

## Jeff Hohman

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**From:** Jeff Hohman [jeffhohman@firstminnesotafilms.org]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 18, 2013 4:51 PM  
**To:** 'rep.phyllis.kahn@house.mn'  
**Cc:** 'Dean Urdahl'  
**Subject:** A Recommendation for the Legacy Fund from Walter Mondale  
**Attachments:** No More Gallant a Deed Sponsorship Proposal for Legacy Committee2.docx; No More Gallanet a Deed Letter 2.pdf

3/18/2013

Dear Representative Kahn,

The week before last, I had the opportunity to attend the Legacy committee hearing regarding the possibility of legacy funds being used to invest in feature films to be made in Minnesota.

We believe we have a film project, a documentary film project, that is worthy of consideration for Legacy Fund support.

In the fall of 2007, Bill Semans, founder of the Cricket Theater and my filmmaking partner (-we have produced four award-winning WWII documentaries and a feature film-) was walking around the Lake of the Isles with his friend Walter Mondale. Walter asked Bill if he had read "No More Gallant a Deed", Dick Moe's book on the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota Volunteer Regiment. Bill hadn't, but did, as did I. This started us on our current adventure: producing a documentary on the history and achievements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota. It has been quite a journey.

Through the private support of numerous donors, including Tom Heffelfinger, whose great-great grandfather was a member of the 1<sup>st</sup>, Stan Hubbard, Kari Hubbard Rominski, Wayne Jorgenson (whose private collection of 1<sup>st</sup> memorabilia is museum worthy), Richard Fontaine (former CEO of Gamestop), Emily Ann Tuttle, and Chris Spencer, we have invested nearly \$120,000 over the past two years doing the basic research and storyboarding needed to tell the remarkable and complex story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota. IFP MN is acting as our fiscal agent for these donations. We are ready to start the production phase of the documentary.

Last year, despite the valiant efforts of Rep. Dean Urdahl, we were unsuccessfully in obtaining Legacy Fund support for our film.

We have the support of TPT, which is "eager" to broadcast the film (letter of support attached); the Minnesota Historical Society Press is interested in working with us on several of the publishing projects emerging from the research work on the film (Steve Elliot, Director of MNHS said of the project "I applaud your film and educational ambitions and plans for community engagement"); we have plans to provide every school in the state with copies of the film along with age appropriate study guides; we have developed a plan to produce local exhibits from the original research for the communities who sent companies to the 1<sup>st</sup> as well as a create a mentoring and funding program for young filmmakers to produce short documentaries on their communities at the time of the Civil War, and more.

Attached are a comprehensive description of the project and a copy of the TPT letter regarding their eagerness to broadcast the film. Walter Mondale plans on writing you in support of our project, too.

Would it be possible to schedule a meeting with you in the near future to discuss this worthwhile endeavor?

We would be pleased to meet you at your capitol office; but, if you would like a special treat, our production office is in an 1888 building in NE Minneapolis and on a long white wall in the office is the storyboarded section of the film covering the Battle of Gettysburg. You are cordially invited to meet with us there, too.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Jeff Hohman  
Producer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

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# Legacy Fund Proposal

## No More Gallant a Deed

### The History and Times of the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota Volunteer Regiment

“There is no more gallant a deed in recorded history. I would have ordered that regiment in if I had known every man would have been killed. It had to be done. I was glad to find such a gallant body of men at hand willing to make the terrible sacrifice that the occasion demanded.”

-Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock

Prepared by

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03/10/2013

## The Project

First Minnesota Films LLC under the fiscal sponsorship of IFP Minnesota Center for the Media Arts is producing **No More Gallant a Deed**, a documentary film on the history and achievements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota Volunteer Regiment during the United States Civil War (1861-1865). The story of the regiment set against the backdrop of pioneer Minnesota, which had only become a state in 1858, will bring to life for this generation of Minnesotans our remarkable history.

The chronicle of the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota, once Minnesota's greatest story, has been mostly forgotten. Through the use of archival photographs, newspaper reports, paintings, maps, music, and, most importantly, the voices of the soldiers and the citizens of Minnesota as captured in their letters and diaries, the story of the 1<sup>st</sup> and the state they called home will be brought to life. In the midst of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this momentous time of our state's and nation's history, it is imperative that we bring to life for the current and future generations the heroic role of Minnesota's volunteers.

These soldiers came from every northern state to the east plus eighteen European countries. All immigrants to Minnesota, they rallied to the Union cause when President Lincoln called for troops in April of 1861, becoming the first regiment in the Union Army. This regiment, described by President Calvin Coolidge "as saviors of their country," was composed of ten companies of 100 men each from nine Minnesota communities: Winona, Wabasha/Lake City, Red Wing, Hastings, Stillwater, Faribault, Minneapolis, St. Anthony, and St. Paul (two companies).

