When the BOYS CAME HOME

WALTER N. TRENERRY

BY THE LAST of May, 1865, all Confederate forces had stacked arms and Jefferson Davis was a Yankee prisoner. After four years the Stars and Stripes again flew throughout the land. All was very quiet on the Potomac; there would be no more tenting on the old camp ground; that righteous sentence read by the dim and flaring lamps had been executed.

On May 29 President Andrew Johnson issued an amnesty proclamation. Both recruiting and the draft had already been stopped, and by the end of June draft lottery wheels were being sold at auction — one found its way into Phineas T. Barnum's museum. After the Grand Review of May 23 and 24, which saw the Union armies march into history down Washington's Pennsylvania Avenue, the Army of the Potomac was dissolved, and General William T. Sherman bade a reluctant farewell to the Yankee boys who had followed him through Georgia.¹

On July 1 the blockade was lifted, and before the summer was over the whole Mississippi squadron was auctioned at Mound City, Illinois; the sixty-three boats and tugs sold for $625,000. Another great corps in the Grand Army was liquidated at about the same time, when 24,000 veteran mules were auctioned off. Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs advertised them as "thoroughly broken . . . gentle and familiar, from being so long surrounded by soldiers." At the end of August ninety-eight surplus generals were also mustered out.²

THE CLOSE of the war found Minnesota's volunteers in eleven infantry regiments, a few artillery and cavalry units, some irregular outfits, or on detached service. The reorganized First Regiment was with the Army of the Potomac at Appomattox. The Second, Fourth, and Eighth regiments and the First Light Artillery Battery had punched their way across Georgia and the Carolinas with Sherman and waited under arms near Durham, North Carolina, until Johnston surrendered there on April 26, 1865. The Third Regiment was on garrison and guerrilla control duty at Devall's Bluff, Arkansas. The Eleventh had the same assignment in Nashville. The Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Ninth, and Tenth regiments had taken part in some of the war's last action at Fort Blakely and Spanish Fort, outside Mobile, and were still in Alabama. Other Minnesota units were elsewhere in the South or off in western Minnesota or Dakota fighting Indians.³

³ Correctly reading the political future.

² Press, June 15, 27, August 24, 29, 1865.
³ Minnesota Adjutant General, Reports, 1865, p. 4.

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Minnesota Governor Stephen A. Miller at once opened a lengthy correspondence with military officials to speed Minnesota volunteers out of the service and home. He was not alone, for the war department was besieged by a wire-pulling horde of governors, Congressmen, legislators, and politicians, all intent on doing their utmost for the boys from their locality.

Under this tireless pressure, the department soon announced that all white soldiers in the Army of the Potomac and Sherman’s armies, and on limited service with the Veterans’ Reserve Corps, whose enlistments would expire by October 1, 1865, would be discharged promptly. Convalescents and released prisoners were sent home at once without rejoining their units. Understandable wails rose from patriotic veterans who had re-enlisted toward the war’s end, but the army needed them for occupation duty and they were not then released.

Most of Minnesota’s soldiers were among those scheduled for an early return. “Let us prepare,” the St. Paul Press exhorted its readers, “to give them such a reception, that the memory of it will be carried forever in the hearts of the boys in blue, as a proof that the patriotic self-devotion of the soldier is still as ever the highest title to the love and honor of the American people.”

Fourteen-year-old Mary A. Hagerty’s ode in the bucolic manner, “A Welcome to Our Returning Soldiers,” published a few days later, echoed the same sentiment:

Welcome, soldiers, one and all,
Welcome, welcome to St. Paul;
To parents, wives and children dear
Who long have watched in hope and fear;
Mothers now their sons will greet,
War-worn veterans they will meet.

To home and friends you have returned,
Home and friends you well have earned,
Peace has blessed our home again;
Columbia’s free from slavery’s stain,
And Minnesota hails her sons,
Crowned with the laurels they have won.

MINLED with the citizens’ anticipation to see these men may well have been a degree of apprehension. St. Paul had already had one opportunity to observe that veterans of rugged military service frequently like rugged frolics.

On June 14, 1865, the river boats “Savannah” and “Victory” had brought to the city some 750 men of the Third Illinois Cavalry, bound for service in Dakota Territory. As these lads burst from confinement to overrun the levee, they left on board a score of battered and bruised fellow passengers, who complained to St. Paul police that the only use cavalrymen seemed to have for civilians was as punching bags.

