



COUNCIL ON AMERICA'S MILITARY PAST - U.S.A.

PRESERVING, INTERPRETING AND SHARING OUR MILITARY HERITAGE

presents

The Persistent Preservationist August 2024



Editor's Note:

Welcome! This is Number 17 of the CAMP newsletter dedicated to preservation. I am Daniel Sauerwein and am assuming the editorship of this publication from Nick Reynolds and thank him for all his hard work on this newsletter over the last few years and his help with me taking on this role and founder Hal Youmans for creating this newsletter. The Persistent Preservationist will be published at least three times a year, in April, August, and December for the time being, though I am exploring the possibility of making this a larger quarterly publication. Currently, the deadline for submitting content for future issues will be July 20, November 20,

and March 20 to allow me time to put the issue together. If you have ideas or suggestions for content, please reach out to me via my email below.

A little about me as the new Editor. I am a new member of CAMP, having joined last year reaching out to volunteer when the call was put out for an Editor to help CAMP. I work as a Reference Specialist in the State Archives at the State Historical Society of North Dakota in Bismarck. I previously taught History, Geography, and Political Science at Northland Community and Technical College, Lake Region State College, and the University of North Dakota.

I completed coursework towards the Ph.D. in History from the University of North Dakota, specializing in American History and Public History, as well as minoring in Geography, I have an MA in History from the University of North Dakota in American History and a Geography minor, with my thesis being Civil War camps of instruction in Illinois, and a BA in History from Illinois College in Jacksonville, with minors in Geography and Economics. I have worked as an archivist for over ten years, specializing in military records and genealogy.

I am a member of the Society for Military History, the Society of Civil War Historians, the Army Historical Foundation, the Company of Military Historians, and the Midwest Archives Conference. In my spare time, I engage in Civil War living history and am involved in my community as a member of the Civil Air Patrol, Sons of the American Legion, and VFW Auxiliary.

My vision for this newsletter is a collaborative one and I want this publication to reflect you as members and highlight your contributions. For my first issue, I am sticking close to home and highlighting living history programming here in North Dakota at two historical forts and how such programs help preserve the military history of the state.

I would ask that members consider submitting interesting articles they feel the rest of the membership would be interested in dealing with historic preservation from across the country. If you want to contribute content, please email me at daniel.sauerwein@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for the opportunity to serve as editor. Have a wonderful fall and we will see you in December.

— Daniel Sauerwein, Editor.

Galvanized Yankees and Cavalry Troopers: Preserving America's Military Past in North Dakota

by

Daniel Sauerwein, Editor

North Dakota has a rich military history, intersecting with some of the major events of American military history dating back to the earliest days of the republic. Lewis and Clark and their Corps of Discovery spent the winter of 1804-05 there, establishing Fort Mandan, where they interacted with the Mandan people, and met Sakakawea¹, who

¹ A note on the spelling of her name. Most of you are probably familiar with the spelling as Sacagawea, based on the spelling in Lewis and Clark's journals, but Sakakawea is the spelling recognized by the Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara) in North Dakota and is the accepted spelling in North Dakota, so I will use it as well.

aided their journey greatly and likely ensured their survival. Frontier military forts came to the state in the latter half of the nineteenth century to establish federal presence over the new Dakota Territory, enforce federal policy towards Native Americans, and protect the railroads that shaped the state in several ways.

The earliest fort established in what became North Dakota after Fort Mandan was Fort Abercrombie in 1858. Initially situated on a flood-prone area of the Red River approximately thirty miles from Fargo, the fort was moved to higher ground along the river in the same area in 1860. Its most well-known event was the siege in August and September 1862 during the Dakota War, when several hundred Dakota battled the soldiers of Co. D, 5th Minnesota Infantry Regiment and local militia. The fort held out and served as an important stop on the Red River especially for trade between St. Paul, Minnesota and Fort Garry (modern Winnipeg, Canada) before the Army decommissioned it in 1877.²



Living historians portrayed Union soldiers and Confederate prisoners of war, who would take the oath of allegiance and join the Union army as Galvanized Yankees as part of the "From Prisoner to Prairie" event at Fort Abercrombie State Historic Site.

soldiers and civilians associated with the two forts. The members of Co. D-5th Minnesota Infantry Living History Group provide programming at both sites, twice a year at Fort Abercrombie, as the home of the historic Company D, and has provided programs at Fort Abraham Lincoln annually since 2021. Members include educators, professional historians, and others with a passion for living history and research. The goal is to show visitors what life was like at a given point in time for the people at the forts.

