

OVERVIEW AND MAJOR BATTLES OF THE CIVIL WAR: Ed Seufert

QUESTION: Did America have a **CIVIL WAR?**

Merriam-Webster:

A war between opposing groups of citizens within the same country or nation.

It's an armed conflict where factions within a single country fight over **control, policies, or independence**, contrasting with a foreign war.

Examples of Civil Wars:

Then English had a Civil War from **1642-1651** between the **Parliamentarians** (Roundheads) and the **Royalists** (Cavaliers)

Then Russians had a Civil War from **1917-1923** between the **Reds** (Bolsheviks) and the **Whites** (Anti-Bolsheviks)

Then Spanish had a Civil War from **1936-1939** between the **Republicans** (Left-Wing groups) and the **Nationalists** (Fascists)

**Or Did America have a WAR between two
Sovereign nations?**

I would propose that America had a war between
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA and
THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA.

Maybe a more accurate description would be:

THE WAR FOR SOUTHERN INDEPENDENCE
OR
THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

I think the **UNION** had a **Civil War!**

Lecture 1 (Jan 12, 2026):

- . Introduction
- . Fort Sumter (**April 12-14, 1861**)
- . First Bull Run (**July 21, 1861**)
- . ANACONDA Strategy (**1861-65**)
- . Western Rivers Strategy
- . Fort Henry (**Feb 8, 1862**)
- . Fort Donelson (**Feb 11-16, 1862**)
- . Capture of Nashville (**Feb 25, 1862**)
- . Battle of Hampton Roads (**March 8-9, 1862**)
(Monitor vs Virginia)

Lecture 2 (Jan 26, 2026):

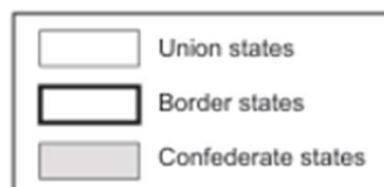
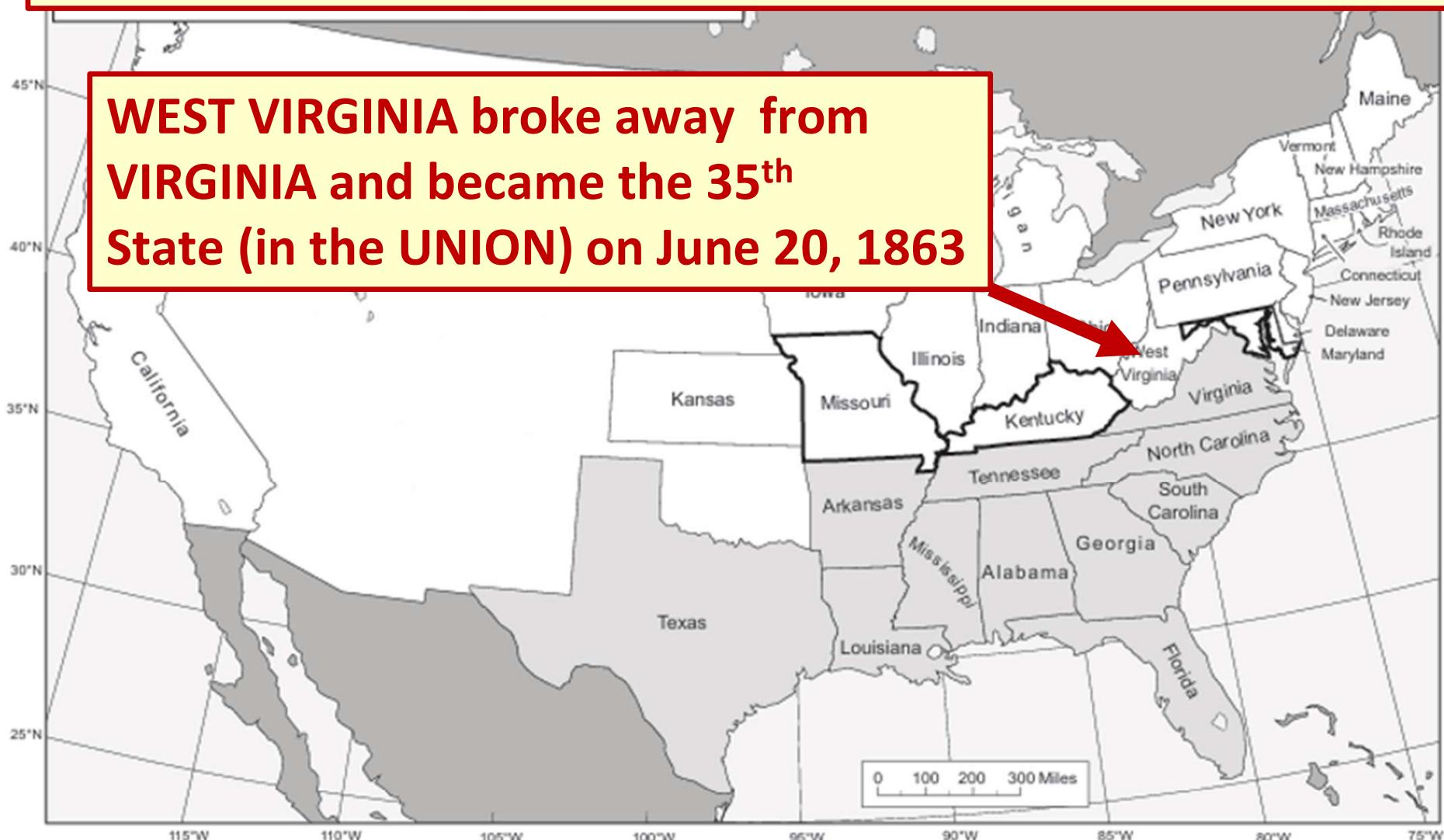
- Shiloh (April 6-7, 1862)
- Antietam (Sept 17, 1862)

Lecture 3 (Feb 10):

- Fredericksburg (Dec 11-15, 1862)
- Chancellorsville (April 30-May 6, 1863)

THE UNION; CONFEDERATE, & BORDER STATES

WEST VIRGINIA broke away from VIRGINIA and became the 35th State (in the UNION) on June 20, 1863

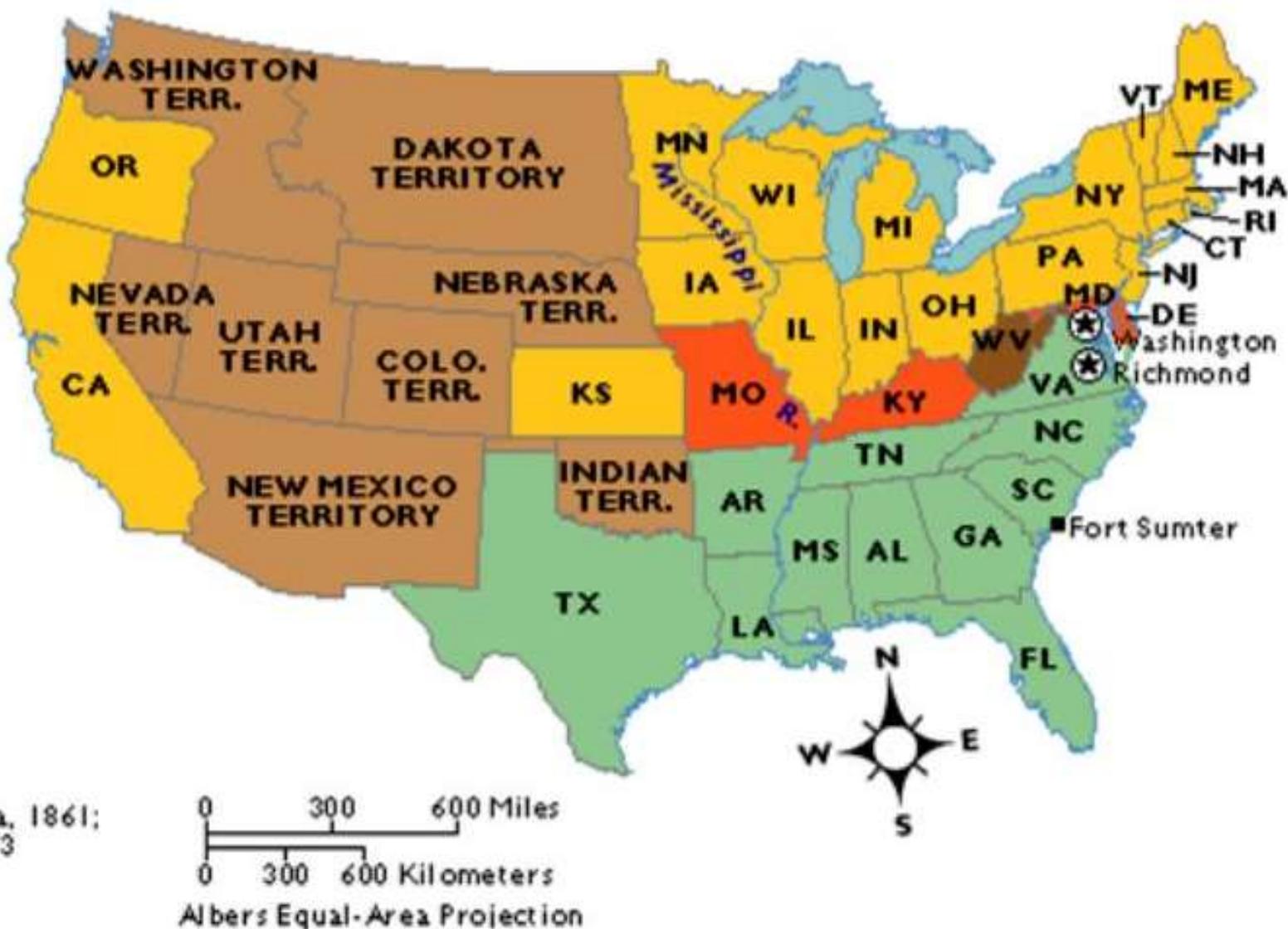


Courtesy: Arizona Geographic Alliance <http://geoalliance.asu.edu>
School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning
Arizona State University
Cartographer Becky Eden

CivilWar.pdf12

THE UNION; CONFEDERATE, & BORDER STATES

SECESSION	
SC	Dec. 20, 1860
MS	Jan. 9, 1861
FL	Jan. 10, 1861
AL	Jan. 11, 1861
GA	Jan. 19, 1861
LA	Jan. 26, 1861
TX	Feb. 1, 1861
VA	April 17, 1861
AR	May 6, 1861
TN	May 6, 1861
NC	May 20, 1861





Battle of Fort Sumter

April 12-13, 1861; Charleston Harbor, SC

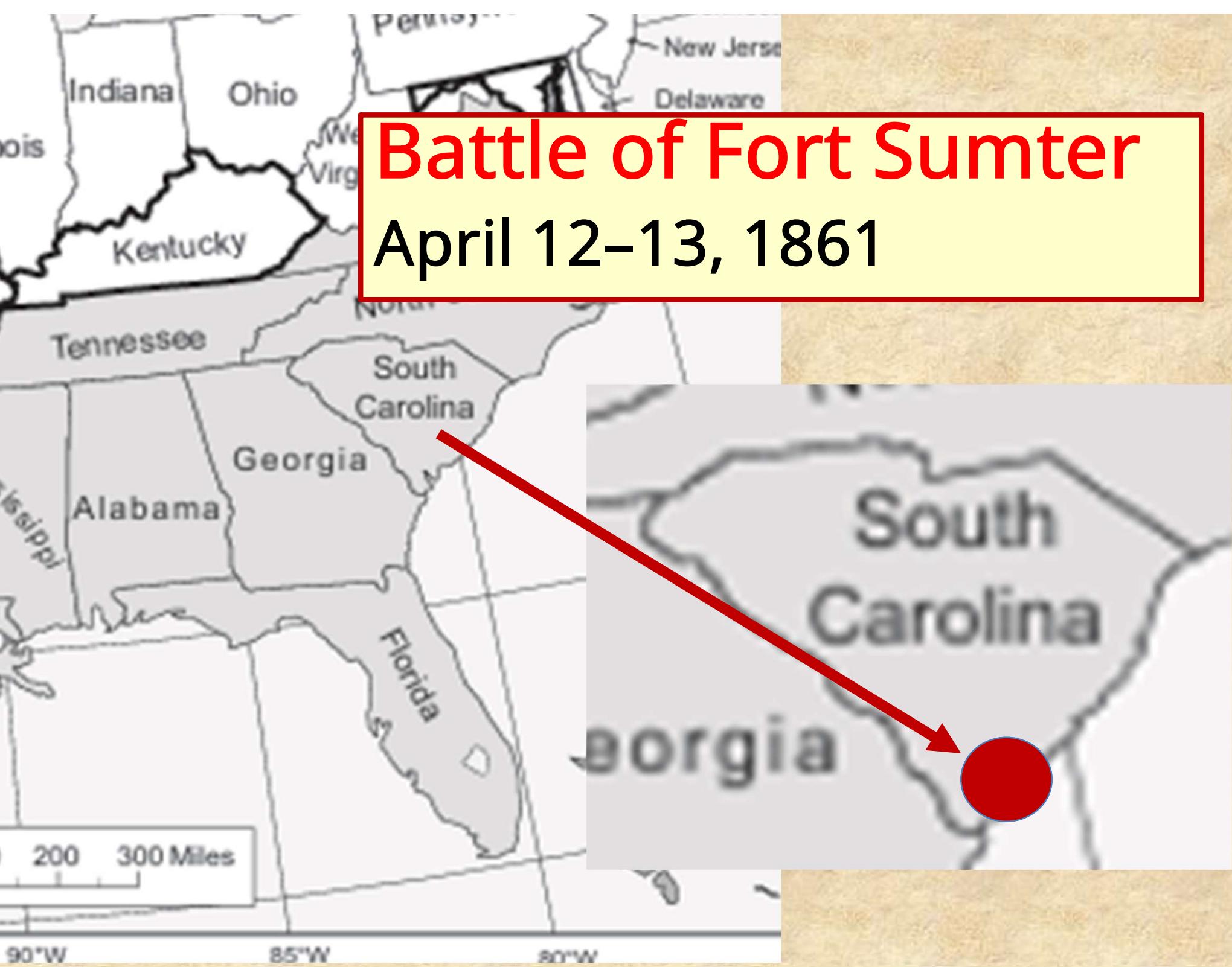
- First battle of the Civil War
- Confederate attack on U.S. fort
- Union surrender after bombardment

Key Takeaway:

