The Battle of Antietam (Sharpsburg)

“The Bloodiest Day of the Civil War”
September 17, 1862
Known as the Battle of Sharpsburg in the South
Fought in Sharpsburg, Maryland and Antietam Creek
1st major battle fought on Northern soil
Bloodiest single-day battle in American history
Lee wanted new supplies and recruits from Maryland.

Davis thought they could get foreign recognition by having a battle on Northern land.

McClellan’s army was moving in to attack Lee. Two soldiers found copies of Lee’s battle plans (Special Order 191).

- Lee divided his army and sent them to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, Virginia, and Maryland.

- Could easily defeat if McClellan could move quickly enough.
Prior to battle...

- England & France was on the verge of recognizing the Confederacy as a separate nation. Thus far the South had successfully defended itself.

  - Lincoln, who was moving closer towards declaring the Emancipation of the slaves in the Confederacy, needed a clear victory before he could do so. Europe would have a harder time supporting a Confederacy under siege if the mission of the Civil War were to end slavery in the South (which up until this time had not been the case).
5:30am

Union Attacks across Miller’s cornfield & Dunker Church
Union attacks against the Sunken Road (Bloody Lane) pierced the Confederate center.
Hill (Confederate) crossed the Antietam Creek after returning from Harpers Ferry.
Drove back the Union.
Lee was outnumbered 2:1, but he committed his entire force.

McClellan sent only ¾ of his army, “allowing Lee to fight the federalists to a standstill”.

They continued to battle until Lee withdrew.
Aftermath

- Union- 12,401 casualties
  2,108 dead
    - rep. 25% of the Union
- Confederacy- 10,318 and
  1,546 dead
    - rep. 31% of the Confederates
- More Americans died on Sep 17, 1862 then any other day in the nations history, including WWII’s D-Day and the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001
Confederates dead on Hagerstown road after the battle.
Aftermath cont.

- Strategically, it was the turning point of the war
  - Victory for the Union
  - Emancipation Proclamation
- Despite having more #s, McClellan failed to destroy Lee’s army
  - Lee was able to withdraw
  - battle was inconclusive
President Lincoln and General George B. McClellan in the general's tent near the Antietam battlefield, October 3, 1862.
Lincoln with McClellan and staff at the Grove Farm after the battle.
Burnside Bridge at Antietam National Battlefield is named after Union General Ambrose Burnside who captured the bridge during the battle. (Photo: SNN)
Cites

- http://www.old-picture.com/civil-war/pictures/Battlefield-President-Lincoln.jpg