



2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

“ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 161

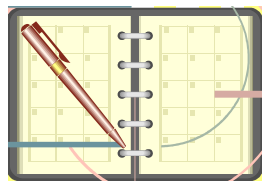
January 2009

Upcoming Events

April 4, 2009

It's a bit away yet, but planning is well underway for the Mache event at the River Center on April 4, 2009. All members are asked to reread the December meeting minutes if you were not at the meeting and be prepared to give an outline of your duties at the January meeting. We are preparing outlines of equipment needed at the booth and handouts to be available both at the booth and at the presentations.

ALL MEMBERS are requested to create a booklist of your favorite publications to hand out as resources. Please include the author, ISBN number and date of publication as well as why this is a good book to learn from. Fictional books are good to have on the list as well, just include why you think it is a worthy read.



2009 Calendar Planning

ALL MEMBERS are requested to gather information on the possible events we may want to consider attending in the upcoming season. Some members have already received information on the event in Keokuk. If you have information on any event, please bring it to the January meeting. We are gathering information to discuss so we can set our 2009 calendar at the February meeting.

2009 Dues are DUE!!

Annual Battery membership dues are due in January of each year. Please send your dues and updated contact information to our Battery Treasurer, Daryl Duden. (His address is on the back page)

Remember, you must be current in your dues to be eligible to vote or hold office in either the corporate or military command as stated in the Battery by-laws.

Next Meeting

January 24, 1:00 p.m.
Green Mill Pizza
Hwy 61 in Hastings, MN



On This Date

January 1864

The first month of the new year found the Second Battery in camp near Chattanooga, Tennessee. Their official “station” was Rossville, Georgia. Though a “morning report” would seem to indicate that it should be done every day, the Battery’s records do not have a report for every day. Sometimes several days went by before anything was recorded. Still, we can be thankful the Battery’s records have as much as they do. Research has turned up one unit, the Second Illinois Battery I, that did not keep daily records for a whole year! When the War Department asked why the records had not been sent in, the officers were honest and said they had not kept records, but would try to “make something up” if it was really thought necessary!

The following is what was written in the Second Minnesota Battery’s morning reports. The numbers indicate the date. Missing dates did not have a report written.

Remarks for the Month of January, 1864

- 1 Lieut Harder returned from leave of absence - Drew 30 Horses from Capt. Barrett Co. "J" 2 Ills Arty
- 3 One Horse Died in Camp
- 5 one Horse Died in Camp
- 6 one Horse died in Camp, Privates August Apple, Jesse Baker, Lorning Fletcher and Sam Wheeler details from 34 Ill. Vol. Infty returned to their regt
- 7 Private Babcock, 34 Ill V. I. Returned to his Regt.
- 8 Private Peter Zimmer 34 Ill V. I. returned to his Regt. Tillotson returned to Company
- 9 One Horse died in camp
- 12 Two Horses died in Camp
- 13 Two Horses died
- 14 Two Horses died in Camp
- 15 Two Horses died in Camp
- 19 One Horse died and one taken up
- 20 John Craven returned from Hospital
- 23 Two Horses died in Camp
- 27 One Horse died in Camp
- 28 Right half of Batty started with the div. on an expedition toward the enemy's lines
- 29 Half Bty. returned from reconnaissance

10-PDR PARROTT RIFLE

by Sgt. Daryl Duden

We often have the opportunity to describe our field piece for the public, a M1861 10-pdr Parrott Rifle. The gun was a design of Robert Parker Parrott. Many Civil War artillerists and collectors know him for his inventions of the projectile and cannon, which bear his name. Born in Lee, New Hampshire, October 5, 1804, Parrott graduated third in his class at West Point Military Academy in 1824. He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the 3rd U.S. Artillery and was assigned to the southeastern states where he participated in the Creek Indian War. He was later assigned as assistant to the Chief of the Ordnance Bureau and, later, as an inspector of ordnance at the West Point Foundry at Cold Spring, New York. The foundry was a private firm and administered by civilians. Parrott, by this time a Captain, resigned his rank and accepted the civilian position of superintendent of the foundry on October 31, 1836. Parrott served the foundry well during the next 41 years. He became the lessee and operator of the foundry and experimented with the manufacturing of artillery. As a private citizen, Parrott was able to experiment with cannons and projectiles without the usual red tape involved in government foundries. His accomplishments during his tenure included the perfection of a rifled cannon and its corresponding projectile (both named after him) patented in 1861, and the Parrott sight and fuse, which were developed during the Civil War years. The fact that he used his own foundry to manufacture his weapons is proven by the letters WPF (West Point Foundry) along with his initials RPP as inspector, stamped on the trunnions of the Parrott gun tube. Parrott's cannons were distinguished by a single reinforcing band of wrought iron around the breech of the iron tube. His first rifled cannon design, a 10-pdr (2.9-inch), was turned out in 1860. By the next year, he had developed the 20-pdr (3.67-inch) and 30-pdr (4.2-inch) versions, among other models. In 1864, the 10-pdr was replaced with the 3-inch Parrott Rifle. In 1867, Parrott turned the operation of the foundry over to other parties, but he continued to experiment with projectiles and fuses until his death on December 24, 1877.

