



NEWS

Issue 68: December 2025

MEMBER PROFILE: KEITH ROBIDEAU

BY LANA BLUMHOEFER



Keith Robideau's interest in the Civil War began in high school and grew from there. "I had two very interesting teachers that somehow managed to make a spotty, snotty teenager pay attention to history. My high school history teacher, Mr. Shogren, and Dr. Marsh at Hamline both made history, especially the Civil War, interesting and even relevant. Instead of just memorizing dates or giving boring lectures about certain events they both treated the Civil War as a living event that had repercussions that existed today. This was in the early 70s, a decade of chaos and confusion around Vietnam, Nixon, civil rights, women's rights and a questioning of how America got to this point and what was going to happen next."

Keith's brother and sister-in-law, Kevin and Pam Robideau, are also interested in the Civil War and joined at the same time as Keith in 2022. He credits Pam with having a wealth of knowledge. The Robideau brothers grew up in a family that paid a lot of attention to their family history, tracing their ancestors back to the 1400s on their dad's side.

He enjoys the variety of speakers and topics the TCCWRT offers, especially when the topic is something other than a particular battle. He also appreciates it when the speakers are impressed by our membership numbers.

Keith recently discovered that a distant relative had fought for the Union, and he and Kevin are trying to find out more about that relative.

When asked what interests him most about the Civil War, Keith shared, "It used to be the fact that we survived it as a nation and thrived. But that's changed in the last 15 years. I'm struck by the similarities in today's reality and the parallels to the Civil War. States rights were a rallying cry for the south in the mid-1800s, and we hear that phrase a lot today, especially when it comes to restricting individual rights at the Supreme Court level. Civil rights, especially towards African Americans, was a flash point during and after the Civil War, and we are fighting those same battles today.

“The term most often used for the most vocal supporters of the south before and during the Civil War was ‘fire eaters.’ I think that probably could be applied to quite a few demagogues today, especially those on social media. The description of South Carolina in the 1850s was “too small to be a country but too large to be an insane asylum” could seem to be an apt description of certain sections of the USA today.”

Vicksburg is Keith’s favorite battlefield. “I always find something new and interesting at each visit. Reading the account of the siege can't accurately define just how harsh the topography was. Swamps, hills, gullies, and bluffs in writing aren't nearly as imposing until you get out on site and walk the battlefield. It makes me wonder how those soldiers actually fought and survived there.”

We asked him if there is something he would like to share with us that most people do not know about him. “I’ve spent the equivalent of a decent retirement fund to attend Rolling Stones concerts all over the country for the last 50 years. My children just shake their heads over this!”

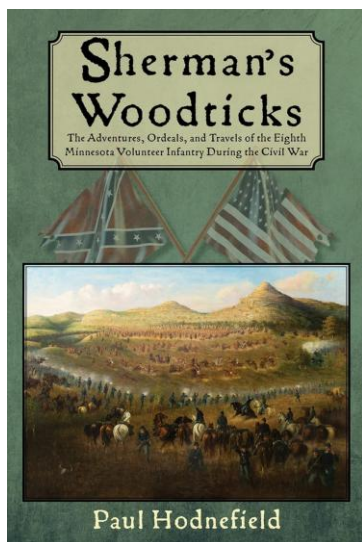
STEVEN SCHIER’S CIVIL WAR TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE MONTH

How did Harriett Beecher Stowe help end slavery?

(See page 7 for the answer)

OUR DECEMBER MEETING – DECEMBER 16, 2025

Sherman’s Woodticks: The Remarkable Travels of the 8th Minnesota Infantry During the Civil War – Paul Hodnefield



In August, 1862, a number of men from Monticello, greater Wright County, and surrounding areas answered the call to arm. These volunteers eventually became Company E of the Eighth Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment. The Eighth Regiment had an extraordinary experience. During the last year of the Civil War, this regiment traveled more miles than any other unit, North or South. Beginning in Minnesota, they campaigned west to the Yellowstone River as part of the Dakota War and then turned around to go south through Tennessee to North Carolina. Along the way, they endured extreme weather, three train derailments but still fought bravely when needed, including against such noted foes as Sitting Bull and Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest. This is the story of the Eight Minnesota told through the eyes of the soldiers, primarily those in Company E.



