



MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MINNESOTA
MINNESOTA MILITARY MUSEUM

ALLIES

Newsletter for Members and Friends

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Honoring the fallen, your help is requested

By Kyle Ward

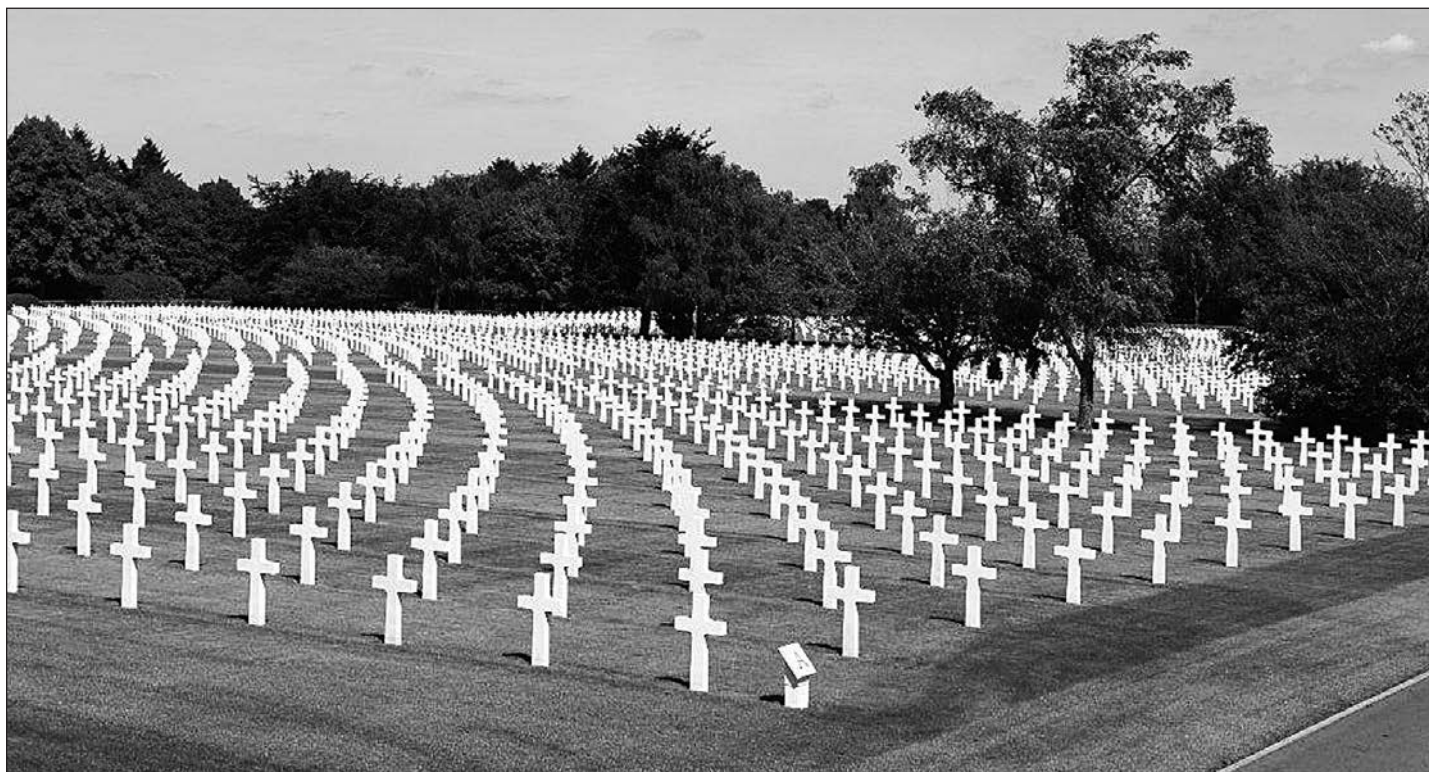
(Kyle Ward is an Associate Professor of History and Director of the Social Studies Education program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. He is also a long-time friend of the Minnesota Military Museum.)

Last May, I had the opportunity to bring a group of future Social Studies teachers on a two-week tour of Europe which was called "World War II and the Western Front." During our trip we visited Churchill's War Rooms and the Imperial War Museum in London; the D-Day beaches in Normandy, France; Battle of the Bulge sites around Bastogne, Belgium; and Dachau in Munich, Germany. While in Belgium, we also took a small excursion to the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery (HCAC). There we met Superintendent Bobby Bell, who gave us the history of the cemetery, a brief overview of the war and then we discussed a project he has initiated at this site.

