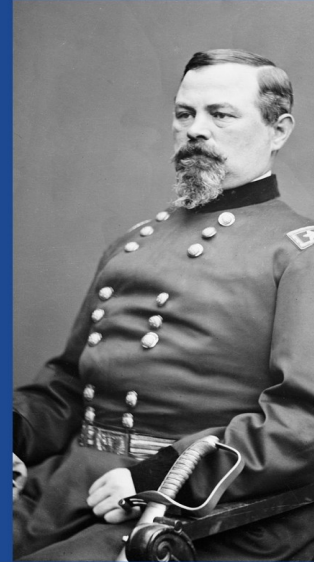


IRVIN MCDOWELL FORGOTTEN CIVIL WAR GENERAL

SEARCHING FOR
IRVIN MCDOWELL

FORGOTTEN
CIVIL WAR
GENERAL



*The first biography of this
important Union General in the
early days of the Civil War*

FRANK P. SIMIONE, JR. AND GENE SCHMIEL,
WITH E.L. "DUTCH" SCHNEIDER

TWO MEMORABLE QUOTES



- “I fear that I am one of the *never-have-beens* rather than one of those *who have been and are.*” (1868)
- “Do you remember what day this is? (It was the anniversary of First Bull Run). Had I won that battle, I should have been the most popular man in America. I need not tell you how very much it is the other...at present.” (c1880)

Ohio Rearing



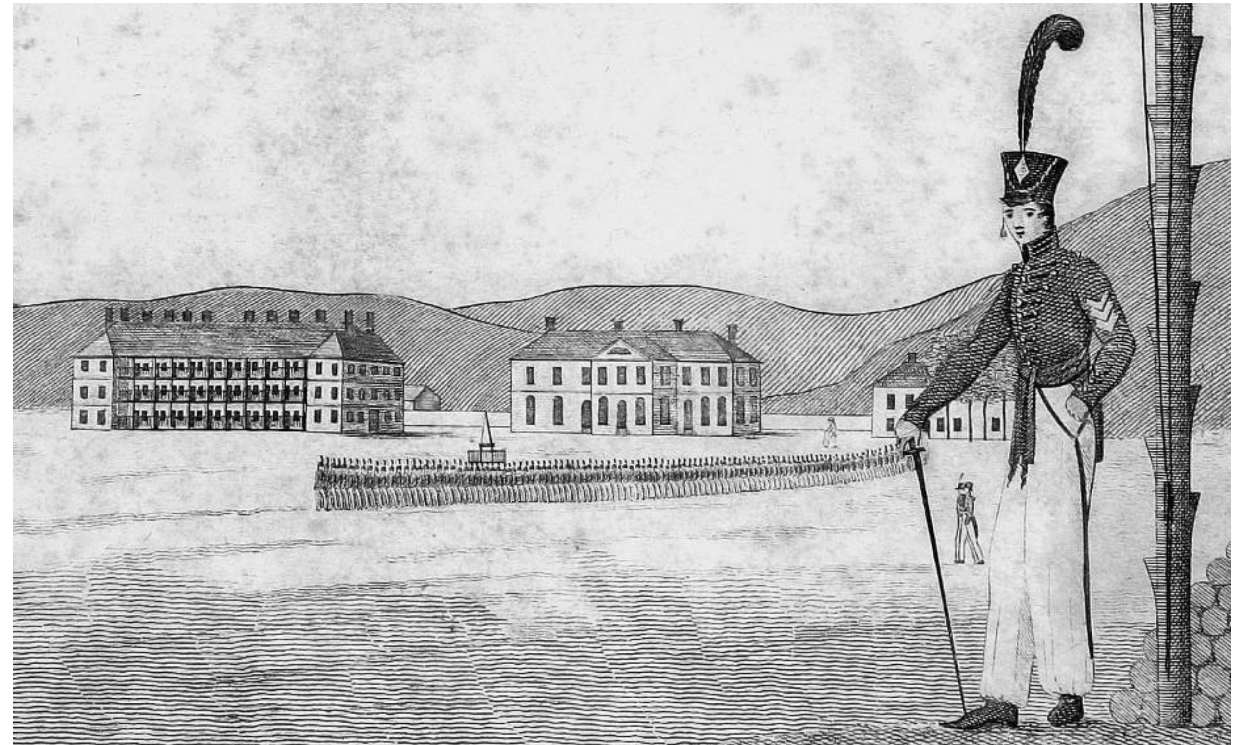
McDowell Home in Columbus

- Born in Columbus in 1818.
- **Father Abram an entrepreneur and politician – one term as Mayor of Columbus.**
- Abram was also an alcoholic, which would have a major effect on Irvin, a firm teetotaler
- **Mother, Eliza's, cousin was influential politician Lewis Cass**

EDUCATION IN FRANCE AND WEST POINT VIA LEWIS CASS



College de Troyes, France



West Point, c 1820

STAFF OFFICER PAR EXCELLENCE ON THE WAY UP, 1838-1861



- Served under Winfield Scott 1838-40; 1848-1861;
- **Taught at West Point 1841-5;**
- **Was sent to Europe 1858-9 to study military techniques - a sure sign that he was considered an “up and comer.”**

PERSONAL LIFE



- Served on General John Wool's staff 1845-8, including during the Mexican War;
- **Wool introduced McDowell to his wife, Helen, of Troy, New York. They had 4 children.**
- **McDowell became wealthy by marriage.**

PROBLEMS FROM PRE-WAR EXPERIENCE:

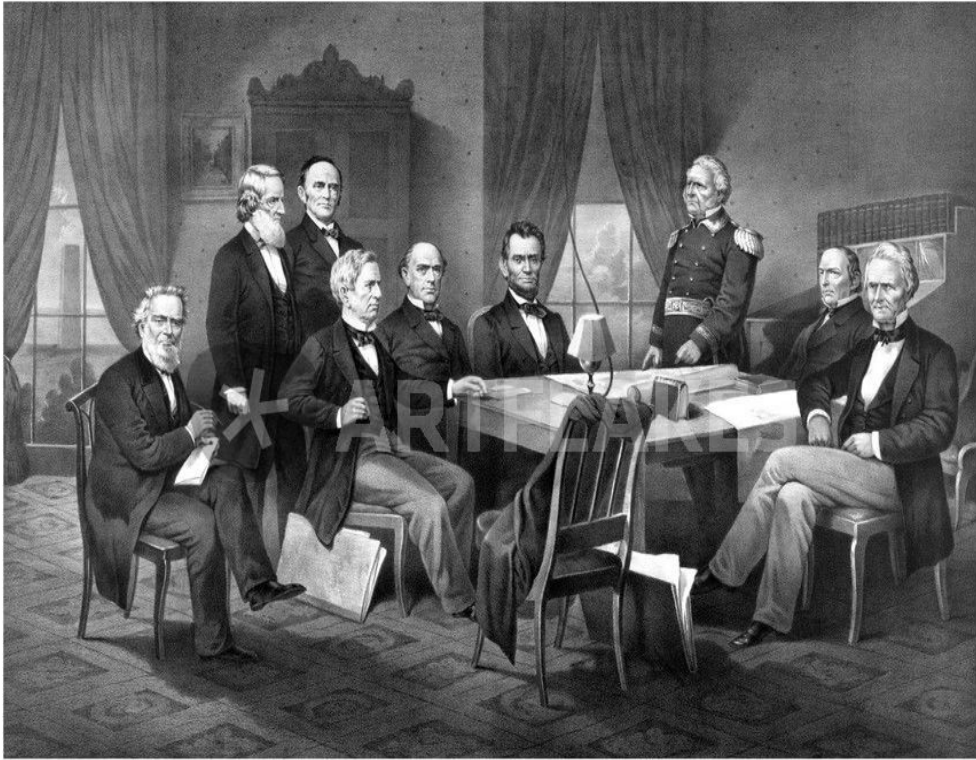
The Perennial Staffer



- Never engaged in actual fighting or led troops into battle, so how would he handle himself when he was in command?
- **Seen as aloof, but also could become emotional and act impulsively.**
- At times on the battlefield was unwilling or unable to take on the role of overall commander and let others do their staff roles.

CIVIL WAR—THE FIRST BATTLES

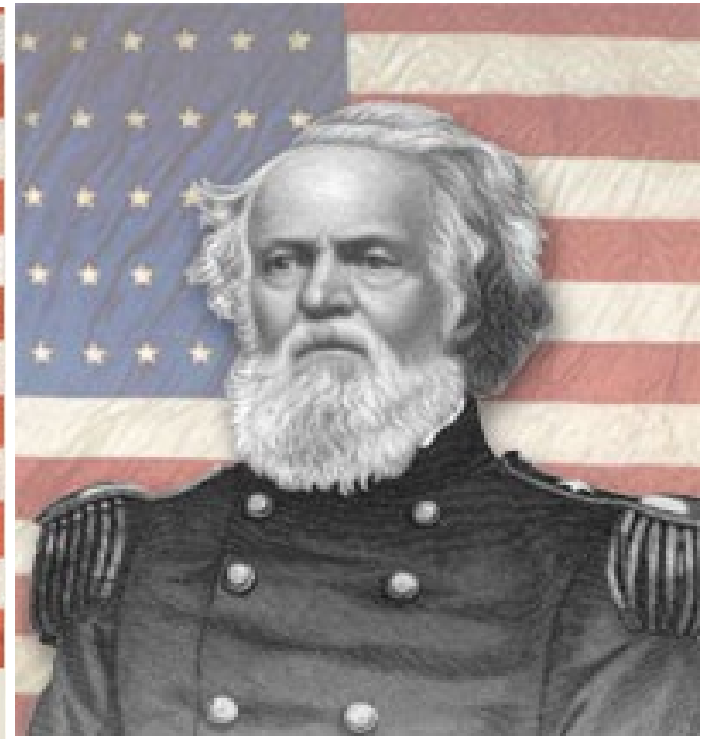
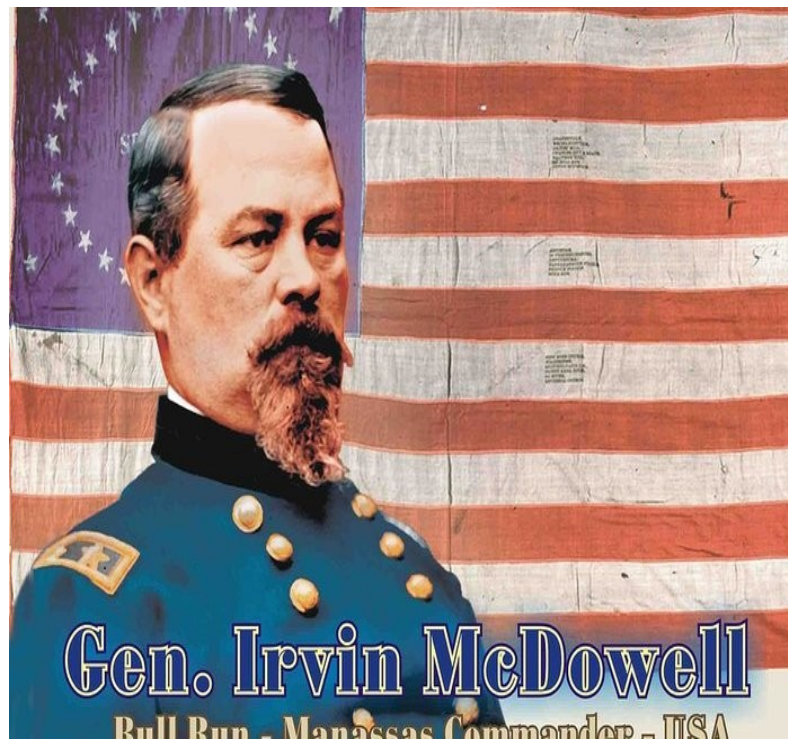
WHO WILL COMMAND?



PRESIDENT LINCOLN AND HIS CABINET, WITH LIEUT. GENL. SCOTT.
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

- Once the Civil War began, both sides had to decide who would lead.
- **Scott was too infirm, and as a Virginian, feared that most of the fighting would be there.**
- He would propose the Anaconda Plan, but the Cabinet and Lincoln believed there had to be a battle.

