

THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM: A TURNING POINT IN THE WAR

by

Lyndsey Sweet

A Senior Honors Project Presented to the

Honors College

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for

Graduation with Honors

by

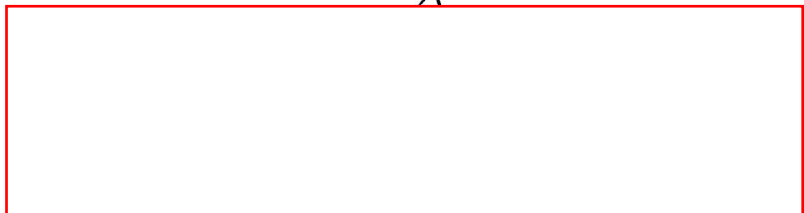
Lyndsey Sweet

Greenville, NC

May 2014

Approved by:

Faculty Mentor (signature
required):



Donald Parkerson Type name here

The Battle of Antietam was the single bloodiest day of the American Civil War and is considered one of the major turning points of the war. This battle was the first of two attempts by Robert E. Lee to go on the offensive and take the war onto northern soil and into the Union. This battle, while the fighting lasted only one day, resulted in the loss of life of thousands of soldiers both for the North and the South. There is some controversy over who won the battle and which side the battle helped by advancing their campaigns. The battle was a draw on both sides, but tactically was a loss for the South. The battle took place in three stages, which were affected by the geology of the battlefield. The weaponry of the South played an important role in the Battle of Antietam. The North was able to use the victory to raise morale, keep the South from gaining diplomatic recognition, and emancipate the slaves in the rebel states. While the Emancipation was generally thought of as a positive result of the battle in the North, there were negative reactions to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. This battle also provided Lincoln the political cover he needed to make changes in the leadership of his army. The Battle of Antietam, the single bloodiest day of the Civil War, was a victory for the North, which allowed them to pursue actions that eventually lead to the conclusion of the war.

In order to fully understand the Battle of Antietam, there must be a discussion as to why Robert E. Lee decided to invade the North. Previously, the war had been fought on southern soil, but after the success of Lee's Richmond campaign, which repelled a Union invasion in June and July 1862, Lee and Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, decided that the time had come to strike an offensive attack on the North. The main goal of this campaign was a rear

battle operation, with the objectives of targeting Union logistics and the political and emotional will of the northerners.¹ Lee's main goal was to reach Harrisburg, Pennsylvania because it was the location of the Union's major supply centers, their key line of communications, and the location of several main bridges and railroads. It was also weakly defended. Lee wanted to reach these areas by traveling through western Maryland, which would provide much needed food for his troops. With the war taking place mainly in the South, the southern farmers were unable to plant and protect their crops to feed the people. By going through the rich soils of western Maryland and on to Harrisburg, Lee thought he might be able to provide critical nourishment and supplies to his men and the people back home. The final goal of the Maryland Campaign was to attempt to convince the people of Maryland to persuade their legislature to vote to secede from the Union and join the southern cause.² The state of Maryland was a slave state, but remained part of the Union as a border state. The state was divided as far as its citizens providing support for the Union or the Confederacy. Lee believed that if he could win in the North, he could convince Maryland to support the South. These goals were Lee and Davis' plans for the war, but as will be discussed later, these goals would not prove to be successful.

The Battle of Antietam, or Sharpsburg according to the South, took place on September 17, 1862 in Sharpsburg, Maryland near Antietam Creek. After the victory at the Second Battle of Manassas, Lee turned his attention on Maryland. He felt that if he could invade Maryland and set up a rebel presence, Washington and other

¹ Major William T. Gillepsie Jr., "Logistics and Lee's Antietam Campaign,"

² *Ibid.*

major northern cities including Philadelphia would be intimidated. The Confederacy thought, "The political and psychological peril could work as effectively as the physical interruption of supplies to force the foe to leave his fortifications while still groggy from defeat."³ Lee had wanted to go into Maryland and convince the people to support the Confederacy, and to join the Confederate Army. He thought that if he could establish a presence in Maryland, that the other northern states would be terrified and this would enable the South to win the war. Another goal in attempting to defeat the Union on Union soil was to obtain international recognition and receive assistance, specifically from France and Britain.⁴

The town of Fredrick had not provided Lee and his army with what they needed to survive and to occupy Maryland. Therefore, he had drawn up battle plans and the Army was on the move from Fredrick to Hagerstown, Maryland in order to gain support. Lee moved across the region with 55,000 men. When Lee's Special Order no. 191 was discovered on a field, Union General George B. McClellan was able to know the exact locations of Lee's troops and brought 77,000 men to defend Maryland.⁵ On the morning of September 17, 1862, there were 130,000 soldiers ready to fight.

