

FORT DONELSON MONUMENT COMMITTEE 2022 REPORT

This will be the first annual report of The First Regiment Nebraska Volunteer Infantry at Fort Donelson Committee (the Committee), as required by NEB. REV. STAT. § 82-803(7). The legislation creating the Committee was passed in 2020, with a minor amendment in 2021, but the Committee members were not appointed by the Secretary of State until November 9, 2021. Secretary of State Evnen wrote Brian K. McCutcheon, the Superintendent of the Fort Donelson National Battlefield, on that same date, advising him of Nebraska's desire to erect a monument to the First Nebraska at Fort Donelson, but there was no response from him and no Committee activity in 2021.

On February 7, 2022, the Committee's Vice-Chairperson, Steve Guenzel, had a telephone conference with Mr. McCutcheon, who stated he would respond to the Secretary of State soon after the activities surrounding the 160th anniversary of the Battle (February 11-15) were completed. Having heard nothing by May of 2022, Mr. Guenzel again called Mr. McCutcheon. Mr. McCutcheon reported that he had written a letter to the Secretary of State on February 18, 2022. For some reason, this letter was not received. The letter was resent in May, and it provided the Committee with subjects Nebraska's proposal would need to address.

The Committee has now met four times, on July 28, 2022, August 26, 2022, September 23, 2022, and October 21, 2022. The Committee identified three Nebraska sculptors (Fred Hoppe, Sondra Jonson, and David Biehl) and one Colorado sculptor with significant Nebraska ties (George Lundeen). Requests for Proposals were sent to all four sculptors and three responded with proposals. The Committee selected Fred Hoppe's proposal. Mr. Hoppe's proposal is a life-sized bronze statue depicting a First Nebraska soldier, hurrying to move into position to block a Confederate assault. Here is Mr. Hoppe's drawing of his proposed sculpture:



The Committee secured the agreement of the Sinclair Hille Architects to create a site plan for the Proposal, which was completed very quickly.

A draft Proposal was prepared by the end of November and circulated among a number of interested parties who agreed to review the Proposal. Changes were made and the Committee is thrilled to report that the final Proposal was signed by Secretary of State Evnen on December 29, 2022, and was mailed to Superintendent McCutcheon on December 30, 2022. A copy of the Proposal may be downloaded from this internet address:

<http://civilwarneb.net/Proposal.pdf>

(Thanks to the Civil War Round Table of Nebraska for hosting the Proposal on its website.)
Now we await a response from the National Park Service.