

Two papers began publication in the Mantorville area as early as 1857: The Mantorville Express, which continued publishing until 1880, and the Wasioja Gazette, which quit by 1859. In the days immediately after the outbreak of war, the Express was a prime recruiting tool for Union soldiers, and Wasioja was an important station along the way for new recruits.

The Red Wing Sentinel, published since 1856, was one of the earliest newspapers in the area, and it became the Goodhue Volunteer in 1861. As its name suggests, it was a pro-Union paper that promoted the war effort. But Red Wing, which was a boom town in those year, had many papers that were vying for attention, many with a political and patriotic outlook that became explicit as the Civil War approached.

Chatfield had a paper in 1856 as well -- the Chatfield Democrat. Though the Democratic Party in those years was conflicted about slavery, state's rights and the threat of civil war, Chatfield would become a hotbed of Union recruiting when war broke out in 1861. The Democrat published until 1902, despite its name in a Republican-leaning state.

There was also a Chatfield Republican newspaper that began publishing in 1856, but it quit the business in 1861. Bad business timing, perhaps, with the nation about to elect Lincoln.

Dozens of start-up newspapers

Other newspapers that were published in the Civil War era and helped inform and shape public opinion about the war:

The Minnesota Gazette, published in Red Wing, 1856-1857.

The Red Wing Argus, 1864-1900.

The Red Wing Republican, 1857-1859.

The Red Wing Daily Republican, which began publishing in 1860.

The Minnesota Posten, a Swedish language paper published in Red Wing in 1857-1858.

The Fillmore County Pioneer, published for just a year in 1856.

The Republican, 1861-65, published in Preston. It apparently became the Preston Republican in that year and continued publishing.

The Wabashaw County Herald, published in Read's Landing from 1857 to 1861, after which it moved to Wabashaw (as it was spelled then).

The Waumadee Herald, published in Read's Landing in 1857.

The Minnesota Patriot, Wabasha, 1858-1859.

The Weekly Journal, Wabasha, 1859-1861.

The Lake City Tribune, 1857-1861.

The Weekly Lake City Times, 1861-1865.

The Mower County Mirror, published in Austin, 1858-1859.

The Minnesota Courier, Austin, 1860-1864.

The Mower County Register, Austin, 1863-1871.

The Winona Argus, 1854-1857.

The Winona Republican, 1855-1862.

The Winona Weekly Express, which began publishing in 1855.

The Democrat, Winona, 1858.

The Winona Daily Review, 1858-1859.

The Times, which began publishing in Winona in 1858.

The Winona Daily Republican, 1859-1901.

The Winona Democrat, which began publishing in time for the 1864 presidential election with Democratic nominee (and former Union general) George C. McClellan challenging Lincoln.

The Democratic Press, Winona, 1865-1866.

All were important locally in helping to build the towns and counties where they were published, and often they were just as important in providing a forum for debating how and whether the Union could endure the approaching crisis.

These papers also were mailed and read by soldiers on the battlefield. The major newspapers from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and elsewhere were peddled from wagons that followed the armies, and they often had more information about the war than soldiers were getting from their leaders.

Newspaperman was among early leaders

One of the most important and colorful figures in early Minnesota history was James Goodhue, who published the state's first newspaper, the *Minnesota Pioneer*, in 1849. As a result of the need for legal advertising, Goodhue essentially became the territorial government's official printer. He witnessed the signing of the Traverse des Sioux treaty two years later in St. Peter, the treaty that contributed to the uprising that became the Dakota War 10 years later. His report helped promote the rapid opening of Minnesota Territory to new settlers.

Those new settlers, many of them immigrants but others from just across the river in Wisconsin or further east, were arriving in the Chatfield, Rochester and Mantorville area within a few years, and almost immediately, business people started newspapers.

According to a biography of Goodhue on the Minnesota Historical Society website, "He sent copies of the *Pioneer* to other newspapers and hotels throughout the county, and he filled its columns with detailed descriptions of Minnesota's natural beauty, abundant resources, fertile soil and healthy climate – he was capable of spinning everything to Minnesota's best advantage, including its winters. He wrote that Minnesota's weather produced 'vigorous minds!' He

even explored Minnesota by horseback, steamboat, and canoe to gain a deeper perspective for promoting Minnesota as a wonderful place to live."

A year after he was at Traverse des Sioux, he was stabbed on the territorial Capitol steps, by the brother of a judge who Goodhue had criticized in print. He recovered to do battle in print another day. He died a year later at age 42 and in 1853, the territorial legislature named Goodhue County for him.

Telegraph lines and photography

Ten years later, when the most important news event in American history was tearing the country apart, newspapers in the North played a vital role in promoting the Union cause and keeping families informed of what was going on.

Cheap and widely available newspapers with some national and world news were a relatively new phenomenon. The telegraph had been around for a few decades, but it was new enough that it hadn't gone transcontinental. News from far away, including exotic items from overseas, was a revolution just under way in 1862. And photojournalism was a brand-new art. The images that Matthew Brady, Alexander Gardner and others brought back from places such as Antietam and Fredericksburg in 1862 transformed how people thought of war.

The growth of railroads not only changed warfare, they made it possible to move cargo around faster, including newspapers. Printing technology was changing rapidly. Everything was changing, and in some way, it all had something to do with the war.

Newspapers played a truly ghastly role in the Dakota uprising, which erupted along the Minnesota River in August 1862. The often inaccurate or exaggerated accounts of the killings that occurred during the outbreak, and the explicit racism in how Indians were described, are shocking to read even 150 years later. There's no doubt Minnesota newspapers fanned public outrage that led to

vengeance killings, bounties for Indian scalps and the banishment of the Dakota people.

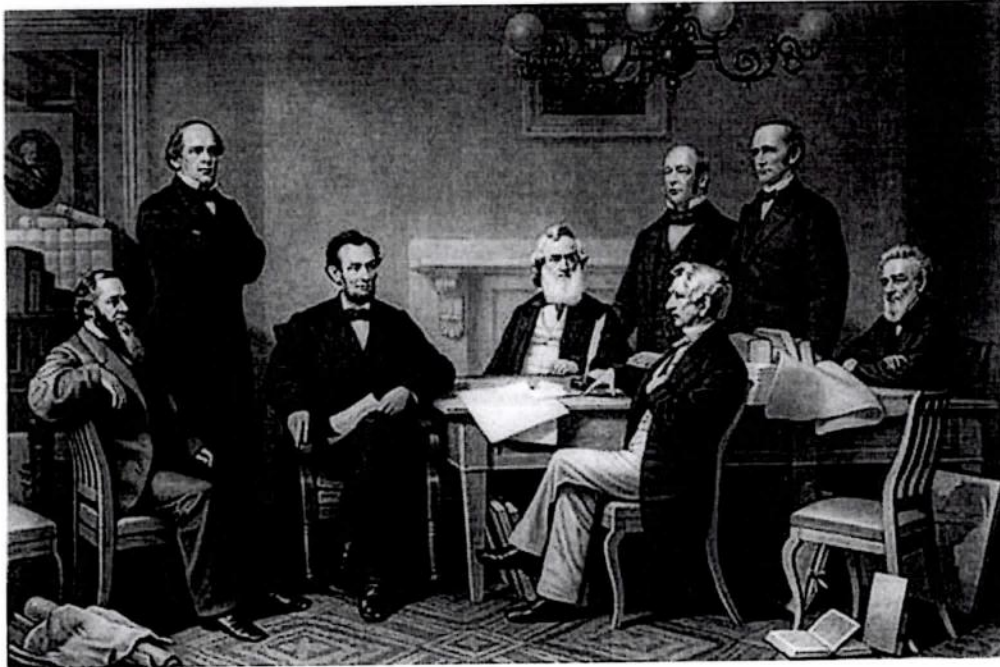
The latter was to the advantage of white settlers who were eager to move in and take what was left of the Dakota reservations. Among the businesses that profited from the eradication of Dakota people from the state: Newspapers.

After the Civil War, a lot of newspapers in the area tended to fold or merge. As you can tell from the list above, papers tended to come and go in pioneer days, but with the end of the war, maybe there was some reader exhaustion, in addition to the economic changes that the war unleashed, that changed the newspaper business as well.

Regardless, during the war years, newspapers were an essential part of the fight to save the Union. They helped to build Minnesota, and along the way, reporters and editors invented a new way to produce the "first draft of history" that was less partisan and promotional, more accurate and independent, and much more valuable.

Abolition Issue Divided Minnesotans
By Jay Furst November 27, 2012

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*



If you've seen 'Lincoln' the movie, you're familiar with a few of the characters in this famous engraving that depicts Lincoln presenting the Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet. From left: Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase, Lincoln, Navy Secretary Gideon Welles, Interior Secretary Caleb Smith, Secretary of State William Seward, Postmaster General Montgomery Blair and Attorney General Edward Bates.

As the second year of America's Civil War came to a close, Minnesotans had reason to wonder if it was all worth it. There was nothing guaranteed about the course of American history in 1862, any more than there is now. In 1862, reasonable people debated whether the incredibly brutal, bloody war was worth it, especially with no end in sight.

There were other ways to resolve the issue. The North could just accept the Southern rebellion and expect that someday, the region would come to its senses. The Union could negotiate a truce and work on a political solution. It could ditch Abe Lincoln and elect a new president in 1864 -- maybe the

charismatic Union Gen. George B. McClellan, who would lead the country in a new direction, possibly including reconciliation with the South.

