Camp was a refuge

Camp life was a welcome break from the strain of battle. Imagine a camp of 100,000 men or more. The armies were often in camp for extended periods and encampments were generally placed near a heavily wooded area and a river. Hillsides for miles were laid bare by the time the army left, as it took a lot of wood for cooking, heating and to build suitable winter quarters. (Few battles were fought in the winter) Rations were better in camp as trains, wagons and sutlers brought supplies, mail and newspapers. Camp ovens provided cherished loaves of soft bread. Life in camp was occupied by training drills, cleaning and repairing guns and equipment, picket guard duty, mending and washing their clothing, reading, and writing letters.

The men often wrote letters by candlelight, with candles being held upright by a bayonet stuck in the ground or in a potato. They often had to salvage writing paper from anywhere they could. Empty hardtack crates made serviceable shelves and tables. One can hardly comprehend the extent of the endurance, courage and dedication of the men, both Union and Confederate, who gave their all for causes they so deeply believed in. Neither privation nor peril could keep them from doing their duty to their country, as they saw it. Their sacrifices bear tribute to a land called "the home of the brave."

Richard and Sharon Krom are authors, historians and speakers who live in Rochester. Richard is the author of "The 1st MN: Second to None."

Lincoln's Short Speech at Gettysburg Had Timeless Message
By Jay Furst November 19, 2013

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

Four score and 58 days after the final shots were fired at Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln boarded a train and went there to say a few words. He arrived from Washington about dusk on Nov. 18, 1863, with his notes not quite finished for the next day's event, the dedication of what was called a national cemetery at the battlefield. He had written the first page of his remarks on Executive Mansion stationery, but he kept working at it on the train -- according to one account, he used his stovepipe hat as a desk -- and that night.

The next morning, which was unseasonably warm and hazy, Lincoln rode on horseback to the fields where less than five months earlier, in the heat of summer, nearly 200,000 Union and Confederate fought for three days, with nearly a quarter of them killed, wounded or missing by the time it was over.

The ground around the platform for the dedication event already held the remains of thousands of Union soldiers and some Confederates as well. Most were buried where they had fallen, then retrieved later. Some said the stench of death was still in the air. Within days of Lincoln's visit, the remains of about a thousand men would be reinterred in the new cemetery.

The dead included dozens of men from Minnesota. About 40 of them were from the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, which made a famous charge against overwhelming odds to keep Confederate forces from taking Cemetery Ridge on July 2, 1863. It was a crucial point in the battle, which became the turning point in the war. The regiment also fought to keep Confederate Gen. George Pickett's charge from changing the outcome of the battle on July 3.

Lincoln, who wanted to know the ins and outs of every battle, surely would have heard of the 1st Minnesota volunteers from Gen. George A. Meade, Major Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock and others. The platform on which he was seated that

day was not far from the ridge where the Minnesotans made their desperate charge on July 2. The event began about noon. The president, who was invited almost as an after-thought just a few weeks earlier, was preceded by a famous orator who orated for more than two hours. Lincoln may have appreciated a few more minutes to think about his own remarks. There was band music and a prayer as the crowd estimated at about 15,000 milled around.

Lincoln's turn came at about 3 p.m. He took his reading glasses and notes from his coat, spoke for less than three minutes and returned to his chair. Though he had a high, penetrating voice that carried well, many in the crowd didn't know he'd spoken at all. The applause was respectful. Most who heard the speech didn't think it was particularly memorable. But the 272 words he spoke 150 years ago today became the defining statement of what the Civil War was about.

'A new birth of freedom'

The war wasn't just about preserving the Union anymore. That was Lincoln's one and only rationale early on, to keep the nation intact at any cost, hopefully quickly and without catastrophic damage. Those hopes were quickly dashed.

The war wasn't about ending slavery. For most of his career, Lincoln had spoken out against it, but when he was elected president in 1860, he made it clear he would do nothing to prohibit it where it already existed. As late as August 1862, after a year of war and tens of thousands of casualties, he wrote a letter to New York newspaper publisher Horace Greeley that said, "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or to destroy slavery."

Just a month later, after the Union army won a bloody but decisive battle at Antietam, he issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation to free the slaves. This became official on Jan. 1, 1863, and it changed the nature of the war.

But even then, Lincoln wouldn't say the war was about slavery. It was only after the Southern invasion of Pennsylvania was stopped at the small south-central farm town of Gettysburg, and Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was driven back, that the meaning of the war became clear to him.

The Gettysburg battle ended on July 3. Lincoln and the world learned of the Union's decisive victory by telegraph on Independence Day. Another crucial Union victory was won on July 4, and the president learned of that three days later. In an excellent new book about Gettysburg, author Allan C. Guelzo writes that Lincoln was exultant, "beaming with joy," when he heard the latter news from the Navy secretary.

"That night, the capital joined in reveling over the twin victories," Guelzo writes in "Gettysburg: The Last Invasion." "A large throng marched up Pennsylvania Avenue with the Marine Band at their head, milling in front of the White House and calling on (Lincoln) for a speech."

Lincoln went to a second-story window and said a few words that would be echoed at Gettysburg. He observed that it had been "eighty odd years ... since on the Fourth of July, for the first time in the history of the world, a nation by its representatives, assembled and declared as a self-evident truth that 'all men are created equal." He called that a "glorious theme," Guelzo says, but said he was "not prepared" to elaborate on it, at that moment. Five months later, he was ready.

The Spirit of '76

The victories on or about the Fourth of July touched a mystic chord for him, linked to the events of 1776 and his almost religious belief in the Declaration of Independence. "I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence," he once said.

Guelzo notes that Lincoln wrote, in 1854, that the U.S. Constitution and system of government was an "experiment" to test whether democracy was possible and enduring. And he notes that Lincoln told his secretary, John Hay, at the start of the war, "The central idea pervading this struggle is the necessity ... of proving that popular government is not an absurdity."

The preservation of the Union would not only mean that the revolutionary promise that "all men are created equal" could still be redeemed. It would preserve the hope that self-government -- "government of the people, by the people, for the people" -- would not perish just yet.

The fighting at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, and other aspects of the war that were trending the Union way, in Tennessee especially, gave Lincoln hope that the corner had been turned -- and it had been turned on or about the Fourth of July, especially in Gettysburg, where the South's most fearsome army and leader had been turned back. It was this that fired Lincoln's thinking about the comments to be made at Gettysburg.

Whether any of the Minnesota heroes of the battle were there to hear Lincoln speak is doubtful. The regiment's leader, Capt. William Colvill, of Red Wing, was among the roughly 170 men in the unit who were wounded -- he was hit three times and sustained crippling wounds. He recovered at a home in Gettysburg for weeks after the battle, then was moved to a hospital in Harrisburg, Pa., about 40 miles away. But Colvill presumably didn't make the trip to Gettysburg for the event. He eventually rejoined the regiment in February 1864, but had to use canes for the rest of his life. Company F of the 1st Minnesota was organized in Red Wing and Colvill was the first to volunteer. Company G was mustered in Faribault, Company I in Wabasha and Company K in Winona.

The man who first offered troops to the Union army, Minnesota Gov. Alexander Ramsey, wanted to attend the event in Gettysburg but just missed it. He was a U.S. senator by that time and traveled by train and steamboat from St. Paul to

Pittsburgh. "By 4:30 a.m. on the 18th he had made his way to Pittsburgh, where he manfully boarded the mail train for Harrisburg," according to one account. "He arrived there at 5 then, continuing south and into the 19th, the dedication, he arrived at a point 15 miles east of Gettysburg and, stranded at Hanover Junction in the wee small hours, he would abandon the idea of attending the ceremonies."

There was no apparent mention of the Gettysburg event or Lincoln's speech in the two Rochester newspapers of the day, based on what's available on the Minnesota Digital Newspaper Hub, a website hosted by the Minnesota Historical Society. The Rochester City Post was full of news of the war, including the latest from Chattanooga, praise for "abolition" activity in Missouri and details about the looming military draft, but no reference to Gettysburg.

The Post, a precursor to the Post-Bulletin, was clearly pro-Union, as was the Rochester Republican. In the editions right after the Gettysburg speech, the latter published a version of Lincoln's 1862 letter to Horace Greeley, where the president said preservation of the United States was his only goal, though if freedom for the slaves could be accomplished as part of that, so be it.

The New York Times covered the event in Gettysburg and reported the text of Lincoln's speech, as did the Associated Press, including his use of the words "under God," which don't appear in his initial versions. The Times notes that there was "sustained applause" after his remarks, and "three cheers were then given for the President and the Governors of the States."

But it would be years before, in hindsight, the words that Lincoln used to crystallize the meaning of the war would be recognized as among the most powerful lines ever written about the American "experiment," which 150 years after his speech remains just that.

Jay Furst is the Post-Bulletin managing editor.

Chatfield Heroes at Missionary Ridge

By Joe Chase November 26, 2013

Rochester, MN Post Bulletin

On the morning after the battle of Chickamauga, the 2nd Minnesota Volunteer Infantry was bloodied but still on the battlefield. That day, 222 officers and soldiers answered the roll call. Before Chickamauga, they numbered 384. The battered Army of the Cumberland was entrenched on the south and east sides of Chattanooga and, with its back to the Tennessee River, braced for renewed rebel attack.

Col. Judson Bishop, of Chatfield, wrote on Sept. 22, 1863, that "we expect an attack perhaps today but probably tomorrow. We are outnumbered but I think we can hold this place until reinforced."

At noon that day, the 46,000 men of Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee reached Chattanooga, but the rebels did not attack. They occupied the heights overlooking the town — Lookout Mountain southwest and Missionary Ridge to the east and south. Bragg announced he had the Federals where he wanted them, stranded deep in Dixie, with winter coming. His plan: Starve the 45,000 Yankees into surrender.

'The center of the war'

Because Confederate artillery on Lookout Mountain could hit Union supply trains approaching along the Tennessee River, the Union army had to bring all provisions to Chattanooga over a 60- mile, mountainous wagon trail from Bridgeport, Ala. An eight-day trip in ideal conditions, rain and axel-deep mud increased it to 20. Worse, Confederate cavalry raided the trains. The supplies that got through could not feed the army.

The 2nd Minnesota was soon on less than half rations, each man receiving "six small crackers a day with about an ounce of salt pork and a small piece of fresh beef." Soldiers began stealing corn from the mules' feed boxes.

Chattanooga was now the center of the war. "All public interest is concentrated on the Tennessee," said U.S. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, who launched a colossal effort to save the besieged army. On Sept. 23, Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman was ordered to start his 20,000 Vicksburg veterans, including the 4th Minnesota Infantry, on the march from Memphis to Chattanooga. Two days later, 20,000 soldiers of the Army of the Potomac, led by Gen. Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker, were put on rail cars and sent 1,200 circuitous miles from northern Virginia to Bridgeport.

Union Gen. William Rosecrans' reports from Chattanooga worried President Abraham Lincoln. "We have no certainty of holding our position here," Rosecrans telegraphed. "Our fate is in the hands of God, in whom I hope." Lincoln wanted a plan, not prayers. On Oct. 17, he appointed Gen. Ulysses S. Grant overall commander of three Union armies west of the Appalachians, including the Army of the Cumberland, and he replaced Rosecrans with Gen. George H. Thomas. Grant wired Thomas that Chattanooga must be held. "We will hold the town till we starve," Thomas replied.

When Grant arrived in Chattanooga on Oct. 23, his first priority was a better line of supply. In the early morning darkness on Oct. 27, 1,500 Union soldiers staged a daring assault to seize a Tennessee River crossing beyond the range of rebel guns. The Union supply line was shortened to eight miles. Food and ammunition began to reach Chattanooga in quantity.

Now, Grant planned an attack. To lead it, he tapped his trusted friend Sherman, who just arrived from Memphis. Grant didn't trust Thomas' Army of the Cumberland. Beaten at Chickamauga and then starved, they resembled scarecrows. Grant told Sherman he feared the Cumberlanders would not come

out of their trenches to fight. Grant did not think much of George Thomas or Thomas' troops, and the troops knew it.

To break the siege, the Yankees had to capture 8-mile-long, 500-foot-high Missionary Ridge. At its base were log and earth breastworks. The crest, where Bragg's army was dug in, bristled with cannons. The position seemed impregnable, and Grant did not intend a frontal assault. He would use Hooker's and Thomas' forces to divert Bragg's attention to the south and center, while Sherman delivered the main attack on the north. Once atop the ridge, Sherman would roll south, pushing Bragg's army off the crest.

Death trap below the ridge

The battle began on the afternoon of Nov. 23, when Thomas' 25,000 Cumberlanders left their entrenchments to test Bragg's center. Flags flying, drums and bugles sounding, the sight brought admiring Confederates out to watch the Yankees drill. Suddenly the rebels realized the blue line was charging. The fight was brief. At a cost of 1,100 men killed or wounded, Thomas' troops overran the Confederate outpost at Orchard Knob. The Army of the Cumberland had come out to fight after all.

The next morning, Hooker's 12,000 Federals attacked fog-shrouded Lookout Mountain in an engagement that newspapers called the "battle above the clouds." Bragg already had moved most of his troops off Lookout, and by 2 p.m., the Yankees were halfway up the mountain. There, Hooker halted for an assault on the summit the next day, but after midnight, the last rebels slipped off the mountain and joined Bragg's main force on Missionary Ridge. The opening rounds were over. The main event was about to begin.

At daybreak on the 25th, Sherman's 26,000 men attacked the north end of the ridge. Patrick Cleburne's 4,000 Confederate soldiers were waiting for them. Cleburne, a slavery-hating Irishman, was the toughest fighter in the Confederacy.

Sherman's bloody, eight-hour assault got nowhere. His army had come to Chattanooga to rescue Thomas' Cumberlanders. Now, someone needed to rescue Sherman. Grant turned reluctantly to George Thomas. The plan was for the Cumberlanders to divert rebel troops from Sherman's sector by attacking the Confederate fortifications at the base of Missionary Ridge. But they were to attack only those lower works, not to climb Missionary Ridge.

At 3:40 p.m., 23,000 Chickamauga veterans, in a line 2 1/2 miles long and six rows deep, cheered and stepped off toward the ridge. The 2nd Minnesota led its brigade toward breastworks held by two Southern regiments. More than a hundred Confederate cannons, "like a thousand thunderclaps," opened fire. "The top of the ridge was one sheet of flame and smoke from the enemy's batteries," Pvt. William Bircher recalled. Shells "tore up the ground around us," and musketry blazed from the Confederate breastworks. "Our boys moved stubbornly forward in the face of the fire," Col. Bishop wrote later. One hundred paces from the breastworks, the Minnesotans cheered and "made a rush for it, and the enemy broke and ran."

'All hell can't stop them'

The works were taken, and Grant's orders were carried out. But now, Thomas' men were in trouble. The captured fortifications became deathtraps: The Federals were fish in a barrel for the 16,000 Confederates shooting down at them. The Yankees couldn't stay where they were and live, but retreat was unthinkable.

There was only one thing to do: A handful of soldiers, then companies and whole regiments, began to climb. Officers who ordered their men to stop were ignored, so they followed the men. The Army of the Cumberland was clambering up Missionary Ridge.

Grant, watching from headquarters, was stunned. The Cumberlanders' improvised and apparently suicidal ascent invited disaster. "Thomas, who ordered those men up the ridge?" Grant demanded. "I don't know," replied Thomas. "I did not." Grant turned to Gen. Gordon Granger: "Did you order them up, Granger?" "No," said Granger. "They started up without orders. When those fellows get started, all hell can't stop them."

The 20-minute ascent, Sgt. Timothy Pendergast remembered later, "was no picnic." The ridge was steep; handholds were necessary to make the climb. "We would charge forward as rapidly as possible," Pendergast recalled, "until becoming too tired to continue, we would take position behind a tree and rest, until gaining breath we would again advance."

Bishop recalled that "the infantry on top hailed down in our faces a perfect storm of lead" as "our men toiled bravely and patiently up." "Within a few yards of the summit," Sgt. Pendergast remembered, the men "halted for our last rest before attempting to dash over the works."

Regimental organization broke down, Bishop recalled, as "every man had to find or clear his own way in the face of a terrible fire of musketry and artillery." In the final rush, as the brigade swarmed over the breastworks, Minnesotans were side-by-side with Ohioans and Hoosiers. Shouting "Chickamauga," they "charged on the astonished Rebels with the bayonet."

A Confederate recalled that "the Federals ran over us like a herd of wild cattle." The rebel line broke but soon regrouped for a furious counter-attack. The fighting was hand-to-hand. For 10 desperate minutes, the battle hung in the balance. But there was room for only one army on Missionary Ridge, and outnumbered and out-fought, the Army of the Tennessee buckled. Gen. Bragg himself, waving a battle flag, tried to rally his men. They ran right past him.

As darkness fell, part of Missionary Ridge belonged to the 2nd Minnesota. The Army of the Cumberland was exultant. "My God, come see them run!" an Indiana soldier shouted. Gen. Granger was in the mood for some fun. "I'm going to have you all court-martialed!" he exclaimed to the men. "You were ordered to take the works at the foot of the hill, and you've taken those on top! You have disobeyed orders, and you ought to be court-martialed!"

