

Waynesboro AT WAR

Battlefield Driving Tour

The Battle of Waynesboro

Campaign Timeline

Sheridan's Road to Petersburg

October 19, 1864

Union Gen. Philip H. Sheridan defeats Confederate Gen. Jubal A. Early at Cedar Creek.

mid-November 1864

Early's weakened cavalry is defeated in skirmishes at Newtown and Ninevah.

November 22, 1864

Union cavalry repulsed in a small action at Rude's Hill.

December 21, 1864

Confederates defeat Federals in an action at Lacey Spring, ending active operations for the winter season.

February 27, 1865

Sheridan's force leaves Winchester, heading south.

March 1, 1865

Federals defeat Confederate cavalry at Mt. Crawford. Early abandons Staunton and withdraws east to Fishersville and Waynesboro.

March 2, 1865

Sheridan defeats Early at the **Battle of Waynesboro**, destroying Early's army.

March 26, 1865

Sheridan joins forces with the Army of the Potomac near Petersburg for the opening of the Appomattox Campaign.

March 30, 1865

Robert E. Lee writes to Early, relieving him of command.

April 9, 1865

Robert E. Lee surrenders the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox.

1864-1865: Jubal Early's Last Stand

The dramatic Union victory at the Battle of Cedar Creek on October 19, 1864, had effectively ended Confederate control in the Valley. Confederate Gen. Jubal A. Early "occasionally came up to the front and barked, but there was no more bite in him," as one Yankee put it. Early attempted a last offensive in mid-November 1864, but his weakened cavalry was defeated by Union Gen. Philip H. Sheridan's cavalry at Newtown (Stephens City) and Ninevah, forcing Early to withdraw. The Union cavalry now so overpowered his own that Early could no longer maneuver offensively. A Union reconnaissance was repulsed at Rude's Hill on November 22, and a second Union cavalry raid was turned back at Lacey Spring on December 21, ending active operations for the winter season. The winter was disastrous for the Confederate army, which was no longer able to sustain itself on the produce of the Valley, which had been devastated by the destruction of "The Burning." Rebel cavalry and infantry were returned to Lee's army at Petersburg or dispersed to feed and forage for themselves.

