

Herman Henry Heitman was a gutsy young man. At the early age of seventeen, he boarded a ship in Bremen, Germany alone to leave his native land and head out for a new beginning in a foreign land three thousand miles from all family and friends. That took some nerve!

Herman was born May 14, 1840 in Prussia, Germany. ^[1] His father was Herman Heitman and his mother was Annie Blam or Blum. ^[2] Both were born in Germany and remained living there after Henry left home for America. If Henry had siblings it is unknown. Most of his family's history was inaccessible because it is located in Germany. Some sources said Henry was "confirmed" in Bremen, Germany in 1854 when he was fourteen. ^[3] In tracking down the history of Herman Henry Heitman, it was discovered that, not only was it a very common name in Germany, but also in America as many Europeans immigrated to the United States in the 19th century and many of them came through the port city of New York. So it was a bit confusing to try and sift out whose records were whose in the public documents. And in some cases, no determination with any degree of certainty could be established.

It was known for sure that Henry immigrated to the United States in 1856. He left the port of Bremen on board the Wieland on September 20. His destination was the port city of New York. He was seventeen and traveling without any family members. The ship's passenger list labeled him a "servant". In about two weeks of transatlantic travel, Henry arrived in his adopted homeland on October 2, 1856. ^[4] What he did when he stepped off the boat was not clear from the sources of information consulted. It would be logical to assume that a newly arrived foreigner, seventeen years of age, who may or may not have spoken any English would have immediately sought a place where he was welcomed, understood and could help him provide for his basic needs of survival (food, shelter, clothing, etc.)

In 1860, there was a twenty-two year old Herman Heitman who lived with a family called Bohlkens in New York City, Ward 8, District 4. John Bohlken, head of house, and his wife, Katherine, owned a grocery store and Herman clerked there along with another

twenty year old immigrant boy named Fred Depman. ^[5] It was difficult to isolate and verify the Herman Henry Heitmans in the public records. There were many in the New York City area alone not to mention Herman or Henry Heitmans who immigrated into the United States and wound up heading west with the great rushes for land and gold. Working as a clerk (unskilled, entry level job) in a grocer's store owned by a fellow German with a kindly wife disposed to take in strays seems just too likely to dismiss as improbable.

By 1861, it was absolutely for sure that Herman had made his way north to Vermont. He was living in Bridport, Vermont in 1861. ^[6] That is when he enlisted into the United States Army. Many Germans served the Union in the Civil War. The majority of them came from places like New York City. Whole regiments were made up of German immigrants from the same borough in the city. Once more, Herman's wandering spirit caused him to move on. He traded the hub-bub of the inner city for the green hills of rural pastures.

Immigrant Heitman became Private Heitman on September 24, 1861. He was credited to Shoreham, Vermont. Private Heitman was assigned to Company K, First Vermont Cavalry. ^[7] Why he chose the cavalry, no one knew except Herman. Perhaps he was an accomplished equestrian. Maybe he thought being an ordinary infantryman was too unglamorous. Maybe he just had an aversion to walking. Whatever the reason, he signed up for the cavalry. He was not mustered-in until November 19, 1861 at Burlington, Vermont. He was twenty-one and committed to a three year hitch in the service. He became a member of Captain Moore's Company of the First Regiment Vermont Cavalry which later became Company K of the First Vermont Cavalry. He was given a mount that cost the Government \$112 and horse equipment valued at another \$31.63. ^[8] The horse was probably a Morgan since the majority of the horses initially given the troopers were of that breed.

The First Vermont Cavalry was organized October 16, 1861 from different parts of the State. Recruiting 966 men, including officers, it was mustered into service on November

19, 1861 at Burlington, Vermont. Mounts arrived at about the same time at "Camp Ethan Allen". The average cost for each horse was about \$110. The four legged troopers were mostly Morgans, chosen for their strength and endurance. Approximately 900 of them were obtained for the regiment at its inception. Each horse was branded with the "US" insignia. These horses were usually between fifteen and sixteen hands high and five to nine years old. Originally when issued, the army tried sorting by color so that each company had the same colored mount. That idea was quickly abandoned. The uniforms of the two-legged troopers consisted of: dark blue jackets cut short at the waist; yellow braid; brass scales on the shoulders (to protect against saber cuts); trousers of light blue; hats of black felt, turned up at one side; top boots; overcoats of brown cloth. No arms were issued at first. That came about a month later.

