

MVCWRT Member Adds Interpretive Tool to Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park

--By Bob Lehman

Last year during our fall tour I talked with Rob Orrison about building a diorama of Bristoe Station for their visitor center. Dan Welch had gotten this started by telling Rob about my hobby with painting military miniatures and wargaming figures. Well, after talking about the figure scale and size of the board a project was born. I made a trip to Bristoe Station Battlefield to get an idea of the lay of the land and any other details that would help in design. It was decided that a 9x9 ft board would allow the desired area needed to show the majority of battle. The figure size of 10mm (approx 3/8") was chosen. My next problem was to make this so I could transport it from Ohio to Virginia when finished. Luckily my wife had bought a large SUV which could haul up to 6 1/2 ft length so the board size came in at 4 boards at 3x6' and 1 board at 3x3'. That was the easy part.

So my winter project was set. I had folding tables that would allow me to position and layout everything in the basement. Foam board along with drywall compound was used for the base and to form hills, a river, roads and then it got painted. Everything was covered in different shades of grass flocking with hundreds of trees and bushes added. Next, all the figures were painted. I used a scale of 1 to 4 to represent the size of Union regiments on the field and closer to 1 to 5 for Confederate units. In all it came out to 2000+ figures. Additionally there are 7 Confederate and 16 Union guns with crews, limbers, caissons and horses. I'm going to estimate there are 2300 miniatures on the tables. Then COVID happened. Let's just say that every day I worried that the cat would decide she had a new toy or litter box. Thankfully that didn't happen! I built a holder to allow the boards to be stacked and transported. Finally, in August, everything was set at Bristoe to receive the completed project. Hopefully you all can make a trip someday and see the diorama in all its glory. Here are some photos to give you an idea.