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“General Herron has a neat, well-formed person, and dresses with much taste. In appearance he is intelligent, and in manners agreeable,” wrote Iowa captain A. A. Stuart in 1865. Stuart praised Herron for his calm composure, taciturnity (though not “sullen or morose”), and self-reliant spirit.

Courage and Conduct

Francis J. Herron

by Dennis Black

A man of less nerve would have been intimidated, perhaps sought safety in retreat and been destroyed. Gen. Herron decided otherwise, and, undismayed, threw his little army upon the rebel lines with an energy and fierceness."

So states an 1867 description of Francis J. Herron at the Battle of Prairie Grove. That Herron was the consummate militarist would be proven throughout the Civil War. He served fearlessly in several chapters of the great epic. He earned promotions at astonishingly early ages, becoming brigadier-general and major-general in his mid-20s. He was awarded the nation's Medal of Honor. And yet he is Iowa's most unknown and overlooked military hero.

Francis J. Herron was born on February 17, 1837, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the son of wealthy farmer and landowner John Herron and Clarissa Anderson Herron. Francis received his first formal education at a military academy in Frankfort, Kentucky, following which he entered Western University of Pennsylvania in Pittsburgh. He left the university at the age of 16 to clerk in a bank and in 1854 partnered in the family banking firm of Herron and Brothers. The next year he and his brother Richard moved to Dubuque, attracted by the vast commerce of the Mississippi River. First engaged in the lumber business, the brothers were soon joined by two more, and they opened the Herron and Brothers Bank of Dubuque.

Herron was involved in more than business. He considered a militia integral to the well-being of the citizenry, and in February 1858, he organized a local unit, "Governor's Greys," named in honor of former Iowa governor Stephen Hempstead from Dubuque. Herron

was its captain. The town took pride in the unit; in April 1860 the *Dubuque Herald* boasted that "the Governor's Greys were out on parade yesterday in their new white accoutrements. We will defy any city in the West to turn out a better looking military company or a 'whiter' [more honorable] lot of boys than our own G. G's. 'Tis true they are composed of the very pink of our finest young men."

By the spring of 1861, Herron and the Greys were anxious, willing, and ready for duty when President Lincoln's call to arms followed the fall of Fort Sumter. They left Dubuque in April to rendezvous in Keokuk. The Greys mustered in as Company I, one of ten companies in the 1st Iowa Volunteer Infantry.

Following two weeks of training, the 1st Iowa departed Keokuk on June 13 to join other Union forces in Missouri. Dramatically divided over the war, Missouri had rejected secession though it had a pro-Southern governor who maintained state troops near St. Louis and the federal arsenal. What happened in Missouri was critical. Determined to push rebel forces out of southwestern Missouri, General Nathaniel Lyon led 3,000 infantry and a battery of artillery towards Springfield. En route they were joined by two Kansas volunteer regiments, a detachment of regular (non-volunteer) army, and an additional artillery battery. The blazing summer sun took a toll on the new recruits, with many falling by the wayside. Such was not the case for Herron and the 1st Iowa, who "stood the test of endurance so well that they out-distanced part of the column," a historian later wrote. "General Lyon called them his Iowa greyhounds" for their swiftness and stamina.

At 5 a.m. on August 10, Lyon's army entered its first battle. Wilson's Creek was the second battle of the Civil

War, the first west of the Mississippi River, and a fierce and bloody confrontation with great deeds of valor on both sides. Lyon's 4,200 troops and Colonel Franz Sigel's 1,200 launched a surprise attack against Confederate General Ben McCulloch.

Unknown at the time, McCulloch commanded a force of 11,600 men. Lyon moved his troops down the west side of Wilson's Creek, where they encountered an enemy cavalry force in retreat. In pursuit, Lyon's troops were met with enfilading artillery. Meanwhile, Sigel had positioned his Union troops on the ridge east of Wilson's Creek and opened artillery fire on the main camp along the creek. The Union had the upper hand until the Confederates regrouped and responded with vengeance. Five of Sigel's six cannon were captured and his command was decimated by point-blank musket fire from 40 yards. The 1st Iowa wore butternut-colored uniforms, as did many Southern troops, and in the confusion of the battle, Sigel had mistaken the Confederates for the 1st Iowa and ordered his men to hold fire.

Lyon was twice wounded and then fell when a musket ball pierced his chest. One historian described his death: "'Iowa Regiment, you are noble boys!' [Lyon] murmured as he saw his 'greyhounds' prepare to charge. A moment later he died."

