

A SESQUICENTENNIAL ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆ MOMENT

JUNE 3, 1861

“The attack was made after a march during the entire night in a drenching rain. The surprise was complete. Fifteen rebels killed. The gallant Colonel Kelley, of the First Virginia Volunteers, I fear, is mortally wounded. No other important casualties on our side.”

Union Gen. George McClellan sent that information to his superior after winning the Battle of Philippi, the first land battle of the Civil War in which two Union divisions launched a surprise attack on a sleeping Confederate force.

Historians generally view the June 3 fight as more of a skirmish than a battle, primarily because no one was killed in the action.

The federal victory nonetheless bolstered support for the Union in northwestern Virginia.

It also encouraged delegates at the Second Wheeling Convention to make bold decisions, including creating the Reorganized (Union) Government of Virginia and electing Francis H. Pierpont as governor.



Photo Courtesy of State Archives

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JUNE 13, 1861

“[Virginia] has, in conjunction with the State executive, instituted wherever their usurped power extends, a reign of terror intended to suppress the free expression of the will of the people, making elections a mockery and a fraud.”

John Carlile included those words in “A Declaration of the People of Virginia,” a proposed reorganization of Virginia’s government that was presented to the Second Wheeling Convention on June 13. Two days before the presentation of Carlile’s document, the Convention had elected Arthur Boreman as its president.

Both men would play significant roles in the creation of West Virginia. Carlile served as a United States senator for the Reorganized Government of Virginia while Boreman was elected the first governor of West Virginia.



John Carlile



Arthur Boreman



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JUNE 23-29, 1861

Disputes are bound to arise over a variety of issues when one state operates with two separate governments, especially issues involving money.

Toward the end of this week in 1861, Virginia's government in Richmond halted work on the Northwestern Lunatic Asylum in Weston in Lewis County, and repealed a loan for West Liberty Academy in West Liberty in Ohio County.

Because the action affected loyal northwestern counties, Virginia's government in Wheeling commissioned the 7th Ohio Infantry to seize gold for the projects from the Weston bank where it was being stored. In all,

the Wheeling government retrieved \$27,000 worth of gold from the Richmond government on June 30, 1861.

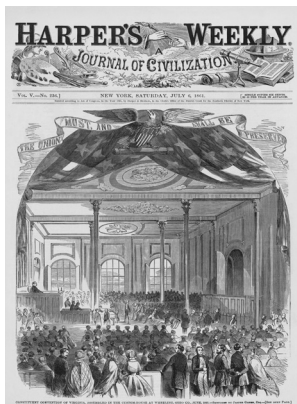


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JUNE 7-13, 1861

“You will, ere this, no doubt, be informed of the unhappy fate of General Garnett, who fell while acting the part of a gallant soldier.”

This message from Union Gen. George B. McClellan officially announced that Confederate Gen. Robert S. Garnett had become the first general from either side to die in the Civil War.

Garnett was killed July 13 at Corrick’s Ford. Two days earlier Union forces had defeated Confederates at the battle of Rich Mountain in Randolph County. By mid-July, Confederate forces had been driven from the majority of present-day West Virginia.

These victories also elevated McClellan’s national reputation and gave Union leaders in Wheeling a sense of security that allowed them to proceed with plans to break away from Virginia.



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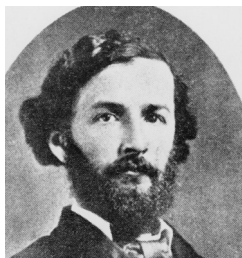
JULY 14-20, 1861

“It is now forgotten except by those, who then first met the enemy & who will still talk of ‘Scary’ around their campfires.”

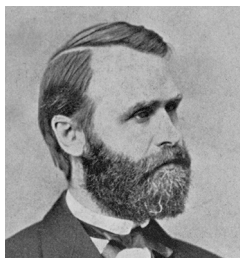
Those words from Confederate Colonel George S. Patton note the July 17, 1861, battle of Scary Creek in Putnam County.

Union troops commanded by Gen. Jacob D. Cox landed in western Virginia and dislodged secessionist militia at Barboursville on July 13 before advancing into the Kanawha Valley. Four days later, both sides suffered heavy losses at Scary Creek. Confederate forces claimed victory by returning to the battlefield after the Union army withdrew. Their victory was hollow, however, as they were forced to evacuate the Kanawha Valley a few days later.

The campaign helped to secured Union control of western Virginia and allowed delegates working in Wheeling to worry less about the possibility of a Confederate attack.



George Patton



Jacob Cox



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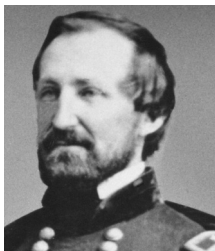
JULY 21-28, 1861

During the summer of 1861, Union Gen. George B. McClellan enjoyed enormous popularity after driving most Confederate forces out of western Virginia even as Federal troops suffered a sound defeat at the first battle of Bull Run.

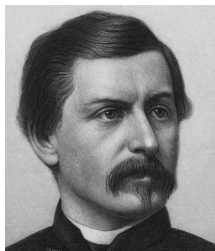
On July 25, 1861, the Wheeling Intelligencer reported that “Gen. McClellan was serenaded in front of the McLure House, and hundreds of people collected to see him.”

McClellan’s military success here solidified Union support in northwestern Virginia and earned him a promotion.

Following his departure, Gen. William S. Rosecrans arrived to defend western Virginia and provide a relatively safe environment for operating the Reorganized Government of Virginia. During Rosecrans’ assignment, he lived in the McLure House in Wheeling.



Rosecrans



McClellan



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JULY 28 - AUG. 3, 1861

In an attempt to regain military control of western Virginia for the Confederacy, Gen. Robert E. Lee arrived at Huttonsville on Aug. 3, 1861.

Lee had hoped to put more pressure on northwestern Virginia during his first war assignment, but he overestimated Union strength at Cheat Mountain in Randolph County and opted not to attack because of a lack of Confederate coordination.

In October, Lee renewed operations against Sewell Mountain in Fayette County, but that, too, was called off, mainly because of poor communication and a lack of supplies.

Unprecedented rainfall, bickering subordinates, inexperienced officers, and rampant disease contributed to both failed campaigns.

In the aftermath, Lee served in administrative positions until June 1862, when he assumed command of the Army of Northern Virginia.

One bright spot for Lee: he first saw his great war horse, Traveller, during the Sewell Mountain campaign. He later purchased the Greenbrier County born-and-bred horse for \$200 in Confederate currency.



Photo Courtesy of State Archives

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AUG. 18-24, 1861

A telegraph detailing a skirmish at Hawk's Nest in Fayette County says the Confederate Army's commanding officer was so calm that one might suspect there was no enemy around.

Actually, throngs of Union troops were at Hawk's Nest in Fayette County on Aug. 20, 1861, when Confederate Brig. Gen. Henry A. Wise led troops into the area.

Ultimately, Union forces prevailed, but the threat of fighting breaking out or Confederates advancing toward Wheeling haunted pro-Union delegates on an almost daily basis as

Union and Confederate forces continued to fight for control of western Virginia.

The same day fighting erupted at Hawk's Nest, Wheeling delegates passed an ordinance seeking to define the boundaries of the proposed state of Kanawha, whose name eventually was changed to West Virginia.

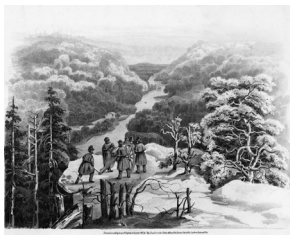


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