



The 118th Pennsylvania crossing the Potomac on September 20, 1862 with the cement mill in the background.



"The Confederate Cemetery, Shepherdstown, W.Va." Image of Elmwood in the 1890's. WV & REGIONAL HISTORY CENTER.

The Siege of Harpers Ferry



AVENUE of INVASION

FOLLOWING THE
Path of the 1862
Maryland Campaign
in Jefferson County

While many of Porter's men crossed the river, Hill's men attacked Union pickets and launched a full assault under heavy artillery fire on the surprised Federals. They immediately began a withdraw, but the 118th Pennsylvania had crossed a ravine, which separated them from the main body of the army.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Follow the trail around the side of the cement mill ruins to the remains of the 6 kilns further up river on the trail.

STOP 7—THE CORN EXCHANGE REGIMENT

In the face of A.P. Hill's rapid advance, a courier reached Colonel Charles Prevost of the 118th relaying the order to retreat. Insulted by the irregular nature of the message, Prevost refused and ordered his regiment to stay put. The inexperienced Pennsylvanians had not yet seen action, and, unbeknownst to them, nearly half of their rifles were defective. The regiment was quickly surrounded and pushed back to the edge of the cliffs above the Potomac. Prevost was seriously injured in an attempt to rally his men. They began to retreat in haste, some of them taking refuge in the kilns of the cement mill. The 118th suffered the worst casualties of the battle.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Return to your vehicle and turn right on to Trough Road moving toward River Road. Turn left on to River Road and continue 1 mile to South Mill Street. Turn left onto South Mill Street and go 0.2 miles. Turn right on to East Washington Street and go 0.2 miles. The Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church will be on your left. Street parking is available.

STOP 8—CARING FOR THE WOUNDED

In the days that followed the battle, both sides began the ghastly task of caring for the wounded. The Presbyterian Church was the largest makeshift hospital in Shepherdstown, serving the casualties from the Battles of South Mountain, Antietam, and Shepherdstown. The town's residents soon became overwhelmed with thousands of gravely wounded soldiers. It has been estimated that at one point, as many as 6,000 wounded sought shelter in the area's homes and businesses. Mary Bedinger Mitchell, a Shepherdstown resident, wrote of the days following the Battles of Antietam and Shepherdstown as "the most trying and tempestuous week of the war for Shepherdstown."



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Go northwest on West Washington Street toward South Church Street. Go 0.2 miles. Turn left at the second cross street on to West Virginia 480 South/ South Duke Street. Go 0.2 miles to Elmwood Cemetery on the right. Street parking is available.

STOP 9—ELMWOOD CEMETERY

The results of the campaign yielded little headway for either army in the broad scope of the war. The intense fighting which had taken place essentially returned both armies to their respective positions, and neither side could claim any significant advantage despite the campaign's tremendous losses. There are 114 soldiers who fought in the Maryland Campaign interred at Elmwood Cemetery. Other notable individuals buried here include Alexander Boteler, owner of the cement mill, and Henry Kyd Douglas, local resident and author of *I Rode with Stonewall*. In less than ten days, the two armies had sustained nearly 30,000 casualties.

The Battle of Shepherdstown





The Shepherdstown battlefield: the Osbourn farm above, the cement mill and quarries below. Printed in *The History of the Corn Exchange Regiment*, compiled and published by John L. Smith in 1888.

LEE’S 1862 MARYLAND CAMPAIGN

Following a successful spring and summer, Confederate General Robert E. Lee led the Army of Northern Virginia into Maryland, the war’s first northern invasion. Though he had won a decisive victory at the Battle of Second Manassas, Lee knew he could not remain in Virginia long. His army needed supplies, and he saw an invasion of the North, which was in a state of disarray politically and militarily, as a way to capitalize on previous successes. Lee convinced Confederate President Jefferson Davis that Richmond would remain safe if he removed his army. Additionally, Lee hoped that leaving Virginia would allow a full harvest in the Shenandoah Valley and secure future supplies for his men.

THE LOST ORDER

On September 9th, a Union soldier found a copy of Order No. 191 from Robert E. Lee in a meadow outside Frederick, MD. “The Lost Order” detailed Lee’s plans for the upcoming campaign and provided newly-reappointed Commanding General George McClellan with a detailed insight into the Lee’s strategy. He had divided his army, sending General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson to Harpers Ferry to capture the Federal arsenal there. McClellan failed to decisively act on the information to gain a full advantage, but he did ultimately realize he could split the Confederate Army by attacking Lee’s force near South Mountain, MD. The Maryland Campaign then began in earnest, ultimately leading to the single bloodiest day in American history, the Battle of Antietam. In the midst of this critical period of the war, Jefferson County would become central to the operations and hopes of both North and South.



“Bolivar and Camp Hill from Bolivar Heights.” Undated postcard from Walter Dittmeyer in Harpers Ferry. WEST VIRGINIA & REGIONAL HISTORY CENTER.



The Murphy Farm. JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION.



The Shepherdstown Cement Mill, known as Potomac Mills, in 1992. HAER-WV-82, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.



