



Gettysburg Campaign

June-July 1863

Fauquier County in the Civil War

From 1861-1865, Fauquier County's "hallowed grounds" were the site of twelve battles and countless troop movements, raids, skirmishes, and encampments. With its proximity to Washington, DC, the county was key territory in Union and Confederate strategy.



Warrenton Courthouse, 1862. Photo by Timothy O'Sullivan. New York Historical Society collection.

In 1862 and 1863, General Robert E. Lee used Fauquier County to his advantage. The engagements at Rappahannock Station I and Thoroughfare Gap were indispensable to his victory at Second Manassas in August 1862, while the cavalry battles at Brandy Station, Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville shielded Lee's infantry as he commenced his second invasion of the North during the spring of 1863.

After a fateful engagement in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Fauquier County's role in the war changed. No longer the cradle of Confederate invasion, the battle lands of Manassas Gap, Auburn, Buckland Mills, and Rappahannock Station II were Lee's path of retreat.

Yet, much as Gettysburg did not end the war, Lee's retreat was not the last that Fauquier County saw of Civil War soldiers. Throughout the Civil War, the "hallowed grounds" of Fauquier County were contested fields of battle. ■



Goose Creek Bridge in 2008. Photograph by Garry Adelman.

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Following a brilliant yet costly victory at Chancellorsville in May 1863, Confederate General Robert E. Lee set his sights, and his army, on a second invasion of the North.

In June 1863, Lee moved his army north toward Pennsylvania. To protect Lee's infantry on this move, General J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry screened the army from a Federal attack. Beginning at Brandy Station on June 9, the cavalry engagements between Union and Confederate forces comprised a significant portion of the campaign, with Brandy Station being the largest cavalry battle of the war. There was more fighting as the armies moved north at Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville.

Stuart's cavalry screen allowed Lee to successfully maneuver his men into Pennsylvania where on July 1-3, 1863, Lee's men fought General George G. Meade's Union army in a fierce battle that ended Lee's second invasion. With almost 160,000 troops engaged and 51,000 casualties, the Battle of Gettysburg was the largest battle of the Civil War and one that sent Lee retreating southward.

After Gettysburg, Lee again called on Stuart's cavalry to shield his troops as they raced toward the Potomac River before Meade could catch them. Although Lee slipped across the river, Meade tried to cut him off but failed after fighting at Manassas Gap. ■



Battle of Brandy Station June 9, 1863

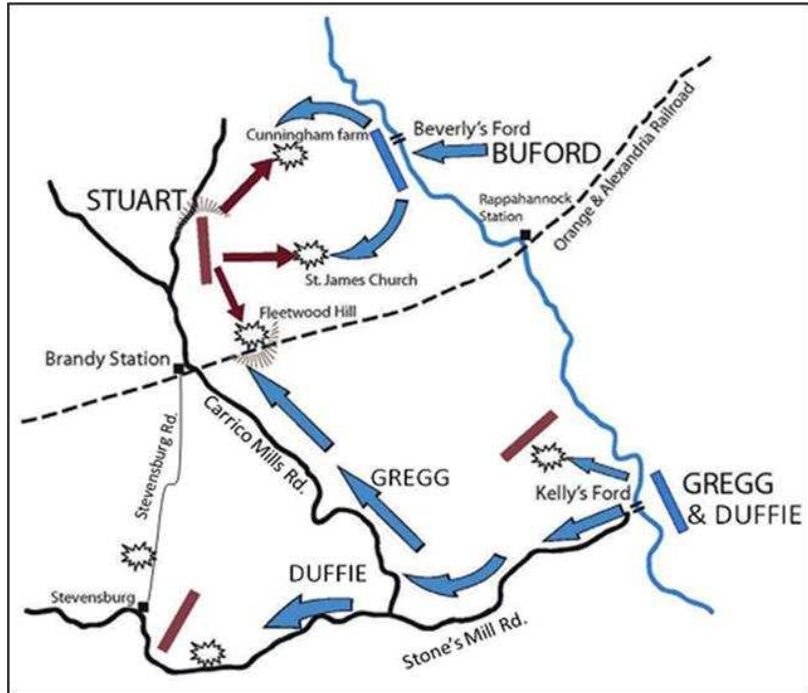
Result:
Inconclusive

Troops Engaged:
~11,000 US
~9,500 CS

Casualties:
~936 US
~523 CS

On June 9, 1863, the war's largest cavalry battle occurred at Brandy Station, involving 9,500 Confederate and 8,000 Union horsemen. The battle began when General Alfred Pleasonton's Federal cavalry units crossed the Rappahannock River at Beverley's Ford and Kelly's Ford, attacking Stuart's surprised Confederates. General John Buford led the 4:30 a.m. charge across Beverley's Ford, forcing Southern horsemen to ride "into the fray partially dressed and often riding bareback." Buford's men engaged Stuart's at the nearby Cunningham farm, St. James Church, and Yew Ridge. As the Federals gained ground near Yew Ridge, the Confederates began pulling back, "to the amazement of Buford's men." They had been forced to shift positions to meet General David Gregg's horsemen arriving from Kelly's Ford.

