

East Falls Past--Gettysburg Civil War Regiment Formed Here

The Fallser, May 2011, by Ellen Sheehan

One Hundred and fifty years ago, the 23rd Regiment Infantry and the 118th Regiment encamped at Camp Union, Queen Lane, on ground known as Scot's Lot. The 23rd was the first regiment organized under the first call for troops on April 21, 1861 and the first to leave Philadelphia fully armed and equipped. Both the 23rd and the 118th fought in the Battle of Gettysburg.

The present site of the Arthur Ashe Tennis Center was the site of Camp Stokely, at which two well-known Pennsylvania regiments of volunteers encamped in 1861-1862, while they were being recruited. The Camp was readily reached by the horse cars of Ridge Avenue, the Norristown trains of the Reading Railroad at School House Lane, and by steam boats on the Schuylkill.

The features of the encampment of the 88th were as follows: The tents were pitched with their aisles at right angles to the river and Ridge Road, the camp stretching from the north and south limits of the meadows; the officers' quarters were between the river and the tent line; the parade ground was situated between the camp and Ridge Road, on the most level portion of the meadowland. Here the whole regiment could be assembled and maneuvered into various positions for dress parades or for Company, Battalion, or Regimental movements. Dress parades were very popular with visitors.

The 88th Regiment of Infantry in November 1861, left Camp Stokely and marched down the Ridge Avenue Turnpike unarmed on its way to the front.

In the following year, the 19th Pennsylvania cavalry, 1st battalion, was recruited on the same property, known then as Camp Gallagher.

The Survivors' Association of the Eighty-Eighth Regiment placed a bronze tablet, supported by two granite pillars, to mark the site of the encampment. The pillars remain but the bronze tablet has been stolen from the site. The East Falls Historical Society is raising funds to return a plaque with the same wording to the site reads, "Camp Stokley - The 88th Regiment Pennsylvania volunteers camped upon this ground from August 31, 1861. Left for the front Oct. 5, 1861 with 865 men and officers. Served in the First and Fifth Army corps Army of the Potomac. Participated in the following battles; Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Mine Run, Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North-Anna, Totopotomoy, Bethesda Church and Cold Harbor."

Contributions to restore the Civil War plaque or to join the EFHS may be sent to Katy Hinele.