

# Northern Lights

CHAPTER

8



Minnesota  
Historical Society

*Northern Lights: The Stories of Minnesota's Past*

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On July 2, 1863, soldiers in the First Minnesota Infantry Regiment charged Confederate lines during the Battle of Gettysburg.



#### 1819

Construction of Fort Snelling begins.

#### 1820

U.S. Congress passes the Missouri Compromise. It outlaws slavery in lands north of latitude 36° 30', but allows it in Missouri and south of this line.

#### 1835-1860

Steamboat tours of the Upper Mississippi River are popular.

#### 1849

Minnesota becomes a territory. Alexander Ramsey is appointed governor.

#### 1850

U.S. Congress passes the Compromise of 1850. It includes a stronger fugitive-slave law, stating that enslaved people who escape must be returned to their owners.

#### 1854

U.S. Congress passes the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which lets these two territories decide whether to allow slavery. (This goes against the Missouri Compromise).

#### 1857

U.S. Supreme Court hands down the Dred Scott decision. It says that enslaved people have no rights and therefore cannot claim freedom, even if they used to live on free soil.

# THE CIVIL WAR

Slavery caused a major division between Northerners and Southerners. These groups often had differing views about its morality and necessity. War broke out when Southern states left the Union. Find out how the experiences of individuals—enslaved African Americans and a soldier in the First Minnesota Regiment—illustrate the impact of slavery and the Civil War on Minnesota.

## LOOK FOR

- What were differences between the North and the South in the years before the war?
- How did people in Minnesota react to slavery and the visiting Eliza Winston?
- What happened to Charley Goddard during the Civil War?
- What problems did the former enslaved person Robert Hickman face when settled in Minnesota?
- What were the consequences of the Civil War for Minnesota?

## KEY TERMS

- abolitionist
- secede
- Union
- Confederacy
- Emancipation Proclamation
- amendment



### 1858

Minnesota becomes a state.

### 1860

Abraham Lincoln is elected president. South Carolina secedes from the Union, followed by 10 other Southern states the following year.

### 1861

Civil War begins. Minnesota is the first state to offer volunteers for the Union army. First battle of war is fought near Bull Run Creek in Manassas, Virginia.

### 1862

U.S.-Dakota War is fought in southern Minnesota. Civil War Battle of Antietam is fought in Maryland.

### 1863

President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation. Battle of Gettysburg is fought in Pennsylvania. Dakota people are forcibly removed from Minnesota.

### 1864

President Lincoln is re-elected. General Sherman leads Union troops on a march to the sea.

### 1865

Civil War ends with Confederate surrender. President Lincoln is assassinated in Washington, D.C. Thirteenth Amendment abolishes slavery.



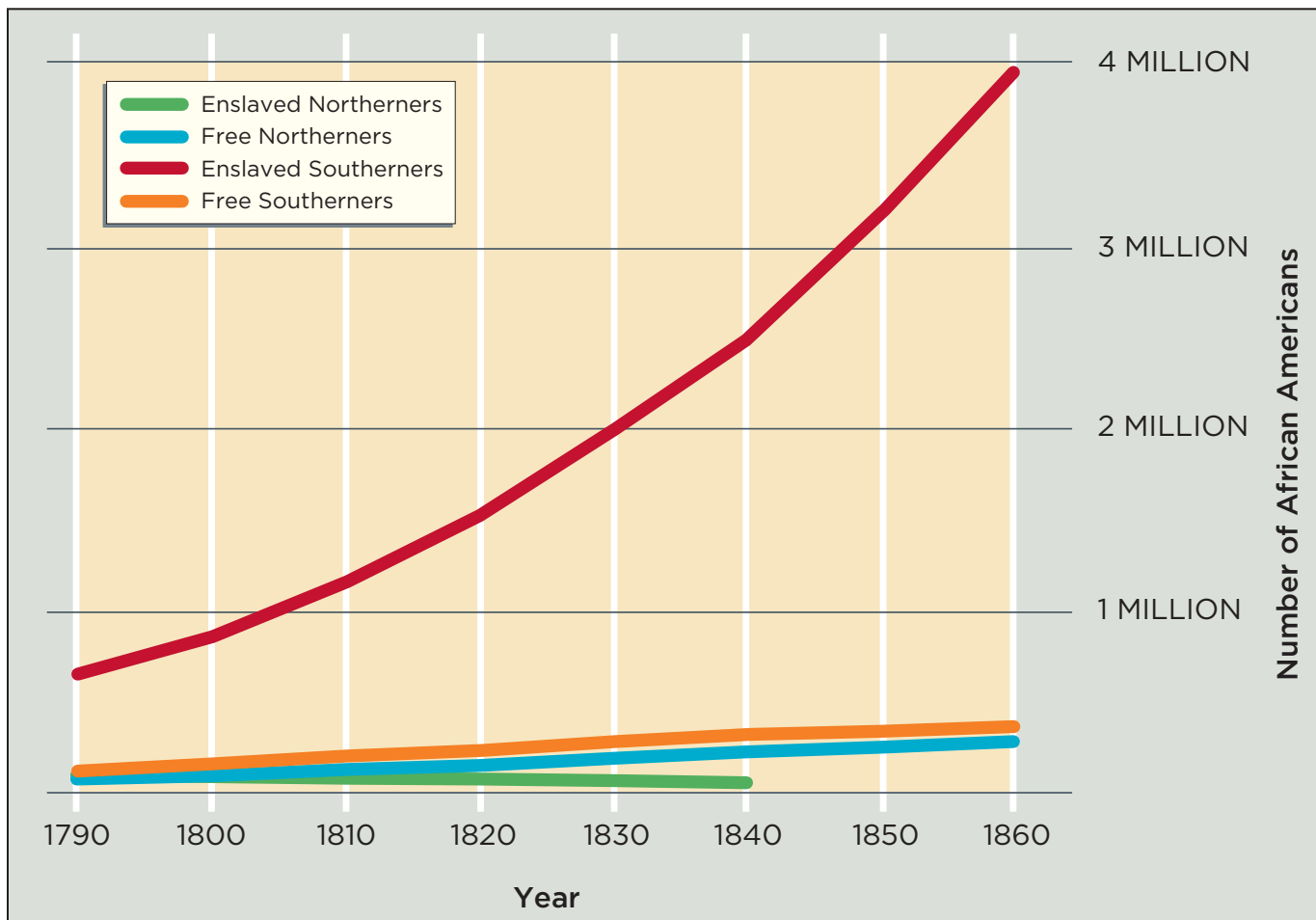
**ON JULY 4, 1858, A NEW STAR** was officially added to the blue field of the U.S. flag. It represented the nation's newest state—Minnesota. The flag now had 32 stars, each representing a different state. All was not well in the land of the Stars and Stripes, though. In fewer than three years, the nation would be at war, and thousands of Minnesotans would head off to join the fight.

By 1858, many Americans had come to think of their nation as having two parts—North and South. The two regions had many similarities, but they also had many differences. The North was a place of big cities, big factories, and farms that produced goods and food for a growing population. The South had only a few large cities and factories, as well as far fewer railroad tracks. On its farms grew many different crops, but its agricultural economy depended largely on three—sugar, tobacco, and especially cotton. Its population was growing more slowly than the North's, and fewer immigrants were settling there.

