

= Ambrose Burnside =

Ambrose Everett Burnside ( May 23 , 1824 ? September 13 , 1881 ) was an American soldier , railroad executive , inventor , industrialist , and politician from Rhode Island , serving as governor and a United States Senator . As a Union Army general in the American Civil War , he conducted successful campaigns in North Carolina and East Tennessee , as well as countering the raids of Confederate General John Hunt Morgan , but suffered disastrous defeats at the Battle of Fredericksburg and Battle of the Crater . His distinctive style of facial hair became known as sideburns , derived from his last name . He was also the first president of the National Rifle Association .

= = Early life and career = =

Burnside was born in Liberty , Indiana and was the fourth of nine children of Edghill and Pamela ( or Pamilia ) Brown Burnside , a family of Scottish origin . His great @-@ great @-@ grandfather Robert Burnside ( 1725 ? 1775 ) was born in Scotland and settled in the Province of South Carolina . His father , a native of South Carolina , was a slave owner who freed his slaves when he relocated to Indiana . Ambrose attended Liberty Seminary as a young boy , but his education was interrupted when his mother died in 1841 ; he was apprenticed to a local tailor , eventually becoming a partner in the business .

Through his interest in military affairs and his father 's political connections he obtained an appointment to the United States Military Academy in 1843 . ( Though Caleb Blood Smith recounted Burnside 's brash and independent application to the military academy . ) He graduated in 1847 , ranking 18th in a class of 47 , and was commissioned a brevet second lieutenant in the 2nd U.S. Artillery . He traveled to Veracruz for the Mexican ? American War but arrived after hostilities ceased and performed mostly garrison duty around Mexico City .

At the close of the war , Lt. Burnside served two years on the western frontier , serving under Captain Braxton Bragg in the 3rd U.S. Artillery , a light artillery unit that had been converted to cavalry duty , protecting the Western mail routes through Nevada to California . In 1849 , he was wounded by an arrow in his neck during a skirmish against Apaches in Las Vegas , New Mexico . He was promoted to 1st lieutenant on December 12 , 1851 .

In 1852 , he was assigned to Fort Adams , Newport , Rhode Island , and , while there , he married Mary Richmond Bishop of Providence , Rhode Island , on April 27 of that year . The marriage , which lasted until Burnside 's death , was childless .

In October 1853 , Burnside resigned his commission in the United States Army . Although maintaining a position in the state militia , he devoted his time and energy to the manufacture of the famous firearm that bears his name , the Burnside carbine . The Secretary of War under President James Buchanan , John B. Floyd , contracted with the Burnside Arms Company to equip a large portion of the Army , mostly cavalry , with his carbine and induced him to establish extensive factories for its manufacture . The Bristol Rifle Works were no sooner complete than another gunmaker allegedly bribed Floyd to break his \$ 100 @, @ 000 contract with Burnside . Burnside ran as a Democrat for one of the Congressional seats in Rhode Island in 1858 and was defeated in a landslide . The burdens of the campaign and the destruction by fire of his factory contributed to his financial ruin , and he was forced to assign his firearm patents to others . He then went west in search of employment and became treasurer of the Illinois Central Railroad , where he worked for , and became friendly with , one of his future commanding officers , George B. McClellan .

= = Civil War = =

= = = First Bull Run = = =

At the outbreak of the Civil War , Burnside was a brigadier general in the Rhode Island Militia . He

raised a regiment , the 1st Rhode Island Volunteer Infantry Regiment , and was appointed its colonel on May 2 , 1861 . Two companies of this regiment were then armed with Burnside Carbines . Within a month , he ascended to brigade command in the Department of Northeast Virginia . He commanded the brigade without distinction at the First Battle of Bull Run in July , committing his troops piecemeal , and took over division command temporarily for wounded Brig. Gen. David Hunter . After his 90 @-@ day regiment was mustered out of service on August 2 , he was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers on August 6 , and was assigned to train provisional brigades in the nascent Army of the Potomac .