The battle of Antietam in September 1862 had at least made it clear that Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia weren't invincible. But a few months later — 150 years ago in December — the Northern army would get whipped again in Fredericksburg, Va., and the question would be reopened: What are we fighting for?

That's why Lincoln's decision to issue an executive order freeing the slaves in Southern states -- the order now called the Emancipation Proclamation, which was issued in preliminary form on Sept. 22 and became official on Jan. 1, 1863 -- was a profound moment in the war and in shaping Minnesota's commitment to the war.

At the time, in places far from the nation's capital and far from slave states, it may not have seemed like the epochal event that it did elsewhere. But it changed the nature of the debate over the war. Lincoln's order -- and it was just that, an executive order requiring no action by Congress -- made clear the war no longer was an effort to put down a rebellion and restore the Union as it was. The war would eliminate slavery once and for all, and it would redeem the nation's original promise of equality and freedom.

Mixed opinions on abolition

The proclamation didn't prohibit slavery in the United States -- it would take the 13th amendment to the Constitution to do that -- but acting as commander-in-chief, he freed the 3.1 million slaves held in the 10 rebellious states of the Confederacy. The proclamation had little real effect when it took hold on Jan. 1, but over time, as the Union armies ground slowly toward Richmond, its effect on Southern materials and moral was profound.

In Minnesota, however, people were more concerned about the war on our own borders, the Dakota uprising that began in late August of that year. At the time, Lincoln's preliminary order was announced, the state was still in chaos, New Ulm was in ashes, the families of more than 300 settlers were coping with the loss of their loved ones and thousands who had fled their homes were just returning.

By the time news of the preliminary proclamation reached southern Minnesota, the final skirmish of the six-week war was being fought at Wood Lake, northwest of Redwood Falls. After that battle on Sept. 23, the remaining Dakota fighters fled the state, and those already in custody were headed toward hasty trials and execution, long imprisonment or exile.

So Minnesota had more immediate issues when the proclamation was issued, and if newspapers of the time in Chatfield, Preston and elsewhere in southern Minnesota are any indication, people here were as conflicted about emancipation as they were in other Northern states. Many praised the president and said his order was long overdue; others were less sure.

The Democratic Party was opposed bitterly to emancipation at that time and said the proclamation would mark the beginning of the end for Lincoln and his war strategy. Democrats in southeastern Minnesota were just as opposed to abolition as those nationally. According to research by Frank Klement for an article in Minnesota History magazine, Democrats in the Legislature introduced resolutions in 1860 that would have allowed slaves to be brought to Minnesota by their owners for up to five months a year. They were blocked by Republicans, who held majorities in both the Minnesota House and Senate.

Split decision in Chatfield

The divide in public opinion was apparent in Chatfield, where two newspapers clashed over Lincoln, the war and abolition. The Chatfield Democrat was a leading voice against abolition, the Republican rationale for the war, and

everything Lincoln. After the emancipation proclamation was released, the paper's editor wrote, "The abolition element that owns (Lincoln) and controls him have triumphed in this, their diabolical effort." The paper endorsed the view in a La Crosse, Wis., newspaper that said, "We are for the Union, no matter who is president, so long as the rights guaranteed all by the Constitution are kept sacred, but if the law to abolish slavery passes, we shall go South to fight."

The proclamation was called "the most foolish joke ever got off by the 6-foot-4 commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy of the United States."

More than a year later, as the elections of 1864 approached, the Chatfield editor wrote, "Every false and delusive effort has been made to poison the minds of the people against peace, because such a result would be sudden death to the abolition-Republican party ... but thank God the blood-hounds of abolitionism are rapidly approaching the end of their diabolical career ... everywhere the cry is peace, peace, peace! And as the people will it, so it will be."

The editor of the Chatfield Republican took the more common view, that the war was cause enough to believe that slavery had to end: "Now that this hideous monster of African Slavery has seen fit to inaugurate civil war, and raise the black banner of piracy, and seeks to destroy in toto the government of our fathers, the conviction is forcing itself upon the minds of all right-thinking men that this damnable leprosy, this plague spot of our free institutions, this breeder of treason, piracy and murder ... had best be overthrown on this continent forever."

Regardless, as winter approached, people in Chatfield and across Minnesota were almost certainly more interested in what Lincoln would do about the Dakota War than what he'd do with the slaves. More than 300 Dakota prisoners of war had been condemned to death by a Minnesota military court. In early November, the president personally intervened in the process and said he'd review the cases of the 303 prisoners who were sentenced to die.

Minnesota political leaders, including Gov. Alexander Ramsey, and military leaders pressured him to let the executions go forward and warned of vigilante justice if he didn't. In early December, Lincoln decided to let the execution of 39 Dakota prisoners proceed. One got a reprieve at the last moment. The other 38 were hanged in Mankato the day after Christmas. Six days later, emancipation for Southern slaves became the law of the land.

Deep gloom at year-end

In December, the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry was bogged down near Fredericksburg, Va. Two officers and 13 soldiers were wounded as the battle raged on Dec. 13, but most of the Union army fared worse and retreated back across the Rappahannock River toward winter quarters, where the army would brood over opportunities missed in 1862.

On New Year's Eve, the 2nd Minnesota Battery lost 10 men in battle at Stones River, Tenn. A month later, the 3rd Minnesota was en route to Kentucky and Tennessee. They were joined a few months later by the 4th and 5th Minnesota infantry regiments and the 1st Minnesota Battery. They were all headed to Vicksburg.

On May 22, during the siege of the Mississippi river city, the 4th Minnesota lost 12 men and 42 were wounded in an attack on Confederate fortifications. In late June, the 2nd Minnesota fought not far away in Tennessee to keep Confederate forces from reinforcing the forces in Vicksburg.

The Vicksburg campaign ended with a decisive Northern victory on July 4 and made Gen. Ulysses S. Grant the unexpected man of the hour for the Union -- the relentless, decisive leader that the commander-in-chief had been looking for since Fort Sumter.

The 3rd Minnesota went on to fight in late summer 1863 at Little Rock, Ark., and helped the Union forces win there as well.

And most important of all, in early July, just as the Union armies were about to win Vicksburg, the 1st Minnesota was out front in what became the turning point of the war, at Gettysburg. From that bloody high point, there was more confidence that the North would prevail. It was only a matter of how long it would take, and how many lives it would cost.

That's what lay just ahead in the new year. But 150 years ago today, in towns such as Rochester on the edge of the frontier, the outlook for the war, for Lincoln, for the men who were far from home on battlefields, for those who stayed behind, was dark, and getting darker.

The Year the Tide Turned
By Jay Furst. September 24, 2013

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*



Minnesota soldiers played a major role in the siege and capture of Vicksburg, Miss., a pivotal moment in the Civil War 150 years ago. This painting of the 4th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry marching into Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, is in the Governor's Reception Room at the state Capitol and was painted by Francis Millet in 1904. Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society

The tide of war had changed. No one knew it at the time -- not Lee, not Grant, not Lincoln -- but by September 1863, the Union armies were moving inexorably toward victory in the Civil War.

Thousands of men were still to die, including hundreds of young Minnesotans, many of them from Southeast Minnesota, but in hindsight, the currents of the war had decisively turned in two places that were obscure 150 years ago but now are famous: Gettysburg and Vicksburg. The battle at Gettysburg, Pa., which began July 1 and ended with Lee's retreat on July 3, marked the "high water mark" for the Confederacy, the last time a large Southern army would invade the north. A day later, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee took control of Vicksburg, Miss., a grinding victory that gave the Union control of the

Mississippi River and kept Grant on a path to leadership of the Army of the Potomac. Neither battle assured the war would end the way it did. Some of the bloodiest battles of the war lay ahead. But by this date in 1863, the North could begin to see a path to victory, and the Southern leadership, while not reconciled to it, could begin to see the Confederacy's fate. Generals and presidents may have had that perspective in late 1863. The soldiers generally didn't. Among those battle-weary soldiers in camps around Vicksburg 150 years ago this week were two brothers from the St. Charles area.

Two years on battlefields

William Christie was born in Scotland and moved with his family to Wisconsin in the years just after Minnesota Territory was established. In about 1855, he acquired farmland in or near St. Charles Township and tried to carve out a living. He was in his late 20s. In the summers of 1860 and 1861, his brother, Thomas, came over from Wisconsin to help with the field work and harvest, but the going was tough, and when war broke out in 1861, Thomas was eager to enlist. He was 18 years old; he believed in the Union cause, and he was eager for adventure.

"Thus it happened," writes Minnesota author Hampton Smith in a collection of the brothers' letters, "that on an October day in 1861, a month that had begun 'with a most gloomy and forbidding countenance' and days of heavy rain that continued 'with great persistency,' William and Thomas Christie walked into the lobby of Winona's Huff House Hotel intending to enlist in a company of recruits being formed for the Third Minnesota Regiment."

Within days, they were at Fort Snelling, being fitted for uniforms and trained to fight. From the early days of the war until the end, 24,000 young Minnesota men passed through Fort Snelling on their way to war. One in 10 were killed in battle or died later of illness or disease.

In a letter to his father, James, that tried to explain their sudden decision to enlist, Thomas wrote, "Now you know, Father, that you would enlist if you were in my place. You have taught me to hate Slavery, and to love my Country ... I shall not deny that motives other than strictly patriotic have had an influence upon me, but I don't think these other motives are wrong. I do want to see the world, to get out of the narrow circle in which I have always lived ... I feel sure, even as I write, that you will not only give me your blessing -- but be glad to have your son enrolled among the Defenders of the Union. But whether that be so or not, I must go."

