

Civil War in Portville



Photo by Eva White

Fulton resident, Carissa Humiston is shown next to a portrait painted by Nikki Skiver of the Humiston children. She is a sixth generation descendant of Amos Humiston.

By Eva White Student Intern

Not even 80 degree temperatures stopped members of the 154th Regiment, New York State Volunteers, from wearing wool uniforms or women who belonged to the organizing committee from wearing full length dresses, complete with hoops and slips, at Amos Humiston Days in Portville July 1 and 2.

The event, sponsored by the Portville Historical Society under the direction of General Chairperson Helen Worth, was held in the memory of Humiston, a Portville native who fought for the Union Army and was killed at the Battle of Gettysburg.

The event started Saturday morning when the 154th Regiment, the same regiment Humiston belonged to, commanded by William Loeffke, held an outdoor encampment on the Portville Free Library lawn.

Eight members of the Regiment, a non-profit organization which consists of 25 members, participated in the event. The Regiment was formed three and half years ago by Loeffke and travels throughout the country joining other units to recreate Civil War battles.

Three styles of tents, based on Civil War originals, were set up. A wall tent, named for its shape (flat sides like a wall) was used by both the Union and Confederate Armies to house commissioned officers. According to Loeffke, these tents were rarely used because they had to be carried by wagons.

A frame tent was used to house two to four enlisted men and most officers. The men took turns carrying the tent on their backs. However, a dog or

pup tent was most commonly used by enlisted men. These tents were only five feet long and three feet high, and housed two men. These tents were very practical because men were smaller, so they could fit inside, and the tents were easier to carry, according to Loeffke.

The weapons and other paraphernalia used by the Regiment were either authentic or exact replicas of real objects, down to the inspector's stamper that was put on the weapons.

'Our purpose is to honor and pray tribute to federal and confederate troops who fought and died for what they believed in. We also try to educate the American public of those years, both of the battles and life,' Loeffke said.

The Regiment also staged actual drills that were used during the war. Loeffke called out actual commands verbatim to his troops.

Scott Frank, the only member of the Regiment who has a past relative, his great-great-grandfather, who served in the 154th, said he joined to 'learn about the war and to keep the memory alive of what people did for the country. It's strange to think so many men could stand on the battlelines and have lead poured into them. What motivates men to do that?'

Inside the library, displays on Portville men who served in the war, various artifacts and memorabilia, quilts, paintings and sketches drawn by Portville High School students, were shown. A video reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg and Amos Humiston Commemoration Service were also available for viewing.

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Photo by Eva White

Organizing committee members for Amos Humiston Days are shown dressed in Civil War era style. From left, Gloria Sullivan, Rebecca Linn, Kay Anderson, Ellie Van Curen, William Loeffke, Ronda Pollack, Helen Worth, Betty Rutterman and Luanna Ellis.

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The Colonial Cloggers, under the instruction of Dee Wittrock, performed a program titled 'Clogging Through the Ages.' A Tea Party was also held in the library featuring sweet and cakes made from Civil War recipes. On Saturday night a Ecumenical Vesper Service was held in the Portville Park. The event was generally

well received, especially the tea party. It was the high point of the day,' Worth said.

'Music in the Park' with Lee and Becky Layton was held Sunday afternoon. Guest singers included Dianna Pierce, Gail Mickoljak, Mary Martin and the Bent Brass.

According to Worth, Amos Humiston Days were generally a success and the Historical Society is looking forward to sponsoring another weekend event next year.