

So Badly Routed

The Battle of Fisher's Hill
in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley,
September 22—24, 1864

Larry W. Allamong, Mike K. Kehoe,
Richard B. Kleese, Nicholas G. Racey,
and William L. Stover, Jr.

Unedited Excerpt



Savas Beatie
California

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and William L. Stover, Jr.

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by the Union to take control of the Shenandoah (known as the "Breadbasket
of the Confederacy"), Grant directed Sheridan and his Army of
the Shenandoah to rid the region of enemy troops and strip it clean.
Grant had had enough of Early's persistent threats to the capital at
Washington, D.C. The authors utilize extensive firsthand archival research
to thoroughly explore the military operations during the days following
the Third Battle of Winchester through Sheridan's attack at Fisher's Hill.
Their descriptions of the fighting, aided by accurate and informative
maps and descriptive views by the soldiers themselves, make for a
complete treatment of the decisive battle and the related military
actions. Students and genealogists will hail the extensive original muster
roll data used to create the Order of Battle, which provides for the
first time the actual unit commanders on the field that day. This study
includes pertinent illustrations, complete casualty listings, and a
self-guided tour. It is an important addition to the library
of Civil War enthusiasts and genealogists"-- Provided by publisher.

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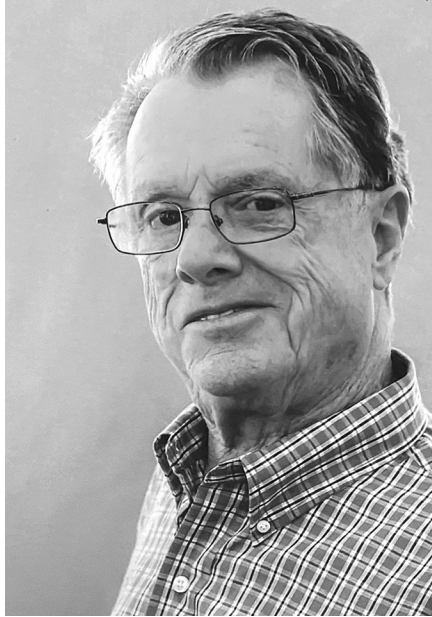
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In memory of our dear friend and fellow historian Jackie W. Troxell Sr.

Jackie served in the U.S. Army, First U.S. Cavalry Division, during the Vietnam Conflict. While on duty he received wounds so severe that it was the considered opinion of his attending medical personnel that it would be a miracle for him to ever walk or function thereafter. Defying all predictions, he did walk and eventually became one of the most prolific Civil War historians and relic hunters in the entire Shenandoah Valley.

THAT FATEFUL DAY

It started on the trench-line, out toward the west,
Where the gray-clad troopers first failed to stand the test,
All along the line from the left to the right,
Crook's men cheered as they put the Rebs to flight.

On Ramseur's hill the Southern infantry stood,
They fought Crook's charge the very best that they could,
For nearly a full hour they held Crook's men at bay,
But, as the sun sank low, 'twas not to be their day.

All along the line, like dominoes they fell,
Nothing could rescue them, not even the Rebel Yell,
The whole of the Rebel infantry was suddenly put to flight,
As darkness fell and a long, long day turned into a long, long night.

Struggling, in full retreat, along the Valley Road,
A line was formed late that day that also failed to hold,
Came Prospect Hill where they tried hard to make a stand,
There, Pendleton fell as he rallied his tiny Rebel band.

On the side of the Pike there's a marker where Pendleton was shot,
A simple sign that tells the story that should never be forgot,
A dramatic story that should always be told about that fateful day,
When Sheridan's Union army made the Rebel army pay.

— L. Allamong, June 2024

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Photos have been placed throughout the text for the convenience of the reader.

MAP INFORMATION

The maps included in this book were drawn to represent, as closely as possible, the positions of the armies and their positions in the Fisher's Hill, Front Royal, and Page Valley areas during the conflict.

The road system overlays for the Fisher's Hill area were developed and drawn by Larry Allamong who relied on decades of study, surveying, and interviews with the old folks of the localities. During his residence on the battlefield, Larry often took horseback rides and has walked virtually every square inch of the battlefield.

