troops that derided terms often associated with McClellan: "lines of retreat . . . bases of supplies." "Let us discard such ideas," he wrote. "Success and Glory are in the Advance. Disaster and Shame lurk in the rear."³

McClellan and his loyalists could not and did not mistake the intentions of John Pope. They dismissed him and his ideas publicly and privately. Fitz John Porter called Pope "an ass," foresaw that his proclamation would "make him ridiculous in the eyes of military men," and predicted: "If the theory he proclaims is practiced, you may look for disaster." But McClellan's officers did not attribute Pope's proclamations and orders solely to Pope's obnoxious persona (though many thought Pope obnoxious enough). Instead, many officers rightly saw the new policies as evidence of the government's commitment to a harder war that would enrage Southerners and further complicate McClellan's operations in the field. Pope's arrival bared a dangerous fissure between the Army of the Potomac and the government it served.

2 George Alfred Townsend, *Campaigns of a Non-Combatant* (New York: Blelock & Company, 1866), p. 221.

3 John Pope to "the Officers and Soldiers of the Army of Virginia," in United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 12, part 3, pp. 473–4 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).

A New York editorialist rued the divisiveness as “useless and harmful.” McClellan wondered to his wife, “There can be little mutual confidence between the govt & myself – we are the antipodes of each other.” Alexander S. Webb, a staff officer with Porter, fulminated about Pope even more vigorously: “How many bright hopes disappointed and . . . all done by the fools in Washington . . . Was there ever such a government, such fools, such idiots . . . ? I hate and despise them more intensely than I do the rebels.” When Pope took to the field in July 1862 he rode the razor’s edge of a Union war effort in tumult and, perhaps (Lincoln and Stanton hoped), at a decisive tipping point, both strategically and politically.⁴

Robert E. Lee sensed all this, and in it all he saw both opportunity and trouble. The emerging political divisions in the North – largely rooted in differing visions of how, or even if, the war should be conducted – represented an opportunity for Lee that he sought to exploit through the elections of 1862 and 1864. He later wrote hopefully of “dividing and weakening our enemies.” Though widely regarded as an apolitical thinker, Lee in fact worked with an acute sense of the likely impacts of his victories on international relations and domestic politics – giving, as he later wrote, “all the encouragement we can, consistently with the truth, to the rising peace party of the North.” He, indeed, would.⁵

But Lee also saw that the emerging policies of the Federal government and, specifically, Pope’s army posed a new and dire threat to the civilians of Virginia and by extension the Confederate war effort. Already, tens of thousands of enslaved people had left the farms and plantations of northern Virginia, central Virginia, and the peninsula to seek freedom in Union lines – leaving crops unharvested and fields fallow. And Northern editorialists increasingly clamored for emancipation to be both policy and law. Then there were Pope’s noxious orders. The soldiers of Pope’s army embraced them enthusiastically, and for a time they ran roughshod plundering the farms of Rappahannock and Culpeper counties. Several of Pope’s officers (including Pope’s emerging confidant, Irvin McDowell) found the orders objectionable for their effect on the army’s discipline. McDowell asserted that the army “is becoming, and that too rapidly, a mere band of marauders &

4 “General Pope’s Address,” in *Western New-Yorker* [Warsaw, NY], July 17, 1862; Stephen W. Sears (ed.), *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989), p. 383; Alexander S. Webb to his father, August 14, 1862, Alexander S. Webb Papers, MS No. 684, Yale University; Peter Cozzens, *General John Pope: A Life for the Nation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 74–5.

5 Lee to Davis, June 10, 1863, OR, 39(3): 881.

theives, and the Officers are becoming alarmed.” McDowell urged restraint, and Pope quickly squashed the unrestrained plundering.⁶

The *Richmond Examiner* accused Pope’s army and the North at large of waging “a war of plunder, rapine, and oppression, without shame and without compunction.” That was overstatement to be sure, but there can be no doubt that when in late July Lee ordered the first parts of his army to leave Richmond and confront Pope, Lee did so with an animus and animation never exhibited against other commanders. Lee labeled Pope “a miscreant” who “must be suppressed.” A Macon, Georgia newspaper declared, “Pope is imitating and excelling Butler” – a Confederate insult of the first order.⁷

Militarily, Lee feared Pope’s new army would descend on the key rail connections between Richmond and the Shenandoah Valley, where the coming harvest would produce much of his army’s food. With McClellan tucked away at Harrison’s Landing on the James River, Lee, on July 14, dispatched Jackson’s wing of the army northward to monitor and, if need be, confront Pope and his 55,000-man army, spread between Fredericksburg and the Blue Ridge in central Virginia. Lee surely hoped that Jackson could accomplish now all that he accomplished in May and June, when his command of 16,000 men alternately occupied, defeated, deterred, or baffled Union forces totaling three times that number. The first of Jackson’s troops arrived at the key rail junction of Gordonsville on July 19, and more would come a week later.

For three weeks Jackson stalked Pope’s army from a distance. By early August Pope had placed his lead corps, under Nathaniel Banks, near Culpeper, with orders for the two other corps – McDowell’s at Fredericksburg and Sigel’s (formerly Frémont’s) at Sperryville – to soon join him. On August 8, Jackson’s men crossed the Rapidan and the next day struck Banks southwest of Culpeper, near Cedar Mountain. The outnumbered Federals matched and parried Jackson, but eventually yielded the field (suffering 2,400 casualties on a blistering hot day). The next day, Jackson drew back across the Rapidan into Orange County.

Meanwhile in Washington, the key decision that would shape the coming campaign came down from the new Union general-in-chief (and Pope’s former immediate superior in the west) Henry Halleck. On August 4, Halleck ordered McClellan to take his army off the peninsula and to return

6 Irvin McDowell to “My Dear Nelly,” August 14, 1862, Irvin McDowell Letters, copies and typescripts on file at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania NMP.

7 “Infamous Order of Gen. Pope,” *Macon Telegraph*, July 31, 1862; *Richmond Examiner*, August 4, 1862.

it as it had come to Washington, by a vast fleet of transports. This would be an immense logistical undertaking: withdrawing from Harrison's Landing under Lee's watchful eye, marching down the peninsula to Fort Monroe, and then putting nearly 100,000 men on those transports. The effort would take weeks to accomplish, and it would establish the dramatic context for Lee's coming confrontation with Pope: Could Lee defeat Pope before the Army of the Potomac could join it in northern or central Virginia? And would Pope give Lee the chance?

Lee learned of McClellan's withdrawal on August 7, when the Union army disappeared from Harrison's Landing and a deserter reported transports moving down the James River. Days later, Lee ordered James Longstreet's wing of the army to leave the Richmond defenses and move to join Jackson against Pope. On the morning of August 15, Lee himself departed Richmond (leaving behind thousands of men to safeguard the capital). His challenge was clear: defeat Pope, or at least drive him out of central Virginia, before McClellan could join him. Much depended on the speed of McClellan's movement. But, Lee knew, even without McClellan's army at his side, Pope possessed enough men to be a formidable foe. Squeezed by time and the prospect of two armies, Lee would not face a more acute crisis during the first two years of his command. He wrote his wife of McClellan's move to join Pope: "we shall have a busy time."⁸

Lee arrived in Gordonsville on the afternoon of August 15 and proposed a plan to cross the Rapidan River and strike Pope just three days later – catching Pope's army, Lee hoped, between the Rapidan and the Rappahannock, where it might be destroyed. But chance interceded. The night of August 17, two Union cavalry regiments captured one of J. E. B. Stuart's staff officers, bearing Lee's orders to Stuart for the campaign – perhaps the greatest intelligence coup of the campaign. Forewarned and realizing Lee's plans for him, John Pope, who derided McClellan's retreats, now ordered one himself. On August 19, the Union army started for the Rappahannock crossings.

For his part, Lee had encountered problems beyond the capture of his orders, and he delayed his advance across the Rapidan until August 20 – confident that Pope would still be concentrated behind the Rapidan in Culpeper County. But the midday sun on August 19 shone down on Lee's disappointment. As he looked down from the towering observation post on

8 Clifford Dowdey and Louis H. Manarin, *The Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee* (New York: Little, Brown, 1961), pp. 257–8.

Clark's Mountain, he and his commanders could see the Union army already in retreat. Lee's army moved the next day, but by midday on August 20, most of Pope's army lay safely behind the Rappahannock River.

Along the Rappahannock, the armies did a four-day, noisy riverdance. Lee did most of the stepping – trying to find a way to strike Pope. He succeeded (and then only mildly) on August 22, when Stuart's cavalry found an unwatched crossing and dashed into the Union depot at Catlett Station. The raiding party captured John Pope's uniform coat and caused chaos, but mostly it illustrated the vulnerability of Pope's position. If Lee could just find a way to the Union rear. But diligent coverage by Pope's army and heavy rains stymied Lee. Instead, the armies shuffled like crabs, slowly northward – farther from Lee's connections to Richmond. Pope's bombast vanished in the face of Robert E. Lee. He wrote to General-in-Chief Henry Halleck, "we shall make the best fight we can."⁹

Pope beseeched Halleck for professional guidance and reinforcements from the Army of the Potomac. Halleck executed his new position of commander-in-chief with all the decisiveness of a shy teenager at a Saturday dance. He dispensed mild opinions, but no directives, to Pope. And his efforts to prod McClellan produced no noticeable uptick in the pace of McClellan's movement from the peninsula. Over days and weeks, Halleck redefined his position as general-in-chief from manager to advisor and encourager. The pattern would persist for nearly two years, until Grant arrived in 1864 with a firmer hand, stronger will, and clearer strategic vision.

Still, troops from the Army of the Potomac found their way to Pope's army. Lee knew this, and his urgency correspondingly increased, for with each sunrise the odds against Lee increased. The division of Pennsylvania Reserves under John Reynolds reached Pope on August 22. Samuel Heintzelman's III Corps of the Army of the Potomac started arriving the next day. Fitz John Porter, McClellan's confidant and verbose critic of Pope, would arrive with his V Corps just days later. Porter complained of his assignment to Pope, writing his friend Ambrose Burnside, "hope Mac is at work, and we will soon get ordered out of this." After his arrival at the front, Porter perceived disorder. "I expect [the Rebels] know what they are doing," he wrote Burnside, "which is more than any one here or anywhere knows." By the time the armies clashed on August 28–30, Pope

⁹ OR, 12(3): 611–12.

had more than 65,000 men in his command. Lee could count about 54,000.¹⁰

The crash of artillery echoed across the Rappahannock Valley from August 20 through August 24, while infantry and cavalry forays made Rappahannock crossings like Beverly's Ford, Freeman's Ford, and Warrenton Sulphur Springs momentarily famous. For Lee, all of it amounted to stalemate – one he could not afford if he meant to dispose of Pope before all of McClellan's army arrived. The moment called for improvisation, and on the afternoon of August 24, Lee summoned Jackson to his headquarters in Jeffersonton. There he presented his plan – one that likely surprised even Jackson. Lee proposed to use Jackson like a basketball coach uses a point guard – to penetrate, to cause confusion, to create opportunity. Jackson would take slightly half the army and embark on a turning movement around Pope's army, crossing the Rappahannock upstream at Hinson's Mill Ford, then following a meandering 45-mile route to the massive Union supply depot at Manassas Junction, on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Longstreet, meanwhile, would keep Pope occupied along the Rappahannock, following Jackson once it became apparent Jackson had succeeded in reaching the Union rear. Stuart would lead and watch the interlude between Jackson and Longstreet. He would be the army's eyes. The bold idea of splitting his army in the face of a larger force would have rankled military traditionalists, but it would prove to be prototypical Robert E. Lee.

The plan, and Lee's assignment of commanders to execute it, revealed his vision for how the Army of Northern Virginia and its commanders would, ideally, operate in the field. Here, in late August 1862, on the plains of northern Virginia, each of Lee's great subordinates would fulfill the role best suited to them. Jackson the agitator, the creator of opportunity. Stuart the eyes and the speed. And Longstreet the responder – capitalizing on the opportunity presented to him. Each man would fulfill these roles during other campaigns and battles, but on no other field would they do so at the same time. This second campaign to Manassas would be the ultimate case study in the Army of Northern Virginia at its best.

That night, Longstreet's men assumed Jackson's positions at the Rappahannock crossings, and the next morning, Jackson's 24,000 men started their trek. The first day's march took them northward to Salem. On August 26, while the cannon still boomed along the Rappahannock,

¹⁰ OR, 12(2) [supplement]: 923.

Jackson's men turned to the southeast, through White Plains, Thoroughfare Gap, and Gainesville. They encountered hardly a Union soldier. At day's end, Jackson's men marched into Bristoe Station on the Orange and Alexandria. There, they gave up the secret of their presence by firing on a Union military train returning from the front (the train escaped, spreading word to Alexandria). They then wrecked two more Alexandria-bound trains, watching with glee as they crashed off the tracks and down the embankment. A fourth train suspected trouble, reversed, and carried warning to Pope. That night, Jackson marched his troops into the depot at Manassas Junction. The next day his men pillaged the place, filling stomachs and haversacks with everything from ice cream to French mustard.

In going to Manassas Junction, Jackson sought not to seize loot, but to send a message. By violently sitting astride Pope's supply line, he hoped to inspire Pope to yield the Rappahannock. Pope responded just as Jackson and Lee hoped he would (a dangerous thing for any Union general). At first word of problems at Manassas, Pope ordered his army away from the Rappahannock in pursuit of the Confederates. From the Orange and Alexandria Railroad on the south to the Warrenton Turnpike on the north, Pope's army swiftly moved east, groping across the landscape for Jackson. Joseph Hooker's division of Heintzelman's III Corps made first contact just west of Bristoe Station on the afternoon of August 27. Richard Ewell's Confederates expertly parried Hooker in an intense, bloody clash along Kettle Run, but the Union move told Jackson he did not have time to linger.

After sunset on August 27, Jackson's men set Manassas Junction afire, signaling by the glow (visible for miles) the fate of the vast Union depot and revealing clearly to Pope Jackson's position. But Jackson would not dally there for Pope to find him. Instead, he ordered his 24,000 men to move northward by various routes to some high ground north of the Bull Run battlefield of July 1861. There, he would await word from Lee that Longstreet and the other half of the Confederate army were in supporting distance. And, if the chance presented, he would attempt to lure Pope into battle.

Pope sought battle too, but the desire reflected misplaced aggression rather than considered strategic thinking. Once his army left the Rapidan – leaving the key rail junctions to the south beyond his army's reach – Pope should have simply abided Halleck's dominant objective for the campaign: unite the Army of Virginia with the Army of the Potomac. By late August, the movement of McClellan's army from the Peninsula to northern Virginia was nearly complete (though it went slowly enough to arouse the anxiety and even the suspicions of those in Washington). Pope could have achieved his

campaign's first objective by simply withdrawing behind Bull Run to the heights at Centreville, where McClellan's incoming II Corps and VI Corps could reach him easily. Instead, Pope saw the chance to achieve perhaps the war's greatest accomplishment: trap and destroy Stonewall Jackson. In his formal orders for his army to descend on Manassas Junction, Pope revealed his exuberance to McDowell: "We shall bag the whole crowd," he wrote. Doing that depended on Pope finding Jackson before Jackson found Pope.¹¹

Jackson spent August 28 holed up on the low, wooded ridges north of the Warrenton Turnpike (modern Route 29) while Pope vectored his army along the roads toward Manassas Junction. Pope's orders called for most of the army to descend on the smoking pile of a place in the expectation that Jackson would still be there – a fallacy that became obvious soon enough. Stragglers reported that part of Jackson's command had marched northeast, toward Centreville. So Pope ordered his army there. As the day progressed, Pope's anxiety and urgency increased, and his focus on Jackson narrowed. By afternoon, any thought of interrupting the junction of the two wings of Lee's army had passed from Pope's mind.

An officer in Banks's corps later noted that in times of stress, Pope gave up his "pompous utterances and empty boasts" and became "a different being." "He was silent, even despondent at times, leaning on stronger men for counsel." That man throughout most of the campaign was corps commander Irvin McDowell, the vanquished army commander from the first clash along Bull Run. While Pope narrowed his focus, McDowell expanded his. That afternoon he ordered a division of his corps to Thoroughfare Gap in the Bull Run Mountains, where he hoped to block Longstreet's passage and make Pope's aspirations for "bagging" Jackson more likely. McDowell's regiments arrived there too late. Longstreet's men had already seized the gap and Lee had ordered them into bivouac for the day. McDowell's men nonetheless engaged them at the mouth of the gap. A small, noisy battle ensued, but McDowell soon yielded. The march of Lee and Longstreet to reach Jackson proceeded unimpeded and on schedule the next morning. Lee sent a note to Jackson confirming this late on the afternoon of August 28.¹²

That piece of good news arrived at Jackson's headquarters north of John Brawner's farmhouse along the Warrenton Turnpike at about 5:00 p.m. By happy coincidence, a part of Pope's army appeared in front of Jackson soon thereafter – one of McDowell's divisions commanded by a Wisconsin

¹¹ OR, 12(2): 72.

¹² George H. Gordon, *History of the Campaign of the Army of Virginia, Under John Pope . . . from Cedar Mountain to Alexandria, 1862* (Boston: Houghton Osgood and Co., 1880), p. 11.

brigadier named Rufus King, who at that critical moment suffered an epileptic seizure that would prostrate him for the next several hours. Unaware, his four brigade commanders continued their march eastward, toward Centreville, directly across Jackson's front. Jackson received word of their passage at about 5:15. He rode out, watched the Yankees, then wheeled and returned to his headquarters. "Bring out your men, gentlemen," Jackson said.¹³

Shells from two of Jackson's batteries soon whistled above the column of Union general John Gibbon's brigade of western troops – four regiments from Indiana and Wisconsin. Lacking guidance from his felled division commander, Gibbon consulted with fellow general Abner Doubleday and decided to confront the Confederate threat, at the time believing it to be Confederate horse artillery only. But when Gibbon's lead regiment, the 2nd Wisconsin, emerged into the fields east of John Brawner's farmhouse, it found not horse artillery, but Jackson's infantry. A spectating Union artilleryman wrote, "The grey backs now came pouring down upon us, a living mass, whooping like so many savages." Another Union soldier conceded the "peculiar corkscrew sensation" in the spine that attended hearing the rebel yell. The Confederates closed to within 100 yards. Gibbon, Doubleday, and Jackson all fed troops into the fight, and soon musketry raged along a nearly half-mile front. Over the next ninety minutes, as darkness turned the firing lines into pyrotechnic spectacles, the two sides fought to a deadly stalemate. Some regiments lost more than half their men.¹⁴

No doubt Jackson (with 24,000 men at hand) ended the night frustrated at not having overwhelmed an enemy force less than half his, but he did achieve a secondary goal at Brawner Farm: by bringing on the engagement, he signaled to Pope his position and invited him to battle. Pope, again, did precisely as Jackson hoped. That night Pope ordered his entire army to converge on the old Bull Run battlefield. Jackson prepared to meet him by distributing his troops along 1.5 miles of an unfinished railroad bed, excavated just before the war. Its cuts and fills would make the focal point of Jackson's position, and a strong one it would prove to be.

By dawn on August 29, 1862, King's division had prudently withdrawn from Jackson's front, while the rest of Pope's army gathered (perhaps

13 William W. Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), pp. 120–1.

14 "Letter from a Soldier," *Yates County Chronicle* [Penn Yan, NY], September 18, 1862; Phillip Check and Mair Pointon, *History of the Sauk County Riflemen, Known as Company A, Sixth Wisconsin* (n.p., 1909), p. 39.

imprudently) to the east on Henry Hill and Matthews Hill – famous landmarks of the Bull Run battle of 1861. Pope, at last, had found Jackson. Only the bagging he so wanted remained.

Pope directed his army to move against Jackson across a mile-long front. The movement constituted not a general assault, but a general groping. On Pope's right, near Sudley Church, Sigel's men skirmished with A. P. Hill's Confederates along the unfinished railroad. On Pope's left, Reynolds's Pennsylvania Reserves division pushed back onto the Brawner farm. Until mid-afternoon, the surging and receding of musketry and cannon marked the varying intensity of battle – a battle that, at least to Pope, fixed Jackson in place.

So far in the campaign, Pope had demonstrated extremes of perception and composure. He succumbed to despair when circumstances forced his retreat across the Rappahannock but had managed the deadly dance along that river well, frustrating Lee for days. He responded promptly to Jackson's turning movement, but descended into an unimaginative, single-minded focus on Jackson that permitted Lee to move Longstreet's wing of the army precisely as Lee had hoped and planned (despite McDowell's attempts to disrupt). Then, on August 29, he engineered the convergence of his army against Jackson reasonably well, but followed with a bit of mental gymnastics that at the distance of decades still defies complete understanding. That morning, Porter's command and King's division of McDowell's corps lay near Manassas Junction. As most of the army converged on the old Bull Run field, Pope ordered Porter and McDowell to advance northwesterly well to the left of the main force, along the road to Gainesville. But the order – known to history as the "Joint Order" – amounted to a verbal salad of muskrat and melon, bound to go down poorly. In successive sentences, Pope ordered Porter to move forward toward Gainesville, halt, and then prepare to withdraw.

Once Pope arrived on the battlefield and better understood Jackson's position, the thought of moving Porter toward Gainesville seemed an even better idea. Problem was, he never revised the confusing orders of the morning. Instead, he imagined that Porter would do as Pope hoped. In Pope's mind, his plan for August 29 became contingent on Porter moving toward Gainesville, turning right, and coming down upon Jackson's western flank. No order written or verbal actually expressed such a plan. Moreover, by mid-morning on August 29, Longstreet's troops (30,000 men, with Lee along with them) arrived on the field. Longstreet did not do as Pope presumed he might – go directly to Jackson's support. Instead, Longstreet

extended Jackson's line southward for nearly 2 miles, all the way to the road from Manassas Junction to Gainesville. Soon, they stood opposite Porter, blocking any chance of his getting to Gainesville that day.

Still Pope hoped, and he spent his day on August 29 trying to occupy Jackson's attention while, in Pope's mind, Porter moved his men to launch a flank attack that in fact had never been ordered. (Porter would be court-martialed and dismissed for "disobeying" this and other orders that day; it took him seventeen years to retry his case and clear his name.) Commencing at mid-morning, Pope launched a series of localized assaults against Jackson. At 11:00 a.m. Robert Milroy struck a gap in Jackson's line at "the Dump" (a space in the unfinished railroad), only to be driven back. At 2:00 p.m. Cuvier Grover's brigade of Hooker's division briefly broke through on A. P. Hill's front (Jackson's left-most division). But no reinforcements exploited the break. At 4:00 p.m., another assault by three regiments rolled over the unfinished railroad in the area held by Ewell's old division, now commanded by Alexander Lawton. The success endured for minutes only. And finally, Philip Kearny of Heintzelman's corps launched the most dangerous attack of all, against Jackson's left near Sudley Church. The assault bent Hill's line back, testing the fortitude especially of a brigade of South Carolinians commanded by General Maxcy Gregg. "Let us die here, my men, us die here," Gregg exhorted his soldiers. Many would. Only an energetic counter-attack from men of Jubal Early's brigade healed the line and drove Kearny back. Jackson's line, though battered, survived the day.¹⁵

Jackson not only survived the day, but Lee's army emerged from August 29 in a vastly improved condition and position. Lee had succeeded in the great gamble of splitting his army. It now stood reunited, with Pope behaving just as Lee hoped he might. The Confederate line extended well over 3 miles in length – Jackson on the left, Longstreet on the right – shaped like the jaws of a waiting alligator. In between lay virtually all of Pope's army. The great question for Lee on August 29 and August 30: if and when to snap those jaws shut. Lee awaited not just any moment, but the best moment. When would it come?

Pope later claimed he knew that Longstreet had arrived on the field, but Pope clearly did not perceive that Lee had used Longstreet's command to extend (rather than support) Jackson's line. Longstreet overlapped Pope's left flank by a half-mile or more. Instead, in reporting to Washington on the

15 Edward McCrady, "Gregg's Brigade of South Carolinians at the Second Battle of Manassas," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, vol. xii (Richmond: Southern Historical Society, 1885): 34.

morning of Saturday August 30, 1862, Pope vastly overstated his situation: “The enemy are driven from the field which we now occupy,” he told Halleck. More than that, as he wrote the dispatch a report came in that Confederates were moving westward on the Warrenton Turnpike, away from Pope. They were in fact only troops and wagons being repositioned, but Pope leapt to the conclusion that most pleased him: the Confederates, after having been battered the previous day, were retreating. Pope ordered his army to pursue – a movement to be led by Fitz John Porter and his V Corps, rather angrily recalled from near Manassas Junction overnight. The pursuit lasted only a few hundred yards. Skirmishers clashed anew. Jackson, Longstreet, and Lee had gone nowhere.¹⁶

At midday, Pope directed that this pursuit be turned into an outright assault. It would be the largest Union assault of the battle – about 10,000 men led by Porter, directed again against Jackson, this time at and around an area that would forever after be known as the “Deep Cut” – an exceptionally deep excavation along the unfinished railroad toward the right of Jackson’s line.

Throughout the early afternoon, Porter’s corps, along with what had been Rufus King’s division, assembled in a body of woods north of Groveton. In front of them lay 800 yards of rocky pastureland belonging to Mrs. Lucinda Dogan. Midway, a wet-weather stream cut the field, then the ground sloped sharply upward to the Confederate line. By 3:00 p.m., Porter completed his arrangements. Moments later, his lines started forward across the Groveton–Sudley Road. A storm of artillery fire from Longstreet’s and Jackson’s cannon engulfed the field, knocking down dozens of Union soldiers as they found their places in line. Still, Porter’s lines surged up the slope. On the extreme right, New Yorkers of King’s division actually reached the railroad embankment, clinging to the one side while Confederates fired inches over their heads into the following Union lines in the open field beyond. “What a slaughter! What a slaughter of men that was,” wrote one Confederate. The Federals “were so thick it was impossible to miss them.” Farther to the Union left, the Union attack leaned into a vicious onslaught of Confederate bullets and artillery, closing in places to within yards of the unfinished railroad. For nearly thirty minutes the fighting boiled at close range. “The flags of opposing regiments were almost flapping together,” wrote one soldier.¹⁷

¹⁶ OR, 12(3): 741.

¹⁷ William A. McLendon, *Recollections of War Times* (reprint edition Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), p. 128; William C. Oates, *The War between the Union and the Confederacy and Its Lost Opportunities* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1905), p. 145.

The Confederate artillery near and north of the Brawner farm continued its fire into Mrs. Dogan's pasture. While the shells did little damage to the Union battle lines that had already crossed the field, they thoroughly discouraged Porter from sending successive lines into the fray. Dogan's pasture "looked like a mill pond in a shower," so frequently did the shells tear into the earth. In the end, only about half of Porter's force joined the attack. Those regiments suffered severely – some with nearly 40 percent killed or wounded. By 3:30, word went down the Union line to retreat. Thousands ran the gauntlet of Confederate artillery pelting the pasture. Porter's attack failed, but it tested Jackson like no other assault at Manassas.¹⁸

Its failure also caused roiling in the Union lines, compelling Pope and McDowell to rush men to support Porter's command as it fell back. Many of those men came from positions south of the Warrenton Turnpike – in front of Longstreet. Both Lee and Longstreet spotted the disorder. Both concluded, separately, that the moment demanded the jaws of the Confederate line snap shut on Pope's army. By 4:00 p.m., Longstreet had most of his 30,000 men moving forward on a front spanning more than a mile. The objective: Henry Hill and the crossing of the Warrenton Turnpike and the Sudley Road. If Lee could seize those places, Pope's army might be trapped and destroyed.

Longstreet struck at the moment when Pope had fewer men in front of Longstreet than at any other time of the battle – this despite several warnings to Pope that Longstreet was there, warnings Pope chose to dismiss. Longstreet's regiments closest to the Warrenton Turnpike struck Federals first, overwhelming a small brigade commanded by future Gettysburg hero Gouverneur K. Warren and in the process killing outright more men in the 5th New York than any other infantry regiment in any battle of the war would lose. Longstreet's lines soon approached Chinn Ridge. To that place Pope and McDowell rushed troops, trying to buy some time by slowing Longstreet – time that would allow them to cobble together a defensive line on Sudley Road on Henry Hill. The fighting on Chinn Ridge roared into the most intense sustained fighting of the battle – a ninety-minute whirlpool that left hundreds of men scattered on farmer Chinn's fields. Texans and South Carolinians and Georgians and Virginians slowly pushed their way northeastward along the spine of Chinn Ridge, capturing a battery from Maine, killing Daniel Webster's son, Fletcher, and finally pushing the Federals off the Chinn farm. The cost was high, but the

¹⁸ Testimony of Fisher Baker, 18th Massachusetts, in *Proceedings and Report of the Board of Army Officers, Convened . . . In the Case of Fitz John Porter, Part 1* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1879), p. 247.

Union troops who fought on Chinn Ridge purchased a priceless commodity with their efforts: time.

When the victorious Confederates emerged onto the ridge overlooking the Warrenton Turnpike and the key intersection they sought, Union battle lines on Henry Hill rushed forward into Sudley Road and opened fire. The Confederates had no choice but to turn to the right and confront them. For the second time in thirteen months, Mrs. Henry's old farm (now marked with her grave) became the focal point of momentous battle. But by then, Pope had managed to arrange a strong line on Henry Hill. The fighting raged fiercely – perhaps the final hour of fighting was the heaviest of all (Longstreet would lose as many men in three hours as Jackson had in two days). While Longstreet's men threatened the Union position on Henry Hill, they could not collapse it. The fighting faded as darkness deepened. That morning Pope had fancied his foe beaten and in retreat. That night, he ordered his army to retreat back toward Washington. Pope may have been the first general officer of the army to leave the field that night – yet another indicator of his undulating demeanor. After arranging the movement, he declared to nearby officers, "If I could be of any further service, I would remain, but as I cannot, we will ride back to Centreville." It was a defeat sudden, decisive, and consequential.¹⁹

As Pope wallowed amid his army's retreat, Lee, a few miles to the west, proclaimed his victory: "The army achieved today on the plains of Manassas a signal victory over the combined forces of Genls McClellan and Pope," he wrote to Davis. The South would rejoice at Lee's word and reward the general (and Stonewall Jackson too) with esteem and confidence. Indeed, the victory at Manassas represented a significant step on Lee's path to becoming the great (and eventually only) repository of Confederate hopes and a cornerstone of Southern identity. The *Richmond Dispatch* called him a "calm, self poised, consummate soldier – one who both as General and gentleman is a worthy representative of the glorious South." True, the battle may not have annihilated Pope's army (though it nearly did), but it cleared the strategic landscape for Lee. Within days after the battle, he concluded to take his army north, across the Potomac into Maryland. He knew his victory at Manassas would intensify divisions in the Union war effort, and with congressional elections scheduled for the fall, a move to and another victory on Union soil might just inspire the North to reconsider the war altogether.

19 Cecil D. Eby, Jr., *A Virginia Yankee in the Civil War: The Diaries of David Hunter Strother* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 97.

Few victories of the war led more directly to dramatic opportunity than did Second Manassas. "There never was such a campaign," proclaimed Confederate general William Dorsey Pender, "not even by Napoleon."²⁰

Defeat along Bull Run and Lee's raid into Maryland threw the Union war effort into intensified turmoil. As Pope shepherded his army toward the defenses of Washington, he wrote despairingly to Halleck: "Unless something is done to restore tone to this army, it will melt away before you know it." He bid the new General-in-Chief to intervene personally. "The enemy is in very heavy force and must be stopped in some way," Pope warned.

These depressing dispatches found their way to Lincoln, and it was Lincoln, not Halleck, who acted to remedy the disaster. On the morning of September 2, Lincoln visited McClellan in Washington – a visit he had hoped would be rendered needless by a victory (or at least the avoidance of defeat) by Pope in the field. He asked McClellan to take command of all of the forces under Pope and once again take to the field. Halleck too begged McClellan to intervene. "I beg of you to assist me in this crisis with your ability and experience," wrote Halleck. "I am utterly tired out." McClellan reveled in drama, and the collapsing army made for a dramatic setting for his return to command. That afternoon McClellan and Pope passed each other on the road to Washington, going in opposite directions, and McClellan again assumed command. Troops cheered. McClellan took to the field, said one man, with "a peculiar twinkle of his eye." For his part, McClellan wrote his wife, "everything is to come under my command again!"²¹

Pope's failure cast a pall across the North – a depression intensified by recrimination and accusation. The army accorded almost universal blame on McDowell, and not a few (including a dying colonel) accused him of being a traitor. The claim was ridiculous, but it found traction enough to ensure McDowell's removal from Virginia forever. Pope accused Porter of purposefully disobeying orders, a claim that Porter's disparaging writings about Pope to Burnside seemed to render plausible. The government prosecuted the case vigorously in part, certainly, to send a message to those in the army who would dare to machinate against unwanted commanders, emancipation, and

20 Dowdey and Manarin, *Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee*, p. 268; "General Lee," *Richmond Dispatch*, September 3, 1862. Warren W. Hassler, *The General to His Lady: The Civil War Letters of William Dorsey Pender* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965), p. 173.

21 "Letter from the Army," *Luzerne [PA] Union*, September 17, 1862; Halleck to McClellan, August 31, 1862, in George B. McClellan, *The Army of the Potomac: General McClellan's Report of its Operations* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1864), p. 616; Sears (ed.), *The Civil War Papers of George McClellan*, p. 428.

emerging hard-war policies. A court-martial found Porter guilty. His dismissal sent a powerful message to officers in the army, and indeed marked the commencement of an important effort by the government to end the debate over war aims from within the army by removing or silencing the debaters themselves. By early 1863, many McClellan loyalists (as well as McClellan himself) would be gone from the Army of the Potomac. Those who remained had learned to manage their political views carefully. Henceforth the army would play only a marginal role in the tumultuous debate over Union war aims. The episode represents perhaps the ultimate ascension of the civil over the military, now a cornerstone of America's national identity.

Had Pope succeeded in August 1862 – or even simply avoided defeat – he likely would have superseded McClellan in command of the Union armies in Virginia, sparing Lincoln the need to restore and, eventually, relieve McClellan. Instead, Pope's Second Manassas campaign left the Union war effort teetering on a narrow political and military ledge. Despite McClellan's opposition, Lincoln continued his efforts to render the Union war effort more expansive, more intrusive, and more destructive. He rescinded none of Pope's orders affecting civilians in Virginia (though the army found the orders respecting oaths of allegiance and guerrillas to be impractical). And then came the greatest irony: at Antietam, McClellan gained the victory that allowed Lincoln to issue the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, a measure McClellan passionately opposed, and in fact considered repudiating. The proclamation stimulated loud rumblings from McClellan and his loyalists (and indeed much of the Northern populace). The uproar merely added to the sense of uncertainty and division born under Pope on the fields of northern Virginia in the summer of 1862 – uncertainties and divisions that would plague and even threaten the Union war effort for nearly two years to come.

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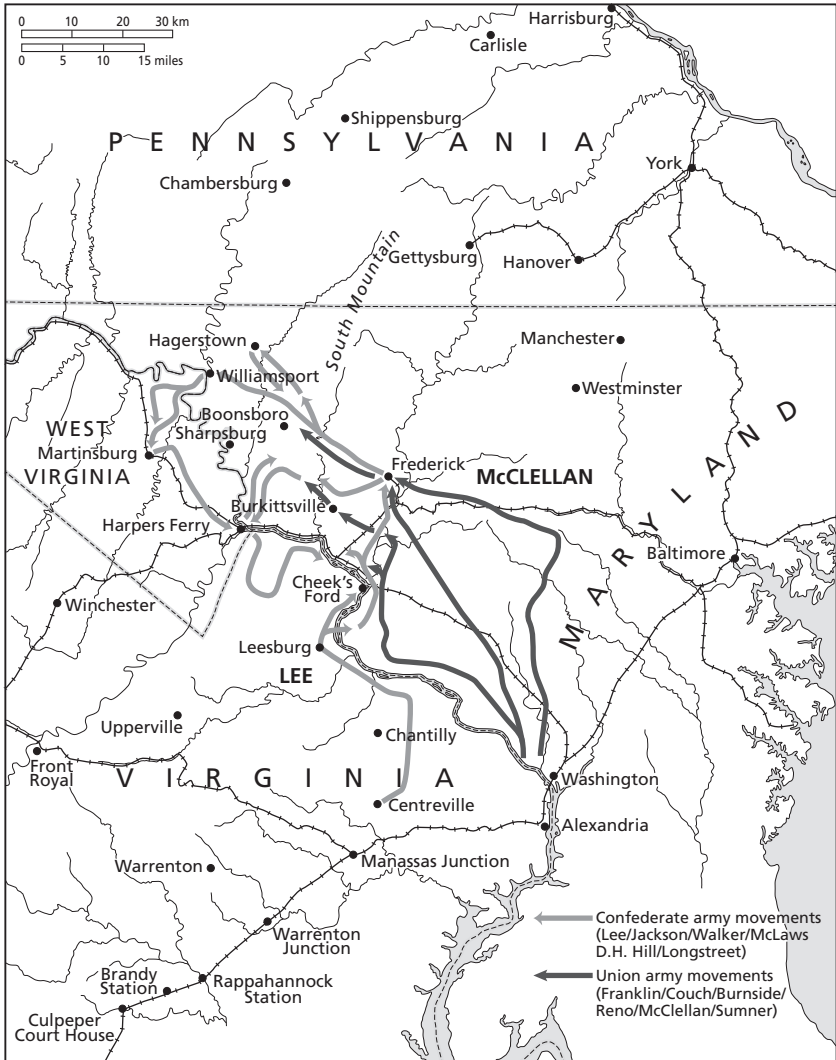
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The Antietam Campaign

D. SCOTT HARTWIG

The victory of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia at the Battle of Second Manassas on August 30–1, 1862 left its commander, Robert E. Lee, with three strategic options. He could besiege the Union capital, Washington, D.C.; he could withdraw to Warrenton, Virginia, where his exhausted and poorly supplied army could resupply and recover; or he could carry forward his summer offensive by crossing the Potomac and invading Maryland, and, if circumstances allowed, Pennsylvania. Lee dismissed the first out of hand. His army had neither the logistics nor strength to attempt a siege. The second surrendered the initiative to the enemy and permitted the Federals to reorganize and train the many new regiments raised in response to President Lincoln's call for 300,000 new volunteers in July 1862. Lee believed the third option offered the greatest opportunities and it kept the initiative in his hands, something he always sought. He related to Confederate president Jefferson Davis that his army was not "properly equipped for an invasion of an enemy's territory," but from both a political and military perspective there was sound logic to invasion.¹ The Union Army of the Potomac and Army of Virginia were disorganized and demoralized. Invading Maryland would force the Federals to place an army in the field before they had reorganized. Lee believed it would also force the Federals to withdraw their garrisons at Martinsburg and Harpers Ferry, Virginia, clearing the Shenandoah Valley of all Union troops. Politics figured importantly in Lee's strategic thinking. He held out little hope for European recognition of the Confederacy. The key to victory was Northern morale and will. In Lee's view, eroding it with Confederate battlefield successes offered the best prospect for a negotiated peace. Victories on Southern soil were helpful but

¹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901) (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).

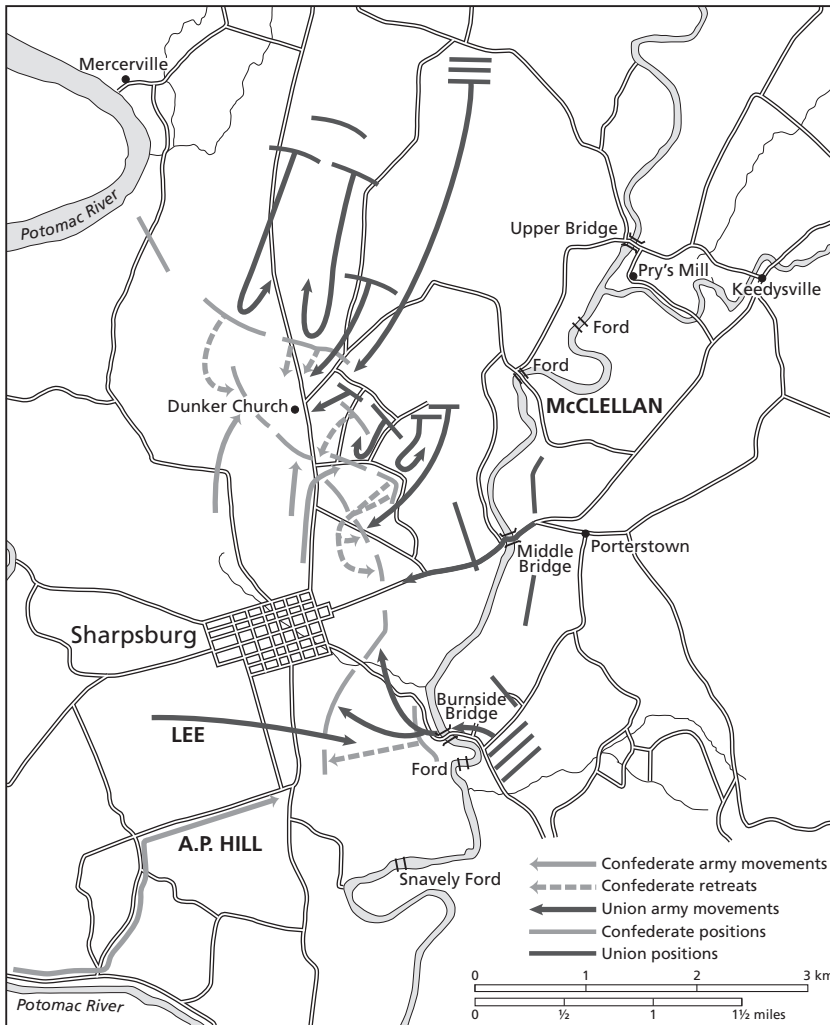


8.1 The Antietam campaign. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

victory on Northern soil carried the prospect of being politically decisive. Given the condition of the army, invasion was a gamble, but a carefully calculated one on Lee's part.

Lee informed Davis on September 3 of his intention to invade Maryland. The next day, September 4, he wrote again to confirm that he was "more fully

The Antietam Campaign



8.1 (cont.)

persuaded of the benefit that will result from an expedition into Maryland, and I shall proceed to make the movement at once, unless you should signify your disapprobation.”² Lee was simply displaying deference to Davis’s authority for both men knew there was no time to wait for a reply. He and Davis

² OR, 19(2): 591.

had discussed Confederate strategy months earlier and were in agreement and Lee knew that Davis would approve his plans. The Confederate armies were on the offensive across a broad front. In Kentucky, two separate armies under generals Braxton Bragg and Kirby Smith were seeking to wrest control of that critical border state from its Union grip.

Lee chose to enter Maryland east of the Blue Ridge Mountains, near Leesburg. His initial objective was Frederick, where his army would pose an immediate threat to Baltimore, Washington, and Pennsylvania. Lincoln would be compelled to place an army into the field before it had fully recovered from Second Manassas. Once the Federals emerged from Washington, Lee could move west, crossing South Mountain, a mountain range about 14 miles west of Frederick, and draw the Union army after him, far from its base of supply and the fortifications of Washington, out in the open where it might be decisively defeated.

8.1 A Crisis in Command

In Washington, President Lincoln confronted the chaos that had descended upon the nation's capital following the defeat at Second Manassas. The tumult was both political and military. On the military front the campaign to capture Richmond and crush the rebellion during the summer of 1862 met failure when Major General George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac was defeated in the Seven Days battles of late June and early July. Lincoln formed a second army in northern Virginia, the Army of Virginia, and placed it under the command of a favorite of the Republicans, Major General John Pope, who advocated a harsher war against the Confederates. Although cordial to one another in official correspondence, privately Pope and McClellan despised and distrusted one another.

McClellan's mistrust extended beyond Pope to include the president and army chief of staff, Major General Henry Halleck, who Lincoln appointed in mid-July to bring coordination to the Union war effort. "I am tired of being dependent on men I despise from the bottom of my heart," wrote McClellan to his wife, on learning of Halleck's appointment. Lincoln visited the army at Harrison's Landing, Virginia on July 8 to assess its condition and meet with McClellan.³ Before he departed McClellan handed him a letter outlining the general's views on how the war should be prosecuted. McClellan advocated

³ McClellan to Mary Ellen, July 18 1862, in, Stephen Sears (ed.), *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989), p. 364.

continuing a limited war policy that the government had essentially followed to this point. "It should not be a War looking to the subjugation of the people of any state. Neither confiscation of property, political executions of persons, territorial organization of states, or forcible abolition of slavery should be contemplated for a moment," McClellan warned. The general also cautioned that a radical policy toward slavery "will rapidly disintegrate our present armies." A general of McClellan's rank and position could offer his opinion or advice on policy that directly affected military operations, but Lincoln considered the limited war policy a failure and was ready to move on particularly on the issue of emancipation. "This government cannot much longer play a game in which it stakes all, and its enemies stake nothing. Those enemies must understand that they cannot experiment for ten years trying to destroy the government, and if they fail still come back into the Union unhurt," he wrote that same month.⁴ He had drafted an Emancipation Proclamation but his secretary of state, William Seward, counseled the president that issuing such a policy following McClellan's defeat on the peninsula would make the government look weak and desperate. Emancipation had to come from a position of strength and for this military victories were necessary.

Lincoln looked to Pope to deliver the victory he needed and as a way to deal with McClellan. Beyond their political differences, the president had lost confidence in McClellan as a military commander. In August, the Army of the Potomac was ordered to withdraw from the peninsula and reinforce Pope. As divisions and corps of the Army of the Potomac reached northern Virginia they were hurried forward to Pope and fell under his command. McClellan was not relieved; his army was just detached and sent to Pope. McClellan seethed with anger and resentment toward Halleck, Lincoln, and Pope. He sensed, probably correctly, that Halleck's and Lincoln's purpose was "to force me to resign." As for Pope, he vented, "I have a strong idea that Pope will be thrashed during the coming week – & very badly whipped he will be & ought to be – such a villain as he is ought to bring defeat upon any cause that employs him."⁵

In the critical days during the Battle of Second Manassas McClellan's star sunk even further with the president when he responded to a question about news from the direction of Manassas Junction, that the government should

4 Lincoln to Cuthbert Bullitt, July 28, 1862, in Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols., Roy P. Basler (ed.), (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953–5), vol. v, p. 347.

5 McClellan to Mary Ellen, August 8, 1862, in, Sears (ed.), *The Civil War Papers of George McClellan*, p. 388; McClellan to Mary Ellen, August 10, 1862, in, *ibid.*, p. 389.

either concentrate all forces to open communications with Pope or “leave Pope to get out of his scrape & at once use all our means to make the Capital perfectly safe.”

On August 31 Halleck and Lincoln learned of Pope’s defeat at Manassas. Pope recommended the army withdraw inside the capital’s defenses where it could be reorganized. “You may avoid great disaster by doing so,” he advised. As they learned more about the defeat it became clear that the army had lost confidence in Pope. It needed reorganization and McClellan excelled at this and enjoyed overwhelming popularity with the troops. Lincoln saw no other alternative and on September 2 placed McClellan in command of all troops within the defenses of Washington. This, he hoped, would buy time to search for a new field commander.

Lincoln shared his decision to place McClellan in command of forces within the capital with his cabinet that afternoon. They were furious, particularly Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase, who had drawn up a petition demanding that McClellan be permanently removed from command or the cabinet dissolved. The petition remained undelivered and reluctantly the cabinet accepted the president’s decision.

News that Confederate forces were crossing into Maryland on September 5 forced Lincoln to field an army. The question was, who would command it? Lincoln may have hoped Halleck would do so, but the chief of staff wanted no part of a field command. The president offered the position to Major General Ambrose Burnside, the 9th Corps commander, but he declined suggesting that McClellan was the best choice. The president knew there was logic in Burnside’s suggestion. No one else had the support of the army like McClellan or the experience necessary to manage a large army. “We must make do with the tools we have at hand,” he famously said to one of his secretaries.⁶ On September 7 he gave McClellan verbal orders to take command of the army in the field. McClellan would later make the dramatic claim that he never received orders and took command at his own initiative. This was a fantasy of his imagination. McClellan had never been relieved so no written order was necessary. The hope to turn back Lee’s invasion and to win a victory that enabled the policy of emancipation to be introduced was now in the hands of a commander who did not believe in it.

6 Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909), vol. 1, p. 116.

8.2 The Armies

The campaigning of the summer on the peninsula and in northern Virginia combined with exceptionally poor logistical support left the Army of Northern Virginia in ragged condition. Numerous soldiers were without shoes and the uniforms of some were in tatters. A haphazard commissary led to short or poor rations, which caused massive and, in turn, increased straggling. A soldier in the 17th Virginia wrote that in his brigade during the march to Leesburg “gangs from every company went off in the surrounding country looking for food, and did not rejoin their commands until weeks after,” ambulances were full of the sick, and “the whole route was marked with a sick, lame, limping lot, that straggled to farm houses that lined the way.” Lee took steps to try to curb straggling by creating a special Provost Guard to arrest stragglers and “punish summarily all depredators, and keep the men with their commands,” but the measures failed to check the problem.⁷

Substantial reinforcements reached the army on September 2, consisting of three infantry divisions, a cavalry brigade, and four battalions of reserve artillery, ordered up from the Richmond defenses. Several thousand conscripts, raised by the First Conscription Act, also joined their regiments around this time. These reinforcements raised Lee’s strength to about 68,400 infantry, 5,300 cavalry, and around 280 artillery pieces. From this peak strength the army steadily declined while in Maryland, mostly due to immense straggling, until by September 17, when they fought the Battle of Sharpsburg or Antietam, it numbered just over 37,000. The core of the army, however, maintained high morale and confidence in their leaders. As one soldier wrote, “Gen. Lee stands now above all generals in modern history. Our men will follow him to the end.”⁸

Lee’s army contained nine infantry and one cavalry division. He grouped the infantry divisions into two provisional wings and a reserve. Lieutenant General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson commanded one wing while Lieutenant General James Longstreet led the other. Both were outstanding officers. Lee personally commanded the reserve, which fluctuated in size. It was a formidable command team.

7 OR, 19(2): 592; Alexander Hunter, “A High Private’s Account of the Battle of Sharpsburg,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, vol. xii (Richmond: Southern Historical Society, 1884): 507.

8 R. H. Jones to wife, September 5, 1862, R. H. Jones Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History, quoted in Joseph T. Glatthaar, *General Lee’s Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York: Free Press, 2008), p. 163.

The Army of the Potomac in Maryland was in reality three hastily assembled armies. The II, V, and VI Corps, and a division of the IV Corps, were from the peninsula army. The I and XII Corps came from Pope's Army of Virginia, and the IX Corps had operated independently on the North Carolina coast until recalled to Virginia. Unlike Lee, who enjoyed the full support of the Confederate government, McClellan's position with the government was one of mutual suspicion.

Because combat and nonbattle losses had been so high it was necessary to reinforce the army with thirteen newly raised regiments, who accounted for nearly 20 percent of the army's effective infantry force at the beginning of the campaign. Most of these regiments had no, or minimal, training. The officers and men, one veteran officer noted, were "of excellent stamp, ready and willing, but neither their officers nor men knew anything, and there was an absence of the mutual confidence which drill begets."⁹

Over the course of the campaign the army's strength grew to approximately 87,000 men with 313 guns. McClellan's return to command helped restore its sagging morale. There was also an understanding in the ranks that the Confederate invasion of Maryland meant that the war was entering a new critical phase and that only hard fighting would defeat the Rebels. "If we fail now the North has no hope, no safety that I can see," wrote one.¹⁰

8.3 Harpers Ferry

The Army of Northern Virginia forded the Potomac near Leesburg between September 5 and 7 and marched north to Frederick where they paused to rest and gather supplies while Lee assessed the strategic situation. By September 7 he learned that the Army of the Potomac had sortied forth from Washington's defenses as he had hoped it would. However, the Union garrisons at Harpers Ferry and Martinsburg, Virginia were not withdrawn as he anticipated. Characteristically, Lee viewed this as an opportunity rather than a problem. He conceived an elaborate plan that divided the army into four parts. One column of three divisions, commanded by Jackson, would make the longest march, to first destroy or drive the Martinsburg garrison back upon Harpers Ferry. Jackson would then cut off the western escape routes from Harpers Ferry. The second column, a division under General John Walker, would cross the

⁹ Milo Quaife (ed.), *From the Cannon's Mouth: The Civil War Letters of General Alpheus S. Williams* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 126.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

Potomac and capture Loudon Heights overlooking Harpers Ferry on the Potomac's south bank. Major General Lafayette McLaws commanded the third column of two divisions. His mission was to capture Maryland Heights, the key terrain overlooking Harpers Ferry on the Maryland shore. The army's three remaining divisions would halt at Boonsboro, Maryland, where they could watch the rear and intercept any forces that might attempt escape from Harpers Ferry. The plan, drawn up as Special Orders No. 191, was issued to all the key commanders. It directed that all forces be in place around Harpers Ferry on September 12, allowing only three days. The army departed Frederick on September 10. On the march, Lee divided his army yet again, proceeding with two divisions under Longstreet to secure Hagerstown, which he intended to use as a base for an invasion of Pennsylvania. This left only D. H. Hill's division at Boonsboro. Lee took great risk in separating his army with the Army of the Potomac approaching in his rear, but like his decision to invade Maryland, it was calculated. He had confidence that the Harpers Ferry operation would be concluded well before McClellan's army became a threat. The army could then concentrate at Hagerstown and seek battle with McClellan, or, if the Federals moved slowly, advance into Pennsylvania and draw the enemy after them.

Although the Confederate commanders moved aggressively, Lee's timetable proved unrealistic. The Union garrison at Martinsburg fled to Harpers Ferry on Jackson's approach but it was not until the afternoon of September 13 that the Confederates completed their encirclement of the Union garrison. The arrival of the Martinsburg garrison raised the Union force in Harpers Ferry to slightly over 14,000, under the command of Colonel Dixon Miles, a regular army officer of over forty years' experience. Many of Miles's regiments were new and lacked training; others were second-line garrison troops greatly outmatched against the seasoned Confederate troops they faced. Miles compounded his problems by poor command decisions that contributed to the loss of Maryland Heights on September 13, a critical blow to the defense of Harpers Ferry. Yet, despite Miles's errors the Confederates fell an entire day behind Lee's schedule.

8.4 The Battles of South Mountain and Crampton's Gap

While the Confederates encircled Harpers Ferry, the Army of the Potomac advanced slowly across Maryland. McClellan has been criticized for the pace of the army's movement from Washington but his critics ignored the logistical and intelligence issues confronting him. Until the army reached

Frederick it was resupplied by wagon trains from depots around the capital. The farther the army moved from Washington the greater distance supplies needed to be hauled. Critical reorganization, such as sorting out the army's logistics, had to take place on the march. The many new regiments needed conditioning and acclimatization to army life, which shorter marches facilitated. But the primary reason for the speed of the army's movements was first, although McClellan received an abundance of intelligence, much of it was wrong, conflicting, or exaggerated; second, it was unclear whether Washington, D.C. or Baltimore was the Confederate objective; and third, Halleck was greatly worried that the Confederate movement into Maryland was merely a feint – that the main Confederate army remained in northern Virginia waiting for the Union army to move away from Washington when they would swoop in and capture the capital. This required McClellan to spread his army across a broad front and keep it within distance that it could move to the capital's rescue if necessary.

On September 12 the advance of the Army of the Potomac reached Frederick and the rest of the army closed up on that city on September 13. McClellan remained uncertain of Lee's intentions although he believed the entire Army of Northern Virginia was in Maryland. There were reports of Confederates near Hagerstown, Boonsboro, Harpers Ferry, and crossing the Potomac near Williamsport. Were they preparing to invade Pennsylvania, returning to Virginia, or moving to capture Harpers Ferry? "Where they have gone, or what their plans are, is as yet involved in obscurity, and I think our generals are a little puzzled," wrote Major General George Meade, in the I Corps. But, on September 13, an enormous stroke of luck cleared the murky picture for McClellan.¹¹ That morning, several soldiers from the 27th Indiana discovered an envelope lying in a field that was part of the camp of Confederate general D. H. Hill's division during the Confederate occupation of Frederick. Inside was a paper wrapped around three cigars. The paper was a copy of S.O. 191 for D. H. Hill from army headquarters. How it was lost, and the fact that its loss was not known by Lee's headquarters staff, is one of the mysteries of the campaign. It proved a tremendous intelligence boost for McClellan and cleared up much of the mystery of the Confederates' movements.

By late afternoon of September 13 McClellan had enough verification on enemy movements to determine the discovered orders were genuine, and he

¹¹ George G. Meade, *Life and Letters of George G. Meade* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), vol. 1, p. 310.

issued orders for an offensive movement on September 14. The VI Corps, reinforced by a division of the IV Corps, were ordered to force their way through Crampton's Gap in South Mountain, fall upon the rear of McLaws's command and relieve the Union garrison at Harpers Ferry. The rest of the army, over 60,000 strong, would advance along the National Turnpike, cross South Mountain at Turner's Gap and engage the Confederate force at Boonsboro. It was not a bad plan but except for the IX Corps McClellan did not move any of his forces over the Catoctin Mountain range, west of Frederick, during the night of the 13th so they would be in position to seize Turner's Gap early in the morning, nor did it contemplate the Confederates might defend the gap. It also committed minimal forces for the important task of relieving Harpers Ferry in order to maximize the force marching on Boonsboro.

Lee was unaware that a copy of his special orders had fallen into enemy hands but during the night of September 13 he learned that the Federals were planning a major advance. He ordered Longstreet to march back to Boonsboro on the morning of the 14th, advised D. H. Hill to defend Turner's Gap, and warned McLaws of a potential threat in his rear.

Early on the morning of September 14 forward elements of the IX Corps advanced toward South Mountain. They were aware of Confederate defenders at Turner's Gap so the Federals sought to outflank them by moving through Fox's Gap, a mile to the south. D. H. Hill, who had only part of his division on the mountain, sent a brigade to defend Fox's and a fierce battle ensued that resulted in the Federals gaining possession of the gap, but they were unable to exploit their success because reinforcements were slow to arrive. Both sides now brought up additional troops. Longstreet's two divisions made a forced march from Hagerstown that left the road strewn with thousands of stragglers. Meanwhile, the Federals, under the command of Major General Ambrose Burnside, massed the I and IX Corps to strike both flanks of the Confederate position. But, D. H. Hill seized the initiative first, and counterattacked at Fox's Gap. The IX Corps repulsed the attack but were unable to gain any additional ground. North of Turner's Gap, Major General Joe Hooker's I Corps, drove in the Confederate left and after severe fighting over difficult terrain seized a prominent mountain top commanding Turner's Gap. Darkness ended the fighting. South Mountain was a major engagement involving 24,000 Union troops against 15,000 Confederates. Union losses were 1,813. The Confederates lost 2,193. The Confederates held Turner's Gap and contested Fox's Gap but Lee's position was untenable. Late that night he ordered a retreat. Initially, he intended to withdraw to Virginia, ending the

campaign and operation against Harpers Ferry, and orders were sent to McLaws to move his command across the Potomac any way he could, and for Jackson to march to Shepherdstown to cover Longstreet's and Hill's crossing.

Five miles south of Fox's Gap, Major General William Franklin's VI Corps, numbering around 12,500 men, arrived before Crampton's Gap around noon. A small Confederate force of only about 750 infantry and cavalry initially confronted him. Major General James E. B. "Jeb" Stuart, whose duty it was to monitor the Confederate rear, left the gap that morning and rode to Harpers Ferry, although he did recommend McLaws send additional infantry to guard the gap. But Stuart had neglected his duty to be in position to warn McLaws of any threat to his rear.

Franklin moved with great deliberation and it was not until mid-afternoon that the VI Corps began their attack. A hard-fought engagement ensued. The Confederates were well-posted and although heavily outnumbered they held off the Union assault. Franklin's resolve collapsed and at 5:20 p.m. he advised McClellan that "the force of the enemy is too great for us to take the pass tonight I am afraid."¹² His soldiers thought otherwise and the officers and men of Major General Henry Slocum's First Division gathered their strength and mounted a daring frontal assault. They smashed the Confederate defenses and swept up the mountain, inflicting heavy losses and capturing many prisoners. McLaws's reinforcing brigade arrived only in time to share in the rout. Confederate losses totaled 896 while the VI Corps tallied 533. Franklin's troops advanced down the western side of the mountain into Pleasant Valley squarely across McLaws's rear.

McLaws's situation was critical. Harpers Ferry had not yet surrendered, which meant that he was trapped against the Potomac by Franklin's VI Corps. He met the crisis with calculated audacity. Reckoning that if the Union garrison at Harpers Ferry knew a relief force was nearby it might prolong the siege he determined to confront Franklin as far down Pleasant Valley as possible. During the night he gathered a force of about 4,000 infantry, twenty-seven guns, and one brigade of cavalry and established a line about one and a half miles south of Crampton's Gap. Franklin, meanwhile, was reinforced by Major General Darius Couch's division during the night, raising his force to nearly 20,000.

¹² William B. Franklin to McClellan, September 14, 1862, in, reel 31, George B. McClellan Papers, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as *McClellan Papers*).

Late that night, McLaws received Lee's orders directing him to withdraw across the Potomac. He exercised his initiative as the commander on the scene and ignored them. "I argued that General Lee did not know the real condition of affairs in the valley where I was." McLaws took the risk "of remaining where I was, and relied upon him [Lee] to get me out of the difficulty I was in."¹³

8.5 Lee Makes a Stand at Sharpsburg

The Union breakthrough at Crampton's Gap complicated the strategic situation for Lee. An immediate withdrawal to Virginia would leave McLaws isolated. It was necessary to do something to buy time for him to extricate his command from the trap it was in. Lee decided to make a temporary stand at Keedysville, Maryland, about 2 miles west of Boonsboro hoping to draw McClellan's main body away from McLaws. Lee sent fresh orders to McLaws to seek a route over or around Maryland Heights and Elk Ridge and to reach Sharpsburg, Maryland. He had not changed his mind about leaving Maryland; these were merely measures he hoped would save part of his army from destruction.

During the march to Keedysville Lee decided that the village of Sharpsburg, behind Antietam Creek, was a stronger position and he ordered Longstreet and Hill to continue to that place. Around 8:00 a.m. on the morning of the 15th Lee received a dispatch from Stonewall Jackson written the evening before at 8:15 p.m. Jackson reported that he expected Harpers Ferry to surrender on September 15. This instantly altered the strategic picture. Ever aggressive, Lee now saw an opportunity to salvage his campaign. Whether he could do so or not depended on McClellan's advance from South Mountain. If he moved aggressively then Lee could still withdraw across the Potomac at Shepherdstown. But if McClellan moved cautiously Lee thought it might be possible to complete the capture of Harpers Ferry and reunite the army at Sharpsburg to offer the Federals battle.

8.6 Harpers Ferry Surrenders

The Confederates spent the morning of September 14 in the arduous undertaking of hauling artillery up to Maryland Heights and Loudoun Heights,

¹³ Lafayette McLaws, "Capture of Harpers Ferry," *Philadelphia Weekly Press*, September 12, 1888.

while Jackson placed his artillery to shell the Federals' main defensive line on Bolivar Heights, around Harpers Ferry. By that afternoon the guns were in place and they opened a fierce bombardment of the Federal positions. Although the Union artillery fought back bravely the Confederate gunnery demoralized the Union garrison. That night, in the only bright moment for the Federals, the nearly 1,300 cavalry that were part of the garrison carried out a daring escape through Confederate lines. The Confederates spent the night moving infantry and artillery into positions that would render the Bolivar Heights line untenable. As soon as a morning fog lifted on September 15 the Confederate batteries opened fire, raining shells down upon the Federals from multiple directions. "The shower of shot and shell was tremendous," wrote a Boston newspaper reporter.¹⁴ After nearly an hour and a half the Federals' guns exhausted their ammunition. It was clear to the Union commanders that without artillery they could not hope to repel a Confederate infantry assault. Miles met with his commanders around 9:00 a.m. and nearly unanimously they decided that surrender was their only option. While Miles's emissary negotiated the surrender one of the last shots fired by Confederate artillery mortally wounded Miles, which spared him the condemnation of his countrymen for the largest surrender of Union soldiers during the war.

At a cost of just over 300 casualties the Confederates captured 12,520 Federal soldiers, forty-seven pieces of artillery, and large quantities of equipment and horses. They also seized some 1,200 African Americans, both free and slaves, who had escaped into Union lines. The Confederates made no distinction between them. Some were returned to nearby slave owners who claimed them while the rest were sent by rail to Richmond to be sold or resold into slavery. Although not the most famous victory of Stonewall Jackson it may have been his most noteworthy for the damage done to Union forces at such a small cost to the Confederates. A military commission investigated the cause of the Union surrender with the testimony filling 900 pages. They concluded that Miles displayed "incapacity, amounting to almost imbecility."¹⁵ There is no doubt that Miles was guilty of numerous egregious command errors yet, with a garrison of largely green troops, he held out for almost four days against a superior Confederate force, which left the Army of Northern Virginia divided and vulnerable to a defeat in detail by McClellan. It was an opportunity the Union commander failed to take full advantage of.

¹⁴ "The Surrender of Harpers Ferry," *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, September 19, 1862.

¹⁵ OR, 19(1): 799.

8.7 Concentration at Sharpsburg

It took the Army of the Potomac all day and into the night of September 15 to move from South Mountain to Antietam Creek where they found Longstreet's and D. H. Hill's brigades and artillery arrayed to dispute passage of the creek. McClellan has been criticized for the slowness of his pursuit after South Mountain and for not attacking the Confederates at Sharpsburg on the 15th, but it was not due to his caution. There were only two roads to move the entire army on. Major General Joseph Hooker, commanding the I Corps, and Major General Edwin Sumner, commanding the II and XII Corps, following the Boonsboro Pike, halted their troops along the road when they encountered Lee's defensive line, rather than massing their forces as ordered, creating a massive traffic backup. General Ambrose Burnside had orders to march his IX Corps from Fox's Gap on a parallel road but although he was directed to exert "the utmost vigor in your pursuit," he did not stir and spent the morning resupplying his troops.¹⁶ Late that morning, McClellan heard from Franklin in Pleasant Valley, who advised him that he believed Harpers Ferry might have surrendered, and, if this was the case, that he would need strong reinforcements. This was followed by a note from Sumner, who reported the enemy "in large force" behind Antietam Creek.¹⁷

McClellan initially advised Franklin to "attack whenever you see a fair chance of success," but as it became clearer Lee was making a stand at Sharpsburg, he changed Franklin's orders to hold his position.¹⁸ McClellan reached the front late in the afternoon and conducted a hasty reconnaissance of the Confederate position. There were three bridges over Antietam Creek: the Rohrback Bridge to the south, later known as Burnside's Bridge; the Middle Bridge, which the Boonsboro Pike crossed; and the Upper Bridge, about a mile and three-quarters north of the Middle Bridge. There were also two useable fords: Pry Ford, a few hundred yards below the Upper Bridge, and Snavelly's Ford, about a mile below the Rohrback Bridge. Only the Upper Bridge and Pry's Ford were undefended, rendering them the best option to move against Lee. But the day was too far gone to mount an attack so McClellan gave orders for his commanders to mass their forces in the vicinity of Keedysville and to hold their troops "in readiness to attack the enemy early in the morning should he be found in our front at that time."¹⁹

¹⁶ OR, 51(2): 837.

¹⁷ Sumner to Randolph Marcy, September 15, 1862, *McClellan Papers*, reel 31, LC.

¹⁸ OR, 51(2): 836.

¹⁹ Colburn to Sumner, September 15, 1862, Orders Received, II Corps Papers, RG 393, NA.

In Pleasant Valley Lafayette McLaws arranged his 4,000 infantry and artillery so skillfully that Franklin reported to McClellan he was outnumbered two to one. "I have not the force to justify an attack on the force I see in front," he wrote, even though his command outnumbered McLaws three to one.²⁰ Around 2:00 p.m. McLaws began to withdraw from Franklin's front toward Harpers Ferry. Franklin mounted a timid pursuit, reporting at one point that the Confederates were drawing off too fast for him to catch up. The victory at Crampton's Gap was squandered and McLaws was allowed to march his two divisions, artillery, and trains over the Potomac River pontoon bridge into Harpers Ferry unmolested.

8.8 September 16

A heavy fog lay over Sharpsburg on the morning of September 16 obscuring whether Lee had withdrawn across the Potomac during the night or remained in his front. The opinion at army headquarters was that Lee was too good a general to fight a battle with a river at his back. At 7:00 a.m. McClellan wrote Halleck that he would "attack as soon as the situation of the enemy is developed."²¹ As the fog lifted it became evident Lee remained. McClellan spent the morning hours with a lengthy reconnaissance of the enemy position. Lee had pulled his infantry out of sight in the undulating terrain so only his artillery was visible and it was difficult for McClellan to fix the enemy positions. He might have sent his cavalry over the Upper Bridge to probe the Confederate position but he made no use of it. Ezra Carman, a veteran of the battle and later Antietam's most important historian, criticized McClellan, writing "nothing seems to have been done with a view to an accurate determination of the Confederate position."²² There was urgency to move against Lee quickly. McClellan had made the deliberate choice to commit the bulk of his army to crushing the forces under Lee, knowing that this might leave Harpers Ferry to its fate. Now that Harpers Ferry had surrendered it meant the Confederate troops there would be marching hard to reinforce Lee. Attacking before they arrived was imperative. But it was not until early afternoon that McClellan settled upon a plan of action. In concept, three corps – the I, XII and II – would cross Antietam Creek and strike the Confederate left, while the IX Corps would make a diversionary attack against the enemy right to prevent Lee from shifting troops to his left.

²⁰ OR, 19(1): 47. ²¹ OR, 19(2): 307.

²² Thomas G. Clemens (ed.), *The Maryland Campaign of 1862*; vol. 11: Antietam, by Ezra Carman (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2012), p. 21.

The V Corps would constitute a reserve, which could strike the enemy center if opportunity offered. The execution of this plan was poor. Hooker's I Corps alone was sent across Antietam Creek on the afternoon of the 16th with orders to discover the Confederate position. McClellan seemed to want to see what Hooker encountered before he moved the XII and II Corps across Antietam Creek. None of the corps commanders were briefed on the overall battle plan, which resulted in a lack of understanding of how their corps fitted into it, and raises the question of whether the September 17 attack was a planned or an improvised operation.

While McClellan delayed, some of the Confederates from Harpers Ferry arrived. Jackson left A. P. Hill's division to finalize the details of the Union surrender and set out at sunset on the 15th to join Lee with two divisions and Walker's division. McLaws was delayed to obtain badly needed rations for his men and did not get underway until the afternoon of September 16. The march to Sharpsburg for all these units was severe. The pace was rapid and many were exhausted by days of active operations, and McLaws's men were desperately short of food. Massive straggling resulted. A 5th Florida officer recorded that half his regiment fell out. In an 18th Mississippi company, only seventeen of sixty men completed the march. Nevertheless, Jackson and Walker reached Sharpsburg mid-morning of the 16th and McLaws's divisions arrived on the morning of September 17.

Lee's decision to offer battle at Sharpsburg with an army crippled by heavy straggling was one of his most controversial during the war. "I think it will be pronounced by military critics to be the greatest military blunder that Gen. Lee ever made," wrote Edward P. Alexander, Lee's chief of ordnance during the campaign.²³ Why then did he offer battle? Lee was a gambler, but a calculated one. He was also an opportunist. A withdrawal to Virginia surrendered the initiative to the enemy and ended everything he hoped to gain by his invasion of Maryland. What seems likely is that Lee hazarded a battle at Sharpsburg because if he could defeat McClellan's attacks then his army would still be in Maryland, he would recover the initiative, and could continue a campaign of maneuver north of the Potomac where the possibilities for a more decisive military/political success were far greater than transferring the war back to Virginia. Yet, the poor physical condition of Lee's army should have convinced him that its ability to exploit any success in Maryland was limited.

23 Edward P. Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 145.

Around sunset on the 16th Hooker's I Corps ran into elements of Lieutenant General John Bell Hood's division in the East Woods, and the 30-acre cornfield of David Miller, which would become infamous as "the Cornfield." Sharp skirmishing resulted and continued past dark. The troops lay on their arms in close proximity to one another and Hooker advised McClellan that a major clash in the morning was certain and that he needed to be reinforced. McClellan ordered General Joseph K. Mansfield's XII Corps across the creek around midnight but held the II Corps back.

8.9 Sharpsburg, Maryland

Sharpsburg, Maryland was a community of slightly over 1,300 people in 1862. It was primarily a farming economy but grist mills along Antietam Creek were also an important industry. A significant part of the population was of German descent, but there were also English and Irish Catholics, and French Huguenots, such as the Roulette and Mumma families. The Germans were typically members of the Lutheran and Reformed churches but there was a small community of Dunkers, so called because of their custom of full immersion for baptism. The local Dunkers had built a small, white church north of Sharpsburg in 1852 along the Hagerstown Turnpike that became a focal point of much of the morning and early afternoon fighting on September 17. African Americans were also part of the community, both free and slave. The number of slaves in the Sharpsburg area in 1862 is unknown but Washington County, which included Sharpsburg, recorded 1,435 slaves in the 1860 census. However, Sharpsburg, like most of western Maryland, was largely Unionist in sentiment. Typical farms in the battlefield area were those of Samuel Mumma, Jr., and William Roulette. Mumma farmed 186 acres while Roulette had 180. Their fields were in corn, orchards, pasture, or freshly plowed. Since these were essentially subsistence farms there were not large numbers of livestock.

Although the battle on September 17 caused significant damage – Mumma's farm buildings, for example, were burned by Confederate troops to prevent their use by Union sharpshooters, and numerous buildings in Sharpsburg suffered damage from artillery – the most significant impact on the community was felt in the battle's aftermath. Many farms were used as field hospitals, and elements of the Army of the Potomac remained in the Sharpsburg area for over a month after the battle. Losses due to foraging by troops in both armies and the fighting on the 17th were significant. Henry Piper, whose farm bordered the famous Sunken Lane, recorded losses of 1

horse, 8 cows, 24 turkeys, 14 beef cattle, 40 hogs, 18 sheep, 200 chicken, 100 bushels of Irish potatoes, 200 bushels wheat, 800 pounds of bacon, 3,000 pounds of lard, and 20 acres of corn. Even more serious was disease. With so many troops and animals in the vicinity, not to mention several thousand dead bodies, some of which were not well-buried, civilians were exposed to various deadly diseases, such as dysentery and typhoid fever. No accurate accounting has been done but anecdotal evidence indicates that a considerable number of civilians contracted diseases from the army and that several died.

8.10 The Battle of Antietam – September 17

The battle opened at dawn, around 5:30 a.m., with Hooker's I Corps attacking the Confederate left, under Jackson. The carnage was appalling. "Men, I can not say fell; they were knocked out of the ranks by dozens," one Union officer recalled of the fighting.²⁴ By 7:00 a.m. Jackson's divisions were shattered and Hood's division counterattacked, driving Hooker's corps back, but at a terrible cost. One of Hood's regiments, the 1st Texas, suffered a loss of 82.3 percent.

General Joseph Mansfield's XII Corps arrived around 7:30 a.m. to relieve the I Corps, and on the Confederate side, three brigades of D. H. Hill's division advanced to Hood's relief. Mansfield was mortally wounded while deploying his men, but by around 8:30 a.m. his troops succeeded in driving Hill's brigades back with heavy losses.

The Confederate left was badly shaken and Lee rushed two divisions and several other brigades from elsewhere on his line to reinforce it. At the same time McClellan had at last released part of Sumner's II Corps. Sumner arrived with Major General John Sedgwick's division on the Union right and sent it forward into the West Woods to roll up the Confederate flank, but Lee's reinforcements, arriving from the south, struck Sedgwick in front and flank. In less than thirty minutes of combat Sedgwick's division lost 2,200 men and was routed from the woods. "My men fell around me like dead flies on a frosty morning," wrote one of Sedgwick's officers of the slaughter.²⁵

Shortly after Sedgwick became engaged General William French's division of the II Corps opened an attack upon Lee's center, situated upon an old

24 Rufus Dawes, *Service with the Sixth Wisconsin* (Dayton, OH: Morningside Bookshop, 1984), p. 90.

25 James Peacock to Son, October 27, 1862, 59th NY file, Antietam National Battlefield Library.

sunken farm lane, known afterward as Bloody Lane. The Confederate position at the Sunken Lane was vulnerable to an attack on its exposed right flank but French made no effort at maneuver. Instead, he hurled his three brigades, one after another, in frontal assaults upon the Confederate position meeting what one of French's men described as "a perfect tempest of musketry," and suffering 1,759 casualties in the process.²⁶ About 10:30 a.m. General Israel Richardson's division of the II Corps reinforced French's attack upon the Sunken Lane. D. H. Hill's two brigades, defending the lane, were reinforced by Richard Anderson's division. "The roar of musketry was incessant and the booming of cannon almost without intermission," noted a North Carolinian of the desperate fighting that ensued.²⁷ Richardson's assault outflanked and overwhelmed the Confederate defense and around noon the Sunken Lane fell and Lee's center was shattered. But the Confederates assembled a number of batteries and scratched together some infantry that prevented Richardson's brigades from exploiting their advantage, and the shelling mortally wounded Richardson. The division pulled back under cover and the crisis at Lee's center was ended.

While Richardson fought his battle against the Confederate center, Franklin's VI Corps arrived from Pleasant Valley. Receiving reports from Sumner that the army's right flank was in precarious condition McClellan ordered Franklin to reinforce this part of his line. It was a fateful decision for had the VI Corps reinforced Richardson it might have proved decisive. Unknown to Sumner, following the rout of Sedgwick's division, Brigadier General George S. Greene's division of the XII Corps repulsed two Confederate attacks on its position and at about 10:30 a.m. advanced into the West Woods immediately west of the Dunker Church. Greene's lodgement in the woods received minimal support and shortly after noon a Confederate counterattack drove him from the woods.

At 9:10 a.m. McClellan sent orders to Burnside to open his attack to capture the Rohrbach Bridge and assault the Confederate right flank. Although a division was sent to cross the Antietam at Snavelly's Ford, in order to outflank the bridge's defenders, McClellan's engineers had misidentified the ford, leading to a long delay in finding and crossing the correct ford. In the meantime, between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. under increasing pressure from McClellan to carry the bridge, the IX Corps mounted three direct assaults to

26 Charles D. Page, *History of the Fourteenth Connecticut*, vol. Infantry (Meridan, CT: The Horton Printing Co., 1906), p. 37.

27 Walter Clark (ed.), *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War* (Wendell, NC: Broadfoot Publishing, 1982), vol. 1, p. 247.

capture it. Only about 400 Georgia troops were defending but their position was well concealed and on high ground that completely commanded the bridge's approaches. They easily repulsed the first two attacks but the third succeeded in carrying the bridge in a desperate assault. Burnside pushed the IX Corps over the bridge and around 3:30 p.m. opened a general advance upon the Confederate right flank. Lee's line here was thin and on the verge of collapse, when around 4:00 p.m., A. P. Hill's division reached the field after a grueling forced march from Harpers Ferry. Hill's brigades struck the IX Corps' exposed left flank and drove the Federals back to the bluffs near the bridge where darkness brought an end to the fighting.

8.II Aftermath

It was the single deadliest day in the war. Union losses totaled 12,410, including 2,108 killed. The Confederates reported their loss as 10,291, with 1,567 dead, but many of their casualty returns were inaccurate and some units' losses were not reported at all. Their actual loss may have been as high as Union losses. Casualties in some units were frightful. The 27th Georgia, for example, carried 400 men into action and mustered only thirty-seven on the morning of September 18. The carnage shocked veterans of earlier battles. A Massachusetts soldier who crossed over Miller's cornfield and the pasture south of it wrote, "The whole field was literally covered with dead and dying." An Indiana soldier who fought with French declared "the sunken road was an awful sight, dead bodies crossed three and four deep, blood had literally flowed ankle deep." Colonel James Jackson, of the 47th Alabama, concluded, "Battle is a terrible thing and it takes nerves of iron to stand the battles we are having in this country."²⁸

During the night of September 17 the Confederates added thousands of stragglers who had fallen out on the marches up from Harpers Ferry so that by September 18 some units were stronger than they had been on the 17th. Lee actually contemplated mounting an offensive against McClellan's right but reconnaissance showed that it was too strongly held for any hope of success. McClellan did not renew the attack, for which criticism has been heaped upon

28 Charles Morse to Mother, September 21, 1862, Charles Morse Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; T. A. Lowusdale, "The Story of Antietam as Told to My Son," 14th Indiana file, Antietam National Battlefield Library; John R. Rankin, "What I Thought at Antietam," Indiana State Historical Society; James W. Jackson to My Dear Wife, September 21, 1862, in "Providence Has Been Kind," *Military Images* (January–February 1999): 22–3.

him. The reality was he had few fresh troops with which to lead an attack. Only one division of the army had not been engaged on the 17th and although another fresh division arrived on the 18th it was composed of raw, untrained troops. Few generals in his army at the time disagreed with the decision. The Confederates had fought with such aggressive ferocity that most believed their army was of equal or superior size to the Army of the Potomac.

With no options for offensive action, Lee withdrew across the Potomac to Virginia at Shepherdstown during the night of the 18th. McClellan pursued and on September 20, elements of the V Corps crossed Boetler's Ford at Shepherdstown. Lee immediately counterattacked with A. P. Hill's division and drove the Federals back across the river with heavy losses, ending the Maryland campaign. The Confederates could claim a stunning victory at Harpers Ferry, but overall their campaign was a military and political failure. Losses were extremely heavy and Lee failed to strike a decisive blow to Northern morale. McClellan declared that, "those in whose judgment I rely tell me that I fought the battle splendidly and that it was a masterpiece of art."²⁹ This was pure bombast. Many soldiers in both armies considered Antietam a draw. "I tell you it was a dreadfully bloody battle, each side was bound to gain the day, therefore the dead was piled in winnows on both sides," observed one soldier.³⁰

Alexander Gardner and Timothy O'Sullivan, two cameramen in the employ of Matthew Brady, arrived immediately after the battle and starting on September 19 captured a remarkable series of images of the battle's grim aftermath. In October Brady exhibited a number of Gardner's and O'Sullivan's images at his New York City studio. For the first time Americans viewed the war's carnage. It was a sobering experience. In the opinion of one reporter who viewed them, "if he [Brady] has not brought bodies and laid them in our door-yards and along streets, he has done something very like it."³¹

Lee's withdrawal to Virginia provided the perception of a Union victory, which was all Lincoln needed to issue his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22. Reaction to the president's proclamation was mixed within the Army of the Potomac. An artillery officer noted, "I do not hear much said here in the army on the subject, but all think it unadvised

29 George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story* (New York: Charles Webster and Co.), p. 612.

30 Eugene Anderson to Parents, September 22, 1862, 6th Wisconsin file, Antietam National Battlefield Library.

31 *New York Times*, October 20, 1862.

at this time; even the most anti-slavery.” A Wisconsin officer disagreed. “We like the Proclamation because it hurts the rebels. We like the Proclamation because it lets the world know what the real issue is,” he wrote.³² McClellan, however, could not reconcile to the direction the war was moving, and complained of the proclamation “inaugurating servile war.”³³ He spent the remainder of September resting and resupplying his army and training the thousands of new recruits who joined the army in new regiments. Lincoln visited the army for four days at the beginning of October, hoping that he could urge McClellan to commence a new campaign before winter set in. But McClellan refused to be budged, complaining he was not receiving the supplies he needed. There were supply issues but he exaggerated them. Finally, on October 26 the army began crossing the Potomac into Virginia. The Republicans took a significant beating in the fall elections but managed to maintain control of Congress, which gave Lincoln flexibility in managing McClellan. When Lee succeeded in easily maneuvering his army into position between McClellan and Richmond, Lincoln decided to act. On November 7 he relieved the general replacing him with Ambrose Burnside. It marked a noteworthy change in the course of the war and in Union war policy. The limited war McClellan represented would be replaced by a harder war that struck at the very underpinnings of Southern society and changed the nation.

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32 Allan Nevins (ed.), *A Diary of Battle: The Personal Journals of Colonel Charles S. Wainwright* (Gettysburg: Stan Clark Military Books, 1962), p. 108; Dawes, *Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers*, p. 126.

33 McClellan to William H. Aspinwall, September 26, 1862, in, Sears (ed.), *The Civil War Papers of George McClellan*, p. 482.

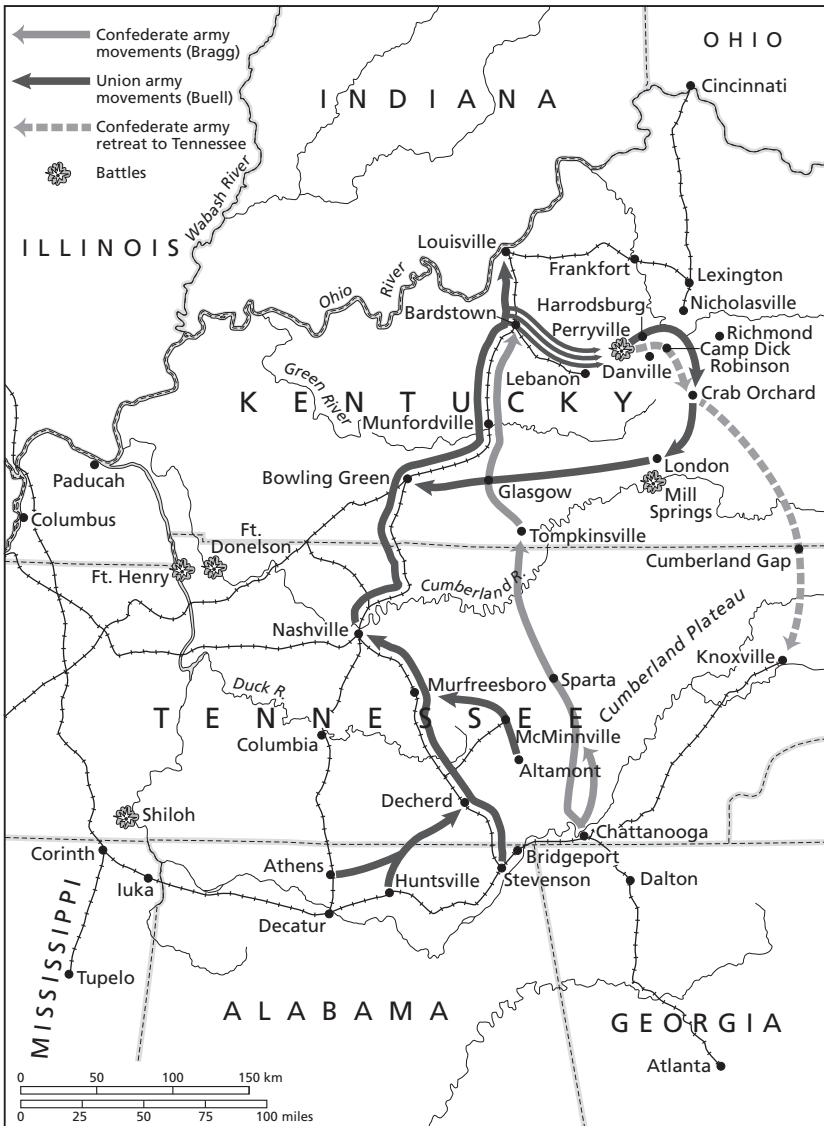
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The Western Theater, 1862–1863

KENNETH W. NOE

Ulysses S. Grant's successful campaign against Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862 left the western Confederacy reeling. The capture of the Tennessee and Cumberland river forts placed nearly a third of available Confederate troop strength in the theater into Federal custody. Flanked by Grant and facing Don Carlos Buell's approaching Army of the Ohio as well, Confederate department commander Albert Sidney Johnston led a ragged, dismal, rain and sleet soaked retreat out of southern Kentucky. Plagued by desertions and stragglers, his army stumbled across Tennessee until it reached northern Mississippi. Nashville, one of the Confederacy's most industrialized cities, fell without a fight in Johnston's wake before the month ended, and soon with it most of Middle Tennessee's rich farmlands. Simultaneously, John Pope's Army of the Mississippi and Andrew Foote's fleet of Union gunboats pursued Confederates fleeing their Mississippi River "Gibraltar" at Columbus, Kentucky. They drove down the flooded river valley until encountering the Confederate bastion at Island No. 10 opposite New Madrid, Missouri. Farther west across the river, Federal troops under Samuel Curtis already were in the act of shoving Sterling Price's secessionist Missourians out of southwestern Missouri into Arkansas during a brutal winter campaign. Reuniting the separated Confederate forces including Price's that had won a victory at Wilson's Creek the previous summer, new Confederate commander Earl Van Dorn launched an ill-fated attack at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, that left his defeated army staggering southward in the cold. Not surprisingly, given the collapse of the Confederacy's western line of defenses and its apparent implosion, many Federal soldiers gleefully anticipated a prompt end to the war after an additional season of mopping up.¹

¹ A classic overview is found in Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861–1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967). More recent but equally strong companion volumes are Larry J. Daniel, *Days of Glory: The Army of the Cumberland, 1861–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press,



9.1 The western theater, 1862–1863. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd. Military movements from Kenneth Noe, *Perryville: This Grand Havoc of Battle* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

The Confederates were not yet beaten, however. Desperate to prevent the further collapse of the west, Johnston rallied troops from across the Gulf Coast states to the crucial railroad junction at Corinth, Mississippi, located where the east–west Memphis and Charleston Railroad connected with the north–south Mobile and Ohio. Early in April, marching through deep mud and hard rain, Johnston's force plodded back north toward the Tennessee River. Grant's Army of the Tennessee had camped at Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee, while its commander awaited the tardy, flooding-delayed arrival of Buell's force at Savannah. Confident and convinced that their enemies were cowering in Corinth, they did not expect or prepare for an assault. It was a costly mistake. Encouraged by his new second-in-command, P. G. T. Beauregard – recently fallen from Jefferson Davis's grace and shipped out west – Johnston hoped to crush Grant's army before Buell reinforced it. Heavy rain and deep mud slowed the march for two days, however, long enough for Beauregard to despair of its success. Yet Johnston would not give up. On the morning of April 6, roughly 45,000 Confederates launched what effectively became a surprise attack that hammered the more numerous Federals back toward the Tennessee River. Grant arrived in the midst of battle and confusion to find demoralized men and panic along the riverbank, but he also realized that most of his soldiers had managed to offer stiffer resistance as the day passed. The death of Johnston also slowed the Confederate advance. Beauregard nonetheless claimed victory that night, confident that he would finish off Grant in the morning. But it was not to be. Augmented by Buell's arriving army, the Federals launched a brutal double-counterattack the next morning

2004); and Steven E. Woodworth, *Nothing but Victory: The Army of the Tennessee, 1861–1865* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005). For events specifically covered in this chapter, see also a volume by an always interesting scholar, Earl J. Hess, *Banners to the Breeze: The Kentucky Campaign, Corinth, and Stones River* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). As for specific battles and campaigns, for the Forts Henry and Donelson campaign and its aftermath, see two books by Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Forts Henry and Donelson: The Key to the Confederate Heartland* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987), and *Fort Donelson's Legacy: War and Society in Kentucky and Tennessee, 1862–1863* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997). One should also consult U. S. Grant's well-regarded *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, 2 vols. (2nd edition, New York: DeVinne, 1895). The standard biography of Johnston remains Charles P. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston, Soldier of Three Republics* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1964), but a new volume is needed. For Island No. 10, see Larry J. Daniel and Lynn N. Bock, *Island No. 10: Struggle for the Mississippi Valley* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996). For Pea Ridge, see William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess, *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992). An excellent study of Middle Tennessee before and after occupation is Stephen V. Ash, *Middle Tennessee Society Transformed, 1860–1870: War and Peace in the Upper South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

that slammed the Confederates back across the bloody field and ultimately back into their entrenchments at Corinth.²

Two days of vicious fighting left Shiloh – or Pittsburgh Landing as the Confederates called the melee – the bloodiest battle of the war so far. Civilians north and south expressed horror as casualty rolls appeared in local newspapers. Yet in and of itself, it did not halt the advancing Federal juggernaut. Bad weather and Henry Halleck, Grant's commander in the west, also played significant roles in the delay. Cautious and unwilling to be surprised as Grant had been, and stymied by the continuing rain and bad roads as well, Halleck arrived on the scene and called for Pope after the reduction of Island No. 10. At that moment he had over 100,000 men under his command, giving him almost a two to one advantage. He nonetheless inched cautiously toward Corinth, entrenching almost nightly to avoid a repeat of the Shiloh surprise. Inside the city itself, Beauregard and about 55,000 reinforced soldiers of the Confederate Army of Mississippi coped with a bad water supply, sickness, and unhappiness in Richmond. On May 30, pessimistic that he could hold the city, he began falling back along the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, eventually halting at Tupelo. From there, he informed Jefferson Davis that he was leaving subordinate Braxton Bragg in command and going to a resort to recover from his own illness. For Davis, it was the last straw in a relationship strained to breaking point since the Battle of First Manassas. He fired Beauregard and gave the theater permanently to Bragg. Infamously hard to get along with in the old army, Richmond nonetheless had lauded Bragg for his apparent aggressiveness at Shiloh. At the front, however, he had already started losing the support of his soldiers for what seemed to them foolish piecemeal attacks. His post-battle attempts to blame his men for his failures compounded the cancerous beginnings of his tenure.³

Bragg inherited serious problems at Tupelo. Sickness continued, morale was low, and soldiers inflated and recycled stories about Bragg's cruelty and penchant for military executions. He missed the crucial supplies that Beauregard had left behind in Corinth. But there was also the problem of what to do now that Corinth had fallen to Halleck. Outnumbered over two

2 Shiloh has received extensive coverage over the years. Notable accounts include Larry J. Daniel, *Shiloh: The Battle That Changed the Civil War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); James Lee McDonough, *Shiloh – in Hell before Night* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1977); and Wiley Sword, *Shiloh: Bloody April* (Dayton, OH: Morningside Books, 1988).

3 The standard biography of Bragg during this period remains Grady McWhiney, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat*, vol. 1, *Field Command* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969).

to one, Bragg knew that he lacked the manpower and transportation to retake Corinth directly. But he also had an unusual, hidden ally: the mosquito. Wary of pressing deeper into the malarial south and shackled to a single railroad north, Halleck decided to halt at Corinth and wait out the fever season while safeguarding his supply line from guerrillas. The Union navy, he reasoned, could deal with the Confederate's Mississippi River stronghold at Vicksburg. Halleck thus dispersed his command. He sent a division to Curtis and spread out most of Grant's and Pope's armies into pleasant garrisons along his vital communications network.⁴

There would be no rest for Buell's men, however. Halleck ordered their general to march to the east, across northern Alabama, toward the vital Confederate railroad center at Chattanooga. From there, President Lincoln's cherished project of liberating East Tennessee could start to become a reality. Buell resisted as long as he could, wary of the East Tennessee mountains and convinced that a better approach would involve marching for Chattanooga from Nashville. As Buell had feared, the march across Alabama soon became a Federal nightmare. Notably, the weather changed. While the first half of 1862 had been unusually wet, a massive drought descended across the trans-Appalachian south as summer lengthened. By mid-summer, the region was already foraged out thanks to a smaller Union force that had been centered in Huntsville previously. River levels eventually fell so low that Buell had to depend solely on railroads for supplies, but Confederate horsemen led by the likes of Nathan Bedford Forrest and John Hunt Morgan harassed those lines repeatedly and effectively. Buell's hot, dusty, and increasingly hungry column elongated as its van approached Chattanooga, even as Buell sent back more and more men to protect vital bridges, trestles, tunnels, and rail stations in his rear.⁵

From Tupelo, Bragg watched. He began to consider attacking Buell's exposed flank as a better alternative to attacking Corinth's formidable works, or else sitting out the summer himself. Other factors, however, increasingly pointed to yet another, more daring option. From East Tennessee, the vastly outnumbered Confederate commander Edmund Kirby Smith repeatedly issued anxious requests for help against Buell's

4 For a fascinating discussion of this issue, see Andrew McIlwaine Bell, *Mosquito Soldiers: Malaria, Yellow Fever, and the Course of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010).

5 See Stephen D. Engle's excellent *Don Carlos Buell: Most Promising of All* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

approaching army.⁶ Meanwhile, influential Confederates from Tupelo visited the Confederate White House and insisted that a Confederate strike north not only could regain Tennessee but also liberate increasingly restless Kentuckians from the alleged tyranny of Union rule. After a successful raid into his home state, Morgan insisted that white Kentuckians only needed the appearance of a friendly Confederate army to overthrow Yankee occupation. Politically astute, Bragg paid attention to the “Kentucky bloc” and their “Kentucky dream.”⁷ Finally on July 21, he informed Richmond that he was moving his restyled Army of the Mississippi to Chattanooga to relieve Kirby Smith. It would be no easy task. With the most obvious rail routes blocked by the enemy, Bragg had to move his infantry south, all the way to Mobile, cross the wide bay on ferries, and then entrain his men to Chattanooga via Atlanta, a total distance of 776 miles. Cavalry and artillery meanwhile would have to travel overland. Yet only six days later, Bragg’s infantry began unloading in Chattanooga. Lost in subsequent events and defeats, it remains one of the most monumental troop movements of the war.

Once in Chattanooga, Bragg met with Kirby Smith to decide what to do next. The latter agreed to reduce the Federal garrison at Cumberland Gap before they combined their armies and turned to fight Buell. Kentucky would follow. Kirby Smith marched accordingly on August 13, his numbers augmented with crack troops from Bragg’s army. Once in the vicinity of the gap, however, he changed his mind, if he had ever intended to honor the agreement at all. No one in the Confederacy felt the pull of Kentucky and the glory of liberating it more than the ambitious Kirby Smith. Intentionally exaggerating his difficulties, he quickly bypassed the gap with about 6,500 men and struck north into the Bluegrass State. On August 30, he crushed a hastily gathered, poorly trained Federal force of relatively equal numbers at Richmond. It was one of the most lopsided victories of the war. The survivors fell back in disarray to Lexington and then endured a forced march to Louisville forever remembered as the “Hell March” for its extreme heat, scarce water, and brutal pace. From Richmond, Kirby Smith marched into Lexington, taking the seemingly ecstatic city on September 2. His sudden appearance in Bluegrass Kentucky created

6 Here I follow the example of biographer Joseph H. Parks in referring to the general as “Kirby Smith” rather than “Smith.” See *General Edmund Kirby Smith C. S. A.* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1954).

7 For the “Kentucky bloc” and its influence, see Thomas L. Connelly and Archer Jones, *The Politics of Command: Factions and Ideas in Confederate Strategy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973).

a different kind of hysteria in Louisville and across the lower Midwest, however. State governors pushed new, barely trained regiments into Cincinnati and Louisville in hopes of keeping the Confederates south of the Ohio River. The abandonment of Cumberland Gap created more civilian panic and political gnashing of teeth.

In fact, Kirby Smith had already halted. Expecting to be greeted by happy secessionists and eager recruits, he initially reported success. “My entrance into the Bluegrass region of Kentucky has been a perfect ovation,” he wrote his wife. “Old and young have flocked to me and with love in their eyes have thanked God for their deliverance from persecution.”⁸ As some of his soldiers noted along the march, however, most of those cheers came from women and children. The commonwealth’s most eager secessionists had already enlisted a year earlier, and were serving in units such as former Democratic presidential candidate John C. Breckinridge’s famed Orphan Brigade. The men the soldiers now found along the march, they complained, stayed indoors. Within days, Kirby Smith wrote Bragg that “the Kentuckians are slow and backward in rallying to our standard. Their hearts are evidently with us, but their blue-grass and fat-grass are against us.” If the Confederates wanted wary Kentucky men to come forward and enlist, he added, they required arms, a functioning Confederate state government, and the presence of Breckinridge’s Confederate “Orphans” – in short, a real guarantee that the Confederate presence in the state would be permanent.⁹ Bitterly disappointed about the lack of promised Confederate enlistment, and equally concerned about Federal activity north of the Ohio, Kirby Smith established small garrisons up to the Ohio River and then asked Bragg to march north and join him in the liberation of Kentucky.

Bragg was already in motion, and with wagonloads of arms for Kentucky Confederates. On August 26 he had begun marching northward from Chattanooga, aiming generally for the Kentucky Bluegrass without a specific destination in mind. Once there, he expected to link up with Kirby Smith somewhere and fight Buell. To hold Mississippi and protect his

8 Edmund Kirby Smith to his wife, September 4, 6, and 20, 1862, Edmund Kirby Smith Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. See also Kenneth Noe, *Perryville: This Grand Havoc of Battle* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), pp. 40–1. See also William C. Davis, *The Orphan Brigade: The Kentucky Confederates Who Couldn’t Go Home* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980).

9 United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 16, part 2, p. 846 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).

western flank from Grant as well as Pope's old army – the latter under William S. Rosecrans because Abraham Lincoln had shifted Pope to Virginia – he called upon Earl Van Dorn and Sterling Price. Both had led their armies from Arkansas across the river into Mississippi, unwillingly in Price's case. While outnumbered significantly, an optimistic Bragg repeatedly asked them to check Grant and Rosecrans, and then strike north into western Tennessee, perhaps as far as Nashville.¹⁰

Bypassing well-defended Nashville to the east, Bragg charted a course in the general direction of Louisville, indirectly convincing his men that the city was his goal. He encountered little opposition. Ahead of him, Buell's army had already started retreating. Alarmed by Kirby Smith's swift strike and then Bragg's obvious preparations for a similar operation, Buell had misinterpreted Rebel troops' movements and started falling back on August 20. Despite pleas from subordinates such as George H. Thomas to stop and fight on favorable terrain, Buell pushed his discontented army all the way back to Nashville. Reasonably sure that a strong garrison could hold the city, he then decided to retreat all the way to his main base at Louisville. Thus, by the end of August, both armies were racing north toward the Ohio River on parallel paths, with Bragg pulling ahead on the more direct course as he approached the Kentucky state line. Some soldiers described it as a monumental foot race, a favorite pastime in antebellum America. Others simply complained about the pace, their increasingly skimpy, drought-ravaged rations, a growing lack of potable water, and their apparently inept commanders. Morale was especially bad in Buell's retreating army. Rumors even circulated among those soldiers that Bragg and Buell were traitorous brothers-in-law who slept together nightly, determined not to fight. Many soldiers took out their frustrations on civilians, as foraging sometimes turned into widespread pillaging and destruction.¹¹

On September 5, Bragg's army began filing into Kentucky. On September 12, the Confederates entered the town of Glasgow to a rapturous reception. That night, Bragg sent a brigade under James Chalmers to Cave City, on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. Unbeknownst to Bragg, Chalmers decided the following evening to attack the Federal garrison at Munfordville that

¹⁰ The most important (but dated) biographies for these generals are Albert Castel, *General Sterling Price and the Civil War in the West* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968); Robert G. Hartje, *Van Dorn: The Life and Times of a Confederate General* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967); and William Lamers, *The Edge of Glory: A Biography of General William S. Rosecrans U.S.A.* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961).

¹¹ I discuss all of this in more depth in Noe, *Perryville*.

protected the mammoth railroad bridge across the Green River. With him rode a detachment of Kirby Smith's cavalry. When the doughty, well-entrenched garrison proved too much a match, an annoyed Bragg concluded that he had no choice but to lead the rest of his army on a forced march to take Munfordville, lest a defeat undermine morale. While the brief siege was bloodless and ended in a formal surrender on September 18, the detour cost Bragg valuable time and allowed Buell to cautiously draw near. Unsure of how to react to the changed circumstances, Bragg considered stopping to fight, but eventually marched his men north and then east to Bardstown, arriving on September 22. The turn toward Bardstown disappointed many Confederates who had assumed all along that Louisville was their goal.

Over the next several days, both generals encountered insubordination, confusion, and disappointment. On the Confederate side, Kirby Smith not only refused to give up his independent command, but moved his army to the east, even farther away from any link-up with Bragg. Meanwhile, few Kentuckians were rushing forward to fight under Bragg's colors either, and most of them wanted to fight as cavalry. In retrospect, Kentucky Confederates had overstated their degree of support in the commonwealth. Many more Kentuckians, both white and black, would end up fighting in blue. Kentucky's support for the Confederacy ultimately was a wartime chimera and a slanted postwar invention grounded in racial politics. Yet at the time the outcome surprised and disappointed Bragg and his men. His soldiers increasingly complained that Kentuckians were all talk when it came to supporting them. When a stirring, anti-emancipation proclamation from Kentuckian Simon Bolivar Buckner failed to add men to the ranks, Bragg's sullen mood darkened to the point of considering a retreat to Tennessee. "Unless a change occurs soon," he reported, "we must abandon this garden spot of Kentucky to its cupidity. The love of ease and pecuniary loss are fruitful sources of this evil."¹²

Instead, convinced by local leaders that fear of Union reprisals was still holding back would-be Confederates, Bragg decided to travel to Lexington to meet with Kirby Smith and then go on to the state capitol at Frankfort. There they would formally install Kentucky's rump Confederate governor, Richard Hawes. Governor Hawes would then implement the Confederacy's conscription law. "I see no hope but in the conscript act," Bragg wrote Richmond, "and I propose to enforce it immediately after installing the

12 *OR*, 16(2): 876. See also Lowell H. Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009).

provisional civil government on Saturday the 4th. The people themselves assure me that they prefer it, as they hope this to escape the penalty of confiscation if we are obliged to retrograde."¹³ Bragg thus left his army with his senior but most distrusted subordinate, the former Episcopalian bishop Leonidas Polk, and rode to Lexington.

The final disappointment for Bragg at this moment was the failure of his hoped-for western support. Price and Van Dorn, as it turned out, were still mired in Mississippi. Price at least had started moving his Army of the West north from Tupelo as Bragg wanted, hoping to either threaten Grant's communications in western Tennessee or else retake Corinth if the Federals had pulled out. But at Iuka, Mississippi, east of Corinth, he stopped along the railroad on September 14 to wait for Van Dorn's Army of West Tennessee to join him. Van Dorn at that moment was still a four days' march away at Holly Springs and expending most of his energies trying to gain official control over Price's command. The two Confederate generals finally agreed to rendezvous instead at Rienzi, which required Price to pull back to the west and hand over his army. Seizing the initiative created by Price's halt and Van Dorn's inaction, Grant determined to attack Price before he could be reinforced. On September 16 he divided his larger force and launched an overly complicated pincer movement, sending Rosecrans south to Rienzi before turning eastward to Iuka while Edward O. C. Ord and three divisions moved down the more direct path along the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Grant rode with Ord. On the night of September 18, Ord's column reached the outskirts of Iuka and skirmishing began. Rosecrans had yet to arrive, however, delayed longer than he had promised by the longer distance, difficult terrain, and muddy roads. The next afternoon, Price unknowingly began his planned retreat to Rienzi and the rendezvous with Van Dorn. Late in the day, southwest of town, his Confederates ran into Rosecrans's approaching column on the same road. Vicious fighting raged for two hours, until nightfall. Fooled by interrupted communications and the natural phenomenon of "acoustic shadow," a combination of terrain and wind direction that can disorient sound, Grant knew nothing of the battle until the next day. Ord, previously ordered by Grant not to go into action until he heard the sounds of battle, likewise did nothing. Finally informed of the battle the next morning thanks to a late-arriving dispatch from Rosecrans, Grant

13 OR, 16(2): 892; Lynda Lasswell Crist (ed.), *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, vol. VIII (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), p. 417; and Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

planned a counterattack but soon found Price gone. After briefly deciding to stand his ground and fight, Price had given in to his subordinates and used an unguarded road to continue the planned retreat toward Van Dorn. Ord took the town while Rosecrans mounted an ineffective pursuit that accomplished little more than widening a developing breach with Grant.¹⁴ Price's bloodied force meanwhile rendezvoused with Van Dorn at the town of Ripley on September 28. The local situation in northern Mississippi remained in flux, but Bragg could now count on little help from that direction.

By the time of the Battle of Iuka, Buell's army had arrived in Louisville. Pride in reaching the city first buoyed his men's self-confidence, but most continued to loathe their commander. His plan to absorb the city's raw recruits as well as three divisions of reinforcements sent from Grant's army into a reorganized Army of the Ohio hit a roadblock on September 29 when one of his subordinate generals – the unfortunately named Jefferson C. Davis – murdered the projected commander of one of Buell's three new corps in a city hotel. In an effort to fill the spot with a loyal man, he turned to Charles Champion Gilbert, an unpopular "acting major general" since the defeat at Richmond and the Hell March. Gilbert actually only held the rank of captain. His appointment created consternation among other officers, notably Philip Sheridan. Buell also fended off challenges from Washington, where Abraham Lincoln and newly appointed Union general-in-chief Henry Halleck decided to fire Buell and replace him with Thomas. Only Thomas's reluctance to take over in the midst of a campaign kept Buell in command.¹⁵

With his career on the line, Buell completed reorganizing his army and on October 1 – the same day that Bragg arrived in Lexington – he moved most of his 57,000-man army against Polk's 16,800 Johnny Rebs at Bardstown, marching to the southeast on three roads. All along the way, enslaved African Americans stole away to Buell's columns, where they often found support from an increasingly antislavery rank and file. Slave owners who tried to reclaim escaped slaves encountered physical violence and occasionally burned homes. Two divisions under Joshua Sill meanwhile feinted brilliantly toward Frankfort. As Sill approached the capital on October 4, panic ensued, marring Governor Hawes's speech and the festivities that followed when

14 For an excellent account of the campaign and battles of Iuka and Corinth, see Peter Cozzens, *The Darkest Days of the War: The Battles of Iuka & Corinth* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

15 For command problems in the Army of the Ohio, see Engle, *Don Carlos Buell*; but also Gerald J. Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment: The Army of the Ohio, 1861–62* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

gunfire rang out to the west. The Confederate brass fled in haste, abandoning and embarrassing the new government. Thoroughly convinced by erroneous reports from Kirby Smith that Sill represented most of Buell's army, Bragg ordered Polk to march north in order to consolidate the two Confederate forces. Polk refused. Feeling pressure from the northwest without understanding its full meaning, he instead retreated to the southeast toward Danville.

On October 7, Polk's retreating army passed through a small town called Perryville. Not remarkable to weary soldiers at the moment, Perryville in fact had critical features of note. One was water, increasingly scant in the deepening drought. In addition to various springs, pools of stagnant water remained in the bed of the Chaplin River, which bisected the town. Perryville also stood at the hub of the three roads Buell was using to drive south. Finally, steep rolling hills west of town offered high ground and cover to a defending force. By that evening, Polk as well as fellow general William J. Hardee had grown alarmed at the increasing pressure down the Springfield Pike directly west of town. Back-and-forth cavalry fighting had occurred on the road for much of the day. After a series of murky and poorly explained dispatches that did credit to no one, Bragg agreed that Polk should stop and defeat the pursuing force before resuming his march northward. None of the Confederates seemed to grasp that an entire corps of Buell's army lay on the road, or that the other two were about to arrive on other roads from the northwest and southwest. Indeed one Confederate division continued moving north toward the planned junction as the rest of the army backtracked to Perryville. The army bivouacked along the dry riverbed except for a brigade of Arkansans that took up positions west of town, in the hills along the pike. One Arkansas regiment took up a lonely position at the far western point of the Confederate line on a rolling eminence called Peters Hill. Most civilians abandoned the town in anticipation of a coming battle.

Buell's III Corps under Gilbert approached Peters Hill from the west and settled into camp. Before daylight on what would be a hot and dry October 8, desperate for water, Federal troops went forward to seize the hill and surrounding springs that they had scouted during the tense night. As the morning passed, the fighting around Peters Hill drew increasing numbers of troops into a hellish vortex. Finally grasping that he had underestimated the numbers of enemy troops in the vicinity, Polk broke off combat and fell back into a defensive position. That decision angered Bragg, who arrived unexpectedly during the morning to discover a silent field. Finding Polk's dispositions faulty as well – the Confederate right was completely in the air – he

began shifting troops from his left in order to launch an afternoon attack against what he believed to be the Union forces' vulnerable left flank. Instead, when it finally went off tardily at about 2:00 p.m., the assault wave squarely hit Buell's I Corps, commanded by Alexander McDowell McCook, just as it came into position on the northern side of the field. The two forces battled into the darkness, with the Confederates steadily forcing back McCook's line without breaking its connection to the other Union corps.

Tremendous confusion marked the Battle of Perryville, also called Chaplin Hills by some Union regiments. Injured in a fall the previous evening and tricked by yet another occurrence of acoustic shadow, Buell did not participate at all. In fact he spent most of the day relaxing on his cot, hearing nothing more than what he believed to be scattered artillery fire. An equally confused Gilbert meanwhile squandered an opportunity to take the town and get into the Confederate rear. I Corps thus did the lion's share of the fighting until late in the day, when Buell and Gilbert finally sent a few regiments into the fray after scattered hard-to-believe reports began trickling into headquarters. The situation across the lines was no better. Only that night did Bragg finally realize that most of Buell's army was at Perryville rather than farther north, which meant he was woefully outnumbered. Indeed still another Federal corps lurked just to the southwest, having spent the day skirmishing with Confederate cavalry but emerging largely unbloodied. Bragg thus hastily abandoned the field during the night and retreated, first to Harrodsburg and then to his supply depot at Camp Breckinridge (better known as Camp Dick Robinson) 15 miles beyond. Despite a late junction with Kirby Smith and his army, Bragg concluded on October 12 that he had neither the supplies nor the numbers to hold Kentucky. He ordered a long retreat toward Cumberland Gap and back into Tennessee. Bragg's army and Kirby Smith's marched on two separate roads, hungry, sullen, and occasionally shot at by Unionist guerrillas as they approached East Tennessee. Chalmers's Confederate Mississippians summarily lynched sixteen suspected bushwhackers in a single oak tree near Cumberland Ford (now Pineville) Kentucky. The army eventually went into camp west of Nashville at Murfreesboro. High-ranking officers, notably Polk, soon occupied their time trying to persuade Jefferson Davis to replace Bragg, whom many now viewed as an incompetent martinet. Bragg traveled to Richmond to defend himself while blaming others. Davis decided not only to stick with Bragg instead of someone like Beauregard or Joseph E. Johnston, but also to merge Kirby Smith's army into Bragg's. The new force would be called the Army of Tennessee.

Buell had saved Kentucky for the Union, but it seemed to matter little. Faint praise accompanied increasing pressure from Washington to pursue Bragg into East Tennessee. Buell followed only halfheartedly and finally halted altogether without ever leaving Kentucky. The mountains were too barren for operations, he correctly argued, especially with winter drawing near. Instead, he wanted to move through Nashville first before confronting the Confederates. Lincoln generally was not impressed with the realities of logistics or topography, and he asked pointedly why the Confederates could operate in the East Tennessee mountains but Buell could not. On October 22, Buell decided to ignore Washington and start for Nashville. Two days later, Halleck fired Buell. Under pressure from Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Halleck soon ordered Buell to Cincinnati to stand trial before a military commission on vague allegations of incompetence, disobedience, and disloyalty. Buell welcomed the chance to clear his name. Largely exonerated, he nonetheless never again held a command in the war, despite support from friends such as William Tecumseh Sherman. Eventually he became a bitter critic of Republicans and the war effort.

Having fired Buell, Halleck promptly reorganized the theater. He created a new Department of the Cumberland and named Rosecrans its commander. Since Iuka, Rosecrans had done much to augment his growing reputation in a second battle in Mississippi, laurels that hopefully at least would help in upcoming northern elections. He had occupied Corinth with his army of 23,000 while Ord took up a position to the northwest at Bolivar, Tennessee. Reinforced, Ord had about 12,000 men there, joined by a force under Stephen Hurlbut. Grant himself made his headquarters at Jackson, Tennessee, but much of the rest of the army took up garrison duty in various area towns. Meanwhile, the Confederates Price and Van Dorn had concentrated at Ripley on September 28, with Van Dorn taking overall command of about 22,000 men. Still determined to support Bragg and retake western Tennessee as well, Van Dorn rashly led his combined army from town on the morning of September 30. He marched first for the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, striking it at Pocahontas, Tennessee, while trying to make it appear that Ord at Bolivar was his target. From there, Van Dorn turned southeast for a quick march to Corinth, the region's grand prize and a city he hoped to control before moving north into Tennessee. He approached the still-fortified city from the northwest on the hot morning of October 3, believing reports that the entrenchments there were particularly weak. Although he initially doubted that Van Dorn actually would attack, Rosecrans for his part prepared to defend the city using the older and weaker Confederate works as

well as two newer, strengthened inner lines of entrenchments, redoubts, and batteries.

At about 10:00 a.m., Van Dorn launched his initial assault against the Union works. After hours of determined fighting, the Confederates breached the older, outermost ring of rifle pits and steadily drove their defenders into the stronger, inner works. They advanced about 2 miles and camped in an arc that stretched from the city's northeast to its west. While the brutally hot day ended with stalemate, Van Dorn was confident that he would take the city and its vital rail junction the next day. Meanwhile, Rosecrans pulled his men back into the more compact inner lines and repositioned them to brace for another assault. Both sides were exhausted.

Before dawn the next morning, Van Dorn pounded the defenders with artillery and then launched a slow-developing, mismanaged assault that only hit its stride at mid-morning. One brigade nonetheless briefly penetrated the strong Federal defenses on the Federal right while toward the center the Confederates again had short-lived success against the innermost line and actually entered the town before being repulsed. Union reinforcements stemmed both breaches, however, and Federal artillery covered the field. By afternoon Van Dorn's attack had failed and his army was retreating. Tardily as far as a frustrated Grant was concerned, Rosecrans launched a pursuit only the next morning. Van Dorn narrowly managed to escape back to Holly Springs after an ugly encounter with Ord and Hurlbut's approaching force at Davis Bridge on October 5. That small victory was not enough to save his command, as a storm of condemnation descended upon him from across the Confederacy. Van Dorn soon lost his army to John C. Pemberton and reverted to chief of cavalry. In November he would request a court of inquiry to counter charges of incompetence, drunkenness, and cruelty during the campaign. He was found not guilty, but his reputation had soured to the degree that he never again commanded an army. It was as a subordinate to Bragg that he died the following spring, shot to death by a jealous husband.

While Grant as well as many modern historians expressed disappointment with Rosecrans's leadership, his second victory made him the obvious choice to replace Buell after Perryville.¹⁶ Once joining his new command in Kentucky on October 30, Rosecrans ironically decided to continue Buell's controversial plans, and he marched his army toward Nashville instead of

¹⁶ For a contrary view supporting Rosecrans, see Frank P. Varney, *General Grant and the Rewriting of History: How the Destruction of William S. Rosecrans Influenced Our Understanding of the Civil War* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2013).

East Tennessee, with the lead elements arriving on November 7. Once there, his decision to then rest, refit, and reorganize his force – for the moment called the XIV Army Corps – soon frustrated Washington, especially after disappointing returns in the 1862 elections and the terrible Union defeat at Fredericksburg, Virginia on December 13. Across the North, morale plummeted while both resurgent antiwar Democrats and frustrated Radical Republicans increasingly condemned the administration. The beleaguered Lincoln administration was desperate for victories. Having fired Buell already, Lincoln twice discussed firing Rosecrans with Halleck.

Rosecrans's soldiers spent a dreary Christmas season in Nashville, largely spurned and occasionally physically attacked by elements of the city's white population, already seething under Union occupation and Andrew Johnson's military governorship. White Middle Tennesseans largely remained devoted Confederates. Finally on December 26, Rosecrans began moving toward Bragg's camps at Murfreesboro, some 30 miles to the southeast. An unexpected spell of cold rainy weather as well as bad roads, faulty intelligence, and Confederate resistance impeded his approach. It was only on December 29 that Rosecrans sidled up near Bragg's line. The delay had left time for the Confederates to rest and fill their bellies as well. The next day, Rosecrans's army went into a line running from the northeast to the southwest that was roughly parallel to Bragg's. As night fell, a regimental band's patriotic tunes inaugurated a raucous battle of the bands until all of them united to play a plaintive performance of "Home Sweet Home."¹⁷

Early on the dark, frosty morning of December 31, Bragg launched a devastating attack on the Union right before Rosecrans had a chance to initiate his similarly planned assault against Bragg's right. Striking the weaker end of Rosecrans's line, waves of Confederates hammered it back 3 miles toward the Nashville Turnpike and the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, in the well-worn analogy, like a jackknife folding back into its handle. Rosecrans masterfully hurried reinforcements from his left to the pike and was finally able to stem the attack near dark. That night, Bragg claimed victory, convinced that Rosecrans would have to retreat toward Nashville. Some of Rosecrans's generals would have liked to have done just that, but Rosecrans himself, supported by George Thomas and others, decided instead to stay and fight. The next day thus found the Federal army still in position. January 1, the same day that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation took

¹⁷ For the ensuing battle, see Peter Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1991); James Lee McDonough, *Stones River: Bloody Winter in Tennessee* (Nashville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1980).

effect, saw relatively little action other than probes, although Rosecrans crucially extended his left to the east, across Stones River to high ground beyond the east bank.

Rosecrans's moves thoroughly mystified Bragg. Finally on January 2, Bragg decided to launch a heavy assault against Rosecrans's new position across the river, still in hopes of driving the Federals back to Nashville. To make the attack he chose John C. Breckinridge's relatively fresh division. Relations between Bragg and Breckinridge were already bad, as the Kentuckian blamed Bragg for his failure to recover his home state, while Bragg blamed Kentuckians in general and in particular Breckinridge's failure to reach the army in time for Perryville. Once he saw the hill for himself, now strengthened by over fifty Federal guns, most arrayed hub to hub, Breckinridge protested that the attack was suicidal. He launched it nonetheless at 4:00 p.m., despite rain and sleet. The Confederates initially drove Union defenders across the river, but then the massed guns shredded the advance. A Federal counterattack rapidly retook the lost ground. The Battle of Stones River, or Murfreesboro as Confederates insisted on calling it, was over.

