

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
*A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society*

**Spring 2015**

Volume 50, Number 1

**Growing Up in St. Paul**

*Payne Avenue:  
Memories of Mora,  
Bocce Ball, Shining Shoes,  
Gardens, and Swede Hollow*

*Richard A. Sherwood*

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*When Adapting to Change Was Not Enough*  
**Brings Is Gone: The Life and Death**  
**of a St. Paul Family Business**

*Marcia Kremer, page 3*



*With the St. Paul Cathedral in the background in this undated photo, a Brings and Company wagon driven by two teamsters is on its way. Imagine lifting over 100 bales of hay onto this wagon, each of which weighed between 60 and 80 pounds, then driving one of many teams of horses that Brings owned over the years to deliver the hay! Photo courtesy of the Kremer Family Collection.*

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 50, Number 1

Spring 2015

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON DECEMBER 20, 2007:

The Ramsey County Historical Society inspires current and future generations to learn from and value their history by engaging in a diverse program of presenting, publishing and preserving.

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## A Message from the Editorial Board

Wander around St. Paul with this magazine and your imagination, and you will learn all kinds of stories. The stone building now located at 178 Goodrich Avenue was once the home of Joseph Brings, patriarch of the Brings family and founder of the Brings Company, the legendary feed business. Marcia Kremer outlines its origins and flexibility in providing first hay for carriage horses, then feed for the circus and the zoo, and finally landscaping products. The Soldiers and Sailors Memorial at the eastern end of Summit Avenue is crowned with a sculpture of Josias King, whom Patrick Hill restores to his rightful status as the first Minnesota volunteer in Lincoln’s Union army. Hill’s article carefully dissects the surrounding events and discredits a competing claim. And the current Swede Hollow Park provided a natural playground for Richard Sherwood and his friends growing up on the East Side of St. Paul in the 1940s. The Second World War was a backdrop, but the boys were able to build forts, explore the woods, and even follow Phalen Creek to fish in the Mississippi River. Write your own Ramsey County story and share it with others too!

*Anne Cowie*  
Chair, Editorial Board

# “I’m Going to Stick by Uncle Sam.”

## The Mysterious Tale of the First Volunteer

*Patrick M. Hill*

The statue represents Josias R. King, the first man to volunteer in the First Minnesota Infantry, the first regiment tendered the government for the suppression of the rebellion.

*Inscription on the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial  
in Summit Park, St. Paul, 1903*

I’m a Saint Paul native and spent my early years playing in Summit Park across the street from my home where the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, surmounted by the statue of a solitary soldier depicting Josias King, is located. And as I traversed back and forth across that park on the way to and from Cathedral grade school every day of my

first four years of formal education, Joe and I became fast friends.

The 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry proudly laid claim to the being the first regiment tendered and accepted by any state for defense of the Union following President Abraham Lincoln’s call for troops on April 15, 1861. That pedigree is so solidly documented that other states

rarely bother to dispute it and few from Minnesota would dare. Naturally that declaration would eventually lead to inquiry as to who was the first of the 1st Minnesota, and I had always been taught that it easily led to Josias Ridgate King of St. Paul. I’m not certain if he staked the claim or if it was bestowed upon him, but once granted he accepted the award with pride to the end of his days. It was certainly granted by the 1880s though possibly somewhat sooner.

So I was little distressed when I read the August 1996 issue of *Civil War Times Illustrated* where I learned of a challenge to King’s honor. The Anoka County Historical Society made the case that despite the long-established, seldom questioned recognition of Josias King as the first man to volunteer to serve in the 1st Minnesota Infantry for the Civil War, that the honor actually belonged to another soldier: Aaron Greenwald of Anoka.

Joe King had been a constant presence in my early life and since he is no longer available to answer these charges himself, I feel that I must. Reconciling these contradictions will require a careful reconstruction of the events, some more than 150 years in the past.

### Why This Matters

“Why after 150 years does this even matter? Why not just allow Anoka County to have the notoriety?” To that I can only say that truth and accuracy matter. Truly understanding the large events of history is built upon first understanding the small events. If we fail in our comprehension of the small ones, how reliable will our understanding of the large events be? Anoka is a beautiful city in its own right without need of false honors.

Over the decades many terms have been carelessly thrown about to describe this achievement. So let us be precise about what is actually being asserted for



*This photo from about 1905 shows the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial in its original location across the street from Summit Park in St. Paul. Sculptor John Karl Daniels executed the larger-than-life-size bronze casting of a Union soldier by using Josias King, the widely acknowledged first volunteer for the First Minnesota Infantry Regiment, as his model. The street to the left of the monument is Summit Avenue. The current St. Paul Cathedral would later be constructed where the photographer was standing when this photo was taken. At that time, the Memorial was relocated to Summit Park. Photo by Sweet. This and all other photos in this article are courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.*

these men. Simply stated: who was the first man to volunteer for service in the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, the first regiment officially tendered and accepted by the Federal government for service in the Civil War after Lincoln's call for troops on April 15, 1861?<sup>1</sup>

The question is NOT who was the first man to ENLIST in the Union army or the 1st Minnesota Infantry, as is often mistakenly claimed. To volunteer and to enlist are different things. Thousands of other men *enlisted* in the Union Army around the country before either of these men or anyone else in the 1st Minnesota Infantry. However, by virtue of it being the first regiment tendered and accepted for Federal service following the government's formal call for troops, in one way the 1st Minnesota could rightfully claim definition as the senior regiment in the Union Army. Therefore the first man to VOLUNTEER for the regiment could by that definition claim to be the first volunteer for the Union Army. In the murkiness of specific definitions many others can make similar claims, however. Dozens of other regiments enlisted and were in the field before the 1st Minnesota was called to duty in the theater of war.<sup>2</sup> Therefore careful, precise language is important in resolving this controversy without initiating another.

### The Anoka Legend

In the August 1996 issue of *Civil War Times Illustrated*, the Anoka story made the case that despite the long-established, seldom questioned recognition of Josias King as the first man to *volunteer* to serve in the 1st Minnesota Infantry, that the honor actually belonged to another soldier of the regiment, Aaron Greenwald of Anoka.

As the original version of the Anoka story goes, on April 14, 1861 (*sic*) after sending a telegram from Washington to William H. Acker, the Adjutant General of Minnesota, directing him to issue a proclamation calling for volunteers for federal service, Governor Alexander Ramsey was said to have sent a second telegram to Willis Gorman with instructions to also begin recruiting volunteers. The tale reports that Ramsey's telegram reached Gorman on the afternoon of the same day it was received in St. Paul.



