

Illinois' Civil War legacy goes beyond Abraham Lincoln

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Before Abraham Lincoln was sworn in as the United States' 16th president, seven slave states had succeeded from the Union, formed the Confederacy and seized control of federal property within their borders.

The first shots of the Civil War were fired on April 12, 1861 when the Union refused to turn over Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina to the Confederacy. So began the four-year-long War Between the States that would produce more than a million casualties and define the presidency of Illinois' favorite son.

Three days after the bombardment of Fort Sumter, President Lincoln called for troops from the states to recapture the federal property seized by the South, including 6,000 troops from Illinois. The *Illinois State Journal* reported an estimated 100,000 volunteers and the *Chicago Tribune* noted a flurry of military activity with Soldiers drilling on nearly every corner. Illinois quickly filled the six regiments in the War Department's original request and received authorization to fill four additional regiments.

Lead by the veterans of the Mexican War a little more than a decade earlier, these volunteers, from politicians to women in disguise, would lay the foundation for a proud lineage and a polished Illinois National Guard that has more recently sent its Soldiers, and now Airmen, to the sands of Iraq, the mountains of Afghanistan and the skies of Libya.

Out of all the states during the Civil War, Illinois contributed the Commander in Chief President Abraham Lincoln, the Chief of all Union Armies (and future president) Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, and a charismatic and triumphant General and U.S. congressman John A. Logan. Illinois also contributed perhaps the youngest Medal of Honor recipient in American history 14 year old Orion Howe, and nearly 260,000 troops, nearly 35,000 of whom died in battle, from disease or wounds, or in prison camps.

The lesser known and more intriguing

One Civil War Soldier from Illinois tremendously admired by comrades was Pvt. Albert D.J. Cashier. The 19 year old enlisted with the 95th Illinois Regiment in August 1862 and mustered out three years later. The Irish immigrant's peers wrote that Cashier was a little Soldier known for raw courage, heroic bravery and spunk.

Cashier tirelessly cemented those adjectives on the battlefield by shimmying up a tree to rescue a captured Union flag while being exposed to confederate snipers and, on another occasion, by climbing up a fortification to taunt the rebels into revealing their positions. Using a

sharp wit and a clear head, Cashier constantly performed with valor while keeping a secret that could ignite scandal up and down the ranks. Cashier was a woman and named Jennie Hodgers.

Hodgers worked as a farmhand before the Civil War and found male attire better suited for her work. Adopting a male persona elevated Cashier's social, economic and legal status in antebellum society. Hodgers' secret went undiscovered until 1911, but there were close calls and a trusted few that helped prolong the masquerade.

While the 95th Illinois Regiment laid siege to Vicksburg, Hodgers was captured during a reconnaissance mission. The humiliation of being found out by her unit was one thing, but by the enemy? She fought back, wrestled the guard's rifle away from him and hit him in the face with the butt of the rifle, knocked him to the ground, then outran everyone in the ensuing chase.

After the Civil War, Hodgers found it easier to earn a decent wage as a man. In disguise, she went to work as a laborer for Illinois State Senator Ira Lish until she broke her leg in an accident. Her secret was revealed to the Doctor that set her leg and to Lish. Both were sworn to secrecy and kept their word.

In 1890, her leg having never healed correctly and still using the name Albert Cashier, Hodgers was awarded a veteran's pension and admitted to the Soldier and Sailor's Home in Quincy, Il. as a disabled veteran. Soon after, her closely guarded secret was public knowledge and prompted the pension bureau to launch a fraud investigation, setting off a media frenzy. Her Civil War comrades were outraged and publicly defended Hodgers. She died on Oct. 10, 1915 and was buried in uniform with full military honors at Sunny Slope cemetery in Saunemin, Il.

Asked why she enlisted by a reporter after her secret was made public, Hodgers answered simply, "The country needed men and I wanted excitement."

Today, more than 1,500 women serve proudly in the Illinois Army National Guard and 800 in the Illinois Air National Guard. And they lead from the front just as Hodgers did.

