

The Emancipation Proclamation
January 1, 1863

A Transcription

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth)], and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

running like a wave along the line, brought the regiment to its feet. A silence fell on every one at once, for each felt that the momentous 'now' had come. Just as we started I saw, with a little shock, a line-officer take out his watch to note the hour, as though the affair beyond the creek were a business appointment which he was going to keep.

When we reached the brow of the hill the fringe of trees along the creek screened the fighting entire, and we were deployed as skirmishers under their cover. We sat there two hours. All that time the rest of corps had been moving over the stone bridge and going into position on the other side of the creek. Then were ordered over a ford which had been found below the bridge, where the water was waist deep. One man was shot in mid-stream.

At the foot of the slope on the opposite side the line was formed and we moved up through the thin woods. Reaching the level we lay down behind a battery which seemed to have been disabled. There, if anywhere, I should have remembered that I was soaking wet from my waist down. So great was the excitement, however, that I have never been able to recall it. Here some of the men, going to the rear for water, discovered in the ashes of some hay-ricks which had been fired by our shells the charred remains of several Confederates. After long waiting it became noised along the line that we were to take a battery that was at work several yards ahead on the top of a hill. This narrowed the field and brought us to consider the work before us more attentively.

Right across our front, two hundred feet or so away, ran a country road bordered on each side by a snake fence. Beyond this road stretched a plowed field several hundred feet in length, sloping up to the battery which was hidden in a corn field. A stone fence, breast-high, inclosed the field on the left, and behind it lay a regiment of Confederates, who would be directly on our flank if we should attempt the slope. The prospect was far from encouraging, but the order came to get ready for the attempt.

Our knapsacks were left on the ground behind us. At the word a rush was made for the fences. The line was so disordered by the time the second fence was passed that we hurried forward to a shallow undulation a few feet ahead, and lay down among the furrows to re-form, doing so by crawling up into line. A hundred feet or so ahead was a similar undulation to which we ran for a second shelter. The battery, which at first had not seemed to notice us, now, apprised of its danger, opened fire upon us. We were getting ready now for the charge proper, but were still lying on our faces. Lieutenant-Colonel Kimball was ramping up and down the line. The discreet regiment behind the fence was silent. Now and then a bullet from them cut the air over our head, but generally they were reserving their fire for that better show which they knew they would get in a few minutes. The battery, however, whose shots at first went over our heads, had depressed its guns so as to shave the surface of the ground. Its fire was beginning to tell.

I remember looking behind and seeing an officer riding diagonally across the field -- a most inviting target -- instinctively bending his head down over his horse's neck, as though he were riding through driving rain. While my eye was on him I saw, between me and him a rolled overcoat with its traps on bound into the air and fall among the furrows. One of the enemy's grape-shot had plowed a groove in the skull of a young fellow and had cut his overcoat from his shoulders. He never stirred from his position, but lay there face downward, a dreadful spectacle. A moment after, I heard a man cursing a comrade for lying on him heavily. He was cursing a dying man.

As the range grew better, the firing became more rapid, the situation desperate and exasperating to the last degree. Human nature was on the race, and there burst forth from it the most vehement, terrible swearing I have ever heard. Certainly the joy of conflict was not ours that day. The suspense was only for a moment, however, for the order to charge came just after. Whether the regiment was thrown into disorder or not, I never knew. I only remember that as we rose, and started all the fire that had been held back so long was loosed. In a second the air was full of the hiss of bullets and the hurtle of grape-shot. The mental strain was so great that I saw at the moment he singular effect mentioned, I think, in the life of Goethe on a similar occasion -- the whole landscape for an instant turned slight red.

I see again, as I saw it then in a flash, a man just in front of me drop his musket and throw up his hands, stung into vigorous swearing by a bullet behind the ear. Many men fell going up the hill, but it seemed to be all over in a moment, and I found myself passing a hollow where a dozen wounded men lay -- among them our sergeant-major who was calling me to come down. He had caught sight of the blanket rolled across my back, and called me to unroll it and help to carry from the field one of our wounded lieutenants."