Paul Hodnefield is a commercial finance attorney and skilled researcher. For as long as he can remember, Paul has had a passion for American history, with particular interest in the Revolutionary, Civil War, and frontier eras. A Minnesota native, Paul lives in the Twin Cities with his wife, Patty.

OUR 2026 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

- January 20, 2026 “Parole of Prisoners of War in the Civil War” – Stefan Lund
- February 17, 2026 “Had it Been a Defeat Instead, the Nation Could have Scarcely Lived Over” Battle of Stones River 1862-1863 – Chris Kolakowski
- March 17, 2026 “The Union in Peril: Lincoln and the Secession Crisis 1960 – April 1861” – Ian Iverson
- April 25, 2026 Annual Symposium
- May 19, 2026 “Disunion in the Confederacy or What If Lincoln Lived?” – Brian Jordan

TCCWRT MEMBERS WITH DECEMBER BIRTHDAY

- | | | | |
|-------|---------------|-------|-----------------|
| 12/4 | Will Williams | 12/17 | Phil Baker |
| 12/4 | Mike Huttner | 12/21 | Jerry Ogdahl |
| 12/6 | John Metzger | 12/28 | Craig Macintosh |
| 12/9 | Rolf Westby | 12/26 | Larry Pearson |
| 12/12 | Ron Whitehead | | |

Happy Birthday, Members!

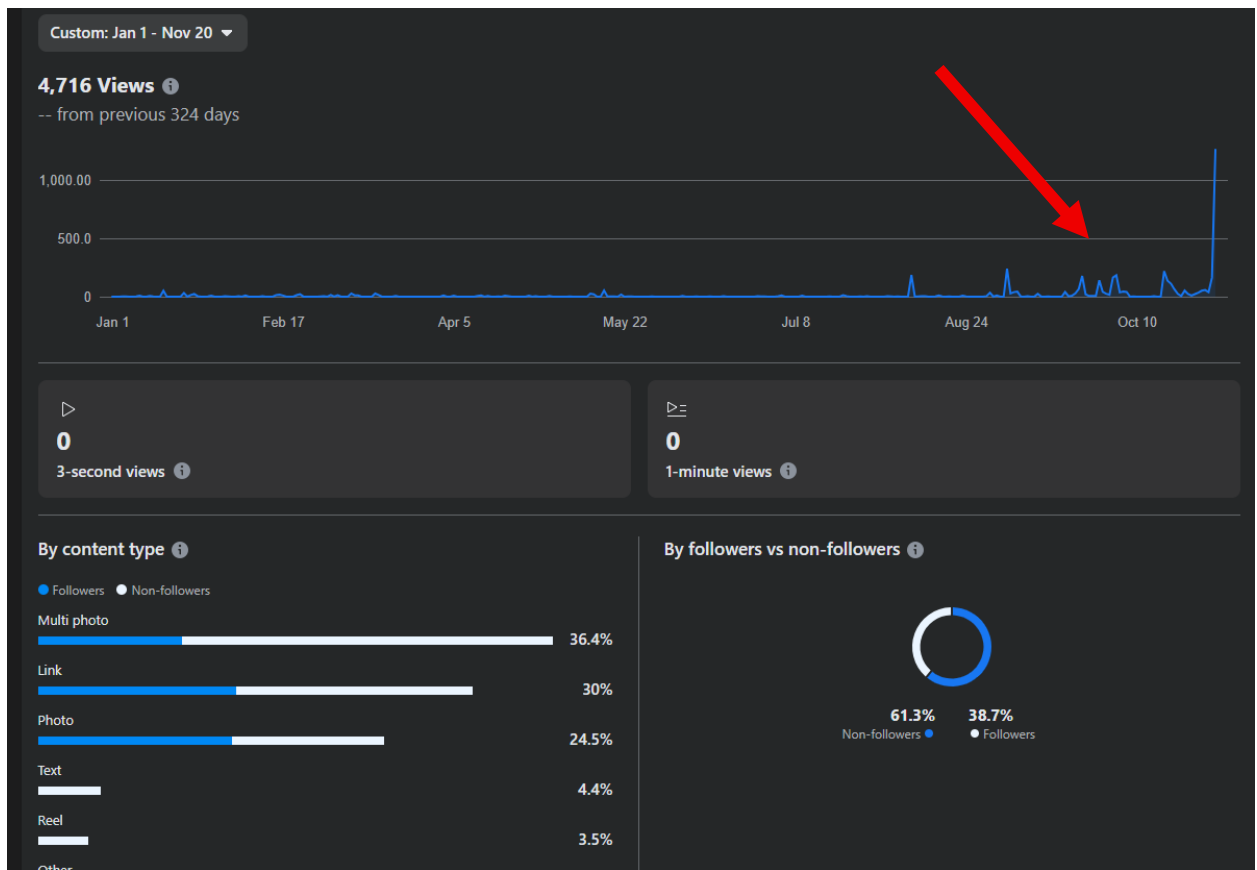
The Twin Cities Civil War Round Table and Facebook

