



**THE CIVIL WAR BATTLES AT OVERALL:  
A Military History of the Milford Battlefield  
By John B. Rice, Jr.**

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### Summary

In September and October of 1864, two battles occurred at the village of Milford, Virginia, a prosperous commercial hub now known as Overall. Although the casualties were low at these little-known battles, they were strategically important. Both prolonged the fighting in the Shenandoah Valley, since both times the Confederate cavalry held the line at Milford and allowed Confederate General Early's defeated infantry to escape to the southward down the Page Valley.

On September 22, 1864, as a part of his Fishers Hill battle plan, Union General Philip Sheridan sent approximately 5000 cavalry southward up the Page Valley with orders to cross Massanutten Mountain via New Market Gap and get behind the retreating Confederate army under General Jubal Early. Approximately 1,800 Confederate cavalry under General Wickham took a stand at Milford, where the Page Valley is most narrow, thus providing a naturally strong defensive position. The Confederates established their defenses on the hillslope south of Overall Run, with their flanks resting on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River on the west, and the steep slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains on the east. The battle included an artillery duel and several probing charges by the Federal cavalry throughout the day, including a flank attack along the East Side of the battlefield. Unsuccessful at dislodging the Confederates, and rather than risking excessive casualties from an aggressive assault on their strong position, the Union troops withdrew, to the great dismay of General Sheridan, whose Fishers Hill battle strategy otherwise proceeded according to plan.

On October 25 and 26, 1864, a nearly identical battle occurred at Milford when General Sheridan made a second attempt to get his cavalry get behind the Confederate army, again commanded by General Jubal Early - this time as they retreated from the disastrous battle of Cedar Creek. As in the September battle, approximately 1,700 Confederate cavalry withstood artillery shelling and a flank attack along the east side of the battlefield, thus preventing the Federal Cavalry, with over 1,100 troops, from advancing southward up the Page Valley.

Despite their successes at Milford, the Confederate army never recovered from its losses in the Valley in the fall of 1864. On the other hand, the Union victories in the Valley created the widespread optimism in the North that the war would be won after all. The victories helped re-elect Abraham Lincoln and with Lincoln as President, the Confederacy lost its last hope for a favorable negotiated end to the war.

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