The Front Royal and Luray area road-system overlays were developed and drawn by Nicholas Racey using period maps, diary entries, historical USGS topographical maps, as well as consultations with persons native to the areas. It is important to note that many of the contemporary roads and by-ways did not exist during 1864.

The locations of the map depicting the execution of Mosby's men were extensively researched by William Stover, using historical maps, interviews, and diary entries to determine the most precise locations available at this writing.

Using a combination of USGS shaded relief contour maps as the base, the period road systems were overlaid to create a visual image of the battlefield as it appeared during the time of the war.

The scales of the maps vary somewhat, though road positions are generally accurately shown, if not actually precise.

Acknowledgments

Without question, one of the most important contributors necessary to the efforts contained herein was the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, which began the charge to preserve the land incident to the Battle of Fisher's Hill. Their initial efforts have been continued by successor organizations to the extent that the field over which the brave men of the Union and Confederate Armies contended on September 22, 1864, remains available for future generations.

The late Ted Hockman, who owned and farmed much of the land originally preserved, took extensive time from the precious years of his later life to guide the authors individually and collectively on tours of the field, pointing out the location of gun emplacements and trench lines that are now obscure. Surrounding landowners have been equally open to allowing ingress to their lands for important study. Among those landowners to be mentioned are Pastor William Erbach, Pearly Brill, Paul Fravel, the Foster family, the Pangle family, Jerry King, Randy and Kimberly Painter, Ms. Belinda

Palmer, John Stevenson, Ms. Susie Grimes and contributing authors Larry Allamong and William Stover, Jr.

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Will Greene's advice to contact Savas Beatie about publishing our work was also very good advice. Theodore (Ted) Savas and his very capable associates Sarah Keeney and Veronica Kane have been exceptional in getting our manuscript to publication. A special thanks also go out to Dave Snyder, a most able editor, and to Ryan Quint, who served as the indexer for this volume.

The Fisher's Hill Group, as we are sometimes known, wish to express our thanks for the patience of our spouses Kathy Kehoe, Annie Kleese, Kelly Sager, and Anna Stover during the years this project has consumed. It is also important to thank Annie Ray Kleese for providing a meeting place and for including snacks, cookies, and candy which were vital to our continued success along the way.

Preface

*T*he Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864 originally began with Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel's failed spring offensive. During July 1864, Gen. Robert E. Lee detached Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early's Second Army Corps, Army of Northern Virginia, for an exciting raid to threaten, and perhaps capture, Washington, D.C. Early's invasion would prove to be the final major push of the war into the Federal states in the Eastern Theater.

In each of the earlier major incursions, Union forces had successfully repelled the advancing Confederates. In the battles of Antietam and Gettysburg, threats to the Federal capital had been defended with virtually the entire Army of the Potomac. That army was now under the commanding general of all U.S. forces, Ulysses S. Grant, crossing the James River to begin the siege of Petersburg, Virginia.

To meet Early's threat, Grant dispatched significant portions of his force to Washington. Early made a strategic withdrawal back into the Shenandoah Valley but remained poised to again threaten the city. To meet this threat, Grant and the Lincoln administration created an army known as the Army of the Shenandoah. Against some opposition, Grant hand-picked Maj. Gen. Phillip A. Sheridan to command the newly created army.

Sheridan's assignment was to deploy his superior numbers to protect the capital, and to neutralize the Shenandoah Valley as an avenue of invasion, as it had been during the earlier years of the conflict. Quashing the valley's role as a supplier of food and forage to Lee's beleaguered army was also an important consideration. Grant ordered Sheridan to attack and press Early and the Confederates, and even to destroy them if such an opportunity presented itself.

Sheridan began his campaign in August 1864, and by September 20 had won a major victory at Winchester, Virginia. Very aware of his great numerical superiority, he immediately followed Early's Confederate retreat some 20 miles south to Strasburg and the Confederate position atop Fisher's Hill, a short distance south of the town.

Sheridan and his commanders developed an elaborate plan to destroy Early's army that included frontal feints and assaults, forced marches into the mountains for surprise flanking maneuvers, and cavalry detachments dispatched to circle and prevent the anticipated Confederate retreat. The successes and failures of the Battle of Fisher's Hill and its related actions in the Page (or Luray) area of the Shenandoah Valley, including the Mosby affair at Front Royal, Virginia, are the focus of this book.