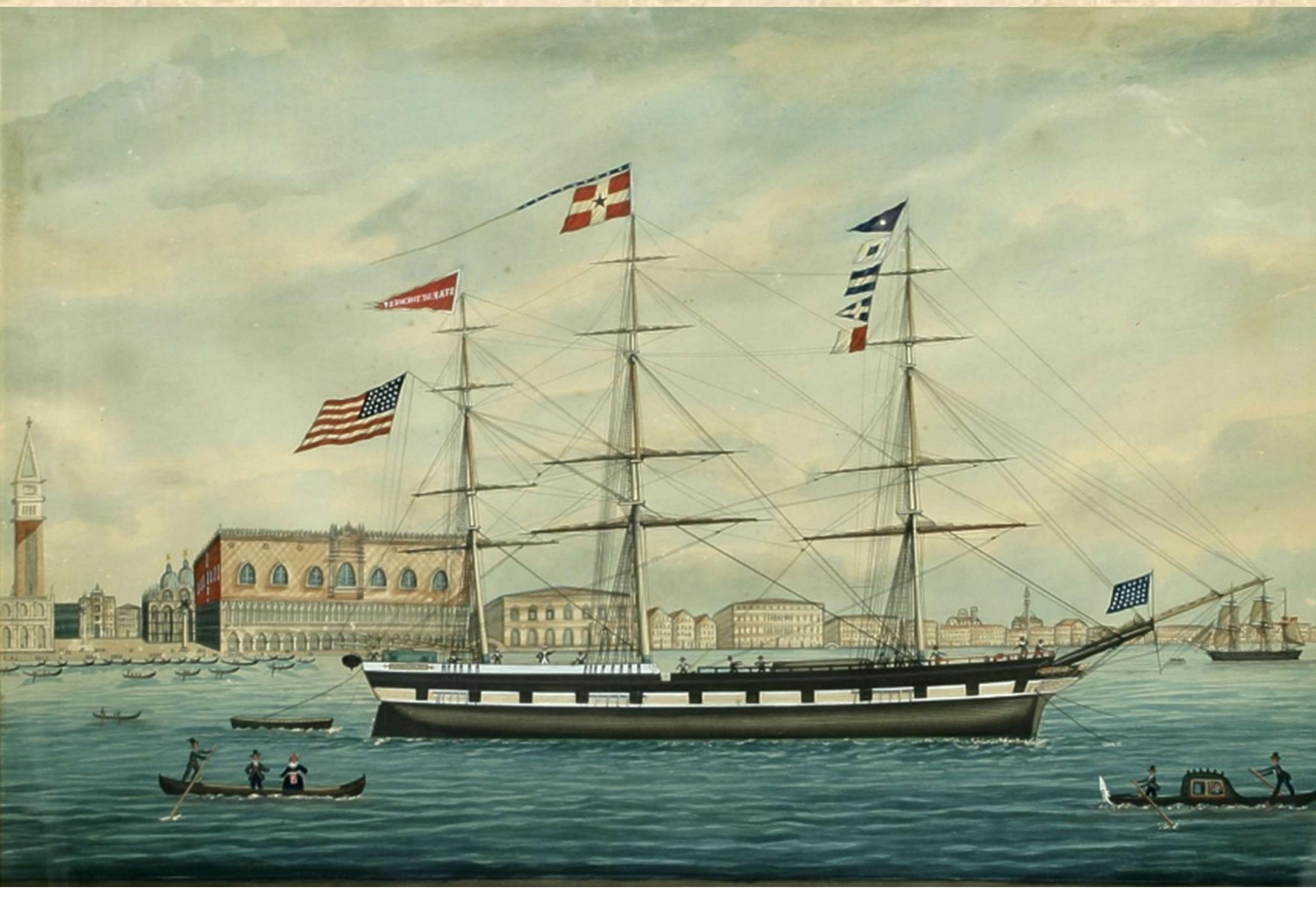
The Civil War began when Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter.

Battle of Fort Sumter

April 12-13, 1861

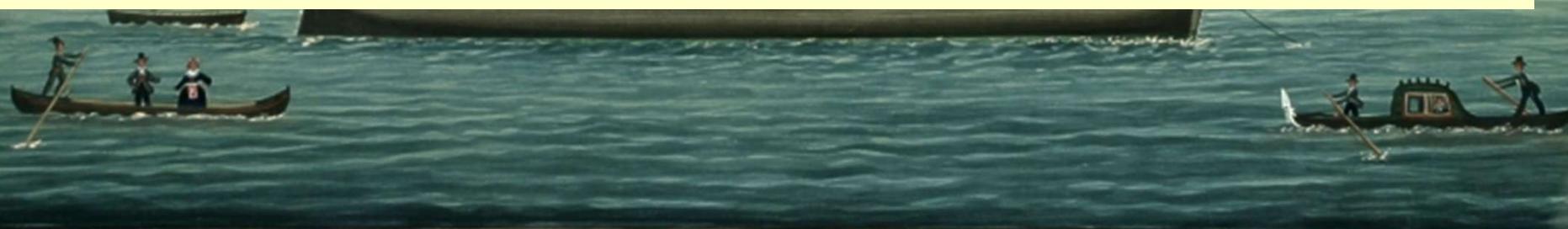


"STAR OF THE WEST" Union Supply Ship for Fort Sumter

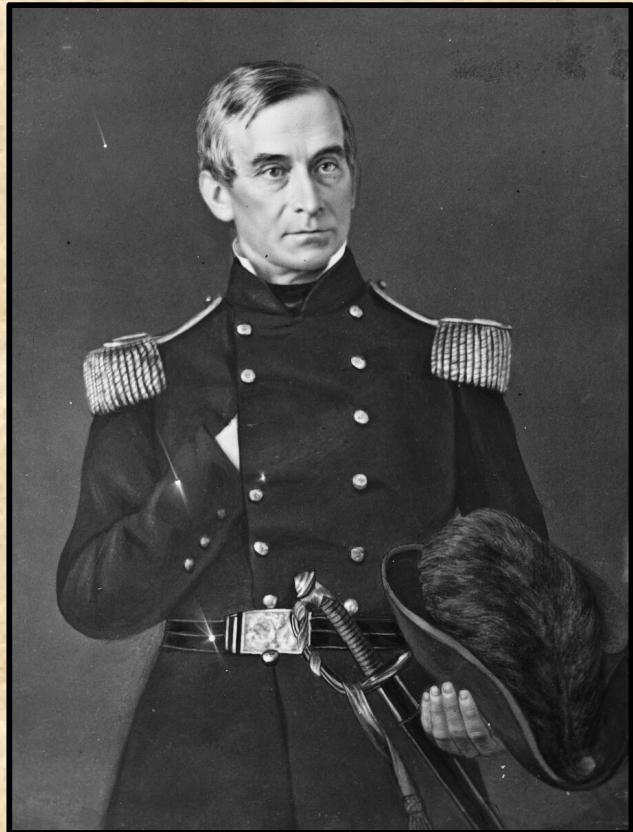


"STAR OF THE WEST" Union Supply Ship for Fort Sumter

- ❑ Before Fort Sumter was fired on in April, the United States tried to quietly resupply the fort. On January 9, 1861, a civilian ship called the Star of the West sailed into Charleston Harbor carrying food and soldiers.
- ❑ After taking fire from the Confederate Forts, the ship was forced to turn back. No one was killed, but this showed that compromise had failed and that armed conflict had already begun—even before the official start of the Civil War.”



Commanders at the Battle of Fort Sumter



Union Commander:

Major Robert Anderson

Role: Defended Fort Sumter

Surrendered to avoid loss of life



Confederate Commander:

Brigadier General

P.G.T. Beauregard

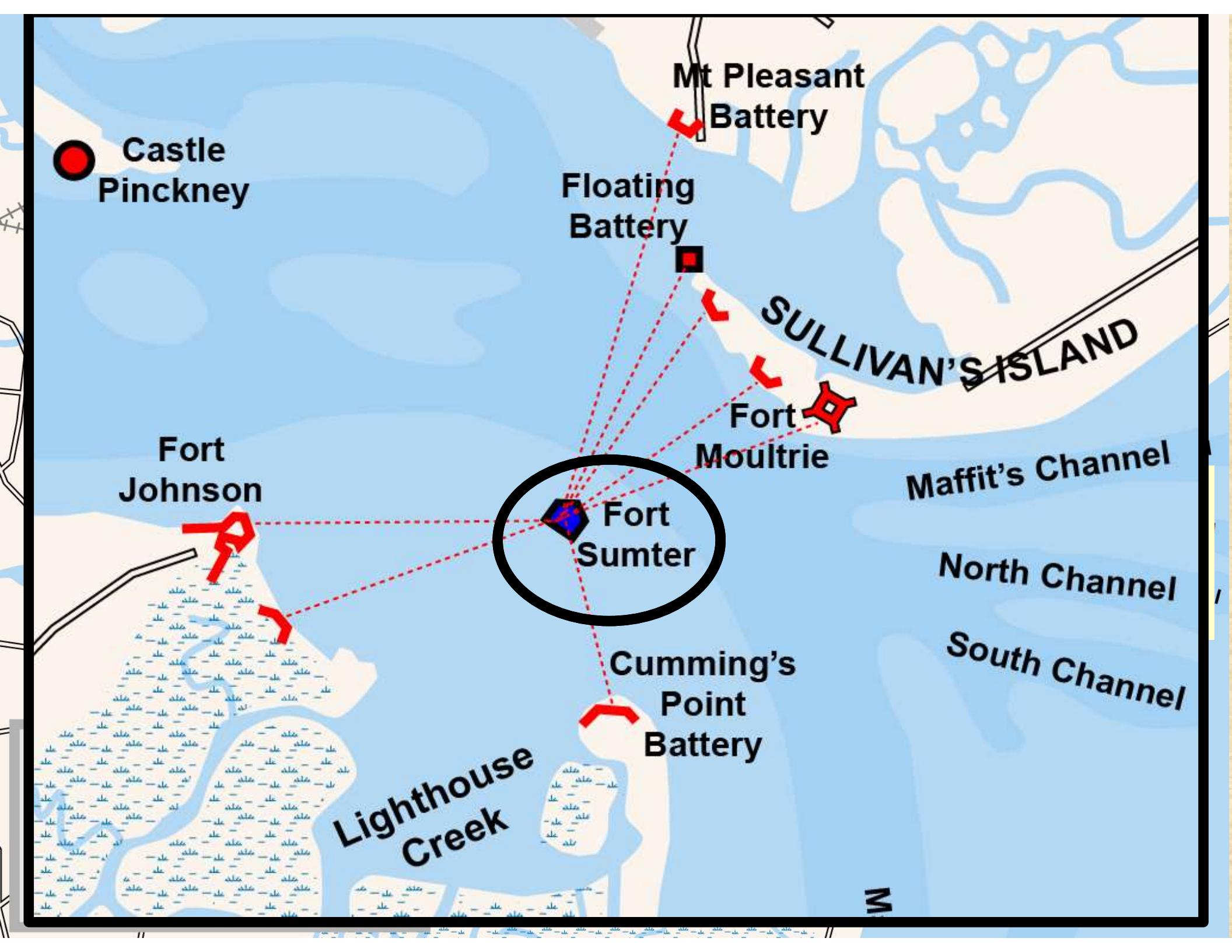
Role: Ordered bombardment to force Federal Surrender of Fort Sumter

Charleston Harbor, early morning of April 12, 1861

Major Anderson wrote this letter back to General Beauregard:

“General: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication informing me that you will open the fire of your batteries on Fort Sumter in one hour from this time. I am not aware that any war exists between the Government of the United States and the Confederate States, and I shall not feel myself bound to reply to your communication by any other act than that of preparing to defend the fort. I shall await the first shot, and if fired upon, shall defend myself to the last extremity.”

— Robert Anderson



THE IRONY

- Robert Anderson was a U.S. Army officer and Instructor of Soldiers.
- P.G.T. Beauregard studied under Anderson at West Point Military Academy.
- Years later, **Beauregard** ordered the bombardment of **Anderson's** fort at Fort Sumter.



Impact of the Battle of Fort Sumter

- ❑ Turned a political crisis into open war
- ❑ Ended hopes for a peaceful compromise
- ❑ Prompted President Lincoln to call for Volunteers
- ❑ Forced Americans to choose sides

Key Takeaway:

- ❖ With the firing on Fort Sumter, the nation crossed a point of no return.
- ❖ Both sides believed the war would be short.

The First Battle of Bull Run

would prove them wrong!



First Battle of Bull Run

July 21, 1861; Near Manassas, Virginia

- First major land battle of the Civil War
- Fought near Washington, D.C.
- Large numbers of untrained volunteers
- Both sides expected a quick victory

Key Takeaway:

Bull Run revealed that the Civil War would be long, difficult, and costly.



First Battle of Bull Run

July 21, 1861



Commanders at the First Battle of Bull Run



Significance:

- Commanded the Union's first field army of the war
- Led mostly inexperienced volunteer troops
- Operated under intense political pressure to act quickly
- His defeat revealed the Union was unprepared for large-scale war

UNION: Irvin McDowell

Why he matters:

McDowell's failure demonstrated that enthusiasm could not replace training and organization.

Commanders at the First Battle of Bull Run



Significance:

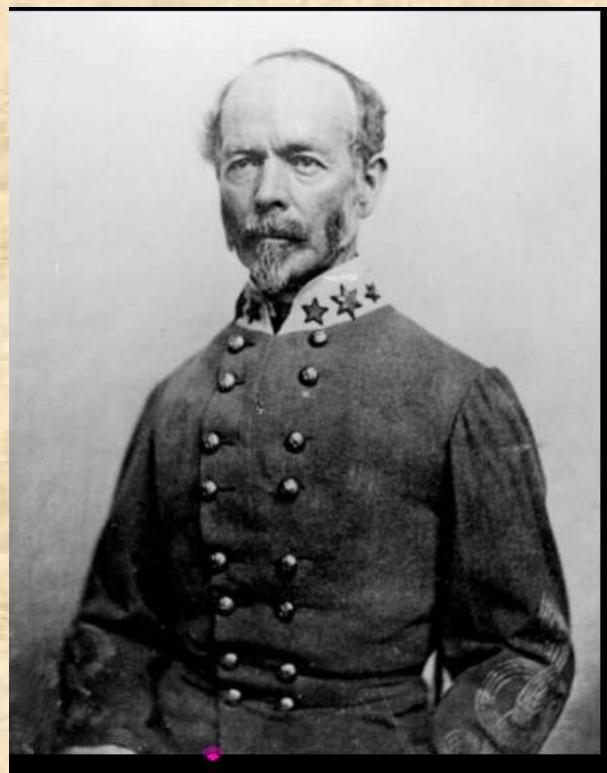
- One of the Confederacy's first prominent battlefield commanders (Commanded troops at Ft. Sumter)
- Organized defensive positions around Manassas.
- Helped coordinate Confederate forces at a critical early stage

Confederate:
P. G. T. Beauregard

Why he matters:

Beauregard's success boosted Confederate confidence and legitimacy.