THREE PRIME UNION CANDIDATES: MCCLELLAN, MCDOWELL, AND MANSFIELD

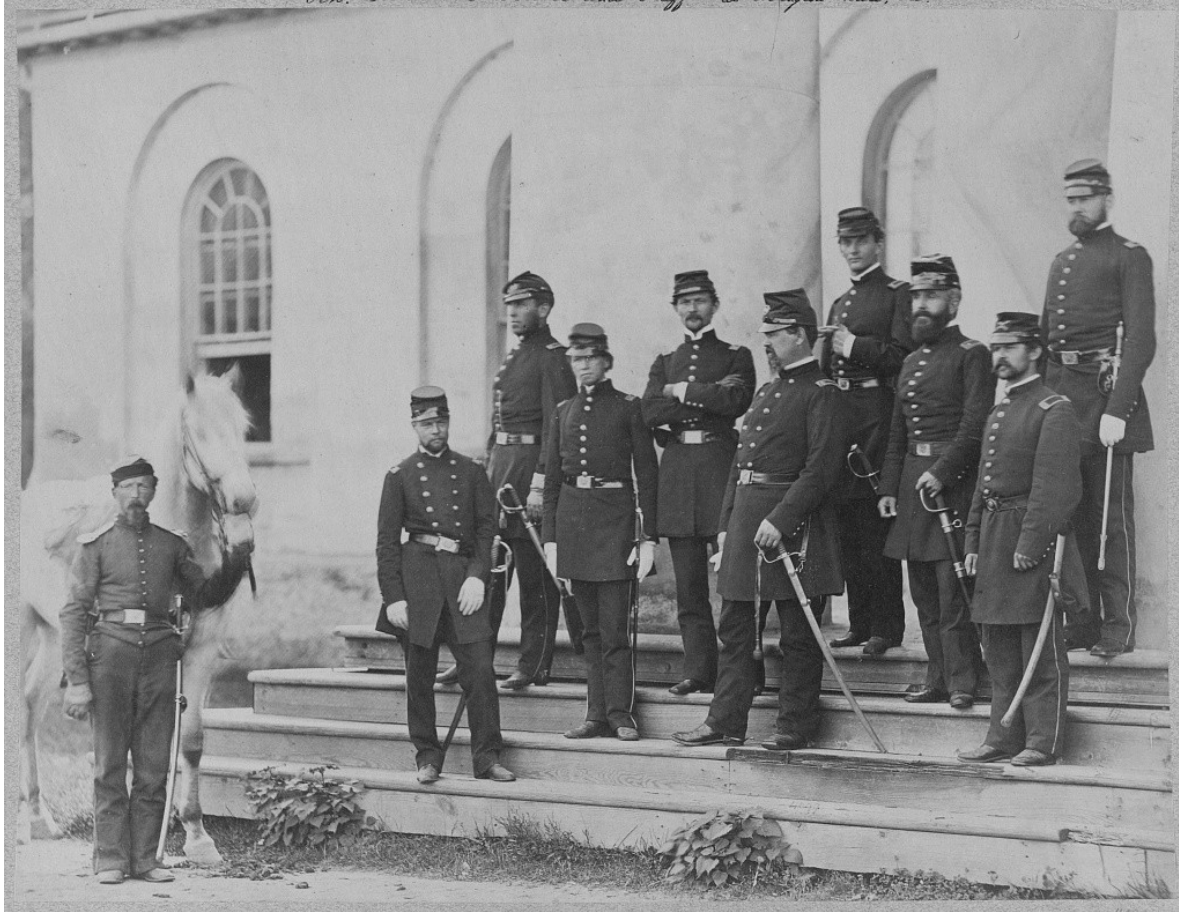


CHASE'S INFLUENCE



- In the “Team of Rivals,” no one more influential than Chase.
- **He wanted an Ohioan and first recommended McClellan, but he became commander of Ohio’s troops in mid-April**
- Next choice was McDowell, who was also a family friend.

MCDOWELL “WINS”; MANSFIELD AND SCOTT RELUCTANT



- May 27, Dept. of Northeastern Virginia created, with McDowell at its head;
- **Set up headquarters at Arlington Hall; Mrs. Lee departs**
- **Mansfield dragged his feet when asked to support McDowell;**
- **Scott even once asked McDowell to turn down the assignment.**

ORGANIZING AN ARMY, CREATING A BATTLE PLAN

- On reviewing his motley assemblage of troops, many 90 day volunteers, McDowell thought 4-5 months to get them ready
- **But on June 3 Scott startled McDowell by asking for his battle plan.**
- Confederate troops were assembled around Manassas and the nation wanted a quick victory.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED!



AN ATTACK UPON WASHINGTON ANTICIPATED!!

THE COUNTRY TO THE RESCUE!

A REGIMENT FOR SERVICE

UNDER THE FLAG  OF THE UNITED STATES
IS BEING FORMED IN JEFFERSON COUNTY.

NOW IS THE TIME TO BE ENROLLED!

Patriotism and love of Country alike demand a ready response from every man capable of bearing arms in this trying hour, to sustain not merely the existence of the Government, but to vindicate the honor of that Flag so ruthlessly torn by traitor hands from the walls of Sumter.

RECRUITING RENDEZVOUS

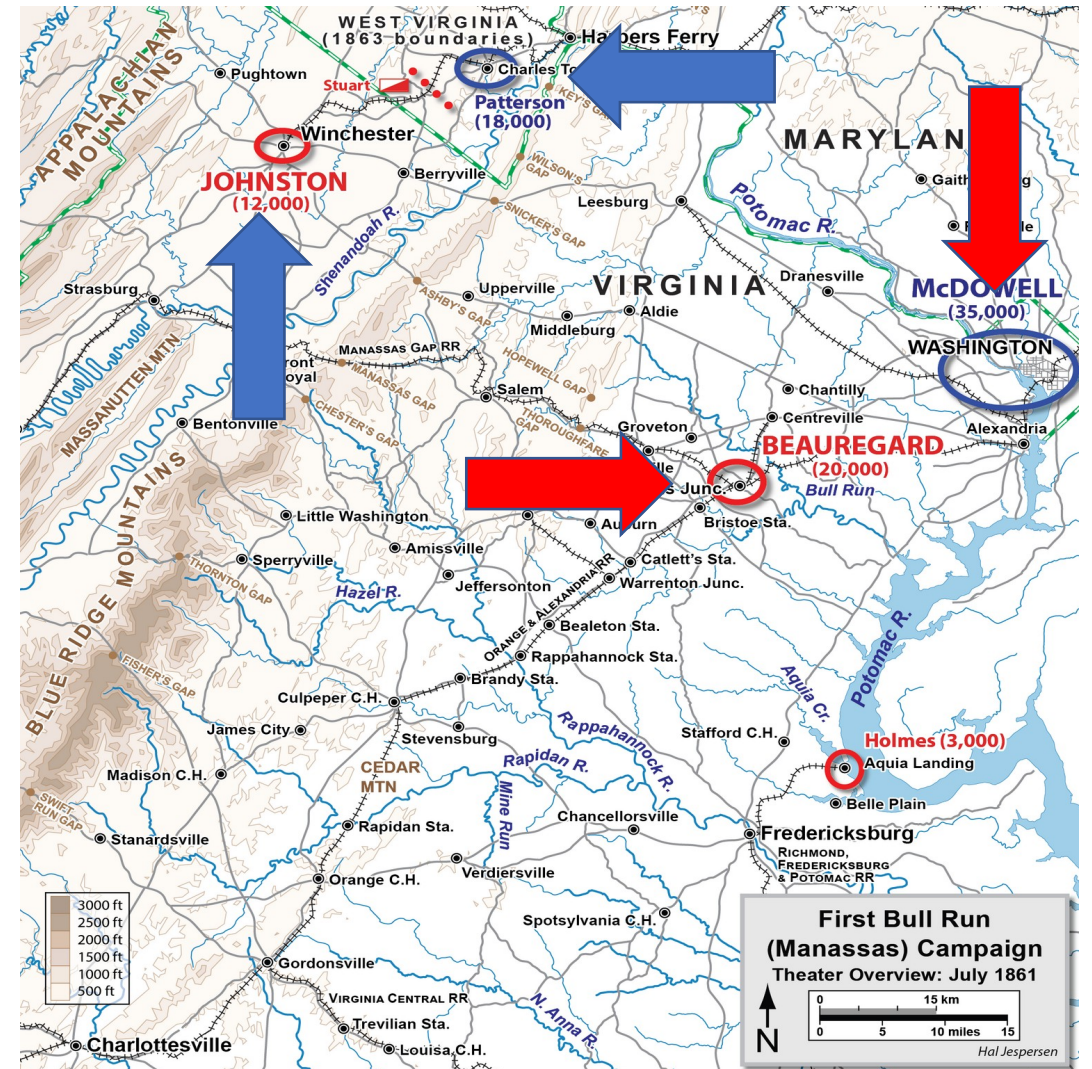
Are open in the village of WATERTOWN, and at all the principal villages in the County, for the formation of Companies, or parts of Companies. Officers to be immediately elected by those enrolled.

WATERTOWN, APRIL 20, 1861. WM. C. BROWNE, Col. Comd'g 35th Regiment.

Ingalls, Brockway & Beebe, Printers, Reformer Office, Watertown.

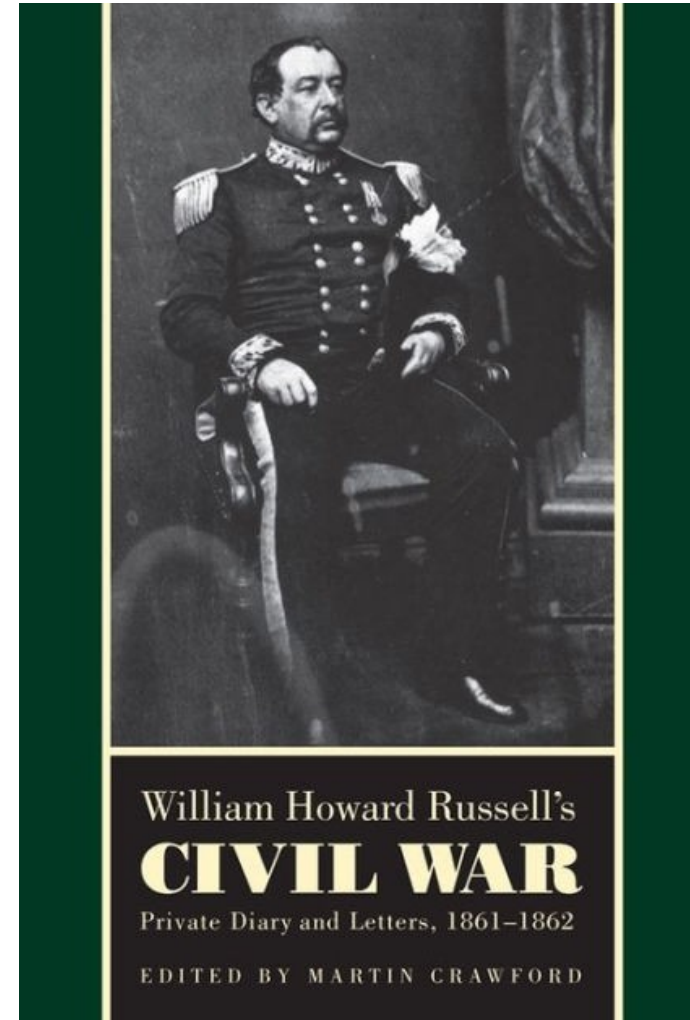
THE PLAN FOR FIRST MANASSAS

- Taking a cue from Scott in Mexico, McDowell proposed on June 29 using some 35,000 troops to outflank the Confederates, which had, he estimated, 25,000 under Beauregard outside Manassas.
- Key would be to keep Johnston's force of 10,000 in the Valley.
- Robert Patterson, one of Scott's oldest friends, failed that job.

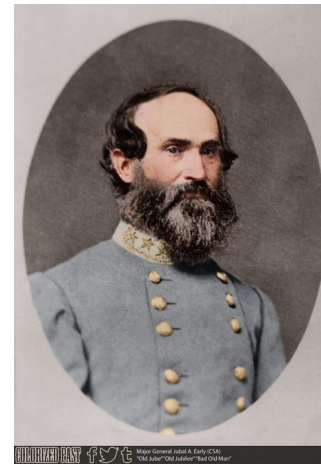
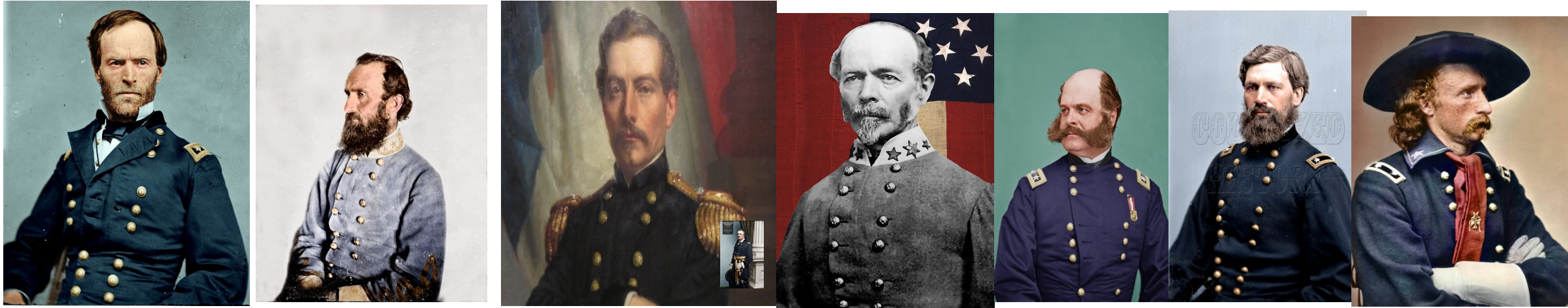


LINCOLN APPROVES ADVANCE ON JULY 9; MCDOWELL ADVANCES ON JULY 16, CHECKS ON SUPPLIES

- McDowell fretted that his men were not ready, but the political dynamic demanded action.
- He delayed for a week because he was unsure of supplies and the abilities of his staff and men – he did much of the work himself.
- Scott remained overall commander of the operation and did not give McDowell flexibility.

