

★ THE U.S. ARMY CAMPAIGNS OF THE CIVIL WAR ★

# THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY CAMPAIGN

MARCH – NOVEMBER 1864



Cover: The Battle of Cedar Creek, *by Julian A. Scott* (Vermont State Curator)

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by  
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## INTRODUCTION

Although over one hundred fifty years have passed since the start of the American Civil War, that titanic conflict continues to matter. The forces unleashed by that war were immensely destructive because of the significant issues involved: the existence of the Union, the end of slavery, and the very future of the nation. The war remains our most contentious, and our bloodiest, with over six hundred thousand killed in the course of the four-year struggle.

Most civil wars do not spring up overnight, and the American Civil War was no exception. The seeds of the conflict were sown in the earliest days of the republic's founding, primarily over the existence of slavery and the slave trade. Although no conflict can begin without the conscious decisions of those engaged in the debates at that moment, in the end, there was simply no way to paper over the division of the country into two camps: one that was dominated by slavery and the other that sought first to limit its spread and then to abolish it. Our nation was indeed "half slave and half free," and that could not stand.

Regardless of the factors tearing the nation asunder, the soldiers on each side of the struggle went to war for personal reasons: looking for adventure, being caught up in the passions and emotions of their peers, believing in the Union, favoring states' rights, or even justifying the simple schoolyard dynamic of being convinced that they were "worth" three of the soldiers on the other side. Nor can we overlook the factor that some went to war to prove their manhood. This has been, and continues to be, a key dynamic in understanding combat and the profession of arms. Soldiers join for many reasons but often stay in the fight because of their comrades and because they do not want to seem like cowards. Sometimes issues of national impact shrink to nothing in the intensely personal world of cannon shell and minié ball.

Whatever the reasons, the struggle was long and costly and only culminated with the conquest of the rebellious Confederacy,

the preservation of the Union, and the end of slavery. These campaign pamphlets on the American Civil War, prepared in commemoration of our national sacrifices, seek to remember that war and honor those in the United States Army who died to preserve the Union and free the slaves as well as to tell the story of those American soldiers who fought for the Confederacy despite the inherently flawed nature of their cause. The Civil War was our greatest struggle and continues to deserve our deep study and contemplation.

RICHARD W. STEWART  
Chief Historian



## SHENANDOAH VALLEY CAMPAIGN MARCH–NOVEMBER 1864

### *Strategic Setting*

As 1864 began, the outlook was grim for Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his generals. The encouraging victories in 1863 at Chancellorsville, Virginia, and Chickamauga, Georgia, were diminished by the repulse of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and by the fall of Vicksburg, Mississippi. The signs were clear that the Confederacy had lost the strategic initiative. Davis now had to conserve Southern resources to fight a defensive war. He had to hope that either Union defeats in 1864 would bring the North to the negotiation table or that a war-weary Northern electorate would oust President Abraham Lincoln from office in November and replace him with someone willing to make peace.

On the other hand, the strategic outlook for the Union in 1864 was promising. The previous year had ended on a positive note. The Federal Army of the Potomac had fended off Lee's northern invasion and forced the rebels to retreat to central Virginia. In the Western Theater, three Federal armies coordinated by Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant had won a signal victory at Chattanooga, Tennessee, in November 1863 and were pressing toward the Confederate industrial and rail center at Atlanta, Georgia. Impressed by Grant's aggressive command style and success, Lincoln brought him to Washington in early March 1864

to take command of all Federal armies. He promoted Grant to the rank of lieutenant general and named him general in chief of the U.S. Army, creating unity of command for all Union field forces.

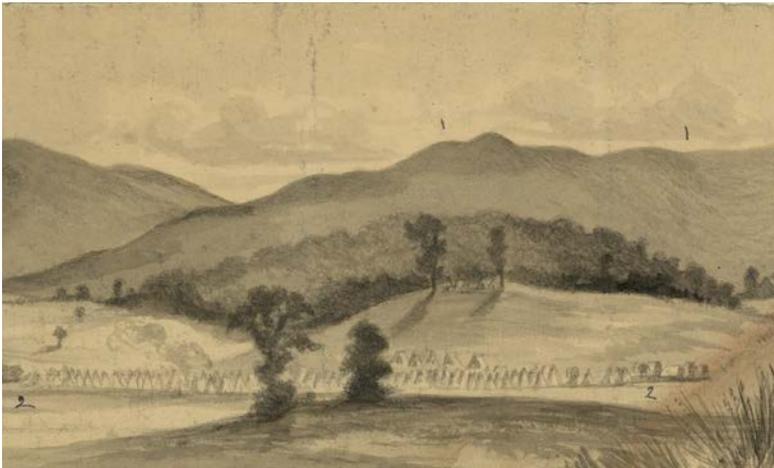
When Grant arrived in Washington, he found Maj. Gen. George G. Meade's Army of the Potomac facing Lee's Army of Northern Virginia across the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers, from Fredericksburg to Culpeper, Virginia. In addition to this main area of operations was Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, a critical region for both sides west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

### THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

Geography gave the Shenandoah Valley, or simply "the Valley," a unique strategic role in the Civil War. The Valley extends for about one hundred sixty miles through western Virginia and into West Virginia between the Blue Ridge Mountains on the east and the Allegheny Mountains on the west. The northern or "lower" end of the Valley terminates in West Virginia at the Potomac River. At approximately midpoint, Massanutten Mountain divides the Valley lengthwise for about sixty-five miles into two narrow parallel valleys. The west valley retains the name Shenandoah Valley, while the east valley is usually called the Luray Valley. Since the Valley offered any invading rebel force a covered approach to

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*Massanutten Mountain, by Edwin Forbes*  
(Library of Congress)



Washington, Baltimore, and other Northern cities, Lincoln and his generals watched for Confederate activities in the Shenandoah and the threat they might pose to the U.S. capital. In fact, Lee's two invasions of the North in 1862 and 1863 had used this route.

In the 1860s, the Valley had a relatively well-developed road and rail network. The Valley Pike, the state's only hard-packed rock or "macadamized" road, ran the length of the Valley. The Shenandoah Valley also had several functioning railroads and a nearby canal. The Union-controlled Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad ran along the banks of the Potomac River at the north end of the Valley, along with the parallel Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal. Together the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and C&O Canal were the backbone of the main Federal supply line from the Midwest. Their protection was a top priority for Lincoln.

Most agricultural supplies, textile goods, and raw materials bound for the eastern Confederacy came by train. The Virginia Central Railroad's tracks connected Richmond to the Shenandoah Valley and on to Covington in the Allegheny Mountains. Another railroad, the Virginia and Tennessee, ran northeast from Tennessee into southwestern Virginia, crossed the New River on a massive wooden bridge, and continued east to Lynchburg and Richmond. The Virginia and Tennessee trains went as far south as Atlanta, linking Richmond with the western Confederate states. A section of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains connected Lynchburg and Charlottesville. The combination of a developed transportation network; agricultural productivity; the presence of iron, lead, and salt mines; and its usefulness as an easy south-north avenue to both Washington and Richmond made the Valley and southwest Virginia a valuable asset for the Confederacy to protect and the Union to control.

### **GRANT'S GRAND CAMPAIGN PLAN**

Within days of his appointment as general in chief, Grant prepared a major spring campaign. He hoped to take advantage of the Union Army's numerical superiority with a coordinated offensive that would strike the Confederates simultaneously on several fronts. He envisioned the Federal armies as three great strategic "wings"—left, center, and right. The left wing was the Army of the James concentrated near Yorktown, Virginia, and commanded by Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler. It was to march

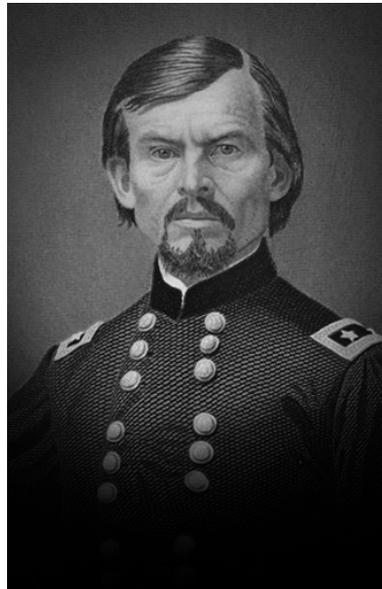
up the James River to approach Richmond from the southeast. The right wing, which consisted of Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's western armies in Georgia and Tennessee, was ordered to advance against Atlanta. Grant's center wing was Meade's Army of the Potomac located along the Rapidan River northwest of Richmond. That army was to make the main Federal thrust against Lee and Richmond. However, it was on a political tether that required it to be interposed between Lee and Washington, D.C.

In a secondary role to support Meade's Union offensive was the Department of West Virginia, located west of the Blue Ridge. Grant intended its units to disrupt Lee's supply lines by cutting the railroads in western Virginia, with the added goal of drawing some of Lee's forces away from Richmond. Newly appointed Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel commanded the department. Sigel had been educated at a German military academy and saw brief service in the European revolutions of 1848. After fleeing to America, he lived in St. Louis, Missouri, and enjoyed strong connections to the large German community.

Despite poor military performances in several previous campaigns, Sigel's political connections were strong enough to protect him from relief from duty. Although the Department of West Virginia was a military backwater, Sigel's department was nonetheless a complex and difficult one to command. Most of his forces were short-term volunteers or state troops strung out in small detachments to protect the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in western Maryland and northern West Virginia. His outposts also acted as an alarm for any Confederate invasion across the Potomac. Given Sigel's reputation and limited resources, Grant expected little

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*General Sigel*  
(Library of Congress)



from him in the way of support but was determined to use all possible assets in his grand campaign.

In early April, Grant began issuing detailed orders for the upcoming campaign, and on 4 May 1864 the great offensive began. “The Armies were now all ready to move,” Grant observed, and “they were acting as a unit so far as such a thing was possible over such a vast field.” The Army of the Potomac crossed the Rapidan and marched to challenge Lee in the area west of Fredericksburg known as the Wilderness. Sigel also made preparations to participate in the upcoming operations.

### **INITIAL MOVEMENTS AND PREPARATIONS**

Other than small raids and skirmishes, there had been little military activity in the Valley since Lee’s army passed through it in July 1863. Confederate Brig. Gen. John D. Imboden led the small Valley District Brigade with less than three thousand men in scattered locations to keep watch on Union activities and, if given the chance, to raid the Baltimore and Ohio trains, tracks, and depots. In addition, Confederate partisan units led by Lt. Col. John S. Mosby and Capt. John N. McNeil threatened Union rear areas and made forays against small Union detachments.

Davis and Lee worried about a threat to their Valley supply lines, but, faced with an anticipated Union offensive against Richmond, they had few resources to spare for their security. In February 1864, Davis appointed Maj. Gen. John C. Breckinridge to command the Confederate Department of Western Virginia, which included Imboden’s district, with responsibility to defend the Shenandoah Valley, protect the railroads, and block any Federal attempt to approach Richmond from the west. Breckinridge had served in the Mexican War without seeing action. He had later entered politics and had served as U.S. vice president (1857–1861) and then as a U.S. senator from Kentucky until he joined the Confederacy in 1861. Breckinridge’s headquarters was at Dublin, in southwestern Virginia. His department roster listed about eight thousand men, including Imboden’s brigade. To bolster the Valley’s defenses, Brig. Gen. John H. Morgan’s brigade of cavalry came from Tennessee to protect the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad and valuable lead mines near Wytheville, Virginia.

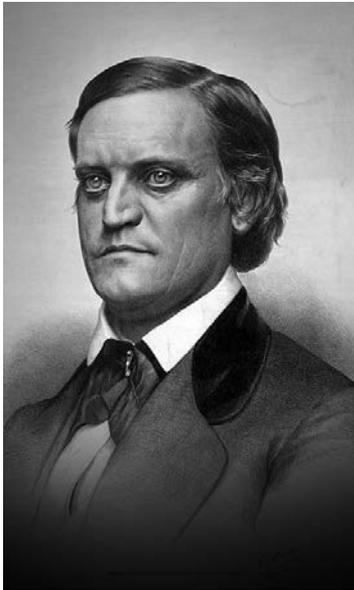
Sigel also took command of his department in March 1864, with headquarters at Cumberland, Maryland. He brought along two fellow Germans from his old staff—Brig. Gens. Max Weber

and Julius Stahel. Weber became Sigel's chief of staff, while the Hungarian born Stahel was named chief of cavalry with the rank of major general. At mid-March, Sigel's troops totaled twenty-four thousand men, most assigned to security duty for the B&O Railroad. Two semi-independent detachments—one of about thirty-five hundred infantrymen under Brig. Gen. George Crook and the other a cavalry brigade of nearly three thousand troopers led by Brig. Gen. William W. Averell—were encamped near Charleston, West Virginia, almost two hundred miles to the southwest. Aware of Grant's intention for a general campaign and keen to participate in the action, Sigel began pulling together a third field force from various garrisons guarding the railroad. To strengthen the reduced security forces, he ordered construction of additional blockhouses and entrenchments at key locations along the rail line and at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

Grant's campaign orders arrived at Sigel's headquarters on 29 March, carried by Maj. Gen. Edward O. C. Ord. The new orders directed Sigel to assemble a force of ninety-five hundred infantry,

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*Lithograph of General Breckinridge*  
(Library of Congress)



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*General Averell*  
(Library of Congress)



cavalry, and artillery with ten days' rations at Beverly, West Virginia, over one hundred miles southwest of Cumberland. Under the command of Ord, this force would advance into the Valley to cut the Virginia Central Railroad at Staunton, Virginia. At the same time, Crook and Averell (with Crook in overall command) were to cut the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, destroy the New River Bridge near Dublin, Virginia, and prepare to continue east to attack Lynchburg. Sigel was to follow Ord with the army's wagon train of supplies for a rendezvous with Crook at Staunton. Ord, however, quickly grew impatient with Sigel's slow pace and obtained from Grant a reassignment in mid-April.

