1863 was a pivotal year—a “game changer” in modern parlance—for the course and consequence of the American Civil War. After two bloody years, it was brutally clear to both North and South that the conflict was going to be long and costly, not the brief affair some politicians and military leaders had presumed in 1861. Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, issued in January, changed the tenor of the war as well. It was no longer simply a fight to preserve the Union; a new moral imperative had been embraced—the death of slavery. This paradigm shift for the North meant that there was no place for compromise. If the North were to be victorious, then the South would have to be subdued.

1863 was also a year of spectacle, transformation, and turmoil. The enlistment of black troops, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the flight of African Americans from slavery as the Union Army moved into the South foreshadowed changes to the framework of American society and challenged white America’s perspective on race. Draft riots in New York City, bread riots in Richmond, Virginia, and resistance to the war...
in the North and South alike led to upheaval on the home front.

Some of the war’s largest and most important campaigns provided the spectacle as well as dreadfully long casualty lists. The concurrent Union victories at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and Vicksburg, Mississippi, in July 1863 marked a crucial turning point. At Gettysburg, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee lost a critical engagement and returned to Virginia with a battered army that would never again be able to launch a major offensive. With the Confederate surrender of Vicksburg, the Union Army secured control of the Mississippi River, a vital transportation source for northern commerce, and effectively split the Confederacy in half. Coming the day after Lee’s defeat at Gettysburg, the fall of Vicksburg also had a significant impact on morale, North and South. Southerners wondered if their dream of independence could be sustained, while northerners renewed their hope for a reunited country.

Minnesota’s soldiers played key roles at both pivotal engagements, with the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry making a sacrificial charge to hold the Union line at Gettysburg, and the Fourth Minnesota Volunteer Infantry being among the first Federal troops to enter Vicksburg. The Fifth Minnesota Volunteer Infantry and the First Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery also served as veteran campaigners in the seven-month battle for Vicksburg, while the Third Minnesota Volunteer Infantry participated in the final push to take the city. The First Minnesota’s exploits at Gettysburg propelled the regiment to legendary status as one of the most distinguished fighting units of the Civil War, while the Vicksburg Campaign added luster to the reputation of Minnesota units that had fought with distinction at Shiloh, Tennessee, and Iuka and Corinth, Mississippi.

Vicksburg also played a part in restoring the morale and stature of the Third Minnesota Infantry, which had been deceived by Confederate cavalry commander Nathan Bedford Forrest into surrendering at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on July 13, 1862.

Hallowed Ground: Gettysburg

Following on the heels of his brilliant victory at the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863, Lee led his Army of Northern Virginia in a second invasion of the North. (An unsuccessful campaign was waged in Maryland in September 1862.) With his men in high spirits, Lee planned to secure provisions from the rich Pennsylvania farmlands and take the fighting away from war-torn Virginia. He also hoped that winning a major victory on northern soil might bring the Federals closer to peace negotiations. Urged by President Lincoln, Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker sent his Union Army of the Potomac in pursuit but was relieved of command just three days before the battle. His replacement, Maj. Gen. George G. Meade, moved northward, keeping his army between Lee and Washington, D.C. When Lee discovered that Meade was in Pennsylvania, he concentrated his army in the vicinity of Gettysburg.

Elements of the two armies collided west and north of the town on July 1, 1863; the Confederates pushed the Federals back through Gettysburg to Culp’s Hill and Cemetery Ridge, south of town. Reinforcements from both armies arrived that evening, including the First Minnesota Infantry as part of Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock’s Second Army Corps.

The First Minnesota had the distinction of being the first state volunteer regiment formally tendered in response to President Lincoln’s call for 75,000 troops in 1861. Organized at Fort Snelling on April 29, 1861, and re-mustered for three years of service on May 10, the First Minnesota had its baptism by fire on July 21, 1861, at Bull Run, where it was among the last units to retire from the field and suffered some of the heaviest casualties of any Union regiment. Its men served faithfully throughout 1862, including at the battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg and in the Peninsula Campaign, but their true test of courage came on the second day at Gettysburg.

On the morning of July 2 the First Minnesota was situated on the left of the Federal line along Cemetery Ridge as part of a fishhook-shaped defensive position that stretched across the hills and ridges south of Gettysburg. The regiment had roughly a third of its original complement of 1,000 men reporting for duty under the command of Col. William Colvill of Red Wing.

