

Echoes of Emancipation

While Fritz Rasmussen closed out 1863 thinking about the draft, that same year had begun with discussions about issues of race. In its first editorial of 1863, *Hemlandet* celebrated “a new epoch” in “this country’s history” as slavery had been abolished, the rebellion’s backbone broken, and freedom reestablished.¹ Still, *Hemlandet*’s articles demonstrated continued widespread feelings of vengeance toward Dakota bands, and the lead-up to emancipation revealed a lack of support for racial equality within the Scandinavian-American community.²

Throughout 1862, expressions of racial superiority occurred regularly even among professed anti-slavery officers. On January 15, 1862, Ferdinand Winsl w, chief quartermaster for the Army of the Southwest, described his “elegant free darkie” servant, Homer Grimes, as a “nigger” ready “for any command,” and a few months later Colonel Hans Heg noted his young Black servant working hard while acting as “a good Nigger.”³ Additionally, in an

¹ “Nyt rshelsning [New Year’s Greeting],” *Hemlandet*, January 7, 1863.

² On expressions and feelings of vengeance toward the Dakota, see N., “Til Red. Af Hemlandet [To the Editor of Hemlandet],” *ibid.*; Andrew Jackson, “Scandia, Carver Co., Minn. D. 13 Dec. 1862,” *ibid.*

³ Ferdinand Sophus Winsl w, “Pacific, Mo. 15 January 1862,” in *Ferdinand Sophus Winslow letters, September 1861-February 1862* (University of Iowa, Special Collections Department, 1862). In describing his breakfast ritual, Winsl w, who paid Grimes \$20 a month, wrote: “In the morning he makes fire, brushes all my clothes and blackens my boots, stands over me while I dress; he has charge of all my trunks and clothes, sees to the washing, and altogether I have first rate comfort by his attendance. When I am dressed, he spreads the table, comes back with a waiter with my coffee, milk, sugar, steak and other eatables, and there I sit in my lordly solitude,

undated letter to his Danish-born father, seemingly composed in 1862, seventeen-year-old Charles Adolphus Lund wrote from Racine, Wisconsin: "I do not believe in letting the Negro free, not by a good deal."⁴

Yet military developments prompted renewed assessment of race relations, not least within the Lincoln administration, and the Scandinavian-American press followed events closely. As the main Union Army frantically chased Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia into Maryland during the first half of September 1862, the Scandinavian-American press, drawing on east coast newspapers, published weekly situation reports.⁵ In a by-now well-known turn of events, a Union corporal's discovery of Lee's Special Order 191, detailing the Confederate Army's movements, gave the government troops an unprecedented advantage, and the subsequent costly battle around Antietam Creek on September 17 forced the invaders back.⁶ The victory gave President Lincoln a successful military pretext for issuing the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, which *Emigranten* (notably commenting on the proclamation's military instead of moral impact) described as a "mighty step forward in suppressing the rebellion."⁷ Lincoln's proclamation proposed to compensate states in the Union that set "immediate or gradual" abolition in motion but, as we have seen, also kept the option of colonization, with freedpeople's consent, open.⁸ Thus, the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation implicitly reinforced a view of white citizenship that was also demonstrated in Secretary Seward's Homestead Act promotion in Europe and further underlined by his September 30

the nigger standing in front, ready for any command." Also Theodore C. Blegen, *The Civil War Letters of Colonel Hans Christian Heg* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1936), 57. Heg added that his Black servant strutted around "as big as a monkey" when the colonel got him a pair of pants.

⁴ Lund, "Dear Father."

⁵ "Madison. 27de Septbr. 1862," *Emigranten*, September 29, 1862; "Reballarna i Maryland [The Rebels in Maryland]," *Hemlandet*, September 17, 1862; "Krigen i Virginia [The War in Virginia]," *Emigranten*, September 8, 1862.

⁶ Charles B. Dew, "How Samuel E. Pittman Validated Lee's 'Lost Orders' Prior to Antietam: A Historical Note," *Journal of Southern History* 70, no. 4 (2004): 865–869.

⁷ "Madison. 27de Septbr. 1862."

⁸ "Madison. 27de Septbr. 1862," *Emigranten*, September 29, 1862; Edna Green Medford, *Lincoln and Emancipation* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015), 61–62. See also James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861–1865* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 301–302, 14–17.

(a)



(b)



(c)



FIGURE 9.1 Ferdinand Winsl w (bottom right) wrote more than 100 letters to his wife, Wilhemina, during the Civil War, as did Hans Heg to his wife, Gunild, and both at times expressed a sense of white racial superiority. Courtesy Winslow Family Private Collection and Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum Archives.

attempt to open colonization negotiations with Great Britain, France, Holland, and Denmark.⁹

Yet, even with its underlying premise of a continued white man's republic, the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was controversial. From 1862 and forward, Democrats, according to Eric Foner, raised fears that "Emancipation would produce 'scenes of lust and rapine' in the South and unleash 'a swarthy inundation of negro laborers and paupers' on the North."¹⁰ With a message amplified through sympathetic editors, the Democratic Party hammered at the lack of military success, the ineffective leadership, the poor economy, and the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation's impotence ahead of the 1862 midterms. As *Green Bay Advocate* editor Charles D. Robinson opined on October 2, 1862, you had to "catch your rabbit" before you could cook it, and the proclamation had no effect until "the States in rebellion" were once again brought "under the jurisdiction of the constitution."¹¹

During this time of economic and military anxiety, Democratic viewpoints, as we have seen, appealed to some Scandinavian-born immigrants in New Denmark, and even among otherwise solid Republican supporters in the Scandinavian community, the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation received a lukewarm reception. Swedish-born Frans O. Danielson, serving in the 29th Iowa, wrote to his siblings that he was glad to hear that the Republican Party had a lot of support back in New Sweden before commenting on the soldiers' reaction to Lincoln's proclamation: "There are some bitterly opposed to it but they will have to grin

⁹ As Ella Lonn reminds us, Seward did everything he could to encourage immigration with the related aim of adding potential white military personnel. See Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 418–420. See also James Mitchell, *Report on Colonization and Emigration Made to the Secretary of the Interior by the Agent of Emigration* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1862), 28. See also Phillip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page, *Colonization after Emancipation: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 73. See also Seward, "Department of State, Washington, 30th September 1862, Bradford R. Wood, Esquire."

¹⁰ Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 234–235.

¹¹ "The President's Proclamation," *Green Bay Advocate*, October 2, 1862. A few weeks later, Robinson also charged Republicans with undermining the Constitution and depicted New York's Democratic governor Horatio Seymour as one "of the men who have stood upright amid the storm of fanaticism." See "Gov. Seymour and the War," October 23, 1862.

and bear it," Danielson wrote.¹² Perhaps more revealing, Danielson, who had observed runaway slaves up close as part of the Army of the Southwest in Helena, Arkansas, added: "Let me know if you have got Niggers up in Iowa yet, and what you think of freeing them and sending them North. We have got thousands of the buggers down here. For my part I don't think much of them."¹³

In expressing views of Black people's inferior status, however, Scandinavian immigrants were far from alone.¹⁴ Responding to an equipment request from the Army of the Southwest, Major-General Henry W. Halleck suggested that the army's commander, Samuel R. Curtis, and his "antislavery politics" were part of a larger problem, as Congress was "so busy discussing the eternal nigger question" that they failed to make the necessary appropriations.¹⁵ Moreover, as Curtis' army advanced toward Helena in the spring and summer of 1862, enslaved people by the thousands "abandoned their masters" and joined the march, which foreshadowed the challenges and criticism of emancipation along the banks of the Mississippi River.¹⁶ Curtis, who was closely aligned with German-born anti-slavery radicals in his ranks and personally close with Ferdinand Winsl w, liberally issued free papers and allowed former slaves to sell cotton from nearby plantations, which opened him up to censure from more conservative officers.¹⁷

When Curtis was transferred for a higher command in August 1862, his division commander Frederick Steele, an opponent of emancipation, took

¹² F. O. Danielson, "Helena, Arkansas November 5, 1862," in *Mathilda Cassel Peterson Danielson (1834-)*. *SSIRC Mss P*: 55 (Augustana College, 1862); Earl D. Check and Emeroy Johnson (translator), "Civil War Letters to New Sweden, Iowa," *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1985):3-25.

¹³ Danielson, "Helena, Arkansas November 5, 1862."

¹⁴ As commander of the Army of the Southwest, Samuel R. Curtis' anti-slavery views, for example, proved problematic when he prepared to bring "war by emancipation" into Arkansas in early 1862. See Anders Bo Rasmussen, "The Spoils of the Victors: Captain Ferdinand Winslow and the 1863 Curtis Court of Inquiry," *Annals of Iowa* 76, no. 2 (2017): 162.

¹⁵ Quoted in Andrew Zimmermann, "From the Rhine to the Mississippi," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 5, no. 1 (2015): 25-26.

¹⁶ Carl H. Moneyhon, "From Slave to Free Labor: The Federal Plantation Experiment in Arkansas," in *Civil War Arkansas: Beyond Battles and Leaders*, ed. Anne J. Bailey and Daniel E. Sutherland (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 178; Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865*, 249. See also Rasmussen, "The Spoils of the Victors: Captain Ferdinand Winslow and the 1863 Curtis Court of Inquiry."

¹⁷ "The Cotton Court of Inquiry; Testimony of Maj.-Gen F. Steele Important Developments Gen. Curtis Implicated," *New York Times*, May 24, 1863.



