

# 51st virginia infantry

51st Virginia Infantry: A Glimpse into a Confederate Regiment's Journey

**51st virginia infantry** holds a significant place in the annals of Civil War history, representing one of the many Confederate regiments that shaped the tumultuous landscape of 19th-century America. This infantry unit, formed in Virginia during the early days of the Civil War, saw action in numerous battles and campaigns, embodying the spirit, struggles, and sacrifices of the Southern soldiers. Exploring the story of the 51st Virginia Infantry offers a window into the broader Confederate military experience, the strategic challenges they faced, and the legacy left behind by those who served.

## The Formation and Early Days of the 51st Virginia Infantry

The 51st Virginia Infantry was organized in 1861, shortly after Virginia seceded from the Union. Drawing men primarily from several counties in Virginia, the regiment quickly became part of the Confederate States Army. Like many other units formed during this period, the 51st Virginia Infantry comprised volunteers motivated by a mix of regional loyalty, defense of their homes, and the complex socio-political climate of the time.

## Recruitment and Composition

Recruitment efforts focused on local communities, with companies often consisting of men who shared close personal ties, such as neighbors, friends, and relatives. This closeness fostered a strong sense of camaraderie but also meant that losses in battle could deeply affect entire communities back home. The regiment's companies were typically named after their county or town of origin, a common practice intended to boost morale and enlistment.

## Training and Early Assignments

Like many Confederate units, the 51st Virginia Infantry began with limited training and equipment. Early on, the soldiers trained in basic infantry tactics, marksmanship, and battlefield maneuvers, often under challenging conditions due to shortages of supplies. Initial assignments involved defensive positions in Virginia, protecting key transportation routes and strategic points as the Confederacy prepared for the inevitable confrontations with Union forces.

# Major Engagements and Campaigns

Throughout the Civil War, the 51st Virginia Infantry participated in several important battles, contributing to notable Confederate campaigns. Their involvement provides insight into the strategic priorities of the Confederate Army and the harsh realities faced by infantry regiments during prolonged conflict.

## Battle of Antietam

One of the most significant and bloodiest battles in which the 51st Virginia Infantry fought was the Battle of Antietam in September 1862. Also known as the Battle of Sharpsburg, it marked a critical moment in the war, being the single bloodiest day on American soil. The 51st Virginia Infantry found itself engaged in intense combat, enduring heavy casualties while demonstrating discipline and resilience under fire. Their actions contributed to the overall Confederate defensive effort, even though the battle ended inconclusively.

## Gettysburg Campaign

The regiment also took part in the Gettysburg Campaign in the summer of 1863, one of the pivotal moments in the Civil War. The 51st Virginia Infantry marched north as part of General Robert E. Lee's invasion of the North. During the three-day Battle of Gettysburg, the regiment faced fierce fighting, especially during efforts to break the Union lines. While the Confederate forces were ultimately repelled, the bravery and determination of regiments like the 51st Virginia Infantry remain well-documented in historical records.

## Later War Actions and the Siege of Petersburg

As the war dragged on, the 51st Virginia Infantry was involved in the grueling Siege of Petersburg (1864–1865), a protracted series of battles and trench warfare that drained Confederate resources. The regiment's role in defending Petersburg was crucial, as the city was a vital supply hub for the Confederate capital of Richmond. Despite dwindling manpower and supplies, the soldiers of the 51st Virginia Infantry continued to hold their positions until the eventual fall of Petersburg and Richmond signaled the collapse of the Confederacy.

# **Life as a Soldier in the 51st Virginia Infantry**

Understanding the experiences of the men in the 51st Virginia Infantry provides a more personal perspective on the hardships and daily realities of Civil War soldiers.

## **Camp Life and Hardships**

Outside of battle, soldiers endured harsh conditions in camp. Food shortages, inadequate clothing, and exposure to the elements were constant challenges. Diseases such as dysentery, typhoid, and pneumonia claimed many lives, sometimes more than the battlefield itself. Letters and diaries from soldiers in the 51st Virginia Infantry reveal the emotional toll of separation from family and the uncertainty of war.