³ Joseph L. Harsh, *Taken at the Flood* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1999), 47.

⁴ John Tooker, *Antietam: Aspects of Medicine, Nursing and the Civil War* (The American Clinical and Climatological Association, 2007).

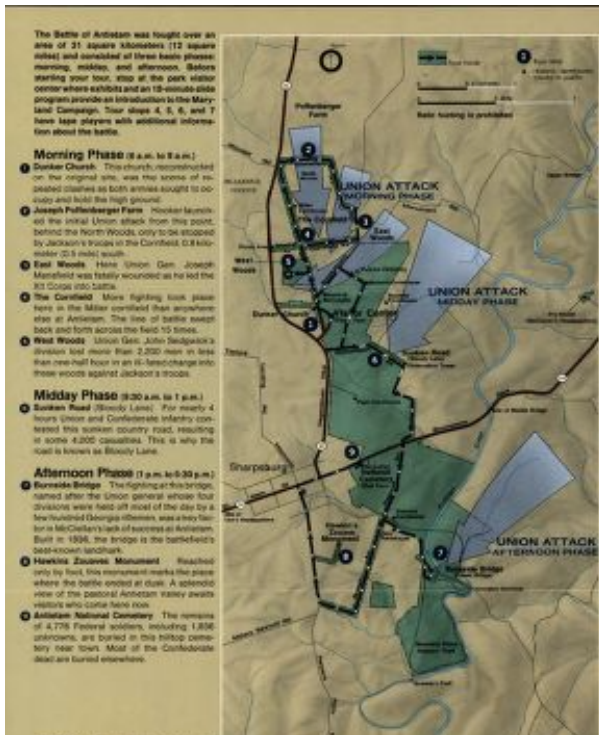
⁵ *Ibid.*

The North had gained a major advantage when Lee's Special Order no. 191 was intercepted. The order included a list of where Lee was ordering each division to go. In the note it says, "He may select, take the route towards Sharpsburg, cross the Potomac at the most convenient point and by Friday morning take possession of the Baltimore and Ohio R.R."⁶ When McClellan obtained this Special Order he knew exactly where each line was going and when. He was able to then send troops to defend the area near Sharpsburg, at Antietam Creek. This interception is the key reason that McClellan was able to defend Maryland and force Lee's army back into Virginia. If he had not accidentally intercepted the note, there would have been an element of surprise and the South may have won this major battle. However, since the South was defeated and severely weakened, they were not able to maintain a position in enemy territory. The Special Order No. 191 interception was a significant reason the North was able to defend Antietam.

On September 17, 1862, early in the morning the first shots were fired. The battle can be divided into three stages taking place at three locations near Antietam Creek. Union General Hooker fired the first shots near Joseph Poffenberger Farm at the Miller cornfields, number 2 on map 1. The cornfield proved to be a difficult location in which to fight because the corn was so thick and the soldiers on both sides were unable to see who they were shooting at. Hooker's men advanced, driving back Jackson's troops, exposing them to the elements. Eventually Jackson

⁶ Robert E. Lee, Special Order No. 191.

was reinforced by additional troops, driving Hooker's men back along the land they had gained.⁷ The morning fighting was a constant gaining and losing of ground between the two divisions and was the location where most of the casualties took place.



Map 1.
This map, provided by the National Park Service, illustrates the phases of the battle throughout the day.

The second phase of the battle took place mid-morning to early afternoon on the sunken road, which is now referenced to as Bloody Lane. Bloody Lane is located at number 6 on map 1. The road was given this nickname because this section of the battle was four hours of constant fighting resulting in nearly 4000 casualties.⁸ The Union divisions sought to drive the southerners back across the lane. This resulted in hours of harsh and tragic fighting. After four hours, due to exhaustion, this portion of the battle ended. Bloody Lane was the last major phase of the battle, however the fighting was not completely finished.

