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Franz Sigel

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Franz Sigel (November 18, 1824 – August 21, 1902) was a [German](#) military officer, revolutionist and immigrant to the [United States](#) who was a teacher, newspaperman, politician, and served as a [Union major general](#) in the [American Civil War](#).

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Early life

Franz Sigel



F. Sigel

Early life [edit]

Sigel was born in [Sinsheim, Baden](#) (Germany), and attended the [gymnasium](#) in [Bruchsal](#).^[1]

He graduated from [Karlsruhe Military Academy](#) in 1843, and was commissioned a [lieutenant](#) in the [Baden Army](#). He got to know the revolutionaries [Friedrich Hecker](#) and [Gustav von Struve](#) and became associated with the revolutionary movement. He was wounded in a duel in 1847. The same year, he retired from the army to begin [law school](#) studies in [Heidelberg](#). After organizing a revolutionary free corps in [Mannheim](#) and later in the Seekreis county, he soon became a leader of the [Baden revolutionary](#) forces (with the rank of [colonel](#)) in the [1848 Revolution](#), being one of the few revolutionaries with military command experience. In April 1848, he led the "Sigel-Zug", recruiting a militia of more than 4,000 volunteers to lead a siege against the city of [Freiburg](#). His army was annihilated on April 23, 1848 by the better-equipped and more experienced [Prussian](#) and [Württemberg](#) troops. In 1849, he became Secretary of War and commander-in-chief of the revolutionary republican government of Baden. Wounded in a skirmish, Sigel had to resign his command but continued to support the revolutionary war effort as [adjutant general](#) to his successor [Ludwik Mieroslawski](#). In July, after the defeat of the revolutionaries by

Franz Sigel

Born	November 18, 1824 <div>Sinsheim, Baden, Germany</div>
Died	August 21, 1902 (aged 77) <div>New York City, U.S.</div>
Place of burial	Woodlawn Cemetery the Bronx
Allegiance	 Baden <div> United States of America</div>
Service/branch	 Baden Army <div> Union Army</div>
Years of service	1843–1847 (Baden) 1861–1865 (USA)
Rank	Lieutenant (Baden) <div> Major General (USA)</div>
Commands held	XI Corps
Battles/wars	1848 Revolution American Civil War <ul style="list-style-type: none">Battle of CarthageBattle of Wilson's CreekBattle of Pea RidgeSecond Battle of Bull RunBattle of New Market

[Prussian](#) troops and Mieroslawski's departure, Sigel led the retreat of the remaining troops in their flight to [Switzerland](#).^[2] Sigel later went on to [England](#). Sigel emigrated to the [United States](#) in 1852, as did many other German *Forty-Eighters*.

Sigel taught in the [New York City](#) public schools and served in the state militia. He married a daughter of [Rudolf Dulon](#) and taught in Dulon's school.^[3] In 1857, he became a professor at the German-American Institute in [St. Louis](#). He was elected director of the St. Louis public schools in 1860. He was influential in the Missouri immigrant community. He attracted Germans to the [Union](#) and anti-slavery causes when he openly supported them in 1861.

Civil War [\[edit\]](#)

Shortly after the start of the war, Sigel was commissioned [colonel](#) of the 3rd Missouri Infantry, a commission dating from May 4, 1861. He recruited and organized an expedition to southwest Missouri, and subsequently fought the [Battle of Carthage](#), where a force of pro-[Confederate](#) Missouri militia handed him a setback in a strategically insignificant fight. However, Sigel's defeat did help spark recruitment for the [Missouri State Guard](#) and local Confederate forces. Sigel later took part in a skirmish at [Dug Springs](#).^[2]

Throughout the summer, [President Abraham Lincoln](#) was actively seeking the support of anti-slavery, pro-Unionist immigrants. Sigel, always popular with the German immigrants, was a good candidate to advance this plan. He was promoted to [brigadier general](#) on August 7, 1861, to rank from May 17, one of a number of early [political generals](#) endorsed by Lincoln.

Sigel served under [Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon](#) in the capture of the Confederate [Camp Jackson](#) in St. Louis and at the [Battle of Wilson's Creek](#), where his command was routed after making a march around the Confederate camp and attacking from the rear. Sigel conducted the retreat of the army after the death of General Lyon.^[2]




Riverside Drive, New York City



His finest performance came on March 8, 1862, at the [Battle of Pea Ridge](#), where he commanded two [divisions](#) and personally directed the Union artillery in the defeat of [Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn](#) on the second day of the battle.^[4]

Sigel was promoted to major general on March 21, 1862. He served as a division commander in the [Shenandoah Valley](#) and fought unsuccessfully against Maj. Gen. [Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson](#), who managed to outwit and defeat the larger Union force in a number of small engagements. He commanded the [I Corps](#) in Maj. Gen. [John Pope's Army of Virginia](#) at the [Second Battle of Bull Run](#), another Union defeat, where he was wounded in the hand.