The result of the Battle at Fisher's Hill was the eventual advance of Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah to the area near Harrisonburg, Virginia. This maneuver led to "The Burning" during late September and early October that has often been regarded as the most extensive retribution ever inflicted by armed forces against the citizenry of an area. The northern valley was rendered a virtual wasteland. Sheridan's victory at Cedar Creek, Virginia, on October 19, 1864, coupled with the earlier victories at Winchester, Fisher's Hill, and Toms Brook, secured the valley against Confederate advances and played an important part in the re-election of President Abraham Lincoln, and the resultant victory of the Union.

Larry W. Allamong

Michael K. Kehoe

Richard B. Kleese

Nicholas G. Racey

William L. Stover, Jr.

I

An Overview

By the fall of 1864, many Shenandoah Valley residents came to doubt whether their great valley, “the breadbasket of the South,” could continue to supply Robert E. Lee’s Confederate army in the field. The war had far exceeded almost everyone’s pre-war prediction both in duration and intensity. The preceding three years had taken a severe toll on the economic capability of the population to continue to produce all they had in years past. With many of the sons of the region now under arms, permanently disabled, or in their graves, many of the valley’s fertile fields lay dormant and unproductive.

The farms in the valley had never significantly relied on slave labor. Rather, valley agriculture depended on the existence of small family farms to plant, harvest, sell, and share crops. The defeat of Robert E. Lee’s Confederate forces at Gettysburg in July 1863 caused that army’s withdrawal to the northern, or lower valley, where the army consumed some considerable portion of the summer harvest. Despite these factors, the outlook for the 1864 fall harvest was bright, and the valley continued to be among the most important sources of supply for Lee’s army.

A major change in the Federal war effort took place during February 1864 when the U.S. Congress revived the army rank of lieutenant general, paving the way for the March 10, 1864, appointment of Ulysses S. Grant as general-in-chief of all Union forces. His successes in the West had raised his stature in the eyes of President Lincoln and spurred the promotion. Lincoln also voiced his approval of Grant’s unflinching approach and his willingness to pursue his objective aggressively. Lincoln had previously promoted Grant to the rank of major general following his success at Vicksburg, on the Mississippi, during July 1863. There, Grant’s refusal to be side-tracked from his army’s objective led to the capitulation of that river fortress and secured uninterrupted passage for the

United States on the great river. Grant clearly was willing to fight, as had more recently been demonstrated in his relentless tactics in subsequent actions around Chattanooga. Lincoln had personally telegraphed Grant his “more than thanks, my profoundest gratitude for the skill, courage, and perseverance . . . which you and [your command]” had demonstrated at Chattanooga.¹

Lincoln was less enthusiastic about his army's efforts in the East. The president had, for some time, expressed annoyance at the Army of the Potomac's lethargy in pursuit of Lee's army following the battle at Gettysburg.

Consistent with his new responsibilities as general-in-chief, in concert with Gen. Henry W. “Old Brains” Halleck and President Lincoln, Grant presented a plan that required simultaneous moves by several Federal forces against Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in the East, with the objective being the capture of the Confederate capital at Richmond. Grant also envisioned a simultaneous advance by Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's forces operating in the Western Theater against a Confederate force led by Maj. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston. Also included within the plan's objectives was an expedition to be led by Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel that would operate from the vicinity of Harpers Ferry, to protect against Confederate threats to Washington from the Shenandoah Valley and thereby prevent interruption of the B & O Railroad. Grant also ordered Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler with his Army of the James to advance toward Richmond, operating in concert with Meade's overland advance. Still another part of Grant's plan entailed Brig. Gen. George A. Crook's Army of West Virginia to operate in concert with a cavalry division under the command of Brig. Gen. William W. Averell against the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad in southwestern Virginia. This strategy, if executed simultaneously, would force the Confederates to employ forces on several fronts, thereby denying their ability to congregate forces against Federal armies on any individual field. Specifically, as the execution of Grant's plan pertained to the Virginia valley, Federal objectives could be expanded to include the large Confederate supply depots and storehouses at Staunton that employed the Virginia Central Railroad for shipments between Staunton and Charlottesville, Lynchburg, and Richmond, and co-operation with General Crook's expedition against the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad—the link to the salt and lead mines in western Virginia at Saltville and Wytheville respectively.²

1 United States War Department, *The War of The Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1880–1901), Series 1, vol. 31, pt. 2, 51. Hereafter cited as *OR*. All references are to Series I unless otherwise noted.

