

Winchester

AT WAR

Battlefield Driving Tour

Third Battle of Winchester

September 19, 1864

1864 Timeline

August 7

Union Gen. Philip H. Sheridan assumes command of the Federal Army of the Shenandoah, opposing Confederate Gen. Jubal A. Early's Army of the Valley.

August - Early September

Sheridan and Early alternately advance and retreat in the northern Valley, occasionally engaging one another, and reconfiguring their forces, a time some refer to as "mimic war."

August 16

Elements of the two armies meet near Front Royal in the inconclusive Battle of Guard Hill.

September 3 - 4

The armies fight another inconclusive engagement at the Battle of Berryville; Early withdraws behind Opequon Creek.

September 19

Sheridan attacks Early's divided army at the Third Battle of Winchester, winning a victory that sends Early's army south to Fisher's Hill.

September 21 - 22

Early's army is defeated again at the Battle of Fisher's Hill and retreats south through the Valley.

Sept. 23 - Oct. 8

Sheridan's army moves south all the way to Staunton, then moves north and embarks on "The Burning," systematically confiscating or destroying barns, mills, crops, and livestock throughout the central Valley.

October 9

Confederate cavalry is routed at the Battle of Tom's Brook by Union cavalry; the Burning ends.

Mid-October

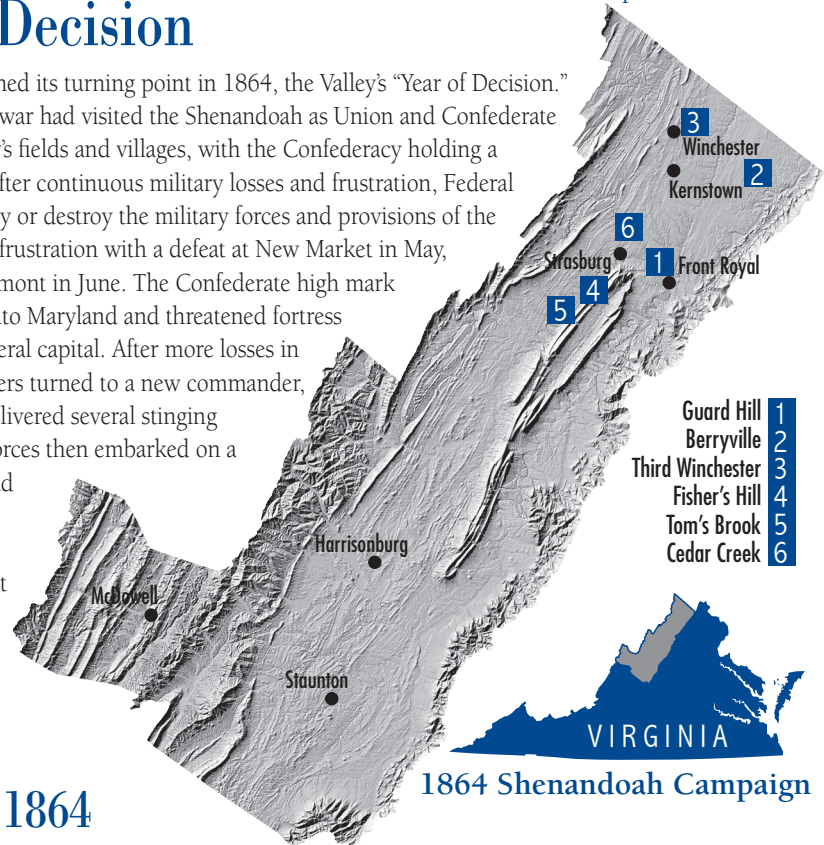
Federals encamp along the banks of Cedar Creek, between Strasburg and Middletown.

October 19

Early attacks Sheridan's Union army at the Battle of Cedar Creek, winning much of the battlefield by early afternoon before Federals launch a counterattack that all but destroys Early's army for the remainder of the war.