By John-Erich Mantius, Vice President

Facebook started in 2004 and now, 21 years later, has over 3 billion monthly active users. Why is Facebook important to the TCCWRT? Because thousands of Civil War enthusiasts like us are actively on Facebook seeking out stimulating content and compelling narratives. Whether you are a former re-enactor, a high school history teacher, employed or retired with a special passion for the Civil War, there are many available Civil War-dedicated Facebook pages that are compelling – including ours!

Since September, we've been posting content weekly to share many of the great content sites including our own unique Minnesota-centric posts. Our goal is to make this not only an additional fun resource for our members, but also to attract and engage new viewers who, hopefully, will join our round table. In fact, one of the key strategies to growing our membership is to expose unique and new Facebook visitors to our page to our wonderful organization.

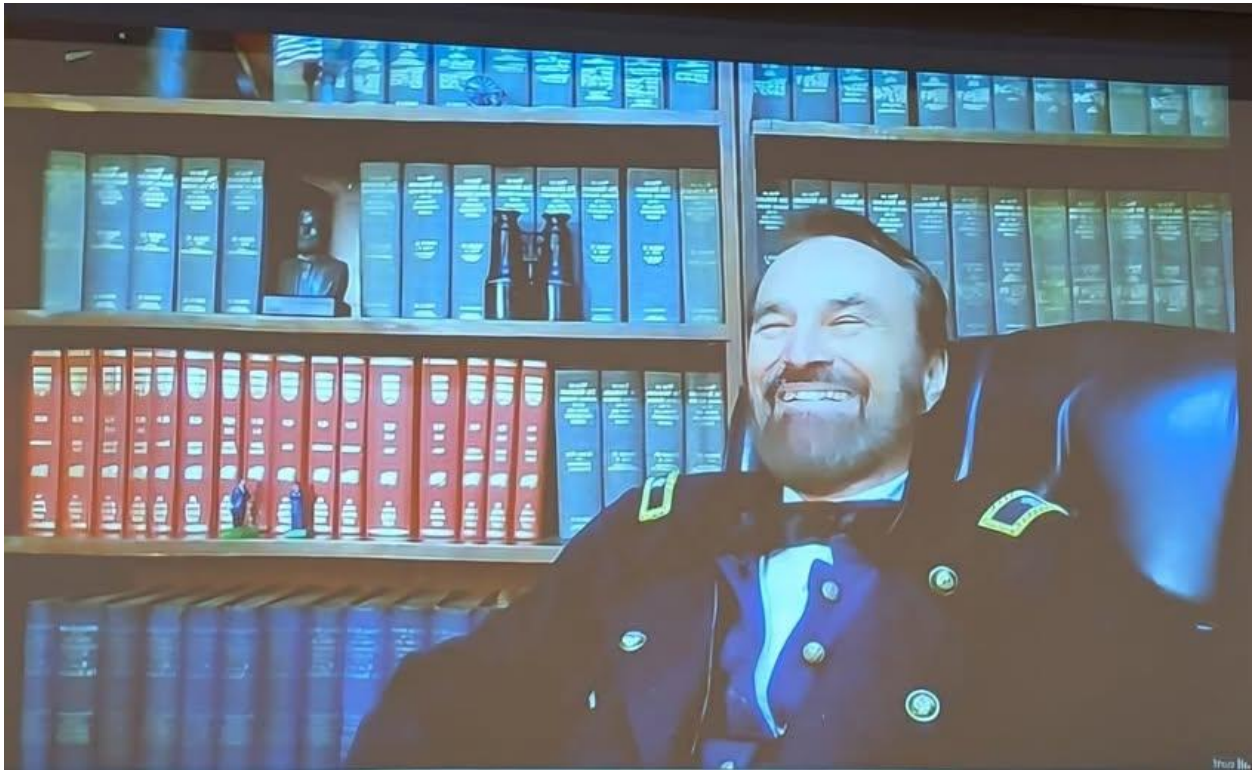
Since September, we have drastically improved our page views and over 60% of the viewers of our content are outside of our followers...meaning that we are getting visibility



well beyond our current 2,900+ followers. Curt Fields, who joined us as General Ulysses S. Grant back in October, has been actively promoting our page and telling his followers

to follow us. This is such a nice gesture and will help the Twin Cities Civil War Round Table grow its online visibility to many new people.

