The First Minnesota.

Published in the office of the New Union Office, March 11, 1862.

THE FIRST MINNESOTA REGIMENT.

"DEATH TO TRAITORS!!"

BERRYVILLE, VA., TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 1862.

The Stars and Stripes in Berryville again!!!

Yesterday afternoon the Van Allen Carney entered our town, following closely the lead of the 187th "Orange" Company, and the "Commonwealth" Company of the 188th Infantry, which have been long expected by the citizens of Berryville. They were met with a hearty welcome and a shower of flowers.

Red Ayers Enraged.

A white flag flying from the Liberty Pole with the letter "O" superimposed on the "Southern Cross" in the center, accompanied the "Gravediggers" as they proceeded.

Their appearance added to the excitement of the residents, who thronged the streets to welcome the returning soldiers.

The Reconciliation.

Mrs. Brown, with a dejected face, stood ruefully in the doorway of her home, her eyes filled with tears. The news of the Union victory had reached her, and she knew the war was over. She had lost her husband and had to support her family alone. But she was determined not to let her grief show. She battled through the crowds, her head held high, her heart heavy.

Increase of Circulation.

We have the pleasure to inform our readers that this issue of the "Northern Star" has been greatly increased. We hope that this will encourage others to subscribe to our paper and support its cause.}


This morning edition of the "Northern Star" was much appreciated by our readers. We have increased the number of copies and added several pages to accommodate the increased demand.

To Our Friends.

We have received a letter from a friend in the Union Army expressing his desire to read our newspaper and asking for a subscription. We are pleased to hear from him and will do our best to accommodate his request.

The First Minnesota.

Published in the office of the New Union Office, March 11, 1862.

THE FIRST MINNESOTA REGIMENT.

"DEATH TO TRAITORS!!"

BERRYVILLE, VA., TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 1862.

The Stars and Stripes in Berryville again!!!

Yesterday afternoon the Van Allen Carney entered our town, following closely the lead of the 187th "Orange" Company, and the "Commonwealth" Company of the 188th Infantry, which have been long expected by the citizens of Berryville. They were met with a hearty welcome and a shower of flowers.

Red Ayers Enraged.

A white flag flying from the Liberty Pole with the letter "O" superimposed on the "Southern Cross" in the center, accompanied the "Gravediggers" as they proceeded.

Their appearance added to the excitement of the residents, who thronged the streets to welcome the returning soldiers.

The Reconciliation.

Mrs. Brown, with a dejected face, stood ruefully in the doorway of her home, her eyes filled with tears. The news of the Union victory had reached her, and she knew the war was over. She had lost her husband and had to support her family alone. But she was determined not to let her grief show. She battled through the crowds, her head held high, her heart heavy.

Increase of Circulation.

We have the pleasure to inform our readers that this issue of the "Northern Star" has been greatly increased. We hope that this will encourage others to subscribe to our paper and support its cause.


This morning edition of the "Northern Star" was much appreciated by our readers. We have increased the number of copies and added several pages to accommodate the increased demand.

To Our Friends.

We have received a letter from a friend in the Union Army expressing his desire to read our newspaper and asking for a subscription. We are pleased to hear from him and will do our best to accommodate his request.
The Typographical Fraternity of the First Minnesota Volunteers

Perry Thomas Tholl

The First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment is famously known for its charge at the battle of Gettysburg in 1863. Well before that watershed event, the unit earned a quieter distinction with the pen, not the sword: It was one of the few Civil War regiments to print a newspaper. This unusual activity came about by chance early in the war. Like many of the volunteer regiments, the First was made up of men with all sorts of skills and from various trades. Printers and editors were among the many caught up in the call to war, and more than 20 of them joined the ranks of the First Minnesota and set off to help keep the nation united.1