After sporadic fighting the following day, Bragg ordered a retreat to Tullahoma, 36 miles to the southeast on the road to Chattanooga. Rain that night added to the Confederates' sour mood. Rosecrans took the town but would go no farther, until summer, building up reinforcements and supplies until he finally moved in the direction of Tullahoma and eventually Chattanooga. Bragg's newest defeat increased the already shrill tenor of calls for his dismissal. Breckinridge in particular believed that Bragg had set out intentionally to murder his Kentuckians. At the same time, Rosecrans's refusal to pursue steadily cost him support in Washington. Instead of following Bragg, Rosecrans began turning Murfreesboro into a veritable fortress. Over the next months, the men of the renamed Army of the Cumberland would spend their time constructing the largest earthworks of the war in the west.

The bloody year of 1862 in the western theater ended in discouragement for both sides. At the beginning of April, Northerners had every reason to believe that the secession was on its last legs. Confederate armies were retreating everywhere except in Virginia. Henry Halleck's decision to halt his juggernaut at Corinth for the summer, however, combined with a dramatic dry turn in the weather, gave the Confederates both time and an opportunity to respond. Braxton Bragg's invasion of Kentucky failed to gain the state, but at least it stopped for a time the loss of territory in the Deep

South. Despite all the marching and killing of the late summer and autumn, however, the operational situation in the west at the end of the year was little different than where it had stood at the beginning of May. The Federals still held Kentucky and western and Middle Tennessee, as well as territory in northern Alabama and Mississippi including Corinth. Yet the rebellion continued. Across the Union, the lack of military progress east or west, coupled with emancipation and controversial new conscription legislation, dragged support for the Lincoln administration to its lowest point. Only success in the field could reverse that slide. The spring and summer thus would see Federal armies picking up where they had left off, resuming operations abandoned in the previous year. Campaigns for Chattanooga to the east and for control of the Mississippi River to the west would define the western theater's war in 1863.

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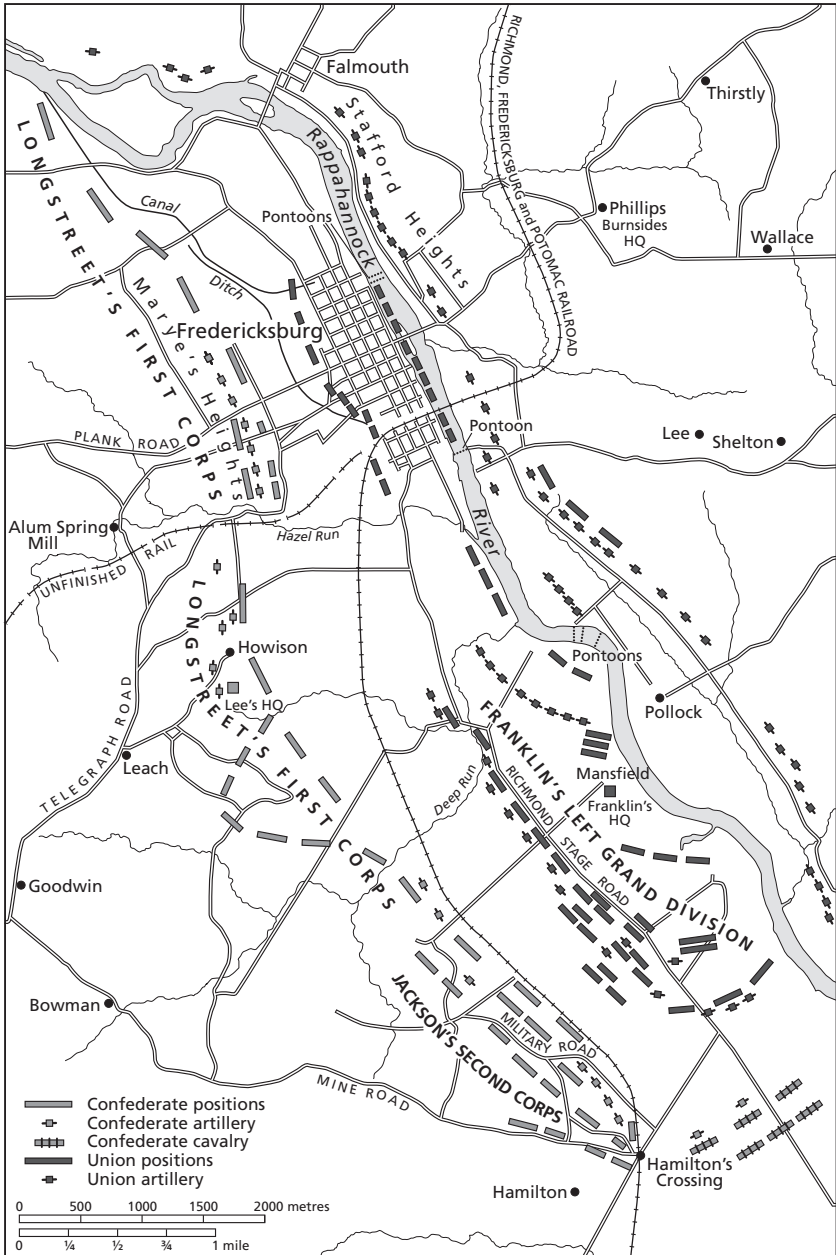
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The Battle of Fredericksburg

ELIZABETH PARNICZA

“On the first day of January . . . all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.” Balancing the weight of four million lives in his pen, President Abraham Lincoln took advantage of the Battle of Antietam – a tactical draw – to issue the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862. Cloaked in legal verbiage, the president’s message struck like a bold ultimatum: any portion of the United States that remained in rebellion against the federal government by January 1, 1863 stood to lose its most powerful residents’ property and the cause of conflict between North and South. The proclamation declared all slaves in those territories free and under the federal government’s protection to maintain their new status. Lincoln, an astute politician growing into his role as commander-in-chief, realized that the promise would ring hollow without the military might to enforce it. Despite the Union’s near victory at Antietam, the ability of the Army of the Potomac and its commander George McClellan to deliver that support remained highly in question, even in Lincoln’s own mind.

Eager to demonstrate the power of his armies, Lincoln urged McClellan to action while the weather remained favorable to campaigning. Lee’s army retreated into Virginia in late September 1862 and Lincoln hoped McClellan would follow. McClellan hesitated and fell short of expectations, prompting Lincoln to write, “Are you not overcautious when you assume that you cannot do what the enemy is constantly doing? Should you not claim to be at least his equal in prowess, and act upon the claim?” After many attempts at both gentle and direct prodding, Lincoln replaced the man who refused to put his army to use. On November 7, Ambrose Burnside replaced George McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac, with clear instructions to act swiftly and decisively. In replacing McClellan, Lincoln demonstrated



10.1 The Battle of Fredericksburg. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

both an increased role in directing Army of the Potomac movements and his dire need for an aggressive commander who would deliver victories.¹

While Burnside did not consider himself suited to the job and was a friend of McClellan's, his record was impressive enough to merit the promotion. He had successfully coordinated a joint naval–infantry operation against the North Carolina coast earlier in 1862 and capably commanded the Union IX Army Corps. Upon taking command, Burnside was immediately asked to present his plans for the army's action. Though the prime campaign season was past, Burnside recognized the urgency of the situation and acted accordingly. The campaign he proposed – advancing his army toward Richmond following the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad line (R, F, & P) – signaled a change toward a harder style of war in the east at the close of 1862.²

As the calendar edged closer to January 1, Burnside championed a movement toward Fredericksburg, Virginia based primarily on the capacity of the R, F, & P line to supply his 135,000-man army. Although the army's high command favored a move by way of Culpeper, the Orange and Alexandria rail line to the west simply could not support the full force. Anticipating Lincoln's approval, Burnside asked for pontoon bridges to span the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg. Unbeknownst to Burnside, the Engineer Corps was not prepared to furnish pontoons so quickly. As soon as Burnside received approval for his plan, he began his march and arrived opposite Fredericksburg in two days, trusting the pontoon bridges would promptly meet the army there.³

When the lead elements of the Army of the Potomac arrived on Stafford Heights opposite Fredericksburg on November 17, 1862, only about 1,000 Confederates occupied the town. The opportunity was ripe for Burnside to take advantage of the Army of Northern Virginia's absence to seize the town and continue south. Despite Burnside's later reputation as inept, the immense size of his force, and the army's reputation for slow action, Burnside's quick, decisive movement paid off: he had gotten the drop on Robert E. Lee. Lee was ill-placed to counter a move to the southeast. Anticipating a movement on Culpeper, further west in the state, Lee's army stood divided, with James Longstreet holding the 1st Corps near

1 Abraham Lincoln to George McClellan, October 13, 1862, in United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 21, p. 97 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).

2 Francis A. O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), p. 6.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 21–5.

Culpeper and Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson’s 2nd Corps poised further west still in the northern Shenandoah Valley near Winchester, Virginia. Once Burnside made a swift movement on Fredericksburg, Lee determined to counter with a movement to the highly defensible North Anna River south of Fredericksburg. When Burnside did not immediately advance southward, Lee’s plans changed. With Southern civilians already feeling the weight of war and supplies to the army scarce, Lee could not afford to give up Fredericksburg and its surrounding farmland without a fight. He immediately shifted north, and Longstreet’s corps arrived in Fredericksburg on November 22. Lee called Jackson to concentrate at Fredericksburg. Although initially caught off guard, Lee rapidly prepared a formidable welcome for the Union forces on the heights south of the Rappahannock.⁴

While Lee nimbly shifted his plans and troops in response to the Union advance, Burnside’s rapid movement had come to a screeching halt at the Rappahannock River. Fearful of halting the historically slow Army of the Potomac, Halleck had not informed Burnside that his critical pontoon boats and bridging material were not in position to move with the army. The 50th New York Engineers had received orders to move from the upper Potomac to Washington, D.C. on November 12, but a crucial week passed before the pontoon train set out from Washington, D.C. and then promptly became stuck in rain and mud. The equipment finally arrived at the Army of the Potomac’s camp on November 25, eight days after the lead elements had arrived, and three days after Longstreet’s corps had arrived to contest the movement.⁵

The delayed arrival of the pontoon equipment was a searing blow to the Union army’s efforts at Fredericksburg. All bridges that crossed between the town and Stafford County across the river had been destroyed earlier in the war, and the river was tidal, rising and falling up to a point north of town. There were no fords close by that could manage the supplies and artillery necessary to sustain an army across the river or on its march south. Burnside’s plan depended upon the pontoon bridges carrying his army across, and had they been present at his arrival in Fredericksburg, the army’s crossing would have been virtually unopposed. Had Halleck passed along the communication that the engineers were not able to accommodate Burnside’s

4 Ibid., pp. 11, 29, 33–5, 37–9; Joseph T. Glatthaar, *General Lee’s Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York: Free Press, 2008), pp. 183–4, 216.

5 Wesley Brainerd, *Bridge Building in Wartime: Colonel Wesley Brainerd’s Memoir of the 50th New York Volunteer Engineers*, Ed Malles (ed.), (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), pp. 93–7; O’Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 44–8.

timeline, Burnside could have delayed his movement or planned to cross elsewhere. Without appropriate communication despite his inquiries, Burnside confronted a most challenging situation on November 25. If he persisted in his plan, half of the Army of Northern Virginia stood to oppose him in crossing the river. If he reconceived his plans, he risked a campaign later in the unpredictable winter weather and threatened to miss Lincoln's January 1 deadline. Faced with his first check of the campaign, Burnside stepped back to consider alternatives and to consult with Lincoln.⁶

In a revealing dispatch to Lincoln and high command in Washington, dated November 22, Burnside admitted that his plan relied on two factors for success that had fallen through: the pontoon bridges and additional provisions that he had requested. Burnside clarified that he was not hesitating but merely could not act as though his plan had been followed: "I do not recall these facts in any captious spirit, but simply to impress upon the General-in-Chief that he cannot expect me to do as much as if all the parts of the plan had been carried out." Burnside was, in short, stuck. As he cast about for a solution, he warned, "I must, in honesty and candor, say that I cannot feel that the move indicated in my plan of operations will be successful." With this ominous prediction, Burnside turned his attention to the obstacle in view: the Rappahannock River.⁷

Burnside scouted the river up- and downstream for an opening in the Confederate defense. Lee had covered all logical crossing points, though an opportunity presented itself a few miles downstream at a bend in the river called Skinker's Neck. Calling on the brown water navy, Burnside laid a new plan to cut south of Lee's forces, crossing the Rappahannock on December 5. Unbeknownst to Union command, "Stonewall" Jackson's forces arrived as Burnside's forces converged near the bend. The gunboats steaming up the river tipped Burnside's hand, and Confederate sharpshooters kept a close watch on the crossing point.⁸

With yet another door closed, Burnside realized that surprise was the key element to get his army across the river. As pressure from higher up mounted, he decided that his best option was to cross immediately in the face of Lee's forces. Burnside wrote to Washington that he thought, "the enemy will be more surprised by a crossing immediately in our front than in any other part of the river." Agreement with Burnside's newest proposal was far from universal among the Army of the Potomac's officers, and the sheer

6 Ambrose Burnside to G. W. Cullum, Chief of Staff, dated November 22, 1863, in OR, 21: 103-4.

7 Ibid. 8 O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 49-53.

language of his orders indicated that he had run out of easy options. As the army readied for the advance, its success was predicated on catching its watchful opponent by surprise. Burnside set the date for the crossing to be December 11, 1862, not quite a month after his army had arrived opposite Fredericksburg.⁹

The cover of darkness on the night of December 10–11 offered the Union army's best hope for surprise. As engineer Wesley Brainerd recounted, "The moon shone with a quiet light which was reflected from the sparkling snow which scarceley covered the ground. Little fires here and there on the opposite side of the river glimmered and sparkled from the ice which bordered the stream." Burnside had planned carefully to spread out his efforts along the river into three main crossing points. The upper pontoon crossing just below Chatham Manor looked directly into town and hosted two bridges. On the south end of town, the city docks received one bridge, and a few miles south of town, two bridges were constructed opposite open fields. Once the bridges were in place, the army could cross rapidly and begin the effort to push the Confederates off the heights beyond town.¹⁰

The situation looked worst at the Upper Pontoon Crossing looking directly into Fredericksburg. Brainerd had scouted the area and decided that, "escape from there with life was extremely problematical and now, as the time approached for the opening of the grand tragedy, my mind passed through a variety of emotions which I apprehend must be experienced by those who are conscious of the near approach of their final dissolution." He wrote a farewell letter to his father, asking him to look after his wife and daughter, before assuming his position along the riverbank. With an intense air of foreboding, the engineers waited until the clock in St. George's steeple struck 1:00 a.m., quietly hustled their materials to the riverbank down a narrow road beside Chatham's ravine, and went to work, splashing boats into the icy waters.¹¹

At the Upper Pontoon Crossing, the Rappahannock stretched 400 feet across, but as the sun rose to burn off the thick fog, the bridge only covered half the distance. The engineers looked across the river, and the lifting fog revealed an alarming sight: "I saw, what for the moment, almost chilled my

9 OR, 21: 64, 105.

10 Brainerd, *Bridge Building in Wartime*, p. 109; O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 57–61.

11 Brainerd, *Bridge Building in Wartime*, pp. 153–4; U.S. Corps of Engineers, March 1863 Coastal Survey Map, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (hereafter FRSP) Files.

blood. A long line of arms moving rapidly up and down was all I saw . . . But I knew too well that line of arms was ramming cartridges and that the crisis was near." Lee's men had not waited idly as the bridge builders did their work; Brigadier General William Barksdale, commanding the defenses of the city, had his Mississippians dig in along the riverbank. At 5:00 a.m., two Confederate cannon fired to signal the Army of Northern Virginia to the river crossing and to prepare for the battle to come. Barksdale's men along the river opened fire as soon as they could see the engineers. Unarmed and untrained for battle, the engineers scurried off their incomplete bridges to relative cover.¹²

On Stafford Heights 147 pieces of Union artillery roared to life to defend their engineers. Though they rained fire on the riverbank, a second attempt by the engineers to return to their bridges around 9:00 a.m. failed. Well-covered in basements and houses along the riverfront, the Confederates stood their ground, and the Mississippians fired heavily into the latest attempt with a clear view of the unarmed engineers. "To boldly face such a fire without anything to protect or defend himself with and that within 25 rods of the devils it takes pluck I tell you," claimed the 50th New York Engineers' surgeon. As men trained with specialized skills to lay bridges, roadways, and defensive fortifications, Union engineer lives were too valuable to lose in the shooting gallery of an open pontoon bridge. As the engineers abandoned this next attempt, the entire campaign hinged on crossing 400 feet of river.¹³

Burnside's frustration poured into the city in the form of a general artillery bombardment, ordered to range on the entire city, rather than just the riverbank houses. Shortly after his arrival opposite Fredericksburg, Union major general Edwin Sumner had brokered a rough truce that the town would not be shelled if townspeople did not fire shots or produce goods for the army, and Lee had agreed not to use the town for military purposes. Since the Mississippi sharpshooters had broken that agreement, Burnside was within his rights to fire, but in doing so, he set an example for the Union army's behavior toward Fredericksburg's civilians. Although the bombardment caused extensive damage and fires in the largely evacuated homes in town, Barksdale's men remained stubbornly in place. Turning desperate,

12 Brainerd, *Bridge Building in Wartime*, p. 155; O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 63–6.

13 Clarke Baum, Surgeon, 50th New York Volunteer Engineers, December 11, 1862 letter, FRSP. For an overview of the Union army's engineer corps, see Earl J. Hess, *Field Armies and Fortifications in the Civil War: The Eastern Campaigns, 1861–1864* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 11–16.

Burnside accepted a suggestion from the engineers to send infantry across in the boats, ferried by the engineers. Once across, the soldiers could establish a bridgehead that would allow the engineers to complete their spans. Both the 7th Michigan and the 19th Massachusetts volunteered, with the colonel of the 7th answering that “he had a regiment that would go through H—! if required.” Undaunted by fear and anticipated death, the infantry piled in, and despite a few mishaps and enemy fire, landed on the other side. The elevation of the riverbank provided sufficient cover to allow the boats to land, and the Federal troops regrouped on the shores of Fredericksburg before moving into the town. Though the infantry had little time to reflect on the accomplishment, Union forces at the Upper Pontoon Crossing cleared the first major hurdle of the campaign by crossing the Rappahannock under a hail of bullets. The other crossings had fared better, with only slight resistance at the Middle Pontoon Crossing and clear construction at the Lower Pontoon Crossing. Now that the first obstacle – the Rappahannock River – was cleared, Union forces concentrated on dislodging Confederate forces from the town of Fredericksburg itself.¹⁴

Just as they had creatively used basements to fire on the engineers, the Confederate forces in Fredericksburg melted into homes and backyards to fight a delaying action as night fell on the town. Clearing the town street by street, Union forces hit pockets of concentrated fire from the Mississippians, but slowly gained ground, often firing at nothing more than rifle flashes in the growing darkness. By about 7:00 p.m., the Confederates pulled back from the town to the heights beyond in preparation for the conflict to come. Far from viewing the retreat as a defeat, Lee was drawing the Union forces into a fight on his terms. The heights ranging west and south of town with open ground in front formed a formidable defensive line, and a perfect trap for the gathering Union army. Although the Army of the Potomac had shown remarkable ingenuity and dexterity in the face of strong obstacles, its innovation had yet to be tested in the open fields beyond Fredericksburg.¹⁵

As the prospect of the coming battle loomed, Union soldiers took full possession of Fredericksburg, with more units crossing on the evening of December 11 and through December 12. Most of the town’s residents

14 O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 36, 76–7, 83; William A. Blair, “Barbarians at Fredericksburg’s Gate: The Impact of the Union Army on Civilians,” in Gary W. Gallagher (ed.), *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Decision on the Rappahannock* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 153; Frederick W. Osterle, 7th Michigan Infantry, memoir, FRSP, 6.

15 O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 83–100.

had evacuated in the weeks preceding the crossing, and the vacant town offered much that called to the soldiers' needs and wants. Soldiers entered Fredericksburg with clear comprehension of the situation. Not only did the homes and stores contain comforts and souvenirs, but because the town had been held against them and bombarded, many soldiers considered the town's fate to be forfeit. Men were angered by the Confederate army's use of the town and particularly by the street fighting. One Massachusetts soldier recognized the similarities between his hometown of Nantucket and Fredericksburg and concluded that any army finding itself in possession of such a town would act similarly, asserting, "when the hostile troops gained the town what a picnic would be in store for them. They would enter the houses and stores and help themselves. Well, that is just the state in which we found Fredericksburg when we entered the city, and of course the troops considered it common property." Rather than eliciting sympathy from the comparison of Fredericksburg to home, soldiers drew justification that their homes would be treated likewise if the roles were reversed.¹⁶

For many soldiers, the looting of Fredericksburg was contained to diving in the river for sunken tobacco or raiding homes of butter and teacups. Soldiers sought the comfort of warm beds, feather mattresses, and an improvement on their rations for dinner. For others, including men of the 20th Massachusetts, who had been heavily involved in the street fighting, Fredericksburg was open to plunder and looting. Soldiers pilfered Fredericksburg's best libraries, and men even took St. George's Episcopal Church's four-piece communion set (it was returned after the war). For men like Henry Abbott of the 20th Massachusetts, the plundering seemed to be a matter of course, as he described his search for souvenirs: "I have got a very good edition of Plutarch's *[L]ives* for the governor. I did get a most beautiful writing desk but it was taken away from my servant. I have two children's books for Frank and Arthur. I went into nearly every house to get some nice little silver thing for mamma & Mary Welch, but was too late. Macy got just the thing – a little bed lamp of silver." Abbott mentions the regiment's soon-to-be colonel, George Macy, with envy for his looting abilities, but his account reveals that both officers and men exhibited a general lack of discipline on the evening of December 11 and through December 12. Provost Marshal Marsena Patrick deplored the actions of the "brutal Soldiery" and lamented that he could not restore enough order to prevent

¹⁶ Richard F. Miller and Robert F. Mooney, *The Civil War: The Nantucket Experience Including the Memoirs of Josiah Fitch Murphey* (Nantucket, MA: Wesco Publishing, 1994), pp. 89–90.

the wholesale looting. He instead resorted to stopping large items from crossing the pontoon bridges, like the desk taken from Abbott's servant.¹⁷

Though souvenir-taking and searching for creature comforts are near universals of war, the looting of Fredericksburg took on greater meaning through its near carnival atmosphere and the justifications soldiers gave for their actions. As the evening of December 11 wore on, soldiers joined together from their individual pursuits on Fredericksburg's main avenue, Caroline Street, where some soldiers set up a cotillion to dance with each other. "Between sets the ladies would sit on the curb-stones and the gentlemen would do the honors," one soldier remembered. Along the length of the street, soldiers "clothed in the costumes of Virginia that were in fashion in the days of Mary Washington" paraded through town. The men found an old coach, hitched it to a mule, and had it "driven down the length of Caroline Street by a soldier in the mask of a negro, with two representative belles of a by-gone age sitting on the back seat and scattering smiles and kisses to an applauding crowd." While some of these antics were simply men looking to relieve their anxiety on the edge of battle, by specifically mocking old southern traditions, these soldiers asserted that these traditions – the southern "way of life" including the rigid racial and social hierarchies – belonged in the past. As Ambrose Burnside moved more men into the streets of Fredericksburg and the floodplains to the south of town on December 12, more soldiers indulged in the conveniences and comforts that Fredericksburg had to offer, apprehensive of the greater struggle to come.¹⁸

Fredericksburg's residents were undaunted in their support of the Confederacy when they returned to their homes. If anything, they were more resolved and united by the devastation of their homes and businesses. Across the South and in the Army of Northern Virginia, soldiers and civilians

17 Kevin E. O'Brien (ed.), *My Life in the Irish Brigade: The Civil War Memoirs of Private William McCarter, 116th Pennsylvania Infantry* (Campbell, CA: Savas Publishing Company, 1996), p. 16; Charles E. Goddard, letter, February 10, 1863, FRSP, cat. #14169; David T. Hedrick and Gordon Barry Davis, Jr. (eds.), *I'm Surrounded by Methodists . . . : Diary of John H. W. Stuckenberg Chaplain of the 145th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry* (Gettysburg: Thomas Publications, 1995), p. 38; "A Brief History of St. George's Church," revised June 26, 2012, St. George's Episcopal Church; Robert Garth Scott (ed.), *Fallen Leaves: The Civil War Letters of Major Henry Livermore Abbott* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1991), pp. 155–6; David S. Sparks (ed.), *Inside Lincoln's Army: The Diary of Marsena Rudolph Patrick, Provost Marshal General, Army of the Potomac* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff Ltd., 1964), pp. 188–9.

18 Richard Moe, *The Last Full Measure: The Life and Death of the First Minnesota Volunteers* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1993), p. 210; George A. Bruce, *The Twentieth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry 1861–1865* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1906), p. 210.

alike banded together to raise funds for the “Fredericksburg sufferers.” Whether intended or not, these grassroots steps toward a more determined, harder war forged a stronger will to fight on both sides.¹⁹

The first two days of the Battle of Fredericksburg – December 11 and 12 – featured radically nontraditional means of warfare. Acting on the critical political timeline of the Emancipation Proclamation, Burnside pushed across the Rappahannock River in the face of a foe determined to slow the crossing by any means necessary, leading the Army of the Potomac to cross in pontoon boats and fight street by street to gain its intermediate objective. Once in possession of the town, soldiers looted the homes and stores, feeling justified by the stubborn Confederate defense. Union soldier Roland Bowen summed up the situation succinctly, stating in a letter to his mother that

Such is War. But we stole or destroyed everything in the City, great was the ransacking thereof. Mother you know but very little about War. One Reb was killed with a canon ball, [and] three days after the hogs were eating up the body and no one would take pains to drive them away. I was too busy stealing [in] the City, besides I knew the hogs wanted something to eat. (Such is War).

As he struggled to define war in terms that his mother could understand to explain his actions, Bowen revealed the transformation that both the average soldier and the two armies were undergoing in late 1862. War had hardened the individuals prosecuting the war, and, in turn, they had taken harder measures to bring it to a quicker conclusion, whether by defending Fredericksburg in basements and cellars, or bombarding and looting the town. Such measures in the east brought the war home to civilians fleeing battle and returning to find their homes and possessions destroyed. In most cases, civilians hardened their view of the war in turn.²⁰

Ambrose Burnside planned to resume a more traditional style of battle on December 13, after spending much of December 12 regrouping and funneling troops across the pontoon bridges into Fredericksburg and onto the plains below the town. The Army of Northern Virginia lay spread in a formidable

19 Blair, “Barbarians at Fredericksburg’s Gate,” pp. 142–70; Letters and receipts received by James Power Smith of contributions for the relief of Fredericksburg sufferers, January–April, 1863, FRSP, acc # 00255, cat # 2007, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024, 2026; *Ibid.*, acc# 252, cat # 2506, 2508, 2510, 2513, 2514, 2515.

20 Richard F. Miller, *Harvard’s Civil War: A History of the Twentieth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005), p. 206; Gregory A. Coco (ed.), *From Ball’s Bluff to Gettysburg . . . and Beyond: The Civil War Letters of Private Roland E. Bowen, 15th Massachusetts Infantry 1861–1864* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1994), p. 142.

position across the range of heights that lay just beyond the town and to its south. James Longstreet's 1st Corps occupied the bulk of the line, stretching from the bend of the river north of Fredericksburg, over the prominent Marye's Heights, and along the high ground that bowed inward at the center of Lee's line. At the less defensible southern end of Lee's line stood Stonewall Jackson's 2nd Corps, stacked in three main lines of a "defense in depth," bristling from freshly dug infantry and artillery entrenchments along Prospect Hill. As Burnside conferred with his generals, the officers agreed that an attack against the southern end of the field offered the greatest potential outcome, as success would open the path south to Richmond. As part diversion and part secondary effort, Burnside ordered a second attack to go forward against the northern end of the field and Longstreet's defenses. Combined, he hoped to pull a victory out of an otherwise stumbling effort.²¹

Major General William B. Franklin, commanding the Union Left Grand Division facing the Confederate right to the south of Fredericksburg, left his last meeting with Burnside on December 12 believing that his attack against Jackson's line on the southern end of the field would be the army's main effort the following day. Haunted by the specter of a court-martial to match the one convened to try Fitz John Porter for their actions at Second Bull Run, Franklin realized that his actions were likely to fall under an unusual amount of scrutiny. Ever cautious, Franklin had requested that his orders arrive by midnight, but he did not receive them until 7:00 a.m. on the 13th. The orders that Franklin held in his hands used vague terms, calling on him to "keep his whole command in position for a rapid movement down the old Richmond road" but to also "send a division at least . . . to seize, if possible, the heights near Captain Hamilton's" on the far right of the Confederate line while "taking care to keep it well supported and its line of retreat open." Franklin's orders also provided detailed context for the attack to be made on the northern end of the field, an attack against the Confederate left "with a view to seizing the heights." Using tentative verbiage like "to seize, if possible" and directing only one division (4,000–5,000 men) with support to cross the open plains to the south of town, Burnside's orders painted a very different picture than the plan that Franklin had last heard, and with daylight at hand, there was little time for Franklin to seek clarification. Consulting with his corps commanders, Franklin concluded that his attack must be an "armed reconnoissance" or

21 US Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 37th Congress, 3rd sess., no. 108, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1863), 667.

an “observation in force” and planned accordingly. Franklin delegated command of the attack to I Corps commander Major General John Reynolds, who chose the two divisions to form the attack. Of his 60,000 men, Franklin engaged just under 9,000 to participate in the attack.²²

As George Meade’s and John Gibbon’s divisions formed in readiness for the morning’s fog to lift, a small Confederate force used the dense fog to its advantage. Young Major John Pelham, commander of Confederate horse artillery, scouted a position perpendicular to the forming Union lines and positioned a single Napoleon cannon to fire down the line. Sheltered by fog, low ground, and vegetation, Pelham’s position eluded Union return fire and kept Union forces scrambling to respond for a half hour before he paused and eventually gave up his advance post. Following Pelham’s 10:00 a.m. start to the battle, Union forces detailed Abner Doubleday’s division to watch the intersection, preventing another Confederate incursion on their flank.²³

Back along the main Union line, Franklin’s artillery began a searing barrage of the heights in front of them by 11:00 a.m. Confederate artillery held mostly silent behind the tree line, conserving their fire for the infantry assault that was presumed would follow. After an hour’s bombardment, the Union gunners turned to their infantry counterparts, feeling they had done all they could. As Meade’s ranks clambered upright, covered in mud, they moved forward in eerie quiet. With ample time to prepare their position, Confederate forces had marked out the field before them to ensure their fire had the most devastating effect. Artillery fire opened on Meade’s ranks as they passed the small sapling marking 800 yards. Fourteen guns under Reuben Lindsay Walker opened up on the exposed attack. Now that the Confederates had revealed their position, Union artillery roared back to life in support, unleashing a terrible bombardment. One South Carolina artilleryman wrote:

Hall was wounded in the arm . . . “C” was wounded in the leg, but is not off duty. A piece of shell went through my coat sleeve; it stung a little. A Minie ball went through the ramrod, and it or a splinter struck me on the head. I was by the gun looking at the Yankees when a great piece of shell, big as my two fists, came along and knocked a spoke out of the wheel, and it or a piece

22 Ibid., pp. 707–10; William Marvel, “The Making of a Myth: Ambrose Burnside and the Union High Command at Fredericksburg,” in Gary W. Gallagher (ed.), *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Decision on the Rappahannock* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 3–4, 14.

23 O’Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 143–9.

of the spoke, or something else, hit me square in the breast . . . I saw a piece of shell go a "kiting" by my leg, missing it an inch or two . . .

Not all gunners stood by their post in the harrowing experience. The Purcell Artillery's men fled to safety until Captain William Pegram wrapped himself in the unit's colors and shamed his men back to the gun. By the end of the duel, only two of Walker's fourteen guns remained functional. Meade and his men watched from the open field, and when Union artillery struck an ammunition chest, he seized the opportunity to order his men forward.²⁴

Meade's attack surged ahead, guiding on the cover of a thin line of woods that jutted forward into the open plain. Tucked inside the woods was a 400-yard gap in the Confederate line, a swamp deemed impassible by Confederate high command, that served as the back door into Jackson's defenses. Pressing forward after Meade's charge, Gibbon's division was trapped in the open plain to Meade's right and quickly bogged down in front of the railroad grade at the base of the heights. Meade's men swarmed into the swamp, intuitively charging into the least-defended area atop Prospect Hill. Deep in the woods waited Maxcy Gregg's South Carolinians, serving as a reserve with their arms stacked. When the Federal troops sprang through the woods, Gregg, wary from a friendly fire incident during the Battle of Second Manassas, ordered his men to cease firing, saying, "You are firing on our friends," before he was mortally wounded by a Union volley. Caught by surprise, the Confederates were quickly overtaken, and Meade's forces spread out, following a military road that ran the length of the Confederate line like a spine.²⁵

After breaking through the first line and scattering Gregg's forces, Meade's men fanned out to the north and south, surprising Confederate forces on their flanks. Compounding Gregg's unpreparedness, Meade's attack had caught Stonewall Jackson's line at a critical moment. Seeing Union forces mass near the intersection that Pelham had fired from so effectively that morning, Jackson depleted his defense in depth by concentrating his forces just opposite, on the far right of his line. Major General Jubal Early received his orders to move to the right just as he heard the sounds of battle in his

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 149–56; OR, 21: 511, 458–9, 649; David G. McIntosh, *A Ride on Horseback in the Summer of 1910 over Some of the Battlefields of the Great Civil War with Some Notes of the Battles*. Manuscript. Southern Historical Collection, FRSP Files, 27–9; Ben, *A Letter from the Battlefield, December 13, 1862*. Letter. FRSP Bound Volume 162.

²⁵ James Lane, *James Lane to Augustus Hamlin, May 26, 1895*, MOLLUS Papers, Augustus C. Hamlin Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University; J. Norton, 1886 Speech to veterans of Orr's Rifles. Speech. FRSP Bound Volume 64.

front. Making a snap decision and risking a court-martial, Early ordered his men forward into the developing battle along Military Road. Early's decision came just as Meade's men were closing in on the artillery along Prospect Hill. In the face of Confederate reinforcements, the success of Meade's attack likewise depended upon receiving support from the nearly 60,000 reserves held by William Franklin.²⁶

In the rush of his successful breakthrough of the Confederate line, Meade sent requests for aid to the closest unit he could find, a division under the command of Brigadier General David Birney, who replied that he required orders from Major General John Reynolds to move forward. Since Reynolds could not be found readily on the field, Meade leveraged his rank and assumed authority for ordering Birney into the assault on his third missive. Precious time was lost as the commanders exchanged messages, and no other forces waited in the wings to support Meade and Gibbon's advance. Although Birney finally ordered his men forward, they were only able to cover Meade's retreat and stem the tide of Confederates enthusiastically pouring out of the woods in pursuit. Lacking a larger attack force or a strong support, Union hopes for victory against the Confederate right had collapsed by 2:30 p.m. Meade narrowly fell short of breaking Jackson's line, and as his men retreated across the field the Army of the Potomac lost its best chance for ultimate victory.²⁷

Once Pelham's guns rang out on the morning of the 13th south of town, Union forces began forming up at the edge of Fredericksburg, facing west. Major General Sumner had orders to "move the first corps directly to the front, with a view to taking the heights that command the Plank road and the Telegraph road," sending his Grand Division directly against the strongest part of the Confederate line positioned on commanding ground. Although victory against the Confederate right offered the greatest promise of strategic success, Burnside intended to try both ends of the Confederate line with strong attacks. Burnside placed most of Major General Joseph Hooker's Grand Division to support Sumner in the attacks against the formidable heights ahead.²⁸

Eight hundred yards beyond the edge of town, the Telegraph Road ran at the base of a range of heights that stretched north to the river called "Marye's

²⁶ O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 203–12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 198–200, 216; US Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 37th Congress, 3rd sess., no. 108, 3 vols., 692–3.

²⁸ OR, 21: 106–7; US Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 37th Congress, 3rd sess., no. 108, 3 vols., 667.

Heights,” soon to become one of the most famous Confederate positions of the war. The Telegraph Road was sunken from the weight of wagons for much of its length, and a stone wall originally intended as a fence or retaining wall stood between the road and the open fields beyond town. Confederates quickly repurposed the road and wall as a protective barrier against attacks crossing the open ground between town and the heights. Lieutenant Colonel Edward Porter Alexander had skillfully dug in the Confederate artillery on the crest of the heights to give the guns the best possible view of any Union assault. Lee had protested the placement, but Alexander insisted, and when his position was vindicated in battle, he even had the audacity “to have one little dig” at Lee after the battle, saying, “it was a mighty good thing those guns about Marye’s were located on the brows of the hills.” The overall position was so remarkable that, after viewing the large Union force staging for their attacks, Alexander proclaimed, “If we couldn’t whip it we couldn’t whip anything, & had better give up the war at once & go back to our homes. From that moment I felt the elation of a certain & easy victory.” Alexander’s confidence proved prophetic, to the misfortune of the Federal soldiers milling through town before crossing the open plain.²⁹

Sumner chose well his first divisions to attack the heights: Major General William French and Major General Winfield Hancock, “two of the most gallant officers in our army, and two [divisions] that had neither of them ever turned their backs to the enemy.” Geography worked against the Federal assault, adding to the natural defenses the Confederates employed. A creek and swampy ground funneled an assaulting column into only about 500 yards to maneuver – the space to front a brigade – which first traversed a canal ditch. Soldiers balanced their way across on the stringers because the Confederate forces had pulled up the bridge planks. Once across the ditch, approximately 800 yards of open ground sloped upward to the stone wall. Despite making repeated assaults, none of Sumner’s units made it closer than 50–75 yards to the staunchly defended stone wall.³⁰

Wave after wave of Union attack went forward against Marye’s Heights through the early afternoon, serving both to hold Longstreet’s forces in place and to offer a small hope for success. William B. Franklin reported mixed

29 Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, Gary W. Gallagher (ed.), (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 167–8, 175, 177.

30 US Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 37th Congress, 3rd sess., no. 108, 3 vols., 658; Francis A. Walker, *History of the Second Army Corps in the Army of the Potomac* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), pp. 162–4.

results and near constant action against the Confederate right, despite the failure of his main assault. Strategically, the southern end of the field offered a far greater chance for success than the Federal attacks against Marye's Heights promised, but Burnside understood the looming threat of having his back to the Rappahannock River with an aggressive-minded opponent in front and so continued the assault. When Sumner's men were exhausted in attacks against the stone wall, he called on Joseph Hooker's Grand Division to move forward to the attack.³¹

As Brigadier General Andrew A. Humphreys readied his men for the next assault against the heights, he considered both the obstacles ahead and the previous failed attacks. He resolved that "the only mode of attacking him successfully was with the bayonet." Humphreys and his men charged forward into a hail of Confederate fire with Humphreys defiantly whistling the tune "Gay and Happy," and although even Hooker praised the attempt, saying that "no campaign in the world ever saw a more gallant advance than Humphrey's men made there," the stiff Confederate defense compelled Humphreys and the assault that followed it to fall back to the cover of town. Hooker reported bitterly, "Finding that I had lost as many men as my orders required me to lose, I suspended the attack." Burnside's continued attacks had prevented any potential counterattack but had gained no ground at a high cost.³²

Night brought a close to the fighting, and soldiers on both sides regrouped and reflected on the day's events. Discussions of which unit demonstrated the greatest courage in coming closest to the stone wall or whether Lee should have pressed a counterattack rose up soon after the battle, but in its immediate aftermath, each soldier was left to reckon with the day's efforts and resulting carnage. One Union soldier mournfully summarized the experience of night on the battlefield:

Some sat on the curbstones, meditating, looking gloomily at the ground; others lay on the pavement, trying to forget the events of the day in sleep . . . Always when one spoke, it was of a slain comrade – of his virtues or the manner of his death; or of one missing . . . The thoughts of all were in the

³¹ William B. Franklin, *Copies of General Hardie's Notes to General Burnside, from General Franklin's Headquarters, December 12, 13, and 14, 1862*, reproduced in US Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 37th Congress, 3rd sess., no. 108, 3 vols., 712–14; US Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 37th Congress, 3rd sess., no. 108, 3 vols., 667–8.

³² OR, 21: 431; Carswell McClellan, *General Andrew A. Humphreys at Malvern Hill and Fredericksburg* (St. Paul, MN: privately printed, 1888), p. 16; US Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 37th Congress, 3rd sess., no. 108, 3 vols., 668, 671.

houses of the killed, seeing there the scenes and sorrow which a day or two afterward occurred. Then they reverted to the comrade of the morning, the tent-sharer, lying stark and dead up on Marye's Hill or at its base.

Losses reported at large stood ultimately at 12,500 Union casualties and 5,400 Confederate casualties. In the fighting at Prospect Hill, an almost even number of Union and Confederate soldiers fell, but the Confederate triumph at Marye's Heights was remarkably lopsided, with casualty figures at approximately 1,000 Confederate to a staggering 8,000 Union. To each soldier like D. Watson Rowe, sitting on Fredericksburg's curbstones, each individual loss was felt deeply by each comrade, and every man knew that the losses would soon reverberate north and south to grieving families struggling to cope with the horrors of war. While Fredericksburg does not rank among the highest casualties of the war, such a lopsided defeat was a far cry from the military and political victory that had captured the hopes of Union high command. Although battles with greater losses preceded and followed Fredericksburg, the nature of this loss haunted the Union army and plummeted morale.³³

The next morning, Burnside proposed to personally lead his former IX Corps in an all-out charge against Marye's Heights, but his subordinate officers, headed by Edwin Sumner, talked him out of the dangerous proposition. By the evening of December 15, Burnside determined to retreat back across the Rappahannock, which the army executed under cover of darkness. He attempted one more campaign in January – fatefully and descriptively known as the Mud March – before retiring the army to winter quarters. Burnside's second defeat, due this time to rain and mud, combined with the protests of a cadre of subordinates who took claims of low confidence to Lincoln spelled disaster for the commander. Joseph Hooker took command of the Army of the Potomac at the end of January, and he immediately took to the task of revitalizing the demoralized spirits in the army.³⁴

Across the river, as Lee settled the Army of Northern Virginia into winter quarters, morale was high among the troops following the victory at Fredericksburg. Low supplies forced Lee to divide his forces to forage in the countryside. Soldiers in the ranks expressed high hopes, even beginning to think that victory in 1863 might lead to peace and independence. However, Lee and his officers were disappointed by the seemingly hollow victory at Fredericksburg. Although they had delivered a blow, Confederate forces did

33 D. Watson Rowe, "On the Field of Fredericksburg," *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, July 21, 1877; O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 498–9.

34 US Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 37th Congress, 3rd sess., no. 108, 3 vols., 656; O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 447, 494–5.

not deal out lasting damage or the destruction of the opposing army, as high command hoped.³⁵

Lincoln's deadline of January 1, 1863 to sign the Emancipation Proclamation weighed heavily in the aftermath of Union defeat at Fredericksburg. Faced with the news, Lincoln confronted both the desperation of the Union cause and the weight of defeat politically and on the home front. With courage that matched the resilience slowly growing in the Army of the Potomac, Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation into law on New Year's Day, formalizing the freedom of slaves already in Union lines as "contraband" and promising the freedom of millions more and generations unborn. Soon formerly enslaved men would swell Union army ranks in greater numbers and with perhaps the most tangible cause of personal freedom.³⁶

With the revolutionary movements toward emancipation as a backdrop, the Battle of Fredericksburg bridged the gap between the more traditional Civil War of 1862 and the war's future with innovative tactics and blows struck against Confederate civilians. Imposing Confederate earthworks and defenses proved the strength of improved defensive positions and the futility of traditional frontal assaults – lessons that would reappear with a vengeance in 1863 and 1864. Union soldiers' willingness to innovate and to strike at the very heart of the Confederate democracy – the home front – predicted a harsher war, one that a soldier of 1861 or 1862 would barely recognize by its end. Even as the high command edged toward the same conclusion, the Army of the Potomac's average soldier had rejected the softer war and protection of Southern private property, and after seeing the devastation wrought by Union soldiers discarding that policy, Confederates in turn hardened their outlooks. Combined with freedom and the chance to fight extended to all African Americans in areas in rebellion against the federal government, 1863 promised to be a more decisive year of the war. Echoes of the past still rang out as Union soldiers shouted "Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!" when they turned back Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg in July 1863, undoubtedly remembering their comrades fallen on Virginia's open plains. Ultimately, Fredericksburg served as a warning of the past in its frontal assaults and hefty political pressures, but it also served as a vision of the future through emancipation, innovative tactics on both sides, and a harder war brought home to civilians.

35 O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 494–5, 497–8.

36 George C. Rable, *Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press: 2002), pp. 373–83.

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The Chancellorsville Campaign

CHRISTIAN B. KELLER

II.I Antecedents

After the devastating Union defeat at Fredericksburg in December 1862, both the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia repaired to seasonal camps, licked their wounds, and remained wary of their enemy. Major General Ambrose Burnside, still in command, decided to locate the Federal corps around Falmouth, Virginia (just north of Fredericksburg), in a large cluster, guarded to the west by the cavalry. The Confederate camps, hugging the southern bank of the Rappahannock, stretched from Port Royal to the south up to Banks and US fords to the north, with Major General J. E. B. Stuart's cavalry guarding the westernmost approaches to the Fredericksburg area and posting videttes above the river. As the troops of both armies settled into winter quarters, they were treated to unusually pleasant weather. Christmas Day, 1862, dawned mild and bright. At his headquarters at Moss Neck, on the Corbin Estate grounds, Lieutenant General Stonewall Jackson entertained General Robert E. Lee, Brigadier General William Nelson Pendleton, Stuart, and their staffs, in a rare display of conviviality that underlay his stern, Presbyterian scruples. The turkeys, homemade biscuits, and other culinary delicacies the Rebel high command enjoyed that day belied the gnawing problem of adequate supply for the rank and file, who, as the winter wore onward, would find themselves reduced to half-rations. Two railroads, both only partially reliable and prone to breakdowns, supplied the Confederate army, ensuring that Lee would be vexed by logistical problems in the months leading up to the spring campaign. They grew so chronic that he was obliged to detach most of his artillery to pastures close to Guiney's Station, about 20 miles distant, and send Lieutenant General James Longstreet with George Pickett's and John Hood's divisions on a supply-gathering mission to south-side Virginia and eastern North Carolina in February. Once there, they also became involved

in a siege of Suffolk and could not be extracted in time to return to the main army at Fredericksburg, ensuring Lee would engage his Federal opponent with only three-quarters of his effective numbers.¹

Abraham Lincoln allowed Burnside to remain in charge of his army despite the former's reservations and the latter's lack of self-confidence. In February, 1863, the hapless Union general, under political pressure to achieve something, tried another offensive that entailed marching most of the Federal army up the northern bank of the Rappahannock in an attempt to cross the upper fords and operationally outflank the Confederate defenders at Fredericksburg. The "Mud March," as the soldiers derisively called it, failed miserably thanks to unceasingly wet, cold, and windy conditions that became a hallmark of the 1862–3 winter season in Virginia. Long gone were the sanguinary days of December and their warmer weather. Disappointed with the results and personally lobbied by Burnside's dissatisfied subordinates, the president decided to remove him from command, replacing him with one of those lobbyists, Major General Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker.

Hooker immediately embarked on a series of reforms to restore the fallen morale in his army and place it in strong fighting condition for the next campaign. Undergirded by the superior Union logistical network, he ensured supplies, especially rations, were distributed regularly and on time to the troops, created a military intelligence service, consolidated the cavalry under one command, and decentralized the artillery. Abolishing Burnside's "Grand Divisions," the new commander also created the "corps badge system," in which each Federal corps would henceforth be identified by a distinctive shape or symbol, such as a trefoil, diamond, circle, or crescent moon, which were then color-coded to identify divisions within each corps. Soldiers began to wear their new badges, emblazoned on their kepi caps, with pride, and began to think that the next time they wrangled with the Rebels they would win. Reinforcements also poured into the Army of the Potomac as the winter gave way to spring, raising Hooker's numerical superiority over his enemy to more than two to one. Boastful to the president, his subordinates, and his army, Hooker exclaimed, "May God have mercy on Robert E. Lee, for I shall have none." As he developed his plans for the coming campaign, which he hoped to launch in April, he was certain that the Confederates "must ingloriously fly" or fight him on ground of his choosing, ostensibly at a numerical disadvantage. Spirits among the Union soldiers soared.

1 Stephen W. Sears, *Chancellorsville* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), pp. 46, 48–9, 98–9, 110.

Abraham Lincoln, cautiously optimistic after personally reviewing nearly all of Hooker's army in April, still admonished his general, "This time put in *all* your men."²

Hooker's command team, however, was at best disjointed and at worst fractious, boding problems for future command and control in battle. Major General Darius Couch, his senior subordinate and in charge of the veteran II Corps, was barely neutral toward his chief, whereas the seasoned George Meade, John Sedgwick, and John Reynolds, major generals leading the V, VI, and I Corps respectively, were suspicious of Hooker's boasting and ambition. Henry Slocum, commanding the XII Corps, was young and less experienced, and Oliver Otis Howard, the new leader of the half-German XI Corps, contended with dissatisfaction in the camps about his elevation to command over ethnically German subordinates. Many of them, in turn, felt marginalized by latent nativism exhibited both by the Anglo-American press and from within the greater Army of the Potomac. Only Major General Daniel Sickles, a US senator hailing from New York City's Tammany Hall machine, liked the army commander personally. He had proven himself in battle and headed the stalwart III Corps. Major General George Stoneman, recently promoted to lead the Union cavalry, was new to that level of responsibility and untested. Further, to add to the possible difficulties, Hooker refused to divulge many details of his impending campaign plan with his corps commanders, fearing the loss of operational security that had bedeviled his predecessors. This habit, combined with a strong ego and firm belief in his own superior generalship, foretold of friction to come.³

In contrast, the Confederate command team, even minus the currently absent Longstreet, had worked together increasingly well throughout the previous campaigns and had honed a level of performance approaching its apogee. From Lee on down to the brigade commanders, nearly all of the Army of Northern Virginia's leaders were well-seasoned and led veteran field-grade and junior officers. Lee, Jackson, and Stuart, all believing Christians, had been further bound together by personal and religious ties during the winter and early spring months. Lee and Jackson, in particular, had been unified by a spiritual revival throughout the army that Jackson's

2 Walter H. Hebert, *Fighting Joe Hooker* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1999), pp. 178–83; Gary W. Gallagher, *The Battle of Chancellorsville*, National Park Service Civil War Series (Conshohocken, PA: US National Park Service and Eastern National, 1995), p. 6; Sears, *Chancellorsville*, p. 116.

3 Sears, *Chancellorsville*, pp. 59–60; 128; Christian B. Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), pp. 47–8.

personal chaplain, the Reverend B. T. Lacy, spearheaded. With a steadfast faith that divine providence would smile upon their joint efforts in the spring, the two chieftains planned to preempt the Federals by launching a spring offensive first, with the ultimate goal of reaching Pennsylvania, wrecking northern infrastructure, and decisively defeating the Army of the Potomac for political effect. They were handicapped, however, for want of means, especially enough men and healthy horses. Lee suffered a serious attack of angina, complicated by a bad cold, in late March that lasted well into April, further frustrating their plans. About to recall Longstreet to begin this campaign in late April, Lee realized he was too late when Hooker opened his offensive on April 29, 1863, several days later than he had hoped, but in plenty of time to thwart a Confederate thrust northward.⁴

11.2 The Battle and Campaign

The Union commander had anticipated initiating his offensive in mid-April, but the miserable weather of the winter continued and turned the roads to impassable rivers of mud. Finally, the last week of the month offered meteorological respite and provided the opportunity, however fleeting, to commence the campaign. Hooker's plan contained several moving parts but was eminently feasible: he would divide his 134,000-man army and personally lead three corps – the XI, XII, and V – around Lee's western flank, crossing both the Rappahannock and the Rapidan rivers and marching quickly through the dense woods of the Virginia Wilderness toward the enemy rear at Fredericksburg. Meanwhile, John Sedgwick, commanding the other wing comprising his own VI and Reynold's I Corps, would cross the Rappahannock at Deep Run, entrench, and keep Lee's attention fixed at the city. If opportunity beckoned, he was to attack, but otherwise he was to serve as the anvil to Hooker's hammer, with Lee caught in between. Couch's II Corps would "float" between the two halves of the Union army, hovering at Banks Ford on the Rappahannock, within easy marching distance of Hooker or Sedgwick if either required assistance. Union headquarters would remain at Falmouth, under the watchful eyes of Major General Daniel Butterfield, chief of staff, and all orders would be processed through him. Stoneman and the cavalry corps were sent south and west to wreak

4 Joseph Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army* (New York: Free Press, 2009), pp. 212–15; W. G. Bean, "Beverly Tucker Lacy, Stonewall's Jolly Chaplain," *West Virginia History*, vol. 29, no. 2 (January 1968): 80, 87, 95; Rev. John W. Jones, *Christ in the Camp or Religion in Lee's Army* (Richmond: B. F. Johnson and Co., 1887), pp. 518–19.

havoc on Lee's communications with Richmond and his supply network, but the bad weather and mixed signals between Hooker and Stoneman caused the Federal horsemen to start off late (at the same time as the infantry, in fact), thereby depriving Hooker of his mobile arm while causing little damage to the enemy. The absence of the vast majority of the Federal cavalry would be a major factor in the coming battle.⁵

On the 29th, covered by a thick fog and misty rain that shrouded their efforts, Sedgwick and Reynolds lay their pontoons below Fredericksburg and took up positions near where Franklin's Grand Division had crossed in December. Supported by the powerful Union artillery on Stafford Heights overlooking their bridgehead, this wing of the Army of the Potomac was almost entirely secure by late morning, when Stonewall Jackson asked Lee for permission to plan an assault, which, after a thoughtful reconnaissance, he deemed impracticable. The Federal flanking force of infantry began its trek the same day without incident and succeeded in crossing both the rivers with minimal resistance by the afternoon of the 30th. Alerted quickly by J. E. B. Stuart of the movement, Lee telegraphed President Jefferson Davis, "all I have up there are two brigades of Stuart's cavalry," precious little to contest the advance of the Union goliath. Lee immediately begged for all available reinforcements and the recall of Longstreet and his two divisions, but nothing reached him in time. Shaking the water from their trousers and jackets, the soldiers in Hooker's wing then turned east, almost 70,000 strong, marched through the Wilderness and past a large estate locally known as Chancellorsville, and stopped within sight of the open country just a few miles to the west of Fredericksburg. Outnumbered, outflanked, and temporarily surprised, it appeared as if Lee, indeed, would be forced to "ingloriously fly" to the south, perhaps to the line of the North Anna River, or face an unequal battle here against Hooker's heavy battalions. With Sedgwick threatening at Fredericksburg, the Confederates, barely 62,000 men of all arms, were caught in a dilemma.⁶

Lee and Jackson, conferring at Lee's camp at Hamilton's Crossing south of Fredericksburg, refused to be paralyzed and reacted quickly. As early as the 29th Lee had sent Lieutenant General Richard Anderson's division, one of Longstreet's erstwhile commands, to the Chancellorsville crossroads of the Orange Turnpike and Plank Road to delay any Union advance from the west. Observing the approach of Hooker's large force, Anderson withdrew a few

5 Sears, *Chancellorsville*, pp. 193–4; Gallagher, *The Battle of Chancellorsville*, pp. 11–13.

6 Fitzhugh Lee, "Chancellorsville," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, vol. VII (Richmond: Southern Historical Society, 1879): 545–85.

miles to the east to the vicinity of Zoan Church and, under orders from Lee, began to entrench, the first time in the war that the commanding general issued such an order. On the 30th, Lee directed Major General Lafayette McLaws's division, also one of Longstreet's, to reinforce Anderson, to be followed by three divisions of Jackson's corps. Early in the morning of May 1, McLaws led a long column of Confederates, the flower of the Army of Northern Virginia, on the short march down the Orange Turnpike. Jackson was close behind him, and when asked by Chaplain Lacy if they were about to retreat, Stonewall replied, "Retreat? No! There is no thought of retreat. We will attack them." Jackson was instructed to leave Major General Jubal Early and the 12,000 men of his division at Marye's Heights and opposite Deep Run to watch, and, if possible, contain Sedgwick should he attack. Lee therefore divided his army in the face of an aggressive enemy over twice his number. It was a risk, but to retreat at this point would abandon too much territory and valuable infrastructure to the Unionists and bring them that much closer to Richmond. It was also not in Lee's nature to back down from a challenge. As he had at Sharpsburg the previous September, he had learned to accept a bad situation when presented to him and monopolize upon any opportunities that may arise. With Jackson at his side, Lee, mounted on his horse Traveller, personally joined the Rebel columns on the morning of the 1st and received the jubilant cheers of his men, who had come to expect nothing but victory from him and his trusted lieutenant.⁷

About 11:00 a.m., near Zoan Church, on open ground about 5 miles west of town, McLaws's division, under Jackson's supervision, ran headlong into elements of Brigadier General George Sykes's Union division of Meade's V Corps. Fierce fighting ensued, and for a while the Federals pushed McLaws back, but when the Confederate threw in his tactical reserve and flanked Sykes, the Federals retreated, crying for reinforcements. Those cries reached the ears of both Meade and Hooker, the latter shocked at the strong resistance his advance had encountered. Slocum's XII Corps, advancing down the Plank Road south of Sykes, would have soon confronted both Anderson and some of Jackson's divisions, but were never given the chance to actively engage the enemy. The XI Corps, bringing up the rear, had not yet come up, and the remainder of Meade's corps marched down the river road, on the south bank of the Rappahannock, separated from their beleaguered comrades by dense forest. Those soldiers, however, were almost within sight

⁷ Sears, *Chancellorsville*, pp. 187–9; Gallagher, *The Battle of Chancellorsville*, pp. 16–17; John Esten Cooke, *Stonewall Jackson: A Military Biography* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1866), p. 394.

of Banks Ford, the occupation of which would have unified the two wings of Hooker's army, but at that critical juncture, the Union commanding general lost his nerve. The Confederates were not supposed to be this far west of Fredericksburg and in such numbers, he thought. Sykes, commanding the steady US Regulars, would not have been so badly handled if this were simply a portion of Lee's army. Perhaps Longstreet had somehow arrived, Hooker mused; Professor Thaddeus Lowe's observation balloons, posted on the Federal side of Banks Ford, had reported endless ranks of gray moving down the turnpike earlier that day. To the chagrin of Meade and Slocum, Hooker ordered an overall withdrawal of his two forward corps back to Chancellorsville, where, he believed, the flanking wing of the army could consolidate and be easily reinforced. They would await attack from the enemy and, with numbers and a fortified position on their side, should easily defeat the Rebels. Hooker ordered Couch and Sickles to join him at the crossroads in the Wilderness, and instructed all units to entrench in anticipation of attack from the west and south. Couch, incredulous at his chief's decision (as were many in the Union army that night), later wrote, "at that moment I believed my commanding general a whipped man."⁸

Suddenly and quite unexpectedly, Lee and Jackson discerned their enemy had relinquished the tactical and operational initiative. They also realized, however, they were still badly outnumbered and that only a small window of time likely remained before Hooker came to his senses and reclaimed his offensive. And there was still Sedgwick at Fredericksburg, who might at any moment attack Jubal Early and, pushing him aside, march down the turnpike to assault their rear. Early in the evening and then again in the wee hours of the morning of May 2, the Southern chieftains sat down together on some old Yankee cracker boxes at the intersection of the Plank and Furnace roads, only a few hundred yards from Anderson's front line, and conferred about how best to strike a blow against the Unionists. Their options were not all that auspicious at first; a reconnaissance revealed the Federal left flank was well secured against the Rappahannock and their front was already bristling with entrenchments buttressed with artillery. But with the help of J. E. B. Stuart's scouts, the Confederates discovered the Federal right flank, occupied by the XI Corps, was "hanging in the air," ripe for a flank attack. Jackson sent Jedediah Hotchkiss, his mapmaker and topographical engineer, along with Reverend Lacy, who had once ministered to a congregation in the

8 Gallagher, *The Battle of Chancellorsville*, pp. 18–20; Sears, *Chancellorsville*, p. 212; Ernest B. Furgurson, *Chancellorsville: Souls of the Brave* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), pp. 130–2.

area, on their own scouting mission to discover a route to that exposed flank. Waking the owner of a local iron ore furnace, they enlisted the help of his son, who assured them he could guide the Confederates along a rough, narrow logging road that led indirectly to their desired target. Reporting back to Lee and Jackson, Hotchkiss and Lacy provided their intelligence. The generals jointly decided upon a course of action: Jackson and 33,000 soldiers of his corps, three full divisions, doused their campfires early on the morning of May 2 and marched 12 circuitous miles through the thick woods to strike the unprotected Federal flank. Stuart's horsemen and the budding trees of early spring screened their advance. Lee was left with only 14,000 men (McLaws's and Anderson's divisions) to confront all of Hooker's force at Chancellorsville, should he attack. To distract the Northerners, Lee's contingent would strongly "demonstrate" in their front to keep Hooker's attention focused on them, and not on his flank. One of the epic maneuvers in all of American military history was underway. For the second time in so many days, the Confederate commander had divided his army in the face of the enemy, taking yet another risk.⁹

Soldiers of Sickles's III Corps, which had joined the flanking wing along with Couch's II Corps after the shock of the day before, were stationed on a cleared hill called Hazel Grove just to the southwest of Chancellorsville. From the high ground these men quickly discovered Jackson's flank march through gaps in the trees on the morning of May 2. Their vision extended southward to Catharine Furnace, where they could see long lines of the enemy moving west, and, taking a turn in the distant road, head south. Reporting this to Hooker and Sickles, the burden of what to do rested with the Federal generals. Unfortunately for the Union, both men misinterpreted the movement as a likely Confederate retreat, waited too long to react, and when Hooker finally granted Sickles permission in the afternoon to march two divisions of his corps southward in a probe toward the furnace, it was too late. Sickles's force slammed into a rear guard only, the vast majority of Jackson's command having already passed beyond the contact point. More problematic, the removal of most of the III Corps from its original position left an almost mile-wide gulf between the rest of the Federal army and the XI Corps, posted on the extreme right. Hooker had wisely telegraphed for Reynolds's I Corps to leave Sedgwick's wing at Fredericksburg and immediately march to Howard's flank, with an eye toward securing that sector of his army against the Rappahannock, but delays in transmission ensured

9 Sears, *Chancellorsville*, pp. 231–5; Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, p. 51.

Reynolds was still half a day away when Jackson neared the end of his long march.

Oliver Otis Howard, for his part, receiving the reports from Hooker's and Sickles's headquarters about retreating Rebels, also believed the enemy was abandoning the fight and disobeyed the spirit of two precautionary orders from his chief to prepare for a possible attack on his flank. Hooker was not altogether certain the Confederates were not up to something and had asked his subordinate to be ready for it. Yet all Howard had done to prepare for that contingency was to redirect two cannon and two regiments to face west. Some of Howard's troops, however, especially the Germans, slowly became aware that a large body of men was approaching their right as the afternoon light began to fade. Pickets from Brigadier General Charles Devens's division, stationed on the far right, actually ran into Jackson's battle lines in the woods as they formed up in preparation for their assault. Scouts, such as artilleryist Captain Hubert Dilger, were sent out by Major General Carl Schurz, commander of the XI Corps' Third Division, and reported the enemy massing in the forest, but Howard's and Hooker's staffs dismissed them, calling them "excitable Dutchmen." Schurz, who had been the German soldiers' pick for corps commander after the beloved Franz Sigel resigned in February, confronted Howard about the alarming intelligence in the late afternoon but was told not to worry. How could any large body of men pass through these trees, choked with briars, brambles, and saplings? The Anglo-American Federal leaders, suffering from cognitive dissonance, believed what they wanted to believe: the enemy was retreating. And they had no significant cavalry force to confirm or deny their assumptions. Stoneman and all but a small fraction of the Federal horsemen were far to the south, achieving little.¹⁰

About 5:30 p.m., with darkness falling, Jackson unleashed 26,000, Rebel-yell-screaming Confederates into the 8,500 men of the Federal XI Corps encamped along the Orange Turnpike. The corps, already outnumbered over three to one, had been further weakened by the earlier detachment of Brigadier General Francis Barlow's brigade of Brigadier General Adolph von Steinwehr's division, sent to the south by Howard to assist Sickles in his quest at Catharine Furnace. Bereft of their tactical reserve, the "Half-moon Men" of the XI Corps would be hopelessly outmatched and outmaneuvered. Scampering rabbits, squirrels, quail, and deer preceded the Rebels themselves, and initially the men of Devens's division thought fortune had smiled upon them by supplying extra rations. But then they heard the eerie, spine-

10 Furgurson, *Chancellorsville*, pp. 156–7; Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, pp. 52–6.

tingling sound of the Rebel yell echoing on three sides of them. Jackson was upon them. There was precious little opportunity to react.

Jackson correctly figured time was of the essence and so did not wait for most of Lieutenant General A. P. Hill's division to come on line before he quietly told Major General Robert Rodes, whose division would lead the assault, "you can go forward, then." It was a good decision: although his attack would miss the added power of Hill's men, it was still powerful enough to bowl over most of the XI Corps. For Anglo-Americans and German Americans alike in that hapless organization, there was simply no time for their regiments, nearly all hugging the turnpike and facing south in expectation of an attack from that direction, to realign and respond; this was especially true of Devens's division. The thick woods and the ferocity of the Rebel attack ensured that for those first assailed, beyond a few ragged volleys, the only safety was in flight. Further east along the turnpike, two stubborn holding actions held up the Southern onslaught for about fifty minutes, eating into the fleeting daylight. The first was a stand made by most of Schurz's ethnically German division at the Wilderness Church, and the second occurred along a makeshift line of entrenchments near Dowdall's Tavern, commanded by Colonel Adolphus Buschbeck of Von Steinwehr's division. Both actions proved that a good portion of the XI Corps had actually stood and fought for a time and not "run like sheep," as one newspaper editorial unfairly styled them. Other soldiers, especially Devens's men, had definitely been routed without much resistance, but nativistic Anglo-Americans in both the army and the northern press were not interested in making distinctions. They lampooned all of the corps as the "flying Dutchmen," labeled them "cowardly poltroons," and scapegoated them for what would become another incredulous Union defeat. Only in German-language newspapers and soldiers' letters did the truth surface that the soldiers in Howard's command had not all skedaddled, and in fact had delayed Jackson's attack just enough for night to come, buying time for the rest of the Federal army to react.¹¹

By the end of the evening, the III and XII Corps, which began to form defensive lines in the Hazel Grove–Fairview area, presented a solid obstacle to further Rebel progress. Hooker, seemingly recovered from the shock of the flank attack, realigned those corps to meet the expected Confederate onslaught the next day, but both commands suffered friendly fire incidents in the darkness. The commanding general also telegraphed Sedgwick to attack

¹¹ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, pp. 57–71.

the Rebels in his front immediately and march down the Orange Turnpike to his aid. Receiving the message only near midnight – a fateful delay – the corps commander decided to wait until the morning to follow its intent.

Frustrated by the failing momentum of his attack and the loss of daylight, Jackson reconnoitered with his staff in the pitch black of the woods north of Hazel Grove. Much ground had been gained and a Federal corps shattered, but he desired more: the destruction of the Union army by cutting it off from the fords of the Rappahannock. Moving purposefully in front of his advanced lines to ascertain the new positions of the enemy, a crackle of musketry erupted. Stonewall reeled on his horse, accidentally shot in the left arm and right hand by North Carolinians in Brigadier General James Lane's brigade, who mistook his party for Union cavalry. Jackson was immediately evacuated to the rear, but suffered several falls from his litter en route – falls that may have exacerbated his already serious injuries. A. P. Hill, Jackson's second-in-command who by now had led his division to the front and was riding in a party behind his chief, was also hit, although not seriously. Command temporarily devolved to cavalry commander J. E. B. Stuart, the only operational-level commander available, who planned to resume Jackson's attack the next day. Lee, receiving the news of Stonewall's wounding and the amputation of his arm, was noticeably affected and grew emotional. He later wrote his subordinate a heartfelt note: "I congratulate you upon the victory which is due to your skill and daring. You have lost your left arm, but I have lost my right." Hearing of Lee's solicitude, Jackson said to a staff member, "General Lee is very kind, but he should give the glory to God." Later he stated, "better that ten Jacksons should fall than one Lee." For now, however, the Confederate commander could not focus on anything but the reunion of his still-divided army. Much depended on what Hooker did – or did not – decide to do.¹²

May 3 dawned a brilliant, crisp day, and by the time the sun was peaking above the trees ringing Hazel Grove, this key terrain was in Confederate hands. Hooker, mistakenly believing that the hill had become a salient in danger of being snipped off by the impending Rebel attacks, ordered Sickles's III Corps off of the high ground and back toward Fairview, another (but weaker) clearing two-thirds of a mile to the east. Sickles, in disbelief, would long remember this order and the ensuing carnage inflicted upon his corps;

12 Sears, *Chancellorsville*, pp. 296–7, 306–7, 371; Joseph G. Morrison, *Confederate Veteran*, vol. 13, no. 5 (May 1905): 231; Lee to Jackson, May 3, 1863, reprinted in Clifford Dowdey and Louis Manarin (eds.), *The Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee* (New York: Bramhall House, 1961), pp. 452–3.

his experiences on May 3 would influence him almost two months later to march out to a peach orchard at Gettysburg. Sensing the opportunity dangling in front of them, Southern artillery batteries swarmed the vacated ground, which dominated the successive clearings of Fairview and Chancellorsville, and opened a murderous fire on Federal infantry and artillery holding those positions and in the woods bordering them. Artillery officer E. P. Alexander later wrote, "never was there such a gift of a battlefield." Waves of Confederate infantry from A. P. Hill's division and Major General Raleigh Colston's division of Jackson's corps, some of them personally led by Stuart on foot with his plumed hat and sword, assaulted hastily prepared defenses manned by Federal brigades of the III, XII, and II Corps posted in the woods to the north and south of Fairview. At first, the Rebel attacks foundered on the felled logs and shallow trenches of the Unionists, but when one of the defending Union brigades faltered and fell back, Stuart exploited the breakthrough and began to break up the Northern line. The combined weight of the dominant Confederate artillery, which for the first time in the eastern theater outgunned their Yankee adversaries, and the violence of the Rebel infantry assaults was too much. With some of the woods north of the Hazel Grove–Fairview axis set afire by exploding shells, the scene was truly horrific. A man fell literally every second between 6:00 and 9:00 a.m., making May 3, 1863, the second bloodiest day of the Civil War.¹³

His artillery outmatched and out of ammunition and his infantry lines collapsing, Hooker ordered the abandonment first of Fairview at 9:30 and then Chancellorsville, which had served as his headquarters throughout the battle. Fighting raged around the mansion itself even as Hooker's staff hurried to remove the last files and tents of the army's nerve center. Members of the Chancellor family, huddling in the basement, were rousted by sympathetic Federals before they evacuated the building, which had been set on fire by exploding shells. By 10:00 the bulk of the Army of the Potomac was in retreat to a defensive position quickly prepared around US Ford. Despite having two corps standing idly by (Meade's V and John Reynold's I) that could have crashed into Stuart's northern flank, Hooker chose to retreat northward toward the Rappahannock River and his tight, new defensive position. Perhaps a concussion suffered when a Rebel shell shattered a pillar he was leaning against on the Chancellor House porch about 9:15 affected his

13 Samuel P. Bates, *The Battle of Chancellorsville* (Meadville, PA: Edward T. Bates, 1882), p. 120; Gary W. Gallagher (ed.), *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 204–7; Sears, *Chancellorsville*, pp. 317–39, 365–70.

decision-making. Rendered unconscious by the blow, the commanding general was out for nearly an hour – a key hour in which the fate of his campaign hung in the balance and communications with Sedgwick and Butterfield were halted. Refusing to relinquish command when he groggily came to, Hooker may have been mentally incapacitated by the experience. Nearly all his subordinates were unsympathetic at the time and agreed that Chancellorsville was one of the greatest lost Northern opportunities of the war so far. The boasts and promises of a glorious campaign appeared to have come to naught.¹⁴

Lee, for his part, witnessed the reunion of his army's two wings as Anderson's and McLaws's troops surged westward and met Stuart's men in the Chancellorsville clearing around 10:15. Against the backdrop of the burning mansion, Lee rode triumphantly past his cheering men. His aide-de-camp, Charles Marshall, later wrote of that moment: "[Lee] sat in the full realization of all that soldiers dream of – triumph; and as I looked at him in the complete fruition of the success which his genius, courage, and confidence in his army had won, I thought that it must have been from some such scene that men in ancient days ascended to the dignity of gods." But Lee knew all was not yet well. Jackson was badly wounded, his army was still strongly outnumbered by the enemy, and despite the miracle achieved at Chancellorsville, the Federals had still not received a mortal blow. More worrisome, the Confederate commander received word that Sedgwick was approaching from the east. If allowed to continue unimpeded, 16,000 fresh Union muskets would be added to Hooker's soldiers now furiously entrenching near Banks Ford. Unshaken by the news, Lee decided to divide his army for a third time, sending the battle-weary divisions of Anderson and McLaws eastward down the Orange Turnpike to stop Sedgwick. He would remain at Chancellorsville with Jackson's divisions and plan a renewed attack on Hooker.¹⁵

Responding to Hooker's plea for assistance on the 2nd, Sedgwick and his VI Corps finally assaulted Early at Fredericksburg on the morning of May 3, and after two bloody repulses, pushed him off Marye's Heights and sluggishly proceeded west down the turnpike toward Lee's rear. Suffering nearly 2,000 casualties in these attempts, his brigades worn out by their hard-fought

14 John Bigelow, Jr. *The Campaign of Chancellorsville: A Strategic and Tactical Study* (1910; reprint edition, New York: Konecky and Konecky, 1995), pp. 367–71; Sears, *Chancellorsville*, pp. 337–9.

15 Marshall quoted in Clement A. Evans (ed.), *Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate States History*, 12 vols. (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Company, 1899), vol. 111, p. 390.

victory, "Uncle John," as his soldiers called him, methodically reorganized his command before proceeding. Although most of the famous Washington Artillery of New Orleans was captured, Early escaped with his division intact and regrouped at a preplanned location just to the south of town. Down but certainly not out, Early would be shortly ready for another go at the Federals. In the meantime, Brigadier General Cadmus Wilcox's Rebel brigade made a desperate stand at Salem Church that afternoon after relocating from their old station at Banks Ford. Marching to the sound of Early's guns that morning, Wilcox arrived too late to help prevent Early's retreat, but he was superbly positioned to harass and delay Sedgwick. The church, a solid red-brick structure dominating a choke point on the turnpike where the woods crowded in on the road, offered a splendid defensive opportunity. The fighting was desperate, but bolstered by some of McLaws's tired brigades that arrived just in time, Wilcox stopped Sedgwick cold. The Federal corps commander, having once been the anvil to Hooker's hammer, had, following his chief's wishes, switched roles and become the hammer, but he was numerically too weak to rescue Hooker's campaign.¹⁶

The next day, May 4, the full divisions of Anderson, Early, and McLaws, enjoying a sizable local numerical superiority and supervised at the last minute by Lee himself, launched a series of uncoordinated assaults on Sedgwick, who, honestly expecting annihilation, was happily surprised to beat each of them off in turn. Early achieved substantial progress in his assigned sector, but Anderson's attacks were feeble and McLaws, perhaps mentally fatigued by this time, contributed little. Immensely frustrated, Lee, for one of the few times in the war, publicly lost his temper and chastised his division commanders for their failure to better coordinate. He knew a great opportunity had slipped his grasp to turn the campaign into a strategic-level victory by bagging Sedgwick's corps. Glad to be still alive, the VI Corps soldiers withdrew relatively unscathed back across the Rappahannock late that night and into the morning of May 5. Hooker had sent an order demanding Sedgwick retain his bridgehead, but true to the pattern of Union communications in this campaign, it arrived too late. The Federal commander, somewhat recovered from his earlier concussion but dejected at how his carefully laid plans had all gone awry, was badly disappointed in Sedgwick and later wrote as if his subordinate preempted his decision to withdraw the rest of the Army of the Potomac across the river by his

16 Bigelow, *The Campaign of Chancellorsville*, pp. 390–400; Furgurson, *Chancellorsville*, pp. 273–83.

(Sedgwick's) decision to retreat his single corps. Hooker began preparations to abandon the campaign after calling a council of war on the 4th, which he oddly absented himself from, and during which the majority of his corps commanders expressed a desire to stay and fight. For his part, Lee was already feeling the absence of Jackson and lamented that the Federal army had not been more badly damaged. A frontal attack against Hooker's several corps, now heavily entrenched in a strong position against the Rappahannock at US Ford, was only foiled by the Unionists' withdrawal on the night of May 5–6.¹⁷

11.3 Results and Strategic Implications

Against all odds, Robert E. Lee had scored a stunning tactical victory. By audaciously dividing his army three times and repeatedly achieving local numerical superiority, he shocked the enemy into abandoning his promising and potentially lethal offensive, inflicting 17,000 casualties while suffering 13,000 of his own. These were casualties the Confederacy could ill afford to lose, however, and included dozens of seasoned field- and junior-grade officers, as well as the talented leader of the Stonewall Brigade, Brigadier Frank Paxton. But it was the loss of Jackson, who died on May 10 from either pneumonia or sepsis (probably because of infection resulting from his falls from the stretcher) at a small house at Guiney's Station, that was most keenly felt. To the majority of Confederates, in and out of the army, regardless of theater, state, or rank, Stonewall's death was viewed as a strategic contingency point for the Rebel war effort. Despite jubilation over the battle's results, the perception that nothing would be the same after he died spread like a virus throughout the southern states, and, although hope for final victory certainly remained, citizens as diminutive as schoolgirls and as powerful as Jefferson Davis himself shared an acknowledgment that his loss changed national prospects. "A great national calamity has befallen us," Davis wrote to Lee, and a small girl in Lexington, Virginia related, "[it] was the first time it had dawned on us that God would let us be defeated." A newspaper editor in North Carolina wailed, "The loss which the cause has suffered by his removal from the world cannot be overstated . . . he was absolutely invaluable," and another claimed, "for the first time since the war began this nation weeps as one man." Jackson was simply unique as a strategic and operational advisor to

17 Bigelow, *The Campaign of Chancellorsville*, pp. 407–18.

Lee and as his strong “right arm” on the battlefield, and many people knew it. No more could the commanding general turn to Stonewall for frank counsel about how to proceed during a particular crisis, and gone were his inimitable abilities as a rapid marcher and flanker. Lee himself lamented to his brother, “Who can fill his place I do not know” and wept at length in his tent with a mutual friend, William Nelson Pendleton, who could only comfort himself by knowing Jackson had exchanged this world for an infinitely better one in heaven.¹⁸

Jackson’s death also created organizational and intellectual problems in the Army of Northern Virginia that had to be addressed. Lee now had to restructure his army, dividing it into three roughly equal corps rather than two wings as before. This decision would cause the elevation to corps command of A. P. Hill and Richard S. Ewell, two men who had fought well under Jackson’s direct supervision as division generals but were untested at the corps level and unused to Lee’s intent-based communication. It would also portend the shuffling around of brigades and commanders and the introduction of entirely new units to fill out all three corps. In the next campaign, some of them would fight alongside each other for the first time, and some leaders were brand new at their position. The Federal army had also escaped permanent, decisive damage, a fact that dominated Lee’s thinking as it had after the Battle of Fredericksburg. Aware that the sands of strategic time were draining away for the Confederacy, he yearned to strike a telling, possibly killing blow on the Army of the Potomac, and came away from his improbable victory at Chancellorsville believing that the superb fighting quality of the Confederate rank and file could carry the day on any field, a confidence that would prove disastrously misplaced two months later in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Lastly, having thrown the Union Army of the Potomac on the defensive after Chancellorsville, Lee was determined to enact the earlier-conceived plan to move north once more in a bid to possibly end the war. Once Longstreet returned with his two divisions, Lee sensed his opportunity. The strategic initiative in the east now passed again to the Confederacy.¹⁹

18 Varina Davis, *Jefferson Davis, Ex-President of the Confederate States of America: A Memoir*, 2 vols. (New York: Belford Co., 1890), vol. II, pp. 382–3; Elizabeth Preston Allan, *A March Past* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1938), p. 152; Raleigh, NC, *Semi-Weekly Standard*, May 12, 1863; Richmond *Daily Dispatch* citing Knoxville *Register*, May 15, 1863; Lee to Charles Carter Lee, May 24, 1863, transcription in Robert E. Lee Collection, box 1, Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

19 Gary W. Gallagher (ed.), *Chancellorsville: The Battle and Its Aftermath* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. xi–xii.

Upon hearing news of Hooker's withdrawal across the Rappahannock, an astonished President Lincoln turned to a colleague and uttered, "My God, my God, what will the people say?" Yet another Union campaign in the east had come to naught and Lincoln would once more have to walk the political tightrope. Reluctant to immediately relieve Hooker of command as he had his predecessors, partially because no good alternatives beckoned, Lincoln opted to give the general one last try – but just one more – and kept him in charge, for now. The Army of the Potomac, despite its losses, remained intact and morale among the troops, excepting the German Americans of the XI Corps, was surprisingly stable. There was definite regret at the abrupt end of so promising a campaign, but the enlisted men blamed Hooker and their German-born comrades for the failure, and so salved the sting of defeat. Hooker blamed just about everyone but himself: Stoneman, for failing to distract and disrupt Lee enough; Sedgwick for failing to obey his orders quickly and rescue him on May 3; and Howard for failing to take precautions for his flank as ordered. He offered later all three of these men as sacrifices to the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. Grumbling and suspicions among the army's corps commanders abounded, and some complained directly to the president and the secretary of war, just as Hooker had against Burnside. But they remained loyal and determined to climb back from defeat, even as the numbers in their organizations shrank: the expiration of the enlistment terms of dozens of Union regiments reduced the numerical strength of the army by over 20,000 men.

On the home front, spirits plunged at the news of Chancellorsville. Citizens in both small towns and cities across the North mourned the reversal of yet another much-heralded campaign. Few locales escaped the sad news of loved ones and friends who had been killed or wounded, adding to the despondency. Coming on the heels of the debacle at Fredericksburg, the defeat in the Virginia woods signaled to those disposed to make peace, especially in the Democratic Party, that the time had come to accept permanent separation of the country. Confederate victory appeared foreordained. Copperheads, advocates of peace so named because some wore copper pennies on their lapels, grew in numbers and political power in the southern Midwest and in southern and eastern Pennsylvania, and threatened to fragment Lincoln's carefully forged political coalition. Among the North's German American communities, feelings of sadness at the loss of sons and brothers who fell in the XI Corps' struggle were replaced by outrage and indignation at the treatment of their ethnic soldiers in the Anglo-American press. Editorials appeared in the German-language press demanding the

removal of Howard and Hooker and recommending Germans throughout the Union either withdraw support from the Northern war effort, band together politically to fight against the resurgent nativism, or both. Mass protest rallies occurred in New York, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, and other cities with large ethnically German populations, but in the end the Federal triumph at Gettysburg, and the passage of time, helped salve the sting of prejudice. Still, Lincoln would lose the German vote in the 1864 election by almost the same margin with which he had won it in 1860, a reminder that ethnic allegiance in wartime is fragile, and German immigrants increasingly reinforced their distinctive German American identity as the war progressed.²⁰

The greater northern public, which had endured military disaster before, did not allow Chancellorsville to assume such a large place in their collective memory and, determined to carry on, remained confident in their army and the righteousness of their cause. Certainly, in response to Lincoln's lament, the "people" indeed had much to say; some ridiculed the administration while others complained about his generals or the "Dutch," but only a minority believed the war was lost. The majority weathered this storm as they had the previous ones, waiting and hoping for the day their army would finally beat Bobby Lee. That day would dawn at a small Pennsylvania town, just across the Maryland border, almost exactly two months after the smoke cleared from the forests and fields in the Virginia Wilderness.²¹

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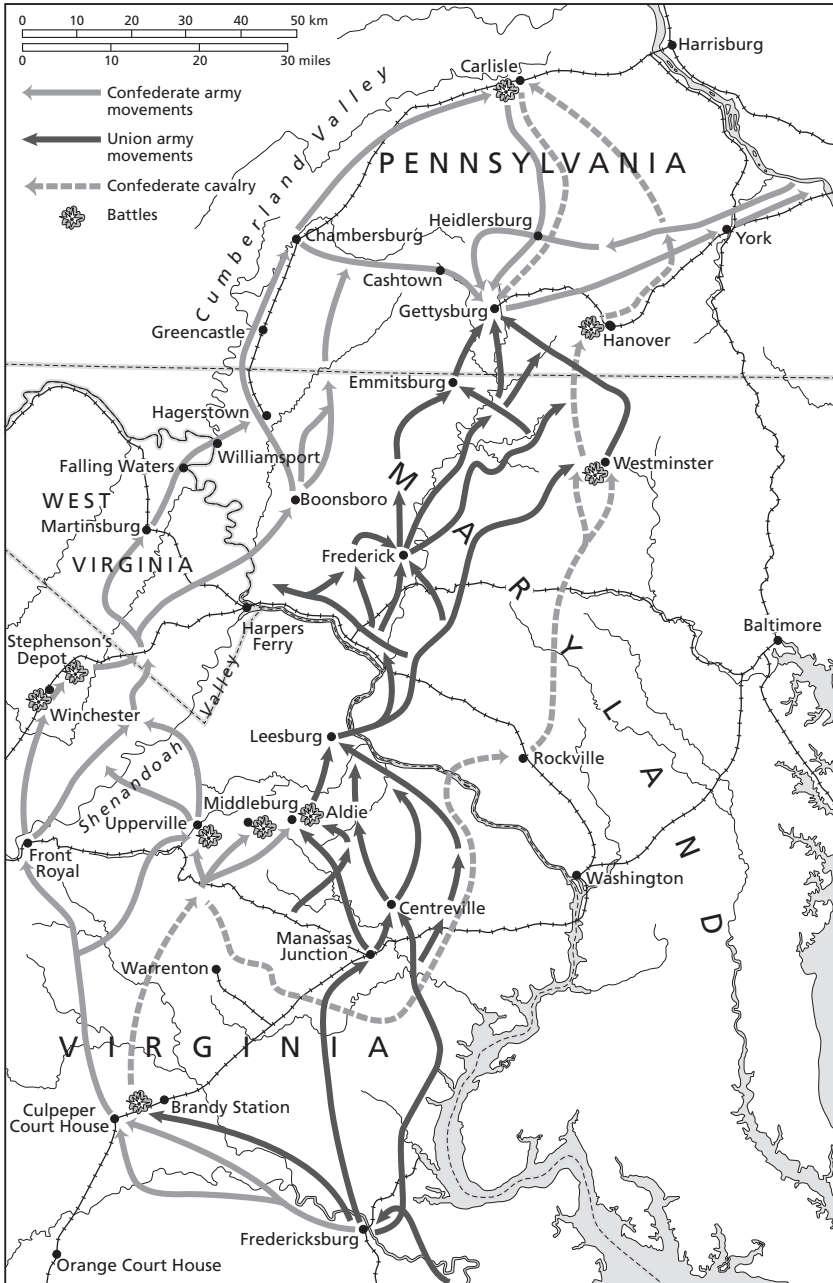
The Gettysburg Campaign

CAROL REARDON

The Battle of Gettysburg has inspired a more voluminous literature than any single event in American military history for at least three major reasons. First, after three days of fighting on July 1–3, 1863, General Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia and Major General George G. Meade's Army of the Potomac lost more than 51,000 dead, wounded, captured, and missing, making Gettysburg the costliest military engagement in North American history. Second, President Abraham Lincoln endowed Gettysburg with special distinction when he visited in November 1863 to dedicate the soldiers' cemetery and delivered his immortal Gettysburg Address. Finally, Gettysburg gave the Union its first significant victory over General Lee; the subsequent euphoria helped to fix in popular memory – if not in objective history – an enduring image of Gettysburg as the turning point of the Civil War.

12.1 The Confederacy's Strategic Challenges in mid-1863

In the late spring of 1863, the Confederacy faced a deteriorating strategic environment. Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant's Union forces had surrounded Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton's Confederate army at Vicksburg, a key Mississippi River port, and General Joseph E. Johnston's relief force had proven unable to raise the siege; substantial Union ground and naval forces probed General P. G. T. Beauregard's Confederate troops around Charleston, South Carolina; Major General William S. Rosecrans's Union army challenged Confederate general Braxton Bragg in middle and eastern Tennessee; and Union forces near Suffolk, Virginia threatened Richmond itself. General Lee watched these developments closely and in April advised Confederate secretary of war James A. Seddon that “the readiest method of relieving pressure on



12.1 The Gettysburg campaign. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

General Johnston and General Beauregard would be for this army to cross into Maryland” and head north.¹

Lee also faced dire challenges of his own, especially a serious shortage of food for his army and its animals. He could not tap into large parts of the Shenandoah Valley, the heart of Virginia’s agricultural production, now under Union military occupation. Two years of war had devastated farms in Virginia’s Tidewater and Piedmont, as well. By mid-April, Lee wrote his wife that he needed to “establish our supplies on a firm basis,” and opportunity beckoned after Lee defeated the Army of the Potomac under Major General Joseph Hooker at Chancellorsville on May 1–3, 1863.² Despite the loss of 13,000 men and the death of Lieutenant General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, Lee informed his civilian superiors that the time had come for a northward advance by his army to sweep Union troops from the Shenandoah Valley, to push the Army of the Potomac out of Virginia, and to give the state’s farmers a chance to plant and harvest a crop. Additionally, he argued, the disruption caused by such a campaign would afford “greater relief” to the Confederate “armies in middle Tennessee and on the Carolina coast than by any other method.”³

Brief snippets in postwar memoirs suggest that Lee’s plan did not win the immediate support of the Confederacy’s senior military and political leaders, and other alternatives – including sending Lee himself or parts of his army to the western theater – received active consideration before President Davis finally gave the nod to Lee’s offensive into Union territory. No detailed minutes survive to explain or prioritize the factors that shaped the discussions, however, and since Lee started his summer offensive with no public announcement from the Davis administration, the public press speculated extensively about the goals of the campaign. Credible suppositions – including Lee’s desire to improve his logistical base and take active operations onto Northern soil – blended with grandiose claims for designs to capture Washington, to forge formal alliances with European powers, to force Grant to lift the siege at Vicksburg and redeploy his troops against Lee, or even to force Lincoln to surrender by completely destroying the Army of the Potomac on northern soil.

The lack of clear specifics for Lee’s campaign extended to his plans for his army’s goals in Pennsylvania. After reorganizing his army following Jackson’s death from two corps into three – under his second-in-command, Lieutenant General James Longstreet, and newly promoted lieutenant generals Richard

1 Clifford Dowdey and Louis Manarin (eds.), *The Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee* (New York: Bramhall House, 1961), p. 430.

2 Dowdey and Manarin (eds.), *Wartime Papers*, p. 438.

3 Dowdey and Manarin (eds.), *Wartime Papers*, pp. 434–5.

S. Ewell and A. P. Hill – he ordered his army northward on June 3. Lee issued no formal commander's intent to inform the actions of his senior subordinates. Nor did he make a public announcement to Pennsylvanians to explain his army's presence as he had done during the Maryland campaign in 1862. One major criticism of Lee's generalship in the summer of 1863 centers on his failure to send his 75,000-man army into Pennsylvania with a clearly defined mission. Lee left behind an evidentiary void that authors of Gettysburg campaign narratives have filled with both reasonable assumptions about his logistical concerns and more dubious notions such as his intention to capture eastern Pennsylvania's anthracite coal fields.⁴

12.2 The Union Reaction to Lee's Move North

General Hooker missed Lee's initial northward moves, but his horsemen caught Major General James E. B. Stuart's Confederate cavalry off guard near Brandy Station, Virginia on June 9, and sent them reeling. The setback did not deter Lee. He continued to push toward the Shenandoah Valley for the protection of the Blue Ridge Mountains. On June 14–15, Ewell's 2nd Corps at the head of Lee's advance routed the Union garrison at Winchester. Ewell entered Pennsylvania on June 22, and his men gathered supplies so aggressively that Lee issued two special orders to chastise his men for their "instances of forgetfulness."⁵ For the next week, Confederate troops continued to fill their logistical needs, reached the outskirts of Harrisburg, and easily repulsed challenges from Pennsylvania's Emergency Militia. Hooker initially considered a thrust toward the Confederate capital, but Lincoln reminded him sternly that "Lee's army and not Richmond, is your sure objective point."⁶ Hooker began his belated pursuit by sending his cavalry against the tail of Lee's army still in Virginia, but at Middleburg, Upperville, and Aldie, Stuart's Confederate horsemen effectively blocked them.

By June 27, with Lee already in Pennsylvania, Hooker had finally entered Maryland. Under War Department pressure to pursue more aggressively, Hooker sent a sharply worded dispatch demanding reinforcements and expansion of his authority. Early on June 28, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton

4 See *Army and Navy Journal*, vol. 1, October 10, 1863.

5 For the text of Special Orders Nos. 72 and 73, see United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), specifically series I, volume 27, part 3, pp. 912–13 and 942–3 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series I unless otherwise noted).

6 OR, 27(1): 35.

relieved Hooker of command of the Army of the Potomac and replaced him with Major General George G. Meade. The order also provided Meade with a daunting two-part mission; he had to protect Washington and Baltimore, as well as find and fight Lee. With incomplete knowledge of the deployment of the 94,000 men in his seven-infantry corps and cavalry – and even less information on Lee’s troops – he nonetheless issued orders to resume the march toward Pennsylvania the day following his promotion. Selective reading of Meade’s initial orders enabled detractors to describe his contingency plan for a defensive stand along Pipe Creek on the Maryland border as evidence of his lack of aggressiveness; but Meade understood both his offensive and defensive missions and expressed clear willingness to “assume the offensive from this place” should opportunity offer.⁷

On June 30, Meade sent Brigadier General John Buford’s 2,800-man cavalry division to Gettysburg to find and report back on Lee’s movements. Buford’s troopers fanned out to the north, east, and west along seven of the ten roads that converged in this crossroads town. They reported a strong Confederate presence north and west of town and exchanged shots with reconnoitering Confederate infantry along the Chambersburg Road west of town. Buford correctly predicted to Meade that a fight would start near Gettysburg the next morning.

12.3 July 1: The Battle Begins

When Lee heard of Meade’s promotion, the Army of Northern Virginia stretched from the Maryland border near Hagerstown north to Chambersburg and then east to the outskirts of Harrisburg. Lee lacked reliable information about the Army of the Potomac’s activities and intentions. Because Stuart had interpreted Lee’s June 23 orders to “take position on the right [east] of our column” to justify a wide-ranging swing to the east of the entire Union army as well – a decision still hotly debated by students of the battle today – he had not kept Lee reliably updated on Meade’s movements.⁸ Thus, Lee prudently ordered his overstretched army to concentrate near Cashtown, Pennsylvania, about 8 miles northwest of Gettysburg. His corps commanders knew not to bring on a fight until the entire force had arrived.

7 George Gordon Meade (ed.), *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, Major General, United States Army*, 2 vols. (1913; reprint edition, Baltimore, MD: Butternut and Blue, 1994), vol. II, p. II.

8 OR, 27(2): 316.

Brigadier General Henry Heth's division from A. P. Hill's 3rd Corps had probed toward Gettysburg on June 30 and engaged with Buford's troopers, mistaking them for local militia. Early on July 1, they advanced again down the Chambersburg Road and once again met Buford's men, this time near Marsh Creek, approximately 3 miles west of Gettysburg. A brief exchange of shots here started the Battle of Gettysburg at approximately 7:00 a.m.

The terrain west of Gettysburg rolled across a series of gentle ridges ideal for defense. On McPherson's Ridge, 1 mile west of town, Buford established the line he determined to hold and sent back a constant stream of information to update Major General Meade and Major General John F. Reynolds, commanding the I Corps, the closest Union reinforcements. On Seminary Ridge, the final height between McPherson's Ridge and Gettysburg, Buford used the cupola of the Pennsylvania Lutheran Seminary's Old Dorm to observe Heth's advance and the measured withdrawal of his troopers to McPherson's Ridge. As pressure grew on the outnumbered cavalrymen – Heth had put two full infantry brigades into his first line – Reynolds finally reached the battlefield and took charge of the fight. His arrival changed the asymmetric infantry-versus-cavalry meeting engagement of the early morning to a more conventional and sustained infantry clash. Even if Heth had not sought a fight, he now faced one.

Reynolds had no time to plan a battle. He simply responded to the threat in his front and tried to stop Heth. About 10:45, while ordering his famous Iron Brigade against the Tennesseans and Alabamians pouring into a woodlot on McPherson's Ridge, Reynolds fell dead, shot through the head. Major General Abner Doubleday, the I Corps' senior division commander, succeeded to command with little knowledge of the situation or Reynolds's intentions. The Iron Brigade cleared the woods and bought Doubleday time to consider his options – attack, withdraw, or hold on – while other I Corps troops stopped a brigade of Mississippians and North Carolinians in the bed of an unfinished railroad on the north side of the Chambersburg Road, capturing several hundred Confederates. Noon brought a brief calm for Doubleday and Heth to decide their next moves; both determined to continue the fight for McPherson's Ridge.

The sudden arrival around noon of substantial Confederate reinforcements broke the quiet. Major General Robert E. Rodes's division from Ewell's 2nd Corps had planned to rejoin Lee near Cashtown, but the sounds of Heth's fight against the Union I Corps drew them instead toward Gettysburg. As they emerged from the woods on Oak Hill, a height just north of McPherson's Ridge, the two generals realized they held a seemingly

perfect position to envelop the right flank of Doubleday's I Corps. Ewell, however, still operating under orders not to engage until the army concentrated, faced an interesting choice: obey his original instructions, or take advantage of a promising opportunity to attack.

First, Ewell turned Oak Hill into a formidable artillery platform. Then, he ordered Rodes to assault the right flank of the I Corps line, which, he believed, rested in a woodlot on a slight ridge extending south from Oak Hill, now designated Oak Ridge. Rodes planned a coordinated attack of three brigades, with Colonel Edward A. O'Neal's Alabamians on the left, Brigadier General Alfred Iverson's North Carolina brigade in the center, and Brigadier Junius Daniel's North Carolinians on the right.

The plan seemed reasonable and straightforward, but it fell apart from a series of inexplicable errors. O'Neal's Alabamians attacked first and alone. They attacked through low ground behind Oak Ridge, expecting little resistance. When they found an entire I Corps brigade in a line of battle blocking them and then spotted the head of Major General Oliver O. Howard's newly arrived XI Corps entering the fields north of Gettysburg and threatening their left flank, the Alabamians fired a few volleys and withdrew. O'Neal failed to report these unanticipated developments to Rodes or Ewell, and Iverson and Daniel advanced still believing they aimed at an unprotected Union flank. Unfortunately for Iverson's men, the Union troops who repulsed O'Neal redeployed behind the crest of Oak Ridge and caught the Tar Heels in close-range volleys. Nearly half of them fell dead or wounded within fifteen minutes, and Iverson, who had remained on Oak Hill, refused to ride forward to rally the survivors. Daniel's brigade could not succor them either. Instead of advancing westward, they unaccountably veered south, away from Oak Ridge and toward the railroad cut and the Chambersburg Pike. This costly episode – as with the debacle at the railroad cut – demonstrated that overall Confederate success could also include individual and small-unit failures.⁹

The arrival of Howard's XI Corps certainly complicated Ewell's decisions, but it also gave the Union forces at Gettysburg its fourth different commander on July 1. He astutely left Brigadier General Adolph von Steinwehr's division on Cemetery Hill, a prominent treeless elevation on the southern edge of Gettysburg, to establish a strong defensive position to serve, if

9 Robert K. Krick, "Three Confederate Disasters on Oak Ridge: Failures of Brigade Leadership on the First Day at Gettysburg," in Gary W. Gallagher (ed.), *The First Day at Gettysburg: Essays on Confederate and Union Leadership* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1992), pp. 92–140.

needed, as a rallying point. Howard then ordered Doubleday to continue holding the I Corps line west of Gettysburg on McPherson's Ridge. He then turned his attention to Ewell's approach from the north. While Rodes's men pressed their attacks from Oak Hill northwest of town, Howard learned that Major General Jubal Early's division under Ewell's corps had begun to deploy battle lines astride the Harrisburg Road northeast of Gettysburg. Howard quickly ordered his remaining two divisions under Major General Carl Schurz and Brigadier General Francis C. Barlow to positions north of the town to stop Ewell. Both division commanders were military amateurs, and their dispositions showed it. Schurz failed to close a gap between his left flank and the right flank of the I Corps, and the strength of the two XI Corps divisions combined proved insufficient to cover the front assigned to them. Barlow created an additional gap between his division and Schurz by advancing against orders to take possession of a knob of high ground in his front.

As Howard completed his dispositions, General Lee reached the battlefield. From his position west of Gettysburg, he could not see Howard and Ewell's lines north of Gettysburg, but he had received enough positive news to abandon his intention to concentrate his army before accepting battle. At mid-afternoon, Lee ordered an attack along his entire line, from northeast to northwest to west.

When Early launched his assault on Barlow's division northeast of Gettysburg, the troops on the right flank of the XI Corps line were unprepared to receive the attack. Barlow fell badly wounded and many of his soldiers broke for the rear, significant numbers of them captured in the unfamiliar streets of Gettysburg. Northern newspapers of the day blamed the entire XI Corps – not just Barlow's division – for repeating their collapse at Chancellorsville, when they crumbled under Stonewall Jackson's flank attack. Once again, the press labeled them as "Howard's Cowards," the "Flying Half-moons" from their crescent-shaped corps badge, or, in reference to the significant number of German-born soldiers in its ranks, the "Flying Dutchmen."¹⁰ But the entire XI Corps did not deserve such opprobrium. Schurz's men on the center and left of Howard's line north of town stood fire well and, for a while, effectively resisted Ewell's assaults. In the end, however, the XI Corps line north of town evaporated. The retreat of Howard's XI Corps rendered vulnerable the right flank of the I Corps line on Oak Ridge. With victorious Confederates pushing into Gettysburg from the north, Rodes

¹⁰ For a comprehensive perspective that sees beyond questions relating to ethnicity, see A. Wilson Greene, "From Chancellorsville to Cemetery Hill: O. O. Howard and Eleventh Corps Leadership," in Gallagher (ed.), *First Day at Gettysburg*, pp. 57–91.

launched a second attack from Oak Hill. The Union troops had little remaining ammunition, and they finally received orders to abandon their position, too.

The center and left of the I Corps line continued to hold McPherson's Ridge west of town. Daniel's North Carolinians, who had failed to support Iverson, found themselves embroiled in a tough fight against a newly arrived brigade of Pennsylvanians under Colonel Roy Stone near the railroad cut and the McPherson farm buildings. Few of the Pennsylvanians had seen serious battle action before Gettysburg, but they faced north to repulse several assaults by Daniel's Tar Heels and then redeployed under fire to face west to receive the attack by a fresh brigade from Heth's division. To their immediate south, the Iron Brigade continued to fight in the woodlot where General Reynolds fell earlier that day. Their fight against Brigadier General James Johnston Pettigrew's North Carolinians on the afternoon of July 1 holds a prominent place in Gettysburg lore. Before it ended, the Iron Brigade's 24th Michigan alone lost eight officers killed and nearly 80 percent of its men killed, wounded, and missing. One company of the 26th North Carolina entered the fight with eighty-eight men in ranks and suffered 100 percent casualties. After about two hours of fighting, the survivors of all the I Corps infantry brigades that fought that day on McPherson's Ridge – along with a massed battery of seventeen cannon astride the Chambersburg Road – made a last stand on Seminary Ridge. At about 3:45 p.m., Lee sent forward Major General W. Dorsey Pender's fresh division of Hill's 3rd Corps to carry the position. The Union defenders held on until Colonel Abner M. Perrin's South Carolinians finally pierced the center of the Union line near the Seminary's Old Dorm.¹¹

By about 4:00 p.m., the Union line north and west of Gettysburg had collapsed, and Cemetery Hill south of town teemed with disorganized survivors. Near the gatehouse of Evergreen Cemetery, Doubleday and Howard clashed over troop deployments and command authority. The arrival of Major General Winfield S. Hancock, commander of Meade's II Corps, ended further debate. Carrying with him Meade's written authorization to make decisions in his name – necessary, since both Howard and Doubleday outranked him – Hancock ordered Howard to hold Cemetery Hill and, over Doubleday's objections, sent one I Corps division to hold adjacent Culp's Hill. Slowly, order was restored.

¹¹ J. Michael Miller, "Perrin's Brigade on July 1, 1863," *Gettysburg Magazine*, no. 13 (July 1995): 22–32.

About 5:00 p.m., observing the chaos on Cemetery Hill, Lee ordered Ewell to attack Cemetery Hill “if practicable” and without renewing a prolonged fight. Ewell evaluated the situation, considered what he knew about it – and mostly what he did not know – and deemed Rodes’s and Early’s divisions too disorganized to mount another attack. He decided against making the attack. Observers then and historians today still debate the correctness of his decision.

Late on July 1, Lieutenant General Longstreet arrived at Lee’s headquarters near the seminary. After congratulating Lee on his success that day, Longstreet inquired about orders for his 1st Corps for the following morning. He was surprised to learn that Lee intended to stay and fight at Gettysburg. Longstreet later recalled that Lee had expressed a desire to launch an offensive campaign but to fight defensive battles on ground he chose. Now he seemed to have abandoned that notion. When Lee asserted that if the Union army remained at Gettysburg in the morning, he would attack, Longstreet countered that if the Army of the Potomac still held its line, then Meade wanted Lee to attack. Lee stood his ground, however, and Longstreet later recalled the exchange as one of the few times he ever saw Lee “lose his vaunted equipoise.”¹²

12.4 July 2

As Lee settled in for the night, Major General Meade finally reached Gettysburg about midnight. After speaking with several senior subordinates, he ordered the entire Army of the Potomac to close on Gettysburg. He made his first thorough reconnaissance of the battlefield at first light on July 2. After considering – and quickly rejecting – an attack option, he designed a defensive line that soon became known as “the fishhook.” The pointed barb of the hook rested near Culp’s Hill, and Major General Henry W. Slocum’s XII Corps joined the I Corps troops sent there by Hancock to defend it. The bend in the hook rested on Cemetery Hill, where Howard’s XI Corps remained in place. The long shank of the fishhook extended south from Cemetery Hill along a height known as Cemetery Ridge; Hancock’s II Corps held the line immediately south of Cemetery Hill, and Major General Daniel E. Sickles’s III Corps filled the southern extension of the ridge. Little Round Top, its western slope recently deforested, stood just north of Big

¹² James Longstreet, “Lee in Pennsylvania,” in *The Annals of the War* (Philadelphia: *Philadelphia Weekly*, 1879), p. 434.

Round Top, the two hills anchoring Meade's fishhook. When his V and VI Corps arrived, Meade could use them to strengthen any part of his line or hold them in reserve. In Napoleonic terms, Meade had fashioned an inherently strong interior line, about 4 miles long.

As July 2 dawned, however, Lee found himself in the unfamiliar position placing his numerically inferior army on an exterior line that ultimately stretched for 7 miles, beginning east of Culp's Hill, continuing westward through Gettysburg, and then reaching south along Seminary Ridge. About 1 mile separated Seminary Ridge from the shank of the Union fishhook on Cemetery Ridge. Lee still planned to fight, and – because Stuart still remained absent – he ordered Captain Samuel Johnston, a staff engineer, to reconnoiter the Union dispositions. Just where Johnston went and what he saw remain one of Gettysburg's great mysteries. In any case, he reported the presence of Union troops on the hills just south of Gettysburg, noted more troops extending partway down Cemetery Ridge, and claimed that the Round Tops remained unoccupied.

Based on Johnston's flawed report, Lee developed his battle plan for July 2. He assigned the main effort to Longstreet's 1st Corps, intending for them to move south of Gettysburg and then attack northward along the Emmitsburg Road toward the town to roll up the left flank of the Union line along Cemetery Ridge and take Cemetery Hill in reverse. To coordinate with Longstreet, Lee ordered Ewell to use his 2nd Corps to initiate a diversion – with the option to turn it into a full-fledged attack – against Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill. A. P. Hill's 3rd Corps held Lee's center, its mission to support Longstreet and Ewell.¹³

Longstreet once again expressed strong opposition to Lee's plan. When he failed to change Lee's mind, he reported that only the divisions of Major General Lafayette McLaws and Lieutenant General John Bell Hood had reached Gettysburg; Major General George Pickett's division had not arrived. Lee permitted Longstreet a brief delay for Hood's final brigade to arrive and made up for Pickett's absence by giving Longstreet authority over Lieutenant General Richard H. Anderson's division of Hill's 3rd Corps. Still, Longstreet did not begin to move into position until about 11:00 a.m. Lee had expressed a desire that Longstreet move with both speed and secrecy, and when McLaws reported that his route took them in view of a Union signal station on Little Round Top, Longstreet ordered a countermarch that better sheltered their march, delaying the attack further. About 3:30, when

¹³ OR, 27(2): 318.

Longstreet's troops finally reached the western slope of Seminary Ridge well south of Gettysburg, he asked McLaws how he planned to deploy his lead division for the attack. McLaws stated his intention to crest the ridge, march eastward until astride the Emmitsburg Road, face his line to the north, then attack to roll up the left flank of the Union line. When the Confederates reached the top of Seminary Ridge and saw their intended battleground, however, they immediately realized that it looked nothing like Captain Johnston had described it. A large peach orchard and the open fields along the Emmitsburg Road, all reported as unoccupied, now teemed with Union troops.

These soldiers belonged to Sickles's III Corps. Meade had ordered Sickles to hold the southern end of Cemetery Ridge and to cover Little Round Top, but Sickles quickly realized that if he pushed out to the peach orchard and the Emmitsburg Road, he could deny Confederate batteries an advantageous position. He had abandoned such a position at Chancellorsville, and Confederate artillery rushed in and inflicted heavy losses on the III Corps; he did not want to repeat the experience. Twice Meade denied Sickles permission to move forward, but finally, about 2:00 p.m., the III Corps advanced without authority. Sickles placed one division along the Emmitsburg Road facing west. To cover Little Round Top, he faced his second division to the southwest, angling it back to fill the space between the road and the hill. Sickles's action disrupted Meade's fishhook and isolated the III Corps from the rest of the Union army. Moreover, he had insufficient manpower to hold the left of his line. He left wide gaps between his troops in the peach orchard, those in the sizable Rose's Wheatfield, and those near the massive rock formation now known as Devil's Den. Sickles's new line also included an indefensible salient at the peach orchard that could be attacked from west and south simultaneously.

Regardless of these weaknesses, Sickles's advance rendered unworkable Lee's original orders to attack up the Emmitsburg Road and roll up the Union flank. Although Longstreet informed Lee of the significant changes in the military situation along this portion of the Union line since early morning, Lee refused to alter his initial plan. To match the new reality, Longstreet now deployed his troops to make a frontal assault against Sickles's entire line. While McLaws's men remained in place to attack Union troops at the peach orchard, where they initially had planned to deploy, Longstreet shifted Hood to McLaws's right flank to attack the left of the III Corps line closest to the formidable Round Tops. Scouts reported a way around those hills that would threaten the Union rear area and reduce the need for frontal attacks. But Lee

had grown impatient, and Longstreet ordered Hood to attack. Hood – one of Lee’s most aggressive subordinates – responded with the only formal protest in his military career.

When Meade learned of Sickles’s forward movement, he rode out toward the peach orchard, and, after a heated exchange with Sickles, ordered the III Corps back to its original position, with an important codicil: “if General Lee will let you.” Just then, Longstreet’s artillery opened on Sickles’s line. Meade immediately changed Sickles’s orders, instructing him to hold his line, rather than risk a controlled withdrawal that might collapse under Confederate pressure and destroy the entire Union line. Meade then informed Sickles that he would support the III Corps line with reinforcements from quiet portions of the fishhook. Rival interpretations of Sickles’s actions and Meade’s response to them have fueled one of Gettysburg’s most heated controversies, and vitriolic postwar exchanges between supporters of each general still influence how historians evaluate this series of command decisions.

When Longstreet’s infantry assault began, Hood’s two leading brigades – the Alabamians under Brigadier General Evander M. Law and the Texas Brigade under Brigadier General Jerome B. Robertson – stepped off toward their respective objectives, Little Round Top and the left of Sickles’s III Corps line at Devil’s Den. Imperfectly understood orders, disruptive Union artillery fire, and the effective work of the US Sharpshooters on the skirmish line caused the two brigades to intermingle. Effective command and control broke down, as three of Law’s and two of Robertson’s regiments headed for Little Round Top, while two Alabama regiments and Robertson’s two remaining units closed in on Devil’s Den. Hood fell wounded early in the fight, leaving no senior commander to unsnarl the confusion.

On the crest of Little Round Top, an outstanding observation point, Major General Gouverneur K. Warren, the Army of the Potomac’s chief engineer, spotted the gun barrels and bayonets of Longstreet’s men glinting in the late afternoon sunlight. Even before the attack started, Warren realized that the Confederate battle line extended well beyond the end of Sickles’s left flank on Devil’s Den. Except for a signal team, Warren stood nearly alone. As a staff officer, he had no authority to order combat troops to defend the hill, but Colonel Strong Vincent, ordered to take his 1,400-man brigade from the V Corps to reinforce the line in Rose’s Wheatfield, exercised his initiative to divert to Little Round Top.

Vincent’s four regiments quickly formed a battle line on the southern slope of Little Round Top, and their stand has become one of Gettysburg’s most famous episodes. The Confederates first attacked Vincent’s right flank and

then moved to hit his center. The stand of Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's 20th Maine on Vincent's left flank and – at the time – the left flank of the entire Army of the Potomac, however, generally receives disproportionate attention. After several unsuccessful attempts by Law's Alabamians to break Chamberlain's line by frontal assault, the 15th Alabama maneuvered around his left flank. The Maine colonel counted only 386 men in ranks, but he managed to refuse his left flank to allow it to confront directly the new threat while the right half of his regiment continued to face south. When ammunition ran low, Chamberlain ordered his men to fix bayonets. As he reported it, he gave orders for the left of his line to charge down the hill, swing to the right – like a gate – and clear their front. The exhausted Alabamians retreated in disorder when Chamberlain's men hit, and the threat to Little Round Top and the Union left flank evaporated. During the postwar years, Chamberlain and his soldiers seldom agreed on the details of the fight – or who deserved the credit for the victory – but nobody challenged the end result.

The same good fortune did not extend to Sickles's advanced line. At Devil's Den, Confederate attackers received unexpected reinforcements. Brigadier General Henry L. Benning's Georgia brigade should have followed Law's Alabamians to Little Round Top, but in the confusion of battle they entered the fight at Devil's Den instead. The addition of Benning's firepower helped to bring the Devil's Den fight to a quick and victorious end for Southern arms. Sickles's overmatched Union defenders finally withdrew to Cemetery Ridge. The most intense fighting then shifted to John Rose's nearby wheatfield, separated from Devil's Den by a small woodlot. For complexity and confusion, no aspect of the Battle of Gettysburg defies analysis quite like the fight in the wheatfield. For about ninety minutes, the rival forces attacked and counterattacked through the trampled wheat and through the woods surrounding it. Like a series of crashing waves, troops from four separate Confederate brigades were fed into the fight against soldiers from at least eleven Union brigades. Nowhere did Meade fulfill his intention to support Sickles's line as completely as he did here; reinforcements from the II and V Corps reinforced the original III Corps defenders in close combat that at time flowed north and south and then east and west. Possession of the field may have changed six times and no single individual commander exerted control over it. In the end, Confederates held the western edge of the field, Union soldiers held the woods to the east, and over 6,000 men had fallen.

Longstreet's attack then progressed toward Sickles's line along the Emmitsburg Road. South Carolinians attacked the III Corps salient at the peach orchard from the south while Brigadier General William Barksdale's Mississippians assaulted the position from the west. Union artillery broke the Carolinians' attack, but Barksdale's Mississippians could not be stopped. The collapse of the peach orchard salient now rendered vulnerable the left flank of Sickles's line along the Emmitsburg Road, and Longstreet now sent forward Anderson's division – the 3rd Corps troops assigned by Lee to cooperate in Longstreet's main effort – to attack that line frontally. Lee's initial plan to outflank and roll up the Union line had apparently been forgotten. As the III Corps readied to receive Anderson's frontal attack, heavy Confederate artillery fire – some of it coming from batteries just arrived in the peach orchard as Sickles had feared – raked down their line from the left. The III Corps line on the Emmitsburg Road began to give way. In the chaos, a cannonball hit Sickles in the right leg, completely shattering it and requiring amputation.

Although it is often unappreciated, the Union army now faced a crisis. When Sickles moved forward from Cemetery Ridge, no other Union troops had filled the gap he left. Only a few hundred yards behind Sickles's original line, nearly unprotected, lay the Taneytown Road, one of Meade's two lines of supply, communication, and, if needed, retreat. A hastily organized line of Union batteries bought time for Major General Hancock of the II Corps, commanding the nearest unengaged troops, to cobble together a battle line on south Cemetery Ridge to face Brigadier General Cadmus Wilcox's Alabamians and Colonel David Lang's small brigade of Florida infantry from Anderson's division of A. P. Hill's 3rd Corps. The sacrifice of the 1st Minnesota infantry – often cited as an 82 percent loss – often claims the spotlight, but other troops from the II Corps – and even regiments from the Union I and XII Corps, the latter sent by Meade from the quiet Union right flank on Culp's Hill – helped to seal the breach here. After these troops repulsed the charge of Anderson's third brigade to enter the fight, Brigadier General Ambrose Wright's Georgians – who some accounts claim reached the crest of Cemetery Ridge itself – the sun set shortly after 7:00 p.m., finally ending the Confederate main effort on July 2.

But quiet did not fall over the entire battlefield. Lee's original orders required Ewell to launch a diversion on the Confederate left flank at the sound of Longstreet's guns. At approximately 4:00 p.m., Ewell's artillery on Benner's Hill had opened against Union batteries on Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill. At twilight, after his guns fell silent – his batteries were entirely

overmatched— Ewell ordered his infantry forward. He sent Major General Edward Johnson's division against Culp's Hill. They did not realize that, since Meade had sent most of Slocum's 10,000 soldiers to help Sickles, only a brigade of 1,500 New Yorkers under Brigadier General George S. Greene held the hill. Greene, an engineer, had his men erect breastworks and clear a field of fire on the wooded slopes, giving him a decided advantage now that he faced at least 5,000 Confederate attackers. The sun fell as Johnson's Confederates captured the lower half of Culp's Hill. The upper half, however, remained securely in Union hands, since Colonel David Ireland's 137th New York – much like the 20th Maine on Little Round Top – refused its flank on the right of Greene's line and fought off Confederate attacks from two directions. Ewell's second assault targeted the northern and eastern slopes of Cemetery Hill. Two brigades – the Louisianans of Brigadier General Harry T. Hay and the Tar Heels of Colonel Isaac Avery – hit XI Corps brigades, still badly mauled by their fight on July 1, broke their line, and even captured Union cannon on the crest of the hill. But darkness and the timely arrival of reinforcements from Hancock's II Corps finally repulsed the attackers. The fighting on July 2, the battle's costliest day, finally ended in darkness. While Antietam still ranks as the Civil War's bloodiest day, July 2 at Gettysburg remains a plausible candidate for the second position.

12.5 July 3

As comparative quiet fell over the battlefield, the rival commanders followed far different courses. After only five days in command, two of them locked in battle, Major General Meade needed to know the state of his army and the state of mind of its key generals. He listened more than he talked at a midnight gathering of his senior commanders. Major General Daniel Butterfield, his chief of staff, then posed three questions. Should the army stand at Gettysburg or withdraw? Should the Army of the Potomac take the offensive or remain on the defensive? If the army stayed, but remained on the defensive, how long should they await Lee's next move? Their consensus – stay, remain on the defensive, and reconsider options in twenty-four hours if Lee took no action – fully suited Meade's own preferences.¹⁴ Lee held no such

¹⁴ Two interesting accounts of the so-called "council of war" can be found in Meade (ed.), *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade*, vol. 11, p. 97; and John Gibbon, *Recollections of the Civil War* (New York: Putnam's, 1928), p. 187. As junior officer present, Gibbon cast the first vote for each of the three questions so he could not be influenced by his superior's preferences.

meeting with his senior commanders. He believed that July 2 had resulted in partial victories on both flanks. Although his army had suffered significant losses, he remained convinced that continued attacks against those weakened points, launched early in the morning, would bring decisive victory. As he wrote in his report, for July 3, “the general plan was unchanged.”¹⁵

Artillery fire opened early, but Lee’s guns did not break the silence. Late on July 2, after supporting Sickles, the XII Corps returned to Culp’s Hill and found Ewell’s men occupying some of their breastworks. With Meade’s permission, Union batteries opened fire about 4:30 a.m. on Confederate troops on lower Culp’s Hill and near Spangler’s Spring at its base. The bombardment lasted only about fifteen minutes, but it prompted Ewell to launch his early-morning attack. From 5:00 a.m. until nearly 11:00 a.m., fierce fighting flared all along the line. At Spangler’s Spring, a misunderstanding of orders to gather intelligence on the location of the Confederate line resulted in a needless frontal attack that resulted in the loss of several hundred Union soldiers. Union fortunes fared far better on Culp’s Hill itself, however, where Greene’s original defenders, now heavily reinforced by the rest of the XII Corps and others, took full advantage of the protection their breastworks offered to throw back Ewell’s attack with heavy loss.

About 9:00 a.m., the duration and intensity of the Culp’s Hill fight – and Longstreet’s failure to match Ewell’s attack with his own offensive push against the Union left – convinced Lee to reevaluate his options. Suspecting that Meade had reinforced his flanks, Lee now considered an attack against the Union center on Cemetery Ridge. Longstreet again respectfully disagreed, offering his professional opinion that “no 15,000 men” arrayed for battle could break that line. Longstreet’s postwar detractors accused him of insubordination for resisting Lee’s plan; in reality, he responsibly fulfilled his obligation as the army’s second-in-command to critique and offer alternatives to high-risk plans. In the end, Lee decided to assault the Union center on Cemetery Ridge. His decision to do so still stands among the most controversial aspects of his generalship at Gettysburg.

