



Army Heritage Center  
**Foundation**  
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one Soldier at a time*

# Voices of the Past

## CIVIL WAR

### Highlights:

- In late August of 1862, the Union and Confederate armies were drawn into a second battle over the critical supply depot and strategic railway junction in Manassas, VA.
- For two days, General Pope's forces tried and failed to breach Confederate lines.
- The Union defeat at Manassas led to Confederate invasion of the North.

**Note:** *In the North the two battles fought in the vicinity of Bull Run were known as the 1st and 2nd Battles of Bull Run. In the South they were called the 1st and 2nd Battles of Manassas. Officially the US Army designates the actions that occurred in the vicinity of Bull Run on 16 - 22 July, 1861 as the Bull Run Campaign, whereas the actions that occurred in the same vicinity on 7 August - 2 September 1862 are designated as the Manassas Campaign.*

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*Part of the Army Heritage Center Foundation's Educational Series*

## Once More Into the Breach: The Battle of Manassas

**(Virginia, 1862)** Just over a year after Charles Perkins and the 1st Massachusetts Infantry set out for Richmond, only to be turned back at Bull Run, the Union Army was once again headed for a fight at Manassas, VA. In August 1862, Union and Confederate armies converged for a second time on the plains of Manassas. The two armies, now made up of seasoned veterans, knew well the realities of war. The Battle of Second Manassas, covering three days, produced far greater carnage and brought the Confederacy to the height of its power.

After Bull Run, General George B. McClellan took command of Federal forces around Washington and created the Army of the Potomac. In March 1862, McClellan left a strong force to cover the capital and moved by water to the tip of the York-James peninsula, only 100 miles southeast of Richmond. Early in April he advanced

toward the Confederate capital.

Anticipating such a move, the Southerners abandoned the Manassas area and marched to meet the Federals. By the end of May, McClellan's troops were within sight of Richmond. Here General Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate Army met the Federals in the bloody but inconclusive Battle of Seven Pines. Johnston was wounded and Confederate President Jefferson Davis placed General Robert E. Lee in command. Seizing the initiative, Lee sent his forces, now called the Army of Northern Virginia, across the Chickahominy River and, in a series of savage battles, pushed McClellan back from the edge of Richmond to a position on the James River.

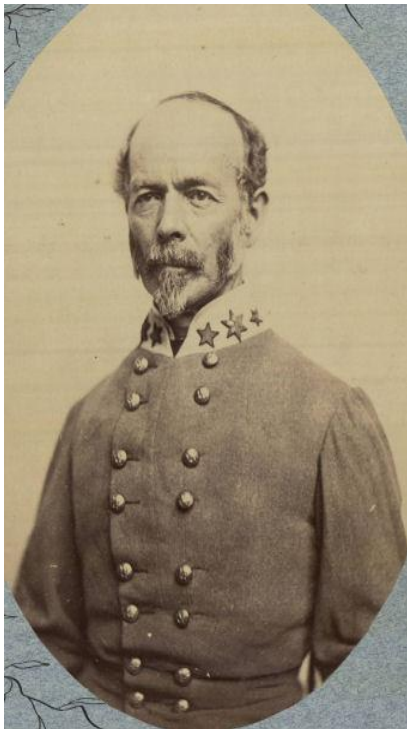
At the same time, scattered Federal forces in northern Virginia were organized



Orange and Alexandria Railroad near the battlefield. Railroads were used to carry troops and supplies. During the Battle of Bull Run, Confederate reinforcements traveled from Piedmont Station to Manassas Junction. The 35 mile trip marked the first time in U.S. history that railroads were tactically used to forward soldiers towards the frontlines of combat. Photo Courtesy of the USAHEC, MASS-MOLLUS Collection.



General John Pope, Army of Virginia. Photo Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



General Joseph E. Johnston, C.S.A. Photo Courtesy of the USAHEC, MASS-MOLLUS Collection.



