

## **Confederates Threaten Washington, D.C.**

**<http://civilwar150.longwood.edu>**

During this week Maryland was a particular area of interest for the Confederates with their ultimate goal of capturing Washington, D.C. There were small fights at Sir John's Run and Antietam along with the capture of Hagerstown. Meanwhile the Union was working on reinforcements to protect their capital. The Sixth Corps from the Army of the Potomac rushed to reinforce those troops that were already defending Washington in preparation for Early's attack. More fighting ensued at several Maryland locations including Middletown, Brownsville, and Hager's.

By July 9<sup>th</sup>, Confederates were planning to march into Washington from Frederick, Maryland; the only thing standing between them and Washington were Union forces. The Army of the Potomac's Sixth Corps had taken position by the Monocacy River to protect the B&O railroad junction from the Confederates. Early gave orders for his troops to continue attacking and eventually managed to make a break in the Union line causing the Federals to retreat. Confederate forces continued to move towards Washington but Washington was well protected with approximately 10,000 troops with reinforcements of an expected 15,000 from the Army of the Potomac. A few days later Early had taken up a position near Fort Stevens and ordered his men to attack. The men followed order but were weakened by physical fatigue from the hot temperatures. Ultimately, nothing became of this attack other than a small fight and a delay in the Confederate's plan to capture Washington.

After the battle, Early's army continued to face conflicts in Maryland at Rockville and Gunpowder Bridge. He also began to interrogate citizens to receive information on where the

Union forces were located in the Union capital. Confederates had success in capturing supply trains during fighting in Frederick, Maryland, but even this small success could not persuade Early to keep fighting against the Union when they were bound to receive reinforcements. Once Early heard of the Union's reinforcements, he decided his army could not prevail in a battle against the Federal forces. The very next day President Lincoln visited Fort Stevens and with that Early commanded his troops to retreat back into Virginia.

During the battle, Lincoln had visited Fort Stevens twice while also contemplating his plans for reconstruction. President Lincoln proclaimed his backing of a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery, but declared that he was not prepared to support the idea that Congress had the authority to eradicate the institution. The proclamation was a statement of his pocket veto July 4 of the Wade-Davis reconstruction bill. He said he could not be inflexible on any one plan of reconstruction or to set aside the new Federal governments in Arkansas and Louisiana, but if people of a state wished to choose the system of restoration in the bill, that would be proper.