## **Weapons and Tactics**

The regiment, like many Confederate infantry units, was primarily equipped with rifled muskets, which allowed for greater accuracy than earlier smoothbore firearms. Infantry tactics during the war often involved forming lines and engaging in volley fire, but as the conflict progressed, trench warfare and skirmishing became more common. The adaptability of the 51st Virginia Infantry to evolving warfare conditions was a testament to their training and leadership.

## **Leadership and Notable Figures**

Key leaders within the 51st Virginia Infantry played vital roles in shaping the regiment's effectiveness and morale.

## **Regimental Commanders**

Throughout its service, the regiment was commanded by officers who brought experience and strategic insight to the unit. Leadership changes often occurred due to battlefield casualties or promotions, but strong command was essential to maintaining order and discipline amidst the chaos of war. Some commanders of the 51st Virginia Infantry were recognized for their tactical acumen and dedication, leading their men through some of the toughest engagements.

## **Stories of Valor and Sacrifice**

Personal stories of soldiers from the 51st Virginia Infantry highlight acts of bravery and the profound sacrifices made. These narratives, preserved through letters, memoirs, and official reports, help humanize the regiment beyond mere statistics, illustrating the courage and resolve of individuals who fought under difficult circumstances.

## **The Legacy of the 51st Virginia Infantry**

The history of the 51st Virginia Infantry does not end with the Civil War's conclusion. The regiment's legacy continues to be remembered and studied by historians, descendants, and Civil War enthusiasts.

## **Preservation Efforts and Historical Societies**

Several organizations and historical societies have worked to preserve battlefields and archives related to the 51st Virginia Infantry. These efforts ensure that future generations can access firsthand accounts, artifacts, and records that shed light on the regiment's role in American history.

## **Impact on Local Communities**

The counties that contributed men to the 51st Virginia Infantry often hold commemorations and maintain monuments honoring their ancestors' participation in the war. This connection between past and present underscores the lasting impact of the regiment on Virginia's cultural and historical identity.

Exploring the story of the 51st Virginia Infantry reveals more than just military maneuvers and battle dates—it opens a window into the lives of young men caught in one of America's most defining conflicts. Their experiences, both on and off the battlefield, contribute to a deeper understanding of the Civil War's complex legacy and the enduring human spirit amidst adversity.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What was the 51st Virginia Infantry Regiment?**

The 51st Virginia Infantry Regiment was a Confederate infantry regiment that served during the American Civil War, primarily composed of men from Virginia.

## **When was the 51st Virginia Infantry Regiment formed?**

The 51st Virginia Infantry Regiment was formed in 1861, shortly after the outbreak of the American Civil War.

## **In which major battles did the 51st Virginia Infantry participate?**

The 51st Virginia Infantry participated in several major battles including the Battle of Gettysburg, the Battle of Antietam, and the Battle of Chancellorsville.

## **Who were some notable commanders of the 51st Virginia Infantry?**

One notable commander of the 51st Virginia Infantry was Colonel Philip St. George Cocke, who played a significant role in organizing the regiment.

## **What was the role of the 51st Virginia Infantry during the Gettysburg Campaign?**

During the Gettysburg Campaign, the 51st Virginia Infantry was part of the Confederate forces engaged in intense fighting, contributing to the regiment's reputation for bravery despite suffering heavy casualties.

## **How did the 51st Virginia Infantry Regiment's service end?**

The 51st Virginia Infantry Regiment continued to serve until the end of the Civil War, ultimately surrendering with the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House in April 1865.

## **Are there any memorials or reenactments dedicated to the 51st Virginia Infantry?**

Yes, there are several Civil War memorials and reenactment groups that honor the history and legacy of the 51st Virginia Infantry Regiment, particularly in Virginia and at key battle sites.

