



BATTLELOG

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V. 1.7

SEPTEMBER 2026

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Contents

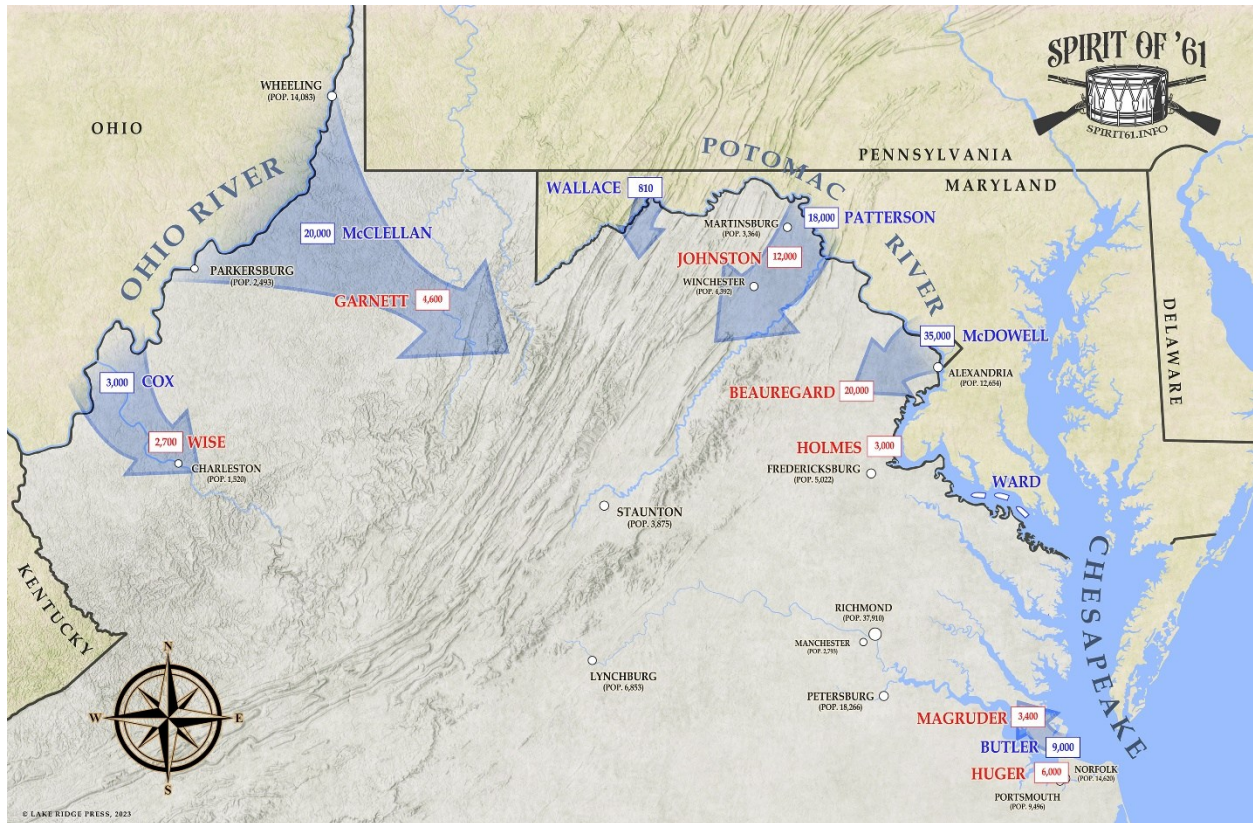
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Battle Timeline

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
Wednesday, June 12	Skirmish at Romney	Hampshire County, WV
Monday, June 17	Engagement at Vienna	Fairfax County, VA
Wednesday, June 19	Action at Bridge No. 21	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	Skirmishes at New Creek and Piedmont	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	Action 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 and Monday, July 15	Skirmishes at Dan's Run and Kelley's Island	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,

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

The April 12-13, 1861 Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter, followed by President Abraham Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers to "suppress the rebellion" in the Deep South, pushed the Virginia Convention in Richmond to adopt an ordinance of secession by a vote of 88 to 55, subject to ratification by popular referendum on May 23.

A large majority of the delegates who voted "no," including Congressman John S. Carlile, an early advocate of West Virginia statehood, came from the Trans-Allegheny region and northern Virginia. Upon returning to Clarksburg, Carlile immediately called a large Union meeting and delivered an impassioned speech urging the election of delegates from western Virginia to assemble and oppose secession.

Meanwhile, partisans on both sides began mobilizing for war. In Wheeling two infantry companies loyal to the United States took shape: the Rough and Ready Guards and the Iron Guards. Workers from the La Belle Iron Works figured prominently among the latter. As more volunteers arrived, they went into camp at the Western Virginia Agricultural Society fairgrounds on Wheeling Island to be organized into a regiment. The site soon became known as Camp Carlile.

On April 29, Maj. Gen. Robert E. Lee ordered Maj. Alonzo Loring, sheriff of Ohio County, to muster volunteer forces into state service in Wheeling and protect the terminus of the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad. Loring, however, proved either unable or unwilling to comply.

Despite his inaction, two secessionist companies were recruited in the city: the 80-man Shriver Grays under Capt. Daniel Shriver, and a much smaller company led by Capt. James W. Sweeney. Both slipped out of Wheeling in secret before the secession referendum. The Shriver

Grays eventually reached Harper's Ferry, while Sweeney's company made its way to the Kanawha Valley, where it disbanded a few months later.

Farther south, Lee ordered Maj. Francis M. Boykin, Jr. to muster volunteer forces into state service around Grafton, where the B&O and Northwestern Virginia railroads met, and to cooperate with Loring. Boykin, however, found volunteers hard to come by. "I find that organizations exist in most of the counties pledged to the support of what they term the Union," he wrote. "I see no other alternative than to send forces from the east for the present. This section is verging on a state of actual rebellion..."

On May 4, Robert E. Lee assigned Col. George A. Porterfield to organize and command the state's secessionist volunteers in northwestern Virginia. Porterfield did not arrive in Grafton until May 14. By then, pro-Union delegates from 27 western Virginia counties had already convened at Washington Hall in Wheeling to debate a response to the secession crisis. After three days of debate, the convention adjourned with a consensus to wait for the results of the May 23 secession referendum before taking further action.

Porterfield found no volunteers in Grafton. Instead, attorney and newspaper publisher George R. Latham was quietly organizing a unionist company known as the Grafton Guards. In nearby Fetterman, a small town north of Grafton along the Tygart Valley River, Porterfield found merchant and postmaster John A. Robinson raising the Letcher Guard, named for Virginia Governor John Letcher. Thirty-two men mustered into service for one year on May 13.

At Clarksburg, the local militia split into two rival camps: the Union Home Guard and the secessionist Harrison Rifles. When the Harrison Rifles mustered in the streets with muskets in hand, a crowd of Union sympathizers and Home Guard men quickly gathered. To avoid a confrontation, the Harrison Rifles agreed to lock their arms in the county jail overnight, retrieve them in the morning, and quietly leave town to join Porterfield.

On the night of the 18th, someone attempted to burn the covered bridge over the Tygart Valley River at Fetterman. Porterfield quartered his men in the bridge to guard it. On the 22nd, he ordered the Harrison Rifles, Letcher Guard, and Barbour Lighthorse Cavalry to march on Grafton and break up the Union organization there. As the secessionists approached Latham's newspaper office, townspeople began to gather, hurling insults. Musket barrels soon appeared in windows, doorways, and behind fences. Capt. John A. Robinson decided discretion was the better part of valor, and the expedition turned back.

That evening, 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 the Fetterman Bridge over the Tygart Valley River. Lt. Daniel Wilson and Thornsby 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 the pair 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. Lieutenant Wilson escaped. Daniel W. S. Knight was accused of firing the fatal shot and was later formally charged with Brown's murder, though he was acquitted.

A few days after the shooting, Latham and his Grafton Guards marched toward Fetterman, spoiling for a fight to retrieve Brown's body. Porterfield had already ordered it returned, however, and they met the escort bearing his remains on the road.

News of Brown's death inflamed an already volatile situation. "Are the people of northwestern Virginia to stand this sort of thing?" *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* editors fumed. "Are they to see their Union brethren shot down by marauding murderers, and forever remain powerless to avenge their blood? No! Never! Let the Union men prepare at once to meet the villainous traitors, and drive them from our midst." Brown's death became a rallying cry for unionists to take up arms.

The Grafton Guards soon departed for Camp Carlile in Wheeling. They were not formally sworn into federal service until May 25, but Thornsby Bailey Brown is widely regarded as

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.

On April 17, 1861, the Virginia Convention in Richmond adopted an ordinance of secession by a vote of 88 to 55, subject to ratification by popular referendum on May 23. Delegates from the trans-Allegheny counties who voted "no," led by Congressman John S. Carlile, an early advocate of West Virginia statehood, quickly organized in opposition.

When Virginia Governor John Letcher sent a letter to Andrew J. Sweeney, mayor of Wheeling in Virginia's northwestern panhandle, requesting that he seize federal buildings for the Commonwealth, Sweeney replied that he had already taken them "in the name of Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, whose property they are."

Undaunted, Maj. Gen. Robert E. Lee, commander of all Virginia forces, ordered Maj. Alonzo Loring and Maj. Francis M. Boykin, Jr. to muster volunteer companies into state service in Wheeling and Grafton, respectively, and to cooperate in securing the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad. Strong Union sentiment in the region prevented either man from carrying out the mission.

Lee then directed Col. George A. Porterfield to proceed to Grafton and organize the state (secessionist) volunteers reportedly assembling in northwestern Virginia. When Porterfield arrived in the region, however, he found only several hundred poorly armed and equipped recruits.

Meanwhile, on May 3, U.S. General Orders No. 14 created the Department of the Ohio, encompassing Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio under the command of Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan. Ohio Governor William Dennison urged swift action, pressing McClellan to "defend Ohio beyond, rather than on her border." McClellan, however, was reluctant to violate Virginia's sovereignty and risk influencing the upcoming secession referendum.

When President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to serve a 90-day term, Ohio and Pennsylvania quickly filled their quotas. Governor Letcher refused to comply, and as the government in Richmond moved toward secession, John S. Carlile and other unionists in northwestern Virginia began recruiting "loyal" regiments. Men from Ohio and Pennsylvania side-stepped their states' quotas by joining these units.

Captain Albert C. Hayes and the Washington Rifle Guards, organized in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, found themselves in that position. They arrived in Wheeling by steamboat on May 10 and mustered into three-year service eleven days later, becoming Company A of the Second Virginia Infantry (U.S.).

On May 22, pickets from Porterfield's command exchanged fire with members of a Union company known as the Grafton Guards at a bridge over the Tygart Valley River. Thornsby Bailey Brown of the Grafton Guards was shot and killed. By the time Virginians went to the polls the next day, the prospect of war seemed inevitable. Statewide, white male voters approved secession by a wide margin. In northwestern Virginia, however, the result was reversed.

In Wheeling, the First Virginia Infantry (U.S.) mustered into federal service on May 23. The next day, as Union troops crossed the Potomac River opposite Washington, DC and occupied Alexandria and Arlington Heights, the Union Home Guard seized control of Clarksburg, Congressman Carlile's hometown, patrolling the streets with pistols, shotguns, knives, and other improvised weapons.

On the 25th, after the Grafton Guards departed for Wheeling, Porterfield moved his entire force of several hundred infantry and cavalry into Grafton. Fearing an invasion by overwhelming numbers from Ohio, he ordered Col. William J. Willey to target bridges along the B&O Railroad. That evening Willey partially carried out the order with a small squad, destroying two bridges over Buffalo Creek between Farmington and Mannington.

