

WINCHESTER NATIONAL CEMETERY



Third Battle of Winchester, September 19, 1864. Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, 1888.

Six Battles

Control of the Shenandoah Valley was essential for the Confederacy. Six major battles were fought in Winchester and nearby locations.

At the First Battle of Kernstown on March 23, 1862, Union Col. Nathan Kimball defeated Gen. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson. On May 25, 1862, Jackson won a decisive victory over Union Gen. Nathaniel Banks at the First Battle of Winchester. The Second Battle of Winchester, June 1863, was another Confederate victory.

Three more battles occurred here in 1864. On July 24, Confederate Gen. Jubal Early defeated Gen. George Crook at the Second Battle of Kernstown, and kept Crook from reinforcing Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Petersburg, Virginia. At the Third Battle of Winchester on September 19, Union Gen. Philip Sheridan defeated General Early. They met again on October 19 at the Battle of Cedar Creek. Sheridan rallied his troops and drove Confederates from the valley. It was the last major engagement in the area.

National Cemetery

Winchester National Cemetery was established in 1866 on the site of the Third Battle of Winchester. Soon after the federal government created the 5-acre cemetery, remains were moved here from the battlefields at Winchester, New Market, Front Royal, Snicker’s Gap, Harpers Ferry, Martinsburg, Romney, and other nearby places.

Though approximately half of the 4,440 remains buried here were unknown, when possible they were placed in sections designated for particular states.



The 1871 superintendent’s lodge before a second story was added, c. 1905. National Archives and Records Administration.

By law, the secretary of war appointed a “meritorious and trustworthy” superintendent to manage the cemetery. To qualify for the position, an individual must have been an army enlisted man disabled in service. Former private Philetus Sedgwick, 125th New York Infantry, was appointed the first superintendent on October 1, 1867. He served until his death in 1874.

Monuments

The cemetery contains fourteen monuments that honor men and regiments that fought in battles in and near Winchester.

The first monument was erected in 1866 to officers and soldiers of the 14th New Hampshire who died at the Third Battle of Winchester. Many more monuments were erected in the 1880s and 1890s, some on the anniversary of this battle, September 19.

A final wave of dedications occurred in the early 1900s. In addition to New Hampshire, regiments from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Vermont, and troops of the 6th Army Corps are memorialized.

A monument dedicated to the 8th Vermont Volunteer Infantry, led by Col. Stephen Thomas during the Third Battle of Winchester, was moved from the battlefield to the cemetery in 1896 at the request of the Vermont Quartermaster General’s Office. It sits among the graves of Vermont’s volunteer soldiers.



Monument to the 3rd Massachusetts Cavalry, c. 1888. Four of the fourteen monuments in the cemetery honor Massachusetts soldiers. The Third Massachusetts Cavalry in the War for the Union, 1903.