These were all major differences. There was one, though, that was driving a wedge between North and South more than any other. That difference was slavery.

▼ The African American population grew dramatically in the years leading up to the Civil War. **Which group shows the largest increase in population growth? How might this change affect everyday life and the economy of its region?**

### African American Population in the United States, 1790–1860



## Dred and Harriet Scott

Dred Scott and Harriet Robinson were enslaved people brought to Fort Snelling by their owners. They met at Fort Snelling and married in 1836. After their wedding, Harriet Scott's owner, Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro, either sold her or gave her to her husband's owner. He was Dr. John Emerson, a military surgeon stationed at the fort.

Fort Snelling was in free territory. Slavery was illegal in free territory, but no one tried to enforce the law. When Dr. Emerson returned to Missouri—a state where slavery was legal—he took Dred and Harriet Scott with him.

In 1846, the Scotts sued for freedom in the Missouri courts. They claimed that because they had lived in a free territory, they were free. For the next 11 years, the case filtered through the court system until it reached the U.S. Supreme Court. In a landmark 1857 decision, the U.S. Supreme

Court ruled against the Scotts and refused to give them their freedom.

The court stated that African Americans were not citizens, so they had no rights under the Constitution. The ruling also stated that enslaved people were considered property, and that slave owners could not be deprived of property.

That same year, though, the Scotts' owners freed them. Dred, Harriet, and their two daughters, Eliza and Lizzie, lived together in freedom for a little over a year. In 1858, Dred Scott died of tuberculosis, a common lung disease at the time.



The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in this case was an important factor in the coming of the Civil War. The ruling said that Congress did not have the legal right to prevent slavery from expanding. Many Southerners believed that meant the right to enslave people was now protected forever. Many Northerners feared slavery would spread into western territories if they didn't do something to stop it.

People on both sides became more firm in their beliefs. It was hard to imagine how the two sides could come together. More and more Americans became convinced that war was coming.

## LAND OF THE FREE?

Ever since its beginning in 1776, the United States had struggled to live up to the ideal found in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal." Slavery prevented this ideal from being achieved. Many Americans owned enslaved African Americans, and the U.S. Constitution even contained words that made slavery legal.

By the early 1800s slavery was beginning to divide the country in two. In the North, more and more people were coming to believe slavery was morally wrong and unprofitable. States like Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania passed laws making it illegal for one person to own another person. Newer Northern states such as Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin banned slavery right from the start.

It was a different story in the South. While some Southerners believed slavery was wrong, many more believed it was essential to their way of life. Farmers in the South—especially those owning plantations, or very large farms—needed cheap labor in order to make their sugar, tobacco, and cotton crops profitable. A new type of cotton plant and the invention of the cotton gin—a machine that separated the fiber of the cotton plant from its seeds—had turned cotton into an especially profitable crop. Southern plantation owners depended more than ever on their enslaved people to pick cotton.



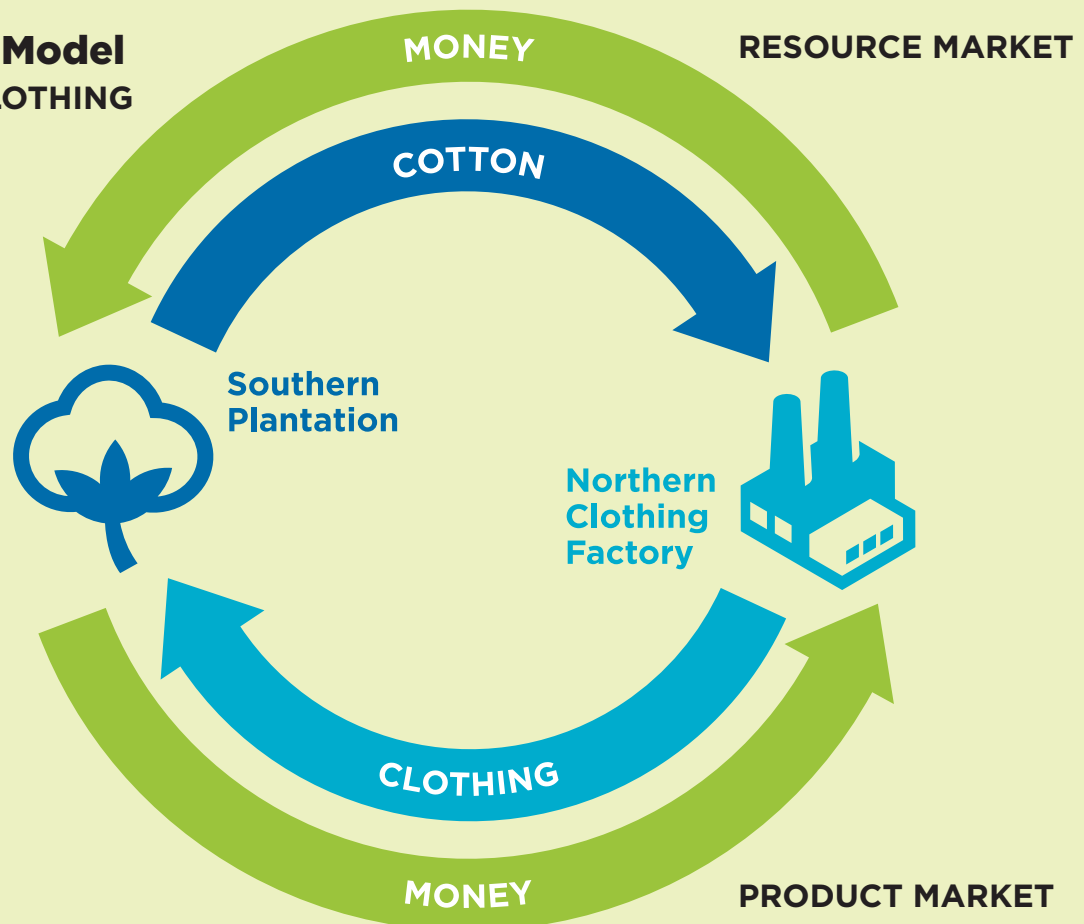
### The Economics of Slavery

A circular flow model is used to show the interaction of buyers and sellers in a market economy. This model shows how slavery connected the North to the South. The marketplace connected buyers and sellers, even when

they came from different regions. For example, a farmer from the South made money from cotton grown on his farm that was used to make clothing. If a factory owner or employee from the North made money from

producing clothing, that person was connected economically to cotton produced by slave labor. As a result, even places that outlawed slavery, like Minnesota, benefited from it.

### Circular Flow Model COTTON AND CLOTHING



## A Moral Dilemma

Sometimes, values in society conflict with each other. In the 1860s—and today—two important values existed: making money and treating people fairly. A major cause of the Civil War was that these values were in conflict.

Some said that it was morally wrong and unfair to enslave another person. Others felt that slavery was an economic necessity, and that their way of life would not survive if it went away. People had strong opinions about what should be done about it, and many were willing to die for their beliefs.

**Can you think of a current event that causes people to debate the choice between making money and treating people fairly?**



▲ The Winslow House hotel, shown here in 1860, was a Minnesota business that profited from Southern tourists. They sometimes brought their enslaved servants with them. Those in the state who were against slavery felt it was wrong to own enslaved African Americans, especially in the free state of Minnesota.

