



2009 DeKalb Heritage Festival Activities

Students 'meet' historic figures and experience life in the 1800s firsthand.

Businessman Benjamin Swanton in the Swanton House. Sometime in the 1840s, the Swantons moved to Decatur and bought Ammi Williams' property. The house was at 240 Atlanta Avenue, the intersection of Atlanta Avenue (now Swanton Way) and Peavine Creek. Mr. Swanton soon established a steam and water-powered gin-grist mill on Peavine Creek, a machine shop, a tanyard, a blacksmith shop, and a brick kiln on his property. The Swanton's entrusted the house to a family friend during the Civil War. Students will hear about the "Yankee in the Attic."

In the Barber cabin, **African American teacher Charlotte Forten** recalls the civil rights struggles she encountered in 1853. Born to a prosperous Philadelphia family, she sailed to Port Royal, South Carolina in 1862 to teach. Charlotte presents an account of the Civil War from the point of view of a black woman who lived independently when neither women nor African Americans had many freedoms.

Author Mary Ann Harris Gay (1828-1918) in the Mary Gay House. This Confederate author and heroine wrote an eyewitness account entitled "Life in Dixie During the War." This book recounts a series of daring exploits, including her forays across enemy lines to secure food and clothing for women and children of war-torn Decatur. Some of the anecdotes later inspired scenes in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*. During the war, Mary Gay hid winter clothing in her dining room ceiling and later smuggled it to Confederate soldiers. She refused to desert her home while her land was being occupied by the enemy. After her brother was killed during the war, she supported his survivors and other family members by peddling her three books door-to-door.

Confederate Scout and Spy Nancy Hart (1846-1902) from North Carolina cooks up cornbread and ways to carry messages to the Southern armies in the Biffle cabin. Nancy tells students about how she worked underground to assist the Confederacy as a scout, guide, spy, messenger and nurse. For instance, she peddled eggs and veggies to the Yankees to spy on them.

Under the trees, **Calvin Sims, Frontier StoryTeller**. Dressed in authentic period attire, Calvin Sims, a Master StoryTeller with an International following, spins his tales of the golden days of the American West. Specifically the heroic contribution of the little known heroes of the 9th and 10th cavalry. These soldiers who were given the name Buffalo Soldiers by the Cheyenne Indians who both feared and respected them. These soldiers, many of them former slaves, escorted wagon trains west, built many Army forts and towns and fought Indians from sea to shining sea. There was even a woman, Cathy Williams or William Cathay, who fought gallantly disguised as a man until she was wounded in combat and discovered.

The staff from the Decatur Recreation Center will lead students in making **Old Fashioned Hand Dipped Candles** just like the pioneers! Students may take home their creations.

Students will have the opportunity to observe demonstrations on the ancient textile arts of **Weaving** and **Spinning** and learn how these methods were used to make clothing and household items.