After the fighting at Bull Run in July 1861, the First Minnesota spent almost six months on picket duty on the banks of the Potomac River at Camp Stone near Edward’s Ferry, Maryland. In February 1862, with winter soon to end and the muddy roads improving, Gen. George McClellan, commander of the Union Army, wanted to reopen the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Doing so involved, among other tasks, rebuilding the bridge destroyed by Confederates at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, and occupying the lower Shenandoah Valley around Winchester, Virginia. For that task, McClellan sent the first and second brigades of Gen. John Sedgwick’s division, including the First Minnesota. They left Camp Stone by train and marched into Harpers Ferry, the site in 1859 of abolitionist John Brown’s last stand. After a week’s stay, the brigade marched ten miles to Charlestown, West Virginia, while its brass band played “John Brown’s Body.” After a few days’ encampment there, the order came to move on to Berryville, Virginia, where the rebel army was reported to be.2

Pvt. Ole Nelson of Company A described their orders, received on March 10, 1862: “About 4 o’clock we were aroused from ‘Tired nature’s sweet restorer—balmy sleep,’ and ordered to pack up and prepare for march at 6 a.m. The usual preparations were made, and we were again under march.” The First Minnesota was assigned to the advance guard of the First Brigade along with Van Allen’s cavalry (the Third New York) and Rhode Island Battery A. Approaching Berryville, they saw dismounted cavalry,

Facing: Page one of the second edition of March 11, 1862, which introduced the motto “Death to Traitors!” Above: One manufacturer’s version of a common midnineteenth-century hand press; a similar one would have printed the First Minnesota newspaper. The exact model, unfortunately, is not known.
and the Rhode Island battery was ordered to fire in that direction. The Union cavalry and battery, along with companies B, E, and K of the First Minnesota, then rushed into Berryville, a town of some 500 to 1,000 inhabitants. Berryville’s place in Civil War history was that it was on the route of both the Union and Confederate armies to somewhere else.

Under fire, the Confederate cavalrmen left the town as fast as the Union brigade entered. Pvt. Edward A. Stevens of the First Minnesota’s Company B, a correspondent for the *Stillwater Messenger*, reported to the readers at home:

The first Union flag to wave in this village since the rebellion was a small one carried by Sergeant Shepard, of company B. Those who think his legs are not good should have seen him running into town. After carrying it though the principal streets, it was wafted to the breeze from the cupola of the court house.

As we approached the town a white flag was discernable, but when we arrived to where it was we found it to be a flag put up nearly a year ago by the people. It had on it the letters “C.S.”—The pole from which it floated was soon cut down.

The people here are nearly all secesh—a few claim Union. Not a young man can be found in the place. The remaining males here had been enrolled for the service, and would have been called away in a few days. I hardly think they will go now.

Contrabands [slaves] are coming in large numbers. Many of them are set to work; what becomes of the rest I do not know.4

The brigade camped for the evening just northwest of town, awaiting its next orders.5

**Sgt. William Lochren Probably Described**

best what transpired before the brigade awoke the next day: “During the night the printers of the regiment took possession of the office of the Berryville Conservator, and in the morning following issued a large edition of *The First Minnesota*, a small paper of four pages, which sold readily, not only in the regiment but in all the surrounding camps. It was filled with a rollicking mixture of humor and patriotism, jibes upon the runaway editor of the Conservator, and the fleeing ‘secesh,’ and good advice to the inhabitants, which they were unlikely to profit by.”6

---

*Thomas H. Pressnell, about 1862; he first entered the printing office through a window.*

Pvt. Thomas H. Pressnell of Company C, who claimed to have started in the printing business at the tender age of eight, confessed his role in the endeavor many years later: “The first night we were in town I had a camp leave of absence, and going down the streets of the village noticed the printing office, and the idea struck me that it would be a good thing for the boys of the association to take possession and issue a paper, provided we could get permission of the proper authorities. I eluded the guard in front of the shop and entered by the way of one of the windows.”7

Once inside, he noted:

It was one of the best equipped little printing offices I had ever seen, and I found that the outside page of the next issue of the paper had already been printed and lay on the “bank.” Everything was in good shape, and I concluded to get the rest of the boys together and get out a paper.

I left the office and soon met Ed A. Stevens [Co. B] . . . and Frank J. Mead [Co. H] . . . and they agreed to go into the deal with me. We went to the general’s headquarters and soon had an order to take possession of the printing office and go ahead getting out the paper. We asked Ole Nelson [Co. A], Charles S. Drake [Co. A] and Julian J. Kendall [Co. H] . . . and Henry W. Lindergreen [Co. H] . . . to assist us, and soon took over the whole plant.