Southerners were not the only people who supported slavery. Some Northerners believed that the South should be allowed to keep slavery and that enslaved people who had escaped should be returned to their owners. Nearly all Northerners did agree on one thing, however: They didn't want slavery to spread into the West as new states were formed. Many white Southerners did. Decisions about whether slavery would exist in these new western states were important, because they determined which side would have more power in the U.S. government. Of all the questions involving slavery, this one seemed hardest to resolve.

Like Northerners in other states, Minnesotans had varying feelings about slavery and what to do about it. In 1860, those feelings were put to the test.





▲ In 1860, St. Anthony and Minneapolis were located across the river from one another. When the two towns merged together in 1872, St. Anthony became part of Minneapolis.

**abolitionist:** someone who wants to end slavery

## FREEDOM FOR ELIZA WINSTON

The Mississippi River had become a highway between Minnesota and the cotton plantations of the South. Hundreds of steamboats traveled on the river, carrying passengers in comfort and style. Many of these passengers were wealthy Southerners taking what was called the Fashionable Tour, a popular steamboat trip that travelled the Mississippi River. Hotels in St. Anthony and Minneapolis welcomed the Southern visitors because they were good for business. These Southerners sometimes created a problem when they brought their enslaved household workers with them.

In the summer of 1860, a well-to-do Mississippi plantation owner named Richard Christmas arrived in St. Anthony. He was accompanied by his wife, Mary, their child, and an enslaved servant named Eliza Winston. Winston's duties were to care for the child and to wait on a sickly Mary Christmas.

When Winston reached Minnesota, she knew she was in a free state, but she wasn't sure what that meant. Did it mean she could just walk away from her master? If she did, where would she go? How would she live? Would anyone help her? These questions were answered when she met Emily and Ralph Grey, a free African American couple who lived in St. Anthony. The Greys were friends of Frederick Douglass, who had escaped slavery. He was an **abolitionist** who was working to end it. Abolitionists made up a nationwide movement of both African Americans and European Americans who sought freedom for all.

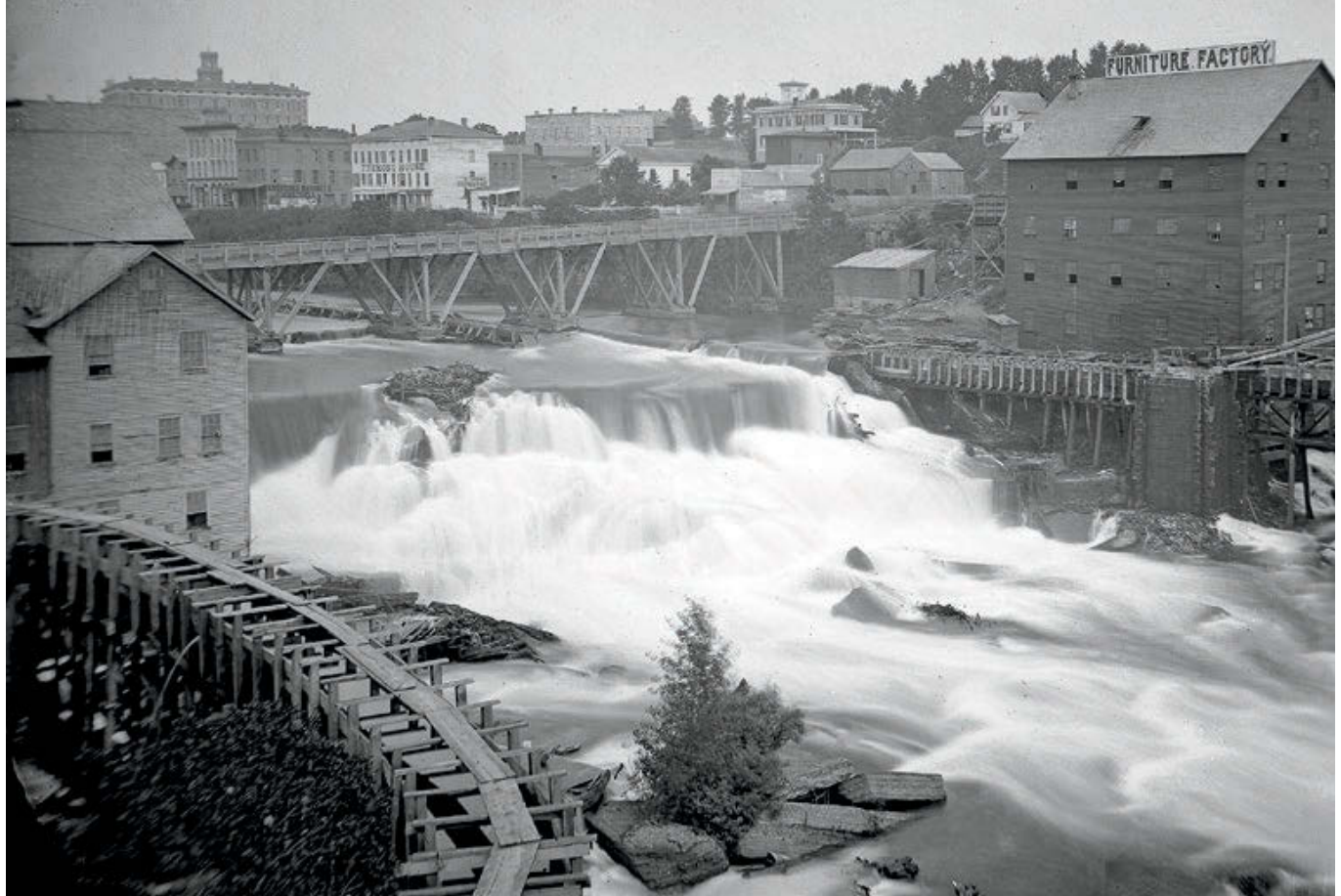
The Greys wanted to help Eliza Winston become free. With the help of some white friends, the Greys convinced Judge Charles Vanderburgh to consider Winston's case. Vanderburgh sent a sheriff to the house where the Christmases were staying with an order to take Winston into custody.

That evening, the judge held a hearing. The whole town was excited. Abolitionists were joyful because they believed the state law was being enforced. Others claimed that Winston had been kidnapped. They worried that publicity about the case would drive away rich Southern visitors. Minnesota merchants depended on the money these visitors spent. Vanderburgh heard arguments from both sides and quickly gave his ruling: Eliza Winston was no longer enslaved. She was free to go where she pleased.

Finding a place to go, however, would not be easy.

That night a mob of people surrounded the Greys' house, where they thought Winston was staying. They demanded that she be returned to the Christmases. Some threw stones through the windows,





▲ Steamboats traveled up the Mississippi River as far as the Falls of St. Anthony. There they docked, bringing tourists to St. Anthony and Minneapolis. Some of the travelers stayed at the Winslow House, which stands tallest in the top left corner of this photograph.

and others broke into the home. They searched for Winston, but she was not there. The Greys and their friends had sent Winston to a safe location out of town. It's not known exactly where she went during this time, but she did return to the area a few months later to speak to an abolitionist group. It's not clear what happened to her after that.

