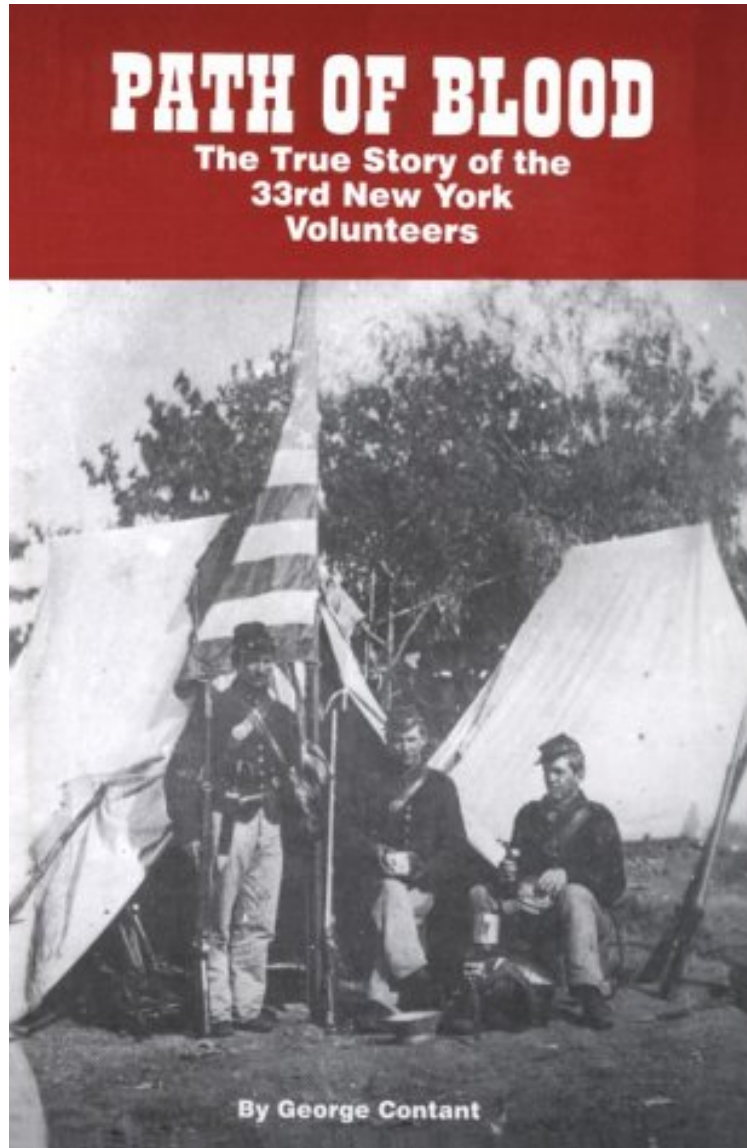


(Free) Path of Blood: The True Story of the 33rd New York Volunteers

Path of Blood: The True Story of the 33rd New York Volunteers

George W Contant, George W. Contant

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George W Contant, George W. Contant : Path of Blood: The True Story of the 33rd New York Volunteers before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Path of Blood: The True Story of the 33rd New York Volunteers:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Path of BloodBy smcjmhGreat Read. Knowing they are talking about my ancestors gives me a different outlook on the way they lived back then. Couldn't put it down.7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A Union unit's story, thoroughly researched, freshly told.By Donald M. Bishop