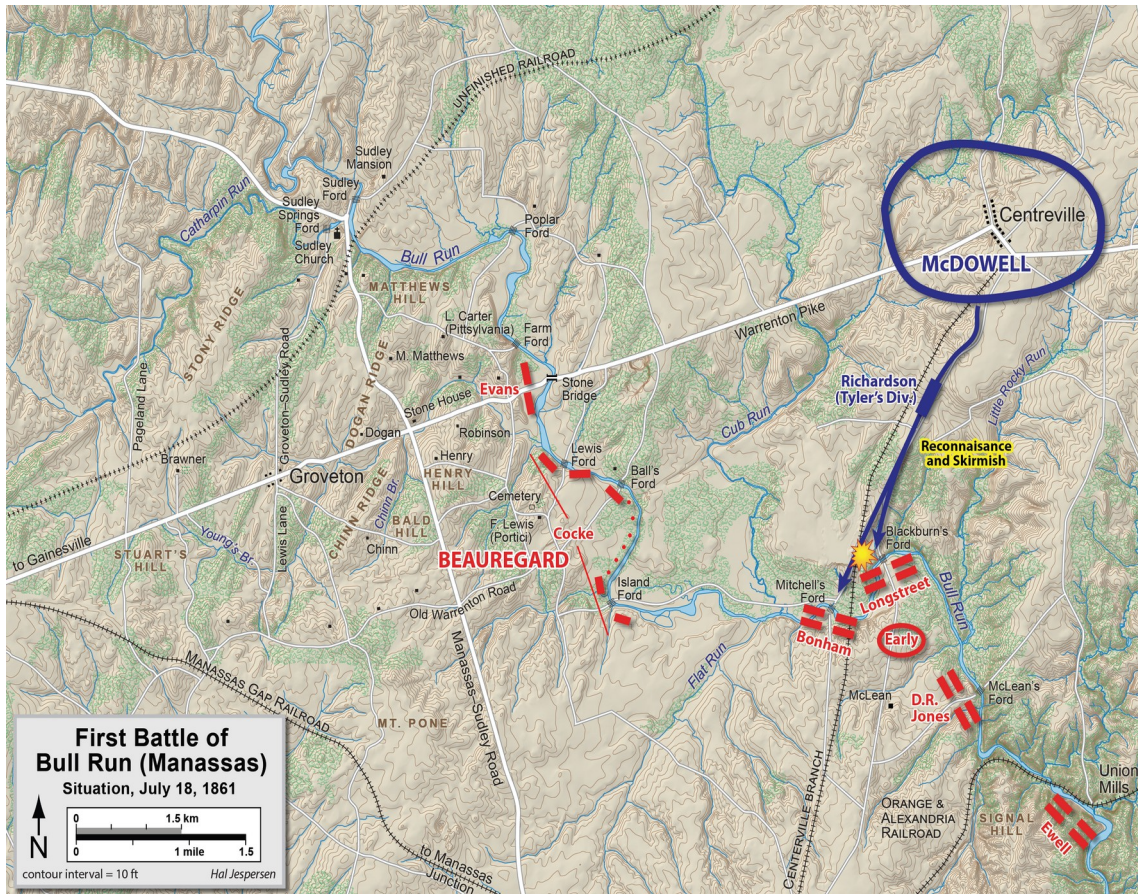


**Other Major Personalities on the Battlefield:
Sherman, Jackson, Beauregard, Johnston, Burnside, Howard, Custer, Richardson, Miles, Longstreet, Kirby Smith, Early,
Ewell, and Jeff Davis**



Blackburn's Ford July 18

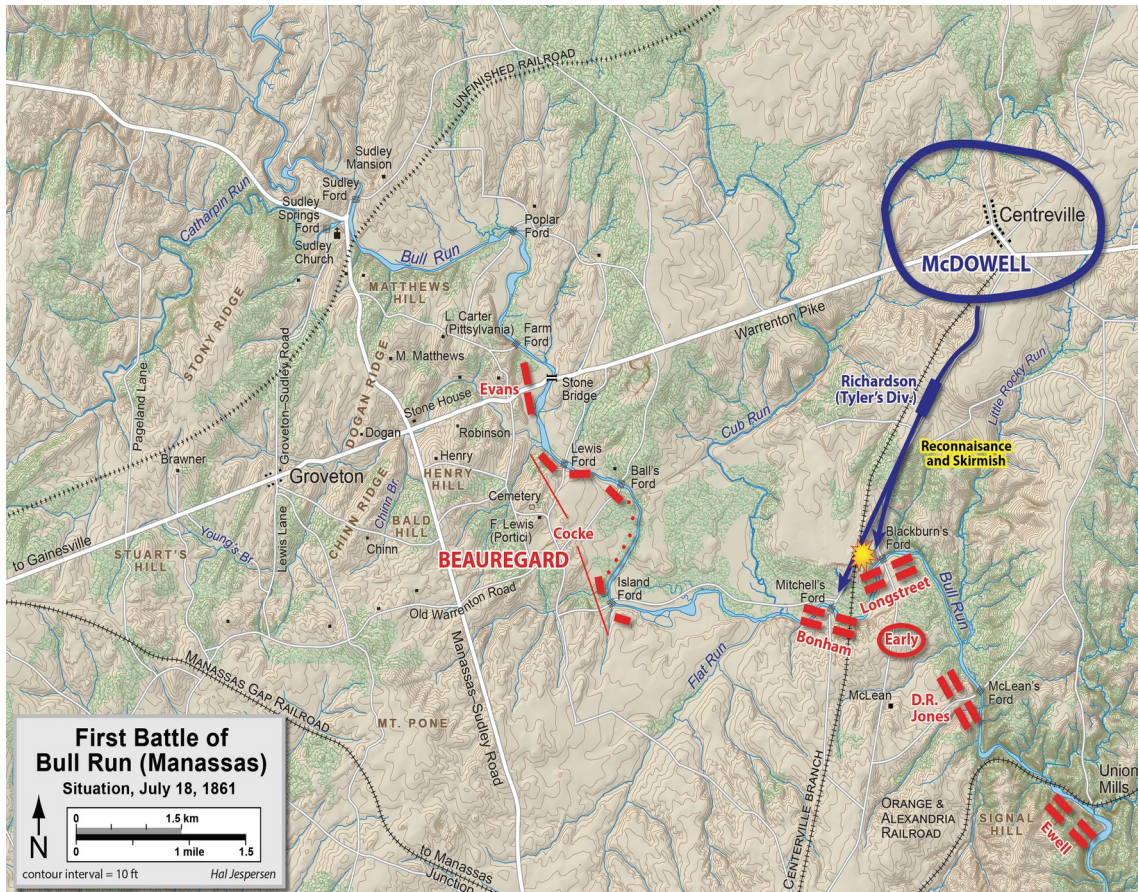
The First Maneuvers



- McDowell impulsively scouts the left flank– tells no one where he is going.
- Tells Gen. Daniel Tyler not to attack at Blackburn's Ford
- Tyler attacks when McDowell's whereabouts unknown.

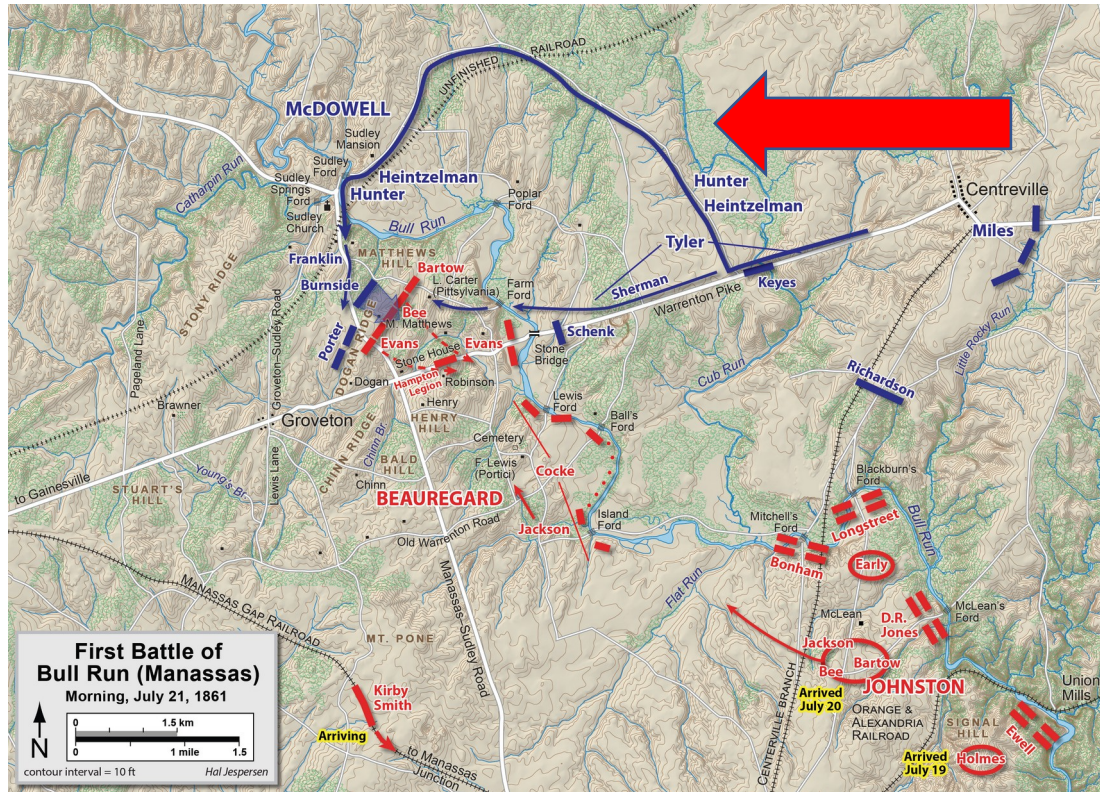
BLACKBURN'S FORD JULY 18

COMMAND PROBLEMS



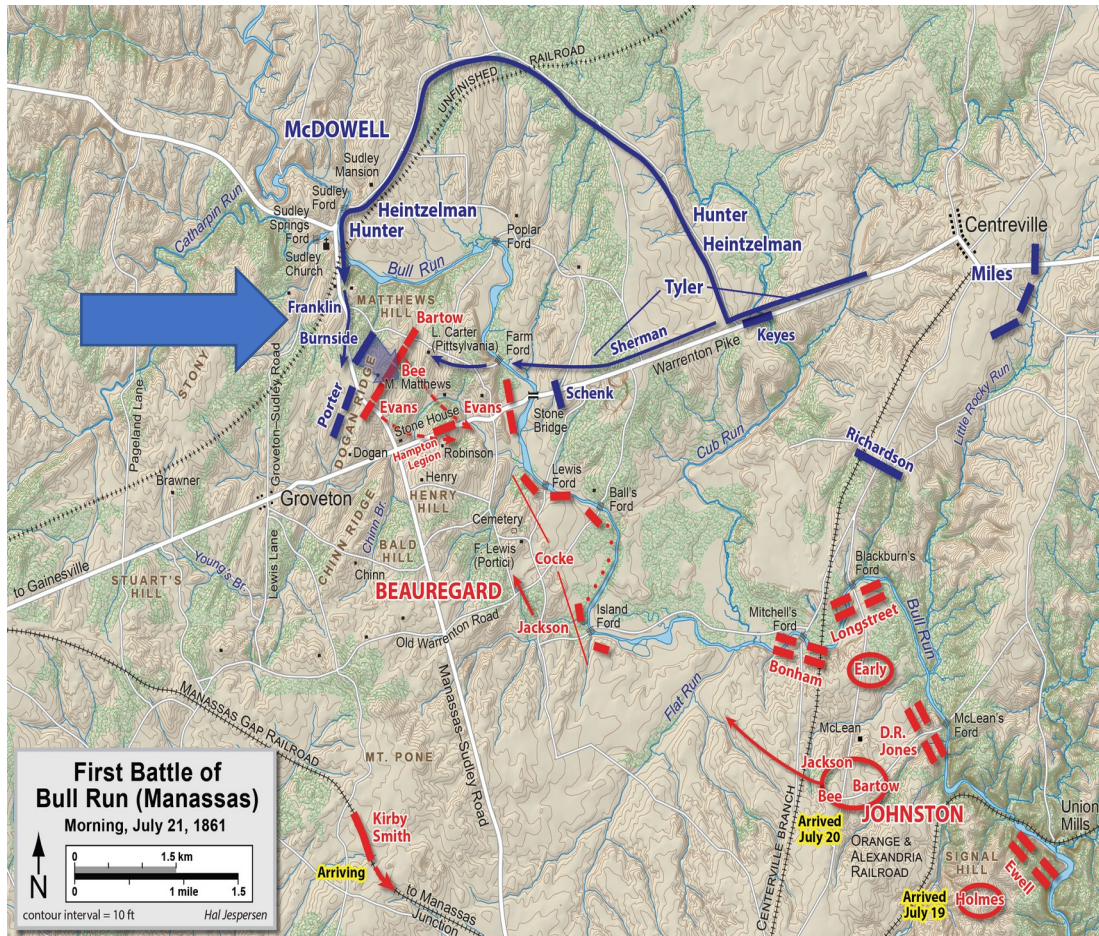
- Tyler brushed back by Longstreet;
- McDowell admonishes Tyler, and their cooperation undermined.
- McDowell now decides to attack by the right flank instead of the left.

Slow Preparations; Looking for a Ford



- July 19/20 McDowell, with no maps, looked for fords of Bull Run.
- **The ones they found led to the circuitous route and delays.**
- Patterson fails to fend off Johnston, who arrives on July 20.

