

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).

UNION Objectives (Western Theater)

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

0 The Confederates knew one thing clearly:

1 *If Corinth falls, the Western Confederacy*

2 *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)



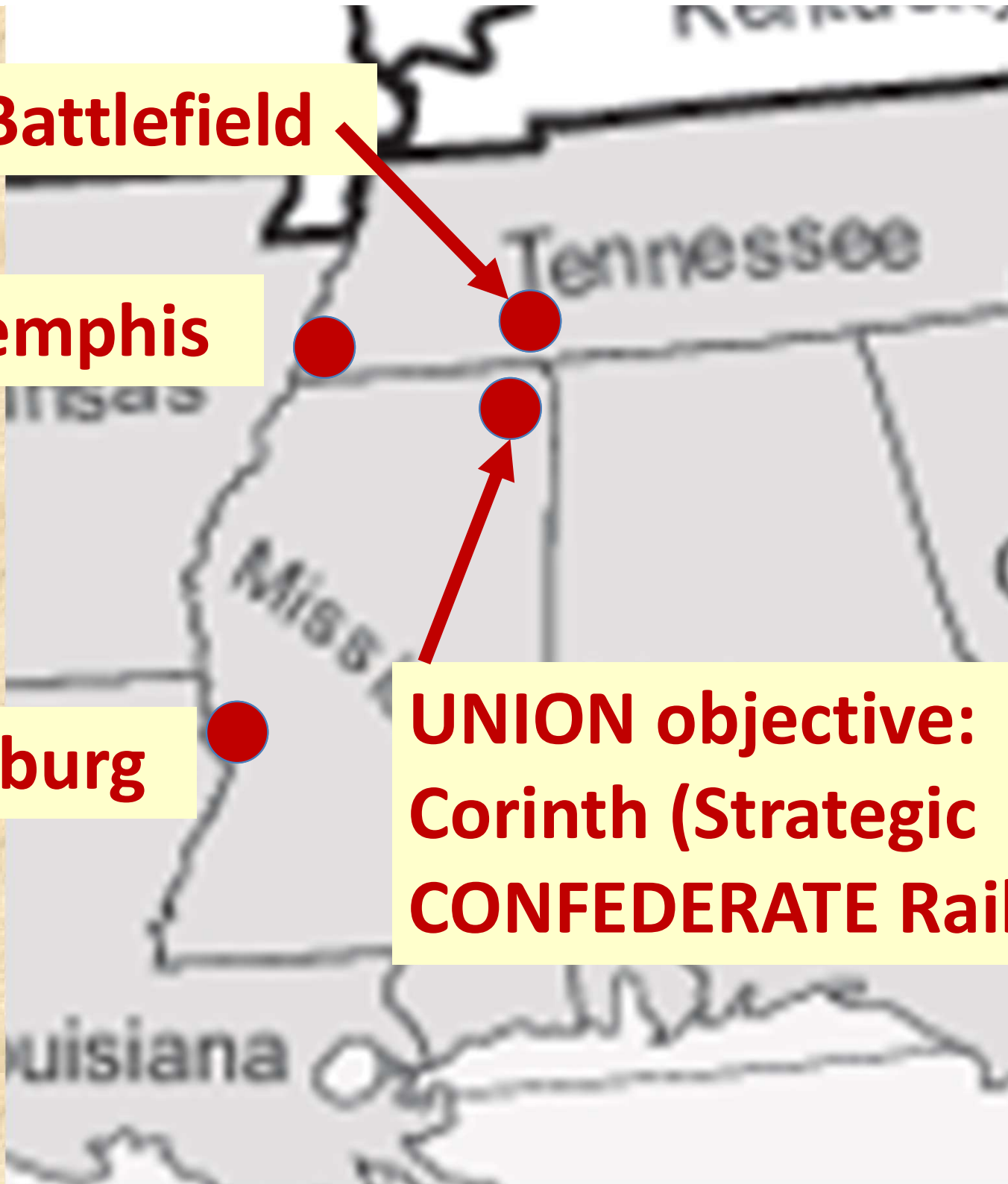
Location of the Battle of Shiloh

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:

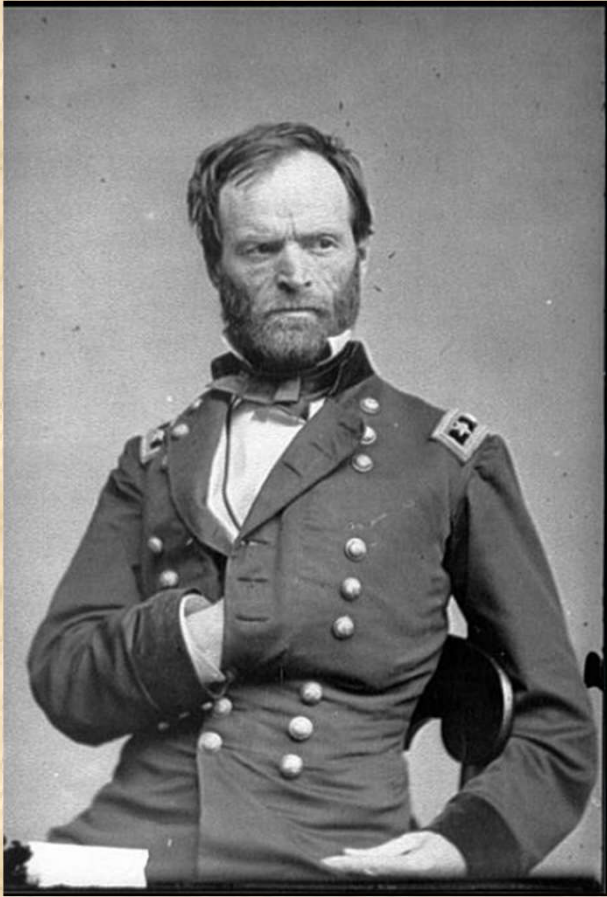
- Overall **UNION** commander
- Caught by surprise but refused to retreat
- Held defensive line through brutal first day
- Coordinated counterattack with Buell on April 7

