

# OVERVIEW AND MAJOR BATTLES OF THE CIVIL WAR; Session 2: Ed Seufert

- Shiloh (April 6-7, 1862) Western Theater
- Then Transition to:
- Antietam (Sept 17, 1862) Eastern Theater

# The Strategic Situation (Early Spring 1862).

Grant's army moved up the Tennessee River, deep into enemy territory  
—*something unprecedented this early in the war.*

and **MEMPHIS & VICKSBURG**

## 3. Destroy CONFEDERATE field armies

- 1 The Confederates knew one thing clearly:  
1 *If Corinth falls, the Western Confederacy  
is in serious danger.*

## 3. Strike Grant before he could unite with Buell

# The Strategic Situation (Early Spring 1862).

## Where the War Stands After the UNION capture of Nashville

By **February 1862**, the **UNION** had achieved something no one expected so early:

**Nashville** captured without a fight (Feb 25, 1862);  
The first **CONFEDERATE** state capital to fall.

**Strategic Meaning of Nashville's Fall:**

The **UNION** now controlled the **Cumberland** and **Tennessee Rivers**

**CONFEDERATE** defensive lines in **KY** and **TN** collapsed

**Grant's** victories had blown a hole straight through the **CONFEDERATE** western defense

# THE BATTLE OF SHILOH (April 6-7, 1862)



**Location of the Battle of Shiloh**

0 100 200 300 Miles

**Shiloh Battlefield**

**Memphis**

**Vicksburg**

**UNION objective:  
Corinth (Strategic  
CONFEDERATE Rail Hub)**

# Why Shiloh Happens Where It Does

Shiloh Church at Shiloh Battlefield



# Why Shiloh Happens Where It Does

The **CONFEDERATE** Counterstroke:

**CONFEDERATE** commanders (**Johnston** and **Beauregard**) planned a surprise attack

Strike **Grant** before **Buell** arrives

Drive **UNION** forces into the Tennessee River

Restore **CONFEDERATE** morale after months of bad news

This sets the stage for one of the most shocking moments of the entire war.

# Commanders at the Battle of Shiloh



## SIGNIFICANCE:

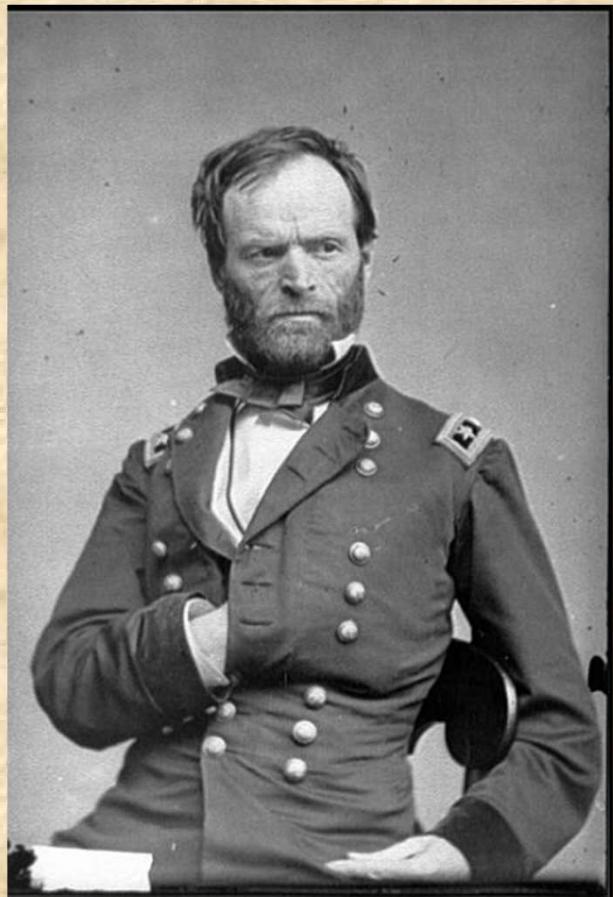
- Overall **UNION** commander
- Caught by surprise but refused to retreat
- Held defensive line through brutal first day
- Coordinated counterattack with Buell on April 7

**UNION: Ulysses Grant – Major General, Army of the TN**

### Why he matters:

*Shiloh proved Grant's determination and resilience in a MAJOR BATTLE.*

# Commanders at the Battle of Shiloh



## SIGNIFICANCE:

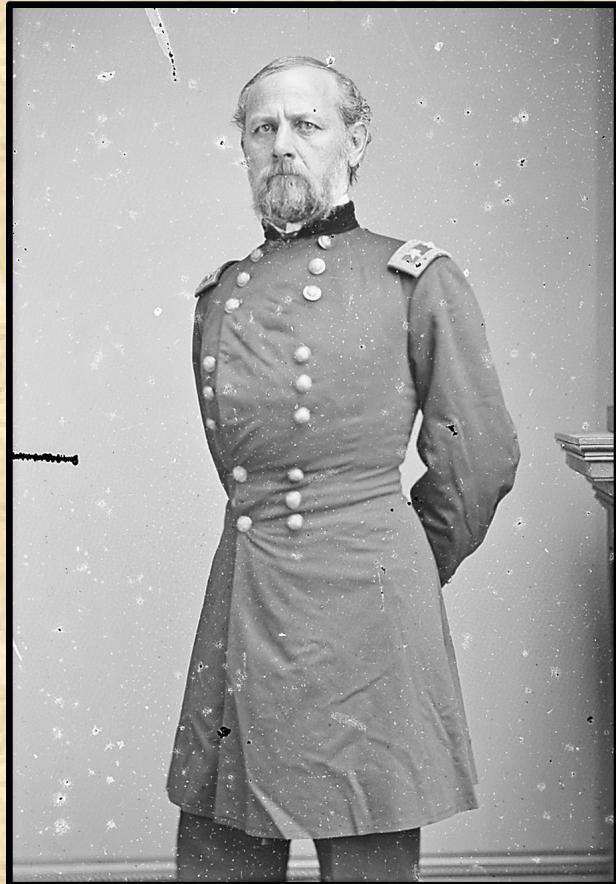
- First Union general heavily engaged
- Fought stubbornly all day on April 6
- Wounded twice but stayed in command

