Opening Manassas

The Iron Brigade, Stonewall Jackson, and the Battle on Brawner's Farm, August 28, 1862

Lance J. Herdegen and Bill Backus

Unedited Excerpt

SB
Savas Beatie
California

Lance

For Shirley, who dances with such grace to the Ojibwe drums of her kinsmen at Lac Courte Oreilles.

Bill

To Mom and Dad—For everything.

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Photos have been added throughout for the convenience of the reader.

Introduction

The idea of a fog-of-war book on one battle and using two authors to write from the Confederate and Union sides came from our publisher, the insightful Theodore P. Savas of Savas Beatie, during a phone call three years ago. The idea intrigued me. He assured me he could find someone to pen the Confederate side of the fence. That was enough for me.

I soon discovered I knew too much of the Iron Brigade of the West in its first battle as a unit. That made it difficult to describe the engagement using just the information on hand at the time to evaluate the fighting and the role of various officers.

Prussian military analyst Carl von Clausewitz used the word "fog" to describe the uncertainty facing military officers on a field of battle. Were they confident of their own ability and the ability of their commands? What were the capabilities of officers and commands on the other side? What were the possibilities and hinderances of the field? What about the weather conditions?

It is easy long afterwards—especially by writers of military history—in describing a battle to see the errors made at the time and make judgmental statements about the conduct of various officers.

Yet, there is much gained by putting yourself in the place of this officer or that and how he reacted with only the information he had at the time. This is especially true looking at the Union side of the fighting at Gainesville on the field now called Brawner's Farm.

There is even confusion about the name of the engagement. Iron Brigade veterans never knew they were fighting on a farm leased by John Brawner. They always called it "Gainesville" for a nearby crossroads community, and that was the name put on their battle flags. The name "Brawner's Farm" was first used by Alan Nolan in his powerful 1961 book, *The Iron Brigade*.

In writing this account I was reminded of a day in August 1981 when I was on hand for the first unrolling of battle flags of the Wisconsin regiments. They had been rolled a century before and bound in cheese cloth and were now being prepared for restoration and preservation.

The flags were unrolled on a long table. They were musty and smelled of smoke, whether campfire or tobacco I could not discern. Several of the early issue flags were in tatters, and the stars and battle names painted on them a handful of paint chips. Several of the wooden staffs were marked by bullets. In one flag was found the wood sapling cut by 7th Wisconsin men the night after the first day of Gettysburg. The original had been shattered by an artillery blast.

The early banners showed the most damage. Painted on some of them was the name of the Iron Brigade's first fight as a unit— "Gainesville."

Lance J. Herdegen
Town of Spring Prairie
Walworth County, Wisconsin

Acknowledgments

Writers spend much time alone as they work on the book, but it is never in individual achievement. many people have an impact on the finished work. In fact, they are often woven into the very words themselves.

First I would like to acknowledge what a pleasure it was to work with Bill Backus as we completed this unusual project. How much did I enjoy reading his sections.

We are both indebted to Theodore Savas and his Savas Beatie team. It was a pleasure to work with Sarah Keeney, Veronica Kane, Ian Hughes, and Sarah Closson. They are a dedicated professionals and made this entire experience enjoyable and worthwhile.

A special thanks to Phil Spaugy, Dan Netteshiem, Dan Joyce and all those descendants of the Black Hats who came forward with letters, diaries, and photographs of their ancestors. Others who deserve mention include Paul Johnson, Steve Victor, Brett Wilson, Doug Dammann, Alan Gaff, William Washburn, William J. K. Beaudot, Pat and Bob Sullivan, and the late Howard Madaus and Alan T. Nolan. Many others helped, so many it is all but impossible to name them here. My thanks to all.

Introduction

When publisher Theodore Savas approached me with his idea for this book, I was immediately intrigued. The concept of a fog-of-war study returns the drama back into the story. What interested me even more was Ted's idea to use this concept on Brawner's Farm, the opening engagement of Second Manassas.

Sandwiched as it was between the drama of Gen. Robert E. Lee's Seven Days' battles and his strategic defeat in Maryland at Sharpsburg, the Second Manassas campaign has yet to generate the study it deserves. John Hennessy's magisterial 1993 *Return to Bull Run: The Campaign and Battle of Second Manassas* might have something to do with that; following in Hennessey's footsteps is rather daunting. But for a campaign that was arguably Lee's greatest victory, new studies (and lots of them) are warranted and needed.

