



Early Phases, 1861-62

# Confederate strategy

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- Confederates were fighting a *defensive* war
  - George W. Randolph, Confederate Secretary of War:
    - *"There is no instance in history of a people as numerous as we are inhabiting a country so extensive as ours being subjected if true to themselves."*
- Victory unnecessary; stalemate fine
  - US not only had to conquer but *hold* territory
    - Required many more men
- Military importance of African Americans
  - *Initially* worked to Confederates' advantage
    - Slave labor freed up more white men for military service
    - But African Americans soon began to escape to Union lines, becoming workers and spies, and eventually enlisting

# Union strategy

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- Early in the war, *keeping border states in the Union was Lincoln's most pressing goal*
  - Wants to persuade seceded states to rejoin the Union
  - Believed that most southerners opposed secession
  - Thought the US was fighting against a *class*, not a people
- Every military move was initially dictated by the desire for reconciliation
  - Mark Grimsley calls this the “**conciliatory policy**”
    - Scrupulous concerns for white civilians
    - Even committed to returning those who escaped from slavery, if enslavers not in rebellion against U.S.



# “Anaconda Plan”

- Gen. Winfield Scott predicted a two-year war when most thought it would a matter of months
- Proposed a strategy early in the war
  - Army would protect Washington and pin down Confederate troops in Northern Virginia
  - Navy would blockade all ports; isolate the Confederacy economically and diplomatically
  - Joint army-navy invasion down the Mississippi River would cut the Confederacy in two
  - Idea was to avoid mass casualties; allow Unionism to re-emerge
- Widely mocked in Northern press
  - But in the end, victory would look a lot like what Scott envisioned

# Border states

- Part of Scott's thinking reflect his understanding of the critical importance of the border states
  - Slave states that had not seceded: Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware
- Critically important to hold
  - These four states eventually provided the U.S. with 200,000 white troops and 50,000 USCT troops
- No major battles in border states in 1861
  - But the *political* struggles in them were key
- Control over these territories gave the Union a launching pad
- Lincoln had to tread lightly
  - Couldn't just go in militarily
    - Delicate political balancing act

