



## **Hmong Foodways in Ramsey County**

KRISTINA HER, PAGE 1

## By the Numbers . . .

For nearly fifty years, a large population of Hmong from Southeast Asia have called Ramsey County home. As the community grew, they brought seeds, planted gardens, opened grocery stores, joined co-ops to learn American farming practices, sold produce at farmers' markets, and opened innovative restaurants. Today, an integral part of the Hmong foodways community is the twelve-year-old Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA). This group of farmers owns 155 acres in nearby Dakota County and supplies fresh produce to Twin Cities' markets, schools, hospitals, and individual families. To learn more, see Kristina Her's cover story "Hmong Foodways in Ramsey County" on page 1.

Number of acres owned by HAFA:

**155**

Number of fruit, vegetable, herb, and flower varieties grown by HAFA farmers and sold to customers in the Twin Cities:

**160**

Percentage of Hmong American farmers among all farmers contributing to Twin Cities' markets:

**50%**

Number of years a typical farmer member at HAFA has been growing produce or flowers:

**20**

Typical plot size each farmer at HAFA works:

**5-10 acres**

SOURCES: Hmong American Farmers Association website, accessed July 2023, <https://www.hmongfarmers.com/>.

## ON THE COVER



This exquisite Hmong village story cloth in the Minnesota Historical Society collections depicts the Hmong relationship with food and farms in Laos. Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.

## Contents

- 1 **Hmong Foodways in Ramsey County**  
KRISTINA HER
- 11 *Growing Up at Fort Snelling*  
**Honoring the First Regiment of Minnesota Volunteer Infantry for Fifty Years**  
JOHN H. GUTHMANN
- 22 *Rolling through the Decades*  
**Roller Skating in Ramsey County**  
HEIDI HELLER
- 33 **A Tribute to John Watson Milton (1935-2023)**  
JOHN M. LINDLEY
- 34 **Honoring WWII Codebreakers and the Founding of Engineering Research Associates**  
DAVE BEAL, LOWELL BENSON, DON HALL, JAY PFAENDER,  
AND CHAD ROBERTS

## Message from the Editorial Board

What defines us as a place or a people? The Civil War stamped the new state of Minnesota as the proud home of the First Regiment of the Minnesota Volunteer Infantry and shaped its future. Over 100 years later, Hmong refugees fleeing from war in Southeast Asia began arriving here, forever changing and enhancing the culture of Ramsey County. The struggles and triumphs of these disparate events are reflected in two of our articles this summer. Kristina Her writes lovingly of the important role that food has always played for the Hmong and how, after a rocky start, Hmong foodways thrive today in St. Paul and beyond. John Guthmann tells tales of his beloved *second* First Minnesota, a group of devoted reenactors faithful to the authentic experience of our original volunteer infantry. These and other articles in this issue offer insights into the many stories that define us.

*Anne Field*  
Chair, Editorial Board

**Corrections:** In "A Slow Track to Nowhere: St. Paul's Downtown People Mover" (Spring 2023), Metropolitan Council Chairperson John Boland was misidentified. Also, Saint Paul City Council Member Vic Tedesco did not represent the West Side. At that time, council members were elected at-large and represented the entire city. RCHS regrets the errors.

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## Honoring the First Regiment of Minnesota Volunteer Infantry for Fifty Years

JOHN H. GUTHMANN

It was July 2, 1988—the 125th anniversary of the First Minnesota’s famous charge during the second day of battle at Gettysburg. To celebrate, the National Park Service (NPS) invited the country’s foremost reenactment organizations to participate in a Civil War demonstration by creating commemorative Union and Confederate regiments. Although NPS rules prohibited soldiers from firing even blank rounds at one another, the public witnessed an authentic display of regimental camp life, military drill, and battle tactics that were present on the battlefield in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on a substantially larger scale in 1863.<sup>1</sup>

In this modern-day scenario, eighty-eight men, forming two of the ten Union infantry companies were from the First Regiment of Minnesota Volunteer Infantry. Celebrating its

own fifteenth anniversary that year, *this* First Minnesota was formed as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 1973 to commemorate and perpetuate the memory of the *first* First Minnesota, accurately portray the original unit, educate the public, and have fun. The captain of one of the two First Minnesota companies—Company A—was, me, your author, a thirty-three-year-old St. Paul lawyer.

Like the uniforms, equipment, and portrayals on the battlefield, the weather that day was historically accurate—dangerously hot and humid. Yet, the moment the reenactors could only dream of when the First Minnesota was formed in 1973 was imminent. Before thousands of spectators, the Union regiment was about to recreate the First Minnesota’s charge on the original ground at Plum Run. With numbers approximating the



In 1988, two companies of the First Minnesota Regiment—in Pennsylvania for the reenactment of the brutal Battle of Gettysburg—gathered around the largest of three memorials to the original First Minnesota. The monument commemorates July 2, 1863, the second of three days of intense fighting there. *Courtesy of Arn Kind and John Guthmann.*

262 Minnesotans who rushed toward Wilcox's Brigade while outnumbered at least five to one, a play-by-play of the commemorative charge was narrated for battlefield visitors by none other than NPS historian Ed Bearss—soon to become famous in the 1990 Ken Burns documentary, *The Civil War*. As the command to advance was given, Bearss' voice bristled with excitement. He was almost beside himself.<sup>2</sup>

