

With His Own Eyes

Col. William Colvill, in an 1877 presentation, recalls the actions of the First Minnesota Volunteer Regiment at Bull Run. Part 2.

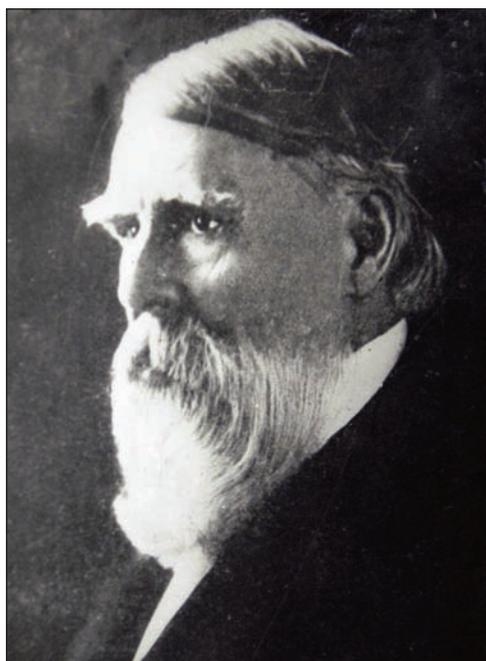
By Al Zdon

Part 1 of the Colvill account, drawn from the Association of the Survivors of the First Minnesota essay done by Colvill in 1877, appeared in the Fall, 2010, edition of Allies.

The first part deals with the beginnings of the Battle of Bull Run and charts the ebb and flow of the battle. In the end, a Minnesota company, under the command of Lt. Col. Miller, second-in-command of the regiment, made what was perhaps the final advance by Federal forces that day, July 21, 1861.

In the second part, Colvill describes his own harrowing retreat from the field.

Lt. Col. Stephen Miller now had few men left, and he abandoned the field. Colvill too made his way back from the action and soon arrived at the Warrentown Pike – at the same spot the First Minnesota had crossed to engage in battle some hours before. Colvill was watching the movement of some Union cavalry.



Col. William Colvill maintained his piercing eyes until his death in 1905. He lived in Red Wing and Duluth for most of his post-war life.



Points of Interest

Curator's Notes 5

Artifact donations 6

Memorials and Contributions 7

News of the Society 8

ALLIES

“Stupidly gaping after them, I was aroused by the sound of footsteps and looking around saw a platoon front of the enemy, marching double quick and within a few feet distance. This startled me out suddenly as a partridge, and my movement startled them as much. Instinctively I started for the slope of the hillside towards the creek [probably Young’s Creek which ran parallel to the pike] and diagonally from the road. It was but a few rods, but that distance was never made more quickly by a race horse. You should have seen me with a secesh smooth bore on my shoulder, a large artillery sword in my hand, make my long shanks spin.”

It’s interesting that through all the chaos and disaster of the day, Colvill managed to be toting a couple of souvenirs. And he did have long shanks; he stood six foot five.

“There was no sign of fatigue, although before I considered myself just about used up. Turning my head when about halfway to the bank – the platoon was in the act of wheeling around the corner of the wood toward me; a step or two farther – I heard the chuck of the muskets brought briskly to the palm of the hand, and then with a mighty leap and feet thrown out I landed on my back with head crouched downward, just below the top of the bank, and at the same instant, through the space I filled when they



A newspaper sketch shows Colvill and a Union battery.



Colvill posed with a flag at one of his final reunions with his comrades.

pulled the trigger, buzzed a hundred bullets. You should have seen the surprise – the actual astonishment in their faces as springing up, I rushed down to and up the creek, out of the fire behind the bank.”

Colvill crossed the creek and ascended a hill, finding wounded men in a house. He also retrieved the regimental colors which were with the men guarding the temporary field hospital. Colvill moved on and saw three fresh Confederate regiments heading toward the road. Ahead in the turnpike was General McDowell, the Union commander. “In a quizzical humor and looking towards the enemy’s regiments, I suggested that he had better *rally* in the woods. His face at that time was turning alternately red and white with each pulsation. A whole history could be read in it at a glance. He preserved his dignity, however, and paying no attention to my impudence, calmly

directed an aid... to *recede* in this direction.” (The italics are Colvill’s.)

The disorganized Union retreat stretched for miles ahead, heading in the general direction of Washington. Colvill reported that the First Minnesota had lost 280 men, killed or wounded, “thrice more than any other regiment on our side.” With pride, Colvill recounted how the retreat of the Minnesotans was executed under Col. Willis Gorman, “with his clear and ringing tones, gives the order to form column by platoons, and this the First Regiment executes with the same precision as upon dress parade, and amid the cheers of the mob, away it marches, bringing up the rear in good order.”