On 17 April, as Ord left, Sigel decided to take his place. He received new instructions from Grant for the coming campaign, which ordered him to make a diversionary threat against Staunton and the Virginia Central Railroad. Sigel was to go no farther south than Winchester, or perhaps Cedar Creek, ten miles farther south, so as to remain a protective force for Washington and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The intent was to draw Confederate units north, away from Crook and Averell, who were the actual raiding forces. Crook's target remained the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad bridge while Averell planned to destroy the large saltworks near Saltville, Virginia. Following their attacks, the two columns were to unite at Staunton.

Before the end of April, Sigel had five divisions in his Department of West Virginia: two infantry, two cavalry, and a mixed reserve division. Sigel placed the reserve troops at Harpers Ferry and in outposts along the B&O route, on trains as escorts, and on armored railcars. He retained personal command over two field divisions of about seven thousand men: the 1st Infantry Division under Brig. Gen. Jeremiah C. Sullivan and the 1st Cavalry Division led by Stahel. Sigel's other two divisions were Crook's infantry and Averell's cavalry in West Virginia. Reinforcements raised their total strength to some ten thousand men, but supplies were short, and wagons and horses were in poor condition.

Despite Sigel's energetic efforts, the Federal high command had little confidence in him. The Union Army's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck, wrote, "It seems but little better than murder to give important commands to men such as Sigel." Nevertheless, Lincoln kept Sigel at his post in order to shore up political support among German-Americans, thousands of whom were serving in Union armies at the beginning of 1864.

## Operations

### OPENING MOVES

On 29 April, Sigel left his camp near Martinsburg, West Virginia, and cautiously headed south on the Valley Pike with his two field divisions and a large wagon train. His troops reached Winchester three days later. Alerted to Sigel's advance, Imboden asked Lee and Breckinridge to send reinforcements to the Valley, assembled his Confederate brigade at Mount Crawford, and called up the local militia. Imboden gathered about fourteen hundred men from local reserves to add to his own fifteen hundred veterans and then marched north to Woodstock to delay Sigel. Meanwhile, on 2 May, Crook began moving his infantry division toward the Valley from West Virginia, and Averell's cavalry followed three days later.

In early May, General Breckinridge was in a quandary. Confederate signal stations and scouts in the mountains to the west alerted him to the approach of Crook and Averell from West Virginia. At the same time, Sigel's advance from the north threatened Staunton and the Virginia Central Railroad. President Davis and General Lee directed Breckinridge to join with Imboden to block Sigel's advance, so Breckinridge immediately ordered his scattered units to concentrate at Staunton. The Union plan to draw Confederate forces away from Crook had worked (*Map 1*).

Meanwhile, two hundred miles to the south, Averell and his two thousand Union cavalymen rode toward Saltville. As he neared the town early on 8 May, his scouts brought in prisoners who divulged that Brig. Gen. William E. "Grumble" Jones and Morgan were waiting ahead with a large Confederate force. Unwilling to risk a major encounter far from any reinforcements or logistical support, Averell turned away from Saltville and headed northeast toward his next objective, the lead mines and rail facilities at Wytheville. On 10 May, as Averell's troopers rode through a narrow gap near Cove Mountain north of Wytheville, they ran into Morgan's forty-five hundred Confederate defenders. In a four-hour cavalry battle, the Federals were unable to break through the Confederate defenses. As darkness fell, the combatants disengaged and Averell, low on supplies, withdrew northeast to find Crook.

On 9 May, after days of rain and fifty miles of hard mountain marching toward the Valley, Crook's Union infantry division finally reached Cloyd's Mountain, five miles from Dublin. Facing

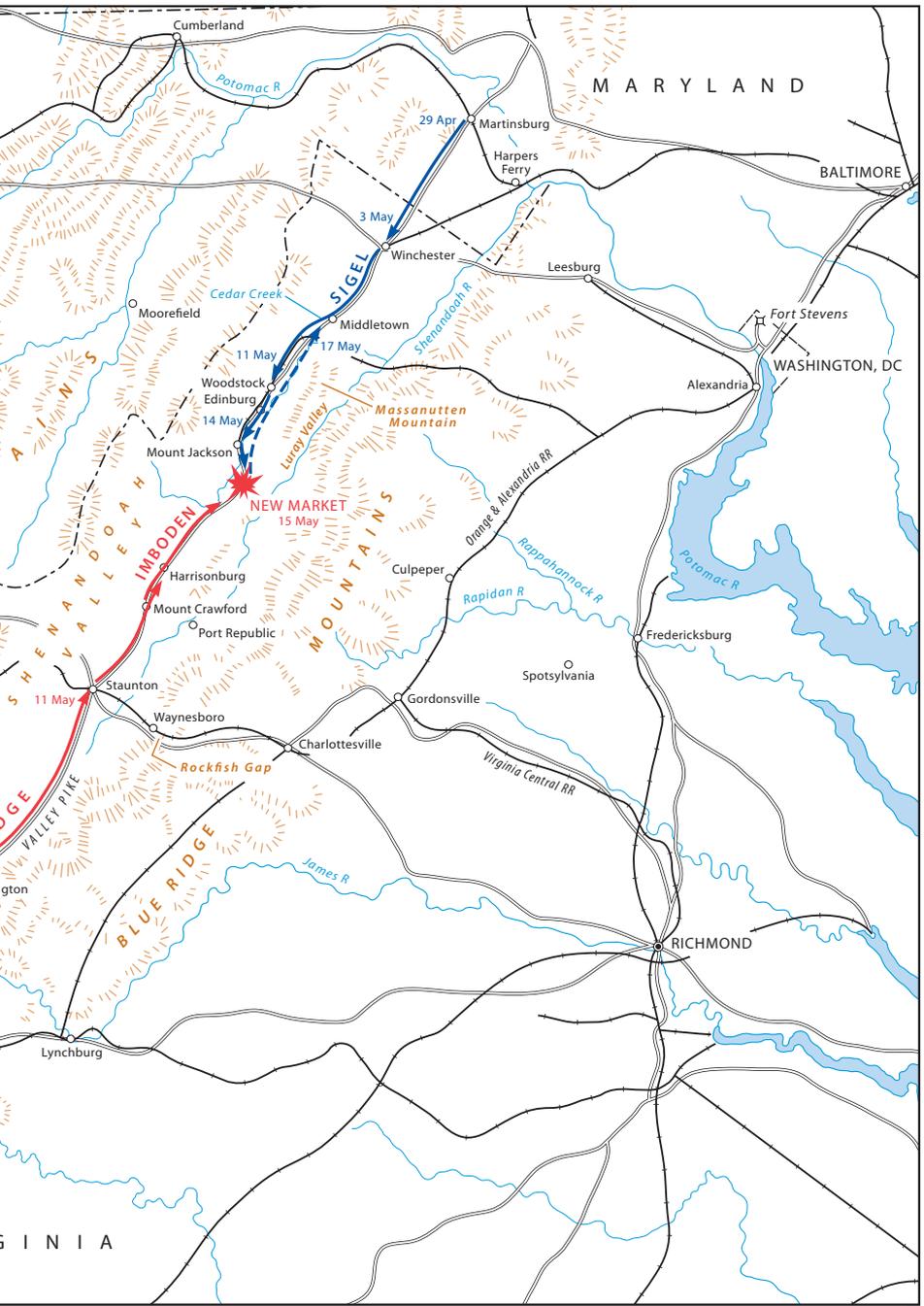
the Federals was a hastily organized Confederate force of twenty-four hundred men under Brig. Gen. Albert G. Jenkins, who had placed his men with a couple of cannons in positions to block the road as it crested a spur of the mountain. In a hard-fought engagement, an assault by the brigade of Col. Rutherford B. Hayes finally overcame the rebel defenders. The Confederates suffered 500 casualties, including the mortally wounded Jenkins, while Crook lost 688 men. The remaining Confederates withdrew over the New River Bridge as Crook advanced into Dublin where his men captured a large supply depot and destroyed the Virginia and Tennessee tracks.

The next day Crook burned the New River Bridge. His force remained in the area long enough to demolish additional miles of railroad track and other facilities. Despite the earlier plan to wait for Averell, Crook withdrew to West Virginia, later claiming that he had received word of a large Confederate force en route to attack him. Averell reached Dublin, found Crook gone, and continued into West Virginia, eventually joining Crook's troops at Union on 15 May.

In the lower Shenandoah Valley, Union forces began to move southward along the Valley Pike. Sigel's divisions slowly advanced from Winchester on 9 May. By late afternoon on 11 May, Sigel reached Woodstock, where he gained an intelligence coup when he found a pile of telegrams waiting for Imboden at the telegraph office. These messages revealed that Breckinridge was still at Staunton, two days away. Sigel saw that, if he moved fast enough, he had an opportunity to reach New Market and then march south to capture Staunton or move east over Massanutten Mountain and through the Luray Valley to support Grant's operations near Spotsylvania. Sigel had not planned to go beyond Woodstock, but by extending himself he had a chance to gain some favorable attention from his superiors. He decided to continue his march up the Shenandoah Valley. He had at his disposal two brigades of cavalry under General Stahel, five batteries of artillery, and one infantry division led by General Sullivan. The foot soldiers consisted of two brigades, under Col. Joseph Thoburn and Col. Augustus Moor. Altogether, Sigel's army numbered approximately nine thousand men.

Sigel stirred to action on 14 May. He ordered Moor to make a reconnaissance up the Valley Pike toward Mount Jackson, over twenty miles away. Since all Moor's regiments were on detached





duty, he was to take two regiments from Thoburn's 2d Brigade. Although some Union cavalry was operating in advance, Moor would be mostly on his own with his mixed force of infantry regiments, cavalrymen, and an artillery battery of six guns. Lacking intelligence, maps, and scouts, his force was beyond supporting distance by Sigel. Despite his misgivings with the mission, Moor had his detachment on the pike headed south on 14 May. Near Edinburg, he met one of his own regiments, along with Col. John E. Wynkoop's three hundred cavalry troopers and a section of horse artillery. This brought Moor's combined strength to over twenty-three hundred men. Moor sent Wynkoop ahead to link up with the advanced cavalry that had already driven Imboden's Confederates south out of New Market.

### **THE BATTLE OF NEW MARKET**

Late on 14 May, Moor took up positions just north of New Market on Manor's Hill. On his right (west) flank, he placed Capt. Chatman T. Ewing's battery of West Virginia Artillery. In front of Ewing and lower down the slope, two infantry regiments formed Moor's main line. Capt. Alonzo Snow's Maryland battery of light artillery supported the left (east) flank. A third infantry regiment stood behind the main line. Moor posted Wynkoop's cavalry in the town and notified Sigel that New Market was clear of the enemy. Sigel ordered his other units to advance before dawn the next morning.

Moor anticipated an early morning attack by Imboden's Confederates. At 0300 on 15 May, he called forward another of his brigade's regiments that was on picket duty at Edinburg, eighteen miles north and at least six hours away. Back at Woodstock with Sigel were the remnants of Sullivan's and Stahel's divisions, greatly reduced by detachment to other duties. At 0500, Sullivan moved two regiments and three artillery batteries south on the pike. Stahel departed Woodstock later with Col. William B. Tibbits' cavalry brigade, while Sigel and his staff dallied until about 0800 before riding southward.

Before dawn on 15 May, Breckinridge rode into Imboden's camp south of New Market to take command. Following him by two hours were six Virginia infantry regiments in two brigades, a battalion of over two hundred cadets from the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), some dismounted cavalry, four artillery batteries, and a two-gun artillery section from VMI. Counting Imboden's

horsemen, Breckinridge commanded a force of about fifty-three hundred men and sixteen artillery pieces.

As the rainy day opened, Breckinridge prepared his forces for a possible Union attack. He placed Brig. Gen. John Echols' infantry brigade, which included the VMI cadets, on the left (west). He located Brig. Gen. Gabriel C. Wharton's infantry brigade on the right (east), close to the pike, and on the far right, to the south of New Market, was Imboden's brigade.