Gregg met little resistance at Kelly's Ford and took some time arriving at Brandy Station; some of Gregg's men never arrived on the battlefield, delayed by Confederates at Stevensburg, where Duffie was ordered to hold his position. Those who reached the field immediately engaged the enemy at Fleetwood Hill. A series of confusing charges and countercharges swept back and forth across the hill. When the battle finally ended, Confederate cavalry still held the field, but could not pursue their advantage. The Union forces re-crossed the Rappahannock at Beverley's Ford and Rappahannock Station to their camps in Fauquier. The Confederates, however, had managed to prevent the Union cavalry from learning the intentions of General Robert E. Lee, who had begun marching his infantry to the Shenandoah Valley to invade the north. ■



Battle of Aldie June 17, 1863

Lee's army continued its march north behind the Blue Ridge Mountains, with General Stuart and his cavalry corps under orders to screen the infantry from Union forces. On June 17, General Alfred Pleasonton's Federal horsemen moved toward the village of Aldie, described



Confederate prisoners seized at Aldie, Virginia, June 17, 1863. Detail of photo taken by Alexander Gardner. Library of Congress collection.

by wartime photographer Alexander Gardner as "very charming, very much diversified with hill, wood and valley, fine farms, [and] pretty brooks." Union General Kilpatrick's 1,200-man cavalry brigade intercepted a detachment of the 2nd Virginia Cavalry and drove the outnumbered Confederates back past the Aldie Mill. The Federals and Confederates pushed each other back and forth through Aldie along the Aldie Gap Turnpike. Later that afternoon, the battle moved off the turnpike to the Adam and Furr farms. After attacks and counter attacks, Stuart finally withdrew the brigade to Middleburg, where more Union troops had arrived.