### Reflecting on the Past

The opportunity to recreate such a pivotal moment in both Minnesota and national history on the original ground caused members of the First Minnesota to reflect—How did we get here? Near dusk later that evening, at the exact time the original charge occurred, many of the reenactors gathered at Plum Run—while surrounded by twinkling fireflies—to think about this question further.<sup>3</sup>

The American Civil War defined much of Minnesota's first century as a state. The First Minnesota was literally the first regiment of volunteers offered in answer to President Abraham Lincoln's call for troops following the fall of Fort Sumter in 1861. The unit left a distinguished record of service throughout the war. After four years, about 24,000 men, or 52 percent of the 45,832 male Minnesotans between the ages of fifteen and sixty at the time of the 1860 census, served in one of the state's fourteen infantry, four artillery, and four cavalry units. Thankfully, no other event has come close to the impact of the Civil War on Minnesota society, including World War II.<sup>4</sup>

And so, this article chronicles the origins of the *second* First Minnesota, in part, through my eyes, as the unit celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in 2023 and continues to pay tribute to our Minnesota soldiers from long ago.

### The Birth of the *Second* First Minnesota

Our story begins with the centennial of the Civil War and the fifteen-year buildup to the nation's bicentennial. Coinciding with the more public Vietnam War and the civil rights movement, the years 1961 to 1976 were a great time to be a historian or history buff. Many state legislatures, including Minnesota's, made substantial investments in historic preservation, building restoration, and the interpretation of historic

sites. The proposal to build a new bridge over the Mississippi River at Fort Snelling created a public flap in 1956 because the planned design would have left the fort's historic Round Tower in the middle of a highway cloverleaf.<sup>5</sup> The hub-bub led to preservation of the historic fort property, construction of a highway tunnel under the fort, and funding of the fort's reconstruction and restoration to its 1827 appearance, which was nearly complete by July 4, 1976, and fully completed in 1977. From Fort Snelling's fertile ground, Minnesota's famous First Regiment of Minnesota Volunteer Infantry was born in 1861 and reborn in 1973.

The bicentennial was only four years away when seventeen-year-old John Guthmann took a job as a tour guide at Fort Snelling in 1972. At the time, I had no idea it would lead to a lifelong love of historical reenacting and living history. Not long before, the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) had entrusted Fort Snelling historian John Grossman and new program manager Stephen Osman to implement an innovative and, later, much imitated "first person" living history program at the fort. Costumed guides presented the site as it existed in the 1820s and interacted with visitors in the present tense, making the past come alive.<sup>6</sup>

Grossman and Osman met in 1970 at Northfield's Jessie James Day Reenactment. Grossman portrayed a Confederate colonel and rode in the parade with a Scarlet O'Hara actor while St. Olaf student Osman assumed a starring role, defending the bank with his Colt Navy Model 1851 revolver. Grossman worked at Fort Snelling. Osman was part of a reenactment group called the 114th Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry during the late 1960s in his home state.

The fort's living history program captured the public's attention and brought in hordes of school children, but it also enticed many amateur historians inside the fort's walls. In the fall of 1970, as part of Fort Snelling's 150th anniversary celebration, Osman was on hand in his authentic wool nine-button frock coat, sky blue trousers, and forage cap. Joining him were men portraying the New Ulm Battery, the 7th Cavalry, and a group called the Twin Cities Muzzle Loading Club (mostly "buckskinners" depicting early nineteenth century fur traders). After MNHS hired Osman the following year,

enactments continued. For example, the annual rendezvous on Pike Island focused on the fur trade, which played an important role in Fort Snelling's presence at the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Peter Rivers.<sup>7</sup> To the delight of the public, early nineteenth-century Minnesota life could be experienced through axe-throwing demonstrations, military drill, and a live shooting competition featuring military smoothbore muskets and the rifles used by the buckskinnners.

A number of the buckskinnners were also Civil War enthusiasts. They included Chuck Fouzie, Otho "Buck" Buxton, Bill Dalin, Gene Henrickson, Vance Leak, Bob Lange, and Bob Snouffer. Moreover, Dalin and Henrickson owned homemade Civil War uniforms, which they sometimes wore when visiting the fort. They often spoke of forming a regiment to accurately portray the lives of Civil War soldiers.<sup>8</sup>

In August 1973, it was learned that one buckskinner had called a meeting to organize a Civil War reenactment group. Having seen the Civil War "impressions" put together by some, Henrickson shared his concern with Osman that the group could be made up of men wearing cotton or polyester costumes rather than wool uniforms and carrying lighter and historically inaccurate two band Zouave rifles rather than proper three band rifle muskets. Henrickson urgently suggested, "Let [us] do it and do it quick before somebody else does it wrong."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the call went out to those interested in



Friends John Grossman (left) and Stephen Osman (right) at the US Grant Cantonment in 1970 with Carla Irenius. Through their early interactions as reenactors, Grossman and Osman helped found the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry in 1973. Courtesy of Stephen Osman.

"do[ing] it right." Osman packed the initial organizational meeting with as many of Fort Snelling's staff as he could muster—whether they intended to join the new unit or not, although many later did. I was among the staff who attended that meeting.

The gathering took place in Fort Snelling's school house by candlelight. In addition to turning out the votes, Osman, Grossman, and Henrickson had prepared in advance to present the framework for a nonprofit corporation that would be named after the original First Minnesota, complete with draft bylaws and regulations.

