

Museum Notes

for the week of July 26 – August 1, 2026

by Kristen Parrott, curator

As we commemorate the U.S. 250th this summer, several branches of the U.S. military are also commemorating 250 years. The Revolutionary War began in April of 1775, and three branches of the military were formed shortly thereafter. The army was established on June 14, 1775; the navy on October 13, 1775; and the marines on November 10, 1775. The U.S. declared its independence from Great Britain on July 4, 1776.

In honor of all of these anniversaries, we are pleased to bring to the museum a traveling exhibit about military mascots. The “Fur, Feathers, and Fidelity: Military Mascots” traveling exhibit from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum features mascots and their important service in the military. This special exhibit will be at the Vernon County Museum and History Center, 410 S. Center Ave. in Viroqua, from Saturday, August 1, through Thursday, August 27. Public hours at the museum in August are Monday through Friday, 11AM to 4PM, and Saturday, 10AM to 2PM.

A variety of mascots dating back to the Civil War are featured throughout the exhibit. You might have heard the story of Old Abe, the War Eagle, who was the mascot of the 8th Wisconsin Infantry during the Civil War. This very special bald eagle was carried on a tall perch into battle many times, inspiring Wisconsin soldiers. He survived the war and lived the rest of his long life at the state capitol.

Dogs are a favorite military mascot, and the stories of several are featured in the exhibit, as well as the stories of a monkey and a lion. “Fur, Feathers, and Fidelity” shines a light on the human side of military service and engages animal lovers of all ages. The exhibit is provided courtesy of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, located in downtown Madison. It is funded in part by the Wisconsin Humanities Council with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Here are some other dates for your August calendar: On Thursday, August 13, at 10AM, the genealogy class will meet at the history center for a session about using military records in your research. On Sunday, August 23, at 4PM, there will be a cemetery walk at the South West Prairie Lutheran Church Cemetery in rural Viroqua. And on Saturday, August 29, from 4 to 7PM, the annual Pork Chop Dinner will be held in the parking lot of the history center. More details to come!