

Battle of Winchester September 19, 1864

Lewis Cass White



"The ground was almost as level as a floor, and our orders were to march as fast as possible without double-quicking, for fear that our ranks might become broken, and when we met the enemy, half a mile in front, we could not drive them from their temporary breastworks."

Battle of Winchester. Alfred Rudolph Waud, Sept. 19th. 1864. Library of Congress

Soon after the battle of Fort Stevens, July 12, 1864, General Early retreated from Washington and located his army in the Shenandoah Valley, the "Granary of the Confederate Army," in the vicinity of the beautiful town of Winchester.

General Grant determined to prevent a recurrence of Early's advance on Washington and in order to do this, he placed General Sheridan in command of the Union forces in and around Harpers Ferry and the Shenandoah valley, consisting of the 6th Corps, Gen H. G. Wright, the 19th Corps under General

Emory, and the 8th Corps under General Crook, who afterwards was famous as an Indian Fighter. About Sept. 10, General Sheridan sent a dispatch to General Grant at Petersburg that "it seems time to push things". Grant answered by dispatch saying "rush things". Upon information, written by

Miss Wright, a Union woman in Winchester, and placed in tin foil and placed in the mouth of a colored man (as always loyal to the Union cause) who delivered the same to our scouts near Painted Post, General Sheridan concluded to attack and gave battle to Early Sept. 19, 1864. At 2:00 a.m. camp broke, tents were taken down, and we started on the march, taking the pike crossing "Opequon Creek" and about 3 miles from Winchester town. We crossed the creek at the old mill fording and advanced to the crest of the hill beyond. Our orders were to charge the enemy as soon as we reached the

top of the hill and saw them, which we did in good order. My regiment, the 102d Pa. Vet. Vols. belonged to the 1st brigade, 2nd Div. 6 Corps, the whole Brigade was 139, 93d, 98, 102d Pa. Vols. and 62nd N.Y. I was color Sergeant of the 102 Pa. Vols. and carried the U. S. flag. William G. Greenwalt, brother of John G. of the Pension Bureau, carried the state flag. Advancing upon the rebel works, we opened fire and called to them to throw down their arms and surrender. Some returned our fire, and others started to run, but the brave Color Sergeant of the 57th Va. stood on top of the Rifle pit waving his flag

until we were not two rods away from him then he jumped down and ran away with his comrades. We jumped over the rifle pit, and followed the fleeing enemy. One Confederate fired at us; seeing this Sergt. Shira of Co. H raised his gun and fired, the shot taking effect in the "Grayback's" arm, and by this time he thought "discretion is the better part of valor" and threw down his gun and surrendered to us. Immediately in the rear of the rifle pits and in a depression an officer and half dozen men were collected, and I rushed on to them, with Capt. Stewart of my company close at my heels, and said to the offi-

cer, a member of the 57th Va. C.S.A. "Hand up that sword". He unbuckled it from his belt and handed it to me, and with that his men passed to the rear. Now about that sword which now hangs in my library as a relic of the war. On October 19th, 1863, at Fort Hamilton, New York, the members of Co. H. 1st Bat., 12th U.S. Inf. presented a beautiful sword. worth at least \$50.00 to First Sergeant August Eggemeyer, who had served in the regular army some years and had been promoted to Second Lt. Lt. Eggemeyer was promoted to 1st Lt., then to Captain and at the battle of Cold Harbor, Va., June 4th, 1864