

Seven Days Campaign Timetable

April 1847 – As a Captain in Winfield Scott’s army in Mexico, Robert E. Lee, a West Point classmate of Jefferson Davis, gains much fame when he scouts and develops attack plans at several battles, for instance showing the way to use a rough trail around El Telegrafo Hill and into the Mexican rear, leading to victory in the battle of Chapultepec. General Scott calls Lee’s reconnaissance “indefatigable and daring.”

Saturday, July 27 1861 – Following the debacle at 1st Bull Run the Federals turn the command of the Army of the Potomac over to George McClellan, 34, replacing McDowell who remains in command of a division. Although he did not actually participate in any of the battles, McClellan is perceived as the liberator of western Virginia.

Thursday, October 31, 1861 – Lincoln and his cabinet accept the resignation of General Scott as General-in-Chief and appoint 34 year-old George McClellan to take Scott’s place as Commander of all Union armies.

Wednesday, November 13, 1861 – Lincoln calls on McClellan at his home, wanting to speak with the newly installed Union Army commander. McClellan snubs Lincoln by retiring without acknowledging the President.

Sunday, December 1, 1861 – Lincoln, being somewhat concerned that little action has taken place, sends a communication to McClellan about the army’s movement. Lincoln asks, “How *long* would to require to actually get it in action?”

Monday, December 2, 1861 – The 37th Congress develops criticism of Lincoln’s three-fold strategy which is: 1) re-accession of Tennessee; 2) taking control of the Mississippi River; and 3) focusing on the eastern theater, especially the area between Washington and Richmond.

Monday, January 27, 1862 – After months of delay and frustration, Lincoln issues *General War Order Number One*: “that the 22nd February 1862 be the day for a general movement of the Land and Naval forces of the United States against the insurgent forces.”

Friday, January 31, 1862 -- To supplement his earlier general order, Lincoln issues *Special War Order Number One*: pressing the Army of the Potomac to take possession of “a point upon the railroad south westward of what is known as Manassas Junction.”

Saturday, March 8, 1862 – Lincoln and McClellan discuss plans for the Army of the Potomac with other military advisors concurring with McClellan’s desire to enter Virginia by way of the peninsula southeast of Richmond. Lincoln also issues *General War Order Number Two* that provides for certain Union troops to be positioned for the defense of Washington, in effect drawing some troops from McClellan’s offensive.

The CSA ironclad *Merrimack* battles with the Union ironclad *Monitor* at Hampton Roads, Virginia, in the war’s first major naval battle.

Tuesday, March 11, 1862 – Lincoln removes McClellan as General-in-Chief of the Union army but leaves him in command of the Army of the Potomac. Army commanders, including McClellan, are placed under Stanton’s direction.

March 24, 1862 – In preparation for the McClellan’s Peninsula Campaign, Union troops begin disembarking at Fort Monroe on the north shore of the James River where it flows into the Chesapeake Bay.

April 3, 1862 – Lincoln, discovering that McClellan has left fewer than 20,000 men for the defense of Washington, orders the retention of an additional corps to assure the safety of the capital, still leaving McClellan nearly 112,000 men for his siege of Richmond.

April 6-7, 1862 – The Battle of Shiloh with 13,047 casualties for the prevailing Union forces under Grant’s command.

April 25-May 1, 1862 – David Farragut, with 17 Union ships under his command, takes New Orleans, a key port. Ben Butler is installed as military governor of New Orleans.

May 5, 1862 – Lincoln, along with Stanton and Chase, travel by ship to Fort Monroe, where they will observe the Federal advance into Virginia.

May 9, 1862 – In his meeting with McClellan, Lincoln admonishes McClellan for his difficulties in maintaining cooperation between himself and his corps commanders.

May 11, 1862 – The Confederates are forced to scuttle the *Merrimack*, opening the James River to Union gunships.

May 16, 1862 – In order to logistically support his advance upon Richmond, McClellan establishes a major supply base on the Pamunkey River at White House. (One of Lee's sons owns this property.)

May 23, 1862 – Lincoln issues orders to McDowell in Fredericksburg, telling the general to direct 20,000 troops into the Shenandoah area in order to prevent CSA from moving their forces any closer to Banks' troops of the Army of the Potomac. The strategic objective of Jackson's Shenandoah Valley campaign is to keep McDowell and other Federal forces from joining McClellan.

May 24 1862 – Lincoln issues orders to Fremont to advance against Jackson's forces in the Shenandoah Valley. Because of these orders as well as the orders to McDowell, Lincoln also tells McClellan that an increase in McClellan's strength is impossible.

Moving cautiously and deliberately, McClellan's army moves up the Peninsula to within seven miles of its objective, Richmond.

May 25, 1862 – Lincoln presses McClellan to “either attack Richmond or give up the job and come to the defense of Washington.”

