The Great War: WWI

Event at Midway Village Museum

Rockford, Illinois

Largest Public WWI Reenactment in the US

- Began in 2013 and used the same model as the popular WWII Reenactment Event at Midway Village Museum in September (now in it's 20th year)
- Goal is to honor the veterans of WWI with an immersive educational experience for visitors of all ages
- Educational themes range from experiences of soldiers from over a dozen countries, life on the home front, and highlighting Rockford's role in WWI including Camp Grant

The Great War Event Basics

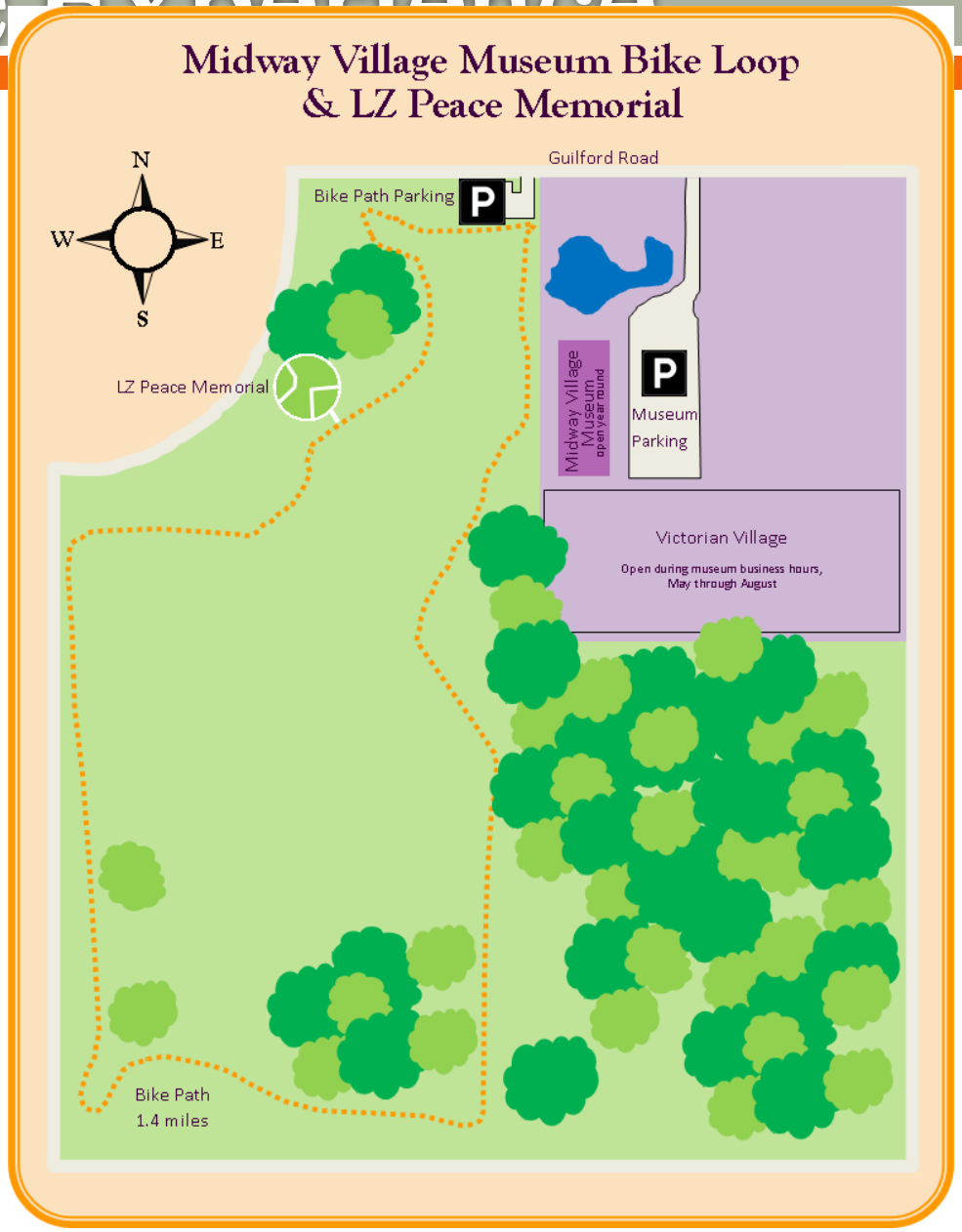
Where: Midway Village Museum, 6799 Guilford Rd., Rockford, IL 61107
When: Friday, April 8, 9:30am – 2pm School Day; Saturday, April 9, 11am – 5pm Public Event; Sunday, April 10, 11am – 4pm Public Event
Who: Activities available for all ages
How: Tickets available online, at the Gift Shop, and on the day of the event. Adults: $10 each; Children 3-17: $5 each; Museum Members are free

