



## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 204

December 2012

### On This Date-150 Years Ago

**Morning Reports for the Month of December, 1862**  
(Numbers indicate the day of the month)

- 1 Contraband Reaff Matine - Jas. Hausord - Bill Mon - "Sick" Mule teamsters and Hicks and Anthony - Blacksmiths A. C. Gowdy -- William Costello and Fred Kohlstadt detailed on daily duty
- 9 1st Serg C. N. Earl, Serg. T. Tidd and Privates J. Kennedy, D. Jarvis, M. I. Brown taken to Hospital at Nashville, Tenn.
- 10 Alonzo Keene Died at Hospital in Camp near Nashville.
- 15 Received official notice of discharge of John C. Vanfleet
- 20 Received official notice of the death of Melchor Blesi at Hospital at Nashville.
- 21 Received official Order No. 20 of Gen. Jeff C. Davis transferring Nelson N. Fulton Co. I 22nd Regt Ind Vols to the 2nd Minn Ba'tty.
- 25 Received Official Notice of the discharge of Private Peter Campbell Dec 16th 1862 Segt D. C. Munsey detailed on Daily Duty
- 26 Received official notice of discharge of Matthew Taisey -- T. I. Hopkins, mortally wounded in mouth in Battle near Nolonville Gilbert Gaslin left in Hospital -- sent to Nashville --
- 30 John I. Hopkins Died in Camp on the field Silas Howard Dischg'd

### Upcoming Events

**Civil War Christmas, 10:30 to 1:30**  
**December 15, Circle Pines City Hall, Circle Pines**  
**200 Civic Heights Circle, Circle Pines**

We will interpret things soldiers in the field and families at home were doing to celebrate the season. Pages 3 and 4 of the newsletter have more Christmas history. (This issue has a bonus page!) Please be thinking about what you want to do—we want this to be different than the Winter Camp we did last February at this same site, so start thinking about an 1860s holiday.

**Ideas for soldiers** include writing/reading letters, making a gift from camp materials to send home, decorating a tree with things in camp, planning a camp Christmas dinner for the troops, singing Christmas songs, etc.

The home front activity ideas can include some of the same things as the soldiers, as well as packing Christmas boxes, planning special foods or clothing, traveling to visit family/soldiers, etc.

**LADIES: Volunteers are needed** to make church dolls, paper beads and cornucopias with the visitors. Supplies will be provided as well as history and training if needed.

Other ideas are encouraged! Please let Vickie know what you plan to do so she can coordinate the activities—we don't all want to be doing the same thing! This is a **paid event**, so we need a good showing of members.

**Following the Christmas event**, we will go to the Pizza Hut just east of the City Hall for lunch (everyone will order from the menu on their own) and our December meeting.

**Miss Mandy** will be arriving from her studies in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) just in time to attend this event and meeting. She is very excited to see everyone again!



### Next Meeting

**Saturday, December 15, after the Christmas Event, ca. 2:00p.m.**



At the Pizza Hut just off Lake Drive in Circle Pines, a couple blocks east of City Hall.

# **Battery Profile**

## **Halvor Evenson**

Halvor was a part of the wave of immigrants who came to America in the mid 1800s looking for a better life and opportunity. He and his wife, Johanna, had been married in Norway in 1860 and came first to Wisconsin, then to Minnesota, where they settled in Fillmore County. Their first child, Olav, was born in January of 1861. By the time Aasne was born in October of 1862, the family had moved to Eureka Township in Dakota County. Their third child, Eivind, was born in August of 1864, just a month before Halvor decided to enlist in the Second Minnesota Battery.

The draft rendezvous was going on in Minnesota that late summer and the bounties promised could be very enticing to a man with little means. Halvor signed the enlistment papers on August 26, 1864, and was mustered in at Fort Snelling on September 10th. The muster sheet said he was 5' 7-1/2" tall, had blue eyes, light hair and a fair complexion. He was a farmer, was 34 years old, and made his mark on the papers rather than signing his name. Whether he really could not write or just could not write in English is unknown.

Halvor's time with the Second Battery was uneventful. He arrived at the camp outside Chattanooga, Tennessee, where the Battery was doing garrison duty. He saw no hard fighting and few long marches. Halvor was discharged at the end of the war with the rest of the men in the Battery on August 16, 1865.

