

Winchester National Cemetery  
401 National Avenue  
Winchester, Virginia 22601

## Description

The Winchester National Cemetery, established in 1866, is located about 1/4 mile east of Winchester City Hall. The cemetery is rectangular in shape and is enclosed by a limestone wall, four feet, six inches high, 18 inches thick, and extending 1,879 lineal feet. The main entrance is situated in the center of the north side and is protected by 12-foot-wide entry gates, constructed circa 1910, made of ornamental wrought and cast iron. The main gates are supported by cast iron piers. There is a four-foot-wide walk gate on each side, supported by concrete piers. A 14-foot-wide cast iron rear access gate to Woodstock Lane, with stone piers on each side, was constructed in July 1940. The burial sections were originally named after various states, as far as practicable, and the interments were made in the same manner. Graves are marked with upright marble headstones.



The lodge was originally constructed in 1871 and consisted of a one-story stone building of three rooms. Although this lodge was based on a design by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs, it was a smaller version than the standard lodge design by Meigs for national cemeteries during that era. A one-story frame wing containing a kitchen was added around the turn of the century. The windows on the first floor are six-over-one double-hung. About 1914, a second story frame addition containing three bedrooms and one bath was constructed over the stone part of the house. The windows on this story are in pairs, four-over-one double-hung. The old kitchen was removed, date unknown, and replaced with the present one-story stucco kitchen wing. The roof on this wing is tin. In 1936, an addition to this wing was made, containing a laundry room and basement. A well is located in the rear of the lodge.

In 1930 a brick, stucco and concrete utility building with comfort station, 29 feet, 6 inches by 29 feet, was constructed directly to the rear of the lodge near the eastern corner of the perimeter wall. The roof is tin. A pair of wrought iron gates, nine feet wide, supported by stone piers, was constructed in November 1929, to provide access to the utility building.

A brick, stucco, and concrete gasoline storage building, six feet, four inches by five feet, four inches, was constructed in 1936 beside the southeast perimeter wall near the eastern corner of the cemetery. The roof is tin.

## Noted Burials

Many Civil War soldiers whose remains could not be identified are buried in a common area located in the center of the cemetery, identified by four wooden boundary markers. A plaque commemorating these soldiers is located in Section 37 near the flagpole and is inscribed as follows:

## UNKNOWN CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS

WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE FOUR WOODEN  
BOUNDARY MARKERS ARE THE GRAVES OF 2,338  
CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS WHOSE NAMES ARE UNKNOWN

THESE SOLDIERS WERE ORIGINALLY BURIED WHERE  
THEY BRAVELY FOUGHT AND DIED DURING BATTLES  
AT NEW MARKET, FRONT ROYAL, SNICKER'S GAP,  
HARPER'S FERRY, MARTINSBURG, ROMNEY, AND  
THE SURROUNDING AREA.

EVEN THOUGH THEIR NAMES ARE UNKNOWN,  
THE SACRIFICE OF THESE SOLDIERS WILL NEVER  
BE FORGOTTEN.

According to an article in the March 19, 1894, edition of the Winchester Times, J. W. Smellie, then owner of the fine Belle Grove estate near Middletown, informed the newspaper that George W. Staples, who was a Confederate soldier during the entire war, was plowing in the field immediately in front of the mansion a few days earlier. He turned up two skulls and upon going further, another one was raised by his plow. Upon making an examination, nine bodies were found in a trench. They proved to be U.S. soldiers, as evidenced by pieces of their coats with Federal buttons upon them. Evidently, two of them were officers. Smellie found a bullet between the ribs of one of the skeletons when it dropped out upon being taken up. Several of the shoes had foot bones in them and one boot had the entire leg bone in it. A battery of artillery belonging to the 6th Army Corps, Sheridan's Army, was stationed in this field. Smellie immediately placed himself in correspondence with Major Drum, Superintendent of the Winchester National Cemetery, and the remains were later removed to the cemetery and reinterred.

### Significant Monuments/Memorials

123rd Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry Monument - Granite, surmounted by cut granite, faced with cross rifles; Base, eight feet, five inches by eight feet; Height, seven feet, six inches.

Pennsylvania Monument - Surmounted by a bronze figure of a woman supporting a fallen figure of a soldier holding a flag; Base, eight feet, one inch by eight feet, one inch; Height, 20 feet; erected by The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

14th New Hampshire Regiment Monument - Granite with cut column point at top; Base, three feet by three feet; Height, ten feet; erected by the State of New Hampshire sometime prior to 1969.

114th New York Volunteer Infantry - Granite with cut granite spar pyramidal peak at top; Base, seven feet, ten inches by seven feet, ten inches; Height, 30 feet.



Massachusetts Monument -A life-size bronze statue of a soldier in field equipment, erected in 1907.

