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Community Corner (/minnesota/woodbury/around-town)

Washington County Library Presents the First Minnesota

R. H. Stafford and other libraries gear up for six months of events commemorating the 150th anniversary of the regiment's involvement in the Civil War.

By Meghan Hatalla (Patch Poster) - (<https://patch.com/users/meghan-hatalla>) Updated February 17, 2011 10:22 pm ET

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Each Piece Tells

Washington County Library presents the First Minnesota, a quilt made by the women of the regiment during the Civil War. The quilt is made of white fabric with a pattern of red and green squares. Each square contains a small red tulip and green leaves. The quilt is displayed on a wall.



Public Services Division manager for the [Washington County Library](http://www.co.washington.mn.us/info_for_residents/library)

(http://www.co.washington.mn.us/info_for_residents/library). “Governor Ramsey happened to be in Washington, D.C., when President Lincoln put out the call for volunteers, and Ramsey volunteered Minnesota.”

Washington County’s forefathers enlisted in the first state volunteer regiment for the Union Army, the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry. The regiment is known for its gallantry in battle and has the distinction of suffering the heaviest casualties of any regiment at two key battles: Bull Run and Gettysburg. Even 150 years later, the regiment remains a popular topic for historical authors, buffs, and even textile artists.

The sesquicentennial is spurring a full six months of events at various Washington County sites, coordinated by Manion and funded by Minnesota’s Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

“The First Minnesota came together because there are so many people in Washington County who are interested in this topic,” said Manion. “We were able to make connections through library staff and really put this funding to great use.”

Woodbury’s will be playing host to a few of the events and installations, with one already sparking awareness.

“We’ve gotten a lot interest, especially with the quilt display,” said librarian Diane Estreen, gesturing toward one of the library’s newest, temporary decorations—a white quilt, adorned with red and green.

While actually a reproduction of an original, which is too fragile to display, the quilt represents a more human side of the Civil War:

First Minnesota soldier John George Bauer was wounded in a skirmish outside of Lockridge Mill, Tenn. While medics insisted on amputating the arm due to the severity of the injuries, Bauer refused, and he was left on the battlefield for dead as the Union retreated.

A woman in Lockridge Mill—Confederate sympathizer Mary Benson Lockridge—heard about the Union soldier left on the field, and despite her own political leanings, found the soldier and nursed him in her own home. She saved his arm, and when he was well, she gave him a quilt to hide his Union uniform.

Bauer made it across enemy lines and back to Fort Snelling in Minnesota. He became a Methodist pastor in the Washington County area, and his family has preserved and passed the quilt down through generations.

The reproduction, made by Nancy Miller and Lynne Michaels, lends some insight into Mary Benson Lockridge’s life.

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“It’s not symmetrical,” Manion said. “It features Carolina lilies that are leaning this way and that, it’s inconsistent and a very idiosyncratic thing to find on a quilt. It’s my guess that it wasn’t something of value to Miss Lockridge, and something she was willing to give up.”

It’s also thought that Lockridge was of high social standing, based on her last name and the name of the town. Woodbury library patron Kristan Nolan noticed the quilt immediately after entering.

“It’s crazy to think that something as mundane as quilt could save someone’s life,” Nolan said. “And that the family has kept it and told the story to every generation—you have to wonder if the Lockridge family even has any idea that this happened.”

The community can visit the quilt and make their own guesses at the R. H. Stafford Branch Library through February, and at other branches through June 2011. But the quilt is only one part of the First Minnesota program.

“We certainly hope that people will read, learn and enjoy,” Manion said. “We want to get people together on a common theme, a common subject like this and learn together using library resources, and then sharing the knowledge.”

One early indicator of the program’s success is the library’s One County, One Book program, in which a book is chosen for the community as a whole to read and discuss. The library selected “Pale Horse at Plum Run: The First Minnesota at Gettysburg” by Brian Leehan as the accompanying adult book to the program, purchasing 100 copies. As of Feb. 11, all copies were checked out with a waiting list.

As the program continues, the libraries will be hosting re-enactments, a concert of Civil War songs, portraits of the First Minnesota soldiers, and also a "Readers Theater" featuring live reading of collections of letters from Civil War soldiers.

“There’s a sense of change or learning in the community, and maybe even making connections between what happened way back then to what’s going on now,” Manion said, referencing our country’s ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. “It’s not all heroics—through their letters, we listen to them talk about girl trouble, bad food, complaining about hierarchy, all that. And these are the guys who fought at Gettysburg.”

As much as warfare has changed over 150 years, there’s still one common component: the soldiers are people, with thoughts and ideas and impulses.

“There are a lot of similarities between wars,” Manion said. “We want to commemorate the First Minnesota soldiers who kept the Union together and our freedoms alive so we could go on and fight more wars for freedom and democracy.”

For more information about upcoming events at Washington County libraries, click [here](#)

(http://www.co.washington.mn.us/info_for_residents/library/grace_grady_books_and_reading_page/first_minnes

What did you think?



Originally published February 14, 2011. This post is contributed by a community member. The views expressed in this post are the author's. [Registered users are welcome to post on Patch](#) (<https://my.patch.com>).

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