Col. Alicia Tate-Nadeau, the Chief of the Joint Staff is the first female to hold a chief of staff position in the Illinois Guard, but leading the way is nothing new for Tate-Nadeau. She was the first female direction of operations.

Citizens Support to the Citizen Soldiers

Today, members of the Illinois National Guard, man or woman, cannot be successful without the support of our friends, family and communities. Nowadays members of our support network would not travel with us, but that wasn't the case during the Civil War.

In August of 1861, 44 year old widow Mary Ann Bickerdyke sent her two teenage children to live with a friend and left Galesburg, Illinois with donated money and supplies and went to work as a nurse at a Union Army hospital in Cairo, Illinois. Bickerdyke was appalled by

the deplorable sanitary conditions she found at the hospital and immediately set about to whip the hospital into shape including the practices of the doctors, nurses and staff.

Thousands of men remembered that day as “the day a cyclone hit the federal base at the bottom tip of Illinois.” For a time after Bickerdyke arrived at the hospital in Cairo, she was known as the *cyclone in calico*. Union Soldier Andrew Somerville, said Bickerdyke reminded him of his mother and he assigned her the moniker “Mother Bickerdyke,” a nickname that would stick and is how Mary Ann Bickerdyke would be known for the rest of her life.

Mother Bickerdyke doggedly nursed Union Soldiers back to health until after the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862 when General Ulysses S. Grant told her to go home and rest. She followed only part of Grant’s order. She went home, but she didn’t rest. While at home, Bickerdyke accepted a formal position with the U.S. Sanitary Commission; a rarity for women of that time to be sure.

Bickerdyke rejoined Union troops at Fort Pickering in Memphis, Tenn. less than a year after taking leave. She would stay with them and General William Sherman as they marched to the sea to capture the port of Savannah, Ga. in December of 1864. When Bickerdyke applied for a pension two decades later, Dr. A. Goslin, a physician she worked with during the war, testified to the U.S. senate that “Her services were simply indispensable. She is truly a mother to the hundreds of sick and dying Soldiers. Her services were worth more to General Sherman’s army during the Atlanta campaign than any brigadier general in it.”

On November 8, 1901, Bickerdyke was buried with full military honors at Linwood Cemetery in Galesburg, IL. Two years later Illinois Governor Rickard Yates commissioned a monument to be placed on the lawn of the Knox County courthouse in Galesburg.

Soldiers from the Illinois National Guard’s Battery C., 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment will pass the statue of Bickerdyke on the courthouse lawn when they return from Sinai, Egypt in May 2011 where they’ve been part of the Multi-National Forces Observers overseeing the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

Of the 55 communities in Illinois today that house an armory, most have rallied to support their local Soldiers and Airmen in every way imaginable as those armories sat vacant for months at a time and their communities incrementally quieter while those citizen Soldiers deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Kuwait and Egypt since Sept. 11, 2001.

Illinoisans continue to support their citizen Soldiers with the same vim and vigor as Mother Mary Ann Bickerdyke; from the individual that pays for a Soldier or Airman’s meal and slips quietly out of the restaurant, to the community groups that organize large-scale care package assembly and shipping operations, to the elected officials that ensure Illinois’ service members are properly thanked through government programs.

A legacy of Courage

Since Sept. 11, 2001, every member of the Illinois National Guard has either enlisted or reenlisted knowing the country was involved in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each of those Soldiers or Airmen knew the odds of being deployed were high when they raised their right hand and swore to defend the constitution and obey the orders of the commander in chief. Each decided they would make all the necessary sacrifices for our great country.

Among the first volunteers to answer President Lincoln's call for troops in April 1861 was 12 year old Orion P. Howe. Assigned as the drummer boy, the Waukegan, Illinois native served the 55th Illinois Volunteer Infantry.

For two years, Howe's rhythmic cadence paced the 55th, his legs growing stronger until the day his youth and legs would save the Union army. On May 19, 1863 during one of the heaviest exchanges of the Siege of Vicksburg, Howe's commanding officer Col. Oscar Malmberg realized his forces were dreadfully low on ammunition.

