

# Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine



Vol. XXXX, No. 4  
Winter, 2019  
ISSN 1536-3279



SANTA'S VICTORIAN WORKSHOP

## In This Issue:

Presenting a Fresh & Fiery  
First-Person Program

Peoria's Riverboat Men

A Picture Perfect Christmas  
at Old World Wisconsin

How to Present a Successful  
Performance, Part I

Men's Shirts, From Simple to  
Fancy, 1800 -1880

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The Season's Greetings

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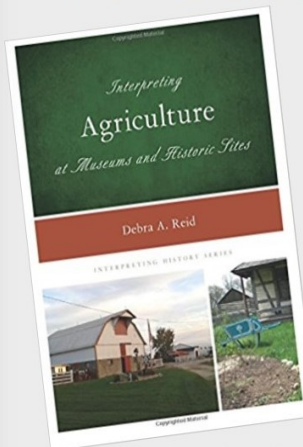
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**Cover Photo** - Santa's Victorian workshop at *An Old World Christmas* event held at Old World Wisconsin on the first and second weekends in December. Volunteer Tim Brown portrays Santa in his Victorian workshop, providing a great photo op for event visitors. (Photo by Mike Morbeck, courtesy of Old World Wisconsin)



MOMCC is the Midwest Regional Affiliate of

**ALHFAM**  
The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums





# EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

By Tom Vance

FALL is my favorite season and October is my favorite month. This past October, my wife Susan and I got to see three different museum exhibits. The first was at the Science Center in St. Louis. The exhibit was on Pompeii and was there only until early November.

The volcano eruption aside, I came away thinking Pompeii would have been a wonderful place to live. It had a temperate climate, fertile lands, access to the Mediterranean Sea, and was a great trading center. Even the slaves were paid a wage and could eventually buy their freedom. Many of them became well-to-do. The typical house had rooms around an open court yard and pool and a separate open garden area. Much of what we know about Roman culture came from Pompeii - a time capsule from the year 79.

The first part of the exhibit focused on all aspects of Pompeii culture and was rich with original artifacts, statuary, sections of fresco wall paintings, and such things as fine jewelry. Then there was a small theater that showed a time-lapse film of the volcano eruption and the destruction of Pompeii. The screen then lifted, and the last gallery displayed plaster casts of the people of Pompeii in their death poses.

The following weekend, we made our annual pilgrimage to see friends in Clarksville, Tennessee. While there, we visited a small historic site - Historic Collinsville Pioneer Settlement - on the south side of Clarksville. The site was developed by a well-to-do family who collected and restored 16 log houses and outbuildings dating from the 1830s to the 1870s, and all from the local county. It was recently turned over to the Clarksville-Montgomery County Tourism Bureau and is open on a regular basis with a calendar of special events throughout the year. It's a charming site that includes a very nice dog trot cabin.

The third exhibit we visited on the way home from Clarksville was the Ark Encounter in Williamstown, Kentucky. Conflicting beliefs aside, it is extremely well-done from a museum exhibit stand-

point. The State of Kentucky and a huge list of donors provided many millions of dollars to create a first-class museum experience that is equal to anything Disney could produce. One thing I took away from seeing the Ark is a better understanding of how different people can live in totally different realities based on their belief systems.

Then in early November we traveled to West Chicago to the fall MOMCC conference. I had been to Kline Creek Farm during a past MOMCC conference, but it was a real pleasure seeing it again, despite the cold weather. Keith McClow, Kate Garrett, and all the staff and volunteers at Kline Creek put on a first-class conference and deserve many kudos for their efforts. And as a testament to the fine quality of the sessions offered, I collected ten potential articles for future issues of the magazine.

In this issue, I am thrilled to include articles from two nationally recognized performers - Riverlorian Brian "Fox" Ellis and roots musician and folklorist Chris Vallillo. Those attending the spring *Spirit of Peoria* steamboat excursion will have an opportunity to get to know Brian as he portrays steamboat captain Henry Detweiler on the boat and then John James Audubon at the Starved Rock lodge on Thursday evening.

I'm also pleased to feature an article on 19th-century shirts by Eileen Hook, proprietor of Talbott Heritage Goods in Sacramento, California. I attended Eileen's session on shirts at the 2018 ALHFAM conference in Oklahoma. The last article I would like to mention is Cait Dallas' article on *An Old World Christmas* at Old World Wisconsin. Through articles in this and the past two issues, Anna Altschweiger has coordinated an in-depth look at programs and events at OWW. I extend my appreciation to her and the folks at Old World for a great series of articles. □



**Left** - A statue of Athena greets visitors when they first enter the Pompeii exhibit. **Middle** - The visitor center at Historic Collinsville in Clarksville, Tennessee. **Right** - Noah's blacksmith shop in the Ark at the Ark Encounter in Williamstown, Kentucky.



## 2019 FALL CONFERENCE



**Thursday workshops** included (from the left) Furniture Mending for Living History taught by Ed Bouvier, Village Woodwright; Bobbin Lace taught by Donna Fausek; and Plowing With Draft Horses taught by Matt Dehnart of Kline Creek Farm, among others.



**Conference sessions** included (from the left) Dressing Alice by Betsy Urven; panel on Gens XYZ moderated by Kate Garrett; and a session on flax processing by Cathy Grafton. Other sessions covered a wide-range of interesting subjects.



**From the left** - Cynthia Clampet delivered the keynote address on corn during the luncheon; Dr. Ben Franklin as portrayed by Terry Kutz; Jim & Diane Nickel; Chris Olson of Dagnabit Studios provided tintypes of anyone willing to sit for the camera; some of the tintypes are shown upper right; the silent auction featured many interesting items.



**The period clothing contest** included 17 participants pictured on the left. The winners were Eliana Smiewec for best over-all; Howard and Gloria Taylor for most creative; and Patti Kennedy Green for most glamorous.



# PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

By Mike Follin

FIRST of all, let me thank everyone who worked to make the recent MOMCC Fall Conference a success. Despite the bitter cold weather, the hospitality was warm and inviting, the sessions and workshops informative and educational. The evening at Kline Creek Farm was delightful. The “crisp” temperature, great caramel corn (or should I say praline!), warm glow of the stove and lamplight in the house, great tour guides, and a warm bonfire for s’mores made the entire evening a wonderful step back in time. Of course, the attending members always make for a great conference, and it was good to see both familiar and new faces at the sessions. Your continued support of the organization is much appreciated.



The Board says goodbye and thanks to Jim Slining, who served the past two years in the position of Vice President. His wisdom, thoughtfulness, and guidance were and are great assets to the board and the organization. Gail Richardson steps into the position. Gail was previously serving a term as Member-At-Large. Jim Patton was reelected as Member-At-Large and Kate Garret has been appointed by the board to fill out Gail’s term. While the board manages the business of the organization, I remind the members that they were elected by and to serve you. Your communication with the board is essential to help us direct the future path of the organization. The board is listed in the magazine, and we encourage members to contact any of us via email or phone with your concerns or suggestions and ideas for the betterment of the organization.

Ann Cejka made a brief but informative presentation at the business meeting. “Dipping our toes into the water” reflects MOMCC’s effort to move forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with technology. Ann has done a wonderful job of establishing a Google Classroom, a virtual Google office for the board, and the ability for us to utilize YouTube videos for our members. I encourage everyone to go to the website and investigate these offerings. Ann said she welcomes inquiries, so please feel free to contact her with questions or for instructions and guidance. The Google classroom will be very helpful for conference sessions, handouts, and workshops. Likewise, using YouTube will be beneficial to provide a visual for workshops and crafts. As mentioned in the last President’s Perspective, ALHFAM has started the STP (skills, trades, and preservation) initiative for members. They have a tutorial to demonstrate how simple it is to produce a video using your cell phone. I would encourage you to visit the ALHFAM site and watch the tutorial. All MOMCC members are also automatically members of ALHFAM.

MOMCC SPRING CONFERENCE 2020 is coming!!! As you heard and saw at the business meeting, the MOMCC Spring Conference is offering a unique opportunity to members. The conference is combining educational sessions with a cruise on a riverboat, *The Spirit of Peoria*. Spring 2020 Conference packets were available to all who attended the fall conference; registration and conference information are online at the MOMCC website. This promises to be a great experience for all who attend, with an opportunity to learn, be entertained, and enjoy the company of individuals dressed in period travel attire (all periods) in the setting of a riverboat. We also hope to see “carpetbaggers and traveling salesmen” (vendors!). Since there is not space for vendors to “display” their wares, vendors will need to rely on the age-old method of “pulling it out of the satchel, display suitcase, or carpetbag” with a face-to-face sales pitch! We hope a number of vendors or individuals who just want to be a character, will rise to the challenge, helping to create and add to the atmosphere of period riverboat travel. Remember, the deadline to register is February 11. Please read the conference registration instructions carefully. I look forward to seeing you all aboard the *Spirit of Peoria* in Spring 2020! □

## MOMCC FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION

MOMCC Spring Conference 2020

**Traveling In America - Spirit of Peoria Riverboat Cruise**

**March 12-13, 2020**

For each conference, MOMCC gives out a limited number of fellowships to help offset conference costs.

Fellowships cover conference registration in addition to funds for lodging at the conference site.

Four fellowships of \$230 each will be given out for the 2020 spring conference.

**All applications must be received by January 15, 2020**

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**including necessary qualifications and selection criteria.**





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## MIDWEST OPEN AIR MUSEUMS COORDINATING COUNCIL

### **MOMCC Officers and Board of Directors**

Mike Follin, *President*  
Gail Richardson, *Vice President*  
Debra Reid, *Treasurer*  
Dawn Bondhus Mueller, *Secretary*  
Betsy Urven, *Past President*

### **Board Members-at-Large**

Ann Cejka  
Jim Patton  
Kate Garrett

### **Conference Coordinators**

Becky Crabb, Spring  
Monique Inglot, Fall

### **Website, Social Media**

Ed Crabb  
Andi Aerbskorn

### **Magazine Editor**

Tom Vance

MOMCC was established in 1978 with the goal of furthering the interchange of materials, information, and ideas within the history museum field.

### **Membership**

We welcome membership and participation from administrators, volunteers, interpreters, curators, historians, educators, maintenance/facilities staff, gift shop workers, facilitators, docents, and anyone else with an interest in history and public education. Membership is \$30 per year for individuals, \$35 for families, and \$50 for institutions. Membership application can be found at [www.momcc.org](http://www.momcc.org).

### **Our Purpose**

The purpose of MOMCC is to further promote excellence and to provide a forum for the interchange of materials, information, ideas, and consideration of issues within the open air, interactive, and historical museum profession.

**MIDWEST REGION:** The Midwest is defined as the eight states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

**OPEN-AIR MUSEUM:** Interpreting life as material culture in the context of buildings, objects, and open space. A site or facility that interprets history through exhibits, living history interpretation, and/or educational programs.

### **Resource Committees**

Interpretation, Music, Art, and Material Culture  
Leadership and Supervision  
Agriculture, Gardens, and Foodways

# MOMCC Board of Directors

## PRESIDENT



**Mike Follin** received his undergraduate degree in Cultural Anthropology and Communication from Capital University and his graduate work was at Ohio State University in the field of Research and Performance of American History and Folklore. He currently serves as Coordinator of Interpretive Services and works in Public Programs at the Ohio History Connection, where he has been for 34 years.

## VICE PRESIDENT

**Gail Richardson** is the foodways supervisor at Sauder Village, where she develops and implements butchering, dairy processing, and candle making programs and food related festivals as well as working in collections during winter months. She has been active in MOMCC for the past 10 years.