⁷ National Park Service, "Antietam National Battlefield, Maryland," 1980.

⁸ *Ibid.*

The third and final portion of the battle took place at the bridge over Antietam Creek, later renamed Burnside Bridge after the Union General Burnside, who along with his troops, had been attempting to cross the bridge since mid-morning. Four hundred Georgian troops had driven him back each time, until one o'clock in the afternoon when Burnside was finally able to cross the bridge.⁹ The men on both sides took a several hours to reorganize their troops, and in that time, General Hill of the Confederacy and his division joined the Georgian troops and pushed Burnside and his men back across the bridge. After this push back, the fighting ended for the day and for the battle. The next day Lee and his men began their retreat back into Virginia.

McClellan's plan was "Turn both flanks and roll up Lee's army."¹⁰ McClellan was trying to play a game of chess with Lee, moving troops one set at a time. McClellan had no troops at Lee's center and was merely attempting to defeat the flanks on the right and left, weakening the Confederates. However, McClellan did not dispatch enough troops at one time. For example, Lee moved Walker's Division from his weakened right side to his left in order to provide more protection on that side. Some of the Confederate troops were moved to defend the line and the line was stretched as far as was possible. McClellan then sent Burnside to attack. Had he been able to attack at the same time as Hooker on the other side, Lee would have

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Tooker, *Antietam: Aspects of Medicine, Nursing and the Civil War.*

been greatly overwhelmed and the battle could have been shortened.¹¹ McClellan did not send additional troops to defend against the Confederate left, and Lee was able to recover.

The artillery shortage of the Southern Army was another advantage for the Army of the Potomac in their defeat of the Army of Northern Virginia. Lee's army brought in 246 pieces of artillery to the battle site. Although this may appear to be a large number, the pieces did not all match and were mainly short-range artillery. According to Gallagher's book, "Of the fifty-nine batteries present at Antietam, only five had uniform armaments."¹² Since the pieces did not match and were mainly short range, the few long distance batteries present were not effective. The quality of ammunition also was an issue. The fuses tended to burst inside the barrels affecting the ability to continue to use the weapon.¹³ While the Confederate Army was taking time to match ammunition to weapons, the Union Army was prepared and able to attack more quickly.

Although the Army of Northern Virginia had difficulties with their artillery, it was not completely ineffective. Since the number of batteries was so low, the South decided to have the artillerist shift about on the battlefield. This allowed those manning the cannons to "Close in on the attacking enemy infantry, their main target,

¹¹ James V. Murfin, *The Gleam of Bayonets* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 245.

¹² Gary W. Gallagher, *The Antietam Campaign* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 105.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 106.

while dividing the fire of the superior Federal artillery.”¹⁴ The Confederates were able to fire at the Union troops at short distances and were able to effectively hold the ranks of the Union soldiers.

The geology and terrain of the field that the battle was fought on was a major factor in the number of deaths on September 17, 1862. Most areas of the battlefield had either Conococheague formation or Elbrook formation. The Conococheague formation mainly consisted of limestone and created an open, less rigid landscape. The Elbrook formation created a landscape that provided more cover and natural trenches in the land. Other obstacles on the battlefield included fences, walls, and wooded slopes that reduced visibility.¹⁵ In a study done by Judy Ehlen and R.C. Whisonant, they determined that the terrain had a significant impact on the number of casualties during the Battle of Antietam. They said,

Our analysis clearly shows that the lower relief Conococheague topography resulted in significantly higher casualty rates as compared to those for the Elbrook. Terrains underlain by purer limestones tend to be open rather than deeply dissected, have low relief, and few obstacles. They tend to allow good visibility; good fields of fire for both small arms and artillery.¹⁶

Clearly, in the areas where the Confederates, who reached the battle site first, were able to dig down into the trenches, they held the upper hand in the battle. However, the majority of the battle was fought in the Conococheague terrains where the land

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Judy Ehlen and R.C. Whisonant, *Military Geology of Antietam Battlefield, Maryland* (Radford, VA: Geology Today, 2008), 23-25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

was flatter and the visibility was higher, allowing the North to use their large number of troops to kill more southern soldiers, weakening the flanks on either side of General Lee. The battle began in the upper Conococheague terrain, which was made up of cornfields, and then moved to the Elbrook terrain, the Sunken Road region. The terrain in the Sunken Road areas allowed the troops to attempt to dig down further into their trenches, which provided more shelter and therefore led to longer periods of fighting on the Sunken Road.