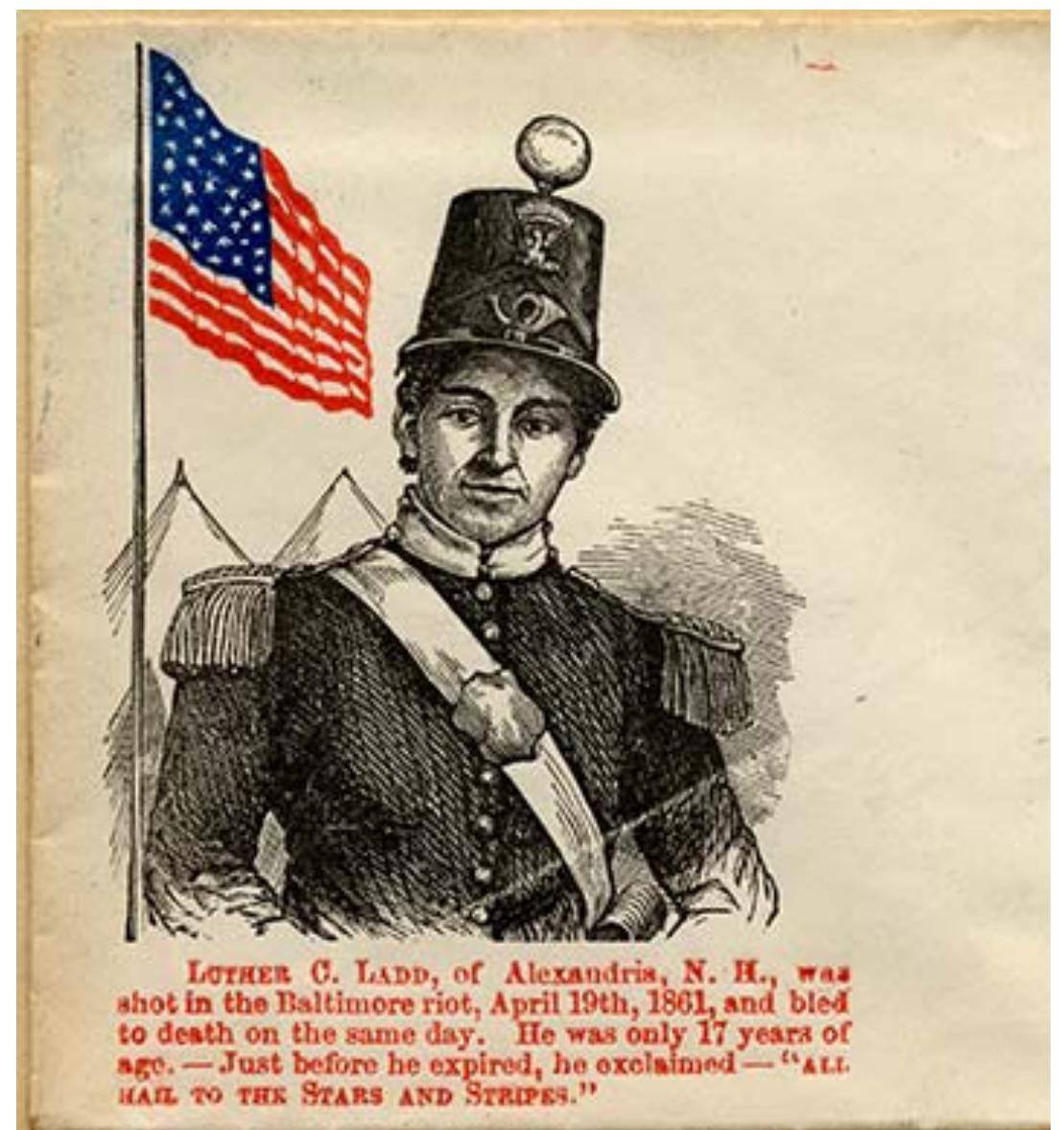
# Maryland, April 1861

- Maryland is unique because of the capital
- When the first Massachusetts troops made their way to DC, southern sympathizers in Baltimore attacked them
  - Killed 12 people
  - First blood that was shed
- Confederate sympathizers destroyed railroad bridges and telegraph lines leading to DC
  - Cut off communications between the capital and the rest of the country for six days

- “Massachusetts Militia Passing Through Baltimore”
- April 19, 1861



MASSACHUSETTS MILITIA PASSING THROUGH BALTIMORE.



LUTHER C. LADD, of Alexandria, N. H., was shot in the Baltimore riot, April 19th, 1861, and bled to death on the same day. He was only 17 years of age. — Just before he expired, he exclaimed — "ALL HAIL TO THE STARS AND STRIPES."



LUTHER C. LADD

# Lincoln acts boldly in Maryland

- Stationed troops along the railroad and declared martial law
- Arrested ringleaders and held them without trial, along with 32 secessionist legislators and dozens of sympathizers
- Maryland voted not to secede, but many of its former leaders were in jail!
- Lincoln suspended habeas corpus
  - We'll return to the question of civil liberties
  - For now, know that Justice Taney was enraged\*

\* *Remember this – will pick up this thread later in the course*

# Meanwhile, out in Missouri...

- At Camp Jackson, St. Louis
  - Ostensibly a neutral training ground for the state militia
  - Really a pro-Confederate force
  - Planned to raid the federal arsenal
- U.S. Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon got wind of the plans
- Seized the entire unit with Union troops
- When they marched the captives into town, a hostile pro-secessionist crowd gathered
- Union troops fired into crowd
  - 28 killed; a quarter of them children; dozens wounded



UNITED STATES VOLUNTEERS ATTACKED BY THE MOB, CORNER OF FIFTH AND WALNUT STREETS, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI.—[SKETCHED BY M. HASTINGS, ESQ.]