## TREASURER



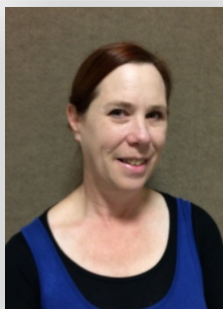
**Debra A. Reid** is curator of Agriculture and the Environment at The Henry Ford (since January 9, 2017). Before that, from 1999 to 2016, she taught in historical administration, history, and women's studies at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois. She has recently authored a book, *Interpreting Agriculture at Museums and Historic Sites*, published by AASLH.

## SECRETARY

**Dawn Bondhus Mueller** worked in a variety of professional capacities at Living History Farms in Urbandale, Iowa, for 15 years. She is now the Executive Director at the Wisconsin Automotive Museum located in Hartford, Wisconsin.



## PAST PRESIDENT



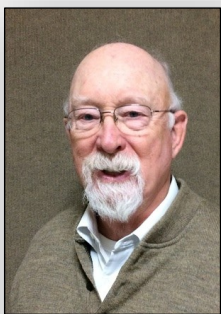
**Betsy Urven** worked for 10 years as lead interpreter and program assistant at Wade House State Historic Site in Greenbush, Wisconsin. She has also produced period clothing for a number of historic sites and has been involved with MOMCC since 2002.

## MEMBER-AT-LARGE

**Ann Cejka** is the Program Coordinator for Ushers Ferry Historic Village in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where she also serves as curator of collections, manages social media, and produces various forms of electronic media. She holds a Bachelor's degree in history and public relations from Mount Mercy College.







#### MEMBER-AT-LARGE

**Jim Patton** worked as lead interpreter and resident blacksmith at Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site near Springfield, Illinois, for 21 years. He currently serves on the board of directors of the Elijah Iles House in Springfield, and is a long-time member of MOMCC.

#### MEMBER-AT-LARGE

**Kate Garrett** is a heritage interpreter at Kline Creek farm located in West Chicago for the past nine years. She started as a volunteer at Graue Mill in Oakbrook, Illinois, then worked at Living History Farms in Iowa and the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown before returning to DuPage County, Illinois.

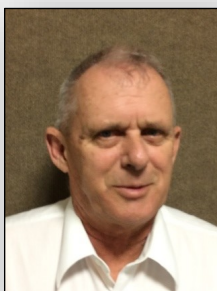
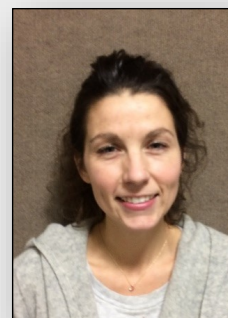


#### SPRING CONFERENCE COORDINATOR

**Becky Crabb** recently retired as Park Manager at Lake County Parks Buckley Homestead, Indiana, where she worked since 1980. She is past president of MOMCC. After being raised on an Indiana farm, Becky earned a degree in Wildlife Biology from Ball State University.

#### FALL CONFERENCE COORDINATOR

**Monique Inglot** works as the Assistant Program Coordinator for Volkening Heritage Farm in Schaumburg, Illinois. She has served as MOMCC Fall Conference Coordinator since 2014.



#### CONFERENCE REGISTRAR

**Ed Crabb** has an Associates degree in Web and Graphic Design. He has been a Historic Volunteer for over 30 years at Buckley Homestead County Park in Lake County, Indiana, and is starting on his fourth year as the Conference Registrar.

#### MAGAZINE EDITOR

**Tom Vance** served as site manager at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site south of Charleston, Illinois, for 28 years before retiring and becoming a historic consultant. He is past president of MOMCC, was editor of the magazine from 1986 through 1992, and has been current editor since 2016. He holds an M.A. in Historical Administration from Eastern Illinois University.





## PRESENTING A FRESH AND FIERY FIRST-PERSON PROGRAM TWO CASE STUDIES

By Brian "Fox" Ellis, Riverlorian on the Spirit of Peoria

**Note -** Brian "Fox" Ellis is Riverlorian on the Spirit of Peoria. He will do first person presentations of both John James Audubon and riverboat captain, Henry Detweiler at the 2020 Spring Conference.

FOR more than 40 years, I have made a living as a storyteller and first-person historical re-enactor. For 25 years I have been the Cruise Director and Resident Historian, or "Riverlorian," on the *Spirit of Peoria*. Not only have I written more than 30 performances for myself, but because I have hosted the Historic Springdale Cemetery Tours for 20 years and worked with the Looking for Lincoln Tourism Board, among others, I have researched and written at least 100 short stories for other re-enactors and coached hundreds of others as they developed first-person programs.

I am beyond excited that the MOMCC Conference is coming to the best floating outdoor museum in the world, the *Spirit of Peoria*. In anticipation of the spring gathering of our tribe, Tom Vance asked if I would give you a glimpse into what goes on behind the scenes, before you meet these characters on the boat, so I thought I would

share a little of my process. I also hope this might ignite a spark of enthusiasm and help you to build a better fire for your next new program.

### Who fits like a glove?

The first and most important step is to find a character that fits. Which characters are you drawn toward and why? Start with a personality that makes it easy for you to step into their shoes. Look for places where your life overlaps with theirs. The more real and less "acted-out" it is for you, the more real and less "theatrical" it is for the audience. It should feel like a conversation between two real people, you and the audience, which it actually is, if done well!

With Steamboat Captain Henry Detweiler, it was easy. I had been working on the *Spirit of Peoria* for just a couple of seasons when I started the cemetery programs, so he was the first character I developed for the cemetery tour. I really like the adventure of his life and thought he would be the perfect vehicle for telling the history of the river and riverboats. And we already had a Mark Twain impersonator, so I wanted a fresh perspective. Sometimes a lesser-known character gives you more wiggle room on how you present the story.

With John James Audubon, I was commissioned by Dickson Mounds Museum as part of a special exhibit they curated. I like to say he chose me! As I started the research,

**Above photo -** Brian "Fox" Ellis performs an impersonation of legendary naturalist painter John James Audubon for middle and high school students at the West Baton Rouge Museum in Port Allen, LA. (Photo by Angela Major, Baton Rouge Advocate)



I was amazed at how many places he collected birds where I had also hiked, canoed, and explored! My first job out of college was at the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History. John James Audubon's first job as an artist and taxidermist was at the same museum. I used to teach wilderness survival skills in the South, and he had lived off the land in many of the same places. Audience members have said it is hard to tell where Audubon ends, and Fox begins.

### Research, research, and then research some more!

Look for autobiographies, letters, and diaries. Start with primary source documents and then read for context. The goal is to get a glimpse of their world through their words, their ideas, and their use of language, "from the horse's mouth." A children's picture book or grade school biography is a great starting point, because this author has done some of your homework in both boiling down the important points AND providing a solid bibliography of recommended books at the back. Read those books! As you read, follow up on threads that intrigue you, look for exemplary stories, pivotal moments in the character's life that are both "a good story" and give us insight into how they worked, lived and thought. Read what other scholars have written, and read contextual history so you can speak intelligently about this person within his or her historical time frame. A good rule of thumb, though not always attainable, is that the script should be 70% their words, 100% their beliefs.

With Audubon, this was easy. He kept journals throughout his travels; we have dozens of deeply personal letters; and he published 10 volumes, more than 2000 pages on birds and mammals, including 50 short stories about his travels. There are a dozen award-winning biographies, 100 books about birds and early ornithology, and literally thousands of articles. Choose a character who was a prolific writer, read deep, and the show writes itself. But then another problem arises – what to include and what to leave out. Though I usually include some of all three topics, I can focus on art history for art museums, living history for historical societies, and ornithology for birding festivals and natural history museums. I regularly go the extra step to do the extra research on what birds he painted there when I am invited to a place I know Audubon also visited.

With Detweiller, the research was more difficult at first. I found his obituary in the microfiche, which gave a good but brief summary of his life. There was a short biography in a history of Peoria book, not exactly storytelling material. So, I broadened my research to focus on contextual

history. I read a lot of Mark Twain and B.A Botkin's riverboat tales. After I had written a 10-minute performance piece for the cemetery and used this same story on the riverboat for a season or two, I was given an unimaginable gift from the lawyer who handled the family's estate. When he saw my program, he said the family would be pleased that I am keeping his story alive, so he gave me a transcription of several years' of Detweiller's riverboat logs from

before and during the Civil War, a hundred pages in Detweiller's words! This radically transformed and refocused the program. I read more deeply on the role of riverboats in the Western theater, and I was able to use much more of his words to bring the audience into the action as he saw it. More than an eyewitness, he was a player on the world's stage and, as an added bonus, he was friends with Abraham Lincoln. I now have two hours of Detweiller and can focus on the riverboat era or the role of steamboats in the Civil War, an under-appreciated chapter in Civil War history.

### What is THE story?

There are many ways to approach this, and when you are well-read on the character, the outline will suggest itself. To

create a gripping story line, start with a pivotal moment in their career, or create a timeline of their life, or engage the audience in a public debate, or recreate a spiritual crisis... or...or...or...

Examples include: An old woman looking back on her life; a young man on the verge of some great adventure; an older man who has just returned from his journey; a mother explaining her life work to a daughter who is following in her footsteps; a recreated press conference in which you anticipate answers from the press and allow the audience to actually ask questions near the end; or... Whatever frame you create, it needs to include a logical beginning, middle, and end; dynamic stories; and a chance for the audience to be engaged with the material. The frame also answers key questions for the audience, namely, why are we here and why should we care?

Period music is also a plus. I like to sing, and so do most audiences. Including a few period tunes perks up the show and adds another level of authenticity, and the right lyrics can reinforce the main points of the story.

Again, Audubon was almost too easy, because I had read deeply. When he launched his career and left his family for what turned out to be several years, he sent a sweet, warm, and long letter to his sons outlining his life story so they would know their father, just in case he did not survive the adventure. I start there. He also wrote a short essay



*Brian "Fox" Ellis portraying John James Audubon. (Photo courtesy of the author)*

explaining his process for creating art. He gave countless formal and informal “talks” to art and scientific societies to help sell his art. So, the frame was readily built, and I could easily hang different stories in the gallery to match the interests of the audience. As you might imagine, traveling in the wildest places in America in the earliest part of the 1800s gives me a lot of fodder for exciting storytelling. A fun risk I take with every show is to allow the audience to direct a few twists and turns. I ask, “What are your favorite birds?” and then quote what Audubon wrote about those birds. I could talk about birds all day, but they would rather hear about their favorite birds.

With Detweiler, because the show was first written for the cemetery tour, it is a simple series of flashbacks, his life story in a chronological order with a focus on a few adventure stories he tells in his captain’s log. What the audience does not realize until the end, and they seem to really enjoy the epiphany, is that I am actually the ghost of Detweiler speaking from the grave. I always end with “and I still drive a riverboat...across the river Styx! So, when your time comes, I might be the one to ferry you home!”

### **Keep costume and props simple but pay attention to detail.**

Sometimes all you need is a hat or a bonnet, an apron, or a pair of wire-rim glasses. Allow the story to convey authenticity, but make sure your shoes fit the bill. Choose props that are more than just stage clutter: each and every item should help you tell the story.

