

# Civil War Heritage Music Gathering & Encampment



Warming up for an evening concert are (left to right) Lee Ann Deak, Gail Babirad and Jim Broden, part of the string section for the 77th New York Regimental Balladeers. Photos by Mike Ryan.



Stoking the forge fires, vintage village blacksmith John Albert, from the hamlet of Hensonville (left) and his mentor Don Vanhart of Maine, New York, create 19th Century-style conveniences. “Every time I make something, I learn more. If you aren’t learning something every day, why wake up?” Albert says, explaining his love of blacksmithing. Albert, a co-organizer of the Windham Civil War event, and Vanhart will exhibit tools of their trade, August 13-18, at the Delaware County Fair in Walton.



20th Anniversary of the Civil War Heritage Music Gathering & Encampment was held at the Centre Church in Windham, last weekend. “This began as part of the town of Windham bicentennial and grew from there,” said Barbara and Bill Lonecke, the event co-founders. “The Civil War defines our country,” Mr. Lonecke said, explaining the American fascination with the most violent period in our history. “In order to understand the 21st Century, you have to understand the mid-19th Century,” said Mr. Lonecke (who is portraying Lt. Colonel Walter Taylor, the adjutant general to Robert E. Lee).



Field dressing station was often a grisly scene during the Civil War with its limited medical technology. Dan Celik (portraying Union Army surgeon Melvin Hyde), holds a high tech 19th Century “amputation saw knife” that could slice flesh with one edge and cut through bone with the other edge. “It saved a lot of time when the wounded were coming in waves,” Celik said. Soldiers judged to be beyond human help were triaged to the Dying Tree where a simple wooden coffin awaited. “They were moved away from soldiers who might survive, to keep up morale” says Bob Tillson (portraying bloody-aproned Confederate surgeon William Steptoe Christian).



Little time-traveller Giovanna Maritato, from 21st Century Danbury, Connecticut, visits 19th century Civil War re-enactors Gerard and Bette Mayers, enjoying a summer evening. The Mayers are portraying Mary Jane and John W. Fairfax. Mr. Fairfax was a member of Confederate General James Longstreet’s staff. “One of my (his) jobs was to keep the General in whiskey when needed,” Mr. Mayers says, grinning.



Teresa Deckard, a member of the Susquehanna Travellers, plays a tin whistle, portraying the niece of Septimus Winner, a Civil War-era composer. Winner wrote songs such as “Listen to the Mockingbird” which was Confederate General Robert E. Lee’s favorite tune. Winner composed under the pseudonym Alice Hawthorne. His/her original sheet music was among the collection of Civil War memorabilia on display.



John Quinn, host of the annual Civil War Heritage Music Gathering & Encampment, quietly expresses the patriotic spirit of a unified nation. Quinn, a retired history teacher, is also a co-organizer of the event.

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# History, Horns and Camaraderie at Heritage Music Gathering and Encampment

**By Jonathan Ment**  
WINDHAM - History buffs and fans of music from the Civil War era gathered last Friday night inside the Windham Theater for a screening 1993's epic "Gettysburg."

The screening was part of the Civil War Heritage Music Gathering and Encampment that filled the hall and grounds at the historic Center Church next door, all weekend.

"Gettysburg" marked the first time the most famous battle in American History had been committed to film.

The free public screening included popcorn and drinks and at nearly four-and-a-half hours run time, it was probably hard to find a better 'entertainment value' in the region, at least on an hourly basis.

The film included over 5,000 Civil War re-enactors as extras, a handful of which were in attendance, and attracted a crowd of about 50. The Providence Brigade Band treated early arrivals to the first of three weekend performances.

They played again at Saturday's Grand Concert, including in support of Emily Lapisardi's portrayal of Jenny Lind, "the Swedish Nightingale" a case of history repeating itself. It was 168

years earlier, on October 7, 1850 that the original Providence Brass Band that accompanied Lind at her only concert appearance in Rhode Island. The troupes' final set included a stirring rendition of "March of the Swiss Solders from Rossini's "William Tell Overture" (recognizable as the Lone Ranger theme); and a memorable performance of "Variations of Yankee Doodle" on the keyed bugle.

But it was another horn player that made the biggest splash of the night. Bob Williams of the Irish Volunteers switched from ukulele to tenor saxophone midway though "Shortnin' Bread" to bring down the house in a possible tribute to the indomitable spirit of deceased band mate Dave Miles. The saxophone was invented prior to the Civil War, so it would be correct to the period, Williams assured the audience.

Following the show the group's guitarist Don Dwyer said the annual event in Windham was among Mile's favorites.

Miles, and Gathering regulars Jed Marum and Richard Mendoza, were featured in a memorial video I was honored to produce under commission to one of the

event's organizers John Quinn.

Quinn's bandmate John Kenosian died just one week before the Gathering and was featured in a separate video segment projected during the 77th NY Regimental Balladeers performance.

As one performer put it at Saturday night's Grand Concert, a lot has changed since his time in the service when it took weeks for the Red Cross to reach him with mail from home.

Today's military can sometimes place video calls to family, conceivably from on or near the battlefield, he suggested.

For those who took part in during the Civil War, the lines of communication were far more tenuous and music helped fill the void.

Historical presentations were part of all programs, from the re-enactor portraying Rose O'Neill Greenhow a civil war Confederate spy at the United Methodist Church for a 'Breakfast Tea,' to Lapisardi's Lind, a talk by Roger Lee Hall, director of the Center for American Music Preservation, David Getty's presentation on Immigration – the overarching theme of this year's event; and of course the informative intros to

songs during the Grand Concert that audience members have come to expect from the likes of Steve Ball, an encyclopedic resource on the origins of the songs he performs with wife Lisa.

It's not uncommon for songs to be repeated during the weekend, with different artists offering different approaches and perspective to these recognizable parts of the nation's musical fabric.

Other weekend features including blacksmithing demonstrations, an ice cream social sponsored by Stewart's Shops; and Kevin Gray's Wet Plate Photo Works, using photographic technology true to the celebrated era.

The encampment is held the first weekend in August and all events, except for the Grand Concert, are free. It's never too soon to mark your calendar for next year, as the event is always engaging.

Support for this year's event was provided by the Windham Foundation, the Community of Windham Foundation and numerous local patrons and businesses including the Hotel Vienna, and the Thompson House recipients of awards for their continued support of the annual event.



A rare performance on a tenor saxophone was among the highlights of Saturday's Grand Concert. It was a new sound for the Irish Volunteers' Windham audience. Photos by Jonathan Ment.



Arden and Carson, also known as Hudson and Clark, performed some of their songs on fiddles made from cigar boxes. Carson did advice the musicians in the room "they are cigar boxes" possibly alluding to the difficulty of achieving and maintaining proper tuning.



After beginning their performance outside the Center Church, the Schenectady Pipe Band, established in 1917, continued playing while marching inside to fill the front of the hall.



Emily Lapisardi as Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale offered a bit of historical perspective with her performance. The Providence Brigade Band and a performer portraying P.T. Barnum were also part of the show.



David Getty presents a talk titled "Immigration: How Did We Get Here" Saturday afternoon during the Civil War Heritage Music Gathering and Encampment.



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Ken Purcell performed at both an afternoon session pictured here and the Grand Concert, when he played piano.



Lisa Ball takes a break from the upright bass to play guitar and sing lead in the second half of Saturday's show. Steve Ball accompanies.



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