By nightfall, there had been many casualties on both sides. A total of 23,000 men died, were wounded, or reported missing.¹⁷ According to the *Official Records of the War on Rebellion*, 2,010 men were killed, 9,416 wounded, and 1,043 were missing, resulting in 12,469 total casualties for the North.¹⁸ For the South, there were reports of 1,550 killed, 7,550 wounded, and 1,020 missing for a total of 10,320 casualties.¹⁹ While these numbers show that the North lost more men, the North started with a significantly larger number of troops available for battle. Image 1 shows the Confederates burying their dead in the Antietam fields.²⁰ This photograph is significant in two ways. First, it shows the incredibly large number of dead bodies the South had to bury. Secondly, it shows that the North was more efficient at picking up their dead and burying them, because by the time the photographers got to the battlefield, there were no northern soldiers out on the fields. In a letter from a

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁸ United States War Department, *The Official Records of the War on Rebellion* (Washington: Government Print Off), Series 1 Volume XIX Part 1, pg 34.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Alexander Gardner. *Antietam, Maryland. Burying the dead Confederate soldiers*, photograph, (Washington, D.C., Library of Congress: *Civil War glass negative collection*).

soldier, William C. White, he wrote, “It was four miles long and the dead lie all along in lines in one place there was a regular line of battle for about one hundred yards they lay in twos where Ricketts battery opened grape and canister is mowed the rebels down like grass I saw a great many of our dead but twice as many rebels.²¹” This quotation emphasizes the extensive number of deaths during the battle, and shows how the soldiers described the encounter to their families.

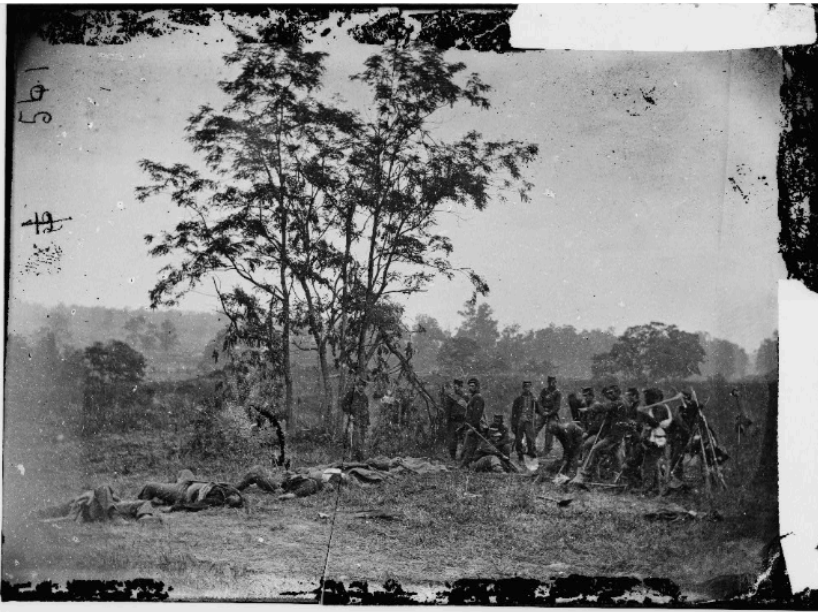


Image 1.
This image, taken by Alexander Gardner, depicts the Confederate soldiers burying their dead after the Battle of Antietam.

During the night, Lee gathered his generals and told them to attack only if McClellan attacked in the morning. McClellan sent an urgent message to Washington asking for more troops. In reality, however, he had Porter’s entire Corps of 12,800 men as well as some remains of other troops that had not been used the previous day, resulting in 25,000 men who had not fired a single shot on September 17, 1862.²² McClellan had possessed an ample number of troops to attack a second time

²¹ Faith Charlton, *The Battle of Antietam: A Philadelphia soldier’s experience*, (Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center, September 2012).

²² Murfin, *The Gleams of Bayonets*, 297.

and would also outnumber the remaining Confederate troops, but was not aware of his resources. Therefore, the day was spent waiting on more men and ammunition.