Death knell of the Confederacy

Five men of the 2nd Minnesota were killed, and 34 were wounded, four of whom later died. In a cold wind atop the ridge, the Minnesotans lit their campfires. When Gen. Thomas rode up, the regiment cheered. Under "Pap" Thomas, these Minnesotans had seen their first combat at Mill Springs. They had stood their ground at Chickamauga, and they went hungry and then triumphed at Chattanooga. That night, Thomas joked with the boys and promised to "fatten [them] up now."

The odds, which had always been against the Confederacy, became impossibly long with defeat at Chattanooga. "Captain, this is the death knell of the Confederacy," a young rebel soldier told his commander as they retreated. "If we cannot cope with those fellows with the advantages we had on (Missionary Ridge), there is not a line between here and the Atlantic Ocean where we can stop them."

A Long Road Home from Gettysburg
By Dale Blanshan December 3, 2013

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

The little copse of trees on a slight ridge among the fields southeast of Utica looks like the copse of trees on a similar ridge at Gettysburg, Pa. It's fitting that David Taylor, who lost his life on the ridge at Gettysburg in July 1863, should be buried in a Minnesota cemetery on a similar ridge.

David Taylor, born in Ireland in 1836, emigrated to America with his family and eventually settled on a farm near Utica. In April 1861, he was working across the road from his parents' home when civil war broke out and President Abraham Lincoln called for volunteers to restore the Union. Taylor and his friends Ephraim Burton and James Richardson answered the call. They traveled to Fort Snelling, where on May 23 they were mustered into service and assigned to Company K of the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry.

War was not kind to the Winona County boys of Company K. Burton was killed at Bull Run. Others were wounded, killed or taken prisoner at Antietam, Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg.

At Gettysburg, Pvt. Taylor met his fate. He may have been wounded on July 2, when Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, buying five minutes of time, ordered the 1st Minnesota to charge a Confederate force six times their number. Or he may have been killed the next day defending against Pickett's famous charge. The regimental roll of July 29, 1863, says only that Taylor died on July 3.

The Gettysburg dead were buried on the field of battle. Most were removed, including 3,500 reburied in a new national cemetery on Cemetery Ridge. Taylor was not among them. His father and brother had traveled to Pennsylvania, found his body and carried it home.

On Nov. 19, 1863, President Lincoln mounted a speakers' platform at the new Gettysburg cemetery to deliver an address in which he honored "the brave men, living and dead, who struggled here." The next day, Taylor was laid to rest in the little cemetery back home near Utica.

The Winona Daily Republican reported that the funeral ceremonies for Taylor were imposing and the largest that had ever occurred in the town. The minister who presided noted that "from the day that he entered the army until he was slain at Gettysburg, he had never sought or obtained a furlough, was never sick or absent from duty and always performed the duties required of him with the faithfulness of a good soldier and the enthusiasm of a true patriot."

Last summer, I joined a crowd of onlookers at Mt. Auburn Cemetery, southeast of Utica, where the remains of Taylor had lain for a century and a half. The Lewiston American Legion provided a color guard for the event on June 22, and members of the Rushford American Legion Riders Post, with names such as Scuffy, Sunshine and Junkyard, set up a wall of red, white and blue, a brisk wind snapping their flags to attention.

State Sen. Carla Nelson represented the government that had called Taylor into service, and a group of re-enactors in Civil War uniforms represented the boys who answered the call. One of them stood guard over Taylor's grave through the ceremony.

The Taylor family was represented by Dick Christiansen, of Newell, Iowa, who had only just learned that he was the closest living relative of an American hero.

After a township official welcomed the assembly, Ken Flies of the Minnesota Civil War Commemoration Task Force told of finding 19 Minnesota Civil War soldiers who had been brought home for burial and how a new stone marker was being placed at the grave of each. Chuck Weissbrodt, of the Rochester Civil War

Roundtable, and Dick Krom, a descendant of one of Taylor's regimental comrades, told the story of the battle of Gettysburg and Minnesota's part in it.

A rose was laid on the grave. After a reading of the Gettysburg Address, a solitary bagpiper played "Amazing Grace," the music fading as he marched off. Bugler Bill Crowder played "Taps," while the soldiers fired three volleys in salute.

Feeling the solemnity, the crowd lingered. One of the last to leave was the soldier who laid a wreath on Taylor's grave. As I watched, he strode purposefully back through the cemetery to stand before the new headstone. After a silent, solitary moment, he raised his right hand in salute, clicked his heels in a smart military turn and was gone.

Two Weeklies Agreed on the War
By Ryan Stotts December 10, 2013

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

In 1863, news traveled slowly to Rochester.

Eight years after the first settler homesteaded a claim in what became Rochester, and a year or so before the first telegraph wires and railroad lines connected it to the outer world, newspapers were the only source of relatively authoritative news.

When the news finally arrived, it packed an emotional wallop. Witness this account, published in the Oct. 24, 1863, Rochester City Post, from an unnamed solider fighting in Company B of the 2nd Minnesota Volunteer Infantry near Chattanooga, Tenn. The soldier's letter is dated Oct. 5 and describes in detail an attack on Company B by rebel forces on Sept. 18-19.

"It is not for me to relate more than the simple fact of what was done. What is true of Company B is true of the regiment. Every man did his duty and the memory of our dead shall be sacred forever. We know they fought with unflinching, determined bravery, and while their friends mourn them, let them be assured that this company mourns with them, for long association has made their vacant places in the ranks as scared as the vacant chair of the family hearthstone."

Company B went into the fight with 37 men and came out two days later with five dead, 13 severely wounded and two taken prisoner.

"Today, Oct. 5th, the rebels have opened fire on us with artillery on two sides," he wrote. "A shell burst out entrenchments wounding mortally (a sergeant) of Company F. We expect a siege; it is unpleasant, but trust us, while living, to preserve the honor of our State."

The visceral emotion and graphic nature of the report was common in the dueling newspapers that were published weekly in Rochester as the Civil War entered its penultimate year, 1864. They published sharply critical editorials, as well as bulletin-like reports from the battlefields. While it was normal for thousands of words to run without a byline of any kind, it was at that time assumed that all the news, no matter how partisan, was chiefly credited to the publisher and editor -- often the same person.

Two papers, both Republican

Two weeklies were published in Rochester at that time, the Rochester City Post and the Rochester Republican. While both wrote stinging editorials aimed at Democrats, which at that time was the more conservative party, the more radical paper was the Republican.

Several papers had come and gone in the pioneer city by 1863. The Olmsted County Journal was the first published in the county, but it died a quickly in its founding year, 1857. Then came the Rochester Free Press (1858), the Rochester Democrat (August 1857 to November 1858), and the Rochester City News, which collapsed in 1859. Its materials were snapped up by W. H. Mitchell and Dr. L H. Kelly, who founded the Republican in 1860.

Kelly quickly retired, but R. H. Hoag joined Mitchell late in 1860, bringing a press and materials with him from Northfield. He then enlisted to fight in the war in 1862 and left Mitchell on his own until that November, when S. W. Eaton joined the paper.

Vying for readers hungry for war news was the Rochester City Post, founded in 1859 by David and Cyrenus Blakely, brothers from Vermont who both had previous newspaper and printing experience. David, who would go on to serve as Minnesota Secretary of State from 1863 to 1865 and later was publisher of the

St. Paul Pioneer and head of printing for the Tribune in Minneapolis, worked closely with Cyrenus until the latter enlisted in the 3rd Minnesota Regiment.

After the war, Cyrenus returned to Rochester but only briefly. He went on to establish one of the largest printing businesses in Chicago.

The City Post, which was by far the more financially successful paper, was nearly as tough on the Democrats as the Republican newspaper. Minnesota at that time leaned Republican and was four-square behind the war effort, though there were plenty of Democrats in Southeast Minnesota as well, especially as the war dragged on.

"The people of this country have learned, by some sad experience, to look upon certain leaders of the Democratic party with but little confidence," the City Post commented on Dec. 12, 1863, "and to suspect them always of double-dealing."

It went on to name names, accusing governors and "political hacks" alike of striking hands with rebels and corrupt patriots. The headline read, "True Democracy."

All that's fit to print

Not everything was partisan, and the papers weren't all about the war. Poems and literary sketches often dominated page one. Local features and social items came before the war news and obituaries. Vital information, such as news of the military draft, fill the pages of the last three months of 1863.

"The Milwaukee Sentinel continues to urge upon the citizens of that place the importance of a direct railroad connection with Winona," the Republican reported on Dec. 23. It went on to quote the Winona Republican:

"There can be no reasonable doubt of the intention of the Northwestern Company to extend an arm of their road from Janesville to Winona."

Despite the war, change was coming and industry was flourishing. The state's wool clip was one of the largest in the Union. A seminary for young ladies was announced in Rochester. Attorneys, milliners and saddleries all advertised their wares in the papers.

Life went on, despite the catastrophic war to the east and south, and Minnesota's trend was toward hope and prosperity -- especially by the end of 1863, when the Union's progress on the battlefield was undeniable.

"The National interests, though not entirely divested of painful and dangerous aspects, appear today much more hopeful and promising than they did one year ago," the Republican told readers on Dec. 30, 1863. "The mighty energies of the nation have in some degree been aroused and systematized and have assumed shape, point and direction; the ample resources of the country are becoming rapidly developed but are in no way exhausted. Greater confidence and a more practical unanimity are felt; a large extent of territory, held one year ago by rebel insurgents, has been captured and is now held by the legitimate government; and this nation may reasonably hope, that if true to itself and to its high and sacred mission, ere another New Year shall be greeted by us, peace, honorable and lasting, shall reign throughout all our borders.

"Readers, a happy New Year to you all."

Ryan Stotts is a Rochester freelance writer and a former special sections editor for the Post-Bulletin.

Home Beckons After Three Years of War
By Ryan Stotts December 17, 2013

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

By this date 150 years ago, what was left of the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry was camped near Brandy Station, Va., where a great cavalry battle had been fought in June. The 16 officers and 309 enlisted men recently had finished their last engagement, the inconclusive Mine Run campaign in Virginia. Ahead of them lay 1864, with the faint promise that the regiment, one of the first to enlist to fight for the Union in April 1861, would be able to go home.

That promise would be kept, but not until February 1864, when the regiment's depleted ranks would be given a hero's welcome, first in Washington, D.C., and then in St. Paul. They would be mustered out of service at the end of April, almost three years to the exact date they had left for battle, more than a thousand men strong.

The 1st Minnesota would be involved in 21 battles, and their valiant fight at Gettysburg on July 2-3, 1863, which only 47 of more than 250 soldiers survived, would overshadow the distinguished records of other Minnesota regiments. Of the 11 volunteer regiments, it was the 1st Minnesota that everyone talked about, celebrated and honored. But as 1863 turned into 1864, the men were worn out, cold, lonely and homesick.

Pvt. Edward H. Bassett, a 19-year-old from Morristown, near Faribault, who was one of the few men to see three full years of enlistment, wrote home to his parents from winter camp near Brandy Station, about 90 miles from the Confederate capital of Richmond, on Jan. 3, 1864: "The question is, is this the road to Richmond? Well, I begin to think the war is about to end and I expect I will be home by the time the grass grows in the spring of 1864."

It was wishful thinking, especially after the Union victory at Gettysburg didn't lead to destruction of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, as Lincoln had

hoped. But, then, everyone in the camp wanted the war to be over. Everyone wanted to go home. They had, after all, not been able to strike Lee's army at the end of November in Orange County, Va. as they had hoped. The failure would close out the Union's attempts to achieve a decisive victory before winter.

The Mine Run campaign

The plan was simple. Union Gen. George G. Meade, who led the federal troops to victory at Gettysburg but was criticized for not more aggressively pursuing Lee after driving him back into Virginia, planned to strike the right flank of Lee's huge army south of the Rapidan River. Lee had 48,000 men, but the army was in two parts, separated by 30 miles in a mountainous area. By Nov. 27, members of the 1st Minnesota were poised among the 81,000 federal troops, ready to strike.

For Company F Sgt. James A. Wright, the occasion was doubly poignant. Not only would it be the last engagement for his regiment, but it was also his 23rd birthday. "As we lay there in the bushes, we could hear the dull thud of an occasional gun, apparently a long way off to the left, where the 5th Corps was holding the Plank Road," Wright, who was from the Red Wing area, later wrote of the campaign. "At the same time, the smothered grumbling of the 3rd Corps artillery, coming continuously through the tangled woods from some miles way on the right, indicated at that hour the strongest opposition was in that direction. Meantime, we were neither immune nor idle, but along the whole front the skirmishes were busy. This was the situation at noon of the 27th, and for some hours there had been seemingly but little progress."

Nor would there be. Meade, who was slow to attack due to a traffic jam of troops and artillery on a nearby river, gave Lee ample time to strengthen his lines of battle along the village known as Mine Run, and on Nov. 30, the members of the 1st Minnesota were lying in wait so close they could see the rebels around their camp fires.

"We found out about 9 o'clock in the a.m. that the idea of charging the works had been given up and we lay there all day expecting they would open on us but they did not and we were relived that night and went to the rear so we got out of another bad place without losing any men," Bassett wrote. "If the charge had been made as first intended, I don't believe there would be 10 men of the 1st Minnesota Regt. came out live." By Dec. 2, the threat of major bombardment from either side still failed to materialize. The Union army retreated into winter camps, with Meade, who was soon to be replaced by Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, wearily saying, "I am too old to command this army. We never should have permitted those people to get away."

Homeward, angel

Meade wasn't the only one tired and pessimistic. The harsh monotony of camp life, which consisted of drills, hard work, anxiety and tedium, only added to the drained spirits of the men, and a quiet Christmas was enlivened only by the rare appearance of beef soup on the menu. The New Year was uneventful, but by late January, rumors were swirling that the 1st Minnesota might be sent home.

"On Tuesday night, February 2 (1864), Lt. Col. Charles P. Adams, commanding the regiment, returned from Washington, where he had been since Saturday, and there was a rumor the next day that the regiment was to be ordered home soon," Wright reported. "Some believed the story, and some did not, saying, 'it is too good to be true.'" It was, indeed, true. By Feb. 16, 1864, the men would be back where they began in St. Paul.

"This gallant regiment left Washington for home on Monday of last week, after being the recipients in that city of a splendid ovation prepared for them at the National Hotel," the Rochester City Post reported on Feb. 20, 1864.

"The presence of such gentlemen as the Vice President, the Secretaries of War, and of the Interior, and so many Senators and Representatives, testified to the

deep interest felt in what Minnesota had done, and what her first regiment had accomplished." The troops had first stopped in La Crosse, Wis., where they were put onto sleighs and taken to Winona, where there were warmly welcomed and fed, and by noon the next day they had made it to Red Wing. From there the members of the 1st were sent to Hastings, where they were put into hotels and feted, with an oyster supper and a reception at Teutonia Hall.

"The following day, Monday, was a perfect gala day in St. Paul, the entire population, the Legislature and distinguished strangers present vying with each other, according to our St. Paul exchanges, in attention to these distinguished veterans," read the City Post. "These heroes of 21 battles deserve all these ovations and more too. No other regiment in the army can point to so long and glorious a record as these returning conquering heroes.

"Their record covers a space from July 1861 to December 1863, as follows:

Bull Run, Va. – July 21, 1861

Ball's Bluff, Va. – Oct. 21, 1861

Siege of Yorktown – April 1862

West Point, Va. – May 7, 1862

Fair Oaks, Va. – May 31 and June 1, 1862

Peach Orchard, Va. – June 29, 1862

Savage Station, Va. – June 29, 1862

Glendale, Va. – June 30, 1862

White Oak Swamp, Va. – June 30, 1862

Malvern Hill, Va. – August 5, 1862

Malvern Hill, Va. – July 1, 1862

Vienna, Va. – Sept. 2, 1862

Antietam, Md. – Sept. 17, 1862

Charlestown, Va. – Oct. 16, 1862

Fredericksburg, Va. – Dec. 13, 1862

Fredericksburg, Va. – May 3, 1863

Haymarket, Va. – June 25, 1863

Gettysburg, Pa. – July 2-3, 1863

Bristow Station, Va. – Nov. 27, 1863

Mine Run, Va. – Nov. 27, 1863

The City Post concluded, "The 1st Regiment has not yet re-enlisted, but it is probable that very many of its members will do so." In fact, many of the soldiers did, but the regiment was not reformed. Those that went back to the battle front were part of what became known as the 1st Minnesota Battalion of Infantry.

Wright was among the 134 men from the 1st Minnesota who re-enlisted and became part of the battalion. He was back in Virginia by the time the magnolias and redbuds were blooming in May. But during those winter days in early 1864, he, like his brothers in arms, was briefly able to enjoy the peace of being back home.

"I am home, at last, once more, and as gratefully glad as a mortal can be," he wrote. "I found all comfortable and almost beside themselves with joy at my return."

Ryan Stotts is a freelance writer in Rochester.

Fight for the Union, 1864: Hope Grows for War's End

By Jay Furst September 16, 2014

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

Cpl. Thomas Christie, a farmer from Winona County, was camped about 2 miles south of Atlanta, which had fallen to the Union army two weeks earlier. His older brother, William, who owned the farm in the St. Charles area, was marching with Union Gen. William T. Sherman, who after some cleanup operations around Atlanta, was preparing to evacuate the city, set fire to it, then begin his devastating "March to the Sea."