As our time was somewhat limited, we used the outside part of the edition, which had already been printed for the Conservator and printed the first edition of the “First Minnesota” on the other side. The next morning they were distributed among the soldiers and brought all kinds of prices from 5 cents to a dollar each.

All seven men are listed in the masthead of the Minnesota sheet. Several had worked for Minnesota newspapers before enlisting; now, as war correspondents, they used pen names so they could write freely without fearing retribution from officers or fellow soldiers. Ole Nelson sent dispatches to the *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat* under the name of Private, and Stevens was Raisins...
placed in a chase—essentially, the metal frame of a page. Usually, printers pulled a proof page to check for errors before locking the galleys into the chase, which was then carried to the bed of the press.11

Next, the galley was inked. By the 1860s, inking rollers were common, replacing the ink balls of leather that had to be pounded. One printer would run the inked roller across the type, an action he would have to repeat for each impression. A piece of damp paper was then laid over the type, and a second printer used a rotating crank to move the bed of the press under the platen. He pulled a lever to lower the platen onto the sheet, making the impression. After releasing the lever to raise the platen, he cranked the bed back out, and the page was removed and hung to dry. This method was an updated variation of the technique required for Gutenberg’s flat-bed printing press of the 1400s. Technology had much improved by 1862, but the shop in Berryville was still using an older hand press.

Despite the physical labor involved, printing was a time-honored craft that often attracted literate, ambitious men as young as 12 years. Apprentice printers, called devils, learned to manipulate type and arrange it to his *Stillwater Messenger* audience. Mead, who had previously worked for the *Hastings Independent* and the *State Atlas* (Minneapolis), now wrote for them as Howitzer and Handell, respectively.8

Others would put on printing aprons while in Berryville. Sgt. John R. Mars of Company H was listed in the masthead of the second issue, and Myron Shepard later claimed: “I also wrote two or three short articles for the ‘Berryville Conservator,’ having had some experience as an editor.” Thomas M. Aldrich of the Rhode Island Battery A remembered: “We remained at Berryville throughout the 12th, and one of our corporals, H. Vincent Butler, with some of the First Minnesota men, took possession of the printing-office and printed a number of copies.”9

Unfortunately, it is not known who wrote the articles, since at this time it was not common practice to credit authors. The title “printer” took in all publishing roles. As had been the case for centuries, many small newspapers were owned, operated, and edited by the same person. It was generally understood, however, that the proprietor took credit for editorials.10

The craft of printing demanded mental dexterity to write copy; coordination to compose type, reversed for printing; and hard physical labor. Printers would work up a sweat carrying the heavy lead type and pulling the press, all the while inhaling the distinctive smells of wet paper and printer’s ink. The type was selected from a type case and arranged, one letter at a time, in a composing stick. When full, the stick was placed on a flat tray with raised sides, called a galley; galleys formed the newspaper columns. They were checked for accuracy and placed in a chase—essentially, the metal frame of a page. Usually, printers pulled a proof page to check for errors before locking the galleys into the chase, which was then carried to the bed of the press.11

“It was one of the best equipped little printing offices I had ever seen. . . . Everything was in good shape, and I concluded to get the rest of the boys together and get out a paper.”

from left to right: Printer Frank J. Mead, about 1861. Julian J. Kendall, about 1862, another member of the typographical fraternity. Henry W. Lindergreen, about 1862; like several of his comrades, he continued in the newspaper business after the war. Edward A. Stevens, aka Raisins, from a 1901 First Minnesota reunion photo.
into eye-pleasing combinations through verbal instructions from a journeyman or a master printer. Later, as journeymen, they were free to work for wages or establish their own printing offices—if they had financial backing. Ironically, very little instruction was passed along by way of the printed word. Tradition, customs, and techniques were orally transmitted.12

**THE BERRYVILLE CONSERVATOR HAD BEEN A**

weekly newspaper: one sheet, 16-by-22 inches, printed on both sides and folded, making four pages. Since three pages had been put up by the paper’s owner, H. K. Gregg, when Pressnell found the office, only one—inside, to the right of the fold—was blank. The front page was already datelined BERRYVILLE, VA., WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 1862. In retrospect, this date has caused confusion, as the Minnesota printers released the paper on Tuesday, March 11.13

