

VMI in the Civil War

November, 1859

A contingent of the Corps was dispatched to Charles Town following John Brown's raid on the Harper's Ferry arsenal. Cadets stood guard at Brown's execution on December 2nd

April, 1861

The Corps was sent to Richmond, where cadets drilled Confederate army recruits. The commanding officer during this trip was Major Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson, who had joined VMI's faculty in 1851 as professor of natural and experimental philosophy and instructor of artillery. Jackson accepted a commission and left for active duty soon after the Corps arrived in Richmond.

May, 1862

The Corps was ordered to aid General Jackson's forces during the McDowell campaign. The cadets, commanded by Scott Shipp, marched in pursuit of Federal troops but were not engaged in battle.

May, 1863

General Stonewall Jackson died on May 10 from wounds received at the Battle of Chancellorsville, and his body was returned to Lexington for burial.

August – December, 1863

The Corps was called into the field to defend against the raids of General William Averell, but was not engaged in battle.

May 15, 1864

The Corps, again under the command of Scott Shipp, marched into battle along with General John C. Breckinridge's forces against Federal troops led by General Franz Sigel. Ten cadets were mortally wounded in the Battle of New Market.

June 11, 1864

Federal troops, under the command of General David Hunter, entered Lexington. The Corps retreated to a camp in the Blue Ridge near Balcony Falls. VMI was burned the next day by Hunter's soldiers. On June 25 the Corps returned to Lexington, only to be furloughed two days later.

December, 1864

Academic work resumed at the Alms House in Richmond. VMI's temporary headquarters.

April, 1865

Richmond was evacuated and the Corps disbanded. The Confederacy surrendered at Appomattox.

October, 1865

VMI reopened in Lexington.