Major S. D. Sturgis now assumed command. Preparing for the final attack, every available Union soldier was moved to the front, effectively concentrating their muskets and artillery. The Confederates established a line of 6,000 men but did not break the Union lines. Nevertheless, Sturgis and his troops, exhausted and low on ammunition, retreated to Springfield and then to the railroad at Rolla. Although Wilson's Creek was considered the South's victory, the Confederates erred in failing to pursue and finalize that victory.

Of the 1st Iowa's 800 troops, 154 were casualties at Wilson's Creek. Francis Herron was slightly wounded by an exploding artillery shell. He was later praised by Sturgis for his "zeal and courage." Sturgis also praised the 1st Iowa Volunteers for fighting "like devils, and if any man after this ever says to me that volunteers won't fight, I'll make it a personal matter with him!"

Ten days after the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Herron and the 1st Iowa were mustered out, having served beyond the 90-day enlistment. He and the Governor's Greys returned to Dubuque for an exuberant welcome home. Herron immediately went in search of an officer's commission in another regiment.

He found it in the 9th Iowa Infantry, raised by Con-

gressman William Vandever from his northeast Iowa district. The 9th was mustered into service at Dubuque on September 24, 1861, with Vandever as colonel and Herron as lieutenant-colonel. The regiment immediately departed Dubuque by steamer for training at Benton Barracks, St. Louis.

From fall to midwinter, the 9th Iowa guarded railroads in Missouri. In late January 1862, the regiment joined Brigadier-General Samuel R. Curtis and the Army of the Southwest, and proceeded to Springfield in search of Major-General Sterling Price, commander of the pro-Confederate Missouri State Guard. At Sugar Creek, along the Missouri-Arkansas border, the 9th Iowa experienced its first skirmish, advancing on an enemy three times as large. The Confederates put up little resistance and fled south into Arkansas to rendezvous with Major-General Earl Van Dorn.

Van Dorn commanded Confederate troops west of the Mississippi. On the evening of March 6, he and his 16,500 troops (including 800 Cherokees) attempted to outflank Curtis's army of 10,250, consolidated three miles south of Elkhorn Tavern at Pea Ridge—the site of what would be the Civil War's most decisive battle west of the Mississippi.

Van Dorn had divided his army into two columns. Herron was in temporary command of the 9th Iowa when advised of Van Dorn's move. In response, he ordered the regiment in a sustained, forced march of 16 hours to join the main body. Upon their arrival, he told his men, "We have come a long ways, boys, to fight them, and by the Eternal, we will fight them right here!"

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COURTESY ANDY THOMAS

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Above: *On the Battery: The Battle of Pea Ridge at Elkhorn Tavern, March 7, 1862.* Painting by Andy Thomas.

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courthouse. Nine months later, he and his troops would march through Van Buren, where Herron would take possession of the flag with "considerable pleasure" and send it to Iowa's governor.

Herron was soon exchanged for Colonel Lewis Herber who, coincidentally, had fought at Wilson's Creek. After a brief recuperation in Baltimore, Herron returned to Iowa and promptly sought a promotion through his friend, Iowa governor Samuel J. Kirkwood. Without hesitation, Kirkwood recommended promotion, and on July 30 Lieutenant-Colonel Herron was promoted to brigadier-general, becoming the only officer in Iowa history to bypass a colonelcy. Thus, at the age of 25, Francis J. Herron became Iowa's youngest general. He thanked the governor with several boxes of cigars delivered to his office.

Herron was soon assigned command of the 3rd Division of the Army of the Frontier, under General John Schofield. Schofield's three divisions had been skirmishing between Missouri and Arkansas. General James G. Blunt, 1st Division, was in the vicinity of Bentonville when he moved against a detachment of Major-General Thomas C. Hindman's army, perhaps 20,000 strong in Arkansas's Boston Mountains. Hindman now gathered his troops for an assault.

Blunt needed reinforcements and immediately dispatched a messenger, who arrived early on December 3 at Schofield's command. Schofield was absent, leaving Herron in command. Herron immediately broke camp, and, with the 2nd and 3rd divisions, entered a forced march of men, guns, and wagon trains. After four grueling days and nights and 110 miles, Herron and his troops arrived at Fayetteville a few hours before dawn on December 7.

