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GUIDE TO VIRGINIA'S CIVIL WAR

BATTLEFIELDS & SITES

Manassas (Bull Run) at 150: *A Field Guide to the First Big Battle*



Visitors walk past the Stonewall Jackson monument on the Manassas battlefield.

Stories by
Don Pierce and Rob Orrison

It was supposed to be the battle to end it all.

On July 16, 1861, the world watched as a 35,000-man Federal army headed out of Washington DC, beginning a 20-mile march toward 22,000 Confederates concentrated behind a wandering creek called Bull Run.

Conventional wisdom had it that this one big battle would settle the question that had turned into war at Fort Sumter four months earlier. Since then, certainly, shots had been fired and blood shed. But most of it seemed like lightning from a distant storm.

Now the storm had come. On a hot July 21, these two novice armies tangled on rolling hills

near a railroad junction important to both sides.

What happened that day — a decisive Confederate victory — changed lots of things, including people's idea that this was going to be a quick, sanitary war. This first big battle at Bull Run, or Manassas, meant that the war was headed for a dark shore with an outcome and duration no one could predict.

Now, 150 years after the battle, international attention returns to this Northern Virginia battlefield. A four-day schedule of commemorative events featuring lectures, tours and a big reenactment, is planned (see story this page).

If you intend to visit during that July week or some other time this year, you might want

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Events July 21-24 commemorate First Manassas anniversary

A four-day series of events, including National Park battlefield activities and a major reenactment, highlight the Manassas area's commemoration of the First Battle of Manassas (Bull Run).

The Henry Hill section of the Manassas National Battlefield Park opens to the public at noon Thursday, July 21 (the actual battle anniversary), following a ticketed morning ceremony. Plans call for living history, long and short tours, and other special programs at the park that day. More special park programs continue at the park through Sunday, July 24. See www.nps.gov/mana for a complete schedule.



Colorful uniforms will be in evidence during the Manassas reenactment.

A big reenactment is scheduled near (but not on) the National Park July 23-24. The number of spectator tickets has been limited. For reenactment and package ticket information, see www.manassasbullrun.com.

Other area events continue through July 24 including a 150th-anniversary exhibition at the Manassas Museum; a recreation of the 1911 Peace Jubilee; a Civil War-era baseball game; and wall-to-wall, area-wide living history presentations, special tours, musical performances and much more. For a complete, detailed schedule, see www.manassasbullrun.com.

Map of Virginia, pages 20-21

First Manassas: A Field Guide, cont'd from page 1

to stick around awhile to see some of the dozen or so sites that fill out the story of the big battle.

Here's a survey of sites (all with Civil War Trails signs or more) that contribute to the story of the first big battle of the war. Find an interactive map to all these places on CivilWarTraveler.com/150/manassas.html.

Manassas National Battlefield Park

This National Park actually preserves and interprets two battlefields: The landscape shared by the July 21, 1861, battle and a much bloodier one fought in late August 1862.

Important parts of the First Battle include Henry Hill, the hottest part of the battlefield, where charges and countercharges decided the day and where Confederate Gen. Thomas Jonathan Jackson became "Stonewall"; the Stone Bridge over Bull Run, over which the first shots of the battle were fired and a diversionary Union attack was made; and Chinn Ridge where fresh Confederates forced a Federal retreat. The park visitor center, located on Henry Hill just north of I-66 on Route 234, offers exhibits, audio-visual displays and an orientation film. Admission is \$3/person, good for three days. Find more on the battlefield at www.nps.gov/mana. For a free podcast tour of Henry Hill narrated by park ranger Greg Wolf, see www.CivilWarTraveler.com/audio.

Signal Hill

This is the spot where Confederate Capt. E.P. Alexander used flags to warn Col. N.G. "Shanks" Evans that Union troops were advancing on his flank. It is believed to be the first battlefield telecommunication. A monument placed by the Army Signal Corps is here along with a Trails sign. Parking area located



Wood fence at Henry House site on the Manassas battlefield

approximately 9200 Signal View Drive across from Signal Bay Waterpark.

Piedmont Station

Confederate reinforcements from the Shenandoah Valley — including Jackson's men — boarded trains here en route to Manassas Junction in what is probably the first use of a railroad to move troops to imminent battle. These soldiers made the difference in the July 21 battle. Trails sign describes the event. Located just north of I-66 on US 17.

Old Stone Church and Centreville

Union troops marched past this church on their way to the battlefield in July 1861, and they passed by here again in disorganized retreat. The church was used as a hospital. Civil War Trails sign on the spot at 13941 Braddock Road in Centreville with other historical markers close by.

