

Vienna Civil War Re-Enactment to Feature Train Battle

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The Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) train tracks have been gone for more than four decades, but that won't stop Vienna officials from commemorating a 150-year-old battle that made military history.

Town officials have arranged for a replica locomotive from Strasburg, Va., to be brought to Caffi Field for a re-enactment of the June 17, 1861, Civil War battle in which a train had been used in warfare for the first time in history.

The town will hold a re-enactment of the battle on Saturday, June 18, said Vienna Parks and Recreation Director Cathy Salgado.

Living-history events, including a military encampment, will be held at the site earlier in the day. Town officials will provide a detailed event schedule later this spring, Salgado said.

Vienna officials would have liked to hold the event a day earlier on the battle's 150th anniversary, but postponed it for a day because James Madison High School will hold its annual all-night postgraduation party at the Vienna Community Center that Friday evening.

The town 50 years ago held a re-enactment of the battle using an actual train along the W&OD rail line near the community center. This was not an option for the Civil War sesquicentennial commemoration, as the train tracks were removed to make way for the W&OD Trail.

This year's train battle will be performed by two re-enactment groups, the 17th Virginia Infantry Regiment, Company G, and the 5th Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia, Salgado said.

The groups will hold an encampment during the day of June 18, then conduct the battle at around 6:30 p.m., the time of day when the Civil War engagement took place.

According to Connie and Mayo Stuntz's history book, "This Was Vienna, Va.," 668 Union troops and 29 officers with the 1st Ohio Regiment were being transported by train on June 17, 1861, when some troops were dispatched to guard railroad bridges and crossings.

The 300 or so soldiers remaining on the train were ambushed by about 575 Confederate soldiers from the 1st South Carolina Volunteers near what is now the W&OD Trail and Park Street, S.E.

Six or seven people (accounts vary) were killed in the battle before the Union troops withdrew, according to the book.

The train-battle re-enactment and related events will not be the only Civil War commemorations in Vienna this year. The town on May 21 will hold a re-enactment of the 1861 vote in which Vienna became the only part of Fairfax County to favor staying with the Union and not seceding.

Town residents voted 78 to 44 against secession, according to the Stuntzes' book. County voters, however favored secession by a vote of 1,231 to 289.