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Jubal Early

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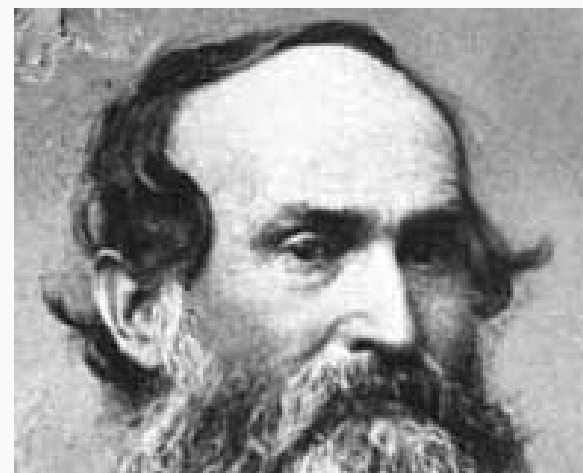
For the character from the television series Firefly, see [Jubal Early \(Firefly\)](#). For the ferry, see [White's Ferry](#).



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(April 2009)

Jubal Anderson Early (November 3, 1816 – March 2, 1894) was a lawyer and [Confederate](#) general in the [American Civil War](#). He served under [Stonewall Jackson](#) and then [Robert E. Lee](#) for almost the entire war, rising from regimental command to [lieutenant general](#) and the command of an infantry corps in the [Army of Northern Virginia](#). He was the Confederate commander in key battles of the [Valley Campaigns of 1864](#), including a daring raid to

**Lieutenant-General
Jubal Anderson Early**



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the outskirts of Washington, D.C. The articles written by him for the [Southern Historical Society](#) in the 1870s established the [Lost Cause](#) point of view as a long-lasting literary and cultural phenomenon.^[1]

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Early years [edit]



Nickname(s)	Old Jube, Old Jubilee
Born	November 3, 1816 <div>Franklin County, Virginia</div>
Died	March 2, 1894 (aged 77) <div>Lynchburg, Virginia</div>
Allegiance	 United States of America <div> Confederate States of America</div>
Service/branch	 United States Army <div> Confederate States Army</div>
Years of service	1837–1838, 1847–1848 (U.S.), 1861–1865 (C.S.A.)
Rank	 Major (USA) <div> Lieutenant General (CSA)</div>
Commands held	Second Corps, Army of Northern Virginia Army of the Valley
Battles/wars	Seminole Wars Mexican-American War American Civil War



Historic marker for Jubal Early birthplace, [Franklin County, Virginia](#)

Early was born in the Red Valley section of [Franklin County, Virginia](#), third of ten children of Ruth (née Hairston)

and Joab Early. The Early family was a well-connected old Virginia family. Early's father operated an extensive tobacco plantation of more than 4,000 acres at the foot of the Blue Ridge. Early attended local schools as well as private academies in Lynchburg and Danville before entering West Point in 1833.^[2] He graduated from the [United States Military Academy](#) in 1837, ranked 18th of 50. During his tenure at the Academy he was engaged in a dispute with a fellow cadet named [Lewis Addison Armistead](#). Armistead broke a mess plate over Early's head, an incident that prompted Armistead's resignation from the Academy.^[3] After graduating from the Academy, Early fought against the [Seminole](#) in Florida as a [second lieutenant](#) in the [3rd U.S. Artillery regiment](#) before resigning from the Army for the first time in 1838. He practiced law in the 1840s as a prosecutor for both [Franklin](#) and [Floyd](#) Counties in Virginia. He was noted for a case in Mississippi, where he beat the top lawyers in the state. His law practice was interrupted by the [Mexican-American War](#), in which he served as a Major with the 1st Virginia Volunteers from 1847–1848. He served in the [Virginia House of Delegates](#) from 1841–1843.

- [First Battle of Bull Run](#)
- [Battle of Williamsburg](#)
- [Seven Days Battles](#)
- [Northern Virginia Campaign](#)
- [Battle of Antietam](#)
- [Battle of Fredericksburg](#)
- [Battle of Chancellorsville](#)
- [Gettysburg Campaign](#)
- [Overland Campaign](#)
- [Valley Campaigns of 1864](#)
- [Battle of Waynesboro, Virginia](#)

Other work

Lawyer

Civil War [\[edit\]](#)

Early was a [Whig](#) and strongly opposed secession at the [April 1861 Virginia convention](#). However, he was soon roused by the actions of the Federal government when [President Abraham Lincoln](#) called for 75,000 volunteers to suppress the rebellion. He accepted a commission as a [brigadier general](#) in the Virginia Militia. He was sent to [Lynchburg, Virginia](#), to raise three regiments and then commanded one of them, the [24th Virginia Infantry](#), as a [colonel](#) in the [Confederate States Army](#).

