

WHAT'S GOING ON IN BONITA

NOV. 9 1994

AC-0032

19th-century Christmas

Koreshan site to look like 1800s village

By JANE HILL
News-Press correspondent

Turn back your calendars this weekend and your thinking forward to explore a Victorian village decorated in the spirit of Christmas past.

Friday through Sunday, the Koreshan State Historic Site will become a lively 19th century village visited by an assortment of costumed guests including Civil War soldiers, Seminole Indians, Santa Claus and President Lincoln.

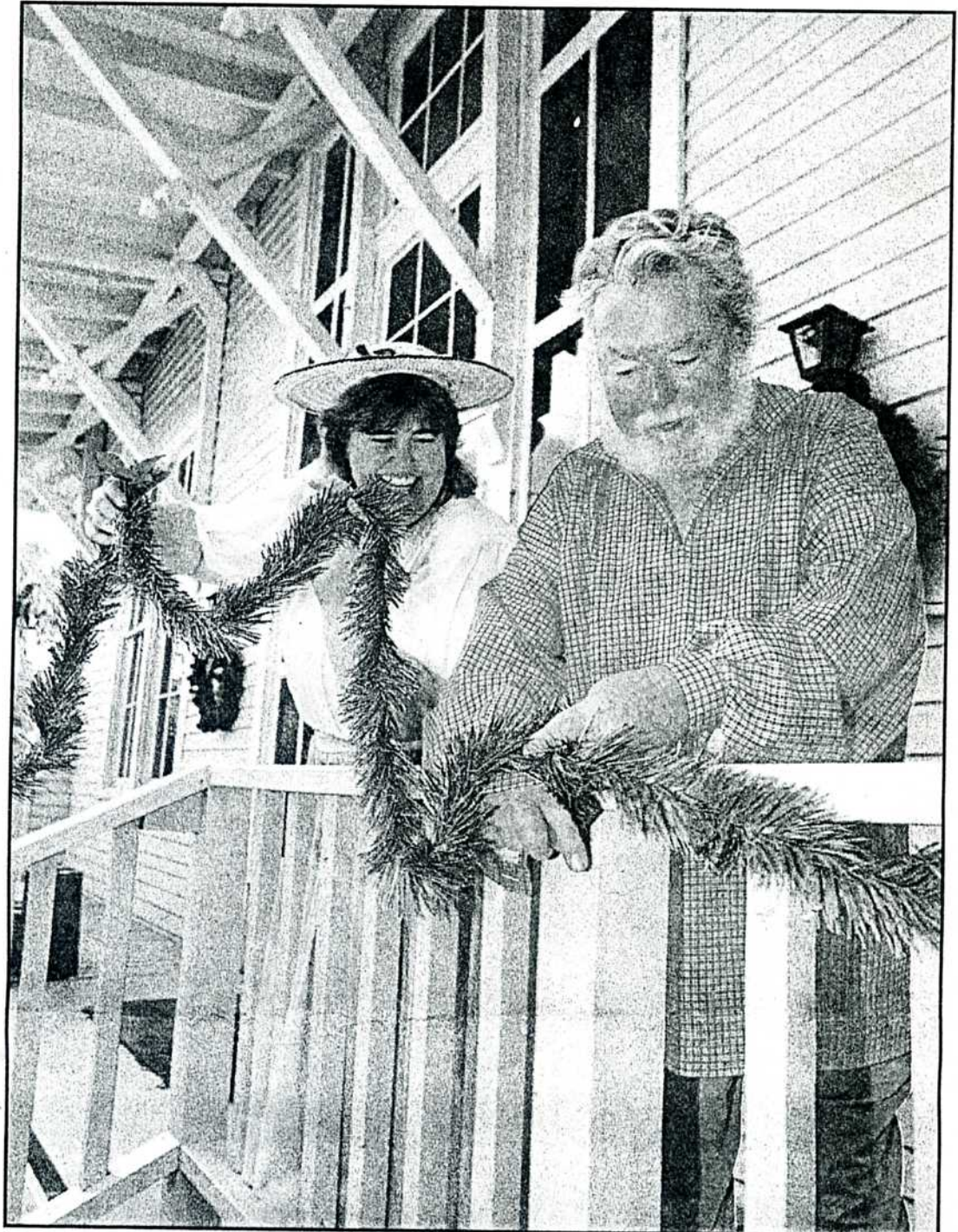
Weavers, spinners, blacksmiths and butter makers are among the 30 trades people typical of the period, who will demonstrate their work and sell their wares. In the evening, shopping continues by lamplight.

