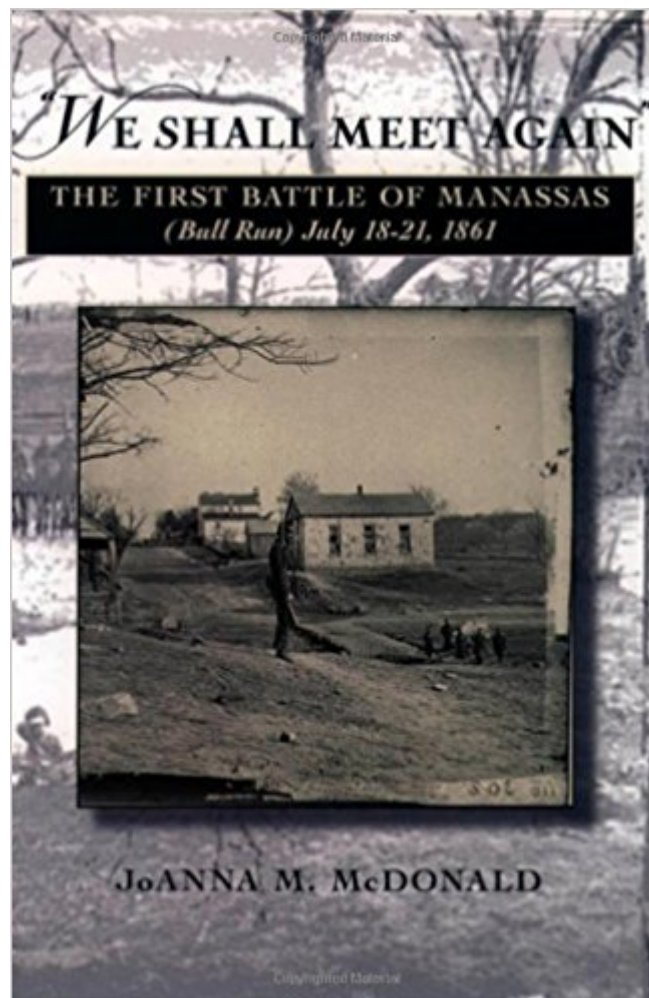




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"We Shall Meet Again": The First Battle Of Manassas (Bull Run), July 18-21, 1861



Synopsis

The First Battle of Manassas claimed the lives of approximately 878 soldiers and wounded another 2,489. With a battlefield stretching nearly five miles, 15,000 Union and 14,000 Confederate soldiers clashed for four fateful days, many of them young and terrified and receiving their first taste of a long and bitter war. Their courage, military skill, and brute strength were tested, leading some brigades and many individuals to receive reputations that followed them into history. Now, for the first time, this extraordinary work brings the Battle of Bull Run to life by featuring over two hundred photographs of the individual soldiers and forty-five highly detailed maps. Written by a noted military historian, it provides all the necessary background information to understand the minutiae of the military action, yet it also personalizes the horrors of those few destructive days. Through poignant, often disturbing, excerpts from diaries and letters, this book offers readers a rare glimpse at the tragedy of war. Moreover, it portrays with realism and compassion the significance of the first battle of the bloodiest war in American history.

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Customer Reviews

"A well-written, well-paced account."--The Rebel Rouser
"This reads like a novel with all the drama replete of fiction but is derived from source materials and observers of the time."--Reviewer's Bookwatch

JoAnna M.McDonald has been a student of military history for sixteen years. She is also the author

of several battlefield guides, including *The World Will Long Remember: A Guide to the Battle of Gettysburg* and *The Liberation of Pointe-du-Hoc: The 2d Rangers at Normandy*.

Interesting history book.

This book looks and reads like a local historical society publication, but it does collect some useful facts and memories. For serious military analysis, though, find another source.