# Missouri and Kentucky

- Missouri would be plagued with guerilla fighting throughout war—civilians suffered terribly
- State critical because of access to the Mississippi River
- Kentucky also controlled access to important rivers—the Ohio and the Cumberland
  - Routes needed to supply armies in the western theater
  - Also an important agricultural region
- Both sides tried to win over Kentucky, but the Confederacy invaded in Sept. 1861
- U.S. sent in Ulysses S. Grant to the region
- Kentucky never officially seceded but would remain a battleground for the rest of the war but

# Kentucky map



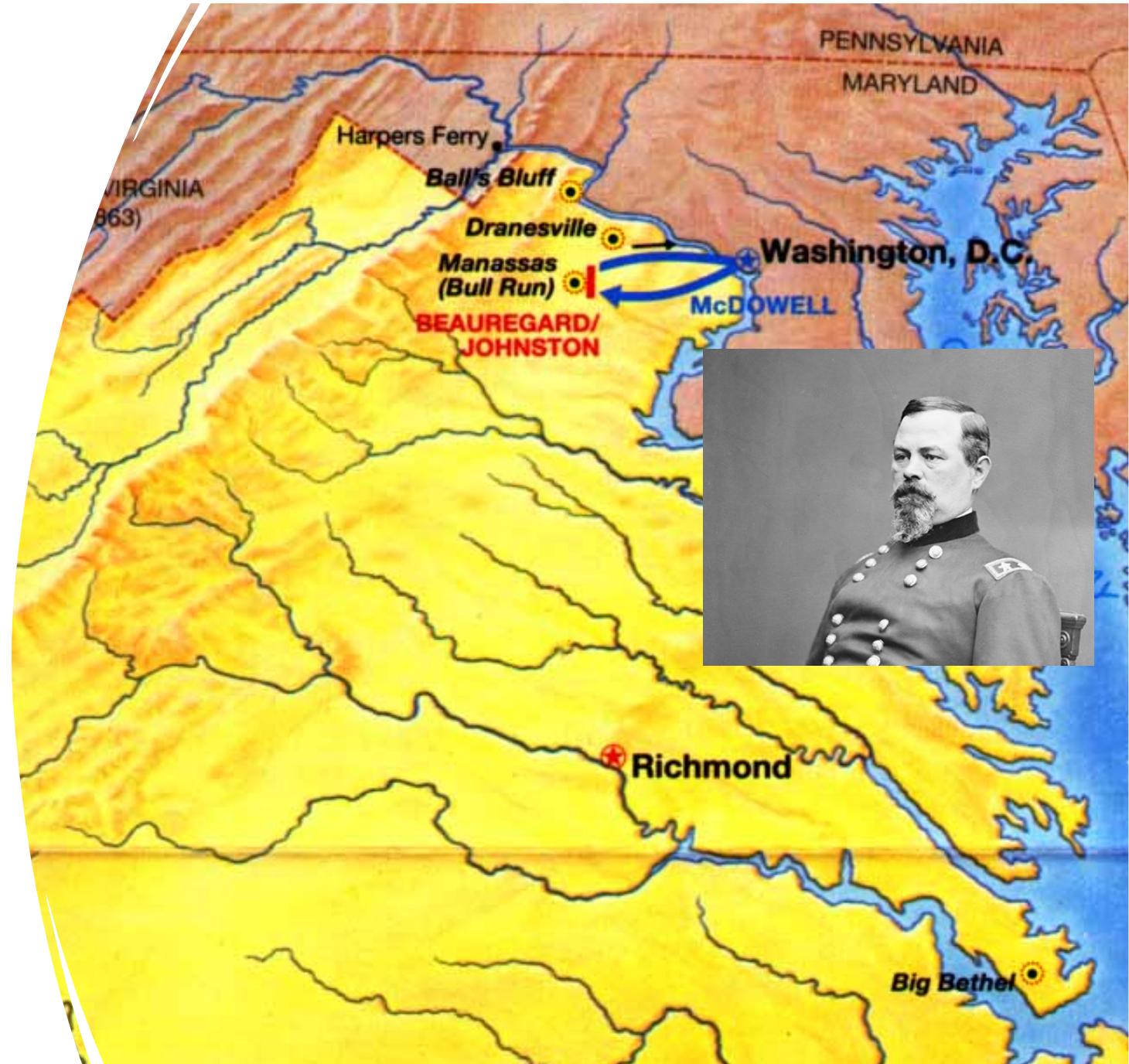
# “On to Richmond”