From Curt Fields' Facebook page:



General Grant ([Curt Fields](#)) has a hearty laugh in his library during a recent visit with the [Twin Cities Civil War Round Table](#) via the Visual Telegraph. His talk to that distinguished CWRT was time very well-spent.

The General hopes all of his friends on the Book of Face will visit and FOLLOW the page of this worthy Civil War History group. Any person so doing will be the better for it. SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT US!

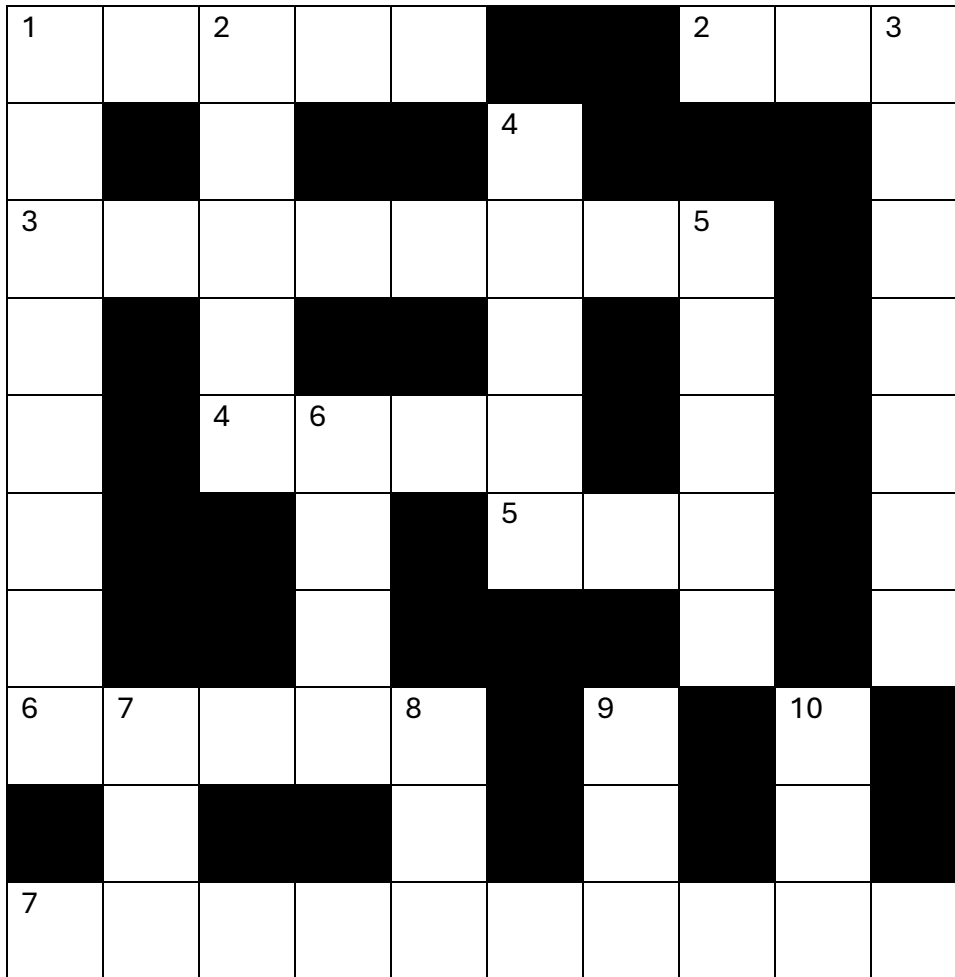
Photo by: The Twin Cities Civil War Round Table

It is up to all of us to share the merits of this great organization with as many people as possible so we continue to grow and replenish our membership over the coming years. If you know someone you think might be interested, invite them to one of our events. And, if you are looking for more valuable content on the Civil War, consider following us on Facebook by clicking this [LINK](#).

