

Union Corps Histories Cavalry Corps (Army of the Potomac)

Stoneman's Raid; Chancellorsville; Greenwich; Beverly Ford; Aldie; Middle-Burg; Upperville; Hanover; Gettysburg; Monterey; Fairfield; Hagerstown; Williamsport; Boonsborg; Falling Waters; Shepherdstown; Manassas Gap; Kelly's Ford; Brandy Station; Culpepper; Raccoon Ford; White's Ford; Rapidan; James City ; White Sulphur Springs; Buckland's Mills; Stevensburg; Mine Run; Averell's Raid; Barnett's Ford; Kilpatrick's Raid; Kautz' Raid; Parker's Store; Todd's Tavern; North Anna; South Anna; Yellow Tavern; Meadow Bridge; Milford Station; Hates' Shop; Hanover Court House; Ashland; Old Church; Cold Harbor; Trevilian Station; St. Mary's Church; White House Landing; Nottoway Court House; Stony Creek; Wilson's Raid; Ream's Station; Staunton Bridge; Moorefield; Luray; White Post; Smithfield; Berryville; Opequon; Woodstock; Waynesboro; New Market; Tom's Brook; Cedar Creek; Hatcher's Run; Newtown; Rood's Hill; Darbytown Road; Bellefield; Sheridan's Raid; Mount Crawford; Dinwiddie Court House; Five Forks; Amelia Springs; Sailor's Creek; Clover Hill; Appomattox.

This list covers only the more important of the numerous battles in which the Cavalry of the Army of the Potomac were engaged. It would be almost impossible to enumerate all the minor actions and affairs in which it participated, as not a day passed but, somewhere, at least, a battalion or regiment was under fire. From Beverly Ford to Appomattox, a "dead cavalryman" could have been seen any day of the year in answer to Hooker's famous query.

The first organization of the cavalry into one command was made in April, 1863, and Major-General George Stoneman was placed at its head. It numbered 11,402 men present for duty, and was divided into three commands under Generals Pleasanton, Buford and Averell. Stoneman's corps made a raid on the enemy's rear during the Chancellorsville campaign, but, owing to various causes, the movement did not produce the favorable results expected. Hooker, being dissatisfied, relieved Stoneman and put Major-General Alfred Pleasanton in his place.

On June 9, 1863, the corps was engaged at Beverly's Ford, Va., in a battle which was largely a cavalry affair on both sides. From this battle dates the efficiency of the cavalry arm of the service in the war. Particular regiments had often demonstrated their efficiency on previous occasions, but until this battle the cavalry had not shown its ability to act as an independent body. Pleasanton took about

9,000 sabers to Beverly Ford, one-third of which, however, were not engaged, Duffie's Division having been detached to hold a position elsewhere. The three divisions were commanded by Generals Buford, Duffie and Gregg. A proper compliment of horse artillery was attached, and two brigades of infantry were also present in support. Casualties at Beverly's Ford, 484 killed and wounded, not including captured or missing.

More hard fighting occurred at Aldie and Middleburg (June 17th and 19th), one of the passes of the mountains which screened Lee's advance into Pennsylvania, the cavalry losing in these two actions 66 killed, 177 wounded, and 161 missing; total, 404. At Gettysburg, the Cavalry Corps was still under Pleasanton's command, with Buford, Gregg and Kilpatrick as division-generals, and numbered 11,000 sabers and 27 guns. Two brigades of horse artillery -- Robertson's and Tidball's, 9 batteries-- were attached to the corps previous to this campaign. Cavalry fought with cavalry at Gettysburg, the fighting occurring mostly on the extreme right of the Union line. Kilpatrick had a fight, also, on the left, in which General Farnsworth was killed. The casualties in the Cavalry Corps at Gettysburg amounted to 90 killed, 352 wounded, and 199 captured or missing; total, 641, the heaviest loss falling on Custer's Michigan Brigade. Buford's Division had the honor of opening this historic battle, his long skirmish-line of dismounted troopers holding the enemy at bay until the First Corps arrived on the field. The Cavalry made some brilliant charges during the course of this battle, in which saber cuts were freely exchanged.

