

### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY SEPTEMBER 14



**Union General Jesse Lee Reno, the highest-ranking Federal officer from present-day West Virginia in the Civil War, was killed in action on September 14, 1862, at the Battle of South Mountain.**

#### CSO: SS.8.22

#### **Investigate the Document: (*Harpers Weekly*, October 4, 1862)**

1. What famous Confederate general was among Jesse Reno's graduating class at West Point in 1845?
2. *This* unusual facial hairstyle, originally known as burnsidese, got its namesake from this Union General, to whom Reno was ordered to report in Annapolis, Maryland in 1861.

**Think Critically:** The bloodiest single-day battle in American history coincided with the Battle of South Mountain three days later near Sharpsburg, Maryland. What was the name of this battle? The result of the battle also allowed for President Lincoln to issue this well-known public statement. (Hint: "That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.")

## THE LATE GENERAL RENO.

WE publish on page 629 a portrait of the late GENERAL RENO, who was killed at the Battle of South Mountain, on 14th September. The portrait is from a photograph by Brady.

Jesse L. Reno was born in Virginia, in 1825. His family removed to Pennsylvania when he was a boy, and from that State he was appointed to West Point in 1842. He graduated in 1845, ranking seventh in a class which included Stonewall Jackson and many gallant officers of the Union army, and was appointed Brevet Second Lieutenant of Ordnance.

During the war with Mexico, 1846-'7, he commanded a howitzer battery, and for "gallant and meritorious conduct at the battle of Cerro Gordo" was brevetted First Lieutenant April 18, 1847. For bravery on the battle-field of Chapultepec, where he was wounded, he was brevetted Captain September 13, 1847. When hostilities ceased he was appointed Assistant Professor of Mathematics at West Point for six months, and was then appointed Secretary of the Board of Artillery—a position he held about eighteen months, during which he was engaged in testing the relative merits of heavy ordnance and compiling a work on heavy artillery tactics. He was subsequently connected with the Coast Survey service, and upon withdrawing went out West with a corps of Topographical Engineers, and assisted in the construction of a military road from Big Sioux to St. Paul. He was engaged in this work some twelve months, and on the 3d of March, 1853, he was promoted to a full First Lieutenancy of Ordnance. He was next (in 1854) stationed at the Frankfort Arsenal, where he remained about three years, and then accompanied General Johnston in the expedition to Utah as ordnance officer. Returning in 1859, he was ordered to the Mount Vernon Arsenal in Alabama, and recently was stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. On the 1st of July, 1860, he was promoted to a Captaincy of Ordnance, having been Senior First Lieutenant of that department for some time. He was appointed Brigadier-General of Volunteers November 12, 1861, and was subsequently ordered to report to General Burnside at Annapolis, Maryland, preparatory to taking a command in the expedition to North Carolina.

He commanded the second brigade in Burnside's army, and led the attack upon Fort Barlow, on Roanoke Island. He subsequently displayed good generalship and gallantry in the fight at Newbern. In July he was ordered to Newport News to reinforce the army of the Potomac; and subsequently to Fredericksburg. He was soon attached to the army of Virginia, and took part in the series of actions which terminated at Manassas on 1st September. When General M'Dowell was granted leave of absence he was appointed to his command, with the rank of Major-General, and led his corps against the rebels in Maryland. On the 14th inst. the rebels were attacked in their position on South Mountain, and just at the close of the fight, when the victory was won, he was killed by a sharpshooter. The *Herald* correspondent thus describes the manner of his death:

General Reno had been most active all day, fearing no danger and appearing to be every where at the same time. Safe up to seven o'clock, no one dreamed of such a disaster as was to happen. He, with his staff, was standing a little back of the wood on a field, the rebel forces being directly in front. A body of his troops were just before him, and at this point the fire of the rebels was directed. A Minié-ball struck him and went through his body. He fell, and, from the first, appeared to have a knowledge that he could not survive the wound that he had received. He was instantly carried with the greatest care to the rear, followed by a number of the officers, and attended by the division surgeon, Dr. Cutter. At the foot of the hill he was laid under a tree, and after a few moments the surgeon said he could not live, and he died without the least movement a few minutes after. Grief at any time is heart-rending; but such grief as was manifested by the staff officers and those about him it has never before been my lot to witness.

The old soldier, just come from the scene of carnage with death staring him in the face on every side, here knelt and wept like a child. No eye was dry among those present, and many a silent and spoken resolution was made that moment that Reno's death should be amply avenged. Thus died one of the bravest generals that was in the service of his country; one of the bright gems in the crown of Burnside, and a man whom all respected and loved. The country can ill afford to lose at this trying hour such men as Kearney, Stevens, and Reno. The intelligence of his death was received by all with the greatest sorrow, as it was well known that but few could take his place. The command of the corps devolved upon General Cox, who, from that time, directed the movements of the army.

He was, indeed, one of the bravest of the brave, and one of the ablest of our generals.