2 U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, 2 vols. (New York, 1866), vol. 2, 130–132; *OR* 33, pt. 1, 798–799; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 2:129–132.

Sigel's elevation to department command raised eyebrows among many in Washington's military and political circles, but his popularity within the German-American community and his standing in the Republican Party ultimately secured his selection. Sigel, himself a German immigrant, enjoyed military experience in Europe prior to his 1852 arrival in the United States. He played an important role in his home state of Missouri by enlisting great numbers of German-American immigrants, and received considerable political attention for saving Missouri for the Union. His war experience included both his part in an embarrassing defeat at Wilson's Creek, Missouri, in August 1861, and a significant positive contribution to the Federal victory at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, in March 1862.

Sigel's arrival at the Department of West Virginia at Cumberland, Maryland, on March 11, 1864, was heralded with an artillery salute and great fanfare. After organizing his command, Sigel moved his army to Martinsburg during late April and entered Winchester on May 1st. At first, Sigel focused on co-operation with Crook's Federal force marching east toward Staunton from Beverly in Randolph County, West Virginia. Their combined objective would be destruction of the railroad and the extensive supply facilities there.³

To counter Sigel's advance, the Confederates gathered a makeshift army composed of Maj. Gen. John C. Breckinridge's two-brigade force, which was force-marched from southwest Virginia to join Brig. Gen. John D. Imboden's Northwestern Brigade cavalry, which, as the only organized command in the lower valley, had maintained constant surveillance of Sigel's movements. Together, with the aid of a battalion from the Virginia Military Institute numbering 277 cadets, Breckinridge, in command of the combined Confederate force, inflicted a severe defeat on Sigel's Federals at New Market on May 15, 1864. Sigel's entire Federal force retreated to the north bank of Cedar Creek, near Middletown.

On May 21, Maj. Gen. David Hunter replaced Sigel as commander of the Department of West Virginia. A widely circulated comment made by Col. David H. Strother, a staff officer in the Union army, in response to news that Crook had been successful in his efforts to burn the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad trestle across the New River in southwest Virginia, offered damning criticism of Hunter's predecessor: "We are doing a good business in this department. Averell is tearing *up* the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad while Sigel is tearing *down* the Valley turnpike."⁴

3 Henry A. Du Pont, *The Campaign of 1864 in the Valley of Virginia and the Expedition to Lynchburg* (New York, 1925), 8–9.

4 Cecil D. Eby Jr., ed., *A Virginia Yankee in the Civil War, The Diaries of David Hunter Strother* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1961), 229.

Hunter, the son of a Presbyterian minister and a West Point graduate, class of 1822, had a very ordinary military career, and resigned in 1836. He then married, speculated unsuccessfully in real estate, and rejoined the army in 1841. He served in the Mexican War under Gen. Zachary Taylor as the chief paymaster and by 1850 had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. While serving in the Kansas Territory prior to the war, he had become an ardent abolitionist and thereafter became known as "Black Dave." At the outbreak of hostilities, he was promoted to division command and suffered a wound at Bull Run in July 1861. He endured several unimportant assignments following his recuperation from the wound until his assignment to command the Department of West Virginia on May 19, 1864.

The victorious Confederate forces at New Market were led by Maj. Gen. John C. Breckinridge. Breckinridge, a Kentuckian, was elected in 1856 as the youngest U.S. vice-president; ran unsuccessfully for president in 1860; and served in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives from his home state. Though he was not a graduate of a military college, his war experience included participation in Western Theater operations, particularly in battles at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and Chickamauga, Georgia. He and his command were redeployed to reinforce Lee near Richmond.