The Confederates were disappointed by McClellan's failure to attack. The troops were discouraged that even though they had better ground most of the battle, they were unable to win. They had suffered enormous casualties and their divisions were in shambles. Of the nine division commanders present at the battle, three of them were killed. Eighty-six of the one hundred seventy-three regimental officers were also killed or wounded.²³ These losses involved only officers and commanders, and did not include the number of infantrymen that were killed during the twelve-hour battle. Despite these losses the men wanted to fight. They felt that being on the offensive and attacking the North on Union soil would help them win the war.

In the late afternoon on September 18, 1862, McClellan sent a message to General Sumner saying, "The commanding general directs you, if the enemy appears to be retiring, to mass your troops in readiness to move in any direction. The other corps commanders are directed to push forward their pickets, and if the enemy is retreating, to mass their commands."²⁴ McClellan, after the battle, claimed that these were fighting orders, but none of the other commanders realized this and did not attack Lee's troops again that day. He also provided excuses that his men were tired and hungry. They were not in correct formation and with the right corps. He

²³ James M. McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 133.

²⁴ Murfin, *The Gleams of Bayonets*, 302.

claimed that they were out of ammunition and they had not had reinforcements arrive on the scene. Whatever the case may be, McClellan did not direct any additional attacks towards Lee's army on September 18, 1862.

At approximately the same time as McClellan gave the orders to be at the ready if Lee's men moved, Lee had also decided what action he and his troops would take. On September 18th, in the late afternoon, General Lee sent out orders of evacuation to his men.²⁵ The only reason Robert E. Lee decided to stay in Maryland on September 18th was to assess whether he could attack McClellan's right side and advance his campaign to convince Maryland to join the Confederacy and as a result, alarm other major northern cities. Once it was confirmed that McClellan was not going to initiate another day's worth of fighting, Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia had no choice but to retreat back across the Potomac. Although the Confederate Army wanted to remain on the offensive, they did not have the resources to stay in the North.

It was the opinion of many commanders in the South to withdraw from Maryland instead of remaining in the state. Longstreet had wanted to retreat even before the battle took place. Once the message was sent out that Lee had ordered the Army of Northern Virginia to retreat, all the wagons were packed up, and by nightfall they had begun the difficult trip back into Virginia. There was a different atmosphere as the men crossed back into Confederate lands. On the way into

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Maryland, they had been positive, but on the trip home, the mood was somber. McClellan's troops did not attempt to attack the Confederate troops during their retreat, and the remaining troops made it back to safety without another shot being fired.

Although neither side clearly won the battle, the North's morale rebounded and they believed they had won the battle. Prior to Antietam, the Union troops and the citizens of the Union were losing faith. They were destroyed in the Second Battle of Manassas and the soldiers were beginning to doubt their leaders. After the Battle of Antietam, the morale of the soldiers and people of the Union had been restored.

It is important to note that Southerners and southern newspapers did not agree with the initial reports that the North had won the battle. The *Charleston Courier* stated, "If we failed to rout the enemy, it was only because the nature of the ground prevented him from running."²⁶ This was a very extreme response to the battle but many more were more realistic, admitting that they did not clearly win the battle, but that the Union Army of the Potomac had suffered a great number of losses on their homeland.

The Battle of Antietam can be seen as a northern victory because, as mentioned above, it dashed Robert E. Lee's hopes of being on the offensive. In his mind, if he could have a presence in the North, he could win the war. However, as a

²⁶ *Ibid.*

result of Antietam, he was not able to take the offensive for another eight months.²⁷

This time allowed the North to prepare more troops and develop a strategy to defeat the Confederacy.

The battle had an important impact on the result of the Maryland Campaign as well as the rest of the war. Lee did not expect McClellan to reorganize the Army of the Potomac so quickly, and did not expect McClellan to meet him prior to reaching Pennsylvania. McClellan's able-bodied Union troops attacked Lee's semi-unprepared troops in Maryland. Secondly, Lee's plans failed because he did not succeed in his goal of gaining the support of Maryland. It is true that Maryland was divided over the war, however Lee marched into western Maryland, which was not supportive of the South. The people of Maryland instead saw men who were barefoot, under clothed, poorly fed and lacking ammunition and supplies.²⁸ When Lee issued his Proclamation to the Confederates, which attempted to convince the citizens of Maryland to join the Confederate forces, he was met with the polite yet non-sympathetic tone of the people of Maryland. The main supporters of the Confederacy were located in southern Maryland, primarily in Baltimore and Annapolis and in eastern Maryland. By invading in western Maryland, Lee had made the mistake of taking their food and supplies, thinking they would support the South. Instead, he made the people of western Maryland believe more strongly in their decision to support the Union.

