



NEWS

Issue 64: August 2025

MY FIRST CIVIL WAR EXCURSION

BY WILFRED WILLIAMS



Photo courtesy of the National Park Service

It was later in life that I finally took an interest in my great-grandfather's service in the Civil War with the 2nd Minnesota Infantry. I researched everything I found on the 2nd Minn, connected with some coworkers who were "into" the Civil War, and joined the Twin Cities Civil War Round Table. In due time we decided to take a trip to a Civil War battle site. One member of our group was extremely well versed in the Civil War and suggested Shiloh, since that year the anniversary,

April 6- 7, would fall on a Sunday as it did in 1862. He was a stickler for as much authenticity as possible.

The Trip

We hooked up with my cousin who had a spacious RV and the six of us took off for the Shiloh Battlefield. After an overnight in Kentucky, we arrived at the park with plenty of time for orientation and familiarization before heading to the Battlefield Campground which is basically across the road. When driving in it was easy to see the place was packed, with tents on the periphery. When registering, the proprietor seemed as if he wanted to apologize for having to put us near the shower building, electricity but no sewer/water hookup, and a lot of noisy kids. We assured him it didn't bother us, and we would be just fine. A short walk took us to a restaurant for supper. BTW, if a waiter ever asks if you want farm or river catfish – TAKE FARM! The place was crowded with what seemed about a company or two of Confederate Soldiers (albeit reenactors). I finished eating, went out, and sat down by a Johnny Reb on the porch. We exchanged the relevant niceties. Recognizing my accent was not Southern, he wanted to know where I was from. After telling him my story he wondered what unit my great-grandfather fought with. When I said the 2nd Minn, he knew it was the Army of the Cumberland led by George (Pap) Thomas.

The Talk

Then began my first version of the “talk.” Slavery was not the cause of the Civil War and Lincoln never wanted to free the slaves. I remained quiet and listened as this was my first encounter with a Reb and hearing such things. Today, hearing that, I would recommend he look at what Alexander Stephens (VP of the Confederacy) had to say about slavery and secession. My second version of the “talk” occurred shortly after our return to the campsite. I recognized these were Boy Scout troops and Explorer Posts, having been one myself. The campfires were going, and

the Stars & Bars (Confederate battle flag) were flying right along with the Stars & Stripes. As we talked to leaders and scouts on our way around, we discovered there WERE a lot of kids camped here – about 2500-3000. We called these Jamborees when I was in Scouting. The focus of this annual Jamboree was indoctrination into their true southern “Heritage” with a lot of emphasis on their version of the Civil War and the Antebellum South.

After another day at Shiloh, we made a brief visit to Corinth, MS and then headed north to Tuscumbia, AL. It was here I realized an important place to head for in these towns was the town square, especially if it was the County Seat with the old Courthouse usually turned into a Confederate Museum with plenty of memorabilia and literature extolling the “Lost Cause,” which is alive and thriving. This was the case in Tuscumbia, so we headed there. The first thing you notice is the requisite statue on the lawn. Most of these statues, to the glory of some Confederate soldiers and “The Cause,” were erected and tended by “The Daughters of The Confederacy.” This was my third version of the “talk” except it was written on the statue base.

“IN YOUR HEARTS YOU KNOW THEY WERE RIGHT.”

Enough Said!

STEVEN SCHIER’S CIVIL WAR TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Which law allowed the people of the state to decide if the state would be a slave state or a free state

(See page 12 for the answer)

TCCWRT MEMBERS WITH AUGUST BIRTHDAY

8/2 Tom Hutchinson

8/8 Stephen Osman

8/4 James Mewborn

8/17 Leroy Owens

8/8 Michael Eckman

8/18 Bill Huntzicker

8/23 Steven Olson

8/31 William Smith

8/24 Leslie Allen Sharpe

8/31 Mitch Rubinstein

8/27 Melodie Cooper

8/30 Teri Joyce

2025 TCCWRT ANNUAL SUMMER PICNIC

The TCCWRT had our annual picnic at Minnehaha Falls Park area on Tuesday July 15 at 4 pm.

About 35 people attended. It was great to be able to mingle with each other. And we all survived the 90s temp heat, with a little help from a breeze!

Many brought various food items, and we thank them for that. And for those that contributed \$5.

