

LITCHFIELD

Independent Review

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COMPLETING
THE PUZZLE

Dragons look to fit
all pieces together / 12



MOVING ON TO
A NEW ROLE

LHS grad Fenton
to lead Summit / 12

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PHOTOS BY BRENT SCHACHERER

Marian Pennertz offers a smile and a gingerbread cookie to passersby from the bakery window at the Forest City Stockade.

Christmas at the
FOREST CITY STOCKADE

Betty Hermann and Marian Pennertz maintained a fast pace Saturday, smiling all the while, as they served gingerbread cookies from the window of the small Bakery shop at the the Forest City Stockade.

They were among dozens of volunteers back at the stockade grounds after a one-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic that shut down many community events last year.

Like the bakers and other volunteers, stockade visitors seemed eager to return to their annual reminiscence of life on the Minnesota prairie in the late 1800s and early 1900s at the stockade's Pioneer Christmas, as large crowds circulated throughout the stockade grounds just off State Highway 24 in Forest City.

Bob Hermann, a longtime member of the

stockade committee that organizes the annual Pioneer Christmas and summer Rendezvous, flashed a wide smile also as he talked with visitors and watched them hurry between buildings on the grounds. People stood in long lines for food highlights like fry bread and stew but hardly seemed to notice the wait for their goodies.

Inside the stockade's centerpiece cabin, some stockade volunteers made and served lefse, while upstairs women demonstrated the craft of spinning wool into yarn. In other buildings, volunteers dipped bees wax candles, served hot apple cider and even printed stationery on a letterpress in the newspaper office.

Though it lacked snow, the Pioneer Christmas had every bit of holiday cheer that was missing a year ago.

See more photos on Page 2.



Seen through the window of the bakery, Betty Hermann rolls out gingerbread dough, which would later turn into cookies samples for visitors to the Forest City Stockade's Pioneer Christmas Saturday.

Keeping an eye on the standards

Once-a-decade revision
of social studies standards
prompts debate

BY BRENT SCHACHERER
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The focus of social studies taught in Minnesota schools will be decided during the next year as the Department of Education reviews and establishes social studies benchmarks and standards.

Jeff Niedenthal is among a relatively small but determined group who believe parents and others ought to be paying closer attention to the once-a-decade process.

The Grove City resident admits a conservative philosophy influences what he thinks should be included, and not included, in the

standards. But that's not all that motivates his interests, he said.

"Hopefully (I can) influence people to get engaged and comment on the process on either side of the political spectrum," Niedenthal said. "Just get engaged. You don't have a right to (complain) if you don't participate in the fight."

He does worry, however, that right now the process for establishing the standards has been slanted to a more liberal bent.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education's website, the standards review committee has 44 members, including K-12 teachers, administrators, college faculty, informal educators and community members. Their work has been open via a series of virtual



Jeff
Niedenthal

town hall-type meetings, and the Department of Education recently released the committee's benchmarks. The deadline for commenting on the benchmarks is Dec. 14.

"They're trying, in my opinion, to phrase and guide the benchmarks, ergo the curriculum, to focus on, to satisfy their political viewpoint, their political end, rather than the broader spectrum of the entire historical context."

Committee members, however, have said their effort is not based on politics.

"It's about telling the whole story, not just parts of the story that make us feel good," Danyika Leonard, policy director at Education Evolving, and a member of the committee, told the St. Paul Pioneer Press after the committee's second draft was released in August.

Standards to 8 ►



FILE PHOTO

The G.A.R. Hall is located at 308 N. Marshall Ave. in Litchfield.

Group urges
city to follow
G.A.R. Hall deed

100-year-old agreement
demands Memorial Hall
remains in original state

BY BRENT SCHACHERER
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As their numbers dwindled and members saw the inevitable demise of their organization, Union Army, Navy and Marine veterans sought to ensure the physical monument to their service continued.

Forever.

That's when the members of the Grand Army of the Republic Frank Daggett Post made a deal with the city of Litchfield, deeding their hall to the city. The donation came with a handful of stipulations, most notably that the hall would remain the same as it was when members gathered there in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

More than 100 years later, that agreement has become a source of conflict between Grand Army of the Republic descendants, city leaders and the Meeker County Historical Society.

Specifically at issue are clauses in the 1885 contract — as reported in the Nov. 28, 1885 edition of the Litchfield Saturday Review — that require the G.A.R. Memorial Hall to remain essentially as it was when actively used by members a century ago.

The city "... shall maintain and keep in repair the said premises, and the said Memorial Hall thereon situate, according to the intention and design of the building, as in this instrument expressed; and the said Village of Litchfield shall never permit the same to be used for, or diverted to any other purpose, whatever."

The agreement also states that the city "shall carefully collect and scrupulously preserve in the room of said Memorial Hall ... all the war relics, flags, guns, chairs, pictures, and all other personal property and belongings of said Frank Daggett Post, and arrange the same in and about said room, so that said room may retain the appearance, as nearly as practicable, of still being occupied and used by said Frank Daggett Post ... as nearly as practicable, forever..."

When the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic — a national organization of descendants — held their annual meeting at the Frank Daggett Post in August, members noticed immediately that terms of the 1885 agreement are being violated.

The Memorial Hall has been overrun, in the opinion of at least some members, by unacceptable items that change the hall's appearance

G.A.R. to 8 ►