As Detweiler, I wear a captain’s jacket and Greek fisherman’s cap, a period shirt and bow tie, much like the photo. Again, the story is what is important here. I try to get out of the way and let the captain bring the audience in. With Audubon, it is a little more complicated. Because the frame of the show is one of his informal talks to sell art, he would travel with a small art exhibit. So do I. I set up a few easels and display several museum-quality reprints of his birds and mammals. This is not only great eye-candy, but I use these prints to talk about birds and art. When he had a bronze bust commissioned, he wore the buckskin given to him by the Lakota Indians who adopted him; when in Europe he dressed as the “American Woodsman,” so I wear a buckskin shirt that I made.

### **See every show as a rehearsal.**

Once you have a solid understanding of the character, a clear outline of where you are going and how to get there, and the right shoes and props, see every time you perform

as a chance to explore the character *and* adapt the program to fit the audience. Do not memorize a script; be in the story and allow the audience reactions to help shape the program. Be conscious of how you can use each performance as a chance to improve each element of the program, working one piece at a time. Be willing to take risks to keep it fresh. Continue to read and research and add new stories.

### **Wade into the controversy, but keep your head up as you cross the swamp**

Almost every historical character has a skeleton or two in the closet. Please give me history completely fleshed out, warts and all. If we whitewash history, we erase most of the drama, passion, and humor. Audubon’s father was part of the slave trade. He shot birds and ate them. If I attempted to sweep these facts under the rug, the dust bunnies might morph into monsters. If I state them as facts and move on, it gives the audience something meaty to chew on and creates a potentially powerful teachable moment. The Q & A is a key place to allow the audience to engage with controversial ideas. I especially enjoy answering questions, first in character, then I take off the hat or jacket and answer a few questions as myself. Be ready for a troll if you cross this bridge, but if you know

the facts and are a compassionate, inclusive scholar, you can manage the conversations so folks’ opinions are heard and thoughtful dialogue ensues.

I hope this is helpful, and I look forward to you meeting Audubon and the Captain on the *Spirit of Peoria* riverboat this spring. □

**About the Author** - Brian “Fox” Ellis is the author of 16 books, two dozen musical theatre productions, and more than 100 magazine articles. He has helped to research, write, and narrate several PBS documentaries. As a museum consultant, he has worked with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, led a storytellers’ tour of the Louvre in Paris, and curated exhibits for museums large and small. For 40 years he has travelled the world collecting and telling stories with an emphasis on the place where art, history, science, and culture overlap.



*Brian “Fox” Ellis portraying steamboat captain Henry Detweiler.  
(Photo courtesy of the author)*







## PEORIA'S RIVERBOAT MEN



*Four prominent Peorians whose lives were inseparable from the Illinois River.*

By Brian "Fox" Ellis, Riverlorian on the Spirit of Peoria

**T**HE Illinois River has been - and will always be - an important resource in the ongoing history of the Peoria, Illinois, area. Its bounty brought our ancestors to this valley, and, if well-respected, it will continue to be a source of life and renewal. Here are brief biographies of four men who traveled this river and recognized its importance in our cultural and economic growth.

### French Explorer and Founder of Peoria

Henri de Tonti (1649/50-1704) was LaSalle's right-hand man - with no right hand. He was a French-born son of Italian immigrants who became a well-known mercenary. In the battle of Creve Coeur in Belgium, a grenade blew off most of his hand - he cut away the rest and continued to fight! It was also at the battle of Creve Coeur that he met René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, who hired him for his expedition to New France. The two

of them paddled birch-bark canoes thousands of miles across the heartland of America.

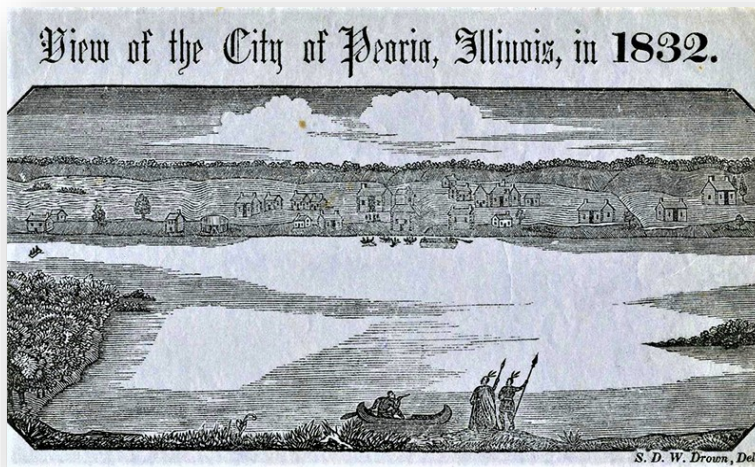
A leader among men, de Tonti was also known as a fierce negotiator with the Indians. During a battle at la Roche - later known as Starved Rock - he waded into the massacre with the calumet, a peace pipe, held high above his head. The battle stopped. De Tonti lied to the Iroquois about the number of



**Henri de Tonti** - attributed to Nicolaes Maes (Photo from History Museum of Mobile, AL, Public Domain)

French and American Indian warriors in an unsuccessful effort to deter the onslaught.

With LaSalle, de Tonti was the first European to paddle his canoe the full length of the Mississippi River. They planted a cross claiming the entire river drainage system for the king of France, naming the soon-to-be-built town *New Orleans* for the Duke of Orleans, and named the territory *Louisiana* for the patron saint of King Louis IX. When

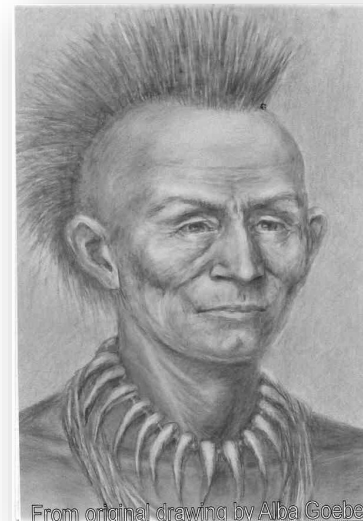


LaSalle's mission to build New Orleans stumbled and then failed, de Tonti moved the base of his fur-trading empire, establishing the first European outpost along the western shores of Lake Pimiteoui which helped lay the groundwork for what became Peoria. Today, he is honored as the namesake for an annual award given by the Peoria Historical Society for community leadership.

### Potawatomi Chief and Peacemaker

Gomo (died 1815) was one of the most respected American Indian leaders in the Illinois River Valley. When more than 26 chiefs gathered at Cahokia to powwow with General William Clark and Illinois Territorial Governor Ninian Edwards in 1812, every other chief stood and said, "Gomo is our leader; Gomo speaks for us."

Gomo stood up and spoke eloquently of broken promises and the rights of the American Indians to live in peace. His village was on the northwest shore of Peoria Lake, near where Chillicothe's Shore Acres Park stands today. His brother was Chief Senachwine, another peacemaker.



**Potawatomi Chief Gomo** - drawing by Alba Goebel (From the Chillicothe IL Historical Society, public domain)

In 1812, Ninian Edwards attacked and burned the French village of Peoria, arresting all the Frenchmen, including those who were his allies. He then abandoned the women and children, deserting them in the wilderness without food or shelter. Gomo happened to be out hunting along the river that night. He heard the uproar, saw the flames and carefully scouted the scene. He then risked his life to help the French women and children, leading them to his village, where each of them was fed and housed. The next day, he sent a flotilla of canoes downriver so the French could be reunited with their families in St. Louis. Today, he is remembered with a short, dead-end street on Peoria's south side.

## Explorer and Fur Trader, Founder of Chicago

Born in the Caribbean of French and African parentage, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable (before 1750-1818) was highly educated for a man of his time. When he visited New Orleans, he was captured and sold into slavery, but a priest discovered his intelligence and was so impressed he helped du Sable escape. Du Sable fled upstream and lived in Peoria for several years. He owned several hundred acres of what is now downtown Peoria, and he married a Potawatomi woman.

Du Sable then moved his family further upstream and founded a fur-trading emporium, which later became Chicago. (It is intriguing that both New Orleans and Chicago were founded by men from Peoria!) He later sold his fur trade empire to American John Kinzie, who had political connections. Secretary of War Henry Dearborn commissioned the fort which bore du



**Jean Baptiste Point du Sable**  
(From History of Chicago by A.T. Andreas, 1884, Public Domain)

Sable's name, and modern Chicago grew up on the shores of Lake Michigan. Today, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable is honored with a statue created by Preston Jackson, which stands outside the Carver Center in Peoria.

## Steamboat Captain and Civil War Hero

Born in the Alsace-Lorraine region of France, Henry Detweiller (1825-1903) immigrated to Peoria when he was a boy and pursued his dream to become a riverboat captain. He learned the steamboat captain trade as a trainee on a small steamboat, the Frontier, which ran a daily passenger

route from Peoria to Ottawa or Peru, the same route traveled by the Spirit of Peoria today.

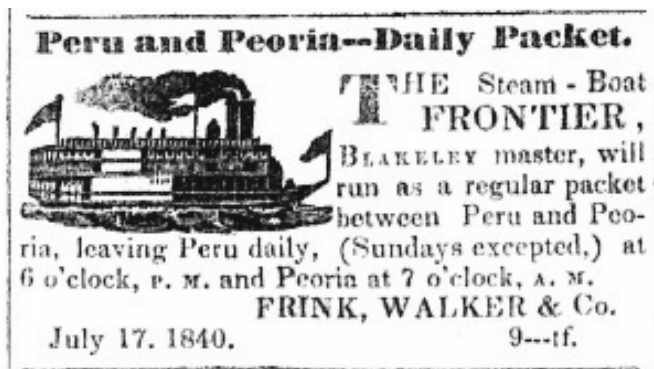


**Steamboat Captain Henry Detweiller.** (Photo from historyon-the-fox.wordpress.com, public domain)

Detweiller plied the rivers for more than 30 years and was good friends with young lawyer and politician, Abraham Lincoln. The last time Lincoln visited Peoria, it was Captain Detweiller who ferried him there and got him checked into a hotel.

Throughout the Civil War, Detweiller delivered troops and supplies, running missions deep into the South. He helped General Ulysses S. Grant run the gauntlet at Vicksburg. After the war, he got into the ice business with young Edward Woodruff. When Woodruff became mayor of Peoria, Detweiller was the city treasurer. What was once Detweiller Ice Company became Detweiller Marina.

Today, there is a major thoroughfare and park named for him. His children donated Detweiller Park and Detweiller Marina to the city so the public would always have access to his river. □



## 1840 Steamboat from Peoria to Ottawa & Peru

Realizing steamboats could speed both passengers and mail during the Illinois River's three ice-free seasons, stagecoach operators Frink & Walker purchased the small steamboat Frontier to connect with stages at either Ottawa or Peru, depending on the depth of the river. Henry Detweiller was hired as a pilot trainee on April 13, 1840, and learned the riverboat pilot's trade aboard her. He was soon appointed second captain of the Frontier. (Illustration from By Trace & Trail, Oswegoland Heritage Association, 2010; information from "The Saga of Henry Detweiller," historyonthefox.wordpress.com, May 19, 2013)



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## A PICTURE PERFECT CHRISTMAS RETHINKING ENGAGEMENT

By Cait Dallas, Old World Wisconsin

*At An Old World Christmas, guests immerse themselves in engaging and interactive experiences inspired by holiday customs brought to the state by the diverse cultures that helped shape the traditions that many Wisconsin families continue to practice today. Old World's 1880s Crossroads Village is decked in holiday greenery and full of buildings bustling with holiday preparations. Guests can help prepare vanocka, a traditional braided bread; listen to live music, carols, and hymns; learn about holiday traditions like St. Nicholas and English Boxing Day; enjoy a scenic horse-drawn ride; take a photo in Santa Claus's Victorian workshop and in front of the largest Yule Goat in North America; and visit with a few of the site's four-legged residents in the barns. They also have to watch out for Krampus who wanders around the site taking selfies with guests.*

**H**O, HO, HO! I wager that you can time travel through the holidays of your own life by flipping through the pages of family photo albums (I know some of you have 'em) or swiping through images collected on your cell phone. You see yourself and your loved ones grow and age. New faces enter the picture and others disappear. Maybe there was a ritual to the holiday picture taking - you always did or do the annual holiday family scene at the table ala Norman Rockwell, or holding your Hanukkah gifts, or in front of a Christmas tree, or the classic photo with Santa. For my family, it was the ceremonial couch sitting picture - children arranged cheek by jowl along the sofa from oldest to youngest - and the variations featuring grandparents, aunts and uncles, and derivations thereof.

