

Kentucky's Civil War: Garrard County's Camp Dick Robinson



Historical Marker #1750 commemorates Camp Dick Robinson, a Garrard County recruiting camp that was instrumental in keeping Kentucky in the Union.

Established on the farm of Richard Robinson in August 1861 by Union officer and Maysville native William "Bull" Nelson, many of Kentucky's first Union regiments were formed there. The site soon became a staging ground for several early military campaigns.

When the camp was established, Kentucky was attempting to stay neutral in the conflict. Although Gov. Beriah Magoffin complained to Abraham Lincoln about the site, Lincoln responded that since the camp "consists exclusively of Kentuckians" and that it was not the "popular wish of Kentucky" to close it, he refused to remove the soldiers.

In 1862, Confederates took the area, renamed the site "Camp Breckinridge," and used it as a supply base. That October, the rebels fell back to Perryville to stay between Union forces and those supplies, which resulted in the Battle of Perryville.

Camp Nelson, established north of Garrard County near Nicholasville, ultimately replaced Camp Dick Robinson. Today, Camp Dick Robinson is remembered for helping solidify the Union cause in Kentucky.

Photo: The home of Richard Robinson, which became the main headquarters building for Camp Dick Robinson in Garrard County. From the collections of the Kentucky Historical Society.