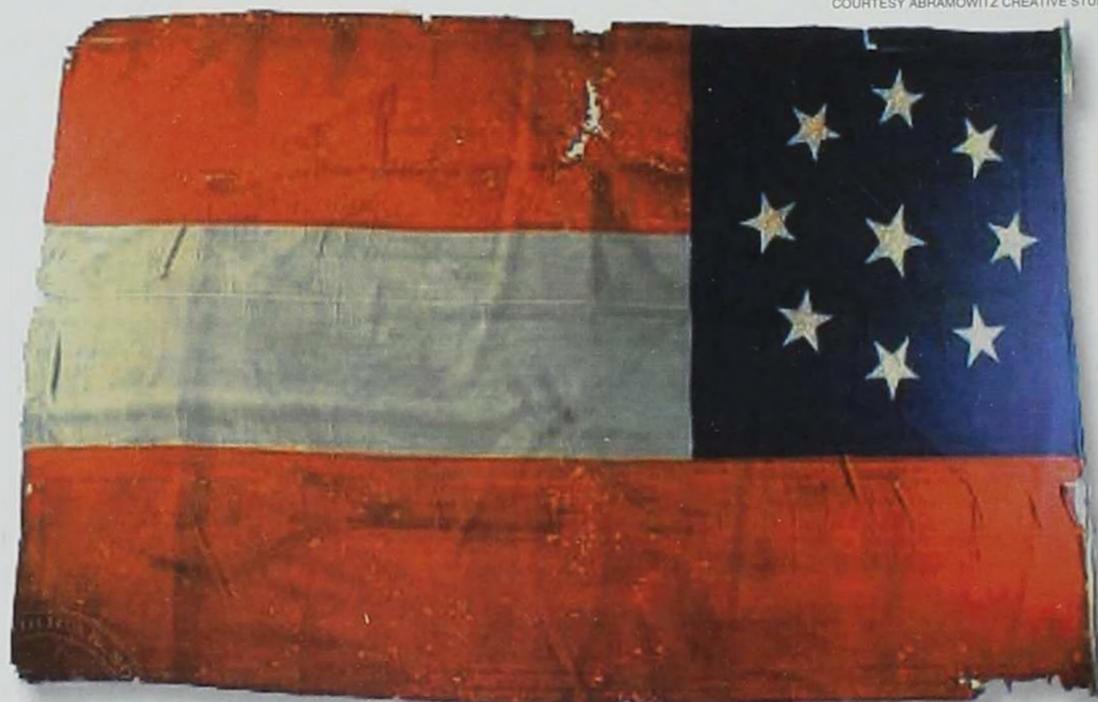
Hindman did not yet know

Herron's troop strength. When Major James M. Hubbard of Herron's advance guard was captured, he was taken before Hindman and was asked, "How much of a force has General Herron?"

The soldier replied, "Enough to annihilate you!"

Hubbard's firm resolve caught Hindman's attention and tempered his eagerness to attack Herron.

Hindman's massive army now lined Prairie Grove, partially sandwiched between Blunt and Herron's three divisions. Skilled artilleries dueled relentlessly. Herron led numerous infantry advances up the slopes: "For four miles we fought their cavalry, driving them back to Illinois creek, where I found their whole force strongly posted on a long ridge, with magnificent positions for batteries. For one mile in front it was clear ground, and my road lay right in the center of their line. From a pris-



COURTESY ABRAMOWITZ CREATIVE STUDIOS

Early in February 1863, Francis Herron wrote Governor Kirkwood the following words: "With this, I send you a rebel flag captured by my troops, at Van Buren, Arkansas, in December last. This identical flag was floating on the court-house in that place, one year ago, while I was there, held as a prisoner of war; and, of course, it gave me considerable pleasure to take possession of it. Will you please pass it over to the State Historical Society, with my compliments."

Although the flag appears reversed, some 19th-century flags had the canton in the upper right rather than the upper left. The flag measures about 14x8 feet. A circle of eight stars surrounds a slightly larger ninth star. According to researcher Dave Holmgren, "This is a rather unusual number of stars on a Confederate flag. Some early Confederate flags showed seven stars for the seven original states of the Confederacy. Later flags showed eleven stars for the total number of states that eventually joined. Others showed thirteen stars, to include Missouri and Kentucky although neither seceded from the Union. Perhaps this flag shows nine stars because Arkansas was the ninth state to secede. It joined the Confederacy within weeks of the surrender of Fort Sumter and secession of Virginia. Tennessee and North Carolina followed later in May."

oner taken, I learned that Hindman was on the ridge, with his whole force, and intended to whip me out before Blunt could get up—in other words, to take us one at a time. The case looked tough, with Blunt ten miles away, and 25,000 men between us; but I saw at a glance there were just two things that could be done; namely, fight them without delay, and depend on the chance of Blunt's hearing me and coming up, or retreat and lose my whole train. It required no time to make a decision."

Blunt, having heard the commotion of heavy battle, moved to position, shifting the momentum to the Union. Still, neither army gained advantage. As darkness fell on the blood-soaked slopes, casualties were immense. The Union loss at the Battle of Prairie Grove was 1,100; the Confederate loss, 3,000. During the night and following morning, Hindman and his rebel army quietly retreated.

