

# DORIS

## Drafted into the Civil War after finally reaching freedom

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Feature Writer

Probably a number of people in the area have stories to tell of their ancestors serving in the bloody Civil War. My great-grandfather, Jacob Wintermantel, who immigrated from Switzerland to homestead in a community that later became known as Irish Valley, was the only Civil War veteran whom I have heard much about, both from my grandmother and a letter circulated among relatives written by George Wintermantel to his people back home in Switzerland giving an account of the family life in the United States, in 1875. There are fine Wintermantel descendants, both in Wisconsin and outside of the state who have done and are doing a great job of research. The only granddaughter left as a descendant of Jacob Wintermantel is Ruth Hehenberger of Sauk City. There are quite a number of Jacob Wintermantel descendants in the area with names as Bender, Becker, Moely, Sprecher, Ladd, Litscher, Steuber, Sorg and Gasser.

After a long, hard, courageous, challenging journey, the Wintermantels from Switzerland were able to settle near Honey Creek, it wasn't long before Jacob and his two brothers found themselves soldiers in the Civil War.

If there would be anything glamorous about the bloody horrors of war it would be the uniform or the officer's club in time of peace. As the picture shows Jacob Wintermantel's uniform seems to be some kind of thrown together civilian outfit, that wasn't too durable for the battlefield.

That was probably common attire for the soldiers. Yet, somehow, they managed to spruce up their "uniforms" the best they could and stand with pride and dignity to have their picture taken.

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Jacob Wintermantel had to leave his wife and children to fight in the Civil War in Petersburg and Richmond, Va.

George Wintermantel, in his letter to his people back in Switzerland, explained that it was hard for Jacob to leave his wife and children when he was drafted into the Civil War. Jacob reported that sometimes everything on the battlefield was like a cemetery for fallen soldiers. He served in Camp Peterson and Richmond, Virginia for nine months.

The letter recorded that brothers Christian and William Wintermantel also served in the Civil War. William was in many bloody battles and was in danger day and night between the southern rebels and enemy Indians. Christian served in the 26th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment. He was in some of the largest battles of the whole war era, Fredrichsburg and Chancellorsville in Virginia and

Gettysburg in Pennsylvania. He endured earth-shaking cannon fire and saw blood streams on large and small battles. He finally came back to Wisconsin after three years. Two years later he acquired 160 acres of land in Kansas. George believed that every soldier who had an honorable discharge was entitled to land.

The impact of the experiences of our ancestors in the Civil War lives on. And how they have handled situations help us along the way in our present time.

Jacob Wintermantel and his wife Agnes Yoss Wintermantel moved to Prairie du Sac in his retirement. His obituary, (1916) Sauk County News read, "He (Jacob) was faithful and loyal to the church of his choice, in which he served his God according to the dictates of his conscience, enlightened by the Holy Spirit."