Today on Across the Fence we're gearing up for one of Vermont’s top 10 events of the summer. We are previewing the state's premier history event the 2012 Vermont History Expo. Good afternoon and thanks for joining us; I am Judy Simpson. The Vermont History Expo is this weekend, June 16 and 17th at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds. The weekend expo is presented by the Vermont Historical Society and joining me to begin the program is the director of education and public programs for the Historical Society, Tess Taylor. Welcome; thanks so much for being here.

Tess.: Thank you, good afternoon Judy, it's nice to see you.

Judy.: This is such a great event; it's so full of history.

Tess.: Yes it really is. Vermont Historical Society started this in the year 2000. Wow it's been that long now and as a way to showcase Vermont’s history especially through our almost 200 local historical societies. They are at the expo showing something about their town letting people know what happened in their town and how lively they are in their town's history.

Judy.: That really is the key, local history.

Tess.: Absolutely.

Judy.: The museums help record and display our history so the expo has a wide range of museums from American precision museum to rope use. Who are some of the other people who will be there and what other things can people see?

Tess.: We have probably 80 local historical societies which is about the number we get. Some do have some years some do it other years and some do it every time. Then we also have other museums and heritage sites. We also have organizations that are really steeped in keeping history about a very particular thing from the Crown Point road association to the Green Mountain Club. Antiquarian booksellers talking about all the different books they do. I love the Fred Larkin dancers because they come in and dance but they also talk about the history of
Contra dancing in Vermont so they are actually there all weekend talking about it maybe even enticing people to join them.

Judy.: People can also trace their roots at the expo?

Tess.: That's right. We have a whole area of genealogy and archives that our library and Paul Carnahan runs the floral hall area and that's full of geneologists from ethnic geologists who the latter day saints are there in their geologists the archivists there from UVM so you won't go wrong if you're a researcher.

Judy.: I think what I like about this particular expo is that you get a chance to really talk to people.

Tess.: Exactly and it's at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds which creates a really beautiful and relaxed atmosphere they are spread out on gorgeous fairgrounds that's over 140 years old. If you want to go and talk to somebody about an heirloom breed animal you've got a chance to do it without being surrounded by 10,000 other people and there's no time hustle and bustle or if you want to talk to a local historical society about some aspect that they're bringing along to the fair. People who are doing handcrafted traditional crafts will be there. From spinning to learning how to do timber framing and all sorts of things. It's a lot I think probably the only complaint I've heard ever is that it's too much to do.

Judy.: There's also a parade, two parades.

Tess.: We have two parades and the parades are fantastic. Music people come join the parade three and actors the local historical society. Some of them have their own banners and they come and march in the parade with whenever it is their per train that year. The animals we always have animals and we always encourage kids. We have an area where kids can prep something for the parade make flags or do different things and then be in the parade and that's always the showstopper because people love seeing the kids come by.

Judy.: There's usually a theme? What's this year's theme?

Tess.: This year's theme is Vermont in the Civil War. Were in the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. This is 1862 so right now we're in the middle of the war if you think about 150 years ago. We've a lot of towns talking about their Civil War activity we have authors and presenters people who have written books or have topics on the Civil War and re-enactors.

Judy.: We should mention that one of the Civil War re-enactors is John Peterson of Brandon. John is the president the Champlain Valley Re-enactors Incorporated. And today you're representing Israel Goode.

Israel.: That's right hind is real good. I'm the sutler for the second Vermont regiment. I'm the traveling store that goes with the boys.

Judy.: That's what sutler means.

Israel.: Sutlers is an old word. It's the dirty work from soot that a man would do a traveling with the army and today in 1862 I travel with the army as their store.
Judy.: What kinds of things do you sell.

Israel.: Anything the boys want that the Uncle Sam does not give them I can provide. They get rather tired of army bread hard tack and salt beef so I have all sorts of tasty dainties. Canned fish oysters and a favorite with the boys, brandy peaches. They're not allowed to buy hard spirits but who's to say if they take a little bit of juice from the peach.

Judy.: How can that be bad? Now your organization is Champlain Valley Historical Re-enactors and I imagine one of your main goals is education?

John.: That's right the Champlain Valley Historical Re-enactors is a group that concentrates on giving the whole Civil War experience a little air. There are groups to concentrate on soldiers and so on but we like to engage the public. Getting a little bit of the life of the soldier that something that can be done but we can also have the Civil War Medical coalition we have civilians who join our group we have an artillery group we have a cavalry group. We really tried to get everybody involved when we do our reenacting.

Judy.: What do you think it is about the reenacting that so popular with people?

John.: It's our story; this is our roots. People love history and here's a chance to immerse yourself in the time re-enactors talk about, having a period moment. The suspended flash of a feeling that you're really back there.

Judy.: What are some of the other Civil War era roles that your group helps reenact?

