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ANTIETAM

NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD






# ALTERNATIVES

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## INTRODUCTION



This document presents three preliminary alternatives for future management, use, and interpretation of Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg, Maryland. The battlefield was set aside in 1890 to commemorate the single bloodiest day of the American Civil War. Of the 40,000 Confederate and 87,000 Union troops who met at Antietam Creek on September 17, 1862, more than 23,000 were dead, wounded, or missing at day's end.

Antietam's establishing legislation called for commemorating the tragic event by marking battle lines and command positions on the land. That mandate was expanded in 1960 when Congress recognized the Antietam landscape as an important cultural resource and authorized the restoration of the battlefield to its condition at the time of the battle. The alternatives presented in this document include actions to fulfill the 1960 mandate and to ensure the long-term preservation of the battlefield and its historic scene.



*"Everybody tears cartridges, loads, passes guns, or shoots. Men are falling in their places or running back into the corn . . . The men are loading and firing with demoniacal fury and shouting and laughing hysterically . . ." Major Dawes, 6th Wisconsin. Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam by Stephen W. Sears.*



*"The thunder-like cracking of the bursting shells, the whistling, rocking, shrieking of the heavy missiles soon became one prolonged roar. . ." One of General Meade's men. Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam.*





## THE PARK TODAY



*The most remarkable feature of Antietam which distinguishes it from most other battlefields managed by the National Park Service is the almost perfect integrity of the site. The setting was always rural. The German farmers who owned the farms around the battlefield tended to maintain their antebellum houses and barns in good repair. So far there has been only a minimum of development around Sharpsburg. The farms are still farmed. Corn still grows in Miller's cornfield, where the heaviest fighting took place.*

– from the 1981 National Register listing

The historic scene at Antietam today is essentially as it was in 1862 – a collection of farms and farmlands in a rural setting. At the time of the battle, corn was the primary crop, and orchards and family gardens were common; a variety of fence types delineated individual lands. Most of the farms remain, and those that are no longer in use have been planted with grass to maintain their open character. Some changes have occurred. A portion of the land was wooded during the war, and most of those woods are now gone. Some of the historic roads have been paved or abandoned, and other roads have been added. However, all in all, the battlefield appears much as it did when Union and Confederate troops met there 127 years ago.

Of the structures and features added to the battlefield since the war, several have become

historic in their own right. These include Antietam National Cemetery, where nearly 5,000 soldiers are buried; the 103 monuments placed by states and individuals to commemorate the men who fought at Antietam; and the observation tower overlooking Bloody Lane, one of the major battle sites. Only a few houses and the visitor center near the park entrance, the automobile tour route, and other paved roads and parking areas are modern intrusions.

The National Park Service manages the national battlefield and national cemetery, including the commemorative monuments that have been placed there. The Park Service maintains the vegetation around the monuments and prevents them from getting overgrown. Based on Park Service policy, no new monuments will be erected unless authorized by Congress or approved by the director of the National Park Service (*Management Policies*, 9:17).

Three areas within the park are the primary focus for interpreting Antietam's battle events – Miller's cornfield in the north, Bloody Lane in the center, and Burnside Bridge in the south. These areas witnessed the heaviest fighting during the morning, midday, and afternoon phases of the battle. The auto tour of the park takes visitors through these areas, retracing troop movements and interpreting human interest stories through wayside exhibits and an audio tape that can be rented. The tour also includes interpretation of Dunker Church and a number of farmhouses and associated barns that

existed during the war, including the Mumma, Piper, Sherrick, Otto, and Pry houses. Dunker Church has been restored and is open to visitors. The facades of the historic farmhouses are maintained, and the historic scene associated with them is preserved. The Pry house is open for prearranged guided tours.

In addition to the auto tour, a 2-1/2-mile hiking trail follows Antietam Creek and part of the route used by the Union soldiers during the Burnside Bridge battle. Information about the park and a film and exhibits about the battle are available at the visitor center. A bookstore run by the cooperating association is in the lobby of the building. The exhibits, film, book sales, and an observation deck are on three different floors in the visitor center, which is confusing to visitors and difficult to maneuver in large groups.

