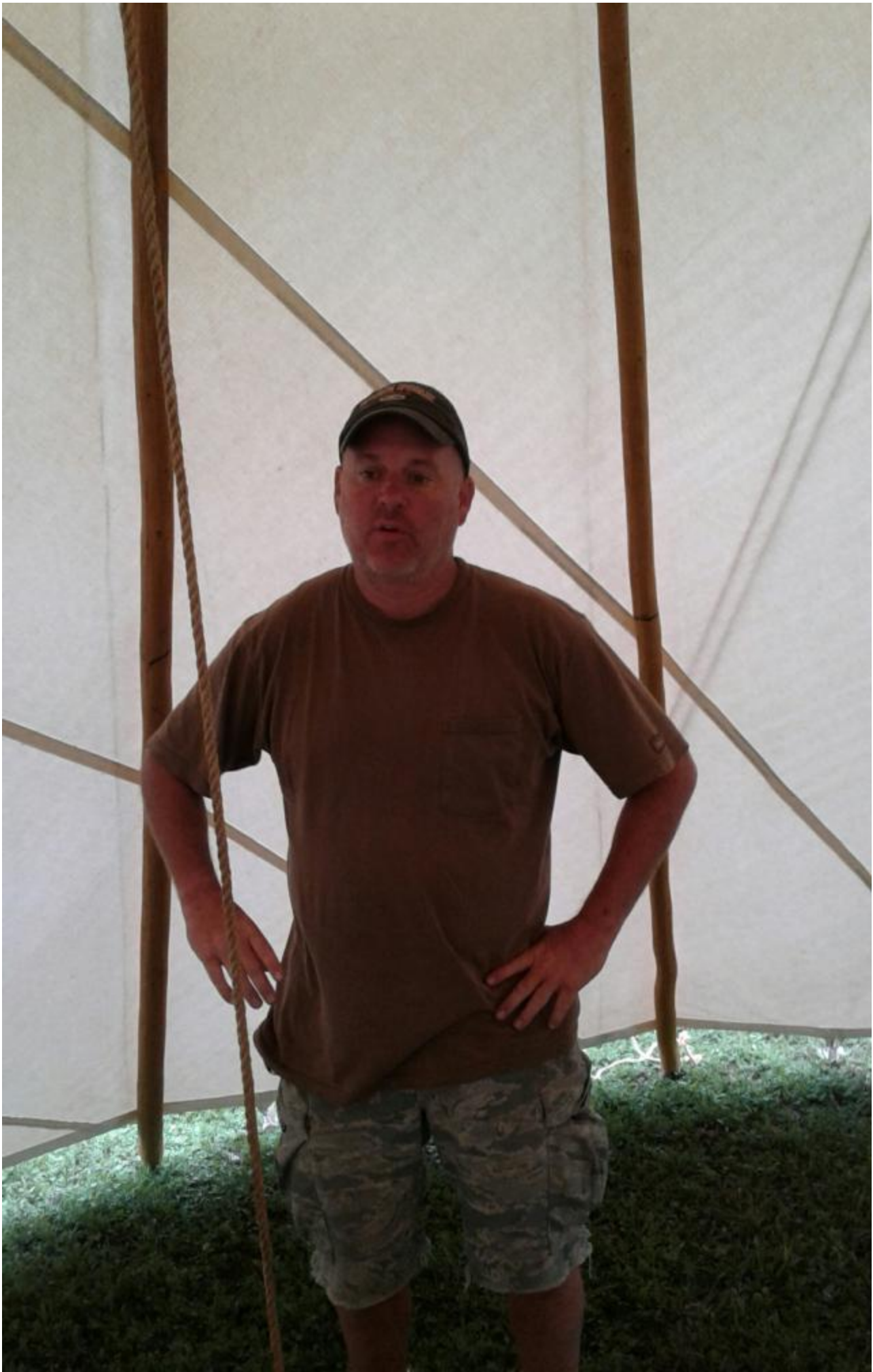




Setting up camp: Heritage enthusiasts prepare for Grafton Rendezvous

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
October 13 2016 6:55 AM





GRAFTON - **Brad Allen** and his brother, **Matt Allen**, arrived in Grafton by canoe late Tuesday afternoon.

They were some of the first to set up camp on the riverfront before the **Grafton Rendezvous** this weekend. Brad and Matt Allen packed their belongings into trailers and canoes from their spot in **Kampsville** at **Heritage Days**, and made their way down the **Illinois River** to Grafton, after a quick stop in **Nutwood**. Brad Allen said the trip took around 13 hours, taking several stops into account. The two traveled from near **Springfield**, with Brad Allen being from **Franklin**, and Matt Allen hailing from **New Berlin**.

"It was my first trip down the river," Matt Allen said. "I'll never forget it."

The brothers arrived around 4 p.m. Tuesday at the Grafton riverfront, on the north end of the marina. They then spent the next several hours setting up camp. Brad Allen has a large canvas teepee, propped by wooden poles. Situating that on its own can take as much as three hours.

Brad Allen bought himself the gently-used teepee at a discount for his birthday last January. He said he has been a part of the historic rendezvous re-enactment culture for around three years. He was inspired by his co-worker, from whom he purchased his teepee.

"I kind of jumped in with both feet," Brad Allen said. "My kids are grown, and I'm a single man. This is a good way to go out and enjoy life."

During the rendezvous this coming weekend, visitors will be able to enjoy hand-made items and food done by people holding a wealth of information about the past. The rendezvous re-enactments are held to commemorate the rendezvous of fur traders, which took place on the banks of the Illinois River from the times of early European settlement to the 1840s.

Matt and Brad Allen described those historic times colorfully. They said fur-trappers and Native Americans would come from all corners of the region to sell their hides. They said many of those trappers would have spent their money by the end of that week on certain amenities, such as whiskey.

That spirit of party is still intertwined with the historical accuracy of the event. Matt Allen said all the people who take part in the event are very knowledgeable about the methods of the people they are representing. Brad Allen, who was stationed in Alaska in his early military career, said he appreciated the ability to live in the survivalist style of his youth.

"If that solar flare happens, and the grid is shut down, we'll know how to survive just fine," he said. "One day I want to take a small bug-out bag or something and go into the Shawnee Forest for about 10 days by myself and see how I do."



People from all walks of life take part in the rendezvous re-enactment culture. The Allen brothers work for the **Illinois Air National Guard**, based out of the **Springfield Airport**. Others are doctors, lawyers and even archaeologists.

"There is a wealth of information to be found here," Matt Allen said.

After visitors to the rendezvous start filing home, which usually happens around 5 p.m. or so, the re-enactment fades a little bit, and people start enjoying each other's company around a communal fire, Brad Allen said.

"We tell stories, and laugh so hard I felt myself grow abs," Matt Allen said.

"One guy had to go home, because his side hurt so bad from laughing so much," his brother agreed.

Visitors to the rendezvous this weekend can choose to admire everyone dressed in historical garb staying in canvas tents and teepees. They can peruse assorted wares made in pre-1840s methods, and participate in various contests and events. One man, said Brad Allen, brings a cannon, which shoots candy into the sky for children to collect.

More information on the rendezvous can be found by walking the shore of the Illinois River this coming Saturday and Sunday.

