



NEWS RELEASE

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“THANK GOD FOR MICHIGAN” – *Abraham Lincoln*

**TV SERIES HIGHLIGHTS MICHIGAN’S
SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE CIVIL WAR**

TO AIR ON/AROUND VETERAN’S DAY (11.11.11)

GRAND BLANC, MI—“Thank God for Michigan,” President Abraham Lincoln is reported to have said when the young state was the first to send troops to aid in the Union Army’s efforts in the American Civil War.

Michigan’s contributions to the war effort are the focus of *The Michigan Experience: The American Civil War Years (TME)* series to air on public television over the four years of the Civil War’s Sesquicentennial (2011-2015).

The production is the work of iMichigan Productions (iMP), a non-profit educational production company based in Grand Blanc.

John Gibney, director of the Monroe County Historical Museum calls the production, “The most factual depiction to date.”

Rodney W. Brown, the show’s producer/director and iMP’s co-founder, said the show is the direct result of an interview he’d done with director Ken Burns (*Civil War, Jazz, and Baseball*).

When Brown asked Burns how he decided what to omit from his epic PBS production, Burns said he was often asked why elements of the war were omitted and his answer was simply “time.” There wasn’t enough time, said Burns. At the same time, Burns said he hoped the local media would take up where he had left off to tell the local and regional stories of the Civil War.

That, said Brown, “was my turning point.

“Tell Michigan’s stories,” he thought to himself.

From Burns’ challenge came iMichigan Productions and its first project: Michigan’s role in the Civil War.

The first episode of the series will air on or around Veteran’s Day (11.11.11) on all of the public television stations in the state (check local listings).

The four one-hour episodes cover Michigan’s role in the Civil War including its 90,000 soldiers, its senator who orchestrated the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments, its

agricultural and equestrian contributions to the war effort, its Navy, cavalry, and ambulance builders and its Civil War cemeteries.

Through the state's Civil War reenactor community and historians, viewers hear the voices and stories of Michigan's many regiments, its government, and daily life. These stories include those of the 102nd Regiment of Detroit, Michigan's only black regiment to fight in the war.

The production relies heavily on state historians and history educators to ensure its accuracy and that its content mirrors state K-12 history curriculum standards.

Unprecedented in the state, is the collaboration between commercial television stations that have joined forces with iMichigan Productions on behalf of this project. News anchors from the seven major markets --- Marquette to Detroit --- serve as hosts to the segments of the first episode. They are Steve Asplund of WLUC-TV, Marquette; Suzanne Geha of WZZM-TV, Grand Rapids; Judy Markee of WWMT, Kalamazoo; Diana Lewis of WXYZ, Detroit; Bill Harris of WJRT, Flint; Sam Merrill of WNEM, Saginaw; and David Andrews of WILX, Lansing.

Brown said the commercial media partners recognize the value of this production to their own communities and to the state as a whole. "This program celebrates a legacy of commitment, achievement and sacrifice by our Michigan ancestors. Everyone who watches this show will see themselves and be renewed in their pride for their Michigan heritage."

Station Manager Kent Wieland of WKAR-TV of East Lansing, which will air the show, said of the production, "As the Civil War constitutes a grave and pivotal point not only in our national history but that of Michigan, the story of Michigan's involvement is a story that needs and merits greater exploration. This documentary series examines Michigan's role and provides a better understanding of the impact of Michigan's involvement."

Already available for the TME project is a *Living History Narratives* page at the iMP website. Visitors can hear in first person from a slave, from soldiers, from Sarah Edmonds of Flint, Mich., who dressed as a man to enlist in the Union Army, and from President Lincoln, General Robert E. Lee, General George A. Custer. Living history impressionists present the first person narratives on the site.

Additional airdates for TME are expected around Black History Month, Flag Day, Memorial Day, and in the spring in anticipation of the 8th grade Civil War curriculum.

iMP, which is in pre-production with the final three episodes of the TME project, was founded in 2010 by Brown and partners Leon Collins and Donna Ullrich, both of East Lansing.

iMP creates multi-media productions that are educating and stimulating, and about Michigan. In addition to the television programs, iMP is in the process of creating a robust e-learning center to provide teachers, students and life-long learners with free resources and tools to enable them to further their exploration and learning on each iMP project topic.

For more information and to see trailers of the show go to:
www.imichiganproductions.org.