

Volume I, Issue 1 – January 2024

BRASS BUGLE



Spirit61.info



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Welcome to the Spirit of '61 Newsletter — The Brass Bugle

M.A. Kleen, Editor

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *Brass Bugle*, Spirit of '61's monthly newsletter. This newsletter will catalog all the website updates from the previous month, as well as feature some of our most interesting articles and contributions by you, the reader.

Spirit of '61 was established in 2021 to publish a day-by-day account of events in Virginia prior to the First Battle of Manassas/Bull Run for the 160th anniversary of the American Civil War. Each article was accompanied by transcribed primary sources from the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* and *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, and other published works.

It soon expanded to include entries on individual battles and skirmishes, personalities, and units, as well as original maps and other research. We have scoured primary and secondary sources from all over to provide the most complete accounts. Where errors are found, we seek to correct them. Above all, our goal is to provide the most accurate source on this murky period of Civil War history for students, historians, researchers, and enthusiasts alike.

The American Civil War was truly a war of brother against brother, and no state experienced that more profoundly than Virginia. As the nation tore apart in the spring of 1861, Virginians were forced to pick a side: stand with their state, or remain loyal to the Union? In the chaos of those formative months, the answer wasn't always clear.

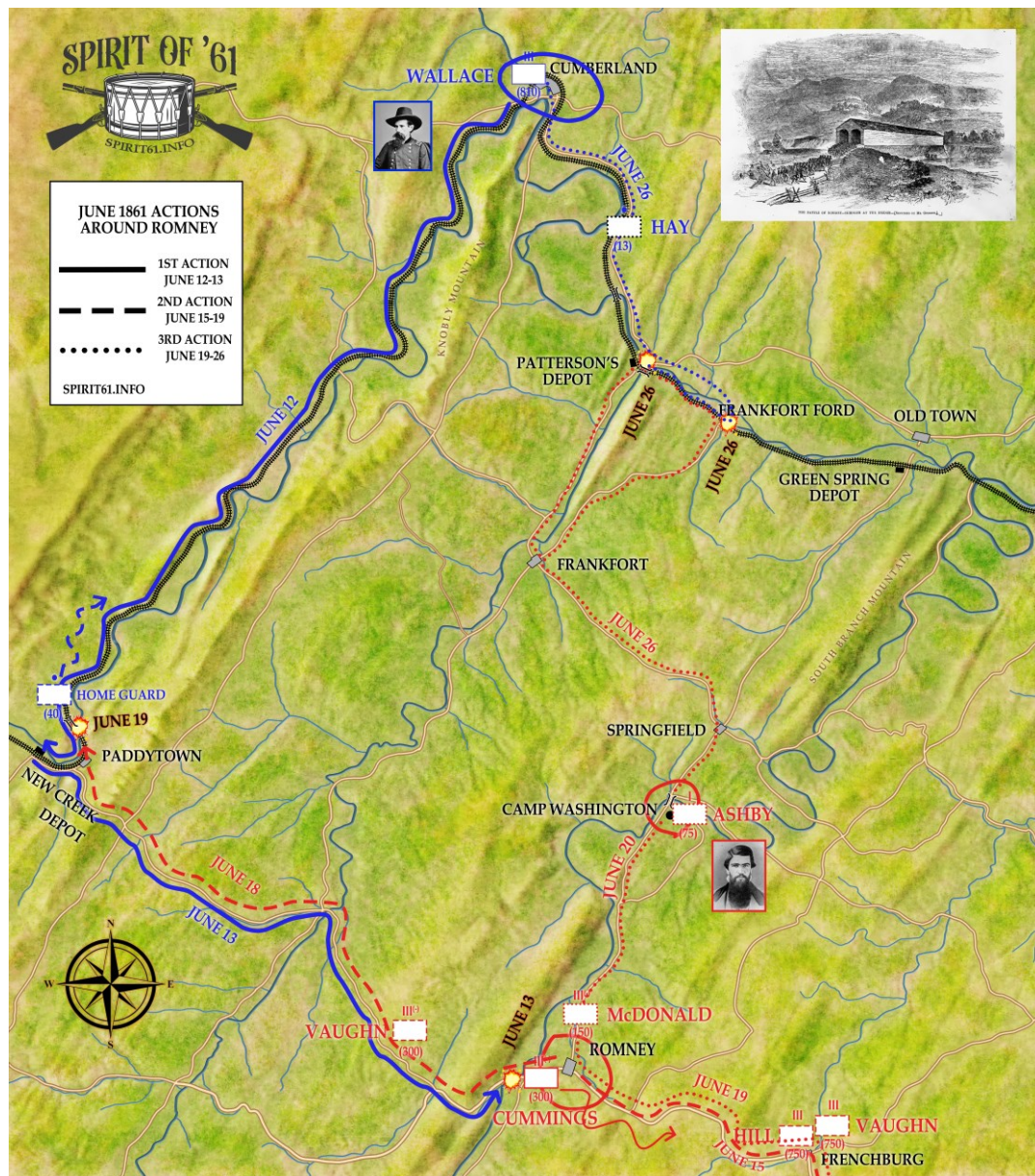
So far, we have tallied 33 armed encounters across Virginia prior to the Battle of Bull Run, which we have divided into three convenient "fronts" based on the major rivers along Virginia's borders. While it looks like we've found them all, contemporary newspaper articles and obscure mentions in other texts always seems to lead to one more.

