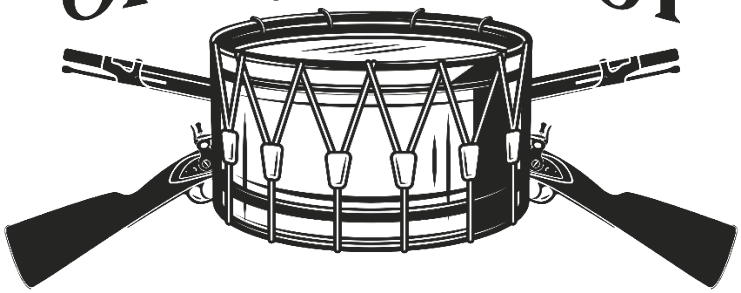
SPIRIT OF '61



BATTLELOG

SPIRIT61.INFO

V. 1.5

FEBRUARY 2026

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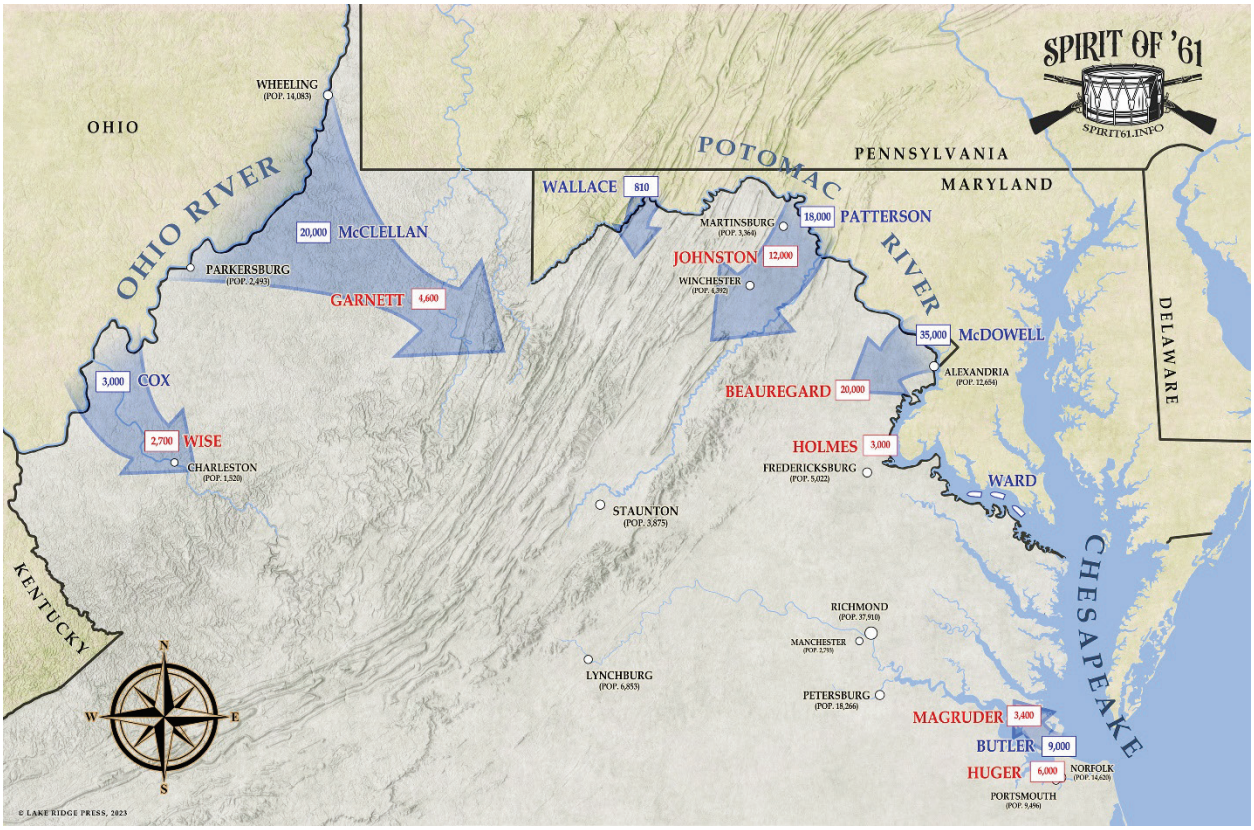
Contents

Battle Timeline

Date in 1861	Military Activity	Present-Day County
Tuesday, May 7	Engagement at Gloucester Point	Gloucester County, VA
Saturday, May 18 and Sunday, May 19	Engagement at Sewell's Point	Norfolk, VA
Wednesday, May 22	Action at Fetterman	Taylor County, WV
Tuesday, May 28	Action at Glover's Gap	Marion County, WV
Wednesday, May 29 to Saturday, June 1	Engagement at Aquia Creek	Stafford County, VA
Friday, May 31	Action at Cloud's Mill	Alexandria, VA
Saturday, June 1	First Battle of Fairfax Court House	Fairfax County, VA
Monday, June 3	Action at Philippi	Barbour County, WV
Wednesday, June 5	Engagement at Pig Point	Suffolk, VA
Saturday, June 8	Action at New Market Bridge	Hampton, VA
Monday, June 10	Battle of Big Bethel	Hampton, VA
Thursday, June 13	Engagement at Romney	Hampshire County, WV
Monday, June 17	Engagement at Vienna	Fairfax County, VA
Wednesday, June 19	Action at New Creek	Mineral County, WV
Friday, June 21	Action at Righter's House	Marion County, WV
Monday, June 24	Action at Carter's Creek	Lancaster County, VA
Tuesday, June 25	Engagement at Mathias Point (1st)	King George County, VA
Wednesday, June 26	Skirmish at Frankfort/Patterson's Creek	Mineral County, WV
Thursday, June 27	Action at Buckhannon	Upshur County, WV
Thursday, June 27	Engagement at Mathias Point (2nd)	King George County, VA
Saturday, June 29	Skirmish at Bowman's Place	Tucker County, WV
Sunday, June 30	Action at Pike's Creek	Alexandria, VA
Tuesday, July 2	Battle of Hoke's Run/Falling Waters	Berkeley County, WV
Thursday, July 4	Skirmish at Harper's Ferry	Jefferson County, WV
Friday, July 5	Skirmish at Smith's Farm	Newport News, VA
Saturday, July 6 to Sunday, July 7	Skirmish at Middle Fork Bridge	Upshur County, WV
Sunday, July 7 to Thursday, July 11	Battle of Bellington/Laurel Hill	Barbour County, WV
Sunday, July 7 to Monday, July 8	Skirmish at Glenville	Gilmer County, WV
Thursday, July 11	Battle of Rich Mountain	Randolph County, WV
Thursday, July 11	Action at Martinsburg	Berkeley County, WV
Friday, July 12	Skirmish at Cedar Lane	Newport News, VA
Saturday, July 13	Battle of Corrick's Ford	Tucker County, WV
Saturday, July 13	Engagement at Barboursville	Cabell County, WV
Sunday, July 14	Skirmish at New Creek	Mineral County, WV
Monday, July 15	Skirmish at Bunker Hill	Berkeley County, WV
Tuesday, July 16	Skirmish at Pocatalico	Putnam County, WV
Wednesday, July 17	Battle of Scary Creek	Putnam County, WV
Wednesday, July 17	Skirmish at Farr's Crossroads	Fairfax County, VA
Thursday, July 18	Battle of Blackburn's Ford	Prince William County, VA
Friday, July 19	Action at Greenbrier River	Pocahontas County, WV

War on Three Fronts



Maneuvers and battles in Virginia prior to the Battle of First Manassas, July 21, 1861, were centered around control of major waterways. Virginia had three main waterways that defined its antebellum borders: the Ohio, Potomac, and Chesapeake rivers. While the men who fought in the Civil War wouldn't have recognized these as "fronts" or used that terminology, it is a convenient way to organize the military activity in Virginia during the first few months of the war.

Most maps of the military situation in late spring, early summer of 1861 focus almost exclusively on the action in front of Washington, DC, leading directly to the Battle of First Manassas (aka Bull Run). But the Union war effort in Virginia involved thrusts from three directions: west, north, and southeast.

Approximately 23,000 men under overall command of George B. McClellan crossed the Ohio River to push deep into the Trans-Allegheny region of Virginia. 53,800 men commanded by generals Irvin McDowell and Robert Patterson pushed south across the Potomac River. And, finally, Brig. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler commanded approximately 9,000 men at Fort Monroe, where he attempted to push up the Virginia Peninsula.

These efforts were oftentimes uncoordinated or poorly coordinated. At the onset of the war, Union war planners were saddled with a hodgepodge of volunteer regiments led by inexperienced commanders with plenty of enthusiasm and little else. Many of the experienced regular Army officers had defected to the Confederacy. While this ultimately culminated in the disastrous loss at Bull Run, Union success in western Virginia can't be discounted. McClellan's early victories allowed West Virginia to gain statehood in 1863. Elsewhere, the footholds gained around Alexandria and Fort Monroe would never be seriously challenged for the remainder of the war.

1. Chesapeake Front

The Chesapeake Bay, a defining feature of Virginia's maritime border, stretches approximately 200 miles south from the mouth of the Susquehanna River in Maryland to Cape Henry and Cape Charles, Virginia. It is the largest estuary in the United States, providing an important avenue for domestic and international trade and commercial fishing. The 170-mile-long Delmarva Peninsula defines its eastern shore. The peninsula's 70-mile long "tail" forms the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

Along the Chesapeake's western shore lies Tidewater Virginia, a region shaped by the Potomac, Rappahannock, York, and James Rivers. These rivers, which flow into the Chesapeake, create three distinct peninsulas: the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, and Virginia Peninsula. This area played a crucial role in Colonial Virginia, and by the start of the Civil War, it remained home to some of the state's wealthiest and most influential families. Plantation agriculture dominated the economy, and the enslaved black population often outnumbered free white residents.

In 1861, the bustling Virginia cities of Portsmouth and Norfolk sheltered the Gosport Navy Yard, a vital U.S. Naval facility. Just north of these cities, the confluence of the James, Nansemond, and Elizabeth Rivers created the expansive natural harbor of Hampton Roads. Its entrance was flanked by Old Point Comfort at the tip of the Virginia Peninsula to the north, and Sewell's Point to the south. Fort Monroe, a stone and brick bastion-style fort built between 1819 and 1844, stood on Old Point Comfort.

On April 17, 1861, the Virginia Secession Convention voted in favor of secession, subject to a popular referendum to be held on May 23. Federal property in Virginia was in the crosshairs, including the Gosport Navy Yard and Fort Monroe. Secessionists argued they should be seized at once without waiting for the results of the referendum. The following day, Virginia Governor John Letcher telegraphed Confederate President Jefferson Davis: "Our object is to now secure the navy-yard at Gosport…"

Federal authorities had good reason to be worried. Dozens of desertions by Virginian officers and men made defense of the Yard untenable. On the night of Saturday, April 20, Commodore Charles Stewart McCauley, its commander, ordered the ships in the harbor sunk to prevent their capture and attempted to blow up the Yard. Virginia militia saved most of the arms and its large dry dock, however, including approximately 1,085 cannon of various sizes and 250,000 pounds of powder.

After the fall of Fort Sumter in South Carolina, Fort Monroe became the last remaining federal stronghold in the South. Rather than invest the fort and force its surrender, as the Confederates had done at Fort Sumter, Virginia opted for a defense in depth. They used the seized artillery from Gosport Navy Yard to fortify points around Hampton Roads and along the York and James rivers. Robert E. Lee, as overall commander of Virginia's militia, placed the flamboyant Colonel "Prince" John Bankhead Magruder in charge of defending the Virginia Peninsula. Benjamin Huger, a South Carolinian, took command of Confederate forces gathering around Norfolk.

On April 27, President Abraham Lincoln extended his blockade of the seven original seceding states to include the ports of Virginia and North Carolina. The U.S. Navy formed the Atlantic Blockading Squadron, led by Flag Officer Silas H. Stringham, to enforce the blockade. On May 7, the first hostile exchange of fire in Virginia occurred between the converted steam tugboat USS *Yankee* and a shore battery at Gloucester Point, opposite of Yorktown on the York River. Neither side reported casualties.

On May 22, Brigadier General Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts assumed command of the Military Department of Virginia, which included everything within a 60-mile radius of Fort Monroe. Known

for his aggressive leadership, Butler quickly sought to expand the Union's foothold on the Virginia Peninsula. By the end of May, his forces had occupied the nearby towns of Hampton and Newport News. It was only a matter of time before Union and Confederate forces clashed.

This came on June 10, 1861 at Big Bethel Church. The resulting battle was an unambiguous Confederate victory, and, though small compared to what was to come, it involved over 6,000 combatants and resulted in 86 recorded casualties. After Big Bethel, only a few small skirmishes occurred on the Virginia Peninsula that summer, and major military operations in the area ceased until the following year.

The Confederate strategy in the Chesapeake in early 1861 was purely defensive, focusing on erecting fortifications and shore batteries to prevent Union forces from advancing up the Virginia Peninsula or York River. In this effort they succeeded, but the failure to seize Fort Monroe had lasting consequences for the remainder of the war. Norfolk would fall in early 1862, and Fort Monroe continued to be a staging ground for invasions of Virginia. Its sheltering of escaped slaves in 1861 impacted national policy, eventually leading to the Emancipation Proclamation.

1.1 Engagement at Gloucester Point

Tuesday, May 7, 1861

Gloucester County, VA

The Engagement at Gloucester Point was fought on Tuesday, May 7, 1861 between a Union gunboat commanded by Lt. Thomas O. Selfridge, Jr. and a Virginian battery commanded by Lt. John Thompson Brown in Gloucester County, Virginia.

On April 17, 1861, the attack on Fort Sumter and President Abraham Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers to "suppress the rebellion" in the Deep South spurred delegates at the Virginia Convention in Richmond to pass an ordinance of secession, pending the results of a popular referendum on May 23.

A few days later, Virginia militia captured the Gosport Navy Yard at Norfolk, seizing approximately 1,085 cannon and 250,000 pounds of powder. Governor John Letcher appointed Robert E. Lee, recently resigned from the U.S. Army, as a major general in command of Virginia's Provisional Army and Navy.

On April 27, Lincoln extended the blockade of the seven original Confederate States to include the ports of Virginia and North Carolina. From his post at Fort Monroe at the mouth of the Chesapeake, Flag-Officer Garrett J. Pendergrast attempted to enforce this blockade with the remnants of the fleet he had rescued from Norfolk. With resources stretched thin, the U.S. Navy supplemented its fleet by chartering civilian vessels.

One of these chartered ships was the USS *Yankee*, a 328-ton side-wheel steamer built in New York City in 1860. Measuring 146 feet in length, the Navy outfitted her with two 32-pounder guns and a crew of 48. The *Yankee* first helped evacuate the Gosport Navy Yard before serving as a dispatch and escort vessel between Annapolis and Havre de Grace, Maryland.

As Virginia slid inexorably toward war, defensive preparations became urgent.

Located across the York River from Yorktown, Gloucester Point (originally Tyndall's Point) offered a natural defensive position where the river narrows to less than a mile wide. Recognizing its strategic value, British colonists constructed a fort there in 1667, which they later named Fort James. This site became a crucial stronghold for British forces during the

American Revolution. Fortifying the point would be vital for preventing the U.S. Navy at Fort Monroe from controlling the York River.

On May 3, Lee appointed Gloucester County native William B. Taliaferro as colonel of Virginia volunteers, placing him in command of the defenses at Gloucester Point. Lee instructed him to cooperate with Virginia Navy Capt. William C. Whittle on the construction of a shore battery. By that time, local militia and enslaved laborers had already begun erecting rudimentary fortifications.

While still in Richmond, Taliaferro wrote to Lee for guidance, asking what he should do if a U.S. Naval ship attempted to pass the point: "Is the attempt to be resisted, or shall I await the institution of more decisive hostilities on the part of the United States authorities?" He could not have foreseen how quickly his question would need an answer. On May 6, Taliaferro ordered a company of the Richmond Howitzers, led by Lt. John Thompson Brown and equipped with two six-pounder cannons, to reinforce Gloucester Point. They arrived by steamboat from West Point the next morning. At the same time, Flag-Officer Pendergrast ordered Lt. Thomas O. Selfridge, Jr. to sail up the York River with the USS *Yankee* and examine the fortifications.

As soon as the vessel was spotted, the Richmond Howitzers sprang into action, joined by local civilians who hauled two older cannons down from the county courthouse. A volunteer company, the Gloucester Invincibles, which had not yet mustered into state service, took a supporting position behind the redoubt. Three cannons were positioned inside the fortification and a fourth was placed at the foot of the wharf.

As the *Yankee* approached within 2,000 yards of Lt. Brown's battery, Brown made the fateful decision to open fire. The "political question" Taliaferro wrestled with was answered by a 26-year-old lawyer with no military experience. The Richmond Howitzers fired approximately a dozen shots at the *Yankee*. From their viewpoint, the steamer "careened to one side," indicating a successful hit. But the list was caused by the weight of the *Yankee's* own guns being moved into firing position. Lt. Selfridge tried to counteract the tilt by shifting equipment and letting water into the starboard ballast tanks. The *Yankee* returned six rounds, but its guns could not elevate high enough to strike the shore battery.

Seeing the engagement was futile, Selfridge sailed away after thirty minutes. Neither side reported casualties. Taliaferro arrived at Gloucester Point that evening, missing the fight. The next day, he finally received Lee's instructions. Ironically, the orders were to do precisely what Lt. Brown had already done: fire a warning shot across the bow, and "if she still persist, you will fire into her." However, when Lee learned of the incident, he disapproved of them firing from such a long range.

As the first hostile engagement between Virginia and the U.S. government in the Civil War, this brief exchange received surprisingly little press coverage, occurring less than two weeks before Virginia's secession referendum.

1.2 Engagement at Sewell's Point

Sat., May 18 and Sun. May 19, 1861

Norfolk, VA

The Engagement at Sewell's Point was fought on Saturday May 18 and Sunday May 19, 1861 between a Union gunboat commanded by Capt. Henry Eagle and a Confederate battery commanded by Capt. Peyton H. Colquitt in Norfolk County, Virginia.

In April 1861, events in Virginia were at a boiling point. The attack on Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and President Abraham Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers to "suppress the rebellion" in the Deep South galvanized secessionists and radicalized moderates.

Delegates at the convention in Richmond quickly passed an ordinance of secession, pending the results of a popular referendum on May 23.

The Gosport Navy Yard in Norfolk, Virginia, was among the nation's finest naval facilities. Determined not to let it fall into hostile hands, its commandant ordered the yard destroyed on the night of April 20-21, with many of its ships scuttled or burned. The destruction was incomplete, however, and Virginia militia seized hundreds of cannon and 250,000 pounds of powder.

U.S. Flag-Officer Garrett J. Pendergrast, aboard the 50-gun frigate USS *Cumberland*, withdrew to Fort Monroe with the remnants of the Home Fleet. Situated at Old Point Comfort in Hampton Roads, Fort Monroe was the only federal facility in Virginia that remained in Union hands.

During the move on Gosport, Confederate Secretary of War LeRoy Pope Walker telegraphed Georgia Governor Joseph E. Brown for reinforcements. "Governor Letcher, of Virginia, telegraphs for troops. …Unless they go at once they will be too late. Can you send them without delay?"

The Columbus Light Guard, led by Captain Peyton H. Colquitt, was among the first to respond. In February, Ella Rose Ingram presented the company with a new flag on behalf of the ladies of Columbus. It bore the Georgia coat-of-arms and a single star on one side, the Goddess of Liberty on the other, all set on a white field with blue trim. The company arrived in Portsmouth, Virginia, on April 23 and was assigned to an artillery battery at Hospital Point on the Elizabeth River, opposite Norfolk.

Meanwhile, Governor Letcher placed 65-year-old Flag-Officer French Forrest in charge of the Gosport Navy Yard. A lifelong sailor, Forrest had fought in both the War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War, and was to cooperate with Virginia Brig. Gen. Walter Gwynn, a former railroad engineer commanding the land forces. To prevent Union ships and troops at Fort Monroe from retaking the yard, Gwynn began constructing an artillery battery at Sewell's Point, directly facing the fort.

By mid-May, the U.S. Blockading Squadron under Flag-Officer Silas H. Stringham consisted of five ships: the USS *Cumberland* (Captain John Marston), USS *Star / Monticello* (Captain Henry Eagle), USS *Harriet Lane* (Captain John Faunce), USS *Quaker City* (Acting Master Samuel W. Mather), and USS *Yankee* (Acting Master Charles Germain). The squadron soon expanded with the arrival of the USS *Minnesota*, several smaller vessels, and Commander James H. Ward's Potomac Flotilla.

Stringham tasked Captain Eagle and the *Star* with blockading the mouths of the James and Elizabeth rivers. On May 18, the steam tug *Kahukee* delivered a work party of slaves, leased from local plantations, to help construct fortifications at Sewell's Point. Captain Eagle pursued the tug up the Elizabeth River as far as the battery at Boush's Bluff, which was manned by Captain Edward R. Young's Halifax Light Artillery. Young fired a shot at the *Star*, forcing it to withdraw.

Off Sewell's Point, Commander Ward arrived in his flagship, the 269-ton side-wheel steam tugboat USS *Thomas Freeborn*. Armed with two 32-pounder guns, the *Thomas Freeborn* joined the *Star*, and together they bombarded the unfinished fortifications for over an hour. Most of their shots, however, landed in the woods and swamp to the rear and did little damage.

The following morning, Brig. Gen. Walter Gwynn arrived and directed reinforcements to complete the battery and mount the guns. Captain Colquitt's Columbus Light Guard was first on the scene, joined by a Virginia company known as the Woodis Rifles. More Virginians soon followed, including detachments from the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues and the Norfolk Juniors. The battery consisted of two 32-pounders and two smaller-caliber rifled guns.

Work continued all day within range of the *Star's* 9-inch gun and two 32-pounders. The 9-inch Dahlgren smoothbore naval gun could hurl a 72.5-pound shell more than 3,000 yards.

Around 5 p.m., Gwynn placed Captain Colquitt in charge and returned to Norfolk. Less than 30 minutes later, just after three guns had been emplaced, the *Star* opened fire.

One member of the Columbus Light Guard later recalled, "*Whiz-z-z* came a shell, and bursted on our battery near Private Oliver Cleveland, who had gone out in front of one of our guns to shovel away sand."

During the exchange, which lasted more than an hour, the Confederates hoisted the Georgian flag. The *Star* (*Monticello*) fired 114 shots and was hit five times in return, suffering only superficial damage and two wounded sailors. Just one Confederate gun was struck by a shell, and no casualties were reported other than a bruised leg. Short on ammunition, the *Star* withdrew.

On May 21, several blockading ships fired passing shots at the Sewell's Point battery, causing no damage. Minor though it was, the engagement signaled that the Civil War in Virginia was underway, even as neither side yet knew what form the conflict would take. The coming weeks would be a crucial test.

