



"Sketch of Engagement at Opequon Bridge and Smithfield," by Union cartographer Jedediah Hotchkiss. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.



The Rutherford House in Charles Town, where Sheridan and Grant met on September 16, 1864.

A CONTESTED COUNTY

A TRAVEL GUIDE
of the 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign in Jefferson County

STOP 7—ENGAGEMENT AT KEARNEYSVILLE

Roughly one mile south, three divisions of Confederate infantry massed under the command of General John C. Breckenridge and General Gabriel C. Wharton. Their strength was not fully known to the advancing Federal cavalry under Torbert. The Federal cavalry had with it several artillery pieces which they began to use to great effect. A sharp fight ensued with the Rebel line beginning to break. Yet with the arrival of reinforcements at the Confederate rear, the Union troops quickly began to be overwhelmed. After learning from captured Confederates of the strength of Confederate forces, Torbert ordered Merritt and Wilson to withdraw back to the main body of the Union Army near Halltown.

FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Turn right out of the parking lot onto WV 480 (Leetown Road) and travel approximately 7 miles, crossing 51 into the Middleway Historic District. Turn left onto Old Middleway Road and take a right onto East Street. There is a parking lot on your left by the Masonic lodge and historic cemetery. 105 East Street.

STOP 8—ENGAGEMENT AT THE OPEQUON

Fighting resumed on August 28th, as Federal cavalry drove Confederate forces around Leetown back to Smithfield (now called Middleway), where a covered bridge offered one of the few all-weather crossings over Opequon Creek. Facing an entire Federal cavalry division, the Confederate troops retreated across the Opequon. At this spot, Cavalry divisions under General Wesley Merritt confronted Confederate General Lunsford Lomax's cavalry and horse artillery, while General George A. Custer's division flanked the Confederates sending them in retreat back across the Opequon Creek.

FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Turn left out of the parking lot onto East Street. Turn right onto Grace Street, go approximately .5 mile. Turn right onto Bunker Hill Road and go approximately .5 mile until you reach a dead end at the ruins of the Opequon Stone Bridge.

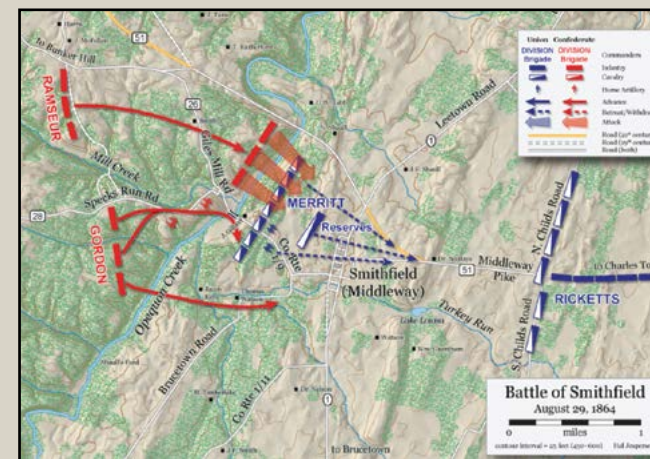
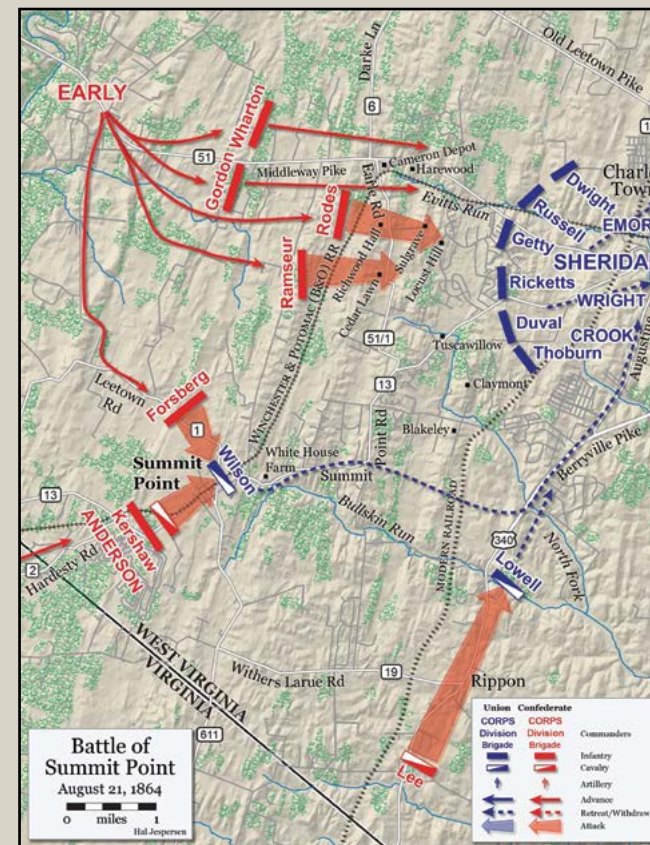
STOP 9—THE BATTLE RESUMES