Lee fleshed out his new plan with four additional decisions. First, he designated the assault’s target, an area on Cemetery Ridge marked by a conspicuous clump (or copse) of trees. Second, to neutralize the numerous Union batteries, he took the unusual step of ordering a preliminary artillery bombardment before the infantry assault. Third, he assigned the troops to

¹⁵ OR, 27(2): 320.

make the attack, selecting Pickett's 5,500-man Virginia division from Longstreet's 1st Corps, the survivors of Heth's division, and two brigades from Pender's division, the latter two commands from Hill's 3rd Corps. While Pickett's men were fresh, all of Hill's units suffered heavily on July 1; Heth's men went into action on July 3 under temporary command of General Pettigrew, and after Pender fell mortally wounded late on July 2, Major General Isaac R. Trimble took command of his troops assigned to the charge. In total, approximately 13,000 infantry formed the attacking force. Finally, Lee gave Longstreet command of the attack. Longstreet suggested that Lee give the assignment to an officer who possessed greater confidence in the plan, but, after an awkward silence, he accepted his professional obligation to "adopt his views and execute his orders as faithfully as if they were my own."¹⁶

At approximately 1:00 p.m., Confederate artillery opened. Estimates of the bombardment's duration range from ten minutes to four hours. Lee's chief of artillery, Brigadier General William N. Pendleton, failed to manage ammunition resupply, and many Confederate shells overshot their marks. Still, Union batteries near the copse of trees suffered significant damage, and Confederates noticed that gun crews were removing damaged guns. Union artillerymen needed twenty to thirty minutes to replace damaged batteries with fresh ones. Could the Confederate infantry cross the valley between Seminary and Cemetery Ridge – not quite a mile – in that time?¹⁷

Although Longstreet still opposed the charge – and even considered stopping it when he learned of the low supply of artillery ammunition – he finally nodded assent to Pickett's request for orders to advance. Pickett's Virginians deployed in a deep swale near the Henry Spangler farm in the valley between Seminary and Cemetery Ridges. Pettigrew's and Trimble's men emerged from the trees on Seminary Ridge nearly one-quarter mile north of Pickett's men, pushing through the smoke of William Bliss's burning farm buildings. The terrain between Seminary and Cemetery Ridges gently rolled, its hollows running north and south offering protection, especially to Pickett's Virginians, during their advance. Additionally, a ripple of ground running west to east between the two ridges meant that Pickett's division and

16 James Longstreet to A. B. Longstreet, July 24, 1863, quoted in James Longstreet, "Lee in Pennsylvania," p. 414.

17 See Gary W. Gallagher (ed.), *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 254–9; and James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1895), p. 392, for Confederate perspectives on the effectiveness of the bombardment.

Pettigrew's and Trimble's men advanced independently and out of sight of each other until they neared the Emmitsburg Road that ran across their front several hundred yards west of the Union center on Cemetery Ridge.

On Cemetery Ridge, Major General John Gibbon's division of Hancock's II Corps deployed behind a stout stone wall that ran south to north in front of the copse of trees. Pickett's Virginians advanced toward Gibbon's command. The open area around the copse of trees became known as the Angle, since it was encompassed by the stone wall on two sides; just north of the trees, the wall turned abruptly to the east and then after 100 yards, extended again to the north. Brigadier General Alexander Hays's division held the II Corps line north of the Angle, and Pettigrew's and Trimble's troops mostly fought against this command. The distinctions are important for understanding the very different perspectives that participants bring to their accounts of "Pickett's Charge."

Until the attacking Confederates reached the Emmitsburg Road, Union artillery, including some fresh batteries, exacted the greatest cost. Controversy arose when Brigadier General Henry J. Hunt, Meade's chief of artillery, wanted to fire deliberately to conserve ammunition for the final Confederates push, while Major General Hancock insisted that his corps batteries maintain a high rate of fire to steel his men. Hancock won the argument on the field, but it continued for decades in print.¹⁸

By contrast, Union infantry held its fire until the Confederates came close enough for effective massed volleys. When soldiers on Gibbon's left opened fire, they noticed Pickett's troops shifting away from them and toward the clump of trees, wrongly attributing the action to the accuracy of their fire. Pickett's three brigades made this movement purposefully, however, with their commanders leading from the front. Brigadier General Richard B. Garnett, on horseback against orders, fell dead when his men halted about 25 yards from the stone wall to fire their initial volley at Gibbon's defenders. Brigadier General James L. Kemper, deployed to Garnett's right, fell seriously wounded, his men rescuing him from near capture. Brigadier General Lewis A. Armistead brought up Pickett's second line and led across the wall all the Virginians who would follow him. The Union line broke in two places as Confederate infantry – as many as 1,500 or perhaps only a handful – poured into the Angle. As the Union line stiffened and

18 See Francis A. Walker, "General Hancock and the Artillery at Gettysburg," in Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (eds.), *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (New York: Century, 1884–9), vol. III, pp. 385–6, and Henry J. Hunt, "Rejoinder," in *ibid.*, III, pp. 386–7, for opposing views.

reinforcements arrived, Armistead fell mortally wounded. General Pickett, who had accompanied his division as far as the Emmitsburg Road, sent for reinforcements to exploit the breach, but none came. After an intense fight in the Angle that lasted perhaps twenty minutes, three Vermont regiments threatened to envelop Pickett's right flank. Pickett pulled his men back with a loss of approximately 60 percent of them. But "Pickett's Charge" was not a one-sided bloodletting. Some regiments in Gibbon's division that fought at the Angle suffered losses that exceeded 40 percent, and both Hancock and Gibbon fell wounded.

Pettigrew's and Trimble's commands fared no better. They did not penetrate the Union line where Hays's division held it, although some Mississippi troops later claimed they did. Indeed, according to Hays, the Confederate attack was repulsed even more quickly than it took him to write about it. Still, as the fate of the 11th Mississippi illustrates – its 592 men fought only on July 3, and lost 312 – Pettigrew's men did not give way without a fight. Pettigrew and Trimble both fell wounded. Colonel James K. Marshall – one of Pettigrew's brigade commanders – was killed, another wounded and captured, and a third performed so poorly that he soon resigned. When Union troops enveloped the left of their line, however, Pettigrew's and Trimble's survivors withdrew as well. General Lee met them all back on Seminary Ridge and accepted full responsibility for the attack.

The repulse of "Pickett's Charge" ended the battle's most intense infantry fighting. Four miles to the east of Gettysburg, however, Stuart's Confederate cavalry – they had finally arrived at midday on July 2 – clashed with Union horsemen under Brigadier General David M. Gregg. Rival skirmish lines of dismounted troopers opened the fight. Stuart then ordered a mounted charge, one of the largest sabre-to-sabre clashes of the entire war, that newly promoted Brigadier General George A. Custer's Michigan cavalry finally blunted. After the war, suggestions arose that Stuart had orders to attack the rear of Cemetery Ridge simultaneous with Pickett's frontal assault, but no contemporary evidence supports the notion. At the same time, south of Gettysburg, Union troopers under newly promoted Brigadier General Wesley Merritt advanced northward up the Emmitsburg Road to threaten Lee's left flank. A combined force of Confederate infantry and cavalry stopped Merritt, but near the base of Big Round Top – an extension of Merritt's action along the road – Brigadier General Elon J. Farnsworth suffered a similar reverse. Farnsworth received orders to advance over rocky terrain that was not well suited to the operation of cavalry, leading to a heated exchange between Farnsworth and his superior. Ultimately,

Farnsworth personally led his men forward and fell mortally wounded. Unlike the clash between Stuart and Gregg, the cavalry fights on the southern periphery accomplished little. But they ended the battle.

12.6 The Retreat and Pursuit

On July 4, amid sporadic skirmish fire, Major General Meade issued a congratulatory order to his army but canceled the traditional Independence Day salute to the nation lest the Confederates reopen the battle. Late in the day, in heavy thunderstorms, Lee pulled back his troops to Seminary Ridge, abandoning Gettysburg and his line east of it. To withdraw his army, he started his combat troops and 5,000 Union prisoners on a direct route for Hagerstown and then to the Potomac River crossings at Williamsport, Maryland. He sent by a longer route toward Chambersburg and then south to Williamsport his 17-mile-long wagon train of sick and wounded soldiers, all he could transport, while leaving thousands to be cared for by Northern military and civilian medical personnel.

Meade's cavalry followed Lee closely, but the Union infantry did not follow until July 5. Heavy rain that slowed Meade's pursuit also destroyed the pontoons Lee was relying upon to remove his army safely across the Potomac. Thus, Meade caught up with Lee at Williamsport. Meade prepared to attack on July 13, but bad weather once again forced a delay. When the skies cleared on July 14, Lee's army had crossed on rebuilt bridges. A frustrated Abraham Lincoln wrote Meade a letter bemoaning Lee's escape, but he never sent it; instead, he publicly congratulated Meade and his army on their victory. Meade's inability to mount an aggressive pursuit of Lee after Gettysburg still colors evaluations of his generalship.

According to official records, the Army of the Potomac lost 3,155 killed, 14,529 wounded, and 5,365 captured and missing at Gettysburg. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia lost 2,592 killed, 12,709 wounded, and 5,150 captured and missing. The raw numbers considerably understate the battle's impact on the two forces, however. Approximately 5,000 of the wounded died of their injuries; Gettysburg's final death toll exceeds 10,000. Reynolds's death, the wounding of Hancock and Sickles, as well as the loss of over a dozen brigade and division commanders shattered Meade's senior leadership. Lee lost no corps commanders, but he soon missed their fallen subordinates; he especially lamented the loss of irreplaceable regimental and company commanders. The two armies sparred at Bristoe Station and Mine Run later in 1863, but major active operations did not resume until the start of the Overland

campaign in May 1864, when Lee once again took on Meade, now considerably overshadowed by the arrival of Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant.

The battle's impact touched far more than the rival combatants. Hundreds of Pennsylvanians incurred uncompensated damage to property and livelihood. Gettysburg's 2,400 residents struggled to provide for well over 20,000 wounded soldiers until army surgeons organized a system to care for them. Within a few days, both curious gawkers and grieving families arrived, the latter to retrieve the remains of loved ones – if they could be found. Trench graves crisscrossed trampled farm fields. Huge clouds of greasy black smoke from burning over 5,000 dead horses and mules created a stench that only peppermint oil or camphor could block. Teenagers made money by collecting battlefield artifacts; several local children died when live artillery rounds exploded in their hands. Pennsylvania governor Andrew Curtin authorized local attorney David Wills to purchase land for a military cemetery, and Wills secured 17 acres on Cemetery Hill for that purpose. In time, Wills invited Edward Everett, the premier orator of his time, to deliver the dedicatory address and invited President Lincoln to add “a few appropriate remarks.” On November 19, 1863, to an audience of perhaps 15,000, Lincoln delivered his brief, but decidedly eloquent, Gettysburg Address.

In time Gettysburg played a central role in inspiring a spirit of national reunion after the Civil War. John B. Bachelder, a wartime militia officer who became the first “official” historian of the battle, turned Gettysburg into a literary and interpretive battleground, one where the objectivity of history and the subjectivity of national memory freely intertwine even today. He invited veterans from both armies to return to Gettysburg, and his interviews with them helped him to approve locations for many of the monuments that still stand on the battlefield's woodlots, hillsides, and farm fields. But he was also a hotel owner and entrepreneur who promoted an image of Gettysburg as the “high water mark” of the Confederacy and the turning point of the war to attract visitors. Although Meade's victory at Gettysburg, both alone and when combined with Union success at Vicksburg on July 4, provided a welcome outpouring of excitement – one Philadelphia newspaper emblazoned “Waterloo Eclipsed” as a headline above its Gettysburg coverage – it did not last long.¹⁹ News of the New York draft riots, the failure at Fort Wagner in mid-July, the inactivity in the eastern theater in the fall of 1863, and the Union defeat at Chickamauga in September soon quieted the short-lived euphoria of July.

¹⁹ *Philadelphia Enquirer*, July 6, 1863.

Ultimately, the results of the Battle of Gettysburg did not change the strategic picture dramatically for either side. Lee did not surrender until twenty-one months later, and historians argue that Antietam, Vicksburg, Atlanta, the 1864 elections, among others, had more lasting impact. But popular memory still places Gettysburg above them all.

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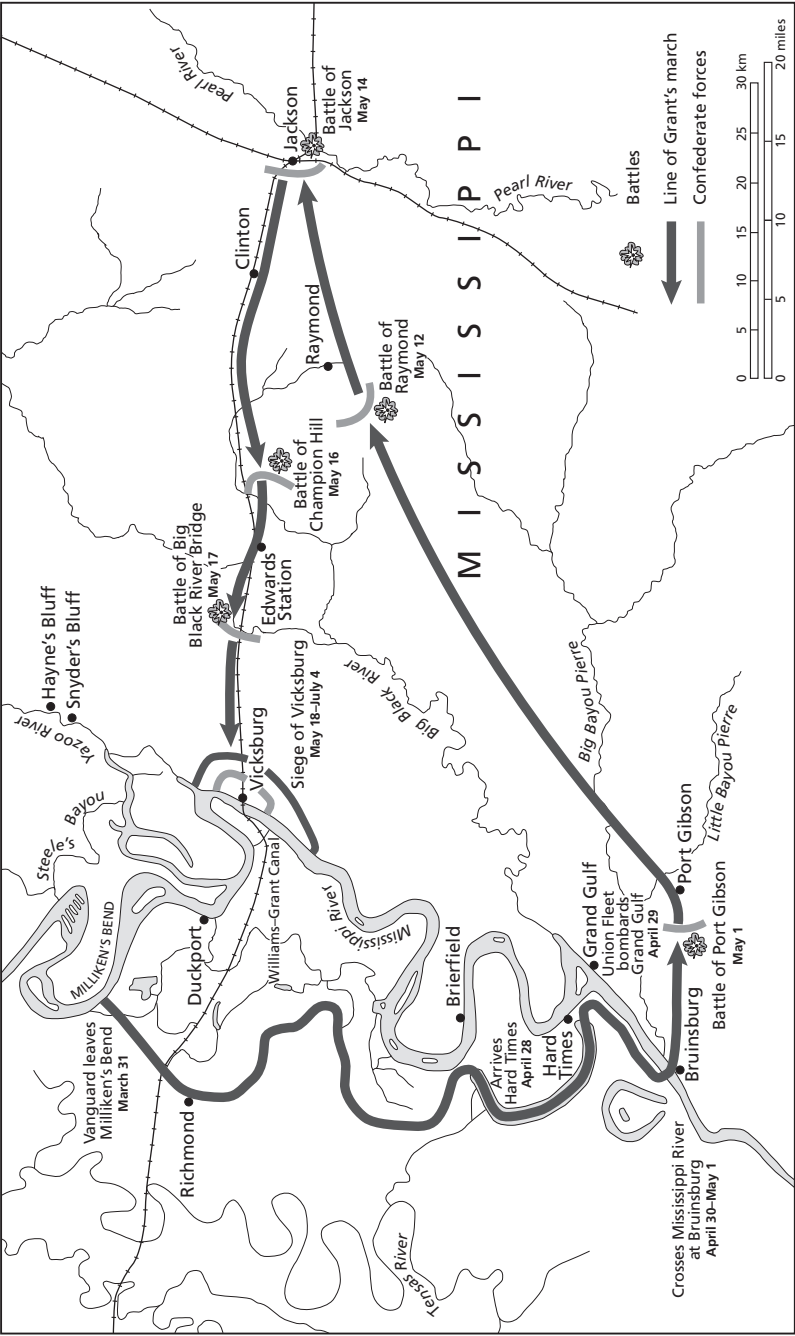
The Vicksburg Campaign

TERRENCE J. WINSCHER

From the outset of the Civil War, the importance of the Mississippi River as a line of supply and communications and a military operations corridor was apparent to all on both sides of the Mason–Dixon line. Although “too thick to drink and too thin to plow,” the Mississippi River was regarded as the “spinal column of America.” For more than 2,000 miles the river flows silently on its course to the sea providing a natural artery of commerce. The Mississippi River and its tributaries were the interstate highways of the nineteenth century. These streams drain half the continent and gliding gracefully along their waters steamers, flatboats, and vessels of all descriptions heavily laden with the rich agricultural produce of the land moved downstream to New Orleans en route to world markets. Indeed, the sheer volume of traffic on the Mississippi and tonnage of goods it carried evidenced that the silent water of the mighty river was the single most important economic feature of the continent, the very lifeblood of America. One contemporary wrote emphatically that “The Valley of the Mississippi is America.”¹

The lower valley in particular – that stretch of the river from Cairo, Illinois, southward to the Gulf of Mexico, was destined to be perhaps the most decisive theater of military operations during the conflict that tore the nation asunder from 1861 to 1865. Nestled along the east bank of the river in the lower valley, midway between Memphis and New Orleans, was Vicksburg, Mississippi. The city was founded by and named for the Reverend Newitt Vick, a Methodist minister from Virginia who in 1812 first viewed the “Father of Waters” from the heights on which the city stands. But it was the muddy water of the great river that gave birth to the town and nourished its soil. Through

1 Lloyd Lewis, *Sherman: Fighting Prophet* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932), p. 252; United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890–1901), series 1, volume 30, part 3, p. 694 (hereafter cited as OR; all citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).



13.1 The Vicksburg campaign. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

industry and thrift those who followed Vick quickly tamed the land. An abundance of wood, cotton, and foodstuffs soon ushered in a brisk and profitable trade with cities and towns along the river and its tributaries, and brought prosperity to the “City on the Hill,” which grew in wealth and charm to become by 1860 the second largest city in Mississippi – boasting a population of nearly 5,000 souls, and considered by many among the most beautiful in the south.

Huddled among bluffs that tower almost 300 feet above the river, historian Peter Walker described the city on the eve of civil war: “the hills were tiered with buildings – long, low warehouses lay along the waterfront; three blocks up from the river the best stores and shops lined Washington Street, farther away from the river, Greek Revival homes, shielded by fences and hedges, stood aloof from the streets, [and] less pretentious houses were stacked along the hillsides.” The most prominent structure was the Warren County Court House, built by slave labor on the highest hill in Vicksburg. Completed in 1858, the courthouse symbolized not only the city’s prominence as the county seat, but also proclaimed to the world that Vicksburg was a bold, confident, and dynamic community. The city also boasted of six newspapers that covered the gamut of political views, four fire companies, and churches and civic organizations to suit any denomination, along with brothels and hotels to fit any pocketbook. Vicksburg and her people enjoyed a special bond with the river – it was *their* river and every aspect of community life depended on the silent, majestic water. Sara Ann Dorsey of Louisiana recognized and understood that bond and referred to the citizens of Vicksburg as “the keepers of the River.” But, just as the river gave birth to the town, it would bring the instrument of Vicksburg’s destruction.²

Upon the secession of the Southern states, and in particular Louisiana and Mississippi, the river was closed to unfettered navigation, which threatened to strangle Northern commercial interests. With the advent of civil war, President Abraham Lincoln gathered his civil and military leaders to discuss strategy for opening the Mississippi River and ending what he termed a “rebellion” in the Southern states. Seated around a large table examining a map of the nation, Lincoln made a wide sweeping gesture with his hand then placed his finger on the map and said, “See what a lot of land these fellows hold, of which Vicksburg is the key. The war can never be brought to

2 Peter F. Walker, *Vicksburg: A People at War, 1860–1865* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. 8–9.

a close until that key is in our pocket.” It was the president’s contention that “we can take all the northern ports of the Confederacy, and they can defy us from Vicksburg. It means hog and hominy without limit, fresh troops from all the states of the far South, and a cotton country where they can raise the staple without interference.” Lincoln assured his listeners that “I am acquainted with that region and know what I am talking about, and, as valuable as New Orleans will be to us, Vicksburg will be more so.”³

These powerful statements coming from the sixteenth president were no exaggeration. Confederate cannon mounted along the bluffs commanding the Mississippi River at Vicksburg were not only trained on the river, but also denied that important avenue of commerce to Northern shipping. It is important to further note that the river was of equal significance to Southern interests, and Vicksburg was the connecting link between the eastern and western parts of the Confederacy, what Jefferson Davis referred to as “the nailhead that held the South’s two halves together.” One-half the landmass of the Confederacy was west of the river and from that vast trans-Mississippi region came tremendous quantities of Texas beef and pork, sugar, salt, and molasses from Louisiana, Arkansas mules, and lead from Missouri – supplies that were essential to maintain Southern armies in the field and sustain a civilian population in ever-increasing need of sustenance. These supplies were funneled through Vicksburg to depots that helped supply the armies of Generals Braxton Bragg and Robert E. Lee.⁴

Northern military officials reached the same conclusion as Lincoln and Davis. William T. Sherman, a man destined to play a prominent role in the military operations that centered on Vicksburg, wrote, “the Mississippi, source and mouth, must be controlled by one government.” So firm was his belief that Sherman stated: “To secure the safety of the navigation of the Mississippi River I would slay millions. On that point I am not only insane, but mad.” The Union General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck wrote in similar, direct, albeit less eloquent terms, “In my opinion, the opening of the Mississippi River will be to us of more advantage than the capture of forty Richmonds.”⁵ The consequence of these attitudes led Northerners to regard regaining control of the lower Mississippi River as imperative, because it

3 David Dixon Porter, *Incidents and Anecdotes of the Civil War* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1885), pp. 95–6.

4 Jerry Korn, *War on the Mississippi: Grant’s Vicksburg Campaign* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life, 1985), p. 16.

5 OR, 31(3): 459; OR, 24(1): 22; John C. Pemberton, *Pemberton: Defender of Vicksburg* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 261.

would reopen that important avenue of commerce enabling the rich agricultural produce of the Northwest to reach world markets and it would split the Confederacy in two, sever the vital east–west supply route, and effectively seal the doom of Richmond.

In order to protect the Mississippi Valley, Confederate authorities established a line of defense that ran from Columbus, Kentucky, on the left overlooking the Mississippi River, through Bowling Green, to Cumberland Gap where the right flank was anchored on the mountains. On the great river south of Columbus, fortifications were also placed at Island No. 10, and on the Chickasaw Bluffs north of Memphis. Seventy miles below New Orleans, two powerful masonry forts, Forts Jackson and St. Philip, stood guard near the mouths of the Mississippi River.

Eager to confront the difficult task before them, Union land and naval forces moved with a vengeance from two directions in a massive converging attack to wrestle control of the river from Confederate troops. Driving south from Cairo, Illinois, Federal forces seized Forts Henry and Donelson on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers respectively and in February 1862 opened the pathway to invasion of the Deep South. Continuing the drive, Union forces gained victory at Shiloh in April, Corinth in May, and having forced the surrender of Island No. 10, seized Memphis in June.

Moving upriver from the Gulf of Mexico were the ships of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron commanded by then Flag Officer David Glasgow Farragut – who would become the nation’s first admiral. His ships bombarded and passed Forts Jackson and St. Philip on April 24, 1862, and captured New Orleans thirty-six hours later. With initial success behind him, Farragut sent an advance flotilla upriver. Baton Rouge fell to the Federals on May 8, Natchez, Mississippi four days later, and the flotilla steamed on toward Vicksburg.

After the fall of New Orleans, as the Union pincer slowly closed along the river, the Confederates began to fortify Vicksburg. The city’s geographical location made it ideal for defense. Equally important, existing rail lines connected Vicksburg with Jackson and, via Jackson, points elsewhere in the Confederacy, enabling the shipment of heavy ordnance to the “Hill City.” It was not long before Vicksburg became known as the “Gibraltar of the Confederacy,” and it would prove a tough nut to crack. The strategic significance of Vicksburg greatly increased after the fall of Memphis as it then became the northernmost point below Memphis where the bluffs met the river. It was only a matter of time before war in all its horror centered on Vicksburg.

Initial efforts by Union land and naval forces to capture Vicksburg and open the great waterway to navigation ended in failure. The first threat developed on May 18, 1862, when the vanguard of Farragut's squadron arrived below Vicksburg and demanded the city's surrender. In terse words the demand was refused. Lieutenant Colonel James L. Autry, the post commander, replied, "Mississippians don't know, and refuse to learn, how to surrender to an enemy." Incensed, Federal authorities opened fire upon the city and maintained an intermittent bombardment from late May, all through June, and into late July, but to no avail. Even with the added firepower of the inland water fleet that arrived on July 1 from Memphis, the bombardment was ineffective. In late July Farragut's fleet, wracked with sickness and plagued by rapidly falling waters, withdrew to New Orleans and deeper waters while the gunboats of the brown water navy returned northward. "What will they say in the North now about opening the Mississippi River," quipped Marmaduke Shannon, editor of the *Vicksburg Daily Whig*, "Huzzah for Vicksburg!"⁶

The Union's initial failure convinced both Union and Confederate high commands that if Vicksburg were going to fall it would be at the hands of a combined land and naval effort. The batteries that overlooked the Mississippi River at Vicksburg were powerful, indeed formidable, and would be strengthened. But all the land accesses were open. Confederates decided to construct a line of defense to guard the city's landward approaches and control the roads and railroad access to Vicksburg. The responsibility for design and construction of these works was assigned to Major Samuel Lockett, chief engineer of the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana. Lockett, a graduate of West Point, Class of 1859 in which he stood second, was a highly skilled and well-trained engineer who set about his task with vigor.

Reconnoitering through the hills and hollows around Vicksburg, Lockett quickly realized that the city was naturally defensible. Due to the area's unique topography that consisted of a series of sharp, narrow ridges, fronted and backed by deep, steep ravines, Vicksburg was a natural fortress, which he planned to make even stronger by the construction of field fortifications. To aid the garrison, hundreds of black slaves were pressed into service to labor on the fortifications. The line as designed and constructed under Lockett's supervision stretched for more than eight miles and consisted of

6 United States Navy Department, *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894–1922), series 1, volume 18, pp. 782–3; *Vicksburg Daily Whig*, July 11, 1862.

nine major forts connected by a continuous line of trenches and rifle pits. The works formed a huge semicircle around Vicksburg the flanks of which rested on the river above and below the city. It would be manned by a garrison of 30,000 troops, mount 172 big guns, and pose the major challenge to Union domination of the river.

Late that same year, a two-prong Federal advance on Vicksburg met with disaster. Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, commander of the Union Army of the Tennessee, had divided his force in two for an advance on Vicksburg. One column, under Grant's personal command, marched overland from Grand Junction, Tennessee, into north Mississippi. The object was to draw Confederate forces responsible for the defense of the Vicksburg–Jackson enclave into the northern portion of the state and there keep them pinned while the other column, under Major General William T. Sherman, made a rapid push down the Mississippi River and seized Vicksburg.

As Grant's column pushed south through Holly Springs and Oxford toward Grenada, his ever-lengthening supply and communications line became dangerously exposed. The Mobile and Ohio Railroad, on which Grant depended for supplies, fell prey to raiding Confederate cavalry under Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest. On December 20, Confederate cavalry under Major General Earl Van Dorn struck his advance base at Holly Springs. Destruction of the vital rail line and his base at Holly Springs compelled Grant to begin a pull back to Memphis. That same day, as Van Dorn's gray-clad horsemen raced into Holly Springs, Sherman began the embarkation of his command and by day's end was moving downriver toward Vicksburg.

Coincidental to the operations then underway, President Davis, accompanied by General Joseph E. Johnston, arrived in Vicksburg on December 19 to bolster the morale of the people and inspect the city's fortifications. Davis pronounced the fortifications strong whereas Johnston declared them to be nothing but an elaborate trap and warned that certain disaster awaited the army that manned its defenses. The president's visit was short-lived and the assurances he provided failed to assuage the fears of those who lived in Vicksburg, while Johnston's keen military instincts provided ominous prophecy.

The president's visit, coupled with the news that reached the city from north Mississippi, placed the citizens of Vicksburg in a celebratory mood. Christmas Eve found the ranking officers of the garrison dancing the night away with the belles of Vicksburg at a ball hosted by Dr. William Balfour and

his wife Emma, when suddenly a courier raced in with the news that Sherman's force was rapidly approaching the city. "This ball is at an end," declared the garrison commander, who ordered his troops to prepare for battle.⁷

The Union Expeditionary Force was met north of the city at the base of the Walnut Hills overlooking Chickasaw Bayou. As Sherman probed for a weakness in the Confederate defenses, Southern soldiers no longer occupied by Grant in north Mississippi arrived by the thousands. Although his chances of success dwindled with each passing hour, Sherman ordered the attack, telling his subordinates, "We will lose 5,000 men before we take Vicksburg, and may as well lose them here as anywhere else." The attack on December 29 was quickly, easily, and bloodily repulsed. In reporting the action, Sherman simply wrote, "I reached Vicksburg at the time appointed, landed, assaulted and failed."⁸

The Federal force withdrew to Milliken's Bend, Louisiana (upstream and opposite Vicksburg), only to find an irate Major General John McClelland, who had been granted presidential authority to command the operations against Vicksburg. But when he arrived in Memphis to take charge of his troops, McClelland learned that Sherman had commandeered them and moved downriver to Vicksburg. The former Democratic congressman from Illinois quickly assumed command, led the force up the Arkansas River, and on January 11, 1863, captured the Post of Arkansas and 5,000 Confederate soldiers.

Despite McClelland's success, Grant, as departmental commander, ordered him to return to Milliken's Bend and quickly moved there himself to assume personal command of the army. (McClelland was thus relegated to command of the XIII Corps.) Having been checked on the overland route, Grant seized upon Federal naval supremacy on the inland waters to transfer his army to Milliken's Bend and Young's Point, Louisiana. During the winter months, Union forces stockpiled tremendous quantities of rations, clothing, medicine, ammunition, and countless other items in preparation for the spring campaign aimed at Vicksburg. Grant also orchestrated a series of ill-fated bayou expeditions the object of which was to reach the rear of

7 Stephen D. Lee, "Details Important Work by Two Confederate Telegraph Operators, Christmas Eve, which Prevented the Complete Surprise of the Confederate Army at Vicksburg," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, vol. VIII: 53-4.

8 George W. Morgan, "The Assault on Chickasaw Bluffs," in Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (eds.), *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (New York: Century, 1884-9), vol. III, p. 467; *OR*, 17(1): 613.

Vicksburg. The most famous of these operations was the failed effort to excavate a canal across the base of DeSoto Point, opposite Vicksburg. Grant hoped to open a channel for navigation that would bypass the batteries of Vicksburg, or possibly even change the course of the river and render the city useless militarily without firing a shot. The only result of these “experiments,” as called by Grant, was an ever-lengthening casualties list.

After months of frustration and failure, Grant was at a crossroads in his military career. There was tremendous clamor in the Northern press to remove him from command. Even members of the cabinet urged Lincoln to replace Grant as commander of the western army. But the president responded to those critical of Grant by saying, “I can’t spare this man, he fights. I’ll try him a little longer.”⁹ Despite the stinging criticism, and cognizant that even Lincoln’s patience had limitations, Grant appeared stoic but confided the torment he felt to his wife Julia. Determined to persevere, Grant remained focused on his objective – Vicksburg. The general ignored his critics and examined his options.

Three options were discussed at army headquarters. The first was to launch a direct amphibious assault across the Mississippi River and storm the Vicksburg stronghold. The second was to pull back to Memphis and try the overland route once again. And, the third was to march the army down the west side of the river, search for a favorable crossing point, and transfer the field of operations to the area south and east of Vicksburg. In characteristic fashion and with grim determination, Grant boldly opted for the march south. Vicksburg historian Edwin C. Bearss writes of Grant’s decision: “The third alternative was full of dangers and risks. Failure in this venture would entail little less than total destruction. If it succeeded, however, the gains would be complete and decisive.”¹⁰

On March 29, 1863, Grant ordered McClernand to open a road from Milliken’s Bend to New Carthage on the Mississippi River below Vicksburg. The movement began on March 31, and thus the Vicksburg campaign began in earnest. The selection of McClernand remains a source of controversy to this day, but McClernand had demonstrated his willingness to fight at Fort Donelson and Shiloh, and developed into an able combat officer. And, as Grant’s other corps commanders, Sherman and Major

9 Alexander McClure, *Abraham Lincoln and Men of War Times, Some Personal Recollections of War and Politics during the Lincoln Administration* (Philadelphia, PA: Times Publishing, 1892), pp. 193–4.

10 Edwin C. Bearss, *The Campaign for Vicksburg* (Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1985–6), vol. 11, p. 21.

General James B. McPherson, both West Point-trained, opposed the plan, McClernand gained what was arguably the most important assignment of the campaign. The XIII Corps was thus the tip of the spear. McPherson's XVII Corps would follow in its wake, while Sherman's men remained opposite Vicksburg to deceive Confederates in the Hill City.

As Grant's infantrymen slogged their way south through Louisiana corduroying roads and building bridges each step of the way, the Union fleet commanded by Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter prepared to run by the batteries at Vicksburg. On the dark, moonless night of April 16, vessels of Porter's Mississippi Squadron raised anchor and moved downriver toward the citadel of Vicksburg. With engines muffled and running lights extinguished, Porter hoped to slip pass the batteries undetected. Suddenly the night sky was ablaze from bales of cotton soaked in turpentine that lined the river on both banks and barrels of tar set afire by the Confederates to illuminate the river and silhouette the fleet as it passed the batteries.

For several hours the fleet withstood the punishing fire that was poured from Confederate batteries. Porter noticed that the shot and shell were hitting his smokestacks, the pilothouse, and hurricane deck, some were even hitting the gundeck, but few were hitting any lower where the vital parts of the boats – the engines, boilers, steam drums, and mud filters were located. He reasoned that there was a fatal flaw in the placement of Confederate batteries that prevented the guns from being properly depressed to direct an effective fire against the gunboats and transports. Porter quickly directed his vessels to move across the channel and hug the Mississippi shore. As they did so, the shot and shell began to fly harmlessly overhead. So close did the fleet approach Vicksburg, that sailors reported hearing commands given by Confederate gun captains. They also heard bricks tumbling into the city streets, the effect of their own gunfire. When the shelling stopped, Porter tallied the damage to his fleet and recorded the loss of only one transport vessel. A feat deemed impossible by many had been achieved. With a large portion of Porter's fleet now below Vicksburg, Grant had the capacity to cross the mighty river.

The following day, April 17, Grant unleashed his cavalry in order to further confuse his opponent and keep Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton guessing as to his true intentions. Colonel Benjamin Grierson led the main column southward out of La Grange, Tennessee, and headed toward the Southern Railroad of Mississippi, the iron rails of which were Vicksburg's lifeline. Riding down the east side of the Magnolia State, Grierson reached the railroad at Newton Station on April 24 and set his men to tearing up tracks,

cutting telegraph lines, and destroying water towers and culverts. The damage, however, was only superficial and within days rolling stock was moving again toward the Hill City. Rather than retrace his steps or return to La Grange via Alabama, Grierson continued to the southwest and cut the New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern Railroad at Hazelhurst. After a sharp clash at Wall's Bridge over the Tickfaw River, the exhausted column reached the shelter of Union lines in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on May 2. Sherman called the raid "the most brilliant expedition of the Civil War," as it caused Pemberton to strip his river defenses of cavalry and compelled him to disperse his infantry. Thus, in the critical opening stage of the campaign when Pemberton should have been concentrating his manpower, the Confederate commander scattered his units and would not be able to concentrate them in time to battle Grant.¹¹

By the end of April, two of Grant's corps had arrived opposite Grand Gulf. It was Grant's intention to force a crossing of the river at Grand Gulf where there was a good all-weather landing and from which point roads radiated deep into the interior of Mississippi. Two forts manned by the stalwart division commanded by Brigadier General John S. Bowen guarded Grand Gulf and posed an obstacle to Federal plans. On April 29, Porter's gunboats bombarded the Grand Gulf defenses in preparation for a landing by Grant's troops. The fleet silenced the guns of Fort Wade, but could not silence those of Fort Cobun.

Ever adaptive, Grant disembarked his men from the transports and marched them 5 miles farther down the levee. That evening Porter's fleet passed the Confederate batteries and rendezvoused with Grant at Disharoon's plantation. On April 30–May 1 Grant hurled his army across the mighty river and onto Mississippi soil at Bruinsburg. A band aboard the flagship *Benton* struck up "The Red, White, and Blue" as Grant's infantrymen came ashore unopposed. In one of the largest amphibious operations in American history up to that time, Grant landed 22,000 men and began the inland campaign to capture Vicksburg. Grant later wrote, "When this was effected I felt a degree of relief scarcely ever equaled since," and stated unequivocally: "All the campaigns, labors, hardships and exposures from the month of December previous to this time that had been made and endured, were for the accomplishment of this one object."¹²

¹¹ D. Alexander Brown, *Grierson's Raid* (Dayton, OH: Morningside: 1981), p. 223.

¹² Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Webster and Co., 1885), vol. 1 p. 480.

Once ashore, Grant's forces pushed rapidly inland and marched through the night. In the early morning hours of May 1, Confederate resistance was encountered west of Port Gibson to where Bowen had rushed his command. In a furious battle that raged throughout the day, Union soldiers fought with grim determination to secure their beachhead on Mississippi soil while Confederate soldiers fought with equal determination to drive the invaders into the river. By day's end Confederate forces, outnumbered and hard-pressed, retired from the field.

At the cost of fewer than 900 men, the Union Army of the Tennessee had won a resounding victory at Port Gibson on May 1. The significance of his triumph cannot be overstated as it secured Grant's beachhead on Mississippi soil and compelled the evacuation of Grand Gulf, which provided his army with a base from which to launch its inland drive against Vicksburg. Of greater impact than the reported 787 casualties inflicted on the Confederate army, the action threw Pemberton off balance. Reeling in shock, the commander of the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana embraced a defensive posture, but rushed to the Hill City and took personal command of the Army of Vicksburg. Michael Ballard, biographer of the Pennsylvanian in gray, asserts that "when Grant crossed the Mississippi, he pushed Pemberton across his personal Rubicon." Confused, uncertain, and with his confidence shattered, Pemberton would stumble through the unfolding crisis with predictable indecision.¹³

That evening, Pemberton wired Davis: "A furious battle has been going on since daylight just below Port Gibson . . . Large reinforcements should be sent from other departments. Enemy's movement threatens Jackson, and, if successful, cuts off Vicksburg and Port Hudson from the east." The news was frightening to the most stout Southern heart. The consequences of Confederate reaction, politically and militarily, to the deteriorating situation in Mississippi would determine the fate of the Southern nation and her people.¹⁴

The gaseliers at the president's house in Richmond burned late into the night that first week of May as a small group of men stood around a table examining a map of the region. Jefferson Davis paced the floor as he directed that troops from as far away as the Atlantic Coast be rushed to Mississippi. But more than troops were needed if Mississippi was to be saved and the vital connection to the vast trans-Mississippi region secured. Leadership –

¹³ Michael B. Ballard, *Pemberton: A Biography* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), p. 140.

¹⁴ OR, 24(3): 807.

aggressive leadership – was essential, and that leadership had to come from someone with the authority to act and the ability to communicate with Confederate forces in the region as well as the authorities in Richmond. To meet this pressing need, the president turned to Joseph E. Johnston, who, at that point in time, was the only full general available for such duty.

On May 9, 1863, Secretary of War James A. Seddon sent a note to Johnston, then at Tullahoma, Tennessee: “Proceed at once to Mississippi and take chief command of the forces, giving to those in the field, as far as practicable, the encouragement and benefit of your personal direction.” The Virginian replied: “I shall go immediately, although unfit for field service.” (He had not yet fully recovered from the wounds he had received at Seven Pines the previous May.) The next morning Johnston and his staff boarded a train for the long circuitous trip to Mississippi. Before leaving he wired Pemberton that the safety of Mississippi depended on beating Grant and advised: “For that object, you should unite your whole force.” Pemberton would attempt to do just that, but it took the luxury of time he did not have, and in the process he yielded the initiative to a most dangerous opponent.¹⁵

Rather than march north on Vicksburg, upon the arrival of Sherman’s corps that united with him on May 7, Grant directed his army in a northeasterly direction. It was his intention to sever the rail line that connected Vicksburg with Jackson and cut the Confederate garrison off from supplies and reinforcements. This was boldness personified and Napoleonic in its concept. Such a decision elevated Grant above his contemporaries and identified him as a modern warrior. (More than a century later, General Colin Powell would take a page from Grant’s playbook and tersely outline his strategy in Iraq to defeat Saddam Hussein: “I’m going to cut him off and kill him.”)

As Grant’s forces pushed inland, Pemberton finally divined Grant’s intention to straddle the railroad and began shifting three of his five divisions eastward from Vicksburg and across Big Black River to Edwards Station. He also called up from Port Hudson, Louisiana, a 3,000-man brigade commanded by Brigadier General John Gregg, who was instructed to move to Raymond, southwest of the capital city of Jackson. On May 12, Gregg’s men were ensconced in the woods that lined Fourteenmile Creek as McPherson’s corps neared Raymond. The fiery Gregg launched an assault that initially sent the Federals reeling. But Major General John “Black Jack” Logan, one of McPherson’s division commanders, quickly rallied the troops. Heavy Union

¹⁵ OR, 24(1): 215; OR, 24(3): 808.

reinforcements arrived in the afternoon and McPherson counterattacked. Gregg's men were forced from the field and withdrew into the Jackson defenses.

In the aftermath of the fighting on May 12, Grant marched on Jackson with the corps of Sherman and McPherson, while McClelland assumed a blocking position facing west to guard against Pemberton in Edwards. On the night of May 13 Joseph Johnston arrived in Jackson as a cold, hard rain fell upon the capital. Without inspecting the city's defenses, Johnston informed the authorities in far-off Richmond, "I am too late," and ordered the evacuation of Jackson. Historian Bearss asserts that "Johnston seemed to think disaster was inevitable and desired to clear himself in advance of any responsibility for it, rather than spending his energy to avert it." A driving rainstorm on the morning on May 14 delayed the Federal attack and bought Johnston valuable time to withdraw his command. When the rain stopped, Union troops advanced and overwhelmed the Confederate rear guard. By day's end the national colors were restored over the capitol. Not wishing to waste combat troops on occupation of Mississippi's capital, Grant ordered Jackson neutralized militarily. Machine shops and factories were set afire, telegraph lines cut, and railroad tracks were heated then wrapped around trees to make what the soldiers called "Sherman neckties." Anything of military value was destroyed. That night Grant slept in the same bed that Johnston had that very morning.¹⁶

With much of Jackson a smoldering ruin, Grant turned west toward his objective. The Union commander left two of Sherman's divisions behind to complete the work of destruction and shifted his headquarters to Clinton. In the predawn darkness on May 16, two railroaders informed Grant of Pemberton's location and provided an accurate assessment of his troop strength. Grant directed seven divisions to move immediately and concentrate on Edwards Station.

Marching along three parallel roads, the Union advance caught Pemberton unprepared. As the Federals closed on Edwards, Pemberton deployed his troops in line facing east. He was unaware that the largest of Grant's three columns, moving along the Jackson Road, would soon outflank his position on the left and cut him off from Vicksburg. Disaster was averted as Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee rushed his brigade of Alabamians to the crest of Champion Hill and recessed the line to the west, but the salient thus formed placed the Confederates in a poor

16 OR, 24(1): 215; Bearss, *The Campaign for Vicksburg*, vol. 11, p. 530.

defensive position. With a mighty cheer and at the point of bayonet, the Federals drove the Southerners from the crest of Champion Hill. In a desperate attempt to regain the hill and reestablish his left, Pemberton ordered a counterattack. On the double-quick the Arkansans and Missourians of Bowen's division entered the fray and drove the Federals back over the crest. Confederate success, however, was short-lived as Bowen's attack ground to a halt. Grant now ordered an advance all along his front, which by late afternoon forced Pemberton's army from the field.

In what proved to be the largest, bloodiest, and most significant action of the campaign, Pemberton's army was routed from the field in panic and confusion. In addition to the loss of almost 4,000 men and twenty-seven cannon, the division commanded by Major General William W. Loring was cut off and lost to Pemberton for the duration of the campaign. In reference to the action on May 16, 1863, famed British military historian Major General J. F. C. Fuller has written, "The guns of Champion's Hill sounded the doom of Richmond." Perhaps so, but there was more fighting to be done before the citadel of Vicksburg fell.¹⁷

The following day, Grant's forces overwhelmed the Confederates once again at Big Black River Bridge and forced them back to the Vicksburg defenses. Having witnessed the debacle at the Big Black River and the wild flight of his troops, Pemberton dejectedly stated, "Just thirty years ago I began my military career by receiving my appointment to a cadetship at the U.S. Military Academy, and to-day – that same date – that career is ended in disaster and disgrace." For all practical purposes it was, but it was a disaster that would affect an entire nation and its people.¹⁸

The citizens of Vicksburg watched in fear as the shattered remnants of Pemberton's army poured into the city on that fateful day. Emma Balfour witnessed the demoralized mass of humanity fill the streets and later wrote with trepidation, "I hope never to witness again such a scene as the return of our routed army!" With pen in hand she recorded of the scene, "From twelve o'clock until late in the night the streets and roads were jammed with wagons, cannon, horses, men, mules, stock, sheep, everything you can imagine that appertains to an army being brought hurriedly within the intrenchment." She confided to her diary the fears of many in Vicksburg as

¹⁷ J. F. C. Fuller, as quoted in Bearss, *The Campaign for Vicksburg*, vol. 11, p. 637.

¹⁸ Samuel Lockett, "The Defense of Vicksburg," in Johnson and Buel (eds.), *Battles and Leaders*, vol. 111, p. 488.

she wrote: "What is to become of all the living things in this place . . . shut up as in a trap . . . God only knows."¹⁹

On through the long day and into the evening marched the weary soldiers clad in butternut and gray. Singly or in small groups, with no sense of order or discipline, the men filed into the rifle pits and turned to meet Grant's rapidly approaching army. A medley of sounds filled the night air as the Confederates readied their defenses: officers shouted orders, teamsters whipped their animals and dragged artillery into position, and, as the soldiers worked with picks and shovels, some men cursed while others prayed. Throughout the night, the ringing of axes was constant as additional trees were felled to strengthen fortifications, clear fields of fire, and form obstructions in their front. Work continued at a feverish pace and by sunrise the city was in a good state of defense.

Late in the afternoon, Confederate soldiers peering over their parapets spotted long columns of Union infantrymen moving slowly toward the city. It was a terrifying spectacle, and yet magnificent in the extreme as battle flags snapped in the breeze above the columns and bayonets glistened in the sunlight. Union skirmishers deployed and artillery roared into action, but the day wore away with nothing more than a long-range artillery duel. That night the soldiers of both armies rested on their arms. Each knew that the bloody work at hand would commence with the rising sun and prepared for battle in his own way.

Grant was anxious for a quick victory and, after making a hasty reconnaissance, ordered an attack. Early on the morning of May 19, Union artillery opened fire upon the city and for hours bombarded the Confederate works with solid shot and shell. The thick smoke from the guns shrouded the fields and made it virtually impossible to see. At 2:00 p.m., when the guns fell silent, Union soldiers deployed into line of battle astride Graveyard Road, northeast of Vicksburg, and stormed the city's defenses. They succeeded in planting several stands of colors on the parapets of Vicksburg, but were driven back with the loss of 942 men.

Undaunted, Grant decided to make a more thorough reconnaissance then hurl his entire force against Vicksburg on May 22. Early that morning Union artillery roared into action and for four hours bombarded the works with solid shot and shell tearing large holes in the earthen fortifications. At 10:00 a.m., the prearranged time for the assault to begin, the artillery fell silent. Union soldiers moved forward over a 3-mile front toward the defenses of

19 Diary of Emma Balfour, copy in Diary Collection of Vicksburg National Military Park.

Vicksburg. Sherman's men, on the right, astride Graveyard Road, and McPherson's in the center on the Jackson Road, succeeded in planting their colors on the exterior slopes of Vicksburg's defenses in several areas, and McClernand's made a short-lived penetration at Railroad Redoubt, but at the point of bayonet were checked and driven back a second time with severe loss. In the assault on May 22, Grant lost over 3,000 men killed, wounded, or missing.

Although his nose was bloodied a second time, Grant was not yet willing to resort to a siege of the city. As he contemplated his next move, Grant left behind his dead and wounded, many of whom had been lying unprotected since May 19. Exposed to the sun and heat the bodies of the dead began to bloat and turn black. On May 25, white flags appeared along the Confederate line. Union soldiers were hopeful that the city would soon be surrendered. Their hopes, however, were dashed as word quickly spread that a note was passed from Pemberton to Grant "imploing in the name of humanity" that Grant bury his dead as the odor had become offensive. A truce was granted for two and one-half hours during which time men in blue and gray mingled between the lines. "There a group of four played cards," recalled one soldier, "two Yanks and two Rebs, while others swapped tobacco for coffee." While the gruesome task of the burial details was completed, it was almost as if there was no war in progress. At the appointed time the flags were taken down and everyone ran for cover. The siege of Vicksburg began in earnest that day.²⁰

Throughout the month of May and into June Union soldiers slowly extended their lines to the left and right until they completely encircled the beleaguered city. Once the encirclement was completed Pemberton's garrison was effectively cut off from all supply and communications with the outside world. The Confederates had to subsist solely on what they had stockpiled in Vicksburg prior to the siege. With each passing day those supplies dwindled until they were nearly exhausted. In order to conserve what food supplies were on hand, Pemberton ordered the daily ration cut to three-quarters, then to half and quarter, then cut yet again. By the end of June the daily ration consisted of only a handful of peas and rice. Even water was rationed to one cup per man per day.

Disease began to spread rapidly through the ranks. Dysentery, diarrhea, malaria, and various fevers all took a heavy toll of human life and were more certain causes of death than were Union sharpshooters. At first, scores then

20 Osborn H. Oldroyd, *A Soldier's Story of the Siege of Vicksburg* (Springfield, 1885), p. 35.

hundreds of men could be seen laying their weapons aside and walking or crawling as best they could to the hospitals in Vicksburg. Public buildings were filled to capacity and many fine private residences were converted to hospitals. But even there, there was no succor as medicines were in short supply. Each day the “dead wagons” made the rounds of the hospitals and the dead were brought out in ever-increasing number and carried to their long rest with nothing but a blanket for their shroud.

With the Union noose growing tighter around Vicksburg, Confederate authorities worked desperately to rescue the garrison. Across the river in Louisiana, Major General Richard Taylor, son of former US president Zachary Taylor, sent a Texas division to attack the Union supply enclaves at Milliken’s Bend and Young’s Point. It was hoped that a successful strike would compel Grant to loosen his hold on Vicksburg and enable the garrison to cut its way out. On June 7, the Texans unleashed a vicious attack on Milliken’s Bend that was guarded by the recently recruited African Brigade. The black troops in Union blue were driven from their position and back through their camps. One Texan recalled: “Our troops followed after them, bayoneting them by the hundreds.” The black soldiers reformed behind the levee along the Mississippi River and with the timely arrival of two Union gunboats managed to hold their position. Realizing that they were no match for the powerful gunboats, the Texans withdrew. The action at Milliken’s Bend demonstrated clearly that the black man would and could fight, and spurred the enlistment of additional black regiments.²¹

With the encirclement of Vicksburg completed, Union soldiers began to sink approaches toward the Confederate line. Working under the direction of engineer officers, the men excavated a sap, or trench, that was 7 feet wide and 8 feet deep. Sheltered behind a sap roller – a large bundle of cane and vine woven together that could stop a bullet, Union fatigue parties zigzagged toward their objective and opened parallels at intervals by which Grant moved up his infantry and artillery to within 300 yards, then 200 yards, then 100 yards. Thirteen approaches were excavated by Union soldiers at different points along the siege line with the object of mining the Confederate works. The most successful was known as “Logan’s Approach.” Situated along the Jackson Road, Logan’s Approach inched toward a salient manned by the Third Louisiana Infantry, which was reached on June 23. A gallery was then carved directly under the fort and preparations made for mining.

21 Joseph P. Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker’s Texas Division* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 250.

On June 25, 2,200 pounds of black powder were placed in the mine. At 3:00 p.m. the fuse was lit. Tense moments passed as the Federals waited to storm into the breach and seize Vicksburg. Suddenly there was a muffled thud, then a loud explosion as the ground began to break and a column of flame and dirt reached to the sky. Inside the column of flame one could see men, mules, and accouterments blown skyward. Before the dust even settled, Union soldiers poured into the crater and attempted to secure the breach. In the wild melee that ensued clubbed muskets and bayonets were freely used and hand grenades were tossed back and forth. The battle raged in unabated fury for twenty-six hours as Grant threw in one fresh regiment after another, all to no avail. The breach was sealed by the Confederates at the point of bayonet. The great gamble had failed.

In the city itself, the situation grew more desperate with each passing day and civilians came to realize that they were not immune to death on the battlefield. The harsh reality was that men, women, and children became casualties to Union shells that fell like rain upon the city. Life under siege soon translated to life underground as many of the townspeople sought shelter in caves they had dug to escape the constant bombardment of Union cannon and heavy mortar. "Caves were the fashion – the rage – over besieged Vicksburg," recorded one terror-stricken resident, who noted the "hillsides were so honeycombed with caves that the streets look like avenues in a cemetery." During one period of intense shelling, Margaret Lord tried to comfort her daughter Lida as the family crouched in their cave. "Don't cry my darling," she soothed the child, assuring her that "God will protect us." The little girl could not be calmed sobbing, "But, momma, I'm so afraid God's killed too."²²

For the citizens and soldiers trapped in Vicksburg it seemed their only hope was in the person of General Johnston. "God send him quickly," prayed Confederate Lieutenant William Drennen. Pemberton too longed for Johnston and his Army of Relief. The Virginian had sent numerous assurances that help would soon be on its way: (May 25) "Bragg is sending a division; when it comes, I will move to you"; (June 7) "We are nearly ready to move"; and (June 22) "I will have the means of moving toward the enemy in a day or two." And still he remained in Jackson as the siege of Vicksburg entered its seventh week. Davis and members of his cabinet urged Johnston to move quickly, but none more forcefully than Secretary of War

22 William W. Lord, "A Child at the Siege of Vicksburg," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, CXVIII (December 1908): 44.

Seddon, who admonished: "Vicksburg must not be lost without a desperate struggle. The interest and honor of the Confederacy forbid it." And yet, to the urging of his superiors and pleading by Pemberton, Johnston would only reply, "I am too weak to save Vicksburg." Not until his personal honor was endangered did Johnston finally decide to move and on July 1, the eager soldiers of the Army of Relief shouldered their rifle muskets and took up the march toward Vicksburg, by which time it was too late.²³

On July 1 a second mine was planted and detonated beneath what was left of Third Louisiana Redan but was not followed by an infantry assault. That day, Grant was notified by his subordinates that given just a few more days of digging, thirteen mines could be planted and detonated simultaneously. This was the moment that Grant and his men had been working toward all these many weeks of siege. It is not likely that the Confederates could have withstood such an attack. On the hot afternoon of July 3, Grant was in the process of planning an attack (which he scheduled for July 6), when white flags of truce appeared along the lines. Out from the city came a cavalcade of officers in gray led by Pemberton. Grant rode to meet with him between the lines. Pemberton asked Grant on what terms would he receive the surrender of the garrison and city of Vicksburg. Grant replied that he had no terms other than immediate and unconditional surrender. These terms were unacceptable to Pemberton, who assured Grant that he would bury many more of his men before he gained entrance to Vicksburg. The generals agreed only upon a cessation of hostilities, then rode their separate ways. Grant assured Pemberton that he would have his final terms by ten o'clock that night.

True to his word, Grant sent in his final, amended terms. Instead of an unconditional surrender of Vicksburg, Grant offered parole to the garrison. Pemberton received the note in the quiet of his headquarters. In the company of his generals Pemberton read the note then passed it around for his subordinates to read and comment upon. Almost to a man, they agreed they were the best terms to be had. Thus, on the morning of July 4, 1863, white flags fluttered in the breeze above the fortifications of Vicksburg. Marching out from their works, Confederate soldiers furled their flags, stacked their arms, and turned over their accouterments at which time a victorious Union army marched in and took possession of Vicksburg – the fortress city on the Mississippi River that had eluded them for so long.

²³ OR, 24(3): 917, 953, 971, 965.

Martial music filled the city streets as Grant rode in along the Jackson Road and down to the Warren County Court House where he watched the Stars and Stripes placed atop the building. He then rode down to the waterfront to personally thank and congratulate Rear Admiral Porter for the assistance rendered by the US Navy during the operations for Vicksburg. Almost as an afterthought, he sent a message to Washington informing President Lincoln of the city's surrender. It took several days for the message to reach the capital, during which time the only remaining Confederate bastion on the Mississippi River – Port Hudson, Louisiana – fell into Union hands. Upon receipt of Grant's message, Lincoln sighed, "Thank God," and declared that "The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea."²⁴

"Glory Hallelujah!" proclaimed William T. Sherman, "The best Fourth of July since 1776." His declaration could not have been more fitting had he known at that time of the Battle of Gettysburg fought on July 1–3, which, when combined with the results at Vicksburg, marked the turning point of the war. But whereas two armies, badly bruised and bleeding, marched away from Gettysburg to fight another day, Union victory at Vicksburg was complete. In addition to taking the city and capturing a garrison of 29,500 men, the Union Army of the Tennessee seized a huge amount of military stores. Among the public property captured were 172 pieces of artillery, 38,000 artillery projectiles, 58,000 pounds of black powder, 50,000 shoulder weapons (mostly British Enfield rifle muskets, arguably the finest infantry weapons of the time period), 600,000 rounds of ammunition, and 350,000 percussion caps – resources in men and material that the South could ill afford to lose. In addition to this tally must be added the 7,000 casualties inflicted on Southern forces during the inland phase of the campaign leading up to the siege and 82 cannon captured as Grant's army pushed deep into the interior of Mississippi and compelled the evacuation of Southern strongholds that centered on Snyder's Bluff, north of Vicksburg, and Warrenton and Grand Gulf, south of the city.²⁵

In terms of artillery alone, 254 cannon were captured by Federal forces during the Vicksburg campaign. (For the sake of comparison not a single Confederate cannon was lost at Gettysburg.) This figure represents more than 11 percent of the total number of cannon cast by Southern foundries from 1861 to 1865. Of this figure 85 were heavy siege guns. Added to this tally was the corresponding number of limbers, caissons, forge wagons,

²⁴ Henry Steele Commager (ed.), *The Blue and Gray: The Story of the Civil War as Told by Participants* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), vol. 11, p. 677.

²⁵ OR, 24(3): 461.

implements, harnesses, saddles, bridles, and the myriad of other accouterments associated with artillery that was also lost during the campaign. Thus, rather than produce weapons to strengthen the armies in the field, Southern foundries were simply working to replenish diminished supply. As events proved in the wake of the disasters of 1863 at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and later at Chattanooga, the Confederacy did not have the luxury of time to replenish this tremendous loss.

“We must go back to the campaigns of Napoleon to find equally brilliant results accomplished in the same space of time with such a small loss,” wrote Francis V. Greene of the Vicksburg campaign. The outcome of the campaign established Ulysses S. Grant as one of the great captains in history and identified him in the mind of Abraham Lincoln as the general who could lead the Union armies to victory. Eight months later Grant was elevated to the rank of lieutenant general and given command of all Union forces. Equally, if not of greater significance, the North achieved a strategic goal with victory at Vicksburg, not just a tactical one such as at Gettysburg. Now split in two along the line of the Mississippi River and caught in the coils of the giant Anaconda, the Southern Confederacy could not long survive.²⁶ Upon reflection, Colonel Joshiah Gorgas, chief of the Confederate Ordnance Bureau, lamented of the turn of events in July 1863: “Yesterday we rode on the pinnacle of success – today absolute ruin seems to be our portion. The Confederacy totters to its destruction.” Twenty-one months later, the inevitability of Appomattox Court House ended the greatest tragedy in American history.²⁷

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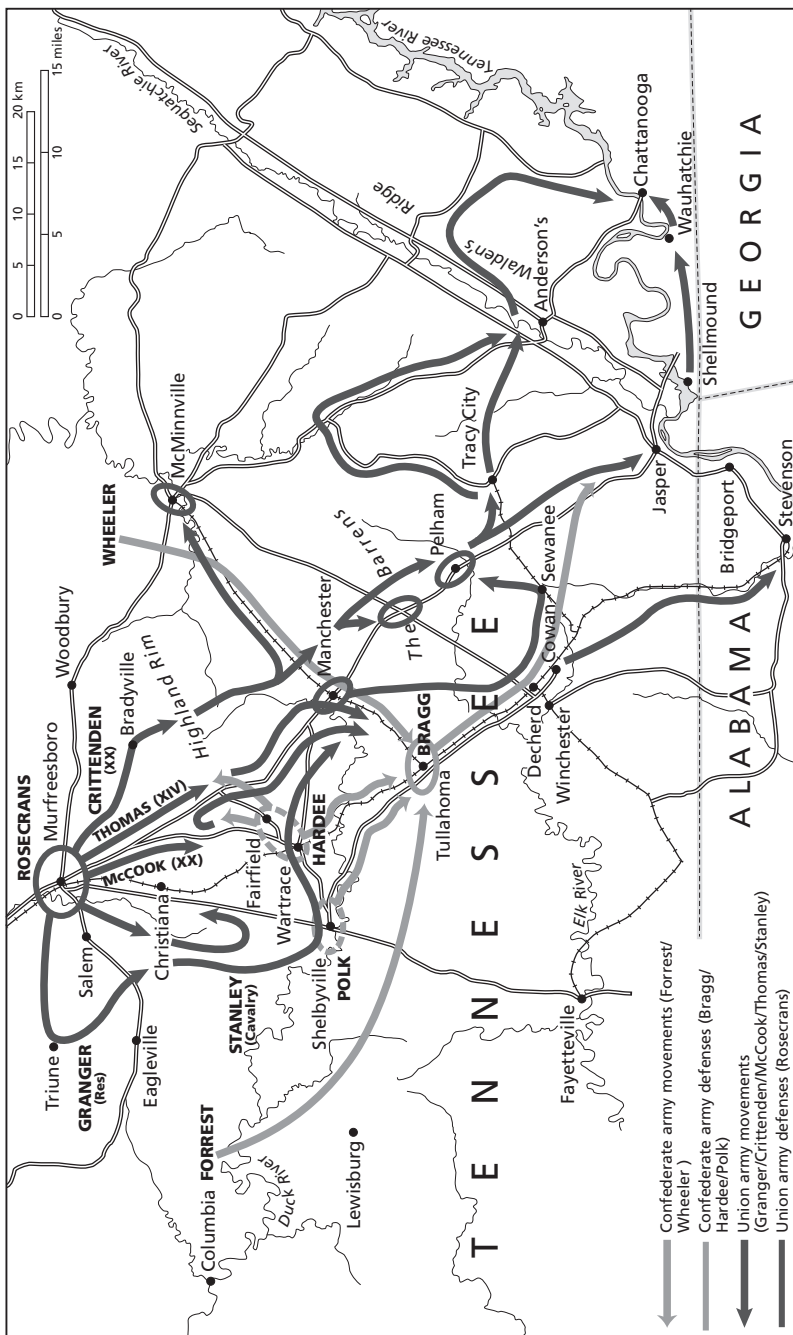
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The Battles of Tennessee, 1863

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The summer and fall campaigns of 1863 marked the pivotal five-month-long turning point of the Civil War. Famous and well-noted campaigns around Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania have rightly been highlighted as turning-point moments. Less well-known, however, are the campaigns that unfolded in Middle and East Tennessee between June and November, 1863. Despite being eclipsed by the dramatic surrender of the Confederates' last bastion on the Mississippi River and by the stunning defeat of Lee's Army in Pennsylvania, the 1863 Tennessee campaigns initiated broad military, logistical, political, and social changes that transformed the Confederacy's capacity to make war, unleashed the transformative power of the Emancipation Proclamation, freed white Unionists from the control of Confederate authority thus making available a tremendous untapped reservoir of manpower, and opened a violent and bloody guerrilla war that raged for years after the end of the war. The campaign also transformed the landscape where the armies concentrated and set in motion more than a century of environmental catastrophe in some parts of Tennessee. Finally, in creating a memorial landscape in the late 1880s and 1890s that became the model for the nation's National Military Parks the veterans of the 1863 Tennessee campaigns set the tone and created the legal foundations that shaped and continue to shape the way Americans remember and commemorate the Civil War.

To fully understand the strategic, political, logistical, and military importance of the region in 1863, it is necessary to know something of the war's history in the region between early 1861 and the summer of 1863 (see also Chapters 3 and 9, this volume). When Tennessee declared its independence from the United States in May 1861 and joined the Confederacy, the Eastern "Grand Division" of the state resisted. By a margin of 80 percent the small farmers and mountaineers of the region remained loyal to the United States. Buoyed by this support, during the summer and fall of 1861 the Northern public and the Lincoln



14.1 Tennessee, 1863. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

administration looked to the region as the key to undermining the newly formed Confederacy. Northern newspaper editors assured their readers that reclaiming the heavily Unionist region of East Tennessee would cause “the utter ruin of the rebels” in “only a matter of a few months’ time.” Just two months later, President Abraham Lincoln issued a memorandum declaring that taking and holding the region represented the key for Union victory.¹

Such assertions made perfect cultural and political sense in 1861. Popular literature painted the mountains as the antithesis of the slaveholding south. In the mountains, northern writers argued, the higher ground and preponderance of independent farmers created a virtuous people at odds with the depraved cotton south. The public, vocal political resistance the mountaineers raised against secession seemed to bear out the moral superiority of the mountain southerner. Loyalist opposition ran strong in the region where local leaders – often projecting their own views on whether the Union provided the best protection for the local “way of life” or whether joining league with the newly formed Confederacy would guard social order, and projecting their own economic ties to pro- or anti-Confederate markets – provided powerful political cues for their neighbors and kin. In late May, just before the state vote on secession, the first East Tennessee Convention met in Knoxville. Consisting of 500 local Union men from across the region, the convention appointed a committee to draft a resolution that decried the “ruinous and heretical doctrine of secession” and denounced the state’s “military league” with the Confederacy that put Tennessee “in hostile array against the Government of which it was, and still is, a member.”² Despite organized, vocal, and effective opposition to secession in East Tennessee, the Middle and Western Grand Divisions of the state overwhelmingly approved leaving the Union. Less than two weeks after the June 8 referendum on secession the East Tennessee Convention met again in Greenville on June 17–20 and issued a request that East Tennessee be allowed to separate from Tennessee. Governor Isham Harris ignored the request and in so doing initiated three years of Confederate civil and military control over the region. The loyal men and women of the region descended into what they called the

1 Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols., Roy P. Basler (ed.), (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953–5), vol. 1v, pp. 457–8 quoted in Robert Tracy McKenzie, *Lincolntonites and Rebels: A Divided Town in the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 87.

2 Samuel W. Scott, *History of the Thirteenth Regiment, Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry, U.S.A.: Including a Narrative of the Bridge Burning; the Carter County Rebellion, and the Loyalty, Heroism and Suffering of the Union Men and Women of Carter and Johnson Counties, Tennessee, during the Civil War* (Philadelphia, PA: P. W. Ziegler and Co., 1903), pp. 39–43.

“reign of terror” as Tennessee and Confederate authorities set out to disarm them and bring them under control through martial law. Civilians by the hundreds fled to Kentucky to avoid Confederate threats or to join the US Army.

Resistance exploded on November 8, 1861, when groups of Unionists led by William and Samuel Carter from upper East Tennessee seized railroad trestles on the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad and the Western and Atlantic Railroad and burned them. The raiders, whose mission had been approved by President Abraham Lincoln, Senator Andrew Johnson, and Secretary of War Simon Cameron, believed their sabotage supported a conventional invasion from Kentucky into East Tennessee through Cumberland Gap. Command confusion, however, left Carter and his men isolated and unsupported. General Robert Anderson, who had knowledge of the plan and overall command in the southeastern corner of Kentucky, had become sick and was replaced by William T. Sherman. Sherman, in consultation with several leading officers, concluded that the mountain passes and roads would become impassable during the winter months and that the food available to an invading army would be insufficient to feed a large, invading column. The invasion was cancelled. The raiders, however, never received the word that the columns of troops they expected from Kentucky would not be arriving and launched their bold attacks. The Confederate response was swift and violent. Many men believed to have been a part of the bridge-burning band were imprisoned. Others were hanged and left in public to serve as a warning to other Unionists.

Ulysses Grant’s successful campaign against Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in February 1862 moved the main armies well away from East Tennessee. By capturing the two forts, Grant opened the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers to Union naval vessels and brought much of Middle Tennessee under US control. By the beginning of March 1862, the military frontier had shifted from the Kentucky–Tennessee border to the northern border of Mississippi and Alabama. Ulysses Grant’s victory at the Battle of Shiloh in early April consolidated the United States’ gains and opened the way for an advance on the vital rail junction at Chattanooga in the southern corner of East Tennessee. On April 10, 1862, just days after the fighting at Shiloh ended, a US force of nearly 8,000 men under Ormsby Mitchel made a one-day forced march from Fayetteville, Tennessee to Huntsville, Alabama. The advance caught Rebel troops by surprise and Huntsville, situated on the strategically vital Memphis and Charleston Railroad, fell without a fight late

on April 11. Troops under Mitchell then moved east and west, one column targeted Decatur, Alabama the other aimed at Stevenson and Bridgeport, Alabama just over 45 miles from Chattanooga.

Mitchell's advance soon bogged down in the face of partisan cavalry attacks. Even so, in late May he ordered Brigadier General James Negley with a small division to lead an expedition to capture Chattanooga. On June 6 Negley's men skirmished with Confederate troops in the mountains near Chattanooga. Unionist civilians along the march route were "wild with joy, while the rebels [were] panic stricken" by the sudden appearance of such a large force of US troops.³ Negley's men arrived on the north shore of the river at Chattanooga on June 7 and prepared to attack the town. A reconnaissance found the Confederates behind fortifications on the opposite side of the river and atop Cameron Hill. Negley deployed two artillery batteries along Stringer's Ridge on the north bank of the Tennessee River and opened fire on the Rebel fortifications. At the same time, infantry advanced to the river's bank to harass the Confederate gunners. US gunners kept up a steady fire through the 7th and shelled Chattanooga until noon on June 8. Unable to seize the town, Negley withdrew on June 10. Though the attack failed, it alerted Rebel leadership to Chattanooga's vulnerability and through the early summer the Confederate commander responsible for the region, Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith, brought reinforcements to bolster the town's defense.

Even as Smith prepared to better defend the town, 40,000 US troops of the Army of the Ohio under Major General Don Carlos Buell began an advance on Chattanooga along the Memphis and Charleston Railroad – the same line seized by Mitchell. Confederate cavalry raiders ranged across Kentucky, Middle Tennessee, and North Alabama destroying vital supplies and railroad lines. Buell's advance slowed to a crawl. Despite the slow pace of Buell's advance, the "movement threatened the very heart of our country, and was destined, unless checked immediately, to sever our main line of connection between the East and the West," wrote the Army of Mississippi's commander General Braxton Bragg.⁴ In early July he began moving his troops to Chattanooga to counter Buell's move. By the first week of August his entire force lay in camp near Chattanooga.

3 United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 10, part 1, p. 919 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).

4 OR, 16(1): 1089.

The commanders of the two forces now occupying East Tennessee, Bragg and Kirby Smith, met to create a plan to invade Kentucky. The invasion sought not only to bring Kentucky into the Confederate nation but also to achieve the recapture of territory lost during the spring – beyond that, however, there existed little consensus as to what the cooperating forces aimed to achieve or how they would cooperate.

As the Rebels moved northward, Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio gave up northern Alabama and Middle Tennessee south of Nashville. Buell's army marched fast and saved the vital logistics center at Louisville. After a short rest, Buell, bolstered by thousands of new troops, advanced on the Confederates in a well-executed offensive. The Confederates attacked a portion of Buell's army in the campaign's major battle at Perryville on October 8. Despite some tactical success during the fighting, Bragg realized that the Army of the Ohio had seized the strategic advantage in Kentucky. Frustrated by the lack of direct support coming from Kentuckians, concerned by US victories in northern Mississippi that prevented Confederate troops under Earl Van Dorn from reinforcing the Rebels in Kentucky, and hampered by a lack of food Bragg ordered his army out of Kentucky. They began marching southward on October 13. Though pressed by the Lincoln administration to follow Bragg through the mountains of eastern Kentucky and into East Tennessee, Buell resisted, arguing that his force was too small to effectively take and hold the region and instead moved to Nashville.

Frustrated by Buell's lack of aggressiveness, on October 24, 1862 the War Department transferred command of the Army of the Ohio to Major General William Starke Rosecrans. Faced with waning enthusiasm for the war and encountering significant opposition to the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation issued in September 1862, the Lincoln administration looked to Rosecrans and his army for successes that would buoy the spirits of the northern states. The War Department expected action and issued broad, but direct, instructions to Rosecrans. "The great objects to be kept in view in your operations in the field are . . . First, to drive the enemy from Kentucky and Middle Tennessee; second, to take and hold East Tennessee, cutting the line of railroad at Chattanooga, Cleveland, or Athens, so as to destroy the connection of the valley of Virginia with Georgia and the other Southern States."⁵

⁵ OR, 16(2): 640.

As Rosecrans took charge, Bragg retreated to Knoxville, on through Chattanooga and into Middle Tennessee and took position near Murfreesboro, 45 miles south of Nashville. The move secured most of Middle Tennessee, North Alabama, and East Tennessee for the Confederates. Despite regaining much of what had been lost earlier in the year, the broader failure of the Kentucky campaign became a source of recrimination and conflict in the headquarters and camps of the newly renamed Army of Tennessee. Kentuckians in the army, furious that the Confederates had retreated from their state, directed their vitriol at Bragg. Bragg blamed his subordinates. His subordinates, chief among them Kirby Smith and Leonidas Polk, whose performances during the campaign left much to be desired, worked to protect their own reputations and heaped blame on Bragg.

As the Rebel leaders squabbled, Rosecrans began planning a move southward for the newly renamed XIV Army Corps. Delays, however, grated on the nerves of the War Department and by mid-December efforts to remove Rosecrans mounted. Finally, on December 26, 1862 the army moved. By the 30th Rosecrans prepared to attack the Confederates at Murfreesboro. The Confederates, however, seized the initiative and attacked on the morning of December 31. Bragg's onslaught forced Rosecrans's veterans back. Major General Philip H. Sheridan's division, however, stabilized the United States line near the Nashville Pike staving off disaster. The XIV Army Corps remained unmoved and stood in line on January 1, 1863 defying the exhausted Confederates. The next day Bragg attacked again. "The contest was short and severe," Bragg wrote, "the enemy was driven back and the eminence gained, but the movement as a whole was a failure, and the position was again yielded."⁶ Midday January 3, Bragg issued orders to retreat to the south.

Rosecrans's troops rejoiced over their victory at what would be called the Battle of Stones River and the Lincoln administration gave thanks to soldiers who had given the United States a great boost in morale. Strategically, the battle set the stage for the United States' invasion of the Rebel heartland and the final liberation of East Tennessee. Victory also bolstered the impact of the Emancipation Proclamation that had been issued during the fighting in Tennessee. The policies it outlined gave new meaning to the campaigns that would come in 1863 and began a complicated social revolution that transformed the entire nation.

⁶ *OR*, 20(10): 668.

During the early months of 1863, authorities in Washington looked favorably on Rosecrans. But Rosecrans's penchant for thorough preparation began to frustrate the War Department. Rosecrans was deeply concerned about what he believed would be a difficult and logistically complex movement from Middle Tennessee to Chattanooga. The War Department's patience, however, grew thin as Rosecrans sent up a constant barrage of supply requests accompanied by a constant string of excuses for not launching an offensive. Frustrations grew as the spring campaign season arrived – Lincoln wanted concerted action. Rosecrans and his Army of the Cumberland, however, remained inactive while the Army of the Tennessee and the Army of the Potomac began offensives in late April and early May 1863.

On the Confederate side problems began almost as soon as the Army of Tennessee settled into winter camp around Tullahoma. Internal squabbling over the failure of the Kentucky campaign continued. Polk lobbied President Jefferson Davis to have Bragg removed from command and encouraged officers to speak out against the commanding general. William J. Hardee, who commanded one of the army's two corps (Polk commanded the other), used his classes of instruction for subordinate officers to demonstrate Bragg's incompetence. Division commanders John C. Breckinridge and Benjamin Franklin Cheatham, both heavy drinkers, bridled at their commanding general's discipline and his attempts to encourage sobriety among his officer corps. Conflict also flared over Bragg's decision to concentrate the army at Tullahoma. Though several important roads converged on the town, topographical weaknesses exacerbated by the smallness of the command, William J. Hardee argued, left the position susceptible to flank attacks. To compound the problem, Bragg issued a circular concerning the decision to retreat from Murfreesboro that ended with an offer to resign from the army if the officer corps concluded that the commanding general no longer inspired confidence. Their vote of no confidence had no effect on Bragg, however, who remained in command. Recriminations and intrigue roiled the Army of Tennessee's camps through the first six months of 1863.

During the long period of inactivity by the main armies, guerrilla and partisan activity increased and took on a new tone. The Confederates began to employ more Partisan Rangers to help impede Rosecrans's advance. US forces, including some led by East Tennesseans, helped defeat the Rebel insurgents. Deserters from Bragg's army made the situation even more chaotic. Not a few of them took the oath of allegiance to the United States and became fierce partisans in the mountains and ridges between Nashville and Chattanooga. Not surprisingly, civil law could not contain the violence,

and communities across the region descended into chaos with little productive work being done by anyone. Survival became the watchword for thousands of families swept up in the war's hidden devastation.

Pressure on Rosecrans from Washington mounted through the late spring and early summer. Finally, on June 24, as Grant's siege at Vicksburg was moving to conclusion and as Lee's army ranged up the Cumberland Valley of Pennsylvania, Rosecrans moved his force, now called the Army of the Cumberland, toward Chattanooga. His plan was complicated and daring. A diversionary force held Bragg's attention on his left flank at Shelbyville while the other three infantry corps (XIV, XX, and XXI) swung southeasterly beyond the Confederate right flank. The leading element of this force – a mounted infantry brigade – commanded by Colonel John T. Wilder crashed through Hoover's Gap along the Highland Rim and scattered the Confederate cavalry regiment stationed there. As Henry Campbell, a gunner in the 18th Indiana Battery, put it "Wilder's sudden and unexpected advance took the Rebels so completely by surprise that before they were aware that we were coming, we had possession of all the hills and were in line of battle on the very ground they had chosen for the defense of the gap."⁷ A sharp fight ensued. Armed with seven-shot Spencer repeating rifles, the troops of Wilder's Mounted Infantry Brigade proved too formidable for the musket-toting Rebels. The stunning firepower in the face of the Confederate counterattack inspired Campbell to declare "The Spencer Rifles Save the day." To the west, US troops from the XXI Corps seized Liberty Gap and opened another passage through which the Army of the Cumberland could advance. It took less than twenty-four hours for Rosecrans's force to penetrate the Confederates' best line of defense. Although wet weather sapped the US forces and stalled the advance, the first phase of the campaign proved a dramatic success.

Bragg attempted to mount a counterattack. However, poor leadership by his corps commanders led Bragg to cancel the offensive. Rosecrans moved cautiously forward toward Confederate entrenchments at Tullahoma where Bragg had determined to make a stand. Polk and Hardee, alone, met to discuss Bragg's plan to fight at Tullahoma – they concluded that the only course of action was retreat and urged Bragg to do so on June 28. A day later, Bragg issued orders for the Army of Tennessee to retreat to Chattanooga. By the time Rosecrans's men moved forward against the Rebel fortifications

7 Diary of Henry Campbell, Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Collection, Fort Oglethorpe, GA.

on July 1 they were empty. Bragg's army moved south quickly and on July 4 they crossed the Tennessee River and camped in the shadow of Lookout Mountain at Chattanooga.

The campaign had been a dramatic success. Confederate forces had been driven out of several strong positions without a major battle and US forces had seized all of Middle Tennessee. Unlike Gettysburg and Vicksburg, the success of the Tullahoma campaign came with relatively few casualties. The Army of the Cumberland reported 83 killed, 473 wounded, and 13 captured or missing. The Army of Tennessee's losses are less clear but 1,634 of Bragg's men became prisoners. Rosecrans, however, did not press his June and July success. In front of him still lay a powerful Confederate army and the loyalists of East Tennessee continued to be under the control of Rebels. Once again the War Department demanded action and Rosecrans stalled.

From the Chattanooga area Bragg considered his defensive options, while Rosecrans's army settled into camp at Manchester and McMinnville where they resupplied and prepared to advance across the Cumberland Plateau. Halleck and Stanton demanded action while Lincoln fretted about the loyalists in East Tennessee. Early in August the War Department issued peremptory orders for the army's advance. Still Rosecrans, supported by his leading generals, delayed. Finally, on August 16 both the Army of the Cumberland and the Army of the Ohio, operating in upper East Tennessee, moved forward on a final drive to take Knoxville and Chattanooga. The plan depended on deception and speed. Mounted men under Robert Minty and John T. Wilder and two brigades of infantry under William B. Hazen and George Wagner marched through the Sequatchie Valley, across the Cumberland Plateau, and into the Tennessee River valley well north of Chattanooga to give the illusion that the army's main crossing would be made north of Chattanooga and that Rosecrans and Burnside would unite and then press southwestward. To appear more threatening, they built campfires that seemed to show a much larger army in the valley, demonstrated noisily along the riverbank to make it appear that pontoon bridges were being constructed, and dumped construction materials into the river to further the impression that US troops were preparing to bridge the river north of Chattanooga.

The most dramatic part of the deception took place on August 21, when Eli Lilly's 18th Indiana Battery from Wilder's Brigade rolled quietly into position on Stringer's Ridge – the same ridge line used by Negley's artillery a year earlier – and prepared to shell the town. Shortly after noon, the first shells

from Lily's guns streaked into the heart of the town. Many of the Army of Tennessee's leading officers were attending a service at the First Presbyterian Church at the corner of 7th and Market Street in the center of town in observance of a special day of prayer called by President Jefferson Davis. One of the first shells crashed through the church's modest steeple and sent the officers running to their commands. Meanwhile, the townspeople panicked at the sudden appearance of the US forces. As Colonel Newton Davis of the 24th Alabama put it "you never saw such a skidadling in all your life. Shop Keepers, Peach & apple venders, and speculators of all types, both Jews and Gentiles commenced running in every direction."⁸ As the shells flew, many sought shelter on the south side of town behind a small bluff known locally as Irish Hill. By August 23 many of the town's residents had gathered a few belongings and left for points south.

As the shelling scattered Chattanooga's residents, Alexander McCook's XX Corps and George Thomas's XIV Corps moved toward river crossings near Stevenson, Alabama 30 miles south of Chattanooga. Thomas Crittenden's XXI Corps, following the diversionary force under Hazen, moved up the Sequatchie River valley to reinforce the idea that the army's main effort would be focused to the north of Chattanooga. Bragg responded by sending all of his remaining infantry force north, posting them all between Chattanooga and the Hiwassee River. He left only a small force of cavalry on the crest of Sand Mountain – the very front where Rosecrans prepared to cross. On August 29 the troops of the Army of the Cumberland's XIV and XX Corps began crossing the Tennessee River at Caperton's Ferry. By the morning of September 1, the same day that Bragg ordered Simon Bolivar Buckner to abandon Knoxville, Crittenden's troops retraced their steps and marched south down the Sequatchie Valley toward their assigned crossing point at Shellmound just north of where McCook and Thomas had crossed the river. By September 4 the entire army was on the south bank. The three corps – fully supplied to fight two major battles – separated into three columns in an attempt to get behind Bragg's army, threaten his supply line, and force them to retreat southward toward Atlanta.

Though Rosecrans anticipated difficulty crossing Sand Mountain and Lookout Mountain the reality of the terrain proved more challenging than imagined. As Captain Francis W. Perry of the 10th Wisconsin Infantry put it: "A road must be constructed up an inclined plane on the mountainside from

8 Richard A. Baumgartner and Larry M. Strayer, *Echoes of Battle: The Struggle for Chattanooga, an Illustrated Collection of Union and Confederate Narratives* (Huntington, WV: Blue Acorn Press, 1996), p. 25.

foot to summit, winding around bluffs and boulders, cutting and rooting up trees, filling gullies, dislodging rocks and leveling earth until a track could be cut wide enough to permit artillery and baggage wagons to pass up.”⁹ Once the road had been prepared, the weary soldiers lined the route from top to bottom standing on each side of the road “ready to assist each struggling team and help roll the wheels where the exhausted and discouraged animals failed to move the load.” Once across Sand Mountain, the troops almost immediately faced the steep sides of Lookout Mountain. As Perry put it: “The Lookout range of mountains still lay between us and Bragg’s line of retreat. To climb and pass this mountain range seemed a greater task than what we had already accomplished.”¹⁰ Slowly and with tremendous effort the XIV Corps made its way across the range and prepared to move down the mountain into McLemore’s Cove and then on to strike the retreating columns of the Army of Tennessee.

As Thomas’s veterans struggled up Sand Mountain reports coming into army headquarters on September 6 convinced Rosecrans that the Confederates were preparing to retreat to Dalton, Georgia. Troops operating along the river between Chattanooga and Poe’s Crossroads north of the town reported that the Rebel troops in that area appeared to be moving south. Through the first week of the month, Hazen’s men just north of Chickamauga Creek worked to prepare a boat that could ferry 150 men at a time across the Tennessee, and Wagner, near Chattanooga, had boats ready to cross his troops at the same time. On September 8, Wagner reported to army headquarters that the Confederates had abandoned the town and that he would begin crossing on September 9. In the predawn hours of the 9th, a trio of wary soldiers from the 97th Ohio rowed across the river and came to the south bank at Ross’s Landing. They commandeered the horse ferryboat, took it to the river’s north shore and began ferrying Wagner’s brigade of the XXI Corps onto the green around the landing.

By the evening of September 9, Chattanooga was firmly in the hands of the men of the XXI Corps. Miles to the south, the XIV and XX Corps appeared to be in position to cut off Bragg’s supply route. Yet the mountain crossings had taken longer than anticipated and the days lost laboring over them provided Bragg with enough time to assess Rosecrans’s moves and mount a counterstrike. Bragg’s first move, made even before he realized the true nature of Rosecrans’s advance, was to move his army south toward LaFayette, Georgia, and there concentrate his entire army. During the

⁹ Ibid., p. 28. ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 29.

preparations for the move Bragg had begun to piece together various intelligence reports and realized that the US forces were scattered across a 60-mile front – none in position to support the others. Bragg moved quickly and tried to mount an attack to destroy a portion of Thomas's corps in McLemore's Cove on September 9–10 but a dramatic command breakdown derailed the attack giving Thomas time to pull back into a strong defensive position at the foot of Lookout Mountain. As late as September 12 Rosecrans remained unaware of the danger his army faced and expressed frustration that Thomas's column had not yet captured LaFayette. Only slowly did he begin to realize that his army was in great peril. Adding to increasingly ominous reports from LaFayette were statements made by Rebel deserters that troops from Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia were on their way to bolster Bragg's army.

On September 12–13 Rosecrans finally fully recognized the danger. He quickly issued a recall order to McCook, who was to march north and link up with Thomas near Stevens Gap. Once united, the two corps would march to connect with the XXI Corps at Lee and Gordon's Mill on Chickamauga Creek. McCook, unfamiliar with the road network and concerned that a misstep might expose his isolated force to Confederate attack took a time-consuming route. Finally, on the 17th Thomas and McCook reunited and began their march toward Lee and Gordon's Mill. While McCook marched and Thomas waited, Bragg attempted once again to attack the isolated XXI Corps. On the 12th and 13th he urged Leonidas Polk to move against Crittenden's force. Polk disobeyed and on September 13 Bragg called off the operation. Frustrated by the failures of his chief subordinates, Bragg determined to concentrate his army, move to a position that would make it easy to absorb the reinforcements coming from Virginia and Mississippi, and avoid being put into a dangerous position by the rapidly converging Army of the Cumberland.

Undeterred by two offensive failures, Bragg once again issued orders for his army to assume the offensive on September 18. The plan was simple – cross Chickamauga Creek move the army between the flank of Rosecrans's line at Lee and Gordon's Mill, where the two roads leading to Chattanooga diverged, and attack. Such a turning movement promised to cut Rosecrans off from his route back to Chattanooga and provide the possibility of pushing the Army of the Cumberland south into McLemore's Cove from where it could not reasonably find a route of retreat. Rosecrans's cavalry and mounted infantry troops delayed the crossings on the 18th. Despite them, however, Confederates forced their way across and took a strong

position on what intelligence reports showed was the left flank of the Army of the Cumberland. But Bragg's plans for a crushing attack soon came unraveled. Rosecrans had been alerted to the danger to his front and left and began shuffling his army northward led by three divisions of Thomas's XIV Corps, who during the night of September 18 and the early morning of September 19 marched north from near Crawfish Springs toward the critical intersection of LaFayette Road and Reeds Bridge Road. As long as they held their position, the retreat route back to Chattanooga – both the LaFayette Road and the Dry Valley Road – remained open. Nathan Bedford Forrest's Cavalry Corps encountered some of the outposts of these units in the predawn hours of September 19, and at around 9:00 a.m. the troopers became entangled in a sharp fight, initiating what became known as the Battle of Chickamauga.

Fighting tumbled out of control and neither army commander exerted much control over the chaos. Vicious attacks and counterattacks swirled around the Winfrey farm as troops marched to the sound of the firing and smashed into each other in the tangled woods. Along the LaFayette Road, Confederates found a gap in Rosecrans's line and crashed across the road near the Brotherton farm. But no reinforcements helped push the attack and Rebels collapsed in the face of a counterattack. All around the Vinniard farm, troops from Lee's army tangled in a slugging match and were bested by the soldiers from Illinois, Wisconsin, Kansas, Indiana, and Ohio. The fighting extended into the deepening gloom of the Georgia forest in a rare and desperate night battle near the center of both lines. The fighting died down late in the evening as the US troops reorganized and readjusted their lines and the Confederates began to sort themselves out after a - confusing day of fighting in the dense woods.

Rosecrans called his corps leaders to his headquarters at the house of Eliza Glenn to discuss the plans for the next day. Some time around 10:00 p.m. the principal officers gathered. They discussed the day's fight and determined to remain on the defensive. The upshot of the meeting was that "Thomas should hold the Rossville [LaFayette] Road at all hazards, as the prize of the battle, and be reinforced if it took the whole army to enable him to do so."¹¹ All along the line units realigned themselves in strong defensive positions, reserve forces were deployed near the army's center, and Gordon Granger, commander of the Reserve Corps at Rossville, was

¹¹ David A. Powell, *The Chickamauga Campaign – Glory or the Grave: The Breakthrough, the Union Collapse, and the Defense of Horseshoe Ridge, September 20, 1863* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2015), p. 12.

given instructions to be prepared to march to the field in case Thomas's line became endangered.

The day's fighting left Bragg feeling confident. The arrival of more reinforcements on the field portended greater success the next day. Coordinating his move, however, proved difficult as communications broke down at the highest levels of command. At a meeting during the evening of the 19th Bragg, in an attempt to bring some order to his five-infantry corps, reorganized his army into two wings – one commanded by Leonidas Polk and the other by James Longstreet. The new command arrangement proved troublesome – Longstreet arrived on the battlefield some time after 11:00 p.m. and was only then informed that he would command half of Bragg's army. In Polk's wing communications broke down overnight and battle orders failed to reach D. H. Hill.

Bragg intended for the army's offensive, led by D. H. Hill's troops, on September 20 to collapse the Army of the Cumberland's left (or northern) flank and drive them away from Chattanooga and into McLemore's Cove. But the dawn attack did not happen. Hours passed as orders were reissued and hungry men were fed. The miscue gave the soldiers in Thomas's command needed time to prepare their line. Axes rang out through the early morning as soldiers felled thousands of trees that they fashioned into chest-high breastworks along the edges of the Kelly farm. By the time the Rebels moved, Thomas's men stood behind stout works that provided excellent protection from attacking Rebels.

When they moved forward, Confederate troops lapped around Rosecrans's vulnerable left flank. Along the line of breastworks, however, Bragg's men made little headway. Reinforcements hurried northward bolstered Thomas's line and finally blunted the Rebel threat. The pressure alarmed Rosecrans, who shifted more and more men to the north end of the line. Confusion took hold when a series of requests from Thomas resulted in a hastily drafted and poorly written order that resulted in a temporary gap opening in the center of the line. Rarely, if ever, did such breaks in a battle line occur but the one created as Rosecrans shifted troops northward proved disastrous. At the same time the gap opened, James Longstreet, who had used the morning hours to organize a powerful attacking column nearly three divisions deep, advanced. Longstreet had no idea that a gap was opening in his front, but when the Confederates advanced they knifed through the undefended center of the US line.

Longstreet's attack devastated the center and right wing of the Army of the Cumberland. Within an hour, large portions of the XX and XXI Corps fled the

field in confusion. To be sure, pockets of resistance hampered the Rebel advance and bought valuable time for the US troops gathering on a series of hills around the Snodgrass farm. Even so, by two o'clock Thomas, the only one of the army's top leaders to remain on the field, faced a dire tactical situation. Through the afternoon, Thomas cobbled together a line that ran from his line of breastworks to the west along the hills at the Snodgrass farm. Determined Confederates surged up the slopes but each time met withering fire from blue-clad soldiers that time and again drove back disjointed Rebel attacks. Despite dwindling ammunition supplies, Thomas held through the afternoon. As the sun set he prepared to pull his troops back to the gap in Missionary Ridge near Rossville. Confederate units advanced one last time as darkness fell creating confusion among Thomas's exhausted troops. But a timely counterattack and fleet feet helped the remnants of the Army of the Cumberland escape. As Confederates reached the LaFayette road near the Kelly farm it became clear that they had finally gained victory. A Rebel yell rose at one end of the line and rolled back and forth as the men celebrated their victory.

The next morning, however, dispelled any notions among the Confederates that their battlefield victory had shattered the United States' second-largest field army. Though driven from the field, the US troops stood firm on the heights of Missionary Ridge around Rossville Gap. As one soldier from the Army of the Cumberland put it, this was "not a defeated army so far as the men in the ranks were concerned."¹² Desperately needed food and ammunition arrived from Chattanooga on the 21st and strong breastworks appeared all along the US line. Rebel probing attacks discovered the line and Bragg's exhausted men made no further efforts to advance. By the evening of the 21st Rosecrans pulled his army back into the half-built Confederate earthworks in and around Chattanooga. Bragg's army advanced toward the outskirts of town and by the 23rd had pressed close to town. They soon took up positions on Missionary Ridge to the east of Chattanooga, across Chattanooga Valley to the south of town, and then across the toe of Lookout Mountain into Lookout Valley to the south and west of town. The campaign that had been marked by tremendous marching and bold moves across vast swaths of southeast Tennessee and northwest Georgia now settled into a new, static phase of siege war.

12 Charles Eugene Belknap, *History of the Michigan Organizations at Chickamauga, Chattanooga, and Missionary Ridge* (Lansing, MI: Robert Smith, 1897), p. 143.

Despite building strong fortifications around the town that discouraged a direct attack by Bragg, the Army of the Cumberland occupied a dangerous position. By controlling Lookout Valley to the southwest, the Confederates had denied the US Army access to the railroad that ran to their supply depot at Bridgeport, Alabama. This left only a tenuous route over Walden's Ridge. Confederate sharpshooters, posted on the south bank of the Tennessee River and across from where the Walden's Ridge route hugged the north bank of the river, wreaked havoc on the wagon trains that tried to pass.

Rebel leaders, however, failed to capitalize on their advantages. The primary cause of distraction was an old one – Braxton Bragg's ongoing feud with many of his subordinates. Within days of the end of the fighting at Chickamauga, Bragg began his effort to purge officers of his enemies with a special focus on Leonidas Polk and Thomas Hindman. At the same time, a cabal of well-placed officers, including Lieutenant General Leonidas Polk, Lieutenant General James Longstreet, Lieutenant General Daniel Harvey Hill, and Major General Simon Bolivar Buckner, began to plot a way to both capture Chattanooga and push Bragg from command of the army. Less than a week after the end of the battle, Longstreet and Polk sent letters to Richmond demanding Bragg's removal. By September 30, President Jefferson Davis took the unprecedented step of traveling to Tennessee in early October. Though Davis kept Bragg in command, the conflicts continued and by mid-October the rupture between Bragg and Longstreet was complete. The fighting among the Confederate high command deeply influenced the conduct of the siege – indeed according to Bragg's chief of staff more time was spent on the conflicts and the reorganization of the army aimed at splitting up political allies who opposed Bragg than in preparing to keep the US forces bottled up in Chattanooga. The confusion, bitterness, and lack of command cohesion soon came to haunt the Rebels.

On the US side, Washington's confidence in Rosecrans finally collapsed. George H. Thomas took command of the Army of the Cumberland and Ulysses S. Grant, the most competent and successful US commander in the war, was sent to take overall control of the soldiers from the three armies – the Army of the Tennessee, the Army of the Cumberland, and the Army of the Potomac – that were concentrating in Chattanooga. After a long and painful journey on the battered road across Walden's Ridge, Grant arrived in Chattanooga on October 23. Though he received a cool reception from the Army of the Cumberland's new commander, George Thomas, Grant moved quickly and decisively to end the siege. Much depended on opening

a new line of supply that would bring in sufficient food and ammunition to bolster the condition of the Army of the Cumberland that by the second week of October was on half-rations and in desperate need of relief. Grant put in action a bold plan to open a more direct supply line. On October 27, he sent a force under William B. Hazen on pontoon boats down the Tennessee River from Ross's Landing to the river's south bank at Brown's Ferry. They landed, fought a short battle, and took control of the vital ferry point just across from Chattanooga. At the same time, troops under Joseph Hooker moved forward from near Bridgeport, Alabama to Wauhatchie Station in Lookout Valley. Their objective was to seize the station on the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad and then link up with Hazen's troops. The move, unsuccessfully contested by portions of Longstreet's corps in a night battle at Wauhatchie Station on October 28 and 29, opened a new line of supply from Bridgeport, to Wauhatchie, and then by wagon train across the pontoon bridge at Brown's Ferry and into Chattanooga.

To the northeast, Ambrose Burnside's IX Corps created significant problems for the Confederates. Rather than moving to assist Rosecrans in Chattanooga, in early October he took his forces into the northern Holston River valley to keep Confederates from moving from Virginia to assist in holding the region. Burnside's troops also effectively cut the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad making it impossible for Confederate supplies to flow through the vital corridor. Their hold on the region precipitated one of the most perplexing decisions of the entire campaign. On November 5 Bragg – in a move approved by President Davis and specifically aimed at getting Longstreet out of Bragg's way – sent him and his corps to deal with Burnside and recapture Knoxville.

Longstreet's move occurred just as Major General William T. Sherman's troops began to arrive from Mississippi and as Grant put in motion his plan to drive the Rebels away from Chattanooga. A large-scale reconnaissance of Orchard Knob on November 23 resulted in a quick victory over an outgunned Rebel outpost and gave Grant a strategically critical toehold halfway between the US works in Chattanooga and the Confederate lines on Missionary Ridge. On the 24th, Grant ordered Joseph Hooker to demonstrate against Lookout Mountain to draw Bragg's attention to his left flank. Hooker pushed his attack more vigorously than Grant expected. He found a thinly held Confederate line on the mountain's lower slopes and crushed them in a dramatic attack on a fog-shrouded day. At the same time, William T. Sherman moved to cross the river and attack the north end of

Missionary Ridge. For many weeks, Union soldiers had been concealed in the rugged ground around the mouth of North Chickamauga Creek secretly preparing a small flotilla of pontoon boats that were to be used to ferry riflemen downriver where they would seize a beachhead on the river's south bank. Within an hour of leaving their hiding spot, the troops leapt from their boats, captured a group of surprised Confederate pickets, and secured their position with a strong line of field works. With the south bank secured, Sherman sent his pontoon wagons, concealed in the ridges north of town, forward to the riverbank. Under cover of artillery, the engineers quickly laid a pontoon bridge, and within an hour, Sherman's veterans were marching across the river. They moved forward across the flat ground between the river and Missionary Ridge and soon ascended the heights they believed to be the north end of the ridge. They were mistaken and found themselves on a hill separated from the main line of Missionary Ridge by a steep ravine. The blunder forced Grant to remake his plan for November 25. Under the new plan, Sherman would launch his attack on the north end of Missionary Ridge while Hooker, now free to move unopposed down Chattanooga Valley, would move eastward toward Rossville Gap where he would form his troops facing to the north and advance northward. Thomas's Army of the Cumberland would watch the middle portion of the Rebel line and help stop the flow of Confederate reinforcements from south to north.

Beginning in the morning, Sherman's troops charged but were repulsed. As Sherman's attack stalled, Grant and Thomas watched from near the center of the US line on Orchard Knob. By mid-afternoon it was clear to Grant that Sherman's attack had ground to a halt. To help Sherman, Grant instructed Thomas's Army of the Cumberland to advance to the base of Missionary Ridge to hold the Rebels in place and help Sherman's attack along. Through poor planning and miserable coordination, the Confederates had left half of their force at the foot of the ridge and half on top of the ridge. When Thomas's men advanced the Confederates posted at the base of the ridge gave way and began retreating up the steep slope. Defenders on the top could not fire at Thomas's troops for fear of hitting their own men. Even so, Thomas's men found themselves in an uncomfortable position open to rifle and artillery fire unable to respond with much effect. The soldiers themselves launched the final attack up the slope. In irregular lines and following the natural contours of the ravines that cut the face of the ridge, they advanced. In many places they moved nearly unseen in the smoke and gathering darkness. Many Confederates panicked when US troops suddenly appeared on the ridgetop in the center of Bragg's line. The gap opened by

their flight spread and within a very few minutes the entire Army of Tennessee's left flank disintegrated. Hooker's force, delayed because the Confederates had burned a critical bridge that crossed Chattanooga Creek, began a devastating attack from the south. Only darkness stopped the advance. Bragg's shattered army struggled to save its wagon trains and to reach safety to the south. For two days Hooker's troops hounded the fleeing Confederates. On November 27, the Confederates fought a successful rear-guard battle with Hooker's troops at Ringgold Gap ending the fighting around Chattanooga, and thus ended the campaign. To the northeast, Longstreet's brief siege of Knoxville ended when he launched a badly conceived and poorly executed attack on Fort Sanders on November 29. The short battle confirmed Burnside's hold on Knoxville. Five days later, Longstreet moved northeasterly to Rogersville, Tennessee and soon after went into winter camp ending the major campaigns for East Tennessee.

The guerrilla war that had been fought in the hollows and hills began to take new form as thousands of loyal white citizens, cowed by the presence of Rebel forces for nearly three years, flocked to join the US Army. By the time the war ended tens of thousands of white East Tennesseans were serving the United States. The already intense conflict fueled by divided political loyalty and community ties of household, friendship, and kinship took on increased intensity in 1864 and 1865. Violence spiraled into vendetta and revenge as men such as Champ Ferguson (pro-Confederate) and "Tinker" Dave Beatty (pro-Union) kept alive the memory of those killed in the war's early years and swore vengeance. Mutilation, torture, and the murder of men, begging for their lives, in the presence of women and children became common occurrences. From Hamilton County to the far reaches of upper East Tennessee destructive reprisals undid what remained of civil society.

For the black men and women of the region, dramatic change followed US victory. Thousands of slaves trudged to Chattanooga from plantations in Alabama and Georgia in search of the freedom promised by the Emancipation Proclamation. Although Tennessee had been exempted from the Emancipation Proclamation, the decisions of local commanders who opened doors to freedom and a change of heart by Governor Andrew Johnson in August 1863 helped to accelerate the erosion of slavery in Tennessee as the final campaigns unfolded. The transition from slavery to freedom gained momentum in November and December 1863. Never had the frontier of freedom been so close to thousands of slaves living in Georgia, Alabama, and southeast Tennessee. Knowing that reaching Chattanooga

meant freedom, thousands of men and women self-emancipated and fled into the Union lines soon after the final shot was fired on Missionary Ridge. Through the last month of 1863 and through spring 1864, a steady stream of refugees flowed into the town. Forbidden from remaining in and around the town and its sprawling military supply complex, they established on the north bank of the Tennessee River a community called by the white soldiers Camp Contraband. By mid-1864 nearly 4,000 freedpeople had settled into the cramped and often filthy camp. At year's end another 2,000 refugees had taken residence there. Many lived in grass and mud huts while the more fortunate crowded into shanties made of piled wood. Though the camp was cramped with many living in less than 12 square feet of space, the sanitation facilities nonexistent, and chronic wood shortages kept the men and women constantly in the cold, the camp at Chattanooga proved more comfortable and healthier than similar camps in the Nashville area.

Many of the women who settled there worked as cooks, nurses, water carriers, and washerwomen for the white US soldiers garrisoning the town. Hundreds of men worked for the army's sprawling supply depot. Others volunteered to fight in the US Army and served in United States Colored Troops (USCT) regiments that guarded railroads, chased guerrillas, and built fortifications. In December 1864 some of the Chattanooga USCT garrison traveled north to join the army organized by General George H. Thomas and played a major role in the crushing Union victory at the Battle of Nashville in late 1864. Much of this work – as soldiers, cooks, nurses, and laborers working for the army – helped these men and women transition from slave labor to wage labor. At the same time a common culture emerged out of the labor and suffering in the camp. In everyday life and in churches built within the camps, the residents forged a strong bond and laid the foundation for the creation of a strong postwar black community in Chattanooga.

The physical town in which that political community grew was dramatically different than the one that had stood in 1862. Change accelerated alarmingly from 1863 to 1865. Though the Confederates had built some fortifications, and Rebel camp grounds had resulted in the clearing of some forests during 1862 and 1863, the impact on the land around Chattanooga had remained limited. All that changed in the days and months after the Battle of Chickamauga. The siege that gripped the town between late September and late November accelerated the destruction of the prewar town environment. Tens of thousands of men and animals crowded into the ring of forts and the remaining trees and shrubs were stripped bare in desperate attempts to feed

the starving horses and mules. Once the siege ended, the army went to work establishing the infrastructure needed to launch an invasion of the Deep South. Clear-cutting timber operations eliminated large swaths of timber in Chattanooga Valley to the south, Hamilton Valley to the north, onto Missionary Ridge to the east, and all along the banks of the Tennessee River as far north as the county seat of Dallas, 20 miles to the northeast. Descriptions left by soldiers who served in Chattanooga during 1864 and 1865 painted a gloomy, dingy, and bare vision of the town that had been described as “very beautifully situated, and is almost hidden from view by the numerous shade trees that are thickly strewn all over the places.”¹³

Stories began to take shape, however, as veterans of the campaigns and battles – drawn in part by railroad promoters who advertised special excursions across the southern battlefields – began to flood into the region for reunions and to revisit the old battlefields. In 1891, a recommendation emerged from the House Committee on Military Affairs calling for the creation of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. Their plan for the park was to be “in all its aspects a purely military project.” “The political questions which were involved in the contest”, they wrote “do not enter into this view of the subject, nor do they belong to it.”¹⁴ Congress passed the bill in the summer of 1891. While the legislation successfully preserved space, it severely restricted its potential use. Focusing only on the military actions made it possible to erase Chattanooga’s history as a major site of refuge for self-emancipating slaves and as a place where a story of women’s experience – both black and white – unfolded in complex and dramatic ways. Instead, the park’s interpretation marginalized political division, downplayed the central role slavery played in secession and the Confederate nation, extolled the unity of white America, and evaded the social changes wrought by emancipation and the postwar constitutional amendments and legislation that extended new freedoms to African Americans.

The disremembering of the war in Tennessee, embodied at the Chickamauga National Military Park, celebrated in popular literature, and repeated in other formal and informal remembrances obscured much: the claims to freedom made by the men and women who fled slavery and scratched out the first steps of citizenship in their service to the United

13 Henry Campbell, entry of August 21, 1862, *Three Years in the Saddle: A Diary of the Civil War*, unpublished (n.d.), Wabash College, Crawfordsville, IN.

14 H. V. Boynton, *The National Military Park Chickamauga-Chattanooga. An Historical Guide* (Cincinnati, OH: Robert Clarke, 1895), pp. 257–8.

States in Chattanooga and elsewhere; the dramatic social change brought about by internecine violence and its community-destroying horror; and its environmental impact that transformed the landscape surrounding Chattanooga and started the town on a downward spiral of ecological disaster that lasted more than a century. While a new chapter in the story of the campaign has been imagined by scholars and political leaders at the turn of the twenty-first century, much work remains to be done to create an integrated and nuanced understanding of what happened in 1863 Tennessee and how those events continue to influence the way Americans understand their epochal event and how they imagine a national future.

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The Overland Campaign

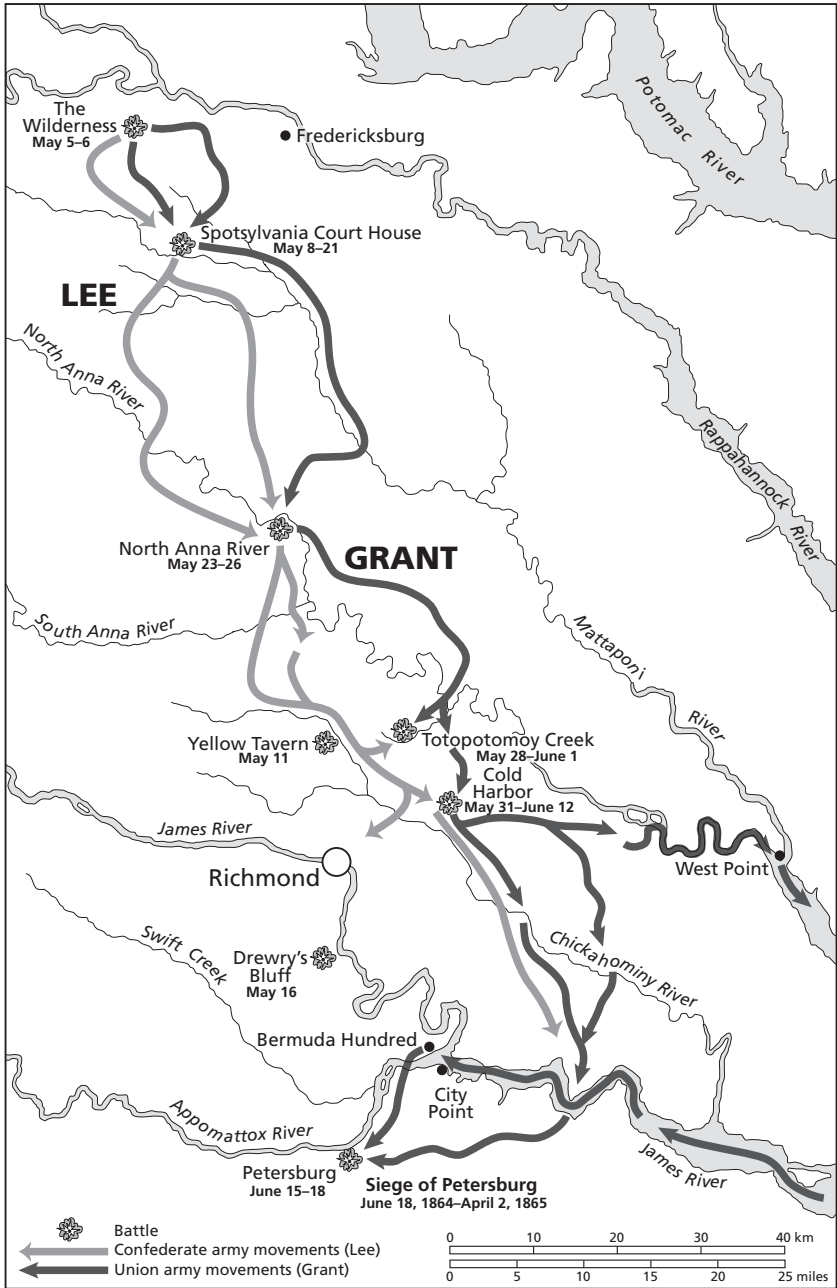
GORDON C. RHEA

The year 1864 opened to a mixed military picture. In the American Civil War's western theater, Union forces had won a string of victories, securing the Mississippi River and much of Tennessee. In the east, the Army of the Potomac, led by Major General George G. Meade, had rebuffed General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Gettysburg but had achieved little of significance since then. Profound war weariness gripped the Northern populace. It was an election year, and President Abraham Lincoln rightfully questioned whether voters would give him a second term. Unless Federal armies won victories, the presidential race seemed destined to favor an opposition candidate willing to negotiate with the South, enabling the Rebels to achieve through political means the ends that had eluded them by force of arms.

In Virginia, the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia faced off across the Rapidan River, midway between Washington and Richmond. Sharply aware of the need for military success in the east, Lincoln summoned the architect of the Union's western victories, Ulysses S. Grant, arranged for his promotion to lieutenant general – a post held previously only by George Washington – and placed him in charge of the nation's military might. Sealing perhaps the most compatible working relationship between president and commander-in-chief the nation had yet seen, Lincoln promised Grant a free hand running the war and the resources he needed to win.

Earlier that year, Grant had urged Union planners to abandon trying to capture Richmond and instead concentrate on disrupting Lee's supply lines. As Grant saw it, the spring campaign should begin with a Federal advance inland from Suffolk, destroying the railroads around Weldon and occupying Raleigh. "This would virtually force an evacuation of Virginia and indirectly of East Tennessee," Grant predicted, and would "draw the enemy from campaigns of their own choosing, and for which

The Overland Campaign



15.1 The Overland campaign. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd. Military movements from Gordon Rhea, *On to Petersburg: Grant and Lee, June 4-15, 1864* (Louisiana State University Press, 2017).

they are prepared, to new lines of operations never expected to become necessary.”¹

The Lincoln administration, however, rejected the idea of a major offensive in North Carolina out of concern that such a move would weaken the garrisons protecting the nation’s capital. Instead, Major General Henry W. Halleck, Lincoln’s general-in-chief, insisted that the Union’s military should concentrate toward the defeat of Lee’s army. “We have given too much attention to cutting the toe nails of our enemy instead of grasping his throat,” counseled Halleck.²

Grant accordingly devised a strategy that employed his formidable edge in numbers and materiel to move directly against Lee while at the same time menacing the Rebel army’s source of supplies and ensuring Washington’s safety. The Army of the Potomac would spearhead the offensive and move directly against the Confederate army while a second Union army, under Major General Franz Sigel, sliced south through the Shenandoah Valley west of Lee, depriving the Confederates of food and forage from the rich valley farms and threatening Lee’s western flank. At the same time, Major General Benjamin F. Butler’s Army of the James was to advance up the James River against Richmond and sever Lee’s supply lines. And Brigadier General George Crook, commanding the Union Army of West Virginia, was to move on Dublin, cutting the critical Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. Battered in front by the huge Potomac army, denied sustenance by the valley incursions, and harassed in the rear by Butler, Lee would finally be brought to bay. Grant’s plan was an intelligent exercise, carefully drawn to meet Halleck’s requirements and to escalate the war in the east to a swift conclusion.

Shortly after arriving in Washington, Grant met with Meade to gauge whether he should appoint a new general to head the Army of the Potomac. To Grant’s surprise, the hero of Gettysburg offered to step aside. Grant, however, decided to keep Meade on, decreeing that he would set broad strategic policy and coordinate the nation’s far-flung armies while Meade commanded the Army of the Potomac. “My instructions for that army were all through him,” Grant later wrote, “and were all general in their nature,

¹ Ulysses S. Grant to Henry W. Halleck, January 19, 1864, in United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 33, p. 395 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).

² Halleck to Grant, February 17, 1864, *ibid.*; OR, 32(2): 411.

leaving all the details and the execution to him.”³ The two men’s relationship, however, deteriorated quickly once the campaign began.

On April 1, Grant visited Fort Monroe, at the confluence of the James and York rivers, to confer with Butler about his role. When Meade started out against Lee from the north, Butler was to move along the James River’s southern bank against the Confederate capital. “Richmond is to be your objective point,” Grant stressed, “and that there is to be cooperation between your force and the Army of the Potomac, must be your guide.”⁴

Throughout April, Grant strengthened Meade’s army. Soldiers on furlough returned to their commands, new recruits swelled the ranks, and garrison troops from the North’s urban centers journeyed to the Virginia front. More men – Major General Ambrose E. Burnside’s IX Corps – joined Meade’s force, which had grown by the first week of May to nearly 120,000 soldiers. Meade’s quartermaster-general, Brigadier General Rufus Ingalls, rightfully boasted that “probably no army on earth ever before was in better condition in every respect than was the Army of the Potomac.”⁵

The Potomac army’s command structure, however, was an unruly arrangement, and Grant’s decision to accompany Meade in the campaign against Lee guaranteed a collision between his and Meade’s very different military temperaments. Willing to take risks, Lincoln’s new commander-in-chief would find himself hobbled by a more deliberate subordinate whose caution often ran counter to his own bold plans. The addition of Burnside’s IX Corps multiplied the complications. The portly New Englander had led the Army of the Potomac during its failed offensives around Fredericksburg in the bitter winter of 1862–3, and his commission as major general predated Meade’s. Grant’s awkward solution to this nightmare of military protocol was to let Burnside manage his corps as an independent command, with Grant coordinating Burnside’s and Meade’s movements.

Compounding the confusion was a recent reorganization of the Potomac army into three infantry corps headed by generals who had never before worked as a team. Major General Winfield S. Hancock, commanding the II Corps, would spend much of the ensuing campaign in an ambulance, his mind clouded by drugs to dull the pain from a wound he had received at Gettysburg; Major General John Sedgwick, heading the VI Corps, was “steady and sure,” a friend pegged him, but had difficulty adjusting to the fast-moving exercise envisioned by Grant and

3 Grant’s report, *OR*, 36(1): 18. 4 Grant to Benjamin F. Butler, April 2, 1864, *OR*, 33: 794–5.

5 Rufus Ingalls’s report, *OR*, 36(1): 276–8.

would be killed by a sharpshooter;⁶ and Major General Gouverneur K. Warren, leading the V Corps, was brilliant but flawed by an annoying habit of openly second-guessing his superiors. New to the army and to Meade was Major General Philip H. Sheridan, now commanding the cavalry corps and soon ensnared in a bitter feud with Meade over the proper role of the army's mounted arm.

The elements of his plan in place, Grant issued final instructions. Major General William T. Sherman was to move against the main Rebel army in the west, "break it up and get into the interior of the enemy's country as far as you can, inflicting all the damage you can against his war resources." Meade was to undertake the same role in the east, supported by Sigel, Crook, and Butler. "Lee's army will be your objective point," Grant reminded Meade. "Wherever Lee goes, there you will go also."⁷

The Confederacy's president Jefferson Davis recognized that the North's advantage in manpower and industry foreclosed the South from winning independence by military prowess. By staving off Union victories, however, he hoped to persuade the exhausted Union to let its defiant sister go. Lieutenant General James Longstreet, one of General Lee's corps commanders, put it simply. "If we can break up the enemy's arrangements early, and throw him back," predicted Longstreet, "he will not be able to recover his position nor his morale until after the Presidential election is over, and we shall then have a new President to treat with."⁸

The Confederacy's fate rested largely with Lee, whose victories during the past two years had made him a symbol of the rebellion's determined spirit. While Lee had fared poorly when he ventured outside of the Old Dominion – as witnessed by his reverses at Antietam and Gettysburg – he had proven formidable on his home turf. Lee's aristocratic bearing seemed strikingly at odds with Grant's more plebeian comportment, but the two men shared an aggressive military temperament. Like Grant, Lee was a master at offensive operations and had a talent for turning seemingly impossible situations his way. The inventive Confederate's most brilliant successes had been against armies that outnumbered him better than two to one, coincidentally the same numerical advantage that the Army of the Potomac held over him this spring. Lee's victories during the previous two years, however, had exacted

6 Charles A. Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1913), pp. 190–1.

7 Grant to George G. Meade, April 9, 1864, OR, 33: 828.

8 James Longstreet to Alexander Lawton, March 5, 1864, OR, 32(3): 588.

a painful toll in casualties, and replacements for fallen heroes were becoming harder to find. Time would tell whether the Army of Northern Virginia could repel the Union armies converging on Virginia before Grant's multipronged juggernaut ground the Rebels into submission.

By the end of April, Lee commanded nearly 65,000 soldiers. Facing an enemy almost twice as numerous and much better supplied than his own force, Lee nonetheless held important advantages. Most of his soldiers were veterans, and new men were generally assigned to seasoned outfits where they could fight alongside experienced troops. Lee's soldiers knew every road and path and displayed the élan of men defending their native soil. Each spring Union invaders had advanced on Richmond, only to be driven back. Reminiscing years later, one of Lee's former soldiers reflected that "The thought of being whipped never crossed my mind."⁹

The Army of Northern Virginia, like the Army of the Potomac, had three infantry corps heads with mixed blends of talents and flaws. These included Longstreet, Lee's "War Horse," fresh from an unsuccessful independent foray in Tennessee and commanding the 1st Corps; Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell, the eccentric, peg-legged 2nd Corps' commander, who seemed befuddled by Lee's deferential style of leadership; and Lieutenant General Ambrose P. Hill of the 3rd Corp, wracked by ill health and apparently overwhelmed by the responsibilities of high command. Closest to Lee was the flamboyant Major General James E. Brown "Jeb" Stuart, heading the army's cavalry. After a month of fighting Grant, only one of these generals – Hill, or "Little Powell," as the soldiers called him – would remain in the field.

