

(revised 10/24) **The Civil War in Fairfax County, Virginia**

The Civil War in Fairfax County, Virginia was the most divisive and destructive period in the county's history. Soon after President Abraham Lincoln was elected President on November 6, 1860, local citizens began holding a series of public meetings at the Fairfax Court House to discuss whether the commonwealth should remain in the Union or secede and join the nascent Confederate States of America (CSA).

Remain or Secede?

Resolutions were adopted to expel pro-Union, anti-slavery men from the county and several **were** passed that defended slavery. Other resolutions supported arming and funding local militia. The Fairfax Cavalry, under Captain Mottram Dulany Ball, and the Fairfax Rifles, under Captain William H. Dulany, drilled and paraded together on the courthouse yard throughout early 1861. Virginia voted to leave the Union on May 23, 1861. Shortly thereafter, on June 1, the first armed conflict in the Civil War occurred in and around the same courthouse grounds where those early public debates on secession began. Confederate Captain John Quincy Marr of the Warrenton Rifles was killed in the skirmish with Company B, Second U.S. Cavalry. He has been memorialized as the first Confederate officer to be killed in the Civil War.

Confederate Occupation of Fairfax County

In July, roughly 18,000 soldiers of the Army of Northeastern Virginia, under the command of Union General Irvin McDowell, advanced from Washington D. C. through Fairfax County. They engaged in the Battle of Blackburn's Ford on July 18, and subsequently the Battle of First Manassas or Bull Run on July 21. The Union forces were routed and retreated through the county back to the nation's capital city, foreshadowing a costly, protracted war.

Confederate Generals P.G.T. Beauregard and Joseph E. Johnston subsequently established their headquarters at Fairfax Court House. More fighting occurred soon after, with skirmishes at Accotink and Pohick Church on August 18, followed by the Battle of Lewinsville on September 11. There also were skirmishes along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad at the Springfield Station on October 2 and December 4, at Burke's Station. The Battle of Dranesville took place on December 20. **It** was the first, but minor, victory for the Federal forces. The Confederates

controlled most of the western half of county through March 1862, when they vacated their winter quarters at Centreville to defend Richmond. The Union then reasserted its military and civilian control, establishing the Restored Government of Virginia and, on May 22, local Fairfax citizens voted to establish a pro-Union form of government.

Continuing Confederate Raids

Yet, even under Union control, Fairfax County was subjected to continuing Confederate raids. In 1862-1863 raids were led by General J. E. B. Stuart and from 1863, they were headed by Colonel John Singleton Mosby. Fairfax County remained part of “Mosby’s Confederacy” until the end of the war, with stealth raids conducted relentlessly against Union troops.

Battle of Chantilly (Ox Hill) September 1862

The largest single battle in Fairfax County was the Battle of Chantilly, often referred to as the Battle of Ox Hill, occurred on September 1, 1862. Confederate forces under the command of General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson engaged General John Pope’s defeated Union troops as they retreated to Alexandria and Washington after the Battle of Second Manassas, also known as Second Bull Run). Union Generals Isaac Stevens and Philip Kearny were killed in action among 1,500 casualties. Today, their deaths are memorialized at Fairfax County Park Authority’s Ox Hill Battlefield Park.

Defenses of Washington

As the war progressed, the Union strengthened its defenses surrounding the nation’s capital, particularly in southern Fairfax County, where more than fifty known actions occurred along the Woodlawn-Accotink-Pohick corridor. Local citizens that included young Quakers, free blacks, and former slaves, formed the Accotink Home Guard, a fully integrated volunteer company. Established initially as a defense against raids by Mosby and Captain James Kincheloe’s Chinquapin Rangers, these volunteers later joined Union troops, such as Unassigned Company A, U.S. Colored Troops, stationed at Accotink, to conduct offensive operations in Fairfax and neighboring Prince William Counties.

Last Raid in Fairfax County

The Orange and Alexandria Railroad was a favorite target of Confederate raiders, with numerous actions at Fairfax Station and Sangster’s Station. The last raid in Fairfax County occurred on

April 10, 1865, when two Mosby companies attacked Burke's Station. This was one day after General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House.