The first page-and-a-half of the Conservator was devoted to a truncated version of Confederate Gen. Joseph Johnston’s official report, dated October 14, 1861, on the battle of Bull Run. Below it, the typographical fraternity found enough space to add: “[The above is all that was in type of the report, and the copy could not be found—more’s the pity—Eds. First Minnesota].” The paper also listed the standing committees of the Confederate States Congress and offered a page-and-a-half of advertisements from Berryville and Winchester. Several of these promised rewards for the return of runaway slaves. In another, titled “To the Brave Soldiers of the South,” merchant C. B. Rouss proclaimed: “We take this occasion to renew the offer of $20,000 for the head of Lincoln, or $1,000 for either of his pet Kangaroos. Also to say that we are selling goods very cheap, and expect a little lot this week from the Abolition Devils.”

Page three, titled First Minnesota, carried a reading line: “published by a detachment of the Typographical Fraternity of the First Minnesota Regiment.” Soldiers from the regiment had formed this fraternity long before making their newspaper. Thomas Pressnell would later write sociability was encouraged, and officers and men mingled freely in this feature of camp life, due respect, of course, being observed, as to rank and rights . . . .

The printers in the regiment organized what we called the “Typographical Fraternity of the First Minnesota Regiment” composed of both officers and men, but the general management of which was gallantly accorded to the enlisted men. This Association became the social club of the regiment and many were the pleasant gatherings around its boards at “The Swamp” (the name we gave to our headquarters) at which the general questions of the day, and others, of a literary nature were freely discussed by all who chose to be present and participate. The principal function pulled off by our Association was a grand banquet given during the holidays . . . which was generally attended.14

Below the names of the printers—Stevens, Pressnell, Nelson, Drake, Mead, Kendall, and Lindergreen—in the *First Minnesota*’s masthead was a quote from Scottish poet Robert Burns: “A chiel’s [fellow’s] amang ye takin’ notes, An’ faith he’ll pret ‘em.” The page began with an editorial, “To Our Friends,” explaining the circumstances that brought the men to Berryville, to the printer’s shop, and to their decision to print the newspaper. “An Apology,” too, was editorial in nature: “Our short residence in Berryville, and the sudden absquatulation of the local editor, is our apology for the meagre variety in the local column. Our enterprising and progressive nature forbids that this state of things shall long be suffered to exist, and as soon as we can find a young man of satisfactory qualifications, we promise our readers a Local Department— instructive, entertaining, and a faithful mirror of ‘men and things’ in and around Berryville.”15

Several articles made fun of the Conservator’s “run away editor,” Gregg, taking him to task for various issues but mainly for being anti-Union: “He formerly held forth here, and at this desk where we are now writing, with the same pen and ink—we had almost said the same paper, but thank God, the paper has never been polluted by his foul touch—and sent forth column after column in vile abuse of the best government the world has ever known—the government that towered above all others, and on whose banners might be written ‘peerless.’”

Another mocking article, “Too Bad,” revealed: “‘Please don’t handle the type,’ are the words posted on the wall. We are sorry, Mr. Gregg, that we must disregard your injunction, but these are troublesome times, and really we couldn’t help it. You make an e-Gregg-ious error.” Most of the other stories were short and, no doubt, hurried due to the looming morning deadline. There were small items
LATEST NEWS
FROM
RECESSION.

REBELLIONIST.

DEPARTED ORDERS FROM THE FIRST
MENNITORS,* D. C. MCKINLEY, N. I. AND
WENDT.

From Arkansas!
Great Battle!

A Glorious Victory!
Big Haul!

Gen. Curtis Routed!

All the Enemy's Cannon,
18,000 Stand of Arms,
Camp Equipment,
Ammunition,
Taken!

Bagout Charge!

The Yankees Run!

Cavalry in Pursuit!

Desperate Fighting!
Our Loss Three Thousand
Killed and Wounded!

Loss of the Enemy over
Seventy Thousand!