Do you have a passion for American history and enjoy doing research? We are actively seeking contributions to this newsletter as well as our website. Updating and maintaining a growing number of pages (276 as of Dec. 24th) is a daunting task and we need all the help we can get. Contact us at spirit61.info or email dispatches@spirit61.info ❖

Encyclopedia Updates in 2023

Blog posts are only a small piece of what goes into our online Civil War encyclopedia, but new articles and updates may not be readily apparent. Here is just a small part of how Spirit61.info has grown over the past year:

- Updated or added new battle pages for the Greenbrier Ambush, a second New Creek Skirmish, Glover's Gap, Fetterman, and Shuter's Hill, and removed the page for Ravenswood when further research determined no skirmish was fought there.
- Added new illustrations for Robert E. Lee, Irvin McDowell, Joseph E. Johnston, Lew Wallace, James H. Ward, and Philip St. George Cocke.
- Created a new page for artifacts and added high resolution scans of *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* from our private collection.
- Added new maps, including a Map of June 1861 Actions around Romney, the Ohio Front, and Virginia in 1860.
- Added unit pages for the 23rd Virginia Regiment and Ramsey's 1st Regiment Georgia Volunteers.



Map of June 1861 Actions around Romney, Virginia

Our first official map depicts the actions around Romney, Virginia (today, West Virginia) in June 1861, which pitted Lew Wallace's Indiana zouaves against a variety of Confederate forces sent to secure the area. Romney was a hotbed of secessionist support and Confederate forces in the area threatened the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, which Col. Lewis "Lew" Wallace was tasked to protect.

Confederate movements into and out of the area were complicated, so solid, dashed, and dotted lines distinguish between the three separate actions:

- Engagement at Romney on June 13
- Action at New Creek on June 19
- Skirmish at Frankfort Ford and Patterson's Creek on June 26

Though important, early war action around Romney was something of a sideshow. Lew Wallace's 11th Indiana Regiment was technically attached to Robert Patterson's Department of Pennsylvania, which menaced the Shenandoah Valley. Likewise, Confederate forces sent to Romney were under overall command of Joseph E. Johnston's Army of the Shenandoah.

Wallace and his men were stationed in Cumberland, Maryland from June 10th to July 7th. The principal Confederate force at Romney were several cavalry companies commanded by Col. Angus W. McDonald. Among them were the Fauquier Mountain Rangers led by Lt. Col. Turner Ashby and Capt. Richard Ashby. The death of Richard Ashby near Patterson's Creek Depot was a blow from which his brother never recovered.

Angus McDonald would not have an illustrious military career. He suffered from crippling rheumatism and retired from command in late 1861. Turner Ashby went on to command "Stonewall" Jackson's cavalry in the Valley and was killed at Good's Farm on June 6, 1862. Lew Wallace rose to the rank of major general and commanded the Union VIII Corps. After the war, he published the novel *Ben-Hur* (1880). ❖



Artifact: Robert S. Garnett's Resignation Letter

*Loyds, Essex Co. Va.
April 21, 1861.*

Sir;

*I have the honor hereby to
tender to the President of the United
States my resignation as a Major in
the 9th Regiment of Infantry of the
United States' Army — to take effect
on the 30th inst, or sooner if desired.*

*May I beg the favor to be notified
of its acceptance at the earliest date
convenient.*

I am, Sir,

*Very respectfully
Br. St. Garnett.*

R. S. Garnett.

Major 9th U.S. Army.

Col. L. Thomas.

Adj. General U.S. Army.

Loyds, Essex Co. Va.