As April turned to May, Lee recognized that Grant meant to initiate a major offensive in the Old Dominion. Ever aggressive, Lee preferred to seize the initiative, hoping that a Confederate victory might compel Lincoln to recall his forces to defend Washington. But food and fodder remained scarce, and Lee had no clue what route the Union leviathan on the Rappahannock's northern bank or Butler's force south of Richmond might take. He adopted a defensive strategy, resolving to assail the Army of the Potomac as soon as it ventured across the Rappahannock River, 60 miles north of Richmond. Ewell's and Hill's corps manned the Rappahannock fortifications, and Rebel cavalry prepared to sound an alarm if the Federals tried to sweep around the fortified river line. At the first hint of a hostile move, Lee meant to concentrate rapidly toward the enemy, catching him as he crossed the river or shortly afterward. Lee

9 Samuel D. Buck, *With the Old Confeds: Actual Experiences of a Captain in the Line* (Baltimore, MD: H. E. Houck, 1925), p. 102.

directed Longstreet to remain near Mechanicsville, a few miles south of Gordonsville and almost 15 miles south of Orange Court House, where he had ready access to rail lines leading to the valley and to Richmond.

Above all, Lee determined to avoid falling back. "If I am obliged to retire from this line," he predicted, referring to his hold on the country below the Rapidan, "either by flank movement of the enemy or want of supplies, great injury will befall us."¹⁰

In later years, popular historians touted Gettysburg as the Civil War's turning point. In fact, Union forces failed to follow up on the battle and failed to take a meaningful initiative for the next ten months. As a consequence, by the spring of 1864, Lee had largely repaired his Gettysburg losses. Entrenched below the Rapidan, he faced the Federals with only slightly fewer men than he had taken into Pennsylvania the previous year. Supplies were thin, but Lee's lean veterans would lose no battles because of hunger or shortages of ammunition, and their morale remained high.

15.1 The Battle of the Wilderness

Grant left Meade to devise the details of the Potomac army's movement against Lee. Rather than attacking the Rebels head-on across the Rapidan, Meade elected to slip downstream and cross to Lee's side of the river at Germanna and Ely's fords, circumventing Lee's strong defenses. The strategy, however, posed risks. After crossing the Rapidan, the Northerners would enter an inhospitable forest known as the Wilderness, whose tangled second growth made grand maneuvers impossible, rendered artillery useless, and confined cavalry to a few roads and blind trails. Yet the Federal brass decided to remain in the Wilderness until the army's ponderous supply wagons caught up. The assumption that Lee could not move quickly enough to ambush the Union army in the forest ranks among the war's egregious miscalculations.

After dark on May 3, two Union columns started toward the Rapidan fords. Brigadier General James H. Wilson's cavalry division, followed by Warren's V Corps, crossed at Germanna Ford, and 5 miles downriver, Brigadier General David M. Gregg's Union horsemen, followed by Hancock's II Corps, crossed at Ely's Ford. By mid-afternoon, Hancock's soldiers were settling into camps along the Wilderness's eastern reaches. A few miles west, near Wilderness Tavern, Warren's men lit their cooking fires, as did

¹⁰ Robert E. Lee to Jefferson Davis, April 15, 1864, *OR*, 33: 1282–3.

Sedgwick's troops to their immediate north. Burnside's independent command, bringing up the rear, camped above the Rapidan.

Lee faced a difficult decision. If he retreated, he would forfeit the initiative and diminish his room to maneuver. Taking the offensive was hazardous but offered the possibility of success. From Lee's position near Orange Court House, three roads – the Orange Turnpike, Orange Plank Road, and Catharpin Road – pointed east toward the Union army. Determined to strike Grant in the Wilderness, Lee thrust Ewell out the turnpike and Hill out Orange Plank Road, hoping to pin the Federals in the forest. Longstreet meanwhile was to slip below the forest's southern fringe and charge north into the exposed end of the enemy line. If all went as Lee planned, Grant stood to share the fate of his predecessor Major General Joseph Hooker, who had suffered defeat on this same ground almost exactly a year earlier.

Lee's plan was fraught with risk. Until Longstreet arrived, Ewell and Hill would each face a foe that outnumbered them better than three to one, and each would have to wage his own battle separated from the other by miles of intractable woodland. If Grant learned that Lee had divided his army, he could focus irresistible pressure against either Rebel wing, crush it, and then turn on the remaining wing. Under that grim scenario, the Army of Northern Virginia would collapse, Richmond would fall, and the Confederacy would be doomed.

Mistakes by Union cavalry aided Lee's strategy. Sheridan gave the critical assignment of patrolling the roads toward Lee to Wilson, his least experienced general heading his smallest division. Misunderstanding what was expected of him, Wilson mounted tentative probes toward the Confederates, found nothing, and camped for the evening. Undetected, Ewell and Hill crept to within a few miles of the Union army's encampments and bivouacked for the night.

Near daylight on May 5, Ewell and Hill launched their dual offensive, catching the Federals unprepared. Determined to regain the initiative, Grant ordered Meade to attack. Ewell repulsed Warren and Sedgwick on the turnpike, and combat flared for hours between antagonists invisible to one another in the dense spring foliage. Still hoping to break Lee's defenses, Meade ordered another assault, this time against Hill on the plank road, spearheaded by Hancock's corps and some of Sedgwick's men. But Hill's line held, and by nightfall, the soldiers of both armies lay entrenched within yards of one another.

Lee's boldness and the Union commanders' failure to coordinate their attacks had stymied the Federal offensive. Grant, however, now understood

Lee's troop dispositions and directed Meade to concentrate a massive onslaught against Hill on Orange Plank Road. Lee for his part expected Grant to renew his hammering and instructed Longstreet to shift to the plank road to support Hill.

Shortly after sunrise on May 6, Hancock drove Hill back through the woodland, and for a few breathless moments, it seemed as though Lee would be captured and his army defeated. In a dramatic reversal of fortune, Longstreet's corps arrived and repulsed the Federals, saving the Army of Northern Virginia. Assuming the offensive, the Confederates assailed Hancock's flank, repelled the Federals back to the Brock Road, and squeezed in two spirited attacks before dark.

Lee's aggressive response stymied Grant in the Wilderness, but the Union commander refused to concede defeat. Determined to recover the initiative, he directed Meade to shift south to Spotsylvania Court House, 10 miles below the Wilderness. The maneuver, Grant predicted, would place the Federals between Lee and Richmond, forcing Lee to abandon the Wilderness and fight on ground of Grant's choosing.

Shortly after dark on May 7, the Union juggernaut started south.

15.2 The Battles for Spotsylvania Court House

Lee was uncertain whether Grant meant to renew his hammering in the Wilderness; sidestep to Fredericksburg and press south along the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad; or perhaps march toward Spotsylvania Court House. Hedging his bets, Lee held his army in the Wilderness and sent his 1st Corps, now commanded by Lieutenant General Richard H. Anderson after Longstreet had been seriously wounded in the Wilderness, south along a makeshift trail hacked through the forest. Anderson marched until dawn, stopping a few miles northwest of Spotsylvania Court House.

Meanwhile Jeb Stuart's Confederate cavalry delayed the Union army's advance, fighting dismounted behind successive fence-rail barricades. Shortly after sunrise on May 8, Stuart ordered his fought-out riders to make a desperate stand along high ground called Laurel Hill, overlooking the Spindle family farm. Anderson's corps, Stuart learned, had bivouacked a short distance away, and soon Rebel infantry filled the gaps in Stuart's thin line.

Warren, assuming that the gray-clad forms on Laurel Hill belonged solely to Rebel cavalry, ordered an attack. The Spindle farm became a slaughter pen

as Confederates raked the advancing Union line with concentrated fire, stalling Warren's offensive. Grant's drive to take Spotsylvania Court House had failed.

Deploying Sedgwick on Warren's left, Meade ordered another attack near sundown. Ewell's Confederates, however, arrived in the nick of time to repel Sedgwick's offensive. The next day – May 9 – Burnside pushed the Federal line southeast, gaining the important Fredericksburg Road, and Hancock's troops hooked onto Warren's right, reaching west to the Po River. Lee slid Hill into position across from Burnside, and by afternoon on May 9, the armies were digging in, Grant's lines oriented south toward Spotsylvania Court House and Lee's troops looking north, barring the Union advance.

While the two armies faced off behind formidable earthworks, a simmering feud between Meade and Sheridan erupted into open warfare. Meade faulted Sheridan for failing to brush Stuart's horsemen aside during the advance toward Spotsylvania Court House, and Sheridan resented Meade's meddling in his management of the cavalry. The two men quarreled bitterly, and Meade reported Sheridan's insubordination to Grant, expecting Grant to support him. Exasperated over Meade's inability to beat Lee in the Wilderness or to win the race to Spotsylvania Court House, Grant sided with Sheridan.

With Grant's blessing, Sheridan headed south with the entire Union cavalry corps, expecting that Stuart would pursue. Events unfolded as Sheridan had predicted, and on May 11, he defeated Stuart's cavalry at Yellow Tavern, mortally wounding the Rebel cavalry chief. Lost in Sheridan's euphoria over his victory was the consequence of his absence at Spotsylvania Court House. Sheridan had left Grant blind, while Stuart had left Lee enough troopers to reconnoiter Union positions and screen the Confederate infantry. Grant's release of Sheridan with the Union cavalry arm was to cost the Federals dearly.

Grant meanwhile initiated a welter of assaults intended to break Lee's Spotsylvania line. Late on May 9, Hancock slipped around the western end of the Rebel army to attack the Confederate flank. Lee's left, however, was firmly anchored on a loop of the Po River, and darkness thwarted Hancock's maneuver. The Union II Corps settled in for an uneasy night, separated by the Po from the rest of the Army of the Potomac.

Lee pounced on the chance to gobble up the isolated Union corps. The next morning – May 10 – Confederates under Major General Jubal A. Early charged Hancock's Federals and forced them to make a costly retreat

across the Po. Hancock escaped, but the lesson was clear: the Army of Northern Virginia was full of fight, and its commander was as vigilant as ever.

Grant, however, was undeterred and ordered a massive offensive across Lee's entire front at 5:00 that evening. Once again, slipshod coordination thwarted his plan. First Hancock had to extricate himself from the Po and deploy on the western end of the Union formation. Then Warren once again launched an attack against Laurel Hill that deteriorated into a bloody repetition of his failed charges against the same objective on May 8, forcing headquarters to delay the army-wide offensive an hour to give Warren time to regroup.

The postponement threw another component of the intended offensive out of whack. A Confederate sharpshooter had killed Sedgwick on May 9, and the new VI Corps commander, Major General Horatio Wright, had adopted a proposal made by Colonel Emory Upton, one of his most aggressive officers. The trick to attacking Lee's daunting earthworks, Upton urged, was to secretly mass troops near the Rebel entrenchments and send them forward at a clip. By charging without stopping to fire, soldiers could overrun the entrenchments and cleave a breach large enough for a fresh force to exploit.

Impressed, Wright gave the colonel twelve handpicked regiments and incorporated the attack into the evening's battle plan. The supporting force consisted of a II Corps division under Brigadier General Gershom R. Mott. No one, however, alerted Mott that the assault was postponed, so promptly at 5:00 p.m., Mott's men started forward, only to be badly mauled by the Rebel defenders. An hour later, Upton, ignorant of Mott's repulse, launched his own attack. The charge succeeded, and Brigadier General George Doles's sector of Confederate line fell to Upton's troops. Mott's division, however, was no longer available to assist Upton, and fresh Confederate troops rushed to the endangered sector, driving Upton's men back to the Union lines. Upton's attack, like so many before it, failed because of mistakes by the Union high command.

Grant, however, had discovered a weakness in Lee's line. Near the center of the Rebel position, Lee's engineers had run the earthworks northward, then bent them southward into a large salient. Nearly half a mile wide and half a mile deep, the protrusion – dubbed the Mule Shoe – would be difficult for the Rebels to defend. Grant determined to send Hancock's 25,000 soldiers crashing into the Mule Shoe while two more corps – the IX on the left, and the VI on the right – assailed the Mule Shoe's sides, pinching off the huge bubble. Meanwhile Warren's

corps was to pound Anderson's Rebels on Laurel Hill to keep them from reinforcing the beleaguered Confederates in the Mule Shoe. After overrunning the salient and ripping Lee's line in half, the victorious Federals hoped to dispose of the Rebel army's remnants.

During the night of May 11, concealed by a blinding rainstorm, Hancock's troops slogged to the Brown family farm, half a mile from the Mule Shoe. Misinterpreting Confederate intelligence, Lee concluded that Grant was retreating and decided to remove artillery from the Mule Shoe and bring the guns back to good roads in his rear to pursue Grant. And so, while the Union army deployed to attack the Mule Shoe, Lee unwittingly weakened the very spot Grant had targeted.

As morning approached, Ewell, whose troops occupied the Mule Shoe, concluded that his line was in danger and asked for the artillery back. But before the guns could return, Hancock's troops attacked, clambered over the ramparts, and sent some 3,000 Confederate prisoners to the rear. Grant's plan was succeeding perfectly.

Riding into the Mule Shoe, Lee took control of the effort to repel the Federal hordes. He planned to hurry reinforcements into the salient to detain the Federal onslaught until he could construct a new defensive line along high ground to the rear. Fighting in the Mule Shoe raged unabated throughout May 12 and into the early morning of May 13. In one of the war's most brutal episodes, Confederates sent into the Mule Shoe by Lee held their ground for nearly twenty hours of face-to-face combat. Around 3:00 a.m. on May 13, Lee ordered the Mule Shoe's defenders back to the newly constructed line. As the sun rose over Spotsylvania County, Grant learned that Lee now confronted him from a position stronger than ever.

Stymied again, Grant strove to regain the initiative. During the stormy night of May 13–14, Warren and Wright made a forced march toward the Rebel army's unprotected right flank below Spotsylvania Court House. Muddy roads slowed their progress, and the Rebels seemed prepared, so Grant called off the attack. Later in the day, Lee shifted Anderson's 1st Corps from the left of his line to his right, blocking Warren's and Wright's planned offensive. The armies now faced each other in lines running generally north to south, with Lee still controlling the approaches to Spotsylvania Court House.

The rain stopped on May 17, and Grant decided to attack from the north. During the night of May 17–18, Wright returned to the blood-stained fields near the Mule Shoe, and at first light, he and Hancock charged toward Ewell's new line. Once again, Grant surprised Lee, but the ruse went for naught.

Secure behind earthworks, Ewell's artillery broke the assault. It was afterward said that Confederate infantrymen patted the smoking tubes of the guns with affection.

Grant concluded that Lee's Spotsylvania line was indeed impregnable. Bad news also arrived from other fronts. On May 15, Rebels under Major General John C. Breckinridge defeated Sigel at New Market, thwarting the Union offensive in the Shenandoah Valley. The next day, another Rebel force cobbled together by General Pierre G. T. Beauregard defeated Butler at Drewry's Bluff, near Richmond. Worried for his army's safety, Butler withdrew to Bermuda Hundred, in the angle formed by the confluence of the James and Appomattox rivers. The Army of the Potomac would have to defeat Lee without the expected support.

15.3 The North Anna Campaign

Undeterred, Grant devised yet another plan to entice Lee from his earthworks by sending Hancock on a march to the southeast, anticipating that Lee would try to snag the isolated Union corps. When Lee went for the bait, Grant would attack with the rest of his army, plunging down Telegraph Road to destroy whatever force Lee dispatched.

On the night of May 20, Hancock started his diversionary march, passing through Bowling Green and entrenching near Milford Station, 20 miles southeast of the armies. At the same time, Grant withdrew Warren's corps to Telegraph Road, where it waited to pounce on any force that Lee sent against Hancock. The next day, Lee learned of the Union movements and concluded that Grant intended to march south along Telegraph Road, the direct route to Richmond. To thwart Grant's expected move, Lee rushed Ewell east to Mud Tavern, where Telegraph Road crossed the Po.

Grant became increasingly concerned. He had heard nothing from Hancock – Rebel cavalry controlled the countryside toward Milford Station – and Ewell's Confederates were now entrenching across Telegraph Road, blocking the direct route to Richmond. Worried that Hancock might be in danger, Grant evacuated his Spotsylvania Court House lines, sending part of his army along Hancock's route through Bowling Green while the rest pushed south on Telegraph Road. Once again, a Union operation that had begun as an offensive thrust was assuming a decidedly defensive tone.

Nightfall saw a Union army in disarray. Near Milford Station, Hancock sparred with Confederates sent from Richmond to reinforce Lee.

On Telegraph Road, Burnside was halted by Ewell's defenses, turned around, and became entangled with Wright's corps, creating a messy traffic jam. Warren's corps meanwhile followed in Hancock's footsteps, stopping for the night at Guiney's Station.

Lee still had no clear idea of Grant's intentions, but signs increasingly pointed to a Union move south. The next defensive position was the North Anna River, 25 miles away, and Lee started in that direction. Without Sheridan's cavalry to gather intelligence, the Federals were blind to the fact that Lee was marching past his recumbent troops and let Lee's army slip by unhindered.

May 22 witnessed Lee's exhausted troops cross the North Anna and encamp south of the river, along the Virginia Central Railroad. Lee's concern was to protect the rail line, which served as an important link to the Shenandoah Valley.

Grant pushed south as well. On May 23, the Union army converged at Mount Carmel Church, a handful of miles above the North Anna River. Hancock's corps routed a brigade of South Carolinians at Chesterfield Bridge and entrenched along the river's northern bank; Burnside extended the Union line upriver from Hancock, securing the crossing at Ox Ford; and Warren's troops marched upriver to Jericho Mills, threw pontoon bridges across, and went into camp on the southern bank. Grant had breached the river line without a serious fight and had gained another opportunity to assail Lee outside of his entrenchments. Grant might not be winning battles, but his relentless blend of maneuver and attacks was edging Lee toward Richmond. While Grant had not achieved his objective of defeating and destroying Lee's army, it was beginning to appear as if he might achieve a comparable result by maneuvering Lee to Richmond and pinning the Confederate force in the Rebel capital's fortifications.

Learning that Federals had crossed at Jericho Mills, Lee ordered Hill to drive them back. The ailing corps commander, however, misjudged the size of the Union force and sent only one division, which was overwhelmed and retired to the Virginia Central Railroad.

Lee was in serious trouble. Part of Grant's army had crossed the river and was threatening his western flank. With Richmond only 25 miles behind him, Lee had little room for maneuver. That evening, Lee, his chief engineer, and several subordinate generals devised an ingenious plan to deploy the Army of Northern Virginia into a wedge-shaped formation, its apex touching the North Anna River at Ox Ford and its legs reaching back to anchor on strong

natural positions. When the Federals advanced, Lee's wedge would split Grant's army in two, affording the Confederates a strong defensive position and perhaps even permitting a counterattack. Lee's plan cleverly suited the military maxim favoring interior lines to the North Anna's topography.

The next morning, Grant mistakenly concluded that Lee was retreating and crossed the river in pursuit. Confined to his tent with dysentery, Lee could do little more than hope that his defensive line would hold. As evening came on, Grant discovered Lee's clever deployment and ordered his troops to start digging. Soon the Union army had entrenched, hugging close against the wings of Lee's wedge. Lee was locked in place, but his position remained too strong for Grant to attack. Stalemated once again, the hostile armies stared across at one another, pressed cheek by jowl south of the river.

15.4 Cold Harbor

For the third time, Lee had stymied Grant, and for the third time, Grant looked to maneuver to break the impasse. A short distance east of the armies, the North Anna merged with other rivers to form the Pamunkey. Grant decided to disengage from Lee under cover of darkness, cross to the river's northern bank, and sidle 30 miles southeast to Hanover town. The maneuver would bring the Union army 17 miles from Richmond, and provisions could be shipped in from Chesapeake Bay and unloaded at White House Landing, on the Pamunkey. A quick dash across the Pamunkey, and the Confederate capital would fall, bringing the war to a rapid close.

On the night of May 26–7, Grant stole across the North Anna and headed east. The next morning, Lee learned that Grant was gone and that Union infantry was appearing at Hanover town. Lee quickly marched to interpose between Grant and Richmond. On May 28, Union and Confederate mounted forces collided south of the Pamunkey at Haw's Shop in a battle that raged most of the day. Although Union cavalry ultimately gained possession of the field, Confederate horsemen led by Major General Wade Hampton succeeded in discovering the location of Grant's army while shielding Lee's whereabouts from Grant.

Lee's next move was to assume a strong defensive position along Totopotomoy Creek, a marshy stream that intersected Grant's route to Richmond. Union probes found the Rebels entrenched behind formidable works lining the creek's southern bank, and attempts to break the Confederate line failed. Once again, Grant faced the prospect of stalemate.

Federal fortunes brightened on May 30, when Warren crossed Totopotomoy Creek downstream from Lee and drove west toward the Rebels. Recognizing an opportunity to attack Warren's unsupported corps, Lee directed Early, who replaced Ewell and was now commanding the Confederate 2nd Corps, to attack Warren with his own troops and Anderson's 1st Corps. The offensive started well enough as Early's lead elements slammed into Warren. Anderson's Confederates, however, made little headway, and Early's attempt to turn Warren's flank ended in a bloody repulse for the Rebels. The grueling campaign seemed to have dulled the Army of Northern Virginia's offensive capacity.

Burnett's Tavern was a ramshackle wooden structure by a star-shaped intersection called Cold Harbor, a handful of miles below the armies. The place was to figure importantly in the campaign's next stage. By seizing the road junction, Grant stood to gain an unobstructed route to Richmond and a chance to strike Lee's flank and rear.

On the last day of May, Major General William F. "Baldy" Smith's XVIII Corps arrived from Bermuda Hundred to reinforce Meade. Both sides dispatched cavalry to reconnoiter, and a mounted engagement soon crackled around the crossroads. As the combat heated, Lee persuaded Beauregard to send Major General Robert F. Hoke's division from the Richmond defenses. By evening, Sheridan had driven the Rebel horsemen from the strategic crossroads. Hoke's division soon arrived and erected a defensive line west of the intersection, facing Sheridan.

Grant and Lee rushed more troops toward the emerging Cold Harbor front. During the night, Wright's corps headed for the intersection; orders went out for Smith to march there as well; and Lee directed Anderson to start south and join Hoke. All night, troops wearing blue and gray packed the roads in a race for Cold Harbor.

On the morning of June 1, Anderson's lead elements attacked Sheridan at Cold Harbor, only to be driven back by concentrated fire from the Union cavalrymen's repeating carbines. Forming next to Hoke, Anderson extended the Rebel formation northward. Soon Wright's corps tramped into Cold Harbor, and by late afternoon Smith's troops had arrived as well, deploying next to Wright.

By evening, Union and Confederate infantry confronted each other along a north-south axis. Around 6:30 p.m., anxious to maintain the initiative, Wright and Smith attacked and breached the Rebel line. Although darkness fell before the Federal commanders could achieve complete success, the

results were heartening to the men in blue. Each side had lost about 2,000 soldiers, but the Federals were well-positioned to exploit their gains.

Hoping to finally strike a killing blow, Grant hurried Hancock's corps toward Cold Harbor. But dark roads and an improvident shortcut delayed Hancock's march, and not until noon on June 2 did his winded men straggle into position. Grant decided to postpone the attack until June 3, a delay that would prove fatal, as Lee, now fully alerted to Grant's intentions, had time to shift more soldiers – Breckinridge's troops, recently arrived from the valley, and Hill's corps – to the Cold Harbor sector. All day, the Rebels prepared for the expected Union assault.

Grant's decision to attack Lee's formidable entrenchments on the morning of June 3 has provoked strong criticism. The general's assessment, however, was grounded in a sober appraisal of the situation. Grant believed that constant marching and fighting had severely weakened Lee's army. After all, Lee had failed to take the offensive at the North Anna, had permitted Grant to cross the Pamunkey unopposed, had fumbled at Bethesda Church, and had almost been overwhelmed on June 1. The Rebel army, it seemed, was a depleted force, ripe for plucking.

The Army of the Potomac was flush with fresh troops from Washington and with Smith's XVIII Corps. Delaying made no sense; more time would only give the Rebels a chance to bring up reinforcements. Moreover, the Republican convention was about to convene; what better gift could Grant offer President Lincoln than the destruction of the main Confederate army and the capture of Richmond? Aggressive by nature, Grant decided to proceed. If the offensive worked, the rewards would be tremendous; failure would simply represent another reverse in a campaign filled with reverses, and Grant would try another tack. In short, the consequences of forfeiting the opportunity for quick victory seemed worse than attacking and failing.

Grant's plan called for an army-wide offensive across a 6-mile front. Meade was responsible for overseeing the assault but resented his subordinate position and thoroughly disapproved of Grant's hard-hitting tactics. He expressed his discontent by doing little; the record reveals no efforts to reconnoiter, coordinate the corps, or tend to the things that diligent generals ordinarily do before sending troops against fortified lines. The victims of Grant's and Meade's untidy command relationship would be the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac.

At 4:30 a.m. on June 3, the Union army's southern wing – Smith's, Wright's, and Hancock's corps – advanced under a deadly hail of lead. Hancock

achieved a brief breakthrough but was quickly expelled. Wright's troops advanced a short distance and began digging in, and in Smith's sector, three brigades marched into a pocket lined with rebel muskets and cannon and sustained horrific casualties. The attack ended in under an hour. Later in the morning, Warren and Burnside made disjointed, unsuccessful attacks in the battlefield's northern sector. By noon, Grant adjudged the offensive a failure and called it off.

The Union assault at Cold Harbor was a disaster, although stories of fields strewn with blue-clad corpses convey a distorted impression of actual losses. Some sectors saw massive slaughter, but along much of the battle line, Union losses were minor, and many Confederates had no idea that an offensive had even been attempted. Historians have suggested that 7,500 to well over 12,000 Union casualties were incurred in a few terrible minutes. A careful analysis of the units engaged, however, suggests that the grand charge at Cold Harbor generated more like 3,500 Union casualties. Total Union casualties for the entire day approximated 6,000; Confederate losses were about 1,500.

Conceding the futility of further frontal assaults, Grant directed the Union commanders to try and advance their lines by "regular approaches." For the next few days, Federal engineers pressed their entrenchments closer to the Confederate works. Localized skirmishes were common, and sharpshooters plied their deadly trade. After a tragic set of delays and misunderstandings, Grant and Lee on June 7 finally negotiated a truce to remove the dead and wounded. For most of the injured soldiers lying between the armies, the truce came too late. "I have always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made," Grant wrote years later in his memoirs, conceding that "No advantage whatever was gained to compensate for the heavy loss we sustained."¹¹

Looking to break the impasse at Cold Harbor, Grant again turned to maneuver, this time with an eye to severing Lee's supply lines. "Without a greater sacrifice of human life than I am ready to make," he wrote Halleck on June 5, "all cannot be accomplished that I had designed outside of [Richmond]."¹² His new plan was to dispatch Sheridan's cavalry north of Richmond, wrecking the Virginia Central Railroad and perhaps severing the James River Canal in cooperation with Major General David Hunter's forces in the Shenandoah Valley operating against Lynchburg. A second component involved cutting the flow of Confederate supplies from Petersburg to

¹¹ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Webster and Co., 1885), vol. 11, p. 276.

¹² Grant to Halleck, June 5, 1864. OR, 36(3): 598.

Richmond. Butler's Army of the James was well positioned at Bermuda Hundred to execute that operation, especially if supported by all or part of Meade's forces.

Over the ensuing week, Grant honed his plan. He determined to reinforce Butler with Smith's XVIII Corps, which would move directly on Petersburg while the rest of the Potomac army disengaged from Lee and marched south across the James River. Once Petersburg was in Union hands, Lee would have no choice but to abandon his Cold Harbor defenses and seek a new source of supplies, most likely fleeing west toward Lynchburg. Grant intended to follow and pounce on the retreating Rebels. He recognized the movement as "hazardous," since the Potomac army's withdrawal would free Lee to attack Butler and to send reinforcements to Hunter in the valley. But he believed that his plan offered a likelihood of victory that fairly compensated for the dangers of leaving Lee temporarily untended. "The move had to be made," he later claimed.¹³

During the ensuing week, while the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia sparred like two boxers warily searching for openings, Grant prepared for the move. The Army of the Potomac contracted south toward the Chickahominy River, and two of Grant's aides reconnoitered the James to locate the ideal crossing. Preparations were made to shift the army's supply base from White House Landing on the Pamunkey to City Point, where the James and Appomattox Rivers converged. Union headquarters requisitioned boats and bridging material for constructing a massive pontoon bridge across the James. Instructions went to the navy to ensure that the James remained free from Confederate ironclads that might interfere with the operation.

Grant set the night of June 12 for Meade's withdrawal from Cold Harbor. The trick was to conceal the departure behind an impenetrable screen of cavalry and infantry and to dash across the Chickahominy before Lee could react. Grant had successfully executed disengagements of comparable difficulty after impasses in the Wilderness, at Spotsylvania Court House, and at the North Anna River. This time, however, Lee expected precisely the maneuver Grant had in mind and had posted cavalry along the Chickahominy to sound the alarm the moment the Union army set off.

In broad outline, Grant's final plan was for the Union force to advance to the James in four coordinated columns. Warren was to screen the grand maneuver from Lee by crossing the Chickahominy at Long Bridge and

¹³ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, vol. II, pp. 280–1.

swinging west, blocking Lee's approaches to the moving columns. Hancock was to follow Warren across Long Bridge and push south, while Wright and Burnside were to cross the Chickahominy 9 miles downriver at Jones's Bridge. A third column, comprised of Smith's corps, was to slide east to the Pamunkey, board transports at White House Landing, and travel by the Pamunkey, York, and James Rivers back to Bermuda Hundred. A fourth column with the army's wagon trains was to proceed east of the infantry and cross the Chickahominy downriver from Jones's Bridge. In sum, Grant anticipated that two days of rapid marching would see Smith rejoining Butler while the Potomac army crossed the James. When the XVIII Corps reached Bermuda Hundred, it would be ideally positioned for a swift and unexpected assault against the city.

Lee meanwhile was busy reacting to developments in the Shenandoah Valley. On June 6, Hunter's Federals captured Staunton, threatening Lynchburg and the rest of the valley. Lee immediately released Breckinridge's division to counter Hunter and on June 12 instructed Early to head for the valley with his entire corps. Early would be sorely missed at Cold Harbor, but Lee calculated that Lynchburg's fall and the permanent disruption of supplies from the valley were disasters that he could not survive. Unknown to Lee, he was dramatically weakening the Army of Northern Virginia on the very eve of Grant's grand maneuver.

After dark on June 12, the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac quietly withdrew from their entrenchments and marched off on their assigned routes. By midnight, Union cavalry had brushed aside their Confederate counterparts at Long Bridge, and Union engineers were busy constructing a pontoon bridge across the Chickahominy. Early on the 13th, while the rest of the army's units pursued their assigned routes, Warren's men pushed west out the Long Bridge Road to the Riddell's Shop intersection, barring the approaches from Lee's army.

Although Lee anticipated Grant's possible maneuver south, the Union withdrawal caught him by surprise. Shortly after sunrise, as word arrived that the Federal trenches were empty, Lee put his diminished army in motion, crossing the Chickahominy and angling toward Riddell's Shop to intercept the Union advance. Warren's lead elements, assisted by Union cavalry, fought a stubborn delaying action, pinning Lee in place at Riddell's Shop and nearby White Oak Swamp. By sundown, Lee had posted his troops in an arc running from the swamp to Malvern Hill, manned by his two remaining corps under Hill and Anderson. If Grant intended to loop back toward Richmond, Lee was positioned to block him.

Grant, however, had no intention of attacking Richmond. That evening, Hancock's troops filed into camps near Charles City Court House, where they were joined the next day by the rest of the Potomac army. Screened by Wilson's cavalry, Hancock on June 14 started across the James by ferry while Union engineers constructed a 1,250-foot pontoon bridge over the river at the Weyanoke peninsula. The Army of the Potomac's troops, exhausted by some forty days of marching and fighting, reveled in the richness of the James River plantations. "Where we bivouacked was a delightful part of Virginia, almost a garden, and the most fertile and luxuriant we have seen," a Union infantryman recalled. Noted another: "Almost every house where an army goes is cleaned out of eatibles."¹⁴

The story of Grant's failed attempt to take Petersburg is described in the ensuing chapter on the Petersburg campaign (see Chapter 19). Smith's offensive on June 15 failed to capture the town, as did a welter of Union attacks over the ensuing three days. The Overland campaign from the Rapidan to the James came to a close, and the Petersburg campaign began. The fighting in Virginia would continue for almost ten more blood-stained months.

During the forty-two days that comprised the Overland campaign, Grant's strength was his unwavering adherence to his strategic objective of neutralizing Lee's army. While he frequently stumbled, the overall pattern of his campaign was that of an innovative general employing thoughtful combinations of maneuver and force to bring a difficult adversary to bay. Lee's strength was his resilience and the fervent devotion that he inspired in his men. He, too, made mistakes, often misreading Grant and placing his smaller army in peril, only to devise creative solutions that turned the tables on his adversary. In many respects, the generals exhibited similar traits. Each favored offensive operations and were willing to take risks; each labored under handicaps, although of different sorts; and each was bedeviled by subordinates who often seemed incapable of getting things right. Grant and Lee were about as evenly matched in military talent as any two opposing generals have ever been.

Casualties on both sides were horrific. Grant lost about 55,000 men, and Lee about 33,000. Measuring losses against the respective sizes of the armies at the campaign's outset – Lee had about 65,000 men, and Grant some 120,000 – Lee's subtractions exceeded 50 percent of his initial force, while

14 William H. Powell, *History of the Fifth Army Corps* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), p. 696; Margery Greenleaf (ed.), *Letters to Eliza from a Union Soldier, 1862–1865* (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1970), p. 103.

Grant's were about 45 percent. While Grant's relentless style of combat generated heavy casualties, in some respects the general was less reckless with his soldiers' lives than his predecessors had been. Unlike them, who disengaged after their battles and left Lee to repair his losses, Grant followed up his fights with a vengeance. As assistant secretary of war Charles Dana remarked, "Grant in eleven months secured the prize with less loss than his predecessors suffered in failing to win it during a struggle of three years." Moreover, although each army received substantial reinforcements during the campaign, Grant's capacity to augment his force was vastly greater than Lee's. Simple arithmetic suggested that Grant would ultimately prevail.

If the commanders are scored by tactical successes, Lee holds a slight edge. Although consistently outnumbered, he thwarted Grant's offensives at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Court House, the North Anna River, Totopotomoy Creek, and Cold Harbor. But if the campaign is viewed in terms of which general came closest to realizing his overall strategy, Grant comes out ahead. Despite tactical reverses, he never considered himself defeated and relentlessly pursued his objective of nullifying Lee's army. The Rebel commander's grand objective was to hold the line of the Rapidan, and he failed; Grant's goal was to negate Lee's army as an effective fighting force, and in that he largely succeeded. In little over a month, Grant broke Lee's offensive capacity and locked the Army of Northern Virginia behind the earthworks protecting Richmond and Petersburg. While Grant had not destroyed Lee's army as he had intended, he had gutted the Rebel force's offensive capacity and seriously diminished its ability to affect the outcome of the war.

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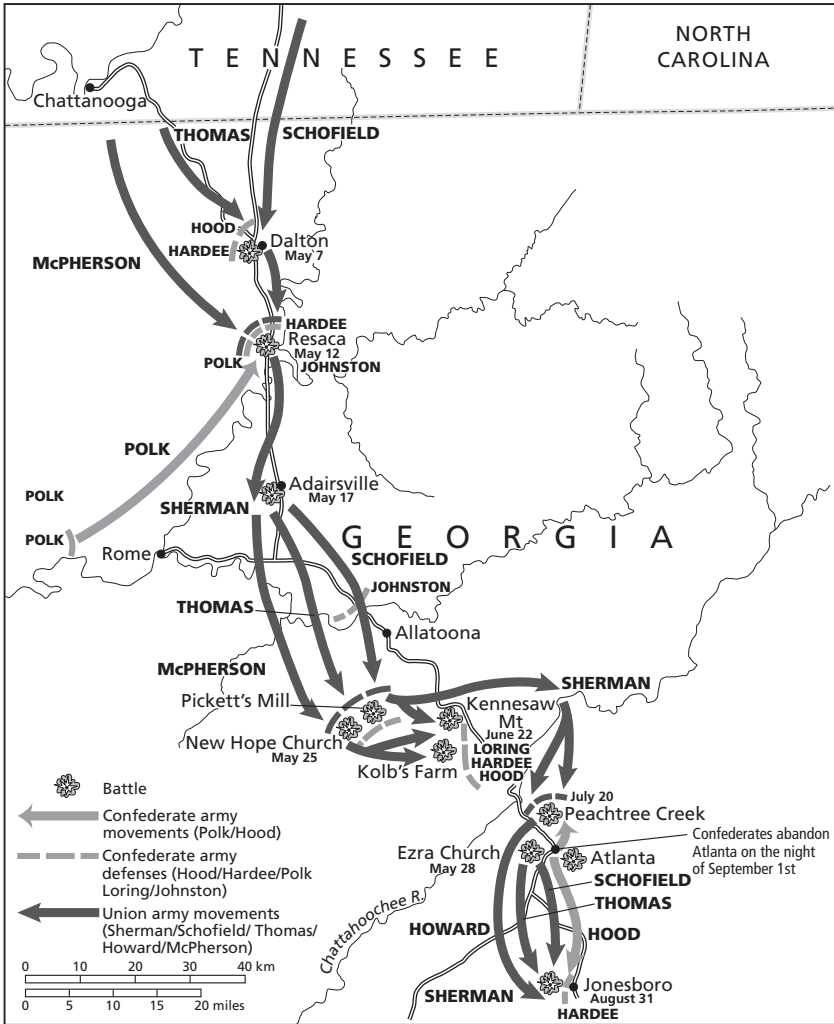
The Georgia Campaign

ROBERT L. GLAZE

In the last eight months of 1864 Union general William Tecumseh Sherman conducted some of the Civil War's most significant military operations. When the general invaded Georgia in May, the Union war effort was in doubt, war weariness was ubiquitous in the North, the Lincoln administration's days were seemingly numbered, and Confederate victory appeared a likely possibility. When the general captured Savannah at year's end, Lincoln had secured reelection, the Empire State of the South had been gutted, and the Rebels had allowed their last viable chance at independence to slip through their grasp. Due to Sherman's victories in Georgia, first during the Atlanta campaign (May 7–September 2, 1864) and then during his storied "March to the Sea" (November 15–December 21, 1864), the ultimate triumph of Union armies was all but guaranteed as the sun set on 1864.

Federal victory, however, was far from guaranteed during the year's early months. As their respective armies prepared for active campaigning in spring 1864 both the Union and the Confederacy found their war efforts at a crossroads. With the forthcoming Northern presidential elections looming in November, the South believed that a decisive battlefield victory, or at the very least avoiding a significant disaster, would lead to Abraham Lincoln's defeat at the polls. Then, with a Democrat in the White House, the Rebels could sue for an end to the war and, with it, independence. Conversely, Republicans believed that if Union armies emerged triumphant in forthcoming campaigns Northern war weariness would abate, Lincoln would be reelected, and the Union war effort would continue until the South surrendered.

To achieve ultimate victory, Lincoln tasked his recently promoted general-in-chief, Ulysses S. Grant, with devising Northern strategy for 1864. By the war's third year, leaders on both sides had all but surrendered their desire to achieve a climactic victory over the enemy's army. Civil War armies, as generals finally learned, were simply too large and too numerous to accomplish that Napoleonic goal. Grant, in turn, envisioned five simultaneous advances against



16.1 The Georgia campaign. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

various Rebel armies that would ultimately exhaust the Confederacy's war effort. One of the most significant wings of this operation took place in northern Georgia as William T. Sherman's massive 110,000-man army group prepared to march south out of Chattanooga to move against Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate Army of Tennessee, bivouacked in Dalton, Georgia. Sherman's force contained James B. McPherson's Army of the Tennessee, George

Thomas's Army of the Cumberland, and John M. Schofield's Army of the Ohio. Although Sherman's primary mission was to prevent Johnston's army from reinforcing that of Robert E. Lee in Virginia, Grant's mandate to his favorite lieutenant also ordered him to strike at the South's war resources. Sherman, for his part, was determined to accomplish these goals while also waging war on home-front morale. Once the campaign was underway, his goals broadened to include the capture of Atlanta – the second most important city in the Confederacy behind Richmond. Consequently, Sherman's Georgia campaigns would wage physical and psychological warfare against the Rebels.

While Sherman's record as field commander was checkered, he possessed superb strategic vision and realized that the forthcoming campaign would have both military and political ramifications. Luckily for the Union cause, Sherman also possessed the steely determination necessary to triumph in a lengthy and, at times, indecisive campaign. In the midst of his effort to capture the Gate City, Sherman wrote to Grant: "Let us give these southern fellows all the fighting they want . . . Any signs of let up on our part is sure to be falsely construed and for this reason I always remind them that the siege of Troy lasted six years and Atlanta is a more valuable town than Troy."¹ Luckily for Sherman, he also enjoyed the confidence and support of both Grant and Lincoln and his efforts in Georgia would be aided by capable subordinates and veteran soldiers who had experienced little but victory in the western theater. Georgia was also hardly a foreign land to Sherman as he had spent significant time in the state during the 1840s. Furthermore, Sherman's soldiers were increasingly armed with the most cutting-edge weapons – Spencer rifles, carbines, and Henry repeating rifles.

Conditions in the Confederate army were far less promising. While Joseph E. Johnston possessed a superb reputation, his record as field commander was characterized by indecision, egoism, and insubordination. Moreover, he had only recently inherited command of the Army of Tennessee – a hardscrabble force that had known little but defeat. Since the war's beginning the army had operated under generals that were incapable, irascible, and insubordinate. The preceding November the army, then commanded by Braxton Bragg, suffered a disastrous defeat at the Battle of Chattanooga, forcing it to retreat into north Georgia. Although Johnston did much to improve the army's discipline and morale, when campaigning began his army was still plagued by chaos

1 William T. Sherman, *Sherman's Civil War: Selected Correspondence of William T. Sherman: 1860–1865*, Brooks D. Simpson and Jean V. Berlin (eds.), (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 684.

in the high command. Johnston also suffered the scorn and distrust of his commander-in-chief – Confederate president Jefferson Davis. Relations between the two men had been strained since 1861 when Davis promoted other officers ahead of Johnston. Furthermore, unlike his Union counterpart, Johnston either could not, or would not, acknowledge the larger political significance of the Atlanta campaign. In command of 54,000 men, he was also outnumbered two to one; these Rebel soldiers would be armed with the same muzzle-loading rifles they had used the whole war. Most men at the time, however, seemed to be unaware of the technological superiority of the Union army. The Army of Tennessee's primary asset at the outset of the Atlanta campaign was north Georgia's geography – an asset it soon squandered.

As Sherman invaded north Georgia on May 4, he opted to travel along his primary supply line – the Western and Atlantic Railroad, which ran from Chattanooga to Atlanta. Against the wishes of Jefferson Davis, Johnston, largely due to his numerical inferiority, adopted a defensive posture in hopes that his adversary would launch costly frontal assaults. Indeed, from the Rebels' perspective, the rugged terrain in north Georgia seemed to favor the defensive. However, when Sherman encountered Johnston's army dug in along Rocky Face Ridge in Dalton he refused to squander his men in an attack. Instead, setting a precedent he would repeat numerous times over the coming months, Sherman ordered a portion of his army to demonstrate in Johnston's front, while McPherson's Army of the Tennessee was sent on a march through the undefended Snake Creek Gap to gain the enemy's left flank. With his flank threatened, Johnston ordered his army to retreat southward to Resaca.

On arriving at Resaca, Johnston received reinforcements in the form of a corps under Leonidas Polk. These reinforcements from Mississippi joined Johnston's other two corps – commanded by William J. Hardee and John Bell Hood. Nevertheless, Johnston repeated his earlier tactic and ordered his army to dig in and await a frontal assault. In the face of a numerically superior enemy army, Johnston's Fabian tactics were, on one hand, wise. The general realized he had little to gain in going on the offensive against Sherman's massive army, his retreats were well-conducted, and he was, to some extent, slowing Sherman's advance southward. On the other hand, the continual loss of Southern territory was detrimental to Confederate morale. Moreover, Jefferson Davis's patience with his general waned with every mile the enemy got closer to Atlanta. At Resaca, Sherman too opted to repeat his earlier maneuver and ordered McPherson to go around the enemy's left while

Thomas and Schofield probed its front. With his flank once again threatened, Johnston ordered his army to retreat to Cassville, about 25 miles south of Resaca.

At Cassville Johnston was given his greatest opportunity to deal Sherman a climactic blow. Because of the sheer size of Sherman's army group the Federal general had no choice but to divide his forces and pursue the retreating Rebels along three routes. Realizing he had an opportunity to attack one of Sherman's isolated columns, Johnston decided to make a stand at Cassville. However, when one of the Rebel corps commanders – John Bell Hood – reported the unexpected arrival of Federal cavalry in his rear, the ever-cautious Johnston called off the attack and ordered his army to retreat across the Etowah River toward Allatoona. Not only did the Army of Tennessee's retrograde movement continue, but Johnston allowed his pursuers to cross the river uncontested, missing another opportunity to strike at the Northern army while it was divided.

At Allatoona, the Rebel army dug in and assumed another strong defensive position, one that Sherman again refused to attack. For the first time during the campaign, however, Sherman detached from the Western and Atlantic Railroad, sending a significant portion of his army westward into the countryside in an effort to outflank Johnston's army. In response, Johnston sidled his line to the left. These maneuvers resulted in two localized Confederate victories. On May 25, a portion of Sherman's army under Joseph Hooker attacked Hood's Confederate soldiers at New Hope Church and were repulsed. Two days later, at Pickett's Mill, Sherman ordered Oliver O. Howard's corps to attack Johnston's right flank. Confederates under Patrick Cleburne easily defeated Howard's poorly executed attack. Despite these tactical Rebel victories, Sherman maintained the initiative, and with it, his southward movements.

Johnston, while still unwilling to assume a more offensive posture, was determined to remain between his enemy and Atlanta. After ordering his army to dig in around Marietta, Johnston pleaded with Richmond to send him reinforcements. Namely, he wanted Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry transferred to his command where it could operate against Sherman's supply line. The Confederate War Department refused, pointing out that such a move would leave Mississippi, where Forrest was then located, open to further Union incursions. Moreover, Johnston seemed to be unwilling to send his own cavalry, commanded by Joseph Wheeler, on such a mission. For his part, Sherman, who had long found Forrest to be a thorn in his side, was ensuring that the Rebel cavalryman had his hands full in Mississippi.

Ultimately nothing came of Johnston's pleas. Moreover, Sherman, aware that the Western and Atlantic was his army's lifeline, devoted many resources to protecting his supply line.

The campaign, due to several days of nearly endless rainfall, entered a period of relative inactivity for the first couple weeks of June. His efforts stymied by the weather, Sherman grew increasingly impatient of the indecisive nature of the Atlanta campaign's early stages. On June 27, Sherman surrendered to the temptation of achieving a climactic breakthrough and, convinced Johnston had stretched his lines too thin, ordered his men to attack a wing of the Rebel army, which was entrenched along a series of ridges between Marietta and Big Shanty (now Kennesaw). In a series of futile frontal assaults, Sherman's army was handily defeated at the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain. Although he considered attempting another series of charges, his subordinates convinced him of the futility of such efforts. This engagement – Sherman's greatest mistake of the campaign – resulted in 3,000 Union casualties, while the Rebels lost only 700 men.

Sherman, confronted with the futility of attacking an entrenched enemy, resumed his flanking strategy in the days following Kennesaw Mountain. Despite the armies inching ever-closer to Atlanta, Johnston resumed his retreat, this time ordering his men to dig in along the northern shore of the Chattahoochee River – the last river separating Sherman and Atlanta. Johnston hoped Sherman would repeat his previous error and attack, but Union soldiers discovered several points to Johnston's right where they could cross the river and threaten the Rebels' flank without having to offer battle. Johnston, again on the retreat, was confronted by Jefferson Davis. The Confederate president demanded to know Johnston's plan for saving Atlanta, which the general refused to share – if indeed such plans existed. In early July, the Confederate government began evacuating wounded soldiers from the city's medical facilities. Atlanta's newspapers soon abandoned the city as well. Once Sherman crossed the Chattahoochee in early July, Atlantans, convinced they were about to be abandoned to the Yankees' mercy, began to panic.

With Sherman's army approaching the gates of Atlanta, Johnston refusing to make a stand, and civilians clamoring for action Jefferson Davis made one of the most controversial decisions of the war. On July 17 Davis sent Johnston a telegram informing him to turn command of the Army of Tennessee over to John Bell Hood. A number of Confederate authorities suggested that Davis delay the change in command. Even Hood, despite having covertly campaigned for Johnston's job for several weeks, joined the chorus of voices

calling for Johnston's maintenance. Replacing a commanding general in the midst of a campaign was a gamble but from Davis's perspective he had little choice. Over the course of two months Johnston had allowed Sherman's army to advance from Chattanooga to Atlanta without offering any serious opposition. Confederate morale, especially among civilians in Atlanta, declined with each of Johnston's retreats. The city was both practically and symbolically important to the Confederate war effort. It contained much-needed war industries and was the last remaining rail link between Virginia and the western Confederacy. Moreover, Johnston refused to maintain regular communication with his commander-in-chief or to modify his Fabian policy. While after the war Johnston insisted that he was preparing to turn the tables on Sherman, there is no contemporary evidence suggesting that he would have done anything but continue to retreat.

John Bell Hood was an officer of undeniable personal bravery. Losing the use of an arm at Gettysburg and having a leg amputated following a wound at Chickamauga, Hood, by 1864, was one of the most popular generals in the South. While he served in Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia for the first two years of the war Hood had earned a reputation as an aggressive, if sometimes reckless, brigade and division commander. Promoted to lieutenant general in 1864, his record as corps commander during the Atlanta campaign was more dubious. Reckless aggression, while sometimes an asset to a brigadier general, could be a liability for a corps commander. During his convalescence in Richmond, Hood gained the ear of Jefferson Davis and other influential politicians. In the midst of the Atlanta campaign, he used these connections to lobby for Johnston's job. For decades historians insisted that Hood became addicted to laudanum following his return to service in 1864; however, there is little evidence supporting this claim. Hood idolized his former commander and was determined to lead his army with Lee's characteristic audacity. Unfortunately for Hood, he was commanding the Army of Tennessee, not its superior sister army in Virginia.

Jefferson Davis's expectations lined up well with Hood's unapologetically aggressive command style. The general was expected to make a stand for Atlanta and, in that respect, Hood did not disappoint. When Hood took command, Sherman's army was approaching the city from three different directions. With the enemy army group divided, Hood sensed an opportunity to attack the Federal forces in detail. George Thomas's Army of the Cumberland, approaching the city from the north, was the first of Sherman's armies to fall into Hood's crosshairs. Hoping to attack Thomas while his army forded Peachtree Creek, Hood ordered his army to attack at 1:00 p.m.

on July 20. However, overly complex plans and miscommunication between Hood and his lieutenants led to a delay. Thus, Thomas's men were able to cross the creek and set up defensive positions before the Rebel attack began. The subsequent clumsy and piecemeal Confederate attack was repulsed.

Despite failure at the Battle of Peachtree Creek, Hood again went on the offensive – further showing that he was no Joe Johnston. Focusing his attention on McPherson's Army of the Tennessee approaching from the east, Hood once again drew inspiration from his experience in Virginia and ordered a complex flanking maneuver. But like at Peachtree Creek Hood failed to recognize his army's limitations and the Confederate attack was late and uncoordinated; the July 22 Battle of Atlanta ended in yet another Confederate defeat. Major General McPherson, one of Sherman's favorite lieutenants, however, was killed during the engagement and command of his army descended to Oliver O. Howard.

Following the Battle of Atlanta, Sherman ordered Howard's army to march to the northwest to threaten the city from a different direction. Although Hood's response was delayed, he sent General Stephen D. Lee's corps to intercept the approaching Federals at Ezra Church. The rapidity of Howard's advance, however, caught Lee by surprise. In a desperate attempt to halt the Union advance, Lee ordered a reckless and premature attack that was easily and bloodily repulsed. In the span of nine days, Hood had ordered his army to attack Sherman three different times. While the general fulfilled his promise of going on the offensive, it cost his army 13,000 casualties while Sherman lost only 6,000 men.

After the Battle of Ezra Church, morale within the Army of Tennessee plummeted. Postwar sources insist that Johnston's replacement with Hood was greeted with near universal derision among the enlisted men but wartime correspondence reveals a more nuanced picture of soldiers' opinions of Hood. While he was never as beloved among the rank and file as was his predecessor, many soldiers – tired of constantly retreating – had welcomed Hood's ascendance. So excited were they to be going on the offensive, some of Hood's men even interpreted the battles at Peachtree Creek and Atlanta as victories. Nevertheless, faced with the bloodletting at Ezra Church and the specter of a protracted siege, the Rebel soldiery began turning against its commander. Further wounding Confederate morale, one by one the four railroads supplying Atlanta were severed by Federal forces.

Despite the loss of Rebel life and the poor morale in his enemy's army, Sherman had yet to achieve what had become his ultimate goal in the campaign – the capture of Atlanta. The city itself was encircled by 11 miles

of fortifications and earthworks manned by both Hood's soldiers and men from the Georgia State Militia. While Hood (and earlier Johnston) was grateful for the extra manpower, little camaraderie existed between the Confederate and state troops, with the former labeling the latter as rank amateurs who had no business brandishing a rifle. Instead of assaulting Hood's lines around Atlanta, Sherman opted to place the Gate City under siege. While the Union army was not large enough to wrap around the city's entire perimeter, Sherman still ordered his artillery to bombard both Hood's lines and the city itself. Giving Atlantans no warning, Sherman – hoping to distract Hood from Union movements, hurt Rebel morale, and curtail Atlanta's industrial production – subjected the city to five weeks of shelling. Besieged and without newspapers, Atlantans were now cut off from the outside world. Moreover, municipal government had all but ceased to function and the army was the only viable authority in the city. By late July, only about 3,000 civilians (of the city's wartime population of 22,000) remained in the city. Despite the vigor of the bombardment, noncombatant casualties remained remarkably low – only twenty civilians died in the siege.

While the Atlanta campaign had, thus far, gone in the Union's favor, it had not provided the stimulus necessary to boost Northern morale. Although Johnston's retreats weakened Confederate spirits, white Southerners proved to be remarkably optimistic during the summer of 1864. Their two most important cities were still standing unoccupied and their primary field armies were all still actively campaigning. Conversely, Northern morale sagged as the campaign season continued. While many Yankees were ebullient when Grant took charge of their armies, their enthusiasm waned in the wake of astronomical casualties in Virginia and his failure to defeat Lee or conquer Richmond. Sherman's campaign in Georgia garnered only a fraction of the casualties that his commander's efforts further north accumulated, but the fact remained that Atlanta had yet to fall.

Having failed to pound Hood's army into submission, Sherman set his sights on the Macon and Western Railroad – the only rail line still supplying the Rebels in the city. Hoping to repeat earlier successful cavalry raids, Sherman dispatched horsemen under Edward C. McCook and George Stoneman to sever the supply line. Unfortunately for the Federals, both of these expeditions were defeated by Confederate cavalry under Major General Joseph Wheeler. On August 25, realizing his cavalry could not muster the force necessary to accomplish his goal, Sherman ordered the majority of his army to march southeast toward Jonesboro.

Hood's army, already stretched thin trying to protect the city, could not effectively counter Sherman's maneuver. Still, in a desperate effort to stave off disaster, Hood ordered Hardee's corps to attack. Drastically outnumbered, the Rebels were easily defeated at the Battle of Jonesboro. His army battered and broken and his last remaining supply line in enemy hands, Hood had no choice but to evacuate Atlanta on September 1. As the Army of Tennessee abandoned the city, it set fire to a massive ammunition train to prevent it from falling into Union hands, damaging valuable civilian infrastructure. Mayor James Calhoun surrendered Atlanta to Sherman the next day as the Union army claimed its prize. With that, the Confederacy's second most important city, with its valuable industries, strategic location, and symbolic value, fell to Union hands. In early September, Sherman – planning on gutting the city's industry and infrastructure – expelled the majority of Atlantans from their city. In doing so, he hoped to avoid having to garrison the city, thus saving him precious manpower. Although not without precedent, this forced exile of a civilian population reflected Washington's evolving hard-war policy. Over the duration of the Atlanta campaign, the Union and Confederate armies suffered 37,000 and 32,000 casualties, respectively.

While Atlanta fell on Hood's watch, most historians agree that Joseph E. Johnston bears most of the blame for the city's capitulation. Having missed multiple opportunities to stymie the Union's advance, Johnston had all but sealed the city's fate by the time he was removed from command. Hood's actions in the campaign's final stages were reckless and ill-conceived, but he had few other options beyond attack; the general's negative reputation among military historians is largely a result of his leadership during the subsequent Tennessee campaign.

Aside from the military victory that accompanied the occupation of one of the Confederacy's most important industrial and transportation centers, Sherman's triumph at Atlanta was an unparalleled political victory for the Union. It guaranteed Abraham Lincoln's reelection in November (Major General Philip H. Sheridan's victory in the Shenandoah Valley in October helped this effort), solidified Republican dominance in Congress, and, in turn, ensured that the war would continue until the Confederacy capitulated. Republicans ascendant, emancipation was now certain to be a prerequisite to postwar reunification. Northern civilians, despondent after months-long stalemates across multiple fronts, were overjoyed with Sherman's victory. While many Rebels refused to acknowledge it at the time, defeat at Atlanta signaled that the South's last viable chance at gaining its independence was lost.

Nevertheless, in fall of 1864, the war continued. John Bell Hood, still commanding the Army of Tennessee, hoped to turn the tide of the war in the west by invading and liberating the Volunteer State and then marching into Kentucky. Following his retreat from Atlanta, Hood – hoping Sherman would follow him – took his army into North Alabama and eventually into Tennessee. Sherman, after briefly pursuing Hood, opted to dispatch a portion of his force under George Thomas to Tennessee while he remained in Atlanta with the majority of his army group. In the coming weeks Hood would lead his army to defeat and destruction at the battles of Franklin and Nashville while Sherman began planning and executing the next phase of his war against Confederate morale and infrastructure. Ever-cognizant of the political dimensions of the war, Sherman invited Georgia governor Joseph E. Brown to Atlanta in an effort to secure a separate peace with the state. Brown, despite his contentious relationship with Richmond, refused the invitation. Confederate Georgia would have to be quelled through military means.

Atlanta remained in Sherman's possession for six weeks before the general began his next campaign. During the interim, the Union general began developing plans for his March to the Sea. Intent on heading toward Savannah or Charleston, South Carolina, Sherman realized he would have to abandon his supply lines in order to carry the war further south. He understood that marching his army, unsupported by a rail line, through hostile countryside during the winter was a risky endeavor. Nevertheless, Sherman was convinced that the damage his operation would do to Southern agriculture, industry, and infrastructure far outweighed the risks. He also believed that it would succeed in breaking the Confederacy's already flagging morale. If successful, his march would also further divide the south in half, cutting Virginia off from precious supply sources in Georgia and Florida.

From Sherman's perspective, his forthcoming campaign would be similar to his Meridian Expedition (February 3–28, 1864) in which his army operated deep in enemy territory, cut off from its supply lines, and waged war on home-front morale. After dispatching spies and studying census records to determine what routes would provide his army with enough food and forage, Sherman presented his innovative plan to his superiors. President Lincoln and Lieutenant General Grant were initially doubtful of Sherman's scheme's merit. Lincoln especially was hesitant to approve a significant and risky military operation prior to the November elections. Grant, who had discussed with Sherman the possibility of a march to the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico months earlier, was more easily swayed and interceded on his

subordinate's behalf. However, it was agreed that the Union army would remain in Atlanta until after the election.

Knowing that Rebel authorities would move back into the city after he began the march, Sherman ordered that anything of military worth be evacuated or destroyed. What few civilians remained in the city limits were forced into exile. Factories, warehouses, train depots, machine shops, and foundries were all put to the torch. Due to the evacuations – both voluntary and forced – the city's fire department existed in name only and was powerless to halt the blaze. Consequently, homes, churches, and other privately owned and non-military buildings were caught in the inferno. While Sherman had not issued orders to destroy civilian property, he was more concerned with planning his next movements than with the amount of collateral damage Atlanta suffered at the hands of his army. His actions and his seemingly cavalier attitude allowed Confederates to portray the Union war effort as one of unrestrained destruction, immortalized in *Gone with the Wind*.

With the Confederacy's primary western theater field army in Tennessee, Sherman faced only scattered and weak resistance during his trek through Georgia. Native Georgian William Hardee, headquartered in Savannah, was in command of Rebel forces in the state. Hardee had precious few resources at his disposal and was powerless to check Sherman's inexorable advance. Under Hardee, Joseph Wheeler commanded a cavalry corps while Gustavus W. Smith led the state militia. The cavalryman's effectiveness was hampered by him being subordinate to a number of authorities, thus his troopers were often widely dispersed and incapable of truly interdicting Sherman's advance.

Governor Brown, hoping that citizens of Georgia would rise up to protect their state, issued a call for mass mobilization of all men between sixteen and fifty-five. With the destabilization of the home front and government wrought by Sherman's invasion, precious few men answered the call. While these myriad forces offered sporadic resistance, one of the defining characteristics of Sherman's march is its relative absence of traditional military engagements. Sherman's own writings show that he was more concerned with the Georgia weather than he was with his enemy's military.

When Sherman marched out of Atlanta on November 15, he divided his 60,000-man army into two wings – the right commanded by Oliver O. Howard and the left by Henry W. Slocum. Operating independently of the infantry and accountable to Sherman alone was Judson Kilpatrick's cavalry corps. Covering roughly 15 miles a day, Sherman's two columns

marched to the southeast along parallel routes. Sherman's men were confident if a bit bewildered as their commander chose not to make public the goal of his march. In its early stages, some of his lieutenants were unsure as to whether they were headed for the Atlantic or the Gulf. Knowing they were detached from their supply line was also a source of anxiety for some Federal troops. To feed his army, Sherman ordered his men to forage off the land but nevertheless directed them to respect civilians' private property – as long as their advance was unimpeded. Where the Union army faced resistance, however, private property was fair game.

In theory, each of Sherman's brigades would have a foraging party supervised by a discerning officer. A further directive stipulated that foragers should leave their victims with enough food and supplies to subsist. While some brigades operated according to Sherman's orders, his system proved unworkable and his army was supplied by any number of foraging methods. Large disciplined parties led by officers, small unsupervised groups, and individuals (all colloquially nicknamed "Sherman's bummers"; although "bummer" is most often used to describe Sherman's foragers during the Georgia campaign, it is also used at times to describe foragers, deserters, and marauders from both Union and Confederate armies) spread out into the countryside to gather food and supplies. With such an ad hoc system in place, abuses were commonplace. In addition to food, horses and mules were especially tempting targets and Union soldiers took far more than their army needed. The foraging system was near universally popular among enlisted men, many of whom, despite sharing numerous cultural values with their Southern targets, welcomed the opportunity to avenge the Union. Moreover, for troops that had become accustomed to the dangers of battle and the monotony of camp life, foraging offered a source of fun and leisure. Nevertheless, some officers feared that it would weaken the army's cohesion and effectiveness. Others, especially those with pious leanings, feared that the pillaging would weaken the moral and spiritual fiber of the army. In practice, Sherman – with his singular focus on destroying the rebellion – seemed to care little regarding his soldiers' activities in their free time as long as they were effective in battle or on the march. Sherman himself was aware of the destructive scale and occasional excess of his march, stating

I estimate the damage done to the State of Georgia and its military resources at \$100,000,000; at least, \$20,000,000 of which has inured to our advantage, and the remainder is simple waste and destruction. This may seem a hard species of warfare, but it brings the sad realities of war home to those who

have been directly or indirectly instrumental in involving us in its attendant calamities.²

The first Rebel effort to halt Sherman's advance came at the Battle of Griswoldville (November 22) when Howard's wing encountered a division of Georgia militia. The town of Griswoldville, a sight of Confederate pistol works, had been burned two days prior. Dug in east of the town's ruins – the Yankees easily repulsed the ill-experienced militia, largely made up of men and boys deemed too old or young for service in the regular Confederate army. With 1,000 men killed, wounded, or captured, the Georgians suffered ten times the casualties of their Union opponents. Despite the relatively small size of the engagement, Griswoldville was the largest battle during Sherman's march.

A more significant development occurred on Sherman's left when Slocum's wing occupied Milledgeville, the state capital, on November 23. While the city was protected by fortifications, there were precious few men to occupy the trenches and Governor Joseph E. Brown, members of the state legislature, and other government officials fled the city as the Yankees approached. Feeling free to indulge in a little revelry, and more than a little bitter toward secessionists, members of Sherman's army held a mock session of the Georgia legislature and voted the state back into the Union before moving on to a mock funeral for Joe Brown. Although industries and some government buildings were destroyed, Sherman opted not to burn the city.

Following Milledgeville's capitulation, the Union army continued its southeastwardly movements, arriving at the outskirts of Savannah on December 10. As the march entered its penultimate stages, the Federal troops were foot sore and running short on supplies. Off the Georgia coast, however, was a Union naval flotilla commanded by John A. Dahlgren that had supplies for Sherman's infantry. To link up with Dahlgren, Sherman had to take control of Fort McAllister, an earthen Rebel fortification south of Savannah on the Ogeechee River. Under normal circumstances the fort would have been a daunting target, however, it was inadequately manned and a contingent of Oliver Howard's command took control of the works in fifteen minutes. Sherman's army could now resupply before moving on to the ultimate goal of the march – the capture of Savannah.

2 United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901) series 1, volume 44, p. 13.

Sherman's march ended with far less destruction than it began. The general was open to placing Savannah under siege, but General Hardee – realizing his paltry forces could not hold the city for any length of time – evacuated, possibly saving Savannah from suffering Atlanta's fate. On December 21, the town's mayor, Richard Arnold, along with other leading citizens marched out of the city to meet Union authorities. They assured their soon-to-be conquerors that they would face no resistance if they promised to spare the city. Sherman, ready to bring his campaign to a close, accepted the offer. The next day, in one of the war's most famous telegraphs, he informed President Lincoln: "I beg to present you as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah with 150 heavy guns and plenty of ammunition and also about 25,000 bales of cotton." Following his capture of Savannah, Sherman began planning for the next leg of his march, which would carry his army through the Carolinas and culminate in the last major battle of the western theater at Bentonville and the surrender of the Army of Tennessee at Durham Station, North Carolina on April 26, 1865.³

While Sherman's invasion of the Carolinas proved to be much more vindictive toward the Confederate home front than was his Georgia campaign, the general's operations in the Peach State were still formative experiences for civilians. Even before Atlanta's fall, Georgians began experiencing Sherman's hard-war policies. Some northern Georgians abandoned their homesteads immediately on learning of Sherman's invasion. Deciding to remain in one's home or seek safety elsewhere was a complicated decision. Rumors, government proclamations, and the press provided civilians with information, misinformation, and false hopes. Tales of Yankee murders, rapes, and arson permeated the southern home front while newspapers and Richmond projected unwavering confidence assuring Georgians that it was only a matter of time before Johnston or Hood halted Sherman's advance.

Because Sherman's targets during much of the Georgia campaign were civilian as often as military, scholarly discussion of his march often hinges around its relationship to the concept of "total war," a nebulous term without a clear scholarly definition. One military historian argues that a tenet of total war is "the abandonment of many customary restraints."⁴ The conflict Sherman waged against Georgia's civilians was more total in theory than it was in practice. The violence enacted against the state's population was never as extreme as the language the general used in his orders and decrees.

³ Sherman, *Sherman's Civil War*, p. 722.

⁴ Wayne E. Lee, *Waging War: Conflict, Culture, and Innovation in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 329; Lee, *Waging War*, p. 329.

Following Atlanta's fall Sherman famously stated: "If the people raise a howl against my barbarity and cruelty, I will answer that war is war and not popularity seeking. If they want peace they and their relatives must stop the war." Nevertheless, the Yankees focused their ire on property, and few civilians suffered bodily harm at the hands of Sherman's columns.⁵

While aspects of Sherman's Georgia campaign would be described by Rebels as cruel and barbarous, the destruction and terror meted out to civilians was measured. Georgians suffered the wrath of the Federal army to a greater extent than other Confederate civilians up to that point in the war, but their victimhood was characterized more by quantity than by quality. Union soldiers were not behaving more brutally than they had in the war's early years. The circumstances of the campaign brought them into contact with Southern civilians on a much more regular basis. While many homes were ransacked and looted for food and supplies, typically only abandoned houses and those belonging to politically influential Georgians were put to the torch. Other exceptions included homes from which Sherman's army were fired on and those belonging to known guerrillas and saboteurs. Homes that were still occupied by women and children stood a better chance of surviving Sherman's foragers. While on occasion civilians mobilized to resist the bummers, most Georgians were content to simply try to stay out of Sherman's way. This did not prevent rumors from spreading that told tales of vengeful white Southern civilians killing Yankee soldiers. Both sides did little to halt the spread of these tales. Sherman's officers hoped that such stories would prevent their men from committing acts of excess, while Georgians welcomed evidence, regardless of its veracity, that showed they were defending their homeland.

The amount the Yankees foraged and plundered varied from group to group and soldier to soldier – as it did for both sides throughout the conflict. Some men took only what they needed to subsist while others pillaged with abandon. The difference often hinged on the temperament of the officer in charge of a foraging party. Those commanded by a professionally minded leader typically took only foodstuffs and other necessities while those under the watch of a lax officer, or no officer at all, were more likely to indulge in vandalism and theft of family heirlooms and non-necessities.

Regardless, Sherman's army waged psychological warfare on the Confederacy. The reputation of Sherman and his army preceded them and stories of Yankee barbarity – real and imagined – permeated the home front

5 Sherman, *Sherman's Civil War*, p. 697.

in southern Georgia. Families in the Union army's path often abandoned their homesteads and became war refugees. Those that could not find shelter elsewhere sometimes moved into abandoned railcars. If a man was present in a home, his female family members – assuming he would be the Yankees' most likely target for violence – pressured him to go into hiding.

Civilians also did what they could to protect their belongings from Sherman's foragers. Oftentimes white Georgians buried their valuables or hid them in local forests or swamps in an attempt to keep them from the Yankees, who soon learned to be on the lookout for freshly dug earth. Being robbed of one's foodstuffs, and in some cases shelter, at the outset of winter was a terrifying prospect for civilians. Given the length of Sherman's marching columns, some civilians found their homes and properties ransacked on numerous occasions.

Union soldiers' targets reflected the psychological aspect of their campaign against the Confederacy. Anything pertaining to cotton, such as gins, warehouses, presses, and stores of the crop were especially likely to be destroyed or burned. Sherman's men seemed to take special pleasure in eradicating the crop that long since symbolized the South and its economy and institutions. Destruction of Southern property escalated when soldiers discovered evidence pointing to violence against slaves; whipping posts were another favorite target. In at least one instance, Sherman's men killed a pack of dogs that were used to hunt escaped slaves.

Throughout Sherman's Georgia campaign (and his subsequent trek through the Carolinas) a psychological battle took place between his soldiers and white Southern women. In an attempt to win this battle, Yankee soldiers used gendered tactics when attacking women. While invading Federals rarely physically accosted white women, they exercised no such trepidation when it came to attacking symbols of their class and gender. Ransacking bedrooms and rummaging through women's undergarments became a favorite activity of Yankee soldiers. Elite status symbols, such as pianos, were often destroyed and some women found their personal diaries and letters destroyed, read aloud, or mailed north for the amusement of soldiers and their families.

The most common emotion white household mistresses seemed to experience during the march was outrage. Ironically these attacks, intended to destroy women's morale, only served to steel their resolve. Having assumed their class and gender provided them protection against such affronts, women responded to these insults by demonizing the Yankees. In the minds of white women, only members of an uncivilized, vindictive, and

morally bankrupt society would commit such acts. This, in turn, led to them having a stronger conviction of the righteousness of the Confederate cause. A shared sense of suffering and anger toward the Yankees fostered an even stronger strand of Confederate nationalism and patriotism – one that survived Appomattox and played a pivotal role in the construction of the Lost Cause.

Sherman's war on Rebel morale proved far more effective on soldiers than it did on civilians. Above all, the Georgia campaign demonstrated that neither the Confederate government nor its armies could protect the home front. With key tenets of white Southern masculinity being one's martial acumen and ability to protect home and family, the invading Federals had shown that Rebel men were incapable of fulfilling the breadth of their manly duties. Had Rebel armies been more victorious on the battlefield, the home front would have never been in the Union's crosshairs. In targeting white Southern femininity, Sherman, ironically, cracked the foundations of white Southern manhood and honor.

Sherman's campaigns in Georgia also provided opportunities and obstacles for the state's 500,000 slaves. Wherever the Union army invaded during the war the stability of the institution was threatened. Many of Georgia's slaves, however, often found liberation just outside their grasp. Because of their monetary value, slaves were sometimes evacuated from the vicinity of Union armies. While white Southerners tried their best to indoctrinate their slaves into believing that the invading Yankees were brutal pillagers, most blacks viewed Sherman's army as liberators in practice, if not ideology. Consequently, whenever the opportunity presented itself, slaves flocked to Sherman's marching columns. While Sherman refused to allow blacks to serve in combat roles, by the time his army reached Savannah it was replete with African American cooks, scouts, and laborers.

Escape from the plantation was but the first step toward uncertain freedom. The liberty a slave gained with the arrival of Federal troops could often be fleeting. Moreover, slaves, having escaped from their masters, sometimes found themselves dependent on the Union army – an institution focused on the conquest of the South, not protecting and sustaining escaped slaves. At times, from the perspective of Union military leadership, the latter were incompatible with the former. On December 9, Jefferson C. Davis, one of Sherman's corps commanders, was growing frustrated with his troops' lack of progress. For several days, Davis's march had been hampered by the hundreds of slaves that had fallen in line with his men. Conscious that his was the only corps running behind Sherman's schedule, Davis issued orders

for the slaves to be removed from his command. When his directive was only halfheartedly enforced, Davis grew more forceful. As his army was crossing Ebenezer Creek, he ordered that the pontoon bridge be removed before the majority of the slaves could cross. Desperate to cling to their newly found freedom, numerous slaves plunged into the creek in an attempt to remain with the Union soldiers. Consequently, many blacks drowned in the frigid water. Those that remained on the shores were left to their own devices and the mercy of approaching Confederate cavalry. Although some Northerners protested Davis's actions, Sherman maintained that his subordinates had done only what was militarily necessary. Sherman himself never acknowledged slavery's centrality to the war nor did he believe blacks could serve as effective combatants. Despite the general's popularity among Georgia's blacks, Sherman's concern for their well-being was secondary at best. Slaves, for their part, felt a sense of betrayal when they were victimized by their would-be-liberators.

Georgia Confederates also came to rely on slaves to aid the war effort. For example, prior to Atlanta's fall, slaves from throughout Georgia were impressed to build fortifications around the city. The Confederate government paid owners a dollar a day to rent their slaves, who hauled supplies, dug trenches, and built earthworks, abatis, and chevaux-de-frise to shield the city. Masters were assured they would be reimbursed if a slave became ill, died, or escaped to Union lines. The availability of this labor force freed thousands of white Southerners to serve in the military. Rebels were not the only ones to exploit Georgia's slave population. Slave families often found themselves victims of Union foraging parties. At times, Sherman's bummers could be undiscerning in their foraging, and black families in the army's path found their cabins and often scanty possessions plundered by Federal soldiers. Sometimes troops threatened slaves if they refused to disclose the whereabouts of their masters' valuables. Although exact figures are unknown, a number of female slaves suffered sexual assault at the hands of Union soldiers.

The destabilization wrought by Sherman's invasion and subsequent breakdown of Confederate authority turned portions of Georgia into a haven for guerrillas, bandits, and thieves. Female heads of households, with their husbands and sons often away in the army, were especially susceptible to the plundering of marauders. When Rebel civilians opted to provide bushwhackers with sustenance or intelligence, they faced harsh reprisals from Sherman's men. In early November, while Sherman briefly pursued Hood's movements northward after Atlanta's fall, Federals learned that residents in

Cassville regularly supported both regular and partisan cavalry units. In response, an Ohio regiment forced the town's residents to evacuate before razing the city.

Although Sherman's army and guerrillas (the latter albeit to a far lesser extent) have received most of the blame for depredations suffered by civilians, Joseph Wheeler's Confederate cavalry also pillaged civilian property. Rebel cavalry commands, oftentimes operating independently, sometimes foraged out of necessity. Wheeler was no strict disciplinarian and his troopers often raided farms and homesteads. Furthermore, the cavalryman was ordered to drive off any livestock that could be used by the Union army, so Southern farmers often found themselves deprived of their horses and cattle. During both phases of the Georgia campaign, Rebel soldiers were wont to indulge in at least a measure of pillaging when they abandoned a town to Federal occupation.

The commands of Wheeler and other cavalry officers sometimes served as the avenging arm of Georgia's Confederates. When Rebel horsemen caught one of Sherman's foragers in the act he was often executed. On occasion the Rebels left their victim's body on the roadside or other location where it would send a message to the Yankee invaders. Kilpatrick, Sherman's cavalry commander, enacted reprisals by executing captured Southern cavalrymen. This cycle of violence led to brutal rivalries between Union and Confederate cavalry units.

Both the Atlanta campaign and Sherman's March to the Sea occupied prominent roles in the wartime generation's memory of the conflict. This is especially true for former Confederates. Joseph E. Johnston, John Bell Hood, Jefferson Davis, and other high-ranking Rebels published their memoirs in the postwar period. Hood and Davis both blamed Johnston for the city's fall while Johnston claimed that he would have been able to hold the city indefinitely and, in turn, emerged as the Confederacy's savior. Readers, especially veterans, found Johnston's arguments most convincing. Hood had done himself few favors during the war when he publicly questioned the bravery of the Army of Tennessee's rank and file. The change in command during the Atlanta campaign became one of the great "what if?" moments of the Civil War.

White Southerners' memories of Sherman's march typically revolved around stories of victimization and resistance. A key tenet of the Lost Cause myth was the moral and spiritual superiority of Confederate officers and soldiers. Former Rebels pointed to the both real and imagined depredations Georgians suffered during Sherman's invasion to justify this conviction.

Union foragers' misdeeds grew as time went on until Sherman's columns, in white Southern memories, became little more than a Vandal horde. While evidence exists showing that rape did occur on occasion, it was rare during Sherman's march, despite its preeminent place in Rebels' fears and memories. For many white Southerners of the wartime generation Sherman was little more than a pariah. However, his popularity in the South increased with his vocal opposition to Radical Reconstruction. While he was one of the North's preeminent heroes, his reputation as a military innovator reached its apex during the total wars of the twentieth century.

Atlanta's wartime experience as a city under siege became a defining aspect of its postwar evolution. For some white Southerners, the city's destruction offered the opportunity to recast Atlanta's role in the post-war period as a place of industry, affluence, and new beginnings. New South boosters such as Henry W. Grady presented the city as a phoenix that had risen from the ashes of war to become a symbol of economic rebirth.

Both the Atlanta campaign and the March to the Sea were pivotal chapters in the American Civil War. Collectively they destroyed the Confederacy's last chance of independence, secured Abraham Lincoln's reelection, guaranteed emancipation, led to the proliferation of a defiant nationalism among one section of Rebels while breaking another's will to fight, and laid the foundations of central tenets of Lost Cause mythology. While the Union military eventually triumphed on all fronts, it first secured ultimate victory in the Empire State of the South.

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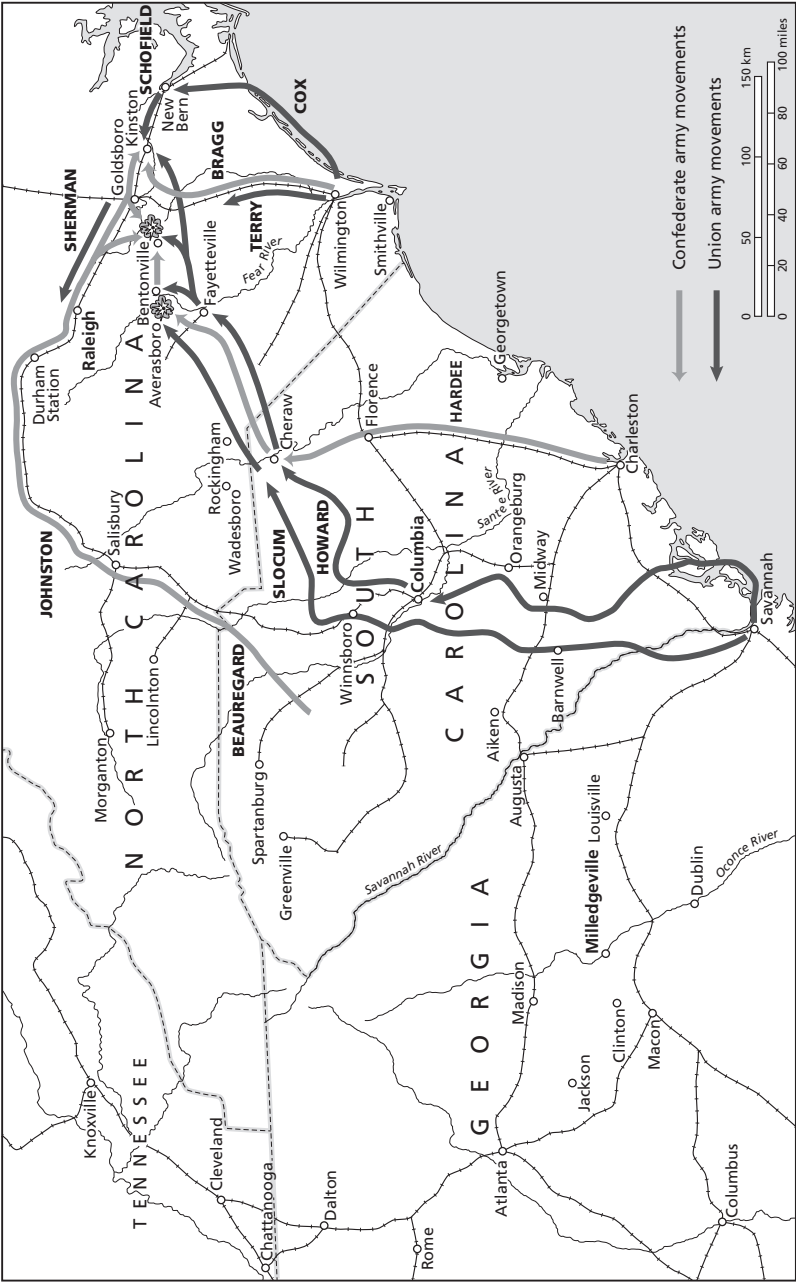
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The Carolinas Campaign

LISA TENDRICH FRANK

The Union's 1865 Carolinas campaign brought hard war to the Confederacy's civilian population, emancipated thousands of slaves, and helped bring the Civil War to a close. The campaign began in January 1865 when Union major general William Tecumseh Sherman and 60,000 soldiers marched north from Savannah, and it ended on April 26, 1865 with Confederate general Joseph Johnston's surrender at Durham Station in North Carolina. The campaign employed unconventional tactics earlier used along Sherman's March to the Sea (see Chapter 16) in order to inflict physical and psychological damage upon the enemy. To do so, seasoned Union soldiers tore up railroads, burned fields and homes, confiscated food and various supplies, took or killed livestock, raided countless Southern homes, shredded personal treasures, liberated enslaved African Americans, and taunted elite white women. Throughout the month and a half of active campaigning through the Carolinas, Sherman's troops averaged 10 miles of marching daily and faced little military resistance from the Confederate army.

The 1865 Carolinas campaign demonstrated both the willingness of the Union army to use force against civilian enemies and their personal property and the utility of doing so. The campaign drastically transformed the physical and social landscape of the Carolinas. The soldiers' route was marked by trampled fields, toppled fences, and burnt pine trees. Lone chimneys, nicknamed Sherman's sentinels, remained where homes once stood, and soldiers left twisted railroad ties, nicknamed Sherman's neckties, wrapped around trees to render them useless. Enslaved African Americans fled homes, as they followed the Union troops, reunited families, and otherwise made further steps toward freedom. As they marched through the Carolinas, Sherman's troops routinely invaded the homes of the slaveholding elite, destroying artwork, pianos, personal papers, clothes, bedrooms, parlors, and kitchens. These tactics left behind both physical and psychological scars. Earlier in the war, as Sherman detailed the goals of his proposed march through Georgia



17.1 The Carolinas campaign. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

and the Carolinas, he told his commander, Ulysses S. Grant, that “this movement is not purely military or strategic, but it will illustrate the vulnerability of the South.”¹ Later, aware of the personal and psychological results of his March to the Sea, Sherman acknowledged “I know my Enemy and think I have made him feel Effects of war, that he did not expect, and he now Sees how the Power of the United States can reach him in his innermost recesses.”²

Sherman planned his invasion into the Carolinas months earlier, from his temporary headquarters in Atlanta, but intentionally kept his ultimate route secret. Instead, he informed Ulysses S. Grant of his hopes of confusing Confederate leaders and civilians by taking “so eccentric a course that no general can guess at my objective,” so he could thereby force the enemy to divide its resources. Sherman even left Grant in the dark about his planned route. “When you hear I am off have lookouts at Morris Island, S.C., Ossabaw Sound, Ga., Pensacola and Mobile Bays. I will turn up somewhere.”³ Over the following months Sherman planned a course through the South to “act in such a manner against the material resources of the South as utterly to Negative Davis’ boasted threat and promises of protection.” He reasoned that “If we can march a well appointed Army right through his territory, it is a demonstration to the World, foreign and domestic, that we have a power which Davis cannot resist.” Furthermore, he realized that “there are thousands of people abroad and in the South who will reason thus – ‘If the North can march an Army right through the South, it is proof positive that the North can prevail in this contest,’ leaving only open the question of its willingness to use that power.”⁴

Sherman’s commitment to secrecy and the reports of destruction he brought to Georgia created anxiety on the Carolina home front and in the ranks of the Confederate military. White Southerners with family in South Carolina were especially concerned about their loved ones. For example, Caroline Petigru Carson, a South Carolinian Unionist who fled to New York, begged Sherman to look out for her Carolina family. In his response, Sherman justified his tactics. Despite rumors to the contrary, Sherman explained that he did not have “a heart bent on desolation and destruction,” but he would necessarily lead his troops there “to vindicate the just power of the Government which received terrible insults at the hands of the People of

1 William T. Sherman to Henry W. Halleck, October 19, 1864, in Brooks D. Simpson and Jean V. Berlin (eds.), *Sherman’s Civil War: Selected Correspondence of William T. Sherman, 1860–1865* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 736.

2 William T. Sherman to Philemon B. Ewing, January 29, 1865, in *ibid.*, p. 811.

3 William T. Sherman to Henry W. Halleck, October 19, 1864, in *ibid.*, p. 736.

4 William T. Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, November 6, 1864, in *ibid.*, p. 751.

that State.” Even with these attitudes in mind, Sherman wrote that he would “try to temper the harsh acts of war, with mercy towards those who by falsehood and treachery have been led step by step from the generous practice of hospitality to deeds of crime & violence.” Nonetheless, as Sherman explained, “[South] Carolina herself tormented us with posturing and cowardice, and forced us to the Contest. Let her admit her error, and we will soon make all sunshine and happiness, where Gloom and Misery reign Supreme.”⁵ The invasion of South Carolina would ultimately have a dispiriting effect on Confederate soldiers in the field. From miles away, many soldiers worried about how their families and homes had fared. In February 1865, one Confederate soldier at Petersburg, Virginia told a Union soldier that he “deplores the idea of letting Sherman pass through Ga and enter S.C.” The Southern soldier asserted that “[Sherman] ought not by any means be allowed to enter for says he: ‘they have a grudge against our state.’”⁶

As he departed Savannah, Sherman divided his 60,000 veteran soldiers into two equal wings and spread them across a 40-mile wide area. As he had done during the March to the Sea, Sherman assigned New Yorker Henry W. Slocum to command the army’s left wing, which contained the XX and XIV Corps of the Army of the Cumberland. Commander of the Army of the Tennessee, Oliver O. Howard of Maine, headed the right wing, which was comprised of the XV and XVII Corps of his army. Both commanders proceeded through the Carolinas as they had through Georgia, liberally razing and foraging through the physical landscape. Confederates, as the Union had expected and hoped, wondered and worried about Sherman’s next move. Both wings marched north, one toward Charleston while the other headed toward Augusta. On February 1, they crossed the North Edisto River and entered South Carolina. Understanding the symbolic importance of Charleston, Sherman assured Chief of Staff Henry W. Halleck that “I shall keep up the delusion of an attack on Charleston *always*.”⁷ Despite their ultimate destinations, he made sure that the soldiers’ maintained their feints on Charleston and Augusta. Instead of invading either city, however, they cut the railroad between the two cities and headed toward Columbia, South Carolina. Along the way they foraged liberally and terrorized white

5 William T. Sherman to Caroline Carson, January 20, 1865, in *ibid.*, p. 803.

6 Edward W. Allen to James and Emily Allen, February 4, 1865, Allen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill [hereafter SHC].

7 William T. Sherman to Henry W. Halleck, January 27, 1865, in Simpson and Berlin (eds.), *Sherman’s Civil War*, p. 810.

Carolínians, who “taunted us with poltroonery and cowardice and forced us the contest.”⁸

Sherman’s desire to punish South Carolínians for their disloyalty permeated the Union ranks. As they approached the “seedbed of secession,” Union soldiers frequently expressed excitement that white Carolínians would feel the consequences of their actions. “Poor South Carolina,” one soldier wrote “must suffer now . . . Her deluded people will now reap the full reward for all their folly and crimes.”⁹ Soldier John Herr similarly gloried that “we will make her suffer wors[e] then she did the time of the Revolutionary war,” and “let her know that . . . it isened so sweet to seceds as she thought it would be.” Other soldiers agreed that “nearly every man in Shermans army say they are in for distroying every thing . . . in South Carolina I dont know but I think Sherman will distroy every thing that is of no value to us.”¹⁰ Regimental commanders did little to dampen these soldiers’ desires to punish South Carolínians. Few soldiers faced disciplinary consequences for their destructive actions in the Palmetto State, and many officers even fanned the flames, encouraging the harsh treatment of Carolina civilians. One soldier noted that when the orders were read, they included reminders that “S.C. was the state where the seeds of rebellion were first sown & ripened into fruit.” These orders also let the soldiers “understand that we were not to be so closely restricted as through Ga. ie, allowed more priviledges.”¹¹ As a result, Union soldiers frequently proclaimed that Sherman intended female Confederates and other civilians to feel the harsh realities of war. George M. Wise, a lieutenant on the march, insisted that Sherman intended the widespread destruction, proclaiming “Sherman is the most relentless enemy the South has in the Union Army” because “when a word from his lips would have stopped the universal devastation he would not speak that word, but said simply to the pleading fair ones of Columbia ‘It is your own fault.’”¹²

8 William T. Sherman to Mrs. Carolina Carson, January 20, 1865, Sherman Papers, South Carolíniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia (hereafter cited as Carolíniana).

9 John J. Hight, January 19, 1865, in Gilbert R. Stormont (ed.) *History of the Fifty-Eighth Regiment of Indiana Volunteer Infantry. It’s Organization, Campaigns and Battles from 1861 to 1865. From the Manuscript Prepared by the Late Chaplain John J. Hight during His Service with the Regiment in the Field* (Princeton, NJ: Press of the Clarion, 1895), p. 416.

10 John Herr to Katy Herr, February 5, 1865, Herr Papers, Duke University, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Durham, North Carolina.

11 Edward W. Allen to James and Emily Allen, February 4, 1865, Allen Papers, SHC.

12 George M. Wise to John Wise, March 13, 1865, in Wilfred W. Black (ed.), “Marching Through South Carolina: Another Civil War Letter of George M. Wise,” *Ohio Historical Quarterly*, vol. 46 (April 1957): 193–4. Southern women agreed. For example, Mary Maxcy Leverett thought that “if Sherman chose to he could have stopped that, for he is a severe

Sherman may not have officially sanctioned these actions, but he certainly knew that his “whole army is burning with an insatiable desire to wreak vengeance upon South Carolina” and encouraged those desires. “I almost tremble at her fate,” he explained “but feel that she deserves all that seems in store for her.”¹³

The march through the Carolinas was physically strenuous on Union soldiers. After a month’s sojourn in Savannah, flooding caused by heavy January rains delayed their initial entry into South Carolina. Even after the flooding subsided, Union soldiers had to deal with water. Rain continued to fall for twenty-eight of the forty-five days of the Carolinas campaign, forcing the soldiers to corduroy their way over the muddy roads; each wing of the army carried its own pontoon bridge that could be quickly assembled to cross the swollen rivers. Some soldiers occasionally slept in trees to stay dry in what one called the “swampeyest cuntrey you ever saw in youre life.”¹⁴

As Sherman’s men moved into and through the Carolinas they became an emancipatory force when enslaved men and women took the initiative, fled from their bondage, and began to follow the soldiers north. Sherman and other Union soldiers typically rejoiced at the Confederates’ loss of a labor force but most of them did not harbor either egalitarian or abolitionist sentiments. As a result, the march through the Carolinas presented a series of contradictions for African Americans. Enslaved people often celebrated the prospect of approaching Union soldiers, but Sherman’s men did not always embrace their role as liberators. Instead, soldiers routinely complained about the burden of having thousands of recently freed African Americans trailing behind them on their march north. Sherman and his commanders made minimal efforts to help those who followed the march. However, on January 15, 1865, Sherman issued Special Orders No. 15, which granted

disciplinarian & they are afraid as death of him.” Mary Maxcy Leverett to Caroline Pinckney Seabrook, March 18, 1865, in Frances Wallace Taylor, Catherine Taylor Matthews, and J. Tracy Power (eds.), *The Leverett Letters: Correspondence of a South Carolina Family, 1851–1868* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2000), p. 390.

¹³ William T. Sherman to Henry W. Halleck, December 24, 1864, in Michael Fellman (ed.), *Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 558.

¹⁴ Sherman’s chief engineer on the campaign, O. M. Poe, reported that they corduroyed 400 miles of road during the Carolinas campaign and that the full army did 800 miles of road. See Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman’s Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), p. 110; James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), p. 471. Thomas Ford to Mr. William, March 28, 1865, Ford Letter, Caroliniana.

freedpeople approximately 400,000 acres of property that the Union had confiscated from Confederates along the South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida coastline. From Sherman's perspective, redistributing this land, including some property off the coast of Charleston, in 40-acre allotments to freedpeople allowed him both to provide for those freedpeople who had been following his army as well as to separate those formerly enslaved African Americans from his army. Giving the freedpeople land of their own would keep them from continuing to follow his army and would free him from the burden of providing for them. Despite actions like these, in other cases Union soldiers complicated the lives of those who they helped to free. Perhaps one of Sherman's motivations for Special Orders No. 15 was a response to the actions of some of his soldiers, who on the way into Savannah had pulled up their pontoon bridges over Ebenezer Creek before the African Americans following them could cross (see also Chapter 16, this volume). These actions left the trailing freedpeople to drown or get captured by Confederates. Despite this type of behavior, other Union soldiers took their roles as emancipators as a badge of honor.¹⁵

Sherman's men did more than punish white South Carolinians by enabling their enslaved men and women to claim their freedom. In South Carolina, Union troops consciously punished white inhabitants, most of them women, by burning homes; confiscating food, clothing, and other supplies; ransacking bedrooms; and publicly humiliating the political and economic elite. As the soldiers made their way northward through South Carolina, they burned at least a dozen towns, including parts of Hardeeville, Barnwell, Midway, Orangeburg, and Lexington. Many Union soldiers gleefully watched "South Carolina . . . getting badly scorched," seeing the destruction as a just reward for the state's provocation of the Civil War.¹⁶ Other soldiers concurred.

15 On Special Orders No. 15, see United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 47, pp. 60–2 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted). On the impact of Sherman's march on African Americans, see Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964); Leslie A. Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1997); Dylan C. Penningroth, "Slavery, Freedom, and Social Claims to Property among African Americans in Liberty County, Georgia, 1850–1880," *Journal of American History*, vol. 84, no. 2 (September 1997): 405–35; Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); David Silkenat, *Driven from Home: North Carolinas Civil War Refugee Crisis* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2016), pp. 93–5.

16 Sylvester Daniels, February 18, 1865, Daniels Diary Typescript, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California. The Union desire to wreak vengeance

Sebastian Duncan boasted that it was “almost as though there was a Secret organization among the men to burn Every thing in the State.” He came to this conclusion because “thus far . . . houses, in Some way, get on fire & nearly all we have passed thus far are in ashes.”¹⁷ Another soldier described Robertsville, South Carolina, as “a very nice little village but now there is nothing left to mark the place except about one hundred ‘monuments’ (Chimnies) erected to the memory of Jefferson D.” Sherman’s soldiers referred to Barnwell as “Burnwell” because few buildings remained standing and, as one soldier noted, “Those belong to the poorer class of people.” The landscape was missing “the large residences of the planters, the Court House, jail and stores [which] were all consumed.”¹⁸

When Union soldiers encamped in the communities surrounding Aiken, South Carolina, starting on February 10, 1865, the soldiers paid particular attention to the homes of the wealthiest white Southerners. They entered both occupied and unoccupied homes, but particularly focused their attention on plantations owned by the political elite and those with large enslaved populations. They were often one and the same. For example, they raided the 437-acre DeCaradeuc estate near Aiken that held twenty-one enslaved African Americans, one soldier explained, because it “was the root of the rebellion” and “that they had to arrest and shoot every influential citizen in S.C., every mover of secession.”¹⁹ Although Union soldiers did not generally shoot

on South Carolina was not a new one. A full year before Sherman’s march began, Isaac Jackson hoped for a chance to punish South Carolina soldiers on the field of battle: “No man ever looked forward to any event with more joy than did our boys to have a chance to meet the sons of the mothers of traitors, ‘South Carolina.’” Isaac Jackson to Moses and Phebe Jackson, July 13, 1863, in Joseph Orville Jackson (ed.), “Some of the Boys . . .”: *The Civil War Letters of Isaac Jackson, 1862–1865* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960), p. 111. Sherman’s men left countless descriptions of the destruction. For examples, see Charles W. Wills, *Army Life of an Illinois Soldier Including Day-by-Day Record of Sherman’s March to the Sea: Letters and Diary of Charles W. Wills*, Mary E. Kellogg (ed.), (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996); Platter Journal, University of Georgia, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Athens; Ward Diary, Caroliniana; Thomas Ford to Mr. William, March 28, 1865, Ford Letter, Caroliniana; David P. Conyngham, *Sherman’s March through the South with Sketches and Incidents of the Campaign* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1865); Samuel Augustus Duncan to Julia Jones, March 15, 1865, in Nina Silber and Mary Beth Sievens (eds.), *Yankee Correspondence: Civil War Letters between New England Soldiers and the Home Front* (Charlottesville: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), p. 51.

17 Sebastian Duncan to Mother, February 1, 1865, as cited in Glatthaar, *March to the Sea and Beyond*, p. 140.

18 As quoted in Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861–1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 201.

19 Pauline DeCaradeuc Heyward, February 18, 1865, in Mary D. Robertson (ed.), *A Confederate Lady Comes of Age: The Journal of Pauline DeCaradeuc Heyward, 1863–1888* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 65–8.

civilians, they still scared Confederates on the home front, who often hid guns under their skirts to guard against armed and sexual attacks. Twenty-one-year-old Pauline DeCaradeuc saw the invasion of her family's home as a personal affront rather than a form of justice. Her parents and siblings had "hundreds of [Union soldiers], in the house, upstairs, in the garret, in every chamber, under the house, in the yard, garden, &c., &c."²⁰ As many enslaved men and women fled for freedom, soldiers destroyed the family's personal property while continually "singing, shouting, whistling, and Oh, my God, such cursing." The human noises were accompanied by that of destruction as the men used "axes [to break] open every door, drawer, trunk that was locked." In addition, they smashed mirrors and furniture and "flung every piece of clothing that they didn't carry off" onto the floors. They also defaced the markers of elite life as they "got some of Fa[ther]'s prettiest paintings and broke bottles of catsup over them." When they finally left, enemy soldiers took with them food, clothing, and various luxury goods, including "every piece of silver, every knife, jewel, & particle of possessions in the house & negro houses." The soldiers' looting seemed senseless and proved infuriating to white civilians, particularly when clothing, trinkets, sheet music, personal papers, and other items littered the paths that Sherman's men took out of town.²¹

The Union's appropriation of food occurred frequently during the campaign. As a result, enslaved and free Carolinians scrambled to find sufficient supplies in the wake of the invading armies. After several days of raids, DeCaradeuc noted that her household, which held the possessions of five other families and plenty of supplies, lost a great deal. Out of the "7 barrels of fine flour, 300 bushels of corn, 1 barrel & 1 box of nice sugar, &c., &c." that they had prior to the arrival of the enemy, they were left with only "15 bushels corn, 1 bag flour, 3 hams."²² The DeCaradeucs possessed much more than the typical Carolinian household, but the seizure of food was widespread. Sherman and his troops liberally foraged for food and other supplies wherever they went. Ahead of their entry into South Carolina he acknowledged that "Of course the Enemy will carry off & destroy Some forage." However,

20 Heyward, February 18, 1865, in *ibid.*, p. 66.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 65–8. Other women felt similar outrage at the insult of having their undergarments taken or displayed. See Mary Maxcy Leverett to Milton Maxcy Leverett, February 24, 1865, *Leverett Letters*, p. 385; Esther Alden [Elizabeth Allston], March 4, 1865, in *Charleston Weekly News and Courier*, "Our Women in the War": *The Lives they Lived, the Deaths they Died, from the Weekly News and Courier, Charleston, S. C.* (Charleston: News & Courier Book Presses, 1885), pp. 359–60.

22 Heyward, February 18, 1865, in Robertson (ed.), *Confederate Lady Comes of Age*, pp. 65–8.

Sherman insisted that he would visit consequences upon the Confederates to cure them of this behavior. "I will burn their houses where the People burn forage, and they will get tired of that."²³ In South Carolina, he continued to stress the necessity and right of foraging, assuring Major General Judson Kilpatrick, commander of a cavalry unit, that "We have a perfect war right to the products of the country we overrun, and may collect them by foragers or otherwise."²⁴

Food was not the only thing in danger of disappearing at the hands of enemy soldiers. Acknowledging this danger, white women hid their valuables in their bedrooms, mattresses, and on themselves, assuming all of these feminine spaces had a special type of protection. However, they often discovered that many enemy soldiers cared little for peacetime ideas about women's protected spaces. One South Carolina woman indignantly declared that her home was defiled. "In one of the bed-rooms the mattress was gone, the feather-bed cut open and the feathers left piled on the floor, the mirror smashed and the door broken from its hinges." The soldiers continued their rampage in other bedrooms as well. "In another the bedstead was destroyed, and some of the furniture cut into by axes, completely ruining it, of course."²⁵ However, Confederate women feared, and sometimes experienced, worse affronts than the ransacking of their private spaces. Although Mary Maxcy Leverett wrote in shock about the soldiers' theft and destruction of her silver, jewelry, clothes, food, bags, and sewing supplies, among other things, she understood that the destruction of her property was "a trifle to what was done in Col[umbia] on some houses." In these instances, soldiers went beyond what she deemed appropriate behavior and "ladies had their dresses violently torn open and were searched for their gold [and the] ladies rushed frantically away from these insults." Even though "as far as [she] could learn, no actual personal insult was inflicted on any lady," she considered these

23 William T. Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, January 29, 1865, in Simpson and Berlin (eds.), *Sherman's Civil War*, p. 816.

24 William T. Sherman to Hugh Judson Kilpatrick, February 23, 1865, in Simpson and Berlin (eds.), *Sherman's Civil War*, p. 819. Sherman used similar ideas about foraging earlier in the war, especially outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. In addition, Major General John Pope issued General Orders No. 5 on July 18, 1862 to direct his troops' foraging efforts in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley: "the troops of this command will subsist upon the country in which their operations are carried on . . . Whenever it is known that supplies can be furnished in any district of the country where the troops are to operate the use of trains for carrying subsistence will be dispensed with as far as possible." OR, 12(2): 250.

25 Mrs. E. A. Steele to Tody, February 15, 1865, in Katherine M. Jones (ed.), *When Sherman Came: Southern Women and the "Great March"* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), p. 135.

“rude & violent attempts to search them for gold” both shocking and unforgivable. “Can meanness go farther?” she asked.²⁶

The fear of sexual assaults permeated the Southern home front even if their occurrences were confined to African American women. Enslaved and free African American women frequently faced worse treatment than their white counterparts, as the societal constraints that limited Union soldiers’ sexual assaults on white women did not extend to them. As a result, the rape and attempted rape of enslaved women occurred throughout the campaign. In South Carolina, young African American women were “obliged to take to the woods, so save themselves from being ravished” when the soldiers arrived each night.²⁷ Another woman described a similar incident. As she told it, during a raid “one [Yankee] wretch had a mulatto wench in Elizas room.”²⁸ The knowledge of how invading soldiers mistreated African American women along the campaign intensified white women’s fears that they might face the same dishonorable fate. Confederate women often acted in accordance with nineteenth-century understandings of sex that assumed the behavior of men was based on their attraction to women, rather than a male assertion of power. Accordingly, some “disguised” themselves as “old married women” so they would not be bothered by invading Union soldiers. Many white women found ways to make themselves less attractive, including one young woman who put on “blue spectacles” and hid her face in a scarf.²⁹ The personal affronts to women’s bodies as well as to their feminine items committed by Union soldiers struck a deeper chord with elite women than

26 Mary Bull Maxcy Leverett to Caroline Pinckney Seabrook, March 18, 1865, Leverett Letter, Caroliniana.

27 Sue to Jane Ann Smythe, April 14, 1865, Adger, Smythe, Flynn Family Papers, Caroliniana.

28 S. McCain to Daughter, March 7, 1865, Snowden Papers, Caroliniana; Anne J. Bailey, *The Chessboard of War: Sherman and Hood in the Autumn Campaigns of 1864* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 64; Marli F. Weiner, *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830–80* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1998), p. 186.

29 Heyward, February 18, 1865, in Robertson (ed.), *Confederate Lady Comes of Age*, p. 69. For examples of other women’s fear of rape and threats of rape, see LeConte, March 10, 1865, LeConte Diary, SHC; Sister A. to Willie, April 11, 1865, Southall and Bowen Family Papers, SHC; Mrs. W. K. Bachman to Kate Bachman, March 27, 1865, Bachman Papers, Caroliniana. On rape during the Civil War see E. Susan Barber and Charles F. Ritter, “Physical Abuse . . . and Rough Handling’: Race, Gender, and Sexual Justice in the Occupied South,” in LeeAnn Whites and Aleica P. Long (eds.), *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), pp. 49–64; Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), esp. pp. 19–25.

did the general destruction of the countryside and the homes along the march.

Sherman's men entered Columbia on February 17, 1865, and they rejoiced at having taken the capital of the state they dubbed the "seedbed of secession." They celebrated with liquor and food "foraged" from local homes, danced on pianos, and cheered loudly. One group of soldiers marched into town singing, "Hail Columbia, happy land, / If I don't burn you, I'll be damned."³⁰ When the city began to burn – most likely as a result of the spread of fires set at crucial supply sites by retreating Confederate soldiers – Union soldiers did little to hamper the destruction to the homes of "the authors of all the calamities that have befallen this nation."³¹ Instead they reveled in the devastation of the capital of the Palmetto State and asserted, as one soldier wrote, that "*their punishment is light when compared with what justice demanded.*"³²

Columbia's African American community celebrated the arrival of Union soldiers even as they worried about mixed messages they had heard about their treatment at the hands of Union soldiers. Many hoped that freedom would arrive with the Northern soldiers, but they also feared for their physical safety. Some African American women had their worst fears materialized; from Columbia, Confederate Daniel Heywards Trezevant reported the rape of "Mr. Shane's old Negro woman, who after being subjected to the most brutal indecency from seven of the Yankees" was then murdered. After the assault, the invading soldiers "held [her] under water until life was extinct."³³

Many of Sherman's men were more interested in punishing white women for their role in secession and the Confederate war effort than emancipating enslaved African Americans. As Union lieutenant colonel Jeremiah W. Jenkins, provost marshal of Columbia, explained, "the women of the South kept the war alive – and it is only by making them suffer that we can subdue the men."³⁴ While in Columbia, Sherman and his troops meted out such punishment. For example, soldier Charles S. Brown described an

30 As quoted in Lloyd Lewis, *Sherman: Fighting Prophet* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932), p. 503.

31 John C. Gray to John C. Ropes, February 24, 1865, *War Letters, 1862–1865, of John Chipman Gray and John Codman Ropes, with Portraits* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1927), p. 458.

32 George M. Wise to John Wise, March 13, 1865, in Black (ed.), "Marching Through South Carolina," 193. See also, Sherlock, February 15, 1865, *Memorabilia of the Marches* (Kansas City, MO: Gerard-Woody Printing Co., 1896), p. 195.

33 Quoted in Catherine Clinton, *Tara Revisited: Women, War, and the Plantation Legend* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995), p. 129.

34 Lieutenant Colonel Jeremiah W. Jenkins as cited in Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 20.

incident in which other soldiers insisted that “a woman kneel to them & beg for Gods sake to leave enough for her children in the house.” After humiliating their female enemies, one account declared, the men would then “turn from them with oaths & take the last morsel of food.”³⁵ White Southern children received similar treatment. As he took blankets away from children so that the troops could use them, one Union soldier defended his behavior: “let the d-d little rebels suffer as we have had to do for the past four years.”³⁶

The soldiers’ focus on the domestic sphere during the military campaign formed the basis of many white women’s descriptions of occupied Columbia. One woman in Columbia relayed her resentment that the soldiers were “going in to houses and holding loaded pistols to ladies heads to make them tell where there gold and silver was.” What she saw as horrifying treatment of civilians did not end there. The soldiers were also “pouring turpentine over the flour and over the beds and put[t]ing a match to them and not letting them have so much as a change of clothes.”³⁷ Elizabeth Porcher’s family faced similar domestic destruction: “the Yankees . . . searched [the house] most diligently for three days, even cutting up feather beds and mattresses.”³⁸ Another South Carolinian bemoaned, “every thing on the plantation taken. Even the ploughs. The loom. & B[ed] clothes bedstead bed, indeed they made a clean sweep.”³⁹ Leverett hoped “that some one could write with a pen of fire and tell the world, the history of the sufferings & agonies of those three days of Yankee rule” in Columbia.⁴⁰

When Sherman’s troops left Columbia on February 19, “the Capital, where treason was cradled and reared a mighty raving monster, [was] a blackened

35 Charles S. Brown to Etta, April 26, 1865, Brown Papers, Duke.

36 Lieutenant Colonel Jeremiah W. Jenkins as cited in Royster, *Destructive War*, p. 23. Also see, William O. Wettleson to Father and Sisters, November 27, 1864, Wiley Files, Emory University, Special Collections Department, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Harvey Reid to Homefolk, December 14, 1864, Wiley Files, Emory; Samuel B. Crew to Brother and Sister, December 15, 1864, Wiley Files, Emory; Mary Sharpe Jones and Mary Jones Mallard, December 16, 1864, in Haskell Monroe (ed.), *Yankees a’Coming: One Month’s Experience during the Invasion of Liberty County, Georgia, 1864–1865* (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing, 1959); Mary Bull Maxcy Leverett to Caroline Pinckney Seabrook, March 18, 1865, Leverett Letters, Caroliniana.

37 S. McCain to Daughter, March 5, 1865, Snowden Papers, Caroliniana. See also Elizabeth Collier, April 20, 1865, Elizabeth Collier Diary, SHC.

38 Elizabeth Palmer Porcher to Philip E. Porcher, March 23, 1865, in Louis P. Towles (ed.), *A World Turned Upside Down: The Palmers of South Santee, 1818–1881* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1996), p. 450.

39 E. N. B. to Kate Taylor, April 1, 1865, Tennant Papers, Caroliniana.

40 Mary Bull Maxcy Leverett to Caroline Pinckney Seabrook, March 18, 1865, Leverett Letters, Caroliniana. See also Esther Alden [Elizabeth Allston], March 1, 1865, *Charleston Weekly News and Courier*, “Our Women in the War”, p. 359; Mother to Gracia, March 3, 1865, Anonymous Mother to Daughter, Heyward Papers, Caroliniana.

ruin.”⁴¹ One soldier bragged that “When our army left [Columbia] there was little left to mark the site except a blackened map of smoking ruins.”⁴² This “pile of ruins,” the soldiers hoped, would be “a warning to future generations to beware of treason.”⁴³ In the end, fire destroyed approximately one-third of Columbia. Sherman maintained that his men had no role in starting the fire, but acknowledged they “may have assisted” in spreading it and found the results satisfying. They “indulged in unconcealed joy to see the ruin of the capital of South Carolina.”⁴⁴ Union colonel Oscar L. Jackson “believe[d] it was not done by order but there seems to be a general acquiescence in the work as a fit example to be made of the capital of the State that boasts of being the cradle of secession and starting the war.”⁴⁵ As they marched away, one recorded that “We bade the remains of the City of Columbia the Capitol of S.C. farewell . . . which had recd her Just reward for the evil deeds she did in the great rebellion.”⁴⁶

As Sherman’s men departed Columbia and headed toward Winnsboro, reports of the destruction filtered to Confederates elsewhere. In a letter home, one Confederate soldier reported to his daughters that “Two thirds of Cola is burnt . . . Cola is a *ruin* & I expect the most desolate place you can imagine. I trust however that a Righteous God will yet *avenge* the vandal treatment he has practiced in this State.”⁴⁷ The news had a particularly devastating effect on the morale in Charleston. Confederates’ dread of what they expected would happen if Sherman’s men arrived helped bring

41 E. H. King, February 18, 1865, as cited in Glatthaar, *March to the Sea and Beyond*, p. 146; see also Mary Ann Anderson (ed.), *The Civil War Diary of Allen Morgan Geer, Twentieth Regiment, Illinois Volunteers* (Bloomington, IL: Robert C. Appleman, 1977), p. 197.

42 Robert Stuart Finley to Mary A. Cabeen, March 30, 1865, Finley Papers, SHC.

43 Anthony J. Baurdick, February 19, 1865, Diary, Baurdick Papers, Emory.

44 William T. Sherman to Henry W. Halleck, April 4, 1865, in *The Hero’s Own Story: General Sherman’s Official Account of His Great March through Georgia and the Carolinas, From his Departure from Chattanooga to the Surrender of General Johnston, and the Confederate Forces under his Command, To Which are Added General Sherman’s Evidence Before the Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War; the Animadversions &c.* (New York: Bunce & Huntington, Publishers, 1865), p. 96.

45 Oscar L. Jackson, February 18, 1865, in *The Colonel’s Diary* (Sharon, PA: n.p., 1922), p. 184. Nearly a century and a half later, scholars continue to debate whether Union or Confederate troops initiated the blaze. The details of this debate have not changed much since the controversy began immediately after the war. For a discussion of the controversy, see Marion B. Lucas, *Sherman and the Burning of Columbia* (1976; reprint, Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2000). Also see Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2012), esp. pp. 44–59.

46 Jesse S. Bean, February 20, 1865, Bean Diary, SHC.

47 H. P. Green to Daughters, March 15, 1865, Mrs. Albert Rhett (Sallie Coles Green) Heyward Papers, Caroliniana.

about the city's surrender on February 18. After Union forces had besieged it from the water for almost two years, Sherman's actions in a town more than 100 miles away did the trick.⁴⁸

Large sections of several South Carolina towns lay in ashes when the Union army left the state. Soldiers burned parts of Gillisonville, Grahamville, Hardeeville, McPhersonville, Springfield, Robertsville, Lawtonville, Barnwell, Blackville, Midway, Orangeburg, Lexington, Columbia, Camden, Winnsboro, Lancaster, Chesterfield, and Cheraw. South Carolina, in the word of one soldier, was "a howling wilderness, an utter desolation."⁴⁹ Perhaps to brag about their accomplishments or make them seem more universal, Union soldiers frequently noted that "there is scarcely anything left in our rear or trac[k]s except pine forests and naked lands and Starving inhabitants." Furthermore, they made sure that "A majority of the Cities, towns, villages and country houses have been burnt to the ground."⁵⁰ In order to cut off communication and supply lines, Union soldiers had also torn up miles of railroads, including parts of the Charleston and Savannah Railroad, the Greenville and Columbia Railroad, the South Carolina Railroad, and the Charlotte and South Carolina Railroad. Many soldiers rejoiced in these accomplishments. Jesse Bean, a soldier from Minnesota, wrote a commemorative poem to "bid adieu to S. Carolina leaving our Marks of revenge behind us to Show the Generations to come."⁵¹

Sherman and his troops entered North Carolina during the first week of March and feinted northwest toward Charlotte. Moving through the state the Union army encountered few Confederate soldiers from Joseph Johnston's makeshift force of about 21,000 men. As they entered North Carolina, a state rumored to have a poorer and more Unionist population than South Carolina, Sherman directed his officers that soldiers should now "deal as moderately and fairly by the North Carolinians as possible."⁵² Even so, they continued to cause widespread destruction, setting fire to pine forests by lighting patches of congealed sap.⁵³ Soldiers also torched the turpentine,

48 William T. Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, January 29, 1865, in Simpson and Berlin (eds.), *Sherman's Civil War*, p. 816.

49 J. Taylor Holmes, February 10, 1865, in *52d Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Then and Now* (Columbus, OH: Berlin Print, 1898), p. 20. See also Thomas J. Myers to Wife, February 26, 1865, Myers Papers, SHC.

50 James Stillwell to Wife, March 12, 1865, as quoted in Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, p. 202.

51 Jesse S. Bean, March 8, 1865, Bean Diary, SHC.

52 William T. Sherman to H. W. Slocum, March 6, 1865, OR, 47(2): 704; William T. Sherman to Judson Kilpatrick, March 7, 1865, OR, 47(2): 721.

53 James A. Connolly to Wife, March 12, 1865, in *Three Years in the Army of the Cumberland: The Letters and Diary of Major James A. Connolly* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,

tar, and rosin factories – places that helped manufacture war materiel – that they encountered along the state's streams. One of Sherman's soldier observed that North Carolina's pine forests "made the handsomest fire . . . especially the smoke as it rolled up in huge back volumes." As Union soldiers "blazed their way through" the state, North Carolina stunk of burning turpentine.⁵⁴

The soldiers continued to face rough conditions in North Carolina, as "there are swamps and dense pine forests everywhere."⁵⁵ Even so, soldiers were determined to bring the war to North Carolinians with large plantations and enslaved populations, even if in comparison to South Carolina they were fewer and rather isolated from one another. "If one finds a large farm here," one soldier explained, "it lies all by itself in the middle of a dense forest."⁵⁶ These isolated homesteads impressed invading soldiers, who noted that "The farmers here are tremendously wealthy, and their large grand buildings are surrounded by negro cabins in rows almost like a city. There has been immeasurable wealth here."⁵⁷ As they moved through the state "like a swarm of locusts" the soldiers continued their destructive campaign against slaveholding civilians.⁵⁸

Sherman's men raided homes and towns, including Wadesboro, Rockingham, Laurel Hill, Mossneck, and Clinton, in North Carolina much as they had in South Carolina. Although some civilians took flight before the soldiers arrived, many remained at home despite the fact that at "Shermans

1959), p. 384. John F. Marszalek argues that when Sherman's troops entered North Carolina "the wholesale destruction they had practiced in South Carolina ceased." However, he admits that "the soldiers did not stop all pillaging; they simply toned it down." Marszalek, *Sherman: A Soldier's Passion for Order* (New York: Vintage, 1994), p. 327. Grimsley asserts that "the Tarheel State received much the same treatment as Georgia – possibly even a bit milder, since North Carolina was not part of the Deep South, was known to harbor significant Unionist sentiment, and had been one of the last states to secede." Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, p. 202. Also see John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), pp. 291–300, 311–17, 328–49; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine, 1988), p. 826. However, Michael Fellman acknowledges that "the men still stripped the countryside of food and livestock and burned public facilities. Some soldiers noted little difference between the overall results in the two Carolinas." Fellman, *Citizen Sherman: A Life of William Tecumseh Sherman* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 235.

54 Rufus Mead to Dear Folks Back Home, March 7, 1865, in James A. Padgett (ed.), "With Sherman through Georgia and the Carolinas: Letters of a Federal Soldier," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 33 (March 1949): 74.

55 William O. Wettleston to Parents and Sisters, April 4, 1865, Wiley Files, Emory. 56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 William T. Sherman to Ellen Ewing Sherman, April 9, 1865, in Simpson and Berlin (eds.), *Sherman's Civil War*, p. 853.

advancing with rapid strides & firmer purpose” they felt their “cheeks blanche . . . teeth chatter & . . . heart flutter like a caged bird.”⁵⁹ From the vantage point of the civilians, it all seemed overwhelming and chaotic. Wealthy North Carolinian Eliza Tillinghast described to her brother, a soldier in the Confederate army, her experiences with “500 men running wild over your defenceless sisters.”⁶⁰ Another woman found this seemingly endless experience – enemy soldiers raided her home eight times – heart-wrenching. “You don[’t] know how awful we felt when the wretches were prying into every sacred thing in the house, even into . . . relics of the dead we never dreamed of concealing.”⁶¹ This kind of behavior outraged many slaveholding women. After describing the destruction the enemy soldiers visited upon the area, one woman claimed “I can’t describe my feelings . . . as I looked upon these *enemies* – who cause so much suffering in our land, who take the lives of our darlings.”⁶²

The experience in North Carolina did not completely mirror that of South Carolina. Although Sherman and his troops continued their assault on the North Carolina home front, Sherman urged his men to soften their attacks on the domestic world when they confronted poorer Southern communities. When Slocum’s command marched out of Fayetteville on March 15, 1865, it returned to what Illinois soldier Charles W. Wills described as “our good behavior,” which included “No foraging, no bumming rails, or houses, and nothing naughty whatever.”⁶³ Southerners, perhaps not surprisingly, believed that the widespread destruction was either a direct result of official directives or an unofficial policy to turn a blind eye. For example, the morning after the burning of Columbia, Mrs. E. L. L. watched as “the order to cease the terrible carnival was given, and the immediate quiet which followed was passing strange, yet it showed the thorough discipline of the mighty army; besides it proved most clearly that permission, if not expressed command, had been given to burn and sack the town.”⁶⁴ One of the men on the campaign, Allen Morgan Geer, observed the remarkable change after Johnston’s surrender: “Very striking is the difference between this march and all others previous. The people remain contentedly at home,

59 Fannie to Addie Worth, February 25, 1865, Jonathan Worth Papers #802, SHC.

60 Eliza Tillinghast to David R. Tillinghast, May 3, 1865, Tillinghast Family Papers, Duke. See also Caroline Gilman to Eliza [1865] in “Letters of a Confederate Mother: Charleston in the Sixties,” *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 137 (April 1926): 511.

