Battle Of Bullrun Essay, Research Paper

The Battle of Bullrun-Manassas

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FIRST BATTLE OF MANASSAS

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Many of these troops were 90-day volunteers summoned by President media/portraits/lincoln\_abraham.htmmedia/portraits/lincoln\_abraham.htm(56k) Abraham Lincoln after the startling news of Fort Sumter burst over the Nation in April 1861. Called from shops and farms, the recruits had little knowledge of what war would mean. The first day’s march covered only eight kilometers (5 miles) as many stayed back to pick blackberries or fill canteens.

McDowell’s lumbering columns were headed for the vital railroad junction at Manassas. Here the Orange and Alexandria Railroad met the Manassas Gap Railroad, which led west to the Shenandoah Valley. If McDowell could seize this junction, he would stand astride the best overland approach to the Confederate’s capital.

On July 18th McDowell’s Army reached Centreville. Five miles ahead a small meandering stream named Bull Run crossed the route of the Union advance, and there guarding the fords from Union Mills to the Stone Bridge waited 22,000 Southern troops under the command of General media/portraits/beauregard\_pierre\_gustave.htmmedia/portraits/beauregard\_pierre\_gustave.htm(24k) Pierre G.T. Beauregard. McDowell initially probed the Confederate center, but his troops were checked at Blackburn’s Ford. He then spent the next two days scouting the Southern left flank. In the meantime, Beauregard asked the Confederate Government at Richmond for help. General media/portraits/johnston\_joseph\_eggleston.htmmedia/portraits/johnston\_joseph\_eggleston.htm(26k) Joseph E. Johnston, stationed in the Shenandoah Valley with 10,000 Confederate troops, was ordered to support Beauregard. Johnston gave an opposing Union force the slip, and, employing the Manassas Gap Railroad, started his army toward Manassas Junction. Most of Johnston’s troops arrived at the junction on July 20 and 21, some marching from the trains directly into battle.

On the morning of July 21, McDowell sent his attack columns in a long march north toward Sudley Springs Ford. This route took the Federals around the Confederate left. To distract the Southerners, McDowell ordered a diversionary attack where the Warrenton Turnpike crossed Bull Run at the Stone Bridge. At 5:30 AM the deep throated roar of a 30-pounder Parrott rifle shattered the morning calm, and signaled the start of battle.

McDowell’s new plan depended on speed and surprise, both difficult with inexperienced troops. Valuable time was lost as the men stumbled through the darkness along narrow roads. Confederate Colonel media/portraits/evens\_nathan\_g.htmmedia/portraits/evens\_nathan\_g.htm(24k) Nathan Evans, commanding at the Stone Bridge, soon realized that the attack on his front was only a diversion. Leaving a small force to hold the bridge, Evans rushed the remainder of his command to Matthews Hill in time to check McDowell’s lead unit. But Evan’s force was too small to hold back the Federals for long.

Soon brigades under Brigadier General media/portraits/bee\_barnard\_e.htmmedia/portraits/bee\_barnard\_e.htm(30k) Barnard Bee and Colonel media/portraits/bartow\_francis\_s.htmmedia/portraits/bartow\_francis\_s.htm(23k) Francis Bartow marched to Evans’ assistance. But even with these reinforcements, the thin gray line collapsed and Southerners fled in disorder toward Henry Hill.

About noon, the Federals stopped their advance to reorganize for a new attack. The lull lasted for about an hour, giving Johnston and Beauregard enough time to stablize their lines. Attempting to rally his men, Bee pointed to General media/portraits/jackson\_thomas\_j.htmmedia/portraits/jackson\_thomas\_j.htm(42k) Thomas Jackson, and shouted the now famous words, “There stands Jackson like a stone wall!” The battle raged until just after 4:00 PM, with each side trying to force the other off Henry Hill. Then fresh Southern units crashed into the Union’s right flank on Chinn Ridge, forcing McDowell’s tired and discouraged soldiers to withdraw.

At first the withdrawal was orderly. Screened by the regulars, the three-month volunteers retired across Bull Run, where they found the road to Washington jammed with the carriages of Congressmen and others who had driven out to Centreville to watch the fight. Panic now seized many of the soldiers and the retreat became a rout. The Confederates, though bolstered by the arrival of President media/portraits/davis\_jefferson.htmmedia/portraits/davis\_jefferson.htm(33k) Jefferson Davis on the field just as the battle was ending, were too exhausted and disorganized to pursue the Union army back into Washington. Daybreak on July 22 found the defeated Union Army back behind the bristling defenses of Washington.

SECOND BATTLE OF MANASSAS

In August 1862, Union and Confederate armies converged for a second time on the plains of Manassas. The naive enthusiasm that preceded the earlier encounter was gone. War was not the holiday outing or grand adventure envisioned by the young recruits of 1861. The contending forces, now made up of seasoned veterans, knew well the reality of war. The Battle of Second Manassas, covering three days, produced far greater carnage, 3,399 killed, and brought the Confederacy to the height of its power. Still the battle did not weaken Northern resolve. The war’s final outcome was yet unknown, and it would be left to other battles to decide whether the sacrifice at Manassas was part of the price of Southern independence, or the cost of one country again united under the national standard.