Once ashore, the veterans continued their anticivilian campaign. In mitigation of their conduct it must be said that they had not been paid for months; that instead of being mustered out at St. Louis, as they expected, they had received orders to board ship and were sent to St. Paul and the Indian country. Their disenchantment with their lot is not past understanding.

They drank everything in sight; having no money, they paid for nothing. One horseman tossed off his whisky and sauntered away, saying, “Charge it to Company C,” while another silently drew his pistol, cocked it, and fixed an accurate bead on the terrified bartender who asked payment. Several gay spirits rode their horses into saloons in classic Western style. Others, dismounted, found healthy physical exercise in battling police. Three men carried out the unit’s most memorable achievement by taking the road in the eighteenth-century meaning and relieving two indignant civilians of watch and wallet at pistol point. St. Paul’s citizens doubtless breathed more easily when this lively outfit trotted away to Devils Lake.

* Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 2:617 (St. Paul, 1892); Press, June 4, 9, 20, 22, 1865.
* Press, May 20, June 3, 8, July 1, 1865.
* Press, June 1, 1865.
* Press, June 21, 1865.
* Press, June 15, 1865.
* Press, June 16, 18, July 7, 1865.

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BEFORE plans could be made for welcoming Minnesota’s units — plans which would insure the city against roistering of the Third Illinois Cavalry type—St. Paul found itself overrun with boys in blue who needed food and lodging more than parades and speeches. Minnesota convalescents and prisoners had started home immediately after Appomattox without being paid. Governor Miller had asked the war department to pay soldiers in the field, only to be told tartly that “Regulations,” the faceless god of all bureaus, called for payment on discharge.10

Penniless and hungry, neglected because they came singly or in small groups, these early arrivals walked St. Paul’s streets to find nothing ready for them. On the morning of May 30 several released prisoners belonging to the Ninth Regiment were found sitting on the sidewalk eating dry bread begged from a bakery. They had landed from the steamer “Muscatine” the day before and had spent the night in the streets.11

The resulting scandal forced action. St. Paul quickly set up a “Soldiers’ Home,” in Mackubin’s Block at Washington and Fourth streets. It consisted of three large rooms outfitted as kitchen, dormitory, and dining room. An “ambulance” — which at that time meant only a conveyance — made regular trips to the levee to meet all vessels. Women volunteers donated food and staffed the home. During the summer of 1865 this establishment offered comfort and even a little luxury to hundreds of travel-worn soldiers passing through St. Paul.12

Having taken this step, the city delayed making further plans until it was again forced to do something. The fault was not entirely with the citizens of St. Paul, for, as often happens, the war department moved illogically and unpredictably. Without warning, it suddenly sent home groups of Minnesota veterans in detachments, rather than in complete units. These men arrived quite unannounced.

On Sunday, June 18, the steamer “Favorite” drew up to the St. Paul levee and deposited forty-eight men of the Second Regiment. They were taken quietly to the Soldiers’ Home. Next day the “Northern Light” brought ninety men of the First Light Artillery Battery. These, too, were escorted to the Soldiers’ Home without fanfare. It was quickly reported that the veterans felt “somewhat aggrieved that their arrival called forth no demonstrations from our citizens.” 13

One First Battery man wrote that while it was bad that St. Paul ignored the boys after Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, and Milwaukee had turned out to cheer them, it was worse that they could get nothing to eat after waiting two hours at the overtaxed Soldiers’ Home and had to beg army rations from the provost guard. Far from being cordial, he continued, St. Paul women avoided soldiers “as they would mad dogs,” and crossed streets to keep from meeting them. The only ones glad to see Minnesota’s heroes, he concluded bitterly, were “a swarm of swindlers” whose welcome took the form of “making prospective hauls on the boys’ greenbacks, for which they propose to exchange ‘sheep’ clothing.” 14

On the heels of this disgruntled group came 140 men of the First Artillery Regiment, arriving in two detachments on June 28 and 30. They also had to content themselves with the quiet hospitality of the Soldiers’ Home. An extremely embarrassing situation came to light when it was discovered that over two hundred men of the Fourth Regiment, who had taken part in the great march to the sea, had already landed at St. Paul and dispersed. They had gone totally unnoticed because they wore civilian clothes.15

SOME ORGANIZATION was obviously overdue. Spurred by these contretemps, St. Paul established a soldiers’ reception com-