1.3 Engagement at Pig Point

Wednesday, June 5, 1861

Suffolk, VA

The Engagement at Pig Point was fought on Wednesday, June 5, 1861 between a Union gunboat commanded by Capt. John Faunce and a Confederate battery commanded by Capt. Robert Pegram in Suffolk, Virginia.

As May gave way to June, there was no longer any doubt about what shape the American Civil War would take. George McClellan had invaded Virginia from the northwest, Irvin McDowell pressed in from the northeast, and on the Virginia Peninsula Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler was plotting his next move from the safety of Fort Monroe at Old Point Comfort, at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.

Since April 27, 1861, the U.S. Navy had enforced an economic and military blockade of Virginia's ports, and small flotillas of Navy ships, along with converted civilian vessels, had already traded fire with Confederate shore batteries on the Potomac and James rivers. The 619-ton, dual side-wheel steamer *USS Harriet Lane*, commanded by 54-year-old Capt. John Faunce (1807–1891) , joined the Atlantic Blockading Squadron on May 24.

Three days later, *Harriet Lane* was placed at Butler's disposal and helped cover the occupation of Newport News Point. Roughly 2,000 Union infantrymen, including the 1st Vermont, 4th Massachusetts, and 7th New York regiments, landed without opposition and immediately began constructing Camp Butler and building embrasures for heavy artillery. The expedition was led by Col. John W. Phelps, a U.S. Army veteran, abolitionist, and commander of the 1st Vermont.

Meanwhile, Flag-Officer French Forrest of the Virginia Navy was erecting fortifications at Pig Point, across Hampton Roads from Newport News. Together, Pig Point and Barrel Point commanded the entrance to the Nansemond River. On May 30, Forrest placed Capt. Robert B. Pegram in command of the seven-gun battery, which was manned by the Portsmouth Rifles, an infantry company.

Benjamin Butler had an ambitious plan to neutralize this threat. "My next point of operation I propose shall be Pig Point, which is exactly opposite the News, commanding the Nansemond River," he wrote. "Once in command of that battery, which I believe may be easily turned, I can then advance along the Nansemond River and easily take Suffolk, and there either hold or destroy the railroad…"

To accomplish this, he tasked Capt. Faunce and *Harriet Lane* with conducting a reconnaissance by fire against the point. On June 4, Faunce scoured several miles of shoreline, reporting on Confederate defenses and concluding that the battery at Pig Point was unfinished. That assessment changed the following morning, when he again steamed toward the point and observed "a number of men apparently engaged in transporting guns by means of ox teams and wheel carriages, while others were seen near the embrasures of the battery with the secession flag flying over them."

At 8:30 a.m., *Harriet Lane* closed to within about 1,800 yards and opened fire.

A member of the Portsmouth Rifles, commanded by Capt. John C. Owens, later recalled, "They opened up on us first... we planted our flag on the ramparts and every man mounted them and gave three cheers before we fired a gun. We then replied, and gave it to them hot..."

The Confederate battery, armed with four 32-pounders and three 8-inch naval guns, struck *Harriet Lane* twice, wounding five sailors. The exchange lasted about thirty minutes, but shallow water prevented the vessel from closing to effective range. One Confederate cannon was damaged, though none of the gunners were injured.

With her mission to gauge the battery's strength complete, *Harriet Lane* broke off the action and returned to port for repairs. The Pig Point battery proved too formidable, and Butler's ambitious plan was never carried out.

1.4 Skirmish at New Market Bridge

Saturday, June 8, 1861

Hampton, VA

The Skirmish at New Market Bridge was fought on Saturday, June 8, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Capt. George W. Wilson and Confederate forces commanded by Lt. Col. Charles C. Lee and Maj. James H. Lane in present-day Hampton, Virginia. Though relatively minor, it played a crucial role in shaping Union General Benjamin Butler's flawed understanding of Confederate positions on the Peninsula, leading to missteps in the subsequent Battle of Big Bethel.

After Virginia Secession Convention passed its ordinance of secession in May 1861, Union forces steadily reinforced Fort Monroe, a federal stronghold located at the tip of the Virginia Peninsula between the James and York rivers. Fort Monroe remained the only federal property in Virginia not seized by the Confederates, and President Abraham Lincoln was determined to avoid another loss like that of Fort Sumter in South Carolina.

On May 22, Brigadier General Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts assumed command of the Union troops at Fort Monroe. Known for his aggressive leadership, Butler quickly sought to expand the Union's foothold on the Virginia Peninsula. By the end of May, his forces had occupied the nearby towns of Hampton and Newport News. In response, Confederate Colonel John B. Magruder ordered Montague's Battalion, supported by artillery and cavalry, to occupy the area around Big Bethel Church, along the road from Hampton to Yorktown.

Major Edgar B. Montague became concerned that a Union force was planning to outflank him. He relayed his fears to Magruder, then fell back to a Colonial-Era tavern called the Halfway House. Magruder responded by sending Colonel Daniel Harvey Hill's 1st North Carolina Infantry Regiment to meet this potential threat. Although Montague's fears were unfounded, when Hill began fortifying around Big Bethel Church along the Northwest

Branch of the Back River on June 7, he inadvertently set the stage for a Confederate victory in the Battle of Big Bethel three days later.

Meanwhile, Union Colonel Joseph B. Carr's 2nd New York Infantry Regiment was foraging for supplies outside Hampton, venturing up to New Market Bridge over the Southwest Branch of the Back River, about five miles from Hill's fortifications. Some of Carr's men were baking bread at an abandoned house when they received word that Confederate cavalry were in the area. Carr dispatched two companies, led by Captain George W. Wilson, to investigate. The group split into two: Company E, under Wilson, advanced toward Little Bethel Church, while Company G took the Back River Road.

Hill's scouts reported that a group of Union soldiers was ransacking the house of Henry C. Whiting, located a short distance east of Little Bethel. Hill called for volunteers to address the threat, and Lieutenant Frank N. Roberts of Company F stepped forward. Hill also directed Major George W. Randolph of the 3rd Company, Richmond Howitzers, to support Roberts' 34-man detachment with a single cannon and placed Lieutenant Colonel Charles C. Lee in command of the group.

Shortly after Lee's group set out, a local citizen rushed into the Confederate camp and informed Hill of a second Union party, this time spotted on the Back River Road. Hill dispatched Major James H. Lane, along with Company E of the 1st North Carolina and one cannon from the Richmond Howitzers, to confront them.

The Old Dominion Dragoons (likely the cavalry Carr's men had spotted) joined Lee's group along the road. From a distance, they observed Wilson's company of New Yorkers at Whiting's farm. Lee ordered the cannon forward. Private Edward C. Gordon of the Richmond Howitzers wrote in his diary: "They saw us pretty soon and started to run! We pursued them until we got within about 400 yards... Venable sighted, and gave the command, 'fire.' The shell struck right by the side of the retreating part, but, O! horrors, it didn't burst."

The Dragoons chased down one New Yorker, Daniel A. Mooney, and captured him. Mooney's name later appeared on casualty lists for the Battle of Big Bethel, but he was, in fact, alive. Wilson's company retreated across New Market Bridge and rejoined the rest of their regiment.

Major Lane's group skirmished with Company G of the 2nd New York along the Back River Road. This encounter, though brief, was more of a stand-up fight than the earlier engagement, with Confederates firing "in real squirrel hunting style." Lieutenant John M. West, commanding the howitzer, had a bullet pierce his hat. The Confederates captured Private George Mason as the New Yorkers again retreated across New Market Bridge. A civilian later reported helping transport a cart full of wounded Union soldiers into Hampton, though no Union accounts corroborate this claim.

The presence of the 2nd New York discouraged any further Confederate pursuit, and both sides returned to their camps. Colonel Hill credited this skirmish with provoking the Union attack at Big Bethel. Butler, possibly due to confusion from the skirmish, mistakenly believed that the Confederate headquarters was at Little Bethel, which contributed to the failure of his plan two days later.

1.5 Battle of Big Bethel

Monday, June 10, 1861

Hampton, VA

The Battle of Big Bethel was fought on Monday, June 10, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Brig. Gen. Ebenezer Peirce and Confederate forces commanded by Col. John B. Magruder and Col. Daniel Harvey

Hill in Hampton, Virginia. It resulted in a Confederate victory with 86 total casualties.

Big Bethel was one of the first pitched battles of the American Civil War. After the Virginia Secession Convention passed its ordinance of secession in May 1861, Union forces steadily reinforced Fort Monroe, a federal stronghold located at the tip of the Virginia Peninsula between the James and York rivers. Fort Monroe remained the only federal property in Virginia not seized by the Confederates, and President Abraham Lincoln was determined to avoid another loss like that of Fort Sumter in South Carolina.

On May 22, Brigadier General Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts was assigned command of the Union troops at Fort Monroe. Known for his aggressive leadership, Butler quickly sought to expand the Union's foothold on the Virginia Peninsula. By the end of May, his forces had occupied the nearby towns of Hampton and Newport News. In response, Confederate forces under Colonel John B. Magruder constructed a mile-long line of entrenchments along the Northwest Branch of the Back River, near the churches of Big and Little Bethel, to block further Union advances.

Butler and his aide, Major Theodore Winthrop, devised a plan for a nighttime surprise attack, to be led by Brigadier General Ebenezer Peirce. Colonel Abram Duryee's 5th New York Infantry Regiment was ordered to march from Camp Hamilton in Hampton after midnight, with Colonel Frederick Townsend's 3rd New York Infantry Regiment providing support. Additional forces, including the 1st Vermont, 4th Massachusetts, and 7th New York regiments, moved out from Newport News along with several artillery pieces.

To prevent confusion during the night operation, Butler designated "Boston" as the watchword for all Union columns and instructed the troops to wear white rags or handkerchiefs on their left arms for identification in the darkness. However, a key miscommunication occurred: Captain Haggerty, the messenger responsible for relaying these orders, failed to inform Colonel John W. Phelps at Newport News of these precautions.

Early on the morning of June 10, Townsend's regiment, led by General Peirce, advanced as planned and approached the 7th New York from behind. Unfortunately, Colonel John A. Bendix of the 7th New York mistook Peirce's men for Confederate cavalry, and the situation was worsened by the fact that the 3rd New York regiment wore gray uniforms, similar to Confederate forces. In the confusion, the 7th New York opened fire, causing 21 casualties and sending many soldiers into a panicked retreat. This friendly fire incident was exactly the disaster Butler had hoped to avoid.

Although Union forces eventually regained order, the gunfire had alerted the Confederate troops to the impending attack. The Confederate defense, commanded by Colonel Daniel Harvey Hill's 1st North Carolina Regiment and supported by the Richmond Howitzers under Major George W. Randolph, withdrew to their trenches, bracing for the assault.

The battle continued throughout the morning and into the afternoon, with Union forces launching several attacks on the Confederate earthworks. However, the Union troops—demoralized by the earlier friendly fire incident—were inexperienced, exhausted, and facing a well-entrenched enemy. Major Winthrop was shot and killed while leading one of the final charges, and Lieutenant John Trout Greble, a regular Army officer, was killed while preparing to withdraw his artillery.

Before the Battle of Big Bethel, Confederate forces in Virginia had largely been on the defensive, retreating from Union advances. The capture of Alexandria and the hasty Confederate retreat from Philippi had been widely reported in the press, boosting Union morale. However, the Confederate victory at Big Bethel marked a turning point, as they decisively repelled the Union forces. The Union suffered 18 killed, 53 wounded, and five missing, while Confederate casualties were much lighter, with only one killed and nine wounded.

After Big Bethel, only a few small skirmishes occurred on the Virginia Peninsula that summer, and major military operations in the area ceased until the following year.

1.6 Action at Carter's Creek

Monday, June 24, 1861

Newport News, VA

The Action at Carter's Creek was fought on Monday, June 24, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Lt. Daniel L. Braine and Confederate forces commanded by Capt. Isaac Currell in present-day Lancaster County, Virginia. The brief exchange of fire resulted in a Confederate victory when the Union landing party was driven off with two casualties.

On April 27, in response to the capture of Harpers Ferry Arsenal and Gosport Navy Yard, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln extended the naval blockade of seven original Confederate States to include the ports of Virginia. Flag-Officer Silas H. Stringham's Atlantic Blockading Squadron, which included the screw-steamer USS *Star* (*Monticello*) , patrolled the Chesapeake Bay, boarding and searching ships and engaging with Confederate shore batteries at Gloucester Point, Sewell's Point, and Pig Point. In late May, the *Monticello* was damaged during the Engagement at Sewell's Point and was sent back to Washington, D.C. for repairs.

Meanwhile, Confederate volunteers quickly formed companies in Virginia's Tidewater region, erecting forts and batteries at strategic points along the coastal waterways. Companies from Virginia's Northern Neck—a peninsula between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers—formed the 40th Virginia Infantry Regiment, commanded by Col. John M. Brockenbrough. Since a regiment typically consisted of only 10 companies, some units were left waiting for assignment. One such unit was Currell's Company from Lancaster County, commanded by Capt. Isaac Currell.

On June 13, the *Monticello* returned to Fort Monroe under the command of Lt. Daniel L. Braine. Ten days later, on June 23, Flag-Officer Garrett J. Pendergrast ordered Lt. Braine to intercept a blockade runner near Smith Island. While sailing up the Chesapeake, the *Monticello*'s pilot informed Braine of a steamer called the *Virginia* that could be captured near the mouth of the Rappahannock River. Braine decided to take a brief detour on June 24, but the *Virginia* was nowhere to be found.

The *Monticello*'s pilot then mentioned that a local man named James W. Gresham, who lived near the mouth of Carter's Creek on the Northern Neck, might have useful information. A landing party of 18 armed men, led by Master's Mate Lewis A. Brown and Assistant Surgeon Heber Smith, went ashore in the steamer's launch—a small craft armed with two swivel guns and a rowboat. While speaking with Gresham, about 30 men from Currell's Company, led by Adjutant Henry S. Hathaway, opened fire from behind bushes and trees along the shore.

Brown later reported, "I heard a man on the stoop say that there was a company of well-drilled volunteers in the vicinity, and on my turning about I saw a company of armed and uniformed men stealing along the shore as if to cut off our retreat. I immediately ordered a retreat to the boat and fired off our carbines, many of which missed fire…"

The Union landing party immediately ran for their launch, leaving the rowboat behind. While wading through the shallow water, Assistant Surgeon Heber Smith and Quartermaster August Peterson were wounded (Peterson later died at Fort Monroe). The launch crew returned fire with their carbines and swivel guns.

Once the landing party was safely back aboard the *Monticello*, Lt. Braine ordered his gunners to fire on Gresham's house, called Pop Castle, causing severe damage. There were no reported Confederate casualties, and the *Monticello* returned to Fort Monroe empty-handed.

1.7 Skirmish at Smith's Farm

Friday, July 5, 1861

Newport News, VA

The Skirmish at Smith's Farm was fought on Friday, July 5, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Capt. William W. Hammell and Confederate forces commanded by Lt. Col. Charles D. Dreux in present-day Newport News, Virginia. This failed ambush turned into a debacle for the Confederates when Dreux was killed.

Following the Battle of Big Bethel, Union and Confederate forces on the Virginia Peninsula settled into a stalemate behind their fortifications. Both armies occasionally sent patrols into no man's land to forage for supplies or scout for enemy activity, but neither was strong enough to dislodge the other.

Newly promoted Confederate Brig. Gen. John B. Magruder, commanding the Hampton Division, assigned the 1st Louisiana Infantry Battalion to guard Young's Mill, supported by a section of artillery from the 3rd Company, Richmond Howitzers, and cavalry from the Catawba Troop of Halifax County. Lt. Col. Charles D. Dreux of the 1st Louisiana took command of the camp.

On July 4th, Independence Day, Dreux hosted a barbecue for his men, providing a generous supply of whiskey. He also welcomed Colonel Lafayette McLaws, the commander of Confederate forces at Yorktown, as a guest. Dreux gave a rousing speech, making it clear he did not intend to wait passively at Young's Mill for the enemy. "This is our day, and we will have it," he was said to have remarked.

Later that evening, during a meeting with his captains, Capt. William Collins of the Catawba Troop informed Dreux that Union troops were frequently seen at the home of Nelson Smith, located along the James River, about four miles to the south. Capt. Robert C. Stanard of the Richmond Howitzers suggested they take a detachment and set up an ambush, a plan Dreux wholeheartedly endorsed. Some sources claim that the idea for the ambush originated with Dreux himself. Regardless, the plan was set: after midnight, they departed with 100 infantry, 20 cavalry, and one howitzer.

As they neared a wooded lane running perpendicular to the main Warwick Road, near Smith's Farm, Dreux positioned the howitzer down the lane, with the cavalry behind it and the infantry deployed on either side. They were ordered not to attack until the Union troops had passed. However, as sunrise approached with no sign of the enemy, Dreux grew impatient and sent scouts down the Warwick Road to determine their location.

Meanwhile, Capt. William W. Hammell and 25 men of Company F, 9th New York Infantry, had bivouacked a few miles outside their camp at Newport News Point. Shortly before dawn, they resumed their march northward. After about two miles, they were alerted to the Confederate presence when a Confederate private fired prematurely—some say at a snake—prompting Hammell's men to spread out and return fire.

Capt. Collins reported, "The first information I received of the approach of the enemy, a gun was fired to our left, on the main road, and was immediately followed by another, and, with a short pause, the firing was again commenced about the same point, which was

kept up regularly, the balls cutting around very near myself and men."

According to Union accounts, at that moment, Lt. Col. Dreux stepped into the road and shouted, "Stop, stop for God's sake stop—you're shooting your own men!" If true (though Confederate accounts do not mention this), Dreux may have mistaken Hammell's men for his own scouts, as they were far fewer in number than the large force he had expected. Hammell hesitated briefly, as the Louisianians' uniforms resembled those of the 1st Vermont Regiment, but he then ordered his men to resume firing. Sgt. Peter J. Martin took aim with his rifle and fatally shot Dreux in the side.

The dense woods made visibility poor, and it seemed to the Confederates that fire was coming from all directions. In the chaos, Capt. Stanard ordered the howitzer to be limbered up and moved to cover the main road. The cavalry, misinterpreting this as a signal to retreat, surged forward, spooking the horses pulling the howitzer. The inexperienced driver lost control of the team, and the horses only stopped after the short skirmish had ended.

Realizing they were outnumbered, Hammell ordered Company F to retreat. Despite Confederate claims to the contrary, no Union soldiers were wounded in the fight. For the 1st Louisiana, however, the loss of their beloved "Charlie" Dreux was devastating. Dreux became the first field-grade Confederate officer killed during the Civil War, and thousands attended his funeral procession in New Orleans.

1.8 Skirmish at Cedar Lane

Friday, July 12, 1861

Newport News, VA

The Skirmish at Cedar Lane was fought on Friday, July 12, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Lt. Oscar von Heringen and Confederate forces commanded by Maj. John Bell Hood in present-day Newport News, Virginia. This minor skirmish resulted in a Confederate victory, with all casualties occurring on the Union side.

Following the Battle of Big Bethel, Union and Confederate forces on the Virginia Peninsula settled into a stalemate behind their fortifications. Both armies occasionally sent patrols into no man's land to forage for supplies or scout for enemy activity, but neither was strong enough to dislodge the other.

On July 5, 1861, a failed ambush near the farm of Nelson Smith resulted in the death of Confederate Lt. Col. Charles Dreux, commander of the 1st Louisiana Infantry Battalion. Dreux was the first Confederate field officer killed in the war, and his death was mourned throughout the South, especially in his hometown of New Orleans.

Eager for revenge, Confederates camped at nearby Young's Mill sought an opportunity for action. Commanding the Confederate cavalry in the area was 30-year-old Maj. John Bell Hood, a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. On the morning of July 12th, Hood led a mixed force of 125 men from the Old Dominion Dragoons, Charles City Troop, Dinwiddie Cavalry, Cumberland Light Dragoons, Mecklenburg Dragoons/Boydton Cavalry, and Black Walnut Dragoons, which collectively formed the nascent 3rd Virginia Cavalry Regiment. Hood and his men rode toward Union lines near the southern tip of Newport News, "looking out for a fight."

Meanwhile, 36 men from Company E of the 7th New York Infantry Regiment had received permission to leave Camp Butler to gather firewood. The 7th New York was composed primarily of German-born immigrants from New York City, many of whom spoke little English. The regiment, known as the "Steuben Guard" in honor of Revolutionary War hero Baron von Steuben, had been involved in a

friendly-fire incident during the Battle of Big Bethel when it mistakenly fired on the 3rd New York Infantry, which was wearing gray uniforms similar to those of the Confederates.

As the foraging party gathered firewood, a group led by 36-year-old Lt. Oscar von Heringen decided to venture deeper into the woods, moving closer to Confederate lines. They were spotted by Hood's scouts near Cedar Lane and Nelson Smith's farm sometime before noon. They were motivated to act outside their orders, it was said, by boredom and a desire to avenge their defeat at Big Bethel. Lt. Frederick Mosebach stayed behind with the rest of the party.

Hood mistook von Heringen's patrol for an ambush and sent a detachment of 30 men, mostly from the Mecklenburg Dragoons, who were armed with Sharps breech-loading carbines, through the thick woods to confront them. Flanking von Heringen's group, Hood's men surprised Mosebach's party, and a sharp skirmish broke out. Mosebach ordered his men to flee toward Nelson Smith's house.

In Hood's account, he recalled, "The enemy having been driven from cover in a very rapid and disorderly flight in the direction of Captain Smith's house, on the banks of James River, I then ordered a charge, and the detachments … dashed gallantly down upon them, taking the flying enemy prisoners."

Von Heringen's patrol was cut off, and most of his men surrendered. The rest of Company E straggled back to camp. In total, von Heringen, Mosebach, nine privates, a mule, and a cart were captured. Four Union soldiers were killed, one mortally wounded, and several others wounded. The Confederates suffered no casualties, except for an injured horse.

Later, after the surviving men of Company E returned to camp, Lt. Col. Edward Kapff led 200 men from the 7th New York to the scene of the skirmish, but they found only scattered remnants of the battle.

2. Ohio Front

In 1861, Trans-Allegheny Virginia was a landscape of hills and mountains cut by rivers like the Kanawha, Little Kanawha, Tygart, Cheat, and Greenbrier. The region consisted largely of small towns and subsistence farms, with limited industry beyond coal mining, salt works, and a nascent iron trade. The first oil wells were drilled on the eve of the Civil War. Compared with eastern Virginia, slavery was uncommon and played only a marginal role in the local economy.

Because the region lacked a strong network of improved roads and railroads, the Ohio River served as its principal artery, running 277 miles along Virginia's western border. Wheeling, then Virginia's fourth-largest city, rose in the Northern Panhandle between Ohio and Pennsylvania, benefiting from immigration and industrial investment flowing from both states. The coming of war threatened to constrict this profitable trade with wealthier neighbors.