UNION: William Tecumseh Sherman – Division Commander

### Why he matters:

*Shiloh redeemed his reputation and cemented his loyalty to Grant*

# Commanders at the Battle of Shiloh



## SIGNIFICANCE:

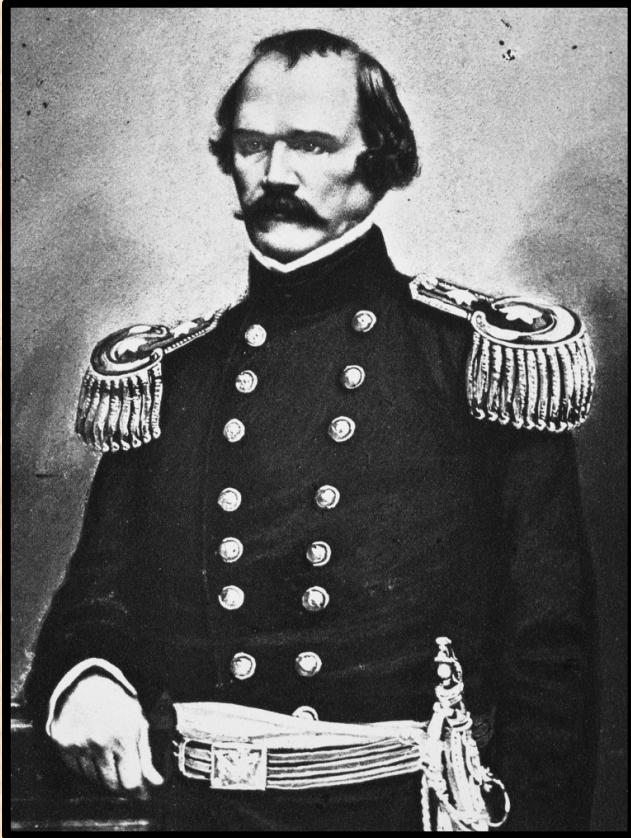
- Commanded reinforcements marching to **Grant**
- His fresh troops critical to April 7 counterattack
- Arrived late April 6, crossed TN river overnight

**UNION: Don Carlos Buell – General, Army of the Ohio**

**Why he matters:**

***His timely arrival prevented UNION defeat***

# Commanders at the Battle of Shiloh



## SIGNIFICANCE:

- Overall **CONFEDERATE** commander
- Planned surprise attack to crush **Grant** early
- Personally led assaults from the front
- Mortally wounded on April 6  
(Shot in the leg; **bled to death**)

**CONFEDERATE: Albert Sidney Johnson;**

Western Theater Commander

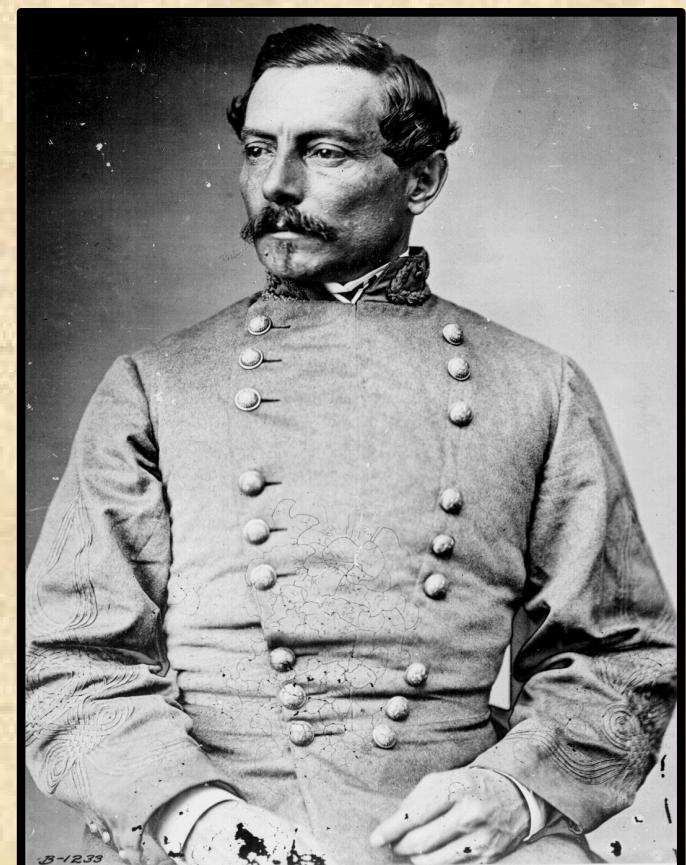
Why he matters:

*His death was a major Confederate loss and severely Impacted the rest of the Battle.*

# Commanders at the Battle of Shiloh

## SIGNIFICANCE:

- Took command after **Johnson's** death
- Believed **UNION** army was defeated on first day, April 6
- Halted attacks instead of pressing advantage to push **UNION** troops into the **Tennessee River**.
- Failed to anticipate **UNION** reinforcements



**CONFEDERATE: P.G.T. Beauregard;**  
Confederate – Second-in-Command

Why he matters:

*Missed chance for decisive Confederate victory*

# THE BATTLE OF SHILOH (1<sup>st</sup> Day April 6, 1862)

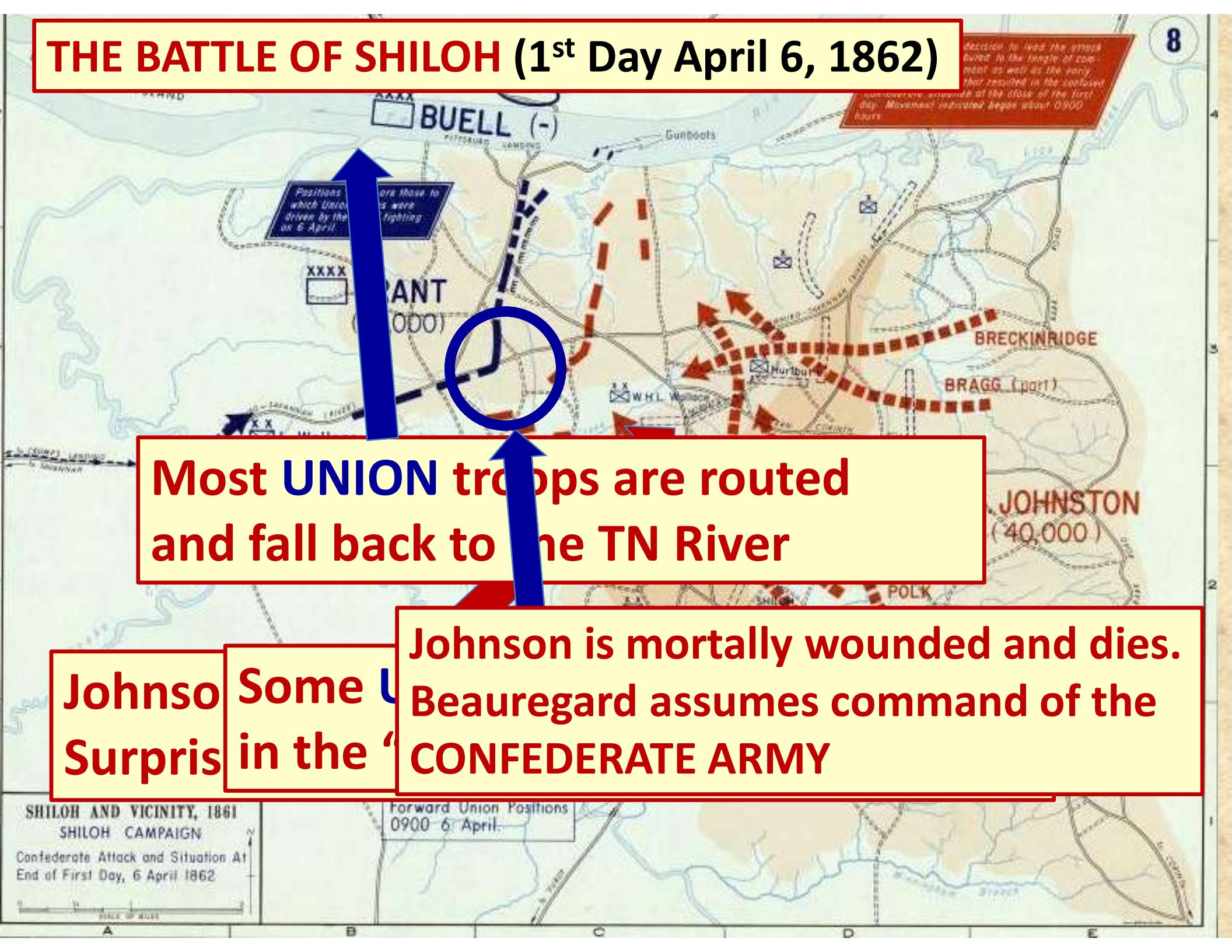
8

decided to lead the attack  
west to the bridge of com-  
munity, as well as the early  
morning, resulted in the confused  
and scattered retreat of the corps of the first  
day. Movement indicated began about 0900  
hours.

Most UNION troops are routed  
and fall back to the TN River

Johnson  
Surprised  
in the '

Johnson is mortally wounded and dies.  
Beauregard assumes command of the  
CONFEDERATE ARMY



## THE HORNET'S NEST (9:00 AM to 5:00 PM)

The Hornet's Nest was a strong UNION defensive position along a slightly sunken farm road

The name came from Confederate soldiers who said the air around the position “buzzed like hornets” from the intense rifle and artillery fire.

Without this stand, Grant's army could have been pushed into the Tennessee River *before reinforcements arrived.*

the Hornet's Nest helped turn what could have been a crushing Union defeat into a Union victory.

# THE BATTLE OF SHILOH

Grant goes on the offensive with Buell's fresh troops

Buell crosses TN River with the Army of the Ohio the night of April 6

The CONFEDERATES retreat back  
To the Rail Hub at Corinth, MS

# Key Takeaway from the Battle of Shiloh

The Civil War would be long, brutal, and total—and neither side was prepared for its true cost.

## Why this matters:

**Unprecedented casualties:** Over 23,000 killed, wounded, or missing in just two days—more than all previous American wars **combined** up to that point.

After **Shiloh**, the war increasingly became one of **attrition**, not quick battlefield glory.

**Shiloh** proved the Civil War would be a **prolonged, industrial-scale conflict** requiring total national commitment.

# FROM SHILOH TO THE EASTERN THEATER

## — A SHIFT IN FOCUS

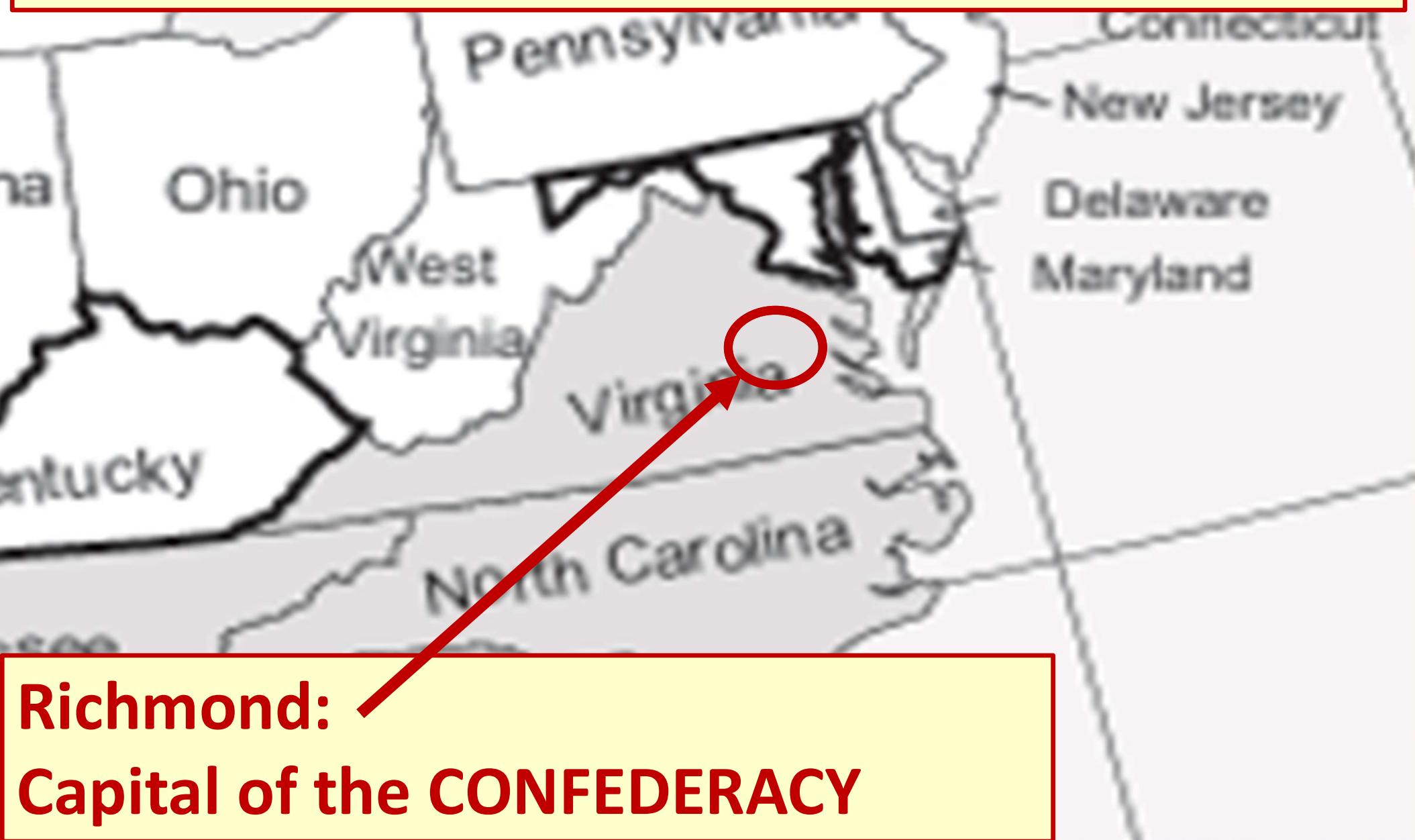
- Shiloh confirms the war will be Long, Costly, and Total
- The Western Theater opens the CONFEDERACY to river-based invasion
- Attention now turns to the Eastern Theater, where:
  - The political capitals face one another

