

This Day in History... August 28, 1862

2nd Battle of Bull of Run

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Shortly after the war began, impatient Northerners pushed President Lincoln to attack the Confederate capital in Richmond, Virginia.

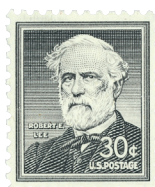
On July 16, 1861, Brigadier General Irvin McDowell gathered 35,000 untrained Union soldiers and marched toward Richmond. The men traveled two days through sweltering heat before reaching Centreville, Virginia, where they rested and regrouped.

In nearby Manassas Junction, an equally inexperienced Confederate army of 34,000 men waited, guarding the vital supply line to Richmond. On July 21, 1861, the two armies met near Bull Run River in the first major land battle of the Civil War. Congressional families gathered to picnic nearby.

A Confederate brigade commanded by Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson held its ground at the Battle of Bull Run. The Union army suffered heavy casualties and was forced to retreat.

By the following summer, Union Major General George B. McClellan had failed in his Peninsular Campaign. President Lincoln then selected John Pope, who'd been successful in the Western Theater, to take command of the new Army of Virginia.

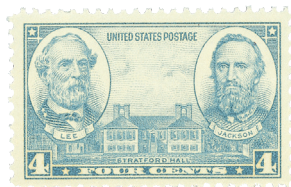
Pope was tasked with protecting Washington and the Shenandoah Valley as well as drawing Confederate forces away from McClellan, who was moving toward Gordonsville. However, Robert E. Lee didn't see McClellan as a threat on Richmond, and moved his best man, Stonewall Jackson, to block Pope and protect the Virginia Central Railroad.



This stamp image was based on two separate photos of Lee.

Throughout August, forces clashed in Virginia. Heavy rains late in the month made Lee unable to send men across the Rappahannock River. In the meantime, the Union forces had received reinforcements. Since the Union forces would now outnumber his own, Lee developed a new plan. He would send Jackson and J.E.B. Stuart to cut Pope's line of communication at the Orange and Alexandria Railroad and force him into a retreat, which would make him easier to defeat.

Jackson set out on August 25, passed around Pope's right flank, and attacked the railroad and Union supply depot at Manassas Junction, Virginia, on August 27, 1862. He then moved his men to a strong defensive position surrounded by woods with a clear view of the Warrenton Turnpike.



Stamp pictures Lee, Jackson, and Strafford Hall (Lee's birthplace).

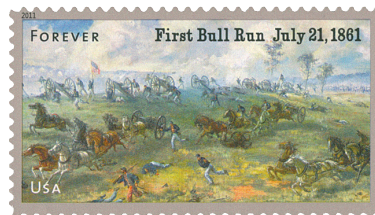
The next day, August 28, Union troops marched east along the road to meet up with Pope's Army of Virginia in Centerville. At about 6:30 p.m., the Confederates began firing on the column of Union soldiers. Fierce fighting continued with both sides "within...fifty yards of each other pouring musketry into each other as fast as men could load and shoot," according to Major Dawes with the Union's 6th Wisconsin. Darkness silenced the guns and the heavy cost of the fight was realized – one in every three men had been shot.

Confederate reinforcements under General James Longstreet began arriving overnight. Though Pope was told of Longstreet's arrival, he believed the enemy was in retreat and attacked the next day. Once again, the fighting ended when the sun went down, and before the outcome of the

battle had been determined.

On August 31, the Union Army again attacked the larger Confederate Army. The Northern troops were pushed back to Henry House Hill. A few divisions held the strong defensive line long enough for Pope to lead his Army in an orderly retreat to Centreville.

Although it was fought on the same ground as the 1861 conflict, the Second Battle of Bull Run was much larger in scale and casualties. Each side suffered casualties of more than 8,000 men in the three-day battle. Pope was removed from command of the Army of Virginia. Though the battle was a victory for Lee, he had not reached his goal of destroying Pope's Army. In spite of this, the Confederate win allowed their army to move closer to the Union capital.



Stamp picturing the 1st Battle of Bull Run.



This stamp image was in part based on an 1862 photograph of Jackson.



The end of this battle led to the Maryland Campaign, which included the Battle of Antietam.

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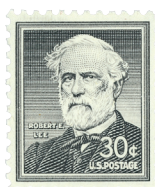
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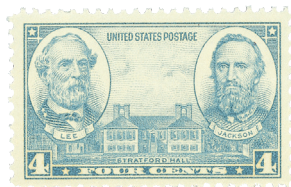
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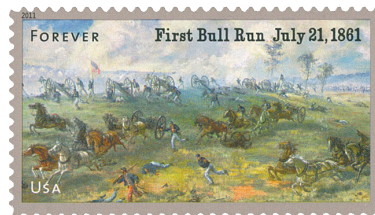
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