FIGURE 9.2 Major-General Samuel Curtis and Staff photographed in St. Louis in late 1861 or early 1862. Winsl w is seated to the far left. Courtesy Sadovnikoff Family Private Collection.

command at Helena and detailed his view of the Army of the Southwest’s condition in a letter to President Lincoln dated February 15, 1863:

[In August 1862] our camps and the town of Helena were overrun with fugitive slaves of both sexes, from infancy up to old age. Vice, immorality and distress, the usual accompaniments of vagrancy and destitution followed. The women were prostituted to a fearful extent, I believe by officers as well as by men, the feeble died in the streets in great numbers, from neglect and want. Disease and the elements of disorganization were introduced into my command by these miserable creatures.¹⁸

Thus, Steele placed blame for the army’s poor condition on fugitives, but – in shaping conditions on the ground – the Union Army’s white officers bore the primary responsibility. At Helena, some Union officers even took advantage of the situation to advance their personal economic interests by confiscating cotton from nearby plantations. One such officer, among several, was Ferdinand Winsl w. While attempting to control chaotic conditions around Helena, the Danish-born quartermaster sold horses, demanded a stake in a local business, and in all likelihood profited

¹⁸ Frederick Steele, “Head Quarters 1st Division 13th Army Corps. In Camp near Vicksburg Miss. Feby. 15th 1863. To His Excellency the President,” in *General Frederick Steele Papers, 1861-1863* (Stanford University Libraries, Department of Special Collections, 1863).

privately from cotton sales that were meant by Curtis to help support the numerous refugees living under desperate conditions.¹⁹ In other words, Winsl w, by taking advantage of his position as chief quartermaster, in several instances chose pecuniary gain at the expense of his professed abolitionist values of “equality and freedom.”²⁰

The soldiers on the ground understood the situation clearly. Danish-born Anders M. Koppel wrote about the soldiers’ “disgust” with the “cotton expeditions” in the summer of 1862.²¹ Additionally, Calvin P. Alling, who like Koppel served in the 11th Wisconsin, pointed out Colonel Charles Hovey of the 33rd Illinois Infantry Regiment as one of the central actors engaged in illegal speculation around Helena and wrote that “some of the regiments engaged in stealing and smuggling cotton, in the name of the Government,” but shipped it north to St. Louis and sold it “as their own.”²²

The cotton speculation going on around Helena in 1862 – and the private gain that followed – led to a “Court of Inquiry” in 1863 that implicated several high-ranking Union officers such as General Curtis (and his quartermaster Winsl w) in an attempt to ascertain, among other things, whether “officers in the service have been engaged, or directly or indirectly participated in traffic in Cotton or other produce on the Mississippi River.”²³ The court case was mostly presented to the public as a problem of officers overstepping their responsibilities as public servants in relation to the government, but that same government was by 1862 also responsible for providing for thousands of runaways.²⁴ The

¹⁹ The Steele quote and parts of this paragraph is also appears in Rasmussen, “The Spoils of the Victors: Captain Ferdinand Winslow and the 1863 Curtis Court of Inquiry.”

²⁰ Winslow, “Brooklyn. 11th Septbr. 1856. Religion Og Politik [Brooklyn. September 11th, 1856. Religion and Politics],” 168; Rasmussen, “The Spoils of the Victors: Captain Ferdinand Winslow and the 1863 Curtis Court of Inquiry.”

²¹ A. M. K., “Korrespondance Fra Det 11te Wisconsin-Regiment [Correspondance from the 11th Wisconsin Regiment],” *Emigranten*, October 13, 1862.

²² Calvin P. Alling, “Four Years in the Western Army: In the Civil War of the United States, 1861 to 1865,” in *Manuscript Collection. Reminiscences. Wis Mss 102S* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, undated).

²³ Captain Robert A. Howard (recorder), “Proceedings and Report of a Court of Inquiry on the Sale of Cotton and Produce at St. Louis, Missouri, 1863. Volume 1,” in *Record Group 159: Records of the Office of the Inspector General* (National Archives, Washington, DC, 1863). See also Rasmussen, “The Spoils of the Victors: Captain Ferdinand Winslow and the 1863 Curtis Court of Inquiry.”

²⁴ Earl J. Hess, “Confiscation and the Northern War Effort: The Army of the Southwest at Helena,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (1985): 62–71. See also Rasmussen, “The Spoils of the Victors: Captain Ferdinand Winslow and the 1863 Curtis Court of Inquiry.”

human cost of Union officers' private profit, however, was only cursorily considered by the court and the press, though the lack of resources in and around Helena, in part due to the cotton traffic, was underscored in a letter – loaded with assumptions about Black people's capacity for citizenship – written by Acting Assistant Quartermaster B. O. Carr and sent to Winslōw on July 24, 1862:²⁵

Capt., There is a perfect "cloud" of negroes being thrown upon me for Sustenance and Support, out of some 50 for whom I draw rations this morning but twelve were working stock, all the rest being women and children. What am I to do with them? If this taking them in and feeding them is to be the order of the day, would it not be well to have some competent man employed to look after them and keep their time; draw their rations; look after their Sanitary Condition. Etc. Etc? As it is, although it is hard to believe that such things can be, Soldiers & Teamsters (white) are according to common reports indulging in intimacy with them which can only be accounted for by the doctrine of Total Depravity.²⁶

Steele and Carr's description of Black fugitives revealed the unequal power relationships between white soldiers and future freedpeople, as well as an ideology of white superiority that was also mirrored by civilians in the Midwest. In Leslie A. Schwalm's words:

Among many midwesterners, emancipating and aiding former slaves who intended to stay in the South were viewed as a humanitarian issue. But when former slaves – by their own volition or with the help of others – made their way north, emancipation became an increasingly critical and vigorously debated matter of public policy. Revealing a deep-seated belief in the benefits and necessity of a racially stratified society, many whites assumed that any black gains in the region would diminish their own status and citizenship. For those midwesterners whose understanding of white supremacy had been premised on their right and ability to exclude first Native Americans and then African Americans from the region, the physical mobility of former slaves suggested an undesirable change in racial boundaries and practices in a postslavery nation.²⁷

²⁵ Howard (recorder), "Proceedings and Report of a Court of Inquiry on the Sale of Cotton and Produce at St. Louis, Missouri, 1863. Volume 1"; "The Cotton Court of Inquiry; Testimony of Maj.-Gen F. Steele Important Developments Gen. Curtis Implicated," *New York Times*, May 24, 1863; Ferdinand (Fred) Sophus Winslōw, "Novbr 18 1863 My Dear General" (Missouri History Museum Digital Content, 1863).

²⁶ B. O. Carr, "Helena, Ark. July 24th 1862," in *Samuel R. Curtis Papers. Testimonies in investigation of Curtis for alleged cotton speculation. 1862–1863. Box 2* (State Historical Society of Iowa, 1862). See also Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 22–25.

²⁷ Leslie A. Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 83–84.

Concerns of freedpeople's mobility were also voiced in *Hemlandet* on October 22, 1862. The paper warned that "a certain party" was trying to stir up the Irish as well as the working class by inciting fear of wage-based competition if "masses" of freedpeople should migrate to the North.²⁸ *Hemlandet*, however, reassured its readership that, while "black migration lowers the wages for white labor," there was no reason to despair:²⁹ "The South is the black race's natural home, the negro thrives the most in the tropical regions."³⁰

News of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation had likely reached civilian Scandinavian-born immigrants a month earlier, when *Hemlandet* on September 24 announced it as "a fatal blow to the rebellion" and *Emigranten* a few days later noted that the president would declare "all slaves free" in the states where the rebellion was maintained by the end of the year.³¹ Still, the Scandinavian-American press spent little subsequent editorial energy on emancipation and instead devoted itself mostly to weekly description of military affairs, coverage of the US-Dakota War in Minnesota, and updates on the draft.³²

A sense of Scandinavian immigrants' position on emancipation could, however, be gleaned from later published letters and editorials. Henrik (Henry) Syvertsen, a Norwegian immigrant with a degree from the Royal Frederick University in present-day Oslo, was curiously silent on the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation when he penned a letter, focused on military matters, to *Emigranten* on October 18, 1862, from Kentucky; but later in the war he published a letter in the Norwegian-language *Fædrelandet* (the Fatherland) about the teachings of phrenology and his belief that "a negro [is] unfit for higher education."³³

In his letter, dated May 30, 1864, Syvertsen reinforced his view of racial superiority, as he sought to allay his Scandinavian-American readers' fear over amalgamation by stating: "I doubt, that a time should come when an

²⁸ "Skola De Swarte Komme Til Norden? [Should the Blacks Come to the North?]," *Hemlandet*, October 22, 1862.

²⁹ Ibid. ³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "Presidenten Utfärdar En Emancipations-Proklamation [The President Issues an Emancipation Proclamation]," *Hemlandet*, September 24, 1862. See also "Madison. 27de Septbr. 1862."

³² See, for example, "Drafting i Wisconsin [Drafting in Wisconsin]," *Emigranten*, October 27, 1862; "Soldaterna Från Illinois [The Soldiers from Illinois]," *Hemlandet*, October 31, 1862.

³³ H. S., "Korrespondance Fra Det Skandinaviske Regiment [Correspondence from the Scandinavian Regiment]," *Emigranten*, November 3, 1862. Also Henry Syvertsen, "Lexington, Ky., Mai 30te 1864," *Fædrelandet*, June 9, 1864.

educated, moral woman would marry a Negro. The loathsome stench alone that comes off a Negro in the summertime would be an insurmountable obstacle.”³⁴ Leading up to the 1864 presidential election, Syvertsen also penned a long letter for *Fædrelandet* with a sense of sensation and ironic distance about local residents’ reaction to the newly deployed Black provost guards: “Just imagine, that Negroes, whom these aristocratic Lexingtonians always have treated and considered animals, that these now should guard them, that was over the top.”³⁵

Fædrelandet, published out of La Crosse, Wisconsin, launched its first edition on January 14, 1864 and claimed to be an unabashedly Union paper, but not because of President Abraham Lincoln, nor because of “Negro emancipation”; rather, it was a Union paper because the pure American republic, created “on liberty and equality,” was a truly “glorious institution in accordance with human and divine law.”³⁶

Though the Union war effort by 1864 was intimately tied to liberty through abolition, the connection was less pronounced in *Fædrelandet*’s coverage.³⁷ The paper’s distinction between “Negro emancipation” on the one hand and American foundational values of “Liberty and Equality” on the other indicated that, despite freedpeople’s crucial contributions to the United States military, support for their future economic and political rights in American society could not be taken for granted among opinion leaders in the Scandinavian-American community.³⁸

³⁴ Ibid. See also Rasmussen, “‘Drawn Together in a Blood Brotherhood’: Civic Nationalism Amongst Scandinavian Immigrants in the American Civil War Crucible,” *American Studies in Scandinavia* 48, no. 2 (2016): 14. Syvertsen’s countryman, B. A. Frøiset, an avowed Democrat and part of the Scandinavian community leadership, continued the theme of amalgamation when he before the important presidential election of 1864 warned that electing Lincoln would lead to the “sacrifice of the citizens’ blood for the Negro’s liberation and equality with the rest of the citizen, by which an abolished mongrel race will be the consequence.” See B. A. Frøiset, “St. Paul, 1864, Sept. 30,” *Fædrelandet*, October 13, 1864.

