

Fur trappers' delight: The Grafton Rendezvous

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
October 17 2016 11:23 AM



GRAFTON - The Grafton riverfront appeared to be stuck in a time warp over the weekend with canvas tents, antiquated flags and even large teepees.

Time and space did not warp, however. In fact, those temporary structures were brought by modern-day people teaching history through action. The modern day **Grafton Rendezvous** celebrates and commemorates the times before 1840 when people throughout the Mississippi, Missouri and Illinois River valleys would meet at a central

point (like Grafton) to trade their furs and wares. Due to the extremely low population density in this part of North America at that time, European trappers and Native Americans would meet once a year to exchange their crafts.

Many of those men of the hills would leave the rendezvous nearly penniless because of whiskey and women, rendezvous participant **Brad Allen** said. Allen traveled to the rendezvous from Kampsville by way of canoe last Wednesday. He and his brother, **Matt Allen**, hail from near Springfield and are relative new-comers to the modern rendezvous scene.

"There is a wealth of information here," Matt Allen said. "People here know nearly everything about those days."



People from all walks of life are drawn to the chance to live like people did in eras before the overwhelming side effects of too much information and mass rapid transit.

"If the solar flare goes off and the grid goes down, we'll be just fine," Brad Allen said.

People going to these modern rendezvous may also leave penniless. Craftspeople skilled in arts such as wood-working, hide-tanning, leather-working and blacksmithing traded the works of their hands in exchange for modern paper money. Homemade soda and baked goods made from scratch were also peddled alongside fresh kettle corn being popped in an actual kettle.

Several items at the rendezvous would be nearly impossible to find elsewhere or in typical brick-and-mortar stores. Some of the vendors were selling obscure objects such as alligator skulls and rattlesnake heads. Some shop keepers said they had seen a steady stream of people, numbering more than 500, during each day of the rendezvous weekend.

