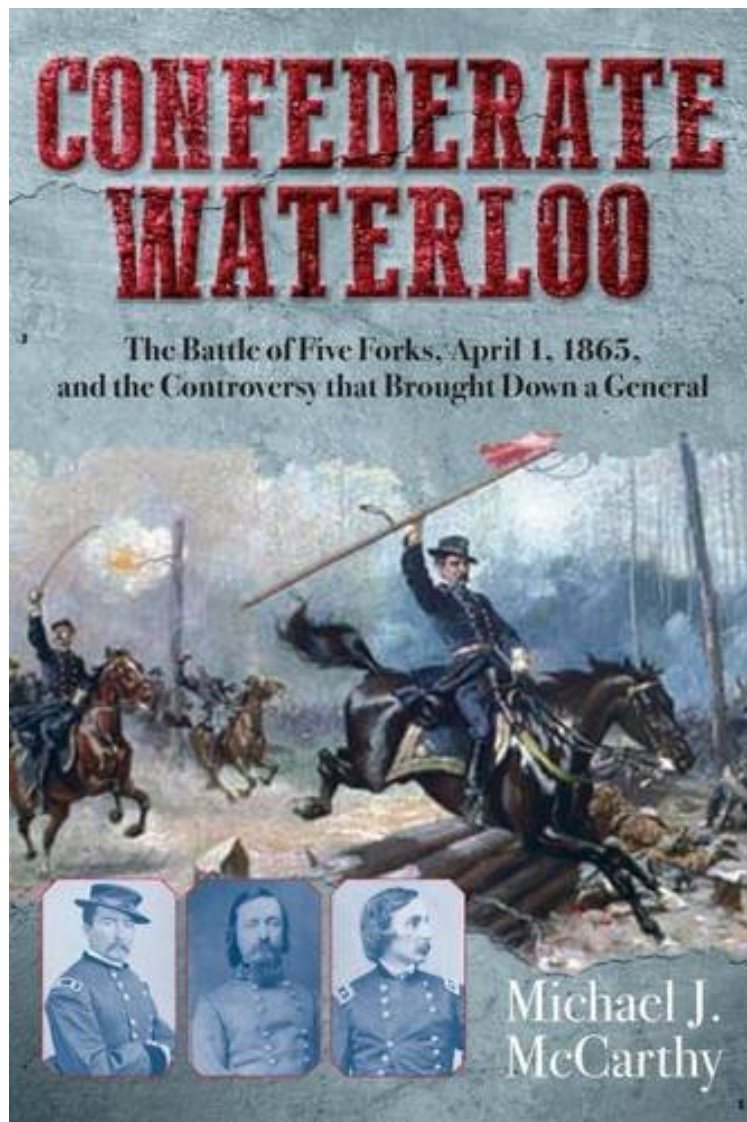


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## Confederate Waterloo: The Battle of Five Forks, April 1, 1865, and the Controversy that Brought Down a General

*Michael McCarthy*

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**Michael McCarthy : Confederate Waterloo: The Battle of Five Forks, April 1, 1865, and the Controversy that Brought Down a General** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Confederate Waterloo: The Battle of Five Forks, April 1, 1865, and the Controversy that Brought Down a General:

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Half battle campaign, half legal drama. All engaging history! A must read!

By brian beirne Very well written battle description with terrific maps (the rare case where the map on the kindle holds up to enlarging it) is the subject of the first half of the book. The second half details the efforts by GK Warren to clear his name and the Court of Inquiry that was the longest in the 19th century. A very engaging story that is worth your time.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Purchase this important and controversial book. You will not be disappointed!

