

Stepping into history of Liberty Pole incident



{John Boal/News & Messenger}

OCOQUAN, VA. - Tony Mallory leads a group dressed as the Prince William militia, re-enacting an event before the Civil War in Occoquan.

By [Amanda Stewart](#)

OCOQUAN, VA. - Event commemorated 1860 "Liberty Pole incident"

A political rally broke out in Occoquan on Saturday afternoon and the topic was Abraham Lincoln's presidential campaign.

About 100 people gathered outside Rockledge Mansion on Saturday afternoon to take part in a reenactment of a pre-Civil War dispute that happened there.

The reenactment was part of the town's "Before the War" event, an all-day commemoration of pre-Civil War Occoquan. The event, sponsored by the Prince William County/Manassas Convention and Visitors Bureau, was the first sesquicentennial commemoration to be held in the county to mark the 150th anniversary of the First Battle of Manassas.

The Occoquan event focused on the summer of 1860, when 60 men gathered near Rockledge Mansion to raise a liberty pole with a banner supporting presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln.

On July 27, 1860, the Prince William County militia rode into Occoquan to remove the banner.

Saturday, reenactors with the Black Horse Cavalry rode down Mill Street in Occoquan to portray the militia.

People watching the reenactment shouted protests as members of the cavalry rode to the liberty pole and cut it down.

"You'll never take our flag," one woman shouted.

But, just as in 1860, they did.

Saturday's event also included lectures on the liberty pole incident, cavalry and weapons demonstrations, historical boat tours and other Civil War-themed displays and activities.

Occoquan Mayor Earnest "Earnie" Porta said the town plans to hold other Civil War events as part of the area's sesquicentennial celebration.

Woodbridge resident Laura Lenz and her daughter Rosemary were at the Occoquan Farmers Market on Saturday when they saw the Civil War event and decided to stop by, Lenz said.

Rosemary, 8, said her favorite part was the horses brought by the Black Horse Cavalry members.

"I liked the horse. It was pretty," Rosemary said after petting one of the horses standing along Mill Street.

Lenz said she also enjoyed the event.

"I think it's a fabulous way to introduce kids to history," she said.