Josias R. King in about 1863. Photo by Joel E. Whitney.



Private Aaron Greenwald in about 1862. Photo by W.W. West.

Gorman, a lawyer, was in court at a trial that the presiding judge immediately recessed given the arrival of such important news. As a crowd collected outside, Gorman, recognized as a former territorial governor, veteran military officer, and gifted orator, stirred the crowd to support the effort to recruit volunteers, and that a young miller named Aaron Greenwald was the first of seven men to step forward.

What documentation exists supporting or disproving these events?

This legend is said to have been based on an article allegedly published in the *Anoka Herald* sometime around 1900—forty years after the beginning of the war—and repeated in a two-paragraph entry in Albert Goodrich's *History of Anoka County*, published in 1905. Supporters of Aaron Greenwald cannot produce a copy of that newspaper; thus it is pure speculation that the newspaper story ever really existed. The book, however, is still available, though the anecdote about Greenwald was published without citation or attribution.<sup>3</sup> During the 50th Anniversary of the start of the Civil War, the July 10, 1911 issue of the *St. Cloud Journal Press* followed by an excerpt in the July 21 *Anoka Union* again repeated the story of Aaron Greenwald first published in the *History of Anoka*

*County*. The following week the *Union* finally named one Alvah Eastman, of St. Cloud as having done the research to prove the Greenwald claim but immediately admitted they never actually saw his data themselves, and to this day his data has never been produced. As with many legends, elements of the tale are true but unsubstantiated, partial truths and oral legends are a poor foundation upon which to base real history.

### King and Greenwald

St. Paul provided two of the companies mustered into the 1st Minnesota. One was Company A, also known as the Pioneer Guards; the other was Company C, the St. Paul Volunteers. Anoka did an impressive job for such a small community in presenting a company ready for service at Fort Snelling in late April, but this company was not accepted for service and many of its men were later mustered into other companies. Joe King and Aaron Greenwald both served in one of the two Saint Paul companies, King in Company A; Greenwald in Company C. Both saw combat in all the major actions of the regiment through the end of 1862, but King had demonstrated further qualities for command and was promoted to Second Lieutenant in September 1861;

First Lieutenant in July 1862; and adjutant of the regiment in September 1862.<sup>4</sup>

Only Greenwald, however, was with the 1st Minnesota when its crowning moment came in the Battle of Gettysburg. There, on July 3, 1863, he would receive a fatal wound repulsing the Confederate high tide near the now famous copse of trees while fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Saint Paul boys of Company C. He died on July 5 and is buried near his parents' home in Pennsylvania.

King, by invitation of General Alfred Sully, the third commander of the 1st Minnesota, to become an aide-de-camp on his staff, was on detached duty from the regiment serving in the Dakota Territory in the summer of 1863 chasing the Sioux who had escaped following their massacre of settlers in Minnesota the previous autumn.<sup>5</sup> King was returned to the regiment following the significant losses of officers at Gettysburg and named captain of Company G.

After the 1st Minnesota mustered out of service in May of 1864, King continued in the army, again by recommendation of General Sully, perhaps one of the most unique assignments the U.S. army could offer. In his appointment as the Lieutenant Colonel of the 2nd U.S. Volunteer Infantry, King commanded a regiment of 1,000 soldiers recruited from Confederate prisoners (they were called "Galvanized Yankees") in the POW Camps at Rock Island and Camp Douglas in Illinois. Eventually he would rise to command not only his own infantry regiment, but also nine other regiments of cavalry and one light artillery battery as the 3rd Sub Division, District of Upper Arkansas. King was a proven leader.

From 1866 until 1870, King served as a lieutenant in the Regular Army with the 2nd U.S. Infantry in Kentucky. He left the service and returned to St. Paul only when his wife became dangerously ill and doctors said a return to a healthful climate like Minnesota's was all that could revive her. King died in St. Paul in 1916, a few days short of his 84th birthday living his last few years in poverty and in frail health but with the wife he loved still by his side.<sup>6</sup> He was buried in Calvary Cemetery on February 12, 1916, the 107th anniversary

of the birth of President Lincoln, his wartime commander-in-chief.

I have found no evidence that either Greenwald or King made any statement about being the first *volunteer* while they were serving in the Civil War. No statement from King about being the first *volunteer* exists from his postwar service ending in 1870. Duty and dedication demanded the soldiers' complete attention while the fate of the country was in doubt. A claim of who was first made during the war would have been greeted with disdain or ridicule. Once the Union had been preserved, aging veterans proud of their service would at some time later rightfully recall their military contributions. Naturally the various roles of regiments and men would be discussed.



*Governor-elect Alexander Ramsey in about 1860.*

### **Ramsey's Communications to Minnesota**

Fortunately there is significant documentation of Governor Ramsey's communications with the Lincoln administration and with Minnesota while he was in Washington, D.C. in April 1861 that survives in the historical records.

To frame the discussion, let us begin with a review of that documented history. On Friday, April 12, 1861, South Carolinians attempted to seize the federal installation of Fort Sumter in the

Charleston harbor by force. The fort surrendered on April 13 and word reached Washington that night. By coincidence, the governor of Minnesota, Alexander Ramsey, was in the nation's capital and following a restless night, on Sunday morning, April 14 in the company of Senator Morton Wilkinson and Thomas Galbraith (now infamously known as the Minnesota Sioux Indian Agent during the Dakota Conflict) stopped to see his old political mentor from Pennsylvania, Secretary of War Simon Cameron. At that very moment Cameron was heading for an emergency Cabinet meeting at the White House. Ramsey told Cameron he was willing to tender 1,000 Minnesota men for "defense of the country." "Commit your offer to writing," barked the secretary while he was heading out the door. "I'll convey it to the President." Ramsey then wrote out his tender and left it on Cameron's desk.<sup>7</sup>

On April 15 President Abraham Lincoln published his proclamation to the nation of the need for troops. When exactly did Lincoln actually issue his formal call? Lincoln's secretary John G. Nicolay states:

The news of the assault on Sumter reached Washington on Saturday, April 13th. On Sunday morning, the 14th, the President and the Cabinet were met to discuss the surrender and evacuation. Sunday, though it was, Lincoln with his own hand immediately drafted the following proclamation, which was dated, issued, telegraphed and published to the whole country on Monday morning, April 15th.<sup>8</sup>

Since the Constitution gives authority to declare war or raise armies only to the Congress and not the president, Lincoln's cabinet had relied upon a 1795 Act of Congress that permitted the president to call upon the states to provide troops from their militias for a period of up to 90 days to quell an insurrection against the federal government. Under this authority, the cabinet decided to issue a call for 75,000 men for the maximum three months permitted in the hopes this would restore order.<sup>9</sup>

The formal Presidential Proclamation was sent on the morning of April 15 by telegram to the governors of each state



in the nation accompanied by a call for troops from Secretary of War Cameron who established a quota of regiments from each state. Minnesota's quota was one regiment. Ramsey's offer was formally accepted the same morning that Lincoln issued his proclamation.