Washington DC and Richmond, VA

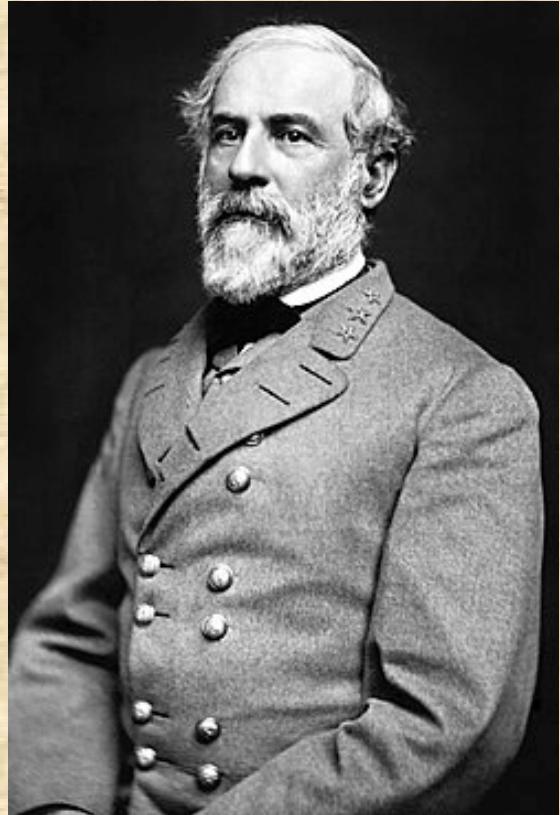
■ were roughly 100 miles apart!

decisions in the East will shape the next phase of the war

# The Seven Days Battles around Richmond (June 26 – July 1, 1862)



# Commanders in the Eastern Theater



- Graduate of **West Point** (1829); renowned U.S. Army engineer
- Distinguished service in the **Mexican-American War**
- Offered command of the **UNION** Army in April 1861 — **Declined**
- Resigned U.S. commission; chose **Virginia** over **UNION** when Virginia succeeded
- Appointed **CONFEDERATE** commander in the East after **General Joe Johnston** wounded

**CONFEDERATE: Robert E Lee,**  
**Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia**

Why he matters:

*“Duty to state, honor, and audacity in command”*

# Commanders in the Eastern Theater



- West Point graduate (1846); Mexican-American War veteran
- Brilliant organizer and trainer of troops
- Created the Army of the Potomac into a disciplined force
- Chronically overestimated CONFEDERATE strength
- Excessively cautious in battle; slow to exploit opportunity

Up Ironically, McClellan would run against  
Co Lincoln as the Democratic Candidate  
W in the 1864 Presidential Election

# Lee versus McClellan

## Lee

Aggressive

Takes risks

Divides forces

Seeks decisive battle

Offensive mindset

Lee fought a Battle to WIN

## McClellan

Cautious

Avoids risks

Concentrates forces

Seeks perfect conditions

Defensive mindset

McClellan fought  
to NOT LOSE a Battle

This will be demonstrated in the Seven Days Battles  
around Richmond and the Battle of Antietam

# THE SEVEN DAYS BATTLES (June 25 – July 1, 1862)

## UNION Objectives:

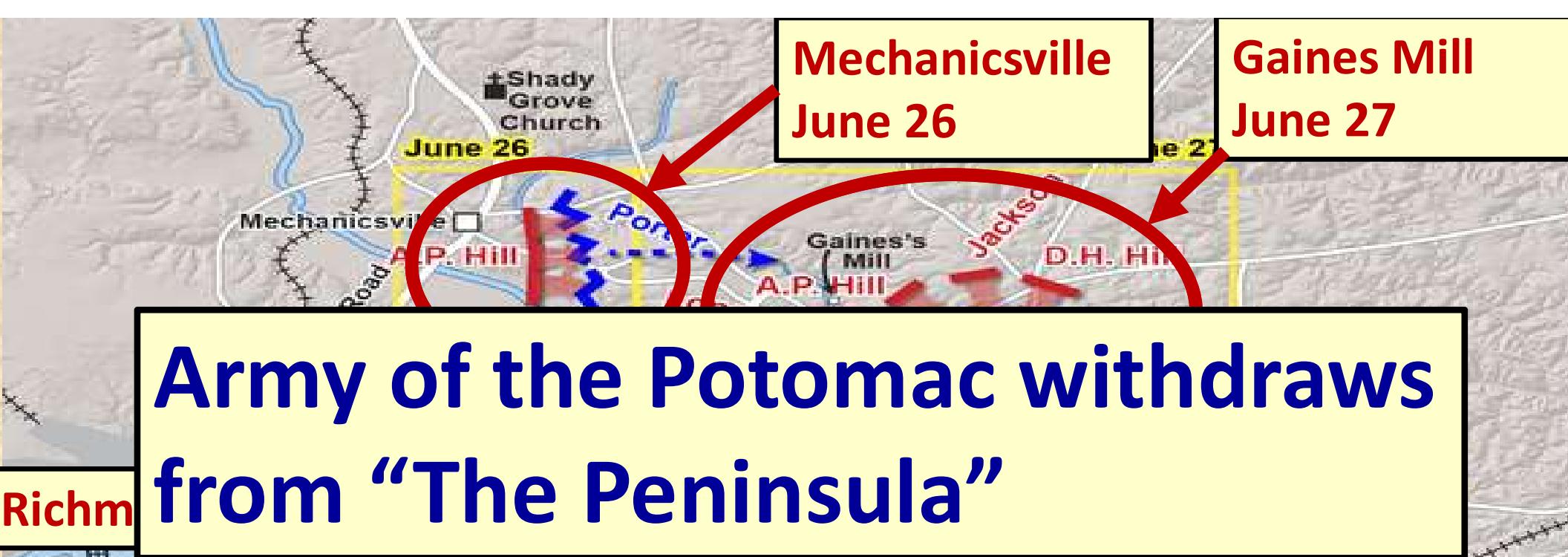
- Capture **Richmond** and end the war in the **East**
- Use numerical superiority to defeat **Lee's army**
- Maintain a secure supply line via the Peninsula