Result:
Inconclusive

Troops Engaged:
~2,000 US
~1,500 CS

Casualties:
~305 US
~119 CS

Battle of Middleburg June 17-19, 1863

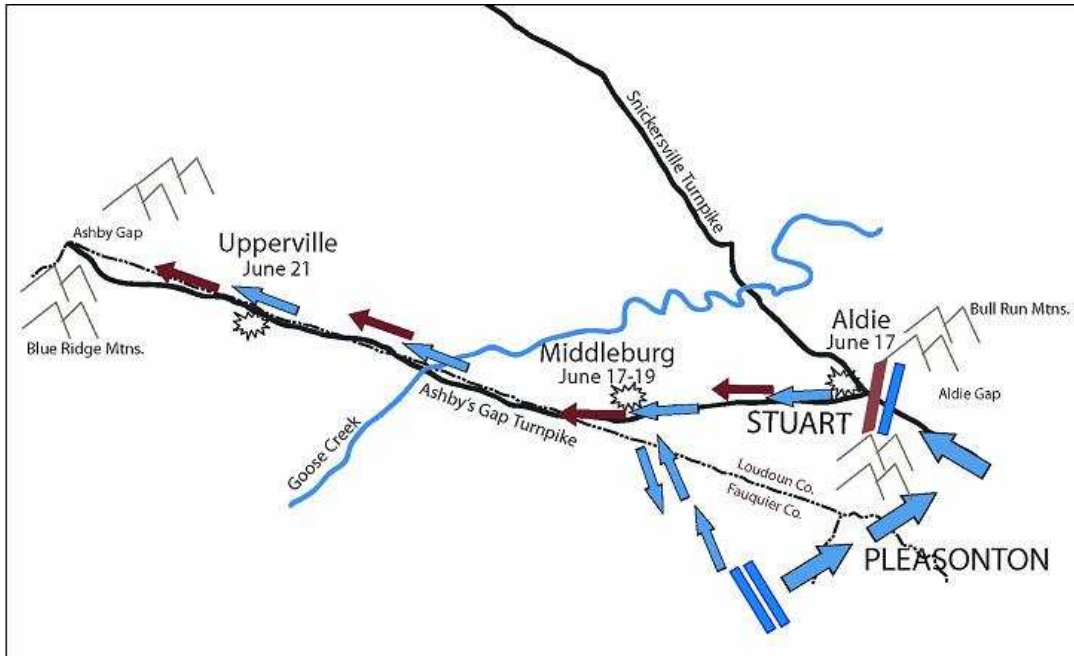
Result:
Inconclusive

Troops Engaged:
~6,000 US
~7,000 CS

Casualties:
~367 US
~40 CS

On June 17, the 1st Rhode Island cavalry was ordered to scout west from Thoroughfare Gap to Middleburg. The Rhode Islanders initially took the town, forcing Stuart and his staff to flee. The 1st Rhode Island Cavalry regiment of less than 300 men, however, was insufficient to hold the town when three Confederate brigades arrived and reoccupied the town. The 1st Rhode Island was routed, losing more than two-thirds of its force killed, wounded, or missing.

As Lee's infantry continued its march northward, Stuart's cavalry continued to protect its right flank by occupying the Blue Ridge passes. Elements of Stuart's and Pleasonton's forces again engaged in Middleburg on June 19, 1863. The day's early fighting occurred just west of town at Mount Defiance along the Ashby's Gap Turnpike. Stuart initially held this position but was pushed back more than one mile to Bittersweet Farm. Both of Stuart's flanks were threatened during the battle, but the Federals did not push this advantage. Although Pleasonton held the battlefield when the firing ceased, he failed to do serious damage to Stuart or his screening movements. ■



Battle of Upperville June 21, 1863

The Battle of Upperville began where the Battle of Middleburg left off. Stuart formed his line on high ground but after the Union troops attacked, Stuart retreated and lost a piece of artillery—the first he lost in the war. The Confederates withdrew further along the turnpike and formed another line to prevent Federals from crossing Goose Creek. For several hours the Confederates held off their opponents but were finally forced to withdraw further west. The Confederates staged an admirable fighting withdrawal, making stands at Vineyard Hill, just east of Upperville, and Trappe Road, just west of town. Although pushed back considerably, Stuart fell back to and held Ashby Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Lee's infantry remained secure in its march north. ■

Result:
Inconclusive

Troops Engaged:
~5,500 US
~6,000 CS

Casualties:
~209 US
~180 CS



"Battle near Upperville, Va., Ashby's Gap in the Distance." Drawing by Alfred R. Waud. Feature in middle distance is the hedge-enclosed vineyard of Vineyard Hill. The turnpike passes the vineyard from the lower left. The artillery in the foreground appears to have been deployed somewhere on the