In response, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan ordered a multi-pronged advance to secure and repair the railroads in northwestern Virginia and seize the key junction at Grafton. He directed the First Virginia Infantry (U.S.) and the 16th Ohio Infantry to approach from Wheeling along the B&O Railroad. At the same time, the 14th Ohio Infantry was to advance from Parkersburg on the Northwestern Virginia Railroad, with the 18th Ohio in support. The Washington Rifle Guards accompanied the First Virginia.

As the Union army advanced, Porterfield withdrew to the town of Philippi, a pro-secession stronghold sixteen miles south of Grafton along the Tygart Valley River. In Marion County, 65-year-old Capt. Stephen Roberts, sometimes misnamed Christian, organized an irregular band of secessionists who cut telegraph lines

and threatened further disruption of the railroad behind the Union line of advance.

Roberts' small company caused enough mischief that Col. Benjamin F. Kelley, commanding the First Virginia (U.S.) and the federal expedition, detailed the Washington Rifle Guards to guard Glover's Gap Tunnel, seven and a half miles north of Mannington.

Before daybreak on May 28, the Guards reached Glover's Gap, captured a handful of insurgents, and sent 2nd Lt. Oliver R. West with five men to break up Roberts' band. West soon stumbled upon Stephen Roberts and his men in camp. Roberts swore he would not be captured "by all the Federal troops in western Virginia" and raised his rifle, but it misfired. West's men returned fire, killing Roberts, and the rest of his company scattered into the hills.

Some sources claim Stephen Roberts was the first Confederate officer killed during the Civil War. At a time when volunteer officers were often elected by their men, he may well have regarded himself as captain of a company. Yet the surviving primary sources describe Roberts simply as the leader of a local band of Marion County secessionists that disbanded after his death. Porterfield may have been in contact with them, but they were never formally sworn into service, making it likely that Roberts was a civilian when he was killed.

Regardless, Union engineers and railroad workers quickly repaired the telegraph lines and the railroad. On Thursday, May 30, five days after crossing the Ohio River, the First Virginia (U.S.) and the 16th Ohio entered Grafton without opposition.

2.1.3 Action at Philippi

Monday, June 3, 1861

Barbour County, WV

The Action at 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, Barbour County, West

Virginia during the American Civil War. The engagement, which was among the first land actions of the Civil War, was a Union victory that encouraged Western Virginians to form their

own pro-Union government and later, their own state.

Events in northwestern Virginia in April and May 1861 had not gone well for the secession government in Richmond. As overall commander of Virginia's provisional army, Maj. Gen. Robert E. Lee attempted to call out the militia to seize key points along the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad at Wheeling and Grafton. Instead, the state's antebellum militia fractured along ideological lines, with unionists and secessionists forming rival outfits. The secessionists were badly outnumbered.

Unionists, led by Congressman John S. Carlisle, turned Wheeling Island into a recruiting and training ground. Volunteers from Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania gathered there to form companies and regiments, armed and supplied by the federal government. Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, commanding the Department of the Ohio, understood that fostering unionist sentiment in northwestern Virginia would be critical to any future operation in the region.

When Col. George A. Porterfield arrived at Grafton, where the B&O met the Northwestern Virginia Railroad, to take command of the state's secessionist volunteers, he found only a few hundred poorly armed recruits scattered through the surrounding communities. He shifted his headquarters to nearby Fetterman, where promised arms and ammunition never came. Robert E. Lee eventually agreed to send a small number of reinforcements from the Shenandoah Valley and Potomac Highlands. Maj. Michael G. Harman, quartermaster at Staunton, armed and equipped these companies and dispatched Rudolph Turk, sheriff of Augusta County, to lead them over the mountains to Beverly in Randolph County.

Statewide, voters overwhelmingly approved the secession ordinance on May 23, but in northwestern Virginia the result was the opposite. Monongalia and Preston counties held mass Union meetings, and their militia pledged to fight only for the Union. The Union Home Guard

seized control of Clarksburg, Congressman Carlisle's hometown. In Wheeling, the First Virginia Infantry Regiment (U.S.), under Col. Benjamin F. Kelley, mustered into federal service for a 90-day term.

On the 25th, after the local Union volunteers left for Wheeling, Porterfield moved his entire force of several hundred infantry and cavalry into Grafton. Fearing an invasion by overwhelming numbers from Ohio, he ordered Col. William J. Willey to target bridges along the B&O Railroad. That evening, Willey partially carried out the order with a small squad, destroying two bridges over Buffalo Creek between Farmington and Mannington. Porterfield also dispatched Monongalia County attorney Jonathan McGee Heck to Richmond to explain the dire situation they faced.

In response to the bridge burnings, McClellan ordered a multi-pronged advance to secure and repair the railroads in the region and seize the key junction at Grafton. He directed the First Virginia Infantry (U.S.) and the 16th Ohio Infantry to move out from Wheeling along the B&O, while the 14th Ohio advanced from Parkersburg on the Northwestern Virginia Railroad, with the 18th Ohio in support.

"Sever the connection that binds you to traitors," McClellan urged. "Proclaim to the world that the faith and loyalty so long boasted by the Old Dominion are still preserved in Western Virginia, and that you remain true to the Stars and Stripes."

The next day, the First Virginia (U.S.) and 16th Ohio reached Mannington, where they found the burned bridges along the B&O and began repairs. Porterfield sent another expedition to destroy bridges between Clarksburg and Parkersburg on the Northwestern Virginia Railroad. The spans at Simpson's Creek, Goose Creek, and the North Fork of the Hughes River were burned. This delayed Col. James B. Steedman and the 14th Ohio from reaching Clarksburg until the 30th.

Realizing he was trapped, Porterfield evacuated Grafton on May 28 and moved his headquarters 15.5 miles south to Philippi, a town in Barbour County with strong secessionist sentiment. En route, he was joined by the Upshur Grays, an infantry company possessing tents but no guns or ammunition.

Although reinforcements grew Porterfield's force to a nominal strength of 780 infantry and 220 cavalry, the raw recruits fostered a carnival-like atmosphere where bravado was abundant and discipline was scarce. This overconfidence was embodied by "Count" Daniel A. Stofer, who, known for his bellicose speeches, boasted, "I can chase Mr. Lincoln's invaders off the soil of Virginia with the limb of a peach tree."

The First Virginia (U.S.) and 16th Ohio regiments rolled into Grafton by train on May 30. In under a week, McClellan's expeditionary force had secured roughly 200 miles of track, meeting almost no opposition. When Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Morris, quartermaster general of the Indiana state militia, arrived in Grafton to assume command, he discovered that Col. Benjamin Kelley had already planned an advance on Philippi.

The plan called for two columns to converge on Philippi from different directions. The first, led by Col. Ebenezer Dumont, consisted of approximately 1,600 infantrymen. It included eight companies of the 7th Indiana Infantry, portions of the 14th Ohio and 6th Indiana regiments, and two cannons from the 1st Ohio Light Artillery. They were to meet at Webster and proceed directly south to Philippi. Colonel Frederick W. Lander, a volunteer aide to McClellan, accompanied the artillery.

A second column of approximately 1,800 men, commanded by Col. Kelley, would first feint a movement east along the B&O Railroad toward Harper's Ferry. Then, at the town of Thornton, they would turn south to envelop Philippi from behind, cutting off the Confederate line of retreat. This column was composed of portions of the First Virginia (U.S.), 9th Indiana, and 16th Ohio infantry regiments.

In Philippi, Colonel Porterfield's command consisted of ten infantry and four cavalry companies, with his headquarters at the Capito Hotel. He had already received reports of a planned federal advance when two women from Fairmont, Abbie Kerr and Mollie McLeod, frantically rode into town reporting they had seen hundreds of soldiers boarding trains. Porterfield's captains held a council of war and unanimously agreed to retreat. Wagons were readied for departure, and cavalry patrols and pickets were dispatched to watch the roads.

A driving rainstorm suddenly upended everyone's plans. Porterfield, convinced no one would advance in such a downpour, let his men rest, and the pickets scattered for shelter. Someone later accused Captain Stofer, the officer of the watch, of being drunk.

The weather turned the Federals' march into a dark, muddy ordeal. The civilian scout leading Kelley's column took a wrong road, bringing them into Philippi from the east rather than the south and leaving a corridor open for the secessionists to escape. Meanwhile, the rain delayed Dumont's column until nearly sunrise, more than an hour after the time Morris had set for their arrival.

As the artillery unlimbered on Talbott's Hill, Matilda Humphreys, whose eldest son served with the Barbour Grays, placed her youngest on a horse and sent him to warn the men encamped below. The Federals seized the boy, and in the struggle Matilda fired her pistol. Colonel Lander, with the artillery, took the shot as the signal to open fire. The boom of the cannon alerted the men below to the danger.

Chaos followed. Porterfield's men abandoned what little they had and fled, some firing parting shots as they went. Porterfield tried in vain to rally them. As Dumont's column descended the hill toward the covered bridge over the Tygart Valley River, Col. Kelley finally appeared on the road into town. Realizing something had gone wrong, he pushed forward with

Companies B and C of his regiment against the retreating enemy.

Seeing Kelley, Colonel Lander spurred his horse and rode straight down the hill, arriving just as Kelley's detachment exchanged fire with Porterfield's rear guard. Quartermaster William Sims fired a pistol and struck Kelley in the chest. Lander quickly captured Sims, and both he and Kelley had to restrain their men from taking revenge. The wound was serious, but Kelley would recover. Only a handful of others were wounded that morning on either side. Col. William Willey, sick in bed, was captured.

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.

Following their rout at Philippi on June 3, Virginia's secessionist volunteers retreated to Huttonsville, astride the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike in Randolph County. On June 6 in Richmond, Virginia Governor John Letcher signed General Orders No. 25, transferring control of Virginia's Provisional Army and Navy to the Confederate government. Newly arrived Confederate President Jefferson Davis promoted Robert E. Lee's adjutant, Robert Selden Garnett, to brigadier general and assigned him command of the army in the northwest.

Forty-one-year-old Robert S. Garnett was a former U.S. Army officer and assistant instructor of infantry tactics at West Point who withdrew into his military career after the deaths of his wife and daughter. He caught up with Col. George Porterfield and the remnants of his small army in Huttonsville on June 14, where he wrote to Lee: "I found there twenty-three companies of infantry... in a most miserable condition as to

Despite failing to capture Porterfield's entire command, the federal attack at Philippi was a success. It dealt a blow to secessionist morale in the northwest from which they never fully recovered. Though a military court of inquiry later cleared Porterfield, and his outnumbered, untrained, poorly armed force was unlikely to have offered much resistance, the men under him blamed him for the disaster. He was reassigned to an administrative post, while his demoralized volunteers drifted 44 miles south to Huttonsville, unsure of what would come next.

arms, clothing, equipment, instruction, and discipline."

Garnett knew his prospects for repelling Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's invasion were slim, but he recognized the importance of blocking the two main turnpikes that crossed the Alleghenies into the Shenandoah Valley. He wasted no time organizing the force he had on hand. During the Philippi disaster, Lt. Col. Jonathan M. Heck was in Staunton gathering reinforcements and supplies. When Heck returned to the northwest, Garnett placed him in command of the 25th Virginia Infantry Regiment. He also formed the 31st Virginia Infantry under Col. William Lowther Jackson. More volunteers soon arrived.

Meanwhile, unionists in the region were busy organizing their own state government under the protection of the Union army. On June 11, the Second Wheeling Convention opened in Virginia's northwestern panhandle with 100 delegates from 34 counties, who met to form a Restored Government of Virginia. Unionists argued that Governor John Letcher and other state officials had forfeited their offices by embracing secession and that, consequently, Virginia had no legitimate government.

On June 20, the delegates unanimously elected Francis Harrison Pierpont, a Marion County attorney for the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad, as their governor. An abolitionist and staunch Unionist, Pierpont's new government was quickly recognized by President Abraham Lincoln. However, not everyone in northwestern Virginia was on board. Pockets of resistance remained, and regiments from Ohio and Indiana were strung out over one hundred square miles, guarding key points along the railroads.