The First broke camp at Burlington on December 14, 1861 and headed for Washington, D.C. by rail. The Regiment, including horses and men, filled one hundred fifty-three railcars. Five separate trains were required to haul the entire outfit to Washington. On December 24, after spending ten days in Washington, the Regiment was ordered to Annapolis, Maryland for drilling. Corporal Wheeler of the First described the troopers moving out: "...Our appearance must have been picturesque. In addition to our equipments of saber, pistol, haversack, canteen, lariat rope and pin; feed bag and blankets, we had cups, plates, frying-pans, coffee-pots, shawls, mattresses, pillows, valises, satchels, brushes, and other things too numerous to mention - all in some unaccountable way attached to our horses and ourselves, so that we had, when mounted, breastworks in our front and bulwarks in our rear. With horses unused to marching, and riders unused to riding, and officers unused to everything in the service, we went most of the way at a pace little short of a charge.... (Collea, First VT Cavalry, p541)" It would not take long for these unseasoned troopers to learn to do more with a lot less as field experience honed their survival skills.

The First Cavalry was not active until the spring of 1862, when, with the forces of General Banks, it was engaged at Middletown, Winchester, and in the campaign which terminated in the second battle of Bull Run August 30, 1862. The loss in the summer

campaigns was heavy, but the command was reinforced in the autumn by the addition of two new companies and many recruits. The Regiment was stationed in the vicinity of Washington on various details during the winter of 1862-63 and frequent skirmishes with Mosby's guerrillas prevented any monotony.

June 28, 1863, the First was assigned to the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac with which it served from that time on. In the Battle of Gettysburg, the Regiment won its laurels; was active in the subsequent pursuit of General Lee by harassing his rear guard. Finally, the unit halted for the winter at Stevensburg, Virginia.

The First Vermont shared in the raid on Richmond in 1864 under General Kilpatrick. Then the spring campaign opened in 1864. In the Battle of the Wilderness, the First lost many brave officers and men. It was active in the battles which followed at Yellow Tavern and Meadow Bridge, during Sheridan's Raid on Richmond, and was also at Hanover Court House, Ashland, Haw's Shop, Bottom's Ridge, White Oak Swamp, Riddle's Shop and Malvern Hill. The Regiment was ordered to join the expedition of destruction of the Weldon and South Side Railroads, in which skirmishes and engagements resulted at Ream's Station, Nottoway Court House, Roanoke Station and Stony Creek. In August it was ordered to join Sheridan who was confronting General Early in the Shenandoah Valley and arrived at Winchester on August 17 in time to participate in the engagements at Winchester, Charlestown, Summit Point, Kearneysville, the Opequan, New Market and Cedar Creek. The original members, who had not reenlisted, were mustered-out on November 18, 1864.

On February 27, 1865, Sheridan's cavalry commenced the return to Petersburg where it arrived after a journey of three weeks. In the cavalry fight at Five Forks, the First Vermont had a share and continued in the advance of the column through several minor affairs until the corps reached Appomattox Court House where General Lee surrendered. The Regiment participated in the Grand Review of the armies at Washington and returned to Vermont early in June. The men whose term of service would expire prior to October 1 were mustered-out at Burlington. The remainder were consolidated into a

battalion of six companies which served in Vermont and upper New York until August 9, 1865 as border guards following the St Albans Raid by Confederates.

The First Vermont was mentioned by Colonel Fox as one of the "three hundred fighting regiments" and also listed it fifth in an enumeration of nine regiments who lost over one hundred nineteen men. It was, however, second to none in the number of captures it made. At the Battle of Cedar Creek, it won three of the eight medals awarded to the army for colors captured. The First Vermont Cavalry fought in seventy-six separate engagements with the enemy over its three year existence. The total aggregate strength of the Regiment was 2,304 officers and enlisted men. One hundred twelve of those were killed or died of their wounds. One hundred fourteen died of diseases and seven of accidents. One hundred fifty-nine died as prisoners in Confederate prisons.

Many believe that cavalymen enjoyed a cushier and more glamorous duty of the fighting units employed during the War of the Rebellion. Not true. Men and horses were repeatedly subject to enormous and often prolonged stresses. Challenged beyond normal endurance, many troopers and their mounts fell victim not only to battle injuries but also non-combatant assaults on their health and well being. For example, on the Kilpatrick-Dahlgren raid, one trooper reported: "...rode all day and all of the night in the rain pouring all the time....and we hadn't had a wink of sleep, only what we got on our horses in that time.... (Collea, *The First Vermont Cavalry*, p.215)". Another member of the First commented - "...three days frequently pass without unsaddling the horses, and the backs of the poor emaciated brutes are first sore, then burst rotten.... (Collea, *The First Vermont Cavalry*, p. 87)". A third trooper of the First noted "...sadly the route of march became easy to follow by the trail of expired horses by the roadside....(Collea, *The First Vermont Cavalry*, p. 156)." At Gettysburg it was estimated that between three and four thousand horses were killed in that one three day battle.

