

In command of Confederate forces in the West, was General Albert Sidney Johnston. He had the unenviable task of holding a vast expanse of territory with inadequate numbers of troops. Johnston attempted to set up a defense in Kentucky, with Tennessee to his back. His line consisted of various forts and installations stretching from the Mississippi River Gibraltar at Columbus, through Bowling Green on the Barren River in south-central Kentucky, thence eastward to Cumberland Gap in the mountains on the border with Virginia. Two rivers cut through Kentucky as potential invasion routes into Tennessee, so to defend these waterways the Confederacy built Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River. Both forts were in northern Tennessee, near the Kentucky line, and had been sited before Kentucky's neutrality was violated. To be sure, the forts were not placed in optimum locations, but work had already begun on them, time was of the essence, and the Confederates had to make the best of what they had.

The inadequacy of Johnston's line, as well as the incompetence of some of the officers under him, was made all too clear only 19 days into the new year. Confederate General Felix Zollicoffer, an influential newspaperman with little military experience, led a force of about 4,000 men out of the mountain protection of Cumberland Gap to a precarious position, with their backs to the Cumberland River, at a place called Mill Springs, or Logan Crossroads. There he was soundly whipped by a force under General George H. Thomas in a battle that cost Zollicoffer his life. For the Union, the nation's confidence in the Western troops was strengthened, and pro-Confederate sympathies in Kentucky, a state severely divided in loyalties, was weakened.

Then, in rapid succession, U.S. Grant's forces, which included the river navy of Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote, captured Forts Henry and Donelson (on February 6 and 16, respectively). The Confederates had no choice but to evacuate Bowling Green and their Columbus fortifications, and then Nashville, the Tennessee capital city, was occupied by Federal forces without resistance on February 25. By June, the Federals even held Cumberland Gap. Further west, across the Mississippi in northwestern Arkansas, near the border with Missouri, Confederate forces under General Earl Van Dorn were defeated in the two-day battle of Pea Ridge, March 7-8, dashing their hopes of reestablishing a Confederate foothold in Missouri. Like Kentucky, Missouri was an important border state much divided in loyalties.

On April 6, Albert Sidney Johnston tried a similar attempt to regain territory by launching a surprise attack from his base in northern Mississippi against Grant's troops camped along the Tennessee River in southwestern Tennessee. Fighting was desperate around Shiloh Church and the Yankees were pushed back steadily on the 6th, but reinforced during the night, Grant managed to win the day on the 7th. The Battle of Shiloh was a close call for the emerging Union hero of the West, and with combined casualties of nearly 24,000 in the two-day struggle, including General Johnston, who bled to death on the field, the battle proved to both sides that this was not only to be a long war, but a very bloody one too.

Thus, the year 1862 opened with Union successes in the Western Theater, some of which were strategically decisive, and witnessed the emergence of Ulysses S. Grant, a man so humble and full of self-doubt at the beginning of the war that he was certain no one would give him a command of any significance.

One of the principal strategies of the Union was a blockade of Southern ports and the splitting of the Confederacy by seizing control of the Mississippi River. Grant's success in Kentucky and Tennessee contributed in no small degree to opening the Mississippi by loosening the Confederacy's grip on these vital areas. On March 14, Union General John Pope captured New Madrid, Missouri, and laid siege to nearby Island Number 10 in the Mississippi, which finally fell on April 7. By June, the Federal fleet captured Memphis after a spectacular naval battle, complete with ramming's and broadsides at close quarters, all of which was observed with intense interest and growing disappointment by folks lining the Memphis waterfront.

Operating against the other end of the river was a huge fleet of warships, mortar boats and infantry transports under Admiral David G. Farragut, which began bombarding Forts Jackson and St. Philip below New Orleans on April 18. A week later Farragut landed at New Orleans, reclaiming it in the name of the United States of America. And so, began a long and oftentimes harsh, sometimes humorous, occupation of the Confederacy's largest city. Now only Vicksburg was an obstacle to the Union's complete control of the Father of Waters. (Later, though, the Confederates fortified Port Hudson, making it an additional obstacle to Union domination of the Mississippi River.)

On the East Coast, the modern age of naval warfare was ushered in with the first clash of ironclad vessels as the USS Monitor and CSS Virginia (formerly USS Merrimack) battled to a stalemate at Hampton Roads, near Norfolk, Virginia.

Elsewhere along the Atlantic coast, Federal troops under General Ambrose E. Burnside made amphibious landings on the North Carolina shoreline and pushed inland and along the coast, seizing the port city of New Bern on March 14, and capturing Fort Macon on April 25, after a month-long siege. The capture of Fort Macon, coupled with the seizure of Fort Pulaski near Savannah on April 11, spelled the doom of medieval-style forts as a means of defense. Once thought impregnable, the moated, high-walled brick forts had been no match for the improved, long-range, heavy rifled artillery brought to bear on them. The big guns blasted huge holes in both forts, forcing their surrender. Lessons were many, and hard learned, in these early days of the war.

