

territorial governor, plus years as head of the Republican party in Minnesota, made his quest for the Senate a reasonable and attainable goal. Added to this political prominence was his economic and social standing in the Minnesota community.

While Ramsey's course to the United States Senate may have seemed relatively unobstructed to the ordinary citizen, beneath the surface of things political there existed a turbulence created by the opportunism of strong-willed men contending for

power. The rich collections of letters and documents left by the contemporaries of that time attest to the intraparty strife of vigorous men who sought influential and important positions in government.

Ramsey was to remain in the United States Senate for twelve years. His election in 1863 helped to determine, in large measure, the political complexion of Minnesota until 1875, when a more successful coalition than that headed by Aldrich defeated his quest for a third term.

A Soldier's Christmas -- 1861

DECEMBER, 1861, found the First Minnesota Regiment of Volunteers performing picket duty along the Potomac. They had seen action at Bull Run in July and again at Ball's Bluff in October, but following the second encounter, the recruits had returned to their permanent camp between Poolesville and Edwards' Ferry, Maryland. From this point they patrolled the north bank of the Potomac River for some distance on either side of Edwards' Ferry. Though it was a time of little excitement, the men were not idle, for their newly commissioned colonel, Napoleon J. T. Dana, drilled the regiment relentlessly through the long winter months, helping to perfect the disciplined fighting unit that was to perform so effectively in later campaigns.

For most of the young soldiers — as for Private Samuel Bloomer of Company B — it was the first Christmas in the army. Bloomer came from Stillwater, and he kept a diary of his wartime experiences which is now in the files of the

Minnesota Historical Society. On December 25, 1861, he wrote:

"This Morning dawned very pleasant and the whole day, but it was a very dull Christmas to us. Last night our sutler had a lot of goods come, with all kinds of marks on them. Some were marked Knives and forks, boot blacking, pepper &c. But our *Col* smelt a rat and had the wagon taken up to the guard house, and this morning had the boxes opened and lo and behold they contained a lot of choice Whiskey & Brandy, which to his surprise were taken up to Poolesville to the hospital department, to be used in that institution. during the day 2 or 3 kegs of beer were got and some of the boys began to feel rather light headed. Had no drills, nor even dress parade [.] I suppose the reason was it was Christmas and it dont come but one in a year. I for one wish that we had Christmas every day on the drilling account, not because we had such a good time, for it was the dullest Christmas that ever I spent in all my life and hope I never shall again. Being a soldier is not like being at home on that day. The boys in my mess got a lot of oysters and good fresh milk and made a good Soup of them. But I had to look on and see them 'go in right' . . . good earnest, as I am no oyster eater. I could not stand it to look on, so I pitched in and eat a lot of bread and Molasses, for a substitute of the oysters. 'perhaps that is a poor substitute.' Sergeant Burns . . . will probably leave for Stillwater in a few days."





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