In the afternoon, Lee launched a heavy assault on the Union left flank, and fierce fighting raged at Devil’s Den, Little Round Top, the Wheatfield, and Cemetery Ridge. About 6 P.M., Confederate brigades attacked near the Peach Orchard on the Emmitsburg Road. Eight companies of the First Minnesota Infantry were in support of Company C of the Fourth U.S. Artillery, and from their posi-

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tion they watched as Union troops of the Third Army Corps retreated in disorder. Desperate to halt the Confederate advance until reserves could arrive, Gen. Hancock rode out to Col. Colvill and ordered the vastly outnumbered First Minnesota to attack.

Lt. William Lochren of Company K later recalled, “Every man realized in an instant what that order meant—death or wounds to us all; the sacrifice of the regiment to gain a few minutes time and save the position, and probably the battlefield—and every man saw and accepted the necessity for the sacrifice.” Advancing 300 yards over open ground, the regiment halted at the dry streambed of Plum Run to fire their muskets, then commenced their charge with leveled bayonets. “Bullets whistled past us, shells screamed over us; canister and grape fell about us,” wrote Sgt. Alfred Carpenter of Company K. “Comrade after comrade dropped from the ranks; but on the line went. No one took a second look at his fallen companion. We had no time to weep.”

The Confederates met the attack with great resistance, but the Minnesotans held firm until reserves arrived. The First Minnesota had fulfilled its mission, but at a terrible price; historians estimate that likely 60 to 80 percent of those participating in the charge became casualties, including Col. Colvill, who was wounded in the right shoulder and right ankle. With Colvill disabled.
and most of his officers killed or wounded, command of the regiment devolved to Capt. Nathan S. Messick of Company G. Although the Confederates had gained ground, the Union defenders still held strong positions by the end of the day.

The battle reached its climax on July 3 with Pickett’s Charge, a dramatic Confederate infantry assault against the center of the Union line on Cemetery Ridge. Despite the appalling casualties suffered the previous day, the First Minnesota was again called upon to stem a rising tide of enemy soldiers. Sgt. James Wright of Company F watched as about 12,000 Confederate troops crossed nearly a mile of open ground toward the Union line. “It was a magnificent spectacle. A rising tide of armed men rolling toward us in steel crested billows,” Wright recalled. At about 200 yards, the Minnesotans opened fire. “Their front line went down like grass before the scythe,” remembered one veteran. The Minnesotans just happened to be positioned at one of the few places where Union lines were breached and, as a result, charged the advancing Confederates one last time as a unit. The fighting became frantic, as recounted by the First Minnesota’s Lt. William Harmon of Company C: “If men ever become devils, that was one of the times. We were crazy with the excitement of the fight. We just rushed in like wild beasts. Men swore and cursed and struggled and fought, grappled in hand-to-hand fight, threw stones, clubbed their muskets, kicked, yelled and hurrahed.”

It was here that Pvt. Marshall Sherman of Company C captured the flag of the Twenty-Eighth Virginia Infantry, for which he was awarded the Medal of Honor. Cpl. Henry D. O’Brien of Company E also received the Medal of Honor for seizing the regimental colors after they had fallen and then leading his comrades in a charge against the advancing Confederates. Pickett’s Charge was repulsed at great expense to the Confederate army, which suffered nearly 5,600 casualties. Union losses numbered about 1,500, including 17 killed and wounded in the First Minnesota. Shot in the head, commanding officer Messick was among the dead; the regiment was taken over by Capt. Henry C. Coates of St. Paul. Although virtually decimated at Gettysburg, the First Minnesota continued in the Army of the Potomac, serving later in 1863 in the Bristoe and Mine Run campaigns. It was mustered out of service upon completion of its enlistment on April 29, 1864, at Fort Snelling. Enough of its veterans reenlisted to form the nucleus of the First Minnesota Battalion of Infantry, which returned to Virginia and served through the end of the war.

“If men ever become devils, that was one of the times. We were crazy with the excitement of the fight.”

Site of Pickett’s Charge photographed 20 years later
By the mid-nineteenth century, the mighty Mississippi River had become America’s economic super highway, connecting the nation’s abundance of agricultural products to world markets. With the onset of the Civil War, the South imposed restrictions on navigation, which threatened to hinder the North’s commercial interests. Situated on a high river bluff, Vicksburg was the nexus of the Confederacy, serving, in the words of its president Jefferson Davis, as “the nailhead that held the South’s two halves together.” President Lincoln, who had piloted a flatboat down the Mississippi River to New Orleans as a young man, recognized the strategic importance of subduing Vicksburg and wresting control of the river. “Vicksburg is the key,” he declared to his military leaders in a strategy session. “The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket.”