I have the great fortune to live, work, and play in the area described in this book. so I have a good sense of the topography and have walked and driven the terrain too many times to count. For this book I had to take an entirely different approach and relearn the campaign from one side as it was happening.

Using mostly firsthand accounts, I have endeavored to present an accurate description (as far as such a thing is possible) as seen through the eyes of the generals, line officers, and rank-and-file soldiers as these events unfolded. This includes the storied flanking operation (and the famous endurance) of Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's men, their actions around Manassas, the sudden eruption of the battle of Brawner's Farm on the evening of August 28, 1862. This, of course, is in addition to the fighting itself.

Researching, walking the ground, and writing this manuscript without an omniscient viewpoint has changed my perspective of the Confederate high command. Victory mitigates many mistakes, but it never completely buries them. Despite his storied Civil War career, I find it difficult to match Jackson's performance here with the legendary plaudits many historians laud upon him. Time and time again, Stonewall's renowned tendency toward secrecy exposed his command to unnecessary risks. Such was the case during the Manassas campaign. In the end, the men themselves and Jackson's outstanding subordinates, especially Richard

Ewell, were perhaps more responsible for the Second Manassas accolades that have typically been bestowed upon Jackson. This became even more clear to me while walking with the men in real time without knowing what was coming, or why.

Trying to piece together what someone knew and when they knew it is a difficult task. Thankfully, much of the core battlefield survives because of the exhaustive research and efforts of archaeologists, archivists, preservationists, and public historians, who have returned much of the landscape to its 1862 appearance. This made my task easier. Archival sources are precious, but there is no substitute for preserved battlefields.

Bill Backus
Manassas, VA

Acknowledgments

The writing of any book requires the assistance of many people. A book with this unique premise requires more than its fair share.

Ahead of everyone else are Ted Savas and Lance Herdegen. The genesis of this book was Ted's. Writing a fog-of-war study would have been difficult had it not been Ted's shepherding in all the various stages it takes to get to publication. Writing a book about the first baptism of fire for the Iron Brigade is a lot easier when you have a coauthor like Lance. The foremost expert on the Wisconsinites (and Indianans) it was a joy to work with Lance.

In no particular order are Kevin Pawlak, Tom McGinley, Brian Ross, Gary Haskins, Lionel Raymond, and Rob Orrison. All have been a sounding board, and debate team, to discuss the Second Manassas Campaign. A chat with any of them always one thinking about the campaign in a new perspective.

A book of this type needs maps. Thankfully Edward Alexander was able to produce fantastic maps that give an idea of how the Confederates viewed the battlefields in 1862.

The staff at Manassas National Battlefield are some of the best in the business. Chief among them is Jim Burgess. In my opinion Jim is the expert on both Manassas battles and the Civil War in Prince William County. It is a pleasure to call Jim a colleague.

Family has been a constant source of encouragement. Gregg and Kathy have been amazing parents-in-laws. Mom and Dad have cheered me on every step of the way, from a history obsession in grade school to a professional historian. Finally, Paige has spent countless hours exploring Civil War battlefields and talking history, sharing a beer, and now raising a family.

Chapter 1

"Johnny Stole a Ha-a-am"

Virginia: August 28, 1862

The infantry brigade moving east along the Warrenton Turnpike at a steady route step was nearing the battlefield of Bull Run. It was a warm late summer day and the sinking sun cast dancing shadows ahead of the moving soldiers. The march had started at 4:00 a.m. and the men now looked forward to a quiet camp where they could cook the chunks of raw beef issued a few hours earlier. Six horse-drawn artillery pieces and transport wagons rumbled and clunked behind the four regiments, the whole compact column filling a half mile of the turnpike. It was second in the line of four brigades ordered to Centreville, Virginia. The first brigade was about a mile ahead and the third and fourth brigades a mile or more behind.