By David Marshall This book is divided into two distinct parts. The first encompasses the military characteristics leading up to and including the Battle of Five Forks. This author utilized an abundance of primary and secondary sources in researching this seldom written about subject. Michael McCarthy determined unlike many historians before him that Union General Ulysses S. Grant and General Philip Sheridan were not necessarily heroic and honest when it came to their depiction of General Gouverneur Warren at Five Forks. He provides a great deal of evidence that they both had an agenda to remove Mr. Warren from command of the 5th Corps which Sheridan did during the middle of fighting. Additionally, this writer points out that "Waterloo of the Confederacy might not have been portrayed or thought of as it really was during the end of the Civil War. The second part of this well written and very readable title concerns the story of the Warren Court of Inquiry. He takes interested students through the entire court proceedings and elucidates the proceedings and ramifications for Warren and Sheridan. This was the longest record of any military court in U.S. History. Originally written as a dissertation by McCarthy, he has added new sources and additional notes have been added since the original research. Five Forks was a small but decisive battle victory for the Union. Confederate General Thomas Munford maintained that after the fighting was ended on April 1, 1865 that like Waterloo was to Europe that the Confederacy was doomed after this Northern triumph. He pointed out that this success triggered Confederate President and the government officials to leave Richmond as well as General Robert E. Lee to leave his defenses in the Petersburg area. In the end this student of this battle ascertains that this important loss caused the end of the Confederacy and the inevitable retreat and surrender at Appomattox. The writer makes an important argument in "Confederate Waterloo" that provides interested parties something to think about. McCarthy stated that both Sheridan and Warren protected or defended their honor. They both spent much of their post war life attempting to dominate public perception of Five Forks and how the clash was remembered. For Warren his fight did not end with his death. Many fellow officers and family members spent lifetimes taking up his cause. In addition to Sheridan and Warren, participants included Generals U. S. Grant, Winfield S. Hancock, Joshua Chamberlain and a surprising collection of former Confederate officers. Their disagreement peaked with a Court of Inquiry that produced a wide-ranging record of testimony and exhibits than any other U.S. military judicial case in the 19th Century. In the end, the findings were not a clear cut victory for either individual. Historians generally accepted the writings of important soldiers such as Sheridan and Grant as fact. The writer points out that modern scholar Joan Waugh quoted and accepted Grant and Sheridan positions over Warren's. This excellent treatment proves that numerous respected historians such as Noah Trudeau, Stephen Sears, Jean Edward Smith and Leslie Gordon have used similar one sided sources that reflect inaccuracies. After the publication of this important title by Savas Beatie, perhaps many academics will now take a fresh look at this battle and the individuals who disagreed with each other and history. McCarthy has added much to the Five Forks canon and the Sheridan-Warren controversy about why this disgraced soldier was relieved during the middle of a battle. He has pulled together an extraordinary list of first hand accounts to recount the decisive role played by the Union 5th Corps, Cavalry, Sheridan and Warren during this important fight to end the Civil War as well as the Court of Inquiry. "The Battle of Five Forks, April 1, 1865, and the Controversy that Brought Down a General" provides 55 helpful images and 10 excellent maps produced by George Skoch. The narrative includes a useful Order of Battle, Bibliography, Index and excellent analysis throughout. This fascinating 336 page story and page turning tome should be added to the knapsack of all interested enthusiasts of this important subject.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. "Welcome contribution," review by Midwest Book Review

By Militarybooks Confederate Waterloo: The Battle of Five Forks, April 1, 1865 and the Controversy that Brought Down a General is a detailed, scholarly analysis of one of the final battles of the American Civil War. Although The Battle of Five Forks ended in victory for the Union, its ramifications lasted long after Civil War's end. During the series of battles, General Phil Sheridan relieved V Corps commander Gouverneur K. Warren, sparking a lifelong effort by Warren and his allies to claim that Sheridan's action was unfair and dishonorable. This precipitated a Court of Inquiry with a greater record of testimony and exhibits than any other U.S military judicial case in the 1800's. Confederate Waterloo draws upon archival research and a wealth of primary sources to present a studious, unbiased account of the entire affair. Black-and-white maps, a bibliography, and an index round out this welcome contribution to public and college library Civil War shelves.- Midwest Book Review (Note: This review was written by Midwest Book Review and posted on at their request)

The Battle of Five Forks, explained former Confederate General Thomas Munford long after the Civil War, "could be classified as a mere skirmish, but no other fight of the entire four years' struggle was followed by such important consequences." The battle broke the long siege of Petersburg, triggered the evacuation of Richmond, precipitated the Appomattox Campaign, and destroyed the careers and reputations of two opposing generals. Michael J. McCarthy's