Although the Confederate forces had been more than double those of the North, the Yankees had persevered through sheer determination and superior leadership. Blunt praised Herron for his gallantry and highest conduct. A Civil War chronicler noted, "At Prairie Grove [Herron] led the advance over the ford of Illinois Creek, and, under the rapid and accurate fire of the enemy, was in imminent peril; but he was perfectly calm, and apparently insensible of danger." Another chronicler minced no words: "The battle of Prairie Grove is Herron's praise. He can rest on the laurels he won there, and in getting there, certain that he will go down to history among the bravest of the brave generals of the war, and among the most energetic and efficient."

For his leadership at Prairie Grove, Brigadier-General Herron was promoted to major-general. The promotion on March 10, 1863, was retroactive to 1862. Though others would follow, Herron—having just turned 26 in February—was at that time the Civil War's youngest major-general.

Now commanding a division of eight regiments and three batteries, Herron joined Grant in his siege on Vicksburg. He arrived on June 11 and immediately took position left of Grant's line along the Mississippi River. Heretofore, the Confederates had relayed orders under the cover of darkness. In Grant's words, Herron's action "cut off the last possible chance of communications between [Confederate generals] Pemberton and Johnston." With Pemberton's surrender on July 4, 1863, Grant selected Herron to occupy the city. Fruits of the Confederates' surrender were some 2,200 officers and 27,000 enlisted men, as well as 172 cannon and 60,000 small arms.

Grant also ordered Herron to drive the Confederates out of Yazoo City, a few miles northwest of

Vicksburg and the site of a Confederate naval yard. Herron's division steamed up the Yazoo River with a convoy of three gunboats, including the ironclad USS *Baron DeKalb*. Arriving just below Yazoo, Herron and his troops went ashore. The gunboats proceeded upriver, but the Confederate batteries were strong and well positioned, and the gunboats retreated out of range.

Herron stated that on July 13, he and "Major Clark, of my staff, went on board the gunboat *De Kalb*, in advance of [Union troops moving into Yazoo City]. The *De Kalb* had moved up to a point nearly opposite the city, when she was blown up by a torpedo (a number of which had been placed in the river by Captain Brown, of the Confederate Navy), which tore away some 2 feet of her port bow, and sinking her in less than a quarter of an hour in 15 feet of water. Fortunately, no one was hurt."

The Union destroyed five Confederate steamers at Yazoo City. Herron reported taking "six guns, with about 200 rounds of ammunition for guns, and captured about 300 prisoners, with 8 commissioned officers." His troops also captured 250 stand of small arms; 2,000 bales of cotton; 800 horses and mules; and hospital bedding for 450 patients. He reported a countryside teeming with corn, beef, hogs, and sheep. Thousands of bales of cotton were "stored in the woods and valleys," and at least 50,000 bales could be transported from Yazoo City. Showing his concern for his men, Herron added, "Owing to the constant labor to which my men have been subjected during the last month, the change of climate, and the impure water used on this trip, many of them are sick."

Just five days after Vicksburg's surrender, another 5,000 Confederates had surrendered at Port Hudson, Louisiana. The Mississippi River was now open to the sea, and the Confederacy was split.

Following Vicksburg, Grant assigned Herron to the 13th Army Corps, commanded by General O. E. C. Ord, Department of the Gulf. Near the end of two weeks of skirmishing in Louisiana, Herron relinquished his command. He was extremely ill, unable to perform command duties. Ord placed him on leave and he departed by steamer for a hospital.

Upon his return a month later, Herron received the command of Union forces at Brownsville, Texas, across the Rio Grande River from Matamoros, Mexico. Mexico was also in the throes of a civil war. Although his hands were officially tied, Herron was thrust into a hotbed of international politics. American interests were at risk,

for France had troops on Mexican soil in what President Lincoln considered a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. France was a known sympathizer of the Confederacy, to the point of providing harbor and haven to its raiders plundering the high seas. Lincoln's administration was not about to allow the French to succeed in their dream of reestablishing an empire.

Although liberal Mexicans were in power at the time of Herron's arrival at Brownsville, by mid-year the power had shifted and Napoleon III had installed his puppet Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph von Habsburg of Austria as emperor of Mexico. The liberals, under President Benito Juarez, departed Mexico City and entered exile as the French embarked on the path of occupying the country.

