ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Tom Raner is an independent researcher having devoted twenty years recovering and documenting Missouri’s Burnt District (Jackson, Cass, and Bates counties) history. A University of Missouri graduate, he later earned an MA from the University of Missouri - Kansas City. Following a business career he turned full attention to the Burnt District. To date, he has published two histories and a biography, all anchored in antebellum and Civil War western Missouri. Tom has spoken in over 30 Missouri counties as well as numerous venues outside Missouri; historian and storyteller he captivates audiences of all ages and interests.

AVAILABLE PRESENTATIONS

CINDERS AND SILENCE: WESTERN MISSOURI’S BURNT DISTRICT

By September 30, 1863, 2,200 square miles of western Missouri had been reduced to ashes and all civilians not residing at a military station had been removed from the area. Their homes destroyed and destitute in near 100 degree heat the refugees scattered throughout the United States. Jackson, Cass, and Bates counties were a battleground from 1861 to 1863. Order No. 11, issued in August 1863, completed the devastation and rendered the area empty. Many historians deem Order No. 11 the single worst military attack on civilians of the Civil War. This presentation, as the title suggests, answers the questions (1) What happened? and (2) Why has it been forgotten? The chronological period covered is 1854 to 1870. Maps, photographs, music, and props bring this history to life for the audience. The presentation demonstrates the explosive and emotional issues that led to Civil War resonate loudly in western Missouri and how national issues flared in local communities and families. In conclusion, the presentation addresses how events in the burnt district informed international decisions made in the 20th century. This presentation does not use electronic devices.

EXODUS: ORDER NO. 11’S IMPACT ON WESTERN MISSOURI

Using the “Cass County Exodus” mural (original now in SHSM collection) as the focal point, the presentation takes the audience into the personal experiences of individual civilians and families forced to abandon their homes following the issuance of General Order No. 11. This presentation does not use electronic devices. Each member of the audience is given a copy of the mural. The mural, a collaborative effort, between the artist and the presenter, depicts actual refugees whose stories emerged from extensive research. The presentation goes beyond the refugees, bring the audience into the exodus itself. The stifling August heat, the dust drifts, the pervasive fear of death, the sounds of animals and humans, and the smell of destruction. The audience is quite literally asked to participate in a flood of frightened humanity driven to desperation in 1863. The journeys and the stories all told - and then there were none.

SPEAKER CONTACT INFORMATION

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