Union land and naval forces began their campaign to gain control of the river in the spring of 1862. Moving swiftly from two directions in a converging attack, Union troops pouring south from Cairo, Illinois, seized Forts Henry and Donelson on the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers, respectively, opening the pathway of invasion to the Deep South. Continuing the drive, Union forces won victories at Shiloh in April—where the First Minnesota Light Artillery saw intense combat at the legendary Hornets’ Nest—and Corinth in May, where the Second, Fourth, and Fifth Minnesota Infantry were engaged.

Under the command of flag officer David Farragut, Federal naval forces captured New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Natchez before turning their attention to Vicksburg. Starting in late May, Farragut’s ships inflicted a steady bombardment on the city for three months, but the Confederates stood firm and the Union fleet, plagued by illness, withdrew to New Orleans.

Knowing that the city could only be taken by a joint land and naval assault, Confederate commanders were determined to make Vicksburg a fortress. Its natural defense features—sharp, narrow ridges fronted by steep ravines—were supplemented with nine forts connected by trenches encircling the city and garrisoned by 30,000 troops commanded by Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton. In November 1862, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, commander of the Union Army of the Tennessee, attempted a two-pronged attack, splitting his forces with Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman. Grant’s plan was to divert Confederate forces with an offensive on the Mississippi Central Railroad while Sherman made a direct assault on Vicksburg by water.

Among Grant’s forces were the First Minnesota Light Artillery, commanded by Capt. Emil D. Munch of Chengwatana Township (Pine County); the Fourth Minnesota Infantry, led by former Minnesota state senator and adjutant general John B. Sanborn; and seven companies of the Fifth Minnesota Infantry under future governor Lucius F. Hubbard. The Minnesotans served primarily as skirmishers and were not heavily engaged; the offensive was curtailed without success when Grant’s caches of supplies were destroyed in a series of daring Confederate cavalry raids led by generals Nathan Bedford Forrest and Earl Van Dorn. With the onset of winter, Grant sought refuge for his army at Milliken’s Bend and Young’s Point, Louisiana, on the Mississippi River opposite Vicksburg. There, Federal forces stockpiled supplies and contemplated their options for the spring.

In late March 1863, Grant launched the next phase of the campaign with another joint operation. While his infantry opened a road from Milliken’s Bend to Hard Times Landing to prepare for a crossing,
Union vessels ran past Vicksburg’s batteries on April 16, giving Grant the means to cross the river. On April 30 more than 22,000 Union soldiers, including the Fourth Minnesota Infantry (assigned to Gen. James B. McPherson’s Seventeenth Army Corps and led by Lt. Col. John E. Tourtellotte of Mankato) and the Fifth Minnesota Infantry (assigned to Sherman’s Fifteenth Army Corps), landed on Mississippi soil and began a 17-day campaign to disrupt Confederate supply lines feeding into Vicksburg. After capturing Jackson, the state capital, on May 14, Grant’s forces won another victory two days later at Champion Hill, where the Fourth Minnesota took 118 Confederate prisoners. Rebel forces were dealt another defeat the following day at Big Black River Bridge, forcing them to retreat into the defenses of Vicksburg.

Grant attacked on May 19, beginning with an artillery barrage that included the two 12-pound howitzers and four 6-pound rifled guns of the First Minnesota Light Artillery. The battery would participate in a daily cannonade of Vicksburg for the next six weeks. William Christie, who served in the unit with his brother Thomas, vividly depicted the scene in a letter to his father:

This morning at three o’clock the Batteries of Gen. Grant’s Army at his Place, opened at once on the doomed city of Vicksburgh, And the effects of such a sight almost defies description. The line extends some eight miles around the Besieged town. . . . Now just stand with me on the Point where our Battery is Placed, and see the vivid flashes of the Guns, like lightning, and the showering of shell, as they made there quick curves through the air, hissing and hurtling, and finnally explodding with a report almost as loud as the Gun.4

This direct assault was turned back, although some Federal units did plant their colors on the parapets of the city. After making a more through reconnaissance of the ground, a determined Grant launched a second offensive with a larger force on May 22. Many did not relish the thought of making another assault on the formidable defenses. Richard S. Reeves, a drummer with Company F of the Fourth Minnesota, recorded the apprehension in camp: “You can see many with long faces sitting down awaiting their doom. . . . I all most felt as though my days was reckoned myself. . . . The word comes fall in. You can see lots with tears in their eyes. They can see death staring...
them in the face but duty calls them and they go." 