Southerners were upset by the outcome, and tourism to the area quickly declined. Local businesspeople such as C. W. McLean, owner of the Winslow House Hotel, were also upset. They had profited from Southern tourists and were angry at the abolitionists for hurting their business. Abolitionists in Minnesota and other Northern states were pleased with the result of this case. They hoped for more successes, but they had no idea how quickly the nation would be plunged into civil war.

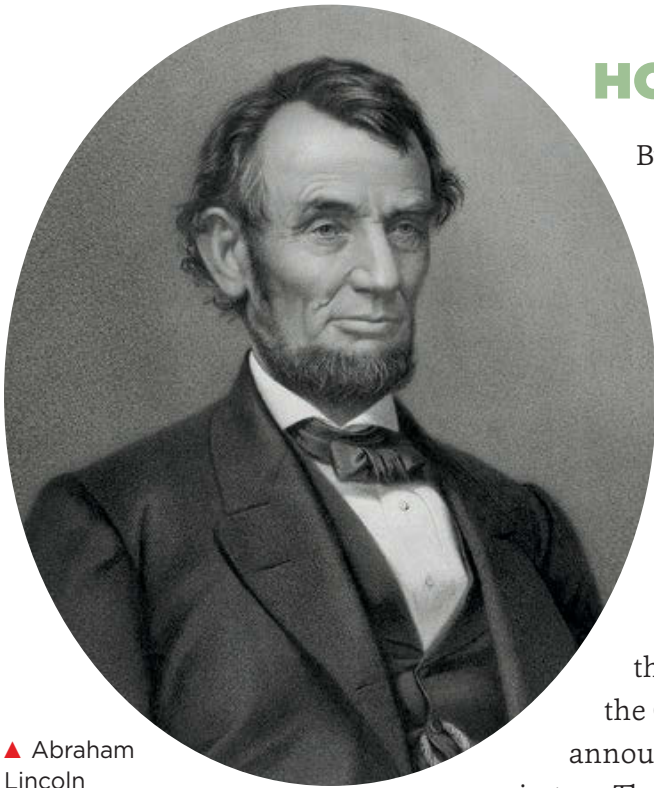
► On August 23, 1860, the *St. Anthony Evening News* featured the story of Eliza Winston's fight for freedom.

**SLAVE EXCITEMENT IN MINNEAPOLIS—**  
**HEARING BEFORE COURT—SLAVE DISCHARGED**  
**—CONFLICTING STORIES.**—Tuesday witnessed a high excitement in Minneapolis; W. D. Babbitt, a Mrs. Gates (white) and a Mrs. Gray (colored) made complaint that Eliza Winston (a slave) was restrained of her liberty by Col. Christmas of Mississippi. A writ was issued and placed in the hands of Sheriff Strout who proceeded to the house of Mrs. Thornton, on Lake Harriet where the parties were residing, and brought Eliza for a hearing before Judge Vanderburgh.

F. R. E. Cornell, Esq., appeared as Counsel for the Complainants, and — Freemen Esq., of Mississippi, for the defence.

Col. Christmas made no attempt at a technical defence, admitting that the woman was free and at liberty to choose whether to remain with him or to go at large. The Court consequently ordered her to be discharged from the custody of the sheriff. Then came the





▲ Abraham Lincoln

## HOME OF THE BRAVE

By the fall of 1860, many Minnesotans were turning their attention to politics. In November they joined with voters—only white men at that time—in other Northern states to elect Abraham Lincoln president of the United States. No Southern states had voted for Lincoln. Southerners believed his election marked the beginning of the end. To them, Lincoln's victory signaled the end of the Southern way of life, a way of life that depended on slavery. This was a turning point in the nation's history.

As a result of Lincoln's victory, Southern states **seceded**. They declared themselves separate from the United States and formed their own country, the Confederate States of America. President Lincoln announced that it was not legal for the United States to split in two. The Confederates did not back down. On April 12, 1861, Confederate forces fired on U.S. troops stationed at Fort Sumter in South Carolina. The North and the South—the **Union** and the **Confederacy**—were at war.

**secede:** to withdraw from an organization or a country

**Union:** the United States of America, often in reference to the Northern states during the Civil War

**Confederacy:** the eleven Southern states that seceded from the Union during the Civil War. Also called the Confederate States of America.

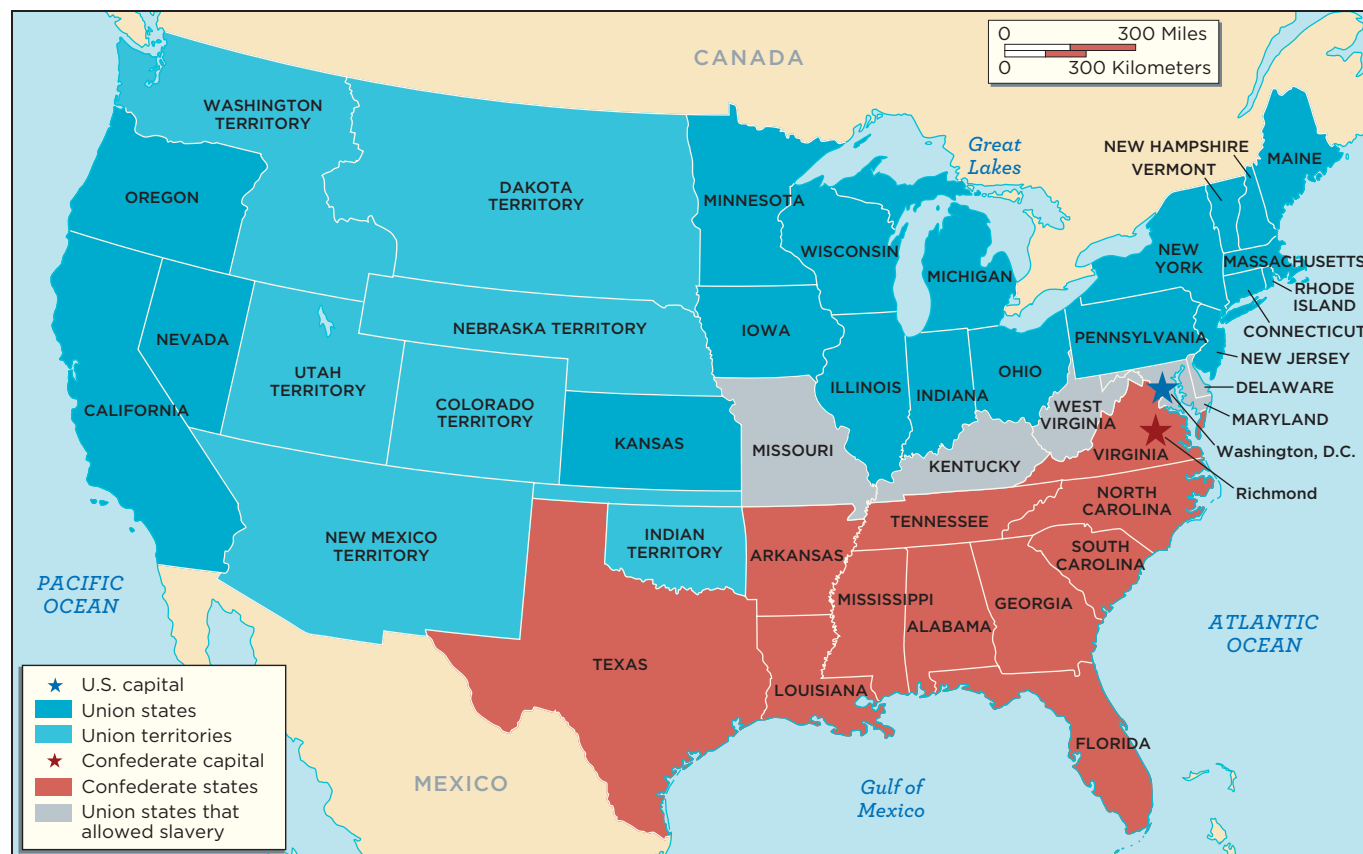
Both sides immediately began building up armies, with each state expected to provide a share of the soldiers. Minnesota contributed a volunteer regiment of 1,009 men. It was made up of soldiers from St. Anthony, St. Paul, and other nearby towns. The First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment—the first of many regiments from Minnesota—trained at Fort Snelling.