Background

The town of Henri-Chappelle was liberated from German occupation on September 11, 1944, by the U.S. 1st Infantry Division (aka the Big Red One). Upon liberation, the Americans immediately established a temporary cemetery close to the German border. The site chosen is where the cemetery now stands.

At the end of the war the cemetery went through a wholesale reorganization. Some of the original interred soldiers were Germans, who were later transferred to another cemetery in Lommel, Belgium. Then, in 1947, families who had lost American service members were given the opportunity to repatriate their loved ones, or have them permanently buried overseas. Nearly 62 percent of all families decided to bring their loved one home; the remaining 38 percent chose to leave their family member next to their fallen comrades-in-arms. Either way, the



The Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery is located in Belgium and contains the graves of 7,992 Americans who died in World War II.

ALLIES



The cemetery was opened in September, 1944, and when it was temporarily closed in early 1945, there were 17,000 Americans buried there. The first site is several hundred yards north of where the present-day cemetery is located.

U.S. government fully financed each family's decision.

Today, 7,992 men are laid to rest in this 57-acre cemetery. In our conversation with the site Superintendent, he reminded us that under each marker lies a member of the U.S. military, who gave the ultimate sacrifice for his country and never made it home to family and friends. With that in mind, knowing that their cemetery is "off the beaten track" and mostly visited only by tour groups, dedicated historians, and/or family members, the staff at HCAC is now on a mission to collect information about each person interred at Henri-Chapelle. Today, they are reaching out to interested parties to see if they are willing to help with that task so they can create a folder for each American serviceman buried there.

After our group returned to the U.S., I contacted Superintendent Bell and asked if he could send me a list with just the names of the Minnesotans laid to rest at Henri-Chapelle, which they were able to do. The list contained 192 names.

I would like to see if we can collect information about every Minnesotan on that list, with the goal of honoring them and their sacrifice during World War II. Volunteers are being sought

Would you be interested in helping with this project? We need volunteers willing to try to find any information they can about one or more of those fallen Minnesota servicemen. If you think you might like to help in this way, please

know that they are not looking for complete biographies or academic-style research, nor do they need original documents. Rather, they hope to get any information that would help visitors, teachers, students, genealogists, or future historians know more about who these men were—who they were in life—something more personal than names on white tombstones in a foreign land.

Materials that would be of interest to the staff for their folders:

Military records

Photos

Newspaper clippings

Family stories

Letters

Written account about the man's time in service and/or the unit in which he served.

To see the list of Minnesotans buried at Henri-Chapelle, please go to our website at www.mnmilitarymuseum.org and, under "Veterans" on the menu bar, click on Henri-Chapelle Project.



Gen. Frederick Castle is one of three Medal of Honor recipients buried at Henri-Chapelle. It is also the burial place for Lt. William Nellis, for whom Nellis Air Force Base is named. He was a P-47 pilot shot down during the Battle of the Bulge.

Instructions for those interested

If you are interested in tracking down information about a specific service member (or service members), or to have one or more names suggested to you, please let me know. You can contact me at kwarddoss@hotmail.com. It is not a problem to have people work on the same person, but by contacting me first we might be able to make sure there are no unnecessary duplications.

Superintendent Bell emailed the following instructions for those interested in helping with this project. Mr. Bell said, "We would appreciate it if anyone who has relevant/interesting information to please scan and send it to us in a PDF or JPEG format to Henri-Chapelle@abmc.gov. This is the very best way for us to collect and store data for the future. When we receive this type of data, we print out copies and store in the Soldier's file (upstairs in our archive room) and we also store the digital information on our shared ABMC folder. Note: Soldier's stories and information are likely to be shared with the Belgian Chapter of the American Overseas Memorial Day Association's website (www.aomda.org) to help in Honoring the Memories of those who are interred and commemo-

rated at this site. If someone chooses to share data with us, but doesn't want it to be shared elsewhere, they need to include a statement saying this."

Thank you for taking the time to consider this project and to help the world remember, and honor, the Minnesotans who fell in the service of their country.

Websites to help you conduct veteran research:

1. The National World War II Museum <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/honor/research-a-veteran.html>
2. The National Archives
<https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2>
3. Ancestry (World War II Collection)
<http://www.ancestry.com/cs/worldwar2records>

Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery holds fallen Americans of two major efforts, one covering the U.S. First Army's drive in September 1944 through northern France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg into Germany (includes the Battle of Aachen and Battle of Hurtgen Forest), and the second covering the Battle of the Bulge.

MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MINNESOTA - Application for New or Renewed Membership

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

MEMBERSHIP TYPE New member Renewing member

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL Regular - \$30/yr Family - \$55/yr Supporting - \$100 Life - \$500

(Life memberships may be paid in four installments of \$125 each. Tell us if you want this option.)

Additional contribution \$ _____

All memberships are acknowledged in the museum newsletter and in our website's Donor Roll Call. Contributions of \$500 or more in a single year and all Life memberships are also recognized permanently on a plaque in the museum lobby.

How would you like to receive your newsletter? Postal mail Email

Would you like to receive information about volunteering? Yes No

PROCEDURE

Pay by mail: Print this form and mail with your check (payable to the Military Historical Society of Minnesota) to: Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Highway 115, Little Falls, MN 56345. If you prefer, you can mail or fax (320-632-7797) this form without payment and follow up by calling the museum at 320-616-6050 with your credit card information.

Pay online: We also have a simple, secure way for you to become a member or renew your membership online. Go to our website at mmilitarymuseum.com. Click on Support Us>Become a Member and follow the prompts.

Your membership is fully tax deductible. We salute and thank you for your support!

The two Dougs: Transition at the curator spot

Doug Bekke retires

Doug Bekke retired on December 31 after serving as curator for the past 16 years.

Doug began volunteering for the museum in the late 1990s. He became the assistant curator in the spring of 2000 and, that fall, became curator. During the years that followed, Doug actively managed a collection that grew substantially in size and quality; developed procedures to ensure more systematic conservation and restoration of artifacts; oversaw the conversion of paper to digitized artifact records; trained and supervised a cadre of exhibit/collection volunteers; and personally conducted over 100 oral histories that are now transcribed and part of the museum's archive.

While many of these behind-the-scenes functions are critically important, Doug recognized that the museum's "public face" is what ultimately brings attention and support. He created several high-profile special exhibits while continually enhancing or cycling objects in and out of the on-going permanent ones, and he regularly organized public events that expanded the museum's reach, luring thousands of new visitors to its doorstep. His last major exhibit, "Into the Fight: Minnesota and the First World War," which opened in July, imaginatively ushers visitors through a simulated bunker on the Western Front while telling the story of the world's "Great War."

Jack Johnson, who, from 1987-2000, preceded Doug as curator, summed up Doug's legacy at a recent board meeting. "We could not have found a more qualified curator for a museum like ours. His dedication to our mission, and his accomplishments on our behalf, have been extraordinary."

Introducing Doug Thompson, our Interim Curator

Doug Thompson, the museum's Collections Specialist since 2008, has been named as Interim Curator, replacing Doug Bekke. In this capacity Thompson will be principally responsible for the museum's ever-growing collection of artifacts, its exhibits, and its educational programs. We asked him to tell us more about himself.

You started working at the museum as a volunteer.

When was that? "In the late 1990s. The first major exhibit I helped with was the Pearl Harbor exhibit in 2001, and then all the other major exhibits afterwards."



Doug Bekke looks over one of his museum exhibits while Doug Thompson checks out some accessions.

How did you get interested in military history? "I can't remember when my interest in military history and artifacts started...certainly in elementary school for sure. It's been a lifelong passion of mine, and one that I've devoted a LOT of time to. I'm a voracious reader of history of all types. Working with Doug Bekke also increased my knowledge of the subject matter. Over the years, I've devoted countless volunteer hours to different historical commemorations around the country, mainly in the area of living history, including work for the National Archives, the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, Historic Ft. Snelling, and various airshows."

Where did you go to school? "I grew up in Long Prairie, Minnesota, but lived all over the world as an "Air Force Brat." After high school I went to St. Cloud State University."

Anything you want to say about upcoming projects or priorities as curator? "One of many projects I would like to tackle is an Operation Iraqi Freedom-Operation Enduring Freedom exhibit, as well as something on the Cold War. An ongoing challenge is finding improved ways to store collections not on display, and I would like to continue with outreach programs that bring the resources of the museum to greater Minnesota."

Anything else you want to add about your family or other interests? "I'm married with four children. My wife and I enjoy traveling (of course visiting historical sites is a big favorite of ours!) but mostly, owing to the ages of our children, we're heavily involved in school activities."

CURATOR'S CORNER

By Doug Thompson



2016 was an exciting year for the museum. Some of the many highlights would be the completion and grand opening of our new World War I exhibit chronicling Minnesota's involvement in that conflict, and the restoration of four WWI and WWII artillery pieces. Those pieces are currently stored under cover in our new artillery display shed. We owe a great

deal of thanks to our wonderful volunteers for all the many hours of hard work they put in to help us see those projects through to completion.

