

# Northern Virginia Campaign

August-September  
1862

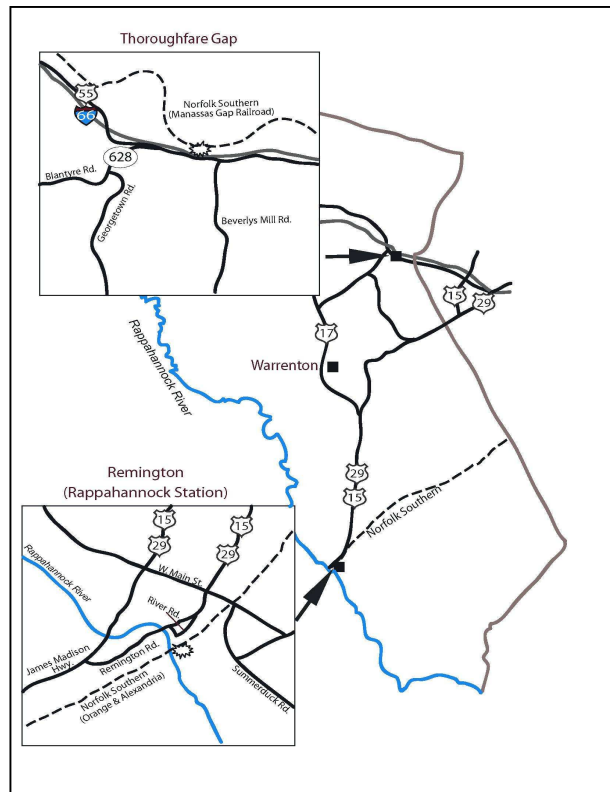
## Fauquier County in the Civil War

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.

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 became 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. ■

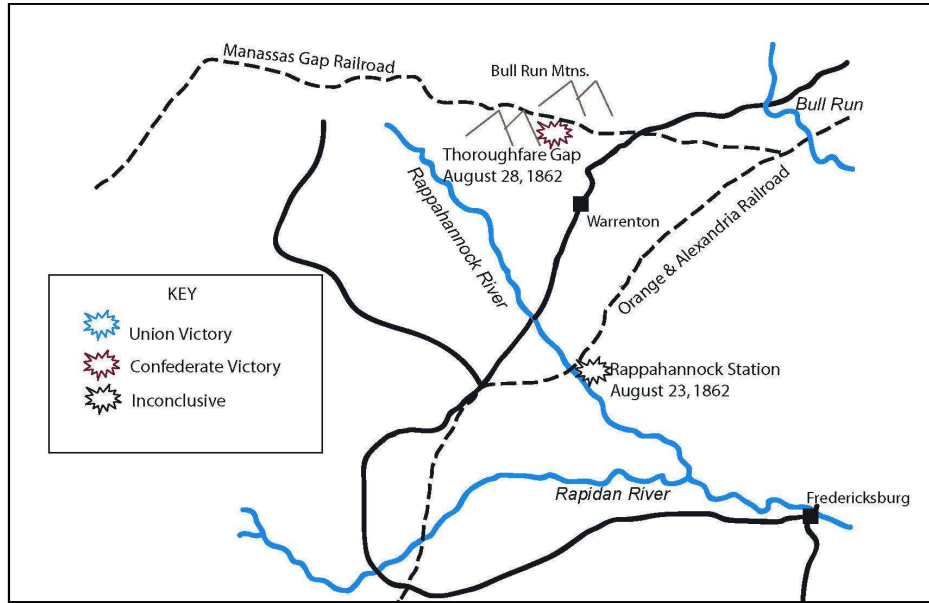


# Northern Virginia Campaign

## August-September 1862

Spring 1862: Following his strategic victory in the Peninsula Campaign, Confederate General Robert E. Lee worried that two armies, under Union General George McClellan and John Pope, would combine their forces for a major offensive against his own. Together, McClellan's troops, east of Richmond, Virginia, and Pope's forces, concentrated at Culpeper, Virginia, would pose a serious threat to Lee's army.

Seizing the initiative, Lee moved his army north to attack Pope before he could unite with McClellan. Before engaging portions of Pope's army along the Rappahannock River and in the Bull Run Mountains, Lee's advance troops, under General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, defeated a smaller Union force at Cedar Mountain on August 9. These relatively small but important actions pushed Pope's army further from McClellan's and allowed the Confederate generals



to converge on Pope near the old Manassas battlefield, where the armies had clashed in 1861.

