

Picnic celebrates 150 years of reconciliation

By Rachel Mahoney

For the first time in 10 years, families will picnic at the Fisher's Hill Battlefield to commemorate the Civil War veterans' picnics that occurred from 1891 into the 1930s.

Shenandoah County Historical Society president Barbara Adamson said thousands of veterans and

their families came by special train stop to picnic on Fisher's Hill and reconnect during those years.

For the 150th anniversary of the Civil War ending, a planning committee that represents eight organizations decided to bring back an event that celebrated the reunification after the war.

"I think it gives people an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of war and the consequences of the war, especially when it's at your own home," Adamson said.

Families can take part in the Fisher's Hill Picnic for free from 4 to 8 p.m. Saturday. Attendees can pack their own picnic or pur-

chase concessions for sale by the Powhatan Ruritan. Although there will be a large tent housing the stage and some seating, Adamson encouraged people to bring their own chairs.

Period band Shenandoah Minstrels will perform representative music from the era starting at 5, and

children can enjoy games and activities throughout the evening.

Shenandoah Circuit Judge Dennis Hupp will deliver a short speech on reunion and reconciliation in the spirit of the political speeches delivered during the veteran picnics' heyday.

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Jenna French, the Shenandoah County director of tourism and marketing, said the focus of the picnic is a refreshing break from reliving the battles.

"So often there's reenactments and there's battlefield tours that take place, but you don't often hear the story about what happened after the war and

how the two sides got back together," she said.

The picnic will feature the "Voices of Blue and Grey" program at 7 p.m. with uniformed reenactors reading personal quotes from veterans and women who attended the picnics and reflected on the aftermath of the war.

Attendees can participate in three walking tours: one at 4:30 p.m., one at 6 and a children's tour at 5:15. Shenandoah County Historical Society board member John

Adamson and Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park chief of interpretation Eric Campbell will lead the tours.

"It's a different perspective than you usually get with the war," French said. "We don't often learn about what took place after Appomattox."

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