

Antietam

NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD SITE, MARYLAND

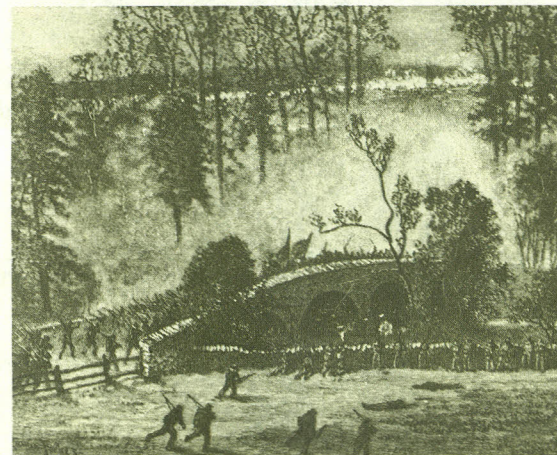
The Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862, greatly altered the course of the Civil War. Robert E. Lee's failure to carry the war effort effectively into the North caused Great Britain to postpone recognition of the Confederate Government. Of almost equal importance was the long awaited opportunity 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.

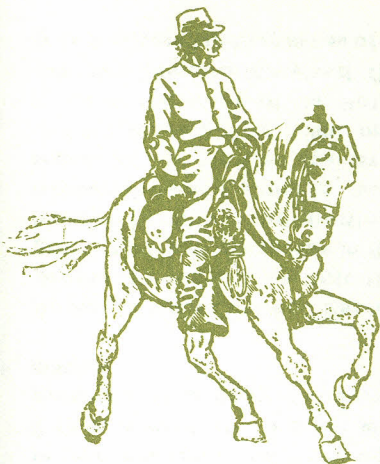
Here Lee tried to block the Federal Army, but McClellan forced the gaps. Lee moved on westward. Finding that McClellan was in pursuit, Lee crossed Antietam Creek and consolidated his position on the high ground to the west, with his center near Sharpsburg. By September 15 McClellan had most of his command within a few miles 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 DUNKARD CHURCH.



THE CHARGE ACROSS BURNSIDE BRIDGE.



A TOUR OF ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD

The battle was fought over an area of 12 square miles. The site today consists of 787 acres and some 8 miles of paved roads. For an unhurried visit to the main points of interest, follow the tour outlined below. If you begin at the visitor center, your first stop will be at the Dunkard Church, just across the Hagerstown Road.

1. The Dunkard Church, reconstructed on the original site, was the scene of repeated clashes as both armies sought to hold the high ground on which it stood.

2. Hooker launched the initial Union attack from the Joseph Poffenberger farm, behind the North Woods. At dawn, 8,000 men of the I Corps swept forward—and were stopped by Jackson's troops in the Cornfield, one-half mile south.

3. Gen. Joseph Mansfield was fatally wounded in the East Woods as he led the XII Corps into battle. One division moved to Hooker's aid in the Cornfield; the other met the determined Confederates in the woods.

4. More fighting took place in the Miller cornfield than in any other area at Antietam. Early that morning, four Union divisions attacked, and four Confederate divisions counterattacked—without pause. The line of battle swept back and forth across this field 15 times.

5. Gen. John Sedgwick's division lost more than 2,200 men in one-half hour in an ill-fated charge into the West Woods. Arriving at the same time, two of Jackson's divisions cut them down with a withering crossfire.