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:

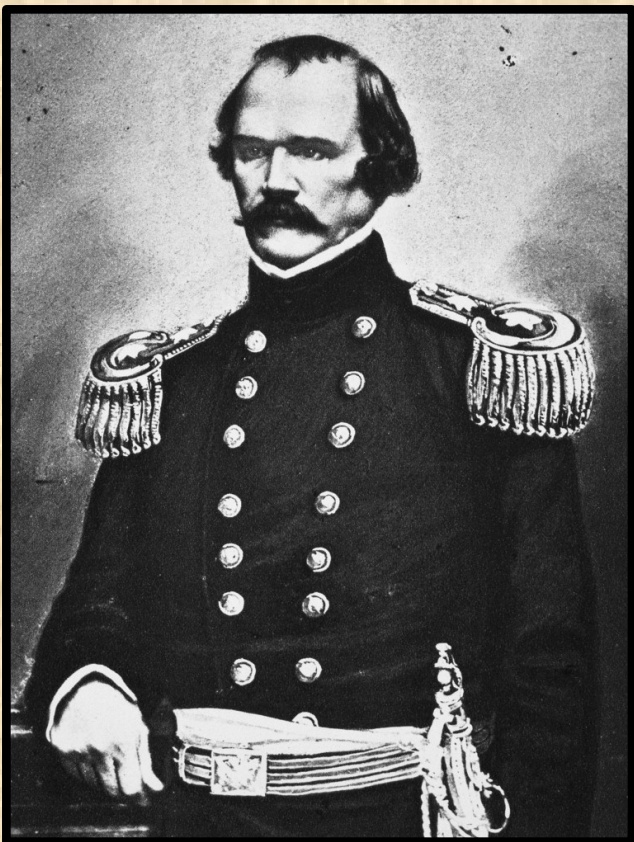
- Commanded reinforcements marching to **Grant**
- His fresh troops critical to April 7 counterattack
- Arrived late April 6, crossed TN river overnight

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

8

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

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

Forward Union Positions
0900 6 April

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.*

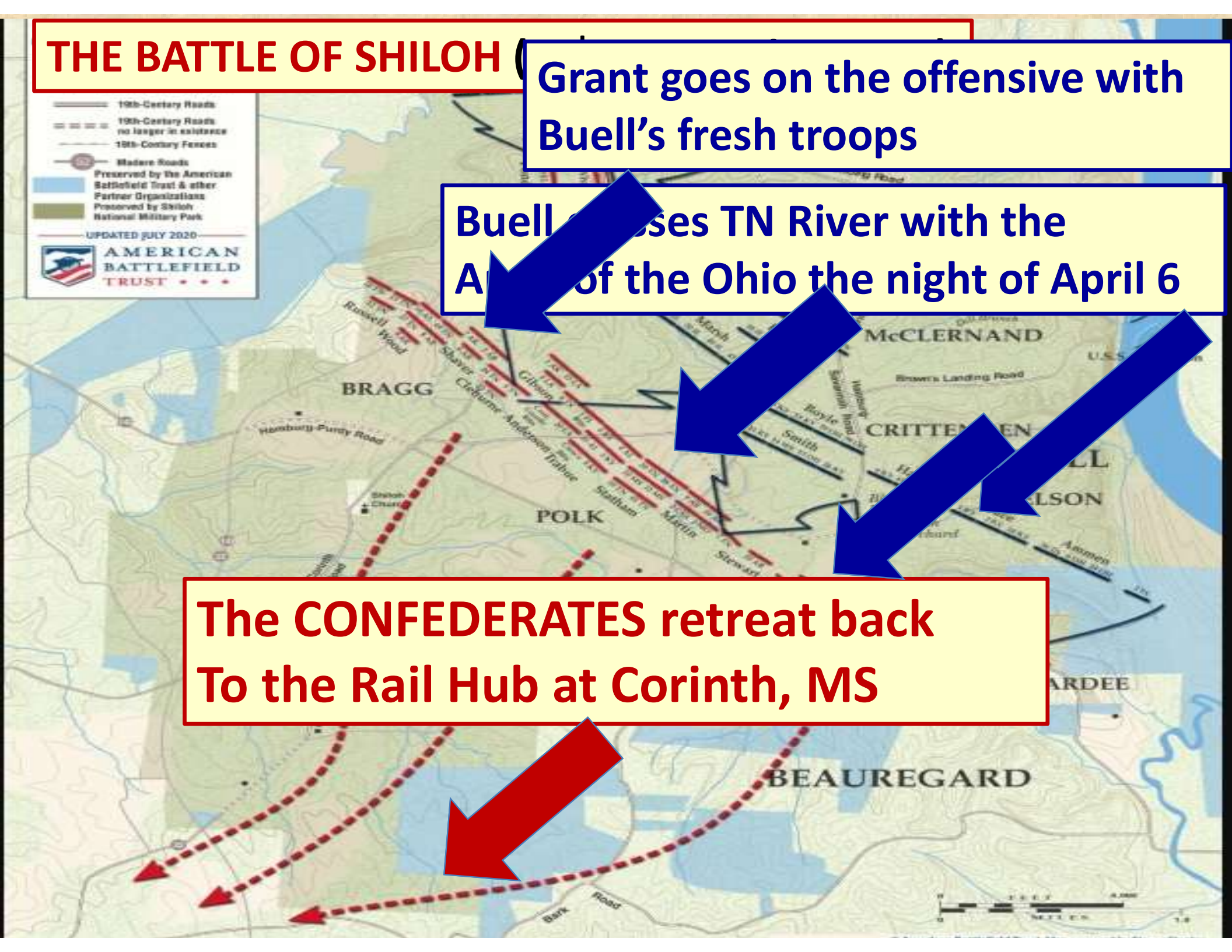
the **Hornet's Nest** helped turn what could have been a crushing Union defeat into a Union victory.

