

# THE CIVIL WAR, 1862

In 1862 the armed forces of the United States undertook the first massive campaigns to defeat the Southern Confederacy. Better organization, training, and leadership would be displayed on both sides as the combat became more intense. Young American citizen-soldiers would find that war was not a romantic adventure, and their leaders would learn that every victory had its price. It was to be a year of bitter lessons for both sides.

As the winter of 1861–1862 wore on, General in Chief George B. McClellan, who more often than not took counsel of his fears, exaggerated his difficulties and the enemy's strength while discounting the Confederacy's problems. He organized, drilled, and trained the Army of the Potomac while western forces under his general command accomplished little. President Abraham Lincoln and the Union waited impatiently for a conclusive engagement. But neither the Union nor the Confederate Army showed much inclination to move, each side seemingly intent on perfecting itself before attempting to strike what each hoped would be a decisive blow.

The President was particularly eager to support Unionist sentiment in east Tennessee by moving forces in that direction. Above all he wanted a concerted movement to crush the rebellion quickly. In an effort to push matters, Lincoln issued General War Order No. 1 on January 27, 1862. This order, besides superfluously telling the armies to obey existing orders, directed that a general movement of land and sea forces against the Confederacy be launched on February 22, 1862. Lincoln's issuance of an order for an offensive several weeks in advance, without considering what the weather and the roads might be like, has been scoffed at frequently. But apparently he issued it with the primary purpose of getting McClellan to agree to move.

## **The War in the East: The Army of the Potomac Moves South**

As the year 1862 began, in the Eastern Theater plans prepared in Washington were aimed at the capture of Richmond rather than



Naval Engagement in Hampton Roads, *J. Davis after C. Parsons, 1863*

destruction of the army commanded by Joseph E. Johnston, now a full general. Precise methods for reaching the Confederate capital differed. President Lincoln favored an overland advance that would always keep an army between the Confederates and Washington. McClellan agreed at first and then changed his views in favor of a waterborne move by the Army of the Potomac to Urbana on the Rappahannock. From there, he could drive to Richmond before Johnston could retire from the Manassas area to intercept him. He felt that the Washington fortifications, an elaborate system of earthen forts and battery emplacements then in advanced stages of construction, would adequately protect the capital while the field army was away. Johnston, however, rendered this plan obsolete; he withdrew from Manassas to Fredericksburg, halfway between the two capitals and astride McClellan's prospective route of advance. Early in March McClellan moved his army out to the deserted Confederate camps around Manassas to give his troops some field experience. While he was in the field, Lincoln relieved him as General in Chief, doubtless on the ground that he could not command one army in the field and at the same time supervise the operations of all the armies of the United States. Lincoln did not appoint a successor. For a time he and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton took over personal direction of the Army with the advice of a newly constituted Army board consisting of the elderly Maj. Gen. Ethan A. Hitchcock and the chiefs of the War Department bureaus.

When events overtook the Urbana scheme, McClellan began to advocate a seaborne move to Fort Monroe, Virginia (at the tip of the peninsula formed by the York and James Rivers), to be followed by an overland advance up the peninsula. If the troops moved fast, he maintained, they could cover the seventy-five miles to Richmond before Johnston could concentrate his forces to stop them. This plan had promise, for it took advantage of Federal control of the seas and a useful base of operations at Fort Monroe and there were fewer rivers to cross than by the overland route. Successful neutralization of the Confederate ironclad *Virginia* (formerly the U.S.S. *Merrimac*) by the Union's revolutionary ironclad Monitor on March 9 had eliminated any naval threat to supply and communications lines, but the absence of good roads and the difficult terrain of the peninsula offered drawbacks to the plan. Lincoln approved it, providing McClellan would leave behind the number of men that his corps commanders considered adequate to ensure the safety of Washington. McClellan gave the President his assurances but failed to take Lincoln into his confidence by pointing out that he considered the Federal troops in the Shenandoah Valley to be covering Washington. In listing the forces he had left behind, he counted some men twice and included several units in Pennsylvania not under his command.

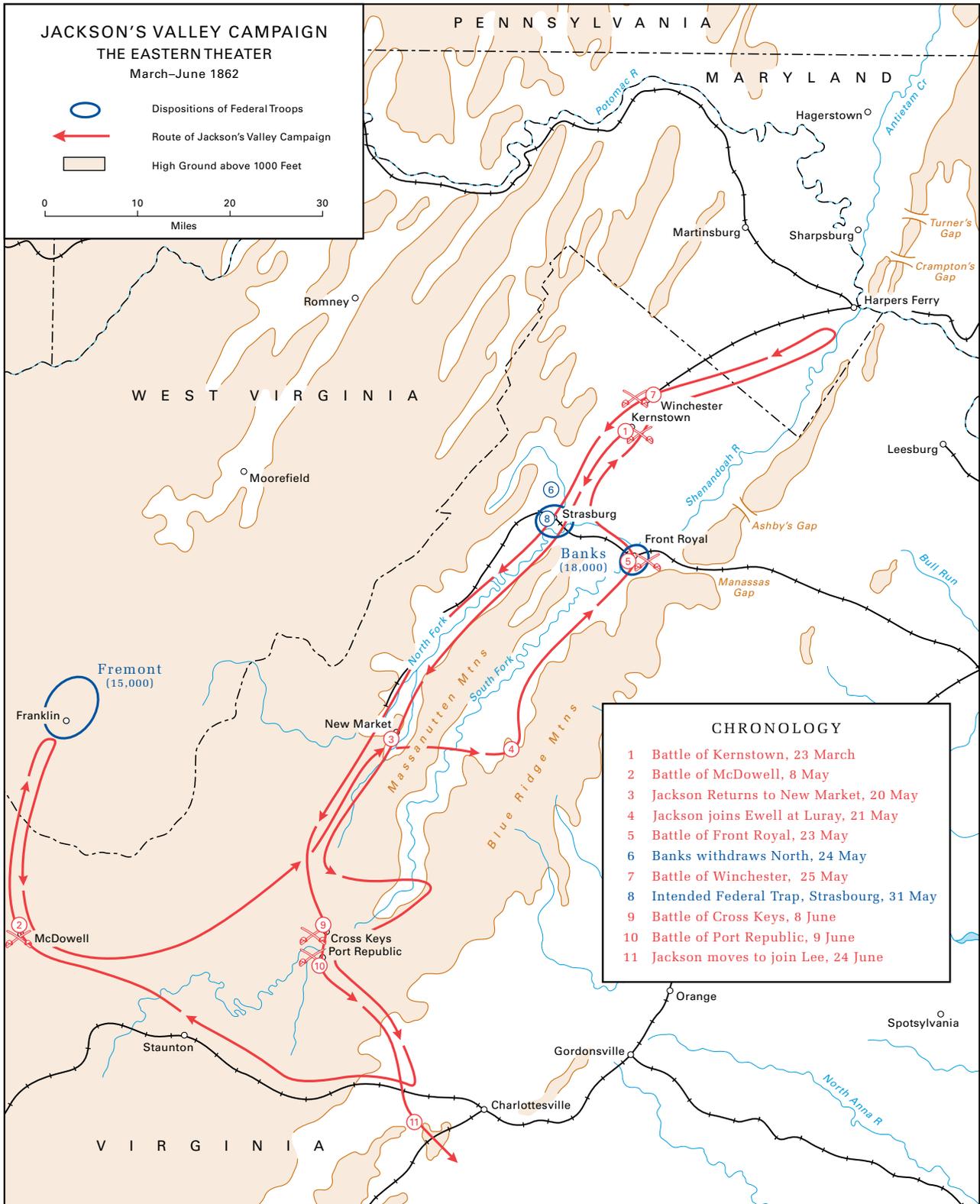
Embarkation began in mid-March, and by April 4 advance elements had moved out of Fort Monroe against Yorktown. The day before, however, the commander of the Washington defenses reported that he had insufficient forces to protect the city. In addition, Lt. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson had become active in the Shenandoah Valley. Lincoln thereupon told Stanton to detain one of the two corps that were awaiting embarkation at Alexandria. Stanton held back Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell's corps of 30,000 men, seriously affecting McClellan's plans.

### **Jackson's Valley Campaign**

While a small Confederate garrison at Yorktown made ready to delay McClellan, Johnston hurried his army to the peninsula. In Richmond, Confederate authorities had determined on a spectacularly bold diversion. Robert E. Lee, who had moved rapidly to the rank of full general, had assumed the position of military adviser to Confederate President Jefferson Davis on March 13. Charged with the conduct of operations of the Confederate armies under Davis' direction, Lee saw that any threat to Washington would cause progressive weakening of McClellan's advance against Richmond. He therefore ordered Jackson to begin a rapid campaign in the Shenandoah Valley close to the Northern capital. (*See Map 25.*) The equivalent of three Federal divisions was sent to the valley to destroy Jackson. Lincoln and Stanton, using the telegraph and what military knowledge they had acquired, devised plans to bottle up Jackson and destroy him. But Federal forces in the valley were not under a locally unified command. They moved too slowly; one force did not obey orders strictly; and directives from Washington often neglected to take time, distance, or logistics into account. Also, in Stonewall Jackson, the Union troops were contending against one of the most outstanding field commanders America has ever produced. Jackson's philosophy of war was: "Always mystify,



General George B. McClellan  
*Matthew Brady, 1861*



Map 25

mislead, and surprise the enemy, if possible; and when you strike and overcome him, never give up the pursuit as long as your men have strength to follow; for an army routed, if hotly pursued, becomes panic-stricken and can then be destroyed by half their number.”

