



## Background and Historical Context

The Battle of Antietam was the bloodiest one day battle in American history: Close to 23,000 soldiers were killed, wounded or missing after twelve hours of savage combat on September 17, 1862. The 12 hour battle began at dawn on the 17th. For the next seven hours there were several major Union attacks on the Confederate left, moving from north to south ([Battle Map](#)). Savage combat raged across the Cornfield, East Woods, West Woods and the Sunken Road as Lee shifted his men to withstand each of the Union thrusts.

After clashing for over eight hours, the Confederates were pushed back but not broken. However over 15,000 soldiers were killed or wounded. While Union assaults were being made on the Sunken Road, a mile-and-a-half farther south, Union Gen. Ambrose Burnside opened the attack on the Confederate right. His first task was to capture the bridge that would later bear his name. A small Confederate force, positioned on higher ground, delayed Burnside for three hours. After taking the bridge at about 1:00 p.m., he reorganized for two hours before moving forward across the arduous terrain—a critical delay. Finally the advance started, only to be turned back by Confederate General A.P. Hill's reinforcements that arrived in the late afternoon from Harpers Ferry, WV.

Despite over 23,000 casualties of the nearly 100,000 engaged, both armies stubbornly held their ground as the sun set on the devastated landscape. The next day, September 18, the opposing armies started to gather their wounded and bury their dead. That night Lee's army withdrew back across the Potomac to Virginia, ending Lee's first invasion into the North. Lee's retreat to Virginia provided President Lincoln the opportunity to issue the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Now the war had a dual purpose of preserving the Union and ending slavery.

Approximately 4,000 soldiers were killed in one single day of fighting on September 17, 1862. In the days that followed, many more died of wounds or disease. For months and years after, the local residents experience the devastation of the Battle. The peaceful village of Sharpsburg became "one vast hospital" and burial ground extending for miles in all directions. When the local residents returned after the Battle they found their houses, barns, and churches turned into field hospitals. In many cases, returning farmers found their crops trampled, fences turned into firewood for soldier campfires, and their food and livestock eaten. Their fields were unplowable because of shallow mass graves filled with Union and Confederate soldiers. It would be several years until these bodies were reinterred elsewhere.

Some losses suffered by the local residents could not be measured strictly in economic terms. After the Battle, William Roulette, who owned a farm in the middle of the battlefield, wrote: "The battle caused considerable destruction of property here. My nearest neighbor lost his house and barn by fire. I lost three valuable horses and sheep, hogs poultry, vegetables, and indeed everything eatable we had about the house so that when we came back we was obliged to bring provisions with us. . ." After the Battle, the Roulette's home and barn were used as hospitals for wounded men and seven hundred dead were interred in their farm fields. The biggest impact, however, was felt through a direct loss to the family itself, as Mr. Roulette continued: "Our youngest died since the battle, a charming little girl twenty months old, Carrie May-just beginning to talk."



Destroyed Mumma Farm, Alexander Gardner photo

New Bern Ct. Ct.  
 9/17<sup>th</sup> 06

P. M.

Sharpsburg Md  
 Dear Sir

Please be so kind  
 as to give me the correct name  
 of the man who owned or lived  
 in the brick house that was  
 burned at Battle Sharpsburg or  
 Antietam - being called by Irish  
 names. I belonged to 3<sup>d</sup> Ct. Co. In  
 -fantry 1<sup>st</sup> Wm L. Drayton's, Ripley's  
 Brigade, D. H. Hill's Division  
 This house stood immediately in  
 our front as the battle was being  
 commenced and at times front was  
 in enemies line. Genl Ripley, to  
 prevent its occupation by sharp  
 shooters & protect his officers from  
 being picked off ordered it to be

**Letter from James F. Clark [Page 1 of 3]**

This letter was sent to the Mumma Family many years after the battle by one of the soldiers who burned their house down during the battle.

Paper. L 9, W 5 3/4 in.