One heartwarming story about the horses of the First Vermont Cavalry appeared in Joseph D. Collea, Jr's book *The First Vermont Cavalry in the Civil War*: "....Abe, aka 'The First Vermont Straggler'....Shot in the neck. the horse had to be left behind by his

rider, Bugler Joe Allen, because he (the horse) could not rise from weakness due to loss of blood at 4 am when soldiers began their march. From that day on, soldiers could be heard cheering and shouting when Abe (now Old Abe) would straggle into their latest camp a day late as he made his way alone to rejoin his comrades. Ultimately, when stronger, he and Bugler Allen rode together again until the end of the war in 1865.... (p.180)" I hope that when Bugler Allen was discharged from the service that he was able to take Old Abe with him.

In the three years that the First Vermont Cavalry was in the service of the United States Army, it took part in seventy-six engagements from Mount Jackson on April 16, 1862 to Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, including the 1862 and 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaigns, the Gettysburg Campaign, the Overland Campaign and the Siege of Petersburg. The Regiment's most notable action was the cavalry charge led by Brigadier General Elon Farnsworth with Major William Wells by his side against the Confederate's right flank on the third day of the Battle of Gettysburg. The Regiment's heritage continued to be celebrated to this day with a state legislative decree naming the Corps of Cadets at Norwich University as members of the Regiment who wear the crossed sabers on all of their uniforms and their insignia. ^[9]

Besides being a part of all the action noted above, Private Heitman's enlistment in the U.S. Cavalry was no more nor no less outstanding than any other trooper in the regiment except for one incident which occurred around October of 1862. The details of the event are buried somewhere in the archives of the United States Army's records. It appeared in Private Heitman's service records that he was court-martialed October 10, 1862 for misconduct. The court was convened at Seminary, Virginia, October 10, 1862 at the Headquarters of the First Division, Third Corps. Private Heitman had been arrested, along with an undisclosed number of others, for "...conduct contrary to good order and military discipline". Specifications were: "...said Herman Heitman, Private of 'K' Company 1st Vermont Cavalry did with others release from confinement John H. Willard, Private 'E' Company 1st Vermont Cavalry in opposition to the commands of Capt. A.W. Preston, commanding 1st Vermont Cavalry. This at camp in the field near Alexandria,

Virginia on or about the 16th day of September, 1862. To which the prisoner pleaded as follows, viz: To the Specification - guilty; To the Charge - not guilty. The Court found the prisoner guilty of the Specification and guilty of the Charge. The Court therefore sentenced Private Herman Heitman to forfeit \$10 per month of his pay for three months and perform hard labor in camp for 15 days." Identical charges and specifications were brought against several others who received the same verdict and punishment. ^[10] Apparently Private Heitman was returned to his regiment and duty for he appeared as present on the Company Muster Rolls for November, 1862 through to his discharge November 18, 1864.

Throughout Private Heitman's three year hitch with the First Vermont Cavalry he was absent only three times. Once was in May/June of 1864 when he was detailed to Headquarters on April 25, 1864. Another time was in September of 1864 while he was away from the regiment to get a remount in Maryland. The third time was in October/November of 1864 when he was back home in Vermont to be mustered-out. ^[11] That occurred on November 18, 1864 at Burlington, Vermont. When released from service to the Government, Herman was owed \$15.50 for clothing and \$100 bounty. ^[12]

Being a civilian again, Herman returned to Bridport to resume life where he left it. By 1869, he had found someone to begin his new life with - Mary Thomasine Leonard became his wife on April 7, 1869 in Middlebury, Vermont. ^[13] She was twenty-five and he was twenty-eight. Mary was born in Ticonderoga, New York August 20, 1843. Her family moved to Shoreham, Vermont sometime between 1860 and 1869 from Black Brook, Clinton, New York. ^[14]

In 1870, Henry, his new bride and his first born son named Michael S. age six months were living with his in-laws, Mary's father, Michael, and her mother, Louise Leonard. The father-in-law owned a farm in Shoreham and Herman worked with him on it as a hired man. The farm, all by itself, was valued at \$2,700 - a modest sized operation for 1870. ^[15] From the public records, it looked like Henry applied for a passport in 1872. In the application, he stated that he was a naturalized citizen. The New York state document

described Henry as being thirty-three years of age and standing five feet seven inches in height. He had blue eyes with a fair complexion. He had a high forehead, sandy hair and a prominent nose. His face was full which went well with his large mouth and chin. ^[16] Henry might have wanted a passport so that he could take his new wife and son back to Germany and show both off to his family in Bremen.