The division had been on the move the past week marching here and there in a frantic search for a Confederate force moving in central Virginia. It was the end of a long, tiring day marked only by occasional enemy horse artillery fire that tried to delay and disrupt the long line of the four brigades. The soldiers chatted and joked as they moved along the roadway in what seemed a leisurely fashion. At one point earlier in the day a far-off brass band could be heard playing the jolly notes of a popular soldier song, and here and there in the sprawling ranks men and boys took up the chorus:

Johnny stole a ha-a-am,
And didn't care a da-a-a-m.

To the north of the marching brigade was a farmhouse and outbuildings and ahead, on the turnpike, a thin wood where the road had been excavated leaving a three-foot embankment. Passing through trees, rays of sunlight

flashed now and then on the bright musket barrels carried by soldiers at the head of the column.

On the wooded low ridge several hundred yards to the north, a man on a dark horse came out of the trees. He watched the marching soldiers as he moved from one spot to another. After a time, he turned and went back over the ridge line out of sight. It was near 6:00 p.m., August 28, 1862, a Thursday. It was a day long to be remembered in homes in far off Wisconsin and Indiana.

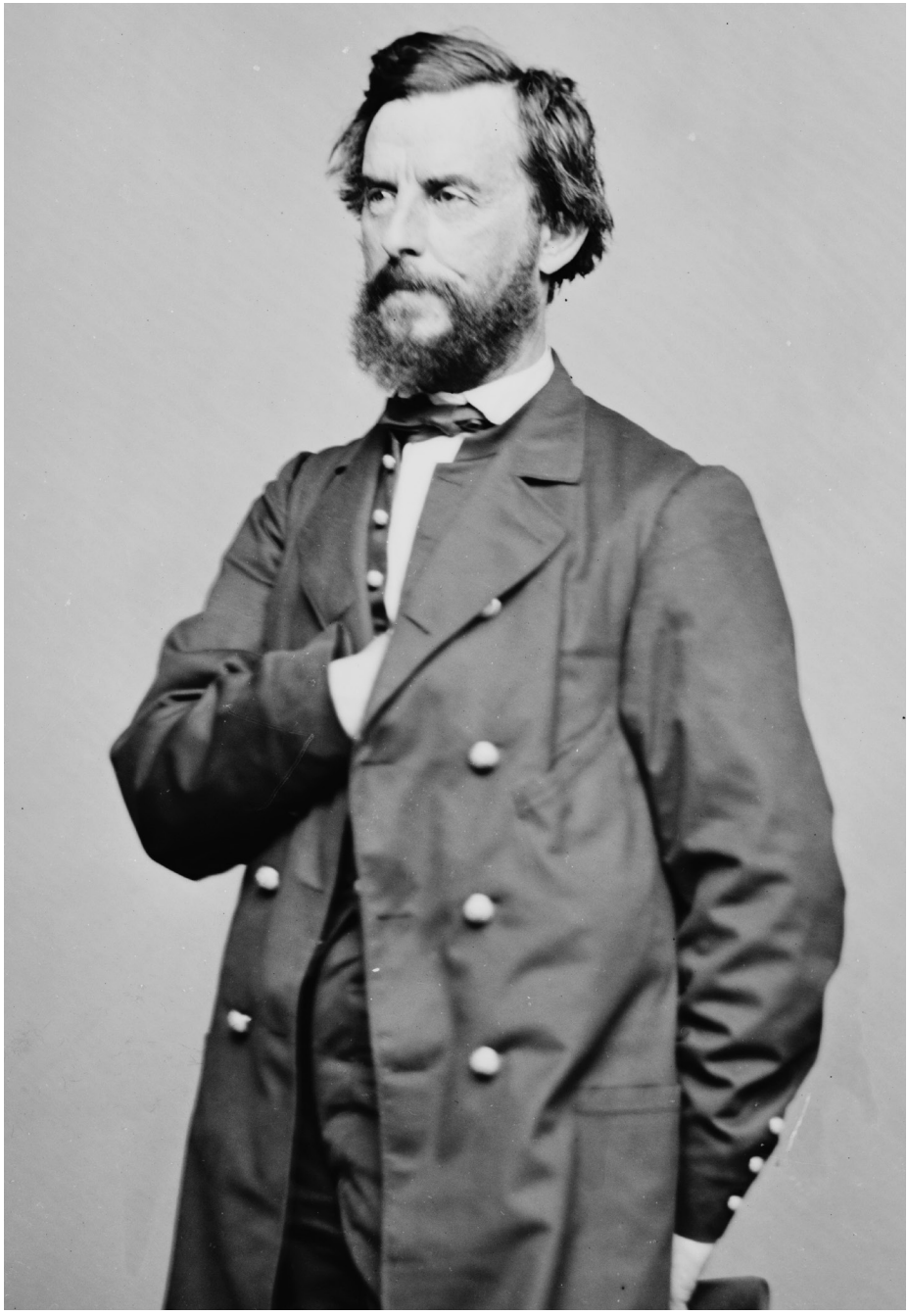
One Month Earlier

The brigade review ordered nearly a month prior on the heights above Fredericksburg, Virginia, came off in what one soldier called "a very poor style." The regiments stepped off promptly as ordered at 6:00 p.m. on August 1, 1862, but the formation soon faltered. Even though the brigade had been together almost a year and heavily drilled the past months, the lines of marching soldiers carelessly bent this way and that as the sergeants and officers tried to correct the alignment. "The boys did not care how they went," the private wrote in his journal that evening, "and the officers could not make them do any better for they were all together, and when they take a notion and hang together, the officers never could handle us as they pleased."[1]

The reason for the "very poor style" may have been that the review came at the end of a long and wearying day preparing a new camp above the city. The weather was hot and the soldiers tired. And it did not help that the whispering in ranks was that the review was ordered to show off the brigade to an elderly civilian watching with division commander Rufus King—and that the watching gent just might be the general's father.