April 21, 1861

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I am, Sir,

Very respectfully

Yr. Obt. Servant

R. S. Garnett

Major 9th U.S. Army

Col. L. Thomas

Adj. General U.S. Army

Robert Seldon Garnett (1819–1861) was a Mexican War veteran and regular Army officer from Virginia. He graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1841 and later served as an assistant instructor of infantry tactics.

As a U.S. Army officer, he rose to the rank of major in the 9th United States Infantry and was stationed in Washington Territory. Tragically, both his wife and child died of illness in 1858, sinking him into a deep melancholy and depression. He took a leave of absence in Europe that lasted for over two years. After the Virginia Convention adopted the Ordinance of Secession on April 17, 1861, Garnett resigned from the United States Army.

Shortly after his resignation was accepted, Virginia Governor John Letcher made him a colonel in Virginia's Provisional Army and appointed him adjutant general to Robert E. Lee. On June 6, 1861, in an attempt to reverse Confederate fortunes in northwestern Virginia, Garnett was made a brigadier general in the Confederate Army and sent to command the Army of the Northwest, where he was mortally wounded in battle on July 13, 1861. ❖



Did Virginia Submit a list of Demands to Remain in the Union?

In 2017, the American Civil War Museum in Richmond published [an article](#) in its Myths & Misunderstandings series that contained erroneous information about the Commonwealth of Virginia's stance toward the Federal Government prior to its secession. In dispelling a myth about the origin of the Civil War, the author, John M. Coski, created one of his own.

The article argues that the primary cause of the Civil War was the issue of slavery. Coski is a historian and vice president of research and publications for what was formerly known as the Museum of the Confederacy (renamed in 2014). In discussing the larger issue, his article states:

“Even Virginia, which seceded after war began, had formulated a list of demands that the U.S. government must meet if Virginia were to remain in the Union; all of them related to slavery and race.”

The embedded reference links back to a transcript of the Virginia Secession Convention published by the University of Richmond, but the text doesn't support his assertion.

On March 19, 1861, Leonard S. Hall, delegate from Wetzel County, submitted the following resolution before the Convention to be referred to the Committee on Federal Relations:

“Resolved, That the Committee on Federal Relations are hereby requested to report the Constitution of the Confederate States of the South, as Virginia's ultimatum, and that they recommend the same to the Northern States of this Confederacy for their adoption or rejection, and in order to give them time to act on the same, this Convention will adjourn to meet again on the first Monday in October, 1861.”

Hall then went on to outline several amendments to the U.S. Constitution, based on the Confederate Constitution, that the United States should enact to ensure Virginia's loyalty. Contrary to what Coski wrote in his article, hardly any of them had to do with slavery or race. You can [read them for yourself](#).

But the substance of Hall's resolution is a moot point because it was tabled and never acted upon (as far as we can determine). Secession was initially rejected by the Convention on April 4, 1861, but the firing on Fort Sumter a week later made compromise considerably less likely.

There were many peace proposals made in early 1861 to prevent secession and war, most notably the Crittenden Compromise and Virginia Governor John Letcher (1813-1884) and former U.S. President John Tyler's peace conference in Washington, DC in February 1861. That conference did adopt recommendations for several amendments regarding slavery, but it was attended by delegates from states remaining in the Union. This wasn't an “ultimatum” proposed by Virginia alone.

On April 4, President Abraham Lincoln met with a Virginia Unionist named John B. Baldwin, who reportedly proposed exchanging Virginia's loyalty for the surrender of Fort Sumter. This was obviously something Baldwin had no authority to do, and he returned to Richmond empty handed (metaphorically).

Neither Leonard Hall nor John Baldwin had the authority to act on the state's behalf, and they certainly did not speak for the entire Commonwealth of Virginia when they made their proposals. ❖

Did Virginia formulate a list of demands that the U.S. government must meet if Virginia were to remain in the Union?

Fact Check: FALSE

Unit: Letcher Guard – Capt. John A. Robinson, Commanding

The Letcher Guard was a Confederate company raised in May 1861 in what is today Taylor County, West Virginia. Captain John Armstead Robinson (1830-1898), a merchant and postmaster, organized the unit. Thirty-two men mustered in at Fetterman, a small town north of Grafton along the Tygart Valley River, for a period of one year on May 13, 1861.