Col. Malmberg sent several runners through enemy fire with hand-written resupply requests. Each runner getting killed shortly after setting off. As the situation became more desperate, Howe, now 14 years old, bravely volunteered to run the resupply message to Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman. Out of options, Col. Malmberg agreed and sent the teenager dashing across the battlefield through a nightmare of exploding shells and crackling bullets.

The remainder of the 55th troops watched anxiously as Howe ran the gauntlet of Confederate artillery and infantry fire. Once again Col. Malmberg watched his runner fall. Although seriously wounded, Howe sprang back to his feet and continued to race across the battlefield and out of sight toward the salvation of the quartermasters. Seven months later, Howe's wounds had healed and he rejoined the 55th regiment.

By the end of the war, Howe was a veteran of 14 engagements and promoted to corporal. Maj. Gen. Sherman was impressed with the youth and wrote to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton strongly urging the young drummer boy be decorated for his actions. He was. Howe is among the youngest recipients of the Medal of Honor and the Illinois National Guard's armory in Waukegan Illinois was ceremoniously named after Him.

An estimated 150 Illinois Service members have received the Medal of Honor since President Lincoln signed the bill issuing the highest military decoration on July 12, 1862. Unfortunately, not all of the Medal of Honor recipients would see the gratitude bestowed upon them for their heroism.

Sgt. Scott Stream from Mattoon, Illinois was killed by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan on Feb. 24, 2009 while deployed with Company B., 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry, 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Stream was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor and will never

hear the sobs of gratitude his state and nation imparts, but he was intensely aware of a single Soldier's ability to impact the charge of a nation like Orion P. Howe.

Evidence of Stream's awareness is found in a letter to his mother written two months before his death:

We who joined with vague notions of protecting our country see how desperate the peril, how hungry the enemy and how frail the security we have is. So the more I love you all the more I feel I must keep fighting for you. The more I love and long for home, the more right I feel here on the front line standing between you and the seething madness that wants to suck the life and love out of our land.

Does that mean I cannot go home? I hope not, because I want this just to be the postponement of the joy of life, not the sacrifice of mine. If it costs me my life to protect our land and people then that is a small thing, I just hope that fate lets me return to the promise land and remind people just how great our land is.

War is a young man's game, and I am getting an old man's head. It is a strange thing. I just hope that I am not changed so that I cannot take joy in the land inside the wire when I make it home. I want to be with you all again and let my gun sit in the rack and float on my back in a tube down a lazy river..."

In some ways Soldiers and Airmen in the Illinois National Guard today are marching to the same cadence that Orion P. Howe rapped-out a century-and-a-half ago.

The Leaders of Illinois' Legacy

An unfortunate circumstance of the millions of modest foot-Soldiers to serve the nation from Illinois is that they took their stories and experiences with them when they left the battlefield, quietly fading into the lives they'd set aside. Many never disclosed the extent of their bravery or the consequences of their actions.

The accounts most often recorded are those of the general officers whose decisions marked turning points in campaigns, whose cleverness changed the way battles were fought, and who were sometimes better at delivering a speech to inspire troops than delivering a strategy for victory in battle.

Maj. Gen. John Buford, Jr. grew up in Rock Island, Illinois and attended West Point in the 1840s with a who's-who of prominent Civil War officers from both sides of the Mason Dixon line.

When Buford and his men arrived at Gettysburg, Buford assessed the Confederate Army to be too large to defeat without reinforcements. At a disadvantage, but unwilling to let

Gettysburg go to the South, Buford positioned his troops in a defensive posture and essentially determined the field of battle, ultimately setting the stage for a strategic Union victory.

Buford would die of typhoid less than six months after Gettysburg, but written accounts report he used his dying breath to pass on military strategy.

Maj. Gen. John Pope was a distant cousin of Mary Todd Lincoln and a friend of President Lincoln. He commanded the Army of the Mississippi and in Feb. of 1862 led a successful campaign to clear rebels from the Mississippi river and opened valuable supply and shipping routes for the Union.

