



Samuel Smith

and the First Minnesota Monument at Gettysburg

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In Morris, Minnesota, on the grave of Samuel and Catherine Smith in Summit Cemetery stands a monument that looks like the memorial to the First Minnesota Regiment Volunteer Infantry at Gettysburg.

I first learned about the monument while visiting Morris and, as a student of the Civil War, had to wonder: Who was Samuel Smith, and why was this monument in Morris? A visit to the Stevens County Historical Society museum produced a 1991 newspaper article that seemed to answer my questions. According to the article, Samuel Smith, a Civil War veteran, had been the model for the Gettysburg statue. He had then ordered a copy for \$2,500 and placed it on his gravesite in 1916, seven years before he died.¹

But why was Samuel Smith selected as the model? The research quest that followed revealed quite a bit, not only about Samuel Smith but also about the First Minnesota monument, its dedication, and its relation to the Morris monument.

Samuel Smith was born in Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany, near the city of Frankfurt on September 11, 1839, as Christ (or Christian) Zimmerman. He came to America at age 16 and settled in Red Wing, initially working on his brother-in-law's farm and then in a sawmill. He stood 5-feet, 6-inches tall and had blue eyes and light brown hair.²

When the Civil War began, 22-year-old Zimmerman substituted for

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Samuel Smith of Winona, enlisting under Smith's name in Company K First Minnesota on April 29, 1861. At this time, an individual who was drafted or otherwise committed to service could hire a substitute. Authorized by the draft law and quite common, substitution and the ability to buy an exemption from the draft led to the expression "a rich man's war and poor man's fight."

"Smith" was wounded at the first Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861, while reloading his musket. As a result, his right thumb was amputated at the first knuckle. He returned to duty and became a teamster. On March 20, 1862, Smith was hurt again when the team of horses he was driving became frightened by a locomotive at Sandy Hook, Maryland, near Harpers Ferry. He was thrown from the wagon and crushed by the wheels, injuring his chest and back. Once recovered, he was transferred to the ambulance corps just prior to the Battle of Fair Oaks in May 1862 and served until he was discharged with the other members of First Minnesota in May 1864.³