1864: The Year of Decision

For the Shenandoah Valley, the Civil War reached its turning point in 1864, the Valley's "Year of Decision." For nearly three years, the pain and misery of war had visited the Shenandoah as Union and Confederate armies marched and fought through the Valley's fields and villages, with the Confederacy holding a tenuous grasp on the bountiful land. Finally, after continuous military losses and frustration, Federal leaders determined in 1864 to conquer, occupy or destroy the military forces and provisions of the Valley once and for all. Spring brought Union frustration with a defeat at New Market in May, then a victory on the rolling landscape at Piedmont in June. The Confederate high mark came when Gen. Jubal Early marched north into Maryland and threatened fortress Washington, causing consternation in the Federal capital. After more losses in the Shenandoah Valley, desperate Federal leaders turned to a new commander, Gen. Philip Sheridan. By early fall Sheridan delivered several stinging defeats, dashing Confederate hopes. Federal forces then embarked on a "scorched-the-earth" campaign that burned and laid waste to much of the Valley's agricultural bounty. After one final attempt to destroy Sheridan's army, Early met a smashing defeat at Cedar Creek on October 19, 1864. Thereafter, the Confederacy had lost control of the Shenandoah Valley.

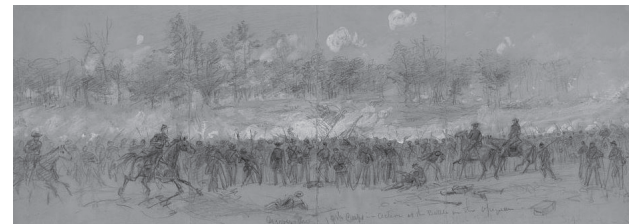


The Waltz: August and September 1864

Uncertain of Early's strength, and unwilling to risk a politically disastrous defeat, Sheridan moved carefully at first. For weeks, the two opposing armies probed, marched, and clashed in smaller battles such as **Guard Hill** (August 16) and **Berryville** (September 3-4), but avoided major engagements. The situation changed dramatically in mid-September. Thanks to information from a Unionist in Winchester named Rebecca Wright, and information that was smuggled to him by an African-American named Thomas Laws, Sheridan learned that Early had sent a portion of his army east to reinforce Gen. Robert E. Lee at Petersburg. Early had also split his army of some 15,000 soldiers to raid and harass the enemy north of Winchester. This was the opportunity that Sheridan had been awaiting.

Battle Summary

Early on the morning of September 19, Sheridan's cavalry divisions crossed the Opequon Creek at three different points—the vanguard of some 39,000 Union soldiers. Behind the cavalry marched three infantry corps advancing through the narrow but direct approach to Winchester along the Berryville Pike and canyon. Sheridan's plan was to surprise and overwhelm Early's scattered forces with a powerful attack. However, on September 18, Early realized Sheridan's intentions and correctly assumed that an attack was imminent. He quickly consolidated his forces, just in time for the Federal onslaught. Sheridan's advance through the Berryville Canyon was confused and tangled with men and supply wagons, which gave Early time to meet the Federal attack. Union Gen. Horatio Wright's VI Corps and Gen. William Emory's XIX Corps were severely mauled attacking across the plain near the Berryville Pike, and the forested hills of First Woods across Middle Field, then on to Second Woods and the West Woods north of the Pike. Confederate artillery and counter-attacks from Gen. John Gordon's and Gen. Robert Rodes' divisions stopped the attacks. By mid-afternoon, Federal Gen. George Crook's Army of West Virginia (VIII Corps), Sheridan's reserve, fell upon Early's weakened left line from the north forcing it to fold back into Winchester. Simultaneously, two Union cavalry divisions—6,000 mounted soldiers—attacked along the Valley Pike, engulfing all resistance in their path. The Confederate left flank collapsed under the tremendous force. Early ordered a retreat which turned into a rout through the streets of Winchester.



Third Winchester Battlefield Park

The Third Winchester Battlefield Park includes over 600 acres of preserved battlefield, the Third Winchester Visitor Center, and over 5 miles of interpreted walking trails.