Social media sites like Facebook (and others like Instagram and LinkedIn) can provide an excellent platform to increase the visibility of the TCCWRT to existing members and potential new ones!

TCCWRT NEWS CROSSWORD NO. 1 DECEMBER 2025

NOTE: See last page for answers.



Down

1. Battle near Sharpsburg MD.
2. Major General U. S. _____.
3. "Ben Hur" author.
4. _____ vs. South
5. "Extra Billy" _____.
6. Built City Class Ironclads.
7. "Honest" _____.
8. Cavalry are the eyes and _____s of the army.

9. Battle of ____ Black River Bridge.

10. _____. _____. _____. Hall

Across

1. "Bloody _____"
2. Battle of _____ Market.
3. _____ and Patriots.
4. Soldiers sleeping quarters.
5. Battle of Gettysburg weather.
6. Lee nickname "_____ Robert".

7. Commanded Confederate forces that fired on Fort Sumter.

DINNER PRICES TO RISE

By Brett Johnson

As many of you are aware, prices of many goods/services have been increasing, with some rising at a good clip. Restaurant prices are no exception.

The Bloomington Event Center raised prices by about 5% this fall and is expected to raise prices again by up to 10% in January, due to rapidly increasing meat costs.

We have been able to hold the price of a meal at \$25 for many years, in part by moving to a luncheon menu instead of a dinner menu, and by holding off on desserts, which are now projected to run about \$6 (with taxes/fees) in January.

But at this point, we have reluctantly concluded that we will need to raise our meal price to \$27.50 in January, to help match the cost increases. One of the things we have talked about is to have our Round Table provide store-bought dessert (cookies or other) so that we could have a treat at times. The Event Center indicated that this would be ok.

SPOTLIGHT ON DECEMBER 1861:

9th Congress established the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War.

13th Battle of Camp Allegheny, West Virginia.

17th Battle of Rowlett's Station, Kentucky.

20th Battle of Dranesville, Virginia

28th Battle of Mount Zion Church, Missouri

STEVEN SCHIER'S TRIVIA QUESTION ANSWER:

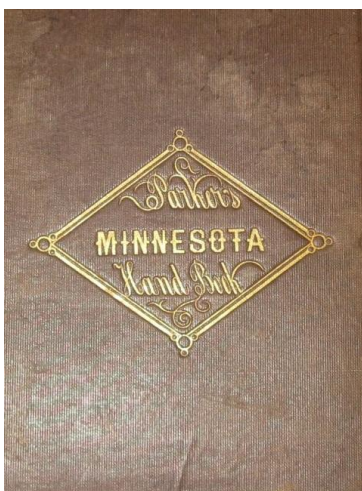
By writing Uncle Tom's Cabin

Harriett Beecher Stowe helped end slavery by writing Uncle Tom's Cabin. This novel, published in 1852, depicted the harsh realities of slavery and its impact on individuals and families. It created a strong emotional response among readers and helped to raise awareness about the cruelty of slavery. Uncle Tom's Cabin became a bestseller and had a significant influence on public opinion, contributing to the growing abolitionist movement in the United States.

From the Dusty Collection #60 *Becoming a Minnesotan in the 1860s*

Stephen E. Osman

“So, what was it like?” is a question we Civil War historians ponder about Minnesota soldiers, few of whom were actually born here. During four years of war the state’s population soared from under 200,000 to the quarter million enumerated in 1865. Driven by widespread promotion, economic expansion, and cheap land, immigrants bravely moved to what had recently been, in their opinion, a dangerous wilderness. That path north was similar for most of these young adventurers in the decade before railroads changed everything. Minnesota’s early pioneers were overwhelmingly male and young, drawn from many states and from northern Europe. They came with optimistic hopes and dreams. Most overcame unique challenges of place to reinvent themselves in the North Star State.



The time was right. Minnesota’s available farmland had exploded with the 1851 Treaties of Mendota and Traverse de Sioux. The Dakota or Santee Sioux sold the government over 35 million acres of land which, incidentally, had amounted to nearly 22,000 acres or 34 square miles of land per Dakota family of four. While the Dakota moved onto reservations ten miles on either side of the Minnesota River, newly purchased government land was surveyed and prepared for sale. Guide books to the Minnesota Territory and then the State boosted the promise of this so called “Eden of the West.” *Empire is receding from the seaboard, and moving with gigantic strides toward the interior...The position which Minnesota holds in the physical system of North America [is the] predestined throne of this great*

American Empire, which advances to the supremacy of the world. (Joseph A. Lockwood, Minnesota: Its Place Among the States, 1860.) Meanwhile, earlier European immigrants wrote effusive letters home that were widely published and distributed among peasant farmers who had little hope for a productive future. Here and abroad, Minnesota was all the buzz!

