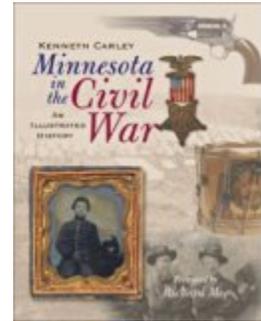


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Kenneth Carley. *Minnesota in the Civil War: An Illustrated History*. Introduction and epilogue by Brian Horrigan. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000. i + 230 pp. \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-87351-564-1; \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87351-387-6.

Reviewed by Halen Watkins (Texas Tech University)
Published on H-CivWar (February, 2007)



Minnesota's Glorious Contribution

Kenneth Carley's illustrated history contains an impressive array of primary materials designed to buttress his efforts to glorify Minnesota's patriotic contributions to the Union during the Civil War. Brian Horrigan pens an introduction that allows the reader to understand Minnesota's recent history prior to the Civil War. It serves to re-iterate the historical setting in which large numbers of Minnesotans volunteered for the Union. Carley's effort is not a typical chronological history; rather it is a history of the campaigns of the various Minnesota regiments. The amount of primary materials in the form of soldiers' letters and diaries is astounding. Photographs of the soldiers, the battlefields, their accoutrements, and regimental standards all help to recreate vividly the era for the reader. However, despite its illustrated value, *Minnesota in the Civil War* is limited in scope, limiting the potential audience. Carley's text will be a treasure for Minnesota and Civil War historians. Yet, most Civil War historians and military historians may find this work lacking, offering no fresh interpretations except the particulars for Minnesota regiments at certain battles.

Carley begins his work documenting the First Minnesota and its various engagements. His main concern is the First Minnesota's involvement at the battle of Gettysburg. Again, emphasizing the theme that runs throughout the text, Carley illustrates the "gallantry" of the Minnesotans in fighting around Cemetery Ridge and repelling Pickett's charge. General Winfield Hancock attributed "the superb gallantry" of the Minnesotans as saving the Union lines from breaking (p. 13). The account

of the battle offers few new interpretations to most civil war historians. However, those interested in regimental histories may enjoy Carley's account of the First Minnesota's involvement. The author offers various personal accounts from the soldiers of their involvement in Bull Run, Gettysburg and other battles along with vignettes on various subjects such as the New York draft riots and sharpshooters in Minnesota regiments to close out the first chapter.

The author next turns his attention to the Second Minnesota and its campaigns in Tennessee focusing especially on the regiment's involvement at Missionary Ridge during the battle of Chattanooga. Carley focuses once more on documenting the patriotic contributions of Minnesotans at certain battles, providing firsthand accounts from soldiers at the various engagements; he also adds additional short commentaries on various subjects designed to add to the historical context and setting. This style becomes the *modus operandi* for the author. Continuing this formula of writing, chapter 3 examines the Third Minnesota and its involvement in the capture of Little Rock and its subsequent surrender. Chapter 4 documents the Fifth Minnesota Regiment and its actions at Corinth. The following chapter explores the Fourth Minnesota's participation in the Vicksburg campaign. Carley discusses various Minnesota regiments' contributions to the 1864 Nashville encounters in chapter 6. The author's conclusion examines the Minnesotans responses upon hearing that the war is over and how they made their way home through various personal accounts.

Carley's *Minnesota in the Civil War* contains a plethora of primary documentation, most in the form of personal accounts that help to recreate the feelings and period for the reader. The strength of the book lies in its illustrative nature, providing images and primary accounts. Carley's scope is limited as he confines his study to engagements of Minnesota regiments. Though some historians will find his treatments of battles and campaigns lacking, he should not be criticized for it because that was not Carley's focus. Overall, Carley succeeds in documenting the contributions of Minnesota and its various regiments to the Union during the Civil War.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-civwar>

Citation: Halen Watkins. Review of Carley, Kenneth, *Minnesota in the Civil War: An Illustrated History*. H-CivWar, H-Net Reviews. February, 2007.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=12819>

Copyright © 2007 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.