These factors left much of the population unsympathetic to secession. Rather than leave the Union, a movement gathered to sever ties with eastern Virginia and form a new state, realized as West Virginia in 1863. In June 1861, Unionists in the northwest formed a "Reorganized State of Virginia," based in Wheeling, with Francis H. Pierpont as its governor. A significant minority still favored secession, however, and guerrilla warfare, raids, and civil unrest plagued the region throughout the conflict.

In May 1861, Ohio Governor William Dennison made clear that control of the Ohio River was critical, arguing, "Above all, I will defend Ohio beyond rather than on her borders." For President Abraham Lincoln, securing the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, which crossed northwestern Virginia from Maryland to Wheeling, was equally vital.

In late April 1861, Ohio Governor William Dennison recruited George B. McClellan to command the state's volunteers. On May 3, General Orders No. 14 created the Department of the Ohio, combining Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio into a single military district. Recalled to federal service at age thirty-four, McClellan was promoted to major general and given command of the district. He would organize the invasion and occupation of western Virginia that summer.

The Ohio Front can be subdivided into two regions: the Tygart and Cheat River valleys and the Kanawha Valley. As along the Potomac, results hinged on coordination across these subregions. Here, the pattern reversed. Union commanders coordinated effectively, keeping Confederate forces split, while dysfunction within Confederate commands produced both military and political setbacks.

2.1 Tygart/Cheat Valleys

A border compromise in the 1780s left Virginia with a 63-mile ribbon of land thrust between Ohio and Pennsylvania, the Ohio River marking its western boundary. In this Northern Panhandle, the city of Wheeling was geographically and culturally closer to Pittsburgh than to Richmond, with burgeoning industry and a large German immigrant population. Farther south, the Baltimore & Ohio and the Northwestern Virginia railroads, the only rail lines crossing western Virginia, converged at Grafton on the Tygart Valley River.

This was a strategic but difficult region to defend. To secure it, Robert E. Lee called on Maj. Alonzo Loring in Wheeling and Francis M. Boykin Jr. of Weston to raise volunteer companies to protect the vital railroads. He ordered Col. George A. Porterfield, a Mexican War veteran, to proceed to Grafton

and organize the volunteers assembling there. Recruits proved scarce, and the few hundred who appeared were poorly armed and equipped.

Politically, northwestern Virginia was strongly unionist. Citizens counter-mobilized, raising companies for Federal service. U.S. Congressman John S. Carlile and other unionist delegates to the Richmond Secession Convention convened their own meeting in Wheeling to debate how to respond to secession. Meanwhile, the 1st Virginia Regiment (U.S.), led by Colonel Benjamin Franklin Kelley, organized at Camp Carlile on Wheeling Island.

After the secession vote, Porterfield ordered bridges on the Baltimore & Ohio and Northwestern Virginia railroads north and west of Grafton destroyed. McClellan responded by dispatching Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Morris with the 1st Virginia (U.S.) and regiments from Indiana and Ohio to secure the line. They defeated Porterfield at Philippi on June 3, 1861.

As reinforcements arrived, Robert E. Lee's adjutant general, Robert S. Garnett, was promoted to brigadier general and given command of Confederate forces in northwestern Virginia. He fortified positions at Laurel Hill and Rich Mountain to guard the two principal mountain roads into the Shenandoah Valley. Garnett appealed to Henry A. Wise, then operating in the Kanawha Valley, to unite their forces against McClellan, but Wise hesitated to cooperate.

In late June, McClellan joined his army and organized an offensive against Garnett. Coordinating with Brig. Gen. Jacob D. Cox's advance in the Kanawha, his forces turned Garnett out of his mountain positions. By mid-July, Garnett was dead and his command scattered, with hundreds taken prisoner. On July 16, the 14th Indiana occupied Cheat Mountain, placing northwestern Virginia firmly in Union hands. With only brief interruptions, it remained so for the rest of the war.

2.1.1 Action at Fetterman

Wednesday, May 22, 1861

Taylor County, WV

The Action at Fetterman occurred on Wednesday, May 22, 1861 between members of the secessionist Letcher Guard commanded by Cpl. Daniel W. S. Knight and unionist Grafton Guards commanded by Lt. Daniel Wilson in Taylor County, West Virginia.

John A. Robinson (1830-1898), a merchant and postmaster, organized the Letcher Guard, named after Virginia Governor John Letcher, in early May 1861. 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.

Grafton was a railroad town and predominantly unionist in sentiment. Around the same time pro-secession forces were organizing in Fetterman, attorney and newspaper publisher George R. Latham (1832-1917) organized the Grafton Guards in answer to President Abraham Lincoln's call for volunteers.

On the night of May 22, 1861, three members of the Letcher Guard, 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 Thornsbury Bailey Brown were returning from a recruiting rally for the Grafton Guards 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 Thornsbury Bailey Brown is widely considered to be the first Union soldier killed in combat during the Civil War.

2.1.2 Action at Glover's Gap

Tuesday, May 28, 1861

Marion County, WV

The Action at Glover's Gap occurred on Tuesday, May 28, 1861 between irregular secessionist militia commanded by Stephen Roberts and a detachment of Company A, 2nd Virginia Infantry (U.S.) commanded by 2nd Lt. Oliver R. West in Marion County, West Virginia.

By the time Virginia voters ratified the decision of its secession convention on May 23, 1861, Richmond had been named the Confederate capital and militia units were mobilizing. As commander of all Virginia forces, Robert E. Lee directed Col. George A. Porterfield to proceed to Grafton and organize the troops in northwestern Virginia. That area was heavily unionist in sentiment, and only several hundred recruits could be found.

Faced with the prospect of invasion by overwhelming numbers, Porterfield ordered bridges along the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and Northwestern Virginia Railroad be destroyed. Several were, and in response, Union Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, commander of the Department of the Ohio, invaded western Virginia with 3,000 volunteer troops under the overall command of Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Morris.

Opposing them were Porterfield's approximately 800 poorly trained and equipped militia gathered at the town of Grafton. Porterfield retreated to Philippi as the Union army advanced. According to author Fritz Haselberger, Porterfield sent detachments, including one commanded by 65-year-old Capt. Stephen Roberts (misnamed Christian), to further disrupt the railroad and cut telegraph lines.

Roberts' detachment succeeded in causing enough mischief that Col. Benjamin F. Kelley, commanding the advanced federal units, sent 2nd Lt. Oliver R. West of Company A, 2nd Virginia Infantry (U.S.) to apprehend them and protect the railroad bridge at Glover's Gap. West captured a handful of insurgents, then, on the morning of May 28th, came upon Stephen Roberts and his band at Glover's Gap.

Roberts swore he would not be captured "by all the Federal troops in western Virginia" and raised his rifle, but it misfired. West's troops returned fire and Roberts was killed. His company fled into the hills.

Not much is known about Stephen Roberts, and his status as a combatant is disputed. According to some sources, he was the first Confederate officer killed during the Civil War. At a time when volunteer officers were elected by their units, Roberts may well have considered himself captain of a company. Author Fritz Haselberger indicated that Col. Porterfield had overall control of Roberts and his men.

Union assistant quartermaster Charles Leib, as well as contemporary newspaper articles, stated that Stephen Roberts was leader of a local band of Marion County secessionists that disbanded after his death. Porterfield may have been in communication with them, but they were not formally sworn into service. In that case, Stephen Roberts was a civilian when he died and not a "Confederate officer".

2.1.3 Action at Philippi

Monday, June 3, 1861

Barbour County, WV

The "Battle" of Philippi was fought on Monday, June 3, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Morris and Confederate forces commanded by Col. George A. Porterfield in Philippi, Virginia during the American Civil War. The engagement, which was among the first land actions of the Civil War in Virginia, was a Union victory that encouraged Western Virginians to secede and form their own pro-Union state. It resulted in less than 13 total casualties.

By the time Virginia voters ratified the decision of its secession convention on May 23, 1861, Richmond had already been proclaimed the Confederate capital and militia units were mobilizing. As commander of the Department of the Ohio, Union Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan invaded western Virginia under the pretext of protecting unionists there. Western counties would later vote to secede from Virginia and form the state of West Virginia.

McClellan sent 3,000 volunteer troops into western Virginia under the overall command of Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Morris. Opposing them were approximately 800 poorly trained and equipped militia commanded by Col. George A. Porterfield gathered at the town of Grafton. Porterfield retreated to Philippi as the Union army advanced. Morris divided his force into two columns, which converged on Philippi and the Confederates camped there.

Before dawn on June 3rd, the Confederates were sheltering from the rain in their tents and were almost taken completely by surprise, if not for a local woman firing her pistol at the Union troops. They broke and ran with Morris' men in hot pursuit, leading Northern journalists to call the fight the "Races at Philippi".

Col. Benjamin Franklin Kelley, who would later become commander of the Department of West Virginia and a major general, commanded the Union 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment and was seriously wounded in the fight, though his men captured the abandoned Confederate baggage train. Kelley was one of the first Union officers wounded in the war.

Confederate forces lost approximately eight killed or wounded in their ignominious defeat. Union casualties amounted to five wounded. Though a minor skirmish, the Union victory at Philippi was consequential in three ways: it made Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan famous, which ultimately catapulted him to command of the Military Division of the Potomac on July 26, it encouraged Unionists in western Virginia to form their own state government, and it encouraged the first Union advance on Richmond that ultimately ended in failure at the First Battle of Bull Run.

2.1.4 Action at Righter's House

Friday, June 21, 1861

Marion County, WV

The Action at Righter's House (aka Coon Run) was fought on Friday, June 21, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Capt. David F. Cable and Virginia cavalry commanded by Capt. John Righter in Marion County, West Virginia.

In late June 1861, the 20th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment (3 Months) led by Col. Thomas Morton was headquartered at Fairmont, Virginia along the Tygart River and Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in Marion County. Its mission was to protect that strategically important railway connecting Washington, DC with the Midwestern states.

Company I of the 20th Ohio was stationed in the town of Mannington, approximately 13 miles west of Fairmont along the B&O Railroad. Its commanding officer, Capt. David F. Cable, had received several reports from "persons of the highest respectability" that a group of rebels were camped at Coon's Creek (or Coon Run) and assembled for drill at the residence of a man named Peter Baker Righter, a well-known secessionist, near the Marion/Harrison County line.

Peter B. Righter and John Righter lived on either side of Coon Run in what is today the community of Francis, two miles east of West Fork River and the town of Enterprise in Marion County. Peter B. Righter was a wealthy farmer, and his son John would become a Confederate captain commanding Company No. 4 of the Virginia State Rangers in 1862 (he later commanded Company D, 19th Virginia Cavalry in 1863). But in that early summer of 1861, his troop was an ill-trained local militia.

On June 20th, Capt. Cable took a detachment of 27 men to Shinnston, approximately 13.5 miles south of Fairmont along the West Fork River in Harrison County. There they found several local guides to lead them to Righter's farm. Cable left ten men in Shinnston as a guard and apparently rejected assistance from the local Unionist Home Guard. At around 3am on the morning of Friday, June 21st, Capt. Cable, 17 of his men, and two or three locals arrived at Righter's House.

A guide approached the house and encountered a man on guard duty. Both returned to their respective sides and reported what they had seen. Capt. Cable arrayed his men in a semi-circle around the house and knocked on the door. Someone blew a horn, and firing erupted from the house and a nearby orchard. Several men, including a local guide, John Nay, were wounded. Cable ordered his men to withdraw to a nearby house where he sent for reinforcements.

In a letter to the *Wheeling Intelligencer*, Capt. Cable said four of his men were severely wounded, and they killed four of the enemy and wounded six. He took seven prisoners. One of the prisoners, Banks Corbett (or Corbin) was shot and killed trying to escape. When they returned to Righter's House at daylight, it was abandoned. The Union soldiers confiscated anything of military value, then set fire to the house.

"It is a terrible retribution on a man who lived like a prince, and could have continued to do so, but for an inborn deviltry and sympathy for ruffianism and treason, which has thus worked his ruin," the *Intelligencer* editorialized. Peter Righter was arrested by Union troops in May 1862, but President Andrew Johnson granted him a full pardon in 1867.

Like many early skirmishes, newspaper reports of the Action at Righter's House were exaggerated and full of hearsay and inaccuracies. It was just one of many tragedies to play out in northwestern Virginia as neighbor turned against neighbor.

2.1.6 Action at Buckhannon

Thurs., June 27, 1861

Upshur County, West Virginia

The Skirmish at Buckhannon occurred on Thursday, June 27, 1861 between a patrol from the Churchville Cavalry commanded by Capt. Franklin F. Sterrett and unionist Home Guards commanded by Col. Henry F. Westfall in Buckhannon, Upshur County, West Virginia.

As Virginia's secession appeared all but certain in the spring of 1861, Virginia Provisional Army commander Robert E. Lee sent Col. George A. Porterfield to what was then Northwest Virginia to organize the state militia. Popular sentiment in the region was decidedly pro-Union, however, and recruits were hard to find. Lack of basic supplies, uniforms, and weapons compounded his problem. He only gathered a few hundred poorly trained men.

Towards the end of May, Porterfield sent Lt. Col. Jonathan McGee Heck (1831-1894), an attorney from Marion County, (West) Virginia, to Richmond to explain, in person, the dire situation they faced. Heck was in Staunton gathering reinforcements and supplies during the Philippi disaster. When Heck returned to the Northwest, Confederate forces had a new commander in the form of Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett. Garnett placed Heck in command of the 25th Virginia Infantry Regiment and ordered him to fortify Rich Mountain.

On June 26, Lt. Col. Heck took his men and wagons and marched toward Buckhannon, looking for supplies. Buckhannon, population 427 in 1860, is the seat of Upshur County. It is located along the Buckhannon River and Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike. The Turnpike was a vital transportation route from the Shenandoah Valley to the Ohio River. Buckhannon, approximately 23 miles east of the Confederate camp on Rich Mountain, became a kind of no man's land between Confederate forces and Union forces camped at Philippi and Clarksburg.

According to Heck, he left camp with 20 wagons and 300 men, including the Churchville Cavalry commanded by Capt. Franklin F. Sterrett. They stopped for the night five miles outside Buckhannon. The cavalry rode out ahead of the infantry, and as they approached a mill on the outskirts of town, they were fired on by 25 men concealed in ambush in a thick wood. Heck named the Union commander as Col. Henry F. Westfall. Westfall, in his diary, wrote "Col. W. defeated the Southerns at Ridgeway's Mill," possibly referring to Watson Westfall, a different militia leader with the same last name.

Westfall's men were hidden in a wood with thick underbrush, so it was difficult for Sterrett to dislodge them. They eventually withdrew, and Sterrett pursued, capturing Arthur G. Kiddy and James L. Jennings on the Clarksburg and Buckhannon turnpike. The pair were taken to Staunton in chains. Although Heck doesn't name them, he did write "We arrested two men."

Heck purchased provisions in town and seized several barrels of salt pork the Union Army had left behind. As the Confederates withdrew on the 28th, the Home Guard continued to snipe at them from concealed positions, wounding a horse but otherwise causing no damage. There were no casualties on either side.

2.1.5 Skirmish at Bowman's Place

Sat., June 29, 1861

Tucker County, West Virginia

The Skirmish at Bowman's Place (aka Hannahsville, aka Action at Cheat River) was fought on Saturday, June 29, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Capt. Hiram Miller and Confederate forces commanded by Lt.

Robert McChesney in present-day Tucker County, West Virginia.

It had been over a month since Union Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan invaded northwestern Virginia, and every week, additional volunteer regiments arrived to reinforce him. It had been over three weeks since Confederate forces fled from Philippi. Their commander, Col. George A. Porterfield, was replaced with Robert E. Lee's adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett. He proceeded to fortify positions at Laurel Hill and Rich Mountain in Barbour and Randolph counties to guard the two main mountain roads leading into the Shenandoah Valley.

As Maj. Gen. McClellan maneuvered his forces into position in front of Laurel Hill and Rich Mountain to confront Garnett, pro-Union delegates in Wheeling declared secession illegal and agreed to form a Restored Government of Virginia to represent the state in Washington, DC. It appointed Francis H. Pierpont governor. Toward the end of June, counties under Union control held elections for new delegates to the Restored Government.

In Randolph and Tucker counties, Dr. Solomon Parsons, a delegate to the Wheeling Convention, was the only candidate.

The 2nd Rockbridge Dragoons, led by Capt. John R. McNutt and Lt. Robert McChesney, were camped with Brig. Gen. Garnett at Laurel Hill. On the night of Friday, June 28, 1861, Lt. Robert McChesney and nine picked men rode northeast toward St. George, then seat of Tucker County, along the Cheat River on a scouting mission and to disrupt the election.

Detached companies of the 15th and 16th Ohio Infantry Regiments and the 1st Virginia (Union) were stationed around Rowlesburg guarding the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, 18 miles north of St. George. In early June, Capt. Hiram Miller of Company H, 15th Ohio Infantry Regiment, hauled away a secession flag fluttering over the courthouse in St. George. Now his unit returned to make sure the election went smoothly.

The next morning, Saturday, June 29th, Lt. McChesney and his men, with a handful of local Home Guards, proceeded to St. George, where they found the vote had already taken place. They traveled north along a mountain road following the Cheat River toward the residence of Adam H. Bowman, an attorney, which was being used as a polling place.

Capt. Hiram Miller got word of their approach and prepared an ambush. Company H was concealed on either side of the road and allowed McChesney and his small troop to advance deeper into their trap. McChesney (or someone in his party), however, noticed the soldiers and turned to escape. Shots rang out. Lt. McChesney was mortally wounded, and three of his men were wounded and escaped. It was said Capt. Miller shot the young Confederate officer.

One man from the 15th Ohio, Pvt. Nathan O. Smith, was killed, and one wounded. Smith was the first combat death in his regiment.

Col. James Irvine of the 16th Ohio ended up with Lt. McChesney's personal effects, which he returned to the lieutenant's family. He wrote: "I will, therefore, not speak of it further than to say that he bore himself gallantly, and my sympathies were greatly enlisted for him when he fell. What should have been our common country, lost a brave and gallant man."

In the opening weeks of the American Civil War, even two dead soldiers seemed like a heavy toll, and both fallen men were mourned back home as martyrs for their cause. In the intervening years, however, small events like the Skirmish at Bowman's Place have largely been forgotten. Even at the time, the skirmish had no bearing on the outcome of that larger campaign, and no after action report was even written about it—at least not one published in the official records.

2.1.7 Skirmish at Middle Fork Bridge

Sat., July 6 to Sun., July 7, 1861

Upshur County, WV

The Skirmish at Middle Fork Bridge was fought on Saturday, July 6 and Sunday, July 7, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Capt. Orris A. Lawson and Col. Robert L. McCook and Confederate forces commanded by Col. Jonathan McGee Heck and Maj. Nathaniel Tyler in Upshur County, West Virginia. Although the Union forces faced setbacks on the first day, the skirmish ultimately ended in their favor, paving the way for a decisive victory at Rich Mountain four days later.

Following the Confederate retreat from Philippi in early June, Brigadier General Robert S. Garnett took command of Confederate forces in northwestern Virginia. Garnett organized disassociated companies into regiments and fortified positions at Laurel Hill and Rich Mountain in Barbour and Randolph counties, aiming to guard the two main mountain roads leading into the Shenandoah Valley.

On June 21, Major General George B. McClellan, 34 years old and head of the Military Department of the Ohio, entered Virginia at Parkersburg to personally assume command of Union forces in northwest Virginia. He arrived in Grafton on June 23 and remained there for nearly a week, addressing supply and logistical challenges.

On June 26, Garnett ordered Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan McGee Heck to lead a portion of his 25th Virginia Infantry Regiment, along with all available wagons, to the town of Buckhannon for a foraging expedition. Buckhannon, the seat of Upshur County, lay along the Buckhannon River and the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike, a crucial transportation route from the Shenandoah Valley to the Ohio River. Heck stationed pickets at the covered bridge over the Middle Fork River, halfway between Buckhannon and Camp Garnett on Rich Mountain, to provide early warning of any Union approach from that direction.

Upon hearing that Confederate troops had occupied Buckhannon, McClellan quickly left for Clarksburg, where he ordered his quartermasters to prepare 100 wagons. However, assembling the wagons proved challenging, and transportation issues remained unresolved even as Union regiments began advancing into Upshur County. Not a single ambulance was available should the troops encounter trouble.

The 9th Ohio Infantry Regiment, led by Colonel Robert L. McCook, reached Buckhannon on the evening of June 29. Brigadier General William S. Rosecrans soon arrived with the 8th and 10th Indiana and 19th Ohio Regiments. By the time elements of Brigadier General Newton Schleich's brigade, including the 3rd and 4th Ohio Regiments, arrived on July 2, the Union troop presence in Upshur County nearly equaled the local population. Schleich was a politician known more for his vulgarity than military prowess.

On July 5, without McClellan's approval, Schleich dispatched a mixed scouting party of 50 men from the 3rd Ohio, led by Captain Orris A. Lawson, to scout Middle Fork Bridge. The party halted five miles from the bridge and set up camp. Shortly after midnight, Lawson led his men over two miles upstream, crossed the river, and attempted to sneak up on the Confederate pickets sheltered in the covered bridge. These pickets consisted of Captain Francis Sterrett's Churchville Cavalry and ten men from the Pendleton Rifles.

Sentinels spotted the Union troops sneaking through the brush, prompting both sides to open fire simultaneously. According to one Ohio soldier, the shooting was "hot as Hell." Corporal Samuel R. Johns was killed, and six others were

wounded. Realizing his forces were outnumbered and had lost the element of surprise, Lawson retreated with the wounded, leaving Johns' body on the field. The brief yet intense firefight also left three Confederate soldiers wounded.

Angry over Schleich's costly error, McClellan the next morning, July 7, ordered Colonel McCook to take the 4th and 9th Ohio Regiments, Loomis's Michigan artillery battery, and Burdsall's Dragoons to secure Middle Fork Bridge. The Confederate pickets stationed at the bridge fired a few shots at the advancing Union troops before retreating up the turnpike to alert their comrades. McCook's men discovered and buried Johns' body before setting up camp.

Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Heck sent Major Nathaniel Tyler of the 20th Virginia Infantry with Company G (the Hampden-Sydney Boys) from his own regiment and Company A (the Upshur Grays) of the 25th Virginia, totaling about 160 men. Along the way, they encountered a local woman who warned them of nearby federal cavalry. Upon reaching the vicinity of the bridge, they saw two Union infantry regiments and an artillery battery in a defensive position.

After exchanging a few volleys, Major Tyler wisely chose to withdraw to their fortified position on Rich Mountain. There were no casualties on either side, though Captain John C. Higginbotham of the Upshur Grays later remarked, "I got my pants and boot-legs riddled with bullets, but without serious injury."

