

Battle Maps

ALTHOUGH ACTIVE COMBAT in the Civil War ceased in 1865, soldiers, politicians, and the general public continued to reminisce, debate, and document the conflict. Gen. John B. Sanborn, one of Minnesota's foremost participants, analyzed and interpreted the war throughout the remainder of his life.

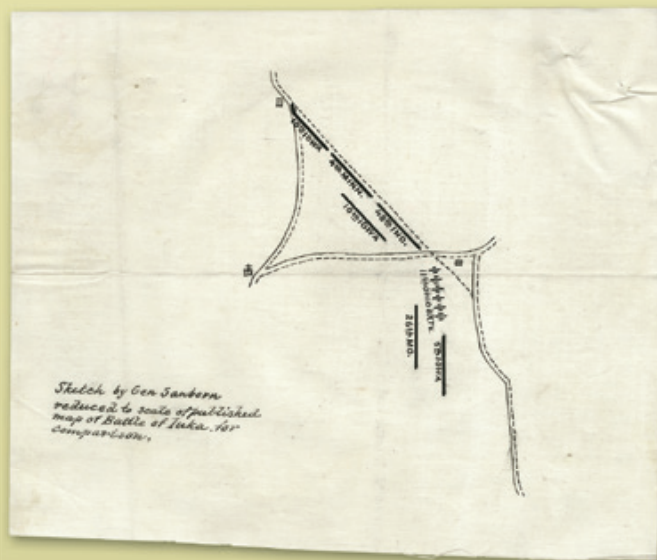
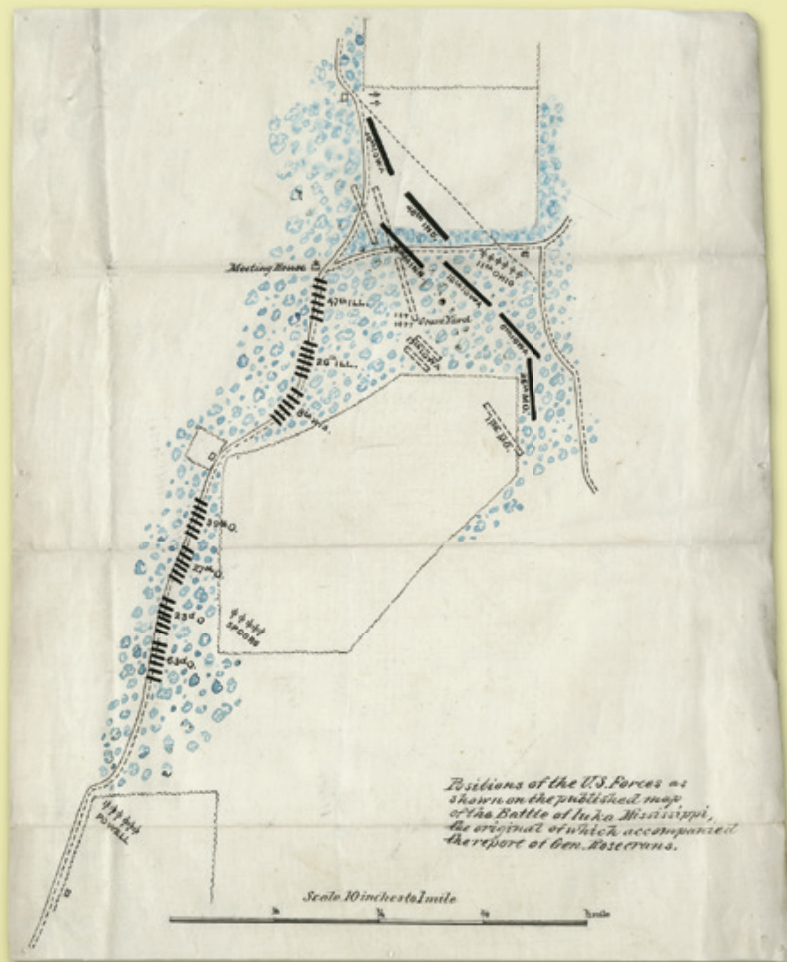
In 1876 the United States War Department published a map of the September 1862 battle of Iuka, Mississippi, based on the report of Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans. Sanborn, a brigade commander in this engagement, disagreed with the positions of the Union troops as depicted in Rosecrans' report, especially that of his Fourth Minnesota Regiment. He wrote to Secretary of War G. W. McCrary with his concerns and shared his memory of the troop configuration that led to a Federal victory, although not the decisive one the generals had expected. McCrary referred Sanborn's letter to the Chief of Engineers' office for analysis.

On February 11, 1879, the Secretary responded to Sanborn, enclosing two same-scale maps documenting the different positions of Confederate and Union troops. McCrary noted that the discrepancy of the Fourth Minnesota's position amounted to 220 feet. While rendering no opinion on the accuracy of either map, he noted, "A copy of General Sanborn's letter will be placed on file with General Rosecrans' map."

McCrary's letter and the two maps were recently donated to the Minnesota Historical Society by the descendants of Gen. Sanborn. They are available for research in the general's papers and await Civil War enthusiasts who wish to opine on the veracity and significance of Sanborn's and Rosecrans' interpretations.

In 1867 President Andrew Johnson appointed Sanborn to the Indian Peace Commission. In this capacity, he journeyed in the western states negotiating with various Native American tribes. His financial account book of these trips, covering July 1867 to October 1868, was included with this recent acquisition of family materials. Sanborn's interest in history resulted in his election as president of the Minnesota Historical Society in May 1903, just one year before his death.

—Duane P. Swanson, curator of manuscripts



Conflicting reports: Gen. Sanborn's sketch (bottom), correcting Maj. Gen. Rosecrans' report of some positions at the 1862 Battle of Iuka. (MNHS COLLECTIONS/JASON ONERHEIM)



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