

The Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862, greatly altered the course of the Civil War. Robert E. Lee's failure to carry the war effort effectively into the North caused Great Britain to postpone recognition of the Confederate Government. Of almost equal importance was the long-awaited opportunity given President Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. Five days after the Federal victory, Lincoln issued his preliminary proclamation which warned the South that on January 1, 1863, he would declare free all slaves in territory still in rebellion against the United States. Henceforth, the war would have a dual purpose: To preserve the Union and to end slavery.

Antietam climaxed the first of Lee's two attempts to carry the war into the North. After a great victory at Manassas in August 1862, Lee headed for Maryland, hoping to find vitally needed men and supplies. Some 41,000 Confederates were pitted against 87,000 Federals under George B. McClellan, once more in command of the Army of the Potomac. McClellan followed Lee into Maryland, first to Frederick, then westward to the passes of South Mountain.

Here Lee tried to block the Federal Army, but McClellan forced the gaps. Lee moved on westward. Finding that McClellan was in pursuit, Lee crossed Antietam Creek and consolidated his position on the high ground to the west, with his center near Sharpsburg. By September 15 McClellan had most of his command within a few kilometers of the creek, while half of Lee's army was still in Harpers Ferry.

The battle opened at dawn on the 17th as Hooker's artillery began a murderous fire on "Stonewall" Jackson's troops posted in a cornfield north of town. The battle raged southward all day—from the North Woods, through the Cornfield, the East Woods, the West Woods, past "Bloody Lane" and Burnside Bridge, to the hills below Sharpsburg where at last it ended. The timely arrival of A. P. Hill's division stopped the final Union assault just short of victory. Neither side had gained the upper hand, but Lee was turned back into Virginia. Losses on both sides were staggering: 12,410 Federals were killed or wounded (15 percent of those engaged) and 10,700 Confederates (26 percent of those engaged).

WARTIME PHOTO OF THE DUNKER CHURCH



THE CHARGE ACROSS BURNSIDE BRIDGE.

#### ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The national battlefield site lies north and east of Sharpsburg, along Md. 34 and 65. Both routes intersect either U.S. 40 or 40A and Int. 70. The visitor center is north of town on Md. 65. Please check with the park staff for days and hours of operation, and for information on facilities and the tour route. Schedules of Living History demonstrations and other special events during the year are available at the visitor center.

There are also interpretive markers at Turner's, Fox's, and Crampton Gaps on South Mountain, scenes of preliminary fighting, and at the Shepherdstown (W.Va.) Ford.

Federal regulations prohibit hunting and removing or disturbing any relics. Fishing is permitted in Antietam Creek. There is a picnic area but camping or fires are not allowed in the park. A walk-in tent campground is available on the C & O Canal, 8 kilometers (5 miles) away.

#### WE'RE JOINING THE METRIC WORLD

The National Park Service is introducing metric measurements in its publications to help Americans become acquainted with the metric system and to make interpretation more meaningful for park visitors from other nations.

#### FOR SAFETY'S SAKE

Motorists are asked to use caution while driving the tour route. Be aware of one-way roads, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Drivers should stop vehicles while reading interpretive signs. To insure proper control, bicyclists should exercise caution while descending hills.

#### ADMINISTRATION

Antietam National Battlefield Site and Cemetery are administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 158, Sharpsburg, MD 21782, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service  
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# Antietam

NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD SITE, MARYLAND

