



National Archives and Records Administration

PACIFIC ALASKA REGION
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Dear Members of the Awards Committee:

The Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) in Seattle hosted the National Constitution Center's traveling exhibit *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War* from January 19 to April 20, 2008. This exhibit focused on three key constitutional issues facing President Lincoln: secession, slavery, and civil liberties. When MOHAI made the decision to host this exhibit, they also made a commitment to investigate the impact of the Civil War and these constitutional issues on the people of the Pacific Northwest. The resulting exhibit *Blue vs. Gray: The Civil War in the Pacific Northwest* provides a new understanding of the truly national impact of the Civil War.

Dr. Lorraine McConaghy, historian at MOHAI, conducted extensive research to uncover the story of the Civil War in the Pacific Northwest. Her research was truly impressive both in scope and depth. She conducted research visits to major archival institutions in the region including the Washington State Archives, Oregon Historical Society, British Columbia Archives, Washington State Historical Society, National Archives and Records Administration- Pacific Alaska Region, and the Special Collections at the University of Washington. In addition, she visited the National Archives in Washington DC. Her research in primary sources included microfilmed copies of newspapers, territorial and provincial records, manuscript collections, memoirs, and public documents. The story that emerged from this research is that settlers in the Pacific Northwest brought the war with them to the region. Their partisan views, and sometimes violence, flared during the war. Dr. McConaghy's research adds new dimensions to Pacific Northwest history and encourages the public to ask questions about constitutional issues during a time of war that are still relevant today.

Blue vs. Gray: The Civil War in the Pacific Northwest consists of eight panels, which were supplemented by artifacts from MOHAI collections during the original exhibit run. The panels use a mix of photographs, facsimile documents, historical depictions, quotations, and narrative to tell the story. The theme of each panel ties back to one of the key constitutional issues, while relating it to the Pacific Northwest. For example, *A Negro Set at Liberty* tells the little known story of Charles Mitchell a boy of 14 who fled to freedom on Vancouver Island in 1860. Another panel, *Stayin' Loyal, Goin' South* depicts the decisions made by some notable residents of the Pacific Northwest to stay loyal to the Union or join the Confederacy. Each panel tells it's own story and places a national event in a regional setting. The Civil War can seem remote to people in the Pacific Northwest since there are no battlefields in the area to remind us of the war. This exhibit provides a context for a better understanding of how the issues of session, slavery and civil liberties impacted the region.

The panels of the exhibit were designed so they could serve as a stand alone exhibit once the exhibit run was complete at MOHAI. Since June 2008, the panels have been on exhibit at the National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Alaska Region in Seattle. Staff and visitors alike have commented that they were previously unaware of the impact of the Civil War on the Pacific Northwest and that the exhibit has exposed them to little known events and themes in our regional, state, and local history.

MOHAI established an Advisory Panel to assist with the development of the exhibit and plan for programs related to the exhibit. In addition to MOHAI staff members of the Advisory Panel included representatives from the Washington State Archives, University of Washington, Seattle Public Library, Puget Sound Civil War Round Table, National Archives and Records Administration, Black Heritage Society of Washington State, McKinney Consultants, and the ACLU. This diverse panel assisted in developing a wide range of educational and fun activities ranging from a well attended lecture series to a living history encampment of Civil War re-enactors. The themes of the exhibit were brought into the classroom through a Newspapers in Education series that ran in the Seattle Times and special emphasis on the Civil War at MOHAI's annual teacher institute.

MOHAI was one of several co-sponsors of the Pacific Northwest Historian's Guild 2008 history conference. The theme of the conference was Blue vs. Gray: The Civil War in the Pacific Northwest. This conference, held at MOHAI while the exhibit was on display, encouraged professional and amateur historians, genealogists, teachers, and the general public to conduct additional research into how the Civil War impacted the people of the Pacific Northwest and present their findings at the conference.

The impact of the exhibit *Blue vs. Gray: The Civil War in the Pacific Northwest* goes well beyond the three month display at the museum. The scholarship of Dr. McConaghy and others provides a lasting contribution and a broader understanding of the impact of the Civil War on the region. Teachers and students can continue to learn from the lessons in the Newspapers in Education series. The eight panels continue as a traveling exhibit and will be available for display in the region through the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. The public can continue to explore the important constitutional issues raised by the exhibit and understand that the Civil War was not some distant event but one experienced locally as well.

Sincerely,



Susan Karren
Director, Regional Archives