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12 Press, June 3, 9, 1865.
13 Press, June 20, 1865.
14 Press, July 1, 1865.
15 Press, June 21, 28, 29, July 1, 1865.
mittee, whose duty it was to find out in advance which men were on the way home and then arrange public recognition from their presumably grateful state. The committee's members were Governor Miller, St. Paul Mayor John S. Prince, and General Henry H. Sibley, commanding officer of the District of Minnesota. These men promptly set up what latter-day military usage would call "standing operating procedure" for giving all returning units a hearty, yet dignified, welcome. The packet company telegraphed ahead what boat was coming, when it would reach St. Paul, and what troops were aboard. On getting this news, the committee stationed a lookout on the river bluffs. When he saw the boat, he reported, and a series of artillery salvos began. During this cannonade the committee, the Great Western Band, the Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company, the Hope Engine Company, and the Minnehaha Fire Company scurried to the levee. As the steamer neared St. Paul's landing, the band started playing; the regimental band on board the boat usually responded. While music blared, the captain docked his vessel, the men swarmed ashore, and time was given for the usual excited reunions with friends and families. Then marshals and military officers lined up a parade. The committee, the local band, and the St. Paul firemen led the arriving unit on a prescribed route: from the levee up Jackson Street to Third, where a triumphal arch was usually built; along Third to Wabasha, where another arch might stand; and along Wabasha to the State Capitol at Ninth. The Capitol's pillars were festooned with a banner inscribed "Honor to the Brave — Welcome Home." From time to time friends — usually men previously discharged — made up special banners and arches for the various units, while women and children frequently tossed flowers at the marching heroes.

The mayor welcomed all the veterans to St. Paul, and at the Capitol the governor delivered a short speech, to which the regimental colonel replied briefly. After this, the soldiers filed into the Capitol, from which legislators' desks and chairs had been removed early in July to make room for decorations of bright patriotic bunting and dining tables loaded with large bouquets. There a hearty meal was served by St. Paul women volunteers.

Since these troops were still on active service, officers and enlisted men continued to eat at separate tables. The ladies and some sympathetic politicians did not like this, and at the beginning of the summer tried occasionally to seat enlisted men among officers. Customs of the service die hard, however, and the experiment was unsuccessful.

Following the collation, the unit reformed outside, usually gave three cheers for St. Paul's ladies, and with bands again blaring was escorted back to the levee along the same route. There the unit reboarded its transport and, as the band music died away in the distance, slowly traveled the short remaining way to Fort Snelling, place of rendezvous, mustering out, and discharge.

This type of reception — simple, dignified, hospitable — satisfied the requirements of both soldier and civilian for something a little noisy and very friendly, giving visual and oral acclaim for work well done. It also satisfied the demands of good order by keeping all soldiers under their officers' eyes, in unit formation, with no time to escape their customary groups and look for mischief.

ONCE ORGANIZED, St. Paul found itself sponsoring a series of one-day carnivals for troops which returned from July until October. The first unit to get this treatment on July 5 — the Eleventh Regiment — was not one with long service and a stirring record of great battles. It had left St. Paul less than a year before and had spent all its

16 Press, June 22, 24, 25, 29, July 1, 1865.
17 Press, July 4, 6, 1865.
18 Press, July 6, 1865.
19 Press, July 2, 1865.
20 Press, July 6, 1865.
time on garrison duty in Tennessee. The Eleventh had nothing to its discredit; it had, in fact, carried out its occupation duties so honorably and justly that one Tennessee resident had felt bound to write the St. Paul newspapers, praising its conduct. Nevertheless, it was one of history’s many ironies that the last regular regiment to be recruited in the state should get St. Paul’s first excited reception for veterans.

The Second Minnesota reached St. Paul on July 15 and charmed the city by quietly sending its band around in the evening to serenade the governor, General Sibley, and other prominent men. On July 17 came the heroic First. This alone of all Minnesota regiments received the special honor of having another boat sent down to meet the steamer which was carrying the regiment. Bands from both boats played all the way to St. Paul’s levee. On this unit’s triumphal arch were the stirring words: “Bull Run, Savage Station, Fair Oaks, Malvern Hill, Glendale, Antietam, Nelson’s Farm, Fredericksburg 1st-2d, Gettysburg, Bristow Station, Petersburg, Hatcher’s Run, Deep Bottom, Ream’s Station, LEE’S SURRRENDER.”