The Shenandoah Valley was essential to both sides. It provided the rebels with critical agricultural provisions and was crucial in the Union’s defense of Washington, D.C. As a result, the Union Army attempted to hold it with 23,000 troops while General Jackson and his force of 10,000 maneuvered rapidly throughout the region. The valley took on additional importance when General McClellan began his advance on Richmond during the Peninsula Campaign, because McClellan pulled troops out of the valley to reinforce his move against the Confederate capital. Jackson responded quickly, using the mountains as shields to his operations and crisscrossing through various gaps and passes to appear unexpectedly near the surprised Union forces. He began by making a long forced march to strike the Union position at Kernstown on March 23, 1862. The tactical victory that resulted not only threw the Federals off balance, but it also prevented troops from being transferred to the Union invasion and thus kept a full Union corps of 40,000 men under General McDowell from joining the Peninsula Campaign. This movement along with several other forced marches during the campaign earned Jackson’s men the epithet “foot cavalry” for their ability to cover great distances to strike the Union at its weakest points.

Jackson went on to defeat Union forces at McDowell, Virginia, on May 8; at Front Royal on May 23; and at Winchester on May 25. The Union command subsequently committed nearly 50,000 troops in multiple converging columns to trap Jackson. Instead of retreating, Jackson audaciously attacked and defeated elements of that force at Cross Keys and Port Republic on June 8 and 9. After that, Federal troops withdrew from the valley, allowing Jackson, again in a forced march, to join Lee in time for the Seven Days’ Battles. Jackson’s Valley Campaign was one of the most brilliant military operations of the Civil War, and military historians continue to study it for its effective use of the principles of maneuver, offensive, and surprise.

## **Peninsula Campaign**

When McClellan reached the peninsula in early April he found a force of ten to fifteen thousand Confederates under Maj. Gen. John B. Magruder barring his path to Richmond. Magruder, a student of drama and master of deception, so dazzled McClellan that instead of brushing the Confederates aside he spent a month in a siege of Yorktown. But Johnston, who wanted to fight the decisive action closer to Richmond, decided to withdraw slowly up the peninsula. At Williamsburg, on May 5, McClellan’s advance elements made contact with the Confederate rear guard under Maj. Gen. James Longstreet, who successfully delayed the Federal advance. McClellan again pursued in leisurely fashion, always believing that he was outnumbered and about to be attacked in overwhelming force by Johnston. By May 25 two corps of the Army of the Potomac had turned southwest toward Richmond and crossed the sluggish Chickahominy River. The remaining three corps were on the north side of the stream with the expectation of making contact with

McDowell, who would come down from Fredericksburg. Men of the two corps south of the river could see the spires of the Confederate capital, but Johnston's army was in front of them. (*Map 26*)

Drenching rains on May 30 raised the Chickahominy to flood stage and seriously divided McClellan's army. Johnston decided to grasp this chance to defeat the Federals in detail. He struck on May 31 near Fair Oaks. His plans called for his whole force to concentrate against the isolated corps south of the river, but his staff and subordinate commanders were not up to the task of executing them. Assaulting columns became confused, and attacks were delivered piecemeal. The Federals, after some initial reverses, held their ground and bloodily repulsed the Confederates.

When Johnston suffered a severe wound at Fair Oaks, President Davis replaced him with General Lee. Lee for his part had no intention of defending Richmond passively. The city's fortifications would enable him to protect Richmond with a relatively small force while he used the main body of his army offensively in an attempt to cut off and destroy the Army of the Potomac. He ordered Jackson back from the Shenandoah Valley with all possible speed.

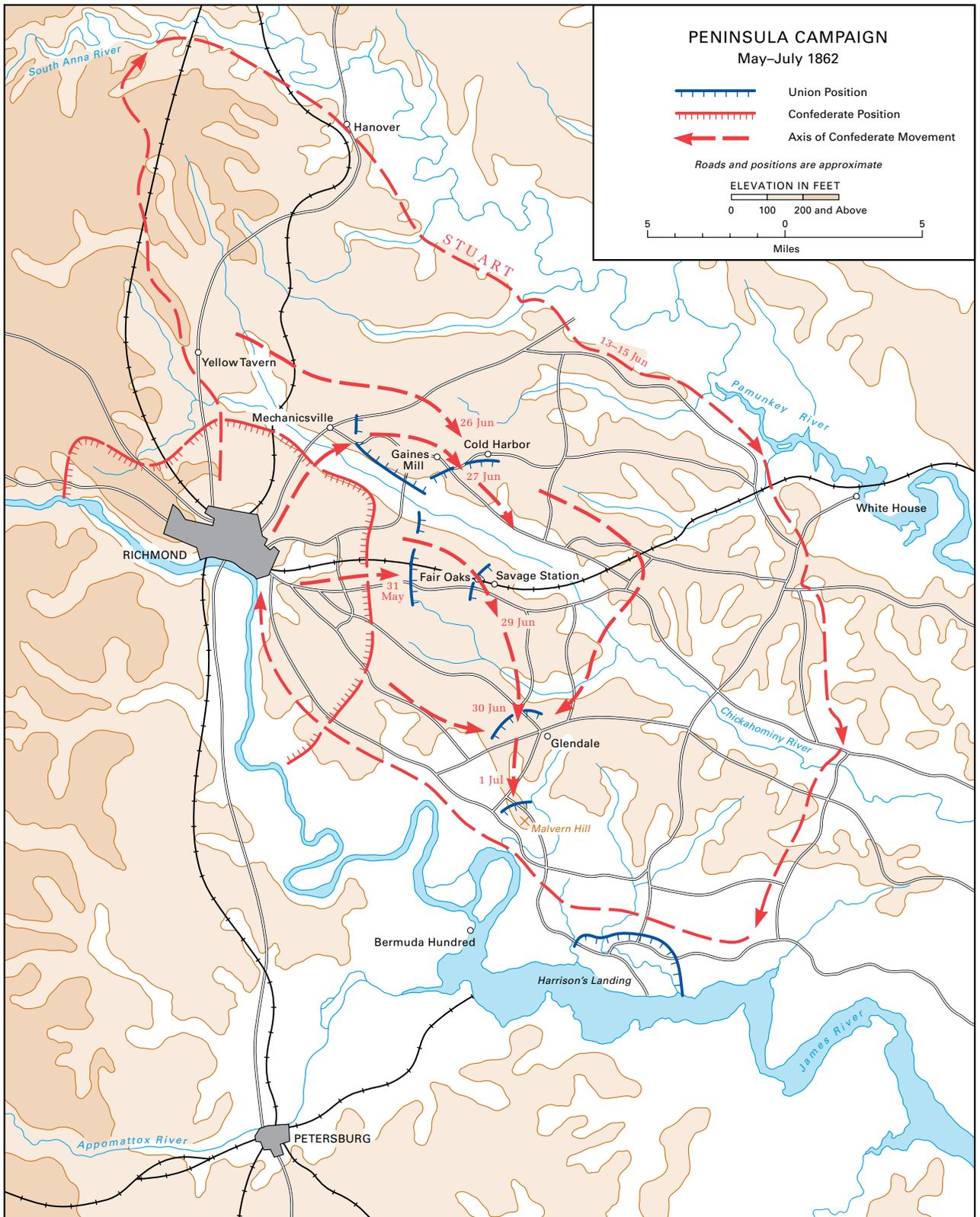
### The Seven Days' Battles

McClellan had planned to use his superior artillery to break through the Richmond defenses, but Lee struck the Union Army before it could resume the advance. Lee's dispositions for the Battle of Mechanicsville on June 26 present a good illustration of the principles of mass and economy of force. On the north side of the Chickahominy, he concentrated 65,000 men to oppose Brig. Gen. Fitz-John Porter's V Corps of 30,000. Only 25,000 were left before Richmond to contain the remainder of the Union Army. When Lee attacked, his timing and coordination were not yet refined. Jackson of all people seemed lethargic and moved slowly; and the V Corps defended stoutly during the day. McClellan thereupon withdrew the V Corps southeast to a stronger position at Gaines' Mill. Porter's men constructed light barricades and made ready. Lee massed 57,000 men and assaulted 34,000 Federals on June 27. The fighting was severe, but numbers told and the Federal line broke. Darkness fell before Lee could exploit his advantage, and McClellan took the opportunity to regroup Porter's men with the main army south of the Chickahominy.

At this point McClellan yielded the initiative to Lee. With his line of communications to White House, his supply base on the York River, cut and with the James River open to the U.S. Navy, the Union commander decided to shift his base to Harrison's Landing on the south side of the peninsula. His rear areas had been particularly shaky since Confederate cavalry under Brig. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart had ridden completely around the Union Army in a daring raid in early June. The intricate retreat to the James, which involved 90,000 men, the artillery train, 3,100 wagons, and 2,500 head of cattle, began on the night of June 27 and was accomplished by using two roads. Lee tried to hinder the movement but was held off by Federal rear guards at Savage Station on June 29 and at Frayser's Farm (Glendale) on the last day of the month.



