

# Civil War reignited in Camp Sherman

By Jodi Schneider  
Correspondent

Imagine stepping back in time during the Civil War in 1863 and walking into the campgrounds behind the frontline of a field filled with Confederate and Union soldiers at battle.

The Northwest Civil War Council (NCWC) brought history to life for the sixth Civil War living history event during a full reenactment at House on Metolius in Camp Sherman Saturday and Sunday.

With the thunderous crack of cannon and the sulfurous pop of muskets, the morning battle began on the meadow, just a stone's throw from the Metolius River.

When the rifles were empty and the artillery nothing more than smoke, dozens of reenactors, often shouting at the top of their lungs when pretending to be wounded, or cheering when a shot landed, delighted the crowd of spectators.

Over 150 years after bloodshed divided the United States, the stories and memories of the Civil War still attract the citizens of the once-war-torn country.

NCWC is a nonprofit living-history organization dedicated to educating the public and their members about the American Civil War. It is made up of individual units (Union, Confederate and Civilian) who come together several times each year to entertain and educate the public about the American Civil War.

Event Coordinator David Banks, who has been a part of the NCWC since 2012, noted, "This is one of the most unique events that we have. I'm sure much of America has heard or read about removing Confederate statues and symbols from our past, and the Civil War reenactment is about the closest and most unbiased look at both sides of the issue one can find."

Sisters resident and reenactment member Michelle

Ehr, aka Mrs. Molly McDaniels, was set up in the Confederate camp getting ready to assist with another burial, this time, an elderly woman. McDaniel's husband, now deceased, had been the undertaker.

"Molly serves as a 'layer-out of the dead' because as a woman she could not be an undertaker since it was culturally not acceptable," Ehr said.

"Layers-out of the dead would wash, dress, and groom the body. They would also close the mouth of the deceased, using a tied cloth or a stick propped between the chin and breastbone, and use coins or other objects to keep the eyes closed.

"There were more U.S. lives lost in the Civil War than any other wars combined," Ehr said. "There was so much death in the Civil War that there was no one that wasn't touched by it. There were very young widows with babies and without

family nearby, they were left pretty much penniless."

The American Civil War created an extraordinary number of young widows, many married for a short time. Between 1861 and 1865, approximately three million husbands, fathers, sons, uncles, and brothers left for war. Roughly 750,000 American families would never see their loved one's face again as the men died, often far from home. As a result, some 200,000 women became widows within those four years.

As spectators walked the grounds, actors in the event remained in character, cooking small meals over campfires and singing songs to the fiddle or other period-correct musical instruments.

Bend resident Matt Cleman, who portrays a Union sergeant with the 69th New York in the Civil War event, has been reenacting for 12 years and has been



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

It's not all about battle. Reenactors recreate many aspects of 1860s camp life during the annual Civil War event at Camp Sherman.

both Union and Confederate soldiers.

"It's always been my goal to present a realistic person for visitors at events; so that they feel like they've met an

actual living person," Cleman said.

In 2018, Cleman and several other NCWC

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