Going home may not have been easy for Halvor. Even though he was only gone one year, his wife and little Eivind had both died. Halvor took charge of his two remaining children and it is believed he went back to farming. The following spring, Halvor married Gunlaug Pederson. She was another of the immigrants who had all come together from Norway when Halvor came. Her husband had died and left her with their two children. Since Halvor and Gunlaug had known each other in Norway, it was not unreasonable for them to marry.

The couple remained in the Eureka Township area and added another three children to the family. Counting Halvor's children, Gunlaug's children, and the three they had together, there were seven.

Halvor's health may not have been good as he mentioned to others that he should apply for a pension from the "liver disease" he contracted while serving in the Union Army. Halvor never got around to applying. He died on November 3, 1870, and was laid to rest in the East Christiana Norwegian Lutheran Church Cemetery in Eureka Township.

The pension application Halvor never filed for himself was filed for Gunlaug. She was desperately poor and had to depend on the help of neighbors for them to get by. The County Poor Fund also stepped in for a time to help the family. It is no small wonder that Halvor's grave was not marked with a stone as Gunlaug already had her hands more than full. One more child died in 1873 and was buried near Halvor. Gunlaug took the remaining children and moved to North Dakota where she lived out the rest of her life. For a time, it was said she had a "French lover" with whom she lived and had a child with, but never married. She may well have been desperate for help raising her family.

Even though she moved to North Dakota, Gunlaug was not alone. There were a good many Norwegians living there, many from Minnesota and the communities Gunlaug lived in before moving. There were also several men who had served in the Second Battery with Halvor living near her new home and it was one of these men, Kittel Torgerson, who signed the pension papers for Gunlaug to continue getting her widow's pension. What eventually happened to her is unknown.

# Christmas During the Civil War

(From The Civil War Trust)

It can be difficult to relate to the men and women of the Civil War era. Despite the extraordinarily different circumstances in which they found themselves, however, we can connect with our forebears in traditions such as the celebration of Christmas. By the mid-19th century, most of today's familiar Christmas trappings -- Christmas carols, gift giving and tree decoration -- were already in place. Charles Dickens had published "A Christmas Carol" in 1843 and indeed, the Civil War saw the first introductions to the modern image of a jolly and portly Santa Claus through the drawings of Thomas Nast, a German-speaking immigrant.

Civil War soldiers in camp and their families at home drew comfort from the same sorts of traditions that characterize Christmas today. Alfred Bellard of the 5th New Jersey noted, "In order to make it look much like Christmas as possible, a small tree was stuck up in front of our tent, decked off with hard tack and pork, in lieu of cakes and oranges, etc." John Haley, of the 17th Maine, wrote in his diary on Christmas Eve that, "It is rumored that there are sundry boxes and mysterious parcels over at Stoneman's Station directed to us. We retire to sleep with feelings akin to those of children expecting Santa Claus."

In one amusing anecdote, a Confederate prisoner relates how the realities of war intruded on his Christmas celebrations: "A friend had sent me in a package a bottle of old brandy. On Christmas morning I quietly called several comrades up to my bunk to taste the precious fluid of... DISAPPOINTMENT! The bottle had been opened outside, the brandy taken and replaced with water... and sent in. I hope the Yankee who played that practical joke lived to repent it and was shot before the war ended."

For many, the holiday was a reminder of the profound melancholy that had settled over the entire nation. Southern parents warned their children that Santa might not make it through the blockade, and soldiers in bleak winter quarters were reminded, more acutely than ever, of the domestic bliss they had left behind. Robert Gould Shaw, who would later earn glory as the commander of the 54th Massachusetts, recorded in his diary, "It is Christmas morning and I hope a happy and merry one for you all, though it looks so stormy for our poor country, one can hardly be in merry humor." On the Confederate home front, Sallie Brock Putnam of Richmond echoed Shaw's sentiment: "Never before had so sad a Christmas dawned upon us... We had neither the heart nor inclination to make the week merry with joyousness when such a sad calamity hovered over us." For the people of Fredericksburg, Virginia, which had been battered only a matter of days before Christmas, or Savannah, Georgia, which

General Sherman had presented to President Lincoln as a gift, the holiday season brought the war to their very doorsteps.

Christmas during the Civil War served both as an escape from and a reminder of the awful conflict rending the country in two. Soldiers looked forward to a day of rest and relative relaxation, but had their moods tempered by the thought of separation from their loved ones. At home, families did their best to celebrate the holiday, but wondered when the vacant chair would again be filled.



