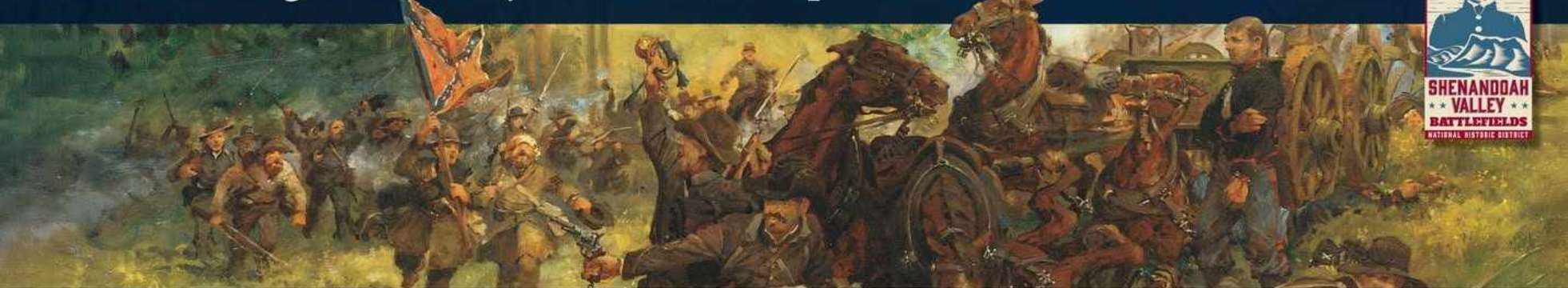


Harrisonburg, Cross Keys, and Port Republic Battlefields



"The musketry was heard in volleys, telling of fearful havoc, slaughter and bloodshed."

— Charles H. Webb, Special Correspondent, New York Times on the Battle of Cross Keys

Prelude to Battle

Following his narrow escape from the converging Federals at Strasburg on June 1, Confederate Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson continued to march his army hard southward up the Valley. Union Gen. John C. Fremont (15,000 men) followed in pursuit along the North Fork of the Shenandoah, west of Massanutten Mountain, while Gen. James Shields' division (3,500 men) marched up the South Fork through the Luray Valley, east of the mountain. In an attempt to keep these forces from uniting, Jackson ordered the burning of numerous bridges along both rivers. When he reached the end of Massanutten, where the mountain would no longer separate the Union columns, he decided to make a stand before they could unite against him.

Confederate Gen.
Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson

Union Gen.
John C. Fremont

Battle of Harrisonburg

June 6, 1862

When Jackson reached Harrisonburg at the end of Massanutten Mountain, he turned southeast towards Cross Keys and Port Republic. On June 6, the vanguard of Fremont's force reached Harrisonburg. Jackson's rear guard, led by General Turner Ashby, engaged Federal cavalry and captured Colonel Sir Percy Wyndham, an English soldier who commanded the 1st New Jersey Cavalry and had earlier boasted that he would "bag Ashby."

The 1st Maryland Infantry (CSA) and 58th Virginia Infantry set an ambush for the Federals, but about 6 p.m., Union forces – including the famed Pennsylvania Bucktails – appeared not in the road as expected, but in a concealed position near Ashby's force. When Ashby's horse was shot from under him, he rolled off the mount, regained his footing, and ordered his men to stop shooting and use the bayonet, shouting, "Charge, men! For God's sake charge!" A bullet pierced Ashby's side and passed through his chest, killing him instantly, while his men cleared the Federals from the wood line. Ashby's body was taken back to Port Republic to the Frank Kemper House, today's Port Republic Museum. The loss of the famed Ashby, "The Black Knight of the Confederacy," was deeply felt.

Battle of Cross Keys

June 8, 1862

Jackson saw Port Republic, a small hamlet southeast of Harrisonburg, as an ideal place to stand and fight. By controlling the only bridges that spanned the South Fork here, Jackson could prevent the Union columns from combining, enabling him to strike at each separately. As Fremont was closer, Jackson's plan was to attack and overwhelm him first, and then turn back to defeat Shields. While preparing to engage Fremont at Cross Keys early on the morning of June 8, however, Jackson was surprised and almost captured by a Union raiding party at Port Republic.