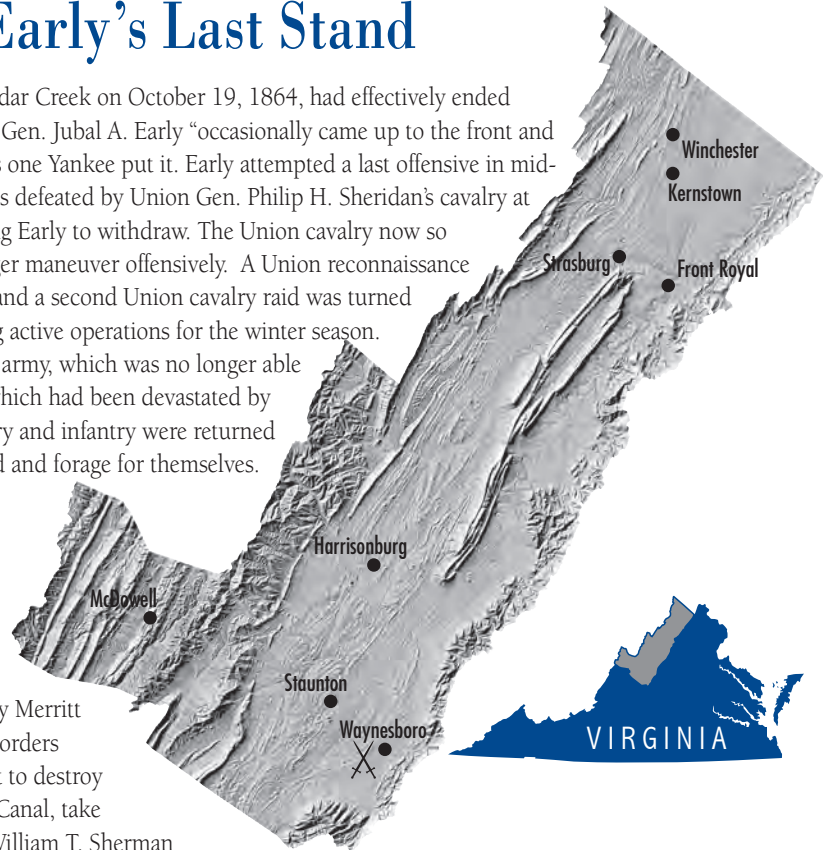
Prelude to Battle

As the winter waned and spring approached, the Federals began to move. On February 27, 1865, Sheridan's force of some 10,000 cavalry under the immediate command of Gen. Wesley Merritt left Winchester, heading south. Sheridan had orders from Union commander Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to destroy the Virginia Central Railroad and James River Canal, take Lynchburg, and then either join Union Gen. William T. Sherman (then in the Carolinas) or return to Winchester. On March 1, a small force of Confederate cavalry under Gen. Thomas Rosser unsuccessfully attempted to delay the Federals at Mt. Crawford, 17 miles north of Staunton. Receiving news of the defeat, Early abandoned Staunton and withdrew east to Fishersville and Waynesboro.

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Riding through sleet on March 2, 1865, Union cavalry divisions under Gen. George A. Custer and Gen. Thomas Devin advanced east from Staunton, arriving near Waynesboro in the early afternoon. There, they found Early's small army, consisting of a remnant of Gen. Gabriel C. Wharton's division and some artillery units. Early presented a brave front, although the South River was to his rear, but after a brief stand-off a Federal attack rolled up Early's left flank – exploiting a gap between the Confederate line and the South River – and scattered his small force. In a few hours, the war for the Shenandoah Valley was over. Early's army fled before the Union cavalry, scattering up the mountainside. More than 1,500 Confederates surrendered.

Early escaped with a few of his aides, riding away from his last battle with no forces left to contest Union control of the Shenandoah Valley. With the Confederate threat in the Valley eliminated, Sheridan crossed the Blue Ridge to Charlottesville and then raided south, destroying the James River Canal locks near Goochland Court House. He then led his cavalry overland to Petersburg to participate in the final campaign of the war in Virginia. On April 9, 1865, after the collapse of the Petersburg lines and a harried retreat, General Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse.



The Battle of Waynesboro

Following the Tour ~ NOTE: The tour takes approximately 30 minutes. That does not include extra time spent visiting sites such as the Plumb House and the Waynesboro Heritage Museum.

Tour Starting Point ~ The tour starts at the Plumb House Museum (1012 West Main Street, Waynesboro).

The museum is open Thursday-Saturday, 10 am-4pm. If the museum is open during your tour, you can view their exhibit on the battle before starting out. The best place to park is behind the museum on Sycamore Street. (Directions to museum: from W. Main Street [Rt. 250], turn south on Locust Ave. In approximately 75 yards, turn right onto Sycamore Street. After proceeding approximately 75 yards west on Sycamore Street, park alongside the road to the right and follow the signs into the museum.) If the museum is not open during your tour, you can start your tour where you park.

Stop 1 ~ Plumb House (1012 W. Main St.)

The Plumb House, built between 1802 and 1804, is the oldest frame dwelling located in Waynesboro. Five generations of the Plumb family occupied the home until 1993. It is located near where much of the action took place between the Confederate and Union armies during the Battle of Waynesboro. The City of Waynesboro purchased the property in 1994.

Directions to Stop #2: Turn around and head back the way you came, now driving southeast on Sycamore Street. In about 170 yards (after you go through the stop sign), the road will take a 90-degree turn to the right and then become Pine Avenue. Continue past the intersection with W. 11th Street and park on the side of the road to the right. Walk up into the parking lot of the Waynesboro Public School Administrative offices (301 W. Pine Street).

Stop 2 ~ Confederate Line (301 W. Pine St.)