On the morning of the 29th, Custer's First Brigade was sent on a reconnaissance toward Bunker Hill to locate the Confederates. As he headed toward Bunker Hill, Custer encountered General Stephen Ramseur's and General John Gordon's infantry divisions. These divisions immediately moved against Custer with orders from Early to chase the Federals across the Opequon. Around 11:30 a.m. the Confederates began an artillery bombardment from batteries on the heights across the Opequon. The attack developed with Ramseur's Division crossing the creek around the bridge and directly west of Smithfield. As Ramseur's leftmost brigade began to swing around Merritt's right flank, Merritt realized he was in danger of being trapped and began a withdrawal to the east. The Federals withdrew toward Charles Town. The Confederates, having accomplished their aim to drive the Federal forces from the Opequon Crossing, halted their attack and retired to Bunker Hill.

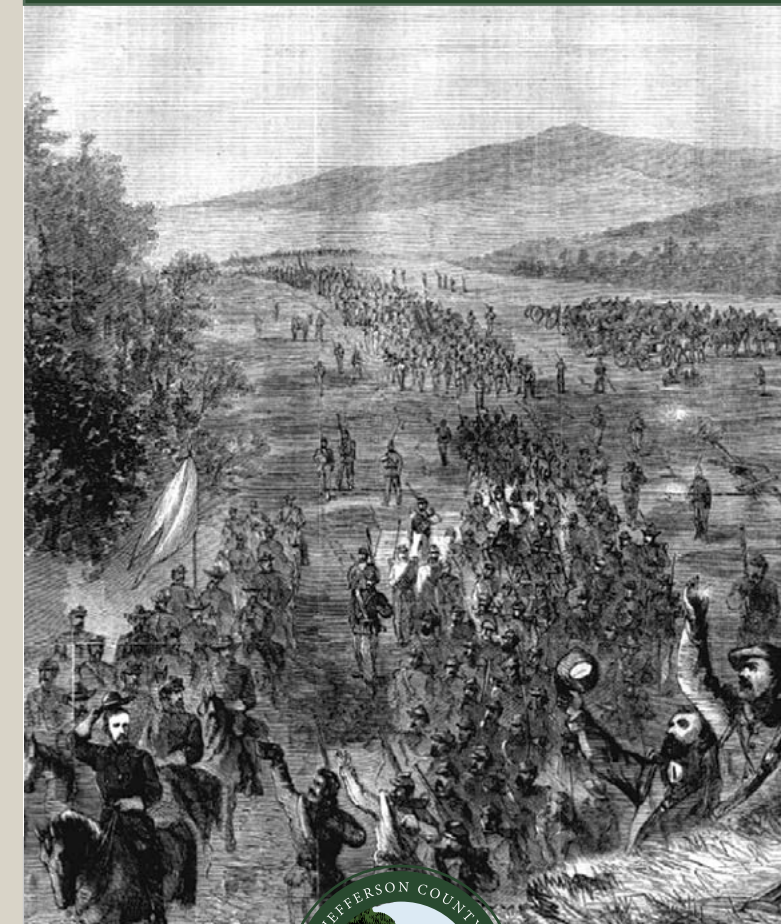
FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Return south on Bunker Hill Road toward Grace Street. Turn left on Leetown Road/Queen Street. Turn right at Old Middleway Road. Merge onto WV-51 and go 6.5 miles into downtown Charles Town. The Carriage House Inn will be on your right. Street parking is available. 417 East Washington Street.

STOP 10—NEW ORDERS

With Winchester, Virginia his eventual goal, Sheridan began to move parallel to the Confederate Army, which at that time spread from Winchester to Martinsburg. On September 3rd-4th, he attacked the Confederates at Berryville, Virginia. With his much larger force, Sheridan was able to push them back to their defenses in Winchester. Encouraged by the news of Sherman's capture of Atlanta on September 2nd and Kershaw's infantry division leaving the Valley to join Lee in Petersburg, Grant decided it was time for more aggressive action. On September 16th, he met Sheridan in Charles Town, WV at the Rutherford house to develop a new strategy for dealing with the Confederate presence in the Shenandoah Valley. It became known as "The Burning." Not only did Sheridan attack Jubal Early's forces relentlessly, he systematically destroyed the Valley's farms and supply sources. Grant told Sheridan that the Valley should be laid bare so that "A crow must carry provisions to fly over." Sheridan ordered an advance into Virginia at dawn on September 19th, and the armies clashed at the Third Battle of Winchester. Sheridan's caution up until this point made Early underestimate him as a commander—to his detriment. Early was ultimately defeated at the Battle of Cedar Creek on October 19th, and the heart of the Confederacy, its breadbasket, was lost to the South for the remainder of the war.



