

The final stop of the Summer Fest Civil War presentation at Pleasant View was in front of the chapel. Those approaching were welcomed with haunting music echoing from the interior. Bruce Branson was inside and unseen, playing “Amazing Grace” and other tunes on an Irish tin whistle.

When the crowd had gathered, Pastor Branson emerged, dressed to fit the role he was playing, that of a country parson during the 1860s. During his presentation, the crowd joined in singing songs, now familiar, that were first written for the Civil War era. During the presentation, the crowd joined in a sing along with old familiar songs.

### **The Role of Music during the Civil War Presented by Bruce Branson**

Music played a critical role during the Civil War. Both the North and South relied heavily on musicians and bands to boost the morale of the troops. Some songs were popular on both sides, but most were specific to either the North or South.

During the Civil War, singing was one of the troops’ favorite ways to pass time. Many songs were inspirational marching tunes; others were sad and sentimental and were sung when thinking of home or loved ones, and some were used to rally troops during battle. One can only imagine being in the middle of the fight carrying a musical instrument rather than a gun.

Sometimes if the soldiers liked the tunes they heard the opposing side singing, they would write their own lyrics to it. It was not uncommon for each side to serenade the other, or for a battle to stop while an impromptu concert was held.

During the first year of the war, an estimated two thousand songs were written, and by the end of the Civil War, more enduring music had been written than from any other period in our history. To this day, many of the Civil War songs are sung when a patriotic piece is required. Army units included individuals from across the county and they rapidly traded tunes, instruments and techniques.

Songs written from this sharing became the first American folk music with features that are considered unique to America. Some of the music was typical to the South, others to the North.

“Oh, Susanna” was a Southern song, indicated by the words, “I come from Alabama.” The song is full of nonsense rhymes, and was sung just to raise the spirits of the troops.

Oh, I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee,  
I'm going to Louisiana, my true love for to see.  
It rained all night the day I left, the weather it was dry  
The sun so hot I froze to death, Susanna, don't you cry.

*Oh! Susanna, Oh don't you cry for me,  
For I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee.*

I had a dream the other night, when everything was still;  
I thought I saw Susanna dear, a coming down the hill.

A buckwheat cake was in her mouth, a tear was in her eye,  
Says I, I'm coming from the south, Susanna, don't you cry.

*Oh! Susanna, Oh don't you cry for me,  
For I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee.*

Another song sung by the Rebels was "The Yellow Rose of Texas"

There's a yellow rose in Texas that I am gonna see  
Nobody else could miss her, not half as much as me.  
She cried so when I left her it like to broke my heart  
And if I ever find her we never more will part.

Chorus

*She's the sweetest little rose bud that Texas ever knew  
Her eyes are bright as diamonds they sparkle like the dew.  
You may talk about your Clementine and sing of Rosa Lee  
But the yellow rose of Texas is the only girl for me.*

Both sides appreciated the lyrics in "When Johnny Comes Marching Home"

When Johnny comes marching home again, Hurrah, Hurrah,  
We'll give him a hearty welcome then, Hurrah, Hurrah;  
The men will cheer, the boys will shout, the ladies, they will all turn out,  
And we'll all feel gay, When Johnny comes marching home.

The old church bell will peal with joy, Hurrah, Hurrah,  
To welcome home our darling boy, Hurrah, hurrah;  
The village lads and lassies say, With roses they will strew away,  
And we'll all feel gay, When Johnny comes marching home.

Get ready for the Jubilee, Hurrah, Hurrah,  
We'll give the hero three times three, Hurrah, Hurrah,  
The laurel wreath is ready now, to place upon his loyal brow,  
And we'll all feel gay, When Johnny comes marching home.

Let love and friendship on that day, Hurrah, Hurrah,  
Their choicest treasures then display, Hurrah, Hurrah,  
And let each one perform some part, To fill with joy the warriors' heart,  
And we'll all feel gay, When Johnny comes marching home.

When the war ended, Abraham Lincoln addressed the people. He ended his comments with the suggestion that the band play "Dixie," describing it as "one of the best tunes I have ever heard.

Oh, I wish I was in the land of cotton  
Old times there are not forgotten

Look away! Look away!  
Look away! Dixie Land.

In Dixie Land where I was born in  
Early on one frosty mornin'  
Look away! Look away!  
Look away! Dixie Land.

Chorus:  
*O, I wish I was in Dixie!*  
*Hooray! Hooray!*  
*In Dixie Land I'll take my stand*  
*To live and die in Dixie*  
*Away, away,*  
*Away down south in Dixie!*  
*Away, away, away down south in Dixie!*

The band then followed with a familiar tune, "Yankee Doodle," a song made popular during the Revolution.

Branson ended his presentation with the following two stanzas of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" Other stanzas were added later.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the lord,  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored.  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword,  
His truth is marching on.

Glory! Glory ! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah  
Glory! Glory ! Hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch fires of a hundred circling camps,  
They have build-ed Him an altar in the evening dews and damps,  
I can read his righteous sentence in the dim and flaring lamps,  
His day is marching on.

Glory! Glory ! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah  
Glory! Glory ! Hallelujah! His truth is marching on