

Civil War Symposium 2025

Presented by the Friends of the Boy in Blue Civil War Memorial Saturday, March 29, 2025

Requiem and Reconciliation, 1865

Requiem is a noun that refers to any musical service, hymn, or dirge for the peaceful rest (repose) of the dead. Requiems are usually written for and given at funerals. Lincoln's shocking and tragic assassination on April 14, 1865, provided the impetus for hundreds of requiems written about him in 1865. But the word can also refer to, and be applied to, the enormous losses incurred as a result of the American Civil War. More Americans were killed, wounded or missing in the Civil War than in all other American wars combined--the current estimate is approximately 750,000. There was hardly a household that wasn't impacted, either by the loss of a family member(s) or someone who came home but carried the physical and/or psychological scars of the war for the remainder of their lives. This was the inspiration for the creation of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), Women's Relief Corps and the memorialization of the war through battlefield monuments and local monuments such as Mankato's *Boy in Blue*.

Leaders in the Civil War: Abraham Lincoln, U.S. Grant, William T. Sherman, Robert E. Lee and Joseph Johnston set the tone for eventual, and lasting reconciliation between the North and South, through their words and actions. Without the stirring words of Lincoln's immortal Second Inaugural Address, "*with malice toward none; with charity for all...to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace...*" or the generous peace terms offered to Confederate Generals, Lee and Johnston by both Union Generals, Grant and Sherman, as well as Lee's final order to his men to lay down their arms and go home; there would have been no "just and lasting peace." As it was; however, honor was met with honor, the terrible war finally ended and the surviving soldiers on both sides returned home.

While the Civil War did exact a heavy price, the country was strengthened; because of it. The Union was preserved as one nation, indivisible, and the scourge of slavery was finally abolished. The freedoms we currently enjoy and many take for granted were a direct result of this 'War Between the States.' This year's Boy in Blue Civil War Symposium is dedicated to telling the story of how the war ended in both requiem and reconciliation.

It should also be noted that in addition to 2025 being the 160th anniversary of the end of the American Civil War, it marks the 10th anniversary of the completion and dedication of the re-created *Boy in Blue* Memorial in Mankato's historic Lincoln Park. www.boyinblue.org