

### The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864

Ethan S. Rafuse

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.lsu.edu/cwbr>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Rafuse, Ethan S. (2007) "The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864," *Civil War Book Review*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 1

Available at: <https://repository.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol9/iss1/16>

## Review

Rafuse, Ethan S.

Winter 2007

**Gallagher, Gary W., ed.** *The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864*. University of North Carolina Press, \$45.00 cloth ISBN 807830054

Analyzing Military Strategy and Execution

New Perspectives on the Shenandoah Valley Campaign

In the latest entry in the University of North Carolina Press's Military Campaigns of the Civil War series, editor Gary W. Gallagher and ten other historians examine various aspects of the military operations in the summer and fall of 1864 that ended once and for all the struggle for control of the Shenandoah Valley, a region many called the breadbasket of the Confederacy. As was the case in previous volumes in this distinguished series, and its predecessor at the Kent State University Press, the essays are uniformly excellent. This volume also confirms the trend evident in more recent entries in this series of focusing less exclusively on military topics, and looking more at social and cultural aspects of the war. This is especially evident in essays by William G. Thomas on Confederate civilians and Aaron Sheehan-Dean on Virginia soldiers during the campaign, but also reflected in Joan Waugh's examination of the life and career of Union officer Charles Russell Lowell and Andre M. Fleche's study of how the targeting of Southern civilian resources by Union troops in 1864 was presented in the Northern Democratic press.

This is not to say, however, that traditional drums and trumpets military history is in any way slighted, for studies of such old-fashioned topics as battles and leaders make up the majority of the essays. Gallagher, for example, draws and expands upon points he previously raised in a comparative essay of Jubal A. Early and Stonewall Jackson, and goes beyond them, in an effective consideration of the respective performances of Early and Philip H. Sheridan in the summer and fall of 1864. Joseph T. Glatthaar then follows Gallagher with an examination of the Union high command's response to Early's operations in the Valley and the problems its members, especially Ulysses S. Grant, had finally

getting their act together.

Leadership in the final major clash of arms in the Valley (not counting the March 1865 engagement at Waynesboro) is the focus of the next two essays, both written by veteran contributors to this series and both focusing on Sheridan's spectacular October 19 victory at Cedar Creek. In the first of these, Keith S. Bohannon examines the debate over whether the Confederate failure to maintain the momentum of their spectacular initial attack on the morning of October 19 was a consequence of Early throwing away the opportunity for victory by calling a fatal halt in the advance, or the result of disciplinary breakdowns in the Confederate army that killed the momentum of the assault. Any subject that involves such grand manufacturers of Civil War memory as Early and John B. Gordon can not help but be a challenge to negotiate with clarity, but Bohannon succeeds. He deftly guides readers around and through the fog of memory to produce a commendably balanced history of the Confederate side of the field at Cedar Creek and a sober take on the subsequent controversy. The second study in which Cedar Creek figures large is William W. Bergen's effective and admiring, yet balanced, profile of the other Union hero of the battle, the often-overlooked Sixth Corps commander Horatio G. Wright.

Readers looking for excellent in-depth tactical studies will find much of value in the next two essays in the book, although fans of Confederate cavalry may find them painful reading, for the consistently poor performance of Southern horse soldiers figures prominently in both Robert E.L. Krick's examination of the Confederate rout at Fisher's Hill on September 22 and William J. Miller's study of the overwhelming Union cavalry victory at Tom's Brook a few weeks later. In what may be a case of saving the best for last, Robert K. Krick closes the book with a terrific essay on the Patton family. In his typically thorough and compelling style, Krick traces the fascinating ancestry of World War II general George S. Patton and provides full descriptions of the distinguished record of service to the Confederacy of numerous members of the Patton family, both in the Shenandoah Valley and elsewhere, from which the future general drew much inspiration.

It will be the rare student of the Civil War who does not finish this volume eagerly looking forward to future volumes in this series, while at the same time finding cause for disappointment in Gallagher's announcement on page xix that there is little prospect for resuming the [series's] former one-volume-per-year pace. Also rather dismaying is the fairly substantial jump in cover price from

previous volumes in the series, which although perhaps justifiable due to the increase in the number of essays, may have the effect of turning away some loyal followers of this series, as well as readers who may only be interested in one or two particular essays. Hopefully, the press will at some point issue a paperback edition in order to ensure that the consistently high quality essays contained in this book reach the wide audience they deserve.

*Ethan S. Rafuse is associate professor of military history at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS.*