Col. Judson Bishop, of Chatfield, who had moved up in June to lead the 2nd Minnesota Regiment, was in hot pursuit of Confederate Gen. John Bell Hood in northern Georgia and Alabama. The 2nd Minnesota Cavalry was in the badlands of western Dakota Territory, where, in July, the army had battled with Sioux Indians in the aftermath of the 1862 Dakota War.

First Minnesota Regiment Capt. William Colvill, who was severely wounded at Gettysburg and had been mustered out after his enlistment expired, was back in Red Wing, editing a paper called the Republican. Others in the 1st Minnesota who re-enlisted formed a new unit, the 1st Minnesota Battalion of Infantry, and immediately returned to action in the east.

All had been fighting for the Union since the earliest days of the Civil War. The end of the war was in sight 150 years ago this week. Atlanta, the industrial capital of the Deep South, had fallen just a few days earlier. Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's huge army was firmly entrenched in the heart of Virginia, and Gen. Sherman's army was preparing to march to Savannah, destroying just about everything in its path.

No one was predicting the South would surrender anytime soon -- for one thing, the Union had an election to get through in November that could oust the commander in chief. But there was reason to think the end could come in 1865.

That wouldn't be soon enough for thousands of men who would fight and die before the end came, including hundreds of Minnesotans. And for families and friends back home in places such as Rochester, Red Wing, Winona and Chatfield, it seemed like it would never come.

Minnesota soldiers re-enlist

Since southeastern Minnesota soldiers were among the first to respond to President Lincoln's call for recruits when the war began, they were among the first to reach the end of their three-year enlistment in 1864.

Many re-upped, including the men of the 1st Minnesota who formed the new battalion. Some were from southeast Minnesota; there were more men from the Rochester, Chatfield and Winona areas in the 2nd Minnesota, and their three-year enlistments also came due in December 1863. Those who re-enlisted, and many did, received a $400 federal bonus -- almost a year's pay for a typical worker in those days. The soldiers also received a 30-day furlough and other benefits for re-enlisting and becoming "veteranized."

Soldiers in the 2nd Minnesota returned home in early 1864, in part to recruit new members, but they were back in plenty of time for the Georgia campaign. Minnesota was the second-smallest state in the Union by population, but it punched well above its weight. It sent 11 regiments into battle, plus other irregular units such as sharpshooters and the like -- about 22,000 men in all, out of a population of about 175,000. About 1,250 of those soldiers were from Olmsted County, which had a population of just 9,500 in 1860.

By 1864, those soldiers were battle-hardened, the kind that generals prized above all. Many had seen the worst of war and kept fighting. They had shown valor at places such as Gettysburg and Chattanooga, where the 1st Minnesota and 2nd Minnesota had played crucial roles. They wouldn't buckle and run under pressure. They'd stand and fight. A soldier in the 1st Minnesota wrote in a letter

after Gettysburg, "Our boys felt bully during all the fight, and no one thought of running or of the danger."

Grinding toward victory

Since the Union victory at Gettysburg in July 1863, the North had pressed its advantage in the west, through the Tennessee mountains and along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. When the armies came out of winter camp and hostilities resumed, it was primarily in Georgia and in Virginia, where Grant began a massive and multipronged attack on Gen. Robert E. Lee's positions, called the Overland Campaign.

Though Grant's army had to retreat after heavy losses at Cold Harbor, Va., in early June and hit an impasse at Petersburg, Va., the siege that ensued kept pressure on Lee and led to the collapse of both Lee's army and the Confederacy in 1865.

The Christie brothers, who had farmed in Winona County for a few years before enlisting in the 3rd Minnesota Regiment in October 1861, fought together with the 1st Minnesota Battery during the climactic days in Atlanta in August and September 1864. They had marched out of Huntsville, Ala., on May 25 and caught up with Sherman's army in early summer.

Their whereabouts are well-documented in part because they were meticulous letter-writers. About 275 of their letters survive, capturing the full arc of the war, and are preserved at the Minnesota Historical Society and have been published in a book entitled "Brother of Mine."

In 1864, the brothers were involved in major battles at Nickajack Creek and Kennesaw Mountain in June and July, and they were with Sherman when he led his army into what became known as the battle of Atlanta, just southeast of the city, on July 22. The battle raged for just a day, and the Union

prevailed against Hood's larger army. Among the estimated 3,600 Union casualties was Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson, the second-highest ranking federal officer to be killed in the war. Southern casualties were estimated at 5,500.

Thomas Christie was nearby when McPherson was killed. "When the fighting at first was beginning to be serious, Gen. McPherson rode down by us, going to the place where the brigade I have mentioned was forming; he rode right through the line, out to the front where the skirmishing was going on, and before he suspected was right among the advancing enemy. They told him to halt, but he wheeled to escape when they fired on him and shot him through the breast. It was not 10 minutes after he passed us till he was hit.

"No language can tell the grief that fills the heart of every man in the Army of the Tennessee, and especially do we of his old Corps feel his loss. Not a man of us but would willingly have given his own life to save that of our much loved young commander."

Hood's army remained intact at the end of the day, however, and Southern forces still held the city. Sherman began cutting rail and supply lines, the city was shelled and the Union army made occasional sorties into the city, but the Confederate army stood firm through August.

Early that month, Thomas wrote to his sister Sarah, who lived with her parents on the family farm northeast of Madison, Wis., that he doubted that Sherman and the Union leaders prized Atlanta for its own sake.

"I think Atlanta is not the chief object of Sherman's operation myself, for the destruction or capture of the Rebel army is worth more to us than a dozen Atlantas, and we will be kept on the move till that object is accomplished," he wrote.

Confederate soldiers were just as weary of the war as the soldiers in Union blue. Thomas Christie wrote to his sister that "everything shows that they are desperate ... as for the men, they wish the thing ended anyway, and express the greatest job when taken prisoners and are allowed to go to our rear."

On Aug. 15, Christie wrote that "our junior 1st lieutenant, William Koethe, was killed yesterday by a sharpshooter. We feel his death deeply; he was a universal favorite. It happened yesterday afternoon. We were not firing at the time. He was sitting between two of the men, talking with them. In his earnestness he learned forward to put his hand on the knee of one of them. Just then the bullet came, from the direction of our right flank, and passed through his heart. He gave a piercing shriek, and fell forward dead.

"This is the worst position we ever were in; the enemy have a raking fire upon us," he wrote. "This bullet passed through my tarpaulin twice and another one twice before it hit the lieutenant. I was under my tarpaulin at the time, but lying down; so the bullet passed over me."

Gone with the wind

The Rochester City Post reported tersely on Aug. 27, 1864, that "the siege of Atlanta is progressing. (Confederate Gen. John B.) Hood has been heavily reinforced."

Four days later, the Union army captured the rail line at Macon, Ga., and cut the last supply line to Hood's army in Atlanta. The next day, Sept. 1, Hood withdrew. On his way out, he set fire to supply depots and to more than 80 railcars loaded with ammunition to keep them from falling into Union hands.

On Sept. 2, the mayor of Atlanta surrendered the city, and on Sept. 3, Sherman sent a telegram to Lincoln that said, "Atlanta is ours, and fairly won."

It was a crucial moment militarily and psychologically for the war effort, but it also was a key to the 1864 elections. Lincoln was in a tough fight with one of his former army leaders, Gen. George B. McClellan, a Democrat who favored continuing the war but was running on the party platform of opposing it.

In August, before the Confederates surrendered Atlanta, Lincoln's chances were precarious enough that the Goodhue Volunteer newspaper in Red Wing ran a story that said, "It is rumored in New York, and is believed by many who are in position to be well-informed, that at an early day, Abraham Lincoln will withdraw his name as a candidate for re-election and urge the assembling of another nominating convention."

The victory in Atlanta changed that. When the St. Cloud Times reported the news on Sept. 8, the headline said, "Glorious news! Atlanta captured. Bad news for Copperheads," the anti-war Democrats.

In Minnesota, which had been the first state to offer troops to the Union effort in April 1861, Lincoln remained popular, though his party lost some ground in the 1862 congressional election. Lincoln carried the state by a 2-1 margin over Stephen Douglas in 1860, the first time Minnesotans had voted for president. But it was a four-man race that year, and since then, the country had been torn apart. McClellan was a formidable candidate, with military credentials and charisma to spare.

As Thomas Christie wrote to his brother James on Sept. 15, a few weeks after the Union victory at Atlanta, most of the men in his unit were "in favor of our old Abe, 'the Railsplitting Buffoon,' as the New York World calls him. Our fellows say that the President has done very well, considering all the circumstances; and that it would be folly to put either of the other two (candidates) in his place."

On the homefront

The big news in Rochester in fall 1864, however, wasn't the siege at Petersburg, the fall of Atlanta or the presidential campaign -- it was the arrival of the railroad.

On Oct. 1, the Winona & St. Peter Railroad reached Rochester and began regular service. Winona was the third-largest city in Minnesota at that time and one of the nation's largest wheat-shipping ports. The Winona & St. Peter was established in 1862 and already it had reached the Zumbro River; it would take another year just to get as far as Kasson.

The arrival of the first train was a transformational moment for Rochester, comparable to only a few events in Rochester's nearly 160-year history, such as the founding of Saint Marys Hospital in 1889 and the beginning of regular passenger air service to Rochester in about 1929.

The city had a population of 1,400 in 1860 -- it was barely half as big as Winona -- and would more than double in size within a decade, thanks in large part to the railroad.

"Jubilate! Jubilate!," the Rochester Post declared. "This is what everybody and his wife cried on hearing last week for the first time in Rochester, the whistle of the locomotive on the Winona & St. Peter Railroad now completed and in running order to this city."

Among those who presumably heard the locomotive's whistle that day: William Worrall Mayo.

An examining surgeon for the Union army as well as a doctor in private practice, Mayo had moved to Rochester with his family in January. The Union army enrollment board was headquartered in Rochester, and with the war prolonged

into its third year, he decided it was time to move here from Le Sueur, north of Mankato.

An ad in the Rochester City Post on Jan. 27 announced the medical services of partners Hyde & Mayo, with an office over the Union Drug Store on Third Street -- "all calls answered by day or night."

Did Mayo and his 3-year-old son, Will, hear the whistle and hurry over to witness history that day? Judging by the newspaper story, it's easy to imagine they did.

So the Rochester area had a lot to "jubilate" about in 1864, but the war was never far from people's thoughts. And just as rail service was beginning here and connecting southeast Minnesota to the world, Minnesota soldiers were tearing up the railroads leading to Atlanta, to make sure the Confederate Army couldn't rebuild before the crushing final blows of the war were struck.

Draft, Re-Enlistment Challenged Soldiers in 1864

By Ryan Stotts September 2014

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

It was, for many, a balance between duty and love. As the Civil War, a war so many thought would be over in a few months, raged for a third year, the question of where a soldier's duty rested became a critical question. Was the soldier's duty to the Union or to his family? That conflict is apparent in the collection of letters that passed between James Madison Bowler, of the 3rd Minnesota Regiment, and his wife, Elizabeth.

Lizzie, as she was called in her letters from her husband, stayed behind in Nininger, near Hastings, while Madison, as he was known, went off to war. "Go if you think it your duty," Lizzie told him. At times, she seems terse, even unpatriotic, but considering that over the four years of the war, the couple had spent only 12 weeks together, and Lizzie was left behind with a child whose health was delicate, the demands must have oppressed her.

"I want you to really think the matter over whether it is your duty to spend all the best of your life away from those who love you best and sighs for your presence ever[y] moment of her life time, or to come home and get a good little home and live happy as we should while others who had the comforts of home take their turn in the battlefield," she wrote to him in 1864, when he was still in the thick of battle. He would remain until its end and eventually was promoted to major in the 113th U.S. Colored Infantry.

Many of the couples' 290 letters to one another are transcribed in Andrea R. Foroughi's excellent book, "Go If You Think It Your Duty," and because the personal relationship is the central focus of the letters, what breaks through more clearly than ever is a desperate yearning to be near one another as the war refused to be won.

"I have been so lonely today," Madison wrote to Lizzie on July 17, 1864, from Little Rock, Ark. "All day I have been at a loss what to do with [myself]. I feel so lonely ... " Again and again, those sentiments appears in his letters. Lizzie takes to addressing him as her "absent husband."

Psychology of the times

The Bowler letters capture a penetrating psychology of the times, especially in Minnesota. While news from the front came in dribbles, those awaiting the return of veterans, as well as an end to the war, were from week-to-week thrown from despair to hope, sometimes within a matter of hours. Hope never faded, but it had grown weary by 1864. Minnesota Gov. Stephen Miller did his best to assure the state the war would end soon, possibly by the end of the year, and he felt sure another draft wouldn't be required. By the time the close of the year rolled around, however, a third draft had taken effect.

In mid-February 1864, several companies on furlough were due back from the 3rd Regiment and the cavalry companies. "Early in the week came Company K, of the Third," reported the Rochester City Post on Feb. 13, "with their gallant Captain, James L. Hodges, who was the first man to re-enlist a company in the Army Corps with which it is connected, so that Minnesota takes the lead as usual." Three hundred soldiers in Company K had re-enlisted by the time it left Little Rock, but that numbered swelled by another 100 when news reached Little Rock of the extension of bounties. That meant the entire regiment, save for those who had been injured, had re-enlisted.

"We are now expecting daily the return home of the 'Bloody First Regiment,'" the Post story says. "A dispatch dated Washington, Feb. 6, states that the Regiment, three hundred and thirty men strong, arrived there that day, and would be paid off and would start for home on the following day. This regiment will be greeted with pleasure throughout the State, and we trust our citizens generally will prepare a reception for those heroes befitting their glorious reputation." Despite his

optimism, Gov. Miller issued a proclamation in March calling for more troops, in hopes of avoiding a draft.

"The deficiency in the quota of the State is less than 1,400 men," he said on March 7. "The liberal government bounties have been extended to the first of April next, and one more united effort will supply that number and maintain the reputation of Minnesota." While enlisting a new regiment would be "inappropriate," Miller said, it was essential to fill the ranks of the existing units. By volunteering for service, Miller said, the state could save itself from the "stigma" of a compulsory draft.

"To those who shall more immediately respond to this appeal," Miller said, "I have only to say that, living, your sacrifices will be appreciated, and falling, you will illustrate the truth of the declaration that – 'The fittest place for man to die, Is where he dies for man." The newspaper took to publishing weekly tables, showing which cities and towns and townships were deficient in enlisted men. By mid-year, the draft was back in place.

Fit for service

In mid-June, with conscription examination well in hand, the City Post informed its readers that few able-bodied men had as of yet reported for duty, causing speculation that they were making arrangements to pay their commutation fees or hire a substitute. A handful of men did present themselves but pleaded for exemption. Finding them fit for service, they were duly conscripted by the enrolling board.

The paper estimated some 1,200 men would surface by the time deadlines began to expire. It warned that once the time allowed for soldiers to report for the draft had expired, however, it would begin again, to fill any deficiencies in a town's quota.

By this point in the war, the names of those examined and deemed unfit for service were reported with precision: Helge Halverson, of Harmony, had a dislocated hip joint; David Allen, of Pilot Mound, was erroneously enrolled; William Madden, of Adams, was blind in his right eye. "Over age" was a common cause for being relieved from the draft, as was a hernia, but a variety of diseases also cropped up, from bone to skin and ear. "Feeble constitution" also made the list.

On June 11, the City Post reported that the 6th, 9th and 10th Minnesota regiments were ordered to the front, the majority set to join the army in Little Rock. The 7th Regiment was sent to Georgia, where it would join the 2nd Minnesota and join Gen. William T. Sherman's forces as they prepared for the final assault on Atlanta and then the "March to the Sea."

While the 3rd Minnesota Battery also was dispatched to the front, it was unclear at the time if the 8th Minnesota, Hatch's Battalion, Brackett's Battalion, the 2nd Minnesota Battery and the 2nd Minnesota Cavalry would proceed with Gen. Alfred Sully on the "punitive expedition" to Dakota Territory, where the army pursued a relentless attack after the Dakota War of 1862.

By Aug. 20, the City Post reported that Minnesota's 1st congressional district had granted 1,888 exemptions to the draft, added 208 new names, "making the entire enrollment list of the district foot up 14,621 names instead of 16,800 as before." Laying out all the quotas, credits and deficiencies in columns for each county, Rochester was deficient 34 men. The draft now was responding to a "late call" for 50,000 new soldiers.

With many of Minnesota's regiments full, some with less than 200 soldiers in their ranks, but other with close to 1,000 or more, the only chance for volunteers to enlist in the state service was in Minnesota's newly-formed 11th Regiment. "Vigorous efforts are being made in various localities to raise companies for this," the Post noted, "but not one has yet been filled."

