

Civil War history buffs come to camp

By Norson Flack
special writer

VIEWERS STEPPED back in time at Heritage Park last weekend during the first Civil War Encampment in the Farmington-Farmington Hills area.

The event began at 8 a.m. Saturday with a schedule that included infantry drills, campfire demonstrations, skirmishes and mail call. It ended at 4 p.m. Sunday. The event marked the first activity of the 25th annual Founders Festival of Farmington-Farmington Hills.

"This park is a beautiful spot for the encampment," said Don Everett, president of the 7th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Company B Unit. "We are here to educate the public to the times of the Civil War. We have been treated fantastic by the people here."

The 7th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Unit organized the encampment at the request of two Farmington Hills Civil War buffs, Sam Lowe, 16, and Tim Sheehy, 20.

"This is just one more way of getting close to American history," Sheehy said.

LOWE AND SHEEHY participated as Union soldiers and slept in the authentic tents, made "saw belly" for breakfast and listened to the harmonica around the campfire.

Sheehy and Lowe said the participation — 150 soldiers — was better than expected for a first-time reenactment, but they would have liked cannon and cavalry participation this year.

"I'm really surprised at how knowledgeable they are," said Kevin O'Brien, a viewer from Farmington Hills. "Each outfit knows the complete history of their unit."

"It was such a tragedy with so many killed," O'Brien said. "The more you read, the more you try to understand the events of the time."

SETTLER PARTICIPANTS set up booths with authentic Civil War merchandise for sale such as flags, hats, knives, tents and hoops for dresses. Prices reflected 1989 costs.

Fred and Casey Healy, settlers from Dryden, had a booth of hand-sewn leather goods. An infantry belt was priced at \$9, cartridge box, \$32.50, and cap boxes, \$14. A Civil War buff may pay as much as \$1,000 for authentic gear to participate in the hobby.

"We are all students of the Civil War," said Jeffrey Adams, a Union soldier from Eaton Rapids. "We appreciate the history of the war. It was a glorious battle."

"I didn't know that much about the guns or the medicine they used," said Pat Keltcher, 11, a viewer from Farmington Hills. "The medical guy showed us how they used old-fashioned ways to stop wounds from bleeding."

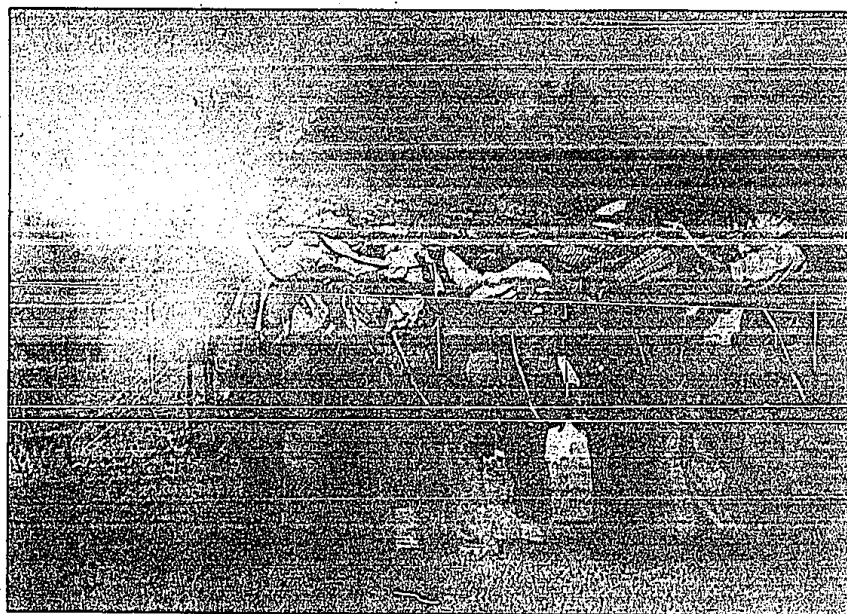
"I think it's good for the kids," said Bob Every, a viewer from Farmington Hills. "We learned that over-the-shoulder horns were made over a period of 18 years. They were designed so troops can be behind them and bear the horns."

