



Union Infantryman vs Confederate Infantryman: Eastern Theater 1861-65 (Combat)

Ron Field

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This book provides analysis and first-hand accounts of three major Civil War battles: 1st Bull Run/1st Manassas, Gettysburg and Chaffin's Farm from two perspectives. The enthusiastic but largely inexperienced soldiers on both sides in the Civil War had to adapt quickly to the appalling realities of warfare in the industrial age. In this fully illustrated study, an authority on the Civil War investigates three clashes that illustrate the changing realities of infantry combat in America's bloodiest conflict.

The appalling slaughter at 1st Bull Run/1st Manassas on July 21, 1861 brought home the realities of war to both sides. In the final bloody stages the 11th New York (1st Fire Zouaves) clashed with the 33rd Virginia Infantry. The 11th New York had first clashed with the "Black Horse Cavalry" and then re-captured the guns of Rickett's battery, only to be forced backwards several times before being crushed into retreat by a final Confederate charge which very much involved the 2nd South Carolina.

Pickett's charge at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863 saw the Confederate veterans of Pickett's division, including the 56th Virginia Infantry, decimated in a set-piece attack on Union positions held by regiments including the 71st Pennsylvania Infantry. Having seen extensive fighting on the previous day, the men of the 71st played a key role in the Union defense, refusing to break and keeping their positions at "the Angle" of the stone wall that marked the Union line, even though their sister regiments broke and retreated. The Union soldiers' staunch defense threw the Confederate front line into confusion, forcing them to withdraw.

On September 29, 1864, at the battle of Chaffin's Farm, the African-American troops of Brigadier General Charles J. Paine's 3rd Division, including the 4th US Colored Infantry under Major A.S. Boernstein, took part in the Union assault on formidable Confederate positions held by Brigadier General John Gregg's veterans of the Texas-Arkansas Brigade, including Lieutenant Colonel Clinton M. Winkler's 4th Texas Infantry. Alongside the 6th USCI, Boernstein's men were ordered to attack at 5.30am unsupported by any Union artillery fire; deployed in a 200yd skirmish line and hampered by a swampy ravine, the two regiments struggled through two lines of defensive emplacements before being riddled by deadly accurate small-arms fire from the Texan defenders. Although a few men actually broke into the Confederate lines, they were soon killed or captured, and the remnants retired. Between them, the 4th and 6th USCI lost 350 of their 700 effectives; fully 14 Medals of Honor were awarded to the regiments that stormed New Market Heights, including Sergeant Christian Fleetwood and Sergeant Alfred B. Hilton of the 4th USCI. The four regiments of Lee's "Grenadier Guards" had inflicted 850 casualties on their attackers while sustaining only 50 themselves.

Featuring specially commissioned artwork, expert analysis and carefully chosen first-hand accounts, this absorbing study traces the evolution of infantry tactics in the crucible of the Civil War by examining three key clashes at unit level.

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