The brigade contained four regiments from the nation's frontier—the 2nd, 6th, and 7th Wisconsin, and the 19th Indiana. The move to the new location was an attempt to escape the malaria prevalent along the Rappahannock River in late summer in central Virginia. In many ways, the summer camps near Fredericksburg and environs were rather pleasant. The city on the south bank of the river midway between Washington and the new Confederate capital at Richmond was noted for its history and location. Now, however, the quiet that once marked the community was disturbed by movement and noise as it was home for various elements of the Union army. The units arrived from the Washington camps the past May as part of George B. McClellan's much-hailed

1 William Ray, *Four Years with the Iron Brigade: The Civil War Journal of William Ray, Company F, 7th Wisconsin Volunteers*, eds. Lance Herdegen and Sherry Murphy (Cambridge, ME, 2002).



General Rufus King. *Library of Congress*

grand advance on the Confederate capital. General Irvin McDowell's force, including the Western regiments, however, was stopped at Fredericksburg to protect Washington and central Virginia as well as being poised to go overland if needed to join "Little Mac." But the order to join the Army of the Potomac outside Richmond never came.

Nowhere was the latest war news followed with more sharp and lengthy discussion than in the four regiments in King's division. The soldiers were singled out as the only all-Western infantry brigade serving in the East. They had been together since mid-summer of the previous year and—except for the 2nd Wisconsin which fought at First Bull Run—saw only limited action. "Of course, we feel eager to be something more than ornamental file-closers," a frustrated Wisconsin officer wrote home. "Our regiment has been more than a year in service, and in soldierly bearing, perfection in drill, and discipline, we do not yield the palm to the regulars in any service." The four regiments brought 4,000 men to Washington the previous year, but transfers, other duties, desertions, and disease had reduced the brigade numbers. Now, the officer noted, only some 2,800 soldiers remained in the 40 companies.[2]

The news from the great Federal army assembled outside Richmond was troubling. Little Mac was stalled outside the city gates and the bright hopes of early summer grew darker with the passing weeks. The war itself seemed to be taking on a more serious tone with dimming hopes of a quick conclusion. The Northern public was still stunned and reeling by the long casualty lists from the fighting in April at Shiloh near Pittsburg Landing in Tennessee. The Confederates were still in the field in force across the whole front, East and West, and it seemed Federal leadership did not know what to do about it.