Breckinridge was unsure of the size of the Union force he faced. He tried to draw out Moor with artillery fire and cavalry probes. Although Moor's guns returned fire, he refused to commit to full battle. His mission had been reconnaissance, and, now that the enemy was located, Moor wisely chose to wait for Sigel and the main Union force. About 0830, Stahel arrived in New Market with Tibbits' cavalry brigade. Moor passed field command to the more senior Stahel and returned to fight with his detachment. Displeased with Moor's disposition of troops, Stahel began relocating them, which caused confusion and uncertainty in the Union ranks. Wary of the situation and unaware when Sigel or reinforcements would arrive, Stahel soon withdrew his cavalry from New Market.

Finally, at 1000, Breckinridge lost his patience: "I have offered him battle and he declines to advance. We can attack and whip them here, and I'll do it." The Confederate general formed an echeloned assault line of almost forty-two hundred men hidden by the hills and misty rain. About 1100, the Confederate infantry advanced across the soggy ground toward the Union position at double-quick time through Union artillery fire to reach temporary safety in a low area at the base of Manor's Hill. The four companies of inexperienced cadets, however, marched at a slower pace in a mass formation, making easy targets and suffering their first casualties. Echols and Imboden advanced on the right toward New Market. The southern brigades then rested while Breckinridge repositioned most of his artillery to a location near the pike.

General Sigel galloped onto the field about 1200, just as the Confederate advance resumed. When Moor's line began to waver under the Confederate artillery fire, Sigel decided to withdraw about a half mile north to new positions closer to Bushong's Hill. As Moor's infantry moved back, some men became disorganized or disheartened and continued to the rear, all the while under artillery fire from Breckinridge's guns. By 1400, Sigel's battered regiments had regrouped on Bushong's Hill where three artillery

batteries massed on the higher west flank. In the Union center were four infantry regiments, and on the left flank east of the pike Stahel had re-formed his cavalry division.

In pouring rain, Breckinridge ordered a general assault. On the left, Wharton's brigade with the VMI cadets moved forward, while Echols advanced on the east side of the pike. As Wharton's infantry appeared, the Union artillerymen fired their guns with double canister. The blast halted the attack. Near the Bushong farm, the advancing Confederates took heavy casualties and sought cover near the farm's fences. One regiment fought forward a hundred yards or so before it was forced back, leaving a gap in the Confederate line. Breckinridge had already committed his reserve battalion, and, advised that his attack was about to fail, he was compelled to send in the VMI cadets: "Then put the boys in . . . and may God forgive me."

About 1500, Sigel detected a wavering in the Confederate line and ordered a counterattack, but battle noise and Sigel's shouting orders in German caused many of his commanders to misunderstand him. In the chaos of combat, he became distracted with placing regiments and lost control of his battle line. The rebels quickly repulsed Sigel's uncoordinated attack. At the same time on the Union left, Stahel sent his two thousand cavalymen in a charge against the Confederate cannons and infantry on the pike, but double-loaded canister and heavy rifle fire wrought havoc on the Union men and horses, stopping the assault in its tracks.

Meanwhile, to protect his artillery from the Confederate fire, Sigel ordered his batteries to pull back to a new position. With Union fire now slackened, Breckinridge saw his opportunity and ordered the general attack resumed. Wharton's brigade, reinforced by the VMI cadets, swept forward into the Union line. Thoburn's and Moor's regiments fell back, as some made a fighting retreat to the guns while others broke and ran. Fortunately for Sigel, Capt. Henry A. du Pont had positioned his battery along the pike behind the battle line and provided covering fire for the retreating troops as the Union line collapsed. Sigel decided to withdraw his defeated army entirely.

Breckinridge halted the Confederate advance to regroup his disorganized and tired troops, which gave Sigel enough time to retreat northward with his supply train intact. He arrived at Cedar Creek on 17 May, having lost over eight hundred men, including many abandoned wounded, and five cannons. Breckinridge lost about five hundred thirty killed and wounded, including sixty-one cadets.

The Union defeat at New Market restored Confederate control of the Shenandoah Valley and allowed Southern troops to move to more threatened scenes of action. Lee ordered Breckinridge and his division to help defend Richmond and sent Morgan back to Tennessee. The VMI cadets returned to Lexington, and Imboden was again left with his small brigade to guard the Valley.

### **HUNTER'S OPERATIONS: FROM PIEDMONT TO LYNCHBURG**

Upon receiving news of the Union defeat at New Market, Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton suggested replacing Sigel with Maj. Gen. David Hunter. General Grant quickly agreed: "By all means, I would say appoint General Hunter or anyone else to the command." Hunter was a West Point graduate and had served in the Mexican War. Early in the Civil War he had advanced in rank to major general of volunteers and division commander. An ardent abolitionist and vocal Lincoln supporter, he was wounded at First Bull Run in 1861 and then served in Missouri and Kansas.

After Sigel was relieved of command on 19 May, Hunter arrived at his headquarters near Cedar Creek two days later with orders from Grant to take command of the Department of West Virginia and regain control of the Valley. Specifically, he was to cut Lee's western supply line by seizing Staunton, blocking the Virginia Central line, and then turning east to capture the key rail and road junctions at Charlottesville and Gordonsville. Grant also hoped Hunter's operations would draw at least an equal-sized Confederate force away from Lee's army confronting the Army of the Potomac. Lincoln, with a political eye on his German-American supporters, asked Hunter to "retain the Dutch in some position, if possible," so Hunter assigned Sigel to lead his reserve division and tasked Weber to command the Harpers

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*General Hunter*  
(Library of Congress)



Ferry garrison. He wanted to replace Stahel and Sullivan, neither of whom had performed well at New Market, but Halleck refused the request.

Union reinforcements arrived at Cedar Creek in the days after New Market, which brought Hunter's field strength to about eighty-five hundred men and twenty-one cannons. In West Virginia, Crook and Averell also received some fresh troops, horses, and supplies and prepared their forces to join Hunter at Staunton (*Map 2*).

On 23 May, Hunter's army advanced to Woodstock where the general received further orders from Grant to destroy key Confederate logistical facilities, including Charlottesville and Lynchburg. After that, Hunter was either to return to the Valley or to continue east to link up with the Army of the Potomac. The Federals entered New Market on 29 May and halted there for two days. Hunter's offensive prompted General Lee to call for reinforcements to defend the Valley. In response, General Jones, whose three thousand Confederates were camped around Wytheville, prepared to move northward to stop Hunter's advancing column.

Hunter continued south and occupied Harrisonburg on 2 June, expecting to join with the troops under Crook and Averell, even firing signal rockets into the air at night to alert the two cavalry commanders of his army's location. Hunter's chief of staff, Col. David H. Strother, suggested leaving the pike and going southeast from Harrisonburg toward Port Republic. This would avoid having to force a crossing of the North (now Maury) River through Confederate defenses south of Harrisonburg. At Port Republic, Hunter could cross the Shenandoah River and capture Waynesboro, thus cutting the Virginia Central Railroad passage through the Blue Ridge to Charlottesville. The Union commander accepted Strother's plan.

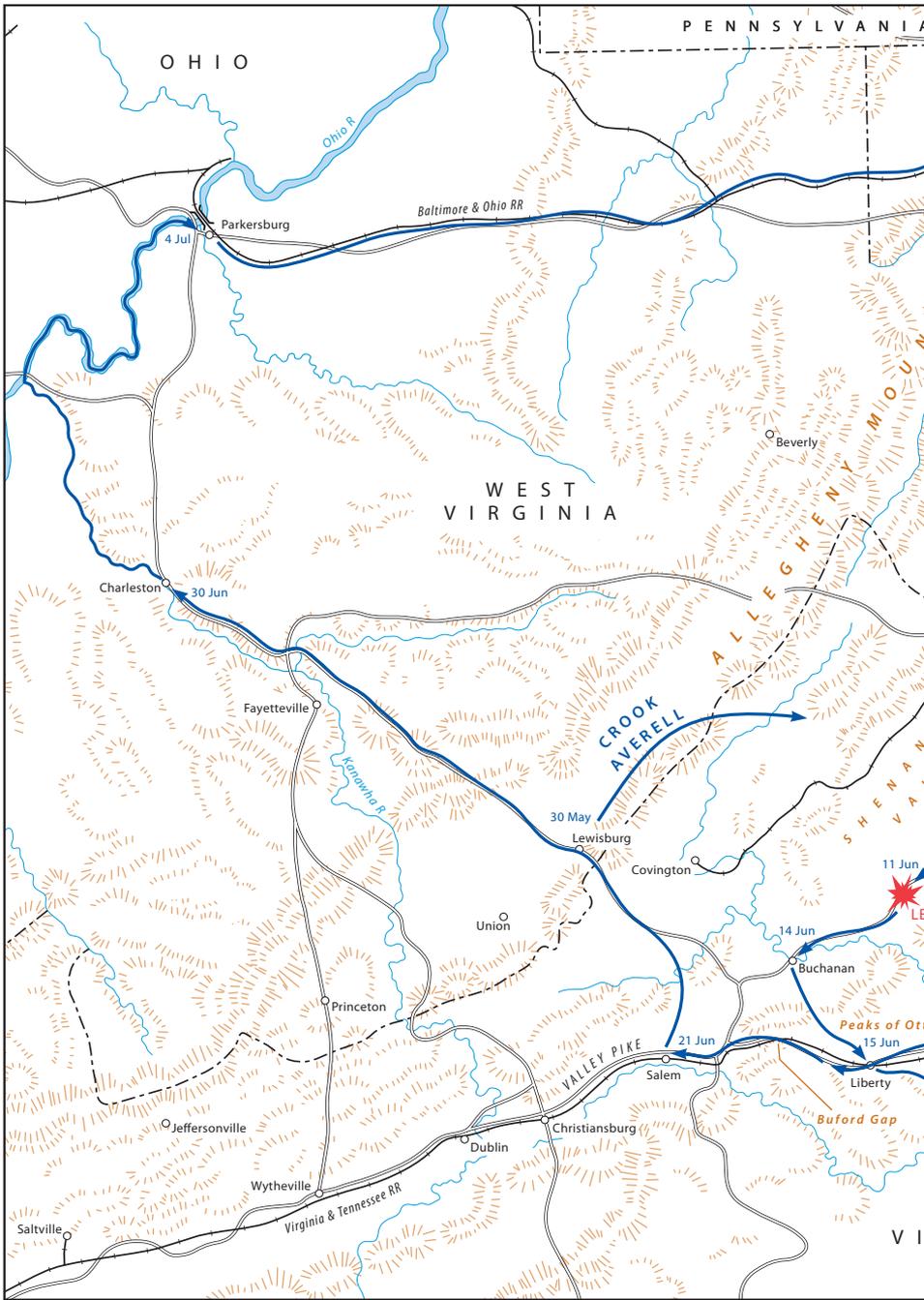
While Hunter paused for two days at Harrisonburg, Grumble Jones arrived to take command at Imboden's camp near Mount Crawford on 4 June. He brought two infantry brigades with artillery, and, shortly thereafter, Brig. Gen. John C. Vaughn arrived with a Tennessee cavalry brigade. The assembled Army of the Valley District numbered about forty-five hundred men and two batteries of artillery. The rebel commanders agreed to attack the separated Union forces before Hunter, Crook, and Averell could unite at Staunton.

Early on 4 June, Hunter started his army moving again and sent his engineer, 1st Lt. John R. Meigs, with a cavalry force south on the pike toward Staunton as a deception. The rest of the army turned southeast toward Port Republic, where it captured a wagon train and destroyed Confederate supplies. But while Hunter's troops marched to Port Republic, Imboden had moved to Mount Meridian, about three miles south of Port Republic, to block the Federals' progress. Jones and the main rebel army moved about seven miles west of Hunter on the Valley Pike, cutting off that direction. With the Shenandoah River at his back, Hunter now had Confederate forces in his path to Waynesboro to the south and Staunton to the west.