## CONFEDERATE Objectives:

- Defend **Richmond** at all costs
- Seize the **strategic initiative in the East**
- Drive **McClellan** away from the capital

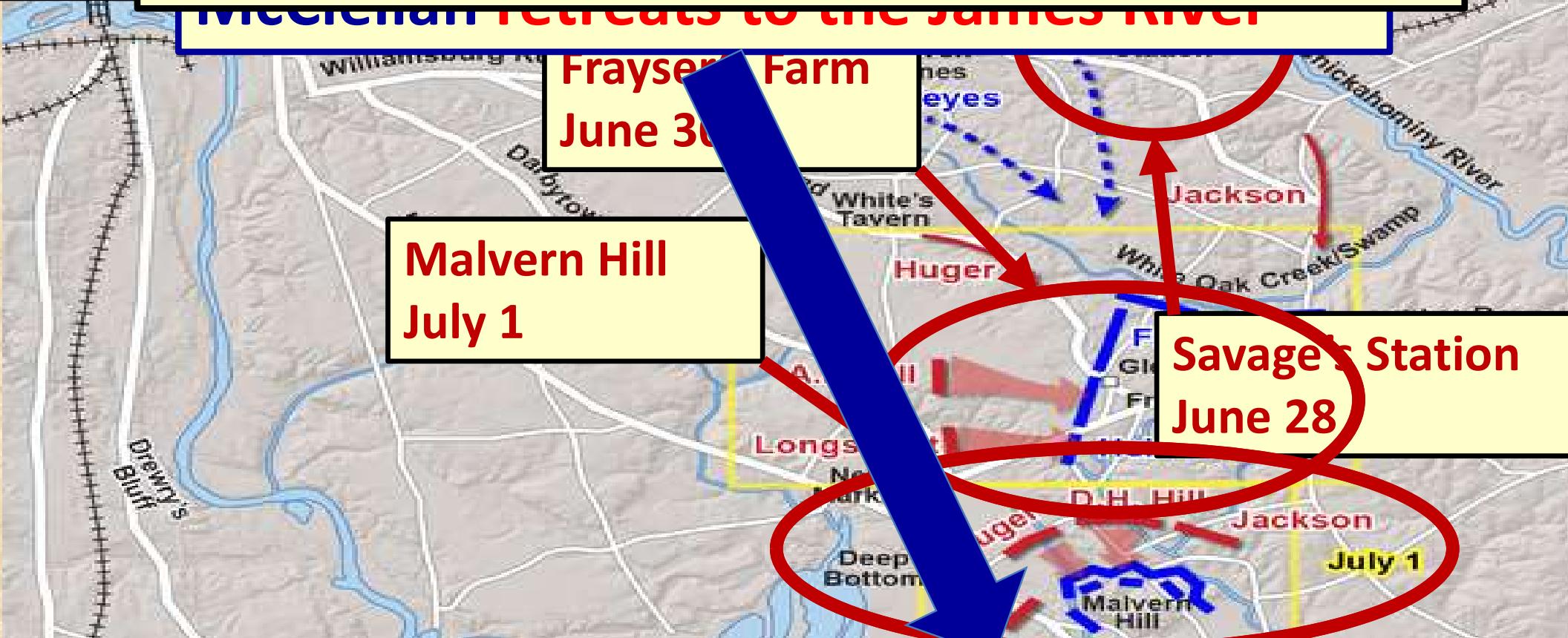
## OUTCOME:

- **CONFEDERATE** strategic victory
- **Richmond** saved; **UNION** offensive halted
- Momentum in the **Eastern Theater** shifts to the **CONFEDERACY**
- **McClellan** forced to retreat to the James River
- **Lee** emerges as an **aggressive, offensive** commander



# Army of the Potomac withdraws from “The Peninsula”

Mechanicsville retreats to the James River



## SECOND BATTLE OF BULL RUN (August 28–30, 1862)

After the Seven Days, McClellan relieved of field command  
John Pope appointed to lead UNION forces in Northern VA  
Stonewall Jackson delivers a decisive  
CONFEDERATE Victory at the Second Battle of Bull Run  
UNION army routed and badly demoralized  
Lincoln restores McClellan to command  
McClellan reorganizes the Army of the Potomac  
and restores morale

# Why the Eastern Theater Suddenly Matters More!

By the Summer 1862:

The **UNION** is winning territory in the West but failing to deliver a decisive blow in the East

Washington, DC remains **psychologically** vulnerable

The question looming over the summer:

*Can the **CONFEDERACY** Win by defeating **UNION** armies near the **Northern** heartland—even if it loses ground elsewhere?*

Robert E. Lee Changes the Game:

After driving **UNION** forces away from Richmond in the Seven Days Battles, **Robert E. Lee** makes a bold decision:

**He takes the war NORTH!**

# Why?

Virginia is exhausted and stripped bare;  
a victory on **Northern soil** might:

- **Demoralize** the Northern public
- Influence the **1862** midterm elections
- Encourage **British** and **French** recognition
- Possibly end the war through negotiation

This sets the stage for the **Maryland Campaign**

# Why Antietam Is So Important Before

~~the First Shot Is Fired.~~

*After Shiloh revealed how terrible the war would be*

- He needs a military success to give it legitimacy

*Antietam would determine what the war would be about*

- International diplomacy
- The moral purpose of the war

# THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM (Sept 17, 1862)

## Location of the Battle of Antietam



## Lee Takes the War North

- September 4, 1862:  
**Army of Northern Virginia** crosses the Potomac
- Lee's army camps around **Frederick**; PAUSES
- Maryland response is **cool, not welcoming**
- Lee must solve a major problem:  
**UNION** garrison at **Harpers Ferry** threatens his rear

# SPECIAL ORDERS No. 191 (September 9, 1862)

- Lee's Plan:
  - Issued by Robert E. Lee, the order directs:
- Stonewall Jackson
  - Move to capture Harpers Ferry
- CONFEDERATE columns to seize the surrounding heights:
  - Maryland Heights
  - Loudoun (Virginia) Heights
- Lee retains a smaller force near South Mountain to screen McClellan
- Lee deliberately divides his army in enemy territory, facing a larger UNION force.