After the Union defeat at Manassas in July 1861, General media/portraits/mcclellan\_george\_brinton.htmmedia/portraits/mcclellan\_george\_brinton.htm(52k) George B. McClellan took command of the Federal forces in and around Washington and organized them into a formidable fighting machine, the Army of the Potomac. In March 1862, leaving a strong force to cover the capital, McClellan shifted his Army by water to Fort Monroe on the tip of the York – James River peninsula, only 75 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 media/portraits/johnston\_joseph\_eggleston.htmmedia/portraits/johnston\_joseph\_eggleston.htm(26k) Joseph E. Johnston’s Confederate Army assailed the Federals in the bloody but inconclusive Battle of Seven Pines. Johnston was wounded and President media/portraits/davis\_jefferson.htmmedia/portraits/davis\_jefferson.htm(33k) Jefferson Davis placed General media/portraits/lee\_robert\_e.htmmedia/portraits/lee\_robert\_e.htm(57k) Robert E. Lee in command. Seizing the offensive, Lee sent his force (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, the scattered Federal forces in northern Virginia were organized into the Army of Virginia under the command of General media/portraits/pope\_john.htmmedia/portraits/pope\_john.htm(25K) John Pope, who arrived with a reputation freshly won in the war’s western theater. Gambling that McClellen would cause no further trouble around Richmond, Lee sent media/portraits/jackson\_thomas\_j.htmmedia/portraits/jackson\_thomas\_j.htm(33k) Stonewall Jackson’s wing northward to “suppress” Pope. Jackson clashed indecisively with part of Pope’s troops at Cedar Mountain on August 9. Meanwhile, learning that the Army of the Potomac was withdrawing by water to join Pope, Lee marched with General media/portraits/longstreet\_james.htmmedia/portraits/longstreet\_james.htm(33k) James Longstreet’s wing to bolster Jackson. Pope withdrew to the north side of the Rappahannock River and successfully blocked Lee’s attempts to gain a tactical advantage. Lee knew that if he was to defeat Pope he would have to strike before McClellan’s Army arrived in northern Virginia. On August 25 Lee boldly started Jackson’s Wing on a march of over 50 miles, around the Union’s right flank to strike at Pope’s rear.

Two days later, Jackson’s veterans seized Pope’s supply depot at Manassas Junction. After a day of wild feasting, Jackson burned what Federal supplies could not be carried off and moved to a position in the woods north of Groveton near the old Manassas battlefield.

Pope, stung by the attack on his supply base, abandoned the line of the Rappahannock and headed toward Manassas to “bag” Jackson. At the same time, Lee was moving northward with Longstreet’s wing to reunite his Army. On the afternoon of August 28, to prevent the Federal commander’s efforts to concentrate at Centreville and bring Pope to battle, Jackson ordered his troops to attack a Union column as it marched on the Warrenton Turnpike. This savage fight at Brawner’s Farm lasted until dark.

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. All afternoon, in a series of uncoordinated attacks, Pope hurled his men against the Confederate position. In several places, the Northerners momentarily breached Jackson’s line, but each time were forced back. That day 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.

The morning of August 30 passed quietly. Just before noon, erroneously concluding the Confederates were retreating, Pope ordered his Army forward “in pursuit.” The pursuit, however, was short-lived. Pope found that Lee had gone nowhere. Amazingly, Pope ordered yet another attack against Jackson’s line. Major General media/portraits/porter\_fitz\_john.htmmedia/portraits/porter\_fitz\_john.htm(25k) Fitz John Porter’s corps, along with part of McDowell’s, struck Brigadier General media/portraits/starke\_william\_e.htmmedia/portraits/starke\_william\_e.htm(21k) W. E. Starke’s division at the unfinished railroad’s “Deep Cut.” The Southerners held firm, and Porter’s column was hurled back in a bloody repulse.

Seeing the Union lines in disarray, Longstreet pushed his massive columns forward and staggered the Union left. Pope’s Army was faced with annihilation. Only a heroic stand by the 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 toward the defenses of Washington. Lee’s bold and brilliant Second Battle of Manassas campaign opened the way for the South’s first invasion of the North, and a bid for foreign intervention.

On July 21, 1861 the First Battle of Bull Run occurred. It was the first real major conflict of the American Civil War. A Union army, consisting of 28,000 men, commanded by General McDowell, fought 33,000 Confederates under General Beauregard. The Union army, under pressure to crush the rebellion in the South, marched towards Richmond, but met the Confederate forces coming north from Manassas, a Southern base.

At the beginning of the five hour battle the Union soldiers had the Confederates on the

retreat, except for one brigade commanded by General Jackson. Due to Jackson’s ability to hold his ground and his stubbornness, the men saw him similar to a stone wall, hence the nickname “Stonewall” Jackson. Thanks to Jackson the Confederates were able to hold out until General Johnston showed up with 9000 reinforcements to help out Beauregard near Henry House Hill. The arrival changed the course of the battle and soon the Union soldiers were fleeing back to Washington. However, because of the disorganization of Beauregard’s army, they could not pursue McDowell any further.

The battle proved that this was not going to be a one sided war for either side, as was predicted. The casualties soared to 2,900 killed, wounded, captured, or missing for McDowell’s army and 2,000 for Beauregard’s. The battle spurred a sense of victory in the South, pushing them on, and in the North a feeling for revenge.