▼ Company E of the Eighth Minnesota Regiment, at Fort Snelling in 1862.





## The Union and the Confederacy During the Civil War



## CHARLEY GODDARD GOES TO WAR

Charley Goddard was 15 years old when the call for volunteers went out. Goddard lived in the Mississippi River town of Winona. He was an adventuresome boy. When he was 12, he had scared his mother—and many other people in town—by swimming all the way across the river through its dangerous currents. Now he was determined to join in what he figured would be the adventure of a lifetime—war.

There was just one problem: He wasn't old enough. Men had to be 18 to enlist. That didn't stop Goddard. When Winona men started enlisting, he lied about his age and signed up, too. A few days later, he and 75 other Winona volunteers boarded a steamboat and traveled upriver to Fort Snelling. For nearly two months, Goddard trained to become a soldier. He learned how to march in formation, fire a musket, and follow orders. On June 22, 1861, Goddard and the rest of the First Minnesota Regiment left Fort Snelling and headed for Washington, D.C. He had just turned 16.

▲ During the war, the nation split in two—the Union, or the North, and the Confederacy, or the South. States in the middle were called border states. They still practiced slavery, but they remained a part of the Union and did not secede.



## A Soldier's Provisions

When soldiers like Charley Goddard joined the army, they received certain items—or provisions—they would need during their service. These provisions included a uniform, weapons, candles, food, and canteens for water.

Because soldiers had to carry their supplies, these provisions needed to be lightweight enough to carry while marching. Others who contributed to the war effort, such as surgeons, also required equipment designed for easy movement.



▲ This Union army canteen—a container for drinks—is made of tinned iron and covered in cloth.



◀ This surgeon's kit was used by a doctor in a Minnesota regiment in the Civil War. It includes a bone saw, a scalpel, and needles.

## Charley at 16

Goddard started writing to his mother, Catharine Goddard, as soon as he reached Washington, D.C. In an early letter he admitted that he was looking forward to his first taste of battle. “The truth of it is,” he wrote, “I would like to be in a little more danger where I could have a chance at some Secession soldiers and finish up the job and go home to old Winona.” Goddard didn’t know better. He didn’t yet realize how terrifying and bloody war could be.

About a month after arriving in Washington, D.C., Goddard and the rest of the First Minnesota Regiment set out for the first major fight of the Civil War. It was the First Battle of Bull Run, on July 21, 1861. On the way there, Goddard got sick and had to stay behind. It was just as well for him. After hours of fierce combat, the Confederates forced the Union army to retreat. The First Minnesota suffered more than any other Union regiment at Bull Run: At least 42 men were killed, around 108 were wounded, and 34 were missing.



Back in Winona, Catharine Goddard heard about the regiment's losses. She wrote her son, reminding him that he was too young to be a soldier. He replied that she should not worry. "I hope that you will not speak to me about coming home yet unless it is your direct order," he wrote. "I want to do some good before I go back home."

Goddard did not see much fighting as a 16-year-old. He wouldn't experience the terrible realities of war until the next year.

### Charley at 17

That fall, the Confederate army invaded the North. The Union forces rushed to turn back the Confederates. The two sides met near Antietam Creek in Maryland. September 17, 1862, turned out to be the bloodiest day in the nation's history: 26,000 men were killed or wounded. "If the horrors of war cannot be seen on this battlefield," wrote Goddard, "they can't be seen anywhere."

Goddard survived the Battle of Antietam, but some of his friends did not. Among the dead was William Smith, a 26-year-old corporal from Winona. Goddard broke the news in a letter to his mother:

*I enclose a lock of Corporal William Smith's hair which I wish you would please give to his mother. Tell her that he fought bravely for the stars and stripes. His remains will be seen to by the boys of our company.*

### Charley at 18

Goddard again witnessed the ravages of war during July 1863. This time they were at a little town in Pennsylvania called Gettysburg.

The Battle of Gettysburg lasted for three hot, bloody days—July 1 through 3. On the second day, the First Minnesota Regiment played a crucial role in what turned out to be an important Union victory. After repeated attacks on the Union lines, Confederate soldiers were on the verge of breaking through. About the only thing standing in their way was the First Minnesota. The Minnesotans charged forward, knowing they probably would not survive. For about 10 minutes, they fought the Southerners almost face to face. Both sides used rifles and bayonets—long, knifelike daggers attached to the end of rifles. The Minnesotans stopped the Confederates just long enough for additional Union troops to arrive.

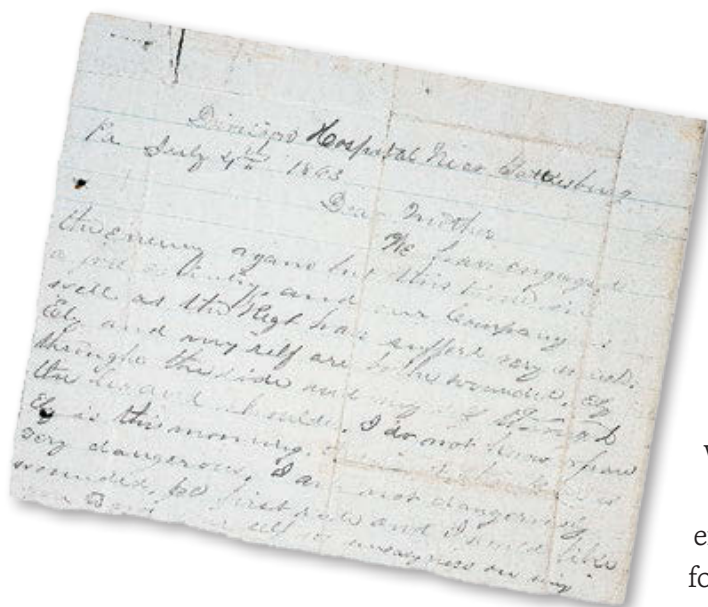


▲ Charley Goddard wore his uniform for this photograph.

► Nurses and female volunteers at hospital camps helped wounded soldiers keep in touch with their families by writing letters for them.



When the fighting was over, the ground was covered with dead and wounded men. Charley Goddard had been seriously wounded. He was shot in the leg and shoulder, but he lived. From his hospital bed, he wrote a letter to his mother that only hinted at the horrors he saw. It told about the Winona soldiers who had been killed or wounded at Gettysburg.