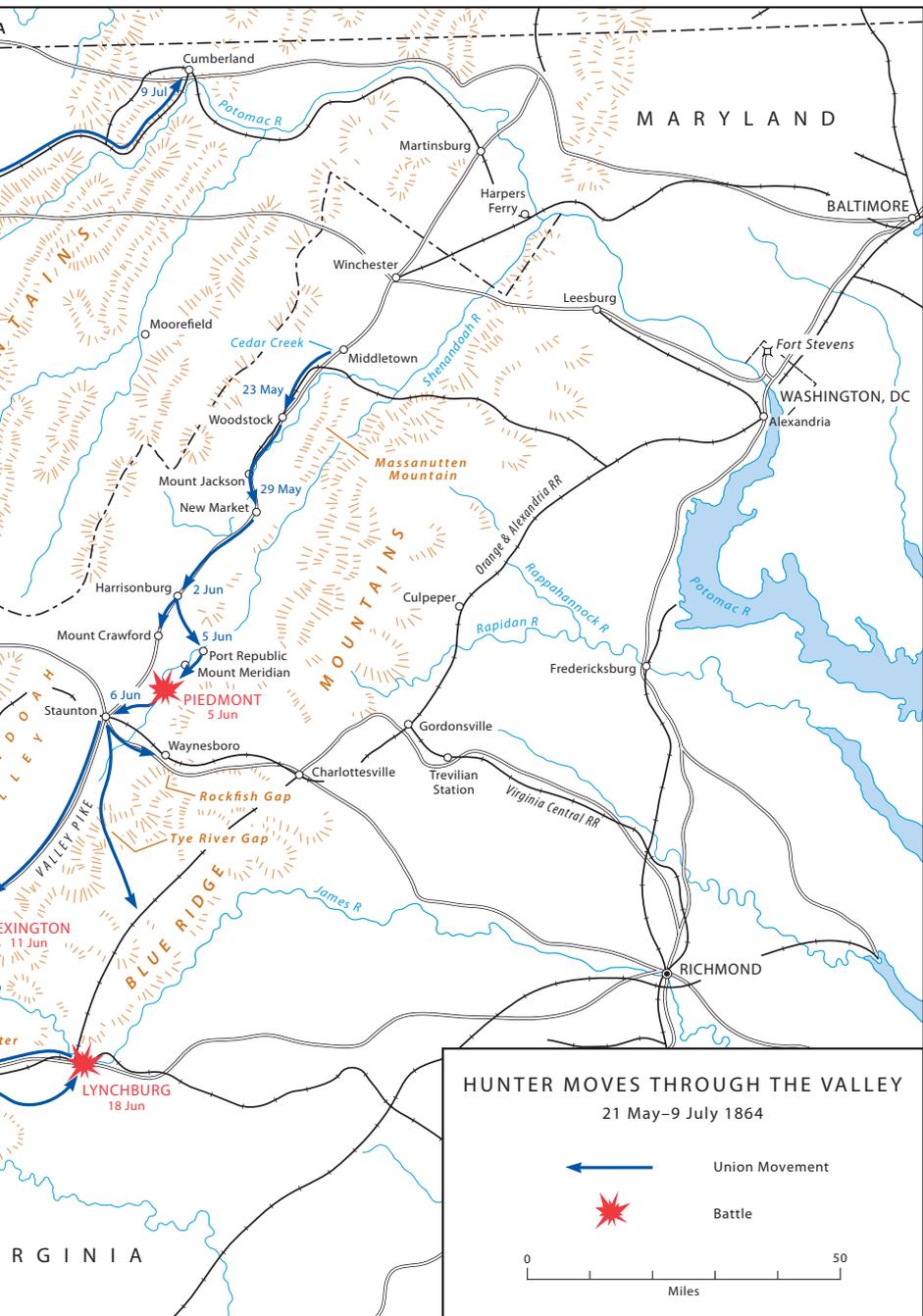
Of further concern, Hunter's troops still had not met with the divisions of Crook and Averell as expected. Days earlier, on 30 May, Crook put his division on the road from Lewisburg, West Virginia to Staunton, and Averell followed with his 2d Cavalry Division on 2 June. However, the passage over the West Virginia roads was slow and difficult, made worse by constant harassment by Confederate skirmishers from the mounted brigades of Brig. Gen. John McCausland and Col. William L. Jackson. As Hunter crossed the South River at Port Republic, both Crook and Averell were still days away from Staunton.

Early on 5 June, Hunter set his command marching south from Port Republic. At 0500, Stahel's 1st Cavalry Division led the column on the road toward Waynesboro through a misty rain. Sullivan's infantry followed with two brigades, under Moor and Thoburn. An hour later Union scouts detected Imboden's rebel pickets and opened fire, catching the rebels by surprise. The Confederates retreated and both sides committed more troops in a confused pistol-saber mêlée. Finally, the Virginians broke and fled. One Union cavalryman recalled that "the Johnnies immediately started on southward and a sort of go-as-you-please fight conducted at all velocities from a dead stop to a rattling gallop ensued."

Imboden rallied his men north of the village of Piedmont, ten miles from Waynesboro, and deployed in an open area on the east side of the road. General Jones had taken a defensive position there with fifty-five hundred men to face Hunter's Federals, who numbered about eighty-five hundred troops. When Jones arrived, Imboden advised withdrawal to a better position, but Jones refused, saying that they would fight there and that he "can whip Hunter anywhere."



MAP 2



9 Jul  
Cumberland

Potomac R.

MARYLAND

Martinsburg  
Harpers Ferry

BALTIMORE

Winchester

Leesburg

Moorefield

Cedar Creek

Middletown

Fort Stevens  
WASHINGTON, DC  
Alexandria

23 May  
Woodstock

Mount Jackson  
New Market

Massanutten Mountain

29 May

Orange & Alexandria RR

Rappahannock R.

Harrisonburg

2 Jun  
Mount Crawford

Culpeper

Rapidan R.

Fredericksburg

Potomac R.

6 Jun  
Staunton

5 Jun  
Port Republic  
Mount Meridian

Virginia Central RR

PIEDMONT  
5 Jun

Gordonsville

6 Jun  
Waynesboro

Rockfish Gap  
Tye River Gap

Charlottesville

Trevilian Station

LEXINGTON  
11 Jun

18 Jun  
LYNCHBURG

RICHMOND

VIRGINIA

Hunter deployed his troops in front of the rebel lines, with Moor on the right (west) and Thoburn on the left, and massed his artillery to fire on Jones' position. Around 1200, Moor's reinforced brigade charged the Confederate left and center several times, but Jones countered the Union assault, followed by heavy fighting in the fields north of the town. Wynkoop's cavalry brigade dismounted and joined Moor's brigade on the right for a renewed attack.

Meanwhile, Colonel Thoburn led an attack on the rebels' right flank with three Union regiments moving into a gap in the enemy lines caused by Jones when he earlier shifted troops to the left to meet Moor's attacks. Thoburn's Federals hit the Confederate line from a concealed position in a ravine. After severe fighting and an unsuccessful attempt by the Confederates to stem the Union advance with reserves, Jones' men began to flee to the rear in panic. During this chaos General Jones was killed. Union cavalry troops captured almost one thousand prisoners and three cannons. A section of Imboden's artillery and part of Vaughn's rebel cavalry managed to take a delaying position south of Piedmont and stopped the Federal cavalry from further pursuit of the retreating Confederate army. Union losses were about eight hundred forty-five killed, wounded, or captured, while the Confederates lost over six hundred fifty killed and wounded and about one thousand captured. It was the most significant Union victory in the Valley to date.

After Vaughn notified Lee of the defeat at Piedmont, Lee ordered Breckinridge to move his division west from near Richmond to defend Rockfish Gap, the most direct route through the Blue Ridge to Charlottesville. Breckinridge put his small division on the road, while Vaughn and Imboden retreated to Waynesboro. In a message to Davis, Lee warned that "if we cannot restrain the movements of the enemy in the Valley, he will do us great evil."

Hunter's army spent the night at Piedmont and then marched to Staunton on 6 June. Crook and Averell arrived there from Lewisburg on 8 June, which brought Hunter's strength to about eighteen thousand men and thirty artillery pieces. Meanwhile, Hunter made several command changes. Brig. Gen. Alfred N. A. Duffie, a former French army officer, replaced Stahel as the cavalry division commander when the latter went to Martinsburg to recover from a wound he received at Piedmont. Col. George D. Wells replaced Augustus Moor as commander of 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, when Moor returned to Ohio with his regiment.

On 9 June, Hunter held a council of war with his senior officers. Although Grant wanted Hunter to cross the Blue Ridge at Rockfish Gap and rendezvous with Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan's command, Hunter learned that Breckinridge was holding the gap with a "strong" force. Strother and Averell advised Hunter to instead march thirty-five miles south to Lexington. From there Hunter could continue south to Buchanan on the James River, where he could follow a road to cross the Blue Ridge Mountains at the Peaks of Otter, and then on to Liberty (now Bedford), west of Lynchburg. Hunter decided on the Lexington-Buchanan-Liberty option and, early the next morning, had his army march south. Unknown to Hunter, the next day Sheridan turned back east after a hard-fought battle with Confederate cavalry at Trevilian Station, twenty-five miles east of Charlottesville.

Hunter's divisions moved along four roughly parallel routes. On the east next to the Blue Ridge rode Duffie's cavalry. Sullivan's infantry division marched on the Valley Pike, while Crook's and Averell's divisions used secondary roads farther west to advance toward Lexington. As Duffie approached Waynesboro, he sent a detachment to demonstrate around the town to mislead Vaughn and Imboden. Meanwhile, Duffie took his division across the Blue Ridge Mountains through the Tye River Gap and emerged north of Lynchburg where he disrupted the railroad between that city and Charlottesville. He intended to join the attack on Lynchburg, but, on 12 June, he received orders from Hunter to return to the Valley and combine with the other three divisions at Lexington.

The Confederate cavalry tried to delay Hunter, but Averell's troopers backed by Crook's infantry pushed steadily toward Lexington. North of the town, the Valley Pike crossed a wooden bridge over the North River close to the prominent hilltop location of the Virginia Military Institute. McCausland, in charge of defending Lexington, received help from the school's faculty and cadets in establishing defenses. The cadets placed a howitzer to cover the bridge approach and prepared the bridge for burning. When Union cavalry drew near on 11 June, the cadets set the bridge ablaze and McCausland's three cannons and the VMI howitzer opened fire. Du Pont's artillery answered from a hill opposite VMI, and Union shells were soon landing on the town and the institute. When Averell's division and a brigade of Crook's crossed the North River north-west of town, the rebel defenders were forced to retreat. Hunter's

engineers soon put up a pontoon bridge for the soldiers to enter the town.

Federal troops looted and burned the abandoned VMI buildings as well as the home of Virginia Governor John Letcher. They also ransacked nearby Washington College but did not burn it, in deference to the college's namesake. Hunter lingered in Lexington for two days waiting for Duffie's detachment to join him as his men foraged, confiscated supplies, and destroyed military stores, iron-works, and ordnance warehouses.

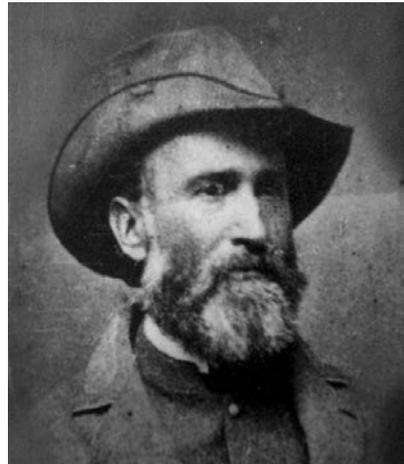
Reports from the Valley caused Lee grave concern for his supply source and rail lines. Always a risk taker, he decided to thin his lines at Cold Harbor and send a major force from his army to retake and hold the Shenandoah Valley. In addition to protecting the Valley's railroads and farms, he hoped to carry the war north of the Potomac once again. On 12 June, Lee met with Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early, the new Second Corps commander, to discuss this initiative. A West Point graduate, "Old Jube" had spent five years as an artillery officer before he left the Army in 1842. Though not a secessionist, when Virginia left the Union, Early had sided with the South. He was a fighter by nature and had seen regimental to division-level action, where he earned a mixed record of performance. He had taken command of Second Corps and had been promoted to lieutenant general only weeks before his meeting with Lee.

Lee ordered Early to slip his corps and two attached artillery battalions quietly away from the Army of Northern Virginia and into the Shenandoah Valley. He was to get north of Hunter and "strike Hunter's force in the rear and if possible destroy it" and then cross the Potomac and threaten Washington. On 13 June, Early marched his Second Corps west toward Charlottesville, eighty miles away.

While Lee and Early gathered forces to protect the Shenandoah Valley, General

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*General Early*  
(Library of Congress)



Hunter sent Averell to secure Buchanan and the bridge over the James River there. Just after Duffie's troopers finally arrived at Lexington on 14 June, Hunter renewed his march to Buchanan, where retreating rebels had burned the bridge. The slow pontoon bridge wagons were far behind, so Union engineers rebuilt the damaged bridge for the troops, artillery, and wagons. Late in the day on 15 June, Hunter's men crossed the Blue Ridge and came within sight of Liberty, about twenty-five miles west of Lynchburg.

Alerted to Hunter's threat, Breckinridge left Rockfish Gap and arrived at Lynchburg on 16 June with twenty-one hundred men. There he found a variety of units that included the former brigades of Grumble Jones, the VMI cadets, local reserves, and wounded soldiers recovering in local hospitals. Maj. Gen. Daniel H. Hill, a former Confederate corps commander, was also in town and helped organize the town's defenses. In addition, Maj. Gen. Robert Ransom Jr. became Early's cavalry commander to direct Imboden and McCausland. Breckinridge telegraphed Early, over sixty miles away at Charlottesville, of Hunter's imminent attack. Early ordered the dispatch of all available Orange and Alexandria Railroad trains to Charlottesville to expedite the movement of his troops to Lynchburg. On 17 June, Early's men began to arrive at Lynchburg, including the Second Corps divisions of Maj. Gen. Stephen D. Ramseur, Maj. Gen. John B. Gordon, and Maj. Gen. Robert E. Rodes.