'Sad times and scenes'

When detailed news did reach home from the front, it wasn't always inspiring. A letter from the field at Helena, Ark., simply signed "Truly, H," and dated Aug. 15, was published in the City Post on Aug. 27. "I have again seated myself to pen a few line to the Post," the letter says, "and I wish it were possible to say something pleasant or encouraging, but sad times and scenes beget sad thoughts, and out of abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

The cause for sadness was soon apparent: With Maj. Gen. Napoleon J.T. Dana inspecting the troops in Helena, the 6th Regiment mustered 175 men for duty, out of the 950 who had arrived less than two months before.

"Every day reduces the number of able-bodied men," the letter says, "and this morning, one company, 'D,' had not a man able for duty. A good many are shaking with the ague, while others are sick with fevers of almost every description, and various other diseases to which people are subject in this climate. In this connection I cannot refrain from speaking of matters as they are here, though it may be painful to the friends at home, who are anxiously waiting and looking for the time when those they have sent forth in their country's cause shall return to war no more. But alas! How many shall be disappointed! How many shall wait and watch in vain! And how many shall refuse to be comforted because their friends are not! Death snatches away its victims and we mourn because they are no more."

Considering itself a "lucky" regiment, the 6th found its fortunes reversed when it got to Arkansas, which the letter-writer details most painfully, due largely to the unhealthy climate, but also something equally insidious.

"There is another matter in which the people of Minnesota are interested and that is the sanitary arrangements for the hospitals," the unnamed correspondent writes. "They have donated liberally and put forth a benevolent hand in view of

the relief of the sick and wounded soldiers in the field. Large amounts of sanitary supplies have been collected and sent to all parts where our soldiers are, in the belief that the suffering ones were receiving the comforts and the little luxuries and delicacies their loving hands prepared. But instead of reaching the objects for whom they were intended, they go into the hands of sanitary managers and military officers, and but very few ever get any further; and while the attachees of the Commission, and officers are living high off the fruits of this benevolent work, the poor sick soldiers lie in the hospitals, suffering for want of proper food and nourishment." The practice, the letter writer adds with a note of despair, "seems pretty universal."

Mindful of his readership, and anxious to be as detailed as possible, "H" concludes the letter with a fascinating, yet grisly, glimpse into life during 1864 wartime. "The Steamer Empress," he wrote, "while passing up the river, on Thursday last, was fired into by rebel battery at Gaines' Landing, this side of Vicksburg. She had on board about 150 discharged soldiers, besides quite a number of other passengers, including some women and children. Mrs. Hyatt, of Rochester, was one of the passengers. The battery opened fired on the steamer as she approached, aiming at her boilers with the intent to disable or blow her up. Over 100 shots were fired, 40 taking effect, killing five men on the spot, and wounding 10 or 11 others, one of whom died soon after. The Captain of the boat at his head taken off smooth by a cannon shot.

"The crew of the boat were not considered the most loyal, and the pilot was for running the boat ashore and surrendering. But Gen. McNeil, the famous Missouri Guerilla exterminator, who chanced to be on board, and on whose account the attack was undoubtedly made, stepped into the pilot house with his sword drawn and reminded the pilot that if he attempted to run the boat ashore, he would lose his head instantly." Damage to the machinery disabled the steamer, but a nearby gunboat came to its relief, and the rebel attack was thwarted.

Words for a terrible time

It was difficult to bolster morale in such times. But if there was spirited fulcrum on which Olmsted County and the war effort in southeast Minnesota swung that year, it came near its center point, on July 4. Knowing the power of oration, especially when it came to lifting the spirits of those enduring one of the bloodiest war imaginable, organizers called in the Hon. Charles H. Lindsley to address the Independence Day crowd in Rochester.

Lindsley, a Rochester resident and a land speculator for the Boston Co., served in the first session of the Minnesota Senate from 1857 to 1859. He came here from Wisconsin when the city was first being staked out in 1855, and according to the Minnesota Historical Society, was mayor from 1858 to 1860. He ran for Congress in 1859 and was defeated by Winona attorney William Windom, who went on to a long career in the House and Senate and also was treasury secretary.

His speech, which runs nearly two full pages in the City Post, reminded citizens of the history of the country, invoking everyone from George Washington (who had died only 65 years previously -- about as remote from Lindsley's time as FDR is from ours) to the very tenets of government that were being thrashed out on the fields of the south. Lindsley, a Republican who later moved back East and died in New York, closed his speech with a direct appeal to the hearts and minds of those who had given up so much in the fight for the Union.

"As a nation and as individuals, we may be called to make great sacrifices – to endure reverses and disasters – to be brought low in the valley of humiliation, and by the blood of our people expiate our crimes against another race – children of the same great Father – who were providentially thrown upon our care," he said. "Verily as a nation, we have been guilty in this matter. We have not done righteousness, executed justice or let the oppressed go free, and it may be that we shall be led through many toils and sufferings. ...

"When we consider the numbers, the talents and the achievements of our volunteers, we are almost led to think they were made for the time and the occasion. Their love of the Union and of liberty was inhaled with their first breath, and they will die before either shall perish. ...

"I cannot tell you with what mingled emotions I have trodden some of those battlefields baptized with their blood, and at other times have mingled with them in their camps and drawn new faith and hope from their patriotism and devotion. After hours spent in contemplation on the disastrous field of Manassas, I have passed to the banks of the Potomac and near its calm and deep waters, I have thought of this dark storm of civil war now sweeping over the land, and pondered over its probable results, as I have mused in silence by the humble tomb of Washington; and to my prayerful question, if this nation for which he toiled, and struggled, and which he finally saved, was to be destroyed at the dictates of a barbarous institution and of mad ambition? "Methought the father chieftain answered, NEVER!"

Civil War Resources

"Chickamauga and Chattanooga: The Battles that Doomed the Confederacy," John Bowers, Harper Perennial

"Gettysburg: The Last Invasion," Allen C. Guelzo

"Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America," Garry Wills

"The 1st Minnesota: Second to None," Richard G. Krom

"One Drop in a Sea of Blue: The Liberators of the Ninth Minnesota," John B. Lundstrom, Minnesota Historical Society Press

"Triumph and Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign," Terrence Winschel

"Vicksburg 1863," by Winston Groom

"This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga," trilogy by Peter Cozzens

Civil War Daybook, Minnesota Historical Society blog, http://discussions.mnhs.org/collections/category/civilwardaybook/

"The Last Full Measure: The Life and Death of the First Minnesota Volunteers," Richard Moe, Minnesota Historical Society Press

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Draft, Black Citizenship Dominate News in Autumn 1864
by Ryan Stotts September 30, 2014

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

The camp of the Tennessee Colored Brigade at Johnsonville, Tenn., during their service in the Vicksburg area. The 3rd Regiment U.S. Colored Cavalry remained on duty in the Vicksburg area through 1864. The growing importance of black soldiers and brigades during the war's decisive years was part of the debate in Minnesota and elsewhere about extending citizenship to freed slaves.
Library of Congress

By autumn 1864, the Civil War didn't look glorious at all. It looked bloody, disruptive to just about all aspects of life, boring at times and beyond resolution. Some argued for peace with the Confederacy. Others said after losing hundreds of thousands of men, peace was impossible, and the South would need to surrender unconditionally or be destroyed. Some said freed slaves should immediately be given citizenship, especially since many were now fighting for the Union. Others said blacks could never become full members of American society.

"I have sat down to answer your letter received several days ago, and laid aside until I could have a suitable opportunity and something interesting to write about," wrote Alexander Christie to his sister, Sarah, in early 1865. "And now after I have sat down and got this far, I am embarrassed to think of what to write about for here there is nothing to be seen or heard, any more than if I was shut up in an old barn and indeed these quarters do resemble old barns to a surprising degree."

Christie, whose brother William farmed in St. Charles Township, Winona County, before the war and was in the 3rd Minnesota Regiment along with his brother, Thomas, was writing from Fort Snelling, in St. Paul, and it typified his short military career. He spent his first few months being shuttled from camp to camp, never certain where he was going. Finally, he was sent to the front, but the war ended days later.

If the Christie letters, which include those of his brothers Thomas and William, are a well returned to time and again by Civil War scholars, it's because they're voluminous. They include not only vivid descriptions of some of the war's most important battles, but also the hum-drum, even irritating, aspects of a soldier's life.

In William's case, as when he wrote to his sister on Jan. 24, 1865, it offers a glimpse into exactly what life was like for regiments at Fort Snelling in the waning months of the war.

"The Barracks, which receive the euphorius appellation of 'The Pen' are irregular rows of lumber buildings which with the parade ground cover 5 or 6 acres in extent, the whole surrounded by boards 14 or 15 ft long set up endways," William wrote. "All round the inside of the enclosure are sentinels pacing back & forth continually armed with breech–loading rifles or muskets with fixed bayonets. Round the walls, inside the buildings are ranged rows of bunks 3 stories high, capable of holding two upon each. At present there is plenty of room, there being

only about 200 men, whereas the barracks would hold 600 easily. Each man has at least one blanket and by sleeping in twos and on the bare ticks they have plenty of clothing.

"I and my comrade lie on one and have only one over us. Which is by far the neatest plan and are sufficiently comfortable as there is a large fire kept up all night. My comrade or 'partner' is a little Irishman belonging to the 2nd Minn. Cavalry now in the state. Has lived in Blue Earth County this last two years, having gone in at a time where the Sioux and Minneshago Indians outnumbered the Whites a hundred to one. He is acquainted with Louis and Jarvain. The former has rented a house, and employs himself looking around; the latter owns a sawmill and is drunk continually. The squad with which I am are all soldiers who have been sick and are now convalescent, waiting to be sent south."

And, while he said he couldn't offer a totally accurate description of life at the fort quite yet, he was grateful for small pleasures. "I now discover that I can obtain water and will not have to drink any of the coffee," he wrote.

A war of confusion

While some soldiers, such as Christie, were almost apologetic for not having more news of battles and military progress, back home in Minnesota the issue was how to keep the army filled with new recruits. A draft for compulsory service had been instituted again in summer 1864, the third in Minnesota since the war began, but the rules and inducements had changed.

In early September, the Rochester City Post tried to cut through the confusion that abounded. "Some communications lately published in the St. Paul Press complaining of the action of the Enrolling Boards of the two Districts in Minnesota, in refusing to exempt conscripts who afterwards were rejected when offered as volunteers, has elicited two or three answers from high officials sources," the Post wrote on Sept. 3.

A drafted man, it went on to say, was not a recruit seeking to enter service — rather, "he is a solider already in service." Time and pay for those soldiers, which was vital for residents to know, commenced from the day of his draft. As a matter of law, "When he reports to the Board of Enrollment, he is then a soldier making a discharge, not a recruit applying to enlist."

"There is no difference between a recruit and a drafted man (aside from bounty)," The Post continued, "except the manner in which they enter the service. One enters voluntarily, being first examined and passed by the Surgeon. The other enters involuntarily, by being drawn in the draft, and without examination."

But confusion and complaints about the draft were rife in the Rochester area as the war dragged on to the end of 1864 and the presidential election approached. Minimum age for soldiering: 16. In late summer, the Rochester paper laid out 21 "facts" about the draft for its readers.

"The exemptions of the original note, to fathers of motherless children under 12 years of age, or some members of families in which others are in service, to sons who are the support of aged and destitute parents, and of other similar cases, are no longer allowed," according to the report published Aug. 27. The original $300 commutation clause, by which a drafted man could be released, was repealed, as was the original "class system," which split the citizens into two classes, the second not being liable for the draft until the first was "exhausted."

While any man age 20 to 45 could be drafted, volunteers could sign up as young as 18, or with the consent of a parent or guardian, 16. "The enlistment of boys under sixteen years of age," the Post said ominously, "is a military offense in the officer who recruits them who may be punished thereafter."

Volunteer government bounties were $100 for one year, $200 for two years and $300 for three years, paid in installments. Soldiers ranked as privates received $16 per month, but drafted men weren't so lucky. "Drafted men receive no

bounties from the Federal government," it said, "and we presume that they will not receive any from the town or county to which they belong."

That wasn't all. "The United States no longer pays premiums for the procurement of recruits," the Post declared. Money for such inducements was running out. The political will for an indefinite number of drafts was weakening. There weren't enough men to fight the war. Patience was wearing thin

'Dull work, indeed'

As the year ended, it appeared to some as if the war was at a stalemate. Though Sherman and the Union army had toppled Atlanta and were on a devastating march through Georgia to the Atlantic coast, where it would turn north and sweep through the Carolinas, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia remained intact and was entrenched in the Petersburg, Va., area. Richmond wasn't in immediate danger, and Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant didn't seem to have any rabbits in his hat to end the war before the end of the year, or early in 1865.

"This is dull work, indeed," said the Wabasha County Herald on Jan. 19, 1865. "No exciting news to stir the patriotic heart; no side-splitting jokes 'played off on strangers,' over which a jolly-minded fellow can enjoy a hearty laugh – nothing transpiring to brighten up the thoughts, nor enliven the mind of a weary editor. Every paper is filled with rehashed war news, a few uninteresting State items, spiced up foolish receipts and other agricultural matter, and dull, lengthy correspondences, upon unimportant subjects, which interest nobody but the authors." There weren't even items with which to take exception to, the paper complained.

"And though we are no pugilist," the Herald continued, "have no inclination to 'dot the eyes' of any of our peaceable contemporaries, yet we are 'spoiling' for something romantic — something that will awaken the energies of our ambitious,

yet almost quiescent, mind. If somebody will start the music, dancers will rush in." By Jan. 26, the Herald got its wish. New discussions, not centered on the front and fighting in the South, began swirling around the State, and it was time to take up issues that would by nature follow the war.

Citizenship for freed slaves

As the war moved into its last phase and blacks played a growing role in the fight, the question of what was called "negro citizenship" became part of the political dialogue in Minnesota. The Wabasha paper wrote on Jan. 26, "The question of negro citizenship is now being discussed by the press of our State, as well as by the Legislature, owing, perhaps, to a petition emanating from the vicinity of Anoka, praying the Legislature to enact a law for the privilege of negro suffrage."

With a reconstruction bill in front of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Herald was succinct in its position: "Only the corrupting influences of slavery, manifested in the deadening of conscience, in the growth of prejudice, in political cowardice, in national apathy, can amount to the fact that this question is now unsettled," the paper declared, "and that there is doubt how it may be disposed of." While the Herald acknowledged there might be "temporary troubles," and that no man be allowed to vote unless he could both read and write, the call for inclusion was unequivocal.

"The surest mode to make a man independent is to give him a sense of his own dignity," the Herald continued. "The strongest stimulant to education and improvement is the stimulus favored by the power to better his condition. To give the negroes the right of citizenship is to make them independent, and to inspire them with motives of the strongest kind to make every effort to raise themselves in the respect and consideration of society."

A question of citizenry

By fall 1864, with the pressures of the draft, the presidential election approaching and Democrats pressing for peace talks with the South, anti-war voices were rising, in southeast Minnesota and across the North. The Goodhue Volunteer newspaper in Red Wing published a poem on Aug. 31 entitled, "Song of the Anti-War Men," that was sent by a reader identified as John Mildway Jr. Mildway claimed that the poem fell out of the pocket of a "Stay at Home," the pejorative name for a man who didn't answer the call of duty and fight for the Union. Whether that's where the poem came from or not, it represented a common attitude toward men who didn't fight.

"I thought your readers, especially those in the Army, might like to know something of the characteristics of some of the Stay at Homes who daily promenade Washington street and ... the Common in Boston, or Broadway and the Central Park in New York, or lounge in the bar-rooms of either city," Mildway wrote, "while their brothers are being killed or maimed before Petersburg, Richmond or Atlanta." The poem ends with these lines:

If in my hand they put a gun,
I'd tremble like a leaf.
And I am sure that I should be
The first to come to grief;
I could not point it at the foe,
I could not shoot it right –
For I'm a coward and poltroon,
And am afraid to fight.

And should they order me to go
And run a bay'net through
A fellow being in gray clothes,
I'd know what I would do –
I'd say I couldn't and I'd cry
Aloud with all my might,
"Sir, I'm a coward and poltroon,
Oh! Do not make me fight!"

And should they put me on a horse
And give a sword to me,
And tell me to charge on the foe,
And kill the chivalry.
I'd turn the horse the other way,
And soon be out of sight,
For a coward and a poltroon
Would rather run than fight.

Kind people, let me here define
My platform, ere I cease –
I'm for the prosecution of
A strong and vig'rous peace;
To aid this end, I'll give my all,
And hurrah for the right!
But I'm a coward and poltroon,
And was not born to fight.

Hurrah for the Snow Diggers
by Ken Files October 14, 2014

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

By late 1864, after four years of bloody fighting, the fate of the Union still hung in the balance. The bloodshed in 1864 alone had caused more casualties than in the three previous years of fighting. Yet, all of this had achieved little success, as Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, commander of all the Union armies, was locked in a great siege at Petersburg, Va., with Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Union Gen. Sherman had only recently completed his "March to the Sea," which, while devastating to Southern morale and military control of the Deep South, did not greatly advance the end of the war. His forces were only slowly advancing through the Carolinas.

The North was nearly financially bankrupt, and people were emotionally drained. Lincoln famously said at the time, "The General of the Army has typhoid fever, the country is out of money and the Secretary of the Treasury says he can raise no more. The bottom is surely out of the tub."