Memphis, Tn., Nov. 31.

A special messenger from Gen.
Price's army brings the joyful infor-
mation that our forces have acquired a
great victory over the combined forces of
Gen. Curtis and other Yankee leaders.
The particulars are withhold, but it may
not be amiss to state, that the Northern
invaders are the number of twenty thou-
sand men, ventured to bear arms, and
were attacked by a portion of the ill-
known forces of Gen. Price, McCook and
Van Dorn. The fight lasted for four
days, and was decided in favor of a
brilliant bayonet charge all along the
line. The enemy took to their heels,
shewing away everything that could
impose their progress. The artillery-
mans mounted their horses and pren-
tantly ran, leaving all their cannon.
It was worse than Bull Run. We have
taken a large amount of camp equipage
over 15,000 stand of arms, and a lot of
ammunition. The fighting was desper-
ate; one loss being over two thousand
killed and wounded, while the enemy has
over seven thousand, dead and prisoners.
Full particulars will soon be given.

FALL IN!
Who Wouldn't Be a Soldier!

Our Musical Friend

Fellow of the Minnesota First

Just Arrived

with

Choice Assortment

of

Wearing Apparel!!!

Eatables!

Tobacco, Cigars, Pipes!

Boots!

Woolen Shirts!

Flannel Drawers!

Stocks, Suspenders!

Prime Hams!

Butter Cheese & Lard!

Lobsters!

Preserved Peaches!

Pickles and Sweet Leaf!

Chewing Tobacco!

Kinnikinnick

SMOKING TOBACCO

Cigars

AND

1001

OTHER ARTICLES

Send the name of the store
GIVE HIM A CALL!
about the brigade and more jokes—surely including the boast that “the boys . . . have ordered 10,000 copies for their friends in the great Northwest.”

Printer Ole Nelson was quite impressed with his regiment’s new fatigue duty: “We have made the office of the Berryville Conservator our headquarters during our sojourn with the secesh inhabitants of Berryville,” he told readers of the St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat in a dispatch written on March 11. “The office, to our great surprise, was in a neat and orderly condition, with sufficient type for publishing a small weekly paper, and a hand press. The outside of the weekly issue designed for tomorrow, was worked off, and from it we judged the circulation of the Conservator to be about two hundred.”

The brigade’s concern, of course, was the war, and in the same dispatch Nelson reported back home: “This morning a detachment of Van Allen’s Cavalry made a reconnaissance [sic] to within three miles of Winchester, surprising a squad of rebel cavalry.” Stonewall Jackson knew that he could not hold Winchester against the larger, oncoming federal force. He would soon evacuate the city, heading south into the Shenandoah Valley but leaving cavalry to cover his retreat.

As it turned out, Tuesday, March 11 was relatively calm for the First Minnesota, and most of the men remained in camp. Isaac L. Taylor reported in his diary: “Strolled about town to take a view of things generally. Came very near being arrested but finally succeeded in eluding the patrol . . . Secesh in this town are very meek & ‘studiously refrain’ from exhibiting Secession proclivities.”

Sgt. James Wright of Company F recorded the military duties of the day in his diary: “In the afternoon, wagons came up with rations and tents, and we started to pitch our tents, but at about the same time there was an alarm, and we at once prepared to march. Going to the front, we found it not to be a serious matter and we returned to the camp before night.”

Apparent the Printers’ Work of the Night Before Paid Off. They did such brisk business that they decided to print an evening issue, too. This one was a single 11-by-16-inch sheet printed on both sides, datelined Berryville, Va., Tuesday, March 11, 1862, and labeled Second Edition. Above the date ran the motto, “Death to Traitors!” The longest articles on the first page were reprints from the morning paper, and some of the earlier first-page material was reproduced on this issue’s back page. Much of the new writing was tongue-in-cheek, presumably including the claim that the morning’s 10,000 copies were “exhausted soon after daylight,” prompting the men to produce 15,000 copies of the second edition. This would have been an impossible feat, as a skilled printer could produce about 250 impressions an hour on a hand press.

