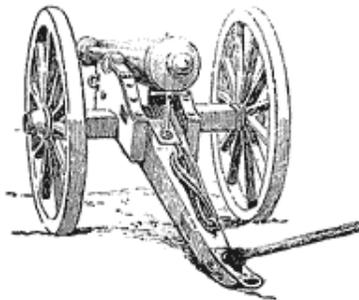


The Grand Review of November 20, 1861

A New Union Army Parades at Bailey's Crossroads, Virginia

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In the first decade of the 21st century, Bailey's Crossroads is a bustling cosmopolitan area of Northern Virginia, just eight miles from Washington, D.C. Towering skyscrapers, shopping centers, a college, and many small ethnic businesses characterize this busy urban neighborhood located just five miles from the Pentagon, headquarters of the world's most powerful military force.

But in the autumn of 1861, Bailey's Crossroads was a rural outpost that had recently been abandoned by Confederate Rebels whose proximity to the nation's capital unsettled the government of President Abraham Lincoln, especially following the surprising rout of Union forces at Bull Run on July 21. The ineptness of the Union Army became even more apparent in

late September when Federal forces gingerly moved to take over Munson's Hill at Bailey's Crossroads following the Rebels' departure. Instead of powerful artillery they assumed the Confederates had left behind, they found a "Quaker canon," a log painted black that the Rebels had successfully employed to intimidate General George B. McClellan's forces.¹ Following this discovery was the October 21 embarrassing defeat of the Union Army at Ball's Bluff near Leesburg, Virginia, just 40 miles up the Potomac River from the banks of Washington.

A frustrated President Lincoln wanted change quickly. He accepted the reluctantly proffered resignation of the recognized hero of the Mexican War, the aged General Winfield Scott, as general-in-chief of all Union armies and, on November 1, 1861, appointed 34-year-old George B. McClellan to succeed the venerable Scott in that position and to serve simultaneously as commander of the Army of the Potomac, a position he had held since late July.²

At the start of the Civil War, the federal government staffed its army primarily by relying on a 1795 law that allowed the President to call upon 90-day state militiamen who served under the command of their states' governors. On May 3, 1861, Lincoln sought 42,000 three-year army volunteers and 18,000 sailors to build an enlarged regular army.³ A brilliant organizer, McClellan had been immersed since the defeat at Bull Run in forming these new recruits into a viable, well-trained army. By the autumn of 1861, the army had grown to approximately 160,000 troops, at least three times as many troops as the enemy had had at Manassas.⁴ From late summer through the fall, McClellan furiously planned and had his men undergo long days of drills in the hope of never repeating the chaotic retreat from Manassas and also to prepare for a Union Army offensive in the spring of 1862.

At Bull Run, when General Irwin McDowell recognized that his inexperienced Union soldiers would be defeated, he ordered a retreat which began in a reasonably orderly fashion, under the circumstances, but quickly turned into pandemonium as soldiers, horses, guns, and hundreds of civilians from Washington, D.C., encumbered by buggies, wagons, and picnic hampers, converged upon the fields surrounding Bull Run to compete for space on the lone highway that offered escape from the jeering Rebels.⁵

Consequently, throughout the latter half of 1861, McClellan constantly put his new recruits through countless formations to assure that they would move competently in future

¹James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom, The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 361-62.

² On July 27, 1861, Lincoln commanded McClellan to take control of the Federal Division of the Potomac, subsequently called the Army of the Potomac, which had been routed at Bull Run under the command of Gen. Irwin McDowell. John S. Bowman, executive ed., *The Civil War Almanac* (New York: World Almanac Publication, 1983), p. 61.

³McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, p. 322.

⁴ Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years* (One vol. edition; New York: Galahad Books, 1954), p. 259.

⁵ Bruce Catton, *The Civil War* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1971), pp. 46-47.