34th Massachusetts Infantry Monument - Granite base with cut marble column supporting bust statue of George D. Wells; Base, four feet by four feet; Height, nine feet; erected by his comrades.

3rd Massachusetts Cavalry Monument - Granite cut base, cut granite monument, faced with horse's head; Base, three feet, ten inches by six feet; Height, five feet.

38th Massachusetts Volunteers Monument - Marble cut to peak at top; Base, one foot, six inches by one foot, six inches; Height, three feet, six inches.

18th Connecticut Volunteer Regiment Monument - Granite with shaft of rough granite corners chamfered and top cut to a pyramid; Base, six feet by six feet; Height, 12 feet.

12th Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers Monument - Granite with cut base and shaft, draped with large cut granite flag; Base, five feet, eight inches by five feet, eight inches; Height, ten feet; erected by the State of Connecticut on October 19, 1890.

13th Connecticut Volunteer Regiment Monument - Granite; Base, seven feet by four feet, six inches; Height, six feet.

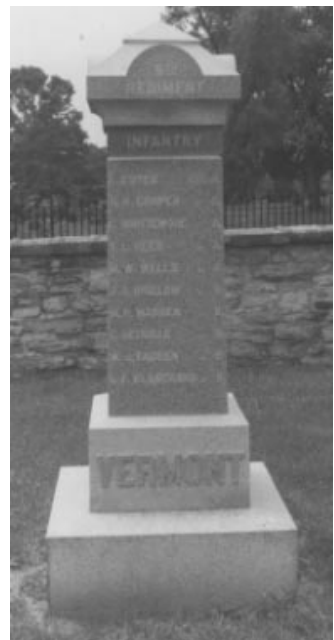
8th Regiment, Vermont Infantry Monument - Granite with shaft cut to point at top; Base, two feet, eight inches by two feet, eight inches; Height, seven feet.

8th Vermont Volunteers Monument - Granite with shaft cut to a point at the top; Base, two feet, three inches by two feet, three inches; Height, eight feet, erected by Herbert E. Hill on September 19, 1885.

6th Army Corps Monument - Granite, rough base faced with cut shaft supporting ball resting on top; Base, five feet by five feet; Height, 15 feet.

There are two monuments, seven feet, six inches in height, each made of an original cast iron seacoast artillery tube, secured by a concrete base. One is located on each side of the flagpole. There is no inscription on either monument.

A plaque, located near the cemetery entrance, is inscribed as follows:



THIRD BATTLE OF  
WINCHESTER  
NEAR HERE EARLY, FACING EAST  
TOOK HIS LAST POSITION ON SEPTEMBER  
19, 1864, ABOUT SUNDOWN HE  
WAS ATTACKED AND DRIVEN FROM  
IT, RETREATING SOUTH. PRESIDENTS  
RUTHERFORD B. HAYES AND WILLIAM  
MCKINLEY SERVED IN THIS ENGAGE-  
MENT ON THE UNION SIDE

### Civil War Activity in Area

Six major battles occurred in the Winchester area during the Civil War. The First Battle of Kernstown took place on March 23, 1862, about three miles south of Winchester. When Confederate Major General Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson learned that Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, commanding the Union 5th Corps, had crossed the Potomac and was advancing on Winchester, he abandoned the town and retreated up the Shenandoah Valley. Banks occupied Winchester on March 12, 1862, and followed the retreating Confederates. The forces met at Fisher's Hill in a brisk fight on March 17 in which the Confederates were defeated and forced to continue their retreat up the Valley. The Federal division under Brigadier General James Shields, which was pursuing Jackson, followed on March 18 to Woodstock, where the infantry halted; the cavalry continued to Mount Jackson, where it learned that the Confederates had crossed the Shenandoah River. Shields started on his return to Winchester on March 19 and reported to General Banks upon his arrival that Jackson had left the Valley. Banks thereupon ordered his forces, except the division commanded by Shields, east of the Blue Ridge and, on March 22, departed for Washington. Colonel Turner Ashby, commanding Jackson's cavalry, had scouted Shields's return to Winchester and, on March 22, attacked the Federal outposts at Kernstown. General Shields moved out immediately with reinforcements and forced Ashby to retire. Shields was wounded during this fight and turned over his command to Colonel Nathan Kimball. The fighting resumed on the morning of the 23rd east of the Valley Turnpike (Route 11) at Kernstown with Colonel Kimball commanding; Colonel E. B. Tyler's brigade was held in reserve. General Jackson reached Kernstown at about 2 p.m. after a forced march and pressed the attack against Shields. Soon after his arrival, Jackson shifted the attack from the east to the west and attempted to turn Shields's right flank, leaving Ashby with his 290 troopers and three guns to continue the fight east of the highway. The forces met on Sandy Ridge just west of Kernstown. Shields had left Colonel Sullivan's brigade to hold Ashby and now called up Colonel Tyler, who had been in reserve. The Federal artillery was posted on Pritchard's Hill, from which point they fired on the Confederates advancing along Sandy Ridge. The fighting continued until dark, when the outnumbered Confederates, their ammunition depleted, were forced to retreat. Confederate losses at Kernstown were 718 from a force of 3,000 infantry, 290 cavalry, and 27 guns; Federal losses were 590 from a force of 6,000 infantry, 750 cavalry, and 24 guns.