³⁵ Henry Syvertson, “Lexington, Ky., Sept. 29, 1864,” *Fædrelandet*, October 13, 1864.

³⁶ “Til Fædrelandets Læsere [To Our Fatherland’s Readers],” *ibid.*, January 14; Anders Bo Rasmussen, “‘On Liberty and Equality’: Race and Reconstruction among Scandinavian Immigrants, 1864–1868,” in *Nordic Whiteness and Migration to the USA: A Historical Exploration of Identity*, ed. Jana Sverdljuk et al. (New York: Routledge, 2020).

³⁷ James M. McPherson, “A. Lincoln, Commander in Chief,” in *Our Lincoln*, ed. Eric Foner (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 28.

³⁸ “Til Fædrelandets Læsere [To Our Fatherland’s Readers].” See also the English-language article that accompanied the first Norwegian-language editorial “To the American People,” *Fædrelandet*, January 14, 1864. Also Arlow William Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847–1872* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1953), 80–82.

In an April 7, 1865, editorial with distinct echoes of the racial stereotypes put forth by *Hemlandet* in 1862, *Emigranten*'s editor Carl Fredrik Solberg penned an editorial asking "what will be done with these freedmen."³⁹ Solberg painted a scenario where freedpeople could "come up here and flood our Northern states" and change the cities' appearances with "black or yellow skin, their wooly head, and white teeth." Even more ominously, the editor asked: "Would they not, with government authority, come and acquire space and become our neighbors and (oof!) our in-laws?"⁴⁰ *Emigranten* continued: "Would not these poor, helpless, poor, wretched, perplexed colored people," lacking legal rights, come North and cause difficulties as a "new and privileged class of beggars and paupers?"⁴¹ The answer, *Emigraten* assured its readership, was comforting:

The negro does not thrive outside the South. We even have an intelligent Negro's own word that many blacks from the North will venture South as soon as any colored there can have his full freedom and his weightiest argument was that "the black people is not regarded at all" here in the North.⁴²

The racial ideology expressed in the Scandinavian-American public and private spheres regarding emancipation would continue to inform perceptions for years. The conclusion drawn, almost universally, was that slavery was a stain on American democracy and the institution's demise consequently a blessing, but freedom did not equal a broad embrace of liberty and equality for nonwhites. Moreover, emancipation debates often played a marginal role on the homefront in midwestern communities even as draft legislation sent an ever-increasing proportion of Scandinavian-born men South. Probably hundreds, if not thousands, of Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes witnessed Black soldiers' war service up close as part of the armed forces where they were confronted directly with the question of freedpeople's rights. Those left behind, however, mainly discussed the duties of citizenship.

As we have seen, liberty in the eyes of Scandinavian immigrants often meant a liberal government, freedom of religion, and equality in societal matters. The Lincoln administration's conscription policy was therefore regularly perceived as undermining the ideal of a limited government protecting individual rights. Yet the paradox between love of liberty and

³⁹ David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 370–372. Also "Madison, 7de April 1865," *Emigranten*, April 10, 1865.

⁴⁰ Ibid. ⁴¹ Ibid. ⁴² Ibid.

reluctance to defend it was almost completely absent in discussions in the Scandinavian-American public and private spheres by 1864.

A week before *Fædrelandet's* first edition, on January 7, 1864, Fritz Rasmussen described correspondence with the local provost marshal about conscription. Rasmussen's inquiry was prompted by conversations with several inhabitants of New Denmark about avoiding the draft – specifically Rasmussen's ability to cheaply make out papers vouching for residents who had not declared their intent to naturalize.⁴³ Little more than a month later, on February 15, 1864, Rasmussen detailed a special meeting by New Denmark's residents at the local schoolhouse with the sole purpose “of voting a tax upon the town, to procure Volunteers, so as to avoid the Draft, so much the dread of the community.”⁴⁴ Usually local meetings ran long due to disagreement, but this was different. “I must say that I have, as yet, not attended any kind of meeting, for whatever purpose, which have proved so unanimous to the subject matter for consideration as this one,” Rasmussen wrote:⁴⁵

Very little Descention [dissent] or opposition brought forward, as those, wishing as to do, plainly felt that internal rebuke, of the thought to do so by learning and seeing the mind of the gathering. It was finally resolved, to have the town authorities procure Volunteers at what price they could get them, though not exceeding \$150.00 each; and the whole sum to be employed [sic], not to exceed \$1500.00.⁴⁶

On February 24, 1864, Rasmussen again dealt with draft-related issues, as his father-in-law came over and wanted his help with paperwork related to draft exemption.⁴⁷ Additionally, in March the Brown County–based vice-consul for Sweden and Norway, Otto Tank, published several “Consular Announcements” in the Scandinavian-American newspapers dealing concretely with the issue of citizenship.⁴⁸ Swedish or Norwegian subjects could obtain a consular certificate to ensure exemption from military service, if they paid \$2; had sworn testimony certifying their “place of birth,” “age,” “arrival in the United States,” and “places lived”; and confirmed “not having voted nor declared their intent to

⁴³ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “Den 7de Torsdag [January],” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 8* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1864).

⁴⁴ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “15. Monday [February],” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 8* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1864).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “The 24th Wednesday [February],” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 8* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1864).

⁴⁸ See for example, Otto Tank, “Consulat-Bekjendtgjorelse [Consular Announcement],” *Fædrelandet*, March 3, 1864.

become citizen of the United States.”⁴⁹ The related issues of citizenship, duty, and conscription only took on increased importance given the mounting Union losses in eastern and western theaters during the spring and early summer of 1864 and revealed a continued chasm between ethnic elite rhetoric and the sentiment in Scandinavian communities – though also a realization on the part of Scandinavian editors that the draft issue was a prime concern among their readers.⁵⁰

On November 16, 1863, *Emigranten* had warned its readership that “the conditions for exemption” were “very strict,” but it nevertheless provided a very detailed description of what conditions *could* lead to draft exemption.⁵¹ *Emigranten’s* message had been clear: it was more the exception than the rule to get out of military service because of one’s physical condition.⁵² A week later, however, a reader emphasized that there was also an important legal component to military exemption. On November 23, 1863, a pointed critique aimed at the Norwegian consul in Wisconsin appeared in the pages of *Emigranten*:

There are a number of Norwegians, among the most recent conscripted or drafted men, whose claim to exemption from the draft rests on “no citizenship,” or in other words, who never have voted in municipal or national elections and never having declared intention to become citizen of the United States.

These Norwegians surely fell under the protection of the Norwegian consul, the correspondent B. W. Suckow, argued, and he chastised the allegedly inexperienced representative for consulting American authorities before issuing “protection-documents.” As an example of the consul’s incompetence, Suckow recounted the story of a twenty-four-year-old Norwegian immigrant

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “Nyheder [News],” *ibid.*, January 14; “Forandringer Og Tillæg Til Udskrivningsloven [Changes and Amendments to the Conscription Act],” *Fædrelandet*, March 3, 1864. For a description of Union offensives and the resulting casualties – approximately 90,000 Union soldiers killed and wounded in May and June alone – in 1864, see James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 718–750. In an account published in 1865, Danish-born Baptist minister Lars Jørgensen claimed to have cared for thousands of “sick and wounded” in hospitals and camps in the preceding years; see L. Jørgensen, *Amerika Og De Danskes Liv Herovre [America and the Danes’ Existence over Here]* (Copenhagen: Louis Kleins Bogtrykkeri, 1865), 4–5.

⁵¹ “Udskrivningen i Wisconsin [The Draft in Wisconsin],” *Emigranten*, November 16, 1863. Though neither “toothlessness” nor “the loss of a finger” would excuse one from military service, the loss of a thumb or the “index finger on the right hand” would. Also, the loss of a “big toe” along with being “deaf, mute, more or less blind” or having a “strong stutter” could ensure exemption, according to *Emigranten*.

⁵² Ibid.

who sought “protection papers against the draft.”⁵³ The consul, however, had stated that the immigrant’s father, who had declared his intention to become a citizen before the son reached legal age, made the son eligible for military service as well. The consul’s interpretation of draft legislation was claimed by the writer to be fallible, as only the father’s full-fledged citizenship could have led to the son being draft-eligible. In the wake of the March 3, 1863, Enrollment Act, which specifically tied draft eligibility to “intention,” the claim seemed tenuous, however.⁵⁴

Absent from the discussion in *Emigranten* was the question of whether a seemingly healthy, twenty-four-year-old Norwegian-born man, who had lived in the United States for a number of years, was actually duty-bound to serve in the military. The American government’s perspective was by 1863 clear: “All able-bodied male citizens” between twenty and forty-five years of age “ought willingly to contribute” to ensure the “maintenance of the Constitution and Union, and the consequent preservation of free government,” but Suckow’s letter indicated a slight shift in the Scandinavian public sphere.⁵⁵

By publishing Suckow’s letter, *Emigranten* now included voices that ran counter to the discourse of duty – so prevalent in the Scandinavian ethnic elite’s push for volunteer recruitment in 1861 and 1862 – and thereby demonstrated an openness to discussing military exemption in an era marked by conscription.⁵⁶ By late 1863 it had seemingly become more acceptable within their own communities for Scandinavian immigrants to seek exemption from military service, and Old World officials were increasingly expected to help obtain it.