Blackburn's Ford

Here Union soldiers got a taste of what was to come. Well-placed Confederates here stopped a Union probe aimed at the railroads. Trails sign located at the ford, in Bull Run Regional Park, on the west side of Route 28. Watch for the Trails sign.

McLean House site

The unfortunate Wilmer McLean owned a house near Blackburn's Ford. The home was damaged during the July 18 battle and occupation, and later skirmishing trashed the property. McLean eventually moved his family to a spot well away from the fighting — Appomattox Court House. Lee surrendered to Grant in McLean's house on April 9, 1865, ending the war in Virginia. Trails sign located at Route 28 and Yorkshire Lane.

Ben Lomond Historic Site

Built in the early 1830s, this manor house has been transformed into the field hospital it became after the 1861 battle. Exhibits highlight the terrible aftermath of the battle and the state of Civil War medicine at the time. Another highlight of the site is the historic road trace Gen. Thomas Jonathan Jackson (soon to be "Stonewall") and his troops used to get to the battlefield. Located at 10321 Sudley Manor Drive. Open for tours

Thursday–Monday 11 am–4 pm. \$5/person. 703-367-7872 or www.pwcgov.org/benlmond. Civil War Trails and other interpretive signs on site.

Liberia

This large brick home, built in 1825, was Confederate Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard's headquarters and probably was a hospital following the battle. Now undergoing restoration. Call the Manassas Museum, 703-368-1873, about scheduled tours and events on the property. Trails marker at Portner and Breedon avenues. Another marker on Mathis Avenue between Breedon and Liberia.

Conner House

Confederate commander Joseph Johnston used this house as headquarters following the 1861 battle. Civil War Trails sign at site on Conner Road near Euclid Avenue.

Mayfield Fort

Built in May and June 1861, this was one of 12 forts used by Confederates to protect the railroad lines at Manassas Junction. An interpreted walking tour takes visitors through the fort. Located at 8401 Quarry Road. Open daylight hours. More info: 703-368-1873.

Manassas Museum / Downtown Manassas Walking tour

The Manassas Museum (9101 Prince William St.) is the starting point for interpreted walking and short driving tours in the downtown area.

The tours reveal several stories related to the 1861 battle including a stop at the historic junction of the Manassas Gap and Orange and Alexandria railroads, a prize the Confederates wanted to protect and the Union wanted to capture. The museum itself offers tour information and Civil War exhibits. Open daily Memorial Day–Labor Day. Cost is \$5/adult. More at www.manassasmuseum.org.

For a map and much more information about all the Civil War sites in the area, download a comprehensive map from CivilWarTraveler.com/maps (Prince William County).

Rob Orrison is the Historic Site Manager for Prince William County, Virginia.

More 150th Anniversaries Summer and Fall 2011

Fairfax

A special commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the June 1, 1861, skirmish at Fairfax Court House is scheduled at the historic courthouse 6–9 pm June 1. Capt. John Quincy Moore was shot in this action, the first Confederate officer killed in battle. Living history, dramatic presentations and more are scheduled.

A reenactment of the event is set for 1 pm June 4 at Main and West streets in Old Town Fairfax. Reception follows at Historic Blenheim.

A new exhibit, "Opening Volleys of the American Civil War: Fairfax in 1861" opens June 1 at the Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center and continues through the year. All is free. For details, call 703-591-0560.

Big Bethel

The observation of the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Big Bethel is scheduled for June 11 on part of the historic battlefield in Hampton.

Living history, interpretive programs and monument unveilings commemorating the

June 10, 1861, battle are scheduled to begin at 10 am. Big Bethel Park is located on Semple Farm Road at Big Bethel Road, Hampton.

Vienna

A reenactment of the July 17, 1861, skirmish at Vienna is scheduled for 6 pm June 18 near the Community Center in Vienna. It follows a day filled with living history demonstrations. A Friday evening (June 17) musical program also is set for the Vienna Town Green. More info: 703-255-6356.

Ball's Bluff

A reenactment and living history weekend Oct. 22–23 will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Ball's Bluff near Leesburg. Soldiers are scheduled to camp at nearby Morven Park, then march to the battlefield (across Route 15) at noon Saturday for a 2:30 pm reenactment of the battle at the Northern Virginia Regional Park on the original battlefield. Saturday evening programs include an illumination on the battlefield, music and more at Morven Park. For ticket and schedule information, see www.150thballsbluff.com.

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BATTLEFIELDS & SITES

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