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.

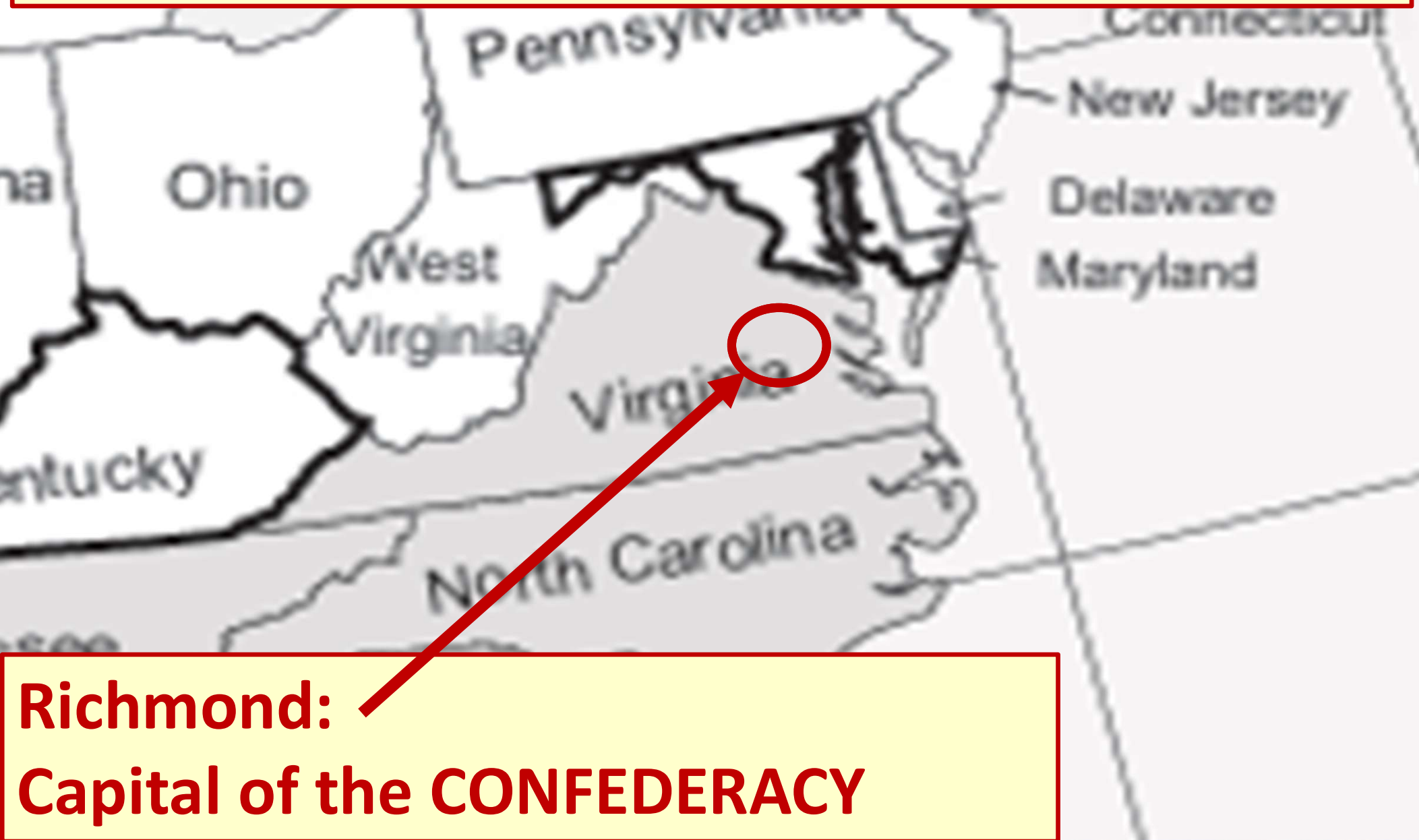
After **Shiloh**, the war increasingly became one of **attrition**, not **quick battlefield glory**.

