

First Cemetery Walk scheduled in Deepwood Cemetery
By Nancy Malcom



Advanced History Classes students enjoyed "shopping" for 19th Century clothing at the Bushwhacker Museum. They will give first-person accounts of notable persons buried in Deepwood Cemetery. Students and who they will represent are: Ariel Rhoads as Mary U. Birdseye, Andi Cornell as Mary Ann Churchell, Veronica Fairchild as Rebecca Gabbert and Ashley Fanie as Belle Norman.

More than a year ago, Terry Ramsey, coordinator of the Bushwhacker Museum, and Lois Pendrak, teacher of Nevada High School's Advanced History Classes first heard about an event called a Cemetery Walk.

With Deepwood Cemetery chosen as the place for the cemetery walk, students have researched notable persons selected from a list provided by Terry Ramsey and Patrick Brophy, curator of the Bushwhacker Museum. Ramsey and Brophy also made students aware of research materials available from the museum's books and other primary source research materials.

The students were responsible for gathering information and transforming it into an encapsulated written and an oral report of that person's life and achievements.

Pendrak said, "My class is a dual enrollment class. We have quarterly projects and this seemed like a viable option for a project. We divided it into two quarters, with the first dealing with the research and the second the oral presentations."

With 43 students participating, teams of two partners were formed. Both partners researched and will do the presentations on the same notable person.

Three other students are serving as narrators prior to each presentation and are also responsible for producing a brochure each visitor will receive listing the students and a few lines about the notable persons represented.

Pendrak explained that each pair will be responsible for researching one person and will turn in a three-to-four page background report, develop a five minute talk in the first-person and obtain an appropriate costume depicting their person & time period.

The narrators will be responsible for devising a map for patrons and developing a speech giving an overview of the project to be presented before each performance.

The first partner of each team will perform their speech twice one weekend, and the second partner will perform twice the next weekend.

Four students were available for comments.

Ariel Rhoads is doing the life of John Birdseye, depicted through his wife's viewpoint. "I put in three to four hours every day for about three weeks," Rhoads said. Her research included genealogy and Vernon County history. Rhoads said, "He built the first brick house in Nevada following the Civil War. They were very rich people and involved with the society. He was a lawyer and she was from Vernon County. They had paid servants, they didn't believe in slavery."

The research opened her eyes to a broader playing field. "It makes me want to live a

better life, because if someone does something like this in the future about me, I want it to be reflected as a good one.”

Travis Pitts will do a presentation about William Lowe. “I picked him because he was a Texas Ranger and that was pretty cool,” Pitts said. “I’ve done six hours of research. There was a lot of material available about him. He was hard working, a Texas Ranger and sheriff and he was a businessman -- he ran a sawmill.”

The research brought out something Pitts had never considered. “He was in the Gold Rush. I didn’t think people from here or Texas went to the Gold Rush. He didn’t make much there though and came back. I’d never heard of him before. It makes me wonder how many other interesting people lived around here.”

Josh Palmer researched Sheldon Amos Wight. “He was one of first lawyers in Vernon County,” Palmer said. “Also he became president of Thornton Bank. He named the town of Sheldon. He owned the land where it was built.”

He and his partner spent several hours on research. “We started off with Vernon County History and my partner went to the Bushwhacker Museum and got some information there.”

Palmer said doing the research affected him in that “It shows there were some important people in this small town of Nevada.”

Rebecca Sitz researched William Franklin Norman. “He was in the first graduating class in Nevada and he married one of his classmates,” Sitz said. “He had a place on the square named after him. I had heard about him a lot before, but didn’t know much about him. He was a spontaneous person and made fun decisions. He went to California in the Gold Rush and had a gold mine but it didn’t have any gold in it.”

Sitz conducted several hours of research each week reading about him in books and looking through several files about him at the Bushwhacker Museum. “I didn’t know anything about Vernon County before, but now I do.”

Students and who they will represent are: Jordan Bell and George Brauer as Harry C. Moore & Glessner Moore Few; Trey Miller and Chris Bray as William Henry Taylor; Sabrina Jones and Bailee Claypool as Maria Douglass Cogswell; Taylor Edmonds and Devin Chapman as D.C. Hunter; Andi Corneel and Marisa Doane as Dr. Albert Churchell; Colby shepherd and Tyler Gast as Senator William Joel Stone; Serena Rawlings and Veronica Fairchild as Rebecca Gabbert; Stephanie Mosbrucker and Ashton McVay as A.B. Cockerill; Rebecca Prewitt and Jessica Davis as W.W. Prewitt; and Felicia Keller and Whitley del Rosari as Dr. Albert Badger. Kaleob Norbury, Kyla Thomas and Brittany Jenkins will be the Narrators.

Pendrak said, I think this has the makings of an extremely profitable experience in the areas of education, community involvement, and in simply being able to make local history come alive.”

Visitors will be free to move from tombstone to tombstone to hear the students give their presentations about the person buried there. There is no charge, but donations to the

Bushwhacker Museum will be accepted. The first presentation will begin at 3:30 p.m. on October 27 at Deepwood Cemetery in Nevada. Each show will last about an hour and will be repeated at 4:30 p.m. on October 27 and twice again starting at 3:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on November 3. Each student's presentation will run about five minutes.

Patrons are encouraged to bring their own lawn chairs. For more information contact the Bushwhacker Museum at (417) 667-9602.