Another project that has seen a lot of progress is our ongoing efforts over the last few years to digitize the artifact records into Past Perfect, a museum software pro-

gram that allows us to more easily access the contents of our vast collection of memorabilia. As well as updating the physical description of the items, we have also undertaken the task of photographing the artifacts to give us a better idea of what we have, and to document the condition of the artifacts.

This allows us to not only easily research items we have to keep track of in our inventory, but to more easily find relevant artifacts for future exhibits and historical study.

It has been a laborious process to reconcile the records with the actual inventory. We are currently in the process of upgrading the software from Past Perfect 4.0 to an even more easily used format called Past Perfect 5.0.

One of the special projects we want to tackle in the near future is a new permanent exhibit on our continuing military involvement in the Middle East, including Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Stories, photographs and artifacts relating to those events would be much appreciated. Do you have anything you'd like to share with the museum?

Volunteer Voices: Meet Fred Tramm

Volunteers are an indispensable to the museum's work. In their own words, here's how they are making good things happen at the Minnesota Military Museum.

Meet Fred Tramm

Fred, who lives in Staples, has been volunteering at the museum for about a year.

On getting involved: "After I retired, my wife thought I should do some volunteer work. Having been with the Patriot Guard Riders and the military, I thought of the military museum."

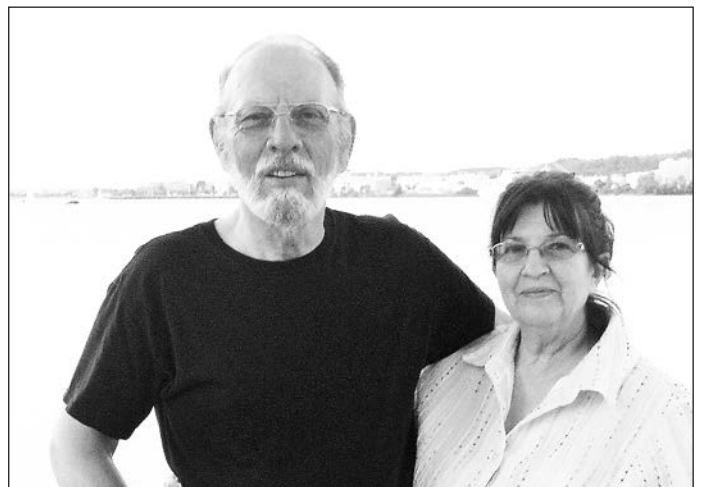
Museum projects: "I've worked mostly with the new World War I exhibit and on restoring the World War I German guns. In the WWI room, I helped build the trench and made a lot of sand bags. I also built the wooden frame around the exhibit cabinets. With the WWI cannons it was mostly scraping off old paint and getting them ready for a new coat."

What he likes most: "I like working with the guns. I also like seeing the projects completed so visitors can enjoy them."

What surprised him: "The thing I did not expect was how

much I have learned about Minnesota's part in the conflicts of the United States, and how museums work."

Meanwhile on the road: "I am Assistant Ride Captain for the Detroit Lakes and Brainerd sectors doing missions for the Patriot Guard Riders, so I spend a lot of time riding my motorcycle around Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. Also Lucy and I like to take road trips on the cycle, just to see the country side."



FRED AND LUCY TRAMM

DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

By Jeff Thielen



It's been a time for losses and additions. The museum recently lost two of our biggest assets, Doug Bekke and Chad Conrady.

Doug Bekke retired December 30 after serving as curator for the past 16 years. Doug is very passionate about military history and that passion was expressed in every exhibit he created for the museum. His exhibits are the reason the Minnesota Military Museum has such a

good reputation with museum professionals and visitors alike.

Chad Conrady's tenure with the museum was just over three years, but Chad also made an impact on the direction we will take as a resource for the public. Chad was the first full-time person the museum was able to hire and our first professional archivist. Chad established the systems and processes to manage the archival materials for public use and processed approximately 60% of the

materials in our collection. Chad left us on October 15 to take a job at the Library of Congress.

Replacing Doug Bekke as the interim curator will be Doug Thompson. Doug has been around the museum as a curatorial assistant for the past six years. Doug is also passionate about military history, with a background that positions him to create exhibits that inspire and educate our visitors about Minnesota's rich military history.