- Back in the East, people growing impatient
  - After Fort Sumter, not much happened for three months
  - Both sides amassed their armies
- Northern public clamored for a quick seizing of Richmond
  - Dismissed Scott's long-range plan
  - But troops ill-prepared, and the terrain around Richmond favored the Confederates
- Lincoln is afraid of seeming indecisive
  - Shows how public opinion was crucial in shaping war strategy

# Richmond: tantalizing target

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- Lincoln elevates Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell
- Urged him to attack Confederate forces amassed just 25 miles from the capital at Manassas Junction
- July 21, 1861: first major battle, the Battle of Bull Run or Manassas
- Spectators famously gathered to watch



# First Battle of Bull Run (Manassas )

- Over 60,000 troops involved
  - Around 18,000 on each side engaged in fighting
- Several factors helped the Confederacy
  - Good intelligence on Union troop location
  - Actions of Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, who earned his nickname here
  - Managed to get troop reinforcements by train
- Union defeat; turned into an embarrassing rout for the Union
  - Wake-up call for North



# Rose Greenhow

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- Lived in Washington, DC
- Led a Confederate spy ring
  - Included at least 16 individuals, many in government offices
- Lee credited her with the Battle of Bull Run victory
- Eventually imprisoned



# First Battle of Bull Run, cont.

- Casualties seemed shockingly high at the time
  - 900 dead, 2,700 wounded (total of both sides)
  - Single bloodiest day in Western hemisphere
  - Showed the war was not going to be quick
- Aftermath: Lincoln signed bill calling for **500,000 troops to enlist for up to 3 years**
- Davis called for an additional **400,000 men**
- Congress passed the Crittenden Resolution
  - Designed to assure border states that slavery would remain legal



# George B. McClellan

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- Lincoln names McClellan Commanding General of the US Army (Nov. 1861 – March 1862)
- “Little Napoleon” and “Little Mac”
  - Just 35 years old; embodiment of a martial hero
  - West Point graduate; graduated second in his class
- Military training
  - Had fought with distinction in Mexican-American War
  - Studied military tactics in the Crimean War
- Successful in business
- Assembled and trained the Army of the Potomac
  - Largest force (nearly 200,000 men) since Napoleon invaded Russia
  - Public enraptured; army a popular spectacle





Army of the Potomac, Grand Review, November 1861

# McClellan

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- Idolized at first; his men loved him
- But he came to be viewed as overly cautious and insecure
- Lincoln said he had “the slows”
- Responsible for bogging down the Union Army early in war
- End of 1861: press and politicians turning against him – attacking him for failing to strike hard against the enemy



# McClellan's view

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- Wanted to prevent the war from becoming a revolutionary struggle
  - Believed slave ownership was a constitutionally protected right
- Wanted a war between armies, not peoples
- Believed the defeat at Bull Run had won many southerners over to the Confederate cause
  - Only an overwhelming Union victory, coupled with considerate treatment of civilians, would win them back
- Wanted to amass a huge force, plan meticulously, and strike Richmond with a single deadly blow

