

DR. JAMES BRYANT / DR. GERALDINE W. KIEFER  
SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY

Strategy and Sublimity: Mapping and Articulating The Valley Pike in the Civil War, 1861-1865

That the Valley Pike was a crucial and strategic artery for battles, troop movements, strategic advancements, and retreats during the Civil War goes without question. It goes without question that the Valley Pike was the crucial and strategic artery for troop movements, battles, and retreats during the Civil War.

In the Valley Campaign of March-May 1862, Stonewall Jackson and his brigades moved rapidly up and down the Shenandoah Valley, via the Pike, in order to divert Federal troops from massing in the major theaters of war in and around Richmond. From May to September 1864, Little Phil Sheridan led his army through a series of Valley engagements and encounters wherein the Valley Pike served not only as a troop mover, but as a link which served to garner as well as articulate crucial Federal victories at Fisher's Hill and Cedar Creek.

What receives very little attention or study are the images that defined, surrounded, centered and evidenced these and related campaigns. What has not been studied as images are the maps, prepared by Federal and Confederate cartographers, that have strategic as well as cultural references and that can be subtly eyed to strategic and cultural messages. Considered as a multi-layered ensemble, these images present multi-textual as well as visually rich material wherein the Valley Pike functioned as the 'spine' and nerve center of War.

The paper begins with Virginia artist and writer David Hunter Strother, author of "Virginia Illustrated: Containing A Visit to the Virginian Canaan and The Adventures of Porte Crayon and His Cousins" (1857). Strother (Porte Crayon), who later enlisted on the Union side and was a military cartographer, portrayed the Valley and its turnpike in sublime terms, elevating them to distinction as 'The Great Valley.'

The main body of the paper concerns the Valley Road as mapped and imaged during the Civil War, focusing on the Valley Campaigns of 1862 and 1864. The focus is the imagery of maps and drawings (engraved as illustrations) marking the movement of troops and the sequencing of battles. By means of these maps and drawings wherein the Valley Road served as the key artery, or was suggested as such by means of imaginative graphic reconstructions (streams of troops marking the presence of one or more main roads), it will be shown that the Valley Pike had strategic significance that was translated into visual and graphic equivalents. The sublime mountainous and valley landscape contextualized by Porte Crayon in 1857 evolved in fundamental ways from 1861 to 1865. Aesthetics and visual messaging, overlaid by strategy, functioned to bring viewers of various stripes (both military and civilian) close to the theaters of real action, supplanting imagined story and romance. Strategy and story commingled, with the Valley Pike in their midst