It used to be that this sort of picture-taking was limited

by the number of rolls of film or flash bulbs or cost of processing. So, most cameras took a few shots on special occasions and were stowed away for the next event. Sometimes extra prints were made and shared around the family. Mostly, they ended up in family albums - documenting a few specific markers of your own unique tradition.

Not so much anymore. The world of digital photography, almost universal access to phones with cameras, and social media have dramatically altered the nature of picture taking and sharing. Today we take photos documenting the mundane to the sublime moments of our lives and every point in between. We share them instantly - the good, the bad, and the ugly - with a universe of friends, family, and strangers via social media.

Maybe you've noticed, as we have, that the camera has



not only become a sort of constant companion of our guests, but it is increasingly literally the lens through which our guests are experiencing our historic sites and museums. I must admit that we still do, from time to time, indulge ourselves in the internal eye roll and moan “if only they’d put the \*%@! camera down and engage in what we’re doing!” But more and more, we’ve come to the view that “guest experience” is not just us creating an experience that we think guests should have, it’s about creating opportunities for guests to deeply engage in the way that is most comfortable to them.



**Christmas Photo Ops** - Many visitors today, see a historic site mostly through the lens of their phone camera. OWW has created photo opportunities that include a sign with the “An Old World Christmas” brand which is then included in photos that visitors post on the internet.

**Facing page** - The Scandinavian Julbock or Yule Goat provides a photo op in what was formerly an open field. The goat has a costumed facilitator in the role of the Jultomte, a gnomish gift-giver similar to Father Christmas. (All photos are courtesy of Old World Wisconsin)

You could think of it as another mode of accessibility: like a wheelchair, it helps guests get where they want to go. The camera is one bit of technology that has become central to the way many of our guests today - and undoubtedly into the future - experience their lives and by extension their time at our site. In a way, guests shape their experience at museums through the viewfinders of their cameras. They decide what is important to each picture that they take and what will be cropped out. These images become the focal point for their memories of this experience.

They extend the life of their visit beyond time and space when they post their pics on social media. So, rather than mere begrudging acceptance of the camera, at Old World Wisconsin, we’ve decided to turn it to our benefit and use it to create experiences that provide natural camera opportunities. That attitude has had a pretty dramatic influence on one of our most beloved public events - An Old World Christmas.

### Photo Op Power

As we learn more and more about how guests choose to see and experience our site through the camera lens, we’ve come to think more deliberately about how to create unique photo opportunities. We’ve found they enable us to tell more stories, create a feeling of change and “newness” for repeat visitors, provide additional points of direct engagement between small groups and the site, AND become the stuff of free advertising for OWW as we’re tagged in a flurry of guest-initiated social media activity. We’ve found that by using our Facebook page to ask for guests to share their visit photos we can spread the word about our event further than our marketing/promotion budget will ever take us. So, what did we do?

### Put Santa to Work!

For years we offered a photo op with Santa inside our admissions building. It was popular; kids sat on Santa’s lap and shared their wishes while grownups snapped photos. But it didn’t really tie in with the action on the historic site and, to be truthful, it was a pretty generic set up. You can imagine the setting because you’ve seen the same thing everywhere - man in Santa suit sitting on a large chair placed on a rug, Christmas tree in the background, and a small side table to hold a token plate of treats. Though some guests liked it, many passed it by, knowing that they could get the same shot at the mall. Our problem was how to transform an experience/photo op that guests liked to something that was unique and played shamelessly to the desire of families for photos.

We made a pretty dramatic change that served us in several ways. We had a building (bike shop) on the historic side of the site that had never been used in winter. After some research into historic presentations of Santa in the 1880s to 1900 and considering the challenges of the building’s furnishings (large workbench, adult tricycles, high



**A young visitor** helps experience facilitator Sarah Linn prepare the 1880s Christmas meal in the Yankee farmhouse kitchen.



**Bobsled photo op** - This set up requires no staff yet gives visitors an opportunity for a “Currier and Ives” photo that includes the “An Old World Christmas” brand sign.

wheel bicycles, etc.), we decided to convert the interior into Santa’s Workshop. Creative incorporation of the big objects into the workshop plan saved us from having to move them to another location.

The workshop concept provided another interior space for families to use to get out of the cold. We brought a small sleigh into the space and filled it with faked bags of toys, positioning it so it was poised to be pulled out of the building’s double doors. Other toys from the education collection were brought from around the site and placed on platforms that created a path that sent guests along exterior walls that were covered in handwritten (faked) letters to Santa. Assorted touchable toys were kept at the ready to entertain waiting guests. This line led families up to Santa, who was in shirt sleeves at the workbench. Kids sat on a large tool chest pulled up to the workbench. This eliminated the increasingly awkward sitting on the lap.

We set the scene with the idea of photography in mind, so we addressed the lighting issues of windows and views right from the beginning. We strategically incorporated some professionally printed signage showing the OWW logo and email address in the background. The result? Terrific success from the point of view of guests and staff! This was something they couldn’t get in the mall. The setting tied directly into late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Santa concepts, was comfortable for adults and kids, and provided ample opportunities to snap pictures while waiting for your turn to take the prize shot of your child with Santa at work. It also got our brand placed within every photo taken of the main view at that location. (see the front cover)

### Think Christmas Card

Santa’s Workshop was a great success, and just one of several intentional photo ops that we’ve cultivated in the last four years. Another recent addition is a classic bobsled from the education collection positioned outside our Yankee farmhouse. You couldn’t get much more Currier and

Ives than this view. One of the beauties of this setup is that it requires no staff. Guests encounter a branded sign (placed strategically at the best photo position) that invites them to climb into the bobsled and take a photo. This has been very popular. It has the advantage, too, of visually activating the street which in past years tended to be pretty quiet as guests spent most of their time inside the heated historic buildings.

### Go Big

A good photo op can be configured in many ways. It might have a variety of small staged settings like the toys in Santa’s workshop or it might be a nostalgic scene that guests can step into like the bobsled. Sometimes it’s the unexpected and exaggerated that folks are drawn to. Never pass up the opportunity to go BIG if it fits into your setting or the stories that you tell. The BIGGEST outdoor activator at OWW has been the Scandinavian *Jultomte* (Yule Goat). This mammoth straw goat (14 feet tall) dominates a portion of the landscape and is a natural photo op in what had been a big empty field between historic buildings. The Goat has a costumed facilitator who takes on the role of the *Jultomte*, a gnomish gift giver similar to Father Christmas. The *Tomte* engages with guests in the area, encouraging the photo activity, sharing the goat tradition linking it to modern expressions of the ancient tradition here and in Europe AND offering to take guests photos in front of the goat.

### Sometimes Naughty IS Nice

The right roaming character can create a multitude of engaging, ever-changing points of photo engagement for guests. We’ve experimented with a few over the years, but the most engaging that we’ve found is the *Krampus*, an edgy Germanic beastie sort of character who deals with all the “bad” children. The actor that plays this part is scary (but not too scary) and has the personality and improv chops to handle a wide variety of situations. He adjusts to



**Move over Santa, Krampus is coming to town!** This mischievous holiday creature from Central European folklore is just one of the many traditions that is explored at Old World Wisconsin’s An Old World Christmas.



fit the guests that he encounters, mugging with kids and adults up close and at a distance. His beastly costume puts him in contrast with the pastoral setting and holiday decorations, making for interesting photos. He also lets the photographer give direction for the shot. This gives guests the opportunity to create their own custom photo.

### Seasonal Swag

Lots of sites include a craft make-and-take in holiday events. Often this results in adults sitting, watching, while kids are beavering away at the activity. With a little staging these can engage adults more by becoming intentional photo ops - essentially creating another experience with little additional work. If the activity is writing a letter to Santa, you might add some sort of mailbox for kids to pose next to while they deposit their letter.



**Christmas swags** - Children and their parents can create a Christmas swag in an area that shares a space with the holiday wassail vending point creating yet another photo op area.

If the activity is creating a tree ornament, having a tree incorporated in the craft set-up creates a natural engagement point where grownups can snap a shot of their kiddos hanging masterpieces on the branches (even if the plan is to take those home). We've recently introduced a "make a mini Christmas swag" craft that is geared toward adults as well as the kids. It shares a space with our holiday wassail vending point. So that combo of adult beverages paired with craft activity is a lively spot for those camera-oriented guests.

### Away in a Manger

Animals - any kind of animals - are natural photo ops. They are an expected and much-loved part of any visit to OWW, regardless of season. Our Christmas holiday, though, has traditionally provided fewer animal encounter opportunities outside of a horse-drawn wagon ride. This has been an extremely popular activity and great for family photos in a bustling group setting. Last year we decided to add an animal encounter of a different sort that proved to be a big success. We put one of our heritage sheep into a

barn in the center of our Crossroads Village where the Christmas activity takes place. This was just a sheep in a pen with one of our historic farmers in attendance to answer questions and moderate the encounters, and was a great photo opportunity for families who wanted an up-close, lower-key animal experience. Sometimes photo ops are bustling activity points. Having some higher activity and some lower activity opportunities provides a lot of variety for guests.

### Photos Galore

So how do we encourage the spread of these photos, many with our brand on them? We use Facebook to encourage guests to share their pictures with us. We've found our guests to be a source for great images that we can use in all sorts of promotions for events, workshops, day camps, etc. Of course, guests share these images on all sorts of social media all on their own. We get a great deal of free promotion through these images and a simple hashtag, #OldWorldChristmas.

### Picture Perfect?

We may not be picture perfect yet at OWW, but we're actively working in that direction. The cell phone gives guests more opportunity to shape, record, and share their experiences at our sites than they have ever had before. This trend will almost certainly continue. Go ahead, embrace the idea of the photo op as another form of guest access and guest engagement. If you consider your holiday events, and perhaps everyday operations too, from that perspective you may see your guest experience from a new angle. You may be inspired, as we have, to think more deliberately about the advantages that come with this ubiquitous technology. The benefits can be terrific in the form of more engaged and happier guests who have shared their views of your site with the world. You too can reap the rewards of a Picture-Perfect Christmas! □

**About the Author** - Cait Dallas has worked in public history settings in southeast Wisconsin for nearly 20 years. She has a bachelor's degree in Anthropology (UW-Stevens Point) and a master's degree in Public History with a graduate certificate in Museum Studies (UW-Milwaukee/Milwaukee Public Museum). Over the years she's served in different types



of institutions (county historical society, private historic estate, and now a large state operated history site) in a variety of capacities: as a guest experience facilitator, an archivist, period clothing manager, and as curator. Her current position as Curator and Exhibit Developer at Old World Wisconsin allows her to do what she loves most - using objects and experiences to help guests make a connection with the past.

