

## **Politics and Destruction Threaten the Confederacy War and Politics Feed on Each Other as the National Elections Loom**

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The week of September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1864, began with more fighting as Confederate General R.H. Anderson's corps moved from the Shenandoah Valley and headed for Petersburg to join Robert E. Lee, which left Early to fend for himself against Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley. Early had a strong defensive line forcing Grant to leave the Petersburg siege lines to discuss future plans in the Shenandoah Valley with Sheridan. When they heard that Anderson had left the Shenandoah Valley, thus weakening Early's forces, Sheridan made plans to cut Early's supply lines and retreat south of Winchester. After learning of Sheridan's plans, Early began moving his troops against that Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and then to Martinsburg. As Sheridan realized how thinly spread out Early's troops were, he quickly moved towards them, leading to the Third Battle of Winchester, as Sheridan's forces of 40,000 men hit Early's forces of 12,000.

The Federal troops headed west toward Martinsburg, while the main infantry force headed west to strike the Valley Pike running north out of Winchester. As Early called in three divisions, the Confederates hit a gap in the Union line. With so many troops against the Confederates, the Union troops pushed them back. Early was forced to retreat up the Valley Pike. The losses were high for both the North and the South, but the Confederates were badly beaten. As the Confederates retreated, Sheridan forces followed, with fighting at Middletown, Strasburg, and Cedarville in the Shenandoah Valley. By the evening of September 20<sup>th</sup>, the Federals were fortifying on the high

grounds north of Strasburg, with the Confederates south of the town on Fisher's Hill. While Sheridan and Early were fighting in the Shenandoah Valley, Nathan Bedford Forrest, who was so greatly feared in the North, and his force of 4,500 men, began operating against Sherman's communications in Alabama and Tennessee, an operation that would last into October.

On September 17<sup>th</sup>, John C. Fremont informed a committee of the Radical Republicans in the U.S. Congress of his intention to withdraw from the Presidential election. He pledged his support to the radical Democracy. Fremont stated that his reason for withdrawing from the presidential race was to prevent the election of the Democrat, McClellan, because if he were to win, it would mean either separation, or re-establishment, with slavery. He considered Lincoln to be a failure, but followed the Republican Party to save the promise of emancipation. Senator Chandler, and other politicians, had struck up a deal with John C. Fremont to help Lincoln win the election. Though Fremont refused the incentives, they included the retirement of Montgomery Blair from Lincoln's cabinet, the possible removal of Stanton, and an active command for Fremont.

The week of September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1864, saw a variety of military developments. There was fighting in the Shenandoah Valley, between Early and Sheridan, that led to the Third Battle of Winchester. While Sheridan and Early were fighting in the Shenandoah Valley, Nathan Bedford Forrest was leading a large unit of cavalry in a raid against Sherman's communications in Alabama and Tennessee. In the world of politics, John C. Fremont was being bribed to pull out of the presidential race to make Abraham Lincoln's chances

of winning the presidential election higher. The week of September 14<sup>th</sup> was a busy week for the North and the South, in both war and politics.