On July 20 the “Keokuk” landed the Eighth; on July 24 the Fourth returned on the “Northern Belle”; July 28 saw the Second Battery of Light Artillery disembark. Two regiments arrived on August 7, the Sixth at 6:00 A.M., and the Tenth at 8:00 P.M., while on the following day the “Savannah” brought the Seventh. One wonders how St. Paul’s citizens and volunteer firemen stood up under welcoming three regiments in two days—and also how appetizing a banquet would seem to the men at an early morning or late evening hour.

Minnesota’s Ninth Regiment, missing its 119 men who had died in the rebels’ infamous Andersonville Prison, came on August 11. Just a month later the “Annie Johnston,” carrying the Third, commanded by Colonel Hans Mattson, churned past St. Paul’s levee without stopping and went di-

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29 Press, June 16, 28, 29, July 6, 1865.
30 Press, July 16, 18, 20, 1865.
31 Press, July 21, 25, 29, August 8, 9, 1865.
32 Press, August 12, 1865.
rectly to Fort Snelling. This unexplained incivility doubtless brought to mind the Third's checkered reputation, which included a disgraceful surrender at Murfreesboro. The committee announced in disgust that all food donated for the reception would be sold at auction.\(^{25}\)

It was not until well into the autumn of 1865 that Minnesota gave its last public welcome to returning troops. The Fifth reached St. Paul on September 22 aboard the "Northern Light," and was delighted to see its arch inscribed "The Fifth Minnesota — Their Presence Was the Harbinger of Victory on Every Field." On October 4, the First Regiment of Heavy Artillery came home, to find the war receding from memory and veterans concerned with the problems of returning to civilian life.\(^{26}\) All units except those on Indian service were now mustered out.

SOME VIGNETTES from the Seventh Regiment's homecoming may help to picture the abrupt transition of the Minnesota soldier from the blood and glory, mud and boredom of his crusade to save the Union back to the quiet villages and farms of his frontier state.

The Seventh had helped capture Mobile and Montgomery, Alabama. On July 20 it was relieved of occupation duty in that state and entrained for Jackson, Mississippi. At Jackson the men found it necessary to leave the railroad and march to the Big Black River. This was a keen sort of tribute, since they themselves had wrecked the railroad so thoroughly that it was not running four months later. At the Big Black the troops boarded a train for Vicksburg, Mississippi, where the packet "Magenta" picked them up and carried them as far as St. Louis. There they changed to the "Savannah" and went on to St. Paul.\(^{27}\)

The river trip was a leisurely triumphal procession. After they crossed the Minnesota line, citizens crowded the riverbanks, waving and cheering to welcome the state's own boys; bands played on shore; congratulatory banners fluttered from trees; rifles and cannon crackled and boomed; and people at every landing forced eatables and potables upon the not unwilling young men.\(^{25}\)

Many members of the Seventh had come from Winona, at which the "Savannah" stopped in its easygoing progress. When the boys stepped ashore there was wonderful, noisy confusion as parents met sons, friends met friends, and sweethearts and spouses were reunited. One delighted mother ran among the crowd of veterans, saying excitedly, "I will kiss all the boys to-day!"\(^{29}\) Yet some who rushed to Winona's landing that morning stood apart from a celebration that they found had no place for them. "I looked across the street," a veteran wrote later, "and saw the widow of one we buried at Memphis; she stood alone and was weeping as though her heart would break."\(^{30}\)

The Seventh re-embarked and steamed northward, with stops at Red Wing and Hastings for the same joyous dementia. The boat reached St. Paul at noon on August 8. Again tragedy accompanied joy. At the levee stood the mother and sister of a twenty-one-year-old private in Company H. When he did not leave the boat, these women moved forward to inquire and were somberly led to a cabin where he lay "in the pallor of death." He had died the night before.\(^{31}\)

At St. Paul the Seventh had its parade and banquet. Marching back to the "Savannah," the men boarded the boat for Fort Snelling and there encamped as if on field service. During the next few days officers and clerks brought service records up to date so that muster rolls would be correct and long unpaid men would get the sums due them. Without military duties, the soldiers led an agreeably indolent life at the fort. The Sixth, Ninth, and Tenth regi-

\(^{25}\) Press, September 12, 1865.
\(^{26}\) Press, September 23, October 5, 1865.
\(^{27}\) Civil and Indian Wars, 1:365.
\(^{28}\) Civil and Indian Wars, 1:437.
\(^{29}\) Civil and Indian Wars, 1:366.
\(^{30}\) Civil and Indian Wars, 1:366.
\(^{31}\) Press, August 9, 1865.
ments were also encamped there awaiting mustering out, and the men had plenty of time to meet old friends, swap yarns, and swagger for the benefit of hundreds of visitors who came from the nearby towns to see the troops and mingle with them.

