

Blue Earth County Civil War History Symposium

“...We Cannot Escape History...”

Sat., March 24, 2012

Blue Earth County Heritage Center, Mankato, MN

Featured Presentations and Speakers

Lincoln's Trials by Fire

1862 was the most trying year of Abraham Lincoln's presidency. In addition to numerous military setbacks, on and off the battlefield, quarrels with his own cabinet over his decision to issue an emancipation proclamation, and being forced to suspend some civil liberties, Lincoln experienced his own personal tragedy, when his beloved son Willie contracted typhoid fever and died. Burdened with his own grief, and that of his wife Mary, the president had to carry on the work of leading the nation through its darkest hour. To make matters even worse, Lincoln received word via telegraph that the Dakota Indians in Minnesota had gone on the warpath, killing settlers and looting both farms and villages as they went. In the aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota War, Lincoln could have easily allowed the trial verdicts that netted 303 Dakota warriors condemned to death to stand, but his own sense of justice rebelled at the thought of hanging potentially innocent men for crimes that did not warrant the death penalty. Against enormous public pressure, Lincoln pardoned 265 of the prisoners, and allowed only 38 to be hanged in Mankato on December 26. It remains the largest mass-execution in American history. Lincoln's trials by fire, both public and private, were far from over at the close of this costly, but momentous year.

Bryce Stenzel is a native of Mankato. He holds both a Bachelor of Science in Teaching Degree and Master of Arts in History Degree from Minnesota State University, Mankato. He is the author of numerous books on local history as well as Lincoln-related topics. Stenzel is currently the Education Director at House of Hope Inc. in Mankato. He is the founder and director of Lincoln's Traveling Troupe, a talented group of area youth, who portray Lincoln's life and legacy through a series of dramatic plays. As a costumed interpreter, Stenzel has portrayed Abraham Lincoln to audiences throughout the U.S. for 22 years.

Boys in Blue: Blue Earth County in the Civil War

Historian, Roger Norland specializes in researching the lives of local Civil War veterans from Blue Earth and Nicollet counties, in an effort to provide modern audiences insights into what it was really like for ordinary soldiers to fight in a war of national significance. In Mr. Norland's descriptions, the personalities of James Cannon (owner of a small paint shop on Front Street in Mankato), George Evans (Garden City man, who claimed to be first Minnesotan in the Union Army), Lorin Cray (served in the 9th Minnesota Regiment at the decisive Battle of Nashville and later became a prominent judge in Mankato) and others re-emerge, in vivid detail, from the mists of time. They were the true “*Boys in Blue*,” for whom the monument in Mankato's Lincoln Park was dedicated. No symposium on this topic would be complete without retelling their compelling stories.

Roger Norland is lifelong resident of Blue Earth/Nicollet Counties. He has done extensive study, research, and writing about local men and women's stories that took place during the Civil War years. Degree in history plus some graduate level work.

First Minnesota Regiment in the Civil War Campaigns of 1862

The First Minnesota Infantry Regiment served with distinction during the American Civil War. The regiment began its service in April 1861 and fought until spring 1864. In three years, the regiment fought battles in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. The presentation, *First Minnesota Regiment in the Civil War Campaigns of 1862*, will bring to life the campaigns and battle's in the important second year of the war. The talk will include: a brief history of the regiment, Peninsula Campaign, Seven Day's Battles, Antietam Campaign, and the Fredericksburg Campaign.

Jefferson Spilman is the supervisor of The Landing in Shakopee, MN. Bachelor of Arts in History/Minor in Government from University of Texas at Austin, attended Mankato State University, graduated from New Ulm Public High School. Museum professional in Minnesota, Texas, Colorado, and Virginia. U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Veteran.

