

General Custer courts visitors at Monroe County Fair

By Crystal Bay Communications

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Custer committee uses historic venue and Monroe Michigan tradition to connect with community and promote upcoming living history event

For 61 years, the Monroe County Fair has been *officially* attracting visitors, but records indicate the fair's roots may extend back nearly two centuries. Perhaps, as a boy growing up in Monroe, Michigan during the 1850s, famed Civil War General and Union Hero George Custer may have celebrated summer by attending these annual expositions.

Tapping into the Monroe County Fair's rich history, the Custer Celebration Event Programs Committee hosted a booth at last week's fair to connect with the community and promote their upcoming annual living history event. Presented by the Monroe County Historical Society, *General George A. Custer's Monroe, His Family & Friends*, runs from October 3 to October 11.

Decorated to resemble an old-fashioned parlor reminiscent of one where George and Elizabeth (Libbie) Custer might have entertained guests, Ronda Stiffler, a Monroe County resident and member of the Custer Celebration Event Programs Committee, invited visitors into the booth to view historic photographs and art.

One painting of significance depicted the buffalo hunt of 1872 where Custer served as official escort to Russia's Grand Duke Alexis as part of a much-celebrated grand tour of the United States.

Stiffler and several youth volunteers talked up Custer's Monroe heritage and passed out literature promoting this year's event.

"When General Custer was scheduled to appear, I let people know so they could return to the booth and meet him," says Stiffler. "There were a lot of people interested in getting their pictures taken with him."

Promotion of the Custer Celebration Event was very well received says Stiffler.

"Many people were excited about the inclusion of Native American programming with Dakota Goodhouse and Ernie LaPointe this year."

Ernie LaPointe, great-grandson of Sioux Chief Sitting Bull will present *The Oral History of the Battle at Little Big Horn*. Dakota Goodhouse, Native American author and Chief of Interpretation at Fort Abraham Lincoln will present *Universal Languages of the Plains*.

The biggest hurdle for Stiffler, who dressed in period attire including a petticoat, was the heat.

"Thank goodness for the air-conditioned Expo Building where I took a few leisurely strolls on my breaks!"

"The most interesting part for me was talking to people and hearing their stories. I have very shallow roots here in Monroe – my family came from Kentucky and I don't have the genealogical connections in Monroe that many people do. It was really cool listening to people tell the tales of their ancestors here in Monroe County. The hometown pride was evident."

For further information on General Custer's hometown Monroe connections and the upcoming Custer Celebration Event, visit: <http://blogsmonroe.com/custer> or call: 734 241-0201.

The Monroe County Historical Society's Custer Celebration Event Committee was formed to raise awareness of General George Armstrong Custer's life, times and impact on Monroe County's history.

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