

TOWN OF VERNON

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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New England Civil War Museum and Research Center Hosts FREE Living History Open House Day *Civil War Reenactors Will Set Up Camp in Rockville's Central Park*

(VERNON, Connecticut) – More than two dozen Civil War reenactors will set up camp in Vernon's Central Park this Saturday, Oct. 1, and recreate camp life, fire muskets and drill just like their predecessors did 160 years ago.

It's all part of the New England Civil War Museum & Research Center's Free Living History Open House Day. Activities are scheduled for 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event begins with a dress parade and welcome at 10 a.m.

The museum, housed on the second floor of Vernon Town Hall, is a gold mine of history about the Civil War. It was established by Rockville men returning from the war and its collection includes the uniforms, rifles and tools they carried during their service. The collection has grown over the years and museum tells the story of one of the darkest and most fascinating periods of American history.

"The Civil War Museum at Town Hall is one of Vernon's treasures," Mayor Dan Champagne said. "The volunteers who run it have done a magnificent job adding to the collection and creating new exhibits. This weekend's Living History Open House is just another example of the great work the volunteers do."

The Civil War reenactors will call on children in the crowd of spectators to join them in drills, said Daniel Hayden, Commander of Alden Skinner Camp No. 45 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, which operates the museum. Living historians will demonstrate impressions of infantry, artillery, navy, and civilians of the time, Hayden said. The event will even include a cannon and a working model of the ironclad ship U.S.S. Monitor.

"This is an event for families, Civil War historians, history buffs and anyone else fascinated by the stories of the farmers, factory workers, craftsmen and other everyday people who went off to war as 'citizen soldiers' during perhaps the most extraordinary time in American history," Hayden said.

Members of the First Company Governor's Foot Guard will also attend and fire volleys from their Charleville muskets, which the unit adopted from the French during the Revolution, said Sgt. Brittany Franco. The First

Company Governor's Foot Guard is the oldest continuously serving military unit in the nation. It begins its 251st year of service in October.

"Events like this one help us celebrate our rich history and honor those who served our state and nation," Vernon Town Administrator Michael Purcaro said. "All are welcome at this free community event."

The Civil War museum will be open for tours and visitors will be able to see new exhibits and artifacts installed over the past year. They include the personal possessions of local figure Thomas F. Burpee, and the uniform trousers of Winsted soldier James Baldwin, both of whom were killed during the war.

The format and setup of the museum allows visitors to experience the journey of an average soldier during the Civil War, from their enlistment, through their service during the war and then their time as members of veterans' organizations.

Aside from the Civil War related features, other exhibitors include the Town of Vernon, the Strong Family Farm, the UConn Reserve Officer Training Corps, and other local organizations. There will also be a silent auction.

The Memorial Building, which houses the museum and Vernon Town Hall, was built in 1890 as a memorial to Civil War Veterans. The second floor was dedicated for use by the veterans and served as the meeting place for the local post of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a fraternal organization of Civil War Veterans. The national GAR dissolved in 1956, after the death of its last member. A successor organization, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, took over the GAR's work of honoring and remembering all Union soldiers. The local camp was established in 1883 and named in honor of Dr. Alden B. Skinner, a local physician who at age 64 volunteered to serve his country and was commissioned surgeon of the 25th Connecticut Infantry Regiment. He traveled with the regiment to Louisiana, where he became ill and died in 1863. Every Memorial Day, members of the camp decorate Skinner's grave and those of 148 Civil War veterans buried at Grove Hill Cemetery in the Rockville section of Vernon. The Camp meets the first Thursday of each month in the museum.

The Living History Day Event is FREE and all are welcome. Regular museum hours are noon to 3 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

About the Town of Vernon

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a population of more than 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in "New England's Knowledge Corridor" with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870-3670 or visit www.vernon-ct.gov.

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