

The Battle of Folck's Mill

AUGUST 1, 1864 — AN IMPORTANT DAY
IN CUMBERLAND, MARYLAND'S HISTORY

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Folck's Mill, previously known as "Pleasant Mill," was purchased in 1937 as part of the Route 40 bypass east of Cumberland, Maryland.

A small wooded site, bordered by a creek and bearing scars of its earlier life as a productive water powered grist mill, with a nearby sawmill, cooperage, private dwellings, and blacksmith shop, is passed every day by hundreds traveling east and west on Interstate 68, or north and south along the current alignment of US 220. Pockmarked by stone foundations of various buildings, the millrace and other items of a bygone era, this historic site dating to 1800 is off limits to the public as it deteriorates back into nature. The site, purchased as part of the Route 40 bypass east of Cumberland, Maryland, became state property in 1937, leading to the demise and destruction of a mill first established by Thomas Beall, and years afterward dubbed

"Pleasant Mill" before being known by its later names of "Folck's Mill" or more recently "Wolfe's Mill," documenting the changing of ownership of the property.

The site is best known as an important day for the City of Cumberland. August 1, 1864, was the day that a small force of Union Soldiers, under the command of General Benjamin F. Kelley, stopped Confederate Calvary under General John McCausland from ransoming the city and possibly burning it, as his forces had done days earlier on July 30, 1864, to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. While



Postcard view overlooking U.S. 40, 1 mile east of Cumberland, Maryland, circa 1937. *COURTESY STEVEN HALL*

- ① FOLCK'S BARN; ② FOLCK'S MILL; ③ HINKLE HOUSE, COLONIAL MANOR (Modern day Puccini Restaurant);
④ Site of MASON'S BARN RESTAURANT; ⑤ HILLCREST CEMETERY

a small engagement, the significance of the event is not forgotten. The Civil War Roundtable of Allegany County commemorated the 150th Anniversary ten years ago, marking attempts to preserve the site of the battle and mill between the Roundtable and State and County governments. Efforts to stabilize the walls of the mill's foundation proved too costly and the focus shifted to providing public access to the site via an overlook and interpretive trail, but a proposal stalled over funding, maintenance and care of the planned overlook. The aim of commemorating the battle continued with the 160th anniversary this year.

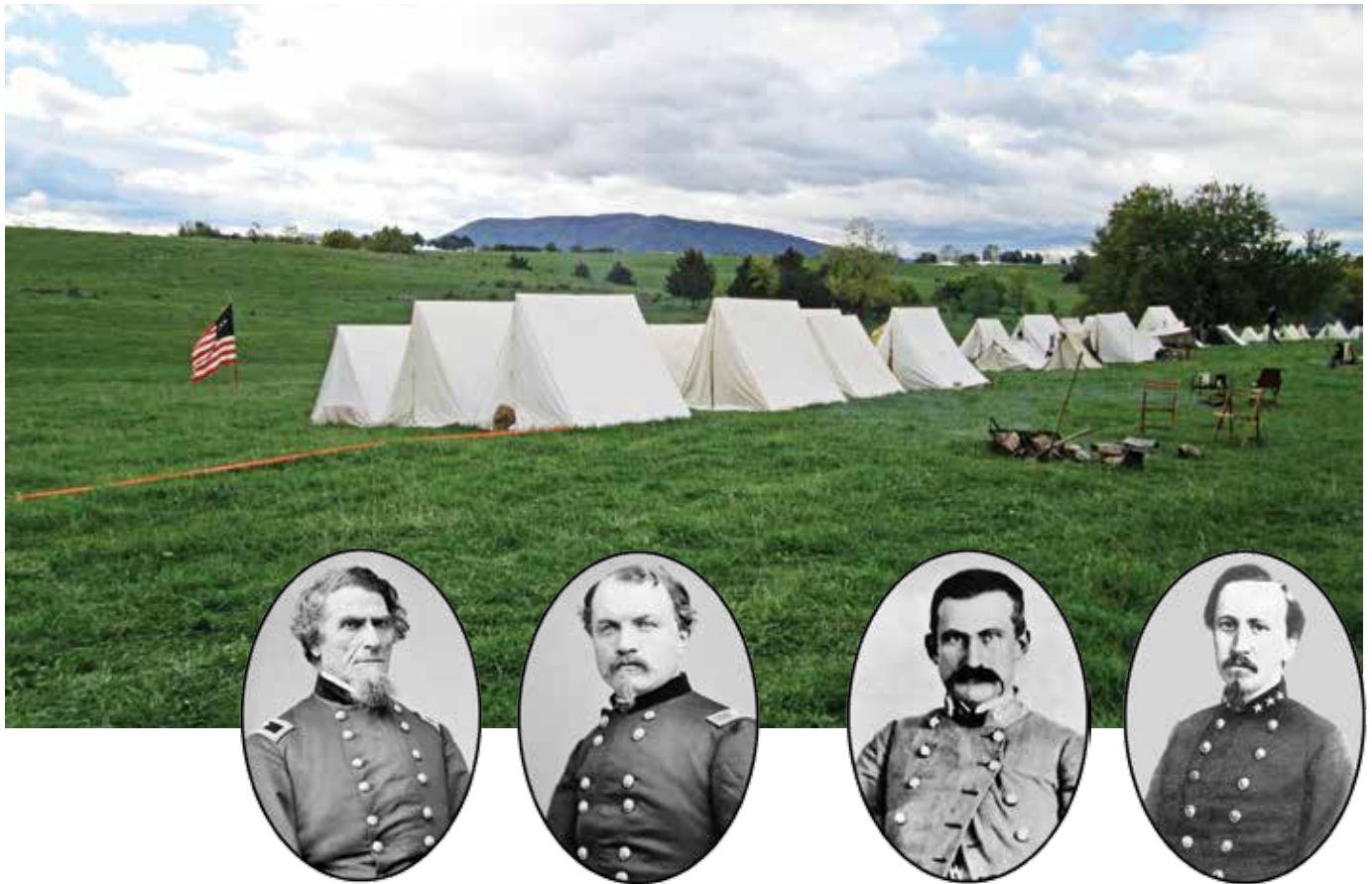
On August 10, 2024, the Civil War Roundtable, with its partner, Company C of the 87th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Association, a group of living historians based in York, PA, held an event on the grounds of the Ali Ghan Shrine Club, which was part of the battlefield site. As educating the public on the Civil War is the mainstay of these non-profit groups, a demonstration of the skirmish



