



MILL SPRINGS BATTLEFIELD ASSOCIATION, INC.

Mill Springs Battlefield Visitor Center • Zollicoffer Park • Historic Brown-Lanier House • Historic West-Metcalf House
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

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*...dedicated to the
preservation, protection,
interpretation, and
maintenance of the
Mill Springs
Battlefield...*

Statement of William R. Neikirk Founder, Mill Springs Battlefield Association

H.R. 5979, the Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument Act

Subcommittee on Federal Lands House Committee on Natural Resources United States House of Representatives

July 17, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Chairman McClintock, Ranking Member Hanabusa, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to testify today in support of H.R. 5979, the Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument Act. I am William Neikirk, the founder of the Mill Springs Battlefield Association, a 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation that preserves, protects, maintains, and interprets the Mill Springs Battlefield in Pulaski and Wayne counties, Kentucky.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MILL SPRINGS BATTLEFIELD, NATIONALLY

The Battle of Mill Springs, fought on January 19, 1862, resulted in a decisive Union victory that ultimately drove the Confederates from Kentucky and enabled the Federal advance into Middle Tennessee in February of 1862.

The defeat of the Confederates at this battle helped secure Kentucky for the Union, a vital achievement, and was the first major Union victory of the war following the disastrous defeat at First Manassas on July 21, 1861. The defeat of Confederate Brigadier General Felix K. Zollicoffer, who died during the battle, was a first of many victories for Union General George H. Thomas.

MILL SPRINGS BATTLEFIELD TODAY

In 1991, the National Park Service identified Mill Springs Battlefield as one of the 25 most endangered battlefields in America. In 1992, Recognizing the need to preserve and protect the battlefield for future generations, 20 other individuals and I came together to found the Mill Springs Battlefield Association. It was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1993, and under the guidance of the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP), the protected area of the battlefield has been able to grow from ½ acre to over 900 acres today. We also own and administer a 10,000 square foot visitor's center built in 2006, which is located adjacent to the Mill Springs National Cemetery. Since our founding, MSBA has spent \$13 million to preserve and interpret the battlefield.

P.O. Box 282 * Nancy, KY 42544 * 606-636-4045 * www.millsprings.net * info@millsprings.net



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PROPOSAL

Though the Mill Springs Battlefield Association has maintained the battlefield since 1992, we appreciate the National Park Service's ability and expertise to generate tourism, and believe that the Park Service is best positioned to maintain the battlefield into the future. In recognition of this, we would like to ask the Committee to support Congressman Rogers' bill, H.R. 5979, which would direct the Secretary of the Interior to establish the Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument as a unit of the National Park System.

MSBA is unique in that we are not asking the Park Service to take over undeveloped battlefield land, nor buy the land. In contrast, we hope to donate the National Park Service the 900 acres with miles of well-kept interpretive trails, a marked driving tour, and a visitor's center/museum. The Mill Springs Battlefield Association will continue as a "friends group" in support of the battlefield, as our dedication to preserving & protecting the battlefield will not change when this hopefully becomes a National Monument.

CONCLUSION

Chairman McClintock, Ranking Member Hanabusa, and members of the subcommittee, thank you again for providing me with the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 5979. As the founding President of the Mill Springs Battlefield Association, I strongly support this legislation, and urge you to advance it to the Full Natural Resources Committee for further consideration. I am happy to answer any questions that you all may have.



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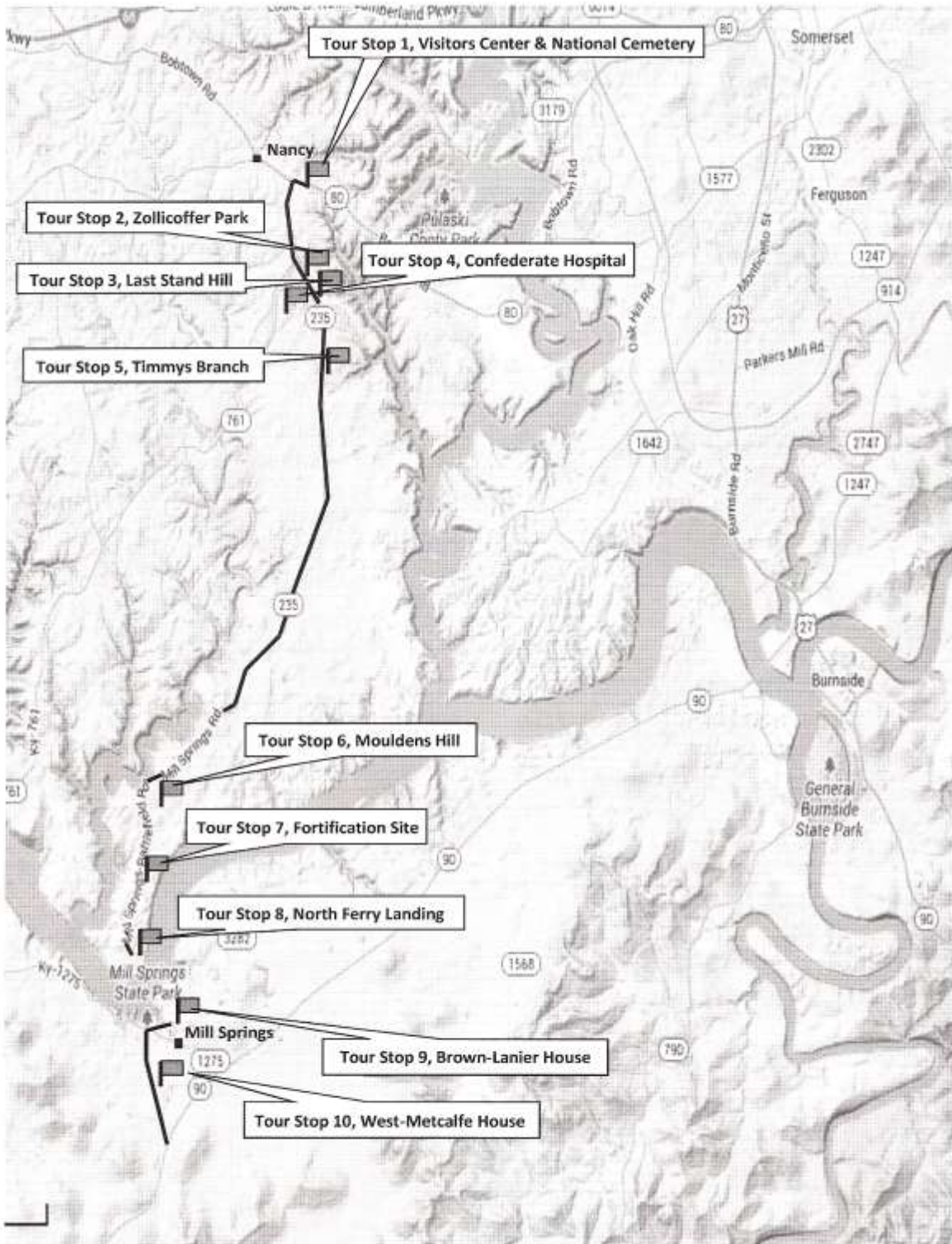


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