Fort Snelling living history staff in 1973, the same year many staff members joined the First Minnesota. Early First Minnesota members include: John Guthmann (back row, fourth from left); Dean Johnson (front row, far left); David Wiggins (fifth from left); Bob Gorg (seventh from right); John Murdock (third from right); and Stephen Osman (far right). Courtesy of Stephen Osman and John Guthmann.



As a nonprofit, the First Minnesota name would be protected. By assuming the name, the unit would be obligated to accurately represent and venerate both the original First and the 1860s era to the public. They would build an infantry company from the bottom up, requiring authentic field uniforms, three band muskets, the correct proportion of privates to noncommissioned officers, and the discipline and esprit de corps necessary to be worthy of the name. At the meeting, as Grossman later observed, “[W]e had the votes and that was the last we’ve seen of Zouaves and cotton uniforms.”<sup>10</sup> Now, the real work could begin.

### A Tradition of Authenticity

The First’s inaugural meeting took place October 3. Early meetings were held at Fort Snelling’s Building 25—an old cavalry stable and MNHS Historic Sites Department headquarters. Henrickson, Fouzie, Osman, Grossman, and Bob Lange were elected to the board of directors. The following month, the first squad of the first company—Company A—formed, with George Halek as corporal. I formally joined the First

Minnesota on November 14. A second squad under Fort Snelling tour guide Bob Gorg assembled in December. George Johnson was elected first sergeant. The regiment was now sixteen men strong. That winter, members poured over an original copy of W. J. Hardee’s *Rifle and Light Infantry Drill* manual, sourced or made historically accurate uniforms, and searched area gun shows and shops for canteens, muskets, and bayonets. Most early members were military veterans, and the new recruits soon learned how to portray themselves in public as soldiers—not just hobbyists in costume.<sup>11</sup>

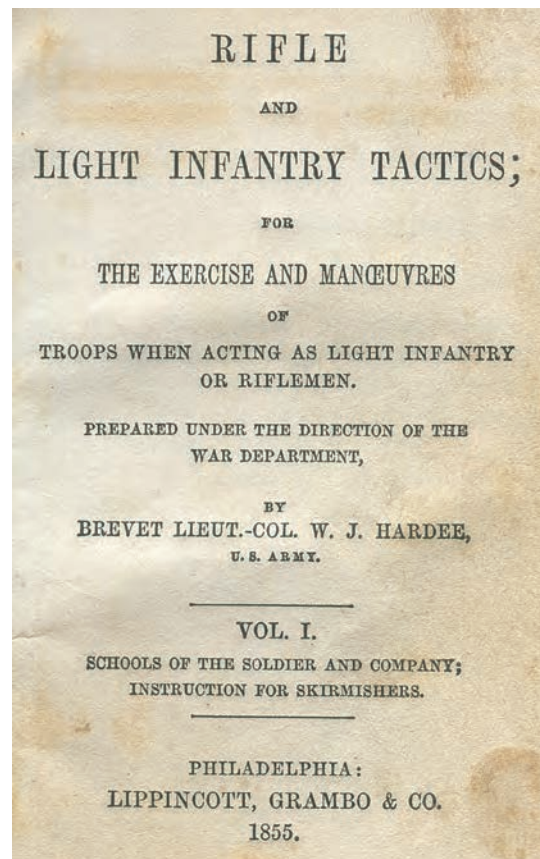
By spring, the fledgling regiment needed a field test. The group held a spring muster—a formal military inspection—at Fort Snelling in April 1974. The scene at the fort, which was in the midst of its restoration, was later described by Grossman:

The stone barracks still smelled of paint [and] the [bed] straw was fresh at the time. Half the fort was incomplete and the parade was a sea of mud. It was snowing at the first reveille roll call formation and many in ranks suddenly remembered what it was really like to be in uniform again. The beans were like bullets and [the] rice was like glue. We decided that each man would be mustered when equipped and trained, and that each would receive a line number when mustered. The first sixteen or so were mustered then, and everyone who mustered after that time was numbered starting with 20.<sup>12</sup>

The First Minnesota was now ready to take the field for its initial campaign. In May, the group traveled to Galena, Illinois, for an enactment in Ulysses S. Grant’s hometown—the third annual US Grant Civil War Cantonment. The First’s twenty men pitched four wedge tents in a muddy field amongst “olive drab tents, chain saws, aluminum yard furniture, Coleman lanterns and charcoal grills; and this was the authentic camp.”<sup>13</sup> As Grossman, who portrayed a private in Company A at the event, recalled:

We left the impression that we were different. Fouzie blew reveille at 6 AM and five minutes later a row of wet, mud-covered

First Minnesota reenactor Stephen Osman owns an original 1855 copy of *Rifle and Light Infantry Drill*. Courtesy of Stephen Osman.



troops in blankets and ponchos answered ‘Here Sergeant’ as George [Johnson] ran through the roll—by memory—loud enough for the whole camp to hear. When we moved it was in formation and when we drilled the whole camp stood and watched. We were the only unit to fight under a 6 by 6 regimental flag. . . . Years later we heard that someone at Galena had said ‘Where they came from nobody knows, who they are nobody knows, and where they went to nobody knows.’ For us, it was as if a handful of the old First had somehow marched out of the rain, bivouacked for a couple of nights, watched the proceedings, did a little light camp duty, broke camp and disappeared back into the mists of time.<sup>14</sup>