It was among the first units to organize in what was then northwestern Virginia and the first to fire a shot in anger. On May 22, 1861, George E. Glenn, Daniel W. S. Knight, and William Reese were on picket duty along the Northwestern Turnpike at Fetterman Bridge over the Tygart Valley River. Lt. Daniel Wilson and Thornsby Bailey Brown, members of the Grafton Guards, a Unionist militia, were returning from a recruiting rally in nearby Pruntytown when they attempted to cross the bridge.

The pickets ordered them to halt, but they ignored the warning. According to some accounts, Brown fired his pistol and struck Knight in the ear. The pickets returned fire, killing Brown. Daniel W. S. Knight was accused of firing the fatal shot, and was formally charged with Brown's murder, though he was acquitted.

The Grafton Guards were not formally sworn into federal service until May 25th, but Thornsby Bailey Brown is widely considered to be the first Union soldier killed in combat during the Civil War.

The Letcher Guard picked up several new recruits, until it numbered approximately 43 men and officers at the beginning of June.

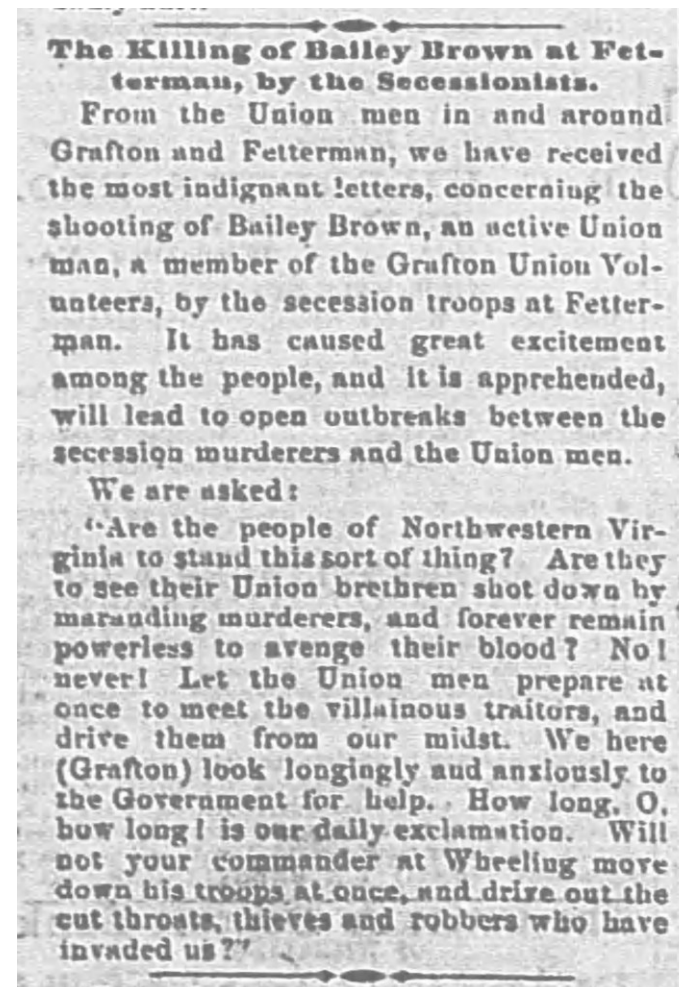
It was involved in the Action at Philippi on June 3, 1861 and then became Company A, 9th Battalion, Virginia Infantry (Hansbrough's) in the Army of the Northwest. It was in Leesville during the battles of Laurel Hill and Rich Mountain, and joined Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett's retreat to Corrick's Ford.

As part of Hansbrough's Battalion, The Letcher Guard fought at Cheat Mountain on September 12, 1861, and Camp Bartow on October 3rd. In 1862, it joined the 25th Virginia Infantry Regiment as its 2nd Company A. ❖

Armstrong, Richard L. *25th Virginia Infantry and 9th Battalion Virginia Infantry*. Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1990.

Carnes, Eva Margaret. *The Tygarts Valley Line June-July 1861*. Philippi: First Land Battle of the Civil War Centennial Commemoration, Inc., 1961. Reprint, Parsons: Barbour County Historical Society, 2003.

Haselberger, Fritz. *Yanks from the South! The First Land Campaign of the Civil War*. Baltimore: Past Glories, 1987.



The Wheeling Daily Intelligencer
(Wheeling) 25 May 1861.