You are standing on the Confederate defensive line. Early positioned his defenses along a northeast/southwest line that coincided approximately with present-day Pine Avenue. Early's right stretched beyond Main Street to the north across the railroad tracks (the Virginia Central Railroad in 1865), with at least one piece of artillery on the high ground between present day Florence Avenue and Port Republic Road. He had positioned five pieces of his artillery facing west on the high ground running along Pine Avenue. His left flank terminated somewhere between present day 14th Street and 15th Street, approximately a quarter mile from the banks of the South River lying to the southwest. This area, known today as Forest Hill, was known as Gallaher's Woods in 1865. Several of the massive oaks still standing today would have witnessed the battle 150 years ago.

Directions to Stop #3: Continue south on Pine Avenue. After 2 ½ blocks, turn right onto 14th Street. After 2 short blocks, turn left onto Locust Avenue. Continue south and then pull over to the right just before reaching the next intersection of 15th Street and Locust Ave. (Please be aware that this is a residential neighborhood.)

"The enemy's left flank, instead of resting on South River, was thrown well forward, leaving a short gap between his left and the river."

— Union Gen. George A. Custer

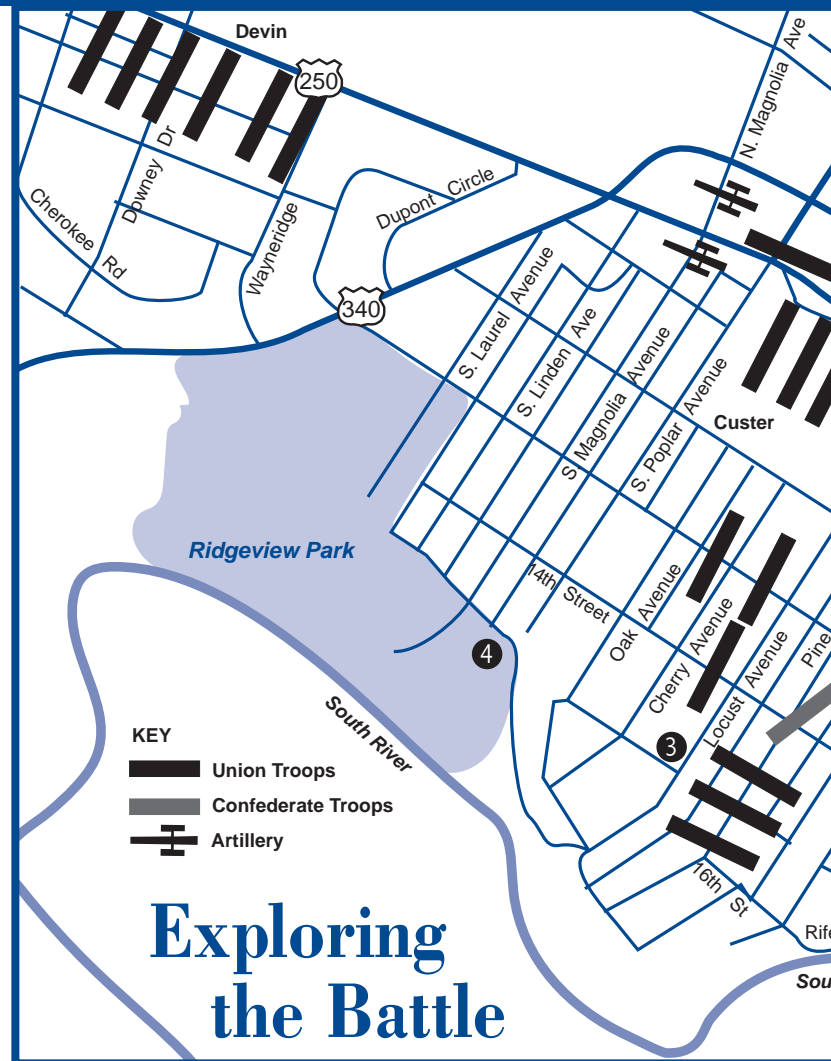
Stop 3 ~ Left End of Confederate Line (Intersection of 15th St. and Locust Ave.)

