



9th Annual Civil War Symposium
Terrible Swift Sword: 1862
Sat., March 26, 2022 9 am – 5 pm

PROGRAM

- 8:00 am **Registration**
- 8:50 am **Announcements and Welcome**
- 9:00 am ***“...We Cannot Escape History ...” Abraham Lincoln’s Trials by Fire***
Presented by Bryce Stenzel
- 10:00 am ***Helen Carrothers - Dakota War, August 1862***
Presented by Teresa Bergdahl with Vince Bergdahl
- 11:00 am ***Banners of Glory: Flags of the Civil War***
Presented by Arn Kind
- Noon **Mess Call**
Music by Lonesome Ron
- 1:00 pm ***Harriet Beecher Stowe Meets Abraham Lincoln***
Presented by Dr. Nancy Koster
- 2:00 pm ***1st Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery and the Battle of Shiloh***
April 6-7, 1862
Presented by Ken Foss
- 3:00 pm ***Rethinking McClellan:***
Accepted Myth VS Fact in the Maryland Campaign
Presented by James Olson
- 4:00 pm **Drawing & Civil War Round Table Discussion**
- 4:50 pm **Closing**

9th Annual Civil War Symposium

Featured Presentations

“...We Cannot Escape History ...” Abraham Lincoln’s Trials by Fire

Presented by Bryce O. Stenzel

1862 was the most trying year of Lincoln’s presidency, both personally, and politically. On February 20, eleven-year-old Willie Lincoln died of typhoid fever, leaving his parents both devastated with grief. After failing to capture the Confederate capital of Richmond in the ill-fated “Peninsula Campaign,” General George B. McClellan was replaced as Commander of the Army of the Potomac by General John Pope. Arrogant and incompetent, Pope attacked Confederate forces under General Robert E. Lee and suffered a humiliating defeat at the Battle of Second Bull Run. Lincoln returned McClellan to command just in time for him to oversee the bloodiest, single day of the Civil War, the Battle of Antietam. Meanwhile, Pope was sent west by Lincoln to lead efforts to put down a full-scale Dakota Indian uprising against white settlers on the Minnesota River Valley frontier, when news of the outbreak of hostilities reached him in Washington. It was Pope who conceived the decision to try the Dakota prisoners by military commission as a means of restoring his tarnished military career by being an “Indian fighter.” If that weren’t enough, Lincoln was in the process of drafting his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation and weighing the consequences of it becoming the cornerstone of the Union’s war effort.

It would have been easy, even understandable, for Lincoln to have been so overwhelmed by all the pressures he faced that he simply ignored his own conscious decision not to hang men for votes. To his credit, he did not. This is the seldom told, comprehensive, and dramatic story of Abraham Lincoln, the Dakota Conflict, and emancipation of the African American race, as it played out against the backdrop of the American Civil War. Ironically, the Final Emancipation Proclamation was signed less than a week after the largest mass-execution in American history took place at Mankato, Minnesota on December 26, 1862.

In this compelling presentation, Lincoln historian, Bryce Stenzel will specifically address Lincoln’s reasons for moving gradually on emancipating the slaves, and how he decided the fate of the 303 Indians sentenced to be executed—motives that have been seriously criticized in recent years by social activists bent on re-writing American history to claim victimhood. In providing an objective, historical analysis of these controversial subjects, Stenzel will tell the hardest story of all—the truth.

**Copies of Bryce Stenzel’s book: “...We Cannot Escape History...” Abraham Lincoln’s Trials by Fire will be available for sale at the Symposium.*

Helen Carrothers and the Dakota War, August 1862

Presented by Teresa Bergdahl with Harley Bergdahl

In 1857, James Carrothers and his young bride, Helen who is only 13 years old at the time, arrive on the frontier of Minnesota. James builds a cabin near Beaver Falls in Renville County and is employed by the Indian Agency. Their first child is born soon thereafter. Then about a year and a half later, James is sent west to work building various structures. Helen is alone again and with little idea of how to live on frontier, has her second child. The Dakota village of Little Crow is very close to the Carrothers cabin. The Dakota start to help the young mother and Helen is becoming well acquainted with Little Crow and learning language. By 1858 she is well-known to the village medicine man.

