



NHL Executive Summary



Best Farm (Hermitage) with Confederate artillery (E.Wallace, 2023)

Name of Property: Monocacy Battlefield (Boundary Adjustment & Updated Documentation)
City, State: Frederick, Maryland
Period of Significance: July 8-10, 1864
NHL Criteria: 1
NHL Theme: IV. Shaping the Political Landscape; 3. Military Institutions and Activities
Previous Recognition: National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmark, 1973
National Historic Context: American Civil War

NHL Significance:

- Monocacy Battlefield is nationally significant for its role as an important delaying action in the American Civil War. On July 9, 1864, approximately 6,600 Federal troops commanded by U.S. Maj. Gen. Lew Wallace delayed 15,000 Confederate troops under the command of Gen. Jubal Early from reaching and attacking a lightly defended Washington, DC.
- Though the Battle of Monocacy lasted only one day and ended in the defeat and retreat of federal troops, it delayed the arrival of Confederate forces in Washington, DC, allowing the US Army time to send reinforcements to protect the capital, and thus save Washington from direct attack.
- By preventing a disastrous invasion of the nation's capital, the Battle of Monocacy contributed to Abraham Lincoln's reelection in 1864 and the eventual defeat of the Confederacy. Along with the Monocacy action, a series of Federal victories on the battlefield in September and October 1864 increased voter optimism about the war's outcome and discredited the Peace Democrats' platform,



which called for immediate negotiations with the Confederate government to end the war. Thus, in November, Lincoln defeated the Democratic candidate by a wide margin of the popular vote.

- Noted Civil War historian Gary W. Gallagher asserted that, “it can be said with confidence that Wallace’s troops spared the Lincoln government a potential disaster, and for that reason the battle of the Monocacy must be considered one of the more significant actions of the Civil War.”¹
- In 1934, Congress authorized the Monocacy National Military Park, which was renamed Monocacy National Battlefield in 1976. The National Park Service opened the battlefield to the public in 1991. The NPS-managed Monocacy National Battlefield encompasses approximately 55 percent of the revised National Historic Landmark district.
- As one of only four principal Civil War battlefields located in what was US territory in the Eastern Theater of the Civil War and that were ranked by the Civil War Sites Advisory Committee as Class A or B for their significant impact on the Civil War, the Monocacy Battlefield represents a nationally important resource for the commemoration and interpretation of the American Civil War.

Integrity:

- The battlefield retains elements of all the features identified by the American Battlefield Protection Program as significant—natural features, cultural features, military engineering features, and artifacts—with a high level of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.
- Natural features remain that played a key role in how the Monocacy battle unfolded across the landscape and include the river and its natural fording places (Worthington, Crum’s, and Hughes fords), the river and ridge topography, and patterns of vegetation.
- Cultural features that contribute to this historic landscape include the layout of the farmsteads, fields and fence lines, woodlots, roads and road traces, the railroad (still in operation), bridges, and other buildings that were present and utilized at the time of the battle.
- NPS has preserved, and in some cases restored, the historic character of the cultural properties within the Monocacy National Battlefield boundary, including the Best, Thomas, Worthington, Baker, and Lewis farms as well as the Gambrill Mill area and railroad junction area.
- Military engineering features such as defensive trenches, battle-related archeological sites, and artifact collections are preserved by the wooded and agricultural landscape in areas of significant battle-related activity.
- The battlefield is in a major urban/suburban setting with substantial residential, industrial, and commercial development along its perimeters.
- Some areas of low-scale residential development occur within the NHL boundary, but do not significantly alter the topography or understanding of the way they battle played out over the landscape. In addition, archeological resources may still exist since most of these areas, developed in the first half of the twentieth century, did not substantially regrade the land.
- In the northern section, near Hughes Ford, four large-scale light-industrial/commercial buildings have been recently erected and more are planned. This is a key area of the battlefield where Confederate forces skirmished with Federals as the latter defended the northernmost river crossing on the battlefield (Hughes Ford). While the buildings and associated stormwater management features disrupt the view,

¹Quoted in Marc Leepson, *Desperate Engagement* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2007), 222.



their impact is localized, and the open, agricultural fields surrounding them still strongly recall the agrarian landscape at the time of the battle.

- In certain areas of the battlefield, twentieth-century highways constructed through the landmark (I-270 and I-70) interrupt an otherwise cohesive appearance and introduce incompatible features and sounds. Despite these intrusions, the essence of the nineteenth-century battlefield and agricultural context remains apparent and tangible to the visitor.

Owner of Property:

Multiple public/private (1,357 acres are federally owned as part of Monocacy National Battlefield (MNB) (56%); another 290 acres are privately owned, but within the congressionally authorized MNB boundary; the remainder is other public land owned by the city, county, or private entities and individuals.)

Acreeage of Property: 3,020 (651 acres added by this adjustment)

Origins of Nomination:

This update originated with the National Park Service (NPS, Monocacy National Battlefield). American Battlefield Protection Program grants partially funded the documentation and outreach work. The project was completed with assistance from partner groups including the Frederick County Landmarks Foundation, NPS’s American Battlefield Protection Program, and Maryland State Historic Preservation Office.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Designation of the expanded National Historic Landmark property has the potential to increase public awareness of the Monocacy Battlefield, particularly parts that were previously not encompassed by the NHL boundary or the national battlefield.
- Visitation to and appreciation of Monocacy National Battlefield is anticipated to increase, and the existing “friends” group, the Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation, is already engaged in care and preservation of the battlefield.
- Several partners have contributed to this effort which has led to a better understanding of the extent of the battle and the need for sensitive in the area.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

Previous effort to update the NHL led to questions and concerns from the city and county governments and from a few private property holders. The NPS is undertaking community engagement efforts to answer questions and explain the implications of this boundary adjustment.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of March 22, 2024):

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation:

Advisory Board Recommendation: