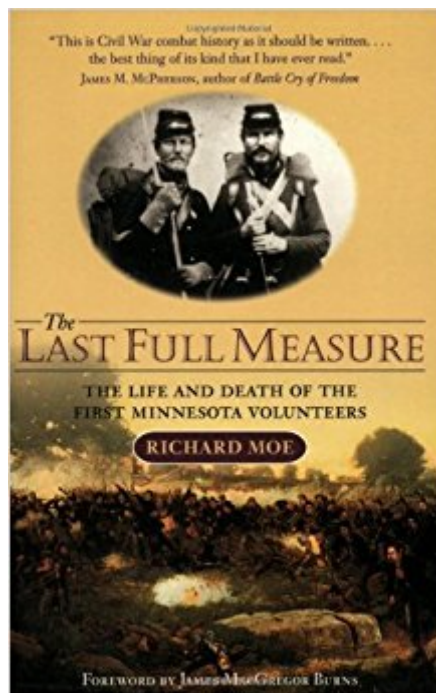




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The Last Full Measure: The Life And Death Of The First Minnesota Volunteers



Synopsis

Since its publication, Richard Moe's *The Last Full Measure* has garnered a reputation as the definitive history of the First Minnesota Regiment and one of a handful of classic regimental histories of the Civil War. The First Minnesota Volunteers, the first regiment offered to President Lincoln after the fall of Fort Sumter, served in virtually every major battle fought in the eastern theater during the first three years of the Civil War. This is the story of the Army of the Potomac during that period: the initial enthusiasm dashed by sudden defeat at Bull Run; the pride at being shaped into an army by George McClellan and the frustration with his—and his successors'—inability to defeat Robert E. Lee; and, finally, the costly battle of Gettysburg, the decisive battle in which the First Minnesota played a crucial, and tragic, role. Drawing on a wide array of letters, diaries, and personal reminiscences, Moe tells the story anew through the experiences of the men who lived it. As James MacGregor Burns notes in his foreword, "Like Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, this work sticks close to the men in battle, and hence, like Tolstoy, the author keeps close to the human size of war." Praise for *The Last Full Measure* "Richard Moe, in this wonderfully told regimental history, manages to rescue that which Civil War studies so often neglects: the people." —Ken Burns, co-producer of *The Civil War* "Exceptional . . . a vigorous, haunting celebration of the Men." —The New York Times Book Review "Regimental history at its best." —Publishers Weekly "Highly recommended. . . . Thoroughly researched and excellently incorporating the soldier's-eye view of the war. . . . The best volume of Civil War historiography to appear in some time." —Booklist "A tribute to the men who helped save the Union. . . . If ever a regiment deserved to be remembered, it is the First Minnesota. . . . Richard Moe has a passion for history. He clearly also has a talent for writing it." —Minneapolis Star Tribune

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Customer Reviews

Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, expertly chronicles a company of Union soldiers who led the charge on Gettysburg. (June Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The First Minnesota Volunteers were among the earliest groups to volunteer for service during the Civil War. The unit was usually on the front line for every major battle and paid the extreme sacrifice, especially at the Battle of Gettysburg. This is a skillful portrait of the trials and tribulations of those volunteers during the first three years of the war. Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, uses the letters, diaries, and personal narratives of the unit's soldiers to create an excellent eyewitness account of battles from Bull Run to Gettysburg with the Army of the Potomac. The author creates a graphic picture of the horrors and sufferings that were endured during battle as well as life in the camps between battles. This account will rank among the best regimental histories of the Civil War. Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 1/93.- W. Walter Wicker, Louisiana Tech Univ., RustonCopyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I've been reading military history for over 40 years and this, quite frankly, is the best unit history I've ever read. Richard Moe brings the First Minnesota Volunteer Regiment to life through extensive use of letters, newspaper stories, official announcements, and other sources. He provides excellent photographs too. The First Minnesota was the first Union regiment offered to President Lincoln for service and fought at the First Battle of Bull Run, Antietam, and Gettysburg. They were one of the only Union regiments to withdraw in order at Bull Run and were honored for their steadfast performance at Antietam. In both engagements, the First Minnesota took significant losses without breaking. At Gettysburg, the First Minnesota was nearly annihilated blocking Rebel units from turning the Union flank on the 2nd day of the Battle of Gettysburg. The First Minnesota conducted a bayonet charge on a Rebel unit 6 times their size and suffered over 80% casualties in 15 minutes. This charge stopped the Rebel breakthrough long enough for Union reserves to be brought up to

plug the gap and stabilize the line. The survivors of the First Minnesota found themselves on the receiving end of Picket's charge on the following day, suffering even more losses while conducting yet another bayonet charge against superior numbers. This unit deserved the best an author could give them and Richard Moe has come through for them with flying colors.

Even though this is the history of the 1st Minnesota from the fall of Fort Sumter through the battle at Gettysburg, it builds to a conclusion on the gallant attack late on the second day at Gettysburg to stop Confederate attack on unmanned portion of the Union line on Cemetery Ridge that would have likely resulted in a serious penetration of Meade's line. I was in combat in Vietnam and to share their thoughts before going into the breach, it brought back some troubling memories. These men did not question the order to charge. They did what they needed to do, knowing the result was not going to be good, Richard Moe captured the moment and the essence of these men and their sacrifice. This regimental history needs to be on everyone's Civil War bookshelf.

Devotion to history isn't as strong in the Upper Midwest as in the Old South. Perhaps oblivion is nobler and less risky than living out a myth, but there are few if any "re-enactors" among my Swedish kinfolk in the Land of Lakes. Of course, the earliest settlers in my clan came to Minnesota in 1872. The Minnesota First Volunteer Regiment, nevertheless, has a good claim on being the most heroic single regiment on either side in the whole war, and Mr Moe documents the history of their heroism most eloquently. Another review complains that Moe use too many quotes, too much primary source material. I totally disagree. The use of letters, journals, and bits from local newspapers is the strength of this book, the part that carries both conviction and immediacy. Comparison to the Ken Burns TV documentary is apt, and I feel that this book, *The Last Full Measure*, is stronger both in impact and in scholarship. We're modest, diffident people, we Minnesotans. You won't find many statues of soldiers in our town squares. Truth is, we don't have so many town squares to show them off in. Kids plow through elementary school in Minnesota thinking of the Civil War as a faraway conflict hardly more intimate to us than the Boer War. I remember being surprised, in college, to learn that there'd been a Sioux War in my birth-county, in the 1860s. History was what happened in other places. I wonder... Is our blissful ignorance a handicap or the source of our comparatively lawful and peaceful community? Our grudges stay at home. Anyhow, as we say in Freeborn County, this here tale of young men fighting for what they care about makes pretty good reading.

One of the best books I have ever read. To follow the Taylor brothers and the rest of the 1st Minnesota from formation in 1861 at Blooming Prairie, Minnesota through almost every major Union battle to Gettysburg in 1863 is an experience. Richard Moe's form of narrative is unique. You will be entrapped in the story told from the soldier's side and feel like you are there with them and part of the Minnesota Regiment.

Mr. Moe's tale of the First Minnesota Volunteers is a real page-turner that reads like fiction. Structured as a journey there-and-back-again through the eyes of the participants he skillfully weaves first-person accounts that are never dry and always clearly assembled. His background and contextual information is helpful and unbiased. Moe has crafted a thrilling tribute to real heroes that should stand the test of time. My only wish is that there were more of the excellent illustrations and photos, perhaps another edition can expand that section.

I highly recommend this book for any Civil war buff. This is the story of the first Minnesota regiment in the civil war. Their story is breathtaking and heroic. When you read about what they sacrificed holding the rise on Gettysburg's second day, you can't help but be proud and amazed.

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