

Civil War sites long neglected

By Elizabeth Smith
MUNFORDVILLE, Ky.—When traveling on Interstate 60, most motorists bypass the exit to Munfordsville, unaware that this small community (pop. 1,600) played an important and colorful role in the Civil War.

The site of the Battle of Munfordsville in September 1862, the Hart county region is rich with historical landmarks and relics. Remains of old Union forts, Civil War graves and memorials, and impressive structures that once served as hospitals or army headquarters still stand, but most are abandoned and decaying as time slowly takes its toll.

Last year, concerned citizens organized the Munfordsville Battlefield Association—a non-profit organization whose purpose is to identify, mark and where possible, to restore and maintain the historic sites and edifices of Hart county.

But progress is slow, as both money and manpower are in short supply. The association, while in the process of applying for government aid, now must depend entirely on donations and membership dues to fund its projects. It recently sponsored the second annual re-enactment of the Munfordsville battle, and, along with local civic groups, a battlefield trek in which Boy and Girl Scouts and various hiking groups covered the area and learned about the historic spots.

The association's current goal is the restoration of Fort Craig—the Union stronghold during the Battle of Munfordsville—and the creation of a memorial battlefield park.

While the site of the earthen fort now is overgrown with grass and trees, the large dirt mounds and surrounding moat are still clearly visible. A primitive wooden sign tacked to a tree marks the historic site.

Adjacent to the fort are the remains of the old Green River Baptist Church and its pioneer cemetery. The church, marked only by two sets of stone steps, served as Confederate Gen. John Hunt Morgan's headquarters in the fall of 1861, and it was here that Morgan and the nucleus of his command were formally sworn into Confederate service. The church was burned by Union soldiers during the battle to prevent its use as a Confederate shelter.

Another target for preservation is a Confederate cemetery dominated by 21-foot mounds and containing the graves of Mississippi soldiers killed in the Battle of Munfordsville.

HISTORIC SITE—The remains of old Fort Craig, the Union stronghold during the Battle of Munfordsville, are covered with tall grass and trees as a result of years of neglect. Concerned Munfordsville residents have made the site their prime target for restoration and preservation.



Neglected for years, the cemetery is overgrown, isolated and almost totally inaccessible. The battlefield association is currently negotiating for a good easement to the site and its inclusion in a park.

Increased interest in these and other landmarks can be at least partially attributed to Col. Hal Engerud, president of the battlefield association and a noted Civil War historian.

Engerud, a retired U.S. Army officer, settled in Munfordsville six years ago. However, he noted, his interest in the area began when he was stationed at Fort Kern in the 1920 and 30s.

"There were so many conflicting stories about the battle and the battlefield," he said, "I made it my business to find out." In addition to spending countless hours digging into records and archives, Engerud has lectured nationwide and worked tirelessly to obtain recognition and suitable markers for historical sites in the area.

Engerud states that during the Civil War, Munfordsville was a strategic point because of the nearby L & N railroad bridge crossing the Green River. A strong Union garrison was established at Fort Craig to guard the supply line between Louisville and Nashville.

The Battle of Munfordsville occurred when Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg, who commanded the Army of Mississippi, moved his forces into Kentucky. Some of his troops tried to take Fort Craig on Sept. 14, 1862, but having underestimated the Union strength, they were repelled the same day.

Bragg, who was resting his troops at Glasgow, then decided to surround the fort with his entire army of 30,000 men. Although reinforcements had arrived from the North, the Union forces numbered only about 4,000. Realizing the situation was hopeless, the Union commander surrendered on Sept. 17.

At Munfordsville, Bragg's army checked the Union line of communication, but he left the area three days after the battle and moved his army toward Bardonia.

Engerud and other historians maintain that if Bragg had kept a strong position in Munfordsville, a victory here would have advanced the Confederate's northern boundary to the Ohio River.

Soon after the Confederate's withdrawal, the Union troops returned and

held the area until the end of the war. They built two more earthen forts—Fort Willich and Terrell—whose remains also are still visible.

While Fort Willich and Terrell are on private property, Fort Craig's land has been donated to the battlefield association.

Still another landmark where necessary care is long overdue is the old Log Inn, built around 1880 and run by Thomas Munford, whose brother Richard founded the town.

As Munfordsville was a relay station and favorite stopping place on the old L & N route, Engerud said, the inn accommodated many famous guests during the stagecoach era. Among them was Andrew Jackson, who stayed at the inn on his way to Washington for his inauguration.

