



**AMERICAN
BATTLEFIELD
TRUST ★ ★ ★**

Antietam Battlefield Field Trip Lesson Plan: Module 2



American Battlefield Trust, 2022

This is an individual module from the Antietam Battlefield Field Trip Lesson Plan. It has been formatted for ease of use or printing options for stand-alone learning experiences.

We strongly recommend viewing the PDF of the entire Field Trip Lesson Plan to find maps, touring tips, and extra resources. If you want just one file, this PDF is for you. It includes all modules (lesson plans and activities), the maps, and the supplemental historic photos in one easy download.

These lesson plans are listed according to their locations on the National Park Service's Self-Guided Auto Tour route. Please consult the [Antietam National Battlefield's Self-Guided Auto Tour map](#) when planning your visit with these lesson plans and battlefield investigations.



American Battlefield Trust Field Trip Lesson

Antietam: Joseph Poffenberger Farm

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What was it like for soldiers who were wounded in the Battle of Antietam and taken to field hospitals in the hours and days that followed? How were local farms, homes, and other buildings transformed into field hospitals to accommodate the large amount of wounded soldiers following the battle of Antietam?

OVERVIEW

The farm of Joseph Poffenberger is located just north of the town of Sharpsburg, Maryland. A large, white farmhouse, along with many outbuildings, sit on a large piece of property. Purchased in 1852, Joseph Poffenberger bought the property from his father-in-law, and he and his wife Mary Ann worked to expand the farm. Their hard work and large farm made them well-known farmers in the Sharpsburg area.

The summer and early fall of 1862 proved to be a fruitful time for the Poffenberger family. They had an abundance of fruit, grains, and smoked meats to carry them through the upcoming winter months. Little did they know that on the evening of September 16, 1862, Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker's I Corps of the Union Army would advance right through their property. Hundreds of soldiers settled on the property and raided the Poffenbergers' bountiful harvest that evening. Furthermore, Union troops broke into the home and raided the house, taking all that they could carry. During the early morning hours of September 17, 1862, Confederate artillery began to fire at the Union troops bivouacking on their property, further damaging it. After the battle, many wounded soldiers were left behind here.

When looking to establish a location for an outdoor field hospital, medical staff, including surgeons, considered several important features. First, they sought a large, open area to accommodate the hundreds, if not thousands, of patients that they would be treating over the coming days and weeks. The battle had raged over numerous private farmlands in the area that could serve just this purpose. Second, medical staff looked for protection when establishing a field hospital. If the hospital was opened during the fighting and close to the front lines, protection would be needed from projectiles landing in and around the site. Farm complexes with their homes, large barns, and numerous outbuildings would certainly fulfill this need and provide further protection from the weather. A doctor with the Sanitary Commission recalled, "Indeed there is not a barn, or farmhouse, or store or church, or schoolhouse...that is not gorged with wounded—Rebel and union. Even the corn-cribs, and in many instances the cow stable, and in one place the mangers were filled. Several thousands[sic] lie in open air upon straw and all are receiving the kind services of the farmers' families and the surgeons."

Civil War medicine, and more specifically Civil War nurses, are often overlooked during the study of battles and engagements. Nurses played an important and critical role in nursing troops back to health after numerous battles. They collected and distributed



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supplies, cooked and cared for wounded and sick soldiers, and provided necessary aid to surgeons and doctors.

Clara Barton was one of the most prominent medical volunteers in the Civil War and helped revolutionize battlefield medicine well after it ended. After the Battle of Antietam, Barton was a nurse at the Poffenberger farm. Later, in 1880, Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross. She modeled the organization after its international counterpart and served as its first president from 1881 to 1904. She was well known for leading the Red Cross in aiding victims of natural disasters in America and abroad.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Knowledge (Describe)
 - List local resources that were utilized for the care and aid of wounded soldiers following the battle of Antietam.
 - Name the key elements that made the J. Poffenberger farm an ideal hospital site.
2. Comprehension/Application/Analysis (Explain)
 - Discuss the positive impact that field hospitals had on the overall health of the armies.
 - Draw conclusions as to how the local resources depleted by the armies affected the town and townspeople of Sharpsburg.
3. Evaluation (Interpret)
 - Connect the medical advancements that Clara Barton provided during the Civil War to medical practices today.
 - Evaluate the importance of Clara Barton's contributions to the nursing efforts during the American Civil War.

BATTLEFIELD LOCATION

Antietam National Battlefield Near Auto Tour Stop #2- J. Poffenberger Farm,
Mansfield Avenue

- National Park Service Virtual Tour
<https://www.nps.gov/anti/learn/photosmultimedia/virtualtour.htm>

ACTIVITIES

Motivational Activity:

1. Gather students at the Clara Barton monument at the edge of the Poffenberger property.
2. Begin by providing the history of Clara Barton and her impact on nursing and medical care during and after the Battle of Antietam. This information is provided in the **Overview** section above.
3. Move your group down the lane of the Joseph Poffenberger property and find an area to reconvene near the homestead.



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Procedure:

1. Introduce students to the Joseph Poffenberger family and farm site. This information is provided in the **Overview** section above.
2. Point out the outbuildings and other structures on the property to help familiarize your students with the farmstead.
3. Divide students into pairs and distribute the [Battlefield Investigation- J. Poffenberger Farm](#) worksheet.
4. Allow students to explore the property to gather their answers and supporting evidence.