Commanders at the First Battle of Bull Run



Significance:

- Reinforced Beauregard with troops from the Shenandoah Valley
- Used railroads to move soldiers quickly—an innovation in warfare
- His arrival helped turn the tide of the battle

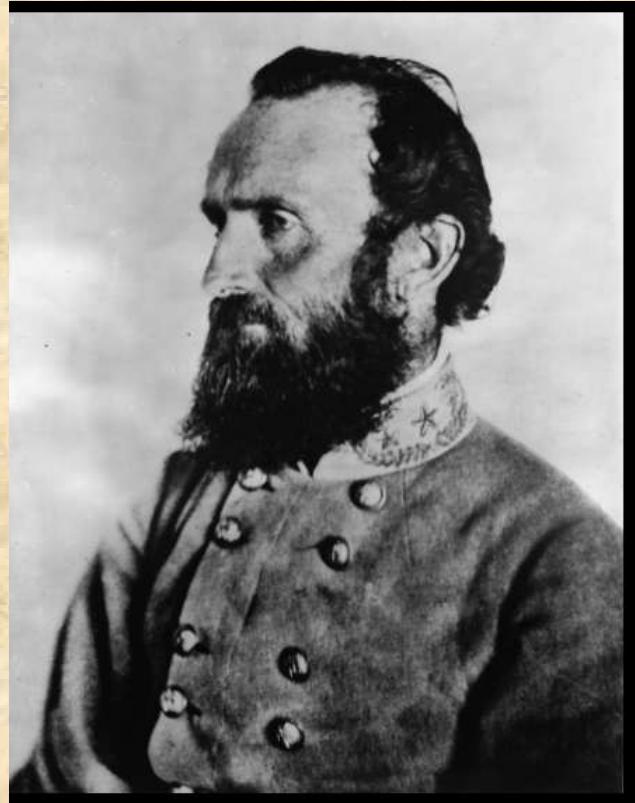
Confederate:

Joseph E. Johnston

Why he matters:

Johnston showed how modern transportation could decide battles.

Commanders at the First Battle of Bull Run



Significance:

- Held firm under heavy pressure at a decisive moment.
- Earned the nickname “Stonewall” for his steadfast defense.
- Became a symbol of Confederate resolve

Confederate: Thomas J. Jackson

Why he matters:

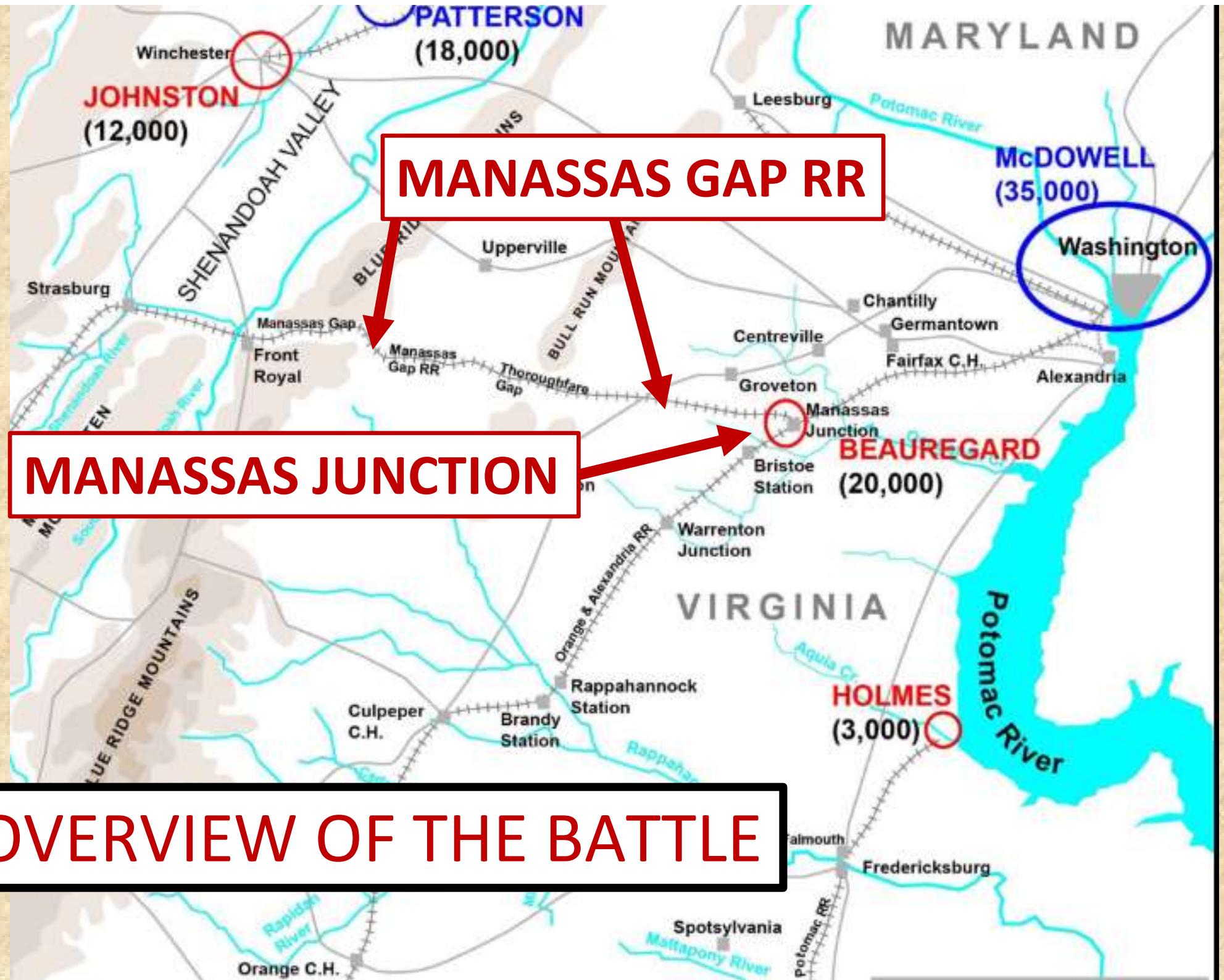
Jackson's stand prevented a Confederate collapse and changed the course of the battle.

During a critical moment on July 21, 1861, as Confederate lines wavered, Barnard E. Bee pointed toward Jackson's brigade and reportedly said:

“There is Jackson standing like a stone wall. Rally behind the Virginians!”

Hence his famous Nickname:

STONEWALL JACKSON





- Union army moves south; Led by Irvin McDowell
- Troops mostly untrained volunteers



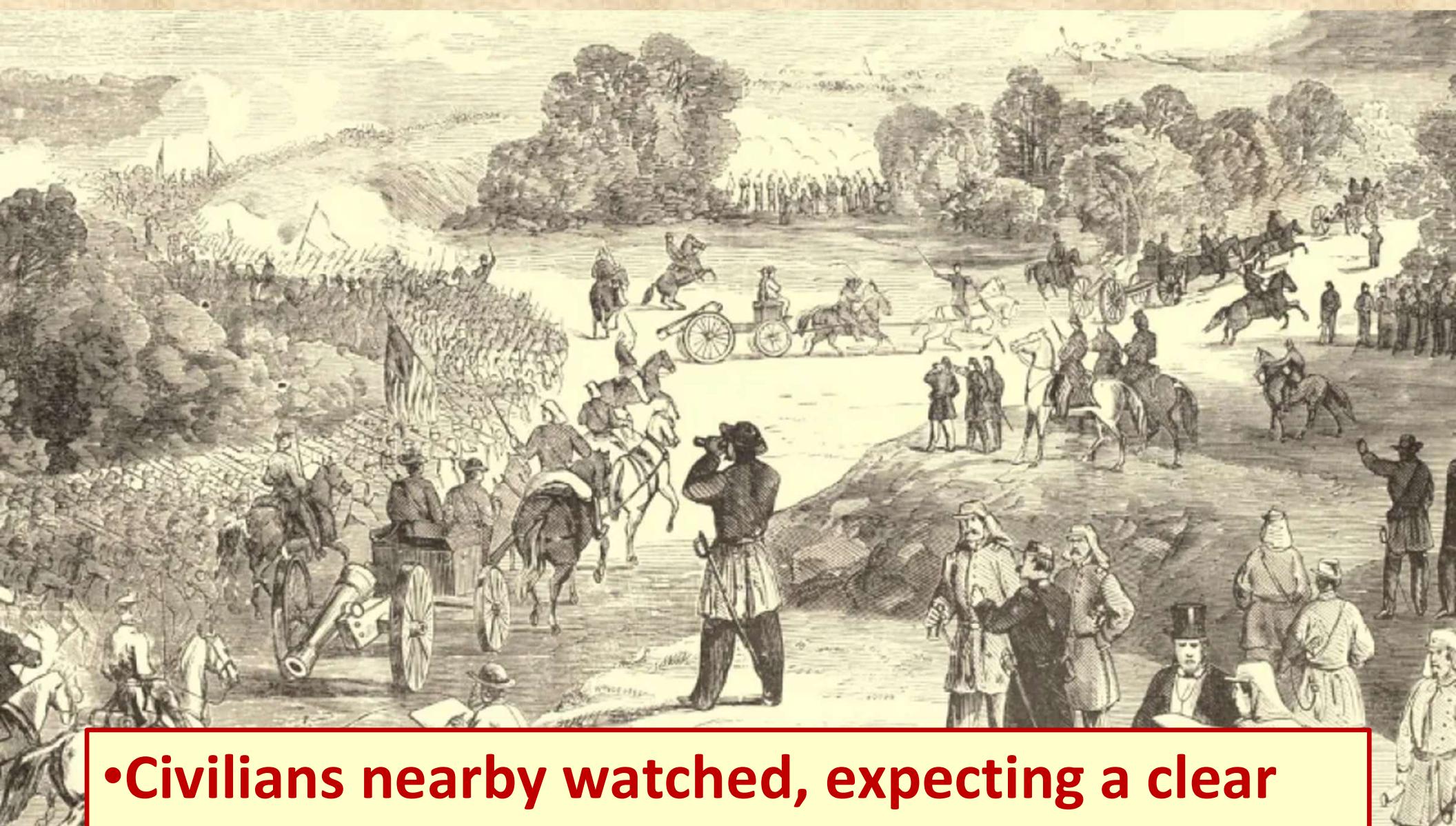
Key Point:

- *Confidence was high – experience was low.*

OVERVIEW OF THE BATTLE



Spectators at Manassas Watch Marching Troops



- Civilians nearby watched, expecting a clear and quick outcome



Picnic at the Battlefield of Bull Run



The Battle Begins — Morning of July 21, 1861

- The fighting began early in the morning, not as a surprise attack

- Both armies believed this would be a decisive, one-day battle

- Union troops advanced confidently toward Confederate positions

- Many soldiers were new volunteers with little combat experience

☒ The Battle Begins — Morning of July 21, 1861

- Civilians nearby watched, expecting a clear and quick outcome

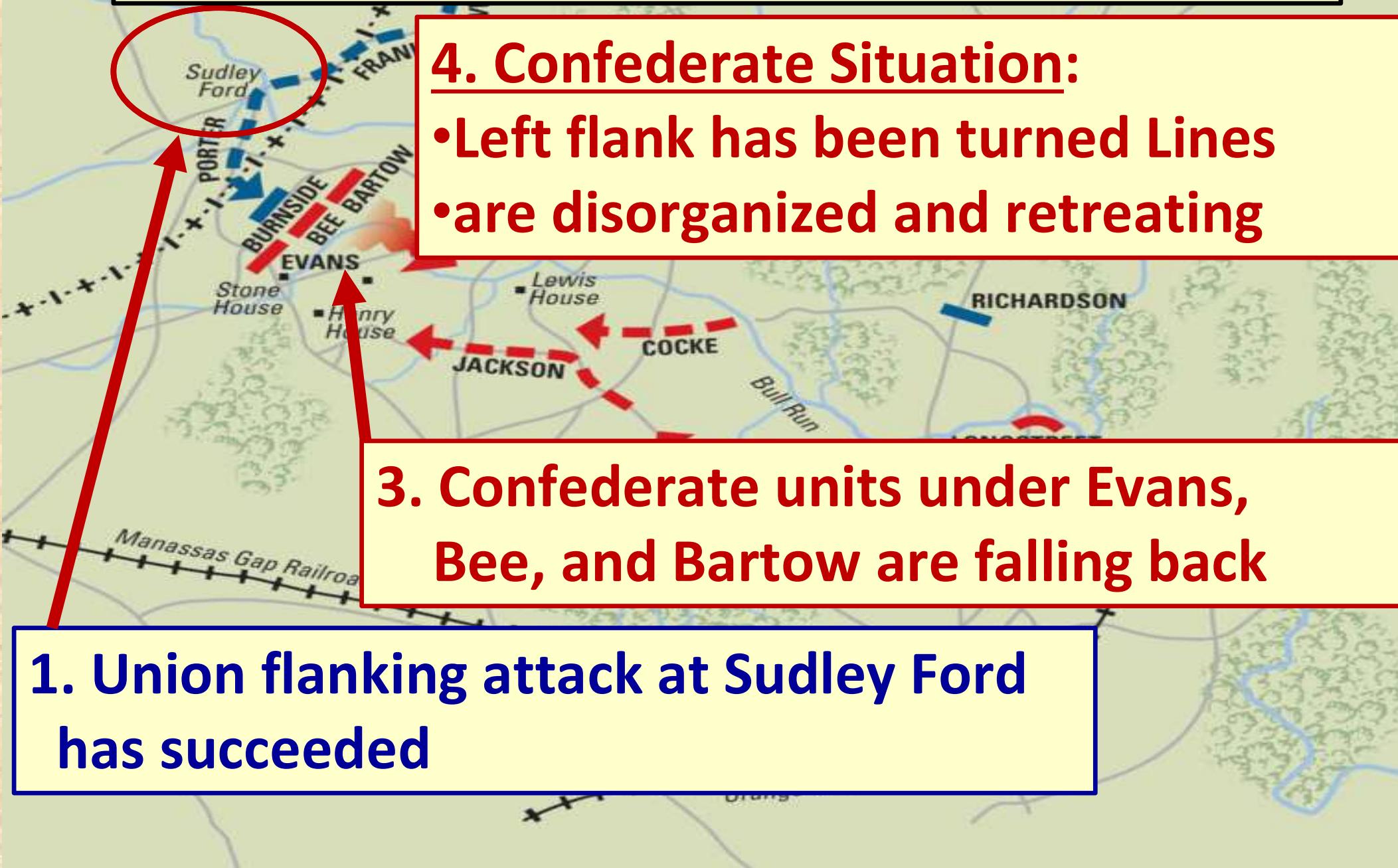
Key Takeaway:

The opening of the battle reflected confidence, inexperience, and unrealistic expectations — on both sides.