²⁷ McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom*, 133.

²⁸ Gillepsie, 38.

As a result of the Battle of Antietam, Lee was forced to retreat back into Virginia in worse shape than the Confederate Army had been before. They had lost around 10,000 men in the battle including several generals. With this heavy hit, Lee would not be able to attack in the North for another eight months, until the Battle at Gettysburg. These heavy losses proved to be detrimental to the army. It was becoming increasingly difficult to convince the men that had not already become soldiers to enter into the war efforts. It was difficult to replace the infantrymen and generals lost at Antietam, although large numbers of replacements were needed since the Confederates were already largely outnumbered by the Union troops. One positive point is that the North did not invade the South again until November, giving the Confederates time to harvest the crops they desperately needed for survival.

Many people, including Lincoln were not happy with McClellan after the battle of Antietam. They wondered why he did not attack Lee on the second day, when he had enough forces to demolish Lee's army. This feeling continued for two months after the battle. McClellan did not cross the Potomac into Richmond in a timely fashion giving Lee and his men the chance they needed to prepare themselves. They were able to grow crops, replace some men, and regain some of their strength. Despite Lincoln's persistent messages to McClellan to cross into Virginia and attack the Confederates, McClellan chose to act slowly. On November 7, 1862 Lincoln relieved McClellan of his duties and ordered Burnside to take command of the army. Lincoln later explained to his private secretary that he, "Peremptorily ordered him to advance [but McClellan kept] delaying on little

pretexts of wanting this and that. I began to fear he was playing false—that he did not want to hurt the enemy.²⁹” The Battle of Antietam gave Lincoln the opportunity to position his leaders in an effort to do what he thought would help the Union Army defeat the ever-weakening Confederates.

The Battle of Antietam aided the North by providing Lincoln the opportunity to present the Emancipation Proclamation. Previously, Lincoln wanted the focus of the war to be on preserving the Union, but after the Battle of Antietam, he altered his course of action. Lincoln had addressed his cabinet several weeks before to present the Emancipation, but decided to wait for an increase in morale to give orders to the Union. On September 22, 1862, President Lincoln presented the following to his cabinet:

You all remember that, several weeks ago, I read to you an Order I had prepared on this subject, which, since then, my mind has been much occupied with this subject, and I have thought all along that the time for acting on it might very probably come. I think the time has come now. I wish it were a better time. I wish that we were in a better condition. The action of the army against the rebels has not been quite what I should have best liked. But they have been driven out of Maryland, and Pennsylvania is no longer in danger of invasion. When the rebel army was at Frederick, I determined, as soon as it should be driven out of Maryland, to issue a Proclamation of Emancipation such as I thought most likely to be useful. I said nothing to any one; but I made the promise to myself, and --to my Maker. The rebel army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfill that promise.³⁰

At the start of the war, Lincoln's main goal was to restore the Union. The issue of slavery was not brought up between Lincoln and the people in the first year

²⁹ McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom*, 152.

³⁰ Abraham Lincoln, *The Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation*, 1962.

of the war. However, with the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, the goal of the war shifted to eliminating slavery in the rebel states. If the rebel troops had not retreated back into Virginia, they would have remained a threat to Maryland and Pennsylvania. The morale of the North would have continued to be low, and therefore Lincoln would not have issued this order declaring the freedom of all slaves in the rebel states if these states did not rejoin the Union.³¹ This portion of the Emancipation is key, because it satisfied the border states. They were able to keep their slaves because they were a part of the Union. The border states were necessary to keep Washington and the heart of the Union from being surrounded by Confederate forces. The Battle of Antietam played an important role in the freeing of these slaves in the rebelling states.