Although ordered to exhibit no visible involvement in Mexican affairs, Herron was besieged with requests, both open and confidential, to intervene. He rendered aid where possible, some of which is known, and undoubtedly much that has never been revealed. An example of his open intervention occurred in early January when violence erupted in Matamoros. The U.S. consul dispatched the following message to Herron on the evening of January 12: "A battle is now raging in the streets of this city between the forces of Governor Manuel Ruiz and Col. Juan N. Cortina. My person and family are in great danger, as the road between here and the ferry is said to be infested with robbers. I have also about \$1,000,000 in specie and a large amount of other valuable property under my charge in the consulate, and from the well-known character of Cortina and his followers, I fear the city will be plundered. I therefore earnestly request that you will send a sufficient force to protect myself and property and to transport the money within the limits of the United States at the earliest possible moment."

Herron ordered the 20th Wisconsin Infantry to cross the Rio Grande. The contingent arrived by 11:30 that night, but waited until morning to rescue the consulate personnel and the million dollars in gold or silver. Governor Ruiz was decisively beaten in the battle that followed, and he and other prominent officers crossed the Rio Grande as refugees.

Matamoros was one of many sensitive and delicate missions that Herron oversaw in his unenviable position of responsibility along the Mexican border. Official records laud the man and his many accomplishments, and it is most apparent that the federal administration had total confidence in the abilities of the 27-year-old major-general from Iowa.

Herron was soon ordered to Louisiana and then to Arkansas. This marked a major change in his life. Herron

was given a free hand to investigate kickbacks, diversions of public property to private use, bribes, and overbillings in the Department of Arkansas. Herron traveled to Fort Smith, Arkansas, and there rekindled friendships with trusted acquaintances. His officer friends, knowing he would treat them well in the face of anticipated discoveries, assisted greatly in getting to the bottom of the sordid and blatant corruption. The results of Herron's investigations, according to a fellow Iowa soldier, were "published in nearly all the leading papers of the country, and convinced all honest men that the Department of Arkansas had been the theatre of most outrageous abuses." Herron's successful resolution of the problem did not go unnoticed by his superiors.

The Civil War was now in its final stage. Confederate troops were demoralized, and desertion was rampant. In late March 1865, Herron joined forces along the eastern shore of Mobile Bay, Alabama, where retreating Confederates had taken final refuge in two nearby forts. Both fell rather easily to the Union, especially with immense contributions by African American troops. Because Herron was a calm and decisive man, it was no surprise when he was selected to negotiate and receive the formal surrender of the Trans-Mississippi Army—60,000 troops—at Shreveport, Louisiana.

Herron was offered many opportunities to remain in service to the Union. In fact, after tendering his resignation in early May and awaiting word from Washington, he proceeded with his duties, including the initial negotiations with Indian nations that had supported the Confederacy. He was also intimately involved in the decisions regarding civil control and law enforcement in Louisiana during the massive reconstruction of the devastated South. Herron went so far as to urge freed slaves to stay with their former masters, in the capacity of paid laborers to plant crops, and thus help restore the South's economy.

Herron's resignation was officially accepted on July 10, 1865. Because of his extensive family in Iowa, most expected that he would return. He was captivated by Louisiana, however, and remained in New Orleans to practice law and pursue other business interests. Word of Herron's decision reached Iowa, where an 1867 profile reported that Herron "is now a resident of New Orleans. While fighting Confederate armies, he seems to have become enamored of the soft breezes and sunny skies of Confederate latitudes, and soon after the establishment of peace within their borders, took up his abode

among his former enemies. Bountifully may he be prospered. If his successes in civil life are proportioned to the merits of his military career, they will be productive."

The price of cotton had soared during the Civil War as demand far exceeded supply. Knowing the price would remain high for a few years, Herron saw the opportunity for huge and quick profits. In the spring of 1866, Herron and Whitelaw Reid (renowned author, newspaper editor, and Radical Republican) entered into partnership and leased three plantations near Natchez. According to *Scribner's Monthly Magazine*, "The bold novices planted the large number of 2,200 acres with cotton, hiring and working no less than 300 Negroes." All looked well, with a huge crop ripening in the fields, when army worms invaded. The loss was immense; only a fourth of the crop was harvested. Luckily, Herron and Reid's meager harvest covered labor and fixed expenses.

Herron was an astute businessman, and his decision to live in New Orleans was surely for business purposes. However, the major-general was soon smitten by the natural beauty and social class of a locally prominent widow. Adelaide Sophia Wibray Flash had inherited considerable stock, funds in Europe, and slaves. Herron was an active Radical Republican and adamantly opposed to slavery in any form; one wonders how he made peace with the issue of his wife having inherited slaves (whom she had freed after the war), or if political and ideological differences even existed between the two.

Although Francis and Adelaide's date of marriage is uncertain, 1870 records indicate that the couple, in their early 30s, was financially secure. Their household comprised three daughters from Adelaide's previous marriage, a white governess, and two white servants.