Shortly after, Fremont attacked Confederate Gen. Richard Ewell's division at Cross Keys. An early Union advance was repulsed as it stumbled into a Confederate ambush, which decimated the 8th New York. Gen. Isaac Trimble's Confederate brigade followed up their success by pressing the Union left and threatening its artillery supports. At this point Fremont's nerve gave way – despite promising progress by Gen. Robert Milroy on the Federal right – and he ordered a general withdrawal. Darkness soon ended the fighting, with the Confederates holding the field – and the Union columns still separated. Jackson now turned his attention back to Shields, whom he would attack the next day at Port Republic.

Battle of Port Republic

June 9, 1862

Having successfully held off Fremont, Jackson quickly turned his attention to Shields' smaller force. Leaving Ewell at Cross Keys to hold back Fremont, Jackson's plan was to concentrate the rest of his army against Shields and quickly crush him with overwhelming numbers.

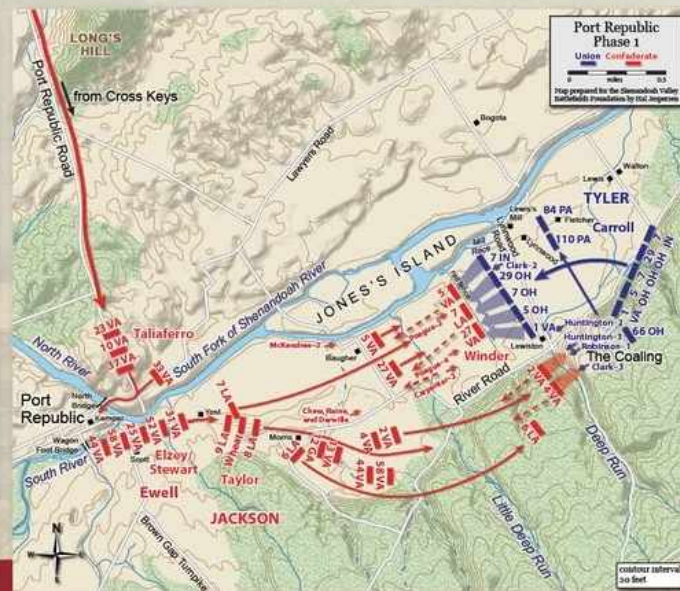
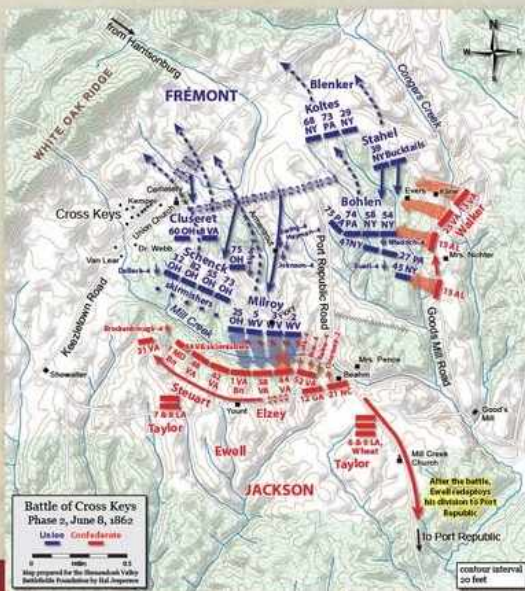
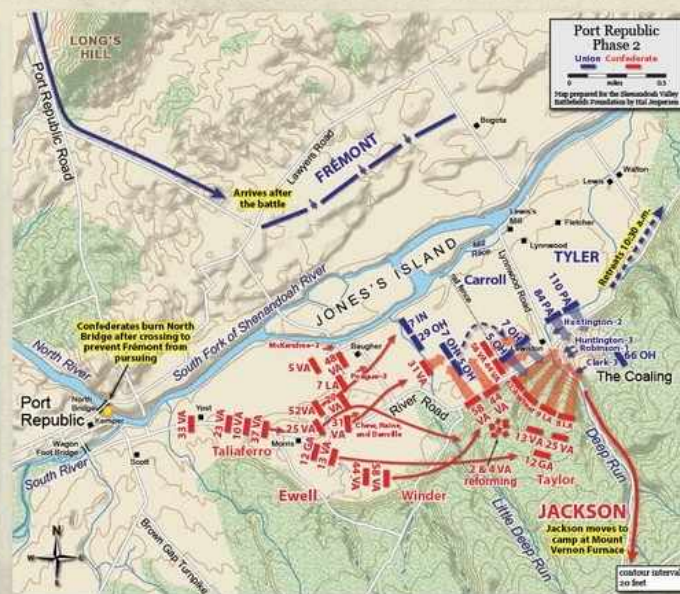
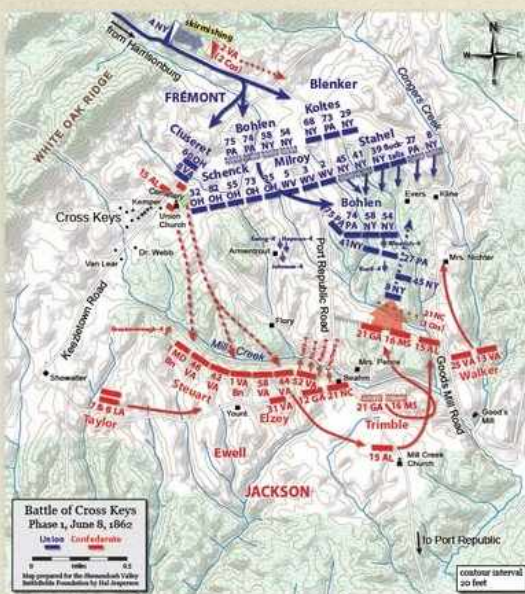
The logistics of moving most of his men from Cross Keys to, and then beyond, Port Republic, proved more difficult than Jackson had anticipated. As the action began on the flat plain of the South Fork of the Shenandoah two miles beyond Port Republic, the Confederates were actually outnumbered. The Union's compact line (commanded by Gen. Erastus Tyler) stretched from the river (on its right) to the shoulder of the Blue Ridge (on the left). Artillery occupied this open crest which dominated the field, known locally as "The Coaling."

