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Iowa style: Rendezvous yourself into fun!

Journey vs. Destination

By Lisa Brainard

Before we get into more nitty-gritty of the Civil War and the Dakota War, I have another worthwhile event I'd like to note.

It will occur the weekend of Aug. 19 to 21 - the Haybarn Rendezvous at The Natural Gait, rural Marquette, Iowa.

I attended this last year and, boy, was it fun. While I'd love to attend again this year, vacation duties (yes, those duties one must do before a vacation) likely will prevent it.



Members of the Big Blue Sky band perform at the Haybarn Rendezvous ("Rondy") last year at The Natural Gait. The 2011 version is coming Aug. 19-21. (Photo by Lisa Brainard)

The excellent Irish singing duo known as Switchback will headline the show. They will perform first Friday evening, Aug. 19, in what's been termed a "cave concert," that is, a Native American rock shelter in the Yellow River valley close to the Ion Exchange (known as "Lower Gait," and owned by the same people).

I can't say enough about this concert venue. Toting your chair, you'll go up a hillside aided by hand-shoveled steps and by a rope strung along it. Find a spot in the rock shelter and sit back to enjoy the great acoustics and the music to come. Plus, a pre-concert meal is offered.

Lodging includes camping, cabins and lodge rooms available at either Lower Gait or Upper Gait, the latter being the hilltop location of The Natural Gait proper and the music festival events of the Haybarn "Rondy," as it's lovingly called.

On Saturday, Aug. 20, the day starts with two-and-a-half hours of kayaking on Yellow River with rentals available. Bands start performing at noon and include Switchback - at times with the Kosier School of Dance students performing Irish dances, James McCandless, the polka sounds of area favorite Jim Busta Band, Yellowhammers and Dennis Garcia.

Food and drink are offered on the grounds, plus meditation classes, kids' activities, jamming by the singing groups, a morning herb and flower walk on Sunday and much, much more.

You can always take your own hike on all their trails, too, as I did last year. They're lovely trails, running from the hilltop down to the river valley, where there are three separate crossings of Yellow River. Since The Natural Gait started as a business and site focused on horse training and riding, you bet you can ride your horses on the trails, too.

It was just a very relaxing weekend with a ton of great music - and none of that craziness you see at the big rock or country music fests. Just today I read a blog piece by Marty McCormack of Switchback, which really captures the idea behind the Haybarn Rondy: a music festival aimed at families. That piece can be found here: <http://waygoodmusic.blogspot.com/>

A schedule can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Haybarn->

Rendezvous/168935389823233?ref=ts#!/photo.php?fbid=249767518377125&set=a.249761428377734.65402.133319040021974&type=1&theater

Be sure to check The Natural Gait for various packages and activity tickets available at www.thenaturalgait.com/events.htm

Coming up

You might want to get these two events on your calendar. I'll share more in upcoming columns.

First up - and you can look for more information right here next week - a Civil War exhibit will be on display in my almost-home town of Clermont, Iowa, and its related Fayette County seat of West Union, Iowa, in late August. It's from the Iowa State Historical Society. And since Clermont is a totally cool, historic town in its own right, you'll be hearing a lot on the area next week.

As a final note, you may have read that Historic Forestville's John Grabko will be presenting information on the Dakota Conflict of 1862 Wednesday, Aug. 17, at 6:30 p.m., at the Spring Valley Library, as well as Saturday, Sept. 10, at the Fillmore County History Center, at 10 a.m.

Grabko, who also runs Historic Adventure and Travel Tours, will include information on a guided motorcoach tour of Dakota War sites, which will be offered Oct. 9 and 10. I am certainly looking forward to all this!

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