With the fate of the nation hanging in the balance, four undersized regiments of Minnesota soldiers would play an outsized role -- men primarily from southern Minnesota, known affectionately by their commanding general as the "Snow Diggers." Of the 40 companies in the 5th, 7th, 9th and 10th regiments, 27 of the companies, or almost two-thirds of these regiment's manpower, were men from Olmsted, Goodhue, Mower, Wabasha, Winona, Houston, Fillmore, Dodge, Steele, Rice, Faribault, Blue Earth, Le Sueur and Nicollet counties.

Three of these four regiments also were commanded by southern Minnesota men: Lt. Col. William B. Gere, of Chatfield, with the 5th; Lt. Col. Josiah Marsh, of Preston, who commanded the 9th; and Lt. Col. Samuel Pearce Jennison, of Red Wing, who led the 10th.

Marsh took command of the 9th after Lt. Col. Alexander Wilkin was killed at the battle of Tupelo in July 1864. Jennison, who was a private secretary to the governor of Minnesota before the war, enlisted with the 2nd Minnesota Infantry in May 1861, was mustered out a year later and rejoined the army with the 10th in September 1862. After Nashville, he was made a brigadier-general.

The North and the South both had two major armies. In the East, the Union Army of the Potomac faced Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. In the West, it was the Union Army of the Tennessee and the Confederate Army of Tennessee. Since the beginning of the war, Lincoln had replaced several of his top generals for not following what he felt was the main objective, to bring a speedy end to the conflict by destroying armies, not capturing cities or territories.

It was not until the Battle of Nashville on Dec. 15-16, 1864, that Lincoln's edict was finally fulfilled with the destruction of the Confederate Army of Tennessee. The force that accomplished this feat was a makeshift force constructed within a few months under Major Gen. George Thomas and led by a small contingent of the XVI Corps, including the Minnesotans fighting as a detachment of the Union Army of Tennessee.

After the fall of Atlanta on Sept. 2, Confederate Gen. John Bell Hood withdrew and fought several skirmishes around the city, cutting Sherman's supply lines. Sherman decided nothing was to be accomplished by chasing him all over the South. He finally got approval reluctantly from Lincoln to march to the sea, rather than to chase Hood's army around Georgia.

Since Sherman was heading to Savannah, Hood decided on his own bold plan to head west toward Alabama, cross the Tennessee River at Tuscumbia and Florence and launch a campaign into middle Tennessee with the intent of possibly recapturing Tennessee, crossing the Cumberland and Ohio Rivers and coming in the backdoor to the aid of Lee in Virginia by forcing Grant to send part of his Army to confront him.

Sherman, when he headed east after setting fire to much of Atlanta in early November, sent Gen. John M. Schofield to Pulaski in middle Tennessee with the IV and XXIII Corps to keep an eye on Hood, and he sent Gen. George Thomas, known as "the Rock of Chickamauga," to defend Nashville and to assemble an army out of local militias and several regiments of colored troops, which had never seen battle.

Thomas's hope was that Schofield, with his 25,000 troops, could delay Hood in southern Tennessee until he could fashion an army in Nashville to meet Hood's northern thrust. To build such an army in a matter of several weeks, Sherman promised Thomas the use of the Right Wing of the XVI Corps from the west by early October. These forces, 9,000 seasoned and battle-hardened fighters that included the Minnesotans, were to serve as Thomas's prime attack force at Nashville.

The problem with this was that Smith's guerillas did not receive this news until Nov. 2, when they were still 200 miles west of St. Louis. This force was in the midst of one of the war's great epic marches, across the length of Arkansas and Missouri and across Missouri to the Kansas line and back to St. Louis, a march of more 750 miles on foot. They would not leave St. Louis for Nashville until Nov. 24.

While Thomas was nervously awaiting the arrival of the guerillas, Schofield did not do a particularly good job of keeping an eye on Hood in lower Tennessee. Hood also bungled his opportunity to change the course of history: His army outflanked Schofield at Spring Hill, Tenn., and could have destroyed Schofield's forces but through poor leadership, the opportunity was lost. Hood then made a frontal attack on Schofield's heavily entrenched forces at Franklin, Tenn., and suffered losses even greater than those of Gen. George Pickett at Gettysburg. Spring Hill and Franklin would go into the history books as two of the war's greatest blunders.

Although weakened, Hood arrived in Nashville and set up a defensive perimeter south of the city. Grant and Sherman urged Thomas to attack Hood immediately, although Thomas' Army was still disorganized and lacked horses for the cavalry, and he would have to attack well-fortified positions in some of the worst weather the South had seen in years.

On Dec. 15, Thomas opened the attack on Hood's left and captured the five forts anchoring Hood's left and drove the Confederate three miles to the east. The Minnesota regiments would play the key role in the capture of three of the five forts. After that resounding victory, Thomas thought Hood would retreat in the night, but he didn't. In the morning, he was just a few miles to the south with his right anchored on Overton Hill, protecting his escape route down the Franklin Pike, and his left three miles to the West on Compton Hill (later called Shy's Hill).

On the morning of the 16th, the Union forces attacked the Confederate right and were resoundingly beaten back. On the Union right were the 12,000 men of the XXIII Corps with orders to attack Shy's Hill at 1 p.m. By 3:30 p.m., they had still not attacked, and Gen. John McArthur of the 1st Division of the XVI Corps, with the Minnesotans, took matters into his own hands. With a brigade of less than 1,000 men, he charged up the 800-foot hill and broke the Confederate line. The 10th Minnesota, on the left of this brigade, would have 28 men killed in this charge, 21 from southern Minnesota.

The 9th, 5th and 7th Minnesota would attack in echelon on the left of the 10th on the hill and across what became known as the "Bloody Cornfield," resulting in the death of 33 more men from southern Minnesota, for a total of 54 of the 100 Minnesotans killed at Nashville. Dec. 16, 1864, was the single bloodiest day of the war for Minnesota.

On the morning of Dec. 17, Gen. Grant ordered the firing of a 200-gun salute at Petersburg, where the siege would continue through the winter, and Gen. Philip Sheridan sent up a 100-gun salute in the Shenandoah Valley. Four months later,

the war would end. The accolades for the Minnesotans by their commanders were the ultimate tribute to their courage and valor. Maj. Gen. John McArthur, Union commander of the 1st Division of the XVI Corps, remarked, "We received a volley which on our right went over our heads but on the left punished the 10th Minnesota severely, but nothing daunted this gallant regiment and together with the others composing the front line they cleared the enemy works."

Gen. Thomas said of the Minnesotans' charge, "It was the finest feat of arms I have ever witnessed." Confederate Gen. Henry Jackson, who was captured during the battle, said the guerillas "moved up and over my works as cool as fate. It was astonishing. such fighting -- it was really splendid."

The ultimate compliment was from Gen. A.J. Smith, Commander of the XVI Corps, as he rode by them on Shy's Hill. He roared, "Hurrah for the Snow Diggers."

Ken Fliés is a native of Plainview and now lives in Eagan. An author and frequent lecturer on the Civil War, Ken is chairman of the Soldier's Recognition Committee of the Governor's Sesquicentennial Civil War Commemoration Task Force.

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Minnesota Historical Society website, www.mnhs.org/index.htm

History Center of Olmsted County website, olmstedhistory.com/

In Their Words, Lt. William B. Gere
October 14, 2014

Soldiers of the 5th Minnesota Infantry after the Battle of Corinth, 1862. Col. William B. Gere, seated at right, was from Chatfield and was a leader of Minnesota soldiers at the Battle of Nashville two years later.

Lt. Col. William B. Gere, who was from Chatfield and commanded the 5th Minnesota Infantry at the Battle of Nashville, wrote of the fighting on Dec. 16, during which the 4th Mississippi's battle flag was captured:

At 4:15 p.m., the order to forward was given, which being repeated along the line, the 5th Minnesota, with bayonets fixed, moved over the breast-works in their front into the open field which lay between them and the enemy's works, and at a double-quick rushed forward under the most terrific and withering fire of musketry and artillery it has ever been my fortune to behold or encounter. Yet, forward our

line pressed, and soon the colors of the 5th Minnesota were planted, the first in our brigade, upon the rebel intrenchments, and the enemy were driven from their fortified position. The regiment pursued, capturing hundreds of prisoners, among whom was Brigadier General (Henry R.) Jackson, and many other officers.

I think I can safely say that the 5th Minnesota captured more prisoners in this charge than the regiment numbered…the glorious victory we had won had not, however, been a bloodless one. The loss in my regiment in this charge had been nearly 100 killed and wounded, which was about one-fourth my entire command.

Some Soldiers Didn't Return as Heroes
By Jay Furst October 21, 2014

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

Not all men who went off to fight for the Union came back as heroes. Some came back, eventually, as deserters. There were no parades for them, though many had fought for the Union for months or years, often had been wounded and seen comrades killed around them in battle, before they deserted, for whatever reason.

After more than three years of war, with hundreds of thousands of casualties on both sides and no end in sight, the notion of upping and leaving the battlefield, just disappearing into one of the big Eastern cities or Canada and hoping to never get caught, was irresistible to some. It was among the government's biggest concerns — keeping the army filled with men, maintaining discipline and bucking up the courage of men in battle. Deserters were regarded as traitors, more or less.

Union Gen. W. S. Rosecrans wrote in a letter to Minnesota Gov. Alexander Ramsey in 1863 that desertion was an "infamous crime" that deserved the harshest punishment. A man who "agreed to serve his country takes wages and even bounty money and violates his oath of service by deserting, is a perjurer, and rascal, and probably a coward," Rosecrans wrote.

The War Department's orders for the first three years of the war were that men who deserted were "to be shot to death with musketry, at such time and place as the commanding General may direct." Rosecrans wanted Minnesota to lower the boom at the state level. Estimates of the number of desertions from the Union army vary, from about 200,000 to as many as 350,000. The official number is about 200,000, or about 8 percent of the 2.2 million men who fought for the Union. About 24,000 Minnesotans served in the war, so if that 8 percent figure is relevant, you might estimate that about 2,000 deserted.

But if the 1st Minnesota Infantry's reports are to be believed, the numbers were much lower. About 1,200 men served in the 1st Minnesota, and 125 were killed, 500 wounded, about 30 died of disease or accident and fewer than 20 were listed as deserters.

The 10th Minnesota Regiment, which served in battle with the rebels as well as in Dakota Territory after the Dakota War of 1862, there were 28 desertions. The men ranged in age from 18 to 45, and as many deserted while fighting in Dakota Territory as in the South.

Few records of area deserters

There's little material on Minnesota deserters, other than raw numbers that are unreliable at best. Michael Eckers, an Owatonna historian and author, said he has run across references to deserters from southeast Minnesota, but the information is sketchy and incomplete. "Deserters and bounty jumpers existed in all states, including Minnesota," he said. Another Minnesota-based Civil War historian, John Lundstrom, said his impression for research on the 9th Minnesota Regiment is that desertion "was less common in Minnesota regiments than in the Eastern regiments, perhaps like the crime rate is much less in rural areas than in cities."

During the research for his book about the 9th Minnesota, "One Drop in a Sea of Blue," Lundstrom found that among the 38 "Liberators" from the regiment, two deserted. "One didn't want to go farther south from Missouri and left in St. Louis, apparently striking out for Canada," Lundstrom said. "The other deserted in southern Tennessee after surviving the battle of Nashville. The regiment had no idea where he went. I was not able to trace either one of them after the war."

Eckers said the only incident he's found regarding a Minnesota deserter is appropriately vague — "it can't be proven that the man deserted." The soldier, Rincus Degrave, was in Company C of the 2nd Minnesota Infantry. According to

the Mantorville Express newspaper, Degrave was found guilty of a crime in Mantorville and ordered to pay a $50 fine. "The next day, Degrave joined the Second Minnesota, which was leaving to go to Fort Snelling and without paying his fine."

Degrave "seemed to live a charmed life," Eckers said. "The sheriff, perhaps, thought it best that he was simply gone." He served until November 1863, when he disappeared during the assault on Missionary Ridge outside Chattanooga. "A pretty thorough search was conducted, according to the diary of Berndt Olmanson, who was in Company E and mentions being a part of the search for a few men presumed dead. All were recovered except Degrave. "The funny thing was, the area where the Second attacked was not particularly difficult ground, i.e., lots of ravines, holes, etc., that could hide a body," Eckers said. No trace of him was found after that, and he's listed as missing in action.

'Leg cases'

President Abraham Lincoln, who often reviewed and pardoned Union soldiers who deserted, called them "leg cases." People who knew him said he had a deep empathy for those who deserted because they were afraid or troubled, as opposed to those who had taken a big bonus and skedaddled. "If Almighty God gives a man a cowardly pair of legs," Lincoln said, "how can he help their running away with him?"

As the writer of a blog called "Civil War Memory" says, "There are no monuments to deserters on Civil War battlefields." "Walking on Civil War battlefields, I sometimes have to remind myself that not everyone (including the wounded) marched in close order forward toward the enemy," Kevin Levin, a Massachusetts history teacher and author, writes in the blog. "Many likely succumbed to their fears and dropped to the ground, sought cover or simply ran in the opposite direction. Even beyond the battlefield itself we know that many soldiers fell short of the martial ideal.

"Those of us who are serious about history and the experiences of these men know to tread carefully when dealing with these moments. We know that there is a context in which to interpret specific moments in the life of the Civil War soldier, not with the goal of judging the individual in question, but with the hope that some kind of understanding is possible. "We have an obligation to tread carefully as historians," Levin writes, "but as Americans, we owe it to these men who ultimately contributed to the preservation of the Union."

Take the money and run

Just as often, however, desertion wasn't a matter of fear and "cowardly legs." Many deserters were bounty hunters who took a cash reward for enlisting, then disappeared from the battlefield at the first opportunity. Especially as the war dragged into 1864, it became increasingly tough to get men to enlist. Lincoln called for another draft in 1864, and though Goodhue County filled its quota early in the summer, Olmsted County and others around the area were running out of recruits. Cash rewards were essential to get men to enlist, and some men took the money and ran.

Many men who went missing and were listed as deserters weren't deserters at all. Some historians believe about a quarter of the men listed as deserters were killed, wounded and either missing in action or hospitalized and unaccounted for, or their records were simply lost or erroneous. About a third of Union deserters went to Canada, at least for a time. Another third were caught and most returned to duty, whether by a change of heart or military persuasion.

It generally made news when deserters were captured. In the Wabasha County Herald in January 1865, the arrest of four brothers known as the "Golden Boys" who had been drafted and didn't report for duty was worth a headline. The incident occurred in Sauk Centre, about 100 miles northwest of Minneapolis and pretty well in the wilderness at that time.

The boys "defied arrest and threatened to shoot any provost marshal or another person who should attempt to take them." That didn't keep the marshal from pursuing them for 15 miles to Osakis Lake, eventually crawling across the ice with his posse so as not to be seen. They reached the cabin, a dog barked, the deserters fled, there was an exchange of gunfire, and "in about half an hour, a voice from the woods called out, 'If we come, will you shoot?' On being assured to the contrary, the other two came in." The deserters were taken to St. Paul. Luckily for them, the war was over in a few months.

Rebels on the run

Desertion was an even bigger problem in the Confederacy, especially by autumn 1864, when there was no doubt that the tide had turned against the South and the November elections in the North were likely to keep Lincoln in the White House and the war effort on track.

After Atlanta fell in September, with Nashville next on the list and with Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia pinned down at Petersburg, rebel soldiers deserted in droves. To quit was "more damning than slaughter," as one book on Confederate deserters would have it, but with Southern morale and war strategy collapsing, men were willing to take their chances at being damned rather than slaughtered. As Lee wrote to Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, in 1864, the collapse of discipline and the rush of deserters had to be stopped, or "I fear the army cannot be kept together."

Reliable numbers about Confederate deserters are even harder to come by than on the U.S. side. They range from as low as 103,000 to as many as 350,000 desertions among the 1 million men who served. About a thousand of the men who deserted were officers. According to historian Mark Weitz, Southern desertions were a decisive factor in major battles such as Antietam in 1862, where the Confederate army was reduced by 10,000 men who had gone missing. Tracking down deserters took resources away from the war effort, and

as the number of deserters grew, bands of them roamed some areas of the South.

Soldiers sometimes deserted from one side to join the other. James Bradley, whose family was from Pennsylvania and later moved to Kansas, joined the Confederate Army but deserted to join the federals and changed his name to James McCullough. Late in the war, he was sent to Fort Snelling, where some Southern prisoners of war were sent to do the work of recruits who then could be reassigned to battlefields.

There were so many Southern deserters at Fort Snelling and other outposts in the state in 1864 that Minnesota Gen. Henry Sibley asked authorities to quit sending them. There were 200 to 300 Southern deserters and POWs at Fort Snelling, and "it requires about an equal force of other men to guard and keep order among them," Sibley wrote.

"There are some good men in the small detachments of rebel deserters which have been sent to this district during the past season, but there are many desperate characters among them who do not hesitate at the commission of any crime or outrage and who desert whenever they have the chance." Sibley was responding in part to an incident described as a riot at the Fort Snelling guard house in 1864 that apparently was instigated by former Confederates held there. After Appomattox, Bradley/McCullough was mustered out and remained in Minnesota for a while as a stage driver before eventually moving to Dakota Territory.

