

County's Milton Hanna was Civil War hero

By Julie Schrader

Blue Earth County Historical Society

As the nation continues to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, we remember the men from Blue Earth County who served with bravery and honor. One of these men was Milton Hanna, who served the entire duration of the war from 1861 to 1865.

Hanna was 19 years old when the war broke out. One of the first men from Blue Earth County to enlist, he was mustered in as a private in Company H, 2nd Minnesota Infantry Regiment — the first organized company in Mankato — on June 22, 1861.

Company H marched south with the regiment and engaged in the first major Union victory at Mill Springs, Ky., took part in the siege of Corinth and fought at Perryville and Stones River.

The company was encamped just outside Nolinsville, Tenn., on Feb. 15, 1863 — a cold and gray Sunday morning — when a small party of men, including Hanna, was assigned to go to the front to forage for mules.

The men started out with a 10-team wagon train. Af-

ter traveling a few miles from camp, the party separated when six of the wagons stopped at a plantation. With Sgt. Lovilo Holmes in charge of 15 men, the other four wagons continued to an open farmstead with a barn and small corn crib.

Just as they started to load the contents from the corn crib into the wagons, Confederate soldiers surprised them. The Union soldiers were outnumbered and surrounded by 125 mounted soldiers — all armed with carbines, rifles and pistols.

Sgt. Holmes ordered his men to take cover in the barn and corn crib and hold fire until he shot first.

Suddenly, they heard a stampede of horse hooves and the famous "Rebel Yell" as the Confederates advanced to fewer than two rods from the buildings. Holmes fired three shots, taking down the Rebels' lead horse and its rider. Other shots quickly followed and several other Rebels fell.

From their cramped spaces, the Union soldiers fired as fast as they could load their weapons and the Minnesota boys yelled

insults at the now dismounted Rebels.

The storm of lead bullets smashing into the small corn crib was incredible. Rebels demanded their surrender, but the Boys in Blue — nearly choking from their own gun smoke — kept up steady return fire.

When the rest of the Minnesota 2nd was sighted coming over the hill, the rebels began to retreat. Seeing this, the Union soldiers crawled out of the corn crib and continued to fight.

They captured three Confederate soldiers, confiscated many weapons and rounded up seven horses.

Union casualties were Holmes, Charles Liscomb and Sam Loudon, who each had flesh wounds. A mule was killed and a wagon tongue was broken.

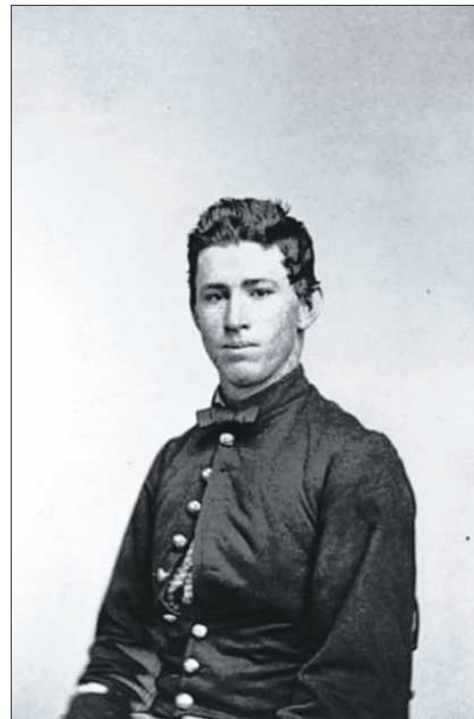
Hanna would go on to fight at Shelbyville and Chickamauga, where he was severely wounded in the leg. Despite his injury, he re-enlisted in December 1863. He later participated in the 100 days' fighting during the Atlanta campaign, accompanying Sherman on his march to the sea.

After Hanna received an honorable discharge July 21, 1865, at Fort Snelling, he returned to Mankato. He married and had two children, was the driving force in building the Mankato Fire Department into a professional organization and was the quartermaster of the Alexander Wilkin Post G.A.R. for many years.

The men in the foraging party at Nolinsville became known as the Corn Crib Party. These men were: Sgt. Lovilo Holmes, Corporals Milton Hanna, William A. Clark and Samuel Wright, Privates James Flannigan, Samuel Leslie, Louis Londrash, Joseph Burger, Byron Pay, John Vale, Samuel Loudon, Charles Liscomb, Nelson Crandall, Charles Kraus, and Homer Barnard.

Due to a government oversight, it wasn't until 1897 that the men from the Corn Crib Party were given a Congressional Medal of Honor for most distinguished gallantry in action during the Civil War.

Hanna's citation reads: "At Nolinsville, Tenn., Feb. 15, 1863, this soldier, then corporal, was attacked by one hundred and twenty-five cavalry. After a most heroic defense, the attack was repulsed and the train saved."



Courtesy Blue Earth County Historical Society

Milton Hanna was one of hundreds of men from Blue Earth County who served in the Civil War. Plans are being made to engrave his name and those of the other soldiers from the county on a Boys in Blue Civil War Memorial in Mankato's Lincoln Park.

Hanna died on January 21, 1913, at the age of 71 at the Soldiers Home in

Minneapolis. He is buried in Glenwood Cemetery in Mankato.