= = = North Carolina = = =

Burnside commanded the Coast Division , or North Carolina Expeditionary Force , three brigades assembled in Annapolis , Maryland , which formed the nucleus for his future IX Corps , and the Department of North Carolina from September 1861 until July 1862 . He conducted a successful amphibious campaign that closed over 80 % of the North Carolina sea coast to Confederate shipping for the remainder of the war . This included the Battle of Elizabeth City , fought on 10 February 1862 , on the Pasquotank River near Elizabeth City , North Carolina . The participants were vessels of the U.S. Navy 's North Atlantic Blockading Squadron , opposed by vessels of the Confederate Navy 's Mosquito Fleet ; the latter were supported by a shore @-@ based battery of four guns at Cobb 's Point ( now called Cobb Point ) , near the southeastern border of the town . The battle was a part of the campaign in North Carolina that was led by Burnside and known as the Burnside Expedition . The result was a Union victory , with Elizabeth City and its nearby waters in their possession , and the Confederate fleet captured , sunk , or dispersed .

In recognition of his successes at the battles of Roanoke Island and New Bern , the first significant Union victories in the Eastern Theater , he was promoted to major general of volunteers on March 18 , 1862 . In July , his forces were transported north to Newport News , Virginia , and became the IX Corps of the Army of the Potomac .

Following Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan 's failure in the Peninsula Campaign , Burnside was offered command of the Army of the Potomac . Refusing this opportunity , because of his loyalty to McClellan and the fact that he understood his own lack of military experience , he detached part of his corps in support of Maj. Gen. John Pope 's Army of Virginia in the Northern Virginia Campaign . Telegrams extremely critical of Pope 's abilities as a commander from Maj. Gen. Fitz John Porter that he received at this time and forwarded on to his superiors in concurrence would later play a significant role in Porter 's court @-@ martial , in which Burnside would appear as a star witness .

Burnside again declined command following Pope 's debacle at Second Bull Run .

= = = Antietam = = =

Burnside was given command of the " Right Wing " of the Army of the Potomac ( the I Corps and his own IX Corps ) at the start of the Maryland Campaign for the Battle of South Mountain , but McClellan separated the two corps at the Battle of Antietam , placing them on opposite ends of the Union battle line , returning Burnside to command of just the IX Corps . Implicitly refusing to give up his higher authority , Burnside treated first Maj. Gen. Jesse L. Reno ( killed at South Mountain ) and then Brig. Gen. Jacob D. Cox as the corps commander , funneling orders to the corps through them . This cumbersome arrangement contributed to his slowness in attacking and crossing what is now called " Burnside 's Bridge " on the southern flank of the Union line .

Burnside did not perform an adequate reconnaissance of the area , and instead of taking advantage of several easy fording sites out of range of the enemy , his troops were forced into repeated assaults across the narrow bridge which was dominated by Confederate sharpshooters on high ground . By noon , McClellan was losing patience . He sent a succession of couriers to motivate Burnside to move forward . He ordered one aide , " Tell him if it costs 10 @,@ 000 men he must go now . " He increased the pressure by sending his inspector general to confront Burnside , who reacted indignantly : " McClellan appears to think I am not trying my best to carry this bridge ;

you are the third or fourth one who has been to me this morning with similar orders . " Although the IX Corps eventually broke through , the delay allowed Maj. Gen. A. P. Hill 's Confederate division to come up from Harpers Ferry and repulse the Union breakthrough . McClellan refused Burnside 's requests for reinforcements and the battle ended in a tactical stalemate .

