

Group Constructs Historic Fence at Stumpy's Hollow

A local preservation group has constructed a new split-rail fence to mark a Civil War battlefield in north Berkeley County.

Gary Gimbel, president of the Falling Waters Battlefield Association (FWBA), said his group placed the split-rail fence at Stumpy's Hollow to draw attention to the historical significance of the site. He said that many people drive by it every day, but do not realize that anything happened in the area. It is hoped that this new fence will help change that.

The fence is the old fashioned "snake" or "zigzag" style split-rail that is commonly seen at National Historic Parks. The fence does not enclose the site, but instead is intended to mark it as a historic location and provide a symbolic link to what happened there during the Battle of Falling Waters.

Early on the morning of July 2, 1861 Union infantrymen advancing south arrived at the fork in the road in the area known as Stumpy's Hollow. While an officer with a few men went to determine in which direction to continue the advance, the remaining soldiers stacked their rifles and relaxed along the side of the road by a split-rail fence which enclosed the adjacent field.

Suddenly a blue-clad officer, Confederate Colonel J.E.B. Stuart still wearing his Union uniform, rode across the field to the fence and ordered the soldiers to dismantle part of it so that he could pass. They jumped up and quickly took down the fence rails.

After Stuart rode through the fence onto the road he drew his pistols and demanded that the soldiers surrender. Unable to reach their stacked weapons, almost an entire company of northern infantry reluctantly gave up. Their capture by Stuart was the start of the Battle of Falling Waters.

The new fence at Stumpy's Hollow stands behind the West Virginia Civil War Trails Signs Interpretive Marker explaining "Stuart's Surprise" placed at the location in the fall of 2008.

Gimbel said it is hoped that as individuals visiting the site read the interpretive sign, the fence will help them to visualize the events which occurred there.

He points out that the split-rail fence also provides a visual connection to those same style fences at the National Parks at Antietam and Harpers Ferry.

Gimbel said that a Governors Community Participation Grant provided by the State of West Virginia was used to construct the fence. He pointed out that the support of local Delegates John Overington and Craig Blair was instrumental in obtaining the grant. Gimbel also thanked the Berkeley County Commissioners and their staff for their help with this grant.

Stumpy's Hollow is located in north Berkeley County at the intersection of Hammond's Mill Road (WV 901) and St. Andrew's Drive approximately half a mile west of I-81.

Although the general area is known by the name Stumpy's Hollow, it is the triangle shaped

piece of land containing large oak trees and rock outcroppings that has become identified with the Civil War. However Gimbel says the origin of this unusual name is not known.

He says that an important mission of the FWBA is to interpret the battlefield and that the association has been very fortunate to work with the West Virginia Civil War Trails Sign program, the Division of Tourism and the Martinsburg-Berkeley County Convention & Visitors Bureau in placing markers at Falling Waters.

A new Civil War Trails Signs interpretive marker was just added to the battlefield a few months ago. It marks the small waterfall which gave the battle its name.

Gimbel said that his group hopes to install additional markers in the future. However he says saving the Porterfield House, built by the grandfather of the Alamo's Davy Crockett, is still the FWBA's primary goal.

The Falling Waters Battlefield Association is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose purpose is to preserve and interpret the Falling Waters Battlefield. For more information, visit their website at www.battleoffallingwaters.com or on FaceBook.





For more photos or additional information, please contact:
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