There was extreme anxiety in the nation's capital that if Confederate forces marched on Washington at that moment, the organized federal troops then present were insufficient to defend the city. Thus Cameron's call emphasized the need for speedy action and included the direction to "... immediately detach from the militia of your state . . ." men to fill their quota for three months' service.

In the four years preceding Lincoln's election in 1860, President James Buchanan's secretary of war, John B. Floyd, a Southern sympathizer, had intentionally crippled the U.S. Army. He had used his position to benefit the South, arranging for thousands of dollars in government bonds, as well as armaments and material, to be shipped from northern locations to the South and relocated most army units away from positions that might threaten Southern interests. Angst in the capitol did not begin to be lifted until the arrival of the 6th Massachusetts on April 20th and of the 7th New York infantries on April 25th.<sup>10</sup>

The timing of this series of events presents a very strong case for the 1st Minnesota Infantry's claim of being the first regiment offered and accepted by any state under the president's call to suppress the rebellion. Thus we have this sequence of documented events as the basis for the 1st Minnesota being the first regiment in the Union Volunteer Army, but who was the first man to volunteer for this first regiment?

### Events on the Morning of April 15

In April 1861 a single telegraph line linked Minnesota to the outside world. It was a wire connecting St. Paul to LaCrosse, Wisconsin, which had only been in service since August 9, 1860. There was no other telegraph service then operating anywhere else in Minnesota, including Anoka (although downriver communities between St. Paul and Winona could



Lieutenant Governor-elect Ignatius L. Donnelly in about 1860.

patch into this line to the outside world). Telegraph transmissions are virtually instantaneous; thus any news of immediacy arriving in or departing from Minnesota had to first come through St. Paul.

Ramsey's first telegram to Minnesota on Monday, April 15 arrived in St. Paul before 10 a.m., local time. This telegram was addressed to his personal secretary, Samuel P. Jennison. The message was brief:

Have tendered the president 1000 men—will not be wanted at present—I write Gen. Acker by mail—Is Governor Donnelly with you Ramsey<sup>11</sup>

There are some telling items in this message. First, there was a decided lack of urgency. Ramsey did not believe the troops he had tendered would be needed immediately. He stated that his initial communication to the chief military officer of Minnesota, Adjutant General William H. Acker, was sent *by mail* (apparently posted before this telegram) not telegraph, again evidencing an obvious lack of urgency. He mentioned in the letter posted to Acker that he felt Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota would be exempted from any call for troops by Washington.<sup>12</sup> The most logical explanation for this casual communication is that Ramsey sent his first telegram to

Minnesota that morning before learning of Lincoln's exact proclamation and Cameron's subsequent telegram containing the quota of troops expected to be raised by Minnesota under Lincoln's request.

The next telegram to arrive in Minnesota that morning would have been the presidential proclamation and Cameron's call for troops as indicated by Nicolay's testimony. It would have been foolish for Ramsey to have initiated recruitment in Minnesota before he knew whether the president intended to request any troops for federal service. Therefore (supported by the leisurely tone in his first April 15 telegram to Minnesota and his decision to mail a letter to Acker containing his belief that Minnesota would be exempted), Ramsey's more urgent, formal direction to raise troops contained in his second April 15 telegram to Minnesota would not have been dispatched until after the official action by the president.

Following the publication of the presidential proclamation, Ramsey sent a second telegram to Minnesota on April 15 addressed to Acker which arrived in Saint Paul at 10 a.m.<sup>13</sup> It read in part:

Issue proclamation in my name calling for volunteers under a requisition of the President of the United States for one regiment of infantry from Minnesota to report at St. Paul forthwith.<sup>14</sup>

Some think it curious that Ramsey did not direct a telegram on April 15 to Lieutenant Governor Ignatius Donnelly, who was then acting governor in Ramsey's absence (though Ramsey would later say he did send a telegram to him). After arriving in Washington in early April, Ramsey apparently realized he would be there longer than he initially anticipated and since there might be small matters that would require the presence of a chief executive during his extended absence, on April 8 he directed Jennison to invite Donnelly to come to St. Paul to warm the Governor's chair while he remained out of the state. Surely Ramsey could never have imagined something as momentous as open rebellion against the national government erupting. Jennison posted a letter to Donnelly that same

day, April 8, which probably arrived at Donnelly's home in Nininger, which is near Hastings, the next day.<sup>15</sup>

So while some suggest Ramsey's failure to telegraph Donnelly directly on April 15 shows some tension existed between the two men, more likely it is simply evidence that he was not sure whether Donnelly had yet arrived in St. Paul.<sup>16</sup> Donnelly, however, took it as a slight and said so in a letter to his wife dated April 17 saying that *Ramsey directed no telegram to him on April 15* (my emphasis). He only learned of Ramsey's order for a proclamation through a conversation with Acker. Intentional or not, any attempt to circumvent the lieutenant governor failed miserably and Donnelly took immediate and active control of the situation in Minnesota.<sup>17</sup>

Despite his receipt of Ramsey's telegram on April 15 directing him to issue a proclamation for troops, Adjutant General Acker refused to act under Ramsey's message, believing that he had no legal authority to initiate the proclamation himself. His action could not precede a formal call from the governor. Acker interpreted Ramsey's message as advisory only, until the formal declaration from either Ramsey or acting Governor Donnelly had been published to the state, and he shared this concern in a conversation with Donnelly.<sup>18</sup>

Notice, there was no mention of Willis Gorman in this correspondence. In addition there is no additional message specific to Gorman in either telegram, nor did Ramsey ever indicate he had sent one to Gorman, nor did Gorman ever mention receiving one. Nor is there even a suggestion of the existence of such a telegram until forty years after the fact in the birth of the Anoka County legend, later repeated in the published articles of 1911 and 1996.