⁶ Sandburg, p. 258.

military actions. In September, he asked the President to ride out into the Virginia hills to view the army's progress. Thus, Lincoln, Secretary of War Simon Cameron, and Pennsylvania Governor Andrew G. Curtin rode around the army while McClellan pointed out a Confederate flag on Munson Hill, still occupied at that point by the Rebels. The general surprised them by noting that they were presently just outside Union lines.⁶ This was a young army whose soldiers were mainly in their early 20's, with thousands only 19 or younger.⁷ McClellan held at least two Grand Reviews of his army that fall, one on October 8, 1861, in Washington, that focused on cavalry and artillery. An estimated 5,500 cavalry and 18 batteries of artillery participated on a warm Indian summer day and were reviewed not only by McClellan, but also by President and Mrs. Lincoln, Secretary of State William H. Seward, and several other generals, including General Joseph Hooker.⁸

On November 20, in Northern Virginia, between Munson's Hill and Bailey's Crossroads,⁹ McClellan conducted the most impressive military review of his career. By all contemporary accounts, the weather had dramatically changed to cold, wintry conditions. Private Robert Knox Sneden of E Company, 40th New York Volunteers (Mozart Regiment), described in his diary leaving his camp in Alexandria, Virginia, at 5 a.m. that morning to participate in a Grand Review. Playing bands and waving flags accompanied the soldiers. Their pride was evident in the polished brass of their buttons and the gleam on their guns. Sneden described their arrival at Bailey's "Cross Roads" in vivid terms:

It was a fine, though cold and windy day. Patches of snow were on the ground when we arrived there about 10 a.m., which made it muddy in places. Many regiments had overcoats on the men. Ours had not as the colonel wanted to show off the fine uniforms. The brigades were drawn up in columns while general McClellan and staff with President Lincoln rode up and down the lines while the bands played and a battery fired salutes. . . .

The heavy and light artillery with cannon polished up like gold, and the ugly looking black Parrott guns [rifled cannon] were drawn up in a long line, while the cavalry were massed in squadrons. Then about 2 p.m. all marched past in review. . . . About half of the men had to stand in the cold wind for hours. Nearly everyone was thoroughly chilled. Many soon filled up the camp hospitals. . . .

The President with his bodyguard . . . was cheered from end to end of the long lines of troops. . . . The review lasted until 5 p.m. and all were not off the ground until darkness had set in. As the men had brought no rations and had been up and marching since five in the morning, all were hungry, thirsty, and cold. They got to camp much quicker than on going out to the review. They were all much elated and no one ever can forget the splendid military sight [it] afforded. All the cooks in camp were at work for half of the

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.275.

⁸ *Harper's Weekly*, October 26, 1861.

⁹ Often referred to as "Cross Roads" in 19th century documents.

night when we returned at 7 p.m. in a drizzling rain.¹⁰

General McClellan arrived with his staff and an escort of 1,800 cavalry.¹¹ The news account published by *Harper's Weekly's* on December 7, 1861, vividly described what made this review so memorable for everyone who participated. The First Rifle Regiment of Pennsylvania Reserve, the "Bucktail Regiment," was given the honor of leading the column of troops. Seven divisions, all of which passed before President Lincoln, his Cabinet, and General-in-Chief McClellan, followed it.¹² The first division, led by General George McCall, featured the brigades of Generals George G. Meade, John Reynolds, and Edward O.C. Ord.¹³ Represented were 12 infantry regiments, two batteries, and one cavalry regiment.¹⁴ S.F. Heintzelman's division, formed by the brigades of Generals John Sedgwick, Charles D. Jameson, and Israel B. Richardson,¹⁵ was second, consisting of seven infantry regiments, two batteries, and one cavalry regiment.¹⁶ These two divisions began their march from near Dranesville, Virginia, approximately 10 miles from Bailey's Crossroads, between two and three a.m.¹⁷

Third came General William F. Smith's division, including the brigades of Generals Winfield S. Hancock, William T.H. Brooks, and H.W. Benham,¹⁸ containing 10 infantry regiments, two batteries, and one cavalry regiment.¹⁹

General William B. Franklin's division marched in fourth, made up of the brigades of Generals Henry W. Slocum, John Newton, and Philip Kearny.²⁰ This division consisted of 12 infantry regiments, three batteries, and one cavalry regiment.²¹

Fifth came the brigade of General Julius Stahel as well as two brigades commanded by senior colonels, composing General Louis (Ludwig) Blenker's division.²² Marching together here were 11 infantry regiments, two batteries, and Colonel Christian F. Dickel's regiment of mounted riflemen.²³

General Fitz John Porter's division was sixth, with brigades led by Generals George W.