Replacing Chad Conrady will be Ryan Welle, who comes to us with a background and training very similar to his predecessor. Ryan has a master's degree in library science with an emphasis in archival studies and an undergraduate degree in history, especially military history. Ryan's skills position him to pick up where Chad left off and continue to work towards making our collection a resource for the public to use.

There is additional information about Doug and Ryan in this edition of Allies.

Every time I accept a resignation and every time I hire someone, I am reminded that people are the most important asset any organization has. I am saddened to lose good staff, but excited for them in their new roles. I am also excited for the potential our new staff members bring to the museum.

Traveling trunks bring history alive across the state

The museum's new Traveling Trunk Program helps bring history alive. Intended primarily for use in schools and libraries, each trunk contains uniforms and equipment—original or reproduction—that would have been commonly used by soldiers during a particular war.

Trunks are available for the Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War.

Teachers and students can literally bring history to life by using the artifacts in creative ways to enrich the study of a particular time in our nation's history. Trunk contents can also be used for static displays or to complement a lecture or discussion about war.

Borrowers can reserve a trunk for three weeks. Arrangements are being worked out with the state's inter-library loan courier system for pick-up and delivery. More information about the program can be found on the museum website under the "Resources" tab.



A WORLD WAR I TRAVELING TRUNK

DONOR HONOR ROLL, October-December, 2016

Memorials

Given by:

Doug Bekke
Gisela Borgwarth
Betty Masoner
Betty Masoner
194th Tank Regiment Assn.
Eugene and Nancy Andreotti

In Memory of:

Hanspeter Borgwarth
Hanspeter Borgwarth
Vernon Gary
Willis Spaulding
Donald J. Klein
Gary E. LeBlanc

Renewing Members

Dean Ascheman ▪ Helen Balcome ▪ John Bathke ▪ Russell Beddow ▪ Adrian Beltrand ▪ Mark Brown ▪ Neill Carter ▪ William Casey ▪ Jon & Diane Grosso ▪ Jack Heidman ▪ Charles Kapsner ▪ Bernard Koskovich ▪ Larry Mongan ▪ Jim Nygaard ▪ Robert Purcell ▪ Susan Rasmussen ▪ George Steiner ▪ Paul Verret ▪ Nancy Walsh ▪ Jim Weber ▪ Roger Williams

New Members

Matthew Heffron ▪ Larry Marquardt

American Legion

Post 47, Hastings

VFW

Post 4086, Wabasha

Donations

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Artifact Donation

The museum gratefully acknowledges donations of artifacts from the following:

Estate of Bernadette C. Anderson ▪ Elizabeth Baklaich ▪ Steve Baklaich ▪ Tom Chial ▪ Barbara Gaasedelen ▪ James Gaasedelen ▪ Jon Gaasedelen ▪ Jim Hovda ▪ Roger Iverson ▪ Tom and Barb James ▪ Clarence W. Jensen ▪ Dean & Elaine Jensen ▪ Karen Krenik ▪ Brian Linde ▪ James Murphy ▪ Ronald Niewohner ▪ Terry W. Palmer ▪ Greg Pel-

SPOTLIGHTED RECENT DONATIONS



The museum recently obtained a fine grouping belonging to a WWII Marine Raider named Stanley Lyons. He was a member of the 4th Raider Battalion, which was commanded by James Roosevelt, son of then-President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Included was a uniform, equipment, paperwork, and a fantastic collection of photographs.

Along with this grouping was a uniform, photos and papers of his father, WWI veteran Andrew Moses Lyon. Thank you to Karen Krenik for these wonderful artifacts of your family's service.



ARTIFACT DONATION FROM THE LYON FAMILY

letier ▪ Mike Rinowski ▪ Jan Rothanburg ▪ Mary Saboe ▪ DeWayne Schwanke ▪ Richard Sorenson ▪ Pat Spinosa ▪ Jon Van der Hagen ▪ John & Sherri Woodley

ALLIES

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Ryan Welle hired as new archivist at museum

We're pleased to announce the appointment of Ryan Welle as the museum's new full-time archivist. He replaces Chad Conrady, who left in October for a position with the Library of Congress.

Welle comes with a range of prior experiences in library and archival settings, including work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where in 2016 he also received his MA in Library and Information Science with a focus in archives.

Other professional venues include the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society, Michigan Technological University in Houghton, and (as a volunteer) the McLeod County Historical Society.

While at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, he worked primarily with papers and photographic materials from veterans who served in different service branches and from time periods ranging from WWI to the Gulf War. His bachelor's degree (2012) was from Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall with majors in history and philosophy.

He began work for us on January 3.



RYAN WELLE