

# NEIGHBORS "TO THE RESCUE"

Edward Noyes

FOR A SHORT TIME in the fall of 1862, two regiments from neighboring states were dispatched to Minnesota to help quell the Sioux Uprising, or Dakota War. The units involved were the Twenty-fifth Wisconsin and the Twenty-seventh Iowa Volunteer Infantry regiments. The Wisconsin soldiers served in Minnesota just short of three months and the Iowans for nearly a month. Militarily, the Wisconsin men played a role directly associated with the Dakota War by contributing to the stabilization of the frontier. The Iowans' main service was to assist with an annuity payment to the restless, but for the most part peaceful, Chippewa (Ojibway) Indians.<sup>1</sup>

It may be that, because the out-of-state troops were in Minnesota only briefly — indeed, some of them wondered why they were there at all — their campaigning has received scant attention. Another important cause of this was that they really had very little to do. Edwin B. Quiner, for example, wrote in his *Military History of Wisconsin* the reasons for the Twenty-fifth's being in Minnesota and then remarked: "We have no memoranda of the movements of the regiment on this service." Yet there are public documents, personal papers, and journalistic sources enough to permit coverage of the Minnesota stay of both regiments. Particularly in the case of the Twenty-fifth Wisconsin, a source abundant with details of regimental history, including the day-to-day experiences of both officers and men, is Quiner's collection of soldier letters gleaned from newspapers of the Civil War era.<sup>2</sup>

The causes of the Dakota War in Minnesota have been the subject of much study and thus will not be retold here. The war itself has also been covered widely and therefore will be dealt with only briefly. The main action began on August 18, 1862, when the Dakota surprised the Lower Sioux Agency, located on the south

bank of the Minnesota River a short distance downstream from its junction with the Redwood. In the next five days, the Indians twice attacked Fort Ridgely on the north bank of the Minnesota and twice lashed out at the German town of New Ulm on the south. When all of these attacks were repulsed, the Sioux were unable to continue down the Minnesota Valley toward St. Paul and Minneapolis. In spite of this and their lack of a planned campaign, the Indians possessed the initiative. By exploiting it, they took a heavy toll of white lives, did much damage to the property of settlers, and caused the wholesale desertion of numerous communities and counties.<sup>3</sup>

Back in St. Paul, energetic Governor Alexander Ramsey met the crisis quickly. Soon after learning of the uprising on August 19, Ramsey named Colonel Henry H. Sibley commander of a military expedition to put down the rebellion. While Sibley moved slowly up the Minnesota Valley, local militia units helped swell the relief force to about 1,400 men, including companies of

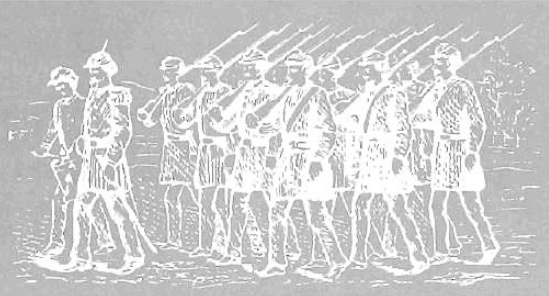
<sup>1</sup>This paper is an edited version of one read at a session of the twentieth annual Missouri Valley History Conference at Omaha, Nebraska, March 10–12, 1977. That paper dealt with Wisconsin troops; materials on Iowa soldiers have been added for this published version.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin B. Quiner, *The Military History of Wisconsin: A Record of the Civil and Military Patriotism of the State, in the War for the Union*, 735 (Chicago, 1866). Edwin B. Quiner, *Correspondence of Wisconsin Volunteers*, is a scrapbook collection of newspaper clippings in the library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison. It will be cited hereafter as Quiner, *Correspondence*.

<sup>3</sup>For the Dakota War in Minnesota, see William W. Folsom, *A History of Minnesota*, 2:109–241 (Reprint ed., St. Paul, 1961); Theodore C. Blegen, *Minnesota: A History of the State*, 259–284 (Minneapolis, 1963); and Kenneth Carley, *The Sioux Uprising of 1862* (Revised ed., St. Paul, 1976). Also helpful is Robert Huhn Jones, *The Civil War in the Northwest*, 14–56 (Norman, Okla., 1960). Jones comments (p. 30) on the Indians' lack of a planned campaign.

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## Wisconsin and Iowa Troops Fight Boredom, Not Indians, in Minnesota in 1862

the new Sixth Minnesota. Sibley lifted the siege of Fort Ridgely on August 27. After very deliberate preparations at the fort, he moved on to defeat the Indians on September 23 in a decisive battle at Wood Lake and, on

<sup>4</sup>Ramsey to Stanton, August 21, 1862, Ramsey to Halleck, August 26, 1862, Ramsey to Abraham Lincoln, August 26, 1862, and Stanton to Pope, September 6, 1862, in United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, vol. 13, p. 590, 597, 617 (Washington, 1885), hereafter cited as *Official Records*. See also, Halleck to Ramsey, August 29, 1862, and Stanton to Pope, September 6, 1862, in Board of Commissioners, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865*, 2:209, 225 (St. Paul, 1892); Jones, *Civil War in Northwest*, 36.

<sup>5</sup>Kirkwood to Stanton, September 10, 1862, in War Department, Headquarters of the Army, letters received by the commander-in-chief, National Archives Record Group (NARG) 108; *Faribault Republican*, September 24, 1862; *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, September 10, 1862.

**GENERAL JOHN POPE**, as commander of the newly created Department of the Northwest, gave orders that sent Wisconsin and Iowa troops to Minnesota.



September 26, freed 269 white and mixed-blood captives at Camp Release near Montevideo.

In addition to lining up Sibley's expedition, Ramsey attempted to get help from the federal government. On August 26 he proposed to General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck that Minnesota and Dakota be organized into a new military department. He also asked Halleck to send General William S. Harney, a veteran Indian fighter then stationed at St. Louis, "to chastise the Sioux." Halleck refused, doubtless because he felt greater concern over military actions in Virginia than troubles in far-off Minnesota. Later, however, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton did what Halleck would not do — and did even more — by creating a Department of the Northwest to embrace the states of Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin, plus the territories of Dakota and Nebraska. Chosen to head the new department was General John Pope, who, though fresh from defeat at the Second Battle of Bull Run (Manassas), was still deemed fit for handling the emergency in Minnesota. Pope also was available, for after the battle he was a general without a command.<sup>4</sup>

Pope's appointment drew mixed reactions. In Iowa, Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood felt grateful over the turn of events. Pope could take full charge. Indeed, Kirkwood told Stanton that he was "very anxious" to have his hands freed of meeting the responsibility involved with the Indian threat. In Minnesota, the *Faribault Republican* was cool toward the appointment. It regarded Pope's presence in the state as no more necessary than "a fifth wheel to a coach" and charged Washington authorities with covering up rivalries in the eastern command by creating for the general a place where he was not really needed. Ignoring Pope's recent setback in Virginia, the *Republican* contended that he would be of better use against the Confederates than against the Sioux. But the *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat* claimed that Minnesotans could rejoice that Pope was coming to the Northwest theater. Confident that the general knew how to fight Indians, the *St. Paul* paper recalled that he also knew the lay of the land in Minnesota from having assisted with topographical surveys in the Red River Valley and nearby areas in 1849.<sup>5</sup>

However others may have viewed his appointment, Pope meant to follow orders to end the Dakota War quickly. Claiming that "what I undertake I do with my whole heart," Pope favored conducting a scorched-earth policy with "celerity" to humble the Sioux. He wrote Sibley on September 17: "By moving rapidly upon the Indian lands and farms, you will at once relieve all the settlers north of the Minnesota [River] from further danger." He reiterated his views to Sibley on October 10: "Let me say again that I regard the destruction [*sic*] of everything that can sustain life between Ft. Ridgely and Big Stone Lake as very important." Apparently wishing to make himself doubly clear, Pope wrote Sibley again on October 14: "I don't wish to leave anything for Indians to subsist on between Big Stone Lake and Fort Ridgely."<sup>6</sup>

To get the troops he considered necessary to end the conflict, Pope could tap several sources within the Department of the Northwest. He could turn to relatively populous Wisconsin and Iowa, and he thought of obtaining men from Nebraska Territory even though he might have to send troops from Iowa to fight Indians in Nebraska. In addition, Pope informed the commander at Fort Abercrombie in Dakota Territory that he wanted 500 mixed bloods to serve against the Sioux until the winter snows became so deep that it would be impossible for them to "come down & make vigorous war." To persuade the mixed bloods, Pope promised pay and subsistence from the government.<sup>7</sup>

POPE LOST little time in requesting troops from Wisconsin. He arrived at St. Paul on September 15 and on September 16 asked Governor Edward Salomon at Madison to send off no more soldiers to the South without advising him. Furthermore, Pope wished the governor to give him two or three regiments "as soon as possible." But there was a hitch. At about the time that Pope

wrote Salomon, General Horatio G. Wright at Cincinnati, Ohio, asked the governor to send all Wisconsin troops to Louisville, Kentucky, "till further notice." Wright explained that "the rebels are pressing northward rapidly and must be met with larger forces than we yet have." Indeed, Confederate General Braxton Bragg was about to capture Munfordville, Kentucky, thus endangering Louisville, some seventy-five miles to the north.<sup>8</sup>

Because of the hazardous situation in Kentucky, Pope received word that reduced his hopes of obtaining the regiments he requested of Salomon. Stanton told Pope on September 23 to make do with only those troops positively needed "for protection from the Indians," because the urgency in Kentucky demanded "every man not absolutely needed elsewhere." Meanwhile, Governor Salomon was uncertain whether to accommodate Pope in St. Paul or Wright in Cincinnati, so he laid the matter in the lap of Stanton, who made it clear that troops from Wisconsin were subject to Pope's authority. Hence, Salomon informed Pope that the Twenty-fifth Regiment, mustered into the federal service on September 14 at La Crosse and under orders to go to Cincinnati, would report instead at St. Paul.<sup>9</sup>

The shift in plans for the regiment drew adverse comment from those Wisconsinites who thought the Sioux a less fitting foe for the Twenty-fifth than the Confederates. At Prairie du Chien, the *Courier* stated: "We presume this will not be agreeable to our boys, but it is probable that Pope will not need the whole of our

<sup>6</sup>Pope to Sibley, September 17, 1862, Pope to Stanton ("whole heart" quote), September 22, 1862, in *Official Records*, series 1, vol. 13, 648-649, 658. See also, Pope to Baker, September 18, 1862, and Pope to Sibley, September 17, 1862, October 10, 1862, and October 14, 1862, in War Department, Department of the Northwest, letters sent September, 1862-July, 1863, 4:22, 58-59, 63, 66, NARG 393.