Victory depended on who controlled "The Coaling" and the focus of the battle centered on this open ridge. As his troops trickled onto the field, Jackson sent the majority against this position; with the initial Confederate assaults being repulsed. Eventually, the crack Louisiana brigade of Gen. Richard Taylor swarmed over the Union guns, capturing the position in a vicious hand-to-hand fight.

After failing to re-take "The Coaling" with their own determined counterattacks, the Union troops had no choice but to withdraw. Fremont's command soon reached the field, but was unable to reinforce Tyler because Ewell had burned all of the bridges spanning the South Fork during his retreat. Although his plan had gone astray, Jackson still managed to win his second battle in two days.

The Campaign Ends

After Port Republic, Union forces withdrew north, bringing the Valley Campaign to a close. Having accomplished his mission by tying up more than 60,000 Federal troops that would otherwise have been used against Richmond, Jackson was free to join Gen. Robert E. Lee in the defense of the capital.



Visiting The Battlefields

MUSEUMS AND VISITOR CENTERS

- A Hardesty-Higgins House Visitor Center**

The Hardesty-Higgins House Visitor Center welcomes visitors to Harrisonburg. Inside you will find experienced Travel Specialists, a state-certified Visitor Center, Valley Turnpike Museum, Virginia Craftsmen Showroom, Rocktown Gift Shoppe, Heritage Bakery and Café, and a Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District Civil War Orientation Center. Other amenities include information and brochures on lodging, dining and entertainment options as well as concierge maps.

212 S. Main Street • Harrisonburg, VA 22801
Open Daily – 9am to 5pm
540-432-8935
- B Mill Creek Country Store**

Located on the Cross Keys Battlefield, the store has battlefield souvenirs and visitor information on the battles of Cross Keys, Port Republic, Harrisonburg, and Piedmont. It also provides made-to-order sandwiches, baked goods, and snacks as well as unique and interesting artwork and antiques. The grounds around the store have interpretive markers about the battle action and orientation signs to help navigate the surrounding battlefields.

7061 Trimble Road • Port Republic, VA 24471
Open Monday – Friday 6am to 7pm
Saturday – 8am to 5pm
540-249-7133
- C Port Republic Museum**

The museum is housed in the historic Frank Kemper House, which was built c. 1835-1845. It was used both as a residence and as an inn and tavern for travelers, primarily for river boatmen. During the Civil War, Confederate Gen. Turner Ashby's body was brought to the house after he was killed near Harrisonburg on June 6, 1862. The museum features a remarkable array of artifacts and outstanding exhibits that bring the history to life.

8691 Water Street • Port Republic, VA 24471
Open by Appointment
540-327-4277

BATTLEFIELD SITES

- 1 Harrisonburg Battlefield / Turner Ashby Monument**

Though mostly lost to development, a preserved section of the battlefield tells the story of the June 6, 1862, action as Union forces pursued Stonewall Jackson's army east of Harrisonburg. The grounds feature a short walking trail with interpretive markers and a monument to Confederate Col. Turner Ashby on the site where he was mortally wounded during a skirmish with Union forces. The site is owned by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and preserved by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.

