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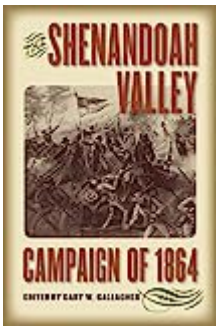

Gary Gallagher, ed. *The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. ix + 416 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-3005-5.

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Return to the Valley

The Shenandoah Valley first gained prominence in the American Civil War during the spring and summer of 1862 when Confederate General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson completed one of the most spectacular and audacious campaigns of the war. Nearly two years later, in efforts to duplicate the success of the 1862 campaign and to open a second front in Virginia, General Robert E. Lee ordered Lieutenant General Jubal Early and his Second Corps, The Army of the Valley, on an independent operation to western Virginia. Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan was appointed commander of all the Union forces in the Valley, the newly christened Army of the Shenandoah on August 7. Sheridan's forces won a series of crucial battles at Third Winchester, Fisher's Hill, and Cedar Creek, before engaging in the infamous "Burning" of late fall. The resulting 1864 campaign lasted nearly six months and superceded the 1862 campaign in all aspects: scale, casualties, and economic and political impact. Indeed, the 1864 Valley Campaign was "unequivocal in its military and economic outcome," leaving the Valley in economic ruin and further ensuring Abraham Lincoln's candidacy for re-election (p. xiv).

The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864, edited by Gary Gallagher, a distinguished Civil War scholar and history professor at the University of Virginia, is the ninth and final volume in the Military Campaigns of the Civil War series. The eleven essays examine and analyze the Valley's battles and leaders. They incorporate elements of the "new military history" by providing an understanding of the common soldiers' and civilians' experiences, as well as the political and economic ramifications of the "longest, largest, and most important military campaign waged in the Valley" (p. ix). Contributors include Joseph T. Glatthaar, Keith S. Bohannon, William W. Bergen, William J. Miller, Robert E. L. Krick, Andre M. Fleche, William G. Thomas, Aaron Sheehan-Dean, Joan Waugh, and Robert K. Krick.

Gary W. Gallagher's essay offers a comparative analysis of Sheridan's and Early's performances, highlighting their contrasting experiences during the campaign. Gallagher argues that Sheridan and Early each performed well in executing orders from their superior commanders. Interestingly, at the outset of the campaign, Early's reputation surpassed Sheridan's. In May 1864, when

Early was appointed commander of the Second Corps (formally under General Richard Ewell and "Stonewall" Jackson), he was one of the most experienced and capable commanders in the Army of Northern Virginia. Sheridan, on the other hand, had little prior experience in high command and struggled to earn respect from his superiors (excluding Gen. U. S. Grant). While Sheridan lacked advantages in personal reputation and command experience, he had superior resource strength, as the Army of the Shenandoah was nearly three times larger than the Confederate force. As Gallagher argues, despite Early's numerical disadvantage he accomplished Lee's strategic directives for much of the campaign, including pushing Federal troops out of the Valley, invading Maryland, threatening Washington D. C., and forcing Grant to send essential troops from the Army of the Potomac to reinforce Washington D. C. and the Shenandoah. Yet some of Early's efforts were unsuccessful, especially his dual defeats at Third Winchester and Cedar Creek, which became "an unmitigated disaster" (p. 17). Comparatively, Sheridan possessed personal charisma and leadership that Early lacked. Sheridan's magnetic presence helped to rally and inspire Union troops to victory at Third Winchester and Cedar Creek. Moreover, Sheridan astutely used infantry and cavalry in coordination, where Early frequently failed to employ his cavalry, often the defining arm in the battles, and instead relied upon infantry and artillery. Sheridan was able to execute most of Grant's objectives, thereby furthering the Union war effort and placing himself as a member of the Great Triumvirate behind Generals Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman.