Adding to the grim outlook was a troubling new order from the War Department combining commands, including McDowell's corps, into a new "Army of Virginia." It placed the Western volunteers another step removed from their beloved "Little Mac" and any hope of rejoining the Army of the Potomac. Around their coffee fires, the boys wondered aloud how they could ever explain their lack of real service to the folks back home. "I feel more like fighting than ever but as yet have not had a chance to show our boasted bravery but hope the [day] will soon come when we will have the orders to join Mclelen," one of the 7th Wisconsin boys wrote in his journal. An officer grumbled in a letter home that "General McClellan presses steadily on to Richmond. We are left out in the wet."[3]

2 Rufus Dawes, *Service with the 6th Wisconsin Volunteers* (Marietta, OH, 1890), 51–52.

3 Ray, *Iron Brigade*, 119; Dawes, *Service*, 44. See also Frank A. Haskell, letter to his brothers and sisters, Sept. 22, 1862, Frank Haskell Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society [hereafter "WHS"].

Despite the dark headlines over the latest war developments, the move to the new camp was welcomed and the volunteers spent the last two days of July constructing tree branch arbors for shade over their tents along the new company streets. The site included a large clover field and timber on three sides and the handy Westerners began digging two wells at each end of the camp. Their small canvas shelter halves and other improvements were soon "all so covered up that you can scarcely see a tent," one soldier wrote in his journal. "There is plenty of wood nearby and tolerable plenty of water."[4]

In their letters, the Western boys described a city "surrounded by high land and being built with strict regularity." It contained "many handsome private residences and public buildings"—one soldier observed—and was supplied with waterpower by the Rappahannock Falls. The city is "a place of great wealth and beauty," a Wisconsin officer wrote to his wife. But he added a disapproving note that the city residents "made their living by furnishing negroes for the Southern market that furnished them with large incomes. So they built themselves beautiful homes and enjoyed them. . . . I would want a more sterling life." Also discovered was the marble monument marking the grave of George Washington's mother. "It was shamefully mutilated and disfigured by reckless soldiers," one soldier wrote home.[5]

The brigade had its beginning in the Washington camps in the summer of 1861. The 2nd Wisconsin reached the war front in June 1861 and the boys always believed they were the first of the three-year regiments to reach the city with the earlier organizations enlisting for 90 days. The Wisconsin men arrived just in time for the battle of Bull Run in July and got whipped along with the rest. The next two arriving regiments—the 5th and 6th Wisconsin—reached Washington shortly after the battle. The 7th Wisconsin, the last of the Badger infantry regiments to be sent to the East, was held at home until after the fall harvest. When it did arrive, it was attached to a holding brigade under the command of Gen. Rufus King comprised of the 2nd, 5th, 6th Wisconsin, and the 19th Indiana.

The Western nature of the unit raised speculation about the creation of an all-Wisconsin brigade under King. One of the strongest encouragements for that idea came in early August 1861 from Col. John Starkweather of Milwaukee.

4 Ray, *Iron Brigade*, 123.

5 Henry F. Young, letter to wife, May 24, 1862, *Dear Delia: The Civil War Letters of Captain Henry F. Young, Seventh Wisconsin Infantry, 1861–1864*, eds. Michael J. Larson and John David Smith (Madison, WI., 2019) 68; George H. Otis, *The Second Wisconsin Infantry, with letters and recollections by other members of the regiment*, ed. Alan D. Gaff (Dayton, OH, 1984), 51–52.; E. B. Quiner, *The Military History of Wisconsin: A Record of the Civil and Military Patriotism of the State in the War for the Union* (Chicago, 1866), 992–993.

He commanded the 1st Wisconsin Infantry, just then nearing an end to 90-days of active service north of Washington. His was a big name back home where he was a prominent attorney and well known for his activity in the pre-war Wisconsin state militia. Always forceful in manner and speech, his Milwaukee Light Guard was regarded as one of the finest militia organizations of the Upper Middle West. It was a "crack company," one observer noted, and displayed a "high degree of proficiency in drill and discipline" in which Starkweather, as captain, "took much pride." As a result, it was the first company selected when Wisconsin formed the three-month 1st Wisconsin regiment of active militia and Starkweather was named colonel.

With his regiment presently in the Department of Shenandoah and scheduled to be sent home, the always ambitious Starkweather wrote to fellow Milwaukeean King, a longtime friend and militia colleague in the Light Guard. King was now—because of his graduation from the U. S. Military Academy—commanding a volunteer brigade at Washington. The letter concerned two matters. The first involved the recent promotion of Lucius Fairchild of Madison, a captain in the 1st Wisconsin, to the 2nd Wisconsin in King's brigade. Could Fairchild be allowed to return to Wisconsin with the 1st Wisconsin before coming back to Virginia to report to his new post, Starkweather asked? "I would like it much that it be so arranged."