Third Winchester Visitor Center

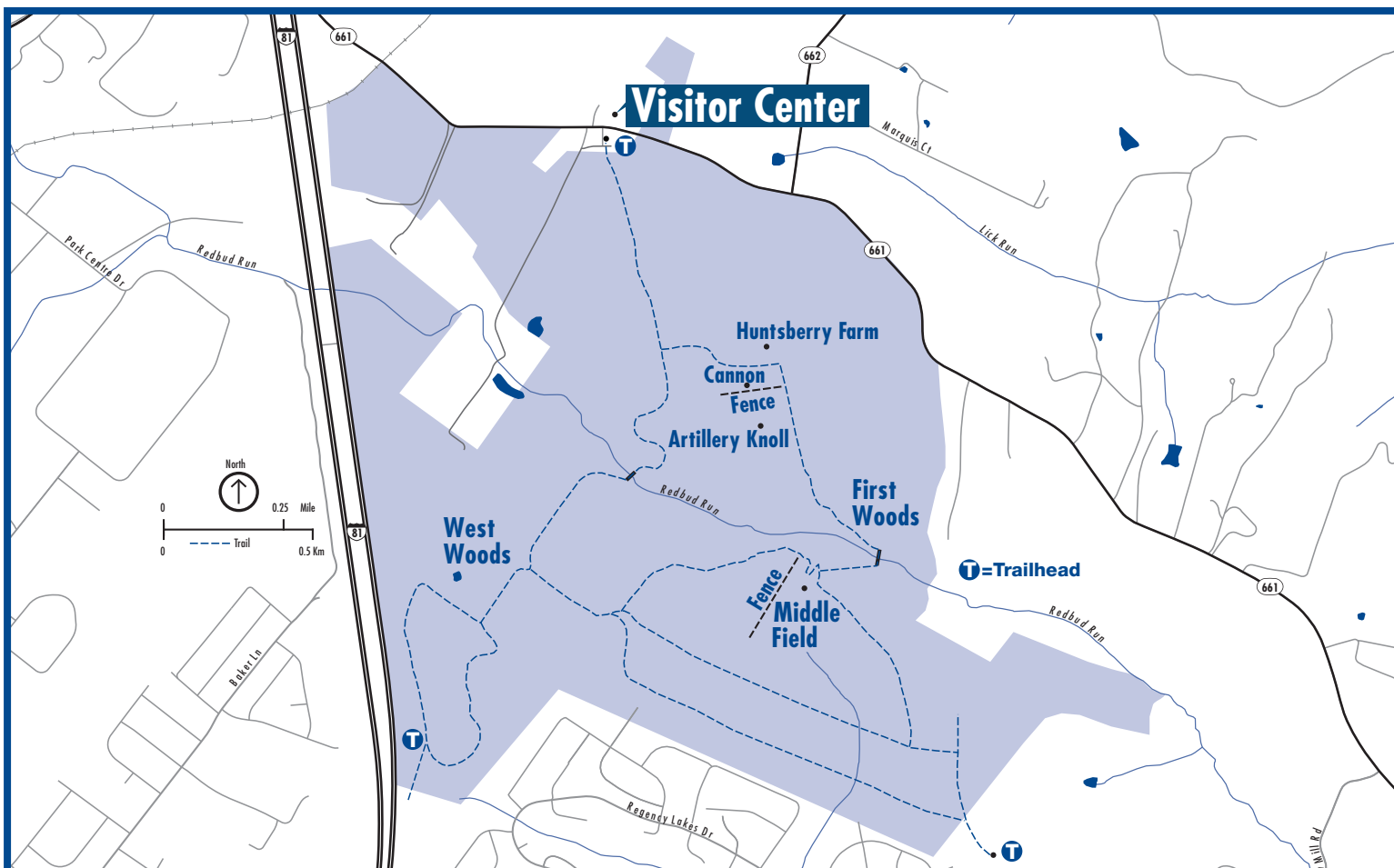
Start your battlefield tour at the Third Winchester Visitor Center, which features battlefield maps, images, and interpretive panels that break down each phase of the battle. Open 10am-5pm Monday-Saturday, 1-5pm on Sunday from March-October. Call 540-740-4545 to check on winter hours.