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

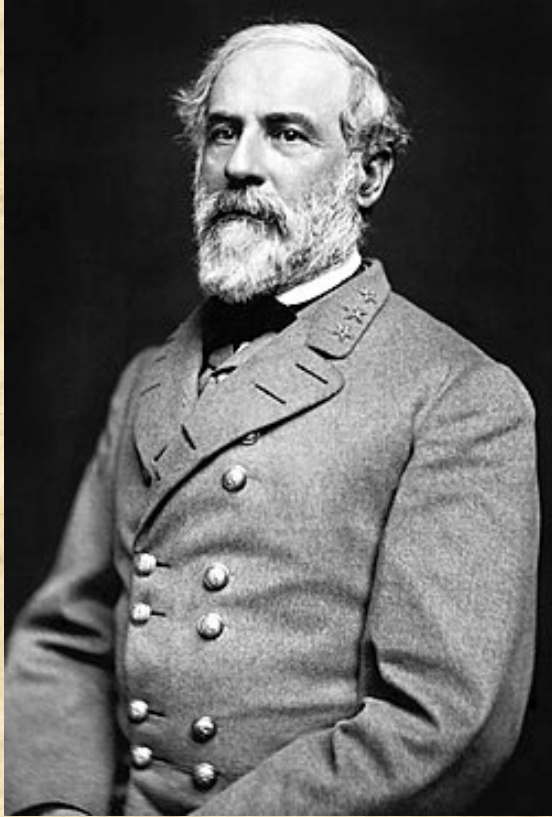
- **Shiloh** confirms the war will be **Long, Costly, and Total**
 - The **Western Theater** opens the **CONFEDERACY** to **river-based** invasion
 - Attention now turns to the **Eastern Theater**, where:
 - The **political capitals** face one another
- Washington DC and Richmond, VA**
were roughly 100 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)**



Richmond:
Capital of the CONFEDERACY

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

Ironically, **McClennan** would run against
Lincoln as the **Democratic Candidate**
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

**Mechanicsville
June 26**

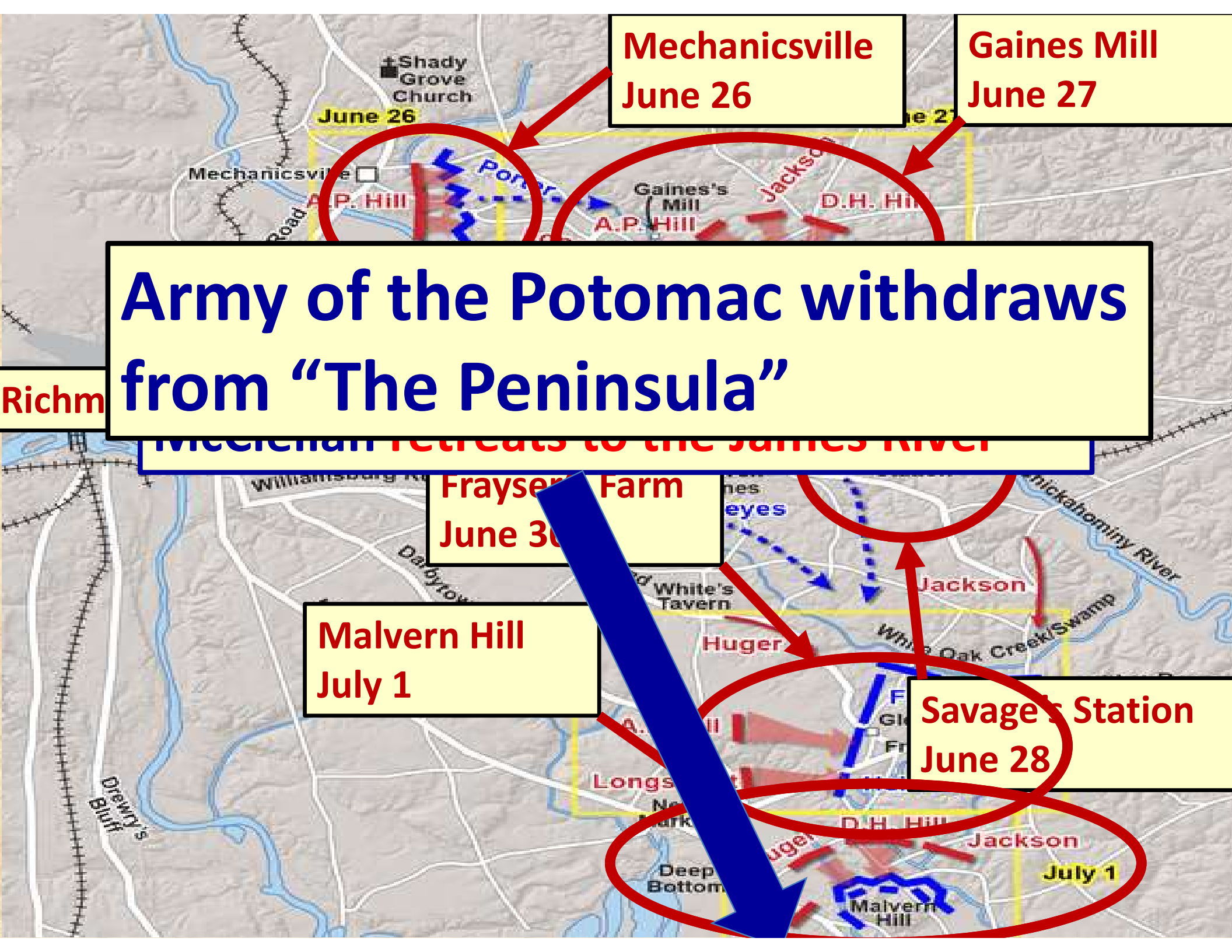
**Gaines Mill
June 27**

Army of the Potomac withdraws from "The Peninsula"