The second matter was more far-reaching. The colonel wanted King to write an order assigning his regiment to the general's brigade. The 1st Wisconsin would return to Milwaukee as scheduled, he said, and would be maintained as "a skeleton" pending recruitment for three-years. Within three weeks' time, Starkweather could fill it with at least two-thirds of the veterans of his old regiment. "I want you to get an order to such effect for me and at the same time place the Wis. 1st in your Brigade," he wrote. "It ought to be done. The governor [Alexander Randall] wants us to go in, and the whole of Wisconsin is anxious for it."

The only thing his men would need, he explained, were new Federal uniforms to replace the state issued militia grey. "The 1st could be put in the field again in short order perfectly disciplined, sound in condition . . . Ready for hard work and would be well informed in its duty." Lawyer Starkweather knew how to shape a request in the most forceful language: "Get me the order General to muster out at once in Mil. And pay off—3 weeks' time and I am with you heart and body with as fine a body of men as ever started up. . . . You can do it for me General. . . . For my sake—for the Regt's sake for Wisconsin and our Country's sake, do this swiftly."[6]

6 Quiner, *Military History*, 993; John Starkweather to Rufus King, Aug. 8, 1861, private collection.

Fairchild was given permission to return to Wisconsin before reporting to his new assignment, but for reasons never clearly explained, Starkweather and the 1st Wisconsin did not join King's brigade. It returned to Milwaukee where it was mustered out and then reformed as a three-year regiment with orders to serve in the Western Theater of the war where Starkweather was now commanding a brigade.

The idea of an all-Wisconsin brigade was dashed for good when the arriving 7th Wisconsin was placed in King's command, as expected, but the 5th Wisconsin was surprisingly transferred to another brigade. The loss of the Badger regiment controverted King's wishes and the wishes of most of the field and line officers and men of the departing organization. The decision to move the Wisconsin regiment, instead of the Indiana regiment, might have been the careless error of an army clerk, but many believed that Army officials—Eastern army officials—objected to an all-Wisconsin brigade under the watchful eye and influence of a powerful patron like the governor of a faraway state.

Chapter 2

"Splendid Looking Fellows"

Washington: Late 1861

From the very first days at Washington, volunteers from Eastern states camped nearby did not know quite what to make of the soldiers from the far West. Sightseers and the curious from nearby Washington and other places came down to the Western camps to stand off to one side or the other to gawk and take the measure of those young fellows still wearing their home state militia gray uniforms. They were considered backwoods rustics. Nearby soldiers from larger states mocked them as "the Country Brigade."

But the soldiers from Wisconsin and Indiana, observers noted, somehow seemed taller and different than the soldiers from New York, New Jersey, and even Pennsylvania, and they moved with what was then regarded as an easy and lanky Western stride. The new volunteers, it was whispered, had lived side-by-side with the native tribes of the frontier, and it was pronounced with solemn tones and firm nods that those Badgers and Hoosiers were used to sleeping on the ground and did not need tents or other shelter. Confirmations flowed when the 2nd Wisconsin passed through Chicago on the way to the front. One of the big city newspapermen watched with awe and described the new volunteers as "all young, stalwart, vigorous, splendid looking fellows." The regiment, he reported, included "200 lumbermen, hardy, cast-iron fellows from the north, who have not properly slept in a civilized bed in a dozen years."[1]

1 Whether born in America or "bred beyond her borders, or in foreign climes," one volunteer explained, the Western men were proud of their states and with the firing on Fort Sumter in 1861 they rushed to fill the volunteer companies. "Not infrequently," one said, "every civilized nation on the face of the earth was represented in the rank and file of the same regiment. Every condition of social, religious, and political faith, all the trades, occupations and professions were represented. The same tent covered the banker, lumberman, medical student, lawyer, merchant and machinist. The millionaire's son touched elbows with the son of his father's hired man." "Wisconsin in the Civil War," *History of Wisconsin* 1, no. 2, n. p.; *Janesville* [WI] *Daily Gazette*, June 1861.