Early was promoted to brigadier general after the [First Battle of Bull Run](#) (or *First Manassas*) in July 1861. In that battle, he displayed valor at Blackburn's Ford and impressed General [P.G.T. Beauregard](#). He fought in most of the major battles in the [Eastern Theater](#), including the [Seven Days Battles](#), [Second Bull Run](#), [Antietam](#), [Fredericksburg](#), [Chancellorsville](#), [Gettysburg](#), and numerous battles in the [Shenandoah Valley](#). During the Gettysburg Campaign, Early's Division occupied [York, Pennsylvania](#), the largest Northern town to fall to the Rebels during the war.

Early was trusted and supported by [Robert E. Lee](#), the commander of the [Army of Northern Virginia](#). Lee affectionately called Early his "Bad Old Man," because of his short temper. He appreciated Early's aggressive fighting and ability to command units independently. Most of Early's soldiers referred to him as "Old Jube" or "Old Jubilee" with enthusiasm and affection. His subordinate generals often felt little affection. Early was an inveterate fault-finder and offered biting criticism of his subordinates at the least opportunity. He was generally blind to his own mistakes and reacted fiercely to criticism or suggestions from below.^[4]

Early was wounded at [Williamsburg](#) in 1862, while leading a charge against staggering odds.

Serving under Stonewall Jackson [\[edit\]](#)

He convalesced at his home in [Rocky Mount, Virginia](#). In two months, he returned to the war, under

the command of [Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson](#), in time for the [Battle of Malvern Hill](#). There, Early demonstrated his career-long lack of aptitude for battlefield navigation and his brigade was lost in the woods; it suffered 33 casualties without any significant action. In the [Northern Virginia Campaign](#), Early was noted for his performance at the [Battle of Cedar Mountain](#) and arrived in the nick of time to reinforce Maj. Gen. [A.P. Hill](#) on Jackson's left on Stony Ridge in the [Second Battle of Bull Run](#).

At Antietam, Early ascended to [division](#) command when his commander, [Alexander Lawton](#), was wounded. Lee was impressed with his performance and retained him at that level. At [Fredericksburg](#), Early saved the day by counterattacking the division of Maj. Gen. [George G. Meade](#), which penetrated a gap in Jackson's lines. He was promoted to major general on January 17, 1863.

At [Chancellorsville](#), Lee gave him a force of 5,000 men to defend [Fredericksburg](#) at Marye's Heights against superior forces (4 divisions) under Maj. Gen. [John Sedgwick](#). Early was able to delay the [Union](#) forces and pin down Sedgwick while Lee and Jackson attacked the remainder of the Union troops to the west. Sedgwick's eventual attack on Early up Marye's Heights is sometimes known as the [Second Battle of Fredericksburg](#).

Gettysburg and the Overland Campaign [\[edit\]](#)

During the [Gettysburg Campaign](#), Early commanded a division in the corps of Lt. Gen. [Richard S. Ewell](#). His troops were instrumental in defeating Union defenders at [Winchester](#), capturing a number of prisoners, and opening up the [Shenandoah Valley](#) for Lee's oncoming forces. Early's division, augmented with cavalry, eventually marched eastward across the [South Mountain](#) range in Pennsylvania, seizing vital supplies and horses along the way. He captured Gettysburg on June 26 and demanded a ransom, which was never paid. Two days later, he entered [York County](#) and seized [York](#). Here, his ransom demands were partially met, including a payment of \$28,000 in

cash. Elements of Early's command on June 28 reached the [Susquehanna River](#), the farthest east in Pennsylvania that any organized Confederate force would penetrate. On June 30, Early was recalled as Lee concentrated his army to meet the oncoming Federals.