Herron had entered the upper crust of southern Louisiana's economic and political social structure. The attorney was at ease in this environment and soon befriended Henry



In New Orleans after the war, Herron married Adelaide Flash.

BOTH PHOTOS, COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

enough to protect him from his adversaries, and he implicated Herron for bogus charges of corruption as a tax collector, claiming he diverted settled accounts to personal use. Herron's friends recognized the ridiculous nature of Warmouth's charges as an obvious vindictive reaction for his own political problems and inadequacies.

Strong and resourceful, with head held high, Herron returned to his law practice. Then, in 1877, when Radical Reconstruction ended and federal troops withdrew from Louisiana, the Herrons departed for New York City. There he was a successful attorney and pursued a variety of business endeavors, including manufacturing and banking. He was active in both the Grand Army of the Republic and the Loyal Legion.

In 1893, a letter arrived informing Herron of his selection as a recipient of the nation's highest recognition for military valor—the Medal of Honor—awarded for his actions on March 7, 1862, at the Battle of Pea Ridge. Then a lieutenant-colonel, he had assisted in the command of the 9th Iowa Infantry and "was foremost in leading his men, rallying them to repeated acts of daring, until himself disabled and taken prisoner." Congress had established the Medal of



Herron was a New York attorney and businessman later in life.

Honor in the 1860s, but many Civil War heroes were not designated for the award until two or three decades later. The War Department issued Herron's medal on September 26, 1893.

Herron died on January 8, 1902, a month short of his 65th birthday and just two months after Adelaide's death. For several weeks he had suffered severely with inflammatory rheumatism and heart trouble. At the news of his death, the Dubuque armory announced plans to drape his portrait in mourning and fly the flag at half-staff for 30 days.

In Queens, New York, Francis and Adelaide's graves are marked by a massive, rose granite stone, adorned by a huge, sculpted sitting eagle. In Des Moines, Iowa, however, any symbol of his heroic actions in the Civil War is oddly absent from a far larger monument.

About the time when Herron received the Medal of Honor, a massive memorial to Iowans in the Civil War was taking shape, at least on paper. In 1887, Iowa veterans in the Grand Army of the Republic had pushed for a monument to be located near the state capitol. The next year, the legislature appropriated initial funds and appointed a commission to select the design.

The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument was controversial from the very beginning, and the wrangling lasted a decade. As the *Iowa State Register* commented in one of many articles on the subject, "The commission's pathway has not been lined with roses along the entire route." Arguments persisted over the artist, the design, and the specific location. Selecting which of nearly 77,000 Civil War soldiers should be honored on the monument was a monumental question in itself. Should they only be officers? Only ordinary soldiers? Only those who had died in the war? Should the portraits be based on actual likenesses or simply represent "the ideal soldier"? Perhaps the names of all Iowa regiments should appear, rather than images of soldiers.

At a time when public statuary dictated popular memory and held great cultural significance, these were weighty debates. Selection of individuals to be depicted apparently began in December 1893. As monument commission secretary D. N. Richardson explained in early 1896, "We have spent several years doing this work and examining into the records of the various soldiers."

In the design that evolved, the 135-foot shaft was crowned by a classical figure of Victory. Two-thirds down the shaft, equestrian statues paid tribute to four of Iowa's greatest Civil War heroes, each astride a spirited horse. These four equestrian statues were consid-

ered the greatest honor. Below the statues, on each side of the monument, large bronze medallions featured another four heroes. Thirty-two smaller medallions belted the square pedestal; bas-reliefs depicted the Battle of Donelson and Iowans' triumphal return home; and allegorical figures represented Iowa and History. Statues of an infantryman, cavalryman, artilleryman, and sailor looking out from the corners completed the monument. In all, 86 Iowans appear on the monument. General Francis Jay Herron does not. Herron's Civil War comrades and Iowa friends were furious.

Certainly some Iowans held Herron in disfavor, primarily because he had been a friend to Louisiana governor Henry Warmouth and had served in his postbellum administration during the time Warmouth had used his position for personal gain—even though Herron was innocent of any wrongdoing and was released from his duties as secretary of state when he would not support the governor during impeachment proceedings.

Throughout Herron's life, however, numerous and notable individuals also attested to his honor, decency, and heroism—as had the Medal of Honor he received in 1893. Many individuals now argued fervently on his behalf as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument Commission identified Iowans to be honored on the memorial.