Antietam- September 17, 1862

General Robert E. Lee's first invasion of the North was a huge gamble that held the potential of very great rewards. Lee's campaign could win Maryland for the Confederacy, earn diplomatic recognition from Britain and France, and perhaps even force the Union to sue for peace. It would also take his troops out of war-ravaged Virginia during harvest time, and enable his troops to live off the enemy's country for a while. Following his victory at the Second Battle of Bull Run Lee led his ragtag army northward across the Potomac River and into Union territory. The ensuing battle on September 17 produced the bloodiest day in American combat history with over 23,000 casualties on both sides. More than twice as many Americans were killed or mortally wounded in combat at Antietam that day as in the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Spanish-American War combined.

From dawn till dark on the 17th the two armies threw frontal attacks at each other, littering the fields with their dead and wounded. 'The whole landscape for an instant turned red,' one northern soldier later wrote. Another veteran recalled, '[The cornfield] was so full of bodies that a man could have walked through it without stepping on the ground.' No clear victor emerged and the fighting stopped out of sheer exhaustion. Lee withdrew during the night of September 18, and re-crossed the Potomac. Tactically, the battle ended in a draw. Strategically, it was a victory for the Union.

Baptism of Fire at Bloody Lane

Some of the day's most brutal combat occurred during the late morning along a sunken road held by the Confederates. For two and one half hours Union troops threw themselves at the entrenched Confederates finally dislodging them. The murderous fire from both sides left the battlefield strewn with corpses giving the road the name 'Bloody Lane.' Lt. Frederick Hitchcock was a member of the 132d Pennsylvania Volunteers and experienced his first combat that day.

"We...moved, as I thought, rather leisurely for upwards of two miles, crossing Antietam Creek, which our men waded nearly waist deep, emerging, of course, soaked through, our first experience of this kind. It was a hot morning and, therefore, the only ill effect of this wading was the discomfort to the men of marching with soaked feet. It was now quite event that a great battle was in progress. A deafening pandemonium of cannonading, with shrieking and bursting shells, filled the air beyond us, towards which we were marching. An occasional shell whizzed by or over, reminding us that we were rapidly approaching the 'debatable ground.'

Soon we began to hear a most ominous sound which we had never before heard, except in the far distance at South Mountain, namely, the rattle of musketry. It had none of the deafening bluster of the cannonading so terrifying to new troops, but to those who had once experienced its effects, it was infinitely more to be dreaded. These volleys of musketry we were approaching sounded in the distance like the rapid pouring of shot upon a tinpan, or the tearing of heavy canvas, with slight pauses interspersed with single shots, or desultory shooting.

All this presaged fearful work in store for us, with what results to each personally in the future, measured probably by moments, would reveal. How does one feel under such conditions? To tell the truth, I realized the situation most keenly and felt very uncomfortable. Lest there might be some undue manifestation of this feeling on my conduct, I said to myself, this is the duty I undertook to perform for my country, and now I'll do it, and leave the results with God. My greater fear was not that I might be killed, but that I might be grievously wounded and left a victim suffering on the field. The nervous strain was plainly visible upon all of us. All moved doggedly forward in obedience to orders, in absolute silence so far as talking was concerned. The compressed lip and set teeth showed that nerve and resolution had been summoned to the discharge of duty. A few temporarily fell out, unable to endure the nervous strain."

With Burnside At Antietam Creek

On the night of September 16, the 9th N.Y. Volunteers took up their position opposite a stone bridge crossing Antietam Creek and awaited orders. As dawn broke, the soldiers could hear the sounds of battle on their right and left but no orders were given to advance. By afternoon, as the fighting ebbed and flowed on other parts of the battlefield, General Burnside gave the order for his troops to attack the Confederates positioned across the Antietam Creek. David Thompson, a member of the 9th N.Y. volunteers describes his experience:

"So the morning wore away and the fighting on the right ceased entirely. That was fresh anxiety -- the scales were turning perhaps, but which way? About noon the battle began afresh. This must have been Franklin's men of the Sixth Corps, for the firing was nearer, and they came up behind the center. Suddenly a stir beginning far upon the right, and

progressing. As I emerged from the woods I saw a bomb shell strike a man in the breast and literally tear him to pieces. I passed the farm house which had been appropriated for a hospital and the groans of the wounded and dying were horrible.