¹⁰ Robert Knox Sneden, "Diary," quoted in *Eye of the Storm: A Civil War Odyssey*, ed. by Charles F. Bryan, Jr., and Nelson D. Lankford (New York: The Free Press, 2000), p. 6.

¹¹ Margaret Leech, *Reveille in Washington: 1860-1865* (Alexandria, Va.: Time-Life Books, Inc., 1980), p. 142.

¹² "The Great Review," *Harper's Weekly*, December 7, 1861.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ "The Grand Review--A Magnificent Display--Four Miles of Troops," *New York Times*, November 21, 1861.

¹⁵ *Harper's Weekly*, Dec. 7, 1861. Jameson is erroneously reported as "Jamison."

¹⁶ *New York Times*, November 21, 1861.

¹⁷ *Harper's Weekly*, Dec. 7, 1861.

¹⁸ *Harper's Weekly*, Dec. 7, 1861.

¹⁹ *New York Times*, November 21, 1861.

²⁰ *Harper's Weekly*, Dec. 7, 1861.

²¹ *New York Times*, November 21, 1861.

²² *Harper's Weekly*, Dec. 7, 1861. Stahel is erroneously reported as "Stahl."

²³ *New York Times*, November 21, 1861. Dickel is erroneously reported as "Deckett."

Morell, John H. Martindale, and Daniel Butterfield.²⁴ This division contained 13 infantry regiments, three batteries, and two cavalry regiments.²⁵ Completing the parade of divisions was General Irvin McDowell's, composed of the brigades of Generals Rufus King and James S. Wadsworth, and Colonel Edward Frisbie.²⁶ This division consisted of 11 infantry, three batteries, and one cavalry regiment, for a total of 76 infantry regiments, 17 batteries, and seven cavalry regiments, "perhaps in all about 70,000 men, forming only a portion of the army on the Potomac."²⁷

This was indeed an impressive display of military might, as the press duly noted: "This was the largest body of troops ever before reviewed on this Continent. They were fully equipped, and in every way supplied, with forty rounds of cartridges. Every division was accompanied by ambulances, so that every branch of the service might be represented."²⁸ Nevertheless, McClellan took no chance that Rebel forces might take advantage of the absence of his army. He left behind enough men in each of the seven divisions to "supply double the usual picket force to guard the camps, and a reserve in addition strong enough to repel any attack in force the enemy could make."²⁹

General McDowell directed the divisions' movements across the Bailey's Crossroads plateau, a daunting task involving more than 20 generals, "seventy thousand men, including seven regiments of cavalry, numbering some eight thousand men, and twenty batteries of artillery, numbering a hundred and twenty pieces."³⁰ When all divisions were finally in place, they formed "a semi-circle of about four miles."³¹

The troops began the actual parade before their leaders at approximately 1:30 p.m. The entire review lasted about three hours.³² By all accounts, 20,000 to 30,000 enthusiastic civilian onlookers watched the review from the sidelines.³³ The crowd was large partly because no passes were required to attend this special event.³⁴ Nevertheless, roads from Washington were heavily guarded along the entire distance to prevent civilians from diverging from the prescribed route.³⁵ It was truly a day for demonstrating pride in and allegiance to the Union. Private Sneden of New York, marching with his regiment, conveyed his amazement at the sight: "There were thousands

²⁴ *Harper's Weekly*, Dec. 7, 1861.

²⁵ *New York Times*, November 21, 1861.

²⁶ *Harper's Weekly*, Dec. 7, 1861.

²⁷ *New York Times*, November 21, 1861. Accounts of the number of participants vary.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Harper's Weekly*, Dec. 7, 1861.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *New York Times*, November 21, 1861.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Since Bull Run, citizens had been required to obtain passes to cross the Potomac in the Government's attempt to control casual traffic and keep routes open for military passage. Leech, p. 142.