In truth, however, the men in the new Wisconsin and Indiana regiments were often not native to their states but were sons of New England and Pennsylvania and Ohio and New York—even Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky. The ranks also included young, tough fellows from Germany, Ireland, Norway, and other places across the sea. In some of the backwoods companies could also be found—against all army regulations—one or two free Blacks or runaway slaves just then living on the frontier. In the Wisconsin units were also found unauthorized representatives of the Ojibwe, Oneida, Potawatomi, and other tribes—all signed up to carry a musket with the rest.

A few of those who stepped forward in Indiana or Wisconsin said they signed the roll because they were bored or wanted to be considered brave or sought advancement. Others saw the war as a fight against the evils of slavery, and some felt they were protecting the sacred Union created by their grandfathers and great-grandfathers. No one saw it clearer than Edwin A. Brown of Fond du Lac, a young attorney and father, who was among the first to join a company in the 6th Wisconsin. He wrote home "Thousands of patriotic lives may be laid a sacrifice on the Altar of our Country's good, but this Country will be purified of this blighting breath of treason and corruption, and history will record of the Republic, that in the year 1861, her patriotic children rallied around the emblem of the early fathers, and purged the land of the great curse of secession."[2]

The volunteers in the new all-Western regiments also desperately wanted to prove their mettle. "We would have died rather than have dishonored the West," one of the Sauk County boys from Wisconsin explained. "We felt that the eyes of the East were upon us, and that we were the test of the West." A Badger officer said the soldiers felt what was at stake was "the reputation of themselves and of their brothers and the reputation of their state."[3]

Inside King's brigade, however, a rivalry to be identified as the best regiment smoldered. The "veterans" of the 2nd Wisconsin provoked much of the heat that late summer and the winter of 1861–62, boasting of their service at Bull Run. The 19th Indiana had also seen action, but only a simple inconsequential skirmish in the eyes of the Badgers. The 6th and 7th Wisconsin had not had a real baptism of fire. Each regiment, one observer said, "had, nevertheless, their individuality, their rivalry, their jealousies, if you will. The 2d had been

2 Edwin A. Brown to his wife, Sept. 8, 1861, Civil War Museum of the Upper Middle West, Kenosha, WI.; Edward Kellogg, "Letters from a Soldier," *Milwaukee Sunday Telegraph*, Sept. 28, 1879 [hereafter "*Telegraph*"]; Earl M. Rogers, "A 6th Wisconsin Company," *Telegraph*, Feb. 1, 1880; Michael H. Fitch, *Echoes of the Civil War as I Hear Them* (New York, 1905), 18–19.

3 Jerome A. Watrous, *Appleton* [WI] *Crescent*, Aug. 20, 1861; Edward Bragg to Earl Rogers, Apr. 3, 1900, Edward Bragg Papers, WHS.

through the Bull Run battle and swaggered a bit in consequence. They rather patronized the other regiments, put on veteran airs. They were superbly drilled but decidedly given to sarcastic comment on the other commands. The 6th, 7th and 19th had not had the 2d's opportunities, but were cock sure that when the time came they could fight every bit as well, stay as long in a hot place or charge just as daringly into a hotter."[4]

It was not only loud talk that gave the 2nd Wisconsin veteran airs. A 6th Wisconsin officer writing home noted the men of the 2nd "look as though they had been 'through the wars' ragged, and saucy, and without discipline." Another officer noted the soldiers "look dirty and more callus than ours. . . . The men are of good stuff, but . . . with little confidence in the officers & that they care little what they do." A third officer said with a sniff that the men of the 2nd "did not have that exuberant, dashing, self-reliant manner that distinguishes the other Wisconsin men."[5]

Contributing to the hard appearance of the 2nd Wisconsin men was the sad condition of their old uniforms, especially the trousers. Many were still wearing the state grey issued in Madison and worn for the past many weeks of campaigning and in camp. There was nothing, a comrade said, quite like the "view of their rear ranks when they attempted a dress parade" as the "lively boys . . . were more like Highlanders minus kilts than model infantry." He added that even the gentlest of breezes were not hindered in cooling their "Adonis-like forms." Of course, in hard soldier fashion, the 2nd Wisconsin boys became the "Ragged Assed Second" and not any of the angry retorts served to comfort the maligned party. The 6th Wisconsin became "King's pet babies" (because of suspected favoritism) or the "Calico 6th," a roast of the homespun shirts worn by the farm boys in the back ranks, or even the "Bragging 6th." A 7th Wisconsin man observed that the 6th "was not well liked by the other regiments." The fellows in the 7th Wisconsin liked to call themselves the "Hungry 7th," but were always known as the "Huckleberries" because they "liked to talk about pies and things to eat." The 19th Indiana men were described as "lean, lank" and a quiet set and became known as "Old Posey County" or "Swamp Hogs No. 19" and,