Maj. Gen John Alexander McClernand grew up in Shawneetown, Illinois and, like Lincoln, was a self educated lawyer. Also like Lincoln, McClernand volunteered with the Illinois Militia during the Blackhawk War. He went on to serve in the Illinois House of Representatives and in the US Congress before serving as a brigadier general under Ulysses S. Grant and then commanding a division at the Battle of Shiloh. After the Civil War, McClernand served as a judge in Sangamon County, Illinois.

Stephen A. Hurlbut transplanted to Illinois from the Carolinas and served in the Illinois House of Representatives before joining the Union Army. Although some historical accounts paint Hurlbut as somewhat corrupt (perhaps Illinois' political legacy) he was promoted to major general and held several commands throughout the Civil War. After the war he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and then served as U.S. Ambassador to Peru.

Elon John Farnsworth, a rugged frontiersman was appointed a first lieutenant in the 8th Illinois Cavalry in 1861. Two years later, Brig. Gen. Farnsworth commanded the 3rd Division and led a lopsided charge against Confederate positions during the Battle of Gettysburg. Knowing the odds were against them, Farnsworth rallied his troops and charged the Confederates as ordered. The 3rd Division took heavy losses and Farnsworth was shot multiple times and died during the battle.

Richard James Oglesby is responsible for the most interesting artifact housed at the Illinois State Military Museum, arguably. Raised by his uncle in Decatur, Illinois, he enlisted as a first lieutenant in the 4th Illinois Infantry Regiment during the Mexican-American War. Oglesby's regiment came close to capturing Mexican President General Santa Anna. Making a hasty escape, Santa Anna left behind his wooden leg and his lunch. Oglesby and his troops ate the lunch and played baseball with the wooden leg. Today you can view the wooden leg at the Illinois State Military Museum.

Oglesby served a term in the Illinois Senate before being appointed a colonel in the 8th Illinois Infantry Regiment during the Civil War. He commanded several brigades and moved up the ranks to major general, getting wounded at least once along the way.

He resigned his commission in 1864 to run for Governor of Illinois. He served three non-consecutive terms as governor, and one term in the U.S. Senator in between.

Benjamin Henry Grierson left his job as a teacher in Jacksonville, Illinois to join the 6th Illinois Cavalry and was quickly promoted to colonel. He led a group of a little more than 1,500 men on a mission akin to a mission the Illinois National Guard's Company A, 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) might undertake today in Afghanistan.

Grierson led his troops on an 800-mile raid of Confederate camps and supply lines from Tennessee to Baton Rouge, Louisiana; capturing prisoners, horses and weapons, disabling Confederate railroad supply operations, and destroying defensive infrastructure. More importantly, Grierson and his men obliterated the morale of Confederate troops, diverted their attention and setting the stage for the Siege of Vicksburg.

Grierson's tactics were ahead of his time and secured his promotion to brigadier general. Grierson was ahead of his time in other areas too, like equal opportunity. Instead of returning to his teaching job after the Civil War, he stayed in the Army and helped assemble the 10th U.S. Cavalry. The 10th included units of black Soldiers and Grierson vocally sympathized with Native Americans, both made him unpopular with other Army officers.

Like Grierson, General John A. Logan displayed the personal courage to do what is right even when it conflicted with popular opinion.

Logan represented the 11th District of Illinois in the U.S. House of Representatives leading up to the Civil War. The 11th District encompassed the far southern regions of Illinois and the people there more readily sympathized with the South. Despite the anti-war and secession-leaning sentiments of his constituents, Logan stood with the union and worked tirelessly up until the attack on Fort Sumpter in 1861 to negotiate a compromise between the North and South.

In July of 1861, Logan rushed from the halls of congress to Manassas, Virginia and, while still wearing civilian clothes, fought as a private with the 2nd Michigan Infantry during the first battle of Bull Run. A month later, he was promoted to colonel in the Illinois Volunteer Infantry and for the next four years fought in eight major campaigns while suffering traumatic injuries to nearly every part of his body.