There are no concession or commercial services in the park. The state of Maryland maintains a picnic area along the Maryland Route 34 (SR 34), which is adequate to meet the demand for picnicking in the Antietam vicinity. Other visitor services are provided by the private sector in nearby communities.

Park management functions are in a number of areas in the park. Headquarters, administrative offices, and the library are on two different floors in the visitor center. Office space is inadequate for present staff, and the offices in the basement are in violation of code because there is no emergency exit door. Maintenance

occupies a building near the cemetery. An adjacent C&O Canal maintenance operation is in a nonhistoric log structure and is highly visible to park visitors.

The 3,245-acre battlefield includes the lands where major troop movements and counter-movements occurred. These lands were authorized by Congress for inclusion in the park because they were considered to be the most historically significant. More than 1,000 acres within the park remain in private ownership and are not available for visitor use and interpretation.

Changing land uses in Washington County are beginning to affect the rural setting of the park. Although the county contains more than half of the total orchard land in the state and is the second largest producer of dairy products, farmland acreage has declined in the last 20 years; since 1980, 3,000 acres have been lost to development. In addition, the completion of two major interstates together with improvements to other roadways has made commuting to Washington, D.C., more practical and has encouraged an influx of new residents who require housing and other suburban amenities. Ways need to be sought to accommodate these changing demands while protecting park resources and the surrounding setting.



## ALTERNATIVES



Three alternatives are presented here for your consideration and review. They range from maintaining existing conditions to restoring most of the historic scene. Although the alternatives propose distinct actions, they all share the common objective of preserving Antietam National Battlefield while continuing to provide for visitor understanding and appreciation of its resources. An illustrated poster is included in the pocket at the back of the document to aid you in visualizing the actions that would be taken under alternative B.



*"The ground was covered in blue . . . I could have walked without putting my feet on the ground."  
Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam.*



*"Pale and bloody faces are everywhere upturned. They are sad and terrible, but there is nothing that makes one's heart beat so quickly as the imploring look of sorely wounded men who beckon wearily for help you cannot stay to give." New York Tribune war correspondent. The Gleam of Bayonets by James V. Murfin.*



Antietam National Battlefield

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## **ALTERNATIVE A: STATUS QUO**

Under this alternative the National Park Service would continue to maintain the park in its present, largely historic condition and to provide for visitor use.

### **Landscape Restoration and Resource Management**

No additional actions would be taken to restore the historic scene. Those areas that reflect the landscape of 1862 would be maintained as accurately as possible so that the visiting public could visualize conditions during the battle. Other resource management actions would be limited to the maintenance of historic structures owned by the Park Service within available funding. These structures include Dunker Church and the Mumma and Piper farms and Otto, Sherrick, and Pry houses. Existing NPS policy would continue to govern decisions about the placement of new monuments at Antietam.

### **Visitor Circulation**

Existing circulation patterns would be maintained, and people would continue to learn about Antietam by going to the visitor center and touring the battlefield by car or bicycle.

### **Interpretation**

The existing stops on the tour route would remain the primary focus of interpretation. The

visitor center would continue to provide interpretation of the human story and aspects of the battle through audiovisual programs, exhibits, and publications.

### **Land Protection**

The 1983 land protection plan for the park would be revised, taking into account the October 1988 legislation (PL 100-528) that removed the ceiling on the amount of land that could be acquired in fee. Land within the current park boundary would be evaluated on a parcel-by-parcel basis to determine if fee acquisition was necessary. Easements and other land protection methods would be proposed for lands that provide a visual backdrop for the park's historic resources. The Park Service would also continue to work with state, county, and local officials, interested organizations, and private citizens to preserve the rural scene outside the park boundary.

### **Park Operations**

Administrative and maintenance staff would continue to occupy the visitor center, maintenance building, and cemetery lodge. The Pry house would continue to provide housing for one employee.