A *Star Tribune* reporter followed the regiment to Galena. Grossman let her know the First Minnesota was serious about authenticity: “We’re the most authentic ones here. But we draw the line at scurvy. And diarrhea. My great-grandfather came home (from the Civil War) with a bad case of diarrhea and died of it.”<sup>15</sup>

The Galena event was followed by a full schedule of summer activities. On Memorial Day, the First Minnesota participated in a program at Cannon Falls Cemetery, where William Colvill, colonel of the First Minnesota at the Battle of Gettysburg, is buried. Those present gained firsthand experience in the hazards of wearing wool uniforms in hot weather—one of the men fainted.<sup>16</sup> Many citizens saw the First Minnesota for the first time when the unit marched in the Aquatennial Torchlight Parade in Minneapolis that July—also a hot day (high of 89°F), although it had cooled slightly by evening.<sup>17</sup>

To gain more field experience, the unit camped at Fairfax and Fort Ridgley, where the men learned the arts of foraging (in a corn field) and skirmish drill. The season ended in September with the unit’s second reenactment in Knoxville, Illinois. By that time, I was fully equipped and marching as a private in Company A. With Osman’s help, I purchased an original 1862 Enfield three band rifle musket at a Hopkins gun shop for \$175. My canteen was a converted original Spanish American War canteen I bought for \$5. My uniform included pants sewn by the



The First Minnesota is often part of local Memorial Day ceremonies like this one in 1975 in St. Charles, Minnesota, hometown of bugler and World War II veteran Chuck Fouzie.



When not reenacting for a crowd of visitors, members of the First Minnesota spent weekends embedding themselves at historic sites and living, learning, and surviving mostly as the original soldiers did. Here they are at Fort Ridgley. Both images courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.

mother of First Minnesota member and fellow Fort Snelling tour guide Chris Brovald.<sup>18</sup> Many commented that authenticity standards by the participants had improved. The First Minnesota’s strong first impression continued as it won the event’s drill and authentic camp competitions. The First Minnesota was on its way.

### Return to the Original First’s Charge at Gettysburg

Our humble beginnings were on the minds of many as the eighty-eight men with the commemorative First Minnesota prepared to charge at Gettysburg on July 2, 1988. To duplicate the original First’s 82 percent-casualty rate, anyone

## Safety First

Folks unfamiliar with living history events depicting military engagements often ask, "Is it safe?" Noncommissioned officers of the First Minnesota work hard to instill safety into the minds of new recruits. The loading and firing of blank rounds in our original and reproduction rifle muskets is practiced extensively by privates under the watchful eyes of their NCOs, right down to their foot positions.<sup>a</sup> In fifty years, no First Minnesota member has experienced a serious injury in the field, although we can only do so much about the heat and its impact on wool-clad troops. For example, in 1986, the 125th commemorative Battle of Bull Run ended early when the field hospital was too full to accept any more heat victims. The heat index that day was about 120°F.

However, life has its risks, and poorly trained and equipped men can be careless. At a reenactment at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, I observed a Confederate soldier fall and impale himself through the calf with his own bayonet. Having attended the event with substandard equipment—a bayonet scabbard missing its brass tip—the man was his own worst enemy. In another example, while serving as extras for the miniseries *North and South: Book II, Love and War* (1986) in Natchez, Mississippi, we heard a bang in the distance during a break and witnessed a hat flying into the air. A man had shot himself in the face.<sup>b</sup> He broke two cardinal rules—make sure your musket isn't loaded when dismissed from duty, and keep the muzzle away from your body.

Safety is always top of mind. During one First Minnesota safety session, we once demonstrated that the flame from a blank round can propel through three inches of pine from five feet. Safety is also an act of faith and a reciprocal obligation. Following a reenactment during the 125th anniversary of the Battle of Saylor's Creek, which was held on the original Virginia battlefield, I ran into a Confederate officer. He was carrying an original Colt Army Model 1860 .44 caliber revolver. When I asked if I could see it, the officer eagerly handed it over. The revolver was capped and fully loaded with live rounds!

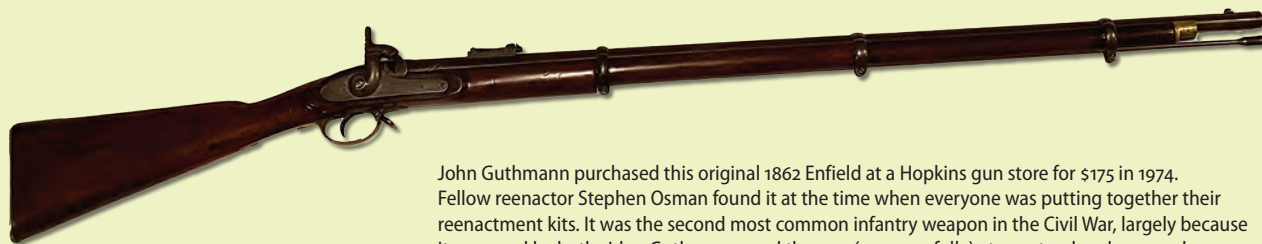


First Minnesota members (L-R) Arn Kind, Wayne Jorgenson, Bob Gilbert, Moe Olson, Don LaPitz, and Gene Henrickson overheated at the reenactment of the Battle of Bull Run in 1986. *Courtesy of Arn Kind.*

When I expressed my shock and anger, he casually replied, "I wasn't ever going to use it."

