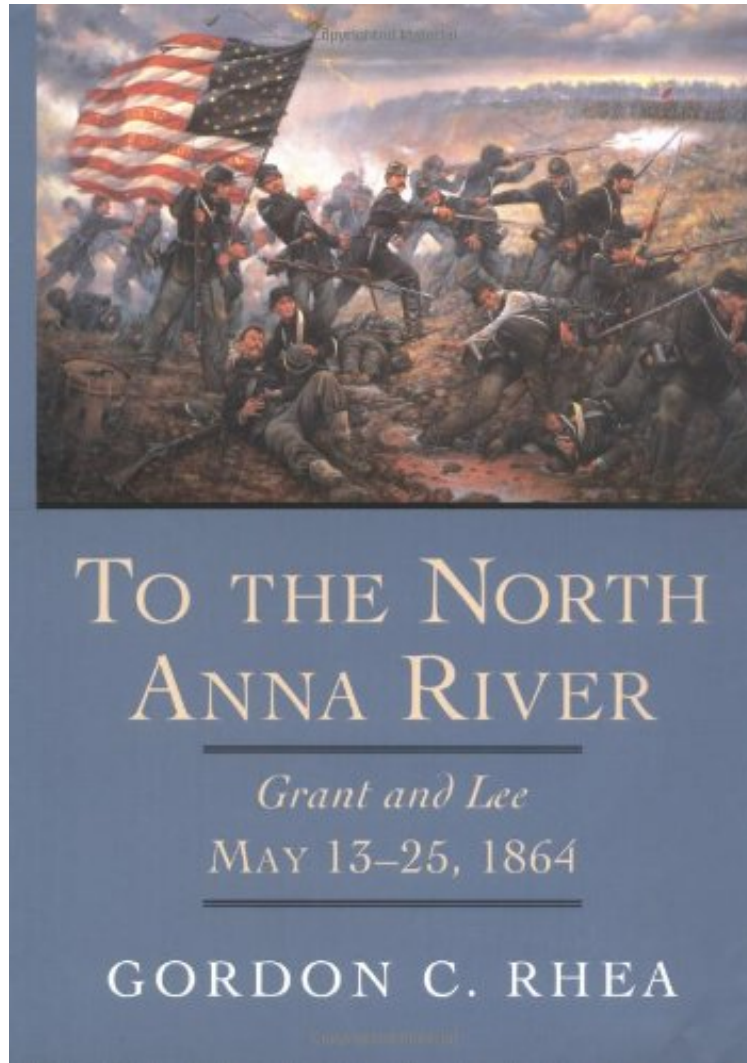


[Ebook pdf] To the North Anna River: Grant and Lee, May 13--25, 1864

To the North Anna River: Grant and Lee, May 13--25, 1864

Gordon C. Rhea

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Gordon C. Rhea : To the North Anna River: Grant and Lee, May 13--25, 1864 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To the North Anna River: Grant and Lee, May 13--25, 1864:

42 of 43 people found the following review helpful. Solid military history of a little-studied campaignBy Bruce TrinquGordon Rhea's "To the North Anna River: Grant and Lee, May 13-25, 1864" is his latest installment in his on-going series of military histories about the great Overland Campaign, following his earlier volumes on the Wilderness and Spotsylvania battles. "To the North Anna River" differs from the previous two books in that the focus here is not