After a last grand parade, the men of the Seventh broke ranks, collected their pay, and received their discharges. Income tax was withheld from officers' final pay. Enlisted men could keep knapsacks, haversacks, and canteens, but they had to pay for firearms. One member of the Seventh felt that this was "almost an insult to the veterans who served their country so faithfully." Disgusted, he told his ungrateful government it could keep his rifle.

Instead of delivering a farewell address in person, as expected, General William R. Marshall, the regiment's commanding officer, gave each man a printed general order. Probably Marshall feared that he would break down if he tried to speak. The order was typical of its day. Its phrases were stilted and somewhat stereotyped, but they came from the heart. The emotions reflected lost their hold on America only with the passing of an entire generation.

"I do not need now to testify of your fidelity, your soldierly endurance, your courage," wrote Marshall. "This has been done in the reports of battles and campaigns, and is a part of the history of the armies with which you have served, and of the state that in part you have so honorably represented in the field. I shall ever cherish a grateful memory of my association with you, and you have each a claim upon my regard and affection that will last through life." That evening, August 16, the Hastings, Red Wing, and Winona men, still in uniform and doubtless clutching their pay and their copies of the farewell order, boarded a packet for home. General Marshall was the only regimental officer who came to the levee. He "bade us good-bye," a Winona man remembered, "shaking each one by the hand, the tears rolling down his cheeks."

FOR MINNESOTA August was the midpoint of that momentous summer — the time at which two psychological forces reached equilibrium. One was nostalgia for the great national conflict; the other was the beckoning future of material expansion and political power. A charming midsummer idyll closed the era of nostalgia — and held a portent of the future. At 9:00 A.M. on August 26, 1865, the packet "Itasca," in company with the "Diamond Joe," which had met it at La Crosse, docked at St. Paul. From the "Diamond Joe" descended Governor Miller, Mayor Prince, and General Sibley. From the "Itasca" quietly walked the nation's hero, "Unconditional Surrender" Grant, who took Fort Donelson in 1862, threw the Mississippi open in 1863, fought it out although it took all summer in 1864, and forced Robert E. Lee to surrender in 1865.
He seemed too small for the great events he had directed. Forty-three years old, five feet, eight inches tall, weighing only 135 pounds, with brown hair and beard and with light blue eyes, he did not impress viewers, and his extreme shyness in public further minimized the warrior; yet this small man’s granite-like determination had saved the Union and smashed the Southern rebellion. He was justly his country’s idol.

As soon as the St. Paul city council had heard that Grant would visit his home at Galena, Illinois, in August, an invitation was sent asking if he would like to come up the Mississippi to St. Paul. To the council’s extreme pleasure the general accepted, and this glorious August 26 was the result.

When the hero stepped ashore, bands played on ship and levee; bells rang throughout the city; artillery salvos boomed. Citizens waved and cheered. Smiling, unexcited, the general and his party entered carriages and rode through the city in a grand procession, escorted, as other soldiers had been, by the fire department, the Second Cavalry Band, and the Great Western Band. At Third and Jackson they drove under a specially decorated triumphal arch; at its top an American eagle held a shield; on one side giant letters read: “Welcome, Defender of the Union,” on the other, “In War the Heroic Soldier, in Peace the Model Citizen.”

After a tour through central St. Paul, in the course of which seventeen spectators were injured when a Wabasha Street balcony gave way, the parade halted at the International Hotel. There Mayor Prince delivered a lengthy and elaborate welcome. Justifying his reputation for brevity, Grant replied: “Ladies and Gentlemen: It is not my habit to make speeches, but I thank you for this very cordial welcome which you have given me to St. Paul.”

The parade then moved west to St. Anthony, where the general survived a test apparently imposed on him wherever he went because of his reputed shyness. A woman ran up to him, handed him a bou-
quet, and said he must kiss her. Grant obeyed this command, it was reported, "without wincing." Mrs. Grant's comments are not available, although she, too, was there.