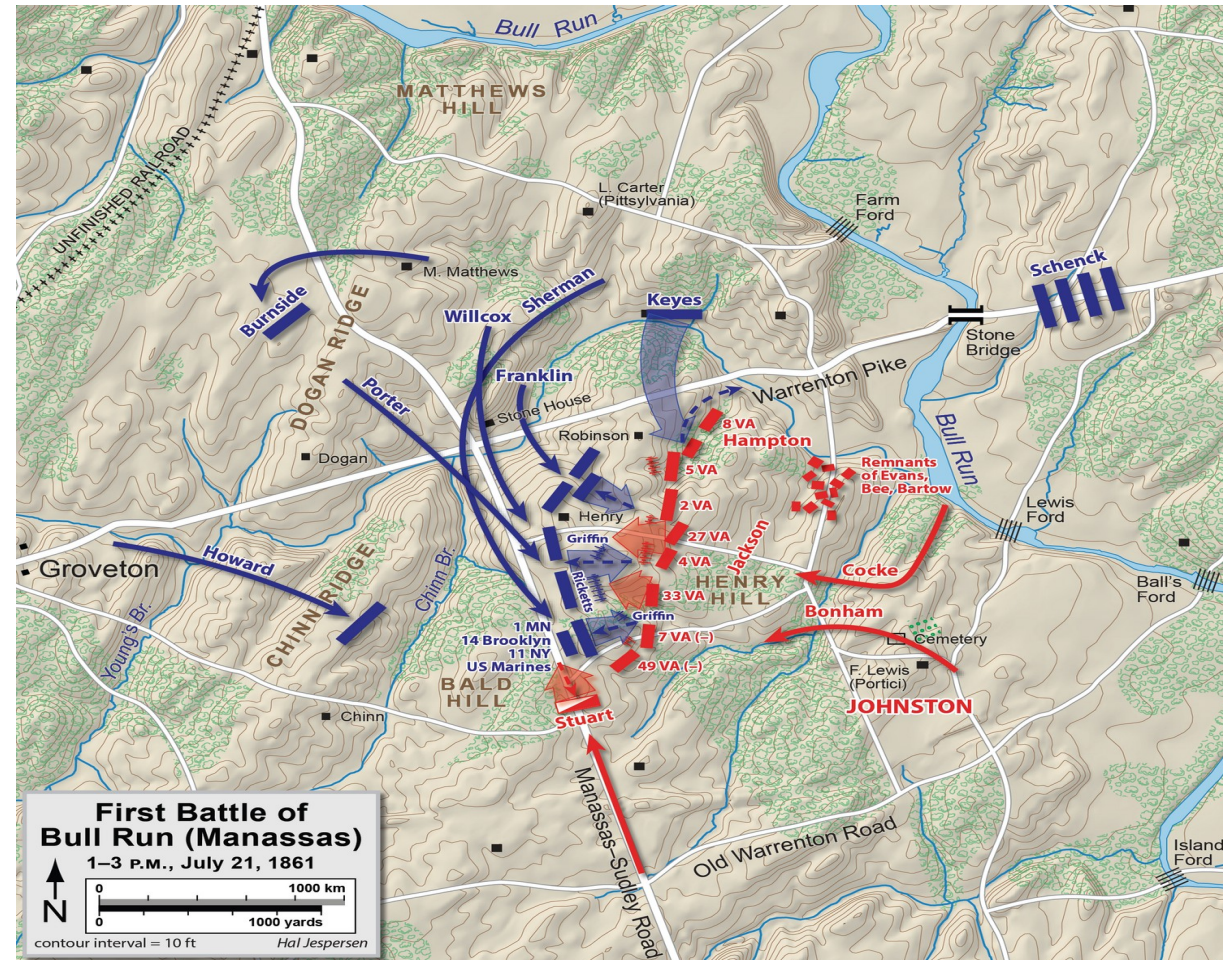
The First Attack



- July 21, the troops began moving over the fords, seeking to flank the rebels, who were thinking of doing the same!
- Instead of staying behind to command troops, McDowell goes with them.

MCDOWELL ADVANCES; CRITICAL MISTAKES

- Union troops drive ahead, Confederates on the run by 3:00;
- But confusion about which groups go where, overlapping one another, while Tyler stays put.
- Beauregard and Johnston agreed on strategy and prepared defenses



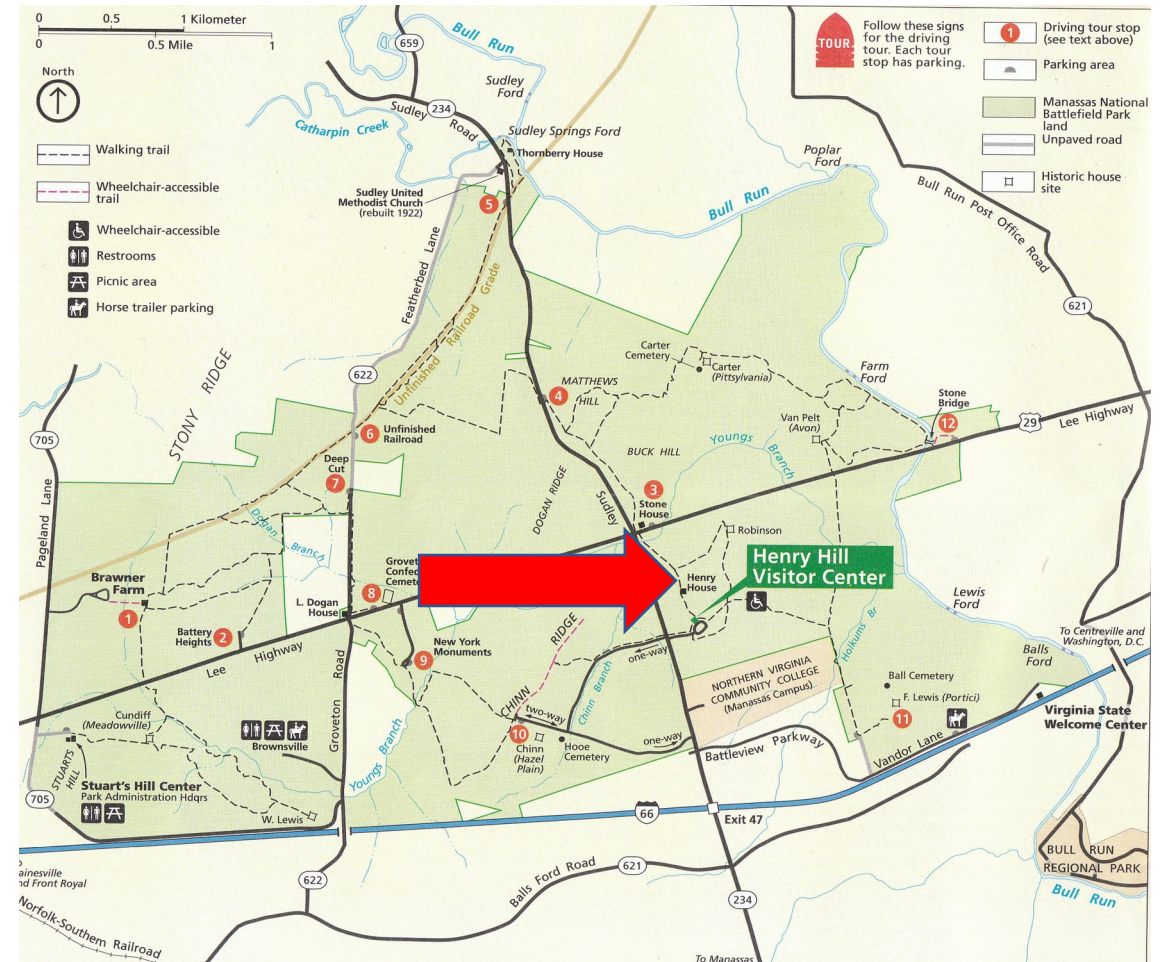
Jackson and Davis on the Defensive



- Jackson is told to be ready to launch a counter-attack.
- **Jefferson Davis on his way to battlefield to see for himself.**

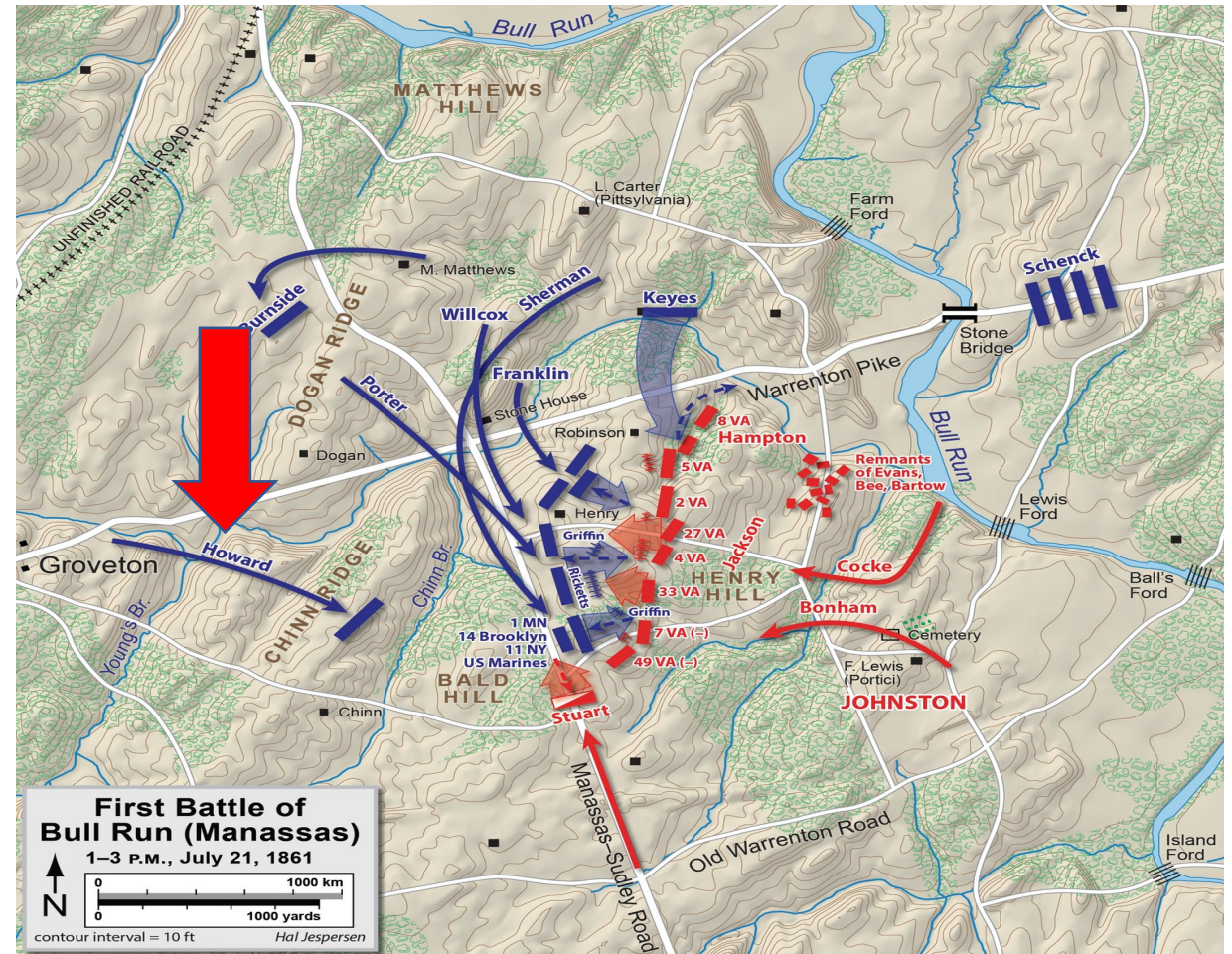
VICTORY IS OURS!?

- At about 3:30 PM McDowell stopped the offensive for two hours and sent message back re “Victory;”
- When Confederates began advancing, instead of staying at the rear to direct the response, he impulsively went to Henry House himself to scout out the situation.

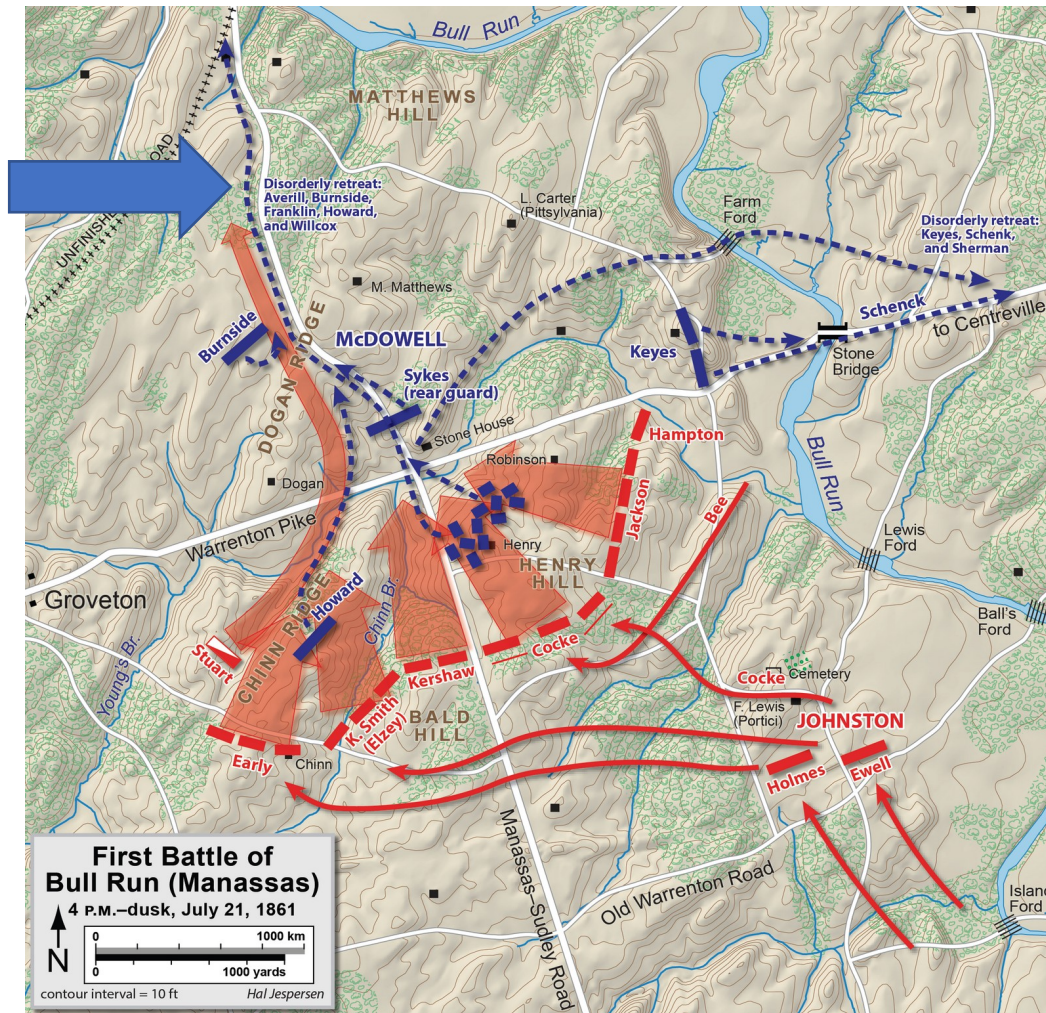


INEFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

- McDowell, a skilled artillery officer, sent artillery ahead, but provided little infantry support;
- One group was overwhelmed after a mistake about uniforms
- McDowell then sent Howard forward (arrow), but too late because Johnston was prepared.