▲ Charley Goddard wrote this letter to his mother from a hospital near Gettysburg.

*We have engaged the enemy again but this time in a free country and our company as well as the regiment has suffered much.... The chaplain will make out an official report and then the people of Minnesota will know the true story.*

The true story was that around 230 Minnesotans were killed or wounded in the fighting at Gettysburg. They suffered one of the highest casualty rates in the war—nearly 70 percent according to some estimates.

Unlike many wounded soldiers, Goddard recovered from his wounds. He returned to his company and fought in several more battles. In February 1864, he and the surviving members of the First Minnesota Regiment headed home because their term of enlistment had ended, though the war would continue for another year. Goddard returned to Winona. He died just four years later after a brief illness at age 23.

The First Minnesota was one of 22 Minnesota units that served during the four years of the Civil War. In all, the state sent about 25,000 men—European Americans, African Americans, Ojibwe, and people of mixed racial heritage—to fight the South. More than 600 were killed in battle. Three times that number died in crowded army camps and in prison camps, where disease spread quickly.



## LAND OF THE FREE

To most Minnesotans, the Civil War had begun as a fight to preserve the Union. As time went on, more Minnesotans began to see that there was another reason for the conflict. On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the **Emancipation Proclamation**. This order for emancipation, or freedom, was meant to force Confederate states to follow a new policy. The document announced that enslaved people had to be set free—if they lived in states that were fighting against the Union. Suddenly, the soldiers of the North were fighting not just to hold the United States together but also to free those enslaved.

Charley Goddard, for one, was happy to fight for this cause. “I am for dislodging any officer who does not give the President’s proclamation his entire support,” he wrote.

What about the people back home, though? Two years earlier, some Minnesotans had responded angrily to the freeing of Eliza Winston. How would they react when African Americans who were no longer enslaved began arriving in the state?

## JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

Robert Hickman was one of the first enslaved people to make the journey to freedom in Minnesota. He had been born into slavery in Missouri in 1831. As an enslaved adult, he had worked as a rail-splitter cutting logs for fences. However, this was not Hickman’s only skill. He had learned to read and write, which most enslaved people weren’t allowed to do. He also preached the Bible and was a leader in his community.

### Emancipation Proclamation:

an order issued by U.S. president Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863. It announced that the enslaved people in the rebelling Confederate states were free.



▲ Robert Hickman became an influential member of the African American community in St. Paul when he arrived in 1863.

### Life in Minnesota During the War

The people of Minnesota did all they could to support the soldiers while they were off fighting. Soldiers’ aid societies gathered supplies and sent them to the soldiers. These groups also raised money for the families of men who had died in the war, and they provided companionship to the wives and mothers of soldiers.

Minnesotans sent thousands of letters and packages to the

battlefronts. Charley Goddard’s mother once went so far as to mail him a turkey dinner.

*“I am happy to inform you that my box has come. That is something a soldier doesn’t get everyday. All that was spoiled was the turkey and a few donuts.”*

As the war raged elsewhere, life went on in Minnesota. Babies

were born. Children went to school. Men and women went to work and raised their families. The days were more challenging, however, with so many gone. Life was often especially difficult for farm families when the men went off to war. Wives, sons, and daughters had to take on all sorts of extra work to keep the farms running while the men were away.

When Hickman heard about the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, he was inspired to change his life. He gathered a large group of enslaved people, and together they escaped and headed north. They called themselves “the pilgrims.” Stories differ about how they made the trip. One says they received help from Union soldiers. Another story recounts how they built a crude raft out of logs that was towed upriver by a steamboat. What is known is that, in May 1863, two steamboats docked in St. Paul, carrying about 300 African Americans.

The people of St. Paul reacted in different ways to the arrival of this large group. Workers on the riverfront were afraid that the newcomers might take their jobs, and they tried to stop the boats from landing. Many other Minnesotans welcomed these Missourians. One newspaper reported that it much preferred what it called the “quiet, civil, and inoffensive manner” of the African Americans to the behavior of the riverfront laborers.

**amendment:** a change to a government process or document



## The Reconstruction Amendments

Once the Civil War was over, the U.S. government worked to rebuild, or reconstruct, the nation. One way it did this was to protect the rights of African Americans by having consistent laws throughout the country. As a result, three **amendments** were

made to the U.S. Constitution. They are called the Reconstruction Amendments because the period following the war came to be known as Reconstruction.

Minnesota’s state constitution was ahead of the U.S. Constitution on these issues. Slavery was

outlawed in the Minnesota constitution upon its creation in 1858. Ten years later, the state constitution was amended to allow African American men the right to vote. This was two years before a similar amendment was added to the U.S. Constitution.

Amendment	What It Did	What It Means
13th Amendment (1865)	Outlawed slavery in the United States	Slavery could no longer exist in any state or territory
14th Amendment (1868)	Provided citizenship to all people born in the United States, regardless of race	African Americans now had the same legal rights and protection as other American citizens
15th Amendment (1870)	Said that the right to vote cannot be denied because of race or skin color	African American men now had the right to vote*

\*The U.S. Constitution did not provide women with the right to vote until 1920.



## The Last Union Soldier

Outside the old train station (known as the Depot) in downtown Duluth sits a bronze statue. It honors the life of a special Civil War veteran, Albert Woolson. When he died in 1956 at age 109, he was believed to be the Union army's last surviving veteran.

Woolson was a well-known figure in Duluth for many years. He appeared in parades and visited schools, telling students about his time as a Union army drummer

boy. There are people alive today who can remember meeting Albert Woolson and learning about his Civil War experiences.

The statue of Woolson is called "The Last Union Survivor." It is a replica of a statue on display in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

**Does your community have a statue or memorial that remembers an important person or event from the past?**



▲ This statue honoring Civil War veteran Albert Woolson is different from many war monuments, which often show soldiers in uniform.

Some of the new arrivals went on to Minneapolis or to Stillwater, but most of them stayed in St. Paul. Soon Hickman and his followers established Pilgrim Baptist Church. At first they had no building to worship in, so they held services in members' homes. Pilgrim Baptist Church was St. Paul's first African American congregation, and it still exists today.

## THE WAR ENDS

The North finally defeated the South in 1865. The war was over, but the nation had paid a terrible price. More than 600,000 soldiers and countless civilians had lost their lives. Many parts of the South were in ruins.

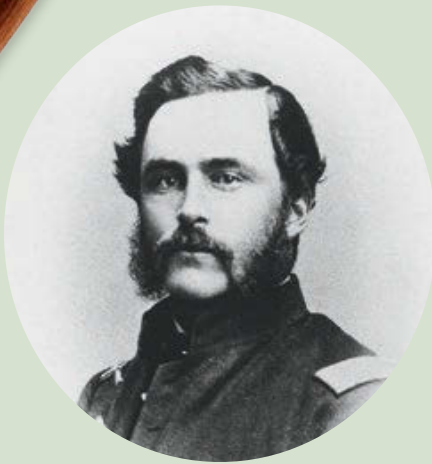
In contrast, Minnesota had escaped most of the ravages of the Civil War. The state's economy had flourished. Prices for farm products had risen. Wheat production had doubled. Immigrants had continued to move in, encouraged by a new federal law that granted government land to settlers. Perhaps more importantly, Minnesotans had learned—partly from the horrors of war and the evils of slavery they had experienced—that their lives were firmly connected to those of other Americans.