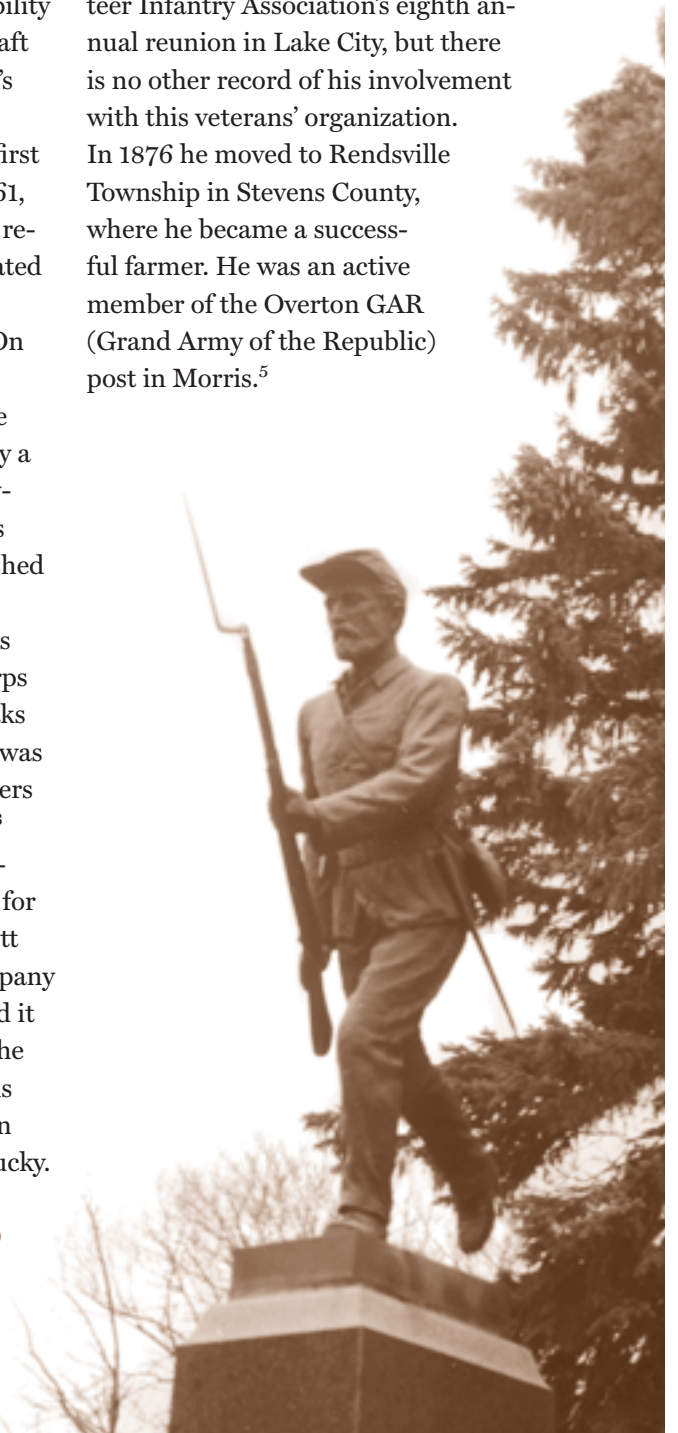
On October 8, 1864, Zimmerman substituted again, this time for Johann Theis of Sand Creek, Scott County. He was assigned to Company K Second Minnesota and reached it in time for Sherman's march to the sea. He served this stint under his own name and was discharged on July 11, 1865, in Louisville, Kentucky.

He then returned to Red Wing and resumed his job in the sawmill.⁴

On April 20, 1867, Zimmerman married Catherine Hartman in Red Wing. They eventually had 12 children (11 of them boys). In 1874 he attended the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Association's eighth annual reunion in Lake City, but there is no other record of his involvement with this veterans' organization.

In 1876 he moved to Rendsville Township in Stevens County, where he became a successful farmer. He was an active member of the Overton GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) post in Morris.⁵

Seeing double? The monument to the First Minnesota at Gettysburg (facing page) and (this page) its apparent twin in Summit Cemetery, Morris



ON NOVEMBER 17, 1880, Christ Zimmerman became a naturalized citizen. Nine years later he legally changed his name to Samuel Smith. According to his descendants and several Morris newspaper articles, he did this in order to obtain a pension for the injuries incurred while he served as Samuel Smith in the First Minnesota. It is more likely, however, that he changed his name in order to *maintain* his pension. He had first applied for one in 1872 as Samuel Smith and began receiving \$2 per month. In 1886 he applied for an increase, so by 1889 he may have decided that it would be easier on all concerned if his name matched his pension record.⁶

When Samuel and Catherine's

son Ferdinand died in May 1895, they purchased a lot in the Morris cemetery. In April 1915 Catherine Smith died and was buried next to her son. That October, Samuel Smith, now 76 years old, attended the fiftieth review of the GAR in Washington, D.C., and stopped at Gettysburg on the trip home, a visit that becomes important to unraveling the mystery of the two monuments. On May 11, 1923, the veteran, farmer, and family man died on his farm near Morris.⁷

MEANWHILE, IN APRIL 1891 the Minnesota legislature had appropriated \$20,000 for the design and

construction of two monuments to the valiant First Minnesota at Gettysburg. Three commissioners—William Lochren, Christopher B. Heffelfinger, and Matthew Marvin, all veterans of the First Minnesota—were appointed to approve the design and oversee construction.⁸

The first and largest monument features a soldier making a bayonet charge. It faces the Emmitsburg Road at the top of the slope where the regiment began its heroic charge on the second day of the battle. The bronze figure, sculpted by Jacob Fjelde of Minneapolis and cast by Henry Bonnard Bronze Company of New York, stands upon a base of granite from Barre, Vermont. The complete monument is approxi-

Samuel and Catherine Smith and family, about 1890. FACING PAGE: A handwritten addendum to his naturalization papers noted that citizen Zimmerman later changed his name to Smith.