Following a four-hour bombardment, Grant’s men—including the Fourth and Fifth Minnesota Infantry—attacked along a three-mile front. The Federals once again briefly penetrated Confederate lines but were repelled and sustained more than 3,000 casualties. The Fourth Minnesota suffered 12 dead and 42 wounded, while the Fifth Minnesota lost 2 men and 1 wounded. The Fifth Minnesota’s adjutant Thomas P. Gere wrote later that day, “The assault was made; through those terrible ravines; the slaughter was awful; our brave boys fell like leaves in autumn; our army was repulsed, having lost many men and gained nothing. . . . This day will long be remembered by thousands.”

Undeterred by these costly defeats, Grant laid siege to Vicksburg, extending his lines and choking off the city’s routes of resupply. The Third Minnesota Infantry, which had served in the U.S.–Dakota War since its parole after Murfreesboro, arrived on June 8 and was positioned northeast of Vicksburg to prevent troops and supplies from entering the city. By the end of June, daily rations for Pemberton’s garrison were reduced to a handful of peas and rice per man. Civilians also suffered. Forced out of their homes by the constant bombardment, many lived in caves dug into the hills and supplemented their paltry diets with mule meat.

Sensing the end was near, Grant ordered his troops to dig tunnels under the enemy works and fill them with black powder in hopes of exploding the fortifications. Two such mines were detonated on June 25 and July 1, but Pemberton’s men maintained their tenacious resistance. Nevertheless, the Confederates, weary and weakened from months of battle and privation, were on their last legs, and on July 3 Pemberton asked for terms of surrender. When he rebuffed Grant’s initial request for unconditional surrender, the Union commander amended his terms to parole for the garrison, and Pemberton agreed. Grant had finally taken Vicksburg, but the cost was high: the Union Army suffered 10,142 casualties, including 80 Minnesotans killed in action.

After 47 days of siege, Union troops entered Vicksburg on July 4. Col. John Sanborn, formerly regimental commander of the Fourth Minnesota Infantry and now a brigade commander, recalled acquiring new uniforms for the event.

On the morning of July 4 all such uniforms were put on, every enlisted man burnished his gun so that it glimmered in the sunshine like pure silver, the bands of music took their position at a little after sunrise, and the commands marched from their camping-places . . . through the city to the courthouse and the banks of the Mississippi. . . . As ordered by Gen. McPherson I led the column that marched into Vicksburg, and the Fourth Minnesota band and regiment led my brigade.
“I have just been up on the hill and saw the rebels marching out and stacking their arms,” wrote John Thurston of Company C, Fourth Minnesota Infantry. “Our forces are also moving in. Marched into Vicksburg, banners flying and music playing. This is the most glorious Fourth of July I ever spent. Fireworks seem to be all around the lines.” Knud Helling of the Fourth Minnesota’s Company H provided a more sobering depiction.

We marched into the city in good order with music playing and the flags flying, which served a very impressive sight. The Rebel soldiers and the inhabitants stood in groups on the street corners and stared at us while we passed by them. All seemed to be very satisfied with their new situation, because they had a hard time under their siege. They had lain in the trenches for 47 days without hardly daring to stick their heads up. The last 5 days they lived on mule meat, and their bread was composed of beans ground together with grain. The inhabitants had lived in caves that they had dug into the hills. They looked pale and shabby.