4 Edward Bragg to Earl Rogers, Apr. 3, 1900; Charles King, "Gainesville, 1862," *Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Commandery of the State of Wisconsin, War Papers* III (Milwaukee, 1903), 271. King was the son of Rufus King and served for a time as his volunteer orderly.

5 Brown to his father, Aug. 28, 1861; Bragg to his wife, undated; *Green Bay Advocate*, Aug. 29, 1861.

said a brigade man in another regiment, that "every man of them did not care a goll darn how he was dressed, but was all hell for a fight."[6]

It was with "great reluctance," one volunteer said, "that we got up even a calling acquaintance with those other regiments, yet some of us had friends, cousins and even brothers in their ranks." In the regiments themselves, there was also some friction between the American-born and the immigrant.

One volunteer wrote home that the four regiments were "separate and distinct communities." A 2nd Wisconsin soldier tried to explain it by saying the men in his regiment "are probably the hardest set of boys, but good natured and easy to get along with. They wear an air of fearless carelessness wherever found. The Sixth is more stately, and distant, and march to slower music than we do. The Seventh puts on the least style and crow the least . . . and is well drilled. It is the truest friend the 2d ever found. The 19th Indiana is an indifferent, don't care regiment. They pride themselves on their fighting pluck—which is undoubtedly good—more than their drill. As a brigade we get along finely together." Private J. P. "Mickey" Sullivan of the 6th Wisconsin said it in plainer terms: "If any one wanted to get into . . . difficulty, all that was necessary for him to do was go into the 19th and say a word against the 'Wisconsin boys' and the same held good in any of our regiments about them."[7]

The brigade's commander, Rufus King, was a well-known figure from back home. Born in New York City, the general was named for his grandfather, Rufus King, a delegate from Massachusetts to the Continental Congress and Constitutional Convention. He was an 1833 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and as a newly graduated young lieutenant, King was assigned duty in the Engineer Corps at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, where his commander was Robert E. Lee of Virginia. He resigned from the army in 1836 to work as an associate editor for two New York State newspapers, *The Albany Evening Journal*, and *The Albany Advertiser*, as well as serving for a time as militia commander of the Albany Burgess Corps. He left New York in 1845 to become part proprietor

6 "A Celebrated Case," *Telegraph*, Aug. 5, 1883; "The Old Brigade," *Telegraph,* Sept. 27, 1885; Ray, *Iron Brigade*, 16. Editor Jerome Watrous said the 2nd Wisconsin early on was the "Hungry Second" stemming from an incident before the brigade was organized. A visitor inquired when he would find the 2nd Wisconsin and was "told that if he went to the front, and out beyond where the Union army found it dangerous to move, then climbed the tallest tree in the neighborhood, he would probably see the boys he was after away off in some cornfield in front helping themselves."

7 *Telegraph*, Mar. 11, 1883; "Heroes of Undying Game," *Telegraph*, Sept. 26, 1896; *Janesville* [WI] *Daily Gazette*, July 10, 1862; Sullivan, *Telegraph*, Mar. 16, 1883.

and editor of *The Milwaukee Sentinel and Gazette*, a post he held until 1859. King was also a captain of the noted Milwaukee Light Guard.[8]

In March 1861, King was appointed minister to the Papal States. He was about to depart when the news of Fort Sumter reached Wisconsin. He immediately quit the appointment and offered his services to Wisconsin Governor Alexander Randall. King was subsequently promoted by President Abraham Lincoln to the national army and then advanced to division command in McDowell's corps in late summer 1861. The senior colonel of the unit, Lysander Cutler of the 6th Wisconsin, served as acting brigade commander until May 1862.

End of Unedited Excerpt

8 Herbert C. Damon, *History of the Milwaukee Light Guard* (Milwaukee, 1875), 20–22.