Land speculators and government land agents eagerly stepped in to facilitate the process, setting up offices at the river transportation hubs. The new states of Iowa and Wisconsin were competing for the same yeoman farmers that Thomas Jefferson had so strongly championed. Despite Civil War, the Upper Mississippi Valley boomed. Of course, the first problem was simply getting there. River steamer lines had a near monopoly until a railroad line finally reached Minnesota after the war. But river travel was weather dependent, open only from mid-March to mid-November. Once the river froze solidly, fleets of horse-drawn sleighs and wagons based in the river towns transported passengers and goods via graded



ice roads on the river. (That’s how the First Minnesota returned to the state in February 1864 after hijacking a Wisconsin train – another interesting story.) But few immigrants wanted to be dropped off in a frozen Winona or St. Paul. Most of those immigrants had sold everything, including their future inheritance on farms where they grew up in order to afford the trip, buy land and gather supplies. They travelled with a trunk of personal possessions; few brought farming equipment due to freight costs. Still, European women always packed their spinning wheels, assuming they would be clothing their families from scratch on the frontier. Most county historical society collections include family treasured examples.

Along with guide books, flyers and broadsides advertised the few routes to Minnesota. Many immigrants reached Milwaukee or Chicago via Great Lakes steamers. There they transferred to one of the two rail lines to the Mississippi. They might stay a few nights packed into cheap boarding hotels near the docks or the rail stations, beset by “helpful” agents speaking their own language and offering assistance in getting to the promised land. Those hotels generally ran a dollar or two per night with meals. Once aboard the train and with trunks in the baggage

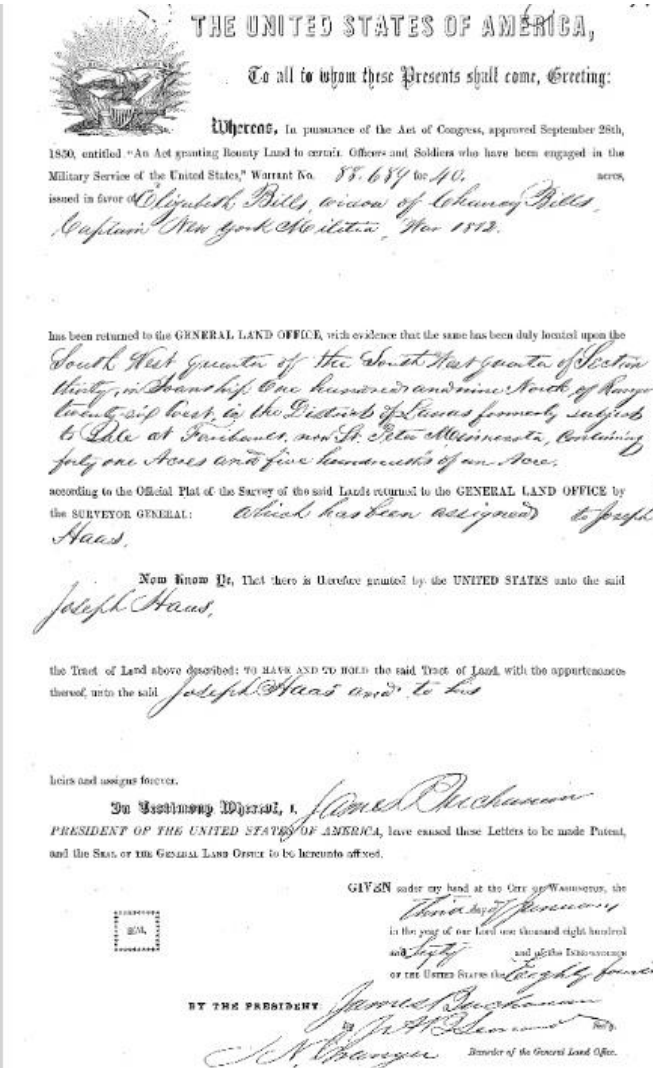


car, immigrants might expect to pay around two cents per mile as a rough average so tickets were in the \$5 range. With an 1860 dollar now worth around \$39, today’s Amtrak price of \$137 is actually cheaper. They had the choice of a run to Prairie du Chien without changing cars or a more complicated trip to La Crosse that saved some river miles.