Letcher Guard 1861 Roster

Name	Rank	Muster Date	Notes
Austin, Oliver P.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Boyce, Michael C.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Boyd, James	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Bragg, Edward S.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Devers, Benjamin F.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Flythe, James F.A.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Flythe, Presley T.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Gawthrop, Joshua E.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Glenn, George E.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Glenn, Jefferson	Sgt.	5/13/1861	Deserted 12/7/1861
Hendricks, William N.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Keener, Lewis S.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Knight, Daniel W.S.	Cpl.	5/13/1861	Killed Bailey Brown, first Union soldier killed in war
Louzader, John L.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Manear, Dennis	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Mathews, Simon	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Morris, Edward C.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Morris, George S.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	

Name	Rank	Muster Date	Notes
Poe, Abraham	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Poe, Alexander	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Poe, David	1st Lt.	5/13/1861	Sick with Typhoid in Huttonsville and moved to Beverly in July 1861
Poe, David M.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Poe, Francis V.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Poe, Jacob	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Poe, Jonathan	Pvt.	5/13/1861	Typhoid fever, Philippi 6/1861
Poe, Solomon	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Reese, William	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Robinson, John A.	Capt.	5/13/1861	
Robinson, William J.	2nd Lt.	5/13/1861	
Rogers, Pearson D.	Pvt.	5/13/1861	Deserted 12/7/1861
Summers, William	Pvt.	5/13/1861	
Tate (Tait), John S.	Sgt.	5/13/1861	
Murply, John C.	Pvt.	5/15/1861	
Peters, Joseph B.	Pvt.	5/15/1861	
Long, John	Pvt.	5/25/1861	
Norris, John	Pvt.	5/27/1861	

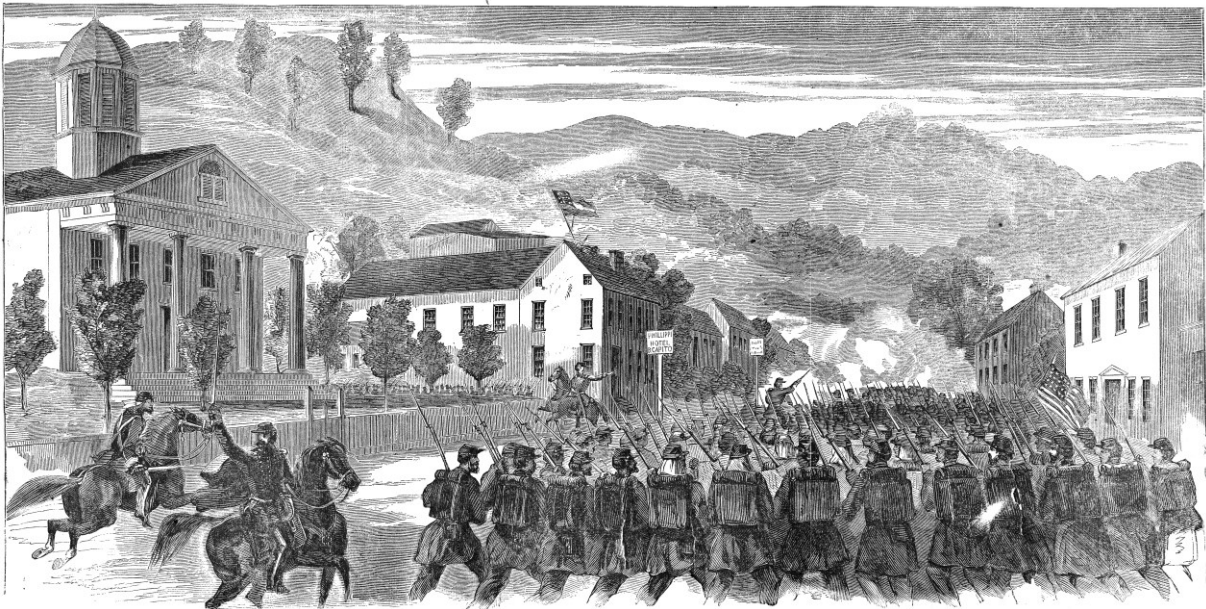
Armstrong, Richard L. *25th Virginia Infantry and 9th Battalion Virginia Infantry*. Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1990.

Hewett, Janet B., ed. *Virginia Confederate Soldiers, 1861-1865*, Vol. III-IV. Wilmington: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1998.



Letcher Guard 1861 Roster (Cont.)

