

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



Fall

1967

Volume 4

Number 2

Ramsey County History

Published by the RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Editor: Virginia Brainard Kunz

Editorial Assistant: Nancy L. Woolworth

CONTENTS . . .

	Marshall Sherman and the Civil War	
	Anne Cowie	Page 3
Fall	Case of the Vanishing Historic Site	
1967	Charles T. Burnley	Page 8
Volume 4	Charles Borup—Fur Trader, Banker, Pioneer	
	Nancy L. Woolworth	Page 13
Number 2	Ramsey County History Receives Award	Page 17
	Forgotten Pioneers . . . IV	Page 18
	Memories of the University	
	Lillie Gibbs LeVesconte	Page 21

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY is published semi-annually and copyrighted, 1967, by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 2097 Larpenteur Avenue West, St. Paul, Minn. Membership in the Society carries with it a subscription to Ramsey County History. Single issues sell for \$1.00. Correspondence concerning contributions should be addressed to the editor. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors. Manuscripts and other editorial material are welcomed but, since the Society is an eleemosynary institution, no payment can be made for contributions. All articles and other editorial material submitted will be carefully read and published, if accepted, as space permits.

ON THE COVER:

Red River ox carts lined up on Third Street (now Kellogg Boulevard) in front of Cheritree and Farwell's Hardware store in 1859. Charles William Wulff Borup, as agent for the American Fur Company, arranged for carts to haul furs for traders.

ACKNOWLEDEMENTS: Unless otherwise indicated, pictures in this issue are from the Picture Department of the Minnesota Historical Society. The editor is indebted to Eugene Becker, picture curator, and his assistant, Dorothy Gimmestad, for their help.

Marshall Sherman and the Civil War

St. Paul's First

Medal of Honor Winner

Much has been written about the First Minnesota Infantry Regiment of the Civil War, so much, in fact, that the record of the "Old First" has eclipsed that of other Minnesota regiments.

History also has passed over St. Paul's first Congressional Medal of Honor winner, and its only medal winner of the Civil War years—a member of the First Regiment who distinguished himself in one brief and furious encounter with Southern forces at the height of Pickett's charge at Gettysburg.

That man, Marshall Sherman, is a shadowy figure today, although he was not, in the St. Paul of his era. He was a bachelor who evidently left behind him no relatives and no personal records or papers.

Putting together what is known of Sherman's life was undertaken by the author, a senior at Summit School, St. Paul, as the outgrowth of a history paper she wrote last winter on the First Minnesota. Miss Cowie is a semi-finalist in the nation-wide Merit Scholarship program and the winner of an award from her school for her work in social studies. With her father, she shares an interest in American history.

BY ANNE COWIE

ON a June day in 1902, survivors of Minnesota's First Infantry Regiment of the Civil War gathered at the old state capitol for their 35th annual reunion. It was a reunion in the classic tradition of such affairs, with the aging veterans feted at banquets and receptions, with poetry readings and other events of a sentimental era.

On the first day of the reunion, a memorable and important ceremony was performed. The men gathered at the capitol to salute their old battle flags. The flags had been unfurled and placed in the hands of several young women, daughters of regimental veterans. As the color call sounded, the men stood at attention, the women moved out of the capitol's south entrance and onto the steps in a trim parade line, surrounded by the glittering bayonets of the honor guard. The band struck up "The Star Spangled Banner" and the men raised their hands in a salute to the tattered flags which 40 years before had led them

into battle.¹

ONE FLAG displayed with the regimental colors had never been hoisted aloft in battle by the First Minnesota's color bearers. This was the Confederate battle flag of the 28th Virginia Regiment, captured by Marshall Sherman of St. Paul, one of four Minnesotans to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor awarded during the Civil War to men who "shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldierlike qualities."^{2*}

Sherman's army career began April 29, 1861, when he and almost 1,000 other volunteers enlisted at St. Paul to form the First Minnesota Infantry Regiment. He became a private in Captain William Acker's Company C. Aker had helped form the

¹The others were Corporal Henry D. O'Brien of St. Anthony Falls, for gallantry at Gettysburg; Sergeant Alonzo H. Pickle of Dover, for gallantry at Deep Bottom, Virginia, and Private John Johnson of Rochester, who served with the Second Wisconsin Infantry Regiment.



Daughters of First Minnesota veterans displayed the regimental colors at their thirty-fifth annual reunion in 1902. The flag of the 28th Virginia Regiment is in front.

pre-war St. Paul Pioneer Guards. When war broke out in 1861, he was adjutant general of Minnesota, the first state to offer troops to the Union.² Acker immediately resigned his post to raise his own company.³

When Sherman volunteered, he was 37 years old, not a young man by any military standards, past or present. He had been born in Burlington, Vermont, in 1822 and had settled in St. Paul in 1849. Unmarried, he set up business as one of the area's first house painters at a time when new buildings were going up rapidly in the frontier town. As a recruit, Sherman took part in the drills and dress parades at Fort Snelling, under the command of Colonel Willis A. Gorman, a former territorial governor.

