

## ***Mapping, Pathfinding, Territorializing, Reenacting: The Shenandoah Valley and the Stonewall Jackson Campaign, 1862***

### **An Exhibition of Artifacts from the Bruce and Geraldine Kiefer Shenandoah Valley Image Collection**

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The Shenandoah Valley “came into its own” in imagery of and promulgated by the Civil War. Histories of the conflict state its strategic importance (for the Confederacy) and power (for the Union): as a corridor for the movement of troops down the Valley to threaten Washington, and as a granary for the provision of grain and other crops from abundantly supplied and supplying Valley farmers. The most intriguing images of the Valley, such as C.S.A. topographer Jedediah Hotchkiss’s “personalized” map of First Kernstown (lobby), upon which the very spot where Jackson slept that night (March 23, 1862) is reverently marked, bypass these bare-fact meanings in order to delve into more metaphorical territories of war.

*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* employed correspondent/“special artist” Edwin Forbes to capture events in the Valley in 1862, when General T. J. (“Stonewall”) Jackson’s victories made it a key theater of war. Forbes pictured First Kernstown (Case 1, lobby); regions along the Road during General Nathaniel Banks’s encampments and movements between First Kernstown and First Winchester (March 23-May 25); during Generals Nathan Shields’s and John Frémont’s marches between First Winchester and Cross Keys (May 25-June 8); and as Banks crossed the Massanutten and the Blue Ridge (July 4-8). In one rollercoaster-like panorama, dated July 4 (Case 2, library), Banks’s wagon trains snake along and string out precariously from an unseen (and unfriendly) valley road; the “Three Sisters” loom as the Road’s natural reinforcement behind. In an expansive panorama above Strasburg, numbered for elaboration and labeling of key positions and captioned “The escape of Stonewall Jackson’s Army down [*sic*] the Valley Pike at Strasburg Va” (Case 3, library), Jackson’s trains rapidly scoot along a Pike straightaway while General Bayard’s scouts pry over their disappearing prey. (Union troops, attempting to trap Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson before he could retreat up the Valley, found their advances to be too late. “[Forbes] came in sight of the enemy, who were retreating through Strasburg very rapidly, with their baggage trains nearly through” [*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*, June 28, 1862, p. 196]).

In all of these images, the Shenandoah Valley microcosmically maps and mimics what *Harper's Weekly* called the “theater of war.” Forbes’s panoramas are more accurately termed “graphic maps” than illustrative art, as the Valley carves out what Union troops and Northern readers were led to understand, imagistically as well as strategically, was a new Virginia—not the tourist’s landscape of spas, hotels and natural attractions, but a hostile, foreign, and dangerously animated territory.

That the Valley’s hostility was sparred is seen in a series of closely-timed and spaced illustrations by Forbes, dating June 2 through 8 and appearing in *Leslie's Weekly* of July 1862 (Case 1, lobby; Case 3, library). They track Frémont up to including June 8, the date of the Battle of Cross Keys, a stunning Confederate victory. Through a veritable storyboard of drawings, published in Leslie’s July 5 paper with victory-laden captions, Forbes attempted to re-contextualize the Valley Road and its connectors from a hostile screen to a bee-line pathway, sublimely re-carved by Frémont, who was known nationwide through his Western explorations as “The Pathfinder.” Pointing to a sublime Federal victory, as pictorial propaganda promulgated in the face of defeat it was an effective vehicle--a sublime metaphor.