On the following day, Union troops assaulted Lynchburg's defenses, but Hunter could find no weaknesses in the rebel lines. An attempt by Crook to strike the Confederate right flank also failed. Later, a surprise counterattack by Early's newly arrived brigades hit the Union lines but was repulsed after heavy fighting. Crook and Averell encouraged Hunter to continue the battle for the city, but Hunter decided to wait until the next morning to attack. Later that day, the Union commander became convinced that Early's Second Corps of eight thousand men actually numbered twenty thousand and decided to abandon his operations to capture Lynchburg before he was hit by a "superior" force. He ordered his supply wagons back to the Valley and alerted his commanders that the army would soon withdraw. By midnight, 18 June, the Union troops were marching back to Liberty.

Hunter moved southwest through Buford Gap in the Blue Ridge, destroying Virginia and Tennessee tracks as well as a number of civilian farms. When Early discovered that Hunter had slipped away, he sent Ransom's cavalry in pursuit. Serving as Hunter's rear guard, Averell skirmished with Ransom at Liberty, while Crook sent infantry to assist and then set a blocking force to hold Buford Gap. Rebel cavalry under McCausland rode over the Blue Ridge at the Peaks of Otter to position itself north of Hunter's column and to block his route into the Shenandoah Valley.

At Salem, Hunter decided to march his men to West Virginia rather than retrace his steps north into the Shenandoah Valley. He based his decision on the fact that he needed supplies and that, if he remained in the Valley, Early would be able to use the railroad to move to Staunton and intercept the retreating Federals. He therefore proceeded toward Union supply depots at Charleston, West Virginia. From there, he planned to use steamboats to carry his army down the Kanawha River to the Ohio, and then on to Parkersburg, West Virginia, where Baltimore and Ohio trains ran east to Cumberland. However, Hunter soon found "the difficulties were even greater than at first appeared." Supplies were scarce and foraging parties could not find enough food or fodder to sustain the men and horses. Hunter sent ahead for supplies from West Virginia to meet the army, but the wagons were days in coming. His weary troops reached Charleston on 30 June and Parkersburg on 4 July, but his army was strung out behind him, with some men struggling to pull the steamboats over shoals and others marching overland. At Parkersburg, Hunter received orders from Grant that placed him in command of all the operations against Early, who by that time had moved into the northern Shenandoah Valley. Despite the heightened sense of urgency, Hunter had problems coordinating boats and trains, so not until 9 July did he arrive at Cumberland, twenty-one days after leaving Lynchburg.

Hunter escaped from Early with minimal losses, and his army, while tired, hungry, and trail worn, was intact. He had inflicted serious damage on the Confederate military infrastructure in the Valley and, per Grant's desire, had caused Lee to divert a full corps from the Richmond front. But Hunter's indirect route of retreat had removed the only significant Union army from the Valley and left the Shenandoah's resources in Confederate control.

## **EARLY BEGINS TO MOVE NORTH**

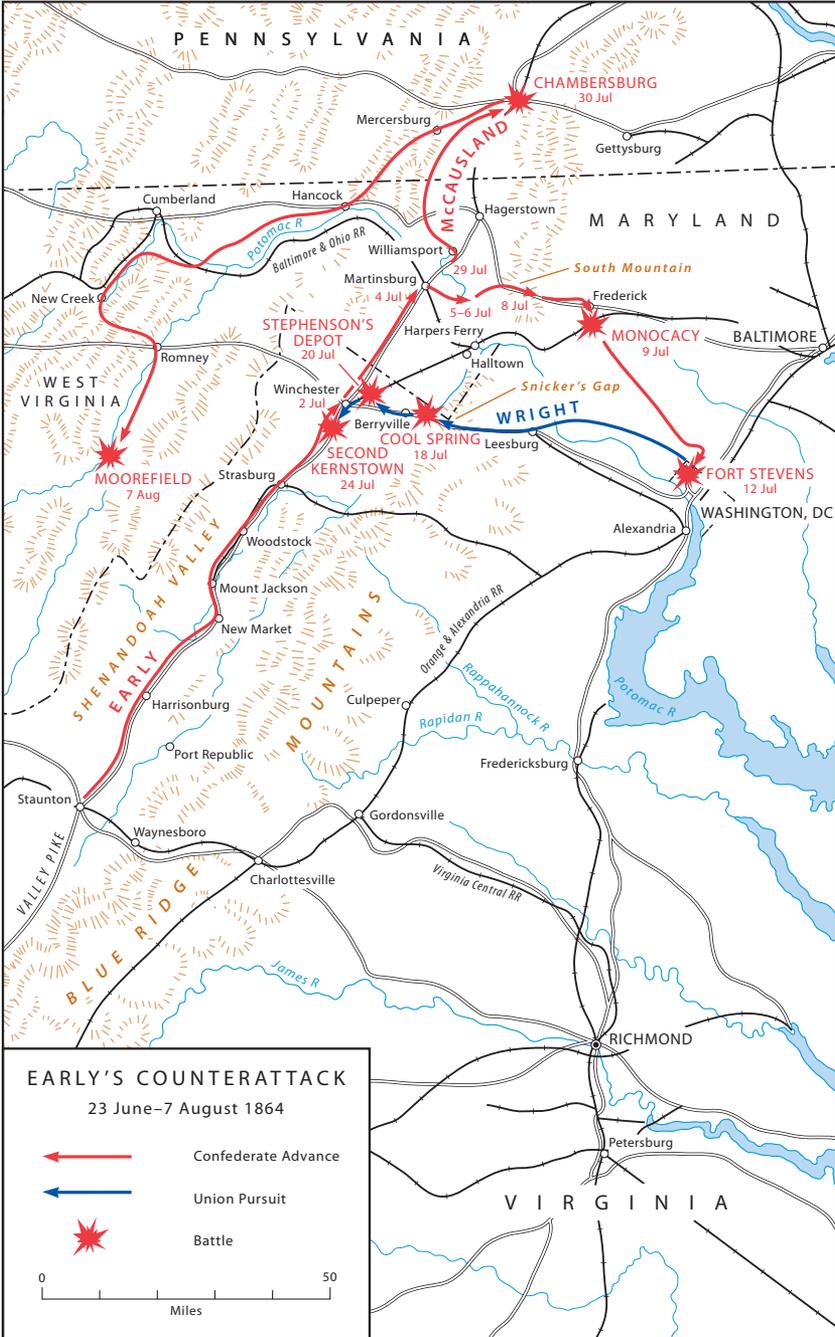
After Hunter retreated from Lynchburg, Early moved with Lee's consent north to the Shenandoah Valley. At Staunton, he reorganized his force into two sections. Breckinridge commanded one element composed of his old division (now led by General Echols) and Gordon's division. Early retained direct control of the other, which included Ransom's division of two thousand cavalry troopers, three artillery battalions, and infantry divisions led by Rodes and Ramseur. Early's total strength was over twelve thousand men (*Map 3*).

After spending a day to rest and refit, on 23 June Early's troops marched north toward the Potomac River. He moved quickly and undetected by Union scouts until he occupied Winchester on 2 July. In response Union troops under General Sigel evacuated Martinsburg and withdrew to Maryland Heights across the Potomac from Harpers Ferry. General Halleck was determined to hold Harpers Ferry and telegraphed General Weber, the garrison commander, that "the first man who proposes a surrender or retreat should be hung." Early moved into Martinsburg where his men found large stores of abandoned rations. They filled their haversacks and wagons, and on 5–6 July Early's troops crossed the Potomac into Maryland using several fords west of Harpers Ferry.

Senior Union officers disbelieved the first reports of Early's advance. On 2 July, Grant telegraphed Halleck that Early's corps was still with Lee and that "there are no troops that can now be threatening Hunter's department." Early knew he had limited time before the Federal commanders reacted. He made only feints near Harpers Ferry, while raiding parties destroyed nearby Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and Chesapeake and Ohio Canal facilities. Early also sent McCausland and his cavalymen to Hagerstown, Maryland, with orders to levy "a contribution of \$20,000" to repay damage caused by Hunter's army in Virginia. On 8 July, the Confederates crossed South Mountain and advanced east to Frederick, Maryland.

## **BATTLE OF MONOCACY AND THE ADVANCE ON WASHINGTON**

As the Confederates moved eastward, anxiety in Baltimore and Washington was at panic level. With Hunter far to the west, Maj. Gen. Lewis Wallace, commander of VIII Corps and the Middle Department headquartered in Baltimore, was the closest senior officer. Like Sigel, Wallace had been sent to a rear depart-



**MAP 3**

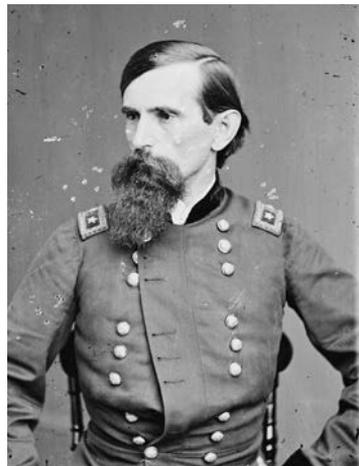
ment considered a backwater with a corps of untried short-term state units. Washington itself was no better defended, with only a skeleton garrison after Grant had sent most of the heavy artillery regiments from its forts to reinforce Meade's Army of the Potomac as infantry. When a steady flow of reports convinced Grant that Early posed a real threat to the capital, he quickly withdrew Brig. Gen. John B. Ricketts' 3d Division, VI Corps, from siege operations at Petersburg and sent it to Baltimore. This division of two brigades arrived on 8 July and took trains to Monocacy Junction on the B&O Railroad, a few miles from Frederick where Wallace was assembling his troops along the Monocacy River. Wallace knew his forces were "probably too small to defeat [Early], but certainly strong enough to gain time."

In two days Wallace pieced together a blocking force of about fifty-eight hundred men and positioned it with a battery of six guns along the east bank of the Monocacy, several miles east of the rail junction. Two road bridges and a rail bridge spanned the river. Wallace positioned Ricketts' brigades on the south flank with the mission to block the Georgetown Pike and its covered bridge and the nearby Baltimore and Ohio iron train trestle. He placed a separate Maryland Home Guard brigade commanded by Brig. Gen. Erastus B. Tyler, part of VIII Corps, on the north flank to hold the Baltimore Pike and its stone bridge, and he established strong outposts on the west side of the river.

Early was unsure of the size of the Union force he faced as he advanced warily toward the Monocacy on the morning of 9 July. At Frederick, he demanded a "contribution" of \$200,000 to keep from burning the town, with which city officials complied. Meanwhile, Rodes' division led the advance along the Baltimore Pike. Two miles to his south-east, Ramseur moved along the Georgetown Pike. Breckinridge's two rebel divisions advanced on the Confederate right flank, with

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*General Wallace*  
(Library of Congress)



Echols in reserve. Ramseur halted his advance at the west end of the Georgetown and B&O bridges, which were guarded by two strong blockhouses and earthworks. Supported by a single artillery piece and ordered to hold the bridge at all costs, the stubborn Union soldiers stood fast. While Early could ill afford any delays, he was keenly aware he had to conserve his strength. He concluded that “the enemy’s position was too strong, and the difficulties of crossing the Monocacy under fire too great, to attack in front without greater loss than I was willing to incur.”

While Ramseur fought to take the two bridges, McCausland scouted the south end of Ricketts’ position. He found a ford over the river, and his brigade quickly splashed across to secure a foothold on Ricketts’ left. Gordon’s men then crossed to join McCausland’s advance. In response, General Wallace ordered Ricketts to burn the covered bridge to block Ramseur’s advance. He realigned his Federal division left to face Gordon’s oncoming troops, but it was too late. After two hours of fierce fighting, rebel troops overwhelmed Ricketts’ brigades and forced them back. About the same time, Ramseur’s division captured the blockhouses and rushed across the B&O trestle. The entire Union line fell back to the right where Tyler’s brigade held the stone bridge open. Once across, Wallace withdrew the Federal force east toward Baltimore. By 1700, Early had his entire army over the Monocacy, but the stubborn Union resistance had cost him a day. The Confederates were still some thirty miles from Washington and had lost about seven hundred men along the banks of the Monocacy River. Federal losses were twelve hundred eighty including one thousand men captured. Stanton relieved Wallace of command for his defeat at the hands of Early’s rebels and replaced him with General Ord.

The next morning, 10 July, Early resumed his advance, with his hungry men foraging as they marched. Many soldiers dropped out of their ranks from fatigue and the oppressive summer heat. By 11 July, Confederate cavalry arrived at Silver Spring, the Maryland plantation of U.S. Postmaster General Montgomery Blair on the northern edge of Washington, D.C. McCausland scouted the right flank of the nearby Union defenses, while Brig. Gen. Bradley T. Johnson and Imboden took their brigades to the left. Early arrived about 1200 to examine the Federal earthworks, which he saw were thinly manned. He ordered Rodes to attack immediately, but it took Rodes too long to prepare his exhausted and scattered men for action. As Early watched, Federal reinforcements moved into the

forts and the opportunity was lost. Early found the Union defenses “to be exceedingly strong, and consisted of . . . inclosed forts for heavy artillery with a tier of lower works in front of each, pierced for an immense number of guns. . . . As far as the eye could reach, the works appeared to be of the same impregnable character.”