I then descended the hill to the woods which had been occupied by the rebels at the place where the Elsworth zouaves made their charge; the bodies of the dead and dying were actually three and four deep, while in the woods where the desperate struggle had taken place between the U.S. Marines and the Louisiana zouaves, the trees were spattered with blood and the ground strewn with dead bodies. The shots flying pretty lively round me I thought best to join my regiment; as I gained the top of the hill I heard the shot and shell of our batteries had given out, not having but 130 shots for each gun during the whole engagement. As we had nothing but infantry to fight against their batteries, the command was given to retreat; our cavalry not being of much use, because the rebels would not come out of the woods.

The R.I. regiments, the New York 71st and the New Hampshire 2nd were drawn into a line to cover the retreat, but an officer galloped wildly into the column crying the enemy is upon us, and off they started like a flock of sheep every man for himself and the devil take the hindermost; while the rebels' shot and shell fell like rain among our exhausted troops.

As we gained the cover of the woods the stampede became even more frightful, for the baggage wagons and ambulances became entangled with the artillery and rendered the scene even more dreadful than the battle, while the plunging of the horses broke the lines of our infantry, and prevented any successful formation out of the question. The rebels being so badly cut up supposed we had gone beyond the woods to form for a fresh attack and shelled the woods for full two hours, supposing we were there, thus saving the greater part of our forces, for if they had begun an immediate attack, nothing in heaven's name could have saved us. As we neared the bridge the rebels opened a very destructive fire upon us, mowing down our men like grass, and caused even greater confusion than before. Our artillery and baggage wagons became fouled with each other, completely blocking the bridge, while the bomb shells bursting on the bridge made it "rather unhealthy" to be around. As I crossed on my hands and knees, Capt. Smith who was crossing by my side at the same time was struck by a round shot at the same time and completely cut in two. After I crossed I started up the hill as fast as my legs could carry and passed through Centreville and continued on to Fairfax where we arrived about 10 o'clock halting about 15 minutes, then kept on to Washington where we arrived about 2 o'clock Monday noon more dead than alive, having been on our feet 36 hours without a mouthful to eat, and traveled a distance of 60 miles without twenty minutes halt.

The last five miles of that march was perfect misery, none of us having scarcely strength to put one foot before the other, but I tell you the cheers we rec'd going through the streets of Washington seemed to put new life into the men for they rallied and marched to our camps and every man dropped on the ground and in one moment the greater part of them were asleep. Our loss is estimated at 1,000, but I think it greater, the rebels lost from three to five thousand."

The First Battle of Bull Run, 1861

In July 1861 the northern newspapers pressured President Lincoln to bring a quick end to the rebellion of the southern states. Adding to the strain was Lincoln's awareness that the ninety-day enlistments of the recruits who had responded to his call to arms after the attack on Fort Sumter were rapidly coming to an end. Something had to be done, and soon. Lincoln pressed for action. Despite his hesitancy that his troops were not yet adequately trained, General Irvin McDowell proposed a plan. He would march his army of 35,000, currently bivouacked around Washington, thirty miles south and attack the Confederate forces defending the vital railroad junction at Manassas, Virginia. Victory would open the way to the Confederate capital at Richmond.

The Union troops were indeed inadequately trained. It took over two days for them to march twenty-two miles south. The summer heat was oppressive. Many of the young soldiers wandered from the line of march to pick berries and rest. The Union army finally reached its objective on the evening of July 18 and encamped along a small stream known as Bull Run. The green troops needed rest and their stocks of food and ammunition that had been discarded along the road had to be replenished.

The Confederate spy network had forewarned them of the Union intentions allowing reinforcements to be moved from the Shenandoah Valley to Manassas. Even the public was aware of the Union's plans. On the day of the battle, carriages filled with spectators eager to see the Confederate defeat flocked to the battle site.

Despite these disadvantages, the North almost won the day. During the early morning hours of Sunday July 21 the Union troops charged across the stream in front of them and pushed the Confederates into a defensive position atop a hill. Confusion reigned on both sides as the battle see-sawed throughout the day. Emboldened by the arrival of reinforcements and by the first use of the blood-curtailing Rebel Yell, the Confederates charged forth in the late afternoon. The Union line melted away. Retreat quickly transformed into mindless rout as the Northern troops rushed head-long back to Washington, discarding much of their equipment along the way. It was a decisive Southern victory. However, sheer exhaustion prevented the Confederates from pursuing the fleeing enemy and capitalizing on their triumph.