<sup>7</sup>Pope to Algernon S. Paddock, secretary of Nebraska Territory, September 22, 1862, and Pope to Norman Kittson, September 23, 1862, in War Department, Department of the Northwest, letter book 1, 196, cards 13 and 17 in Illinois Historical Survey, University Library, University of Illinois, comp., *The Mereness Calendar: Federal Documents on the Upper Mississippi Valley* (Boston, 1971), hereafter cited *Calendar*.

<sup>8</sup>Pope to Salomon, Salomon to Pope, and Wright to Salomon, all September 16, 1862, in Executive Department Administration Military Letters and Telegrams, April 15-September 17, 1862, 1:189, 191, in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin's archives and manuscripts division, hereafter cited SHSW, Archives and Manuscripts, Vincent J. Esposito, chief ed., *The West Point Atlas of the Civil War*, map 5 and text (New York, 1959).

<sup>9</sup>Stanton to Pope, September 23, 1862, in *Official Records*, series 1, vol. 13, p. 662-663; Salomon to Stanton and Stanton to Salomon, both September 17, 1862, and Salomon to Pope, September 18, 1862, in Executive Department Administration Military Letters and Telegrams, 1:191, 192, 2:1, in SHSW, Archives and Manuscripts.



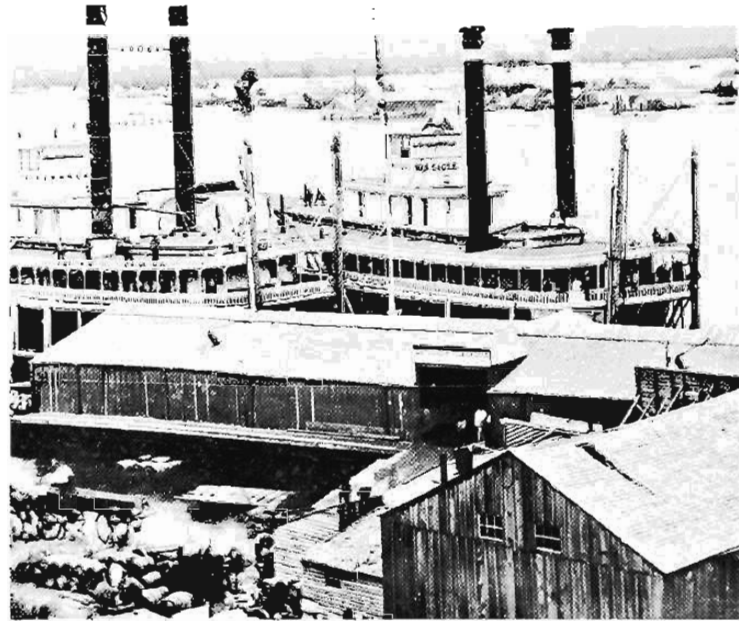
EDWARD  
SALOMON,  
Wisconsin's  
Civil War  
governor,  
1862-1864

regiments, and his orders are also liable to be overridden by the Secretary of War." Another view was that of United States Senator Timothy O. Howe of Green Bay, Wisconsin. Admitting that he did not know how many men were needed to end the uprising, Howe wrote Stanton that, since the nation had "spent a century in civilizing & exterminating our Indian neighbors," he would "be mortified to see 20,000 American soldiers armed [?] for a contest with the few . . . tribes . . . left upon this side of the mountains." Howe contended that volunteers had joined the colors to quash the rebellion in the South. Therefore, he proposed that the job in Minnesota be done by paroled prisoners, or captured rebels "who could be trusted," or Yankee militiamen "too much in sympathy with themselves or with the rebellion to volunteer agt. the latter." Howe concluded: "I beg you will exempt the volunteers from this most unwholesome service." But Stanton kept hands off. In the end, the *Wisconsin State Journal* could only announce from Madison that the fortune of the Twenty-fifth was "to be sent northward instead of southward, and against savage Indians instead of fiendish rebels."<sup>10</sup>

The Twenty-fifth was recruited from southwestern and western Wisconsin and led by Colonel Milton Montgomery of Sparta, Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Nasmith of Platteville, and Major Jeremiah Rusk of Viroqua. According to admirers, it would be difficult to find three men more suited for their places. Montgomery was deemed to be cool, courageous, and sagacious and the possessor of a "happy disposition" certain to "make him [a] popular officer." Nasmith, formerly a captain with the Seventh Wisconsin, was a "fighting man" and a "splendid tactician." Markedly concerned for the well-being of his men, Nasmith disliked harsh discipline, which brought the comment that "the boys all like him as a father." Rusk had had no military experience before joining the Twenty-fifth, but he had served in the Wisconsin legislature. Tipping the scales at 250 pounds, he was said to be "large enough for any office within the gift of the Administration."<sup>11</sup>

Leave-takings for the front during the Civil War were often festive affairs that helped convince the recruits they had done the right thing by volunteering. Typical was the farewell of the Twenty-fifth's Company I from southeastern Grant County. A circle of patriotic women presented the company a flag to follow "in the conflict for

justice and liberty." Assuring the women that he and his men "could not linger when our country calls," Captain Robert Nash accepted the banner with the hope that when they returned the South would be conquered "and that each of you will welcome us as heroes." After the flag presentation, the volunteers downed a meal prepared by gentle but "willing hands." Then it was time to leave for La Crosse: in only "a few minutes, sixty wagons



TWO STEAMBOATS that helped transport Wisconsin and Iowa troops to Minnesota were the "Itasca" (left) and the "War Eagle," shown docked at a St. Paul levee at a time when the Mississippi River was at or near flood stage.

were filled with soldiers and friends who insisted on being with [the troops] as long as possible." Although a depressing drizzle began, a village band did its best to cheer up things with "most excellent music." It helped, too, when townspeople along the way gave the departing recruits apples to munch.<sup>12</sup>

At Dunleith (now East Dubuque), Illinois, Company I stayed overnight at the United States Hotel. Sharing the lodging was Company E, commonly called the Platteville Rangers. According to a Company I volunteer, the night was noisy because some of the Rangers kept their "spirits up by pouring spirits down." Next morning both units boarded the steamer "War Eagle" bound for La Crosse. On the way the steamboat took on Company H at Potosi, Wisconsin, and Company C at Cassville.

<sup>10</sup> *Prairie du Chien Courier*, September 25, 1862, *Wisconsin State Journal* (Madison), October 8, 1862; Howe to Stanton, September 22, 1862, in War Department, Headquarters of the Army, letters received by the commander-in-chief, NARG 108.

<sup>11</sup> *Annual Reports of the Adjutant General of the State of Wisconsin for the Years 1860, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864*, p. 140 (Reprint ed., Madison, 1912). For appraisals of officers, see Quiner, *Correspondence*, 6:263-264, 270.

<sup>12</sup> Quiner, *Correspondence*, 6:265, 267.

Feeding so many mouths taxed the "War Eagle's" facilities, and at bedtime it was every man for himself, with all "matrasses" loose at both ends having been seized well before dark. Each man lay down wherever he could, and anyone wishing to stroll about discovered that so doing was impossible "as it was nothing but legs, go whichever way [one] would."<sup>13</sup>

Philip Roesch, a member of Company H, recorded that, when all was ready to steam away from Cassville, the "War Eagle" could not cope with a strong headwind and had to be assisted by another boat to get under way. Although another recruit thought the mishap a bad omen, "War Eagle" arrived safely at La Crosse. There, the volunteers bivouacked at Camp Salomon. Perhaps the best experience Roesch had in camp occurred when one Andrew Jackson of Beetown, Wisconsin, offered to teach the men in Philip's tent how to read and write so as to stop their nightly card games. "This was the only English education I ever received," Roesch recalled.<sup>14</sup>

In camp, the volunteers were initiated to military routine. They drew clothing, bounty, and pay, and they began to learn how to drill. Happily, the men found the campground pleasant, even if a dense fog did rise endlessly from a nearby slough and the only water available was surface water "pretty well mixed with sand." But no matter. On September 17 the Twenty-fifth received orders to get up at 2:00 A.M. and be prepared to start for Cincinnati by 6:00 A.M. Although everything was ready for departure, the order to leave did not come, and all the troops could do was wait. During the afternoon came word to unpack, and the men unpacked. After an extra day of drilling, the regiment received instructions to depart for St. Paul at 10:00 A.M., but a correspondent noted that "ten o'clock did not arrive until 4 in the afternoon." In due course, the volunteers boarded the steamer "Moses McClellan" and reached St. Paul the night of September 21.<sup>15</sup>

On September 22 the regiment arrived at nearby Fort Snelling, the rendezvous point for military forces in Minnesota. Chauncey Cooke of Company G recorded that the fort, situated on a "steep wall" where the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers meet, was known as the "American Gibraltar." Marveling at "big black cannons pointing in all directions," Cooke wrote his mother: "I tell you those cannons have a wicked look."<sup>16</sup>

The Twenty-fifth did not tarry at Fort Snelling. On September 23 General Pope ordered the distribution of the regiment, as Colonel Montgomery put it, "all along the Minnesota frontier," from Alexandria "at the Extreme North" to Fairmont "at the Extreme South." Pope's purpose was to use both the Twenty-fifth and some Minnesota companies "to establish temporarily a line of posts from north to south along the frontier" behind Sibley, who was pushing up the Minnesota Valley with some 1,600 men and five guns toward an estimated

2,600 hostile Indians. Pope believed that the line would "prevent the Indians from . . . running back upon the settlements," should they get in Sibley's rear. Concerned about the danger, Pope had written Sibley on September 19: "The Indians seem to be getting behind you in small bands, and they will doubtless continue to do so until you move forward." Later in the month, he warned Lieutenant Colonel Nasmith to "take every precaution that no part of your command is surprised, and that no Indians penetrate to the rear of your lines."<sup>17</sup>

On the same day that Pope announced his plans for the Twenty-fifth Wisconsin, Sibley's force fought and won the Battle of Wood Lake, thus ending the uprising. Nevertheless, the Twenty-fifth underwent the disposition ordered. With regimental headquarters at Mankato, Montgomery had command of Companies D, F, and I, stationed respectively at Mankato, South Bend, and New Ulm. With headquarters at Paynesville, Lieutenant Colonel Nasmith commanded Companies B, C, and G — stationed at Alexandria, Sauk Centre, and Richmond in that order — and E and H, stationed at Paynesville. (A drawing exists that the author believes Nasmith used of the temporary fort at Sauk Centre. It shows disposition of forces at the fort.) Headquartered at Winnebago City, Major Rusk commanded Companies A and K, stationed at Fairmont and Winnebago, respectively. Dubiously eyeing Pope's posting of all of Company F at South Bend, the *Mankato Semi-Weekly Record* grumbled that half the company could have been better used to guard some frontier towns more exposed to possible Indian attack. The *Record* complained that, in its "humble judgment," the "policy of keeping one or two hundred men at headquarters as a body-guard for the commander,

<sup>13</sup>Quiner, Correspondence, 6:267.

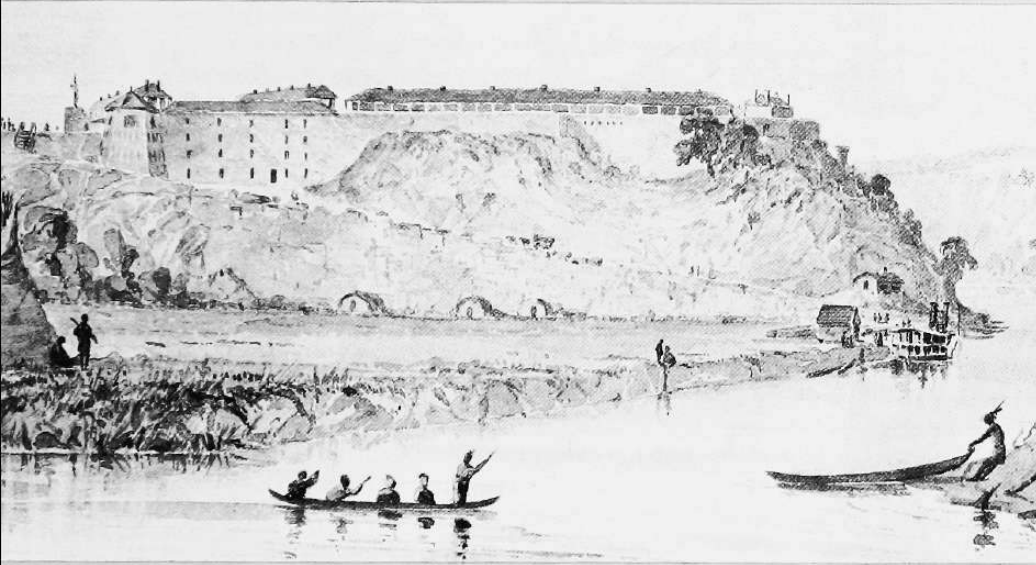
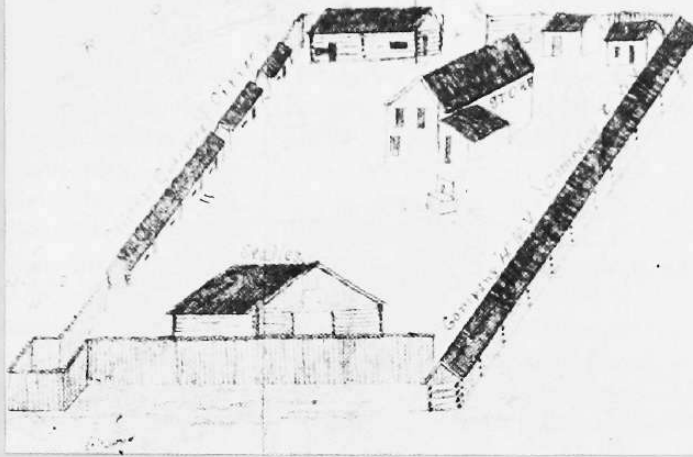
<sup>14</sup>Memorandum of Philip Roesch, Co. H, 25th Reg. Wisconsin Volunteers, 1, hereafter cited as Roesch Memorandum, in the library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>15</sup>Quiner, Correspondence, 6:265, 266, 267–268, 270.

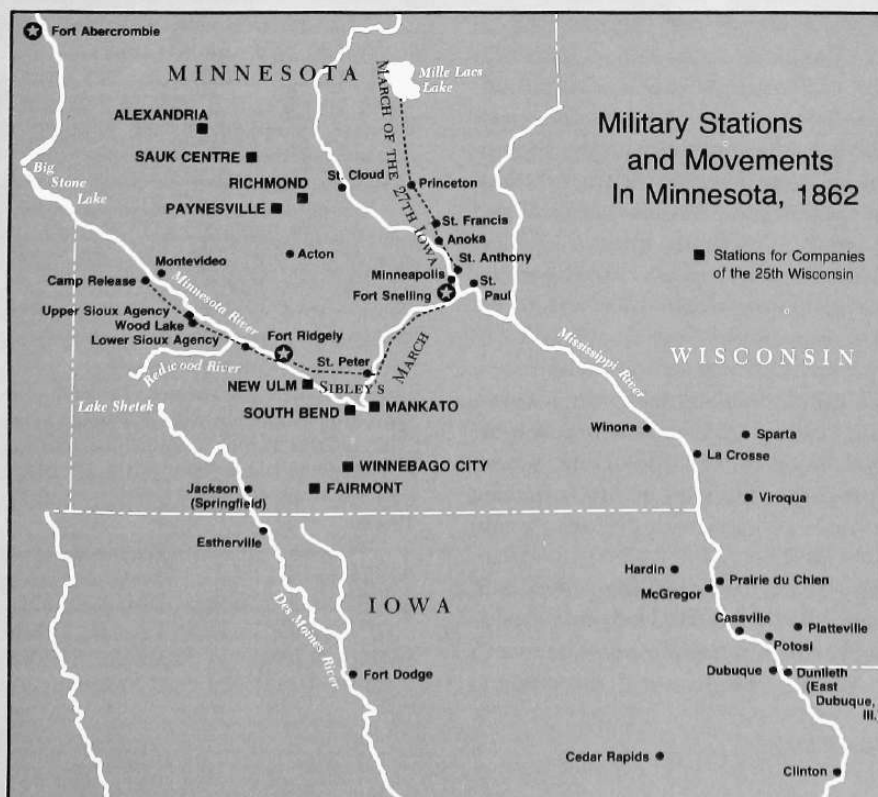
<sup>16</sup>"A Badger Boy in Blue: The Letters of Chauncey H. Cooke," in *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 4:81 (1920–1921). These letters appeared in the magazine's Documents section and will hereafter be cited as Cooke Letters. The editor pointed out that the originals were either destroyed or given away and that the magazine's version was taken from a fifty-copy booklet put out by the *Mondovi* (Wisconsin) *Herald* before Cooke's death in that town in May, 1919. A few months before his death, Cooke had told the magazine editor that the letters in the booklet were somewhat reworked versions of hastily penciled notes he made while in Minnesota in 1862. But he "invented no facts nor situations," he said.

<sup>17</sup>Montgomery to Salomon, December 3, 1862, in Wisconsin National Guard, Records of Volunteer Regiments, Miscellaneous Reports, SHSW, Archives and Manuscripts — hereafter cited as Montgomery Report; Pope to Halleck, September 23, 1862, in *Official Records*, series 1, vol. 13, p. 663–664; Pope to Sibley, September 19, 1862, and Pope to Nasmith, September 25, 1862, in War Department, Department of the Northwest, Letter Book 1, p. 5, 31, NARG 393.

*THIS TEMPORARY FORT at Sauk Centre housed Company C of the Twenty-seventh Wisconsin Regiment and other forces in 1862. The drawing is thought to have been made by Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Nasmith of the regiment. The original of the drawing was loaned to MHS years ago by Will Rindlaub of Platteville, Wisconsin.*



*FORT SNELLING, pictured in 1848 in a Seth Eastman water color, impressed Wisconsin and Iowa troops as it did all visitors.*





in these times, is . . . more ornamental than useful.”<sup>18</sup>

Along with placing the Wisconsin troops where he wanted them, Pope relieved Colonel Charles E. Flandrau as commander of the Southern Department — in the main the region south of the Minnesota River, plus a few areas lying north of it — and appointed Colonel Montgomery to succeed him. Flandrau, a judge on the Minnesota Supreme Court and a former Indian agent, had distinguished himself as commander at New Ulm on August 23 when a determined Sioux attack was repulsed. He asked to be freed of departmental command because of “pressing public duties of a civil nature,” having assumed command only until a regular officer was available as a replacement. Although Pope was complimentary to Flandrau, it may be that, because the change represented a shift from dependence on a local authority to the federal, the general found it to his liking. When assessing the reorganization of the Army of the Potomac in the East, Pope remarked: “Once destroy the local ties and attachments of any members of any military force and the sense [*sic*] of responsibility [*sic*] for their actions, to their friends and neighbours, and you have taken the first step (and it is a large one) towards consolidation under military rule.” Whatever Pope’s thoughts, the change of commanders over the Southern Department proceeded with cordiality. However, Montgomery did send his adjutant, George G. Syms, instead of going himself to receive from Flandrau any proffered counsel. Montgomery’s excuse for not calling on Flandrau personally was that he was “tired, not having been used to riding on horseback.”<sup>19</sup>

In respect to the regiment’s marching to and occupying its designated posts, Chauncey Cooke, Philip Roesch, and George B. Sprague, a member of Company C, all left related accounts. Cooke described how his outfit camped the first night out near St. Anthony only to attract a bevy of neighborhood women and girls who came a-tripping through camp and stepping over the recumbent volunteers “as if we were logs.” An observant lad, Cooke noted that the visitors seemed “pretty fresh” and displayed no offense over frank remarks uttered for their benefit. In any case, the women were soon sent packing so that the men could get some sleep. En route to St. Cloud, Cooke found his hair to be infested with lice. He also fell ill with measles and so had to stay behind. He had no money but that condition did not worry him as much as regaining his health. After recovering in a St. Cloud hospital, he proceeded to New Richmond, where his comrades were preparing for winter. “It is getting cold and the weather makes them hustle,” Cooke wrote his parents on October 28.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, Philip Roesch recorded the progress of Company H to Paynesville. After drawing full equipment at Fort Snelling, the men found the six-mile march to Minneapolis to be tiring. Roesch said the soldiers

thought their shoulders “would come off” from having to lug heavy knapsacks. On the way to St. Cloud, Roesch reported seeing refugees from Indians, but after leaving that place the troops encountered their greatest danger when the advance column came upon “some big rattlesnakes.” After Nasmith gave the order to fire, the men finished off the snakes. The shooting brought up the rest of the company on the double, for the rear thought the advance was engaged with the Indians. Meeting with no further excitement, Company H finally reached Paynesville, where stood an abandoned sod fort whose lone occupant was a dead cow. More seriously, Roesch observed that the Sioux had “been all through the country leaving a trail of burned buildings and slaughtered livestock.” Nevertheless, when the march to Paynesville was over, the rattlesnakes outside St. Cloud had been the only target at which anyone in Company H had fired with intent to kill.<sup>21</sup>

George B. Sprague related the details of a long, 140-mile march by Company C to Sauk Centre. The hard crackers that were his sole diet after leaving Fort Snelling made his teeth so sore he found chewing a torture. Even after he arrived at Sauk Centre, the problem of food — because the army fare was humble and lean — still troubled Sprague. In fact, “trooper George” did not know how he would have survived had he not had money to buy eatables from “a little one horse store” at the settlement. One night Company C was warned that Indians were near. The men slept on their guns. But in the morning the only signs of any foe were a blanket mysteriously left in a haymow, a pony track on the road, and a cow with a rawhide thong around her neck.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Compiled Records Showing Service of Military Units in Volunteer Union Organizations, Wisconsin, Field and Staff Muster Roll, Twenty-fifth Regiment, from September 14 to October 31, 1862, in National Archives — hereafter cited as Compiled Service Records; *Mankato Semi-Weekly Record*, October 4, 1862. See also, *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, September 21, 1862, for disposition of troops.

<sup>19</sup> Pope to Flandrau, September 20, 1862, Montgomery to Flandrau, October 3, 1862, in *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:237, 263; *Mankato Semi-Weekly Record*, October 4, 1862, Flandrau to Ramsey, undated, in the Alexander Ramsey Papers, in the Minnesota Historical Society; Pope to My Dear Governor (Kirkwood), September 21, 1862, in the Kirkwood general correspondence, in the Iowa State Historical Department, Des Moines. In 1900, Flandrau stated that the reason for his being relieved lay in Pope’s decision to disband “the citizen troops” under his command because the men wished to go home. See Judge Charles E. Flandrau, *The History of Minnesota and Tales of the Frontier*, 165 (St. Paul, 1900).

<sup>20</sup> Cooke Letters, in *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 4:82–83, 84–85, 87.

<sup>21</sup> Roesch Memorandum, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Sprague to Dear Parents, October 7 and 27, 1862, in George B. Sprague Papers in SHSW, Archives and Manuscripts.

Nasmith, reporting to Pope from his later headquarters at Sauk Centre (he moved there because it was more centrally located), analyzed the situation in his sector. In stationing his troops according to plan — that is, where they could provide the greatest protection to settlers — Nasmith noted that the neighborhood was deserted around Acton, where the Dakota War had started on August 17. He reported seeing only one house within ten miles of the place. Nasmith guessed that no one would return to the Acton area that fall, but in other neighborhoods settlers were “nearly all returning to thare homes.” The officer thought it unlikely that any large numbers of Indians remained in the vicinity, for reports had mentioned the presence of only small bands. Nevertheless, he wanted some horses for scouting, as “in goin” the rounds of outlying places he found the distances too far for walking. Besides, he thought that it would not be “safe for one to go alone.” But Nasmith did not want very many horses, because “they would need stabling this winter & it is very hard to get Lumber or timber Short of St. Cloud.”<sup>23</sup>

HAVING TAKEN their assigned stations, the personnel of the Twenty-fifth Wisconsin made ready for a long stay in Minnesota. They cut hay and dug potatoes from abandoned fields, stored fodder for horses, built cabins — the units at both Mankato and South Bend even constructed shelters for captive Sioux — and chopped wood. When necessary the troops interrupted their chores to escort families back to abandoned farmsteads or to scout for Indians — almost always without results. On one occasion a party from Mankato was out for two days, only to find no one in sight when “they got to where the Indians were.” The men returned “rather angry” either because of their disappointment or “the saddles and hard riding horses” used on the expedition. Probably the grimmest duty performed in Minnesota by Wisconsin soldiers took place in late October when Company F marched to Lake Shetek in Murray County to bury the dead left by the Sioux during a raid late in August.<sup>24</sup>

For the most part, the Twenty-fifth performed the usual humdrum duties of barracks living. To help while away the monotony, the men had several choices. Some turned to hunting and fishing, as wildlife was plentiful in

Minnesota. Reading was another way to dispel boredom, but the printed word was not always at hand. An officer of Company A reported that, although his men were in good physical health, “they were nearly dead for something to read.” “Send us the paper,” he appealed to Editor Marcus Mills (“Brick”) Pomeroy of the *La Crosse Democrat*, “and it may save the lives of a whole company.”<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, some soldiers of the Twenty-fifth managed some formal social life in Minnesota. The *Mankato Independent* reported on December 13 that a Thanksgiving supper and military ball given by a Minnesota unit stationed at Judson not only “passed off in splendid style” but also included as guests certain officers of the Twenty-fifth, who “made tender hearts flutter by their presence.” Glittering and gay, the revelry reminded the newspaper of how

The fair and the brave  
Who, blushing, unite  
Like the sun and the wave,  
Where they meet at night.

Church attendance, probably a less glamorous diversion than the foregoing event, provided another social-spiritual outlet for Wisconsin men. In fact, some volunteers initiated religious worship among themselves. Aware of “the *danger and temptation*” around them, a dozen men of Company C declared their intent to “convene on Thurs. eve of each week, for public prayer and devotion” to the Almighty. “Would to God,” wrote the company correspondent, “that our country had more such men doing her service.”<sup>26</sup>

Some members of the Twenty-fifth earned money in their spare time to supplement the always tardy army pay. (Even the officers at Mankato suffered the indignity of being unable to pay their board bills and having the hotelkeepers hold their trunks until the paymaster arrived.) Taking advantage of nature’s bounty, more than one volunteer went trapping in fields and woods and sold pelts for a little welcome cash. Regimental Quartermaster William H. Downs, who regarded himself to be “as thick” with Colonel Montgomery “as three in a bed,” discovered a handier way to extra income. Telling his wife that he intended to “guard against” any temptations because he knew that “Human flesh is weak,” Downs mentioned that he was “handling a large lot of money in buying cattle & potatoes” and that he might “make something considerable in the matter,” or he might not. “One thing is certain,” wrote Downs, “I cant loose [sic].” Explaining it all, Downs said that beef rations were commuted to him at “3½ cents per lb” and, because he bought beef “at 2½ to 3 cents per the nett on foot,” he could “more than clear the hides & tallow.” Thus, it seemed to him that he would make “two or three hundred dollars this winter.”<sup>27</sup>

Wisconsin troops, like others, held varying views of

<sup>23</sup>Nasmith to Pope, October 6, 1862, in War Department, Department of the Northwest, letters received, NARG 393.

