

Winchester Battlefields



The Charge of Custer at Winchester by William B. T. Trego (1879)

“The unfortunate town of Winchester seems to have been made a regular shuttlecock of by the contending armies.”

– British Observer Col. Arthur Fremantle

Winchester During The Civil War

Situated in the fertile Shenandoah Valley, Winchester was highly contested during the Civil War. Its strategic location as a hub for transportation made Winchester an attractive prize for both the North and the South. Six major battles took place here, and the town changed hands approximately 72 times – more than any other town in the country.



Begin your battlefield visit at the James R. Wilkins Winchester Battlefields Visitor Center. Located at the Third Winchester Battlefield Park, the site features indoor and outdoor exhibits interpreting Winchester's Civil War history and the six battles that were fought in and around the city. Orientation films, a digital 3D map, visitor information and souvenirs are all available at this site. The Winchester Battlefields Visitor Center is the recommended first stop for exploring Civil War Winchester.

541 Redbud Road, Winchester VA 22603

Open April 1 to October 31

Thurs, Fri, Sat, Mon: 10am to 4pm

Sunday: 1pm to 5pm

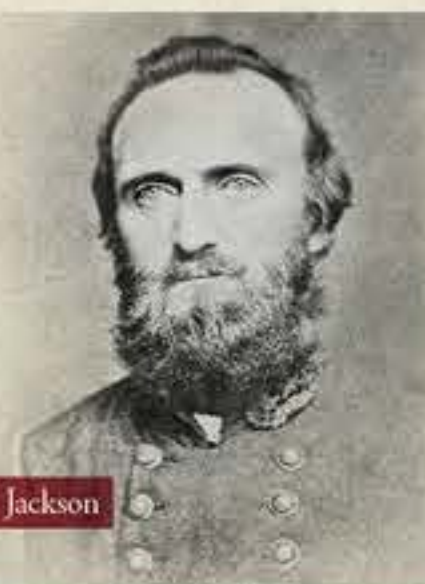
1st Battle of Kernstown

March 23, 1862 • Jackson's 1862 Valley Campaign

As commander of the Valley District, Confederate Gen. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson was tasked with keeping the Federal Army in the Shenandoah Valley from moving east to join Union Gen. George McClellan during the Peninsula Campaign. In a rare intelligence mistake, Col. Turner Ashby reported to Jackson that most of the Federal troops in Winchester had left the area.

Relying on this faulty intelligence Jackson rushed his small force of nearly 4,000 men north to attack the Federals in Winchester commanded by Col. Nathan Kimball. Jackson quickly learned that he was facing an entire Federal division of 8,500 men. The Federals stopped Jackson at Kernstown then counterattacked turning Jackson's left flank and forcing him to retreat.

The battle was a tactical defeat for Jackson, however the fight at Kernstown was a strategic victory for the Confederates. President Abraham Lincoln was concerned that Jackson was a threat to Washington and redirected substantial reinforcements to the Valley, depriving Union Gen. George McClellan's army of these troops. McClellan claimed that the additional troops would have enabled him to take Richmond during the Peninsula Campaign, and perhaps even end the war that much earlier.



Gen. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson

“Say nothing about it. We are in for it”

– Confederate Gen. Stonewall Jackson upon learning that his force was vastly outnumbered

1st Battle of Winchester

May 25, 1862 • Jackson's 1862 Valley Campaign

Following the Confederate victory at the Battle of Front Royal on May 23, Confederate Gen. “Stonewall” Jackson pursued Union Gen. Nathaniel Banks retreating force to Winchester on May 24. By nightfall, Banks' men were in a defensive position on the south side of Winchester, braced for the advancing Confederates.

