



The 48th Pennsylvania in the Battle of the Crater: A Regiment of Coal Miners Who Tunneled Under the Enemy

Jim Corrigan

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In June 1864, Grant attempted to seize the Confederate rail hub of Petersburg, Virginia. General P.G.T. Beauregard responded by rushing troops to Petersburg to protect the vital supply lines. A stalemate developed between the entrenched armies. Union commander General Ambrose Burnside advanced the idea of allowing the 48th Pennsylvania--a regiment from the mining town of Pottsville--to tunnel under Confederate entrenchments and place explosives there. The plan should have guaranteed Union victory, yet the battle turned into an astonishing Confederate triumph. This thorough history of the Battle of the Crater shows how bickering among Federal commanders allowed shattered Confederate troops the opportunity to regroup, costing the Union an opportunity to capture Petersburg and bring an early end to the war. It also reveals how the cooperation of Confederate commanders helped to avert certain defeat. Appendices include a list of forces in the Battle of the Crater, a table of casualties, and a list of soldiers decorated for gallantry during the conflict.

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