While commanding the 31st Illinois Infantry, Logan was shot in the shoulder. He received medical treatment and returned to battle only to have his horse short from beneath him. The horse reared up and fell over, crushing Logan's right leg and foot. His Soldiers boosted him onto another horse and he immediately received an enemy bullet to the thigh, puncturing his holster and exploding his pistol, sending scorching shrapnel into his ribs. Shot a second time in the same thigh, Logan was reported killed in action. He survived and earned a battlefield promotion to brigadier general from Ulysses S. Grant.

Logan and his men occupied an area outside Raleigh, North Carolina when news of Lincoln's assassination came down. With sadness turning to anger the men aimed their cannons toward Raleigh and prepared to burn the city to the ground to avenge Lincoln's death. Again displaying his tremendous personal courage, Logan stood between the cannons and the city and told his men they'd have to go through him. His men retreated.

Logan returned to Washington DC after the war to finish his term in the House of Representatives and went on to serve two terms in the Senate. Logan is credited with establishing Memorial Day in 1866.

Echoes of Logan's legacy and leadership can be found across Southern Illinois and reflected in the Soldiers of the Illinois National Guard's 2nd Battalion 130th Infantry Regiment, headquartered in Marion Illinois.

Ulysses S. Grant moved to Galena, Illinois in 1860. He was 38 years old, a graduate of West Point Military Academy and a veteran of the Mexican American War. Grant grew bored with the Army and resigned his commission in 1854. After a couple of failed attempts to earn a living near his in-laws, Grant took a job as a clerk in his father's leather goods store in Galena.

A year later, Fort Sumter was attacked and Grant left his father's store to recruit volunteers. From there, the nearly 40 year old would lead the Union to victory at the Battle of Shiloh and the Siege of Vicksburg before thrashing General Robert E. Lee and capturing the Confederate capital or Richmond, Virginia in April 1865.

Grant wrote in his memoir that his inspiration was simple and straight forward at the beginning of the Civil War, "I have but one sentiment now: that is we have a government and laws and a flag and they must be sustained. There are but two parties now: traitors and patriots. And I want hereafter to be ranked with the latter."

Grant served as a quartermaster during the Mexican American War where he said he observed and adopted Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott's military philosophy, "The art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is, get at him as soon as you can, strike at him as hard as you can and keep moving on."

Grant's celebrated war-time heroism and leadership propelled him into the Whitehouse, but his ability to lead his cabinet was far less effective. Although his two terms as president were plagued with corruption and scandal, Grant was never accused of doing anything illegal.

The leader of the above leaders had only a small amount of actual military experience, but made up for it with a keen sense of judgment, a profound intellect and an almost divine foresight.

Abraham Lincoln served as a captain in the Illinois Militia during the Blackhawk War where he would learn the consequences of war. The 22 year old was in charge of a burial detail

and the sight of the blood-soaked battlefield at Kellogg's Grove would stay with him throughout his life.

Knowing the carnage that adorns a battlefield made the emotional toll of the Civil war weigh even heavier on President Lincoln. After the Union Army took control of the telegraph lines, Lincoln spent countless hours in the telegraph office, lamenting over every move his generals made.

Lincoln hand-picked many of the top generals during the war. He chose men that lived and breathed the freedoms of our nation and understood its destiny as a single nation. Lincoln chose men he trusted and could impart his emotional tie to the nation and the souls that lay down to keep it intact. His leadership and close bond with his generals was so deep that he was able to persuade Logan to become a Republican after the war.

Lincoln, like Sgt. Stream in 2009, had a profound awareness that the price of freedom would be paid with lives up to and including his own.

He told a crowd of shivering Springfield residents gathered at the train platform in Feb. 1861 as he left to assume the presidency, "I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington."

The train whistle blew and the tall, lanky figure slowly faded eastward into martyrdom.

Lincoln's legacy lives today in the men and women of the Illinois National Guard whose headquarters is at Camp Lincoln and whose Joint Force Headquarters unit patch features a silhouette of Lincoln.

From the state of Illinois rose the leaders and nearly 260,000 Soldiers that fought and died to keep our nation together. Since then, Soldiers and now Airmen, raised on the same soil, have stood in the defense of these United States in nearly every military operation to date.