Third Winchester Walking Trails

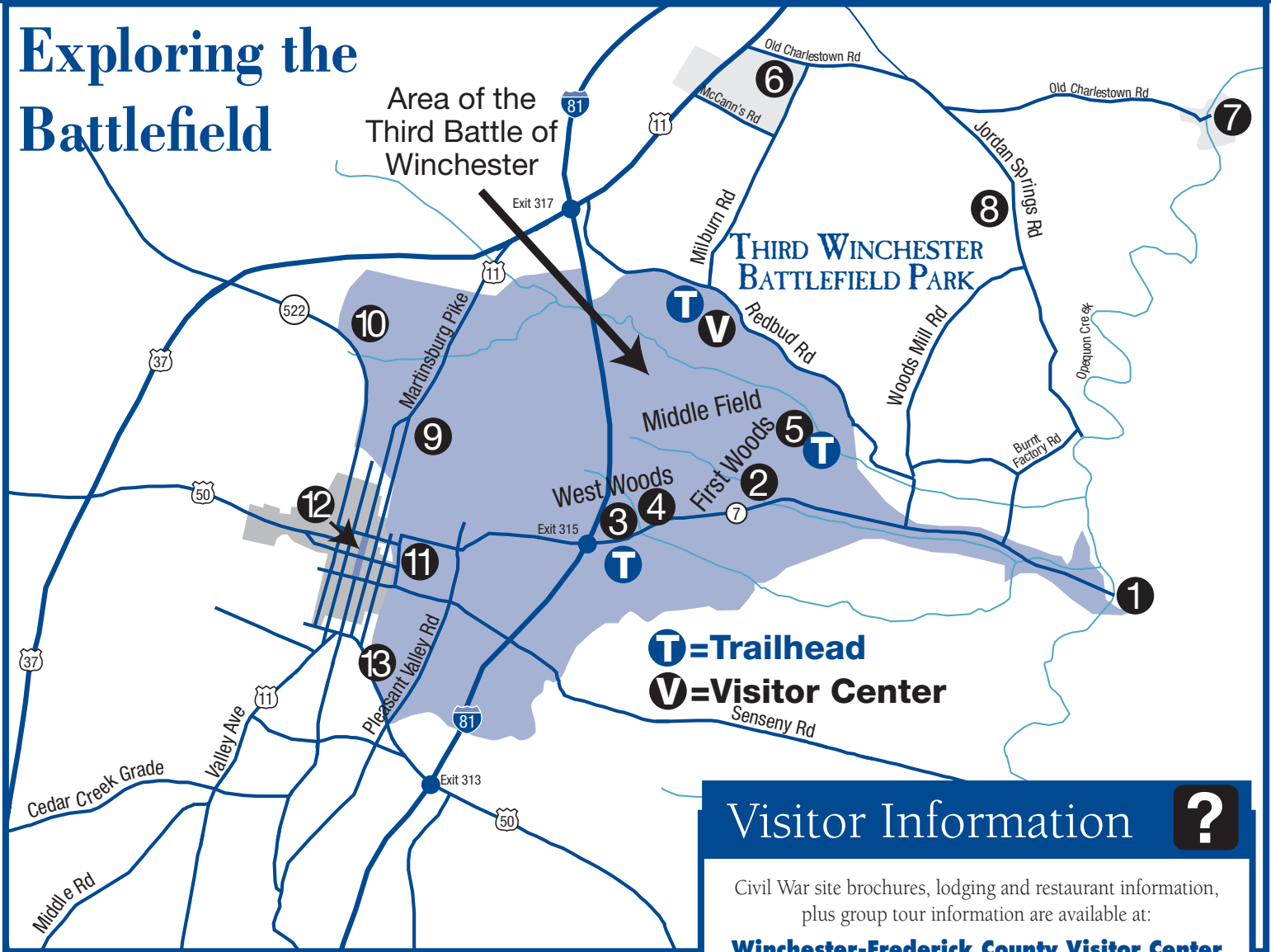
There are over 5 miles of walking trails on the Third Winchester Battlefield Park. The trails include orientation signs, over 20 interpretive markers, replica cannon, and restored battlefield landscapes. The battlefield park is open daily from dawn to dusk. There are three trailhead entrances to the battlefield, each with orientation kiosks. The trailheads (which can be seen on the map) are located at:

- #1 – Redbud Run Trailhead. Located directly across from the Third Winchester Visitor Center (541 Redbud Road)
- #2 – Millbrook High School Parking Lot. 251 West Woods Drive. Trailhead is located at northwest corner of school parking lot. **Important:** Parking is not allowed during school hours.
- #3 – West Woods Walking Trail. Located near the TownPlace Suites hotel (170 Getty Lane) in the Winchester Gateway Shopping Center, accessible from Va. 7.

The walking trails contains the First Woods, Second Woods, portions of the Middle Field, the West Woods, portions of Redbud Run, and Huntsberry Farm (including Artillery Knoll). Please feel free to enter the trail system at any of the entrances to explore the trails and interpretive markers.



Exploring the Battlefield



Directions to Stop #1 (Tour Starting Point): Take Virginia Highway 7 to where it crosses Opequon Creek 8 miles east of Winchester. (Opequon Creek is the county line between Frederick County and Clarke County.) Park in the pull-off area on the north side of the highway

Driving Tour Directions

Stop 1 ~ Federal army crosses Opequon Creek at Spout Spring (Sept 19, 1864) 2-9am

At this location most of Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah crossed Opequon Creek, led by Gen. James Wilson's 3rd Cavalry Division. Following was Wright's VI Corps, Emory's small XIX Corps of two divisions, and farther back in support was Crook's corps. Wilson began crossing here at 2am, with the infantry filing into Berryville Canyon, and forced the Confederate picket lines back.

This area was a key staging location for Federal troops throughout the day of the battle. South of the highway you can see historic Millbank, the Daniel Wood house, built c. 1850. Confederate troops near the house initially resisted the first Federals to cross the creek, but were quickly overwhelmed and chased through the Berryville Canyon. The house and the area around it were used as a field hospital after the battle.

Directions to Stop #2: Drive west towards Winchester on US 7. Past the entrance of Millbrook High School, the road rises. Stop at a safe pull-off along the road near the top of the hill.

"I cannot find a four leaf-clover, so I suppose we will have to go in."

— Union Gen. George Crook, at the Opequon Crossing, prior to taking his Army of West Virginia onto the battlefield

Visitor Information ?

Civil War site brochures, lodging and restaurant information, plus group tour information are available at:

Winchester-Frederick County Visitor Center and Civil War Orientation Center

1400 S. Pleasant Valley Rd., Winchester - 877-871-1326
Open daily - 9am-5pm
www.visitwinchesterva.com

Third Winchester Visitor Center

(operated by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District)
541 Redbud Road, Winchester
Open 10am-5pm Monday-Saturday, 1-5pm Sunday
www.ShenandoahAtWar.org

Old Court House Civil War Museum

(operated by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District)
20 N. Loudoun Street, Winchester - 540-542-1145
Open 10am-5pm Monday-Saturday, 1-5pm Sunday
www.courthousemuseum.org

Stop 2 ~ Federal Deployment - 6-9am (Mouth of Berryville Canyon)

Wilson's cavalry quickly and easily secured the plains beyond Berryville Canyon and met little resistance. Wright's VI Corps followed through the canyon but ignored orders to leave the train of wagons behind. The many wagons soon caused a huge jam in Berryville Canyon for Emory's corps following behind. Sheridan established his Headquarters at the Eversole farm, just to the south of this location and the road. Realizing the seriousness of the traffic jam in the canyon, Sheridan's famous anger boiled as his army met stiff resistance. Still, he directed the deployment of his army effectively. But by then Confederate reinforcements were en route—Sheridan lost his opportunity to destroy Early's army. On the morning of September 19, Early had only Gen. Stephen Ramseur's division and a small division under Gen. Gabriel Wharton available to meet the Federal juggernaut. As Early consolidated his scattered forces through the morning, Ramseur's division deployed a few hundred yards to the west straddling modern-day US 7 and was the only Confederate force to meet the Union advance from Berryville Canyon. Ramseur's division stopped the Federal attack as Union brigades and regiments were thrown back.

