

Off the beaten path

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The Other Paw Paw Tunnel

The C&O Canal Tunnel just across the Potomac from Paw Paw is certainly a must-see. Over 3,000 feet long, the massive brick-lined structure took 14 years to build. Over the years, countless travelers have gone there to walk through it.

Back in W.Va., about a half-mile downriver from the town are the remains of a much lesser-known 250-foot-long tunnel. It is found along the old B&O's right-of-way through Paw Paw Ridge.

Today, unlike the well-preserved canal tunnel, the railroad tunnel is just an abandoned, deep cut in the ridge. But long ago, it looked much different. On Nov. 6, 1842, *The Baltimore Sun* stated that the tunnel "is through soft slate rock... and is completely arched with brick, and fronted with white sandstone.

One interesting Civil War episode took place there. On Oct. 4, 1862, Capt. John H. Hite surrendered the 80 soldiers and officers of Co. B, 54th, Pa. Inf. to Brig. Gen. John D. Imboden's 1st Virginia Partisan Rangers. Earlier that morning, the Rebels had surprised and captured another com-



Woman gather at the Paw Paw railroad tunnel. photo courtesy of Barbara Norton

pany posted three miles up the track at Little Cacapon.

Hite's high-spirited men were dug in about 500 yards west of the tunnel and spoiling for a fight. But when a Rebel approached and offered surrender terms, the captain agreed readily. The astonished men then came out of their rifle pits, tossed down their arms, and marched off to prison.

The Pennsylvanians spent two long months in prison and to a man believed that Hite, who was a staunch

Democrat, had given up because he hated Pres. Lincoln over his recent issuing of The Emancipation Proclamation.

Steve French is a historian, teacher and the author of Phantoms of the South Fork: Captain McNeill and His Rangers; Imboden's Brigade in the Gettysburg Campaign and Rebel Chronicles: Raiders, Scouts and Train Robbers of the Upper Potomac.

Be part of the Bicentennial!

Saturday, June 20
Historian Steve French will talk about the Civil War in Morgan County on West Virginia Day at the Star Theatre starting at 11 a.m.

Monday, July 6
Morgan County Day will be celebrated in Berkeley Springs State Park, with food trucks, history displays and a special photo session. Organizers want to take a group picture of Morgan County's residents on this special day!

Saturday, September 19
Historian Steve French will talk about the importance of railroads in Morgan County's history, and how they shaped the community.

Saturday, October 17
George Didawick will present an overview of the history of sand mining in Morgan County, from the early days of small mines to the current days of modern operations.

To keep up to date on Bicentennial happenings, follow the Morgan County Bicentennial Facebook page, and check the weekly issue of *The Morgan Messenger* for event announcements.



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