The First Battle of Winchester took place on May 25, 1862. General "Stonewall" Jackson had struck at Front Royal in a surprise attack on May 23, 1862, routing and capturing most of the 1,000 Federal troops stationed there. Colonel John B. Gordon, commanding the 3rd brigade under Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, insisted that it was an attack in force by Jackson's force of 17,000 men and urged Banks to retire to his base at Winchester. Banks refused to be

convinced of his danger and delayed his movement to Winchester until May 24. Jackson had moved out on the Front Royal road to Winchester planning to cut off Banks's move in that direction; ordering Major General Richard S. Ewell to continue on the Front Royal road, Jackson moved west toward the Valley Pike with Colonel Turner Ashby's cavalry in advance. Striking the Pike near Middletown, the Confederates found the road crowded with Banks's trains moving toward Winchester and attacked immediately. In a short time, the road was clogged with burning wagons and dead horses; the cavalry escort fled to the west pursued by those of Ashby's cavalry who had not stopped to loot the captured wagons. The Federal column was thrown into confusion by the attack, some of the troops retreating toward Strasburg, while others continued toward Winchester with the Confederates in pursuit. At about 2 a.m. on May 25, the Federal troops reached Winchester, exhausted after the running fight. Jackson had been compelled to allow his exhausted troops two hours of much needed rest and, at 5 a.m., ordered an advance. As his batteries opened, he heard the sound of firing in the east and knew that Ewell was pressing forward in that direction. Federal resistance was stubborn and it was not until three hours later that Gordon's right flank was rolled up by an attack by General Dick Taylor's brigade. General Isaac R. Trimble flanked Donnelly's position at about the same time and the Federal troops retreated through Winchester and out along the Martinsburg Pike, continuing their retreat to the Potomac, crossing to safety at Williamsport. Jackson's efforts were rewarded by capture of valuable supplies at Winchester and at Martinsburg, including a great store of much needed medical supplies. During the action on May 23, 24, and 25, Banks lost 3,000 men, most of whom were captured; Jackson lost 400 men.

The Second Battle of Winchester occurred on June 13, 14, and 15, 1863. On June 13, Federal patrols reported the Confederates advancing in force along the Front Royal Road toward Winchester. Major General Robert A. Milroy signaled Colonel Andrew T. McReynolds, stationed in Berryville with 1,800 men, to abandon that town and retreat toward Winchester. Major General Richard S. Ewell had sent Brigadier General Robert E. Rodes to Berryville to capture the troops there, but McReynolds reached Winchester safely and was posted in Star Fort. The Union division wagon guard at Bunker Hill commanded by Major William T. Morris fought off Jenkins's cavalry, which had accompanied Rodes on his move to Berryville, and returned with some loss to Winchester.



There was some street fighting in Winchester, with skirmishing east of town on the 13th and continuing on the 14th. On June 14, Milroy ordered Colonel Joseph Warren Kiefer to occupy West Fort, which was an uncompleted strong point about a mile west of Fort Milroy located just northwest of Winchester. Ewell had sent Brigadier General Jubal A. Early with his division to a position near Little North Mountain, this movement being unobserved by the Federals. Their attention was centered on Brigadier General John B. Gordon with his Georgia troops and some guns on Bowers Hill, south of Fort Milroy. At 4 p.m. on the 14th, Early opened with 20 guns on West Fort and, under this artillery cover, Hays's brigade attacked and drove the Federals from West Fort to Fort Milroy and Star Fort. Without help from Major General Joseph Hooker, Milroy knew that he was fighting a losing battle and prepared to retreat. During the night of the 14th, Milroy ordered his guns spiked and, abandoning his wagons, led his troops at 1 a.m. on the 15th along the Martinsburg Pike. Ewell anticipated such movement and ordered Major General

Edward Johnson with his division to march east of Winchester to intercept the move toward Martinsburg. Johnson marched through the night and reached the bridge across the railroad near Stephenson, as Milroy approached from Winchester, three miles distant. Johnson's attack was unexpected in the dark but the retreating Federal troops put up a stiff resistance and casualties were suffered on both sides. Many prisoners were taken by the Confederates. The Federal losses from June 12 to and including June 15 were 95 killed, 373 wounded, and 5,039 missing and captured.