Once at the river after an all-day trip across Wisconsin, travelers moved quickly to the steamers, frequently operated by the same transportation companies. Some lines offered two express runs a day upriver. Most boats left in the evening. After a supper provided on board, exhausted immigrants camped out on deck or in cramped cabins. The steamers generally arrived at St. Paul the following evening often stopping briefly in Winona and Red Wing. Those of us who love the drive from La Crosse to Red Wing can only imagine the wonder of those travelers chugging up the Mississippi on a paddle wheel steamer. They were truly entering a new world. Their scenery-filled river trip cost them approximately \$5 for deck or \$10 for cabin passage. They arrived at the crowded St. Paul docks confused and jostled by Irish immigrant roustabouts.

From there, another night in a cheap hotel and then the search for a wagon or river packet transport to their new home.

That home, if a farmstead, might have several origins. European immigrants looked to established communities whether German, Norwegian, Swedish or other smaller settlements.



The comfort of a familiar language and a stranger's shared home often welcomed them as they established their own homestead. Young single men sought out the rich employment opportunities in the river city mercantiles that outfitted travelers, in a widening range of small businesses, or as much needed farm laborers. Boarding houses were their first home in Minnesota. Those who sought a farm benefitted from several government programs that eventually processed over 10% of the land in the county. The Preemption Act of 1841 offered up to 160 acres at a fixed \$1.25 per acre with full title coming after five years residence and improvements. Western land was also given as bounties for military service in the War of 1812 and the Mexican War. Those land grants were freely bought and sold like the grant to a New York officer's widow eventually sold to Mankato reprobate Joseph Haas from last month's story. Another source of land was the so-called Half Breed Tracts granted to mixed blood participants in the 1851 treaties, and most later sold to others.

The Homestead Act of 1862 opened the floodgates. Slaveholding Democrats could no longer prevent passage to limit free state settlement. Now the land would be nearly free after a \$10 filing fee for heads of families, single men over the age of 21, or veterans under that age. Applicants were required to cultivate or otherwise improve the land and maintain residence for five years when they could then apply for an official patent, with \$8 filing fee, for their up to 160 acres. Returning Civil War veterans had the five-year requirement reduced by the number of months they had spent in service. It is estimated



that nearly 100 million Americans today have benefitted from their ancestor's participation in the Homestead Act.

Homesteading singles and families had to process through land agent offices before moving to their claims, and those agents kept half of the filing fee. Procuring farming supplies and livestock in the river towns and arranging a freight wagon or passage on a Minnesota River packet to their new home site, the immigrants set off to a new life in the west. Their journey took them along one of the several government-built dirt roadways into the interior before they ventured cross country into the trackless prairies. A rough cabin or dugout might be their first home, but with land cleared and under cultivation they had a promising future.

New Minnesota Military and Veteran's Museum Update

Construction is moving on schedule at 70% completion. Macro artifacts like Vietnam War and a Korean War helicopters, a WWI 40&8 railway car, A WWII training glider and a WWII Stuart tank are going into place. Planning is moving forward on the tableaux that will feature some of them.

Text for the Civil War gallery, snapshots of artifacts and sample images are being used to create layouts of each exhibit panel. The heads for the Taylor brothers First Minnesota mannequins were completed by David Geister and uniforms/equipment procured by Stephen Osman awaiting final assembly and dressing. Those figures will greet visitors entering the new gallery.



Round Table member donations are coming in steadily. We have a \$50,000 minimum challenge. To date \$47,375 has been pledged of which \$33,675 has been received from 35 TCCWRT donors. Some have made several donations!



The challenge runs through 2026, so fully tax-deductible donations span two years. Some of us have used the required minimum distribution (RMD) from our IRAs as a qualified charitable donation (QCD), thus reducing our taxable income. Each donor receives a personal acknowledgement from the 501(c)3 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.mnvetermuseum.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 and scroll down to see a conceptual fly 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>

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TCCWRT NEWS CROSSWORD NO. 1 ANSWERS:

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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: earlofbruce@hotmail.com