DISTRICT COURT, 12th JUDICIAL DISTRICT, }
COUNTY OF STEVENS.

STATE OF MINNESOTA.

I, Christ Zimmerman do swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States of America, and that I do absolutely and entirely Renounce and Abjure forever, all Allegiance and Fidelity to every Foreign Power, Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatever; and particularly to the Empire of Germany whose subject I was. And further, that I never have borne any hereditary title, or been of any of the degrees of Nobility of the country whereof I have been a subject, and that I have resided within the United States for five years last past, and in this State for one year last past.

Subscribed and sworn to in open Court this }
17th day of November 1880 } Christ Zimmerman
Henry Baldwin Clerk.

DISTRICT COURT, 12th JUDICIAL DISTRICT, }
COUNTY OF STEVENS.

STATE OF MINNESOTA.

And now, to-wit: At a term of said Court now being held at the village of Morris in and for the County of Stevens in said State, upon the foregoing oath and affidavits, and upon further proof having been made by the production of ^{fact} ~~a certificate~~ that the said Christ Zimmerman did, ~~before the Clerk of~~ serve in the military ~~Court of the United St~~

_____ the same being a Court of Record, having common law jurisdiction, make the requisite declaration of his intention to become a citizen of the United States, and to renounce all other allegiance, as required by the laws of the United States,

It is Ordered by the Court, That the said Christ Zimmerman be, and he is hereby admitted to be, a citizen of the United States.

By the Court: Henry Baldwin Clerk.

A true Record. Attest: Henry Baldwin Clerk.

May 21, 1889
Pair
name changed to Samuel Smith

mately 32 feet high; on its base, in bronze, are a coat of arms of the State of Minnesota, a list of the battles fought by the regiment, a description of the action at Gettysburg written by William Lochren, and a relief by Fjelde depicting the regiment's famous charge. (The second monument, more modest, is located where Minnesota fought on the third day of the battle.)

Both monuments were erected in 1893, in time for the thirtieth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. The total bill was \$19,313, which covered siting; land purchase (approximately 3,000 square feet); construction, including foundations and leveling; sodding; and lettering. Fjelde's design and sculpture accounted for \$6,400, of which \$2,300 went to the Bonnard company for casting. The firm that made the smaller monument collected \$2,500, while the J. M. Sullivan company of Minneapolis was paid almost \$10,000 for the granite, extra lettering, and assembly of the larger one. Commissioner Marvin of Winona received \$211.74 for a trip to Gettysburg to oversee work on the foundations.⁹

FOUR YEARS LATER, IN 1897, the Minnesota legislature appropriated \$5,000 for the July 2 dedication of the larger monument. Four commissioners—the original three, plus Col. William Colvill, who had commanded the regiment at Gettysburg—oversaw both the dedication ceremony and the funds. On June 7 they sent letters to all First Minnesota “comrades” detailing who was eligible for the expenses-paid trip to Gettysburg: “Those who participated with the regiment in the battle. Those who were prevented from

participating by reason of wounds received in battle. Those who were prevented from so participating by reason of sickness on the march from Falmouth, Va., to Gettysburg; and those who prior to that battle were discharged by reason of wounds.” Wives and family could attend at their own expense—\$30.¹⁰

Donations helped reduce the overall cost. James J. Hill furnished four Great Northern Railway sleeping coaches. The Soo line (Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Sault Ste. Marie Railroad) donated one sleeping car and a combination car, and the Northern Pacific Railway provided a special car. Two of the cars were too tall for the tunnels through the western Pennsylvania mountains, however, so replacements were rented from George M. Pullman's company. Nevertheless, the donations reduced the total cost of the trip to \$4,735. The balance of the appropriation was returned to the state treasury.¹¹

