Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/110812/draftSM.png**Re-enactment of 1861 revolt at county courthouse to highlight commemorative activities Saturday in Port**

One hundred fifty years ago to the day Saturday, a group of Port Washington area residents riveted the nation with their revolt against the Civil War draft.

Rooted in fear they were being unfairly treated in the draft, they took to the streets in a confrontation that ended only when the state militia surrounded the city.

At 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 10, Ozaukee County will host a commemoration of the draft riot on the steps of the courthouse, where the confrontation began, and a celebration of the local soldiers who fought in the war.

An exhibit of Civil War memorabilia and artifacts will be on display in the Ozaukee County boardroom from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Friday, Nov. 8 to 16, except for Sunday, Nov. 11.

Another draft riot exhibit is being held at the Luxembourg American Cultural Center through Dec. 31.

“The draft riot is the premier historic event of Ozaukee County,” said Kevin Wester, an avid historian and executive director of the Luxembourg American Cultural Center. “It sent shock waves through the country.

“It was such a big event in the day. It made the newspapers in New York, in Chicago, in Madison.”

What is known is that on Nov. 10, 1862, attorney William Pors, the draft commissioner, was ambushed by an angry mob of Luxembourg farmers opposed to President Abraham Lincoln’s draft. Many of the farmers believed that Pors, a German Protestant and Mason, was exempting his friends from military service, Wester said, adding that language and cultural differences came into play as well.

A crowd of more than 200 people stormed the courthouse when Pors prepared to draw the names of those to be drafted. He fled, and the mob swooped through the city, destroying the homes and property of those they believed sympathized with Pors.

Pors fled to Milwaukee, and Gov. Edward Salomon ordered eight companies of the 28th regiment to surround Port Washington.

At dawn on Nov. 12, the troops surrounded the rioters and the community. There was little resistance.

Through the years, Wester said, stories about the draft riots took on a life of their own.

But organizers of Saturday's event have done their best to get to the truth about the riot.

"The bottom line is we'll never know one definitive reason for it," Wester said. "There are two sides to it."

The 2 p.m. ceremony Saturday will include music by the Civil War Singers of Manitowoc, remarks by a number of local officials, an interpretive storytelling of the riot and the dedication of a historical marker placed at the courthouse.

There will also be a tribute to Ozaukee County Civil War soldiers, as well as all local veterans, Wester said, noting the event occurs just a day before Veterans Day.

Re-enactors from Wisconsin and Illinois will be present.

A map of downtown Port Washington that locates areas where significant events in the draft riot took place will also be developed.

Although the program is expected to be held outdoors, it will be moved indoors in the case of inclement weather.

"It's a wonderful story," Wester said. "So often, we forget the rich history we have."

The art exhibit features a number of photographs and biographies of Civil War soldiers. Among them are the boots Henry Bichler, a Port Washington tailor, wore to war.

"He went through some incredibly grueling experiences," Wester said.

The State Historical Society has also lent a large, almost life-sized photograph of Edward Blake, the son of Barnum Blake of Port Washington who during the battle of Franklin wrapped the flag around himself to protect it from capture.

"It's iconographic," Wester said, noting the well-known photograph depicts Blake a few years after the war, in his Union uniform with the tattered flag.

"It's pretty spectacular. It shows the fight to save the flag and the beating he took," Wester said.

Image Information: A VARIETY OF Civil War artifacts, memorabilia and photographs will be exhibited at the Ozaukee County Administration Center in Port Washington as part of the draft riot commemoration. Showing off a few of the items were members of the celebration committee, (from left) Kevin Wester, Jim Asplin, County Administrator Tom Meaux, Michele Weiland and Al Buchholz. Asplin donated a historic monument about the draft riots to the county. Photo by Sam Arendt