Upon the reorganization of the Army of the Potomac, in April, 1864, Major-General Philip H. Sheridan was placed in command of the Cavalry Corps. The three divisions were commanded by Generals Torbert, Gregg (D. M.), and Wilson, and contained 32 regiments of cavalry, numbering 12,424, "present for duty, equipped." This does not include the cavalry--1812 in number--attached to the Ninth Corps; nor the horse artillery which acted in conjunction with the mounted troops. The campaign of 1864 was marked by the hardest fighting and greatest loss of life which had hitherto fallen to the lot of this arm of service. Most of the time it was cavalry fighting cavalry, in large numbers, by brigades and divisions. As the men fought dismounted and with carbines, the battles closely resembled infantry engagements, and being well supplied with horse artillery there was but little difference in the character of the fighting. Among the more important of these dismounted cavalry battles in Grant's campaign, might be mentioned Todd's Tavern, May 8; Hawes' Shop, May 28; Trevilian Station, June 11; St. Mary's Church, June 24; Dinwiddie Court House, March 31; Five Forks, April 1; and Appomattox, April 9, 1865.

In August, 1864, Sheridan was promoted to the command of the Army of the Shenandoah, and took with him the First and Third Cavalry Divisions--Merritt's and Wilson's. General Torbert was assigned to the command of the cavalry forces in the Shenandoah, and his two divisions were reinforced by Duffie's and Averell's Cavalry Divisions of the Army of West Virginia. The cavalry fighting in the Shenandoah was a series of brilliant affairs, interspersed with skirmishes, which cost the corps a serious loss of life.

Upon Sheridan's return to Petersburg he brought back with him Devin's and Custer's Divisions, which, added to Crooks' (formerly Gregg's) Division, restored the organization to its original formation, General Merritt being in command of the three divisions. The corps started on the final campaign of 1865 with 37 regiments of cavalry, numbering 13,820 present for duty, or about 11,000 carbines available for action. During the last ten days of the campaign--from Five Forks to Appomattox--the corps took a prominent and meritorious part in the operations which culminated in the surrender of Lee's Army. The cavalry were a conspicuous and attractive feature of the Grand Review at Washington, after the close of the war. Soon after that event, most of the regiments were mustered out of service.

Among the heavy losses of the cavalry the following casualties are worthy of note; they indicate clearly the hard fighting done by this arm of the service.

FOLLOWING LINES SHOW: Location_&_Date

Killed Wounded Captured Total

Beverly Ford, Va., June 9, 1863

81 403 382 866

Gettysburg, Pa., July 14, 1863

90 352 407 849

Gettysburg campaign, June 12--July 24, not including Gettysburg

219 866 1,471 2,556

Brandy Station, Va., Aug. 1, 1863

21 104 20 145

Mine Run, Va., Nov. 26--Dec. 2, 1863

28 119 77 224

Wilderness, Va., May 5-7, 1864

97 416 197 710

Hawes' Shop, Old Church, Ashland, Aenon Church, Va., etc., May 25-30,
1864

110 450 96 656

Cold Harbor, Va., May 31--June 6, 1864

51 328 70 449

Sheridan's First Expedition, Va., May 9-24, 1864, Beaver Dam Station,
Yellow Tavern, Meadow Bridge, etc

64 337 224 625

Trevilian Raid, Va., June 7-24, 1864

150 738 624 1,512

Wilson's Raid, Va., June 22-30, 1864

71 262 1,119 1,452

Deep Bottom, Weldon Railroad, Reams' Station, Petersburg, etc., Va.,
August 1-30,

1864 64 269 122 455

Chaffin's Farm, Peebles' Farm, etc., Va., Sept. 1-30, 1864

24 121 336 481

Shenandoah campaign, 1864; Opequon, Tom's Brook, Cedar Creek, and 26
other engagements

454 2,817 646 3,917

Fall of Petersburg and Pursuit of Lee, March 29--April 9, 1865

221 930 339 1,490

It will be observed that over one-fourth of these losses are made up of captured, or missing, men. This was unavoidable, as the cavalry operated almost entirely within the enemy's lines, and without the support of other troops. Repeatedly, they made daring raids, which carried them a long distance from their own army, and in which any small detachment was always liable to be cut off by the vigilant enemy which hovered around the flanks and rear of the raiding column.

The cavalry of the Union Armies, including both Eastern and Western,

lost 10, 596 officers and men killed or mortally wounded in action,
and about 26,490 wounded who survived.