When the new publishers reproduced Conservator articles, they often added their own commentary. For example, to the original notice, “Change: A new and beautiful flag was yesterday run up on the Secession pole in this place,” they elaborated, “And yesterday a white flag was seen in its place, it soon came down, though.” They also reprinted three of the Conservator’s original ads “as a specimen of modern advertising in the South.” One was Rouss’s reward offer, to which the men added: “Read it, and remember he lives in Winchester, where we are going.”

There was serious news, too. The back page included Brig. Gen. Willis A. Gorman’s General Order No. 3, which posted guards throughout the town to protect its citizens and their property. The order proclaimed: “Laxity of discipline will demoralise any army, while crime, disorder, and licentiousness are unknown among obedient and orderly troops.”

The back page also introduced a feature that would recur in the third issue: “Latest News from Secessia. Reported Exclusively for the First Minnesota by Grapevine Telegraph and Wheelbarrow Express.” These short bulletins purported to be Confederate news flashes: “England to Recognise the C.S.A.!” “Generals Gorman and Abercrombie Taken Prisoners!” “President Davis is better this morning. He has winked twice during the last ten hours.”

Written by soldiers for soldiers, the First Minnesota not only offers a glimpse of regimental camp life, duties, and attitudes but also preserves slang terms, some of them not documented elsewhere. “Secessia” no doubt denotes the Confederate states. “Wheelbarrow express” is a humorous oxymoron. “Grapevine telegraph” referred to camp rumors, best described by Sgt. Wright in the winter of 1861–62 at Camp Stone.

One thing surprised me then—and I have wondered at it since—how some of the boys managed to get so much information as to what was being done and what it was planned to do. Every day had its story of what was to be done on the morrow, but when tomorrow came it failed to “materialize.” Many fanciful stories were current in
camp for the week preceding the march for Bull Run. Of course, they soon failed to pass current and were referred to as "grapevine dispatches". It is certain that someone had a brilliant and super-heated imagination.\textsuperscript{20}

Describing the newspapers in his March 22 dispatch to the \textit{St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat}, Nelson used a little artistic license, repeating the claim that the typographical fraternity had printed 10,000 copies of the first issue and 15,000 of the second. Stevens's March 13 report to the \textit{Stillwater Messenger} more accurately related, "The circulation of the old sheet was quite small, and towards night we issued a second edition of over 1,500 copies." That night, Isaac Taylor recorded in his diary that this second edition sold for five cents a copy. He then contentedly described the evening: "Bills now being in the advance we are allowed fires to night. Our tents now arrived we rejoice in expectation of a good sleep."\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Wednesday, March 12 Was a Time to Rest}

and prepare for future orders. No paper was issued, but the printers were busy collecting copy. Patrick H. Taylor (Isaac's brother) summed up the day in his diary: "Day dawns beautifully. I slept well last night. Van Allen's cav[alry] drill the charge. Long roll in evening."\textsuperscript{22}

It looked as if the next day might bring some action, though not for the typographical fraternity. "Early Thursday morning, we left the camp and 'struck the pike' for Winchester," Sgt. Wright reported, "where it was thought the main force of the enemy in the Valley was located." As the men began their march, the First Minnesota's newly assigned leader, Col. Alfred Sully, caught up with the regiment and took command. Stevens reported favorably to the \textit{Stillwater Messenger}, "Colonel Sully . . . is here. He is evidently a fine officer, has a good voice, and is well liked. My opinion is that he will wear well." The brigade was no more than two miles from Winchester when it was ordered back to Berryville. Jackson's forces had retreated early the morning before.\textsuperscript{23}

Stevens also sent his Stillwater readers some intelligence from the grapevine telegraph. Writing on March 13, he related: "It is probable that we move again to-morrow, and that we will soon leave the 'Old Dominion' for the third time—this time, however, not as a military necessity. Where we shall go none of us can tell, although many do tell. The general opinion appears to be, on a 'sea-board excursion,' or a 'military coast survey.'"\textsuperscript{24}

His dispatch continued with news of the impromptu newspaper. "To-day the press has been running since early dawn, and will be kept running most of the night—we printers didn't go to Winchester. If we leave in the morning, we shall relinquish our office to Mr. Gregg, the late proprietor; he hid the first day, but finding that citizens were not injured or arrested, he came out of his hole, visited our office and found us at work."

