

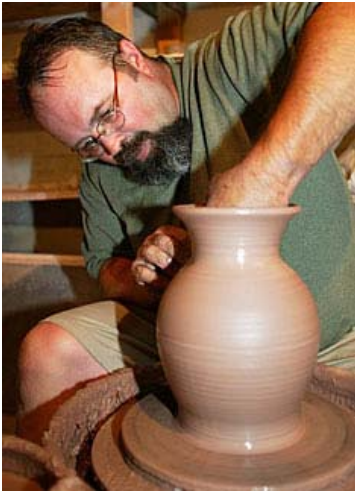
# A step back in time

## Blue Earth County Fair features new rendezvous

By Josie Garcia

Free Press Staff Writer

GARDEN CITY — Bill Macemon is bracing his feet for this weekend when he'll be making pottery the old-fashioned way.



Peter Barta

Bill Macemon of Lake Crystal uses an electric wheel to make a pitcher at his home studio. He'll be setting that wheel aside for a manual one during the Watonwan River Rendezvous at the Blue Earth County Fair.

Instead of creating pottery using an electric wheel, he will use a kicking wheel. The thrower stands rather than sits and moves the wheel by kicking with a foot.

Macemon and more than 15 other artists and traders will make up a new attraction called Watonwan River Rendezvous during this weekend's 144th Blue Earth County Fair in Garden City.

Cathy Kietzer, secretary for the Fair Board, said she wanted to make learning history fun by bringing it to life. The rendezvous, a camp focusing on the 1840s, helps people understand how life was lived as participants dress and use customs of the time period, she said.

"I wanted to do something different — that's how you keep people coming back (to the fair)," she said.

Rick Johnston, camp boss for the rendezvous, said there will be plenty of frontier activities, including

demonstrating how to work with wool, basket weaving, a man portraying a voyageur, use of old-fashioned firearms and kids games.

Macemon will be one of the demonstrators making pottery. Like other potters, Macemon said he has a couple of kickwheels of his own aside from the one he will use at the fair.

"Kickwheels are still very popular," he said. "Potters like them because they can throw pots at anytime. They don't have to use electricity."

Macemon has been shaping and making pottery for more than 30 years. He said a junior high school teacher inspired him. Much like the rendezvous theme, the rest is history.

"I just fell in love with the ability to create and work on the wheel," he said.

His creations of bowls, jugs, mugs and other kitchenware will be on display and for sale at the fair. The pottery is microwave, oven and dishwasher safe.

Most of the pottery has designs of basket weaving or a grass-swept look in texture. But Macemon said no two items are exactly alike making creating each object unique.

This is Macemon's seventh year participating in a rendezvous. Some of the festivals and fairs he has traveled to include the Big Island Rendezvous in Albert Lea, the Minnesota Renaissance Festival and the Dakota County Fair. He has been a participant since 1969. He and his wife, Mariana, "went all over kingdom come," he said.

Rendezvous are a big interest to Macemon and other participants because they capture state and Minnesota River history. Historically, the Minnesota River was used as a way to travel for Indians, explorers and traders.

As a teacher at Riverbend Academy in Mankato, Macemon said he occasionally shares what he knows with students in his pottery class, including discussing where pottery was made. He also teaches sculpture, drawing and painting.

Johnston said the Watonwan River Rendezvous can be a learning experience for everyone.

"Put down the history book and come and see it," he said. "We take the book one step further. We do it."