



## Donnybrook: The Battle of Bull Run, 1861

By David Detzer

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In April 1861, Confederate artillery blasted Fort Sumter into surrender. Within weeks, the Confederacy had established its capital at Richmond. On May 24, Lincoln ordered troops across the Potomac into Virginia, only a few miles from the Confederate military base near the hamlet of Manassas. A great battle was inevitable; whether this would end the war, as many expected, was the only question. On July 21, near a stream called Bull Run, the two forces fought from early morning until after dark in the first great battle of the Civil War. America would never be quite the same.

Donnybrook is the first major history of Bull Run to detail the battle from its origins through its aftermath. Using copious and remarkably detailed primary source material—including the recollections of hundreds of average soldiers—David Detzer has created an epic account of a defining moment in American history. This new paperback edition includes additional maps.

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## **Donnybrook: The Battle of Bull Run, 1861** By David Detzer **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

The Civil War's first major battle was not especially bloody or decisive, but this fascinating study makes it an apt microcosm of the conflict. Historian Detzer (Allegiance: Fort Sumter, Charleston and the Beginning of the Civil War) provides a lucid narrative of the battle's course, judiciously assesses the causes and authors of the Union defeat, draws vivid thumbnail sketches of participants from generals to privates, and debunks the "stone wall" legend and other enduring myths of the battle. But the book's greatest strength is its account of the social, psychological and organizational aspects of warfare in the Civil War epoch. Fought by hastily mobilized amateurs, the battle highlighted the Herculean difficulties the two sides faced in clothing, supplying and feeding large armies and trying to turn fractious civilians into competent soldiers. And Bull Run gave volunteers imbued with romantic jingoism their first taste of the horror, chaos and physical agony of combat. Drawing on a mountain of first-hand accounts, Detzer paints a detailed panorama of every aspect of army life, from the mechanics of working a musket, to the grisliness of battlefield medicine, the scrapping for meals and the suffering through long, waterless marches on a sweltering July day. The result is a splendid portrait of the Civil War as the soldiers knew it. B&w photos not seen by PW.

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#### From Booklist

\*Starred Review\* This is the fourth account of the First Battle of Bull Run (or Manassas) to appear in the last 15 years, but Detzer's work stands above the crowd because it possesses several superior qualities. Narrative verve is present, but more important is the author's grip on how difficult it was for Civil War generals to control a battle, *and* how difficult it is for a historian to reassemble the chaos of combat into a coherent chronicle. Returning to these two challenges as he recounts the preliminary maneuvers that precipitated Bull Run, Detzer revises the blame conventionally heaped on the losing Union general, Irvin McDowell. Among other reasons, McDowell's attack plan misfired because of a staff officer's incompetence, despite which he almost gained the victory. This is where the "Stonewall" Jackson legend comes into play. Detzer dismantles the moniker--allegedly uttered by a Confederate general killed in the battle--as both fictitious and out of proportion to the dubious stalwartness of Jackson's regiments, two of which completely cracked. Detzer also vivifies the soldier's experience of fear and physical exhaustion, polishing what is nearly a model of how a Civil War battle history should be written. *Gilbert Taylor*

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#### Review

"A lucid narrative of the battle's course. A splendid portrait of the Civil War as the soldiers knew it."  
(PW Online)

"A marvelous account. Comprehensive, thorough, deeply researched, rich in detail, and highly readable."  
(John C. Waugh)

"Nearly a model of how a Civil War battle history should be written."  
(Booklist)

"A primer on Civil War military organization, training, and experience."  
(Library Journal)

"A vibrant narrative history that will appeal to a wide range of readers. Very effective and unfailingly entertaining."

*(North & South Magazine)*

"Detzer establishes himself as the premier historian of the war's first months, as Donnybrook follows his thoughtful, much acclaimed Allegiance."

*(American Civil War)*

"This is history as it should be written."

*(Seattle Times)*

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#### **Angela Taylor:**

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