

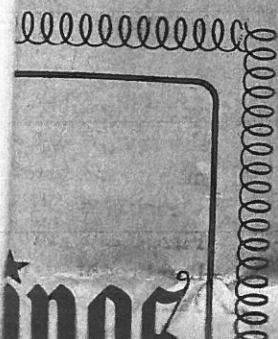
Heidelberg militia adds sparkle to historic hobby



Using a homemade "lintstock" (wooden rod with chemically-treated rope) to light the cannon's powder charge, Bob Ruehling (second from left) recoils as fellow cannoneers Don Eihlers (left) and Neil Bohnsack stand in various poses as the Parrott weapon fires on an imaginary target. The scene of the demonstration is the Bohnsack farmyard.

Bicentennial feature by

Mike Slavik





Ruehling taps fine gunpowder into the charge at the rear of the barrel. The powder will later be used for the 2-oz. charge.



Neil Bohnsack swabs the 1½-in. bore barrel prior to firing the cannon.

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Watch for details!
Grand opening 2nd week in October

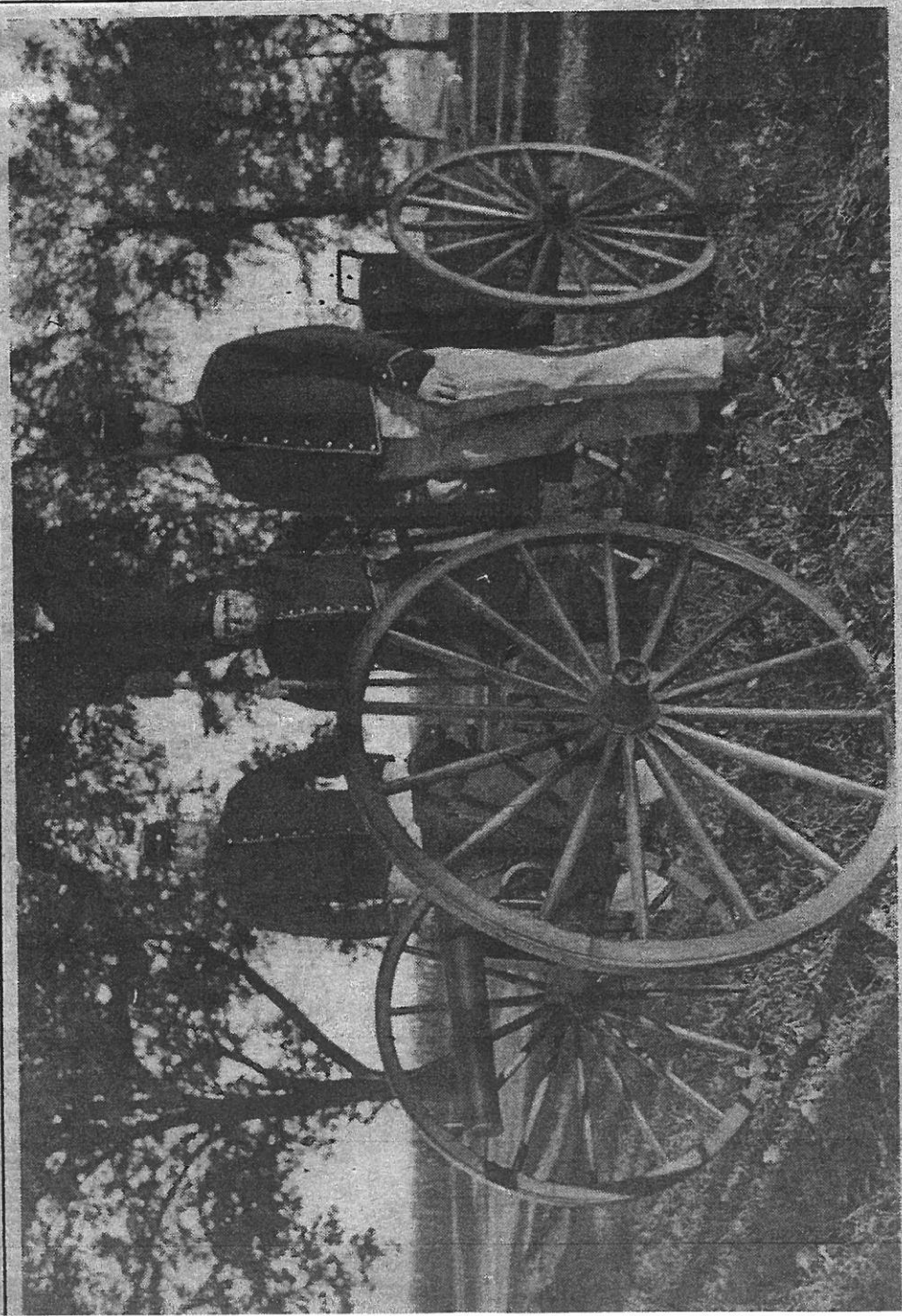
Sandi's Sew 'n Knit

colleges, as well as adult education, parish libraries and educational activities. Last year's effort in New Prague produced nearly \$5,000 for the St. Wenceslaus fund, and other amounts for various local church-related education programs.

Wenceslaus Convent, with entrants to follow Columbus Ave. North to the public elementary school. Police chief Frank Mach reports that portions of the avenue will be blocked off from traffic during the morning hours after 9 a.m., and later if the flow of marathon traffic is still heavy.

Lonsdale via Webster and Veseli. Starting time is 9 a.m., with opening ceremonies to begin at 8:45 a.m. Persons should check in from 8 to 11 a.m. The route will close at 4 p.m., and a shuttle bus service will be available between towns.