Approaching Gettysburg from the northeast on July 1, 1863, Early's division was on the leftmost flank of the Confederate line. He soundly defeated Brig. Gen. [Francis Barlow's](#) division (part of the Union [XI Corps](#)), inflicting three times the casualties to the defenders as he suffered, and drove the Union troops back through the streets of town, capturing many of them. In the second day at Gettysburg, he assaulted [East Cemetery Hill](#) as part of Ewell's efforts on the Union right flank. Despite initial success, Union reinforcements arrived to repulse Early's two brigades. On the third day, Early detached one brigade to assist Maj. Gen. [Edward "Allegheny" Johnson's](#) division in an unsuccessful assault on [Culp's Hill](#). Elements of Early's division covered the rear of Lee's army during its [retreat from Gettysburg](#) on July 4 and July 5.

Early served in the Shenandoah Valley over the winter of 1863–64. During this period, he occasionally filled in as corps commander during Ewell's absences for illness. On May 31, 1864, Lee expressed his confidence in Early's initiative and abilities at higher command levels, promoting him to the temporary rank of [lieutenant general](#).

Upon his return from the Valley, Early fought in the [Battle of the Wilderness](#) and assumed command of the ailing A.P. Hill's [Third Corps](#) during the march to intercept Lt. Gen. [Ulysses S. Grant](#) at [Spotsylvania Court House](#). At Spotsylvania, Early occupied the relatively quiet right flank of the Mule Shoe. At the [Battle of Cold Harbor](#), Lee replaced the ineffectual Ewell with Early as commander of the [Second Corps](#).

The Valley, 1864 [\[edit\]](#)

Main article: [Valley Campaigns of 1864](#)

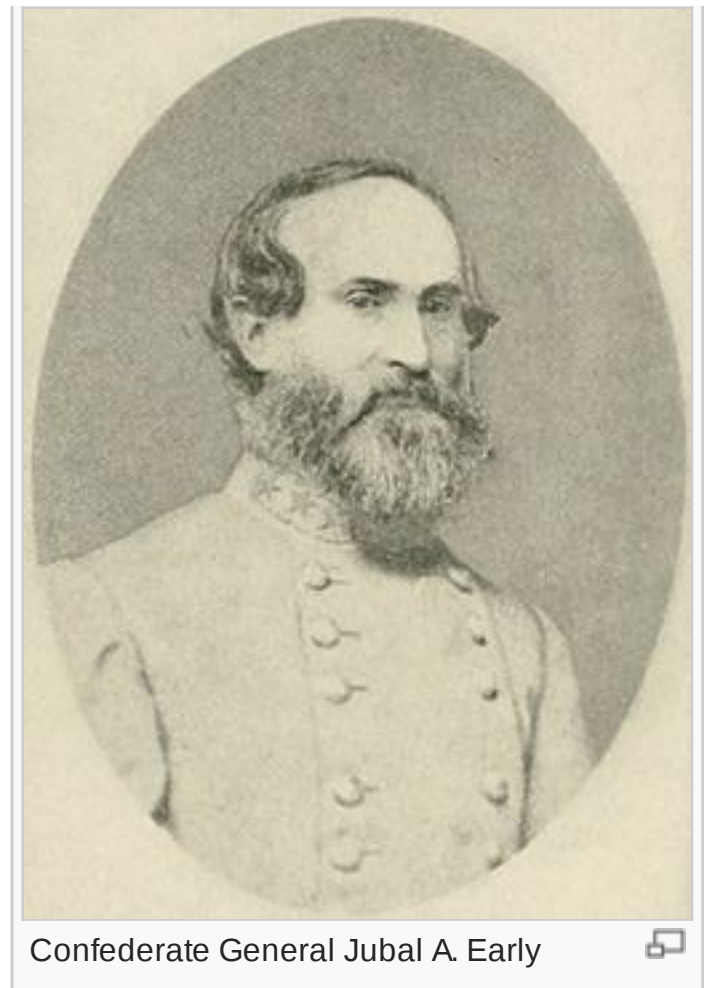
Early's most important service was that summer and

Early's most important service was that summer and fall, in the [Valley Campaigns of 1864](#), when he commanded the Confederacy's last invasion of the North. As Confederate territory was rapidly being captured by the Union armies of Grant and Maj. Gen. [William Tecumseh Sherman](#), Lee sent Early's corps to sweep Union forces from the Shenandoah Valley and to menace Washington, D.C., hoping to compel Grant to dilute his forces against Lee around [Richmond](#) and [Petersburg, Virginia](#).

Early delayed his march for several days in a futile attempt to capture a small force under [Franz Sigel](#) at [Maryland Heights](#) near Harpers Ferry.^[5] He rested his men from July 4 through July 6.^[6] Although elements of his army would eventually reach the outskirts of Washington at a time when it was largely undefended, his delay at Maryland Heights prevented him from being able to attack the capital.