**Frayser Farm
June 30**

**Malvern Hill
July 1**

**Savage's Station
June 28**



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*

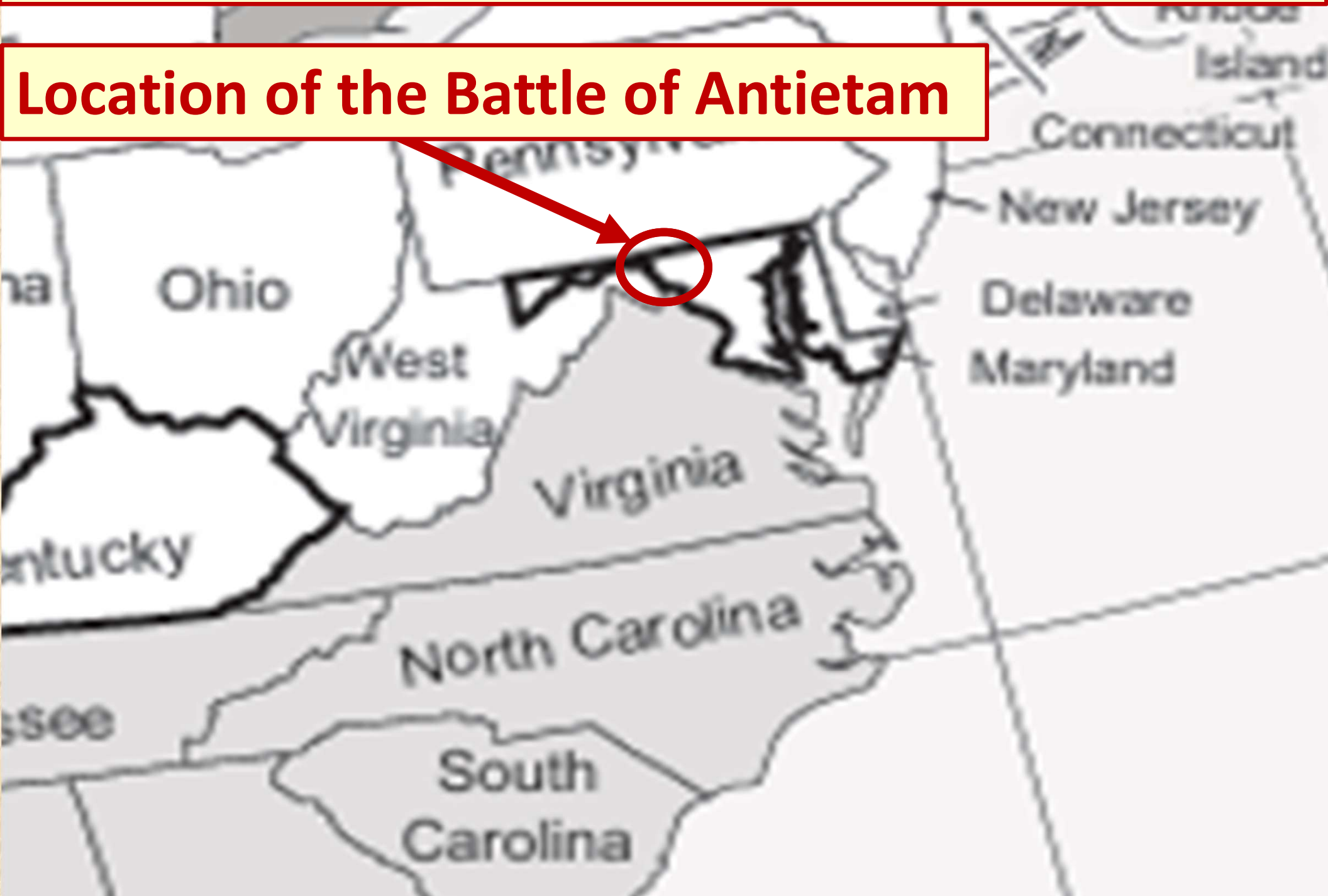
- He needs a military success to give it **legitimacy**

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)

FREDERICK

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

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

**SOUTH
MOUNTAIN**

TURNER'S GAP

CRAMPTON'S GAP

SHARPSBURG

**HARPER'S
FERRY**

LEGEND

TROOP MOVEMENTS

Confederate	Union
--- SEPTEMBER 3-9	--- SEPTEMBER 3-9
— SEPTEMBER 10-13	— SEPTEMBER 10-13
... SEPTEMBER 14-17	... SEPTEMBER 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