Securing Middle Fork Bridge removed the final barrier between McClellan's army and the Confederate stronghold on Rich Mountain. By the morning of July 9, McClellan's advance units had reached Roaring Creek, from where they would launch a flanking attack two days later, overwhelming the Confederate defenders at Rich Mountain.

2.1.8 Battle of Bellington/Laurel Hill

Sun., July 7 to Thurs., July 11, 1861

Barbour County, WV

The Battle of Belington (Laurel Hill) was fought from Sunday, July 7 to Thursday, July 11, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Morris and Confederate forces commanded by Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett in Barbour County, West Virginia during the American Civil War. The battle was technically a draw, but defeat at Rich Mountain on July 11 compelled Garnett to abandon his fortified camp at Laurel Hill.

Following an ignominious Confederate defeat at the Battle of Philippi in early June, Brig. Gen. Garnett took command of Confederate forces in western Virginia and fortified two key mountain passes: one at Laurel Mountain leading to Leadsville and the other at Rich Mountain to Beverly. Lt. Col. John Pegram commanded a smaller force at Camp Garnett in Rich Mountain, while Garnett stayed at Camp Laurel Hill with 4,000 men.

Garnett knew his prospects for victory were slim. "I don't anticipate anything very brilliant–indeed I shall esteem myself fortunate if I escape disaster," he wrote. His pessimism would be tested on July 7, when Brig. Gen. Morris arrived with his 3,500-man brigade and made camp in nearby Belington (where he soon received reinforcements, bringing his total to 4,000). The two sides skirmished for several days. Morris' orders were to "amuse" his opponent and prevent him from reinforcing Rich Mountain.

Accounts of the battle vary, but it involved both infantry and artillery duels. A Confederate soldier wrote to the *Richmond Daily Dispatch*: "The company had no sooner taken their proper

place, when they opened briskly on the foe, which was returned as briskly; but few of the return shots did any execution…," and "During the latter part of the day the enemy fired a number of bomb shells, grape-shots and balls in the direction of our troops, playing havoc with the trees and shrubbery…"

Another Confederate, George P. Morgan, recorded in his journal: "Early in the morning the enemy made his appearance near our fortified camp (near Laurel Hill) and were promptly repulsed by the 1st Georgia regiment with the loss of one wounded on our side and several killed on theirs. The day was principally occupied in skirmishes, in which nearly all our forces were engaged, but with the loss of only one man on our side."

Ambrose Bierce, a Union soldier in the 9th Indiana Infantry and later an accomplished author, remarked: "A few dozen of us, who had been swapping shots with the enemies' skirmishers, grew tired of the resultless battle, and by a common impulse – and I think without orders or officers – ran forward into the woods and attacked the Confederate works. We did well enough considering the hopeless folly of the movement, but we came out of the woods faster than we went in – a good deal."

Casualty estimates from these five days of fighting are hard to come by, since contemporary accounts tended to exaggerate, but the number of killed and wounded may have been as high as two dozen on either side. Confederate forces held out until the 11th, when they slipped away under cover of night to avoid being surrounded.

2.1.9 Skirmish at Glenville

Sun., July 7 to Mon. July 8, 1861

Gilmer County, WV

The Skirmish at Glenville was fought on Sunday, July 7, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Col. John M. Connell and Confederate forces commanded by Col. Robert Alexander Caskie in present-day Gilmer County, West Virginia.

It had been two months and 11 days since Union Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan invaded northwestern Virginia, and additional volunteer regiments arrived weekly to reinforce him. It had been over a month since Confederate forces fled from Philippi. Their commander, Col. George A. Porterfield, was replaced with Robert E. Lee's adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett. He proceeded to fortify positions at Laurel Hill and Rich Mountain in Barbour and Randolph counties to guard the two main mountain roads leading into the Shenandoah Valley.

As Maj. Gen. McClellan maneuvered his forces into position in front of Laurel Hill and Rich Mountain to confront Garnett, he spread his forces across what was then northwestern Virginia, protecting vital transportation routes and providing legitimacy for the fledgling Unionist Restored Government of Virginia in Wheeling.

Members of the 17th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment, led by Col. John M. Connell, initially enlisted for three months in and around Lancaster, Ohio in April 1861. They were sent to Parkersburg, Virginia (today, West Virginia) along the Ohio River to root out secessionist militias in Jackson County. In early July, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan attached the 17th Ohio to Brig. Gen. William S. Rosecrans' brigade. They then marched approximately 94 miles east to Buckhannon, to guard supply trains.

As elements of the 17th Ohio were moving through the small town of Glenville along the Little Kanawha River, 42 miles west of Buckhannon, they were attacked by the 1st Cavalry Regiment, Wise Legion commanded by Col. Robert Alexander Caskie. Glenville, population 398 in 1860, was the seat of Gilmer County.

Accurate reports of the skirmish are difficult to find, but evidently it continued the next day. Connell's men were able to get a scout through to Buckhannon, and Maj. Gen. McClellan sent the 7th and 10th Ohio regiments to relieve them. The Confederates, realizing they were about to be outnumbered and with no reinforcements of their own in sight, hastily withdrew. There were no reported casualties on either side.

2.1.10 Battle of Rich Mountain

Thursday, July 11, 1861

Randolph County, WV

The Battle of Rich Mountain was fought on Thursday, July 11, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Brig. Gen. William Rosecrans and Confederate forces commanded by Lt. Col. John Pegram in Randolph County, West Virginia during the American Civil War. The battle was a Union victory, routing Confederate forces in western Virginia and resulting in approximately 340 total casualties, mostly Confederate.

Soon after Virginia seceded from the Unites States in May 1861 and joined the Confederacy, Union Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, as commander of the Department of the Ohio, invaded western Virginia under the pretext of protecting unionists there. These western counties would later vote to secede from Virginia and form the state of West Virginia.

Following an ignominious Confederate defeat at the Battle of Philippi in early June, Confederate Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett fortified two key mountain passes: one through Laurel Mountain leading to Leadsville and the other through Rich Mountain to Beverly. The smaller force, consisting of 1,300 men and four cannon at Camp Garnett in Rich Mountain, was commanded by Lt. Col. John Pegram.

McClellan brought 5,000 men and eight cannon within two miles of Camp Garnett, where he permitted Brig. Gen. William S. Rosecrans and approximately 2,000 men to conduct a flanking attack, guided by a 22-year-old local unionist named David Hart. On the afternoon of July 11th, Rosecrans' men surprised, assailed, and eventually overwhelmed the Confederate rearguard on Hart's family farm.

Pegram realized he was nearly surrounded, so he ordered a quick retreat under cover of darkness. Pegram and Garnett were separated, and Pegram and his men surrendered. Three hundred Confederates were killed or wounded at Rich Mountain. In contrast, Union forces sustained 46 casualties at Rich Mountain and up to 53 at Corrick's Ford. McClellan was widely praised for his victory and was given command of the Military Division of the Potomac on July 26, 1861.

2.1.11 Battle of Corrick's Ford

Saturday, July 13, 1861

Tucker County, WV

The Battle of Corrick's / Carricks Ford was fought on Saturday, July 13, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Capt. Henry Washington Benham and Confederate forces commanded by Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett in Tucker County, West Virginia during the American Civil War. The battle was a Union victory, routing Confederate forces in western Virginia and resulting in approximately 670 total casualties, mostly Confederate.

Soon after Virginia seceded from the United States in May 1861 and joined the Confederacy, Union Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, as commander of the Department of the Ohio, invaded western Virginia. On June 3, he sent Confederate militia fleeing from the town of Philippi, and in July, he smashed a Confederate force at Rich Mountain.

Following defeat at the Battle of Rich Mountain, Confederate Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett attempted to retreat from his camp on Laurel Hill to Beverly, but was misinformed about a Union presence there and fled northeast toward the Cheat River. "They have not given me an adequate force," Garnett lamented. "I can do nothing. They have sent me to my death." His words would be prophetic.

On July 13th, Garnett arrived at Corrick's Ford on the Cheat River with 4,500 men. As they crossed, Union Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Morris' brigade attacked, and while looking for another route to escape across the river, Garnett was shot and killed. His army abandoned its wagons, cannon, and supplies and fled.

Twenty Confederates were killed or wounded at Corrick's Ford, including Garnett, who was the first general officer to fall in battle during the Civil War. Six hundred went missing and probably deserted. In contrast, Union forces sustained 53 casualties at Corrick's Ford. McClellan was widely praised for his victory and was given command of the Military Division of the Potomac on July 26, 1861.

2.1.12 Action at Greenbrier River

Friday, July 19, 1861

Pocahontas County, WV

The Action at Greenbrier River was fought on Friday, July 19, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Sgt. William D. Gault and a Confederate irregular unit in present-day Pocahontas County, West Virginia. The ambush, along with similar actions by Confederate guerrillas, not only inflicted heavy casualties but also paralyzed Union forces on Cheat Mountain, halting their advance and effectively creating a stalemate until the fall.

The death of Brigadier General Robert S. Garnett and the crippling of the Army of the Northwest at Corrick's Ford temporarily ended organized Confederate resistance in northwestern Virginia. A flurry of letters and dispatches from Confederate commanders urged someone to hold Cheat Mountain Pass, but the 14th Indiana Infantry Regiment secured it first. Cheat Mountain, strategically positioned astride the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike about 80 miles northwest of Staunton, gave the Union uncontested control of more than 10,000 square miles of Trans-Alleghany Virginia.

Under Colonel Nathan Kimball, the 14th Indiana began constructing Cheat Summit Fort (also known as Fort Milroy) on July 16 at the 4,000-foot summit of Cheat Mountain. They were soon joined by Captain Cyrus O. Loomis' Battery A, 1st Michigan Light Artillery, and Captain Henry W. Burdsall's Independent Company of Ohio Cavalry, also called Burdsall's Dragoons.

In northwestern Virginia, where most residents were Unionists, the Union Army was welcomed with recruits, supplies, and intelligence. However, resistance stiffened as the

troops moved deeper into the interior. Virginians unaffiliated with formal military units began harassing Union forces by cutting telegraph wires and sniping from mountain crags and dense forests.

This guerrilla activity became so pernicious that on June 23, Major General George B. McClellan issued an open letter condemning such tactics. He warned that anyone firing on sentries or pickets, burning bridges, or harassing Unionists "will be dealt with in their persons and property according to the severest rules of military law."

By July 19, 1861, Confederate Brigadier General Henry R. Jackson reported from Monterey that the "*débris* of General Garnett's command are constantly pouring in." To counter Union advances, Jackson formed a composite unit of cavalry and militia under Major Alexander C. Jones of the 44th Virginia Infantry, a Virginia Military Institute graduate. Their mission was to patrol the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike near Cheat Mountain and monitor Union movements. A group of 80 riflemen were to "annoy the enemy from the hills and bushes."

That same day, a seven-man patrol from Burdsall's Dragoons, led by Sergeant William D. Gault, rode south along the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike toward the Greenbrier River. On the south side of the Greenbrier's East Fork stood Travellers Repose, a well-known inn and post office marking the no man's land between Union and Confederate positions.

Turning back north, the patrol approached the bridge over the Greenbrier River's West Fork near modern-day Durbin. Just north of the bridge was a rocky outcrop known as Hanging Rock. Unbeknownst to the patrol, approximately ten Confederate guerrillas, likely Major Jones' riflemen, were hidden in the wooded hills nearby. Among them was 47-year-old Ewing C. Devier from Highland County.

As the river was low, Burdsall's Dragoons crossed downstream from the bridge and stopped to water their horses. The hidden riflemen opened fire, killing Sergeant Gault and wounding Privates Seeley E. Mensch, William A. Kennedy, and Bernard Straight. Kennedy reportedly was shot in the hand while raising his carbine to return fire. After the war, historian William T. Price wrote a florid account of the incident based on Devier's 1862 recollection, inaccurately claiming six or seven horsemen were killed, including two who died in each other's arms.

Brigadier General Jackson also exaggerated the ambush's success, reporting that "[The enemy's] scouts have been roaming the country on this side of it, and yesterday a party of nine of them were taken in ambush by a party of our scouts, who killed seven of them and wounded the eighth." In reality, after firing a few shots, the bushwhackers melted into the wilderness, not staying to verify the number of dead or wounded.

Two uninjured dragoons remained with the wounded while the third raced back to Cheat Mountain to report the ambush. Colonel Kimball immediately dispatched Lieutenant Nathan Willard and 50 men from Company E ("Crescent Guards") along with a wagon to recover the casualties. The regiment's surgeon, Joseph G. McPheeters, met the returning party on the road and escorted Private Mensch to a house where he tried to make him comfortable. Despite the efforts, Mensch, who had been shot in the back, died shortly after midnight.

In the long term, the Greenbrier River ambush had little strategic impact, though it made Union forces more cautious about advancing further until the fall. Just days later, news of the Union defeat at Bull Run led General Winfield Scott to recall McClellan to Washington, D.C., with Brigadier General William Rosecrans replacing him. No more battles occurred in northwestern Virginia until late August.

2.2 Kanawha Valley

The Kanawha River runs 97 miles from the confluence of the New and Gauley rivers to the Ohio. In 1861, the valley's largest town was Charleston, population 1,520. South of town, the Dickinson saltworks produced large quantities of salt, which was critical for preserving food and curing leather. The river itself offered a navigable artery into the heart of western Virginia.

On May 3, 1861, Governor John Letcher commissioned Charleston businessman Christopher Q. Tompkins as a colonel and authorized him to raise a regiment in the Kanawha. Lieutenant Colonel John McCausland, a Virginia Military Institute professor, was sent to help muster and train the units. Complicating matters, former Governor Henry A. Wise, a Tidewater planter, received a Confederate commission with authority to raise his own force to defend the Kanawha Valley, bypassing state authorities.

Wise, an energetic secessionist, used his political connections to raise several combined-arms regiments for his "Wise Legion," surrounding himself with veteran staff officers to offset his lack of military experience. He established his headquarters at Charleston on June 26 and immediately employed military force to suppress the area's strong unionist sentiment. The heavy-handed approach worked at first but bred deep resentment.

To counter Confederate influence in the Kanawha Valley, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan turned to Brig. Gen. Jacob D. Cox, an Ohio attorney and state senator. After Virginia's secession vote, local unionists had assured McClellan they could keep events in hand. But he could not allow Wise to operate unchecked while he moved against Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett's army to the north.

Cox advanced deliberately up the Kanawha River, skirmishing at several points but suffering a sharp defeat at Scary Creek. Meanwhile, McClellan's operations in the Tygart and Cheat valleys shattered Garnett's army. Fearing encirclement by Union columns moving down from the north, Wise evacuated Charleston on July 24 and fell back to Gauley Bridge, narrowly escaping a trap. Cox's brigade entered Charleston on the 26th and Gauley Bridge on the 29th, clearing the Kanawha Valley of Confederate forces for the time being.

2.2.1 Skirmish at Barboursville

Saturday, July 13, 1861

Cabell County, WV

The Skirmish at Barboursville was fought on Saturday, July 13, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Lt. Col. George Neff and Confederate forces commanded by Col. Milton J. Ferguson and Capt. Albert G. Jenkins in Cabell County, West Virginia. It began favorably for the Confederates but ultimately was a Union victory when the Confederates fled the field.

As his campaign to secure northwest Virginia got underway, 34-year-old Maj. Gen. George Brinton McClellan (1826-1885), head of the U.S. Military Department of the Ohio, hesitated to send troops into the Kanawha River Valley. Local Unionists assured him that they could keep secessionists at bay, but when former Virginia governor Henry A. Wise established a base camp near Charleston with around 2,700 Confederate troops, McClellan had to act.

At the beginning of July, Wise occupied Ripley, south of Ravenswood on the Ohio River, with a small force. However, he withdrew on July 8 after the 21st Ohio crossed the river to confront them. Up to this point, the opposing

armies had several near-misses and close brushes, but no actual fighting. That was about to change.

McClellan ordered Brig. Gen. Jacob Dolson Cox, Jr. (1828-1900) to take command of the 1st and 2nd Kentucky (U.S.) and 12th Ohio Infantry regiments and proceed to Gallipolis, Ohio on the Ohio River. The 1st and 2nd were Kentucky regiments in name only. They consisted almost entirely of Ohio volunteers, led by a few Kentucky officers. In Gallipolis, they met up with the 21st Ohio Infantry. Cox also brought along an under-strength regiment, the 11th Ohio, two cannons, and a small contingent of cavalry. In total, he commanded around 3,000 men.

Cox divided his small army into three columns. The 1st Kentucky (U.S.) crossed at Ravenswood, Cox and the Ohio regiments crossed at Point Pleasant at the mouth of the Kanawha River, and the 2nd Kentucky (U.S.) seized Guyandotte. These columns were tasked with dispersing any Confederate troops in their respective areas and then proceeding to Red House on the Kanawha River, where they would unite to confront Wise at Charleston.

U.S. Congressman Albert Gallatin Jenkins (1830-1864) resigned from Congress in 1861 and was elected captain of a cavalry company in Cabell County called the Border Rangers. Jenkins, who owned a plantation near Guyandotte, was well-respected in the community. Following the Union occupation of Guyandotte, Jenkins and his Border Rangers rode to nearby Barboursville, located at the confluence of the Mud and Guyandotte rivers, to reinforce a poorly organized local militia. The Sandy Rangers, led by Captain James Corns, joined them.

Around or shortly after midnight on July 13, Col. William E. Woodruff of the 2nd Kentucky (U.S.) roused his men and ordered Lt. Col. George W. Neff to take most of Companies A, B, D, F, and K on a spoiling attack against nearby Barboursville, where he believed the Confederates were gathering for an offensive. The 316 men were to march silently in the early morning and surprise the enemy. However, delays and unfamiliar terrain meant they didn't reach their destination until after sunrise, despite being only six miles away. The Confederates were ready for them.

The Confederate camp and defensive position were on a ridge, now known as "Fortification Hill," overlooking the covered bridge over the Mud River. The ridge was steep and bisected by a cut for the unfinished Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad. The Confederate militia, armed with a variety of weapons including muskets, shotguns, squirrel rifles, and pistols, had also removed some bridge planks to make crossing more difficult.

As the Union force approached, the Border Rangers, who had been watching the road, withdrew. When Neff's men came within range, the militia on the hill "opened a murderous fire upon us. From every tree, bush, and stone, rifle and musket balls were literally showered upon us. On a hill, southeast of the bridge, their main body formed in beautiful order, the front rank kneeling and the rear rank standing, and loaded and fired in rapid succession."

A few Union soldiers were hit, and the rest sought cover in and around the covered bridge. It took quick thinking by Lt. Col. Neff to turn the tide. When he failed to get Company K moving, he turned to Capt. Alfred J.M. Brown and Company A, who fixed bayonets and clawed their way up the ridge. The surprised Virginia volunteers began to falter. They fired one last volley as the Federals reached the summit, then broke and fled. Several Confederates injured themselves as they fell into the railroad cut.

Neff's triumphant troops marched into town with flags waving, gathered discarded weapons and equipment, and raised the Stars and Stripes over the courthouse. It was a hard-fought victory. One Union soldier was killed outright, two were mortally wounded, and 13 others were injured. The extent of Confederate casualties is unknown, but James Reynolds was mortally wounded, and at least two others were injured.

The immediate consequence of this small skirmish was that it cleared the way for the 2nd

Kentucky (U.S.) to rejoin Brig. Gen. Cox's main body along the Kanawha River in time for the Battle of Scary Creek four days later. Cox called it "a very creditable little action."

2.2.2 Action at Pocatalico

Tuesday, July 16, 1861

Putnam County, WV

The Action at Pocatalico was fought on Tuesday, July 16, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Col. Charles A. De Villiers and Confederate forces commanded by Col. John N. Clarkson in Putnam County, West Virginia. It ended in a draw, with minimal casualties.

As 34-year-old Maj. Gen. George Brinton McClellan (1826-1885), head of the U.S. Military Department of the Ohio, began his campaign to secure northwest Virginia, he was initially reluctant to send troops into the Kanawha River Valley. Local Unionists assured him they could manage the secessionist threat, but when former Virginia governor Henry A. Wise established a base camp near Charleston with around 2,700 Confederate troops, McClellan was compelled to take action.

In early July 1861, Wise briefly occupied the town of Ripley in Jackson County but withdrew after the 21st Ohio crossed the river to confront him. Despite near-misses between the opposing forces, no fighting had occurred yet. McClellan ordered Brig. Gen. Jacob Dolson Cox, Jr. (1828-1900) to take command of Union troops in the area and "Drive Wise out and catch him if you can."

To accomplish this task, Cox had the 1st and 2nd Kentucky (U.S.) and the 11th, 12th, and 21st Ohio Infantry regiments, along with two brass rifled 6-pounder guns and a small cavalry unit—totaling about 3,000 men. Cox divided his forces into three columns to advance into the Kanawha Valley, with orders to reunite at Red House and confront Wise at Charleston. On July 13th, the 2nd Kentucky engaged and scattered a small Confederate force at Barboursville, delaying its arrival.

That same afternoon, Cox arrived at Red House with four companies of the 11th Ohio, the 12th and 21st Ohio regiments, and four cannon (two without caissons or cannoneers). Red House was approximately 31 miles up river from his starting point at Point Pleasant. The following day, Col. Jesse S. Norton took Companies F, G, and H of the 21st Ohio on a reconnaissance mission along the south bank of the Kanawha River to the mouth of Scary Creek. There they encountered the Kanawha Riflemen, Putnam Border Rifles, Bailey's Company, and a section of artillery. The Confederate artillery fired warning shots and Norton's men retreated.

Meanwhile, half of the 1st Kentucky (U.S.) arrived at Red House, commanded by Lt. Col. David Alexander Enyart, and that evening Cox sent them and the remainder of the 21st Ohio to reinforce Norton. Shortly after they departed, however, due to darkness and inexperience, a misinterpreted order resulted in a friendly-fire incident that left three dead and several wounded.

From Red House, Cox's next destination was the mouth of the Pocatalico, seven miles upriver. The Confederates burned the bridge over the Pocatalico, but at that time of year the river was so dry that it was easily forded. Confederate vedettes contested the advance. "The progress thus far has been steady, but for the last day it has been in the face of constant skirmishing," wrote Cox. Thomas Vandyne/Vandine of Company H, 11th Ohio was wounded in the hip and died a few weeks later.

The 11th Ohio was first to reach the west bank of the Pocatalico River on the 16th along with Capt. Charles S. Cotter's two rifled 6-

pounders, and they began scouting the area for a campsite. General Wise's aide-de-camp, Col. John N. Clarkson, and Capt. John P. Brock's and Capt. Albert J. Beckett's cavalry companies were picketing on the east side of the river.