When the regiment's call to duty came, the men were not ordered to Washington. Six companies were dispatched to Minnesota's three western frontier posts, Forts Ripley, Ridgely and Abercrombie, to relieve the Regular Army's Second United States Infantry Regiment for service in the east.

²Governor Alexander Ramsey was in Washington when word was received April 13, 1861, that Fort Sumter had surrendered to the Confederates. The next morning, Ramsey went to the office of Secretary of War Simon Cameron where he made a written offer of 1,000 soldiers from Minnesota. Cameron notified Ramsey that Minnesota's quota would be one regiment of 780 men.

SHERMAN, with Company C, and the men of Company G, set off for Fort Abercrombie, about 15 miles north of present-day Breckenridge.

The orders "... served as a decidedly wet blanket thrown over our patriotism..." wrote one of Sherman's comrades. However, new dispatches arrived June 14, ordering the regiment to Washington. Sherman's company, still marching toward Fort Abercrombie, made the 60-mile return trip to Fort Snelling in two days.⁴

In Washington, the regiment was assigned to the First Brigade, Second Division, Second Army Corps, and became part of the frustrating, sometimes inept efforts of the Army of the Potomac to win an early victory over the Confederate forces.

In the confused retreat from the First Battle of Bull Run, the regiment was unable to reorganize. Captain Acker found himself the ranking officer in a large group of soldiers. Taking command, he engineered an orderly withdrawal into Washington. He shortly was transferred into the regular army and Lieutenant Wilson B. Farrell became captain of Company C.⁵

AFTER BULL RUN, the makeshift uniforms of red shirts and black pantaloons, which the men wore when they left Fort Snelling, were discarded for new uniforms. On August 1, Marshall Sherman signed the roster of Company C's "Non-commissioned Officers, Musicians and Privates" showing receipt of a pair of infantry boots, a pair of trousers, and two coats. The "hair plumes" and "eagles" mentioned in the consignment were not issued.⁶

There followed Ball's Bluff, the Peninsular Campaign, Fair Oaks, The Seven Days' Battles. Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Miller described the wide-spread weariness of the regiment when he wrote, "We have suffered greatly in our recent marches and battles. . . . The regiment and entire army needs several weeks of repose."⁷

At Antietam the First Minnesota was exposed to heavy fire and severely punished. Although General Robert E. Lee's attempted invasion of the North was turned back here, by June, 1863, his second thrust was under way and a long pursuit by the Union army began. Marshall Sherman marched with his regiment toward the little Pennsylvania crossroads town of Gettysburg.

The First Minnesota was near the end of the marching order. The men choked on the dust of the thousands of others who had marched ahead of them under the hot sun. It rained, and the tired men, weighed down by their heavy knapsacks, struggled through mud and stumbled over sharp stones.

ON JULY 1, they could hear gunfire and knew a battle had begun somewhere up ahead. They met stragglers from the battlefield who passed along hair-raising stories of fierce fighting.

Early on July 2, the regiment was ordered to take the field in a rearguard position. The men were in place by 6 A.M.⁸ Sherman's Company C was sent to division headquarters as provost guard and Companies F and L dispatched to other sections of the battlefield. Thus these men did not take part in the famous charge of the First Minnesota late that day. Of the 262 men who made the charge, 216 were killed or wounded, the heaviest loss of any Union regiment during the entire war.⁹

THE NEXT DAY, further decimation awaited the regiment's survivors. That morning was relatively quiet. New orders were brought back by Company C's first lieutenant, William Harmon. He had been present at a luncheon meeting when the Union Army's commander, Major General George C. Meade, the commander of the Second Division, Brigadier General John Gibbon, and Major General Winfield Scott Hancock, Second Corps commander, were discussing battle plans.

General Meade predicted that the Confederate Army would launch an artillery barrage first, then follow it with an infantry attack. According to Lieutenant Harmon, General Gibbon turned to him and said, "Do you hear that, Harmon?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, see that your company is there," replied General Gibbon.¹⁰ His order was part of a general decision to relieve all provost guards and return them to their regiments.

Company C prepared to move to its position in the center of the Union line but almost immediately, the Confederate artillery began a furious bombardment of the Union lines. The Union guns answered.



Marshall Sherman in his Union army uniform with the flag he captured.

Iron and shrapnel filled the air. Men were pinned to the ground.

NOT UNTIL the great artillery duel ended abruptly two hours later could Company C advance to the battlefield. There, 15,000 Southern infantrymen were moving across the field, toward the Union center. When the Confederates were about 200 yards away, the Union troops opened fire. The men shifted their pace from double-quick to a full run and rushed upon the Union line. The two armies were enmeshed in the violent struggle of fierce hand-to-hand combat.

