

Issue 6: October 2020

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First Minnesota Monument at Gettysburg

OUR OCTOBER MEETING – 10/20/2020

“Union General August Willich”

David Dixon

The life of Union General August Willich begins as a Prussian army officer who renounces his nobility and joins in the failed European revolutions of 1848. He emigrates to America, edits a daily labor newspaper in Cincinnati, and becomes one of the most accomplished generals in the Union Army. This story sheds new light on the contributions of 200,000 German-Americans who fought for the Union. Willich’s life offers a glimpse into the international dimension of America’s Civil War. For Willich, the nature and implications of that revolution turned not on Lincoln’s conservative goal of maintaining the national Union, but on issues of social justice, including slavery, free labor, and popular self-government. The Civil War was not simply a war to end sectional divides, but to restore the soul of the nation, revive the hopes of democrats worldwide, and, in Willich’s own words, “defend the rights of man.”

David Dixon earned his M.A. in history from the University of Massachusetts in 2003. He has written books, given nearly 100 talks to audiences, appeared on Civil War Talk Radio and other podcasts. He hosts B-List History, a website that features obscure characters and their compelling stories.

2020-2021 SPEAKER SCHEDULE

November 17, 2020 – Thomas Arliskas: “General U.S. Grant and the Battle of Belmont”

December 15, 2020 – Brian Steele Willis: “General George Henry Thomas”

2020-2021 SPEAKER SCHEDULE CONTINUED

January 19, 2021 – John Haymond:	“The Infamous Dakota War Trails of 1862”
February 16, 2021 - John Fazio:	“Decapitating the Union: Jefferson Davis, Judah Benjamin and the Plot to Assassinate Lincoln”
March 16, 2021 – Leslie Goddard:	“Gone With The Wind and the Construction of Civil War Memory”
May 18, 2021 – Mike Movius:	“The State of the Civil War Round Tables”

THIS MONTH IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY – OCTOBER

3 rd	1862 – Second Battle of Corinth, Mississippi
8 th	1862 – Battle of Perryville (Chaplin Hills), Kentucky
12 th	1861 – First ironclad in the U. S. Navy, USS St. Louis launched at Carondelet Missouri
14 th	1863 – Battle of Bristoe Station, Virginia
16 th – 18 th	1859 – John Brown’s Raid on Harper’s Ferry, Virginia
19 th	1864 – Battle of Cedar Creek, Virginia
19 th	1864 – Confederate Raid on St. Albans, Vermont
21 st	1861 – Battle of Ball’s Bluff, Virginia

CIVIL WAR BIRTHDAYS – OCTOBER

10 th	1837 – Col. Robert Gould Shaw, U.S.
20 th	1819 – Gen. Daniel Sickles, U.S.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Thanks again to Lana Blumhoefer for the Civil War calender information with some additions by the editor.

JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP!

Are you on Facebook? If so, please consider joining our Civil War Round Table - Twin Cities Group. On our Group page you will find posts shared from some of the best Civil War history organizations in the county including the American Battlefield Trust, Civil War Chronicles and Emerging Civil War. As a group member you can post and share any Civil War related items (photos, stories, questions) you wish. If you are already on Facebook, make sure you the search for our group and ask to be a member.

From the Dusty Collect: Together Again – Thomas Dwelle’s Reunion Badges

The First Minnesota’s stay at Camp Stone, Maryland in fall 1861 was their own version of “All Quiet Along the Potomac” as the popular song lamented. Every few days the boys rotated through watchful but relaxed guard duty at Edward’s Ferry. It was punctuated by occasional fun as they surprised their equally relaxed opponents with shots from the few *rifled* muskets that could carry across the river. The Battle of Balls Bluff on October 21 changed all of that. In an ill-advised attack on Leesburg Virginia Lincoln’s close personal friend US Senator and Colonel Edward Baker lost his life and the invasion force was lucky to escape.



The First Minnesota provided critical service poling flatboats across the river to insert and later to evacuate a diversionary force at Edwards Ferry three miles downriver.