# How to Present a Successful Performance

## PART 1

By Chris Vallillo, Roots Musician & Folklorist

**M**ANY museums and historic sites are finding live performances to be an effective, accessible new way to tell their story AND attract new audiences. For those of you who are new to this situation, it can be an intimidating task to try to produce your first event.

I have 35 years of boots-on-the-ground experience documenting, performing, and producing historical music in almost any situation you can imagine. I'm well-versed in both historical music and using music in a historical and museum context. What I hope to do here, is offer you my perspective on performance from both a producer's and a performer's point of view.

### Why Use Music in a Historical Setting?

Music has been an important cultural tool for countless years, and songs and melodies from or about an event or an era can create an almost visceral connection to that time and place. Fortunately, there is a rich body of well-documented historical music that we can draw upon to help bring an event or era into sharper focus.

Music is a common phenomenon that crosses all borders of nationality, race, and culture. It's long been a powerful tool for arousing emotions and feelings - far more powerful than everyday speech. It is a "language of emotion" that cuts across cultures and can be so evocative that it has been described as standing halfway between thought and phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

More than any other stimulus, music has the ability to conjure up images and feelings that don't need to be directly reflected in memory. The reasons behind the "thrill" of listening to music are strongly tied to theories based on synesthesia. That is a condition in which one type of stimulation evokes the sensation of another, as when hearing a sound produces the visualization of a color. The brain's emotional, language, and memory centers are connected



**Chris Vallillo** at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. (photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

when processing music - providing what is essentially a synesthetic experience.<sup>1</sup> This creates a more powerful connection to the material being performed, which translates into a better, more enriching experience for audiences.

Let me give you an example. I recently was asked to be a part of an event produced by The Illinois Humanities Council called *Walt Whitman Turns 200*. It took place at the Vachel Lindsay home in Springfield, Illinois and brought together poets, writers, and educators in a celebration and discussion of the poetry of Walt Whitman and its impact on Illinois writers. I was asked to bring a musical component to the presentation, and I performed the classic Whitman poem, *O Captain, My Captain*, set to music.

The poem itself is a powerful piece of writing, expressing in a beautiful, emotional way, the tragic loss of a great leader through the dual lens of the nation as well as the eyes of his son. It was put to music by one of the best interpreters of Whitman's life and works, John Slade. (You can hear my performance of the song here: *O Captain, My Captain*, <https://soundcloud.com/gin-ridge-records/o-captain-my-captain>)

In performance as a song, this piece becomes greater than the sum of its parts. The melody is complex, rising and falling with the emotion of the piece. All the elements of the song, the lyrics, the tempo, the melody, the musical accompaniment, work together to tell the story with greater impact.

Music can also impart a real sense of an era as well. The tempo of a piece often reflects the pace of life when it was written; the lyrics and imagery of a song can give insight into the worldview of the time.

For example, love songs of the mid-1800s tend to be slow and melodic, and nature is often used as an allegory



for love. This reflects the pace and imagery of an agrarian society, as in this song from the 1850s, *Aura Lee*. (Listen to *Aura Lee* at this link: <https://soundcloud.com/gin-ridge-records/aura-lee>)

When the blackbird in the spring  
'Neath the willow tree  
Sat and rocked I heard him sing  
Singing Aura Lee  
Aura Lee, Aura Lee  
Maid of golden hair  
Sunshine came along with thee  
And swallows in the air

The melody is slow, pastoral, and relaxing. The imagery compares the beauty of nature to the beauty of Aura Lee - exactly what you'd expect from a slower-paced life in what was primarily an agrarian society.

Another example of a song that gives a different insight to an era is the abolitionist song *Darling Nelly Gray*. Written in 1856 by B. R. Hanby, it was based on the true story of an escaped slave named Joseph Shelby. Shelby travelled North on the Underground Railroad with hopes of not only winning his own freedom, but of raising enough funds to purchase the freedom of the wife he had left in bondage deep in the south. Sadly, illness overtook him, and he died at the home of Hanby's father, a member of the Underground Railroad. Hanby wrote a song that combined the lamentations of unrequited love with the evils of slavery and had a hit on his hands!

If you look at the original lyrics of the song, you'll see the words present a highly romanticized version of slave life, and this is an abolitionist's song! It doesn't even address the underlying conflict of the song until the 3rd verse. (Listen to *Darling Nelly Gray* here: <https://soundcloud.com/gin-ridge-records/darling-nelly-gray>)

There's a low, green valley, on the old Kentucky shore.  
Where I've whiled many happy hours away,  
A-sitting and a-singing by the little cottage door,  
Where lived my darling Nelly Gray.

**Chorus:**

Oh! my poor Nelly Gray, they have taken you away,  
And I'll never see my darling anymore;  
I'm sitting by the river and I'm weeping all-the-day.  
For you've gone from the old Kentucky shore.

When the moon had climbed the mountain and the  
Stars were shining too.

Then I'd take my darling Nelly Gray,  
And we'd float down the river in my little red canoe,  
While my banjo sweetly I would play.

One night I went to see her, but "She's gone!" the  
neighbors say.

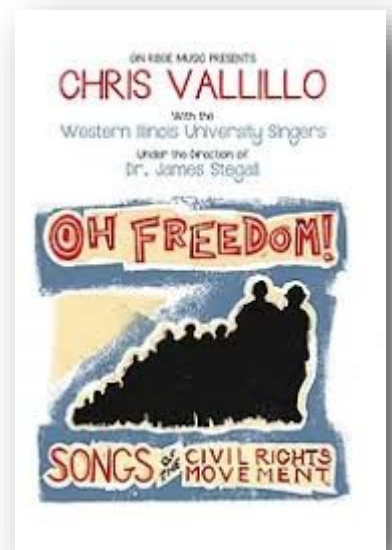
The white man bound her with his chain;

They have taken her to Georgia for to wear her life  
away,  
As she toils in the cotton and the cane.

You would think those clashing elements would work against the message of the song, but in that era and using that very language, this song connected powerfully with large groups of people, and was considered a radical abolitionist song. This gives you a strong insight into the rigid communication styles and pre-set stereotypes that were prevalent in the era.

Cognitive psychologists have confirmed what educators have long known - that we have a variety of different but mutually enhancing avenues to learning. Music is one such avenue. Research suggests that the more senses we use, the deeper and broader the degree of learning. While music is obviously an auditory activity, the kinesthetic, visual, and tactile senses can be activated via clapping, dancing, and instrument-playing.<sup>2</sup>

In my show, *Oh Freedom! Songs of the Civil Rights Movement*, I demonstrate how music was used as a political tool and a group experience by performing the song, *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody (Turn Me Around)*. I first tell the story of how this song came to be used in a demonstration in Albany, Georgia, in 1962. After singing the first verse, I keep the music going but talk over it, describing how the songs were often improvised on the spot and a song leader would call out the new lyrics and everyone could join in. I then ask the audience to do that very thing and sing the new verses with me. At the end, I have them clap along. I lead all the interactions exactly as they would have been by a song leader in an actual demonstration. By the end of the song, through storytelling, music, and rhythm, I've described the process of group singing in the Civil Rights movement, had them participate as a group in the singing, and involved them in the song by coordinating their clapping in the same manner the demonstrators themselves would have done. Through the use of these multiple senses, I've significantly increased the impact of their experience and their learning. (You can see a YouTube video of *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody* here: <https://youtu.be/0y0zfsPfre8>)



**Poster for Chris' program  
Oh Freedom!**



**Chris performing for the Smithsonian exhibit, Crossroads, Change in Rural America.** (Photo courtesy of the author)

### The Benefits of Presenting A Performance

A live performance can add an engaging and educational element to any event and be a great way to attract new audiences while inviting established audiences to return to your site.

You create a stronger bond with your audience, new or old, by telling the story of your site or event through the enhanced nature of a performance. Discussions after a performance, formal or informal, can lead to stronger community connections, oral history contacts, and a rash of new opportunities. People sharing their stories with one another helps create new relationships and a sense of ownership with the site.

Performances are also an excellent way to keep your site in the public eye through press releases and social media on the events. It's also a good reason to cultivate and maintain a relationship with regional broadcasters and news outlets. With a properly managed publicity campaign involving press releases, social media, and email blasts, you put your site or event in front of countless people and create a greater sense of awareness in the general public, *even among those who don't come out for the performance!* This has a cumulative effect, creating a greater awareness of who you are and what you do.

Of course, you should be using a performance as an opportunity to build up mailing lists, email lists, and social media subscribers as well as creating social media content.

### Ways to use music in a historic context

Many historic sites use live or recorded music as a background to simply to set a mood. This is okay, but it only scratches the surface of the possibilities and impact of using live performance.

The next level up is to use a performance to enhance and expand an ongoing event or festival. This can be a good place to start if you are new to presenting a performance. Since you already have an event in place, many of the basic elements will already be taken care of. You simply add in a musical performance that reflects the event, such as an old-time string band playing square dance tunes for a harvest festival.

I recently performed at a living history museum as part of a multi-day fall festival. I performed in their one-room schoolhouse on site and played schoolhouse-related songs and historical play party songs, some of which I had collected from that very area. At a Civil War re-enactment at Wade House in Wisconsin, I performed historically accurate Civil War music. Rather than just play at isolated sites around the grounds, I performed on the battlefield, just before the battle. The performance set the stage for the battle that followed. I drew much larger crowds and got a significantly better response.

In all these situations, I use multiple historical instruments, different styles of playing and audience participation to create interest and hold the attention of the audience. I also include information about the song, its history, or the back story of the event it describes.

At Wade House, I focused on songs that speak of the hardships of the war: the battle songs, the camp songs, all to set the stage for the battle. I played songs like *The Vacant Chair*, *Kennesaw Line*, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, *Dixie's Land*, *Picayune Butler*, etc. This is specialized material designed to inform the audience about the battle, and content is a huge part of the presentation. This level of accuracy and content is not something you'll find in a local folk or bluegrass band. You need professional Humanities performers for this level of presentation.

Another excellent way to use music is to present a performance in association with an exhibit, perhaps as an opening or closing event, to reflect and re-enforce the message of the exhibition. If you are new to this, there are some excellent models to look at, follow, and build upon.

**Museums on Main Street (MOMs)**, from the Smithsonian Institution is a great place to start. There are also numerous traveling exhibits from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Library of Congress, American Library Association, and others. All these exhibits require outreach programming to be presented during the run of the exhibit to support and expand on its theme. Go to the exhibition websites. Look at who is presenting these exhibits and see how they present their outreach programs. Why re-invent the wheel?

As a performer in this context, I present content heavy, scripted shows dealing with the specific theme of the



exhibit. This type of structured performance adds significant content to the presentation and is also an excellent outreach program for student groups visiting the site. Kids, in particular, respond well to music-based educational shows and they love cool, old instruments!

There are many Humanities-based performers who do this type of performance very effectively. They can present excellent programming around a specific theme or time such as Dr. Martin Luther King Day, Lincoln's Birthday, National Poetry Month, etc. Tying an event to an established holiday is an excellent way to stay in the public eye. It can also be a strong hook for publicity.