Company C, commanded by Captain Farrell, arrived on the scene just at the moment the Confederates hit the Union center. There was no time to look for a battle position, and it was only by chance that Lieutenant Harmon "caught sight of Heffelfinger"¹¹ and discovered he was fighting with the rest of his regiment.¹¹ In the confusion that followed, it was impossible to organize an attack.

"The fight had become a perfect melee, and every man fought for himself," an unidentified sergeant of the regiment later recalled.¹² Everything was forgotten but the fight itself. Some men were wounded without realizing it.

"We were crazy with the excitement of the fight . . . men swore and cursed and struggled and fought . . . threw stones, kicked, yelled and hurrahed," Harmon

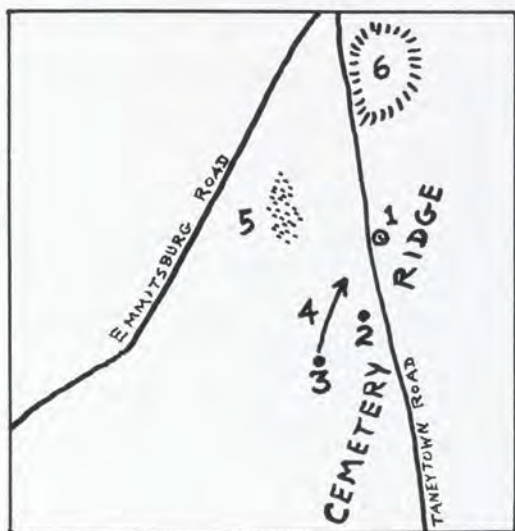
¹¹Captain Christopher B. Heffelfinger, a survivor of the First Minnesota's infantry charge of the previous day.

wrote later.¹³

Captain Nathan S. Messick, commanding the regiment, was killed on the field. Command passed to Farrell. He, too, was killed.

Marshal Sherman, fighting hard, plunged into the midst of the surging, struggling men and emerged with the flag of the 28th Virginia Infantry Regiment. This marked the highpoint of Pickett's charge. The Confederates began to waver, to fall back, and the battle was over.

PERHAPS IT IS easier to grasp the significance of Sherman's capture of an enemy flag during combat when something is known of the tactics of warfare during the Civil War era. The colors were the very heart and soul of a regiment. They were the rallying point for the men. The color guard carried the flags into battle with the regiment and the bearers thus occupied the most exposed position of the men in the regiment. Advancing men followed their regiment's maneuvers by keeping their eyes on their flags. Commanding officers stationed back of the lines kept track of the progress of battle by watching the flags, so that importance of the color bearers and the flags they bore was



In this diagram of a portion of the action at Gettysburg, (1) indicates General Meade's headquarters, (2) the position of the First Minnesota before its famous charge on July 2, (3) the regiment's position before Pickett's charge on July 3, and (4) the movement of the remnants of the regiment at the height of the charge. Also indicated are Ziegler's Grove (5) and Cemetery Hill, (6).

crucial in those years before field telephones and other modern means of battlefield communications.

Thus, it was each soldier's duty to catch up the flags if the color bearers were wounded or killed. During the First Minnesota's charge at Gettysburg on July 2, the regiment's colors were shot down and hoisted again three times.¹⁴ During Pickett's charge the next day, Corporal John Dehn, the last survivor of the First Minnesota's color guard, was shot through the hand and the flagstaff was cut in two. Corporal Henry D. O'Brien snatched up the broken staff and tattered flag and carried it through the rest of the action.¹⁵

CAPTURING A FLAG during battle often meant hand-to-hand combat, surrounded by the enemy. Congress awarded Sherman the newly-instituted Congressional Medal of Honor. More Medals of Honor were awarded during the Civil War than in any conflict since then. Years later, in 1916, Congress provided for a board of five retired general officers to take a hard look at the 2,625 Medals of Honor which had been awarded up to that time. The purpose was to weed out awards which did not conform to the true purpose of the medal.

As a result, 911 names were dropped from the list. Most were in one group, a Maine regiment whose men were given medals as an inducement to re-enlist during a critical time in the war. Of 47 others who lost their medals, one was William "Buffalo Bill" Cody.¹⁶ Sherman's award, however, withstood the scrutiny of the board and his name is carried today on the official list of Medal of Honor winners from Minnesota.

There seems to be no record of how he received his award, except that medal presentations during the Civil War did not have the pomp of the White House ceremony of today—a practice begun in 1906 under President Theodore Roosevelt.

