

John Behrenfeld, Civil War Veteran

His life as recorded in written documents

John's Years in Germany and Immigration to America

John was born Nov. 10, 1822, in Osnabruck, Hannover, Germany, and was named Johan Caspar. His parents were Corporal John Philipp Leopold and Johanne Friederike Eleonore (Brockman) Behrenfeld. John saw military action as a soldier in Germany. On April 2, 1851, he sailed to America on the passenger ship Held and docked in New York City on May 22. He then traveled the United States for a few years looking for a place to settle down. Sometime after he left Germany, his middle name changed to either Frederick or Ferdinand.

John's Years in America

- *Life in Waconia, Carver County, Minnesota, 1855 – 1871, including Civil War Service*

In 1855 John chose to put down roots in newly settled Waconia Township in Carver County, Minnesota. On May 11, 1858, John was elected the first township collector, and on Oct. 9 he married Anna Scheuble of Baden, Germany. John purchased land that he farmed, but he also built the first hotel in Waconia in the early 1860s. During their time in Waconia, John and Anna's family included five living children: Lena (Henry Jenneke) who was born to Anna before she married John; Emma (Diedrich Bergman); Bertha (Charles Miller); George (Louise Pawlitshek); and Emil (Ella McGuire). Anna, who was born March 1870, died one month later.

Minnesota and U.S. Civil War Soldiers records detail John's experience as a Civil War soldier. On Feb. 22, 1862, he was inducted into the 5th Regiment, Company E, Minnesota Volunteer Infantry. The Minnesota record lists his rank in as private and rank out as sergeant. The U.S. record lists his rank in as sergeant and rank out as sergeant. On Nov. 23, 1862, he was honorably discharged for disabilities.

In 1892 Carver County citizens erected a monument to its Union soldiers. The front of the monument reads: "To the memory of the defenders of the Union, 1861 to 1865." The soldiers' names, including J. Behrenfeld, are inscribed on three sides of the monument, which resides in a Waconia city park. John's grave in Heron Lake, Minnesota, has a Civil War Veteran star.

- *Life in Heron Lake, Jackson County, Minnesota, 1871 – 1897*

In 1871 (possibly late 1870), having sold the hotel and Waconia farm land, John moved his family to Heron Lake, Jackson County, Minnesota. He was awarded homestead land in LaCrosse Township. He and Anna had four more children: Ida (Levi Coyour); Fredericka (Martin Hanson); Otto (Lydia Stilli); and Theodore.

On March 31, 1886, the Grand Army Post of Heron Lake was mustered and John was the Post's first junior vice commander. John farmed until 1887 when he and Anna moved into Heron Lake Village. Anna died Oct. 15, 1889, and after that John lived with his children in town and was in business with his son-in-law Charles Miller. John died Sept. 28, 1897. Both he and Anna are buried in Sacred Heart Catholic Cemetery in Heron Lake.