### **Gorman Not Ramsey's First Choice**

Appointments of field officers for Civil War regiments were the prerogative of the various state governors. They were considered prized gifts of political patronage. In most cases, particularly the early appointments went to their political allies, often to the detriment of the military



*Willis A. Gorman in about 1861.*

performance of their regiments. However, both Gorman and his regiment performed meritoriously, earning the unit accolades and Gorman a promotion to brigadier general. Because of their mutual success together, casual students today tend to think that he was Ramsey's first choice to command. This is not correct. Indeed, we learn from Ramsey's own diary entries of April 25, 1861 that Gorman was not even among the first candidates considered by Ramsey for the post.

That consideration was extended to Napoleon J.T. Dana, a St. Paul banker with a West Point education who had recently been a captain in the Regular Army. After Dana declined to accept a 90-day appointment for business reasons, Ramsey entertained Dana's recommendation and looked to Alexander Wilkin. Ramsey's diary entry of April 27 indicates his "STRONG" inclination to offer the post to Wilkin.<sup>19</sup>

Following a series of inspiring speeches at public meetings meant to drum up support for the war and to recruit volunteers beginning with his Anoka speech on April 16, popular sentiment soon swung to Gorman, a gifted orator and campaigner. Ramsey eventually bent to the public will and named Gorman colonel of the 1st Minnesota Infantry on April 29. However, since Gorman was not among Ramsey's first select group

to lead this regiment, is it credible to think that on April 15, the first day of the emergency, Ramsey would turn to him or even think to contact him, let alone direct a message be delivered specifically to Gorman at all due speed?

### **War Fever in St. Paul**

The capital city had been wild with war fever since word arrived on April 13 of the attack on the Fort Sumter. The topic was continuously discussed on the streets. Two daily papers, the *Press* and the *Pioneer and Democrat*, posted updates at their offices throughout the day with the latest word from the East.

In this charged environment, there was no surprise when news of the contents of Ramsey's second telegram directing recruitment to begin had been leaked and was being openly discussed about the city streets on the afternoon of April 15, the very day it arrived.

Within one knot of men thrashing out matters was a Southern sympathizer who exclaimed "I wish to God I had been there to fire the first gun!" Reacting immediately to the declaration, 5 foot 1 inch Alexander Wilkin, an army veteran, slapped the larger man's face warning him, "... he would be hung if he uttered any more of his treason."<sup>20</sup>

Following receipt of Ramsey's message, Captain A.T. Chamblin, the commander of the roughly 75-member Pioneer Guards militia, the oldest and best drilled company in the state, was called by Donnelly to the Capitol where he was persuaded to hold a recruitment meeting of the "PGs" at their armory on that very night. King asserts that Chamblin personally made the rounds inviting each member of the "PGs" to the 7:00 p.m. meeting, something that would not have been difficult to do in the small town.

This meeting of the "PGs" was for the purposes of generating recruits under the call of Secretary Cameron just received and the one Donnelly himself would issue to Minnesota the next morning. (Recall Cameron's telegram had cited the need for each state to "immediately detach from the militia of your state" men to fill their quota for 3-months' service). Indeed, Acker himself had been an early

member and officer in the “PGs” dating from 1856 until his appointment as the state adjutant general at the beginning of Ramsey’s term just a month earlier. In Order No. 1 of April 16, Acker’s official call for troops, priority was given in recruitment to eight militia companies listed by name that then existed in Minnesota and which, from his prior long service in the state militia, Acker was quite familiar. None of these militia companies was from Anoka County.

The meeting was held in the “PGs” armory, the 60- x 80-ft third floor of the Tilsen Produce building, on Third Street (now Kellogg Boulevard) between Cedar and Minnesota Streets. The hall was filled beyond capacity and included some members of the public hoping to volunteer or just witness the excitement. The militia declined to enlist *en masse* due to the concerns of some members with business obligations. Following a brief recess, individual volunteers “under the call” were solicited by Captain Chamblin to be recorded in a small notebook at the secretary’s desk. At that moment Josias King, who happened to be seated next to Chamblin, with the secretary nearby, was the first to sign the enlistment book declaring “Here is one for the war.”<sup>21</sup> Many others would join him in St. Paul that night of April 15, but Willis Gorman was not among them. He was serving as defense council in a trial in Anoka.

Donnelly issued his formal proclamation the next morning, April 16 (in his own name as Governor *ad interim*, not Ramsey’s), which was accompanied simultaneously by the call for troops from Acker and then jointly distributed throughout the state. It is likely Donnelly and Acker’s messages were carried by the regular mail. Their official messages were directed to units of government and local newspapers to spread the message to the citizenry. In those days mail was carried in relays by boat, stage-coach, freight wagons, and on horseback throughout the state. Even if special couriers were dispatched their means of transportation would, however, have been much the same.

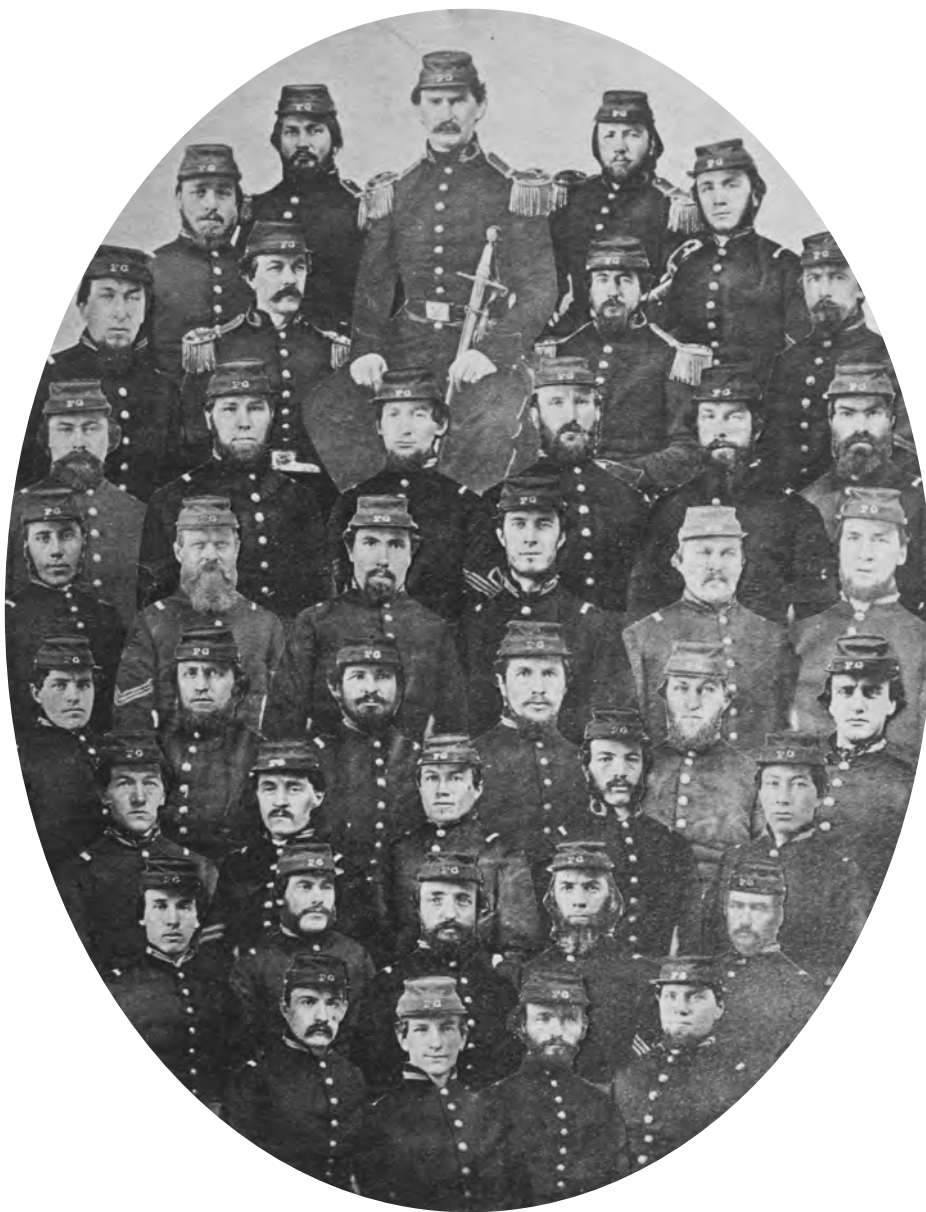
The couriers would travel along established relay routes (the route to Anoka being through St. Anthony at the Falls,

