



Hurricane from the Heavens: The Battle of Cold Harbor, May 26 - June 5, 1864 (Emerging Civil War)

Daniel Davis, Phillip Greenwalt

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“Lee’s army is really whipped,” Federal commander Ulysses S. Grant believed.

May 1864 had witnessed near-constant combat between his Army of the Potomac and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. Grant, unlike his predecessors, had not relented in his pounding of the Confederates. The armies clashed in the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania Courthouse and along the North Anna River. Whenever combat failed to break the Confederates, Grant resorted to maneuver. “I propose to fight it out along this line if it takes all summer,” Grant vowed—and it had.

Casualties mounted on both sides—but Grant kept coming. Although the great, decisive assault had eluded him, he continued to punish Lee’s army. The blows his army landed were nothing like the Confederates had experienced before. The constant marching and fighting had reduced Robert E. Lee’s once-vaunted army into a bedraggled husk of its former glory.

In Grant’s mind, he had worn his foes down and now prepared to deliver the deathblow.

Turning Lee’s flank once more, he hoped to fight the final, decisive battle of the war in the area bordering the Pamunkey and Chickahominy rivers, less than fifteen miles from the outskirts of the Confederate capital of Richmond. “I may be mistaken, but I feel that our success over Lee’s army is already assured,” Grant confided to Washington.

The stakes had grown enormous. Grant’s staggering casualty lists had driven Northern morale to its lowest point of the war. Would Lee’s men hold on to defend their besieged capital—and, in doing so, prolong the war until the North will collapse entirely? Or would another round of hard fighting finally be enough to crush Lee’s army? Could Grant push through and end the war?

Grant would find his answers around a small Virginia crossroads called Cold Harbor—and he would always regret the results.

Historians Daniel T. Davis and Phillip S. Greenwalt have studied the 1864 Overland Campaign since their early days working at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, where Grant first started on his bloody road south—a road that eventually led straight into the eye of a proverbial “Hurricane from the Heavens.”

Hurricane from the Heavens can be read in the comfort of one’s favorite armchair or as a battlefield guide. It is part of the popular Emerging Civil War Series, which offers compelling, easy-to-read overviews of some of the Civil War’s most important stories. The masterful storytelling is richly enhanced with more than one hundred photos, illustrations, and maps.

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