'Butcher's Day' for deserters

Though deserters were threatened with execution, it appears few were. Reports vary, but about 150 men were executed in the North, or about 0.0007 percent of those who deserted. Those who went to the firing squad often had other accusations against them as well. The executions often were well-publicized, to

have the greatest possible salutary effect on those who remained in service. About 230 deserters were executed in the Confederate states as well, according to some sources, and firing squads "remained active" through the last days of the war around Petersburg and Richmond, Va.

Among the most notorious moments of the war in the South was when Confederate Gen. George E. Pickett — famous for the failed "Pickett's Charge" at Gettysburg — ordered the mass hanging of 22 Confederate deserters in Kinston, N.C., in February 1864 after a lost battle there. When the war was over, Pickett was pursued for possible war crimes related to the hangings, but Gen. Ulysses S. Grant intervened to put an end to the investigation.

President Lincoln was more empathetic and forgiving of those who deserted than his generals. He personally reviewed about 1,600 military justice cases, and there were other appeals for direct presidential intercession or pardons that never made it into the record books. His generals implored him not to make exceptions and do anything to weaken discipline.

One of his toughest commanders, Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, called the "Beast" by Southerners, wanted all deserters executed. Lincoln's response was, "God help me, how can I have a butcher's day every Friday in the Army of the Potomac?"

Another time, Lincoln said, "You can't order men shot by dozens or 20s. People won't stand it." In February 1864, he ordered that all death sentences for deserters be commuted to imprisonment for the remainder of the war.

Many shared Lincoln's reluctance to execute deserters, in part because justice didn't always seem to be applied fairly. A story in the Rochester Republican newspaper in February 1863 put it bluntly: "We do not for a moment question the right or 'military necessity' of shooting deserters. The rule, though a severe and painful one, is deemed necessary to prevent desertions and general

insubordination." But whether those executions were administered fairly, or needed to be administered at all, was a debate that went on throughout the war.

William Christie, who farmed in Winona County and served in the 3rd Minnesota Regiment, wrote in a letter home in 1863 that "soldiers of every rank are either deserters, or traitors, and the men brag that a deserter can't be brought back" — but rank-and-file soldiers also saw "men who have been high in command, go unchanged when they richly deserve the rope."

Election Day nears

The Union victory at Atlanta and the approaching victories at Nashville and Petersburg were just enough to persuade Northern voters that the war was on track, that the end was possible after winter came and went, and that Lincoln was the right man to see it out.

And life went on. In Red Wing, they hosted the State Agricultural Exposition, what later became the State Fair, in early October. It was held in Rochester two years later. Also in Red Wing, fall classes had begun at Hamline University — now located in St. Paul — and in Rochester, a new academy for girls called the Rochester Female Institute opened in October in "Head's Block," the grand building on College Street owned by George Head, often called the "Father of Rochester."

The circus came to town in September, with "monster pythons," "tragedians, comedians, Ethiopian comedians," "beautiful lady balladistes" and a re-creation of the battle of Chattanooga, called "The Storming of Lookout Mountain." Soldiers from the Rochester area, including the 2nd Minnesota, with its Chatfield area volunteers, had fought hard for the Union victory in Chattanooga a year earlier. There were likely people in the circus audience who had family or friends who fought there.

Episcopal Bishop Henry Whipple, a leading figure in pioneer Minnesota, stopped in Rochester on a trip east in early October. There were ads in the paper for the Hubbell House in Mantorville, the popular stagecoach stop, and though Dr. William W. Mayo, who moved to Rochester in early 1864, no longer advertised his medical services with Dr. W.A. Hyde, the latter advertised himself as an "eclectic physician and surgeon" who was always on call.

Though it was an election year, the Rochester area newspapers had relatively little campaign news. There were no political ads for Lincoln or McClellan that said, "I approve this message because I care about Minnesota" or "because it's time for a change," but the papers were often explicitly partisan, as evidenced by their names — the Rochester Republican, the Chatfield Democrat, the Red Wing Republican — and people could choose their political news "channels."

In the end, when ballots were cast on Nov. 8, Minnesota voters chose Lincoln, as they did in 1860. In Olmsted County, Lincoln won by a more than 2-to-1 margin over his former general, George C. McClellan, 1,849 votes to 829. The president won by a wider margin in Goodhue County (1,866 to 688) and Mower County (637 to 214), but it was closer in Winona County (1,590 to 1,032). In the next day's newspaper, before the results were known, the Rochester Republican noted that "the election in this city yesterday, we are happy to say, passed off in a very quiet and orderly manner. While all were earnest in their work, all rights were respected, and none appeared to wish to create any disturbance.

"In the evening, the streets were nearly deserted. Republicans had gone home for the purpose of rejoicing in their triumph, and the Copperheads" — Democrats who favored negotiating for peace with the Confederate states — "had slunk into their holes and drawn their holes in after them, so that there were none to be found."

A week later, when the votes had been counted and national results were mostly in, the Rochester Republican wrote that the returns were "of the right stamp to make glad the heart of every loyal man and every lover of his country."

"Wisconsin and Minnesota, as true to the divine principles of human freedom as is the needle to the Pole, have spoken in thunder tones their condemnation of this accursed rebellion; and glorious New England has insured the victory which shall soon result in a permanent peace for our beloved country, with a union of all the states," the paper said. Statewide, Lincoln received about 25,000 votes, or 60 percent of ballots cast, and the state's four electoral votes. He won a resounding national victory with 2.2 million votes to McClellan's 1.8 million, leading to an Electoral College landslide of 212 votes to 21. McClellan's nickname was "Little Mac," because of his short stature, and the Rochester newspaper couldn't resist a last jab after the results were in: "Poor Little Mac, thou art rightfully named."

Bloody days remained

During those last days of the campaign and after the election, southeast Minnesota soldiers were on an epic march to join the Union fighters at Nashville. By December, they were in place and played a crucial role in the Union victory at Nashville. The 5th, 7th, 9th and 10th Minnesota regiments fought there, and nearly two-thirds of the soldiers were from southern Minnesota, with three of the regiments led by men from Chatfield, Preston and Red Wing.

A hundred of those men were killed in two days, 54 of them on Dec. 16. It was the bloodiest day of the war for Minnesota, bloodier even than the second day at Gettysburg, where the 1st Minnesota was decimated. But it was another Union victory that, 150 years ago, gave people in Rochester, Chatfield, Red Wing and all over Minnesota more hope than ever that when winter was over and spring came, the fight for the Union might be won.

Columbia's Destruction Was Personal
By Michael Eckers March 17, 2015

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

The Civil War began in South Carolina with the opening shots being fired in Charleston Harbor. Four years later, Gen. William T. Sherman's army marched north through the Carolinas, and among the cities that were destroyed was Columbia, S. C. Engraving by William Waud for *Harper's Weekly*, 1865.

In December 1860, after Abraham Lincoln had been elected president but before he took office, South Carolina leaders voted to secede from the Union. Their decision sowed the seeds of rebellion, and more than four years later, after a Civil War that had killed hundreds of thousands and injured many more, South Carolina was about to reap the whirlwind.

In Savannah, Ga., Union Gen. William T. Sherman commanded more than 60,000 troops who were more than willing to fight their way through South Carolina in early 1865. Sherman had proven the point of his famous assertion that "war is hell and you cannot refine it." He had carved a path to the sea from Atlanta to Savannah in late 1864, and he was pointed to march his army north to join Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant for the endgame in Virginia.

Minnesota part of the march

Among the vast blue throng in Savannah were more than a thousand Minnesota soldiers, primarily in three units that had seen much of the fighting in the western theater: The 2nd and 4th Volunteer Infantry Regiments and the 1st Minnesota Light Artillery Battery. The words of their members, recorded in journals, letters and official reports, help to tell the story of what became known as the Carolina Campaign, Sherman's march in 1865.

"Poor South Carolina! She was sandwiched in between two States who looked upon her as the original source of their past madness and their present trouble. The whole army was burning with the insatiable desire to wreak vengeance on South Carolina. I almost trembled at her fate, but felt that she deserved all that seemed in store for her."

So began William "Billy" Bircher, the drummer boy of the 2nd Minnesota, whose diary chronicled events covering the entire four years of service by the regiment. The unit had been formed right after the famed 1st Minnesota in June 1861; they were the first volunteers without any significant military experience or training. The 2nd had shown its mettle at Mill Springs, Ky., early in 1862 and again at Chickamauga, Ga., in fall 1863. The men were now hardened soldiers used to long marches and fierce fighting, having just completed the march from Atlanta to Savannah.

Many of the men in the 2nd came from counties around Rochester. The men in Company A were primarily from Fillmore County. Company B was an Olmsted company, and C was from Dodge County. The 4th Minnesota also participated in the March to the Sea. The capture of Atlanta in September 1864 marked the end of their third year of service, and the regiment had seen action in the Vicksburg campaign from May through July 1863 and the Battle of Iuka, Miss., before that. The 4th's Company D was from Goodhue County, F from Freebon and K from

Mower. They, too, were looking forward to exacting revenge on the state they felt had caused so much misery.

Weather was its own enemy

Confederates were not the only enemy these Yankees would face, however. South Carolina is a land of rivers and swamps; the winter rains began at the same time Sherman's army moved forward.

"Our regiment started across the Savannah River, but the excessive rains had raised the water over the narrow dike, so that the wagon trains could not get to the mainland, and a part of the division train was lost in the river. Details of our men worked all night trying to save the train, and the next afternoon we returned to our old camp in the suburbs of the city (Savannah)."

So reported Capt. Alonzo L Brown, formerly the adjutant of the 4th Minnesota, in the official history of the regiment. Weather would prove to be as much of a hindrance to the army's march north as any enemy soldiers they encountered.

The 1st Minnesota Light Artillery Battery also would feel the effects of the enemy you couldn't shoot at. Many times, the heavy gun carriages and limbers would nearly disappear into the mud and water, requiring miles of roads to be "corduroyed" to remain usable. This involved covering the roads with a layer of cut tree trunks to allow the wagons to continue on. Thousands of soldiers were put to work felling the woods, building roads through swamps and bridges across swollen streams. Any buildings along the route were knocked down, and the lumber used in like fashion. Often, churches were left standing with their insides gutted, the floors and pews becoming part of the roadway.

Sherman's army traveled northward in two main columns, as they had in their march across Georgia. Minnesota was represented in both; the 2nd was part of the 14th Corps and marched on the left. On the right were the 4th and the 1st

Artillery, both in the 17th Corps. Marching along two roughly parallel routes, they could cover wider areas and still support each other if the need arose. It wouldn't. Confederate Gen. William Hardee mustered fewer than 15,000 men. The rebels could only fight a delaying action as the Union juggernaut headed north through the Palmetto State.

As the Union troops advanced inland from the coast, they found drier roads and were able to march as many as 14 miles a day while continuing to burn property and gather supplies. Vacant homes were burned to the ground, almost without exception. Those with inhabitants might be spared. Col. Judson Bishop, of Chatfield, who commanded the 2nd Minnesota, wrote about one unfortunate town, called Barnwell Court House:

"We entered the village in advance of all other troops; guards were stationed at all the houses and the bummers and stragglers were admonished as they came up to keep in the streets and move on. They were greatly surprised at this restraint and some of them were not disposed to submit to it; but no serious resistance was made, and by sunset the village was as quiet and peaceful as could be desired.

"We remained here until noon next day, when our corps having passed on, we were ordered to follow. Before we were half a mile away, the village was on fire in a dozen different places and was no doubt totally destroyed."

Columbia burns

Directly in the path of the right wing of Sherman's army was Columbia, the state capital. It's here that the Saluda and Broad rivers converge to form the Congaree. Across the river junction is high ground where Union artillery, including the 1st Minnesota Battery, fired at the new statehouse, under construction and standing tall in the middle of Columbia. Today, commemorative stars mark the face of the building where shells struck.

The Edgefield Advertiser, a South Carolina newspaper, reported:

"Our informant ... says Sherman's force is between sixty five and seventy five thousand strong – the finest looking men and the most splendidly equipped, he has ever seen; that he has no negro soldiers – only negroes in his pioneer corps. Previous to the near approach of the overwhelming horde of vandals, Gen. Beauregard was in or near the city with between ten and eleven thousand men; he withdrew towards Winnsboro. Upon entering the town, the Yankees began immediately to apply the torch and before they ceased their work of destruction, three fourths of our fair capital were smouldering ruins. hey threw shells against the new State House and defaced it considerably."

Though the army's advance was hard work, there were daily routines that made a soldier's life more tolerable. was hard work, there remained routines in the lives of the soldiers that continued. According to Bishop: *"Next morning, Sunday, we crossed the Broad River and destroyed several miles of railroad track, and burned a train of cars and the depot at Alston; then attended divine service in the afternoon in camp."*

The vengeance directed at South Carolina was as personal as the individual soldier fighting; in the midst of the violence and mayhem, instances of kindness surfaced. As the 2nd Minnesota marched near the Broad River, north and west of Columbia, several members of the regiment began to set fire to a vacant house. A moment later, about a dozen former slaves came out of the building and put out the fires, explaining that with their "master" in the army and "mistress" having fled with the children, they had no place else to live. The Minnesota soldiers helped extinguish the fires they had just set and resumed their march up the road, with the sincere thanks of the newly freed inhabitants. At the top of the next rise, a drummer boy in the 2nd looked back and watched the next regiment in line completely destroy the home and drive off the former slaves.

South feels defeat

Several soldiers recorded in their journals about fellow marchers who killed songbirds and field mice in an attempt to remove any living creature along their way. This attitude abruptly changed as the men crossed that imaginary line on the map and entered North Carolina. Now, their focus was again directed against purely military targets; most houses and churches were left intact.

The long, blue columns on the Carolina roads approached other Union forces that were heading inland from newly captured Wilmington and other troops from New Bern. Confederate forces gathered together and commanded by Gen. William J. Hardee and Gen. Braxton Bragg attempted to halt the Union columns converging at Goldsboro. Several days of fighting only added to the casualty lists as the Union armies overwhelmed the smaller rebel forces.

Confederate Gen. Joseph Johnston told rebel President Jefferson Davis, "Our people are tired of the war, feel themselves whipped and will not fight. Our country is overrun, its military resources greatly diminished, while the enemy's military power and resources were never greater and may be increased to any extent desired. ... My small force is melting away like snow before the sun."

On April 17, several days after the surrender of Gen. Robert E Lee at Appomattox Courthouse, the commanders of the two opposing armies, Sherman and Johnston, agreed to a ceasefire that then led to the final Confederate capitulation. Still, through those spring months, men on both sides continued to fight and die. Alexander Christie, of the 1st Minnesota Light Artillery, was looking forward to meeting up with two of his brothers at Goldsboro, N.C. He wrote a letter that speaks of the disappointing news he received on his arrival.

"I have deferred writing to you until today to afford myself time to collect my thoughts somewhat for I was completely confounded on my arrival here at

learning the sad news of Willie's capture by the Enemy & your departure for the north.

"And strange to say, you left the station for New Bruno an hour after my arrival in the outskirts of the town after a six-day march from Wilmington.

"All these things combined so staggered me that I hardly feel like writing now, but I know it is my duty to do it.

"The afternoon of the 4th I went over to the camp of the Battery and in company with Ed Everts and them learned the particulars of Willie's capture, and I now feel satisfied that he is a prisoner of war at most. Ed Everts could not tell me enough about it to enable me to decide whether it was a regular confederate force or not that took him, and therefore, I was afraid it might have been Guerrillas."

The Carolina Campaign had been 425 miles of marching in 50 days for the northern men, similar to the March to the Sea but longer and tougher physically. Historians have written much about the destruction that South Carolina ultimately brought about. Consider, instead, the simple words of Bernt Olmanson, a bachelor Norwegian farmer in Company E (Nicollet County) of the 2nd Minnesota:

"South Carolina got what was coming. (But) I often thought it was entirely too hard. I saw old people hardly able to leave their house while it was burning, and I felt sorry for the women and children."

Michael Eckers, of Owatonna, is the author of several books about the Civil War, including "The Boys of Wasioja: Company C of the 2nd Minnesota."

Petersburg Was the Final Line of Defense
By Jay Furst March 24, 2015

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

Miles of trenches dug into the earth, the continual booming of artillery shells exploding, alternating days of scorching heat and drenching rain that brought knee deep mud. You and the enemy, separated by a hundred yards of scarred ground, watch for any hint of an attack; expose even a glimpse of yourself and expect a rifle bullet whining as it passes close by. This could be a description of the front lines in France during the First World War; it was, rather, the closing months of a war fought a half century earlier in the fields near Petersburg, Va., a city of about 18,000, roughly the size of Red Wing today.

The Civil War had dragged on for more than three years, consuming the lives of nearly a half million young men in a fight some believed would end slavery and reunite the country. The rebels battled on for the creation of a separate nation, calling this their "Second War for Independence." State against state, often county against county; even families had been torn apart by the violence.

In summer 1864, the Union's Army of the Potomac hammered its way to the back door of the capital of the Confederacy, maneuvering Lee into a defensive position to protect the railroad leading north to Richmond. The railroads allowed food and supplies to continue to flow between the areas still controlled by the South.

Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's army sustained roughly 50,000 casualties during the battles and the Petersburg siege, about 41 percent of the army; Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia sustained 32,000 casualties, but those dead and wounded accounted for 46 percent of army.

Beginning in May 1864 in the battle of the Wilderness, the two armies clashed at a dozen sites. At Cold Harbor in early June, Grant lost as many as 7,000 men in a few hours while attacking strong defensive positions; Lee's losses were fewer

than 1,500. Finally, the battle stopped in front of Petersburg, both sides exhausted as they settled into a siege. Lee knew he couldn't win without the ability to move his smaller, more mobile forces; Grant boxed him in with the need to defend Richmond and the rail lines.

A reconstituted 1st Minnesota

Joining Grant's army the day after the fight at Cold Harbor in June 1864 was the 1st Minnesota Infantry Battalion, composed of veterans of the regiment that had fought so bravely at Gettysburg the year before. The 1st Minnesota Regiment had been mustered out of service in the spring back at Fort Snelling; most of the men went home, having done more than their share to defend the United States.

Those who chose to continue the fight "to the end" were formed into the 1st Battalion; recruitment brought their numbers up to two full companies (200 men) that were then sent to Virginia. They were in the thick of the fighting until the final surrender in spring 1865. The 1st Battalion was assigned to the same brigade in the II Corps that had been the place of their old unit, rejoining men from other states they had known for so long.

Grant's push to the outskirts of Petersburg was costly; nearly 12,000 Union casualties compared with 4,000 for the rebels. Action on June 24 cost 1st Minnesota Battalion seven dead and 14 wounded. At one point during the campaign, there were fewer than 50 men fit for duty. Between August 1864 and their return home to Minnesota after the war, the Battalion was reinforced through recruitment and the addition of veteran groups such as two companies of U.S. Sharpshooters from the state until it had nearly a thousand men. They were the only organized unit from Minnesota to fight in the campaign.

While the 1st Battalion served in the Army of the Potomac, other Minnesota soldiers fought in the Atlanta Campaign, the March to the Sea, the Carolinas

Campaign, and on battlefields from the Killdeer Mountains in Dakota Territory to Nashville, Tenn.

Part of Grant's strategy was to lengthen his army's line of trenches beyond the Confederate's capacity. The North had a nearly inexhaustible supply of manpower; immigration continued to expand the population with masses arriving from Europe. Irish, German and Scandinavian immigrants were pouring into the newly opened territory from Minnesota westward. There were opportunities for young men to attain U.S. citizenship quickly by signing up to fight in the Union Army.

The South had no such well to draw from; the Union blockade had tightened to the strangling point. There were only a few ports in the Confederacy where their ships could evade the U.S. Navy, bringing in a mere trickle of desperately needed supplies and material. Manpower in the South was in particularly short supply; too many soldiers had been captured and were sitting in Northern prisons. The old process of "parole and exchange" had been halted by Grant because the South refused to exchange black prisoners, sending them back into slavery instead.

As Northern lines lengthened, Lee was forced to spread his men dangerously thin along miles and miles of trenches. Each Union attack could potentially break through his defenses, in which case Petersburg would fall and with it, Richmond.

At the same time in 1864, Union Gen. William T. Sherman launched his drive toward Atlanta, preventing reinforcement in Virginia. Grant then sent Gen. Philip Sheridan with another Union army into the Shenandoah Valley, destroying crops and railroads and leaving a burned out landscape behind. No fall harvest would reach the soldiers in Petersburg. It became a simple question of when Grant would break through.

Last hope: The ballot box

The only hope the Confederacy held onto heading into fall 1864 lay in the elections coming up in November. There was growing unrest and disappointment in the numbers of casualties the war was inflicting; some called Grant a butcher. Lincoln supported his general, knowing the only way to win the war was to totally defeat Lee and his army. The popular former commander of the Army of the Potomac, George McClellan, was running for president against Lincoln. McClellan's Democrat party promised to end the war by any means necessary.

It looked like a winning political strategy -- and an ironic one, since nearly a century of politics and elections had failed to prevent civil war. But Sherman's capture of Atlanta in September, followed by Sheridan's Shenandoah Campaign in October, ensured Lincoln's re-election and a strong showing by Congressional Republicans, sealing the fate of the Confederacy.

In late October, the 1st Battalion was engaged in the battle of Boydton Plank Road, an attempt to sever the South Side Railroad and lengthen the Union's lines. The attacks were successful until Confederate counterattacks drove back the II Corps containing the Minnesota troops. A similar attack on Feb. 5, 1865, at Hatcher's Run resulted in the capture of an important road leading into Petersburg. That was apparently the last major engagement at Petersburg for Minnesota troops. These engagements were small, but they were incremental turns of the screw that relentlessly increased pressure on Lee.

Capt. J.C. Farwell, who moved to Minnesota from New Hampshire in the late 1850s, was in charge of the 1st Battalion at Boydton Plank Road. He was 28 and a saloon keeper in Henderson, just north of Le Sueur on the Minnesota River, when war broke out in April 1861. He was married and had a 2-year-old daughter, but he was among the first to enlist in the 1st Minnesota Infantry, Company A.

He was on the muster roll at Gettysburg and may have been in the regiment's famous charge. In February 1864, when the 1st's tour of duty expired, he returned to Fort Snelling and waited to be mustered out. But he apparently couldn't stay away; by April, he was mustered in with the 1st's Company G, and a month later he was joined the new 1st Battalion, Company A, as captain.

Farwell wrote this account of one encounter with the enemy in those months when the siege was tightening around Petersburg: "At 11 o'clock at night the army fell back and I was left without knowledge of the fact. I kept my men under arms during the night, and the next morning, seeing no troops on my left or right, I at once sent out three of my best men to ascertain if our forces had changed their position during the night. They did not report back.

"I then sent Lieutenant Coquillard of the Seventh Michigan Regiment to where the right of our brigade rested the day before. He came back out of breath, saying that our force had all left and the enemy's cavalry were advancing. To prevent our colors from falling into the hands of the enemy, the United States flag was torn to pieces and every man took a piece. The state flag was folded and wrapped around the body of the color bearer, his shirt and blouse over it.

"I had one captain, three lieutenants and 120 men... I gave the command 'Forward' and we started out of the timber, all well-armed and supplied with ammunition, which we had taken from captured rebels. We marched out of the timber and were about to cross the plank road when the enemy charged down the road with a yell. I at once about-faced the command and ordered them to fire. We broke and drove the enemy back in disorder, killing and wounding quite a number.

"We then marched for the timber on the opposite side of the road, which we reached just in time to prevent the enemy's cavalry from cutting us off. The enemy charged into the timber after us, but owing to the heavy underbrush, they were unable to overtake us. We had good time for about two miles through heavy

timber when I halted the command to rest and learn the correct course to strike for Weldon railroad. After learning the course by the sun I deployed my command in single file and marched eleven miles through the timber.

"We arrived inside our picket line, and my men being tired, I camped for the night. Next morning we marched some seven miles and found our division and brigade. Casualties in the battalion were three wounded."

Farwell was promoted to brevet major in October 1864 for "gallant and distinguished services in extricating his command from a superior force of the enemy on the day after the battle of Boydtown Plank Road." In early January 1865, when the battlefields were more quiet, he requested leave to visit his parents in Vermont and to recover from pneumonia. His illness lingered into February and in the end he was mustered out near Petersburg just before the collapse of the rebel army.

After the war, he moved back to New Hampshire, where he was a shop keeper and postmaster. He was divorced in 1885 and didn't remarry. According to records, he never received his $100 signing bonus for joining the 1st Minnesota Battalion, but he received an $8 monthly pension for his government service until his death at age 80 in 1913 -- 50 years after Gettysburg.

The endgame

The beginning of the end occurred on April 1, with a resounding Confederate defeat at Five Forks, when Union forces led by Sheridan and his cavalry broke through Lee's lines. Sheridan's mission was to threaten the South Side Railroad, the last supply line to Petersburg and Richmond -- if not to actually seize control of the junction at Five Forks, at least to draw out Lee's forces and create opportunity elsewhere.

Lee responded by sending Maj. Gen. George Pickett, a key figure at Gettysburg, with infantry and cavalry to hold the crossroads "at all hazards." Sheridan called for more infantry from the V Corps, but it appeared Pickett had stopped the advance on March 31, and he withdrew to fortify his position.

The next day, Sheridan's cavalry boldly attacked, with the V Corps attacking along the Confederate left flank and rear, and within hours Pickett's hold on the junction was lost. A day later, Lee informed the Confederate president that Petersburg was lost as well, and Richmond, 25 miles to the north, would have to be evacuated.

The few days that followed were a blur as the two armies marched hard to the west, Lee trying to avoid being overwhelmed by Union forces. The 1st Battalion and the rest of the II Corps were involved in fighting at Sailor's Creek on April 6 and the High Bridge/Farmville on April 7. They were "snapping at the heels" of the great Army of Northern Virginia when Lee was forced to halt at Appomattox Court House by the V Corps blocking his way. Time had expired on the rebellion.

Feb. 1: Union Gen. William T. Sherman begins his campaign through the Carolinas, which ends with Confederate Gen. Joseph Johnston's surrender on April 26. The 2nd and 4th Minnesota Regiments and 1st Minnesota Battery were among Sherman's forces.

Feb. 3: President Lincoln secretly meets with Confederate officials on a steamboat in Hampton Roads, Va., to discuss a possible peace settlement. The Union's terms were unconditional surrender; the Confederacy rejected that and the war continued.

Feb. 23: Minnesota ratified the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery. Congress approved the amendment on Jan. 31 and it was ratified by the states on Dec. 6. Secretary of State William Seward, who survived an assassination attempt the same night that Lincoln was killed, certified its ratification on Dec. 18.

March 4: Lincoln is inaugurated for his second term.

March 17: The 5th, 6th, 7th, 9th and 10th Minnesota Regiments are among the Union soldiers in the land campaign at Mobile, Ala.

March 29: Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant begins final moves against Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's army in the siege at Petersburg, Va.

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Editor's Note: In September 2011, the Post-Bulletin began a four-year series to commemorate the Civil War and our region's part in it. Some of the great heroes of the Union war effort were from Southeast Minnesota. They fought with the 1st Minnesota Volunteers and helped turn the tide at Gettysburg. They fought with the 2nd Minnesota at Missionary Ridge, and they fought in every major battle of the war from Bull Run to Petersburg.

Since 2011, we've published more than 50 pages of local history, tracking the war's events from the opening shots on Fort Sumter to this point in 1865, when Lincoln delivered his immortal Second Inaugural Address, and Union armies were closing in on the rebel capital about 110 miles from Washington.

The final page runs on Tuesday, April 14, 150 years to the day after Lincoln was shot at Ford's Theater. The night before, at 7:30 p.m. April 13, we'll have a Post-Bulletin Dialogues program at the Rochester Public Library to look back once more at how the Civil War changed our state and nation.

Dakota War Echoed for Generations
By Jay Furst April 1, 2015

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

"Many of the command had had their families murdered and were instigated to enlist by the wish to avenge themselves upon the perpetrators of those outrages." -- Lt David L Kingsbury, 8th Minnesota Infantry

In the summer of 1862, Minnesota was one of the newest of the United States, only a part of the Union for four years. The state had sent more than 5,000 men into battle with the Confederacy. But when the Dakota War started in August 1862, it opened another front for the Minnesota military. Gov. Alexander Ramsey commissioned his predecessor, Henry Sibley, to lead the fight against the Dakota warriors, and by the end of the year, nearly all the Dakota people were driven from the state, several hundred hostages released and 38 men were executed in Mankato, the largest mass execution in U.S. history.

Gen. John Pope was assigned by the War Department in Washington to command the forces that would be deployed against the Dakota people in the years ahead. Pope, who had a checkered career in Union Army leadership, left no doubt regarding his attitude about his mission against the Dakota people. He wrote to Sibley in September 1862; "There will be no peace in this region by virtue of treaties and Indian faith. It is my purpose utterly to exterminate the Sioux if I have the power to do so and even if it requires a campaign lasting the whole of next year. Destroy everything belonging to them and force them out to the plains, unless, as I suggest, you can capture them. They are to be treated as maniacs or wild beasts, and by no means as people with whom treaties or compromises can be made."

Sibley got the message, though judging by his and Ramsey's response, they were already on the same page. A few weeks earlier, Ramsey had told a special session of the Minnesota Legislature, "Our course then is plain. The Sioux

Indians of Minnesota must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of Minnesota." Or both. Based on what happened in 1863 and 1864, it appears that political and military leaders chose to both banish the Dakota and then pursue them all across the northern half of Dakota Territory.

'Punitive expeditions'

The first of what were called the "punitive expeditions" in Dakota Territory were launched in summer 1863. A two-pronged attack was planned to drive the Indians further west, which would also have the effect of opening new territory for settlement, which was already well under way in the eastern parts of the territory.

Newly promoted Brig. Gen. Sibley would lead one of the columns, and another reassigned general, Alfred Sully, commanded the second column, marching north from the Missouri River. Sully commanded the 1st Minnesota Infantry during the Peninsula campaign and at Antietem in summer 1862, and after the bloody Union disaster at Antietam, he was reassigned to Dakota Territory.

Most of the men serving in the Dakota military expeditions were from Minnesota, including some who had played a direct part in the Dakota War of 1862 or had lost family or friends in the bloody conflict. Olmsted County provided a large number of men, serving in many units. Among them were Lt. James Heath and his brother, Pvt. Kimball Heath, of Marion Township. Both served in Brackett's Battalion in the 1864 expedition; Kimball Heath is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Rochester.

James Bender, of Rochester, was part of the 3rd Minnesota Light Artillery along with many other area men, including Franklin Fulton, of Wasioja; Halftin Leckoldt, of Steele County; and Lt. Don Daniels, of Rochester. Units serving in Sully's expeditions were primarily cavalry. The 2nd Minnesota Cavalry, Independent Battalion Minnesota Cavalry and Brackett's Minnesota Cavalry Battalion were joined by the 8th Minnesota Infantry and the 3rd Minnesota Light Artillery Battery.

The crown jewel of Sully's expedition was Brackett's Battalion. Organized in fall 1861, it was made part of the 5th Iowa Cavalry and served in Tennessee and northern Alabama until "veteranized" in January 1864. With Sully, it was a highly skilled cavalry unit under command of Major Alfred Brackett, and it would become the longest serving Minnesota unit of the war.

Men were also recruited from Wisconsin, Iowa and other Midwestern states, and Sibley even took some Confederate prisoners being held in the military prison camp at Rock Island, Ill. These became known as "galvanized Yankees" and many are buried throughout the Upper Midwest, including southern Minnesota.

Col. Robert MacLaren was commanding officer of Fort Snelling when he was given command of the new 2nd Minnesota Cavalry as part of the Dakota expeditions. When his command set out in 1864, MacLaren wrote: "One feels as though he was setting out on a long sea voyage when he starts on an Indian summer campaign, but to me there is a charm in this prairie life, this absence from the form, customs, and vices of civilized life. Before us all is uncertain; behind us near and dear friends. God grant that we may all live to see each other in the land of the living!"

Criss-crossing the prairie

Sibley's forces reached Dakota Territory near Big Stone Lake, on Minnesota's west-central border, on June 24, 1863, and headed northwest toward Devils Lake. By July 17, he learned the Dakota had left the Devils Lake area -- what they called Spirit Lake -- and were headed toward the Missouri River.

To improve his army's mobility, Sibley deposited unneeded baggage, surplus supplies and disabled men and animals at a camp and continued the pursuit.

After battles on July 24 at Big Mound, July 26 at Dead Buffalo Lake and July 28 at Stoney Lake, Sibley pursued the Dakota to the Missouri. Warriors there

engaged Sibley's troops as their families escaped across the river on July 30. After waiting two more days in hopes of a rendezvous with Sully's troops, Sibley, his command short of food and his men exhausted, returned to his camp. On Aug. 12, 1863, they headed home to Minnesota.

While Sibley waited for Sully at the Missouri River, Sully waited for his steamboats at Fort Pierre, at present-day Pierre, S.D. Sully's campaign was plagued by a succession of delays. The biggest was caused by a prolonged drought that kept the Missouri River low and prevented steamboats from moving upriver.

On the July 25 rendezvous date, Sully's troops had just arrived at Fort Pierre. In mid-August, Sully, desperate to advance, loaded supplies onto borrowed wagons and marched overland toward Devils Lake with rations adequate for just a few weeks. In late August, long after Sibley had gone home to Minnesota, Sully's command reached Long Lake, southeast of present-day Bismarck. Realizing that he had missed Sibley, Sully still hoped to catch up with the Dakota. Captured informants reported the Dakota had escaped by crossing the Missouri but returned after Sibley departed and had moved eastward to hunt buffalo for winter provisions. Frustrated and with little to show for a summer in Dakota Territory, Sully turned his army eastward toward the James River.

Massacre at Whitestone Hill

On Sept. 3, 1863, a scouting party discovered an Indian camp near Whitestone Hill, about 50 miles south of Jamestown. There were as many as 4,000 people in the hunting camp, with 400 lodges and signs of recent buffalo kills. Sully directed a battalion of the 6th Iowa Infantry, about 300 men, to quickly surround the camp to prevent escape.