<sup>24</sup>Quiner, Correspondence, 6:269–270, 271, 272–273; *Mankato Semi-Weekly Record*, November 8, 1862; *St. Paul Pioneer*, November 11, 1862.

<sup>25</sup>Quiner, Correspondence, 6:269.

<sup>26</sup>Quiner, Correspondence, 6:268.

<sup>27</sup>Quiner, Correspondence, 6:272; Cooke Letters, in *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 4:91–93; Downs to Dear Wife, October 9, 11, 26, 1862, in William H. and Edmund Downs Letters, 1861–1864, in SHSW, Archives and Manuscripts.



the Indians. Upon seeing ruined farmsteads and desolated communities, or upon finding the remains of white victims of the war, the soldiers commonly judged the Sioux to be barbaric, inhuman, and undeserving of charitable consideration. The Chippewa and the Winnebago, both of whom were uncertain factors in the war, did not enjoy much respect, either, from the Wisconsin volunteers. Still, when an unruly crowd appeared at Mankato while a detachment of the Twenty-fifth was bringing in for trial a dozen Winnebago suspected of complicity in the uprising, the troops not only stood off the people but also shared food with the prisoners. Moreover, when a German settler begged the soldiers to shoot an ailing Winnebago who was traveling on horseback, the officers quickly shut up the fellow.<sup>28</sup>

Such regard for duty won praise from the *Mankato Semi-Weekly Record*. But after the Winnebago were exonerated, the way that war can cause a shift in people's attitudes became evident when "four boys of the Twenty-fifth" chased the erstwhile prisoners into the brush with no friendly purpose. The *Record*, which had complimented the arresting detachment for protecting the Winnebago, now expressed regrets that the "four boys" had no guns, thus permitting the Indians to get away unharmed.<sup>29</sup>

This turnabout was not the only example of how war

could work psychological twists upon people. Regimental Chaplain Thomas C. Golden of Eau Claire, for instance, reported from Mankato that Company D had been "fully represented" at both morning and evening church services on Sunday, October 26. Two days later the company's correspondent wrote that his comrades who were guarding captive Sioux hoped that their prisoners would try to escape so as to "have the pleasure of shooting them." Moreover, Golden himself showed little evidence of Christian charity when he wrote the *Sparta Herald* that on November 11 the head of Sibley's column entered Mankato with 371 Sioux in custody. A man with a relish for tasty meals and a liking for cozy quarters, the chaplain wrote of the prisoners: "I think they have each a blanket which is like themselves abominably filthy. Unless the President forbids it there will be a grand hanging bee some of these days."<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, Chauncey Cooke considered the campaigning against the Sioux "a miserable Indian war." While recovering from measles, Cooke had read some of Episcopal Bishop Henry B. Whipple's pleas for the government to rectify wrongs against the Sioux and had accepted the clergyman's views. Besides, Cooke had enjoyed intimate friendships with Indians during his youth in rural Wisconsin. Yet he found that matters were not as they had been. While journeying homeward, Cooke stopped at Fort Snelling, where he saw hundreds of

*THIS DISMAL CAMP on the Minnesota River below Fort Snelling was the miserable "home" for uncondemned Sioux prisoners during the winter of 1862-1863. Some Wisconsin troops, returning home, took pains to view the Indian encampment.*

<sup>28</sup> *Mankato Semi-Weekly Record*, October 11, 18, 1862.

<sup>29</sup> *Mankato Semi-Weekly Record*, November 29, 1862.

<sup>30</sup> *Sparta Herald*, October 22, November 5, 19, 1862; Quiner, *Correspondence*, 6:271.



"broken-hearted, ragged and dejected" captive Sioux, plus what he guessed to be a million starved-looking dogs. When he strolled among the tepees and sometimes looked inside, the looks he received were of hatred, steady and intense.<sup>31</sup>

WHAT WERE attitudes of the Twenty-fifth toward its mission in Minnesota? In general they were frustration coupled with resignation. An important factor was that the regiment arrived in Minnesota just as the tide turned against the Sioux, and so ended any exciting thoughts of conflict. One company correspondent did conjecture as late as October 11 that the campaigning might not be finished, but another was more accurate when he wrote that, after leaving La Crosse, "all of our traveling has been toward the Indians, and we have not been able to see one since we left, and are not likely to . . . this winter." Using the letter "M" as a *nom de plume*, still another soldier noted that, if no one was overly disappointed about being sent to fight the Sioux, everybody "would a little rather" have gone South. Questioning the need of sending Wisconsin soldiers to Minnesota at all, M wrote: "On the whole I think the impression strengthens that the 25th could have served the country to much better purpose in Dixie than here." It was M's wish — shared by General Pope — that paroled Wisconsin troops would become substitutes for the Twenty-fifth. "Heaven grant it," wrote M on October 2, but heaven was deaf to the hopes of both M and Pope. As Robert Huhn Jones has indicated, men in high places thought that "the [paroled] men could not . . . be used against the Indians." Whether or not such thinking was sound, Captain John M. Scott of Company E did not expect "much trouble" from the Sioux. Although he was impressed with the damage they had done, Scott confided to a friend that his time in Minnesota seemed "lost."<sup>32</sup>

Two enlisted men who seemed to have shared Scott's opinion — and did something about it — were George W. Brees of Company B and John Kill of Company C. One day in October, Brees left camp to go fishing, but the last his comrades heard of him he was "40 miles" away and hurrying homeward "as fast as his legs would carry him, and what . . . [was] more he had no fish." A correspondent remarked: "As far as we are concerned, we are not at all sorry that the vile wretch has left us.

This is too pure an atmosphere to be tainted by such a presence as that of George W. Brees." As for John Kill, he decided to decamp at Fort Snelling in late October. Dutifully, the captain of Company C issued a notice that Kill should be apprehended as a deserter, but the only reward he offered for arresting him was one cent in Confederate currency — and for returning him, the same sum.<sup>33</sup>

Soon after Pope announced the end of the war on October 9, rumors began to circulate that the Twenty-fifth Wisconsin might receive orders to leave Minnesota at any minute. Perhaps with more gravity than levity, Captain Scott declared that he could not be responsible for the profanity such a directive would arouse, because his men had worked hard at building winter quarters and had even dug a well. What was worse, when Pope did decide that the Twenty-fifth should go, it was too late for the men to leave by boat. In late November navigation on the Mississippi north of Winona was "pretty much 'played out,'" and by December the river had frozen "tight as a drum." But Pope specified that, "by marches not excessive," the regiment should concentrate in Winona "at the earliest practicable moment." This meant in some cases that scattered units faced long tramps of up to 300 miles through heavy snow and biting cold.<sup>34</sup>

Having to leave their warm quarters so late in the year unleashed irritation throughout the rank and file of the regiment. In a frank report to Governor Salomon, Colonel Montgomery wrote as follows:

On our arrival the men were set to work to provide winter quarters in which way they occupied their time except when on picket duty. They . . . spent the fall in building log barracks. We were also ordered to make requisition for four months provisions in advance . . . which . . . led us . . . to believe we were to remain . . . during the winter. With this impression our men worked well. Supposing that they, . . . not other troops were to occupy the buildings erected for quarters . . . and not an intimation, had we officially, . . . until an order was issued on the 11th of November by Brig. Gen. Sibley for us to move to Winona.

In addition to Montgomery, correspondent Alexander W. Grippen of Company G complained that the volunteers had had to labor in preparing for winter — often without horses unless, by "scouring the country," they found some "old plugs which the Indians had not considered worth driving away." To correspondent M and his fellows, it seemed "as if the 25th Wisconsin had been acting the cat's paw for the Minnesota troops — just as if we were sent up here for the sole purpose of providing comfortable quarters for the valiant sons of . . . that State." Having no inkling until November 25 that they

<sup>31</sup>Cooke Letters, in *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 4:93–95, 99–100.

<sup>32</sup>Quiner, Correspondence, 6:266, 268–269; Jones, *Civil War in the Northwest*, 143.

<sup>33</sup>Quiner, Correspondence, 6:270; *Grant County Herald* (Lancaster, Wisconsin), November 25, 1862.

