

## CALIFORNIANS in the CIVIL WAR

When the American Civil War broke out in April 1861, the state of California (admitted to the Union in 1850) boasted a population of only about 350,000 persons. It was a cosmopolitan population, composed of people from all over the U.S. and from many foreign lands. Many had come for gold. By 1861 the “boom” was long over, but California was still a major source of gold and silver production.

Although far from the eastern battlefields of the war, California found itself caught up in that struggle. While the state remained in the Union, a significant minority of Californians had come from southern states and favored the Confederate cause. Throughout the war, there were occasional attempts by southern sympathizers to foment trouble in state. Also, the withdrawal of Regular Army troops at the start of the war encouraged some Indian tribes in the state to rise up and fight further encroachment of white settlers on their lands.

Californians loyal to the Union eagerly awaited a call from Washington, D.C., for California volunteer regiments to help fight the southern rebellion. And a call came – but Californians who rushed to enlist were disappointed to discover that the government wanted them fill the vacancy left by the Regulars and help maintain order in the western U.S. Some Californians did travel east to enlist in regiments from other states; and Massachusetts recruited an entire battalion of cavalry from Californians eager to fight rebels. Also, some of the first California troops helped drive back a Confederate invasion of New Mexico and Arizona. But most of California’s volunteer soldiers served in camps and forts scattered from Washington Territory to the Mexican border, and from Catalina Island to Salt Lake City and west Texas. They sometimes brushed with pro-Confederate rowdies; more often had to fight Indians; but mostly they suffered the same routine boredom as plagued their Regular Army predecessors.

All told, California fielded eight regiments and one battalion of infantry, as well as two regiments and one battalion of cavalry. About 15,000 Californians served in these units, giving California the distinction of having put a higher proportion of its population into uniform than any other state in the Union.

**FORT TEJON**, abandoned by the Regular Army in 1861, was re-occupied at various times during the Civil War by contingents of California troops. These troops provided a “police” presence for ranchers and settlers in the region and kept watch over the nearby Indian reservation.

**THE “SOLDIERS” YOU SEE HERE AT FORT TEJON TODAY** are re-enactors portraying **Company G** of the **2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of California Volunteer Infantry**. The soldiers of Company G enlisted in the fall of 1861. They came mostly from Angel’s Camp up in the “gold” country and from San Francisco. They had previously served at various posts in northern and central California. They came to Fort Tejon at the start of February 1864 and remained here until June 1864, when they marched south to Drum Barracks in Wilmington. **THE CIVILIANS** represent some of the sorts of folks who lived near the Fort or who occasionally stopped here in their travels during the 1860s.

**PLEASE** feel free to speak and interact with the soldiers and civilians. *But be advised...*for them, it is February of **1864**. Expect them to speak and act accordingly. *Come and experience some “living history.”*

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