Colonel Thomas Morton's 20th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment (3 Months) was headquartered at Fairmont, along the Tygart Valley River and B&O Railroad in Marion County. The regiment was tasked with protecting the strategically important railway connecting Washington, DC, with the Midwestern states. In late May, secessionists had burned two bridges between Fairmont and Mannington, and Union forces had broken up a partisan band at Glover's Gap. The threat of further sabotage was a continuing concern.

Company I of the 20th Ohio was stationed in Mannington, a town approximately 13 miles west of Fairmont. Its commander, Capt. David F. Cable, had received several reports from "persons of the highest respectability" that a rebel group was camped at Coon's Creek (or Coon Run). According to these reports, the group assembled for drill at the nearby residence of Peter Baker Righter, a well-known secessionist.

Peter B. Righter and his son, John, lived on either side of Coon Run near the present-day community of Francis in Marion County. Peter was a wealthy farmer, and John would later become a Confederate captain in the Virginia State Rangers and 19th Virginia Cavalry. In the early summer of 1861, however, his troop was just an ill-trained local militia.

On June 20, Capt. Cable took a detachment of 27 men to Shinnston, 13.5 miles south of Fairmont along the West Fork River in Harrison County, where they found local guides to lead them to Righter's farm. Cable left ten men in

Shinnston to secure the town, apparently rejecting assistance from the local Home Guard. Around 3:00 a.m. on Friday, June 21, Capt. Cable, his remaining 17 men, and a few guides arrived at Righter's house.

Scouting ahead, one of Captain Cable's guides came face-to-face with a sentry. Both men quickly retreated to alert their respective sides. Captain Cable then arrayed his men in a semicircle around the house and knocked on the door. A horn blew, and gunfire immediately erupted from the house and a nearby orchard. Several men were wounded, including a local guide named John Nay. Cable ordered his men to withdraw to a nearby house and sent for reinforcements.

In a letter to the *Wheeling Intelligencer*, Capt. Cable later reported his own losses as four men severely wounded. He claimed his men killed four of the enemy, wounded six, and took seven prisoners. One of the prisoners, Banks Corbett (or Corbin), was shot and killed while trying to escape. When the Union soldiers returned to Righter's house at daylight, they found it abandoned. After confiscating anything of military value, they set the house on fire.

"It is a terrible retribution on a man who lived like a prince, and could have continued to do so, but for an inborn devilry 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.

Newspaper reports about the action at Righter's house, like those of many early skirmishes, were filled with exaggeration and inaccuracy. Yet, beneath the hearsay, the event was a clear and tragic example of the civil conflict unfolding in northwestern Virginia, where the strategic fight for vital lines of communication devolved into a bitter struggle between neighbors.

2.1.6 Action at Buckhannon

Thurs., June 27, 1861

Upshur County, WV

The Action 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. Though no one was hurt, the short fight and the rumors it sparked pushed George B. McClellan to launch his final campaign against Robert S. Garnett.

In mid-June 1861, Upshur County became the center of military activity in northwestern Virginia. Its county seat, Buckhannon, sat astride the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike and served as a hub for other improved roads leading to Weston and Clarksburg. Situated between the Union and Confederate armies, control of this crossroads was key to securing freedom of movement throughout the region.

Like many counties in northwest Virginia, Upshur was a unionist stronghold where voters opposed secession by a 7-to-3 supermajority. While most of its antebellum militia officers actively undermined mobilization orders from Richmond, there were notable exceptions, including the mayor of Buckhannon, Col. L. L. D. Loudin. He supported the county's only secessionist company, the Upshur Grays.

Local unionists like Sylvester Bunyan (S.B.) Phillips recruited volunteer companies for the Union army, and others, including Watson Westfall, Henry F. Westfall, and Daniel D. T. Farnsworth, organized a network of pro-Union Home Guard units. After the victory at Philippi, unionist confidence soared, causing prominent local secessionists to flee.

On June 6, urged on by Congressman John S. Carlile, who was helping to establish a loyal state government in Wheeling, Department of the Ohio commander Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan telegraphed his superiors: "Recent

developments show that it is absolutely necessary to muster in Virginia troops between Gratton and Parkersburg for service in that State." Permission came swiftly, and recruits began assembling in Clarksburg, Carlile's hometown.

Provisional Confederate President Jefferson Davis arrived in Richmond at the end of May, and on June 8, Virginia Governor John Letcher formally handed over control of the state's secessionist volunteers. Davis retained Robert E. Lee as a military advisor. To command forces in northwest Virginia, he selected Lee's adjutant, Robert Selden Garnett.

After arriving at Huttonsville, Garnett began drilling and organizing his small army. He developed a strategy to block the two main turnpikes crossing the Alleghenies into the Shenandoah Valley, establishing his headquarters at Laurel Hill in Barbour County on the Beverly-Fairmont Turnpike. To fortify Rich Mountain overlooking the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike, he placed Lt. Col. Jonathan M. Heck in command of the 25th Virginia Infantry Regiment.

As the Confederates dug in at Laurel Hill and Rich Mountain, Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Morris, commanding the Union expedition in McClellan's absence, hesitated. Although his forces had a significant numerical advantage, they were spread thin protecting key railroad points and, critically, lacked the wagons needed for a sustained offensive. However, after receiving (false) intelligence that rebels were active near Buckhannon, Morris was prompted to act, ordering Col. James B. Steedman to lead a column to the town. It consisted of Steedman's 14th Ohio Infantry Regiment, three companies from the 15th Ohio, and a section of artillery.

Leaving before dawn, the column began its twenty-mile trek from Philippi to Buckhannon over rough, narrow roads meandering through the hills. The nervous 90-day volunteers

expected an attack at any moment, but the “seceshers” were nowhere to be seen. After marching all day, the sight of Buckhannon lifted the column’s spirits, and they were greeted with enthusiastic cheers from Upshur County’s unionists.

Steedman’s stay in Buckhannon was cut short when a courier from Philippi raced into camp the following afternoon. Morris heard a rumor that former Virginia governor Henry A. Wise was preparing to attack Philippi. The Union army worried more about Wise and his “legion” in the Kanawha Valley than they did about Garnett’s troops encamped mere miles away. Steedman’s men left their provisions, including nine barrels of salt pork, with the Home Guard and hastily returned to Philippi.

Dissatisfied with his army’s progress, McClellan crossed the Ohio River into Virginia in late June. The reinforcements he brought increased Union forces in northwest Virginia to around twenty thousand men—more than enough to dislodge Garnett from his mountain fortresses. The “Young Napoleon” arrived at Grafton on June 23 and remained for nearly a week to resolve supply and logistical issues before advancing.

On June 25, as S. B. Phillips’ company headed to Clarksburg to be mustered into the Union army, Lt. Col. Jonathan M. Heck on Rich Mountain received orders to lead a foraging expedition to Buckhannon. The next morning, Heck’s column, with a portion of his regiment and all their wagons, began its slow descent from the mountain along the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike. It was likely no coincidence that the Confederates waited until Phillips’ company was well on its way to Clarksburg before making their move.

Scouting ahead was Capt. Francis F. Sterrett’s Churchville Cavalry, followed by three infantry companies and a twenty-wagon train overseen by Col. Rudolph Turk. After marching approximately eighteen miles, passing through the covered bridge over the Middle Fork River,

the column stopped for the evening near Sand Run, five miles outside of Buckhannon. There, Sterrett’s troopers split into small patrols to scout the surrounding roads.

The fight began at daybreak on June 27. The town of Buckhannon was situated south of an elongated oxbow of the Buckhannon River, which was bisected by a millrace that powered Ridgeway’s gristmill. As the mill ground meal, about a dozen of Sterrett’s troopers stood guard. Suddenly, shots rang out from the thick underbrush of a nearby stand of trees.

The Home Guard likely fired flintlock muskets and squirrel guns with an effective range of under one hundred yards, while Sterrett’s men, armed with pistols and shotguns, had an even shorter range. “There was no damage done by either party, the enemy being ambushed in a thick wood in an unapproachable position,” Heck later reported. The Home Guard remained just long enough to demonstrate its resolve, then fled.

As Heck’s infantry and wagons hurried toward Buckhannon, terror gripped Upshur County’s unionists. Whole families took to the hills, and when Heck’s men entered Buckhannon, they found it a ghost town. A search uncovered the provisions left by the 14th Ohio more than a week earlier. Soon, curious civilians returned and opened their stores, from whom Heck’s men “purchased from the citizens a sufficient quantity of corn, bacon, oats, quartermaster and ordnance stores, (a small quantity of powder and lead,) to load all the wagons we had with us.”

The Confederates captured two Home Guard members, Arthur G. Kiddy and James L. Jennings, as they fled up the macadamized Clarksburg Turnpike. According to Kiddy, Colonel Turk arrested the pair and brought them to Buckhannon. After being searched, the prisoners were then taken to jail in Beverly, where they and others were forced to clean the streets with cast-iron balls chained to their legs. Contrary to some

reports, they were not forced to dig trenches at Camp Garnett on Rich Mountain.

Early that afternoon, Heck's teamsters packed their wagons, and the column, loaded with provisions, two prisoners, and a reclaimed horse, turned back toward Rich Mountain. After camping along the east bank of the Middle Fork River, they returned to Camp Garnett on the morning of June 28. A Home Guard company led by a Capt. Boyles followed, sniping at the column. Sterrett's troopers turned them back at the Middle Fork River, suffering only one casualty in the process—a horse shot in the hip.

Unionists, abetted by Congressman John S. Carlile, greatly exaggerated the encounter, falsely reporting a major Union victory to bolster support for the new loyal state government in Wheeling. However, when word reached

McClellan that Confederates had occupied Buckhannon, he was spurred to action. He immediately ordered his army to advance into Upshur County, beginning his campaign against Robert Garnett in earnest.

2.1.5 Action at Bowman's Place

Sat., June 29, 1861

Tucker County, WV

The Action at Bowman's Place (aka Hannahsville or 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. The brief but deadly skirmish, tied to control of the Cheat River corridor, revealed how quickly political conflict in northwestern Virginia could turn violent.

More than a month had passed since Virginia's secession referendum and Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's invasion of the northwest. Protected by McClellan's Army of Occupation, the region's unionists gathered in Wheeling, a city on the Ohio River in Virginia's panhandle, to form a new state government that would remain loyal to the United States.

Between June 11 and 25, 1861, one hundred delegates from 34 counties convened to establish the Reorganized or "Restored" Government

of Virginia. They argued that the existing government in Richmond had abdicated its authority by voting to secede.

On June 20, the delegates unanimously elected Francis H. Pierpont as governor. A staunch unionist, abolitionist, and attorney for the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad, Pierpont's new government was quickly granted recognition by President Abraham Lincoln.

With volunteer regiments arriving weekly, McClellan was ready to press his advantage. He arrived in Grafton on June 23, to take personal command of the coming offensive. His target was the small but growing Confederate force under Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett, which was blocking the vital east-west passages of the Allegheny Mountains and threatening the B&O Railroad.

Garnett had arrived nine days earlier to help restore confidence in Confederate forces in the region, whose morale had been badly shaken

after a series of setbacks. He proceeded to fortify positions in Barbour and Randolph counties to guard the two main mountain roads leading into the Shenandoah Valley.

Garnett established his headquarters at Laurel Hill on the Beverly-Fairmont Turnpike and sent Lt. Col. Jonathan M. Heck and the 25th Virginia Infantry Regiment to fortify Rich Mountain overlooking the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike.

Toward the end of June, counties under Union control held elections for the Restored Government's new House of Delegates. In Randolph and Tucker counties, Dr. Solomon Parsons, a delegate to the Wheeling Convention, ran unopposed.

Detached companies of the 15th and 16th Ohio Infantry, along with Capt. James F. Donnelly's Cameron Volunteers, 1st Virginia (U.S.), were stationed around Rowlesburg to guard the B&O Railroad and the Tray Run Viaduct over the Cheat River.