TOUR STARTING POINT: Potomac Street, Harpers Ferry, WV. Start at the ruins of the US Armory Site in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, located on Potomac Street.

STOP 1—HARPERS FERRY

Lee could not allow his army to be threatened by the Union force at Harpers Ferry as they advanced into Maryland, and the town also provided a necessary supply line for his army into the Shenandoah Valley. In September 1862, a Union garrison of 14,000 soldiers under Col. Dixon Miles occupied the town. Lee had expected the garrison to flee as they had in Martinsburg and Winchester, but Miles was ordered to not withdraw, forcing Lee’s hand. He sent 23,000 men to lay siege to Harpers Ferry.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Head southeast on Potomac Street which becomes Shenandoah Street when you turn right. Go less than 1 mile and turn right onto US-340 South. Go 1 mile turning right onto US 340 North ALT/ West Washington Street. Take the first left onto Whitman Avenue.

STOP 2—BOLIVAR HEIGHTS

Gen. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson’s division left Frederick, MD on September 10th. He approached Harpers Ferry on three sides to occupy Maryland Heights, Loudoun Heights, and Schoolhouse Ridge. The town was effectively surrounded, but the rivers were an inconvenient barrier with no bridge across, and Miles occupied higher ground at Bolivar Heights to potentially combat Stonewall at Schoolhouse Ridge. Miles held fast but wrote McClellan that if the garrison was not supported within 48 hours, he would have to surrender. On September 14th, Gen. A.P. Hill’s division marched on Miles’ position here.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Exit the Bolivar Heights parking lot back toward West Washington Street. Turn right onto West Washington Street returning to US-340 South. Go 1 mile and turn left onto Millville Road. Enter the NPS parking lot on your right after 0.5 miles.

STOP 3—JACKSON’S FLANK ATTACK

After the success of Hill’s attack on Bolivar Heights and with the high ground surrounding Harper’s Ferry in his possession, Jackson ordered additional artillery be brought up that evening in preparation for an assault on the morning of the 15th. Jackson’s assault included a daring flanking maneuver by Hill’s men on the Federal position here, at the Murphy Farm. While contemplating surrender, Miles was mortally wounded by cannon fire. The surrender at Harpers Ferry was the largest Union surrender of the war. After paroling the prisoners, Hill left to join Jackson at Antietam.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Turn left out of the NPS parking lot onto Millville Road, go 0.5 miles toward Alstadts Hill Road. Continue on to Bakerton Road, which turns into Engle Molers Road. Go 11.5 miles. Turn right onto Shepherdstown Pike (WV-230) and follow until you reach South Duke Street. Turn right onto South Duke Street. Go 1 mile. You will cross the Potomac River into Maryland, turning right on to Canal Road. Go 0.5 miles to the parking lot on your left.

STOP 4—PACK HORSE FORD

Jackson marched toward Shepherdstown and crossed the Potomac here to join Lee at Antietam. The Battle of Antietam on the 17th was the single bloodiest day of the Civil War, despite being tactically inconclusive. On the night of the 18th, Lee began to withdraw his depleted forces back into Virginia at this ford. Through the night, a long train of infantry, cavalry, and supply wagons crossed the Potomac undisturbed. Despite being aware of the Confederate movement, McClellan opted not to follow Lee and encourage further damage to his own battered force.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Turn right onto Canal Road toward Maryland-34 West/Shepherdstown Pike, go 0.5 miles. Turn left onto Maryland 34/Shepherdstown Pike re-crossing the Potomac River, go 0.8 miles. Turn left onto West German Street. Stay straight through Shepherdstown and go 2 miles. West German Street becomes River Road. Turn right onto Trough Road and go 0.1 miles to a small parking area on the right.

STOP 5—CONFEDERATE DEFENSE

Lee positioned 600 men (largely artillery) on the heights above the river under the command of Gen. William Pendleton. The Rebels simply hoped to defend the ford and prevent further attacks on the army as it made its way toward Martinsburg. Pendleton, a preacher from Lexington and friend of Lee’s, did not expect much harassment from the Federal troops across the Potomac. However, on September 19th, Federal sharpshooters crossed Pack Horse Ford and overran his position. He retreated in a panic in search of Lee. The Federals captured four of Pendleton’s 44 artillery pieces, one of which had been captured by Rebels at the Second Battle of Manassas. Despite their success, McClellan passed along an order to General Fitz John Porter to halt the assault and recall his men to the Maryland side of the Potomac. He waited until the next day to launch another attack.



FOLLOWING THE TOUR: On foot, turn left onto Trough Road, back toward the River Road intersection. Turn left onto River Road and go 0.3 miles to the Cement Mill ruins on your right.

STOP 6—THE SECOND DAY

The following morning, on September 20th, Porter ordered two divisions back across the Potomac to establish a bridgehead. Having captured the heights above the river crossing, the Federals sought to continue pursuit of Lee’s army. Aware of Pendleton’s retreat, Jackson ordered one of his divisions commanded by A.P. Hill to return to the crossing site and repel the Union advance.