With marching infantry, artillery, and cavalry all running around the same ground, scenarios can get dicey. Stay away from cannon muzzles and horses, if you can. In Natchez, one of our men got caught under a cavalry horse. The animal did everything it could to get out of the way. Our man was uninjured, although he ended up with couple of hoof marks on the back of his sack coat.

One can still have fun in these situations. At the 140th Bull Run reenactment filmed for the movie *Gods and Generals* (2003), the cavalry charged toward us. I ordered my company to stand with bayonets fixed and pointed high in the position of "guard against cavalry." We held firm. Not wanting to ride through our closed ranks or face our bayonets, the cavalry screeched to a halt. A private on horseback looked back and yelled in frustration, "Captain, what do we do now?" The captain simply responded, "Ride around them!" Off they went—without a casualty on either side.<sup>c</sup>



John Guthmann purchased this original 1862 Enfield at a Hopkins gun store for \$175 in 1974. Fellow reenactor Stephen Osman found it at the time when everyone was putting together their reenactment kits. It was the second most common infantry weapon in the Civil War, largely because it was used by both sides. Guthmann used the gun (very carefully) at events when he served as a private. However, for the last twenty-four years, he usually assumes the role of musician or officer, so the gun has stayed safely in storage. *Courtesy of John Guthmann.*



born before October 1 was designated to fall during the thrust toward Plum Run.

With my October birthday, I would portray Capt. Nathan Messick, the highest-ranking officer who survived that fateful day. The field littered with “bodies,” I, Messick, gathered the survivors and marched them back to the line in formation as the public cheered and the announcer gushed.

### The Tradition Continues

Over the years, the First Minnesota has participated in numerous local and national living history events. To broaden its impression of the original unit, it added field music, and some members later formed an artillery unit. Because of its reputation as a premier authentic unit, the First Minnesota has been invited to participate in Hollywood portrayals of the Civil War on film and television. These include: *The Ordeal of Dr. Mudd* (1980); *The Blue and the Gray* (1982); *North and South: Book II*, *Love and War* (1986); *Glory* (1989); *Dances with Wolves* (1990); *Gettysburg*

(1993); and *Gods and Generals* (2003). To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 2013, the unit participated in a reenactment near the original battlefield on the farm where the movie *Gettysburg* was filmed.<sup>19</sup>



Here, at Gettysburg, the author John Guthmann (*third from left*) addresses a question from the regimental adjutant, who has his back to the camera. That weekend, Guthmann also portrayed Capt. Nathan Messick for the July 2 charge. Messick's luck and his command only lasted a day. He was killed in action on July 3, 1863, during Pickett's Charge—an illustration of which is seen here. Messick is buried at Gettysburg National Cemetery. *Courtesy of Arn Kind and Minnesota Historical Society.*

Musicians were important members of military units in the Civil War. Music and cadences accompanied troops as they marched; helped convey orders; inspired soldiers as they moved toward battle; and when not on the battlefield, signaled roll call, drills, and the morning wake up alert (reveille). The First Minnesota field musicians seen here in 1997 in Maryland at the 130th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Antietam include (L-R): John Guthmann, Jim Moffet, Craig Grab, an unknown musician who joined the group from another unit, and Mike Kotch.



Arn Kind (left) was one of twenty-two First Minnesota reenactors to serve as extras in the movie *Dances with Wolves* starring Kevin Costner, seen here with Kind. Note the busyness on the set behind the two. Both images courtesy of Arn Kind.

For decades, the public enjoyed the MNHS-sponsored “Civil War Weekend” at Historic Fort Snelling each June. During the event, the clock moved forward from 1827 to the 1860s as the First Minnesota joined fort staff and returned the post to its former role as a Civil War recruiting and training center. The last two Civil War Weekends were invitational events that attracted reenactors nationwide. “The Sheep Farm” commemorated the 150th anniversary of

the raising of the First Minnesota. In 2015, our “Home Sweet Home” invitational celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Second Minnesota mustering at Fort Snelling after the Civil War ended.<sup>20</sup>

Thanks to a still vibrant living history hobby, unique opportunities for First Minnesota members to relive real events continue. For example, in August 2021, the First Minnesota traveled to Fort Wadsworth (later Fort Sisseton) in South Dakota. For this event, unit members became Galvanized Yankees—Confederate prisoners of war who accepted an offer to pledge allegiance to the United States and join the Union Army to get out of prison. The soldiers we portrayed served at this remote fort during and after the Civil War, not long after the US-Dakota War of 1862. To ensure accurate impressions, each reenactor was given a copy of the National Archives’ file on the soldier whose identity they assumed.

At living history events, reenactors must be true to their roles and do not generally break character—even if approached by curious visitors or if something happens by mistake. For example, during our four days at Fort Wadsworth, I became Enoch Latham, a twenty-six-year-old farmer from North Carolina. He galvanized in 1863 while held in a Maryland prisoner-of-war camp. As Latham, I inadvertently walked across the parade ground with another private—in violation of a standing post order. I assumed

there was no risk of arrest because we were also accompanied by an officer. No such luck. The other private and I were arrested and thrown in the guard house, accused of violating the post order and, for good measure, “drunkenness and disorderly conduct.” As you might expect, the officer walked away unmolested. At trial, I, as Latham, argued my own defense and escaped with a disorderly conduct conviction with time served—which wasn’t long, as the officers realized it was time for supper call, and the post’s only fifer and drummer were jailed.