## **Additional Resources**

51st Virginia Infantry: A Detailed Examination of a Confederate Regiment

**51st virginia infantry** stands as a significant yet often overlooked unit within the Confederate States Army during the American Civil War. Formed amidst the mounting tensions of 1861, this infantry regiment was composed

primarily of men from various counties in Virginia, reflecting the state's complex role in the Confederacy. The 51st Virginia Infantry's journey through the war is marked by its participation in key battles, strategic movements, and the evolving nature of infantry combat during one of the most turbulent periods in American history.

## **Formation and Early Organization**

The 51st Virginia Infantry was organized in June 1861, drawing recruits largely from central and western Virginia counties such as Alleghany, Monroe, and Greenbrier. At its inception, the regiment was part of the larger Confederate effort to consolidate forces in the face of Union advances. Leadership roles were typically filled by local notables and experienced military men, which was common among Confederate regiments where community ties often influenced command appointments.

The regiment was initially equipped with standard infantry weapons of the time, including rifled muskets, although supply shortages frequently affected armament consistency. Training was conducted under the Confederate military's early war protocols, emphasizing line infantry tactics inherited from Napoleonic warfare but soon challenged by technological advancements in weaponry.

## **Combat Engagements and Tactical Deployments**

Throughout the war, the 51st Virginia Infantry participated in several notable engagements, reflecting the shifting theaters of conflict in the Eastern campaigns. Their involvement in battles such as the Seven Days Battles and the Battle of Fredericksburg demonstrated the regiment's operational importance.

### **Seven Days Battles**

During the Seven Days Battles in 1862, the 51st Virginia Infantry was part of the Confederate forces attempting to repel the Union Army's Peninsula Campaign aimed at capturing Richmond. The regiment's role involved aggressive offensives and defensive maneuvers that tested their resilience and coordination under fire. Despite heavy casualties, their performance contributed to the Confederate Army's tactical success in pushing back Union forces.

# **Battle of Fredericksburg**

The Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862 saw the 51st Virginia Infantry entrenched in defensive positions against a well-coordinated Union assault. Their ability to hold firm lines under intense artillery and infantry attacks highlighted both the discipline and determination of the regiment. This battle is often cited as one of the Confederate Army's most decisive victories, with the 51st playing a critical role in the defensive network that repelled the Union offensive.

## **Challenges and Adaptations**

Like many Confederate regiments, the 51st Virginia Infantry faced numerous challenges throughout its service. Attrition from combat casualties, disease, and desertion gradually reduced their numbers, necessitating reorganization and consolidation with other units. Supply shortages, particularly of food, ammunition, and medical care, further strained the regiment's effectiveness.

The regiment also had to adapt to evolving military doctrines and battlefield technologies. The increased use of rifled muskets and artillery demanded changes in infantry tactics, such as the adoption of skirmish lines and entrenchments. The 51st Virginia Infantry's capacity to adjust to these conditions influenced their operational longevity.

## **Leadership and Morale**

Leadership within the 51st Virginia Infantry underwent several changes due to battlefield casualties and promotions. Commanders played a crucial role not only in tactical decisions but also in maintaining morale among troops who endured harsh conditions and prolonged engagements. Letters and diaries from soldiers reveal a complex picture of camaraderie, hardship, and a steadfast commitment to their cause, reflecting the human element behind the regiment's military actions.

## **Legacy and Historical Significance**

The 51st Virginia Infantry's service provides valuable insights into the Confederate infantry experience during the Civil War. While not as widely chronicled as some regiments, its operational history contributes to a broader understanding of Virginia's military contribution and the complexities of Confederate military organization.

In comparison to other Virginia regiments, the 51st demonstrated a balance of tenacity and adaptability, characteristics emblematic of Confederate infantry.

units. Their participation in major battles underscores their strategic importance in the Eastern Theater, bridging the experiences of local militias and professional soldiers.