Using live performance may be a new area for some of you, but more and more these days, historic sites and museums must actively work to stay in the public eye. We are all fighting for audience, constantly working to get people to put down the cell phone, turn off the TV, and participate in an era where public interaction is on a downward trend. Museums and historic sites need to be more than just repositories for artifacts; these days they are cultural centers that reflect the legacy and history of the region and bring people together to celebrate and learn about our heritage. We want these sites to be places people return to again and again, not just visit once - and performance can be an excellent way to make this likely to happen.

### How To Do It

The first and most important thing, in my opinion, is to take the performance seriously. Treat it like you would any other aspect of an exhibit or historical presentation. **Use professional performers**, especially those who specialize in historical presentations. Gear your music to the event and be as historically accurate as possible. When you present music in a historical setting, use a specialist artist with skills and content worthy of a historical exhibit. Match the performance to the presentation. If you are presenting a Civil War-era experience, don't program a local bluegrass band! It is not historically appropriate for a Civil War event. Bluegrass music literally began in December of 1945 when Earl Scruggs joined Bill Monroe's band. An old-time string band that performs music from the 1840s through 1860s would be the proper choice.

**Remember, you get what you pay for.** I'm always astonished by the fact that so many events will pay top dollar to have a historical character interpreter on site, but will balk at paying anywhere near that amount for an artist who travels the same distance and brings vintage instruments and sound equipment worth between \$10K and \$15K and who has a deep knowledge of the subject at hand. There are dedicated musicians and presenters that can help interpret your site with historical accuracy and professional presentations. These are the folks you want to work with. A professional has the chops musically and the skills professionally to do the job well, and the best of these can handle almost any situation they find themselves in (and in the process, help you learn how to do this better).

### Resources

Resources for locating professional humanities-based performers can be hard to find. Start early by building up a list of potential artists you might want to work with by networking with sites similar to yours. You can gain insight into the budget needed by asking presenters what acts they've featured charge.

**Tourism Agencies.** In Illinois we have groups like the *Looking for Lincoln Coalition* or *Route 66 Scenic Bi-way*.

There are similar groups across the Midwest. These groups are constantly producing events that feature music and either have contacts and information to share or can connect you with someone who does.

**State Arts Agencies.** In Illinois, the Illinois Arts Council has a touring artist roster and an Artists in Education roster. Most states have similar lists of artists. Call and ask. In Illinois, these are lists of juried artists with a description of what they do and a price range they charge.

**State Humanities Councils.** Many state humanities councils have a speakers bureau. This can be a lecture or performance on a specific subject. Again, they list the presenters available with a description of their programs.

Be creative! In 2015, I was producing the Bishop Hill Folk Festival, and we got a grant from Swedish Government that stipulated that we needed to present at least two Swedish artists. I called the American Swedish Museum, asked for suggestions, and hired an excellent group they recommended.



*Chris and George Buss performing Lincoln the Great Communicator. (Photo courtesy of the McLean Co. Historical Museum)*

## Finances

To work with professionals at this level costs real money; however funding is frequently available to support this. Here are a couple resources you should know about.

**State Humanities Councils.** Humanities councils are looking for programs that involve content. Most have a Speakers Bureau that helps bring in a speaker or performer at a reduced cost. In Illinois, the Road Scholars program costs a presenter \$75, and the IHC pays the artist a fee plus expenses. Some agencies offer small to moderate grants. In Michigan the Humanities Council has the Action Grant that can provide up to \$750 to present a performer. There are larger grants for specific projects as well. The Missouri Humanities Council has mini-grants of up to \$1,500.

**State Arts Agencies.** Arts agencies are looking to support events that involve performance and are less concerned about content. They can offer minor touring support grants all the way to large program grants. Illinois has the Arts Tour and Live Music Grant which pays between 50 and 75% of the cost of bringing in an Illinois performer. Indiana has an Arts in the Parks and Historic Sites Grant which funds between \$500 and \$3,000 for a performance at a specific list of sites. Go to your state's website and explore the *Grants* section.

**Local and regional grants.** Many regional and local arts agencies offer funding. Don't forget regional foundations. Many successful businesses have foundations set up to support their community. Go to their websites to see what they offer, then call and ask questions.

In any grant situation, there will be restrictions and conditions that must be met to be funded. Remember, grant writing is based on the golden rule: *He who has the gold makes the rules!* Look at the grant guidelines to determine what the requirements are and make sure you meet them. Learn the things they want to know about you and your project and make sure you tell them that in the application. There are always more people asking for funding than there is money to hand out so don't give them a reason to say no!

**Sponsors.** Partner with local businesses to get funding in exchange for sponsorship credit, or, better yet, in-kind contributions. I currently produce two different concert series. At both locations I have partnered with a local hotel for artist's rooms in exchange for sponsorship credit. This is a win-win for the sponsor, the event, and the artists, and it's much easier to book acts if they don't need to cover the cost of hotels.

These are just a few ideas on ways to use music and tools to make it happen. Next issue I'll get into the nitty gritty of how to put on your event. □

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**About the Author** - Chris Vallillo is an award-winning roots-based singer/songwriter and folklorist from Macomb, IL. His 2009 project, *Abraham Lincoln in Song* was endorsed by the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and performed across the country. He twice served as the Illinois State Scholar for the Smithsonian Institution's traveling exhibit on roots music, *New Harmonies*. His most recent show, *Oh Freedom!*, was performed at the Lincoln Presidential Museum last Juneteenth.

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## MEN'S SHIRTS FROM SIMPLE TO FANCY 1800-1880

## IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

By Eileen Hook, Proprietor, Talbott & Co. Heritage Goods

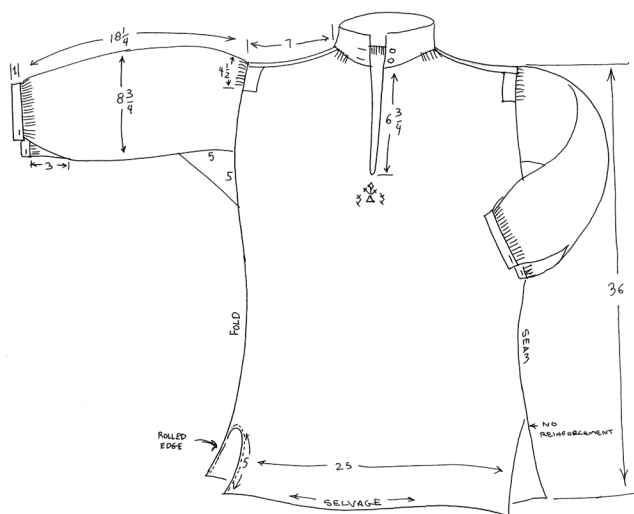
**Note:** This article is based on a presentation at the 2018 ALHFAM Conference in Oklahoma and will appear in the 2018 Conference Proceedings.

MEN'S clothing has had trends and changes much like women's, although at a slower pace. Men's shirts have also evolved more slowly than other men's garments such as trousers, waistcoats or vests, and coats. Evolution in shirts may be traced by cut, fabric type, and color or pattern. What a man wore, what it was made of, and when and where he wore it helped identify his "level" in society.

## Shirts on the Square

Shirts were made “on the square” for centuries, well into the 1800s. The front and back of the shirt were usually cut as one long rectangular piece, folded at the shoulders and the opening for the neck and front slit cut out of the middle. The sleeves, collars, etc. were cut in squares and rectangles of the remainder of the fabric. Minimal shaping was done of these squares and rectangles by more squares and rectangles folded into gussets at the neck and under the arms. The appropriate length collar and wristband were all that was needed to fit a shirt to an individual (Figure 1).

Shirts cut in this manner allowed the maker to utilize the fabric's length and width. If you were making multiples of the same size shirt you could purchase many yards



**Figure 1** - Traditional squares and rectangles shirt pattern. (Credit: William Brown, *Thoughts on Men's Shirts in America*, Shirt #1, 1760-1790, p. 18)

of the fabric of the appropriate width to fit the man you were sewing for and use all the edge and end pieces for collar, cuffs and sleeves. Making shirts for the men and boys of a household was a constant occupation. Shirts were also made to give to those less fortunate.

Shirts for the “laboring class” were made of stout linen. Instances of shirts of a color other than shades of white were few, and finding an extant linen or cotton shirt in a color is very rare. *The Workwoman’s Guide* (1838) mentions blue checked, unbleached, and striped calicos being used for men in lighter occupations or for children.<sup>1</sup>

Gentlemen's shirts were made of fine linen by tailors, as well as at home. The shirt style for gentlemen was the same as that for the laboring classes, although there might be variations in the shape and width of the collar, the shoulder straps, and the binders. The purpose of binders or linings is to strengthen the shirt at the shoulders and seams where there would be rubbing from the vest or braces.

Separate tie-on shirtfronts were made with pleats and frills to tie on over a shirt and under the vest to make the plain shirt look fancier. Separate button-on collars were being made as early as the 1820s. Shirts that would accommodate these collars were made with a band collar with a button at the back where the collars buttoned on and off. The shirtfronts and collars were made with finer fabric than the shirt itself. The same technique of making these visible parts of a shirt of finer fabric was common in making full shirts as well as those with add-on pieces.

Shirts were mid-thigh length or thereabout to protect a man's nether regions from coarser trouser fabric; they also acted as underwear. Shirts also protected the finer fabrics of the waistcoat/vest or jacket from body oils and perspiration. It was much easier to launder multiple shirts than silk or wool outer garments. A man of means might have enough shirts to change two or three times a day.

The collars on square and rectangle shirts, c.1800-1830s, usually had two buttons, but really tall ones might have three. These tall collars would be starched and held up by a neck stock and a well-tied cravat.

Cuffs were narrower on work shirts, about one inch wide, and grew wider as the century progressed. Even as

1. A Lady. *The Workwoman's Guide* (1838; reprint, Guilford, CT: Opus Publications, Inc., 1986), 137.

the cuffs widened, the cuff buttons or sleeve link button-holes continued to be placed close to the sleeve/cuff seam. Buttons in the middle of the cuff did not come into vogue until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The wider cuffs could also be folded back to protect the cuff fabric from dirt or body oils, then unfolded for a fresh look.

Early 1800s shirts had hand-made thread buttons (Dorset), or cloth-covered metal rings. As factory-made buttons of mother-of-pearl or china became more prevalent and cheaper, they were used on men's shirts.

Shirts were most commonly made of white or shades of white fabric for men of all occupations. The earliest were made in linen; as cotton became readily and cheaply available, it was substituted. Shirts might also be made of cotton with a linen collar, cuffs and bosom pieces - the parts that would show.

In 1810, William Clark (of Lewis and Clark fame) as the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, ordered fabric to use as gifts for western tribes. Included with the order were samples of red prints. The red color was highly admired by the tribes and much sought-after (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** - Fabric samples in shades of red sent by William Clark to fabric manufacturers. (Credit: The Museum of the Fur Trade)

### Transition period: 1840s-1850s.

Paintings by genre artists such as William Sidney Mount and George Caleb Bingham are useful in determining the appearance of shirts worn by men in outdoor occupations (Figure 3). Men in frontier areas were depicted in Bingham's river boatmen paintings wearing colored shirts of the kind called "trade shirts." These shirts were made in factories, and as piecework in major cities, by the thousands and sent to ready-made clothing dealers for the Native American and fur trapper trade. These are most likely cotton and are of the square- and rectangle-cut.