After the party had lunched and toured Minneapolis, the carriages jogged back toward St. Paul, stopping at Minnehaha Falls and Fort Snelling, where refreshments were served. One hopes that the Grant entourage enjoyed some rest, but judging from the mileage covered and the means of covering it, one is doubtful. By 9:00 P.M. all were seated at dinner in the International Hotel with 150 St. Paul citizens. At the banquet's end Grant gave another of his famous short speeches, which can also be set down in full without difficulty: "Gentlemen and Firemen of St. Paul: I am just about to leave, after a very pleasant visit to your city and State. I am much obliged to you for the cordial welcome I have received. Good night."

Leaving the hotel amid music and cheers, the great general retraversed his parade route to the levee in a torchlight procession. Bouquets were again tossed into his carriage, and crowds cheered tirelessly. Posing briefly at the levee, Grant's party, including his father, his wife, and his children, once more boarded the "Itasca." While bands played and watchers stood on shore, the boat, sparkling with Chinese lanterns, gradually disappeared from view, borne away, one may imagine, on the crest of Minnesota's postwar jubilation and excitement.

With the cool, brisk days of fall, the wave of nostalgia subsided. As a final gesture, a great "soldiers' festival" was held on September 20 at the fair grounds to give statewide public honors to all Minnesota veterans. Already the St. Paul Soldiers' Home had been closed, and after arranging a last celebration on October 4 to welcome the First Heavy Artillery Regiment, the soldiers' reception committee wound up its affairs.37

THE STATE to which Minnesota's soldiers returned was not quite the same they had left. Its way of life was already beginning to feel the mighty but subtle changes initiated by four years of war in the South and on its own frontiers. It had more people; it was more cosmopolitan; business and recreation had expanded; and the year 1865 was itself to be an interesting transition period in which public attention shifted from the battlefronts to examining the first stirrings of the great postwar boom ahead.

Still a remote land of river boats and stagecoaches, Minnesota stood on the eve of a railroad era which would transform the state. From 1862 to 1865 there had been only one short line of track, running from St. Paul to St. Anthony. In June, 1865, when James J. Hill was still advertising himself as ticket agent for the North Western Packet Company, the Minnesota Valley Railroad's first locomotive, the "Mankato," reached its destination by steamboat, and by July 11 a trip from Mendota to Rosemount was available on the Minnesota Central Railway's first line. In the fall promoters were speaking confidently of a Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad, to connect the heads of navigation on the country's two greatest inland waterways.38

The Indian war, which had at first threatened to depopulate the state's western half, had resulted by 1865 in the removal of all Indians from southern Minnesota and the opening of large new tracts of agricultural land. These lay waiting for the horde of settlers who had already begun to pour westward. The resources of Minnesota, and the promise which it held for the nation's sturdy agriculturists were glowingly described during the summer of 1865 in a series of articles written for the St. Paul Press by a local journalist-farmer named Oliver H. Kelley.39

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37 Press, September 14, 21, October 5, 14, 1865.
38 Press, May 20, June 8, July 13, October 22, 1865.
39 For example, see the Press, July 14, 15, 19, 28, 1865.
Others had their eyes fixed farther west. During the war the army had given protection to several emigrant expeditions across the northern plains, and the lure of gold in Montana Territory was already calling to many adventurous veterans. More far-sighted fortune seekers thought they saw a Pacific railroad in the wake of the wagon trains and an economic empire with St. Paul as its capital.46

A hint that St. Paul might have a rival for this role came in July, 1865, when the editor of the Press, looking for something to replace the long columns of war dispatches that through four years had filled his front page, found a local story in the development which had quietly taken place around the Falls of St. Anthony. Almost overnight, it seemed, the little cluster of mills had mushroomed into an investment of well over a million dollars.47

That Minnesota's postwar world was full of promises seemed certain; when and in what way they would be realized, and who would reap the benefits thereof were still questions. The answers depended largely upon the state's veterans.

MOST of these men returned quietly to their former ways without publicity and without much more noise than a few carouses with old friends, but there were also some spectacular cases of rowdyism. On a single July day, for example, two returned warriors took part in a shooting match at the Six Mile House—a hostelry on the St. Paul-Stillwater road—while another veteran was arrested for stealing $170 from a comrade in his former unit. As late in the year as September 29 police had to settle a fracas at St. Paul's Merchants' Hotel among men who "have not yet shed their officer's habiliments."48

