

During the War Between the States

present day Fort Knox did not exist. At that time this land consisted of small towns and villages that in one way or another were affected by the war. Kentucky was a border state caught in between the Union states and the seceded southern states. Men throughout Kentucky enlisted in both Union and Confederate armies. Union, Confederate and guerrilla forces were active in this area. General Morgan and his men came through this area on numerous occasions as did Union troops. More often it was lawless bands of guerrillas that roamed and plagued the area. A few earthen forts were constructed by Union troops to help protect the L & N railroad and hold strategic hills. Fort Duffield is the most notable of these forts. Once on Fort Knox property, it was given to the city of West Point as a gift and is now open to the public.

Please contact the Cultural Resource Office at Ft. Knox if you would like to share Civil War letters, photos, or stories related to this area.



Fort Knox Cultural Resources Office
Environmental Management Division

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Fort Knox History

The Civil War

1861-1865

Background Image:

Major-General Buell's Army Crossing Salt River, Kentucky, In Pursuit of Bragg.—Sketched by Mr. H. Mosler. *Harper's Weekly*; October 25, 1862



The Fort Knox Area During the American Civil War

During the American Civil War (1861-1865) Kentucky was considered a border state. Caught between the northern Union and southern Confederacy, Kentucky supplied more than 100,000 men to the Union army and over 30,000 for the Confederate cause. Fort Knox, as we know it today, did not exist during this time period. At that time this land was occupied by citizens living in numerous small towns and villages. Towns like Pitts Point, Garennettsville, and Mill Creek supplied both armies with men. Union and Confederate armies passed through and occupied the area at various times. Both sides used the Louisville and Nashville Turnpike as a main thoroughfare through this country. A portion of this turnpike runs through Ft. Knox. General Buell's Union Army relied on it for their hurried march to Louisville in September of 1862. No major battles were fought in this area; however, the area was plagued by attacks and depredations by guerrillas.

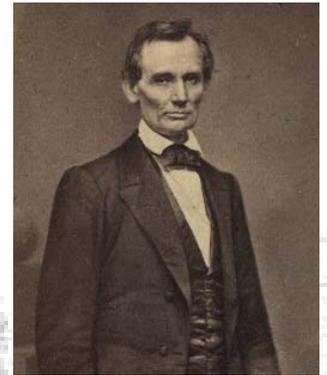
Local lore tells of bloody event known as the Muldraugh Hill Massacre which occurred south of West Point, KY during the war. This unconfirmed and likely exaggerated account states that one of Gen. Morgan's men, Captain Thomas H. Hines, led a small group of cavalrymen to ambush a local federal agent who reportedly sold stolen horses to the Union army. The agent, J. W. Jarrett, sent buyers out into rural areas to intimidate farmers into losing their horses. He would then have his men assemble these horses in a gorge near the L & N Turnpike and from there they would take them to the Ohio River for transport.

In the pre dawn hours of June 20th, 1864 as Jarrett slept in West Point, Hines and his men surrounded and ambushed Jarrett's men at this gorge. It is reported that over 40 men were killed during the attack and from the stampede that ensued. Hines retreated to the Vine Grove area and hid at a friend's house for a few days afterwards. Upon finding the grisly aftermath, the citizens buried Jarrett's men in a mass grave at Pleasant View Baptist Church. The attack apparently had its intended effect, and Jarrett discontinued his business with the Federal Army. Thomas Hines recounted this wild tale in an 1890 interview. A similar incident was reported in newspapers in August 1864, but the facts regarding participants and casualties differ greatly from Hines' story. It may also be noted that Hines was known to have been in Canada when the attack took place.

Union forces constructed several earthen forts on Muldraugh Hill along the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. This railroad was a major line of supply for Union troops occupying the south and as such was vulnerable to attacks from Gen. John Hunt Morgan's cavalry and rebel partisans. The locations of these forts remain outside the present day Fort Knox border. The most notable fort constructed in this area is Fort Duffield, which overlooks West Point and the Ohio River. This land would one day be owned by Fort Knox. In October 1861, General William Tecumseh Sherman established a supply base at West Point. Sherman decided that a hill overlooking West Point, Pearman Hill, would be a good location to fortify his position He ordered five regiments to construct earthworks on the hill. The 9th Michigan Infantry was placed in charge of the construction, and

they named it Fort Duffield in honor of their regimental commander. Labeled by a Louisville newspaper as the "Key to Louisville," the fort saw no action against Confederate forces. General Morgan avoided the fort due to its great defenses. Sixty-one men of the garrison died of disease and were buried in a cemetery by the fort. Fort Duffield was given to the town of West Point in 1978 and is now open to the public as a community park.

Abraham Lincoln, our nation's president during the Civil War, has a connection to the land now occupied by Fort Knox. His grandmother, Bathsheba, along with her son Thomas (the president's father) and her youngest daughter Nancy Ann with her husband William Brumfield moved to what was then known as Mill Creek from Washington County, Ky. Bathsheba died in 1833 and has a granite memorial in Lincoln Memorial Cemetery on Fort Knox. Lincoln also has a cousin, Lucretia Allstun, buried in Bogard Cemetery.



For additional reading:

The Civil War in Hardin County, Kentucky. By Mary Josephine Jones. Published by Ancestral Trails Historical Society, Inc., Vine Grove, Kentucky; 1995.

Abraham Lincoln Image: Library of Congress
Background Image: Guerrilla Depredations
Harper's Weekly; December 24, 1864