Since its inception, the First Minnesota has attracted historians and history buffs interested in portraying the lives of real soldiers—a common interest and common love. And yet, these men came from wildly different professions: an accountant, stockbroker, minister, exterminator, several engineers, law enforcement officers, two doctors, an entomologist, and, of course, history teachers. Oh, and we can’t forget member David Arneson, the coinventor of the game Dungeons & Dragons. This diverse membership met on the grounds of the former Fort Snelling Military Reservation. Eventually, meetings moved from Building 25 to the auditorium at Historic Fort Snelling’s interpretive center. Today, the First Minnesota remains sixty members strong and meets monthly. Military drill begins at 7:00 p.m. followed by a business meeting at the Northern Star Council’s Team Building Center (the old cavalry drill hall) on Fort Snelling’s Upper Post. The group publishes a monthly newsletter. Its masthead is a facsimile of the masthead created by the original First Minnesota when it briefly published a newspaper in March 1862 after taking over the office of the *Berryville Conservator* following the union’s capture of Berryville, Virginia.<sup>21</sup>

In 2023, the First Regiment of Minnesota Volunteer Infantry has been busy in its fiftieth anniversary year with a spring muster at Sunny Hill Farm in Cologne, Minnesota; a Memorial Day service at Union Cemetery and Manitou Days Grand Parade, both in White Bear Lake; the 160th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, sponsored by the Patriots of the Civil War Association (PCWA); and a Pan-O-Prog Parade in Lakeville on July 15. For those interested in seeing the regiment in action, LeDuc Historic Estate in Hastings hosts a Civil



War weekend September 9-10, 2023. For more information on the First Minnesota, go to [www.firstminnesota.org](http://www.firstminnesota.org). For more information on Civil War Weekend at LeDuc Historic Estate, visit <https://www.dakotahistory.org/leduc-events>.

John Guthmann (right) sits with Nathan Willar in jail at Fort Wadsworth, awaiting “trial” for violating a post order—a big no-no! Courtesy of Jim Moffet.

**Acknowledgments:** Thanks to Stephen E. Osman, Arn Kind, and W. James (Jim) Moffet for reviewing early drafts and providing photographs and primary research material. I would also like to acknowledge all members of the First Minnesota over the last fifty years. Thank you for helping preserve the memory of the original First Minnesota and for giving me countless memories of my own.

*John H. Guthmann is a Ramsey County district court judge, its former chief judge, a past member of the Ramsey County Historical Society Board of Directors, and a current RCHS editorial board member. He graduated from Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa, with a double major in history and political science in 1976 and received his JD from William Mitchell College of Law in 1980. He was editor-in-chief of the William Mitchell Law Review, 6. After clerking for Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert Sheran, he spent twenty-seven years in private practice until his appointment to the bench in 2008.*

**There’s More!**

To see more photos of the First Minnesota, go to <https://rchs.com/publishing/catalog/ramsey-county-history-summer-2023-honoring-minnesota-first-regiment>.



## NOTES

1. Christian J. Heidorf, *Gettysburg: The 125th Anniversary, What They Did Here 1863-1988* (Gansevoort, NY: Harlow & Taylor Associates, 1988), 12, Appendix A. "Approximately 1,100 accurately uniformed living history veterans, both Union and Confederate, from all over the United States converged on Gettysburg National Military Park at the invitation of the National Park Service." The Union forces included 120 artillery, twenty-nine cavalry, and 354 infantry. The Confederate army included thirty-nine artillery, thirty-two cavalry, and 424 infantry; "The Past in the Present," National Geographic Society, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/past-present/>. The society offers an accurate and colorful definition and description of historic reenactments and reenactors: "Reenactors are people who recreate historical events. Reenactments are typically done for the public, to entertain and educate. Reenactments of battles and communities during the Civil War are among the most popular. . . . Reenacting is an American tradition. Before the Civil War, Americans reenacted scenes from the Revolutionary War. . . . After the Civil War, veterans from both the Union and the Confederacy recreated daily camp life in order to share their experience with friends and family. One of the last Civil War reenactments by Civil War veterans was the Great Reunion of 1913, on the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. . . . The highlight of the Great Reunion was the reenactment of Pickett's Charge, the last assault of the Battle of Gettysburg;" "Minnesota Recipients," Medal of Honor Convention, <https://www.mohtwincities.com/2016-convention/minnesota-recipients/>. The First Minnesota's defense of the Union line during Pickett's Charge on July 3, 1863, produced two Medal of Honor recipients: Marshall Sherman and Henry O'Brien. Only a day earlier, the unit suffered 82-percent casualties during its own charge on Southern lines. The charge was ordered by Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock to buy the fifteen minutes necessary to shore up a hole in the Union center; Chris Army, "Charge of the 1st Minnesota," *Hallowed Ground Magazine*, October 4, 2022. The First Minnesota's charge is widely credited as one of the key actions that made a Union victory at Gettysburg possible. As Hancock later stated, "No soldiers on any field, in this or any other country, ever displayed grander heroism."

2. Steve Zimmerman, "An Historic Weather Report," *Celebrate Gettysburg*, August 23, 2017, [https://www.theweathernetwork.com/en/news/weather/severe/this-day-in-weather-history-july-1-1863-the-battle-of-gettysburg](https://www.theweathernetwork.com/en/news/weather/severe/this-day-in-weather-history-july-1-1863-the-battle-of-gettysburg;); "July 2, 1988 – Hagerstown, MD," *Weather Underground*, <https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/us/pa/gettysburg/KHGR/date/1988-7-2>.