Early in the day of August 17th, 1862, James leaves for Owatonna to attend a congressional convention. Helen is alone again, taking care of a sick Mrs. Urania White. When word reached her cabin late in the day of the attack on the Lower Agency, she initially does not want to leave since the Dakota are her friends and she does not feel threatened. By the next day she had helped gather the white men, women and children that lived close to her cabin. Convinced to leave, the Henderson party she is with is attacked. Eight members of the Henderson party of 27 whites are killed and Helen and Urania White along with their children, are taken to Little Crow's village. On August 20th, Little Crow is fearful for Helen's safety and has her, along with her 2 children, taken out of the village and told to hide. On the 21st, Helen escapes from the cornfield where she had hidden.

Helen struggles for 9 days without food and water for herself and children, hiding from Dakota warriors in the area. Eventually, nearly naked and unable to move, Helen's nearly lifeless body is spotted a short distance from the road by travelers who alert soldiers at Fort Ridgely. They find her, cover her, and bring her and her children into the fort where they are nursed back to health. It was later estimated that she had traveled some 70 miles in her horrific journey.

Banners of Glory: Flags of the Civil War

Presented by Arn Kind

Regimental Flags or "Colors" were critical in Civil War battles as they marked the location of every unit or regiment on the battlefield. Soldiers recruited for the volunteer army were raised in regiments in their home states and were sent off to war after a presentation of a set of colors (flags) from the people of their home state. This usually took place in a ceremony during which the men of the regiment were encouraged to bring glory to these flags through their bravery and good conduct on the battlefield. There was consequently a strong sense of loyalty and responsibility toward defending and bringing honor to these colors. As there was now a strong association between the flags and the people back home, the colors almost seemed to the soldier to be living breathing organisms that represented their friends, families, and relatives. Not only that, but to the individual soldier the flags represented his own personal sense of honor, his sense of manhood, his patriotism, his loyalty, and dedication to the cause. This explains why so many Medal of Honor recipients during the war were awarded that honor in defense of their own flags or capturing the enemy's. This presentation is all about these Banners of Glory.

Harriet Beecher Stowe Meets Abraham Lincoln

Presented by Dr. Nancy Koster

Harriet Beecher Stowe met Abraham Lincoln in December 1862. Before this meeting Stowe was very critical of Lincoln for not moving fast enough to abolish slavery. Koster will give background on why abolitionists were critical of Lincoln. She will also share interesting scenes of Stowe visiting her son in a Union Army camp.

Rethinking McClellan: Accepted Myth VS Fact in the Maryland Campaign

Presented by James Olson

George B. McClellan is the general that everyone loves to hate. There is always a “but” after anything positive that is said about him. “McClellan was a good organizer, but...”; “McClellan won the battle of Antietam, but...”; “McClellan could have been a great general, but...”

General McClellan certainly had his faults and did not necessarily have the best personality. This much is true and well documented, BUT has history been fair to his generalship? Was “Little Mac” slow? Was he timid in his planning because he worried about destroying the machine that he built? Was he the villain that he has been made out to be by some? Did other generals of the time think so lowly of him that he should appear at the top of modern “worst generals” lists? Or has George McClellan’s legacy become severely tarnished by historians who unknowingly repeat lies, exaggerations and mistruths?

1st Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery and the Battle of Shiloh April 6-7, 1862

Presented by Ken Foss

The speaker for this presentation will be Mr. Ken Foss of New Ulm. He is a long-time member of the New Ulm Battery, a home defense military unit created in the aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. The first captain of the New Ulm Battery, Richard Fischer, was offered the position of “Captain” because he had prior military experience fighting in the Battle of Shiloh, as a member of the 1st Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery. Mr. Foss will discuss both the 1st Minnesota Battery’s role in the Battle of Shiloh, as well as some lesser known facts surrounding this strategic battle and its significance.