When 1880 rolled around, Henry and Mary and expanded family lived in Orwell. Henry farmed. The decade of the 1870's had been busy ones for Mary. Between 1870 and 1879, she had delivered six more children to Herman. Michael, their first born, came on January 16, 1870. He was followed by: Ann(a) G. on February 22, 1871; Dora Jane on October 5, 1872 ; Emma Catherine on March 22, 1874; Herman Henry on February 22, 1877; and finally, Bess (Elizabeth) Hannah on June 2, 1878. There may have also been an additional child born to the family in 1877. That child could have been Richard John born August 24, 1877 who died two years later in 1879. Herman and Mary were gluttons for punishment because, in addition to having seven children that looked like steps in a stairway, they boarded four other people in their home in 1880. Three of them, Edward Pecoy, Joseph Orin and John Thompson were all saw mill laborers. The fourth man was Charles Orin who was a "sawyer" and probably the father of Joseph. In 1882, Herman and Mary had their last child. She was named Mary T. after her mother and was born December 10, 1882. All of the children were born either in Orwell or Shoreham. ^[17] All this child bearing was hard on Mary. Her body never had time to recover from one pregnancy before she was expecting again. On August 21, 1884, Mary died from heart disease. ^[18]

Aged sixty and widowed, Herman continued to live in Orwell and farm in 1900. His daughter, Emma, lived with him to take the place of Mary as mistress of the house. His son, Herman, worked on the farm as a laborer. This was Federal Census year was the first that asked about immigration. Whoever answered the census taker's questions stated that Herman had come to the United States in 1856, had lived in the U.S. for forty-three years and was a naturalized citizen. ^[19]

Herman was asked again about his citizenship status when another census year came around in 1910. Herman was now sixty-nine or seventy depending on who was doing the counting. He was a farmer (general). He and the bank owned his home. He was a naturalized citizen. And yes, he could read and write. His son, Herman, still lived with him and so did his forty year old son, Michael who made a living being a machinist. In addition to two sons, two of his daughters had also come home to roost again. Dora, thirty-six, came home bringing with her two grandchildren of Herman's. Dora had been widowed. Elizabeth (Bess), a thirty year old divorcee came home bearing a granddaughter named Mitchel M. Gregory. Maybe starting a family all over again was too much for the seventy year old Herman for he died in 1914 in Benson, Vermont of "mitra insufficiency; chronic myocarditis; and arteriosclerosis.

NOTES

1. Ancestry.com, Vermont, Death Records, 1909-2008 for Herman Henry Heitman.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., Kenneth Bell Family Tree for Herman Henry Heitman.
4. Ibid., 1900 and 1910 U.S. Federal Census for Herman H. Heitman; Ibid., New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 for Herman Heitman.
5. Ibid., 1860 U.S. Federal Census for Herman Heitman.
6. Ibid., American Civil War Soldiers for Hermann Heitmann.
7. Ibid., U.S., Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865 for Herman Heitman.
8. Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Vermont, p. 3, image 308642319. Hereinafter referred to as Compiled Service Records....
9. Vermont in the Civil War by G.G. Benedict, Burlington, VT, Free Press Association, 1888, Chapter XXVIII, "The First Cavalry Regiment", pp. 534-535 and 538-541; Vermont in the Civil War/Units/1st Vermont Cavalry; The First Vermont Cavalry in the Civil War by Joseph D. Collea, Jr., McFarland, 2009, pp. 215, 87, 156, and 180; wikipedia.org/1st Vermont Cavalry.
10. Fold3.com. Compiled Service Records..., pp. 28-29, images 308642439 and 308642443.
11. Ibid., Compiled Service Records..., p.24, image 308642420.
12. Ibid., Compiled Service Records..., p.25, image 308642425.
13. Ancestry.com, Kenneth Bell Family Tree for Herman Henry Heitman and Mary Thomasine Leonard.
14. Ibid., Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908 for Mary H. Heitman.
15. Ibid., 1870 U.S. Federal Census for Hamon Hideman.
16. Ibid., U.S. Passport Application, 1795-1925 for Herman Heitman.
17. Ibid., 1880 U.S. Federal Census for Herman Hightman; Ibid., Haskell-Rounds Family Tree for Herman H. Heitman.

18. Ibid., Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908 for Mary H. Heitman.
19. Ibid., 1900 U.S. Federal Census for Herman H. Heitman.
20. Ibid., 1910 U.S. Federal Census for Herman H. Heitman.
21. Ibid., Vermont, Death Records, 1909-2008 for Heman Henry Heitman.