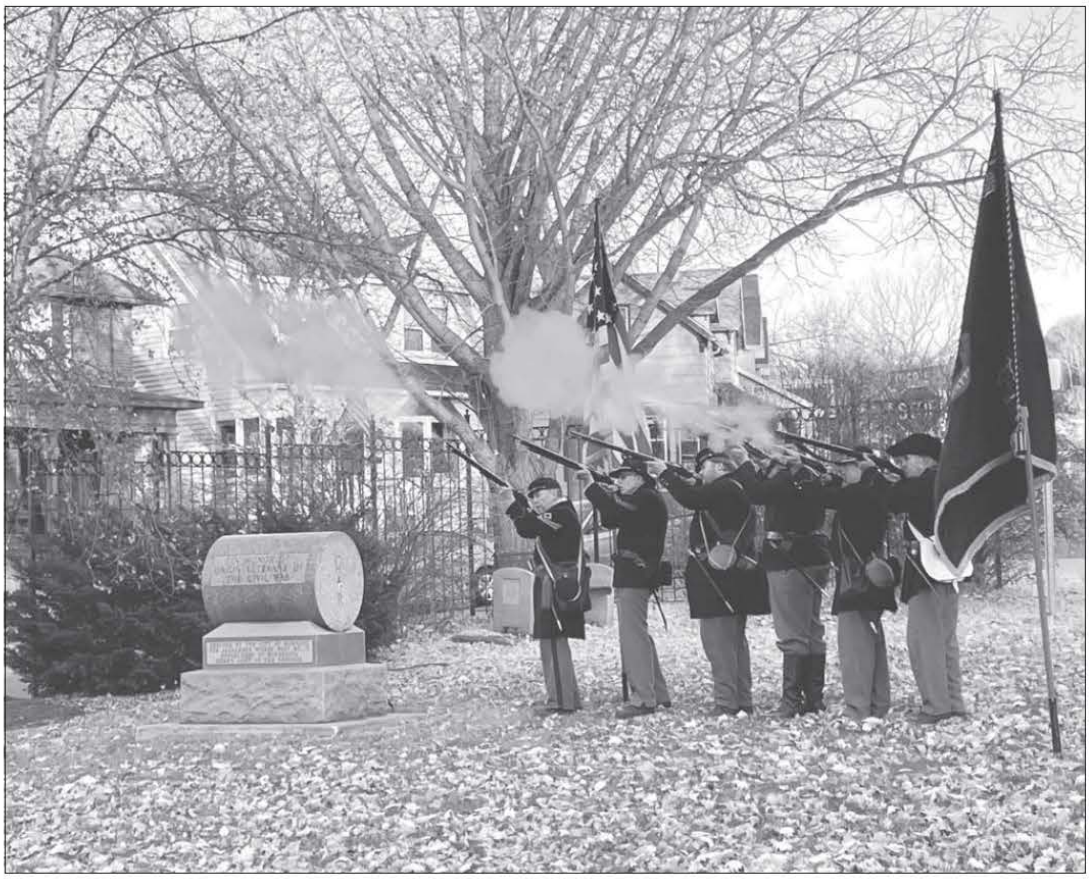
Currents

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Courtesy Julie Schrader

As they have in previous years, the Friends of the Boy in Blue Civil War Veterans Memorial will hold a Veterans Day ceremony in Mankato's historic Lincoln Park. The ceremony is at 4 p.m. Wednesday.

REFLECTING AND HONORING

Veterans Day ceremony to be held at Mankato's Lincoln Park

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MANKATO — For Bryce Stenzel, there's a family connection to Veterans Day that's important to him.

"My father was a World War II vet so it's personal to me," the St. Clair resident said. "But for people who may or may not have someone in the service, they should still be grateful for the freedoms they enjoy."

Stenzel is president of the Friends of the Boy in Blue Civil War Veterans Memorial, whose mission it is to honor and preserve the Blue Earth County Civil War Veterans Memorial located in Mankato's historic Lincoln Park. He's one organizer of a 4 p.m. Wednesday Veterans Day ceremony there.

The public is welcome to attend and he hopes to see as many as 50 attendees.

The event will include the national anthem, military honors, Taps and a recitation of the Gettysburg Address by Stenzel, who will be dressed as President Abraham Lincoln. Friends of the Boy in Blue Civil War Veterans Memorial President Susan Hynes will also talk about Minnesota's involvement in the Civil War and how that ties into Veterans Day, Stenzel said.

He added that it's important to honor veterans on Veterans Day.

"They fought and some gave some, and some gave all for the freedoms that we enjoy," he said. "Some of them paid the ultimate sacrifice, which was losing their lives. And the living ones who came back came with a lot of scars from whatever conflict they happened to be in.

"It's not just the battlefield injuries they sustained. There are also long-term side effects – cancer, post traumatic stress syndrome and Agent Orange exposure. General William Sherman made the statement in the Civil War. He said, 'War is hell,' and that's a quote. And it still is. We're honoring people, both the living and the dead."

The Friends of the Boy in Blue has been hosting a Veterans Day ceremony for roughly 10 years, Stenzel said. He said it's a time to reflect and honor the sacrifices made by veterans.

"It's important we remember all of them and realize our freedoms that we enjoy aren't free," he said. "It's a way to honor those sacrifices but it's also a thanksgiving thing in a way too because we're being grateful for the freedoms we enjoy."

Last week's "free election" was another reminder that veterans fought and died "for that freedom to vote," Stenzel said. "That didn't happen out of thin air."

The Boy in Blue Veterans Day ceremony on Wednesday will be held rain or shine.

"Veterans didn't take the day off when our freedoms were at stake," Stenzel said. "So we're not going to take the day off when it's time to honor their service."