President Mark Pridgeon conducted a great civil war trivia contest that was won by Mitch Rubenstein. Mitch gets to run the contest next year!

A good time was had by all!

Brett Johnson, along with picnic committee members Lana Blumhoefer and Bruce Cooper





Photos by Brett Johnson

From the Dusty Collection #56 *William Dodd's Rifle at New Ulm*

By Stephen E. Osman



Most of us are familiar with Dodd Road in the south metro, but few know the history behind the name. Minnesota territorial pioneer William Dodd was killed during the second Battle of New Ulm on August 23, 1862, and may have carried this rifle when he fell. It was purchased from his direct descendants and has been on previous exhibit both in the Brown County Historical Society Museum in New Ulm, and as part of the Civil War sesquicentennial exhibit at the Minnesota Military and Veterans Museum. Its future home will probably be in one of those institutions.

The artifact is a percussion over under double rifle made during the 1850s. It is muzzle loading and each barrel about 40 caliber that took a .4-inch diameter lead ball. To load, the powder charge was

poured down each barrel, a greased linen patch placed over each muzzle, a round lead ball placed on top of each, and then both forced down with a wooden ramrod to rest on the powder charge.



Finally, a small copper percussion cap was placed on each nipple to ready the rifle for firing. Each barrel has its own trigger. The left side of the stock has a small compartment with hinged German silver lid for the caps [picture above], while the right side of the stock has a larger compartment for the greased patches and balls [picture to right].



These rifles were typically made in the northeast although some have Ohio maker stamps. This one is only marked REMINGTON on each back action lock. That firm, founded in Ilion, New York in 1816 and still in business today, may have only made the locks. The rifle is a bit unwieldy with no wooden fore stock but is easy to load and still quite accurate with open sights. There is a threaded hole in the breechplug strap for what was probably an iron peep sight, now

missing. The rifle would have been handy for hunting small game although not as versatile as the double-barreled shotguns most pioneers preferred. Those smooth bore weapons could be loaded with a large ball for game or with shot for fowl. Not surprisingly, these were also favored by the Dakota warriors who would eventually take Dodd's life.

Minnesota pioneer William Bigelow Dodd made a land claim of 160 acres in 1853, founding a town site he named Rock Bend, soon renamed St. Peter. This was on land purchased from the Dakota in 1851 at the nearby Treaty of Traverse de Sioux. Captain Dodd brought his new (second) wife, Harriet Newell to the claim in 1854, and donated land for the construction of the first Episcopal church just across the road. The War Department commissioned Dodd to oversee construction of a new military road from Fort Atkinson, Iowa to Mendota; the 70-mile portion between Mendota and Rock Bend was completed in just 109 days with a crew of 11 men. Captain Jesse L Reno (later killed at South Mountain) led an 1854 survey party northeast from Iowa and reported "Opposite Traverse des Sioux we struck a road, newly cut out, from Rock Bend to St. Paul, by Captain Dodd, of Minnesota. It materially assisted in our survey, and enabled us to get through the Big Woods several weeks sooner than we would otherwise have done without this –our only guide among the unexplored labyrinth of lakes and marshes."

Meanwhile the displaced Dakota gradually moved onto reservations ten miles wide each side of the Minnesota River from just west of New Ulm to the state border. In 1858 the northern half of the reservation, timbered and still holding game, was sold off. The reservation Dakota received annuity payments that included both cash and goods and had the services of government employees to encourage them to take up market farming. Among the distributed goods were things intended to help "turn them into white men" as one Dakota stated. According to Captain Jeremiah Donahauer of the Second Minnesota Infantry, sent to guard the 1861 annuity distributions, the goods included cheap black suits, boots, and top hats. Of little use to the Dakota, such distributions benefited local merchants happy to accept government gold. Those useless suits would figure later into the New Ulm battle.

New Ulm had been settled in 1855 by German immigrants and by 1860 had 180



buildings including of course a brewery (still open today!). After a failed attack by fewer than 200 warriors on August 19, 1862, townspeople fortified six downtown blocks that eventually held over 300 fighters, well over 1000 refugee women and children, and countless animals. Judge Charles Flandrau was named commander over the insufficiently armed citizen defenders bolstered by about a hundred men from Mankato, two militia companies from Le Sueur, and militias from Brown County, Nicollet County, St. Peter, Lafayette, and New Ulm. The

St. Peter company was led by Lieutenant William Dodd, second in command. On the 23rd the Dakota returned, nearly 800 strong, and mounted several attacks. Eventually most of the outlying buildings were burned.

