



Trevilian Station, June 11–12, 1864: Wade Hampton, Philip Sheridan and the Largest All-Cavalry Battle of the Civil War

By Joseph W. McKinney

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In June 1864, General Ulysses Grant ordered his cavalry commander, Philip Sheridan, to conduct a raid to destroy the Virginia Central Railroad between Charlottesville and Richmond. Sheridan fell short of his objective when he was defeated by General Wade Hampton's cavalry in a two-day battle at Trevilian Station.

The first day's fighting saw dismounted Yankees and Rebels engaged at close range in dense forest. By day's end, Hampton had withdrawn to the west.

Advancing the next morning, Sheridan found Hampton dug in behind hastily built fortifications and launched seven dismounted assaults, each repulsed with heavy casualties. As darkness fell, the Confederates counterattacked, driving the Union forces from the field.

Sheridan began his withdrawal that night, an ordeal for his men, the Union wounded and Confederate prisoners brought off the field and the hundreds of starved and exhausted horses that marked his retreat, killed to prevent their falling into Confederate hands.

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About the Author

Retired U.S. Army officer **Joseph W. McKinney** lives in Brandy Station, Virginia.

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