Yet elite rhetoric surrounding the duties of citizenship persisted. As an example, John A. Johnson, who was one of the principal organizers behind the 15th Wisconsin regiment in 1861, addressed the question of duty and sacrifice in a Fourth of July address aimed at an English-speaking audience in 1864.

⁵³ B. W. Suckow, “Den Norske Vicekonsul i Wisconsin,” *ibid.*, November 23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* See also Thomas C. Mackey, ed., *A Documentary History of the Civil War Era: Legislative Achievements*, vol. 1 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 129–138. The Enrollment Act, in its clarification of the 1862 Militia Act, specifically incorporated the phrase “persons of foreign birth who shall have declared on oath their intention to become citizens” as “liable to perform military duty.”

⁵⁵ Mackey, ed., *A Documentary History of the Civil War Era: Legislative Achievements*, 129–138.

⁵⁶ Hans C. Heg et al., “Opraab [Call],” *Emigranten*, September 30, 1861. See also Ivar Alexander Weid, “Ivar Alexander Hviid,” *Middelfart Avis*, September 10, 1862. See also H. Mattson, “Til Skandinaverna i Minnesota [To the Scandinavians in Minnesota],” *Hemlandet*, September 11, 1861.

The speech initially echoed Lincoln's at Gettysburg in November 1863 and then turned to the importance of territorial growth, with an implicit nod to the threshold principle, before ending with a discussion of duty. "Eighty-eight years ago today," Johnson noted, "the immortal Continental Congress" made clear to the world that "all men were created free and equal."⁵⁷ Like several Scandinavian-born orators and editors before him, Johnson lauded the nation's founders for their seemingly infallible commitment to freedom and equality and criticized the slaveholding states for undermining these values:

It has been said by some, "why not let the South go?" Have we not without their territory enough resources to make the greatest nation on earth. We have one foot upon the Atlantic the other upon the Pacific with territory between of almost exhaustless fertility, enough to farm 50 great States capable of supporting more than 100 millions of people . . . but if the South may secede why may not any other section, or even single states. And where would it end if a section or state as soon as it felt a little aggrieved should practice the doctrine of secession? Would we not soon be divided into immensurable petty states, without the power to protect our industry or commerce or to enforce respect from foreign nations?⁵⁸

On the importance of maintaining national unity for the sake of continued territorial and population growth, Johnson added: "No one doubts this. Then our only salvation is to put forth every effort to make every necessary sacrifice of blood and treasure to reunite the shattered Republic."⁵⁹ Yet the rhetoric of "every necessary sacrifice," by ethnic leaders such as Johnson, was often not shared on the ground in the Scandinavian immigrant enclaves, and increasingly the resistance was reflected in the press.

A little more than a month later, *Fædrelandet* focused less on the nation's founding ideals than on the pressing reality of the draft. On August 25, 1864, acknowledging its readership's hopes and wishes, *Fædrelandet* noted a sense "that Wisconsin will not have to furnish much more than 12,000 men."⁶⁰ In Illinois, focus was even more clearly directed at draft avoidance. On September 7, 1864, *Hemlandet* reported to its mainly Swedish-born readership, that the "draft is on everybody's mind" and added that "every town does whatever possible to dodge it."⁶¹ *Hemlandet* informed its readers that anyone who was not yet a citizen, had not voted, and had not taken out papers with intent to naturalize

⁵⁷ J. A. Johnson, "88 Years Ago to Day the Immortal Continental Congress," in *John A. Johnson Papers*. P691. Box 12 (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association., 1864).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* ⁵⁹ *Ibid.* ⁶⁰ "Draften i Wisconsin," *Fædrelandet*, August 25, 1864.

⁶¹ "Draften," *Hemlandet*, September 7, 1864.

could contact “W. H. Church, Clerk of Circuit Court,” in Chicago’s 1st Ward, and get proof of exemption from the draft.⁶²

By 1864, the framing of duty by the Scandinavian press was less specifically tied to military service in defense of the nation’s values than to an acceptance of Old World countrymen also contesting the definition and duty of citizenship in order to avoid military service. Residents in New Denmark seemingly explored every exemption option. An increasingly desperate Fritz Rasmussen penned the following complaint in his diary on October 2, 1864, after his neighbor Knud had stopped by to borrow a recent issue of *Fædrelandet*:

So goes Sunday, even with Monday, worrying and drudging; more so now, under the dreadfull [sic] anxiety of the “War” i.e. the fear of being drafted, to “serve my Country” (?) Yes, to serve a few overrich, vainglorious and diabolical creatures, in the shape of human beings. . . . Honest, Hold [old], Hoary “Abe” is certainly to[o] honest and old, for the position he holds, blessed be the generous heart to the contrary!⁶³

Resigned, Fritz Rasmussen by October 3, 1864, had started to make arrangements for travelling to Green Bay for a medical examination with his brother-in-law James.⁶⁴ On October 6, James stopped by to notify Fritz Rasmussen that they had both been drafted along with New Denmark community members Marcus Pedersen, Rasmus “Sejler” (sailor), Anton Christiansen, Johan Hartman, Niels Mogland, Ferdinand Larke (Lærke), and several others. According to Fritz Rasmussen, James “staid [stayed] talking a little while, about which best to do: ‘run away or stand.’”⁶⁵

On October 11, Rasmussen went down to James to see if “he had come back from Green Bay and ‘the Provost Marshals Office’ and what might be the news.”⁶⁶ James was not home yet, however, and Rasmussen made plans with his countryman Ferdinand Larke to go the following day. When Rasmussen got back to his own place, an Irish community member, in Rasmussen’s diary referred to as Brady’s wife, came to talk and put “forth all Kinds of arguments to induce me to ‘not report’ or ‘run away.’”⁶⁷

⁶² Ibid. ⁶³ Rasmussen, “Oct Sunday 2nd.”

⁶⁴ “The 3rd. Monday [October],” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 8* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1864).

⁶⁵ “The 6. Thursday [October],” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 8* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1864).

⁶⁶ “The 11. Tuesday [October],” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 8* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1864).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Yet, in the end, Rasmussen and several other community members could not bring themselves to run away. On a beautiful and mild fall day, October 12, Rasmussen and his travel companions went to Green Bay to report for military service.⁶⁸ In the “forenoon” of October 13, Rasmussen went in for his medical examination, hoping to get exempted, and got the impression that a bribe, which was not an uncommon occurrence, could have secured such an outcome.

As J. Matthew Gallman has shown, bribery was so prevalent that numerous humorists with a wide audience portrayed “those weak kneed, cowardly, despicable types who came up with ridiculous schemes to avoid the draft.”⁶⁹ Some showed draft dodgers running off to Canada, “creating an expatriate community of cowards in Windsor”; others men dressing up as women; and the cartoonist Austin A. Turner depicted an early draft evader complaining of weakness in his back but in fact carrying a “stack of bills strapped to his back, as a generous bribe to the doctor” (see Figure 9.3).⁷⁰

The word around Green Bay was that it was possible, with the right stack of bills, to find a similar exemption solution in the local examiner’s office, but at the moment of truth Fritz Rasmussen failed to take advantage of the situation:

If I had only been bold and present-minded enough, I might, I think, very probably have been exempted [sic] for, I had or to all appearances, was given, all the chance, that the Doctor possibly could give a person, to offer a bribe, if really he would have taken any, as the general belief is that he does.⁷¹

While Fritz Rasmussen could not bring himself to pay for a fraudulent medical exemption, Ferdinand Larke was willing to pursue other options. The Danish-born blacksmith, who was examined just a few minutes after Rasmussen, “pretended a stiff knee,” “made himself a miserable cribble [sic],” and complained loudly though he, in Rasmussen’s estimation, was as “sound in the leg as if he never had any ailment in it.”⁷² In an unexpected turn of events, Larke also told the examining surgeon, who “worked at” him considerably, that Fritz Rasmussen could vouch for his injury.⁷³ Put on the spot, Rasmussen

⁶⁸ “The 26th Wednesday [October],” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 8* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1864).

⁶⁹ J. Matthew Gallman, *Defining Duty in the Civil War: Personal Choice, Popular Culture, and the Union Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 143–49.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 149–153. ⁷¹ Rasmussen, “The 26th Wednesday [October].” ⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*



FIGURE 9.3 Underlining the prevalence of draft resistance, and its echoes in broader American culture, the draftee in this cartoon says, “Doctor I’m weak in the back,” to which the examining surgeon replies, “Yes, I see it – can’t go – too delicate.” Courtesy Library Company of Philadelphia.

explained that he had known Larke for “the last 11 or 12 years” and also bended the truth when adding:

[I] had often heard him tell of suffering extremely, in that knee once; [and] had allways [sic] thought that he drew that leg a little awkward, when walking; yes: that he was considered an upright character, through our neighborhood; that I didn’t think it nessesary [sic] to make use of cloroform [sic].