**Figure 3.** - Working men in variety of shirts on the Missouri River in the 1840s. (Credit: George Caleb Bingham, *The Jolly Flatboatmen*, 1846, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art)

In the 1830s, "An important novelty was introduced [in England], a primitive form of 'sports shirt,' known as an 'aquatic shirt,' intended for the river but soon adopted by the *unfashionable* young man. The correct form had narrow blue and white, or red and white stripes or checks of cotton, and the collar and wristbands were not visible. A medical student in Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* (1836-37) wore a blue and white striped shirt and false collar."<sup>2</sup>

The front edge of the simple square collar began to be cut back in the 1840s, either with a curve at the front, or with a separate neckband, and the collar made shorter. Shirt collars could be starched or not and would have a single button.

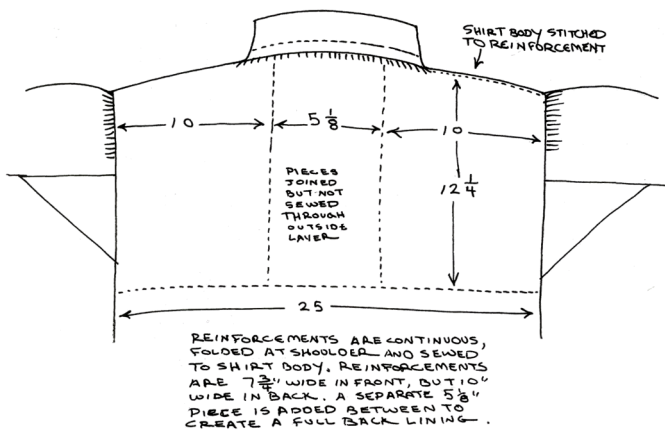
As the 1840s and 50s went on, more shirts had interior linings across the back rather than the strap or epaulet-style binder previously seen. This is the precursor to the exterior yoke on the back of modern shirts. The interior lining on the back was paired with an interior lining on the front that could extend all the way to the sides of the placket at the front, or even form a diagonal from the bottom of the arm-scyce to the middle of the placket (Figure 4).

Shirt front plackets began to change as well. Where previously there was only a small hem where the fabric was turned under and maybe a single button, they were now made of a separate piece of fabric applied to the front with two or more buttons to close it. The buttons on the collar, placket, and cuffs were often white glass or porcelain. Factory-made shirt buttons were readily available by the thousands.

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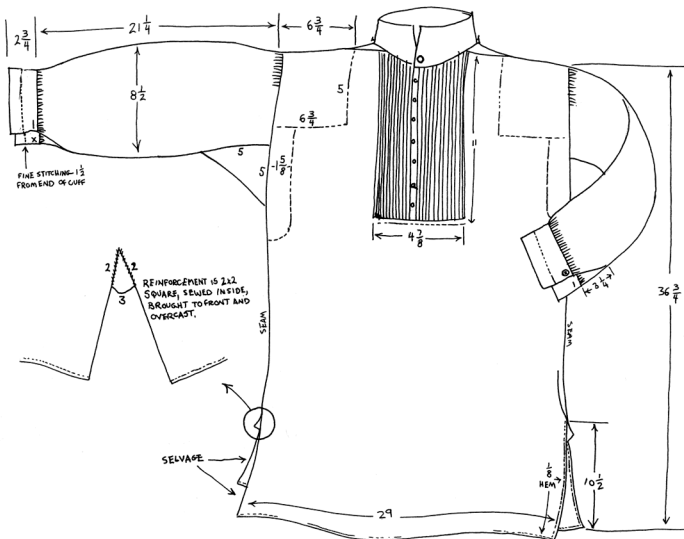
2. C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington, *The History of Underclothes* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992), 125.





**Figure 4.** - Shirt back interior lining, mid 1800s. (Credit: William Brown, *Thoughts on Men's Shirts in America*, Shirt #4, p. 34)

Pleated bosom shirts became more and more common both for special occasions and for everyday wear. Under-arm and neck gussets were still used, and interior lining and binders are typical of the period. It is likely the person who made the shirt in Figure 5 adapted the pattern used since childhood with a few new features. Interestingly, the pleats on these shirts open towards the placket, not away from it as they do in today's tuxedo shirts.



**Figure 5.** - Pleated bosom shirt, c.1840s. (Credit: William Brown, *Thoughts on Men's Shirts in America*, Shirt #10, p. 60)

Cotton was being manufactured in the mills of New England states and came in a wide variety of qualities, colors, and patterns. It was now cheaper than linen, although it was not as durable. Patterned and colored shirts were considered casual or "sports shirts" (Figure 6). One printed shirt was noted as having the figure of a famous prima

donna forming "the pattern...on which she was reproduced many times in a chocolate tint (1847)," and "Patterns of coloured shirtings, such as horses, dogs and other sporting designs (1855)."<sup>3</sup> Patterns to reproduce these shirts are hard to come by today.



**Figure 6.** - Pleated front printed shirt. (Genesee Country Village Museum, Greene Collection. Photo by the author)

## Over shirts

The square and rectangle style held on longer in the over shirts or smocks worn by working men. Col. Randolph Marcy noted in his *Prairie Traveler* book of 1859 that over shirts in red and blue flannel could be found "in almost all the shops on the frontier."<sup>4</sup>

Wool flannel shirts were found in the excavation of the steamboat Arabia, which sank in 1856 on its way to the frontier settlements on the Missouri River. These shirts sometimes had braid sewn on the front in a pattern. Often termed a "battle shirt" these days by Civil War re-enactors, there is no evidence of such a term being used in the time period.

Over shirts no longer came only in solid colors; they also came in patterns like stripes or checks (Figure 7).

## Mid 1850s-1880s, a More Fitted Shirt

As the century progressed, shirts were more often made in factories, and ready-made shirts grew in popularity. Once the factories were supplied with sewing machines, trained operators turned out shirts by the dozens, along with coats, trousers, and vests. Colors, stripes, separate collars, bosoms, and cuffs were part of the wide variety of items available.

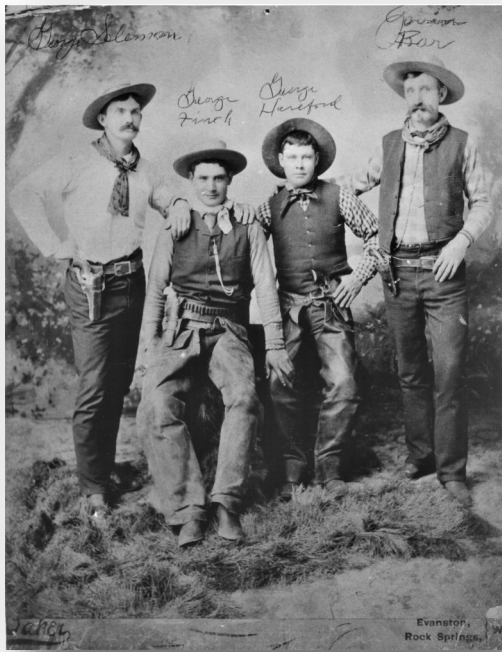
3. C. Willett and Phillis Cunningham, 142.

4. Randolph B. Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler* (1859; reprint, Saybrook, CT: Applewood Books, 1986), 37.





**Figure 11. -**  
Four working  
cowboys, two  
wearing solid  
color shirts,  
two wearing  
patterned  
shirts, 1880s.  
(Credit: Sweet-  
water County,  
WY, Historical  
Museum)



In summary, white shirts were the standard attire for men from all walks of life through the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century and later. The traditional square and rectangles shirt continued to be worn in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Non-white shirts were often worn by working men and men engaged in sporting activities. In the mid-1800s through the end of the century, shirts slimmed down and took on a more fitted shape. This newer shirt was factory-, home- or tailor-made in the standard white or in prints or patterns for casual and working wear. □

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**About the Author** - Eileen Hook has been involved in first person living history since 1980. Her particular interest is the lives and activities of the 'ordinary people' in California before and at the beginning of the Gold Rush. She has been researching and sewing period clothing for 40 years and is currently proprietor of Talbott & Company, Heritage Goods,



# Historic Trades Resource

Interpretive Demonstrations of

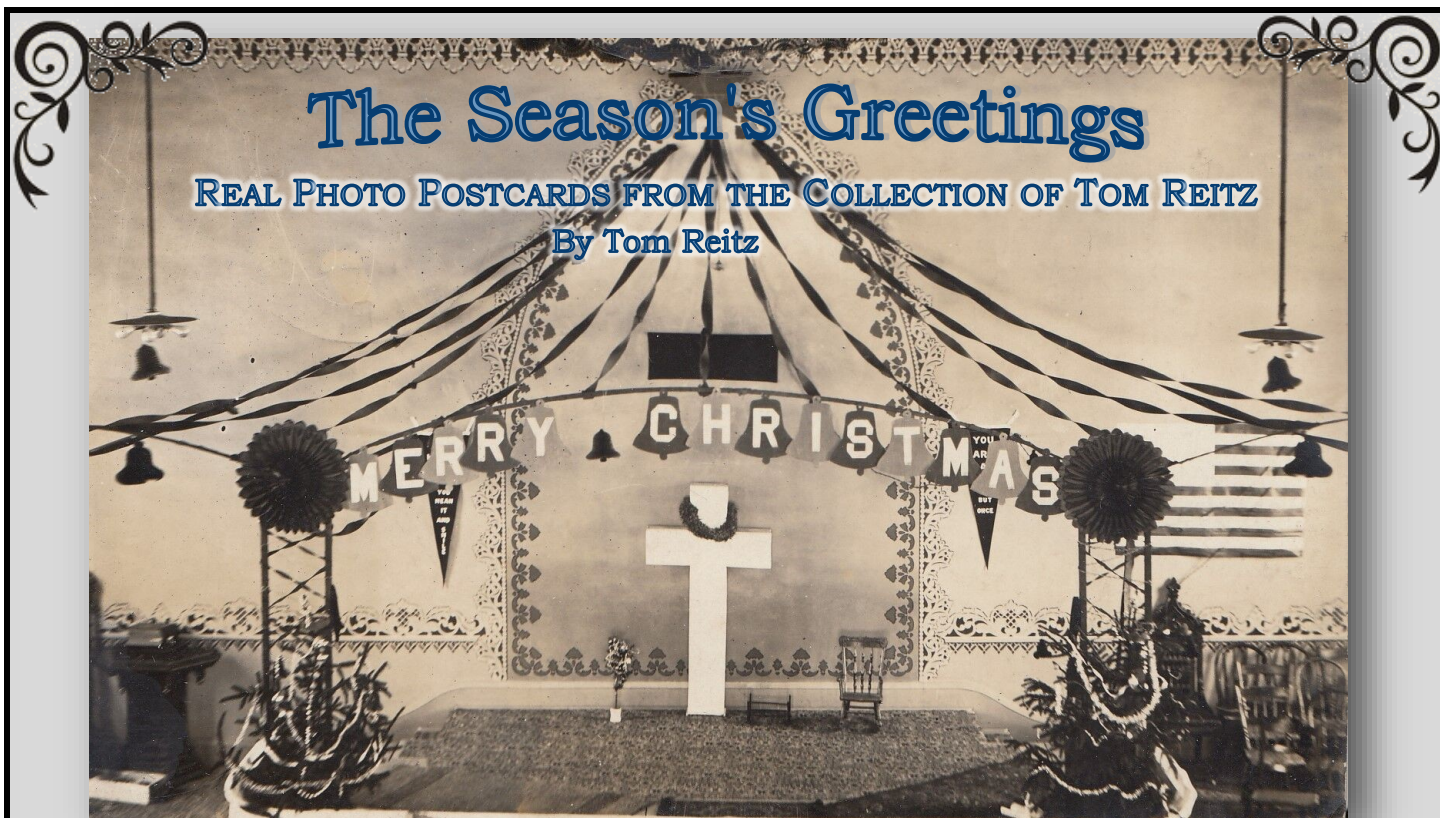
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**T**OM Reitz shares images from his extensive collection of photographic postcards, exploring Christmas in people's homes, churches, businesses, and schools decorated for Christmas in the early 1900s in the Midwest. The original images are privately printed photographic postcards, measuring 3½ inches by 5½ inches in size.