# Peninsula Campaign, March-July 1862

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- First large-scale Union offensive in the Eastern Theater
  - Plan for attacking Richmond
  - Took troops down the Potomac River; landed at Fort Monroe\*
    - Over 100,000 men amassed on the York Peninsula
    - Only 15,000 Confederates between him and Richmond
- Stalled by Confederate Gen. John B. MacGruder
  - Who engaged in clever theatrics to make force appear bigger than it was
    - Fooled McClellan, who began a siege at Yorktown instead of attacking
  - Gave Confederates time
    - Allowed Joseph E. Johnston's troops to arrive from the West

*\*Remember Fort Monroe; we will come back to it.*



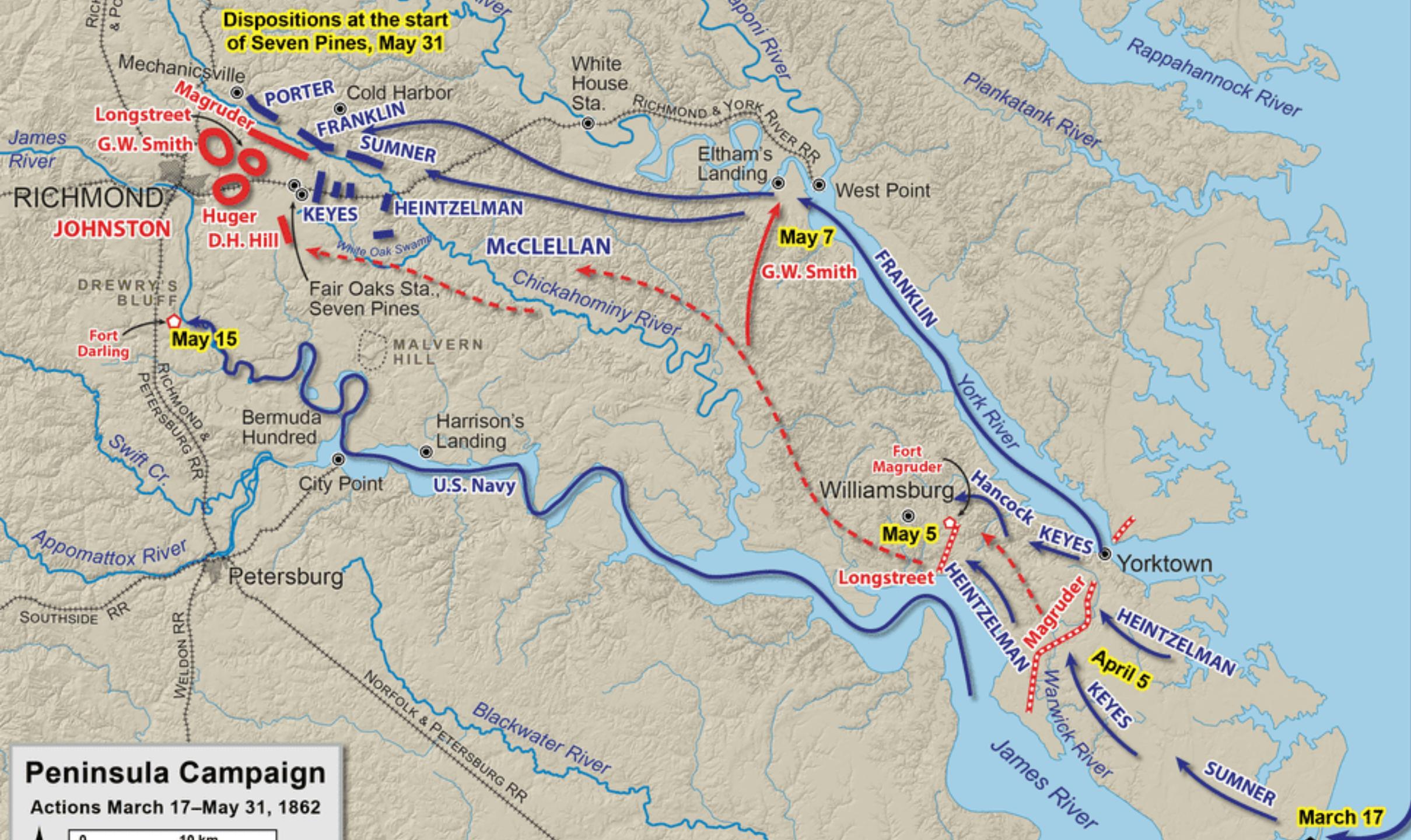
# Peninsula Campaign, cont.

- Lincoln super frustrated
  - April 9, 1862: *"It is indispensable to you that you strike a blow. I am powerless to help this ... The country will not fail to note—is now noting—that the present hesitation to move upon an entrenched enemy, is but the story of Manassas repeated...you must act...."*
- McClellan mad at Lincoln for refusing to send more troops
  - Wrote to wife that he was one of *"these traitors who are willing to sacrifice the country and its army for personal spite and personal aims."* (!!!)
  - Contemptuous of Lincoln – viewed him as an uneducated rube

# Peninsula Campaign, cont.

- May 20: McClellan crossed the Chickahominy River with half of his troops; he's so close to Richmond
  - But instead of pursuing his advantage, he stopped and requested reinforcements
- On May 31, Confederate Gen. Joseph Johnston attacked troops on the south side of the river
  - Battle of Seven Pines; Johnston wounded
  - Gen. Robert E. Lee came to fore
  - Seven Days' Battle

## CHESAPEAKE BAY



## Peninsula Campaign

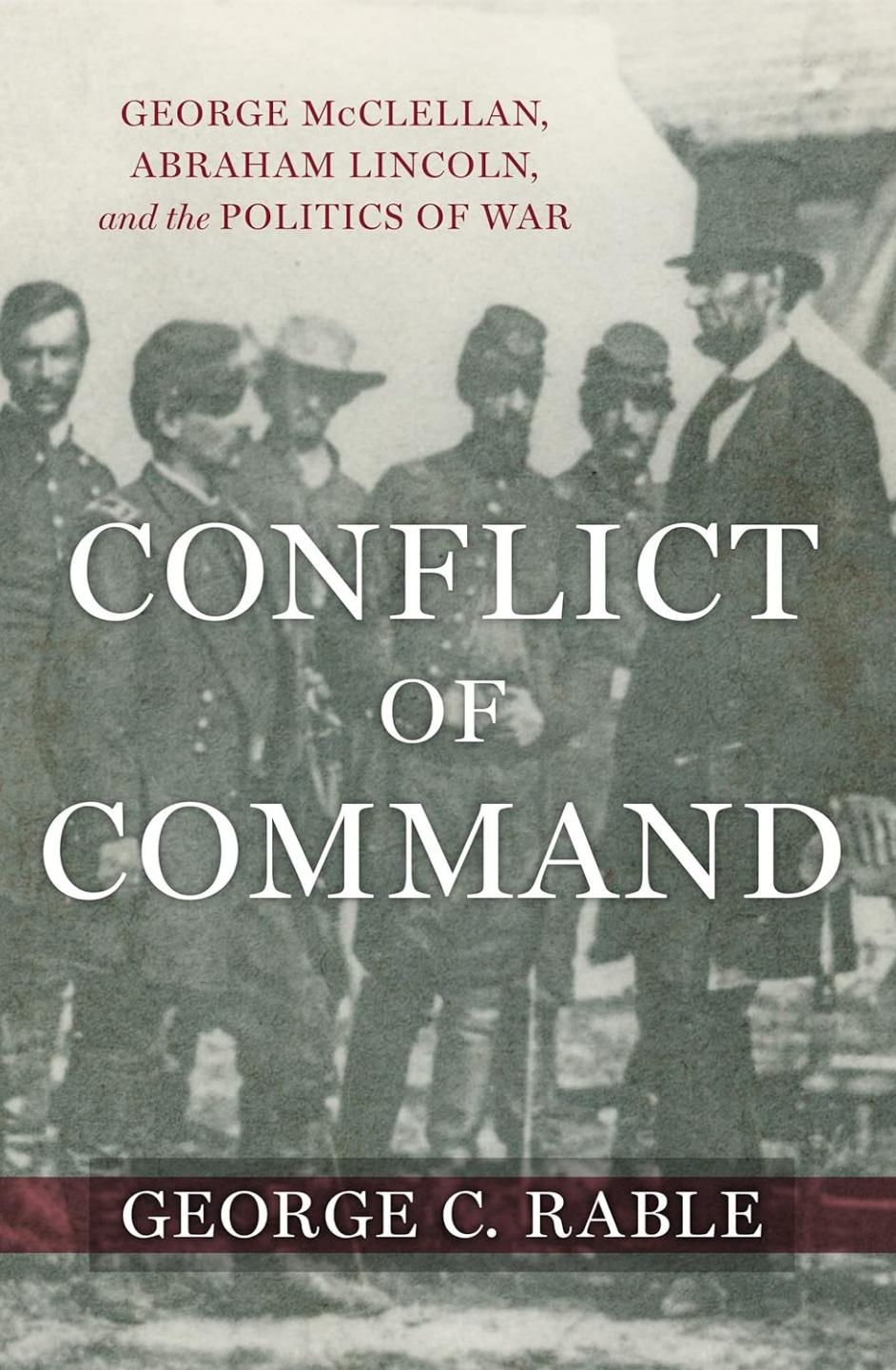
Actions March 17–May 31, 1862



March 17

# Assessing McClellan

- Organized an army of unprecedented size and complexity
  - Instilled discipline/pride in untrained troops
- Understood the importance of logistics
  - Supplying the army; equipping and clothing men; arranging for transportation
- BUT the successful Civil War generals would be bolder, more ruthless
  - Willing to accept huge casualty rates
- And more savvy about the importance of an ever-watchful press



GEORGE McCLELLAN,  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN,  
*and the POLITICS OF WAR*