Evidently, as a portion of the 11th Ohio descended the large hill overlooking the Pocatalico, Clarkson spotted them and determined to drive them off. He divided his force, leaving one half at the base of the hill, and charged with the other half. "I proceeded to the hill near the Mouth of the Polka … and then came into contact with some three hundred of the enemy which we charged with success killing eight of the enemy agreeable to the best information I could receive, and routing the remainder, driving them to their camp without any loss to my command…" Brock reported.

Few, if any, Union accounts of this incident exist. Cox does not mention it in his published reports and a brief description appearing in the *Cincinnati Daily Times* is far less dramatic. It read, "Soon after the Eleventh halted a company of rebel horsemen, acting as scouts, came to the river bank opposite and poured a volley of balls into their camp, without, however, injuring anyone. The Eleventh returned fire, emptying one saddle…"

It's unlikely any Union soldiers were killed or wounded without it being mentioned in the press. On the Confederate side, one private was wounded in the hand, one horse killed, and several horses were wounded.

Never-the-less, Wise reiterated Brock's version of events in a report to Richmond, bragging that all he needed was more arms and ammunition and "I will drive them into the Ohio River and across…" The next day, Wise's men would win a significant victory at Scary Creek, but his imagined offensive would never materialize. Wise evacuated Charleston on July 24th.

2.2.3 Battle of Scary Creek

Wednesday, July 17, 1861

Putnam County, WV

The Battle of Scary Creek was fought on Wednesday, July 17, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Brig. Gen. Jacob D. Cox and Confederate forces commanded by Brig. Gen. Henry A. Wise in Putnam County, West Virginia. It resulted in a Confederate victory, but ultimately had no affect on the overall campaign. Union forces captured Charleston a week later after Confederates withdrew from the Kanawha Valley.

In early July 1861, 34-year-old Maj. Gen. George Brinton McClellan (1826-1885), head of the U.S. Military Department of the Ohio, aimed to expel former Virginia governor Henry A. Wise and his "Wise Legion" from the Kanawha River Valley. Wise had established a base camp near Charleston with roughly 2,700 Confederate troops, conducting several reconnaissance missions in the surrounding area. He arrested Virginia unionists and posed a threat to McClellan's ongoing operations farther north.

To confront Wise, McClellan turned to Brig. Gen. Jacob Dolson Cox, Jr. (1828-1900), who commanded a force of about 3,000 men, including the 1st and 2nd Kentucky (U.S.) and the 11th, 12th, and 21st Ohio Infantry regiments, along with two cannons and a small cavalry unit. Cox divided his troops into three columns, ordering them to converge at Red House before advancing on Charleston.

On July 13, the 2nd Kentucky engaged and scattered a small Confederate force at Barboursville. Later that afternoon, Cox arrived at Red House—about 31 miles upriver from his starting point at Point Pleasant—with four companies of the 11th Ohio, as well as the 12th and 21st Ohio regiments and four cannons (two without caissons or cannoneers).

Meanwhile, Brig. Gen. Henry A. Wise sent Lt. Col. George S. Patton with approximately 900 men to Camp Tompkins at the mouth of the Coal River. Patton, however, determined that the bluffs overlooking Scary Creek, three miles downriver, would make a much better defensive position. He moved the Kanawha Riflemen, Putnam Border Rifles, Bailey's Company, and Hale's Kanawha Battery into place above Scary.

On July 14, Col. Jesse S. Norton led Companies F, G, and H of the 21st Ohio on a reconnaissance mission along the Kanawha River's south bank, reaching the mouth of Scary Creek. Confederate artillery fired warning shots, prompting Norton's men to retreat. That evening, when half of the 1st Kentucky (U.S.), under Lt. Col. David Alexander Enyart, arrived at Red House, Cox sent them along with the remaining 21st Ohio troops to reinforce Norton. However, in the ensuing darkness, a misinterpreted order led to a friendly-fire incident, resulting in three deaths and several injuries.

Over the next two days, Cox consolidated his position near the mouth of the Pocatalico River, a tributary of the Kanawha. On July 16, the 11th Ohio briefly skirmished with Confederate cavalry. The following morning, Cox dispatched Lt. Col. Carr B. White of the 12th Ohio on a reconnaissance toward Scary Creek. White's men exchanged fire with Capt. Andrew R. Barbee's Putnam County Border Rifles before withdrawing to report their findings.

Cox authorized Col. John Lowe of the 12th Ohio to lead his regiment, along with Cotter's Independent Battery and George's Independent Company of Ohio cavalry, to dislodge the Confederates from Scary Creek. At the last moment, he added Col. Norton and two companies of the 21st Ohio, given Norton's familiarity with the area. After the battle, Cox faced criticism for not allowing Norton to bring his entire regiment.

Simultaneously, Lt. Col. Patton received news that Union troops had returned to Scary Creek. Patton gathered two cavalry companies and the Kanawha Artillery to reinforce the three infantry companies already stationed at Scary Creek. En route, local women presented Capt. Albert G. Jenkins' Kanawha Border Rangers with a flag. Patton's reinforcements arrived just in time.

Lowe's Union forces approached Scary Creek along two roads that merged below the Simms House. The battle began around 2 p.m. with an artillery duel between Cotter's Battery and the Kanawha Artillery. Union rifled guns, known for their accuracy, destroyed one Confederate cannon, killing Lt. James C. Welch. To preserve his remaining artillery, Patton ordered it to cease firing.

Confederate Capt. James W. Sweeney's small infantry company from Wheeling, (West) Virginia occupied a cluster of buildings across the burnt bridge on the north bank of Scary Creek, firing on Union troops through the windows. After George's cavalry made an ineffectual attempt to dislodge them, Col. Norton personally led an infantry attack supported by a devastating barrage from Cotter's Battery. Sweeney's men fled, but as they did, Cotter's Battery ran out of ammunition.

The Union forces devised a plan for Lt. Col. White to lead a bayonet charge with two companies of the 21st Ohio, while Maj. Jonathan D. Hines and a detachment from the 12th Ohio attempted a flanking maneuver by crossing Scary Creek upstream. However, Hines' detachment became tangled in dense underbrush, and those who managed to cross the creek failed to join the main attack.

White succeeded at the bridge, driving the Confederates back and wounding Lt. Col. Patton severely. Command then fell to Capt. Albert Jenkins, who rallied his troops. Reinforcements soon arrived, including the Sandy Rangers, Kanawha County militia, and an additional cannon, tipping the scales back in the Confederates' favor. Col. Norton was wounded and captured, and the Confederates reclaimed the bridge.

Exhausted and short on ammunition, Col. Lowe ordered a retreat, covered by the remaining troops of the 21st Ohio, whom Cox

had belatedly ordered forward. Misinterpreting the withdrawal, Jenkins briefly pulled his men back, leaving the battlefield temporarily deserted. When the Confederates realized their mistake, they returned and set nearby buildings ablaze to prevent their use by Union forces.

It was after sundown. Observing the smoke from the fires, Col. Charles A. De Villiers of the 11th Ohio and several officers of the 2nd Kentucky—Col. William E. Woodruff, Lt. Col. George W. Neff, Capt. George Austin, and Capt. John R. Hurd—mistakenly assumed that Lowe had won. They crossed the river to greet who they thought were their fellow compatriots, only to be captured by Jenkins' Confederates and sent to Libby Prison in Richmond.

The defeat at Scary Creek stunned Cox's command. Seven officers, including three colonels, were captured, with 15 men killed and over 35 wounded and 11 captured or missing. The loss, combined with a shortage of supply wagons, delayed further Union advances by nearly a week. Confederate casualties included four dead, twelve wounded, and four captured. Wise tried to follow up on the victory, but discretion was the better part of valor. He ultimately chose to withdraw from Charleston on July 24, retreating to Gauley Bridge to avoid being cut off by advancing Union forces to the north, who had recently captured Cheat Mountain.

3. Potomac Front

The Potomac River, a 405-mile waterway originating in the Potomac Highlands of what was then northwestern Virginia and terminating in the Chesapeake Bay, formed the antebellum boundary between Virginia and Maryland. Virginia's secession would have transformed this boundary into an international border, placing the U.S. capital on the opposing shore. Therefore, securing the Potomac was critical for Union war planners, both to facilitate the movement of friendly troops and supplies and to deny the enemy the same advantage. To enforce President Lincoln's blockade and secure the river, the Union Navy formed a flotilla to patrol the Virginia shore and prevent Maryland sympathizers from supplying Confederates across the river.

While the Potomac River offered Virginia and the Confederacy a natural barrier against invasion, its length posed significant defensive challenges. Insufficient forces existed to effectively secure every crossing. Consequently, establishing interior lines to counter Union advances became a key element of Confederate strategy. Initial deployments focused on Harper's Ferry and Centreville, but these positions were subsequently abandoned as the strategic situation evolved. This effectively ceded control of the river to the Union, save for the sector east of Fredericksburg, where Confederate shore batteries hindered Union naval operations.

The Potomac Front can be subdivided into upper and lower, using the Shenandoah River as the dividing line. Each area was assigned separate military districts but had mutually-supporting objectives. The success or failure to coordinate forces between these two areas would decide the fate of the whole. The First Battle of Bull Run / Manassas was the culminating event of military activity on this front in the spring and summer of 1861. The Confederates successfully united their forces at Bull Run and won the battle. While the Union Army had numerical superiority, their failure to prevent Confederate coordination led to a disastrous loss.

3.1 Upper Potomac

Northwest of Great Falls, the Potomac River is not ideal for navigation. Constructed between 1828 and 1850, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was designed to facilitate the flow of river traffic between Washington, D.C. and Cumberland, Maryland. The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad served the same purpose on land. These were vital transportation routes linking the U.S. capital with the west. Harper's Ferry was a strategic point on this route, and home to a U.S. arsenal. No major battles were fought in this sector in the spring and summer of 1861, but there were several skirmishes, including the largest at Hoke's Run / Falling Waters.

To oversee this subregion, the Union Army established the Department of Pennsylvania on April 27, 1861, headed by 69-year-old Major General Robert Patterson. The 11th Indiana Regiment, acting semi-independently, was stationed in Cumberland, Maryland. Initially, their strategy was to prevent Confederate incursions into Maryland and protect the B&O Railroad. Under pressure to act more aggressively, Patterson finally crossed the Potomac on July 2 with a mission to tie up Confederate Brigadier General Joseph E. Johnston's army in the Shenandoah Valley. His failure contributed to the Union disaster at the Battle of Bull Run.

The Confederates in the Upper Potomac had similar but opposite objectives: delay Union forces and damage the B&O Railroad to sever that vital transportation route. Before Virginia officially joined the

Confederacy, its militia assembled at Harpers Ferry under the command of Col. Thomas J. Jackson. Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston took command on May 23rd and formed the Army of the Shenandoah. Johnston evacuated Harper's Ferry to Winchester, where he could more easily access the Manassas Gap Railroad and reinforce P.G.T. Beauregard at Manassas Junction, which he did on July 20-21. This successful maneuver tipped the scales at Bull Run, winning the battle for the Confederacy.

3.1.1 Engagement at Romney

Thursday, June 13, 1861

Hampshire County, WV

The Engagement at Romney was fought on Thursday, June 13, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Col. Lewis "Lew" Wallace and Confederate forces commanded by Col. Arthur C. Cummings in Hampshire County, West Virginia.

Col. Lew Wallace, commanding the 11th Indiana Infantry Regiment, was a bit of an aberration. He was a lawyer and friend of Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton, and would go on to write the novel *Ben Hur* (1880). His regiment, styled in French-inspired "zouave" jackets, were originally stationed in Cairo, Illinois, but Wallace used his political connections to get his men transferred closer to the action.

The 11th Indiana was sent to guard the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in Maryland, across the Potomac River from Virginia. It technically fell under Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson and the Department of Pennsylvania but operated independently. It arrived in Cumberland, Maryland on June 10, 1861. Patterson gave Wallace leeway to "capture or rout" armed insurgents in the area, and he was happy to oblige.

Wallace heard a body of secessionist forces were camped in Romney, Virginia, 21 miles south along the South Branch of the Potomac River. These were two companies from the 33rd Virginia Infantry Regiment: the Potomac Guards and Independent Greys (Company A and F) under Col. Arthur C. Cummings, and the Hampshire Riflemen, which later became Company F, 7th Virginia Cavalry Regiment.

Five hundred men from the 11th Indiana proceeded by train the night of June 12, then plodded along rough mountain roads the next morning. The 21-mile trip turned into an 87-mile slog. Confederates had advanced notice of their arrival and were posted on a hill behind the bridge Wallace's men would have to cross to enter Romney.

Despite multiple defensive advantages, including two artillery pieces mounted on the high ground and the difficulty of attacking across a river, the 11th Indiana executed the movement flawlessly suffering only one superficial wound. Wallace personally led several companies to flank the hill, but before they could get into range, the Confederates melted into the flood of Romney's pro-secession residents leaving town.

Though Wallace pledged not to harass any unarmed citizens, his men did destroy the printing press and offices of the *South Branch Intelligencer*. Satisfied, Wallace withdrew his troops the next day. Confederate Col. Turner Ashby and his cavalry occupied Romney by June 17th, leading to another skirmish at Frankfort and Patterson's Creek.

3.1.2 Action at New Creek

Wednesday, June 19, 1861

Mineral County, WV

The Action at New Creek was fought on Wednesday, June 19, 1861 between Confederate forces commanded by Col. John C. Vaughn and Union Home Guard commanded by Capt. Horace Resley in Mineral County, West Virginia.

On June 11, 1861, Union Col. Lewis "Lew" Wallace, commanding the 11th Indiana Infantry Regiment at Cumberland, Maryland, attacked several companies of ill-trained militia at Romney, Virginia (today West Virginia) along the South Branch of the Potomac River. The Confederates fled in disorder. This, and the threat of McClellan's army coming over the mountains from the west, led Confederate Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnson to withdraw his small Army of the Shenandoah from Harper's Ferry south to Winchester, fearing he was in danger of being surrounded.

To counter Wallace's presence in the area, Johnson sent Col. Ambrose Powell Hill with the 3rd Tennessee Infantry Regiment and Hill's own 13th Virginia Infantry Regiment to re-occupy Romney. They arrived sometime on the night of June 15th.

"I have positive information that there will be four thousand rebel troops at or in Romney to-night, who swear they will follow me to hell but what they will have me," Wallace wrote frantically. Their actual number was likely around 1,500.

On the night of Tuesday, June 18, 1861, Col. John C. Vaughn took two companies from the 3rd TN and two from the 13th VA and marched 18-miles northwest to New Creek (today, Keyser) on the North Branch of the Potomac River. New Creek was also located along the strategically important Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. A.P. Hill gave Vaughn instructions to disburse whatever Union forces were there and burn the bridges over the river.

When Col. Vaughn arrived at New Creek around 4am on Wednesday, June 19th, he claimed to observe 200 to 300 armed men with two pieces of artillery on the north bank of the Potomac. In truth, the "Cumberland Continentals" defending the bridge hardly consisted of a modern-day platoon. They numbered between 28-40 men privately raised by the B&O Railroad and fielded one 6-pounder Gun and an old 4-pounder.

To avoid capture, the poorly-trained militia spiked their two cannon, fired their muskets, and skedaddled, wounding a private from Company I, 3rd TN. The Confederates captured the guns and the unit's flag, then burned the bridge and returned to Romney.

In Cumberland over the following days, Wallace prepared his men to fight and evacuate if necessary. He staged their wagons filled with baggage on the main road going north to Pennsylvania, then arrayed his regiment for battle when scouts reported a rebel force coming toward Cumberland from Romney. "There were a number of curios in my camp, relics of the late raid, and I did not relish the thought of making contributions of the kind in return, not even a handful of beans," he wrote in his memoir.

The enemy unit turned around four miles away, however, and the anticipated battle never arrived. In a few days, the 11th Indiana would be tested again, but another inconsequential skirmish would do little to change the fortunes of war in that corner of northern Virginia.

3.1.3 Skirmish at Frankfort/Patterson's Creek

Wednesday, June 26, 1861

Mineral County, WV

The Skirmish at Frankfort and Patterson's Creek (aka Kelley's Island) was fought on Wednesday, June 26, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Col. Lewis "Lew" Wallace and Confederate forces commanded by Lt. Col. Turner Ashby in Mineral County, West Virginia.

In mid-June, Col. Lewis "Lew" Wallace, commanding the 11th Indiana Infantry Regiment, arrived in Cumberland, Maryland across the Potomac River from Virginia with a mission to guard the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. His 11th Indiana routed a Confederate force out of Romney, Virginia on June 11, then withdrew.

Confederate reinforcements under Col. Ambrose Powell Hill arrived in Romney on June 15, then proceeded to burn the railroad bridge at New Creek. On June 19, two companies of Confederate cavalry arrived in Romney commanded by Col. Angus W. McDonald, Sr. to relieve them. Hill's infantry left on the 21st.

These troop movements alarmed Wallace and his men, who were outnumbered and far from reinforcements. His nearest support were Pennsylvania Reserve units who had orders not to leave their state. To gather intelligence about what he was up against, Wallace instructed his men to commandeer horses, but they only found thirteen in "fair" condition.

Meanwhile, McDonald's cavalry was busying itself around Romney. Lt. Col. Turner Ashby led a company called the "Mountain Rangers" from Fauquier County. On the morning of Wednesday, June 26, 1861, Lt. Col. Ashby and his younger brother, Cpt. Richard Ashby, set off on two different missions. The elder Ashby took nine men on a scouting mission toward Patterson's Creek Depot, while the younger Ashby set off with 19 men to arrest a local Unionist. Not finding him at home, Richard Ashby split his force and took the smaller squad toward Patterson's Depot.

Lew Wallace's scouts, led by Cpl. David B. Hay, were also on the move that day. His troop of thirteen mounted infantrymen headed from Cumberland east to Frankfort's Ford along the Potomac River to ascertain if any enemy cavalry were there. They ran into Richard Ashby and his squad near the mouth of Dan's Run, approximately three miles southeast of Patterson's Creek. A sharp fight erupted. Most of the younger Ashby's men managed to get away, but Richard was mortally wounded and left for dead. Cpl. Hay was also wounded.

The Hoosiers rode back toward Cumberland and stopped to rest on a small island (called Kelley's Island or Kelly's Island) in the Potomac River at the mouth of Patterson's Creek. Lt. Col. Turner Ashby, joined by two scouts who heard the firing earlier, located the federals and charged headlong through the shallow water. It was a fatal mistake. Ashby's horse was shot out from under him, two of his men were killed, and several wounded (Lew Wallace greatly exaggerated the number of Confederate cavalry and their casualties).

Wallace sent two companies to help, and the Confederates withdrew. Later, Turner Ashby found his younger brother's body and became a changed man–sullen with a burning desire for revenge. He would also die in battle, on June 6, 1862.

This was the last skirmish for the 11th Indiana in Virginia. In July, the regiment joined Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson's army north of Winchester, Virginia, returned to Romney July 11-13th, then proceeded home to Indianapolis to be mustered out and re-organized as a three-year regiment in early August.

3.1.4 Battle of Hoke's Run/Falling Waters

Tuesday, July 2, 1861

Berkeley County, WV

The Battle of Hoke's Run (Falling Waters/Hainesville) was fought on Tuesday, July 2, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson and Confederate forces commanded by Col. Thomas J. Jackson in Berkeley County, West Virginia during the American Civil War. The battle was a tactical Union victory, but both sides gained valuable combat experience. Jackson won praise for his performance and promoted to the rank of brigadier general. Hoke's Run resulted in 78 total casualties. Hoke's Run resulted in 78 total casualties.

The Shenandoah Valley lies between the Appalachians and Blue Ridge Mountains, its fertile soil shaped by the twin branches of the Shenandoah River. The North and South forks join northeast of Front Royal and continue to the Potomac at Harper's Ferry. In 1861, this confluence formed one of the Upper South's key strategic points, where the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, and the Winchester & Potomac line running through Charlestown to Winchester converged near the U.S. arsenal at the river's edge.

On the evening of April 18, 1861, one day after the Virginia Convention in Richmond voted to secede, U.S. troops abandoned and set fire to the Harper's Ferry arsenal. Local civilians and Virginia militia rushed in, rescuing most of the machinery. Sixty-four-year-old Kenton Harper, a major general in the state militia, took charge of the volunteer companies gathering there. Colonel Thomas J. Jackson, then an instructor at the Virginia Military Institute, soon arrived to impose order and drill the new recruits.

On May 6, Jackson, acting on his own initiative, sent troops across the Potomac to fortify Maryland Heights. The decision made sound military sense but conflicted with Virginia's political aims. Governor John Letcher and Robert E. Lee, who commanded the state's volunteer forces, wished to avoid any appearance of aggression and feared provoking Maryland, which was attempting to remain neutral.

Union leaders had no such hesitation. After the fall of Fort Sumter, U.S. troops moved freely through Maryland toward Washington, D.C., and the state was initially placed within the Military Department of Washington. On April 27, as Jackson reached Harper's Ferry, the War Department created the Military Department of Pennsylvania, covering Pennsylvania, Delaware, and much of Maryland. Sixty-nine-year-old Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson took command. His force consisted largely of 90-day Pennsylvania volunteers, supplemented by a handful of regular Army units.

In late May, Confederate President Jefferson Davis placed Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, formerly the U.S. Army's Quartermaster General, in charge of the growing Southern force at Harper's Ferry, soon called the Army of the Shenandoah. Doubting the position could be held, he secured permission to fall back to Winchester. On June 13, he began the withdrawal, ordering the destruction of the Potomac bridges behind him.

Patterson, under pressure from General Winfield Scott, crossed the Potomac at Williamsport on June 16, twenty miles north of Harper's Ferry. His lead brigade, under Brig. Gen. George Cadwalader, pushed as far as Falling Waters before being recalled. Reports of a possible attack on Washington led Scott to withdraw the regulars attached to Patterson, along with the 1st Rhode Island Infantry and

Tompkins Marine Artillery. Deprived of these units, Patterson lost confidence in his ability to challenge Johnston.

From Winchester, Johnston directed Jackson's First Brigade, composed of the 2nd, 4th, 5th, and 27th Virginia Infantry regiments and the 1st Rockbridge Artillery, to join Lieutenant Colonel J.E.B. Stuart's 1st Virginia Cavalry at Martinsburg, twenty-one miles up the Valley Pike. This macadamized turnpike stretched ninety-three miles from Martinsburg to Staunton, and Martinsburg itself was a key stop on the B&O Railroad. Johnston ordered Jackson to destroy dozens of locomotives and railcars and burn the roundhouses and machine shops. Jackson also torched the Colonnade Bridge over Tuscarora Creek, though he managed to save some locomotives and machinery, sending them down the Pike to Strasburg.

After receiving unclear instructions from headquarters, and concerned about expiring 90-day enlistments, limited artillery, and poor supply, Patterson chose to recross the Potomac at Williamsport on the morning of July 2. Four miles downriver lay a tumbling stream called Falling Waters. From that ford, the Williamsport Pike ran less than three miles to the small settlement of Hainesville. Midway between the two stood William Rush Porterfield's farm and the junction with Hammonds Mill Road.

