

# Civil War Arsenal gives glimpse of history

April 12, 2011



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It is not just about the weapons, but that is a vital part of Starkville's Civil War Arsenal.

Curator and Wisconsin native Duffy Neubauer is also fascinated with the "rolling stock" and how Civil War military units shod their horses and kept the cannons in transit. That fascination has developed into a private collection of Civil War field artillery carriages that can't be found in any national park. Starkville's Civil War Arsenal is one of only three museums in the nation where all of the specialized rolling stock can be viewed at the same time and in the same location.

But this is no ordinary collection. Neubauer is a Civil War re-enactor and all of the pieces within the collection are used as part of the living history events held throughout the country. Neubauer describes the arsenal as a "working museum."

Neubauer, who is operations coordinator at Mississippi State University's Humphrey Coliseum said, "I have always been into cannons. But it was the 100th anniversary of the Civil War that really captured my imagination."

Tuesday marked the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, and within the arsenal, there are period photos, cannons and a variety of reproductions that represent 50 years of passion and interest.

He always said he wanted create a museum to share his passion for collecting and creating reproduction pieces. And though Neubauer said he feels like there is so much more he wants to do, opening the Arsenal was a way to "get something started." He has plans for additional military pieces and more space.

"Duffy's Civil War arsenal is a magnificent collection, which is well displayed in his museum, and I strongly recommend a visit to anyone with an interest in Civil War artillery," said Dr. Bill Parrish, historian.

"If there is anyone in the United States who knows more about Civil War artillery than does Duffy Neubauer, I do not know who that individual is," said Dr. John Marzalek, historian and curator of the Ulysses S. Grant Collection at Mitchell Memorial Library on the Mississippi State University campus. "Duffy is universally recognized as 'the' authority on Civil War cannons."

Marzalek said Starkville's Civil War Arsenal "is one of this area's best kept secrets.

"But as word of it gets out, people will travel to Starkville to see his collection and hear his knowledgeable and entertaining presentations," Marzalek said. "Duffy is one of the 'founding fathers' of the Golden Triangle Civil War

Roundtable, the leader of the local reenactment group, and now he is the founder and proprietor of the best artillery museum anywhere. What a local treasure he is.”

A typical visit to the Arsenal, which is located in the Sunset subdivision, west of Starkville, begins in the Visitor’s Center, with one of 10 educational slide-show presentations. Neubauer said after viewing the slide program visitors are prepared for a self-guided tour of the collection of the artillery rolling stock, used by both Union and Confederate armies. After going through the museum, visitors return to the Visitor’s Center for a question and answer session. Allen McBroom recently took Boy Scout Troop 45 to visit the Civil War Arsenal. He said the scouts were amazed, not just by the quality and the quantity of the original cannons and other gear on display, but also by Neubauer’s deep knowledge of how the Confederate and Union soldiers lived their days, and performed in battle.

“It would have been easy to spend several hours just learning and understanding the chronology of the projectiles he has on display, but somehow Duffy was able to compact his 40-plus years of collecting information and memorabilia into a rather brief presentation of about an hour,” McBroom said.

McBroom said when Neubauer begins his presentation, visitors are transported to the battlefield.

“When Duffy comes out dressed in his wool uniform, and begins to talk about the challenges that faced the artillery units during the War Between the States, you begin to feel as if you’re there, on the battlefield, as Duffy explains the job of each man in the unit, and how critical each man is to the success of the cannons they operated,” McBroom said.

McBroom said Neubauer is pretty low-key about his efforts in what he’s collected over the years, but his satisfaction shows when he talks about how his caisson has been used in military funerals for soldiers who died during the War Between the States, and had to have their graves relocated.

“It’s hard to not become emotional as he talks, in his quiet way, of the ways his collection fits into today’s preservation of this important part of America’s history,” McBroom said.

Scouts are naturally full of questions, and McBroom said Neubauer seemed to have a good answer for every question that came up.

“His explanation of cannon sights, the sort of powder used, the way the carriages could be adjusted for aiming, all kept the Scouts and the attending adults captivated,” McBroom said.

Admission to Starkville’s Civil War Arsenal is free and open to the public by appointment only. Donations are welcomed to assist with operating and maintenance costs.

The Visitor’s Center can accommodate tour groups of about 30 people, and Neubauer encourages clubs, Sunday School classes and scout groups to visit the arsenal.

For more information or to make an appointment for touring, call Neubauer in the evenings at 323-2606.