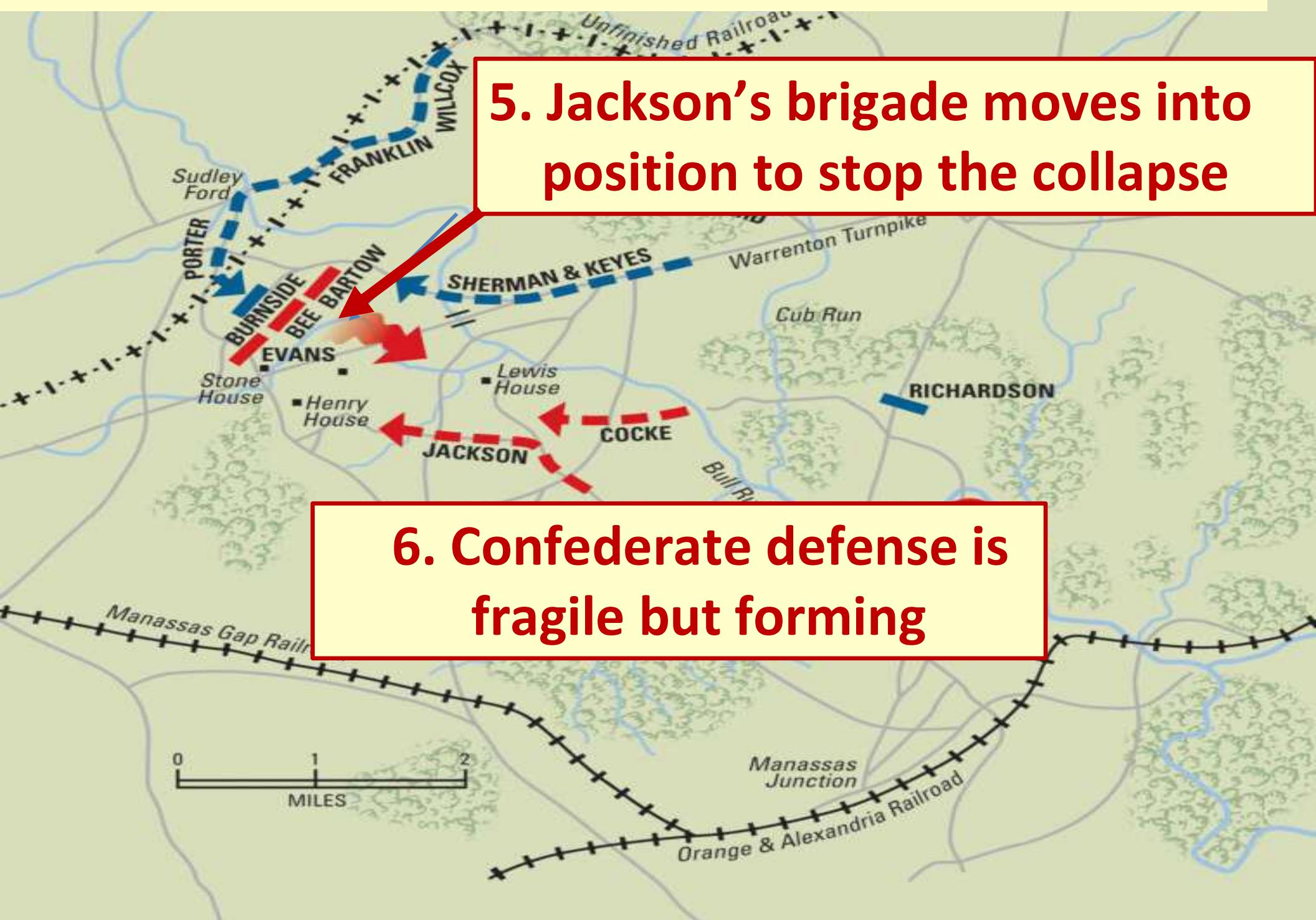


⚔️ Midday Turning Point; Late Morning to Midday

2. Union forces believe victory is close!



⚔️ Midday Turning Point; Late Morning to Midday



Late Afternoon Collapse; Mid- to Late Afternoon

7. Union Situation:

Attacks become uncoordinated and piecemeal

8. Units are mixed together and hard to control;
Artillery positions are overrun or abandoned



9. Morale collapses as resistance stiffens
and then advances



Late Afternoon Collapse; Mid- to Late Afternoon

10. Confederate Situation:

Jackson's line remains firm at the center



11. Confederate Situation:

- Fresh troops press forward on both flanks
- Confederate forces shift from defense to offense

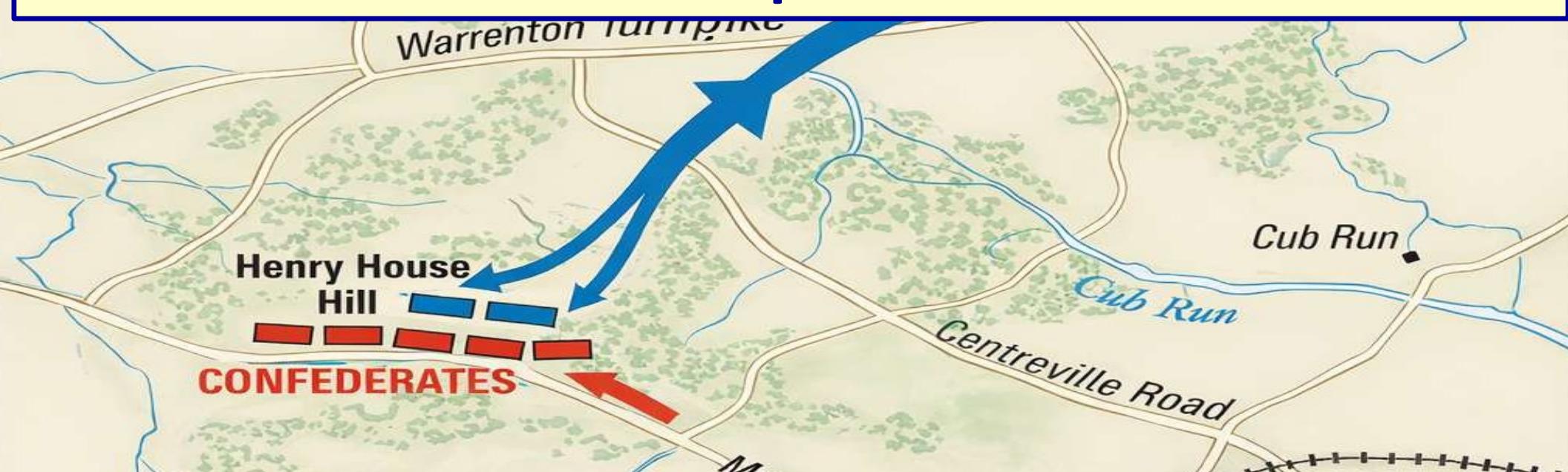
12. Momentum clearly belongs to the Confederacy

☒ The Union Retreat from Bull Run; Late afternoon into early evening

WASHINGTON

What Happened During the Retreat?

13. Union resistance collapsed late in the afternoon



14. Panic spread rapidly toward Centreville
and Washington

☒ The Union Retreat from Bull Run; Late afternoon into early evening

WASHINGTON

15. Withdrawal along the Warrenton Turnpike became chaotic



16. Soldiers, officers, supply wagons, and **CIVILIANS** crowded the roads



17. Panic spread rapidly toward Centreville and Washington

0 | 1 mile

Union retreat from Bull Run
Retreat becomes a rout



“The Rout at Bull Run”

— Union Soldiers and Civilians Fleeing



The Missed Confederate Opportunity: *What Was Possible?*

- The road to Washington, D.C. lay open
- Union defenses around the capital were weak
- A rapid pursuit *might* have threatened the city

Many observers later asked:

Why didn't the Confederates march on Washington?

Why the Confederates Did NOT Pursue

- Confederate troops were as exhausted as the Union troops.
- Commanders lacked accurate information about Union strength
- Units were badly disorganized after hours of fighting
- Victory had come suddenly — and the Confederate army was not prepared to exploit it.

Why the Confederates Did NOT Pursue



Key Takeaway

Bull Run ended with a Union rout, but Confederate exhaustion and disorganization prevented a decisive pursuit—allowing the Union to survive and the war to continue.

The Anaconda Strategy: Strangling the Confederacy

- After the shock of BULL RUN, Union leaders realized this war would not be over quick.
- Winfield Scott, General-in-Chief of the U.S. Army, proposed a long-term plan to starve and strangle the Confederacy
- Named after the **anaconda snake**, which kills by slow constriction, not quick strikes
- Designed to avoid massive bloodshed and end the war through economic pressure

SCOTT'S GREAT SNAKE.

Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1861, by J. B. ELLIOTT of Cincinnati in the Clerks Office of the District Court of the Southern District of Ohio.



INDUSTRY & AGRICULTURE IN THE NORTH & SOUTH

The North's advantages:

- Larger population
- Greater industrial capacity
- Strong navy



The South's strengths:

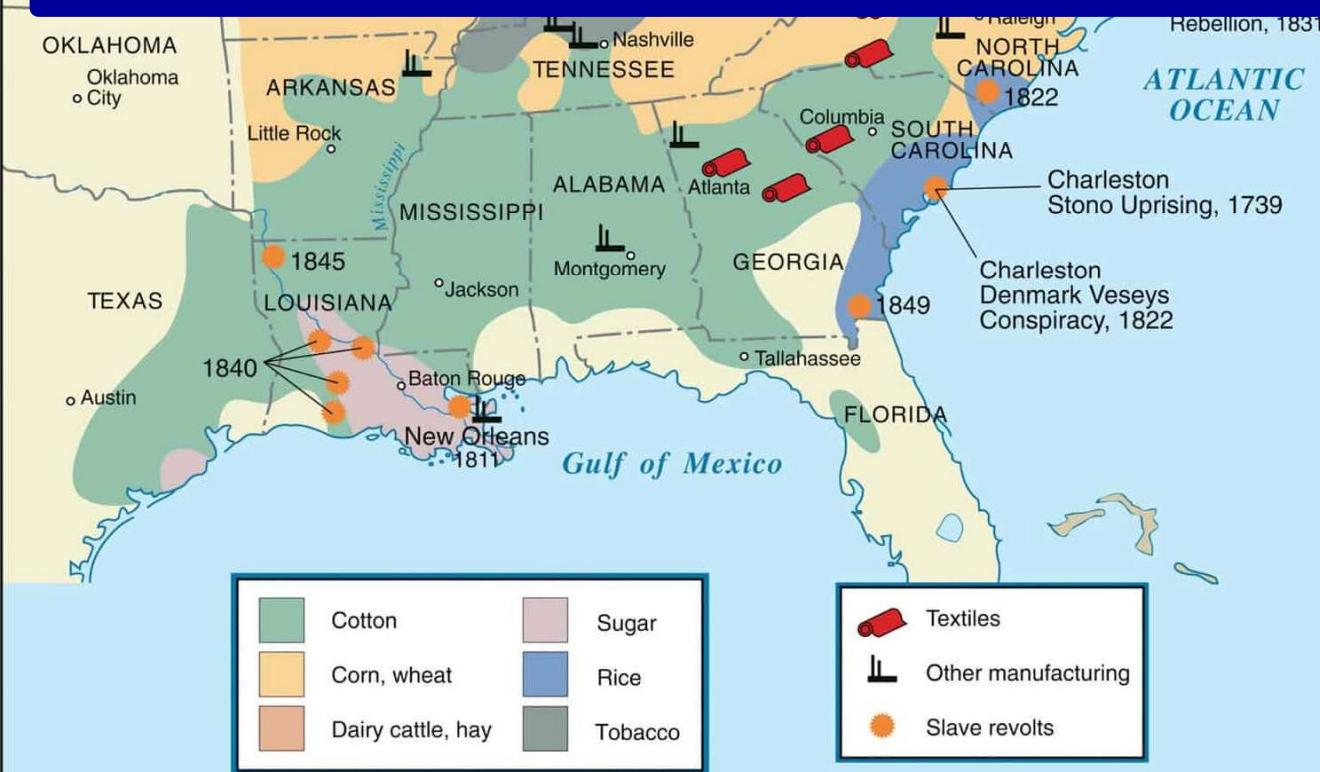
- Defensive fighting on home territory
- Agricultural exports (especially cotton)
- Hope of foreign recognition



INDUSTRY & AGRICULTURE IN THE NORTH & SOUTH



The Union could out-produce the South—but not necessarily out-fight them quickly. Scott believed the Union should use its strengths and deny the South theirs.



The Two Main Components of the Anaconda Plan

Component 1: Naval Blockade

- Block Southern ports from Virginia to Texas
- Prevent export of cotton
- Stop import of weapons, supplies, and medicine

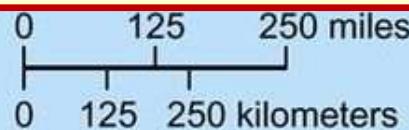
Component 2: Control of the Mississippi River

- Split the Confederacy in two
- Isolate Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana
- Cut off vital food and manpower

“Like a snake tightening its grip, the plan aimed to slowly cut off the Confederacy’s ability to breathe—economically and militarily.”



“The strategy did not win the war overnight—but it steadily weakened the Confederacy until collapse became inevitable.”



THE WESTERN RIVER STRATEGY:

Turn Rivers into Invasion Highways

This is the western complement to the
Anaconda Strategy.

Instead of a slow **coastal blockade**,
the Union uses **geography** as a weapon.

Rivers are not **obstacles** —
They are **high-speed supply lines**.

**Control the rivers and you outflank entire
Confederate defensive lines without massive battles.**

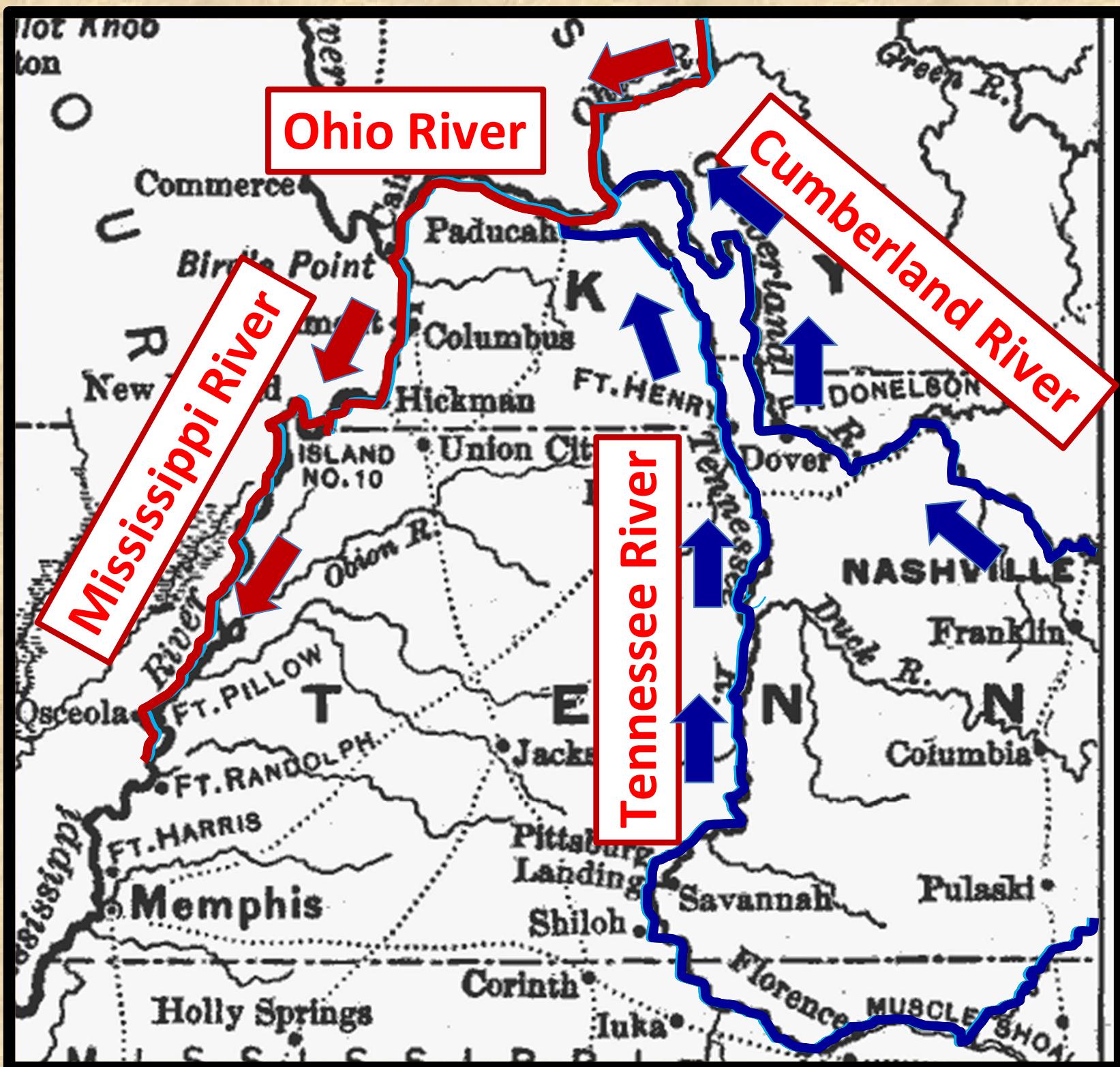
THE WESTERN RIVER STRATEGY:

Takeaway:

*Whoever controls the rivers controls
the Western Theater*

THE WESTERN RIVER STRATEGY:





THE WESTERN RIVER STRATEGY:

Union gunboats steam upstream (southward) to engage forts.