Brigadier General John D. Imboden, a lawyer and native of Staunton, had served almost the entire war in the valley, and was very familiar with the ground the Confederates were charged to defend. Also without formal military education, he organized a partisan ranger outfit which became the 62nd Virginia Mounted Infantry—the nucleus of his Northwestern Virginia Brigade (cavalry). Imboden provided notable service during Lee's retreat from Gettysburg, when he saved the Confederate wagon trains from capture while waiting to cross the Potomac near Williamsport, Maryland. Imboden remained in the valley establishing an effective line of pickets widely dispersed to the west and north of Staunton, though his command found itself somewhat out of favor with Jubal A. Early, the commander of the Valley District. Early received promotion to lieutenant general on May 31, 1864, only two days after his temporary assignment to take over command of Lee's Second Corps, Army of Northern Virginia. A Virginian and a West Point graduate, class of 1837, Early's cantankerous attitudes tended to alienate colleagues, and his open criticism of Imboden's cavalry did little to promote harmony within his command.⁵

General Hunter began his southward advance from Belle Grove near Middletown, on May 26, reaching the town of Strasburg. Leaving there, with Daniel and Priscilla Borden's Sandy Hook barn set ablaze, he occupied Woodstock on May 29, New Market on May 30, and Harrisonburg three days later. On May 20, Grant had already suggested that Hunter cooperate with the forces under the command of Brig. Gen. George Crook

5 OR 33, pt.1, 1167–1168.

in a combined attempt to capture Staunton, as well as Gordonsville or Charlottesville.⁶ Hunter's force numbered some 8,500 men with 21 guns. Imboden's scattered brigade, numbering only 1,600, could do little to impede Hunter's advance. Imboden, however, constantly reported on Hunter's advance, and finally received word that Brig. Gen. William. E. "Grumble" Jones's entire force would be immediately dispatched from southwest Virginia to his aid.⁷ On June 4th, Jones arrived, and consistent with his senior rank, took command of a Confederate force opposing Hunter, numbering perhaps 5,600.⁸ On Sunday, June 5th, the two forces met in a fierce struggle at the Battle of Piedmont, a village located on East Road, approximately seven miles southwest of Port Republic and 13 miles northeast of Staunton. Hunter's Federal army was successful in the affair which lasted until mid-afternoon, when Jones was killed and the Confederates were driven from the field. Hunter had achieved the first Union victory in the Shenandoah Valley since Kernstown in 1862. One of the "secondary prongs of Grant's over-all offensive appeared to be working at last," according to historian E. B. Long.⁹ Hunter did not pursue the defeated Confederates, but rather preferred to continue the march to Staunton, the prize of the valley. He reached that locale the following day and linked his force to Crook. Imboden withdrew to the area of Waynesboro, where he continued to monitor Hunter's movements.

Hunter's and Crook's combined forces spent several days destroying all military property in Staunton and succeeded in wrecking several miles of the vitally important Virginia Central Railroad. Grant wanted Hunter to continue to destroy the Virginia Central Railroad in the direction of Charlottesville and Lynchburg, if possible.¹⁰ Hunter decided on a route via the Valley Pike to Lexington, which he entered on June 11th. The Federals spent the ensuing two days there, ransacking that city, including burning the buildings of the Virginia Military Institute and the home of Virginia's immediate past governor, John Letcher. Continuing to follow Grant's instructions, Hunter then directed his forces, together with Crook's division, to march toward Lynchburg, passing through Buchanan, and crossing the mountains toward Liberty (now Bedford), Virginia.

Confederate resistance to the Federal advance was offered by recently promoted Brig. Gen. John McCausland and his brigade of cavalry. Formerly under the command of Brig. Gen. Albert Jenkins, the brigade, numbering approximately 1,800, could offer only feeble resistance to Crook's advance toward Lynchburg. They were able, however,

6 OR 34, pt. 3, 3–4.

7 OR 37, pt. 1, 750.

8 Ibid., 151.

9 E. B. Long, *The Civil War Day by Day* (New York, 1971), 516.

10 OR 37, pt. 1, 598.

to slow the Federal progress, during which time Lee concentrated all available forces to protect and hold the city. Residents, convalescents, military personnel, and all other able-bodied men were pressed into service to construct a defensive line of entrenchments around the city.

