

Living Memories

the Civil War in the Hudson River Valley

History is Alive

- ❖ The memory of the Civil War reverberates not only in the former Confederacy, but in the North as well.
- ❖ This includes New York and the Hudson River Valley.
- ❖ The experience of “living historians” and how they try to remember the Civil War today.

Reenacting in Action

The 125th



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New York in the Union

- ❖ New York was a very important part of the Union cause, even though no battles were fought there.
- ❖ It had a stable government and a fairly stable economy, so New York was the source of many war supplies:
 - ❖ Cannons from Cold Spring
 - ❖ Gunpowder from Saugerties

NEW YORK IN THE UNION

- ❖ The most important contribution from New York was the regiments of men it sent South to support and fight for the Union.
- ❖ In fact, it supplied more men for the cause than any other state.

Reenacting in Action

The 125th at a Parade



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Affects of the War

- ❖ Shifted the focus of the country from agriculture to industrialization.
- ❖ Well-traveled veterans had experiences that enhanced their lives in ways that their home-life did (and could) not

Affects of the War

- ❖ Many of the soldiers often learned skills:
 - ❖ teamwork, leadership and being able to follow orders
 - ❖ these enabled many of them to find greater success back home

Reenacting in Action

“This is Living History?”



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Why Reenact?

- ❖ Reenactors have many reasons for bringing the past back to life, just like the soldiers of the Civil War they emulate.
- ❖ Connection to war (ancestral or individual)
- ❖ Historical interest (academic or personal)

Reenacting in Action

Instructing the New Recruits



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Mark Morreale

- ❖ Morreale's "primary purpose [for reenacting] is to *teach*, to *disabuse* the public concerning the *myths* of the time period, and to explain the *realities of life* at that time." [emphasis added]

Mark Morreale

- ❖ Many reenactors will do these things to an extent, but often have an agenda, like advocating the Lost Cause Ideology or romanticizing the conflict, or do not live as accurately as possible.
- ❖ Morreale does not participate in the mock battles, as they “distort the war’s brutal realities.”
- ❖ Rather, the living historians must strive to be as accurate as possible, and to treat the history with respect.

Reenacting in Action

More Instruction



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Bob Sandusky

- ❖ What you get out of reenactment depends on what you put into it.
- ❖ The level of commitment can be seen with how a reenactor handles tasks like sleeping and eating.

Bob Sandusky

- ❖ For Sandusky, “reenacting has helped [him] understand what the men who fought the war wrote about.”
- ❖ True of both then and now, the media portrays a glorified version of war that is quickly disproved through real war experience or, in the case of the Civil War, accurate reenacting.
- ❖ It is understanding this difference and experiencing it for yourself that brings about what Sandusky calls enlightenment.

Reenacting in Action

Making Camp



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Achieving Enlightenment

- ❖ The method is the more, the better:
 - ❖ “The more detailed the experience the better; the more authentic the uniforms, the experience and smells of camp life, the more profound the knowledge of the participants, the better,” – Morreale
 - ❖ Sandusky eats only period foods like homemade hardtack while reenacting, and tries his best to maintain a soldier mindset, but agrees that the main part of reenacting comes with the gear.

Achieving Enlightenment

- ❖ That being said, there is only so much realism that can be accomplished.
- ❖ Dysentery and other diseases, though all too common in the Civil War, are not copied by the reenactors.

Living History Success

- ❖ Being a successful living historian is an expensive hobby that requires:
 - ❖ uniforms
 - ❖ appropriate accessories
 - ❖ weapons
- ❖ Some reenactors acquire uniforms are good quality reproductions that copy every detail, including the cloth and sewing techniques.
- ❖ Reenacting is a costly hobby and everyone has a budget.

the Presentation is over...

But you could always Reenact it



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