then up the river road) as was done with all official messages, stopping along the way to convey the information which would mean—given that even a direct horseman would take nearly three hours to reach Anoka from St. Paul—that the earliest time the official Donnelly or Acker dispatch could reach Anoka would be midday of April 16. This is a crucial element in validating that Josias King had volunteered before Aaron Greenwald.

## Dissecting the Anoka Legend

*Ramsey sent a telegram from Washington to Willis Gorman in Minnesota on April 14 or 15, 1861 specifically requesting him to recruit volunteers.*

Why was Anoka’s legend centered on Willis Gorman? Because their tale was strengthened by the coincidence—known only in retrospect—that Gorman would become colonel of the regiment and from a distance of forty years few would recall



*Organized in 1856, the Minnesota Pioneer Guard, which was headquartered in St. Paul, was a key military unit for recruiting volunteers for the First Minnesota Regiment. Seen here in this 1859 photo are Pioneer Guard members, left to right, top to bottom: A. Chamblin, D. Justice, Charles Lund, M. Patterson, Luther Clark, T. Campbell, William VanSlyke, John Devereux, Josias King, J. Ward, Francis Gilman, Harry Coates, L. Dunn, William Shelley, L. Biseneau, C. King, James J. Hill, P. O’Connor, Charles Zierenberg, and A. Holco. Photo by Tuttle.*



that on April 15, 1861 his eventual connection to the unit was not even under consideration. Gorman (1816–1876) was appointed governor of the Minnesota Territory in 1853 by Democratic President Franklin Pierce. He succeeded Alexander Ramsey who had been the first territorial governor, appointed by President Zachary Taylor of the Whig Party. Gorman was a decorated Mexican War veteran who had previously served in two Indiana Regiments, had been wounded once, and had returned home to practice law and further the Democratic Party. He was a skilled campaigner and a fiery, compelling orator; some said he was among the best in the nation.

One of Gorman's first actions on arriving in Minnesota in 1853 was to undertake an investigation into Ramsey's dealings during the Dakota Treaties of 1851. Ramsey was eventually cleared by the U.S. Senate, but this investigation had been a serious threat to Ramsey's political career and it's very likely that it left some bitterness toward Gorman on Ramsey's part.<sup>22</sup> With the election of President James Buchanan in 1856, the last Whig president, Gorman was replaced in 1857 as territorial governor by Samuel Medary, who served for the last few months before Minnesota's statehood. Gorman returned to private law practice.

The earliest substantiated Anoka legend in 1905 says Gorman received a telegram from Ramsey on the morning of April 14 while in court. Since April 14 would have been a Sunday, let's assume the advocates for Greenwald intended Monday which would have been April 15. However, since telegraph service between St. Paul and Anoka did not yet exist, the Anoka story suggests a rider was dispatched first to the village of St. Anthony and then relayed to Anoka, twenty miles away, where Gorman was representing clients at trial.<sup>23</sup> Upon receiving the telegram, the trial was recessed, and Gorman is said to have announced the important content of the telegram and thereupon addressed a crowd outside the courthouse. Supposedly acting on Ramsey's direction, he then began to recruit volunteers to join a regiment. The first man

to volunteer was Aaron Greenwald. The historic record clearly demonstrates this timing was not possible.

What is far more likely is that it is simply a faulty forty-year-old recollection of the actual event, confusing by two days a non-existent telegram from Governor Ramsey for the official distribution of Acting Governor Donnelly's April 16 proclamation accompanied by Adjutant General Acker's official call for volunteers then being distributed throughout the entire state that day. After departing St. Paul that morning, a routine relay of the mail would have been made at St. Anthony and that rider would have arrived in Anoka by late morning or early afternoon of April 16. The rest of the story regarding Gorman's speech there with the recruitment of Greenwald and the others follows very logically.

However, all these events occurred on April 16 the day AFTER the evening meeting and enlistments by the Pioneer Guards in St. Paul on April 15. The failing memories of forty years and natural pride for the men who served from Anoka County had simply produced the error, and over the years those wishing it were true have repeated the mistake in their favor without critical analysis. Of course, April 16 disqualifies the Anoka volunteers as the first in the state because of the meeting of the St. Paul Pioneer Guards the previous night where King and a few dozen others had volunteered.