Describing the incident in his diary, Rasmussen was somewhat shocked that Larke “dared to try” without even having consulted or hinted at his intention before turning to his fellow New Denmark resident for support:

During the scuffling, Ferdinand once cried out most pitiable and said “Oh ‘Doctor’ I didn’t come here to get hurt. I came to be examined.” To which the Surgeon answered: “No, but we are not here to be fooled.” But most assuredly as I have heard Ferd. to have said since – they were most damnably fooled. By nine oclock P.M. on the 13th we again made home, most dreadfully tired; and, I, by no means very contended [sic].⁷⁴

Approaches to the draft and medical examination processes underscored the desperate measures foreign-born residents would take to avoid the draft. For some, the strategies for avoiding military service succeeded. Larke, for example, was declared exempt because of “lameness in the right Knee,” while Rasmussen – along with several community members, Norwegian-born Einar Quisling among them – was “held” for the army instead.⁷⁵ The news shook Fritz Rasmussen, who could not bring himself to record anything in his diary for two weeks after going to Green Bay. “I have been rather puzzled in my mind; hardly knowing what to lay hands to, on account of the being ‘drafted’ to serve ‘Oncle Samuel’ [sic],” Rasmussen finally wrote on October 26.⁷⁶

The thirty-one-year-old immigrant now had to leave his wife and three daughters in New Denmark. As it turned out, Rasmussen would also serve alongside soldiers of native-born, German-born, and Irish-born heritage while experiencing the effects of slavery up close. Thus, Rasmussen – who, like many of his fellow countrymen in Brown County, would have preferred to stay out of the Civil War – had to contemplate the merits and drawbacks of American citizenship to an even greater degree over the following year. Yet when the Danish-born immigrant, weary from countless hours of hard farm work, sat down on October 26, 1864, to take up his diary, optimism about life in America had temporarily vanished. Rasmussen’s entry captured his mood: “Perhaps I may soon come to write with the sword or bayonet, making gory figures. Thou Lord and Ruler of us miserable beings, have mercy upon us and save us from the Evils to come.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid. ⁷⁵ Ibid. ⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Fritz Rasmussen’s mood was moreover affected by false rumors circulating in New Denmark about the deaths of previously drafted community members Anthon Christiansen, T.C. Johansen, Marcus Pedersen and John Hartmann, who allegedly had been killed, either by guerrillas or by a train running into the river.

As Fritz Rasmussen and other New Denmark community members prepared to travel south, the officers and men of the 15th Wisconsin were getting ready to travel north. The *remaining* officers and men, that is – the past two years had been trying for the approximately 800 Scandinavians who had originally enlisted. Battles at Perryville, Stones River, Chickamauga, Pickett’s Mill, and Atlanta had taken such a toll that, by late 1864, only 320 men remained on active duty.⁷⁸

Yet, throughout the war, soldiers in the Scandinavian Regiment continued to describe warfare as something Scandinavians withstood better than any other ethnic group. As Henry Syvertsen noted after the regiment’s first major battle in Kentucky on October 8, 1862, “the Norwegians must be a quite peculiar, composed race”; despite “cannon-shot after cannonshot and musketvolley after musketvolley thundering” around them, “the coffee pots were immediately over the fire as soon as the order to rest was given.”⁷⁹

The narrative of calmness under fire, often traced back to a martial Viking past, was common in descriptions of the Scandinavian Regiment during and after the Civil War.⁸⁰ The underlying idea was a sense of Scandinavian superiority that, to some degree, was earned on the battlefield but also reflected in civilian accounts. In his memoirs, for example, former Union officer, Ole Balling, even contended that Abraham Lincoln in the fall of 1864, had greeted him “with great affection” and mentioned that the Norwegians he knew in the Midwest were “the very best settlers.”⁸¹

Among the Norwegians in the Midwest who served in the military, the 15th Wisconsin Regiment was the most visible unit and therefore received the most attention in both contemporary and subsequent accounts.⁸² For its

⁷⁸ E. B. Quiner, *Military History of Wisconsin* (Chicago, IL, 1866), 630–631. During the war, 267 soldiers in the 15th Wisconsin Infantry lost their lives, twenty-two went missing, and a sprinkling of others deserted, were reassigned, or discharged.

⁷⁹ H. S., “Korrespondance Fra Det Skandinaviske Regiment [Correspondence from the Scandinavian Regiment],” *Emigranten*, November 3, 1862.

⁸⁰ John Fitch, *Annals of the Army of the Cumberland: Comprising Biographies, Descriptions of Departments, Accounts of Expeditions, Skirmishes, and Battles* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1864), 231. Fitch in 1864 wrote that thousands of Scandinavians were “found in every regiment organized in the Northwest” and counted among “the best and bravest of our soldiers. Descendants of the sturdy Vikings of medieval times.”

⁸¹ O. P. Hansen Balling, *Erindringer Fra Et Langt Liv [Memories from a Long Life]* (Kristiania: S. & Jul Sørensens Bogtrykkeri, 1905), 82–83.

⁸² For an attempt to get part of the 15th Wisconsin mustered out of war service a few months early, see K. J. Fleischer, “Petition Fra Det Skandinaviske Selskab i Madison Til Guvernør Lewis Af Wisconsin [Petition from the Scandinavian Society in Madison to Governor Lewis of Wisconsin],” *Fædrelandet*, October 13, 1864.



FIGURE 9.4 Portrait of Hans Heg by Herbjørn Gausta. The Norwegian-born colonel fell at the battle of Chickamauga on September 20, 1863. Courtesy Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum Archives.

part, the 15th Wisconsin was hit hardest during the battle of Chickamauga on September 19 and 20, 1863. Colonel Hans Heg, shortly after having been promoted to brigade commander, fell victim to a sharpshooter's bullet, while Ole C. Johnson, who succeeded Heg as regimental commander, was captured and sent to Libby Prison in Virginia.⁸³ In all, the 15th Wisconsin sustained 177 casualties during the battle, and afterward stories of Hans Heg's sacrifice, valor, and coolness under fire, along with that of his soldiers, came to exemplify the Scandinavian war effort.⁸⁴

⁸³ J. A. Johnson, ed., *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie* [*The Scandinavian Regiment's History*] (La Crosse: Fædrelandet og Emigrantens Trykkeri, 1869), 103–111.

⁸⁴ Ole C. Johnson, "De Norske Krigsfanger i Libby Prison [The Norwegian Prisoners-of-War in Libby Prison]," *Emigranten*, November 23, 1863. See also Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie* [*The Scandinavian Regiment's History*], 109. See also "Oberst Hans C. Heg [Colonel Hans C. Heg]," *Fædrelandet*, August 25, 1864.

Still, the fact that many Scandinavians did not serve in pan-Scandinavian units and instead were scattered in numerous regiments across the midwest was lamented by *Fædrelandet* on August 25, 1864:

Unity makes for strength and respectability. Heg wanted his countrymen to reap the full fruit of what they did for the fatherland. He realized that if Norwegians were shoved into the American regiments under the American regimental names, then the Americans would appropriate all the officers' positions – everything that would yield money and honor – and only leave the Norwegians the cold honor to cover the battlefield with its bodies, without even in death mentioning their actual names.⁸⁵

The necessity of gaining ethnic recognition for political gain through units like the 15th Wisconsin, and the underlying premise of pure Scandinavian units performing better than ethnically mixed units, was underscored in the same article by *Fædrelandet*.⁸⁶

Furthermore, the idea of Scandinavian military superiority was on full display in *Fædrelandet* leading up to the 1864 presidential election. At this moment, agitation against Democrats, not least German and Irish supporters of the Democratic Party, had reached a pinnacle, as demonstrated by the October 13 editorial penned by *Fædrelandet*'s editors:

In the Democratic meetings some big-name Gentlemen are sitting intelligently, a smile on their lip and clever stratagem behind their ears, but the masses are formed by the Irish and Germans, who never knew what the constitution contained and blindly follow their leaders' say . . . When we see Norwegian farmers among this crowd, we have to believe that either they seek office at the presidential election or they have degraded themselves to being equals with the Irish and intellectually inferior Germans.⁸⁷

Ramping up the anti-Democratic agitation, the editorial also compared writers of Democratic campaign pamphlets with animals, Irish, and "wild-Germans" (*Vildtydskere*).⁸⁸ As a demonstration of the Democratic Party's

⁸⁵ "Oberst Hans C. Heg [Colonel Hans C. Heg]."

⁸⁶ Ibid. "[It is] a shame that the many thousand Scandinavians, who serve in the Union army, did not follow this example and form their own Regiments. Instead they are spread around in nearly all Regiments, and no matter how brave they have proven themselves they have to be content with the praise or shame the Yankees' behaviour gets their Regiment."

⁸⁷ "Et Ord, Demokrater! [A Word, Democrats!]," *Fædrelandet*, October 13, 1864.

⁸⁸ Ibid. See also Rasmussen, "'Drawn Together in a Blood Brotherhood': Civic Nationalism Amongst Scandinavian Immigrants in the American Civil War Crucible," 18.

lack of appeal among Scandinavians, the 15th Wisconsin, which by late fall of 1864 was finally stationed in the rear to guard a bridge at Whiteside Station, sent a clear message when the soldiers cast their presidential election votes on November 8.⁸⁹

Through votes for presidential electors, state superintendent, members of congress, state senators, members of assembly, and county officers, it became clear that Abraham Lincoln's Union Party continued to enjoy overwhelming support. With Company B detached at Lookout Creek, 177 soldiers in the 15th Wisconsin Regiment had their votes registered in the surviving records, and 176 votes (99 percent) were cast for electors who supported Abraham Lincoln.⁹⁰

Norwegian-born Second Lieutenant George Hovden of Company G marked the election in his diary and noted that everyone in the company "went for Lincoln."⁹¹ A little north, at US hospital no. 8 in Nashville, Tennessee, Gunvold Johnsrud, who served in the 16th Minnesota Infantry on November 4, 1864, wrote about the "great Union Procession for the A. Lincoln & Johnson party," held in the streets ahead of the election, and added: "It was quite a wonder to see so many lights at one time and place." During the election, four days later, the Norwegian-born Johnsrud offered the assessment that "little Mack will have a poor show for president."⁹²

In Arkansas, a Swedish-born correspondent to *Hemlandet* reported that the 3rd Minnesota, which included a Scandinavian company, had voted before leaving Pine Bluff. "All the votes 'cast' were for Abraham Lincoln," the correspondent noted, though "one or two intended to vote for Mac but refrained from doing so, out of shame, when they saw how everyone else voted (they were 'conscripts')."⁹³

⁸⁹ "Det Skandinaviske Regiments Major Georg Wilson [The Scandinavian Regiment's Major Georg Wilson]," *Emigranten*, November 21, 1864.

⁹⁰ Chief Clerks of the Senate and Assembly, ed., *The Legislative Manual of the State of Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: Atwood & Rublee, 1865), 172. See also Joseph Mathieson, "Statement of Votes Polled for Electors of President and Vice-President of the United States," in *Wisconsin. Governor Military Votes, 1862-1865. Series 60. Box 11* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1864).