CONFEDERATE COUNTER-ATTACK; UNION DEFEAT



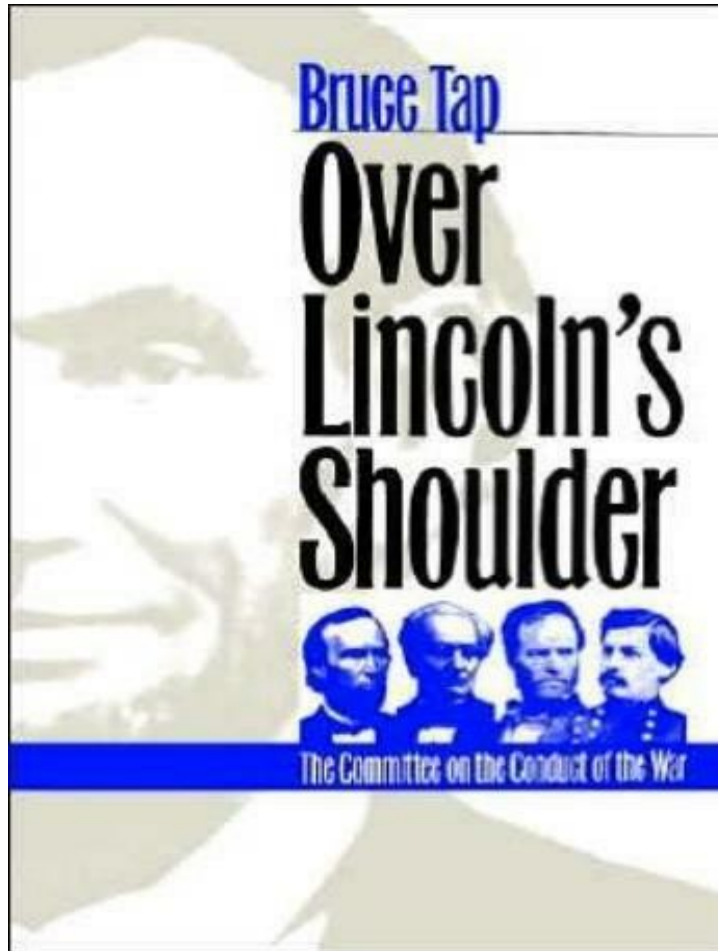
- Union troops, which had been on the verge of victory, now overwhelmed; and many panicked in retreat.
- **McDowell orders a formal retreat, and the army moves to Centreville, fearing a rebel attack on Washington.**
- Davis urges that, but Beauregard demurs.

BLAME CASTING; THE RISE OF MCCLELLAN



- **After the battle, McDowell blamed rushed planning and poor quality of his troops, but his errors of judgment were also critical.**
- Scott ordered McClellan to Washington to replace him;
- **McDowell sent into limbo.**

MCDOWELL WAITS AND WAITS AND WAITS



- McDowell got no new assignment for a time, though he was under McClellan's command.
- **He spent time preparing his report and testifying to a new power in Washington, the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War.**

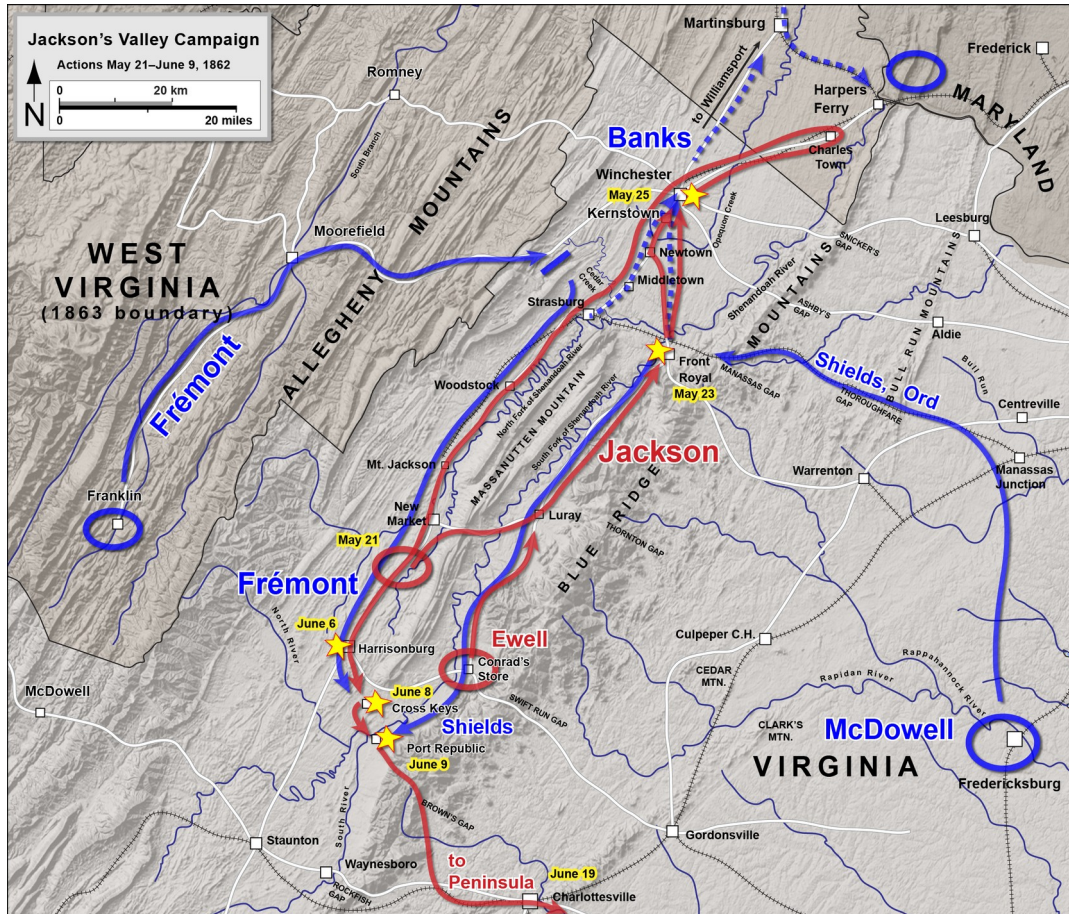
MCCLELLAN PLANS AND PLANS AND PLANS



McClellan and His Generals

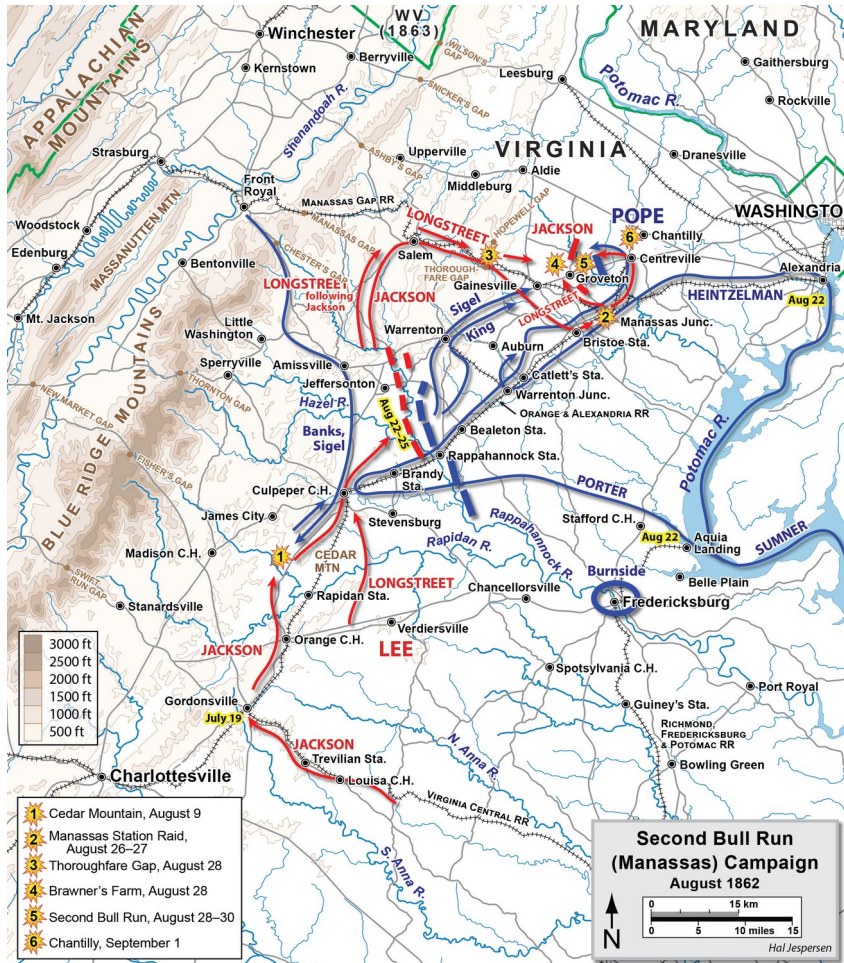
- McClellan spent many months getting the army ready, but not using it. Lincoln grew impatient.
- McClellan presumed that McDowell was plotting to resume command.
- In March 1862 Lincoln approved the Peninsular Campaign
- McDowell to command the 1st corps, but it is detached from McClellan to guard Washington.

THE PUPPET GENERAL



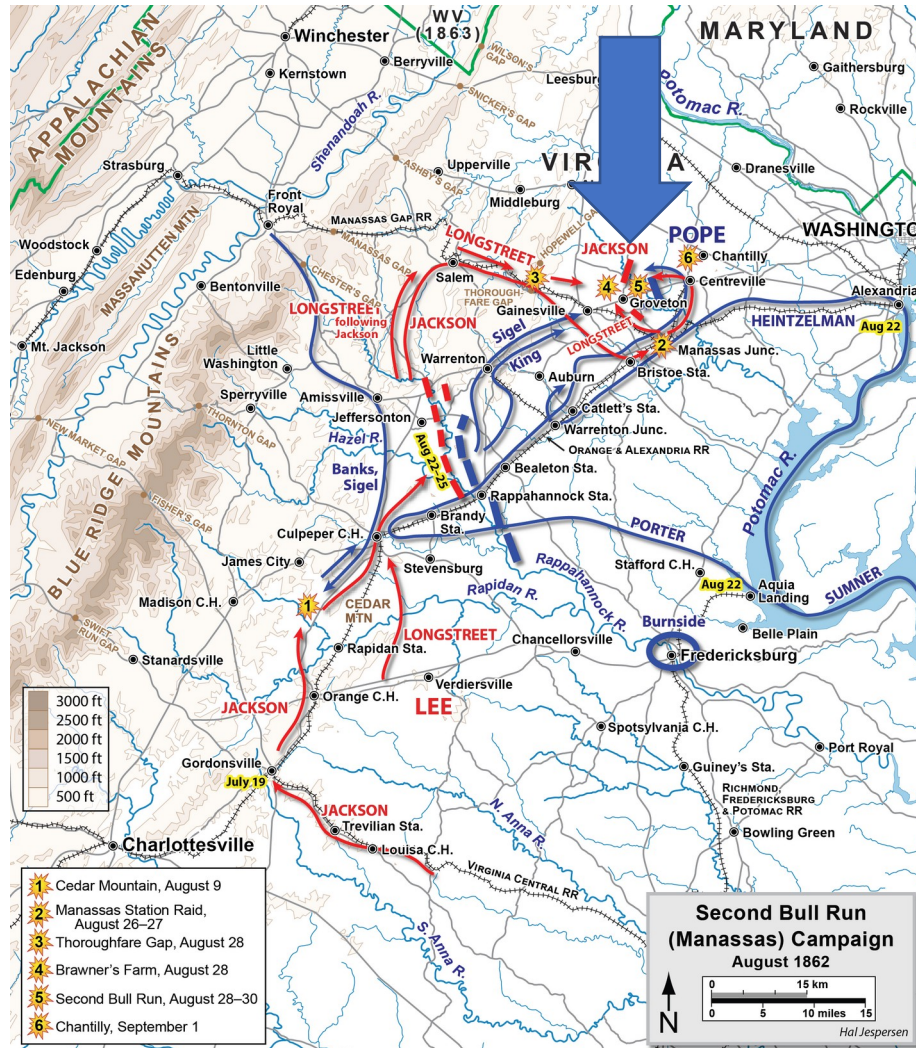
- **McClellan constantly asked for more troops, and McDowell wanted to go to Richmond;**
- But Lincoln instead sent him to assist against Jackson in Valley;
- **McDowell protested, and McClellan presumed he was plotting against him.**
- McDowell became a “Puppet” among Lincoln, Stanton, Halleck, and McClellan