### **Proving King's Lineage**

Simply disproving the validity of the Anoka legend does not, however, by itself, confirm Josias King's position as the first Minnesota volunteer. What if someone other than either King or Greenwald deserves the honor? What is the proof of the honor belonging to King? Primary above all others was the meeting of the Pioneer Guards on the night of April 15, 1861, where King was the first to volunteer for service in the presence of a couple of hundred people including many current and future men of prominence from the city including James J. Hill and probably Acting Governor Donnelly. The April 18, 1861 edition of the daily *Pioneer & Democrat* reported the PGs met "but the official proclama-

tion was not out." BOTH National and State proclamations were out and known on Tuesday morning, April 16; thus the PG meeting could only have occurred on April 15, 1861. In later years those in attendance would validate King's action that evening and honor him for it.<sup>24</sup>

*Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars* (MCIW) is the official state publication documenting the war record of every military unit in Minnesota. Each organization was invited to prepare a telling of its own history for publication. Knowing they were creating their official record for posterity, in every instance the veterans of each unit selected one of its members to prepare a draft while other members of the unit would review it for accuracy suggesting additions and subtractions for improvement. The result was an anthology of histories free of glaring errors and rich in details that only the collective members would have known.

In the "Narrative of the 1st Regiment" submitted as its official history for MCIW, King is recognized as the regiment's first volunteer. The author of that history was William Lochren, the last adjutant of the 1st Minnesota and later in life a federal judge; federal Pensions Commissioner; and in 1889 elected chair by the other commissioners of the Civil and Indian War History Commission, which was the body created by the legislature to produce MCIW. In those roles Lochren, who by then was the acknowledged spokesman for the 1st Minnesota regimental history, was an accomplished, exacting, careful, and well respected arbiter of fact who would not have accepted an unsubstantiated or sloppy claim by a pretender for the regiment in which he proudly served, let alone publish the claim in the official record of the regiment. To produce the regiment's history, Lochren consulted with many of the unit's surviving members. The consensus validated King's legitimate status as the first volunteer of the regiment.

### **1903 Summit Park Soldiers and Sailors Memorial**

The Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Memorial in Summit Park in St. Paul was the result of a process that can trace

its origins to a suggestion by the editors in the June 25, 1865 *St. Paul Pioneer* to erect a monument to the 1st Minnesota Infantry in Rice Park. Almost thirty years later in 1893, the Acker Post 21 of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a Civil War veterans' organization, passed a resolution to locate a Civil War memorial on a small triangle of land on St. Anthony Hill at the head of Third Street adjacent to Summit Park. It would be yet another ten years before that resolution was realized.

The dedication of the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial near Summit Park in St. Paul was held on November 20, 1903, nearly four years before work on Archbishop John Ireland's majestic Cathedral would begin on the crest of St. Anthony Hill, just a few paces to the west. The dedication of the memorial was a grand affair organized by Civil War veterans. The money to build the memorial had been raised by groups associated with them. The speeches were made by Civil War veterans. The ceremony was attended by hundreds of Civil War veterans.<sup>25</sup>

Atop that monument was a statue of a solitary Union soldier. John Karl Daniels, the sculptor with a studio across the Wabasha Bridge, had been commissioned by the veterans who paid for the work to craft the soldier in the likeness of Josias King, an obvious tribute to his acknowledged status as the first volunteer. During the monument's assembly, King had even posed with the 8-foot 2-inch statue to demonstrate how well Daniels had fulfilled his commission. When King was introduced to this crowd of Civil War veterans as the first soldier to volunteer for the 1st Minnesota Infantry and therefore the first Minnesotan to volunteer, few harbored objections.

### **The War Between the Acker and Garfield GAR Posts**

A little known aspect of this story is a conflict that arose in 1903 between two St. Paul GAR Posts, Acker and Garfield, regarding the design and credit for the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial in Summit Park. The final design, planning, and financing of this monument was done by

the larger, more influential Acker Post through a committee headed by Captain Joseph J. McCarty, a Kentucky veteran and St. Paul city comptroller. Using his political and financial connections, McCarty almost single-handedly drove the completion of the monument. After the idea for a memorial had floated around St. Paul for nearly forty years without success, without McCarty's dedication it probably would not have been finished in 1903 either.

McCarty had skillfully arranged the political support of the legislature, county, and city in approving the funds and the location for the memorial. He let contracts for materials and design. Clearly, he was an advocate of King's role as first volunteer and as evidenced by the existing language on the monument, most challenges to his opinion fell on deaf ears. Nevertheless, McCarty's high-handed management of the campaign bruised some feelings among his comrades at Garfield Post.

A committee of Garfield Post members appointed in 1903 and led by James D. Wood launched a series of blistering complaints regarding the monument which, among other things, included the language on the panel which identified King as the first Union volunteer. Wood had been a member of the 2nd Wisconsin Infantry, senior regiment of the legendary Iron Brigade of the Army of the Potomac. Soon recognized for his intelligence, he rose to adjutant of that brigade by 1862. His attention to detail and predisposition for debate would make him a formidable opponent for anyone unfortunate enough to be on the opposite side of a question.

Wood persuaded the Garfield Post to form a committee to formalize their objections, which were delivered to the Ackers and published in the December 27, 1903 *Pioneer Press*. The newspaper characterized them as "very wrathful" and "scathing." Wood forcefully objected to McCarty's conduct; argued that there had been financial contributions to the memorial from others besides the Ackers; and challenged the assertions that Minnesota had been the first Union regiment and King had been the first Union volunteer. Significantly Wood did

not take issue with King being acknowledged as the first volunteer in Minnesota.

Feeling they could not allow such public accusations to go unanswered, the Acker Post formed its own committee which on November 29, 1905 submitted a report in rebuttal. It provided a detailed history of the development of the monument from conception to completion and a pointed defense of McCarty's leadership in that effort. It did not mention the challenges to King or the 1st Minnesota's role as the first Union regiment. The Ackers held the early advantage. But Wood, emulating the actions of the brigade in which he had served, absorbed this early punishment but continued the fight for eight years.<sup>26</sup>

The Acker Post had deeded possession of the memorial to the City of Saint Paul at the 1903 dedication and thereafter turned aside requests for alterations rightfully pleading lack of ownership. The blueprints for the Cathedral of Saint Paul submitted for city approval in 1906 required a realignment of Summit Avenue in front of the proposed grand edifice. The city concluded that the resulting hairpin turn off the new Summit Avenue down the hill onto Third Street, would require the relocation of the memorial. The simplest solution was to move it across the street into Summit Park to the spot it occupies to this day.

This required the monument's disassembly and I suspect at this time the city took the opportunity to amend the wording on tablet #2, which originally gave credit for construction of the memorial exclusively to the Acker Post to subsequently read "Affiliated Association of GAR Posts." Thus, the primary objection of the Garfields was finally sustained, but the panel identifying King as the first Union volunteer remained unaltered. Other lesser Garfield objections continued to occasionally surface in newspaper stories through 1911 and may have been considered by the creators of the Anoka legend.