Summary Activity:

1. After the time allotted to complete the worksheet, reconvene students and facilitate a discussion based on their findings.
2. Allow students to provide justification for their answers and to compare answers with their peers.

Extensions:

Have students research other farms and structures that were utilized as hospitals after the battle of Antietam. They can then compare these findings to the experiences at the hospital that had been made at the Poffenberger farm..

RESOURCES

Teacher:

- Walker, K. M., and Kirkman, K. C. *Antietam Farmsteads: A Guide to the Battlefield Landscape*. Sharpsburg: Western Maryland Interpretive Association, 2010.
- [Battlefield Investigation - J. Poffenberger Farm](#)
- [Battlefield Investigation - J. Poffenberger Farm Answer Key](#)
- National Park Service Website
<https://www.nps.gov/anti/learn/photosmultimedia/tour-stop-2.htm>
- American Battlefield Trust Video: Clara Barton Collection at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine
<https://youtu.be/BplGSE-9Gek>
- American Battlefield Trust – In4 Video: Battlefield Fences
<https://youtu.be/StvjCIZTxxc>
- American Battlefield Trust – In4 Video: Civil War Medicine
<https://youtu.be/IDYWP2fz4-E>

Students:

- [Battlefield Investigation - J. Poffenberger Farm](#)
- National Park Service Website
<https://www.nps.gov/anti/learn/photosmultimedia/tour-stop-2.htm>
- American Battlefield Trust Video: Clara Barton Collection at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine
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- American Battlefield Trust – In4 Video: Battlefield Fences
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<https://youtu.be/IDYWP2fz4-E>

STANDARDS**Social Studies - National Council for the Social Studies**

- Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- Theme 3: People, Places, or Environments
- Theme 4: Individual, Development and Identity
- Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Theme 6: Power Authority and Governance



**American Battlefield Trust Field Trip Battlefield Investigation
Antietam: Joseph Poffenberger Farm**

Name: _____

Locate the different buildings, crops which would have been grown on the farm at the time of the battle, and other daily necessities and identify how each would have been used to support the field hospital. Find evidence around Joseph Poffenberger's property that reveals why this site was used as a major field hospital during and after the Battle of Antietam.

- 1.) Describe the importance of different crops grown on the farm of Joseph Poffenberger. How could each of the following crops support the important role the Poffenberger farm played during and after the battle?

Crops -

Straw -

Fruit -

Animals -

- 2.) Describe how roads around the Joseph Poffenberger farm played an important role during and after the battle. List and discuss supporting facts.

- 3.) Describe the location of a source of water in relation to the home of Joseph Poffenberger. What information in this area supports the fact that this property played an important role during the battle?



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- 4.) Describe the location of the following buildings in relation to the home of Joseph Poffenberger. What information about these buildings/areas support the fact that this property played an important role during the battle?

Ice House -

Corn Crib/Granary -

Kitchen -

Barn -

Smoke House -



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**American Battlefield Trust Field Trip Battlefield Investigation
Antietam: Joseph Poffenberger Farm
Answer Key**

Name: _____

Locate the different buildings, crops which would have been grown on the farm at the time of the battle, and other daily necessities and identify how each would have been used to support the field hospital. Find evidence around Joseph Poffenberger's property that supports the establishment of a field hospital on this site following the battle of Antietam.

- 1.) Describe the importance of crops grown on the farm of Joseph Poffenberger. How could each of the following crops support the important role the Poffenberger farm played during and after the battle.

**Crops- Corn/Wheat/ Flax/Clover
Straw, Fruit Orchard, Animals**

All provided necessary food to sustain the hospital while it was on this site.

- 2.) Describe how roads around the Joseph Poffenberger farm played an important role during and after the battle. List and discuss supporting the facts that support their importance.

Easy to transport supplies to wounded troops. Provided access to transport wounded troops after the battle.

- 3.) Describe the location of the source of water in relation to the home of Joseph Poffenberger. What information on this area supports the fact that this property played an important role during the battle.

Water Well- Provided water for various needs while the hospital was on this property.

- 4.) Describe the location of the following buildings in relation to the home of Joseph Poffenberger. What information on this building/area supports the fact that this property played an important role during the battle.

**Out Buildings- Provided shelter for wounded soldiers.
Ice House, Corn Crib/Granary, Kitchen, Barn, Smoke House**



BATTLE QUOTES — J. POFFENBERGER FARM

“I returned to my house; it was completely empty. I had nothing left. I lived on army crackers that I found on the battlefield for five days.”

Joseph Poffenberger

“All realized that there was ugly business and plenty of it just ahead. This was plainly visible in the faces as well as in the nervous, subdued demeanor of all. The absence of joking and play and the almost painful sobriety of action, where jollity had been the rule was particularly noticeable.”

Frederick L. Hitchcock of the 132nd Pennsylvania Infantry

“we was aroused at 11 o’clock from tired natures sweet repose. Our officers ordered us to fall in and make no noise. We were even warned not to let our canteens or tin cups rattle.”

Frederick Crouse of the 128th Pennsylvania Infantry

“with Hooker, there was bustle and cooking, with Jackson there was only munching of cold rations and water from the spring.”

Bradley Johnson , September 17, 1862





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