= = = Fredericksburg = = =

McClellan was removed after failing to pursue General Robert E. Lee 's retreat from Antietam , and Burnside was assigned to command the Army of the Potomac on November 7 , 1862 . He reluctantly obeyed this order , the third such in his brief career , in part because when he tried to refuse , the courier told him that the command would go instead to Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker ( whom Burnside disliked ) . President Abraham Lincoln pressured Burnside to take aggressive action and on November 14 approved his plan to capture the Confederate capital at Richmond , Virginia . This plan led to a humiliating and costly Union defeat at the Battle of Fredericksburg on December 13 . His advance upon Fredericksburg was rapid , but planning in marshaling pontoon bridges for crossing the Rappahannock River and his own reluctance to deploy portions of his army across fording points later delayed the attack . This allowed Gen. Lee to concentrate along Marye 's Heights just west of town and easily repulse the Union attacks . Assaults south of town , which were supposed to be the main avenue of attack , were also mismanaged , and initial Union breakthroughs went unsupported . Upset by the failure of his plan and by the enormous casualties of his repeated , futile frontal assaults , Burnside declared that he would personally lead an assault of the IX corps . His corps commanders talked him out of it , but relations between the commander and his subordinates were strained . Accepting full blame , he offered to retire from the U.S. Army , but this was refused . Burnside 's detractors labeled him the " Butcher of Fredericksburg " .

In January 1863 , Burnside launched a second offensive against Lee , but it bogged down in winter rains before it accomplished anything and has been derisively called the Mud March . In its wake , he asked that several officers , who were openly insubordinate , be relieved of duty and court @-@ martialed ; he also offered to resign . Lincoln chose the latter option on January 26 and replaced him with Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker , one of the officers who had conspired against Burnside .

= = = East Tennessee = = =

Although Burnside offered to resign his commission altogether , Lincoln declined , stating that there could still be a place for him in the army . Thus , he was placed back at the head of the IX Corps and sent to command the Department of the Ohio , encompassing the states of Ohio , Indiana , Kentucky , and Illinois . Since this was a quiet area with little activity going on , the president reasoned that Burnside could not get himself into too much trouble there . However , antiwar sentiment was riding high in the Western states as they had traditionally carried on a great deal of commerce with the South , and there was little in the way of abolitionist sentiment there or a desire to fight for the purpose of ending slavery . Thoroughly disturbed by this trend , Burnside began issuing a series of orders forbidding " the expression of public sentiments against the war or the Administration " in his department , which finally climaxed with General Order No. 38 , which declared that " any person found guilty of treason will be tried by a military tribunal and either imprisoned or banished to enemy lines " . On May 1 , 1863 , Ohio Congressman Clement L. Vallandigham , a prominent opponent of the war , held a large public rally in Mount Vernon , Ohio in which he denounced President Lincoln as a " tyrant " who sought to abolish the Constitution and set up a dictatorship . Burnside had dispatched several agents to the rally who took down notes and brought back their " evidence " to the general , who then declared that it was sufficient grounds to arrest Vallandigham for treason . Despite the Congressman 's protests that he was the victim of simply expressing his opinions in public , a military court tried him and found him guilty of violating General Order No. 38 . He was thus sentenced to imprisonment for the duration of the war . Vallandigham was turned into a martyr by antiwar Democrats . Burnside next turned his attention to Illinois , where the Chicago Times newspaper had been printing antiwar editorials for months . The

general dispatched a squadron of troops to the paper's offices and ordered them to cease printing .

Lincoln had not been asked or informed about either Vollandigham's arrest or the closure of the Chicago Times . Remembering the section of General Order No. 38 which declared that offenders would be banished to enemy lines , Lincoln finally decided that this was a good idea , and so Vollandigham was freed from jail and sent to Confederate hands . Meanwhile , Lincoln ordered the Chicago Times to be reopened and announced that Burnside had exceeded his authority in both cases . The president then issued a warning that generals were not to arrest civilians or close down newspapers again without the White House's permission . Burnside also dealt with Confederate raiders such as John Hunt Morgan .

In the Knoxville Campaign , Burnside advanced to Knoxville , Tennessee , first bypassing the Confederate @-@ held Cumberland Gap . After occupying Knoxville unopposed , he sent troops back to the Cumberland Gap . Brig. Gen. John W. Frazer , the Confederate commander , refused to surrender in the face of two Union brigades and Burnside arrived with a third , forcing the surrender of Frazer and 2 @, @ 300 Confederates . After Union Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans was defeated at the Battle of Chickamauga , Burnside was pursued by Lt. Gen. James Longstreet , against whose troops he had battled at Marye's Heights . Burnside skillfully outmaneuvered Longstreet at the Battle of Campbell's Station and was able to reach his entrenchments and safety in Knoxville , where he was briefly besieged until the Confederate defeat at the Battle of Fort Sanders outside the city . Tying down Longstreet's corps at Knoxville contributed to Gen. Braxton Bragg's defeat by Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Chattanooga . Troops under Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman marched to Burnside's aid , but the siege had already been lifted ; Longstreet withdrew , eventually returning to Virginia .