These images were primarily taken by amateur photographers and printed as postcards in home darkrooms or as a special request when film was developed. Most people printed only a few postcards of each image to save in a photo album or to send to family and close friends. This type of postcard was popular from about 1903 to 1930.

### Background

George Eastman sold his first Kodak camera, loaded with film for 100 exposures, designed for amateur photographers, in 1888. Photographers sent the camera, with the film inside, back to the factory to be developed and printed.

In 1900, Eastman Kodak Company introduced the Kodak Brownie, a simple box camera priced at one dollar. Rolls of film sold for 15 cents each, increasing the popularity of the hobby of photography and lessening the need for professional photographers with studios. Amateur photographers could now load the rolls of film themselves; they only had to return the roll of film for developing and printing. Snapshots were born!

Eastman Kodak introduced the 3A Folding Pocket Kodak camera in 1903; it produced negatives 3½ inches by 5½ inches, the same size as a postcard. Customers could now order their negatives printed on postcard-size paper with the reverse side already printed with a stamp box, or if you had a home darkroom, you could print your own postcards.

By the mid-1910s, when Eastman Kodak stopped manufacturing the 3A camera, the fad of ordering or printing your own photographic postcards started to fade, although they continued to be printed for decades.

Real photo postcards are photographs; they are a continuous-tone image printed on photographic paper. Mass-produced postcards are printed by lithography or on an offset press. The latter are distinguished by the thousands of printed dots that make up the image.

Unlike commercially printed postcards, which could number in the hundreds of thousands made from one negative, most amateur photographers printed one or at the most about ten postcards from their negatives.

Collectors refer to these photographic postcards as real photo postcards or RPPC for short.

### Dating Real Photo Postcards

Postal cancellations and messages can be the easiest ways to date a real photo postcard. But what if the postcard was never sent or no one wrote and dated a Christmas message to family and friends?



Until early in the 1900s, messages had to be written on the front of postcards; only the address could appear on the reverse. Beginning in 1907 in the United States, and a few years earlier in other countries (such as 1904 in Canada), messages and addresses could both be written on the reverse side of postcards – resulting in the “divided back” – with one half for the message and the other for the address.

The pre-printed stamp box, often printed with the words PLACE STAMP HERE in the upper right corner on the reverse of postcards, can also be an important dating tool. Many companies manufactured postcard paper, each with its own unique branded stamp box. Some companies changed their stamp box every few years – so many stamp boxes can be associated with a distinct span of years.

Want to know more about real photo postcards? Check out *Real Photo Postcard Guide: The People's Photography* by Robert Bogdan and Todd Weseloh, published by Syracuse University Press in 2006. And online look for Playle.com – especially the lists and dates of stamp boxes and postcard backs; and Metropostcard.com – Guide to Real Photo Postcards.

I hope these images of Christmas past taken in the eight Midwestern MOMCC states prove useful and enjoyable and, if appropriate, that they help inform your historic site's seasonal decorating. □



**Left photo—Child hidden behind Christmas tree, Stonington, Illinois, 1913**—Beneath the tree are toys and gifts including several dolls, balls, children's books including *Cinderella*, a set of stacking animal blocks, alphabet wood blocks, and toy china doll dishes. Decorations on the tree include tinsel garland, a photograph (or greeting card?), a doll, glass ornaments, and a short length of beaded glass garland.

**Middle photo—Tree with lit candles, Chicago, Illinois, 1914**—The candles are lit on this decorated Christmas tree with light-colored fabric on the floor to catch dripping candle wax. Decorations on the tree include tinsel garland, strings of popcorn, glass ornaments, a Kewpie doll (top left), and small glass bells.

**Right Photo—George Nall with twin sons Robert and Lester, Chicago, Illinois, 1916**—And a tabletop Christmas tree with electric lights, glass ornaments including indents, a glass spike, tinsel garland, and tinsel-wrapped glass ornaments.

**Facing page—Grace Methodist Church, Delaware, Ohio, 1913**—Decorations include two Christmas trees flanking the front of this church, a small child-size feather tree next to a doll's bed and rocking chair, crepe paper garlands, an arch with the words MERRY CHRISTMAS spelled out and attached to paper bells, honeycomb paper bells, and rosettes.





**Left—Kenneth Buckley, Jeffersonville, Indiana, 1906**—A sheet of light-colored fabric is spread beneath the Christmas tree to protect the carpet from needles, sap, and sometimes candle wax from the tree. The tree is decorated with strings of popcorn, a paper chain garland, and glass ornaments.



**Middle—Two children with tree, Lansing, Michigan, 1908-1918**—These two children are looking at their candle-lit Christmas tree, decorated with a star on top, tinsel garland, and two mesh stockings, presumably filled with candy and toys. Their gifts include a box of dominos, a xylophone, a coloring book—*The Animal Painting Book* (copyright 1908), a small train engine and cars, a tabletop pinball game, and a train engine picture.



**Right—Haskell Family, West Creek, Indiana, 1931**—Milford, Mabelle, Esther, and Anita Haskell standing next to their family's Christmas tree decorated with single strand "lametta" tinsel and glass ornaments. Although single-strand, lead foil tinsel had been manufactured since earlier in the century, it doesn't commonly appear on Christmas trees in the United States until the late 1920s.



**Christian Church, Warren, Indiana, 1908**—fabric bunting, crepe paper garlands, live greenery, and honeycomb paper bells outline the chancel.





**O.J. Harris Store, Archer, Iowa (?)**, 1907-1920s—Similar to many dry goods and grocery stores, the O. J. Harris store sold a wide assortment of groceries, dry goods, clothing, hardware, and household furniture. Some of their seasonal goods are displayed outside the store, including winter coats, children's sleds, and Christmas trees.

**De Vries Meat Market, Grand Haven, Michigan, 1907-1918**—an unusual sight by today's food-handling regulations is this horse-drawn wagon/sleigh load of turkeys. The three men on the wagon—with American flags, a Christmas tree, and banner—are posing proudly before they deliver the turkeys to the Story & Clark Piano Company in Grand Haven, Michigan. The two fellows wearing butcher's aprons are likely the owners of the meat market, brothers Edward and Peter De Vries.



**Slingluff's General Store, Elwell, Michigan, 1908-1912**—A commercially manufactured fabric banner proclaims that Marlie Slingluff's General Store is the HEADQUARTERS FOR HOLIDAY GOODS. Slingluff's window displays include winter boots, toys, and doll buggies, with children's sleds displayed outside.





**Left—Irene Dutton, Waupaca, Wisconsin, 1912**—The candles are lit on Irene’s Christmas tree, if only for a few minutes, while the photograph was taken. Decorations on the tree include a fabric Santa Claus, tinsel garland, tinsel-wrapped glass ornaments, and a glass spike on top of the tree. Irene is holding a doll; other toys include a china tea set and two tin cups sitting on a serving tray, another doll in a buggy, a teddy bear, and a child-size carpet sweeper.

**Right—John Hake, Jefferson, Wisconsin, 1911**—John is sitting in a highchair next to a tabletop Christmas tree. His gifts include a circus set (clown, ladder, chair, and elephant), stacking picture blocks, a train engine, a model car, and a children’s book, *The Wonderful Performing Dogs*. Decorations on his tree include tinsel garland, a folded paper chain garland, and a string of popcorn.

**Below—Concordia College, Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, 1914**—Henry Camin (right) has a Christmas tree in his dorm room at Concordia College (Theological Seminary) in St. Louis, where he posed with fellow students, Arthur Bartling and H. Graupner. His tree includes several candles, tinsel garland, glass ornaments, honeycomb paper bells, and several tinsel-wrapped paper decorations.







**Classroom, Hillsboro, Wisconsin, 1907-1918**—Even though this is inside a classroom, sometime between 1907 to 1918, the spirit of the season has been created by "snow" falling from the ceiling. Many of the children are in costume, presumably for the school's Christmas pageant. If you look closely at what they are wearing, you'll detect a theme—Little Red Riding Hood, Little Bo-Peep and some sheep, Jack from Jack Be Nimble fame—all nursery rhyme characters. In the middle of the group you'll see Santa Claus, although the boy has removed his mask.



**Left—Man in car, St. Louis, Missouri, 1909**—Photographic postcards taken in studios were popular souvenirs to send to the folks at home as seen in this image from 1909, taken in St. Louis—with the addition of a wish for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



**Right—Vern Vorhes, Gale Barth, Claude Barth, Marble Rock, Iowa, about 1920**—The three boys are standing near the front of what appears to be a classroom, decorated with a Christmas tree and a paper faux brick fireplace.





**Left—Tree in revolving musical stand, Chisholm, Minnesota, 1916**—The photographer of this Christmas tree has draped a sheet or tablecloth behind the tree to improve the contrast in the image. The tree, decorated with candles, tinsel garland, tinsel-wrapped glass ornaments, and blown glass ornaments, is standing in a revolving music box.

**Middle—Decorated tree, Clara City, Minnesota, 1910-1930**—This Christmas tree is decorated with individual strands of tinsel, chenille garland, glass ornaments, tinsel garland, a blown-glass bird, tinsel-wrapped ornaments, and a tinsel star. Gifts beneath the tree include dolls, a wicker doll buggy, and books including *The Night Before Christmas*.

**Right—Ahler Family Christmas tree, Grand Mound, Iowa, 1907-1918**—Toys and gifts beneath the Christmas tree include children's books, a toy dog, a flower vase, and several dolls. Decorations on the tree include US flags, cookies baked in animal shapes, fresh fruit, a honeycomb paper bell, a doll tucked in the branches, tinsel garland, paper or fabric flowers, and a candy/cookie box.

**Below—Family having Christmas dinner, Tyler, Minnesota (?), 1907-1917**—They are gathered around the dining table at midnight on Christmas night. On the table—covered with a tablecloth decorated with garlands of bells and sprigs of holly—are lit candles, a carafe of liquor, glasses, a bowl of fruit, and what appear to be gifts and wrapping paper.







**Above—Furnace Street Mission, Akron, Ohio, 1937**—The Great Depression was a decade of struggle for people around the world. The Akron Furnace Street Mission stepped up to help with food baskets for people in need at Christmas 1937. The food baskets include a bag of flour, a box of cane sugar, a loaf of bread, apples, milk, and more.

**Below—Dorothy and Charlotte Zander, Sandusky, Ohio, 1913**—Happy New Year from the Zander Family—including Dorothy (left) and Charlotte—and their many dolls. The Zander's Christmas tree is decorated with tinsel garland, tinsel-wrapped ornaments, cornucopia, a paper lantern, a tin horn, and Christmas crackers.



**About the Author - Tom Reitz** has an MA in Historical Administration from Eastern Illinois University and a BA in Anthropology from the University of Waterloo. He retired in 2017 from the Waterloo Region Museum in Kitchener, Ontario after 32 years in museum administration and curatorial positions. Tom is a member of ALHFAM, and the Golden Glow of Christmas Past, an international educational organization for collectors of antique and vintage Christmas. Tom can be reached at [TReitz@rogers.com](mailto:TReitz@rogers.com).





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