John.: We have the Christian commission. These for ladies and men who would provide bibles and services like letter writing that sort of thing. We have our Calvary mounted on good Vermont Morgan horses. We have artillery and in fact our artillery group comes all the way down from Canada. The Montreal grays and blues. We have a wide purview that way. We have an excellent medical group. They've been asked to do presentations down the Gettysburg of course premier Civil War historic site.

Judy.: The items that people see some of the clothing and so forth is that authentic?

John.: Absolutely. One of the things re-enactors get upset about is when people talk about costumes. This isn't a costume it's a reproduction of the clothing that was worn in the period. Some re-enactors spend thousands of dollars just outfitting themselves enough into clothing.

Judy.: Did you have to do a lot of research for roles?

John.: One of the things it is a lot of research has already been done. Different re-enactors will get different interest areas. We had a fellow who had half a dozen Civil War ancestors that he would research each of them. I happen to like the civilian side of things so I've gotten involved with doing the sutler impression. There's all kinds of opportunities.

Judy.: Is it a big time commitment?
John.: It's up to the re-enactors. Some re-enactors might do one national event a year like going to Gettysburg where this year the big 150th is going to be the Antietam reenactment. If you live down in Virginia Maryland area you could go to an event every weekend from March through October. So it's up to the re-enactors.

Judy.: Among other things that you do you also work in tin I understand?

John.: I am a period Tinsmith I make reproductions of handmade tin ware that's correct.

Judy.: How did you get interested in that?

John.: I've always liked metalworking since I was a little kid. I'm going to museums my parents would drag us along and my poor siblings. Let's go to a park. I want to go to the museum and it's stuck. I learned period Metalworking at Sturbridge Village when I was a younger person and kept up with it since.

Judy.: How can people learn more about your organization?

John.: We are online. Hooray for the 21st Century and the Internet. www cvhri.com Champlain Valley Historic Re-enactors Incorporated.

Judy.: Terrific. There is a lot of interest of course in the Civil War history and Tess you must be excited about incorporating that in the theme of this year's history expo?

Tess.: I really am, it made things kind of easy because a lot of people have been gearing up for this anniversary for a long time now. If people remember Howard Coffin going up to people at least five years ago saying help us find your town Civil War history. So I think people have been really was ready for this. At the history expo we started a couple years ago we had one of our trustees say. What about Saturday night? Because we're there all day Friday and all day Saturday. What about Saturday night can we do a town dinner or chicken pie supper or something? So I appeal to the town of Tunbridge and the school has been doing community dinner which is a very nice thing. So if you're at the expo all day and want to go into the town at the town hall and have a nice community dinner with the kids. And the kids do a lot of the work it's great. This year we decided to do something very interesting with the re-enactors staying at camp for the weekend. Is to go back into the campgrounds and this part would be free of charge if people wanted to come to this and would be great. Go back into the fairgrounds and sit around a campfire with the re-enactors and the constitution Brass quintet of Vermont that has done a lot of research on Civil War music is going to sit around the campfire with us and we're going to sing songs. I have been to a performance of theirs and when you sing along with them and sing these songs. Like tenting tonight or Aura Lee were some of the songs that they sung you really start feeling that loneliness and longing for home. I think it's going to be really nice experience. We're going to be doing that at dusk down in the fairgrounds with the constitution Brass quintet.

Judy.: Once again it's a great opportunity for people to actually talk to the re-enactors and find out what it's all about learn more about history.
John.: That's a nice way to feel like a re-enactor if that's something you feel like you want to do. Sitting around the campfire is one of the best parts of reenacting. Those evening things where you get that period moment.

Judy.: And you get a chance to see some of the artifacts too?

Tess.: That's true. People will be bringing artifacts with them. Here you are with the sutler and you're going to be bringing things that the soldiers might've bought. Stationary from you to write a letter will you're going to see a lot of letters that the history expo between the soldiers and their people of home. Their moving and they're touching and it really does bring you right to the place where they were.

John.: So many museums keep things behind glass. This is going to be a nice chance to really touch history.

Judy.: This is the good thing too because a lot of people I know you mentioned Howard Coffin and his big drive was go up in your attic and see what you got because these are things families have held on to luckily for generations.

Tess.: That's right and now will be on display.

Judy.: That's great. How can viewers get more information in advance about the history expo?

Tess.: We do have a website and its www.vermonthistory.org/expo or you can always call us at the Vermont Historical Society at (802) 479-8500.

Judy.: You mentioned families coming and certainly for children who might not understand what's going on with re-enactors and all the different history it's a chance to introduce them to the whole topic.

Tess.: It sure is and kids catch on pretty quickly don't they John? With what's going on and they get right into it. One nice thing about families is we encourage people to come in period dress. It does not have to be civil war it could be 1970s even that's history now. But if people come in period dress they get in half price.

Judy.: That's wonderful. Once again if you need more information about the history expo the number to call is (802) 479-8500. I want to thank you both for joining me today.

Tess.: Thank you Judy this has been fun.

John.: Thank you very much.

Judy.: Good. That's our program for today I'm Judy Simpson will see you again next time on Across the Fence.

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