There was frequent comment on the increase in crime and how the war "had a demoralizing effect upon society, and rendered the resort to violence and the use of deadly weapons an everyday affair."49 In addition, the knowledge that thousands of recently discharged veterans with mustering-out pay in their pockets were traveling through the state brought an influx of professional gamblers, pickpockets, and confidence men. Their work was made easy by the crowded conditions, in which stagecoach space was reserved so far ahead that many men preferred to walk home.46

On August 19 headlines in the St. Paul Pioneer underlined a wartime social problem older than Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. A veteran of Company H, Seventh Minnesota, had arrived home to find his wife living with another man and two new babies in the house. He promptly seized his pistol to apply an ancient remedy. Happily for his wife's paramour, the soldier was too angry to shoot accurately and the guilty man, after running up the street while bullets whizzed around him, escaped with his life, to be arrested and tried for adultery. Other veterans, not so given to public demonstration, began divorce actions against erring spouses. "The amount of gross immorality and licentiousness produced by the war is alarming," the newspaper lamented.50

In contrast to these lurid episodes, it is pleasant to read that most of the boys sobered up quickly and turned from the past to face the problems and challenges of the workaday world. In that sphere the ex-servicemen began immediately to sense their importance and the value of keeping together as a bloc. Their earliest organizations were sentimental groups, formed to keep alive memories of great days. Such was the First Minnesota Association, created on June 18, 1865, and composed of those who had fought in the original First Minnesota, which had been disbanded in 1864. Political acumen grew rapidly, however, and the end of 1865 found Ramsey County vets-

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* Press, July 12, 1865.
* Press, July 25, September 29, 1865.
* Press, July 22, 1865.
* Press, July 21, August 17, 1865.
* St. Paul Pioneer, August 19, 1865.
erans meeting collectively to act on recovering enlistment bounties promised by the county in 1862 and never paid. In Minnesota, as elsewhere, a new element was about to enter politics. For the first time in American history more than a million men had worn their country’s colors, and politicians were wooing this bloc with unparalleled fervor. Governor Miller had sounded the keynote when he welcomed the veterans at the receptions in St. Paul. His speech, repeated many times through the summer, set forth a platform capable of infinite enlargement. Its simple theme was: “Give the Boys What They Want.” Specifically, he called for public support of needy ex-soldiers, wives, widows, and children; a state asylum for war orphans; a state soldiers’ home; and universal soldiers’ franchise.

Actually, Minnesota had done reasonably well for its men while in service. Though the governor neglected to mention it, the legislature had already appropriated money for an orphan asylum such as he described. Local government units were allowed to levy special taxes (from which soldiers and veterans were exempt) to pay bounties or support soldiers’ dependents. Special appropriations gave relief to the disabled, and the soldiers’ vote was conferred as early as 1862. Later, when the federal government established disability payments, the Minnesota legislature named the state’s adjutant general as agent for all Minnesota veterans’ claims against the United States for bounties, pensions, and back pay.

With the veterans home, Minnesota’s politicians lost no time in larding their heavy rhetoric about patriotism and reconstruction with a few reminders of these and other benefits. The adjutant general advertised his services as claims agent, and Republican land officers overflowed with concern in helping ex-soldiers secure in person those Homestead Act lands which a generous government had allowed them to pre-empt by agent while on active service.

The year 1865 closed with an election in which Minnesota chose a new governor. The two contestants were General Marshall under the banner of the Republicans and Henry M. Rice, an ex-Senator and long-time leader of the proslavery wing of the state’s Democratic party. The issues were clear-cut, and the campaign was fought on the questions of loyalty to the Union and its soldiers, reconstruction, and Negro suffrage. Rice was particularly attacked for his tardy support of the war. When the votes were counted in November, Marshall was the winner by more than three thousand. Minnesota was committed to giving the boys what they wanted.

Marshall was the second of eight Civil and Indian war veterans who were to occupy the governor’s chair until after the turn of the century. The elections of 1865 opened a new era not only in Minnesota but throughout the United States. Those young soldiers who ran laughing and shouting down river-boat gangplanks, excitedly realizing that at last they were home, now controlled the country, and they set about the building of a mighty industrial nation. By the time the last Civil War veteran left the Minnesota governorship in 1904 the swift transformation of their land must have puzzled even the soldiers who had made it possible.

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**Notes:**
- "Press, June 18, October 19, 1865.
- "Press, July 6, 16, 18, 21, 1865.
- "Press, June 9, August 4, 1865.

**Illustrations:**
The illustrations on pages 291, 293, and 294 are the work of Mr. Harry Heim of Minneapolis.