

The Final Attack Trail

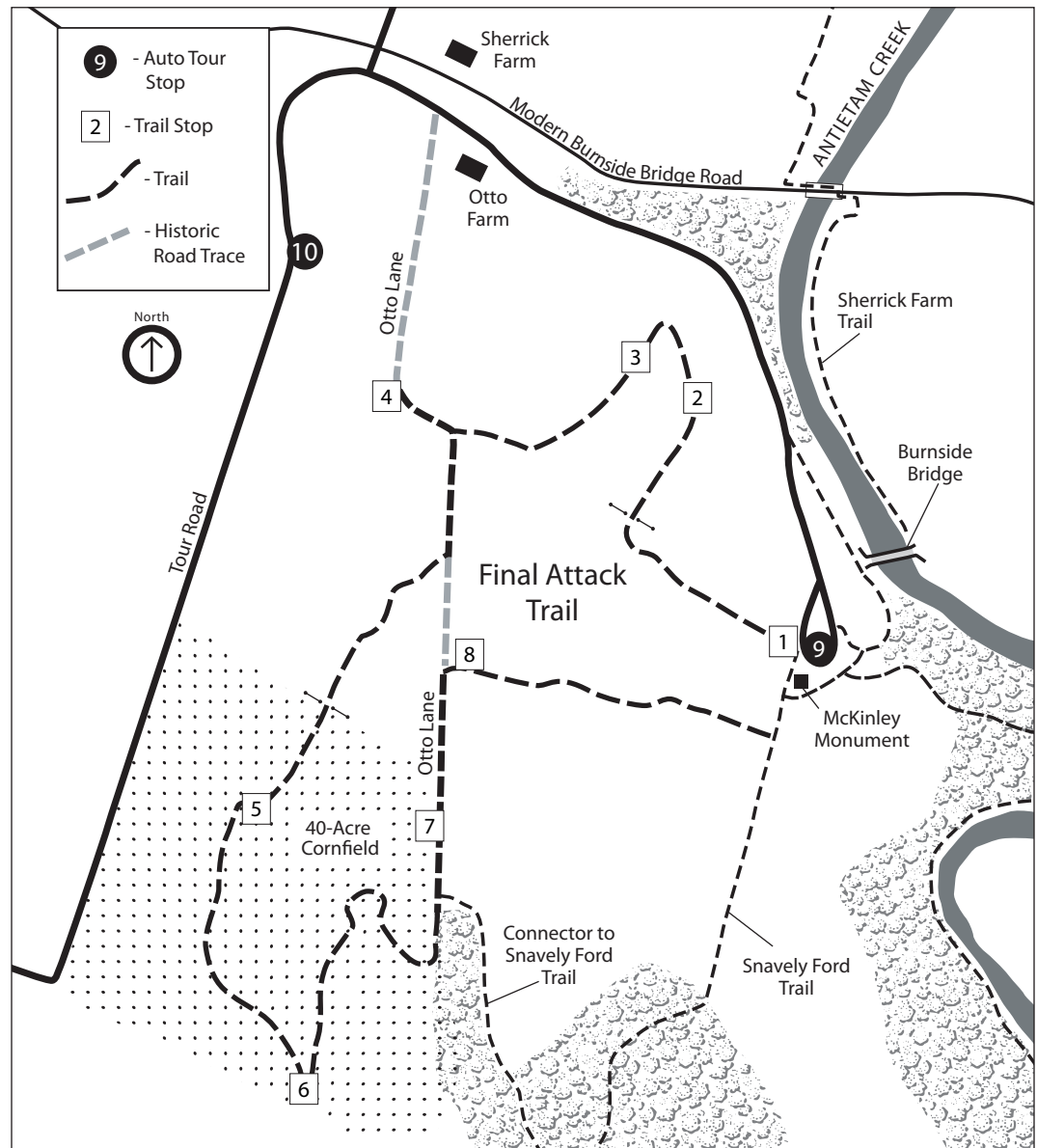
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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



Trail Map

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Stop 1 - Introduction

The Final Attack Trail begins at Auto Tour Stop 9. The trail is 1.7 miles in length and takes 60 to 90 minutes to walk. The terrain is rolling and the trail can be uneven, so good walking shoes are recommended. Please stay on the trail.

