

# CIVIL HONOR



Photos by Dan Greenwood

Arn Kind, of Mankato, shares the story of the history of the first Dedication Day — later changed to Memorial Day — at Lincoln Park in Mankato Monday afternoon.

## Ceremony remembers county's 682 Civil War vets

By Dan Greenwood  
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**T**his Memorial Day marked the seventh anniversary of the Boy in Blue monument, erected at Mankato's Lincoln Park to honor and remember the Blue Earth County soldiers who fought in the American Civil War. The county also boasts the very last living Civil War veteran in the entire country, who lived well into the 1950s.

The engraved names of those Civil War veterans from the area are memorialized on bricks surrounding the memorial. They include Albert Woolson, who resided in Mankato during that time. Born in 1850, Woolson was the last living Civil War veteran in the entire country until his death in Duluth in 1956.

Right next to Woolson's name is another veteran from that war — Wilhelm Urban, who fought against the Confederate Army in Tennessee and Alabama. Following Urban's death in 1913, he was buried close to the farm he lived

on at St. Paul's Lutheran Church Cemetery just southeast of Minnesota Lake.

Urban is also the great-great grandfather of Bryce Stenzel, who organizes the annual Memorial Day event at Lincoln Park and plays Abraham Lincoln while reciting the Gettysburg Address each year.

"The neat part was that my grandmother, who I knew, knew her grandfather who was that man," Stenzel said. "My grandmother was born in 1894 — and she got to visit with him when she was a little girl."

Urban fought at the Battle of Nashville (1864), but he also fought at the Battle of Spanish Fort, which began on March 27, 1865, and ended on April 8, the day before Confederate General



Susan Hynes (left), of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and James Olson (right), commander of American Legion Lorentz Post 11 in Mankato, lay wreaths honoring veterans at Lincoln Park Monday.

Robert E. Lee surrendered — effectively ending the war on April 9, 1865.

"Somewhere in this time frame my great-great grandfather developed what was called on the health record, "bloody dysentery," and he had to be hospitalized in New Orleans," Stenzel said.

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# MEMORIAL: Remembering area's Civil War soldiers at monument

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•One of the stories my grandma did tell was that he never totally recovered from that. He still had stomach ailments and so on through the remainder of his life. He survived (the war) but he had to carry those war scars for the rest of his life. And I'm sure some of the things he witnessed he had to carry as well.Ž

Local newspaper accounts from that era described Urban as •a very kind, compassionate man who would give the shirt off his back if somebody needed it,Ž Stenzel said.

As a 10-year-old boy growing up in Mankato, Stenzel came across an old history book of his

grandfather's. The book contained a picture of the original Boy in Blue memorial at Lincoln Park, erected in 1892.

When he asked his father, a World War II veteran, to take him to Lincoln Park, he was surprised to find that the memorial was no longer there after years of neglect and vandalism led to its removal. It planted a seed in his mind that would become a reality decades later.

In 2010, Stenzel approached other like-minded individuals to raise money to replace the iconic statue and fountain.

•There was a group of about 10 of us locally who helped to raise funds together to erect this statue to commemorate the 682

Union soldiers that volunteered for the Civil War from Blue Earth County,Ž said Susan Hynes, who served on the Boy in Blue committee and is also a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Arn Kind, who also served on the Boy in Blue committee, spoke at Monday's event about the history of Memorial Day, called Dedication Day until the holiday name was changed in 1971. He dressed in a uniform typical of the Civil War era when General John Logan, a Civil War Veteran, designated May 30 as Dedication Day in honor of the soldiers who fought in the Civil War for the purpose of decorating the graves of comrades

who died in defense of their country.

•On that first Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery with about 5,000 participants there. They decorated the graves of 20,000 Civil War soldiers. By 1890 most northern states had made Declaration Day an official state holiday.Ž

Kind said even though Minnesota was the youngest state at the time, the state sent 22,000 men altogether who went off to fight for the Union.

•Of those 22,000, 2,500 would not come home,Ž Kind said.

Generations later, Stenzel said that Lincoln's Gettysburg Address reso-

nates today just as much as it did in 1863 when the country was facing its biggest crisis yet.

•The Gettysburg Address is really a call to action,Ž Stenzel said. •I want people to follow that directive and take what they learned here and go forward, that we are a government of, by and for the people. In order to keep it from perishing from Earth we have to get involved and teach our young people. My goal is to inspire people to pass the torch from one generation to the next, and Lincoln had that same message in the Gettysburg address.Ž

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