-  Interpretive Node
-  Primary Road
-  Secondary Road
-  Tour Route
-  Restored Historic Road
-  Road to be Removed
-  Trail

## Alternative B Extensive Scene Restoration / New Circulation Patterns

Antietam National Battlefield  
United States Department of the Interior - National Park Service



## **ALTERNATIVE B: EXTENSIVE SCENE RESTORATION/NEW CIRCULATION PATTERNS**

This alternative would involve restoration of Antietam National Battlefield to the maximum extent possible consistent with continued public access to its principal features. Actions would be largely confined to lands within the current authorized boundary.

### **Landscape Restoration and Resource Management**

Based on historical data, the vegetation patterns (farm fields, woods, and orchards) would be reestablished to resemble the conditions just before the September 17th battle. Available information indicates that the changes would not be extensive because the battlefield retains much of its historic integrity. The most visible changes would be the replanted Piper farm orchard and other orchards and the reestablished west woods, north woods, and east woods near Miller's cornfield. Fence lines would be evaluated and restored to their historic locations and appearance.

The most significant change would involve the existing road system. Wherever possible, road segments that did not exist at the time of the battle and are not critical for visitor access would be removed, and the areas restored to their appearance in 1862. Road segments that are on historic alignments and are not necessary for visitor or resident circulation would be

restored to historic conditions. This would include the historic roads in and around the cornfield, the portion of the old Hagerstown or Sharpsburg Pike adjacent to the cornfield, most of Bloody Lane, and the old road from the Sherrick and Otto farmhouses to Burnside Bridge. Proposed circulation patterns are described in the next section and illustrated on the Alternative B map.

As part of historic scene restoration, the exteriors of the Mumma, Sherrick, and Otto farmhouses and the Pry house would be restored, and these houses along with the previously restored Piper house would be maintained. The Mumma farmhouse would be adaptively used to accommodate staff offices, thus freeing space at the visitor center for interpretive needs. The Piper house and farm would be maintained as a historic component of the park and used more actively for interpretation. The Otto and Sherrick farmhouses would be restored and maintained as a part of the historic scene, but no adaptive uses would be permitted because modern elements and cars would be an intrusion on the historic setting at these houses. The Pry house would be available for organized group interpretation. All other structures owned by the National Park Service that are not elements of the historic scene would be removed. The Park Service would also seek to place all existing utilities underground to reduce their visual impact on the historic scene.

Because the objective of this alternative is to re-create the historic scene to the extent possible, the existing battlefield monuments would be maintained, but future monuments would not be permitted.

### **Visitor Circulation**

As part of the restoration actions described above, the number of paved roads in the park would be reduced. Interpretation would continue to focus on the sites of the three major battle phases – the cornfield, Bloody Lane, and Burnside Bridge – but new roads and parking areas would be developed to provide access to these sites. Road alignments would be carefully designed to ensure they would not intrude on the historic scene; wherever possible, roads and parking would be hidden by topographic features or vegetation.

Automobile access into the cornfield would be along a new alignment paralleling Maryland Route 65 (SR 65). Mansfield Avenue north of the cornfield would be retained for local traffic, but Cornfield Avenue and other nonhistoric roads and parking areas would be removed. Parking for the cornfield would be relocated to an area near Philadelphia Brigade Park. At Bloody Lane the existing paved road parallel to the lane would be relocated out of sight, and parking would be provided to the southeast of the observation tower, also out of sight of the lane. The existing parking area at Burnside Bridge would remain, and vehicle access would be provided along a new road from the west. To

facilitate access from Burnside Bridge to the national cemetery and to remove auto tour traffic from the main part of Sharpsburg, Rodman Avenue would be converted from one-way to two-way traffic and visitors would be routed back along this road to complete the auto tour. Suggested road alignments and parking are shown on the Alternative B map.

Initial contact and orientation would continue to be provided at the visitor center, and battlefield visits would continue to conclude at the national cemetery.

