Mark H. Tompkins

Mark Tompkins spoke at the Optimist Club this week. He is from the 5th Cavalry Historical Society and is an avid history reader and loves to share in that history. He has met many High School students that don't know much about American history, even World War II history.

Mr. Tompkins told a story about his ancestor Abram Tompkins. In 1852 Abram came to Iowa from Michigan with his wife and twelve children. He served in the legislature from Tama County from 1855-1867.

A neighbor of Abram Tompkins was James Wilson, who also served in the legislature at the same time. James Wilson was born in Scotland. James Wilson, and was known as Tama James Wilson. He was also a Secretary of Agriculture and held a cabinet position longer than anyone else had.

In 1885 Ulysses S. Grant voluntarily gave up his commission and with it his pension. He was later swindled out of the rest of his money. When the legislature found out that he was broke just before the inauguration on 4 March 1885, they tried to pass legislation giving him his pension back. At the last minute in the legislature, there was another issue to resolve, that of a contested election of Tama James Wilson and his competitor. Wilson voluntarily ended his contest of the election, thereby losing his seat, so the legislature would have time to vote on giving Grant his pension back. Grant died less than six months later. He was to receive a pension of $13,000 per year, and his widow $5000 per year.

About the Civil War, Tompkins said that no subject in America has been written about more than the Civil War. Never in a war have so many Americans died in such short conflicts. In Gettysburg there were 800 men fighting in a battle that lasted about 45 minutes. Only 14 remained at the end. In three days, 20,000 men died.

Mark Tompkins served in the Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard for 35 years. He said he will talk about American History for anyone.