

From the Rhineland to the Red River

[Levine, Robert A](#) ; [Jean Powers Soman](#). [Civil War Times](#) [39.5](#) (Oct 2000): 88.

MARCUS SPIEGEL'S RISE TO command of a Union regiment was both unlikely and uniquely American Born the son of a Rabbi, inn Abenheim, Germany, in 1829, Spiegel left home at the age of 20 for a better life in the United States. There, he joined other Jewish immigrants making a living by peddling goods across the vast Ohio countryside.

By 1861 Spiegel had carved out a comfortable life for himself. The daughter of an Ohio Quaker had converted to Judaism and become his wife. The couple had started their own business and set up shop in Millersburg with their three children. Spiegel had even become a Freemason and an ardent Democrat. When the call went out for Union volunteers, Spiegel's loyalty to his adopted homeland spurred him to enlist in the 67th Ohio Infantry. His political and social standing earned him the captaincy of Company C.

Spiegel wrote often to his beloved wife as he tramped across the Virginia countryside with his regiment. Meanwhile, his willingness to look after wounded soldiers earned him the respect and admiration of his men. His superiors thought well of him too, and at times left him in charge of the regiment when its commander was absent. Some of the Ohioans even took to calling him Colonel.

Late in 1862, Spiegel transferred to the newly formed 120th Ohio, where his experience earned him a promotion to lieutenant colonel. On March 20, 1863, he was officially commissioned a colonel, and he took command of the regiment.

Shortly after the fall of Vicksburg in July 1863, an exploding shell severely wounded Spiegel. His wife welcomed him home for several months of recovery. But by March 1864, Spiegel was back with the 120th Ohio.

Several weeks after Spiegel's return, Confederates ambushed the Federal transport City Belle, near Snaggy Point on the Red River. Most of the 120th was captured, but Spiegel was struck by another shell-this time fatally. Spiegel's name would live on in the memory of his wife, and in the Spiegel Catalogue Company, which his brother Joseph started after the war. CWT

NAME **Marcus Spiegel**

DATES 1829 to 1864

ALLEGIANCE Union

HIGHEST RANK Colonel

UNIT 67th Ohio Infantry, Company C; 120th Ohio Infantry

SERVICE RECORD Enlisted as a captain in December 1861. Severely wounded outside Vicksburg in July 1863. Killed in the Red River Campaign on May 3, 1864.