Both Breckinridge's Division stationed at Rockfish Gap, near Waynesboro (subsequent to its June 3 fight at Cold Harbor), and Early's Second Corps, from the Richmond defenses, were dispatched to Lynchburg to aid Imboden's and McCausland's troopers who were being slowly pressed toward the city. As the Confederate command under Early assembled to defend Lynchburg, the armies engaged on the evening of June 17, and again on the morning of June 18. Hunter, now fearing his numbers were insufficient and realizing he was in enemy territory without adequate supplies, began a hasty retreat westward toward Charleston, West Virginia, vigorously followed by Early's advancing Confederates. Early could not bring Hunter's forces to bay, however, and he gave up the pursuit on June 22 west of the Blue Ridge Mountains near Salem, Virginia. There, according to Lee's instructions, Early turned his army northward and began his advance down the Shenandoah Valley, with the goal of threatening the Federal capital.¹¹ Early and his assembled force passed Lexington on June 24, and Strasburg on July 1, crossing the Potomac into Maryland on July 5 after skirmishing the previous day at Harpers Ferry. The Confederates turned east, through Frederick and continued southeast to the Monocacy River crossing, where their progress was temporarily arrested by a federal force numbering some 7,000 under the command of Maj. Gen. Lew Wallace. After driving the Federals from the field on July 9, Early pressed on to Rockville, Maryland, thence south to confront Fort Stevens, within the District of Columbia and less than five miles from the White House.

To counter Early's threat, Grant dispatched two divisions of the VI Corps under Maj. Gen. Horatio Wright to join other forces assembled for the defense of the city. An 1841 graduate of West Point, Wright had recently succeeded to command the VI Corps following the death of Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick at Spotsylvania. Within days, the Federal defenders numbered some 20,000. After an initial skirmish, Early opted not to attack the Federal host and began the withdrawal of his forces across the Potomac at White's Ferry, above Leesburg, marching toward the safety of the Shenandoah Valley. Hunter boarded the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and returned toward Harpers Ferry to aid in the capture of Early's Confederates. Wright assumed command of the combined pursuit.

Wright's pursuit ended near Snicker's Gap (now Bluemont, Virginia), following a sharp engagement at Cool Spring on July 18th, where the Winchester-Leesburg Pike

11 Jubal A. Early, *War Memoirs: Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War Between the States* (Bloomington, IN, 1960), 380.

crossed the Shenandoah River. Following that affair, Early continued his withdrawal through Berryville toward Winchester, to concentrate his forces near Strasburg.¹² Wright and his VI Corps, supposing Early intended to join Lee, returned to Washington, leaving only Crook's command to occupy the valley. Brigadier General William Averell, commanding Crook's cavalry, followed Early toward Winchester where, together with a portion of Crook's infantry, he inflicted a stinging repulse of Maj. Gen. Stephen D. Ramseur's Confederate division near Stephenson's Depot, north of the city, on July 20.

By July 22, Early located his headquarters on the front lawn of Spengler Hall, at Strasburg. Ramseur's Division was encamped along the Capon Grade west of Strasburg. Gordon's Division occupied Hupp's Hill on the Valley Pike north of town, and Rodes's Division halted at Fisher's Hill, two miles to the south. While in camp at Strasburg, Early learned of the VI Corps' departure, and determined to attack Crook, now bivouacked at Kernstown, south of Winchester. Early's attack, on July 24th, with the able assistance of Breckinridge's successful flanking maneuver, drove Crook's Union force beyond the Potomac. Following this affair, known as Second Kernstown, Early took position in the greater Winchester area, dispatching John McCausland's cavalry troopers to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where on July 30, they burned the town to retaliate for Hunter's depredations in Virginia.¹³ Early's army continued to operate in the area between Martinsburg, West Virginia, to the north and Winchester, Virginia, to the south.

Grant now realized that Early intended to remain in the valley and was not returning to Lee's army at Petersburg. He decided to appoint Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan as the temporary commander of all the troops opposed to Early, to destroy Early's force and clear the valley of Confederates. Grant wrote to Gen. Henry W. Halleck on July 14 that the valley should be "cleared and cleaned so that crows flying over it for the balance of the season will have to carry their provender with them."¹⁴ On August 1st, he advised the War Department of his intention to press the effort in the valley with Sheridan. Lincoln responded to Grant's communication favorably but stated, "I repeat to you it will neither be done nor attempted unless you watch it every day, and hour, and force it."¹⁵ Grant then traveled on August 3rd to Frederick, Maryland, where he personally advised Hunter of Sheridan's appointment. Hunter graciously requested to be relieved from command, and Sheridan took command of the newly-formed Middle Military Division.¹⁶

¹² Ibid., 397.