upon full-scale fighting between massed armies, but instead examines an extended interval of maneuvers and probes which always fell short of the assaults planned. Mistakes and misperceptions by both armies abounded, balanced by unfaltering determination and moments of genuine brilliance. This period has in the past attracted relatively little attention from military historians, probably due in large part to its lack of "big battle" drama. Yet, the story told by Rhea is one full of suspense and tension, as Grant vigorously sought a weak point where he could finally overwhelm his foe, while Lee scrambled to block each move. Ultimately, it is a story with neither clear-cut winner or loser. Certainly Lee managed to preserve his army, yet the North Anna portion of the Overland Campaign ended with an undeterred Grant sending his army even deeper into Virginia to ultimately pin the Army of Northern Virginia in place, defending Richmond and slowly bleeding to death. Rhea's concentration is upon Grant and Lee and their chief deputies, the corps commanders, and he provides incisive analyses of the leaders for each step of the campaign. He thoroughly demolishes the tired old myth that Lee foresaw each of Grant's moves, but bestows strong acclaim upon the Confederate commanding general for his ability to find a way out of every scrape. Grant receives high marks from Rhea for his unwavering resolve in carrying out his strategic aims, but is sharply faulted for repeated failure in tactical preparation. Both Lee and Grant, Rhea amply demonstrates, were guilty of errors and oversights. In the end, the two generals seem to have been unusually well matched. Corps commanders on both sides receive little praise, with only Hancock in the Army of the Potomac evidencing sufficient judgment and initiative to be trusted off a short leash. Although each maneuver and clash is described in sufficient detail to understand what happened, "To the North Anna River" is not primarily concerned with recounting the experiences of individual soldiers. Edwin Coddington's classic study of Gettysburg was subtitled "A Study in Command" and that is a label which could be appropriately applied to Rhea's books. The question of "why" (or "why not") is always central, not just "what" and "how". "To the North Anna River" is a strong continuation of an admirable work in progress and I already look forward to the next volume in the series which should bring the armies of Grant and Lee to the fields of Cold Harbor.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Read Rhea but read Grant alongside. By mchoneburnardkI had been looking for clear and comprehensive explanation of Grant's Virginia campaign for a long time. I stumbled into a Gordon Rhea Youtube presentation so I got his book on Cold Harbor, a battle that particularly interested me. Rhea did such a good job on Cold Harbor that I got his Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and North Anna books. All have a lot of detail (but not boring), quotations from soldiers' letters, and good maps. Rhea is a professional writer, the highest compliment I can give. My only concern is that Grant wrote a personal memoir which includes great condensations of each major battle covered by Rhea. I don't think Rhea paid enough attention to insights from Grant. Grant was scrupulously honest with a midwestern frankness and candor, and with no bluster. Nobody has perfect recall, including Grant, but Grant was very intelligent and he saw things and a view that no one else had. He even explains that he wrote his memoir because he needed the money because a Wall Street partner bankrupted a firm Grant had his life savings in. Can't get more honest than that. Lee never wrote anything because he did not trust the "picklock biographers". Even serious historians of the Civil War like Rhea avoid second-guessing. Too many times this results in nitpicking and revisionism without a stronger basis than that available before. You will not understand how the Civil War was brought to a close unless you understand Grant and you won't understand Grant without reading his memoir. It is the best military memoir since Caesar's Gallic Wars and Caesar wrote only the first one-third of that. Nevertheless, Rhea's books are essential for understanding the different battles that ended the war.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. To the North Anna River - An informative and sobering trip By John Keohane This is my second review of a book by Mr. Rhea, the other being of The Battles for Spotsylvania Court House. They cover the period following the initial Civil War meetings of Grant and Lee in the Wilderness. Since I had moved this past year to Henrico County, VA I have increased my understanding of the geography and both of the Rhea books have added to that understanding. Since we are near the 150th anniversary of the various battles in May 2014 timing could not be better. I have also placed on Mr. Rhea a difficult burden. We had recently discovered that my wife's third great-grandfather Patrick Connelly, from Ireland and New York, had served in Corcoran's Legion, in particular Company G of the 164th New York Infantry Regiment of the 4th Brigade of the 2nd Division (Gibbon) of the 2nd Corps (Hancock) of the Union Army of the Potomac. His unit is sometimes referred to as part of the Irish Legion. The burden I placed on the author was to let me try to find and follow Patrick in his writings. The Spotsylvania book was not too helpful in this regard as became obvious in the North Anna River book when it became clear that Patrick's unit did not join the Army of the Potomac until May 17th. However, both books built up a background of persons and events which would add to an overall understanding. The North Anna book did enable me to find and follow Patrick's larger units until the day following his arrival when he was captured. As Rhea sums up the result of the fighting: "Union losses for May 18 were high for the short time that the troops were engaged. Hancock's aide...placed Union 2nd Corps casualties at 650. Commentators attributed 250 casualties to Gibbon....Some units suffered disproportionately. A soldier asserted that the Corcoran Legion 'was blown to atoms'" [page 154]. As an aside, it is interesting to note the number of daily casualties which greatly exceed annual casualties for some of our current and recent actions and how odd that by World War I the memory of massed assaults on entrenched forces had slipped from memory. I also had not remembered or realized how often the armies of that time maneuvered at night and how that added to the soldiers' discomfort and confusion. I

look forward to the next installment on Cold Harbor.

With *To the North Anna River*, the third book in his outstanding five-book series, Gordon C. Rhea continues his spectacular narrative of the initial campaign between Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee in the spring of 1864. May 13 through 25, a phase oddly ignored by historians, was critical in the clash between the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia. During those thirteen days -- an interlude bracketed by horrific battles that riveted the public's attention -- a game of guile and endurance between Grant and Lee escalated to a suspenseful draw on Virginia's North Anna River. From the bloodstained fields of the Mule Shoe to the North Anna River, with Meadow Bridge, Myers Hill, Harris Farm, Jericho Mills, Ox Ford, and Doswell Farm in between, grueling night marches, desperate attacks, and thundering cavalry charges became the norm for both Grant's and Lee's men. But the real story of May 13--25 lay in the two generals' efforts to outfox each other, and Rhea charts their every step and misstep. Realizing that his bludgeoning tactics at the Bloody Angle were ineffective, Grant resorted to a fast-paced assault on Lee's vulnerable points. Lee, outnumbered two to one, abandoned the offensive and concentrated on anticipating Grant's maneuvers and shifting quickly enough to repel them. It was an amazingly equal match of wits that produced a gripping, high-stakes bout of warfare -- a test, ultimately, of improvisation for Lee and of perseverance for Grant.