SECOND MANASSAS CAMPAIGN



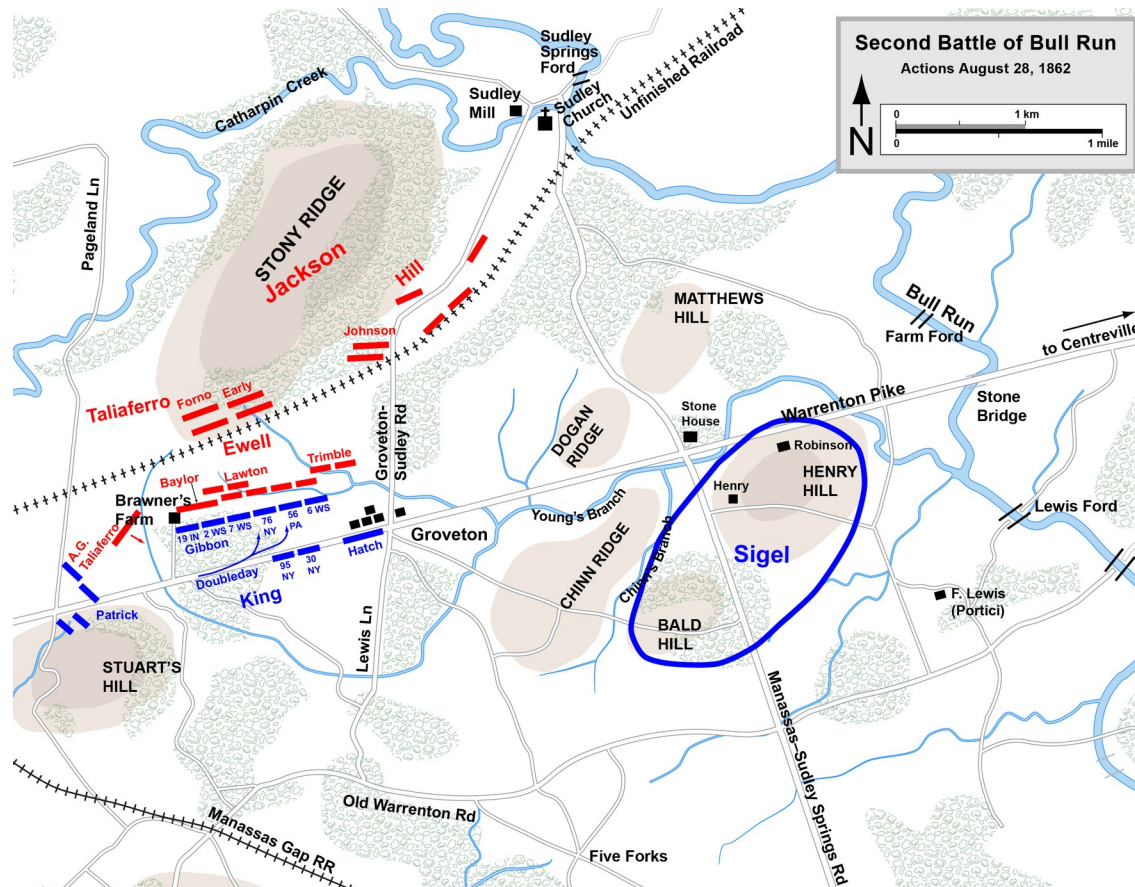
- Pope appointed head of Army of Virginia in June; Lincoln recalled McClellan from Richmond in August.
- McDowell becomes Pope's "Deputy" and chief adviser

THE SCOURGE OF MANASSAS AGAIN



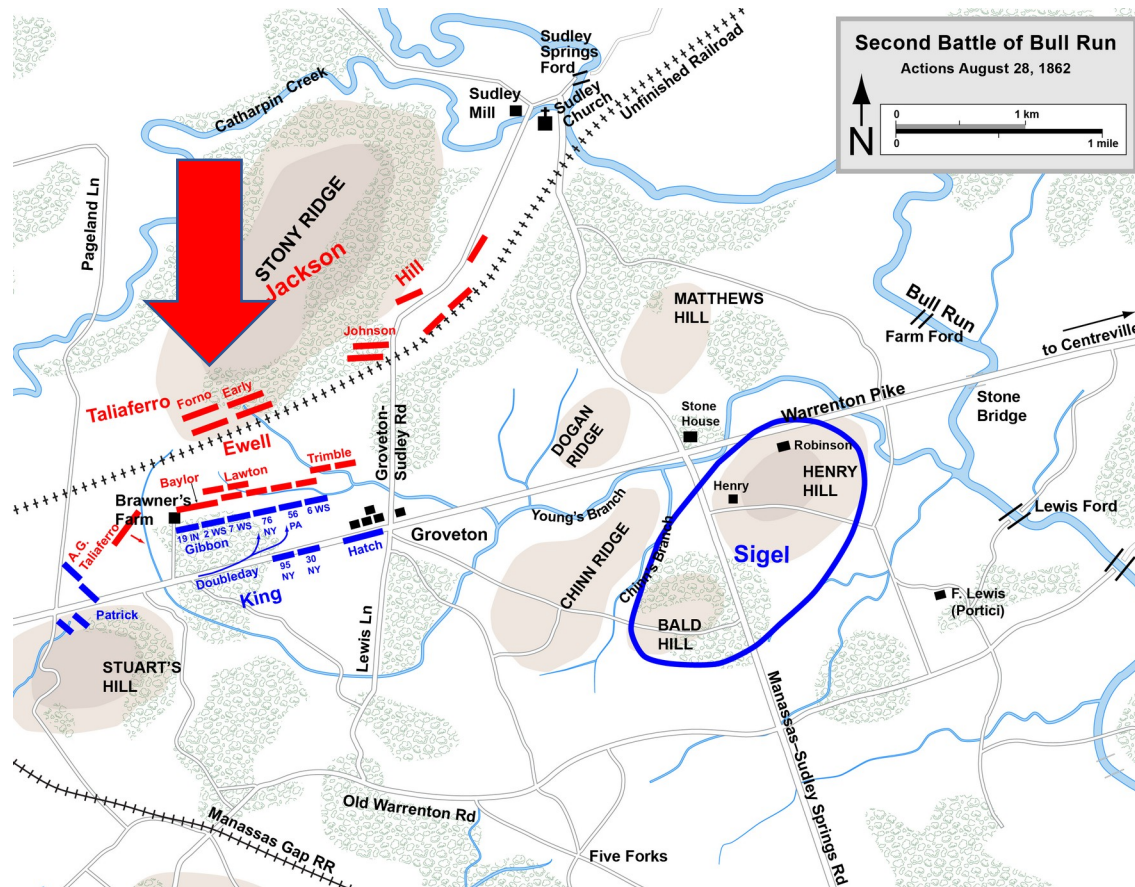
- Lee launched movement North in early August to defeat Pope before McClellan and his men could join that army.
- Late August Jackson went around Pope and took Manassas. Pope's cavalry "lost" him, and Jackson cut Pope's communication with DC

ALL IS CONFUSION/DIVISION FOR THE UNION



- Pope thought Jackson was in Manassas until August 27; he refused to believe Longstreet was close.
- **Porter was coming North to help, but Pope knew he was insubordinate;**

MCDOWELL WANDERS



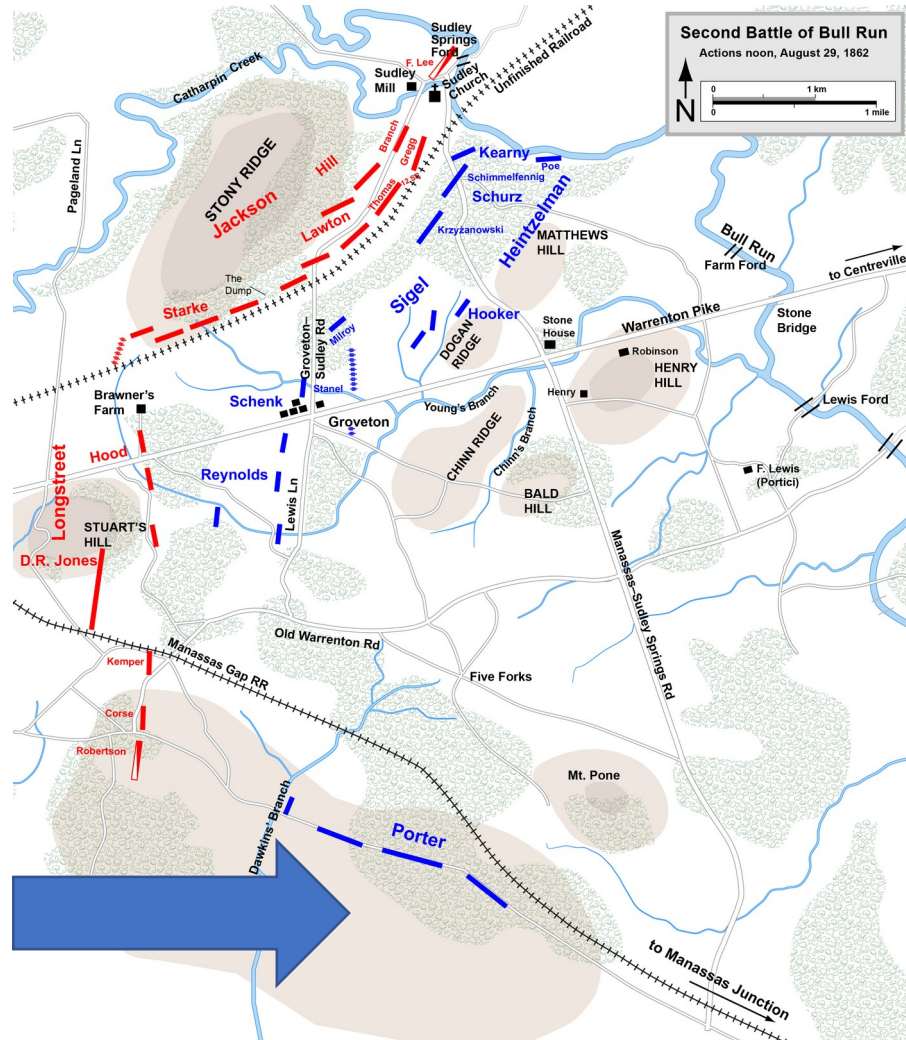
- McDowell left his troops Aug. 28 to look for Pope; his troops were attacked in first action of 2nd Manassas.
- **Meanwhile, McClellan was actively discouraging any assistance and Porter was carping.**

McClellan / Porter Undermine Pope

- McClellan dragged his feet , held back over 25,000 men.
- **Wanted Pope to lose so he could regain command.**
- Porter wrote messages that Lincoln read saying Pope didn't know what he was doing. They would be key evidence at his court-martial