Capt. William McMullen's Independent Rangers and Col. John J. Abercrombie's Sixth Brigade led the advance, followed by Col. George H. Thomas' First Brigade. Brigadier General James S. Negley's Fifth Brigade moved along a road slightly to the west to guard the army's right flank. The rest of the column was strung out behind.

Early that morning, videttes from Stuart's cavalry spotted Union troops crossing the ford and quickly warned Jackson at Camp Stephens north of Martinsburg. Jackson dispatched Kenton Harper, now a Confederate colonel commanding the 5th Virginia, along with his regiment and the 1st Rockbridge Artillery. The 2nd and 4th Virginia Infantry moved forward but were held in reserve, while the 27th Virginia stayed behind to guard the wagons and baggage.

Around 10 a.m., Harper's regiment reached the Porterfield farm. Though he had nine companies on hand, they numbered only about 380 men. Stuart's command was similarly reduced, mustering roughly 334 officers and men. Jackson directed Harper to send one company to the right of the road to probe for the enemy. They had barely advanced before encountering skirmishers from the 1st Wisconsin Infantry, and firing commenced.

Temporarily outnumbered, the Federals fell back. Harper responded by placing three companies to the left of the road, three to the right, and sending the remaining three forward to occupy the farmhouse and its outbuildings.

Hearing the gunfire, Colonel Thomas sent forward two 6-pounder guns under Lieutenant Delavan D. Perkins of Company F, 4th U.S. Artillery, supported by the 23rd Pennsylvania. On the Union right, the 11th Pennsylvania of Abercrombie's brigade advanced and pressed Stuart's cavalry.

With these reinforcements in place, the Union line began to turn Harper's flanks, forcing his small regiment to fall back in good order, firing as they withdrew. The Rockbridge Artillery positioned a single gun in the road to cover the retreat. Sitting on a rock outside the house known as Whitonia, Jackson was drafting a dispatch when a Union artillery shell burst nearby, scattering dirt and debris over him. He quietly brushed himself off, finished the message, and remarked, "They have gotten our range. I suppose we had better retire."

Farther west, at the junction of Hammonds Mill and Vineyard roads, an area known as Stumpy's Hollow, Company I of the 15th Pennsylvania was scouting ahead of Negley's

brigade. Captain Frank Hess left his men briefly to reconnoiter the road. During his absence, J. E. B. Stuart rode up and, mistaking the Pennsylvanians for his own troopers, ordered them to clear a fence.

The Federals, seeing his dark blue uniform, assumed he was one of their officers. Stuart, however, realized the error first and commanded them to surrender. Most complied, but a few attempted to flee and were shot by Stuart's reinforcements. One of the men involved in the firing was James Humbles, a freeman of color serving with the First Rockbridge Dragoons.

That afternoon, Jackson withdrew his entire brigade to Darkesville, about seven miles south of Martinsburg. Patterson occupied Jackson's former camp, stopping for the night. He entered Martinsburg at noon on July 3, to the cheers of its predominantly unionist population. The skirmish lasted less than an hour. One Confederate was killed and eight wounded; Union losses totaled three killed, seventeen wounded, and forty-nine captured.

Both sides could claim a measure of success. Patterson's army drove the Confederates back and occupied Martinsburg, while Jackson's disciplined withdrawal delayed the Federals long enough for Johnston to ready the Army of the Shenandoah to oppose them. Johnston commended Jackson's composure under fire and recommended his promotion to brigadier general—a commission already en route.

3.1.5 Skirmish at Harper's Ferry

Thursday, July 4, 1861

Jefferson County, WV

The Skirmish at Harper's Ferry was fought on Thursday, July 4, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Maj. William Atterbury and Confederate forces commanded by Capt. John Henderson in present-day Jefferson County, West Virginia. The skirmish was technically a draw, as both sides withdrew without gaining an advantage; however, all the casualties were on the Union side.

Following the capture of Harper's Ferry Arsenal by Virginia militia in April, Harper's Ferry became the assembly point for the growing Confederate Army of the Shenandoah. By the time Confederate Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston superseded Col. Thomas J. Jackson in command on May 23rd, the Confederate forces had swelled to approximately 10,000 infantry and cavalry. Additionally, Col. Angus W. McDonald, Sr.'s 7th Virginia Cavalry Regiment was tasked with patrolling a broad area, stretching from Harper's Ferry to the headwaters of the Potomac River.

On June 10th, Colonel Charles Pomeroy Stone, commander of the newly formed 14th U.S. Infantry Regiment, was ordered to lead several volunteer infantry regiments and battalions on an expedition westward along the Maryland side of the Potomac River. The goal was to disrupt pro-Confederate supply lines from Baltimore and hinder any Confederate attempts to control the Potomac River crossings. Stone's force consisted of around 2,500 men, including the 9th New York State Militia Regiment (not to be confused with the 9th New York Infantry Regiment stationed on the Virginia Peninsula).

Meanwhile, the Confederate high command debated the feasibility of defending Harper's Ferry, which was situated between mountains at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers. Ultimately, Johnston decided it was untenable, and between June 13-15, he evacuated his army south to Winchester, destroying the bridges across the Potomac in the process. McDonald's cavalry

remained behind to monitor Union movements across the river.

By early July 1861, the lead elements of Stone's expedition reached Sandy Hook and Maryland Heights, directly across from Harper's Ferry. Among them were Companies A and C of the 9th New York State Militia Regiment, commanded by Major William Atterbury. On the morning of July 4th, Independence Day, a volunteer picket post, composed of men from Companies A, C, E, and G under the command of Lieutenant William P. Galbraith, noticed a Confederate flag fluttering in the eerily quiet town. Believing it was deserted, they decided to cross the river in a small boat to remove the flag.

The men accomplished their mission, but they were mistaken about being unopposed. As they crossed back to the Maryland side, approximately 25 Confederate soldiers from Captain John Henderson's dismounted cavalry appeared from windows and the ruins of the railroad bridge, opening fire with deadly accuracy. Henderson's company, mustered in Charles Town on June 26, 1861, primarily consisted of recruits from Jefferson County, (now West) Virginia—the same county where Harper's Ferry is located.

Atterbury rushed to the scene with Companies A, C, and sixteen men from Company G. He reported later that evening, "On arrival, found the enemy posted about the trestle-work and behind the abutments of the bridge on the Virginia shore and in some of the buildings along the river. Opened fire on them, but ascertaining that the muskets of the command were not effective at that distance, and the enemy being armed with rifles or rifled muskets, ordered the command to retire."

The skirmish lasted about 30 minutes before both sides withdrew. Two Union soldiers were killed and two wounded, with no casualties among Henderson's command. Tragically, Frederick Roeder, a local baker and known Unionist, believed it was safe to venture outside to assess the aftermath, but Atterbury's men still anxiously overwatched the town. As he stepped into the open, a bullet ricocheted off a building and mortally wounded him.

On July 18, 1861, the 2nd Massachusetts Infantry Regiment crossed the river and occupied Harper's Ferry. The town remained under Union control until October of that year.

3.1.6 Action at Martinsburg

Thursday, July 11, 1861

Berkeley County, WV

The Action at Martinsburg was fought on Thursday, July 11, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Col. John S. Clark and Confederate forces commanded by Capt. Thomas L. Yancey in what is today Berkeley County, West Virginia. The brief but inconsequential encounter highlighted the dangers of untested volunteers operating in enemy territory.

Acting under pressure from the War Department in Washington, DC, after one false start and with 90-day enlistments about to expire, scant artillery, and poor supply, 69-year-old Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson crossed the Potomac River at Williamsport, Maryland, on July 2, 1861. With an inexperienced and untested army, he stepped into Virginia to invade the lower Shenandoah Valley.

The Shenandoah Valley's fertile farms and ironworks were vital to the Confederacy's survival. At this early stage of the war, Confederate President Jefferson Davis entrusted its defense to Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, formerly the U.S. Army's Quartermaster General. His Army of the Shenandoah included

Col. Thomas J. Jackson's brigade and Lt. Col. J. E. B. Stuart's 1st Virginia Cavalry.

A single improved road ran from the ford opposite Williamsport up the Valley through Martinsburg, Winchester, and Harrisonburg to Staunton. The ninety-three-mile stretch of macadamized turnpike from Martinsburg to Staunton was known as the Valley Pike. When Patterson's army crossed the Potomac, Jackson held Martinsburg ahead of the main Confederate force at Winchester. Martinsburg was also an important stop on the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad.

In the late afternoon of July 2, Patterson's leading brigades clashed with Jackson's men along the road to Martinsburg in what became known as the Battle of Hoke's Run, or Falling Waters. This delaying action allowed Jackson and Stuart to withdraw safely and rejoin Johnston. Patterson entered Martinsburg at noon on July 3, greeted by the cheers of its largely unionist population.

Meanwhile, Johnston assembled the Army of the Shenandoah for battle near the small village of Darkesville, about six miles south of Martinsburg, and remained there for four days before falling back to Winchester.

In Martinsburg, Patterson hesitated. His supply line from Hagerstown was stretched thin, and he believed Johnston outnumbered him. General Winfield Scott had warned him to "attempt nothing without a clear prospect of success," and Patterson chose to wait for reinforcements. Col. Charles Pomeroy Stone, having completed his expedition along the Maryland shore of the Potomac, joined him on July 8 with elements of four regiments and a battalion of District of Columbia volunteers.

That same day, the 19th New York Infantry, the "Cayuga Regiment," commanded by Col. John S. Clark, and the 28th New York Infantry, the "Scott Life Guard," under Col. Dudley Donnelly, also arrived.

Patterson at last drafted orders to advance on Winchester but rescinded them at the last moment, citing the exhaustion of the newly arrived regiments. On July 9, he convened a council of war with his senior officers. They almost unanimously agreed the army was in a precarious position and ought to move farther east to Charlestown. Johnston might be luring them into a trap, and it seemed wiser to flank his position. Even so, Patterson remained in Martinsburg.

J. E. B. Stuart's cavalry camped at Camp Vigilance near Bunker Hill, keeping the enemy under constant watch. Stuart kept Johnston informed of Patterson's movements, harassed Union patrols, and drilled his men in tactics he had learned fighting the Apaches and Cheyenne.

Patterson's army continued to suffer from shortages. He wrote to headquarters, "Supplies, especially provisions, are very scarce, and not even one day's rations can be relied upon. The supply of grain also is very limited." On the morning of July 11, Companies A and C of the 28th New York and four companies of the 19th New York, under Col. Clark, were assigned to guard a foraging expedition, with an eye toward catching some of the cavalry that had been giving them so much trouble.

The Harrisonburg Cavalry, led by Capt. Thomas L. Yancey, and the Washington Mounted Rifles, led by Capt. William E. "Grumble" Jones, were also active that morning. Yancey with 27 men, and Jones with 50, scouted in two separate parties toward Martinsburg.

A small group of soldiers from Company I, 19th New York, were foraging about two miles from camp when they spotted Jones' horsemen and raced back up the road. Jones pursued with most of his force but sent five men, including Private John Singleton Mosby, around to cut them off. Mosby surprised and captured Corporal Martin Webster and Private Samuel J. Tobias, then rode to within sight of the Union camp before turning back.

Meanwhile, the main Union foraging party reached a farm about five miles southwest of Martinsburg. Capt. Elliot W. Cook, Lt. Daniel R. Whitcher, 20-year-old Private Isaac W. Sly, and five others from Company A, 28th New York, formed an advance guard to watch the road.

Before long, they saw a body of cavalry approaching at full gallop and opened fire.

"About twenty of the scoundrels fired on us," Yancey later boasted. "I made a charge on them, killed two, wounded one, and took a prisoner. The others retreated, and by the time his comrades came to his aid, [we] was out of the way."

Cook's party fell back toward their reserve, firing as they went. Private Sly was kneeling in a field to return fire when he was struck in the jaw; the bullet passed through his neck and killed him almost instantly. Another shot shattered the buckle on Lt. Whitcher's scabbard.

By the time Col. Clark arrived with reinforcements, the Confederate cavalry had vanished over the horizon. Webster and Tobias were taken to Winchester for questioning, then sent on to Libby Prison in Richmond, where Tobias later died of his wound.

Shortly after returning from the foraging expedition, Clark was relieved of command and placed under arrest pending a court-martial. Several of his captains had accused him of "incompetency to command, harsh and ungentlemanly treatment of officers and men," and frequent profanity. The charges were eventually dismissed, but he never again commanded a regiment.

3.1.7 Skirmish at New Creek

Sunday, July 14, 1861

Mineral County, WV

A second Skirmish at New Creek was fought on Sunday, July 14, 1861 between Confederate forces commanded by Capt. Macon Jordan and Union forces commanded by Lt. Col. Thomas L. Kane in modern-day Mineral County, West Virginia. The skirmish was a Union victory. Confederates retreated back to their base at Romney, and New Creek Station remained in federal control for the remainder of the war.

In early July, Colonel Lewis "Lew" Wallace and his 11th Indiana Infantry Regiment, stationed in Cumberland, Maryland, along the Potomac River, were ordered to join Major General Robert Patterson's army north of Winchester, Virginia. The 11th Indiana counter-marched to Romney from July 11-13, then proceeded home to Indianapolis to be mustered out and re-organized as a three-year regiment in early August.

Meanwhile, the 13th and 5th Pennsylvania Reserve Regiments and Battery A, 1st Pennsylvania Artillery were encamped at Camp Mason & Dixon just north of the Maryland border for two weeks debating the constitutionality of Pennsylvania state troops entering Maryland. On July 7, the departure of Wallace's regiment left Cumberland and key points along the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad vulnerable to attack.

At the request of General Winfield Scott, Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin ordered the troops at Camp Mason & Dixon to advance and protect Cumberland. The 13th Pennsylvania Reserve Regiment, nicknamed the "Bucktails" for the deer tails they wore on their hats, was led by Colonel Charles J. Biddle and later became the 42nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry.

Opposing them was Colonel Angus W. McDonald, Sr.'s 7th Virginia Cavalry Regiment, tasked with guarding and patrolling the area from Harper's Ferry to the headwaters of the Potomac River. McDonald's over-strength regiment, containing more than a dozen companies, had already skirmished with Wallace's Indiana Zouaves and Colonel Charles P. Stone's Maryland expeditionary force.

On Friday, July 12, Colonel Biddle received word that rebels had destroyed train cars and two trestle bridges over George's Creek on the

Maryland side of the Potomac River, north of Piedmont. Early the next morning, Biddle moved his regiment and the 5th Pennsylvania Reserves, led by Colonel Seneca G. Simmons, 20 miles south by rail. They disembarked at the remains of the Potomac River bridge north of New Creek Station (present-day Keyser), which the Confederates had destroyed on June 19.

From there, Lt. Col. Thomas L. Kane led 40 men from Companies H and I of the Bucktail Regiment and two members of the Cumberland Home Guard on foot to New Creek Station. That night, Kane and his men took shelter in a stone house belonging to Mr. William Armstrong on the road to Romney, while the two Cumberland men slept on the station platform.

Just before sunrise on July 14, Captain Macon Jordan's Company, joined by part of the Letcher Brock's Gap Rifles and the Mountain Rangers, around 85 to 100 men in total, rode into New Creek from Piedmont. Private Richard Black of the Brock's Gap Rifles dramatically charged his horse onto the station platform, surprising the two members of the Cumberland Home Guard. One was taken prisoner, and the other, William Kelly, was killed.

Hearing the commotion, Lt. Col. Kane sent a squad to investigate. His men hid in a meadow of tall grass, fired a few shots at Jordan's Confederate soldiers, then retreated to the stone house. The Confederate cavalrymen formed up and charged the house, but the Bucktails, renowned for their marksmanship, opened fire from the windows. "They came up in fine order, but broke and ran on receiving a fire which was reserved till they were ready to dismount," Kane wrote. Lieutenant Reuben L. Booten, Pvt. William L. Miller, and two horses were killed, with an unknown number wounded.

The Confederate raiders retreated south, and Kane and his men pursued them. About eight miles down the road toward Romney, near the small village of Ridgeville, they briefly exchanged fire again. Kane's force took refuge in a large stone house and awaited reinforcements. The following day, a detachment of Pennsylvania troops occupied Piedmont, and Colonel Biddle reached Kane with the remainder of his two regiments on the night of the 16th. Instead of advancing on Romney, however, they withdrew back to New Creek.

Due to Major General Patterson's advance in the Shenandoah Valley, on July 17, Brigadier General Joseph E. Johnston ordered Angus McDonald to relocate his entire regiment to Winchester, abandoning the Romney area. McDonald's forces covered Johnston's advance to Manassas but did not participate in that battle. No further military activity would occur in that corner of Virginia until autumn.

3.1.8 Skirmish at Bunker Hill

Monday, July 15, 1861

Berkeley County, WV

The Skirmish at Bunker Hill was fought on Monday, July 15, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Col. George H. Thomas and Confederate forces commanded by Lt. Col. J. E. B. Stuart in what is today Berkeley County, West Virginia. Though a tactical Union victory, it bought time for Joseph E. Johnston's Army of the Shenandoah to slip away and help achieve victory at the First Battle of Bull Run on July 21.

At the beginning of July 1861, Union Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson, 69-year-old veteran of the War of 1812 and Mexican-American War and commander of the Military Department of Pennsylvania, moved his army across the Potomac River into Virginia's lower Shenandoah Valley. The march was key to the Federal strategy to contain Confederate Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of the Shenandoah and prevent it from reinforcing P. G. T. Beauregard's forces near Manassas Junction.

Moving cautiously, Patterson pressed Col. Thomas J. Jackson's brigade at Hoke's Run and then occupied Martinsburg, an important stop on the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad whose population was largely sympathetic to the Union cause. Even so, his army suffered from supply shortages and struggled with undisciplined 90-day volunteers. Forced to forage for food in the countryside, Patterson's men stumbled into at least one deadly clash with Lt. Col. J. E. B. Stuart's 1st Virginia Cavalry.

On July 9, Patterson convened a council of war with his senior officers. They almost unanimously agreed the army was in a precarious position and should move farther east to Charlestown. For nearly a week, they waited while reinforcements trickled in. Finally, on the morning of July 15, 1861, they broke camp and marched south along the Valley Turnpike.

At the head of the Union advance was Col. George H. Thomas' First Brigade, consisting of Capt. Charles H. Tompkins' 1st Rhode Island Battery, with six rifled guns, supported by the 21st Pennsylvania Infantry under Col. John F. Ballier. Close behind marched Col. Charles P. Dare's 23rd Pennsylvania Infantry, with other regiments following in the long column. The Union soldiers stepped off in fine spirits. Many three-month volunteers had expected to be going home, but instead found themselves marching toward Winchester, looking for a fight.

By this time, Johnston had already withdrawn his main infantry force several miles south to Winchester, wary of engaging Patterson's numerically superior army in a direct confrontation. In his place, he left a screen of cavalry under J. E. B. Stuart to observe and delay the Union advance. Stuart's command, several hundred cavalrymen, acted as the eyes and ears of the Confederate army.

As Patterson's vanguard pushed through the hamlet of Darkesville, about two miles north of Bunker Hill, the 21st Pennsylvania fired a few potshots at Confederate pickets retreating out of town. One musket ball struck Mrs. Chapman, a local resident, in the hip as she ran into the street to gather her children to safety. Fortunately, the injury was not grave. A Union army surgeon, Dr. William H. Worthington of the 9th Pennsylvania, was called to treat her and found it to be a "slight" flesh wound.

After a march of about two hours, Patterson's lead elements approached Bunker Hill. As they neared the village, they encountered Confederate cavalry outposts. Patterson's advance deployed to meet this threat: Maj. George C. Spear of the 23rd Pennsylvania took four companies and extended to the right as skirmishers, a maneuver that successfully flushed the enemy horsemen from concealment on the flank.

The Confederate cavalry, about 600 strong, rallied astride the turnpike behind Mill Creek. Union sources reported that Lt. Col. Stuart began forming his troopers as if to charge the 21st Pennsylvania Infantry in the road. Unbeknownst to Stuart, however, the Rhode Island artillery lay concealed just behind the infantry.

When the Confederates drew up to attack, Tompkins's battery suddenly opened fire at close range, hurling shells and grape shot with "powerful effect" directly into the cavalry column. At the same moment, the 21st Pennsylvania loosed a volley into the stunned horsemen. Caught by surprise, the Confederate charge collapsed almost at once; according to eyewitnesses, the rebel troopers "immediately scattered" under the deadly fire.

A detachment of the 2nd U.S. Cavalry pursued the fleeing rebels down the turnpike for about two miles toward Winchester. The chase yielded at least two prisoners, both of whom were brought back to Gen. Patterson.

Disorganized and outgunned, Stuart's cavalry withdrew in haste, skirmishing intermittently as they fell back. Their retreat was covered by a series of impromptu roadblocks—trees felled across the turnpike and fences thrown into the path of the pursuing Federals. These obstructions significantly slowed Patterson's advance.

By evening, Patterson's forces had fully occupied Bunker Hill and found the Confederate camps hastily abandoned. Tents, provisions, and even cooking fires had been left behind. That night, Union scouts probing beyond the village encountered a small Confederate cavalry rear guard, resulting in a brief but sharp exchange of fire in the dark. No significant casualties were reported on the Union side, and Confederate accounts give no indication that the skirmish led to further loss of life.

Many in Patterson's camp expected a larger battle at Winchester in the coming days. On July 16, he kept his army at Bunker Hill for a day of rest and reorganization. The troops were footsore and low on rations after the rapid march. That night, he received troubling intelligence: a reconnaissance found the direct turnpike from Bunker Hill to Winchester barricaded with more fallen trees and fences.

He was also acutely aware that most of his troops' enlistments were set to expire within days. In an official report, he warned that a "very large portion" of his force would "lay down their arms" when their term ended in late July, and that no "active operations towards Winchester can be thought of" until fresh three-year volunteers replaced them.

As Patterson's army lingered at Bunker Hill, Brig. Gen. Johnston took full advantage. He prepared to evacuate Winchester, leaving his sick and the town's defense in the care of Virginia militia. Stuart's cavalry screen continued to monitor Union movements and cover their own. By the time Patterson resumed his march on July 17, pivoting toward Charlestown rather than continuing directly south, Johnston had already set his withdrawal in motion. Two days later, on July 18, he slipped away toward Piedmont Station and travelled by rail to join Gen. Beauregard at Manassas.

Though minor in casualties and tactical results, the running skirmish at Bunker Hill helped mask Johnston's movement and reinforced the mistaken impression among Union leaders that a large force remained in front of them. In this way, the clash at Bunker Hill became a modest but integral part of the maneuvers that set the stage for the Confederate victory at First Manassas.