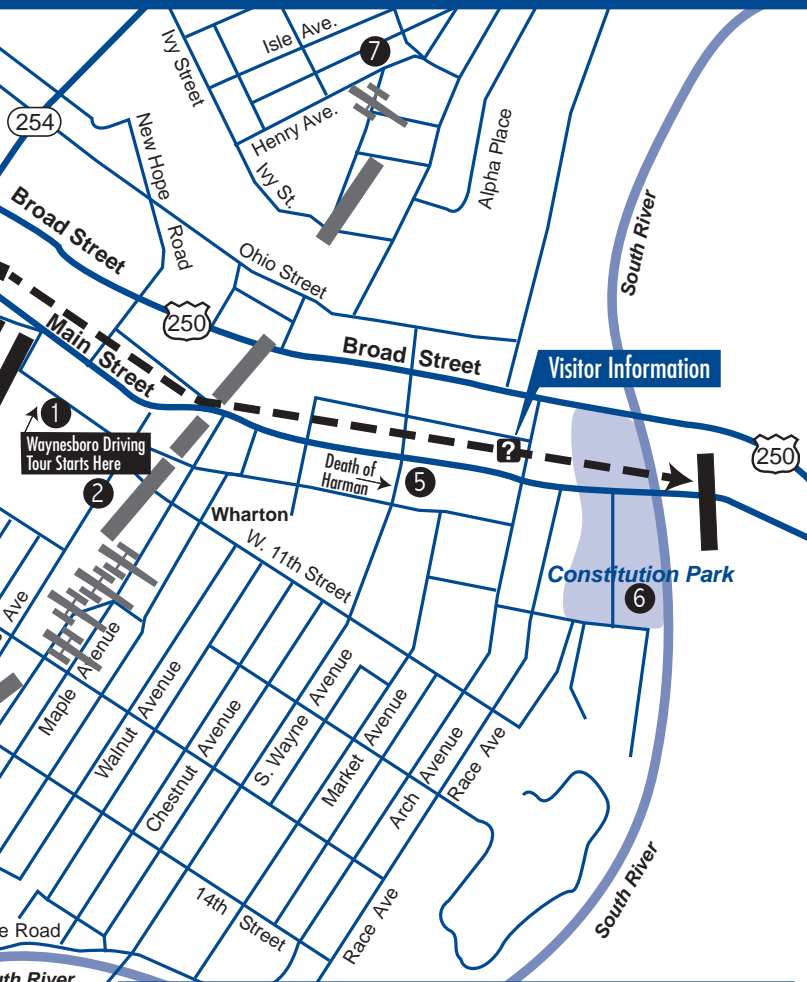
This is the approximate location where Early's left flank ended. (The area was mostly wooded in 1865.) This left an opening between this spot and the South River—one which Union General George Armstrong Custer, who was in effective command of Federal forces on the field, would exploit masterfully.

Directions to Stop #4: Continue south on Locust Ave. for one more block, then turn right onto Oak Avenue. (As you drive on Oak Avenue, you'll notice that you're on the heights where the Confederate left ended.) Continue on Oak Avenue for 3 blocks, then turn left onto 14th St. Continue on 14th St. for 3 blocks, then turn left onto S. Magnolia Ave. Continue for 1 block until you come to the entrance to Ridgeview Park. At the entrance, turn left onto the side road adjacent to the baseball field. (Do not go through the main park entrance, where you see the sign). Continue on the side road to the parking lot alongside the baseball field. Park in that lot.

"We started along that muddy road to make the last fight of the Shenandoah."

— Union Capt. Harlan Lloyd, 22nd New York Cavalry





Visitor Information ?