9th Annual Civil War Symposium Featured Speakers



Teresa & Vince Bergdahl *aka: Harley & Patience*

Vince & Teresa became Harley & Patience when they joined the Old West Society of Minnesota in 1993. The OWS performed historical sketches of the Old West 1865-1895 throughout the US in such places as Tombstone AZ, Fort Smith AK, Durango CO, North Platte NB and Deadwood SD. OWS were regular performers at Historic Murphy's Landing, Shakopee, MN and from 1997-2002, Harley & Patience presented historical persons such as Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, Victoria Woodhull and George & Libbie Custer. From 1997-2003, they were regular cast members for the Buffalo Bill Show at The Wade House, Greenbush, WI. In 1999 Harley & Patience were involved in the documentary "The Confessions of the Ninth Man".

From 2002-2018, Harley & Patience presented the story of Norwegian immigrants during The Landings Folkway's event every December. In 2012, Harley & Patience were part of the founding of the Old West Regulators of Minnesota and performed Old West scenarios at the Landing until 2017.

In 2002, Harley & Patience were founding members of Co. C 5th Minnesota Infantry and told the story of the Dakota War of 1862 at the Landing and many other Civil War venues in Minnesota, Iowa & Wisconsin. Harley began telling the story of TJ Sheehan, the Hero of Fort Ridgely. In 2007, they placed a gravestone for Col. Sheehan's wife, Jennie at Calvary Cemetery. It was during this period that Patience became aware of the story of Helen Carruthers thru noted historian John LaBatte.

Following the demise of Co. C 5th MN in 2016, Harley & Patience began presenting the story of Civil War veterans in the Grand Army of the Republic and the Woman's Relief Corps. They travel Minnesota, Iowa & Wisconsin presenting this important history.



Ken Foss is a former member of the First Minnesota Volunteer infantry re-enactor group and a current member of the New Ulm Battery, where he recently served as the organization's president.



Arn Kind has been a teacher for the past 40 years, 36 of them in the public schools 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 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. Audience members will be able to observe, handle, and interact with these items as part of their hands-on experience in living the history.



Dr. Nancy Koester is the author of *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Spiritual Life* winner of a 2015 Minnesota Book Award. She also wrote a textbook, *Introduction to the History of Christianity in America*. She taught history at the college and seminary levels and is now retired. Her current project is a biography of Sojourner Truth. Nancy is the great-great-granddaughter of Captain Clark Keysor, a native of Mankato who served in the Civil War.



James Olson grew up on a farm near Amboy, MN and graduated from Blue Earth Area High School in 2003. He has been a Civil War buff since the age of seven years old when he saw the film version of "The Red Badge of Courage." After high school, James did a hitch as a machine gunner and machine gun team leader in the United States Marine Corps, making one trip to Iraq.

Since leaving the Marines, James has been involved with Veterans Groups in the Mankato area including serving four years as the Commander of Lorentz Post 11, American Legion in Mankato and currently serves as the Commandant of the Forrest G. James Detachment #589, Marine Corps League. He is also member of Walter H. Strand Post 950 (VFW), Voiture Locale #281 (40&8), Lyle C. Pearson, Sr. Chapter 10 (DAV) and Prairie Land Defenders Chapter, Military Order of the Purple Heart. In his spare time, he is a board member for the Winnebago Area Museum, and The Daniel Boone Motor Trail Association. He is also a Boy in Blue Memorial Project committee member.



Bryce Stenzel is a native of Mankato, Minnesota. He holds Bachelor of Science (Social Studies Teaching) and Master of Arts (History) degrees from Minnesota State University-Mankato, where he graduated Summa Cum Laude. Mr. Stenzel has portrayed President Lincoln as a Costumed Historical Interpreter for over 30 years and is the author of numerous books and articles on local history as well as Lincoln-related topics. He is founder, playwright 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. Mr. Stenzel chairs Mankato's Boy in Blue Civil War Memorial Committee, serves as president of and plays trombone in the Mankato

Area Community Band, is the Secretary of the New Ulm Battery, and a Director in the Minnesota Boys of '61 Civil War Veterans' Memorial organization.



Ron Affolter *aka Lonesome Ron*

Lonesome Ron is a singer/songwriter who presents songs of the Civil War as well as music of the Old West. Through a grant from Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council and support from the McKnight Foundation, he has recorded a CD of traditional cowboy songs. He was also awarded first place in the 2010 Jimmie Rodgers Echo Video Yodeling Contest. Lonesome Ron is a member of the Western Music Association and in 2014 had the honor of being inducted into America's Old Time Music Hall of Fame.