During the time of Early's Maryland Heights campaign, Grant sent two [VI Corps](#) divisions from the Army of the Potomac to reinforce Union Maj. Gen. [Lew Wallace](#). With 5,800 men, he delayed Early for an entire day at the [Battle of Monocacy](#), allowing more Union troops to arrive in Washington and strengthen its defenses. Early's invasion caused considerable panic in Washington and Baltimore, and he was able to get to the outskirts of Washington. He sent some cavalry under Brig. Gen. [John McCausland](#) to the west side of Washington.

Knowing that he did not have sufficient strength to capture the city, Early led skirmishes at [Fort](#)



Confederate General Jubal A. Early



[Stevens](#) and [Fort DeRussy](#). The opposing forces also had artillery duels on July 11 and July 12. [Abraham Lincoln](#) watched the fighting on both days from the parapet at Fort Stevens, his lanky frame a clear target for hostile military fire. After Early withdrew, he said to one of his officers, "Major, we haven't taken Washington, but we scared Abe Lincoln like hell."^[7]

Early crossed the Potomac into [Leesburg, Virginia](#), on July 13 and then withdrew to the Valley. He defeated the Union army under Brig. Gen. [George Crook](#) at [Kernstown](#) on July 24, 1864. Six days later, he ordered his cavalry to burn the city of [Chambersburg, Pennsylvania](#), in retaliation for Maj. Gen. [David Hunter](#)'s burning of the homes of several prominent Southern sympathizers in [Jefferson County, West Virginia](#) earlier that month. Through early August, Early's cavalry and guerrilla forces attacked the [B&O Railroad](#) in various places.

Realizing Early could easily attack Washington, Grant sent out an army under Maj. Gen. [Philip Sheridan](#) to subdue his forces. At times outnumbering the Confederates three to one, Sheridan defeated Early in three battles, starting in early August, and laid waste to much of the agricultural properties in the Valley. He ensured they could not supply Lee's army. In a brilliant surprise attack, Early initially routed two thirds of the Union army at the [Battle of Cedar Creek](#) on October 19, 1864. In his post-battle dispatch to Lee, Early claimed that his troops were hungry and exhausted and fell out of their ranks to pillage the Union camp. This allowed Sheridan critical time to rally his demoralized troops and turn their morning defeat into victory over the Confederate Army that afternoon. One of Early's key subordinates, Maj. Gen. [John B. Gordon](#), in his 1904 memoirs, attested that it was Early's decision to halt the attack for six hours in the early afternoon, and not disorganization in the ranks, that led to the rout that took place in the afternoon.^[8]

Most of the men of Early's corps rejoined Lee at Petersburg in December, while Early remained in the Valley to command a skeleton force. When his force was nearly destroyed at [Waynesboro](#) in March 1865, Early barely escaped capture with a few members of his staff. Lee relieved Early of his command soon after the encounter, because he doubted Early's ability to inspire confidence in

the men he would have to recruit to continue operations. He wrote to Early of the difficulty of this decision:

While my own confidence in your ability, zeal, and devotion to the cause is unimpaired, I have nevertheless felt that I could not oppose what seems to be the current of opinion, without injustice to your reputation and injury to the service. I therefore felt constrained to endeavor to find a commander who would be more likely to develop the strength and resources of the country, and inspire the soldiers with confidence. ... [Thank you] for the fidelity and energy with which you have always supported my efforts, and for the courage and devotion you have ever manifested in the service ...

— Robert E. Lee, *letter to Early*

Postbellum career [\[edit\]](#)

When the Army of Northern Virginia surrendered on April 9, 1865, Early escaped to Texas by horseback, where he hoped to find a Confederate force still holding out. He proceeded to Mexico, and from there, sailed to [Cuba](#) and Canada. Living in [Toronto](#), he wrote his memoir, *A Memoir of the Last Year of the War for Independence, in the Confederate States of America*, which focused on his Valley Campaign. The book was published in 1867.

Early was pardoned in 1868 by President [Andrew Johnson](#), but still remained an unreconstructed rebel. In 1869, he returned to Virginia and resumed the practice of law. He



was among the most vocal of those who promoted the [Lost Cause](#) movement. He criticized the actions of Lt. Gen. [James Longstreet](#) at Gettysburg. Together with former General [P.G.T. Beauregard](#), Early was involved with the [Louisiana Lottery](#).