Regarding the highest honor—the equestrian statues—an April 1894 newspaper article on the commission's progress announced that "it was decided that the four equestrian statues . . . should represent Generals [Grenville] Dodge, [John M.] Corse, [Marcellus M.] Crocker, and [Samuel Ryan] Curtis." Whether these were the final choices is not clear. At a November 1895 commission meeting, former Iowa senator J. K. Graves of Dubuque argued that Herron deserved an equestrian statue. He was supported by testimonies, letters, and petitions from Governor-elect F. M. Drake; U.S. Senator William B. Allison; recent Speaker of the House David Henderson; Dubuque's Governor's Greys; and others of importance. In response, the commission explained that no space remained for a fifth equestrian statue and instead voted unanimously that Herron's likeness would replace the Iowa coat of arms on one of the four large medallions.

The Iowa Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, south of the capitol, honors Iowans in the Civil War. Although the likenesses on it clearly represent specific individuals, none are identified by name. Controversy dogged the planning and design of the monument, particularly regarding who would appear on it.

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Graves saw this as somewhat of a victory. The large medallion, he said, "is second place on the monument, and considering the insidious, cowardly New York attack upon General Herron's character, had relegated our hero to obscurity so far as Iowa's monument is concerned, is a triumphant vindication of his unsullied civic character, in harmony with his excellent military record." Graves referred to a "cowardly letter" from an unnamed "assassin of character" who had "stabbed in character and hurled [Herron] from Iowa's monument but two months after the outrage [became] known."

The "outrage" may have referred to a *New York Times* article two months earlier, on September 20, announcing possible litigation against "Francis J. Herron, a broker at 45 Broadway" regarding alleged stock speculation in a Mexico mining operation. Nothing more is known about the charges against Herron, but they apparently affected the commission's choices. Months later, commission member C. H. Gatch stated that the commission had considered Herron for an equestrian statue until they heard of the slanders and initially believed them.

Herron's supporters would not rest. On January 21, 1896, Senator Robert Bonson of Dubuque entered Joint Resolution No. 7. The monument commission had indeed received "a secret communication impugning the General's personal character," Bonson stated, but the Governor's Greys had "conclusively demonstrated the utter groundlessness of the secret attack." Why then, Bonson asked, "of Iowa's two living Major-Generals, one [Samuel Curtis] was accorded equestrian honors and the other given a Medallion"? The senator's resolution was meant to force the monument commission to grant Herron equestrian honors on the monument. Due to apparent behind-the-scenes lobbying, Joint Resolution No. 7 was not adopted. Herron would not be honored by an equestrian statue.

A year and a half later, contractors were installing the medallions on the monument, and on August 27 the *Iowa State Register* listed those depicted. According

to the news story, Herron was assigned a large medallion, as were General W. W. Belknap, General Edward Hatch, and Colonel E. F. Winslow. But in the end, the Iowa coat of arms, not Herron's likeness, appeared within the large medallion. No further explanation for this final substitution has been found.

A great injustice was rendered by the Iowa Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument Commission. Unquestionably, Herron's contribution to the legacy of Iowans in the Civil War was monumental. Yet, vicious innuendo with no validity resulted in his absence on the monument and his obscurity in Iowa history. Several of Iowa's historically prominent figures, along with the media they influenced, had

commented negatively on Herron's decision to stay in Louisiana following the war; were quick to point out that his wife had inherited slaves; widely reported the scandal in the Louisiana administration; and savored any rumors of business failures.

Even his final years have been portrayed negatively by scholars and biographers. *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (1964) states that Herron's "stature and fortunes steadily diminished" during his years in the Louisiana governor's administration and that "his death certificate records that he died in a 'tenement' on West 99th Street [New York City], 'Occupation: None.'" A recent history of the Battle of Wilson's Creek (published in 2000) cites this same source and asserts that he was "unsuccessful in business and died in poverty."

These interpretations are easily refuted. First of all, although Herron's 1902 death certificate lists his occupation as "none," the 1900 census lists him as a banker. Perhaps he had exited his career because of severe health problems in the last months of his life. Second, the notation of "tenement" on his death certificate did not necessarily mean a slum. Technically, a tenement (from the word "tenant") meant simply a multiple-dwelling build-

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, FROM A. A. STUART'S IOWA'S COLONELS AND REGIMENTS . . . (1865).



A steel engraving of Herron from an 1865 book about "Iowa's distinguished officers—those through whom the military prowess of the State is known abroad." Years later, rumor and innuendo overshadowed Herron's prowess and conduct during the war.

ing. In fact, censuses of 1880, 1890, and 1900 list the Herron residence as an "apartment." His address on West 99th was just west of Broadway and the north end of Central Park, in fashionable suburbs. It is unlikely that slums lined the street. Two years after his death, an ad in the *New York Times* describes Herron's former apartment: "6 large rooms and bath . . . Elevator, etc." The rent was \$60—over \$1,200 in today's dollars.