After capturing the Burnside Bridge, approximately 8,000 Union soldiers reorganized on this side of Antietam Creek. Forming a line of battle a wide mile, they advanced across the ground that you will walk for the final attack to drive Robert E. Lee's Confederate army from Maryland.

In this part of the battle, which lasts from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., there were five times as many casualties than there were in the action at the Burnside Bridge. Two Generals were killed and Colonel Harrison Fairchild's Brigade of Union soldiers suffered the highest percentage of casualties for any brigade in the Union army at the Battle of Antietam. These final two and one-half hours of combat conclude the twelve hour struggle that still ranks as the bloodiest one-day battle in American history.

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Head west for about 100 yards then bear right.

Stop 2 - Advance on Sharpsburg

You are facing mostly east. Antietam Creek is at the bottom of the hill below you and the Burnside Bridge is 300 yards to your right. The Union 9th Corps gathered behind the hill on the other side of

Antietam Creek and made their assaults on the bridge. Once the Burnside Bridge was taken, about 8,000 Union soldiers gathered on this side of the creek, many of them moving up the creek valley below.

Trail bends around the hill to the west.

Stop 3 - The Sherrick Farm

In the valley in front of you is the Sherrick Farm. The farm was built in the 1830's by Joseph Sherrick Jr. and was leased to

Leonard Emmert at the time of the battle. You are standing at about the center of Burnside's battle line.

From here the trail continues west and down towards the historic Otto Lane and 11th Ohio Monument.

Stop 4 - Otto Lane Respite

As you enter the historic Otto Lane the trail continues south (left). This entire trail is located on the Otto Farm. John and Kate Otto's home is just to the north down this historic farm lane. After they advanced

under the terrible fire from Confederate rifles and cannons to this point, Union soldiers would use this lane and gully to try to find respite from the terror.

Backtrack to the trail which follows Otto Lane south then turn right across the field to the 16th CT Monument.

Stop 5 - Caught in the Corn

It was the 16th CT and the 4th RI of Col. Edward Harland's Brigade that took much of the onslaught of the Maj. General A.P. Hill's Confederate counterattack in the 40-Acre Cornfield. Hill's men had been left behind after the capture of Harpers Ferry.

Lee ordered Hill to join the army as soon as possible. They left Harpers Ferry at 7:00 a.m., marched fifteen grueling miles, waded across the Potomac River, and arrived about 4:00 p.m. Three of Hill's five brigades, about 2,500 men, would arrive in time to attack.

From here the trail continues south, through what was the 40-Acre Cornfield to the southern most boundary of the park.

Stop 6 - The End of the Line

You have walked to the extreme southern end of the battlefield and have completed a mile of the 1.7 mile trail. You are beyond the southern flank of the Union army. Once again, it was on this end of the field

that A.P. Hill's Confederates made their counterattack to support D. R. Jones' division that was being pushed back to Sharpsburg.

From here the trail winds north. You will be walking in the footsteps of Hill's men as they attacked Burnside's flank.

Stop 7 - Final Attack Vista

You are overlooking one of the best battle panoramas at Antietam. From this spot you can see most of the ground covered in the 9th Corps advance and A.P. Hill's

counterattack. As you face west, Hill's soldiers attacked from your front and left and the Union line collapsed from left to right.

Continue north along Otto Lane.

Stop 8 - Artillery Ridge

This ridge line was used by the artillery of both sides. Early in the battle two Confederate batteries held this ground and used it to hold Burnside's men at bay. After the bridge was taken and the Southern

cannon left this ridge, two U.S. batteries would pull into the same position facing in the opposite direction and supported Burnside's advance.

From here the trail turns east. You are now headed back towards the Burnside Bridge.

Final Stop - The McKinley Monument - Soldier, Statesman and Martyr

Sergeant McKinley was a Commissary Sergeant with the 23rd Ohio. During the battle, Sergeant McKinley bravely served the soldiers in his regiment. After the war, McKinley served as a Congressman and Governor of Ohio. He was twice elected as

President before he was shot and killed at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York in 1901. This monument was dedicated in his memory two years later on October 13, 1903.

Burnside's advance and A.P. Hill's counterattack concluded the twelve hours of fighting on September 17, 1862. On this end of the battlefield the Union men fell back to where you started this walk. The difficult terrain, the confusion of battle, and a timely Confederate arrival all combined to stop the Union army and led to a tactical draw. General Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia held their ground on the 18th, then withdrew back across the Potomac River to Virginia.