If damaged they float north into friendly territory.

Confederate forts are fixed in place —

They can't withdraw.

Confederate field armies struggle to respond because rivers move faster than marching columns.

Takeaway:

Union gunboats can attack, disengage, repair, and return — Confederate forts get one chance.

THE WESTERN RIVER STRATEGY:

Union gunboats steam upstream (southward) to engage forts.

If damaged they

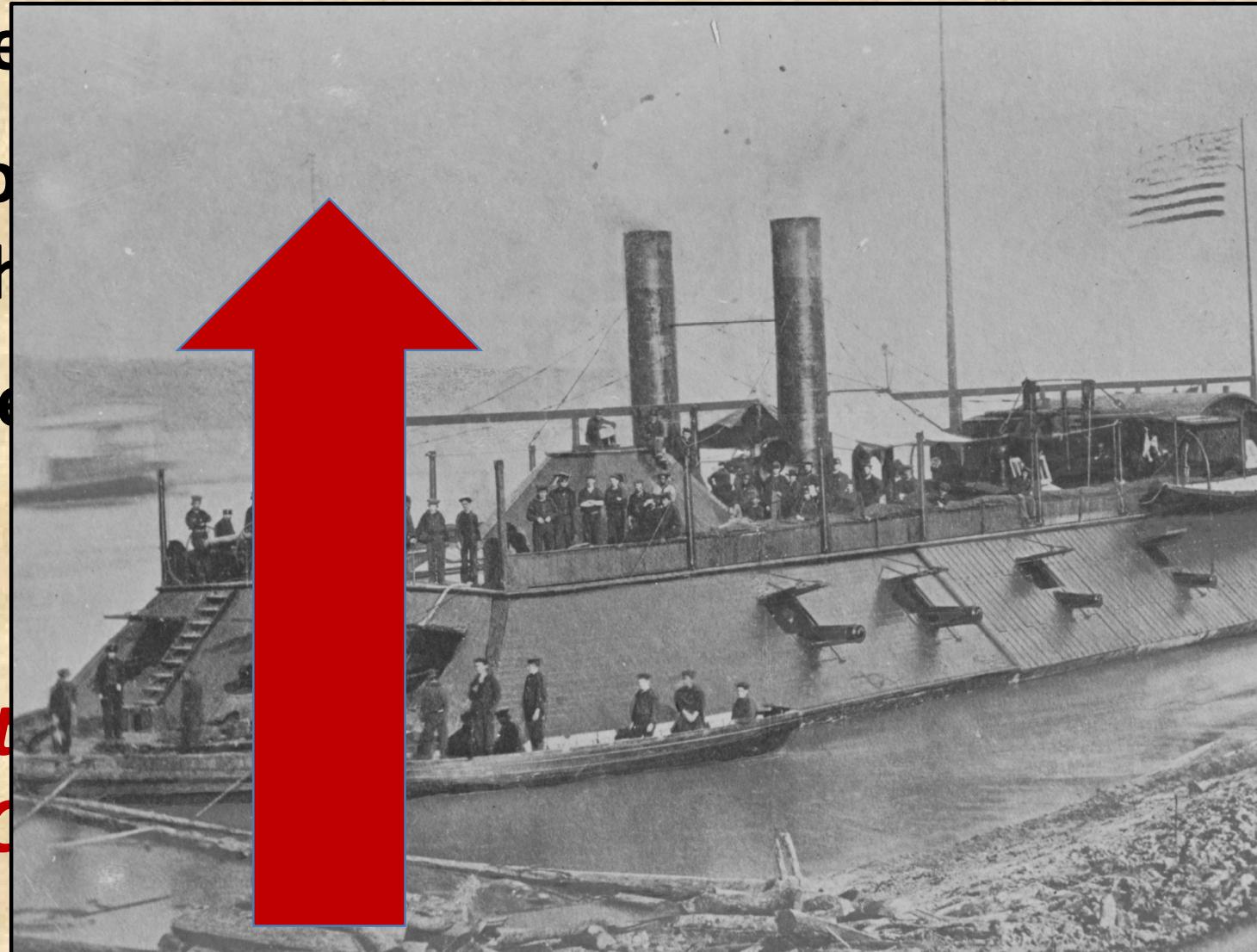
Confederate forces

They can't withdraw

Confederate forces
because **rivers**

Takeaway:

Union gunboats
attack and return – C



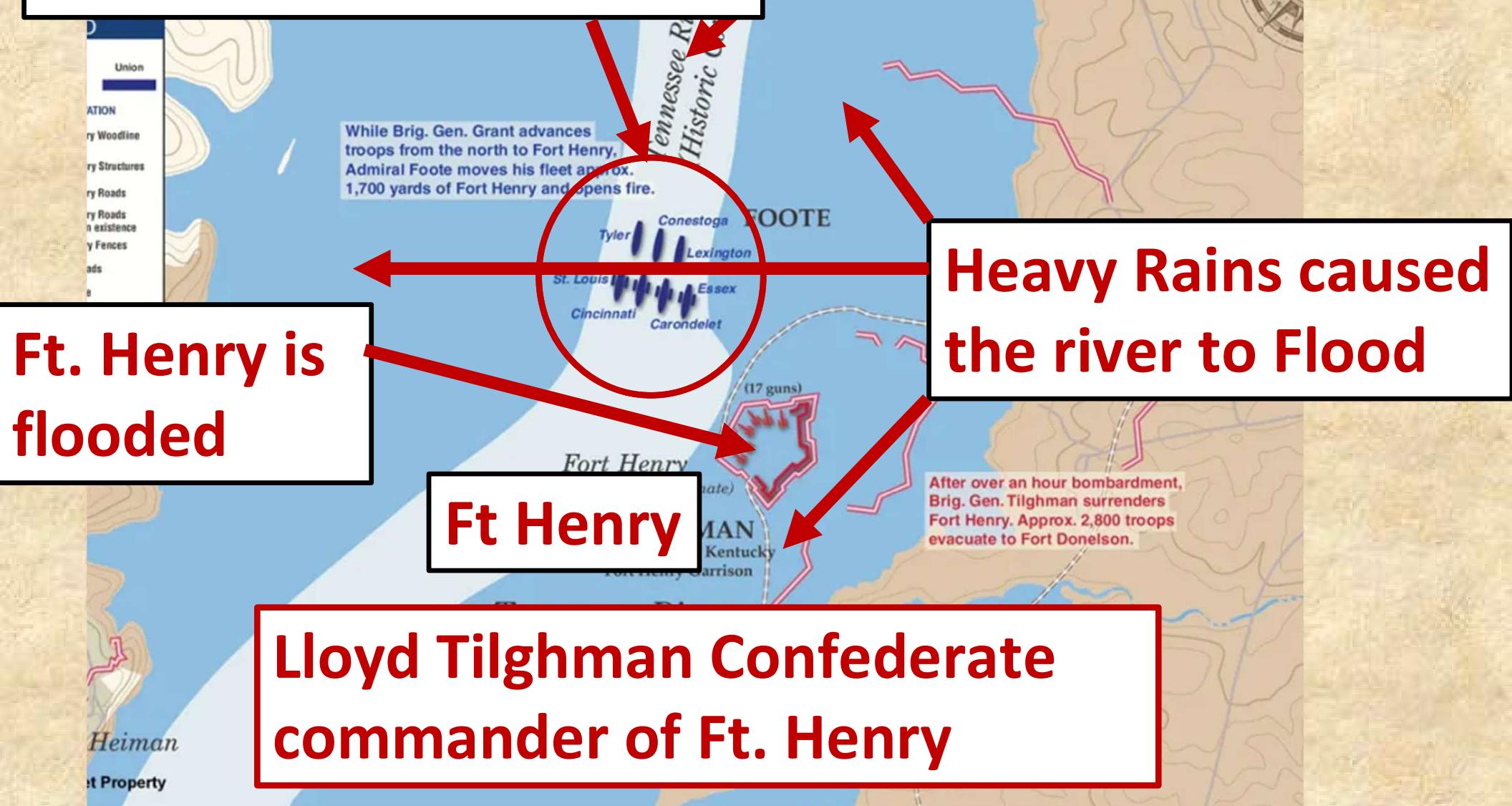
The Western River Strategy

Applied

The Attack on Fort Henry - Tennessee River

Admiral Andrew Foote attacks Ft Henry close in with his Gunboats!

Normal Course of Tennessee River





The Attack on Fort Henry - Tennessee River

February 6, 1862

Union ironclads moved down the Tennessee River, closed to **point-blank range** and pounded the fort

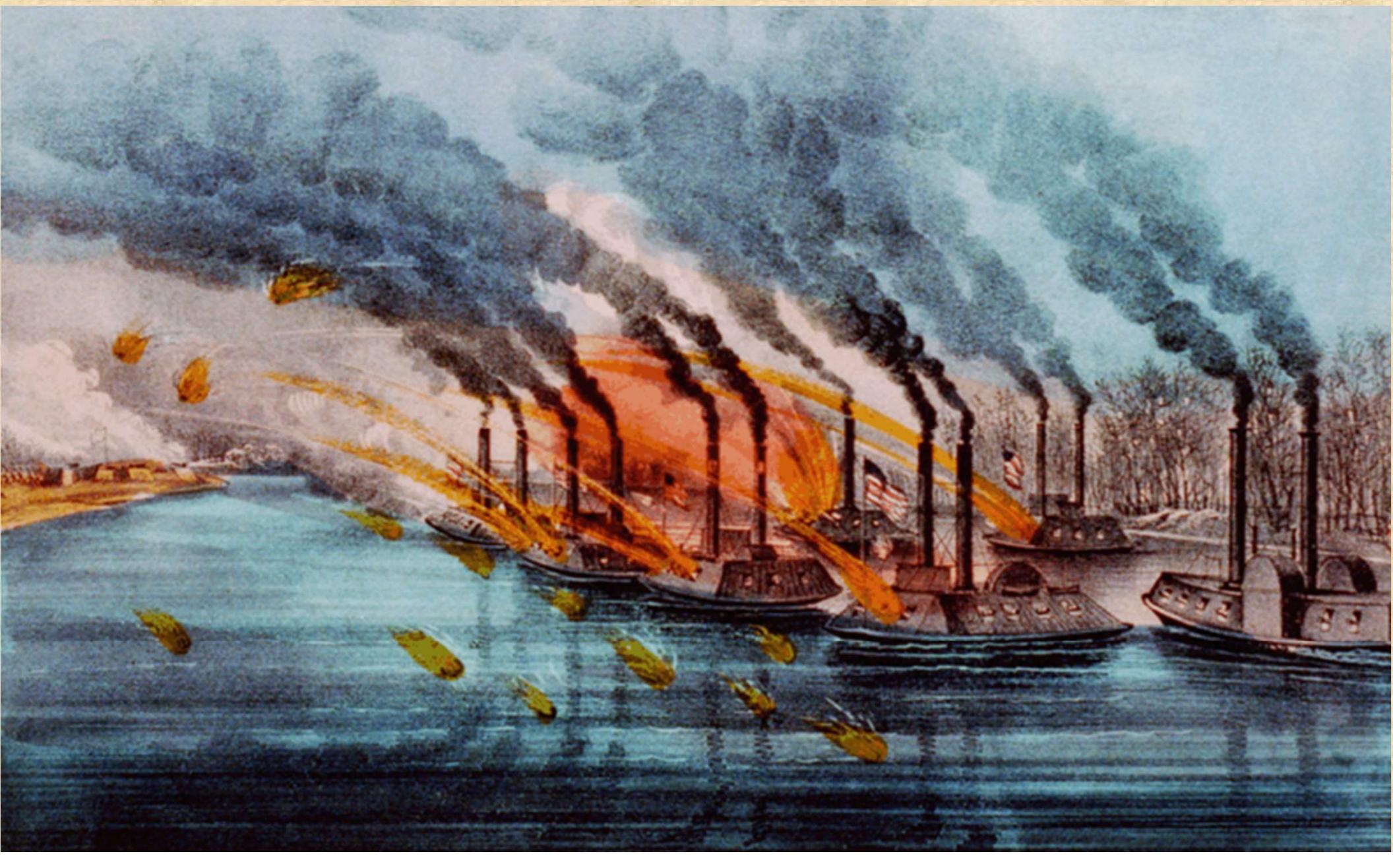
The fort was **flooded by heavy rains**; only a few cannon were still usable.

Most Confederate troops were sent away toward Fort Donelson.

Commander Tilghman stayed behind with a skeleton garrison to **delay the Union**.

The fort **surrendered before Ulysses S Grant's** infantry could fully deploy.