At first light on May 25 picket fire opened the battle. The first Confederate attack occurred against the Union left flank atop Camp Hill. After failed attempts to seize that flank, Jackson turned his attention to Banks' right atop Bowers Hill. Around 7:30 a.m. a flank attack led by Gen. Richard Taylor's Louisiana Brigade dislodged Banks' defenders. In less than one hour Banks' line crumbled under the pressure of Jackson's assault and Union soldiers fled north through the streets of Winchester. As Banks' men ran through town, angry civilians reportedly shot at the Union soldiers. Jackson's men pursued as far north as Stephenson's Depot, but with insufficient cavalry and a war-weary army – slowed by throngs of civilians in the streets welcoming Jackson and his men as liberators – Banks was able to escape.

Jackson's smashing victory at the First Battle of Winchester was the emotional high point of his 1862 Valley Campaign, sent Federal forces tumbling out of the Valley, and prompted northern leaders into a reaction that inadvertently helped save Richmond.



Gen. Nathaniel Banks

“I do not remember having ever seen such rejoicing...the people seemed nearly frantic with joy...Our entrance into Winchester was one of the most stirring scenes of my life.”

– Confederate Gen. Stonewall Jackson

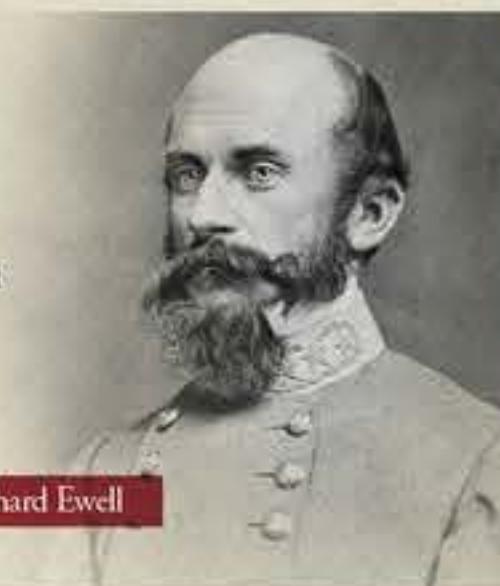
2nd Battle of Winchester

June 13-15, 1863 • Lee's 1863 Gettysburg Campaign

After the Battle of Brandy Station, June 9, 1863, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee ordered his II Corps, Army of Northern Virginia, under Gen. Ewell, to clear the northern Shenandoah Valley of Federal opposition. Ewell's columns converged on Winchester's garrison commanded by Gen. Robert Milroy. Instead of retreating in the face of superior numbers, Milroy determined to make a stand in the supposedly strong fortifications west and north of town.

Fighting began on the afternoon of June 13, but the next day the Confederate Louisiana Brigade captured West Fort leaving Milroy in an untenable position. After dark, Milroy abandoned his remaining entrenchments in an attempt to retreat to Charles Town. Confederate Gen. Edward “Allegheny” Johnson's division marched at night and before daylight on the 15th cutting off Milroy's retreat just north of Winchester at Stephenson's Depot. After intense and chaotic fighting, the Confederates captured approximately 4,000 Federals and scattered the rest of Milroy's defeated force.

The Second Battle of Winchester was a stunning Confederate victory which cleared the Valley of Federal troops and opened the door for Lee's second invasion of the North that led to the Battle of Gettysburg. The battle also demonstrated a rare use of extensive earthworks in the Shenandoah Valley.



Gen. Richard Ewell

“The disaster at Winchester, when it came, was a surprise to all.”

– President Abraham Lincoln

Battle of Rutherford's Farm

July 20, 1864 • Early's 1864 Maryland Campaign

Confederate Gen. Jubal Early was returning to Winchester after a movement on Washington D.C. that saw brief fighting around the city's defenses. Pursued by Federal forces under Gen. Horatio Wright, the Confederates defeated them at the Battle of Cool Spring on July 18 and continued their movement westward.