On July 24, 1864, a second battle at Kernstown took place between the armies of Major General Jubal A. Early and Brigadier General George Crook. Crook commanded the Army of West Virginia later to be known as the 8th Corps of Major General Philip H. Sheridan's army. Early fell back to Strasburg and, on July 22, started down the Valley Pike looking for Crook. Crook had taken position behind Hoge Run, the anchor of his line being the fine artillery position on the south end of Pritchard's Hill. Early attacked at Kernstown and was victorious. His victory deprived General Ulysses S. Grant of two infantry corps and two divisions of cavalry for the entire fall of 1864.

The Third Battle of Winchester, also known as the Battle of the Opequon, took place on September 19, 1864. Major General Jubal A. Early was in the vicinity of Bunker Hill, where he had gone with Major General Robert E. Rodes, Major General John B. Gordon and Major General John C. Breckenridge to drive Colonel William W. Averell back toward Charles Town, leaving Major General Stephen D. Ramseur to guard Winchester. When Major General Philip H. Sheridan learned of this division of Early's forces, he ordered an immediate advance against Ramseur at Winchester, planning to defeat him before Early could rejoin him. Ramseur, outnumbered as he was, resisted stoutly the Federal advance. When Early, from his position on the Martinsburg Pike, heard firing from Ramseur's position, he hurried with the divisions of Rodes and Gordon to his assistance, joining Ramseur at about 11 a.m. Rodes formed on Ramseur's left (Rodes was killed while forming his line) and Gordon's division formed the left flank until Breckenridge joined at about 2 p.m. At noon, Sheridan had ordered the 8th Corps under Brigadier General George Crook up from reserve to extend the Federal right. At 3 p.m., Crook struck the Confederate left flank at almost the same time the 1st Cavalry Division under General Wesley Merritt rode against the Confederate left. The line broke and Early retreated to earthworks at Winchester. At 5 p.m., continued Federal pressure broke this line and Early retreated through Winchester and up the Valley Pike. The Confederate losses were about 4,000 from a force of 11,000; Sheridan lost 5,665 from a force of 42,000. This Federal victory, along with those on September 22 and October 19, 1864, near Winchester, broke Confederate control of that town and the Shenandoah Valley, the Federal troops remaining in that area during the remaining months of the war. This battle was fought on the site of the present national cemetery.

The sixth battle that occurred in the Winchester area was the Battle of Cedar Creek on October 19, 1864. Despite the disabling reverses suffered at Winchester on September 19 and at Fisher's Hill on September 22, Lt. General Early, commanding the Second Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia, knew that he must still endeavor to prevent the victorious Major General Philip H. Sheridan from returning detachments of his force to General Ulysses S. Grant, opposing General Robert E. Lee at Petersburg in eastern Virginia. He knew that to accomplish this task, he would have to mount another offensive. Therefore, when Sheridan withdrew northward from Harrisonburg, Early followed. The 2nd Corps reached Fisher's Hill on October 13 and discovered the Federals encamped upon the slopes north of Cedar Creek, encircling the stately

mansion Belle Grove, just south of Middletown, some 20 miles from Winchester. Reconnaissance convinced Early at first that his position was too strong for his weakened army to attack. Early had suffered heavy casualties among his officers and his divisions were critically short in this respect. In numbers, the three corps of Sheridan was greatly superior to Early's five divisions. With these circumstances in mind, Early held his ground at Fisher's Hill, hoping the Federals would attack him or withdraw to the north. After four days, the provisions of the 2nd Corps were nearly exhausted and Sheridan was still at Cedar Creek. Early, an ardent understudy to Stonewall Jackson, determined to attack. Sheridan was believed to have had his headquarters at Belle Grove.

By the time the sun was up on October 19, the Confederates were successfully advancing in all parts of the field. Early had attained the surprise necessary to catapult an army of inferior numbers to a position of advantage and near victory over an army more than twice its size in numbers. Between sun-up and 10 a.m., his men drove Sheridan's three corps from their respective camps and from their rallying position west of Middletown. The Confederates had captured 1,300 prisoners and 18 guns, but Sheridan was not among the captured. He had not even been on the field but had spent the night of October 18 in Winchester after returning from a trip to Washington. He arrived on the field in the early afternoon and helped to reform and steady his badly shaken ranks. Around 4:30 p.m., Sheridan had ably reorganized his beaten army and set it in motion against Early. The sheer weight of numbers thrown against the Confederates in positions more easily taken than susceptible of holding soon broke their lines and put the men in head-long fight for the opposite bank of Cedar Creek and the heights of Fisher's Hill south of Strasburg. Sheridan recovered his 18 guns and some 20 Confederate guns. Many Federal prisoners escaped and many wagons were retaken by the Federals. Early's victory of the morning was Early's defeat and disgrace of the evening. Southern clamor against him soon resulted in his replacement. Confederate control of Winchester and the Shenandoah Valley was broken. Federal troops remained in the area during the remaining months of the war.