

## Regional Context and Historical Overview

### Regional Context

The City of Manassas Park is located approximately 26 miles southwest of Washington, DC and is bounded by Prince William County to the north, west, and southeast. To the south, it borders the City of Manassas.

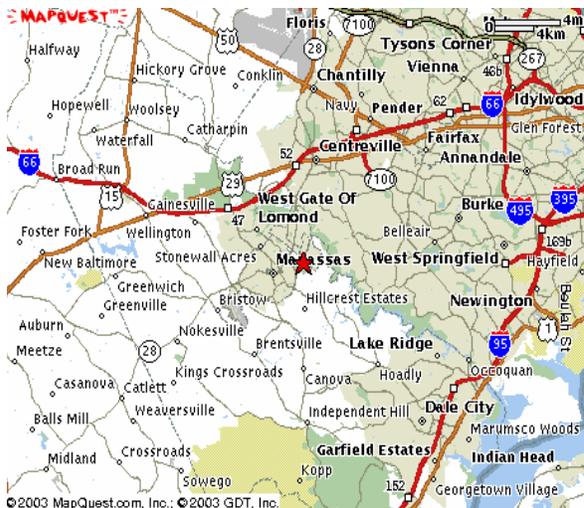


Figure 2.1 Regional Map

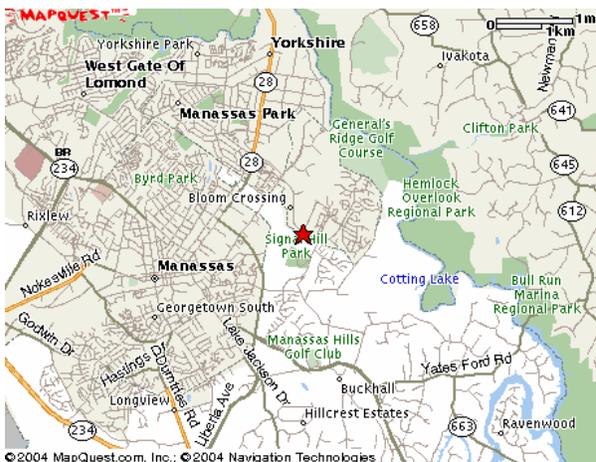


Figure 2.2 Manassas Park Map

### Prince William County

Prince William County and the two independent cities of Manassas and Manassas Park consist of 360 square miles in the northeastern portion of Virginia. The topography of the area varies from the coastal plain along the Potomac River to the east, through the Piedmont plateau in the center, to the ridges and foothills of the west. Approximately one-half of the county is forested. Prince William County, Manassas, and Manassas Park are part of the Washington – Arlington - Alexandria Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

### History of Prince William County

Historians say the Doeg Indians inhabited this land when Capt. John Smith roamed up the Potomac River for the English crown. Smith and his men visited with members of the Doeg tribe during their exploration in 1608. Settlers followed, pushing back the Indians and transforming what they viewed as a wilderness.

As the population grew, settlers petitioned for a new county to be formed. In 1731, Prince William County was carved out of Stafford County and would initially include pieces of present-day Loudoun, Fauquier, Arlington and Fairfax

counties. Prince William County was named for William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, the youngest son of King George II of England.

Many colonists came to Prince William County to escape religious persecution. George Brent and three partners acquired 30,000 acres from Lord Culpeper in 1687 and were granted religious freedom by King James II. They created a town called Brenton, or Brent Town, and built a fort to monitor the Indians.

A few wealthy men, known as the Barons of the Potomac, quickly snapped up most of the land. Englishmen immigrating to Virginia in hopes of owning land were often disappointed to find it already parceled out.

The treaty of Albany in 1722 opened more land as the Iroquois Confederacy of Indians moved west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Also, Robert "King" Carter, agent for the proprietary company holding the Northern Neck, issued titles to small sections of land. Colonists from countries other than England also began to settle in Prince William, including French, German and Scottish people.

## Civil War Battles

Two of the Civil War's key battles were fought on Prince William soil, the Battles of First and Second Manassas, also referred to as the First and Second Battles of Bull Run.

### *First Battle of Bull Run (Battle of First Manassas)*

In 1861, at the First Battle of Bull Run – the Civil War's first major land battle – Union and Confederate soldiers fought for control of the railroads that ran through Manassas Junction. This battle was won by the Confederacy.

### *Second Battle of Bull Run (Battle of Second Manassas)*

A second, bloodier battle was waged on the same ground 13 months later, resulting in another Confederate victory. Many historians consider this battle to be General Robert E. Lee's greatest success. Three days of fighting in the Battle of Second Manassas opened the way for Lee's invasion of the North, ultimately leading to Gettysburg.