<sup>34</sup>Quiner, Correspondence, 6:271; *Winona Daily Republican*, November 18, December 1, 1862; *Dubuque Democratic Herald*, December 5, 1862. For Pope's directive, see *Calendar*, 12:222, card 722.

were to depart. M grumbled: "We were just to get up and toddle, without further ceremony."<sup>35</sup>

Few would deny that the prospects of a dreary, wintertime trek in frigid Minnesota were disheartening. To make the situation worse, the troops had only worn-out shoes and clothing, and some men lacked sufficient bedding. As for shelter, Montgomery reported that "tents were all blown to pieces on these large prairies where the wind has full sweep." One reason for this may have been that the unit's tents were of poor quality from the very start — if all were like those issued the regiment during July and August, 1862. At that time, 112 tents distributed were inventoried as being "Old tents used by the 7th Wis inf't Vol."<sup>36</sup>

Commenting on the regiment's inadequate clothing and tents, the *Mankato Record* placed upon Pope the responsibility of correcting things. The *Record* asserted: "If the public service actually demands the presence of this fine regiment in the south this winter, the General in command of this department should at least see that they are properly clothed." But one member of the Twenty-fifth who had no anxieties about marching to Winona was Quartermaster William Downs. He reported to his wife that he owned "a large bear skin coat weighing about 25 lbs & other apparel in proportion" and admitted possessing two pairs of moccasins which he intended to wear, one atop the other, along with two or three pairs of socks. Downs told his wife not to worry about him, but he feared that "some of the men [would] suffer." Sharing that apprehension, Montgomery requisitioned clothing and other items needed for what lay ahead. Though promised, the supplies did not come.<sup>37</sup>

When Montgomery received a second order to move "immediately," he had to move, supplies or no supplies. But Montgomery protested to Salomon that he thought "it hard for men to march and carry their guns and knapsacks across their backs at this season of the year." The colonel tried to soften the blow by directing his detachments to travel in small groups so they would be more likely to find shelter in sparsely settled neighborhoods. Otherwise, Montgomery could only urge that the troops be granted a furlough when they arrived at Winona or some other point before being sent south. He also thought that paying the part of the regiment with him would raise morale.<sup>38</sup>

By December 13 the Twenty-fifth was concentrated at Winona. Although it had only a modest population, the town went out of its way to house the troops. The women of Winona also feted the men with a toothsome dinner, the only flaw being the grouching of a "croaker" who labeled the charitable deed as "gaseous." This brought some retaliation in the Winona press, but Montgomery took pains to give thanks for the hospitality by expressing the hope that "the blessings of Heaven be

showered upon the city, and its inhabitants; and *especially*, may peace, prosperity, and happiness attend the ladies of the place."<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, Montgomery requested, and received, permission to leave Winona, and at 1:00 A.M. on December 14 the Twenty-fifth moved out for La Crosse, forty miles away. To get out of walking, Philip Roesch and five comrades paid a dollar each for a farmer to drive them. After some hours, the six reached their destination by crossing the Mississippi upon "some very poor ice." On December 15 the regiment arrived in full strength at La Crosse, where it rested for two days filled with hospitality and good cheer. Having caught its breath, the regiment entrained for Madison and arrived there on December 18. Everybody received a ten-day furlough, although at first the military higher-ups had said "no." Because the men were "bent" on having furloughs, correspondent M had feared that failure to grant them would "cause trouble." But Roesch "was glad when the 10 days were gone by," and he could return to duty.<sup>40</sup>

A curiosity related to the regiment's return to Madison was that Private Norman C. Sherman of Company F appeared wearing a headdress alleged to be that of Little Crow, the chief who had led the uprising. In company with an editor of the *Wisconsin Patriot*, Sherman called at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin to display his booty. The journalist hoped that Secretary Lyman C. Draper could persuade the soldier to present the headdress to the society. Apparently Draper made no such attempt — or if he did, he failed to induce Sherman to part with his prize.<sup>41</sup>

In retrospect, the Twenty-fifth Wisconsin's mission to Minnesota seems an exercise in futility. Because the regiment arrived in the state only three days before the Battle of Wood Lake, its use as a screen protecting the settlements behind Sibley had no effect upon the campaign, unless it was in the element of readiness for the unexpected. Moreover, it is questionable whether the campaign contributed much to the regiment's preparation for field maneuvers or its organizational cohesion.

<sup>35</sup> Montgomery Report, Quiner, Correspondence, 6:272-273.

<sup>36</sup> Montgomery Report: Return of Camp and Garrison Equipage, January 26, 1864, in Jeremiah M. Rusk Papers, SHSW, Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>37</sup> *Mankato Semi-Weekly Record*, November 29, 1862; Downs to Dear Wife, October 26, November 24, 1862, Downs Papers.

<sup>38</sup> Montgomery Report.

<sup>39</sup> *Winona Daily Republican*, December 9, 10, 11, and 15, 1862.

<sup>40</sup> Quiner, Correspondence, 6:273, 274. Roesch Memorandum, 3. Notes on the Montgomery Report refer to the matter of a furlough for the regiment.

<sup>41</sup> *Wisconsin Patriot*, December 30, 1862; author interview with Thurman Fox, director of the museum of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, March 6, 1977.

Because its components were widely separated after September 20, the Twenty-fifth had had only twelve battalion drills. True, when the regiment arrived at Fort Snelling, the *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat* had said the men would "make havoc among the redskins when the opportunity affords." But the opportunity never came. The evidence shows that the tally of casualties inflicted by the Twenty-fifth upon the Sioux amounted to zero. A more serious enemy was contagion — especially measles — which ran through the ranks and even caused some loss of life.<sup>42</sup>

Notwithstanding the regiment's neutral combat record, the hazards of disease, the inroads of death, and the rigors of hard marching, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* considered the unit to have been "tolerably 'seasoned'" by its part in the Indian war. In Madison, a correspondent of the Thirtieth Wisconsin thought that, even though the Twenty-fifth had had no easy time in Minnesota, the men were "hardy looking." And a member of the Thirty-fifth Wisconsin reported that the Twenty-fifth was "a very fine organization, their heavy, even steps, erect heads and easy, graceful bearing placing them beside the best of our regiments."<sup>43</sup>

With those testimonials to the fitness it developed in Minnesota, the Twenty-fifth left for Columbus, Kentucky, on February 17, 1863. It would serve in the vicinity of Vicksburg, Mississippi, in Arkansas, in Alabama, in Tennessee, and with General William Tecumseh Sherman in his raid on Meridian, Mississippi, his capture of Atlanta, and his famed March to the Sea. Finally, on May 24, 1865, the Twenty-fifth participated in the grand review of troops at Washington, D.C., long miles from Fort Snelling and the stations it once had held on General Pope's protective screen during the Sioux War of 1862.<sup>44</sup>



SAMUEL J. KIRKWOOD, governor of Iowa during the Civil War (1860–1864)

JUST AS he had requested troops from Wisconsin, Pope asked for soldiers from Iowa to take the field in Minnesota. Right away he met with difficulty, as a War Department order had allocated "all Iowa troops" for service in Missouri. Pope stood his ground, however, and even though Iowa Adjutant General Nathaniel Baker remonstrated that he was countermanding the department's order, Pope on September 17 halted the Twenty-first Iowa, which had embarked for St. Louis the day before. But Pope let that unit proceed after holding it at Davenport, Iowa, for some hours. Apparently thinking that Pope meant to take all Iowa troops ordered to St. Louis, General John M. Schofield, commanding all the Union militia of Missouri, complained to Halleck on October 18: "I beg of you not to let him take them from me." In turn, on October 19 Halleck told Pope to keep "hands off" the Iowa troops ordered to St. Louis. As Halleck saw it, the number of Indians with whom Pope had to contend in Minnesota "cannot be very great."<sup>45</sup>

But the setback for Pope did not mean his authority was resented by all Iowans in high places. As mentioned earlier, Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood told Stanton that he was grateful that Pope had been appointed commander of the Department of the Northwest. Now the general could take full charge, as Kirkwood was "very anxious" to have his hands freed from the responsibility of meeting the Indian threat. In any case, on October 6 Pope obtained the Twenty-seventh Iowa for service in Minnesota.<sup>46</sup>

A twisty trail of events led up to the departure of the Twenty-seventh northward. Not only was the regiment going to Minnesota because Pope thought he needed more troops there but also it was expected to help shield Iowa's northwestern frontier from Indian raids. In late

<sup>42</sup> Compiled Service Records, Twenty-fifth Wisconsin, Regimental Return for December, 1862; *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, September 13, 1862.

<sup>43</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 17, 1862; Montgomery Report. Quiner, Correspondence, 6:269, 271, 274, 7:11–12; *Roster of Wisconsin Volunteers of the War of the Rebellion, 1861–1865*, 2:284, 285, 290, 292, 302, 306 (Madison, 1886).

<sup>44</sup> Compiled Service Records, Twenty-fifth Wisconsin, Regimental Return for January and February, 1863; Charles E. Estabrook, ed., *Records and Sketches of Military Organizations Relating to Wisconsin in the Period of the Civil War*, 147–149 (Madison [?], 1914).

<sup>45</sup> Baker to Pope, September 15, September 17, 1862, in Iowa Adjutant General Letter Book, September 8–23, 1862, p. 230, 305, 476, in Iowa State Historical Department, Des Moines. See also, Pope to Baker, September 18, 1862, *Calendar*, 12:196, Card 4; War Department, Department of the Northwest, Letter Book 1, p. 4, NARG 393; and Schofield to Halleck and Halleck to Pope, both September 18, 1862, in *Official Records*, series 1, vol. 13, 650.

<sup>46</sup> Kirkwood to Stanton, September 10, 1862, in War Department, Headquarters of the Army, letters received by the commander-in-chief, NARG 108.