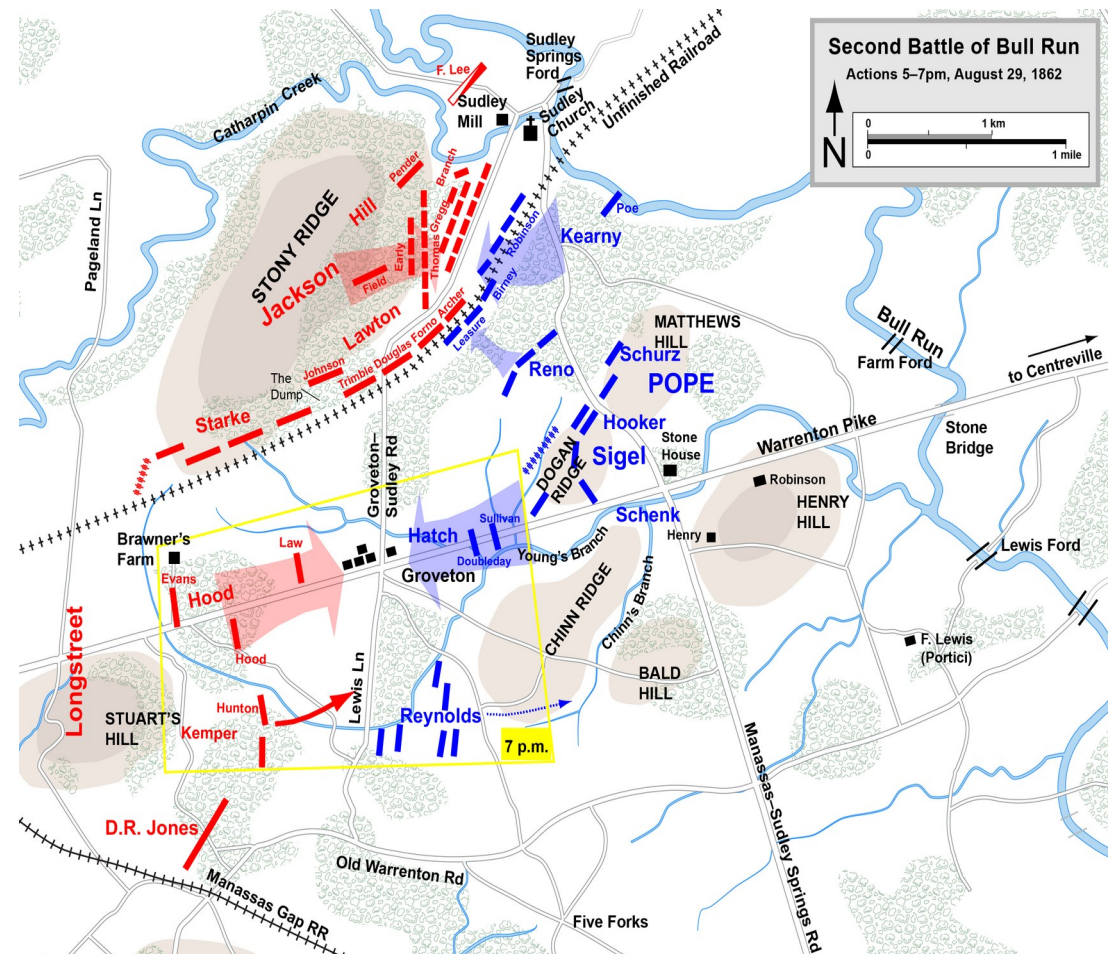
POPE'S AND MCDOWELL'S DELUSIONS



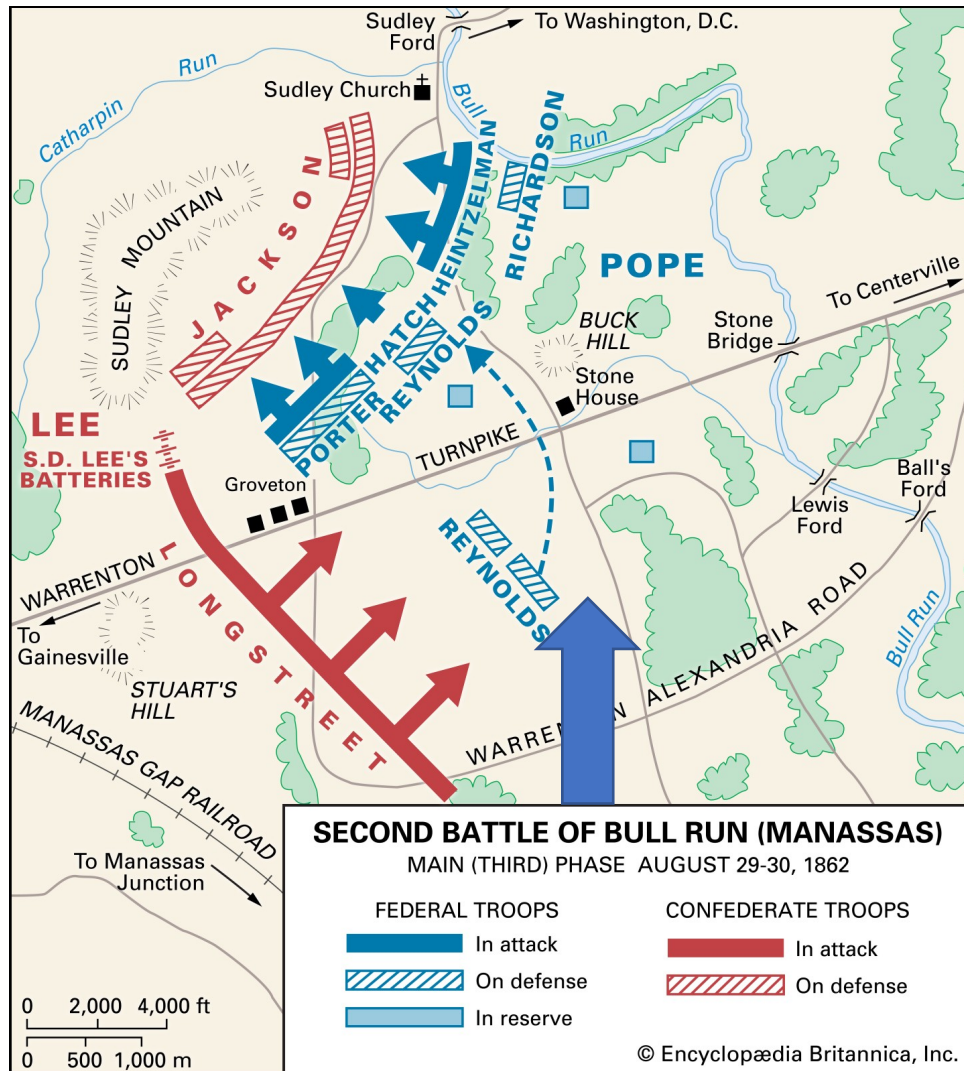
- August 29, Pope refuses to believe Longstreet is near, focuses on Jackson, orders Porter to attack.
- Porter delays, but inadvertently causes Longstreet to delay
- McDowell, after wandering around for almost a day, meets with Porter. They get the “Joint Order,” squabble about rank.

POPE FIXATES; MCDOWELL REINFORCES THE DELUSION

- Aug 29: McDowell was told Longstreet was there, but he “forgot” to tell Pope
- **Pope ordered an all-out attack on Jackson; believed Jackson was retreating that evening.**
- **McDowell, who knew better, told his men that Pope was right about the retreat! He told them to support the attack, and they were being hammered when night fell.**

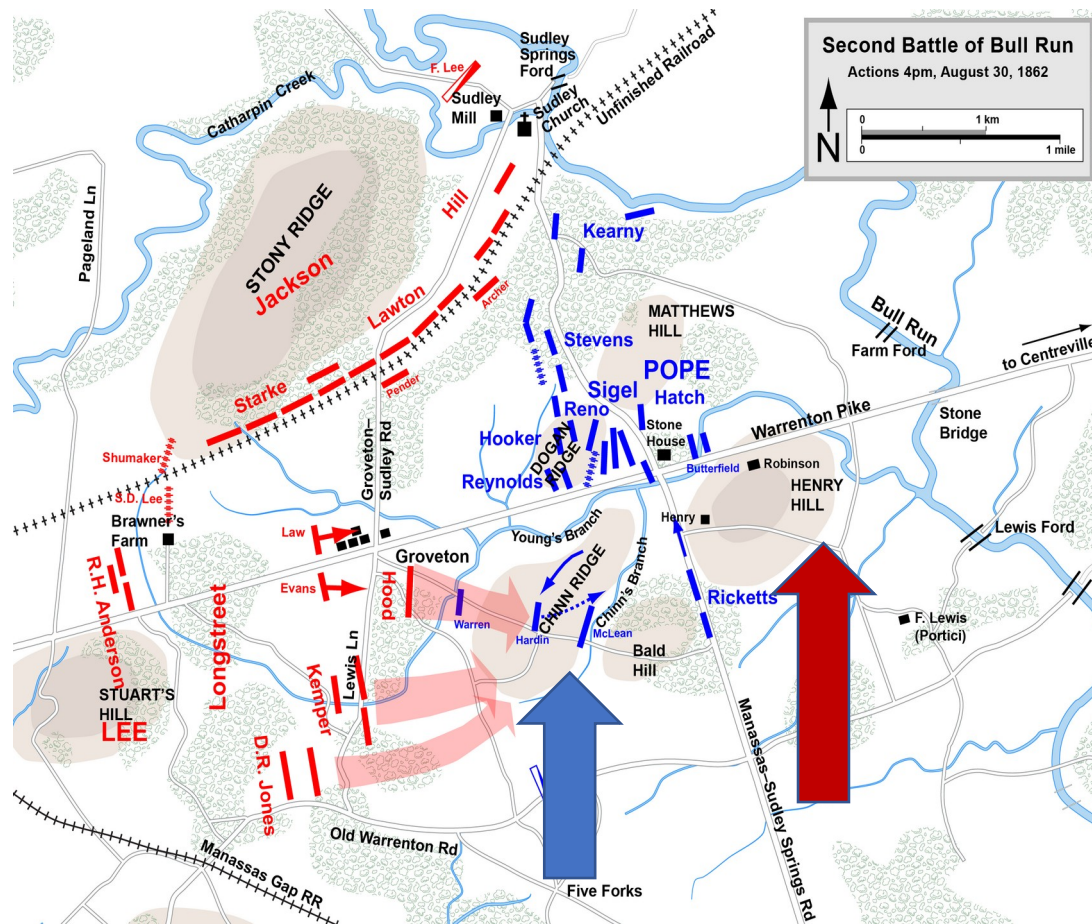


MCDOWELL'S FINAL FAILURES



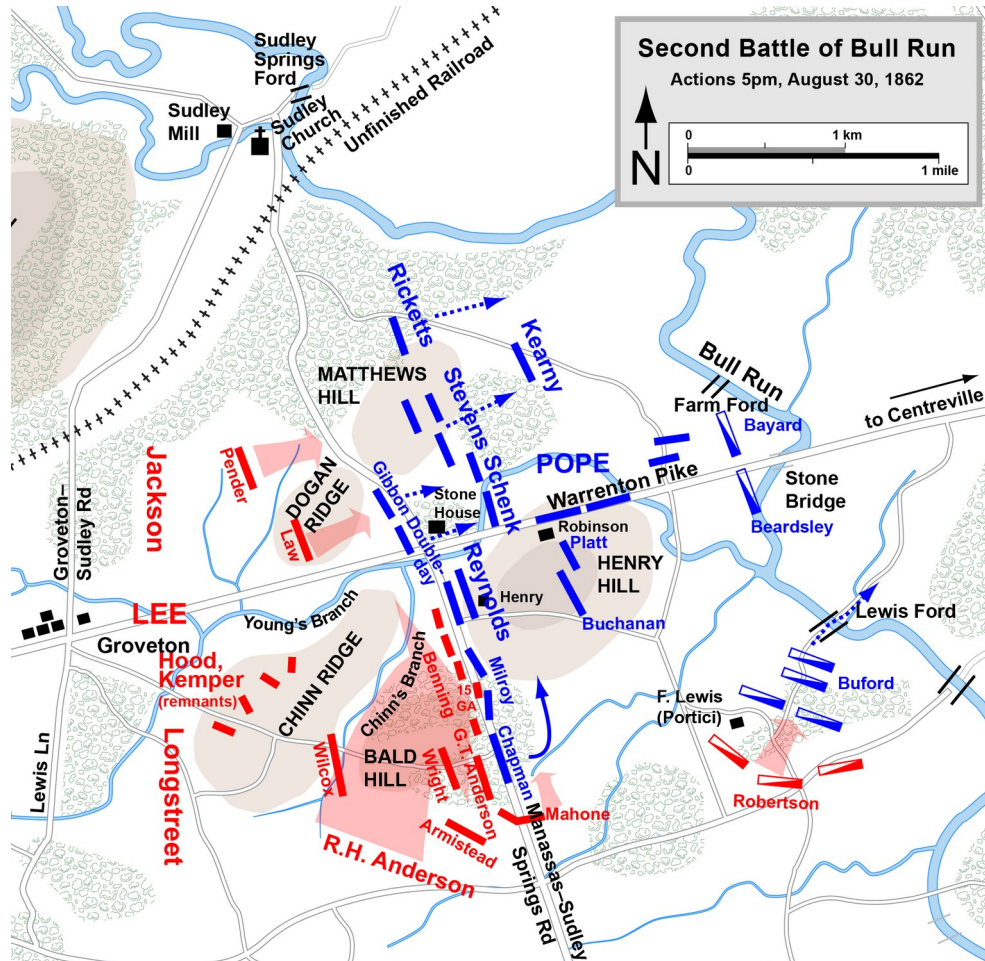
- August 30, Porter finally attacked Jackson, even as Longstreet approached;
- Porter was being devastated, and McDowell made his final and most important mistake: he told Reynolds to aid Porter, leaving Chinn Ridge almost defenseless against Longstreet.

LONGSTREET FILLS THE GAP; MCDOWELL STRAINS TO CORRECT HIS GAFFE



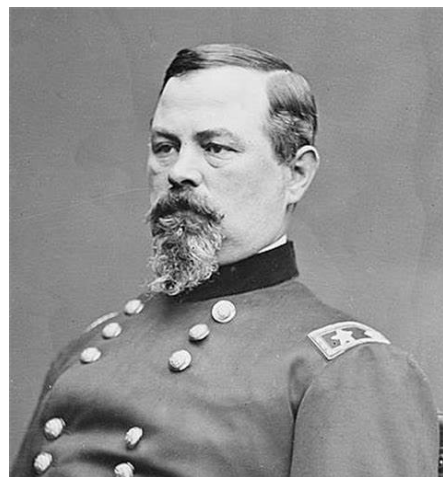
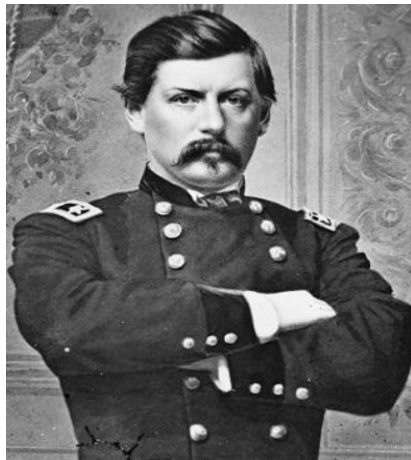
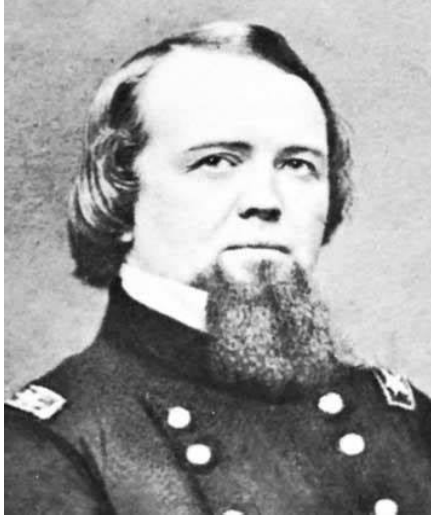
- When he saw what was happening, a frantic McDowell tried to recall Reynolds;
- He rode around the field, scavenging for troops, aiming to set up a final defensive line at – just as at First Bull Run – **Henry Hill**