Two companies of the First did go into action at the fringe of the battlefield the next day, losing one man killed. Another, twenty-one-year-old Lake City resident Thomas Dwelle of Company I, was wounded by a minie ball through his right shoulder. Dwelle was sent home when he could travel and his convalescent furlough was extended twice. Finally back with the regiment in 1862 but unable to perform much duty, he was ultimately discharged for disability in February 1863.

Fast forward to 1986 when Dwelle’s grandson moved from his south Minneapolis home leaving much of Thomas’ artifacts for an estate sale.

Two of my friends went to the sale and I was able to buy some badges and gear from one of them. Later Thomas’ grandson gave me his diary and furlough papers; copies are now in the MHS archives.

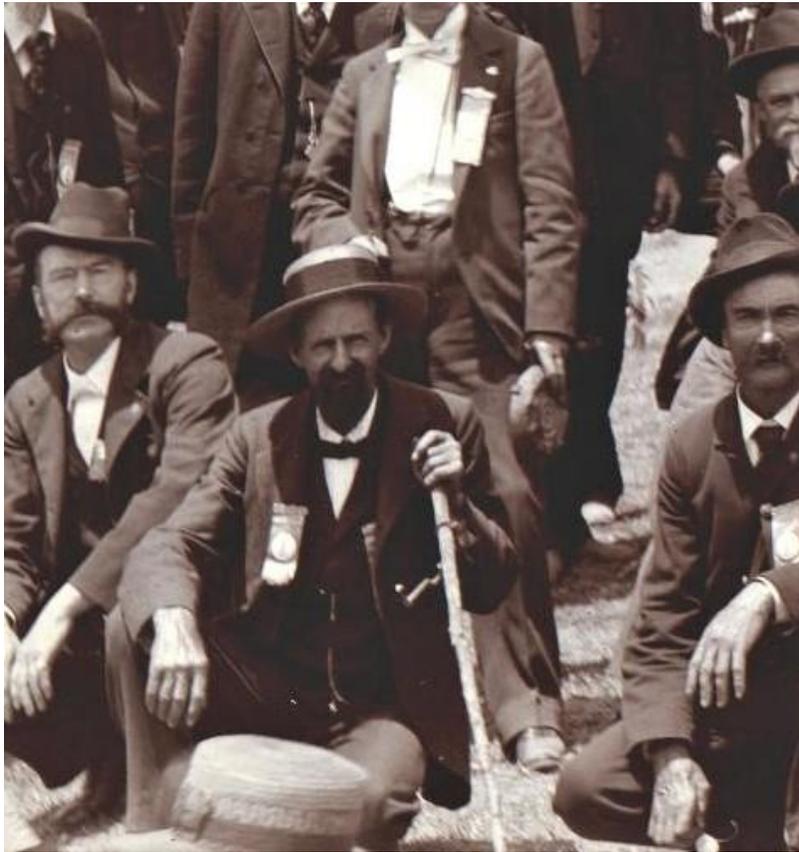
This year I acquired some militaria from my second friend's estate which included the two badges he had purchased at the sale. One was missing its celluloid drop badge, but I dug out my own 1986 purchases, and there was the missing drop! This particular badge was from a 1905 annual reunion held at the Old Soldiers' Home and featured Colonel Gorman on the front and the five colonels of the First Minnesota who had risen to general thanks to the Regiment's performance on the reverse.



The other badge (left) was produced in limited numbers and only for those surviving veterans who made the 1897 trip to Gettysburg for dedication of their monument. Built on the starting spot of their heroic charge July 2, 1863, the monument commemorates the unparalleled sacrifice of the regiment in 15 minutes of critical fighting that stopped a Confederate breakthrough.



James J. Hill, honorary member of the Regiment, provided railroad cars for the veterans to make the trip. Their days on the battlefield included ceremonies, speeches and lots of time roaming the fields and reminiscing. Thomas Dwelle, though not himself a Gettysburg veteran, made the trip as well.



He wears this actual badge in the photo and has picked up a battlefield relic cavalry horse bit that hangs from his walking stick. Wonder if I missed that horse bit at the sale???

CONTACT US:

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Can you contribute to a future newsletter? Writers are wanted to submit Civil War related articles to this newsletter.

Please submit your drafts to Bruce Cooper: earlofbuce@hotmail.com