Life of a Civil War Soldier

In 1858 the thirty-second star was sewn onto the nation's flag, as Minnesota became the newest state to join the Union. Within 3 years, the citizens of this state would be called upon to send their young men off to preserve and defend this glorious union. Fourteen months later, while these men were away, another civil war erupted within the boundaries of their own state, as the Dakota fought to regain their lands. Two simultaneous civil wars placed huge demands on the citizens of this state as the flower of Minnesota Manhood fought out east, down south and on the prairies of southern Minnesota. Much has been written about these two conflicts and they are well known. Arn Kind, teacher-historian-reenactor, will give us an idea of what the conflict was like for the typical soldier of this time. What was his uniform, his equipment, his weapons, his food, his daily life like? What were his motivations for enlisting? What were his expectations? What did he expect to accomplish? This presentation will include a "living history" experience that will allow participants to get a feel for what it was like to be a soldier in the ranks.

Arn Kind is currently teaching at Franklin Elementary School in Mankato, MN. For the past 35 years he has taught in grades 4 through 12. He's been bringing his presentations to students and adults of all ages; from classroom seminars at elementary and high school levels to seminars at the university level. He has also been featured at summer camps, historical reenactments and festivals. Arn is also the creator of Fort Union Civil War Camp, a summer program where young people, ages 11 to 17, became recruits in the Union Army for a week.

Arn is a member of the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment; a reenactment group based out of Fort Snelling. Because this group is noted for its authenticity, they have appeared in many documentaries and historical feature-films such as *The Blue and the Gray*, *North & South*, *Glory*, *Gettysburg*, *Dances With Wolves*, and *Gods and Generals*. Arn brings this authenticity to his presentations. His training and experiences as a teacher enable him to adjust and adapt the subject matter to suit different age levels.

A very important part of Arn's presentations are the artifacts, uniforms and equipment that he brings. Students will be able to observe, handle, and interact with these items as part of their hands-on experience in living the history.

Louisa and John Humphrey: Discovering Our Civil War Ancestors

Susan Hynes takes you along on a journey discovering her Civil War era ancestors as she portrays her great Grandmother Louisa Hoyt Humphrey. Louisa tells of her family's voyage cross country to Minnesota by steamboat, the fort built at Winnebago City in 1862, and of her post war marriage to Army of the Potomac veteran John Humphrey. Susan also shares what she learned of the fate of other ancestors in the Western campaigns as she shares photos and artifacts from their lives during this tumultuous time.

Susan Hynes serves on the Board of Trustees of the Blue Earth County Historical Society. She enjoys illuminating history and making it accessible to a wide range of people through the use of costumed interpreters, hands on activities and props. Over the past eight years she has helped to stage many such events for Blue Earth County Historical Society, Betsy-Tacy Society, Rapidan Heritage Society, Lincoln Traveling Troupe, Wasioja Civil War Days and others.

Shelley Harrison, Blue Earth County Historical Society Archives Manager, discusses research resources available to those seeking information about their own Civil War ancestors.

B is for Battle Cry: A Civil War Alphabet

Program begins with articles and ads culled from local Civil War-era newspapers, some of which are humorous and others that are poignant. With the help of modern technology, Pat and Dave will give some background that includes how their childhood books influenced them. "Literary Interlude": Pat and Dave will introduce the book, "B is for Battle Cry: A Civil War Alphabet," and explain the music that helped give the poems their structure. Pat will sing part of "Hard Times Come Again No More" and "Hard Crackers Come Again No More". They will read from the book with the pages on the big screen so that everyone can see them and show the writing and illustrating process.

Pat Bauer has been a teacher for over thirty years, and presently teaches American history to students at Black Hawk Middle School in Eagan, MN. She is particularly fond of using music, costumes, picture books and lots of activity when she teaches. For many years, she was also a costumed interpreter at Historic Fort Snelling in the Twin Cities, where she met and married her husband, David Geister. They continue to make appearances as various historical characters, in addition to presenting at conferences, museums, libraries and schools. Pat is currently working on several manuscripts with historical themes. She was appointed to the Governor's Civil War Task Force and will continue to serve on that committee until 2015.

David Geister is an artist and historical interpreter who specializes in illustrating children's books with historical themes. His artwork has been featured in a variety of magazines and is used at several historic sites. He worked for many years as a costumed interpreter at Historic Fort Snelling, as well as other sites within the Minnesota Historical Society. Dave's life-long fascination with the Civil War has inspired him to paint many scenes from this chapter of American history.