At the age of 77, after falling down a flight of stairs, Early died in [Lynchburg, Virginia](#). He was buried in the local Spring Hill Cemetery.

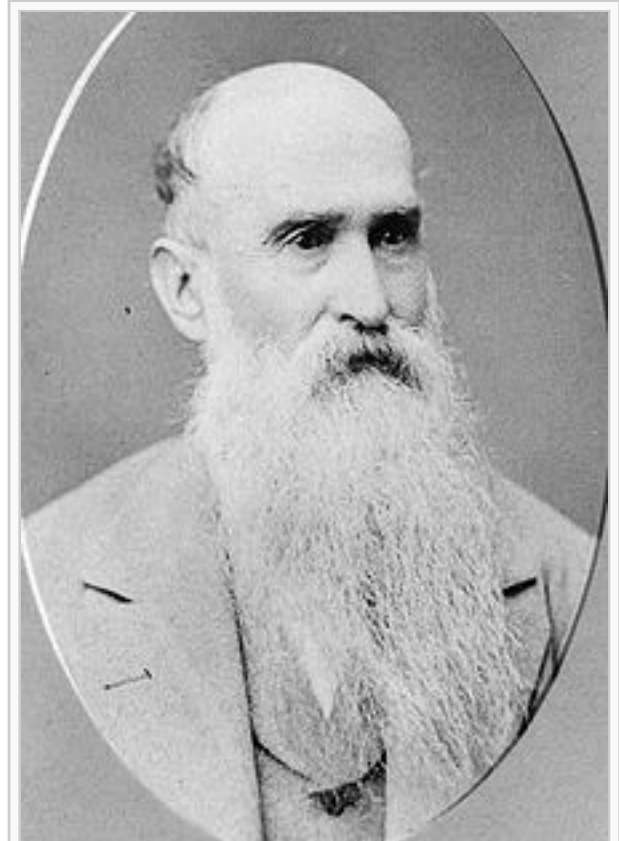
Legacy [edit]

Main article: [Lost Cause of the Confederacy](#)

Early's original inspiration for his views on the *Lost Cause* may have come from General [Robert E. Lee](#). In Lee's published farewell order to the [Army of Northern Virginia](#), the general spoke of the "overwhelming resources and numbers" that the Confederate army fought against. In a letter to Early, Lee requested information about enemy strengths from May 1864 to April 1865, the period in which his army was engaged against Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant (the [Overland Campaign](#) and the [Siege of Petersburg](#)). Lee wrote, "My only object is to transmit, if possible, the truth to posterity, and do justice to our brave Soldiers."^[9] Lee requested all "statistics as regards numbers, destruction of private property by the Federal troops, &c." because he intended to demonstrate the discrepancy in



General Early, disguised as a farmer, while escaping to Mexico, 1865.



Early in his elder years.

strength between the two armies. He believed it would "be difficult to get the world to understand the odds against which we fought". Referring to newspaper accounts that accused him of culpability in the loss, he wrote, "I have not thought proper to notice, or even to correct misrepresentations of my words & acts. We shall have to be patient, & suffer for awhile at least. ... At present the public mind is not prepared to receive the truth."^[9] All of these were themes that Early and the Lost Cause writers would echo for decades.

Lost Cause themes were also taken up by memorial associations, such as the [United Confederate Veterans](#) and the [United Daughters of the Confederacy](#). To some degree, this concept helped the (white) Southerners to cope with the dramatic social, political, and economic changes in the postbellum era, including [Reconstruction](#).^[10]

Early's contributions to the Confederacy's final days were considered very significant. Some historians contend that he extended the war six to nine months because of his efforts at Washington, D.C., and in the Valley. The following quote summarizes an opinion held by his admirers:

Honest and outspoken, honorable and uncompromising, Jubal A. Early epitomized much that was the Southern Confederacy. His self-reliance, courage, sagacity, and devotion to the cause brought confidence then just as it inspires reverence now.