On the night of 11 July, Early’s infantry numbered about ten thousand men, with only a third fit for action. He planned an assault against the Union fortifications in the morning but soon learned that fresh units from two veteran Federal corps had arrived in his front. Maj. Gen. Horatio G. Wright and two of his VI Corps divisions along with two additional XIX Corps divisions led by Brig. Gen. William H. Emory now occupied Washington’s northern defensive lines. At dawn the next morning, Early observed the new troops within the Union lines while his own force came under heavy artillery fire and aggressive skirmishing from the Federals’ positions around Fort Stevens, two miles south of Silver Spring. Within this fort, President Lincoln was also watching the action.

Early recognized that any chance there had been to breach the Union defenses was gone, and he gave orders to withdraw once darkness fell. Nevertheless, he had achieved one of Lee’s prime objectives—to draw Federal troops away from the Petersburg front. With Ransom’s cavalry as his rear guard, Early’s troops headed for crossing sites over the Potomac downriver from Harpers Ferry and a return to Virginia.

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*General Wright*  
(Library of Congress)



### **RETURN TO THE VALLEY: COOL SPRING, STEPHENSON’S DEPOT, AND SECOND KERNSTOWN**

Other than small cavalry patrols that nipped at the heels of Ransom’s rear guard, the Federal pursuit of Early was confused and sluggish. Eventually, Grant appointed General Wright to “supreme command of all troops moving out against the enemy . . . regardless of the rank of other commanders.” Wright took command of a force of fifteen

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*Fort Stevens*  
(Library of Congress)



thousand men from two divisions of his VI Corps, led by Brig. Gen. David A. Russell and Brig. Gen. George W. Getty, and two from Emory's XIX Corps, under Brig. Gen. Benjamin S. Roberts and Brig. Gen. Cuvier Grover. Ricketts' 3d Division of VI Corps in Baltimore also joined Wright at Leesburg, Virginia. Meanwhile, Early crossed the Potomac, marched through the Blue Ridge south of Harpers Ferry, and was back in the Shenandoah Valley by 17 July. His troops camped near Berryville, about ten miles east of Winchester.

Using Baltimore and Ohio trains, Hunter—still commander of the Department of West Virginia—finally arrived back at Harpers Ferry on 15 July with advance elements of his troops that had retreated from Lynchburg. Halleck ordered him to assemble an ad hoc force and to coordinate with Wright to trap Early in the Valley, a blow to Hunter's pride because he had seniority over Wright. Insulted, Hunter asked to be replaced as department commander, but Lincoln intervened and assured Hunter the awkward situation was temporary.

Hunter disbanded the Reserve Division and sent both Sigel and Stahel back to Washington, ending the "German" presence in the department leadership. Meanwhile, General Crook assumed command of the Department of West Virginia's field forces involved in the pursuit of Early, acting under Wright's orders. Crook dubbed his command the Army of the Kanawha, which was scattered about the Valley. Averell's 2d Cavalry

Division with Col. Isaac Duval's brigade from the 2d Infantry Division held positions at Martinsburg, while the divisions of Sullivan and Duffie camped around Halltown, West Virginia, a few miles southwest of Harpers Ferry. Sullivan had orders from Hunter to march his 1st Infantry Division south to join Wright, but Sullivan made no attempt to obey the order. When Crook arrived at Sullivan's camp on 16 June to take formal command, he found the troops unprepared to move and lacking any camp security. He relieved Sullivan and placed Thoburn in charge of the division.

On 17 July, Crook reported to Wright with his two divisions (Thoburn's 1st Infantry Division and Duffie's 1st Cavalry Division) and two additional infantry brigades (Col. Jacob Campbell's of Crook's 2d Infantry Division and Col. James A. Mulligan's from the disbanded Reserve Division). Wright instructed Crook to secure Snicker's Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains south of Harpers Ferry and to send Duffie's cavalry on a reconnaissance to Snicker's Ford, one of several that crossed the Shenandoah River at the west side of the gap. Wright planned for VI Corps to use this gap and cross the ford while XIX Corps used other nearby gaps.

By 1200 on 18 July, Duffie's men secured Snicker's Gap, and at 1400, they descended to Snicker's Ford. However, when Duffie tried to cross, heavy fire from Gordon's rebel division on the west bank turned him back twice. Alerted to the Union presence, Early shifted his divisions around Berryville to meet the threat. At the same time, Thoburn's Union division marched about three miles upriver to Island Ford (Judge Parker's Ford) where it succeeded in crossing the Shenandoah against a small Confederate force. Once across, Thoburn encountered additional enemy troops under Breckinridge and Rodes at a farm called Cool Spring. In sharp fighting Thoburn's regiments collapsed, and many soldiers fled, some into the river to drown. A stone wall beside the river offered a final defensive position where Thoburn rallied his remaining infantry with supporting fire from VI Corps artillery. As darkness fell, Ricketts appeared, but, when he saw the situation, he refused to commit his division. During the night, Thoburn slipped his remaining men back across the river, having suffered more than four hundred casualties. On the following day, Hunter ordered Averell's cavalry division with Duval's brigade to move south from Martinsburg toward Winchester,

which would put them in Early's rear. Thus, two Federal columns were converging on Early—Crook and Wright from the east and Averell and Duval from the north. The Confederate commander prudently withdrew his army from Berryville and marched south to Strasburg.

About 1200 on 20 July, Averell's patrols probed south on the Valley Pike and found Ramseur's division in a blocking position near Stephenson's Depot, five miles east of Winchester. Averell had only 2,350 men and 12 cannons, while Ramseur, augmented with 3 cavalry brigades, led some 5,000 Southern troops. Against Early's orders, Ramseur advanced without making a proper reconnaissance and an aggressive attack from Duval's infantry caught him in the act of deploying his men. Although outnumbered, Duval and Averell destroyed Ramseur's left flank and sent the routed Confederates fleeing to Winchester. Darkness ended Averell's cavalry pursuit.

Wright brought VI and XIX Corps into the Valley at midday and halted at Berryville. He had had no communication with Averell but heard the sound of the fighting at Stephenson's Depot. When his scouts could find no Confederate presence in the Berryville area, Wright concluded that Early was in full retreat and marching to rejoin Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. He considered his mission completed and late that night turned his two corps around and marched back toward Washington, where Halleck directed him to disband his ad hoc pursuit force and to return VI and XIX Corps to Meade at Petersburg. At dawn on 21 July, Averell occupied Winchester and sent Union cavalry patrols on to Kernstown, about four miles south. Crook later joined Averell and took command of the entire Army of the Kanawha.

Wright's departure left Crook and his 9,500-man Army of the Kanawha as the main Union force in the Valley under the overall command of General Hunter. Crook reorganized his force into five divisions. Former brigade commanders Thoburn, Duval, and Mulligan were each assigned an infantry division, while Duffie and Averell retained their two cavalry divisions.

On 23 July, rebel cavalymen informed Early that Wright's Union forces had left the Valley. In response, Early turned his army of 16,200 men north again and marched to attack Crook's unsuspecting Union troops at Kernstown, the site of an earlier battle during the 1862 Valley Campaign. Gordon's

division attacked about 1200 on 24 July and caught Crook's units unprepared. While Gordon's attack held Crook's attention in the front, Ramseur attacked Crook's right while Breckinridge slipped around the Federal left flank and crushed it. General Mulligan was mortally wounded and his Federal division overrun. Stunned and assaulted from three directions, the Army of the Kanawha collapsed. Crook's retreat from Kernstown became increasingly disorganized and finally dissolved into a rout when Union cavalry troopers raced through his rear guard and panicked the wagon train. The teamsters lost all control, whipping their teams to a gallop over the fields in what Duffie called "a perfect stampede" that destroyed over eighty supply wagons.

Crook re-formed his forces and withdrew through Winchester to Martinsburg for the night. He had lost over twelve hundred men, all his supplies, and twelve artillery caissons. Concerned that Early would again threaten Washington and Baltimore, Hunter ordered Crook to withdraw into Maryland. Crook evacuated Martinsburg and crossed the Potomac on 26 July. He placed outposts along the river and then marched his army back to Halltown, where he disbanded Mulligan's division and incorporated it into Thoburn's command. Averell took his cavalry to Hagerstown and placed outposts at the river crossings. Once more the Shenandoah Valley belonged to Early. Shaken by Early's aggressive return, Halleck rescinded the order for Wright to disband his force and directed him to march VI and XIX Corps back to the Valley to serve under Hunter. By 29 July, these two corps arrived at Hunter's headquarters near Monocacy Junction.

### **RAID ON CHAMBERSBURG AND THE BATTLE OF MOOREFIELD**

Early was determined to retain the initiative by taking the war to the North again. It served Lee's goal of drawing troops from Union forces besieging Petersburg and satisfied Early's desire to exact retribution for the damage done in the Valley by Hunter. Early ordered McCausland to lead two cavalry brigades across the Potomac for a raid on Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. McCausland crossed the river on 29 July with about three thousand men and a battery of horse artillery. Alerted to the crossing and fearing it was Early's full force, Hunter shifted units to cover Washington and Baltimore. While Averell blocked the South Mountain gaps, Crook's troops and VI Corps

camped near Monocacy Junction while Emory was en route from Washington with his XIX Corps divisions led by Roberts and Grover.

McCausland's raiders appeared in Chambersburg at dawn on 30 July demanding a ransom of \$100,000 in gold or \$500,000 in U.S. currency. When the money was not raised, the rebels set the town on fire. With almost six hundred buildings aflame and the town looted, McCausland's brigades left for Hancock, Maryland. Averell arrived at Chambersburg three hours later and took up the chase with his much smaller force. He skirmished with McCausland's rear guard near Hancock but could not prevent the rebels from recrossing the Potomac near Cumberland, Maryland, into West Virginia on 2 August.

After an attack on Baltimore and Ohio Railroad facilities at New Creek (now Keyser), West Virginia, failed, McCausland halted near Moorefield. Averell's Union scouts located the two Confederate brigades resting there in scattered camps separated by the south branch of the Potomac. Averell, with a force only half the size of McCausland's, attacked with audacity in the predawn hours of 7 August. The surprise assault struck "like a fiery meteor from the sky" that shattered the Confederate brigades and sent them fleeing. McCausland escaped, but Averell's pursuit bagged eight artillery pieces and over six hundred prisoners—a serious blow to Early's mounted strength.

### **SHERIDAN TAKES COMMAND**

Early's victory at Kernstown and the burning of Chambersburg galvanized Grant and Lincoln into action. They met at Fort Monroe, Virginia, on 31 July and agreed to streamline the cumbersome geographic command structure in the Shenandoah Valley by bringing four separate Army departments (West Virginia, Middle, Susquehanna, and Washington) under a new Middle Military Division with a single commander. By default, as the senior general in the area, Hunter was the overall division commander, but Grant lacked confidence in him as a battlefield leader. Instead, Grant selected General Sheridan for "temporary duty . . . to command all the troops in the field" in the new division. Sheridan's orders were to go after Early and to "follow him to the death. Wherever the enemy goes, let our troops go also." Sheridan, Meade's chief of cavalry, had built a reputation as an aggressive fighter but at age thirty-four was thought by Lincoln and Stanton to be too young

and inexperienced for the Valley mission. Despite these misgivings, they deferred to Grant's judgment. Along with Sheridan, two of Meade's cavalry divisions led by Brig. Gen. Alfred T. A. Torbert and Brig. Gen. James H. Wilson rode northward to reinforce the new command.

Securing the Shenandoah Valley had finally become a Union priority, and Lincoln, leery of Halleck's interference, told Grant to take a personal interest: "I repeat to you it will neither be done nor attempted unless you watch it every day, and hour, and force it." Grant heeded Lincoln's instructions, and on 5 August he went to Monocacy Junction to confer with Hunter. He found the Baltimore and Ohio rail yard filled with idle engines and railcars, while thousands of troops camped nearby. Hunter lamented that due to confusing orders from Halleck, he "had lost all trace of the enemy" and was unsure what to do. When Hunter learned that Sheridan, his junior in rank, would command the troops in the field against Early's Confederates, he asked to be relieved, and Grant complied. Grant immediately ordered all available troops put in the field and sent them by train to the Federal camp at Halltown. Early was, in fact, camped close by near Bunker Hill, West Virginia.

With Hunter's departure, Sheridan became the Middle Military Division commander on 7 August. When Torbert arrived with his 1st Cavalry Division, Sheridan appointed him chief of cavalry, so Brig. Gen. Wesley Merritt took over the division. Averell and Wilson commanded Torbert's other two cavalry divisions. Although Averell outranked Torbert and protested the reorganization, Sheridan brusquely told him to obey his new chief. Meanwhile, General Crook reorganized his own infantry into two divisions with Thoburn leading 1st Division and Duval at the head of 2d Division. On 8 August, these troops, in addition to the Artillery Brigade, now commanded by du Pont, became the Army of West Virginia.