⁹¹ O. M. Hovde, ed., *The Civil War Diary of George Johnson Hovden Translated by Norma Johnson Jordahl* (Decorah, IA: Luther College Library, 1971), 63.

⁹² Gunvold Johnsrud, "1864 at U.S. Hospital No 8. Novbr 4," in *Civil War Diary. Gunvold Johnsrud, 1841-1923. P468* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1864).

⁹³ En af de få Qwarwarande, "Soldat-Korrespondens. Duvalls Bluff, Ark. D. 1:Ste Dec. 1864 [Soldier Correspondence. Duvall's Bluff, Ark. the 1st of December 1864]," *Hemlandet*, January 11, 1865.

Reporting about a mock vote involving his “invalid company” in Lexington, Kentucky, Henry Syvertsen distanced himself from the Democratic candidate George McClellan and reported it as a “happy sign of the times” that 44 out of 50 supported Lincoln.⁹⁴ Moreover, Ole Steensland, an imprisoned Norwegian-born soldier from the 15th Wisconsin, later remembered how support for Lincoln remained strong even in the infamous Georgia prison camp Andersonville where thousands died from illness and malnutrition.⁹⁵

The New Yorkers went around with ballots and said “vote for little Mac(Clellan) and let us have peace and get out of here and not lie here to rot for Lincoln and the Negroes.” We said: Vote for Lincoln; – a Man, who is loyal to the Unions and will not give up until he has [clamped] down on the Confederacy.⁹⁶

The Scandinavian soldiers thereby helped justify the rationale behind the Lincoln administration’s decision to let soldiers vote. Wisconsin Republicans had taken the lead regarding this electoral issue, and several other states modeled their voting practice after Wisconsin’s example.⁹⁷ Across the country, more than three out of four soldiers, 78 percent, supported Abraham Lincoln in the 1864 election, and the Scandinavian 15th Wisconsin Regiment’s 176 out of 177 votes for the incumbent turned out to be the strongest support for the president among any Wisconsin regiment.⁹⁸ In the 9th Wisconsin Regiment, made up of a sizeable German contingent, close to 80 percent of the soldiers (396 out of 498) supported Lincoln, while that number was less than 30 percent in the 17th Wisconsin, a predominantly Irish regiment.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Syvertson, “Lexington, Ky., Sept. 29, 1864.”

⁹⁵ William Marvel, *Andersonville: The Last Depot* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 58–59.

⁹⁶ “We were there during the election and the rebels liked to know the spirit among the prisoners and thus wanted us to vote and campaign,” private Ole Steensland later remembered. See Waldemar Ager, *Oberst Heg Og Hans Gutter [Colonel Heg and His Boys]* (Eau Claire, 176).

⁹⁷ Oscar Osburn Winther, “The Soldier Vote in the Election of 1864,” *New York History* 25, no. 4 (1944): 441.

⁹⁸ Assembly, *The Legislative Manual of the State of Wisconsin*, 172. See also Joseph, “Statement of Votes Polled for Electors of President and Vice-President of the United States.” See also Frank Klement, “The Soldier Vote in Wisconsin During the Civil War,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 28, no. 1 (1944): 46.

⁹⁹ “Wisconsin Military Vote – 1863 and 1864,” *Prescott Journal*, December 10, 1864.

Such voting patterns among Scandinavians, Germans, and Irish extended outside of Wisconsin's military units.¹⁰⁰ As Walter Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich have pointed out, the "percentage of support" for Lincoln among Germans "declined slightly" between 1860 and 1864, and Milwaukee, with its strong German influence, "was one of only two big cities where Lincoln lost ground between elections."¹⁰¹ Even more pronounced was Irish-American opposition to Lincoln. As Susannah Ural has shown, "Irish-Americans turned out in droves" to vote for George McClellan in 1864, which, in one example, led to 90 percent of the vote in a heavily Irish New York ward being cast for Lincoln's opponent.¹⁰²

The Scandinavian immigrant vote in New Denmark was less clear. Despite his frustrations with the Lincoln administration, Fritz Rasmussen probably supported the sitting president, whom he had described as "honest" a month earlier. Yet in the same diary entry Rasmussen, as we have seen, also maintained that Lincoln was too "old, for the position he holds."¹⁰³ In his diary, Rasmussen wrote that he had gone "to schoolhouse No. 1 for election," but in contrast to 1860, where he voted "for Abraham Lincoln and H. Hamlin," he did not disclose which candidates received his support in 1864.¹⁰⁴ Fritz Rasmussen did, however, maintain, or at least regain, his admiration for Lincoln, and if he followed the recommendations in the Scandinavian-language newspapers circulating in New Denmark, he would again have voted "for Lincoln."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ On Scandinavian civilian support for Lincoln, see for example, Sw. Tragordh, "Hvem Bør Blifwa President För Nästa 'Term' [Who Should Be President for the Next 'Term?]," *Hemlandet*, May 4, 1864.

¹⁰¹ Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 12. Support for the Republican Party also declined slightly, from 81.6 to 79.5, in the 9th Wisconsin between the gubernatorial election in 1863 and the presidential election in 1864. See "Wisconsin Military Vote - 1863 and 1864."

¹⁰² Susannah Ural Bruce, *The Harp and The Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 231.

¹⁰³ Rasmussen, "Oct Sunday 2nd."

¹⁰⁴ Fritz W. Rasmussen, "Den 8de Tirsdag [November]," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 8* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1864). See also "November 1860. Den 7de. [November 1860. The 7th]."

¹⁰⁵ "Den 8de Tirsdag [November]"; "New Denmark. Brown Co. Wis. January 27th 1894," in *Rasmussen, Fritz. Additions, 1860-1918. Green Bay Mss 4. Box 9* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1894). On the different newspapers read in New Denmark, see "Den 27de Løverdag [April]," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers*.

If Fritz Rasmussen did indeed vote for Lincoln, he likely did so along with most Scandinavian immigrants.¹⁰⁶ Even along the Pearl River in the deep South, Christian Koch, who had been navigating life between New Orleans and his home in Hancock County since 1862, was clear about his political preferences.¹⁰⁷ “I am glad Lincoln is elected again, I dont [sic] want to see peace now till the South is whipped, if it last 10 years longer, I begin to feel as if I could help to fight them myself,” Koch wrote.¹⁰⁸

In the end, Lincoln won all the states in the North, with the exception of New Jersey, and also enjoyed electoral success in states such as Maryland, Missouri, and West Virginia. *Emigranten* celebrated the president’s reelection on November 14, 1864, while praising the voters’ support of the “war policy hitherto followed to suppress the rebellion.”¹⁰⁹

Lincoln’s reelection ensured that the conscripted New Denmark farmers would have to help suppress the rebellion and ensure emancipation.

Diaries, 1856–1876. Green Bay Mss 4. Box 8 (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1867). The election of 1864 did, however, reveal one specific example of Scandinavian ethnicity trumping otherwise solid editorial Republican sentiment. Hans Heg’s younger brother Ole, who had served briefly as quartermaster in the 15th Wisconsin, ran for the assembly candidate position in Racine County on a Democratic ticket. Despite Ole Heg’s political affiliation, *Emigranten*’s editor endorsed his candidacy based on the premise that too few Scandinavian-born immigrants had been nominated by the nation’s two major parties and thus deserved Scandinavian support when they were nominated. “Preferably we feel that for such local functions, little attention should be paid to the party, but as much as possible always be on the side of a fellow countryman . . . Had it been for a more important political office, such as Congress . . . we should have expressed the hope that he would not be elected.” See “Kandidat Til Assembly i Racine Co., Wis., – En Normand Nomineret [Candidate to Assembly in Racine Co., Wis., – A Norwegian Nominated],” *Emigranten*, October 17, 1864.

¹⁰⁶ *Fædrelandet* reported the margins of victory across the states on November 24, 1864. See “President Lincoln Og De Forenede Staters Fremtid [President Lincoln and the Future of the United States],” *Fædrelandet*, November 24, 1864. See also McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, 803–805. Helped, in part, by the soldier vote, Lincoln won 212 votes to 21 in the electoral college, though the election was closer in states such as Indiana where absentee ballots were disallowed.

¹⁰⁷ Marco Giardino and Russell Guerin, *Mississippi’s No-Man’s Land: An Echo of the Koch Family Letters* (Denver: Outskirts Press, 2006), 15–49.

¹⁰⁸ Christian Ditlev Koch, “Nelsons Mill Novb 19 1864,” in *Christian D. Koch and Family Papers, Mss. 202, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections. Box 2* (LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1864).

¹⁰⁹ “Madison, 12te Nov. 1864,” *Emigranten*, November 14, 1864. With the “exception of a lone scuffle by a polling place in Minnesota,” everything had proceeded peacefully, *Emigranten* reported, “the government had taken its precautions against the expected assaults from fanatical rebels and draft dodgers and the northern border town were not interfered with.” See also Richard H. Abbott, *The Republican Party and the South, 1855–1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 38–39.

Two months later, Fritz Rasmussen therefore started his own journey toward the deep South along with 150 other closely guarded draftees.¹¹⁰

Fritz Rasmussen left Madison as part of the 14th Wisconsin Regiment on a clear, cold Tuesday, January 17, 1865, en route to join the Union campaign against Mobile in Alabama.¹¹¹ For months the draft had impacted life in Wisconsin, and for months it would continue to do so. Thus, in one of Edward Rasmussen's first letters to his son in the army, dated January 23, 1865, he included information on the draft that demonstrated how closely the community followed the quota system and how much they by 1865 knew about it:

Now the draft is again upon us and this time I am thinking that it will be the last as here will not be many remaining for additional drafting. I saw in the [Green Bay] Advocate that Green Bay must deliver 45 of their able-bodied men and since there are here in this town around 30 and they therefore must have 12 men but will draft 24, then it will soon even out.¹¹²

Additionally, on February 20, 1865, Rasmussen's in-laws, Ane and N. C. Hansen, referenced the impending draft scheduled for March, which seemed to make it impossible for any of the remaining foreign-born men to avoid military service. Consequently, several Danish immigrants struck out for Green Bay to voluntarily enlist and procure the \$300 bonus associated therewith.¹¹³

Fritz Rasmussen's brother-in-law, Celius Christiansen, who was drafted in 1862 but avoided service by hiring a substitute, likely knew that he was on the short list for the upcoming draft and volunteered in Green Bay along with at least ten other New Denmark residents, which caused "quite a commotion" in the immigrant community.¹¹⁴ The problem, as Fritz Rasmussen's father described it, was that by volunteering in Green Bay and being paid there, the volunteers would be credited there and not in New Denmark, which likely meant that "the few remaining will have to go as soldiers since there will be no one left to draft from."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Fritz W. Rasmussen, "Dagbog: Madison Jan: Den 17/65," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Correspondence, 1834-1942. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 1.* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865). See also Ager, *Oberst Heg Og Hans Gutter [Colonel Heg and His Boys]*, 58.