General "Jeb" Stuart, C.S.A., 1863  
*George S. Cook*



Map 26

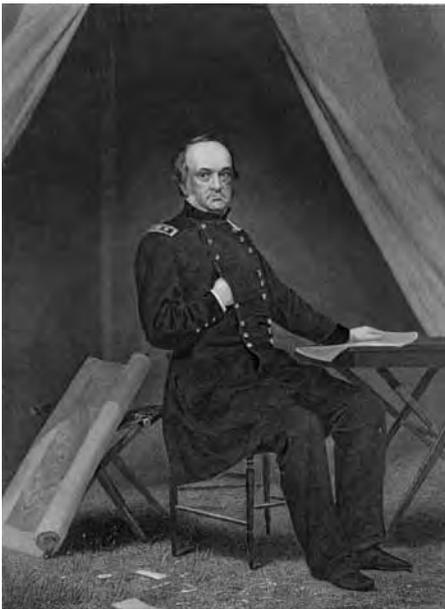
By the first day of July McClellan had concentrated the Army of the Potomac on a commanding plateau at Malvern Hill, northwest of Harrison's Landing. The location was strong, with clear fields of fire to the front and the flanks secured by streams. Massed artillery could sweep all approaches, and gunboats on the river were ready to provide fire support. The Confederates would have to attack by passing through broken and wooded terrain, traversing swampy ground, and ascending the hill. At first Lee felt McClellan's position was too strong to assault. Then, at 3:00 P.M. on July 1, when a shifting of Federal troops deceived him into thinking there was a general withdrawal, he changed his mind and attacked. Again staff work and control were poor. The assaults, all frontal, were delivered piecemeal by only part of the army against Union artillery, massed hub to hub, and supporting infantry. The Confederate formations were shattered, costing Lee some 5,500 men. On the following day the Army of the Potomac fell back to Harrison's Landing and dug in. After reconnoitering McClellan's position, Lee ordered his exhausted men back to the Richmond lines for rest and reorganization. His attacks, while costly, had saved Richmond for the Confederacy.

The Peninsula Campaign cost the Union Army 15,849 men killed, wounded, and missing. The Confederates, who had done most of the attacking, lost more: 20,614. Improvement in the training and discipline of both armies since the disorganized fight at Bull Run was notable. But just as significant was the fact that higher commanders had not yet thoroughly mastered their jobs. Except in McClellan's defensive action at Malvern Hill, which was largely conducted by his corps commanders, neither side's higher command had been able to bring an entire army into coordinated action.

## Second Bull Run

The failure of the Union forces to take Richmond quickly forced President Lincoln to abandon the idea of exercising command over the Union armies in person. On July 11, 1862, he selected as new General in Chief Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, who had won acclaim for the victories in the west. The President did not at once appoint a successor in the west, which was to suffer from divided command for a time. Lincoln wanted Halleck to direct the various Federal armies in close concert to take advantage of the North's superior strength. If all Federal armies coordinated their efforts, Lincoln reasoned, they could strike where the Confederacy was weak or force it to strengthen one army at the expense of another; eventually they could wear the Confederacy down, destroy the various armies, and win the war.

Halleck turned out to be a disappointment. He never attempted to exercise field command or assume responsibility for strategic direction of the armies. But, acting more as military adviser to the President, he nevertheless performed a valuable function by serving as a channel of communication between the Chief Executive and the field commanders. He adeptly translated the President's ideas into terms the generals could comprehend and expressed the soldiers' views in language that Mr. Lincoln could understand. However, he did not solve the strategic coordination problem of the Union.



H. W. Halleck  
*Alonzo Chappel, 1862*



*Orange and Alexandria Railroad Military Bridge*

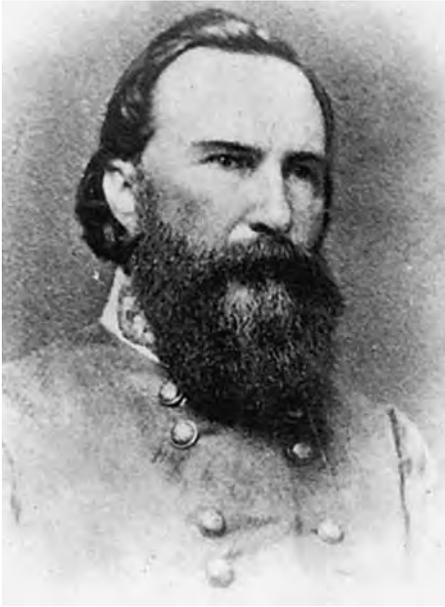
Shortly before Halleck's appointment, Lincoln decided to consolidate the various Union forces in the Shenandoah Valley and other parts of western Virginia—45,000 men—under the victor of a small battle in the west at Island No.10, Maj. Gen. John Pope. Pope was brought East with high expectations, but he immediately disenchanted his new command by announcing that in the West the Federal armies were used to seeing the backs of their enemies. Pope's so-called Army of Virginia was ordered to divert pressure from McClellan on the peninsula. But Jackson had left the valley, and Federal forces were scattered. On August 3 Halleck ordered McClellan to withdraw by water from the peninsula to Aquia Creek on the Potomac and to affect a speedy junction at Fredericksburg with Pope. Meanwhile, Pope began posting the Army of Virginia along the Orange and Alexandria Railroads to the west of Fredericksburg.

Lee knew that his Army of Northern Virginia was in a dangerous position between Pope and McClellan, especially if the two were to unite. On July 13 he sent Jackson with forces eventually totaling 24,000 men to watch Pope. After an initial sparring action at Cedar Mountain on August 9, Jackson and Pope stood watching each other for nearly a week. Lee, knowing that McClellan was leaving Harrison's Landing, departed Richmond with the remainder of the Army of Northern Virginia and joined Jackson at Gordonsville. The combined Confederate forces outnumbered Pope's, and Lee resolved to outflank and cut off the Army of Virginia before the whole of McClellan's force could be brought to bear.

A succession of captured orders enabled both Lee and Pope to learn the intentions of the other. Pope ascertained Lee's plan to trap him against the Rappahannock and withdrew to the north bank astride the railroad. Lee, learning that two corps from the Army of the Potomac would join Pope within days, acted quickly and boldly. He sent



*General Halleck's Hardee Hat  
Manufactured ca. 1859*



*General Longstreet*

Lee, by great daring and rapid movement, had successfully defeated one formidable Union army in the presence of another even larger one.

Jackson off on a wide turning movement through Thoroughfare Gap in the Bull Run Mountains around the northern flank of Pope's army and subsequently followed the same route with the divisions commanded by General Longstreet.

Pope took note of Jackson's move but first assumed that it was pointed toward the Shenandoah Valley. Then Jackson, covering nearly sixty miles in two days, came in behind Pope at Manassas on August 26, destroyed his supply base there, and slipped away unmolested. Pope marched and countermarched his forces for two days trying to find the elusive Confederates. At the same time the Union commander failed to take Lee's other forces into account. As a result he walked into Lee's trap on the site of the old battlefield at Bull Run. Pope attacked Jackson, posted behind an abandoned railroad embankment, but again the attack consisted of a series of piecemeal frontal assaults that were repulsed with heavy casualties. By then Porter's V Corps from the Army of the Potomac had reached the field and was ordered to attack Jackson's right (south) flank. By this time also, Longstreet's column had burst through Thoroughfare Gap; and deploying on Jackson's right, it blocked Porter's move.

The next day, August 30, Pope renewed his attacks against Jackson, who he thought was retreating. Seizing the opportunity to catch the Federal columns in an exposed position, Lee sent Longstreet slashing along the Warrenton turnpike to catch Pope's flank in the air. The Federal army soon retired from the field; and Pope led it back to Washington, fighting an enveloping Confederate force at Chantilly on the way.

Lee, by great daring and rapid movement, and by virtue of having the Confederate forces unified under his command, had successfully defeated one formidable Union army in the presence of another even larger one. Halleck, as General in Chief, had not taken the field to coordinate Pope and McClellan, and Pope lost the campaign despite the advantage of interior lines.

President Lincoln, desiring to use McClellan's admitted talents for training and reorganizing the battered eastern armies, had become convinced that bitter personal feelings between McClellan and Pope prevented them from working effectively in the same theater. On September 5 Halleck, upon the President's order, dissolved the Army of Virginia and assigned its units to the Army of the Potomac. He sent Pope to a command in Minnesota. The Union authorities expected that McClellan would be able to devote several months to training and reorganization, but Lee dashed these hopes.

## **Lee Invades Maryland**

Up to this point the Confederates in the east had been following an inherently defensive strategy, though tactically they frequently assumed the offensive. But Davis and Lee, for a complicated set of political and military reasons, determined to take the offensive and invade the North in coordination with Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg's drive into Kentucky. Militarily, in the east, an invasion of Maryland would give Lee a chance to defeat or destroy the Army of the Potomac, uncovering such cities as Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, and to cut Federal

communications with the states to the west. Lee also retained hopes that he could bring Maryland into the Confederacy.

The Army of Northern Virginia, organized into two corps (Longstreet's consisting of five divisions and Jackson's of four divisions) plus Stuart's three brigades of cavalry and the reserve artillery, numbered 55,000 effectives. Lee did not rest after the second battle of Bull Run but quickly crossed the Potomac and encamped near Frederick, Maryland, from which he sent Jackson to capture an isolated Federal garrison at Harpers Ferry. The remainder of Lee's army then crossed South Mountain and headed for Hagerstown, about twenty-five miles northwest of Frederick, with Stuart's cavalry screening the right flank. In the meantime McClellan's Army of the Potomac, 85,000 men organized into six corps, marched northwest from Washington and reached Frederick on September 12. Of the 85,000, however, 20,000 were green troops that had only joined the Army in the summer of 1862.

At this time McClellan had a stroke of luck. Lee, in assigning missions to his command, had detached Maj. Gen. D. H. Hill's division from Jackson and attached it to Longstreet and had sent copies of his orders, which prescribed routes, objectives, and times of arrival, to Jackson, Longstreet, and Hill. But Jackson was not sure that Hill had received the order. He therefore made an additional copy of Lee's order and sent it to Hill. One of Hill's orders, wrapped around some cigars, was somehow left behind in an abandoned camp, where it was picked up on September 13 by Union soldiers and rushed to McClellan. Waving the captured orders, McClellan is supposed to have stated, "Here is a paper with which, if I cannot whip Bobbie Lee, I will be willing to go home." This windfall gave the Federal commander an unmatched opportunity to defeat Lee's scattered forces in detail if he pushed quickly through the gaps. However, McClellan vacillated for sixteen hours. Lee,



The Bloody Lane, Battle of Antietam, *James Hope, 1889*

informed of the lost order, sent all available forces to hold the mountain gaps, so it was nightfall on the fourteenth before McClellan fought his way across South Mountain.