61 Loula to Poss, May 22, 1865, Graves Family Papers, Caroliniana.

62 Sister A[] to Willie, April 11, 1865, Southall and Bowen Family Papers, #4135, SHC.

63 Wills, April 29, 1865, in *Army Life of an Illinois Soldier*, p. 373.

64 Mrs. E. L. L., in *Charleston Weekly News and Courier*, “Our Women in the War,” p. 255.

men are plenty, a safety guard is at each house and our soldiers make no effort to forage or destroy.”⁶⁵ This was accompanied by a change of behavior by some Confederate civilians. In some instances, white civilians freely gave food to Union soldiers as they passed through parts of North Carolina:

After we left cheraw we marching to Rockingham 22 miles then to fayetteville 40 miles, where the inhabitants recd the Army with great kindness the Laides bringing out things (eatables) to them, I got two breakfasts, one of coffe & Biscuits at a Laides house all her meat had just been eaten up at the other, some Hame & Biscuits. also she gave me, a package of smoking and a peice of chewing tobacco.⁶⁶

Nonetheless, before that change arrived, citizens suffered. Without any wagon trains to carry supplies for them Union soldiers necessarily continued to forage liberally in North Carolina. According to Glatthaar, “Statistics from the Carolinas campaign are much less complete, yet they do indicate that foragers stripped the countryside of at least 7 million pounds of food-stuffs, 11.6 million pounds of corn, 8.3 million pounds of fodder, and 11,825 horses and mules.”⁶⁷ The plight of civilian families was shared across class lines. One woman complained that the Union men were “taking the last crumb . . . of meat, flour . . . every-thing needful” and that many civilians “suffered hunger while the fiends were here.”⁶⁸ One soldier would not be deterred from taking the food regardless of the condition of the civilians. After all, “the army must be fed.” Such scenes continued throughout the state and “twas the same scene repeated at each house. begging intreating some time with tears.”⁶⁹ In poorer North Carolina, the plundering may not have been as widespread as it had been in South Carolina, but its effects may have been worse and the civilians still felt it keenly. Those with the least resources fared the worst. Despite Sherman’s orders to his men to treat North Carolinians “as moderately and fairly . . . as possible,”⁷⁰ many Confederate women noted that “our people are starving every where in the country there is nothing left, the people are coming every day in large

65 Geer, April 29, 1865, in Anderson (ed.), *Civil War Diary*, p. 217.

66 Arthur Grimball to John Grimball, March 15, 1865, Grimball Family Papers #980, SHC.

67 Glatthaar, *March to the Sea and Beyond*, p. 130. Troops in other areas during the war, including Lee’s army as it marched to Gettysburg in the summer of 1863, similarly stripped areas of their food and sustenance, especially when traveling without wagon trains to transport supplies.

68 Eliza Tillinghast to David R. Tillinghast, May 3, 1865, Tillinghast Family Papers, Duke.

69 Edward W. Allen to James and Emily Allen, March 10, 1865, Edward W. Allen Papers #3737-z, SHC.

70 William T. Sherman to H. W. Slocum, March 6, 1865, OR, 47(2): 704; William T. Sherman to Judson Kilpatrick, March 7, 1865, OR, 47(2): 721.

numbers for something to eat.”⁷¹ Feeding everyone was increasingly difficult because “the fiends have killed every hog, chicken, taken all the cattle they could & killed the rest” and had “taken all the provisions every where.”⁷²

After a March 10 clash at Monroe’s Crossroads in which both sides claimed victory, Union troops headed to Fayetteville. On March 11, Sherman’s soldiers arrived in Fayetteville – a railroad town that Union soldiers found “offensively rebellious.” As a transportation and communication hub, Fayetteville was an important and traditional military target. Destroying the town, Sherman noted, would help lead to “the utter demolition of the Railroad System of South Carolina.” After all, “the utter destruction of the enemys arsenals at Columbia, Cheraw and Fayetteville are the Principals of the movement.” He was particularly pleased in his ability to enter Fayetteville because “These points were regarded as inaccessible to us, and now no place in the Confederacy is safe against the Army of the West.” He knew that his success in marching his 60,000 Union troops through the heart of the Confederacy showed his ability to go anywhere and do what he wished. “Let Lee hold on to Richmond, and we will destroy his Country, and then of what use is Richmond.”⁷³

Sherman was not content to just reach the town. As he had done in Atlanta and other cities along his march, Sherman targeted the military infrastructure to keep them from the use of Confederates even after his departure. In his Special Orders No. 28, Sherman detailed to his commanders that he wanted the arsenal, tanneries, factories, and other buildings destroyed.⁷⁴ Almost immediately upon entering it, his troops burned the local arsenal and mills, tore up the railroads, and foraged where they could.⁷⁵ As “flames towered above” the houses across her street, one woman described her house filling “with the women & children of the neighborhood children screaming & everyone frightened almost to death.”⁷⁶ As the fires burned, Union soldiers

71 William T. Sherman to H. W. Slocum, March 6, 1865, OR, 47(2): 704; William T. Sherman to Judson Kilpatrick, March 7, 1865, OR, 47(2): 721. On continued domestic warfare in North Carolina, see Frank, *Civilian War*, esp. pp. 73–5. Ellen Devereaux Hinsdale to Child, March 23, [1865], Hinsdale Family Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke.

72 Ellen Devereaux Hinsdale to Child, March 23, [1865], Hinsdale Family Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke.

73 William T. Sherman to Edwin M. Stanton, March 12, 1865, in Simpson and Berlin (eds.), *Sherman’s Civil War*, p. 825.

74 William T. Sherman, Special Field Orders No. 28, March 11, 1865, OR, 47(3): 779.

75 George Ward Nichols, March 14, 1865, in *The Story of the Great March from the Diary of a Staff Officer* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), pp. 252–3.

76 Ellen Devereaux Hinsdale to Child, March 23, [1865], Hinsdale Family Papers, Duke.

spread out in the small town and began looting other homes. After Sherman left her hometown, a Fayetteville woman complained that the Union soldiers “spared nothing but our lives”⁷⁷ and another bemoaned that “were we to live a million years the 11th of March will be one of the darkest spots in our memories.”⁷⁸

The sexual assault of women continued in the Union’s campaign in North Carolina. While most soldiers merely frightened and humiliated civilians with property crimes, Sherman’s army earned a reputation for being “rather loose on the handle.”⁷⁹ Officers punished the rape of white women, whose race and class provided some privileges and protections. One Union soldier reported that “One poor fellow was Shot the day I arrived here for Committing a Rape.”⁸⁰ Another reported that “There was an[other] execution in the 14th A.C. that day of a soldier for committing a rape on an ‘old lady’ I did not hear the particulars.” In addition, “We had a Review & inspection of our Div. this P.M. and after them a man was ‘drummed out’ by the whole Div. for attempting to commit a rape on a young woman, I did not hear any particulars of this case yet.”⁸¹ Private James Preble “attempted to rape” two women and “did by physical force and violence commit rape upon the person of one Miss Letitia Craft” in North Carolina.⁸² African American women, not surprisingly, suffered similarly. Even as they served in an emancipatory army, Sherman’s soldiers rarely believed in racial equality and shared similar attitudes about the availability of black women. Furthermore, they rarely suffered consequences for their sexual assaults on African American women.

After Fayetteville, Sherman’s men struck at the many smaller and often poorer communities in North Carolina. These towns included places like Averbosboro, Bentonville, Clinton, and Goldsboro. As the soldiers approached and entered each community, households filled with anxiety. Catherine Edmondston, for example, seethed with anger after hearing “negro news,” which she credited as “reliable,” of a raid through Northampton county that included the burning of “Jackson a small town about 12 miles from us.” She

77 Anonymous Woman [Fayetteville, NC], March 22, 1865, Emma Mordecai Diary, Mordecai Family Papers, SHC.

78 Sarah Tillinghast to David R. Tillinghast, Tillinghast Family Papers, Duke.

79 John “General Jack” Casement to Francis Marion Jennings Casement, April 2, 1865, Casement Collection, Huntington Library.

80 Ibid.

81 Charles Brown Tomkins to Mollie Tomkins, April 2, 1865, Charles Brown Tomkins Papers, Duke.

82 As quoted in Feimster, *Southern Horrors*, p. 20.

was especially furious because she heard the town “was burned in the night without giving the inhabitants warning or allowing them to save anything.”⁸³

Elsewhere, Union soldiers offered similar descriptions of the widespread destruction in North Carolina. A Wisconsin soldier, for example, described Goldsboro where Union soldiers “destroyed a great deal . . . destroyed and burned. Many of them are carrying away great quantities of silver and gold and they say they could find loads of silverware, because nearly every house contains all sorts of dishes of silver.”⁸⁴ The invading soldiers took larger pieces, too, seizing “tankards of silver holding many gallons and filled them with brandy, etc.”⁸⁵ However, as they had done in Georgia and South Carolina, they ultimately “emptied them and threw them away because they could not carry them away.”⁸⁶ Even smaller items eventually littered the paths traveled by the soldiers. “Knives of solid silver (both handles and blades), and forks, and large serving trays three to four feet across of pure silver and richly engraved and thicker than a silver dollar were thrown away and burned, etc.”⁸⁷

As Sherman and his troops continued to make their way through North Carolina toward Goldsboro, they faced little military resistance. Johnston and his much smaller force were retreating and waiting for reinforcements. Their smaller size allowed them to move quickly and made it difficult for the Union army to catch them. As a result, there was little military fighting along the path through North Carolina. The Battle of Averasboro (March 16, 1865) was one of only a few military skirmishes on the campaign. Although it was a relatively short and small battle, Averasboro resulted in significant casualties for both sides: 682 for the Union and 500 for the Confederacy.⁸⁸ It, too, rattled civilians’ nerves and turned their once safe homes into dangerous front lines. During the battle, Janie Smith and her family “could hear the commands and the groans & shrieks of the wounded.”⁸⁹ Her proximity to the battle brought other terrors. Smith also had to confront battle casualties:

83 Catherine Edmondston, April 4, 1865, in Beth G. Crabtree and James W. Patton (eds.), *“Journal of a Secesh Lady”: The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereaux Edmondston, 1860–1866* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 1979), p. 688.

84 William O. Wettleston to Parents and Sisters, April 4, 1865, Wiley Files, Emory. 85 Ibid.

86 Ibid. 87 Ibid.

88 For a description of the battles of Averasboro and Bentonville, see Mark L. Bradley, *Last Stand in the Carolinas: The Battle of Bentonville* (Campbell, CA: Savas Publishing Company, 1996), pp. 132–3.

89 [Janie Smith] to Janie N. Robeson, April 12, 1865, Mrs. Thomas H. Webb Collection, North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

The infirmary was here and oh it makes me shudder when I think of the awful sights I witnessed that morning Ambulance after ambulance drove up loaded with our wounded One half of the house was pressed for the soldiers but owing to the close proximity of the Enemy they only sent in the sick. But every barn & out house was filled and under every shed & tree the tables were carried for amputating the limbs. I first felt like my head would burst when I would see our poor brave men rushing into the battle and then coming back so mangled.⁹⁰

Despite her attempts to do so, she claimed that “The scene beggars description. The blood lay in puddles in the grove, the groans of the dying & the complaints of those undergoing amputation was horrible, the painful impression has seared my very heart. I can never forget it.”⁹¹ Throughout the ordeal, Smith and the other women of her family “kept busy making and rolling bandages and sending nourishment to the sick & wounded until orders came to leave home.”⁹² After spending much energy caring for the wounded, “Then was my trial leaving our poor suffering Soldiers when I could have been relieving them some. As we passed the wounded going to the woods, they would beseech us not to go.”⁹³ Her experiences with wounded soldiers as well as with invading enemy troops intensified her dislike of the Yankees:

When our army invades the North I want them to carry a torch in one hand and the sword in the other. I want desolation carried to the heart of their Country, the widows & orphans left naked & starving just as ours were left. I know you’ll think this a very unbecoming sentiment but I believe it is our only policy now.⁹⁴

Further inciting Confederate women’s rage at Union tactics was the soldiers’ treatment of enslaved Africans. After some of “Sherman’s bummers” had visited her home, Annie Jones “found our servants in the most distressed condition.” The soldiers “got drunk, made the negroes come in our house with them & while one played the piano, they all danced soldiers and negroes – a perfect saturnalia! The poor women were frightened to death and were obliged to obey.”⁹⁵ Janie Smith was infuriated by the enemy soldiers’ behavior toward her and her enslaved workers. “Mr. Sherman I think is pursuing the wrong policy to accomplish his designs. The negroes are bitterly prejudiced to his minions They were treated if possible worse

90 Ibid. 91 Ibid. 92 Ibid. 93 Ibid. 94 Ibid.

95 Annie Jones to Cadwallader Jones, March 6, 1865, Cadwallader Jones Papers #2487, SHC.

than the white folks; all their provisions taken and their clothes destroyed and some carried off.”⁹⁶

As he summarized his army’s movements, Sherman assessed his Carolinas campaign as a complete success. Focusing on the military destruction and detailing the army’s path, he reported that “Our march was substantially what I designed.” He was pleased that they had remained on course, initially marching “straight on Columbia feigning on Branchville & Augusta.” Along the way the troops had wreaked an immense amount of damage and had “destroyed in passing the Railroad from the Edisto nearly up to Aiken.” As they marched “from Orangeburg to the Congaree. Again from Columbia down to Kingsville and the Watersee, and up towards Charlotte as far as the Chester Line” they simultaneously tore up railroads and other property. The army then “turned east on Cheraw, and thence to Fayetteville.” Sherman particularly detailed the results they had achieved in Columbia where they “destroyed immense arsenals & Railroad establishments, among which were 43 cannon.” They had similar results in other urban areas. He was proud to report to Grant that “At Cheraw we found also machinery & material of war from Charleston among which 25 guns, and 3600 barrels of Gun powder. And here [Fayetteville] we find about 20 guns, and a magnificent U.S. arsenal.” With no guarantee that the war was coming to an end any time soon, Sherman justified his destruction because “We cannot afford to leave detachments, and I Shall therefore destroy this valuable arsenal for the Enemy shall not have its use, and the United States should never again confide such valuable property to a People who have betrayed a trust.”⁹⁷ As a result, he proudly assessed that “My March . . . besides its specific fruits actually produced a marked Effect on Lees Army, because fathers & sons in his Ranks felt a natural Solicitude about children or relations in the regions through which I had passed with Such relentless Effect.”⁹⁸ He had successfully shown Confederates what Union power could and would do to Rebels.

Sherman’s soldiers also saw the campaign as a great success. They realized that even Confederate cities that they did not invade felt the effects of the

96 [Janie Smith] to Janie N. Robeson, April 12, 1865, Mrs. Thomas H. Webb Collection, North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

97 William T. Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, March 12, 1865, in Simpson and Berlin (eds.), *Sherman’s Civil War*, p. 822.

98 William T. Sherman to Philemon B. Ewing, April 9, 1865, in Simpson and Berlin (eds.), *Sherman’s Civil War*, p. 852.

invasion. In March, as they streamed through North Carolina, one soldier proudly reported that “this trip is the best think in the wrld it has led the rebbels to vacuate charleston and willmington and menny other places.”⁹⁹ Union soldier Charles S. Brown enjoyed the effect he had on Southern civilians through his role as a part of Sherman’s army. He had “fun in Raleigh” because “I had the pleasure of being ordered to find out who wanted Guards &c&c in our section & to post them & I tell you I did I found out it was fun to hear their questions & some I did scare allmost to death the very name of ‘Shermans Bummers’ would cause all to turn pale and I made some I tell you.”¹⁰⁰

After battles at Averasboro and Bentonville (March 19–21), Sherman joined Brigadier General John Schofield at Goldsboro on March 23. Then, Sherman and nearly 100,000 men advanced toward Raleigh on April 10, and occupied that city on April 13. News of Robert E. Lee’s April 9 surrender to Grant, which did not reach Sherman until April 11, encouraged Confederates to try to broker a peace with Sherman. After three meetings to determine the terms, on April 26, 1865 Joseph Johnston surrendered his troops to Sherman at Durham Station, North Carolina. Sherman’s destructive home-front campaign in the Carolinas ended.

The Union’s Carolinas campaign was part of a larger effort to bring war home to Confederate civilians and to subsequently bring the war to a close. By marching through the Carolinas almost completely unobstructed by Confederate soldiers and unbothered by formal battles, Sherman and his soldiers demonstrated the futility of the larger Confederate war effort. More importantly, they used unconventional tactics to win the campaign, even though those tactics included punishing civilians and the home front. The Union’s assault on the Carolinas included the burning of homes, twisting of railroads, destroying of factories, and raiding of fields. In addition to these physical acts of military destruction, Union soldiers further attacked their enemies by entering homes and bedrooms, humiliating civilians, ransacking and destroying personal items, and otherwise striking psychologically and physically at white Southerner civilians’ personal worlds. This wholesale domestic attack successfully brought about the end of the Confederate war effort. After four long years of fighting, Sherman’s final campaign forced Confederate soldiers and commanders to reluctantly accept the necessity of

99 Thomas Ford to Mr. William, March 28, 1865, Ford Letter, Caroliniana.

100 Charles S. Brown to Mother and Etta, April 18, 1865, Charles S. Brown Papers, Duke.

surrender. Sherman's campaign became, as he had predicted it would, "proof positive that the North can prevail in this contest."¹⁰¹

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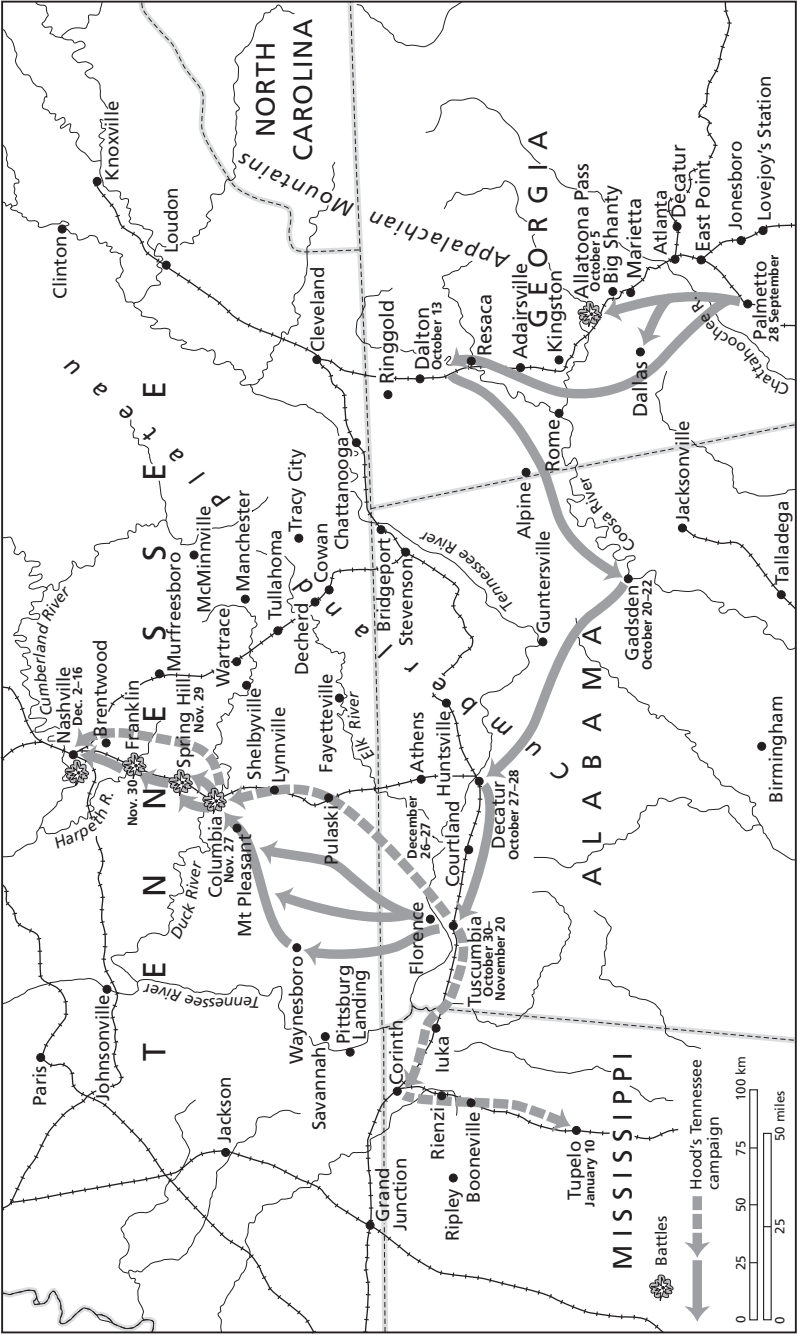
¹⁰¹ William T. Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, November 6, 1864, in Simpson and Berlin (eds.), *Sherman's Civil War*, p. 751.

The Tennessee Campaign, 1864

WILLIAM LEE WHITE

William Tecumseh Sherman's capture of Atlanta on September 2, 1864 delivered a massive blow to the rapidly diminishing hopes of the Confederacy. The city's fall practically ensured Lincoln's reelection, who maintained a vigorous war against the Confederacy. In the wake of the city's fall, its defenders, the Confederate Army of Tennessee, withdrew to the railhead of the West Point railroad at Palmetto Station, Georgia, about 25 miles south west of Atlanta. There, its controversial commander, the one-legged Lieutenant General John Bell Hood, took stock of the situation.¹ He rested, restructured, and repaired his army, which had been engaged almost constantly since the beginning of the campaign in May. Conditions were bleak, the army's officer corps was decimated, and heavy losses in the ranks made many of his regiments mere shadows of their former selves. Morale was at an all-time low. With this poor outlook, he decided on a new plan of action, proposing to strike at Sherman's supply lines in north Georgia. With this in mind he learned that President Jefferson Davis was on his way to inspect the army and confer with him and his corps commanders about future operations, as well as to inspire the army and the civilian population. Davis also came to investigate allegations about failures in Hood's leadership, notably from one of his corps commanders, General William J. Hardee. Upon his arrival he met with Hardee, who leveled an ultimatum that either he or Hood had to go, so Davis transferred Hardee to departmental command, giving command of his corps to General Frank Cheatham. Davis also met with other officers and delivered several

1 The recent publication of Hood's papers, *The Lost Papers of Confederate General John Bell Hood* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2015) has provided a great deal of insight into Hood on many levels as well as dispelling several myths about him, the most notable being that Hood did gain some use of his arm and dispelling the idea that Hood was addicted to laudanum.



18.1 The Tennessee campaign, 1864. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd. Military movements from William Lee White, *Let Us Die Like Men: The Battle of Franklin, November 30, 1864* (Savas Beatie, 2018).

encouraging speeches while inspecting the army. Finally, Davis met with Hood to talk about the army's future course of action.

Davis, always looking for an offensive move, was swayed by what Hood proposed and heartily approved the plan, but cautioned that should Sherman fail to take the bait and move into the interior of Georgia, then Hood should follow and block his advance. Davis also informed Hood that he was reestablishing the defunct Military Division of the West, a Department Command to oversee his and Richard Taylor's armies, under the command of General P. G. T. Beauregard. Davis placed Beauregard in this position to silence the increasing chorus of critics who wanted Hood replaced, however the position did not give Beauregard authority to direct Hood and was more of an advisory position. With his mission completed, Davis departed for a speaking tour of several cities to inspire the population, though he unwittingly alerted Sherman to Hood's plans, saying at one point, "it is in the power of the men of the Confederacy to plant our banners on the banks of the Ohio."² Davis's personal attention to the region demonstrated the importance of Hood's mission. After the fall of Atlanta, Hood commanded the largest Confederate army in the western theater and operated in a region still loyal to Richmond. For the Union, subduing Hood meant gaining permanent control of the middle corridor of the Confederacy west of the Appalachian Mountains.

Hood's Army of Tennessee crossed over the Chattahoochee on September 29 moving northward to destroy and disrupt Sherman's lines of supply and communication, while seeking to draw Sherman northward and find a location to bring him to battle and defeat him, somewhere in the North Georgia Mountains. General A. P. Stewart's corps and General William Jackson's cavalry division struck the first blow in a series of easy victories at Big Shanty, Acworth, and Moon Station on October 3 and 4, capturing the Union garrisons and ordering the men to destroy the railroad. Ultimately destroying 10 miles of track, Captain Boyce of the 1st Missouri Infantry noted, "to Destroy is a soldier's joy."³ Surgeon James M. Brannock observed, "I have scarcely ever seen a greater change that has taken place in the Army since the visit of President Davis. Lieutenant General Hood has published his plans to the whole army and by his course has gained the confidence of the men. I believe they will fight for him now as well as they

2 Jefferson Davis, "Jeff. Davis and Columbia," *New York Times*, October 26, 1864.

3 Joseph Boyce, *Captain Joseph Boyce and the 1st Missouri Infantry, CSA* (St. Louis: Missouri History Museum, 2011), p. 180.

would for Joe Johnston.”⁴ Sherman, now alerted to Hood’s movements, postponed his plans for moving deeper into Georgia. Leaving one corps to hold Atlanta, he ordered the rest of his forces northward in pursuit of the Confederates and alerted the garrisons on his supply lines back to Chattanooga. Sherman ordered General George Thomas to Nashville to gather a defense in case Hood made a move for Middle Tennessee. To assist him, Sherman also sent General David Stanley’s IV Corps, John Schofield’s XXIII Corps, and several cavalry divisions, while Sherman prepared the rest of his force to pursue Hood.

After his initial success, Hood ordered a more ambitious strike. General Samuel French’s division was ordered to attack the garrison of 976 men guarding Allatoona Pass, a formidable railroad cut through the Allatoona Mountains, 65 feet wide and 180 feet deep. French was to fill in the cut and destroy the railroad bridge over the Etowah River, a short distance to the north. French marched through the night arriving before the garrison just before daylight on October 5. Deploying his 3,276 men to assault from the west and north, he sent a demand for surrender: “I have placed forces under my command in such a position that you are surrounded and to avoid a needless effusion of blood, I call on you to surrender your forces at once and unconditionally.”⁵ Unknown to French, during the night 1,054 reinforcements arrived by rail, including the 7th Illinois Infantry armed with Henry repeating rifles, led by General John M. Corse, who assumed command of the garrison.

French’s men moved confidently forward and met a strong resistance, but onward they went and managed to drive back the Union defenders on the western side of the gap into an earthen fort that guarded that side of the pass. With heavy casualties and fighting at a standstill, reports of Sherman approaching from the south finally convinced French to break off the attack around 2:00 p.m. and withdraw to rejoin Stewart. The small affair had been brutal; French lost 897 while Corse lost 706.

Hood and the army did not seem to mind the setback; they had destroyed several cuts and about 25 miles of track as well as captured several garrisons. Hood’s men were in fine spirits, though some began displaying anger when they saw occupied communities and old battlefields of the previous spring, a trend that would continue as the campaign went on and they encountered

4 Quoted in Anne Bailey, *The Chessboard of War: Sherman and Hood in the Autumn Campaigns of 1864* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 34.

5 Samuel French, *Two Wars; The Autobiography of Gen. Samuel G. French, CSA* (Huntington, WV: Blue Acorn Press, 1999).

African American soldiers. Hood moved his forces farther north and west toward the Alabama state line. As the army moved on to Cave Springs, Beauregard arrived to confer with Hood. Hood explained that his plans were to keep striking at the railroad and draw Sherman into a battle.

Hood decided to streamline the army to make it more mobile, sending a large part of his wagon train and part of his artillery west to Jacksonville, Alabama. He also welcomed the return of the bulk of his cavalry. Its commander, Major General Joe Wheeler, had departed from Hood in August to launch what turned into a rather disastrous raid on Sherman's supply lines. The result saw his cavalry corps spread from southwest Virginia to central Alabama. Having reassembled what remained of his command he returned to Hood, meeting with him on October 8. Hood continued north toward the town of Rome, but then moved eastward to strike the railroad again. The Confederates arrived before the old battlefield of Resaca on October 12. Since its abandonment by the Confederates the previous May, Union troops constructed Fort Philips and an extensive series of fortifications to protect the town and the railroad bridge over the Oostanaula River. Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee's 7,000-man corps confronted the garrison of 600 men as the rest of the army moved northward behind him. Stewart's corps hit the railroad a few miles to the north as Cheatham continued the march northward toward Dalton. At Resaca, Lee called for an "immediate and unconditional surrender," adding that if refused, "no prisoners will be taken."⁶ The change in tone was brought on by the knowledge that United States Colored Troops (USCT) were known to be on duty in the area, though none were there. The Union commander refused the demand and prepared for defense of the town. Lee tested the defenses, but ultimately decided against an assault.

Hood's soldiers destroyed the railroad tracks at every opportunity. General Patrick Cleburne noted the process of railroad destruction:

The men would lift shear up one hundred yards of the track at once and then pitch the immense grating of wood and iron over on its back. The heavy fall would break rails and cross ties loose. The shouting of the long lines of lifters, the ringing of pick and ax heads against the iron pins fastening the rails to the wood, the interminable line of fires as the cross ties were given to the flames,

6 United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 39, part 1, p. 753 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).

the thousands of columns of smoke, the scene so suddenly and completely changed.⁷

On October 13 Hood and Cheatham arrived before Dalton, which was garrisoned by about 800 men from several companies of the 44th United States Colored Troops, recruited from escaped enslaved men from the surrounding area the previous spring and summer, and several white units, all commanded by Colonel Lewis Johnson of the 44th. Hood sent in the demand for surrender and, mirroring the language of Lee at Resaca, warned Johnson, "I demand the immediate and unconditional surrender of the post and garrison under your command, and should this be acceded to, all white officers and soldiers will be paroled in a few days. If the place is carried by assault, no prisoners will be taken."⁸

For the second time in just a few days Hood was demonstrating a dark turn in Confederate protocol and going against the accepted laws of war in regards to the treatment of prisoners of war. Johnson initially refused but then requested an interview with Hood and complained about the terms being offered, to which Hood told him that, "he could not restrain his men, and would not if he could; that I could choose between surrender and death." After Johnson was shown the Confederate positions and numbers he determined that any resistance was futile and begrudgingly surrendered the garrison. What followed, the first real interaction that the soldiers of the Army of Tennessee had with African American soldiers, turned into an ugly and violent encounter. Spencer Talley, a Tennessee officer, recalled,

we took the white men as prisoners but the negroes were taken as livestock or other property. The separation of these white officers from their negro commands was an interesting as well as sickening scene to our southern boys. The White officers in bidding farewell with their colored men showed in no uncertain way their love and devotion to the colored race. Their hearty handshakes and expressions of sorrow over their separation will never be forgotten.⁹

With word of Sherman approaching Resaca and with the large Chattanooga garrison to the north, Hood once again diverted his army westward, pushing through the little hamlet of Villanow, where the officers of the 44th USCT

7 *The Long Lost Diary of Major General Patrick Cleburne: The Tennessee Campaign of 1864* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016), p. 16.

8 OR, 44: 737.

9 Diary of Lieutenant Spencer B. Talley, Thomas Longstreet Library, Chickamauga and Chattanooga NMP.

were paroled and notice was sent out for local slaveholders to claim any of the men of the 44th as runaways.

Meanwhile, Sherman was finally closing in trying to catch Hood, who was pushing through Snake Creek Gap against the rear guard of Lee's corps. Sherman then turned his forces westward in pursuit of Hood's main army, overwhelming a rear-guard force at Shipp's Gap while more Union troops moved south from Chattanooga. A tightening net of blue convinced Hood he needed to move if he was not willing to offer battle around LaFayette, which he was not. Scrapping his original plan, Hood moved southwest toward the Alabama state line, crossing over into that state at the little border town of Gaylesville and then on to the vicinity of Gadsden, Alabama. Meeting with Beauregard at Jacksonville, Alabama, Hood offered up a new plan: to move toward Guntersville, Alabama on the Tennessee River, cross there and move into Middle Tennessee and then on to Nashville.

As the Confederate generals planned and the army rested, Sherman gathered his forces at Gaylesville. Sherman's frustration with chasing Hood was high, and he intended to break off the chase and move his army back to Atlanta and push on into the interior of Georgia. Finally, receiving word from Grant that he was clear to do so, he set off from Gaylesville to Atlanta. Hood meanwhile was setting out on his move, but learning that Union gunboats on the Tennessee River would prevent a crossing of the Tennessee at Guntersville, he changed his plan again. Hood rerouted his army west toward the town of Decatur, Alabama, intending to cross the river there. The Union commander of the District of North Alabama, General Robert Granger, watched for Hood. One of his patrols clashed with Hood's approaching column on October 26, and within a few hours Hood was investing the fortified town of Decatur. As the Confederates confronted the town, it began to rain heavily and continued for several days, adding to Hood's woes as he worked to try to find a weak point in Union defenses.

Meanwhile, reinforcements were on their way for the beleaguered Union garrison. The 14th USCT was dispatched from the garrison at Chattanooga, along with two timberclad gunboats, part of the riverine naval force that patrolled the Tennessee River from Chattanooga to Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Seeing now that Decatur was too strong – a newspaper correspondent termed it “a hard nut to crack” – and unwilling to hazard the heavy losses that would be entailed by assaulting the town, Hood decided to break off from the town and instead once again move westward to find another point

to cross the Tennessee.¹⁰ He arrived at Tuscumbia, Alabama, and the Army of Tennessee arrived on October 31. Hood planned to stay there only a short time, until he gathered enough rations for twenty days of campaigning and Nathan Bedford Forrest arrived with his mounted men, but this proved to be a much greater task than he anticipated. Precious time slipped away for Hood and by November 17 Hood only had seven days' worth of rations on hand. Nonetheless, on November 20 Hood finally began crossing his whole force over the Tennessee, a process that took till the following day as the weather turned bitterly cold.

Now reunited, the march northward began. One of Hood's soldiers described Hood proclaiming, "we will have some hard marching and some fighting, but that he is not going to risk a chance for defeat in Tenn., that he will not fight in Tenn. unless he has equal number of men and choice of the ground."¹¹ Hood planned to move his army of 40,000 rapidly into Tennessee to flank Union general John Schofield, whose command had been ordered by Thomas to Pulaski, Tennessee. Hood moved out with his force in three columns with Forrest's troopers in the van. However, the weather continued to deteriorate, turning the roads into frozen mud, and slowing the pace of the army considerably. One Confederate, Sergeant Sumner Cunningham noted, "the artillery and wagons cutting through mud to the hubs. Our impatience made the march seem very long." But morale remained high, as the army began to cross over into their namesake state. Locals stretched a banner over the road, welcoming and warning the soldiers, "Tennessee, a grave or a free home."¹² Despite this grim welcome, the army's morale surged though the weather remained frigid.

Schofield was not taken by surprise though. His cavalry detected Hood's movements and reported to Thomas at Nashville. Thomas ordered Schofield to leave Pulaski and fall back rapidly toward Columbia, 30 miles behind him. General Jacob Cox led the way with Schofield's XXIII Corps, and General David Stanley followed with the IV Corps. Schofield's withdrawal was accompanied by another column as well. Pulaski was the site of a large contraband camp and the formerly enslaved African Americans also hurried northward to escape reenslavement or worse if they fell into Confederate hands. Their journey would not end until they reached Nashville, where they

¹⁰ OR, 39(1): 699.

¹¹ Norman D. Brown (ed.), *One of Cleburne's Command: The Civil War Reminiscences and Diary of Capt. Samuel T. Foster* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1980), p. 145.

¹² John A. Simpson (ed.), *Sumner A. Cunningham Reminiscences of the 41st Tennessee: The Civil War in the West* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Books, 2001), p. 93.

joined the already overpopulated contraband camps there. Cox arrived in the vicinity of Columbia on November 23, moving his divisions west of the town to greet Hood's advancing columns.

The Union cavalry had their hands full with Forrest as they tried to slow the Confederate advance on Columbia, which by the 23rd had only a small force of infantry guarding it. Cox's infantry formed up along Bigby Creek as the Union horsemen withdrew into Columbia. Soon, Confederate cavalry pushed forward, expecting to once again drive back the Union troopers, but running into Union infantry, a sharp engagement followed that ended with the Confederate troopers withdrawing. Schofield's men continued to file into Columbia and soon occupied a defensive position around the town. Hood's infantry and artillery arrived soon after and confronted Schofield.

Hood now saw an opportunity to once again try to flank the Union forces and gain their rear, this time at the little village of Spring Hill, 8 miles behind Schofield. To accomplish this, he left S. D. Lee and the bulk of the army's artillery to hold Schofield in place, while Cheatham's and Stewart's corps along with Forrest's cavalry crossed the Duck River at Davis's Ford, a short distance east of Columbia. To ensure speed there would be only limited artillery with the column along with a number of gunners to man the cannon they expected to capture. On the morning of November 29, Forrest's command, advancing from three points against the Union cavalry, had little trouble in driving them northward. By late afternoon, Forrest had completely brushed Brigadier General James H. Wilson aside and was riding rapidly on Spring Hill from the east. Hood's infantry was having a harder time. The Davis Ford road was abandoned, in poor condition, besides being narrow and curvy, and it was taking much longer than expected to arrive at Spring Hill.

As Forrest clashed with Wilson, Cheatham and Stewart trudged north, and Schofield began to suspect something was wrong. Then he received word from a reconnaissance that Hood's infantry was flanking him, again. Schofield ordered his wagon train and most of his artillery to Spring Hill with General George Wagner's division of the IV Corps. General David Stanley was sent to Spring Hill to assume command of the defense. As they neared Spring Hill, they heard the unmistakable sound of gunfire to the east of town. Stanley ordered Wagner to quickly move into town and prepare to repulse the rapidly approaching threat. Wagner's men formed a perimeter around the town as Forrest's horsemen came rushing upon them. Forrest failed to carry the position and withdrew to await the arrival of Hood and the infantry. Cheatham's corps arrived on the scene around 5:00 p.m. with Hood,

who ordered him to “take possession of and hold that pike at or near Spring Hill.”¹³ After issuing orders to distribute his forces, Hood left the field to establish his headquarters at a nearby home. Things soon collapsed, as part of Patrick Cleburne’s line clashed with a portion of Stanley’s line as the sun set, forcing him to divert his advance and move north toward the town before being forced to halt.

Chaos ruled the night as the fighting sputtered out as some Confederate units stopped a matter of a few yards from the turnpike, but did not block it. Cheatham refused to push them forward because he did not support night attacks. Conflicting stories flowed back to Hood from his generals as well as from some individual soldiers, but finally assured that the Union’s escape route was blocked, he went to sleep expecting that victory was his. That was not the case. All through the night Schofield’s columns moved up from Columbia and passed right by their opponents, in some cases only a few yards from where they marched. By dawn the next morning, the Union forces were out of Spring Hill and on their way to the town of Franklin, 14 miles further to the north. He later wrote that it was “the biggest day’s work I ever accomplished for the United States.”¹⁴ When Hood awoke the next morning he found Schofield had escaped his trap, later bitterly noting, “The best move of my career as a soldier, I was thus destined to behold come to naught.”¹⁵

Hood met with several of his key officers for breakfast and expressed his displeasure with the failures of the previous evening. One staff officer described him as “wrathy as a rattlesnake . . . striking at everything.”¹⁶ But Hood could not afford to remain inactive and brood. He moved his forces in pursuit of Schofield. The Union troops were then arriving at the town of Franklin, located in a bend of the Harpeth River. Schofield was bordering on panic. Hood nearly caught him at Spring Hill and now finding the Harpeth flooding and the wagon bridge washed away, he would have to remain until the bridges were repaired. Schofield ordered Cox to take charge of the defense and deploy Union forces in “position . . . to hold Hood back at all hazards till we get our trains over.”¹⁷ The infantry began to dig in with

13 John Bell Hood, *Advance and Retreat: Personal Experiences in the United States and Confederate States Armies* (Philadelphia, PA: Burk and McFertige, 1880), p. 284.

14 David Sloane Stanley, *Personal Memoirs of Major General D. S. Stanley* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), p. 195.

15 Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, p. 290.

16 Henry M. Field, *Bright Skies: Dark Shadows* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890), p. 219.

17 Jacob D. Cox, *The Battle of Franklin, Tennessee, November 30, 1864* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1897), p. 39.

determination, strengthening their works with whatever they could find from the surrounding area. At several points along the line orange and locust trees were cut down and incorporated into the defenses, making several nearly impenetrable points along the line. The IV Corps batteries then deployed at points along or immediately behind the lines. A battery also made its way to Fort Granger, an earthen fort built on the northeast side of Franklin on a high bluff above the Harpeth in 1863. The land to the south of these defenses was largely open crop fields, over rolling ground, for about 2 miles ending at a series of hills, on which Wagner's division took up a defensive position on a line of hills and waited.

As Hood's men advanced northward they found abandoned equipment and wagons, the sight emboldening and encouraging the men. By mid-afternoon the Confederate vanguard was skirmishing with Wagner's men as the rest of the army followed on the Columbia Turnpike. Wagner ordered his men to fall back from the line of hills to a point about halfway to Union mainline. On a slight rise he began deploying his remaining two brigades in open fields to either side of the Columbia Turnpike, where they began to dig in as best they could in their exposed position. Their work continued as they began to see the Confederates pouring over the hills beyond them and deploying to make an assault. When Hood arrived at the front, he rode to the top of Winstead Hill, on the west side of the Columbia Turnpike, and surveyed Schofield's positions.

Having tried twice to flank Schofield, with daylight rapidly fading and seeing this as his last chance to stop Schofield from joining Thomas, he decided to attack. Hood met with his commanders and laid out the situation before them. Though Forrest and Cleburne expressed concern and opposition, Hood was not deterred. With Lee and the artillery still making their way up from Franklin he would have only Cheatham's and Stewart's corps and the few batteries that had accompanied them along with Forrest's cavalrymen. With sunset around 4:30 he could not afford to wait and the Army of Tennessee began to take its positions to launch a frontal assault. There was little illusion among the men in the ranks and their officers about what was to come. Indeed the final meeting of Cleburne and his brigade commanders set the tone. As the meeting broke up and they moved to return to their brigades, General Daniel Govan said to Cleburne, "well General, there will not be many of us that will get back to Arkansas." Cleburne responded, "well, Govan, if we are to die, let us die like men."¹⁸ This view reflected the

¹⁸ Irving A. Buck, *Cleburne and His Command* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1908), p. 339.

convictions of many within the army that day that the Confederacy was dying. Many diehard soldiers in the army could not imagine being defeated by their hated foes or a world without chattel slavery: they would rather die than see it.¹⁹

Hood attacked on a wide front. Stewart's corps formed up east of the Columbia Turnpike, while Cheatham formed his divisions to the west of Stewart's. By 4:00 p.m. all was ready and then with the wave of a signal flag bands began to play, bugles sounded the advance, and the Army of Tennessee marched forward. A Union staff officer took note, "it was a grand sight such as would make a lifelong impression on the mind of any man who could see such a resistless, well coordinated charge. For the moment we were spellbound with admiration, although they were our hated foes; as we knew that in a few brief moments as soon as they reached firing distance, all that orderly grandeur would be changed to bleeding writhing confusion."²⁰ Indeed, the pageantry did not last long. Union artillery opened fire along the line and from Fort Granger. Wagner's advanced position proved to be a double-edged sword. Though Wagner's two brigades were left vulnerable in their exposed position, they were going to delay Cheatham, and instead of a solid line of Confederates striking the Union line, they would strike piecemeal.

As Cleburne and Major General John C. Brown engaged Wagner, Stewart advanced through the fields of the massive Carnton plantation complex, finding obstacles in the woodlots, fences, and ultimately in the plantation itself. However, on his left, French's division seemed to make better time, until one of his brigades struck the eastern tip of Wagner's line, which caused his other brigade, Brigadier General Francis Cockrell's 1st Missouri Brigade, to surge forward alone, and, unhindered, they would have the distinction of striking the Union main line, alone, unsupported on both flanks. Cockrell later reported that his command, "hurled themselves against the works. It was grand and terrible in the extreme. Almost all were killed and wounded very near the works or in the ditches of the works. I have no language to paint the scene."²¹ Indeed the Missouri Brigade was nearly obliterated, suffering 419

19 Jason Phillips, *Diehard Rebels: The Confederate Culture of Invincibility* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007); George Rable, *Damn Yankees! Demonization and Defiance in the Confederate South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015).

20 Levi Schofield, *The Retreat from Pulaski to Nashville, Tenn* (Cleveland, OH: Press of the Caxton, 1909), p. 34.

21 Francis Marion Cockrell, "The War in their Words: 'No Man Wavered,'" *Civil War Times* (December 2017): 55–6.

casualties out of the 696 men present. As the Missourians reeled back, seeking shelter in the swales of the ground or in the ditch of the Union works, the rest of Stewart's corps charged forward, part of them now coming to a dead halt a short distance in front of the now blazing Union works, due to the impassable Osage orange hedge. One Union officer later described the fighting: "they never flinched; but defiantly moved on until they struck the hedge, where they were balked as completely as though they had run against a Chinese wall. They made desperate efforts to penetrate it without avail. Human nature couldn't stand the destructive fire that was rained upon them."

All the while, blasts of gunfire tore through their ranks as men swore, screamed, cried, and shouted, and, combining with the Rebel yell, the noise created a cacophony of hell that was noted even among the roar of battle. At points where they could get to the works there was severe hand-to-hand fighting, but the Confederates could not break the line, before the survivors either withdrew or sought what shelter they could near the lines. Wagner and his men realized their vulnerability once the Confederate advance began, but by then it was too late. As soon as Cheatham's men came within range they opened fire, and momentarily checked the Confederates, but then they recovered and surged toward Wagner's line, which caused the Union troops to break and run back toward the main line in a flight that one Confederate later described as "Devil take the hindmost." Seeing Wagner's men running, some Confederates began to shout, "go in the works with them! Go into the works with them!" And now a race began for the Union center.

The Union forces along the main line waited, holding their fire as their comrades raced toward them, being unable to fire lest they kill their own comrades, but finally the order was given to fire. "It seemed to me that hell itself had exploded in our face" remembered General George W. Gordon of Brown's division.²² The blast of fire ripped through both Confederate and Union soldiers, and though staggering the line, it did not stop it. Portions of Brown's and Cleburne's men clambered over the works or through the gap in the main line around where the Columbia Turnpike came through. Now a combination of factors came together. A second line of defense had been constructed in this area, through the farm of Fountain Branch Carter, and was occupied by a newly recruited regiment of Missourians, who despite the odds held their position as did a brigade made up of a regiment of new

22 George W. Gordon, "General P. R. Cleburne", *Southern Historical Society Papers*, vol. XVIII, (Richmond: Southern Historical Society, 1890): 267.

recruits, and Southern Unionists. All of this occurred just as Brigadier General Samuel E. Opydyke ordered his brigade forward toward the Carter House, arriving on the scene just as the Confederates pushed in among the buildings. A brutal hand-to-hand fight occurred on both sides of the turnpike as the combined Union force pushed the Confederates back to the main line and sealed the breach. Fighting would continue along this front until the end of the battle, with combatants separated from each other by the earthen walls of the Union main line. Major General William B. Bate's division was slowed by the distance they had to cover to reach the position on Brown's left, and thus did not advance at the same time. Brown and Cleburne were already repulsed when Bate brought his three brigades into action onto a now rapidly darkening battlefield, only to be repulsed in turn, his men falling back a short distance. As Bate came into position to launch his attack, Hood ordered the lead division of S. D. Lee's corps, Major General Edward Johnson's division, into the fight. Johnson moved forward in darkness, guiding his movements toward the flashes of gunfire. Lee later wrote, "it looked as if the division was moving into the very door of hell, lighted up with it sulphurous flames."²³ Johnson's attack stumbled forward in the darkness, and, like Bate before him, he failed to break the Union defenses.

Fighting continued sporadically along the front, but no larger attacks were launched. Jacob Cox now saw an opportunity, sending word back to Schofield he urged that a counterattack now could very well end the Army of Tennessee, but Schofield would hear none of it and ordered withdrawal. By 3:00 a.m. they were across the Harpeth and headed to Nashville, leaving Hood with the field. When the sun rose over that field, it was an appalling site, even for the battle-hardened veterans of the Army of Tennessee. Lieutenant Colonel C. Irvine Walker of the 10th South Carolina recalled, "I never saw such a sight in my life, the dead, dying, wounded everywhere. I could hardly walk without stepping in a pool of blood or on the remains of some gallant comrade."²⁴ Hood's attack at the Battle of Franklin on November 30 had cost the army 6,252 casualties out of the roughly 20,000 men who made the attack, including the loss of six generals killed, five wounded and one captured. Schofield, meanwhile, counted the loss of 2,326 men, a large portion being captured when Wagner's line was overrun.

23 Stephen Dill Lee, "Johnson's Division in the Battle of Franklin," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, vol. 7 (Oxford, MS: The Mississippi Historical Society, 1903), p. 79.

24 C. Irvine Walker, *Great Things Are Expected of Us: The Letters of Colonel C. Irvine Walker, 10th South Carolina Infantry* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2009), p. 180.

Schofield made his way on to Nashville without any further problems from Hood. With his arrival Thomas now had 55,000 men, having gathered garrison troops from all across the state, including USCT regiments, newly recruited regiments, and Andrew Jackson Smith's hard-marching division from Missouri. The Confederate Army of Tennessee was just a shell of its former self, numbering less than half of what Thomas held, but Hood pushed on to the city. The options that Hood had on the morning of December 1 were very poor: he could retreat, which was not even considered; he could bypass Nashville and move into Kentucky and toward the Ohio River, but that would leave Thomas and his forces in his rear; he could attack, which was also not considered given the condition his army was now in; or, finally, what he chose to do: move to Nashville to take up a strong defensive position and wait for Thomas to attack him and hope for a mistake to be made.

When Hood arrived before the city, he faced the problem of how to deploy his army. Nashville had seven main roads leading into it from the southwest, due south and southeast. Hood posted his forces across the two railroads that ran into the city from the south, cutting the city off from reinforcements from the garrison at Murfreesboro and any others that might be sent up from Chattanooga. Hood ordered a move against the Murfreesboro garrison, but the campaign proved to be an embarrassing failure for Bate and Forrest, and Bate returned to Hood's lines around Nashville on December 9, while Forrest remained behind to keep the Union forces there in check. This detachment left Hood with fewer than 20,000 men to face Thomas, and he stretched them in a thin line covering nearly 5 miles. Hood ordered Brigadier General James R. Chalmers's cavalry division to watch for any movements by the Union forces. Hood's line still did not control all the roads leading into the city from both the southeast and southwest because he did not have enough men left.

Even worse, on December 8 the weather turned bitterly cold and it began snowing and sleeting, making life for the Confederates especially miserable. The wretched weather also made things difficult for Thomas. He was finishing plans to attack Hood and now those had to be postponed until the weather improved. This did not sit well with Ulysses Grant, who urged Thomas to attack earlier. Grant even considered leaving Petersburg and going to Nashville himself to take command from Thomas. Finally, on the afternoon of December 13 the temperatures warmed and on the following day Thomas issued his orders for the attack on Hood. General James Steedman moved out with his provisional division consisting of two USCT brigades and one brigade of rear echelon white troops. Steedman's orders from Thomas were to demonstrate against the Confederate right and

hold them in place as long as possible, as the real attack would strike Stewart's corps flank near the Hillsboro Pike. Steedman chose Colonel Thomas Morgan's USCT brigade to lead the assault. They moved out through the chill morning fog toward the flank of Cheatham's position and overran the Confederate rifle pits and even part of the works before being caught under fire from a lunette constructed just east of a deep cut of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. One Confederate artilleryman noted upon seeing African American soldiers marching toward them, "it excited in our men the intensest indignation."²⁵

Through it all Morgan's men took heavy casualties before being repulsed. However, their mission was a success: all eyes were on their attack, instead of on their left from where the main threat was coming. Against Stewart, Thomas sent Major General Thomas J. Wood's and A. J. Smith's divisions and Wilson's cavalry corps. The massive assault rolled over Stewart's flank, overwhelming a series of five redoubts, constructed to protect that flank, and buckling the Confederate line. Stewart's men fled to the southeast toward the Granny White Pike, as Hood belatedly rushed troops from Cheatham's and Lee's corps to try to staunch the collapse, but it was too late. That evening Hood ordered a withdrawal of his forces back to the Overton Hills, where he established another line, this one more compact. The men worked through the night digging a new line of defense in the muddy ground.

By dawn, they had a slight line of works prepared. Thomas's plan remained much the same as the one from the day before: Steedman would attack the Confederate right at Overton Hill as a diversion while the main assault consisting of Schofield's XXIII Corps, A. J. Smith's division, and Wilson's cavalry corps would sweep down on Cheatham's line and crush it. Steedman once again struck the Confederate defenses and heavy fighting resulted with his USCTs bearing the brunt of the fight and taking heavy casualties in their assault. On the Confederate right the Union troops came crashing down on Cheatham like a tidal wave of blue; Bate's division was overwhelmed as Schofield, Smith, and Wilson converged on his position from three directions simultaneously. The collapse of Bate's division caused a chain reaction throughout the rest of Cheatham's line spreading into Stewart's as Union troops pressed their advantage. Wilson's cavalrymen swung wide around Cheatham's flank and cut his route of retreat to the

25 Phillip D. Stephenson, *The Civil War Memoir of Phillip Daingerfield Stephenson* (Conway: The University of Central Arkansas Press, 1995), p. 320.

south causing the Confederate fugitives to stream eastward toward Overton Hill and the Franklin Pike. At this critical moment more pressure was put on Lee by Steedman, but he managed to hold his position long enough for Stewart and Cheatham to reach the Franklin Pike to make their escape. Lee, now commanding the only intact corps of the army, along with a few scattered brigades, fought determinedly to allow their comrades to escape, before they pulled back. Lee assumed the duties of the rear guard for the fleeing army, if indeed it could still be called an army.

On December 16 the Battle of Nashville was over, Hood had lost nearly 6,000 men, 1,500 killed and wounded, while over 4,500 were captured. Now, whether the Army of Tennessee would survive the retreat was the question. The retreat was a nightmarish ordeal that lasted for the next ten days and covered over 100 miles in the December cold and rain. Throughout the night of December 16 the mob of soldiers made their way south in a cold drizzling rain through Brentwood and on toward Franklin, where they hoped to find some safety on the other side of the Harpeth River. During the night Wilson, pushed forward with his cavalry in pursuit and almost immediately clashed with one of Chalmers's cavalry brigades that had constructed a barricade across the Granny White Pike. In the ensuing melee the commander, US colonel Sylvester G. Hill, was wounded and captured and his men driven back, but time had been bought. The following day, Hood's forces reached Franklin and managed to cross the now rising Harpeth River while Lee's corps fought several engagements with Wilson, though Lee himself was wounded and knocked out of action, being replaced by General Carter Stevenson. Things were touch and go as they fought a series of clashes with Wilson's pursuing cavalymen, who relentlessly dogged the tired infantrymen. However, by the following afternoon there was some semblance of order returning to the army.

By the morning of the 18, Hood was considering making a last stand with the army at Columbia. But reality set in and with the arrival of Forrest near Columbia on the morning of December 19 from Murfreesboro. Hood decided to continue the retreat with Forrest in overall command of the rear guard, pulling together a handpicked combined arms force. This force covered the army for the rest of its trek of misery out of the state, and toward the Tennessee River. The remains of the Army of Tennessee crossed over the river on Christmas day near Bainbridge, Alabama. It took three days for the last troops to make their way across, for the first time having some breathing room from Thomas's dogged pursuit. They then made their way to Tupelo,

Mississippi where the 18,742 survivors of the campaign went into camp. Thomas's forces had for all practical purposes destroyed the effectiveness of the Confederacy's last mobile army. The Tennessee campaign was over. In the weeks that followed, Hood resigned from command, and then what remained of the army was transferred to other fronts. It would never fight as a united force again.

Hood's Tennessee campaign was one that seemed doomed from the start. Hood realized that all hope for the Confederacy's survival depended on him somehow doing the impossible and scoring a dramatic victory. Though the campaign started off with promise, Sherman's maneuvering and ultimate refusal to keep chasing him into Alabama foiled him. In Alabama, his delays squandered precious time before crossing the Tennessee, enabling Thomas to gather the forces he needed. When Hood finally started moving north into Tennessee, the odds were decidedly against him. The only real chance he had was at Spring Hill, and even if he somehow managed to defeat Schofield there, he still had Thomas and his force at Nashville with which to contend. The failed assault the next day at Franklin took away any chance of success. Of all of Hood's questionable behaviors, continuing on to Nashville remains one of the most glaring. Hood's only hope at Nashville was for Thomas to make an egregious error, which was unlikely and did not happen in Thomas's capable hands. The fact that Hood was able to move any of his army out of Tennessee was a testament to the resolve and ability of his army.

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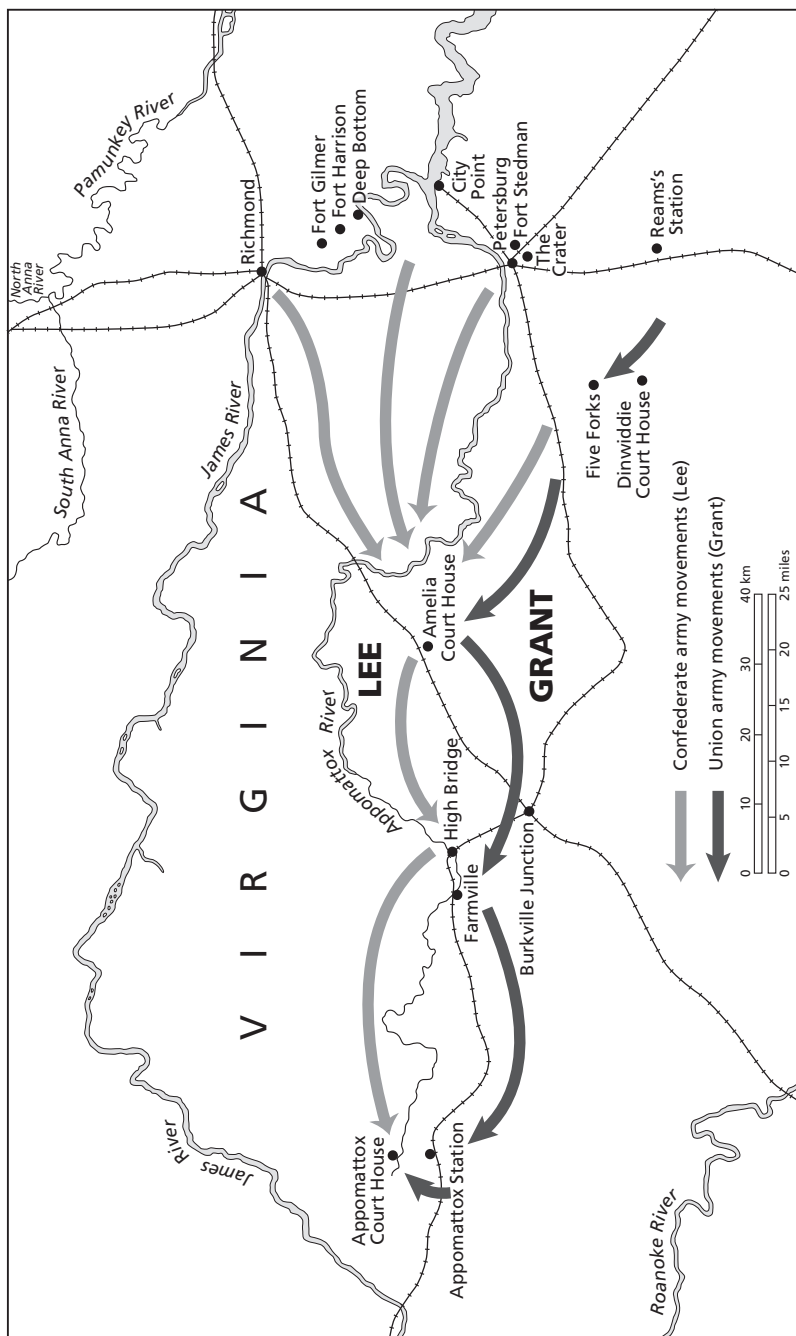
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The Petersburg and Appomattox Campaigns

WILLIAM MARVEL

In the second week of June, 1864, at the end of Ulysses Grant's Overland campaign from the Rapidan River, the Union and Confederate armies of the eastern theater occupied the same ground they had contested two years previously. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia defended the north-eastern approaches to Richmond from the spot where he had launched his ferocious attacks on George McClellan's Army of the Potomac in 1862. This time Lee lacked the strength to repeat his offensive. Ulysses Grant, meanwhile, enjoyed the unlimited War Department support that McClellan had been denied, so he was not to be discouraged or recalled. Grant would clearly make another stab at Richmond, probably by trying to skirt Lee's front as he had so many times since crossing the Rapidan. Lee anticipated that the next attack would come from one side of the Chickahominy River or the other. Rather than face the maze of swamps and streams north and east of Richmond, Grant decided to transport his army across the James River and strike rapidly for Petersburg, the crucial rail hub 25 miles below the Confederate capital. The army that controlled Petersburg controlled Richmond.

Throughout the day and night of June 14 a fleet of steamers ferried Winfield Hancock's II Corps over the James River to Windmill Point, ahead of the rest of Grant's army. At 4:00 a.m. on June 15, William F. Smith crossed his XVIII Corps over the Appomattox River from Bermuda Hundred, about half the marching distance from Petersburg that Hancock faced. By early afternoon Smith neared the daunting defensive fortifications east of Petersburg, but he waited for all his troops to come up before deploying for an attack. With an hour or so of daylight remaining he sent forward two divisions – one of black troops and one of white. Pierre G. T. Beauregard was defending Petersburg with a single infantry brigade, a few hundred cavalymen, and some militia. The outnumbered Rebels fell back, and the sun set with both armies digging in again. Smith waited for



19.1 Petersburg and Appomattox. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd. Military movements from William Marvel, *Tamished Victory: Finishing Lincoln's War* (Houghton Mifflin, 2011).

reinforcements while a few brigades from Lee's army arrived to aid Beauregard. Hancock's corps had been arriving on the field when Smith launched that first evening assault, but Smith merely positioned them to guard against a counterattack.

Grant himself supposed that the Confederate reinforcements would have been more extensive, and most of June 16 passed with each army rushing men to the scene. Late in the afternoon George Meade came up to take command of the army, and toward evening he ordered Hancock to make another assault on the fresh Rebel entrenchments. Those new works were already strong enough that the Confederates behind them repelled several times their numbers.

During the night Robert Potter's division of Ambrose Burnside's IX Corps crept into position immediately in front of Beauregard's new line, and at the break of day on June 17 Potter's three brigades swept over the top. Catching the exhausted defenders completely by surprise, they captured the earthworks, swarms of prisoners, a battery of field guns, and hundreds of small arms. Another IX Corps division under an inebriated James Ledlie failed to advance in support, and by the time a third division came up the Rebels had recovered. Ledlie's division abandoned the captured trenches during the night under a Confederate counterassault.

In the darkness Beauregard drew back to a third line, much closer to Petersburg. Lee began sending him heavy reinforcements, having at last concluded that Grant had shifted his entire army south of the James. By dawn of June 18 the Confederate infantry in the second line had all fallen back to defend the third. The II, V, and IX Corps of Meade's army lined up for another assault, found the second line empty, and tramped nearly a mile before spotting the red clay of Beauregard's last defensive perimeter.

That line looked imposing, and much more heavily manned. The three Union corps commanders stopped to discuss another head-on assault, but could not agree on coordination, and Meade finally ordered them to advance without regard to each other's movements. Nowhere did the uncoordinated assaults even reach the Confederate line. Potter's division of the IX Corps came closest, taking cover on a slope about a hundred yards away, within sight of the church spires of Petersburg. The rest of Burnside's and the other corps dug what protection they could wherever their progress was halted.

Thus passed the best chance to seize Petersburg at a stroke and force the evacuation of Richmond, which would almost certainly have ended the war earlier. What followed is usually called the siege of Petersburg, but it never met the technical definition of a siege: the Union army never encircled the

city, and Confederates there maintained at least a limited source of outside supply to the bitter end. The political and strategic importance of Richmond and Petersburg nevertheless locked Lee in place, and Grant continued to try cutting off Petersburg's lifeline to the Confederate interior, primarily by flanking Lee's left. Lee resisted one thrust after another for more than nine months, extending his line until it grew perilously thin. The earthworks thrown up by the two armies on June 18 formed the rudiments of tandem trench networks that started north and east of Petersburg on the Appomattox River. From there they ran southward, across the City Point Railroad and the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad, stopping near the Jerusalem Plank Road that ran south from the city.

At first, Grant obviously hoped to finish off his enemy that summer, adhering to a schedule he had implied in the spring. He waited only a few days before trying to seize control of the roads and rail lines radiating south and west out of Petersburg. On June 22, he sent James Wilson and August Kautz deep into Virginia with a few thousand cavalry to burn the Staunton River railroad bridge on the Richmond and Danville Railroad; that line supplied Richmond directly, and at Burkeville Junction it crossed the Southside Railroad, which ran into Petersburg. That same day, holding his new earthworks east and south of Petersburg with three corps, Grant sent two others westward, across the Jerusalem Plank Road and toward the Petersburg Railroad – called the Weldon Railroad by most Union soldiers because it led to Weldon, North Carolina.

The II Corps, led by David Birney while Winfield Hancock recuperated from old wounds, turned north in line of battle after crossing the plank road. Horatio Wright's VI Corps continued beyond, aiming for the Weldon Railroad. Most of Birney's troops took position as planned and started digging their own new line of entrenchments, to connect with those east of the Jerusalem Plank Road. Francis Barlow's division, on the left of Birney's front, turned north to follow the rest of the II Corps, and in so doing lost touch with the VI Corps. With that connection broken, Barlow refused his left – pulling the troops on his left back perpendicular to the rest of his line, to defend his flank in the event of an attack.

That attack soon came. Lee had sent A. P. Hill to confront this threat, and one of Hill's division commanders was William Mahone, who had been president of the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad before the war and knew the Petersburg vicinity well. Leading his men within striking distance of Birney's position by a route that disguised his approach, Mahone hit Barlow's division without warning and soon put it to flight. Caught by the flank, the

next Union division likewise crumpled and gave way, as did the third and last division. Mahone captured a battery and hundreds of prisoners, and Birney withdrew his battered corps back across the Jerusalem Plank Road.

Meanwhile, Wright and the VI Corps remained where they were, and the next day moved on to what they called the Weldon Railroad. A Vermont brigade led the way, cutting the telegraph line and tearing up some track on the morning of June 23, but more of A. P. Hill's corps attacked them at noon, folding back both ends of one division and pinching off several hundred more prisoners from the Vermont brigade. As Wright withdrew back to the Jerusalem Plank Road, Confederates herded the Vermonters and the other Union prisoners toward the railcars that would carry them to the prison camp at Andersonville, Georgia. They would be among the last new prisoners sent to that stockade, which thousands of prisoners from Grant's and Sherman's campaigns had filled to the bursting point.

Two days later Wilson and Kautz reached the Staunton River by a roundabout route, tearing up a few rails along the way, but they were prevented from destroying the railroad bridge by a makeshift force of convalescent soldiers, militia, and civilian volunteers. Confederate cavalry dogged their retreat back toward Petersburg, and when they first tried to cross the Weldon Railroad they met a bloody repulse from Wade Hampton's division. Galloping north toward Reams's Station, where they expected Wright's corps to be in possession, they found only Mahone's infantry, which attacked them while Rebel cavalry harried them from the rear. Finally Wilson and Kautz abandoned their wagon train and all their artillery, and in desperation they separated to confuse the pursuit. Not until July 1 did their last scattered fragments reach Union lines, badly depleted in numbers, horses, arms, and equipment.¹

After that disastrous foray Grant abstained from offensive operations for a few weeks while he ordered up more troops from Louisiana. He still hoped to seize Petersburg with overwhelming force sooner rather than later, and but for circumstances elsewhere he might have done so. His plans still did not indicate that he was reconciled to an extended campaign, and he probably did

1 For the first fortnight of operations around Petersburg see Earl J. Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg: Field Fortifications & Confederate Defeat* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), pp. 15–39; A. Wilson Greene, *Civil War Petersburg: Confederate City in the Crucible of War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), pp. 183–93, and William Marvel, *Tarnished Victory: Finishing Lincoln's War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), pp. 69–77.

not suspect that he would still be maneuvering to capture the city nine months later.

The civilian population of Petersburg seemed resigned to a protracted ordeal. Conditions inside the city deteriorated quickly. Union artillery threatened the residents from June 16 onward, partly from projectiles that overshoot the Confederate lines and occasionally from fire deliberately aimed at bridges or other strategic targets. The first civilian was killed a week later, and stray shells claimed another victim every few days, convincing many inhabitants to leave the city for safety elsewhere.

For those innocents on the receiving end of Union ordnance, the shelling illustrated the barbarity of Yankee soldiers, who would make war on women, children, and the elderly. To Southerners who lived in perpetual dread of slave insurrections, that behavior seemed consistent with the brutality of an army bent on abolition. Most of Grant's men viewed the bombardment of an occupied city as an unfortunate necessity, although many harbored little sympathy for Rebels of any gender or age, and some justified the infliction of any misery that helped to erode the Southern will to fight.

As Union shelling intensified through late June and July, many of those residents who remained in the city fashioned makeshift bomb shelters in their cellars or yards. Trains delivering goods to Petersburg began stopping outside of town to avoid bombardment, shuttling their cargo in by wagon, and some purveyors stopped coming into the city at all, so food and other provisions fell short despite the departure of so many citizens. Confederate soldiers aggravated that scarcity as they tried to supplement their own bland rations with fresh vegetables through purchase, begging, or stealing from private gardens. The danger and deprivation would last the better part of a year, with shortages of necessities growing steadily worse, but instead of breaking down under the stress the citizens seemed to grow inured to the hardships.²

The Wilson–Kautz cavalry raid had not yet come to grief when Burnside's IX Corps began a mining operation that Lieutenant General Grant would eventually see as another promising opportunity to seize Petersburg. Lieutenant Colonel Henry Pleasants, a mining engineer, commanded a Pennsylvania regiment in Potter's division that included scores of coal miners. Potter's works lay barely a hundred yards below the Confederate trenches, which sat on a ridge surmounted by a four-gun battery at a protruding salient. Pleasants proposed to dig all the way to that little fort, run galleries left and right beneath it, pack them with powder, and blow the

2. Greene, *Civil War Petersburg*, pp. 190–202.

redan to bits, after which Union infantry could pour through the breach. Major General Meade and his chief engineer discouraged the idea, doubting that a tunnel over 500 feet long could be completed without suffocating those who were digging it, but Pleasants devised a means of ventilating the entire length of the shaft. His men went to work by noon of June 25, less than a week before the last frontal assault had been repulsed.

Burnside developed a plan for an assault to follow the blast, choosing the fourth division of his corps, which was composed entirely of US Colored Troops. During the campaign from the Rapidan, those men had served mainly as guards for Burnside's wagon train and as laborers on the fortifications. That left their ranks fairly full, in comparison to those of his three battered white divisions, and Burnside soundly reasoned that their morale also remained high, since they had not faced repeated failure in all those bloody assaults against fortified enemy positions. He instructed their division commander, Edward Ferrero, to train them for the specific battleground maneuvers they would have to perform to follow his tactical plan: he expected them to lunge into the gap created by the explosion and wheel to the right and left, with each column in line of battle, to roll up the newly exposed flanks of the Confederates on either side of the rupture. That would allow other troops to push through the center and seize the high ground of the cemetery at Blandford Church, on the next ridge a quarter of a mile behind the Confederate fort. Once there, Union artillery would command Petersburg and most of Lee's entrenchments, forcing a hasty retreat.

The digging continued for a month. Confederates heard rumors of the operation, guessing that any mine would probably have to be dug on that sector of Burnside's front where the trenches lay so close together, but they never found it. By July 26 the main shaft had been finished, reaching 510 feet, and two galleries had been dug perpendicular from the terminus, to reach both ends of the fort.

At that point Burnside and Meade began discussing the details of the attack that was to follow the blast, to coordinate with Grant's desire for broader operations. Grant had already inaugurated an offensive movement above the James River, near Richmond, using cavalry under Phil Sheridan and Hancock's II Corps to threaten the Confederate capital. Hancock crossed from Bermuda Hundred to a bridgehead Grant had established weeks before on the left bank of the James at a place called Deep Bottom, and Sheridan deployed alongside him. Their presence and demonstrations by some of Major General Benjamin Butler's troops persuaded General Lee to start sending troops up from Petersburg to defend the capital, and when Grant

detected that anticipated shift he turned his attention back to Burnside and his mine.

Pleasants had his men carry in four tons of powder in kegs, placing them in the two galleries and tamping both of them by filling the throat of each magazine with a deep stack of sandbags to prevent the blast from blowing back down the tunnel. They left just room enough to admit the fuses, and on the night of July 28 the last shift of Pennsylvanians backed out of the mine, leaving it charged and ready.

A problem had already developed among the generals. In outlining his plan for the assault, Burnside had revealed to Meade his intention to use Ferrero's division of black regiments as the spearhead, but Meade seemed to doubt their competence, or their will. When the two generals met on July 28 Meade said he could not allow Ferrero's division to lead the attack, claiming that they had too little experience, which was true enough. Burnside argued that his white regiments were too weak from casualties, too fatigued by a dozen weeks of front-line combat, and too demoralized by failed frontal assaults on fortified positions to attack the Rebel line with much enthusiasm. Meade said he would put the matter before Grant, and Burnside evidently expected the general-in-chief to support his choice.

If his own conflicting testimony to subsequent investigators was any indication, Meade won Grant's disapproval of Burnside's plan by playing a different card, warning of the potential political consequences if Ferrero's men met with disaster: the very Radical Republicans who had demanded the mobilization of black soldiers would accuse them of having willingly sent them to slaughter, he suggested. Either that point won Grant to Meade's opinion or Grant wished to defer to his army commander as a demonstration of his support and confidence, and Grant allowed Meade to veto Burnside's choice. In addition, Meade insisted that Burnside avoid the fancy wheeling of troops to roll up the enemy lines, and simply push straight toward the hill where Blandford Cemetery sat. The explosion and the attack were already planned for the predawn hours of July 30, but it was not until near noon on July 29 that Burnside learned of this discouraging decision.

Each of Burnside's white divisions had good reason to be passed over for the assault – because of exhaustion, attrition, or unreliable commanders – but each also had some cause to be chosen to lead it. At last, in frustration, Burnside let the choice be made by lot, and it fell to James Ledlie's first division. Ledlie had already let Burnside down before, apparently because of excess drinking, although Burnside seemed unaware of the cause. Lieutenant

General Grant later insinuated, too, that Ledlie was unable to conquer his fear of battle sufficiently to carry out his duties.

During the night Burnside's corps lined up behind the trenches. The mine was supposed to be sprung well before dawn, but twilight was glimmering along the horizon when the ground began to rumble. The Confederate fort burst upward in billows of flame and smoke that carried men, guns, and debris high into the air. Grit and particles of clay showered down on the waiting Yankees, and after a brief hesitation Ledlie's men lurched forward into the long, deep crater the mine had created. Ledlie himself entered a bombproof and begged some brandy.

The initial explosion killed as many as 350 Confederates. Scores of South Carolina infantrymen from Brigadier General Stephen Elliott's brigade and gunners from a Virginia artillery battery lay dead, injured, or half-buried in the wreckage of the fort. Those Union soldiers who were supposed to lead the assault stopped to act as rescuers, and started digging out the survivors. There was no one to drive them forward, and no one seemed to understand what they were supposed to do in any case, so they lingered in the temporary safety of the crater while the sun rose and as Confederates on either side of the smoldering breach awakened to the situation.

Potter's foremost brigade swarmed over the Confederate works to the right of the crater. By then the remainder of Elliott's South Carolinians and other troops north of the ruined fort had recovered enough to level a raking fire into the side of Potter's formation. Below the breach, a Virginia brigade poured in an enfilade fire from the other direction, aided by at least one fieldpiece. It was precisely such a flanking fire that Burnside's original plan had been meant to neutralize.

An hour after the blast the crater and the nearby Confederate trenches were crowded with two brigades from Ledlie's division and one each from Potter's and Colonel Orlando B. Willcox's, but the flanking fire held them there. Meade urged Burnside to throw in everything he had, including Ferrero's black troops, and to push straight ahead for the hill with the cemetery. Burnside relayed those orders, but Ledlie's men would not budge: as Burnside had feared, they had grown too accustomed to earthen fortifications to venture into concentrated fire, and the crater provided protection.

Some of Potter's troops and one brigade of Ferrero's division deployed north of the crater, pushing the Carolinians there back a little, but the other black regiments streamed into the crater and the adjoining trenches, worsening the crowding. Two Confederate brigades and a portion of another held all

or part of five Union divisions in check while Generals Beauregard and Lee arrived to oversee the defense.

Lee again called on William Mahone, who hurried two brigades of his division, and later a third, from the extreme right of Lee's line. By the time they reached the vicinity, some Union troops had finally worked their way out of the crater to assemble for the assault on the targeted heights. A few of the black troops had lined up on the open ground west of the crater under regimental officers, and part of Potter's leading brigade stood alongside them. They faced a couple of hundred yards of open ground before a wide swale intervened.

Mahone formed his men for a counterattack in that swale. This was the first time any of Lee's army had faced black troops, and word of their presence had spread among outraged Confederates. Mahone's Virginia brigade swept over the top of the swale and plunged into them, sending them reeling back into the crater and the trenches north of it. In a few minutes of savage work the Rebels cleared the trenches of blue uniforms, driving them back to their own lines or into the still-smoldering excavation. Realizing they would be given no quarter, many of Ferrero's men fled in panic, and plenty of the white troops followed them back to safety through an increasingly thick gauntlet of bullets, canister, and shellfire.

Burnside urged Meade to order the V Corps into the fight, but Grant and Meade had already decided that the day had been lost, and instead ordered Burnside to withdraw all his forces from the enemy lines. It was too late to do that safely, and for another three hours hundreds of men held out amid the debris from the explosion, returning diminishing rifle fire from the rim of the crater. Three of Burnside's brigadiers who had joined their men in the crater tried to arrange a covering barrage from their own lines to allow those in the crater to run for it, but in the end there was no need of planning. Early in the afternoon Mahone launched a fresh attack with a brigade of Alabamians whose momentum took them to the edge of the crater and in among the occupants, whom they shot, stabbed, and clubbed without mercy. A dense mass of blue uniforms surged back across the bullet-swept furlong between the lines, with many of them dropping along the way.

Hundreds inside the crater raised their hands in surrender, but it was some time before enraged Southerners could be restrained from the slaughter, especially of black soldiers. Numerous Confederates admitted that many of Ferrero's men were shot down as they tried to surrender, and discrepancies between the number reported missing and the number of prisoners tend to corroborate at least a portion of those claims. In the face of such Confederate

rage at meeting armed black men, Union soldiers who expected to be captured reportedly killed some of their own black comrades rather than be taken with them. The cost of the day had been nearly 4,000 Union casualties, all but a few hundred of them in the IX Corps, besides an undetermined number of Confederate losses that ran into the hundreds. When the sun went down the lines remained where they had been the day before, and where they would remain until the following spring.³

Some of the Union soldiers taken prisoner at the crater told of unusually harsh treatment. That likely reflected the racial animosities aroused by the first US Colored Troops taken by Lee's army, but theirs was also the first large contingent of any Union prisoners who entered Petersburg after its civilian population had been shelled. It buoyed Rebel morale that so many Yankees had been badly beaten by so relatively few Confederates, diminishing the sense of inevitable defeat among both Southern civilians and soldiers. For decades after the war the triumph of outnumbered Confederates at the crater fed the image of superiority ascribed to them – and particularly to the Virginians, who claimed a disproportionate share of the credit for the victory.

The defeat elicited an equal but opposite reaction North of the Potomac, where it aggravated a growing atmosphere of military stagnation. The sense that the war amounted to a useless and escalating waste of blood and treasure weakened popular support for the president barely a hundred days before the election. His prospects for reelection sank even further after more reverses in August.

The crater dissuaded Grant from further frontal assaults on Lee's lines. Instead he resumed his flanking strategy, sending heavy columns around Lee's left or right – or around both flanks at once, in an effort to stretch the Rebel lines to the breaking point. After each incursion Lee would extend his fortifications to reduce the manpower necessary to defend that sector. Eventually the opposing lines ran for 25 miles or more, from just below Richmond to Deep Bottom, across Bermuda Hundred on the other side of the James, then over the Appomattox east of and below Petersburg to a point 8 miles southwest of the city.

A fortnight after the crater debacle, Grant sent Hancock and the II Corps back above the James to the Union bridgehead at Deep Bottom again, giving him the X Corps and a division of cavalry for another try at Richmond. Union

3 On the mine and the battle see Earl J. Hess, *Into the Crater: The Mine Attack at Petersburg* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2010) and Michael A. Cavanaugh and William Marvel, *The Battle of the Crater: The Horrid Pit, June 25–August 6, 1864* (Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, 1989).

intelligence maintained that Lee had dispatched most of his men from that side of the river to the Shenandoah Valley, but that report was exaggerated, and Hancock encountered far more resistance than he expected. Worse yet, his celebrated corps had lost its old *élan*. Barlow noticed particular demoralization in his division, where one regiment of heavy artillerymen who had been converted to infantry resisted his orders to hold the front line against a thin cordon of Confederate skirmishers. That such reluctant foot soldiers should balk at a fight might not have shocked the veterans, but it may have been more disturbing that the legendary Irish Brigade also crept behind cover rather than accept the assignment the artillerymen had shunned. Later Barlow observed two other brigades in his division quailing before relatively light enemy fire, as well as troops from another of Hancock's divisions. Hancock gained nothing on that front, and eventually he brought all but a bridgehead guard back to Petersburg.

Hancock was still on the Richmond side of the James when Grant directed Major General Gouverneur K. Warren and the V Corps to make another attempt against Petersburg's supply lines. Warren moved his corps across the Weldon Railroad on August 18, stopped at Globe Tavern, and sent a couple of divisions up the railroad toward Petersburg. Leading just two brigades from his own Confederate division, Henry Heth drove both Union divisions back down the railroad. The next day Mahone joined Heth, and together they pushed Warren's advance all the way back to Globe Tavern, but IX Corps reinforcements saved the day for Warren. He retained control of the railroad, despite uncharacteristically timid behavior by the troops under his command.

Freshly returned from Deep Bottom, Hancock brought his two best divisions to Warren's aid, and over the next few days they tore up the tracks below Globe Tavern. A. P. Hill still controlled that sector, and he struck Hancock at Reams's Station on August 25. The Confederate force did not heavily outnumber Hancock, but the Union soldiers again showed little inclination to fight. Many of them refused to move forward when their officers called for a charge, and others who had been ordered to defend breastworks fled without pulling a trigger. As had happened in Warren's fight a few days previously, more than 2,000 of them threw down their rifles and surrendered rather than fight.⁴

Some generals in the Army of the Potomac attributed the waning combativeness of their men to the habit of living in the relative safety of their entrenchments, or to the demoralizing effects of costly attacks on entrenched

4 Hess, *In the Trenches*, pp. 124–41.

infantry through the spring summer. Lee's Confederates had shared the experience of trench warfare, although they had more often been the defenders in assaults on fortified positions, but their battlefield ardor seemed undiminished. The trouble among Union soldiers, as most seemed to recognize, may have been the heavy concentrations of high-bounty volunteers, including those who served as substitutes for drafted men: they had often enlisted primarily for the windfall in bounties and substitute fees. Economic incentives had been driving Northern citizens into uniform from the outset of the war, but there was a significant difference with the new bounty men, many of whom were recent immigrants lacking any sense of national loyalty or obligation, let alone community pride.

Lee's army fielded some substitutes and legions of conscripts, including many who might never have voluntarily enlisted, but there was probably not a man in Confederate uniform who had enlisted out of mercenary motive. Confederate recruits often did receive small bounties, but the value of Confederate currency depreciated so quickly that neither that nor army pay offered much incentive. The impulse to defend their homeland and to live up to the exaggerated Southern expectations of courage afforded Lee's army greater cohesiveness and battlefield effectiveness. That effectiveness also yielded victories over superior forces that further steeled his soldiers to their task. Privation and anticipation of ultimate failure were beginning to erode Confederate morale, but demoralization of the degree that Grant's soldiers displayed in the summer of 1864 still lay months away.

The Confederate army not only drew its replacements from a much more effective draft system, with fewer exemptions and less substitution, but those conscripts were incorporated into existing regiments. That strengthened veteran units and gave the new men the advantage of serving in harness with experienced soldiers. The principal effect of the Union draft was to stimulate volunteering, and politics often encouraged governors to meet state quotas with entirely new regiments, so they could issue sheaves of new commissions. New regiments also appealed to the recruits, who could serve with acquaintances instead of among strangers, and they could expect to spend longer in training before they went to the front. Men who had enlisted in local units felt more pressure to perform well under the eyes of their neighbors, friends, and relatives, but so late in the war inexperience could be a burdensome handicap in a contest against veterans.⁵

5 On morale see J. Tracy Power, *Lee's Miserables: Life in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Wilderness to Appomattox* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998) and

At the end of September Grant put another of his two-pronged operations in motion, again using his superior numbers to stretch Lee's resources. First he ordered Ben Butler to send part of his Army of the James toward Richmond via Deep Bottom, and on September 29 Butler crossed the X Corps over the James River under David Birney, along with an XVIII Corps division of US Colored Troops. The rest of the XVIII Corps, all white troops, marched over a pontoon bridge a little upstream under Edward O. C. Ord. The two columns aimed for fortifications running from the river, at Chaffin's Bluff, to New Market Heights. Ord struck Fort Harrison, the anchor to that part of the line, and found it woefully undermanned. Seizing the fort and the line north of it, he prepared to make another assault on the Confederates' inner line.

Birney, meanwhile, moved on the Rebel defenses at New Market Heights, where he found his white regiments badly weakened by skulking. He sent the 4th and 6th Colored Troops in a bayonet charge against the entrenchments held by a Texas brigade, but that attack stalled with half the men in the two regiments down, dead or wounded. An assault by twice as many troops from the same division proved almost as bloody, but – in contrast to the white troops – the novice black regiments of the XVIII Corps finally drove the Texans away. Their performance elicited prominent newspaper praise, helping to restore the reputation of the US Colored Troops, which had suffered generally, if unfairly, from the crater fiasco.

From there Birney joined Ord's attack on the inner line, with both his white and black troops making valiant, bloody, but unsuccessful assaults on one fort. Lee rushed heavy reinforcements up from below the James, and on September 30 he tried to recapture Fort Harrison, but the X and XVIII Corps occupied all of Lee's old outer line and held their ground.

Supposing that Lee had weakened his Petersburg front, Grant shifted to his extreme right that same day, sending Warren's V Corps westward from his position at Globe Tavern. Two divisions of the IX Corps followed, under Major General John Parke: Burnside had gone home on leave after the crater battle, never to return.

In responding to the threat above Deep Bottom, Lee had been forced to leave his right virtually undefended. Only some thinly spread Rebel cavalry covered the Boydton Plank Road and the Southside Railroad – the last two direct supply routes into Petersburg. Aiming for those twin corridors 4 miles

James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

to the northwest, Warren captured some trenches a mile or more west of Globe Tavern. Parke's two divisions took position on Warren's left, and late in the afternoon they started moving north, toward the plank road and the Southside Railroad.

All the infantry that remained to defend Petersburg was A. P. Hill's corps and one other division, but they enjoyed the advantage of interior lines: the distance between the extremities of Lee's perimeter was shorter than the distance between the ends of Grant's, allowing the Confederates to transfer troops from one point to another more quickly. Hill raced several brigades there and caught Parke off guard, hitting the leading brigade of Potter's division and nearly cutting it off from the main body. Parke's corps retreated half a mile, but II Corps troops later secured the position. That extended the Union trench network a couple of miles to the vicinity of Poplar Spring Church, but the plank road and the railroad were still in Confederate hands, and Lee hurried the construction of fortifications to protect them.⁶

Grant made one more attempt to close off those routes late in October, pulling parts of the II, V, and IX Corps out of line again and marching them toward the Boydton Plank Road. While troops from Butler's Army of the James distracted the enemy with attacks on the Confederate defenses east of Richmond, Hancock led the advance of the striking column several miles westward. After the fighting at Poplar Spring Church Lee had stretched his trenches past the new terminus of Grant's fortifications, anchoring his defense line on the banks of Hatcher's Run. Hancock ventured into the undefended terrain west of the run and reached the plank road, where several brigades from A. P. Hill's corps slammed into him. The outnumbered Confederates were eventually repulsed, but they had bloodied their assailants sufficiently that Union forces pulled back to the safety of their original works.⁷

Conditions among the civilian population deteriorated as winter neared, with shortages of firewood adding the discomfort of cold houses to the misery of bare pantries. Union artillery still played on the city, sporadically most of the time but with occasional flurries of shot and shell. Inflation aggravated the scarcity of basic necessities, and prices rose to astronomical

6 The premier work on the offensive of September 29–October 2 is still Richard J. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981).

7 The late-October operations are best covered in Hampton Newsome, *Richmond Must Fall: The Richmond-Petersburg Campaign, October 1864* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2013).

levels in Petersburg even before the value of the Confederate dollar collapsed elsewhere. Citizens made the best of their plight, keeping up their spirits with convivial social gatherings where guests ignored the paucity of food and beverages. They could hardly have been called optimistic, but if anything the tribulations of Petersburg citizens seemed to brace them against the extreme discouragement that had begun to infect Confederate citizens generally.

Shortfalls in sustenance weighed more heavily on Lee's soldiers, who lacked the dietary variety of even the Petersburg citizens, seldom enjoyed the comfort of a warm bed, and faced the constant danger of death in the trenches or in open battle. Desertions increased with the cold weather, and those who did slip away more often failed to come back. Many now deserted into Union lines, accepting exile in the North rather than keep up a fight in which they had lost hope.

Grant's last aggressive movement during 1864 consisted of sending Warren on a mission of destruction down the Weldon Railroad with his V Corps, part of Hancock's II Corps, and a cavalry division. Traditionally, this raid has been interpreted as another of Grant's efforts to cut off Lee's supplies. Confederate quartermasters had established a circuitous wagon route to bypass Warren's position at Globe Tavern, collecting provisions from farther down the Weldon line and shuttling them up the Boydton Plank Road. Interrupting Lee's supplies may have played a part in Grant's thinking, but a similar operation against the same railroad corridor by Union troops in North Carolina suggested broader plans. Warren left on December 7, marched 40 miles south in miserable weather, tearing up all the rails he could, and came back in six days. He had barely returned when troops from Butler's army left by steamer for an assault on Fort Fisher, guarding the Confederacy's last open Atlantic port at Wilmington. The havoc Warren wrought on the Weldon line was evidently also meant to impede Lee if he attempted to detach troops for the defense of Wilmington, and to an extent it succeeded: once Lee learned of the Fort Fisher expedition he sent Robert Hoke's division, and the trains carrying Hoke's infantry had to make a wide detour through Danville.

The armies lay relatively quiet through the rest of December and January, but early in February Grant tried once more to sneak around Lee's right flank at Hatcher's Run. On February 5, with cavalry leading them, the V Corps and two divisions of the II Corps again marched out of their works and 3 miles west. The II Corps, now commanded by Andrew Humphreys in place of the ailing Hancock, stopped there and began digging in along Hatcher's Run while Warren and the cavalry kept going. Their hasty earthworks may have saved the day for the II Corps, because when Henry Heth's division burst out

of the woods at Humphreys he was able to hold them off with little more than a single brigade.

Out in the open several miles farther on, Warren and the cavalry had less luck when they encountered three Confederate divisions Lee had rushed out for the emergency. At one point Union cavalry retreated right into Warren's substitute-laden infantry, causing widespread confusion, and most of Warren's troops gave way in shameless flight. Eventually Warren rallied everyone, riding into the chaos of their retreat and exhorting the men to courage by personal example, but when he finally mounted enough resistance to stop the Rebel onslaught he decided to fall back on the II Corps at Hatcher's Run. Union engineers connected the fresh works there with the old line at Poplar Spring Church, but the little campaign had demonstrated once again how easily superiority in numbers could be neutralized by the protection of entrenchments or by shortcomings in morale or motivation.

The progress of Sherman's march across the Carolinas forced Lee to consider detaching troops to Joseph Johnston's patchwork army. Johnston commanded the paltry remnant of the Army of Tennessee's disastrous Nashville campaign and thousands of scraped-up garrison troops, militia, and Georgia and Carolina Reserves, along with some 6,000 cavalry: his entire force did not amount to half the number of Sherman's combined armies. Lee contemplated reinforcing Johnston heavily to defeat Sherman before turning back to face Grant together.

So desperate a strategy had little chance of success, but any chance it did have depended on Lee being able to hold Grant's host in place after detaching a large part of his own army. Since he was already unable to contain Grant's persistent extension of the siege lines, Lee hoped to force a contraction of those lines that would allow him to defend Petersburg and Richmond with only a portion of his army. It was such a contraction – rather than the outright evacuation of Petersburg, as most historians have assumed – that he hoped to achieve with a surprise attack on Grant's lines on the morning of March 25, 1865.

John B. Gordon, commander of the remnant of what had once been Stonewall Jackson's corps, gathered an assault column before Fort Stedman, a small Union bastion east of Petersburg, not far from the Appomattox River. Gordon intended to seize that fort with a rush and pour through with a sizable portion of Lee's army, isolating most of the Army of the Potomac from Grant's supply base at City Point. Then Gordon planned to turn south with much of his force and roll up the Union lines from the flank, or from behind, forcing the Yankees onto

open ground, where for the past seven months they had not been performing very well.

It all began propitiously enough, with the Union pickets silently subdued and Fort Stedman captured well before dawn, but Confederate intelligence maintained that another line of Union forts lay behind Stedman. Gordon's infantry went looking for those forts, but they did not exist, and while Rebel soldiers stumbled around behind the main Union line General Parke mobilized IX Corps infantry against them. Gordon's breakthrough was quickly contained and his men trapped in and around Fort Stedman, from which they could only escape back into their own lines through a deadly deluge of artillery and musketry. Before breakfast the survivors of the attack column were marching back to their old sectors of the Confederate perimeter, leaving behind several thousand of their comrades.

Some of those troops reached their old positions just in time to meet an assault by the VI Corps southwest of Petersburg, from the works around Poplar Spring Church. Generals Wright and Humphreys had both proposed attacking from their end of the line, reasoning that Lee must have weakened his force on their front to mass his men against the Union right, but Major General Meade was absent from headquarters and Parke, in temporary command, preferred to await Meade's return. Once Meade came back he authorized the attempt, and fighting on the Union left continued all afternoon, but with most of the Confederate troops back in place it was all for nothing.

A few days after Fort Stedman, Grant made one last attempt to sneak around Lee's right flank, either to sever his communications or stretch his army thin enough to break it somewhere. Grant sent Sheridan and the cavalry to Dinwiddie Court House, nearly 20 miles southwest of Petersburg. Warren, meanwhile, led the V Corps on another march past the extreme right of Lee's lines, beyond Hatcher's Run. Lee responded by sending most of his own cavalry to that sector, under his nephew Fitzhugh Lee, along with George Pickett's all-Virginia division from James Longstreet's corps. For three days at the end of March Warren and Sheridan contended with Pickett, Fitz Lee, and Bushrod Johnson's division of infantry, which had originally held the trenches on the right flank. On March 30 Sheridan's cavalry took a sound beating near Dinwiddie Court House at the hands of Pickett and Fitz Lee.

Then, late on March 31, Grant gave Sheridan control of Warren's V Corps as well as the cavalry, and the next day Sheridan and Warren attacked Pickett in his works around Five Forks, several miles west of the main Confederate

trenches. Warren's corps fell on Pickett's left and caved it in, whereupon Pickett's whole line collapsed. The survivors of his division mostly fled west, away from Lee's army, behind a screen of Fitz Lee's cavalry, but thousands of them surrendered on the spot.

The stunning victory at Five Forks moved Grant to order a frontal assault all along Lee's attenuated lines the next morning, and after a deafening barrage Union infantry moved through the gloaming on April 2 toward those intimidating fortifications. The VI Corps found the first opening, breaking through a couple of miles west of Petersburg, and as A. P. Hill rode up to assess the situation he was shot out of the saddle. Some Union troops faced west and some faced east, cutting Lee's army in two. Those west of the breach took roads following up the Appomattox River, looking for a bridge over which they might return to Petersburg; those to the east backpedaled into Petersburg over the rest of the day, withstanding powerful pressure until darkness. During the night Lee slipped everyone across the Appomattox and turned west toward Amelia Court House, for a planned rendezvous of all the troops from Petersburg, Bermuda Hundred, and Richmond.⁸

As had seemed probable from the first fighting at Petersburg, Lee's departure from that city forced the Confederate government to abandon Richmond. Jefferson Davis and his cabinet escaped to Danville on the last train out of Richmond, stopping for a few days there and again in North Carolina before dispersing to avoid capture. Davis's chair at his Clay Street residence was hardly cold before Abraham Lincoln reclined reflectively in it during his visit to the captured city. Lincoln himself had discounted the importance of the Confederate capital to the survival of the rebellion, but its loss brought the rebellion to a more abrupt conclusion than anyone had anticipated. Lee's army constituted the principal embodiment of Confederate fortunes thereafter, and Grant focused on extinguishing that last flicker of hope.

Amelia Court House lay south of the Appomattox, and many of the Confederates cut off by the April 2 breakthrough found their way there. Sheridan, most of the Army of the Potomac, and part of the Army of the James, now under E. O. C. Ord, followed on their heels. Longstreet's corps reached Amelia on April 4, and most of Lee's other troops slept within range of it that night. Lee wasted a precious day waiting for Richard Ewell and his

⁸ For operations in the final months at Petersburg see A. Wilson Greene, *Breaking the Backbone of the Rebellion: The Final Battles of the Petersburg Campaign* (Mason City, IA: Savas Publishing Company, 2000).

hybrid column of infantry, marines, sailors, converted heavy artillerymen, and militia from the Richmond defenses. By the time Ewell caught up, Sheridan lay across Lee's path with cavalry and some infantry. That forced Lee to abandon his main source of supply, the line of the Richmond and Danville Railroad, and follow long back roads to the west. He sent most of his artillery far to the north, out of the enemy's reach, via Buckingham and Appomattox counties.

After a tiring night march Lee's rear guard fended off one attack after another throughout April 6 until, at the twin crossings of Sailor's Creek, Sheridan's cavalry cut off Ewell's entire column, with part of Pickett's and Bushrod Johnson's divisions. The VI Corps came up behind Ewell, and after a one-sided fight that whole fragment of Lee's army surrendered, generals and all. On a parallel road a mile away Gordon's corps fought off a similar attack by Humphreys and the II Corps, abandoning much of the wagon train to make its escape.

That night the fugitives kept moving. Longstreet reached Farmville the next day, ahead of the enemy. Gordon crossed High Bridge, the towering railroad bridge over the Appomattox River, with pursuers right behind him. An attempt to burn the bridge failed, and Gordon came into Farmville with Humphreys and the II Corps in hot pursuit. Gordon repulsed one attack on Confederate artillery north of Farmville, near Cumberland Church. Longstreet came up with his own corps and the remnants of Hill's, forming a defensive crescent there against another assault by Humphreys, and in the little battle that followed Longstreet took the last Union prisoners the Army of Northern Virginia ever captured.

Gordon took the lead from there on yet another night march, and kept moving throughout April 8. He camped that night with his headquarters within 3 miles of Appomattox Court House, and his leading infantry bivouacked in the village. Longstreet and Lee camped several miles behind him. In the last significant contribution of the mounted arm in a major war, Sheridan's cavalry had already captured Appomattox Station, 3 miles beyond the shire village, along with a trainload of provisions Lee's men desperately needed, and they stood across Lee's last escape route. In a final council of war by firelight, Lee determined to push out from Appomattox Court House in the morning, and if nothing but cavalry stood in the way the infantry would fight its way through. Lee had lost too many men from capture and desertion to contend with anything greater, and he knew that if Union infantry blocked their path he would have to capitulate.

Early on April 9 Gordon, whose corps had suffered some of the heaviest desertion, prepared to advance with a weak line of infantry. Longstreet brought up the rear, miles behind, dogged by the II and VI Corps. Between them rolled what remained of the wagon train, surrounded by throngs of disarmed and demoralized soldiers who had left their commands but had not yet abandoned the army. Gordon's battle line swept over the rise beyond Appomattox Court House, pushing back Union cavalry, but infantry from the Army of the James filed into line a mile from the village and Gordon began falling back. Other cavalry and the V Corps appeared on Gordon's left, and he hastened his withdrawal while couriers took the news back to Lee. Longstreet drew his troops into line of battle, anticipating an attack from Humphreys and Wright, and there the opposing armies stood, waiting, while Lee sent out a flag of truce with a request to meet Grant.⁹

Lee waited at the foot of the hill leading into Appomattox Court House, alongside the headwaters of the Appomattox River, where it ran so narrow and shallow that his men had splashed across it. Early in the afternoon an officer from Grant's staff found him there, told him Grant was on his way by a longer route, and rode into the village with him to find a place where the two commanders could meet. There they encountered Wilmer McLean, who offered his own house, near the courthouse.

Grant arrived much later, and in less than an hour, the two generals concluded an agreement that would allow all Lee's soldiers to go home on parole until they were exchanged. Both understood that their conference brought the war a lot closer to conclusion than it had been only a week before, and that there would probably be no more need for exchanges of prisoners. Just before the campaign began Lincoln had advised generosity in any surrender negotiations, aiming to facilitate sectional reconciliation. He had always promised to welcome Rebels back to citizenship who ceased to resist the government and pledged themselves to future allegiance; save for his insistence that slavery must end, he wished to impose no punitive demands that would discourage such renewed loyalty.

Grant fully complied, providing Lee's men with food, allowing those who claimed horses to keep them, and offering free government transportation home for those whom it would help. He departed Appomattox the next day, leaving the details to subordinates who, contrary to the wishes of the senior Confederate officers, insisted on a formal ceremony for the surrender of the

9 The Appomattox campaign is the subject of William Marvel, *Lee's Last Retreat: The Flight to Appomattox* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

Confederate infantry. Despite that demand, the ritual was conducted without undue humiliation to the vanquished Confederates. The degree of respect shown by the victors became a matter of some exaggeration during the reconciliationist frenzy of a later age, but no Confederate left Appomattox with cause to doubt the sincerity of Lincoln's long-standing promise.

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PART II

★

PLACES

War on the Rivers

GARY D. JOINER

Prior to the Civil War, the US War Department, and particularly the navy, concentrated on fighting a European foe in foreign and home waters. Britain was the most commonly conceived enemy.¹ Great coastal forts were built at major river mouths or a short distance upstream.² There was no need to protect the vast network of inland rivers and smaller streams. The Civil War created unforeseen problems for both the North and the Confederacy.³

Union naval strategy rapidly evolved from this prewar stance to a twofold action of blockading Southern commercial ports and prosecuting the war on inland waters.⁴ With few exceptions, this meant the entire lower Mississippi River valley. At the start of the war, none of the navy's twelve warships in home waters could operate easily in nontidal rivers.⁵ Innovation was needed, and President Abraham Lincoln chose Gideon Welles as secretary of the navy, whose orders were to bring the service up to war-fighting status and prosecute actions as needed.⁶ Welles's organizational skills made him the ideal head of this crucial service arm. Lincoln held great respect for both the navy and its new head, allowing his secretary to handle his department with only occasional interference.

1 Portions of the following narrative are found in Gary D. Joiner, *Mr. Lincoln's Brown Water Navy: The Mississippi River Squadron* (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield), chapters 3–8.

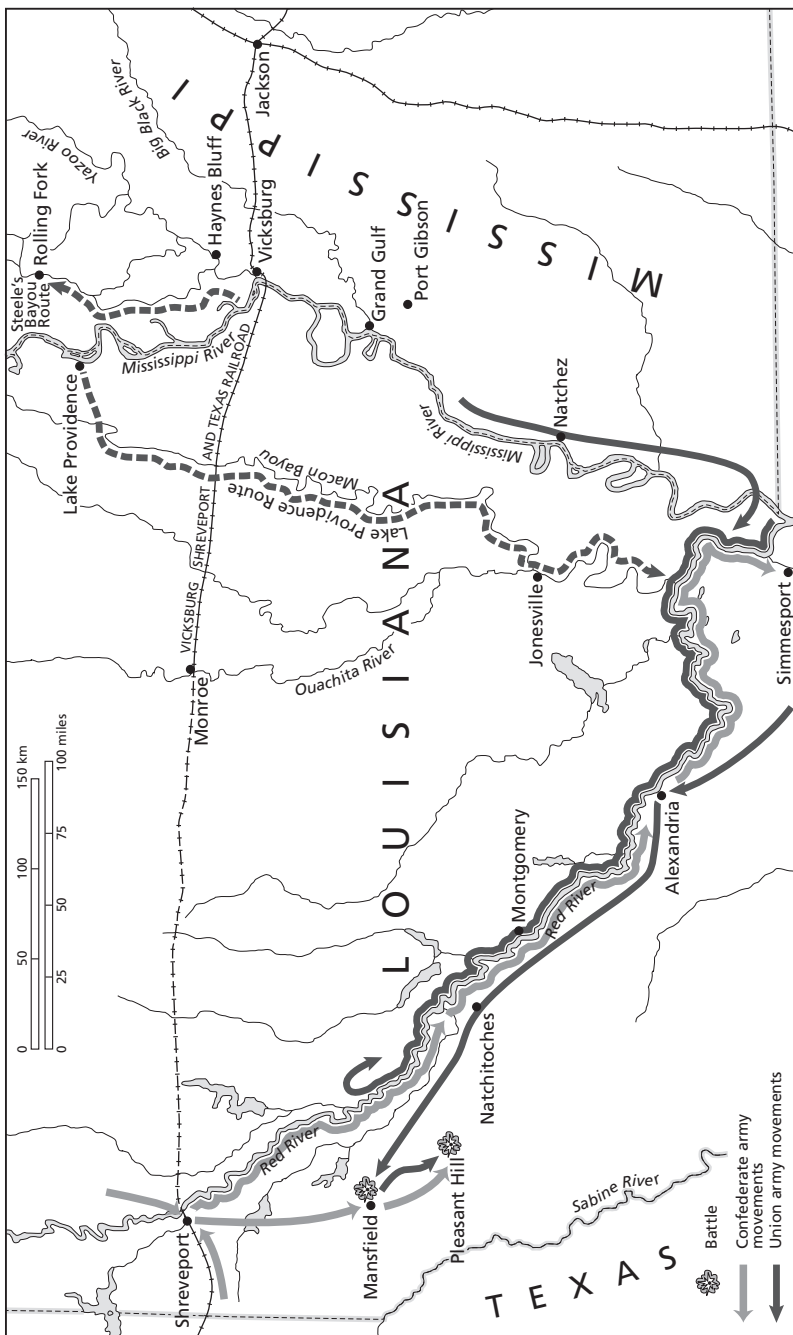
2 See Jay W. Simson, *Naval Strategies of the Civil War: Confederate Innovations and Federal Opportunism* (Nashville, TN: Cumberland House, 2001), pp. 12, 73.

3 Portions of brown water strategic problems are found in Gary D. Joiner and Spencer C. Tucker, "Riverine Warfare," in *The Civil War Naval Encyclopedia*, Spencer C. Tucker (ed.), (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011), vol. 11, pp. 592–5.

4 Portions of Union naval strategy are found in "Strategy, Union Naval," in *ibid.*, vol. 11, pp. 671–5.

5 Bern Anderson, *By Sea and by River: The Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), p. 10; Donald L. Canney, *Lincoln's Navy: The Ships, Men and Organizations, 1861–65* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998), pp. 9–10.

6 By far the best account of Welles's life is found in John Niven, *Gideon Welles; Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994).



20.1 War on the rivers. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

Subjugation of inland or “brown water” streams came with greater problems. Because the navy had no presence on inland waters, except the Great Lakes, the army expected vessels to operate under them. New types of vessels were needed – boats with shallow drafts, large guns, and narrow enough to navigate the twisting streams of the South. The navy would not fully control its own vessels until October 1862.

Gideon Welles picked Commander John Rodgers to assist the army. His brief command in 1861 resulted in the purchase and conversion of three timberclad boats, the *Tyler*, *Lexington*, and *Conestoga*. At the same time, James Buchanan Eads, in St. Louis, Missouri, built seven ironclads of the City Class. Eads chose his home as his construction headquarters and the small but strategic town of Cairo, Illinois as the nexus for building the new fleet.⁷ These formidable vessels were named for cities important to their construction: *Cairo*, *Carondelet*, *Cincinnati*, *Louisville*, *Mound City*, *Pittsburg*,⁸ and *St. Louis*. Initially, these seven sisters were differentiated only by differing color bands atop their chimneys: *Cairo*, gray; *Carondelet*, red; *Cincinnati*, blue; *Louisville*, green; *Mound City*, orange; *Pittsburg*, light brown; and *St. Louis*, yellow.⁹

These ten vessels, together with other ironclads and monitors, formed the nucleus of the brown water navy. The vessels were grouped into the Western Gunboat Flotilla. Under Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote, these vessels patrolled the larger rivers of the upper South, aided army forces, and bombarded shore installations.

Southern naval strategic thinking and implementation of plans were directly dependent upon politics and the geography, industrial capability, and population distribution of the new nation.¹⁰ The Confederacy was at

7 United States Navy Department, *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894–1922), series 1, volume 22, pp. 277–8 (hereafter cited as *ORN*; all subsequent citations are of series 1); Eads Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri.

8 The spelling of vessel was “*Pittsburg*.” Although the spelling of the city name was, and is, Pittsburgh, the federal government and other entities periodically dropped the “h”. It was not officially added until 1911.

9 *Mound City*, orange not officially confirmed. Personal conversation with Elizabeth Joyner, USS *Cairo* Museum, Vicksburg National Military Park, August 23, 2006; “Identification Colors for Chimney Bands,” credited to Mrs. Edwin C. (Margie) Bearss, from a list by a Mr. Shepard, engineer on the *Carondelet*; Donald L. Canney, *The Old Steam Navy Volume Two: The Ironclads, 1842–1885* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1993), p. 54; a remarkable catalog of items contained in or attached to the City Class vessels is found in Elizabeth Hoxie Joyner, *The U.S.S. Cairo: History and Artifacts of a Civil War Ironclad* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006).

10 Portions of Confederate naval strategy are found in “Strategy, Confederate Naval,” in Tucker (ed.), *The Civil War Naval Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, pp. 667–71; Anderson, *By Sea and by River*, p. 10; Canney, *Lincoln’s Navy*, pp. 9–10.

a distinct disadvantage at the beginning of the war. The Union possessed most of the population, railroads, and heavy manufacturing industries. Of these assets, the lack of heavy manufacturing capabilities most affected the South, especially in the production of weapons and naval vessels. Southern politicians and the general public deeply distrusted central government, preferring to give more power to the states. All national policy was affected by this core belief, which shaped Confederate naval strategy throughout the war. The Southern belief in regional government, with each state carrying great sway, impeded national defense measures and created havoc throughout the war. Confederate secretary of the navy Stephen Russell Mallory was chosen to guide the fledgling service through the war. More than anyone else, Mallory molded Confederate naval strategy.

The Confederacy possessed only fifteen warships in 1861. Unlike their Southern-born army counterparts, most naval officers chose to remain in Federal service. This lack of vessels and personnel was heightened by the geographic nature of the South. The coastline stretched across nine states from Virginia to Texas, a distance in excess of 3,000 miles. The major cotton-exporting ports (and, just as important, importation of goods ports) all needed protection. The largest naval shipyard was located at Norfolk, Virginia. Wilmington, North Carolina, Charleston, South Carolina, Pensacola, Florida, Mobile, Alabama, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Galveston, Texas were all vital to the cotton trade. Added to the ports needing protection were thousands of miles of rivers that must be guarded, not only at their mouths, but also along their channels. The lifeblood of the Confederacy was the sale of cotton. It provided money for weapons and the equipment Southern armies needed to exist. The prewar single-crop economy became a great hindrance to establishing a viable wartime society.

Mallory decided upon a dual strategy. First, and most successfully, he attempted to purchase warships from Britain and western European nations. The South could not afford, nor would time allow, the purchase of all the vessels needed to guard its coastline from a Union blockade. Instead, Mallory sought to purchase swift commerce raiders to interdict Union merchant trade. The most successful of these vessels were the CSS *Alabama* and the CSS *Shenandoah*, both purchased from Great Britain.

The second strategy implemented by Mallory was innovative and daring. To protect the rivers and harbors of the Confederacy, he decided on a policy of point defense. Large numbers of ironclad gunboats were constructed in or near ports that needed the most protection. Inland ports, primarily cotton-transfer points, usually contained repair facilities for steamboats. If enough of

the required materials and labor could be gathered at these points, ironclads could be built to protect these towns. The Confederacy built twenty-two ironclads during the war.¹¹ Most were unfinished or inadequately armed by the time Union forces arrived in the area. A few were so successful that they altered Union naval strategy.

Among the most successful of the Confederate ironclads was the CSS *Arkansas*, built not in a town or harbor, but in the middle of the Yazoo River swamp above Vicksburg, Mississippi. The *Arkansas* disrupted the Mississippi Squadron at Vicksburg in early 1862. While attempting to support Confederate forces in an effort to recapture Baton Rouge, Louisiana, its barely reliable engines failed and the gunboat was scuttled. Another successful ironclad was the CSS *Tennessee*. This vessel protected Mobile Bay until August 1864. It also suffered from engine problems, but the amount of resources dedicated to its destruction provides proof of the caution the Union Navy held for the vessel.

Mallory commissioned ironclad gunboats in seemingly impossible places. Two of these improbable sites and boats were the CSS *Jackson*, built on the Chattahoochee River at Columbus, Georgia and the CSS *Missouri*, built on the Red River at Shreveport, Louisiana.¹² He believed that any port worth protecting could be augmented by a gunboat.

The Confederate navy also created innovative weapons such as submarines, the spar torpedo (mine), and the free-floating or submerged torpedo (mine).¹³ The spar torpedo was the weapon used by the CSS *Hunley* in Charleston Harbor in the first successful attack by a submarine on another vessel. The attack resulted in the sinking of the USS *Housatonic* on February 17, 1864. An electrically detonated torpedo destroyed the USS *Cairo* on December 12, 1862 in the Yazoo River in Mississippi during the Vicksburg campaign.¹⁴ Other mines floated in rivers and harbors across the South.

Mallory's efforts often ended with incomplete or inadequately armed vessels. The rapid pace of Union land operations with close cooperation by

11 Paul H. Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1989), passim.

12 ORN, 26: 747–8; Jonathan H. Carter, *Carter Correspondence Book*, Manuscript in the National Archives, Carter to Mallory, February 1, 1863; Katherine Brash Jeter, *A Man and His Boat: The Civil War Career and Correspondence of Lieutenant Jonathan H. Carter*, CSN (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1996), p. x.

13 For a thorough examination of the Confederate torpedo program, see Milton F. Perry, *Infernal Machines: The Story of Confederate Submarine and Mine Warfare* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965).

14 ORN, 22: 644–7, 784; Edwin C. Bearss, *Hardluck Ironclad, The Sinking and Salvage of the Cairo* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), p. 46.

the Union navy, particularly the Mississippi Squadron, often resulted in Confederate shipyards being overrun or bypassed. Union efforts on the high seas were successful in hunting down the raiders. By the end of the war, the Union's ability to starve Southern commerce and greatly out produce the numbers of warships conclusively decided the issue.

Welles concentrated on building the blockading fleet and all but ignored the pressing issue of a huge internal boundary that stretched along the Ohio River to the Mississippi River and potentially up the river to beyond St. Louis, Missouri. He believed the US Army would be responsible for handling the inland, riverine, or brown water, issues.

The solution to prosecuting the naval war, even before vessels could be obtained, was described in a course of action by General-in-Chief Winfield Scott, a War of 1812 veteran. Scott described a plan that would work in two parts. First, the blockade would starve the South from outside assistance. Second, the internal waterways of the South must be controlled and used as an invasion path. These two parts must be integrated for the plan to work. While the blockade would squeeze Confederate trade and resupply to a trickle, reducing or capturing interior fortifications and strongpoints would be essential to destroying the Southern ability to make war. For the navy, this meant close cooperation with the army in the interior while its ships starved Confederate ports. The problem was that not enough vessels existed for the first part and no vessels existed for the second.

The first action in which a Union commander received assistance was at Belmont, Missouri on November 7, 1861, when the *Tyler* and *Lexington* supported a landing by Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant. Union strategists hoped to gain a foothold across the Mississippi River from the massive Confederate fortifications at Columbus, Kentucky.¹⁵ Although the raid had little effect, Grant immediately recognized the usefulness of big naval guns. The gunboats provided the only reliable means of reconnaissance deep into Confederate territory. One of the forays by the timberclad *Conestoga* under Lieutenant Seth Ledyard Phelps up the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers discovered two large Confederate forts guarding the approaches. Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River became major targets for the Union.¹⁶ As 1862 began, the navy would see its importance grow and missions and obligations greatly expand.

15 Jack D. Coombe, *Thunder along the Mississippi: The River Battles That Split the Confederacy* (New York: Sarpedon, 1996), 40.

16 ORN, 22: 356–7.

The effort to wrest control of the inland rivers was, from the beginning, a joint army–navy venture. Army commanders, particularly Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman, became close allies of the Western Gunboat Flotilla and, later, the Mississippi Squadron. Flag Officer Foote believed the navy could destroy the forts. He attacked Fort Henry on February 6, 1862 with four ironclads and two timberclads.¹⁷ The fort, located almost at water level, was no match for the large naval guns aboard the vessels.¹⁸ The Confederates used a new weapon on the gunboats: torpedoes (mines.) These proved to be largely ineffective, but the navy recognized the new threat. High water was also a factor in the navy’s favor and the fort fell easily.

Foote then turned his attention to the more formidable Fort Donelson, located on much higher ground with belts of batteries. Foote brought three City Class ironclads and two timberclads against the fort. The upper batteries stood 120 feet above the river and were out of vertical elevation range of the naval guns. Foote brought his flotilla to within 600 yards of the fort’s guns and found that his ironclads were very vulnerable to plunging fire. While Grant and his army force marched overland from Fort Henry to invest the fort, Foote attacked the batteries. The Confederates opened a highly accurate barrage on the ironclads. All three ironclads – the USS *Carondelet*, USS *Pittsburg*, and USS *St. Louis* (later *Baron DeKalb*) – received heavy damage from either enemy fire or collisions.¹⁹ The Confederates were disheartened because the ironclads were quickly repaired and returned to menace the batteries. The fort was soon forced to surrender by pressure from Grant and the menace of the gunboats.²⁰ The loss of the two forts destroyed the myth of a Confederate defense line on the lower portions of the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers.²¹ Flag Officer Foote was wounded in the foot during the action but continued to lead his flotilla in the coming weeks. Foote was a fearless innovator. His new gunboats allowed him to seek out and attack fortified positions that were unlike any coastal emplacements. As the war

17 David Dixon Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: Sherman Publishing, 1886), p. 147.

18 Captain Jesse Taylor, “The Defense of Fort Henry,” in Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (eds.), *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (New York: Century, 1884–9), vol. 1, pp. 368–73.

19 Henry Walke, “The Gunboats at Belmont & Fort Henry,” in Johnson and Buel (eds.), *Battles and Leaders*, vol. 1, p. 362.

20 For a detailed examination of the Battle of Fort Donelson see Gary D. Joiner, *Mr. Lincoln’s Brown Water Navy*, pp. 41–8.

21 Excellent critiques are found in Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Forts Henry and Donelson: The Key to the Confederate Heartland* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987) and Kendall Gott, *Where the South Lost the War: An Analysis of the Fort Henry-Fort Donelson Campaign, February 1862* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 2003).

progressed the strengths and weaknesses of these vessels revealed themselves and each engagement brought changes in tactics.

Foote moved his battered ironclads to Mound City for repairs, thus almost vacating the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers with the exception of the three timberclads. The next major target for the Union was to capture or neutralize the Confederate supply base at Corinth, Mississippi. The closest point of resupply was Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River, near a small church called Shiloh.

The timberclads *Tyler* and *Lexington* assisted Grant again at the Battle of Shiloh on April 6–7, 1862. During the first day's fighting, Confederate forces pushed the Union army back to the river. The gunboats provided close-in fire support, harassing the Confederates and giving the Union forces time to reinforce and regroup. They also provided counterbattery fire for the 170 transports that brought Union troops to the battle.²² Several Confederate commanders credited the gunboats with providing covering fire, protecting the Union transport vessels, and adding greatly to the Union defenses.²³

While the timberclads were engaged on the Tennessee River, the newly repaired ironclads saw service again on the Mississippi River. The Confederates had fortified Columbus, Kentucky on the eastern bluffs of the river and Island No. 10 (the tenth island south of Cairo, Illinois). The loss of forts Henry and Donelson compromised Columbus and the Confederates concentrated on Island No. 10, near New Madrid, Missouri. Island No. 10 was an elongated oval about 2 miles long and one mile wide.²⁴ Located in the middle of a hairpin "S" curve, or "devil's elbow," of the Mississippi River, it was upstream but south of New Madrid, which had its own fortifications.²⁵

Foote moved against the island fort in March 1862. He brought nine gunboats and ten mortar rafts on the mission. He did not enjoy the same level of support from the army that he had achieved with Grant. The field commander on the scene attempting to control the region was Major General John Pope, who distrusted the navy. Foote would essentially have

22 Unsigned, undated memoir in USS *Tyler* file at Shiloh National Military Park.

23 United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890–1901), series 1, volume 10, pp. 385–7, 397, 418, 423, 425, 432, 455, 480, 499, 534, 582, 601, 622, 616 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).