Confederate Waterloo is the first fully researched and unbiased book-length account of this decisive Union victory and the unpredictable aftermath fought in the courts and at the bar of public opinion. General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had been locked into the sprawling defenses surrounding the logistical stronghold of Petersburg and the Southern capital at Richmond for more than eight months when General Grant launched an offensive against Lee's exposed right flank. A series of battles led up to April 1, when General Phil Sheridan's forces struck at Five Forks. The attack surprised and collapsed General George Pickett's Confederate command and turned Lee's flank. An attack along the entire front the following morning broke the siege and forced the Virginia army out of its defenses and, a week later, into Wilmer McLean's parlor to surrender at Appomattox. Despite this decisive Union success, Five Forks spawned one of the most bitter and divisive controversies in the postwar US Army because Sheridan relieved V Corps commander Gouverneur K. Warren during the battle. The order generated a life-long effort by Warren and his allies to restore his reputation by demonstrating that Sheridan's action was both unfair and dishonorable. The struggle climaxed with a Court of Inquiry that generated a more extensive record of testimony and exhibits than any other US military judicial case in the 19th Century. In addition to Sheridan and Warren, participants included Gens. Ulysses S. Grant and Winfield S. Hancock, together with a startling array of former Union and Confederate officers. McCarthy's Confederate Waterloo is grounded upon extensive archival research and a foundation of primary sources, including the meticulous records of a man driven to restore his honor in the eyes of his colleagues, his family, and the American public. The result is a fresh and dispassionate analysis that may cause students of the Civil War to reassess their views about some of the Union's leading generals.

"Another fascinating account of a modern day siege during the American Civil War - I think the fact that we can match photographs to people who actually took part in this conflict makes it something extraordinary, and kindles interest to an amazing degree. Fascinating." (Books Monthly) "Confederate Waterloo: The Battle of Five Forks, April 1, 1865 and the Controversy that Brought Down a General is a detailed, scholarly analysis of one of the final battles of the American Civil War... Confederate Waterloo draws upon archival research and a wealth of primary sources to present a studious, unbiased account of the entire affair. Black-and-white maps, a bibliography, and an index round out this welcome contribution to public and college library Civil War shelves." (Midwest Book) "McCarthy's Confederate Waterloo is really two books: A long-overdue and well-researched telling of the Battle of Five Forks, the Confederate defeat that led to the evacuation of Richmond, and the sad tale of the destruction of the career of V Corps commander Maj. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren by Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan for Warren's alleged insubordination. McCarthy carefully documents Warren's efforts to clear his name, and comes to some interesting conclusions about Sheridan's actions. This book is highly recommended for any scholar of the Army of the Potomac, the campaigns of the spring of 1865, and for anyone who is interested in seeing injustices rectified." (Eric Wittenberg, award-winning author (with Scott Mingus Sr.) of *The Second Battle of Winchester: The Confederate Victory That Opened the Door to Gettysburg June 13-15, 1863*) "Mike McCarthy's take on Generals Grant, Sheridan, and Warren comes from the pen of an unjaundiced historian unafraid to let the sources lead the way to the truth of what happened that day so long ago that broke Lee's tenacious grip on Petersburg and Richmond. I firmly believe careful readers of this volume will agree that Confederate Waterloo: The Battle of Five Forks, April 1, 1865, and the Controversy that Brought Down a General is a fascinating story, beautifully told." (Bryce Suderow, co-author (with Edwin C. Bearss) of 2-volume *The Petersburg Campaign: The Eastern Battles and The Western Battles*) "Mike McCarthy begins this engrossing story with a lengthy review of the events of the final days of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and the road to Appomattox, including a detailed accounting of the Battle of Five Forks on April 1, 1865. The second half of his book focuses on General Warren's all-consuming crusade to regain his reputation after being sacked by Phil Sheridan at the climax of victory at Five Forks. McCarthy's tale of the Court of Inquiry is a true courtroom drama that was front-page news in 1880. From newspapers to personal correspondence to musty court records, McCarthy uses innumerable sources to knit together a story grounded on exhaustive research, good writing, and a fascinating set of characters. Confederate Waterloo is a must-read and something new and different for even the most accomplished readers of US history." (Mark Silo, author of *The 115th New York in the Civil War: A Regimental History*) About the Author Michael J. McCarthy graduated from LeMoyne College in 1969 with a BA in history and obtained his Masters in American history two years later. He pursued a career in government and received MPA degrees in public finance from the University at Albany, and in public management from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. During his long career with New York state, however, he never lost his love of Civil War history. As he approached retirement, Mike returned to school and received his Ph.D. in American history from the University at Albany in 2010. Confederate Waterloo is a revised and updated version of his dissertation.