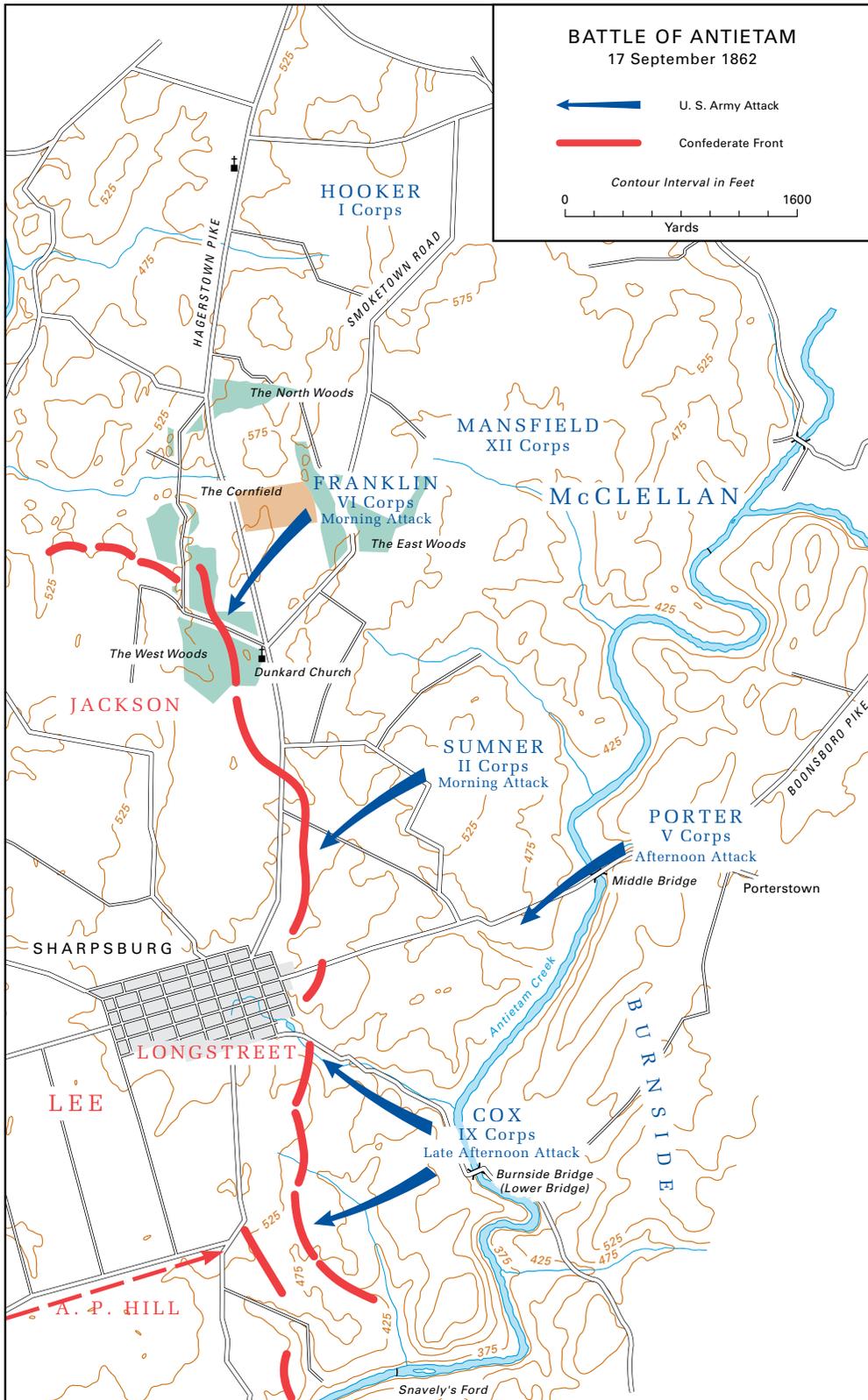
Lee retreated to Sharpsburg on Antietam Creek, where he turned to fight. Pinned between Antietam Creek and the Potomac with no room for maneuver and still outnumbered since Jackson's force had yet to return to the main body after capturing Harpers Ferry, Lee relied on the advantage of interior lines and the boldness and the fighting ability of his men. It was a dangerous move, however, and could have resulted in the total destruction of his army.

McClellan delayed his attack until September 17, when he launched an uncoordinated series of assaults that drove back the Confederates in places but failed to break their line. Heavy fighting swelled across ripe fields and up through rocky glens that became known to history as the West Wood, the Cornfield, the East Wood, Bloody Lane, and Burnside's Bridge. (*Map 27*) One Southerner remembered the attacking Union columns: "With flags flying and the long unfaltering lines rising and falling as they crossed the rolling fields, it looked as though nothing could stop them." But when the massed fire of field guns and small arms struck such human waves, a Union survivor recalled, it "was like a scythe running through our line."

McClellan, like too many leaders during the Civil War, could not bring himself to commit his reserve (the V Corps under Porter) at the strategic moment. Although adored by his men, as one of the veterans wrote after the war, he "never realized the metal that was in his grand Army of the Potomac." Jackson's last division arrived just in time to head off the final assaults by Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside's corps, and at the end of the day Lee still held most of his line. Casualties were heavy. Of 70,000 Federal troops nearly 13,000 were killed, wounded, or missing; and of the 40,000 or more Confederates engaged, almost 10,000 were casualties. It was the bloodiest single day of the war, and the bloodiest day in American history. Although Lee audaciously awaited new attacks on September 18, McClellan left him unmolested; and that night the Army of Northern Virginia withdrew across the Potomac.

## **Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation**

Antietam was tactically a draw, but the fact that Lee was turned back from his invasion of the North made it a strategic victory and gave President Lincoln an opportunity to strike at the Confederacy psychologically and economically by issuing his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862. Lincoln, while opposed to slavery and its extension to the western territories, was not an abolitionist. He had stated publicly that the war was being fought over union or secession, with the slavery question only incidental, and had earlier overruled several generals who were premature emancipators. But he wanted to strike at the economy and military sustainment power of the Confederate states and to appeal to antislavery opinion in Europe. He had awaited the opportune moment that a Union victory would give him and decided that Antietam was suitable. Acting on his authority as Commander in Chief, he issued the proclamation that all slaves in states or districts in rebellion against the United States on January 1, 1863, would be thenceforward



Map 27

## THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

Throughout the Civil War, four slave states—Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri—had not seceded. Union strategy depended on retaining these states and the loyalty of their influential slaveholding residents. Therefore, the Lincoln administration overrode early efforts by some northern generals (Fremont in Missouri in 1861 and Hunter in coastal enclaves of South Carolina early in 1862) to end slavery within their commands. Only when Union forces held several of the Confederacy's leading cities (Memphis, Nashville, and New Orleans) and had defeated a southern offensive at the battle of Antietam in September 1862 was Lincoln able to issue a proclamation that freed Confederate slaves, but not those in the border states or in Union-occupied territory. Union armies continued to advance, though, and more than 100,000 former slaves from the liberated regions were able to join the ranks of the U.S. colored troops during the last two years of the war.

and forever free. The proclamation had no effect initially: only the states in rebellion were affected, and those states had no intention of implementing the proclamation. Slaves in the slaveholding border states that remained loyal to the Union were not touched, nor were the slaves in those Confederate areas that had been subjugated by Union bayonets. Thus the Emancipation Proclamation had no immediate effect behind the Confederate lines, except to cause a good deal of excitement. But thereafter, as Union forces penetrated the South, the newly freed people deserted the farms and plantations and flocked to the colors.

African Americans had served in the Revolution, the War of 1812, and other early wars; but they had been barred from the Regular Army and, under the Militia Act of 1792, from the state militia. The Civil War marks their official debut in American military forces. Recruiting of African Americans began under the local auspices of Maj. Gen. David Hunter in the Department of the South as early as April 1862. There was a certain appeal to the idea that blacks might assure the freedom of their enslaved brethren in the South by joining in the battle for it, even if they served for lower pay in segregated units under white officers. On July 17, 1862, Congress authorized recruitment of Afri-



