

## **Aftermath of Bull Run, McClellan Takes Command**

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As a result of the July 21, 1861 defeat at Bull Run, the Lincoln administration had lost confidence in the abilities of Irvin McDowell. With the defeated and demoralized Union army hunkered down in the defenses of Washington, President Lincoln turned to an ambitious and seemingly competent officer who had won several victories in western Virginia, George Brinton McClellan.

The thirty-four-year-old officer had enjoyed a distinguished pre-war career. He had been born in Philadelphia on December 3, 1826. Beginning at the age of thirteen, he attended the University of Pennsylvania for two years before being accepted into the United States Military Academy. The young Pennsylvanian graduated second in his West Point class of 1846. McClellan served as an engineer officer during the Mexican War, earning two brevet promotions and the notice of General Winfield Scott. He remained in the army after the war, working on a number of engineering projects and serving as an official observer to the Crimean War. McClellan resigned his commission in 1857, and over the next several years he earned a lucrative salary while working for several railroads in the Midwest.

Living in Ohio at the outbreak of the war and serving as president of the St. Louis, Missouri, and Ohio Railroad, McClellan was soon appointed major general of state troops by Ohio governor William Dennison. Shortly thereafter he accepted a general officer's commission in the Regular Army and command of the Department of the Ohio. In that position in participated in his first active campaign of the war, an operation to secure western Virginia for

the north. For his services there McClellan, soon to become known as the “Little Napoleon,” received a resolution of thanks passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on July 16, 1861.

Just days after the Bull Run debacle, Lincoln turned to McClellan to reorganize and reinvigorate the demoralized Union forces defending Washington. The young general arrived in the capital on July 26. Quickly demonstrating his organizational abilities, he re-equipped and trained his command, which he soon named the Army of the Potomac. By the Fall of 1861 his army appeared ready to take the offensive again, but McClellan began, to the frustration of the Lincoln administration, to demonstrate a seeming lack of aggressiveness and unwillingness to engage the enemy without overwhelming superiority. Not until the Spring of 1862 would he undertake the next major offensive against Richmond.

While the Union army around Washington licked its wounds in the aftermath of Bull Run, in faraway New Mexico, Confederate forces continued their invasion of the southern part of the territory in an effort to add it to the borders of the new nation. Continuing an operation that had begun several weeks earlier, southern forces occupied Fort Fillmore, along with several other outposts that had been abandoned by their Union garrisons. Later in the year, additional Confederate troops under Henry Sibley would move into the territory in preparation for an even larger invasion to the north and west. While the Confederacy established an Arizona Territory, its attempt to secure additional western lands would fail following a defeat at Glorieta in March 1862.

Another major event during the week was the July 25 passage of the Crittenden-Johnson Resolution by the U.S. Congress. Proposed by Congressman John J. Crittenden of Kentucky and Senator Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, the resolution sought to reassure Unionists in the border

states that the war was being fought not for “overthrowing or interfering with the rights of established institutions” in the slave states, but simply to “defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution and to preserve the Union.” While the resolution passed, anti-slavery activists opposed it and the measure was eventually repealed.