William W. Bergen, an independent scholar, offers an insightful essay on Horatio G. Wright, "The Other Hero of Cedar Creek." Surprisingly, despite the vast amount of scholarship produced on Civil War generals, Bergen states that "not a single biography, monograph, or article" has examined Wright (p. 86). The lack of scholarship on Wright is confusing considering his impressive wartime experiences and military record. Wright served as an engineer, commanded the Department of the Ohio, and became a senior corps commander with the Army of the Potomac in the last year of the war. Wright's Sixth Corps was pivotal in the Valley campaign, was present for Lee's surrender at Appomattox, and joined with General Sherman's forces to move against remaining Confederate units in North Carolina. Bergen argues that Wright is not only neglected in the scholarship, but was also obscure in his own life. While a West Point graduate, Wright, unlike the majority of his classmates, did not serve in the Mexican War, but instead remained a senior engineer at Fort Jefferson. In addition, Wright is rarely mentioned in contemporary correspondence. Generals Sheridan and Sedgwick (Wright's predecessor as commander of the Sixth Corps) rarely mention Wright. Bergen attributes some of Wright's anonymity to the fact that unlike many Civil War commanders, Wright lacked political connections and did not call attention to himself during or after the war. Bergen's essay is an insightful examination of one of the war's most competent, but little known commanders.

Similar to Bergen's analysis of an overlooked Union commander, Joan Waugh, professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, examines Charles Russell Lowell and his performance during the Valley campaign. Lowell, a "New England Cavalier," was a Union cavalry commander who was mortally wounded at the battle of Cedar Creek. Waugh argues that Lowell's motivations for enlisting and fighting remained steadfast: preservation of the Union and freedom. Lowell believed that military victories were only useful if they furthered the overall cause of the Union. Upon Lowell's death at Cedar Creek he was mourned, as "one of the Union's best and brightest" (p. 333).

Andre Fleche, a doctoral candidate at the University of Virginia, has provided an understanding of how military and political affairs, specifically Sheridan's actions in the Valley, were intrinsically linked in the fall of 1864. Fleche argues that the Democratic opposition stemmed from Sheridan's hard war campaign and suggests that "Sheridan's Valley campaign epitomized all that Democrats perceived as wrong in the Republican led war effort" (p. 203). Democrats remained steadfast to their conciliation policy and argued that implementation of hard war policies (the destruction of crops, barns, and property) would only alienate southern civilians and thereby make reconciliation more difficult to achieve. Consequently, Democrats nominated former commander of the Army of the Potomac Gen. George B. McClellan who (unlike Lincoln, Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan) advocated a gentlemanly and conciliatory war. Illustrating how military and political affairs were related, Fleche concludes "Sheridan's Valley campaign became a symbol of Republican tyranny and mismanagement of the war" (p. 218).

Aaron Sheehan-Dean, history professor at the University of North Florida, offers an analysis of Virginian soldiers' experiences during the Valley campaign. Written in the genre of the "new military history," Dean seeks

to explain the campaign not from Sheridan's or Early's perspectives, but from the viewpoint of the men who were fighting not only for a cause, but also for their country and homes. Various historians have argued that by 1864 many of the southern soldiers and civilians had become disillusioned with the war effort and had lost faith in the Confederate cause. Dean disagrees and argues that, by the end of Sheridan's campaign, soldiers and Valley civilians were "badly shaken but not resigned to defeat" (p. 258). Moreover, he argues that Sheridan's hard war tactics, while severely impeding and damaging the Valley's livelihood and economy, did not uniformly destroy the resolve of the Valley's population, but in many instances reaffirmed civilians' commitment to the southern cause.

William G. Thomas, professor at the University of Nebraska Lincoln, also examines Confederate civilians' experience during the 1864 campaign. Thomas argues that their experience in 1864 differed greatly from the experience in 1862, primarily in the conduct of the Union soldiers. Sheridan's campaign and execution of hard war represented a drastic evolution from the war's conduct in 1862 or in the early phase of the 1864 Valley campaign. Popular history portrays "the Burning" as the total destruction of the Valley's resources. Thomas, however, concludes that Union troops "inflicted limited and targeted damage that neither destroyed the entire Valley nor subjugated its population" (p. 240). Similar to Dean, Thomas believes that Sheridan's campaign did not uniformly diminish the morale of southern soldiers and civilians, but suggests, however, that after the Confederate defeat at Fisher's Hill and Cedar Creek, southerners began to question their faith and cause.

This collection of essays lacks a unifying thesis or argument. Readers wanting a complete and detailed understanding of the military events of the Shenandoah Campaign may be dissatisfied. Instead, *The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864* offers an assortment of essays on various topics, including battles, leaders, common soldiers, civilians, and politics. This volume complements Gallagher's earlier essay collection *Struggle for the Shenandoah: Essays on the 1864 Valley Campaign* (1991), which focuses primarily on military leadership, with little insight into roles of common soldiers, civilians, and politics. This final volume in the Military Campaigns of the Civil War series will further complement Gallagher's earlier volume on the Shenandoah Campaign of 1862.

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