WOMEN PARTICIPANTS dressed in a costume that started with authentic hose and went on to pantaloons, a petticoat, a hoop with seven rings, another petticoat, a dress, a hat and lace mitts that didn't cover the fingers.

"We joined the unit so that our children would learn history," said Linda Williams, wife of Pvt. Richard Williams, a Union soldier. "We have built strong friendships with very good people that carry on good values and good patriotism. It's nice to be in a group with people of the same morals and values."

The Confederacy unit staged an act with one of its soldiers accused of stealing other's pay.

"There is one soldier among us



DOUGLAS E. SUSALLA

Union forces fire a volley in preparation for a skirmish with Confederate forces.

who we thought was a gentleman, but he is actually an egg-sucking dog," the commander said.

The soldier had to wear a sign

made of wood with "thief" burned into it.

"I like how neat the captain's tent is," said Jean Krause, a viewer from Farmington Hills. "I guess that's an advantage of the higher rank."

THE MOST excitement of the event seemed to be focused on the skirmishes at 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Confederate and Union troops battled with authentic rifles filled with gunpowder, bringing the real Civil War effect to viewers.

"The battle is choreographed ahead of time, but you lose a sense of reality when you are in the field," Sheehy said.

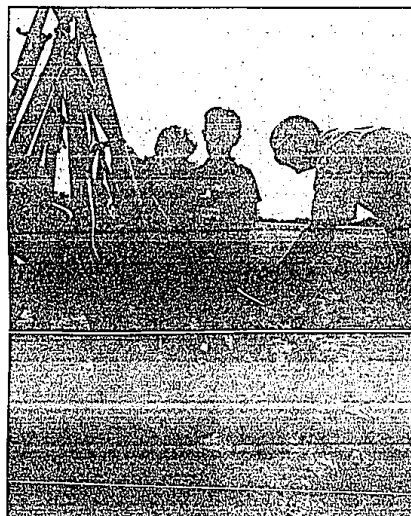
Statements such as "Damn Yankee lies" or "Yellowbelly Yanks" were heard toward the Confederate camps as soldiers prepared their guns for battle.

Dan Wiley, commander of the 43rd North Carolina Confederacy Unit, and his troops outnumbered the Yanks and won both battles Saturday and Sunday.

The 5th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment Band, headquartered in Dearborn Heights, performed such original Civil War tunes as "Dixie Land" and "Johnny Comes Marching Home" before and after battle.

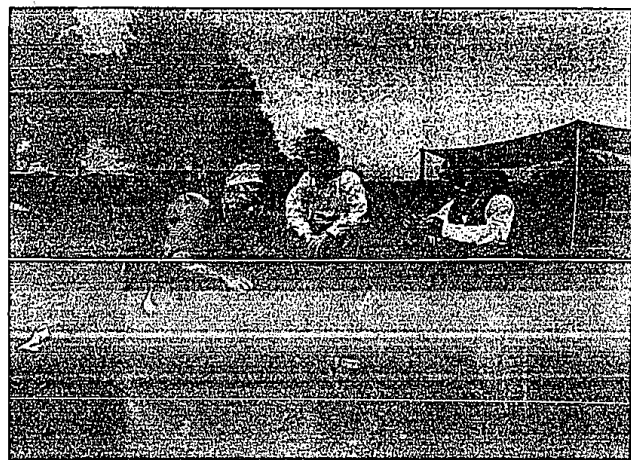
Carl Moss of Port Huron participated as Governor Blair, Michigan governor during the Civil War.

"Lincoln once stated 'Thank God for Governor Blair' because he was one of the strongest men to encourage the troops," Moss said.



DOUGLAS E. SUSALLA

Robert Snyder of Farmington examines a Civil War rifle with grandchildren Christy Snyder, 10, and Craig Snyder, 8, of Farmington Hills.



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Sam Lowe (left) of Farmington Hills, Dick Williams of Lansing and Tim Sheehy of Farmington Hills, all Union soldiers, cook some breakfast.

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