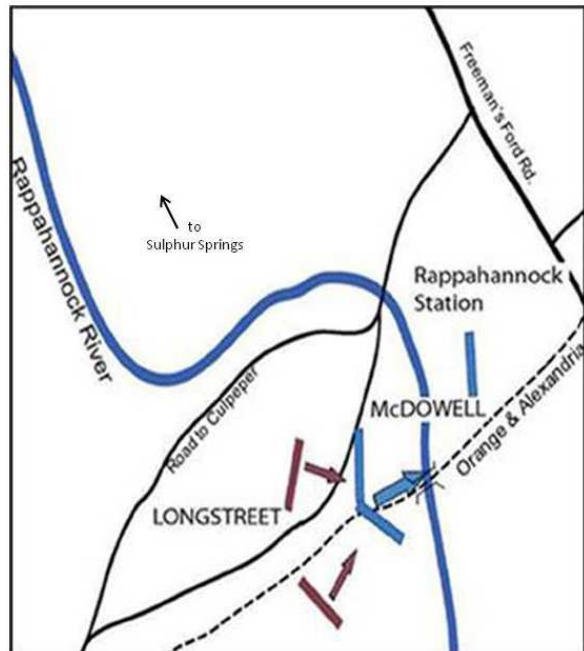
At the Second Battle of Manassas, August 28-30, Lee achieved an overwhelming victory which prompted Pope's hasty withdrawal towards Washington. Although a Confederate turning movement failed at the Battle of Chantilly on September 1, the door had been opened for Lee's first invasion of the North—an invasion that ended at the Battle of Antietam. ■

**Result:**  
Inconclusive  
**Troops Engaged:**  
~2,000 US  
~2,500 CS  
**Casualties:**  
~172 US  
~53 CS

### First Battle of Rappahannock Station August 23, 1862

On the morning of August 23, Pope learned that Jackson and his men were on the north bank of the Rappahannock River at Rappahannock Station, attempting to cross at Sulphur Springs. Heavy rains made the river impassible at this point and the Confederates remained isolated from the main body of their force.

Recognizing the opportunity, Pope planned to attack Jackson's troops at Sulphur Springs. He ordered McDowell's Corps, which was in position on the south side of the river at Rappahannock Station, to cross the river and prevent a Confederate withdrawal by destroying their route—the railroad bridge.



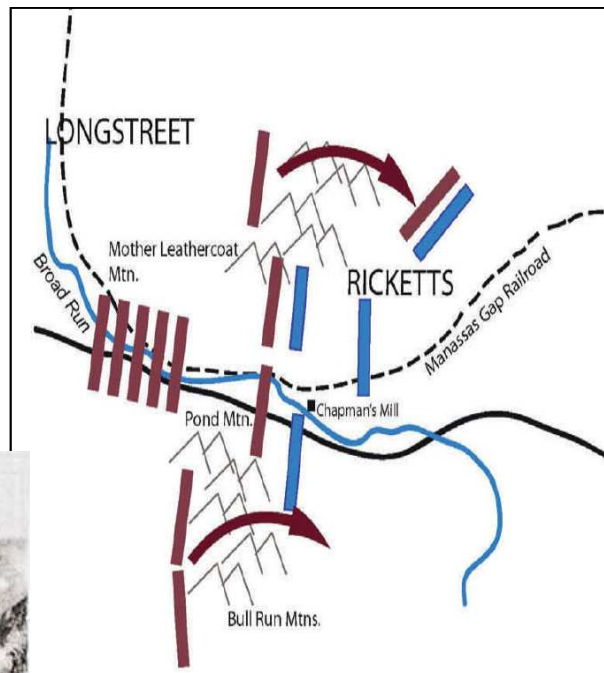
Before McDowell could act, however, Lee ordered General James Longstreet to push the Federals back to the north side of the river. Two hours of Confederate artillery bombardment failed to dislodge McDowell's men, so Longstreet called on his infantry. As Longstreet's men approached the base of the Federal position on a knoll, their opponents retreated down the opposite slope and over the railroad bridge. Once atop the knoll, Confederate soldiers took fire from Union troops, which had already safely crossed over to the north bank of the Rappahannock. Fire was so heavy that the Confederates were forced to fall back and seek cover. Likewise, at Sulphur Springs, pressure from an offensive launched by Pope forced Confederate engineers to construct a bridge across the Rappahannock so that Jackson's forces could retreat to the south side of the river. Thus, while the battle of Rappahannock Station resulted in little tangible gain for Confederate forces, the conflict did help set the stage for one of Lee's greatest victories. ■