Brochures and information about Civil War sites, other sites, lodging, restaurant, and other information are available at:

Waynesboro Tourism

301 West Main Street, Waynesboro – 540-942-6512
 Open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm
www.visitwaynesboro.net

Downtown Staunton Visitor Center

35 South New Street, Staunton – 540-332-3971
 Open daily, 9am-6pm (April-October),
 9:30am-5:30pm (November-March)
www.visitstaunton.com

Stop 4 ~ Union Flanking Attack (Ridgeview Park)

The alley which today connects Magnolia Avenue to the end of Locust Avenue (and parallels the baseball fields) is closed for public traffic. It is the original roadbed of “the sunken lane” referred to in reports and diaries of the battle. In 1865 it connected to Greenville Road (present day U.S. Route 340/Rosser Avenue). According to one local, “Two boys, deserters from the vicinity . . . guided Custer, concealed by the woods on Early’s left flank . . . to a sunken lane leading from the Greenville road to the South River ford, and wholly unprotected by Early on his extreme left flank.” From this vantage point, the Union army scaled the bluffs above the alley and surprised the vulnerable Confederates resulting in what famed Confederate mapmaker Jedediah Hotchkiss would call “one of the most terrible panics and stampedes I have ever seen.”

Directions to Stop #5: Take the side road back the way you came, and turn right back onto S. Magnolia Ave. After 1 block, turn right onto 14th Street. Continue for 0.8 miles to S. Wayne Ave. Turn left onto S. Wayne Ave. Continue north for 0.4 miles to W. Main St. Turn right. Continue partway down the block and park in any available space on the right.

Stop 5 ~ Death of Harman/Battle Through Town (near 420 W. Main St.)

During the melee of the Confederate retreat through downtown Waynesboro, Colonel William H. Harman was surrounded by five Federals just west of here. There are conflicting reports as to what happened next. Several reports suggest that Harman refused to surrender and drew his sidearm, only to be gunned down and die in his hometown. Others claimed Harman attempted to surrender but was shot anyway by Union soldiers.

(While here, you can also visit the Waynesboro Heritage Museum at 420 West Main St. The museum is open from Tuesday-Saturday, 9am-5pm.)

Directions to Stop #6: Continue east on W. Main St. for 1 ½ blocks (approx. 0.2 miles) and then turn right (south) onto McElroy St. Pull into the parking lot of Constitution Park, near the shelter. Take the walking trail that curves around the shelter and heads south adjacent to the river. From the parking and shelter area, take the walking trail for approximately 160 yards until you see the monument just to the right.

Stop 6 ~ Harman Monument

William Harman was the brother of Stonewall Jackson’s quartermaster, John Harman, who survived the war. All in all, there were five Harman brothers who fought for the Confederacy. Colonel William Harman was the only confirmed Confederate casualty of the battle. This monument was placed by the J.E.B. Stuart Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, Staunton, VA in 1926. It has been moved twice

This concludes your tour. For information on other Civil War sites in the area, visit Waynesboro Tourism or the Downtown Staunton Visitor Center, or go to www.ShenandoahAtWar.org. (Tour description written by Richard Williams.)

“The troops gave way on the left, after making very slight resistance, and soon everything was in a state of confusion.”

– Confederate Gen. Jubal A. Early

Further Reading

For more about the battle, see *The Battle of Waynesboro* by Richard G. Williams, Jr. (History Press, 2014), which is available at the Waynesboro Heritage Museum and online. For a more detailed driving tour of Augusta County Civil War sites, see *Gibraltar of the Shenandoah: Civil War Sites and Stories of Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County Virginia* by Robert H. Moore II (The Donning Company Publishers, 2004), which is available through the Augusta County Historical Society and online. For additional Civil War history and historic sites in the Valley, go to www.ShenandoahAtWar.org.

Shenandoah AT WAR



VIRGINIA



Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District

The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District was created by Congress to protect and interpret the Valley's Civil War story. The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, the authorized management entity for the National Historic District, proudly shares this unique history with people around the world.

The National Historic District lies in northwest Virginia, within an easy drive of Richmond, Tidewater, and the DC metropolitan area.

Interstate 81 runs the length of the District, linking with I-66 in the north and I-64 in the south. From the east and west, the District is also served by US Routes 250 (Staunton), 33 (Harrisonburg), 55 (Strasburg), 50 and 7 (both in Winchester).



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



www.CivilWarTrails.org



www.ShenandoahAtWar.org



www.VirginiaCivilWar.org

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To sign up for our monthly "Shenandoah At War" e-newsletter, email us at info@svbf.net. For more information, call 540-740-4545.