## The 1911 St. Paul Golden Jubilee and Newspaper Skirmish

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the start of the Civil War in 1911 naturally sparked significant remembrance activities planned by and for the aging veterans who had preserved the Union. Thus the 44th annual reunion of the surviving veterans of the 1st Minnesota Regiment Association was scheduled for June 22 in St. Paul, the exact anniversary of departure of the regiment from the city to the seat of war. The city immediately undertook to make it a memorable celebration. A full day of ceremonies, parades, and fireworks were planned at which 138 surviving members of the regiment were in attendance.

At 10:30 A.M. on the north steps of the second capitol, the same ground where the first capitol had stood, Mrs. James J. Hill representing the women of St. Paul presented a beautiful replica of the regimental colors to Samuel Lilly, president of the association, just as had occurred with Colonel Gorman in 1861 from the hands of Anna Ramsey, the war governor's wife. The ceremony ended with the award of a laurel wreath to Josias King acknowledging his status as the first Union volunteer from Minnesota. After a minute, King removed the wreath, but held it to his heart for the rest of the ceremony.

There was a banquet that evening with speeches including one from Martin Maginnis, a former U.S. senator from Montana and the oldest surviving officer of the regiment. The final speech that night was delivered by former Mayor Daniel Lawler. It included some factual errors, which perhaps overstated the role of the 1st Minnesota at Gettysburg and also the specific claim of Josias King being the first volunteer and enlistee in the Union Army. Four days later Lawler was called to account for his mistakes by the old bulldog, James Wood, in the *Pioneer Press*, which initiated a two-week long exchange of letters in the paper between Wood, Lawler, and King. Yet through it all Wood did not dispute King's role as the first volunteer in Minnesota.



*Captain Jeremiah C. Donahower took this photo in 1903 of an elderly Josias R. King standing next to John Karl Daniels' bronze statue of a Union soldier that was modeled on King.*

This controversy was mentioned in the Anoka newspapers, which also took the occasion to revive the story of Aaron Greenwald. The Anoka coverage extended the discussion in the St. Paul newspapers for another few days, which included more promises to get to the bottom of the first volunteer claims but no evidence is found that any substantiating evidence was ever presented by Greenwald supporters.

The Golden Jubilee ended with a massive fireworks display on the river at Harriet Island seen by 25,000 people. One of the sets was a giant illumination of King above the title "First Volunteer." Throughout the full day of ceremonies, many highlighting King's status as first volunteer from Minnesota, not a single objection was raised from any of the 138 survivors of the 1st Minnesota Infantry in attendance. There was not another substantive challenge to his status for 80 years until the reemergence of the Anoka Legend in 1996.<sup>27</sup>

## The Death of King

In failing health during his last years, the citizens of St. Paul created a fund to provide for King's comfort in his final years. James J. and Louis W. Hill personally presented the \$2,500 raised during the Christmas of 1915. Josias King's loyal heart finally gave out on February 10, 1916 just short of his 84th birthday. A one-day visitation for King that was held at the Kelly Funeral Home on W. Seventh Street, adjacent to King's apartment, was attended by over 5,000 people. Archbishop John Ireland personally presided over King's funeral. Governor Joseph Burnquist, St. Paul Mayor Winn Powers, and the entire Saint Paul City Council attended the funeral mass. James J. Hill and John Devereux, the last surviving members of the old Pioneer Guards who were present at the April 15, 1861 meeting where King first volunteered, served as honorary pall bearers. King was accorded full military honors befitting a dignitary. Nothing in the reports about King and his funeral suggests there was any doubt that these mourners considered Josias Ridgate King had been the *first volunteer* of the Union Army's first regiment.

## Conclusion

Aaron Greenwald was a patriotic son of Minnesota who did not hesitate to answer the call for help when his country needed him. He served in a St. Paul company of volunteers. He sacrificed his life to preserve the Union and he will forever be honored for that. But he did not claim, nor does he warrant, recognition as Minnesota's first volunteer. The historical evidence does not support it. Josias King, on the other hand, by the overwhelming preponderance of evidence, was the first Minnesota volunteer.<sup>28</sup> He didn't seek the honor, but in the interests of historical accuracy, his memory does not deserve to be disturbed by further false claims.

*Patrick Hill has spent many years studying Minnesota's role in the Civil War and has published numerous articles on that conflict, including three earlier ones in this magazine.*

## Notes

1. Some assert that if the 1st Minnesota was the first regiment tendered for service in the Union Army, then the first volunteer for that regiment was, by default, the first volunteer in the Union Army. This article will not enter that fray. Its purpose is only to establish the first man to volunteer for the 1st Minnesota Infantry.

2. Pennsylvania "First Defenders"; 6th Massachusetts; 7th New York; and 8th Massachusetts as some examples.

3. Neither the alleged news article nor the *History of Anoka County* attribute any sources for the basis of their legend. The entire story is anecdotal. James Groat, who volunteered with Greenwald, left a memoir dated October 17, 1889 in which he acknowledged his failing memory and then immediately proved his point by claiming that the news of Confederate fire at Fort Sumter arrived by telegraph on April 14 and subsequent efforts in Anoka on *that night* to organize a company at which he and Greenwald volunteered. The date and telegraph service could not be correct. Captain Tollman did report at Fort Snelling with a company of Anoka men, including Greenwald and Groat in late April, but the company was declined and disbanded. Many of the men later signed on with other companies of the regiment.

4. A regimental adjutant is a staff officer who assists the *commanding officer* of the *regiment* in the details of regimental duty. The commander trusts his judgment and he is usually authorized to speak for the commander in his absence.

5. Sully served as the third commander of the 1st Minnesota from March 13, 1862 to October 18, 1862 when he was promoted and became the regiment's brigade commander, 1st Brigade, 2nd Division, 2nd Corps. In all likelihood, the seeds for his later replacement were planted during the battle of Fredericksburg where he refused to add his brigade to the obviously hopeless and ongoing slaughter. "They might court martial me and be damned. I was not going to murder my men," he is reported to have uttered after refusing the order. Fredericksburg had been such a total disaster, however, that a court martial held far greater potential to embarrass the army command than Sully. So, although his judgment to save his men had proven to be correct and until then he had been recognized as an excellent commander, such insubordination could not be tolerated by some in the army. Consequently Sully was banished in May 1863 to the Great Plains to fight the Dakota.

6. He died in the third floor apartment at 277 W. Seventh Street, where he spent the last few years of his life. That building still exists.