Later that year, the Christie brothers were mustered into the 1st Minnesota Battery, an artillery unit. A few days before Christmas, they arrived at Benton Barracks in St. Louis, a key federal camp near the junction of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. The battery guarded the St. Louis Arsenal and received advanced training, and in April 1862, they met up with Gen. Grant's Army of the Tennessee at Corinth, Miss., and were attached to Gen. William T. Sherman's division.

What followed was the bloody battle of Shiloh, where their unit sustained heavy losses. "The First Minnesota Battery could not have had a more trying baptism by fire than that day at Shiloh," Smith writes in the introduction to the book of the Christies' letters, entitled "Brother of Mine" and published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Midpoint of the war

By autumn 1863, they had passed through several more baptisms by fire, and they were with Grant at Vicksburg, where attacks were made on the Southern fortress city on May 19 and May 22, with heavy losses. Those were followed by a siege that ended with the Confederates' surrender on July 4.

Thomas Christie, in a letter to his father that day, wrote, "My dear father, we have celebrated the Fourth today by walking into Vicksburg! I do not know all the particulars; but at least it is certain that we have taken everything, the Rebel army, their artillery, ammunition, small arms, etc. ... Read the newspapers for particulars, and rejoice! The Army of the Tennessee has made the glorious Fourth doubly worthy of commemoration."

Nearly 5,000 Union soldiers were killed or wounded, 2,000 more than the Confederates' casualties, but about 29,500 Southern soldiers were captured. Most were paroled or released, many to fight again. After the city fell, the 1st Minnesota Battery remained in and around Vicksburg for the better part of a year, to hold the area and occupy the city. Since the artillery unit had left Fort Snelling, about half of their men had been killed, wounded or were no longer fit for battle; Sherman allowed the unit to regroup, receive new equipment and prepare for the 1864 offensive.

William Christie, in a letter to their brother, Alexander, wrote from camp not long after Vicksburg fell that "the Mississippi River is open and the Southern Confederacy is cut in twain. It will be out of the question to think that the pesky critter can live without the tail, and if (Union Gen. George) Meade only gives the head a scrunch with his heel, we will soon make away with the body."

Meade was never able to deliver that "scrunch" to Lee's army in Virginia, however, and the Union armies failed to land the knockout blow in late 1863 that would have speeded the war's end. Still, Smith says the Christie brothers and the other Minnesota fighters knew the Union's prospects were brighter.

"I think they definitely knew," Smith said in an interview last week. "One thing that put a damper on everything was the battle of Chickamauga, which was a disaster for the Union." That battle on Sept. 19-20 also involved hundreds of Minnesota soldiers, including many from the Chatfield area in the 2nd Minnesota Infantry, and resulted in heavy casualties. The defeat blunted the North's advance into

northern Georgia. But even so, among the Minnesota soldiers remaining at Vicksburg, "there was a lot more optimism and reason for hope," Smith said. "They realized that there was a long way to go." Early on in the war, "people were hoping the war would be over quickly, and as it turned out, people were very disappointed." By late 1863, the North had reason again to hope that an end was in sight.

'The shine had been taken off'

Smith, 64, has been a history librarian at the Minnesota Historical Society for 30 years. The Christie family letters from the Civil War are among the treasures of the MHS collection, "some of the best letters from the Civil War," he said.

Smith became aware of the letters, which were donated to the society beginning in 1959, about 20 years ago. "I became fascinated by them. I've always been interested in the Civil War and have made it my specialty here." He's an Alabama native, "so I used to live near or visited a lot of the places they wrote about. I know the geography."

The letters stand out among the thousands of letters and journals from the Civil War because of the completeness of the correspondence, for one thing. The letters cover virtually the entire war period, from two men who had very different personalities, writing skills and perspectives. The family at home cherished them and kept them safe for generations.

Among the reasons it's a complete collection: Both men survived the war. "William was not as well-educated as Thomas," Smith said. "He had terrible handwriting and worse grammar. Thomas was very well-educated. He was just extremely intelligent, and all his life he had this very outgoing personality that comes through in his letters. You can't help but like him. As a young man, he's very sure of himself, maybe a little too sure. But he's very open-minded.

"William, in some ways, is more sensitive, less cocksure. He was very smart and a keen observer." In "Brother of Mine," which came out in 2011, Smith used about 80 percent of the wartime letters.

The brothers "were very good observers," he said. "They could write in a detached way about what they were seeing and describe it well for their family members. They were very aware of the political and military situation of the war itself. Even though they were both born in another country, they seemed to understand American politics very well."

After two years of war, beginning with that "baptism by fire" at Shiloh, both men had been changed. "A bit of the shine has been taken off of Thomas," Smith said. "He had changed his mind somewhat about religion. He had been something of an agnostic, but he was definitely a believer by the end of the war."

"I think for both of them, the romance of war was long gone. After Shiloh, they never wished for a big battle ever again. That was enough for them."

Big battles lay ahead

The way it turned out, the Christie brothers had many big battles ahead. After Vicksburg, they would go on to Atlanta with Sherman, then would go in different directions briefly but would be reunited in the final campaigns and were part of the Grand Review in Washington after the war was over.

William returned to Minnesota to farm and raise a family — a big family, with 11 children. He died at age 70 in 1901 and is buried south of St. Charles.

Thomas went on to more adventures. He went to college in Beloit, Wis., taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, later studied at Andover Academy in Massachusetts and became a minister, then spent 43 years in Turkey as a

missionary and educator. He lived there until shortly before his death in Pasadena, Calif., in 1921.

In a letter home in June 1862, when he wasn't yet 20 years old, Thomas wrote that all the killing and death around them "have had a good effect upon the men, making them feel kindlier and more brotherly towards each other. We are no longer a mass of discordant elements thrown together and called a Company, but we are now bound together by common bereavements and common danger into one body."

They were becoming a band of brothers, in other words — he and his own brother, and all the other young Minnesotans around them.

Uniformly Gallant, Soldierly Beyond Praise
By Joe Chase. October 1, 2013

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

The survival of an army hung in the balance. It was Sept. 20, 1863, the second day of the great Civil War battle that would become known as Chickamauga. That afternoon, on a hill called Horseshoe Ridge, a cobbled-together collection of exhausted, shot-up Yankee regiments stubbornly held its ground.

The Union Army of the Cumberland was already defeated and now the rebels were on the verge of destroying it. But if the victorious Confederates could be held up for a few hours, the routed northern army might survive to fight another day. It was one of the most important moments of the war, and in the bloodied blue line that defied the rebel tide was a regiment with boys from Fillmore, Olmsted and Dodge counties: The 2nd Minnesota Volunteer Infantry.

The 2nd Minnesota was formed at Fort Snelling in summer 1861, and young men from southeastern Minnesota had been the first to enlist. Company A, led by Chatfield engineer and newspaper editor Judson Bishop, was made up of the Chatfield Guards militia and other Fillmore County lads. Company B, with Capt. William Markham commanding, was from Rochester and Olmsted County. Company C, recruited by Mexican War veteran James George at his Wasioja law office, came from Dodge County and included professor Clinton Cilley from the nearby Wasioja Baptist Seminary, who brought with him into the army almost the entire enrollment of his school.

Its training completed by October 1861, the 2nd Regiment left St. Paul bound for the eastern Army of the Potomac. It was diverted en route to the western Army of the Cumberland, and for two years, it campaigned over Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama. On Jan. 9, 1862, the regiment fought and sustained casualties (12 killed, 32 wounded) in the first significant Union victory of the war, at Mill Springs, Ky.

'River of death'

In September 1863, the 2nd Minnesota and the rest of the Army of the Cumberland were near Chattanooga, Tenn., an important railroad center. A Union army in control of Chattanooga would be a dagger in the ribs of the Confederacy. Union Gen. William Rosecrans had outmaneuvered Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg and his Army of Tennessee that summer, compelling the rebels to abandon Chattanooga almost without a shot. Rosecrans pursued Bragg into northern Georgia, thinking Bragg was on the run. But Bragg turned to fight, and on Sept. 19, a dozen miles south of Chattanooga, the two armies — 58,000 Yankees and 66,000 Confederates — collided beside a creek known by a Cherokee word that means "river of death": Chickamauga.

The 2nd Minnesota, under the command of now-Col. James George, arrived at Chickamauga on the night before the battle with 384 officers and men. Two years earlier, when the regiment boarded steamboats in St. Paul for the trip east to the battlefields, there were 1,020 men, but the war had taken a devastating toll.

Anchoring the left end of the 4-mile Union battle line, the Minnesotans saw heavy fighting during the battle's inconclusive first day. Their brigade stopped an attack by Mississippi infantry, pouring volleys of rifle fire into the charging rebels from as short a distance as 40 yards. Eight men in the regiment were killed, and 41 were wounded on the first day.

That night was unusually cold for Georgia, but no fires were permitted because the enemy was so close. The next morning brought more tough fighting for the 2nd in a stubble corn field. Here, Lt. Col. Judson Bishop — now second in command of the regiment — had his galloping horse shot out from under him, sending him flying in a somersault over its head. The regiment was gathering its wounded during an early afternoon lull in the fighting when an officer rode up with orders for the brigade to move at once to Horseshoe Ridge.