### **Interpretation**

**Visitor Center.** There are several problems with the current space allocations and functions in the visitor center. The cooperating association sales area dominates the entrance lobby. To entering visitors, the most important function of the visitor center appears to be the bookstore. Visitor use spaces are on three different levels, creating confusion and making access for disabled visitors a major problem. The present exhibits and audiovisual program do not interpret the Civil War as a chapter of American history or the place of Antietam within this chapter. To correct these problems, the following actions would be taken.

The cooperating association sales area would be relocated into the south wing of the visitor center. This would allow more space for sales and storage, would place cooperating association offices and storage on the same floor, and would separate the cooperating association function from the exhibit area. It would also allow fee collection and sales to be handled by one person during periods of low visitation.

The basement of the visitor center would be expanded and converted to office space supporting interpretive activities. The exhibits would be moved to the lobby, and this area would be arranged with fee collection/information to the right of entering visitors (as at present), a staircase up to the observation room in the same approximate location as the present staircase down to the exhibits, and an elevator for disabled persons up to the observation room.

The present exhibits interpreting the soldier's story would continue to be displayed. However, because exhibits are not a good medium for telling general stories and interpreting abstract ideas, they would not be used to tell the story of the Civil War and Antietam's role in it. The existing motion picture, "Antietam Visit," is excellent and would continue to be used for a number of years. In addition, a National Park Service motion picture providing an overview of the Civil War would be developed. This movie would be available for showing at all National Park Service Civil War battlefield sites. It would include the reasons for the war,

major strategic and political events during the war, and the very different America that emerged from the war.

Because the visitor center is a modern intrusion in an otherwise historic area, when it reached the end of its useful life, it would be removed and its functions relocated to a new building away from the battlefield sites.

**The Cornfield.** Miller's cornfield was the site of possibly the most intense and sustained fighting in American history. This was the bloodiest place on the bloodiest day. Historic accounts speak of the noise of cannon and musket fire, the smoke, and the leveling of the cornfield by bullets. Interpretation here would be in two parts. First, a transition area would be established between the new parking area and the old Hagerstown or Sharpsburg Pike, with stone walls, bas reliefs, photographs, tactile and textural elements, and art work to expose visitors to the sights of the cornfield battle and its aftermath. Interpretation here would be through imagery rather than words. The objective would be to convey the intensity of the fighting and its cost and to elicit emotions rather than ideas.

The second interpretive component would be a low plaza at the top of the rise near the south side of the cornfield. A central battle map and perimeter wayside exhibits would tell about the various phases of the battle and the individuals and units that participated. These exhibits would be low profile.

**Bloody Lane.** Interpretation at Bloody Lane would be provided through wayside exhibits and possibly an audio station. The exhibits would be mounted on a small circular plaza surrounding the observation tower.

The tower sits on the spot where Bloody Lane makes a right-angle bend to the south. The lane would be restored on both the west and south sides of the tower, and the portion of the lane that is covered by the tower plaza would be indicated by using a different material on the plaza floor. No exhibits or structures of any kind would be placed in the viewshed from the plaza down Bloody Lane to the west. Views would be unobstructed, and the design would invite visitors to walk down into the lane.

Wayside exhibits around the plaza would describe events and battle participants: the battle itself, the Irish Brigade, the approach of the Union army from the Roulette and Mumma farms to the sunken road (Bloody Lane), McClellan's headquarters in the Pry house, Lee's headquarters in Sharpsburg, the Union signal station on Red Hill, and Burnside Bridge and the afternoon phase of the battle. If an audio tape was used, marching music could be played to help re-create the soldiers' experience as they marched into battle with the bands playing just behind them.

**Piper Farm.** Antietam might acquire a comprehensive Civil War medical collection, which could be the basis of an outstanding permanent exhibit. The Piper barn was used as a field hospital during the battle and would be

an appropriate place to display this collection. In addition, the Piper farmhouse would provide an excellent place to interpret the effects of battle on the civilian population.