Maps courtesy of the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board. Cover image: "Sheridan's army on the march up the Shenandoah Valley," published in Harper's Weekly, October 22, 1864.





“Shenandoah Valley, 1864” by Alfred Waud, depicting “The Burning.” LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Robert E. Lee’s army, though outnumbered by Union forces, seemed impossible to crush. When George Meade failed to intercept Lee after his defeat at Gettysburg in 1863, President Lincoln looked to the Western Theater for new leadership. General Ulysses S. Grant, who had successfully won control of the Mississippi River by the summer of 1863, was given command of all Union armies on March 2, 1864. Knowing the Confederacy’s manpower was limited, Grant coordinated attacks on all fronts. He also called for scorched earth tactics in key areas to destroy the South’s infrastructure and economic base. William Tecumseh Sherman was given control of most of the western armies (to devastating effect in Georgia) while Grant faced Lee with the Army of the Potomac in central Virginia in the bloody Overland Campaign.

The South had maintained control of the Shenandoah Valley since Stonewall Jackson’s successful 1862 Valley Campaign. In the summer of 1864, General Jubal A. Early used its strategic location to probe Union territories, threatening the safety of the capital, in an effort to draw Union forces north, away from Lee in Petersburg. Following a resounding victory at Lynchburg in June, Early pushed into Maryland and Pennsylvania, where his subordinate, Brigadier General John McCausland, burned Chambersburg. The summer had been one of great success for Jubal Early. After assuming command of the Army of the Valley, Early led a series of major victories at Monocacy, Cool Spring, and Kernstown, along with a daring raid which halted just outside of Washington, D.C. at Fort Stevens. By August 1864, Early felt very confident that any attempt by Union forces to check his movements in the area would be futile.

With Abraham Lincoln’s re-election in 1864 far from certain, it became increasingly important for Grant to avoid major tactical losses while also subduing the constant threats on the capital. Frustrated by the ineffective leadership of Franz Sigel and then David Hunter in the Valley, Grant appointed Philip Sheridan to command a consolidated Federal force called the Army of the Shenandoah, whose tasks were to defeat Early, close off his northern invasion route, then lay waste to the Shenandoah Valley, denying the Confederacy a rich source of provisions. Sheridan moved cautiously in Jefferson County through August, lulling Early into a false sense of security, before plunging into Virginia in September. The ultimately successful campaign came to a close at the Battle of Cedar Creek on October 19th and left the Virginia Valley in ruins.

This tour follows the Valley Campaign actions in Jefferson County from Sheridan’s arrival at Harpers Ferry on August 7, 1864 to his meeting with Grant in Charles Town on September 16th.



“The war in Upper Virginia—Gen. Sheridan’s headquarters at Harpers Ferry,” drawn by James Taylor, printed in Frank Leslie’s *Illustrated Newspaper*, Sept. 3, 1864.



“Battle of Summit Point, Sunday, August 21st, between Gen. Wilson’s cavalry and the Rebels,” by J. E. Taylor for Frank Leslie’s *Illustrated Newspaper*, Sept. 17, 1864.



“Sketch of Actions near Kearneysville and Shepherdstown, VA” by Union cartographer Jedediah Hotchkiss. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.



TOUR STARTING POINT: The Lockwood House, located in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park at 359 Fillmore Street.

STOP 1—SHERIDAN’S HQ

When Sheridan arrived here on August 7, 1864, he met immediately with his commanders to determine his objectives for the upcoming campaign. Sheridan quickly identified Winchester, Virginia as his objective though he knew he also had to be careful of leaving his supply lines vulnerable. Early had positioned his army along the Old Valley Pike after a vigorous campaign which had culminated with fighting at Kernstown, Virginia. Though Sheridan would move his headquarters as the army moved to various points in the county, Harpers Ferry remained his base of operation for the entirety of his time in Jefferson County.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: From Harpers Ferry NHP, head south on 340 toward Charles Town. In approximately 5 miles, turn right onto US 340 S/ WV 9 ramp toward Berryville. Drive approximately 7 miles to St. John’s Church in Rippon. The church will be on the left, and there is a pull-off in front. 2518 Berryville Pike.