Even so, all was not well in Minnesota. Families were broken, and bodies were crippled for life as a result of war. Even more damaging was the conflict that had been raging in the southern part of the state. It happened around the same time Charley Goddard was fighting at Antietam. This war also inflicted deep wounds that would cause great pain for years to come.



► Civil War sword and scabbard

# MISSIONARY RIDGE, “THE SOLDIER’S BATTLE”



▲ Jeremiah C. Donahower, from St. Peter, Minnesota, was an officer in the Second Minnesota Regiment during the Civil War. **Can you find him in Volk’s painting?**

## Problem at the Capitol

The people of Minnesota were upset! It was 1905, and the new capitol building in St. Paul had just opened to the public. The walls and ceilings inside the capitol were decorated with beautiful murals—but the paintings depicted mostly ancient history and mythology. Minnesotans wanted to see Minnesota history in the capitol. A group of citizens and war veterans decided to take action. They raised money to hire famous American artists to paint pictures about Minnesota history and Minnesotans in the Civil War.

Artist Douglas Volk was hired to paint the Civil War’s Battle of Missionary Ridge in Tennessee. When Volk met with the selection committee in 1905, they had just one request: Make your painting as accurate as possible.

## Where Could Volk Get His Information?

The battle had happened in 1863—42 years earlier—but Douglas Volk knew that Civil War veterans were still alive. He knew there were letters, diaries, and reports from the actual battles that he could study. Objects such as uniforms, medical equipment, guns, and ammunition could easily be found. There were even photographs of soldiers from the Second Minnesota Infantry Regiment and photographs of Missionary Ridge in the 1860s.

► This coat was worn by Captain Donahower. **Look carefully at the coats in the Volk painting. Do they look like this one?**





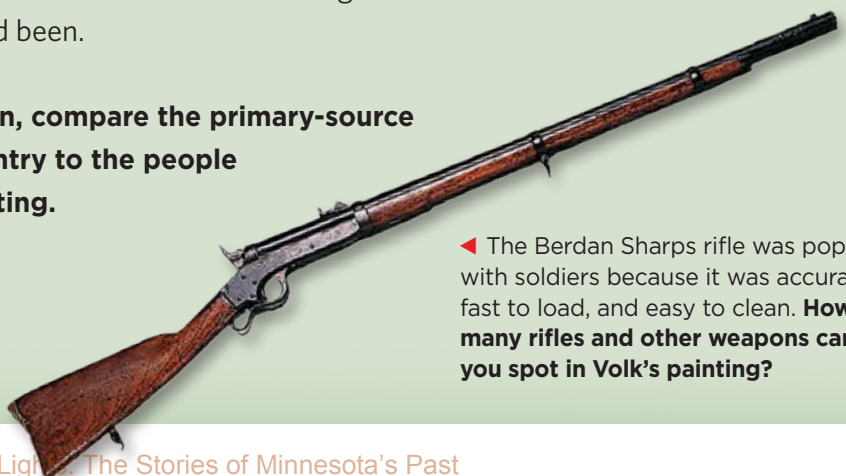


Unfortunately, no action shots of the battle existed. “Fast action” film had not been developed in the 1860s. Yet painting the Battle of Mission Ridge *in action* was Volk’s job. He knew he needed to make his painting as historically accurate as possible, but he also wanted viewers to feel the excitement and drama of the battle. He wanted everyone who looked at the painting to see how brave and daring the soldiers of the Second Minnesota had been.

▲ *The Second Minnesota at the Battle of Mission Ridge*, by Douglas Volk, 1906. The painting is six feet high and eight feet long. It is still on display in the state capitol in St. Paul.



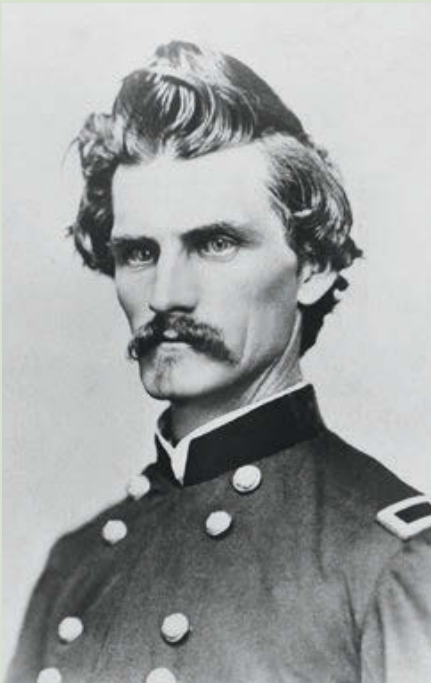
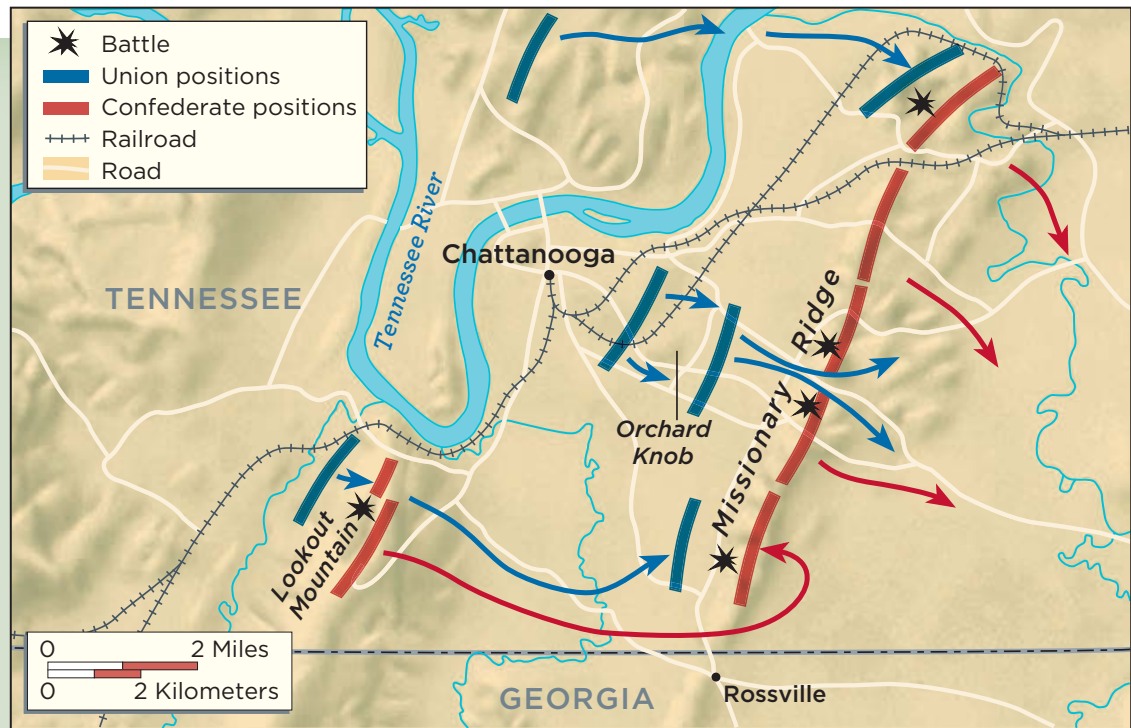
**As you read this Investigation, compare the primary-source photos, objects, and diary entry to the people and objects in Douglas Volk’s painting.**