**AMERICAN
BATTLEFIELD
TRUST**

VIRGINIA

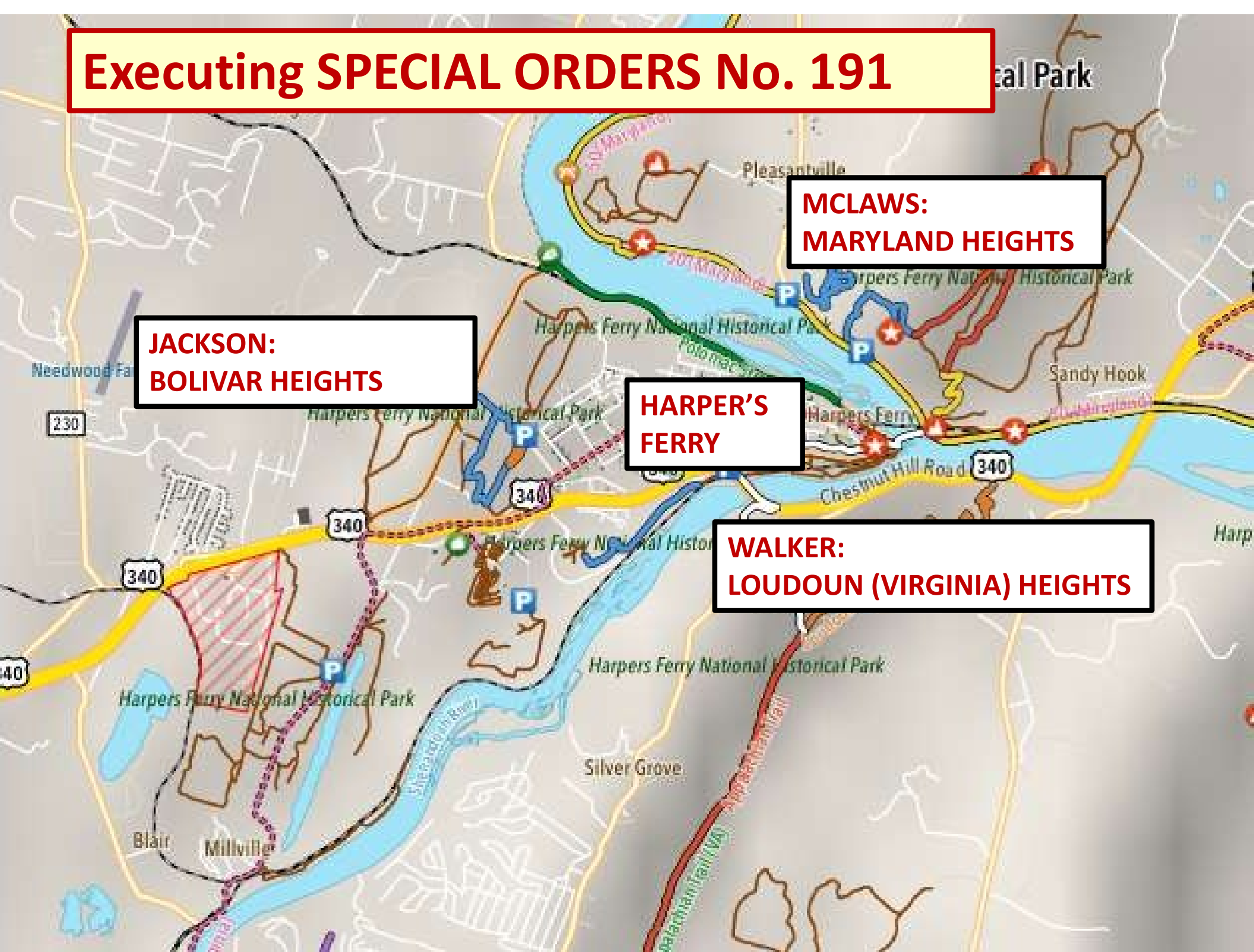
Executing SPECIAL ORDERS No. 191

JACKSON:
BOLIVAR HEIGHTS

MCLAWS:
MARYLAND HEIGHTS

**HARPER'S
FERRY**

WALKER:
LOUDOUN (VIRGINIA) HEIGHTS



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

(Confidential)
No. 191
Special Order No. 191
its march to-morrow taking the Hagerstown road Gen Jackson Command will form the advance and after passing Middletown with such portion as he may select take the route towards Sharpsburg cross the Potomac at the most convenient point & by Friday morning take possession of the Baltimore & Ohio R.R. capture all of the Enemy as may be at Martinsburg and intercept such as may attempt to escape from Harpers Ferry

III Gen Longstreet's command will pursue the main road as far as Burnsville where it will halt with reserve supply and baggage trains of the army

IV 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 Harpers Ferry and by Friday morning possess himself of the Maryland Heights and Encamp in the capture the Enemy at Harpers Ferry and vicinity

V Gen Walker with his division

will keep Gen Jackson on his left and the road between the End of Mountain and the Potomac on his right. He will as far as practicable cooperate with Gen McLaws & Gen Jackson in intercepting the retreat of the Enemy

VI 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 precede Gen Hill

VII Gen Stuart will detach a squadron of Cavalry to accompany the Commanders of Gen Longstreet Jackson and McLaws and with the main body of the Cavalry will cover the route of the army & bring up all baggage that may have been left behind

VIII The commands of Gen Jackson McLaws & Walker after accomplishing the objects for which they have been detached will join the main body of the army at Burnsville or Hagerstown

IX Each Regiment on the march will habitually carry its arms in the Regimental ordnance wagons for use of the men at their encampments and previous to the march

For
Gen D. H. Hill
Major General
Cavalry Division

By Command of Gen R. E. Lee
R. A. Chilton
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**

THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM

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

HARPERS FERRY

FOX'S GAP

SOUTH MOUNTAIN

1 found
Sept 13

FREDERICK

Frederick

LEGEND

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

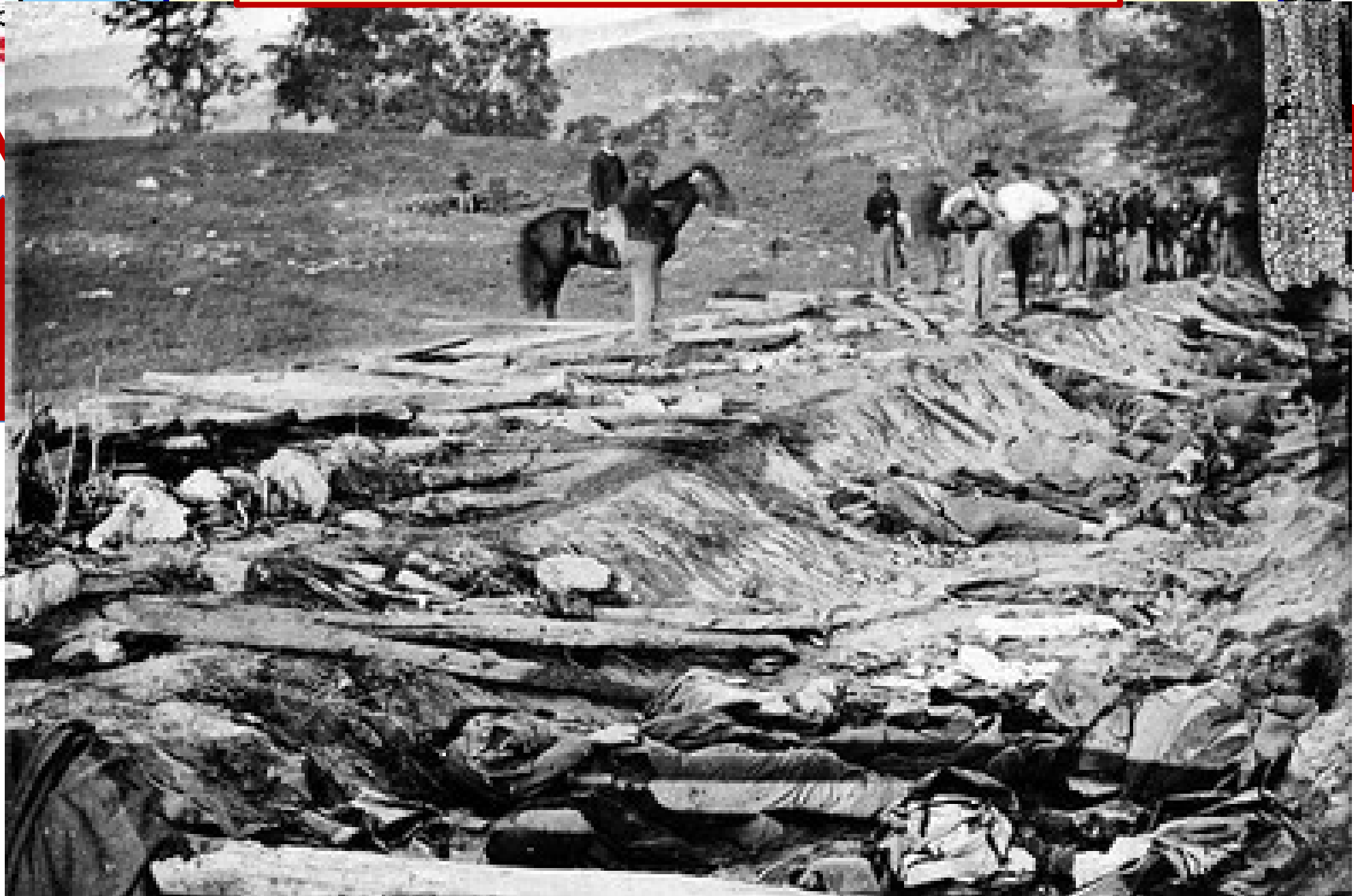