On the Homefront: Maud Hart Lovelace Honors Local Civil War Veterans

When writing the Betsy-Tacy books, author Maud Hart Lovelace captures the history and spirit of the time and place, a time in which people were amazed at the contrast between Mankato's pioneer past and its comfortable and civilized present. Mankato was only 40 years old when Maud was born in 1892. She grew up hearing firsthand the stories from the early settlers who arrived by steamship or covered wagon. She heard stories of bravery of the First Minnesota Regiment at Gettysburg, the vivid stories of the Dakota Conflict, and the devastation of grasshoppers, floods, blizzards and epidemics. She loved these stories of hardship and adventure. These true stories and the people she knew growing up eventually became a part of the Betsy-Tacy books. What was it like to live in Mankato during the Indian and Civil Wars? How did Mankato honor its Civil War veterans? Two women, Marguerite Marsh and Mary Warren Pitcher, who knew Maud Hart Lovelace and later became characters in her books, will tell their stories which Maud would later write about.

Betty Cords - costumed interpreter for Blue Earth County Historical Society events

Alexandria Oldenburg – costumed interpreter for Blue Earth County Historical Society and Betsy-Tacy Society events, and member of Lincoln's Traveling Troupe.

Boy in Blue discussion panel

Symposium speakers will join together for a panel discussion. Questions will be taken from the audience.

Panel Moderator: Shelley Harrison, Blue Earth County Historical Society Archives Manager.

Music on the Wire - Telegraph Demonstrations

The invention of Morse Code in 1844, and the expansion of telegraph service (15,000 mile network) during the Civil War (1861-1865), literally transformed how that war was fought and won. It was the first tool of mass-communication, enabling the Union side to transmit information back and forth across vast distances, quickly and effectively, in a way the Confederacy never could. Early in the war, Abraham Lincoln understood the power of the telegraph as a weapon of war. He was the first American president to insist that telegraph lines be installed directly into the War Department, creating a central command and control center—the hub of Lincoln's war operation. He also signed an executive order, placing all telegraph facilities in the Union under the control of the United States military. During his tenure as Commander-in-Chief, Lincoln himself sent out at least 1,000 telegrams, much to the annoyance of his commanders in the field. For the first time in history, the democratically elected head of a nation's armed forces could obtain a vast strategic overview of what was happening on the battlefield.

Daryl Hrdlicka has performed as a costumed interpreter and actor since his days in high school. He has been an actor and musician in the Laura Ingalls Wilder Pageant in Walnut Grove for the past 6 years, and has appeared at Mankato's History Fest, Worthington's Pioneer Village, Betsy-Tacy Society events, Westbrook's Heritage House Museum, Blue Earth County Historical Society events and Pipestone's Civil War Days.

Songs of Home & the Old Campground - Civil War Era Music

Lonesome Ron will perform authentic Civil War songs. Those from both the North and the South. Songs of hope, songs of desperation and ones that offered respite from the anguishes of war. And he also presents a few of the tunes that were sung during the years leading up to the war.

Lonesome Ron has entertained with cowboy songs and Western yodeling for 40 years. He also performs songs from American History including music from the great cattle drives, Stephen Foster songs, Civil War tunes as well as a number of original songs. His original songs have been selected for competition in several song writing contests including NPR's Big Top Chautauqua. He also wrote and recorded soundtrack music for the Jesse James documentary, "The Ninth Man," which won an award in California.

Audiences enjoy hearing Lonesome Ron perform music of the Sons of the Pioneers, Johnny Cash, Gene Autry, Hank Williams and other great stars. He has performed with some of the top names in the music field such as Jean Shepard the Queen of Country and Donna Douglas of the Beverly Hillbillies. He's shared the stage with Jan & Dean, Marie Osmond and Boxcar Willie, and has appeared in the cable soap opera, "As the Corn Grows." Lonesome Ron has been featured at many Old West and historical events including: Defeat of Jesse James Days in Northfield, MN, Spirit of the West Festival in Sioux Falls, SD, National Country Music Festival in LeMars, IA, Trader's Jubilee in Prairie Du Chien, WI, Younger Brothers Capture in Madelia, MN and the Jesse James Farm in Kearney, MO.