— James I. Robertson, Jr., *Alumni Distinguished Professor of History, [Virginia Tech](#);*
Member of the Board, Jubal A. Early Preservation Trust

Early was an outspoken believer in [white supremacy](#) and despised the [abolitionists](#). In the preface to his memoirs, Early wrote about former slaves as "barbarous natives of Africa", whom he believed were "in a civilized and Christianized condition" as a result of their enslavement. He

continued:

The Creator of the Universe had stamped them, indelibly, with a different color and an inferior physical and mental organization. He had not done this from mere caprice or whim, but for wise purposes. An [amalgamation](#) of the races was in contravention of His designs or He would not have made them so different. This immense number of people could not have been transported back to the wilds from which their ancestors were taken, or, if they could have been, it would have resulted in their relapse into barbarism. Reason, common sense, true humanity to the black, as well as the safety of the white race, required that the inferior race should be kept in a state of subordination. The conditions of domestic slavery, as it existed in the South, had not only resulted in a great improvement in the moral and physical condition of the negro race, but had furnished a class of laborers as happy and contented as any in the world.^[11]

Honors [\[edit\]](#)



Tablet honoring Jubal Early,
[Rocky Mount, Virginia](#)

- The boat at [White's Ferry](#), the only ferry still operating on the [Potomac River](#), is named *General Jubal A. Early*.^[12]
- A major thoroughfare in [Winchester, Virginia](#) is named "Jubal Early Drive" in his honor.
- Virginia Route 116 from Roanoke City to Virginia Route 122 in Franklin County is named after him. In Roanoke County, it is referred to as "JAE Valley Road," incorporating Jubal Anderson Early's initials. In Franklin County, it is called "Jubal Early Highway." The Franklin County portion passes the birthplace of General Early, which is identified by a historical highway

marker.

- There is a road in Potomac, MD called "Jubal Early Court."
- His childhood home, the [Jubal A. Early House](#), was listed on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 1997.^[13]
- [Fort Early and Jubal Early Monument](#) can be found in Lynchburg, Virginia

Streets named after him [\[edit\]](#)

- Jubal Early Drive, Forest, Virginia
- Jubal Early Court, Potomac, Maryland
- Jubal Early Highway, Boones Mill, Virginia
- East Jubal Early Drive, Winchester, Virginia
- West Jubal Early Drive, Winchester, Virginia
- Jubal Early Lane, Conroe, Texas

In popular culture [\[edit\]](#)

- Early was portrayed by MacIntyre Dixon in the 1993 film *Gettysburg*, based on [Michael Shaara's](#) novel, *The Killer Angels*. His scenes appear only in the Director's Cut release.
- The bounty hunter in "Objects in Space", the final episode of Joss Whedon's series *Firefly* is named [Jubal Early](#), referring to [Nathan Fillion's](#) claim that he is descended from the general. He is played by [Richard Brooks](#) (who is, ironically, an African-American).
- In the [Jean-Claude Van Damme](#) film *Inferno*, a main character played by [Pat Morita](#) is named Jubal Early.

See also [\[edit\]](#)

- [List of American Civil War generals](#)



[American Civil War portal](#)



[United States Army portal](#)







Notes [\[edit\]](#)

1. [^] [Ulbrich](#), p. 1221.
2. [^] [Early](#), Ruth Hairston. *The Family of Early: Which Settled Upon the Eastern Shore of Virginia and Its Connection with Other Families [↗](#), Brown-Morrison, 1920, pp. 107-08.*
3. [^] *Resignation of Lewis A. Armistead*, January 1836, RG 77, E18, National Archives. Some historians characterize Armistead's departure as a dismissal from the Academy; see citations in [Lewis Addison Armistead](#).
4. [^] [Gallagher](#), *Struggle for the Shenandoah*, p. 21.
5. [^]  [Chisholm](#), Hugh, ed. (1911). "Harper's Ferry". *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press.
6. [^] O.R., Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part 1, p. 1020.
7. [^] [Lewis](#), p. 87.
8. [^] [Gordon](#), pp. 352-72.
9. [^] [a](#) [b](#) [Gallagher & Nolan](#), p. 12.
10. [^] [Ulbrich](#), p. 1222.
11. [^] [Early and Gallagher](#), pp. xxv–xxvi.
12. [^] [White's Ferry website](#) [↗](#).
13. [^] ["National Register Information System"](#) [↗](#). *National Register of Historic Places*. [National Park Service](#). 2010-07-09.




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External links [[edit](#)]

- Jubal A. Early in *Encyclopedia Virginia* 
- General Jubal Early Homeplace Preservation 
- "Jubal Early" bio , Blue and Gray Trail
- Works by Jubal Early on Open Library at the Internet Archive



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Gettysburg figures

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[American memoirists](#) | [People of Virginia in the American Civil War](#)
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