Just before noon that day, a blunder in the Union command had opened a hole in the middle of the Yankee line, through which poured 16,000 Confederates commanded by Gen. James Longstreet — Robert E. Lee's "war horse," temporarily on loan to Bragg. Longstreet had arrived only the night before with 12,000 fresh troops. The Union army was cut in two by the maneuver, the right half scattering "like leaves before the wind."

Panic and confusion spread. Rosecrans and his staff had to leap to their horses and flee or be overrun. The complete annihilation of the Army of the Cumberland seemed imminent. As he galloped from the field to organize defenses at Chattanooga, Rosecrans sent his chief of staff, James Garfield -- who one day would be president of the United States -- to find Gen. George Thomas on the Union left, with orders to cover the retreat for as long as he could hold.

'Hold this ground'

Imperturbable Thomas, a bear-like, 47-year-old career army officer known as "Pap" to his men, commanded the army's 14th Corps, and the 14th wasn't running. George Henry Thomas was a Southerner disowned by his family when he chose to serve the United States rather than Virginia. Now, he gathered a handful of regiments, hurried them to the hilltop called Horseshoe Ridge and told them that retreat was not an option. "We will hold this ground, general," one of Thomas's officers grimly assured him, "or we will go to heaven from it."

The fleeing Army of the Cumberland needed time to reach the safety of Chattanooga, and Thomas's 14th Corps — of which the 2nd Minnesota was a part — stayed behind to buy that time.

When the 2nd Minnesota arrived at the ridge at 2:30 p.m., the Confederate assault had already begun. The regiment immediately took the place of the 21st Ohio, which was out of ammunition and went into action on the far right of the Union line. The British-made Enfield rifle musket, the weapon carried by the

Minnesotans at Chickamauga, could kill at a quarter-mile. In the hands of the average infantryman, it was reliably deadly at 100 yards, and that soldier could load and fire three times in a minute. To take Horseshoe Ridge, Longstreet's Confederates were advancing up a long slope directly into that fire. The hillside became a killing ground. Wave after wave of rebel infantry rolled up the slope. Each attack was driven back. But with each assault, more Union defenders fell from the firing line. The Yankee soldiers saw Pap Thomas calmly sitting on his horse, oblivious to whistling bullets.

Gen. Garfield sent a message to Rosecrans that Thomas was "standing like a rock." The name stuck. For the rest of his life, George Thomas would be known as "The Rock of Chickamauga." Now, the Minnesotans were running out of ammunition, and that wasn't their only problem. Unable to take the ridge by frontal assault, a rebel division was forming up on the western end of the Union battle line for an attack intended to overwhelm them from the right — what military men call turning the enemy's flank. The Minnesotans were at the far right end of the Union line.

The cartridge boxes of the dead and wounded were found and emptied. The last cartridges were loaded. There were less than 100 for the regiment's 250 rifles. The order came to fix bayonets, and down the line the men affixed cold steel to rifle muzzles. Through the smoke and trees they could hear the rebels coming.

Bloody Horseshoe Ridge

Then, a miracle of battlefield timing happened. Union Gen. Gordon Granger and his 5,000 men had been marching toward the sound of the fight on Horseshoe Ridge for three hours. Now, just as the rebels began to surge up the slope to crush the Yankee right, the first elements of Granger's corps came running to join the fight. The fresh troops arrived on the crest just in time to extend the Union battle line to the Minnesotans' right, and Granger brought with him a wagon carrying 95,000 rounds of ammunition.

The attack was repelled, and the Confederate flanking plans foiled. All that afternoon, the fight for Horseshoe Ridge was the bloody center of the Civil War. The barrels of muzzle-loading rifles became so hot they could not be used, so the soldiers traded rifles with the dead. The slope became so covered with rebel dead that, from the Minnesotans' position, the ground could hardly be seen.

Afternoon became evening. Again, ammunition ran low. Cartridge boxes of enemy dead on the hillside were searched and emptied. The regiment had less than two rounds per man. Again, bayonets were fixed. A last rebel attack was repulsed just before dark.

As darkness fell, the battlefield grew quiet, and Thomas began to move units off the ridge. At about 8 p.m., the 2nd was ordered to withdraw. In the darkness and with empty rifles — for now the ammunition was completely gone — the 2nd Minnesota slipped off the ridge and followed the rest of the army toward the defenses of Chattanooga. The 2nd Minnesota's brigade was the last organized Union brigade to leave the field of Chickamauga.

At midnight, the exhausted and bloodied Minnesotans halted their march, formed a defensive line against possible rebel pursuit just outside Chattanooga, and with rifles stacked nearby, they slept. The Minnesotans left 35 of their comrades dead on the field. Another 113 were wounded. Eleven of the men killed and 34 of the wounded, several of whom would die in coming days, were from Companies A, B and C — the Fillmore, Olmsted and Dodge County companies. Total federal dead at Chickamauga numbered 1,657, and 9,765 were wounded. Confederate losses were 2,312 dead and 14,678 wounded.

Chickamauga was a Confederate victory, but in the words of a veteran of the 2nd Minnesota, "The troops who stayed with Thomas on the field never understood it that way and have never admitted a Union defeat."

Col. George wrote, "The conduct of the officers and men of my regiment was uniformly gallant and soldier-like beyond praise. If any one of them failed in doing his duty, I do not know it."

The Army of the Cumberland had been saved. The battle of Chickamauga was over. The siege of Chattanooga had begun.

The Key in Lincoln's Pocket
By Ryan Stotts. October 8, 2013

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

"The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket," said the 16th president of the United States. That key was Vicksburg, Miss.

Eyed by Lincoln, his administration and the Union army since the beginning of the Civil War, the Confederate stronghold would only topple after one of the longest campaigns in the western theater of the Civil War. When it finally fell into Union hands on July 4, 1863, the 4th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry would ride proudly into the city directly behind Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. Getting there would prove anything but easy.

Vicksburg 1863

Nestled atop 300-foot bluffs, mounted with fierce Confederate cannon batteries, sitting at a bend in the Mississippi River, the small city of Vicksburg, population 4,500, represented an important victory in the course of the war for the Union Army. Under the control of Confederate Gen. John C. Pemberton, Vicksburg had effectively scissored off northern commerce and communications along the economically vital Mississippi. By seizing the city, Lincoln and his military leaders knew they could split the Confederacy in half. They could also sever much-needed supplies and communications from the eastern theater of war.

But it would take the Union two battles, a handful of engagements and skirmishes, two assaults and a prolonged siege to finally wrest control of the fortress. Strategically, the months leading up to its fall would prove Grant a shrewd and effective general, leaving Pemberton no choice but to surrender.

The rebels were tough fighters, but over the past year of fighting, they were already beginning to feel demoralized from losses at Antietam, Perryville and

luka. They couldn't afford to lose control of the Mississippi. Confederate President Jefferson Davis said, "Vicksburg is the nail head that holds the South's two halves together." The Union needed control of that river, and they knew they needed Vicksburg to get it.

The human factor

"There are so many things published now a days that did not happen, by men who were not there, that if a man wants facts he must apply to someone born before the war." – T. M. Young, 4th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry

Three Minnesota divisions fought in the Union's three-month campaign to capture the city: the 4th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, under the command of Lt. Col. John Eaton Tourtellotte; the 4th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, under the command of Col. Lucius F. Hubbard; and the 1st Minnesota Light Artillery Battery, under the command of Capt. William Z. Clayton.

Col. John B. Sanborn had been appointed brigadier general following the 1862 battle at luka and oversaw the 4th Minnesota, which was made up of volunteers from counties all over the state, including Steele, Mower, Freeborn, Waseca and Goodhue counties. The Minnesota troops, who ultimately fell under the command of Grant and the Union Army of Tennessee, marched with two corps, the 15th and the 17th, led by Generals William T. Sherman and James B. McPherson.

While complete numbers for their rosters are challenging to collate, records of those killed and wounded in action are meticulous. In the two major assaults on Vicksburg, on May 19 and May 22, 1863, 12 men from the 4th Minnesota were killed and 42 were wounded. In 1905, Calvin R. Fix, a private in the 4th Minnesota, wrote to his surviving comrades, asking them for photos from their time in service, as well as their remembrances of the Vicksburg campaign. While many were elderly, with failing health and memories, several provided Fix with detailed accounts of the cost the initiative had taken on them.

"I was hit in the head one morning about 2 o'clock with a bullet," R. S. Reeves wrote, "but kept on at work as sharpshooter. On the 22nd of May I was knocked over by a shell exploding too close to my head. On the 22nd of May I stood next to the color guard, all of which were shot. I just had 'fool luck,' that's all."

Most remember the Springfield or Whitney rifles they carried, as well as their haversacks, cartridge boxes and canteens. Some had more specific recollections. "I had one button shot off my coat," wrote Willard L. Harris. That was almost the entirety of his letter.

The journey to the siege

Minnesota soldiers suffered few casualties in the events leading up to the two assaults on Vicksburg, and none during the siege itself, which began on May 25. In fact, they rarely saw battle. None were lost in the May 1 battle to capture Port Gibson, which forced the evacuation of Grand Gulf, affording Grant his staging area for a massive northeastern movement aimed at cutting off Pemberton's supply line via the Southern Railroad of Mississippi. Nor did they engage on May 12 at Raymond, where rebel forces were outnumbered about 4 to 1.