Names now mostly forgotten were once state and national heroes. Colonel William Colvill, known as the hero of Gettysburg, and James Wright of Red Wing Company F; Charlie Goddard, just 15, of Winona Company K; Sam Bloomer from Stillwater Company B, a native of Switzerland, who lost a leg at Antietam; Aaron Greenwald of Anoka, perhaps the first volunteer in the nation, who served in Company C and would be killed at Gettysburg; and Chris Heffelfinger of Minneapolis Company D, who was sent on spying missions behind Confederate lines, plus many more.

The **No More Gallant a Deed** project includes not only the film but also educational materials, books, public exhibitions, and other broadly based public education initiatives from the original research done for the film.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota was a storied regiment, known for their bravery under fire and their resolute behavior. Their signature act took place on July 2, 1863 during the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg, when two hundred sixty-two members of the 1<sup>st</sup> charged 1600 Confederates to gain five-minutes-time to allow Union reinforcements to arrive and close a dangerous gap in the Union line. At the end of the fight, only 42 men walked off the field; the rest were killed or wounded. Were it not for the actions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota Volunteer Regiment, the Battle of Gettysburg would likely have been lost. A Union loss at Gettysburg would likely have meant the loss of the Civil War. To learn more about the story and content of the film go to [www.firstminnesotafilms.org](http://www.firstminnesotafilms.org).

Upon completion of this project, First Minnesota Films LLC will have:

- Produced a three to four hour long documentary film of the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota set against the backdrop of pioneer Minnesota;
- Produced an additional one-hour documentary profiling 20 significant members of the 1<sup>st</sup>;
- Shared with communities our research materials to be used in the staging of local photo and art exhibits exploring pioneer life and our state's role in the Civil War;
- Distributed copies of the film with age-appropriate study guides to every Minnesota school;
- Produced, published and distributed several books and CDs about the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota Regiment that are spin-offs of the film.
- Mentored and sponsored young filmmakers to make supporting documentaries about life in their home communities during the Civil War.

## **The Proposal**

First Minnesota Films is seeking a Legacy Fund grant of \$2,250,000 (a detailed budget is available upon request, as is a breakdown of expenditures to date.) These funds will be used to produce, promote, market and distribute the film as

well as use our materials for community outreach programs, commission related books based on our film research in conjunction with Minnesota Historical Society Press, create educational materials related to the film, mentor documentary filmmakers, and more.

First Minnesota Films will work with other Legacy Fund grantees – TPT has already expressed their eagerness to broadcast the film (letter of support attached), the Minnesota Historical Society ( Steve Elliot, Director of MNHS said of the film “I applaud your film and educational ambitions and plans for community engagement”), regional arts boards and historical societies will assist in presenting community-based exhibitions connected to the film, and, with assistance of the Minnesota Film Board, young filmmakers will be commissioned to produce short documentaries about the ten communities that sent companies to the 1<sup>st</sup>. The First Minnesota Films creative team will mentor these filmmakers and premiere their films in conjunction with the community based premieres of **No More Gallant a Deed**.

Our overriding objective is to make Minnesotans aware not only of their state’s history, heritage, and traditions during this crucial time, but also the achievements of one of Minnesota’s greatest generations.

### **Why the Legacy Fund?**

In the description of Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund found at (<http://www.legacy.leg.mn/sites/default/files/resources/ACHFFinal.pdf>) the guiding principles of the funds are delineated.

We believe that our many faceted, interdisciplinary project meets these principles. For example, the first principle described is for Active Engagement, which as stated means “ACHF investments will substantially broaden access to performances, exhibits, programs and resources; foster long-distance participation through broadcasting, the internet and other technologies; actively engage Minnesotans in their history in creative and imaginative work; and create opportunities for all Minnesotans to get directly involves as artists, historians and critical thinkers in their communities.

There is no other film being made about Minnesota’s contribution to the Civil War. In fact, we are not aware of any other film being produced about the Civil

War nationwide. It has nearly 25 years since Ken Burns released his landmark documentary on the Civil War. We are confident that our film will generate the same level of interest for the Civil War, but with a Minnesota angle. TPT has indicated an interest in taking the film to PBS member stations for their consideration.

Our project **No More Gallant a Deed** does all this with our film to be broadcast on Minnesota's premier public television station, our commissioning several books for general distribution, our support for and creation of local, community based exhibits, our educational outreach program, and our use of young artists, particularly filmmakers, to maximize the project's reach.

Other principles of the ACHF are equally relevant to our project, especially related to the sections headed Collaboration and Connection, Preservation and Access, Lifelong Learning, and Statewide Impact.

We believe few projects meet the criteria of the ACHF as well as ours and, as a result, we believe we merit serious consideration for Legacy Funding. And, time is of the essence with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War period running through 2015.

### **The Timeline**

The project was originally conceived in the fall of 2007 as the result of a conversation about books between former Vice-President Walter Mondale and Bill Semans, the film's director. During the conversation, Richard Moe's fine book about the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota Volunteer Regiment, "The Last Full Measure," was discussed. Bill and Jeff Hohman, the film's producer, thought the story of the 1<sup>st</sup> would make an excellent documentary film. They then did some preliminary research and reading to validate the core concept of the film and made some preliminary funding inquiries in the private sector.

