

**GENERALS J.E. JOHNSTON
AND G.T. BEAUREGARD AT
THE BATTLE OF
MANASSAS, JULY 1861**

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Generals J.E. Johnston and G.T. Beauregard at the battle of Manassas, July 1861 by Gustavus W. Smith

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GUSTAVUS W. SMITH

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THE BATTLE OF MANASSAS,

JULY, 1861.

BY

GUSTAVUS W. SMITH,

FORMERLY MAJOR-GENERAL CONFEDERATE STATES ARMY.



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PRELIMINARY.

In the latter part of September, 1861, at the joint request of Generals Johnston and Beauregard, I was appointed Major-General by President Davis, and ordered to report to General Johnston for duty as commander of the Second Corps of his army, then at and in the vicinity of Fairfax Court-house, Va. The First Corps was commanded by General Beauregard. Intimate personal and official relations existed between the three of us.*

After it was decided by President Davis, in the first days of October, that General Johnston's army could not be reinforced to an extent sufficient to justify an immediate campaign of invasion, the forces were withdrawn to the neighborhood of Centreville. During the next few months we had abundant leisure, and, in that time, I became thoroughly acquainted with the principal events connected with the battle of Manassas and familiar with the ground upon which the fighting occurred. The impressions I then received were deep and lasting. They were derived from all available sources, principally from Generals Johnston and Beauregard.

* After the battle of Manassas, the combined forces of Generals Johnston and Beauregard were called the "Army of the Potomac"; which had been the designation of Beauregard's forces before the two bodies of troops were united. Those of the latter were now designated the First Corps, and Johnston's troops, from the Shenandoah, the Second Corps. Up to the time of my arrival General Johnston had commanded this corps, which consisted of eight brigades, not organized into divisions, and he, at the same time, commanded the army. I relieved General Johnston from duty as a Corps Commander, and he was thus enabled to give his undivided attention to the control of the army as a whole.

In 1874 I read General Johnston's "Narrative," and was surprised and *shocked* to find that, in reference to Manassas, his account differed so greatly from the opinions I had formed in 1861, which were derived in great part from himself, and from reading his official report.

In his "Narrative," he not only claimed more credit for his services in that battle than I had been led to believe he was justly entitled to receive, but, in my opinion, he now *unfairly* called in question the accuracy of General Beauregard's official report, and endeavored to detract from the well-earned distinction of that army commander.

In the *Century Magazine*, May, 1885, General Johnston emphasized his attack on the correctness of General Beauregard's official report, and enlarged his own claims.

Since that time the official records have become accessible. I have made a synopsis of those records, and propose to contrast some of General Johnston's more recent statements with his own official report, and with *facts* which were well established in 1861.

GENERALS JOHNSTON AND BEAUREGARD

AT THE

BATTLE OF MANASSAS.

PART I.

The Official Records.

Early in the summer of 1861, General J. E. Johnston commanded the Confederate Army of the Shenandoah, which protected that valley against the Federal forces under General Patterson; whilst General G. T. Beauregard commanded the Confederate Army of the Potomac, near Manassas, confronting the main Federal Army, which was in the vicinity of Washington City.

These two Confederate leaders controlled separate armies; and, each independently of the other, reported to, and received orders direct from the War Department at Richmond.

On the 11th of June, 1861, General Beauregard, from Manassas, wrote to President Davis: "I wish it distinctly understood, however, that if the army should offer battle on the line of Bull Run, I shall accept it for my command, against whatever odds he may array in my front." Again, on the next day, he wrote: "The enemy seem to be taking the offensive towards Harper's Ferry, and a few days hence may find General J. E. Johnston in such a critical condition as to render it impossible to relieve him. If he were ordered to abandon forthwith his present position and concentrate suddenly his forces with mine, guarding with small detachments all the passes through which the enemy might follow him, we could, by a bold and rapid movement forward, retake Arlington Heights and Alexandria,