The Schedule

- Thursday: Reenactors begin to arrive and set up
- Friday 9:30am – 2pm: School day offered for students to receive a unique educational experience
- Friday 2:15 – 10pm: Reenactors continue to arrive, Sales Vendors arrive, Food Vendors arrive
- Saturday morning: Remaining reenactors and vendors arrive, safety meetings take place
- Saturday 11am – 5pm: Event is open to the public
- Sunday morning: Safety meetings
- Sunday 11am – 4pm: Event is open to the public
- Sunday 4:15pm: Clean Up and Departure

146 Acres to Create an Immersive Experience

- Three parking areas: Paved lot for handicap parking, Large field lot for reenactor parking, Large field lot for general public
- Large open field for larger battle reenactments
- Historic Village with 26 buildings to create town scenes and skirmishes
- Woods area for camp areas with foxholes, bunkers, etc.
- Museum Center with permanent exhibits
- Handicap accessible
- Golf Cart shuttles



Midway Village Museum
Rockford's History Museum

Victorian Era Village and Gardens

Check out our Cell Phone Guided Tour!

The cell phone tour is a new alternative to our Guided Village Tours, and is available year-round! Listen here:

Dial: 815-977-9436
Or, use this QR code:

Keypad Commands

- 1 Rewind
- 2 Pause/Play
- 3 Fast Forward
- # Skip
- *0 Leave Comment

Buildings

1. Millhouse
2. Old Doll's House Museum
3. J.L. Clark Hardware Store
4. Plumbing Shop
5. Blacksmith Shop
6. Police Station
7. Law Office
8. Midway Village Community Church (1883)
9. Rockford Hospital
10. Marsh House (c. 1840s-1860s)
11 Ralston House (1890s-1904)
12. Pepper House (1875-1890)
13. 1905 Barn
14. 1850 Barn
15. Mowry Brown House (1840)
16. Old Stone School (1902)
17. Fire Station
18. Town Hall (1874)
19. Barber Shop/Carpenter's Shop
20. Midway Community Bank (1892)
21. General Store
22. Print Shop
23. Breckenridge House (1860s)
24. Heritage Garden Park
25. Gazebo
26. Water Tower
27. Chamberlain Hotel
Available for Rentals: Lakeview Rooms

Gardens

1. Prairie Restoration
2. Heritage Garden Park
3. School Garden
4. Four-Square Kitchen Garden
5. Blue Garden
6. Floral Carpet Beds
7. Tomato Test Plot
8. Immigrant Garden
9. Grandmother's Garden
10. A Moonlight Garden - A Wedding Garden

Village Hours:

May, Thurs - Sun: 11am-4pm
Jun - Aug, Tues - Sun: 11am-4pm
Sept - Oct: By appointment only
Tours begin at 11, 12, 1, 2 & 3

Museum Hours:

Tues. - Fri: 10am-4pm
Weekends: 10:30am-4pm
May - Aug: Closed Mondays
Sept - Apr: Closed Sun. and Mon.