Today the two-story building appears much the way it did then, with the original timbers, fireplace and chimney still intact.

Formerly used as a public library and then a meeting place for the Munfordsville Woman's Club (the owner of the property), the inn is now abandoned and needs in need of a thorough cleanup. Tall grass and weeds, discarded boxes, empty bottles and other signs of either vandalism or neglect hold the charm this landmark could reflect.

And throughout the town, there are several other historically important structures of historical significance. One is the corner of an old Presbyterian Church, used as an army hospital during the Civil War, and across the street is an old schoolhouse that was used as the hospital nurses' quarters.

A handsome brick house, known as the P. A. Smith home, served as Bragg's headquarters during his brief occupation of Munfordsville. Also, the Thomas Munford home, the Richard Munford home, which served as Union headquarters in 1861, and the childhood home of Union Gen. Thomas J. Wood still exist as ties to the past.

Engerud noted that the Munfordsville story has many more details and subjects. He added that many local residents have been aware of the town's rich heritage but never knew "where to go or who to turn to" for help in restoring and maintaining the historic sites.

Through the efforts of the battlefield association, he said, sufficient interest may be aroused to preserve these relics for posterity.

EDWIN M. BEALERT
 Edwin M. Bealert, 50, died Friday, Oct. 18, 1974 in the Veterans Hospital, Lexington, after a weeks illness.

He was a resident of Mt. Sterling, an employee of the Montgomery County Road Department and a veteran of World War II. He was a son of the late William T. and Edna Campbell Bealert.

He is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Ellen Payne Roberts, Lexington; Mrs. Donna Baucher, Owensville; two sons, William Edwin Bealert, Carlisle; Daniel Allen Bealert, Owensville; seven grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Sunday at the Matthews-Beaucher Chapel, conducted by Rev. H. Dallas Sugg. Burial in the Carlisle Cemetery.

MRS. E. HAMPTON BARNETTE
 Mrs. Lerona Burns Barnette, 84, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., died Friday, Oct. 18, 1974 at the home of her daughter, Mrs. John B. DePuy, Pikeville, after an extended illness.

She was born in Greenbrier County, W. Va., the daughter of the late Joseph and Ida Sheppard. She was a member of the Eastern Star, the First United Methodist Church, Ft. Lauderdale.

Obituaries

dale, the W.S.C.S. in both Kentucky and Florida, was past president of the Kentucky Conference Ministers Wives and had served with her husband in the following churches: Pikeville; Prestonsburg; Denham; Carlisle; Georgetown; London; LaGrange and Whitesburg.

She is survived by her husband, Rev. E. Hampton Barnette; one daughter, Mrs. John D. DePuy; one brother, Joseph Burns, Akron, Ohio; two sisters, Mrs. A.L. Elder, Booneville, Ark.; Mrs. J.K. Warrenton, Margate, Fla.; two grandchildren; one great-grandchild.

Funeral services were held Sunday at the Pikeville United Methodist Church with Rev. Harold W. Dorsey officiating, assisted by Rev. Kenneth C. Hallock and Rev. J.L. Meyer. Burial in the Georgetown Cemetery, Georgetown.

JOSEPH WILLIAM KERNS
 Joseph William Kerns, 87, 865 Darley Drive, Lexington, died Friday, Oct. 18, 1974 at Good Samaritan Hospital.

He was a retired construction foreman, born in Carlisle, the son of the late Simon and Mollie Armitage Kerns, and a member of the Broadway Christian Church.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Mamie Hall Kerns; one daughter, Mrs. Joyce Lee Sheppard; one sister, Miss Lillian Kerns; one granddaughter, Mrs. Sharon Gail Abney; two great-

grandchildren, Philip Thomas and Jennifer Dawn Abney, all of Lexington. Services were held at Kerr Brothers Funeral Home, conducted by Rev. Marshall J. Leggett. Burial in Lexington Cemetery.

FALBENBERG: Robert Hall, Chester Ward, J.T. Coby, George Hopper, Bud Hickey, and Siles Wilson.

Easter Seal

Continued from page 1

years. He served as past president of the Kentucky Easter Seal Society and served on its board for 20 years. He is a vice president (retired) of the Kentucky Utilities Co.

Reservations for the luncheon may be made by contacting the society at the facility or center in one of the cities named above or by telephoning the society in Louisville at 684-9791.

All people interested in work for the handicapped are invited to attend the society's 52nd annual meeting, McGuire said.

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