Directions to Stop #3: Continue west on US 7 and pull into the Winchester Mall parking lot on the right, just before the Interstate 81 interchange.

Stop 3 ~ Ramseur's Defense - 6am-12noon (South of West Woods; Junction I-81 & US 7)

In this area of east Winchester, Ramseur's Confederate division was able to block the Federal advance, first Wilson's cavalry division, and then Wright's VI Corps. The situation was desperate on both sides: Federal forces were stacking up in the canyon and being slaughtered as they reached the plain out of the mouth of the canyon; Ramseur's division was being driven back gradually and needed reinforcements. Eventually Confederate Gen. Rodes' division arrived and deployed north and to the rear in an area called the West Woods. For most of the day, these two Confederate divisions withstood several savage attacks by two Federal corps.

Directions to Stop #5: Return to VA. 7 and turn left (west) to Millbrook High School entrance and turn left, follow the road up into the school complex. Drive to the west through the parking lots until you can see woods behind the school area. Look for the large interpretive kiosks at the entrance to the walking trails.

"I don't think I ever heard such a noise as was made when Rodes started in. It sounded as if every tree in the woods was falling down and that a terrific thunder storm was raging in the woods."

— Confederate Private George Q. Peyton, 13th Virginia Infantry

Stop 4 ~ ~ West Woods - Vortex of Battle - 11:40am-4pm (Near 170 Getty Lane)

Note: This is one of the three trailheads for the 5 miles of walking trails on the Third Winchester Battlefield Park, which is owned and operated by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.

During Third Winchester, no position saw more constant battle than the West Woods. When Sheridan launched his first major attack at 11:40 am, Confederate artillery inside the woods shelled the Federals attacking along the Berryville Pike. At the same time, in the northern part of the woods, Confederate Gen. Zebulon York's Louisiana Tigers (of General John B. Gordon's just-arriving division) advanced through the woods and helped blunt the initial Federal assault. The Federals kept coming in superior numbers, and sent Gordon's men tumbling out of the woods – but were themselves met by new southern troops under Gen. Robert E. Rodes, who sent his division plunging headlong into the West Woods. Rodes was killed before entering the woods, but his troops smashed into the Federals and drove them out of the woodlot. At the same time, Confederate Gen. Bryan Grimes' North Carolina brigade advanced south through the western part of the woods and slammed into the Federals closer to the Berryville Pike. But the Confederates had no reserves, and the larger Federal numbers began to tell. Union Gen. David Russell mounted an assault into the woods, and although Russell was killed, his attack, and the follow-up by his subordinates, turned the tide. Gen. Emory Upton took command and drove his men into the woods, staggering the weakened Confederate defenders and throwing them back. The Federals cleared the last of the Confederates from the West Woods by 4:00pm.

Directions to Stop #5: Return to VA. 7 and turn left (west) to Millbrook High School entrance and turn left, follow the road up into the school complex. Drive to the west through the parking lots until you can see woods behind the school area. Look for the large interpretive kiosks at the entrance to the walking trails.

Stop 5 ~ First Woods XIX Corps Attack - 11:40am-2pm (Parking lot of Millbrook High School)

Note: This is another one of the three trailheads for the 5 miles of walking trails on the Third Winchester Battlefield Park, which is owned and operated by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District. Please remember that parking here is prohibited during school hours.

After you orient yourself using the large interpretive signs, enter the large body of woods to your front. You are now in the area known as the First Woods. At 11:40 a.m. a Union signal cannon opened the Union assault. Troops from Gen. William Emory's XIX Corps moved west through this area and then through the Middle Field, to strike Gen. John B. Gordon's Confederates in the Second Woods.

Once you are done exploring the area of the First Woods, follow the trails and read the interpretive markers to understand the XIX Corps' assaults, the fighting in the Middle Field and West Woods, and Gen. George Crook's attack across Redbud Run.