The third issue of the regimental newspaper was probably sold Thursday evening, given that it included news gained on the day's march to Winchester. Another 11-by-16 sheet printed on both sides, this final edition was datelined: \textit{Berryville, Va., Thursday, March 13, 1862}. Again, an editorial— "What we are here for"—led off. In candid language, it spoke for preserving the Union rather than for emancipation.

There can be no greater mistake made than the one we find so prevalent in the secession districts that the Union troops have invaded the south for the purpose of interfering with the peculiar institutions thereof, or that their object is to desolate the land or oppress the inhabitants. We came on no such errands. The people of the south have been our friends,—our brothers. Our fathers fought side by side to achieve our independence and afterwards to maintain our national honor and integrity. Together North and South have grown up and become a mighty nation. . . .

We ask no questions as to slavery or emancipation, it is none of our business. . . . But we strike for the Union and the Constitution and the old flag. If traitors and rebels are hurt it can't be helped—push on the column.

A short satire on the second page, "A Specimen," included a fanciful image of a five-cent note, poking fun at corporation scrip, the paper money issued in small denominations by southern communities. In Virginia, scrip could be redeemed in state banknotes if presented in quantities of at least five dollars. Coins, having ap-
precipated above face value, were being hoarded, and this paper money—“shinplasters”—was virtually worthless, lacking adequate backing and further devalued by inflation. The currency was said to resemble bandages for sore legs.) The printers let it be known that “We do not take them—remember that.” The rest of the paper contained camp news, editor bashing, and an advertisement of items for sale by the regiment’s sutler, Oscar King.

March 14 Found the First Minnesota

leaving Berryville for good. Writing from Bolivar Heights, Virginia, on March 16, Stevens reported to the Stillwater Messenger, “At nine o’clock on Friday morning our regiment left Berryville, and at three o’clock our tents were pitched near Charlestown, Va.” Patrick Taylor’s diary entry noted: “camped in the woods east of town. ‘Se-cesh’ think we are retreat ing and seem pleased.” Stevens gave his final summary of the regiment’s newspaper in his March 16 dispatch: “The publication of the First Minnesota has been suspended for the present.—Nearly four thousand copies were printed. The regiment is advertised. Items are plenty, but time—‘there’s the rub.’”

Years later, printer Frank Mead recalled the Berryville publication and its editor: “The entire supply of paper, collected and husbanded by Mr. Gregg, the confederate proprietor, against the blockade, was used up in printing The First Minnesota, and the office was left desolate. Mr. Gregg was arrested and imprisoned for all round disloyalty by Secretary of War Stanton, and spent several months at Fort Warren in Boston Harbor.”

About two weeks after the division left Berryville, however, the 27th Indiana Regiment printed its own newspaper, The Haversack, on the Berryville press. Perhaps Mead exaggerated when he claimed to have used up the paper supply. In any case, Gregg never reestablished his newspaper. And the printers of the First Minnesota? They were grateful to Gorman for letting them practice their trade, but they, too, issued no more newspapers during the war.

The First Minnesota would see serious action in the coming years. The grapevine dispatches about a “sea-board excursion” were correct. Once back in Washington, the regiment headed down the Potomac River to start McClellan’s march to Richmond: the bloody Peninsula campaign. Later that year, the men would find themselves fighting at Antietam and Fredericksburg. Then in 1863 came their famous charge downhill to the dry streambed of Plum Run at Gettysburg.

First Minnesota corps insignia, part of its silvering still intact

As for the members of the typographical fraternity: Edward Stevens was sent to work as a printer in Gen. McClellan’s headquarters later in 1862, never to return to the regiment. After the war, he remained in the newspaper business. He owned his own paper in Minneapolis, the Gopher Mirror, but lost it to a fire in 1874. Stevens may have been the person who convinced his acquaintance, publisher and salesman Jacob H. Heisser of Minneapolis, to reprint and sell copies of the first issue of the Berryville Conservator/First Minnesota in the 1890s.