In contrast to the brilliant successes of Union forces in the West, General McClellan 's Army of the Potomac turned in a dismal record for 1862. Constantly prodded by Lincoln to do something at least threatening in the direction of the Confederates, still encamped at Centreville, not far from the capital, Little Mac seemed content to drill and organize and drill some more, to the point that on March 11, he was demoted from General-in-Chief of all Federal armies (Scott 's old job) to commander of just the Department and Army of the Potomac, still an enormous responsibility. When McClellan did get around to moving, he moved ponderously, giving chase' to the retreating Confederate army of Joe Johnston as it fell back from Centreville to a new and presumably better position on the Rappahannock River.

On to Richmond!' became the battle cry of the Army of the Potomac. When the Confederates in May 1862 relocated their seat of government to the Virginia capital of Richmond, a scant 100 miles south of Washington, it was predestined that the intervening ground would become blood-soaked before the war ended. But in his first major offensive, McClellan 's approach was not overland, but seaward. In devising the Peninsula Campaign, he turned his back on Johnston 's army in northern Virginia. Instead of a direct confrontation, McClellan loaded his massive army on transports for a trip by way of the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay to Union-held Fortress Monroe, on the tip of the peninsula between the York and James rivers.

It was a tremendous undertaking, but the transfer of 100,000 men, bag and baggage, with horses, mules and wagons, artillery, and supplies, was immaculately executed by McClellan, the master planner, and by April 5, he was laying siege to Yorktown and its 15,000 defenders. Nearly a month later he was still sitting before Yorktown, pleading for reinforcements, though he never held worse than a two-to-one edge over the Confederates during the whole campaign. Little Mac 's delays allowed Johnston to bring his army down from the Rappahannock line.

In order to hold the attention of Union forces in northern Virginia after Johnston 's relocation, and to prevent reinforcements from being sent to McClellan, Confederates under Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley created a strategic diversion that has been heralded as one of the most brilliant operations in military history. The enigmatic Jackson, who was extremely religious, sucked on lemons, and told no one of his plans, and his legendary foot cavalry,' managed in a series of lightning marches and surprise attacks to create the illusion of much greater numbers, and in so doing, in one month 's time, tramped some 350 miles, fought five battles (McDowell on May 8, Front Royal on May 23, Winchester on the 25th, Cross Keys on June 8, and Port Republic on the 9th), in which three different Union armies were defeated, inflicted twice their own number of casualties, even though outnumbered two-to-one, or worse, and managed to hold the attention of an estimated 60,000 potential reinforcements for McClellan. Jackson 's Shenandoah Valley Campaign is one of the most remarkable and fascinating episodes of a war filled with human interest and drama.

Once McClellan finally got his army moving on the Peninsula, he made good gains, entering an evacuated Yorktown on May 3. Pushing the Rebels out of Williamsburg on the 5th, by the end of the month the church steeples of Richmond were in sight. There is Johnston finally turned to lash back at the pressing Federals, who were at the moment vulnerable, straddling the Chickahominy River east of Richmond. In the ensuing Battle of Seven Pines (or Fair Oaks), fought May 31-June 1, Johnston was severely wounded on the first day of the fight. He was replaced by President Davis ' military advisor, General Robert E. Lee, who had thus far in the war racked up a string of failures in minor engagements in mountainous western Virginia, and had performed routine inspections of coastal installations along the Atlantic seaboard. The change in command would prove momentous.

It turned out that Lee had been the mastermind behind the Shenandoah Valley diversion, so ably executed by Stonewall Jackson. Their relationship would grow, for even the secretive Stonewall trusted Lee, and perhaps no one else. The Battle of Seven Pines ended in stalemate, and McClellan 's army remained lurking on the outskirts of the Confederate capital. Lee went on the offensive. In a series of battles known as the Seven Days, June 25-July 1, Robert E. Lee began to

emerge as the premier commander of the South (a transformation that would reach fruition during the ensuing Second Manassas Campaign).

Skirmishing on June 25 proved indecisive. Meanwhile, Stonewall Jackson 's men arrived from the Shenandoah Valley to reinforce Lee. The next day the Confederates struck hard at Mechanicsville, pushing back a portion of McClellan 's huge and divided army. On the 27th, the Battle of Gaines Mill was another offensive by the Army of Northern Virginia, which saw Federals again in retreat. At Savage Station on the 29th, McClellan 's rear guard was struck, forcing him to leave behind nearly 3,000 sick and wounded men. The Battle of Frayser 's Farm (or White Oak Swamp) on June 30 was a confused fight in which Lee attempted a double-strike from the north and west through a desolate swamp. Nothing went right, but the mere audacity of the Confederates kept Little Mac on alert and moving backward. Lee 's campaign to save the capital ended on the seventh day of fighting, July 1, at Malvern Hill. The ill-advised attacks in this battle were extremely costly for Lee and drew severe criticism. But it was still early in the war, everyone was learning, and Lee had indeed saved Richmond.