¹¹¹ Rasmussen, "Dagbog: Madison Jan: Den 17/65."

¹¹² Edward Rasmussen, "New Denmark T. O. Den 23 Januar 1865," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Correspondence, 1834-1942. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 1* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

¹¹³ Ane Hanson, "New Danmark D. 20 Feb. 1865 Kjere Sviger Søn," *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Edward Rasmussen, "New Denmark 26 Fbr. 1865," *ibid.* ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Rasmussen's wife Sidsel made the same point when she wrote to her husband from New Denmark on March 22, 1865, and revealed in a new letter the following day that the draft's pressure exacerbated ethnic tension in the community: "Dennis Devan was drafted and ran away like every other Irishman. [Johan] Goldsmidt was also Drafted and had to go."¹¹⁶ Yet also within the Danish immigrant community, the draft revealed both ethnic and class tension. Indicating the continued conflict between German and Irish immigrants and their Scandinavian counterparts, not least perceptions of who was bearing, and who was skirting, the duties of citizenship, Fritz Rasmussen's father notified his son of the draft's results on March 23, 1865:

The draft has come to an end here 14 days ago and now I believe it will end for good, as there is not one single able-bodied man left fit for service. Here the draft was later. Linhardt, Mads Rasmussen, Anders Petersen, Goldsmidt, Dines Duan [Dennis Devan], Hofman and several Germans and Irish but all three Danes were rejected and they only got a hold of a few Germans. The rest had run away.¹¹⁷

Edward Rasmussen also recounted a story of a failed attempt at bribery by Goldsmidt, who as a result was compelled to serve even without a medical examination, before turning his attention to the community volunteers that had enlisted. "That concludes the draft," Rasmussen asserted.¹¹⁸ Otherwise, most of the Rasmussen family letters sent to Fritz revolved around concern for his safety, local news (a town election on April 4 and a deadly smallpox outbreak in May), and national news from the war (the fall of Richmond and Petersburg).¹¹⁹

One topic completely absent from the letters sent south to Fritz Rasmussen was the issue of emancipation and the plight of four million freedpeople after the end of hostilities. This was perhaps not surprising given the relatively small number of free Black people living in the Upper Midwest (in Brown County, Wisconsin, twenty "free colored" out of approximately 12,000 residents were counted in the 1860 census), but while the New Denmark letter-writers may never have met a Black community member, they would have known about policy debates through newspapers circulating in

¹¹⁶ Sidsel Rasmussen, "Onsdag Den 22 Marts," *ibid.* See also "New Danmark Marts 23," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Correspondence, 1834–1942. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 1* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

¹¹⁷ Edward Rasmussen, "Denmark Den 23. Martz 1865," *ibid.* ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ See, for example, Sidsel Rasmussen, "Juni Den 22," *ibid.*

town.¹²⁰ Moreover, thoughts on abolition, and the fight to achieve it, had clearly taken on increased importance outside of Brown County.

For Fritz Rasmussen, the shared fate of soldiering created an even greater sense of solidarity, also across ethnic lines, for the already class-conscious Wisconsin farmer. As an example, the thirty-one-year-old immigrant's first letters home from the campaign against Mobile in March 1865 detailed spending miserable, rainy days huddled up on a pile of coal with his Irish comrade-in-arms Patrick Terry, and a week later sharing his tobacco with a Prussian-born neighbor from New Denmark named George Böhme.¹²¹ Yet in Alabama's subtropical climate, surrounded by unknown and often unwashed men, the drafted farmer had come down with a painful bout of diarrhea. Weakened by hot flashes and chills, Rasmussen time and again had to leave the ranks and let yellowish pus mixed with bloody stool fertilize the swamps of Alabama. "I am seemingly in no small danger of losing this fragile life, either by enemy bullets or disease in this climate," Fritz Rasmussen warned his wife Sidsel in a letter on March 24.¹²² Three days later, the Army of West Mississippi came into contact with Confederate defenders by Mobile Bay in Alabama, and, judging by the way the Danish draftee recorded the encounter, he thought he was going to lose his life in the confrontation.¹²³

The noise, Rasmussen wrote, was intense, almost to the point of deafening. Only when darkness fell over southern Alabama did the shooting wane, but even then the Danish immigrant's life was still in danger due to feverish shivering and, by day, the continued Confederate bombardment.¹²⁴ Over the following days, one shell landed in a group of soldiers but only knocked over their coffee pot; another snapped a pine like a twig; a third tore the head off a man; and as the siege around Mobile's Spanish Fort and Fort

¹²⁰ Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1864), 529.

¹²¹ Fritz W. Rasmussen, "Camp on Fish River, Alabama. Marts Den 24de 1865," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1857-1876. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 8* (Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865). See also "April Den 1ste 1865," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1857-1876* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

¹²² Rasmussen, "Camp on Fish River, Alabama. Marts Den 24de 1865." See also Anders Bo Rasmussen, *I Krig for Lincoln [To War for Lincoln]* (Copenhagen: Informations Forlag, 2014), 23-24.

¹²³ "Den 28de Klok 2 Eftermid. [Marts]," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1857-1876* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865). Also *ibid.*, 257-66.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

Blakely continued, Rasmussen reported on several wounds suffered by both Black and white soldiers in his vicinity:¹²⁵

This morning an Indian was carried in, shot in the head, and who was, I think, drawing his last breaths. Just as we had had dinner they started to throw shells in here again so one was not safe anywhere and an old poor English-man (Isaac Brigham) who had gone as a “substitute” and like me came from Green Bay had his right leg torn a quarter off three inches below the knee by a piece of a bomb.¹²⁶

Rasmussen’s military experience, shared with thousands of comrades, strengthened his sense of belonging to a national community and in some ways mirrored that of the Irish and Black soldiers.¹²⁷ As Christian Samito has pointed out, “military service had explicit links to citizenship and inclusion as part of the American people,” and the fact that Rasmussen and others of Scandinavian heritage served alongside American Indians, Germans, Irish, English, and native-born soldiers helped shape a broader view of American citizenship.¹²⁸

Fritz Rasmussen in his writings regularly exhibited concern for, and friendship with, fellow soldiers of many different backgrounds.¹²⁹ The reluctant recruit sympathetically described a fellow soldier of Stockbridge Indian heritage who helped an ill Irish-born comrade-in-arms; and on

¹²⁵ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “Marts Den 31de Klokken 7–8,” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1857–1876* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

¹²⁶ “April Den 3de 1865,” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1857–1876* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

¹²⁷ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “History! Of the Town of New Denmark, Brown Co. Wis,” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Correspondence, 1834–1942; Records of the New Denmark Home Guards, 1876–1883, and Evangelical Christian Society, 1871–1897*; “History of the Town of New Denmark,” 1876, 1881; and *Miscellaneous Material. Box no. 1. Green Bay Mss 4.* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1876); Rasmussen, “‘Drawn Together in a Blood Brotherhood’: Civic Nationalism amongst Scandinavian Immigrants in the American Civil War Crucible,” 22–24; William Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers – The Union’s Ethnic Regiments*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 175. Burton argues that “geography, personal friendships, occupation, class, non-ethnic politics, and ambition” weighed heavier than ethnicity for most soldiers.

¹²⁸ Christian G. Samito, *Becoming American under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship During the Civil War Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 40.

¹²⁹ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades – Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 85. Based on his draft experience, Rasmussen’s writings add support to James McPherson’s argument that a Civil War soldier’s primary group was partly made up of “the men from his town or township with whom he enlisted.”

March 30, 1865, he mourned another Stockbridge Indian friend from northern Wisconsin, Thomas Anthony, who had died of illness.¹³⁰

This saddened me even more than if it had been someone from a different part of the country[.] This man was, so to speak, from home and we had practically formed a brotherly relationship that, for my part went closer to the heart than perhaps his but which encouraged me more than any others except my comrade Terry.¹³¹

Interestingly, Rasmussen's statement alludes both to the entanglement of Native Americans and white European settlers and the distance between them.¹³² On the one hand, the Danish immigrant felt a real bond between him and Anthony based on their mutual Wisconsin background, but Rasmussen also realized that the warm "brotherly" feelings were not necessarily shared by Anthony, who in his lifetime would have witnessed large-scale European settlement on American Indian land in the Midwest.¹³³ Though motivations for joining the military were multifarious among Native people, Anthony's volunteer service is noteworthy due to the association between martial manhood and American citizenship.¹³⁴ Thomas Anthony's service in a regular military unit such as the 14th Wisconsin could well have been motivated by economic concerns but could also potentially have been a way to establish a claim to citizenship.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Celius Christiansen, *En Pioneers Historie (Erindringer Fra Krigen Mellem Nord- Og Sydstatene)* [A Pioneer's Story: Memoirs from the War between North and South] (Aalborg: Eget forlag, 1909), 19–21. See also Fritz W. Rasmussen, "Marts Den 30de 1865," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers, 1834–1942*. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 1 (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

¹³¹ "Erindringer Fra Mit Feldtliv. Camp near Montg. Ala. Juni Den 26. 1865," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Correspondence, 1834–1842. Box 1. Folder 1* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

¹³² For other examples, see Gunlög Fur, "Indians and Immigrants – Entangled Histories," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 33, no. 3 (2014): 55–76.