Two years later, just before the battle of Gettysburg, Colvill was able to revisit the battleground of Bull Run. “The woods were all gone, even the stumps all hacked up for fuel, and the whole face of the countryside seemed to have been leveled off.” At first Colvill could not find the site where the battery stood and where the regiment did most of its fighting. Suddenly, it all came together. “All the surroundings arranged them-

ALLIES

selves in order in my mind, and I was at home. It was the place of the repulse of a whole brigade of the rebels from Rickett's battery by the First Minnesota regiment, and at which from that regiment alone, the enemy had sustained more loss on that day than from the whole army beside."

Some hyperbole perhaps for his old comrades, but spoken from the heart. Colvill was able to make many reunions with his men, and he died in 1905 while at a gathering of the First Minnesota's survivors in St. Paul.

Colvill, of course, led the First Minnesota in its heroic charge at the Battle of Gettysburg. He was brevetted a General before the end of the war, but always preferred the title of "Colonel Bill." After the war he served in the Legislature, and was also elected Minnesota's Attorney General. He lived in Red Wing where he worked as a lawyer, and then took a federal posting in Duluth. He also homesteaded a plot of land on the North Shore of Lake Superior in what now is in Colvill Township. He never fully recovered from the extensive wounds he received during the war.

MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MINNESOTA - Application for New or Renewed Membership

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

If you have had military experience, in which branch of service? Check all that apply:

US Army US Navy US Marine Corps US Air Force US Coast Guard
 Other Highest rank achieved _____ Circle one: Active Former Retired

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Individual/Household

Regular (\$25/yr.)

Sustaining (\$50/yr.)

Life (\$350. May be paid in four installments of \$90 each. Tell us if you want this option.)

Organization

Regular (\$500)

Sustaining (\$1,000)

Corporate

Regular (\$1,000)

Sustaining (\$3,000)

Individual memberships are annual except Life memberships. All contributions of \$500 or more in a single year and all Life memberships are recognized on a plaque in the museum lobby.

PROCEDURE

Pay by check or credit card: Download this form and mail with your check (payable to the Military Historical Society of Minnesota) to Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345. You can also mail this form without payment and follow up by calling the museum at 320-632-7374 with your credit card information. **Pay online:** GiveMN.org is a simple, secure way to become a member by paying online. Go to www.givemn.razoo.com/story/Military-Historical-Society-Of-Minnesota and follow the prompts.

Your membership is fully tax deductible. We salute and thank you for your support!

Curator's Notes By Doug Bekke



Work continues to move forward on the museum's new exhibit, "Minnesota's Two Civil Wars," dealing with both the war between the north and the south, and the 1862 Dakota uprising in western Minnesota. Steve Osman has been busy working on the text and finding photographs, illustrations and artifacts for the exhibit. I have been busy finishing the exhibit cases and preparing mannequins. The exhibit opening is scheduled for July 9th and I hope you can attend.

Over the past year Charlie Pautler, the site director from the Charles Lindbergh House in Little Falls, has been working on several special projects at the museum. Charlie has also been working on State Legacy Grant money through the Minnesota Historical Society. His primary effort has been to work on the important collection of items received from General Jack Vessey. On the first weekend in February, a movie company visited the museum to film parts of a story on a WWII Minnesota airman who was shot down and held as a prisoner in Stalag Luft III. This is the camp made famous by the movie "The Great Escape." Charlie Pautler and Doug Thompson became involved in this project and numerous museum assets were used, including the French 40&8 boxcar.

Over much of the last year, I've been assisted by Doug Thompson, who has helped me process new artifact donations and clear up some problems and questions with the existing collection. This often involved researching and more precisely identifying the artifacts, and sometimes contacting the artifact donors to obtain additional information on an item's history. Doug has a vast knowledge of military history and military artifacts, and his help has been invaluable. I very much hope that Doug can continue his excellent work at the museum. I'll be working hard to raise the money necessary to keep him working on his projects.

This brings me to the topic of fund raising. The museum needs your support if it is to move forward with its mission to honor and remember the service of all of Minnesota's veterans. The Museum receives about 30 percent of its annual operating funds from the Minnesota Legislature. The State's looming budget shortfall may force a reduction in the amount of state money received by the museum. I have for a long time advocated for an increased effort to obtain private money to support the museum's mission. Last year the museum generously received an \$8,000 matching grant opportunity from the Katherine B. Andersen Fund. The museum needed to raise a matching \$8,000 in new donor, unrestricted donations. Despite several appeals for help the museum was only able to raise about \$3,000 in qualifying funds and the grant was lost. Thankfully the Anderson fund renewed the grant opportunity for opportunity for 2011. The museum needs your support to match this grant, and to fund many other museum projects.