August, 1862, the Sioux were reported to have captured — even burned — the village of Springfield (renamed Jackson) in Jackson County, Minnesota, a short distance from the Iowa line. It had been reported, too, that the Sioux were moving “down the west bank of the Des Moines River” and that Iowans living in counties adjacent to the Minnesota border were fleeing to Fort Dodge, sixty miles south. Reporting on August 28 from Estherville, Iowa, the postmaster there noted that the “whole settlement of Jackson [Minnesota] have just arrived here frightened by the Indians.” Calling for help, the postmaster wrote: “I have been here five years, but



**NATHANIAL B. BAKER**, Iowa's adjutant general during the Civil War, dispatched muskets, ammunition, and men.

this is the first really alarming report I have heard from the Indians. The people up this way have cried wolf so often, that I am afraid that now the wolf has really come. . . .”<sup>47</sup>

Two weeks before Pope arrived at St. Paul in mid-September, Iowa authorities had moved to secure the state's northwestern frontier. On August 28 Governor Kirkwood requested the assistant adjutant general at St. Louis to permit a unit known as William's Cavalry Company to remain in Iowa lest the state's “whole frontier [be] exposed to the ravages of the Indians.” The next day Adjutant General Baker dispatched 300 muskets and ammunition from Clinton by special train to Otter Creek, where the rails ended some forty miles west of Cedar Rapids, and thence by wagon to Fort Dodge in the Des Moines River Valley. While the arms were on their week-long journey, Kirkwood informed the Iowa state legislature of “startling rumours” of Indian assaults on the state's northwestern counties. Kirkwood also reported that, in order to prepare for such emergency, he

had sent arms and an observer to the scene. The agent was one Schuyler Ingham of Des Moines, and Kirkwood gave him “full authority to act as circumstances [might] require.”<sup>48</sup>

The legislature then authorized the creation of a border guard of 500 mounted men whom Ingham duly recruited. Known as the Northern Iowa Brigade, the unit was a state force raised for state service. According to the *Davenport Daily Democrat and News*, Baker believed that troops recruited for state service only would be more effective if they should be made subject to duty outside the state. The *News* noted also that it had been “first proposed to raise a regiment of State troops” to defend the frontier, but, because such troops could not go beyond the borders of Iowa, “the programme was accordingly changed.” The result was that Pope ordered Baker to detail “six companies from some Iowa regiment of volunteers,” first to serve the state's northwestern frontier and next to protect Jackson County, Minnesota, where the *Davenport Gazette* saw the units comprising “a wall of steel” for stopping any Indian attack before it reached Iowa soil. At first the *Davenport News* guessed that the companies would come from the Twenty-sixth Iowa encamped at Clinton, but on October 3 it reported that Baker was readying for Minnesota service the Twenty-seventh Iowa stationed at Camp Franklin near Dubuque.<sup>49</sup>

Composed of the “overplus” from companies recruited for the Twenty-first Iowa and mustered into the federal service on October 3, the Twenty-seventh was led by Colonel James E. Gilbert, Lieutenant Colonel Jed Lake, and Major George W. Howard. All three had made their mark in civilian life. Gilbert was a successful lumber dealer, Lake was an attorney who was elected to

<sup>47</sup> *Clinton Herald*, August 30, 1862; *Des Moines Daily State Register*, August 29, 1862, citing a letter from A. Jenkins, Estherville postmaster, to C. B. Richards of Fort Dodge, August 26, 1862. The newspaper will be cited as *Des Moines Register* hereafter.

<sup>48</sup> N. H. Brainerd, “military secretary” to Kirkwood, to Captain Preston, an assistant adjutant at St. Louis, August 28, 1862, in War Department, Headquarters of the Army, letters received by the commander-in-chief, NARG 108; *Clinton Herald*, August 30, 1862; *Des Moines Register*, August 30, 1862; Benjamin F. Shambaugh, comp. and ed., *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, 2:317 (Iowa City, 1903).

<sup>49</sup> *Davenport Daily Democrat and News*, September 25, 1862, and October 3, 1862; *Clinton Herald*, October 4, 1862, citing the *Davenport Gazette*; Harvey Ingham, *The Northern Border Brigade: A Story of Military Beginnings* (n.p., n.d.); State of Iowa, *Acts and Resolutions Passed at the Extra Session of the Ninth General Assembly . . . Convened . . . on the Third Day of September, A.D., 1862*, p. 1-2 (Des Moines, 1862). See also, Marshall McKusick, *The Iowa Northern Border Brigade*, chapters 2, 6 (Iowa City, 1975); Iowa State Legislature, *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of the Rebellion*, 3:1115-1116 (Des Moines, 1908-1911).

the Iowa legislature in 1860, and Howard, like Lake, had practiced law and, besides, had served in county government. Gilbert was said to be solid and substantial, Lake genial and deeply patriotic, and Howard "cool . . . and self-contained."<sup>50</sup>

General Pope discovered that time had slipped by in getting the Twenty-seventh Iowa to Minnesota, so on October 6 he ordered the regiment to leave Dubuque at once. Rather than head for either Iowa's northwestern border or Jackson County, the unit departed for St. Paul, as Pope considered the season too far advanced for campaigning along the Iowa-Minnesota line. Commenting on Pope's orders, the *Davenport News* surmised that the Twenty-seventh would "be shipped on the first boat up."<sup>51</sup>

But the regiment was delayed further. Indeed, an observer might have judged the Twenty-seventh to be poorly prepared to go anywhere, for it lacked ammunition, arms, knapsacks, tents, and uniforms. Nonetheless, Pope insisted that it depart for St. Paul "without waiting for anything," even though Baker considered it "folly to move this regiment without four months rations" because of high provisioning costs once cold weather began. Baker had no choice, in the face of orders, but to instruct Colonel Gilbert to "move at once" with what men he had and to let other officers bring the remainder. Officers wrangled over ammunition and tents, with Gilbert losing the tents and receiving nothing but Baker's promise that "General Pope will take good care of you."

<sup>50</sup>On Gilbert, see Captain A. A. Stuart, *Iowa Colonels and Regiments*, 421–422 (Des Moines, 1865) and U.S. Manuscript Census, 1860, Allamakee County, p. 30. On Lake, see Lewis Publishing Company, *A Memorial and Biographical Record of Iowa*, 361–362 (Chicago, 1896); *Des Moines Register*, September 10, 1862, Harry Church Chappell and Kathryn Joella Chappell, *History of Buchanan County, Iowa, and Its People*, 2:8–11 (Chicago, 1914). On Howard, see J. H. Powers, *Historical and Personal Reminiscences of Chickasaw County, Iowa*, 49, 54, 82, 95, 234, 268 (Des Moines, 1894).

<sup>51</sup>*Davenport Daily Democrat and News*, October 7, 1862.

<sup>52</sup>Baker to Pope, October 4, 1862, Baker to Gilbert, October 6 and 7, 1862, Baker to Pope, October 18, 1862, Baker to Gilbert, undated telegram, in Iowa Adjutant General Letter Book, September 23–October 13, 1862, p. 247, 290, 318, 386, 454–455; Pope to Halleck, September 22, 1862, in War Department, Department of the Northwest, Letter Book 1, p. 24–25, NARC 393; Lurton Dunham Ingersoll, *Iowa and the Rebellion*, 540 (Philadelphia, 1866).

<sup>53</sup>*Dubuque Daily Herald*, October 5, 10, 11, 12, 1862; Fred Albert Shannon, *The Organization and Administration of the Union Army, 1861–1865*, p. 119 (Cloucester, Mass., 1965).

<sup>54</sup>*Dubuque Daily Herald*, October 10, 11, 1862; *St. Paul Pioneer*, October 14, 15, 1862.

<sup>55</sup>*Dubuque Daily Herald*, October 22, 1862; *St. Paul Pioneer*, October 18 and 23 ("shoot" quote), 1862. Concern over possible difficulties with the Chippewa is shown in Pope to Halleck, September 23, 1862, in War Department, Department of the Northwest, Letter Book 1, p. 13, NARC 393.

The pledge doubtless was sincere, but only recently Pope had informed Stanton that "the government's credit was far below par" at St. Paul and that he was doing everything he could, albeit there was "little to do it with." On October 8, after all the ado and the general's "imperative" orders, the Twenty-seventh received a five-day furlough, with a month's pay to boot. In retrospect, it hardly seems — as a historian of the period has written — that the Twenty-seventh "hastened" to assist Pope at St. Paul.<sup>52</sup>

While the Twenty-seventh volunteers were off on their holiday, the mustering officer at Dubuque received funds for paying their bounties and for buying them some 1,800 pairs of drawers and 1,200 pairs of socks. To arm them, a shipment of 750 muskets, 120 Enfield rifles, and 37,000 rounds of ammunition arrived. But some of the firearms were of a kind an observer once labeled "the refuse of all Europe." Four companies were given clumsy, rusty, and old Austrian-made muskets, dated 1826. "The boys don't like them," the *Dubuque Daily Herald* reported, "and many were the murmurs we heard." The newspaper also noted that, before departing for the war, members of the regiment purchased boots "which they consider more appropriate for a winter campaign in Minnesota."<sup>53</sup>

BY STAGES, the Twenty-seventh Iowa departed northward. First to go were four companies which sailed aboard the "Northern Light" on October 11 and arrived at St. Paul two days later. The remaining six embarked on the steamers "Itasca" and "Flora," the former arriving on October 14 and the latter on October 15. After seeing the first of the Iowans, the *St. Paul Pioneer* declared: "A finer looking set of men could not be produced anywhere; and we only regret that they did not turn their faces the other way, and march in the direction of Secesia."<sup>54</sup>

Safe in camp at Fort Snelling, the Twenty-seventh Iowa was lucky — the fighting was over. Four companies stayed at the fort — possibly to keep an eye on captured Sioux — while the other six marched 125 miles north to Mille Lacs to assist with an annuity payment to the Chippewa. Throughout the crisis, authorities had worried about the restless Chippewa, but a settlement made with them on September 15 helped clear the air. One provision was that the Chippewa bands should receive their customary annuities regardless of the Sioux War to the south. Whether or not the annuity system contributed to good relations with the Indians, the *St. Paul Pioneer* proposed: "Shoot nine, and the tenth will understand your arguments."<sup>55</sup>

Official records regarding the Twenty-seventh Iowa's march to Mille Lacs are scanty. One regimental account concerning Company G noted that on October 15 Pope sent the troops on their long tramp, while another for