The trip began on June 29, 1897, when approximately 160 veterans (Smith did not go), Governor David M. Clough, and his staff left Minneapolis. The entourage arrived in Gettysburg on July 1. That evening and early the next morning, the veterans toured the battlefield. The dignitaries stayed at the Eagle Hotel; some of the “old soldiers” secured rooms in town, while most stayed in the train sleepers.¹²

The dedication ceremony began at 10 A.M. on July 2 with William Lochren as master of ceremonies. Among the many speeches that day, Governor Clough delivered an address and donated the monument to Gettysburg National Park, and Col. A. B. Cope, park superintendent, accepted. Lochren related the history of the regiment, and Col. Colvill was introduced and greeted by “three

rousing cheers.” Senator Cushman K. Davis and other members of the Minnesota congressional delegation also spoke.¹³

Telegrams from several posts representing old comrades of First Minnesota were read, and a wreath with the inscription “82nd New York Volunteers Revere You—First Minnesota” was presented. Concluding the ceremony, Mrs. Tillie Pierce Allerman, who had cared for the wounded soldiers of Gettysburg, including Colvill, was introduced. Governor Clough and his staff were then photographed by the monument, as were Col. Colvill and the veterans of the regiment. Finally, the Lafayette, Pennsylvania, GAR post gave the 44-gun national salute. After that full day, the train left Gettysburg at about 8:30 P.M. and arrived in Washington, D.C., at midnight. The Minnesota veterans spent the next two days sightseeing before returning home.¹⁴



Dedication of the First Minnesota monument: a sunny day at Gettysburg, July 2, 1897



Veterans at the Minnesota monument after the dedication ceremony, July 2, 1897

BUT WHAT OF SAMUEL SMITH as the model for the monument? Research in newspapers and the Minnesota Historical Society archives turned up no reference to any model. Rolf Wunder, a descendent of Jacob Fjelde, knows of no documentation. Neither of the two Morris newspapers mentions anything about Smith going to Minneapolis to pose for Fjelde, nor is there evidence that he traveled to the Gettysburg dedication. The model for the monument would most likely have attended its dedication, and the local papers would have reported the trip.

Likewise, the documentary record yielded little information that would connect the Gettysburg monument to the one on the Smith family grave. Aside from the 1991 newspaper claim that Smith was the model, the only reference to the monument at his gravesite is found in his obituary in the *Morris Tribune*: “In the cemetery at Morris, Mr. Smith erected a monument to the charge of the First Minnesota . . . at Gettysburg where so many of his comrades fell.”¹⁵

There is usually a reason for selecting a model for an honor such as the Gettysburg monument. The individual did something outstanding or memorable, is a high-ranking officer, or is well known to veterans or the public. So, why would Samuel Smith have been chosen? In all likelihood he did not make the charge with the regiment, as he was assigned to the ambulance corps; the June 30, 1863, muster rolls show him as being on detached service with that corps. A list of survivors of the charge does not include his name. Furthermore, he was not active with the First Minnesota veterans association. He was not a public figure, and he was a private when discharged.¹⁶

Of course, Smith might have been the model if he had known the sculptor. But Smith was a German immigrant, and Fjelde was a Norwegian immigrant. Smith lived in Red Wing and then Morris while Fjelde lived in Minneapolis. It is highly unlikely they knew each other.