24 Island No. 10 no longer exists. The Mississippi River has destroyed all traces of it.

25 See *Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891–5), plate x (hereafter cited as OR *Atlas*).

to take the fort without army support. The island's defenses held back the flotilla's first attack and Foote had to reconsider his tactics. Foote and his officers decided they must attempt to run at least one ironclad past the gauntlet of the island's batteries at night. This was accomplished by the USS *Carondelet* under Captain Henry Walke and First Master William R. Hoel. Foote sent the *Pittsburg* to join the *Carondelet* below the island fort. Foote, Walke, and Hoel became heroes within the navy and in the press for the daring passage made at night, during an intense storm, and with no casualties.²⁶ With ironclads above and below the island, the defenders were forced to surrender on April 7, 1862.²⁷

The next target below Island No. 10 was the large city of Memphis, Tennessee. Foote's wound became worse and he was replaced by Captain Charles H. Davis.²⁸ Davis used six City Class ironclads and several mortar rafts against the city. The Confederates countered with eight cottonclad rams of the Confederate defense fleet. The term "cottonclad," as the name implies, refers to a vessel that was armored, not by iron or thin metal sheets, but with bales of cotton. The Confederates suffered shortages of useable railroad iron and thick or thin sheets of iron. They possessed an enormous amount of cotton. The bales were stacked vertically along the sides of the vessels, sometimes several rows thick. Although this sounds like a terrible idea, the Confederates found that the bales easily absorbed small arms projectiles and small artillery rounds. However, they could not easily withstand large naval artillery rounds or shells, and if the cotton caught on fire, it could not normally be extinguished. A cottonclad ram was a fearsome weapon.

The initial battle between these seemingly mismatched forces witnessed the Union ironclads *Cincinnati* and *Mound City* both sunk. The Confederates lost one cottonclad.²⁹ This was the first purely naval engagement of the war in the Mississippi River valley. The *Mound City* was raised the next day and the *Cincinnati* shortly afterward. This greatly frustrated the Confederates.³⁰

An independent unit, the US Ram Fleet, under Colonel Charles Ellet, arrived above Memphis. Davis was not the fleet's superior. The Ellet rams relied upon great speed and agility to ram an enemy vessel. Many were not armed at that time. The Confederate cottonclads normally possessed a small

26 ORN, 22: 730; Larry J. Daniel and Lynn N. Bock, *Island No. 10: Struggle for the Mississippi Valley* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1996), p. 142.

27 ORN, 22: 734–5. 28 Ibid., 202–3.

29 At the time, the cottonclad was thought to be the *General Sumter*; however, since this vessel was seen some days later, it is unclear which vessel the *Carondelet* destroyed.

30 ORN, 23: 13–17; Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies*, p. 170; Coombe, *Thunder along the Mississippi*, p. 125.

number of field howitzers or cannon. An engagement between these two similar types of vessels yielded ballet-like parries with rapid turns. Both sides sought a clear line of approach to gain enough speed to skewer an opponent. In a peculiar battle between the Ellet rams and the Confederate cottonclads on May 10, 1862, most of the Rebel vessels were destroyed. Charles Ellet, Jr. was killed, and a tenuous relationship began between the navy and the Ram Fleet.³¹

Fort Pillow, above Memphis, fell to land forces and Memphis became the next great target. The Ram Fleet fought the Confederate cottonclads at Memphis before the bulk of the Western Gunboat Flotilla could be amassed above, upstream of the city. Ellet's rams almost destroyed or captured the bulk of the defending vessels.³² This brought nearly all of the Mississippi River north of Mississippi under Union control.

The lynchpin of Confederate defenses in the Mississippi Valley was Vicksburg, Mississippi, thought to be all but impregnable. The vertical bluffs on the eastern banks of the river rose up to 290 feet and the Confederates rushed guns and men to fortify them. Batteries and individual artillery pieces studded these heights from concealed locations. They could shoot down on any intruding vessel with impunity. Vicksburg was located in a sharp turn of the river known to steamboat men as a "devil's elbow." Vessels descending the river found themselves navigating a sharp bend and suddenly staring up at a huge square-topped bluff studded with cannon. The Confederate gunners were ideally situated to send plunging fire into any gunboat that came within range.

Before the flotilla could make an attack, they were ordered to assist the army by conducting an excursion up the White River in Arkansas. The object was to dislodge the Confederates under Major General Thomas Hindman from their fortifications near the town of St. Charles, Arkansas at Devall's Bluff.³³ The White River, although navigable for 300 miles, was narrower than the Mississippi, Tennessee, or Cumberland rivers. This was a different environment – more constricting and fraught with more perils.

Flag Officer Davis chose the *Mound City*, commanded by Augustus Kilty, as his flagship, and selected the *St. Louis*, *Lexington*, and the armored tug *Spitfire* to sweep up the river. Other vessels would join the core group later. Kilty and his cohorts left Memphis on the morning of June 12. Kilty decided to ascend

³¹ William D. Crandall, and Isaac D. Newell, *History of the Ram Fleet and the Mississippi Marine Brigade in the War for the Union on the Mississippi and its Tributaries, The Story of the Ellets and their Men* (St. Louis: Buschart Brothers, 1907), pp. 9–13.

³² OR, 10: 906–10; ORN, 23: 122. ³³ *Mobile Daily Tribune*, July 2, 1862; ORN, 23: 166.

the river with the *Mound City* and the *St. Louis*, relying upon their thick armor for protection. There was simply no way that the lighter vessels could flank and protect the big ironclads.

As the pair approached the Confederate works, including an artillery battery mounted on a high ridge, a well-placed round from the 42-pounder seacoast howitzer slammed into the *Mound City*, penetrating its port casemate immediately in front and a little above a gun port. The round did unbelievable damage as it passed through the iron and the oak behind it. While still in flight, it killed three men and then exploded the steam drum, scalding most of the crew.³⁴ Other vessels, including the *St. Louis*, dragged the stricken *Mound City* out of harm's way. Of the *Mound City*'s crew of 175 men and officers, eighty-two were buried at the site, forty-three drowned or were shot while in the water, and twenty-five were scalded, including Captain Kilty. Only twenty-five men – three officers and twenty-two enlisted men – were uninjured.³⁵ The Confederates melted away into the countryside. The navy proclaimed the mission a success, but after their retrograde, the Confederates returned. The navy proved once again that it could assist ground troops, but perhaps at great cost.

While the Western Gunboat Flotilla made great strides in opening the Mississippi River valley, the traditional blue water navy created a major foothold on the lower Mississippi River.³⁶ The elegant screw sloops of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron under Admiral David Glasgow Farragut, with the assistance of mortar schooners under his foster-brother, Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter, entered the Mississippi River. The vessels worked to disable an enormous chain placed across the river 70 miles upstream in the third week of April 1862. They managed to pass the large Fort Jackson and the smaller, older Fort St. Philip across the river and neutralized them. The largest city and most important port in the South, New Orleans, surrendered without firing a shot on April 30 to the navy and to the army on May 1. The Southerners had not protected the city, believing that the fortifications below would stop any invader.

³⁴ ORN, 23: 166. ³⁵ Ibid., 196.

³⁶ The efforts of the US Navy on the lower Mississippi River are not, strictly speaking, within the focus of this chapter. The events recounted here are included to provide the reader with a summary of the actions under Admiral David G. Farragut and do not constitute a full history the battles involved. For a more complete history, see Charles L. Dufour, *The Night the War Was Lost* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960); John D. Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), among others.

The fleet then advanced in a series of rapid leapfrog actions. Farragut had orders to control the Mississippi River north of New Orleans and join with (newly promoted) Flag Officer Charles H. Davis's ironclads at Memphis. The *Richmond* forayed on May 3 but ran aground in an attempt to reach the Louisiana capital at Baton Rouge. Four days later, the *Iroquois* arrived there and demanded the capital's surrender. Although the city featured no practical defenses, it refused to surrender. Commander J. S. Palmer sent a shore party to the former Federal arsenal and raised the US flag. The *Iroquois* moved close into the bank with its guns loaded, guarding the small group of Union sailors ashore. Farragut arrived at Baton Rouge on May 10 and immediately sent the *Oneida*, under Commander S. P. Lee, upriver to demand the surrender of Natchez, Mississippi. Because the town's citizens could not bear to see naval gunfire destroy its magnificent homes, they surrendered immediately.³⁷ On May 18, Lee steamed farther upstream to take Vicksburg, Mississippi. This all seemed unbelievably easy, and up to that point, it was. The navy sloops transited hundreds of river miles above New Orleans with only token resistance, but the blue water vessels were moving into a narrowing river without knowing its depth or the vicissitudes of its currents.

Commander S. P. Lee arrived at Vicksburg on May 18 and observed for the first time the already fortified bluffs that rose above the river. His guns could not elevate to attack the batteries on such heights and he had too few soldiers aboard to make a difference. Vicksburg refused to surrender.³⁸ Farragut returned to New Orleans on May 30, leaving army troops under Major General Benjamin Butler in Baton Rouge. Farragut wanted to leave the river with its fickle currents and too-close banks. The first attempt at taking Vicksburg failed.

President Lincoln put intense pressure on Gideon Welles to have Farragut join Flag Officer Davis and take the city. Accordingly, Farragut returned to the area below Vicksburg on June 26 with three of his sloops and several auxiliary vessels. Commander Porter assisted with seventeen of the mortar schooners, and Butler sent 3,000 men under Brigadier General Thomas Williams. The mortar boats initiated a brisk but ineffective bombardment because the bluffs obscured the city from the navy's vantage point. Farragut realized he should land the soldiers, but he saw no viable place. Williams reported to Farragut that he commanded far too few men to take Vicksburg. Not wanting to withdraw a second time, Farragut decided to run past the batteries to join Davis, whom he hoped was near. The army began building

³⁷ ORN, 18: 490–1. ³⁸ ORN, 18: 492.

a series of canals, both above and below Vicksburg, with the intent of bypassing the now huge fortifications. All these attempts were destined to fail in some regard.

After several officers made suggestions, the first attempt was at the DeSoto peninsula opposite the hairpin turn of the river at Vicksburg.³⁹ Farragut and his sloops steamed upstream in the early morning hours of June 28. Rebel batteries spotted the intruders and began firing down upon them. The sloops returned fire as best they could, while the mortar schooners, anchored below, poured spectacular but ineffective fire over the bluffs. By dawn, the *Hartford*, *Iroquois*, and some of the support boats had passed the batteries, but the *Brooklyn* and two other vessels had not and turned back. Farragut was pleased that the *Hartford* had received only minor damage but was dismayed that his force was severed. Prior to the attempt, Farragut had made contact with some of the Ellet rams by land reconnaissance and joined three of them. He requested that they send one ram back to Memphis to have Flag Officer Davis bring the gunboat flotilla and also that they wire army major general Henry Halleck to send a force of infantry to assist in capturing Vicksburg.

While Farragut and a portion of his fleet were above Vicksburg, some of the Ellet rams ascended the Yazoo River to find the much-feared Confederate ram *Arkansas*. The ironclad did not look like other Confederate ironclads. It had vertical armor 6 inches thick. The ram alone was 16 feet long, 10 feet wide, and attached to 10 feet of solid timber. Armament consisted of two 9-inch smoothbores, two 64-pounders, two 6-inch rifles, and two 32-pounder smoothbores. The 18-inch-thick iron plate and railroad iron casemate were from salvaged metal and colored a rusty brown.⁴⁰ Her Achilles' heel was in her engines. Raised from a sunken hulk, they never worked properly.⁴¹ The rust color blended into the color of the bluffs at Vicksburg, making her at times almost invisible.

On the morning of July 15, the *Arkansas* moved downstream near the mouth of the Yazoo River. A Union tug saw it and turned around to warn the fleet. The nearest warships were the ironclad *Carondelet*, the timberclad *Tyler*, and the ram *Queen of the West*. The *Carondelet* and *Tyler* fired at the Rebel ironclad at close range with no visible effect. The *Arkansas* fired point-blank into the *Carondelet*, doing heavy damage. Captain Walke nursed his stricken vessel to shore, grounding before it sank. Both the *Queen of the West* and the *Tyler* fled before they could fall victim to the powerful intruder. The *Arkansas*

39 Commander H. H. Bell transmitted such an idea on June 14, 1862. See ORN, 18: 582.

40 Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies*, p. 202. 41 Ibid.

chased the boats out into the Mississippi, where the remainder of Farragut's fleet kept up just enough steam to maintain the engines.

Despite all the firing heard from upstream, the fleet of thirty vessels was caught unaware. Davis's ironclads were anchored on the east bank of the river. Ellet's rams were near the mouth of the Yazoo, the army transports were tied up to the Louisiana side, and the mortar schooners were downstream. Isaac Brown, the *Arkansas*' captain, chose to run the ironclad through the middle of the Union fleet. Her chimney was damaged by shellfire and this reduced her speed. She attacked targets as they presented themselves and then disappeared against the bluffs.

The ironclad *Essex*, the ram *Sumpter*, and the Ellet ram *Queen of the West* attempted to attack the *Arkansas* but were driven off, separated from the remainder of the Union fleet by the Vicksburg batteries. Farragut moved his vessels downstream on July 24. The second attempt on Vicksburg failed miserably. Geography seemed to be on the side of the Confederates. The twisting river with erratic currents, the elevation of the Confederate guns, and large of quantity of hubris in the Union commanders all led to the defeat.

At the same time, the Confederates planned to recapture Baton Rouge. They wanted the *Arkansas* to reinforce the army and keep the Union navy occupied. On August 5, the Rebels attacked their former capital. The *Arkansas*, on its way to assist them, suffered engine problems and grounded itself on the western bank just upstream from Baton Rouge. After helping repulse the Confederate attack, the *Essex* steamed upstream to attack the *Arkansas*. As it approached, the crew set the *Arkansas* ablaze to keep it out of Union hands.

Although not recognized for its significance at the time, the Union navy's aborted attempt to capture Vicksburg heralded a turning point in the war in the west. The continued separation of the blue and brown water squadrons, the lack of cooperation from the army, and the expanding strength of the Vicksburg fortifications all forced President Lincoln and his planners to make some tough decisions. In the following months, both the army and naval forces in the west would see radical changes not only in who led them, but also in how and where they would fight. Charles Davis was a good commander and performed admirably, but with limitations. His shortcomings lay in what might be called "command vision." President Lincoln and Secretary Welles realized that a new direction must be taken. The Western Gunboat Flotilla was no longer an adequate unit facing increasing complexities. New leadership was needed.

Gideon Welles transferred Flag Officer Charles Davis to Washington to be Chief of the Bureau of Navigation.

After much lobbying by the navy and the president, Congress passed legislation transferring the Western Gunboat Flotilla to the navy with an effective date of October 1, 1862.⁴² The name was changed to “the Mississippi Squadron,” reflecting its elevated status and importance, but this was just the beginning of the reorganization. The squadron’s first commander was Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter. Porter realized that the force must be greatly expanded and developed a smaller, heavily armed type of vessel called tinclads. With the tinclads, the navy could navigate into smaller streams inaccessible to the ironclads. For the first time, Southern armies in the Mississippi Valley were at risk from Union forces escorted far into the interior. The tinclads were mostly sternwheelers that carried one-and-one-quarter-inch armor plating. The new warships were even more versatile than expected. Eventually, the US Navy had sixty-three of these tough craft, and some of the gunboats, particularly the *Marmora*, *Fort Hindman*, *Juliet*, *Cricket*, *Covington*, and *Signal*, became known for their exploits. Porter also contracted with James Buchanan Eads to build hybrid monitors. The most important of these were sisters, the *Osage* and *Neosho*. The decks and other surfaces sported armor two and one-half inches thick that could deflect almost all cannon shot.⁴³ Other large vessels were acquired, built, or converted. Porter’s brother, William, designed two powerful but exceedingly odd vessels, the *Choctaw* and *Lafayette*. These were originally clad with India rubber as armor because rubber was flexible, and it was easier to work with on complex surfaces. The rubber rotted in the hot climate and the vessels were reclad in iron. The largest of the ironclads was the *Eastport*, captured by Seth L. Phelps on an earlier mission. After it was redesigned, the sidewheeler was 280-feet long with armor six and one-half inches thick and eight guns, including two 100-pounder rifles.⁴⁴ The use of these guns as bow guns displayed the intent for the gunboat to be an ironclad killer. David Porter also invested in a large sidewheeler named *Black Hawk*, which became his flagship. It carried eleven guns and was painted black and white.⁴⁵

Less than a month after taking command, Porter assisted both Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant and Major General William Tecumseh Sherman in what became known as the “Bayou Experiments,” attempts to bypass Vicksburg or to create approaches through the Yazoo Swamp. These were

42 Naval Historical Division, *Civil War Naval Chronology 1861–1865* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), part 11, p. 100.

43 Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies*, p. 149. 44 Ibid., p. 156. 45 Ibid., p. 164.

disasters of varying order. All ended in utter failure but some efforts witnessed ironclads almost trapped in the lush jungle-like swamp. Many vessels found themselves swirling in circles in torrents created by blown levees. Other gunboats were holed by point-blank fire from concealed artillery.

The most onerous event occurred on December 12, 1862, when the ironclad *Cairo* was sunk by a Confederate torpedo.⁴⁶ Later that month, the squadron assisted Major General Sherman in an attack on Hayne's Bluff, the northernmost of the Vicksburg defenses. The Union forces were pushed back, and the commander of the *Benton* was killed.⁴⁷ While repairs were made, Porter assisted the army in the capture of Arkansas Post, a Confederate fort on the Arkansas River. This fort denied access to Little Rock, several hundred miles up the river.⁴⁸ Sherman and Porter saw the attempt as a practical necessity to clear their back door before resuming operations against Vicksburg and to redeem themselves from the Hayne's Bluff debacle.

Vicksburg was not only an extremely strong fortified bluff; it also allowed the Confederates to pour in much-needed men, supplies, and cattle from Texas and Louisiana across the Mississippi River below it.⁴⁹ From the mouth of the Red River on the Louisiana side and upstream to Vicksburg was a fairly secure area for this traffic. Although some Union vessels were on that section of the river, the Confederates had little to worry about unless the gunboats were seen, or large plumes of black smoke were observed nearby. Porter decided to halt, or at least thwart, this movement. Of course, the squadron was still above Vicksburg; therefore, some of his boats would need to run the gauntlet of the bluff batteries to conduct the mission. The bluffs held hundreds of guns from muskets up to and including huge siege cannon. The batteries were masked and seemed to be invisible. The only time in which they could be seen was when the guns fired. On February 2, 1863, Porter sent Colonel Charles Rivers Ellet, aboard the ram *Queen of the West*, past the batteries. The ram carried cotton bales over its wooden sheathing to absorb or deflect the solid rounds from the Rebel artillery. The *Queen* also mounted a 30-pounder bow gun and three 12-pounder howitzers.⁵⁰ The difficult passage was made with minor damage. Porter stationed observers to watch the run to ascertain the strength of the defenses on the

46 ORN, 23: 550; John C. Wideman, *The Sinking of the USS Cairo* (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 1993), pp. 26–31.

47 ORN, 23: 573.

48 Charles Edmund Vetter, *Sherman: Merchant of Terror, Advocate of Peace* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1992), p. 150.

49 The Battle of Vicksburg is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 13.

50 Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies*, p. 161.

Vicksburg bluffs. Porter's spotters were quite surprised to find the enemy guns firing from spots where there were no indications of any guns existing before. The shots came from banks and gullies, from railroad depots, from clumps of bushes and from hilltops almost 300 feet high. A better system of defense was never devised.⁵¹ Ellet severely hampered Confederate transshipment of men and goods until he chased a transport up the Red River and was forced to abandon his ram.⁵² Lieutenant Commander George Brown, commanding the ironclad *Indianola*, ran the gauntlet of the Confederate defenses on February 13 to assist Ellet. The *Indianola* was attacked and beached by the (now) Confederate ram *Queen of the West* and the high-speed ram *William H. Webb*.⁵³

Admiral Farragut found his position limited. The Confederates built a strong fortification at Port Hudson, just south of the Mississippi–Louisiana state line. Porter, with the bulk of the Mississippi Squadron, was north of Vicksburg. Some of Porter's vessels were south of the fortifications, but north of Port Hudson. The admiral's West Gulf Blockading ships were south of Port Hudson. Farragut decided to run past the Port Hudson guns on March 14. He lost the sloop *Mississippi* in the effort and only got his flagship *Hartford* and the smaller *Albatross* above the guns.⁵⁴ They were now trapped. Colonel Alfred Ellet dispatched two of his rams, the *Switzerland* and the *Lancaster* to run the gauntlet at Vicksburg and assist Farragut. Both were destroyed.⁵⁵

The army decided to cut a canal at Lake Providence on the Louisiana side. According to the Union's maps, this would allow transports to take a 400-mile detour that placed the troops and vessels at the mouth of the Red River. Six months later, less than 1 mile of useable water had been cleared. Simultaneously, Porter and Sherman decided to attack the northern Vicksburg defenses at Chickasaw Bluff, just south of Hayne's Bluff. This mission ended in disaster again, with the navy almost losing the bulk of its light tinclads.⁵⁶

The efforts of Porter and Sherman convinced Lieutenant General U. S. Grant that conventional methods of attack would not work against Vicksburg. He placed three army corps on the Louisiana side north of Lake

⁵¹ ORN, 24: 320.

⁵² Maurice Melton, "From Vicksburg to Port Hudson: Porter's River Campaign," *Harper's Weekly*, vol. 12, no. 10 (February 28, 1863).

⁵³ ORN, 24: 376–7, 384–5. ⁵⁴ ORN, 19: 672, 677–9, 686–8. ⁵⁵ ORN, 24: 515–16.

⁵⁶ Katherine Polk Gale, "Reminiscences of Life in the Southern Confederacy, 1861–1865": 10–11A, Gale and Polk Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Providence and had them march south, eventually to Hard Times Landing, where he hoped to cross them to the Mississippi side. All he needed was Rear Admiral Porter, his gunboats, and all the transports and barges he could muster.

Porter's squadron herded every transport and barge to run the Vicksburg gauntlet on the night of April 16. The earlier attempt by the *Indianola* allowed him to see where the guns were and how to run them. Rather than firing back, all vessels were "buttoned up." They used their engines and the current to carry them to safety. The only vessel lost was the transport *Henry Clay*, when the captain panicked and tried to leave the column. The vessel became an easy target and paid for it by becoming a blazing hulk.⁵⁷ Fortunately for the column, the Confederate gunners concentrated heavily on the stricken steamboat and neglected many others.

The Confederates scored a victory against the US Navy soon after this passage when the Mississippi Squadron attempted to reduce yet another Confederate fort that had been erected at Grand Gulf on the Mississippi side of the river. The *Benton* was cut up yet again and the ironclad *Tuscumbia* never saw service again, but spent the remainder of the war in the repair docks.⁵⁸

Despite this victory, the Union carried the momentum now. With Grant's army on the east side of the river, it moved quickly to seize Jackson, the capital, and then forced the Confederate army inside the extensive fortifications. Grant attempted two frontal attacks on May 19 and May 22. Both failed. The Union army then laid siege for forty-seven days. Vicksburg surrendered on July 4. Port Hudson surrendered the next week. As Abraham Lincoln noted when he heard the news: "The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea."⁵⁹

The loss of Vicksburg and Port Hudson shattered Confederate hopes of fresh armies to be raised west of the Mississippi River and sent east. Gone too were the supplies needed to succor the eastern armies. The Mississippi Squadron, for the remainder of 1863 and early 1864, patrolled the great river and its eastern tributaries to enforce this new blockade.

One more great expedition was planned, this one controversial and filled with rancor. After the fall of Vicksburg, Major General Sherman lobbied for a campaign up the Red River, the only major tributary of the Mississippi River that the Mississippi Squadron did not patrol, toward the Confederate

⁵⁷ ORN, 24: 553, 555–8, 682. ⁵⁸ ORN, 24: 574–5, 607–8, 610–11, 613, 615–23, 625–6.

⁵⁹ Abraham Lincoln, *Lincoln on Democracy*, Mario Matthew Cuomo and G. S. Boritt (eds.), (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), p. 291.

capital of Louisiana at Shreveport. It was home to the Confederate Army of the Trans-Mississippi, was the center of a crude manufacturing web that reached deep into Texas, contained large numbers of warehouses filled with supplies, had a naval base that manufactured and repaired warships, and (although it is not certain whether Rear Admiral Porter knew it at the time) was the home of five submarines that were sisters of the CSS *Hunley*. The small city was also the gateway to the interior of Texas.

It was at this moment that Lieutenant General Grant moved east to take over command of all army operations. Major General Sherman moved to Tennessee and Georgia to contend with the Confederate Army of Tennessee. As a result, the Union commander that carried out the mission was Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, a political general disliked by Grant, Sherman, and Porter. By the time Grant protested, the expedition was planned and underway.

Banks's plan was cumbersome and unwieldy. It relied on all commanders being on time and ready for action. Two columns were to descend upon Shreveport from Arkansas. Another would march across southern Louisiana and then turn north and march to Alexandria in the center of the state. The final piece of this clockwork mechanism required almost all of the Mississippi Squadron, accompanied by army transports with supplies, and 10,000 of Sherman's veterans loaned to the navy for protection. They were to meet Banks at Alexandria and proceed north to neutralize Shreveport.⁶⁰ Banks's army would be under the protection of the navy's big guns. Altogether, the expedition consisted of over 42,500 men and 108 naval vessels.

None of the four pincers started when they should, and the Arkansas troops almost starved due to lack of planning and overconsumption of supplies. The southern Louisiana march was mired in heavy rains and bottomless mud. General Banks arrived eight days late to meet his troops in Alexandria.

The Mississippi Squadron started the mission well, taking the antishipping Fort DeRussy with ease with assistance of some of Sherman's troops. Alexandria fell to the *Osage* without a shot on March 15. Porter, his vessels, and Sherman's veterans waited in Alexandria for a full week, stealing over 3,000 bales of cotton and sending them back to the Admiralty Court in Springfield, Illinois.⁶¹ All during that week and after, Porter monitored the

60 For a thorough examination of this campaign, see Gary D. Joiner, *Through the Howling Wilderness: The 1864 Red River Campaign and Union Defeat in the West* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006).

61 Dispatch in the personal collection of Mr. Richard Self, Shreveport, Louisiana.

water levels in the Red River. During the spring, the water should be rising. Instead, the river fell, sometimes slowly, at other times, quite rapidly. He never knew the cause. The Confederates built two dams at Tones Bayou in southern Caddo Parish below Shreveport. When Porter's gunboats reached Alexandria, Confederates blew the dams and allowed the Red River to flow quickly into Bayou Pierre. This diverted 75 percent of the flow into the ancient channel between Shreveport and Natchitoches, almost trapping the squadron.⁶² The effect in Alexandria was an erratic drop in water level.

Rear Admiral Porter divided his fleet, leaving all but one of his large ironclads at Alexandria. He led the smaller tinclads and transports with the giant *Eastport*.⁶³ She was his ironclad killer. She grounded on nearly every bend and almost trapped the trailing vessels several times. General Banks, who could not read any type of military map, decided that the army and the squadron should join at Springfield Landing. The problem was that it was 4 miles west of the river. When Porter arrived at what he thought was the landing, he was actually about 6 miles to the north at the foot of Scopini cutoff. The Confederates had wedged a huge vessel, the *New Falls City*, across the river and broke her keel.⁶⁴

The squadron was now potentially trapped. The vessels could not easily turn around and were ill-designed to move in reverse for lengthy periods of time.⁶⁵ Once this was sorted out, the gunboats and transports descended the river to Blair's Landing where the rear of the column was attacked on April 12. Porter received word that Banks had met with a huge defeat at Mansfield and would not be joining him. As the squadron attempted to return to Alexandria, it was attacked again at Deloach's Bluff. Once they came within sight of Alexandria, the river had almost dried up. Porter had given up on the *Eastport* after she had sunk in shallow water for the eighth time. Porter had her scuttled near the mouth of Cane River, about 30 miles to his rear. The fleet was saved by the ingenuity of Colonel Joseph Bailey, who constructed, with volunteer help, a series of dams that refloated the squadron. While the dams were under construction, the squadron lost five more

62 US Congress, *Report on the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, 1863-1866*, 38th Congress, 2nd sess., "Red River Expedition" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865), 281-3; *OR Atlas*, plate L11; Lavender Soil Map (1906), Archives and Special Collections, Noel Memorial Library, Louisiana State University in Shreveport.

63 *OR*, 34: 168, 179-80. 64 *OR*, 34(3): 172.

65 Robert L. Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy: The Trans-Mississippi South, 1863-1865* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1972), p. 309; Abstract log of USS *Chillicothe*, March 7-June 8, 1864, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.; *ORN*, 26: 777-8.

vessels to enemy artillery below Alexandria. The most significant were the gunboats *Signal* and *Covington*. Once again, gunboats were powerful tools of force projection, but were vulnerable if they were not assisted by troops on the ground.

Porter moved out of the Red River as quickly as he could. It was his last action on brown waters. He wrote with relief to his mother "I am clear of my troubles and my fleet is safe out in the broad Mississippi. I have had a hard and anxious time of it."⁶⁶ Porter, particularly when writing to his mother, was the master of understatement. He knew that Federal politicians and the Northern press would portray the campaign for it was, an unmitigated disaster for the Union. This was the last major action on inland rivers during the Civil War.

The development of the brown water navy and bold actions striking deep into the Confederacy along its internal rivers proved to be ultimately successful in winning the war on the western waters. The war on the rivers was critical to Union victory. Here, more than any other location or situation during the struggle, combined arms operations between the army and navy were overwhelmingly successful. Technological innovations in ship-building, weaponry, tactics, and interservice cooperation were unheralded. Army and navy commanders learned to work with each other, trust the others' strengths, and learn from weaknesses. Both service arms learned that the war could not be successfully prosecuted in the interior of the continent without a unified effort. The western rivers were more than avenues of commerce. They pointed like a dagger into the heart of the South, and a series of thrusts made into this river system ultimately led to Union victory.

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War on the Waters

KURT HACKEMER

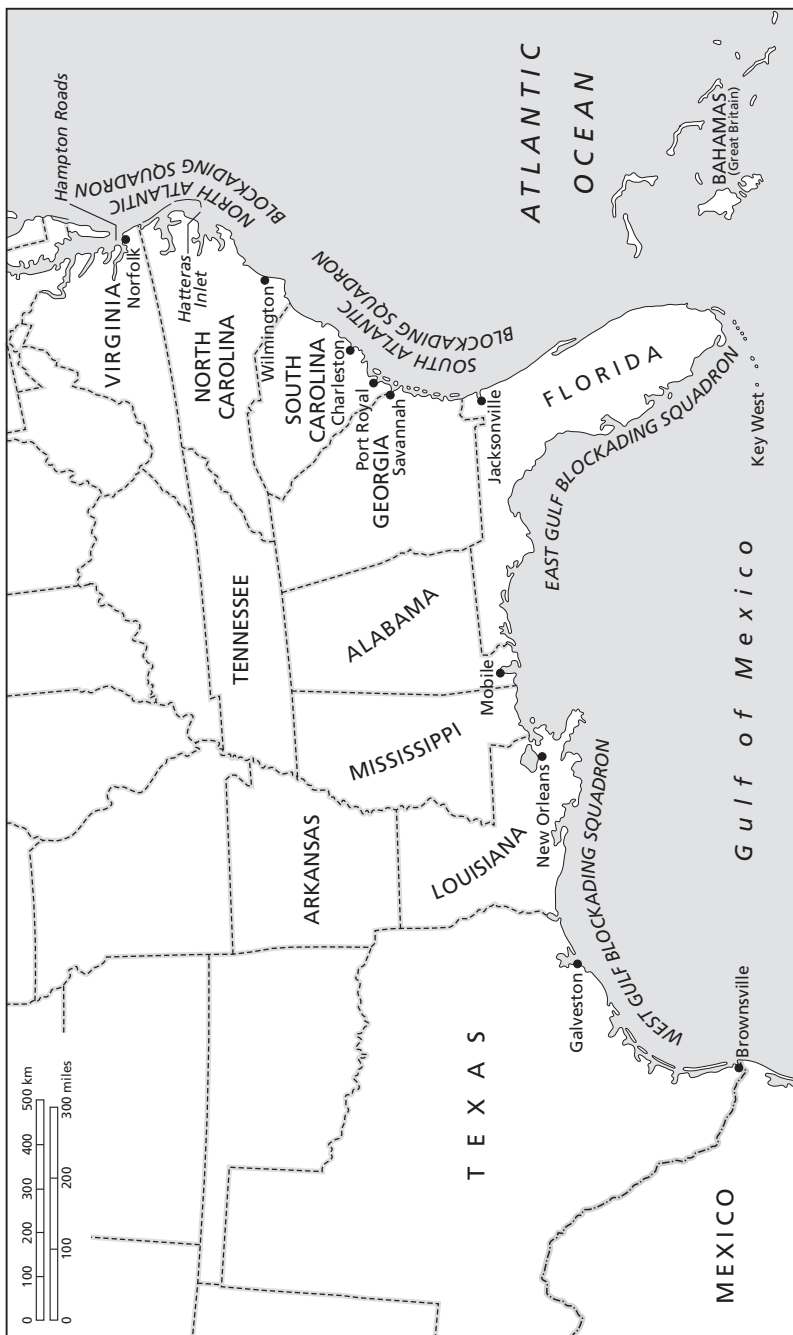
The naval history of the American Civil War is often reduced to a discussion of the blockade, the clash between ironclads at the Battle of Hampton Roads, and a vague sense that gunboats and transports played an important role in the riverine campaigns of the western theater. The Union and Confederate navies certainly participated in those aspects of the larger conflict, but they also clashed on the high seas, made sophisticated combined arms operations possible on the coast, and influenced the strategic and diplomatic direction of the larger struggle between the North and the South. The naval war also defined the Civil War military experience for more than 90,000 combatants, a relatively small but not insignificant number. Although the war was ultimately won and lost on land, naval operations affected the pace, tempo, and outcome of the conflict.

As it became clear in the summer of 1861 that the war would not be resolved in one fell swoop, US secretary of the navy Gideon Welles reported to Congress the “three different lines of naval operations” that he expected would occupy the navy’s attention for the foreseeable future. They were:

1. The closing of all the insurgent ports along a coastline of nearly three thousand miles, in the form . . . of an international blockade;
2. The organization of combined naval and military expeditions to operate in force against various points of the southern coast . . . and including all needful naval aid to the army . . . in its operations on the Mississippi and its tributaries; and,
3. The active pursuit of . . . piratical cruisers.¹

The scale and scope of the operations envisioned by Welles were well beyond the capabilities of the Union navy at the time, which lacked both the requisite

¹ US Congress, “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1861,” Senate Doc. 1, 37th Congress, 2nd sess. (1861), 1.



21.1 War on the waters. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

ships and organizational structure to carry out these missions. With barely a dozen vessels in American waters at the start of the war, a staff of only eighteen in the Navy Department, and an officer corps disrupted by almost 400 resignations, achieving these goals would be challenging, to say the least.

Welles was a Connecticut newspaperman who held a variety of political appointments before the war, including service as a navy bureau chief during the Mexican War. He began with crucial structural changes. Most important was congressional legislation on July 31, 1861 creating the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, which Welles immediately staffed by appointing Gustavus Vasa Fox, an eighteen-year navy veteran who had resigned to take a management position in a New England textile mill before the war. Fox was equally comfortable communicating with civilians and naval officers, and he implemented Welles's directives. He clarified Welles's instructions to officers at sea, worked with private contractors to build ships, and negotiated the points where the civilian and naval worlds intersected with each other.

The navy's bureau system was overhauled the following year as the number of bureaus increased from five to eight. The duties of the antebellum Bureau of Equipment and Repairs were redistributed to the new Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting, the Bureau of Construction and Repair, and the Bureau of Steam Engineering, while the duties of the antebellum Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography fell under the purview of the new Bureau of Ordnance and Bureau of Navigation. Welles also implemented personnel reforms. Officers no longer capable of active duty assignments were gently retired, merit was introduced more explicitly into the promotion process, and the number of engineers in the navy was significantly increased. Collectively, these changes made rapid growth and modernization possible, which in turn enhanced the navy's ability to perform its assigned missions.

The structural and personnel changes were accompanied by an aggressive effort to acquire enough ships to make Welles's plan a reality. Vessels already owned by the government were converted into warships as quickly as possible, and purchasing agents scoured Northern ports for the almost 500 civilian ships that would be refitted for military service. The navy yards built fifty-five new warships and contracts were let to civilian builders for another 124 vessels. All of the new warships and 313 of the purchased vessels were steamers, and seventy-one were ironclads of various types. The acquisition process was marred by inefficiency, irregularities, and investigations, but it resulted in a navy of almost 700 ships by December 1864 capable of carrying out Welles's ambitious agenda.

Historians have long relegated the navy to secondary status when discussing Union and Confederate grand strategy because of the predominantly terrestrial nature of the war and a tendency to view it as an almost purely national event. Adopting an international perspective, however, places the navy in a more central role in terms of strategy. Welles's revamped navy in particular affected strategic and diplomatic considerations in ways that have only recently been appreciated. Potential international implications were never far from Abraham Lincoln's mind as he and his cabinet forged Union grand strategy. The nation that concerned Lincoln the most was Great Britain, whose government seemed antagonistic toward the Union at times, especially early in the war, and whose actions were carefully considered by the French as Napoleon III weighed his diplomatic options. The latest iteration of the Anglo-French naval rivalry was well underway with the recent launches of the ironclads *Gloire* and *Warrior*, and the resulting rush to upgrade both fleets had triggered yet another European arms race.

The remaking of the Royal Navy directly affected the Union. Despite the rivalry with the French, a series of diplomatic crises, most notably the *Trent* affair, guaranteed that Great Britain's likely military adversary was the United States. Any war between the two would be primarily naval, with much of the anticipated combat taking place along the North American coast. Even as Lincoln and Welles contemplated a fleet that could support suppression of the rebellion, they also recognized the importance of simultaneously preparing to resist an external foe. Their solution was to emphasize the construction of coastal rather than seagoing ironclads that could defend North America without posing an offensive threat that might further inflame tensions with Great Britain. Blue water warships fielded by the Union would be steam cruisers designed to hunt down Confederate commerce raiders rather than more heavily armored ironclads that posed a direct challenge to Britain on the high seas. The selective ability to forcibly resist British interference in American affairs in turn affected both terrestrial military preparations and the Lincoln administration's diplomatic efforts.

The navy's dramatic growth and increasing strategic importance required more sophisticated leadership and better integration with the Union's decision-making process than had existed in the antebellum period. In both cases, President Lincoln involved himself early in the war as the scale and scope of the conflict overwhelmed existing organizational structures and forced him to become an active commander-in-chief and an energetic participant in strategic planning. He remained a key figure in naval decision-making until a better-staffed and organized command

structure could be created. Only then did his priorities shift elsewhere, although he interjected himself in naval affairs, as he did army affairs, throughout the war when they affected issues of larger national import. Lincoln was able to do so because he grew increasingly comfortable with the quality of Welles's personnel choices. Welles, ably assisted by Fox, organized naval squadrons to meet specific strategic needs and managed those squadrons to meet the Union's larger strategic goals. Most important, he proved remarkably adept at identifying offensive-minded squadron leaders who would carry out the Navy Department's directives. Those who failed to do so were quickly replaced.

In stark contrast, Confederate secretary of the navy Stephen Mallory was left almost entirely to his own devices, for Jefferson Davis had no real interest in the navy and never carefully considered how it might be integrated into overall Confederate strategy. Despite the fact that the South had a limited maritime tradition, relatively few shipyards, and was not well suited for industrial warfare, Mallory made the most of his limited resources. He knew that "naval engagements between wooden frigates, as they are now built and armed, will prove to be the forlorn hopes of the sea," so he tried to offset the Confederacy's lack of numbers with technologies like ironclads, mines, torpedo boats, and the world's first combat submarine.² Cheap technologies like mines could deny access to rivers and anchorages while simultaneously limiting the impact of the Union's industrial infrastructure in a cost-effective way. Torpedo boats, submarines, and ironclads that could destroy any extant Union warship theoretically negated the Union's numerical advantage, although that fleeting opportunity would disappear as the Union mobilized its industrial resources and fielded its own advanced technologies. Mallory also hoped that waging economic warfare against the Northern merchant marine would have an outsized political effect. Each of these stratagems became cause for consternation in the Union navy, but Mallory's failure to develop an effective command system, coupled with the Confederacy's failure to integrate these efforts into some sort of cohesive strategic approach, meant that the Confederate navy made a more limited contribution to the war effort than might otherwise have been possible.

2. Stephen Mallory to C. M. Conrad, May 8, 1861, in United States Navy Department, *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894–1922), series 11, volume 1, p. 69 (hereafter cited as ORN; all subsequent citations are of series 11 unless otherwise noted).

Despite the terrestrial nature of the war, the initial strategies adopted by the Union and the Confederacy incorporated naval components. The Confederacy planned to use its 3,500 miles of coastline, ten major ports, and approximately 180 navigable inlets, bays, and river mouths not only to ship cotton out to European mills and bring in vital war materiel, but also to launch privateers and raiders against the vulnerable Northern merchant marine. The Union, as part of Major General Winfield Scott's infamous Anaconda Plan, would attempt to blockade that same coastline and economically isolate the Confederacy until its citizens came to their senses and demanded restoration of the Union. However, it lacked both the ships and bases in 1861 to carry out an effective blockade. Ships would be purchased and built through a scaled-up procurement process, as noted above, but acquiring bases required planning and carrying out combined operations with the army, an area where the navy had limited experience.

When the navy began blockade operations, it possessed only two bases in the South: at Hampton Roads, Virginia near the mouth of the James River, and at Key West, Florida. The vast distance between these bases affected the efficiency of the blockade itself, with ships assigned to closing key ports like Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, New Orleans, or Jacksonville often spending just as much time in transit or undergoing repairs as they did on actual blockade duty. Seizing new base locations along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts meant figuring out how to work with army troops who would be necessary for any successful operation and devising new ways of attacking coastal fortifications.

Initial Union efforts focused on Hatteras Inlet off the North Carolina coast, a choke point controlling access to the Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds. These strategic sounds were protected by 200 miles of barrier islands, had important rail and canal connections to major Confederate cities on the Atlantic seaboard, and were safe havens for privateers that slipped out to prey on Union shipping. There were a half-dozen or so inlets through these barrier islands, but only Hatteras Inlet was deep enough to allow passage by large ships, and it was well-defended by two forts manned by determined garrisons. A combined army-navy expedition was created in August 1861, with 860 troops commanded by Major General Benjamin Butler joining a naval force commanded by Flag Officer Silas Stringham. This was the first significant combined operation since the Mexican War, so Butler and Stringham improvised. Butler's soldiers went ashore in small boats on the morning of August 28. The unopposed landing was chaotic, with boats smashed in heavy surf and the majority of the soldiers struggling to the beach, as Colonel

Max Weber recorded, “wet up to the shoulders, cut off entirely from the fleet, with wet ammunition, and without any provisions.”³ Fortunately, it did not matter. Stringham’s squadron outranged the Confederate forts, making their defense untenable. Naval gunfire drove the Confederates out of the first fort on the first day, and inflicted enough damage on the second fort that its garrison surrendered the next morning. Butler’s landing party immediately occupied both forts, demonstrating the value of ground troops attached to a naval expedition. The amphibious assault was poorly conducted, but it proved the efficacy of the idea, and similar operations soon threatened the entire coast.

Even as the Hatteras Inlet forts surrendered, plans were being made for a much larger combined operation commanded by Brigadier General Thomas Sherman and Flag Officer Samuel Francis Du Pont. Port Royal, South Carolina, with its large sheltered natural harbor, was between Charleston and Savannah, Georgia, two key Confederate ports. Seizing Port Royal gave the navy a maintenance and repair facility that made it easier to exert more consistent pressure on the South Atlantic Coast. The problem was Forts Walker and Beauregard, whose formidable seaward defenses controlled the northern and southern sides of the harbor’s entrance. Those forts had been designed to take advantage of the prevailing winds and tides to put attacking warships at a disadvantage, but their construction was based on long-standing principles that applied to sailing ships. An intense storm off Hatteras Inlet battered the approaching invasion fleet, but the well led expedition of almost 100 ships arrived off Port Royal in early November, where Du Pont contemplated a traditional frontal assault against the forts. Captain Charles Davis, however, had an epiphany about how the Union might use steam technology to mitigate the forts’ inherent advantages. He realized that steam propulsion freed the attacking warships from the strictures of wind and tides and allowed for independent maneuver. Several of Du Pont’s ships entered Port Royal Sound, taking heavy fire from Fort Beauregard’s seaward guns as they did so, and steamed to the weaker landward side of Fort Walker. There, they maneuvered in an oval pattern that allowed for continuous heavy fire into the fort. By their third pass, the Confederate defenders began abandoning the fort, which was quickly occupied by a shore party. Fort Beauregard’s garrison fled shortly thereafter.

3 Report of Colonel Max Weber, 20th New York Infantry, September 5, 1861, in United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 4, 589.

A well-organized expedition led by officers who understood how to gain maximum benefit from the technology at their disposal now controlled one of the finest natural harbors on the South Atlantic Coast.

The Union's ability to mount a successful combined army–navy expedition created an important strategic advantage that they replicated elsewhere. Interservice cooperation remained dependent on the personalities of the commanders involved, and coordination was sometimes difficult, but by the late spring of 1862, the Union had used this impressive new capability to seize Roanoke Island, Elizabeth City, New Bern, and Fort Macon on the North Carolina coast; Fernandina, Brunswick, and Fort Pulaski on the Georgia coast; St. Augustine, Jacksonville, Apalachicola, and Pensacola on the Florida coast; Ship Island, Biloxi, and Pass Christian on the Mississippi coast; and Galveston on the Texas coast. The biggest prize, though, was the capture of New Orleans and its outer defenses on April 25, 1862, which deprived the Confederacy of a major port, important industrial facilities, and a critical commercial and banking hub. Wilmington, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; and Mobile, Alabama remained in Confederate hands, but the Union navy's ability to project power with combined operations, and the Confederate navy's inability to effectively resist that power projection, complemented by Union efforts on land, made the blockade more effective, and accelerated the war's outcome.

Mobile fell to a combined army–navy force in August 1864 and Charleston surrendered to Major General William Tecumseh Sherman's marauding land army in February 1865, but the attack on Wilmington's outer defenses at Fort Fisher in January 1865 required a more sophisticated combined operation. Like earlier expeditions, army–navy cooperation depended on personalities more than a formal command structure. Army troops only became available once Lieutenant General Ulysses Grant was convinced that seizing Wilmington would hasten the Confederacy's collapse by closing supply routes into Richmond and General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. For its part, the navy assembled sixty warships under Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter, the largest invasion fleet of the war.

The navy began the attack with a poorly conceived plan to load an old ship with over 200 tons of gunpowder and explode it in the shallows next to the fort with the intent of breaching the outer wall. The attempt failed miserably, with some Confederate defenders thinking only that a ship's boiler had blown up. This was followed by a fleet bombardment like those that worked so well against forts earlier in the war. However, unlike the masonry forts that defended much of the Confederate coastline, Fort Fisher had thick

earthen ramparts that absorbed incoming Union shot and shells. The fort suffered some damage but was substantially intact, a fact confirmed by a landing force sent ashore by General Benjamin Butler. Butler promptly declared that the fort could only be taken by siege, pulled the majority of his soldiers from the landing beach, and returned of his own accord to Hampton Roads. Grant, who described the expedition thus far as “a gross and culpable failure,” promptly sacked Butler and ordered Major General A. J. Terry to return to Porter’s fleet and cooperate with the navy.⁴

Working together, Terry and Porter demonstrated the Union’s proficiency in combined operations when capable leaders were determined to work well with each other. Union gunboats provided covering fire concentrated against specific targets, with wooden warships firing at longer ranges and ironclads operating closer in. At the same time, Terry’s soldiers landed on the landward side of the fort while a smaller force of sailors and marines landed on the seaward side. Once naval gunfire had disabled the majority of Confederate gun emplacements, the ground forces attacked. The sailors and marines were pushed back, but their assault drew Confederate defenders away from the landward side and made it possible for the soldiers to penetrate the defenses there. The attackers sustained heavy casualties but captured the fort and over 2,000 prisoners. More important, Confederates in the rest of Wilmington’s outer defenses abandoned their positions, allowing the Union to seize this important port and further degrade Lee’s logistical network.

The evolution in operational abilities from Hatteras Inlet to Fort Fisher reflected a larger change in the way command decisions were made over the course of the war. The navy’s antebellum command culture stressed decentralized decision-making, and captains had significant authority to take individual action in the nation’s interest. Most of the navy’s warships served on foreign stations rather than in domestic waters, where there were often no other government representatives available, and the slow pace of communications made it difficult to receive timely news. The Civil War changed all of those parameters and created a more centralized command structure. A majority of the rapidly expanding navy’s warships fought and patrolled in domestic waters, both military and civilian superiors could interact with captains with relative ease, and communications between warships, shore stations, and the nation’s capital were relatively quick.

4 Grant to Lincoln, December 28, 1864, in Ulysses S. Grant, *Memoirs and Selected Letters. Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, Selected Letters 1839–1865* (New York: Library of America, 1990), p. 668.

The new centralized command structure started at the top, with President Abraham Lincoln. Although not formally trained in military art, Lincoln developed a strong sense of strategic purpose as the conflict took shape, and perhaps better than anyone else in the war he remained relentlessly focused on restoration of the Union as the war's final outcome. The scale and scope of the war overwhelmed the Navy Department, which faced its own growing pains, and Lincoln, by necessity, became intimately involved in decision-making at all levels. He interjected himself into campaign planning, diplomatic affairs involving navy officers, and promotion decisions, but only when naval leaders hesitated or seemed on the verge of hurting the overall war effort. As they became more proficient running a war of this magnitude, and as a trustworthy and competent naval command structure took shape, Lincoln became less involved. What had changed, though, was the newfound realization by naval leaders and officers that the president could be an active player in daily affairs if they proved unable to run their part of the war on their own.

Secretary Welles and Assistant Secretary Fox were the two most important reasons why Lincoln became more comfortable with decisions made by the navy, and they in turn became the primary forces behind an increasingly centralized command structure. The size of the war and multiplicity of missions required more sophisticated organization than the antebellum force, and Welles and Fox devoted much of their time to devising a squadron structure that could effectively concentrate force and command authority at the multiple points where it was needed to meet the Union's strategic purposes. Equally important were the personnel decisions made to lead those squadrons. Welles was determined to wage an offensive war, and he ruthlessly sacked commanders who were not aggressive enough, successful enough, or who failed to work well within the navy's revamped command structure. With some notable exceptions associated with global operations far beyond North America, the days of the independent commander making decisions in isolation from Washington were numbered.

Samuel Phillips Lee's tenure as commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron illustrates these changes well. The squadron itself was created to provide a narrower geographic focus that would apply specific pressure on the Confederacy. Lee was tasked with patrolling Virginia's eastern shore, protecting the North Carolina sounds, and reducing the number of blockade-runners operating from Wilmington, North Carolina, which emerged as one of the Confederacy's most important ports. The first two missions were relatively straightforward, but tightening the cordon around

Wilmington required marshaling appropriate resources and working closely with the Navy Department. Welles found Lee “destitute of heroic daring” but also “cautious and vigilant,” which made him well suited for this particular task, and he gave Lee the latitude to make decisions on his own, but always with the understanding that watchful eyes monitored the situation.⁵ Welles and Fox also helped Lee get more modern ships better suited for his mission, balancing Lee’s requests against those made by other squadron commanders. That level of communication and oversight proved crucial as Lee steadily built a more sophisticated blockade around this key Confederate port.

The increasingly powerful and more active Navy Department created by Welles and Fox became critically important as the navy introduced a radically different technology on a large scale into the fleet: ironclad warships. Contrary to popular belief, the American Civil War did not introduce ironclads to the world’s navies. During the Crimean War, the British and French had cooperated to build a group of armored steam batteries. Though not oceangoing warships, each battery was independently powered and protected by four inches of wrought-iron armor on a thick wooden backing. Those batteries went into action against the Russian fortress at Kinburn on October 17, 1855 and proved remarkably successful, knocking out the Russian defenses and forcing the garrison to surrender.

The Anglo-French alliance dissolved with the war’s end, and the two nations resumed their traditional naval rivalry. The French, who could not match British naval funding, saw an opportunity to negate the Royal Navy’s existing numerical advantage by building oceangoing ironclad warships that would instantly make all British vessels obsolete and put both nations on an even footing. The armored frigate *Gloire* began construction in 1858 and was completed by the summer of 1860. Two additional ironclads from the same class were also laid down in 1858, demonstrating French commitment to challenging the Royal Navy. The British quickly responded, laying down their first armored frigate in 1859, HMS *Warrior*. And with that, France and Britain had rekindled their long-running naval rivalry, this time with ironclads.

This foray into transformative warship design by both major powers did not go unnoticed in the United States. Paying close attention was Stephen Russell Mallory, who represented Florida in the US Senate before the war,

5 William E. Gienapp and Erica L. Gienapp (eds.), *The Civil War Diary of Gideon Welles, Lincoln’s Secretary of the Navy. The Original Manuscript Edition* (Urbana: Knox College Lincoln Studies Center and the University of Illinois Press, 2014), p. 518.

serving as the influential chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs. Mallory was fascinated by new technology and pushed for the adoption of better power plants and screw propellers by the US Navy during the 1850s. After evaluating the Crimean War, he lobbied for completion of an unfinished American armored battery, but his efforts failed. When Florida seceded and joined the Confederacy in January 1861, Mallory resigned his office and followed his state. President Jefferson Davis, recognizing his talents, nominated Mallory to be the Confederacy's first secretary of the navy. Mallory accepted and almost immediately brought his vast knowledge of naval affairs to bear.

The Union retained the majority of the antebellum navy's warships and shipyards. That, along with its superior industrial capacity, meant that Mallory could not hope to build a comparable Confederate fleet. Like the French, Mallory instead hoped to use technology to offset what appeared to be an overwhelming Union advantage. The Confederate Navy Department and its surrogates would experiment with different types of mines (called "torpedoes" at the time), armored batteries, and submersible and semisubmersible warships like the *Hunley* and the *David*. In each case, the Confederacy hoped to find a cost-effective weapon that could deny Union access to key ports and rivers, or even damage or disable far more expensive warships.

Still, from the very beginning Mallory envisioned a bolder approach based on ironclads. In a May 1861 letter to the chair of the Committee on Naval Affairs, he made clear that he regarded "the possession of an iron-armored ship, as a matter of the first necessity. Such a vessel at this time could traverse the entire coast of the United States, prevent all blockades, and encounter, with a fair prospect of success, their entire Navy." Mallory reasoned that "inequality of numbers may be compensated by invulnerability, and thus not only does economy, but naval success, dictate the wisdom and expediency of fighting with iron against wood without regard to first cost."⁶ Given the Confederacy's limited industrial capabilities, he intended to have the ironclad built in England, but diplomatic concerns made that impossible. Instead, he pinned his hopes on the salvaged hull of the USS *Merrimack*, acquired when the Union navy abandoned the Gosport Naval Yard. The frigate's hull and its worn steam engines would become the CSS *Virginia*, an ungainly casemated ironclad ram. The overhaul began in June, and by the end of the month rumors were swirling around Washington about this potential threat.

6 Mallory to C. M. Conrad, May 8, 1861, ORN, I: 69.

As a new, unproven technology, the capabilities and limitations of ironclad warships were not well understood, so the Washington rumor mill immediately assumed the worst about the Confederacy's new weapon. Some predicted that the emerging Union blockade would be rendered impotent in one fell swoop, while others suggested that Washington, New York City, or another major Union port might come under direct assault. Secretary Welles recommended that a naval board be assembled to determine the feasibility of ironclads and asked Congress for permission to build one or more of them if the report was positive. The report was indeed affirmative, a call for proposals was issued, and a second board of naval officers evaluated seventeen submissions by the end of August. In the end, three were accepted: a turreted steam battery that became the USS *Monitor*, a belt and battery vessel built along traditional lines that became the USS *New Ironsides*, and a rail and plate gunboat that became the USS *Galena*.

The navy's ability to have three disparate ironclad designs simultaneously built demonstrated the great potential of Northern industry, the potency of the naval-industrial relationship that started in the decade before the Civil War but grew rapidly after the outbreak of hostilities, and the efficacy of the organizational changes introduced by Welles and Fox during the preceding year. Although problems with the construction process regularly surfaced in the war and Congress investigated alleged fraud and incompetence on occasion, the Union's advantages in these areas only grew over the course of the war, resulting in the construction of over seventy coastal and oceangoing ironclads, primarily variations on the *Monitor*'s turreted design.

The *Virginia*'s foray against the Union blockading fleet on March 8, 1862 and its storied confrontation with the *Monitor* on the following day at the Battle of Hampton Roads demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of each vessel and their respective navies. Supported by gunboats from the James River Squadron, *Virginia* steamed out to challenge the five Union blockaders denying the Confederates access to Hampton Roads. Both the sloop *Cumberland* and the frigate *Congress* engaged *Virginia*, but their cannon fire ricocheted off the cumbersome ironclad without doing any real damage. In the next few hours, *Virginia* sank the *Cumberland* by ramming it, and disabled and inflicted so much damage on *Congress* that the frigate ultimately blew up. Three more Union frigates, the *Minnesota*, *Roanoke*, and *St. Lawrence*, ran aground in shallow water where the deep-draft *Virginia* could not reach them. The *Virginia*'s captain resolved to come back the next day when the tide was in to finish breaking the blockade.

Virginia had suffered some damage that first day, due in part to limitations in its armor cladding necessitated by the Confederacy's weak industrial capabilities, but repairs were readily made and it returned to Hampton Roads the following morning. There, the Confederates found USS *Monitor* waiting, positioned between *Virginia* and *Minnesota*, which triggered the first battle between ironclad warships. The more nimble *Monitor* easily outmaneuvered *Virginia* and its salvaged engines, another casualty of the Confederacy's anemic industrial infrastructure, but *Monitor*'s larger cannon inflicted only minimal damage because the Union navy did not fully understand their capabilities. *Monitor*'s thicker and more sophisticated turret armor easily resisted the Confederate onslaught, although the monitor was briefly knocked out of the battle by an opportune hit on its pilothouse. Still, *Monitor* held the field as *Virginia* withdrew, preserving the blockade and vindicating its radical new design.

Even before the Battle of Hampton Roads, the Navy Department decided that turreted ironclads best met its needs, and contracts were already let to an emerging network of contractors who could adapt their processes and equipment to meet the navy's requirements. Monitors with single, double, and even triple turrets would become iconic representations of the Union's industrial and organizational might. It was not a flawless experience, as the ill-fated *Casco*-class light-draft ironclads readily demonstrated, but it gave the Union both a qualitative and a quantitative edge in the contest for control of the continent's coasts and rivers. The Confederacy, meanwhile, built far fewer ironclads on more basic and less effective designs. Its lack of raw materials, machine shops, rolling mills, and minimal bureaucratic organization made it difficult not only to coordinate construction of cutting-edge warships but also to integrate naval assets into a coherent national strategy, putting the Confederacy at an enormous disadvantage.

The *Monitor*-style design quickly became a social phenomenon that intrigued not only the general population but also the Navy Department personnel charged with planning naval operations. The *Monitor* was so different, and its associated technology was seen as so disruptively modern, that many automatically assumed similar ironclads would be disproportionately powerful and have an outsized impact on the course of the war. Encouraged by the success of the naval expedition that seized Port Royal in November 1861 and caught up in the hype about monitors, Assistant Secretary Fox pressed for a similar assault on Charleston in the spring of 1863. Welles was swayed, noting that Fox, "who has more naval knowledge and experience and who is better informed of Charleston and its approaches, and the capabilities and

efficiency of our officers and ships entertains not a doubt of success.”⁷ Charleston was much more heavily defended than Port Royal, but Fox was confident that ironclads would batter down its defensive fortifications and pave the way for a decisive victory. Samuel Francis Du Pont, tasked with leading the expedition, initially shared Fox’s enthusiasm for ironclad technology, but his early experiences testing them against Confederate fortifications suggested they lacked the sustained firepower to inflict much damage. They were superb defensive weapons but did not carry enough ordnance for an effective bombardment against shore positions, especially earthen forts like Sumter.

Despite Du Pont’s concerns, planning for an attack against Charleston continued, and nine of the ten ironclads available on the Atlantic Coast were put at his disposal by the Navy Department. Seven of the nine were *Monitor*-style ironclads, a very public test of the new design and the navy’s faith in it. The results were disappointing, to say the least. On April 7, 1863, the ironclads fired 154 shots at Fort Sumter, their primary target, while Confederate gun crews replied approximately 2,200 times. The ironclads were hit almost 400 times and all of them were disabled to some degree. The USS *Keokuk*, one of two non-*Monitor* ironclads, would sink the next day. To make matters worse, there was no appreciable damage to the Confederate shore fortifications and Charleston remained secure. The navy had learned an important lesson, and there would no more purely naval attacks against major Confederate strongholds. More ironclads would be built and used along the Atlantic Coast, but they would be but one component in larger combined operations against places like Wilmington, North Carolina. Their mystique had been moderated by the practical considerations of combat. Subsequent efforts to take Charleston would involve cooperation with the army.

Du Pont was pilloried in the press for losing his nerve and not renewing the attack once his ironclads were repaired. A widely reprinted editorial from the *Baltimore American* called on the administration “to entrust the work to new hands.”⁸ Du Pont thought the Navy Department was complicit in the public criticism and decided to fight for vindication of his honor with the help of personal contacts in the navy’s officer corps and Congress. This was an ill-advised move at best, even if he had done so in the less structured antebellum navy, but it proved fatal for his career in the restructured Navy Department built by Welles and Fox and overseen by President Lincoln.

7 Gienapp and Gienapp (eds.), *The Civil War Diary of Gideon Welles*, p. 160.

8 See, for example, the *Alexandria Gazette*, April 15, 1863, p. 2.

Lincoln may have agreed that Welles and Fox placed too much faith in unproven ironclad technology, but he also appreciated their willingness to aggressively prosecute the war, even if mistakes were made. For their part, Welles and Fox remained focused on retaining an offensive-minded squadron at Charleston that would continue pressing the Confederate defenders there. Du Pont was replaced by John Dahlgren and offered a posting in a quieter sector of the war. Several of Du Pont's captains who defended him and advocated on his behalf found themselves reassigned to less prominent duties. Welles and Fox tried to assuage Du Pont's concerns and retain his services for the overall benefit of the war effort, but when that proved impossible because he insisted on vindicating his personal honor, their Navy Department clearly asserted its control over operations in the field and confirmed that centralized control was the new way of doing business.

Among Du Pont's supporters was Captain Raymond Rodgers, who aspired to become superintendent of the US Naval Academy. As a result of his support for Du Pont after Charleston, he never made it to Annapolis and instead found himself assigned to the USS *Iroquois*, where he was charged with hunting down Confederate commerce raiders in the East Indies. These commerce raiders were another attempt by Stephen Mallory to inflict meaningful damage on the Union with the minimal resources at his disposal. Mallory understood that the Union, and specifically its merchant marine, was playing an increasingly important role in an emerging global economy. The vast expanses of open ocean and relatively inefficient communications networks of the day made it possible for fast, well-armed raiders to strike and then disappear. Mallory hoped these raiders could disrupt the Northern economy by decreasing trade with other nations and ultimately induce some level of war weariness among the influential merchants and financiers clustered along the Atlantic coastline. He also hoped that the Union might be forced to detach ships from the blockade and scatter them around the globe in pursuit of the raiders.

By early May of 1861, Mallory settled on a two-pronged approach to attacking the Union merchant marine. The first prong was privateers, operating under letters of marque issued by the Congress of the Confederate States. Privateering, however, had become problematic. It had traditionally been used by weaker naval powers like the United States, but the 1856 Declaration of Paris signed by the major European powers outlawed it as a legitimate stratagem in times of war and declared it equivalent to piracy. Practically speaking, that denied Confederate privateers access to British and French ports, including several key anchorages in the Atlantic and Pacific

oceans that were part of those larger empires. Still, those privateers had some limited success in the first year of the war, taking a number of prizes off the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. However, the ever-tightening blockade made it difficult to send prizes back to ports where the privateers could make money from the proceeds and recoup their investments, and the Union launched operations against privateering havens. By the summer of 1862, privateers ceased to have a meaningful impact against Northern commerce.

Mallory knew privateering would be problematic, so he simultaneously initiated the second prong of his raiding strategy, putting state-sponsored cruisers to sea against the Union's merchant marine. He started with converted merchant vessels whose hulls and decks were strengthened to carry ordnance. The most famous of these early cruisers was the CSS *Sumter* (formerly *Havana*), a newer packet steamer known for its speed on the New Orleans to Havana run. The conversion was overseen by Raphael Semmes, who would also take *Sumter* to sea. Semmes had distinguished himself in the US Navy during the Mexican War and was a strong proponent of a raiding strategy for the Confederate navy. *Sumter* was limited in both size and steaming range, but Semmes would use his new command effectively to demonstrate the outsized impact that a relatively modest investment might have.

Semmes guided *Sumter* out of New Orleans at the end of July 1861, evaded the still-porous Union blockade, and began taking prizes in the Gulf of Mexico. In three days, he burned one merchant ship and seized six more, ultimately taking five of them to Cienfuegos, Cuba to test Spanish neutrality. Spain ultimately decided to remain neutral and refused to allow belligerent prizes in its ports, which caused the seized ships to be returned to their owners. By that time, however, Semmes had resumed his predations in the Caribbean and off the Brazilian coast, but found relatively few prizes to take. After evading a Union warship in Martinique, he then sailed to the North Atlantic, where he took three more prizes before putting in to Cadiz, Spain to refuel. There, he encountered a problem that had plagued him in the Caribbean and South America: Union consuls with instructions from Washington to throw up all possible obstacles to prevent Confederate cruisers from refitting and refueling. Based in large part on Union diplomatic pressure, the Spanish government ordered Semmes out of Cadiz. He sailed for Gibraltar, taking two prizes on the way, but found himself unable to get coal there either. With three Union warships waiting for him outside the harbor, no fuel, and boilers badly in need of an overhaul, Semmes abandoned *Sumter* and began making his way back to the Confederacy.

Sumter and almost a dozen other converted cruisers like CSS *Nashville* were an important first step in implementing Mallory's raiding strategy, but they were incapable of staying at sea for the extended periods of time required to damage the Union merchant marine. For that, Mallory needed ships designed from the ground up as commerce raiders. Therefore, he directed Confederate agent James Bulloch to purchase or have built in England six light-draft propeller steamships with full sail rigs and retractable propellers for extended cruising. These ships were to be of suitable size to carry an armament capable of overpowering any merchant vessel, able to operate at sea for extended periods of time, and fast enough under steam to evade Union warships. They were not intended to challenge the Union navy directly, although that would happen before war's end.

Using a series of fronts, agents, and a fair amount of subterfuge, Bulloch signed contracts with British ship-builders by late summer of 1861 but managed to hide the existence of these raiders until construction was well along. The Foreign Enlistment Act defined British neutrality, and building warships for the Confederacy or any other belligerent power was clearly forbidden. However, unarmed ships were not subject to the same prohibitions, so Bulloch took great care to separate construction of the ships from his efforts to arm them. Even so, Ambassador Charles Francis Adams, Sr. stymied him at every turn, both with these cruisers and when the Confederacy tried to acquire British-built ironclad rams, leading Bulloch to complain that "the extent to which the system of bribery and spying has been and continues to be practised by the agents of the United States in Europe is scarcely credible."⁹ Aggressive Union diplomatic efforts meant that only two of the six would make it to sea, where they would be armed and outfitted outside of British territorial waters and sent to harass Union merchant ships. The remaining four were either seized or did not finish building before the end of the war.

The first of these cruisers was built as the *Oreto* by William C. Miller & Sons of Liverpool. Although a merchant ship for legal purposes, *Oreto* was based on a modified British gunboat design. Ambassador Adams became increasingly suspicious about the *Oreto*'s true purpose as the ship neared completion and began pressuring the British government to seize it, but Bulloch got the vessel underway to the Bahamas in late March 1862 before anything happened. A similar drama played out in Nassau at the urging of the

9 James Bulloch, *The Secret Service of the Confederate States in Europe or, How the Confederate Cruisers were Equipped*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1883), vol. 2, p. 38.

US consul there, and *Oreto* was briefly detained by British authorities before being released. Once at sea, *Oreto* was commissioned as CSS *Florida* and met a tender carrying ordnance and ammunition. However, some key pieces of equipment were missing and the ship, commanded by John N. Maffitt, needed more crew members. After two brief stops in Cuba, Maffitt ran the blockade into Mobile in early September 1862, where the *Florida* finished fitting out, took on more sailors, and waited for a chance to break out and carry out its mission.

In the meantime, a second cruiser was also preparing for sea, this time at the John Laird, Sons & Company shipyard in Liverpool. Designated the *Enrica* in British records, the ship was ready for sea by late June 1862. Like the *Oreto/Florida*, *Enrica* had to slip out of England earlier than planned in anticipation of Ambassador Adams's efforts to have it seized. In August, *Enrica* met its tender in the Azores, took on ordnance and ammunition, and received its new commander, Raphael Semmes. Semmes was heading home after service on the *Sumter*, but was sent back to Europe to command the new ship, now commissioned as CSS *Alabama*. Although *Alabama* went to sea several months after *Florida*, it was the first of the two cruisers to begin capturing prizes, with the first one taken on September 5, 1862 near the Azores. Nine more prizes followed in quick succession before *Alabama* relocated to the North American coast in October. Thirteen more prizes were seized or burned in the next two months between Newfoundland and Virginia, with *Alabama* shifting to the Gulf of Mexico in December to rendezvous with a supply ship. While in the gulf, Semmes lured USS *Hatteras* away from a larger Union naval force and sank it.

The first half of 1863 saw *Alabama* inflict its greatest damage on Union merchantmen. Operating primarily off the coast of Brazil, Semmes took twenty-nine prizes between February and July, converting one of them into the raider CSS *Tuscaloosa*. The Union navy had detached several ships from blockade duty to hunt him down and Semmes was forced to abandon the area and sail east. After stopping in Cape Town, South Africa for refitting, Semmes took *Alabama* into the Indian Ocean, where he took more prizes before returning to the South Atlantic. With his ship badly in need of repairs, he put in at Cherbourg, France on June 11, 1864, where USS *Kearsarge* caught up with him three days later. Between August 1862 and June 1864, Semmes had taken sixty-five prizes, caused widespread panic that resulted in the reflagging of many Union merchantmen, and weakened the Union blockade as warships were dispatched around the world to hunt him down. He observed after the war that "we were doing the best we could, with our limited means, to harass

and cripple the enemy's commerce, that important sinew of war."¹⁰ Not content to abandon *Alabama* as he had with *Sumter*, Semmes took *Alabama* out to challenge *Kearsarge* on June 19. *Kearsarge*'s superior gunnery outmatched *Alabama*, and the most successful Confederate raider of the war was sunk after a fierce battle lasting little more than an hour.

Alabama's reign of terror coincided with the depredations of CSS *Florida*, which escaped from Mobile on January 16, 1863 and added to the chaos confronting the Union navy as it sought to contain this challenge to the North's vulnerable merchant marine. For the next six months, *Florida* operated off the North and South American coasts while also ranging into the central Atlantic Ocean, taking twenty-two prizes. Union warships organized as the West Indies Squadron combed the Atlantic looking for Confederate raiders, but Captain Maffitt and his crew eluded them. Sorely in need of repairs, *Florida* put in at Brest, France. Now commanded by Lieutenant Charles Morris, *Florida* ventured back into the Atlantic sea lanes in February 1864, worked its way back across the Atlantic, and wound up in the port of Bahia, Brazil by early October 1864, having taken a total of thirty-seven prizes. Two of the seized ships were converted into raiders and added to *Florida*'s legacy by taking an additional twenty-three prizes. When *Florida* arrived at Bahia, Morris found USS *Wachusett* in the harbor, but he was confident of the protection extended by Brazilian law. However, *Wachusett*'s captain ordered a successful night attack that seized the raider and towed it out to sea, ending *Florida*'s career.

The loss of *Florida* and *Alabama* by late 1864 mirrored what happened to the majority of Confederate raiders. Most were captured or destroyed at that point, with never more than seven or eight active at any given moment. The only exception was the CSS *Shenandoah*, which did not begin its raiding career until October 1864. *Shenandoah* took the majority of its thirty-eight prizes in the Pacific Ocean, primarily New England whalers. Most were seized after the surrender of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, but Commander James Waddell was not sure that the war was over until August 3, 1865. He then set sail for Liverpool, England, where he surrendered his ship and crew to British authorities on November 6, 1865, and became the last official representative of the Confederate States of America to lower the national flag.

Over the course of the war, up to fifty Union warships were detached to search for Confederate raiders, but the sheer size of the oceans and poor

¹⁰ Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat, during the War between the States* (Baltimore, MD: Kelly, Piet & Co., 1869), p. 746.

communications infrastructure made that task exceedingly difficult. Secretary Welles faced enormous pressure to protect ports and sea lanes from their depredations, but he rightly recognized that the raiders had little real effect on the Union war effort and that he was better served by assigning as many ships to the blockade as possible. If anything, Union exports grew significantly over the course of the war. However, those exports were increasingly carried by neutral flagged merchantmen, which hurt the American merchant marine for decades to come.

The US government would seek and win indemnification after the war from Great Britain for its role in facilitating the Confederate raiders, but Welles never gave in to public pressure or lost sight of the fact that this was just one facet of the overall naval war. Instead, he devoted his time and energy to building a competent centralized command system, encouraging cooperation between the army and navy for combined operations that affected the course of the war, and building a fleet of modern steamers and ironclads that allowed the navy to contribute meaningfully to Union victory.

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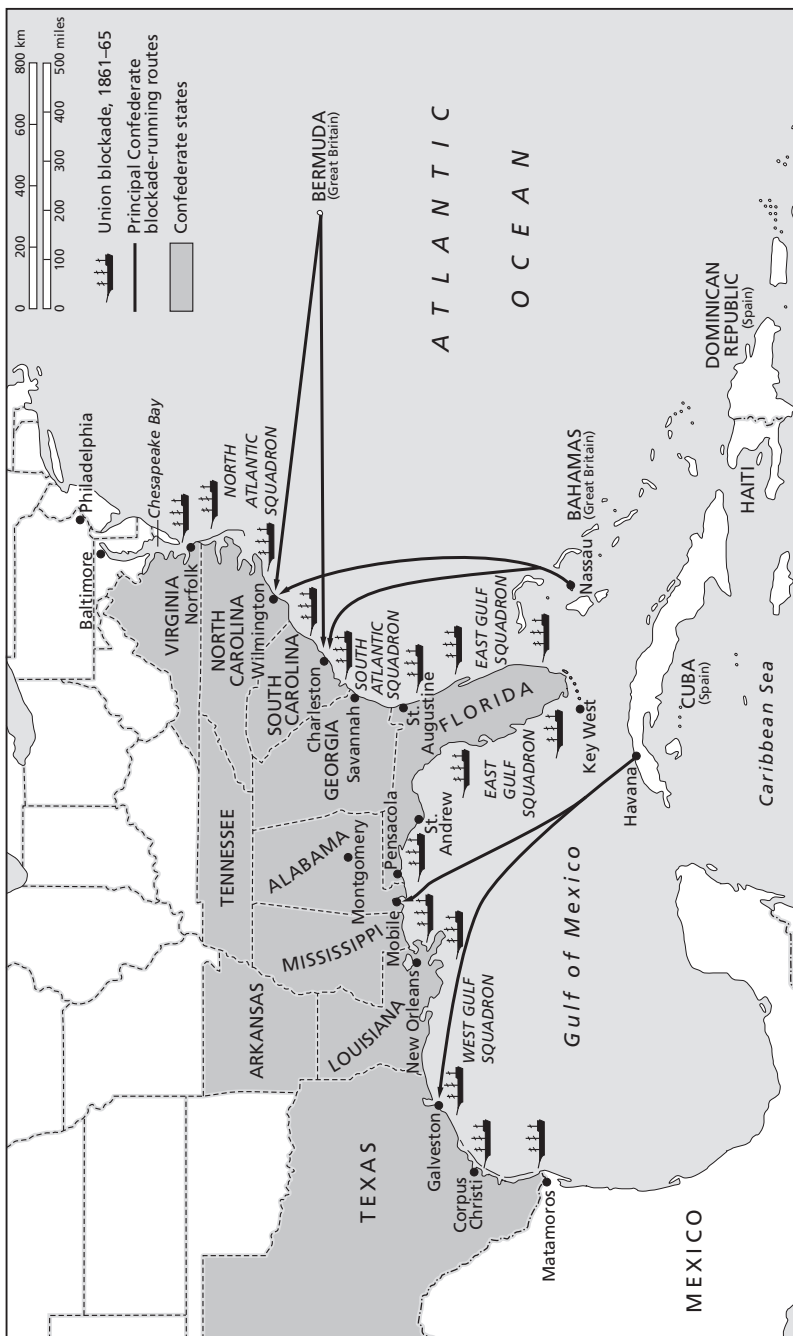
The Blockade

ROBERT BROWNING, JR.

For centuries maritime powers have used blockades against enemies to weaken and isolate them by disrupting communications and limiting commerce. President Abraham Lincoln, hoping to obtain these same goals, announced his intention to blockade the southern states at the outbreak of the Civil War. He did this in two proclamations. The first he issued on April 19, 1861, which included all the coastal southern states from South Carolina to Texas. Eight days later he released the second, adding North Carolina and Virginia to the list.¹

Lincoln's closest advisors, however, did not fully back these proclamations. While the proclamations only laid out the president's intent to blockade the South, they met with disagreement in his own cabinet. Initially some took the position that there was no war – that this conflict was only a domestic insurrection. Therefore, they argued that the ports should just be closed to all commercial traffic. They took this position because a blockade was recognized as an act of war and might encourage foreign recognition for the Confederacy. A number of heated discussions ensued over the different plans to stop the South's trade, and closure of the southern ports was persistently discussed before Lincoln made his announcement of the blockade. Lincoln's secretary of the navy, Gideon Welles, initially opposed the blockade. Welles, whose long beard had earned him the nickname "King Neptune," led the fight for closing the ports in the cabinet meetings, arguing that the conflict was an insurrection, that the blockade was not on a foreign coastline,

¹ Lincoln to Seward, April 19, 27, 1861, in United States Navy Department, *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894–1922), series 1, volume 4, pp. 156, 340 (hereafter cited as ORN, all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted); Congress did not legitimize the blockade until August 6, *United States Statutes at Large* 12: 326.



22.1 The blockade. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

and that the establishment of a blockade would extend belligerent rights to the Confederacy.²

Each method of stopping the Confederacy's trade created special issues. Because a blockade meant there was an "enemy," international law allowed the offender of a blockade to be chased into international waters. Closing the ports assumed that the rebellion was an internal struggle and the government could simply close its insurrectionary southern ports, but there were legal loopholes. Any vessel that challenged this order by attempting to run into a closed port would only have violated a US revenue law. The offender also could only be captured in American territorial waters and tried in a federal court in the state and district where the infraction occurred, which was impossible because these were now under Confederate control. Some cabinet members, however, reasoned that the nations of Europe might consider closure of the ports as an attempt at a "paper blockade," that is proclaiming a blockade without the naval resources to fulfill the legal requirements. Closing the ports, likewise, would not force European nations to acknowledge this action because international law did not recognize this form of trade interdiction.

Lincoln had considered this option. On March 18, over a month before the blockade was announced, Lincoln wrote Welles and asked him how much of his naval force he could immediately place under the control of the secretary of the treasury to close the ports. He also inquired what additional force he might later transfer and when this transfer might take place. Had Lincoln made the decision to close the ports rather than to implement a blockade, it may have had broad international consequences and it certainly would have changed the nature of the Revenue Cutter Service. Secretary of State William Henry Seward persuaded Lincoln to adopt a blockade, successfully arguing that most of the nations of the world recognized blockades and this would avoid international complications.³

The April announcements of a blockade gave Lincoln at least one method of interdicting Southern trade. The question of closing the ports remained at the discretion of Congress. The Treasury Department recommended that Congress close the southern ports and empower the collection of customs duties on shipboard, without a formal blockade. Penalties for violation

2 John Niven, *Gideon Welles: Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 356.

3 Stuart Anderson, "1861: Blockade vs. Closing the Confederate Ports," *Military Affairs*, vol. 41 (December 1977): 190; Lincoln to Welles, March 18, 1861, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, Record Group 45, Letters Received from the President and Executive Agencies, entry 44, vol. 137, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

included forfeiture of both ship and cargo. Congress responded favorably to the recommendation and within a week had the bill on the President's desk, which he signed into law on July 13. This law gave the president the formal authority to close the ports. With two means of interdicting the South's trade, this greatly satisfied Welles and alarmed Europe. The Ports Act, however, did not direct the president to close the ports; it merely authorized him to do so.⁴

The British and the French were particularly uneasy and somewhat agitated that the Lincoln administration might try to close the ports rather than institute a blockade. They feared that this action would serve as an attempt to sever trade without implementing a formal blockade, something the tenets of international law did not support. Despite Lincoln's intentions to use only the blockade, European reactions to the existence of both means of interdicting trade were as some feared. The British foreign secretary, Lord John Russell, commented: "It is impossible for Her Majesty's government to admit that the President or Congress of the United States can at one and the same time exercise the belligerent right of blockade, and the municipal right of closing the ports of the South." He added that the government would not dispute the United States rights of blockade "but an assumed right to close any ports in the hands of insurgents would imply a right to stop vessels on the high seas without instituting an effective blockade."⁵ Despite the negative European reactions to the bill, the United States held firm on its right to close the ports and Seward continued to fret over the possibility of foreign intervention.

Seward persuaded Lincoln to utilize the blockade as the tool for trade interdiction since blockades were recognized by international law and would be the least likely to cause international complications with the European nations. By issuing a notification of a blockade, however, the Union implicitly gave the Confederacy belligerent status because a blockade is a belligerent right, and implies a conflict with an external enemy. Lincoln grasped the conundrum and noted increasing pressure from Europe, recognizing that closing the ports would look like a "paper blockade." Therefore, he used only section five, issuing a proclamation on August 16 that forbade intercourse with the insurgent states. As matters developed, the president did not close a single port until April 11, 1865, long after the threat of intervention.⁶

⁴ *United States Statutes at Large*, 12: 256–7.

⁵ Lord John Russell to Lord Richard Lyons, July 19, 1861, quoted in Henry Glass, "Marine International Law," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, vol. 11, no. 3 (1885): 460.

⁶ Howard Jones, *Union in Peril: The Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 49 and Lynn M. Case and Warren F. Spencer, *The United States and France: Civil War Diplomacy* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), pp. 126–57.

Ignoring the fact that he did not have a large navy, Lincoln's blockade proclamations initiated, what was for months, a paper blockade. This is due to the fact that the blockade had to meet the legal standards recognized by the nations of Europe. The 1856 Declaration of Paris framed the international standards of blockade practice. Most of the world's nations signed this agreement, but the United States was not a signatory. This agreement required that "an adequate force" remain at all times at the entrance to a port to prevent communication. It was necessary for the Union ships to establish the blockade of each Confederate port by written notification. After this notification went ashore, the vessels then in port had fifteen days to leave without fear of capture. International law required that an adequate force then had to remain at all times at the entrance to prevent communication. The interpretation of what constituted an "adequate force" could be interpreted widely and remained essentially undefined by international law. By the widest interpretation of the law, one vessel could qualify as an adequate force.

Under the standards of international law, once the navy instituted the blockade of a port, at least one vessel had to remain on station. If the blockaders left, or if bad weather or enemy warships drove them off, then the navy had to reinstate the blockade at that port. A lapse in the presence of a warship nullified the blockade and required the navy to reactivate the blockade by sending a notification ashore once more and allowing another fifteen-day grace period for vessels to exit the port without penalty.

At the time of these proclamations, the navy of the United States was far from strong and was incapable of accomplishing this immense task. A list of naval vessels compiled in April contained only ninety names. Fifty of these were sailing vessels, of which the larger were useful mainly as receiving and training ships. The list included forty steam vessels – two were unfinished, three were relegated to duty as receiving ships, and three were stationed on the Great Lakes. Eight others, including five steam frigates, were laid up for repairs. These five steam frigates constituted the main element of American naval strength. Although formidable warships, they could not effectively perform as blockaders in the South's shallow waters because of their deep drafts. The navy had only three armed vessels ready for service on the Atlantic Coast at the outbreak of war. The remaining vessels were in the Gulf of Mexico or on foreign stations, from which some did not return for six months.

In April, the navy's ability to institute and maintain a blockade only worsened. Before a single ship could deploy, the nation's largest naval facility

at Norfolk, Virginia was abandoned and destroyed. The loss of this yard and the earlier capture of the navy yard at Pensacola, Florida in January, left the Union only two coastal bases in the south – Fort Monroe in the Chesapeake Bay and Fort Jefferson in the Tortugas, neither of which would substantially serve the naval effort.

Because the Union navy began the war with only a small number of warships and many of them incapable of blockading the southern coast, it had to both purchase and build a navy. Initially, the Navy Department obtained every steam vessel it could purchase in the Northern ports, including tugs, ferryboats, and passenger vessels. These steamers often made less than adequate blockaders. Not designed to carry heavy guns or large crews, the merchant ships frequently had no protection for their engines, some of which lay above deck. Yet, many of these ships served the navy for the entire war.

The initial building program that augmented the navy was that which built the *Unadilla*-class gunboats often called the ninety-day gunboats due to their rapid construction. There were twenty-three in this class and they served both as blockaders and in river operations. Following this, the navy also constructed twenty-eight *Sassacus*-class gunboats that served in a similar capacity. Particularly valuable were the sloops of war constructed during the war. These vessels combined heavy armament, good speed, and a long cruising range, which made them capable of dealing with commerce raiders, other enemy combatants, and Confederate fortifications.

Over the course of the conflict, the Union navy also had success converting captured steam-powered blockade-runners into blockading vessels. These steamers often served as successful blockaders due to their speed. Examples include the *Robert E. Lee*, which became the USS *Fort Donelson*, and the *Ella and Annie*, renamed the USS *Malvern*.

Initially, as the Union warships encountered other vessels while cruising the coast, they inserted a notification of the blockade on the register and the muster roll and also noted the time, and the longitude and latitude. After a while, when an adequate period elapsed for knowledge of the blockade, Union naval officers no longer gave a warning and captured the vessels without notice. When suspicious vessels were stopped, a boarding officer inspected the ship's papers (the bills of lading, the register, the cargo manifest, the invoices, and the charter party). After this examination, the officer determined what to do with the vessel and the cargo. If the officer considered the vessel innocent of any infractions of the law, he released her. Any irregularities meant that the vessel became a lawful prize of war. The master and the official papers accompanied the ship and appeared along with other officers and crew

members in the prize court proceedings. The prize courts generally convened in the Federal District Courts, the principal ones being in New York, Boston, Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia, Providence, New Orleans, and Key West. Foreign citizens captured on the vessels were released, but Confederates and later pilots were sent to prison camps.⁷

The British government announced its neutrality on May 13, 1861. The British did not protest Lincoln's blockade because, as the world's foremost naval power, their long-term naval interests lay in expanding and maintaining the blockade practice. Although the American blockade annoyed and inconvenienced the British, they also recognized it would establish convenient precedents for them in the future. The *London Times* summed up this feeling by stating, "the normal state of this country in time of war is that of a belligerent, and . . . blockade is by far the most formidable weapon we possess. Surely we ought not to be overready to blunt its edge or injure its temper?" France confirmed its acceptance of the blockade three days after the British on May 16. With French support it became clear that Europe would recognize the US blockade if it were executed according to international law. This resolved one of the Union's earliest and its potentially gravest problems.⁸

Despite the fact that a loosely maintained blockade advanced long-term British naval interests, the British foreign minister, Earl Russell, was often critical of what he pointed out was the relaxed state of the blockade and frequently raised questions concerning its legality. On February 5, 1862, after the United States had had nearly a year to implement a blockade, Russell wrote concerning the blockade of Wilmington and Charleston. He admonished the Union's efforts stating that "It appears from the reports received . . . that although a sufficient force is stationed off those ports, various ships have successfully eluded the blockade; a question might be raised as to whether such a blockade should be considered effective." Just ten days later, though, he seemed to have accepted the state of affairs and wrote: "Assuming . . . that a number of ships is stationed at the entrance of a port, sufficient . . . to prevent access to it or to create an evident danger of entering it or leaving it" this will ensure the blockade is "an effective one by international law."⁹

7 Francis H. Upton, *The Law of Nations Affecting Commerce during War* (New York: John S. Voorhies, 1863), pp. 395–6, 441–2.

8 *The Times* [London], February 10, 1862.

9 Earl Russell to Lord Lyons, February 5, 1862, Great Britain, Parliament, *Sessional Papers* (Commons), 1862, vol. 62, pp. 119–20; Russell to Lyons, February 15, 1862, as cited in John D. Hayes (ed.), *Samuel Francis Du Pont: A Selection from his Civil War Letters*, 3 vols. (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1969), vol. 1, p. 326n.

As late as August 1864, both the United States and the British were still trading missives over the effectiveness of the blockade. Secretary of State Seward wrote to the British ambassador to the United States, Lord Lyons, admitting the shortcoming of the blockade maintained against steamers. He believed that “no maritime power” could “maintain so effectual a blockade” as that of the United States. Seward further stated: “I think, therefore, with great deference, that either our blockade must be acknowledged to be sufficient, or it must be held that no lawful blockade can be maintained against contraband traders who enjoy the advantages of steam navigation.”¹⁰

The blockade was structured to stop the Southern states from developing a war economy. To be successful, it had to prevent the arrival of imports that helped the South to prosecute the war and to check the flow of exports that would finance the conflict. It was crucial for the Union blockade to stop the exportation of cotton, the main staple of the economy, both before and during the war. Despite the fact that most of the Southern states’ economies depended on cotton agriculture, many Confederate leaders thought that a self-imposed cotton embargo would cause a severe shortage in Europe’s textile industry. They speculated that the shortage caused by an embargo would bring not only recognition from France and Britain but also their intervention into the war. Later called “King Cotton diplomacy,” the embargo was supported by the Southern press, cotton factors, planters, and the public. The Confederate Congress never passed an embargo law, but the concept was backed by state legislatures and there was a de facto or extralegal embargo for a year. Despite the fact that cotton had fueled the Industrial Revolution, the South would discover that this strategy did not have the desired effect. It failed because the South was not the only cotton-producing region and there was a surplus of this staple in Europe at the war’s beginning, which reduced greatly the initial needs of this product. By spring 1862, the embargo policies were gradually relaxed because it had failed to have the desired diplomatic effect. Necessity had also intervened because cotton, as the main medium of foreign exchange for the South, was badly needed to buy items necessary to maintain the war effort. The deterrence created by the de facto embargo that kept the planters from shipping massive quantities of cotton overseas actually gave the blockade more credibility.¹¹

¹⁰ *The Times* [London], September 25, 1863; Seward to Lyons, August 8, 1864, US Department of State, Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, 38th Congress, 2nd sess. (1865), House Ex. Doc. 1, part 2, p. 673.

¹¹ Douglas B. Ball, *Financial Failure and Confederate Defeat* (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1991), pp. 65–6.

The failure of “King Cotton diplomacy” was an indicator of the Confederacy’s lack of resolution to formulate trade laws and policies that would benefit the nation. Founded on the principle of states’ rights, the Confederate Congress was hesitant to pass regulatory trade laws. In May 1861, the government did pass a tariff, posing a restriction on some items imported into the Southern states. Of marginal value, this policy did not keep the blockade-runners from bringing in many other luxury goods due to the high profit margins that these goods brought on the market. It was not until February 1864 that the Confederate government fully intervened and passed a law to regulate imports and exports. In an effort that was too little and too late, it prohibited the importation of certain luxury items, and a second bill authorized the government to utilize half of the available cargo space in blockade-runners for government cargo. Many believed that this would have an adverse effect on the blockade-running trade by reducing the number of vessels engaged in it. Instead the numbers increased. The new law did forbid the importation of most of the goods covered in the 1861 law, albeit to take effect in March 1865. Despite the regulations, blockade-running never waned due to the large profits that were realized.¹²

The imported cargos carried by vessels of private companies varied for many reasons. It was risky to freight a vessel entirely with valuable or hard-to-obtain supplies because if the vessel was lost due to capture it might be months before new supplies could be found. Varied cargos did benefit the merchants, who could make substantial profits. Confederate and state-owned blockade-runners carried items specific to the needs of the government and had great success keeping the troops supplied. When the Confederacy needed items to carry on the war effort, it found some means to get them past the blockade. Late in 1864, when Confederate troops needed food, 500,000 rations came into the South, and 2,500,000 more were in foreign

12 C. G. Memminger and James A. Seddon, March 5, 1864, “Official Regulations to Carry into Effect to ‘Impose Regulations upon the Foreign Commerce of the Confederate States to Provide for the Public Defense,’” in James M. Matthews (ed.), *Public Laws of the Confederate States of America Passed at the Fourth Session of the First Congress* (Richmond: R. M. Smith, 1864), pp. 179–81; United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series IV, volume 3, pp. 187–9 (hereafter cited as OR); Confederate States of America, Treasury Department, *Tariff of the Confederate States of America, Approved by Congress, May 21, 1861* (Charleston, SC: Evans and Cogswell, 1861).

ports waiting to be shipped. This was enough food for 100,000 men for two and one-half months.¹³

Luxury items brought through the blockade created both positive and negative effects. The small carrying capacity of the blockade-runners, combined with a high demand for goods, influenced both their cargos and the freight rates. The issue that guided this matter was the “value to bulk” relationship, which not only encouraged the importation of luxury goods but also influenced the types of cargos imported into the Confederacy. The value of the item in relation to its bulk largely determined what was imported because it was more profitable to bring in smaller and lighter items such as soap, clothing, needles, wines, and perfumes. While guns and accouterments were economically feasible to transport, badly needed items such as railroad rails, marine engines, and locomotives were expensive to carry because of their bulk, although a few did come into the South. Profit was the most important element that sustained the trade and the risks associated with running the blockade made it necessary to realize large financial returns. The makeup of the cargos, the revenues realized, and the ever-increasing costs of the imports and exports were partially determined by the cost of transporting goods through the blockade, which increased 5,000 percent.¹⁴

Starting the war with a small naval force and a large operational area, the Union leadership made an attempt to devise an overall strategy and to resolve future naval concerns. To do so, Gideon Welles created a “Commission of Conference,” also referred to as the “Blockade Strategy Board.” Before this board met, the Navy Department had no strategic plan and addressed every problem as it arose. The idea for the creation of this board originated with Professor Alexander Dallas Bache, the superintendent of the US Coast Survey. Organized on June 27, 1861, the board consisted of Bache, chief engineer of the Army Department of Washington John G. Barnard, and two naval officers, Captain Charles H. Davis, who acted as recorder and secretary, and Captain Samuel Francis Du Pont, who served as chairman.

The Strategy Board met frequently at the Smithsonian Institution from July to September 1861, preparing six major reports and four supplementary ones. Collecting hydrographic, topographic, and geographic information, its members

13 Robert M. Browning, Jr., *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear: The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron During the Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press. 1993), p. 267.

14 Robert B. Ekelund, Jr. and Mark Thornton, “The Union Blockade and Demoralization of the South: Relative Prices and the Confederacy,” *Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 73, no. 4 (December 1992): 891, 900; Ekelund and Thornton, “The ‘Confederate’ Blockade of the South,” *The Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 29.

developed strategies and devised methods to render the blockade more effective. The board accumulated the information necessary to establish logistical bases on the Atlantic Coast and recommended points in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida to be seized as coaling stations and naval bases. The board also prepared a general guide for blockading operations, which the Navy Department followed closely throughout the war.

During the board's meetings, strategy and organizational changes were hammered out after thorough discussion and debate among the members. Their recommendations were discussed and modified by the president, the cabinet, and the army leadership. Although the board's proceedings were confidential and not intended for the public, accounts of the meetings began to appear in Northern newspapers in July, defeating the effectiveness of its strategical deliberations.

Lincoln's proclamations had relegated the navy to blockade 3,500 miles of shallow coastline containing 189 inlet, harbor and river entrances. The specific geography of the southern shoreline complicated the implementation and maintenance of the blockade. A great benefit to the South and a challenge to keeping a strict blockade were the numerous barrier islands that protected inward passages along much of the southern coast. Inlets separated these islands at intervals and often opened into large estuaries. This intricate network of waterways allowed shallow-draft vessels to keep communications open without the need to enter the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico. The Union navy began the war needing ships to watch the coast, but during the entire war it needed shallow-draft craft to patrol close to shore.

As early as April 1861, because of the paucity of warships available for blockading operations over such a vast expanse, the leadership of the Navy Department entertained the idea of closing the ports by sinking hulks in the main channels. When the Europeans heard about this, it brought protests. The British Foreign Office called this method of blockade a "measure of revenge, and irremediable injury against an enemy." The French press called it "an act of inhuman and barbarous revenge" and "an act of vandalism . . . only worthy of the dark ages." Seward defended this action by calling it a temporary measure to aid the blockade without permanently injuring the harbors and inlets. The secretary of state also claimed that the United States never planned to sink vessels in the main channels, wishing to obstruct only the lesser ones.¹⁵ The Confederacy also pursued this strategy by obstructing

¹⁵ Quoted in Case and Spencer, *The United States and France*, pp. 251–2; Glass, "Marine Law": 462.

channels to restrict the movement of the US Navy in certain waters and to limit access to waterways that were difficult to defend.

The Navy Department did sink hulks at about half a dozen ports; the largest effort was at Charleston. Against the “cradle of secession” they sank twenty-nine large ships in a checkerboard pattern in two of the main channels leading into the harbor. The *New York Times* claimed that the hulks presented “unconquerable obstacles” while some believed that the obstructions would be only short-lived. The latter proved to be right. A survey of Charleston’s main ship channel four months later found that the currents had scoured a 21-foot channel at low water – a deeper channel than had existed originally. Although the navy attempted to close several southern ports and inlets by sinking stone-laden vessels, in no case were they effective.¹⁶

In May 1861, the Navy Department initially created two blockading squadrons. The Atlantic Blockading Squadron’s responsibilities included the eastern ports from the Chesapeake Bay to Key West, Florida, and the Gulf Blocking Squadron patrolled from Key West to the Rio Grande. At the end of October 1861, the Atlantic Blockading Squadron divided into the newly formed North Atlantic and South Atlantic Blockading squadrons. The North Atlantic Squadron’s responsibilities were the coasts and interior waterways of Virginia and North Carolina and the South Atlantic Squadrons watched the coast from South Carolina to Key West. Later, the boundary moved to include the coast only as far south as Cape Canaveral. The Gulf Coast Blockading Squadron split in February 1862. The East Gulf Blockading Squadron patrolled from Cape Canaveral to St. Andrew’s Bay, Florida, and the West Gulf Blockading Squadron’s area of responsibility began west of St. Andrew’s Bay, Florida and stretched to the Rio Grande River and into the Mississippi River for two years as far north as Vicksburg, Mississippi.

An early embarrassment to the efficiency of the blockade was the operation of Confederate privateers. The majority of these vessels sortied out of Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans. These warships operated under a letter of marque and reprisal issued by the Confederate government. This commission allowed private vessels to make prizes of Northern shipping. They were constrained because the 1856 Declaration of Paris outlawed privateering. Without the European and the Caribbean ports available, they could only sortie from and return to Confederate ports. A particular awkwardness to the United States was the fact that as a nonsignatory of the

¹⁶ Robert M. Browning, Jr., *Success Is All That Was Expected: The South Atlantic Blockading Squadron during the Civil War* (Dulles, VA.: Brassey’s, 2002), pp. 53–4; *Times* [New York], November 26, 1861.

declaration, it could not legitimately condemn Confederate privateering efforts. While the United States protested this form of warfare, its failure to sign the 1856 declaration gave the United States little sympathy from foreign governments.

The South's lack of naval resources induced President Jefferson Davis to adopt this strategy. With early success, Northern shipping interests overwhelmed Lincoln with requests for the protection of Union commerce. On the same day that the blockade was announced, Lincoln proclaimed that the government would treat the privateers as pirates, a policy that was later abandoned. This topic also affected the delicate issue of neutrality then being considered by the European nations. In an attempt to force the issue, Secretary of State Seward let the European powers know that the United States was now ready to become a signatory to the declaration of 1856, hoping to convince them that this was an internal struggle and eager to stymie any effort for Confederate recognition as a nation. The effort became moot when on May 13, 1861 both Britain and France recognized the Confederacy as a belligerent power and, holding them to the antiprivateering clause of the 1856 Declaration of Paris, denied the privateers the use of their ports.¹⁷

The Southern privateers had only limited early success and as the blockade became more stringent they could not operate without great risk. By 1862, they were no longer a threat to shipping. They did, however, occupy the full attention of the naval authorities early in the war. While not developing into a long-term threat, Confederate commerce raiders did. Confederate secretary of the navy Stephen R. Mallory prioritized the building and outfitting of these warships. The two most successful, the CSS *Alabama* and the CSS *Shenandoah*, both built in Great Britain, had a global impact on Union shipping. The success of the Confederate commerce raiders caused the majority of the US merchant fleet to change their registration to foreign countries. They also impacted the effectiveness of the blockade because of the large number of Union warships sent to find and destroy them.

As the navy slowly implemented the blockade, sailing vessels performed most of the early trade with the Confederacy. For the first six months, though, all types of vessels functioned as blockade-runners. Three-masted ships, barks, passenger steamers, tugs, and other assorted craft all ran the blockade. But, as the Union navy was able to deploy additional gunboats to make the blockade more substantial, large vessels powered by wind alone

17 D. P. Crook, *The North, the South, and the Powers, 1861–1865* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), pp. 65, 67–8.

could not be risked. Sailing vessels were generally slower than steamers, they could be seen farther at sea, and they were dependent on the weather and the currents to move. Nevertheless, sailing vessels, particularly small fast schooners, continued to run the blockade for two years into the war on the East Coast and throughout the war on the Gulf Coast.

While steam blockade-runners received most of the attention of the blockading vessels, small sailing vessels did operate throughout the war. By 1862, the smaller merchantmen, mostly sailing vessels, rarely carried arms and munitions and usually carried salt and assorted cargos that were sold in local markets. Small entrepreneurs owned these ships and could not afford to risk more expensive cargos in slow ships. These small entrepreneurs still made large profits on their ventures.

Stopping the steam blockade-runners developed into a major challenge to the US Navy as the war unfolded. Gradually steamers evolved to meet the challenge of an ever-more stringent blockade. Many of the fastest packet ships that plied European waters before the war were initially brought into the blockade-running trade. They had great success against the slower Union warships. As the Union navy deployed more and faster warships to patrol the coast, the reaction was that new, specially designed steamships were constructed expressly for speed and stealth to break the blockade. These steamers usually displaced between 400 and 600 tons, were built of iron or steel, sat low in the water, and had extremely narrow beams and rakish designs. Builders constructed both screw- and sidewheel vessels, each having its advantages.

Avoiding detection was the most important characteristic necessary for the success of the blockade-runners. In many cases they carried only a light pair of lower masts, with no yards. A small crow's nest on one of the masts often appeared as the only alteration from the ship's sharp outline. The hull showed little above the water and was usually painted dull gray to camouflage the vessel. The captain kept the ship's boats lowered to the gunwales, and some steamers had telescoping funnels that could be lowered to the deck in order to maintain an even lower profile. British engines became more powerful as the war progressed and the boilers normally burned semibituminous British coal, but the blockade-runners used anthracite coal whenever possible because it made little or no smoke. When approaching the shore, these vessels blew their steam off under water, showed no lights, and sometimes muffled their paddle wheels with canvas, all to avoid detection. Some captains even insisted that their crew wear white clothing, believing that one black figure could reveal the position of a vessel.

Under certain stages of the moon and the atmosphere the blockade-runners were almost invisible at even 100 yards. They blended so perfectly with their surroundings that on dark nights only their wakes were spotted by lookouts on the Union ships long after they had steamed by. The famed blockade-running captain John Wilkinson boasted that the ships seemed “almost as invisible as Harlequin in the pantomime.”¹⁸

The fact that most of these specially built blockade-running vessels came from British shipyards and that many were captained by British subjects added a diplomatic wrinkle to the already strained relations between the United States and Great Britain. Gideon Welles, resentful that the British played such a prominent role, allowed his officers to press belligerent rights as far as possible, allowing them to pursue zealous seizure policies that generated hundreds of prize cases to be heard in higher courts. Many of the seizures that were protested in court were clearly overreaches of authority and the vessels were later released with monetary compensation attached, straining diplomatic relations even more during the conflict.

The blockade was made even more difficult because nearby foreign ports developed as entrêpôts to serve the blockade-running trade. These ports allowed the fast and sleek steamers to load their cargos for the short run to Confederate ports. Nassau and Bermuda served East Coast ports, while Havana accommodated all the ports of the Gulf Coast. Other ports such as Vera Cruz and Tampico were used by many of the small sailing vessels. The use of all these ports as entrêpôts by blockade-runners created an extra source of friction between the Lincoln government and foreign nations.

One of the more interesting problems for the Union's Gulf blockade was the neutral port of Matamoros, Mexico. Just across the river from Brownsville, Texas, trade here increased exponentially during the conflict. A revolution in Mexico created a situation whereby many of the same military articles that the Confederacy needed were similarly required by the revolutionaries. Arms, accouterments, food blankets, uniform cloth, and other useful items were shipped here to Mexican merchants. The Union naval officers had difficulties trying to determine what items were lawfully shipped here, not having the authority to limit items legitimately destined for Mexico. Mexican merchants serving as front men for the Confederates also helped with the export of hundreds of thousands of bales of southern cotton which crossed the border from Texas.

18 John Wilkinson, *The Narrative of a Blockade-Runner* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1877), p. 171.

There was no legal way for the Union officers to stop this trade other than holding all the ships' masters accountable for having flawless paperwork that documented well the cargos' connections to Mexican merchants. The naval officers were often aggressive in their enforcement, seizing many ships that were later returned to their owners. More aggravating to the officers responsible for stopping this trade was the fact that a number of the vessels trading here had cleared from New York, New Orleans, and other US ports.

The American Civil War would forever change how the international prize courts viewed blockades. The American court rulings expanded the legal precedents that the international community would later recognize as international law. The rulings broadened the number of items recognized as contraband of war. They also ruled that contraband cargos could be seized anywhere during the journey, even if the contraband was bound for a neutral port. Still, the seizures and the consequent unpopular court decisions only generated European protests.

One of the great challenges of the blockade was keeping a large number of warships off the ports. During the first year of the war, with so few vessels available, the blockade was mostly maintained by naval vessels that kept semipermanent stations. Sailing warships could remain for long periods of time but steamers needed to leave their posts and continued to ply to and from their stations for fuel supplies. In order to lengthen their stay and to conserve coal, during the day the blockaders anchored from 3 to 5 miles from shore, out of the range of Confederate defenses. At night they steamed closer to the inlets or harbor openings. As steam warships became more predominant and grew in numbers they began to patrol farther from the entrances and were able to position themselves better to catch their prey. The extra movement by these steam warships did complicate the logistical situation. It caused them to travel for fuel more often and resulted in more breakdowns of the machinery and boilers. Repairs and refueling kept as much as 20 percent of the vessels away from their blockading duties.

While most of the blockade-runners chose moonless nights to make their trips, others chose nights that provided some light. Captains and pilots knowledgeable of the southern coast were at a premium and the sudden increase in the trade had left some owners with unskilled men and thus afraid of wrecking their vessels. Captains became increasingly cautious as they approached their destinations and at times had to send boats ashore to ascertain their whereabouts. One contemporary commented that he considered it "the lesser of two evils to run the risk of being seen and chased, rather

than to take the certain danger of being wrecked, when running in insufficient light." The boldest of the blockade-running captains, though, did not fear to steam directly through the fleet. Blockade-runner captain John Wilkinson remarked: "for although the blockade runner might receive a shot or two, she was rarely disabled; and in proportion to the increase of the fleet, the greater would be the danger of their firing into each other . . . [making them] very apt to miss the cow and kill the calf."¹⁹

A well-handled steamer could average about one round-trip a month from the nearby entrépôts of Bermuda, Nassau, and Havana, but might make it in as little as eight days. It generally took about sixteen days to unload and load another cargo. Some of the blockade-runners made trips through the blockade as regularly as packets. Several factors, however, made their trips irregular: the conditions of the blockade, the weather, mechanical conditions, quarantines, cargo availability, the moon, and the tides.

Initially, the deep water ports of Charleston on the Atlantic Coast and New Orleans, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama on the Gulf Coast were the major destinations for blockade-runners. The commerce at New Orleans, the South's most important port, was for the first few months active, but the trade was quickly restrained by the effective blockade of the Mississippi River. By early 1863, Charleston's business had declined and when the navy determined to capture this city, it sent a large naval force there that greatly constricted the trade. The trade at the port of Wilmington, North Carolina rose as that of Charleston fell, having grown immensely since the war began. By early 1863, it had surpassed Charleston, becoming the South's most important port. Mobile's importance never completely declined, but after January 1863 Galveston, Texas grew in importance as a port in the Gulf.

In April 1861, no one realized that the sleepy town of Wilmington, North Carolina would become synonymous with the word "blockade." With a population of nearly 10,000, it was the state's most important city before the war. Wilmington had boasted the largest naval stores market in the country, receiving visits from two to three dozen ships that arrived and cleared weekly during the peak trading seasons. Geography and communications more than any other attributes determined Wilmington's growth and importance to the Confederacy during the war. The town itself lay 20 miles

19 Crosby to Lee, February 11, 1864, ORN, 9: 475; [No author] "Running the Blockade," Southern Historical Society Papers, vol. 1x (Richmond: Southern Historical Society, 1881): 375; Lee to Fox, February 20, 1864, ORN, 9: 496; Braine to Clitz, July 6, 1862, ORN, 8: 547; Wilkinson, *Narrative of a Blockade-Runner*, p. 131.

from the mouth of the Cape Fear River and 15 miles from New Inlet, beyond the reach of direct assault by naval vessels. The river could be navigated as far as Fayetteville, 100 miles upstream, and its tributaries were also navigable for shorter distances. The river had two navigable entrances and between them lay Smith's Island, which stretched for 10 miles into the ocean. Frying Pan Shoals extended 15 miles farther into the Atlantic, making the distance between the inlets by sea some 50 miles, while the distance directly between them was only about 7. The double inlets required two separate blockading forces to watch the coast and made it possible for those violating the blockade to choose the inlet that better suited their intentions. This separation compounded the existing problems for the blockaders, especially communications, coherence, and support. With railroad connections to both Richmond and Charleston, Wilmington would surpass in importance every city in the South, except the Confederate capital.

The blockade made fortunes for many. Shortages caused by the blockade spurred higher prices and inflation. The potential profits from blockade-running ventures lured many foreign businessmen into the trade. A single round-trip might allow profits enough to pay for both cargos and the vessel. These high returns ensured that the trade would continue. A clerk in the Confederate War Office commented: "About one in every four steamers is captured by the enemy. We can afford that." James Randall, a clerk at a blockade-running firm in Wilmington, agreed: "Bad luck is expected occasionally, but the percentage of profit is largely in favor of the Confederate steamers. Nearly every one that had been captured had paid for herself a half dozen times."²⁰

Fragmentary evidence relates that large amounts of goods came through the blockade. But because Confederate government records did not survive or were not kept on most of the imported goods the story is incomplete. To balance their foreign trade, the Confederacy exported mostly cotton but did export other agricultural items including large quantities of tobacco and naval stores. Small quantities of flour and meal, bacon, hams, lard, linseed oil, corn, rice, tallow, and wheat were exported early in the war.

20 Davis to House of Representatives, December 20, 1864, OR, IV, 3: 952; A. Sellev Roberts, "High Prices and the Blockade in the Confederacy," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 2 (April 1925): 158–61; Hawley to Seward, June 1, 1863, ORN, 9: 80–1; J. B. Jones, entry for November 12, 1863, in *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1866), vol. II, p. 95; James R. Randall to Katie, December 16, 1863, James R. Randall Collection, Southern Historical Society Papers, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

Studies of blockade-running indicate that in 1861 a blockade-runner had less than a one in ten chance of being captured; about one in three in 1862; one in four in 1863 and 1864; and in 1865, after most ports were closed, about a one in three chance. Steamers made as many as 1,300 attempts to run through the blockade, over 1,000 of which succeeded. Over 3,300 attempts were made to evade the blockade of the East Coast ports, most of these occurred at the Carolina ports. There were nearly 3,000 attempts to run the blockade of the Gulf states. The *London Index* noted that between January 1, 1863 and the middle of April 1864, of the 590 attempted trips into the ports of Wilmington and Charleston 498 ended with success. These numbers indicate that only about 15 percent of the attempts at these two ports ended in capture. This figure complements the figure of 77 percent of a more recent and comprehensive study. Steamers succeeded about 92 percent of the time, while sailing vessels enjoyed an 80 percent success rate. Despite the more than 5,000 successful trips through the blockade, this figure represents only a fraction of the South's prewar trade.²¹

Due to the incomplete records that exist, the total amount of cotton that passed through the blockade varies between the sources. The most modern scholarship suggests that some 450,000 bales of cotton ran through the blockade and 60 percent of this from East Coast ports. Another 350,000 bales may have passed through Matamoros to both foreign and American markets. Yet, despite this relative sense of success, all the cotton imported from the South represented less than 12 percent of the prewar totals.

Blockade-runners did not enjoy the same success rate on the inward journey and thus imports lagged behind exports. Nevertheless, tremendous amounts of goods came through the blockade and varied in size from straight pins to marine engines. Most importantly, the Confederacy imported at least 400,000 small arms and millions of pounds of lead and saltpeter from Europe to sustain the war effort. Much of this passed through the port of

²¹ Marcus W. Price, "Ships That Tested the Blockade of the Carolina Ports, 1861–1865," *The American Neptune*, vol. 8 (July 1948): 196; Price, "Ships That Tested the Blockade of the Georgia and East Florida Ports, 1861–1865," *The American Neptune*, vol. xv, no. 2 (April 1955): 97; Price, "Ships That Tested the Blockade of the Gulf Ports, 1861–1865," *The American Neptune*, vol. 11, no. 4 (October 1951): 262; Frank Lawrence Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 260–1; *The Index* [London], June 30, 1864; Stephen R. Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running during the Civil War* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 221; David G. Surdam, "The Union Navy's Blockade Reconsidered," *Naval War College Review*, vol. 51, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 89.

Wilmington. One historian estimated that over 300 cargos of munitions reached the Confederate ports.²²

It is obvious that the blockade did not effectively keep contraband out of the Confederacy. But, it is equally clear that the blockade severely damaged the Confederate war effort in several ways. Without a blockade, the Confederacy would have freely imported every object necessary for the continuation of the war, and exported without constraint cotton to sustain these purchases. Instead the blockade kept cargos minimal and restricted military shipments. Imports included only the most important articles as well as a portion of luxury items while shipments containing items such as locomotives, railroad iron, and other equipment and machinery came into the Confederacy in much smaller quantities or not at all.

The blockade also elongated the South's military supply lines and made the armies more vulnerable to the success or failures of the ships running the blockade. For four years the squadrons watched the coast, stopping only a small percentage of vessels trying to run the blockade. The blockade largely affected the items that could be imported and exported, requiring the leadership to make hard choices on what was imported. Importantly, the blockade greatly reduced the amount of the South's trade, curtailed purchasing power by restricting the money available to prosecute the war, and limited the items the Confederate government needed to carry on the conflict. Thus, the South's wartime economy never fully developed because of the blockade.

The South might have solved some of its most crucial transportation problems had the blockade never been implemented. One of the great needs was iron, which was not imported in any large amounts due to the bulk to value issue. The lack of this single commodity alone caused the leadership to choose between the manufacture of naval ironclads or an expansion of its railroads. In many cases the iron used to build ironclads was desperately needed for transportation. By the end of the war the Confederacy was deficient in both railroads and ironclads. The blockade aggravated the monetary system and helped to add to the tremendous rate of inflation, and spawned the financial problems abroad.

The blockade did cause the general populace to suffer due to inflation and the collapsed Southern economy. Depressed prices for agricultural goods combined with the higher prices for imported items diminished the

22 Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy*, p. 267; Surdam, "The Union Navy's Blockade Reconsidered": 87; David G. Surdam, *Northern Naval Superiority and the Economics of the American Civil War* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 169, 171.

purchasing power of southern citizens.²³ Escalating food prices, and disrupted internal logistics created food shortages in the urban centers, and situations like the Richmond bread riots ensued. Items such as nails, medicines, salt, flour, and other household goods were scarce, expensive, and often hard to obtain. The lack of these commodities had a greater impact on the populace. Shortages of coffee, molasses, whisky, and other consumer items, easy to obtain before the war, angered the public. These shortages had an impact on Southern society at all levels and played a significant role in the South's will to continue the war.

The US Navy grew from a force of ninety vessels, not capable of blockading the South, to a force of nearly 700 ships in less than four years. As the war progressed, the Union forces controlled more points along the coast, which reduced blockading responsibilities. This fact and the growing numbers of ships available meant that only the fastest ships and the boldest captains could break the blockade. While the blockade was never airtight, it kept all but the fastest vessels, with relatively small cargo capacities, from even making the attempt.

The Union blockade isolated the South both politically and diplomatically. Without establishing a full-scale war economy, by early 1865, the South had expended a great deal of its resources to win the war. Raw materials, manpower, and industrial facilities were all in short supply, were inaccessible, or had been consumed or destroyed. The states' rights doctrine of the Confederacy had failed to unite the states into coordinated action for the benefit of all. The troops were demoralized and short of many items needed to sustain them in the field. Nearly all the ports of the Confederacy were closed and the Southern people were exhausted and desired peace. The US Navy and its blockade was a key factor in making this happen.

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The Border War

AARON ASTOR

"I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game," President Abraham Lincoln wrote to Illinois senator Orville Browning in September 1861. He continued, "Kentucky gone, we can not hold Missouri, nor, as I think, Maryland. These all against us, and the job on our hands is too large for us. We would as well consent to separation at once, including the surrender of this capitol."¹ With these choice words Lincoln made clear the centrality of the Border States in the Union war effort. Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri would remain as loyal slaveholding states – along with Delaware – throughout the Civil War.

The Border States' importance lay beyond geography, where they could serve as a buffer between Confederate and free Union territory. They also contained within them a large white population, some of the largest industrial cities in the slaveholding South, and myriad manufacturing and agricultural riches that would serve a nineteenth-century army well. The Border States occupied the geographic, political, and economic heartland of America at the outset of war.

Contemporaries beyond Lincoln certainly appreciated the importance of securing the Border States. But they disagreed on what actually counted as Border States, and on the relative importance of each state to the war effort. In fact, commentators in 1860 regularly referred to Tennessee and Virginia as Border States in addition to the four mentioned above. As the war unfolded, the mountainous sections of Virginia and Tennessee would continue to be seen as Border States, including especially the newly created state of West Virginia, and the staunchly Unionist section of East Tennessee. The District of Columbia, though not actually a state, possessed many of the peculiarities of Unionist slaveholding Maryland.

¹ Letter to Orville H. Browning, September 22, 1861, in Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Roy P. Basler (ed.), (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953–5), vol. 1V, pp. 531–3.



23.1 The Border war. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

If the Border is described as the line between slavery and freedom then surely the free states along that line – or the portions of free states closest to that line – must be considered Border States too, or what historian Christopher Phillips calls, the Middle Border.² This would include Kansas and the southernmost counties of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Indeed, the early nineteenth-century settlement of the Lower Midwest by so many Kentuckians, Virginians, and North Carolinians makes inclusion of this area in the Border States category necessary.

With these considerations in mind, this chapter employs an expansive definition of the Border States to include Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, the District of Columbia, West Virginia, Kansas, East Tennessee, and the southern counties of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. The topography of this Middle Border varied considerably between the Delaware Bay, the Appalachian Mountains, the Ohio River valley, and the eastern Great Plains. Each of these states (or sections of states) contained bitterly divided loyalties that revealed complex internal dynamics as well as conflicting relationships to the larger Union and Confederacy. At one point or another they were considered to represent a border between free and slave territory, between potential support for Union and secession, and between actual allegiance to the Union and the Confederacy. As most residents of the Border States feared, much of the Civil War would be fought on this contested ground.

23.1 The Antebellum Border States: Demography, Economy, and Politics

The Delaware Bay marks one of the more unlikely sections of the Border States. The southernmost counties of New Jersey included the sparsely populated Pine Barrens, a region of profitable truck farms that served large urban markets in Philadelphia and New York, and miles of seacoast guarded by lighthouses constructed by the US Engineering Corps in the 1850s. The last residue of Northern slavery could be found in these counties. The state's 1804 gradual emancipation law allowed slavery to linger for decades, with eighteen slaves still appearing on the 1860 census for New Jersey. Nobody considered New Jersey a slave state by then, but its proximity to slaveholding Delaware lent southern New Jersey a more Southerly political bent than the counties closer to New York. In the 1860 presidential election Stephen

2 Christopher Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Douglas earned some of the state's Electoral votes thanks in part to the deeply conservative Democratic bent of the counties south and east of Philadelphia.

