

82nd Airborne Division Memorial

The photo on the left shows the 82nd Airborne Division Memorial near Crystal Falls, next to the Paint River bridge on U.S. 141. It has a particularly interesting local history.

Local members of the 82nd Airborne community established the memorial, and one person who played a major role was Melvin "Mel" Saier of Crystal Falls.

Saier was a World War II Army paratrooper who fought in the Battle of the Bulge. After moving to Crystal Falls, he became deeply involved with the local veterans community and served as the NCOIC of the local 82nd Airborne Color Guard. His obituary specifically credits him with helping establish the 82nd Airborne Memorial at Memory Lane Resort and getting the nearby bridge renamed.

The memorial wasn't simply a generic veterans memorial—it grew out of the local 82nd Airborne veterans themselves.



Why a bridge?

The bridge connection is especially appropriate for the 82nd Airborne.

Airborne troops have historically been tasked with seizing and holding bridges because controlling bridges can be critical to moving troops and equipment. The memorial site became associated with the bridge over the Paint River, which is why you may see it referred to as the 82nd Airborne Bridge Memorial or Airborne Bridge Memorial. Local records describe the bridge as being renamed in connection with the memorial.

The memorial is along U.S. 141 near the Paint River, and Crystal Falls Township still recognizes the site as the 82nd Airborne Memorial.

It is still part of local Memorial Day ceremonies

The memorial isn't just a historical marker. It has been incorporated into the area's annual Memorial Day observances.

During the Crystal Falls/Amasa Memorial Day ceremonies, veterans and community members have traveled to the 82nd Airborne Memorial, where a wreath ceremony, rifle volley, and Taps are performed.

One newspaper account described a wreath being placed there in honor of the last living member of the 82nd Airborne in the local area at the time.

A later Memorial Day report also referred to the site as the "82nd Airborne Bridge Memorial" and showed the ceremony taking place there.

There is another interesting local connection

The Crystal Falls area had several men connected to the 82nd Airborne. For example, the national WWII Memorial Registry lists Frederick J. Hebein Jr. of Crystal Falls as an 82nd Airborne veteran who served in four European campaigns and received, among other decorations, a Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf Clusters.

So the memorial represents more than the division in a general sense—it reflects a real local connection between Crystal Falls and the men who served as Army paratroopers.