## Manassas Park Historic Sites

### *Camp Carondelet (Louisiana Brigade Winter Camp)*

Known as the home of the Louisiana Troops, Camp Carondelet was the site for the Grand Ball in early February 1862. At this site, soldiers built a series of log cabins to make it through the harsh winter. In spring, the troops burned all of the cabins, but the foundations remain. The Louisiana Brigades had a reputation of being fierce warriors and Camp Carondelet is one of only two sites remaining of its kind, the other being located near Williamsburg, Virginia. Camp

Carondelet is listed in the National Register as an historical landmark.

### *Conner House*

The Conner House, often referred to as the Yellow Hospital, served as headquarters for both Union and Confederate armies as well as a Union Field Hospital during the Civil War. Between 1861 and 1862, the Conner House served as headquarters for General Joseph E. Johnston, CSA, who was Commander of the Confederate Forces, as well as for Colonel L. B. Pierce, USA.

The 19th century red sandstone structure was more than likely built using material from a nearby quarry.



Figure 2.3 General Johnston

To the east of the house lie the present day railroad tracks. During the Civil War, the Orange & Alexandria Railroad owned the tracks.

Local historians believe that it was after the First Battle of Bull Run, in July 1861, when General Johnston made the Conner House his headquarters.

In addition to serving as headquarters for both Union and Confederate leaders, homesteads such as the Conner House were also used as

field hospitals. Renowned Civil War photographer Timothy O' Sullivan photographed the Conner House in July 1862, and labeled it "The Yellow Hospital". A book published after the Civil War contains another photograph of the house that is titled "Headquarters of Col. L.B. Pierce". Colonel Pierce, Commander of the 12<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Calvary, was sick at the hospital in August 1862. During this time, Stonewall Jackson ordered General Trimble to capture the Union Army's supply depot at Manassas Junction. On the night of August 26, 1862, Trimble and his troops approached Manassas. In front of this house, Trimble encountered opposition from the 12<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Calvary. Colonel Pierce was taken to Fairfax Courthouse before Trimble captured the hospital. Trimble then took the depot at Manassas Junction.

Following the war the property was eventually purchased by the Conner Family and used as a dairy farm. The Conner House is listed in the National Register as an historical landmark and is part of the Civil War Trails Program.



Figure 2.4 Conner House during Civil War

### *Signal Hill*

The monument at Signal Hill stands in recognition of the great significance of this landmark. The first documented use of flag signals to communicate USA movement were used at this location by E.P. Alexander, CSA. The movement, noted by the “gleam of sunlight” off the blades of the matching troop’s bayonet’s, was immediately relayed in the historic message “Look to your left, you are turned”. This message saved the CSA from an impending ambush and almost certain defeat.

The earth still remains trenched and cannon placements are still evident. The Roseberry Family, in 1999, donated acreage to the site to the City. Signal Hill is listed in the National Register as an historic landmark.

### *Orange & Alexandria Railroad Bridge Piers*

The Civil War era trestle abutment of the defunct Orange and Alexandria Railroad supported the Union Mill Bridge -- a strategic water crossing between Washington and Richmond. In August 1862, a fierce battle raged between Generals Pope and Jackson. Jackson had retreated from a defensive line along the Rappahanock River into an area along the Bull Run and launched an attack on Popes’ troops. Union General G.W. Taylor was mortally wounded in this battle. Today, the trestle still bears the original dated cornerstone and 'confederate' graffiti.

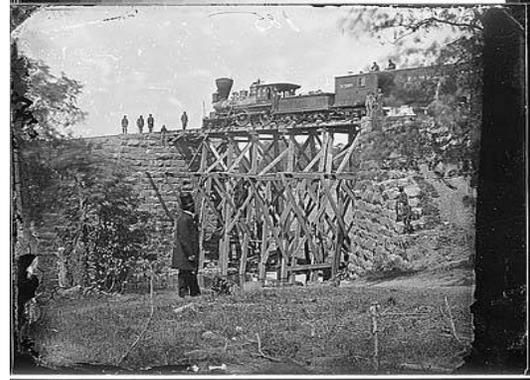


Figure 2.6 Railroad Piers during Civil War



Figure 2.7 Railroad Piers Today

### *Georgia Cemetery*

Within site of Camp Carondelet, the Georgia Cemetery is the burial site for the Georgia Brigade, which participated in the First Battle of Bull Run. Gravesites, although pilfered and removed of significant artifacts, lie as a memorial to all of the fallen soldiers who fought during the Civil War. The Georgia Cemetery was included in the nomination with Camp Carondelet for historic registration.



Figure 2.8 Georgia Cemetery

## Preserving the History of Manassas Park

Preserving the city's rich past is a major goal with the ramifications of such a success extending far beyond maintaining the historical landmarks.

Under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Department, the city has

partnered with the City of Manassas and Prince William County as part of the Civil War Trails Tours Program. This partnership will enable the city to apply for grants, receive state and federal funding to assist in the preservation of our landmarks; increase tourism in the city, thereby adding a revenue stream; and add valuable physical presence to our school system's history curriculum.