The 10-pdr Parrott had a nominal length, from the muzzle face to the rear of the reinforcing band, of 73 inches. Rifling inside the bore was 3-groove, right hand twist. The weight of the tube was 890 pounds. The tube was mounted on a standard U.S. Army #1 carriage, already in service with the 6-pdr M1841 Gun. The maximum range of this gun was 5,000 yards with an effective range of 2,000 yards at 5° elevation.

By now, you are asking yourself, "Why is Sgt Duden repeating all this information that we already know?" The information that is the reason for this article is actually in the biography of Robert Parker Parrott. When the M1863 version of the gun was introduced, it was not referred to as a 10-pdr Parrott Rifle. Because he was competing directly against the 3-inch Wrought Iron (Ordnance) Rifle, produced at the Phoenix Iron Company, Parrott's technical specifications identified this later version of his gun as the 3-inch Parrott Rifle.

Our lack of this "bit of knowledge" only became apparent when I had the opportunity to serve as #6 this past summer. Diligently doing my duties of preparing fused projectiles, I soon realized none of the ranges and times of flight on the TABLE OF FIRE inside the lid of our limber chest matched what "I knew them to be". Although initially I was bewildered, I now understand why nothing matched. When we ordered our limber chest, it arrived with a TABLE OF FIRE for the 3-inch Iron Parrott Rifle. Now that we are aware this is "technically inaccurate", we will be taking action to get it replaced with a TABLE OF FIRE for the 10-pdr Iron Parrott Rifle [2.9 inch Bore].



Battery Profile

Wilber Nichols

There is no hope of his again being of any Value to the Service. He had Earned the high consideration of a Good soldier. at the time of muster he was considered an Athletic Powerful Man, his Early Discharge is recommended.

This notation on the certificate of disability discharge ended Army life for Wilber. He was suffering with varicose veins that he described as "ulcerated" and edema in his legs. He had been in the hospital since November 26, marching would have been almost impossible for him, and the prospects were that he would not be fit for duty again, so Wilber was discharged on February 16, 1863.

When Wilber enlisted on October 30, 1861, he may well have believed he would be serving in the First Minnesota Battery which was forming up at the time. For some reason, he did not join that unit, but transferred instead to follow William Hotchkiss into the Second Battery. Wilber was a farmer from Hennepin County, and the two may have known each other. When Wilber enlisted, he said he had been born in Concord, New York, was 34 years old, had black eyes and hair, a dark complexion, and stood 5' 9" tall. He was married, having taken Harriet as his wife on January 1, 1855, when they were living in St. Anthony Falls, Minnesota. Wilber served as a corporal in the Battery.

While Wilber was off serving in the Army, his wife took their children and went back to Connecticut to live. Wilber wrote her several letters from camps of the Battery, telling her in great detail how he was sending money home to her in a letter with another person he trusted as he did not trust the mail. Wilber wrote, "he can tel you how I have been I do not get any letters from you yet I do not know the reson nor can under Stand why my letters do not come by thare had been a change in our male matters that I hope will improve them the mail is cared now by Champlins and Qarter master Shargents and I hope that I shall hear from you." Spelling was probably not Wilber's strongest attribute.

Though only a corporal with an artillery battery, Wilber had some thoughts on how the war was being waged. In September of 1862, the Battery was camped outside of Louisville, Kentucky. Wilber's letter was dated September 27, 1862.