**Word of the Surrender at Vicksburg**

Vicksburg and the Union triumph at Gettysburg reached a jubilant Minnesota a few days later. “Glory to God!” exclaimed the *St. Paul Daily Press*, “The right hand of the nation follows up on the Mississippi the blow struck by its left hand on the Susquehanna, and the rebellion staggers, under two mortal wounds, to a disastrous and ignominious fall.” The news of Gettysburg, first to arrive, ignited a “spontaneous and spirited” celebra-

**For Further Reading**

- Authored by the men who led Minnesota’s soldiers in battle, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars: 1861–1865* (1890) provides a comprehensive overview of the state’s role in the conflict. This two-volume set includes unit histories, regimental rosters, and official reports and correspondence. It is a “go-to” resource.
- Originally released in 1961, the expanded version of Kenneth Carley’s *Minnesota and the Civil War: An Illustrated History* (2000) draws extensively on the Minnesota Historical Society’s holdings of letters, diaries, photographs, and artifacts to provide a multifaceted approach to the story.
- Many excellent books published in recent years document the history of the First Minnesota Infantry and its role at Gettysburg, including *The Last Full Measure: The Life and Death of the First Minnesota Volunteers* by Richard Moe (2001); *Pale Horse at Plum Run: The First Minnesota at Gettysburg* by Brian Lee Han (2004); and *Every Man Did His Duty: Pictures and Stories of the Men of the First Minnesota* by Wayne Jorgenson (2012).
- Former Vicksburg National Military Park historian Terrence Winschel has written, coauthored, or edited several first-rate works on that campaign, including *Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar* (1999), *Triumph and Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign* (1999), and *Vicksburg is the Key: The Struggle for the Mississippi River* (with William Shea, 2003). Michael Ballard’s *Vicksburg: The Campaign That Opened the Mississippi* (2010) offers a brief yet detailed account of the battle.
- Readers seeking a Minnesota perspective on the campaign will be captivated by two outstanding compilations drawn from the manuscript collections of the Minnesota Historical Society. *Go If You Think It Your Duty: A Minnesota Couple’s Civil War Letters*, edited by Andrea Foroughi (2008), presents an intimate and poignant portrait of the relationship between James Madison Bowler and Lizzie Bowler, a newly married couple who exchanged letters for four years after Madison enlisted with the Third Minnesota Infantry. *Brother of Mine: The Civil War Letters of Thomas and William Christie*, edited by Hampton Smith (2011), chronicles the brothers’ experiences in the First Minnesota Battery, including more than 30 letters detailing the Vicksburg campaign.
tion in St. Paul, soon made all the sweeter: “When the glorious news of the surrender of Vicksburg came in the afternoon, the enthusiasm and joy of the people knew no bounds. It fairly boiled over, and in its irrepressible phrenzy, it seemed that the whole populace had really gone mad.”

After serving occupation duty in the city, Minnesota veterans of the Vicksburg Campaign were deployed throughout the South, where they continued to serve until the end of the war. The Third Minnesota Infantry went to Arkansas, participated in the Battle of Bayou Fourche outside of Little Rock on September 10, 1863, and made a heroic bayonet charge against Confederate cavalry at the Battle of Fitzhugh’s Woods near Augusta on April 1, 1864. The First Minnesota Light Artillery joined Sherman’s forces in the Atlanta Campaign and the famous March to the Sea in 1864 and continued with Sherman through the final Western Theater campaign in the Carolinas in 1865. The Fourth Minnesota Infantry was deployed to Tennessee in the fall of 1863, fighting in the Third Battle of Chattanooga on November 23–25 before moving to Alabama for garrison duty. The Fourth also participated in Sherman’s March to the Sea and the Carolinas Campaign. The Fifth Minnesota Infantry served in Mississippi and Louisiana through 1864, participating in engagements at Pleasant Hill, Louisiana, on April 9 and Tupelo, Mississippi, on July 14–15. The regiment served at the Battle of Nashville on December 15–16, 1864, before deploying to Alabama in the spring of 1865 for the Mobile Campaign.

Long Remember

The Union victory at Vicksburg, coupled with the capture of Port Hudson, Louisiana, on July 9, 1863, secured Federal control of the Mississippi River from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. The importance of the Vicksburg Campaign was not lost on its participants, and on July 4, 1864, occupying Union soldiers erected a marble obelisk on the Vicksburg battlefield to commemorate the first anniversary of the Confederates surrender there. Post-war reunions of Vicksburg veterans, particularly the reunion of 1890, encouraged the establishment of Vicksburg National Military Park by Congress in 1899.

In 1901 the Minnesota legislature authorized a commission led by John Sanborn to place a memorial in the military park to honor Minnesota’s soldiers. New York sculptor William Couper was chosen to design the monument, consisting of a white granite obelisk with a bronze statue of a woman, representing peace, at its base. Six engraved bronze markers on red granite were also situated throughout the park, commemorating the Minnesotans killed in battle. “Minnesota will especially cherish the spot on which this memorial stands,” said former Fifth Minnesota Infantry commander Hubbard at the dedication on May 24, 1907, “and the soil in which the remains of her valiant dead here repose, hence to this locality she will in future years often turn in filial remembrance, as to a spot hallowed by the blood of the sons of her younger years.”