Name	Rank	Muster Date	Notes
Murphy, Eugenius	Pvt.	5/28/1861	
Mathews, William K.	Pvt.	5/30/1861	
Gainer, Storms H.	Pvt.	5/31/1861	
Kelley, Enoch	Pvt.	5/31/1861	
Murphy, Francis B.	Pvt.	5/31/1861	
Murphy, Herbert	Pvt.	5/31/1861	
Murply, Andrew J.	Pvt.	5/31/1861	
Collins, Martin V.B.	Pvt.	6/12/1861	
Jarvis, Edmund J.	1st Sgt.	6/12/1861	
Friel, John T.	Pvt.	6/17/1861	
Friel, William T.	Pvt.	6/17/1861	
Halterman, John W.	Pvt.	6/17/1861	
McCutchan, William A.G.	Sgt.	6/17/1861	
Dawson, Sidney N.	Pvt.	6/23/1861	
Drake, Barbour C.	Pvt.	6/23/1861	
Musgrave, Pinkney A.	Pvt.	6/25/1861	
Gatrel, John	Pvt.	6/28/1861	
Jones, James M.	Pvt.	6/28/1861	



“The Battle of Philippi” in *Harper’s Weekly*, Vol. 5 No. 236, July 6, 1861.

Name	Rank	Muster Date	Notes
Jones, Robert A.	Pvt.	6/28/1861	
Jones, William B.	Pvt.	6/28/1861	
Woodside, Isaiah W.	Pvt.	6/28/1861	
Allender, Thomas A.	Pvt.	7/4/1861	
Lynn, William	Pvt.	Unknown	Deserted 12/1/1861

Armstrong, Richard L. *25th Virginia Infantry and 9th Battalion Virginia Infantry*. Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1990.

Hewett, Janet B., ed. *Virginia Confederate Soldiers, 1861-1865*, Vol. III-IV. Wilmington: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1998.



FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions

In our inaugural issue, I'd like to address some questions our readers may have regarding Spirit of '61, our mission, and website. If you have any questions not covered here, please contact us via email at dispatches@spirit61.info

Q: Why only cover 1861, or more specifically, the period prior to the First Battle of Manassas/Bull Run?

A: The Civil War was a dramatic event in American history that has been studied in great detail, however, this period has not. Most Civil War histories fast forward from the firing on Fort Sumter to the First Battle of Manassas, but those four months contain many dramatic events, including the first naval actions, first land battles, first officers killed on both sides, political strife, and much more. We want to provide a place where people can find accurate information about those events online.

Q: Why focus on Virginia exclusively?

A: Mainly because I, your humble editor, live in Virginia, but also because most of the military events during May, June, and July happened in Virginia.

Because Virginia was directly across the Potomac River from Washington, DC, and the vital Baltimore & Ohio Railroad passed through its territory, Virginia was the inevitable first battleground. It was invaded on May 24, 1861, a day after Virginia voters ratified their Ordinance of Secession. The battles of Big Bethel, Rich Mountain, Scary Creek, and dozens of smaller skirmishes were all fought in Virginia prior to the Battle of Manassas.

Q: Why does the Confederate flag not appear on your site?

A: Assuming you mean the ubiquitous Confederate battle flag (a blue St George's Cross on a red field, with 15 white stars), that flag was not designed until after the First Battle of Manassas/Bull Run, and wasn't in use until November 28, 1861, so it falls outside the scope of our project.

Virginia forces carried their state flag into battle during the first few months of the war, and other secessionists waved the "palmetto flag" of South Carolina. The official Confederate flag in 1861 was the "Stars and Bars", similar to the U.S. flag but with two red stripes and one white, and a circle of white stars inside a blue square. Because of our commitment to 100% accuracy, we only display period-appropriate flags on our website.

Q: Why did Virginia secede?

A: Summaries of the Civil War often portray secession as a single event, but that is inaccurate. Seven states formed the Confederate States of America on February 8, 1861: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. Virginia was lukewarm when it came to secession. In the presidential election of 1860, Constitutional Union candidate John Bell received 44.63 percent of the popular vote, securing all 15 of Virginia's delegates. Prominent Virginians, including Robert E. Lee, Governor John Letcher, and former president John Tyler, were not in favor of secession and warned about the horrors war would bring. On April 4, 1861, the Virginia Secession Convention rejected secession by a vote of 88 to 45.

Then came the firing on Fort Sumter and President Abraham Lincoln's request for volunteer troops to "suppress the rebellion" in the Deep South. Lincoln's call for volunteers outraged many of the previously pro-Union delegates, and the Convention reversed itself, voting in favor of secession 88 to 55, subject to a popular referendum to be held on May 23, 1861. Any honest reading of events would conclude that Virginia seceded in reaction to Lincoln's call for troops. The thought of a predominantly Northern army marching across its territory to invade the Deep South was simply unacceptable to a large majority. ❖