## Preservation and Commemoration

Today, the legacy of the 51st Virginia Infantry is preserved through historical societies, battlefield parks, and archival collections. Researchers and Civil War enthusiasts analyze muster rolls, battle reports, and personal accounts to reconstruct the regiment's narrative. These efforts contribute to understanding the socio-political impact of the Civil War on Virginia communities and the soldiers who fought under the Confederate banner.

## Conclusion

The 51st Virginia Infantry exemplifies the complexities of Confederate military units—formed from local populations, shaped by the pressures of war, and tested in pivotal battles that defined the Civil War's outcome. Its story offers a nuanced perspective on the infantryman's experience, the tactical evolution of warfare, and the enduring historical significance of Virginia's regimental contributions. As historians continue to explore Civil War legacies, the 51st Virginia Infantry remains a vital subject of study for those seeking to comprehend the multifaceted nature of this defining American conflict.

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**51st virginia infantry:** Historical Sketch and Roster of the Virginia 51st Infantry Regiment

John C. Rigdon, 2015-10-15 The 51st Virginia Infantry Regiment was organized at Wytheville, Virginia in August of 1861. It was composed of eleven companies from southwestern Virginia. The vast majority of these men were farmers. The 51st earned an impressive record in many battles. It led the charge at New Market, a victory which saved the Shenandoah Valley, and therefore bought the Confederacy another year. The regiment participated in Longstreet's Knoxville Campaign, and was assigned briefly to Lee's Army of Northern Virginia while fighting around Richmond and at the bloody battle of Cold Harbor. It was also a vital part of Jubal Early's Valley Campaign and his famous raid on Washington. Companies Of The VA 51st Infantry Regiment Company A (Capt. Stephen M.



Dickey's Company) - Grayson County Company B (Nelson Rifles) - Nelson County Company C Company D ( Capt. Ezekiel Youngs Company) - Grayson County Company E (Wythe Rifles) - Wythe County and Nelson County Company F Company G Company H Company I (Capt. John P. Wolfe's Company) - Washington County Company K (Bland Tigers) - Bland County Company L (Tazewell County Company) - An eleven-piece band

**51st virginia infantry: Virginia Civil War Regiments** Source Wikipedia, 2013-09 Please note that the content of this book primarily consists of articles available from Wikipedia or other free sources online. Pages: 62. Chapters: 41st Virginia Infantry, 45th Virginia Infantry, 51st Virginia Infantry, 43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry, 33rd Virginia Infantry, Virginia units in the Civil War, List of West Virginia Civil War Confederate units, Stonewall Brigade, 35th Battalion of Virginia Cavalry, Danville Artillery, 32nd Virginia Infantry, 25th Virginia Infantry, 10th Virginia Cavalry, Fluvanna Artillery, 7th Virginia Cavalry, 8th Virginia Infantry, Loudoun Rangers, 4th Virginia Cavalry, 31st Virginia Infantry, 38th Virginia Infantry, 1st Virginia Cavalry, 4th Virginia Infantry, Carpenter's Battery, 2nd Virginia Cavalry, 2nd Virginia, Company D, 3rd Virginia Cavalry, 27th Virginia Infantry, 5th Virginia Cavalry, 63rd Virginia Infantry, 53rd Virginia Infantry, 55th Virginia Infantry, 10th Virginia Infantry, 15th Virginia Cavalry, 6th Virginia Cavalry, 11th Virginia Infantry, 17th Virginia Infantry, 42nd Virginia Infantry, 61st Virginia Infantry, 23rd Virginia Infantry, 40th Virginia Infantry, 9th Virginia Cavalry, 49th Virginia Infantry, 21st Virginia Infantry, 18th Virginia Infantry, 36th Virginia Cavalry Battalion, 19th Virginia Infantry, 28th Virginia Infantry, 44th Virginia Infantry, 11th Virginia Cavalry, 37th Virginia Infantry, 24th Virginia Infantry, 57th Virginia Infantry, 14th Virginia Infantry, 50th Virginia Infantry, 13th Virginia Infantry, 56th Virginia Infantry, 13th Virginia Cavalry, 29th Virginia Infantry, 16th Virginia Infantry, 47th Virginia Infantry, 15th Virginia Infantry, 58th Virginia Infantry, 62nd Virginia Mounted Infantry, 59th Virginia Infantry, 52nd Virginia Infantry, 30th Virginia Infantry, 12th Virginia Infantry, 48th Virginia Infantry, 36th Virginia Infantry, 54th Virginia Infantry, 8th Virginia Cavalry, 46th Virginia Infantry, 60th Virginia Infantry, 26th Virginia Infantry, 1st Virginia Infantry Battalion, 12th...