Despite running a very frugal cost-conscious operation, keeping the museum's doors open is expensive. Exhibits are costly and time consuming, but what is exhibited in the museum is only a small part of the state's military heritage being preserved in the museum's storage area. This is labor-intensive work and people with specific skills are needed to do the work. It takes time and it costs money. We live in a forward-looking society. It is important the future generations don't come to think of Gettysburg as just another theme park, that Iraq was not I-Rack (a shelving unit), and that the Battle of the Bulge was not a weight loss program. The museum's mission to honor and remember the service of all of Minnesota's veterans can't move forward without your help. Please support the museum's work.

Artifact Donation Honor Roll (Sept. 1 to December 31, 2010)

The museum gratefully acknowledges donations of artifacts from the following:

Craig Anderson ▪ Bemidji State University ▪ Mary Gafkjen ▪ Anthony Gozola ▪ Jon F. Grossman ▪ Patricia S. Gustafson ▪ Daniel Heathcott ▪ Pam Jamma ▪ Betty Johnson ▪ Carmene B. Kemp ▪ Dale Klima ▪ Bernard Koskovich ▪ Jerry Kyser ▪ Tom Lewin ▪ Thomas Manti ▪ June Mattox ▪ Mrs. Drew Morris ▪ Cathy L. Newman ▪ Bill Palmer ▪ Dennis Paulson ▪ Kevin L. Rofidal ▪ Ursula Schmeling ▪ Richard Schwerke ▪ Mike Smith ▪ Wayne Soens ▪ Ken Streiff ▪ Richard Vosika ▪ James Williamson ▪

Artifact Donations (Sept. 1 - December 31, 2010)

Uniforms: Belt (2) ▪ Blouse, USMC WWI ▪ Boots, jungle ▪ Buckle, belt ▪ Cap, USMC overseas ▪ Cap, sailor ▪ Cap, Service ▪ Coat, USMC service ▪ Overcoat, Civil War repro ▪ Overcoat, USA OD wool (2) ▪ Overcoat, USMC ▪ Shirt, jungle fatigue ▪ Shirt, khaki (8) ▪ Shirt, tiger stripe camo ▪ Shirt, tropical fatigue (2) ▪ Shirt, USN blue jumper ▪ Shirt, USN white jumper (2) ▪ Suspenders ▪ Tie ▪ Trousers, Civil War repro ▪ Trousers, jungle fatigue ▪ Trousers, tropical fatigue ▪ Trousers, USA OD ▪ Trousers, USMC service ▪ Trousers, USMC WWI ▪ Trousers, USN blue (2) ▪ Uniform blouse, USA OD wool ▪

Equipment: Cold Climate Survival Kit ▪ Helmet, helicopter pilot ▪ Helmet, steel ▪ Mine detector set ▪ Parachute (2) ▪ Sea bag ▪

Miscellaneous: Blanket, USN wool ▪ Books ▪ Book, British ration WWII ▪ Book, cigarette card (2) ▪ Cap, baseball ▪ Dog tags ▪ Doll ▪ Flag, Japanese WWII ▪ Insignia ▪ Letters ▪ Magazines ▪ Medals ▪ Newspapers ▪ Pajama pants, Vietnamese black ▪ Photos ▪ Pillow sham, souvenir ▪ Pocket calendars ▪ Postcards ▪ Poster, framed WWI ▪ Relics, Fort Ridgely ▪ Throw, sofa ▪

Weapons and related items: Knife ▪

Please Notify Us of Address Changes

Please notify the museum if your mailing address changes so we can keep our mailing lists current. Changes in mailing rules recently enacted by the U.S. Postal Service require that any of our newsletters with incorrect addresses be returned and we must pay the postage. In order to keep mailing costs down, we must make every effort to maintain our mailing lists properly.

Memorials (Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, 2010)

Given by:

Sidney K. Schmuckler
Douglas P. Bekke
Linda A. Cameron
194th Tank Regiment Assn.
Lyle C. Doerr
Raymond & Shirley Lunde
Raymond & Shirley Lunde
Raymond & Shirley Lunde
Robert Schaumann
Raymond & Shirley Lunde
Dale Smith

In Memory of:

Joseph W. Steman
Don Frederick
Don Frederick
Glen Nelson
Kenneth O. Wofford
Jerome Storeim
Alberta Storeim
William Kiernat
James Sieben
Thomas Collins
Robert Samp

<u><i>In Memoriam</i></u>	
In Memory of:	_____
Given by:	_____
Address:	_____
City:	_____ State: _____ ZIP: _____
<u>Please indicate here name and address of member of family to whom we can send notice of your gift:</u>	
Name:	_____
Address:	_____
City:	_____ State: _____ ZIP: _____
Make checks payable to: Minnesota Military Museum 15000 Hwy. 115, Camp Ripley Little Falls MN 56345	
<u>Gifts are deductible for income tax purposes</u>	