Civil War historian Patricia Faust considered Herron "one of the most admired officers of the war, at least by his commanders." Ulysses S. Grant spoke highly of the young major-general from Iowa. When William Tecumseh Sherman visited his brother Hoyt Sherman in Des Moines, the general often spoke of Herron's selfless contribution to the North's successful perseverance in the war, and he portrayed Herron as one of Iowa's greatest generals.

By age 26, Francis J. Herron had risen from the rank of captain to major-general. He led his troops through key battles at Wilson's Creek, Pea Ridge, Prairie Grove,

Vicksburg, and Yazoo City. He had the trust of his superiors to negotiate with Confederate officers and Indian nations. He was given the responsibility to subtly intervene in Mexican affairs and to objectively investigate the Union's own Department of Arkansas. He transcended political backstabbing by a corrupt Louisiana governor and received the esteemed Medal of Honor from the U.S. Congress. To quote a Civil War colonel, Herron's "courage and conduct won the admiration of all." His legacy of leadership deserves far more visibility in Iowa than it has received in the past. ❖

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NOTE ON SOURCES

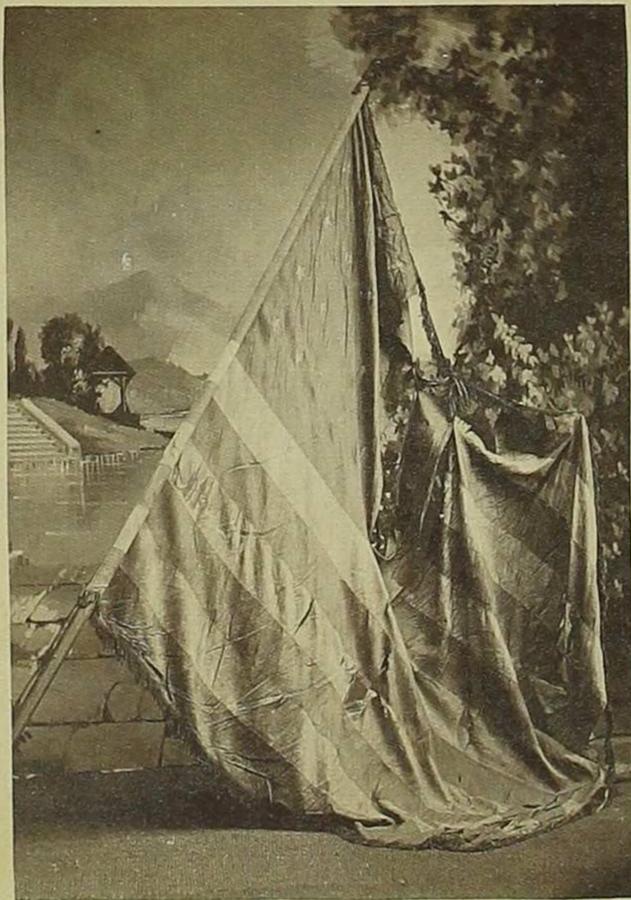
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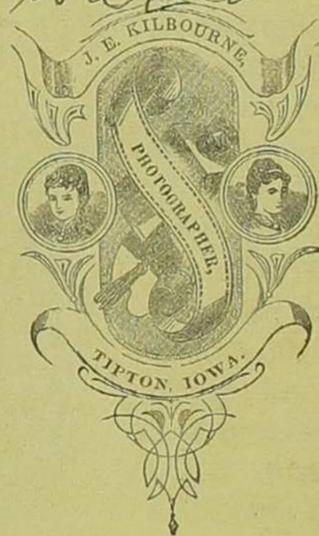
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Complete annotations are held in the *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files (SHSI-Iowa City).



11th Reg Iowa Vol.

This flag
belonged to the
11th Reg Iowa Vol Inf
Carried through the
civil war and I



followed
Lt
J. White

done: M. Virginia White

Today many of us look upon our nation's flag as a powerful symbol. It is carried in parades, adorns our clothing, and serves as an avenue of political expression. But to Civil War veterans, flags meant much more.

During the war, battle flags had served the regiments as treasured comrades. The soldiers had looked to the flags when the smoke and rattle of thousands of muskets deafened their ears to their officers' calls. The flags guided them forward and rallied them when pressed near destruction. In turn, the men cherished the flags for the lives they had saved and the horrors they had shared. The tattered flags were the memories of thousands, dead or maimed, who served, honored, and carried them for what they represented—our nation.

The story behind one such flag follows.

—Bill Johnson, battle flag curator
State Historical Society of Iowa