HOLDING THE LINE; RETREAT TO CENTREVILLE



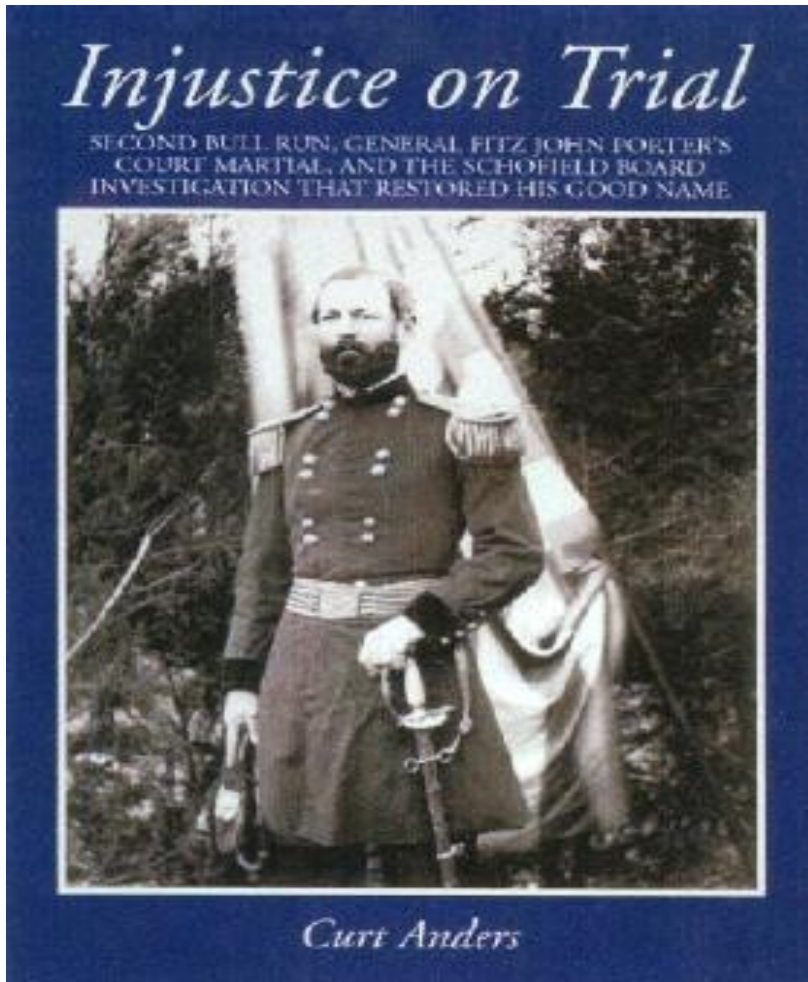
- Chinn Ridge line fell at 5, but the Union defensive line at Henry Hill was ready at 6.
- **Pope himself was there, and McDowell continued to ride around, looking for troops.**
- Jackson did not act at this point – a saving grace for the Union.
- **Retreat began at 7; most men reached Centreville that night.**

POINTING FINGERS



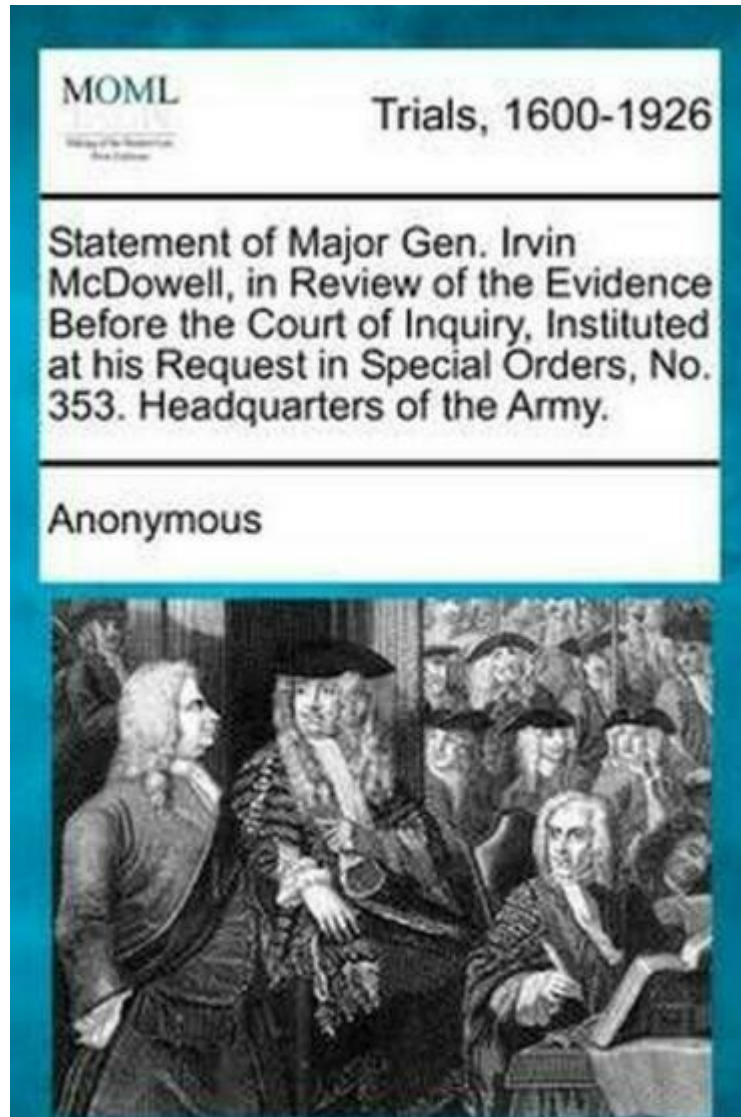
- By November 1862, all four men responsible for the failure of Second Manassas would be cast aside and have no further battlefield responsibilities.
- **The two senior commanders, Pope and McClellan, would receive no official reprimands.**
- Porter would be court-martialed and convicted;
- **McDowell would undergo his own self-directed “court of inquiry.”**

PORTER AND MCDOWELL ON TRIAL



- Mid-November to February 1863, two “trials” in same building.
- **Each man fingered the other in both trials and McDowell had what one scholar called “selective amnesia” about his several mistakes;**
- Porter’s was a kangaroo court, but his insubordination still made him guilty. Was cashiered from the army.

MCADOWELL PROSECUTES HIMSELF AND LEADS THE DEFENSE!



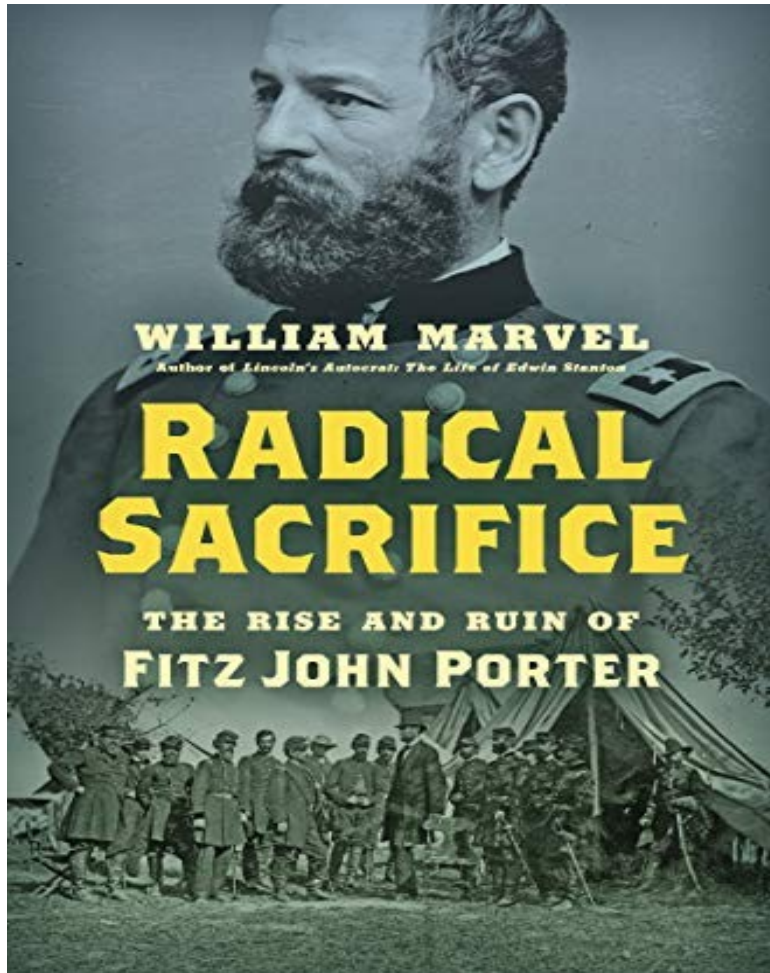
- McDowell had been accused of treason and drunkenness, and he asked for the hearing;
- But in the event, he was the prosecutor and defendant, and he was exonerated.
- But his mistakes and misjudgments had now been aired in public in both trials

LIFE IN OBSCURITY BEHIND AN ARMY DESK



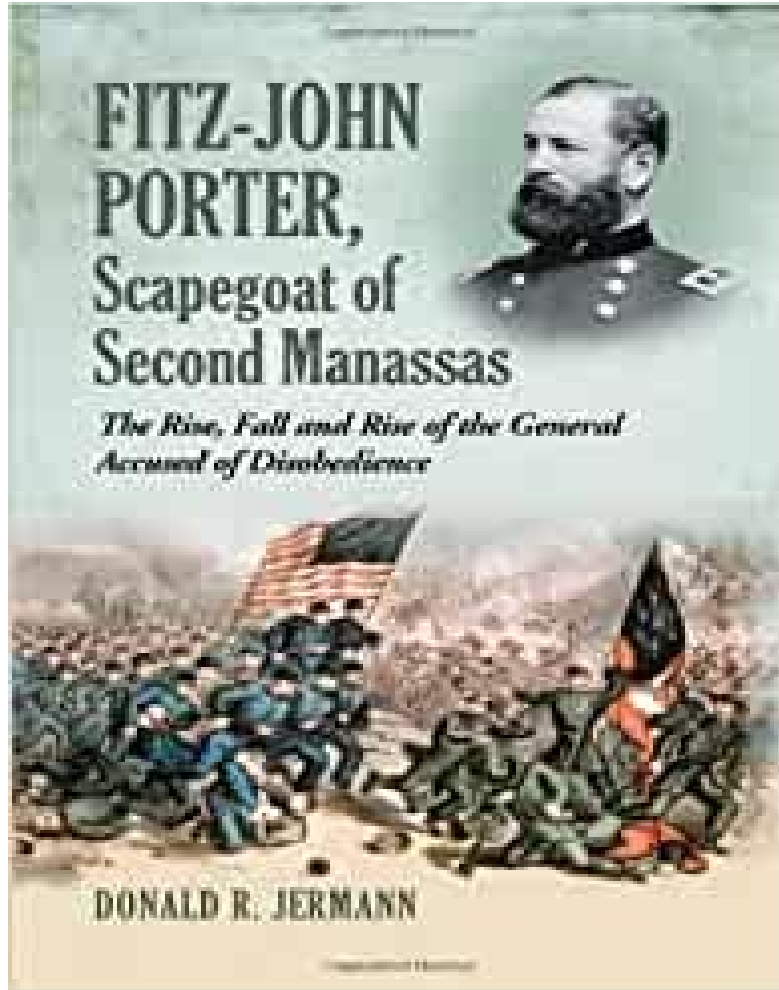
- McDowell knew his battlefield career was over, but he stayed in the army. He now had a series of desk jobs – which is where his talents were best suited.
- **Among them were investigating cotton frauds and deciding on when to retire disabled officers.**
- **After the war he commanded military districts in California and Kentucky, ultimately rising to the rank of Major General.**

THE PORTER RE-TRIAL



- October 1878, after many tries, Porter re-tried before a military court.
- McDowell unhappily was called to testify. He knew that if Porter were not guilty, then the fingers would be pointed at him and Pope (who refused to testify).

THE PORTER RE-TRIAL; RETURN OF THE SCOURGE OF MANASSAS



- McDowell adamantly refused to add to his testimony at the first trial, saying that Second Manassas and these hearings had been his “personal nightmare” for years.
- **Porter was acquitted and the court said that his conduct at Second Manassas was “a model of military excellence” (sic)**
- McDowell’s conduct and failings were again aired in public, but he put this behind him and moved on.

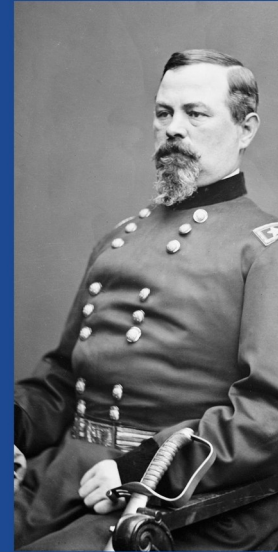
Retirement and a Final Blow

- McDowell retired in San Francisco in 1882 and then became a Parks Commissioner who developed a reputation for beautifying the city.
- *He died in 1885 and is buried in the cemetery at the Presidio.*
- For unknown reasons, his name was misspelled on his simple tombstone

A DUTIFUL, DILIGENT, DEPENDABLE MILITARY MAN WHO BELONGED IN THE BACKGROUND, NOT ON THE BATTLEFIELD

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FORGOTTEN
CIVIL WAR
GENERAL



*The first biography of this
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