May 31-June 1, 1862 -- At Seven Pines, Confederate forces, led by Joe Johnston, launch a well-conceived attack upon McClellan's army, which he has divided into two parts. However uncoordinated assaults, coupled with the arrival of Union reinforcements, result in a stalemate. Both sides suffer heavy losses including the wounding of Johnston.

June 2, 1862 – In relief of Johnston, R. E. Lee assumes command of Confederate troops and renames his new command the Army of Northern Virginia. However, Lee does not think to order topographic surveys or make accurate maps of Henrico County which is a treacherous place to maneuver. The few crude available maps are useless.

June 9, 1862 – Jackson's Shenandoah campaign is successfully concluded at Port Republic.

Thursday, June 12, 1862 – Mechanicsville – After Stuart rides around McClellan's rear, Lee decides (1) to drive Union forces away from Richmond area

and (2) to capture the Union supply base at White House. McClellan decides to start to withdraw thereby abandoning his Peninsula campaign. Although a tactical defeat for the Confederates, it is a strategic victory since it dislodges McClellan's siege of Richmond.

June 16, 1862 – Lee orders Jackson to report to Lee in Richmond.

Saturday, June 21, 1862 – In the evening, Jackson arrives by train at Frederick Hall, about 50 miles north of Richmond.

Monday, June 23, 1862 -- In order to reinforce Lee, Stonewall Jackson begins transporting his 18,500 troops from the Shenandoah Valley, promising to arrive by June 26. In the early morning light Jackson begins a 52 mile horseback ride to Lee's headquarters, arriving at 3:00 pm. Lee meets for the first time with his generals, Longstreet, Jackson, D.H. Hill (Jackson's brother-in-law), and A.P. Hill. Lee outlines a risky, complex plan that requires close liaison among the general and whose timing is dependent upon Jackson's arrival to an area that was new to him. After outlining his plan Lee leaves the room depending upon his generals to work out the details; Jackson assures the other generals that he will be on the battlefield ready to attack by the night of the 25th.

Tuesday, June 24, 1862 –In a driving rain Jackson rides 40 miles back to his army north of Richmond finding it strung out and stationary. Jackson himself seems in somewhat of a torpor, and fails to invoke any sense of urgency to converge with the rest of Lee's army as promised by sunset of the 25th. During a driving rainstorm, Jackson's army continues its march toward Lee but by midnight is still 25 miles from the designated starting point.

McClellan advises one of his corps commanders that his continued advance would "be chiefly an Artillery and Engineering affair."

-- Day One --

Wednesday, June 25, 1862 – Oak Grove --The first combat – essentially a large skirmish -- of the Seven Days. These battles will engage more men and produce more casualties than any previous campaign in American military history.

By nightfall Jackson's army has reached Ashland after a march of 20 miles but still six miles from the designated starting point. Instead of pushing his men to make the extra effort, Jackson calls a halt, and his tired men stop to eat and sleep.

McClellan – who has moved all but Porter's Corps, comprised of 26,000 men, south of the Chickahominy River -- orders a probing attack but Confederates conduct operations calculated to confuse Federals into assuming a larger Confederate force than it actually is. Despite relatively ineffective Rebel assaults, McClellan becomes more concerned about his army's safety.

Casualties: 626 USA & 441 CSA

■ Day Two –

Thursday, June 26, 1862 --- Mechanicsville/Beaver Creek Dam -- Lee plans to take advantage of Porter's isolation north of the Chickahominy, but despite leaving at 2:30 that morning Jackson is arriving late, approximately six hours behind his schedule, and is out of contact with the other commanders. Rather than wait, Lee allows the impulsive A.P. Hill to launch two frontal assaults against Porter, whose corps is the only Union corps still north of the Chickahominy River. With Jackson still not on the battlefield Lee sends word to A. P. Hill not to advance but to hold the ground taken. However Hill apparently believing he still had discretion of attacking on his left sends two brigades into a gallant but suicidal attack against Porter's right entrenched behind Beaver Dam Creek.

Hill's second assault results in the Rebels suffering one of the most terrible and useless slaughters in the Civil War. Lee had erroneously presumed Porter was guarding the supply base at White House but Porter had turned his defensive line ninety degrees to defend the main Union army south of the Chickahominy (which runs in a southwesterly direction.) Furthermore, Lee had made no arrangements for Jackson to communicate with the rest of Lee's army south of the Chickahominy, although Stuart was available for this job. Although only about three miles away when he arrives at 5:00 pm, Jackson opts to go into bivouac to await further orders. Lee had intended to launch 50,000 men against Porter's 25,000 but is able to engage only 14,000.

Although the battle involved 160,000 men, Jackson's army seemed to be alone on the fringe of the battlefield. That evening, upon hearing of Jackson's arrival, McClellan orders a withdrawal toward Harrison Landing on the James River; accordingly Porter retreats to a new position during the night.