Notable Confederates: Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard and "Stonewall" Jackson

Samuel J. English was a Corporal in Company D of the Second Rhode Island Volunteers. Shortly after the battle he wrote his mother a letter describing his experience. We join his story in the early morning hours before the battle:

"Sunday, the 21st about 2 o'clock the drums beat the assembly, and in ten minutes we were on our march for Bull Run having heard the enemy were waiting to receive us, our troops then numbering 25 or 30 thousand which were divided into three columns ours under Col Hunter taking the right through a thick woods. About eleven o'clock as our pickets were advancing through the woods a volley was poured in upon them from behind a fence thickly covered with brush; the pickets after returning the shots returned to our regiment and we advanced double quick time yelling like so many devils.

On our arrival into the open field I saw I should judge three or four thousand rebels retreating for a dense woods, firing as they retreated, while from another part of the woods a perfect hail storm of bullets, round shot and shell was poured upon us, tearing through our ranks and scattering death and confusion everywhere; but with a yell and a roar we charged upon them driving them again into the woods with fearful loss. In the mean time our battery came up to our support and commenced hurling destruction among the rebels.

Next, orders were given for us to fall back and protect our battery as the enemy were charging upon it from another quarter, and then we saw with dismay that the second R. I. regiment were the only troops in the fight; the others having lagged so far behind that we had to stand the fight alone for 30 minutes; 1100 against 7 or 8 thousand. It was afterwards ascertained from a prisoner that the rebels thought we numbered 20 or 30 thousand from the noise made by us while making the charge. While preparing to make our final effort to keep our battery out of their hands, the 1st R.I. regiment then came filing over the fence and poured a volley out to them that drove them under cover again; they were followed by the New York 71st and the Hampshire 2nd regiments, with 2,000 regulars bringing up the rear who pitched into the "Sechers" (Secessionists) most beautifully.

Our regiments were then ordered off the field and formed a line for a support to rally on in case the rebels overpowered our troops. When the line had formed again I started off for the scene of action to see how the fight was

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ANDERSON. MAJOR FIRST ARTILLERY. COMMANDING.
PRIVATE PROPERTY AND SALTING MY FLAG WITH FIFTY GUNS. ROBERT
COLORS FLYING AND DRUMS BEATING. BRINGING AWAY COMPANY AND
OUT OF THE FORT SUNDAY AFTERNOON THE FOURTEENTH INST. WITH
INST. PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES AND MARCHED
ELEVENTH
GENERAL BEAUREGARD BEING ON SAME OFFERED BY HIM ON THE
REMAINING BUT FORT. I ACCEPT TERMS OF EVACUATION OFFERED BY
CARTRIDGES OF POWDER ONLY BEING AVAILABLE AND NO PROVISIONS
DOOR CLOSED FROM THE EFFECTS OF HEAT. FOUR BARRELS AND THREE
SERIOUSLY INJURED. THE MAGAZINE SURROUNDED BY FLAMES AND ITS
WALLS
ENTIRELY BURNED THE MAIN GATES DESTROYED BY FIRE. THE GORGE
FORT SUMTER FOR THIRTY HOURS UNTIL THE QUARTERS WERE
NEW YORK. . HON. S. CAMERSON. SECY. WAR. WASHN. HAVING DEFENDED
SS. BALTO. OFF SANDY HOOK APR. EIGHTEENTH. TEN THIRTY A.M. . VIA
The following is the transcript of the telegraph sent by Major Robert Anderson announcing the surrender of Fort Sumter.

APRIL 13, 1861

On April 10, 1861, Brig. Gen. Pierre G.T. Beauregard, in command of the provisional Confederate forces at Charleston, SC, demanded the surrender of the U.S. garrison of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. Garrison commander Robert Anderson refused. On April 12, Confederate batteries opened fire on the fort, which was unable to reply effectively. At 2:30 p.m., April 13, Major Anderson surrendered Fort Sumter, evacuating the garrison on the following day. The bombardment of Fort Sumter was the opening engagement of the American Civil War. From 1863 to 1865, the Confederates at Fort Sumter withstood a 22-month siege by Union forces. During this time, most of the fort was reduced to brick rubble.

Telegram Announcing the Surrender of Fort Sumter (1861)

DOCUMENT SET #1 - 1861

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