This summer, two events provided amazing interpretive programs of a high quality. In late July, approximately 35 living historians from across the country came to Fort Abercrombie to present the event *From Prisoner to Prairie: The Life of "Galvanized Yankees"* at Fort Abercrombie. The event had the distinction of being an Authentic Campaigner-approved event, with the Authentic Campaigner (AC) being a community of nationally recognized living historians who put on high-caliber programming and events at historic sites across the nation, including several

NPS sites.

The event involved several portraying Confederate prisoners at Point Lookout being guarded by Union soldiers before being offered the chance to take the oath of allegiance and join the US Army. These new Galvanized Yankees were then inspected, enlisted, and issued their federal uniforms and equipment as members of Company A, 1st United States Volunteer Infantry Regiment, who historically garrisoned Fort Abercrombie from November 1864 into 1865.

The public was able to see a unique part of the fort's history and a fascinating part of Civil War history through this event in a region that is geographically largely removed from the larger Civil War. Guard duty took place in the original guard house of the fort and the elements of garrison life were on display, including historic recipes cooked for the soldiers. Participants also experienced the fun of Midwestern weather, as it was a hot and humid weekend and

two rounds of thunderstorms blew through early Sunday morning, adding to the excitement of the event.

At Fort Abraham Lincoln, members of Company D portrayed soldiers of Co. A, 7th Cavalry who were left behind to keep an eye on the post in 1874 when Custer and the bulk of the regiment went on the Black Hills Expedition. Interpretive programming on drill with the carbine, saber drill, skirmish drill, life of enlisted men in the barracks, and food were well attended by park visitors. Visitors also learned about S. A. Dickey, who was the post trader,

² "Fort Abercrombie - History - State Historical Society of North Dakota." 2024. Nd.gov. 2024. <https://www.history.nd.gov/historicsites/abercrombie/abercrombiehistory.html>.

providing goods not issued by the government. These programs added to the preservation of the past at the fort by allowing attendees to ask questions and engage with the material culture of 1874.

Living history events are important to historical sites, as they are special events that can draw additional visitors and attention to sites that may be off the beaten path in terms of broader state tourism. These programs are also important educational opportunities for visitors to interact with volunteers giving their time to present and engage with visitors based on solid research. With both events, participants and organizers researched in primary source collections related to the time periods they were trying to recreate to provide a degree of historical accuracy that is important to making such programs beneficial to sites.

Living history programs help keep historic military sites alive and visible to the general public and enhance the efforts to preserve these sites by drawing critical attention to the site, as visitors attracted by the special programs can then communicate with site staff to learn what needs the site may face. Such programs often raise funds for the site to help them with their mission and can also foster partnerships with the living history groups and the broader community around that site that can serve key support roles to the site in both a public relations and fund-raising capacity.

If a historic fort or other military site near you conducts living history programming and interpretation, go and support the program by visiting and engaging with the volunteers. Consider getting involved with such groups too, as they are welcoming and love to have new members to help them and broaden their scope. Finally, we have fun learning and doing, as we research and get to share our findings with our friends and the public.

Rest assured that there are dedicated folks doing their part to keep historic forts in North Dakota visible and accessible to the public to learn about these important sites and the events they represent.



Living historians demonstrate saber drill based on the historical manual in use in 1874. This is one of the few examples of such drill being demonstrated for the public.



In addition to military impersonations, civilians are often portrayed.



Portraying Samuel A. Dickey, post trader at Fort Abraham Lincoln.



Living historians portray soldiers on garrison duty receiving their pickle issue to prevent scurvy at Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park.

Founded in 1966 as the Council on Abandoned Military Posts, CAMP changed its name in 1981. It is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization whose members are interested in the identification, restoration, preservation, and memorialization of old military installations as well as their history and traditions. All persons sharing these interests are invited to join. CAMP publishes an academic journal (*The Journal of America's Military Past*) and a newsletter on recent developments in historic preservation (*Headquarters Heliogram*). Find out more at: www.campjump.org.