Casualties 361 USA & >1,365 CSA

■ Day Three --

Friday, June 27, 1862 -- Gaine's Mill -- (Part of this battlefield overlaps Cold Harbor, scene of a bloody battle two year later.) McClellan believes his army is doomed and loses all initiative.

After his failure to catch and destroy Porter's isolated corps at Mechanicsville, Lee presses on toward Gaines Mill where the Union has taken strong defensive positions behind Boatswain's Swamp, a marshy creek. Lee amasses 57,000 soldiers, the largest Rebel concentration of the Seven Days, for the battle of Gaine's Mill, aka First Cold Harbor. Lee – not knowing where Porter is located, (Lee assumes Porter had moved back to Powwhite Creek facing west) and knowing nothing of the terrain or of Boatswain's Creek, -- where Porter actually was, facing north -- and failing to use signal officers or cavalry to reconnoiter, divides his army with D.H. Hill flanking to the left while Jackson is to get round and behind Porter's right flank. Longstreet advances on the right. Jackson's arrival is again delayed because Jackson does not like the route taken by the guide and orders a countermarch of four miles. At end of the day, pursuant to Lee's request Hood's brigade breaks through a gap in the Union lines in one of the most famous charges of the war forcing Porter to withdraw before darkness causes the fighting to cease but Rebels lose as many men in six hours as they had in two days at Shiloh. Had Lee reconnoitered, he would have realized Jackson could have easily placed his force to the rear of the Army of the Potomac. Nevertheless Gaines Mill is the first major victory in Lee's celebrated career, ironically on the same field as his last major victory two years later at the battle of Cold Harbor.

This battle is the week's largest and most costly engagement. Following the war A. P. Hill will muse that while the Rebels were grand, it was "the kind of grandeur which the South could not afford." By the end of the fighting and change of positions, the entire Union army is now south of the Chickahominy while the Confederates are all north of the river.

Notwithstanding the Confederate victory the Union was positioned to have a virtually clear path into Richmond defended by the single Confederate division south of the river. Some of McClellan's subordinate commanders urge an attack but McClellan is convinced the Confederates still outnumbered him. Union loses several supplies in its retreat. McClellan is whipped mentally and sends a telegram blaming the Administration for not sending enough troops.

Casualties: 6,837 USA (Most of whom were from Porter's Corps.) & 8,751 CSA

-- Day Four --

Saturday, June 28, 1862 – Garnett's and Golding's Farms — Minor action of the campaign. At White House Landing, Northern troops destroy supplies, equipment, and buildings as they complete their evacuation of the area before supply wagons roll southward in long convoys toward Harrison's Landing, a river plantation fifteen miles south on the James River. Quaker Road is the only one

good road leading to the Landing across the barrier of White Oak Swamp, three miles south of the Chickahominy.

Upon learning their army is retreating for the James River, Union rank-and-file react angrily with dismay and disbelief, coming to the realization that their efforts and the bloodshed of their comrades were in vain. Many soldiers and junior as well as senior officers cannot concede any defeat of their army but rather believe McClellan has simply let them down.

Lee has lost contact with the Federals but fails to dispatch his cavalry to reconnoiter, and since he does not know of McClellan's movements, Lee does not order any pursuit.

Casualties: 368 USA & 461 CSA

-- Day Five --

Sunday, June 29, 1862 – Savage's Station and Allen's Farm – Having finally discerned which direction McClellan is headed, Lee, hoping to hit Union forces in the flank as they retreat, orders a complicated plan doomed to fail by the nature of the ground and the generals' ignorance of the terrain, their inability to maintain communications, and an impossible timetable. As could be expected, such pursuit is bungled from the beginning. Jackson is to rebuild the Grapevine Bridge, located south of New Cold Harbor, and then to advance between the Chickahominy and White Oak Swamp. However, poor staff work, faulty maps, geographical obstacles, timid division commanders, stout Union resistance, particularly by Sumner's rear guard, and Jackson's slowness frustrate Lee's efforts. Magruder allows himself to be stopped by a single Union Brigade at Savage Station, three miles east of Seven Pines. At the end of the day, Lee simply orders that each of his divisions march down on five specified roads, hopefully to converge on the retreating Federal columns.

As the Union rearguard withdraws during the night, they leave large quantities of supplies and equipment as well as 2,500 men in a field hospital.

Casualties: 1,590 USA & 626 CSA

-- Day Six --

Monday, June 30, 1862 – White Oak Swamp/ Frayser's Farm/ Glendale – After Savage's Station, in a heavy rain while its supply train continues its move toward Harrison Landing, the tail of the Union army has crossed White Oak Bridge, which it destroys.