On the west side of the bay was the state of Delaware, which has long been included as one of the proper Border States. Unlike New Jersey, Delaware maintained slavery up to and through the Civil War. Though its politicians vigorously defended the institution, the demographic reality was that slavery was dying out by 1860. Indeed, with only 1,798 slaves remaining in the state in 1860, Delaware actually held the largest free black percentage of any slave state in the Union; 91 percent of all African Americans in the state were free in 1860. But even here the picture is varied depending on geography. Most of the African American population – free and enslaved – lived in the southern two counties of Kent and Sussex. The more populous northern county of New Castle, with its DuPont gunpowder works at Wilmington, had become a veritable free territory by the time of the Civil War.

Though slavery appeared to be dying out in Delaware, the ruling Democratic Party refused to extinguish the system once and for all. Delaware Democrats aligned themselves with Southern Democrats throughout the 1850s, supported President James Buchanan's embrace of the pro-slavery Lecompton constitution in Kansas, and backed John C. Breckinridge for president in 1860 over Stephen Douglas. Delaware's politics tilted strongly toward the South, but around Wilmington a growing Republican Party with ties to Philadelphia's manufacturing market threatened to overturn the staunchly pro-Southern bloc in Dover and within the state's congressional delegation.

For a small state, Maryland contains some of the most topographically diverse landscape of any in the Union. Its economy, demographics, and politics would reflect this diversity. The tobacco-based counties of southern Maryland, between the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay, had been a center of slavery in Maryland since the seventeenth century. Until the early nineteenth century, landowners on the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay could be counted as natural allies of the western shore tobacco planters. However, tobacco-induced degradation of the soil on the Eastern Shore and the transition to truck farming resulted in a rapid decline of slavery, much like in neighboring Delaware. By 1860, the Eastern Shore, home of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, would host the largest free black population of any region in the country. Roughly half of all black Marylanders were free in 1860, with a preponderance in the Eastern Shore.

In the western part of the state there were thickly forested mountains, settled mostly by non-slaveholders drifting down from Pennsylvania. Many were descendants of Palatine German (Pennsylvania "Dutch") immigrants from the early eighteenth century who generally opposed the system of slavery, though they supported the Jacksonian Democratic Party. Extension of the National Road, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad through western Maryland pulled the regional economy closer to that of Pennsylvania than Virginia.

Between the Chesapeake lowlands and the western mountains was the great industrial port city of Baltimore. One of the largest cities in the nation in 1860, not to mention the Border South, Baltimore's growth was fueled by German and Irish immigration, a growing manufacturing sector, and a busy railroad and shipping hub connecting Maryland to markets in the Pennsylvania and Ohio interior. Hired slaves mingled with the largest urban, free black population in America. Its political divides turned more on immigration and ethnic division than on slavery, *per se*, but the possibility of secession threatened to turn the city into a battlefield.

South of Baltimore, east of the District of Columbia, and west of Chesapeake Bay was the tobacco-growing slave plantation heartland of southern Maryland. Secession sympathy was strongest in Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's counties, as tobacco planters had much more in common with Virginia Tidewater elites than they did with truck farmers across the Chesapeake Bay or industrialists in Baltimore.

The District of Columbia included within it the cities of Washington and Georgetown as well as the unincorporated portions of the "ten miles square" making up the nation's capital. In 1846, the portion of the District of Columbia west of the Potomac River was retroceded to Virginia, leaving a largely undeveloped capital along the marshy banks of the Potomac and Anacostia rivers. Until 1850, Washington, D.C. was one of the foremost slave-trading centers in the Upper South, sending thousands of slaves from nearby Maryland and Virginia plantations to cotton plantations in the Deep South. Though the slave trade was banned in 1850, the system of slavery continued within the capital city, often to the shock and dismay of Northern congressmen resident there. A slaveholding city just below the fall line, Washington, D.C. struck most observers as decidedly Southern in its mannerisms, institutions, and political orientation.

Just north of the Mason-Dixon line in southern Pennsylvania were some of the most productive farms in the country. Descendants of settlers from Germany and Ulster in the eighteenth century, southern Pennsylvania

farmers tended to support the Democratic Party in the 1840s and 1850s, offering native son James Buchanan for the presidency in 1856. Though southern Pennsylvanians often knew of slaveholding kinfolk across the border in northern Maryland, the Keystone State's lack of slavery ultimately encouraged the growth of free black communities in cities like Chambersburg and Lancaster. Rail-based industrial growth also pulled southern Pennsylvanians closer to markets in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and its politics toward the Republican Party in the late 1850s.

To the west, the great Appalachian Mountain chain extended southwest to northeast from Alabama through Pennsylvania and into New England. The mountains formed a major barrier to trade within Virginia, especially as legions of migrants settled in the valleys and coves of northwestern Virginia. Decades of tension between the northwestern Virginia counties and the Tidewater planters created a movement for stronger representation in state government or, barring that, separate statehood long before the Civil War. This was especially the case along the Ohio River, where social and economic ties were much closer to the states of Pennsylvania and Ohio than they were to the rest of Virginia. Slavery persisted in some sections of northwestern Virginia, especially in Kanawha County, Greenbrier County, and what became the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. Still, none of the counties of the future state of West Virginia, excepting Jefferson on the Eastern Panhandle, had more than 14 percent slaves in 1860. The secession of Virginia would provide the spark of separate statehood that many residents of northwestern Virginia had long sought.

Another mountainous section of a slave state – East Tennessee – seemed ripe for separation with the coming of secession. To be sure, slavery could be found throughout East Tennessee, and early flirtation with antislavery activity had largely dissipated by the 1850s. Moreover, construction of a railroad link from Virginia to Georgia pulled many of the valley communities into a Southern regional economy based on wheat. But most East Tennesseans distrusted the cotton planters of the Deep South, maintained a fairly localized economy, and resented the loss of political power in the state to Nashville and Memphis. The political leadership in the eastern mountain counties of Tennessee, especially those in the Whig Party around Knoxville, vigorously supported the Union. Complicating matters was the presence of Democratic senator Andrew Johnson, who supported the Southern Democrat John C. Breckinridge for president in 1860 but remained loyal to the Union once the Civil War broke out. For these reasons, contemporaries spoke of East Tennessee as a Border State region.

Kentucky was the classic Border State, both for its geographic location at the heart of the Union and along the slave-free line, but also because of its reputation as the home of the Great Compromiser, Henry Clay. Since entering the Union in 1792, Kentucky beckoned migrants from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina as they traveled through Cumberland Gap and into the West. Many of these migrants and their children moved west to Missouri, while others crossed the Ohio River to the Old Northwest, and still others ventured southward. Occupying the geographic heartland of 1860 America, Kentucky gave birth to presidents Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis.

Commerce and industry along the Ohio River connected the state's economy to the Midwest as well as to the river cities of the Lower South. Louisville, with immigrants from Ireland and Germany pouring into its working-class neighborhoods, competed with Cincinnati for dominance in the Ohio Valley. Kentucky's agricultural output, especially its hemp, horse, and tobacco farms in the central Bluegrass region and in the southwestern part of the state, served regional and national markets. While Kentucky affirmed its commitment to slavery in the 1850s, it nevertheless "tolerated" a vigorous antislavery presence far longer than other slave states. With its strong kin and commercial ties to the Midwest, and a deep Whig Party tradition of support for tariffs, banks, and internal improvements, Kentuckians expressed little desire to join any secession movement in early 1861.

Most residents in the southernmost counties of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois along the Ohio River counted Kentuckians as their kinfolk and political allies in the years before the Civil War. However, some communities, especially those settled by German immigrants, came to oppose slavery and supported the Republican Party. Most important was the city of Cincinnati, which transitioned from a commercial river port city into an industrial center in the mid-nineteenth century and welcomed legions of German and Irish immigrants in the 1840s and 1850s. Staunch antislavery institutions and advocates called Cincinnati home, including the Lane Theological Seminary, Senator Salmon Chase, and the author Harriet Beecher Stowe. Southern counties of Illinois and Indiana contained a similar mix of Kentucky-based social allegiances and a scattering of German and Yankee antislavery communities.

No Border State was more convoluted than Missouri. Its demographic settlement resembled a patchwork of countervailing social and political impulses. An old French-speaking slaveholding elite in St. Louis oriented

the state's early trade down the Mississippi River toward Louisiana. Kentuckians who settled in the Boonslick or "Little Dixie" region along the Missouri River in the central part of the state in the 1810s bolstered Missouri's case for entrance into the Union as a slave state in 1821. But northern-born merchants and manufacturers followed suit into St. Louis in the 1830s and 1840s, while other Northern-born farmers settled the farms north of the "Little Dixie" heartland. In the Ozarks of southern Missouri, many mountaineers from East Tennessee set up modest farms, most of them too poor to own slaves or contribute significantly to the commercial agricultural economy. They would remain Jacksonian and later Breckinridge Democrats right up to the Civil War, but split their allegiances as the war broke out.

Meanwhile, large numbers of German immigrants moved to Missouri in the 1840s and 1850s, creating ethnic communities just south and west of St. Louis, and heavily German neighborhoods within the city itself. Though not monolithically antislavery, most German immigrants distrusted the large slaveholding elites, who many Germans thought resembled the old Prussian Junker class that made their lives miserable in the old country. A politically powerful group of 1848 revolutionaries helped steer Missouri's German communities toward a more vigorous antislavery politics by the late 1850s. Free soil Democrats like Thomas Hart Benton and Republicans like Frank Blair generated one of the strongest antislavery political bases within any slave state in 1860.

Still, the pro-slavery Democrats under Claiborne Fox Jackson, David Rice Atchison, and Benjamin Stringfellow controlled state politics in the late 1850s. The Bleeding Kansas episode amplified pro-slavery thought in central and western Missouri. Governor Jackson maintained a balancing act in 1860, committing himself to the strongest pro-slavery position while backing Stephen Douglas for president. Missouri would be the only state to award its electors to Douglas, thanks in part to its secession-sympathizing governor who manipulated the various moving parts of Missouri politics in his favor.

At the western extremity of the Border States was Kansas, a state that came to symbolize the sectional troubles before the Civil War. In many ways, the American Civil War began in Kansas in the 1850s with competing militias fighting over the status of slavery in the territory and in the future of the nation. Organized as part of the Kansas Nebraska Act in 1854 under the auspices of the popular sovereignty doctrine, supporters and opponents of slavery flocked to the territory in hopes of organizing the future state along their preferred lines. That Kansas had been off limits to slavery since the Missouri Compromise of 1820 lent special urgency to antislavery activists,

many of whom traveled from New England with the express purpose of hemming slavery in at the Missouri border. With antislavery settlements at Lawrence and Topeka and pro-slavery communities at Leecompton, the territory quickly collapsed into guerrilla war. A series of referenda on a pro-slavery territorial constitution that passed thanks to fraud committed by "Border Ruffians" from Missouri did little to settle the state's future. Ultimately, a semblance of order returned to the state by 1858 as free soilers from the Midwest settled in large enough numbers to ensure that the state would ultimately come into the Union as a free state in 1861.

23.2 Secession and War Come to the Border States:

1861

Each of the four candidates for president in 1860 could claim a victory among the Border States. Stephen Douglas won Missouri and earned a partial victory in New Jersey. John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky won Maryland and Delaware. John Bell, the Constitutional Union nominee and former Whig won his home state of Tennessee and Kentucky. And Abraham Lincoln won the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, including many of the border counties. When Lincoln emerged victorious, very few people within the Border States embraced secession. If anything, most people along the border yearned for some kind of compromise and peace, as they knew that an impending civil war would consume the region. A Border State convention was held at Frankfort, Kentucky in April 1861 to consider the common interests of the Border, and Kentucky's senator John Crittenden figured heavily in compromise efforts. Of the Border States only Missouri bothered to call up a "sovereignty convention" in the months after Lincoln's election, and nearly all the delegates to that convention proved to be avowed Unionists. Even Tennessee failed to hold a convention as voters rejected the need for one in February 1861.

The real crisis appeared after Confederates fired on Fort Sumter and President Lincoln called up 75,000 troops to put down the rebellion. Political sentiment shifted dramatically in the Upper and Border South, as many so-called "conditional Unionists" determined that Lincoln had violated the voluntary compact of Union through the use of coercive force, and began to align themselves with the rest of the slaveholding Deep South. Virginia voted for secession on April 17, followed shortly afterward by secession votes in the legislatures of Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee. The state of Tennessee put the secession measure up for a popular referendum on June 8,

1861, and two thirds of the voters in East Tennessee voted to remain in the Union. A convention of Unionists, including Congressman Horace Maynard, T. A. R. Nelson, William "Parson" Brownlow, and Senator Andrew Johnson met at Knoxville and Greeneville to consider separation from Tennessee; the US Constitution allows for state dismemberment only when the governor of the rump state approves of it. When Governor Isham Harris rejected this request, East Tennessee Unionists began plotting an armed insurrection against the Confederate government. This included an autumn 1861 plot to burn several railroad bridges along the route connecting Virginia to East Tennessee and to Georgia. Major General William T. Sherman called off a major invasion from Kentucky at the last minute, too late for the bridge burners to abort their mission. With five bridges burned on the night of November 8, 1861, the conspirators were arrested and martial law declared in East Tennessee. Thousands of East Tennessee Unionists fled over the mountains to Kentucky to form Union regiments in hopes of liberating their homes.

Whereas East Tennessee Unionists failed to carry their section back into Union hands, residents of northwestern Virginia had greater success. Immediately after a secession ratification vote in May 1861, Union sympathizers gathered at Wheeling along the Ohio River to consider the process of dismembering Virginia and forming a new state, to be called West Virginia. Two elements present in the West Virginia case were missing in East Tennessee: Union military control, and a pro-Union governor available to "accept" the Wheeling Convention's request. Major General George McClellan crossed the Ohio River and successfully occupied the northern part of the territory to be included in West Virginia in May and June 1861. As for receiving approval from the rump state of Virginia, the Union army allowed the Wheeling Convention to choose Francis Pierpont as the provisional governor of "Restored" Virginia. Pierpont then fulfilled the request of the Wheeling Convention to dismember Virginia under the terms of the Constitution. It would take two more years for West Virginia statehood to become a reality, but the path was laid out at Wheeling in the spring of 1861.

The four traditional Border States of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri responded to the outbreak of war in different ways, depending upon preexisting political considerations, military contingencies, and local alliances. Secession commissioners from the Deep South visited each of the Border States in the spring of 1861 and made their appeals to legislators in those states. While Delaware never seriously considered secession, its legislature received a commissioner from Mississippi whose speech welcoming

Delaware to secede – or to allow Mississippi to secede – was received with both “cheers” and “hisses.” A resolution in the Delaware legislature expressed its “unqualified disapproval” of Mississippi’s “remedy for the existing difficulties.”³ A handful of Confederate sympathizers eventually headed to Maryland and Virginia and joined Confederate regiments, but Delaware as a whole would remain as a conservative, pro-slavery state within the Union.

In Maryland, the political situation nearly exploded in mid-April as Massachusetts soldiers passed through Baltimore en route to Washington, D.C. to defend the capital city against Confederate invasion. Rioters attacked members of the 6th Massachusetts Regiment marching in downtown Baltimore. The soldiers fired back into the crowd. Four men of the 6th Massachusetts died, as did eleven rioters on the streets of Baltimore. Coming on April 19, 1861, just two days after Virginia seceded from the Union, the Baltimore riot portended an ugly civil war to be fought along the border between slave and free states, and between pro-Union and pro-Confederate citizens within each state.

A complicated series of maneuvers between federal and state authorities kept Maryland safely in the Union in the wake of the Baltimore riot. Major General Benjamin F. Butler opened a transit route to Washington through Annapolis so that Federal soldiers would not be required to run the gauntlet of Baltimore mobs. Governor Thomas Hicks ordered railroad bridges between Baltimore and the North burned so as to prevent any future troop incursions. The state legislature convened in Frederick at the end of April and considered – and rejected – secession, though it hoped to secure neutrality between the warring sections. In May Butler declared martial law in Maryland, and Lincoln ordered the arrest of several Baltimore officials, many of them housed in Fort McHenry of Star Spangled Banner fame. After further protests against Federal rule, a third of the General Assembly was placed under arrest in September, forcing that body to disperse. Maryland remained safely under Union military control from that point on, with a growing contingent of Federal troops building a circle of forts to guard the District of Columbia. The guns of Fort McHenry would face the city, ready to fire if another major riot broke out. But no major internal efforts to take Maryland out of the Union occurred after September 1861.

Maryland and Delaware supplied several regiments to the Army of the Potomac and Army of Virginia, with most recruited in the first year of the war. A majority of Maryland’s Union soldiers came from Baltimore and

³ *New York Times*, January 4, 1861.

western Maryland, while Delaware Unionists in Wilmington and New Castle County were most likely to join the Federal army. Some Confederate sympathizers fled southern Delaware and joined a larger contingent of southern Marylanders en route to Virginia where they joined Virginia and North Carolina units. The Maryland Confederate exodus was accelerated by the May 1861 declaration of martial law. Some Maryland Confederates, like Captain Bradley Johnson, insisted upon forming Maryland-based regiments as opposed to joining Virginia and North Carolina units.

Kentucky temporarily achieved what Maryland attempted: neutrality. A pro-Southern Kentucky State Guard, led by Simon Bolivar Buckner and established in 1860, ostensibly kept the peace between the sections. With a strongly pro-Union legislature that refused to consider holding a secession convention, Kentucky's governor Beriah Magoffin secured a vote for neutrality on May 16, 1861. Activists from both sides violated Kentucky's neutral stance during the summer of 1861, with rival armies recruiting soldiers and inhibiting traffic on the Ohio River. A summer legislative election strengthened the Unionists' hand, though the flight of Confederate supporters to Tennessee, some of them members of the Kentucky State Guard, may have helped add to the Unionist majority. On September 4, 1861, Confederate general Leonidas Polk officially violated Kentucky's neutrality by invading and occupying Columbus along the Mississippi River. Within days, Ulysses Grant's Union forces crossed the Ohio River from Illinois and occupied Paducah. The state legislature was prepared to cast its lot with the Union once and for all.

However, Kentucky Unionists hit a brief snag, one that threatened to unravel Unionist efforts across the Border States in the summer of 1861. Union general John C. Frémont, in command in Missouri, issued an order on August 30, 1861 threatening to free the slaves owned by Missourians who supported the Confederacy. At this stage of the war, the Lincoln administration vowed to protect slavery if it was needed to secure the Border States for the Union. It was during this short crisis of early September that Lincoln wrote his famous letter to Illinois senator Orville Browning outlining the central importance of the Border States, which included the phrase: "To lose Kentucky is the same as to lose the whole game."

Lincoln forced Frémont to rescind his emancipation edict on September 11, 1861. Only then did the Kentucky state legislature feel comfortable going through with plans to affirm its ties to the Union and reject neutrality. The Union army now openly recruited soldiers at Louisville and at Camp

Dick Robinson, about 30 miles south of Lexington. Meanwhile, the Confederate army pushed ahead with its occupation of southern Kentucky, establishing a long arc of control from Columbus, on the Mississippi, to Bowling Green and then southeast to Cumberland Gap. The Confederate objective was primarily defensive in nature, establishing a buffer to protect Tennessee from Union invasion. Under the protection of Confederate troops, Kentucky Confederates passed a secession ordinance at Russellville and declared George W. Johnson to be the governor. However, roughly 70 percent of all white Kentuckians who fought in the Civil War fought for the Union.

In Missouri, the Civil War devolved into a dreaded guerrilla struggle by the summer of 1861. Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson, a strong supporter of secession, called a sovereignty convention in February to consider the state's relationship to the Union. Though the convention overwhelmingly rejected secession, the state legislature was still dominated by Jackson loyalists who sought other means to pull the state out of the Union. Like Kentucky governor Beriah Magoffin, Jackson blasted Lincoln's troop call-up as an outrageous assault upon the people of the South. In the weeks to follow, Confederate supporters raided an armory in Liberty in western Missouri and, more ominously, plotted to import weapons from the Confederacy to a pro-secession militia camp in St. Louis called Camp Jackson. The Missouri State Guard, organized by Jackson in 1860, stood ready to back Jackson's secession plans, while Federal general Nathaniel Lyon and his largely German-born Unionist militia vowed to defend the city against a Confederate uprising. On May 10, Lyon's men marched to Camp Jackson and placed the men under arrest. As they marched through town, Confederate sympathizers pelted the Union troops with stones and the troops fired into the crowd. Much like the Baltimore riot a month earlier, the Camp Jackson affair plunged St. Louis into civil war.

A brief truce was ironed out between the more conservative Federal general William Harney and Missouri State Guard commander Sterling Price. After weeks of reports of secession sympathizers intimidating Unionists in the central and western part of the state, Brigadier General Lyon reassumed command, called Governor Jackson and General Price to a meeting at the Planter's House Hotel on June 11, and informed the Missourians that the Federal government would annihilate any opposition to Federal authority in the state. Jackson and Price traveled up the Missouri River to Jefferson City in hopes of defending the capital against Unionist invasion. A brief but decisive battle at Boonville led to a rout of the pro-

Jackson Missouri State Guard and the Union occupation of the Missouri capital. With Jackson's government now in exile in southwest Missouri, the February sovereignty convention, filled with Unionists, established itself as the Provisional Government of Missouri and elected Hamilton Gamble as the Provisional Governor of the state.

Militarily, however, Union efforts to clear out Confederates ran into several stumbling blocks. Lyon attacked the Missouri State Guard, reinforced by Confederate soldiers from Arkansas, at Wilson's Creek on August 10 and was killed. A month later, Missouri Confederates pushed north to the town of Lexington and forced the town to surrender to Confederate control. In this heavily pro-Confederate section known later as Little Dixie, Confederates recruited thousands of men to join the army. Despite the Confederate successes at Wilson's Creek and Lexington, and a robust recruitment effort, General Price decided to retreat back to the southwest portion of the state. The exiled pro-Confederate legislature gathered at Neosho and passed an ordinance of secession, though it was not in force where the Federal military remained in charge. Confederate supporters who never reached Price's lines in September 1861 formed guerrilla bands that terrorized Unionist civilians for the next four years.

A more conventional Confederate military effort to control the Mississippi River turned the southeast corner of the state into a war zone as well. General Jeff Thompson hoped to coordinate a Confederate invasion of Missouri. In the meantime, he occupied Belmont, Missouri along the Mississippi River and worked with Lieutenant General Polk on the Kentucky side to guard against any Federal naval expedition southward. In a series of maneuvers in the winter of 1861–2, Lieutenant General Ulysses Grant thwarted Confederate plans to control the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, and opened up the way for a naval assault on Tennessee via the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers in February 1862.

In Kansas, Free State supporters, known generally as Jayhawkers and still smarting from the Bleeding Kansas days, threatened war against pro-slavery farmers in western Missouri. Shortly after Kansas entered the Union as a free state in January 1861, tensions grew once again along Missouri's western border. Kansas military units formed immediately, with some heading to Washington, D.C. to secure the Federal capital, but most guarding the border with Missouri. In June, shortly after the Planter's House talks broke down in St. Louis, Kansas soldiers occupied Kansas City, Missouri and held the town for the remainder of the war. Just after Wilson's Creek in August, Missouri soldiers attacked Fort Scott in Kansas as they marched north toward

Lexington, Missouri. In retaliation, Kansas Jayhawkers James Lane and Charles Jennison raided and destroyed the town of Osceola, Missouri in late September. From this point onward, bloody raids in both directions across the Kansas–Missouri border escalated, producing some of the most ferocious guerrilla warfare in the entire Civil War.

In the southern portions of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, war fever took hold fairly soon after Fort Sumter. This was especially true in larger cities like Cincinnati and Evansville, where Republicans and War Democrats rallied to the Union standard upon the outbreak of war. Though antiwar Copperheads appeared in some of these communities, much of that sentiment would not emerge until it became clear that the war would take on more explicitly emancipationist aims. The same story held true in southern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. For all the conservatism of the states' voters in 1860, most communities rallied to the defense of the Union after Fort Sumter.

23.3 The Year 1862 and Confederate Invasion

In 1862, the Union army used the Border States as a logistical launching pad for military invasion of the Confederate South. At the same time, the Lincoln administration began efforts to entice Union state governments to accept emancipation on a voluntary basis. Both efforts ended in frustration by the end of the year, as the Confederate army launched wide-ranging invasions of Kentucky and Maryland, while President Lincoln ended up issuing an Emancipation Proclamation that effectively excluded the Border States.

The Union military disaster at First Bull Run in July 1861 led a few months later to the appointment of George McClellan to the command of what would become the Army of the Potomac. McClellan had earned plaudits for securing northwestern Virginia and was widely respected as a man who could organize an effective fighting force. Washington, D.C. would quickly become one of the most fortified cities in the world as McClellan raised the largest army ever to appear on American soil. A second major Union army called the Army of Virginia was formed under the leadership of Nathaniel Banks and operated mostly in the Shenandoah Valley.

With fighting along the Virginia Peninsula in the spring of 1862 few Marylanders anticipated the war reaching their home communities. That changed dramatically after the Confederate victory at Second Bull Run on August 30, 1862. Robert E. Lee launched his first invasion of Union territory as he crossed the Potomac River into western Maryland. Hopeful of recruiting Maryland citizens to the Confederate cause, his men sang

"Maryland, My Maryland," a lament about the expulsion of Confederate sympathizers in the previous summer. Unfortunately for Lee, western Marylanders generally supported the Union and ran from the Confederate invaders. On September 13 a group of Union soldiers discovered Lee's battle plans and troop position maps wrapped around a bundle of cigars. McClellan moved slowly to exploit this intelligence, engaging in a brief battle at South Mountain before confronting Lee along Antietam Creek near the town of Sharpsburg. In the bloodiest single day of the entire Civil War, September 17, 1862, the Battle of Antietam resulted in 22,720 casualties. Lee's battered army avoided complete destruction as Stonewall Jackson's corps made a forced march from Harpers Ferry to stop Major General Burnside's assault upon a narrow bridge late in the day. Lee's army succeeded in recrossing the river into Virginia, much to the chagrin of President Lincoln.

In what historian Christopher Phillips calls the Confederacy's "Tet Offensive," the Confederate Army of Tennessee launched an invasion of Kentucky at the same time Lee entered Maryland.⁴ After Union general Don Carlos Buell saved Grant's army at Shiloh in April 1862, followed by the successful siege and capture of Corinth, Mississippi, Confederate forces retreated south to Tupelo. Under the new leadership of General Braxton Bragg the Confederates rode the rails to the Gulf Coast and then back north again through Alabama and Georgia to Chattanooga, Tennessee. Buell's army gingerly marched across northern Alabama, briefly reaching Chattanooga before Bragg arrived, and then setting up a defensive line around Murfreesboro. By the time Bragg arrived in Chattanooga his men were in great spirits and ready to go on the offensive.

Lieutenant General E. Kirby Smith began the offensive in August heading north out of Knoxville, while Bragg pushed northwest out of Chattanooga, over the Cumberland Plateau and into central Kentucky. The two-pronged invasion of Kentucky caught Buell off guard, resulted in Confederate occupation of Lexington and Frankfort (briefly), and fueled panic in Louisville, Cincinnati, and throughout the Ohio River valley. After catching up with Bragg's men near Bardstown Buell engaged Bragg in a bloody but indecisive battle at Perryville on October 8. Ironically, Bragg reconnoitered with Smith at Harrodsburg after the battle, but Bragg decided that the Confederate army had little to gain by remaining in Kentucky. Bragg retreated to Cumberland

4 Christopher Phillips, *The Civil War in the Border South* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013), pp. 49–64.

Gap and then to Knoxville and Chattanooga before turning northwest to Murfreesboro.

The Kentucky campaign proved to be a disappointment for Bragg as few Kentuckians took up his call to join the Confederate army. Though wary of Lincoln's emerging plan for emancipation, pro-slavery Kentuckians calculated that they had little to gain by joining the Confederacy in 1862. Still, civilians along the Ohio River, like those straddling the Mason–Dixon line, experienced the horrors, fears, and disruptions of war on the home front for the first time.

Further west, 1862 witnessed a decisive defeat of Confederate forces in the fight for Missouri. Union general Samuel Curtis launched a renewed push against Price in southwest Missouri, which led to a significant Union victory at Pea Ridge in northwest Arkansas. With a later victory at Prairie Grove, Arkansas Curtis secured northern Arkansas and, by extension, Missouri for the Union. Despite future incursions into Missouri in 1863 and 1864, and a persistent guerrilla war, the Confederacy's last chance to effectively take Missouri out of the Union died at Pea Ridge in March 1862. This did not bring peace to the state. Civil War violence deriving from the guerrilla conflict continued in Missouri throughout the war.

By December 1862, the Union army had successfully repelled Confederate invasions in Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. There would be more military trouble ahead at Fredericksburg, Virginia, and Chickasaw Bayou along the Mississippi River, but the Border States would not figure in these conventional battles. Of far more importance in the Border States at the end of 1862 was the impending Emancipation Proclamation, which undermined the Union cause in the Border States. What at first appeared to be the most likely region to begin emancipation policy turned out to be the last place where slavery would come to an end.

In fact, Lincoln presented representatives of the Border States with a gradual, compensated emancipation plan in March 1862. Congress supported this measure as a whole in April, but Border State representatives rejected it. Delaware's representatives gave it the most serious consideration but ultimately spurned the offer of compensated emancipation for the state's minuscule slave population. Instead, Congress passed an immediate, compensated emancipation bill for the District of Columbia on April 16, 1862, leading Frederick Douglass to note that it was the first time in American history that the Congress voted to free any actual slaves. A second effort in July to convince Border State representatives to accept compensated emancipation also failed. Exasperated with the failure to enact voluntary

emancipation in the Border States, Lincoln moved toward a more radical plan of general, uncompensated emancipation, authorized by the Second Confiscation Act and later an Emancipation Proclamation.

The limited success of McClellan's army at Antietam enabled Lincoln to issue his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862. The decree, to take effect 100 days later on January 1, 1863, exempted Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, and the Union-held "restored" portions of Virginia (including what became West Virginia) and southern Louisiana. Though he informed his cabinet of his decision to issue a proclamation as early as July, Lincoln waited for a military victory to announce it, for fear of looking desperate in seeking international approval. Indeed, the British and French governments were seriously considering recognition of the Confederacy during the summer of 1862, so Lincoln had to proceed carefully. At the same time, Lincoln needed to reassure conservative Unionists in the Border States that he would not eliminate slavery in loyal territory. With Bragg scouring the Kentucky countryside looking for recruits, an emancipation decree could lead to mass defections to the Confederacy.

Lincoln ultimately determined that the Union military victory in the Border State of Maryland had provided enough political justification for issuing the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation even though Bragg's and Smith's troops continued to operate within Kentucky. The gambit paid off as few Kentuckians joined the Confederate army, even after the proclamation. In fact, the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation may have prevented slaveholding Unionists from defecting to the Confederacy. Had they done so, they would have turned Kentucky into a "rebellious" state subject to the Emancipation Proclamation. Ultimately exempting Kentucky from the proclamation may have been just enough to salve the support of conservative Unionists in the Bluegrass State in 1863.

One underappreciated role the Border States played throughout the war was in housing Confederate prisoners of war. Most important along these lines was Fort Delaware, a star-shaped fort originally constructed in the early nineteenth century to guard against invasion up the Delaware River. It was converted to a prisoner of war camp at the outset of the Civil War and housed thousands of captured Confederate soldiers as well as Union (especially Border State) civilians accused of treason. Point Lookout in southern Maryland served a similar purpose, though it was used mostly to detain political prisoners in the first half of the war. In the west, the Gratiot Street Prison in St. Louis housed Missouri Confederate soldiers and civilians

accused of harboring bushwhackers. Just across the river at Alton Prison in Illinois, thousands of Confederate soldiers and civilians from within Missouri were held as well. The proximity of these sites to battlefields and to communities with divided loyalties made them particularly useful to the Union cause.

23.4 The Border War Intensifies: 1863 and 1864

The Border States experienced a brief reprieve from military activity in the early months of 1863. In the west, Sherman and Grant probed the lower Mississippi River en route to Vicksburg, while Major General William Rosecrans followed up on a bloody victory at Murfreesboro to plan for a push toward Chattanooga. In the east, a disastrous battle at Fredericksburg led the Union Army of the Potomac, now under the command of Joseph Hooker, to consider a major flanking movement to the west near Chancellorsville. The only incursion into the Border States happened in Missouri where Brigadier General John S. Marmaduke launched two small-scale raids from Arkansas into southern Missouri in hopes of disrupting Union supply lines. The January and April raids ended in stalemate and failure.

The admission of West Virginia to the Union on June 20, 1863 completed one of the more extraordinary and permanent political developments in the Border States. Momentum toward statehood followed the two Wheeling Conventions in 1861. The Restored Government ordered a referendum to be held later in 1861 on creation of a new state, with the measure passing overwhelmingly by a truncated electorate. A state Constitutional Convention was held in early 1862 and submitted its application to the Restored Government, which approved the separation. Application was made to Congress by the end of 1862 and President Lincoln insisted that gradual emancipation be included as part of the final state Constitution. The final measure was approved, with gradual emancipation at the insistence of conservatives, in the spring of 1863 to take effect on June 20. The state of West Virginia adopted full emancipation in February 1865.

The military picture changed considerably after the Union catastrophe at Chancellorsville in early May. General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia now planned a second invasion into Union territory, this time into Pennsylvania. With the Blue Ridge shielding his north-bound army from Major General Joseph Hooker's view, advance troops with Lee's Army of Northern Virginia entered Williamsport, Maryland on June 15 and crossed into Pennsylvania on June 24. Hooker knew little

of the Confederate army's exact whereabouts, but he understood enough to cross into Maryland and pursue Lee while keeping Washington and Baltimore protected. On the eve of a major confrontation, Hooker was relieved of command of the Army of the Potomac and replaced with Major General George Meade. Seeking potential battle sites, Meade dispatched several subordinates to scope out optimal terrain along the Maryland–Pennsylvania line to lure Lee into battle. A chance encounter between Union general John Buford's cavalry and Confederate troops in Henry Heth's division just west of Gettysburg brought matters to a head on the night of June 30, 1863.

The Battle of Gettysburg was the largest battle in the Civil War, with over 170,000 soldiers fighting over three days, producing 51,000 casualties. It is hardly surprising that this massive battle was fought in the zone of the Border States, where rising Confederate military fortunes in central Virginia, north-east-facing mountains capable of shielding troop movements, and large, vulnerable eastern seaboard cities filled with civilians anxious about an impending draft call, all beckoned Lee's invasion of Maryland and southern Pennsylvania.

In fact, the second largest battle of the Civil War, at Chickamauga, can also be considered a part of the larger struggle over the Border States in the summer of 1863. In June 1863 Union general William Rosecrans and his Army of the Cumberland began his campaign from Murfreesboro to Chattanooga. Rosecrans outmaneuvered Braxton Bragg at Tullahoma and then convinced Bragg to remove all remaining forces from East Tennessee to reconnoiter along Chickamauga Creek just south of Chattanooga. This meant the abandonment of Chattanooga and Knoxville, which Major General Ambrose Burnside occupied on September 1. Rosecrans recruited deserters from the Confederate army to attack Bragg's retreating forces, while Union forces secured the Cumberland Plateau to the west of Chattanooga as a supply route into the city of Chattanooga. James Longstreet's corps was sent by rail to support Bragg at Chickamauga, and arrived on the battlefield at Chickamauga on September 20 in time to rout Union forces that had mistakenly opened a gap in their lines. With George Thomas's heroic stand on Snodgrass Hill, the Army of the Cumberland was able to survive the disaster and limp back into Chattanooga. Bragg laid siege to Union troops now trapped inside Chattanooga.

With Union forces under siege in Chattanooga, Lieutenant General Ulysses Grant worked to reopen supply lines from the west along the Tennessee River. Once the "cracker line" opened in October, President

Jefferson Davis divided his siege forces and sent Longstreet away to retake Knoxville. By mid-November, Confederates besieged Unionists in both Chattanooga and Knoxville, but in both cases the siege proved ineffective. In the last days of November men under the command of Union general George Thomas charged up Missionary Ridge and drove the Confederates in Chattanooga into Georgia. Shortly afterward, Longstreet's men plunged into an icy ditch at Fort Sanders in Knoxville, before retreating to the outskirts of the city. Within a few months Longstreet would be back in Virginia and East Tennessee would be secure for the Union.

Conventional military activity in the Border States peaked between June and November 1863, but guerrilla warfare accelerated in intensity at the same time. And unlike the conventional war, the struggle between Confederate-supporting bushwhackers and Union cavalymen would persist until the end of the Civil War. Nowhere did guerrilla warfare define the Civil War experience more than Missouri. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the geography of loyalty was such that the staunchest supporters of the Confederate cause, mostly in central and western Missouri along the Missouri River, found themselves trapped behind Union military lines for much of the war. A second reason was the ineffective command structure of Union forces in the trans-Mississippi theater. Outside of St. Louis, the Union army just never took the time to build a large-scale counterinsurgent force until it was too late. The paid Missouri State Militia and then the unpaid Enrolled Missouri Militia carried the burden of fighting the bushwhackers. When the worst episodes of guerrilla violence took place, as in August 1863 when William C. Quantrill's raiders murdered over 150 men and boys in Lawrence, Kansas, Union general Thomas Ewing responded with Order No. 11, which effectively cleared out the civilian population along the Kansas-Missouri border. The effect of this order was to shift the guerrilla violence east to central Missouri.

Missouri's guerrilla war persisted in 1864, coinciding with one last conventional military raid led by Sterling Price. After a successful Confederate campaign along the Red River of northern Louisiana General Sterling Price organized forces for what would turn out to be one of the longest, and ultimately fruitless, military raids of the war. His goal was twofold: first, to capture either St. Louis or Jefferson City, and, barring that, to recruit men and materiel from the pro-Confederate area along the Missouri River in central and western Missouri. Price failed to achieve the first objective after being defeated at Pilot Knob on the edge of the Ozarks. He was more successful in recruiting supporters after

heading west from Jefferson City to the counties straddling the Missouri River. However, by late October Price's luck ran out as combined forces from Samuel Curtis, Alfred Pleasanton, and Kansas militiamen defeated Price's forces at Westport near Kansas City. Price then turned south and fled Missouri for good.

Guerrilla war intensified in Kentucky in 1864 and took on a more explicitly racial dimension as the Union army began recruiting African Americans for the first time. Until that time, much of the guerrilla-oriented violence was associated with the raiding of John Hunt Morgan. Most of his actions were geared toward destroying supply lines and keeping Union military authorities on their toes. He even invaded Indiana and Ohio in 1863, and after his eventual capture, escaped from jail and continued his raiding until his death in September 1864.

At that point, the guerrillas in Kentucky began to attack Union soldiers, recruitment sites, and, especially, African Americans seeking freedom by joining the Union army. Guerrillas targeted escaped slaves heading for Camp Nelson and along rail lines between the Bluegrass and Louisville. Counterguerrilla activity increased to meet the challenge. John Hunt Morgan met his death at Greeneville in East Tennessee, while some Missouri-based guerrillas like Quantrill migrated to Kentucky before meeting their own fate. Ongoing violence on the Cumberland Plateau along the Kentucky-Tennessee line between ruthless guerrillas like the Confederate Champ Ferguson and the Unionist Tinker Dave Beaty brought violence to every hearth and home.

In Maryland Major General Jubal Early launched a significant raid through Maryland and to Washington, D.C., culminating in his repulse at Fort Stevens in July 1864. After his defeat in July he retreated into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. This time, however, Union forces under Major General Phil Sheridan defeated Early's men at Cedar Creek and began a campaign of complete destruction of the breadbasket of the Confederacy.

Further south, Confederate cavalry generals Joseph Wheeler and Nathan Bedford Forrest led raids into Tennessee to disrupt Major General Sherman's supply line as he pushed toward Atlanta. While Forrest succeeded in breaking Union supply operations in West Tennessee, Wheeler proved much less successful. By the time John Bell Hood launched his own desperate Middle Tennessee invasion in November 1864, Sherman had already vowed to live off the land in Georgia as he marched to the sea.

Two major political developments gripped the Border States in 1864: the presidential election and movement toward emancipation. Lincoln's selection of East Tennessee's Andrew Johnson for vice president signaled the consolidation

of Unionist support across the Upper South. New Confederate disfranchisement provisions passed by pro-Union state governments led to support for Lincoln in Maryland and Missouri, while Kentucky and Delaware supported the Democrat, George McClellan. In November 1864 Maryland passed a referendum abolishing slavery. Missouri followed suit in January 1865, with Tennessee and West Virginia doing the same in February 1865. Kentucky and Delaware, however, refused to budge. The only path to emancipation for slaves in Kentucky was to join the Union army. Fifty-seven percent of military age black men joined the Union army in the last years of the Civil War. Still, slavery would persist in Kentucky and Delaware until ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in December 1865.

23.5 The Ends of the Border War

The year 1865 was a paradoxical one for the Border States. By definition, the border had disappeared as slavery came to an end and the Confederacy disappeared. For many residents of the Border States, the transition to peace went smoothly, as guerrilla war gradually died down. On the other hand, violent resistance to black claims to citizenship and to Radical Republican rule in Missouri and Tennessee, jarring economic change brought by development of the timber and coal fields of Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia, and large-scale immigration to cities like Baltimore, Louisville, St. Louis, and Kansas City meant that life after the Civil War in the Border States would prove to be as tumultuous as the war years.

In many ways the nation as a whole experienced the same wartime and postwar developments and struggles as the Border States. But residents of the Border States could never fully erase the scars of life on the front lines of the Civil War. Regional identities hardened and collective memories transformed in the wake of guerrilla war, physical devastation, resource depletion, and emancipation. Many conservative Unionist Kentuckians became belated Confederates, residents above the Ohio River cast themselves as the Loyal West, and enterprising civilians everywhere turned old battlefields from scenes of mourning into tourist attractions. For most people in the Border States, the Civil War was a painful experience to forget.

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War in the Deep South

ANDREW F. LANG

It was not accidental that in February 1861 Jefferson Davis, a prominent slaveholder from Mississippi, was inaugurated at Montgomery, Alabama, as the new president of the Confederate States of America. Both states had long been at the center of antebellum political power, wielding the stunning influence wrought by cotton and slavery. While South Carolina led the secessionist impulse, the emerging Confederate project would almost certainly have faltered without the crucial support of the Deep South. The Lower South states that seceded in the winter of 1860–1 commanded great political and sectional influence, shaping how and when the incipient slaveholding republic would be formed. But with the advent of war in April 1861, military thinkers considered Mississippi and Alabama the constituent states of the Deep South, judging other parts of the rebellious South in wholly different strategic terms. Mississippi and Alabama indeed played central roles in the formation of the world's largest slaveholding republic; they would accordingly feel the hard hand of war in response to that decision. Although both states did not incur the same kind of invasions and wartime scarring endured by Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia, the Deep South functioned as a testing ground for some of the Civil War's most transformative events, rooted almost entirely in the tense nature of civilian–military relations.

While the region witnessed famous campaigns and battles – notably Shiloh (though the fighting took place in Tennessee), Corinth, Vicksburg, and Mobile – the war in Mississippi and Alabama assumed a different character, namely because Union military forces struggled to penetrate the interior of the Confederate heartland. When they did, the conflict transformed, as Abraham Lincoln prophesized, into “a people’s contest.” Fighting in the Deep South underscored how the Civil War was never about capturing distant capitals and conquering geographic regions to achieve a limited outcome. Instead, the war sought to attack ideological identities and collapse existing institutions, while extinguishing rebellious



24.1 War in the Deep South. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

threats to the United States on the one hand and establishing a slaveholding nation on the other.

"We cannot change the hearts of those people of the South," William T. Sherman famously declared in 1862, shortly after Union armies poured into the region. The following year, while serving as a field officer in Mississippi, Sherman articulated the kind of war that would plague rebellious civilians who lived in the Deep South: "I would not coax them or even meet them halfway,

but make them so sick of war that generations would pass before they would again appeal to it.”¹ At the heart of Sherman’s declaration rested a central theme that framed this mode of war: military actions could never be divorced from their civilian context, shattering the arbitrary distinctions between the battlefield and the home front. All Americans, white and black, Union and Confederate, soldier and civilian, felt the war intimately and violently. And the Deep South in particular experienced the war’s enormous reach. Military events and institutions shaped how civilians responded to war, while civilian actions dictated how military policies emerged, all of which challenged and reinforced the evolution of relations between Federal armies, white Confederates, loyal Unionists, and enslaved African Americans.

War in the Deep South comprised three distinct but complementary components. The first revealed the problem of Union military occupation. Beginning in the spring of 1862, the northern regions of Alabama and Mississippi were the scene of the war’s first inland occupations, accelerating the Union’s civilian policies away from conciliation and toward Sherman’s brand of “hard war.” To that end, the Union’s war in the Deep South was waged not only against armies. It was also waged against a vengeful white civilian population dedicated fiercely to Confederate independence, a reality that forced US armies to confiscate property, live off the land, and develop counterinsurgency doctrines, most of which were exemplified by Sherman’s 1864 Meridian, Mississippi, Expedition, a precursor to his famous marches through Georgia and South Carolina.²

The second component concerned the process of emancipation in which enslaved people used the upheaval created by invasion and occupation to capitalize on their quest for freedom, which ultimately became a centerpiece

1 William T. Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, October 4, 1862, in United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, volume 17, part 2, p. 261 [first quotation]; and Sherman to Henry W. Halleck, September 17, 1863, OR, 30(3): 698 (hereafter cited as OR; all subsequent citations are of series 1 unless otherwise noted).

2 Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861–1865* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861–1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); D. H. Dilbeck, *A More Civil War: How the Union Waged a Just War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Andrew F. Lang, *In the Wake of War: Military Occupation, Emancipation, and Civil War America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017). On the Meridian campaign, see Buck T. Foster, *Sherman’s Mississippi Campaign* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006).

of Federal military policy. Mississippi and Alabama contained one of the largest concentrations of enslaved people anywhere in the South, forming unique conditions and circumstances. From the agency employed by enslaved southerners to use the chaos of war to undermine the plantation system, to the creation and maintenance of contraband camps, and to the raising of African American army regiments in the Mississippi River valley, the region acted as a proving ground to some of the war's most revolutionary developments.³

Finally, the white populations in Mississippi and Alabama complicated the stark binary between Confederate and Unionist. Loyalties in this region were always fluid, subject to the changing conditions of war, the proximity of Union armies, and even one's relationship to the Confederate government. The cotton trade along the Mississippi River also pushed some to declare fealty to financial profit over nation. The white civilian experience also shaped how, when, and why Confederates of the heartland acknowledged defeat, as well as the ways in which they recognized the collapse of their once powerful slaveholding republic.⁴

In the wake of Abraham Lincoln's 1861 call for 75,000 volunteers to put down the Confederate rebellion, Union military policy toward southern civilians at first assumed a moderated, pacifying tone. Lincoln and his leading army commanders assumed that most white southerners did not support secession, repudiated the Confederacy, and sought a peaceful return to the United States. Union legions were thus armed with the banners of conciliation as they prepared to invade the rebellious states, seeking to end the conflict with as little bloodshed and passion as possible. Union military policy sought a sectional reunion and reconciliation that did not disrupt the South's existing social orders, while also respecting the sanctity of private property and liberating the region from the disloyal clutches of aristocratic slaveholders. The Union war thus began with

3 Ira Berlin et al. (eds.), *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861–1867*, series 1, volume 1, *The Destruction of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861–1865* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013).

4 Victoria E. Bynum, *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi's Longest Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Margaret M. Storey, *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).

incredibly lenient overtures, which intended a moderate restoration of the antebellum status quo.⁵

Union soldiers who populated armies in the western theater – that is, the vast region that stretched from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River – entered the Confederate heartland with strict orders to conduct themselves with restraint, curbing reckless interactions with white Southerners and refashioning the bonds of national accord that had snapped during the secession crisis. “We are in arms, not for the purpose of invading the rights of our fellow-country-men anywhere,” Don Carlos Buell, commander of the Army of the Ohio, which had captured Nashville, Tennessee, in February 1862, informed his volunteer troops, “but to maintain the integrity of the Union and protect the Constitution under which the people have been prosperous and happy.” Buell advised that the failure to honor civilian property and private homes would “bring shame on their comrades and the cause they are engaged in.” The momentum of occupying Nashville spurred Union movements further into Tennessee, resulting in the Union’s triumph on April 6–7, 1862, at the Battle of Shiloh. Buell then instructed the Third Division from his army, commanded by Ormsby M. Mitchel, to invade North Alabama, in hopes of taking control of crucial transportation routes and stabilizing the region for further incursions in the western theater. North Alabama offered an ideal strategic position from which to launch campaigns against Corinth, Mississippi, to the west, and Chattanooga, Tennessee, to the east, both of which respectively housed important railroad access and Unionist sentiment.⁶

Merely three weeks after the bloodletting at Shiloh, Mitchel’s 8,000 veterans entered Alabama and witnessed local Confederates’ stunning resistance to the policy of conciliation. Mitchel, who strongly endorsed Buell’s program of moderation, encouraged his soldiers to refrain from harassing civilians and even issued formal orders stipulating that those found in violation of Union policy would be handed over to local authorities to be tried as civilian offenders. Hardly sympathetic with the Confederate cause, Mitchel expressed great desire that his troops act in an honorable manner. Only then could the rebellion be settled in the Union’s favor. But Mitchel faced dual problems that have plagued armies of occupation throughout history: the occupied population sensed with dismay a permanent military despotism on their own soil

5 Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, pp. 13–75; Danielson, *War’s Desolating Scourge*, pp. 3, 25, 33–5, 40–3.

6 General Orders No. 13a, February 26, 1862, OR, 7: 669–70; Danielson, *War’s Desolating Scourge*, pp. 1–3, 25–6, 33–4; Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, pp. 26–7.

even as the occupiers acted under the swaggering assumption that they wielded unchecked martial authority. This toxic combination manifested a troubling brew in North Alabama, as it did, and would, throughout much of the occupied Confederacy. Mitchel's men endured haphazard assaults from guerrillas who attacked Union supply lines, experienced clandestine shots taken at Federal railcars, and struggled to negotiate with local civilians, who both perpetrated these acts and who concealed the identities of guilty civilians. Union soldiers thus retaliated to maintain the balance of power, destroying private property and confiscating civilian goods.⁷

An incident at Paint Rock, Alabama, in April 1862, testified to the evolution of Union military policy in the Deep South. As Union soldiers traveled aboard a railroad transport, their cars came under a sudden fire from guerrillas concealed by the tree-lined brush. After the train came to an immediate halt, Colonel John Beatty led a detachment of his Ohio soldiers to the nearby town of Paint Rock. He told local civilians that the "bushwhacking must cease." To ensure conformity, he "then set fire to the town, took three citizens with me, returned to the train, and proceeded to Huntsville." Beatty informed local civilians that they would be held personally responsible for further attacks, which flouted the proper conventions of civilized warfare. If white Southerners chose to engage Union forces in their quest to establish stability and order throughout the occupied Confederacy Beatty believed he had no choice but to bring them within the violent fold of war. Ormsby Mitchel sanctioned Beatty's approach, ordering Union soldiers throughout North Alabama to castigate white Southerners who aided Confederate irregulars. Hoping to drive a wedge between those who supported the Confederacy – and who thus opposed US armies – and who did not interfere in Union operations, Mitchel's policy spoke to broader policy changes occurring rapidly across the wartime landscape. Enemies who inhabited zones of occupation did not don their nation's military accouterments nor did they abide by codes of martial restraint. Union armies fast realized that irregular conduct – that which transpired well beyond the limitations imposed by national military institutions, such as the Confederate army – had to be combatted with unprecedented tactics.⁸

7 Danielson, *War's Desolating Scourge*, pp. 35–8, 43–4; Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, pp. 79–80.

8 Diary entry, May 2, 1862, in John Beatty, *The Citizen-Soldier; Or, Memoirs of a Volunteer* (Cincinnati, OH: Wilstach, Baldwin and Co., 1879), pp. 138–9; Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, p. 80.

Beatty's and Mitchel's responses, which departed markedly from the Union's initial overtures of conciliation, established a firm precedent that would be followed by the other Union occupiers who encountered stiff resistance from Confederate civilians. The evolution of civilian–military relations in the Deep South echoed Ulysses S. Grant's observation shortly after Battle of Shiloh: "I, as well as thousands of other citizens, believed that the rebellion against the Government would collapse suddenly and soon if a decisive victory could be gained over any of its armies . . . [After that] I gave up all idea of saving the Union except by complete conquest." Grant came to understand, as did many in the Union high command, that victory in the Confederate heartland required a military policy that actively engaged civilians. Indeed, the project of Confederate nationhood required battlefield victories, but it also depended entirely on, and received the fierce support of, white civilians. Grant, whose words underscored the world-views of John Beatty and Ormsby Mitchel, understood that war had to be unleashed not only on formal Confederate armies but also on white Southerners who supported that war. But how would this be done, especially if the United States' principal purpose was to reunite a shattered nation and bind seemingly irreconcilable sectional wounds? To what extent could soldiers act outside the bounds of military decorum to thwart civilian intransigence? Would the military and the Federal government countenance questionable behavior from soldiers who widened an already fatal national divide?⁹

A controversial episode, which occurred in May 1862 at Athens, Alabama, tested the problematic limits of these questions. After Confederate cavalry, enjoying the assistance of local civilians, harassed a Union brigade commanded by John B. Turchin, Turchin permitted his men two hours to retaliate in any manner that they saw fit. They ransacked the town, burning buildings, stealing property, and confiscating goods. Some troops even allegedly raped enslaved women. Arguing that such actions were justified by the irregular assaults against his men, Turchin defended his soldiers' conduct as a reasonable response to a war now waged between soldiers and civilians. Mitchel, although sympathetic to an austere military policy, expressed outrage at the men under his command. Turchin stood trial before a military court and was found guilty of irresponsible command

9 Ulysses S. Grant, *Memoirs and Selected Letters: Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, Selected Letters, 1839–1865* (New York: Library of America, 1990), p. 246.

over his troops. And yet he was ultimately permitted to return to field command.¹⁰

While few Union commanders approved fully of Turchin's actions, they also consented to the necessity of a hard-war policy against obdurate white Southerners. Buell's conciliatory orders, articulated merely three months before the sacking of Athens, now seemed completely irrelevant to a Union army fundamentally changed by the war in the Deep South. Many observers agreed that soldiers should refrain from plundering and pillaging, but they also noted that the rebellion could be extinguished only through formidable and direct means. As one soldier acknowledged in wake of Athens's destruction, "we want an iron policy that will not tolerate treason, that will demand immediate and unconditional obedience as the price of protection."¹¹

As Mitchel's division struggled to pacify North Alabama, the major Union army in the west, 100,000 soldiers commanded by Henry W. Halleck, marched on Corinth, Mississippi, in the wake of the Union's triumph at Shiloh. Home to one of the most crucial north-south, east-west rail lines in the Confederacy, Corinth fell to Halleck's forces in May 1862. That large swaths of Kentucky, Tennessee, northern Alabama, and northern Mississippi capitulated so quickly to Union armies signaled, at least on the surface, impressive Yankee gains. But the Union soon learned, as Mitchel's men had already experienced, that occupation presented incredible difficulties. In addition to pacifying the region against guerrillas and irregulars, Union occupiers also had to garrison towns, provide political and social stability, negotiate with local authorities, issue loyalty oaths, and defend their conquered districts indefinitely. Failure in any of these areas would create dangerous volatility, undermining Union armies as they penetrated deeper into the Confederate heartland and became precariously detached from their lifelines to the North. Occupation in the Deep South thus served a twofold purpose. First, garrisoning towns at once neutered local Confederate authority and allowed Union forces to launch future campaigns at strategic targets, especially Vicksburg. Second, and directly related, both belligerent nations coveted the region's principal geographic prize: the Mississippi River. William T. Sherman spoke for many Union civilian and military leaders

10 Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, pp. 81–5; Danielson, *War's Desolating Scourge*, pp. 75–7, 83–90, 122–3; Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), pp. 54–5; George C. Bradley and Richard L. Dahlen, *From Conciliation to Conquest: The Sack of Athens and the Court-Martial of Colonel John B. Turchin* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006).

11 Quotation in Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, p. 85.

when he explained that the Mississippi was “the great artery of America, and whatever power holds it, holds the continent.”¹²

Although he recognized the promising implications of conquering and holding the Deep South, Sherman harbored profound reservations about whether Union armies could succeed at such a trying assignment. “To attempt to hold all the South would demand an army too large even to think of,” he worried. Union armies indeed controlled key regional points successfully for the duration of the war, including major cities, river fortresses, and railroad connections. Yet they faced stunning challenges: that interior swaths of the Deep South remained in Confederate hands, and occupation pitted Union soldiers against restive civilians, both of whom engaged in a power struggle that attempted to neutralize their opponents. When Confederate irregulars struck Union columns, Yankee soldiers often retaliated, sometimes to the deep chagrin of commanding officers. For example, Brigadier General James W. Denver’s troops, while on an expedition through north Mississippi, destroyed property and seized goods that served little military value. They “seem to be possessed with the idea that in order to carry on war,” Denver explained, “men must throw aside civilization and become savages.” Concerned that such “lawless acts” would bring dishonor to the Union cause and alienate white Southerners from national reunion, Denver worried that “it will not be long before the soldier will be sunk in the cowardly plunderer – for men loaded with plunder are always cowards.”¹³

Denver’s vexation framed the broad culture of Union occupation throughout the Deep South. As Union armies commanded by Ulysses S. Grant prepared their grand campaigns against Vicksburg, those same armies had to develop functioning occupation strategies that served a direct military value while also maintaining ethical standards. What thus occurred between 1862 and 1863 ultimately shaped how Union armies approached occupation across the wartime landscape. The Union high command in the Deep South took seriously common soldiers’ propensity to forage for food and confiscate civilian property. After all, the armies necessarily lived off the land, especially as supply lines stretched too thin and became too dangerous to protect against guerrilla attacks. So, in a profound way, the very conduct that

12 William T. Sherman to Ellen Sherman, June 10, 1862, quoted in Hess, *Civil War in the West*, pp. 69, 62–70.

13 James W. Denver to My Dear Wife, November 29, 1862, Denver Letter, Harrisburg Civil War Roundtable Collection, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

concerned James Denver actually forced Union policy to evolve in soldiers' favor. Grant nonetheless forbade wanton destruction of property and offered to repay loyal civilians for any foodstuffs confiscated for army use. Grant and Sherman learned important lessons during the Vicksburg campaign: civilians were not passive bystanders removed from the maelstrom of war. They were, instead, active participants whose very presence literally fed, clothed, and supported Rebel armies and whose "property" – especially enslaved people – manufactured the Confederate war machine.¹⁴

Grant came to understand that his campaign against Vicksburg served two objectives: capturing the seemingly impenetrable Mississippi River fortress to provide unfettered transportation access and to deprive Confederate civilians of the requisite goods to make war. While he strictly forbade soldiers from plundering, Grant instructed his officers to apply what historian Mark Grimsley calls "directed severity" against the South's economic and agricultural infrastructures. Ordering the destruction of strategic bridges, the annihilation or seizure of certain crops, and the confiscation of enslaved people, Grant's approach attacked the very essences of white Southern life. He intended to inspire a sense of helpless isolation among Confederates who might then see the folly of their rebellious ways. After all, if they did not have the means to make war, perhaps the will to resist would be shattered.¹⁵

After Vicksburg capitulated on July 4, 1863, Grant faced the challenge that plagued all occupation commanders in the Deep South: administering and holding the massive territorial gains won by Union arms. In meeting the task, Grant continued to test his theory that civilians and war-making went hand in hand. Yet Grant's experiments, at first, took place largely in the absence of formal military campaigns. With Vicksburg captured, the formal war in Mississippi and Alabama grew somewhat quiet. The wars of ideology and material sustenance, however, continued. Winning the war outright thus required an absolute exhaustion of the Confederacy's ability to subsist and resist. While Union armies had performed with impressive precision in the West, Rebel armies still survived and civilians continued to profess loyalty to the Confederate nation. By early 1864, Grant and Sherman implemented a raiding strategy designed to propel expeditions against Confederate armies and the civilian countryside, hoping to extinguish white Southerners' abilities to continue the war.¹⁶

14 Hess, *Civil War in the West*, pp. 110–21; Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, pp. 151–62.

15 Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, p. 157.

16 Bradley R. Clappitt, *Occupied Vicksburg* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016).

The most famous example of the raiding strategy that took place in the Deep South was Sherman's expedition against Meridian, Mississippi. Leaving Vicksburg in February 1864 with 21,000 troops, Sherman targeted Meridian because of its strategic railroad connections between central Mississippi and Selma, Alabama. Sherman believed that destroying the rail lines would "close the door of rapid travel and conveyance of stores from Mississippi and the Confederacy east." Sparse Confederate military forces presented very little opposition to Sherman's army as it marched, divesting the region of crops, shattering military warehouses, and disassembling the railroads. After eleven days, Sherman pronounced that "Meridian, with its depots, store-houses, arsenal, hospitals, offices, hotels, and cantonments no longer exists." The expedition was hardly an example of a heartless incursion against a defenseless enemy. Instead, the Meridian campaign targeted specific military institutions and aimed against Confederates' ability to make war. Because Rebel armies had proven extremely difficult to destroy, the raiding strategy intended to take the war to deep reaches of the Confederacy in which civilians witnessed firsthand the power of Union forces laying waste to their lives and their nation. By the end of the year, Sherman would replicate Meridian on a much larger scale in his famous March to the Sea.¹⁷

When the Confederacy formed in the spring of 1861, the Deep South states of Mississippi and Alabama comprised approximately 872,000 enslaved people, which totaled nearly one-quarter of the South's enslaved population, including the Border States. As a percentage of their respective populations, Mississippi boasted an enslaved black majority – 55 percent – while 45 percent of Alabamians were slaves. The onset of civil war fundamentally destabilized these slave societies, deteriorating the institution until its formal death in 1865. Much like the evolution of civilian–military relations between white Confederate and Union armies, enslaved people measured the fate of their freedom against the movements of US military forces. Indeed, wartime emancipation came at different times and different places, but it was almost always contingent on the progress and willingness of Union armies to recognize black freedom. Enslaved people had long resisted slavery. Their efforts were rewarded as Union armies flooded the Confederacy, offering places of refuge for those who actively undermined the plantation system by running away. Their arrival in large numbers behind Union lines forced military and civilian policymakers to define the conditions of black freedom,

¹⁷ Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, pp. 162–4.

which ultimately shaped formal congressional legislation and Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, compelling the army to recognize and defend emancipation as a central war aim. The idea of military contingency – the role of battlefield and military events in shaping social, political, and cultural conditions – thus played a central role in the collapse of slavery in the Deep South.¹⁸

The story of Wallace Turnage, a young enslaved man in western Alabama, underscores the dramatic process of wartime emancipation in the region. Turnage's journey to freedom exposed the crucial relationship between active, personal resistance against slavery and the proximity of Union armies in making real the promise of liberation. Born in 1846 on a tobacco plantation in North Carolina, Turnage entered the world enslaved to a white middle-class owner whose debt ultimately compelled Wallace's sale in 1860 to a Richmond, Virginia, slave trader. Ripped from his family at the age of fourteen, Turnage entered the dark world of domestic slave trading, auction houses, and slave pens while in charge of prepping Virginia slaves for market. After several months during which Turnage witnessed debilitating scenes of auctioneering and human commodification, James Chalmers, a wealthy cotton planter who owned a large plantation in Pickensville, Alabama, a small community that hugged the state line near northeast-central Mississippi, purchased Wallace in the spring of 1860. Turnage was now among the millions of enslaved people who had been sold away in the great antebellum cotton migrations that formed the world's most profitable slaveholding region.¹⁹

Enslavement under James Chalmers brought Turnage face to face with some of the ugliest and most brutal realities of human bondage. After being whipped and beaten on his first day in the cotton fields – and enduring similar punishments several more times over the ensuing months – Turnage embarked on a stunning path of resistance. He escaped the plantation in the autumn of 1860, yet returned on account of hunger and the lack of

18 On the relationship between military contingency and emancipation, see Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 88–90; Oakes, *Freedom National*, pp. 143–4, 207–10, 213–14, 327–8, 345–92, 414–15, 419–22, 427–8, 438, 443, 475, 547. On the active resistance against slavery, see Patrick Rael, *Eighty-Eight Years: The Long Death of Slavery in the United States* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2015). On the nature of slavery in the Deep South, see Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

19 Wallace Turnage, who wrote a moving memoir of his life, is best treated in David W. Blight, *A Slave No More: Two Men who Escaped to Freedom, Including Their Own Narratives of Emancipation* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2007), pp. 55–89, 213–57.

anywhere to go. Faced with a dreadful sense that he could not successfully abscond from the plantation, Turnage sought to carve an independent space within slavery, attacking the overseer who brandished the punishing whip. Such an act earned Turnage ninety-five lashes across his bare back. But his desire to undermine the slave system did not evaporate. When the Civil War began, and rumors energized slave communities that Union armies might soon invade Alabama and Mississippi, Turnage – and countless other enslaved people – sensed an opportunity for freedom that had never before been so promising.²⁰

Once again, Turnage fled his plantation, moving quickly into Mississippi. However, a local white civilian ran into Wallace and notified Chalmers, who, upon returning Turnage to Alabama, proceeded to beat the young man mercilessly. But the upheaval of war offered new opportunities to Turnage, who seemed unmoved by the punishments of slavery. He departed once more in November 1861, attempting to reach the Union armies that, supposedly, occupied northern Mississippi. And once more he was caught by Mississippi slave patrols and forced to return to Chalmers. Whipped and bloodied, Turnage did not flee again for nearly another year. Meanwhile, Union armies successfully penetrated the Deep South, occupying key positions in Mississippi that extended Federal influence well into the Confederate heartland. When it became apparent that US forces would not soon depart, Turnage, undoubtedly aware that only Union armies offered safe refuge, ran away for the fourth time. And once again, in the summer of 1862, Turnage was caught and awaited the awful transport back to Alabama.²¹

Turnage's time in Pickensville, however, was short-lived. Exasperated with his property's unwillingness to remain on the plantation, Chalmers sold the restive teenager to a trader in Mobile. Although a daunting Confederate citadel, the bustling Gulf city presented Turnage, ironically, with his best chance for freedom. By 1864, Mobile had become somewhat isolated, due partly to Sherman's Meridian Expedition, which cut rail access to the city, while the Union navy lay ominously in the harbor. But Mobile still boasted an unnerving number of Confederate defenders to whom an enslaved but restless Wallace Turnage represented the embodiment of their fledgling national experiment. In the face of such concentrated Confederate forces, Turnage fled his owner, strolling through the middle of a bivouac of soldiers who likely assumed he was another camp hand. And so he kept walking. Reaching the outskirts of the city, traveling through

20 Ibid., pp. 55–63. 21 Ibid., pp. 64–74.

snake-infested swamps, and even commandeering a piece of wood to use as a raft, Turnage entered the warm Gulf waters not knowing precisely where he would float. Finally, a boat filled with eight Union soldiers happened upon Turnage, and all aboard looked with palpable silence at the beaten, tattered man who lay before them. The Union navy offered Turnage the protection promised by Federal military forces, and when he arrived at Fort Gaines, Turnage accepted a job as a servant to a Union officer, a position he held until Confederate surrender. After the war, with slavery shattered and reunited with his family from North Carolina, Turnage and his relatives moved to New York City where he lived as a free man until his death in 1916.²²

Wallace Turnage's story points to several broad conclusions about the process of emancipation in the Deep South: the personal, immediate struggle for freedom, combined with the role of wartime and military institutions in shaping how emancipation ultimately unfolded. Both dynamics worked together, each contingent on enslaved agency, the successful operations of Union armies, and the evolution of Federal policy. And the unfolding of wartime emancipation functioned amid Confederates' steadfast commitment to a slaveholding republic designed to thwart Turnage's natural claim to freedom. The contraband camp at Corinth, Mississippi, for instance, became a symbol of black liberty. Founded in December 1862 by Union general Grenville Dodge as a response to the growing refugee crisis throughout occupied portions of the Deep South, Corinth functioned as a training ground in freedom. Providing shelter, food, and employment for formerly enslaved people who either traveled to the camp or who were seized on Union raids, Corinth housed 6,000 African Americans who trained in free labor, aided the Federal war effort, and provided educational opportunities. The camp evolved into a functioning city, providing goods and services and offering bountiful agricultural crops for profitable sale.²³

Experiments in free labor occurred elsewhere in Mississippi, most notably at Davis Bend, the river valley plantation that belonged to Joseph Davis, brother of Confederate president Jefferson Davis. While an exceptional case, the alterations in labor relations that occurred on this famous plot reflected African Americans' desire to reap the fruits of their labor. Indeed, the slaves who remained at Davis Bend in the wake of the white family's flight from Federal military forces took control of the farm and founded a functioning

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 74–89, 113–27.

²³ Timothy Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War: The Home Front* (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2010), pp. 149–51, 154–5; “Corinth Contraband Camp,” online at www.nps.gov/shil/planyourvisit/contrabandcamp.htm, accessed September 2016.

colony of armed black refugees who defied any external threat, including Union military officers. Ultimately, as Union armies moved through Louisiana and Mississippi during the Vicksburg campaign, Federal officials confiscated and converted the abandoned plantations, including the Davis properties, into sources of labor for the government. Formerly enslaved men and women, like those at Davis Bend, rented the land, planted and cultivated cotton, and sold the finished product for a profit.²⁴

The Deep South also embodied revolutionary transformations occurring in the Union army. As enslaved people flooded Federal lines, Union officials came to recognize the valuable military potential of enlisting African American men into the armed forces. After all, black men had long volunteered their services to the government, understanding that the Civil War was so clearly about the fate of freedom. But the Lincoln government largely ignored their claims until it became apparent that manpower shortages, increasing occupation duties, and the unanticipated length of the war demanded attention. The Militia Act (1862) and the Emancipation Proclamation (1863) acted in concert to give the president the authority to raise black regiments. “The colored population is the great *available* and yet *unavailed* of, force for restoring the Union,” Lincoln explained. “The bare sight of fifty thousand armed, and drilled black soldiers on the banks of the Mississippi, would end the rebellion at once.” Lincoln dispatched Brigadier General Lorenzo Thomas in the spring of 1863 to the Mississippi River valley to raise regiments of United States Colored Troops (USCT). Nearly 40 percent of the total number of African American soldiers (180,000) resulted from Thomas’s labors. Meanwhile, the Corinth camp became a central recruiting station for African Americans elsewhere in Mississippi and Alabama. Most important, the rapid enlistment and battlefield performance of formerly enslaved men undermined the white wartime generation’s racist assumptions that black men were too weak and docile to perform in a military capacity. Their stirring efforts at Milliken’s Bend (1863), a consequential battle on the Mississippi River that thwarted Confederate operations during the Vicksburg campaign, and the important rear-guard actions at Brice’s Crossroads (1864), which hindered Confederate cavalry in Mississippi during Sherman’s March to the Sea, proved that

24 Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War*, pp. 113, 149; Gary W. Gallagher and Joan Waugh, *The American War: A History of the Civil War Era* (State College, PA: Spielvogel Books, 2015), p. 101; Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 254–9.

African American men were willing to fight and die for their country and their freedom.²⁵

Yet black military service, especially in the Mississippi River valley, was fraught with danger and exposed the inherent racism that haunted the USCT. Not only were African American soldiers paid less than their white counterparts through much of the war, but they were also subjected to punishing fatigue and labor duty, guarding posts in the dreadful heat and humidity, and exposed to conditions that spread rampant diseases throughout their ranks. Some white officials, such as Ulysses S. Grant, believed that formerly enslaved men would be more naturally acclimated than white northerners to the arduous conditions of service on the Mississippi River. Although a champion of USC troops, Grant admitted in the wake of Vicksburg that "I do not want the White men to do any work that can possibly be avoided during the hot months." Grant's acknowledgment framed a broader consensus among some white officials who considered African American soldiers better fit for duty behind the lines, an assumption that increased the proportion of black disease-related deaths. Nonetheless, by March 1865, 18,299 USCT were stationed at strategic positions along the Mississippi River, providing valuable stability to the region long ago conquered by Union armies.²⁶

The Deep South's white populations featured a diverse cast who both supported and opposed the Confederacy. Much like the process of emancipation, whites in Mississippi and Alabama crafted identities and responses to war based on the evolution of military and political events. Although both states hailed among the wealthiest antebellum slave societies in the world, each contained a substantial white minority who opposed secession and, in

25 Abraham Lincoln to Andrew Johnson, March 26, 1863, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols., Roy P. Basler (ed.), (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953–5), vol. VI, pp. 149–50; Bob Luke and John David Smith, *Soldiering for Freedom: How the Union Army Recruited, Trained, and Deployed the U.S. Colored Troops* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), pp. 34–7, 40, 54, 86, 91–3; Gallagher and Waugh, *American War*, p. 96.

26 Ulysses S. Grant to Henry W. Halleck, July 24, 1863, *Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 9: 110; Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861–1865* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), pp. 266–7; William W. Freehling, *The South vs. the South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 150–1; Margaret Humphreys, *Intensely Human: The Health of Black Soldiers in the American Civil War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 10–12, 80–3, 104–18; Brooks D. Simpson, "Quandaries of Command: Ulysses S. Grant and Black Soldiers," in Brooks D. Simpson and David W. Blight (eds.), *Union and Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997), pp. 123–50; Lang, *In the Wake of War*, pp. 129–57.

some cases, actively fought against the Confederacy. North and southeast Alabama, as well as some river counties and the southern interior of Mississippi – all sites of active Union military actions – harbored Unionists who possessed a variety of motivations. Some had long opposed the radicalism of disunion, believing in the sanctity of a federal Union that best safeguarded planter and slaveholding interests. For example, Adams County, Mississippi – Natchez – was, in 1860, the United States' wealthiest county per capita, and voted decidedly against secession. Others considered the Union inviolable, referencing the exceptionalism of the American founding. Opposition to the Confederacy and its wartime centralization – more so than a fierce dedication to Union – informed the loyalties of other Deep South Unionists. If a common bond linked most Unionists in the region, loyalty to white southern culture and opposition to radicalism – both abolitionism and secession – framed their resistance to the Confederacy.²⁷

Regardless of one's degree or commitment to Unionism, anti-Confederates lived a dangerous and tenuous existence in the Deep South. Unionists in both states were often shunned socially, marginalized politically, and sometimes even targeted by home-front vigilance committees and local guerrillas. Indeed, reflecting the problem of home-front violence across the Confederacy, the presence of Unionism oftentimes engendered local civil wars in which Confederate supporters and Unionists attempted to neutralize each other in a quest for local stability and control. Unionists thus often sought refuge near Federal armies that occupied towns and regulated the countryside. Federal military officials saw in Deep South Unionists, much in the same way they viewed formerly enslaved men, willing and able allies to the Union cause. The occupation of Corinth, for example, afforded some Alabama Unionists the opportunity to muster into the 1st Alabama Cavalry (US), while deserters from the Confederate army in both states – especially those who had been conscripted – sometimes volunteered for US service out of disillusionment with the Southern cause. As one Union officer acknowledged from Decatur, Alabama, in July 1862, bedraggled Confederate veterans arrived behind Federal lines “begging me to give them protection and a chance to defend the flag of our country.” The officer enrolled forty

27 Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 35; Margaret M. Storey, “Unionism,” in *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, online at <http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1415>, accessed September 2016; Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*, pp. 5–6, 12–17, 38–9, 256–60; Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War*, pp. 7–8, 13–18, 102–5, 119–20, 125–42; Jarret Ruminski, *The Limits of Loyalty: Ordinary People in Civil War Mississippi* (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2017).

volunteers who then embarked on an expedition to exploit additional Unionist sympathizers.²⁸

Events in Jones County, Mississippi, constituted perhaps the most dramatic display of Unionism in the Deep South. Although a highly romanticized episode full of half-truths, the so-called “Free State of Jones” featured a confluence of the Civil War’s most transformative conditions: unionism, desertion, the effects of war on civilian populations, the role of battlefield events in shaping perceptions of the national causes, and the social changes wrought by emancipation. Located in south-central Mississippi, Jones County opposed secession in 1861 and, by the following year, served as a refuge for escaped slaves and Rebel deserters in the wake of the Confederate defeats in the fall of 1862. Led by Newton Knight, a local yeoman farmer whose ambivalence toward the Confederacy gave legitimacy to anyone disgusted with and opposed to the rebellion, the growing Jones County band claimed local authority, renounced the Confederate government, and functioned as an autonomous entity in Mississippi.²⁹

Knight’s leadership embodied an emerging crisis in the quest for Confederate independence: desertion. In December 1862, Mississippi governor John J. Pettus cited the “hundreds [of soldiers] who are absent without leave, or on expired furloughs, or have recovered from disability and are not able to return to duty.” Indeed, Knight himself reflected Pettus’s observation, having deserted the Confederate army in its failure to retake Corinth. Local Confederate authorities thus faced the challenge of waging war against Union armies while also neutralizing the disruptive chaos on the home front shaped by deserters who posed a direct, internal threat to Confederate legitimacy. By 1864, the desertion problem forced military officials to send parts of the 6th and 20th Mississippi regiments into Mississippi’s interior to ferret out the unlawful rebels. Their efforts, which stretched over several months, captured 350 deserters, but Newt Knight and his biracial community evaded Confederate detention. The local conflict between pro- and anti-Confederate Mississippi whites, and the establishment of the Free States of Jones, in the words of historian Timothy B. Smith, “was basically a civil war against their own people within the larger war.”³⁰

Loyalties in other portions of the Deep South were far less stark, shaped instead by the changing winds of war and focused on a concurrent dedication

28 Quotation in Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, p. 128. Ash’s book is the best comprehensive treatment of southern Unionists. See pp. 11–15, 35–6, 109–11, 120–9. Storey, “Unionism.”

29 Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War*, pp. 139–41; Bynum, *Free State of Jones*.

30 Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War*, p. 141.

to nation *and* self-interest. As Union armies and navies flooded the Mississippi River valley, ultimately taking control of the region and dictating the flow of commerce, Confederate citizens traded goods – especially cotton – for necessities made scarce by the Federal blockade. Some of these goods even found their way to Confederate armies. But what seemed like pragmatic behavior within the stresses of war translated into a broader question of undiluted loyalty to the Confederacy. Could Confederates seek unconditional independence, fueled by fierce anti-Union sentiments, while bartering with the very enemy that threatened that national destiny? Trading with Union armies thus underscored how civilians in all wars harbor multiple, often simultaneous allegiances to “self, family, community, and nation.” As one local officer informed President Jefferson Davis in 1863, Confederate policy that prohibited civilians trading with Union armies revealed a “cause of exasperation.” “In this state of things,” the official explained, “you cannot consider it strange or peculiar or disloyal that the distressed people should endeavor to procure . . . actual necessities which could be obtained in no other way than from those who resided near Memphis where their location, of course, facilitates their trade with the enemy.” The demands of war forced white Confederates in the Deep South to give primacy to their instinct for self-preservation, even if they never completely disavowed the Confederacy’s bid for national sovereignty.³¹

Regardless of one’s dedication to the Confederate cause, few observers could ignore the stunning pace at which Union armies conquered the Deep South. Beginning early in the war and continuing largely unabated, most of the important cities of the western Confederacy fell to US occupation – including Nashville, Memphis, Corinth, Vicksburg, Natchez, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans, as well as much of the northern interiors of Mississippi and Alabama – and Rebel armies were defeated in most major battles. For those who remained ardent supporters of the Confederacy, the evolution of war had taken a severe toll by 1864. Confiscation of property, destruction of infrastructure, emancipation, and internal rebellions all severely strained white Confederates’ abilities to continue supporting the war effort. Yet as

31 Jarret Ruminski, “‘Tradyville’: The Contraband Trade and the Problem of Loyalty in Civil War Mississippi,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vol. 2, no. 4 (December 2012): 511–37, 511 and 531 [first and second quotations]. See also E. Merton Coulter, “Commercial Intercourse with the Confederacy in the Mississippi Valley, 1861–1865,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 5 (March 1919): 377–95; Ludwell H. Johnson, “Trading with the Union: The Evolution of Confederate Policy,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 78, no. 3 (July 1970): 308–25; Hess, *Civil War in the West*, pp. 70–3, 141–2, 239–42, 264–5, 295–6.

long as Confederate armies remained in the field – and the Army of Tennessee, the principal military force in the west, remained active late in 1864 – white civilians could remain hopeful that a decisive battlefield victory might alter the conflict's course toward independence. Even the loss of Mobile Bay, the fall of Atlanta, and Lincoln's reelection in 1864 – all of which posed devastating blows to the western Confederacy – compelled few Deep South Confederates to abandon the cause. The breaking point came in late 1864 when John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee was, for all intents and purposes, destroyed at the battles of Franklin and Nashville. Without armies to carry the banner of independence, protect against additional Union incursion, and offer hope and possibility, many Confederates in the Deep South finally acknowledged defeat.³²

The Civil War in Mississippi and Alabama revealed how the power of civilian–military relations fundamentally altered social, political, military, and economic foundations. While the region was not scarred in nearly the same fashion as Virginia, Tennessee, or Georgia, residents of the Deep South felt the transformative power of war as it altered their once stable society. Emancipation and the devastation of the slaveholding class revolutionized the region, creating new social and cultural relationships that promised a more perfect Union. Yet the shock of white defeat scarred many former Confederates, leaving festering wounds that would not be fully healed for years to come. The Deep South thus emerged as one of the fiercest regions of violent opposition to postwar Reconstruction and the rights of freedpeople. But it was also, many decades later, the site of a new birth of freedom in which the shortcomings of the Civil War were finally answered in the civil rights movement.

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War in Appalachia

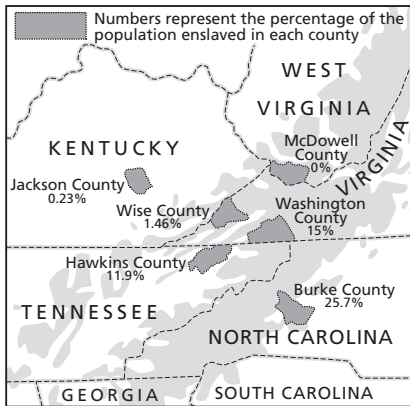
BRIAN D. MCKNIGHT

Unlike most traditional arenas of the American Civil War, no single trait of the Appalachian experience fully captures its true nature. When reading the vast majority of Civil War texts, the conventional warfare of Gettysburg, the struggle between emancipation and slavery, and Lincoln's presidential war powers are the story's central elements. In Appalachia, however, that story was very different. While the region can lay claim to battles in the conventional sense, a well-defended system of slavery, and its own ambitious politicians, Appalachia's Civil War also witnessed more guerrilla warfare and civil unrest than most other sections could imagine. Moreover, Appalachian residents endured these hardships in a region whose topography offered transgressors the privacy they needed and deprived their victims of the publicity that might have saved them their suffering. The region, too, was a comparative backwater to the political and military hotspots that have defined the conventional conflict. It would be easy to judge the region a hinterland and assume its insignificance, but the deterministic terrain, community instability, and pervasive fear combined to create a very dangerous environment over the long term. Simply put, while the citizens of Gettysburg endured the Civil War for six days and five nights, the mountaineers of Appalachia were exposed to direct threat for the full four years of war and nearly a year of postwar uncertainty.

In Appalachia, topography is destiny. During the Civil War, the terrain itself helped narrow virtually every choice that could be made. The same mountains that could be seen as massive walls separating Unionist and Confederate territories had gaps that acted as swinging gates funneling traffic both ways through only a handful of passes. Radiating out from the mountainsides were

The author would like to thank Brian Steel Wills for his longtime friendship and mentorship. A great portion of the author's intellectual development was cultivated with Wills's guidance and his ability to find alternate views of traditional definitions of historical activities, such as how mountain passes actually facilitated and focused regional travel rather than serving as an impediment.

War in Appalachia



25.1 War in Appalachia. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

streams following the path of least resistance through valleys flanked by steep hills. Roads, or paths as most were, usually followed the streams – and sometimes were the streams themselves – until reaching the narrow valleys that held settlers on small farms. From the main roads and creeks, smaller roads and creeks radiated up into more narrow hollows that also held much sparser settlement. Eventually, all of these creeks reached a river where larger settlements, even towns and the occasional small city, could be found, along with avenues and routes out of the mountains and into the broad valleys where large armies operated and a traditional war could be found.

For the purposes of this chapter, the Appalachian range that stretches from Maine to Mississippi must be narrowed. The fact that the Appalachian Mountains are a geographic feature is subordinate to how that feature intersected with the front line of the war. It is also necessary to consider the range as an entangling morass of hills and hollows that evened the odds between large, slow, and cumbersome conventional forces and their small, quick, and light guerrilla counterparts. In order to focus on how the conflict played out in the Appalachian region, much of this chapter's focus will be on the northern and western Virginia border – the region that became West Virginia – eastern Kentucky, eastern and mountainous central Tennessee, and western North Carolina; the locations where soldier and civilian most frequently collided.

The most important force behind the Civil War was the institution of slavery; specifically, its expansion, but this was not necessarily true in Appalachia. Residents of the mountain counties of Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia held slaves, sometimes in large numbers, but the institution was not a central concern across the region as it was in the Mississippi Delta, South Carolina lowcountry, or other regions throughout the South. In 1860, slaves made up nearly 37 percent of the population in slave states and well less than half of that in the Appalachian region. There were counties with few slaves like Jackson County, Kentucky, with only seven slaves in a county of more than 3,000 (0.23%), Wise County, Virginia, with slaves making up 1.46 percent of the total population, and McDowell County, Virginia, without a single slave living in its borders. On the other hand, there were others like Washington County, Virginia, with 15 percent and Burke County, North Carolina, with 25.7 percent, and Hawkins County, Tennessee, with 11.9 percent.¹ Wilma Dunaway paints a complex picture of the Appalachian slave experience in *Slavery in the*

1 Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/collections/>, accessed August 12, 2017.

American Mountain South when she reveals that in spite of lower numbers of slaves in the mountains, the institution itself was well developed. Mountain slaveholders owned a greater percentage of arable land than Deep South planters, women and children were used in the fields at a much greater rate than those working cotton, and the idyllic tale of smallholders working side by side with their slaves was largely myth.²

When the secession winter arrived in late 1860, the parent states of the Appalachian region grappled with the great issues. While most Appalachians hoped to avoid the conflict, their location along the north-south border virtually guaranteed they would have a front-row seat for any future hostilities. As one might expect, the region was as divided in sentiment as it was in slaveholding and connectedness to broader markets; and that division would hallmark the Appalachian Civil War experience. In Appalachia, the topography often drove local economies. In such places as Washington County, Virginia, and Greene County, Tennessee, railroads brought prosperity and connectedness to valley communities. But outside those broad valleys, the mountain counties like Letcher County, Kentucky, or Ashe County, North Carolina, remained as economically isolated as they had ever been.

If one studies the American Civil War, the military theme must be a leading consideration. In Appalachia, however, the military theme often misleads. Most people interested in the Civil War initially look to military and political arenas to explain the conflict's development and maturation, and, for the most part, those two themes ably drive many studies. When looking into the mountains, however, it becomes clear that the conventional military presence was small, geographically focused, and often only consequential to those within sight of the soldiers. Therefore, a military study of Appalachia must give both conventional and unconventional forces equal weight in order to properly treat the impact of armed force on the region.

In the mountains, like in other areas, people mobilized quickly. Just as ports, rail yards, and factories had to be protected, so did the major mountain routes connecting the belligerents. Perhaps the most important location to both parties was Cumberland Gap. Standing at the nexus of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, it provided the most traveled route between eastern Tennessee and Kentucky and boasted the Wilderness Road connecting the Upper Shenandoah Valley of Virginia with the Bluegrass region of Kentucky. Running through the wide valley south of Cumberland Gap, the

2 Wilma A. Dunaway, *Slavery in the American Mountain South*, Studies in Modern Capitalism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Virginia and Tennessee Railroad connected Lynchburg with Knoxville in 1856. This line not only gave the region a few years of economic growth, but it became the Confederacy's northernmost east–west rail link during the first three years of the Civil War.³ As a result of its location, Cumberland Gap also factored into larger military plans. Northerners hoped to liberate the loyal citizens of eastern Tennessee from their Confederate oppressors, an act that would require a major campaign into Confederate territory to cut the main rail and communication links between the western theater of operations and the capitol in Richmond, and require a long-term occupation to stabilize the area – all under the guise of humanitarianism. For the Confederacy, holding Cumberland Gap was necessary for their recruiting efforts. Believing that the Southern cause was appreciated in eastern Kentucky, Confederates needed the access that such locations provided if they were to recruit and have, as Brigadier General Humphrey Marshall hoped, “the people . . . flock around my banner as the Italians did to that of Garibaldi.”⁴

Despite the best-laid plans, the Appalachian region conspired against both Union and Confederate success. Although Abraham Lincoln pressed his commanders in Kentucky to undertake the invasion of eastern Tennessee, none of them could be made to move for fear the terrain would decentralize their armies and make them vulnerable to attack by smaller forces. Union commanders in the region understood that the geography of the mountains could easily become a great equalizing factor and thus reduce a large, powerful, and well-equipped army into a series of small, disconnected, and slow-moving bodies of troops with ineffective logistics and communication. The Confederates knew that holding strategic positions such as gaps and fords could guard against Union incursions. At the same time, being a stationary target in a terrain where a small detachment might effectively cut off a route of retreat was a dangerous game to play. At various points during the conflict, the mere threat of losing a line of retreat enticed a force to abandon its position. In a place like Cumberland Gap, these challenges manifested themselves in the gap changing hands four times during the Civil War – sometimes by force, other times by abandonment.⁵

3 Kenneth W. Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Secession Crisis in the Civil War Era* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1994), pp. 11–12.

4 H. Marshall to Unknown, August 28, 1862, Humphrey Marshall Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

5 Historian and Cumberland Gap National Historical Park ranger Lucas Wilder traces the occupations from Felix Zollicoffer, CSA (August 1861), George Morgan, USA (June 1862), Archibald Gracie, CSA (September 1862), and Ambrose Burnside, USA (September 1863).

One of the most popular elements of the Appalachian Civil War in the modern historiography is the divided nature of its loyalties. In a 1994 article, Kenneth W. Noe examined the foundation of the “Myth of Unionist Appalachia” and laid a significant portion of the blame with William Goodell Frost. Like many others, Frost took comfort in crafting a consensus mythology by putting forth that “when the civil war came . . . Appalachian America clave to the old flag.” For generations, that statement defined the region’s wartime experience, but it did not fit with the facts of the Appalachian Civil War. The reality was that this deeply divided region held a sizable number of devoted secessionists, slaveholders, and dedicated Confederate nationalists, but, as time wore on, those commitments waned and the conflict, which began in a traditional vein, became increasingly localized and less ideological. In Noe’s article and in other regional works, the tenuousness, unpredictability, and ubiquitous danger of the region are put on full display as an effective illustration of the region’s powerful and complex legacy.⁶

Fundamentally, Frost could never be right. In places like Mobile and Chicago, it was easy to be a fully committed supporter of the regional cause from the first moments of the war, but along the borderland – what the Confederacy considered an international border – it was much more difficult. Adding to the uncertain nature of wartime life in a contested region was the high level of difficulty in the daily lives of denizens. In Appalachia, the limited farmland and often stark topography have presented a variety of existential challenges in comparison to the kinds of lives that can more easily be carved out of flat and broad river valleys. For only a few years, the railroad that ran through the upper valley of Virginia and into Tennessee expanded the economies of the towns along its route and may have had some real impact in the mountain communities that supplied these rail towns, but it was only a temporary upturn. When the Civil War broke out, Appalachians removed from the valleys began to see their already strained existences further tighten and when occupying armies appeared with their demands for sustenance and shelter, conditions became even more difficult with the local economy being a very early casualty. What resulted was a crisis within

6 Kenneth W. Noe, “Toward the Myth of Unionist Appalachia, 1865–1883,” *Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association*, vol. 6 (1994): 73–80; and John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War*, Civil War America series (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 84. For more on the subject of complex loyalties in the midst of a dominant sentiment, see W. Todd Groce, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860–1870* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999).

the community hallmarked by the choosing of sides by those taking early odds on the outcome or a declaration of neutrality by the more cautious hoping to see the future before it arrived.⁷

Politically, the divisions were more obvious. Despite the northwestern counties of Virginia being part of the Confederacy as a result of the larger state seceding from the Union, those counties broke away and effectively seceded from a seceded state in 1863. This political action was not fast appearing; the region had been pro-Union since the first threats of secession. In July 1861, Union general George McClellan led an assault over the Ohio River into the northwestern tier of Virginia counties, defeating the Confederate forces attempting to hold the central part of the region. Acting decisively and moving quickly, McClellan won a series of significant fights that would have been front-page news had Manassas not followed so closely and if the region's strategic importance had been properly gauged. To answer, the Confederacy ordered General Robert E. Lee to take command of Southern forces opposing McClellan. Lee, who had yet to find his place in the Confederate command, was given the task of bringing order to the disorder he would find in the aftermath of Rich Mountain and Corrick's Ford, but without clear authority to do so. By August, Lee had made progress and was preparing to meet McClellan. The result of the Cheat Mountain campaign of mid-September was a stalemate confirming Federal authority in the region. With this physical security, the Unionists in the region led the drive for separate statehood.⁸

Militarily, Cheat Mountain was emblematic of Appalachia as a unique region. Despite the massive amount of territory contained in the mountain region, strategically situated between east and west, and north and south, neither side made its defense a priority. The Union invested in the region by placing competent commanders like George Thomas and James Garfield in the field, but Union commanders occupied largely static positions in Kentucky and West Virginia after the first few months of the war. The Confederacy aspired to invade and conquer, but undermined their

7 Kenneth Noe discusses the economic transition of the valley region during the antebellum period and into the Civil War in *Southwest Virginia's Railroad*. Other titles that speak to this phenomenon are: Brian D. McKnight, *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006); and Noel C. Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860–1869* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

8 Stephen W. Sears, *George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1988), pp. 84–94; and Emory M. Thomas, *Robert E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), pp. 201–9.

own ambitions by giving commands to soldiers unsuited to the tasks. The heavy Humphrey Marshall commanded Confederate forces in the extremely mountainous border region of eastern Kentucky and southwestern Virginia for much of the war.⁹ Although John Floyd opened the war competently in West Virginia, after his debacle at Fort Donelson, he returned to Virginia where his political friends gave him command over the Virginia State Line, a network of regional home guard units more akin to guerrillas than soldiers.¹⁰

The same problem of political complexity manifested itself in other parts of Appalachia. East Tennessee was notorious in its support for the Union, despite its position behind Confederate lines. From the earliest days of the war, President Abraham Lincoln hoped for an opportunity to rescue the loyal citizens of East Tennessee and hold that region for the Union. Hoping to help Lincoln keep his priorities focused on their home region, Unionist politicians like Andrew Johnson, Horace Maynard, Thomas A. R. Nelson, Oliver P. Temple, and William G. Brownlow kept pressure applied to the administration. These men traveled widely speaking about the terrible conditions under which their fellow East Tennesseans were living. They frequently met with administration officials, including Lincoln himself, and presented plans that sometimes went so far as cultivating personal relationships with regional commanders in the hopes they could bring every ounce of effort to bear, if necessary.¹¹ Ultimately, Unionist East Tennesseans would have to wait two years before they could speak freely and times would be difficult in the interim.

Wedge between loyal western Virginia and Unionist East Tennessee was the western tip of Virginia. Filled with alternating steep mountains and narrow valleys, this part of Virginia exhibited a surprising degree of loyalty to the Confederacy. In reality, the development of a railroad reaching deep into southwestern Virginia and into East Tennessee by the end of the 1850s connected the region to the broader South to a much greater degree than ever before. Because of this new feature, the transportation impediments of the mountains that separated the region from northern and northwestern markets, and the southwesterly flow of navigable rivers, the people of the

9 Mark Mayo Boatner, *The Civil War Dictionary* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1959), pp. 513–14.

10 McKnight, *Contested Borderland*, pp. 120–1.

11 Michael Toomey, “‘There Is Shameful Wrong Somewhere’: The 1861 Campaign to Liberate East Tennessee,” in Kent T. Dollar, Larry H. Whiteaker, and W. Calvin Dickinson (eds.), *Border Wars: The Civil War in Tennessee and Kentucky* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2015), pp. 63–6.

region embraced its southern connection. Although there were certainly rock-ribbed Southern nationalists in these western counties, pragmatism won the day. John Sharp, a representative from Virginia's westernmost county of Lee, voted against secession after noting to his colleagues that the Commonwealth was "unprepared and defenceless" and that the coming war would be "direful ruin for her." Sharp said: "She is without soldiers, arms, money and credit; and with a debt of forty millions hanging over her without the means of payment" – but his region would at least have an economy if it remained connected to the larger economy.¹² Despite voting with his head and heart on April 17, he ultimately signed the ordinance.

In the valley of eastern Tennessee, unionist civilians conspired to convince Lincoln to liberate their communities by perpetrating a coordinated attack on nine railroad bridges on the Holston and Tennessee rivers stretching from extreme northeastern Tennessee into northeastern Alabama. Led by Presbyterian minister William B. Carter, dozens of Union loyalists mobilized to destroy the bridges. On the night of November 8, 1861, the plan was carried out and five of the targets were destroyed impacting three different railroads, cutting the telegraph lines, and effectively cutting off Confederate forces at Cumberland Gap and Knoxville. Unfortunately, and without having been told of the decision, Union support had been withdrawn, leaving the insurgents to fend for themselves amid the witch hunt that followed the destruction. Within weeks, several dozen Unionist East Tennesseans had been jailed. After an investigation, several of the men were convicted and five were executed by hanging.¹³

With liberation on hold for East Tennessee, some men took matters into their own hands. The most famous was Daniel Ellis. Declared a conspirator in the November bridge burnings, Ellis went into hiding in the mountains of his native Greene County, Tennessee. Soon he became a pilot, leading Union men through the Tennessee and Virginia mountains to Union camps in Kentucky, where they could enlist and fight for the liberation of their home region. If Ellis's memoir is to be believed, in twenty trips, he guided 4,000 men to Kentucky.¹⁴ Operating on a much smaller scale and only 7 miles from the Kentucky border, Henry Colson of Lee County, Virginia piloted

¹² George H. Reese (ed.), *Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention of 1861*, vol. 4, April 16–May 1 (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1965), p. 135. The best treatment of the economic considerations leading to secession by Virginia's western counties is Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad*.

¹³ Fisher, *War at Every Door*, pp. 54–8; and Toomey, "'There Is Shameful Wrong,'" p. 83.

¹⁴ Daniel Ellis, *The Thrilling Adventures of Daniel Ellis* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1867).

men across the mountain. For over two years, he led men, forty at a time, through the passes into Kentucky.¹⁵ Others piloted Unionists northward toward Knoxville, which, by 1864, was held by the Federals. One group, made up partly by escapees from a Confederate prison camp, found help on their trek through North Carolina. By the time they entered Tennessee, their numbers had swollen to seventy-six.¹⁶

To be sure, the study of the Civil War in Appalachia possesses complexities that muddy the waters. In addition to the varied political environments that can be found in each corner of the region, there were cultural considerations that were often lost on outsiders. When Confederate general and regional commander Humphrey Marshall visited a remote farm in eastern Kentucky, he was disturbed by a local unwillingness to devote themselves to his cause. Hectoring an old man in the community, Marshall dismissed his explanation that “everybody lives by and through each other.”¹⁷ With extensive kin networks and tight-knit, geographically isolated communities, members of those neighborhoods were dependent upon one another to a greater degree than better-connected communities.

So mysterious was the true nature of regional loyalty that Union general William Tecumseh Sherman, commanding from Louisville and besieged by reports from southern and eastern Kentucky alternately claiming extreme levels of loyalty and disloyalty, lost his mental bearings and was relieved of command.¹⁸ Indeed, the nature of loyalty was elusive in the region. Sidney Barnes, a mountaineer who commanded a local unit, asked General George Thomas to permit him to establish a local camp and pressed Thomas to supply him with “Blankets, tents, guns, &c . . . More depends on this than men ordinarily imagine.”¹⁹ Barnes recognized that the mountain people were caught between two equally dangerous positions and that they would resist making a public proclamation of loyalty until confident of the outcome. For

15 Claim of Henry Colson, Lee County, Virginia, Claim #6777, Approved Case Files of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871–80, Third Auditor of the Treasury (Approved Case Files), Records of the General Accounting Office, RG 217, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland.

16 Lorien Foote, *The Yankee Plague: Escaped Union Prisoners and the Collapse of the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), pp. 98–9.

17 William C. Davis and Meredith L. Swentor (eds.), *Bluegrass Confederate: The Headquarters Diary of Edward O. Guerrant* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), p. 250.

18 Lee Kennett, *Sherman: A Soldier's Life* (New York: Perennial, 2001), pp. 142–5.

19 Sidney M. Barnes to General George H. Thomas, September 23, 1861, in United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series I, volume 4, p. 281 (hereafter cited as OR; all references are to series I unless otherwise noted).

them, they needed to see a real army complete with men, tents, guns, and horses – then, maybe, they could give their full-throated support.

The region's natural duality of strength and weakness resonates as a theme present throughout the Appalachian Civil War experience. While the narrow valleys afforded men cover under which they could move, that same cover could also be used by men setting an ambush. With such conditions and terrain, guerrilla warfare became the form of warfare most frequently engaged in by people of the region. Irregular warfare comes in a variety of forms on a sliding scale of legitimacy and in the Appalachian region all types were present for the duration of the war.

Two of the seminal names in guerrilla warfare have deep Appalachian connections. John Singleton Mosby practiced law in Abingdon and Goodson, Virginia (in the southwestern corner of the state along the Virginia–Tennessee border) for six years immediately before the war began before moving back to his native eastern Virginia and becoming famous for his support of the Confederate cause.²⁰ John Hunt Morgan, a native of Lexington, Kentucky spent the first two years of the war based out of Middle Tennessee as a raider. After his successful escape from the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus, Morgan returned to Tennessee before settling into southwestern Virginia where he returned to his guerrilla activities.²¹

In the fall of 1862, Humphrey Marshall led an invasion of eastern Kentucky from his base in southwestern Virginia. Edward Guerrant, Marshall's aide-de-camp, recorded seven different instances of bushwhacking on his eleven-day trek back to Virginia. Overall, four soldiers were killed by nine attackers, of whom five were either killed in the fight or captured and executed. Houses were burned in retaliation and the countryside was set afire hoping to drive the invaders away from local communities.²²

The guerrillas that bedeviled Marshall's Confederates came to that kind of service many ways. Some were dedicated and loyal Unionists to whom the sight of a Confederate soldier stirred their anger, but most "were frightened out of their wits" and many "fled like fearful deer to the mountains," but sometimes with a rifle and a half-chance of escaping.²³ High-minded idealists joined conventional armies, but pragmatists became

20 John S. Mosby, *The Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), pp. 11–12; and James A. Ramage, *Gray Ghost: The Life of Col. John Singleton Mosby* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), pp. 30–1.

21 James A. Ramage, *Rebel Raider: The Life of General John Hunt Morgan* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986), pp. 183–98, 211–16.

22 Davis and Swentor (eds.), *Bluegrass Confederate*, pp. 244–53. 23 *Ibid.*, p. 253.

guerrillas. Their pragmatism may have stemmed from the absence or minimization of slavery within their own communities, it may have been the result of a fear that their homes and families would fall victim to any number of threats if they left home to fight in the broader war, or it may have been the way a man too scared to fight conventionally fought when the war came to him. Whatever the motivation, pragmatism drove the guerrilla just as much as any ideology could. In fact, guerrilla warfare could be molded into whatever form its practitioners chose. Guerrillas often attacked families whose male heads were absent and they robbed often, claiming that the booty would be given over to the Confederacy, all the while free to declare loyalty to whichever force they were facing at the moment and able to blend into their communities with relative ease. The guerrillas that occupied these contested borderlands were sociopathic chameleons.

In January 1863, the borderland's turbulence struck in the mountains of western North Carolina. Desertion plagued the Confederacy, particularly in the mountains where hiding out was relatively easy. Tarheel soldiers heard of the sufferings of their families and chose to return home rather than stay with the army. Desertion grew to epidemic proportions and North Carolina governor Zeb Vance estimated that 1,200 deserters were hiding out in the state's western mountains. In the case of the 64th North Carolina Infantry, desertion and bushwhacking went hand in hand. The 64th was composed of poor farmers, but commanded by Lawrence Allen and James Keith, local men who were well-to-do and ambitious. With desertion being such a major problem and the 64th stationed locally near their homes, the regiment was frequently sent on scouting missions into Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia where they sought to capture deserters and bushwhackers. This proved to be highly stressful work and Allen and Keith encouraged exceedingly brutal methods of suppression.²⁴

These conditions encouraged hundreds of members of the 64th to desert their regiment. In one case, 300 men left together and took to the hills close to their homes. As the war dragged on and the privations increased, the 64th hemorrhaged soldiers. One of the popular hideouts for the Confederate deserters was the small community of Shelton Laurel in the Laurel Valley of western North Carolina. There, a Unionist raider named John Kirk joined the men of the 64th and other regional units planning to hide out through the winter. Unable to extract the men from their hardscrabble lair, local officials ruled that these men and their families would not receive allowances of salt

24 Inscoe and McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, pp. 115–17.

necessary for their winter survival. On January 8, 1863, Kirk led about fifty of the men into the Madison County seat of Marshall where they plundered for food and salt and stopped at Colonel Allen's house and harassed his wife and three scarlet fever stricken children, of which two would die by the next day. When Allen and Keith heard of the attack on Marshall, they immediately received permission from the Confederate commander in East Tennessee and moved into the Laurel Valley in search of the raiders. Once there, they arrested the men they found and tortured the women in the hopes that they could tell the Confederates where the others were. The depredations were awful, but in the minds of Keith's and Allen's men, proper considering the fate of Allen's sick children. An 85-year-old woman was whipped, hanged until she blacked out, and robbed while a young mother was bound to a tree in the snow while her infant was laid on the porch to freeze to death.²⁵

By the end of the day, fifteen men had been arrested, of whom five may have participated in the Marshall raid. They were kept in the Laurel Valley for a few days before being roused awake and told they were being marched to Knoxville, Tennessee, where they would stand trial. Two of the men had escaped, but the remaining thirteen began walking with their escort. Not far down the road, they were ordered to kneel and were executed in what has become one of the most infamous events of its kind in the Civil War. Among the casualties were a 65-year-old man and a 12-year-old boy. Even Confederate authorizers were shocked by the outrages. Governor Vance had warned the East Tennessee commander who ultimately set the events in motion "do not let our excited people deal too harshly with these misguided men." In the end, Keith was court-martialed and resigned his commission three months later. Allen, who had lost two children in the wake of the Marshall raid, was suspended for six months.²⁶

On the surface, the idea of a home guard in times of war is a good one and by the middle point of the war, local security was necessary. Differing from regular forces, home guard units resolved to remain in their local areas and protect their friends and neighbors rather than joining the broader war. There was some logic to what might be viewed as selfishness in that their unprotected homesteads lay along what the Confederacy would consider an international border and in the way of virtually every cross-border incursion. The system was not perfect, however, and oftentimes the men who ran local

25 Inscoe and McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, pp. 117–19; and Phillip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981), p. 96.

26 Inscoe and McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, pp. 119–20.

home guard units behaved like opportunistic thugs rather than local protectors. In East Tennessee's Cades Cove, the Unionist home guard unit worked as it should. An isolated community with limited access, the cove could either be a very secure or very dangerous place to live. Until 1864, its largely Unionist population had been a frequent target of North Carolina Confederates, but that spring the remaining men of the cove set up a home guard unit in order to resist. One of the residents, Russell Gregory, organized an early alert system by which residents could be warned of an impending raid. Assigning women and children to watch the passes between the cove and North Carolina, the community was prepared for raids. When one of the sentinels blew a horn, the men felled trees across the road down which the North Carolinians would have to drive their stolen livestock and the cove men hid among the brush to fire into the raiders' ranks. Gregory's plan worked and after one volley, the Carolina raiders rode out of the cove without any of the cattle they planned to steal. Although the men, women, and children of Cades Cove stood up to the raiders, their comfort did not last long. Only two weeks after driving the Confederates off, Gregory was killed in his bed by some of the same men against whom he had fought earlier.²⁷ On the other side of the coin, home guardsmen could be brutal and lawless. Reese Hildreth was an important man in Fentress County, Tennessee. He served as the county's circuit court clerk, became an attorney, and ultimately served in Tennessee's 33rd and 34th General Assemblies from 1859 to 1863. With the Union continually moving deeper into Tennessee, Hildreth moved to a safer neighborhood in nearby Overton County and took a job as a schoolteacher. In 1864, a Union home guard unit rode up to the school, dragged Hildreth out of his classroom, and shot him in full view of his students, one of whom was his daughter.²⁸

Appalachian religion likewise distinguished itself from the rest of the nation during the conflict. At the time of the Civil War, most Appalachians were evangelical Protestants divided between Northern and Southern philosophies on slavery. As the secession crisis deepened and ultimately tore the nation apart, many Southerners began to see the Confederacy and their roles within it as divinely inspired and preordained. Some Appalachian Protestant

27 Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818–1937* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1988), pp. 134–8.

28 Robert M. McBride and Dan M. Robinson, *Biographical Directory of the Tennessee General Assembly, vol. 1, 1796–1861* (Nashville: Tennessee State Library, 1979), pp. 364–5; and Albert Ross Hogue, *Mark Twain's Obedstown and Knobs of Tennessee* (Jamestown, TN: Cumberland Printing Company, 1950), pp. 36, 40, 48, 57.

churches not only pledged their support to the Southern cause, but also made it a requirement for continued membership in the church. In August 1861, the Stony Creek Primitive Baptist Church in Scott County, Virginia declared that members who remained supportive of the United States should “be delt with for disorder and unless full satisfaction be given that the same be excluded from the church.” The next year, a sister church wrote the Stony Creek congregation asking its advice on the issue of church members who were “favorable to the Lincoln Government.” Stony Creek urged the Big Glade Church to erase disloyal members “from their Church Book.”²⁹

As a result of the highly politicized state of Appalachian Protestantism, the churches had placed themselves in the midst of the national crisis and going to church became dangerous. With bandits and soldiers alike roaming the roads and countryside, it was generally unwise to leave home for fear of being accosted along the road or having their home robbed while absent. The lack of civil authority in the region could not guarantee the safety of people or their property and eventually many churches ceased to meet. Ministers, particularly Methodists who remained loyal to the Union, were in particular danger. Frequently arrested and jailed as a form of harassment, a few died for their cause. In October 1861, William Henry Harrison Duggan was jailed in Knoxville after being made to walk 60 miles from Athens, Tennessee. Although he was only jailed for a few days, the fatigue from the walk and the cold nights sapped his energy and he soon died.³⁰ Levi Carter and his son Robert were killed by some of Major General Joseph Wheeler’s men in September 1863 in Bradley County, Tennessee. Levi was shot six times and his son shot through the chest after having his eyeballs cut out. The killers reportedly kept Robert’s eyes in whisky and carried them around as a souvenir of their exploits.³¹

Throughout Appalachia, these dangers forced widespread closings, weakening the social networks that were so important to Appalachian communities. The parishioners of Copper Creek Baptist Church met monthly until November 1862. They resumed services in May 1863 and remained operational until suspending services again in March 1864. Stony Creek Primitive Baptist Church halted services in August 1862 for the duration of the war. In Buchanan County, Virginia’s Sand Lick Baptist Church met only

29 Minute Book, Stony Creek Primitive Baptist Church, 1851–1936, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

30 Durwood Dunn, *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2013), p. 102.

31 Dunn, *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*, pp. 107–8.

intermittently during the war. Most church services did not return to a regular schedule until the summer of 1865.³²

The same civil unrest that disrupted religious worship also impacted civil authority. During the Civil War, numerous county courthouses were burned, effectively halting civil justice and tax collection in the region. No sooner had the first battle in Kentucky been fought at Barbourville than the victorious Confederates raided the courthouse and burned the county tax records.³³ Similarly, as Humphrey Marshall's raiding Confederates retreated out of Kentucky and back to Virginia after the failed Kentucky raid of fall 1862, his men broke into the Owlsey County clerk's office where they took the record books and tore them to shreds in the street.³⁴ In summer 1863, the Harlan County courthouse burned in Kentucky, just across the state line from Virginia.³⁵ With the fire reportedly set by Virginia Confederates, the court clerk in nearby Lee County, Virginia exercised caution and secretly removed the county records and hid them away in a private home. Only a few months later, the clerk's hunch was proved true when a small Union force raided Jonesville and burned the courthouse; but the records were saved.³⁶ For the Confederacy, the destruction of records might free bound men to join its cause without worrying that they may lose their homes and farms. For the Union, the public destruction of its authority made even the most loyal citizen question the kind of security they could count upon. In all, however, the destruction of records indicated a serious lack of civil authority and made this borderland region truly contested. It should be noted that the

32 Minute Book, Copper Creek Baptist Church, 1847–1901, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. For more on this phenomenon, see Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861–1865*, Civil War America Series (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 104–5.

33 K. S. Sol Warren, *A History of Knox County, Kentucky* (Barbourville, KY: Daniel Boone Festival, Inc., 1976), p. 172; McKnight, *Contested Borderland*, p. 3; and Brian D. McKnight, "Reconsidering Felix Zollicoffer: The Influence of Weather and Terrain in the Rise and Fall of a Military Commander in Appalachia," in Kent T. Dollar, Larry H. Whiteaker, and W. Calvin Dickenson (eds.), *Border Wars: The Civil War in Tennessee and Kentucky* (Kent: OH: Kent State University Press, 2015), pp. 147–69.

34 Robert Perry, *Jack May's War: Colonel Andrew Jackson May and the Civil War in Eastern Kentucky, Eastern Tennessee, and Southwest Virginia* (Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1998), p. 64; and T. R. C. Hutton, *Bloody Breathitt: Politics and Violence in the Appalachian South* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2013), p. 63.

35 Jeffrey C. Weaver, *64th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1992), p. 65.

36 James W. Orr, *Recollections of the War between the States, 1861–1865* (n.p., 1909), p. 13; and Bonnie Ball, "Impact of the Civil War upon the Southwestern Corner of Virginia," *Historical Sketches of Southwest Virginia*, vol. 15 (March 1982): 3.

public records of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Sharpsburg, Maryland, and Frankfort, Kentucky, all survived Confederate occupation.

By late 1864, Confederates in the mountains were feeling frustrated by the war's growing sense of futility. A late September military invasion of southwestern Virginia led by Union major general Stephen G. Burbridge set its sights on the saltworks at Saltville, and the railroad and telegraph lines only 10 miles beyond. It was the morning of October 2 when Burbridge's nearly 5,000 cavalymen moved on Saltville. Defending the town on high, steep hills fronted by the slow and deep Holston River, the Confederates had grown from only a handful of local militiamen to a force of 2,800. Throughout the day, the battle raged with the Union soldiers actually breaking the intimidating Confederate line and making it into the town, one-third of a mile beyond the river, hoping to destroy the works. Running low on ammunition, however, the Federals had to turn and retreat back out the way they had arrived. As darkness fell, the Federals made camp within sight of the defended overlooks. Scattered across the field between the lines were dozens of dead and wounded Union soldiers. Many of these wounded were from the 5th US Colored Cavalry, some of whom had only been in the army for two weeks. During the night, soldiers from both sides could hear the cries of the wounded, and when the cold fog lifted on the morning of the 3rd, the Confederates, along with the wounded Federals, realized that Burbridge had withdrawn the remainder of his men during the night leaving his casualties to the mercy of the Confederates.³⁷

That morning, some Confederates, among them notorious guerrilla Champ Ferguson, roamed the battlefield killing wounded Federals, especially black ones. A native of the Cumberland Plateau shared by Tennessee and Kentucky, Ferguson had earned a bloody reputation in his home area and seldom ventured away from its security. At Saltville, however, he had joined Confederate colonel George Dibrell's force of Tennesseans. Although several men participated in what became known as the Saltville Massacre, Ferguson was later convicted of killing fifty-three men during the Civil War, including twelve soldiers at Saltville and three prisoners of war while they were convalescing in a hospital on the campus of Emory and Henry College, near Abingdon, Virginia.³⁸

The postwar period in Appalachia was difficult. Retributive justice came in the form of a torrent of lawsuits from Unionists, or at least those claiming to

³⁷ McKnight, *Contested Borderland*, pp. 207–10.

³⁸ *Daily Press and Times* [Nashville, TN], October 11, 1865.

have supported the Union, accusing Confederate sympathizers of violence, theft, and harassment. The Southern Claims Commission granted several payments to Appalachian Unionists whose affidavits were signed by the most credible witnesses to the wartime offenses. The offenders, meanwhile, often returned to their previous positions as leading citizens.³⁹ Others sought new lives elsewhere. Several of Champ Ferguson's lieutenants moved to the vicinity of Granbury, Texas, where they lived out their lives. The notorious Virginia guerrilla Ezekiel Counts first moved to Kansas, where he became a physician, and then to Junction, Texas, where he changed the spelling of his name to a more Germanic Kountz and continued to practice medicine. The postwar lives of many former Confederates, to include those who had worn out their welcomes in their small Appalachian communities, included emigration to one of these western states where they could begin life anew.

In *Reluctant Confederates*, Daniel Crofts suggests that loyalty was so tenuous in the Upper South because border state residents knew that the battle lines would stretch through their communities and contested armies would compete with them for their food, shelter, and supplies.⁴⁰ If that was true, and there is little reason to suspect it was not, then Appalachia had to be the borderland's borderland. That meant the region's residents occupied one of the most dangerous places in North America during the Civil War. They were literally trying to carve out a living along a boundary so fluid that they often saw both Federals and Confederates on the same day and possibly had these competing ideologies within their family. Moreover, because this border was so dangerous, being able to identify those partisans may have been impossible. To the north and south of Appalachia, the enemy was easily determined, but within it, he could blend into most any situation. One Confederate soldier wrote his mother, "To tell the truth . . . it was almost impossible to tell the loyal from the disloyal."⁴¹ These wartime challenges were not lost in the postwar period. Commercial opportunities often followed the channels of wartime allegiances with Pennsylvania Republicans extending their reach into the timberlands and coal seams of West Virginia, Virginia, and Kentucky, while the region's "otherness" was reinforced by local color writers who helped push Appalachians toward the South using

39 McKnight, *Contested Borderland*, p. 184.

40 Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis*, Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

41 T. Rowland to Dear Mother, October 7, 1863, Rowland Family Papers, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia.

alienation as a common theme. Ultimately, families and communities divided by the war came together tenuously in its aftermath, but the Civil War had broken Appalachia: the region and its people had undergone a terrible experience and, ultimately, had gotten very little out of it – not even the notoriety of a major battle.

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War in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas

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Among the voluminous writing on the American Civil War, the role of the trans-Mississippi theater continues to be misunderstood by many scholars. Usually dismissed as distant and minor, the importance of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas to the overall history of the war has been relegated to the status of sidelight or interesting footnote. Instead, historians need to appreciate the war experience of a region of the Confederacy that contained 1.7 million people, the largest city in the South, and key natural resources. Of all of the states west of the Mississippi, the military campaigns, foreign policy, and national politics playing out in Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana had a significant impact in the history of the war and in the national trajectory that followed.

The trans-Mississippi is a vast and complex region (for more on the trans-Mississippi region in the war's earlier years, see Chapter 4). Several notable authors have tackled the Herculean task of explaining this space, forming more than half of the continental United States at the time. Civil War historian Thomas Cutrer, in his book *Theater of a Separate War: The Civil War West of the Mississippi River, 1861–1865*, takes on the various military campaigns in the region but ultimately concludes that the region was, largely, unimportant to the outcome of the war. Alvin Josephy, better known for his work on Native American topics, wrote *The Civil War in the American West* with a decidedly frontier sensibility and illustrates how the Civil War degraded the lives of indigenous peoples of the West. Both prove sufficient to capture the whole sweep and scope of the conflict in the trans-Mississippi and place it in the larger context of the war.

Other authors have taken on different chunks of the trans-Mississippi. Much ink has been spilled on the early and late campaigns in Missouri along with the terrible guerrilla war in the region, but Arkansas, too, has received significant coverage. Historian Mark Crist, for instance, argues that the state witnessed more than 700 clashes and skirmishes that rent its social



26.1 Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

fabric. Guerrilla actions abounded. The politics of secession in Arkansas also receive treatment, as do the lingering effects and resentments of the war.¹

Louisiana is a complex state, and this is reflected in its Civil War literature. Geographically, it includes three distinct regions, the area roughly from Alexandria north, the Acadiana and the Sugar Parishes to the south, and the Florida Parishes east of the Mississippi. Greater New Orleans constitutes a fourth distinct region. Perhaps the most mature, and the sole comprehensive treatment of Civil War Louisiana remains John D. Winter's *The Civil War in Louisiana*, although the book focuses more on the larger campaigns without much analysis of the unraveling of the old order. Other historians have focused on various regions of Louisiana or on particular campaigns and operations in the Pelican State. New Orleans, perhaps the most important city in the Confederacy before its fall in April 1862, and Shreveport, the headquarters of the Confederate Department of the Trans-Mississippi, receive the most coverage, as does the 1864 Red River campaign. The smaller campaigns and battles and the overturning of the slave-owning elites and its effect on the remaking of Louisiana are just now coming into focus. Its large numbers of enslaved people, complex politics, and cosmopolitan population have also invited scholarly inquiry into how the state transitioned from slavery to freedom.²

Civil War Texas appears to defy comprehensive coverage. No scholarly attempts have been made to cover the sweep and scope of Texas in the Civil War in any depth. Excellent treatments of Texas Unionism and dissent, Texas politics, individual campaigns, and blockade-running abound, but there remains no single significant synthesis of Texas in the Civil War. This hole in the literature is surprising given the key role Texas played in the war both in terms of strategic geography (both domestically and foreign), contribution of manpower to both the Union and Confederacy, and the position it held in the imagination of the Abraham Lincoln administration and many Northern governors as an easily conquerable source of cotton and a way to flank the

- 1 Mark Christ, *Rugged and Sublime: The Civil War in Arkansas* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1994); Michael B. Dugan, *Confederate Arkansas: The People and Policies of a Frontier State in Wartime* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1976); Carl Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2001); Anne J. Bailey, *Civil War Arkansas: Beyond Battles and Leaders* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000); Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas 1861–1874* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003).
- 2 John Winter, *The Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991); Donald S. Frazier, *Fire in the Cane Field* (Abilene, TX: State House Press, 2009), *Thunder across the Swamp* (Abilene, TX: State House Press, 2011), and *Blood on the Bayous* (Abilene, TX: State House Press, 2015).