On July 2, 1988, the high temperature was 84°F. Records indicate that 125 years earlier, it was 81°F. These temperatures don't seem that bad until one calculates the heat index, which, in that region, can run between 95 and 105°F or higher. And, remember, the soldiers were outfitted in wool uniforms.

3. The fireflies impacted the mood at Plum Run. Many of the reenactors were aware that, in some cultures, fireflies are believed to be the souls of soldiers who died in war.

4. Gov. Alexander Ramsey, letter to Secretary of War Simon Cameron, April 14, 1861, in Minnesota Board of Commissioners, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865* (St. Paul, MN: Pioneer Press Co., 1890), 2. Governor Ramsey offered a regiment of infantry the day following the attack on Fort Sumter. The Board of Commissioners, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865* (St. Paul, MN: Pioneer Press Co., 1890), 1; The last surviving Union soldier was also a Minnesotan. Albert Woolson died in Duluth in 1956 at age 106; "Population of the United States in 1860: Minnesota," US Census, 250-251, 254, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/population/1860a-21.pdf>. In 1860, the total population of Minnesota was 172,023. The male population between the ages of fifteen and sixty was 45,832; "Population of the United States in 1940: Minnesota," US Census, 17, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1940/population-volume-2/33973538v2p4ch2.pdf>. In 1940, Minnesota's total population was 2,792,300. The male population between the ages of fifteen and sixty was 907,410. Of that population, about 304,500 served in the armed forces; Jack K. Johnson, "At Home and Abroad: Minnesota at War," *MNopedia*, <https://www.mnopedia.org/home-and-abroad-minnesota-war#:~:text=Over%20304%2C500%20Minnesotans%20served%20in,in%20the%20line%20of%20duty>. The number represents 32.5 percent of the male population between fifteen and sixty.

5. Sarah Shirey, "Round Tower, Fort Snelling," *MNopedia*, <https://www.mnopedia.org/structure/round-tower-fort-snelling>. In 1956, only four of the original buildings at Fort Snelling remained. Three of the four had been substantially modified, and the fort's wall was gone.

6. To learn more about Fort Snelling's innovative first-person living history program, watch the WCCO/Darrell Brand production of *Within the Walls of Old Fort Snelling*. The film includes the arrest and court martial of an eighteen-year-old Pvt. John Guthmann. The officers conducting the court martial included Stephen Osman and John Grossman. The program broadcast in 1973, the same year the First Minnesota formed. It may be viewed at <https://youtu.be/3mXT5zO-vnU>.

7. An enactment is to do something such as depicting the life and times of a soldier. Because there was no

Civil War battle at Knoxville or Galena, Illinois, those battle and camp life demonstrations were enactments. A reenactment brings an event to life—again—usually on or near the location of the actual event. Therefore, what the First Minnesota did at Gettysburg in 1888 was a reenactment. In the hobby, the group does both; The St. Peter River is known as the Minnesota River today.

8. John Grossman, “The Old Soldier’s Yarn . . . Unravelling,” *The First Minnesota*, no. 365 (December 2003) in the thirtieth anniversary edition of the First Minnesota’s monthly newsletter.

9. Grossman.

10. Grossman.

11. Grossman; From 1973 to the spring of 1976, John Guthmann attended college out-of-state and was unable to participate in regimental meetings; W. J. Hardee, *Rifle and Light Infantry Drill* (Philadelphia: Lippencott, Grambo, & Co.), 1855.

12. Grossman. At that time, the regiment established a requirement for mustered members that included passing three tests: authentic uniform and equipment, mastery of military drill, and a quiz on the history of the original First. The original mustering-in standard remains in place; “Charles Fouzie, once of area, dies at 80,” *Post Bulletin*, April 30, 1994. The man who mustered in as no. 1, was Chuck Fouzie. Fouzie was sixty years old in 1973. He served in the US Army during World War II, was a German POW, and lost a finger in service. For years, he played taps on the bugle during military funerals at Fort Snelling National Cemetery, where he is now buried. The missing finger did not prevent him from learning the fife and playing Civil War duty tunes as a First Minnesota member. Fortified with a nip of whiskey, Fouzie could sing period military and folk tunes by the campfire for much of the night without repetition. He marched with the First Minnesota for most of his remaining years until his death in 1994.

13. Grossman; Catherine Watson, “With the boys of the 1st Minnesota at Galena,” *Star Tribune*, June 23, 1974, 166.

14. Grossman.

15. Watson, 200.

16. After two physicians later joined the regiment, their official medical advice was “drink water until you pee clear.”

17. “July 24, 1974 – Minneapolis, MN,” *Weather Underground*, <https://www.wunderground.com/history/weekly/us/mn/minneapolis/KMSP/date/1974-7-24>.

18. John Guthmann officially passed muster on January 23, 1975. With the First Minnesota, he has served as a private, corporal, sergeant, first sergeant, officer, and musician. He sewed most of his current uniform using authentically sourced materials and patterns. One of the benefits of First Minnesota membership is access to the unit’s approved vendor list and its in-house quartermaster store of authentic uniforms and equipment.

