

Hagerstown prison gives Antietam Battlefield a hand | [View Clip](#)
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Rocks from old walls to be used for restoration

The Maryland Correctional Institution in Hagerstown is helping stretch taxpayer dollars this summer with a hefty contribution to the Antietam National Battlefield.

The unlikely donation - more than 110 tons of field stone - is being put to use by the National Park Service in the restoration of buildings at three historic farms that survived the bloodiest one-day fight of the Civil War, on Sept. 17, 1862. More than 22,000 Americans on both sides were killed or wounded in the first major battle on Northern soil.

"We've started already. ... We hauled the first five pallets to the Poffenberger Farm site, and they started laying stone on the [barn] ramps," said Park Superintendent John W. Howard, referring to the farm where Union Gen. Joseph Hooker made his headquarters during the battle.

The limestone rocks will also be used to restore deteriorating foundations and walls on the Poffenberger Farm, and later on the battlefield's Newcomer and Parks barns, which served as field hospitals. All three farms date to the 1830s and 1840s.

Howard figures the donated stone will save the Park Service about \$200,000 on those three barns alone. The stone will also be used for the construction of new battlefield markers near the historic Burnside Bridge.

"Having the stone on hand, and not having to find it or have it quarried, allows us to do it quicker and at lower cost," he said. The money saved can then be applied to other needs, such as restoring floors or rafters, or it might allow another carpenter to be hired.

Best of all, it's the right stone.

"When our masons saw the stone they were really pretty excited. It is exactly the right size, the right color, and it's also aged, so it blends in well with the older stone we already have here."

The three-foot-by-two-foot rectangular blocks were quarried in the 1930s barely 10 miles from the battlefield for the construction of the Hagerstown prison complex.

Rick Winebrenner, maintenance administrator for MCI Hagerstown, said, "They brought inmates up here and alongside professional stonemasons they quarried the stone on the property, hand-cut it and laid it to build this jail and the farm complex that goes with the prison."

All those buildings are still in use, but the decorative stone walls built at the same time had begun to fall down, Winebrenner said. So about 10 years ago they were taken down and the rocks were stored outdoors in a concrete silo.

Three years ago, there were some tentative contacts between the prison and the park about putting the rock to use. Finally, last year, a restoration team from the Park Service went to have a look, liked what they saw, and a deal was struck.

The Park Service began sending dump trucks to the prison in late May, and hauled the last load the second week of June.

"They cleaned the silo out," Winebrenner said. "I think it was a great way to utilize resources and do something worthwhile at Antietam. ... It's a win-win."