It is also unlikely that the commissioners would have selected a

model from Morris. They would have had to pay his transportation to Minneapolis, and no such expense is recorded. It is more likely that the commissioners either selected a model from Minneapolis or, equally possible, that the statue was simply Fjelde’s artistic conception based on instructions from the commissioners. Correspondence among these men and prospective monument builders indicates that, from the start, the commissioners envisioned a specific type of figure: one that represented “the rank and file,” who were “common men . . . the figure should not be heroic.”¹⁷

The First Minnesota monument at Gettysburg was completed before July 2, 1893, the thirtieth battle anniversary. If Samuel Smith had posed and then purchased a copy of the statue, what did he do with it until 1916 when it was said to have been erected at his gravesite? Even if the 1916 date is incorrect, Smith did not purchase the cemetery lot until 1895, several years after the completion of the Gettysburg memorial.

ACLOSER EXAMINATION OF both monuments was in order. The first discovery was that both statues had right thumbs, even though Smith’s had been amputated in 1861. Fjelde might purposely have overlooked this detail, of course. Further comparison revealed other discrepancies: The poses, though similar, are not the same. The Gettysburg figure is a younger man and does not resemble the one in Morris. The cap is different, the hair is different, and the statue has a strap badge on its chest that is not present on the Morris figure. The Gettysburg statue is more detailed, its features more distinct. The models



Similar but not the same: Fjelde's Gettysburg soldier (left, with strap badge) and Samuel Smith's

were obviously not the same, and the statues are not identical.

The northeast corner of the Morris monument yielded conclusive evidence that it was not a copy of the Bonnard casting: a small plaque with the words "Manufactured by the W. H. Mullins Company of Salem, Ohio, U.S.A." Contact with the Salem Historical Society yielded a copy of a page from Mullins's 1913 catalog: "The statuary shown is from models by our own sculptors in our own plant. We are therefore fully prepared to specially model all classes of statuary; including portrait subjects from photographs, correct in likeness to the individual, so that a complete commission for the execution of a statue will be carried out with absolute assurance of satisfactory final results."¹⁸ Comparing a photograph

of Samuel Smith to the figure on his grave monument shows eyes, hair, nose, moustache, and beard that appear similar, if not identical.

Most likely, Smith ordered his statue to be based upon the pose of the First Minnesota monument and a photo of himself. He probably conceived the idea in 1915 on his GAR trip to Washington and Gettysburg after his wife's death. This hypothesis accommodates the 1916 date for placement of the statue in the Morris cemetery and makes sense of the statements in the 1991 article that launched this quest. Samuel Smith was the model for his own monument, which could, indeed, be said to be the same as the one at Gettysburg. Concluding that he posed for the Gettysburg monument would be an easy error to make.

EVEN THOUGH HE WAS NOT the model for First Minnesota monument, the story of Samuel Smith is nonetheless compelling. He was an immigrant and a wounded veteran who continued to serve his new country to the end of the Civil War. He became a father and successful farmer who helped west-central Minnesota become the developed area it is today. Perhaps more compelling, Samuel Smith had a sense of history and his place in it. He and all of his comrades saw that they had saved the Union for posterity. They were proud of their accomplishment and wanted history to know about their deeds. □

Notes

1. *Morris Sun*, May 21, 1991, p. 1; Tami K. Plank, researcher and historian, Stevens County Historical Society, assisted the author. Catherine is the name on the gravestone. She is referred to as Katheron on Samuel Smith's pension records and Katherine in various local publications.

2. Here and below, *Illustrated Album of Biography of Pope and Stevens Counties* (Chicago: Alden, Ogle, and Co., 1888), 479; Samuel Smith, pension application 291743, Records of the Veterans Administration, Record Group 15, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, D.C.; Samuel Smith compiled military service records, First Minnesota Infantry, and Christ Zimmerman compiled military service records, Second Minnesota Infantry, both in Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, NARA.

3. Smith service records; Zimmerman to Matthew Marvin, Feb. 14, 1887, Matthew Marvin Papers, Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), St. Paul. Marvin was a sergeant in Company K First Minnesota; Zimmerman wrote to get aid in obtaining a pension for his injuries at Sandy Hook.

4. Zimmerman service records; J. W. Bishop, "Narrative of the Second Minnesota Regiment," and "Roster of the Regiment," in Board of Commissioners, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars* (1891; repr. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), 1:112, 146.