Two Minnesotans were wounded when Sherman and McPherson took the city of Jackson on May 13 and 14, and, because they were bringing up the rear, only two men from the 4th Minnesota were wounded in the bloodiest battle the campaign saw, Champion Hill on May 16. It was a decisive victory, which sent Pemberton fleeing back to Vicksburg, where he was trapped with an estimated 30,000 troops.

From the start of the siege on May 25, Grant was able to sustain a near-relentless bombardment on the city throughout the long, hot summer, while simultaneously gathering up to 75,000 troops to encircle Pemberton and the residents of Vicksburg. Citizens who remained after the city was sealed off had to witness their homes being burned to the ground, in an effort to increase the

rebels' line of vision of the enemy, and took to living in a system of caves which had been hollowed out of the surrounding area. Many women kept diaries and letters, and Winston Groom quotes many of them in his book, "Vicksburg 1863." One unnamed source said the city "was so honeycombed with caves that the streets look like avenues in a cemetery."

As Grant's army rained havoc from the skies above them, caves began to collapse under the shelling, with some women and children almost buried alive, and many of them constantly terrified. "We are utterly cut off from the world, surrounded by a circle of fire," Dora Miller wrote in her diary. "Would it be wise like the scorpion to sting ourselves to death?" When asked how she survived, resident Mary Loughborough said. "After one is accustomed to (it) we do not mind it; but becoming accustomed, that is the trial."

The sounds of war

The artillery fire was so constant, soldiers were becoming adept at telling the difference between the sounds of various ammunition and artillery pieces.

Nowhere is that more apparent than in a May 31, 1863, letter from William Christie, who served in the 1st Minnesota Battery during the Vicksburg campaign, to his father, James, and beautifully rendered in Hampton Smith's book, "Brother of Mine: The Civil War Letters of Thomas & William Christie."

William, who along with his brother, Thomas, had enlisted in 1861, owned farmland near St. Charles Township in Winona County. Both young men frequently wrote to their father. "I will try in this letter, to describe one of the Grandest sights, I ever saw," William wrote, from a camp near Vicksburg. "This morning at three o'clock, the Batteries of Gen. Grant's Army at his Place, opened at once on the doomed city of Vicksburg, And the effects of such a sight almost defies description. The line extends some eight miles round the Beseiged town. There is Artillery enough on this line to shoot from one to the other. Now just

stand with me on the Point where our Battery is Placed, and see the vivid flashes of the Guns, like lightning, and the showers of shell, as they made there quick curves through the air, hissing and hurtling, and finally exploding with a report almost as loud as the Gun. The air waved like the sea, and vibrated with a hoarse murmuring sound, while the valleys were filled with the loud thundering sound of the detonation of the firing of the mortar Boats..."

All over

By the 46th day of the siege, Pemberton could hold out no longer. On July 3, 1863, he opened negotiations with Grant for surrender, and by the next day Vicksburg belonged to the Union Army.

For the march into the vanquished city on Independence Day, Grant ordered his commanders to send troops who had earned special recognition in battle. McPherson requested two regiments, the 45th Illinois and the 4th Minnesota. The 45th Illinois was slated to be the first to ride in, but for some unknown reason they failed to show up at the appointed meeting spot. After waiting awhile, the 4th Minnesota took the lead. "We marched in column by company," E. U. Russell wrote to Fix in 1905, "right in front, throwing my company (A) in the advance and as I was commanding the company I claim to be (by two paces) the first man of the line to enter to city.

"We wore the regulation uniform with hats, and carried Springfield rifles as arms. I have the sword to-day that I wore upon that occasion. No ladies were in sight, having all repaired to their respective caves, hoping to thus escape the general massacre (which), in their opinion, was about to take place. Rat skins were in evidence on every hand, evidencing the fact that they had subsisted on the carcasses, but just how many rats to the ration, we had no means of knowing.

Epilogue

In 1899, Vicksburg National Military Park was set aside by Congress to commemorate the entire campaign. The park covers 1,800 acres, which includes a cemetery, trenches, walking trails, a tour road and two antebellum homes, as well as over 1,300 monuments, markers and statues. Among them is a 90-foot tall Minnesota Memorial, known as the "Statue of Peace" and dedicated in 1907, a column of granite with a bronze statue of a woman holding a sword and shield. Standing there today, it's impossible not to think of those who fought, suffered and died, many of them far too young.

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Draft Riots Marked 1863 As Much as Battles

By Ryan Stotts October 15, 2013

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

"These wide-spread sufferings have led to the plundering of great cities, the entire destruction of New York – and the rich inhabitants, and even poor property holders, now live in continued terror, dreading and expecting like future attempts. To guard against the renewal of such atrocious acts in the great cities, the states to which they belong have been compelled to strengthen their police forces and measures, and also the general government of the North, to maintain strong military garrisons." – Edmund Ruffin, "Anticipations of the Future," 1860

It seemed possible that the entire country was cracking apart. Held in the grip of a civil war that many felt would end quickly but had dragged on for two bloody years, Americans were reaching a turning point by summer 1863. Tens of thousands of men had volunteered at the outbreak of war in late spring 1861, but by now, it was clear to everyone that fresh troops were needed on both sides. The Confederacy already had passed a Conscription Act in April 1862, and in March 1863, the Union did the same.

Those who had laughed at Edmund Ruffin's apocalyptic 1860 novel, "Anticipations of the Future," weren't laughing by July 1863. New York, for a period of four days, burned with the fury of mass hysteria and civil unrest. Rioters took to the streets. Union troops, weary from battle, were eventually ordered in to restore order. "The nation is at this time in a state of revolution," reported the Washington Times. "North, South, East and West."

Seeds of civil disobedience

Lincoln knew the Union army was in danger of depletion. By summer 1863, decisive victories had been scored in Vicksburg and Gettysburg. But losses were heavy. New men were needed, and the issue of a draft, which had all along been considered but never officially enacted, was finally on the table once again by

late spring. It was by no means a popular piece of legislation. To make it more viable, it contained an escape clause: You could avoid service by paying \$300 or offering a substitute.

In Minnesota, the issue of the draft, as well as a bounty for men volunteering their services, was hotly debated as early as 1862. On Oct. 30, 1862, the St. Paul Daily Press published a letter to the editor, signed "Dakotah," which protested the notion that men who enlisted for profit did so "from avaricious motives, and terming the bounty a bribe." "But when the moment of trial came," the letter concluded, "were they not quite as ready as their predecessors to lay all upon the altar of their country? Let the answer come from the thousands of brave and loyal hearts now gone and going to the scene of strife."

The letter was titled, "Why draft?" By November, the Daily Press was assuring readers that volunteers from old regiments would not be drafted, noting their numbers would be "credited to our quota – that is, they form a part of the 5,362 men required under the call for 600,000 men." The draft was supposed to commence on Nov. 10, but it was postponed until the 20th, with only four Minnesota counties delinquent in their quotas: Winona, Fillmore, Houston and Sibley.

Conscription — requiring men to serve in the military — was going on piecemeal in the states before it became federal law, but reports at the time were sporadic and tended to be rife with error. Newspapers were in the habit of attempting to quell the misinformation by running daily updates, often about their own inadvertent omissions and necessary corrections. It was all adding up: the uncertain end of the war, and the restlessness and fear of the people. An eruption of violence seemed inevitable.

Rioting in Wisconsin

A draft riot broke out on the night of Nov. 17, 1862, in Ozaukee County, Wis. The Masonic Lodge Room was destroyed, and the rioters turned to the pillaging of private property, reported the Stillwater, Minn., Messenger on Nov. 18, besieging "eminent citizens who had been counseling obedience to the laws." The mob had gone so far as to destroy all the local sheriff's papers relating to the draft. The outbreak ended only when 600 troops of the 28th regiment arrived on Nov. 17. Seventy rioters were clapped in arms, the Messenger reported, some of them "prominent citizens of Fort Washington." Six houses had been gutted in the wake of what the paper called "promiscuous ruin."

"We can only surmise what will be the fate of these men," read the Messenger. "The law provides that all who resist or counsel resistance to the draft shall be sentenced to serve in the ranks of the army during the war. This is a very mild sentence, and will be carried out to the letter." Disorder was more prevalent than commonly thought by 1863, with defection and desertion on both sides. Confidence men and profiteers were common, seizing on the fears of citizens, as well as the slowness of the passage of information.

In New York City, tensions were especially high. It wasn't just the so-called Copperheads — Northern Democrats who vocally opposed the war — but immigrant workers as well. Certain factions, particularly the Irish, viewed free blacks as a threat to their own meager living wage. With every available man mustered into service, especially during a summer that saw some of the longest and bloodiest campaigns of the war, as few as 1,000 officers were on hand to maintain order in New York.

By the end of July, members of the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry were stationed north of Kelly's Ford on the Rappahannock River in Virginia. The regiment, made up of Minnesotans from Wabasha, Fairbault, Red Wing, Winona, St. Paul, Minneapolis, St. Anthony and Stillwater, had distinguished itself in a

series of battles, including Bull Run, Antietam and most recently, Gettysburg. Near Kelly's Ford, the regiment was earning a much-needed rest from battle. By mid-August, to their shock, they would be sent to New York, along with members of the 8th and 4th Ohio, the 7th Michigan and the 14th Indiana, to help restore order in a city gone mad with violence. They had no idea what to expect.