Although the Emancipation freed only the slaves in the rebelling states, there was some worry and criticism of Lincoln for initiating this stance because of the border states. While they were able to keep their slaves, many worried what would happen to these states and their slaves when the war was over. One newspaper article, "Effect of the Emancipation Policy on the Border States" published by the *Liberator* on November 27, 1863 talks about the fear of the Emancipation causing the border states, such as Maryland, to secede from the Union, exposing the capital to the Confederates. The article states, "The objection most strongly urged was, that it would alienate the border states from

³¹ Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation, 1962.

the Union, and drive them inevitably into rebellion.³² While this article goes on to explain that Maryland took a vote which decided that slavery must slowly die within their state, and they were in support of the Union more than ever before, others in the North, especially the Copperheads, continued to be concerned that the border states might rebel. Maryland supported the North more now than ever before because of the Battle at Antietam, which had created stronger, more ardent support from Western Maryland.

It is a common misperception that the North was anti-slavery and that the northerners were content with and supportive of the Emancipation. While many of the citizens of the northern states did support the emancipation of slaves in the rebel states, there was one demographic of people who did not support this move by Lincoln. The Irish, particularly in New York, were not pleased with the Emancipation. When the Irish had come to the United States in the 1840's they came by the thousands. They lived in poverty and fought for the unskilled jobs in New York, taking these jobs away from the freed African Americans. During the Civil War, they would be required to fight for the Union, which, after the Emancipation was fighting to free the slaves in the South. The Irish believed that they were fighting to free the African Americans who would in turn flood to New York and take their jobs.³³ Many of the Irish were also Democratic supporters at the start of the war, prior to any fighting, due to the Democrats' stance on slavery.

³² "Effect of the Emancipation Policy on the Border States." *Liberator*, November 27, 1863, p. 33,48.

³³ Albon P. Man, "The Irish in New York in the Early eighteen-sixties," *Irish Historical Studies*, 7, no 26 (September 1950), 89.

After the Emancipation Proclamation, the Irish started riots in the streets and started hurting and targeting African Americans. The Irish had come from a land where they were repressed, where they had little money and had to work hard to put food on their table. They then came to a land where hard work was still required, but they were in a country that valued liberty.³⁴ Fredrick Douglass wondered how, "People who so nobly loved and cherished the thought of liberty at home in Ireland could become, willingly, the oppressors of another race here."³⁵ Clearly, the Irishmen were not supporters of the war, but not because they wanted to keep the country together. Rather, they thought the war was about slavery. They felt that the abolitionists had caused the war and that those who supported the Emancipation were generating more unrest, rather than working to end the war. The Irish comprised a major portion of New York's population and they did not support the Emancipation Proclamation like so many thought the entire North did.

Another after effect of the Battle of Antietam was the shift in politics, especially in the North. Many Massachusetts families supported the war, and their sons freely entered the Union Army. However, after the Battle of Antietam, many families had lost their loved ones. They wanted their lives to return to normal and they did not want to lose any other family members. These changes in their way of thinking can be illustrated by examining the patterns of the election in 1862 in Massachusetts. In Worcester County, there were 2.5 deaths for every 1,000 men or 1 death for every 400 families in this county during the

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

battle of Antietam.³⁶ These rates are rather high, so one could assume the residents would no longer support the Republicans in their war efforts. However, Worcester County was largely abolitionist and the battle helped increase the county's support of the war effort.

The same case cannot be made in several other Massachusetts counties. In these counties, the Democrats, who were trying to gain support in Massachusetts, focused mainly on the Republican conduct and policy. They claimed that the Emancipation was radical, the Republicans failed to negotiate with the South, and that the Republican Party was meddling in military affairs.³⁷ The goal of decreasing Republican support in Massachusetts through these claims proved to be successful. In five of the counties with the greatest number of losses as a result of Antietam, Republican turnout dropped 15% and in Boston and Suffolk counties, the two counties with the highest number of casualties in the battle, the Republican turnout dropped 30%.³⁸ The Republicans, while still strongly supported in the North, were losing that support, especially in the counties with families of those who had died in the Battle of Antietam.

In Pennsylvania, the Republicans controlled the government in 1860. They controlled 41 of the state's 65 counties. The House held a majority of the seats 71 to 29 and the Senate held the majority 27-6.³⁹ However, two years later

³⁶ Lloyd Benson, *Ballots and Bullets: The Politics of Antietam and Chickamauga*, (Juniata Voices, 2013), Volume 13, pg 4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*, 5.

in the elections after the Battle of Antietam, the numbers looked very different. The Republicans controlled only 33 of the state's counties; the House lost the majority of seats, the numbers now 45 to 55.⁴⁰ The Republicans had clearly lost support in Pennsylvania. In the counties where turnout improved, no sons had been lost at Antietam; in the counties where turnout dropped, only three had not lost sons in the battle. These numbers illustrate that Republican popularity declined after the battle and the emancipation of slaves.