Repeated Assaults and Counterattacks



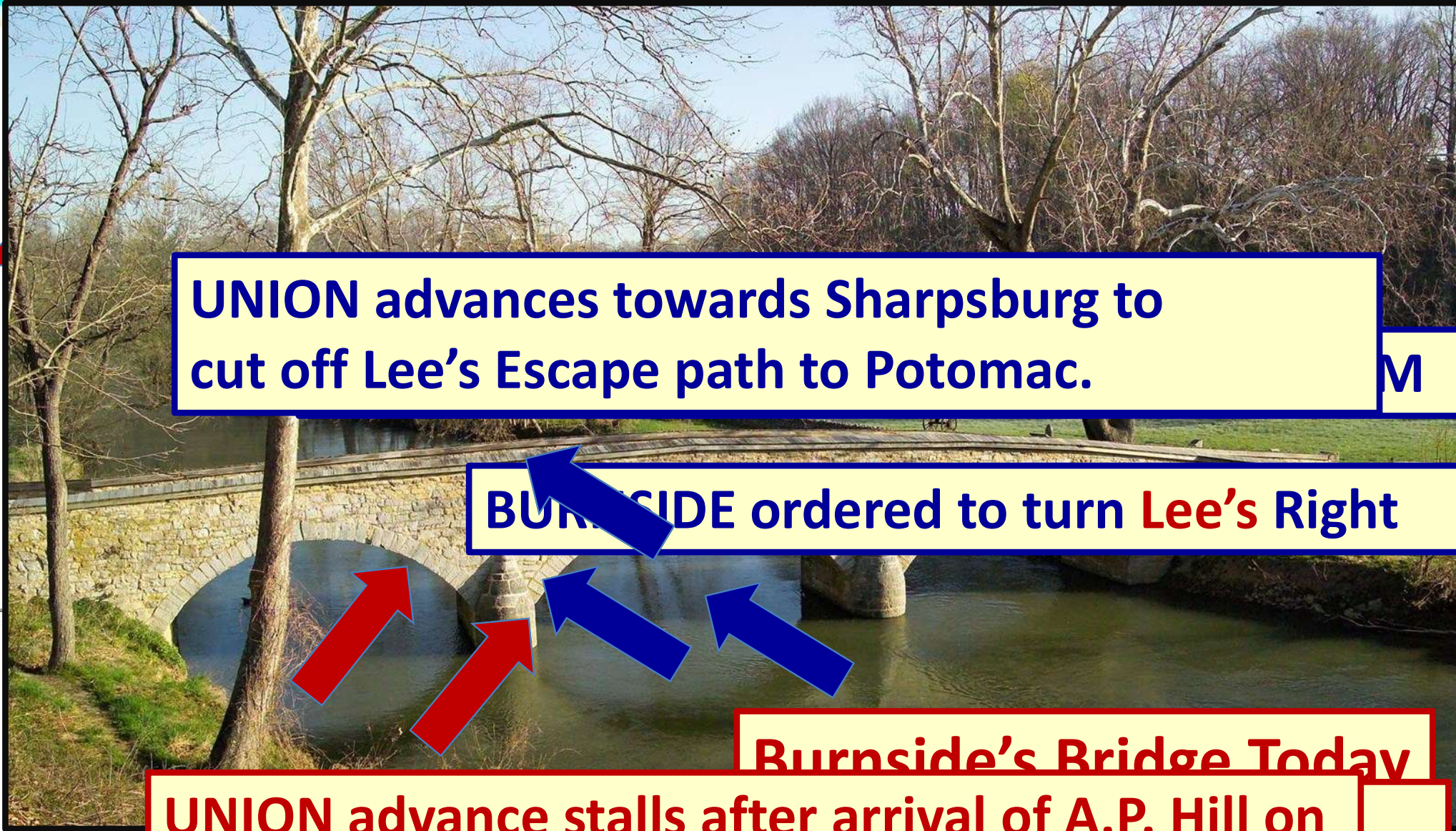
**Snavely's
Ford**

Pl

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.

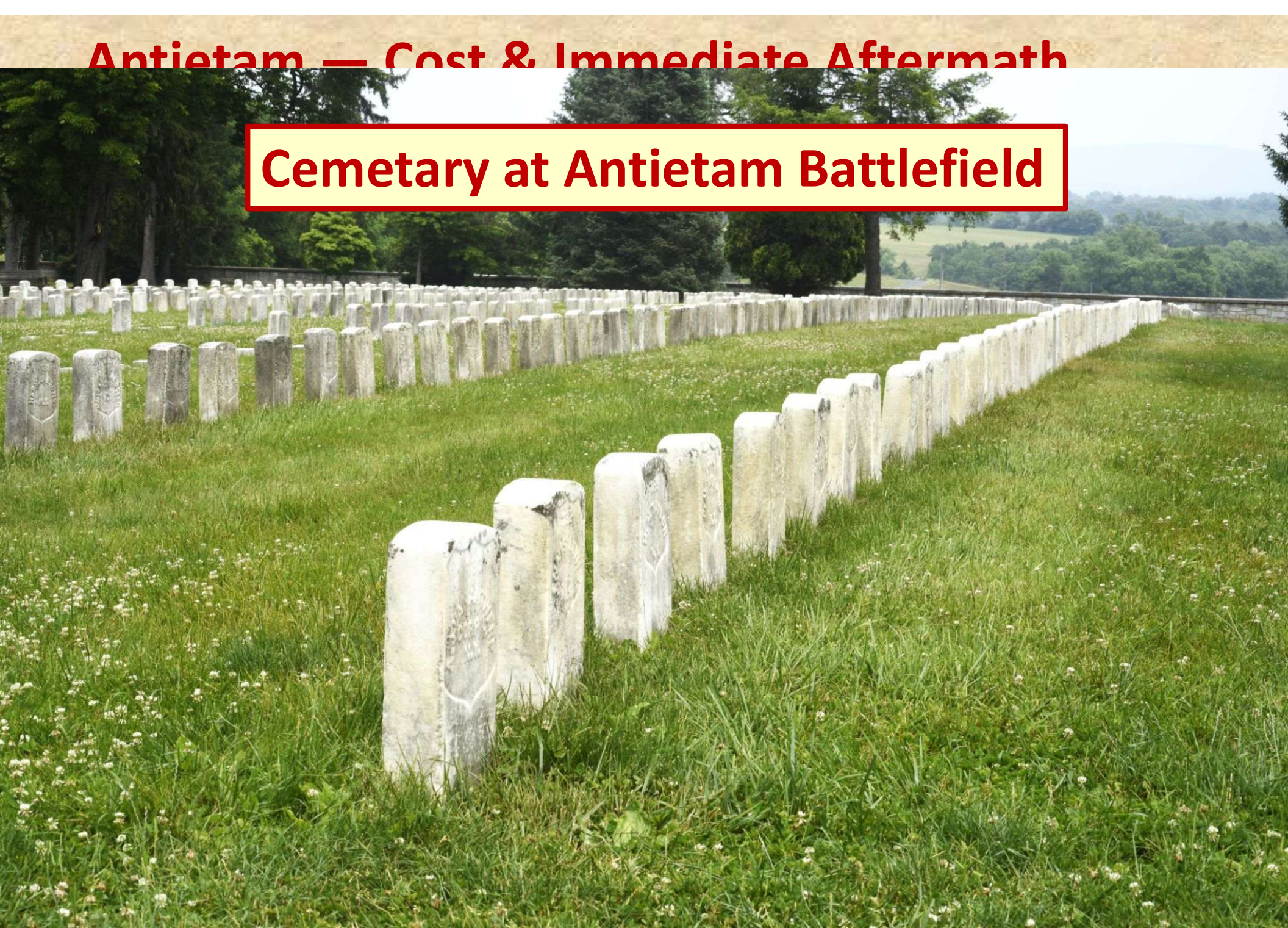
BURNSIDE ordered to turn Lee's Right

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)