To accomplish these objectives, parking and access to the Piper farm would be provided along the new road to Bloody Lane, the existing historic lease would be acquired, and the Piper house would be converted from its bed-and-breakfast function to general interpretive uses.

**Burnside Bridge.** Interpretation at Burnside Bridge would not change substantially. A new wayside exhibit focusing on General Burnside and the Union army command problems would be added. Exhibits on the hill above the Otto farmhouse would be relocated to the Burnside Bridge parking area and modified as needed to fit the new location.

The path leading from the parking area down to the bridge would be realigned to reduce its visual intrusion for visitors looking back up the hill and to eliminate an existing erosion problem. The surface material of the path would also be changed to make it blend in with the hillside.

The wayside exhibit area on the opposite side of the bridge would be redesigned to improve interpretation and reduce the visual impact of the area. Currently, the bridge appears to be simply a bridge. The historic trace of the connecting road would be restored for visual continuity.



**Walking Tour Wayside Exhibits.** The intent of this alternative is to restore as many of the roads as possible to historic conditions. These restored roads would provide opportunities for hiking and biking that are not currently available. The exhibits left when the existing auto tour road was removed would be retained to provide interpretation for walkers and hikers. A new exhibit interpreting the farthest advance of the Union army would be provided at the Hawkin's Zouaves monument.

**Additional Wayside Exhibits and Interpretation.** Wayside exhibit interpretation would also be considered for sites such as the national cemetery, the Shepherdstown or Hagerstown Confederate cemetery (if one of them is added to the park), the Pry house, and Lee's headquarters in Sharpsburg.

### **Land Protection**

Within the current park boundary, land protection proposals would be based on the management objective of restoring the historic landscape to the maximum extent possible. Fee acquisition would probably be the only feasible option for areas needed to restore the historic scene and provide for visitor use. Scenic easements, purchase and sale with covenants, or other land use controls would be recommended for tracts along the park perimeter that provide a visual backdrop. Areas that have been developed in a compatible manner under the current zoning ordinance would continue to be protected through county zoning. Appropriate land protection methods would be developed on

a parcel-by-parcel basis and prioritized to best use limited available funds. A boundary expansion would be recommended to include the Confederate portion of the Shepherdstown or Hagerstown Cemetery, the Grove farm, and the property currently owned by the Conservation Fund. The Park Service would also continue to work with state, county, and local officials, interested organizations, and private citizens to protect the rural scene outside the boundary.

### **Park Operations**

Staff offices would be provided in the adapted Mumma farmhouse. In addition, the Antietam maintenance shop would be enlarged to accommodate a sign maintenance function, and the C&O Canal maintenance area would be removed and the area converted to parking lot for the national cemetery.

### **Other Considerations**

It is anticipated that traffic will gradually increase in the region surrounding Antietam. To avoid conflicts with commuting traffic and further enhance visitor use, the Park Service would encourage an evaluation of the feasibility of constructing a bypass route around Sharpsburg. It should be noted that any such realignment would not change Sharpsburg's existing street system, but it would reduce the amount of traffic currently using Sharpsburg as a thoroughfare.



- Primary Road
- Secondary Road
- Tour Route
- Restored Historic Road
- Road to be Removed

## Alternative C Partial Scene Restoration / Simplified Circulation

Antietam National Battlefield  
United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

## **ALTERNATIVE C: PARTIAL SCENE RESTORATION/SIMPLIFIED CIRCULATION**

The principal objective of this alternative would be to simplify automobile circulation while preserving the battlefield and maintaining the 1890 military road layout. Elements of the historic scene would be restored, but the existing paved road system would be largely retained and modified to provide for one-way circulation from the visitor center through the sites of the three major battle phases to the national cemetery.

### **Landscape Restoration and Resource Management**

As in alternative B, a number of actions would be taken to restore the battlefield scene, in particular the historic vegetation patterns and fence lines. The major difference would be the treatment of the road system. Under this alternative historic alignments would be used to a large degree for visitor traffic; therefore, road restoration would be substantially reduced (see the Alternative C map for details).

