



BILL LOVEJOY/SENTINEL

Union troops get the once over from their squad leader Saturday at Roaring Camp's 30th annual Civil War Battles & Encampment.

A shot of history

Events, Festivals etc.

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Roaring Camp hosts Civil War battle re-enactments through Monday

By KIMBERLY WHITE

kwhite@santacruzsentinel.com

FELTON — Hundreds watched Saturday afternoon as Union and Confederate soldiers clashed in hand-to-hand combat under gray, overcast skies. Thunderous explosions emanated from the cannons lined up at both ends of the field, an occasional smoke ring rising before dissipating in the breeze.

The 30th annual Civil War Battles & Encampment, will be held at Roaring Camp Railroads in Felton through Monday. Each year, it draws

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Rollin George of Visalia lectures on the sound effects of an 1841 six-pound field gun Saturday at the 30th annual Civil War Battles & Encampment.

IF YOU GO

30TH ANNUAL
CIVIL WAR BATTLES
& ENCAMPMENT

WHAT: One of the longest-running historic re-enactments in the West and commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

WHERE: Roaring Camp Railroads, 5355 Graham Hill Road

WHEN: Activities begin each day at 10 a.m. with battles at 12:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. today and at 2 p.m. Monday. A chuck wagon barbecue is served from noon to 3 p.m.

COST: Admission is \$5 per person and parking is \$8 per car. Guests purchasing train ticket receive a \$2 discount by showing admission ticket.

INFORMATION: <http://www.roaringcamp.com>



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ABOVE: A woman dressed in an elaborate gown like those of the period visits a tent in the rebel encampment Saturday during Roaring Camp's 30th annual Civil War Battles & Encampment, which continues through Monday.

LEFT: A union soldier steadies the staff of his company flag while setting up camp at Roaring Camp Railroad on Saturday.

WAR

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hundreds of history buffs to the site, where they re-enact the battles and skirmishes of a war that lasted from 1861-1865.

Drifting among the crowd were women dressed in period costumes, some in elaborate gowns trimmed with lace, others in simple cotton gowns that showed barely any skin. Their delicate forms contrasted with their male counterparts.

Many of the men wore heavy gray and blue wool uniforms, their hands wrapped around rifles and menacing bayonets.

Among those sitting on the sidelines was a woman and her niece, who at that time, would've stayed as far from each other as possible. "Anna Belle's: Gentlemen Always Welcome" read a wooden sign posted outside the tent.

Nichole Vancis, 17, was dressed in a simple, ankle-length cotton dress. Seated beside her was her aunt, Debbie Hawley, wearing a provocative red, satin gown trimmed with black beads — the top pulled tight to the top.

"I walk around and the women, they



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Patrick Lewis of Loomis watches seamstress Alice Schug of Placerville operate a Civil War-era hand-powered sewing machine at the 30th annual Civil War Battles & Encampment on Saturday at Roaring Camp.

just shun you, they don't even say good morning — they know what you are," Hawley said in character. The prostitutes, known at the time as "camp followers," advertised laundry services, but their services involved more than just getting the dirt out of men's clothes.

Visalia resident Charles Henry, who portrayed Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, has been participating in the re-enactments for the past 21 years. He

and hundreds of other volunteers spent the night at the site, some sleeping in the white pitched tents scattered throughout the grounds, while others roughed it underneath the stars.

Some men such as Mike Meals — who portrayed a priest — helped fulfill soldiers' spiritual needs. Meals explained that men such as him would prepare soldiers spiritually before they entered the battlefield, and would go out after the battle to assist the dying and wounded.

"We're the history book that no one wants to read," said Frank Kilbourne, dressed in a blue Union uniform beside the "world's oldest private," 78-year-old Jim Kirchhoffer.

People tend not to want to read dense history books filled with a bunch of dates, locations and names, Kilbourne said, but he and other members of the American Civil War Association can help children get interested in the subject by bringing the history to life.

"But we're also remembering the people who gave their lives to keep this country whole," he added. "You can never forget about that, especially when there are people deployed overseas right now doing just that."