*107th Infantry Guards in Front of the Guard House*

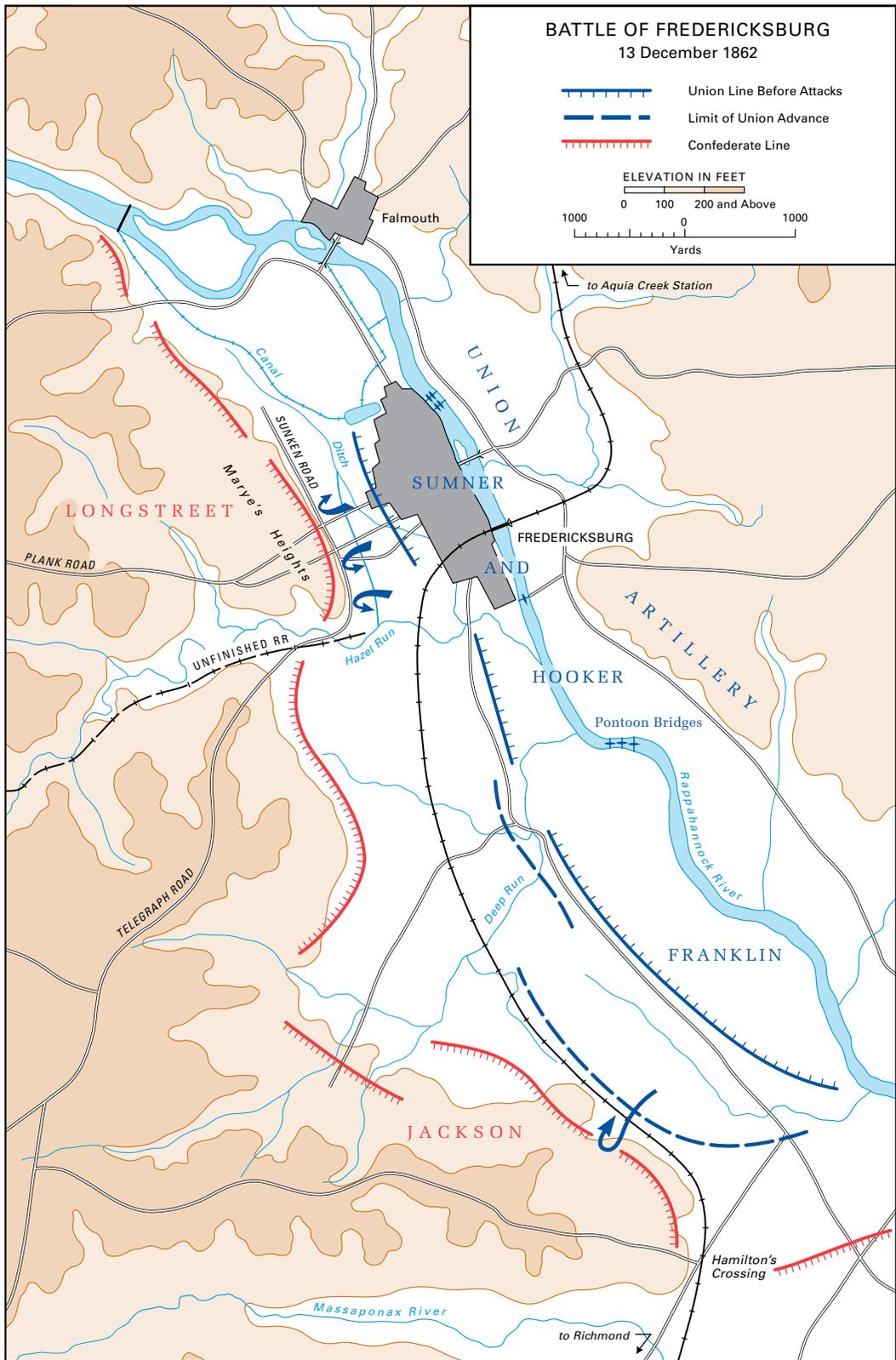
can Americans while passing the antislavery Second Confiscation Act. The Emancipation Proclamation put the matter in a new light; and on May 22, 1863, the War Department established the Bureau of Colored Troops, another innovation of the Civil War in that it was an example of Federal volunteer formations without official ties to specific states (others being the various U.S. sharpshooter regiments and the invalid Veteran Reserve Corps). By the end of the war 100,000 African Americans had enrolled as U.S. Volunteers while many other blacks served in state units, elsewhere in the armed forces, and as laborers for the Union Army. About 180,000 African Americans served the Union cause over the course of the war, making them an irreplaceable source of Army manpower.

## **Fiasco at Fredericksburg**

After Antietam both armies returned to face each other in Virginia, Lee situated near Culpeper and McClellan at Warrenton. But McClellan's slowness, his failure to accomplish more at Antietam, and perhaps his rather arrogant habit of offering gratuitous political advice to his superiors, coupled with the intense anti-McClellan views of the joint Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War, convinced Lincoln that he could retain him in command no longer. On November 7 Lincoln replaced him with Burnside, who had won distinction in operations that gained control of ports on the North Carolina coast and who had led the IX Corps at Antietam. Burnside, acutely aware of his own limitations, accepted the post with reluctance.

Burnside decided to march rapidly to Fredericksburg and then to advance along the railroad line to Richmond before Lee could intercept him. (*See Map 28.*) Such a move by the army, now 120,000 strong, would cut Lee off from his main base. Burnside's advance elements reached the north bank of the Rappahannock on November 17, well ahead of Lee. But a series of minor failures delayed the completion of pontoon bridges, and Lee moved his army to high ground on the west side of the river before the Federal forces could cross. Lee's situation resembled McClellan's position at Malvern Hill that had proved the folly of frontal assaults against combined artillery and infantry strong points. But Burnside thought the sheer weight of numbers could smash through the Confederates.

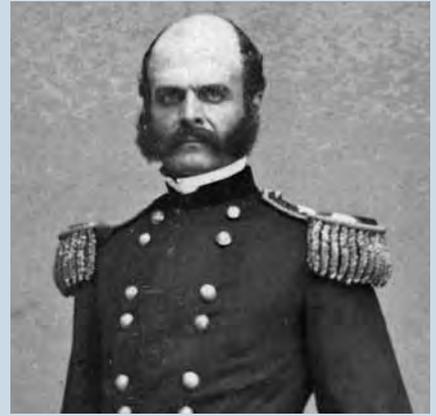
To achieve greater ease of tactical control, Burnside had created three headquarters higher than corps—the Right, Center, and Left Grand Divisions under Maj. Gens. Edwin V. Sumner, Joseph Hooker, and William B. Franklin, respectively—with two corps plus cavalry assigned to each grand division. Burnside originally planned to make the main thrust by the Center and Left Grand Divisions against Jackson's positions on a long, low-wooded ridge southeast of the town. The Right Grand Division would cross three pontoon bridges at Fredericksburg and attack Marye's Heights, a steep eminence about one mile from the river where Longstreet's men were posted. On the morning of December 15, he weakened the attack on the left, feeling that under cover of 147 heavy siege and field guns on the heights on the Union side of the river much could be achieved by a better-balanced attack along the whole line.



Map 28

## SIDEBURNS

At the onset of the American Civil War, many considered Union Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside (1824–1881) a brilliant commander. He was relegated to a supporting role, however, after his costly failure to capture Fredericksburg in December 1862. He is best remembered for his peculiar facial hairstyle. Burnside let his hair connect to his moustache, while he kept his chin clean shaven. At the time, this style became known as burn-sides. Later, while he served as a senator from Rhode Island, the syllables were reversed to create the now familiar term “sideburns.”



Burnside’s engineers had begun laying the bridges as early as December 11. But harassment from Confederate sharpshooters complicated the operation, and it was not until the next day that all the assault units were over the river. After an artillery duel on the morning of the thirteenth, the fog lifted to reveal dense Union columns moving forward to the attack. Part of the Left Grand Division, finding a weakness in Jackson’s line, drove in to seize the ridge; but as Burnside had weakened this part of the assault, the Federals were not able to hold against Confederate counterattacks. On the right, the troops had to cross a mile of open ground to reach Marye’s Heights, traverse a drainage canal, and face a fusillade of fire from the infamous sunken road and stone wall behind which Longstreet had placed four ranks of riflemen. In a series of assaults the Union soldiers pushed to the stone wall but no farther. As a demonstration of valor, the Union attacks all along the line were exemplary; as a demonstration of tactical skill, they were tragic. Lee, personally observing the failed attacks on the Confederate right wing, commented: “It is well that war is so terrible—we should grow too fond of it.”

The Army of the Potomac lost 12,000 men at Fredericksburg, while the Army of Northern Virginia suffered only 5,300 casualties. Burnside planned to renew the attack on the following day. Jackson, whose enthusiasm in battle sometimes approached the point of frenzy, suggested that the Confederates strip off their clothes for better identification and strike the Army of the Potomac in a night attack. But Lee knew of Burnside’s plans from a captured order and vetoed the scheme. When the Federal corps commanders talked Burnside out of renewing the attack, both armies settled into winter quarters facing each other across the Rappahannock. Fredericksburg, a disastrous defeat, was otherwise noteworthy for the U.S. Army in that the telegraph first saw extensive battlefield use, linking headquarters with forward batteries during the action—a forerunner of twentieth century battlefield communications.

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### The War in the West: The Twin Rivers Campaign

Students of the Civil War often concentrate their study on the cockpit of the war in the east—Virginia. The rival capitals lay only a hundred

miles apart, and the country between them was fought over for four years; and, arguably, the Eastern Theater had a more immediate effect on public opinion and morale in the much more populous east. But it was the Union armies west of the Appalachians that marched the greatest distances and struck some of the hardest blows against the Confederacy.

These Union forces in late 1861 were organized into two separate commands. Brig. Gen. Don Carlos Buell commanded 45,000 men from a headquarters at Louisville, Kentucky; while General Halleck with headquarters at St. Louis, Missouri, had 91,000 under his command. These troops were generally raw, undisciplined western volunteers. Logistical matters and training facilities were undeveloped, and as Halleck once wrote in disgust to his superior in Washington, "affairs here are in complete chaos."

Affairs were no better among the Confederate forces farther south. Facing Buell and Halleck were 43,000 scattered and ill-equipped Confederate troops under General Albert Sidney Johnston. Charged with defending a line that stretched for more than 500 miles from western Virginia to the border of Kansas, Johnston's forces mostly lay east of the Mississippi River. They occupied a system of forts and camps from Cumberland Gap in western Virginia through Bowling Green, Kentucky, to Columbus, Kentucky, on the Mississippi. Rivers and railroads provided Johnston with most of his interior lines of communications, since most of the roads were virtually impassable in winter. To protect a lateral railroad where it crossed two rivers in Tennessee and yet respect Kentucky's neutrality and to block the critical Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, the Confederates had built Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River just south of the boundary between the two states. This gave the Confederates an important strategic advantage. On the other hand, hampering the Confederate buildup were Southern governors whose states' rights doctrine led them to believe that defense of their respective states had higher priority than pushing forward the needed men and munitions to a Confederate commander, Johnston, at the front.