Although preservation of historic structures would be an important objective, options would be explored to seek restoration of these structures through historic leasing or similar measures. Only the Mumma house and barn would be restored by the Park Service for use in interpretation. Historic leasing arrangements, similar to the existing lease at the Piper farm,

would be sought for the Otto and Sherrick farmsteads. The Pry house would be available for organized group interpretation.

Under this alternative, monument proposals would be evaluated under existing policies and would be subject to design guidelines that would include a perpetual care trust fund.

### **Visitor Circulation**

A one-way circulation system would be established, beginning at the visitor center, proceeding through the sites of the three major battle phases, and ending at Antietam National Cemetery. The suggested one-way system is shown on the Alternative C map. Because the road would only handle one-way traffic, the width of the road prism could be reduced. In addition, the surface material would be carefully chosen to reduce the visual impact of the road network on the historic scene. Starke Avenue, Cornfield Avenue, and the road behind the Dunker Church would be restored to their 1890 conditions. The two parking lots next to Bloody Lane would be removed and replaced by a single lot southeast of the observation tower.

### **Interpretation**

The visitor center would not be modified under this alternative, but other interpretive improvements proposed under alternative B would be implemented. In addition, because most of the existing road network would still be

open, interpretation of the impact of the war on the civilian population and display of medical artifacts would be provided at the Mumma house and Mumma barn, respectively.

### **Land Protection**

Protection actions for lands inside the park boundary would be similar to those described in alternative B, except that the boundary expansion would include only the Conservation Fund property. The Park Service would continue to work with state, county, and local officials, interested organizations, and private citizens to protect the rural scene outside the boundary.

### **Park Operations**

Headquarters for the park would continue to be at the visitor center. Maintenance would be expanded to accommodate a sign shop. The C&O Canal maintenance area would be removed, and the space used to provide additional parking for visitors to the cemetery.

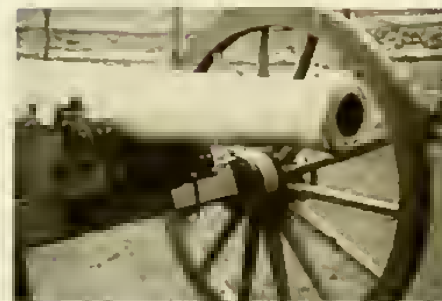




## SUMMARY

The alternatives in this document were developed to fulfill the 1960 legislative mandate "to preserve, protect and improve the Antietam Battlefield . . . to assure the public a full and unimpeded view thereof and to provide for the maintenance of the site . . . in, or its restoration to, substantially the condition in which it was at the time of the battle of Antietam." The planning team recognizes that the battlefield is a place of great historical significance, a place where tragic events played a major role in shaping the future of the nation. The team also recognizes that the community of Sharpsburg and the surrounding county are an integral part of that history and of the present-day experience at the battlefield. With this in mind, we have tried to be sensitive to the needs and interests of nearby residents and to achieve the support and cooperation of all those interested in the future of Antietam National Battlefield.

We encourage you to comment on the alternatives that we have presented by writing to the superintendent or attending one of the scheduled public workshops. Following review of this document, we will prepare a draft general management plan and environmental document that will detail actions to be taken under the three alternatives and evaluate the potential effects of implementing them. That document will also be circulated for public review and comment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.



*"In the time I am writing every stalk of corn in the northern and greater part of the field was cut as closely as could have been done with a knife, and the slain lay in rows precisely as they had stood in their ranks a few moments before. It was never my fortune to witness a more bloody, dismal battle-field." Major Dawes, 6th Wisconsin Volunteers. The Gleam of Bayonets.*







As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural and cultural resources. This includes fostering wise 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 ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The department also promotes the goals of the Take Pride in America campaign by encouraging stewardship and citizen responsibility for the public lands and promoting citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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