The New York draft riots

On the morning of July 13, 1863, a mob set the draft office at Third Avenue and 47th Street on fire. New York City police, as well as state militia members, were attacked and overpowered by the crowd. Gaining momentum, rioters set ablaze a series of buildings: The Bull's Head Hotel, several police stations and the mayor's residence. They attempted an attack on The New York Times building, as well as The New York Tribune. Violence continued throughout Manhattan. Turning on African-Americans, at least 100 were killed, their homes or businesses also destroyed. One man was left charred and hanging from a tree.

Also singled out was the Colored Orphan Asylum on Fifth Avenue, where more than 200 children escaped a mob that set the buildings on fire. By July 14, with the New York Times excoriating the rioters and calling them "ruffians," the mobs continued to attack private residences belonging to noted Republicans and Union activists. Gen. John Wood ordered in nearly 1,000 men from the army and various militias to reign in the riots, and by July 16, the carnage was stopped. "There is but one way to deal with this coarse brutality," The Times reported. "It is idle to reason with it – worse than idle to tamper with it; it must be crushed. Nothing but force can deal with its open manifestations."

A background of bayonets

"You will be surprised to hear that the 1st has finally left the front and is now quartered on Governor's Island, New York Harbor," Private Edward Bassett of the 1st Minnesota wrote to his parents on Aug. 24, 1863.

Having been sent in to make sure peace remained in the wake of the riots, by the time members of the 1st Minnesota arrived there was little to do. "Everything is quiet in N.Y. now I believe but I suppose it is owing to the military force at hand," Bassett wrote. Bassett's correspondence, compiled by Rochester author Richard G. Krom in his book, "The 1st MN ... Second to None," gives a firsthand account of being in the New York area post-riots. Danger had become minimal enough to allow members of the 1st (not on guard duty) the chance to explore the city, visit family and even attend museums and the theater.

"I don't think we will have any trouble here," Bassett wrote to his mother on Aug. 30, "the draft will commence tomorrow, but there will be no call for the Military." Troops of the 1st Minnesota stayed through early September.

Drafting Minnesota

On July 25, 1863, the Rochester Post ran the number of Minnesota men enrolled by county under the new conscription act:

Dodge: 441

Faribault: 277

Fillmore: 1,449

Freeborn: 314

Houston: 849

Mower: 322

Olmsted: 1,398

Steele: 334

Waseca: 237

Winona: 1,779

"The Secretary of War has fixed upon three hundred dollars as the rate of commutation," the Mankato Weekly Record reported that same day, "and designated the collector of internal revenue in each district to receive the money. Duplicate receipts are to be given for this money when paid, one of which is to be delivered to the board of enrollment on or before the day when the person drawn is ordered to report, and will entitle him to a certificate of exemption from further liability under the draft."

The draft, which consisted of drawing names from a box to fulfill the quota of 1,700 men from each congressional district, was to be conducted at the headquarters of the Provost Marshal in Rochester. Official counts are always a source of skepticism in historical accounts. In the wake of the New York draft riots, the official count of the dead was 105. Some sources have wildly different numbers for those killed, and some estimate the wounded at more than 2,000.

With the draft, there are any number of speculative figures as to how many men were called up for service and those who volunteered. By 1863, the Union had called for 600,000 men. By some accounts, a staggering 500,000 of those were volunteers, and 60,000 to 80,000 were drafted. These men helped win the war, of that there can be no doubt.

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A Costly Mistake at Bristoe Station
by Richard and Sharon Krom October 29, 2013

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

During the three months after the battle at Gettysburg, there were many skirmishes between the Union army under Gen. George G. Meade and the retreating Army of Northern Virginia of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee. But on Oct. 8, 1863, Lee turned his army northward. Lee was intent on disrupting the movement of Union troops heading to Tennessee and mounting a major attack on the Army of the Potomac. The stage was set for the battle of Bristoe Station.

Meade began a masterful withdrawal of his army north toward his fortified base at Centerville, Va., hoping to force Lee into attacking him there. His plan was complicated when he received false information that Lee had re-occupied the town of Culpeper. Lee had a high regard for his Union adversary. At one point, he told his staff, "Gen. Meade is the most troublesome federal commander we have met. He is not only a general of courage, intelligence and ability, but conscientious and careful. He is not afraid to fight upon an equal chance and is constantly looking for an opportunity. "If we make any mistake in his front, he will be certain to take advantage of it."

A retreat toward Washington

As Meade withdrew his army from Centerville toward Washington, D.C., he did a masterful job of out-marching the enemy. He reached his supply depot at Warrenton ahead of Lee and destroyed huge quantities of Union supplies and burned the railroad bridges and stores at locations all along the Orange & Alexandria Railroad. These were supplies that Lee desperately needed and had hoped to capture.

On Oct. 14, Meade's advanced unit reached Centerville, 25 miles from Washington. His column stretched back South over a distance of 35 miles. The column was led by the 1st Corps, followed by the 3rd, 6th and 5th Corps. The

2nd Corps, including the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry was serving as rear guard. The veteran Minnesota soldiers were doing what they had so often done, protecting the rear of the column.

They were fanned out over a couple hundred yards serving as "flankers." Over the previous few days, they had been involved in numerous skirmishes, driving off rebel cavalry and infantry attacks. Delayed by these actions, the 2nd Corps had fallen slightly behind, leaving a gap in the line of march. Meade, unaware of this action in his rear, that morning had ordered Gen. George Sykes' 5th Corps to make contact with the lead elements of the 2nd Corps before crossing Broad Run at Bristoe Station.

But Sykes was erroneously informed by a lookout, who spotted a few stragglers and took them to be the men of the 2nd Corps. He anxiously moved out prematurely. The gap in the Union column widened. As chance would have it, this was exactly when Confederate Gen. A. P. Hill arrived. Lee had sent Hill out with his entire corps of 20,000 men, including cavalry and eight batteries of artillery, to cut Meade's stretched-out army in half and capture its 2nd Corps and its supplies. Hill observed a few stragglers near Broad Run marching off about a mile to the east and thought it was the 2nd Corps at the rear of the Union army. He concluded he'd arrived too late and missed his opportunity.

This proved a costly error. What he actually saw was Sykes' 5th Corps marching away. The Union 2nd Corps was now under the command of Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren with a total of about 9,000 men, including six batteries of artillery.

Station on Broad Run

Bristoe Station was a tiny out-of-the-way station on the Orange & Alexandria Railroad, which runs in a north-northeasterly direction from Culpeper to Alexandria. At the station, it crosses a river called Broad Run on a high trestle bridge and is raised on a high embankment. The ruins of the small village of

Bristow were about a half-mile to the west of the station. During the day, the order-of-march had changed, and the 1st Minnesota, followed by the 15th Massachusetts in Gen. Alexander S. Webb's 2nd Division, were now in the lead. They were ordered to advance along the left or west side of the railroad while the remainder of the 2nd Corps marched on the right side, taking advantage of the embankment to conceal them from the enemy. The presence of A.P. Hill's army was not yet known.

The area was one of rolling hills, dotted with patches of dense woods and heavy underbrush. Closer to Broad Run, on the west side of the railroad, was an open plain extending about one-third of a mile to the river. Anxious to deal Meade's army a crippling blow and even the score for Gettysburg, Hill ordered up his artillery and immediately opened fire upon the disappearing column. He sent three North Carolina brigades under Gen. Henry Heth to attack the rear of the retreating Union column and hold them while he moved around to the left and mounted an attack on their center.

His haste in deploying his infantry and mounting an attack against the apparently small number of troops at Bristoe Station proved to be a big mistake. Little did he realize that just then the entire Union 2nd Corps was marching onto the field.

An eyewitness report

The Minnesota men, commanded by Maj. Mark Downie, heard the cannon fire while they were still more than a mile from Bristoe. Though tired from the nearly continuous hard marching of the last few days, they resolutely quickened the pace. Enemy shells arched across the sky from the left, over their line-of-march, and exploded on the hills beyond Bristoe Station. Pvt. Edward Bassett of Company G relates the battle in this unedited letter to his parents:

"Soon after we left camp, we marched out as far as Catlett's Station, where the 2nd Div. of the 2nd Corps stopped to let the [wagon] train pass. We then started

on following the Rail Road until we got within about ½ mile of Bristoe Station where we found a large force of the enemy. Our Reg't. was sent out immediately as skirmisher in front of the Div. and had not advanced more 40 rods when we saw about 300 rebels right in front. As soon as they saw us, they went behind a thicket of pines.

"We advanced about half way through the thicket when they opened on us but most of their bullets went high over our heads. We did not fire but a few shots for the brush was so thick that we could not see them. Some of the boys got a shot or two at them but as I could not get sight of them I did not fire.

"We were soon called back and followed on down by the side of the Rail Road about 80 rods, where we found that the enemy were determined to fight us in a large field. Our regiment was soon opened on by their skirmishers and after we had returned a few shots our General ordered us to fall back across the R.R. and form our line behind the embankment.

"As soon as we began to fall back, the rebels opened a tremendous volley on us wounding two or three slightly. We soon got behind the bank and then you may bet we let them have some of our best rations of Uncle Sam's manufacture of cold lead, which taking effect in many a reb caused him to give up the Ghost then and there. Besides wounding a large number who will recover & I hope learn better than to fire on the old stars and stripes again.

