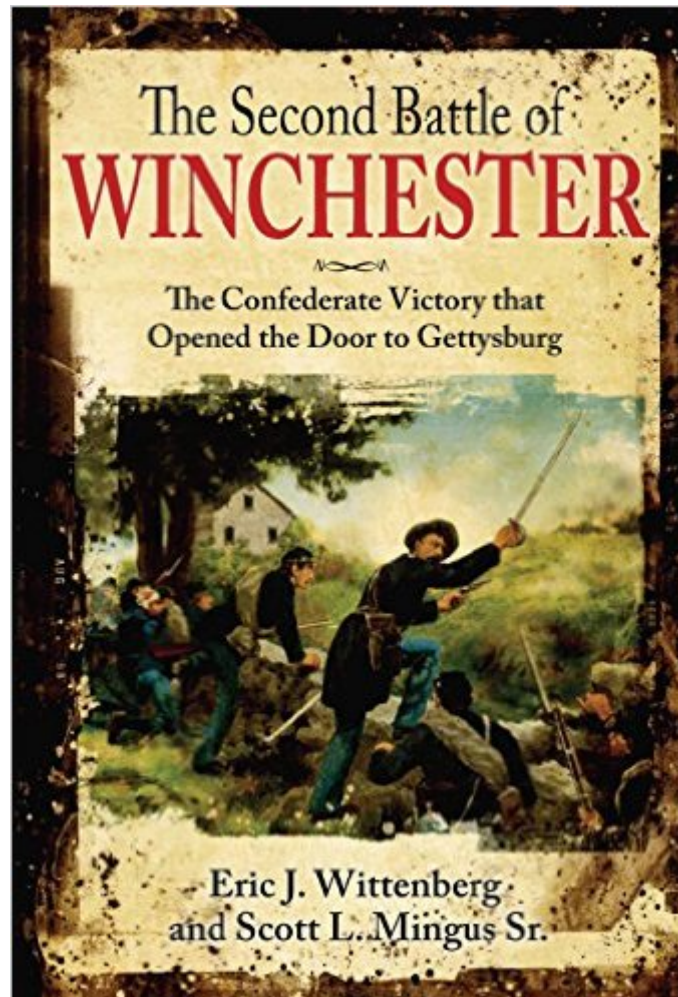


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The Second Battle Of Winchester: The Confederate Victory That Opened The Door To Gettysburg



Synopsis

June 1863. The Gettysburg Campaign is underway. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia is pushing northward through the Shenandoah Valley toward Pennsylvania, and only one significant force stands in its way: Maj. Gen. Robert H. Milroy's Union division of the Eighth Army Corps, in the vicinity of Winchester and Berryville, Virginia. What happened next is the subject of the provocative new book *The Second Battle of Winchester: The Confederate Victory That Opened the Door to Gettysburg, June 13-15, 1863*. Despite being heavily outnumbered, General Milroy defied repeated instructions to withdraw his command even as the overpowering Second Corps under Lt. Gen. Richard Ewell approached within striking distance. The veteran Indiana politician-turned-soldier was convinced the enemy consisted of nothing more than cavalry or was simply a feint. Milroy's controversial decision to stand and fight pitted his outnumbered and largely inexperienced men against some of Lee's finest veterans. The complex and fascinating maneuvering and fighting that followed on June 13-15 cost Milroy hundreds of killed and wounded and some 4,000 captured (about one-half of his command), with the remainder of his command routed from the battlefield. The combat cleared the northern end of the Shenandoah Valley of Federal troops, demonstrated Lee could obtain supplies on the march, justified the elevation of General Ewell to replace the recently deceased Stonewall Jackson and sent shockwaves through the Northern states. Today, the Second Battle of Winchester is largely forgotten. But in June 1863, the politically charged front-page news caught President Lincoln and the War Department by surprise and forever tarnished Milroy's career. The beleaguered Federal soldiers who fought there spent a lifetime seeking redemption, arguing their three-day "forlorn hope" delayed the Rebels long enough to allow the Army of the Potomac to arrive and defeat Lee at Gettysburg. For the Confederates, the decisive leadership on display outside Winchester proved an illusion that masked significant command issues buried within the upper echelons of Stonewall Jackson's former corps that would only make themselves known in the earliest days of July on a different battlefield. Award-winning authors Eric J. Wittenberg and Scott L. Mingus Sr. combined their researching and writing talents to produce the most in-depth and comprehensive study of Second Winchester ever written. Their balanced effort, based upon scores of archival and previously unpublished diaries, newspaper accounts, letter collections, other firsthand sources, and a deep familiarity with the terrain in and around Winchester and the lower Shenandoah Valley, explores the battle from every perspective. *The Second Battle of Winchester* is comprehensive, highly readable, deeply researched, and immensely interesting. Now, finally, the pivotal battle in the Shenandoah Valley that opened the door to Gettysburg has the book it has long deserved.