Earlier that month, Capt. Hiram Miller of Company H, 15th Ohio, received word that secessionists had raised a flag over the Tucker County Courthouse in St. George, eighteen miles south of Rowlesburg and twenty-three miles north of Garnett's camp at Laurel Hill. He set out the night of June 9 with forty men and reached St. George early the next morning. Finding no resistance, they seized a flag at the courthouse and another from a private home, then returned to Rowlesburg in triumph, one adorned with a rattlesnake and the other with a wildcat skin.

Now his unit returned to ensure the election proceeded smoothly.

The 2nd Rockbridge Dragoons, led by Capt. John R. McNutt and Lt. Robert McChesney, were camped with Garnett at Laurel Hill and regularly rode out on patrol. On the night of Friday, June 28, McChesney and nine picked men set out northeast toward St. George along the Cheat River on a scouting mission, intent on disrupting what they regarded as an illegitimate election.

The next morning, McChesney and his men, joined by a handful of local secessionist militia, rode into St. George and found the vote had already taken place. They continued north along a mountain road following the Cheat River toward the home of Adam H. Bowman, an attorney, which was being used as a polling place near the small hamlet of Hannahsville.

Captain Miller received word of their approach and prepared an ambush with his own company, along with men from Company D, 16th Ohio, and the Cameron Volunteers, for a total of roughly 150. Concealed on either side of the road, they allowed McChesney and his small troop to advance. Some may have been dressed in civilian clothes to avoid arousing suspicion.

Accounts differ on how the Confederate cavalry became aware of the trap. One suggests they "got a hint," while another claims a detachment of Union soldiers inadvertently exposed themselves. McChesney, or someone in his party, spotted the soldiers and turned to escape. Shots rang out. McChesney was mortally wounded, and three of his men were wounded but escaped. It was said that Capt. Miller shot the young Confederate officer.

One man from the 15th Ohio, Pvt. Nathan O. Smith, a schoolteacher from Mansfield, was killed, and another wounded. Smith was the first combat death in his regiment, as McChesney was in his.

Brevet Brig. Gen. Charles W. Hill, writing from his headquarters in Grafton, where he oversaw defense of the railroad east to the Maryland border, reported to McClellan: "A light skirmish yesterday after the election in Tucker Co between Col Irvin's men & a Company 60 sixty cavalry from Rockbridge a lieut of the cavalry was killed & several of his men believed to be wounded & several of his horses taken. One man of the sixteenth 16th killed & another wounded. Rebels dispersed."

Colonel James Irvine of the 16th Ohio came into possession of McChesney's personal effects and returned them 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."

Though soon eclipsed by larger, bloodier battles, the two men who fell at Bowman's Place were mourned at home as martyrs for their respective causes. The skirmish had no bearing on the outcome of McClellan's larger campaign. In early July, the new House of Delegates of the Restored Government sent Waitman T. Willey and John S. Carlile to the U.S. Senate. With the

political groundwork laid, all that remained was to defeat Garnett's small army at Laurel Hill and Rich Mountain, a task McClellan pursued with a vigor seldom displayed in his later campaigns.

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.

On arriving to command the Confederate forces in northwestern Virginia, Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett spent three weeks preparing his small army for an inevitable confrontation with Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's 20,000

volunteers. McClellan had already seized over 2,000 square miles of territory, securing the vital Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad and sheltering the Virginia unionists who were setting up a separate state government in Wheeling.

Garnett established his headquarters and main camp on the James Musto farm, in a triangular saddle behind two hills at the foot of Laurel Mountain astride the Beverly-Fairmont Turnpike. As a former major in the Regular Army, Garnett understood the importance of blocking the two main routes through the Alleghenies to the Shenandoah Valley. Accordingly, he sent Lt. Col. Jonathan M. Heck with the 25th Virginia Infantry to fortify Rich Mountain, which overlooked the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike.

Garnett's command, which already included the 31st Virginia Infantry and Hansbrough's Battalion, was bolstered by the arrival of the 20th, 23rd, and 37th Virginia Infantry regiments, the 1st Georgia Infantry (Ramsey's), six cavalry companies, and three artillery batteries (one without guns). From these forces, he dispatched Hansbrough's Battalion and the Greenbrier Cavalry to guard his rear at Leedsville and sent the 20th Virginia, the Lee Battery, and the Churchville Cavalry to reinforce Heck on Rich Mountain.

Despite supply shortages and primitive conditions, morale improved under Garnett's leadership. Nevertheless, the lack of adequate shelter, combined with unusually rainy weather and cold evenings, led to a measles outbreak. The spreading sickness thinned the ranks and killed several men.

On July 6, misjudging McClellan's intentions, Garnett wrote to Robert E. Lee, stating his belief that the Union general had seized "as much of northwestern country as he probably wants." A few days later, Lee skeptically replied that McClellan would likely try to dislodge him and, if possible, advance on Staunton. Lee's assessment proved correct, but by then it was too late.

On the same day Garnett wrote to Lee expressing his optimism, McClellan ordered an

advance. He directed Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Morris in Philippi to create a diversion while he moved against Rich Mountain with a separate force. "Make extended reconnaissances," McClellan instructed Morris, "calculated to give the impression that the main attack is to be made by you, and use all efforts to retain them in their present position."

Garnett's defense relied on mutually supporting positions, designed so that if one was threatened, the other could come to its aid. McClellan's plan, however, threatened both simultaneously, which would leave Garnett's forces isolated and vulnerable. Morris' role was to pin Garnett in place while McClellan made the main attack across Rich Mountain to Beverly, cutting off the Confederates' retreat.

To carry out his part of the plan, Morris took the 6th, 7th, and 9th Indiana Infantry; the 6th and 14th Ohio; detachments from the 15th and 16th Ohio and the 1st Virginia (U.S.); the Grafton Guards; and the 1st Ohio Light Artillery with eight guns (two held in reserve), for a total of more than 5,700 men. Opposing them were just over 3,200 Confederates in a formidable defensive position, though their camp had been ravaged by illness.

Morris' force left Philippi before sunrise on Sunday, July 7, and reached its assigned position about 2.5 miles northwest of Garnett's camp after a brief clash with Confederate pickets. He established his headquarters at the home of William Elliott, a known secessionist whose son served in the 31st Virginia, on a ridge called Elliott's Hill at the junction of the Beverly-Fairmont Turnpike and the Morgantown Road.

The 9th Indiana, led by its energetic colonel, Robert H. Milroy, raced up the turnpike toward Belington (or Bealington), "a miserable little village" of five or six houses and a store. They climbed a forested, cone-shaped hill on the southwest side of the road beside the town. At the same time, Ramsey's Georgia regiment charged up the slope. After a sharp clash, the Hoosiers fell back, leaving behind the body of

Pvt. William T. Girard of Company G. The Georgians lost a man as well when his musket discharged accidentally.

From that point on, the Federals called the hill "Girard Hill."

For five days, the two sides skirmished across the hills and the small hamlet of Belington between their lines, the fighting broken at intervals by passing rainstorms. Garnett chose an aggressive defense, pushing his men forward to contest the heights rather than remain behind their fortifications. In doing so, he played into Morris' hands. Morris, for his part, took a *laissez-faire* approach, giving his subordinates wide latitude so long as they avoided a general assault. Both sides seemed content to feel each other out, rarely committing more than one or two regiments at a time.

Accounts of the fight vary. 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..."

Ambrose Bierce, a Union soldier in the 9th Indiana Infantry and later an accomplished author, recalled: "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."

On the evening of July 11, a courier brought word that McClellan had outmaneuvered and overwhelmed the garrison at Rich Mountain, leaving Garnett in danger of being cut off and surrounded. He made preparations to withdraw while feigning an intention to continue the fight. After nightfall, in a driving rainstorm, Garnett's small army followed the turnpike as it zigzagged across Laurel Mountain.

The next morning, Union pickets cautiously probed toward the Confederate works and sent back word that the enemy was gone. Capt. Henry W. Benham, a civil engineer and volunteer aide, rode forward with a small party to examine the abandoned fortifications. Benham and the 9th Indiana soon set off in pursuit, but on the far side of Laurel Mountain, Morris ordered them to halt. Indecision and delay cost valuable time, and the chase did not begin in earnest until the following day.

Casualty estimates from the five days of fighting around Belington are difficult to determine, but the number of killed, wounded, and captured may have reached two dozen on either side. Morris also took several prisoners, men too sick to move who had been left behind with a note asking that they be cared for. The fighting proved indecisive, but it served McClellan's purpose of fixing Garnett in place while he cleared the way over Rich Mountain. The decisive blow would come a few days later at a ford on Shavers Fork of the Cheat River.

2.1.9 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 Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan and Brig. Gen. William Rosecrans and

Confederate forces commanded by Lt. Col. John Pegram in Randolph County, West Virginia during the American Civil War. The resulting Union victory not only shattered Confederate control of the region but propelled McClellan into national prominence at a critical moment in the war.

At the beginning of July 1861, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan had everything in place to finally confront his Confederate counterpart, Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett, whose 5,400-man force blocked the two main routes through the Alleghenies into the Shenandoah Valley. McClellan arrived in Grafton, Virginia, on June 23 and remained there for nearly a week, addressing the supply and logistical challenges of the coming offensive.

To confront Garnett, McClellan organized his Army of the West into five brigades under Brig. Gens. William S. Rosecrans, Thomas A. Morris, Charles W. Hill, Newton Schleich, and Col. Robert L. McCook. In all, he commanded more than 20,000 men, though roughly half were 90-day volunteers whose enlistments would expire by late July. Hill's brigade was assigned to guard the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, while Morris was ordered to create a diversion at Laurel Hill as McClellan moved against Rich Mountain with the rest of his force.

In mid-June, Garnett assigned Lt. Col. Jonathan M. Heck and the 25th Virginia Infantry to a strong position on the western face of Rich Mountain along the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike. There, Heck established Camp Garnett with the Churchville Cavalry and the Lee Battery, which fielded four 6-pounder guns. Garnett also sent his topographical engineer, Jedediah Hotchkiss, and his chief of artillery, Capt. Julius A. DeLagnel, to help secure the position.

On July 1, Garnett ordered Maj. Nathaniel Tyler, with seven companies of the 20th Virginia Infantry, to reinforce Rich Mountain. They arrived the next day. At the same time, McClellan's main body occupied the strategically placed town of Buckhannon in Upshur County, about 23

miles west of the Confederate camp on Rich Mountain.

Between the two positions, the turnpike crossed the Middle Fork River over a large covered bridge, which the Confederates used as a picket post. On July 6, without consulting McClellan, Brig. Gen. Schleich sent a scouting party from the 3rd Ohio to reconnoiter the bridge, sparking a brief but deadly skirmish. The following day, McCook's brigade secured the bridge as ordered.

Seeking information on the Union advance, Heck sent Maj. Tyler with a small composite force from the 20th and 25th Virginia to reconnoiter the Middle Fork Bridge. Near the crossing, they encountered the 4th and 9th Ohio Infantry and Capt. Cyrus O. Loomis' battery in a prepared position. After a brief exchange of volleys, Tyler prudently withdrew to the fortified line on Rich Mountain. Neither side reported casualties.

On his return, Tyler found that Lt. Col. John Pegram had arrived with the remaining three companies of the 20th Virginia. Pegram assumed command of the post, his Confederate commission superseding Heck's Virginia state commission. The Confederates now had roughly 1,780 men and four guns to defend the mountain.

Garnett misjudged McClellan's intentions. On July 6, he wrote to Robert E. Lee, stating his belief that the Union general had seized "as much of northwestern country as he probably wants." A few days later, Lee replied skeptically that McClellan would likely try to dislodge him and, if possible, advance on Staunton. Lee's assessment proved correct, but by then it was too late. The same day Garnett dispatched his letter, Morris arrived in front of Laurel Hill, touching off five days of skirmishing designed to distract the Confederates from McClellan's main effort.