## CIVIL WAR CAMPAIGN

### ANTIETAM, MD

**CONFEDERATE army camps  
near Frederick (Sept 7-10)**

**SOUTH  
MOUNTAIN**

**TURNER'S GAP**

**CRAMPTON'S GAP**

**SHARPSBURG**

**FREDERICK**

**HARPER'S  
FERRY**

**Lee issues: Special Orders  
#191 Sept 9 to divide army**

#### LEGEND

TROOP MOVEMENTS	
Confederate	Sept 3-9
Union	Sept 10-13
	Sept 14-17

#### LAND FEATURES

19th-Century Cities/Towns

#### BATTLES

- Siege of Harpers Ferry, Sept. 13-15
- Fox's and Turner's Gap, Sept. 14
- Crampton's Gap, Sept. 14
- Antietam, Sept. 17
- Shepherdstown, Sept. 19-20

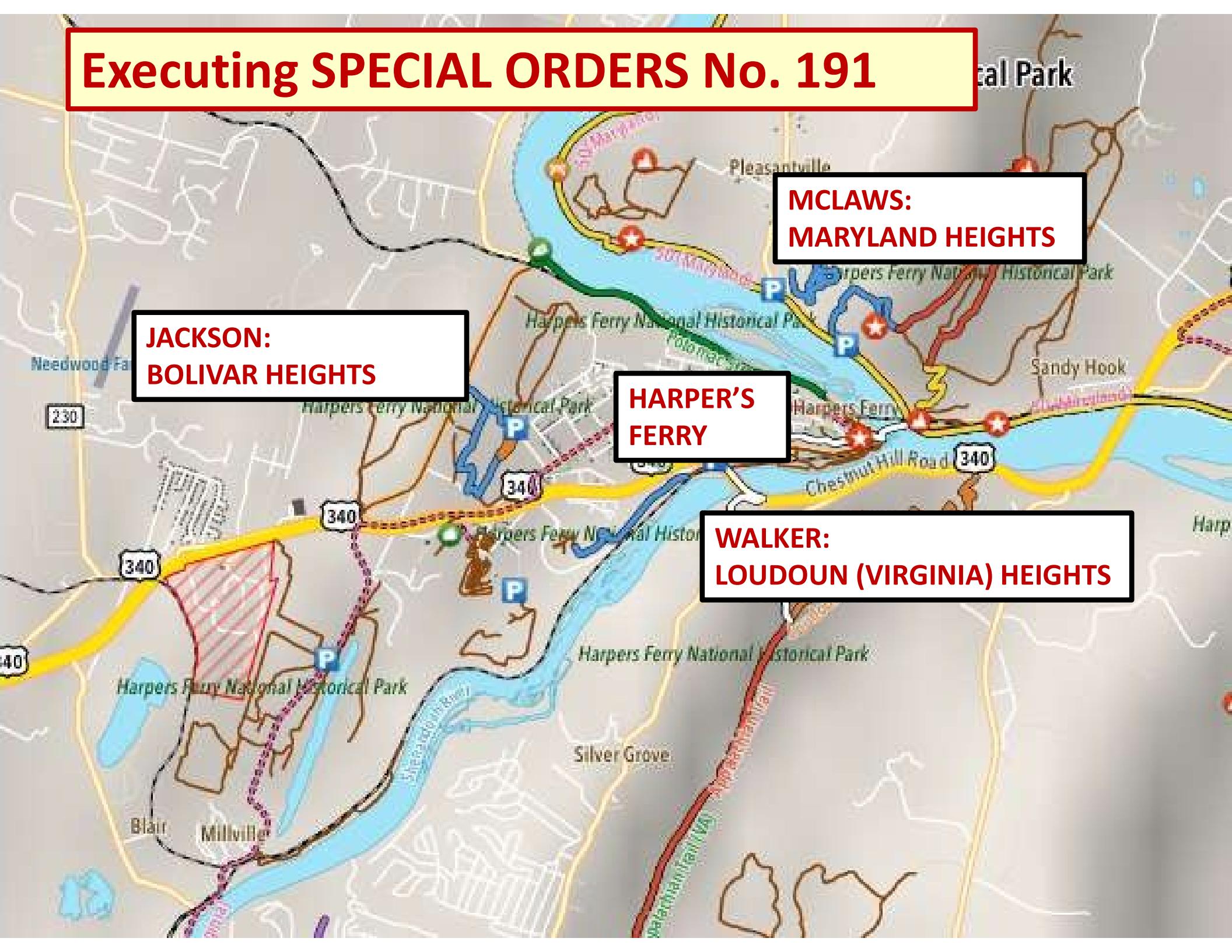
UPDATED MARCH 2020



**VIRGINIA**

**Lee's army crosses  
the Potomac (Sept 4-7)**

# Executing SPECIAL ORDERS No. 191



(Annotated)

1<sup>st</sup> Dr

Special Order No 191

# Special Orders No. 191 ("Lee's Lost Orders")

III Gen Jackson will command his march to-morrow taking the Hagerstown road Gen Jackson's command will form the advance and after passing Middletown with such position as he may select take the route toward Sharpsburg cross the Potowmack at the most convenient point & by Friday morning take possession of the Baltimore & Ohio R.R. capture such of the enemy as may be at Martinsburg and intercept such as may attempt to escape from Harper's Ferry.

IV Gen Longstreet command will pursue the main road as far as Bunker Hill when it will turn with reserve supply and baggage trains of the army.

V Gen McLaws with his own division and that of Gen R. H. Anderson will follow Gen Longstreet on reaching Middletown will take the route to Harper's Ferry and by Friday morning possess himself of the Maryland heights and encamp to capture the enemy at Harper's Ferry and vicinity.

VI Gen Walker with his division

now  
in  
the  
order.

VI<sup>th</sup> Dr will march to-morrow taking the Hagerstown road Gen Jackson's command will form the advance and after passing Middletown with such position as he may select take the route toward Sharpsburg cross the Potowmack at the most convenient point & by Friday morning take possession of the Baltimore & Ohio R.R. capture such of the enemy as may be at Martinsburg and intercept such as may attempt to escape from Harper's Ferry.

III Gen D. H. Hill's division will form the rear guard of the army pursuing the road taken by the main body of the army. The reserve artillery, ordnance and supply trains will follow Gen Hill.

VI Gen Stearns will detach a squadron of cavalry to accompany the command of Gen Longstreet & Jackson to Harper's Ferry and with the main body of the cavalry will cross the route of the army & bring up all horses that may have been left behind.