With Union forces under Gen. William Averell approaching Winchester from the north, Early sent Gen. Stephen Ramseur's to block him. Both sides planned to take the initiative, but Averell struck first. Attacking across the Rutherford Farm, the Union right overlapped the Rebels' left, and Federal infantry and cavalry crashed into that vulnerable flank, shattering the end of the Confederate line. The southern defenses began to collapse. Retreating men streamed through the ranks of those who tried to stand, and despite Ramseur's efforts to stem the tide, the retreat became a rout. The Confederates retreated towards Winchester in confusion, with the Federals capturing four pieces of artillery and nearly 300 men.

The Battle of Rutherford's Farm was a rare Union victory in the Valley, coming amidst a steady stream of defeats at the hands of Confederate Gen. Early during the summer of 1864.



Gen. Jubal Early

“Indications are that the enemy must attack me in the morning. The probabilities are that I shall attack him”

– Union Gen. William Averell

2nd Battle of Kernstown

July 24, 1864 • Early's 1864 Maryland Campaign

Believing Jubal Early's Confederate army was no longer a threat in the Shenandoah Valley, Federal Gen. Horatio Wright abandoned his pursuit and ordered the VI and XIX Corps to return to Washington, where they were to be sent to join Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's Federal forces at Petersburg. Wright left Gen. George Crook with three Federal infantry divisions and a few elements of cavalry in the Valley to hold Winchester.

Under orders to prevent reinforcements from being sent to Grant, Gen. Early marched north on July 24 against Crook. After an hour of stubborn resistance at Pritchard's Hill, the Federal line collapsed, and Crook's divisions streamed back in disarray through the streets of Winchester. Federal Col. James Mulligan, commanding Crook's 3rd Division, was mortally wounded.

Crook retreated to the Potomac River and crossed near Williamsport, Maryland on July 26. Because of this defeat and the subsequent burning of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, on July 30, Grant ordered the VI and XIX Corps back to the Shenandoah Valley and unified several Federal commands in the region under Gen. Philip Sheridan.



Gen. George Crook

“I determined to attack the enemy at once and my whole force was put in motion for Winchester”

– Confederate Gen. Jubal Early

3rd Battle of Winchester

September 19, 1864 • Sheridan's 1864 Valley Campaign

After weeks of skirmishing and small battles, Confederate Gen. Jubal Early mistakenly believed that new Union commander Gen. Philip Sheridan's caution reflected a lack of aggressiveness and felt safe in dividing his forces between Winchester and Martinsburg to wreck the B&O Railroad and threaten Maryland. Learning of Early's risky maneuvers, and that one of Early's divisions had left for Richmond (thanks to information from pro-Union Winchester resident Rebecca Wright smuggled to Sheridan by African American Thomas Laws), Sheridan moved to attack early on September 19.

The battle raged all day on the hills east and north of Winchester. Early's veterans decimated two divisions of the XIX Corps and a VI Corps division fighting in the Middle Field and along the Berryville Pike. Confederate division commander Maj. Gen. Robert E. Rhodes and Union division commander Brig. Gen. David A. Russell were killed within a few hundred yards of one another in the heat of the fighting. Late in the afternoon, a flanking movement by Gen. George Crook's Army of West Virginia and Union cavalry finally broke Early's overextended line north of town and sent them “whirling through Winchester.”

The Third Battle of Winchester was the largest and costliest battle ever fought in the Shenandoah Valley. More than 54,000 men fought and over 8,600 became casualties in a ferocious see-saw struggle and drove the Confederates from Winchester giving the Union permanent control of the city.



Gen. Philip Sheridan

“[Third Winchester] was one of the hottest times I ever seen. Gettysburg could not hold it a light while it lasted.”