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*General Sheridan*  
(Library of Congress)



Although Emory's XIX Corps divisions and Wilson's cavalry had not yet arrived at Halltown, Sheridan decided to take the initiative with a pincer movement against Early. On 10 August, he sent Wright's men west toward Charles Town, West Virginia, while Crook took his army to Berryville. That put Wright north of Early and Crook to Early's south. Early saw the danger and withdrew to Fisher's Hill, a natural defensive feature near Strasburg and out of Sheridan's reach. A few days later, reinforcements from Lee's army at Petersburg arrived, led by Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson. These were Maj. Gen. Joseph B. Kershaw's infantry division, Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry division, and an artillery battalion. Now Early had some twenty thousand men of all arms, and he sent Anderson's division to Front Royal, closer to Sheridan's position.

When Sheridan discovered Early's withdrawal to Fisher's Hill, he advanced VI Corps and Crook's troops closer to Cedar Creek. However, on 15 August, a telegram from Grant urged caution and warned Sheridan of a strong Confederate force (most likely Anderson's division) approaching Front Royal. The same day, rebel partisans under Colonel Mosby attacked and burned a Union wagon train with badly needed supplies near Berryville. Sheridan decided he was overextended and began a careful week-long withdrawal north to Halltown. The next day, Fitzhugh Lee's Confederate cavalry with a brigade of infantry attacked Merritt's Federal troopers at Cedarville, just north of Front Royal, but, after sharp fighting, the rebels retired.

As Sheridan pulled back into defensive positions at Halltown, Early pressed north behind him, but, despite his best efforts, the Confederate commander was unable to maneuver Sheridan into a major engagement. On 21 August at Halltown, Union troops repulsed a badly executed attack by Early. For three more days, Early probed Sheridan's defenses but finally determined that they were too strong for a direct assault. Instead, he made plans to draw Sheridan out from behind the protection of his earthworks.

On 25 August, Early left Anderson to watch Halltown and marched north with Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry and four divisions toward Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and Williamsport, Maryland, on the Potomac River. Early's intention was to spread his army to make it appear larger than it was and to give the impression he was going to cross the Potomac. He hoped Sheridan would leave the Valley to protect Baltimore and Washington as Hunter had done. Instead, Sheridan sent Torbert with two cavalry divisions to find Early's main force, which the horsemen located just south of Shepherdstown. At

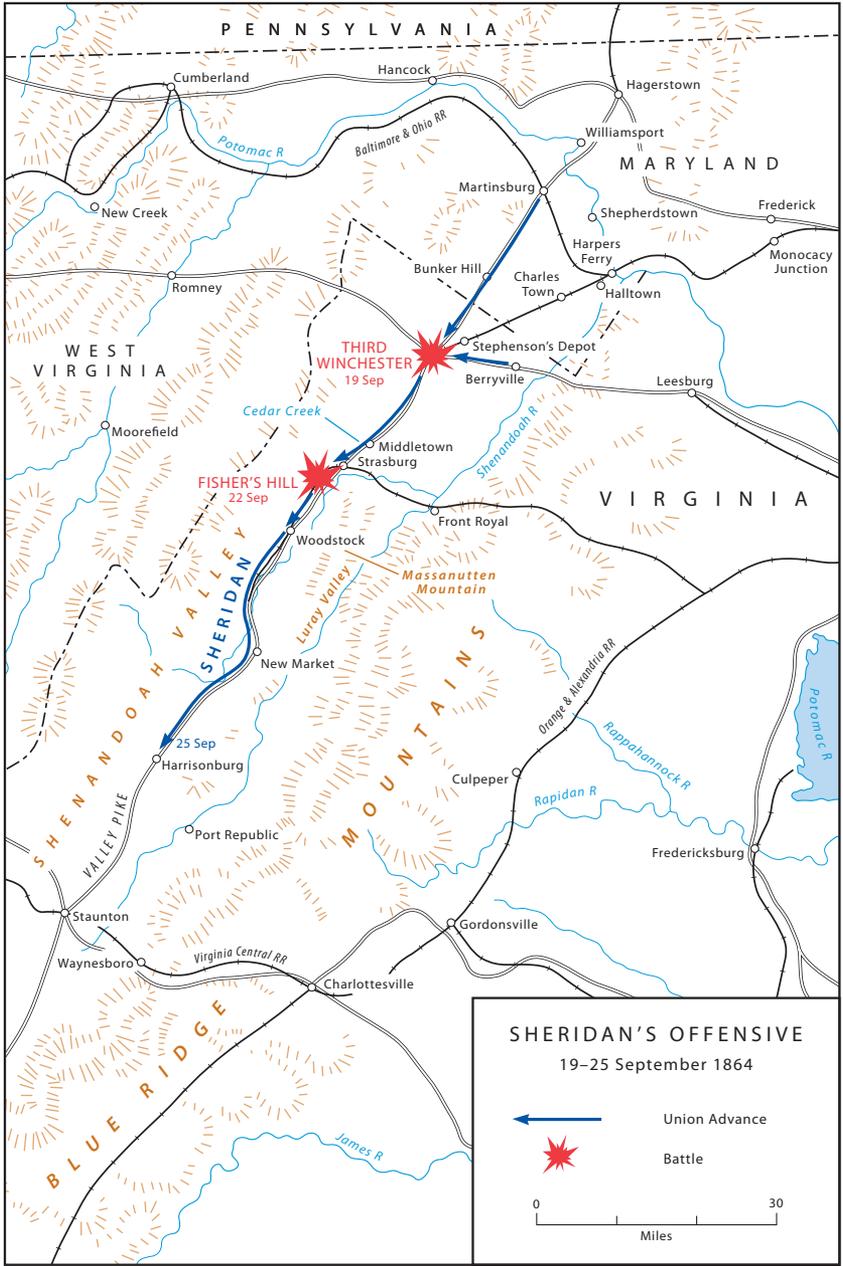
first, Torbert thought he was facing only a cavalry detachment and attacked. His brigades were soon in a sharp fight with Wharton's infantry division and in grave danger. With difficulty, Torbert withdrew and retreated over the Potomac. Sheridan countered with his own deception. He instructed Torbert to leave the Potomac crossings unguarded in the hope of enticing Early to ford the river so he could be cut off, but Early had no intention of doing that.

The next day, 26 August, Early reached Shepherdstown and halted. He knew that to go farther he would be "compelled to attempt to cut my way through, as there was no escape for me to the right or left and my force was too weak to cross the Potomac with him [Sheridan] in my rear." Early disrupted the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad facilities and the C&O Canal, but his tactical gambit to displace Sheridan had failed, and he returned to Winchester. Sheridan reoccupied Charles Town and Martinsburg and then returned to his former positions around Halltown. As Crook's Federals approached Berryville on 3 September, his advance elements encountered Anderson's rebel division withdrawing to Petersburg along with Kershaw's division. In the surprise meeting engagement, Crook pushed Anderson back to Winchester. For the next two weeks, action was limited to cavalry patrols and skirmishes, most of which ended favorably for Torbert's Federals.

### **THIRD WINCHESTER AND FISHER'S HILL**

On 16 September, Grant and Sheridan met at Charles Town to discuss future Union operations in the Shenandoah Valley. Sheridan already had a plan in mind to defeat Early and had recently learned of Anderson's departure for Richmond with Kershaw's division. Although Early retained Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry, he was now outnumbered by about twenty thousand men (*Map 4*).

To take advantage of his superior numbers, Sheridan planned a converging attack against Early at Winchester, where Confederates had won previous victories in 1862 and 1863. The main attack would advance west from Berryville. Wilson's cavalry would clear and secure the ford over Opequon Creek (east of Winchester) for VI Corps to cross it, followed by XIX Corps. Crook's troops, in reserve, were to move behind XIX Corps, swing left, and go south of Winchester with Wilson's cavalry to cut off Early's avenue of retreat. At the same time, Averell, coming from Martinsburg, was to join Torbert to attack the Confederates around Stephenson's Depot, north of Winchester. The Union forces would face the enemy divi-



MAP 4

sions of Rodes and Gordon near the depot, while Breckinridge, with Wharton's infantry division and Imboden's and McCausland's brigades, was east of it. Ramseur's division was positioned with artillery across the Berryville road directly east of Winchester.

At 0200, 19 September, Sheridan's troops began moving. Wilson's cavalry drove in Ramseur's skirmishers and secured the Opequon crossing. Wright led VI Corps across Opequon Creek with Getty's division, followed by Ricketts' and Russell's divisions. About two miles east of town, Wright deployed his battle line with Ricketts on the right, Getty on the left, and Russell's men in reserve. Delayed by VI Corps artillery and wagons moving through a defile known as Berryville canyon, Emory's XIX Corps was not in position on the right of Ricketts until 1100. This delay gave time for Gordon and Rodes to react to the Federal advance and to shift their rebel soldiers south to reinforce Ramseur. Breckinridge was left to deal with Torbert's cavalry alone, on the north side of Winchester.

The Union general assault began about 1140. In severe fighting, VI Corps troops pushed Ramseur and Rodes back while XIX Corps attacked Gordon's position on the rebel left. As the two Union corps advanced, a gap opened between them. Two Confederate brigades charged into it and threatened to collapse the entire Union right until a counterattack by Russell's division restored the Union line. Meanwhile, Sheridan, concerned how Torbert was faring at Stephenson's Depot, redirected Crook to move his command to the Union right, toward Gordon's rebel lines. North of Winchester, Wharton's infantry temporarily held its position until Averell's cavalry outflanked it, forcing the rebels back. Breckinridge retired toward Winchester with the Union cavalry in pursuit, but, near the town, Wharton's two brigades counterattacked and stalled Torbert's advance.

About the same time, Sheridan ordered a final coordinated thrust against the Confederate line, which was now bent into an L-shaped formation to the north and east of Winchester. Crook's troops hit Gordon's left flank and turned into it, sending the Confederate division reeling back, while Wright and Emory also brought their corps into action. Merritt's and Averell's Federal divisions made a classic cavalry charge into the Confederates' far left flank, breaking the infantry lines. The combination of assaults shattered Early's position and forced his army south in an orderly retreat out of Winchester. Sheridan's infantry stopped on the south

edge of the town while Union cavalry continued to pursue the Confederates to Kernstown. Early ended his retreat at a strong position on Fisher's Hill about twenty miles away. Total Union losses killed, wounded, and missing were over five thousand men, while Early's cost was an estimated thirty-nine hundred men.

Sheridan continued his offensive against Early the next day. At dawn, 20 September, his army moved south toward Fisher's Hill. Crook received orders to make a concealed march the next day to hidden positions west of Fisher's Hill and then make an assault on 22 September. Meanwhile, Sheridan sent Torbert east around Massanutten Mountain into the Luray Valley with a reinforced cavalry division. He was to cross back into the Valley some thirty miles south at New Market to cut off Early's retreat. As planned, Crook moved his infantry into position without detection by Confederate signal stations in the nearby mountains while Wright and Emory made distractive feints against Early's positions. About 1600 on 22 September, Crook launched his surprise attack on the rebels' left flank. This assault broke through the Confederate defenses, and, with support from XIX Corps units, Early's army was quickly routed. The panicked Confederates rushed off the hill

*Sheridan's final charge at Winchester, by Thure de Thulstrup  
(Library of Congress)*



with Union infantry in close pursuit. Heavy rain and darkness finally halted Sheridan's victorious troops near Woodstock.

Sheridan assumed his maneuvers would capture Early's entire force, but he was incensed to learn that Torbert had turned back. Strong Confederate earthworks blocked the narrow north end of Luray Valley, and Torbert, wary of heavy losses and concerned about being isolated if the assault on Fisher's Hill failed, decided not to attack the rebel positions. Sheridan's temper flared again when he discovered that Averell was not in pursuit of Early but settled in camp. He ordered Averell to get into action immediately with "actual fighting and necessary casualties," but, when Averell instead went back to camp, Sheridan relieved him of command. Sheridan gave the division to Col. William H. Powell, a veteran brigade commander. Meanwhile, Early retreated south of Harrisonburg while Sheridan followed and occupied the town on 25 September.

Convinced that Early was finally beaten, Grant wanted Sheridan to move against the rail junction at Charlottesville, but Sheridan balked. He was almost one hundred miles from the closest Union supply depot, and foraging efforts in the picked-over Valley could not support his army. He suggested destroying crops, barns, and other supplies in the Shenandoah Valley and then withdrawing his army northward. With Grant's approval, Sheridan sent Union cavalry as far south as Waynesboro to cut the railroads, burn grain and woolen mills, and seize or destroy crops and livestock. Many farms and homes that had escaped damage during Hunter's previous campaign now went up in flames. As Sheridan withdrew down the Valley in early October toward Winchester, the general destruction continued, which exacerbated the already nasty blood-feud between Confederate partisans and Union cavalry, with atrocities committed by both sides.

