



The Civil War is rarely adapted into major Hollywood pictures despite its importance in mainstream America

Jake Gillespie/DN

Civil actions

Historical society starts movie series

■ Hollywood epics "Glory" and "Gettysburg" are included in Civil War cinema, as well as some lesser-known James Stewart work.

BY CRYSTAL K. WIEBE

The Civil War defined the future of America, but is often overlooked in theaters.

The Nebraska State Historical Society's Civil War Cinema is a film festival comprised of those movies that were inspired by the war. Starting Jan. 21 a different film will be shown each week at the Museum of Nebraska History, 15th and P.

Movies start at 2 p.m. Admission is free and seating is limited to 100.

The 1951 film, "The Red Badge of Courage," kicks off the festival.

Based on the novel by Stephen Crane and directed by Academy Award-winner John Huston, the movie stars Audie Murphy, a veteran of World War II.

UNL History Professor Peter Maslowski said the highly decorated Murphy returned from the war to become "of all things, a movie star," but was haunted by his war experience all his life.

"Friendly Persuasion," showing Jan. 28, is the story of pacifist Quakers dealing with their own aversion to war.

In the 1956 film, Gary Cooper and Dorothy McGuire are troubled when their son decides to enlist in the Union Army.

On Feb. 4, the festival's most obscure film showcases some of actor James Stewart's early work.

Andrea Faling, NSHS Library/Archives Associate Director and State Archivist, said "Of Human Hearts" is about an army physician called by President Lincoln to the White House after he fails to write to his mother.

"Glory," a 1989 film starring Matthew Broderick and Denzel Washington and directed by Edward Zwick, tells the story of black soldiers in the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry.

The longest film in the series, "Gettysburg," is about the famous battle of the same name and stars Jeff Daniels.

Part I and II of the movie will be shown on successive Sundays, Feb. 18 and 25.

Faling called Clint Eastwood's 1971 film, "The Beguiled," a predecessor to Stephen King's

Please see CINEMA on 6

New memoir a detailed, artistic account

BY SHARON KOLBET

In 1994, an art dealer approached the Virginia Historical Society with four scrapbooks of Civil War watercolor maps and drawings made by Union soldier Robert Knox Sneden. The previously unknown paintings had been sitting in a bank vault in Connecticut since the Great Depression.

Soon after the purchase of the albums, the historical society learned of a 5,000-page illustrated memoir by the same author that had been languishing in a storage unit in Arizona. Together, the narrative and art constitute one of the most important additions to Civil War literature.

A small edited portion of Sneden's prolific memoir and extensive paintings appear in the publication of "Eye of the Storm: A Civil War Odyssey."

With the release of "Eye of the Storm," historians have a chance to glimpse into the life of a Union private who witnessed the second battle of Bull Run and also survived Andersonville, the Confederacy's notorious, overcrowded and understocked prison.

"September 7 1864: Fine weather, but very hot, 110 degrees anywhere in the shade. This terrible heat helps to

kill us off at the rate of 100 per day inside the stockade. Dead men may be seen by the score lying all along the brook which runs through the filthy swamp, while others are tearing off their soiled clothes to get thread from the seams."

Sneden writes with an analytical detachment and avoids elaborate Victorian prose. His straightforward style gives an immediacy to the events, grabbing the reader with the brutality of the war.

"July 1, 1862... The house was now being filled with our wounded, while our surgeons were hard at work amputating limbs, which were in a ghastly heap near the house, [having been] thrown out of the windows by the assistants."

Working as an architect and engineer in civilian life, Sneden gained his commanders attention with his skills as a mapmaker. That eye for detail can be seen in his unromantic view of the war as well as his meticulous drawings.

During his time of military service, the Union cartographer took care to guard his maps and notes. When preparing to be transferred from Andersonville to another prison,



Robert Knox Sneden

One of the most complete narratives of Civil War history, Robert Knox Sneden also provided drawings of his encounters during the war.

