2-3-2016

To Be Or Not To Be: A Kentucky Battlefield’s Drive to Become a National Park

Elizabeth A. Smith
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/compiler

Part of the United States History Commons

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/compiler/124

This is the author's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/compiler/124

This open access blog post is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.
To Be Or Not To Be: A Kentucky Battlefield's Drive to Become a National Park

Abstract
On January 4, 2016 a large group of people met in the theater of the Mill Springs Battlefield Visitor Center in Nancy, Kentucky. Only a few weeks shy of the 154th anniversary of the small Kentucky battle, these individuals gathered on the chilly night to attend a public forum in support of the addition of Mill Springs into the National Park system. [excerpt]

Keywords
The Gettysburg Compiler, Civil War, 150th Anniversary, Gettysburg, Civil War Memory, Sesquicentennial, Kentucky Battlefield, National Park, Battle of Mill Springs

Disciplines
History | United States History

Comments
This blog post originally appeared in The Gettysburg Compiler and was created by students at Gettysburg College.
On January 4, 2016 a large group of people met in the theater of the Mill Springs Battlefield Visitor Center in Nancy, Kentucky. Only a few weeks shy of the 154th anniversary of the small Kentucky battle, these individuals gathered on the chilly night to attend a public forum in support of the addition of Mill Springs into the National Park system.
The Battle of Mill Springs occurred on January 19, 1862 between Confederate forces under Felix Zollicoffer and Union forces under George H. Thomas. The battle began in the early morning fog and would continue for four hours in a cold rainstorm. Men from Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Minnesota, Indiana, and Alabama would meet at the fields near Logan’s Crossroads where they would engage in a short but influential fight that would see the death of Zollicoffer supposedly at the hands of Speed Fry. Though small compared to later battles, Mill Springs would become the first major Union victory since First Bull Run, help to stop the Confederate defensive line in the West, and gain nationwide recognition for George H. Thomas and Speed Fry.

Today the Mill Springs battlefield is run by the Mill Springs Battlefield Association, which is “dedicated to preserving, protecting, maintaining and interpreting the Mill Springs Battlefield.” The association, along with several other organizations and private donors, has helped acquire and preserve over 400 acres of land across Pulaski and Wayne Counties. This preservation includes interpretive signs, trails, and split rail fences on the battlefield; a visitor center and museum, and a ten-stop driving tour. The Mill Springs Battlefield Park has also been designated as a National Historic Landmark.

This designation may help the battlefield in its attempt to become a unit in the National Park system. Currently, a special recourse study is underway to determine whether or not Mill Springs is good for a potential national park. This recourse study has four criteria that help the participants determine whether to suggest designation to Congress: national significance, sustainability, feasibility, and the need for National Park management.

The first criteria looks at whether the site contains national significance through natural and/or cultural resources. It is very likely that Mill Springs will pass this criteria as it is already designated as a National Historic Landmark. The second criteria looks outside at similar parks already in the National Park system to decide whether or not the natural or cultural resources are not already adequately represented elsewhere. The third criteria looks at the feasibility of the site to decide whether the possible park is of sufficient size and is capable of efficient administration by the National Park Service at a reasonable cost. The final criteria looks at whether or not the site needs National Park management or if the site might be better managed by other organizations.

If Mill Springs meets all four of these criteria then the members of the recourse study will put together a recommendation and send it off to Congress for the final decision. If, however, the park fails even one of these criteria, then it will not be considered for a National Park. The public forum that met in the Visitor’s Center is the first step in the two year process. The recourse study should finalize and submit their findings to Congress in the Fall of 2017. Though it is early in the process and nothing can be certain, the locals who gathered for the public forum, myself included, eagerly await the survey’s finding and hope for Mill Springs to become a unit of the National Park system.
Laying of a wreath on the Confederate mass grave at the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Mill Springs. The Union dead were buried down the road at the National Cemetery while the Confederate dead were buried in a mass grave. Photograph taken by author, January 2012.

Sources:


http://gettysburgcompiler.com/2016/02/03/to-be-or-not-to-be-a-kentucky-battlefields-drive-to-become-a-national-park/