VII The command of Gen Jackson to Lewis & Walker after accomplishing the objects for which they have been detached will join the main body of the army at Bunker Hill or Hagerstown.

VIII Each regiment on the march will habitually carry its arms in the regimental ordnance wagons for use of the men at their encampments to procure wood & for Gen D. H. Hill. By command of Gen R. E. Lee  
Major Gen D. H. Hill R. H. Philpot  
Comay division  
as a General

# How the Orders Were Lost!

“Here is a paper with which, if I cannot whip Bobbie Lee, I will be willing to go home.”

- Found on September 13, 1862 by soldiers of the

**Single Greatest Intelligence Coup  
in the entire Civil War**

- Upon reading the orders, **George B. McClellan** famously declared:

# THE BATTLE OF SOUTH MOUNTAIN (September 14, 1862)

Lee struggles to reassemble his army from the attack on **Harpers Ferry at Sharpsburg**

The stage is now set for a battle along **ANTIETAM CREEK** near Sharpsburg

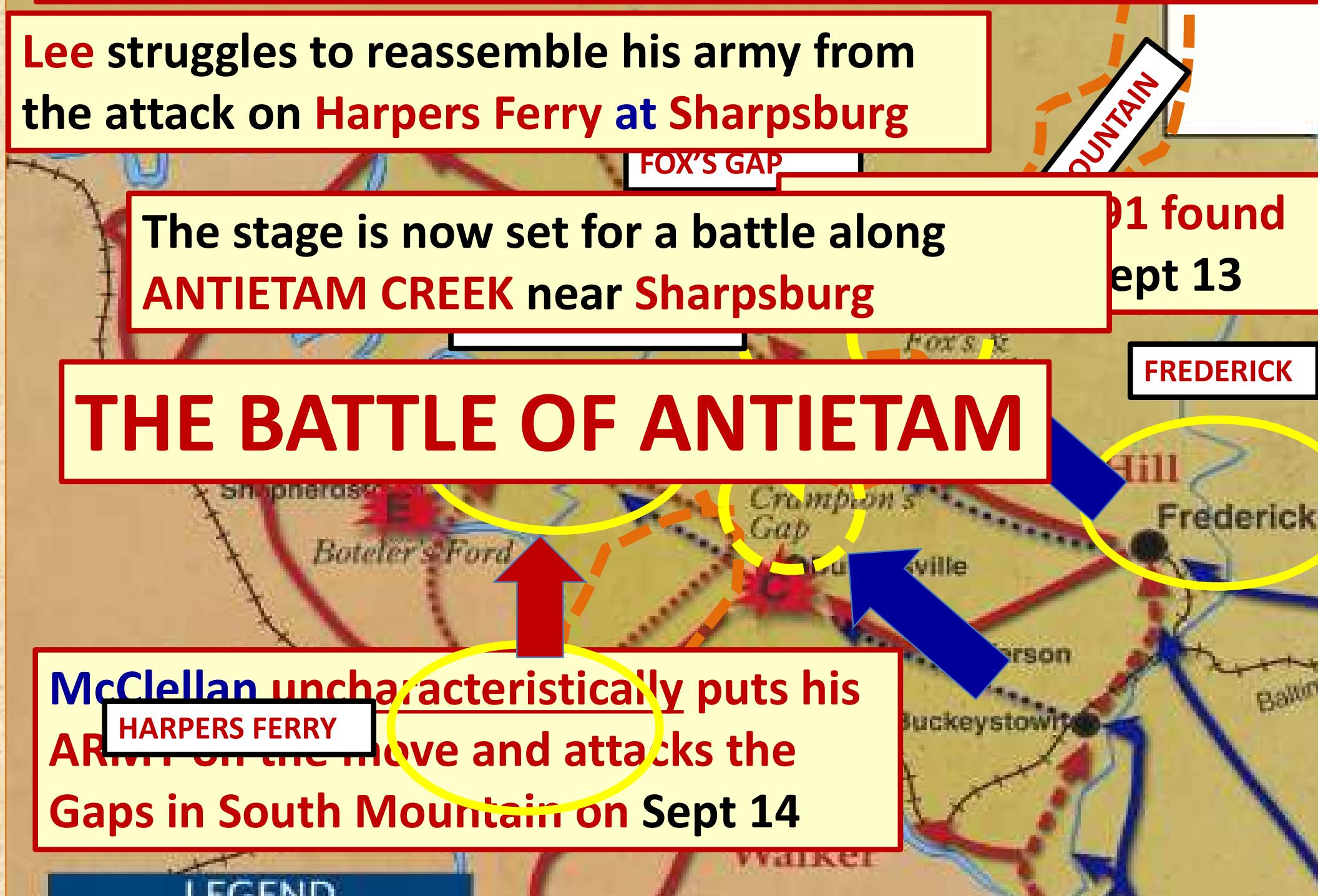
91 found  
Sept 13

## THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM

McClellan uncharacteristically puts his **ARMY** on the move and attacks the Gaps in South Mountain on Sept 14

HARPERS FERRY

FREDERICK



# Why Antietam Became a Battle — Not a Decisive Victory

## September 1862: Opportunity vs. Caution

- McClellan possessed Lee's lost battle plan but delayed his offensive from Sept 14 to Sept 17
- Influenced by intelligence chief Allan Pinkerton, McClellan believed he was OUTNUMBERED

### In reality:

- UNION Army: ~87,000 present (only ~60–65,000 engaged)
- Believed CONFEDERATE = 90,000–120,000 (incorrect)
- Actual CONFEDERATE Army: ~38,000–40,000 present
- McClellan held large reserves, fearing counterattacks that did not exist
- Result: Battle fought in pieces, not overwhelming force
- McClellan fought to avoid defeat, not destroy Lee's army