³⁵ *New York Times*, November 21, 1861.

of citizens and officials from Washington and elsewhere among the spectators, and hundreds of ladies in carriages or on horseback. The French Princes de Joinville, Duc de Chartres, [Comte] de Orléans, who were on McClellan's staff, rode with him."³⁶ A sense of pageantry and the awareness that an historical event was unfolding before their very eyes characterized these civilian onlookers:

Ladies in wide crinolines and tiny bonnets sat marveling in their carriages, and little boys and girls stared popeyed at the white gloves and glistening bayonets, the flags, the polished brass, the cannon smoke. . . .

The Comte de Paris thought it curious to see these civilians "boldly caracoling at the head of a brilliant military cortege." To thousands of uncritical onlookers, the sight was imposing beyond anything they had ever imagined. The division extended for miles over the plain. Until twilight veiled the muddy fields, troops passed in review.³⁷

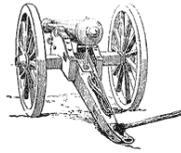
This Grand Review so inspired some of those on the sidelines that it resulted in an important contribution to America's cultural patrimony. Among those present that day was the Boston writer Julia Ward Howe, who had accompanied her husband, the abolitionist Dr. S.G. Howe, to Washington for her first visit to the nation's capital. While returning to Willard's Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, she and her party of fellow Bostonians sang "John Brown's Body." The next morning, with the tune still in mind, she scribbled new lyrics for it inspired by what she had witnessed. It became "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."³⁸

The onlookers' obvious awe at the spectacle of this Grand Review was a concrete sign that General McClellan had accomplished one very important goal in organizing such events: uplifting morale in both the public and his soldiers. For months he had been berating Lincoln for more and more soldiers. This majestic public display of the army he had created in such a short period would certainly inspire more volunteers to enlist and motivate Congress to support his requests for a larger, better equipped military, he must have thought. It was a perfect showcase for General George B. McClellan's organizational genius. It was also a moment that will forever make Bailey's Crossroads a source of pride for those who honor the United States of America.

³⁶ Sneden, p. 6.

³⁷ Leech, p. 142.

³⁸ <http://civilwarhome.com/battlehymn.htm>; Leech, p. 142.



Lincoln at the Crossroads Alliance

Remembering The Grand Review

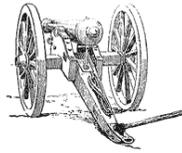
The Grand Review at Bailey's Crossroads was a shining moment for Northern Virginia. Today, 146 years later, residents of the Bailey's Crossroads area are being joined by others who understand its significance to ensure that this historic event will not be forgotten. The Lincoln at the Crossroads Alliance ("The Alliance" or LATCRA) was founded in 2007 to achieve the following *primary* objectives:

- 1) Re-enact the "Grand Review" during its 150th Anniversary at Bailey's Crossroads on Leesburg Pike (Route 7) in 2011,
- 2) Establish future re-enactments every five years, and
- 3) Erect a sculpture--an important work of public art--of President Lincoln and other officials who stood with him at the Grand Review. The sculpture placement will be at Bailey's Crossroads in a location yet to be determined.

What the Alliance hopes to accomplish through these actions is to employ Abraham Lincoln's legacy to inspire a concept of what it means to be an American, with the byproduct of encouraging assimilation among naturalized Americans and encouraging citizenship in others. It also hopes to foster increased historical education and promote educational activities, as well as inspire community cohesiveness in the Bailey's Crossroads area through the commemoration of a shared historical legacy.

The Alliance is pursuing these goals through the establishment of an Advisory Board composed of historians, government representatives, and interested citizens. It is publicizing its mission to solicit the involvement of established re-enactment organizations to ensure strong participation in 2011. Finally, in its capacity as a not-for-profit organization, it is raising funds to undertake its work.

The Alliance came into being through the inspiration of Dr. Siegbert Schacknies, who established residence in the Bailey's Crossroads area following retirement from a distinguished career as an architect, urban planner, and transport economist. When Dr. Schacknies learned that the Grand Review of 1861 had taken place within a few steps of his new home, he became determined to bring this event to light in a very visible way. Before this could happen, Dr. Schacknies died unexpectedly on August 21, 2006. He believed people should ensure that past events which have influenced the future course of history be highlighted and commemorated. The Lincoln at the Crossroads Alliance is being carried forth in his memory and with his vision for Bailey's Crossroads as a place of significance in the history of the United States, Dr. Schacknies's adopted and beloved country. Those interested in supporting this project should contact the Lincoln at the Crossroads Alliance.