★ Main Museum Center, Gift Shop, and Admissions

Reenactors – The Core of the Event

Over 225 WWI Reenactors

- All Reenactor recruitment and management is done by a lead coordinator, Dave Fornell
- Reenactors begin arriving on the Thursday of the event week
- Reenactors preregister on a website and billets are assigned before the event. Billets are both in the Village and camping in the Woods area
- All Reenactors must adhere to specific rules about uniforms, weapons safety, and conduct. Anyone not following these rules will be asked to leave the event.
- Safety and authenticity checks are done throughout the event, and daily meetings take place before the event opens to the public
- Reenactors are expected to educate the public on the area they are representing…engagement is key!

Reenactor Groups Participating

Kampf Group Hoffman
19th Reggimento Fanteria "Bresica" (Italians)
Pershing
Coldstream Guards
2nd U.S. Infantry Div.
Red Cross Knitting Society
28th Regiment - The Lions of Cantigny
47th Co. Marines
33rd Inf. Division
Inf. Regt. 353
Coldstream Guards
32nd US DIV (Laplander)
Parris Island Living History Detachment
Irish Easter Rebellion 1916 display
Turkish Army
Co B, 128th Regiment
US 82nd DIV
INF. REGT. 75
99th Pioneer
IR 75
137e RI French COMMUNICATION
TRENCH - Russians

Battle Reenactments

- Large scale battle reenactments with pyrotechnics twice Saturday & once Sunday
- Smaller 'Town Skirmishes' take place on Main Street of the Historic Village twice a day
- Smaller 'Woods Scenarios' take place in the Woods Area twice each day
- New in 2016: Trench Train Skirmishes take place twice each day
- Battles are chosen around a specific WWI battle and range in years and European locations being portrayed
- Battles are narrated to create a better educational understanding of what took place

Activities

- Trench Tours: Museum has a 150 yard trench system at the Battlefield permanently, visitors can sign up for guided tours throughout the day
- Reenactor camps: Visitors can walk up to camps and engage reenactors directly
- Suffragette Marches
- Musical Performances: A cappella group singing popular 1910s music from America, German folk singer performing popular German songs from the 1910s
- Film Showings: 1910s film shown on 1910s equipment
- French Café
- Salvation Army Donut Lass tent
- Trench Train
- Horses, Model T
- Lectures throughout the day
- FT-17 Tank
- WWI Aviation: WWI airplane replica models on display and flying
- Sales Vendors: Between 14 and 18 vendors selling real and replica WWI uniforms, equipment, books, etc.
- Food Vendors: Dandy Donuts to go next to the Donut Lass tent and Prairie Street Brewhouse

FT-17 Tank

French Cafe

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Trench Train

Safety Measures

- Police and Parking Attendants: Pre-event meetings take place, Parking attendants in each parking area, Police presence in the parking areas/roads and patrolling the event
- Police surveillance overnight
- Security hired for bag checks and monitor costumed reenactors vs. the public
- EMT on site during public hours
- MPs patrolling, crowd control
- Museum staff, head reenactor, EMT, police, admissions gates, and key stations in constant contact with radio system and cell phones
- Fire permits, Food/health permits
- HRS Insurance Coverage, Food Vendor Insurance Coverage
- Waivers signed by all reenactors

In Conclusion

- Make the event as immersive as possible for the visitors, covering as many aspects of the war as possible
- Safety, safety, safety
- Must have good communication between the Museum Event Coordinator and the Lead Reenactor Coordinator
- Clear division of responsibilities: Reenactor Coordinator handle recruitment and registration of reenactors, billet placement for reenactors, battle planning, safety checks, issues with the reenactors during the event. Museum Event Coordinator handles the budget, visitor safety, admissions, food vendors, sales vendors, permits, booking other activities (lectures, musical performances, etc), volunteer recruitment and training, staff training, parking and police coordination, marketing, sponsor recruitment
- Never forget that this event is to honor the memory of the WWI Veterans and Civilians

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