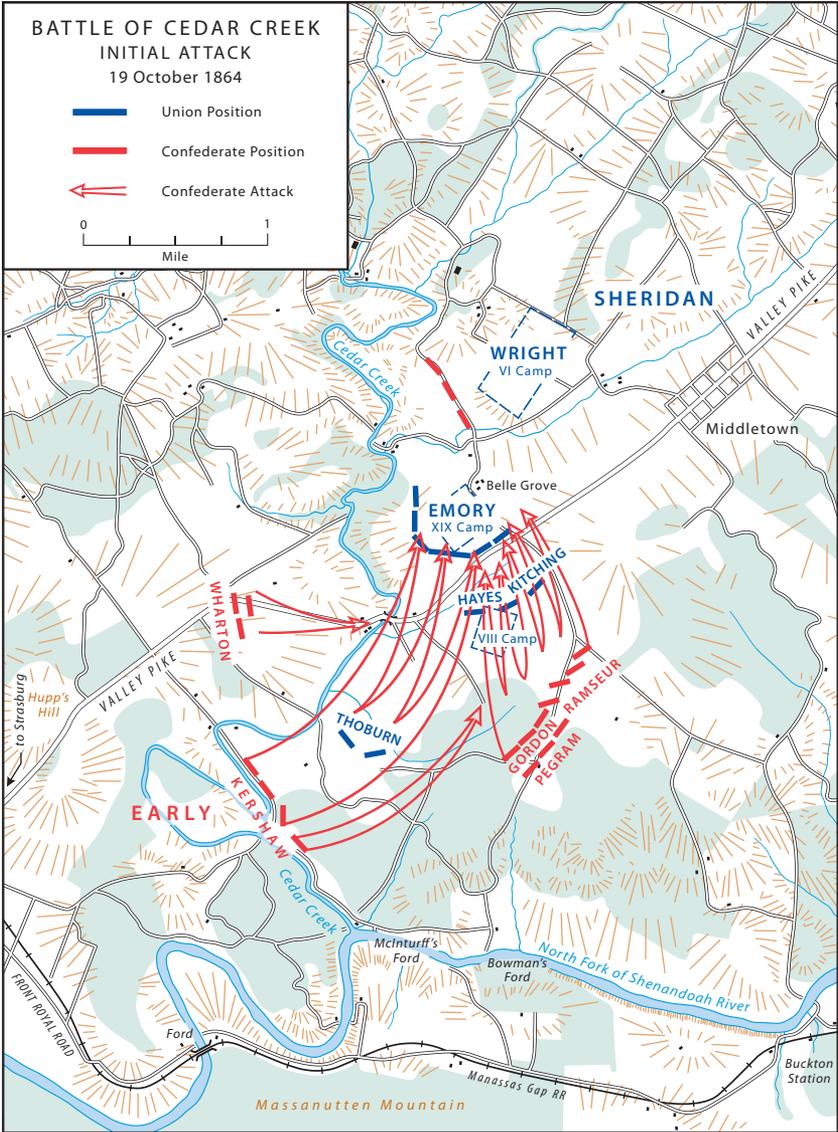
### **THE BATTLE OF CEDAR CREEK**

On 10 October, Sheridan put his army of about thirty-one thousand men into camp along the north side of Cedar Creek near the Valley Pike around Middletown. Crook's two Army of West Virginia divisions and an attached Provisional Division under Col. John H. Kitching were located east of the pike. Thoburn's 1st Division took a position on high ground almost a mile forward (south) of Colonel Hayes' 2d Division and Kitching's men. West of the pike, Emory's XIX Corps encamped in the fields surrounding

Belle Grove plantation. On 12 October, Wright and VI Corps left the Valley and headed east to rejoin Grant because Sheridan assumed that Early's defeated rebels posed little threat (*Map 5*).

Miles to the south, Early had regrouped his army near Waynesboro. When he learned of Wright's departure, he moved his troops north, and by 13 October his men were a few miles south of Cedar Creek. At this point his army numbered between fifteen thousand and twenty thousand men. His unexpected presence was disclosed to the Union troops by a sharp fight at Hupp's Hill near Strasburg between Thoburn's Union division and Kershaw's rebel troops, who had earlier been recalled to the Valley as they marched toward Richmond. Meanwhile, Sheridan received orders from Secretary of War Stanton to report to Washington for a planning conference. Uneasy about Early's return to the lower Valley, Sheridan recalled VI Corps and placed it in reserve north of Emory's troops at Belle Grove. On 16 October, Sheridan left Wright in charge of the army, telling him to be "well prepared" for a possible enemy assault. Wright shifted most of the cavalry to the west flank, which he considered vulnerable to attack. After a rushed meeting in Washington, Sheridan returned to Winchester late on 18 October where he spent the night, having been assured by General Wright that all was quiet along Cedar Creek.

The Confederates, however, were not inactive. With his supplies dwindling, Early knew he had to leave the Valley or defeat Sheridan in battle. Based on a personal reconnaissance by Gordon on 18 October, Early planned an attack on the Federals encamped north of Cedar Creek the following morning. Under a bright moon and using a little-known path and ford over the North Fork of the Shenandoah River, Gordon's, Ramseur's, and Brig. Gen. John Pegram's divisions slipped around Thoburn and advanced toward Hayes and Kitching. Meanwhile, Kershaw's division crossed Cedar Creek in front of Thoburn and launched an assault at 0530. The wave of Kershaw's Confederates struck just as Union troops were cooking breakfast. Kershaw's men overran Thoburn's surprised division, killing Thoburn. Not long after, Gordon's, Ramseur's, and Pegram's divisions fell on Crook's main line. Hayes' troops put up a strong fight for a time, but Kitching's ad hoc division fled immediately. Meanwhile, Wharton's troops advanced north on the Valley Pike to strike at XIX Corps' lines. Emory had little time to realign units, and, when Wharton's men penetrated the rear of XIX Corps'



**MAP 5**



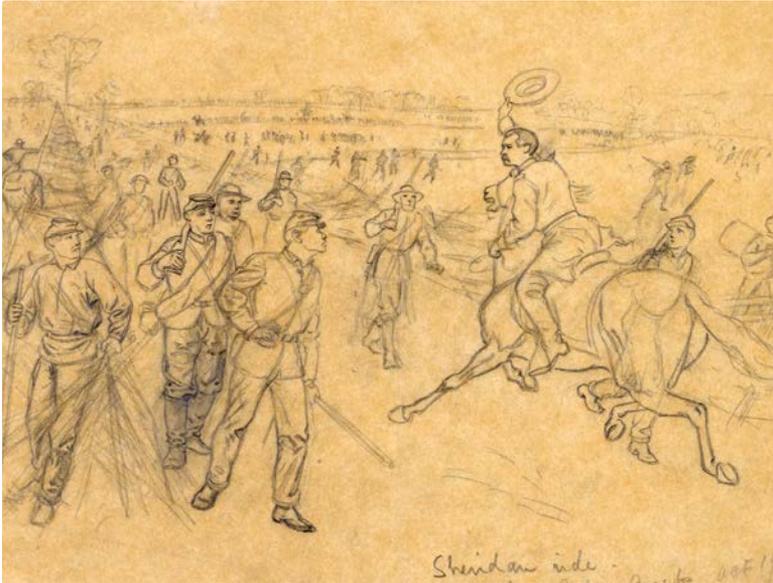
*Fighting at Belle Grove during the Battle of Cedar Creek, by J. E. Taylor  
(Library of Congress)*

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camp, Emory's men fell back to fight stubbornly from the reverse side of their trenches.

Early's attacking formations pushed the Federals beyond Belle Grove where XIX Corps and Crooks' survivors fought individual battles against the onrushing Confederates. Their stubborn resistance gave VI Corps time to prepare to meet the assault, allowing XIX Corps fugitives to re-form. At a crucial point, Getty's 2d Division of VI Corps held out alone for an hour against four of Early's divisions. On the Union right, Merritt's blue-coated troopers prevented further disaster to the Union forces by beating back an attack by Brig. Gen. Thomas L. Rosser's Confederate cavalry. Around 1100, General Sheridan arrived on the battlefield after a frantic ride from Winchester. He saw wounded and disheartened men fleeing the fight but also noted some units standing firm. Again in command, Sheridan set about reestablishing a battle line along a ridge about two miles north of Cedar Creek.

By early afternoon Emory brought his bloodied XIX Corps brigades back into line on the right of VI Corps. The momentum of the Confederate attack had waned as Early's famished troops stopped to eat the food and loot the gear they found in the



*Sheridan's ride from Winchester to Cedar Creek, by Alfred R. Waud  
(Library of Congress)*

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abandoned Union camps. For several hours there was a lull in the engagement as Early and his officers tried to reorganize and consolidate their units, but, before the Confederate attack could resume, Sheridan struck back. About 1630 the reenergized VI and XIX Corps attacked southward with a cavalry division on each flank. After hard fighting, XIX Corps advanced against the Confederate left, which began to crumble. Soon the whole rebel line gave way, and the retreat became a rout. The disorderly mass of Confederates fled back across Cedar Creek and beyond. Sheridan's infantry stopped at the creek, but Torbert's cavalry pursued Early back to Fisher's Hill, about six miles south. In the predawn hours of the next morning, Early's demoralized army resumed its retreat toward New Market.

In the weeks that followed, Sheridan's units resupplied at Cedar Creek. In November, Sheridan built a smaller, but stronger, defensive line at Kernstown so he could safely return XIX Corps to Meade at Petersburg. Learning of this, Early returned to the lower Valley on 10 November. He found the Union positions too strong to assault, and, after some sharp cavalry fighting at Cedarville, the

Confederates withdrew south with Torbert's cavalry on their heels. Sheridan retained VI Corps until December, when winter weather ended major operations, and Lee recalled most of the Second Corps to his own ranks. Early remained behind with a small force but did not again threaten Union dominance of the Valley. While cavalry raids and the bitter guerrilla war continued for another six months, the campaign to control the Shenandoah Valley was over.

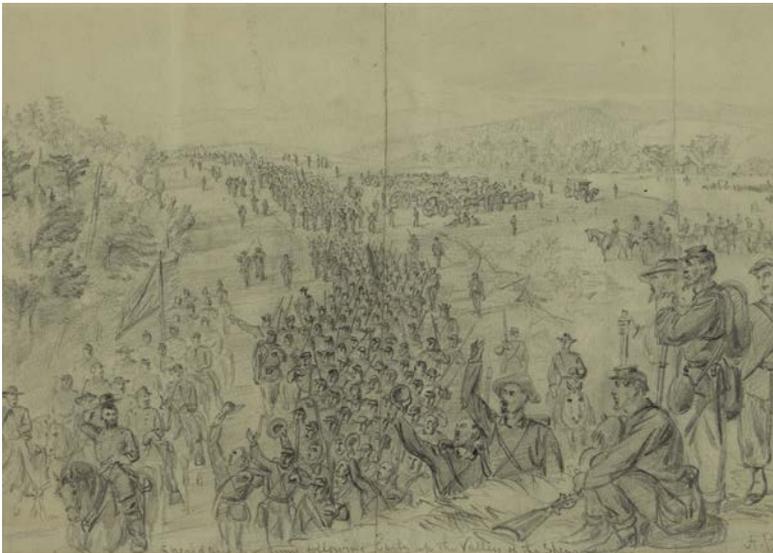
### *Analysis*

Two key factors hobbled the implementation of Grant's plan for the Valley: a cumbersome Army command structure and the mediocre quality of the Union Army's department leaders. It took the defeat of Franz Sigel and the collapse of David Hunter's expedition to finally correct both problems. By the end of the campaign, only one of Sigel's original senior leaders was still in command—George Crook.

The final Union success in the 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign had a major impact on the duration, if not the ultimate

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*Sheridan's army following Early through the Shenandoah Valley,  
by Alfred R. Waud (Library of Congress)*



conclusion, of the war. The loss of the Valley hurt Lee's Army of Northern Virginia besieged at Petersburg because, by cutting the western railroads, the Union had blocked the agricultural and industrial support Lee needed in eastern Virginia. Union control of the Valley opened Lee's western flank to attack and ended his flexibility to use the railroads within his interior lines to shift forces from one threatened area to another. Last but not least, victory in the Shenandoah secured the vital Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, opened a back door to Richmond, and aided the reelection of President Lincoln.

The campaign held clear lessons on the value of a unified, centralized command structure. The relative ease that Early experienced in traversing four uncoordinated Army geographical departments during his raid on Washington demonstrated the disfunction that had long bedeviled the North's command organization. By creating the Middle Military Division and placing a first-class general such as Sheridan as its leader, Grant focused the war effort in the Valley in a way that helped bring victory to the Union.

Finally, the campaign demonstrated the relationship between time and tactical initiative. On three occasions—Sigel at New Market, Hunter at Lynchburg, and Early at Washington—tactical initiative was lost because a commander took too long reaching his objective, giving the opponent time, albeit barely enough, to react.



## THE AUTHOR

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For more information on the U.S. Army in the Civil War, please read other titles in the U.S. Army Campaigns of the Civil War series published by the U.S. Army Center of Military History.  
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SHENANDOAH 1864

