

Foreword

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In September 1990, PBS began airing the nine-part Ken Burns documentary on the Civil War. Like millions of other Americans, I found myself glued to the TV watching each of these episodes tell a series of important and interesting stories about one of America's most important historical events. Having heard rumors about a Minnesota ancestor who had served during the Civil War, I talked to my grandfather who told me that it was his grandfather who had served. My grandfather remembered a couple of random stories that he had heard as a child but beyond that, had nothing else to share about this connection to the Civil War. Since I was a college student, studying to become a future Social Studies teacher, I was intrigued and quickly went to the university library to learn more. After a quick search on the library computer, I was sent to the third floor of the library to find a book titled *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865*.

There, on page 679, I quickly found my great-great-grandfather's name and learned that he had served with the Third Battery of Light Artillery during the Civil War. Fortunately for me, this book that I held also had a brief history of this unit along with the list of the men who had served in this particular unit. This discovery led to a series of conversations with family members, trips to places he had been and increased my lifelong interest in genealogy and the Civil War.

Fast forward to 1997, when I was a graduate student working on my master's degree in history, I found myself studying the history of America's foreign policy during the late 1890s and early 1900s. After going down a few rabbit holes, trying to find a topic for my thesis, I once again found myself in a university library, this time looking up the subject of Minnesota and the Spanish-American War, with the hope of finding some background information that might inspire my graduate research. Just as before, I quickly discovered a book titled *Minnesota in the Spanish-American and the Philippine Insurrection*. After checking this book out and reading it I quickly learned the story of the 13th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment and their role in both the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars, 1898-99. Much like finding my family in the Civil War, reading the story of the men from Minnesota and their service to the nation during this time, I was inspired to write my master's thesis on the role of the 13th Minnesota and then later have a book published about them.

Today, I am a professor at Minnesota State University, Mankato, where I have the pleasure of working with future Social Studies teachers and several history majors. On one recent occasion, I had a group of students who were taking a course in the history of World War I from another professor on campus. Early in the semester, some of the students came to me and were trying to figure out what their research project should be for that particular semester. Without giving it much thought, I automatically sent them over to the university library and told them to find two books, one titled *Minnesota in the War with Germany*, and the other *History of the 151st Field Artillery*. Each student later came back and reported that they were doing research on topics related to the 151st, disease in the training camps, and Minnesota's reaction to the draft. Without these books on Minnesota and World War I, it is safe to say that these budding historians would have found themselves doing research on something much larger and more generic in scale.

I give these anecdotal stories as a way to introduce this book because what Randal Dietrich and his team of authors, historians and researchers have done is not just compile the stories about Minnesota's role and connections to 9/11 and the Global War on Terror, but rather they are helping inspire future historians, teachers, genealogists and people just seeking to learn more about this topic. Their attempt at trying to write a single volume on what can only be described as an unwieldy and often confusing story about what happened on 9/11 and the subsequent wars that followed is extremely commendable.

As can be seen in the first part of this essay, Minnesota has had a tradition of compiling and writing the history of our state after major conflicts, going all the way back to the Civil War. Without these books one has to wonder how many stories would have been lost to history or how many books, research papers, and articles would not have been written using these books as a springboard for further research. In years past, there was the Minnesota War Records Commission that would help fund and organize the research for each of these books. Sadly, after World War I, no more of these state-commissioned books would be published. This obviously then means that there is no official compilation of records, documents, and eyewitness accounts from Minnesotans who served during World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Gulf War.

Granted, there have been several books written about Minnesota during these wars, as well as biographies about individuals telling their personal stories, but none with an official backing of the state, in which historians and researchers try to tell the broad, extensive, and often confusing stories about Minnesota during these historic times. Therefore, there is no

one book that future generations can go to learn more about their family during this time. There is no one book that historians can go to get an overview of how these wars impacted Minnesota and how Minnesotans impacted events during that time. And there is no one book for anyone just generally interested in these topics to quickly learn more about what happened, from a Minnesota perspective.