Through the generous support of private donors, totaling nearly \$120,000, the deep and expansive research needed to bring this story to life was begun in April 2011.

In the nearly two years since then, director Bill Semans, head researcher David Swirnoff, editor Tom Wilbur and producer Jeff Hohman have looked at 1000's of photographs, read scores of books, visited numerous historical societies, talked to professors and historians, watched hours and hours of film, and spent many days and nights talking about how to tell this story with its hundreds of characters, dramatic incidents, rich social history, and historical importance.

And now that virtually all of the pre-production is complete, the research sources identified, the storyboard detailed, the draft narration written, it is time to go into production, to assemble the images, to refine the narration, to blend in the music and the sound effects, to create a moving and dramatic history of that time and those events and those special people who made up the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota Volunteer Regiment. The resources requested will complete this monumental documentary, a record for the current generation and the generations to come. It is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to recognize the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Minnesota's Civil War patriots.

Once complete and in advance of the premiere of the film, a commemoration of the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota will begin in each of the ten communities that sent a company by mounting exhibitions tailored to each community's story. To engage broader Minnesota, a touring exhibit based on the film will be created for use around the state.

Working closely with community supporters and sponsors, First Minnesota Films will assist these communities in the preparation and presentation of these exhibitions. These will tell the story not only of those who served and fought, but also the communities they came from and the life of Minnesota in the 1860's. The archival materials gathered as part of the film project will form the basis of these exhibitions.

As currently planned, the film, **No More Gallant a Deed**, will premiere in these same communities in advance of its television premiere. A special gala event will be held at the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul. These premieres will take on the character of each community using local sponsorship and celebrities to organize and promote them. This will be followed by a statewide roll-out of the film to those communities that would like to have a special screening.

Coinciding with its television premiere, the film will be distributed to all schools in Minnesota with carefully developed, age appropriate study guides. TPT, Minnesota's exemplary public television network, is intending to air the film upon its completion as well as help bring it to the attention of PBS network stations. Several books, including a companion photo essay book, are in the works to be published as well.

### **Production Team and Advisors**

**Jeff Hohman, Producer** – a native Minnesotan, Jeff co-produced the feature film, *Herman USA*, which was released theatrically in 2001 before airing on domestic television as well being distributed worldwide in more than 30 countries. He also co-produced the World War II documentary series, *The American Hero*, recipient of eleven major national documentary film awards, including two Telly Awards as Best Documentary Film of the Year. Prior to producing films, Jeff consulted with numerous video and publishing companies as well as being a literary agent and book packager. Before that Jeff worked for B. Dalton Bookseller in numerous management capacities.

**Bill Semans, Director** – also a native Minnesotan, most recently Bill wrote and produced the play *Exit Strategy* to critical acclaim in both Minneapolis and Los Angeles. He also co-produced, directed and wrote the feature film, *Herman USA* and the award-winning World War II documentary series, *The American Hero*. In addition Bill produced *Fighter Aces of World War II*, the 1988 Military Video of the Year, as well as *Ladies Sing the Blues*, nominated in 1989 as Best Long Form Music Video of the Year. Founder of the Cricket Theater in Minneapolis, Bill was its producing director for 13 years, staging nearly 100 productions. The Cricket was nominated for a Tony Award as Best Regional Theater.

**David Swirnoff, Head of Research** – David has lived in Los Angeles and Portland, Oregon, working for several years in the film industry, doing research and script analysis for production companies. During this time, he wrote three screenplays of his own, managing to option two of the three. In 1998, after returning home to his native Minneapolis to raise a family, he founded Rag and Bone Books, a used and antiquarian book store specializing in American history and literature. After thirteen years in the book business, David closed the store and returned to his first love – working on films.

January 9, 2013

Mr. Jeff Hohman  
Producer  
First Minnesota Films LLC  
637 Kenwood Parkway  
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Dear Mr. Hohman,

Thank you for sending along the description and background about your NO MORE GALLANT A DEED project describing the history and deeds of the First Minnesota Volunteer Regiment during the U. S. Civil War. As we are in the midst of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civil War, it is a timely and needed project.

Your effort sounds very ambitious, so I am glad we had the chance to talk by phone about some of the details, and about your production timeline. The subject of history is a huge audience draw for *tpt* as you might imagine, and none more so than Minnesota history. And as *tpt* works with schools across the state we are learning how critical it is. Your plan to make the film available to all Minnesota school is laudable.

I know we are eager to consider your production for broadcast on Twin Cities Public Television when it becomes available. We have a several projects on historical subjects that are queuing up for broadcast later this year through 2014, and I expect that yours would only add to the impact of these programs in our schedule when it completed.

Please keep me apprised of your production progress as plans develop, and thank you offering *tpt* the opportunity to broadcast the program across Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Thomas Holter  
Executive Director, Programming  
Twin Cities Public Television

c: Shari Lamke