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Customer Reviews

The tale of Milroy's "weary boys". . . . I have read many short description of this battle, how the Confederate forces under their new Second Corps commander, Lieutenant General Richard Ewell, wrecked the division led by Major General Robert Milroy, a part of Schenck's 8th Corps. But this is the first detailed view of the battle that I have read. The reality as depicted in this book is a bit more nuanced than what I had come to understand. Milroy was foolishâ "maintaining his position in Winchester even as he was ordered to retire. But for a couple days, he actually handled the battle pretty well. But, as his superiors figured, he did not have enough troops to stand off a complete Confederate corps. Milroy had about 8,000 troopsâ "infantry, artillery, and cavalry. He had invested a lot of Union soldiersâ™ energy in creating forts and redoubts to stand defensively if the southern forces arrived. However, Ewell had about 14,000 men in arms (and Rodesâ™ division another 8,000 at Martinsburg against a small force of northern troopsâ "amounting to a bit more than 1,000). Thus, Milroy and other nearby Union forces were outnumbered a little over 2 to 1. In June, 1863, Robert E. Lee began moving his army northwards, a route that would reach its climax with the battle at Gettysburg. Standing in his way north through the Shenandoah Valley were Federal forces. Hence, Milroyâ™s troops being posted at Winchester meant that a battle would be fought if Milroy did not retreat. This volume does a nice job laying out why loyal southerners in Winchester and vicinity despised Milroy. The work discusses his military preparations, featuring two main forts and other outposts. In actuality, not a bad defensive systemâ "but he would not have enough troops to

make this tactic work.

The book begins by studying Union General Robert H. Milroy's attempt to maintain and enforce President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and protecting the Lower Shenandoah Valley including Winchester and Berryville, Virginia from January-June, 1863. Unfortunately for the Union forces, Union leaders did not realize that Confederate General Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia were marching into the valley headed for Pennsylvania. The purpose of this title is the intricate and captivating direction the Battle of Winchester ended up taking which led to hundreds of Union men killed and approximately 4,000 captured by the victorious Confederate forces. Professor Jonathan Noyales in his informative foreword mentioned that Union General Robert H. Milroy argued that had his troops not resisted and slowed down Confederate General Richard Ewell's Second Corps at Winchester, the Army of the Potomac might not have had the opportunity to defeat the Army of Northern Virginia at Gettysburg during July 1-3, 1863. This non-West Point trained officer incorrectly believed that the approaching adversarial force was nothing more than horse soldiers or was a feint, so he defied repeated orders to withdraw based on a false premise. In reality, the brave but outnumbered inexperienced Federal soldiers were facing some of the best and most experienced Confederate soldiers. Eric J. Wittenberg and Scott L. Mingus Sr. in "The Second Battle of Winchester" rightly criticize the Union leadership, particularly the often despised Union General Robert H. Milroy.

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