(donald.bishop.67@trincoll.edu) Path of Blood is a fine new history of a regiment in the Army of the Potomac, the 33d New York Volunteer Infantry. The "Ontario Regiment" was raised in Western New York in the spring of 1861, and it served in Virginia and Maryland -- fighting in the battles of Williamsburg, Antietam, and Fredericksburg -- during the first two years of the Civil War. The research for this new history was remarkably thorough. The only previous book on the regiment, published in 1864, was written by the New York Times correspondent that accompanied the unit, David Judd. Though not a professional historian, George Contant masterfully combed through hundreds of scattered Civil War letters and fading newspaper articles to trace anew the story of the regiment. Contant's new account has the same freshness as Judd's because it so extensively quotes the contemporary letters of its officers and soldiers. It is even more satisfying because Contant also quotes the generals, men in neighboring units on the same battlefields, and the Confederate soldiers who faced the 33d. It is fresh, too, because Contant, in the tradition of great historians like Parkman, walked each of the battlefields. This freshness and familiarity overcomes the book's minor editorial shortcomings -- some typos and formatting lapses uncaught by the proofreader. Even after more than 130 years, there are new things to discover about the Civil War. At the Battle of Williamsburg on May 5, 1862, three companies of the 33d halted a Confederate advance led by Jubal Early with a desperate bayonet charge, preventing a major rout of the Union forces. Brigadier General Winfield Scott Hancock received the credit for the daring reversal -- jump starting his remarkable military and political career. Contant persuasively shows, however, that it was the quick thinking of Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Corning of the 33d that was decisive. Du Picq once said that study of a single skirmish in detail yields more knowledge of war than many books on campaigns. Path of Blood illustrates this well. There are many profound lessons about the Civil War -- and about war itself -- to be derived from the experience of the 33rd New York as it marched through Maryland and Virginia: fog of war, friction of war, principles of war, leadership, followership, cohesion and unit spirit, training, logistics, "cause and comrades," and so on. Contant -- like myself, a descendant of one of the 33d's soldiers -- deserves great credit for recovering them. Through the eyes of the 33d's soldiers we see McClellan and Sedgwick and Hancock -- the Peninsula, Antietam, and Fredericksburg -- at first hand. We hear the bands around the campfires and see the "burnished rows of steel" on the march. From their letters -- as they wrote them within hours and days of their struggles -- we hear their voices, cheers, and curses. We feel the battle rage. We learn of their exasperations, and their hopes. And in the end, we know too their love of country.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A NEW REGIMENTAL LOADED FOR BATTLE. By A Customer George Contant's, "Path of Blood..." is truly an exceptional piece of Civil War research and writing. The author, U.S. Air Force Ret'd and a native of western New York, has done a superb job in presenting to Civil War readers one of the best "new" regimental histories in recent years. Recruited primarily from the scenic "Finger Lakes" region of the Empire State, the 33rd New York Volunteer Infantry served with much distinction in the Eastern Theater of war from 1861 until the survivors mustered out in May, 1863. From their brief initiation on the battlefield at First Bull Run, the regiment moved south with General George B. McClellan for his thrust up the Peninsula toward Richmond in the Spring of 1862. Here was where the 33rd experienced its real "baptism" of fire. It was at the Battle of Williamsburg in May, 1862 that the regiment first showed its prowess in "tight" places by wrenching a potential defeat back to victory with an heroic charge under the eyes of the officer most credited with the success, General Winfield S. Hancock. Though the victory would be credited in the press and history books mainly to Hancock, the author correctly shows where the real seeds of success were sown--in the ranks of the fighting 33rd New Yorkers. And, from here, it was only one month later that the men of the 33rd were called upon once again for heroics to stem off an attempt by Robert E. Lee's pursuing Confederates at Golding's Farm. Moving north with McClellan later that year to stop Lee's invasion of Maryland, the 33rd faced the foe again at Crampton's Gap and, later, in the cauldron of battle near the Dunker Church at bloody Antietam. And before the year was out, these now veteran New Yorkers again saw action at the equally bloody Battle of Fredericksburg. With 1863, came a new Federal general, Joseph Hooker, and a new campaign--Chancellorsville. Here, the 33rd served in the Federal Sixth Corps and was part of the that force's successful attack on Lee's rear at Marye's Heights near Fredericksburg. However, when Lee's victorious army pushed Hooker back and turned east to confront the Sixth Corps, the 33rd and comrades suddenly found themselves isolated and surrounded in the country near Salem Church. Now, was the 33rd New York's supreme moment of sacrifice and it met its fate well. As part of the rearguard, the unit fought tenaciously to hold-off the closing Rebels while the Sixth Corps tried to extricate itself from the trap. Though the Corps was successful, the 33rd lost so heavily in its efforts that it effectively ceased to exist as a viable unit for the field. Thus ended the career of this hard-fighting regiment from the "Finger Lakes." Though several modest, early attempts to chronicle this unit's history were made, Mr. Contant's new book surpasses all previous efforts by a long-shot. His research is deliciously thorough, showing long hours and years of searching for sources hidden in libraries, papers, and homes of western New York and beyond. Using over 300 letters, diaries, newspaper and manuscript accounts from the men and families of the 33rd, the author succeeds in blending a high degree of detail with an exciting and flowing prose. Loaded with photographs, well-drawn unit maps, and helpful appendices filled with extra information and rosters, it is a complete package. Though classified as a "regimental" history, this book is more a history of the life of a group of battle-scarred veterans from New York. Using the soldiers' own words and experiences as much as possible to tell their much-needed tale, the author succeeds in providing

riveting descriptions of battle action. Yet, also covered are the origins, lives, thoughts and fears of this acclaimed regiment in their journey from home to battlefield and back again. I don't read many regimental histories for fun, but I wasn't prepared for the excitement this one generates. You can't go wrong picking up this story! Theodore C. Mahr, former National Park Service Historian, reviewer, and author of: "The Battle of Cedar Creek: Showdown in the Shenandoah, October 1--30, 1864".

Book by Contant, George W, Contant, George W.