Over the winter of 1862–63, Sigel commanded the [XI Corps](#), consisting primarily of German immigrant soldiers, in the [Army of the Potomac](#). During this period, the corps

saw no action; it stayed in reserve during the [Battle of Fredericksburg](#). Sigel had developed a reputation as an inept general, but his ability to recruit and motivate German immigrants kept him alive in a politically sensitive position. Many of these soldiers could speak little English beyond "[I'm going to fight mit Sigel](#)" , which was their proud slogan and which became one of the favorite songs of the war. They were quite disgruntled when Sigel left the corps in February 1863, and was replaced by Maj. Gen. [Oliver O. Howard](#), who had no immigrant affinities. Fortunately for Sigel, the two black marks in the XI Corps' reputation—[Chancellorsville](#) and [Gettysburg](#)—would occur after he was relieved.

The reason for Sigel's relief is unclear. Some accounts cite failing health; others that he expressed

his displeasure at the small size of his corps and asked to be relieved. General-in-chief [Henry W. Halleck](#) detested Sigel, and managed to keep him relegated to light duty in eastern [Pennsylvania](#) until March 1864. President Lincoln, for political reasons, directed [Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton](#) to place Sigel in command of the new Department of [West Virginia](#).

In his new command, Sigel opened the [Valley Campaigns of 1864](#), launching an invasion of the [Shenandoah Valley](#). He was soundly defeated by Maj. Gen. [John C. Breckenridge](#) at the [Battle of New Market](#), on May 15, 1864, which was particularly embarrassing due to the prominent role young cadets from the [Virginia Military Institute](#) played in his defeat. ^[4] After the battle, Sigel was replaced by Maj. Gen. [David Hunter](#). In July, Sigel fought [Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early](#) at [Harpers Ferry](#),^[4] but soon afterward was replaced by [Albion P. Howe](#). Sigel spent the rest of the war without an active command.

Postbellum career [\[edit\]](#)

Sigel resigned his commission on May 4, 1865. He worked as editor of the [Baltimore Wecker](#) for a short time,^[2] and then as a newspaper editor in [New York City](#). He filled a variety of political positions there, both as a [Democrat](#) and a [Republican](#). In 1869, he ran on the Republican ticket for [Secretary of State of New York](#) but was defeated by the incumbent Democrat [Homer Augustus Nelson](#). In May 1871 he was collector of internal revenue, and then in October 1871 register of the city.^[5] In 1887, President [Grover Cleveland](#) appointed him pension agent for the city of New York. He also lectured, worked in advertising and published the *New York Monthly*, a German-American periodical, for some years.^[2] Franz Sigel died in New York in 1902 and is buried there in [Woodlawn Cemetery](#) in [the Bronx](#). [Elsie Sigel](#) was his granddaughter.



Honors ^[edit]

Statues of him stand in [Riverside Park](#) in [Manhattan](#) and in [Forest Park](#) in [St. Louis](#). There is also a park named for him in [the Bronx](#), just south of the Courthouse near [Yankee Stadium](#). Sigel Street in [Williamsburg, Brooklyn](#) was named after him,^[6] Sigel Street in [Worcester, Massachusetts](#) was also named after him, as well as the village of [Sigel, Pennsylvania](#), founded in 1865. [Sigel Township, Minnesota](#), settled in 1856 and organized in April 1862, was also named for Sigel. In about 1873 Sigel himself visited Sigel Township and [New Ulm, Minnesota](#).^[7]

See also ^[edit]

- [List of American Civil War generals](#)
- [German Americans in the Civil War](#)



[Biography portal](#)



[United States Army portal](#)



[American Civil War portal](#)

Notes [[edit](#)]

1. [^] Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America*, Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1952, p. 237.
2. [^] [a](#) [b](#) [c](#) [d](#) [e](#) "Sigel, Franz". *New International Encyclopedia*. 1905.
3. [^] Wilson, James Grant; Fiske, John, eds. (1900). "Sigel, Franz". *Appletons' Cyclopædia of American Biography*. New York: D. Appleton.
4. [^] [a](#) [b](#) [c](#) Chisholm 1911.
5. [^] "Sigel, Franz". *Collier's New Encyclopedia*. 1921.
6. [^] Benardo, Leonard; Weiss, Jennifer. *Brooklyn by Name: How the Neighborhoods, Streets, Parks, Bridges and More Got Their Names*. New York University Press. pp. 28–29. ISBN 0-8147-9946-9.
7. [^] Warren Upham, "Minnesota Place Names: A Geographical Encyclopedia," MHS Press, 2001, page 75

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External links [[edit](#)]

 Media related to [Franz Sigel](#) at Wikimedia Commons

- ["Franz Sigel"](#) . [Find a Grave](#). Retrieved 2008-12-29.
- [Franz Sigel in *Encyclopedia Virginia*](#) 
- [Sigel, Pennsylvania, website](#) 
-  [Franz Sigel](#). Eulogy by [Carl Schurz](#).

Military offices		
Preceded by none	Commander of the XI Corps September 12, 1862 – January 10, 1863	Succeeded by Julius H. Stahel
Preceded by Carl Schurz	Commander of the XI Corps February 5, 1863 – February 22, 1863	Succeeded by Adolph von Steinwehr

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