Contributions Honor Roll (Sept. 1 - Dec. 31, 2010)

Contributions Honor Roll (September 1, 2010 through December 31, 2010)

Renewing Members: Gerald Becker ▪ Doug Bekke ▪ Bernard Cahill ▪ Joe Clements ▪ Sandy Erickson ▪ Marvin Hey ▪ James D. M. Holmes ▪ George Jacobs ▪ Richard D. Kaasa ▪ Edward Komac ▪ James Kuhn ▪ Earl Lillestrand ▪ Duane Marholz ▪ George Martin ▪ Kathy Marty ▪ Allan R. Meixner ▪ William D. Morgan, Jr. ▪ James Nygaard ▪ James O'Brien ▪ Harris W. Olson, Jr. ▪ Susan Rasmussen ▪ Paul Rehkamp ▪ Jerry Ryan ▪ Herb Schaper ▪ Donald Severson ▪ Susan Shelton ▪ Fredric Steinhauer ▪ Jon Stratte ▪ Theodore Thorson ▪ Nancy Walsh ▪ Jim Weber ▪ David West ▪ Roger S. Williams, Jr. ▪ Ward Zischke

New Members: Joe Fitzharris ▪ Bernard Koskovich ▪ Kimberle Nagle ▪ Robert Schaumann ▪ Diane Wisocki ▪

American Legion: Post 372, Blackduck ▪ Post 303, Fridley ▪ Post 60, Grand Rapids ▪ Post 202, Hackensack ▪ Post 47, Hastings ▪ Post 161 Auxiliary, LeRoy ▪ Post 627, Nisswa ▪ Post 164, Stewartville ▪ Post 33, St. James ▪ MN American Legion Foundation, St. Paul ▪ Post 545, Spicer ▪ Post 168, White Bear Lake ▪

VFW: Post 1902, Crookston ▪ Post 4456 Auxiliary, Gilbert ▪ Post 1210 Auxiliary, Hastings ▪ Post 245 Auxiliary, Minneapolis ▪ Post 4393, Northfield

Donations: Kenneth C. Johnson ▪ Tim Kennedy ▪ Axel Kornfuehrer ▪ Duane Lorsung ▪ Arthur Ludwig, Jr. ▪ Raymond H. Lunde ▪ Gustav R. Oberg ▪ Ferdinand Peters ▪ Ken Slipka ▪ Ken Streiff ▪ Thomas Wilharber

ALLIES

Allies is published for the members and friends of the Minnesota Military Museum.

Nicholas Ostapenko, **President**
David L. Hanson, **Executive Director**
Doug Bekke, **Curator**
Leland P. Smith, **Archivist**
Sandy Erickson, **Administrator**
Al Zdon, **Editor**

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LITTLE FALLS, MN
PERMIT NO. 40

Return Service Requested

The **Military Historical Society of Minnesota** is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization, registered with the federal and state governments. Donations are tax deductible.

Military Historical Society of Minnesota
C/O Minnesota Military Museum
Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy. 115
Little Falls MN 56345-4173

Museum contact information:

TO:

Telephone: 320-632-7374
DSN: 871-7374
Fax: 320-632-7797
Email: connect@mnmilitarymuseum.org
Website: www.mnmilitarymuseum.org

News from the MHSM:

Check out the new Website

A new website has been created for the Military Historical Society of Minnesota. It's located at: <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org>. The website features lots of new information about the museum. It also includes a list of all donors and volunteers for 2010, found by clicking on the "Support Us" menu in the left navigation bar.

The new site also includes back issues of Allies Newsletter.

Dave Hanson announces retirement

Dave Hanson, Executive Director of the Military Historical Society of Minnesota and the Minnesota Military Museum, will be retiring on April 30, 2011, after more than 17 years of dedicated service. He began work as a museum assistant in 1993, and was appointed Executive Director the following year.

He will be replaced by Jeff Thielen, 57, of Little Falls on May 1. He was previously a conservation officer with the Department of Natural Resources.

More on the transition in the Spring issue of Allies.

New Board Members

Three new members recently joined the Board of Directors for the Military Historical Society of Minnesota. Robert Boone of Cambridge retired from the Minnesota Army National Guard after three decades of service and attainment of the highest enlisted rank—Command Sergeant Major for the State of Minnesota. As a civilian, Bob was a teacher and administrator for the Cambridge Public Schools, retiring a few years ago as a school principal. Frank Messina is owner and CEO of Messina and Associates, a large real estate brokerage and property management firm in Duluth. Frank has been active in a variety of civic organizations and was once a captain in the Minnesota Army National Guard. Kurt Stelten of Sartell is currently the Director of Development and Annual Giving for St. Cloud State University. He has also been involved in a long list of community-based volunteer activities and is a U.S. Army veteran (Operation Desert Storm).