Fort Henry Surrenders before the Army Arrives



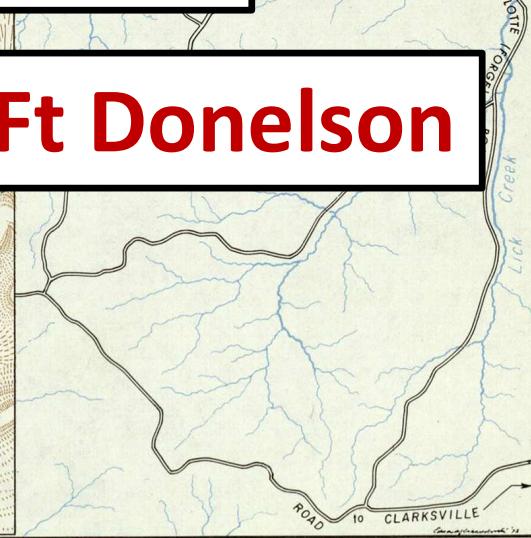
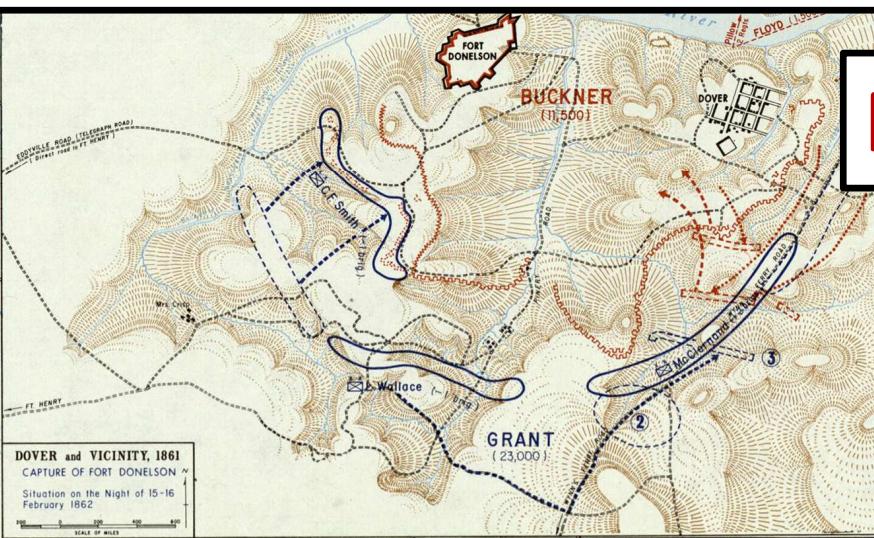
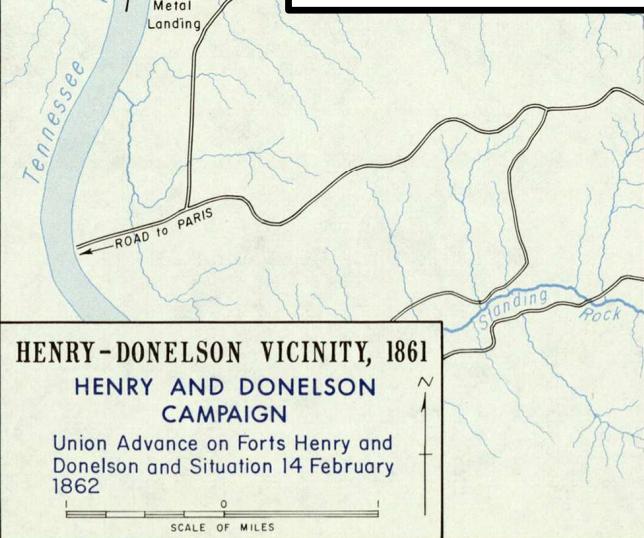
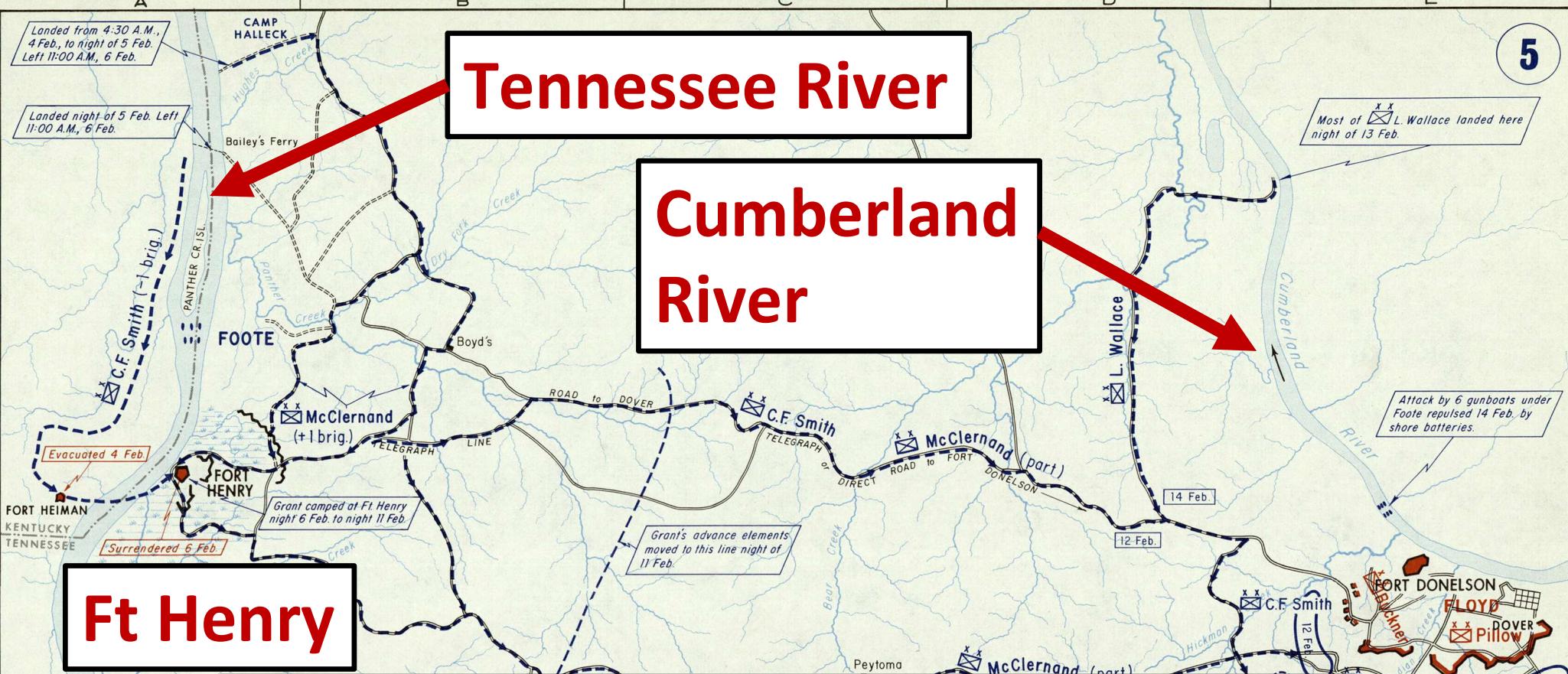
Tennessee River

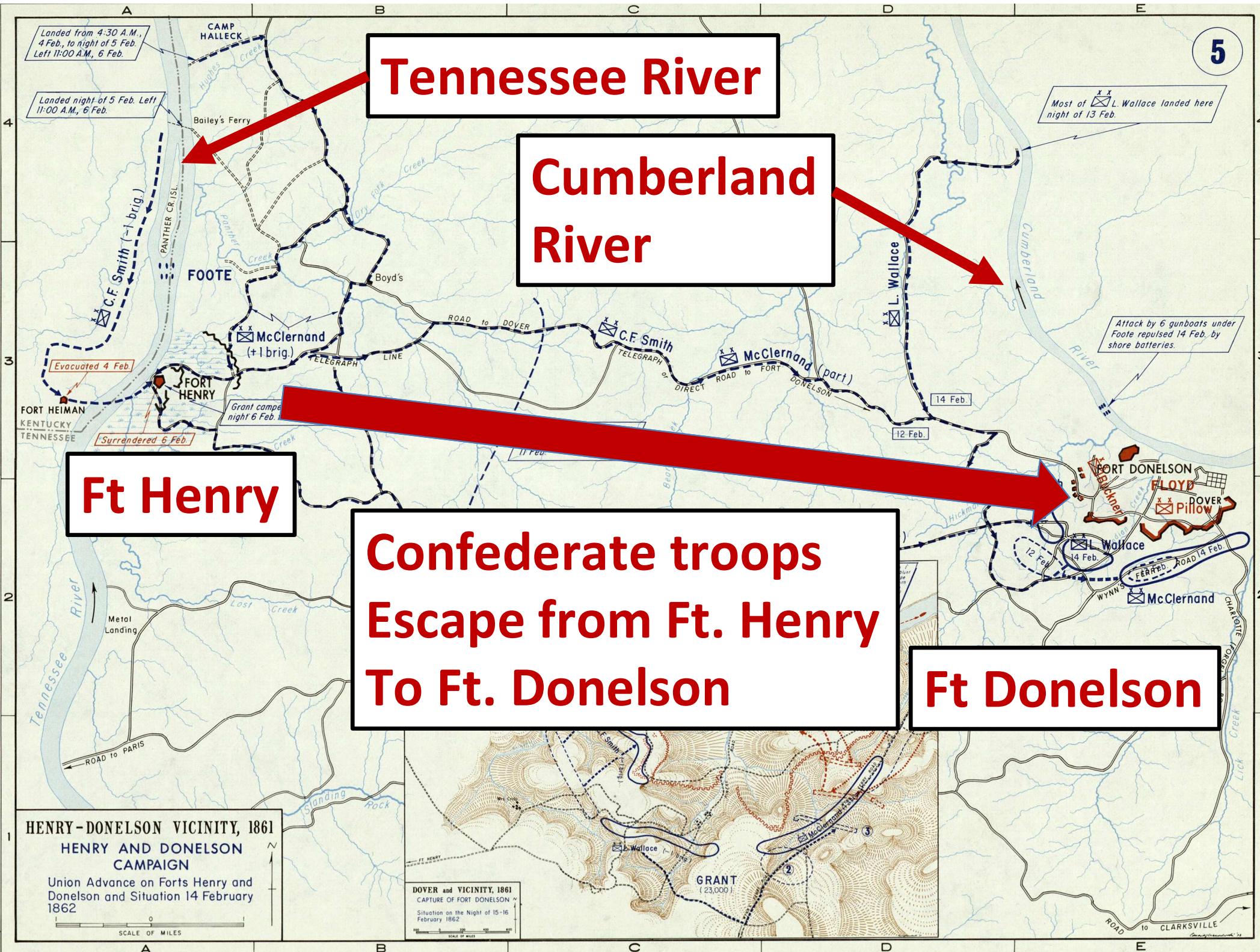
Cumberland River

Ft Henry

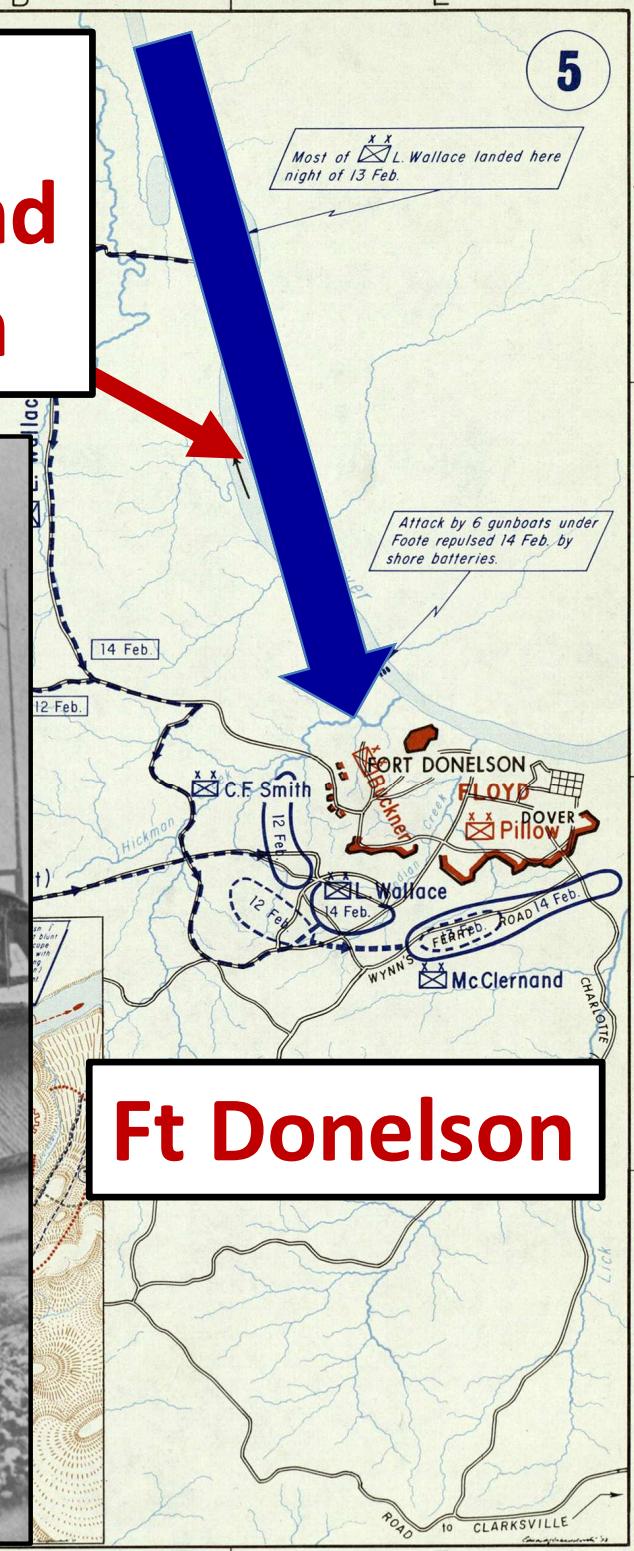
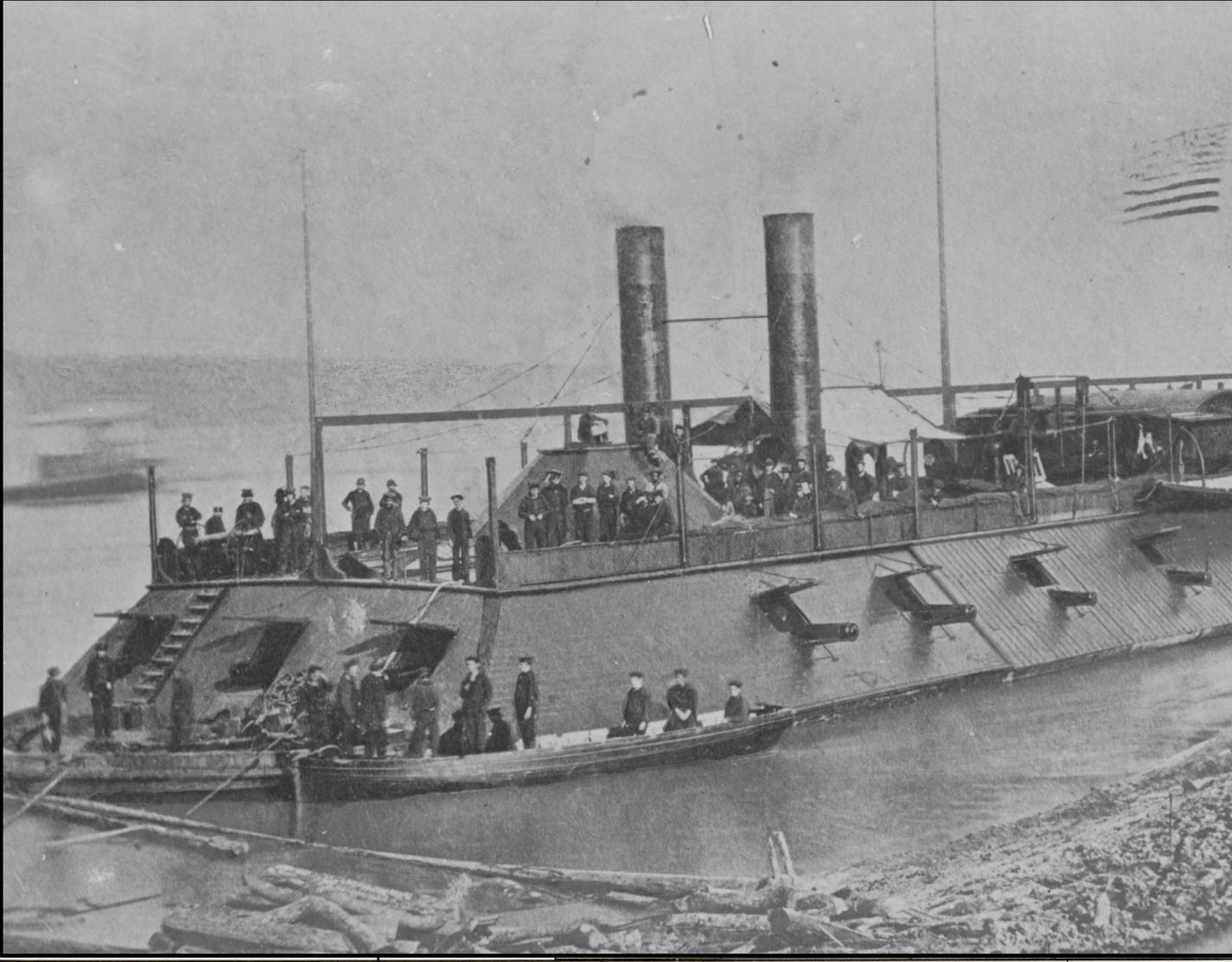
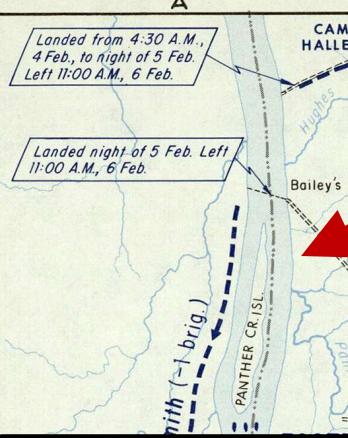
Only 12 Miles separate the two forts