At the beginning of 1862, Halleck and Buell were supposed to be cooperating but had yet to do so effectively. On his own, Buell moved in mid-January to give token response to Lincoln's desire to help the Unionists in east Tennessee. One of his subordinates succeeded in breaching the Confederate defense line in eastern Kentucky in a local action near Mill Springs, but Buell failed to exploit the victory.

In Halleck's department, Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, at the time an inconspicuous district commander of volunteers at Cairo, Illinois, had meanwhile proposed a river expedition up the Tennessee to take Fort Henry. After some hesitancy and in spite of the absence of assurance of support from Buell, Halleck approved a plan for a joint Army-Navy expedition. On January 30, 1862, he directed 15,000 men under Grant, supported by armored gunboats and river craft of the U.S. Navy under a flag officer, Andrew H. Foote, to "take and hold Fort Henry." The actions of subordinate commanders were at last prodding the Union war machine to move.

### **Capture of Forts Henry and Donelson**

Grant landed his troops below Fort Henry and together with Foote's naval force moved against the Confederate position on February 6. At

the Federals' approach the Confederate commander sent most of his men to Fort Donelson. Muddy roads delayed the Union Army's advance, but Foote's seven gunboats plunged ahead and in a short fire-fight induced the defenders of Fort Henry to surrender. Indeed, the Confederates had lowered their colors before Grant's infantry could reach the action. The Tennessee River now lay open to Foote's gunboats all the way to northern Alabama.

General Grant was no rhetorician. Sparing with words, he never bombarded his troops with Napoleonic manifestos as McClellan did. After the capture of Fort Henry he simply telegraphed the somewhat surprised Halleck: "I shall take and destroy Fort Donelson on the 8th and return to Fort Henry." But inclement weather delayed the Federal movement until February 12. Then river craft carried some of the troops around to Fort Donelson. The rest of the troops moved overland under sunny skies and unseasonably mild temperatures. The spring-like weather induced the youthful soldiers to litter the roadside with overcoats, blankets, and tents.

Winter once more descended upon Grant's forces (soon to swell to nearly 27,000 men) as they invested Fort Donelson. Johnston, sure that the fall of this fort would jeopardize his entrenched camp at Bowling Green, hurried three generals and 12,000 reinforcements to Fort Donelson and then retired toward Nashville with 14,000 men. Even without reinforcements, Fort Donelson was a strong position. The main earthwork stood 100 feet above the river and with its outlying system of rifle pits embraced an area of 100 acres. The whole Confederate position occupied less than a square mile. Grant and Foote first attempted to reduce it by naval bombardment, which had succeeded at Fort Henry. But this time the Confederate defenders handled the gunboats so roughly that they withdrew. Grant then prepared for a long siege, although the bitter cold weather and lack of assault training among his troops caused him to have some reservations.

The Confederates, sensing they were caught in a trap, attempted a sortie on February 15 and swept one of Grant's divisions off the field. But divided Confederate command, not lack of determination or valor on the part of the fighting men, led to the ultimate defeat of the attack. The three Confederate commanders could not agree upon the next move, and at a critical moment Grant ordered counterattacks all along the line. By the end of the day Union troops had captured a portion of the Confederate outer works. Now surrounded by Union forces that outnumbered them almost two to one, the Confederate leaders decided they were in a hopeless situation. In a scene resembling something from a comic opera. Brig. Gen. John B. Floyd, who had been Buchanan's Secretary of War and feared execution as a traitor, passed the command to Brig. Gen. Gideon Pillow. Pillow passed the command immediately to Brig. Gen. Simon B. Buckner, who asked Grant, an old friend, for terms. Soon afterward Grant sent his famous message: "No terms except unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted. I propose to move immediately upon your works." A legend and a nickname—Unconditional Surrender Grant—were born.

Some Confederates escaped with Floyd and Pillow, and Col. Nathan B. Forrest led his cavalry through frozen backwaters to safety. But the bulk of the garrison, "from 12,000 to 15,000 prisoners ... also

**"No terms except unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted. I propose to move immediately upon your works."**

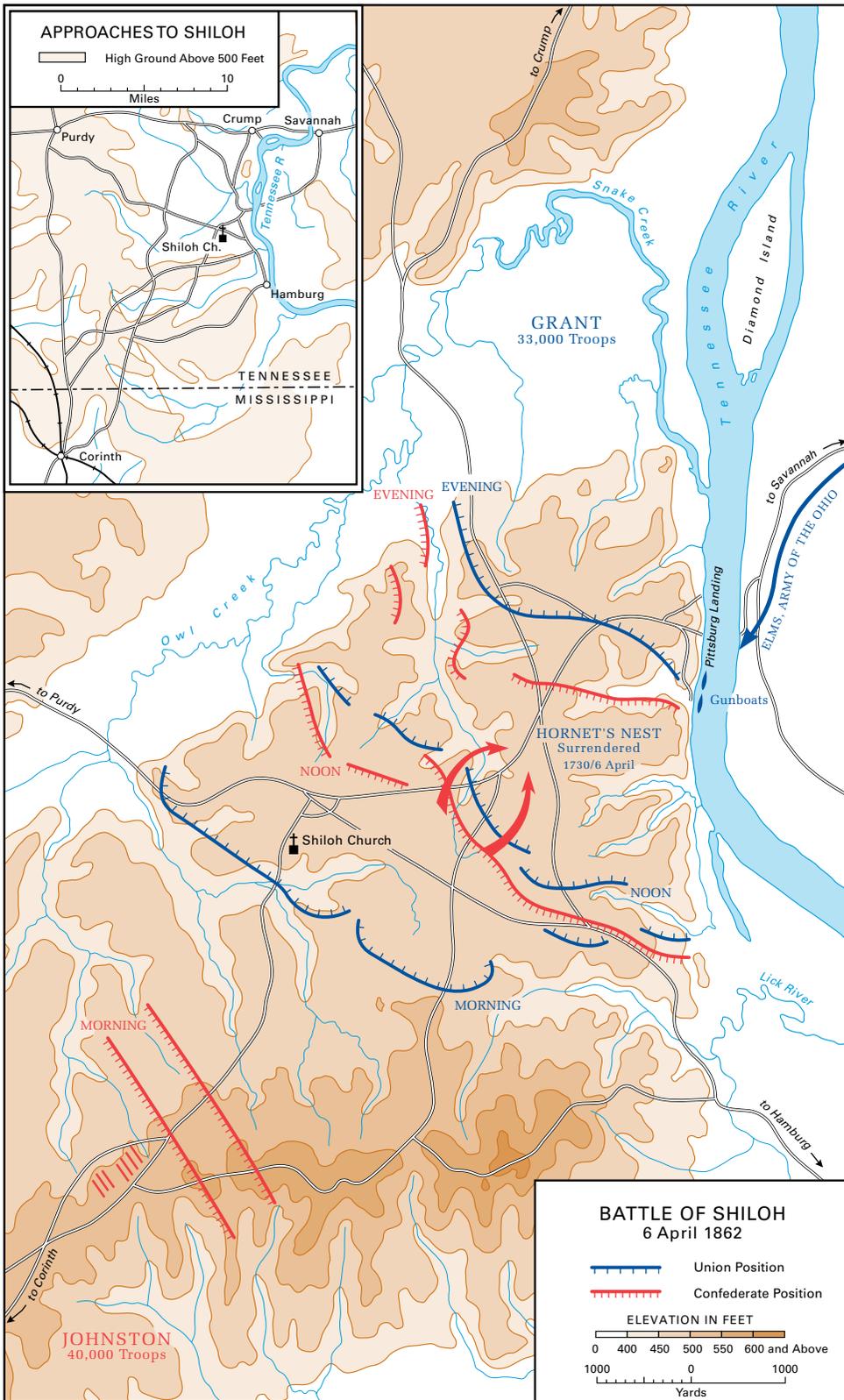
20,000 stand of arms, 48 pieces of artillery, 17 heavy guns, from 2,000 to 4,000 horses, and large quantities of commissary stores," fell into Federal hands. It was a major Union victory.

Poor leadership, violation of the principle of unity of command, and overly strict adherence to position defense had cost the South the key to the gateway of the Confederacy in the west. The loss of the two forts dealt the Confederacy a blow from which it never fully recovered. Johnston had to abandon Kentucky and most of middle and west Tennessee. The vital industrial and transportation center of Nashville soon fell to Buell's advancing army. Foreign governments took special notice of the defeats. For the North, the victories were the first good news of the war. They set the strategic pattern for further advance into the Confederacy. In Grant the people had a new hero, and he received promotion to major general.

### **Confederate Counterattack at Shiloh**

As department commander, Halleck naturally received much credit for these victories. President Lincoln decided to unify command of all the western armies, and on March 11 Halleck received the command. Halleck, nicknamed Old Brains, was well known as a master of the theory and literature of war. Lincoln's decision gave him jurisdiction over four armies: Buell's Army of the Ohio; Grant's Army of the Tennessee; Maj. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis' Army of the Southwest in Missouri and Arkansas; and Pope's Army of the Mississippi. While Pope, in cooperation with Foote's naval forces, successfully attacked New Madrid and Island No. 10 on the Mississippi River, Halleck decided to concentrate Grant's and Buell's armies and move against Johnston at Corinth in northern Mississippi. Grant and Buell were to meet at Shiloh (Pittsburg Landing) near Savannah on the Tennessee River. Well aware of the Federal movements, Johnston decided to attack Grant before Buell could join him. (*Map 29*) The Confederate army, 40,000 strong, marched out of Corinth on the afternoon of April 3. Muddy roads and faulty staff coordination made a shambles of Confederate march discipline. Mixed-up commands, artillery and wagons bogged down in the mud, and green troops who insisted upon shooting their rifles at every passing rabbit threatened to abort the whole expedition. Not until late in the afternoon of April 5 did Johnston's army complete the 22-mile march to its attack point. Then the Confederate leader postponed his attack until the next morning, and the delay proved costly.

