About the Speaker

Barnes Bradshaw is a native St. Louisan who took the long road to his B.A. in History going to eight years of night school over a 10-year period. He started doing first person portrayals of early Americans 30 years ago. The people he portrays are generally those whom he considers the proverbial "everyman." He likes to present these characters because he feels strongly that the folks we read about in our history books, the "famous" people, only got there through the wondrous efforts, the blood, sweat and tears, of countless people who are not recognized in that same way.

Available Presentations

The Great St. Louis Fire of 1849

What started out as a beautiful day in May of 1849 would, by dawn the next day, see the City of St. Louis become a near smoldering ruin. Re-live this harrowing night and learn about the causes and effects of this devastating tragedy. Feel the heat of the inferno of 1 million pounds of burning white pine as we stand along the St. Louis Riverfront, the wood that made up the 23 Steamboats that burned on that night. You will also hear about the history, and the bravery, of the many volunteer Firemen who fought the blaze through the night and of the tragic yet heroic deed of Thomas Targee that finally saved the city from utter destruction.

Gratiot Street, St. Louis' Civil War Prison, and the Life and Times of Absalom Grimes

There are currently 1200+ Confederate Soldiers buried just south of St. Louis at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. Where did they come from? How did they come to die here in the City of St. Louis? I'll tell you how - Gratiot Street Prison, Alton Prison, Myrtle Street Prison - that's how! Learn what it is like to be a Confederate prisoner of war held in or near the City of St. Louis. Relive the experience through the words and mental pictures evoked by one of Gratiot Street Prison's former inmates as he relates the hardships of prison life and the absurdities of Civil War era justice. Hear how the people of St. Louis treated the prisoners and of the life and seemingly unbelievable exploits of convicted Confederate spy Absalom Grimes; a man sentenced to death on at least 2 occasions for carrying Confederate Mail. Will he survive the war to return home to Hannibal, where he was a riverboat pilot alongside Samuel Clemens!

Speaker Contact Information

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