– Confederate Soldier Nathan R. Frazier, 45th North Carolina

Visiting Civil War Winchester



MUSEUMS AND VISITOR CENTERS

- James R. Wilkins Winchester Battlefields Visitor Center**
The visitor center is the main orientation site for the Civil War in Winchester. It provides information on the battlefields and related Civil War sites. Located at the Third Winchester Battlefield Park, the site features exhibits, orientation films, a digital map, and gift shop. The site is operated by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.
541 Redbud Road • Winchester, VA 22603
Open April 1 to October 31
Thurs, Fri, Sat, Mon: 10am to 4pm
Sunday: 1pm to 5pm
540-667-2754
- Shenandoah Valley Civil War Museum**
Located in the heart of Old Town Winchester, the museum occupies the historic Frederick County Courthouse. Built in 1840, the building was used as a hospital, prison, and barracks during the war and many soldiers left their names and other graffiti on its walls. The museum's award winning exhibit "One Story One Thousand Voices" covers the Civil War in the Shenandoah Valley with information panels and artifacts on exhibit. The site is preserved and operated by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.
20 N. Loudoun Street • Winchester, VA 22601
Open Monday - Saturday: 10am to 5pm
Sunday: 1pm to 5pm
540-542-1145
- Stonewall Jackson's Headquarters**
It was at this home that Stonewall Jackson had his headquarters from November of 1861 until his army evacuated Winchester on March 11, 1862. The rooms used by Jackson are restored and today the site is open for tours with artifacts on display.
415 N. Braddock Street • Winchester, VA 22601
Open April 1 to October 31
Hours: Monday-Saturday: 10 am to 4 pm; Sunday: 12pm to 4pm
540-773-1604

KERNSTOWN BATTLEFIELDS

- Kernstown Battlefield Park**
The park features the Pritchard House and Pritchard's Hill, both key features on the battlefield. The 388-acre park has walking trails, a visitor center and exhibits related to the battles of Kernstown. The site is preserved by the Kernstown Battlefield Association.
610 Battle Park Drive • Winchester, VA 22601
Open Weekends: May - October from 10am to 4pm
540-450-7835
- Opequon Presbyterian Church**
Next to the Kernstown Battlefield Park, the church provides a good viewing point of the park when it's not open. Interpretive markers on the site cover the battles of Kernstown.
217 Opequon Church Lane • Winchester, VA 22602
Grounds Open Daily - Dawn to Dusk
- Rose Hill Park**
Part of the 1st Kernstown Battlefield, the park features trails and interpretive markers about the battles.
1871 Jones Road • Winchester, VA 22602
Open Daily - Dawn to Dusk
540-665-5678

1ST WINCHESTER BATTLEFIELD

- Winchester-Frederick County Visitor Center**
Much of the 1st Winchester Battlefield has been lost to development. A marker for the battle is located on the grounds of the visitor center and much of the nearby park was part of the battlefield.
1400 S Pleasant Valley Road • Winchester, VA 22601
Open Daily - 9am to 5pm
540-542-1326

2ND WINCHESTER BATTLEFIELD

- Star Fort**
Located north of Winchester, Star Fort was one of a series of forts around the city and stands as one of the finest existing examples of a Civil War fort in the Shenandoah Valley. Visitors can still see the remains of the star-shaped earthworks, magazine pits, and artillery platforms. Several interpretive markers explain the significance of the fort and the role it played during the 2nd Battle of Winchester. The site is preserved by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.
503 Fortress Drive • Winchester, VA 22603
Open Daily - Dawn to Dusk
540-740-4545
- Richard Snowden Andrews Monument**
Dedicated in 1920, the monument sits along the Valley Pike (US Route 11) on the battlefield. Lt. Col. Andrews commanded an artillery battalion in Fowell's Corps, and it was two of his guns that anchored the center of Gen. Allegheny Johnson's line on the bridge along the Charles Town Road. Andrews was wounded in the action on the morning of June 15, 1863, while directing artillery fire. Andrews' family commissioned the monument.
2748 Martinsburg Pike • Stephenson, VA 22656
Open Daily - Dawn to Dusk
- Carter Farm**
Cut off from their retreat, it was across the fields of this farm that Union forces tried to fight their way out of Winchester early in the morning of June 15, 1863, with many scattering or surrendering. The site also saw action during the battles of Rutherford's Farm and 3rd Winchester. Trails and interpretive signage are in development for the site, but it can be visited as part of the audio tour. The Carter Farm is made up of the open fields on both sides of McCanns Road. The land is preserved by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.
McCanns Road • Winchester, VA 22603
Open Daily - Dawn to Dusk
540-740-4545

