

LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM
SATURDAY, MAY 7TH
by
The Liberty Rifles

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Winchester and the Lower Valley of Virginia were a scene of mixed feelings and emotions ranging from patriotism, pride, and duty to fear, angst and gloom. The Mountain Rangers of Frederick County, VA, or what would soon be mustered into Confederate service as Company D of the 33rd Virginia Infantry, assembled in May of 1861, each man signing a pledge to defend Virginia, and began to acclimate themselves to soldier life - that of cooking, sewing, laundry, sleeping on the ground, and the endless "left, right, left, right" of the drill field. For the Mountain Rangers, the transition from Citizen to Soldier would happen here, on the outskirts of Winchester. The local Civilians loyal to the fledgling Confederacy worked feverishly to provide the soldiers with uniforms, flags, and equipment while many of their family, friends, and neighbors remained loyal to the Union and worried of what was to come. The slaves and freedmen of Frederick County, many of whom accompanied their masters to the seat of war as servants, cooks, teamsters barbers, etc., certainly pondered their future and place in the coming struggle as well. Please join us at Kernstown Battlefield on May 7th and explore the camp of the Mountain Rangers through a living history demonstration, to include a flag presentation program from the Ladies of Winchester to the men of the Mountain Rangers, and a recreation of the signing of the pledge to defend Virginia, as well as various drill demonstrations. Walk through the camp and learn about what the soldiers were experiencing in their first days of war; enter the Pritchard House to get a view of local Civilians making socks, shirts, caps, and other clothing for the soldiers. Try to imagine the exhilaration, excitement, joy and fear that was felt in the Spring of 1861, as the North and South prepared to meet each other on the field of battle.

12:30 pm- Signing the Pledge

We invite visitors to take part in this program recreating the soldiers pledge to defend Virginia. By participating, we will explain the choices Virginians had in 1861. How do you feel about secession, the new Confederacy and the defense of your state? What of the union- in which Virginia had played such an integral part in its creation?

3:00 pm- The presentation of the flag:

With secession came the recruitment of numerous volunteer companies like the Mountain Rangers. It was not uncommon for many of these units to be presented

flags by the citizens of their home town. Handmade by mothers and wives of the volunteers, the flag was clearly an emotional attachment for both soldier and citizen. Once these volunteers were assembled with other companies to form a regiment, there would be one designated regimental flag. More than just a symbol of pride and unity, the flag also marked the center of the regiment- aiding the men on the chaotic, smoke covered battlefield.