Despite the strategic significance of the Vicksburg Campaign, the Battle of Gettysburg came to surpass it in the nation’s collective memory, both in military significance and romantic imagery. There General Pickett made his fateful charge and President Lincoln spoke with epic eloquence. There the Union was saved in the bloodiest single battle fought on American soil. There Robert E. Lee brought his seemingly invincible Army of Northern Virginia to win a victory on northern soil which, in all probability, would have weakened the North’s determination to continue the war.

The valor of the First Minnesota
and the terrible losses it suffered on July 2 certainly contributed to the battle’s Homeric quality and its subsequent memorialization. The urn placed in Gettysburg National Cemetery in 1867 by the survivors of the First Minnesota was the first of the monuments and markers to be located on the battlefield. Two additional memorials, a stately monument commemorating the July 2 charge and an obelisk marking the regiment’s position during Pickett’s Charge on July 3, were dedicated in 1893.

Postwar accolades penned by civic leaders, politicians, and veterans of the First Minnesota further fortified the regiment’s heroic status.

“There can be no question that the First Minnesota Regiment in that battle displayed such heroism and unselfish soldierly devotion as has not been shown, in equal degree, by any body of soldiers since Leonidas stood on the pass at Thermopylae,” wrote William Lochren in 1890. In 1928 President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed simply: “So far as human judgment can determine, Colonel Colvill and those eight companies of the First Minnesota are entitled to rank as the saviors of their country.”

**Minnesota’s veterans of Gettysburg and Vicksburg** have long since been laid to rest. We can never truly recapture what they saw, what they think they saw, and all that they could—and could not—remember about their experience of war. Fortunately, there remains a body of evidence to serve us in the quest to understand who they were and what they did on the battlefield. The Minnesota Historical Society preserves a rich collection of materials relating to the role of Minnesotans in these two historic events, including government records, letters, diaries, photographs, and artifacts. Through these treasures (see following pages), we can gain a glimpse into the soldiers’ world and ensure that their deeds will long endure in the memory of Minnesotans.

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**Notes**

1. William Lochren, “Narrative of the First Regiment,” *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865* (St. Paul: Pioneer Press Co., 1891), 1: 35; Alfred P. Carpenter letter, July 30, 1863 (copy), manuscripts collection, Minnesota Historical Society (MHS). Assigned as the First Minnesota’s adjutant after Gettysburg, Lochren authored the official battle report for the regiment. He was discharged for disability on December 30, 1863. Carpenter was wounded twice in the charge at Gettysburg and was hospitalized for two months.


3. Quoted in Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative* (New York: Random House, 1963), 2: 346; David Dixon Porter, *Incidents and Anecdotes of the Civil War* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1885), 95–96. Lincoln talked about taking Vicksburg with U.S. Navy Commander David Porter while pointing at a map and saying, as quoted by Porter: “See what a lot of land these fellows hold, of which Vicksburg is the key. . . Let us get Vicksburg and all that country is ours. The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket.”

4. William Christie to James Christie, May 31, 1863, James C. Christie and Family Papers, MHS. This collection preserves 274 letters by William and Thomas Christie documenting four years of service in the First Minnesota Battery, including accounts of army life, combat, military politics, and William’s capture after the Battle of Bentonville (NC) on March 21, 1865.

5. Richard S. Reeves, diary entry, May 22, 1863, Richard S. Reeves Papers, MHS.

6. Thomas P. Gere, diary entry, May 22, 1863 (copy), William B. and Thomas P. Gere Papers, MHS. Gere was awarded the Medal of Honor for capturing the colors of the Fourth Mississippi Infantry at Nashville on December 16, 1864.


The painting on p. 220 is courtesy State of Minnesota; p. 226, bottom, and 227 are courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. All other illustrations are in MHS collections.

On the following pages, the photos of the splint, canteen, handkerchief, rifle, and surgical kit are by Jason Onerheim; all flags and flagstaff by Eric Mortenson; and diary, sword, and rain cap by Sandra Reierson. The Boyd portrait is in MHS collections.
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