This would prove to be the largest attack on a town in US history, and the highest civilian casualties of any such battle. At the height of the action William Dodd saw approaching in the distance a file of armed men dressed in citizens' black suits and marching behind a US flag. Gathering a few of his militiamen, he galloped ahead to escort them to the barricades. But the relief column was actually Dakota warriors wearing those 1862 annuity garments. Dodd was shot several times and dragged back inside the barricade where he soon died of his wounds. Flandreau eventually mounted a counter attack down Minnesota Street to drive the warriors off. Two days later, New Ulm was evacuated and a caravan of over 2,000 moved to the safety of Mankato.

Back in St. Peter, Dodd's wife Harriet anxiously awaited word from her husband. Her diary recorded those next three days, followed by another mention of their young son's comments two weeks later:

25th Monday. Heard the rumor that he was killed but did not believe it.

26 Tuesday. The Kiniff boy came and told me he helped to bury him!

27 on Wednesday Dr. Daniels came and brought me his last words. Last--oh shall I never never more hear his voice?

Sept. 11, Thursday. To day Johnny is complaning, how my heart yearns toward this "father's child" I wish I could have dagguerotyped his countenance and attitude as he said yesterday 'Mamma, I'm not afraid, I'll stay by you. If Indian come, I'll chop his head right off.' and illustrating his words, he chopped one tiny finger on the other hand with a most decided movement. Tonight he is a little feverish, and says,

'Do the Indians hurt you? They hurt papa and I must shoot 'em I'm not afraid.'



Harriet herself died in 1863 leaving three children orphans. Her youngest daughter eventually received the rifle passed down over the years until it entered a private collection. The Dodd's house still stands on Chatham Street in St. Peter. William and Harriet are the only burials outside the nearby Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion.

As a footnote, William Dodd's 16-year-old son from his first marriage, William Abiather Dodd, accompanied him to New Ulm where he saw his father shot down. Young William hoped to avenge his father by lying about his age – 22 rather than 16 - to join Company B of the Minnesota Mounted Rangers in October 1862. He served with that one year regiment until November 1863 and participated in General Henry Hastings Sibley's arduous, punitive expedition through Dakota Territory to the Missouri River. The still underage veteran next joined Company A of the 9th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry in January 1864, this time stating his age as 19. He was one of the lucky ones who survived the disastrous Battle of Brices Crossroads that June that saw 233 of his comrades captured and sent to Andersonville and other prisons. Young William likewise survived the Battle of Tupelo where Colonel Alexander Wilkins was killed, and the assault on Shy's Hill in Nashville in December. He was discharged on August 24, 1865, several months short of his 20th birthday having experienced much in his teenage years.

ARLENE GRACE JOHNSON OBITUARY



Plymouth - Johnson, Arlene Grace Oberg age 83, passed away on April 11, 2025. Arlene was born Aug. 9, 1941 in St. Paul, Minnesota to Curtiss and Beulah Oberg. After graduating from Central High School in 1959, she attended the University of Minnesota, graduating from the Institute of Technology with a BS in education in 1963. While at U of M, she met John "Jack" Johnson, whom she married shortly after graduation. Arlene and Jack celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 2021. As a schoolteacher, Arlene taught at Washburn HS in Minneapolis and also in South Bend, Indiana, teaching in the science and mathematics department. She retired from teaching to raise her family. Arlene was a dedicated mother,

supporting her daughters in their education and extracurricular activities. Arlene was an active member of PEO, Antique Club, DAR, Haviland Collector's International, many historical societies, Genealogy Club, West Suburban Women's Club, **Twin Cities Civil War Round Table**, and was a life member of the American Swedish Institute. Arlene enjoyed golf, bridge, and book club, through which she had many friends. She loved to travel, visiting 48 of the 50 states on auto trips with her husband and daughters. The entire family traveled to Sweden and Norway, visiting the family homeland, inspiring an interest in genealogy. During their retirement, she and Jack traveled throughout Europe, China, Africa, Australia and South America, even going to the Azores and Easter Island. She was preceded in death by her parents, two siblings and husband. She is survived by daughters Karin Jackson (Greg) and Sara Christianson both of Golden, Colorado and five grandchildren Annika and Erik Jackson and Eva, Zenia and Nissa Christianson. A celebration of her life will be held at Church of the Epiphany, 4900 Nathan Lane, Plymouth, MN, on April 26th, at 11am with visitation at 10:30am. A private interment at Oakland Cemetery, in St. Paul, MN will follow the ceremony. In lieu of

flowers, memorials may be given to the American Swedish Institute or to Church of the Epiphany. Gearty-Delmore 763-553-1411 gearty-delmore.com

