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Confederate Memorial Day will honor town's history

Step into past at observance on Saturday

By Melissa Poore • mpoore@courier-journal.com
• June 2, 2010

The paths walked by former Confederate soldiers as they lived out their lives in Pewee Valley will be open to the public during a special observance of Confederate Memorial Day.

Organizers say it's a one-time event unlikely to be repeated in its scale.

The event, to be held Saturday, will include re-enactors in period costumes, tours of the land where the old Confederate Home once stood, dulcimer music and an education on the town's history.

It is inspired in part by the release of a new book, "My Old Confederate Home: A Respectable Place for Civil War Veterans," by Rusty Williams, who will be on hand to sign copies of the book.

Suzanne Schimpeler of the Pewee Valley Historical Society said she often hears from people looking to learn about the place where their ancestors lived and hopes the event can help shed light on the subject for the soldiers' descendants.

"I think we'll have a lot of people coming to this who always wondered where their ancestors lived, and they can take the tour and see what went on here," she said. Schimpeler points out that while some of the banners advertising the event picture

the Confederate flag, the image is not meant to offend. The event is about the soldiers who lived in the town, not any of the issues behind the war, she said. A new marker and programs for the day only have images of the Confederate Home and not the flag, she said, adding, "the focus is on the Confederate Home."

Mayor Bob Rogers agreed. "This is not to honor the Confederacy. This is about the fact that Pewee Valley at one point had Confederate soldiers here. The spot for the rest home was picked after the war, when they had no place else to go."

While there were once seven entrances to the hill that the rest home occupied from 1902 to 1934, they are now hard to find. But a new sign was recently installed at one of the entrances on Central Avenue, in time for the observance.

The sign reads: "On this hill once stood the Kentucky Confederate Home, where nearly 1,000 Civil War veterans lived in comfort and peace their most senior years."

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Muralists Fernando and Cindy Trujillo of Crestwood painted the sign.

Cindy Trujillo and her sister Vickie Lovell, who together own Designed to a T Event Planning, located in the red caboose in front of Town Hall, are planning a luncheon that day based on the meal Gen. Robert E. Lee and his officers were served at the Fairfield Inn as they retreated from the Battle of Gettysburg. It includes a bean soup; Johnnie cake dodgers, which are similar to hush puppies; fresh greens with caramelized walnuts; pulled chicken; and desserts.

"The Fairfield Inn still serves that meal, and we contacted them, and they gave us all their recipes to duplicate the meal for this event," Trujillo said. She's making centerpieces for the luncheon that include generals of the Civil War.

"Researching for that has been so interesting," she said of the luncheon, called "The General's Fare." After learning more about what the soldiers endured during the war, "it makes you appreciate what they really had to go through," she said. "We are remembering the men who fought and died for this country. ... Oftentimes, they are overlooked."

The tours of Confederate Hill, which sits on private property, are the first that have been organized for the public.

Visitors will be asked to sign consent forms, and the site is not wheelchair-accessible.

Those who take the tour can walk the hill to see the home's foundation and the general layout of the buildings, like the infirmary, an outhouse and an enclosed gazebo that one soldier turned into a watch repair shop. Schimpeler said old horseshoes also have been discovered on the grounds, a sign of the game the soldiers played to pass the time.

Before coming to the home, many of the soldiers struggled despite having served in the war, she said.

"A lot of them were in the streets. They were very poor; some were sickly. They came here and lived very nicely with a room of their own and meals served to them," she said.

The celebration will begin in the Confederate Cemetery and will include music by the Louisville Dulcimer Society. The town's oral history project will debut at Town Hall, and there will be a gift shop at the Pewee Valley Women's Club, where

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tickets for the tours will be sold. People are invited to come in Confederate costumes.

With everything planned for the day, Schimpeler hopes the celebration will inspire others to embrace the town's history and learn more about the home and its occupants.

"Our community is blessed because we had the home here," she said.

Reporter Melissa Poore can be reached at (502) 582-4117.



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Suzanne Schimpeler, president of the Pewee Valley historical society, uses a level to get the new marker level. Cindy and Fernando Trujillo dig the holes. (By Pam Spaulding, The Courier-Journal) May 10, 2010



Confederate Memorial Day event

When: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday

Where: Locations throughout Pewee Valley

Schedule

10:15 to 11 a.m. and noon to 3 p.m. -- Orphan Brigade photo exhibit, United Daughters of the Confederacy tent.

11 a.m. to noon -- Confederate Memorial Day Service at the Confederate Cemetery, Maple Lane.

Noon to 2 p.m. -- Book signing by Rusty Williams at Pewee Valley Presbyterian Church, 119 Central Ave.

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Noon to 5:30 p.m. -- Pewee Valley Historical Society Oral History Project at Town Hall.

1, 2, 3 and 4 p.m. -- Tours of Sunnyside/Edgewood, former home of Walter N. Haldeman, founder of The Courier-Journal and The Louisville Times. Cost, \$6

1, 2, 3 and 4 p.m. -- Tours of Confederate Hill. Cost, \$6

2 and 3 p.m. -- Civil War-era music by the Louisville Dulcimer Society at Little Colonel Playhouse.

Information

Go to www.peweevalleyky.org

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