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burnt. A volunteer call was made  
as to who would go out doing or 6 private  
from the A. volunteer and I took charge  
of them being at that time sergeant  
major of the Regiment. After firing  
the house we all got back to our  
lines. Myself being the only one hurt.  
Ripley ordered me to carry order down  
his line to 44 and 48 Ga Regiments to  
come up and take a raid force in their  
front. He was shot soon after I helped  
him. I carried the order down to Ga  
troops and being weak from loss of  
blood went off first by an old  
church and on to our field hospi-  
tal. There a woman - young and bare  
head and black hair helped to bandage  
my arm. How often wondered if  
she was any of the family living  
in prison. Please make all due in-  
quiry as to finding out when they were,  
when caught between the lines of  
battle. I wish to write up the  
particulars of the event truthfully.

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and there are some particulars  
 about the family worth like to  
 learn. On the next campaign,  
 Gettysburg, by the command to which  
 I belonged was assisted to capture Genl  
 M'Henry at Manchester Pa and I had  
 to lay up for repairs and did not  
 get any farther. My Brother, now  
 deceased, said he saw the old quito  
 man or thought he talked with the  
 owner of James' land and he  
 said he had the next time they  
 fought they would get out of  
 his cornfields as he gathered no  
 corn or crops that year. Hoping  
 to hear from you with a list of  
 particulars as to when family went  
 that morning Wed Sep 17<sup>th</sup> 1862  
 as far as I now recall, I remain  
 Yours Respectfully & truly  
 James F. Clark  
 Late ~~Major~~ Major  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Me Regiment

**Letter from James F. Clark [Page 3 of 3]**

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### ***A Fateful Turn***

By James Hope

A Fateful Turn-Late morning looking east toward the Roulette Farm. Amid the smoke, noise and confusion on the northern end of the field, Union troops turned south toward an old sunken farm lane. The rolling terrain helped hide the Southern troops until the Northerners were almost on top of them. Suddenly, the Confederates unleashed a withering fire, leading to a desperate three-hour struggle for control of what came to be known as Bloody Lane. The burning Mumma Farm is seen on the left, and Gen. George McClellan is riding with his staff on his only visit onto the battlefield that day at about 2:00 pm. On the right, Richardson's and French's Union Divisions advancing on Bloody Lane.

Antietam National Battlefield



***Photo of Samuel and Elizabeth Mumma***

This is a photograph on Samuel and Elizabeth Mumma who lost everything they owned, including their house, during the battle.

Paper. L 6 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>, W 4 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.

Antietam National Battlefield, ANTI 1286

# Antietam Battlefield

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Antietam National Battlefield  
P.O. Box 158  
Sharpsburg, MD 21782



## Mumma Family Claim Record

At the time of the Battle of Antietam, the Mumma family had owned and successfully operated a farm near Sharpsburg for more than a quarter of a century. Two days before the Battle of Antietam, Samuel and Elizabeth Mumma and their children evacuated their home. When they returned on September 19, they found only the smoking remains of their house, barn and outbuildings. They later learned that during the early stage of the battle, Confederates positioned in the vicinity were ordered to set the Mumma house on fire in order to prevent Union soldiers from utilizing it as a sharpshooter position. This was the only deliberate destruction of civilian property during the battle. Though they filed a claim with the federal government to be reimbursed for the damage, their claim was denied, as the damages were caused by Confederate, not Union, troops. The year after the battle, the Mummas rebuilt their farm, which still stand today.

A DETAILED EVALUATION OF BATTLE DAMAGE TO THE MUMMA FARM IS FOUND IN CLAIM No. 334 CONGRESSIONAL CASE SUBMITTED BY SAMUEL MUMMA, JR., EXECUTORS OF SAMUEL MUMMA DECEASED VS. THE UNITED STATES FILED MAY 29, 1885, IN THE COURT OF CLAIMS:

ONE HOUSE DESTROYED BY FIRE	2000.00
ONE BARN “ “	1250.00
ONE SPRING HOUSE AND HOG PEN	100.00
STOCK TAKEN	460.00
GRAIN OF DIFFERENT KINDS	537.25
HOUSEHOLD FUNITURE AND CLOTHING	422.23
FARMING IMPLEMENTS WAGON ____?	457.00
FENCE DESTROYED	590.00
HAY “	480.00
LAND DAMAGED BY TRAVELING & BURIAL	150.00
FIFTEEN CORDS WOOD	37.00

TOTAL \$7472.18