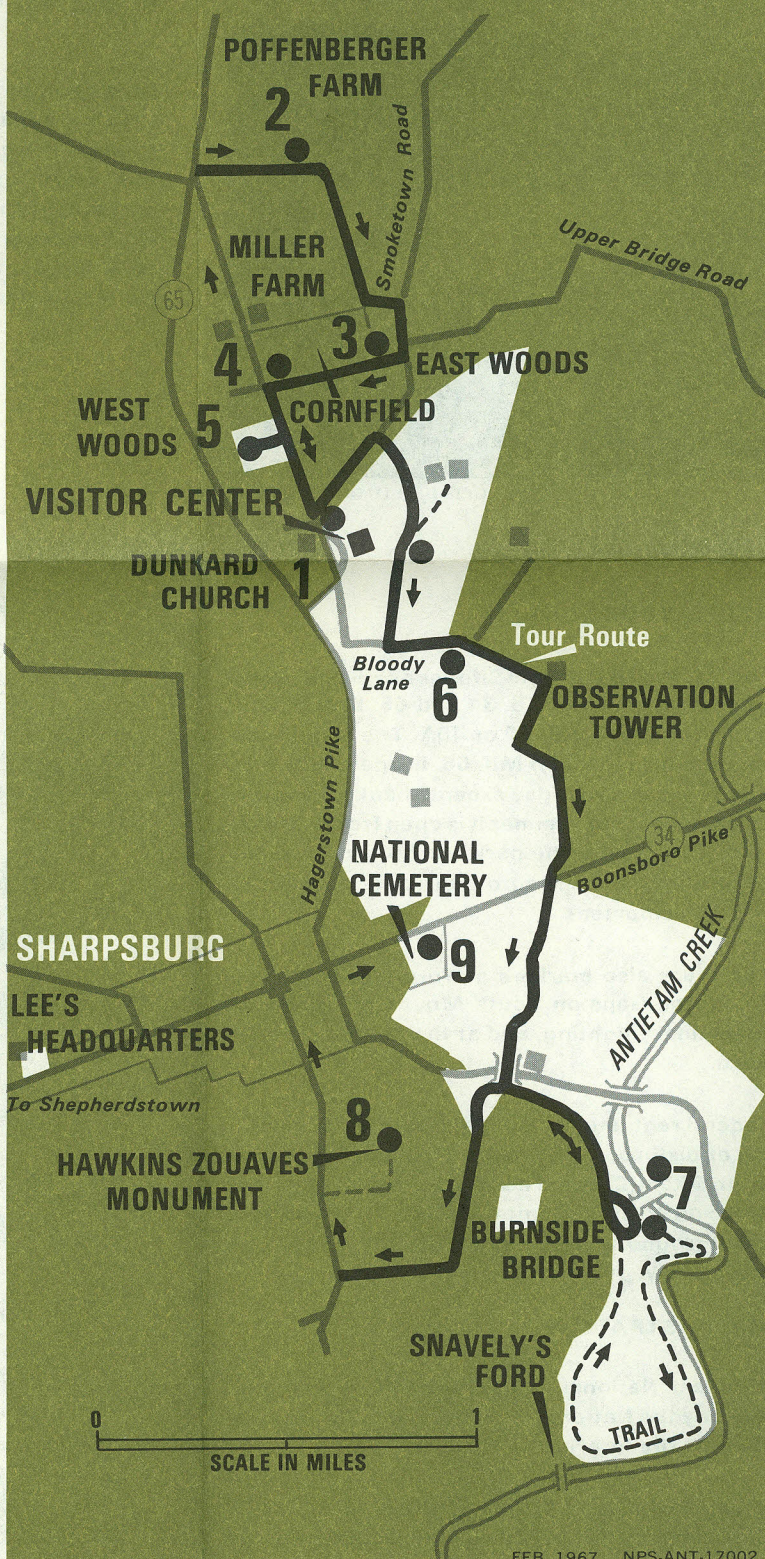
6. For 3 hours, Confederate infantry contested this sunken road pointblank with French's and Richardson's Union divisions—producing 4,000 casualties. Ever since, it has been known as "Bloody Lane."

7. Named after the Union general whose four divisions were held off all morning by a few hundred Georgia riflemen, the Burnside Bridge—and the Union failure there—was a key factor in McClellan's lack of success at Antietam. Possibly the battlefield's best known landmark, the bridge dates from 1836.

8. Hawkins Zouaves Monument marks the site where the battle ended at dusk. Here A. P. Hill's division battered Burnside's final drive to a standstill. Now accessible only by foot, the area offers a splendid view of the pastoral Antietam valley.

9. The remains of 4,773 Federal soldiers, including 1,836 unknown, are buried in Antietam National Cemetery, located on a hilltop at the eastern edge of town.

ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD



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. The visitor center, north of town on Md. 65, is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day except Thanksgiving and December 25. In summer it is open from 8 a.m. to dark. Check with the park staff for information on facilities and the auto tour route during current development.

There are also markers at Turner's, Fox's, and Crampton Gaps on South Mountain, scenes of preliminary fighting, and at the Shepherdstown 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 campground is available on the C & O Canal, 5 miles away.

ADMINISTRATION

Antietam National Battlefield Site is 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 of the site.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR — the Nation's principal natural resource agency — has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