By the evening of July 9, McClellan had advanced to Roaring Creek at the base of Rich Mountain. With him were nine infantry

regiments, one cavalry company, and three artillery batteries, totaling about 9,150 men and 16 guns.

The next day, McClellan ordered McCook's brigade to conduct a reconnaissance in force of the Confederate works, led by Lt. Orlando M. Poe of the U.S. Topographical Engineers. The 9th Ohio, composed almost entirely of German immigrants except for its colonel, the Irish American McCook, deployed flankers who traded fire with Confederate pickets. The Lee Battery joined the action with canister and shell, to little effect.

Poe succeeded in assessing the strength and extent of the enemy's fortifications, and the expedition returned to Roaring Creek with two prisoners. "I saw that we could probably carry the work by storm, but it would be with heavy loss, as the enemy's position was naturally a strong one," he later reported. The 9th Ohio lost one killed and at least one wounded.

Fortune intervened when David Hart, a young man and devoted unionist whose family farm lay near the summit of Rich Mountain, told Rosecrans he could guide a column across the heavily wooded heights to the rear of the Confederate camp. McClellan authorized Rosecrans to lead his brigade on a flanking march, with the intent of coordinating an attack from front and rear. They were to move out before dawn on July 11.

Pegram had his own concerns that the Federals might try to turn his position, a fear confirmed when his pickets wounded and captured 1st Sgt. David A. Wolcott of Burdsall's Dragoons, a courier who had accidentally ridden into their lines. In response, Pegram sent Capt. Julius DeLagnel with five infantry companies and a single cannon to the Hart farm. The detachment, numbering roughly 310 to 350 men, hastily threw up log barricades under orders to "defend it to the last extremity."

He also dashed off a note to Col. William C. Scott, whose 44th Virginia Infantry had spent the night in Beverly after a long march over the

mountains to reinforce Garnett. That morning, Scott received conflicting orders. Garnett called for support at Laurel Hill, while Pegram urgently requested he post his regiment along the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike on the eastern side of Rich Mountain, anticipating a Federal flanking move. Scott chose to place his 570-man regiment there, and later received word from Garnett to remain in position.

Meanwhile, Rosecrans' brigade groped its way through the dark mountain forest in a driving rain, taking a longer route than expected. After eight hours of marching, the column halted about a mile south of the Hart house. When they moved again, they went the wrong way and had to countermarch, losing more time. Not until about 2:30 in the afternoon did the 10th Indiana strike Confederate pickets. In the sharp fight that followed, Capt. Christian Miller and two sergeants went down. Another rainstorm soon rolled in and drenched the men.

Rosecrans made three direct attacks on the Confederate line along the turnpike just north of the Hart House, pausing after the first two to reposition his regiments. Col. Mahlon D. Manson of the 10th Indiana later reported, "... we came to within 350 yards of the enemy's batteries and infantry, when we formed a line of battle and opened fire upon the enemy, which they returned with great spirit from their batteries and infantry, throwing from their batteries shrapnel, shot, ball, &c., with rapidity and force."

The Confederates repelled the first two attacks with the help of a second gun brought up in support. Before long, however, most of the gunners and their horses were shot down. One team bolted and careened down the mountain, still hitched to its caisson. Capt. Julius DeLagnel personally loaded and fired one of the pieces until he, too, was severely wounded. Hearing the firing, Pegram raced to the scene just in time to try, and fail, to rally his men as they gave way under the weight of Rosecrans' third and final assault.

During the fighting, Lt. James Cochrane of the Churchville Cavalry rode down to where Col. Scott and the 44th Virginia were waiting and persuaded him to come to Pegram's aid. When they came within half a mile of the Hart House, however, they heard cheering and realized they were already too late. Scott withdrew to Beverly and, learning that Garnett had retreated from Laurel Hill, he decided to remove the Confederate supplies from Beverly and withdraw south to the Greenbrier River.

McClellan never launched his part of the plan. At the critical moment, when the sound of fighting reached him, he hesitated. His men spent most of the day cutting a path through the woods to position artillery, and by the time word arrived of Rosecrans' success, the Confederates had already begun to slip away. Disorganization and the onset of darkness prevented the Federals from pressing their victory. Early the next morning, Rosecrans' advance entered Camp Garnett and captured over 60 men left behind as sick, five camp slaves, and the remaining two cannon.

The Confederates on Rich Mountain escaped in several groups, the largest under Pegram. On the night of July 12, after an exhausting march to

the Tygart Valley River, his men demoralized and starving, he sent a note to McClellan, whose forces had occupied Beverly that afternoon, offering to surrender. The next morning, as Garnett's wing struggled to escape across Shaver's Fork, Pegram surrendered more than 600 men. In the fighting at Rich Mountain, the Confederates lost 32 killed and 38 wounded, eight of them mortally.

Rich Mountain was a hard-fought but unequivocal Union victory. McClellan's losses were 14 killed, 59 wounded (five mortally), and one missing. He not only cleared the way to the strategic stronghold at Cheat Mountain but also ended any hope of the Confederates retaking northwestern Virginia. The victory catapulted him into the national spotlight. Within weeks, he would be recalled to Washington, D.C., to command the principal Union army in the Eastern Theater. Garnett, meanwhile, was killed on July 13 while directing his men across Shaver's Fork of the Cheat River, becoming the first general officer to die in the war.

2.1.10 Battle of Corrick's Ford

Saturday, July 13, 1861

Tucker County, WV

The Battle of Corrick's 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, ending in the collapse of Garnett's command and the death of the first general officer killed in the Civil War.

For five days in early July 1861, Union forces under Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Morris skirmished with Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett's Confederates around the small hamlet of Belington, in the

foothills of Laurel Mountain in Barbour County, Virginia. The fighting formed part of a broader plan to create a diversion while Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan advanced against Rich Mountain with a separate force. What happened there would shape the fate of Garnett's men on Laurel Hill and, ultimately, Garnett himself.

By mid-June, Garnett had established his headquarters and main camp at Laurel Hill, astride the Beverly-Fairmont Turnpike. He sent a smaller force to fortify Rich Mountain, which overlooked the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike. His primary supply base lay just east of Rich

Mountain at Beverly. Behind his lines ran a road from Beverly north to St. George and on to Rowlesburg, where Union Brig. Gen. Charles W. Hill's brigade guarded the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

If those Union troops slipped in behind Laurel Hill, Garnett's position would be cut off with no clear avenue of escape. To guard against that threat, he posted Lt. Col. George W. Hansbrough's four-company 9th Virginia Battalion and Capt. Robert B. Moorman's Greenbrier Cavalry at the junction of the Beverly-Fairmont Turnpike and the road to St. George, near the community of Leedsville, or Leadsville (present-day Elkins, West Virginia). The detachment numbered fewer than 400 men fit for duty.

Garnett's defense of the two main routes through the Alleghenies into the Shenandoah Valley rested on mutually supporting positions, each meant to reinforce the other if threatened. McClellan's plan, however, pressed both at once, leaving Garnett's forces exposed and divided. Morris' role was to hold Garnett in place while McClellan struck across Rich Mountain toward Beverly, cutting off any retreat.

On July 1, Garnett wrote of his intention to have Hansbrough's battalion switch positions with Heck's 25th Virginia Infantry on Rich Mountain. He quickly reversed the order when McClellan's main force occupied Buckhannon in Upshur County, about 23 miles west of the Confederate camp. Instead, he sent the 20th Virginia Infantry under Lt. Col. John Pegram to reinforce Heck.

McClellan reached Roaring Creek at the base of Rich Mountain by the evening of July 9. Two days later, on the 11th, Brig. Gen. William S. Rosecrans launched a successful flank attack at Hart's Farm, in the rear of the Confederate position. The defenders escaped in several groups, the largest under Pegram, but over the next few days more than 660 men, including Heck and Pegram, surrendered.

When word arrived that McClellan had outmaneuvered and overwhelmed the garrison at

Rich Mountain, Garnett prepared to abandon his fortifications. After nightfall, in a driving rainstorm, his small army withdrew along the Beverly-Fairmont Turnpike as it zigzagged across Laurel Mountain. They moved south toward Beverly, but acting on erroneous information that the road had been blockaded, reversed course. The 37th Virginia, which had been in the rear, now became the lead regiment, until Hansbrough's battalion joined them and took the lead.

The next morning, Union pickets from Morris' brigade cautiously probed toward the Confederate works and reported the enemy gone. Capt. Henry W. Benham, a civil engineer serving as a volunteer aide, rode forward with a small party to inspect the abandoned fortifications. He and the 9th Indiana Infantry soon set off in pursuit, but on the far side of Laurel Mountain, Morris ordered them to halt. Nightfall ended a day of indecision and delay.

Meanwhile, Garnett's column moved slowly northeast along Shavers Fork of the Cheat River; its wagon train stretched in a thin line for more than two miles over rough, muddy roads. All the while, Garnett feared an attack from Hill's brigade advancing out of Rowlesburg. That night, the lead elements bivouacked at Kaler's Ford and did not get underway again until 8 a.m. on July 13.

Before sunrise that morning, Benham and an advance force from Morris' brigade, consisting of the 7th and 9th Indiana Infantry, the 14th Ohio Infantry, and a section of the 1st Ohio Light Artillery, about 2,600 men in all, set off in earnest pursuit. Benham quarreled with Col. Ebenezer Dumont of the 7th Indiana over who was in command, Dumont claiming to be the senior officer on the field. Nevertheless, they reached Kaler's Ford at noon after skirmishing with Garnett's rearguard, which was protecting pioneers felling trees across the road.

With the enemy closing in, Garnett adopted an innovative defense. First, Col. James N. Ramsey's Georgia regiment would stand fast, buying

time for the wagons to move ahead. Then Col. William B. Taliaferro's 23rd Virginia Infantry would take up a strong position and cover the Georgians' withdrawal. By leapfrogging from one position to the next, Garnett hoped to keep his pursuers at bay while the column made its escape.

Garnett's wagon train struggled to cross Corrick's Ford, often misspelled Carrick's Ford, just south of where Shavers and Black forks join to form the Cheat River, near present-day Parsons. The ford consisted of two crossings over an oxbow in the river. The first was broad, the river swollen by recent rains. Teamsters fought to get their wagons through. Some, mired in rocks and mud, had to be abandoned.

The ford's one advantage was a high, brush-covered ridge overlooking the first crossing. As Benham later reported, "The enemy was found to have taken a strong position, with his infantry and artillery upon a precipitous bank of some fifty to eighty feet in height upon the opposite side of the river, while our own ground was upon the low land, nearly level with the river."

Lt. James Elliott McPherson Washington, a distant relative of George Washington and one of Garnett's aides assigned to the guns, gave a rousing cheer that opened the fight. Pelted by rain beneath a low, dreary sky, the 14th Ohio pushed forward, supported by two artillery pieces. It soon became clear the Confederate position could not be carried by a direct assault, and Benham ordered Dumont and the 7th Indiana to work around the flank.

Running low on ammunition and recognizing the threat, Col. Taliaferro ordered a withdrawal. His iron rifled 6-pounder had to be left behind, damaged and immobile. Washington spiked it to keep it from being used against them. Despite holding the high ground and commanding a clear field of fire, the Confederates suffered more than three times as many casualties in the brief, 30-minute fight.

As the Virginians fell back from the first crossing, Garnett rode up and ordered Taliaferro to post ten riflemen behind driftwood piled at the second crossing. He sat his horse midstream, bullets striking the water around him. A small party from the 7th Indiana worked its way forward through the wrecked wagon train and opened fire. As Garnett turned, he was struck in the back and fell. First Sergeant Benjamin F. Burlingame of Company E was credited with the fatal shot. Another man beside Garnett was killed.