Bridge closing inevitable says Scott County Board



The Bicentennial year is nearly over, but 1976 marked the beginning of a new, history-related hobby for a trio of rural New Prague men. Neil Bohnsack, Don Ehlert and Bob Ruehling proudly stand in Civil War-replica regalia near a muzzle-loader cannon, purchased recently on a trip to Illinois. Read about their unique hobby and about the sport of cannon shooting on page 7. [Photo by Mike Slavik]

Boom!

There is a slim chance the Savage railroad bridge will remain open to automobile traffic, according to remarks made Wednesday evening by Scott County Board chairman William Koniarski.

Koniarski made his remarks at a meeting of the 18-169 Corridor Committee held at the Shakopee Senior High school.

"The railroad is not receptive to negotiating a contract," Koniarski said. "they softened a little today, but they said that no money can be paid them to keep the bridge open."

Koniarski said that the railroad officials told county representatives that if they could come up with a plan to repair the bridge and half its deterioration, they would take it to their board of directors.

"The bridge is 70 years old," Koniarski said. "and we paid \$35,000 this year to use it." Over 8,000 cars per day cross the bridge Koniarski said.

To continue use of the bridge, Koniarski said, a new deck is needed and more steel must be added to the structure. He said that deterioration has been hastened by salt damage.

"Our chances are slim," he said. "there is no reason for the railroad to subsidize transportation; our package could cost an awful lot of money and it may not

be feasible without a guarantee for the use of the bridge."

Koniarski said that the expectancy of the bridge years if automobiles continue to use it and 40 years if the railroad uses the bridge.

State Senator Bob Se Jordan, said that of the bridges in the state, 440 considered deficient. Of number, 269 are located in metropolitan area.

"We had a bridge bond that called for the expenditure of \$600,000 over a 10 period and the legislature trimmed that package to \$50,000,000 in a one-shot Senator Schmitz said.

An ad hoc committee force is expected to be established Tuesday, Oct. 5 when it meets with Metropolitan chairman John Boland. committee will be charged with completing its report by early.

Shakopee mayor Walbeck was named chairman of the 18-169 corridor committee. Burchard is secretary. Klein is treasurer and Knoll is Urban Council. Mobility will serve as an advisor.

Anyone desiring information on how they can be involved in the committee call 445-2122.

The Bicentennial year -- birthday of a young nation forced to fight for freedom since its infancy 200 years ago -- is almost over. Also nearing its conclusion is the first season of practice and competition for three rural New Prague men who, bitten by a history "bug", this year embarked on a unique hobby.

Neil Bohnsack, Don Eihlers and Bob Ruehling hold down normal jobs -- electrician, farmer, construction worker. Six months ago, however, the rural Heidelberg neighbors ordered their first cannon and, on a recent trip to Knoxville, Illinois, fell in love with and bought a second weapon.

The bearded trio say they have been interested in the unusual sport for almost three years. Their adventure began in March when Bohnsack mail-ordered a \$600 muzzle-loader from the Dixie Gun Works of Union City, Tennessee. The Civil War-type Parrott model required various renovations, including extra weights and the addition of a sight but, within two weeks of the May delivery date, the cannons were ready to join a growing number of fellow enthusiasts in actual shooting competition.

Forming a team with Mike Hoesie, a Mayer, Minn. powder dealer and owner of a \$4,500 rifle-bore cannon, the men entered their first shoot at St. Cloud, followed by appearances at New Ulm, Dalton, Eau Claire, Wis., Mayer, Waverly and Cologne. Sanctioned cannon competition involves the shooting of 12 rounds at a 4' x 4' target from 150 to 200 yards away. Hoesie's Parrott, which shoots a 9-lb. projectile, was named after a Civil War artillery officer who designed the class of weapons.

Several of the weekend outings have involved demonstrations at community celebrations. On July 4, the cannon team performed at the Heidelberg Independence Day festivities.

The climax of the season came on the Sept. 18-19 weekend, when the three Heidelbergians and Hoesie trucked the latter's Parrott to Knoxville, Illinois, where an annual reenactment of the Civil War "Battle of Stoney Hollow" was being staged. Camping in tents, which most cannon competitors do on outings to nearby and outstate meets, the sportsmen were among approximately 800 people who took part in the mock battle. The two-hour confrontation included some 30 cannon, hundreds of infantrymen, and additional cavalry and artillerymen. Participants came from all over the United States to join the Confederate or Union side (the North won this year).

Prior to the Sunday battle, which was conducted over a 15-20 acre sector of wooded hills and rolling meadows, the four Minnesotans participated in a Saturday firing competition, and were matched with three other rifle-bore cannons.

Before the 400-mile trip home, Bohnsack, Eihlers and Ruehling dickered with a cannon owner from Decatur, Illinois, and purchased his weapon for their growing collection. Make to one-half scale of an original Civil War "boiler gun" (used by land troops to fire on boiler-powered river craft), the \$1,200 Parrot fires a 10³/₄-oz. ball and has a range of up to one mile. Using just two ounces of black powder, the 1¹/₂-in. smooth bore weapon can propel a projectile at up to 2,000 ft. per sec. and is reportedly accurate to within three inches at 150 yards.

A "limber", or two-wheeled vehicle with ammo chest, was also purchased in Illinois, and the matched set was trucked home along with Hoesie's weapon.

Now that the summer cannon shoot season is over, the Heidelberg "militia" is likely to be found firing off an occasional practice round at a faraway tree, or attempting to improve their unique firing technique. Come spring, the men will don their handmade Civil War replica uniforms, measure new powder loads, swab the 300-lb. barrel and launch into another season of smokey competition.

Is it really that much fun? "You bet," says spokesman Neil Bohnsack, "except that