Instead of attacking Malvern Hill, which is lightly defended, Lee opts to try to cut off Union troops by attacking the Union rear around Glendale and White Oak Bridge pin a good defensive position, complete with massive and well protected artillery. Poor staff work, together with timid efforts by some division commanders, again prevents Lee's seven divisions from making a coordinated effort of stopping McClellan's movement. Although late in the day Longstreet and A. P. Hill send frontal assaults (characterized by Thomas B. Buell as a massive free-for-all) near Frayser's Farm, nowhere -- notwithstanding heavy casualties -- do the Rebels gain more than temporary advantage. Jackson, who has been ordered to cross a bridge over White Oak Swamp and attack the enemy from the rear, continues to act as though he is in a trance, impedes any chance of a Rebel win. One historian calls Jackson's failure "complete, disastrous, and unredeemable." By nightfall, the Federals still hold Quaker Road leading to Harrison's Landing.

Once again McClellan rides away after conferring with three of his corps commanders. Although Little Mac leaves the field without designating any second in command, by simple fortuitous circumstance the defenses to Glendale and Frayser's Farm included two of the outstanding divisions in the Army of the Potomac.

By darkness the Federals still hold their position but overnight withdraw to Malvern Hill. C.S.A. BGen. E. Porter Alexander, one of the most objective historians of the Civil War, later says seldom when "we were within reach of military successes so great that we might have hoped to end the war with our independence. ... The first was at Bull Run [in] July 1861 ... This [second] chance of June 30th [at Glendale] impresses me as the best of them all." Lee blames the lack of co-operation among his subordinate commands. In his report Lee's rebuke states, "Could the other commands have co-operated in the action the result would have proved most disastrous to the enemy." But Lee's own performance as commander cannot escape a reasonable, legitimate critique.

Casualties: 2,853 USA & 3,615 CSA

-- Day Seven --

Tuesday, July 1, 1862 -- Malvern Hill – McClellan is holed up on ship, having given up. Union forces have perhaps the best defensive position of the war with very favorable artillery positions for Hunt's 250 guns, many of which are hub-to-hub, protected by 80,000 infantry.

Again Lee has but a slight understanding of conditions on Malvern Hill, and does not reconnoiter, and although Lee had been warned by one of D. H. Hill's staff member from the area that Malvern Hill would be almost impregnable if

McClellan chose to defend it, Lee nevertheless decides to attack. A month earlier Lee, apparently not recognizing the advancements made by artillery since the beginning of the war, had advised that he had all the artillery he needed and that light mobile batteries be transferred to “some other branch of the service.” Jackson is not yet on the scene and Lee has little control over his lieutenants. Deployment of Rebels’ frontal assaults – launched in a piecemeal manner -- is considered one of Lee’s worst mistakes of the war; among other things, Lee senses McClellan’s unnerved state but, perceiving many apparent signs of demoralization, mistakenly projects it upon the men in the ranks as well. Confederate artillery is completely dominated by Hunt’s well-aimed bombardments. Perhaps this is the only time during the war when artillery fire causes more enemy casualties than rifle fire does. D. H. Hill will later say of the suicidal assaults, “It was not war –It was murder.”

Had Lee realized earlier that Harrison Landing was McClellan’s objective, Lee would have had several other options. (1) Since the James narrows upstream there are ideal locations on the south bank for Rebel batteries to sink Union transports. (2) Instead of a frontal assault on Malvern Hill, Lee could have headed with the bulk of his army directly for Harrison’s Landing, on McClellan’s rear.(3) As recommended by Longstreet, Lee could have sent artillery to Evelynton Heights which rises about Harrison’s Landing, and dominates everything thereabout.

Nevertheless, Union forces continue their withdrawal to Harrison’s Landing where they remain a threat to Richmond, only 14 miles to the north.

Casualties: 3,214 USA & 5,355 CSA

Saturday, July 2, 1862 -- Harrison’s Landing – The last of McClellan’s demoralized army arrives at the James River. McClellan’s inability to execute on the battlefield has caused him to fail to win either a political victory with the capture of Richmond or a military victory by destroying the Confederate army.

On the other hand, Lee’s campaign looks like deliverance from certain destruction but the South’s strategic position actually declined. McClellan is still within striking distance of Richmond while the Army of Northern Virgin has lost one-fourth of its entire strength, 20,000, twice the number suffered by Union forces.

The thirty thousand casualties of this campaign equal the number of casualties in the Western campaign in the first half of 1862, including Shiloh.

July 7, 1862 -- Lincoln visits McClellan at Harrison’s Landing. McClellan blames Lincoln for his failure to send more reinforcements and tries to persuade Lincoln to take a more conservative approach to the war, urging that the war “should not

be at all a war upon population, but against armed forces and political organizations.”

August 3, 1862 – Recently appointed General-in-Chief Henry Halleck orders McClellan to relocate the Army of the Potomac to better provide for the defense of Washington.