The examples of the attitudes of the Irish in New York and the change in political support in the North are important in illustrating how the Emancipation and Battle of Antietam affected the lives of those at home in a negative way. The battle, while mainly positive, did have some negative repercussions. Those who felt threatened by the number of newly freed slaves fleeing to the North did not approve of Lincoln's plans. Along with that, those who lost sons in the battle slowly lost their support for the Republicans. While these families still wanted to live in the North and supported the Emancipation, they also wanted the war to end so they would not lose any more fathers, sons, uncles, and brothers.

Robert E. Lee believed that if he could push Maryland to join the Confederate States, he could gain international recognition and receive help from outside countries. This would have been an enormous boost to the Confederate Army in terms of supplies, men, and money. Due to the fact that they could not maintain a presence in the North, they did not gain any diplomatic respect from other

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

countries.⁴¹ The victory at Antietam for the Union troops was important in this regard because if they had lost, the South most likely would have received diplomatic recognition from countries such as Great Britain and France. With recognition, they likely would have been given financial support and would have won the war. Since the North won the battle and Lincoln was able to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, the South did not receive acknowledgement from Great Britain and France. These countries turned away from helping the South because slaves had been freed in their countries prior to the American Civil War. Since the Emancipation Proclamation now turned the focus of the war to slavery, rather than restoring the Union, Britain and France were no longer able to support the South's efforts to become its own country without appearing to be pro-slavery. If these countries had supported the South in its efforts, their people would not have approved, as they had voted to free their slaves years prior. Since the South lost this chance for support, they also did not gain any men or supplies to help rebuild. As a result, the North was able to send their well-supplied troops into the South, which was running low on men, morale, and supplies.

An interesting aspect of the Emancipation involving diplomacy is the reaction of Britain and France to the Emancipation. These countries originally thought that the Preliminary Emancipation was a, "Cynical attempt to deflect European opinion or as a desperate effort to encourage a slave insurrection."⁴² The Anti-Americans in Britain and France also harped on the line in the Proclamation that stated, "Will do

⁴¹ Ehlen and Whisonant, *Military Geology*, 21.

⁴² McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom*, 143.

no act or acts to repress [slaves] in any act they may make for their actual freedom.⁴³ That line was referring to the fact that slaves crossing into the Union would not be returned to the South, but the British and French often used that line to prove the Emancipation had different effects than Lincoln stated. However, after Lincoln published his final Emancipation, Britain and France changed their views. They realized Lincoln was not trying to influence their decision on aiding the South or trying to drive the slaves into rebellion, but that he was actually trying to free the slaves. Britain and France now stated, “The Emancipation Proclamation has done more for us here than all our former victories and all our diplomacy.⁴⁴” Since these countries now fully believed in and supported the Emancipation, it was almost certain that the South was not going to receive political support from Europe, in particular, from France and Britain.

Overall, the Battle of Antietam was more beneficial to the North than the South. Although there were many casualties on both sides, the losses took a heavier toll on the South than the North. The Confederates lost more men than they could afford to lose, while the Union troops never deployed their entire set of forces. The victory gave the Union the morale boost they needed to keep fighting the war and allowed them to trust Lincoln for the time being. Although the battle is considered a win for the North, Lincoln had to reorganize his leaders due to the actions of General McClellan. McClellan did not order his troops to attack immediately and in the days following the war he sent excuse after excuse to Lincoln, which eventually caused

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

Lincoln to release him from the General-In-Chief position and put General Burnside in charge. The victory also provided Lincoln the ideal opportunity he had been waiting for to issue the Proclamation of Emancipation. Although the Emancipation was considered a success for the North, it is important to note the negative reactions in the North during this period. Finally, the Union victory at the battle of Antietam stopped the Confederate States of America from gaining diplomatic recognition from Britain and France, which ensured they would not receive support, supplies, men, and money from other countries. All of these results of the Battle of Antietam benefited the North and enabled the Union to eventually end the war.

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