¹³ Ibid., 398–401.

¹⁴ OR 37, pt. 2, 300–301.

¹⁵ Grant, *Memoirs*, 2:318.

¹⁶ OR 43, pt. 1, 719.

Grant deeply respected the 33-year-old Sheridan, whom he considered an aggressive fighter. Sheridan previously commanded the cavalry in Meade's Army of the Potomac and had proven himself most capable. Grant also made certain that Sheridan commanded sufficient forces to achieve his objectives. His available force, numbering more than 30,000 men, became known as the Army of the Shenandoah. It consisted of three infantry corps—the VI Corps under the command of Major General Wright, the VIII Corps under the command of Brigadier General Crook, and the XIX Corps under the command of Maj. Gen. William H. Emory. Brigadier General Alfred T. A. Torbert led 8,600 superbly equipped cavalry to supplement Sheridan's infantry.

Sheridan began his advance from Halltown, near Harpers Ferry, toward Winchester and Newtown (Stephens City) on August 10th. Early reacted by falling back to Fisher's Hill as Sheridan advanced to the north bank of Cedar Creek. There Early prepared a line of battle expecting an attack from Sheridan, who hesitated, based on information from Grant that Early had possibly been heavily reinforced, which indeed he had been.¹⁷ As Sheridan fell back toward his old camps, Early again followed, with detachments of his army boldly operating from Winchester north to Martinsburg and again into Maryland. During the next month the two armies probed each other, but without a serious engagement. Dismayed by Sheridan's reluctance to attack, and suffering pressure from Washington for additional troops, Grant visited Sheridan at Charles Town on September 17. At this meeting Sheridan assured Grant that an advance was imminent after having received local intelligence that Kershaw's Confederate division had been recalled to Richmond.¹⁸

At daybreak on September 19, Sheridan opened the Third Battle of Winchester by moving his force west on the Berryville Pike to open the contest with Ramseur's Division of Early's army at the eastern edge of the city. The heavy fighting progressed slowly as each side committed additional forces, until the Confederates were obliged to begin their retreat in the face of greatly superior numbers. Late in the afternoon, Confederate organization and resistance completely broke down. Finally, Early's fought-out army was driven from the field when Crook's VIII Corps and the Federal cavalry succeeded against Gordon's and Wharton's infantry divisions and the Confederate cavalry north of the city.

Both sides lost heavily, though the Union army won a very complete victory. Losses in killed, wounded, or captured in Early's force exceeded 4,000. These losses proved far more material to the Rebel force of only 12,000 as compared to Sheridan's loss of

17 Ibid., 775, 783.

18 P. H. Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs of P. H. Sheridan*, 2 vols. (New York, 1888), 2:9.

approximately 5,000 from his available force of 40,000. As darkness fell over the blood-drenched field, Early's defeated army struggled south to escape the Federals.

Early actually led his army quite well on September 19th, until the overwhelming size of the Federal force began to make progress against the Confederate left. Sheridan then added two divisions of superbly mounted and equipped cavalry in a mounted charge astride the Valley Pike against Gabriel Wharton's and John Gordon's Confederate defenders that broke their line and began driving them south through the city. As Wharton's and Gordon's infantry retired in disorder, the balance of Early's army was forced to begin a most disorganized flight south using the Valley Pike to put some distance between themselves and the pursuing Yankees.

Sheridan telegraphed Grant at 7:30 p.m., sharing the news of his victory from within the captured city of Winchester. Grant sent his congratulations the next day, encouraging Sheridan to press his campaign. Lincoln, doubtlessly relieved, also telegraphed Sheridan at Winchester. The secretary of war, Edwin Stanton, along with his thanks and praise for Sheridan, advised the youthful Federal commander of his promotion to brigadier general in the regular army of the United States.

End of Unedited Excerpt