Directions to Stop #6: Leaving the Millbrook School lot, return to Rt. 7 and turn left or east. Follow Rt. 7 east for approximately 0.6 miles, then take the ramp on the left side of the road to the turn onto Woods Mill Road (Rt. 660). At the top of the ramp, turn left to cross Rt. 7 onto Woods Mill Rd./Rt. 660, heading north. After 0.3 miles, turn left onto Redbud Road (Rt. 661). Follow Redbud Road for 2.0 miles and then turn right onto Milburn Road. Follow Milburn Rd. for approximately two miles to the Virginia Civil War Trails signs on the left.

"Good God General, are you badly hurt?"

— Col. Oliver Edwards to Gen. David Russell. Russell had just been hit by a bullet. He would be killed moments later by an artillery fragment.

Stop 6 ~ Stephenson's Depot Federal Cavalry Attack - 10am-3pm (Milburn Road & Old Charlestown Road)

Gen. Wesley Merritt's and Gen. William Averell's Federal cavalry divisions formed near Stephenson's Depot about a mile to the north of here—6,000 mounted soldiers attacked south along the Valley Pike across this ground in the largest cavalry charge in American history.

(There are Virginia Civil War Trail signs at this site describing the cavalry charge of the Third Battle of Winchester and also one explaining the events of the Second Battle of Winchester in 1863 before the Battle of Gettysburg.)

Directions to Stop #7: Continue north on Milburn Road to the intersection with Old Charlestown Road (Rt. 761). Turn right (east) on Old Charlestown Road (Rt. 761) until you reach the Opequon Creek crossing.

continued

Driving Tour Directions continued

Stop 7 ~ Cavalry Fords at Opequon - 1am-3am (Old Charlestown Road)

At this ford two brigades of Merritt's Federal cavalry division crossed Opequon Creek and moved slowly westward, brushing away Confederate pickets. Confederate Gen. John McCausland's brigade offered limited but spirited resistance until mid-day along the Charlestown Road.

Directions to Stop #8: Turn around at a safe location and return west to Old Charlestown Road and then turn left on Jordan Springs Road (Rt. 664). After traveling approximately 0.9 miles you'll come to Historic Jordan Springs on your right. There is a Virginia Civil War Trail marker on the grounds of Jordan Springs near the road. Return to Old Charlestown Road. This area is Stop 7.

Stop 8 ~ Fighting along Old Charlestown Pike (Jordan Springs Road)

Confederate resistance to Merritt's Federal cavalry division provided enough time for Gen. Early to consolidate his army near Winchester. Eventually Gen. Gabriel Wharton's small Confederate infantry division was ordered south to support the main fighting near the Berryville Pike, leaving only the Confederate cavalry under Gen. Fitzhugh Lee to block the Federal cavalry advance.

Directions to Stop #9: Continue west on Old Charlestown Road (Rt. 761) and drive to US 11 and turn left. Drive approximately three miles along US 11 and cross under I-81, continuing until you reach Brooke Road. Turn left onto Brooke Road, cross over the railroad tracks, then take an immediate left onto the gravel road and follow it into the Fort Collier interpretive site.

"They came pouring down upon us like a thousand bricks which of course we could not stand."
— Confederate Sgt. Sam Collier on the final Union cavalry charge

Stop 9 ~ Fort Collier - 3-4pm (Confederate Forts overrun)

There are several interpretive signs on the grounds of the Fort Collier interpretive site. Please do not walk or cross over the trench lines and earthworks. This property is owned by the Fort Collier Civil War Center and the house is a private residence. The original Stine House was destroyed during the battle and the current structure you see was built afterwards.) As the Federal cavalry rolled through this area, Star Fort, another small fortification nearly a mile directly to the west, was also overrun. The crushing cavalry attack collapsed Gen. Early's infantry lines to the east of Winchester and thousands of Confederates fled through Winchester.