Carolers and musicians will stroll around the village, which has been decorated in evergreens for the season. In addition, singers from Estero High School's Madrigal Group, Bonita Middle School, Three Oaks Elementary and the Sweet Adelines will entertain.

Last year, the park opted not to hold the event after record crowds overwhelmed the facilities in 1992. Jeanne Parks, park manager, said the problems — including not having enough shuttles to take people to the festival — have been worked out. This year buses will run continuously every 15 minutes from the parking lot at Estero High School.

"I know we have that under control," she said.

However, Parks suggests families should arrive early, particularly parents with



BRUCE FINE/News-Press

Amy Kolb, left, a park ranger at the Koreshan State Historic Site in Estero, and Dr. Julius Heitz, a volunteer at the site, decorate the Art Hall for the weekend Christmas village that will begin 10 a.m. on Friday and run all weekend at the park.

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young children who want to board buses right away.

"You can always stay late," she said.

A few highlights of the weekend include the following:

■ Friday, Abe Lincoln's address - 7 p.m.

■ Saturday, fashion show - 10 a.m.; Abe Lincoln - noon; parade of confederate troops - 5 p.m.

■ Sunday, Abe Lincoln - 12:30; Ladies Tea - 1 p.m.; discourse on surgical procedures 1860s style - 1:30.

Visitors also can tour the historic buildings where docents will explain the history of the site.

Refreshments and picnic tables are available. Besides hamburgers, there will be Indian fry bread and kettle corn — or popcorn made the old-fashioned way — and a ladies' tea on Saturday and Sunday afternoon.

Parks, said three Cape Coral Boy Scout troops and the Young Marines of Lee

EARLY HOLIDAY

■ **WHAT:** Santa's Village of Christmas Past.

■ **WHERE:** Koreshan State Historic Site, Estero

■ **WHEN:** Fri. and Sat. 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Last shuttle leaves the high school an hour before closing each day

■ **PARKING:** All parking at Estero High School on River Ranch Road, shuttles every 15 minutes

■ **COST:** Adults \$3, children \$2

County cleaned up the shell paths in preparation for the event, and local sponsors have helped underwrite expenses.

All proceeds from admission go toward restoration of the site. Recently, the park service restored the Founder's Hall and a small cottage that belonged to the original land settler who sold his land to the Koreshans. Next in line for restoration is the Planetary Court, which was home to Koreshan women.



Irene Doughty shows her friend, Harriet Hill, two wooden angels while trying to decide which one to buy.



Mike Jolly, a Civil War re-enactor with the 1st Minnesota Company D of the Union Army, draws on his pipe while relaxing at the festival.

An old-time Christmas

19th century comes alive at Koreshan Historic Site

By EILEEN KELLEY
Staff Writer

Perched on an old wooden chair beneath the strong Florida sun was not just any old man, but the big guy himself from the North, just in time to kick off a 19th-century Christmas celebration in the 20th century.

Complete with red knickers, stiff shoes, knee socks, and a golfing stick, Santa said he was whisked away from his vacation on the links to help the southerners kick off the holiday at the Koreshan State Historic Site last weekend.

"I didn't bring my boots, I didn't bring my jacket," said a flustered Santa with rosy — and sun-kissed — cheeks. "But I got my golfing stick. I'm trying to get a vacation before things get too busy up in the North."

Sorry Santa, Christmas officially kicked off in Estero Friday even if it was 87 degrees.

Others in the traditional garb from a century ago took their roles all in stride as the Koreshan Unity Alliance marked its third Santa's Village of Christmas Past celebration. Proceeds from the event are earmarked for the restoration of Planetary Court, a two-story cabin where the women leaders of the settlement lived more than 100 years ago.

Some 150 different local and out-of-state vendors set up camp for the Christmas celebration. Weavers, spinners, blacksmiths and other tradesmen and Civil War re-enactors provided demonstrations throughout the afternoon.



Kathy Hammond spins Samoyed dog hair into yarn during the Santa's Village of Christmas Past festival at the Koreshan State Historic Site in Estero Saturday. Staff photos by Ben Gray



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Captain Bob Scott, of the Gambles Light Artillery unit, polishes his 1862 Army issue revolver during a break in the event.



Sgt. Sean Storm cleans the barrel of a canon while other members of the Gambles Light Artillery unit look on at the Koreshan State Historic Site in Estero Saturday.