19. A performance of the First Minnesota Field

Music may be viewed on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/J8kukK1US78>; John Price, “Acting Civil,” *Eau Claire Leader-Telegram*, July 10, 1982, 71, 74. First Minnesota reenactors on movie sets were typically paid something for their time. For example, each man received \$75 a day for his work on the set of *The Blue and the Gray*. Most reenactors donated the money to the regiment’s treasury; “Minnesota and Alabama meet again 150 years after Gettysburg,” *Minnesota National Guard*, <https://ngmnpublish.azurewebsites.us/minnesota-and-alabama-meet-again-150-years-after-gettysburg/>.

20. When Fort Snelling closed and was sold to Franklin Steele in 1857, the former military post functioned briefly as a sheep farm—thus, “The Sheep Farm” event is a nod to the farm. With the outbreak of hostilities in April 1861, the War Department commandeered the fort and enlistees replaced the sheep that formerly occupied the barracks. In an amazing act of gumption, Steele billed the US Department of War for rent following the Civil War—even though he never paid the full purchase price and title had never passed to him. See Rodney C. Loehr, “Franklin Steele, Frontier Businessman,” *Minnesota History* (December 1946): 314-18; A highlight video of the “Home Sweet Home” event may be found on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/ELgj8ITnp9I>.

21. See Perry Thomas Tholl, “The Typographical Fraternity of the First Minnesota Volunteers,” *Minnesota History* (Fall 2011): 260.

#### **Notes for Sidebar on page 16**

a. Foot positions are included in the original drill manuals published during the Civil War. If used, the men and their weapons are positioned to perform their function with the least likelihood of injury to the soldier on either side. Although the manuals do not expressly state that safety is the reason for establishing foot positions when loading and firing, the safety benefits are apparent to anyone experienced in the type of close-order drill used during the nineteenth century and before.

b. The injured man was in a different unit. John Guthmann never learned if there was any permanent eye damage or other issues.

c. John Guthmann still remembers this event, held in 2001, a month before 9/11. First, he traveled by plane with his sword—something that would never happen today. Second, the regimental commander was from North Carolina. Guthmann said it was jarring reporting every morning to the officers’ meeting and being greeted by, “Mornin,’ y’all.” Finally, the Minnesotans slept on the ground under the stars, without tents or canvas, just like the original First Minnesota did in July 1861. But even with improved authenticity, there were anachronisms. A nearby company had its uniforms dry-cleaned each night and delivered to camp in boxes the next morning.

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future.

The Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) strives to innovate, lead, and partner in preserving the knowledge of our community; deliver inspiring history programming; and incorporate local history in education.

The Society was established in 1949 to preserve the Jane and Heman Gibbs Farm in Falcon Heights, which the family acquired in 1849. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, the original programs told the story of the Gibbs family. In 2000, with the assistance of a Dakota Advisory Council, RCHS also began interpreting Dakota culture and lifeways, now telling the stories of the remarkable relationship between Jane Gibbs and the Dakota people of Ĥeyáta Othújwe (Cloud Man's Village).

In 1964, the Society began publishing its award-winning magazine *Ramsey County History*. In 1978, the organization moved to St. Paul's Landmark Center, a restored Federal Courts building on the National Register of Historic Places. An expansion of the Research Center was completed in 2010 and rededicated in 2016 as the Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center.

RCHS offers public programming for youth and adults. Visit [www.rchs.com](http://www.rchs.com) for details of upcoming History Revealed programs, summer camps, courthouse and depot tours, and more. The Society serves more than 15,000 students annually on field trips or through school outreach. Programs are made possible by donors, members, corporations, and foundations, all of whom we appreciate deeply. If you are not a member of RCHS, please join today and help bring history to life for more than 50,000 people every year.

### **Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion**

RCHS is committed to ensuring it preserves and presents our county's history. As we continue our work to incorporate more culturally diverse histories, we have made a commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion that is based on this core idea: RCHS exists to serve ALL who call Ramsey County home. To learn more, please see [www.rchs.com/about](http://www.rchs.com/about).

### **Acknowledging This Sacred Dakota Land**

Mnisóta Makhóche, the land where the waters are so clear they reflect the clouds, extends beyond the modern borders of Minnesota and is the ancestral and contemporary homeland of the Dakhóta (Dakota) people. It is also home to the Anishinaabe and other Indigenous peoples, all who make up a vibrant community in Mnisóta Makhóche. RCHS acknowledges that its sites are located on and benefit from these sacred Dakota lands.

RCHS is committed to preserving our past, informing our present, and inspiring our future. Part of doing so is acknowledging the painful history and current challenges facing the Dakota people just as we celebrate the contributions of Dakota and other Indigenous peoples.

Find our full Land Acknowledgment Statement on our website, [www.rchs.com](http://www.rchs.com). This includes actionable ways in which RCHS pledges to honor the Dakota and other Indigenous peoples of Mnisóta Makhóche.





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Benefiting children's hands-on educational programming



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Enhance the evening with a unique Pathways Gala VIP Experience.

For event details and registration  
[rchs.com/event/pathways-gala](https://rchs.com/event/pathways-gala)  
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Photo credit: Jen Strom

## *Gibbs Farm Fall Public Hours:* Saturdays through October, 10am-4pm

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*Rolling through the Decades*

## Roller Skating in Ramsey County

HEIDI HELLER, PAGE 22



These young teens were members of St. Michael's Skating Club. Such clubs for devoted "rink rats" were popular in the 1950s and '60s. *Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*