The next phase of fighting in the Eastern Theater was the Second Manassas (or Bull Run) Campaign. The three forces of Union troops so roughly handled by Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah were subsequently consolidated and styled the Army of Virginia. It was placed under General John Pope, just arrived from the West, where he had enjoyed success. Pope 's boasts rankled nearly everyone, and his harsh treatment of civilians in northern Virginia earned him the undying enmity of someone in a position to get back at him, Robert E. Lee.

With McClellan 's army still on the Peninsula below Richmond, Pope 's mission was to march into Virginia and create a new front for the Confederates to contend with. Jackson had since joined Lee for the Seven Days (during which Stonewall was criticized for being too slow). Nevertheless, with Jackson out of the way, Pope had ample space in which to operate. He started marching on July 14. In response, Lee demonstrated his contempt for McClellan, who was sitting largely inactive at his new base on the James River, by dispatching Jackson northward, soon followed by General A.P. Hill 's troops, and eventually Lee 's whole army.

The same northward shift soon occurred in McClellan 's army, with significant consequences to Little Mac and the whole command structure. As units arrived back in Washington, they were funneled out to Pope and thus taken from McClellan 's control. The resulting battles of Cedar Mountain (August 9), Groveton (August 28), Second Manassas (August 29-30), and Chantilly (September 1) constituted the one and only campaign of the short-lived Army of Virginia. Pope was soundly whipped by Lee 's army, and the Yankees were sent scurrying, again, for the Washington defenses.

Lincoln then made an important command decision. Lee had to be stopped; Confederates were again in position to threaten the capital. Despite not leading them to any great victories, McClellan was adored by most of his troops. Because of the current emergency he seemed the best choice. The Army of Virginia was dissolved, and McClellan resumed command of an even heftier Army of the Potomac. But what about Pope? Conveniently, during August the Sioux Indians had gotten restless in Minnesota and were killing people. Off went Pope to Minnesota, shelved for one defeat, but mostly because of his irritating personality.

Late summer of 1862 saw three northward thrusts by the Confederates, none of which were successful. In early September, Lee raided north into Maryland and came close to disaster. His plans had fallen into enemy hands, but the enemy was McClellan, who reacted predictably slowly, but he still managed to place Lee in a perilous situation with a huge Union army bearing down on the dangerously divided Confederate forces. Sharp fighting at South Mountain on September 14 held off the approaching Army of the Potomac long enough for Stonewall Jackson to capture Harpers Ferry on the 15th. This allowed Lee to concentrate his army for a stand along Antietam Creek, at Sharpsburg, Maryland

The battle there on September 17 was the bloodiest single day in American history, with some 24,000 casualties in blue and gray - all Americans. McClellan failed to smash Lee 's much smaller army but did force the Confederate leader to retreat back into Virginia, thus spoiling what ultimately proved to be the Confederacy 's best prospects for British recognition. President Lincoln took advantage of the success to issue his Emancipation Proclamation against slavery.

Across the mountains, Confederate Generals Braxton Bragg and Edmund Kirby Smith struck north through Tennessee and Kentucky, nearly to the banks of the Ohio River, before squabbles between the two generals brought the invasion to

a standstill. The Battle of Perryville on October 8 ended the otherwise successful invasion. The battle was a stalemate, but Bragg, to trace a line of supply, was forced to leave the field to his enemy. Still further west, in Mississippi, a thrust intended to carry Con-federate forces under Earl Van Dorn into western Tennessee was turned back by General William S. Rosecrans at Corinth on October 3-4.

The onset of winter did not discourage military operations in 1862. At Prairie Grove, Arkansas, on December 7, in the ongoing struggle for control of Missouri - even just a corner of it, in this case the southwest one - Union forces under Generals James G. Blunt and Francis J. Herron defeated Confederates under General Thomas C. Hindman in a battle that produced 2,600 casualties, many of whom froze to death during the night. The dashing and womanizing Earl Van Dorn, whose defeat at Corinth had gotten him demoted to a cavalry commander, launched a successful raid on Grant 's supply base at Holly Springs, Mississippi, on December 20. Grant, who was engaged in operations against Vicksburg, lost 1,500 men as prisoners at Holly Springs, and \$1.5 million in supplies. Van Dorn regained some of his reputation as a soldier, but it was his reputation as a woman chaser that led to his demise. The following May he was shot and killed by a jealous husband at Spring Hill, Tennessee.

In the Virginia theater, Lincoln finally had all he could stand of McClellan 's Oslo's' after Antietam, and on November 7 replaced him with Ambrose Burnside, who openly expressed doubts about his ability to command such a huge army. He proved himself right at the Battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, where the slaughter of his men in futile attacks was so great that it prompted Lee to contemplate how one might grow too fond of war. In Tennessee, the year ended with fighting on New Year 's Eve along the banks of Stones River near Murfreesboro. Union commander William Rosecrans emerged the victor by the narrowest of margins, after a terrible struggle that carried into the new year. Bragg, his opponent, left the field on January 3.

For the Union, the year began and ended with victories in Tennessee. East of the mountains, though, Lee reigned supreme.