If you are new to Civil War history, this book will satisfy you. But those who have read dozens, if not scores of Civil War histories might find it disappointing. As for the letters, they are few and far between. And many of the photographs are repeatedly used over and over again, but apparently counted separately. And I really do not think a "noted military historian" would use a photograph or drawing of a private soldier to represent his commanding officer. However, it is an easy, quick read, due to many of its 183 pages being devoted to maps or groups of photographs or drawings.

In September of 1999 I visited the battlefield of Manassas. Prior to that I'd done a little bit of research to give me a clearer idea of what I would be seeing and how it fitted into the wider picture that was the Civil War. JoAnna McDonald's book was a great help in piecing together the events that were to become known as the First Battle of Manassas (or Bull Run depending on your preference). "We Shall Meet Again" certainly gives an excellent overview of the battle, breaking down the different troop movements into stages that the reader is able to clearly follow. However, before the account of the battle itself, McDonald presents a useful introduction entitled 'Ways and Means' covering such aspects as weapons, flags and uniforms and the initial strategies and battle plans of First Manassas. Although only giving selective and limited information this initial section of the book acts as a useful backdrop for the events that were to come. "We Shall Meet Again" essentially provides a step by step account of the battle. It does not provide nor does it attempt to provide an in-depth history. However, it is not to the detriment of "We Shall Meet Again" that its remit is one of focus on the battle itself and not historical analysis of it. For such an analysis I would direct the reader to "Battle at Bull Run" by William C. Davis. The maps and illustrations in the book are limited and could have done with expansion and further detail. Certainly they offer enough clarity to allow the reader to visually follow the action but I would have appreciated a little more. An aspect of the book I found interesting were the photographs/drawings and writings of some of those involved in the fighting. Both these elements helped to humanise the events, reminding us that

although the battle is now seen as an historical occurrence those that fought there were very real. If this is an area that interests you, "First Manassas - Voices of the Civil War" would be an ideal addition to your library. "We Shall Meet Again" offers a good introduction to the First Battle of Manassas. Although the subject matter is quite specific - it's about one battle at the start of the war - it provided me with an insight into not only the details of the battle but also the naivety of its participants.

Joanna McDonald has created an excellent account of the first battle at Bull Run Creek...I've not read a more comprehensive and at the same time extremely readable Civil War battle summary anywhere. Ms. McDonald combines detailed battle tactics with short "vignette" diversions that make this book a real treasure...and I don't think that you'll read any better battle description that puts you right into the fray...I was exhausted by the time I got to the federal retreat from Henry Hill. Each stage of the battle is covered in detail, but not overkill, and is expertly supplemented by an extensive number of maps...I was initially a bit overtaken with all the maps, but later came to depend on them to cover the latest maneuver being discussed. McDonald does an excellent job at covering troop movements and strategy and then, just at the right time, interjects these short vignettes (little stories about the "everyday" soldier or group) that adds just the right perspective to give a poignant vision of that stage in the battle. To top it all off, Ms. McDonald closes the book with an effective epilogue that places the battle in the proper military and political context. In the final analysis, I would have to place this book into the "essential" Civil War reading category...certainly essential to understanding what happened at First Bull Run. I'm told that books by William C. Davis and John Hennessy on First Bull Run are the gauge by which all accounts of the battle are measured...I haven't read either of these, but I would be amazed if these are any better than this book and I enthusiastically recommend it!

This is a good book to become familiar with the first battle of Manassas. It has a good overview of the actions of the battle in chronological order, as well as who the main commanders were and the obstacles they faced. It also does a good job with information about those who fought in the battle -- the privates, sergeants, and how they felt. The vignettes are very good, and allow you to understand exactly what it must of felt like to be there. The only things I didn't like about the book was the lack of emphasis on the illustrations. The drawings of the uniforms and flags look like "napkin" sketches photocopied for the book. The maps can be somewhat confusing, trying to follow the faint arrows and hash marks. Better labeling of the maps would have really helped. The only other

nuisance was the censoring of a couple of curse words. I think, as adults, that we can handle history, uncensored. Other than that, it is a fine, play by play account of the first major battle of the Civil War,

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