5. Smith pension records; *Illustrated Album of Biography*, 479; Minute Book, p. 22, 25, First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Assn. Records, MHS. The minutes include a list of attendees.

6. Zimmerman naturalization record, in Stevens Co., District Court, Naturalization Records—Final Papers, State Archives Microfilm 37, roll 2, vol. 1, p. 166, MHS; Smith pension records; author's interviews with Clinton Smith, grandson of Samuel Smith; Lois Smith, wife of grandson Lloyd Smith; and Pauline Smith, wife of grandson

Donald Smith—all Summer 2003; *Morris Sun*, May 21, 1991, p. 1; *Morris Tribune*, May 18, 1923, p. 1. There is no court record of the name change, but a note at the bottom of Zimmerman's naturalization record states that it occurred on May 21, 1889.

7. Summit Cemetery Records, Stevens County Historical Society, Morris; *Morris Tribune*, Apr. 16, 1915, p. 1, Sept. 24, 1915, p. 8, May 18, 1923, p. 1; *Morris Sun*, May 17, 1923, p. 1.

8. Here and below, *Minneapolis Journal*, June 26, 1897, p. 13; *Benson Times*, July 13, 1897, p. 1; *Appleton Press*, July 8, 1897, p. 3.

9. "Recapitulation of Cost of Monuments," [und. 1892]; for payment of Bonnard, see Knute Nelson to William Lochren, July 8, 1893—both in Gettysburg Monument Assn. folders, William Lochren and Family Papers, MHS. Hereinafter, all cites to the Lochren papers are to these chronological folders.

10. Colvill, Heffelfinger, Marvin, and Lochren to "Comrades of the First Regiment," June 7, 1897, First Minnesota Assn. Records, MHS.

11. Commissioners to Gov. A. D. Eberhart, [1897?], carbon copy, and W. D. Washburn to Geo. M. Pullman, telegram, July 3, 1897, Lochren papers; William Lochren, "Statement of Disbursements" in his "Report of Gettysburg Commission," Governor David M. Clough Gubernatorial Files 1896–97, Minnesota State Archives, MHS.

12. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 3, 1897, p. 1–2; *Stillwater Gazette*, July 1, 1897, p. 3.

13. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 3, 1897, p. 1–2. Colvill had enlisted in Red Wing; by 1897 he lived in Grand Marais. On his speech and its reception, see *Red Wing Daily Republican*, July 8, 1897, p. 4; *Cook County Herald*, July 10, 1897, p. 3.

The Minnesota delegation included J. A. Tawney, L. Fletcher, J. T. McCleary, F. C. Stevens, R. P. Morris, and F. M. Eddy. Representative Tawney was an eight-year-old living in Gettysburg at the time of the battle

(Tawney to Lochren, Jan. 19, 1891, Lochren papers), and Representative Morris, whose family owned slaves, was a boy living in Virginia and described himself as the "rebel member of the delegation" (*Pioneer Press*, July 3, 1897, p. 2).

14. *Stillwater Gazette*, July 7, 1897, p. 3.

15. *Morris Tribune*, May 18, 1923, p. 1.

16. "List of Survivors of First Regiment . . . who participated in the charge made at Gettysburg," typescript, [und. 1892], Lochren papers; Smith service records.

17. See, for example, N. C. Hinsdale, Wetmore & Morse Granite Co., to William Lochren, Sept. 19, 1891, Lochren papers.

18. Catalog page courtesy David C. Stratton, director, Salem Historical Society.



Veteran Samuel Smith

The photos on p. 19 and 24, right, are courtesy the author; p. 20, courtesy Clinton Smith, Morris; contents, center, and p. 24, left, courtesy William Dowling, New Oxford, PA; p. 25 is from the *Morris Sun*, May 21, 1991.

All other images are in MHS collections, including p. 23 from album 125.



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