



The Greatest Civil War Battles: The Battle of North Anna

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- *Includes pictures of the battle's important generals.
- *Includes several maps of the battle.
- *Includes accounts of the fighting written by generals and soldiers.
- *Includes a Bibliography for further reading.

The Overland Campaign that pitted Robert E. Lee against Ulysses S. Grant is one of the most famous campaigns of the Civil War, but one of the most overlooked aspects of the entire campaign was the action around the North Anna River between the fighting at Spotsylvania Court House and Cold Harbor. In fact, it represented Lee's last great chance to destroy the Army of the Potomac.

At the Battle of the Wilderness (May 5-7, 1864), Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee had fought to a standstill in their first encounter, failing to dislodge each other despite incurring nearly 30,000 casualties between the Union Army of the Potomac and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. Despite the fierce fighting, Grant continued to push his battered but resilient army south, hoping to beat Lee's army to the crossroads at Spotsylvania Court House, but Lee's army beat Grant's to Spotsylvania and began digging in, setting the scene for on and off fighting from May 8-21 that ultimately inflicted more casualties than the Battle of the Wilderness. In fact, with over 32,000 casualties among the two sides, it was the deadliest battle of the Overland Campaign.

After Spotsylvania, Grant and Lee both raced to the next natural defensive line, the North Anna River. Ironically, before Lee blocked him in the Wilderness, Grant had anticipated the Overland Campaign starting with fighting around the North Anna, but once they arrived in the vicinity on May 23, Lee was unsure of Grant's intentions and didn't immediately have his army dig in.

The Confederates blocked two attempted river crossings by separate wings of the Army of the Potomac in the first day's fighting, but the battle is best known for Lee's ingenious defensive line along the river. Springing a trap for Grant, Lee established an inverted V as a defensive line, with the salient touching the North Anna River, which would allow the Army of Northern Virginia to use interior lines to fall upon the separate wings of the Union army if it tried to cross the river.

As fate would have it, Grant would fall into Lee's trap, only for Lee to be debilitated by illness at the crucial moments, allowing Grant to realize the potential mistake and avoid a major pitched battle. Grant would swing his army southeast toward the crossroads at Cold Harbor convinced that Lee's army was on the verge of collapse, while Lee was uncharacteristically fiery and ornery as a result of the missed chance at the North Anna.

The Greatest Civil War Battles: The Battle of North Anna comprehensively covers the campaign and the events that led up to the battle, the fighting itself, and the aftermath of the battle. Accounts of the battle by important participants are also included, along with maps of the battle and pictures of important people, places, and events. You will learn about the Battle of North Anna like you never have before, in no time at a11.



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