Arlene was a Round Table member since 2015.

Link to obit: <https://obituaries.startribune.com/obituary/arlene-johnson-1092831346>

SPOTLIGHT ON AUGUST 1861 : BATTLE OF WILSON'S CREEK

- 3rd Confederate artillery batteries near Galveston, Texas are bombarded by Union naval forces.
- 5th The Revenue Act of 1861 is signed by President Lincoln. The Act created the first national income tax.
- 5th Enlistment terms in the Union army increase to 2 years from 3 months.
- 10th Battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri. Confederate forces under General Sterling Price attack Union troops under General Nathaniel Lyon.

OUR 2025-2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

President: **Mark Pridgeon**

Vice President: **John-Erich Mantius**

Secretary: **Carol VanOrnum**

Treasurer: **Jerry Ogdahl**

Past President: **Rod Myers**

At Large Members:

Phil Baker, Brett Johnson, James Mewborn, Aiden Ruch, Gary Wittnebel, Lana Blumhoefer, Bruce Cooper and Bob Svacina

Webmaster: **Ron Whitehead**

NEWS Editor: **Bruce Cooper**

New Minnesota Military and Veteran's Museum Update

The museum interior is taking shape as you can see below. The board met up at Camp Ripley on



23 July and learned that construction will be completed at the end of January 2026, with exhibits installed over the following few months. The oversize (macro) artifacts will go inside shortly. And on this September 2, anniversary of the end of WWII, Gun #3 from the USS Ward will be removed from the state capital grounds for restoration and relocation to the museum. That cannon has deteriorated outside for decades, and the Navy's historical division which owns it would only allow it to remain in Minnesota if it were conserved and

displayed indoors. Our museum is a natural location, and that historic cannon which fired the first American shots of WWII will greet visitors to the new museum.

The exhibits team meets bi weekly to discuss the galleries being designed and written on two-week intervals. Stephen Osman is hard at work on text and artifact choices for the Civil War gallery with deadline for the draft scheduled for August. One addition may be an original artillery limber chest recently found on a Minnesota farm. It will be restored and used as an ad hock bench next to our original 6 pounder bronze gun. We're also pursuing an original oil painting of the Charge of the First Minnesota, and hope to display one of the Sanford guns (small cannons) presented to the First Minnesota in 1862.



Donations are coming in slow but steadily: we have a \$50,000 minimum challenge and now just over \$46,000 pledged of which nearly \$27,000 has already been received from 29 TCCWRT donors. Have you made your pledge yet?

The challenge runs through 2026, so fully tax-deductible donations span two years. Some of us have used the required minimum distribution from our IRA's to donate, thus reducing our taxable income to be reported. Donors will receive an acknowledgement letter from the museum.

There are three easy ways to donate:

- Visit the museum website and make an electronic donation, noting that you are with the Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable. <https://www.mnveteranmuseum.org/new-site-facility>

- Mail a donation to the museum, noting in the check memo “Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable.” MN Military and Veterans Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Highway 115 Little Falls, MN 56345-4173.
- Or hand a check to Stephen Osman at a meeting to be forwarded up to the museum. Please let Stephen know in all cases that you have donated or that you intend to donate in 2025 or 2026 so that he can add you to the tracking documents. foragecaps@comcast.net

Check the museum web site to see a conceptual fly over and through the new building.
<https://www.mnvetmuseum.org/new-site-facility>

Here are two a live camera views of the museum under construction:
<https://www.mnvetmuseum.org/live-cameras>

STEVEN SCHIER’S TRIVIA QUESTION ANSWER:

The Kansas Nebraska Act

CONTACT US:

Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable

info@tccwrt.com

<https://tccwrt.com/>

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