¹³³ Russell Horton, "Unwanted in a White Man's War: The Civil War Service of the Green Bay Tribes," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 88, no. 2 (2004): 18–26.

¹³⁴ Louis P. Masur, *Lincoln's Last Speech: Wartime Reconstruction and the Crisis of Reunion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 9–10, 146–150.

¹³⁵ As Stephen Kantrowitz has shown, Ho-Chunk bands in Wisconsin consciously adopted "Western" expectations of "civilized" behavior, such as buying land and wearing perceived Western clothing, to gain the rights of American citizenship, but such attempts were also met with significant resistance. A few Wisconsin Indians were successful in using the vagueness of American citizenship categories to their advantage by buying small tracts of land and adopting "Western" garb. By doing so, Wisconsin Indians would "demonstrate their fitness by embracing a matrix of values and behaviors: the principles of private

Military service did often lead to increased standing in the surrounding society, not least among white Americans with political power. Native people, however, continued to struggle to achieve recognition as citizens in Wisconsin and elsewhere for years after the Civil War.¹³⁶ American Indians, for example, were notably absent when Republican congressman George S. Boutwell, on the Fourth of July, 1865, pointed to the service by “whites and negroes born on this continent,” as well as “the Irish and the Germans” and “representatives from every European race,” as proof that they all deserved voting rights and, by extension, recognition as citizens.¹³⁷

For many, war service was therefore not without importance – but even in this final push to reunite the nation was also not without risk. While digging trenches outside Fort Spanish by Mobile Bay, Fritz Rasmussen on April 6 described one shell wounding twenty-one men, filling the trench with smoke, and the blast wave nearly concussing the entire unit.¹³⁸ On April 8, Rasmussen and several veterans was shocked “terribly and horribly” by a rifle bullet cutting the neck artery of a fellow soldier while another hit an “Indian” from Rasmussen’s own company in the leg.¹³⁹ Mercifully, by 5:30 p.m. on April 8, the end of the campaign was in sight. In a mass bombardment, more than ninety-six artillery pieces opened fire on the forts around Mobile and, according to one witness observing from a safe distance, created a moment of almost surreal beauty: “The fire of so many large guns, and the loud explosion of shells, produced one of those sublime scenes which seldom occur, even in the grandest operations of

property and contract; habits of fixed settlement, market orientation, and patriarchal household organization; and particular modes of dress, speech, and worship.” See Stephen Kantrowitz, “‘Not Quite Constitutionalized’: The Meaning of ‘Civilization’ and the Limits of Native American Citizenship” (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), 75–76. On the complexity of American Indians’ motivation for military service, see William McKee Evans, “Native Americans in the Civil War: Three Experiences,” in *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America’s Bloodiest Conflict*, edited by Susannah J. Ural (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 188–189.

¹³⁶ Kantrowitz, “‘Not Quite Constitutionalized’: The Meaning of ‘Civilization’ and the Limits of Native American Citizenship,” 75–77.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Samito, *Becoming American under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship During the Civil War Era*.

¹³⁸ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “April Den 6. Klok 2 Eftermid,” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1857–1876. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 8* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

¹³⁹ “April 8de, 1865 Formid. Klok. 9,” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers, 1834–1942. Green Bay Mss 4. Box 1* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

war,” recalled Brigadier General (and later US Minister to Sweden and Norway) Christopher C. Andrews.¹⁴⁰

The bombardment set a chain reaction in motion. The 8th Iowa initiated the attack and succeeded in planting the American flag on top of the breastworks despite fierce Confederate resistance before the defenders retreated further into the fortress. For a brief moment, Rasmussen thought his regiment would be called upon to finish the attack. Shortly before midnight on April 8 Rasmussen and his fellow soldiers were sent to the frontlines “double quick, forward march!” and from this vantage point witnessed other units move toward the breastworks.¹⁴¹ “We expected to see and hear a horrendous sight every moment,” Rasmussen wrote.¹⁴² But the Confederate defenders were gone. Spanish Fort was in Union hands. The following day, on April 9, Fort Blakely fell, and Ferdinand Winsl w – the 9th Iowa’s former quartermaster, who seemed on the cusp of another logistics appointment in Major General Edward Canby’s army – wrote to his wife Wilhemina about the elation.¹⁴³ Winsl w arrived in Canby’s camp just as the battle ended and found his brother-in-law, Christian Christensen, who had helped recruit the war’s first Scandinavian company, along with several high-ranking generals.

I had hardly been there half an hour before one Aide-de-Camp after another came with the glorious news of the assault on and taking of Fort Blakely. So there were congratulations, and as the night set in, and the camp fires shone all around in these magnificent pine woods and everything around looked like a fairy-world all the Generals – Steele, A. J. Smith, Carr, Granger, Osterhaus and others sat down in a circle back of Christensen’s tent around the quiet, happy Canby, who lit and smoked his cigarre [sic] with an apparent delight and gusto.¹⁴⁴

The fact that Winsl w had brought along “all kinds of nice” food and a “demi-john with 5 gallons of whiskey” likely did nothing to dampen the mood, and when the Union Army entered Montgomery, the Confederacy’s

¹⁴⁰ Christopher Columbus Andrews, *History of the Campaign of Mobile; Including the Co perative Operations of Gen. Wilson’s Cavalry in Alabama (1867)* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1867), 149–151.

¹⁴¹ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “April Den 9de 1865 – Palme S ndag!,” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1857–1876. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 8* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Edward Canby, “New Orleans La Mar 5th 1865,” in *Letters received by the Commission Branch of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1863–1870* (Washington, DC: National Archives, 1865); Ferdinand Sophus Winsl w, “Close by Fort Blakely Apr. 10, 1865,” in *Ferdinand Sophus Winslow letters, September 1862–April 1865* (University of Iowa, Libraries, Special Collections Department, 1865).

¹⁴⁴ “Close by Fort Blakely Apr. 10, 1865.”



FIGURE 9.5 Ferdinand Winsl w (left) surprised his brother-in-law, Christian Christensen, in Alabama in April of 1865, and they likely had this photo taken together in New Orleans shortly thereafter. Courtesy Sadovnikoff Family Private Collection.

first capital city, three days later, it was an important step toward territorial reunification.¹⁴⁵

Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Stephan Vaugh Shipman, from Madison, Wisconsin, described the occupation of Montgomery in his diary and noted that they “reached the City about 9 o’clock and amid loud cheering the Flag was run up over the State House where the first rebel Congress

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

met!”¹⁴⁶ The end of combat, however, raised larger questions about the nation’s future, not least the role of freedpeople. According to William Warren Rogers Jr., the “sentiments of rejoicing blacks were not in doubt,” and that was also the way Fritz Rasmussen described his experience around Montgomery on April 22, 1865.¹⁴⁷ As his regiment prepared to march through Montgomery to a camp a few miles outside of town, Rasmussen touched on the unit’s experience with the formerly enslaved. “This morning we again drew rations for two days that should last for three,” Rasmussen wrote, giving the reason that “Negroes” were “rushing to our lines” and causing depleted rations for the soldiers due to the larger numbers of mouths to feed.¹⁴⁸ The reaction among the soldiers was mixed, Rasmussen wrote: “Many find it hard but many just laugh and think that they thereby have a good excuse for ‘fourage’ (stealing).”¹⁴⁹

Rasmussen himself seems to have been more sympathetic to the plight of freedpeople. But if he specifically recorded his impression of marching through Montgomery on April 23, 1865, those diary pages have now been lost. Rasmussen did, however, describe the experience many years later. When asked to recount his war experience almost a half century afterward, the reluctant veteran’s memory allowed for the following:

I helped occupy “the Rebel Capital City” and [I] marched in to the high-pitched tune of “Yankee Doodle” but hardly saw a white person, on the contrary cheered by the black, many of whom could be called white, especially the women.¹⁵⁰

In his recollection, Rasmussen likely alluded to the sexual violence inflicted on enslaved women by their masters before and during the Civil War, and the attempts to cling to such patterns of domination among white southerners when they returned after the war.¹⁵¹ Throughout 1865, Rasmussen and other Union soldiers serving in the deep South had a chance to immerse themselves more in their surroundings and consequently also contemplate southern society then and now, not least the impact of emancipation. By

¹⁴⁶ Stephan Vaughn Shipman, “Wednesday, April 12th, 1865,” in *Stephen Vaughn Shipman, Diary, 1865, Transcription* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

¹⁴⁷ William Warren Rogers Jr., *Confederate Home Front: Montgomery During the Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 147–148.

¹⁴⁸ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “Near Greenville, Alabama April Den 22de 1865 Eftermid. Kl. 3–4,” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Correspondence, 1834–1942. Box 1* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. ¹⁵⁰ Vig, *Danske i Amerika [Danes in America]*, 1, 357.

¹⁵¹ Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 9–11, 70–73.

July 1865, Rasmussen's critique of the Old World nobility and the New World elite mirrored, in important ways, his thoughts on slavery and his antipathy toward slaveowners.

What splendour, yes to put it plainly, Paradise – these people have lived in, not to speak of money or riches, it is therefore no wonder that they became haughty and arrogant. . . . It is also no wonder that when war came that they fought for their slavery, since without slavery their circumstances can not possible [sic] be what they were before. But, whether splendor for them or not, I say, splendid, splendid that slavery is abolished.¹⁵²

Thus, Rasmussen interpreted the Civil War as a class conflict; but it was still not clear how much support for abolition also meant support for freedpeople's equality and citizenship rights. Such discussions were playing themselves out at all levels of American society, not least among the Republican leadership in Washington, DC, where plans of freedpeople's future role in the nation were made simultaneously with plans for expanding the nation's territory and population.

¹⁵² Fritz W. Rasmussen, "Camp at Montgomery, Ala. Juli Den 23de 1865," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Correspondence, 1834–1942. Green Bay Mss 4. Box 1* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1865).