The Confederate defense collapsed with their general's fall, though the Federals pursued only a short distance. They captured dozens of wagons and took nearly 90 prisoners at a cost of just two killed and ten wounded. Garnett's body was carried to the nearby home of William and Deborah Corrick, which served as a makeshift hospital and prison. The house still stands.

Garnett's army struggled on to the northeast toward the Maryland border. From Rowlesburg, Hill's scattered command could do little to pursue. Aside from rounding up a few stragglers, they failed to interfere with the retreat. Six companies of Ramsey's 1st Georgia became separated early in the fighting and wandered the wilderness for days before rejoining the army. In the weeks that followed, the remnants gathered at Monterey under Garnett's replacement, Brig. Gen. Henry R. Jackson.

McClellan praised the conduct of his volunteers and trumpeted the victories at Rich Mountain and Corrick's Ford, writing to his army on July 16, "I am proud to say that you have gained the highest reward that American troops can receive—the thanks of Congress and the applause of your fellow-citizens." He would soon leave Rosecrans in command, however, after being called to Washington following the disaster at the First Battle of Bull Run.

2.1.11 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. In June, former Governor Henry A. Wise, a Tidewater planter, received a Confederate commission with authority to raise his own force to defend the Kanawha Valley.

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 Glenville

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

Gilmer County, WV

The Skirmish at Glenville was fought on Sunday, July 7 and Monday, July 8, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Lt. Col. Francis B. Pond and Confederate forces commanded by Col. Robert Alexander Caskie in present-day Gilmer County, West Virginia. The inconclusive skirmish tied up some Union forces for a few days but had little impact on the larger campaign.

Western Virginia's Kanawha Valley was a strategic but underdeveloped corridor, with the Kanawha River providing its main transportation route. The 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, critical for preserving food and curing leather.

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 Valley. John McCausland, a professor at the Virginia Military Institute, was sent to help muster and train the troops. Tompkins, McCausland, and others, including George S. Patton, Sr. and recently resigned U.S. Congressman Albert Gallatin Jenkins, made some progress before Henry Alexander Wise, a planter from Virginia's Eastern Shore, superseded them.

Henry A. Wise served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1833 to 1844 and as governor of Virginia from 1856 to 1860. As governor, he oversaw John Brown's imprisonment, trial, and execution following the raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry. Amid rising sectional tensions, Wise also sent ordnance to western Virginia to menace the Ohio River. Virginia unionists and Ohio volunteers later seized most of it.

Wise led the secessionist faction at the 1861 convention in Richmond and played a key role in aligning Virginia with the Confederacy. Despite having no military experience, he was commissioned a brigadier general and authorized to raise a combined arms force to defend the Kanawha Valley, which became known as the Wise Legion. To compensate for his inexperience, he surrounded himself with veteran staff officers.

He established his headquarters at Charleston on June 26 and immediately used military force to suppress unionist sentiment. In a region where Union sympathies ran strong, his heavy-handed approach proved counterproductive. Meanwhile, Federal advances farther north were putting Confederate forces under pressure, and their commander began looking to Wise for help.

On May 26, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, Department of the Ohio, had ordered a multi-pronged advance into northwestern Virginia to secure and repair the Baltimore & Ohio and Northwestern Railroads. Two columns converged at Grafton, then turned south to attack secessionist militia gathering at Philippi. As Union reinforcements poured into the region, Robert E. Lee's adjutant general, Robert S. Garnett, was promoted to brigadier general and given command of Confederate forces there.

Facing a much larger Federal force, Garnett suggested that a northward movement by Wise could provide an effective diversion. On July 1, he wrote to Richmond that "it is my opinion that General Wise's command could be of more service to the cause by operating in the direction of Parkersburg and the Northwestern Railroad." On July 6, he revised his proposal, recommending a more northeasterly advance that would threaten Weston and Buckhannon, where McClellan's army was concentrating. Lee

endorsed Garnett's strategy and repeated it verbatim in a July 11 letter to Wise.

Wise, however, began his northward expeditions around the first of July, making it unlikely that he acted in concert with this suggestion. He organized two small detachments of several hundred men: one led by his eldest son, Obadiah Jennings Wise, captain of the Richmond Light Infantry Blues, and the other by Robert A. Caskie, a wealthy Richmond tobacco merchant and captain of Caskie's Mounted Rangers.

Shortly after arriving in Charleston, O. Jennings Wise led his expedition north to Ripley, 40 miles away, departing on the night of June 29 with Capt. John P. Brock's Rockingham Valley Rangers. They reached Ripley the next day, where Lt. Col. George S. Patton and another company joined them. Henry A. Wise arrived with reinforcements on July 4 and considered attacking the 21st Ohio Infantry Regiment at Ravenswood, on the Ohio River. He changed his mind, however, and began withdrawing toward Charleston. The expedition lasted ten days and accomplished little.

Around the first of July, Caskie and his Rangers, about 54 men under arms, rode north with several unidentified companies, a force totaling 160 to 260 men. With his devilish goatee, Capt. Caskie cut a dashing figure. They followed the road through Spencer and Arnoldsburg, now U.S. Route 119, toward Glenville, the seat of Gilmer County, some 89 miles away. The 178-mile round trip meant the expedition would be gone for at least a week and would need supply wagons, further slowing its progress through the remote, mountainous terrain.

Lack of Confederate primary sources makes Caskie's mission difficult to determine. According to Edward A. Pollard, a wartime editor of the *Richmond Examiner*, "General Wise, anxious to give an assurance of support to the strong Southern sentiment reported to exist in Gilmer and Calhoun, sent an expedition into those counties to repress the excesses of the Union men."

Indeed, newspaper reports indicate that the presence of Caskie's expedition, and possibly local secessionist militia, was sowing panic among Gilmer County unionists and causing some to flee to neighboring Ritchie County. Following the secession vote, civil order broke down in Gilmer. Mail service stopped, and the court closed. On July 8, 1861, the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* noted, "We have nothing further from Gilmer, where at last accounts civil strife was going on very actively."

Coincidentally, as Caskie's expedition reached Gilmer County, McClellan was planning to send troops to secure its county seat. Four companies of the 17th Ohio Infantry, about 360 men under Lt. Col. Francis B. Pond, occupied the town. They hadn't been there long before running into trouble.

On Sunday, July 7, Pond's skirmishers clashed with Caskie's men at Camden Flats, overlooking the Little Kanawha River just west of Glenville. Pond formed his battalion for battle on the courthouse grounds, but the outnumbered Confederates avoided a direct attack. Instead, Caskie's men formed a loose ring around town and continued the low-intensity bush fight.

"My little son, about ten years of age, was with the pickets that were first fired on, at the time that they received a volley of forty or fifty shots," wrote Dr. Thomas Maley Harris. "He says that the leaves that were cut from the bushes around them, fell in showers about him." Harris later formed the 10th West Virginia Infantry (U.S.) and rose to the rank of brevet major general.

Pond managed to get a scout through to Buckhannon, prompting two companies of the 7th Ohio Infantry to rush to his relief. McClellan also ordered the 10th Ohio Regiment and the rest of the 7th forward. One member of the relief force later described events on the morning of July 8: "About fifty came upon five men on picket guard, and fired upon them a volley at only thirty paces; but not one of Col. Pond's men was

hurt. They coolly returned the fire and then retreated to the camp.”

As Capt. James T. Sterling approached Caskie's pickets with Companies B and H of the 7th Ohio, about 50 Unionist Home Guards joined him. They soon realized the Confederates were retreating. Facing the prospect of overwhelming numbers and with no reinforcements in sight, Caskie and his men hastily withdrew toward Charleston. Neither side reported any casualties.

2.2.2 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

Pond and his men soon rejoined their regiment at Buckhannon. Like Wise's expedition to Ripley, Caskie's expedition to Gilmer County achieved little. It did, however, inadvertently draw two regiments away from McClellan's operation against Rich Mountain, though their absence had no effect on the battle fought there three days later.

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."

2.2.3 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.

2.2.4 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 cannoners).

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 Skirmish at Romney

Wednesday, June 12, 1861

Hampshire County, WV

The Skirmish at Romney was fought on Wednesday, June 12, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Col. Lewis "Lew" Wallace and Confederate forces commanded by Col. Arthur C. Cummings in Hampshire County, West Virginia. The nearly bloodless victory for the Indiana Zouaves made future author Lew Wallace a household name.

As early as May 24, 1861, Winfield Scott, commanding general of the U.S. Army, telegraphed Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson in Philadelphia, urging him to move troops into western Maryland and occupy Frederick, Hagerstown, and Cumberland. Cumberland, at the tip of a finger formed by the Potomac River, was a vital transportation hub and an important station on the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad. Coal, iron, and other raw materials flowed through town from western Maryland and Virginia to cities along the eastern seaboard. Patterson's attention, however, remained fixed on Harper's Ferry and Martinsburg in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.

Patterson turned to Lewis "Lew" Wallace, a friend of Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton and the state's adjutant general. After organizing Indiana's 90-day volunteers, Wallace assumed command of the 11th Indiana Infantry Regiment. He outfitted the regiment in gray, French-inspired Zouave jackets and drilled its men in French colonial tactics. Initially stationed at Evansville, Indiana, to inspect traffic on the Ohio River, the regiment soon received orders directly from Winfield Scott to join Patterson's command.

On or about June 6, while en route along the B&O Railroad, Wallace and the 11th Indiana

received new orders to halt at Cumberland, secure the area's Potomac River bridges, and await further instructions. Patterson also directed them to win the confidence of the local population and gave Wallace broad authority to "capture or rout" armed insurgents in the region—an order he was more than eager to carry out. Before reaching Cumberland, Wallace learned that secessionist troops occupied Romney, 27 miles to the south, and resolved to confront them at the earliest opportunity.

The regiment arrived in Cumberland on the mist-shrouded morning of Monday, June 10, but its stay was brief. After detouring to pursue a false report, the men rolled into town again the following morning, where local citizens welcomed them enthusiastically. Following breakfast, the entire regiment marched in parade-like formation from the station to its campsite on Rose Hill, named Camp McGinnis (after Lt. Col. George F. McGinnis).

That night, Wallace left two companies behind while the remainder boarded train cars for New Creek Station, avoiding the direct route watched by Confederate cavalry. The detour turned the journey into a grueling, ten-hour, thirty-five-mile slog, much of it over a weather-beaten mountain road that crossed "high bluffs, and narrow passes."

Unlike their neighbors across the state line, residents of Romney and Hampshire County, Virginia, favored secession, especially in the county's eastern two-thirds. At the time, Hampshire County encompassed the areas that now comprise Hampshire and Mineral Counties. At Richmond's secession convention, the county's two delegates voted against secession twice

before reversing themselves and signing the Ordinance of Secession.

Laid out on a flat terrace overlooking the South Branch of the Potomac River, Romney was linked to Winchester by the Northwestern Turnpike, which continued west to Parkersburg on the Ohio River. The Confederate force in town included the Potomac Guards and Independent Greys, later Companies A and F of the 33rd Virginia Infantry Regiment. Their commander, Col. Arthur C. Cummings, was organizing the 33rd into a full regiment. Also present were the Hampshire Riflemen, led by Capt. George F. Sheetz, later Company F of the 7th Virginia Cavalry.

In the predawn darkness, midway between New Creek Station and Romney, near the hamlet of Sheetz's Mill (later Headsville) on Patterson Creek, a local civilian spotted Wallace's passing Zouaves. The man set out on foot for Mechanicsburg Gap, where a friend loaned him a horse for the final three miles to Romney. He arrived shortly after sunrise and raised the alarm.

Colonel Cummings hastily formed his poorly armed men into a line of battle and marched them to the bluff overlooking the turnpike bridge across the South Branch of the Potomac, just west of town. There, he positioned two obsolete 4-pounder cannon, though whether they had ammunition remains uncertain. When Cummings saw Wallace's column emerging from the gap, he realized he was badly outnumbered. There was little to do but order a retreat and join the stream of civilians fleeing eastward.