3.2 Lower Potomac

The Potomac River below Harper's Ferry was vital to defense of Washington, D.C. The national capital was in a precarious position, surrounded by Virginia and Maryland. Maryland, despite declaring neutrality, had a significant secessionist population. The Potomac was a critical lifeline, carrying supplies, troops, and military orders between the capital and Chesapeake Bay. Securing the lower Potomac was a top priority for both President Abraham Lincoln and General Winfield Scott. In mid-May, U.S. Navy Commander James Harmon Ward organized a small "flying squadron," later known as the Potomac Flotilla, to enforce a naval blockade and control access to the river.

To organize the District's defense on land, the Union Army created the Military Department of Washington led by Brigadier General Joseph K. Mansfield. Mansfield advocated an aggressive defense by establishing a bridgehead on the southern side of the Potomac River. The town of Alexandria, Virginia and its deep-water port were seized on May 24, 1861, as was Arlington Heights and other strategic terrain in that corner of northeastern Virginia. On May 27th, Brigadier General Irvin McDowell was appointed to command the new Department of Northeastern Virginia.

Virginia's provisional army divided this subregion into two sectors: the "Alexandria Line" and Military Department of Fredericksburg. Despite its name, Virginia's high command did not intend to defend

Alexandria or the area immediately to the south of Washington, D.C. Instead, its forces were concentrated at Centreville with outposts at Fairfax Court House and Alexandria. Alexandria was abandoned as soon as the Union Army crossed the river. The army's headquarters moved south to Manassas Junction, using Bull Run as a natural defensive barrier. East of Fredericksburg, shore batteries at Aquia Landing and an aggressive defense of Mathias Point effectively prevented the Potomac Flotilla from accomplishing its mission.

A succession of commanders oversaw this strategic area. Colonel Philip St. George Cocke initially organized Virginia volunteers in northeastern Virginia and was largely responsible for formulating the strategy of using the Manassas Gap Railroad to coordinate mutual support with forces in the Shenandoah Valley. Brigadier General Milledge Luke Bonham superseded him on May 21st but was not in charge long before Brigadier General Pierre Gustave Toutant-Beauregard arrived to take command. By that time, the Confederate government had taken control of military operations in Virginia. Colonel Daniel Ruggles initially commanded the Department of Fredericksburg but he was replaced by Brigadier General Theophilus H. Holmes.

Despite ceding a foothold to the Union Army in northeastern Virginia, effective coordination between Confederate forces saved Beauregard's army from defeat at the First Battle of Bull Run / Manassas. The Confederates would never regain control of Alexandria, but in the fall of 1861, they effectively sealed off the Potomac River using shore batteries, blockading Washington, D.C. The situation remained unchanged until the spring of 1862.

3.2.1 Engagement at Aquia Creek

Wed., May 29 to Sat., June 1, 1861

Stafford County, VA

The Engagement at Aquia Creek was fought from Wednesday, May 29 to Saturday, June 1, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Commander James H. Ward and Confederate forces commanded by Col. Daniel Ruggles and Capt. William F. Lynch in Stafford County, Virginia. It resulted in a draw, with neither side gaining advantage over the other.

In late April and early May of 1861, tensions between federal forces and the Commonwealth of Virginia threatened to escalate into full-scale war. On April 17, 1861, delegates at the Virginia Secession Convention in Richmond passed an ordinance of secession, contingent upon the results of a popular referendum scheduled for May 23. In response, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln extended the naval blockade of the Deep South to include Virginia's ports, leading to skirmishes between Virginia shore batteries and U.S. Navy ships in the Chesapeake Bay.

Daniel Ruggles (1810–1897), a Massachusetts-born officer, was appointed brigadier general in the Provisional Army of Virginia and placed in command of the Military Department of Fredericksburg. This region encompassed Fredericksburg, Stafford, Spotsylvania, Caroline, King George, and Westmoreland counties. A captain in the regular U.S. Army, Ruggles was on extended sick leave when the Civil War began. His wife, Richardetta—niece of George Mason—had deep ties to Virginia, prompting Ruggles to adopt the state as his new home and vigorously rise to its defense.

Ruggles, who was administratively reduced in rank to colonel as Virginia opted to limit its number of general officers, immediately began identifying key defensive positions along the Potomac River. Approximately ten miles northeast of Fredericksburg lay Aquia Landing, the terminus of the Fredericksburg and Potomac

Railroad. Initially, Ruggles viewed defending Aquia Landing as a secondary concern. However, John M. Brooke, a former U.S. Navy officer, relayed instructions from Robert E. Lee emphasizing the importance of protecting the railroad terminus. In early May, Ruggles tasked Major Thomas H. Williamson with constructing a battery at Aquia Landing and on nearby Split Rock Bluff.

Captain William F. Lynch of the Virginia Navy was placed in direct command of the Aquia Battery, which consisted of four guns. Meanwhile, Captain Reuben L. Walker and the Richmond "Purcell" Artillery Battery—armed with four 6-pounder rifled guns (sometimes described as Parrott rifles)—dug in on a bluff overlooking the landing. Their goal was to control maritime traffic on the Potomac River and deter any Union attempt to seize the landing by force.

At the same time, U.S. Navy Commander James Harmon Ward (1806–1861), a seasoned seaman who had captained the USS *Cumberland* during the Mexican-American War, proposed the creation of a "flying squadron" to Navy Secretary Gideon Welles. This force, later called the Potomac Flotilla, was tasked with maintaining Lincoln's blockade, monitoring Virginia's shoreline for Confederate activity, and preventing pro-Confederate Marylanders from smuggling supplies across the river.

With naval vessels in short supply, Ward chartered civilian ships and converted them for military use. His flagship, the USS *Thomas Freeborn*, was a 269-ton side-wheel steam tugboat built in 1860 and armed with two 32-pounder guns. It departed the New York Navy Yard for Virginia on May 16, 1861, accompanied by the USS *Reliance* and USS *Resolute*—two 90-ton screw steamers equipped with one 24-pounder and one 12-pounder howitzer each.

Union naval vessels observed the construction of the Aquia Battery from a safe distance but refrained from engaging. By late May 1861, Virginia's allegiance in the Civil War was beyond doubt. On May 23, Virginia voters overwhelmingly ratified secession. The next morning, Union troops crossed the Potomac River, seizing Arlington Heights and Alexandria, Virginia. Ruggles grew increasingly concerned that Union forces might land upriver and flank his position.

On the evening of Wednesday, May 29, 1861, the USS *Thomas Freeborn* approached the Aquia Battery and fired 14 rounds. The low tide caused most shots to fall short, inflicting only minor damage and wounding one Confederate—a man slightly injured in the hand. Ruggles rushed to the scene with 700 men, including troops from the 2nd Regiment Tennessee Infantry (Walker Legion), the 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment, Company F, and the Richmond Light Infantry Blues. However, the guns were silent by the time they arrived after dark.

The following day, Commander Ward sailed south to reconnoiter Mathias Point with a small landing party but found no Confederate troops. On Friday, May 31, Ward returned to Aquia Landing with the USS *Thomas Freeborn*, supported by the 2-gun USS *Resolute* and USS *Anacostia*, a 217-ton screw steamer commissioned in 1859. The three ships exchanged fire with Confederate forces for several hours. One shot breached the sand embankment and exploded in the officers' quarters, but no one was injured. Captain Lynch, aiming to conserve ammunition, ordered his guns to fall silent, though Captain Walker's "Purcell" battery continued firing, wounding one Union sailor. The Union ships, unable to elevate their guns high enough to return fire effectively, withdrew.

Ruggles again rushed his infantry to the scene, but once again, they arrived too late. He hastily telegraphed Richmond for additional ammunition. A polite but firm response came the next day, chastising him for wasting

resources on what Robert E. Lee deemed a futile exchange.

At 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, June 1, the steam-powered sloop-of-war USS *Pawnee* joined the flotilla, adding its eight 9-inch guns and two 12-pounders to the cannonade. To disrupt the Union's line of sight, Captain Lynch ordered several outbuildings and the wharf to be set ablaze. He also repositioned one of Walker's rifled cannons to the shore battery, where it proved effective. "Our sand banks not being en barbette, we could only fire as the enemy came within range through the embrasures," Lynch reported. "This… constrained me to withhold fire except when something like a fair shot presented."

The USS *Pawnee* sustained nine hits, suffering minor damage and one casualty—its commander, who was scratched by a splinter. "The enemy's fire was almost exclusively directed at this ship, his rifled shot passing constantly over and around us," wrote Commander Stephen C. Rowan. Ward described the *Pawnee* as "a sheet of flame" due to the rapid pace of its broadsides. The *Thomas Freeborn* also sustained damage and began taking on water, though its crew was unscathed.

After three days of bombardment, with limited ammunition and minor damage, the Union flotilla withdrew. The USS *Thomas Freeborn* sailed to the Washington Navy Yard for repairs, while the USS *Pawnee* maintained a distant watch on the Confederate battery.

3.2.2 Action at Cloud's Mills

Friday, May 31, 1861

Alexandria, VA

The Action at Cloud's Mill was fought on Friday, May 31, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Capt. William F. Roth and Capt. Michael Tagan (or Fegan) and unknown Virginian militia in present-day Alexandria, Virginia. The action, most likely a friendly-fire incident (though we'll never know for certain), had no effect on the overall strategic situation.

On May 23, 1861, Virginia voters ratified secession, and at 2 a.m. the next day, eleven full regiments, with accompanying engineers, cavalry, and artillery, crossed the bridges into northern Virginia from Washington, DC, and by boat to Alexandria. The 1st Michigan Volunteer Infantry (3 months), led by Colonel Orlando B. Willcox, crossed Long Bridge and proceeded to Alexandria overland, while the 11th New York Volunteer Infantry (First New York Zouaves), led by Colonel Elmer E. Ellsworth, occupied Alexandria by boat from the Potomac River.

Ellsworth, a close friend of President Abraham Lincoln, was killed by James W. Jackson, proprietor of the Marshall House inn, shortly after removing a Confederate flag from the inn's roof. Virginia militia forces fled the town, destroying bridges and railroad tracks along the Orange & Alexandria Railroad as they retreated. Captain Mottrom Dulany Ball and 35 members of his Chesterfield Troop were captured without firing a shot. By May 28, both the 1st Michigan and the 11th New York had set up camp on Shuter's (or Shooter's) Hill, west of Alexandria along the Little River Turnpike leading to Fairfax Court House.

Approximately three miles west of Shuter's Hill, near Holmes Run on the north side of the Little River Turnpike, stood a mill owned by James Cloud. The mill, an unremarkable four-story brick structure, was "noted for nothing but the millions of horrible fleas bred in its vicinity." Its wheel was powered by a muddy stream,

largely hidden by weeds and brush. Captain Ebenezer Butterworth and Company C of the 1st Michigan—the "Coldwater Cadets"—seized the mill, confiscating 400 barrels of flour and hundreds of bushels of wheat. Southern newspapers accused them of forcibly evicting James Cloud's family and ransacking their belongings.

Around the same time, Major General Robert E. Lee visited Manassas Junction to inspect Brigadier General Milledge L. Bonham's defensive preparations. Lieutenant Colonel Richard S. Ewell, a former U.S. Regular Army officer, assumed command of the Virginia cavalry at Fairfax Court House, where the Warrenton Rifles, Rappahannock Cavalry, and Prince William Cavalry were stationed. Both cavalry units were poorly armed, and the Warrenton Rifles had only just arrived. The Goochland and Hanover Light Dragoons were positioned at Fairfax Station, 3.5 miles to the south.

On the night of May 31, approximately 25 men from Company E, the "Steuben Guard" of the 1st Michigan, were stationed on picket duty at Cloud's Mill under Captain William F. Roth. Company G of the 11th New York, led by Captain Michael A. Tagan, was preparing to relieve them. At around 10 p.m., impatient Michigan soldiers began walking back to camp to check on their replacements. The two groups met on the road and returned to the mill together.

Accounts differ on what happened next, but it is generally agreed that some members of the 1st Michigan were inside the mill, while the New York Zouaves took position in a nearby storehouse. In the darkness, a sergeant noticed several figures emerging from a barn. "Who goes there?" he demanded twice, receiving the same response each time: "Soldiers." Unsatisfied, the sergeant raised his musket and fired. A volley of gunfire followed. The Michigan troops began shooting from inside the mill, but in the confusion, no one could distinguish friend from foe.

Captain Roth rushed outside to assess the situation but quickly dropped to the ground to avoid being caught in the crossfire. Two soldiers from the 11th New York, 21-year-old Private Henry S. Cornell and Private Joseph Cushman, were hit—Cornell mortally. As he lay dying, Cornell reportedly exclaimed, "Who would not die a soldier's death?" After the shooting stopped, troops searched the woods but found no signs of enemy soldiers.

Northern journalists, unfamiliar with the local geography, initially misreported the skirmish as taking place at Arlington Mills, three miles to the north. While most believed they had been ambushed by an enemy patrol, others were not so certain. In a letter published in the *New York Leader* on July 3, 1861, under the pseudonym Harry Lorrequer, Private Arthur O'Neil Alcock—a former newspaper editor in Company A of the 11th New York—wrote:

"The simple fact is, that since we left New York we have had only one man killed and two wounded, as is said, by the fire of the rebels. And it is by no means certain that these were not shot by friends in mistake, or by themselves accidentally or through carelessness."

Cornell was given a hero's funeral, attended by his entire company, and was initially buried beneath a tree on a hill near Camp Ellsworth. However, his body was soon exhumed and transported to New York, where he now rests in Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

The Action at Cloud's Mill did not change the strategic picture, but it underscored the confusion and inexperience that marked the early days of the Civil War. The chaotic skirmish, likely a friendly-fire incident, revealed the challenges of coordinating troops unfamiliar with the terrain. It also reflected the tense and uncertain nature of Union operations in newly occupied Virginia, where every shadow and

distant movement could be mistaken for a lurking enemy. It was a stark reminder of the costly learning curve that both sides would endure in the conflict to come.

3.2.3 First Battle of Fairfax Court House

Saturday, June 1, 1861

Fairfax County, VA

The First Battle of Fairfax Court House was fought on Saturday, June 1, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Lt. Charles H. Tompkins and Confederate forces commanded by Lt. Col. Richard S. Ewell and William Smith at Fairfax Court House, Virginia during the American Civil War. This small and inconclusive battle resulted in 17 total dead, wounded, or captured.

It was a calm, clear night. At 2 a.m. on May 23, 1861, under a bright moon, Lieutenant Charles H. Tompkins and Company B of the 2nd United States Cavalry crossed single-file over the Aqueduct Bridge into northern Virginia. They were followed by three New York infantry regiments and a company of engineers.

The cavalry advanced as far as the Loudoun & Hampshire Railroad, where Tompkins stopped a passenger train while U.S. Army engineers destroyed sections of track and burned two bridges over Four-Mile Run. Later that day, they, along with the 5th Regiment, New York State Militia, established Camp Union, half a mile west of Ball's Crossroads near Falls Church. From there, they began patrolling the area for enemy activity.

On May 27, the same day that Irvin McDowell was appointed to command the new Department of Northeastern Virginia, U.S. cavalrymen surprised two Confederate soldiers—Privates Peyton Anderson and William Lillard of the Rappahannock Cavalry—who were on picket duty along the Falls Church Road, about two miles northeast of Fairfax Court House. Lillard was captured, while Anderson, though wounded, managed to escape.

Meanwhile, Major General Robert E. Lee, overseeing Virginia's provisional army, inspected Brigadier General Milledge Luke Bonham's defensive preparations at Manassas Junction. Bonham, a South Carolina congressman, had recently replaced Philip St. George Cocke as commander of the Alexandria Line. On May 29, Lee recommended that an advanced force be sent to Fairfax Court House under Lieutenant Colonel Richard S. Ewell, a former U.S. Regular Army officer.

The town, though strategically insignificant, served as the administrative seat of Fairfax County. It had about 300 residents, two churches, a hotel, and a jail. The Warrenton Rifles, Rappahannock Cavalry, and Prince William Cavalry, approximately 190 men in total, were stationed there, though both cavalry units were poorly armed and without ammunition. Further south, the Goochland and Hanover Light Dragoons were positioned at Fairfax Station, 3.5 miles away.

On May 31, William "Extra Billy" Smith, Virginia's 30th governor, arrived at Fairfax Court House as a civilian to support "his boys" in the Warrenton Rifles. That evening, he briefly conferred with Ewell, who had just returned from reconnoitering the area, before they retired for the night.

Meanwhile, Col. David Hunter of the 3rd U.S. Cavalry, serving as a brigade commander in the Army of Northeastern Virginia, ordered Lt.

Tompkins to conduct a reconnaissance mission toward Fairfax Court House. Tompkins took 50 men from his own company, 22 from the 2nd U.S. Dragoons under Lt. David S. Gordon, and three members of the 5th New York State Militia's regimental staff. They advanced west along Falls Church Road.

At around 2:30 a.m. on June 1, just outside Fairfax Court House, Tompkins' men surprised two Warrenton Rifles pickets, capturing one while the other escaped to warn his comrades. Instead of proceeding cautiously as ordered, Tompkins impulsively led his men on a reckless charge through the town. The cavalry rode through the dark streets, firing wildly in all directions, with only dim hotel lanterns illuminating the scene.

As the Union troopers stormed through, they encountered the Prince William Cavalry, capturing four of its members. Ewell, stepping out of his hotel to assess the commotion, was struck in the shoulder. The two Confederate cavalry companies, lacking ammunition, fled, as did part of the Warrenton Rifles. In the chaos, Captain John Q. Marr of the Warrenton Rifles became separated from his men and was killed—likely by a stray bullet. Tompkins later claimed credit for Marr's death. His Medal of Honor citation, awarded in 1893, reads: "Twice charged through the enemy's lines and, taking a carbine from an enlisted man, shot the enemy's captain."

After the initial charge, the Union cavalry rode out of town toward Germantown before doubling back. In the meantime, ex-Governor Smith rallied the leaderless Warrenton Rifles, attempting to block the Little River Turnpike between the courthouse and hotel. Ewell, bleeding from his wound, briefly joined them before leaving to find a courier to summon reinforcements from Fairfax Station.

Shortly thereafter, Tompkins and his men reappeared on the western side of town. The Warrenton Rifles fired a scattered volley, causing the cavalry to retreat. The Confederates then cautiously advanced toward Zion Episcopal Church, only to be met by another charge. This time, their volleys were more effective, mortally wounding nine Union horses and wounding six men, including Tompkins, who injured his foot when his horse fell on him. Three Union soldiers were taken prisoner, though one was mistakenly reported as dead.

By sunrise, Confederate reinforcements from Fairfax Station arrived, but the skirmish was over. Despite the chaotic nature of the fight, Marr was the only fatality.

Lt. Tompkins later wrote a self-serving report that grossly exaggerated the number of Confederate troops and their casualties. While his boldness earned him some praise, the Union leadership saw the engagement as a costly blunder. Irvin McDowell commended Tompkins' courage but criticized his actions, writing that they had "frustrated unintentionally, for the time, a more important movement." The skirmish at Fairfax Court House, though a minor engagement, revealed the inexperience of both sides in the opening months of the conflict.

3.2.4 Engagement at Vienna

Monday, June 17, 1861

Fairfax County, VA

The Engagement at Vienna was fought on Monday, June 17, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Brig. Gen. Robert C. Schenck and Confederate forces commanded by Col. Maxcy Gregg in Fairfax County, Virginia. It was a one-sided Confederate victory that derailed the Union advance in northeastern Virginia for nearly a month.

By mid-June 1861, the Union's rapid advance into northeastern Virginia had stalled along a line stretching from Alexandria to Chain Bridge and Little Falls. Over 12,000 Union troops were positioned across this 25-square-mile area just beyond the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. Although they encountered little armed resistance, a skirmish on June 1 rattled Union war planners when a cavalry patrol was driven out of Fairfax Court House, suffering six wounded and three captured. Though a minor incident, it prompted Union forces to proceed with greater caution.

On the morning of June 16, Brigadier General Irvin McDowell, commanding the Department of Northeastern Virginia, ordered Brigadier General Daniel P. Tyler to lead a detachment from the 1st Regiment Connecticut Volunteer Infantry on a reconnaissance mission along the Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire (AL&H) Railroad to Vienna. Union observers at Arlington Mills had spotted smoke rising in that direction and, fearing Confederate forces were setting fire to railroad bridges, reported their concerns to headquarters.

Upon reaching the area, Tyler discovered the bridges intact. However, northwest of Vienna, his men came across several locomotives and train cars in flames. After assessing the situation, he withdrew, but not before a civilian near Falls Church shot and wounded a Union soldier. The assailant was promptly taken prisoner. Meanwhile, the 69th New York Infantry advanced from Fort Corcoran to secure the railroad crossing just west of Four Mile Run.

At the same time, Confederate Colonel Maxcy Gregg of the 1st South Carolina Infantry Regiment led 575 men from Fairfax Court House on a reconnaissance mission toward the Potomac River. Along the way, he joined forces with 70 cavalrymen from the Clay Dragoons and Wise Troop, as well as Captain Delaware Kemper's Alexandria Light Artillery, which included two 6-pounder cannons. The combined force scouted north to Dranesville, missing Tyler's expedition by mere hours before setting up camp for the night.

The following day, McDowell directed Brigadier General Robert C. Schenck to send a regiment by rail along the AL&H Railroad to relieve the 69th New York and proceed toward Vienna, guarding bridges and clearing any obstructions. Schenck took 697 men from the 1st Ohio Infantry Regiment, leaving detachments along the route for security. Companies E, C, G, and H—totaling 271 men—traveled by rail on open platform cars.

That same morning, Colonel Gregg, having found little Union activity along the Potomac, moved south to Hunter's Mill, where train cars still smoldered. Sensing an opportunity, he led his men two miles to Vienna and prepared an ambush, anticipating a Union return. Growing impatient, the Confederates were about to move on when, just before 6 p.m., the distant sound of a train whistle prompted them to reset their trap.

As the Union train rounded a bend, Kemper's artillery opened fire—first with solid shot, then with canister rounds. The Ohio volunteers, exposed on open platform cars, scrambled for cover in the woods and underbrush. Eight were killed, and at least five wounded. Companies G and H, positioned on the second and third cars, bore the brunt of the attack.

The *New York Daily Herald* later reported: "When the attack was made Major Parrott, of Dayton, seized the colors and sprang upon the embankment and unfurled them, but was pulled back by some of the company, while admiring his gallantry, were unwilling he should needlessly expose himself."

During the chaos, one soldier lost his arm to a cannonball but managed to retrieve it and jump from the car before collapsing.

The train's engineer, panicked by the attack, detached the engine and sped back toward Alexandria, leaving the Ohio troops to fend for themselves. The Confederates attempted to pursue, but rough terrain and growing darkness forced them to abandon the chase. They captured one wounded Union soldier before withdrawing to Fairfax Court House after midnight.