I truly do Thank God that I am agane permitted to write to you in hopes to receive and andser we hav had our communication cut off So that we could not here from the North or northern armey nor our dear friends. we hav marched from Mississippa to here on half ratiens and Some of the time not more than 1 meal per day it had been a hard march and a long one I hav not written nor had a letter sence we left (?) Miss I lost my day book son after we left So I ha been lost ever sence because I have nothing to refer to git any account of our march be we come by the way of Boling Green and Green River whare we come within 12 miles of General Brag armey and lade over two days so not to intrude upon his honor when he evacuated then we chast them here vary carful not to intrude upon him this is the greatest humbug of a ware that ever was recorded where thoses that hav command do all that they can to assist the rebels get away and it has been in this case we might have captured Braggs hole armey if we could have fought them but no we must chase them and be vary carfull not to git to cloce if the men in thare (?) git to cloce march them over the Same ground 4 or 5 times to delay them as match as posable this has been the case here day before yestarday we marched 8 miles over 4 time which delade the armey a hole day and give the enemy the Same Start if this is the way this war is to be caried on the Soner the contest is given in the better

Wilber must have had enough of complaining about the army tactics as he switched pages and thoughts quickly, wondering how Harriet and the children were getting along and if they had enough money. He admits to not knowing how he could be of much help, but wanted to know how she was getting along just the same. He wrote how surprised he was that he could stand the hard army life, but did admit to Harriet a little about the pain and trouble he was having with his legs. Still, it was another illness that bothered him more.

I hav been home Sick ever Since I got to the Ohio River it looks so natural and made me think of old times our bagage teame was left at Boling green to follow in the rear we hav herd that they have been Captured by the rebel Guirleas band and they hav been ther but we do not bleave it yet if it be true my cloths are all gon except what I hav on my back and they are but few for I did not take hardley enough to keep me comfortable theses cold nights write to me as son as you git this

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The next letter Wilber wrote was dated October 19th and he covered a variety of topics, including the problems with his legs in a little greater detail. He was relieved that the Battery was to stay in camp for a while as a message had come giving the impression that the South was seeking peace, but he was not sure the message was truthful.

*our army cannot move at all and the rebels will hav plenty of time to fortify thare armeys so to con-
tinue the horable war another year Sutch works is outragus to any matien dont you think so to keep us de-
perated year after year for nothing at all but for the officers to make money*

Wilber went on about inspections and the number of men on sick call, then described the land that the Battery was camped in.

*O I tel you Harriet that theses poor people must Suffer this winter thare is no money nor is thare
any produce here you must hav Some Ideah to know that two armeys of 100 thousand each and nerely as
maney horses marching threw a country must Strip it of all kinds of produce and the reble army tuck pos-
sesion of all the mills and wheat that was thrashed and ground it to flour to take with them besides all the
Cattle and horses that belong to union people it is told that they had 15000 head of cattle and the most of
thare arney wer mounted that these that wer not had left thare army*

Without changing paragraphs or sentences, Wilber went on to ask about Harriet's father's business and other things about home. He wondered how much land values were going to drop because of the Indian uprising in Minnesota and believed there would be no more "emagrations" for a long time. He bragged about the wonderful breakfast he'd made because he'd been issued flour, salt, "baken and beef and Sugar and coffy" for their "rations" and now he had no right to complain.

Each letter Wilber wrote ended with the same thoughts: "So I will bid you good bye agane with mutch love kiss the Children for me tel them that father loved them all as well as when he ever did youre affectionate Husband Wilber Nichols."

After he was discharged at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Wilber went to find his family in Connecticut. No record of his ever returning to Minnesota has been found. For a time, he moved to Massachusetts, but went back to Wallingford, Connecticut, where he stayed for the rest of his life. In 1882, Wilber applied for a pension because of the problems with his legs. He blamed his varicose veins and edema on the many hours he spent riding a horse and the exposure to cold and wet after the battle at Perryville, Kentucky. As a witness to his problems, Wilber suggested the Pension Department speak to Captain Hotchkiss. It did not help Wilber's case as the examiner wrote that William Hotchkiss was "unreliable" as a witness.

Wilber died in North Haven, Connecticut, on November 8, 1889, at the age of 62.

The Second Minnesota Light Artillery Battery is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of Civil War history by living it.

Membership is \$12 per year. Non-member newsletter subscription rate is \$6.00 per year.

For information on the Battery, please contact:

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