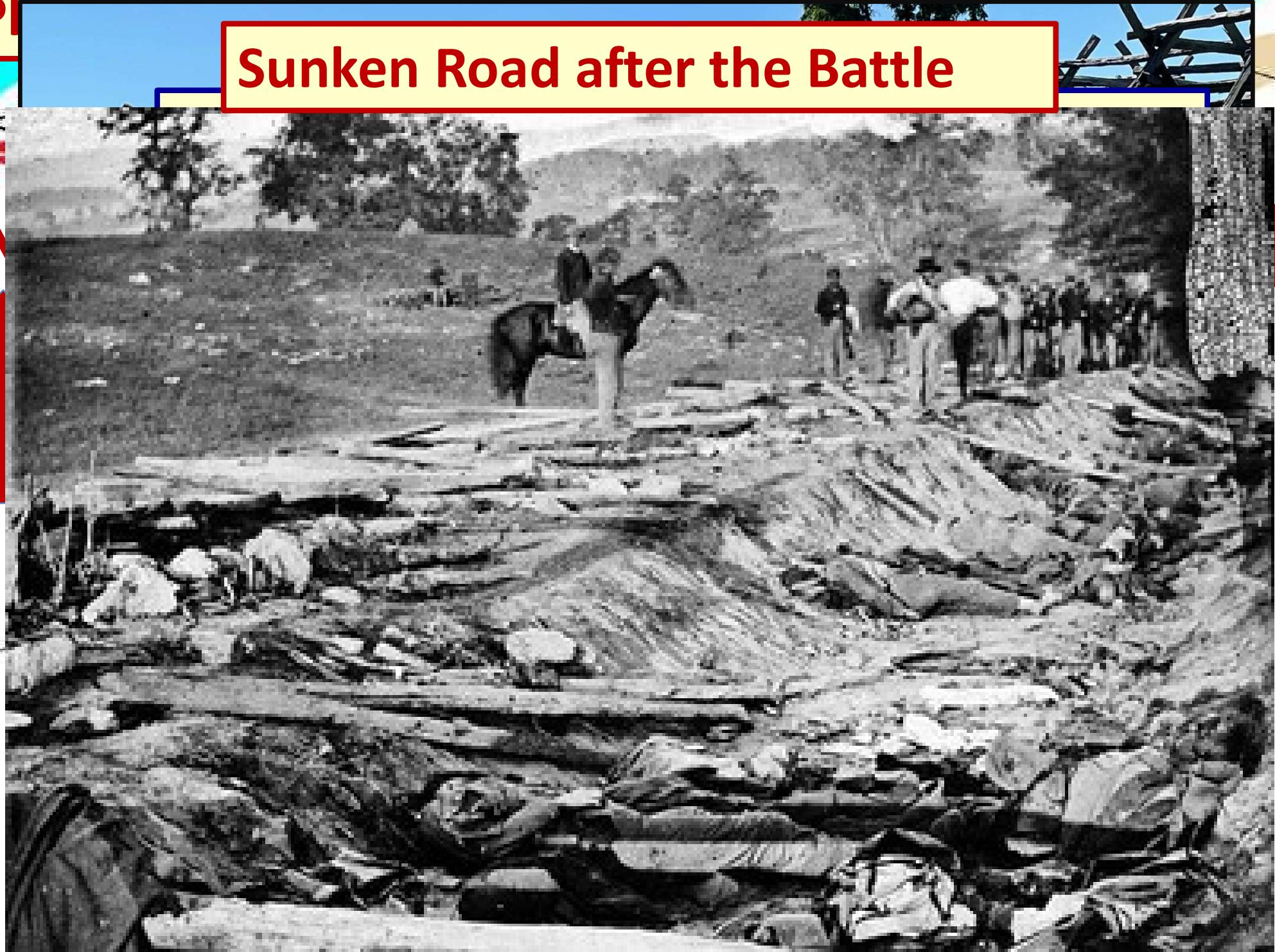
## Phase 1 (5:30 – 9:00 AM)

Union attacks begin at dawn

**Bloodiest morning of the war:  
No side gains an advantage despite  
Massive Casualties on both sides**

**Repeated Assaults and Counterattacks**

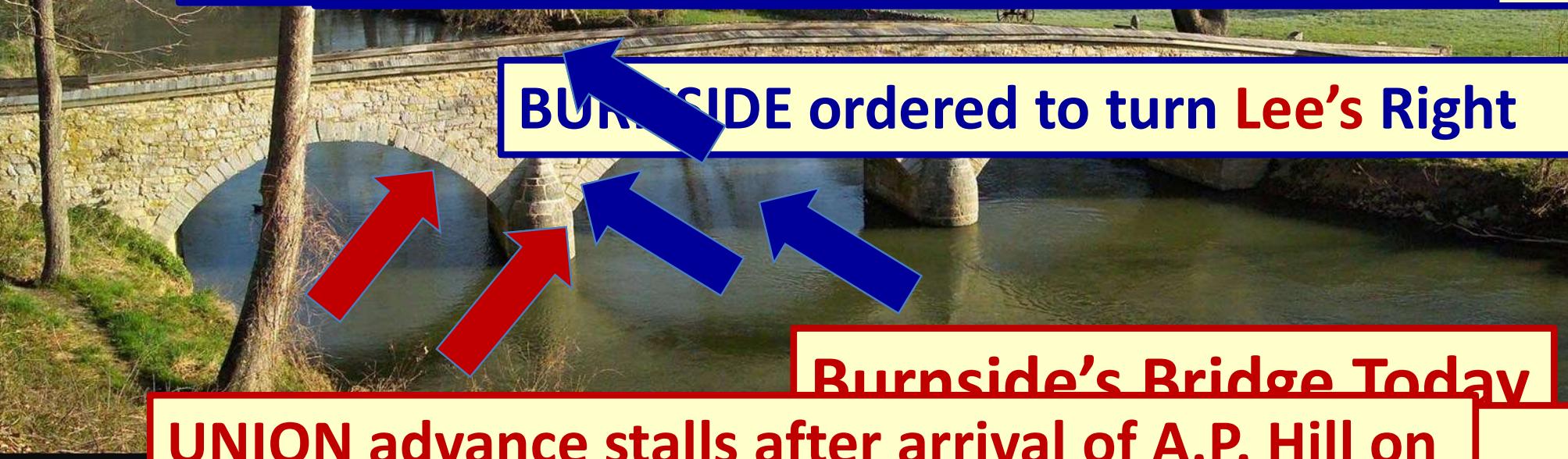
## Sunken Road after the Battle



## Phase 3 (1:00 PM – 5:30 PM)



**UNION** advances towards Sharpsburg to cut off Lee's Escape path to Potomac.



**BURN** **SIDE** ordered to turn Lee's Right

Burnside's Bridge Today



**UNION** advance stalls after arrival of A.P. Hill on forced march from Harpers Ferry

# Antietam — Cost & Immediate Aftermath

## Cemetery at Antietam Battlefield



# Why Antietam Changed the War

**Strategic Significance:**

**UNION strategic victory (not a battlefield rout)**

**Abraham Lincoln issues:**

**The Emancipation Proclamation**

**War becomes about preserving the**

**UNION + FREEDOM for Slaves**

**Britain and France w/hold recognition of the CONFEDERACY**

**CONFEDERATE diplomatic momentum collapses**

**Takeaway:**

***Antietam did not end the war***

***— it changed what the war was about.***

*Next time, we'll see how the war turns even bloodier at:*

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