7. See Ramsey 1888 MOLLUS talk.

8. "Outbreak of the Rebellion" by John Nicolay.

9. See the copy of Cameron's official call in *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars* (St. Paul: Minnesota Board of Commissioners on Publication of History of Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1889), vol. 2, page 1 (hereinafter cited as MCIW).

10. When the American Civil War began in April 1861, there were only 16,000 men in the U.S. Army, and of these many Southern officers resigned and joined the Confederate States Army. The U.S. Army consisted of ten regiments of infantry, four of artillery, two of cavalry, two of dragoons, and one of mounted infantry. The regiments were scattered widely. Of the 197 compa-

nies in the army, 179 occupied 79 isolated posts in the West, and the remaining 18 manned garrisons east of the Mississippi River, mostly along the Canadian border and on the Atlantic coast. Shortly before Lincoln's inauguration, Floyd resigned and took a commission as a general in the Confederate Army.

11. Copy in the Alexander Ramsey Papers.

12. Letter found in MCIW, vol. 2, page 1.

13. 10 A.M., St. Paul time. There was, as yet, no national standardized time; so we cannot know with certainty in 1861 what time it was in Washington, D.C. when it was 10 A.M. in St. Paul.

14. Telegram copied in MCIW, vol. 2, page 2. Ramsey also indicated in this telegram he would leave for home on April 16. The journey by train and boat at that time would indicate his arrival in Minnesota on April 19th or 20th, but because he was delayed by a rail accident in the Alleghenies, he did not arrive until the night of April 23. In an 1888 speech to the Minnesota Commandery of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS), Ramsey said that immediately following the president's call, he sent TWO telegrams to Minnesota. One went to Lieutenant Governor Donnelly and the other went to Attorney General Acker. The surviving record presents a slight variation.

15. Letter in the Donnelly Papers.

16. Note the contents of Ramsey's first telegram to his secretary inquiring, "Is Donnelly with you?" We now know that Donnelly was present in St. Paul by April 11 at the latest since he posted a letter to his wife, Kate, from St. Paul on that date. See the Donnelly Papers.

17. Letter in the Donnelly Papers.

18. Donnelly April 17 letter to his wife, Kate, in the Donnelly Papers.

19. Ramsey's interest in Dana continued unabated and Dana accepted command of the regiment in the fall of 1861 following Gorman's promotion. Wilkin would later be appointed colonel of the 9th Minnesota Infantry and as a colonel commanding a brigade at the Battle of Tupelo July 14, 1864, earned the dubious distinction of being the highest ranking officer from the state killed in battle during the Civil War. His is one of four statues of Minnesota Civil War leaders surrounding the Rotunda of the state capitol.

20. Witnessed and reported by James Baker, then Secretary of State and later colonel of the 10th Minnesota Infantry. Cited in Ronald Hubbs, "The Civil War and Alexander Wilkin," *Minnesota History*, 39, no. 5 (Spring 1965).

21. Later in May while at Fort Snelling now Orderly Sergeant King of Company A, 1st Minnesota Infantry was approached by some of his men seeking his opinion on converting their three-month enlistments to a three-year hitch. "Boys," he replied, "Three years or thirty years, I'm going to stick by Uncle Sam." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 20, 1903.

22. St. Paulites may still be bitter because one of Gorman's last acts was his near success in removing the capital to St. Peter.

23. Attested by some surviving legal documents he had signed and filed there, April 12-17, 1861.

24. Hill was a member of the Pioneer Guards himself. He had participated in a few ceremonies in later years

recognizing King and maintained his appreciation for him even to the last year of King's life when he presented the aged, impoverished veteran with a \$2,500 bequest from a committee to help make his final years more comfortable.

25. The keynote speaker was Henry Castle, the only three-time past Minnesota Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a Civil War veterans organization; a founder of the Acker Post of the GAR which had helped raise funds for the monument they were now dedicating; organizer of the first Memorial Day celebration held in St. Paul in 1870; and the founder of North Saint Paul. In his dedication, he declared King the first volunteer of the 1st Minnesota.

26. Ironically McCurdy and Wood would die less than two weeks apart in 1912 almost as if their titanic dispute had finally consumed them both.

27. Author: the text has a note 27 but the text of the note is missing. Please supply it.

28. Other sources that support King as the first volunteer in Minnesota include the following:

1890 General Christopher C. Andrews, MCIW commissioner, *History of St. Paul*

1908 Lucius Hubbard, Warren Upham, et al., *Minnesota in Three Centuries*

1912 Captain Henry Castle, Commander of Minnesota GAR, *History of Minnesota* and *History of St. Paul and Vicinity*

1916 Return I. Holcombe, *History of the First Regiment Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, 1861-1864* (published by the veterans of the regiment).

1923 The Nathan Hale Post of the Minnesota Daughters of the American Revolution erected a 20" x 30" bronze plaque honoring Josias King as the first volunteer of the Union Army on a pillar entering the concourse of the new Union Depot in St. Paul where it would be seen by millions of people over the next 50 years. The tablet was removed from the Depot in the 1970s and since 1977 has occupied an inconspicuous spot in the Minnesota Territorial Pioneer cabin on the state fairgrounds. For photos of the tablet, see [http://pjefamilyresearch.blogspot.com/2013\\_06\\_02\\_archive.html](http://pjefamilyresearch.blogspot.com/2013_06_02_archive.html)

1935 Governor Theodore Christiansen, *Minnesota: A History of the State and Its People*

1935 Gertrude W. Ackermann, "Volunteer Guards in Minnesota," *Minnesota History*, 16, no. 2

1961 Kenneth Carley, *Minnesota in the Civil War: An Illustrated History* (centennial edition; revised edition, 2000)

1965 Ronald M. Hubbs, "The Civil War and Alexander Wilkin," *Minnesota History*, 39, no. 5

2010 Richard Krom, *The 1st Minnesota—Second to None: A Narrative of the Life and Death Struggles of the Soldier in the Civil War*.

Numerous newspaper articles including but not limited to: *Pioneer and Democrat*, April 16, 1861; *St. Paul Globe*, March 12, 1899; *Minneapolis Sunday Times*, May 3, 1903; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 20, 1903; *St. Paul Dispatch*, November 20, 1903; *Minneapolis Journal*, June 14, 1908; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 22, 1911

R.C.H.S.

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*Bright sun illuminates the details of John Karl Daniels' bronze casting of a Union Soldier that was modeled on Josias R. King more than a century ago. The statue stands atop the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Summit Park in St. Paul. Photo by Robert Muschewske. For more on Josias King, see page 18.*