"We were soon reinforced by the 111th N.Y. and after about one half hours firing we drove the enemy back with a slight loss on our part but we killed about 500 rebs and took 450 prisoners besides about 100 that were left wounded on the field. We also took 5 pieces of rifled canon. We whipped them nicely. I never had a nicer chance to pay them up on the old account and I done the best I could as did all the boys."

Pursued by the screaming rebel line, the men ran up over the embankment just as a fusillade of lead whistled above their heads. Finding their entire division behind the bank, the whole line rose in unison to pour a heavy volley of fire into the rebel soldiers crossing the open plain. The withering fire took an awful toll. The rebel line seemed to melt into the ground; those not killed or wounded fell to the ground to escape the storm and the crews of five Confederate guns brought up to the right of the woods, abandoned their pieces without firing a shot. Union artillery batteries soon galloped through behind the Union line, their horses dripping with sweat.

Within moments, the guns were placed on the hills to the east and opened with effective fire, striking all along the enemy front. Able to wait no longer, the mass of Yankees burst forth from the embankment in a wild headlong charge. Hand-to-hand fighting ensued; rebels unwilling to risk retreating in the hail of lead threw down their arms and surrendered.

The cost of battle

One man in the 1st Minnesota was killed, and 16 were wounded. They captured 322 prisoners and retrieved two of the five captured cannons from the field. Total Union losses were about 50 killed and 450 wounded or captured. The Confederates lost about 138 killed and 1,390 wounded or captured. The battle lasted about an hour and ended as quickly as it had begun, as the North Carolinians withdrew. Lee was angry, and after criticizing Hill for his impetuous attack and the great loss it had cost, he said, "Let us bury these poor men and say no more of it." Warren stealthily withdrew after dark to resume his march to Centreville. About 43 Union and 137 Confederate dead were buried on the field. Warren's soldiers had won a decisive victory and dealt the Confederates an important blow.

Richard and Sharon Krom are authors, historians and speakers who live in Rochester.

Richard is the author of "The 1st MN: Second to None."

Turning Point at Gettysburg
By Ryan Stotts October 29, 2013

Northfield, MN *Post Bulletin*

NORTHFIELD – "Some of the most horrific warfare in the annals of fighting happened right there that afternoon," said Jeff Applequist. The room sat in stunned silence. Applequist, a Carleton College alumnus, was on campus this month to discuss the battle at Gettysburg, Pa., and by this point in the evening, he was focusing on July 2, 1863. Fighting didn't start until 4 p.m. that day, Applequist said, but by the time night fell, more than 20,000 lives would be claimed.

The figures are grisly, but there's much to be learned from them, and Applequist is in the business of taking leadership teams to the famous battle site, teaching them equal parts history, team-building and personal leadership skills. "There's a great deal to be learned," Applequist said, in a phone interview several days before the Carleton event, which was sponsored by the college's department of history along with the Northfield Historical Society. "Just on an emotional level, people can't believe it happened."

While leadership training of this nature has its skeptics, Applequist has found both personal success and fulfillment navigating groups through the battlefields of Gettysburg, as well as the Little Bighorn in southeastern Montana. He lists the core takeaways: common purpose, relationships and trust, self-knowledge, and above all, decision-making. "It's also seeing people experience that history," he said. "It's amazing."

Formerly in senior leadership at Best Buy, Applequist is something of a renaissance man. A political science major with a master's in public administration, he's a former Marine Corps infantry officer, ex-practicing attorney and noted author. "I'm not a trained historian by any means," he said. Still, he knows his stuff.

In 2009, he set up his own business, Blue Knight Leadership, and his book, "Sacred Ground: Leadership Lessons from Gettysburg & the Little Bighorn" followed in 2010. He's been to Gettysburg more than 25 times, and walking the roomful of 35 people at Carleton through the events of that terrible three-day battle, as well as introducing them to its key players, offered a glimpse into how he conducts his leadership sessions.

"The irony of ironies and the tragedy of tragedies is that it was fundamentally Americans killing Americans," Applequist said of the Gettysburg battle that in time was known as the pivotal battle of the war. "It was a catastrophic event in terms of the scale of the human suffering."

Three days of hell

By the summer of 1863, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee was ready to try another massive invasion of the north, as he did in Antietam, Md., the previous year, and as he drove his Army of Northern Virginia toward a head-on collision with Union forces, they were 62,000 strong.

Appointed general of the Army of the Potomac only days before, George Gordon Meade would face Lee's army with 95,000 of his own men. By the time the battle was done on July 3, 4,700 Southern soldiers were dead, with 3,100 on the Northern side. Each army reported total casualties of about 23,000 killed, wounded, missing or captured. The huge armies met on the outskirts of a small Pennsylvania market town, with high ground to the south, ridges to the northwest and 10 roads emanating out from it like a spider web. In July 1863, about 2,400 people lived there. "It was about to get a lot bigger," Applequist said.

The first shots were fired about 7:30 a.m. July 1, three miles west of town. Lee's troops were divided into three massive corps, while Meade divided his into seven. Not only was Lee's army outnumbered, but there also were other disadvantages: lack of communication with his generals, an inferior line of

defense and crude weapons technology. Meade held an interior line of defense, with troops consolidated on Cemetery Hill, Culp's Hill and Cemetery Ridge. In the four square miles of battleground, this left Meade with easier access to routes vital for reinforcements. Lee's troops were left on the fringes, setting up largely on Seminary Ridge. Union officers also were using breech-loading, single-shot weapons, which gave them a superior technological advantage over rebel forces, who were using standard-issue muskets.

But, as they proved simultaneously in Vicksburg, Miss., the rebels were tough fighters, often able to draw out a battle even when outflanked, outnumbered and using inferior weapons. By the end of that first day, Lee's army had pushed hard enough to send Union fighters fleeing in retreat through the streets of Gettysburg.

But things got worse on July 2. Fighting didn't begin until late in the afternoon, but when it did, it rapidly became the second bloodiest day in the Civil War. While the fighting centered largely around Peach Orchard, Wheatfield, Little Round Top and Devil's Den, it was near Emmitsburg Road that the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry enters the narrative and gallantly charges into the annals of history.

In an effort to buy five minutes for reinforcements, Union Maj. Gen. Winfield Hancock ordered the 262 men of the 1st Minnesota, who were guarding a rear battery under the command of Col. William Colvill, to charge a Confederate brigade. They were outnumbered 5 to 1. Their flag fell and rose five times in as many minutes. Within that short gasp of time, all but 47 soldiers were killed.

"What Hancock had given us to do was done thoroughly," wrote William Lochren, of the 1st Minnesota's Company K from Winona. "The regiment had stopped the enemy, and held back its mighty force and saved the position. But at what sacrifice!" It's the single greatest casualty rate for a surviving military unit in the history of American warfare. By nightfall, Meade gathered his generals in a council of war. They all agreed to continue fighting. Lee didn't consult his generals at all.

Like nothing you've ever heard

When Applequist takes groups to Gettysburg, he tells them he's a "Minnesota boy," which requires a stop at the memorial erected in honor of their heroic efforts on July 2, 1863. It's an example, he said, of those in the lowest orders in a unit making a decision critical to the outcome of a massive campaign. How do you teach that kind of split-second bravery, someone in the Carleton crowd asked him.

"That's the art of decision-making," Applequist said. "There is no science in decision-making." Often, as in the battle on July 3, which had come to be known as Pickett's Charge, the victors are "within an eyelash of succeeding." If the Union hadn't won, Applequist said, "we might be having a very different discussion right now." By 1 p.m. July 3, Lee ordered an artillery bombardment from a two-mile line consisting of nearly 160 12-pound Napoleon cannons aimed at Union forces. The two-hour onslaught was ineffective, which says something right there, but the sound it produced was heard 150 miles away in Pittsburgh.

"We had been in the many battles and thought ourselves familiar with the roar of artillery, and the striking and bursting of its missiles," Lochren wrote, "but nothing approaching this cannonade had ever greeted our ears." Company K member Alfred Carpenter could hardly attempt to put down the experience in words.

"I can think of no adjective or collection of adjectives that will describe it," Carpenter wrote. "It must be seen, heard, felt, to be understood." The roar, said Applequist, was itself historic.

"Some analysts think it was the loudest man-made noise on the North American continent until the experimental atomic bomb was exploded along the border of New Mexico in 1945," he said. Within 24 hours of losing their commander and most of their fellow infantry men, the remaining 47 members of Company K were

joined with those in Company F from Red Wing. They had the misfortune to be in one of the rare breeches of Union lines in what happened next.

Confederate forces, undeterred by the ineffectiveness of their artillery assault, were led in a more aggressive infantry assault, named for one of its more colorful rebel generals, George Pickett. The accounts, which include hands and flags shot in half, are all the more poignant when seen through the eyes of those 47 men from Company K, who must have felt like hell was following them on their very heels.

"Men fell about us unheeded, unnoticed; we scarcely knew they were falling, so great was the intensity of attention to approaching foe," Carpenter wrote. "Our muskets became so heated we could no longer handle them. We dropped them and picked up those of the wounded. Our cartridges gave out." It was an intensity which, in the end, would force Lee to realize the futility of any continued efforts. By July 4, the rebels would begin to prepare for a gruesome line of retreat back to Virginia. At the time, Gettysburg residents fell ill from the stench of burning horses and the almost 10,000 corpses littering the fields and dells awaiting burial. They displayed their animosity by, amongst other divisive behavior, charging the surviving soldiers for water.