Sneden used pine gum to glue together pages of his New Testament to conceal some of his smaller sketches.

"I now began secreting my sketches, maps, etc. in my clothing, sewed patches over some, made a false top to my cap, sewing the smallest between the linings, and... made soles for my shoes in which I sewed the most important."

While Sneden often had to forage for paper and ink, his ability to write and sometimes forge important documents brought him the extra food rations that helped him survive his stay in Andersonville.

In December of 1886, Sneden, in broken health, returned from prison to his family who had assumed he was dead. He spent the remainder of his life perfecting his memoir and hoped to see it published.

During his lifetime, the second volume of the five part memoir was lost to fire. After his death, the surviving volumes and paintings remained hidden from public view. But with the rediscovery of Sneden's lost works, the modern reader has the opportunity to view some of the most important Civil War documents ever produced.

Save the Last Dance fails to score with realistic teen cinema fare

BY SARAH SUMNER

To dance is to live for Sarah Johnson, played by Julia Stiles of "10 Things I Hate About You." A product of a single-mother home and a jazz-musician father, she is enthralled with a passion for ballet in "Save The Last Dance."

Her dreams are cut short when her audition for Juillard goes awry and her mother is killed in a car accident. She goes to live with her father (Terry Kinney) in a Chicago slum and finds herself in an all black school.

Interracial love plays a large part in "Save The Last Dance." The relationship between Sarah and Derek, played by Sean Patrick Thomas, starts as anger, develops into friendship and fires into love, which makes more than a few people's heads spin by their lack of interest in the racial

Save the Last Dance

★★★★☆

separation of the neighborhood.

Thomas plays the most well-rounded character in the cast. He has his life with his family, friends, school, and goals for the future. He expresses emotion, not whining and gritting of teeth. Thomas surely looked into the recesses of his character to show some depth in his performance.

Within the time "Save The Last Dance" has to develop its characters, it does not do a quality representation. Stiles tries to imbue her character with depth and pain. As with practically every character in the movie, it does not come off well.

The underlying story of her mother's

death and her dysfunctional relationship with her father is not resolved until the last moments of the movie, which is probably because the movie would only be an hour if it wasn't done that way.

As with every movie role Stiles is in, she is moody and acts pissed off. She is a dry actor and has a terminal need to lighten up and look more into creating a character with personality than to be harsh and subject herself to being distasteful in the eyes of the audience.

School life is glossed over by the director, Thomas Carter. Where to be and what crowd to run in are given to the lead character as a gift so that she can get over her fears of school and try to dive into the fears of life.

Sarah does run into tough times, but she easily assimilates herself with new friends. She is accepted in a world of dif-

ferences right away. She rolls with the punches of class and tries to learn from the examples set forth by people she befriends at school.

It is a typical MTV production with high melodrama and so-called familiar situations. The music is extremely good, containing K-Ci and JoJo and Lucy Pearl. It meshes well with the dance clubs, heart-break, pain and happiness.

Too bad they couldn't have done the same with the writing. The movie was typical. Typical situations, typical love story, typical woman being saved by a young, good-looking man. The damsel in distress line has been thrown out so many times, and surprisingly the bait is still being grabbed, mostly by 12-year-old girls.

Though the story brings about the problems of segregation of race, crime and dreams that need to be accom-

plished, it does itself injustice by containing such cheesy situations.

The movie flows on one level until the last five minutes of the show and then drops off like an anchor to rest in your mind as rusty baggage.

"Save the Last Dance" is a movie that is marketed to junior high students, but it is trying to make a statement to society as well, and it comes off as a joke. The movie could have made a striking point with better writing and development.

It hits a chord with the love story and good looking people with the younger audiences, but leaves those who pay attention to the quality of a movie back at the starting line.

"Save the Last Dance" Starring Julia Stiles and Sean Patrick Thomas. Directed by Thomas Carter. Rated PG-13 (adult language). Playing at Cinema Twin.