◀ The Berdan Sharps rifle was popular with soldiers because it was accurate, fast to load, and easy to clean. **How many rifles and other weapons can you spot in Volk’s painting?**



► Throughout history, geographic locations have affected people's decisions about where to go and what to do. **How many modes of transportation could people have used to get in and out of Chattanooga during the Civil War?**



▲ Judson Wade Bishop, from Chatfield, Minnesota, was the commanding officer of the Second Minnesota at Missionary Ridge. Officers could be recognized by the shoulder straps on their uniforms. **Can you identify Colonel Judson Wade Bishop—and other officers—in Volk's painting?**

## Where Is Missionary Ridge?

Missionary Ridge is part of a chain of steep, craggy mountains in southern Tennessee, next to the city of Chattanooga. Chattanooga was one of the war's most important strategic locations. Both the Union and the Confederacy wanted to control the city.

## What Happened There?

In November 1863, Confederate soldiers were in control of Missionary Ridge, cutting off the rail line to the North that brought Union supplies of food and ammunition. The Second Minnesota and 20,000 other Union troops were stationed in the valley to the west of Missionary Ridge. On November 25, they were ordered to capture the Confederate rifle pits—deep ditches that hid men and guns—at the base of Missionary Ridge. After doing so, the Second Minnesota and others continued charging up the ridge even though they had been ordered to stop. Their charge was so fierce and unexpected that the Confederates fell back in retreat.

The victory at Missionary Ridge enabled the North to control the vital rail center at Chattanooga. Now the Union could move troops, guns, and supplies easily to the South. Equally important, the South lost the use



of this essential transportation link. Because the men charged on their own initiative, with no orders, this battle was nicknamed “the Soldier’s Battle.”

## Moving in Closer

### *Color Bearers*

At the heart of Volk’s painting are the flags, or “colors.” Each regiment carried a national flag and a regimental flag. Some regiments painted the names of the battles they fought on the stripes of their flags.



**How do the flags in Volk’s painting compare to the actual flags of the Second Minnesota below?**

Each regiment had several soldiers whose job was to carry and protect the colors. Carrying the colors was a dangerous job, but also an honor. Soldiers carried the flags at the front of the regiment while marching in battle. Men in battle would look for their colors to see where to move and to keep from being separated from their regiment. Generals would watch enemy colors from afar to track regiments. The enemy shot at the color bearers to confuse the troops, because if a flag went down, soldiers could lose track of the movement of their regiment.



▲ Take a close look at this 1863 photo of Lookout Mountain, which is close to Missionary Ridge. **Does the landscape in Volk’s painting look like this?**



▲ Second Minnesota regimental flag



▲ Second Minnesota national flag

When a regiment won a battle, the colors were planted in the ground to signal victory. Fighting took a toll on the flags. Flags often had holes from bullets and even from cannonballs that had been shot through them.

## Musicians

Drummers and buglers (BYU-glerz) were essential parts of the army. In fact, there were more than 50 distinct bugle calls that told men when to charge, when to shoot, and when to retreat. Like color bearers, buglers had a dangerous job during battle. They needed to be close to commanding officers, who were often at the front of the regiment. Because they were making noise and had shiny instruments, they were easy targets for the enemy.



▲ Civil War bugle



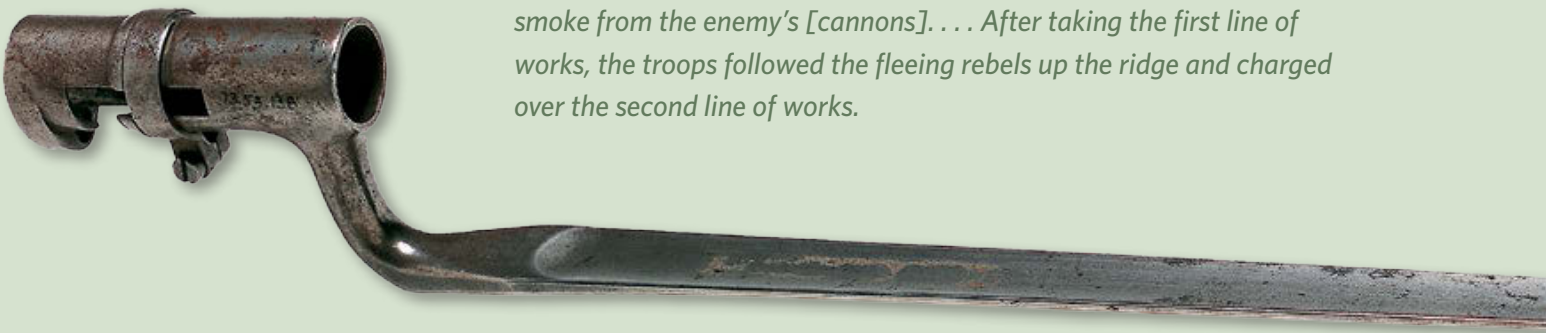
**Has Volk placed the color bearers and musicians realistically?**

## Hand-to-Hand Combat

In the Battle of Missionary Ridge, the Second Minnesota's ultimate goal was to drive the Confederate soldiers off the ridge. Drummer William Bircher wrote the following account of the battle on November 25, shortly after he witnessed it:

*At 4:30 p.m., from a signal gun at Orchard Knob, the entire army moved as one man . . . towards the first line of works [Confederate rifle pits], which we soon reached, and drove the rebels [Confederate soldiers] out. Before we reached the first line of works, we crossed an open piece of ground, and, as we left our cover of trees and entered this piece of ground, the top of the ridge was one sheet of flame and smoke from the enemy's [cannons]. . . . After taking the first line of works, the troops followed the fleeing rebels up the ridge and charged over the second line of works.*

▼ This Civil War bayonet is 18 inches long and attaches to the end of a rifle. **How close would you need to be to the enemy to use a bayonet?**







**How does William Bircher's firsthand account of the Battle of Missionary Ridge compare to Volk's painting?**

Soldiers in the Civil War fought with single-shot rifles, bayonets, swords, and revolvers. They had many cannons to back them up. Typically, soldiers in a regiment began a battle standing in an orderly formation. They marched closer and closer to the enemy, stopping frequently to fire and reload their weapons. The formations would begin to waver as men scrambled over steep hills and brambles, were wounded, or came face-to-face with the enemy.



**Look carefully at the middle of Volk's painting. Can you see the blue lines of soldiers fighting across the length of Missionary Ridge? Can you spot their regimental colors?**

## Did Volk Succeed?

Douglas Volk did extensive research, including visiting the site of the battle twice before he painted the piece. We also know he used live models dressed in real Civil War uniforms and full-size reproductions of the flags as references while he painted. Go back over the evidence.



**Study the painting one more time. How is *The Second Minnesota at the Battle of Mission Ridge* historically accurate? How is it not accurate? How does this painting bring the drama of war to life?**



▲ The type of musket balls that were fired at Missionary Ridge are shown here at their actual size.