## Thoroughfare Gap August 28, 1862

<p><b>Result:</b> Confederate Victory</p> <p><b>Troops Engaged:</b> ~5,000 US ~25,000 CS</p> <p><b>Casualties:</b> ~75 US ~25 CS</p>
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On August 26, after Lee divided his Confederate army, Jackson moved his forces through Thoroughfare Gap, a pass through the Bull Run Mountains, and into position near the old Manassas battlefield. Two days later, General James Longstreet was moving eastward to join Jackson, but found the Gap held by General James Ricketts' Union division. Longstreet's staff officer Moxley Sorrel described the terrain: "This is a mountain gorge, not long, but narrow, rocky, and precipitous. It was capable of stubborn defense. Its echoes were wonderful—a gun fired in its depths gave forth roars fit to bring down the skies."

Ricketts' men put up a fierce fight. Heavy fire erupted from sharpshooters defending the Gap from the six-and-one-half-story Chapman's Mill (now Chapman's/Beverly Mill), and one Federal regiment threatened to take position on Pond Mountain. To counter this threat, Longstreet ordered Colonel Henry Benning's men to climb Pond Mountain and flank Ricketts' left. He also ordered Colonel Evander Law's troops to



*The fight at Thoroughfare Gap on August 28, 1862. Illustration from the Library of Congress collection.*

cross Mother Leathercoat Mountain, to the north of the Gap, and flank the Union right. Together, these two advances ensured Ricketts' withdrawal and Longstreet's safe passage through Thoroughfare Gap.

The next day, Longstreet successfully united with Jackson, already engaged in the Second Battle of Manassas, and their combined forces achieved a signal victory against Pope's army. ■

## The Battlefields Today

### Rappahannock Station

Rappahannock Station (today's Remington) was the site of two separate battles, both involving the railroad and the Rappahannock River. The first of these engagements occurred over the Orange & Alexandria Railroad bridge. Although Union soldiers burned the bridge during the battle, stone piers from the bridge can still be seen on both banks of the river, and the railroad—now the Norfolk Southern—still runs through town today. ■

### Thoroughfare Gap

Nestled in the Bull Run Mountains between Mother Leathercoat Mountain and Pond Mountain, Thoroughfare Gap remains true to its name as water, road, and rail still pass through there today. The Manassas Gap Railroad (now Norfolk Southern) and Broad Run creek still inhabit the Gap, but the old road was replaced with Route 55 and I-66. Chapman's/Beverley Mill stands nearby, watching over the Gap much as it did during the battle. ■

*Destroyed tracks of the Orange & Alexandria Railroad between Bristoe Station and Rappahannock Station. Photograph by Timothy O'Sullivan. Library of Congress collection.*



## 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

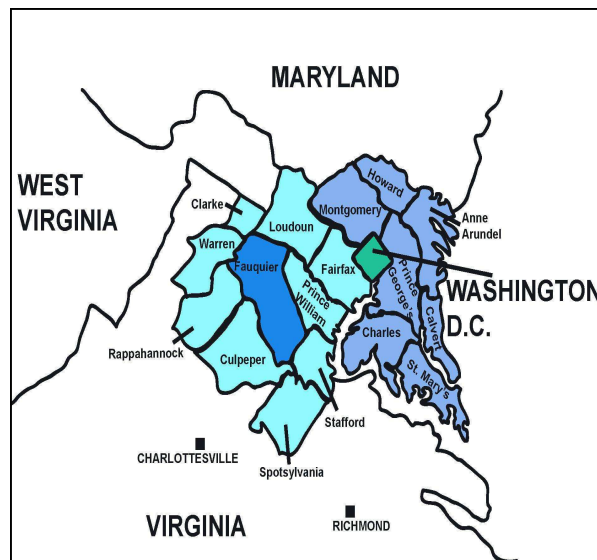
<http://www.civilwar.org/>

### American Battlefield Protection Program

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

## Fauquier County, Virginia

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



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