What happened next is in some dispute, as was often true in U.S. military encounters with Native American tribes. A delegation from the various Sioux

tribes represented in the camp approached under a white flag and said they were only there to hunt. Hunkpapa Lakota leader Sitting Bull is believed to have been among the Sioux leaders in the camp. Other chiefs of the Yanktonai and Hunkpapa at Whitestone were Bighead, Two Bears and Little Soldier.

Sully directed the attack that evening, rather than allow for possible escape after dark. The army estimated about 1,500 Sioux warriors were in the camp; Sioux leaders said they had fewer than 1,000. Sully had about 1,200 soldiers, much better armed, and was able to hold some back from the battle, which ended with nightfall.

By morning, the camp was all but deserted, and few of the Sioux people who had fled were found by patrols afterward. Sully ordered the camp burned, destroying about 300 tipis and as much as 500,000 pounds of dried buffalo meat. As the North Dakota Historical Society says of the camp's destruction, "The Indians also suffered the destruction of virtually all of their property, leaving them nearly destitute for the coming winter."

On Sept. 5, there was a last skirmish east of Whitestone Hill in which six soldiers were killed. In the end, about 22 soldiers were killed and 38 wounded. No reliable estimates are available for the Sioux killed and wounded; estimates ranged from 100 to 300, including women and children. About 150 Sioux were captured, including 32 fighting-age men.

Was it a true battle or was it a massacre, as the Sioux people remember it? According to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe'sversion, it was a senseless massacre of hundreds of men, women and children in a peaceful hunting camp that had no connection to the Minnesota uprising. One of Sully's interpreters, Samuel J. Brown, a mixed-blood Sioux, said "it was a perfect massacre" and "lamentable to hear how those women and children was massacred."

History is written by the victors, of course, and the encounter at Whitestone Hill has been recorded for 152 years as a "battle." About 40 years after it happened, a stone monument went up on the windswept site, honoring the U.S. military. About 40 years later, a plaque was added to acknowledge the Dakota people who were killed and wounded there. After the action at Whitestone, with his supplies running low, Sully and his army called it a year and went to winter quarters.

In early July 1864, Sully returned to the Upper Missouri and established Fort Rice, about 30 miles south of Mandan. Two weeks later, he led an army that escorted a wagon train of gold seekers on their way to Montana. That was another subtext to the punitive expeditions; they were also about gold in Montana.

His scouts learned of a large Indian encampment north of the trail, Sully left the immigrants behind at a camp on the Heart River and marched north to the Killdeer Mountains, an area of high, rocky hills near the badlands. A trading village of about 1,500 tipis was established near the hill called Killdeer Mountain, with Hunkpapa, Yanktonai, Santee, Sans Arc, Miniconjous and Blackfeet Indians gathered there. Among the chiefs were Sitting Bull and Gall.

On July 28, Sully led an attack force of about 2,200 soldiers that was described by White Bull, a Miniconjou chief, as being a mile wide as it approached. The tribes had an estimated 1,600 men who were of fighting age, along with hundreds of women and children. The battle that ensued involved army cannon fire that shredded the camp, as well as cavalry raids.

About 100-150 Indians were killed, according to Sully's report after the battle. Again, the soldiers destroyed what was left of the camp and winter food. The army recorded three dead and 10 wounded.

Returning to the Heart River camp, Sully led his troops and wagon train west across the badlands to the Yellowstone River. Warriors from the Killdeer battle attacked and harassed the army as it crossed the rugged terrain. As Sully and his men struggled westward to the Yellowstone, where they expected to find steamboats with supplies, the Indians engaged them in a running skirmish known as the battle of the Badlands. Low on food and water, the soldiers reached the river on Aug. 12 and headed downstream to Fort Union, near the junction of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers. Lacking horses and supplies, and with his solders exhausted, Sully ended the campaign and returned downriver.

Encounter with Sitting Bull

The final conflict ignited by the 1864 Sully campaign occurred in September, when Dakota warriors encountered another wagon train crossing their territory led by James Liberty Fisk. Fisk had enlisted as a private in the 3rd Minnesota Infantry when the regiment was formed in 1861. By summer 1862, he was a captain in the Quartermaster Corps and was chosen to lead a party of settlers from Minnesota to the West Coast. His first expedition was a success, and it led to another in 1863.

In 1864, he was sent out again, but this time, he strayed from the route ordered by the Army. A late start did not help. He set out from Fort Rice on Aug. 23, not quite a month after the Killdeer Mountain episode, leading 200 emigrants with 88 wagons and escorted by 47 soldiers of the Dakota Cavalry.

Ten days later, a wagon overturned; while a group worked to repair it, the expedition continued on. A force of 100 Hunkpapa Lakota led by Sitting Bull attacked the crew working on the wagon; Fisk and about 50 men hurried back from the main party. The next day, the Sioux attacked again, and Fisk's party was forced to construct a sod fort for protection. They held off their enemies long enough for help to arrive from Fort Rice; Sully sent 900 men to rescue the party.

The next year, Sully and a small force returned a last time to the region they had crossed the year before, but by that time, the Civil War was over, and the Union army was being dismantled. Sully and his command reported few Indians and no battles. The "punitive expeditions" came to a quiet end.

But the legacy of the Dakota War and of Sully and Sibley's expeditions would last for generations in Dakota Territory and beyond. They were among the earliest and deadliest conflicts between the U.S. military and the tribes of the Northern Plains, and they radicalized the Sioux leadership.

Eleven years later, not so far west of the Dakota badlands, the U.S. military and the Plains tribes would meet again along the Little Big Horn River in Montana. The fights that were sparked in Dakota Territory in 1863 and 1864 wouldn't really end until 1890, with the massacre at Wounded Knee.

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Fight for the Union: Minnesotans fight on, as Lincoln looks ahead.
J. Furst. April 14, 2015.

Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin*

Everyone knew the Civil War was over in March 1865. Unless you lived in the South, in which case, you knew it was over but preferred not to believe it. The South kept fighting, though Union armies had rolled to victories through Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia, with thousands of Minnesota men fighting heroically at Chattanooga, Chickamagua and Nashville. In March, Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's army was about to deliver crushing blows to Gen. Robert E. Lee's army at Petersburg, Va., just down the road from the Confederate capital.Union Gen. William T. Sherman's army was marching north through North Carolina to link up with Grant near Richmond. The South kept fighting.

In February, the Confederate vice president met with President Abraham Lincoln on a steamboat in Hampton Roads, Va., even before Lincoln was inaugurated for his second term, and talked about peace terms. The Union's terms were unconditional surrender, and everything after that could be negotiated. The South kept fighting, thus, so did Southeast Minnesota soldiers, many of them in Sherman's army. They had been part of the "March to the Sea" in Georgia after the burning of Atlanta in September 1864, and now the army was hooking north, to carve a path through the Carolinas.

Among the Minnesota soldiers with Sherman was Thomas Christie, who in 1865, was in the 1st Minnesota Light Artillery Battery along with his brother, William. Just a few years earlier, Thomas had been helping William make a go of farming in the St. Charles area; in October 1861, they both went to Winona and enlisted. For about four years, they had fought in some of America's most important battles.

After the fall of Atlanta, the Minnesota battery was split. Thomas remained in Atlanta for a while, and William went with other units in pursuit of Confederate Gen. John B. Hood. By March 1865, Thomas was in the Fayetteville, N.C., area and preparing for the Union assault on Wilmington, N.C., the one remaining major port city in the South.

In a letter home on March 12, he described the past six weeks of "a most active campaign" through the Carolinas. In late January, "our fellows waded across 27 streams, some of them waist deep, fighting all the way; General Smith and Belknap on foot with their swords drawn, at the head of their men." By mid-February, they had fought their way to Columbia, S.C., the capital of what was called the hotbed of the Confederacy.

"On the morning of (Feb. 16), we suddenly emerged from the woods on the west bank of the Congaree and beheld the noble city spread out before us on the opposite shore. Our division was in the advance. When we came in sight the rebels were still running trains in and out of the station next morning, the 13th Iowa of our division crossed the Congaree in an old scow, while my piece was put in position on the bank to protect them.

"They had the honor of raising their flag over the State House ... as soon as the flag was raised, the troops of our division, who were all watching on the bank, gave a tremendous cheer. General Blair sent orders to Capt. Clayton to fire a salute, which my gun had the honor of doing." Christie refers in the letter to the army "rambling through Dixie," but terrible battles lay ahead, and the battles of the past still were fresh in mind.

'Bloodiest day' in December

Minnesotans still were coming to terms that spring with what had been the bloodiest day of the war for their sons, brothers and husbands. Just before Christmas, on Dec. 16, Union soldiers fighting under Gen. John McArthur at Nashville attacked Confederate forces that were in disarray on Shy's Hill. The 10th Minnesota Regiment was among his brigade of about 1,000 men, and 28 men were killed in the charge, 21 from southern Minnesota.

For the day, 54 Minnesota soldiers were killed; over the two-day battle, 100 were killed, making it the most lethal battle of the war for Minnesota. Gen. Henry Thomas called the charge of the Minnesota regiment at Nashville "the finest feat of arms I have ever witnessed." Back home, however, it meant more grief, more funerals without the remains of loved ones, more families torn apart and more dread about what was to come.

Winter slowed military action even in the South, but Minnesota soldiers were on duty and fighting in just about every area at this time 150 years ago. In late February, the 1st Battalion Minnesota Infantry was part of Grant's army laying siege to Petersburg, Va., after having participated in the battle of Hatcher's Run. Also there was a company of Minnesota sharpshooters at Petersburg.

The 2nd Minnesota Infantry, comprising hundreds of men from the Chatfield and surrounding area, was with Sherman's army. The 3rd was at Duvall's Bluff in Arkansas. The 4th was with Sherman. Several infantry regiments were in New Orleans to keep control of that key city, which fell early in the war.

Two cavalry units, the 2nd Regiment and Brackett's Battalion, were on duty in the Minnesota River valley and along the Dakota frontier, in the aftermath of the Dakota War of 1862, which had killed hundreds of white pioneers and Dakota people in the New Ulm and Mankato area and led to the banishment of the Dakota tribe from Minnesota. The military pursued many of them into Dakota Territory in what were called "punitive expeditions" in 1863 and 1864.

By early 1865, cavalry units patrolled the frontier forts from Abercrombie, along the Red River just north of Wahpeton, to Pembina, on the Canadian border.

The first troops to enlist, including the famous 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, already had passed the end of their three-year term; most headed home, though some kept at it. Olmsted County and other area counties were challenged to fill their draft quotas in summer 1864, and by spring 1865, with the war nearing the four-year mark and the outcome apparently decided, it was harder than ever to get men enlisted.

In March, the Rochester Republican newspaper reported that another military draft was underway, with 59 men required to enlist in Rochester alone. The writer noted that "recruiting will have to be done on a magnificent scale to enable our city to swing clear of the revolving wheel."

Nonetheless, most Minnesotans believed in the cause. Voters went for Lincoln in the 1864 election, as they had in 1860. The state's two House members were Republican, and they joined a powerful majority when the new Congress was seated in 1865. They immediately took up the issue that caused the war: slavery.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, issued on Jan. 1, 1863, had freed the slaves in the 10 states of the Confederacy, but it was a wartime action and it didn't address the constitutional issue. For most people living at that time, the process of amending the Constitution was unfamiliar. The last time it had been done was in 1804, when Thomas Jefferson was president.

The proposed 13th Amendment passed the Senate in April 1864 but it failed to make it through the House until Jan. 31, 1865, and it then went to the states for ratification. The general assembly in Lincoln's home state of Illinois ratified it the next day, and on Feb. 23, the Minnesota Legislature ratified it, becoming the 17th state to do so.

That same day, Sherman's army crossed the Catawba River in South Carolina, nearing the border with North Carolina, where major battles lay ahead.

Dr. Mayo 'under arrest'

In early February, the Rochester Republican newspaper reported that George Head, now regarded as the founder of Rochester, served "a complimentary oyster supper" at his grocery and bakery for Union soldiers who were in town for what was called provost duty. "Mr. Head is deserving much credit for his attention to the 'brave boys in blue.' The occasion was marked by a jolly good time and plenty of bivalves."

More "brave boys in blue" were needed, though the war appeared to be winding down. A recruiter was in Rochester in mid-February, trying to find about 130 men to fill the 2nd Minnesota Cavalry, plus more for the Independent Cavalry Battalion, the 3rd Minnesota Battery and Brackett's Battalion.

Part of the inducement to enlist at that time was to avoid prison; for Rochester area men who were drafted in July of the previous year and didn't report, they could enlist in February and beat the rap.

One person who didn't beat the rap — or at least a whiff of scandal, according to the Feb. 15 edition of the Republican — was Dr. William Worrall Mayo. Mayo, who had moved from St. Peter to Rochester in January 1864, conducted medical exams of recruits for the Union army. He had a military commission as an examining surgeon for the Union army. The enrollment board was headquartered in Rochester and apparently his military job was part of the reason he moved to Rochester. His work for the Union army has been a part of the Mayo legacy and lore for 150 years. But a year after Mayo moved to Rochester, he became entangled in an investigation into how those military medical exams were conducted in the St. Peter area. There were allegations that medical exams had been billed improperly, and exemptions might have been sold to men who wanted to avoid military service.

The Rochester Republican, in a story reprinted from the Winona Republican newspaper, reported that Col. John T. Averill, of Lake City, was investigating the "exemption difficulties at St. Peter," which involved "speculative and extortionate charges" by outside physicians who conducted the exams.

The story says Dr. Mayo "acknowledges that he had made private examinations of applicants for exemption, each of whom he charged a fee of five dollars, for informing them whether they were justly entitled to exemption from military duty.

"The doctor claims that he had a right to make these private examinations, under the laws, as they were made outside of office hours.

"Col. Averill has construed the practice in a different light, however, as we learn from the St. Paul Press, and has ordered Dr. Mayo to report at Rochester under arrest, and the whole matter has

been reported to Washington for the decision of authorities there," the story says. Though "no fraudulent exemptions have yet been discovered," Averill annulled a number of exemptions that were provided in that county, and "several outside parties, physicians and attorneys have given bonds for their appearance at the next term of the United States District Court."

The story concludes, "While our opinion of Dr. Mayo as an honest man remains unchanged by the result of this investigation, yet we consider that he acted injudiciously in making private examinations at all, and fully approve of the decision of Col. Averill in suspending him from active duty.

"Men who are employed in a public capacity like that in which Dr. Mayo served, should be careful to avoid even the appearance of evil." Mayo was replaced by a Dr. Cross, according to a later edition, which described Cross as "totally incompetent."

Averill had been in the grain business in Lake City before the war and was a Minnesota senator in the first session after statehood, from 1858 to 1860. In August 1862, he was commissioned as lieutenant colonel in the 6th Minnesota Infantry, was promoted to colonel in November 1864, and was provost marshal general for the District of Minnesota in 1865 when he crossed paths with Mayo.

The investigation of Mayo, who was widely known in southern Minnesota and was immediately one of Rochester's more prominent citizens when he moved here, must have been the talk of the town in spring 1865.

'With malice toward none'

On March 4, a cold, gray day in Washington, President Lincoln placed one hand on what became a family Bible, raised his other hand and took the oath of office for his second term. By that time in his career, Lincoln was known as an eloquent speaker. Even people who hated him, which amounted to about half the country, acknowledged that he could give a good speech. His ability with words was what got him elected. We take Lincoln's greatness as a writer and orator for granted now, but in spring 1865, he was just another politician who could give a good speech.

For his second inaugural, a long speech was expected. The speech at his inauguration in March 1861 was a 3,600-word stem-winder, in which he pleaded with the South to honor the "better angels of our nature." It ended with a long passage that begins, "I am loath to close." His speech in 1865 was 700 words. Short and to the point. Profoundly inspired by political and religious themes, and a work of literary genius, but short.

The war occurred because the Southern states sought to "dissolve the Union" and "would make war rather than let the nation survive," while he and the Northern states "would accept war rather than let it perish."

"All knew" that slavery was the cause of the war, but he said neither side expected "that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease," a reference to the 13th Amendment, which was still in process. He made no predictions on the outcome of the war.

Both North and South prayed to the same God. Neither side's prayers were being "answered fully," but "the Almighty has His own purposes."

"Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said 3,000 years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'" He closed with a promise for the days ahead.

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

A month after Lincoln spoke those words, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox. A few days later, on April 14, Grant was in Washington and Lincoln invited the general and his wife to join him and his wife at Ford's Theater for a show. Grant had other plans, and Lincoln invited someone else.

The Rochester Republican newspaper published the text of his second inaugural speech, with this note: "It was doubtless thought by many that the second inauguration of the president would be made the occasion for a lengthy and detailed address, embracing all the principal events that had occurred during his administration and the causes that had produced them, and also the policy to be pursued in the future as well as a lengthy (word missing) on the conduct of the war. "We are happily all much disappointed," the paper said. The message was "very brief," but it more than got the job done.

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

Fellow-Countrymen:

At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war -- seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish, and the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union even by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained.

Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.