The stranded Ohioans threw aside most of their accoutrements and made their way back to camp on foot, carrying their wounded in blankets. The next day, a local Unionist helped return the fallen soldiers to their regiment.

The Ambush at Vienna reinforced the Union high command's growing sense of caution and further exposed the inexperience of its officers and troops. In response, General-in-Chief Winfield Scott advised McDowell against another advance on Vienna. For the next month, both sides remained in largely the same positions, holding their ground until mid-July.

3.2.5 Engagement at Mathias Point

Tuesday, June 25 and Thursday, June 27, 1861

King George County, VA

The Engagement at Mathias Point was fought on Tuesday, June 25 and Thursday, June 27, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Commander James H. Ward and Confederate forces commanded by Colonel John M. Brockenbrough and Major Robert M. Mayo in King George County, Virginia. It was a Confederate victory that, with the death of Commander Ward, derailed Union plans to control the lower Potomac River.

With the Union offensive in northeast Virginia stalled, attention shifted back to the Potomac River. At the end of May, the Potomac Flotilla failed to silence a Confederate shore battery near Aquia Landing. During the engagement, Commander James H. Ward reconnoitered Mathias Point and found it unoccupied. Over the next month, however, Confederate skirmishers took advantage of the wooded terrain, using it as cover to harass passing Union vessels with small-arms fire. Determined to keep the river open between Washington, D.C., and the Chesapeake Bay, Ward devised a plan to seize and fortify the point.

Mathias Point formed the southern portion of a sharp bend in the Potomac River. With its 270-degree vantage point, high ground, and dense tree cover, it was a natural stronghold for enemy forces to menace Union shipping. To deny the Confederates this advantage, Ward proposed a combined land and naval operation. On June 23, he requested 200 troops and equipment to help clear the woods. He had no way of knowing this mission would be his last.

Securing Mathias Point posed significant challenges. Brigadier General Theophilus H. Holmes (1804-1880), who had replaced Colonel Daniel Ruggles as commander of the Military Department of Fredericksburg, commanded approximately 3,000 infantry and cavalry. The local population, sympathetic to the Confederate cause, provided shelter, supplies, and intelligence to his forces.

Since colonial times, the Hooe family had lived at Barnsfield, their ancestral estate three miles south of Mathias Point, and operated Hooe's Ferry across the Potomac. By 1861, the property was in the hands of Dr. Abram B. Hooe II (1805-1867), a staunch secessionist. A cavalry unit known as Lee's Light Horse (Westmoreland Cavalry) aided him in ferrying supplies for the Confederate Army and had burned the New Jersey schooner *Christiana Keen* in mid-June.

On June 25, Acting Master William Budd, commanding the USS *Resolute*, took action to halt the ferry operation. He fired several shots from his bow gun to disperse any occupants at Barnsfield before taking a landing party ashore to burn the house and outbuildings. By day's end, the estate was reduced to smoldering ruins.

That same day, Commander Stephen C. Rowan approached Mathias Point with the eight-gun, steam-powered sloop-of-war USS *Pawnee* and the steamboat *James Guy*. Early in the morning, two boats ferried 40 sailors and marines, led by Lieutenant James C. Chaplin and U.S. Army engineers Captains Daniel P. Woodbury and William R. Palmer, to investigate whether the Confederates were constructing an artillery battery.

Horsemen, likely from Lee's Light Horse, appeared on shore, prompting the *Pawnee* to fire a few rounds to scatter them. The Union party suffered only one minor injury—a sailor wounded in the wrist—and captured two horses and a slave, who revealed the location of a Confederate camp belonging to Company D, "Farmer's Fork Grays," of the 40th Virginia Infantry Regiment. The *Pawnee* lobbed explosive shells into the camp, though no injuries were reported.

On June 27, Commander Ward arrived off Mathias Point with the USS *Thomas Freeborn* and USS *Reliance*. As the ships provided covering fire, a landing party of 34 men, led by Lieutenant Chaplin, went ashore carrying shovels, hatchets, sandbags, tar, and a lantern to fortify a small position and clear the dense woods. As they advanced inland, they encountered several hundred Confederate troops under Lieutenant Colonel Richard A. Claybrook. Ward ordered them to retreat to their boats while he returned to the *Thomas Freeborn* to resume bombardment.

Believing the cannon fire had cleared the enemy from the thick woods, the Union landing party returned to shore and resumed fortifying their position. However, Confederate reinforcements were already en route. Colonel John M. Brockenbrough dispatched Major Robert M. Mayo with one cavalry and three infantry companies. Approaching through the thick woods, Mayo left two companies in reserve and positioned the Sparta Grays and Lee's Light Horse (dismounted) within 250 yards of the Union forces and "immediately commenced a fire both upon the boats and the steamer."

Outnumbered, the Union sailors and marines scrambled back to their boats. Amid the retreat, a sailor from Louisiana, John Williams, was shot through the thigh while ensuring no man was left behind. His actions would later earn him the Medal of Honor. "Every man must die on his thwart sooner than leave a man behind," he declared, referring to the supports in the center of a rowboat.

Meanwhile, aboard the *Thomas Freeborn*, Commander Ward received a mortal wound to the stomach while sighting a gun. In the ensuing confusion, the ship failed to provide covering fire for the retreating landing party. Ward became the first U.S. Navy officer killed in action during the Civil War, and his death set back Union efforts to control the Potomac. "The gloom which prevailed this locality was oppressive," wrote a correspondent for the *New York Times*. Thomas Tingey Craven succeeded him as commander of the Potomac Flotilla.

The engagement at Mathias Point marked the last significant action in the sector until the fall, when the Confederates effectively sealed off the river, blockading Washington, D.C. The situation remained unchanged until the spring of 1862.

3.2.6 Action at Pike's Creek

Sunday, June 30, 1861

Alexandria, VA

The Action at Pike's Creek was fought on Sunday, June 30, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Lt. Mathew Robert McClennan and a Confederate scouting party commanded by Capt. Walter H. Weems in what is today part of Alexandria, Virginia. Its outcome was a Union tactical victory, but it had no broader impact on the strategic situation in that sector.

June 1861 passed in a tense stalemate in northeastern Virginia, as both sides steadily reinforced. On June 26, Union Brigadier General Irvin McDowell, commanding the Department of Northeastern Virginia, reported 20 regiments with a total strength of over 15,000 men, including 12 artillery pieces. Many of these regiments had enlisted for three months at the war's outset.

One such unit was the 4th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, primarily raised in Norristown in the southeastern part of the state. It was led by 30-year-old Colonel John F. Hartranft, who would later become the 17th Governor of Pennsylvania. The regiment was poorly equipped, lacking proper uniforms and tents until mid-June.

On June 18, the regiment was ordered to reinforce Alexandria, Virginia, and arrived at Camp Hale that evening. The camp was located about a quarter mile north of Fort Ellsworth on Shuter's Hill. An observer who encountered the regiment as it crossed the Potomac River noted, "They express themselves well pleased at the near prospects of a 'brush' with the traitors." Once settled, they resumed drilling and assumed picket duty in the area.

Meanwhile, on the opposing side, another unit was growing restless with the monotony of camp life: the Governor's Mounted Guard. This prewar cavalry company, first organized in 1859, was led by 44-year-old Captain John Grattan Cabell, a Richmond physician. Sixty-five men mustered into state service on May 8, 1861, and by June, they were stationed near Manassas Junction.

The Governor's Mounted Guard frequently operated alongside the Goochland Cavalry, conducting mounted patrols along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad west of Union-held Alexandria. On June 8, two troopers from these companies, Thomas Fleming and Samuel Green, encountered a four-man patrol from the 1st Michigan Volunteer Infantry near Burke's Station. When they attempted to pursue the infantrymen, the tables turned, and the troopers were captured.

On the morning of Friday, June 28, Major John B. Gordon of the 6th Alabama Infantry Regiment ordered Captain Walter H. Weems to lead a scouting expedition toward Alexandria. Weems' force included 48 infantry and 10 cavalrymen from the Governor's Mounted Guard and Goochland Cavalry, with Lieutenant Francis W. Chamberlayne commanding the cavalry scouts.

The first day, the group scouted the vicinity of Accotink Mill but found no enemy forces. They then moved north, stopping 3.5 miles from Alexandria. The next morning, they withdrew to Burke's Station, where they met local scouts who offered to safely guide them toward the Union picket posts south of Alexandria. Weems sent half his force back to camp with the cavalry mounts while the remaining 29 men advanced on foot, bivouacking in the woods within sight of Union fortifications on Shuter's Hill.

A few hours after midnight on June 30, Weems divided his force into small groups to probe the Union picket line. Sergeant Henry C. Hanes of the Governor's Mounted Guard led his

team to the intersection of Telegraph Road and Old Fairfax Road, where Lieutenant Matthew R. McClennan and two privates from the 4th Pennsylvania were standing guard.

Accounts of what happened next vary. One version states that Sergeant Hanes called on the Union soldiers to surrender. Another claims the pickets challenged Hanes' men, who responded defiantly, telling them to "Go to Hell." The Union guards then opened fire, killing Hanes. Hearing the commotion, a few men from Company E, 4th Pennsylvania rushed to assist. In the ensuing firefight, two Pennsylvania privates, Thomas Murray and Llewelyn Rhumer, were shot, with Murray suffering fatal wounds.

Weems later reported no wounded among his men. "Not more than twenty-five shots were fired by our side, and twelve or fifteen by the enemy," he wrote. His force withdrew, leaving behind Hanes' body and several weapons, and returned to camp that evening. Hanes' remains were later sent to Richmond for burial. While dramatic and deadly, the skirmish had no strategic impact.

In mid-July, the 4th Pennsylvania advanced with McDowell's army to Centreville. However, with their enlistment expiring on July 20, they were sent back to Alexandria to be mustered out. Colonel Hartranft remained behind as a staff officer and earned commendation for rallying fleeing troops during the Battle of Bull Run.

3.2.7 Skirmish at Farr's Crossroads

Wednesday, July 17, 1861

Fairfax County, VA

The Skirmish at Farr's Crossroads was fought on Wednesday, July 17, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Col. Thomas A. Davies and Confederate forces commanded by Col. Robert E. Rodes in Fairfax County, Virginia. Though a tactical Union victory, the delaying action allowed Confederate Brig. Gen. Richard S. Ewell to safely withdraw his brigade behind Bull Run, setting the stage for the first major battle of the American Civil War.

Confederate Brig. Gen. Pierre Gustave Toutant-Beauregard arrived at Manassas Junction on June 2 to take command of the Alexandria Line, later known as the Army of the Potomac. The 43-year-old Louisiana Creole had previously led the forces that compelled Fort Sumter's surrender in April. After evaluating his troops and the terrain, he proposed a grand offensive maneuver, but the Confederate War Department in Richmond dismissed it as impractical.

Forced into a defensive stance, Beauregard followed a strategy of withdrawing from forward positions to protect the junction of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad and the Manassas Gap Railroad along Bull Run. If necessary, Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of the Shenandoah could be swiftly transported to the area via the Manassas Gap Railroad. Beauregard's defensive plan relied on 21,000 infantry and cavalry to guard multiple crossing points along Bull Run, from the Warrenton Pike to Union Mills.

The First Brigade, commanded by Brig. Gen. Milledge L. Bonham, and the Second Brigade, led by Brig. Gen. Richard S. Ewell, occupied the most forward positions in the Confederate army. Bonham's brigade, composed primarily of South Carolina infantry and Virginia cavalry, was stationed around Fairfax Court House. Meanwhile, Ewell's smaller brigade, consisting of the 5th and 6th Alabama and 6th Louisiana infantry regiments, the 1st Company of Washington (Louisiana) Artillery, and a squadron of Virginia cavalry, held Fairfax Station, 3.5 miles to the south.

On June 29, Union Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell met in Washington, D.C., with President Abraham Lincoln and Lieutenant General Winfield Scott to plan a march on Richmond, Virginia, the newly established Confederate capital. McDowell doubted that his small, inexperienced army was ready, but Lincoln pressured him to act, as many of the 90-day volunteer enlistments would expire by the end of July. The initial plan called for 30,000 men to advance around Beauregard's right flank, beginning on July 8, but McDowell did not start moving until July 16. By then, he had approximately 34,000 infantry and cavalry present for duty.

Part of McDowell's carefully orchestrated plan called for three divisions to converge on Fairfax Court House from different directions, aiming to trap and destroy Bonham's brigade before it could retreat. Brig. Gen. Daniel Tyler's First Division advanced from Vienna in the north, Col. David Hunter's Second Division moved directly along the Little River Turnpike in the center, and Col. Dixon S. Miles' Fifth Division approached from Braddock Road in the south. However, as soon as McDowell's troops left their camps, the plan began to unravel. Inexperience and lack of discipline, combined with oppressive heat, limited cavalry support, and poor knowledge of the terrain, slowed the advance and disrupted coordination.

At Fairfax Court House, Bonham's hesitation nearly proved disastrous. He delayed withdrawing his wagons and baggage train until the morning of July 17, by which time Union forces were pressing his skirmishers from two sides. As a result, his troops were forced into a hasty and disorganized retreat, abandoning large amounts of camp equipment along the way. Around 9 a.m., Tyler's advance units appeared on Flint Hill, just north of Fairfax Court House, forming for battle. Col. Joseph B. Kershaw's regiment staged a delaying action, gradually falling back under light skirmishing. By 11 a.m., when Col. Ambrose Burnside's brigade from Hunter's division entered the town, they found it eerily deserted.

One and a half miles to the south, Col. Robert E. Rodes' 5th Alabama Infantry Regiment was encamped at Farr's Crossroads, at the intersection of Braddock Road and Ox Road, which led from Fairfax Station to Fairfax Court House. Their camp was directly in the path of Miles' 6,000-man division.

The previous evening, Capt. Charles M. Shelley's Company E had been posted in an advanced position along Braddock Road. As they returned to camp early on July 17, a private from Company H, which partially had replaced them on guard duty, arrived with a prisoner and warned of the enemy's approach. Acting swiftly, Rodes ordered Shelley to reverse course and prepare to confront the threat about a mile east of the 5th Alabama's camp. No Union report mentioned a missing or captured soldier.

Around 8:30 a.m., after spending hours clearing felled trees and other obstacles blocking their advance, skirmishers from Companies A and K of the 18th New York Infantry Regiment, led by Lt. Col. William H. Young and supported by two companies from the 16th New York Infantry Regiment, encountered an artillery epaulement across the road. There, they came upon the advanced guard of Company H, 5th Alabama. The confrontation quickly escalated, and the first shots of the engagement were fired.

"About three miles from Fairfax our skirmishers fell in with the first rebel outposts, and exchanged shots with them, when they hastily fell back without doing us any injury," reported Lieut. Col. Samuel Marsh of the 16th New York. "We continued our march for a mile farther as rapidly as the roads could be cleared, when we again came upon a strong force, upon which the outposts had fallen back."

As the guard from Company H joined Capt. Shelley's men, the skirmish intensified. Amid the exchange of fire, one soldier was wounded in the leg, another in the ear. Outnumbered, the Alabamians conducted a fighting retreat through the woods flanking the road, using the terrain to slow the Union advance. Their tenacious defense bought valuable time for Col.

Rodes, who had just received word from a courier that Bonham had abandoned Fairfax Court House. With the delay, Rodes was able to withdraw the remainder of his regiment and wagons safely.

As the 16th and 18th New York regiments deployed for battle, Lt. Edward W. Groot and three other wounded men were brought in from the skirmish line. But it was too late. By approximately 1:30 p.m., the New Yorkers arrived at the 5th Alabama's abandoned camp. Disorganized and exhausted from the day's slow advance, they halted their pursuit and encamped for the night, while Rodes' regiment slipped safely across Bull Run.

In contrast to Brig. Gen. Bonham, who faced widespread criticism for his disorganized retreat from Fairfax Court House, Col. Rodes earned high praise. Beauregard later commended him as "that excellent officer" who had prepared his men for a "resolute, protracted defense against heavy odds," while also noting that Rodes' subordinates "acted with intelligent gallantry." Despite this recognition, Rodes always believed that his command's efforts at Farr's Crossroads were overshadowed by the larger and more decisive Battle of Manassas that followed.

3.2.8 Battle of Blackburn's Ford

Thursday, July 18, 1861

Prince William County, VA

The Battle of Blackburn's Ford was fought on Thursday, July 18, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Brig. Gen. Daniel Tyler and Confederate forces commanded by Brig. Gen. James Longstreet in Prince William and Fairfax Counties, Virginia. The battle was a Confederate victory and resulted in 165 total casualties.

By mid-July 1861, Union and Confederate forces in northeastern Virginia remained locked in a stalemate, much as they had been since the initial invasion seven weeks earlier. Both sides maneuvered cautiously, reinforcing their ranks and searching for weaknesses while struggling to shape eager but inexperienced recruits into effective armies. Though skirmishes flared along the front, none proved decisive.

Forced into a defensive stance by Confederate high command, 43-year-old Brig. Gen. Pierre Gustave Toutant-Beauregard prepared for a potential advance by Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell's Union Army of Northeastern Virginia. His plan called for a strategic withdrawal to defend the vital junction of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad and the Manassas Gap Railroad along Bull Run. If needed, Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of the Shenandoah could be rapidly transported to the area via the Manassas Gap Railroad. Beauregard's strategy relied on 21,000 infantry and cavalry to guard multiple crossing points along Bull Run, from the Warrenton Pike to Union Mills.

On June 29, McDowell met in Washington, D.C., with President Abraham Lincoln and Lieutenant General Winfield Scott to plan a march on Richmond, Virginia, the newly established Confederate capital. McDowell doubted that his small, inexperienced army was ready, but Lincoln pressured him to act, as many of the 90-day volunteer enlistments would expire by the end of July. The initial plan called for 30,000 men to advance around Beauregard's right flank, beginning on July 8, but McDowell did not start moving until July 16. By then, he had approximately 34,000 infantry and cavalry present for duty.

As soon as McDowell's men left their camps, his meticulous plan began to unravel. The inexperience and lack of discipline among his troops, combined with a shortage of cavalry and

a poor understanding of the terrain beyond his immediate front, turned an 18-mile march into a two-day slog. Col. Orlando B. Willcox's brigade reached Fairfax Station at noon on July 17. The following morning, Col. Israel B. Richardson's brigade arrived in Centreville, only to find it eerily quiet and devoid of Confederates, with abandoned earthworks and scattered military accoutrements marking their former presence.

At Centreville, McDowell ordered Brig. Gen. Daniel Tyler's division to search for a crossing over Bull Run about three miles south at Blackburn or Mitchell's Fords. Tyler advanced along the road with two companies from Richardson's brigade and a squadron of cavalry. At Blackburn's Ford, he spotted only a few Confederate artillery pieces. However, Brig. Gen. James Longstreet's brigade, consisting of three Virginia regiments, was concealed in the woods on the opposite shore. Capt. Delaware Kemper's four 6-pounder guns from the Alexandria Artillery were positioned about half a mile west on the north side of Bull Run at Mitchell's Ford, supported by the 7th and 2nd South Carolina Regiments on the south side.

Despite orders to avoid engagement, Tyler directed two long-range rifled guns from Captain Romeyn B. Ayres' 3rd U.S. Artillery, Company E, to open fire. Kemper's battery, unable to match their range, withdrew across the creek. Tyler then shifted focus to Blackburn's Ford, where artillery bombardment damaged Wilmer McLean's house, kitchen, and barn about a mile south. He ordered Richardson's brigade forward, led by a mixed 160-man battalion under Capt. Robert Brethschneider.

Longstreet's Virginians displayed remarkable restraint for inexperienced troops, lulling the attackers into a false sense of security. Tyler, overconfident, believed he could force a crossing of Bull Run, seize Manassas Junction, and end the campaign in one stroke. Instead, his troops charged headlong into a well-prepared Confederate position. Around 1 p.m., the 12th New York Infantry, led by Col. Ezra L. Walrath, advanced but quickly took cover under a "murderous" volley. Both sides called for reinforcements. The remainder of Richardson's brigade, comprising the 1st Massachusetts and the 2nd and 3rd Michigan regiments, moved up to assist, while Longstreet received support from the 7th Louisiana and 7th and 24th Virginia.

The 12th New York broke and fled in the heat and confusion. Sensing an opportunity, Longstreet ordered the 17th and 1st Virginia regiments to pursue across the creek, but the inexperienced troops became disorganized on the opposite bank. Both sides suffered from friendly fire incidents, with Longstreet himself narrowly escaping shots from the 7th Virginia. Assessing the situation, Tyler ordered Richardson's brigade to withdraw. After several hours of fighting, 83 Union and 82 Confederate soldiers lay dead or wounded. The engagement concluded with an inconsequential artillery duel, serving only to add more names to the casualty lists.

The casualties were minor compared to the First Battle of Bull Run, which would take place nearby just days later, but the skirmish set the stage for what was to come. The Confederate victory boosted the morale of their inexperienced troops while discouraging their Union counterparts. Bruised by the setback at Blackburn's Ford, McDowell chose to shift west and flank the Confederate army at Stone Bridge over Bull Run, setting the stage for the war's first major battle.

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UPDATES

1.5	2/6/2026. Formatted all battle narratives into two columns. Revised and updated narrative for Battle of Hoke's Run. Added narratives for Action at Martinsburg and Skirmish at Bunker Hill and updated battle timeline to reflect changes. Updated narratives for Engagement at Gloucester Point, Sewell's Point, and Pig Point. Updated index and bibliography.
1.4	10/5/2025. Updated Action at Carter's Creek. Revised narrative for the Battle of Blackburn's Ford. Added entry for Skirmish at Farr's Crossroads. Added a version control page (Updates). Updated name "Action at Shuter's Hill" to Action at Pike's Creek. Added strategic overviews for all regions and sub-regions. Added list of sources. Updated index.
1.3	2/16/2025. Retired section titled "Engagement at Arlington Mills," added "Action at Cloud's Mill," and updated battle timeline to reflect changes. Updated narrative for Engagement at Aquia Creek, Fairfax Court House, Vienna, Mathias Point, Shuter's Hill, and Blackburn's Ford. Added date June 25, 1861 to Engagement at Mathias Point. Updated "Skirmish at Buckhannon" to "Action at Buckhannon." Revised entry for Action at Glover's Gap. Updated index.
1.2	11/15/2024. Completed narratives for the Engagement at Barboursville, Skirmish at Pocatalico, Battle of Scary Creek, Skirmish at New Creek, Action at Greenbrier River, and Skirmish at Middle Fork Bridge. Updated index.
1.1	10/8/2024. Revised entry for Battle of Big Bethel. Completed narratives for the Skirmish at Smith's Farm (formerly Curtis' Farm), Skirmish at Cedar Lane, and Skirmish at Harper's Ferry. Added Skirmish at New Market Bridge and Action at Carter's Creek. Updated and re-formatted index.
1.0	7/26/2024. Document created.