Ft Donelson





Admiral Foote's Gunboats come down the Cumberland River to attack Ft Donelson



Tennessee River

Cumberland River

Ft Henry

Grant's Union troops march overland to Ft. Donelson

Ft Donelson

HENRY-DONELSON VICINITY, 1861

HENRY AND DONELSON CAMPAIGN

Union Advance on Forts Henry and
Donelson and Situation 14 February
1862



SCALE OF MILES



The Attack on Fort Donelson – Cumberland River

Feb 11-16, 1862

Fort Donelson sat on high bluffs, unlike flood-prone Fort Henry.





The Attack on Fort Donelson – Cumberland River

Feb 11-16, 1862

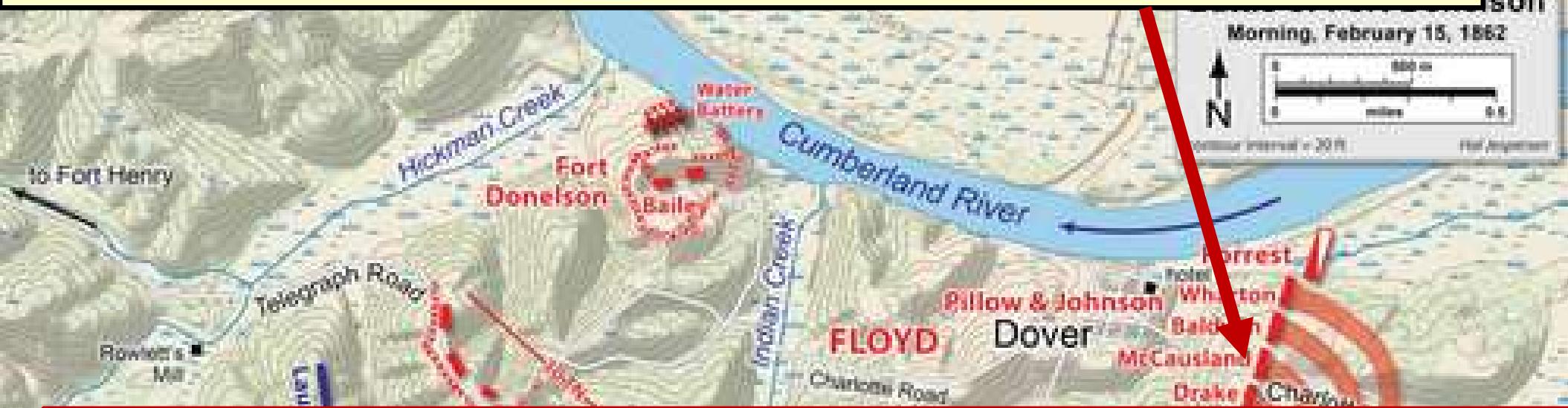
Confederates decided this fort **must be held**.
If Donelson fell, **Nashville could not be defended**.

Grant surrounded the fort rather than rushing it.

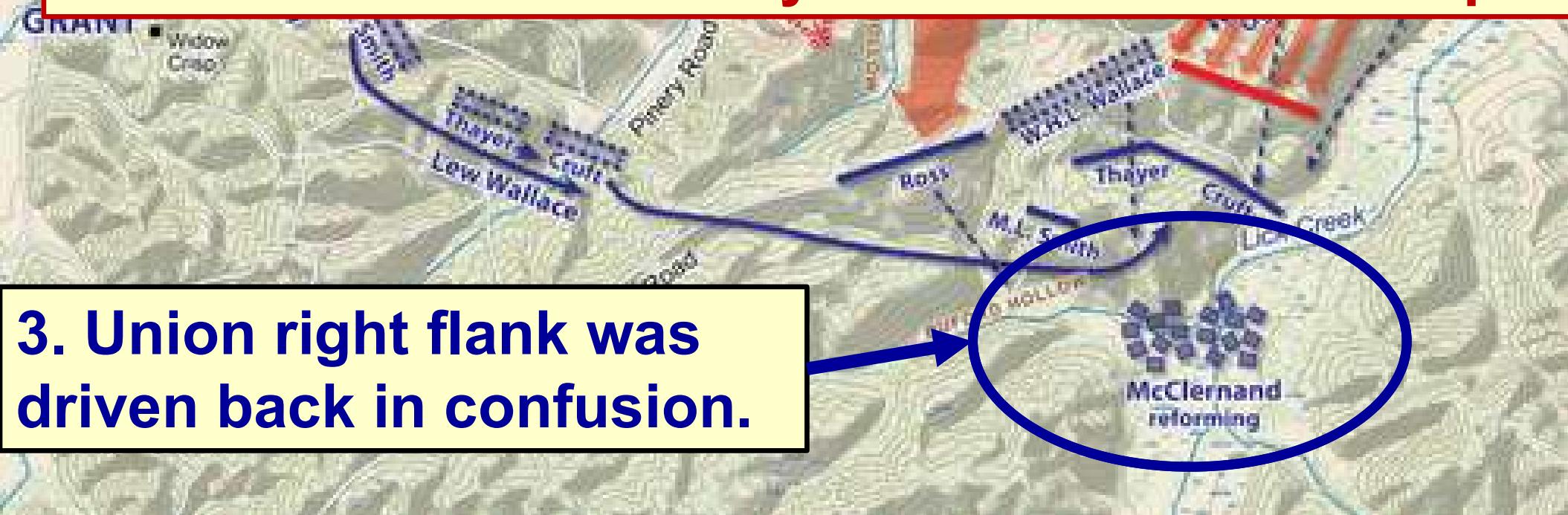
Takeaway:

Fort Donelson was the Confederacy's last chance to stop the river invasion.

1. Confederate forces launched a massive dawn attack

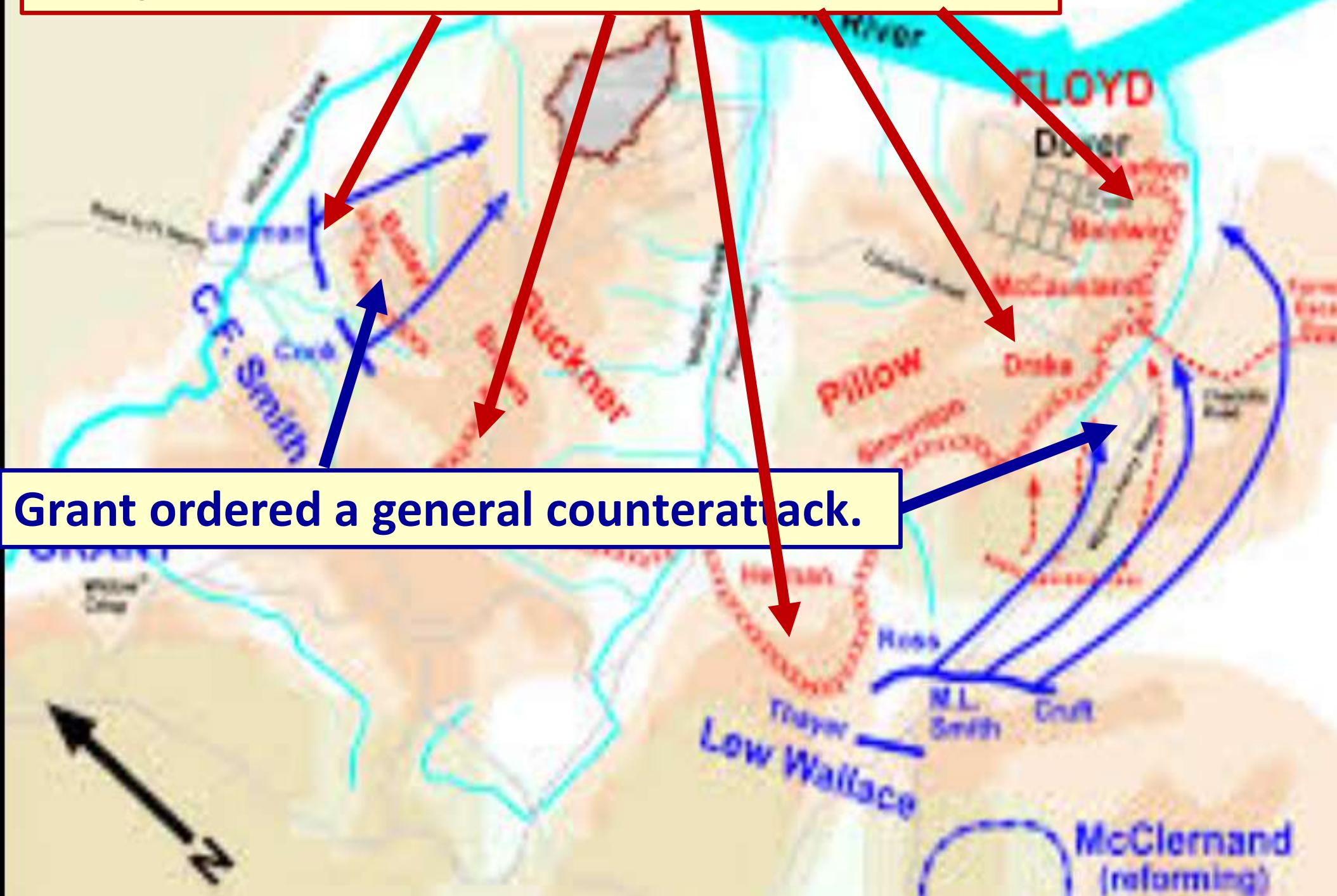


2. The road to Nashville was temporarily open. This was the Confederacy's best chance to escape.



3. Union right flank was driven back in confusion.

Confederate commanders halted the advance.
Troops were ordered back into the trenches.



“Unconditional Surrender”

Confederate General Buckner asked for terms.

Grant replied with no conditions except surrender.

The phrase “Unconditional Surrender” became legendary.

Over 12,000 Confederate soldiers captured.



THE STORMING OF FORT DONELSON, TENN. FEBY 15TH 1862.

The attack on the fort was led by Major General Ulysses S. Grant, who was accompanied by General George H. Thomas. The fort was held by a small garrison of about 12,000 Confederate soldiers, under the command of General John C. Breckinridge. The battle was a major victory for the Union, marking the beginning of the Western Theater of the Civil War. The painting is a reproduction of a work by the artist George Caleb Bingham.

Capture of Nashville (Feb 25, 1862)

After Fort Donelson's surrender:

Confederate forces abandoned Nashville

Union troops entered the city unopposed

Nashville became the first Confederate state

Provided a permanent logistics base
for future campaigns

Takeaway:

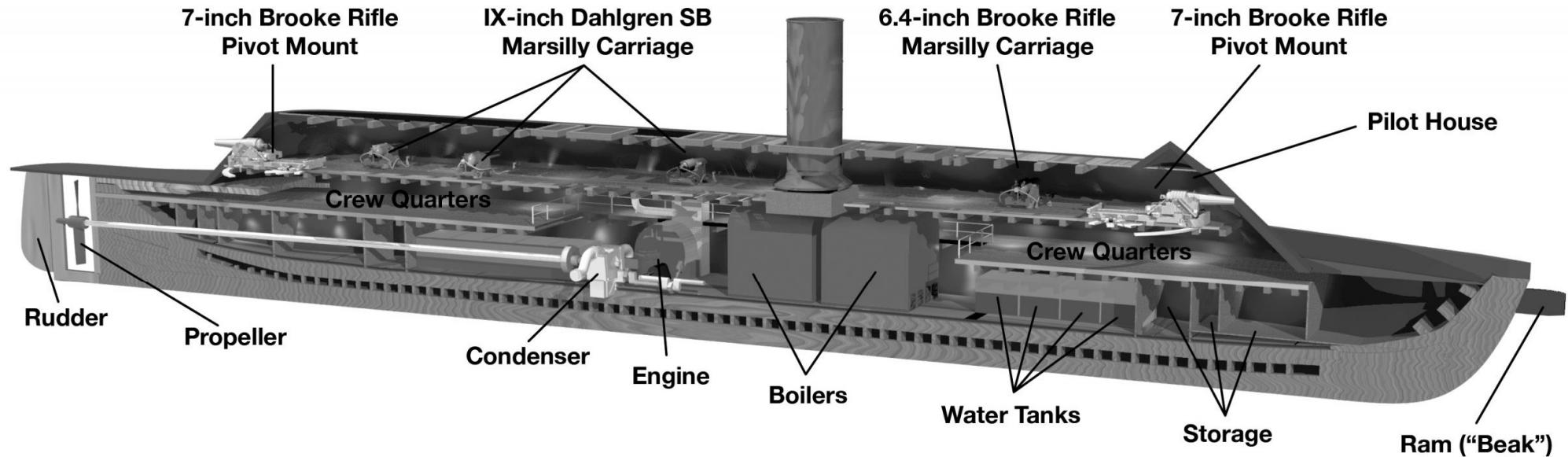
*Nashville fell not because it was attacked
— but because the rivers made it indefensible*



Battle of Hampton Roads (March 8-9, 1862) (USS Monitor vs CSS Virginia)