Grant's forces were encamped in a rather loose battle line and apparently anticipated no attack. The position at Shiloh itself was not good, for the army was pocketed by the river at its back and a creek on each flank. Because the army was on an offensive mission, it had not entrenched. Grant has often been criticized for this omission, but entrenchment was not common at that stage of the war. However, the fact that the principle of security was almost completely disregarded is inescapable. Very little patrolling had been carried out, and the Federals were unaware that a Confederate army of 40,000 men was spending the night of April 5 just two miles away. The victories at Forts Henry and Donelson had apparently produced overconfidence in Grant's army, which like Johnston's was only partly trained. Even Grant reflected this



Map 29

feeling, for he had established his headquarters at Savannah, nine miles downstream.

Achieving near total surprise, Johnston's men burst out of the woods early on April 6, so early that Union soldiers turned out into their company streets from their tents to fight. Some fled to the safety of the landing, but most of the regiments fought stubbornly and yielded ground slowly. One particular knot of Federals rallied along an old sunken road, which the Confederates named the Hornet's Nest because of the stinging shot and shell they had to face there. Although this obstacle disrupted Johnston's timetable of attack, by afternoon the Confederates had attained local success elsewhere all along the line. At the same time the melee of battle badly disorganized the attackers. Johnston's attack formation had been awkward from the beginning. He had formed his three corps into one column with each corps deployed with divisions in line so that each corps stretched across the whole battlefield, one behind the other. Such a formation could be effectively controlled neither by army nor corps commanders.

Then, almost at the moment of victory, Johnston himself was mortally wounded while leading a local assault. General Beauregard, Johnston's successor, suspended the attack for the day and attempted to straighten out and reorganize his command. As the day ended, Grant's sixth division, which had lost its way while marching to the battlefield, reached Shiloh along with advance elements of Buell's army.

The next morning Grant counterattacked to regain the lost ground, and the Confederates withdrew to Corinth. There was no pursuit. Shiloh was the bloodiest battle fought in North America up to that time. Of 63,000 Federals, 13,000 were casualties. The Confederates lost 11,000. Fortunate indeed for the Federals had been Lincoln's decision to unify the command under Halleck; this act had guaranteed Buell's presence and prevented Johnston from defeating the Union armies separately. Grant came in for much denunciation for being surprised, but President Lincoln loyally sustained him. "I can't spare this man; he fights."

Halleck was a master of military maxims, but he had failed to concentrate all his forces immediately for a final defeat of Beauregard. As it was, Pope and Foote took Island No. 10 in April, opening the Mississippi as far as Memphis. Halleck, taking personal command of Grant's and Buell's forces, then ponderously advanced toward Corinth. Remembering Shiloh, he proceeded cautiously, and it was May 30 before he reached his objective. Beauregard had already evacuated the town. Meanwhile, Capt. David G. Farragut with a naval force and Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler's land units cracked the gulf coast fortifications of the Mississippi and captured New Orleans. By mid-1862, only strongholds at Vicksburg and Port Hudson on the Mississippi blocked complete Federal control of that vital river.

## **Perryville to Stones River**

Despite these early setbacks the Confederate armies in the west were still full of fight. As Federal forces advanced deeper into the Confederacy, it became increasingly difficult for them to protect the long lines of river, rail, and road supply and communications. Guerrilla and cavalry operations by colorful Confederate "wizards of the saddle"

like John Hunt Morgan, Joseph Wheeler, and Colonel Forrest followed Forrest's adage of "Get 'em skeered, and then keep the skeer on 'em." Such tactics completely disrupted the timetable of Federal offensives.

By summer and fall rejuvenated Confederate forces under General Bragg, Lt. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith, and Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn were ready to seize the initiative. Never again was the South so close to victory, nor did it ever again hold the initiative in every theater of the war.

The overall Confederate strategy called for a three-pronged advance from the Mississippi River all the way to Virginia. Twin columns under Bragg and Smith were to bear the brunt of the western offensive by advancing from Chattanooga into east Tennessee, then northward into Kentucky. They were to be supported by Van Dorn, who would move north from Mississippi with the intention of driving Grant's forces out of west Tennessee. The western columns of the Confederacy were then to unite somewhere in Kentucky.

At the same time these movements were to be coordinated with the planned invasion of Maryland, east of the Appalachians, by General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Much depended upon speed, good coordination of effort and communications, and the result of the attempts to woo Kentucky and Maryland into the arms of the Confederacy. Victory could stimulate Northern peace advocates, such as the Southern sympathizers known as Copperheads, to lobby for a peace treaty. Furthermore, a successful invasion might induce Great Britain and France to recognize the Confederacy and to intervene forcibly to break the blockade. This last hope was a feeble one. Emperor Napoleon III was interested primarily in advancing his Mexican schemes; he considered both recognition and intervention but would not move without British support. Britain, which pursued the policy of recognizing *de facto* governments, would undoubtedly have recognized the Confederacy eventually had it won the war. The British government briefly flirted with the idea of recognition and might have done so if the Confederates had put together a string of victories, but throughout the war Britain adhered to a general policy of neutrality and respect for the Union blockade.

At first, things went well for the Confederates in the west. Bragg caught Buell off guard and without fighting a battle forced the Federal evacuation of northern Alabama and central Tennessee. But when Bragg entered Kentucky, he became enmeshed in the politics of "government making" in an effort to set up a state regime that would bind Kentucky to the Confederacy. Also, the Confederate invasion was not achieving the expected decisive results, since few Kentuckians joined Bragg's forces and an attempt at conscription in east Tennessee failed completely. Without popular support, the invading Confederate forces faced eventual failure.

Buell finally caught up with Bragg at Perryville, Kentucky, on October 7. Finding the Confederates in some strength, Buell began concentrating his own scattered units. The next morning, fighting began around Perryville over possession of drinking water. Brig. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan's division forced the Confederates away from one creek and dug in. The battle as a whole turned out to be a rather confused affair, as Buell sought to concentrate units arriving from several different

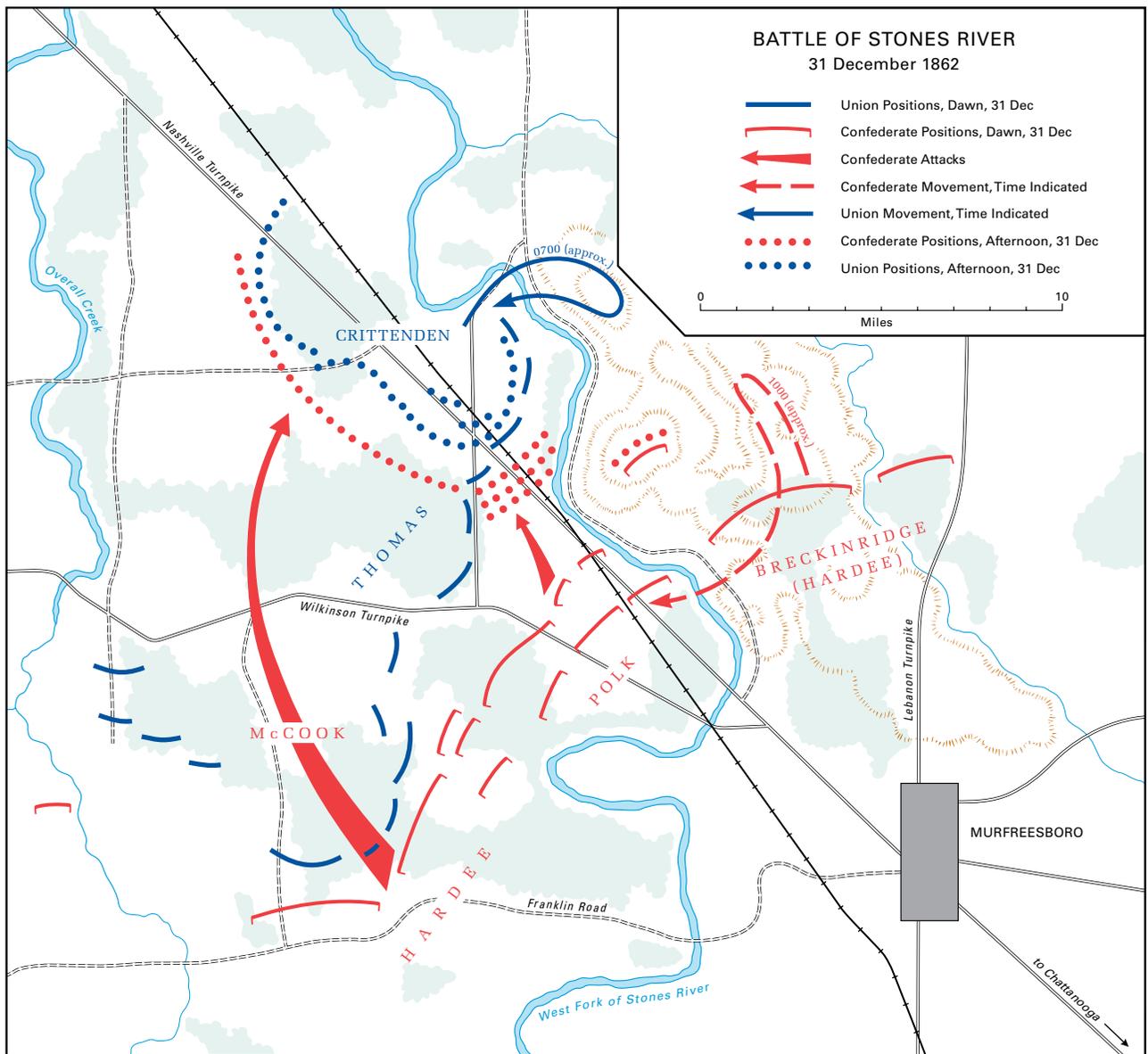
directions on the battlefield itself. Early in the afternoon Maj. Gen. Alexander M. McCook's Union corps arrived and began forming a line of battle. At that moment Maj. Gen. Leonidas Polk's Confederate corps attacked and drove McCook back about a mile, but Sheridan's troops held their ground. Finally a Union counterattack pushed the Confederates out of the town of Perryville. Buell himself remained at headquarters, only two-and-a-half miles from the field, completely unaware of the extent of the engagement until it was nearly over. The rolling terrain had caused an "acoustic shadow," whereby the sounds of the conflict were completely inaudible to the Federal commander. While the battle ended in a tactical stalemate, Bragg suffered such severe casualties that he was forced to retreat. Coupled with Van Dorn's failure to bypass Federal defenses at Corinth and carry out his part of the strategic plan, this setback forced the Confederates to abandon any idea of bringing Kentucky into the Confederacy.