Sheetz's Hampshire Riflemen served as the rearguard. While mounted riflemen exchanged shots with Wallace's skirmishers near the bridge, others occupied Sycamore Dale, David Gibson's two-story Greek Revival plantation house, and fired from its windows.

The Hoosiers pushed across the covered bridge and spread out in a semicircle around the house. During the exchange, a bullet ricocheted off the ground and struck 1st Sgt. Moses Grooms on his suspender buckle, leaving him with a

bruised chest. He was the regiment's only casualty. Wallace then personally led a detachment up the hill to the right to turn the enemy's flank. He reported, "Hardly had my companies deployed and started forward, and got within rifle range, before the rebels limbered up [their artillery] and put off over the bluff in hottest haste."

Realizing they were about to be surrounded, the Confederates abandoned their position and fell back toward town, pausing occasionally to fire on their pursuers. An elderly resident named Busby was wounded.

Although Wallace pledged not to harass unarmed civilians, his men destroyed the printing press and offices of the *South Branch Intelligencer*, a newspaper that openly supported secession. He also ordered Sycamore Dale burned, but its owner persuaded him to spare the house. The soldiers nevertheless ransacked it. Lt. John M. Blue, later of Company D, 11th Virginia Cavalry, recalled, "Bureaus and wardrobes had been broken open and contents scattered over the floor and many things of value taken away."

Romney was largely deserted, save for a handful of African Americans who appeared unfazed by the soldiers' presence. The women prepared a generous home-cooked meal with what Wallace later described as "the famous old Virginia flavor," ensuring that no one went hungry. That afternoon, the weary Hoosiers began the long march back to Cumberland, three wagons loaded with captured guns and equipment in tow and exhausted men dropping along the roadside whenever the column halted.

Though tactically insignificant, Wallace's brief occupation of Romney, combined with the threat posed by Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's army advancing over the mountains from the west, convinced Confederate Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston that his command risked envelopment. He withdrew his small Army of the Shenandoah from Harpers Ferry to Winchester, opening the way for Patterson's advance. Romney, however, soon returned to Confederate hands.

3.1.2 Action at Bridge No. 21

Wednesday, June 19, 1861

Mineral County, WV

The Action at Bridge No. 21 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 modern-day Mineral County, West Virginia. The Confederate victory briefly interrupted traffic on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and severed the connection between Union forces in Maryland and western Virginia.

On June 12, 1861, shortly after arriving in Cumberland, Maryland, on the North Branch of the Potomac River, Col. Lewis "Lew" Wallace and the 11th Indiana Infantry Regiment cleared Confederate forces from Romney, Hampshire County, Virginia. They then returned to Cumberland to establish camp and secure the strategic transportation hub along the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad. Raw materials like coal and iron flowed through the town from western Maryland and Virginia to cities along the eastern seaboard.

The people of western Maryland were decidedly unionist in sentiment. In April, Capt. Horace Resley organized his antebellum militia company, the Cumberland Continentals, to defend the town and guard local railroad bridges. The B&O Railroad partially funded the unit, with good reason to fear for its property.

On May 28, covered railroad bridges over Patterson's Creek in northern Hampshire County, along with the pump house and the 131-foot canal span at North Branch, were burned. In response, a detachment of the Continentals was sent to guard Bridge No. 21, the railroad bridge over the North Branch of the Potomac opposite Paddy Town, twenty miles southwest of Cumberland. They were armed with two cannon: a 6-pounder and an aging 4-pounder.

There, the river wrapped around Queens Point, a rocky prominence rising some 400 feet above the basin on the Maryland side. New Creek Station stood on the bend's southwestern side, west of New Creek, while the small settlement of Paddy Town lay to the east near Limestone Run. The B&O Railroad crossed from Maryland at Bridge No. 21 on the bend's northeastern side, curved past Paddy Town and New Creek Station, then followed the river westward before crossing again near Piedmont.

To counter Lew Wallace's presence in the region, Confederate Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston sent Col. Ambrose Powell Hill from the Shenandoah Valley to reoccupy Romney with the 3rd Tennessee Infantry, 10th Virginia Infantry, and his own 13th Virginia Infantry. A former Regular Army officer, Hill reached Romney sometime during the night of June 17. Civilians who had fled the town greeted the troops with food as regimental bands serenaded them with patriotic tunes. The Confederate force probably numbered about 2,000 men.

Wallace watched this new threat with anxiety. He had repeatedly dispatched pleas for assistance but received none. As a precaution, his men prepared their wagons for a retreat east toward Hancock. "We have been sleeping in our clothes with our arms ready in hourly expectation for the past forty-eight hours," a private wrote to the *Indiana State Sentinel*. "We certainly are now in the most dangerous position of any regiment in the United States."

On the night of June 18, Col. John C. Vaughn marched Companies I and K of his 3rd Tennessee, along with Companies B and I and a detachment from Company K of the 13th Virginia, eighteen miles northwest to New Creek, present-day Keyser. A. P. Hill ordered Vaughn to

disperse any Union troops stationed there and burn the bridge across the river.

Arriving about 4 a.m. on Wednesday, June 19, Vaughn claimed to have found 200-to-300-armed men guarding the Potomac's north bank. In fact, the Cumberland Continentals numbered only twenty-eight to forty men, supported by two obsolete cannon.

Vaughn divided his command into two columns. Capt. Robert White, with Company I and the detachment from Company K of the 13th Virginia, both recruited in Romney, crossed downstream, east of the bridge. Vaughn led the rest of the force across upstream to approach from the south. Confederate Col. Angus W. McDonald and his wife, Cornelia, had lived in Paddy Town during the mid-1850s. One of their eleven sons, Edward Allen, served as a private in Company K, the "Hampshire Guard."

When the column reached the river, it hesitated. A lieutenant turned to Edward for guidance, likely because he had served as an officer in the Virginia militia and knew the area well. Raising his musket, Edward shouted, "Men, follow me!" Except for a small rear guard, the entire column waded into the river behind him.

Meanwhile, Vaughn's column crossed upstream and advanced on the farm of Peter Martz, the B&O watchman at the bridge. Martz and his family fled into the fields at the sight of the approaching Confederates. The Continentals formed in the farmyard and fired several volleys. Pvt. William A. Smith of the 3rd Tennessee was

struck in the hand, and at least one Continental was wounded.

Realizing they were badly outnumbered and in danger of encirclement, the militia spiked their two cannon by driving metal into the vents, pushed them into the river, and retreated in haste, leaving their flag behind. The Confederates recovered both cannon and the flag, burned the bridge, cut the telegraph wires, and returned to Romney.

Over the following days in Cumberland, Wallace again prepared his men to fight or evacuate if necessary. He positioned baggage wagons on the main road north into Pennsylvania, then drew up his regiment for battle after scouts reported a rebel force advancing 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 noted in his memoir.

The expected battle never materialized. Hill's infantry was soon replaced by McDonald's cavalry regiment and sent back to the Shenandoah Valley. Over the next few weeks, the cavalry destroyed or damaged several railroad bridges in and around Hampshire County, though most were quickly repaired. Bridge No. 21 reopened on July 25, restoring uninterrupted rail service between Wheeling and Cumberland.

3.1.3 Skirmishes at Dan's Run and Kelley's Island

Wednesday, June 26, 1861

Mineral County, WV

The Skirmishes at Dan's Run and Kelley's Island were 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 modern-day Mineral County, West Virginia. This

inconclusive clash left both commanders wounded and previewed the savage intensity with which this conflict would be fought.

In mid-June 1861, Confederate Col. Ambrose Powell Hill arrived in Romney, Hampshire County, Virginia, with a small brigade to counter

Col. Lewis "Lew" Wallace's Indiana Zouaves, who guarded Cumberland on the Maryland state line. During their brief stay, Hill's infantry destroyed B&O Railroad Bridge No. 21 and routed a small home guard unit. On June 19, the 7th Virginia Cavalry Regiment, led by sixty-two-year-old Col. Angus W. McDonald, arrived in Romney to relieve Hill. Hill's infantry departed two days later.

General Robert E. Lee, overall commander of Virginia's volunteers, tasked McDonald with disrupting the B&O Railroad, including the destruction of the Tray Run Viaduct over the Cheat River near Rowlesburg. The 1852 wrought iron bridge could not be replaced as easily as smaller, wooden bridges. Success would secure Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's left flank and sever the rail link between Washington, DC, and the northwestern states.

Several of McDonald's companies, including the Mountain Rangers led by Richard Ashby, established Camp Washington on Washington Bottom Farm, a 700-acre property along a bend of the South Branch of the Potomac River about five and a half miles north of Romney. The farm belonged to George W. Washington, a distant relative of our first president. His imposing three-story Greek Revival home, Ridgedale, still stands today.

Thirty-two-year-old Turner Ashby Jr. and his younger brother Richard, 29, were born at Rose Bank Plantation in Fauquier County, Virginia. Turner Ashby's Mountain Rangers were a prewar cavalry company. They joined McDonald's command at Winchester on June 15. Two days later, Ashby was promoted to lieutenant colonel of the 7th Virginia Cavalry, and Richard to captain of the Rangers.

With the arrival of McDonald's regiment, Col. Lew Wallace felt more isolated than ever. His nearest support consisted of Pennsylvania Reserve units ordered not to leave their state. Hoping to gather intelligence on the enemy, Wallace ordered his men to commandeer horses for a scouting party, but they found only thirteen in

"fair" condition. Led by Cpl. David B. Hay, the small force could do little beyond patrol the roads and provide advance warning.

Meanwhile, McDonald's cavalry kept busy around Romney. On the morning of Wednesday, June 26, Turner and Richard Ashby rode out on separate missions. Turner took thirteen men on a reconnaissance toward Patterson's Creek Depot on the Potomac River, twenty miles north of Romney. Richard, riding a jet-black steed, departed with twelve men and a local guide to arrest a Unionist suspected of passing information to the enemy.

After dividing his command, Richard likely led the smaller detachment to Green Spring Depot, across the river from Oldtown, then west along the B&O Railroad toward Patterson's Depot. The larger party, sent to make the arrest, failed to find its suspect at home.

Corporal Hay and his scouts were also on the move that day. The thirteen mounted infantrymen rode south along the turnpike, now West Virginia Route 28, toward Frankfort, present-day Fort Ashby. From high ground overlooking the village, they spotted several dozen Confederates packed tightly into the street. Hay later told Wallace that opening fire would have been "too much like murder."

In truth, even with the advantage of surprise, his small party was badly outnumbered. Wallace later wrote that Hay's scouts tried to find an alternate route to Romney, but the country road they followed instead carried them away from town and back toward the railroad to the northeast.

Somewhere along the road, they encountered a woman watching the passing troopers from her porch. When Hay asked whether any "enemy" were nearby, she replied that they were only a few minutes up the road and exaggerated their numbers. The ruse had the opposite effect. "Boys, shall we fight or turn back?" Hay asked. "Fight!" his men answered. They spurred their horses forward and caught up with Richard Ashby's detachment along the railroad tracks,

about a half mile east of Dan's Run. There, the road narrowed between a steep, rocky hillside and a deep railroad cut, leaving little room for mounted men to maneuver.

The Federals gave chase, firing from the saddle. Accounts of what followed vary, but most agree that a cattle guard or culvert separated Richard Ashby and his men from the open ground west of Dan's Run, where they could turn to face their pursuers. Most of the Confederates cleared the obstacle, but Richard's exhausted horse stumbled and fell, throwing him to the ground. The fight quickly became hand-to-hand. After a brief but savage struggle, during which Corporal Hay suffered multiple wounds, the Confederates broke away and escaped. Richard Ashby did not. Surrounded, he was beaten, shot, stabbed, and left for dead.