1. The ship is often incorrectly called the “**Merrimack**”
2. The Union steam frigate **USS Merrimack** was scuttled at Norfolk in 1861
3. Confederates raised the hull. They rebuilt it as an ironclad and renamed it **CSS Virginia**.
Designed to destroy blockading wooden ships.
4. Northerners continued calling it “**Merrimack**” out of habit.
5. Historically and officially, the battle is:
USS Monitor vs CSS Virginia

CSS Virginia Cross-Section



© J. M. Caiella

Steam-powered

Armed with **heavy naval guns**

Sloped iron armor plates **deflected** enemy fire;

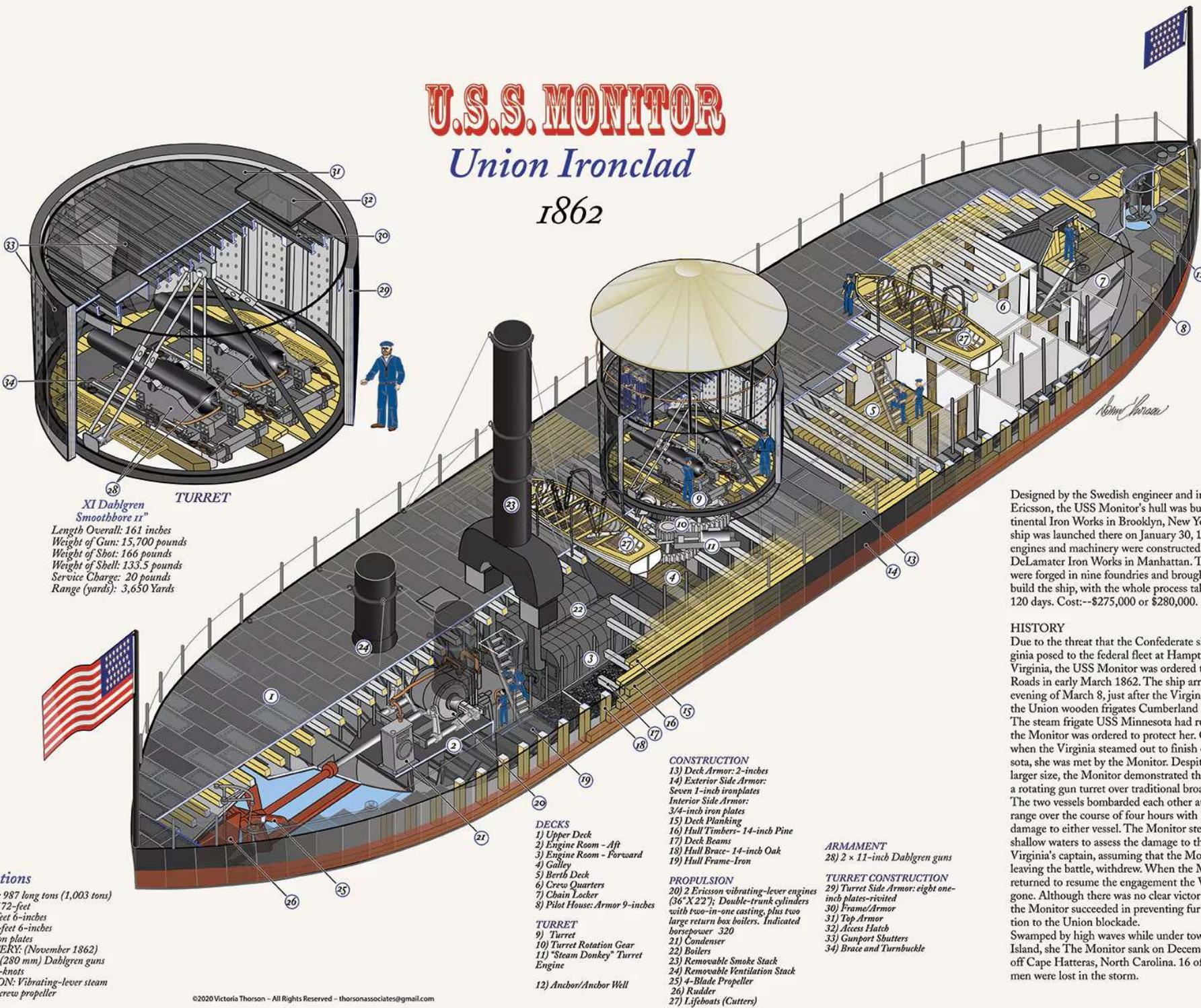
Wooden warship **cannonballs** bounced off

Most **devastating weapon** was the iron ram mounted on the bow

U.S.S. MONITOR

Union Ironclad

1862



Specifications

TONNAGE: 987 long tons (1,003 tons)

LENGTH: 172-feet

BEAM: 41-feet 6-in.
DRAWBAR: 10-feet 6-in.

DRAFT: 10-feet 6-inches
ARMOR: Iron plates

GUN BATTERY: (November 1862)

•2 x 11-inch (280 mm)

SPEED: 9.2-knots

PROPULSION: Vibrating-lever steam engine with screw propeller

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USS Monitor Designed by John Ericsson

Steam-powered

Iron armor protected both hull and turret

Extremely low freeboard

— most of the ship sat just above water

Armed with two large smoothbore guns

Presented a minimal target to enemy gunners;

Enemy shots often glanced off or passed overhead

One Turret could rotate independently of ship movement; Allowed guns to aim in any direction

NICKNAME: “*Cheese Box on a Raft*”

Comparison of the Ironclads:

CSS Virginia

Armored casemate

Built from existing hull

Ram as primary weapon

Sloped armor deflects fire

Limited firing angles

Slow, hard to maneuver

VIRGINIA represented the last evolution of old ideas

USS Monitor

Rotating armored turret

Purpose-built ironclad

Turret guns as primary weapon

Low profile minimizes target

360-degree fire capability

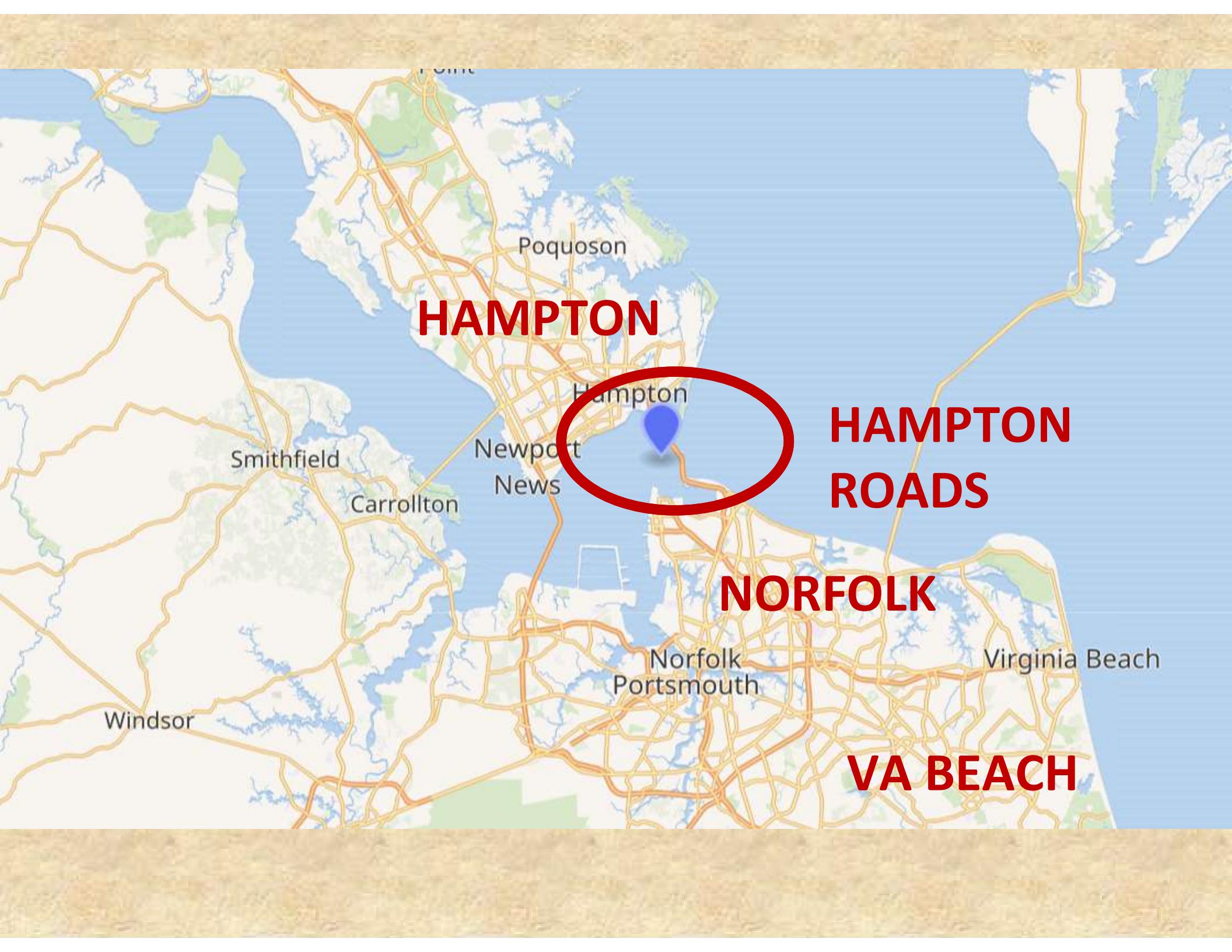
More agile in confined waters

Monitor represented the first example of the future



Battle of Hampton Roads

March 8-9, 1862



HAMPTON

**HAMPTON
ROADS**

NORFOLK

VA BEACH

MARCH 8, 1862

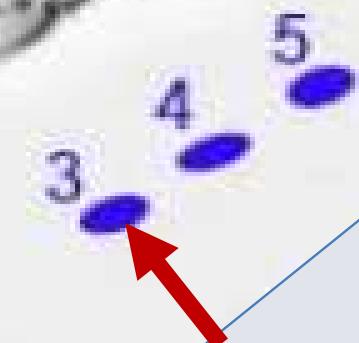
**1. CSS VIRGINIA rammed and sank
the USS CUMBERLAND**

**4. CSS VIRGINIA withdraws
under darkness**

**2. CSS VIRGINIA burns grounded
USS CONGRESS**

3. USS MINNESOTA grounded

MARCH 9, 1862

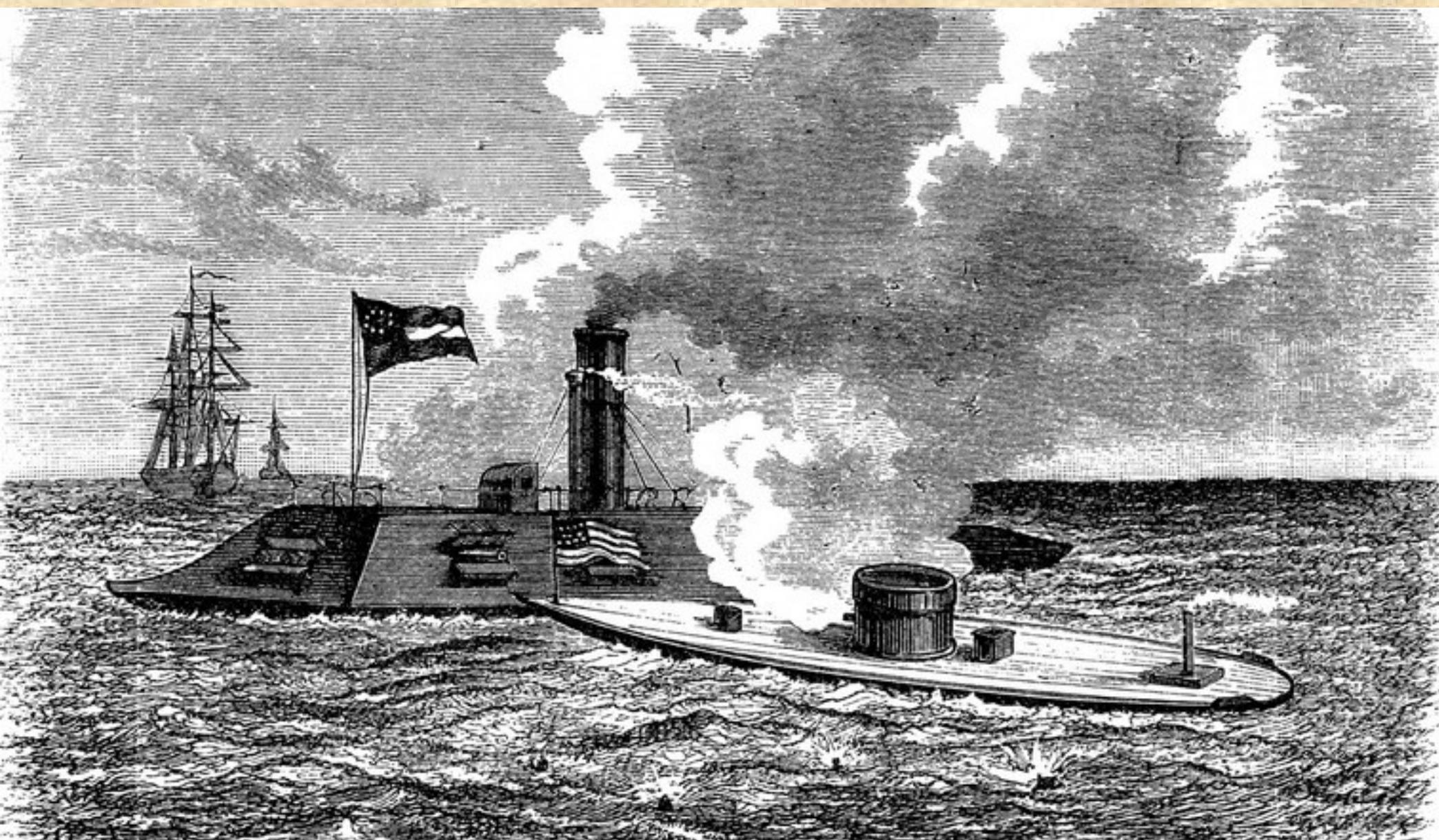


5. USS MINNESOTA grounded

6. CSS VIRGINIA returns to finish off the USS MINNESOTA

**6. CSS VIRGINIA encounters USS MONITOR
and they fight to a DRAW!**

USS Monitor vs CSS Virginia



USS Monitor vs CSS Virginia



Significance of the Battle

First combat between ironclad warships

Confirmed iron armor could defeat heavy naval guns

Accelerated global shift to iron and steel warships

Preserved the Union blockade of the Confederacy

Key Takeaways:

No naval battle in history became outdated faster than Hampton Roads.

In two days at Hampton Roads, naval warfare changed forever.”

The Fate of the Two Ironclads

CSS Virginia

Unable to break the Union blockade

Trapped by Union naval dominance

Scuttled and burned by her own crew in May 1862

Destroyed to prevent capture after Confederate evacuation of Norfolk

USS Monitor

Became the prototype for future warships

Sank later in 1862 during a storm off Cape Hatteras

**Wreck rediscovered in the 20th century;
remains preserved**

Lecture 2 (Jan 26):

- **Shiloh** (April 6-7, 1862)
- **Antietam** (Sept 17, 1862)