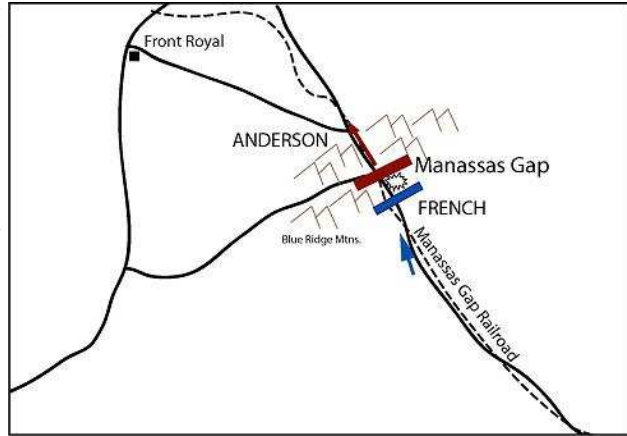
Battle of Manassas Gap July 23, 1863

Result:
Inconclusive

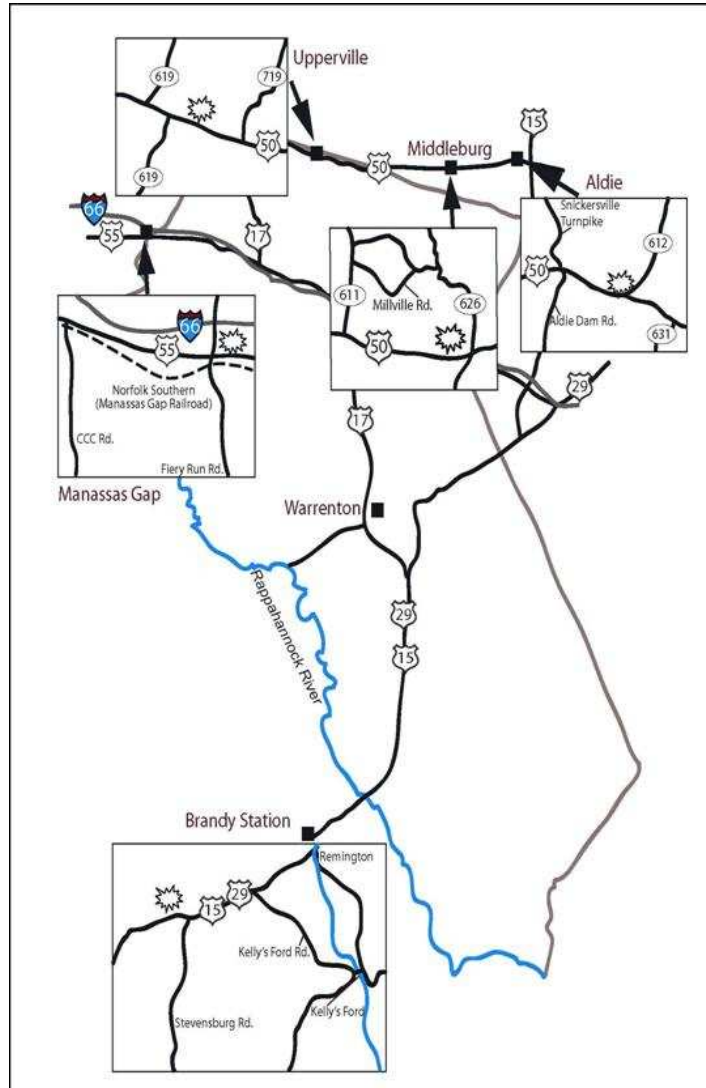
Troops Engaged:
~11,000 US
~7,000 CS

Casualties:
~126 US
~102 CS

Following defeat at Gettysburg, Lee's army retreated across the Potomac River with Stuart's cavalry shielding its eastern flank. Meade pursued, and on July 23, he ordered General William French's Third Corps to cut off the Confederates at Front Royal. To do so, French first had to pass through Manassas Gap, guarded by a portion of General Richard H. Anderson's Confederate division. Throughout the day, French pushed the Confederates through the gap, but by late afternoon, Confederate General Robert E. Rodes arrived with reinforcements to help defend against renewed Union assaults. At dusk, French abandoned his attacks, and during the night, the Confederates withdrew. Union forces awoke the next morning with a clear path to Front Royal, but by the time they arrived, Lee's army had slipped away. ■



Where to find these battlefields today



The Battlefields Today

Brandy Station

Most of this battle occurred in Culpeper County where important parcels of hallowed ground, such as St. James plain and Cunningham Farm, are being preserved by the Civil War Preservation Trust, Brandy Station Foundation, and other preservation organizations. Kelly's Ford, a Union crossing point from Fauquier to Culpeper County, is about 300 yards downstream from the modern-day bridge across the Rappahannock River. Beverley's Ford, another Union crossing spot, is located six miles upstream from Kelly's Ford.



Aldie, Middleburg, & Upperville

These three battles occurred along the Ashby Gap Turnpike, or modern Rte. 50. Many of the landmarks and structures from these battles are still standing and utilized today. A historic stone bridge in Aldie still spans the Little River on Rte. 50, and the Adam, Furr, and Bittersweet farms are also standing and occupied today.

You can also still visit the natural resources from the battles. Mount Defiance, Stuart's initial defensive position at Middleburg, is located just west of town. Goose Creek, much fought over during the Battle of Upperville, still runs nearby today. And Routes 50 and 17 will take you through Ashby's Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Manassas Gap

Manassas Gap is located just east of Linden and Exit 13 on I-66. Today, both I-66 and Rte. 55 John Marshall Highway run through Manassas Gap.



Become Involved in Your History!

Want to learn more about the Civil War or help save a battlefield? The following organizations in your area are committed to history and preservation:

Fauquier Historical Society

<http://www.fauquierhistory.com/>

Fauquier County Department of Community Development

<http://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/departments/commdev/>

Citizens for Fauquier County

<http://www.citizensforfauquier.org/>

Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

<http://www.cvbt.org/>

Civil War Preservation Trust

<http://www.civilwar.org/>

American Battlefield Protection Program

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/abpp/>

Brandy Station Foundation

<http://www.brandystationfoundation.com/index.html>

Fauquier County, Virginia

Located just 55 miles from Washington, D.C., and 95 miles from Richmond, Fauquier County's historic resources are just a short drive away and easily accessible.



This material is based upon work assisted by a grant from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior. Created by History Associates, Inc. for Fauquier County Community, in collaboration with the American Battlefields Protection Program, grant GA-2255-07-008.