

Mid Michigan Renaissance Festival to open in October

BY BILL PETZOLD, Staff Writer

VASSAR — The “rennies” are coming!

Just like “trekkies” love Star Trek, there’s nothing a “rennie” likes more than attending a renaissance festival, and the Mid-Michigan Renaissance Festival (MMRF) will give Vassar-area residents a chance to experience the good “olde” days.



Toni Knoll and her son, Vince, have been working to build the renaissance festival with rennies Chuck and Wendy Hough. The Houghs traveled to numerous festivals and fairs around the country to research and see what it takes to hold a successful renaissance fair. Toni owns the land on which the Village of Kleves will be built, and Chuck and Wendy are helping make the dream of a local renaissance fair a reality.

The Village of Kleves is beginning to take shape about four miles southwest of Vassar on Frankenmuth road.

“We’ve got all the spots cleared for the vendors,” said Toni. “The parking area is about 12 acres, and the festival will cover about 13-14 acres of woods. Things have been going pretty smoothly.”

Toni said that festival organizers have been helped quite a bit by Bob Traver. Bob has been grooming the paths for the festival with a backhoe and with a tractor pulling a yolk rake.

Traver has been so helpful, that plans are being made to “knight” him at the festival’s opening weekend.

In addition to vendors selling food, non-alcoholic drinks and merchandise, the MMRF is bringing in plays, theatrical combat, a living statue, sword-fighting and fencing, and Carnivale Mijnoon — a Middle-Eastern gypsy dance troupe.

Also featured will be musicians, actors, and plenty of people dressed in exquisite renaissance garb, most of which is handmade.

The MMRF takes place in the German village of Kleve, the home of Anna Von Kleve (Sept. 22, 1515 to July 16 1557 — the fourth wife of King Henry VIII of England. Henry VIII sought the marriage with Anna in the hopes that she could give him a male heir, and also to strengthen his kingdom's international power. Henry, excited to meet his new bride, rode out with his men to meet her on her journey to England. But he found that he and Anne didn't really have much in common, and that he didn't find her particularly attractive.

With no handy way for Henry to end the engagement, Henry and Anna were married on Jan. 6, 1540. When it was apparent that Anna and Henry's marriage was doomed from the start, Henry asked for her consent to an annulment, and the marriage was annulled on July 9.

Unlike many of Henry VIII's wives, Anna was not executed and received a generous settlement in the annulment. She had also received the honorary title "the King's Beloved Sister" and was made a Princess of England.

The premise behind the Frankenmuth Road renaissance festival is that Henry VIII and are returning to Kleve after their marriage. Although this occasion never actually happened in history, the plotline combines elements of both English and German history to suit both the actors and sponsors Bronner's Christmas Wonderland and the Bavarian Inn Lodge, who asked the group if they would give the festival a German theme.

The plotline will involve tension between certain nobility and a band of gypsies who have camped in Kleves for the weekend, and German theologian Martin Luther also will make an appearance.

The actors portraying Henry VIII and Anna Von Kleve are both members of the Court at the Michigan Renaissance Festival in Holly.

The MMRF will open the second weekend of October and run through the first weekend of November.

The festival kicks off on Saturday, October 11 at 8:45 a.m. with a play that will introduce attendees to the characters. The theme of the first weekend is "New Beginnings." The following weekend will feature a Celtic Celebration, the third week is a "Pirates and Pints" theme.

The fourth and final week will be "Haunted Hollows" weekend, Nov. 1-2. Kids 12 and younger and in costume will get in free with a paid adult. They will be able to trick-or-treat at the festival both Saturday and Sunday.

The festival is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. each Saturday and Sunday, rain or shine. Children five years old and younger get in free. Admission for kids age six through 12 is \$6.95, and persons age 13 and older are \$7.95.

For information, visit www.midmichiganrenfest.com.