Charles Drake was wounded at Antietam in 1862 and never returned to active duty. After the war he worked in St. Paul as a life-long printer. Julian Kendall, wounded at Savage Station, would become a traveling salesman after the war and retire in California. Ole Nelson, a printer in St. Paul before enlisting, had owned his own Norwegian-language newspaper, Folkets Röst (The Voice of the People) for a few months in 1858. During the Peninsula campaign, he and fraternity members Frank Mead and Henry Lindergreen—as well as many others—suffered the effects of malaria and/or dysentery. Mead and Lindergreen left the regiment, “discharged for disability,” in 1862. In July, Mead was detailed as a printer to McClellan’s headquarters, but he continued to suffer illness and was discharged in December. Both he and Lindergreen would survive and return to the newspaper business. Nelson, however, died in September while hospitalized in Virginia.

Finally, Thomas Pressnell, although wounded several times, reenlisted after the First Minnesota had served its three-year term. He finished as a captain, having fought through the entire war. Afterwards, he continued as a printer, working for various newspapers and eventually settling in Duluth. Pressnell, like Mead, later wrote down his memories of serving in the First Minnesota.

The Berryville Conservator/First Minnesota edition—two newspapers in one—happened to be the first of two instances in which the First Minnesota and Confederate counterparts were tangibly joined. During Pickett’s Charge on the third day of the battle of Gettysburg, the staff of the First Minnesota’s national flag was severed by a minie ball, severely wounding flag bearer Cpl. John Dehn. After the battle,
the men of the First Minnesota spliced the remnant of their flagstaff to a piece they broke from a captured Confederate staff, holding the two together with brass tacks and a leather strap from a knapsack. The symbolism was clear, as a later regimental history proclaimed. Like the earlier joint newspaper, the spliced flagstaff “formed an indissoluble union, and thus united held aloft the Union colors thereafter.”32

Notes


4. “Army Correspondence From the Minnesota First,” *Stillwater Messenger*, Apr. 1, 1862, p. 2. Stevens sent frequent dispatches; this issue of the weekly paper ran two columns worth of them, each dated, under one headline.

5. In 1861 Gen. Benjamin Butler refused to return to their owner three slaves who entered his camp, calling them “contraband of war” and claiming that citizens of seceded states were not protected by federal law; James A. Wright, *No More a Gallant a Deed: A Civil War Memoir of the First Minnesota Volunteers*, ed. Steven J. Krellor (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001), 44.


11. Harris, *Blue & Gray in Black & White*, 83.


13. All quotes here and below are from the newspapers (original, reprint, and microfilm copies), MHS.


15. Absquatulate, meaning to depart in a hurry, is a characteristic example of nineteenth-century American word play. The slight misquote is from Burns’s “On the Late Captain Grose’s Peregrinations Thro’ Scotland.”


22. Patrick Henry Taylor, Diary, Mar. 12 [1862], in private possession. The “long roll,” a prolonged drum roll, signaled troops to prepare as quickly as possible for line of battle or other action.


27. Mead, “First Minnesota Regiment,” 32, Moe research files, MHS. Gregg’s imprisonment could not be confirmed. Most documents on Civil War prisoners at Fort Warren were burned after World War II when the fort was decommissioned; Jay Schmidt, webmaster, History of Fort Warren, home.comcast.net/~jay.schmidt/ft.warren. *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* lists many prisoners but has nothing on Gregg.


29. For details, see Moe, *Last Full Measure*, 120–297.

30. Biographies, www.1stminnesota.net. Heisser’s reprint has been mistaken for an original, but the paper on which it was printed is less durable and the copies are marred by blotches, the result of tears or holes in the original. Stevens and Heisser were both members of the Knights of Pythias, and Stevens helped Heisser form a lodge; William D. Kennedy, *Pythian History* (Chicago: Pythian History Publishing Co., 1904), 2: 831–37.

31. Here and below, www.1stminnesota.net. On Mead’s later career, see Mead, “First Minnesota Regiment,” 2 (editor’s overview); on Lindgreen, *Duluth Herald*, May 31, 1907, p. 1.


The printing press is an advertisement reprinted in Harold E. Sterne, *Catalogue of Nineteenth Century Printing Presses. All other images are in MHS collections, including p. 266, photo by Sandra Peterson/MHS.*