All-too alive

Fielding questions on a cold night at Carleton College 150 years after the bloodiest campaign in the nation's history, Applequist was asked to apply what he knows about Gettysburg and explain the difference between determining a good and bad initiative. In light of how close the entire campaign was, he said, the answer is straight forward: "You'd better win."

From the audience, IBM engineer Scott Strand, of Rochester, was intrigued by Applequist's initiative and wanted to know more about what teams learn while under his guidance on the fields. Reviewing his list, Applequist paused to stress

one thing in particular: communication. "We're so sophisticated in our communication these days," he said, "but I don't think it's any better, necessarily, than in was back in 1863."

Strand, who has participated in what he described as other "meaningful" leadership exercises that utilized the films "Hoosiers" and "Apollo 13," said the lessons Applequist is bringing to light are relevant and important in today's climate – but the ability to experience them on the actual battlefields where so many died adds an intriguing, if sobering, element. "It makes it all too alive," he said.

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Brutal Realities of a Soldier's Life
By Richard and Sharon Krom November 12, 2013

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

The tales of the great Civil War battles and the courage of Union and Confederate soldiers tends to overshadow the routine challenges of their daily lives. Men from every corner of Minnesota enlisted to "save the Union" and fought throughout all regions involved in the war. Traveling on foot and on steamboats, riding in wagons and stage coaches, they gathered at Fort Snelling. When the men of the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment arrived in 1861, the fort was in a state of disrepair. They were put to work cleaning it up and making it habitable.

Unprepared for war -- and maybe especially since Minnesota had only been a state for three years -- officials hurriedly gathered whatever clothing and equipment they could find. The regiment's first uniforms were black felt hats, bright red wool flannel shirts and black pantaloons. They eventually received regulation uniforms after the first battle of Bull Run, on July 21, 1861. At that battle, their first uniforms caused near-fatal confusion when they met Confederates wearing the same colors. Bright red shirts proved to be good targets.

Blue and gray uniforms

Uniforms for the Union army were made of heavy wool fabric. The coats were navy blue and worn with sky-blue trousers and black or dark blue hats. Each branch of the service had a different color for trim and rank insignia. Infantry coats were trimmed with sky blue piping, cavalry in yellow and artillery in red. They were issued a long frock coat for dress and a shorter sack coat for general use. Their shoes were high-top brogans, supposedly made of leather. Sometimes they discovered their shoes fell apart from marching or getting wet -- unscrupulous suppliers would make them out of cardboard coated with a tar

substance to look like leather. The most commonly used hat was the forage cap, which also served as a gathering basket when the men went into fields and orchards looking for berries and fruit to add to their meager rations.

Soldiers were issued a haversack to carry food and a knapsack for other essentials. Strapped atop the knapsack, they carried a blanket rolled up in a rubber sheet and sometimes one half of a shelter tent. This was a piece of canvas about 66 inches long and 63 inches wide. When two canvases were buttoned together over a ridge pole and staked to the ground they provided an open ended basic shelter tent.

Confederate soldiers wore grey uniforms, but as the war dragged on, they used whatever they could get. Often their coats and pants were made of homespun fabric and colored with a dye made from the hulls of butternuts, giving them a light brownish color. As supplies became scarce they often wore captured Union uniforms. Shoes were always in short supply and were frequently taken from bodies on the battlefield. There are many accounts of men on both sides marching and fighting without shoes, even in the cold and snow of winter.

Union infantrymen used the 1861 Springfield rifled musket, which weighed nine pounds. It was an excellent gun with an effective range of over 300 yards. It could be fitted with a bayonet, which was carried on their left side, slung from their waist belt. It fired a 1-ounce soft lead Minnie Bullet. Forty cartridges were carried in a leather box slung at the right hip. The rifle was loaded by tearing open a paper cartridge with the teeth, dumping the gunpowder and bullet down the barrel and then ramming it down with a ramrod. When going into battle they were often issued an additional 40 rounds.

Confederate soldiers used a wide variety of rifles, many of which were imported. Most common were the British Enfield rifle and captured Springfield rifles.

Artillery pieces of all kinds and sizes were used by both the North and the South. They ranged in size from the 3-inch Ordnance Rifle to 6, 12, 24, 32-pounders, and even larger pieces. The weight of the projectile indicates the size. The cannons fired solid shot, a solid cast iron ball; exploding shells, hollow iron balls filled with explosives; and canister and grape shot. The latter two were fired at close range and spewed forth a mass of destructive iron or lead balls, like a giant shotgun blast that tore great holes in the lines of advancing troops.

On the march

Marching was arduous work. The soil of Virginia and neighboring states were mostly red clay, and in hot weather, the tramping of tens of thousands of feet, the pounding of thousands of hooves and wagon wheels turned it into a choking cloud of fine dust. When it rained, the roads became sticky quagmires of knee-deep mud. Encumbered by heavy loads and heavy wool uniforms, the men sometimes marched for days with little to eat or drink and often with little rest. An army column on the march included several thousand cavalry men, thousands of supply wagons and ambulances, 300 to 400 artillery pieces, perhaps 10,000 horses and mules plus up to 140,000 men. It could stretch 100 miles or more. Regiments assigned as rear guard of the column often had to turn and fight the enemy and then run to catch up to the column.

Pvt. Edward Bassett, who served in the 1st Minnesota Infantry, Company G, described how hot, dusty and exhausting it was to march through Maryland in September 1861: "Unwashed and uncombed since we left Uniontown, Maryland, we had gathered the usual defilements of the road and bivouac (Overnight encampment). To the ordinary accumulations of grime that come to those who labor and sweat over dusty or muddy roads & who sleep by the wayside where night or necessity dictates-has been added the uncompromising black of gun powder. It is our custom to tear the paper cartridges with our teeth & many loose grains of powder had adhered to our sweating faces & hands & had been smeared all over them... The color of our uniforms might have been questioned,

for the "Army Blue" was less prominent than the chocolate & mahogany mud stains gathered crossing Maryland and Virginia. Every man's face showed anxiety & physical suffering & their eyes were swollen & inflamed." On the last day of that year, Bassett wrote, "Mud, mud, mud everywhere, enough to lose an army in Charming indeed to wade through."

A soldier's life also meant caring for the remains of dead comrades. Following the battle of Antietam on Sept. 17, 1862, the men of the 1st Minnesota remained on the battlefield for four days to bury dead men and animals. On Sept. 22, James Wright, who served in the 1st Minnesota, Company F, wrote, "We hastened to the bank of the Shenandoah to wash our over-soiled clothing & indulge in a bath in the clear running water of that beautiful mountain river. Fires were made; water heated; clothes washed & boiled & hung on bushes to dry. But however much we may have needed it, individuals could not be boiled, but we were subjected to a series of applications of soap, water & scrubbing...then rinsed off with a plunge in the river... Thousands of soldiers were engaged in bathing for as far as we could see up or down the river."

Often the men marched long distances. The 1st Minnesota's march to Gettysburg covered 140 miles in 16 days. When the bugles blew reveille at 2 a.m., the men scrambled to make breakfast, pack up and then may have stood for hours waiting to fall into their position before the march began. Their day's rations usually consisted of nine hardtack crackers and some salt-cured pork and coffee. Hardtack crackers were made from flour and water and baked rock hard. They measured about 3 inches square and about a half-inch thick, and were sometimes broken up with a rifle butt and dumped into the coffee as it boiled. This served to kill worms and weevils.

A New England soldier advised that the crackers be... "soaked in coffee first -- six weeks was long enough -- then laid on a plate, taking care not to shake the worms out. They eat better than they look, and are so much gain in the way of fresh meat."

The men filled their canteens from nearby creeks. Sometimes the only water available was dipped from wheel ruts in the road where thousands of men, horses and mules had passed by. When the march halted for the night, usually about 9 p.m., wood had to be gathered for fires to make coffee and something to eat. Tents were rarely used if they were to march out again in the morning.

Union surgeon George T. Stevens, of the 77th New York Volunteers, described conditions during their march toward Gettysburg: "June 13, 1863: we started at 10 o'clock at night, a thunder shower prevailed. The road was terribly muddy & our batteries of artillery were frequently stuck in the mire. The rain poured in torrents. We passed over corduroy roads (roads covered with logs to provide a base in the mud). The logs were slippery from the rain, and the men, laden with knapsacks, guns & cartridges, tumbled headlong, rolling far down the steep embankment...

June 15: "Morning dawned. The men were faint & wanted rest & coffee, but there was no halt....The heat of the sun was almost intolerable & the dust suffocating. Men began to fall from exhaustion, many dying of sun stroke & still the march continued. At nearly 3 o'clock we halted. The tired men, with feet blistered and raw, worn out by 17 hours of constant march, threw themselves upon the ground and rested....At 2 o'clock the next morning the shout passed along the line, 'Fall in! Fall in!' ...without coffee we rolled our blankets and fell into line."

On the march to Gettysburg, Union Capt. Samuel Fiske of the 14th Connecticut Volunteers wrote, "We passed....the field of the two Bull Run Battles; & I was shocked to find great numbers of the bodies of Union soldiers lying still unburied. Their skeletons, with the tattered & decaying uniforms still hanging upon them, lie in many parts of last year's battlefield, in long ranks, just as they fell....in many instances, the bodies, which were partially or hastily buried are now much uncovered & a grinning skull meets your gaze as you pass, or a fleshless arm stretches out it's ghastly welcome."