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**51st virginia infantry: Letters of a Confederate Private** Thomas Ochletree Wilson, Missouri Jane Huddle Wilson, 2004

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**51st virginia infantry: 26th Battalion Virginia Infantry** Terry Lowry, 1991

**51st virginia infantry: The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864** Gary W. Gallagher, 2006-12-15 Generally regarded as the most important of the Civil War campaigns conducted in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, that of 1864 lasted more than four months and claimed more than 25,000 casualties. The armies of Philip H. Sheridan and Jubal A. Early contended for immense stakes. Beyond the agricultural bounty and the boost in morale a victory would bring, events in the Valley also would affect Abraham Lincoln's chances for reelection in the November 1864 presidential canvass. The eleven original essays in this volume reexamine common assumptions about the campaign, its major figures, and its significance. Taking advantage of the most recent scholarship and a wide range of primary sources, contributors examine strategy and tactics, the performances of key commanders on each side, the campaign's political repercussions, and the experiences of civilians caught in the path of the armies. The authors do not always agree with one another, yet, taken together, their essays highlight important connections between the home front and the battlefield, as well as ways in which military affairs, civilian experiences, and politics played off one another during the campaign. Contributors: William W. Bergen, Charlottesville, Virginia Keith S. Bohannon, State University of West Georgia Andre M. Fleche, University of Virginia Gary W. Gallagher, University of Virginia Joseph T. Glatthaar, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Robert E. L. Krick, Richmond, Virginia Robert K. Krick, Fredericksburg, Virginia William J. Miller, Churchville, Virginia Aaron Sheehan-Dean, University of North Florida William G. Thomas, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Joan Waugh, University of California, Los Angeles

**51st virginia infantry: 23rd Battalion Virginia Infantry** J. L. Scott, 1991

**51st virginia infantry: 62nd Virginia Infantry** Roger U. Delauter, 1988

**51st virginia infantry: *In Memory of Self and Comrades*** Michael K. Shaffer, 2019-09-24

Thomas W. Colley served in one of the most active and famous units in the Civil War, the 1st Virginia Cavalry, which fought in battles in the Eastern Theater, from First Manassas/Bull Run to the defense of Petersburg. Colley was born November 11, 1837, outside Abingdon, Virginia, and grew up knowing the daily demands of life on a farm. In May 1861, along with the other members of the Washington Mounted Rifles, he left his home in Washington County and reported to camp in Richmond. During the war, Colley received wounds on three different occasions: first at Waterloo Bridge in 1862, again at Kelly's Ford in 1863, and finally at Haw's Shop in 1864. The engagement at Haw's Shop resulted in the amputation of his left foot, thereby ending his wartime service. The first modern scholarly edition of Colley's writings, *In Memory of Self and Comrades* dramatizes Colley's fate as a wounded soldier mustered out before the war's conclusion. Colley's postwar reflections on the war reveal his struggle to earn a living and maintain his integrity while remaining somewhat unreconciled to his condition. He found much of his solace through writing and sought to advance his education after the war. As one of an estimated 20,000 soldiers who underwent amputation during the Civil War, his memoirs reveal the challenges of living with what many might recognize today as post-traumatic stress disorder. Annotations from editor Michael K. Shaffer provide further context to Colley's colorful and insightful writings on both his own condition and the condition of other veterans also dealing with amputations

**51st virginia infantry: Maryland Line Confederate Soldiers' Home** , 1894 Contains description and brief history of the Maryland Line Confederate Soldiers' Home including its Board of Governors, buildings, rooms and cemetery. Also includes some history and rosters of members of the Maryland Line P.A. of the Confederate States and the Society of the Army and Navy of the Confederate States in the State of Maryland.

