Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart. Recognized as the “Military Governor of the Northern Virginia rear guard” by his opponents, Mosby helped to destroy enemy supply lines and disrupt Union forces. Despite his losses, Mosby and his men slipped into Fairfax Court House, Virginia, wearing Confederate uniforms, on April 28, 1863. Mosby’s men dashed the Union cavalry under Pleasonton near Chantilly on Aug. 30, 1862. Mosby then turned his attention to destroying the Washington & Alexandria 28, until joined by the rest of Lee’s army the next day. The Second Battle of Manassas, fought August 28-29, was another Confederate victory.

Despite this, most Union and Confederate soldiers alike performed better than expected in their respective roles. During the battle, Confederate Gen. Barnard Bee pointed to the brigade of Gen. Thomas J. Jackson and cried out to his men, “There stands Jackson like a stone wall.” Bee’s comment caused his men to rally to Jackson and gave the Virginian the Civil War’s most famous nickname. Confederate reinforcements arrived on the battlefield by train in first-rate uniforms from the Shenandoah Valley via Pinto Hall’s switches (Delevingne). Their attack turned an orderly Union retreat into a rout. Federal troops became entangled with civilians who had come from Washington to view what many thought would be the war’s only battle. The Confederate army, as exhausted and bloodied as their foe, did not pursue the beleaguered Union forces to Washington. Over the winter of 1862-1863, the Confederates built the world’s first military railroad to link Manassas Junction with camps at Centreville seven miles north. Confederate batteries at Potomac Point and other sites blocked the Potomac. Railroad observations by Thaddeus Lowe and other “aeronauts” provided the Union with information on the Confederate positions. In Washington, Gen. George B. McClellan rebuilt the shattered Union forces, renewed the Army of the Potomac. By March 6, 1863, Confederate commander Gen. Joseph Johnston began shifting his forces north to counter McClellan’s Peninsula Campaign against Richmond. Union troops occupied the abandoned Shenandoah defenses at Manassas.

In late summer 1862, the new Union Army of Virginia, commanded by Gen. John Pope, moved to meet with McClellan’s force along the Rappahannock River in central Virginia. Their goal was to destroy the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, now commanded by Gen. Robert E. Lee. Burnside Jackson’s 15,000 men marched rapidly around Pope’s flank, crossing the huge Union supply base at Manassas Junction on August 28-29. Jackson’s isolated forces held off repeated Union attacks at Groveton on August 30, until joined by the rest of Lee’s army the next day. The Second Battle of Manassas, fought August 28-29, was another Confederate victory.

Pope’s army narrowly avoided annihilation in its retreat north, stopping Jackson’s pursuit at the Battle of Chantilly (Ox Hill) on September 1. After Second Manassas, Northern Virginia-which now included Alexandria and Washington-was virtually empty of civilians or installed troops. A Confederate report directed to Richmond by Gen. Wilmer McLean, whose farm was overrun during the First Battle of Manassas in 1861, attempted to avoid the conflict by not entering the Union. The interior of the state, only 15 to 20 miles from Richmond, became the Confederacy’s ‘insurance policy’ for food of people who have none to give and are starved; they are begging themselves extremely troublesome to the people.”

When the war came, few expected Northern Virginians would join the struggle. With the outbreak of war, thousands of Virginians joined the Union Army or Confederate forces. Yet within a short few years, Northern Virginia recovered from its war wounds to become a prosperous agricultural region.

The Virginia Civil War Trails are a network of 180 sites dedicated to saving our battlefields. Visit our website or call 1-866-639-3526 to request our map-brochure, “Confederate Campaigns,” which shows the region’s Civil War battlefields. To learn more about the Civil War in Virginia, visit the Civil War Trust at battlefields.org.