MEDALS during the Civil War often were simply handed out by a man's immediate superior, but sometimes they were conferred at military formations and mentioned in the orders of the day. Medals also were sent by registered mail. The whereabouts of some recipients who had been discharged often were unknown, so the



Sherman House, photographed by W. H. Illingworth.

men never received them.¹⁷

In addition to his medal, Sherman received a \$2 pay raise for each successive day of his active service.¹⁸ His military career did not end at Gettysburg. He went with the regiment to New York to help control the draft riots and took part in the Battle of Bristoe Station and the Mine Run Campaign.

By February, 1864, the regiment's three-year term of enlistment was running out. Before being sent home for mustering out, the men were entertained at a banquet in Washington. Representative William Windom presided and praised the men, using the florid oratory of the era:

"When . . . the sisterhood of loyal states shall clothe themselves with victory, and each put on her crown of glory, the proudest of them shall not boast a brighter jewel than that which your heroism has placed in the coronet of our own Minnesota."¹⁸

Sherman re-enlisted at Fort Snelling March 24, 1864, in the First Minnesota Infantry Battalion whose Companies A and B were composed largely of men from the "Old First."¹⁹ In August, while under heavy fire at Deep Bottom, Virginia, he was seriously wounded and later lost a leg. He was sent home. For him, the war was over.

* * *

SHERMAN BECAME a respected prominent citizen of St. Paul. He established the Sherman House, a hotel which stood at Fourth and Sibley Streets in St. Paul. In its heyday, 100 persons could be seated in the dining room and the hotel was called "the best two-dollar a day house in the country."²⁰

Later he operated an insurance business.

A biography in a city history of his day claimed that ". . . all who know the man like him for what he is."²¹ However, ". . . being a man of retiring disposition, he never sought notoriety, politically or otherwise."²² Perhaps this is why there is little record of his later life. He was a member of Acker Post Number 21 of the Grand Army of the Republic, a prominent association of Civil War veterans.

Sherman remained a bachelor. When he died quietly on April 19, 1896, the G.A.R. made the arrangements for his small funeral. Sherman's army comrades played "Taps" over his grave in Oakland Cemetery.

As T. M. Newson, newspaper editor and historian, wrote, Sherman was "a good citizen and a good man."²³

The flag he captured from the 28th Virginia Regiment is today in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Bibliography

1. *Proceedings, 35th Annual Reunion of the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry.*
2. *Medal of Honor Recipients—1863-1963.* Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate. United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1964, page 15.
3. Josiah B. Chaney, *History of Acker Post Number 21, G.A.R.*, page 56.
4. Presnell, Thomas H., *Incidents in the Civil War*, page 5.
5. Chaney, *op. cit.*, page 59.
6. Minnesota Infantry, First Regiment, Company C Papers, 1861-1863. Manuscripts Department, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.
7. *Minnesota in the Civil War and Indian War.* Minnesota Board of Commissioners, Vol. II, page 108.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, page 35.
9. William Watts Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, Vol. II, page 311.
10. William Harmon, "Company C at Gettysburg," *Minneapolis Journal*, June 30, 1897.
11. *Ibid.*
12. "Sergeant," *St. Paul Pioneer*, August 9, 1863.
13. Harmon, *op. cit.*
14. "Sergeant," *op. cit.*
15. *Minnesota in the Civil War and Indian War*, Vol. I, page 37.
16. *Medal of Honor Recipients—1863-1963*, *op. cit.*, page 19-21.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *American Decorations, 1862-1926.* United States Government Printing Office, 1927.
19. *21st Annual Reunion of the First Regiment Minnesota Volunteers*, page 7.
20. *Minnesota in the Civil War and Indian War*, Vol. I, page 68.
21. *St. Paul Dispatch Souvenir*, page 97.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. T. M. Newson, *Pen Pictures of St. Paul, Minnesota*, page 183.



THE GIBBS HOUSE

Headquarters of the Ramsey County Historical Society, 2097 Larpenteur Avenue W., St. Paul, Minn.

THE Ramsey County Historical Society was founded in 1949. During the following years the Society, believing that a sense of history is of great importance in giving a new, mobile generation a knowledge of its roots in the past, acquired the 100-year-old farm home which had belonged to Heman R. Gibbs. The Society restored the Gibbs House and in 1954 opened it to the public as a museum which would depict the way of life of an early Minnesota settler.

In 1958 the Society erected a barn, behind the house, which is maintained as an agricultural museum to display the tools and other implements used by the men who broke up the prairie soil and farmed with horse and oxen.

Today, in addition to maintaining the Gibbs property, the Ramsey County Historical Society is active in the preservation of historic sites in Ramsey county, conducts tours, prepares pamphlets and other publications, organizes demonstrations of pioneer crafts and maintains a Speakers' Bureau for schools and organizations. It is the Society's hope that through its work the rich heritage of the sturdy men and women who were the pioneers of Ramsey County will be preserved for future generations.