

In Millersburg

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Holmes County Farmers Rebelled Against Draft

If the statue standing in the demonstrations, little has changed, except perhaps the method. Just as the government took issue then, so it does now with a threat of immediate reclassification into active service for the deferred students who demonstrate against the draft.

All that remains of Fort Fizzle, located three miles south of Glenmont on County Road 6, is the crumbles of the old stone house used as a fortress by the rebels. Cows graze around the old fort and drink from the stream stemming from the spring so vividly described in the accounts of the battle of Fort Fizzle.

The underground passage way used to escape from the house to the long cabin and its auxiliary escape to the orchard are almost completely covered with refuse.

Holmes Countians aren't quite sure and have to think a minute when asked for directions to the old fort. Maybe that's because of the tendency people have to forget things that have unpleasant connotations.

Newspapers played an important part in the uprising of 1863, the same as they do today. Without press coverage and notoriety of the television cameras, many feel the anti-war demonstrations staged today would not be so attractive to the participants. What fun is the show, with out an audience?

The press adopted an unusual policy concerning the Battle of Fort Fizzle, that of complete silence. Noted historian Fred Almendinger says in his book, "Holmes County, Ohio", about the silence of the press, "The Holmes County Farmer made absolutely no mention whatsoever of the whole affair. When we recall that between 500 and 1,000 men were involved, in a small rural county whose total population in that time was less than 10,000, such a thing would constitute an event of major importance. Yet the newspaper said nothing of the event."

The following spring, however, when the urgency of the time had passed, the Holmes County Farmer once more advocated rebellion saying "Revolution is our right and our duty, and he who will not join in, is a coward, and only fit to be a slave. The Holmes County Republican, an opposition paper, openly defended the administration. With only a few Holmes County supporters it was finally squeezed out. The ad for the sale of the newspaper read "The Holmes County Republican office will be sold on very reasonable terms to any man who can reconcile himself to an enormous copperhead locality".

The editor, unable to find a buyer, finally suspended publication.

There have been a few changes since the Battle of Fort Fizzle, but basically much remains the same. We still have believers, and nonbelievers; those who demonstrate openly and those who work secretly; those who will take orders without question and rebels who agitate.

Holmes County still has men who will take up arms and fight for their county and those who will hide behind the Fort Fizzle stones of objection. The right of a man to choose the means by which he will express his rebellion against what he believes wrong should unquestionably be his. We might not agree with what a man says, but he should have his right to say it; or in modern terms, to demonstrate against it.

It's interesting to note that David Stuber who is credited with throwing the stone at the draft officer and starting the rebellion known as the Battle of Fort Fizzle, went peacefully when drafted for military service and served faithfully until the end of the Civil War.

Whether their rebellion stemmed from a religious, political, or humanitarian base, it was nevertheless a real basis for objection to them. Instead of taking up their picket signs and demonstrating out in the open, the belligerent men of Holmes County took the logical course open to them and met in secret in the "Castles" of the "Knights of the Golden Circle".

They organized and practiced military strategy in secret. Who knows but what a few draft cards might have been tossed on the evening fire had there been any.

The accounts of how the actual assault on the federal officer, enlisting men for the draft, took place are as numerous as the people who tell them. The Holmes County Library file on the Battle of Fort Fizzle contains accounts by men who were actually there, relatives of the rebels, and historians who have studied all accounts. Whether David Stuber actually threw the stone at the enlisting officer not knowing who he was, is not really important.

What is relevant is the fact that when people disagree with what is imposed on them by their government, they will demonstrate, whether it be by picket signs and marches, or by joining secret organizations and carrying rifles. The rebels who demonstrated against the draft in 1863 are scarcely different than the youth of today in their demonstrations. Only the method differs. The resentment is the same.

From the night, so many years ago, that a prominent Millersburg politician advised his listeners to "throw away the revolvers and get rifles 6 of longer range, and you will not be troubled with the draft" to the time of our modern student,

the end of the Civil War.