Confederacy. Texas was also the key to the Southwest, and while there are several excellent treatments of the campaigns in New Mexico and Arizona, few manage to place them in the larger context of the war, or explore the relationship between this theater and the greater operations in the trans-Mississippi.

This uneven coverage in the Civil War literature belies the importance of these states to the outcome of the war and the crafting of the postbellum nation. Texas, with its expansive reservoirs of untapped and undeveloped agricultural wealth, represented the future potential of the United States. The Lone Star State was also the all-weather pathway to the Pacific long sought for the transcontinental railroad. Regaining control of this region would achieve a number of strategic aims: the Confederacy could never be a sea-to-sea nation while at the same time its reestablished Union government could ratify a proposed constitutional amendment abolishing slavery. Likewise, Arkansas was a critical piece in this same puzzle, for many of the same reasons.

Controlling Louisiana was, in many ways, critical to Union victory. New Orleans not only served as the center of capital and banking in the Confederacy, but also guaranteed the value of cotton securities on Confederate bonds. In addition, the stretch of the Mississippi between Port Hudson and Vicksburg served as a transit point for foodstuffs and supplies coming west of the great river. In addition, Louisiana was home to a vast enslaved population that would be easily accessible by military expeditions launched from the Gulf of Mexico or coursing their ways up its various rivers and bayous. These African Americans would be used against their former owners not only as soldiers but also as wage labor serving on US owned and leased plantations. In addition, once Union forces brought Louisiana back into the national fold, this state, too, could give its vote to what would become the Thirteenth Amendment.

Much of Civil War scholarship is predicated on a false assumption. Large armies and heavy casualties do not directly translate into clear importance to the overall outcome of the conflict. Fighting in Virginia and Tennessee, in many ways, was about containing the Confederacy. The fighting in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas was about destroying the very premise of the upstart nation. Of course, none of this was clear in the nebulous months surrounding the secession of the southern states.

Each of these states had peculiarities which would influence their role in the war. Louisiana, with a population of 376,000 free inhabitants and 332,000

enslaved, was one of the most important of the southern states in terms of commercial output and political influence. Slavery and its associated economies were critical to its citizens' livelihood. Its population, though, was deeply divided and not every Louisianan shared in the economic prosperity of its landed elite. Alexandria, in nearly the geographic center of the state, represented a cultural and agricultural dividing line as well. North of that point, residents tended to hail from the other Deep South states and practiced mostly cotton agriculture. South of that point lived the Acadians (or Cajuns), a large population of creoles, and quite a few northerners drawn to the massive profits possible from the cultivation and refining of sugar.³

Politically, the people living in the cotton parishes tended to be Democrats, while sugar planters tended to be Whigs. East of the Mississippi, residents of the Florida Parishes cultivated both sugar and cotton but were culturally similar to their neighbors in southern Mississippi and Alabama. The southwestern pine forests of Louisiana harbored scattered settlements of poor whites and Acadians with an established independent temperament.

Geographically, Louisiana had several key features of strategic importance. The Mississippi River and the riparian parishes dominated commerce and agricultural activity in the states. The Red River, stretching from Shreveport to its junction with the Mississippi near Simmesport, gave access to a fertile valley in the interior of Louisiana that reliably yielded bumper cash and consumer crops. The swampy Atchafalaya Basin split the southern portion of Louisiana into a corridor of land along the Mississippi and another that blended into coastal prairies that extended into Texas. Farther south, Bayou Lafourche meandered through a level country that proved perfect for sugar cultivation. New Orleans, and its hinterlands, were remote from the rest of Louisiana but connected by river, bayou, and, increasingly, rail with the rest of the states. Its location near the Gulf of Mexico and the mouth of the Mississippi made it the most populous city in the south, and the most important economically.

Texas remained a sparsely populated frontier state. Its 422,000 free inhabitants and 183,000 enslaved laborers lived mostly in the forests of east Texas but towns also dotted the Blackland Prairies to the west and the Coastal Prairie from Beaumont to Corpus Christi. Geographically, Texas was huge, encompassing 269,000 square miles, but more than half of the state was

3 John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Freedom in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

effectively uninhabited except by small bands of Indians numbering fewer than 15,000 at any given time. This vast domain had few roads and only a nascent railroad that connected key coastal cities. The distances in Texas, coupled with its lack of infrastructure, made the state more of a potential giant than an actual leviathan. Cultural diversity also made Texas a less cohesive state. Settlers from the Upper South dominated in the north, while immigrants from the Deep South populated the eastern and central part of the state. German immigrants clustered northwest of Houston and in the Texas Hill Country. Texas held a critical strategic position. Its trails heading west connected the rest of the nation with New Mexico Territory and California beyond, making Texas the pathway to the Pacific Ocean. The state was also the gatekeeper to Mexico, the most critical international boundary in the United States.⁴

Like Texas, Arkansas was still developing its potential. A frontier state as well, Arkansan cotton planters dominated its central prairies, the valley of the Arkansas River, the valley of the Washita and White rivers, and the important counties along the Mississippi River. In the hills and mountains of northern Arkansas, hardscrabble farmers dominated. In the sparsely populated southwest, smaller cotton farms had taken hold but lacked the size and scope of the larger plantations along the rivers. The state had 324,000 free inhabitants, and 111,000 enslaved, but the largest concentration of its citizens lay in the east.

Of these three states, Louisiana left the Union first. Just before Christmas 1860, South Carolina seceded, and other Deep South states positioned themselves to do likewise. Determined to make the transition as peaceful as possible, and to maintain control of the process, Louisiana officials ordered state militias to take control of US arsenals and fortifications in the state. On January 9 and 10, these troops did their work, which allowed for the orderly secession of Louisiana on January 26, 1861. Almost immediately, however, the regional fault lines of the state ended any coalescing Confederate consensus. The Sugar Parish and Florida Parish delegates to the secession convention voted to cooperate with other states leaving the Union but refused to join any new nation. The cotton parishes endorsed joining any pro-slavery nation that would emerge from the chaos of secession.

4 Two books that discuss this in depth are Donald S. Frazier, *Blood and Treasure: Confederate Empire in the Southwest* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995) and L. Boyd Finch, *Confederate Pathway to the Pacific: Sherod Hunter and Arizona Territory, C.S.A.* (Tucson: Arizona Historical Society, 1996).

Texas followed. On February 1, the Lone Star State left the Union. A plebiscite confirmed the decision by more than two to one, but pockets of antipathy, if not hostility, for the Confederacy remained in North Texas and among the Germans of the Texas hill country. Even so, state troops immediately moved to seize Federal installations. Nearly a quarter of the standing army of the United States lay in garrisons along the Texas frontier, and getting them to relinquish their forts, camps, and magazines without violence proved difficult. Eventually, Major General David E. Twiggs surrendered all Federal property in the state. Even so, a standoff at Fort Chadbourne nearly sparked a gun battle before couriers could arrive with news of the capitulation.⁵

As was the case in Louisiana, not everyone in Texas embraced secession. Counties with large immigrant populations in the hill country northwest of San Antonio opposed the measure, as did citizens in North Texas. Governor Sam Houston, believing the rise of the new Confederate States of America to be a calamity, refused to take an oath of allegiance to the upstart country. Officials removed him from office. Anti-Confederate sentiment simmered throughout the war.

Arkansans, deeply divided over the disintegration of the United States, waited to see how events transpired. Most of its citizens preferred to remain in the Union, but Governor Henry Massey Rector urged an alignment with the slave-owning states, and pro-Confederate hotspurs seized the state arsenal. Still, Arkansans waited. When Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter, South Carolina, on April 12, 1861, the nature of the rupture changed and President Abraham Lincoln ordered levies of men from each state to suppress the rebellion. On May 6, 1861, Arkansas seceded, its citizens refusing to use force to coerce seceded states to remain in the Union. Still, Unionist sentiments remained vigorous, especially in the mountainous north, and never far from the surface.

With the formation of the Confederacy in February 1861, men from all three of these states answered calls to join the army of the new nation. In Louisiana, strategic concerns shifted most of these recruits toward distant fields including the Panhandle of Florida to contain the Union presence at Fort Pickens in Pensacola, toward Virginia, and toward Memphis, Tennessee.

⁵ There are two competing books of essays on different incidents in Civil War Texas. These include Kenneth W. Howell (ed.), *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy: Texas During the Civil War* (Denton: The University of North Texas Press, 2011), and Charles D. Greer (ed.), *The Fate of Texas: The Civil War and the Lone Star State* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2008).

A small portion of these recruits garrisoned New Orleans and its protective forts, but no sizable Louisiana forces stayed west of the Mississippi. By the end of the war, the Pelican State would contribute around 50,000 men to the Confederate cause. Conversely, some 4,000 white Louisianans served in Union regiments, as did around 20,000 liberated slaves.

Texans took longer to rally to the Confederate cause. Principally this was because of the distances that had to be covered, and few soldiers from the state made it to Virginia or Tennessee. Some of the state's men went back east to serve alongside their cousins in regiments from other states. Most Texas troops, though, converged on Arkansas, the Indian Territory, or went into garrisons on the coast. One brigade of about 3,000 men commanded by Brigadier General Henry Hopkins Sibley mobilized for the invasion of New Mexico. By war's end, about 60,000 Texans served in the Confederate army, while about 1,500 joined the Union cause.

In Arkansas, Southern sympathies concentrated in places including Helena on the Mississippi River, the state capital of Little Rock, and in Washington in the southwest corner of the state. Most of the early regiments and batteries either headed north to counter a perceived Union threat from Missouri and the Indian Territory, or headed toward Confederate forces concentrating in Memphis, Tennessee. A lone regiment of infantry made it to Virginia. Arkansas eventually fielded an estimated 40,000 men for the Confederate army. It would also put more than 10,000 white and an equal number of black soldiers into the ranks of the Union cause.

Initially, the only military threat to these Confederate trans-Mississippi states came from campaigns waged to control the border state of Missouri. The movement of Federal armies under generals Nathaniel Lyon and Franz Sigel threatened to scatter what secessionist forces had gathered in the state, and did drive the pro-Confederate government away, before being checked at the sharp and bloody Battle of Wilson's Creek. The Federals retreated back toward St. Louis and the Missouri River valley, leaving much of the Ozarks as contested country. Both sides pursued limited operations in the region, including the Indian Territory, but seemed content to consolidate their position and await developments. After Wilson's Creek, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas enjoyed a period of respite from the threat of war.

There were, however, reminders. Confederates along the coast of the Western Gulf of Mexico, both in Texas and Louisiana, contended with the presence of Union blockaders and occasional probes of coastal defenses. Troops rallied in San Antonio in the fall of 1861 to reinforce the efforts of secessionists and Confederate forces in the New Mexico Territory, who had

already claimed the southern tier of that province as Confederate Arizona, including the towns of Mesilla and Tucson. Three regiments of mounted troops and three batteries of artillery crossed the expanse of West Texas to make good this claim but failed in their offensive toward Santa Fe after the first of the year.⁶

There were other Confederate disasters that roiled Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas in the spring of 1862. A Union army from Missouri under Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis managed to sidestep a Confederate trap near Fayetteville, Arkansas, and thrashed the Southerners commanded by Major General Earl Van Dorn at the Battle of Pea Ridge on March 7–8. The Confederates fell back into the Arkansas Valley, but events east of the Mississippi forced them to abandon the state to the Federals as officials ordered what veteran troops remained in the region to head toward Memphis and Vicksburg.

The strategic situation left Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas in a state of chaos. The brutal Battle of Shiloh on April 6–7, the fall of New Orleans on April 29, the capture of Corinth on May 30, the fall of Baton Rouge on May 8 and its occupation on May 29, the Union capture of Memphis on June 6, and the first Union attempts against the Confederate positions at Vicksburg indicated a speedy end to the war in the region. It also seemed as though the Federal forces might operate with impunity in the lower Mississippi Valley. Panic began to sweep the Confederacy in general, and secessionists in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas in particular. The Rebel government in Louisiana relocated to Opelousas, and Governor Thomas Overton Moore lamented the weakness of his position.

Confederate conscription laws came into effect at about the same time, however, and changed the nature of the war. Men who had been cool toward Confederate service for the previous year now found themselves reluctantly volunteering for the army, often just ahead of the authorities. In the tangles, forests, and back country of Louisiana, few men remained to answer the summons, though some managed to avoid service by hiding out or running into Union lines. In Arkansas, the time for neutrality had passed and many had to choose sides. The military age men of the state drifted toward the opposing armies and bad blood simmered among the villages and farmsteads across the state. In Texas, farthest away from any Union succor, dozens of new Confederate regiments took shape, their ranks filled with reluctant

⁶ Frazier, *Blood and Treasure*.

soldiers who marched toward service near Little Rock, New Iberia, and Houston.

The Confederacy managed to avoid collapse in the summer of 1862, and military campaigns, although minor, continued in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. Union forces under Brigadier General Thomas Williams abandoned their attempts on Vicksburg and fell back to Baton Rouge; Rebels under Major General John C. Breckinridge followed them there and fought a savage, but inconclusive battle on August 5. The Confederates occupied a high bluff overlooking the Mississippi near a small hamlet called Port Hudson. Meanwhile, the Federals fell back to New Orleans while a small Rebel force under the newly arrived Major General Richard Taylor occupied the Lafourche country.

In Arkansas, the Union army threatened Little Rock. The Confederate state government fled, but newly arrived Texas cavalry impeded the Federal advance, though they were soon brushed aside. Even so, it forced the Northerners to rethink their strategy, and they shifted their march toward the town of Helena and its Mississippi River supply line. As the Federals moved across the northern and central part of the state, they stripped what food and livestock they could from farms and plantations in their path, and self-emancipated slaves followed in their wake. In May, Confederate general Thomas Hindman arrived to reorganize and revitalize Southern efforts after this poor showing.

In Texas, the threat of Union invasion sent secessionists into a frenzy and drove Unionists to extremes to escape their wrath. Some tried to keep quiet and avoid conscription, while others headed to Mexico or New Orleans. Texas Confederates intercepted one such group, more than seventy German settlers from the hill country, and slaughtered them all in what came to be known at the Battle of the Nueces on August 10.

That fall, Union forces surged in Louisiana and Texas. A Federal army under General Godfrey Weitzel drove Taylor's Confederate army out of southern Louisiana in October and established control over all of the Sugar Parishes along the lower Mississippi and along Bayou Lafourche. To hold their gains, laborers built fortifications at Donaldsonville and Brashear City (present-day Morgan City) securing the region and allowing for the transition from slave labor to free to commence. The Confederates dug in near Pattersonville, Louisiana, on the banks of Bayou Teche. In Texas, Federal naval forces pummeled shore batteries all along the coast and captured Galveston, the largest city in the state. Convinced of an imminent invasion, Lone Star Confederates rounded up suspected Unionists, and in North Texas,

executed several dozen in a spasm of sectarian violence that came to be known as the Great Hanging.⁷

There were Confederate stirrings in Arkansas as well. By that December, Major General Hindman had collected an army of more than 12,000 men at Fort Smith besides several thousand troops defending Little Rock. He launched his western army toward Fayetteville to recover that portion of the state and aimed to destroy an isolated Union division in that region. On December 7, his command crashed headlong into the Federals, now reinforced by troops from Missouri and Kansas, at the small hamlet of Prairie Grove between Fayetteville and the border with Indian Territory. The battle was sharp and bloody, but the Rebels eventually withdrew, yielding northwest Arkansas for good and ending any credible Confederate threat to Missouri as well. It also ushered in a period of chaos in the northern counties of the state as civil authority evaporated.

Union forces began gathering in earnest during the winter of 1862 in what promised to be a final offensive to break Confederate control of the lower Mississippi. Forty thousand troops under Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant went into camps in northeast Louisiana and plotted against Vicksburg. Meanwhile, Major General Nathaniel P. Banks led a 30,000-man expedition of nine-months regiments from New England, and newly raised regiments from New York steamed toward New Orleans, reportedly for the invasion of Texas, but in reality to cooperate in the capture of Vicksburg. They reoccupied Baton Rouge in December. A third force gathered in Memphis under the command of Major General John A. McClernand, and in early January he launched a raid up the Arkansas River, backed by ironclad gunboats, to destroy Confederate Fort Hindman at Arkansas Post, capturing nearly 5,000 Rebels in the process.

In Texas, Federal plans met a shocking reverse. A Confederate newcomer to the region, Major General John B. Magruder, swept up available units near Houston and successfully recaptured Galveston in a daring land and sea assault on New Year's morning, 1863. He followed up this shocking victory with another naval triumph off Sabine Pass two weeks later, while the CSS *Alabama*, stalking along the Texas coast, picked off USS *Hatteras* in a swift and humiliating naval duel.⁸

7 For a narrative of this campaign, see Frazier, *Fire in the Cane Field*. See Richard McCaslin, *Tainted Breeze: The Great Hanging at Gainesville* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997) for anti-Unionist violence in North Texas.

8 Edward Cotham, *Battle on the Bay: The Civil War Struggle for Galveston* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1998).

The Confederacy, if a bit late, took notice of the growing importance of the trans-Mississippi states to the overall Confederate bid for independence. In March, Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith arrived in Alexandria, Louisiana to take control of the newly designated Department of the Trans-Mississippi. He immediately went on an inspection of Rebel positions in Arkansas believing this state to be the most important in his jurisdiction. Not everyone agreed. "The Substance of Louisiana and Texas," fumed General Taylor, "was staked against the shadow of Missouri and Northern Arkansas."⁹

The Union forces poised in Louisiana lurched into motion in the spring of 1863. Lieutenant General Grant, gathering reinforcements as we went, bypassed Vicksburg by heading south along the Louisiana shore, then crossed over to the east bank supported by the gunboats of Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter. His campaign into the interior of Mississippi rapidly isolated the Confederate Vicksburg garrison. Meanwhile, Banks had been bloodied in his attempts to defeat the Rebels at Port Hudson and opted instead for a similar bypassing campaign up Bayou Teche and into the interior of southern Louisiana. Smashing Taylor's Confederate army, Banks drove the enemy nearly to Shreveport before reversing course and heading down the Red River and into siege works surrounding Port Hudson.

The Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863, changing the nature of the war in the lower Mississippi Valley. Federal authorities ordered Grant and Banks to raise the overly optimistic figure of 100,000 recruits from the emancipated slaves in the region, and camps of instruction sprang up in Louisiana and Arkansas. Despite these efforts, Union officials eventually resorted to conscription to fill out the ranks but managed to raise only a fraction of the hoped-for army. Even so these measures broke the back of slavery in the region, forcing planters to move their enslaved people to Texas to keep them out of reach of Union armies. The slave population in the Lone Star State rose from around 200,000 to 300,000, mostly in the first half of 1863.¹⁰

Confederate armies trapped in Vicksburg and Port Hudson slowly withered away while their comrades west of the Mississippi struggled to find a way to influence events. General Joseph E. Johnston, ordered by Richmond officials to break the siege of Vicksburg, despaired, begging General Edmund

⁹ As quoted in Frazier, *Thunder across the Swamp*, p. 67.

¹⁰ The immediate effects on Louisiana and Texas are described in some detail in Donald S. Frazier, *Blood on the Bayou: Vicksburg, Port Hudson, and the Trans-Mississippi* (Abilene, TX: State House Press, 2015).

Kirby Smith to make a difference in the strategic situation from the west bank of the Mississippi. His solution was to order perhaps his best unit, the Texas Division under the command of Henry McCulloch, to attack what he supposed was Grant's supply lines on the west bank of the Mississippi at Lake Providence, Milliken's Bend, and Young's Point. The Confederate efforts failed opposite Vicksburg, in part due to the creditable conduct of newly raised black regiments.¹¹

Taylor, furious over what he considered to be a waste of time, blood, and effort, cobbled together a force that overran the Lafourche country. His Texas cavalry and Louisiana infantry captured the important Union depot at Brashear City but failed to carry Fort Butler at Donaldsonville. Even so, Confederate forces spent two weeks upending Union efforts in the region, capturing and returning thousands of newly freed people to slavery. Encouraged despite the odds, Taylor made plans to attack New Orleans, hoping to cross the Mississippi above and below the city with assistance from mounted troops operating in southeastern Louisiana. While he waited for reinforcements, his field artillery effectively interdicted Union supplies heading upriver to the siege of Port Hudson.

Time, though, was running out. In Arkansas, Lieutenant General Theophilus Holmes launched a feeble effort against Union supply lines and ordered nearly 8,000 of his Confederates to head toward the Mississippi. On July 4 these troops assaulted the Union fortifications at Helena but made no headway against the more than 4,000 defenders and retreated after losing some 1,600 casualties. That same day, Vicksburg surrendered, followed by Port Hudson on July 7. Taylor, finding himself in jeopardy of being trapped in the Lafourche country, ordered his troops back across the Atchafalaya River and into the Teche region. Texas general Tom Green delivered a shocking defeat to the pursuing Federals at the Battle of Kochs's Plantation on July 14, buying the necessary time for the Rebels to make good their retreat.

Union armies were now free to launch a decisive campaign into the trans-Mississippi. President Abraham Lincoln wanted efforts made to restore the Union flag in Texas as a counterstroke against French designs on Mexico, while General-in-Chief Henry Halleck wanted Banks and Grant to finish the destruction of enemy forces and institutions in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. Severely demoralized and now cut off from instructions from Richmond, Confederate control seemed ready to collapse amid threats of

¹¹ See Linda Barnikle, *Milliken's Bend: A Civil War Battle in History and Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

mutiny and chronic desertions. Lincoln also wanted Louisiana and Arkansas readmitted to the Union as quickly as possible with sympathetic Unionist governments.¹²

In contrast, Confederate authority in the area tottered. General Edmund Kirby Smith received word from President Jefferson Davis that the trans-Mississippi, which for all intents and purposes now amounted to southwest Arkansas, Louisiana west of the Atchafalaya, and Texas, were on their own. Desperate to shore up what he could, Kirby Smith ordered a general amnesty for deserters and those who avoided conscription. He also called out state troops and home guards to enforce Confederate law. As a final measure, he confirmed Union suspicions about French intentions by attempting to form an alliance between his stump of the Confederacy and their puppet regime in Imperial Mexico.

Circumstances conspired to overturn Union efforts. Savage heat and a significant lack of rain in Louisiana hampered Union attempts to mobilize an effective campaign, and malaria and dysentery crippled their forces. New England regiments raised for just nine-months' service went home. Grant suffered a severe injury in New Orleans in a horseback accident, and a surprise reverse of Union forces at the Battle of Sabine Pass on September 8 stymied Federal attempts to coordinate efforts from Memphis, Vicksburg, Natchez, and New Orleans. The Union disaster at the Battle of Chickamauga diverted troops slated for the expedition into the trans-Mississippi toward Chattanooga, Tennessee, effectively crippling the overall campaign. Despite superior numbers and resources in Louisiana, Union armies failed to make headway against stiffening resistance while politicians dithered on the issue of reconstructing a Unionist government in the state.¹³

Arkansas provided the only good news for Federal authorities. Union troops marched out of Helena and Memphis and converged to drive Confederates out of Little Rock and into the southwestern portion of the state, with Washington becoming the new Rebel capital. Confederate forces

12 Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols., Roy P. Basler (ed.), (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953–5), vol. VI pp. 364–5; Halleck to Banks, August 6, 1863, United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols., index, and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series I, volume 26, part I, p. 672.

13 For a book-length treatment of the Sabine Pass campaign, see Ed Cotham, *Sabine Pass: The Confederacy's Thermopylae* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2004).

abandoned the Arkansas River valley entirely, allowing Union authority to reassert itself in the state.

Eventually, General Banks did what he could with what he had at hand. He drove Taylor and his men back toward Alexandria in what became a grand feint; meanwhile he diverted more than half of his troops to invade Texas via Brownsville to establish a military presence on the Rio Grande. From there, he ordered an advance up the Texas coast to threaten Houston and Galveston, believing these towns to be the key to winning west of the Mississippi. Despite impressive gains, Halleck grew impatient with Banks's management of these efforts, and ordered him to abandon his Texas campaign and refocus his efforts on the Red River valley in Louisiana as the effort most likely to yield favorable results for the government's political and strategic goals. The tangled and confused Union policy, especially in Louisiana and Texas, provided Confederate leaders some relief.¹⁴

The winter of 1863–4 passed with important gains for the Union war effort in the lower Mississippi. Although Confederates continued to harass shipping on the great river, Union garrisons and gunboats proved more than capable of keeping the enemy at bay. In the meantime, Unionist governments coalesced, with Arkansas reorganizing in January and Louisiana in February 1864. All that remained, many believed, was for the Confederate military authority to collapse for the war in that region to come to an end. General Kirby Smith's headquarters in Shreveport, Louisiana, became the target for what most Union authorities hoped would be the last, decisive campaign.

The Red River campaign of March–May 1864 had all the makings for just such a crushing blow. General Banks, yielding to pressure from Washington, moved up the Red River to Alexandria with more than 35,000 troops escorted by an array of gunboats and transports. Meanwhile, Major General Frederick Steele led a force of 7,000 men out of Little Rock toward Camden to uproot the Confederates in that portion of Arkansas before converging with Banks at Shreveport.

The terrain and Confederate forces conspired against the Federal efforts. In Arkansas, a lengthening supply line across this sparsely settled and little improved part of the state impeded Steele's efforts. Meanwhile, Banks and his

¹⁴ See Stephen A. Dupree, *Planting the Union Flag in Texas: The Campaigns of Major General Nathaniel P. Banks in the West* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008). And an interesting treatment of the interplay between the civil war in Mexico and its effects on the US Civil War is Andrew E. Masich, *Civil War in the Southwest Borderlands* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2018).

command moved north past Natchitoches, but clever Confederate engineers dropped the water levels of the Red River, impeding the Union fleet. General Taylor, having given ground since abandoning Alexandria to the enemy, laid an ambush for Banks just south of Mansfield, Louisiana using his Texas and Louisiana troops. On April 8, his army defeated the Union column in a stunning rout that inflicted 2,400 casualties. The Federals rallied the following day at Pleasant Hill and fought the Confederates – now reinforced with Arkansas and Missouri troops shifted south from Camden – to a standstill. Even so, Banks ordered a retreat to Natchitoches, then to Alexandria. In Arkansas, Steele headed back toward Little Rock.¹⁵

The Confederates pursued both enemy armies. Despite several sharp encounters, the Rebels failed to inflict significant damage to either while being bloodied themselves. By the end of May, Steele was back in Little Rock and Banks and his army were back on the Mississippi. Lieutenant General Grant, having succeeded General Halleck as general-in-chief, ordered troops tangled up in these wilderness campaigns in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas shifted to theaters of operations where they would prove more useful. Federals would be content to garrison the parts of these states they held but would launch no additional offensives.

Unmolested, Confederate authorities reasserted themselves where they could. Militarily, General Kirby Smith spent the rest of 1864 rebuilding his armies, perfecting supply lines and cotton routes through Mexico to equip his troops, and crafting an economy to support the war effort. His subordinates were ready to launch offensives of their own that summer, but Kirby Smith restrained them, effectively giving up whatever territory had been lost and digging in where he stood. General Taylor, still eager to move his veterans into southern Louisiana where he had campaigned the previous year, quit in disgust, transferring to command in Mississippi, East Louisiana, and Alabama. Eventually, Kirby Smith did authorize General Sterling Price to lead an army out of Arkansas in a fast-moving invasion of Missouri. This raid raged through the fall, but eventually fell apart in the face of overwhelming Union resistance.

15 There are many treatments of the Red River campaign. The pacesetter is Ludwell Johnson, *The Red River Campaign: Politics and Cotton in the Civil War* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1993), a new offering on the social history of the campaign, Henry O. Robertson, *The Red River Campaign and Its Toll: 69 Bloody Days in Louisiana, March–May, 1864* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2016), and a number of offerings by Gary Joiner, including his most recent, *The Red River Campaign: The Union's Final Attempt to Invade Texas* (Abilene, TX: State House Press, 2014).

Louisiana and Arkansas continued to play an important role politically, even if the war had moved on to other theaters. Both reconvened Unionist governments by the summer of 1864 which outlawed slavery in the states, and both aided in the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, which outlawed slavery nationally. Louisiana ratified the amendment on February 17, 1865, and Arkansas on April 14, 1865. Neither secessionist nor Unionist government, though, could claim the full allegiance of white citizens in either state.

Although major campaigns may have ceased, in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, Civil War related violence did not. Both Unionist and Confederate guerrillas operated in southern Louisiana and across Arkansas, and the oppressive hand of the Confederate home guards and state troops brought terror to many isolated farmsteads. Minor military actions continued but merely added to the death toll while fueling resentments and calls for vengeance that would remain fresh for generations. The presence of thousands of black troops in garrisons in Arkansas and Louisiana only added new aggravations to the simmering hatred fostered by years of war. The last engagement fought by troops still answering to Confederate authority occurred on May 12–13, 1865, at Palmito (or Palmetto) Ranch, Texas. This dustup near the banks of the Rio Grande amounted to little more than a skirmish and an embarrassing check to Union forces sent in from the coast to occupy Brownsville.¹⁶

By then, Confederate efforts at building a nation had unraveled. Military commands dissolved, civilians and deserters ransacked government warehouses, and most of the soldiers went home. On May 26, General Kirby Smith formally surrendered all remaining Confederate forces west of the Mississippi. Even so, isolated garrisons continued to stay in place well into June as Federal troops and authorities moved into the region to restore order.¹⁷

Of all the Confederate trans-Mississippi states, Texas defied Union attempts to invade and restore authority. As a result, Unionists languished for four years and the population of the state swelled with the

16 See Jeffrey Hunt, *The Last Battle of the Civil War: Palmetto Ranch* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2002). Deborah Liles and Angela Boswell have compiled an impressive anthology of Texas women's voices with *Women in Civil War Texas: Diversity and Dissidence in the Trans-Mississippi* (Denton: The University of North Texas Press, 2016).

17 While not just about Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, an important book on the subject is Robert Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy: The Trans-Mississippi South, 1863–1865* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991).

arrival of refugees from neighboring states who often came with enslaved laborers in tow. On June 19, 1865, General Gordon Granger arrived with a Federal garrison for Galveston, Texas, and read the Emancipation Proclamation, the first official word that slaves in Texas received that they were now free people. This “Juneteenth” event has since evolved into a national celebration and expression of the passage of African Americans from bondage to freedom.

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War in the West

KEVIN ADAMS

While actual clashes between Union and Confederate forces occurred in the American West, residents of that enormous region's landscapes during the war years can be forgiven for using America's internecine conflict to advance other interests and agendas. Although there can be little doubt of the intimate connection between westward expansion and the politics of slavery as well as the centrality of the West to the futures imagined by both Northern and Southern statesmen, the military conflict that dominated the country east of the Mississippi River barely touched the region. Little wonder that both scholars and ordinary Americans interested in the Civil War have traditionally spoken of the "western theater" in a manner that might confuse uninitiated readers.¹ Yet one should not think that the American Civil War was irrelevant to westerners or that the West had no impact on the struggle between North and South. In fact, the American Civil War sharpened existing divisions within western states and territories, and provided the larger context for quickening transformations in the region's politics, culture, economy, and society. At the same time, the West, though peripheral to the main theaters of war, loomed large in the strategic thinking of Union and Confederate leaders. Thus, an examination of the American West during the war years exposes tensions and outright contradictions: simultaneously committed and disengaged, westerners found that the conflict provided the perfect cover to address their perennial interest in controlling the pace and extent of Euro-American expansion. They could do so, moreover, wearing the uniforms of a federal government that before the war had sought to check or soften their expansionistic tendencies, an irony that was not lost upon contemporary observers.

1 See, for example, the definition of "West" employed in Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

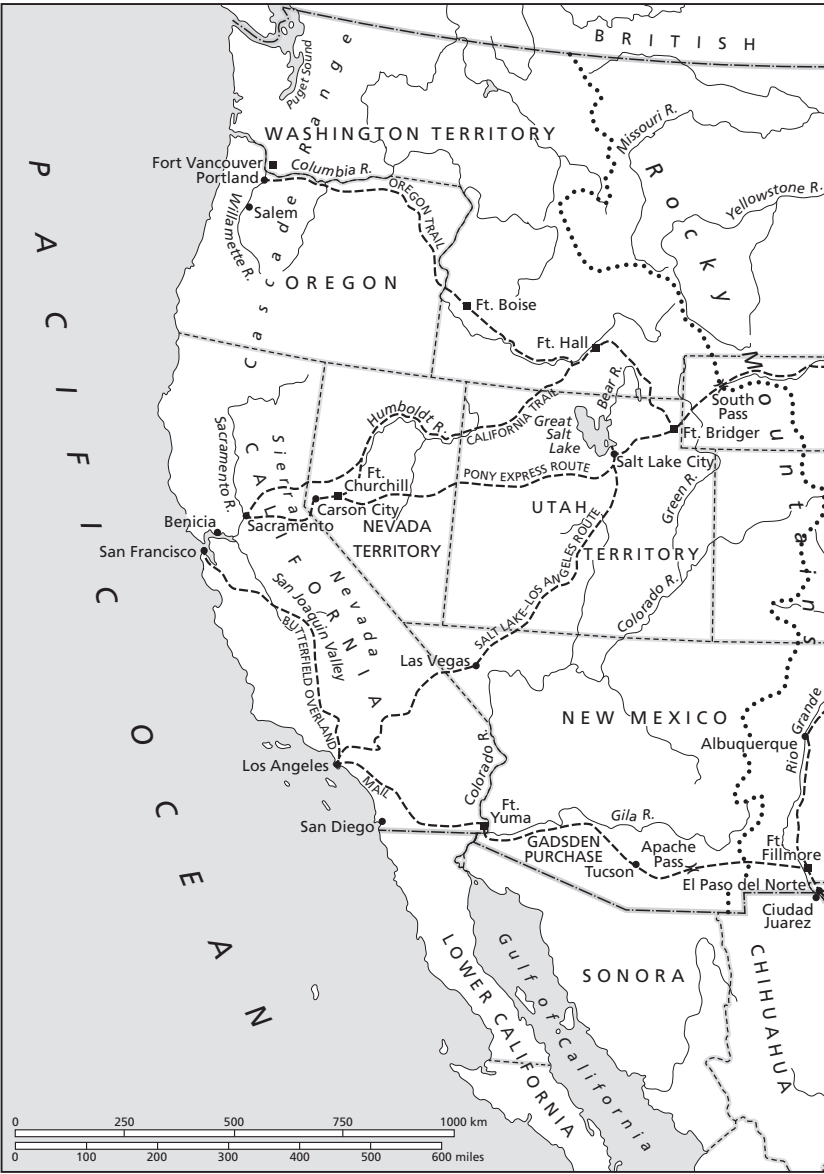
To think about the relationship between the Civil War and the American West is to encounter some well-traveled paths in the historical literature. A site of both dreams and violent conquest, the West has been a focal point of historical study since the professionalization of the discipline in the late nineteenth century.² With the rise of the New Western History in the last decades of the twentieth century, however, specialists in western history have not only more or less inverted Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier paradigm, but they have moved closer to the concerns of specialists in the Civil War, who, during the rise of the New Western History, were just as influenced by the methodologies of social and cultural history. Today, both camps of historians devote a large percentage of their scholarly excavations to questions about the power of race or racism, the definition and extent of rights or liberty, and the reach and consequences of state power.

For all this, historians have, by and large, treated these subfields as separate entities. To be sure, historians have accorded central status to the West in explaining the origins of the war because of the significance of the territorial expansion of slavery to nineteenth-century Americans. "American empire-building," carried out mainly in the American West, a recent overview reminds us, "inevitably provoked multiple conflicts over race and rights," including a long-lasting struggle waged by politicians on both sides to control "the meaning of national expansion." Starting with congressional debates over the annexation of Texas in the 1830s and 1840s, and continuing with the fierce contest over the fate of territories acquired from Mexico during the Mexican–American War, the battle over the disposition of western lands would serve as "the political source of the Civil War."³

Despite Civil War historians' acknowledgment of the West's role in causing the war, they tend not only to quickly move past it, but also to narrow their chronology to the war years and their spatial focus to the territory east of the Mississippi River. The benefits of this approach are

2 Those seeking a basic introduction to the historiography of the West should start with Gerald Nash, *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890–1990* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1991); a more focused reading of Frederick Jackson Turner and his legacy can be found in Kerwin Lee Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890–1990* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1997), pp. 58–128.

3 Virginia Scharff, "Introduction," in Virginia Scharff (ed.), *Empire and Liberty: The Civil War and the West*, (Oakland: The University of California Press: 2015), p. 4; Michael Morrison, *Slavery and the American West* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 5–6. Leonard Richards, *The California Gold Rush and the Origins of the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007) forcefully argues that the battle over California's future status as a free or slave state represented an important step on the road to war.



27.1 War in the West. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.



27.I (cont.)

apparent in the rich and nuanced histories of the war in the East that occupy bookshelves across the country. A laser focus on the years 1861–5, however, works against a full understanding of the relationship between the Civil War and the West, for the points of connection between the two fields require an exploration of the region's pre- and postwar history. Remaining sensitive to the particular history of the West as well as the particular history of the Civil War era is easier when one conceives of the "Civil War in the West," not as an isolated, distinct, and chronologically bounded struggle, but as an expansive moment that reinforced, modified, and overturned larger themes that link the history of the West with the history of the nation.

Moreover, to understand the war in the West, one has to be prepared to see a different war. What makes the Civil War so grand in American history – its scale and carnage – simply does not apply to the war in the West. A Confederate invasion of New Mexico, ended only by a clash of arms at Glorieta Pass, did take place in the first year of the war, but for most of the war, the military threat posed by the Confederate States of America against western states and territories was negligible. Similarly, one finds Confederate sympathizers living in the West on the eve of the war, part and parcel of the Democratic Party's dominance in antebellum western state politics of the 1850s. Their presence during the war annoyed loyal civil and military officials throughout the conflict, but the threat they posed never reached a critical mass. Instead of conforming to our traditional understanding of the war, in the West the story of the Civil War is more about space (both real and metaphorical) than secession. In short, the war provided space for residents of the West – both Euro-American and Native American – to pursue their own agendas with little federal attention. As a consequence, the war in the West devolved into a series of brutal (and familiar) conflicts between whites and Indians from the Canadian to the Mexican borders. Resting on already established antebellum patterns of violence, the Civil War in the West speaks to deeper continuities in nineteenth-century western history, as well as a faraway war's ability to impact the farthest reaches of the American nation. Pursuing every possible connection is beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather, its heart concentrates on one particular thematic connection – the power of local actors and environments to reshape larger forces set in motion by the war – in an attempt to demonstrate how exploring the junction of the West with the Civil War can provide insights for both fields.

First, some basics. As the "secession winter" turned into outright conflict in the spring of 1861, federal authority in the states and territories of the Far

West (California, Oregon, Kansas, Texas, New Mexico Territory, Colorado Territory, Dakota Territory, Nebraska Territory, Nevada Territory, Utah Territory, and Washington Territory) resided largely in the hands of presidential appointees to territorial offices and a military presence of around 10,000 soldiers scattered throughout the region in several dozen camps, forts, and arsenals. For most of these territories' histories, the federal officials overseeing their affairs were Democrats, a natural consequence of that party's domination of the White House (and hence of federal patronage) during the antebellum period. More than a reflection of the Spoil System's workings, however, Democratic control of the West both matched the demographic realities of western migration (40% of whites in California, by far the region's most populous state or territory, hailed from slave states, for example) and suited a party that had placed enormous emphasis on the centrality of the West in the future evolution of American slavery.⁴ Even states like California and Oregon, which had voted Republican in 1860, did so under the press of unique circumstances, as the combined vote totals of Democrats Stephen Douglas and John Breckinridge exceeded 60 percent in both states. California, in particular, not only had an established history of being ruled by Democrats sympathetic to slavery (the so-called "Chivs," Southern Democrats who had moved to the state in the wake of the Gold Rush), but its notional status as a free state had been made a mockery of by the state's promotion of various forms of unfree labor that weighed most heavily on California's Indian population.⁵

Complicating matters further, the most visible symbol of federal authority in the West, the US Army, was on the eve of the war an overstretched and often undertrained force mostly garrisoned in areas far removed from the battlefields we most associate with the Civil War. While the 1855 addition of

4 Alvin Josephy, *The Civil War in the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 233. Richards, *The California Gold Rush*, explores pro-slavery forces' interest in making newly acquired California into a slave state. Failing in this endeavor, Southerners, Richards argues, turned their attention to other western territories like Kansas and New Mexico.

5 The best examination of unfree labor in California is Stacey Smith, *Freedom's Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), though Smith's study fails to integrate her analysis of California's unfree labor regime with the considerable scholarship on the evolution of chattel slavery in the antebellum South and the transition to nominally free labor after the Civil War. A focused examination of slavery in California can be found in Michael Maglieri, "Free State Slavery: Bound Indian Labor and Slave Trafficking in California's Sacramento Valley, 1850–1864," *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 81, no. 2 (2012): 155–92. Forms of unfree labor with their roots in the Hispanic past also appeared in the region; see William S. Kiser, *Borderlands of Slavery: The Struggle over Captivity and Peonage in the American Southwest* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

four regiments to the US Army's combat force under the leadership of Secretary of War Jefferson Davis may have represented "the largest peacetime expansion" of the army since the early nineteenth century and the army's budget increased throughout the mid-1850s, the impact of these developments has been overstated. A fair chunk of the growth in the army's budget stemmed from a 30 percent pay increase for all ranks in 1857, and the expansion of the budget was reversed by 1859, leaving Secretary of War John Floyd complaining in that year that "neither the strength of the army nor the expenditures for its support have been enlarged in proportion to the growth of the population, the extension of the frontiers requiring defense, or the cost of most articles of military supply." As for the size of the force itself, even with an authorized strength of 18,000 soldiers, Secretary of War Floyd was quick to remind readers that barely more than 11,000 soldiers were ready for service at any given time, leaving a military force the impossible task of carrying out a mission that would have strained an army "five times its numerical force." To have actually garrisoned and equipped the antebellum army at its authorized strength would have, in reality, exploded the army's budget given the high cost of military logistics west of the Mississippi.⁶ Not surprisingly, the regular army's campaigns against Native Americans in the decades before the war would not have been possible without the significant addition of state troops and local volunteers. Importantly, men serving in these latter forces often believed that solving the "Indian problem" required letting nature take its course, by which they meant embracing a form of expansion that approached extermination, perhaps even genocide.⁷

The presence of partisan Democrats in the regular army's officer corps also posed a challenge to the new Lincoln administration. While most officers resembled Whigs in their embrace of an activist central state, Democrats not

6 Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 216; United States War Department, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1859* (Washington, D.C.: George Bowman, 1860), vol. 11, pp. 8–10. Karp leans heavily on the importance of military expansion to pro-slavery Democrats, but fails to trace the impact of pro-expansionist policies upon the army "on the ground." It should also be noted the expansion of the regular army actually began in the Whig administrations of Taylor and Fillmore. Durwood Ball, *Army Regulars on the Western Frontier, 1848–1861* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), pp. XXI–XXII provides a concise overview of revisions to the army's authorized strength during the 1850s.

7 Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846–1873* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016) and "Reexamining the American Genocide Debate: Meaning, Historiography, and New Methods," *American Historical Review*, vol. 120, no. 1 (February 2015): 98–139.

only held several command slots in the western army, but President Franklin Pierce had used the mid-1850s' expansion of the army to directly commission dozens of Democrats directly from civilian life.⁸ In short order, concerns about the loyalty of some of these commanders would be borne out. Before Fort Sumter, Major General David Twiggs, having assumed command of the Department of Texas in December of 1860, surrendered approximately 15 percent of the US Army, thousands of weapons, over a million dollars in supplies, 1,200 horses, and over \$50,000 in gold and silver to Texas authorities. While some of the blame for what happened in Texas can be assigned to a dithering Buchanan administration, Twiggs not only acted before Texas seceded and failed to resist the impromptu force of Texans threatening him, but had early on warned his superiors that he would surrender everything in his command should Texas leave the Union. Just one of the nearly 30 percent of regular army officers who resigned their commissions to join the Confederate army, Twiggs died shortly after being cashiered from the army for his treasonous conduct. None of the 2,500 enlisted men he handed over to Texas officials deserted to the Confederacy during their captivity, however, reflecting the overwhelming loyalty of the nation's common soldiers during the secession crisis. (Fewer than thirty enlisted men in the regular army joined the Confederacy.)⁹ Where Texas led, others would follow as newly empowered Confederate authorities sought to replace American power in the region. These ambitions, however, would never be realized, with the Confederacy's most serious campaign to capture the Southwest, its invasion of New Mexico, being repulsed in 1862.

With the wartime withdrawal of federal authority from large swaths of the West came a power vacuum that western volunteers were more than eager to fill. On the surface more numerous than the regulars – 15,000 state troops occupied the Far West for the Union in 1862, nearly 20,000 by war's end – these volunteers represented minuscule percentages of the male populations of their home states and territories. With less than 5 percent of the nation's white residents residing in the trans-Mississippi West in 1860, the Union volunteers in the West were both a racial and political minority.¹⁰ Because the federal government abandoned many frontier forts during the initial

8 Robert Wooster, *The American Military Frontiers: The United States Army in the West, 1783–1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), p. 138.

9 Ball, *Army Regulars*, pp. 191–2; Robert Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848–1865* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1967), pp. 211–12; Josephy, *Civil War in the West*, pp. 23–7.

10 Josephy, *Civil War in the West*, p. 232; Wooster, *American Military Frontiers*, p. 164; Durwood Ball, "Liberty, Empire, and Civil War in the American West," in Virginia

phase of the Civil War, Euro-American military forces consolidated into a smaller geographical footprint. Consolidation not only provided a dizzying array of American Indians increased room to maneuver, but gave them hope that the crisis of war in the East might allow them to reverse the tide of American settlement. Importantly, western settlers, politicians, and volunteer soldiers could read the nearly complete disappearance of federal power in much the same way as Native Americans: the departure of the regular army, less an ally to settlers than popularly supposed, allowed the barely over one million white residents of the western states and territories to enjoy a monopoly on the use of military force. While the Union's Civil War was, essentially, a war waged by state volunteers who were federalized for the duration of the war, one should not automatically assume the blue uniforms worn by volunteer regiments in the West represented a unity of purpose with their eastern peers. Outside of those units preoccupied with endemic guerrilla conflict in Kansas and Missouri, western regiments treated the Civil War not as a conflict designed to preserve the Union "as it was" or emancipate the slave, but as an opportunity to expand Euro-American control of the trans-Mississippi West through "brutal, destructive, and lethal operations against Indian communities" in the region. Elliott West's description of Colorado volunteers can stand in for the region as a whole: they were "mostly locals with a personal stake in keeping matters under control, and there were more of them than there had been regular army troops."¹¹

Significantly, these operations reflected an intensification of antebellum patterns of violence, not a novel development traceable to the emergence of the wartime state; as Khal Schneider's insightful review of the continuities between Indian policy in the antebellum era and the Civil War points out, "the Civil War did not bring American imperialism to the West," because that imperialism had already manifested in the last decades of the antebellum era. Thanks to "the Army's reluctance to abet schemes of extermination" in places like the Pacific Coast, "citizens took matters into their own hands," thus provoking the Indian Wars that federal commanders sought to avoid.

Scharff (ed.), *Empire and Liberty*, p. 67. The six northern states with the lowest rates of military service in the Civil War all came from the West; only Nevada, whose small population mobilized during the war to contain Paiute, Bannock, and Shoshone advances in the northern part of the state, and Kansas, overrun with guerrillas, approached the national average.

- ¹¹ Ball, "Liberty, Empire, and Civil War," p. 66; Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1998), p. 288.

Even though in some locales, as military historian Robert Utley observes, an army “unwilling to embrace extermination policies” completely ceded the military initiative to state troops, military confrontation with Americans of all stripes defined the Native American experience in the 1840s and 1850s. In those decades, engagements between the US Army and Native Americans tripled (to 121), and army casualties quadrupled; as a result, long before Fort Sumter, in places as disparate as Kansas, Texas, northern California, and the Pacific Northwest, state-sanctioned violence against Native Americans came to dominate western landscapes. “The Civil War’s contribution to Indian history was not violent invasion,” Schneider points out, for “that was underway, and it was already a catastrophe.” Instead, the “harsh atmosphere of the Civil War emergency” did something more subtle. As Alvin Josephy’s synthesis of the Civil War in the West argues, the war allowed locals to pursue “an era of stern suppression of the tribes” without fear of federal fetters because Indians’ “efforts to protect their lands and freedom – and even to avoid starvation and to survive” could always be depicted “as interfering with the general war effort and giving aid and comfort to the Confederate enemy.”¹² Far from reflecting the march of an ambitious imperial state, the Civil War in the West illustrates almost the exact opposite point: understandably preoccupied with the war against the Confederate State of America, the US government subcontracted its Indian policy to westerners, who, with their hands finally on the levers of power, took the opportunity presented by the war to aggressively pursue local conquests without concern for larger consequences, and with little oversight or attention from Washington.

One especially infamous encounter between white forces and American Indians, the November 1864 Sand Creek Massacre in Colorado Territory, illustrates these processes well. In it, a combined force of 700 cavalry troopers, many of them 100-day volunteers whose terms of enlistment were expiring, launched an unprovoked attack on a peaceful camp of Arapahoe and Cheyenne Indians. Recruited “solely to fight Indians in the present crisis,” these units had nothing to do with the conflict between North and South and everything to do with Colorado’s continuing quest to seize Indian lands and resources for white development. Led by Colonel John Chivington, a Union hero at the Battle of Glorieta Pass with well-known political ambitions, this

12 Khal Schneider, “‘Distinctions that Must Be Preserved’: On the Civil War, American Indians, and the West,” *Civil War History*, vol. 62, no. 1 (March 2016): 39–42, 53; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 101, 210; Wooster, *American Military Frontiers*, p. 161; Josephy, *Civil War in the West*, p. 231.

force exploited winter weather and vacillating strategic directives, and violated a commander's promise "that no war would be waged against" the Cheyenne and Arapahoe inhabitants of a camp on Sand Creek, who had voluntarily surrendered themselves to military authorities, to launch a devastating assault. Proclaiming their actions retribution for the earlier deaths of white settlers, Chivington and his men used artillery to shell Black Kettle's camp, ignored those Indians trying to put an end to the hostilities, and moved into the camp, killing all they came across, mostly women and children. In this they followed Chivington's instructions "not to take any prisoners" to the letter. Many of the over 100 dead, a later federal investigation would conclude, had been mutilated by the Colorado volunteers, with some of the Indians' body parts being taken for souvenirs.¹³

Yet, Colonel Chivington's victory would be embattled from the start. Almost as soon as word of the Coloradans' actions had spread, a firestorm of criticism fell on the general's head, criticism from both within Colorado (which now faced the prospect of unending Indian war) and without. Immediate investigations by both the army and Congress soon made what happened at Sand Creek notorious ("He deliberately planned and executed a foul and dastardly massacre which would have disgraced the veriest savage among those who were the victims of his cruelty," the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War concluded), but Chivington and his men escaped punishment. Being volunteers whose terms of service expired shortly after the attack, they remained beyond the reach of military justice, making yet another disadvantage of the Federal reliance on locals to wage war in the West apparent. In truth, however, the focus on Chivington has obscured the lack of federal oversight that allowed Chivington, and others like him, to "enjoy," as one scholar puts it, "large autonomy indeed."¹⁴

In the moment, in fact, the power wielded by local volunteers could reflect something other than Euro-American dominance. Far from striking a decisive blow, Chivington had operated from a position of weakness, as his commanders' vague and shifting instructions make clear. Driven from pillar to post by competing imperatives – protect settlers with a small, relatively immobile, and poorly trained force equally liable to be destroyed out on the open or withdraw into strongpoints unable to protect Euro-

13 West, *The Contested Plains*, pp. 287–307; Utey, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, p. 295 n28. On the convoluted backstory to Sand Creek, see Pekka Hämäläinen, "Reconstructing the Great Plains: The Long Struggle for Sovereignty and Dominance in the Heart of the Continent," *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vol. 6, no. 4 (December 2016): 487–8.

14 Utey, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 285, 297.

American miners and farmers – Colorado officials determined to expand the swath of American settlement in the territory could start wars but they did not possess the capacity to bring them to a close. “To his dying day Chivington insisted that Sand Creek had pacified the Plains Tribes,” Ari Kelman’s award-winning study of Sand Creek observes, but the opposite is more nearly true. Several more years of conflict on the Central and Southern Plains would follow in the wake of Sand Creek, making clear that “indigenous resilience in the midst of an expanding American state” would mark the postwar decades. Here, the extermination of the bison by commercial hide hunters and subsequent destruction of Native Americans’ political economy did more to quell Native Americans’ dogged and often successful military resistance than the military prowess of American soldiers.¹⁵

At the same time, the other set of locals in the West, American Indians, took advantage of the withdrawal of the federal presence as much as volunteer troops. North of Colorado, the withdrawal of federal power sparked the bloodiest Indian war of the Civil War, as the Sioux rolled back years of Euro-American settlement in Minnesota through the use of military force. Having seen a dramatic drop in the number of bison in the 1840s and 1850s on the Northern Plains, the westernmost grouping of the Sioux Nation, the Lakota, began to expand west, displacing other Native peoples, and defying the American pretense that their lands were part of the sovereign United States.¹⁶ Their eastern Sioux peers – the Yankton and Dakota, meanwhile, found themselves in dire straits as Euro-American settlement in Minnesota and the newly organized Dakota Territory continued to grow at exponential rates, absorbing formerly Native land and resources. Removed to a reservation in eastern Minnesota in the late 1850s, the Dakota faced starvation and suffering thanks to the usual corruption in the Indian Office. In August of 1862, with federal forces withdrawn from the state, the Dakota, led by a headman who had engaged in treaty-making with the

15 Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 37; Hämäläinen, “Reconstructing the Great Plains,” 482. A good primer on the postwar battle for the Southern Plains is Robert Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866–1891* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 111–29, 142–62; the best study of Native resilience in the face of American expansion during the nineteenth century is Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

16 The classic account here is Richard White, “The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Journal of American History*, vol. 65, no. 2 (September 1978): 319–43. Ostler, *Plains Sioux*, and Hämäläinen, “Reconstructing the Great Plains,” 496–502 show that treaties ostensibly recognizing American power on the plains typically represented victories for Lakota interests.

Americans since the early 1850s (Little Crow), finally struck back. Targeting essentially undefended frontier settlements, the eastern Sioux and their allies killed more than 600 Americans within a week. A hurried defense of the region, organized by the War Department, and spearheaded by Major General John Pope, managed to turn back continued assaults and recover Euro-American and mixed-race captives through diplomacy. Eventually, over 300 Sioux would be sentenced to death for their role in the war by “a ‘military commission’ of dubious legality,” with just over three dozen receiving that sentence in a mass hanging in Mankato, Minnesota. Many of the Dakota most invested in resistance, however, well aware of their probable fates should they surrender, had fled to the west and joined other Sioux bands. There they would continue to fight American troops, for Little Crow’s War had “set off a chain reaction that in three years had locked Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche in a war with the whites that overspread the Great Plains from the upper Missouri to the Red River.” Despite a massive investment of time, energy, money, and lives, American military forces would fail to make much headway in Sioux country for the rest of the war and would remain stymied in the immediate postwar era. Little Crow himself died in a raid on a white settlement in 1863, but the ability of the Sioux and their allies to defy American power characterized most of the next generation.¹⁷

When pondering the larger contours of the conflict between western Indians and Americans in the trans-Mississippi West during the Civil War, it is easy to attribute the actions of western Union volunteers in the West to a generic form of “Manifest Destiny,” to assume that Americans all (or equally) desired expansion, and were willing to use violence to accomplish it. Such an interpretation is too simplistic for it fails to root both the ideology of Manifest Destiny, which was skillfully manufactured by Democrats in the 1840s, and the actions of white westerners in their historical contexts. The manner in which locals used the Civil War as a means to remake their worlds by eliminating the Indian presence had much to do with the variety of politics practiced in the region before the war. Democratic rule in the West, with its Jacksonian tints, emphasized equal opportunity for white men, mastery over nonwhite peoples, either by displacing them or controlling their labor, and everything from annoyance at centralized power to resistance to it, whenever the federal government failed to serve western interests. Opposition to remote governance by forces not completely aligned with

17 Uteley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 261–81; Wooster, *American Military Frontiers*, pp. 179–82.

local sensibilities explains much of the historic animus directed at the US Army by white residents on the margins of the American nation. Settlers knew that thousands of army regulars “surveil[ed] white frontiersmen as much as Indians,” and enforced unpopular federal laws (evicting squatters, attempting to prevent violations of various Neutrality Acts and federal trade policies designed to protect Indians, and so on). The army also interposed itself between whites and Native Americans, and even attempted to protect (though not always in an effective or sincere manner) the rights of Native Americans. Consequently, residents of the nation’s far western reaches had found themselves at loggerheads with federal authority since the founding of the country.¹⁸

This basic element of western life throughout the nineteenth century – the tense relationship between the federal state and western locals – should give pause to assessments, common among both historians of the Civil War era and the American West, that the war facilitated the rise of a “Yankee Leviathan,” a federal government that used the wartime emergency to centralize important duties and functions and to reshape the country’s political economy along the lines of the Republican Party platform.¹⁹ On one hand, congressional Reconstruction, with its expansive view of federal protections for basic rights undergirded by military occupation, and postwar federal Indian policy, defined by removal to reservations and forcible assimilation, comport well with this vision of a strong federal government. On the other, however, while the Civil War created a new framework through which the scope and reach of federal power could be expressed, the ambitions of state-builders were not limited to the North. Historians have shown without a doubt that the Confederate States of America was not only just as interested in consolidating central power, but that its government could be more intrusive than the North’s in certain respects. Conscription in the South, for example, was actually a system of universal military service

18 Ball, “Liberty, Empire, and Civil War,” p. 68. Several studies of the frontier military experience stress this theme. See, for example, Francis Paul Prucha, *Broadax and Bayonet: The Role of the United States Army in the Development of the Northwest, 1815–1860* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1953); Ball, *Army Regulars*; Michael Tate, *The Frontier Army in the Settlement of the West* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); Samuel Watson, *Peacekeepers and Conquerors: The Army Officer Corps on the Frontier, 1821–1846* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2013); Kevin Adams and Khal Schneider, “‘Washington is a Long Way Off’: The ‘Round Valley War’ and the Limits of Federal Power on a California Indian Reservation,” *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 80, no. 4 (2011): 557–96.

19 Richard Bense, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859–1877* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

that contained a few categories of exemption, while Confederate impressment of private property for the war effort had no analogue in the North. More importantly, however, the architects of state power in both the North and South faced the same basic challenge of controlling local landscapes. In the Civil War, this meant that while both belligerents attempted to use the war to build their own empire of liberty in the American West, their aspirations could be unraveled not only by the actions of locals, but by the realities of western geography.²⁰

On this point, the most important military campaign of the war years in the West is instructive. The Confederate invasion of New Mexico Territory in early 1862 represents the importance of the West in the strategic vision of Southern policymakers, and marks the quick maturation of centralized power in the Confederate States. No matter how small the armies, organizing and carrying out an invasion of a territory as distant and foreboding as New Mexico – and dreaming of victories ever farther afield – was no easy task, particularly given the logistical requirements of nineteenth-century armies reliant on animal power. Persuaded by Confederate general Henry Sibley, a veteran of the regular army who was serving in New Mexico when he decided to resign his commission and join the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis agreed to support Sibley's plan to conquer New Mexico and use it as a base of operations from which the ultimate subjugation of Colorado, Utah, and California might be achieved. To achieve this goal, Sibley intended to live off the land – or, more properly, the larders available at each of the region's many small Federal garrisons. His brigade of approximately 3,500 men departed from San Antonio, accompanied by a long wagon train full of supplies intended to last until they reached enemy territory, and several thousand mules, horses, oxen, and cattle.

Sibley's army suggested that the Confederacy could equip and move a large military force, with an even larger "tail," through some of North America's most forbidding landscapes. One should not downplay the significance of this accomplishment. A "uniquely difficult landscape of war," the Southwest had witnessed cycles of violence that had thwarted Euro-American expansion since the time of the Spanish. It would continue to resist

20 In addition to Richards, *The California Gold Rush*, see Kevin Waite, "Jefferson Davis and Pro-Slavery Visions of Empire in the Far West," *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vol. 6, no. 4 (December 2016): 536–65 and Megan Kate Nelson, "Death in the Distance: Confederate Manifest Destiny and the Campaign for New Mexico, 1861–1862," in Adam Arenson and Andrew Graybill (eds.), *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States* (Oakland: The University of California Press, 2015), pp. 35–7.

true conquest by the United States until the end of the nineteenth century, with many postwar army officers desperately seeking to avoid assignment to a region popularly regarded as hot, hostile, and bereft of the comforts normally found at military stations. (Not surprisingly, the famous “Buffalo Soldier” regiments would be consigned to the desert wastes for most of the postwar period.) As Sibley’s force moved into New Mexico, his command began to bleed from a thousand small cuts: Indian raiders ran off stock, the desert landscape provided less and less forage for the animals the farther west they moved, and the region’s water holes proved inadequate for the size of the force at hand. Unlike the smaller, more nimble ponies used by Native Americans, American horses accustomed to considerable forage and ample water proved to be ill-suited to the harsh landscape of the Southwest and hindered the Confederate invasion.²¹ Sickly cattle, meanwhile, did not provide enough meat protein for the soldiers. Much like Napoleon’s columns, overwhelmed by the geographical reality of a Russian campaign, Sibley’s brigade would be undone by a hostile western environment. Sibley’s men would eventually be checked by an intrepid Union force in the mountains, but military defeat only reinforced the existing trend lines: a dissipation of momentum caused by a desperate lack of supplies, a failing transportation system (many of their supply wagons had been burned), and an oppressive fatigue that dulled men and animals lacking sufficient food, water, and shelter. Even worse, on their long retreat back to Texas, Sibley and his men passed through regions already shorn of food resources during their initial advance. As privation and suffering grew, all they could do was to deposit their fortunate dead, wounded, and sick in local communities. The unfortunate simply fell out on their march east, and died of thirst or exposure. “Survivors continued to straggle in [to San Antonio] all summer,” as Alvin Josephy writes, but their return only illuminated the scale of disaster: nearly one-third of Sibley’s force, over 1,000 Confederates, did not return from New Mexico, a casualty rate far in excess of those suffered by Confederate and Union forces in the eastern theater. Defeated as much by western landscapes as by Union force, Sibley’s invasion would not be repeated for the remainder of the war.²²

This short chapter has tried to expose a “West” that is something more than a minor theater of the Civil War; dismissing it as such both underplays

21 Nelson, “Death in the Desert,” p. 34. American horses’ failings in an arid environment bedeviled the US Army throughout the nineteenth century. West, *Contested Plains*, pp. 299–300 provides a concise description of these difficulties in Colorado.

22 Josephy, *Civil War in the West*, p. 91.

how the war accelerated deep and complex continuities in that region's history and overlooks broader changes wrought by the war, some of which had national implications. While the historic reluctance to connect the two fields is happily less apparent than it was a generation ago, it is nevertheless worth asking where the conversation might go from here. To date, quite a bit of the scholarship on the Civil War and the West has concentrated upon the war's consequences for the region. Be they old or new, most of these studies use policy innovations from the war and Reconstruction as their point of entry into the relationship between the West, the war, and nineteenth-century America as a whole. Historians mining this vein have certainly made significant contributions to our knowledge of such subjects as Indian policy, the political economy of the Republican Party (with particular emphasis on the Homestead Act and the various transcontinental railroad acts passed by wartime Congresses), the migration of African Americans to the west, and the impact of Reconstruction era laws and amendments upon diverse western landscapes. At their best, these studies have provided insights for scholars in both camps who are willing to expand their horizons.²³

Much more work, however, remains when it comes to tracing how the West impacted the larger politics and policies of both the Civil War and Reconstruction. For example, an analysis of congressional debates over the Civil War amendments and important pieces of Reconstruction legislation by one legal scholar argues that "The deliberate and careful choice of language" in those documents "regarding words such as 'citizens,' 'aliens,' or 'inhabitants,' was made with [Chinese] immigrants in mind." That a remote and comparatively small western immigrant group might shape the contours of federal rights and promises of protection has not been fully appreciated by Civil War scholars. Similarly, while the historiography surrounding West Coast Chinese immigrants' use of statutes and amendments from Reconstruction to advance claims to federal protection, federal civil rights, and federal citizenship in the

23 In addition to works cited earlier, see D. Michael Bottoms, *An Aristocracy of Color: Race and Reconstruction in California, 1850–1890* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2013); Joshua Paddison, *American Heathens: Religion, Race, and Reconstruction in California* (Berkeley: The University of California Press for the Huntington/USC Institute on California and the West, 2012); Nell Irvin Painter, *The Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977); Leslie Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), and "Reconstructing Race," *Western Historical Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 7–26; Heather Cox Richardson, *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

legal system is extensive, historians of the Civil War era have not integrated these cases, which complicate the traditional story of a legal declension starting with the *Slaughterhouse* cases of the 1870s, into their accounts of the legal consequences of the war and Reconstruction.²⁴ Or, one is forced to think about the end of Reconstruction differently when one learns that the federal government, under the direction of the first Democratic president since James Buchanan, not only deployed the US Army to Seattle for several months in the 1880s on behalf of Chinese residents whose rights were being threatened by mob violence there, but tried white mob leaders under the auspices of the Enforcement Acts.²⁵

Even the most obvious points of contact between the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the West can remain frustratingly opaque. For instance, specialists in Native American and western history have known for some time that the Civil War in the West previewed postwar Indian policy in civil and military officials' desire to concentrate Native peoples on reservations and their willingness to use force to accomplish that end if necessary.²⁶ Nevertheless the connections between the reconstruction of the South and the reconstruction of Indian Country, processes guided by congressional Republicans in the 1860s and beyond, still require further scholarly exploration, particularly when it comes to policy implementation. Both sets of policies revolved around the attempt to integrate oppressed nonwhite populations into the civic mainstream of America, and both sets of policies touched upon basic questions of land ownership, economic development, and education, but these policies are too often discussed separately in everything from textbooks to monographs.²⁷

24 John Hayakawa Torok, "Reconstruction and Racial Nativism: Chinese Immigrants and the Debates on the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments and Civil Rights Laws," *Asian American Law Journal*, vol. 3 (1996): 57. Laura Edwards's *A Legal History of the Civil War and Reconstruction: A Nation of Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015) contains but one reference to the Chinese, for example.

25 Kevin Adams, *American Pogrom: Anti-Chinese Violence in Seattle and the Challenges of the Long Reconstruction* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, forthcoming).

26 The best guide here is the second half of David A. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy & Politics* (1978; reprint edition, Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2000).

27 A laudable exception to this tendency is Cathleen Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869–1933* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011). A briefer outline of how one might connect these subjects can be found in Hämäläinen, "Reconstructing the Great Plains," 489–90. It should be kept in mind that similarity does not necessarily reflect the same historical forces or processes. While reformers saw both African Americans and Native Americans as oppressed, for example, federal policymakers believed that the source of these groups' oppression differed. The institution of slavery had scarred the community of former

Furthermore, lines of scholarly inquiry devised to address the cauldron of war in the canonical battlefields of the East might yet bear fruit when expanded to the trans-Mississippi West. One such area involves the study of “trauma,” which has come to dominate the field for many historians working on the Civil War in the early twenty-first century. Used both as an analytical device that helps us synthesize the experience of war with its later repercussions, and as a focused excavation of the war’s unpleasant features, trauma has its uses even in a region that saw precious little combat between conventional forces. Virginia Scharff’s assertion that “The trauma of the Civil War reshaped the West in many ways” seems reasonable, but remains mostly undemonstrated.²⁸ For example, the ever-expanding literatures on veterans’ experiences, memory, and commemoration in postwar America, literatures that engage the question of the war’s trauma either explicitly or implicitly, have done little with the West. If Civil War veterans were, as James Marten has argued, “everywhere in Gilded Age society,” the West would be as fruitful a place to explore veterans’ reentry into society as Chicago or Charleston, particularly in light of the constant migrations to the region from the East. Kurt Hackemer’s recent study of Union veterans in the Dakota Territory points one path forward in its suggestive finding that veterans moving into the territory tended to live alongside other veterans in a small number of communities, with those who had experienced the most combat being the most likely to live with their peers. Even the recent upsurge in interest in the growth of capitalism and the economic history of the era allows for productive regional comparisons; a forthcoming dissertation by Emma Teitelman of the University of Pennsylvania, for instance, productively explores the larger question of capitalism’s relationship to American state development by examining land, labor, and subsistence in both the devastated postwar South and the emerging American West.²⁹

slaves, but Native Americans, in contrast, were believed to be primarily oppressed by their own archaic cultures. For a detailed study that roots post-Civil War Indian policy in a Christian reform sensibility emerging from the moral crusade against slavery during the Civil War, see Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the Indians*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

²⁸ Scharff, “Introduction,” p. 7.

²⁹ James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), pp. 4–5; Kurt Hackemer, “Wartime Trauma and the Lure of the Frontier: Civil War Veterans in Dakota Territory,” *Journal of Military History*, vol. 81, no. 1 (2017): 75–103; Emma Teitelman, “Governing the Peripheries: Capitalism and State Formation in the Postbellum United States” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, forthcoming).

In short, the Civil War in the West, distinct as it is from the other main theaters of battle, retains significance for historians working not just in the fields of western history and Civil War history, but for historians working on nineteenth-century America as a whole. The site where imperial ambitions confronted a landscape containing equal measures of peril and promise as well as a region where larger questions of sectionalism, war, and peace were reconfigured to suit local needs, the West connects the Civil War era with both antebellum and postbellum America. As the shock waves from Appomattox and Ford's Theatre receded in the late spring of 1865, Americans slowly began to realize that perhaps some of the war's most pressing questions had not been resolved after all. Even as the tumult over Reconstruction grew in size and vitriol, however, both the slowly reuniting country, its central government, and its diverse peoples would find much surer footing in the continued pursuit of western expansion.

Making the West the cornerstone of the country's economic future (be that country the United States or the Confederate States of America) had enticed Americans since the country's founding. It would continue to do so after 1865, aided by wartime legislation passed by the victorious Union's Congress, most notably the Pacific Railroad Acts and the Homestead Act. Building off this wartime foundation, the federal government, postwar settlers, and corporations helped realize the West's economic potential, which until World War II was an uncertain process mostly limited to agriculture, ranching, and the extractive industries.³⁰ The Civil War's outcome helped create this history, but it is important to keep in mind that what Elliott West has perceptively labeled the "Greater Reconstruction" of the United States would only be partially accomplished by the war itself. Slavery was gone, destroyed "by force of arms" and its potential return prohibited, "by Amendment to the Constitution," as the convention drafting a new constitution for the state of Texas conceded, but federal control over the homelands of several hundred thousand Native Americans would have to be reestablished after the brief interregnum of Civil War.

30 Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West and Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950); William G. Robins, *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the West* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1994); David Igler, *Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the Far West* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2001); Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Pantheon, 1985); Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001).

It would take redoubled national effort to reverse the check to Euro-American settlement caused by the war, and, though the pursuit of this effort would involve considerable debate over the means employed, that the newly reunified United States would exert such effort was a foregone conclusion. As West reminds us, “always the Greater Reconstruction was as much about control as liberation, as much about unity and power as equality.”³¹ It is true that the demobilization of the blue-coated hosts that brought Southern armies to heel proceeded very rapidly, but the reversion to a small standing army brought little respite to the Native inhabitants of the West. Within two years, conflict between American settlers, their government, and Native Americans would be endemic on both the Northern and Southern Plains as the Republican overseers of the federal government eagerly turned to the settlement and development of the West, even in the face of an uncertain and tenuous Reconstruction.³² While the policy framework undergirding this burst of Euro-American expansion would bear the fingerprints of the Republican Party’s approach to governance during the Civil War, much of what followed on the ground – bloodshed, betrayal, and dispossession – was as old as the Republic itself.

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³¹ James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861–1865* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014), p. 488; West, “Reconstructing Race,” 7–26; West, *The Last Indian War*, pp. xx–xxii.

³² For the Indian Wars generally, see Wooster, *American Military Frontiers*; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*.

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War in Indian Country

KEVIN WAITE

Stand Watie outlasted them all. By the time the Cherokee chief and Confederate general finally laid down his arms on June 23, 1865, every other remnant of the rebellion had formally capitulated. Robert E. Lee surrendered the main Confederate army at Appomattox, Virginia in early April, while Joseph E. Johnston followed suit later that month at Bennet Place, North Carolina. Even Jefferson Davis, taking flight as president of a now nonexistent government, was finally captured by Union authorities in early May. By keeping his forces in the field for another month and a half, Watie had effectively become the very last Confederate general.¹ Yet the story of Watie's prolonged resistance belies a much more complicated history of Native American involvement in the Civil War. His Cherokee, Seminole, and Muscogee soldiers may have cleaved to the Confederacy until the very last days of the rebellion, but they were largely unrepresentative of the Indian experience during the war. Relatively few Native Americans professed an ideological commitment to either the Union or the Confederacy. The collective experience from centuries of dispossession at the hands of the federal government and individual settlers had imbued in Indian peoples a well-placed distrust of white Americans. If these Anglo-Americans were to destroy one another in a fratricidal bloodletting, let them do so – this was the grand strategy for much of Native America.

The bloodletting found them anyway. The Civil War reached across nearly every corner of the continent and drew tens of thousands of Native Americans – even those who refused to don Union blue or Confederate gray – into the conflict. In Minnesota and the Dakota Territory, the so-called war between the states gave way to a Sioux uprising, followed by a brutal campaign of pacification by the US Army that ended only with the

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¹ Frank Cunningham, *General Stand Watie's Confederate Indians* (revised edition, Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. Similarly, in the territories of New Mexico and Arizona, increased raiding by the Navajo and Apache tribes during the early years of the war provoked a Federal offensive, culminating in the confinement of nearly 10,000 Indians at Bosque Redondo – what could be considered one of the largest prison camps of the Civil War era. Meanwhile, Indian Territory witnessed a major refugee crisis and suffered higher casualties, per capita, than any other state or territory in the war-torn nation. In the eastern half of the country, Native Americans were drawn directly into the conflict between Union and Confederate armies. Roughly 20,000 Indians volunteered or were pressed into service on either side. They served as soldiers, sailors, spies, guides, noncommissioned and commissioned officers. And they participated in some of the war's biggest battles: Pea Ridge, Second Bull Run, Antietam, Chattanooga, the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg, among others. They were there at the beginning, and they were there at the end. Although Watie's capitulation was still nearly three months off, the Seneca leader and Union general Ely Parker bore witness to the effective collapse of the rebellion at Appomattox Court House, receiving Lee's official surrender as personal secretary to Ulysses S. Grant.²

The welter of Indian experiences and crisscrossing loyalties defies a simple narrative for Civil War era Native America. Nevertheless, some general themes emerge. Indian warriors took up arms for a number of reasons – personal glory, monetary gain, coercion, lust for adventure, or even pro-slavery commitment – but most shared a common aim. Regardless of the side they chose, Native American combatants saw participation in the war as their best chance to protect and perhaps enhance their tribal sovereignty.³ Some hoped that alliance with either Union or Confederate forces would provide leverage for future treaty-making. Others seized the initiative after the withdrawal of Federal troops from frontier posts in order to expand their control over resources and territory. Yet whatever hopes Native Americans held at the outset of the war soon proved illusory. They found that their military

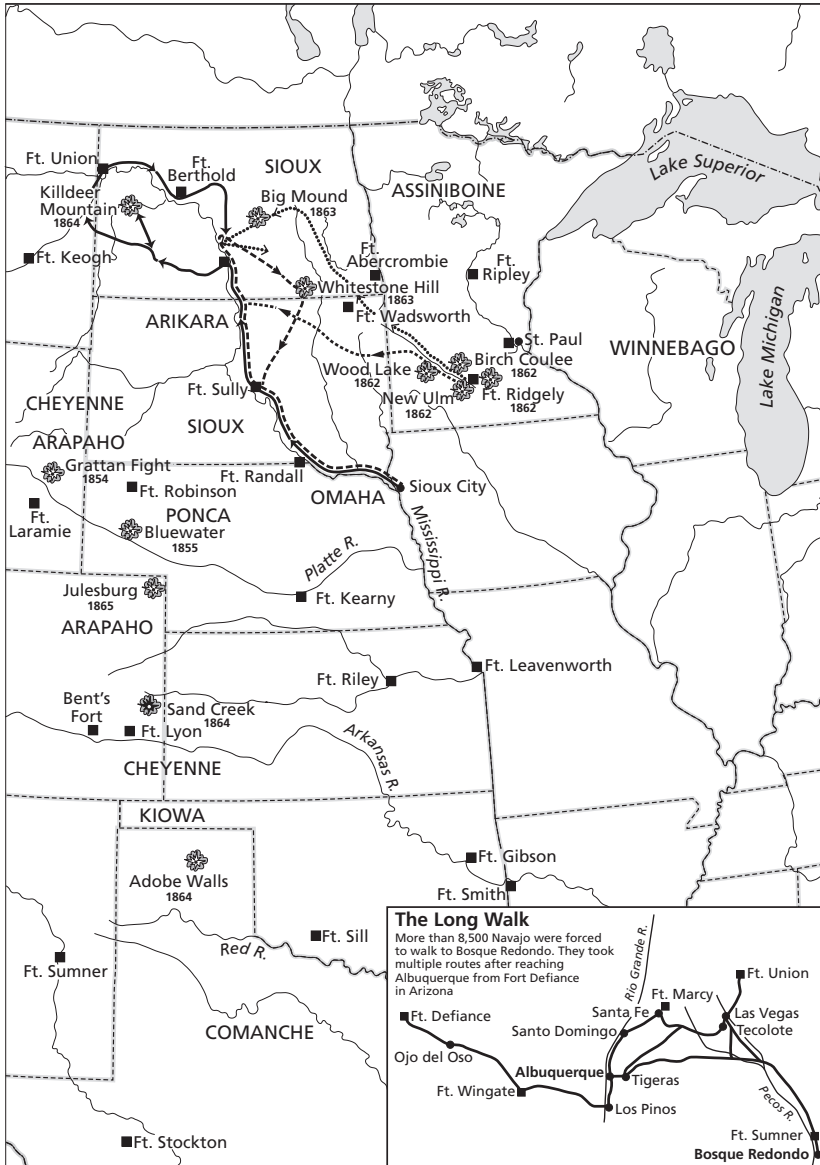
2 On the various capacities in which Indians fought in the war, see Laurence M. Hauptman, *Between Two Fires: American Indians in the Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1995). For accessible introductions to Native Americans in the war see Megan Kate Nelson, "Indian America," in Aaron Sheehan-Dean (ed.), *A Companion to the U.S. Civil War* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), vol. 1, pp. 365–85; and Robert Utley, *The Indian Frontier, 1846–1890* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, revised 2003), ch. 3. The old standard is Annie Heloise Abel, *The American Indian in the Civil War, 1862–1865* (1919, Cleveland, OH: A. H. Clark Co.; reprint, Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

3 See, again, Hauptman, *Between Two Fires*, pp. 1x–xv for Native American motives.



28.1 War in Indian country. Drawn by Cox Cartographic Ltd.

War in Indian Country



28.1 (cont.)

service won them little influence with either Union or Confederate officials, while, by mid-war, the US government began extending its authority over previously sovereign and semisovereign Indian tribes. Furthermore, the destruction, displacement, and death that characterized the entire conflict reached some of its most dismal proportions in Indian country, and, in particular, within the federal Indian Territory (now roughly the state of Oklahoma). While the war years devastated these Native American nations, the peace that followed brought little improvement. The end of the war, with its attendant treaties and removals, was almost universally catastrophic for American Indians, whatever side they chose and however far from Washington they happened to live. In short, the Civil War and its aftermath was a particularly bleak chapter in the long history of Native American dispossession.

28.1 Rebellions and Pacifications

Whereas Indians in the eastern half of the continent were often forced to choose sides, the tribes of the western territories, by and large, maintained official neutrality. They did not, however, escape the war. To the contrary, they expanded it. For the US government, what began as a rebellion of eleven slaveholding states in 1861 had grown, a year later, into a series of insurgencies that spanned the continent. Together, they constituted what historian Steven Hahn calls the Wars of the Rebellion, which include not only the four-year struggle against the Confederate states, but also the interlinked string of conflicts that erupted across Indian country, notably in the Northern Plains and Far Southwest.⁴ There, the withdrawal of Federal forces in early 1861 opened opportunities for tribes with celebrated warrior traditions. Elements of the Sioux, the Apache, the Navajo, the Cheyenne, the Comanche, and others viewed this power vacuum as an invitation to increase their raiding and trading domains. What followed was an era of conflict with the federal government that would continue for well over a decade after the collapse of the Confederacy.

Whereas scholars have traditionally drawn a clear distinction between the Civil War and the Indian Wars, for many of the combatants themselves, the line dividing these two conflicts was almost indistinguishable.⁵ On the

4 Steven Hahn, "Slave Emancipation, Indian Peoples and the Projects of a New American Nation-State," *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vol. 3, no. 3 (September 2013).

5 Those distinctions, however, are being challenged by recent historians, most notably Steven Hahn, *A Nation without Borders: The United States and Its World, 1830–1910*

Northern Plains, in particular, one simply bled into the other. The conflict there began as a series of clashes between white settlers and the Dakotas, a loose confederation of Siouan bands located on reservation lands along the Minnesota River. But soon it evolved into a full-scale war between the Sioux and the US Army. Although Rebel officials made no official diplomatic overtures to the Indians of the Northern Plains, the Dakotas nevertheless kept a close eye on the progress of Union and Confederate armies. They recognized that military developments in the East could have a direct impact on Indian prospects in the West. After Federal forces suffered a string of defeats in 1861 and the spring of 1862, certain Dakota leaders saw a rare opportunity. "It began to be whispered about," one Dakota chief recalled, "that now would be a good time to go to war with the whites and get the lands back."⁶

Over the previous three decades, federal officials had done little to win the loyalty or cooperation of the Sioux. Quite the opposite in fact. Whereas Sioux bands had ranged across the Northern Plains for hundreds of years, by the 1830s their world began to shrink with the arrival of white settlers.⁷ A series of four treaties, negotiated with the US government, progressively diminished their territory, usually by millions of acres at a time, and confined the Dakotas to their Minnesota River reservation by the 1850s. In return, the United States agreed to provide supplies and annuity payments, but the corruption of Indian agents and the venality of white traders in the region undercut the federal end of the bargain and often deprived Indians of needed food and goods. The Dakotas had thus given their land and received little in return. By 1861, some bands faced starvation.

Federal officials refused to heed the warning signs, and soon paid a heavy price. "So far as I am concerned," Indian agent Andrew Myrick sneered, "let them eat grass."⁸ In August 1862 a column of warriors overran a Federal agency outpost, where Myrick himself was stationed. They shot him down as

(New York: Viking, 2016) and through Elliott West's concept of "Greater Reconstruction" in *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Once published, the most complete treatment of this topic will likely be Ari Kelman, *For Liberty and Empire: How the Civil War Bled into the Indian Wars* (Basic Books, forthcoming).

6 Quoted in Hahn, "Slave Emancipation, Indian Peoples and the Projects of a New American Nation-State," 307–8.

7 For the earlier history of Sioux expansion, see Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History*, vol. 65, no. 2 (September, 1978).

8 Quoted in Alvin M. Josephy, *The Civil War in the American West* (New York: Vintage, 1993), p. 109.

he attempted to flee into the woods, and then stuffed a tuft of grass into his mouth, leaving his decorated cadaver as a grim warning to other officials and an augur of the violence to come. By the end of the month, the rebellion spread from the Minnesota countryside into the Dakota Territory, ultimately claiming the lives of an estimated 400 to 600 white settlers. Another 30,000 settlers across twenty-three counties took flight in fear of Chief Little Crow and his Dakota war party. Although two of the four Dakota bands formed a peace party and attempted to protect white settlers, Abraham Lincoln read the violence as a declaration of war by the Sioux people writ large and authorized a massive counterattack.

He dispatched Major General John Pope, fresh from his defeat at Second Bull Run, who arrived in Minnesota in September, determined to “utterly exterminate the Sioux.”⁹ It took him ten months, but Pope eventually subdued some 2,000 Dakotas, who he held as prisoners of war. He condemned 303 of them to death, although Lincoln commuted the sentence of all but thirty-eight. They were hanged in Mankato, Minnesota, on the day after Christmas 1862, in what remains the largest mass execution in American history. In March 1863, Congress voided all treaties with the Dakotas and ended their annuities, while their reservation lands were put up for sale to white settlers. Although Pope’s violent response had broken the back of the rebellion, Dakota bands continued raiding forts and settlements for the remainder of the war. In fact, military conflict between the Sioux and the US government continued until 1890, when the 7th US Cavalry descended on a Lakota encampment at Wounded Knee in South Dakota, slaughtering over 150 of them with the help of rapid-fire Hotchkiss mountain guns. Whereas the Confederate rebellion had been crushed in four bloody years, the Sioux insurgency took the better part of three decades to extinguish.¹⁰

As Sioux war parties raided across the Northern Plains, a similar process unfolded in the Far Southwest, home to powerful Apache and Navajo tribes. In both Minnesota and New Mexico, United States–Indian conflict drew on similar initial conditions. Native Americans in both regions recognized that Union military reversals opened opportunities to assert their own sovereignty and increase access to much-needed resources. They attacked both military and civilian targets in an attempt to relieve the pressures created by

9 David A. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policies and Politics* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1978; reprint 2000), pp. 76–86.

10 On the Sioux and their long war with the United States, see Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

a rising tide of white settlement dating to the antebellum era. Although Indian warriors considered their attacks to be a justified response to foreign invasion, Unionist forces treated them as rebellions against US authority.¹¹ Initially forced to divert troops to the much larger rebellion in the slave South, the federal government eventually launched well-coordinated campaigns against the Indian insurgencies, and, in the process, either killed or imprisoned thousands of Native Americans, many of whom had no connection to the initial risings.

The Civil War in the Southwest began with two distinct threats to the Union's feeble hold over the region: a Rebel invasion from Texas into New Mexico Territory and a wave of Indian attacks on federal mail routes, wagon trains, and settlers. By August 1861, Colonel John R. Baylor's small invasion force had humiliated Federals in the region and formally declared the Confederate Territory of Arizona. Meanwhile, Apache raiding continued, with little regard for whatever color uniforms their white adversaries happened to be wearing. To reassert control over the region, the United States therefore had to either neutralize or drive out these Confederate invaders and Indian raiders. To do so required a massive concentration of military force – something much larger than the region had ever seen before. The entire prewar US Army numbered only about 15,000 soldiers – about a fourth the size of the Postal Service at the time – and was scattered across a series of posts that made large-scale campaigning impossible. But by mid-war, nearly 25,000 men from California, Colorado, and New Mexico had volunteered for military service in the southwest borderlands. They would be deployed, first, to beat back the Confederate advance, and then to wage a systematic war of pacification against the Native tribes of the region.¹²

- 11 The dual nature of United States–Indian conflict – which could be considered either international engagements or civil wars, depending on one's perspective – is explored in Andrew Masich, *Civil War in the Southwest Borderlands, 1861–1867* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2017).
- 12 Masich, *Civil War in the Southwest Borderlands*, pp. 39–48. For more on the Confederate operation in the Southwest and the political objectives that drove it, see Kevin Waite, "Jefferson Davis and Proslavery Visions of Empire in the Far West," and Megan Kate Nelson, "The Civil War from Apache Pass," both in *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vol. 6, no. 4 (December 2016). See also Donald S. Frazier, *Blood and Treasure: Confederate Empire in the Southwest* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995) and Megan Kate Nelson, "Death in the Distance: Confederate Manifest Destiny and the Campaign for New Mexico, 1861–1862," in Adam Arenson and Andrew R. Graybill (eds.), *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States* (Oakland: The University of California Press, 2015). For California's role in this theater see Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), ch. 8.

In Minnesota it was John Pope who led the campaign of pacification; in New Mexico it was James Henry Carleton. Both leaders embraced the practice of hard war, targeting combatants and civilians alike in efforts to shatter Indian resistance. In the fall of 1862 Carleton dispatched the frontier hero Kit Carson on a relentless operation against the Apache, followed by a scorched-earth campaign against the Navajo in July 1863. Carson's war severely limited Apache access to their traditional raiding and trading networks, while his men deliberately created a refugee crisis among the Navajo. They burned lodges, provisions, and orchards, and stormed the sacred Navajo stronghold at Canyon de Chelly. Within a few months, a majority of the 15,000 Navajo Indians had seen their livelihoods go up in smoke – often literally – and were thus compelled to surrender. In a series of forced treks between 1863 and 1866, these Navajo captives were marched across roughly 400 miles of desert land from northeastern Arizona to the middle of New Mexico. Two thousand of them died along the way in what become known as the Long Walk. The survivors were imprisoned alongside a much smaller group of their ancient enemies, the Apaches, at Bosque Redondo. The roughly 10,000 captives of Bosque Redondo endured overcrowding, underfeeding, and raids from nearby Comanche warriors, who carried off their women and children. Whereas Native American tribes had held the balance of power in the southwestern borderlands at the outbreak of the war, by 1867 that dynamic had shifted unalterably in the Anglo-Americans' favor.¹³

The Civil War campaign against Cheyenne and Arapaho was shorter than the prolonged operations against the Sioux and Navajo, but it was every bit as brutal. And it, too, drew on a familiar set of circumstances: a contested treaty that drastically reduced traditional Native hunting grounds set off a spirited resistance from some of the more militaristic bands in the region. Among others, the Dog Soldiers refused to abide by the terms of this treaty, which had been signed by a minority of Cheyenne and Arapaho chiefs. They continued hunting within their traditional range, occupying parts of Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado, and began attacking the growing numbers of white settlers and gold-seekers who poured across their lands. This in turn prompted what can only be considered an exterminationist response from the Colorado territorial governor, John Evans, and military authorities in the region, whose ranks had recently swelled as part of the US campaign against neighboring Confederate Arizona. "I have come to kill Indians . . . kill and

13 Masich, *Civil War in the Southwest Borderlands*, pp. 121–58, 226–80.

scalp all, big and little,” Colonel John R. Chivington proclaimed, “nits make lice.”¹⁴

After dealing a crippling blow to Confederate forces at the Battle of Glorieta Pass in New Mexico, Chivington moved his men into Colorado to wage war indiscriminately against Native Americans. On November 29, 1864, his roughly 700 troops ignored the American flag, and the white flag beneath it, that flew over a peaceful encampment of Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians at Sand Creek in eastern Colorado. They massacred somewhere between 70 and 160 Indians, most of them women and children, and carried scalps and body parts back to Denver as trophies of their triumph.¹⁵ The atrocity set off a violent response, culminating in Indian attacks on the Platte River Road and the sacking of Julesburg, Colorado in the winter of 1865. To counter this Native war party – which at its height may have included as many as 6,000 combatants – Union authorities were forced to divert troops from the major military theaters of the East. Again, the war against the Confederate rebellion merged with a campaign against a Native uprising, with similarly grisly results.¹⁶

28.2 Civil Wars in Indian Territory

By the nature of both its demography and its geography, Indian Territory was destined to become a war zone. Confederate secession had transformed the territory – which occupied what is now roughly the state of Oklahoma – into a border region between Unionist Kansas and Rebel Texas. To Federal forces, therefore, it served as a potential buffer to protect Kansas and mineral-rich Colorado and as a launching pad for an invasion into Texas. Conversely, for western Rebels, it offered protection from a Unionist advance into Texas and as a springboard for a Confederate assault on Kansas or Colorado. For either side, Indian Territory could also potentially supply plenty of recruits. Roughly 100,000 Native people inhabited the territory, with some 70,000

14 Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (reprint, New York: Vintage, 1987), ch. 4.

15 In Chapter 27 in this volume, Kevin Adams rightly notes that Chivington commanded volunteers, which underscores how operations against Indians in the West were often driven by local residents rather than by the US state.

16 Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1998), pp. 287–307; Pekka Hämäläinen, “Reconstructing the Great Plains: The Long Struggle for Sovereignty and Dominance in the Heart of the Continent,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vol. 6, no. 4 (December 2016): 487–8. For the legacy of the massacre, see Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

members of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes – the Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks (Muscogees), Seminoles, and Cherokees – occupying the eastern portion. Plains Indians, notably the Kiowas, Apaches, and Comanches, treated the western part of the territory as an extension of their range, while a number of Wichitas and Caddos had settled on leased lands within the territory after being forced out of Texas in 1859. Between 1861 and 1865, these people would be caught up in conflict that turned their territory into the single bloodiest theater in the entire nation.¹⁷

Deep-rooted rivalries within the various nations of Indian Territory constituted a powder keg that ignited upon Confederate secession in spring 1861. These rivalries dated back to the removal era of the 1830s, when Indian Territory was officially established as the new homeland for the evicted tribes of the American Southeast. Whereas most of the members of these nations had adamantly opposed removal, certain tribal factions negotiated with the federal government. A group of Cherokees – led by Major Ridge, his son John, and John’s cousins, Elias Boudinot and Stand Watie – signed the Treaty of New Echota and surrendered their tribal lands concentrated in northern Georgia. In exchange, they received \$5 million, new lands in northeastern Indian Territory, coverage for the cost of removal, and subsistence for one year afterward. This so-called Treaty Party therefore moved voluntarily, but a majority of the Cherokee Nation, under chief John Ross, repudiated the treaty and refused to comply with removal. As a result, some 18,000 of them were forcibly transported by the federal government in 1838. Four thousand Cherokees, including Ross’s wife, died along the way, in what became known as the Trail of Tears. A year later, followers of Ross exacted vengeance by assassinating Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot. Of the leaders of the Treaty Party, only Stand Watie escaped. Although Watie and Ross came to a truce in 1846, the bad blood between their two factions could not be washed away so easily. The decades-old feud resurfaced with particular intensity at the outbreak of secession – a civil war within the Civil War.¹⁸

17 For succinct overviews of Indian Territory and the war that engulfed it, see Bradley R. Clampitt, “Introduction,” and Brad Agnew, “Our Doom as a Nation Is Sealed: The Five Nations in the Civil War,” both in Clampitt (ed.), *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

18 Arrell Morgan Gibson, *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries* (2nd edition, Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), pp. 43–83. For the postremoval feuding within the Cherokee Nation, see William G. McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears: The Cherokees’ Struggle for Sovereignty, 1839–1880* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

The Native nations of Indian Territory had good reason to mistrust both the US government and the Rebels of the slaveholding South. On the one hand, it was white Southerners who had invaded the ancestral lands of the Five Nations, which, in turn, prompted the adoption of the Removal Act of 1830. On the other hand, it was the federal government itself that oversaw the brutal process of removal. And it was the federal government that had repeatedly violated treaties with various Native American tribes over the years. Unionist leaders did little to assuage the concerns of neighboring Indian people. As a young frontiersman, Abraham Lincoln served in the Black Hawk War (albeit briefly and uneventfully), and never questioned the necessity of Indian removal. Native Americans had no place in the expansionist visions of Lincoln's secretary of state, William Seward. In a speech during the 1860 presidential contest, Seward argued that "the Indian Territory . . . south of Kansas must be vacated by the Indians" in order to be made ready for white settlement. When Rebel forces from Texas and Arkansas invaded Indian Territory in May 1861, US troops quickly abandoned their three forts within the region. With their evacuation went all annuity payments, promised to Native nations under the terms of their removal, as well as any remaining trust that the United States might inspire in its Indian neighbors.¹⁹

The Confederacy moved quickly to fill the void left by evacuating Union forces. Several months earlier, the Confederate Congress had given president Jefferson Davis the power to negotiate treaties with residents of Indian Territory. Davis entrusted Albert Pike, a teacher, attorney, newspaper editor, and 32nd degree Mason, with the responsibility of securing alliances with the tribes of the region, especially the populous Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole nations. Pike's work was made considerably easier by the Federal withdrawal from the territory. When, for instance, the Chickasaw legislature declared its independence from the United States in May 1861, it cited the removal of these Federal troops as one of its primary grievances. By late spring, Pike had overridden the reservations of certain tribal leaders like John Ross, who preferred neutrality, to secure treaties with each of the Five Nations. The Senecas, Shawnees, and Quapaws also signed treaties of alliance, along with a division of the Osages and the Peneteka Comanches, although most of the major Plains tribes remained neutral. Under the terms of these treaties, Native Americans agreed to a right-of-way for Confederate railroads through their territory and pledged to raise

19 Agnew, "Our Doom as a Nation Is Sealed," pp. 64–8.

troops for the Rebel war effort, which would be armed, equipped, and paid for by the Confederate government. The Confederacy promised that these Native units would not be forced to fight outside the territory without their tribal government's permission.²⁰ The Rebel government also agreed to recognize Indian sovereignty, provide tribes with representation in the Confederate Congress, assume the annuities owed by the US government, and preserve the institution of slavery within Indian Territory.²¹

It was their commitment to slaveholding that established a common cause between the Rebel South and certain factions within Indian Territory. Together, members of the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, and Choctaw nations owned roughly 7,700 slaves. Many of these slaves worked for Native masters on large, Southern-style cotton plantations, while others labored under a more independent, tributary form of bondage. Not unlike their counterparts in the South, enslaved people within Indian Territory faced a legion of restrictions on their everyday lives, including their mobility and education. Following a pattern that extended across much of the plantation South, both the Choctaw and Muscogee Nations tightened their slave codes in the 1850s. The Muscogees even attempted to reenslave free blacks by requiring them to choose an owner or be sold for twelve months to the highest bidder. By 1855 the ardently pro-slavery secret society, known as the Knights of the Golden Circle, had spread from neighboring states into the Cherokee Nation and recruited prominent Native slaveholders, such as Stand Watie. Thus, the impetus to preserve and expand the institution of slavery bound together masters in Indian Territory and masters across the South.²²

Whereas most Indian slaveholders believed that alliance with the Rebel South provided the surest safeguard for their human property, the ensuing conflict soon posed a threat to the peculiar institution within Indian Territory. At the outset of the war, a number of Indian masters "refugeed"

20 That promise would be broken at the Battle of Pea Ridge in March 1862, when units from Indian Territory were moved into Arkansas.

21 On Confederate negotiations with Indian nations, see Mary Jane Warde, *When the Wolf Came: The Civil War and the Indian Territory* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2013), pp. 51–9, 121–2, 127.

22 On slavery in Indian country, see Barbara Krauthammer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), ch. 3; Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2015); Linda Reese, "We Had a Lot of Trouble Getting Things Settled after the War: The Freedpeople's Civil Wars," in Clampitt (ed.), *Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory*, pp. 132–52. For the best general overview of Native American slaveholders, see Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

their slaves to Texas, which was, for the moment, well out of the reach of Federal forces. Even prior to the advance of Union armies, though, threats to Native slaveholders were everywhere around them. Within the Cherokee Nation, for instance, antislavery advocates had formed the Keetoowah Society in the 1850s and pledged their support for John Ross over Watie – even though Ross also owned a large slave plantation. They became known as Pin Indians for the two crossed straight pins that they wore under the lapels of their coats. And throughout the war, they presented one of the greatest impediments to Watie as he attempted to consolidate his control over the Cherokee Nation.²³

Not all Indian slaveholders supported the rebellion, however. Like Ross, the Creek leader Opothleyahola owned slaves, but nevertheless preferred neutrality over an alliance with the Confederacy. In the early months of the war, Opothleyahola began rallying a large force of like-minded Creeks and Seminoles, whom he planned to lead to safety behind Union lines in Kansas. Historians estimate that he may have attracted as many as 9,000 followers, including 2,000 fighting men and between 200 to 300 enslaved people, to whom he promised freedom. Before setting out, Opothleyahola also appealed to Lincoln for aid. The president responded that the war did not concern Native Americans, and urged them to remain neutral. Opothleyahola and his thousands of followers, mostly civilian noncombatants, therefore had to make their way across hundreds of miles of exposed terrain, with no protection aside from what they could muster themselves. In November 1861, Confederate-allied Creeks caught Opothleyahola's fleeing column in what was the first Civil War battle in Indian Territory. Over the next month, Opothleyahola's forces fought two more battles against Confederate Indian raiders, during which they were forced to abandon virtually all their supplies except the clothes on their backs and the shoes on their feet. By the time Opothleyahola and his people reached Kansas in the teeth of a vicious winter storm, they were on the verge of utter collapse. According to one Creek Indian, the flight resembled a second Trail of Tears.

War in Indian Territory thus began as a mass refugee crisis – a crisis unmatched anywhere else at the time. The Office of Indian Affairs was completely unequipped for such a humanitarian disaster, and had little in the way of supplies for the roughly 4,500 Indians who poured into Kansas by January. Over the long winter of 1862, thousands of people were scattered over a 200-mile strip of refugee camps. They endured freezing temperatures,

23 Warde, *When the Wolf Came*, pp. 35–45.

meager rations, and the spread of contagious diseases. By the end of the winter, the mortality rate reached 10 percent, while roughly 2,000 ponies died of starvation. Although conditions within the refugee settlements improved somewhat by the next year, thousands of homeless Indians remained in inadequate shelters in Kansas well into 1863. Opothleyahola himself died in March that year.²⁴

The battle lines of Indian Territory, separating soldier from civilian, were indistinctly drawn. According to some historians, it was William Tecumseh Sherman who, by 1864, introduced Americans to what became known in the twentieth century as “total war.” But, as the plight of Opothleyahola and his followers makes clear, a form of total or at least hard war – in which civilians and their sources of livelihood are treated as military targets – came much earlier than that to Indian Territory.²⁵ In fact, Native American noncombatants across the country – from Minnesota to New Mexico to Colorado to Indian Territory – endured far greater hardships than the white Southerners who fell in the path of Sherman’s March to the Sea (see Chapter 16 for more on the march). Sherman, after all, never forced thousands of civilians on a 400-mile march to a prison camp, as had Kit Carson in Arizona, nor did he indiscriminately exterminate any settlements, as did John Chivington at Sand Creek.²⁶ Within Indian Territory, attacks on civilians and their property continued almost unabated until the very last days of the rebellion. In addition to both Union and Confederate forces who vied for strategic control, bushwhackers, bandits, and deserters plagued the region. Robbed of their livestock and their crops, the wives and children of Indian soldiers suffered as much, and often more than, the men in the field. It was the suffering of the civilian population that gave Indian Territory the dubious distinction of being the most ravaged region of the war.

This death and destruction reached its grimmest levels within the Cherokee Nation. Split between Watie and Ross factions since the removal era of the 1830s, the Cherokee Nation became a house divided against itself during the Civil War. A majority of Cherokees sympathized with Watie and

24 For a thorough treatment of Opothleyahola and his people’s plight, see Warde, *When the Wolf Came*, pp. 66–87, 91–5, 139–40.

25 On historians’ approaches to the concept of total war in Indian Territory, see Nelson, “Indian America,” pp. 373–6. On the deliberate targeting of civilians, see Clarissa Confer, *The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), ch. 5.

26 Union general Thomas Ewing, Jr. did expel 20,000 western Missourians for supporting Rebel guerrillas – the closest thing to an Indian-style expulsion of whites in the Civil War.

the Rebel war effort – including 3,000 who served in Confederate units – but that still left thousands of Unionist or neutral tribespeople. Led by the antislavery Pin Indians, these loyal Cherokees repudiated the Watie government, endorsed Ross as their chief – even though Ross himself had relocated to Washington, D.C. by 1862 in order to seek an audience with Lincoln – and passed an emancipation proclamation in February 1863. But like Lincoln's proclamation one month earlier, the Cherokee resolution had a limited reach, as a vast majority of slaves were well beyond loyal Cherokee control. Thousands of these loyal Cherokees, in fact, were refugees by mid-war, clustered first in Kansas and then around Fort Gibson in Indian Territory. By 1863, one-third of married women were widows, while one quarter of all Cherokee children had become orphaned.²⁷

But whereas the Unionist faction of the Cherokee Nation experienced greater losses during the first two years of the conflict, Watie's followers probably suffered more in the next twenty-four months. The Union comeback began in early 1863, when US forces organized a second invasion of Indian Territory – after the first one failed in the summer of 1862. Strategically, Union commanders wanted to secure the territory in order to roll back the western wing of the Confederacy. But they also hoped to use the invasion of Indian Territory to resettle the thousands of Native Americans who had been forced into Kansas at the outset of the war, and thereby relieve pressure on Federal officials for the subsistence and care of those refugees. To this end, they were aided by many of the refugees themselves – including former slaves and free blacks of Indian Territory – who mustered into two home guard regiments. By April 1863, a mixed-race force – including some of the first units to include both African Americans and Native Americans – had regained a foothold within Indian Territory and finally challenged Confederate control of a region that the United States had once given up for lost.

Yet the Federal advance into Indian Territory did not solve the humanitarian crisis that began two years earlier with the flight of Opothleyahola and his thousands of followers. With the partial Union reoccupation, that crisis simply relocated. Federal forces may have gained a foothold within the territory by the spring of 1863, but it was precisely that – a foothold. The Union army was mostly confined to Fort Gibson within the Cherokee Nation, and the Native Americans who reentered Indian Territory were forced to cluster in the immediate vicinity, dependent on US forces for

²⁷ Hauptman, *Between Two Fires*, p. 42.

protection and subsistence. Confederate-allied Native units, who briefly joined up with the notorious guerrilla fighter William Quantrill, exercised free reign across much of the territory, and periodically harried Union forces and Indian refugees around Fort Gibson. In May 1864, Watie and his Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole troops struck a severe blow to the poorly supplied Unionists within the territory. In the only naval battle within the landlocked Indian Territory, Watie seized the *J. R. Williams*, a Federal steamboat loaded with supplies, which had been traveling along the Arkansas River en route to the beleaguered population around Fort Gibson. What Watie and his men could not haul away, they burned or washed down the river. By this point, there were an estimated 16,000 Native refugees clustered around Fort Gibson, in desperate need of these supplies. Just a few months later, Watie again deprived Unionist forces and their Indian allies of much-needed provisions when he seized a Federal wagon train at Cabin Creek. This time his haul was even more impressive, an estimated \$1.5 million in Federal property. Well into 1864, Indian Territory remained a war-torn border zone, with neither side in firm control.

The Federal advance and subsequent clashes also created a new refugee crisis. While Unionist Indians huddled around Fort Gibson, thousands of Southern-sympathizing Natives fled from the territory and into Texas, camping along the Red River valley. A number of them, including Stand Watie's wife, escaped with their slaves in order to prevent their emancipation by US forces. But in the confusion of this mass exodus, some enslaved people were able to slip away from bondage and avoid removal to Texas. Furthermore, when the Union army arrived in Park Hill, a wealthy plantation district within the Cherokee Nation, it sparked a general uprising among the slaves there. Even Watie's raiding could not relieve pressure on the pro-Southern Native population, which had been deprived of virtually all Confederate support by the summer of 1863. At that point, the war had turned decisively against the rebellion within the major military theaters of the East, prompting the withdrawal of the final Texas troops from Indian Territory. Watie's raid at Cabin Creek ended up being the last Confederate victory within the territory. And even the supplies he purloined from the Federal wagon train could not cover the needs of his increasingly ill-clad and underfed troops.²⁸

28 On the Union invasion and the Confederate counterattacks under Watie, see Warde, *When the Wolf Came*, pp. 145–217; Richard B. McCaslin, "Bitter Legacy: The Battle Front," in Clappitt (ed.), *Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory*, pp. 19–37.

The war in Indian Territory ended not with a bang but with a whimper. Aside from sporadic raiding, no major military operations took place in the final nine months of the war. The Confederacy needed all the men it could possibly muster for its desperate last stand east of the Mississippi. But the damage had been done. Four years of conflict had stripped Indian Territory bare. An estimated 300,000 head of cattle – what had been the territory’s richest resource during the antebellum period – had been driven from the region. Other sources of livelihood, like draft animals, wagons, and crops, had similarly been stolen or pillaged by the various combatants, bushwhackers, Jayhawkers, and thieves who passed through the territory. With diets deprived of protein, many Natives in the territory suffered from disease and malnutrition. Indian soldiers died on the battlefield; Indian civilians perished on their withered farms.²⁹

The loss in human life can only be described as catastrophic. Although Native Americans were excluded from the federal census, making demographic data fuzzy at best, the available estimates present a grim picture of population decline across the five major nations of Indian Territory. The Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations were located farthest from the major flashpoints of the war within the region, but even they lost upward of 10 percent of their respective populations. Roughly 500 of 4,500 Chickasaws perished during the war, while the Choctaw population declined from 15,000 to 12,500. About one in five Seminoles were unaccounted for by the end of the war, and the Creek Nation lost roughly a quarter of its population of 13,500. By 1865, the Cherokee population had fallen almost 30 percent, from 21,000 to 15,000.³⁰ Thus when Stand Watie finally laid down his arms in June 1865, he brought to an end fighting in what was, proportionally, the bloodiest theater of the entire war.

28.3 The Reconstruction of Indian Territory

But the casualty figures tell only part of the story. If war brought death and dislocation to Indian Territory, the peace that followed brought equally transformational disruptions. The reconstruction of Indian Territory began with a familiar process for its residents: treaty-making with the US government. American officials claimed that, by signing treaties with the Rebel South at the outset of the war, the Five Nations had voided their

29 Clarissa Confer, “Hardship at Home: The Civilian Experience,” in Clappitt (ed.), *Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory*, pp. 38–63; Gibson, *Oklahoma*, p. 131.

30 Warde, *When the Wolf Came*, p. 264; Hauptman, *Between Two Fires*, p. 42.

previous agreements with the United States and forfeited all annuity payments. New treaties were therefore required, which, not surprisingly, demanded major concessions from Native nations. By 1866, the Cherokees, Muscogeese, Seminoles, Choctaws, and Chickasaws had all signed new documents with the US government. The terms differed for each of the nations, but every treaty included some common conditions. All nations had to abolish slavery; all pledged to form a new intertribal council; all agreed to rights-of-way for future railroad development across their lands; and all surrendered significant amounts of their territory. By comparison, the Southern Rebels who started the war received better terms than the Native Americans of Indian Territory, many of whom had remained loyal to the United States and fought with distinction in the Union army.

Some Native nations, however, navigated the treaty-making process more successfully than others. Ironically, the Choctaws and Chickasaws – the most unapologetically pro-Confederate of the Five Nations – secured more favorable conditions than either the Cherokees, Muscogeese, or Seminoles. Their comparative success stemmed from their unity. Whereas the Seminoles, Muscogeese, and especially the Cherokees, had been bitterly divided during the war – and provided troops for both Union and Confederate armies – the Choctaws and Chickasaws threw themselves behind the Rebel South with minimal internal feuding. And they preserved that united front during the treaty-making process. In fact, the two nations signed a single treaty with Washington in 1866. Although the Choctaws and Chickasaws were forced to cede some of their lands in this treaty, they were able to retain a majority of their territory, unlike the Seminoles, who lost roughly 90 percent of their 2-million-acre reserve. And while the Cherokee, Muscogee, and Seminole nations were all required to grant tribal citizenship to their former slaves, the Choctaws and Chickasaws imposed more race-based restrictions on their free population. Freedpeople within the Choctaw Nation eventually won tribal citizenship in the 1880s, but Chickasaws never adopted their former slaves.³¹

As in the former Confederate states, emancipation for African Americans in Indian Territory gave rise to a new series of struggles. Within the Choctaw Nation, in particular, freedom came by degrees. In October 1865 the Choctaw General Council passed a law – reminiscent of the Black Codes introduced in

³¹ On these postwar treaties and their conditions, see Christopher Bean, “Who Defines a Nation?: Reconstruction in Indian Territory,” pp. 110–31, and Reese, “We Had a Lot of Trouble,” pp. 133–40, both in Clampitt (ed.), *Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory*.

a number of Southern states – that required African Americans to either remain with their former masters or enter into a contractual obligation with a new employer. Wages would come in the form of a lien on their crop, thus transforming freedpeople into sharecroppers. Any former slaves without a labor contract were classified as vagrants, who could be arrested and then auctioned to the highest bidder. Vigilante groups in both the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations ranged across the countryside in an attempt to violently reinforce as much of the old racial order as possible. In the face of continued coercion and discrimination, many freedpeople brought their complaints to Freedmen's bureau agents and military officials in neighboring Arkansas. Like former slaves in the South, they testified to abuse, withheld wages, and seized property. And like the freedpeople of the South, they convinced federal agents of the need to intervene. Through the treaties of 1866, freedpeople of Indian Territory won important rights, including equal protection under the law and, crucially, access to land.³²

Through these treaties, an old story repeated itself. The US government gained millions of acres of Native land, generally for pennies on the dollar, while thousands of Indians were removed from their ancestral homelands to facilitate further American development. Within Indian Territory, each of the Five Nations lost significant tracts of land – albeit some more than others – which was used to resettle Native Americans from across the continent. In this regard, the postbellum reconstruction of Indian Territory can be seen as a postscript to the removals and dislocations of the antebellum era. But whereas these earlier removals moved east to west, the removals of the postwar period generally flowed in the opposite direction.

This was due to the geography of American development during the Civil War era. Two major pieces of Republican wartime legislation – the Pacific Railway Act and the Homestead Act, both passed in 1862 – were designed to

32 Barbara Krauthammer, "Indian Territory and the Treaties of 1866: A Long History of Emancipation," in Gregory Downs and Kate Masur (eds.), *The World the Civil War Made* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), pp. 227–40. On Indian citizenship and the power of black testimony, other essays in the same volume are illuminating, including Stephen Kantrowitz, "'Not Quite Constitutionalized: The Meanings of 'Civilization' and the Limits of Native American Citizenship"; C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa, "Ely S. Parker and the Paradox of Reconstruction Politics in Indian Country"; and Kidada E. Williams, "The Wounds That Cried Out: Reckoning with African Americans' Testimonies of Trauma and Suffering from Night Riding." For more on race and citizenship in the Choctaw and Cherokee nations during this period, see the important work of Fay Yarbrough, *Race and the Cherokee Nation: Sovereignty in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); and "'Dis Land Which Jines Dat of Ole Master's': The Meaning of Citizenship for the Choctaw Freedpeople," in Arenson and Graybill (eds.), *Civil War Wests*.

rapidly settle the trans-Mississippi West. And often, the West was Indian country. To be sure, transcontinental railway development had been the objective of Stephen Douglas and his allies with the original Kansas–Nebraska Act of 1854, but it was not until after the Civil War that the United States had the power, the resources, and the congressional consensus to pursue such a project.³³ The Union Pacific Railroad now had federal charters for the construction of a line across the Central Plains, which made the relocation of Indian tribes in Kansas and Nebraska a priority. Within Kansas alone, Native Americans occupied millions of acres of reservation land along potential railroad thoroughfares. Thus, beginning 1867, the Peorias and Miamis were moved to lands in the Quapaw Reservation in Indian Territory, followed by the Wyandots, who settled in the northeastern part of the territory. The Potawatomis, the Sacs, and the Foxes relocated to lands ceded by the Muscogee and Seminole Nations. Then, in 1871, the Osages sold their 8-million acre Kansas reservations and removed to the Cherokee Outlet. Fittingly, the last major tribe in Kansas was the one that had given the state its name, the Kansas (Konzas or Kaws) Indians. In 1873 they moved to today's Kay County, Oklahoma. Individual Indians could opt to forego removal if they accepted an allotment of land from the US government and surrendered their tribal affiliation – but they did so at their own peril. After fifteen years of removals following the Civil War, over 9,000 Indians from Kansas had been resettled in Indian Territory, leaving fewer than 1,000 Natives in the entire state.³⁴

The mounted tribes of the Great Plains were a particular target of the federal government in this new wave of removals. American officials hoped to turn nomadic hunters and warriors into farmers, and thereby sequester these Indians on reservation lands away from the major transcontinental thoroughfares. In 1867, roughly 5,000 Plains Indians assembled at Medicine Lodge in Kansas to draft a new treaty with the federal government. The resulting document established a series of smaller reservations entirely within Indian Territory, to which thousands of Kiowas, Comanches, Plains Apaches, Cheyennes, and Arapahos would be removed. But American agents soon found it was much easier to draft a treaty than to enforce it against such formidable tribes. The Plains Indians proved largely unwilling to cease their raiding into Texas and Kansas, which prompted Major General Philip

33 On the antebellum railroad debates and the political conflict they produced, see Kevin Waite, "The Slave South in the Far West: California, the Pacific, and Proslavery Visions of Empire" (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2016).

34 Warde, *When the Wolf Came*, pp. 238–40, 278–95.

Sheridan to launch a major military campaign into Indian Territory by 1868. Sheridan had helped crush the slaveholding rebellion in the South, and now he and his men – many of them Civil War veterans – turned their attention to the Indian insurrection in the West.³⁵ Periodic warfare with these tribes would continue into the mid-1870s. Only with the deportation and imprisonment of seventy-one chiefs and warriors, along with one woman, was the federal government able to exert control over the tribes in the western half of the territory. Rebellion within Indian Territory had continued almost unabated from 1861 to 1874.³⁶

Newly empowered by its suppression of the Confederate and various Native rebellions during the Civil War era, the US government used Indian Territory to consolidate control over the continent. Over the span of about fifteen years, Native tribes from across the country – Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Idaho, California, Oregon, and Washington – were rounded up and resettled in Indian Territory.³⁷ Along with a wave of white settlers into the territory, this influx of Native people created new strains on a region that was still reeling from the Civil War. Soaring crime, shrinking territory, and the erosion of tribal sovereignty – this was federal reconstruction in Indian Territory.

28.4 Conclusion

Facing east from Indian country, the traditional borders of the Civil War – both spatial and temporal – blur considerably.³⁸ Confederate secession ignited a series of corollary conflicts with Native Americans that stretched across the continent and continued well past 1865, conflicts that historians have only recently begun to include in the broader Civil War narrative. To be sure, the war was ultimately won and lost on the major battlefields in the eastern half of the country: Antietam, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Spotsylvania, Petersburg, and finally Appomattox. But in mapping their grand strategy, Union and Confederate commanders could not afford to overlook the

35 On the carryover in personnel between the Civil War and the Indian Wars, see Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders*, ch. 10.

36 Stan Hoig, *Tribal Wars of the Southern Plains* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), pp. 233–57; see also Peter Cozzens, *The Earth is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West* (New York: Vintage, 2017).

37 The Nez Perce of the Columbia River plateau were the westernmost group to be removed to Indian Territory, although they were later allowed to settle on reservations in the Pacific Northwest; see West, *The Last Indian War*.

38 The formulation is borrowed from Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, CA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

western territories or the hundreds of thousands of Native Americans who inhabited them. As students of this conflict, neither should we. This broad understanding of the war led Jefferson Davis, shortly after organizing his Confederate government, to dispatch an agent to Indian Territory to secure the alliance of the Five Nations. It prompted Lincoln, in fall 1862, to send John Pope into Minnesota and the Dakota Territory to suppress the Sioux uprising that threatened American settlements across the Northern Plains. And it spurred James H. Carleton, after Union forces beat back the Confederate advance into New Mexico, to launch a scorched-earth campaign against the Navajo and Apache tribes of the region, which turned roughly 10,000 Indians into war refugees and then prisoners at Bosque Redondo.

The scholarship on the American West and Native America draws on a long historiographic tradition, largely distinct from the work on the American South and African American slavery. Yet as historians have increasingly made clear, it is time to move past old paradigms that quarantine slaves in the South and Indians in the West. Some scholars now recognize the Civil War as a juncture, the clearest meeting point of these historiographies.³⁹ More work remains to be done, of course, and more questions can be raised. What, for instance, did Union grand strategy on the Northern Plains and across the Far Southwest have in common with the major campaigns of the eastern theaters, especially those under Sherman and Sheridan? Can the humanitarian disaster of Opothleyahola and his followers be understood as part of the broader refugee history of the Civil War era, which includes the contraband camps of freed slaves? What if we consider Bosque Redondo a Civil War prison camp – not unlike, say, Camp Douglas – rather than simply an Indian reservation? How did the political imperatives that guided the Reconstruction of the former Confederate states also spur the reorganization of Indian Territory? Relatedly and perhaps most importantly, why was a war that freed four million slaves followed by a peace that dispossessed tens of thousands of Native Americans?⁴⁰

These questions require us to think more capaciously about the Civil War era. The defining event of this period was, of course, the suppression of the Southern rebellion and the destruction of the slave regime. But these

39 Stacey Smith provides an important historiographic overview of this new literature and an appeal for further research in “Beyond North and South: Putting the West in the Civil War and Reconstruction,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vol. 6, no. 4 (December 2016): 566–91.

40 On this final question, see Claudio Saunt, “The Paradox of Freedom: Tribal Sovereignty and Emancipation during the Reconstruction of Indian Territory,” *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 70, no. 1 (January 2004): 63–94.

developments became part of an even larger project to remake the continent in the image of the American Northeast. A vast expansion of federal power – beginning with Lincoln’s call for 75,000 volunteers to help suppress the Confederate rebellion and continuing through the relocation of thousands of Native Americans to Indian Territory – made it all possible. Under Republican leadership, this “Yankee Leviathan” pressed an agenda of military occupation, infrastructural development, western settlement, and wage labor.⁴¹ To be sure, some resisted this expansion of federal authority more successfully than others. Republican efforts to enfranchise the freedmen of the American South, for instance, met with substantial resistance, not only from hooded vigilantes but also a resurgent gang of Democratic power-brokers. On the other hand, thousands of American Indians – even those who had served loyally for the Union cause during the war – were systematically dispossessed in the interests of this federal project for the West. In short, while the postbellum South was eventually “redeemed,” postwar Native America was simply removed.

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⁴¹ See Richard Franklin Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859–1877* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Hahn, *A Nation without Borders*.

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