Directions to Stop #10: Leaving Fort Collier, take the gravel road to Brooke Road, turn right, then cross the railroad tracks and turn left onto US 11. After 0.6 miles turn right onto Commercial St. Follow Commercial Street for 0.2 miles to its intersection with Rt. 522 North. Turn right and follow Rt. 522 North for about 0.7 miles until you come to Fortress Drive; turn right onto Fortress Drive. Continue 100 yards north (passing the entrance to the Red Cross parking lot) until you come to a pull-off area just off the road, to the right, in front of the "Star Fort" site sign. A dirt road leads east into the property. Walk along the road for about 200 feet until you come to the gate into the Star Fort site on your left. Enter through the gate and follow the trail into the remarkably preserved earthworks of the Star Fort site.

Stop 10 ~ Star Fort - 3-4pm (Confederate Forts overrun)

To protect the Confederates' extreme left flank Gen. Early positioned Gen. William H. Payne's and Col. Thomas Munford's cavalry in and around Star Fort. The Confederates received the support of two cannon from Maj. James Breathed's Horse Artillery. The Union cavalry brigade under Col. James Schoonmaker attacked this area and eventually broke the Confederate position. Schoonmaker was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions here.

Directions to Stop #11: Leaving Star Fort, make a u-turn and follow Fortress Dr. back to Rt. 522. Turn left (south) onto Rt. 522 and drive into Winchester. As you follow Rt. 522 into Winchester it will eventually turn into Piccadilly Street. Continue on Piccadilly Street to its intersection with North Cameron Street and turn right. Follow North Cameron 0.3 miles to its intersection with Cork Street and then turn left onto Cork Street. Continue on Cork 0.6 miles until its intersection with Pleasant Valley Avenue and turn left onto Pleasant Valley. Follow Pleasant Valley 0.4 miles until you arrive at National Avenue and then turn left onto National Avenue. You will see the National Cemetery on your left. Parking is on the right side of the road.

Stop 11 ~ Winchester National Cemetery

As Early's army broke from their positions north and east of Winchester his army ran through Winchester's streets. In an effort to allow his army to successfully withdraw Early turned to troops in Gen. Stephen Ramseur's division and Gen. Bryan Grimes' brigade to form a final line of defense. That line of defense ran through what are now the Winchester National Cemetery and the adjacent Stonewall Confederate Cemetery.

After the war the Winchester National Cemetery not only became the final resting place for Union soldiers who fought in the region during the conflict, but it also became a place where Union veterans could contemplate the war's meaning through the erection of regimental monuments, and engage in practices of postwar reconciliation. In 1885 veterans from Sheridan's army (the Sheridan's Veteran's Association) camped in an open area on the opposite side of present-day National Avenue during their reunion in the Valley.

Directions to Stop #12: From the National Cemetery continue on National Avenue until it bends around and becomes Piccadilly. At the intersection with Cameron Street turn right. There is metered parking in the public lot at the judicial center. The Old Court House Civil War Museum is located on the pedestrian mall one block to the west.

Stop 12 ~ Old Court House Civil War Museum

After the battle, the old Frederick County courthouse was used as a hospital temporarily and also as a prisoner of war collection site where hundreds of Confederates stayed until they were moved to permanent camps.

Directions to Stop #13: From the public parking lot at the judicial center turn right onto Cameron Street and follow to Piccadilly. Turn right onto Piccadilly and follow it as it bends around and becomes National Avenue. When you arrive at Pleasant Valley Avenue turn right and follow to its intersection with Hollingsworth Drive. Follow Hollingsworth Drive to the first stop sign and turn right onto Opequon Avenue. Very shortly you will see a small parking area/signage on your right.

Stop 13 ~ Shawnee Springs: Sheridan's Field Hospital

Union Gen. Philip Sheridan assembled the makings of what would be the largest field evacuation hospital of the Civil War. Immediately following the battle at Winchester, a 500-tent hospital was constructed in a matter of days. The hospital, which also served the battles of Fisher's Hill, Tom's Brook and Cedar Creek, featured a unique radiant floor heating system, which proved invaluable in the cold fall and early winter months of 1864. Interpretive signs explain the medical story.

Finishing the tour: For information about other Civil War sites in the area, visit the Winchester-Frederick County Visitors Center and Civil War Orientation Center at 1400 South Pleasant Valley Road just south of Hollingsworth Drive.