Stone Hospital. When Perkins escorted a wounded Soldier to a hospital they may have gone to this location. Photo Courtesy of the USAHEC, MASS-MOLLUS Collection.

into the Army of Virginia under the command of General John Pope. Gambling that McClellan was finished, Lee sent Stonewall Jackson's corps northward to "suppress" Pope. Jackson clashed indecisively with part of Pope's troops at Cedar Mountain on August 9. The Army of the Potomac began to withdraw by water to join Pope, so Lee marched with General James Longstreet's corps to bolster Jackson. Pope successfully blocked Lee at the Rapidan River and then withdrew his men north of the Rappahannock. Lee knew that to defeat Pope he had to strike before McClellan arrived in northern Virginia. On August 25, Lee sent Jackson on a 50 mile march around the Union's right flank to strike at Pope's rear.

Two days later, Jackson's troop seized Pope's supply depot at Manassas Junction and began tearing up the tracks of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. After a day of wild feasting, Jackson burned the Federal supplies and moved to a position in the woods at Groveton near the old Manassas battlefield.

Pope, unable to ignore an attack on his supply base, moved towards Manassas. At the same time, Lee

moved northward with Longstreet to reunite his army. To prevent Union efforts to concentrate at Centreville and bring Pope to battle, Jackson ordered his troops to attack a Union column as it marched past on the Warrenton Turnpike on the afternoon of August 28. Thus began the Battle of Manassas.

Convinced that Jackson was isolated, Pope ordered his columns to converge on Groveton. He was sure that he could destroy Jackson before Lee and Longstreet could intervene. On the 29th, Pope's army found Jackson's men posted along an unfinished railroad grade, north of the turnpike. The 1st Massachusetts, including Charles Perkins, was ordered into the line. Perkins wrote:

*"At about 4 o'clock PM we (1st) were reinforced by the rest of the brigade + we were ordered to charge across the R.R. (Manassas Gap) where the Rebels lay. I thought my time had come now sure but was bound to go in did so fired number of Shots while the bullets whistled round me like hail Never was under so severe a fire before Men dropped + fell back wounded by the dozen The trouble was they were Ready for us + were under cover."*

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In a series of uncoordinated attacks, Pope hurled his men against the Confederate position all afternoon. In several places the northerners momentarily breached Jackson's line but each time were forced back. During the afternoon, Longstreet's troops arrived on the battlefield and, unknown to Pope, deployed on Jackson's right, overlapping the exposed Union left. Lee urged Longstreet to attack, but "Old Pete" demurred. "The time was just not right," he said. Meanwhile, Perkins made his way to the rear:

*"we Skedaddled out of the woods double quick. I was so played out + tired I kept onto the Rear Helped a fellow by the name of Walton Co. I 11th Mass. Off to the Surgeons. He was wounded in the left breast + left arm which I tied a handkerchief around until he got to surgeons + had it dressed. He gave me a pistol to give to his Captain to have him send to his sister if he could."*

The morning of August 30 passed quietly. Just before noon, thinking the Confederates were retreating, Pope ordered his army forward in "pursuit." The pursuit, however, was short-lived; Lee had gone nowhere. Pope ordered yet another attack against Jackson's line. The southerners held firm, and Pope's men were hurled back in a bloody repulse. Seeing the Union lines in disarray, Longstreet attacked and staggered the Union left. Pope's army risked annihilation. Only a heroic stand by northern troops, first on Chinn Ridge and then once again on Henry Hill, bought time for Pope's hard-pressed Union forces. Finally, under cover of darkness, the defeated Union army withdrew across Bull Run towards the defenses of Washington. Lee's bold and brilliant Second Manassas campaign opened the way for the South's first invasion of the north and a bid for foreign intervention.

### Source

Portions of this Article Courtesy of National Park Service

<http://www.nps.gov/mana/historyculture/second-manassas.htm>



Soldiers pose near the O&A Railroad Bridge over Bull Run. Photo Courtesy of the USAHEC, MASS-MOLLUS Collection.