RUTHERFORD'S FARM BATTLEFIELD

- Rutherford's Crossing**
Much of what was Rutherford's Farm is now the Rutherford's Crossing Shopping Center. While most of the battlefield has been lost to development, there are interpretive markers located next to the Red Robin restaurant along the Valley Pike (US Route 11).
110 Merchant Street • Winchester, VA 22603 (neighboring property)
Open Daily - Dawn to Dusk
- 3RD WINCHESTER BATTLEFIELD**
Third Winchester Battlefield Park
The 600-acre park covers areas of the heaviest fighting during the battle including the Middle Field and the West Woods. The park features restored historic fences with numerous interpretive markers, monuments and cannons. Over 5 miles of walking trails provide access to the battlefield. The park is owned and operated by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.
541 Redbud Road • Winchester, VA 22603
Open Daily - Dawn to Dusk
540-740-4545
- Fort Collier**
Another of Winchester's numerous forts, this fort saw intense action during the battle. The earthworks of the fort are still visible today and interpretive markers tell the story of the fort and its role in the battle. The site is preserved by Fort Collier Civil War Center Inc.
922 Martinsburg Pike • Winchester, VA 22601
Open Daily - Dawn to Dusk

WINCHESTER CEMETERIES

- Winchester National Cemetery**
The cemetery is the final resting place for Union soldiers who fought and died at the battles of Winchester, New Market, Front Royal, Snickers Gap, Harper's Ferry, Martinsburg, and Romney. The cemetery is also the location of monuments for numerous Union Army regiments that fought in the Shenandoah Valley.
401 National Avenue • Winchester, VA 22601
Open Daily - Dawn to Dusk
540-825-0027
- Stonewall Confederate Cemetery**
Located within Mount Hebron Cemetery, Stonewall Cemetery is the resting place for the bodies of 2,575 Confederate soldiers who died in the fields and hospitals around Winchester, including Turner Ashby and George S. Patton, grandfather of the famous World War II General. Monuments have been erected here by various states and individuals, and every year since 1866 the graves are decorated and appropriate memorial ceremonies held.
305 E. Boscaawen Street • Winchester, VA 22601
Open Daily - 8am to 5pm
540-662-4868



To explore more of Winchester's Civil War history, download the Winchester Battlefields App via the QR Code or dial into the audio tour at 540-302-2877.

Become a Member to support the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation and our preservation and interpretation efforts at Winchester and throughout the region. Membership levels start at just \$35.

HOW TO JOIN

In Person: Visit the Shenandoah Valley Civil War Museum or Winchester Battlefields Visitor Center and ask the staff at the desk.

By Phone: Call 540-740-4545

Online: www.shenandoahatwar.org

By Mail: Send checks to PO Box 897,

New Market VA 22844 (Note: Membership)

SCAN TO JOIN



ABOUT THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY BATTLEFIELDS FOUNDATION

In 1996, Congress designated eight counties in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia as a National Battlefield Site - The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District - which preserves and interprets the region's significant Civil War battlefields and related historic sites. The battlefields of Winchester and Frederick County are part of this district.

The effort is led by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, a 501(c)3 non-profit which works with partners to preserve the hallowed ground of the Valley's Civil War battlefields, to share its Civil War story with the nation, and to encourage tourism and travel to the Valley's Civil War sites.

MORE INFORMATION

Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation

9386 S. Congress Street • New Market, VA 22844 • 540-740-4545

www.shenandoahatwar.org

Under Virginia Code § 10.1-2306. A. It is unlawful to intentionally deface, damage, destroy, displace, dislodge, or remove any object of antiquity on any designated state archaeological site, state-controlled land, or land owned by a battlefield preservation organization or on which such organization holds an easement.