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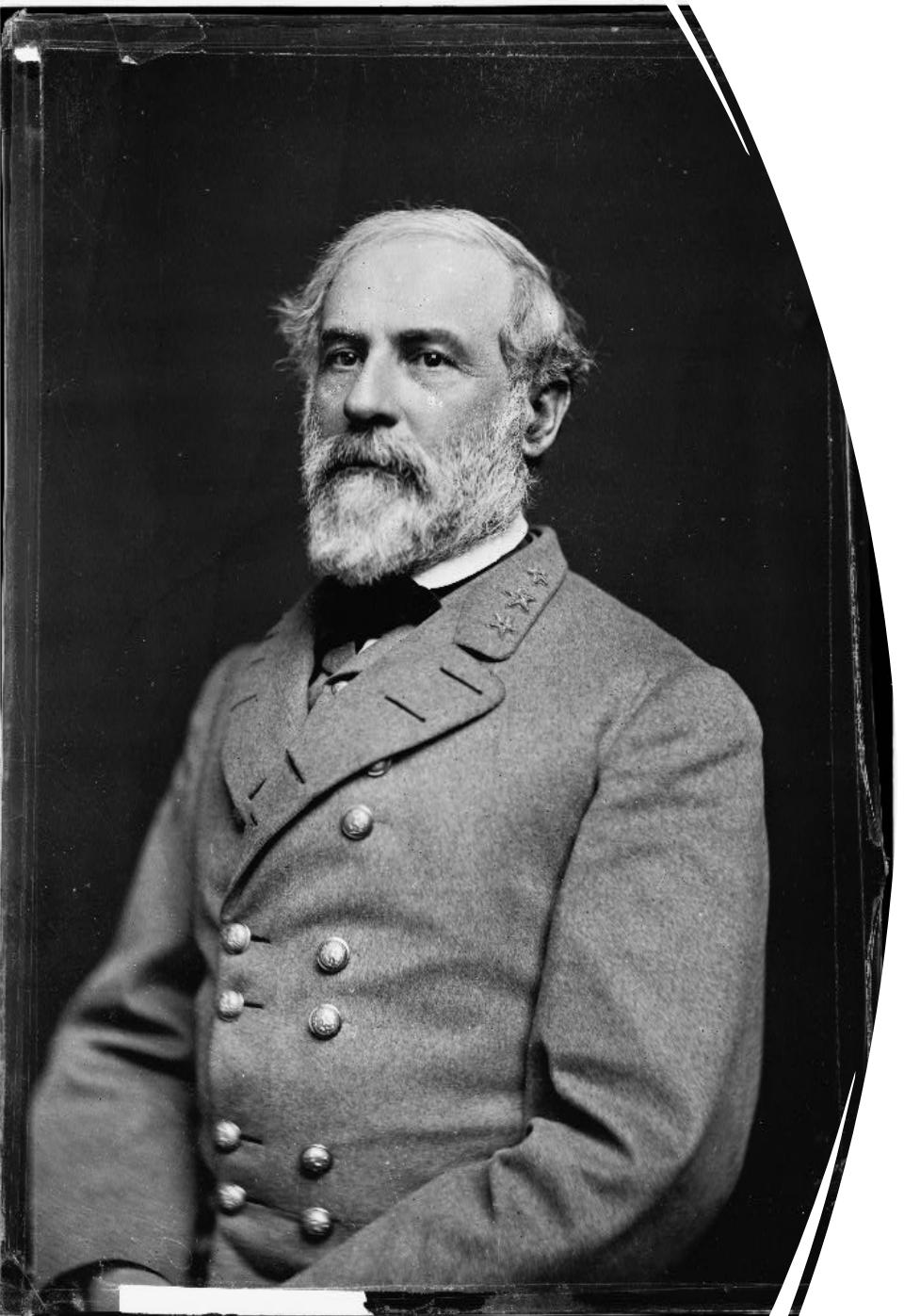
# CONFlict OF COMMAND

GEORGE C. RABLE

## New interpretation

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- Historian George Rable emphasizes politics over personalities
- Argues that Lincoln and McClellan understood the nature of the war and the political forces at work very differently
- Divide widened as Lincoln's views evolved, and he came to embrace emancipation

A black and white portrait of General Robert E. Lee. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark military uniform with a high standing collar. On the collar, there are three stars indicating the rank of General. He has a full, bushy white beard and is looking slightly to his left with a serious expression.

# Aftermath of Peninsula Campaign

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- Gen. Robert E. Lee became head of the Army of Northern Virginia
- Lincoln sacked McClellan as general-in-chief
  - Though he remained in charge of the Army of the Potomac
- Turning point for Lincoln
  - Shifted focus away from the idea of striking a single deadly blow
  - Began contemplating change at the level of *war objectives*
  - Began to look to western generals like Grant

# Mark Grimsley, “Conciliation and Its Failures”

- “Conciliatory policy” v. later turn to “hard war”
  - Conciliation based on the belief that elite slave owners had pushed through secession
    - Against the will of ordinary southerners
  - Initially, the conciliatory policy seemed vindicated
    - Coastal areas of the Carolinas that fell early
- So, what led to the “hard war” policy of 1864-65?
  - Policy that targeted infrastructure, sanctioned the destruction/appropriation of private property, and aimed to erode civilian morale

# Grimsley, cont.

- Northern support for conciliation collapsed; people lost patience
  - Especially after the failure of the Peninsular Campaign
- Never universally supported by commanders; often rejected outright by troops
- Grimsley sees a middle phase: “pragmatic policy”
  - Did not explicitly target the civilian population, but greater severity toward those engaged in guerilla warfare
  - Not until spring 1863 did Grant and Sherman begin major attacks on southern infrastructure
- Key shift to “hard war” was at the level of strategy
  - North would use “demoralization and fear”