This medal was given to re-enactment participants during the 1963 Anniversary of the Battle of Folck's Mill, held at the Allegany County Fairgrounds.

COURTESY MIKE PERRIN

tactics, used by both forces during the fight, was conducted. Several speakers lectured on various topics relating to the Battle, and the Civil War era in general, as part of the activities. Furthering their efforts, a Civil War encampment was on site to give visitors a sense of the life of soldiers in 1864.



**Union General
Benjamin F. Kelley**

**Union General
W.W. Averell**

**Confederate General
John McCausland**

**Confederate General
Bradley Johnson**

The Battle

Following encounters earlier in the month, the Battle of Monocacy, Fort Steven's and Second Kernstown, Confederate General Jubal Early pursued Union forces back across the Potomac River to prevent them from joining with Ulysses Grant around the besieged area of Petersburg, Virginia. This pursuit leads to the burning of Chambersburg on July 30, 1864, as retaliation for Union General David Hunter's destruction in the Shenandoah Valley. Following the town's destruction McCausland's Confederates bivouacked at McConnellsburg, PA, on July 31, 1864, before traveling to Hancock, MD, where they attempted to ransom the town. This led to infighting amongst the Confederates as Hancock was largely Southern sympathetic and the CSA Maryland Units under General Bradley Johnson were going to prevent McCausland from burning Hancock. Interrupting the infighting, Union General W.W. Averell's Cavalry which had been pursuing the group, finally caught up with them along the east end of Hancock beginning a fight through town.

The Confederates retreated laying waste to the National Pike by felling trees and destroying bridges, slowing Averell's

pursuing cavalry. Around 3 am on August 1, 1864, they stopped to rest at Bevansville, MD, near the base of Green Ridge before proceeding west. McCausland's group arrived at the Pleasant Mill site along the Baltimore Turnpike east of Cumberland around 3 pm, with dismounted Confederates advancing on the covered bridge over Evitt's Creek. Union cannon fire drove them to seek shelter behind the properties on the Pleasant Mill site, resulting in the Folck's barn burning down due to the artillery shelling. With damage occurring to other structures, including the nearby Hinkle House (also known as Colonial, or Turkey Flight Manor—currently Puccini's Restaurant, which was utilized as a temporary hospital after the fight), the battle ended as it grew dark. Under the cover of night, McCausland's troops retreated over a "mountain road" arriving in Oldtown, MD, around 5 am. Here the Battle of Alum Hill, Allegany County's second civil war battle, would take place to try to keep the Confederates from crossing the Potomac River into West Virginia, the result—Union troops of the 153rd Ohio surrendered after a stalemate, allowing McCausland to move on to Moorefield, WV, only to be defeated by Averell days later on August 7, 1864.



Civil War encampment (previous page) at the Folck's Mill Anniversary Reenactment. PHOTO BY STEVEN HALL

Above: Folck's Mill Historical Trust marker on the grounds of the Ali Ghan Shrine Club.

The Civil War Roundtable of Cumberland, MD, looks forward to commemorating the 161st anniversary in 2025 with a series of presentations and lectures open to the community. While work continues to bring preservation efforts and site access to the forefront, plans have begun to address the 170th and 175th anniversaries of the battle in 2034, and 2039. Like many organizations facing the challenge of an aging membership, and very few younger members to pass the torch to, the fate of these commemorations is uncertain. If you would like to get involved with efforts to preserve the county's heritage, or just have a general interest in the Civil War, the Civil War Roundtable meets at 7pm on the first Thursday of each month (except July, August and December) in the community room of the LaVale United Methodist Church, located at 565 National Hwy., LaVale, MD.

Additional information also available in the Fall/Winter 2004 issue of *Mountain Discoveries* magazine — see <http://mountaindiscoveries.com/stories/pdf/fw2004/folcks.pdf>

Resources:

Brooke Kenline et al. Archaeological Phase II Investigation at the Folck's Mill Site (1BAG150), Allegany County, Maryland. TRC Environmental Corporation, Chapel Hill, NC. Submitted to Maryland State Highway Administration, Baltimore, MD, 2014.

AL-III-C 182 Folck's Mill Battlefield Architectural Survey File.

Department of Defense. War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Series I Volume XXXVII Operations in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. May 1-August 3, 1864. Part I and Part II.

Alexander, C.T. Hancock to Clear Spring Depot, 1864 adapted from McCausland's Raid and the Burning of Chambersburg, Unpublished Thesis. Accessed online at <https://web.archive.org/web/20110927032654/http://www.whilbr.org/BattleofFolcksMill/index.aspx>

Scott, Harold L. The Civil War Battle at Folck's Mill Near Cumberland, MD. (1999) Independently Published

Gilmore, Harry. Four Years in the Saddle (1866)

Toomey, Daniel C. The Civil War in Maryland (8th Edition 1996) Toomey Press, Baltimore.