**51st virginia infantry: The Complete Roster and Service Records of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia during the Overland Campaign** Alfred C. Young III, 2019-02-13 Alfred C. Young III's Complete Roster and Service Records of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia during the Overland Campaign is the first compilation of the entire roster and service records for all the various units that composed Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia during the 1864 Overland Campaign. It is the ultimate reference guide to the more than 120,000 soldiers who served with Lee in Virginia as he led his army into a series of battles against Union General Ulysses S. Grant. While there are specific guides to several of Lee's units, Young's work is the first comprehensive companion that features data on all of the men who served under the general during this campaign. Using an array of primary source material, from official Confederate records to southern newspapers, Young provides the enlistment and unit data for each soldier as well as a concise history of their service, including records on their rank, time served, promotion, hospitalization, wounds, capture, desertion, absence without leave, furloughs, and death. An essential archive for both genealogists and Civil War scholars, the Complete Roster and Service Records of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia during the Overland Campaign is the most wide-ranging catalog in existence of each soldier's record during the campaign. This vast array of research is available only as an e-book, enabling ease of search and annotation.

**51st virginia infantry: Grant's River Campaign** Jack H. Lepa, 2013-11-08 In Tennessee in the early months of 1862, Ulysses S. Grant captured forts Henry and Donelson and opened the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers to military and commercial shipping. In April the first of many terrible battles of the Civil War was fought near Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River around a decrepit meeting-house known as Shiloh. This costly victory established Federal control over much of central Tennessee. These early Union victories gave the Federals control of two of the major rivers in the region--the highways of the period--opening large areas of the Confederacy to Federal invasion. Other important results were the end of the Confederate threat to control Kentucky and possibly close off the Ohio River. These victories also were a major factor in forcing the

abandonment of a key Confederate fort on the Mississippi River at Columbus, Kentucky. This book describes not only the actual fighting that took place but how important political and economic factors influenced the overall military strategy in the region.

**51st virginia infantry: The Whartons' War** William C. Davis, Sue Heth Bell, 2022-05-03  
Between March 1863 and July 1865, Confederate newlyweds Brigadier General Gabriel C. Wharton and Anne Radford Wharton wrote 524 letters, and all survived, unknown until now. Separated by twenty years in age and differing opinions on myriad subjects, these educated and articulate Confederates wrote frankly and perceptively on their Civil War world. Sharing opinions on generals and politicians, the course of the war, the fate of the Confederacy, life at home, and their wavering loyalties, the Whartons explored the shifting gender roles brought on by war, changing relations between slave owners and enslaved people, the challenges of life behind Confederate lines, the pain of familial loss, the definitions of duty and honor, and more. Featuring one of the fullest known sets of correspondence by a high-level officer and his wife, this volume reveals the Whartons' wartime experience from their courtship in the spring of 1863 to June 1865, when Gabriel Wharton swore loyalty to the United States and accepted parole before returning home. William C. Davis and Sue Heth Bell's thoughtful editing guides readers into this world of experience and its ongoing historical relevance.

**51st virginia infantry: Local designations of Confederate troops** , 189?

**51st virginia infantry: Civil War Medal of Honor Recipients** Robert P. Broadwater, 2024-10-17  
In November 1861, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Townsend, adjutant general of the Army, sought to establish an award to motivate and inspire Northern soldiers in the aftermath of the early, morale-devastating defeats of the Civil War. The outcome of Townsend's brainstorm was the Medal of Honor. This reference book offers information about all recipients of the Civil War Medal of Honor, with details of their acts of heroism. The work then organizes recipients by a variety of criteria including branch of service; regiment or naval ship assignment; place of action; act of heroism; state or country of nativity; age of recipient; and date of issuance. Also included is information about the first winners of the medal, the first recipients of multiple medals, posthumously awarded medals and civilian recipients.