By Christmas Bragg was back in middle Tennessee, battered but still anxious to recoup his losses by recapturing Nashville. Buell, having been dilatory in pursuing Bragg after Perryville, had been replaced in command of the Army of the Ohio (now restyled the Army of the Cumberland) by Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans. In spite of urgent and even threatening letters from the War Department, the new commander would not move against Bragg until he had collected abundant supplies at Nashville. Then he would be independent of the railroad line from Nashville to Louisville, a line of communications continually cut by Confederate cavalry.

On December 26 Rosecrans finally marched south from Nashville. Poorly screened by Union cavalry, his three columns in turn knew little about Confederate concentrations near Murfreesboro, thirty miles southeast of the Tennessee capital. Here, Bragg had taken a strong position astride Stones River on the direct route to Chattanooga and proposed to fight it out. Rosecrans moved into line opposite Bragg on the evening of December 30. Both army commanders proceeded to develop identical battle plans—each designed to envelop the opponent's right flank. Bragg's objective was to drive Rosecrans off his communications line with Nashville and pin him against the river. Rosecrans' plan had the same objective in reverse, that of pinning the Confederates against the stream. Victory would probably belong to the commander who struck first and hard.

## HARDEE'S TACTICS

Before William J. Hardee (1815–1873) published *Rifle and Infantry Tactics* drill manual in 1855, the Army used Winfield Scott's system based on eighteenth-century French experience and training. When 1840s-era longer rifles dictated changes in infantry tactics, then-Secretary of War Jefferson Davis selected Hardee as a brevet lieutenant colonel to design the changes. Published in June 1855, *Tactics* created a lighter, faster infantry but failed to solve the problem of accurate rifle fire from great distances. After Hardee joined the Confederate Army in 1861, he revised his manual; the South used it almost exclusively during the Civil War.



Map 30

Insufficient Federal security, as well as Rosecrans' failure to ensure that the pivotal units in his attack plan were also properly posted to thwart Confederate counterattacks, resulted in Confederate seizure of the initiative as the battle of Stones River opened on December 31. (Map 30) At dawn Maj. Gen. William J. Hardee's corps with large cavalry support began the drive on the Federal right. Undeceived by their opponent's device of extra campfires to feign a longer battle line, Confederate attacking columns simply pushed farther around the Union flank and promptly rolled the defenders back. Applying the principles of mass and surprise to achieve rapid success, Bragg's battle plan forced Rosecrans to modify his own. The Union leader pulled back his left

flank division, which had jumped off to attack Maj. Gen. John C. Breckinridge's Confederate units north of Stones River. While Sheridan's division, as at Perryville, provided stubborn resistance to General Polk's corps in the center, Hardee's units continued their drive and by noon saw the Union battle line bent back against the Nashville pike. Meanwhile, the Confederate cavalry had wrought havoc among Rosecrans' rear area elements. As was typical of many Civil War battles, the attacking columns of Polk and Hardee became badly intermingled. Their men began to tire, and by afternoon repeated Confederate assaults against the constricted Union line along the Nashville pike had bogged down.

That night Rosecrans held a council of war. Some of the subordinate commanders wanted to retreat. Rosecrans and two of his corps commanders, Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden and Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas, vetoed the scheme. Brigades were then returned to their proper divisions, stragglers rounded up, and various other adjustments made in the Federal position. New Year's Day, 1863, dawned quietly, and little action occurred that day.

The sunrise of January 2 revealed Rosecrans still in position. Bragg directed Breckinridge to attack the Union left wing, once more thrown across Stones River on the north. But massed Union artillery shattered the assaults, and counterattacking Federals drove Breckinridge's men back to their line of departure. The armies remained stationary on January 3, but Bragg finally withdrew from the battlefield that evening, permitting victory to slip from his grasp. Tactically a draw, Stones River so badly mangled the Army of the Cumberland that it would be immobilized for six months. Yet, more than most other battles of the war, Stones River was a conflict between the wills of the opposing army leaders. Rosecrans, supported by Thomas and others, would not admit himself beaten and in the end won a victory of sorts.

The great Confederate counteroffensives of 1862 had failed in the west, yet Chattanooga, the key to east Tennessee and Georgia, remained in Southern hands. Farther west, Federal forces had penetrated only slightly into northern Mississippi. The war was simply on dead center in the west at the end of the year.

## **The War West of the Mississippi**

If the major fighting of the Civil War occurred in the "older" populated sections of the United States, the youthful area of the American frontier across the Mississippi saw its share of action also. Missouri and Kansas, deeply involved in the political issues that precipitated the conflict, and even the distant New Mexico Territory, were all touched by military operations.

The Southwest was a particularly rich plum, for as one Confederate commander observed, "The vast mineral resources of Arizona, in addition to its affording an outlet to the Pacific, makes its acquisition a matter of some importance to our Govt." Also, it was assumed that Indians and the Mormons in Utah would readily accept allegiance to almost any government other than that in Washington. The Far West was seen as an area of great opportunity for the Confederates.

It was with these motives in mind that early in 1862 Confederate forces moved up the Rio Grande valley and proceeded to establish that

part of New Mexico Territory north of the 34th Parallel as the Confederate Territory of Arizona. Under Brig. Gen. Henry H. Sibley, inventor of a famous tent bearing his name, the Confederates successfully swept all the way to Santa Fe, capital of New Mexico, bypassing several Union garrisons on the way. But Sibley was dangerously overextended; and Federal troops reinforced by Colorado volunteers surprised the advancing Confederates in Apache Canyon on March 26 and 28 as the Confederates sought to capture the largest Union garrison in the territory at Fort Union.

One of the bypassed Federal columns under Col. Edward R. S. Canby from Fort Craig meanwhile joined the Fort Union troops against the Confederates. Sibley, unable to capture the Union posts, unable to resupply his forces, and learning of yet a third Federal column converging on him from California, began a determined retreat down the Rio Grande valley. By May he was back in Texas and the Confederate invasion of New Mexico had ended. The fighting, on a small scale by eastern standards, provided valuable training for Federal troops involved later in Indian Wars in this area. Indeed, while the Confederate dream of a new territory and an outlet to the Pacific was shattered by 1862, Indian leaders in the mountain territories saw an opportunity to reconquer lost land while the white men were otherwise preoccupied. In 1863 and 1864 both Union and Confederate troops in the Southwest were kept busy fighting hostile tribes.

In Missouri and Arkansas, fighting had erupted on a large scale by the early spring of 1862. Federal authorities had retained a precarious hold over Missouri when General Curtis with 11,000 men chased disorganized Confederates back into Arkansas. But, under General Van Dorn and Maj. Gen. Sterling Price, the Confederates regrouped and embarked upon a bold counteroffensive that ended only at Pea Ridge on March 7 and 8. Here, Van Dorn executed a double envelopment as half his army stole behind Pea Ridge, marched around three-fourths of Curtis' force, and struck Curtis' left rear near Elkhorn Tavern while the other half attacked his right rear. But in so doing, the Confederates uncovered their own line of communications; and Curtis' troops turned around and fought off the attacks from the rear. After initial success, Van Dorn and Price were unable to continue the contest and withdrew. For three more years guerrilla warfare would ravage Missouri, but the Union grip on the state was secure.

The year 1862, which began with impressive Union victories in the west, ended in bitter frustration in the east. Ten full-scale and costly battles had been fought, but no decisive victory had yet been scored by the forces of the Union. The Federals had broken the great Confederate counteroffensives in the fall, only to see their hopes fade with the advent of winter. Apparently the Union war machine had lost its earlier momentum and only decisive victories could regain the initiative.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How and why did Union war aims and policies change over the course of the war?
2. Which theater of war was the most decisive in 1862, and why?
3. What are the benefits and problems of achieving unity of command? Could the Union have accomplished the goal of unity of command effectively? Why didn't it?
4. Why should the Peninsula Campaign have worked? What caused it to fail, and how did this failure impact on Union war aims?
5. "War is too important to leave to the generals." To what degree does this apply to the Civil War in 1862?
6. It has been said that many of the political generals appointed by Lincoln delayed Union victory through sheer incompetence. Attack or defend this observation, citing examples.

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