Company I stated that "on October 31, 1862, the 27th regiment . . . were on the march in Minnesota" and that "they were in the woods beyond the limits of civilization." Having no "blank muster rolls," the men did not assemble for pay on that day. The *Dubuque Daily Herald*, commenting on the trek through forests and swamps, romanticized: "Iowa boys are active and always on the wing. The Twenty-seventh have gone from Fort Snelling to meet the Red Skins, and no doubt will give good accounts of themselves, should they encounter the treacherous foe."<sup>56</sup>

Two Iowa soldiers who recorded their memories of the march to and from Mille Lacs were Peter Olson Earl and George Washington Sherman. Earl mentioned that the little force took along four fieldpieces and that, after reaching "the extreme of civilization" at Princeton, the men had to repair and build corduroy roads to support their provisions and the guns. At hand when the Chippewa collected their annuity, Earl recorded the presence of more than 1,400 heads of families to be paid. He recalled, too, that all got "new Gold coin and change in Silver," because the Chippewa knew the difference between hard money and, as the soldier put it, the "Schinplaster" variety. In so discerning, the Chippewa were not alone, for on November 22 the *Mankato Record* remarked that shimplasters had "entirely driven small silver out of the market and it is quite a curiosity to see a dime or quarter dollar." Earl remembered that, while standing guard one day, he could still "see the sacks of Gold as they were opened and poured on the table and dished out." He remembered, too, that a white man and his Indian wife who kept a general store close by "got the full share of the yellow coin."<sup>57</sup>

Private George Sherman also confided to his diary some perceptive, as well as candid, remarks. He wrote that, while going to Mille Lacs and returning, he and his comrades kept their eyes open for sundry items of food and drink which they could appropriate on the sly. For example, on October 30 Sherman noted that "we robbed the sutter [*sic*] and got some more whiskey." In consequence, the captain became "mad as a wet hen." Whether related or not, another incident occurring two days later resulted in the company quartermaster's being "slaped [*sic*] in the face." Like Earl, Sherman saw where the money went after the Chippewa received it. He wrote: "Mr. Stevens the only white man that lives there . . . has got rich trading with the Indians." According to the manuscript census of 1860, the trader may have been one William Stevens, a native of Nova Scotia. Stevens owned real estate valued at \$2,000 and personal property worth \$1,000. The figures represented nearly one-fourth the valuation of all real estate and personal property in the township.<sup>58</sup>

A regimental account, possibly written by Colonel Gilbert, concluded that the Twenty-seventh's expedition

was "both pleasant and successful." However, to an infantryman the march to Mille Lacs and back meant trudging along on primitive roads while facing the risk, should he fall ill, of being left to recover as best he could. It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that when the regiment was about to conclude its long march, it could hardly have been other than a contented — and relieved — foot soldier named George W. Sherman, who put down in his diary that the Falls of St. Anthony and of "Winohaka" made splendid sights indeed.<sup>59</sup>

The men returning from Mille Lacs reached Fort Snelling on November 4, but they stayed hardly long enough to rest their feet. On November 7 they received orders to depart by boat for Prairie du Chien and thence by rail to Chicago and on to Cairo, Illinois. (At Prairie du Chien, Sherman "got it in . . . [his] head" to visit his wife and children twelve miles off. So he hired a horse, and it "was a sin" the way he rode to be at home for "a good meal" and a four-hour visit.) Meantime, the four companies which had not gone to Mille Lacs went by transport to Cairo. Looking back on the Twenty-seventh's mission to Minnesota, the *Dubuque Herald* said "the boys are delighted to leave that cold country," where icicles were already hanging two feet long at Minnehaha Falls.<sup>60</sup>

During the tour of Minnesota, neither the Twenty-seventh Iowa nor the Twenty-fifth Wisconsin did the Indians any damage. In fact, the bloodiest episode experienced by the Iowans had no connection with Indians but was a "horrible affray" at Camp Franklin on the eve of departure for St. Paul. Originating from bad feeling between Companies A and B, the ruckus began after Company A refused to let Company B share in celebrating the marriage of an "A" soldier. The refusal triggered a "battle" in which several volunteers suffered minor

<sup>56</sup>Compiled Service Records, 27th Iowa Volunteer Infantry, October 3, 1862–January 1, 1863, Co. G, and October 3, 1862–December 31, Co. I, National Archives. For obtaining these sources, the author is indebted to his brother, Jack Sigler, of Springfield, Virginia. See also, *Dubuque Daily Herald*, October 22, 1862.

<sup>57</sup>The diary of Peter Olson Earl is in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City, which permitted its use.

<sup>58</sup>The diary of George Washington Sherman, entries for October 30, November 1, 1862. The diary is in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, and is cited by permission. Data on Stevens are available in the U.S. Manuscript Census, 1860, Minnesota, Mille Lacs County, p. 2, 3.

<sup>59</sup>For appraisal of the Mille Lacs mission, see *Report of the Adjutant General and Acting Quartermaster General of the State of Iowa, January 11, 1864, to January 1, 1865*, p. 1171 (Des Moines, 1865); Sherman Diary, November 3, 1862, entry.

<sup>60</sup>Sherman Diary, November 7, 1862, entry; *Dubuque Daily Herald*, November 2, 1862.

injuries while an unlucky civilian visitor had his thumb shot off. Worst of all, one Jefferson Osborn, an eighteen-year-old member of Company A, received a mortal wound.<sup>61</sup>

Osborn's assailant was not found, but Lieutenant Colonel Lake procured depositions concerning the outburst. That of James Osborn, brother of Jefferson, indicated that the bridegroom had "treated" his fellows at a nearby "Dutch Grocery" and that, while returning to camp, the celebrants met a gang of armed men who shouted, "Damn you. You had better run or die." The erstwhile merry-makers took the first choice as their foes pursued with revolvers blazing. It was at that time that the civilian lost his thumb. All the while, Jefferson Osborn was abed. When he heard cries that his comrades were being murdered, the youth arose and ran to their aid, only to meet two men with guns and fixed bayonets. Attempting to flee, Osborn tripped over a tent rope. Before he could regain his feet, one of the pair stabbed him twice. Osborn somehow got to his friends, who quickly discovered a wound in his arm. But not until morning did they find an abdominal injury which proved fatal.<sup>62</sup>

Osborn's body was aboard when the Twenty-seventh sailed for St. Paul. At McGregor, Iowa, Lieutenant Colonel Lake detailed a party, which included James Osborn, to take the remains home. Osborn's card in Company A's Descriptive Book states in part: "It may seem that he was participating in a drunken affray. Not so. He was asleep in his bunk. On being informed that his brother was being murdered . . . he rushed out to his assistance . . . and was stabbed with a bayonet by a man unknown. . . . Character good." Today Jefferson Osborn's grave is in a rural cemetery on a hilltop near Hardin, Iowa.<sup>63</sup>

Not much remains to be said of the Iowans' service in Minnesota. Perhaps the best point to make is that, by being in the state less than a month, the Twenty-seventh escaped the long, cold, overland march that the Wisconsin troops had to make as a result of a three-month stay.

For much of the remainder of the Civil War, the

Twenty-seventh Iowa served in the mid-South area. It took part in the capture of Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1863, and in General William T. Sherman's raid on Meridian, Mississippi, in early 1864. Later, the regiment served in the Red River (of the South) campaign and in December, 1864, fought Confederates under General John Bell Hood at Nashville. In February, 1865, the Twenty-seventh took part in movements against Mobile, Alabama, and in July appeared at Vicksburg, Mississippi, for mustering out. But it was not actually mustered out until August 5, 1865, at Clinton, Iowa. There, nearly three years before, the *Clinton Herald* had announced the capture by the Sioux of Springfield, Minnesota, and the flight of neighboring Iowans to Fort Dodge.<sup>64</sup>



GRAVE of Jefferson Osborn at Hardin, Iowa

THE PICTURE of Governor Edward Salomon on p. 314 is from Edward B. Quiner, *The Military History of Wisconsin*, frontispiece; that of Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood on p. 323 is from Cyrenus Cole, *A History of the People of Iowa*, facing p. 368 (Cedar Rapids, 1921); that of Nathaniel B. Baker on p. 324 is from Benjamin F. Gue, *History of Iowa*, 2, facing p. 61 (New York, 1903); that of Osborn's grave is by Edward Noyes. All the others are from the MHS audio-visual library. Alan Ominsky made the map on p. 317.

<sup>61</sup>Dubuque Daily Herald, October 14, 1862.

<sup>62</sup>Muster-In Roll, Co. A, Twenty-Seventh Regiment Iowa Infantry. Papers of Jefferson Osborn, and statement of James Osborn in reference to the death of Jefferson Osborn, a private of Co. A, 27th Reg. Iowa Volunteers, to Lt. Col. Jed Lake, on board steamer Itasca [sic], October 12, 1862, off McGregor, Iowa, National Archives.

<sup>63</sup>Lake to Gilbert, October 13, 1862, on board "Itasca" off Red Wing, Minnesota. statement of James Osborn to Lake, and Company Descriptive Book, cards 1 and 2. Jefferson Osborn, all in source indicated in footnote 62. For aid in locating Jefferson Osborn's grave, the author is indebted to Mrs. Julie Mohs and to Mr. and Mrs. Ewald Walch of the Hardin, Iowa, community.

<sup>64</sup>For the service of the Twenty-seventh Iowa after leaving Minnesota, see *Roster of Iowa Soldiers*, 3:1115-1126.



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