

Union Corps Histories 11th Corps

McDowell; Cross Keys; Cedar Mountain; Freeman's Ford; Sulphur Springs; Manassas; Chancellorsville; Gettysburg; Wauhatchie; Lookout Mountain; Missionary Ridge.

On June 26, 1862, President Lincoln ordered that "the troops of the Mountain Department, heretofore under command of General Fremont, shall constitute the First Army Corps, under the command of General Fremont." The corps thus formed was, for the most part, the same as the one afterwards known as the Eleventh Corps, and within a short time it was officially designated as such. This order of President Lincoln was included in the one constituting Pope's Army of Virginia, which was formed from the three commands of Fremont, Banks, and McDowell. Fremont's troops had seen considerable service in Western Virginia, having done some hard fighting at McDowell, and at Cross Keys. General Franz Sigel succeeded to Fremont's command on June 29, 1862, and was in command at Manassas, where the corps encountered more hard fighting, losing 295 killed, 1,361 wounded, and 431 missing; total, 2,087. At this time the three divisions were commanded by Generals Schenck, Von Steinwehr, and Schurz; there was, also, an independent brigade attached, under command of General Milroy.

By General Orders No. 129, September 12, 1862, its designation was changed to that of the Eleventh, a necessary change, as McDowell's command had resumed its original title of the First Army Corps. During General McClellan's Maryland campaign, and during the fall of 1862, the Eleventh Corps remained in Northern Virginia, in front of Washington, occupying various important outposts in the vicinity of Centreville. In December, it marched to Fredericksburg in support of Burnside, but was not present at the battle, after which it went into winter-quarters at Stafford, Va. General Sigel having asked to be relieved, General O. O. Howard was appointed in his place.

General Howard commanded the corps at Chancellorsville, May 1 - 3, 1863, at which time it numbered 12,169 effectives, and was composed of the divisions of Generals Devens, Von 'Steinwehr, and Schurz. It contained 27 regiments of infantry, of which 13 were German regiments. The men of the Eleventh Corps were good soldiers,-- for the most part tried and veteran troops, and were in no way responsible for the disaster which befell them at Chancellorsville. Their commander in that battle allowed himself to be surprised. He was not only surprised, but he had made a very faulty disposition of his troops. The men were not only attacked without a warning shot, but were taken at a terrible disadvantage. Anything beyond a brief resistance was impossible, and they were obliged to abandon their

position as any other corps must have done under the same circumstances. Still, some of the brigades changed front under the attack, and made a gallant resistance for over an hour, seriously retarding the enemy's onset, after which they retired slowly and in good order. The loss of the corps at Chancellorsville was 217 killed, 1,218 wounded, and 972 captured or missing; total, 2,407.

At Gettysburg the corps was still under the command of Howard; the divisions were under Generals Barlow, Steinwehr, and Schurz, and contained 26; regiments of infantry and 5 batteries. It was engaged, in company with the First Corps, in the battle of the first day, and, on the second day, it participated in the gallant defense of Cemetery Hill. On the day before the battle of Gettysburg, the corps reported 10,576 officers and men for duty; its loss in that battle was 368 killed, 1,922 wounded, and 1,511 captured or missing; total, 3,801, out of less than 9,000 engaged.

It accompanied the Army on the return to Virginia after Gettysburg, and, on August 7th, the First Division (Schimmelfennig's) was permanently detached, having been ordered to Charleston Harbor. On the 24th of September, the Second and Third divisions (Steinwehr's and Schurz') were ordered to Tennessee, together with the Twelfth Corps. These two corps, numbering over 20,000 men, were transported, within a week, over 1,200 miles, and placed on the banks of the Tennessee River, at Bridgeport, without an accident or detention.

During the following month, on October 29th, Howard's two divisions were ordered to the support of the Twelfth Corps, in the midnight battle at Wauhatchie, Tenn. Arriving there, Smith's Brigade of Steinwehr's Division charged up a steep hill in the face of the enemy, receiving but not returning the fire, and drove Longstreet's veterans out of their entrenchment's, using the bayonet alone. Some of the regiments in this affair suffered a severe loss, but their extraordinary gallantry won extravagant expressions of praise from various generals, high in rank, including General Grant. A part of the Eleventh Corps was also actively engaged at Missionary Ridge, where it cooperated with Sherman's forces on the left. After this battle it was ordered to East Tennessee for the relief of Knoxville, a campaign whose hardships and privations exceeded anything within the previous experience of the command.

In April, 1864, the two divisions of the Eleventh Corps were broken up and transferred to the newly-formed Twentieth Corps. General Howard was transferred to the command of the Fourth Corps, and, subsequently, was honored by a promotion to the command of the Army of the Tennessee.

Source: "Regimental Losses in the American Civil War (1861-1865)" -
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