1164 Turner Ashby Lane • Harrisonburg, VA 22801
Open Daily Dawn to Dusk
- 2 Union Church**

The scene of some of the initial fighting during the battle, Union Church was a prominent feature on the battlefield. It was here that the 15th Alabama initially engaged the Union army as it deployed onto the field. While the original building fell into disrepair after the war, a new church was later constructed. The current building was renovated after a fire in 2003. The site has interpretive markers about the church and battle action. It's privately owned by the Cross Keys Mill Creek Ruritan Club and only the grounds are open to the public.

5094 Battlefield Road • Harrisonburg, VA 22801
Open Daily – Dawn to Dusk
- 3 Mill Creek Ridge**

Visit the ground of the June 8, 1862, penultimate clash of Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign, where Confederate troops under Gen. Richard Ewell defeated Union Gen. John C. Fremont. Here, you can learn about the battle from the Confederate defensive position and learn about other sites to visit on the battlefield. The site features a trail, Maryland Monument, and interpretive markers. The site is preserved by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.

4232 Bowtie Drive, Port Republic, VA 24471
Open Daily Dawn to Dusk
- 4 8th New York Site**

One of the most famous actions of the battle is the "Slaughter of the 8th New York", which occurred on this site. Visitors can walk the trail and see the field from both the Union and Confederate perspective for this ambush. The site has parking with mowed grass trails and interpretive markers. The site is owned by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.

Located along Port Republic Road just 1.5 miles south of the intersection of Cross Keys Road.
Open Daily – Dawn to Dusk
- 5 Timble's Ravine**

Confederate Gen. Isaac Trimble attacked across these fields as he drove the Union armies right flank back and disrupted their plans for an attack on the Confederate's other flank. From this location, visitors can view the fields of this attack and see interpretive markers along a mowed grass trail. The site has parking and is owned by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.

6812 Goods Mill Road • Harrisonburg, VA 22801
Open Daily – Dawn to Dusk
- 6 Port Republic**

The small village of Port Republic sits along the North and South Rivers, which merge to form the South Fork of the Shenandoah River. Confederate Gen. Stonewall Jackson was headquartered here in the lead up to the battles. On June 8th, 1862, he narrowly escaped capture on the streets of Port Republic. The town has interpretive markers about its history as well as the action that took place here in the lead up to the Battle of Port Republic.

8691 Water Street • Port Republic, VA 24471
- 7 The Coaling**

The Battle of Port Republic was a ferocious, hard-fought Confederate victory that brought a triumphant end to Stonewall Jackson's famed Valley Campaign. Visit the battlefield at the key location, the "Coaling". It was here that the battle was decided. Explore the site with interpretive markers and trails that cover the battle and view the open plains along the South Fork of the Shenandoah River where much of the fighting occurred. Much of the Coaling and surrounding land has been preserved by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.

7120 Ore Bank Road • Port Republic, VA 24471

Become a Member to support the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation and our preservation and interpretation efforts at New Market and throughout the region. Membership levels start at just \$35.

HOW TO JOIN

By Phone: Call 540-740-4545
Online: www.shenandoahwar.org
By Mail: Send checks to PO Box 897,
New Market, VA 22844 (Note: Membership)

SCAN TO JOIN



ABOUT THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY BATTLEFIELDS FOUNDATION

In 1996, Congress designated eight counties in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia as a National Battlefield Site - The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District - which preserves and interprets the region's significant Civil War battlefields and related historic sites. The battlefields of Winchester and Frederick County are part of this district.

The effort is led by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit which works with partners to preserve the hallowed ground of the Valley's Civil War battlefields, to share its Civil War story with the nation, and to encourage tourism and travel to the Valley's Civil War sites.

MORE INFORMATION

Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation
9386 S. Congress Street • New Market, VA 22844 • 540-740-4545
www.shenandoahwar.org

Under Virginia Code § 10.1-2306, A. It is unlawful to intentionally deface, damage, destroy, displace, disturb, or remove any object of antiquity on any designated state archaeological site, state-controlled land, or land owned by a battlefield preservation organization or on which such organization holds an easement.

To explore more of Harrisonburg's Civil War history, download the Civil War Harrisonburg and Staunton App via the QR Code or dial into the tour at 540-755-4782.