Corporal Hay and his scouts captured several Confederate horses and sought refuge on Kelly's Island, a forested, almond-shaped island in the North Branch of the Potomac at the mouth of Dan's Run. Two of their number rode off to find a wagon, as Hay's wounds made it difficult for him to remain in the saddle. The island belonged to Maryland farmer Christopher Kelly, whom the Confederates had arrested and taken to Romney only days earlier. Lew Wallace and others later misidentified the island as lying at the mouth of Patterson Creek.

By then, it was afternoon. Alerted to the earlier fight, Turner Ashby rode to the scene, where the signs of a bloody struggle were unmistakable. Dan's Run entered the Potomac through a stone culvert beneath the railroad. Following fresh tracks through the culvert, Ashby and his thirteen companions emerged in full view of Kelly's Island, where Union scouts opened fire from behind brush and piles of driftwood. Without hesitation, and with a loud "whoop," Ashby spurred his men into the river.

The fight became another close-quarters brawl—neither as brief as the Confederates boasted nor as heroic as the Hoosiers imagined. Although the Union scouts ultimately fled,

Ashby's reckless charge proved costly. Two of his men were killed and five wounded, including Ashby himself. Both sides greatly exaggerated the opposing force's size and casualties, but overall, the Confederates got the worst of both engagements that day.

That night, Confederate reinforcements searched Kelly's Island and found horses, weapons, jackets, and hats scattered across the ground. They also discovered Pvt. John C. Hollenbeck groaning in the brush and took him to a nearby farmhouse. Like Richard Ashby, Hollenbeck had been shot and stabbed. One Virginia trooper, Thomas H. McArthur, also suffered a knife wound to the face. Such wounds were uncommon during the Civil War and attest to the ferocity of the fighting.

Hollenbeck died that night, and his body was left on the porch for his comrades to recover the following morning. Wallace and the 11th Indiana later accused the Confederates of bayoneting Hollenbeck after his capture, a charge the Confederates vigorously denied. Hollenbeck was the first Indiana soldier killed in the Civil War.

Ashby and his men found his brother by the roadside as they returned to Camp Washington. They carried him back to Ridgedale and placed him in a bed, hoping he might recover. After clinging to life for a week, Richard died on July 3. Turner took the loss especially hard, writing to his sister, "I had rather it had been myself." Richard was initially buried in Romney, but the brothers were later reinterred together in Winchester's Stonewall Confederate Cemetery.

The skirmishes at Dan's Run and Kelly's Island marked the 11th Indiana's final action in Virginia. In early July, Wallace and his regiment were ordered to join Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson's army north of Winchester. From there, they returned to Indianapolis, where the regiment was mustered out and reorganized for three years' service 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 Whitionia, 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.

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

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.

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 Skirmishes at New Creek and Piedmont

Sunday, July 14, 1861

Mineral County, WV

The Skirmishes at New Creek and Piedmont were fought on Sunday, July 14 and Monday, July 15, 1861 between Confederate forces commanded by Col. Angus W. McDonald and Union forces commanded by Lt. Col. Thomas L. Kane and Capt. Andrew J. Trout in modern-day Mineral County, West Virginia. The skirmishes ended in Union victory. Confederates retreated back to their base at Romney, and New Creek Station remained in federal control for the remainder of the war.

Since early June 1861, Col. Lewis “Lew” Wallace and his 11th Indiana Infantry Regiment had been guarding the strategic transportation hub of Cumberland, Maryland along the North Branch of the Potomac River. His regiment had skirmished with Confederate forces in the area without a decisive result. When Wallace’s regiment departed on July 7, Cumberland and key points along the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad were left dangerously exposed.

The 13th and 5th Pennsylvania Reserve Regiments, along with Battery A of the 1st Pennsylvania Artillery, were encamped at Camp Mason & Dixon just north of the Maryland border, unable to advance while state officials debated the constitutionality of Pennsylvania troops entering Maryland.

At the request of Winfield Scott, Commanding General of the U.S. Army, Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin finally ordered them to cross the border and protect Cumberland. Because they fell under the Military Department of Pennsylvania, Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson retroactively approved the move by issuing orders to Cumberland on July 8, after the Pennsylvania troops had already arrived.

The 13th Pennsylvania Reserve Regiment, nicknamed the “Bucktails” for the deer tails worn on their hats, was commanded by Col. Charles J. Biddle and was later redesignated the 42nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. They reached Cumberland late on the same evening Wallace’s regiment departed and slept on their arms, prepared for an attack that never came. The next morning, they occupied the Hoosiers’ former campsite.

Thirty-nine-year-old Thomas L. Kane organized the regiment during the spring and early summer of 1861. The men mustered into state service on June 21. Kane recruited heavily among the woodsmen of northwestern Pennsylvania’s “wildcat district.” The regiment initially elected Kane as colonel and Charles J. Biddle as lieutenant colonel, but Kane voluntarily exchanged ranks with Biddle in recognition of his previous military experience.

Shortly after arriving in Cumberland, Kane organized a corps of sixty dismounted scouts who borrowed rifles from the Cumberland home guard because they had been forced to exchange their often superior privately owned firearms for obsolete muskets.

On Friday, July 12, Col. Biddle received word that Confederates had destroyed train cars and two trestle bridges over George’s Creek on the Maryland side of the Potomac, north of Piedmont, Virginia. A network of industrial railroads linked Cumberland with Piedmont through western Maryland’s coal fields, west of Dans Mountain. Biddle dispatched Kane and his scouts through the Cumberland Narrows aboard the Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad to the tunnel beneath Frostburg. From there, they followed the Georges Creek Railroad

south, stopping a few miles north of Piedmont to spend a fitful night in an old stone grist mill.

Piedmont had recently emerged as an important station on the B&O Railroad, complete with a roundhouse and rail yard. The town occupied a bend in the North Branch of the Potomac opposite the mouth of Georges Creek in the foothills of the Allegheny Front. Across the river stood Westernport, Maryland, so named because it marked the westernmost navigable port on the Potomac.

Early the next morning, Biddle moved his regiment and the 5th Pennsylvania Reserves, commanded by Col. Seneca G. Simmons, twenty miles south by rail along the B&O Railroad. The troops disembarked at the ruins of Bridge No. 21. From there, Companies H and I of the Bucktail Regiment marched to New Creek Station.

After crossing the river into Piedmont, Kane led about forty men, accompanied by a guide from Cumberland named William Kelly, five miles along the south bank of the Potomac to New Creek. As they advanced beneath the forested escarpments lining the narrow valley, many suspected Confederate cavalry lurked around every bend. Kane dispatched a sergeant on horseback back to Piedmont to summon Capt. Edward A. Irvin and ten men, leaving the sergeant and the remaining scouts to guard the town. Reinforced to fifty men, Kane entered New Creek and relieved Companies H and I, which then returned to their regiment.

That night, Kane and his men took shelter in a stone house owned by William Armstrong southwest of the train station, while their guide slept on the station platform. Armstrong's house, a longtime local landmark, was located on the site of the old Keyser High School, just west of the intersection of Piedmont and Davis streets. Armstrong's son, Edward McCarty Armstrong, had been one of Hampshire County's two delegates to the Virginia Convention in Richmond.

Just before sunrise on July 14, Confederate Capt. Macon Jordan's company, from Page County, Virginia, joined by detachments of the Letcher Brock's Gap Rifles and Capt. Walter Bowen's Mountain Rangers, rode into New

Creek from the direction of Piedmont with a combined force of roughly eighty-five to one hundred men. They belonged to Col. Angus McDonald's 7th Virginia Cavalry Regiment.

Private Richard Black of the Brock's Gap Rifles dramatically spurred his horse onto the station platform, killed the civilian guide and took another man prisoner. Hearing the commotion, Kane sent a squad to investigate. The Bucktails concealed themselves in a meadow of tall grass, fired several shots at Jordan's troopers, then fell back to the stone house.

The Confederate cavalry formed up and charged, but the Bucktails, renowned for their marksmanship, unleashed a deadly volley from the windows. "The Page boys jumped the fence, charged, and drove them to a large brick house. From the doors, windows, and cupalo [sic], a deadly fire was directed at our brave fellows..." Lieutenant Reuben L. Booten, Pvt. William L. Miller, and two horses were killed, while an unknown number were wounded. A "Private Bosley" was also reportedly killed, but his identity has never been verified. The casualties were buried in Armstrong's yard.

"They came up in fine order, but broke and ran on receiving a fire which was reserved till they were ready to dismount," Kane later wrote. The Confederate raiders retreated south, with Kane and his men in pursuit. About eight miles down the Northwestern Turnpike towards Romney, east of the small village of Ridgeville, the two sides briefly exchanged fire again. Kane's force then took shelter in a large stone house that night, erected barricades, and sent a messenger racing back to Colonel Biddle for reinforcements.

On Sunday afternoon, while Kane's scouts pursued Confederate cavalry south of New Creek, Biddle sent Capt. Andrew J. Trout with Companies A and F of the 5th Pennsylvania Reserves and Company B of the Bucktails to occupy Piedmont. They arrived shortly afterward and took possession of the town's brick market house. Among them was Robert W. Sturrock, orderly sergeant of Company F and an editor of *The Bradford Reporter* back home in Pennsylvania. Sturrock set to work publishing a regimental broadsheet titled *The Pennsylvania Reserve*.

Their first night in Piedmont passed quietly, but after nightfall on Monday, pickets stationed on the hill southeast of town fired at figures moving in the darkness and were answered by the crack of rifles. "For an hour they stood at their posts while the firing continued on the hill and along the railroad," Sturrock reported. The exchange continued for several hours as the remaining Pennsylvanians prepared to repel an attack. The identity of their unseen opponents remains unknown, though they were almost certainly troopers from McDonald's cavalry.

Suddenly, shortly after midnight, the shrill whistle of a train echoed through the valley from the west, scattering the attackers. Aboard were detachments of the 20th and 22nd Ohio Infantry regiments from Charles W. Hill's brigade, sent in pursuit of Confederates retreating before Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's victorious army. Hill dispatched the Buckeyes by rail to New Creek, where they disembarked and marched south as part of a multipronged, but ultimately unsuccessful, effort to trap the remnants of the Confederate army following its defeat at Corrick's Ford.

In the predawn hours of Tuesday, July 16, Kane's messenger reached Col. Biddle, who

immediately put the remainder of his regiments in motion, leaving two companies behind to guard the camp. To reach Kane, the men forded the North Branch of the Potomac with their arms and accoutrements held above their heads. After an exhausting march of ten to twelve miles through the mountains, they reached Kane's outpost. Rather than advance on Romney, however, the Federals withdrew back to New Creek Station and then to Piedmont.

Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson's advance in the Shenandoah Valley soon brought the fighting around New Creek to an end. On July 17, Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston ordered Col. Angus McDonald to withdraw his entire cavalry regiment from the Romney area to Winchester. McDonald's cavalry screened Johnston's subsequent march toward Manassas but did not participate in the battle there. Ten days later, Biddle's brigade of Pennsylvania Reserves also departed, returning to Harrisburg in the aftermath of Bull Run. With both forces gone, military activity in that corner of Virginia subsided 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.

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

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.

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 cavalymen 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.

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

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.

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 Grat-tan 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 cavalymen 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. Rhodes 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.

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

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.

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

1.7	9/28/2026. Updated Battle of Corrick's Ford. Updated date of Skirmish at Romney. Updated names and narratives for the Skirmish at Romney, Action at Bridge No. 21, Skirmishes at New Creek and Piedmont, and Skirmishes at Dan's Run and Kelley's Island. Updated narrative for the Skirmish at Glenville. Updated bibliography and index. Fixed paragraph spacing and indentation.
1.6	5/3/2026. Updated name of Skirmish at Bowman's Place to Action at Bowman's Place. Revised and updated battle narratives for Actions at Fetterman, Glover's Gap, Philippi, Righter's House, Buckhannon, and Bowman's Place, and Battles of Belington/Laurel Hill, Rich Mountain, and Corrick's Ford. Moved the Skirmish at Glenville into Kanawha Valley subregion. Updated index.
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.