This is why it is so admirable that Randal Dietrich and his team have re-invigorated this idea and are writing this book specifically about Minnesota and 9/11 and the Global War on Terror. They have taken on this herculean task with the sole purpose of replicating what the previous state commissions did, which has been a huge help to me and numerous other researchers, genealogists and historians over the years.

To be clear, just like previous books that discussed Minnesotans' roles in different armed conflicts, this book does not profess to cover every story of every Minnesotan who served or participated in these events. With that in mind, the authors of this book decided to try to put things in context so that current and future readers could see some of the bigger picture. Both 9/11 and the Global War on Terror were major global events and understanding the causes and effects of all this will one day take a mountain of researched books, academic articles and documentaries in order to try to piece it all together.

This is what makes this book so important because it clearly and concisely takes all of these major events, what happened on and before 9/11, the major military operations during both conflicts, and even what was happening at home and interjects a Minnesota perspective onto all of it. Furthermore, in order to truly tell this story, they made an effort to be representative of all the branches of the military, found representation from various ethnic and racial groups, interviewed people of different age groups and genders, as well as civilians who served in government or were at home trying to do their part.

As I mentioned earlier, I work at Minnesota State University, Mankato and as I write this (in the summer of 2023) I am reminded that the majority of my students were born after the events of 9/11 transpired. Which means that they have what those of us in Social Studies education refer to as 'textbook' memories of this event as well as the start of both the Afghan and Iraqi Wars. This generation was not alive to have their own memories of these events but rather now have to rely on textbooks, movies, documentaries, or stories shared by older family and friends. Due to the fact that both of these wars lasted a long time, most of my students today are aware that there were recent conflicts in those areas, and/or may have

had family or friends who served, but that is about the extent of their knowledge.

Being aware of all of this, I was therefore thrilled when MSU was able to partner with the Minnesota Military and Veterans Museum and host their traveling exhibit *Resolute: Minnesota Stories of 9/11 & The War*. The exhibit was in the ballroom in the student union, which is in the heart of the campus, making it easily accessible for students and people from the community to visit. What I learned from this exhibit is that our college-aged students have little to no background on many of these events and that there are a number of people from around the state who either have a vested interest or were generally curious about the connection between Minnesota and these historic events. During the four-day run of this event, those of us who were involved heard everything from questions coming from students, who were trying to figure out “which Iraq War” this was (confused with the Gulf War, 1991), to veterans and family members eager to share their stories about their roles during this time.

Again, this is why this book is so important. Due to its large scope and interest in the specific stories shared by Minnesotans, it will, much like the exhibit held on campus, try to introduce these stories to future generations and give more information to a wider community generally interested in this topic. This book deals with how Minnesotans, both civilians and those serving in the military, reacted to the tragic events of 9/11. Readers will also see the stories of Minnesotans who made sacrifices on the hijacked airplanes that day, at the Twin Towers in New York, and at the Pentagon. While other Minnesotans showed up after all the devastation to help try to get things back to normal or quickly joined the military so they could do their part. And unlike the previous state commissioned books, which really pushed a very heroic and mostly positive theme about Minnesota and America’s roles in those wars, this book is willing to dive into topics usually not talked about in works like this. From soldiers dealing with mental and emotional disorders (such as PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder), to veterans with physical disabilities who had to adjust to a new life once they got back to Minnesota. You will also learn about how these mental and physical traumas impacted families and communities at home who were also dealing with their own stress in their own ways.

Randal Dietrich and his team have taken on a task given to them by the state of Minnesota and have created a document that will survive the test of time, as well as become a testament to the men and women who served the state of Minnesota and the nation, be it either in the military or as civilians.

I truly hope that future historians, researchers, and genealogists find their way to this book, that it helps clarify a rather confusing time, and that it then inspires them to learn more about these topics and continue to research and write about these men and women from Minnesota as a way to keep their stories alive for future generations. For that reason alone, this book deserves to be read and put on the shelves next to all the other great books about Minnesota's roles in various wars as a way to continue to honor and commemorate the sacrifices made by all who are reflected in its pages.