STOP 2—RIPON STORE

Ripon Store (now just called Rippon) was a key crossroads on the Charles Town–Berryville Turnpike. Sheridan’s Cavalry moved through here on their way to a surprise engagement at Guard Hill near Front Royal about a week after taking command of the army in the first battle of the Valley Campaign. This little village played a role in several campaigns and engagements. Later on August 21, 1864, during the opening stages of the Battle of Summit Point, Confederate General Fitzhugh Lee pushed Federal cavalry under Charles Lowell back to Charles Town through Ripon Store. The historic “Ripon Lodge Farm” across 340 was present at the time of this fighting.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: From St. John’s Church, turn left onto US 340 S. In 20 yards, turn right onto Withers Larue Road. Continue approximately 3 miles to Leetown Road. Turn right onto Leetown Road. In 1.5 miles, head left onto Thomson Street, which ends at Summit Point Road in about .4 miles. Go straight across the road to the Railside Market. 2871 Summit Point Road.

STOP 3—CONFEDERATE ADVANCE

While Fitzhugh Lee followed the Federals back toward Charles Town, Confederate General Joseph Kershaw led infantry and cavalry from Winchester, attacking General James Wilson’s cavalry here in the first stages of the Battle of Summit Point. A pitched fight took place here for hours with the Federal troopers ultimately retiring to their lines outside Charles Town. Confederate General Richard Anderson, rather than joining the continued assault, opted to go into camp, a decision that altered the broader conflict, perhaps saving the area a bloody fight.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Turn left onto Summit Point Road, heading east. In 3 miles, turn left onto Earle Road. Follow Earle Road for 2.5 miles to Middleway Pike (WV 51) and turn right. In 3 miles turn right at the Old Charlestown Train Depot. 1102 Middleway Pike. **NOTE:** The route you are traveling on Earle Road is where the main Confederate assault took place at the Battle of Summit Point.

STOP 4—EARLY IS DOWN UPON US LIKE MAD!

As the fighting was coming to an end at Summit Point on August 21, 1864, Confederate General Jubal A. Early felt as though his plan was coming to fruition. Rebel forces had pushed the Federal army back at two points and his large force of infantry had started to deploy along Earle Road and Middleway Pike. They had successfully fought back Federal pickets along the ridgelines encompassing old Washington family estates such as Cedar Lawn, Richwood Hall, Harewood and Locust Hill, and now waited for Anderson and Kershaw to arrive from Summit Point for a final large assault on Philip Sheridan’s entrenched forces located about two miles outside of Charles Town. Anderson and Kershaw never arrived, halting the attack and in doing so, ended the Battle of Summit Point. That night, Sheridan withdrew his forces through Charles Town to Halltown.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Turn right out of the train depot parking lot onto Middleway Pike and head toward Charles Town. The road continues to Washington Street, then to US 340. Drive 6 miles and turn right onto Millville Road. Pull into a small parking lot on your left. 2182 Millville Road.

STOP 5—PROBING THE LINE

From this position, near Halltown, Sheridan redeployed his lines in a much stronger position, with his line stretching from the Shenandoah River to the Potomac. Sheridan, content with his defenses, probed Early’s position to determine what elements of the Confederate army were to his front. Several skirmishes took place in and around these fields with limited casualties. Yet as Sheridan garnered intelligence, he began to formulate his plan, desperate to prevent another Confederate invasion into Union territory. To protect the valuable Pack Horse Ford near Shepherdstown, he dispatched cavalry under General Wesley Merritt to guard the crossing into Maryland.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Turn right out of the parking lot and turn left onto US 340 S. In 1 mile turn right onto WV-230 toward Shepherdstown. Drive roughly 7 miles. WV-230 (Shepherdstown Pike) merges onto Flowing Springs Road. Turn left on Gardners Lane. In 1.3 miles continue straight onto Morgan Grove Road for another 1.5 miles. Morgan’s Grove Park will be on your left. Walk to the Pavilion near an old spring house, which is all that remains of Fountain Rock, the home of Alexander Boteler, Confederate Congressman. The home was burned earlier that summer on July 19th under General David Hunter’s orders.

STOP 6—OPERATIONS IN THE BACK COUNTRY

As Sheridan ordered his cavalry north to Shepherdstown on August 25th, Early simultaneously ordered infantry under the command of Joseph B. Kershaw to move toward Shepherdstown, screening the enemy cavalry. Four miles southwest of this spot, a surprise encounter of the two forces began a heated engagement. Simultaneously, forces began to mass at Kearneysville for an unexpected engagement. Merritt and fellow general George A. Custer were able to drive back the Confederate advance, but at Kearneysville, a larger rebel force had formed for battle. Chief Cavalry General Alfred Torbert deployed General James Wilson in support of Merritt and Custer for an assault on the Confederate infantry located at Kearneysville.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Leaving Morgan’s Grove Park, turn left on WV-480 (Kearneysville Pike). Go 5 miles to Kearneysville, turning right into the parking lot just before the Rt. 9 bridge overpass. Looking southeast, you are viewing the fields where Confederate defenses took position against advancing Federal Cavalry.