= = = Overland Campaign = = =

Burnside was ordered to take the IX Corps back to the Eastern Theater , where , in Annapolis , Maryland , he built it up to a strength of over 21 @, @ 000 effectives . The IX Corps fought in the Overland Campaign of May 1864 as an independent command , reporting initially to Grant ; his corps was not assigned to the Army of the Potomac because Burnside outranked its commander , Maj. Gen. George G. Meade , who had been a division commander under Burnside at Fredericksburg . This cumbersome arrangement was rectified on May 24 just before the Battle of North Anna , when Burnside agreed to waive his precedence of rank and was placed under Meade's direct command .

Burnside fought at the battles of Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House , where he did not perform in a distinguished manner , attacking piecemeal and appearing reluctant to commit his troops to the frontal assaults that characterized these battles . After North Anna and Cold Harbor , he took his place in the siege lines at Petersburg .

= = = The Crater = = =

As the two armies faced the stalemate of trench warfare at Petersburg in July 1864 , Burnside agreed to a plan suggested by a regiment of former coal miners in his corps , the 48th Pennsylvania : dig a mine under a fort named Elliot's Salient in the Confederate entrenchments and ignite explosives there to achieve a surprise breakthrough . The fort was destroyed on July 30 in what is known as the Battle of the Crater . Because of interference from Meade , Burnside was ordered , only hours before the infantry attack , not to use his division of black troops , which had been specially trained for this mission . He was forced to use untrained white troops instead . He could not decide which division to choose as a replacement , so he had his three subordinate commanders draw lots . The division chosen by chance was that commanded by Brig. Gen. James H. Ledlie , who failed to brief the men on what was expected of them and was reported during the battle to be drunk well behind the lines , providing no leadership . Ledlie's men entered the huge crater instead of going around it , becoming trapped , and were subjected to heavy fire from Confederates around the rim , resulting in high casualties .

Burnside was relieved of command on August 14 and sent on " extended leave " by Grant . Burnside was never recalled to duty during the remainder of the war . A court of inquiry later placed the blame for the Crater fiasco on Burnside and his subordinates . In December , Burnside met with President Lincoln and General Grant about his future . He was contemplating resignation , but Lincoln and Grant requested that he remain in the Army . At the end of the interview , Burnside wrote , " I was not informed of any duty upon which I am to be placed . " He finally resigned his commission on April 15 , 1865 , after Lee 's surrender at Appomattox .

The United States Congress Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War later exonerated Burnside , and placed the blame for the Union defeat at the Crater on General Meade for requiring the specially trained USCT ( United States Colored Troops ) men to be withdrawn .

= = Postbellum career = =

After his resignation , Burnside was employed in numerous railroad and industrial directorships , including the presidencies of the Cincinnati and Martinsville Railroad , the Indianapolis and Vincennes Railroad , the Cairo and Vincennes Railroad , and the Rhode Island Locomotive Works . He was elected to three one @-@ year terms as Governor of Rhode Island , serving from May 29 , 1866 , to May 25 , 1869 .

Burnside was a Companion of the Massachusetts Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States , a military society of Union officers and their descendants , and served as the Junior Vice Commander of the Massachusetts Commandery in 1869 . He was commander @-@ in @-@ chief of the Grand Army of the Republic ( GAR ) veterans ' association from 1871 to 1872 , and also served as the Commander of the Department of Rhode Island of the GAR . At its inception in 1871 , the National Rifle Association chose him as its first president .

During a visit to Europe in 1870 , Burnside attempted to mediate between the French and the Germans in the Franco @-@ Prussian War .

In 1876 Burnside was elected as commander of the New England Battalion of the Centennial Legion , the title of a collection of 13 militia units from the original 13 states , which participated in the parade in Philadelphia on July 4 , 1876 , to mark the centennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence .

In 1874 Burnside was elected by the Rhode Island Senate as a U.S. Senator from Rhode Island , was re @-@ elected in 1880 , and served until his death in 1881 . During that time , Burnside , who had been a Democrat before the war , ran as a Republican , playing a prominent role in military affairs as well as serving as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in 1881 .

Burnside died suddenly of " neuralgia of the heart " ( Angina pectoris ) at Bristol , Rhode Island , and is buried in Swan Point Cemetery , Providence , Rhode Island . An equestrian statue in his honor was erected in the late 19th century in Burnside Park in Providence .

= = Assessment and legacy = =

Personally , Burnside was always very popular , both in the army and in politics . He made friends easily , smiled a lot , and remembered everyone 's name . His professional military reputation , however , was less positive , and he was known for being obstinate , unimaginative , and unsuited , both intellectually and emotionally for high command . Grant stated that he was " unfitted " for the command of an army and that no one knew this better than Burnside himself . Knowing his capabilities , he twice refused command of the Army of the Potomac , accepting only the third time when the courier told him that otherwise the command would go to Joseph Hooker . Jeffry D. Wert described Burnside 's relief after Fredericksburg in a passage that sums up his military career :

He had been the most unfortunate commander of the Army , a general who had been cursed by succeeding its most popular leader and a man who believed he was unfit for the post . His tenure had been marked by bitter animosity among his subordinates and a fearful , if not needless , sacrifice of life . A firm patriot , he lacked the power of personality and will to direct recalcitrant generals . He had been willing to fight the enemy , but the terrible slope before Marye 's Heights

stands as his legacy .

Bruce Catton summarized Burnside :

... Burnside had repeatedly demonstrated that it had been a military tragedy to give him a rank higher than colonel . One reason might have been that , with all his deficiencies , Burnside never had any angles of his own to play ; he was a simple , honest , loyal soldier , doing his best even if that best was not very good , never scheming or conniving or backbiting . Also , he was modest ; in an army many of whose generals were insufferable prima donnas , Burnside never mistook himself for Napoleon . Physically he was impressive : tall , just a little stout , wearing what was probably the most artistic and awe @-@ inspiring set of whiskers in all that bewhiskered Army . He customarily wore a high , bell @-@ crowned felt hat with the brim turned down and a double @-@ breasted , knee @-@ length frock coat , belted at the waist ? a costume which , unfortunately , is apt to strike the modern eye as being very much like that of a beefy city cop of the 1880s .

= = = Sideburns = = =

Burnside was noted for his unusual facial hair , joining strips of hair in front of his ears to his mustache but with the chin clean @-@ shaven ; the word burnside was coined to describe this style . The syllables were later reversed to give sideburns .

= = Honors = =

An equestrian statue designed by Launt Thompson , a New York sculptor , was dedicated in 1887 at Exchange Place , Providence , facing City Hall . In 1906 , the statue was moved to City Hall Park , which was re @-@ dedicated as Burnside Park .

Bristol , Rhode Island has a small street named for Burnside .

The Burnside Memorial Hall in Bristol , Rhode Island , is a two @-@ story Richardson Romanesque public building on Hope Street . It was dedicated in 1883 by President Chester A. Arthur and Governor Augustus O. Bourn . Originally , a statue of Burnside was intended to be the focus of the porch . The architect was Stephen C. Earle .

Burnside , Kentucky , in south @-@ central Kentucky , is a small town south of Somerset named for the former site of Camp Burnside , near the former Cumberland River town of Point Isabelle .

New Burnside , Illinois , along the Cairo and Vincennes Railroad was named after the former general for his role in founding the village through directorship of the new rail line .

Burnside Residence Hall at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston was opened in 1966 .

= = In popular media = =

Burnside was portrayed by Alex Hyde @-@ White in Ronald F. Maxwell 's 2003 film Gods and Generals , which includes the Battle of Fredericksburg .

A map named " Burnside 's Bridge " was included in Call of Juarez : Bound in Blood , in honoring the memory of Ambrose Burnside .