What Followed the Grand Review of November 20, 1861?

An Historical Footnote

According to historian Margaret Leech, those who witnessed this stirring spectacle would have found it difficult to forget that it was more than a splendid parade: "Faintly, from the direction of Fairfax, came the sound of heavy, irregular firing; for the enemy, always accurately informed of Federal plans, was trying to create the impression of an attack, and throw the review into confusion."³⁹

The Union was indeed imperiled. Manassas had shown the nation that it was involved in more than a rebellion of a few regional hotheads. This was war, with dire potential consequences. Much was expected of General McClellan. Some might argue that his Grand Review at Bailey's Crossroads on that cold November day in 1861 was his most glorious moment. In the months following it, he became increasingly fearful of the enemy's imagined strength and resisted moving offensively against the Confederates. On March 11, 1862, President Lincoln removed McClellan from his command as General-in-Chief of the Union Armies but retained him for the time being as commander of the Army of the Potomac.⁴⁰ Throughout the following winter, his hesitation grew and the trust that the nation and his soldiers had placed in him had dissipated dramatically. By the spring of 1862, his weaknesses were apparent to all in the Virginia Peninsula campaign. He had almost 100 guns in position by the end of April and had scheduled May 6 for a formidable assault on the Rebels. Yet, in his desire to plan every detail perfectly, he hesitated, resulting in yet another setback and missed opportunity for the Union. Relying on good intelligence, Confederate commander Joseph Johnston understood the imminent danger to his army. Wasting no time, he withdraw his men closer to Richmond where he could depend on more secure defensive positions and thereby destroyed McClellan's beautifully conceived plans.⁴¹ For McClellan's soldiers, there were doubts as well as frustration. Private Robert Knox Sneden, who at Bailey's Crossroads had voiced so much pride in their endeavor, expressed disdain on May 2, 1862:

We have . . . fit for duty 103,378 soldiers, while the enemy have not more than 50,000 if he has that! The Fabian [defensive] policy. . . of McClellan has lost him much popularity and "Little Napoleon" stock is at a very low ebb among those dashing leaders as . . . Kearney, . . . Hooker, Sumner or . . . Smith. These generals, including Sedgwick and Heintzelman, never go to McClellan's headquarters to consult about the military situation. And many

³⁹ Leech, p. 142.

⁴⁰ *The Civil War Almanac*, p. 90.

⁴¹ Bryan and Lankford, eds., *Eye of the Storm*, p. 55.

generals don't "pull together" at all, but pull in opposite directions. [This is] mostly caused by McClellan's "masterly" inactivity with siege operations on the brain, when we all know that we could have walked right over the Rebels when we came here first on April 4.

Since then hundreds are sick in hospital while lots have been killed at Lee's Mill and on the picket line, good officers, too, who cannot be replaced.⁴²

By September 1862, McClellan had persevered to engage in the battle of Antietam (Sharpsburg), Maryland. September 7 marked "the bloodiest day of the entire war. . . . McClellan squandered his huge numerical superiority by attacking sequentially instead of simultaneously and never even using a quarter of his troops."⁴³

It was the beginning of the end for McClellan.⁴⁴ By November, the President "had determined that McClellan lacked striking power and would never really fight."⁴⁵ On November 7, 1862, he notified McClellan of his removal as commander of the Army of the Potomac.⁴⁶ Historian Stephen W. Sears succinctly assessed George B. McClellan as a military leader: "[He] stood for limited war, compromise peace, a return to the old order of things--all hopes that over the months of fighting had dimmed and faded and at Antietam were finally extinguished."⁴⁷

⁴² Sneden, pp. 56-57.

⁴³ Edward H. Bonekemper, III, *McClellan and Failure: A Study of Civil War Fear, Incompetence and Worse* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007), p. 133.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁴⁶ *The Civil War Almanac*, p. 119.

⁴⁷ Stephen W. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam* (New York: Book-of-the-Month Club, Inc., 1994), p. 339.

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