**51st virginia infantry: Lee's Army during the Overland Campaign** Alfred C. Young III, 2013-05-06  
The initial confrontation between Union general Ulysses S. Grant and Confederate general Robert E. Lee in Virginia during the Overland Campaign has not until recently received the same degree of scrutiny as other Civil War battles. The first round of combat between the two renowned generals spanned about six weeks in May and early June 1864. The major skirmishes—Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor—rivaled any other key engagement in the war. While the strength and casualties in Grant's army remain uncontested, historians know much less about Lee's army. Nonetheless, the prevailing narrative depicts Confederates as outstripped nearly two to one, and portrays Grant suffering losses at a rate nearly double that of Lee. As a result, most Civil War scholars contend that the campaign proved a clear numerical victory for Lee but a tactical triumph for Grant. Questions about the power of Lee's army stem mainly from poor record keeping by the Confederates as well as an inordinate number of missing or lost battle reports. The complexity of the Overland Campaign, which consisted of several smaller engagements in addition to the three main clashes, led to considerable historic uncertainty regarding Lee's army. Significant doubts persist about the army's capability at the commencement of the drive, the amount of reinforcements received, and the total of casualties sustained during the entire campaign and at each of the major battles. In *Lee's Army during the Overland Campaign*, Alfred C. Young III addresses this deficiency by providing for the first time accurate information regarding the Confederate side throughout the conflict. The results challenge prevailing assumptions, showing clearly that Lee's army stood far larger in strength and size and suffered considerably higher casualties than previously believed.

**51st virginia infantry: Union Command Failure in the Shenandoah** David Powell, 2018-12-19  
The Battle of New Market in the Shenandoah Valley suffers from no lack of drama,

interest, or importance. The ramifications of the May 1864 engagement, which involved only 10,000 troops, were substantial. Previous studies, however, focused on the Confederate side of the story. David Powell's, *Union Command Failure in the Shenandoah: Major General Franz Sigel and the War in the Valley of Virginia, May 1864*, provides the balance that has so long been needed. Union General Ulysses S. Grant regarded a spring campaign in the Valley of Virginia as integral to his overall strategy designed to turn Robert E. Lee's strategic western flank, deny his Army of Northern Virginia much needed supplies, and prevent other Confederates from reinforcing Lee. It fell to Union general and German transplant Franz Sigel to execute Grant's strategy in the northern reaches of the Shenandoah while Maj. Gen. George Crook struck elsewhere in southwestern Virginia. Sigel's record in the field was checkered at best, and he was not Grant's first choice to lead the effort, but a combination of politics and other factors left the German in command. Sigel met Confederate Maj. Gen. John C. Breckinridge and his small army on May 15 just outside the crossroads town of New Market. The hard-fought affair hung in the balance until finally the Union lines broke, and Sigel's Yankees fled the field. Breckinridge's command included some 300 young men from the Virginia Military Institute's Corps of Cadets. VMI's presence and dramatic role in the fighting ensured that New Market would never be forgotten, but pushed other aspects of this interesting and important campaign into the back seat of history. Award-winning author David Powell's years of archival and other research provides an outstanding foundation for this outstanding study. Previous works have focused on the Confederate side of the battle, using Sigel's incompetence as sufficient excuse to explain why the Federals were defeated. This methodology, however, neglects the other important factors that contributed to the ruin of Grant's scheme in the Valley. *Union Command Failure in the Shenandoah* delves into all the issues, analyzing the campaign from an operational standpoint. Complete with original maps, photos, and the skillful writing readers have come to expect from the pen of David Powell, *Union Command Failure in the Shenandoah* will satisfy the most demanding students of Civil War history.

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