# ***Christmas North and South***

From: The Smithsonian Associates Civil War E-Mail Newsletter, Volume 4, Number 7

It hasn't escaped the attention of many that the traditions associated with Christmas celebrations in the United States today began during the Civil War. Without a doubt, it was the loneliness and insecurities of war felt by citizens and soldiers alike that created a need for them to seek solace and security. They found it in part by re-establishing familiar European traditions. This created the illusion of love and peace at a time when very little of that existed in their daily lives.

Christmas had been celebrated in Europe with eating, drinking, and dancing. It was the Puritans who attempted to end this indulgent behavior, and did it successfully when they came to America. With their arrival, Christmas became a serious occasion, the purpose of which was to introspectively ponder sin and religious commitment.

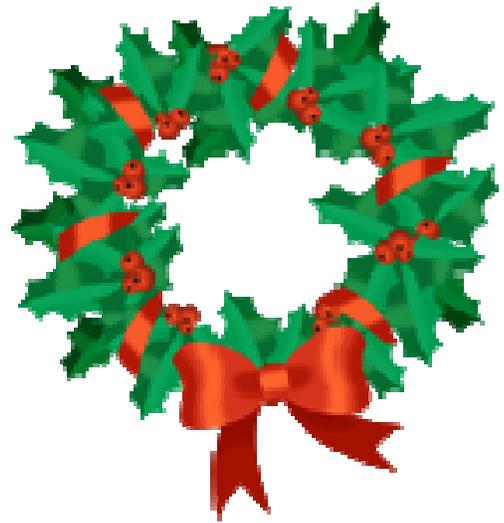
It took almost 200 years for our country to move away from this Puritan view and enjoy the holidays once more. Louisiana was the first state to make Christmas a holiday in 1830, and many states soon followed. Congress did not make Christmas a federal holiday until 1870. The religious revival of the mid 19th century also added to the desire to unite, celebrate, and recognize Christmas.

Christmas cards, carols, special foods, holding winter dances, all date back to the late 1850s. Even before the Civil War, it was common to cut Christmas trees and take them into the home, although they were tabletop size, and usually were arranged with other greenery and mistletoe, all supposed to bring good luck to the household. Union soldiers' letters mention decorating their camp Christmas trees with salt-pork and hard tack.

It was the development of the modern Santa Claus that embedded Christmas into the American way of life. In 1861, Thomas Nast was a German immigrant working as a writer and artist at Harper's Weekly. When he was tasked with providing a drawing to accompany Clement Clark Moore's 1821 poem, 'Twas the Night Before Christmas, he called upon his Bavarian childhood to create our modern image of Santa Claus. His cherubic (but thin by today's standards) Santa was depicted bringing gifts of Harper's to the soldiers, making Nast the first to combine imagery (Santa Claus) and commercialism (selling Harper's) into the American marketplace.

Santa brought children gifts, and gifts were always home made. Children were satisfied to receive just small hand-carved toys, cakes, oranges or apples. Many Southern diaries tell the story of Santa running the blockaded ports in Dixie to fill children's stockings with what little the parents could spare to make the day special for them. Even General Sherman's soldiers played Santa to impoverished Southern children by attaching tree-branch antlers to their horses and bringing food to the starving families in the war-ravaged Georgia countryside.

The most famous Christmas gift of the war was sent by telegram from William Tecumseh Sherman to Abraham Lincoln on December 22, 1864. "I beg to present you as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah, with 100 and 50 guns and plenty of ammunition, also about 25,000 bales of cotton." The gift, of course, wasn't the guns, the ammunition or the cotton, but the beginning of the end of the Civil War.



# Recap

## November 11, Veteran's Day, Winona, MN

This ranks right up there as one of the wettest events we've ever attended. Not only was the rain heavy and steady, but the wind was driving it and the temperatures were low enough to cause some of the rain drops to turn into soggy white lumps. (We refused to use the "s" word to describe what was falling from the sky.)

Despite the weather, there was a respectable crowd in attendance to pay tribute to veterans from all wars. It started at 11:00 a.m. in memory of the end of WWI (11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month). Bugler Bill played *To The Colors* to open the program and closed it with *Taps*. Our soggy gun crew fired three rounds with a spectacular echo that rumbled like thunder back from the bluff. The main speakers cut their remarks short because of the weather



and even the Chaplin didn't ask anyone to remove their hats to pray. The original plan was to fire an additional round for each man on the gun crew to pull the lanyard to show his respect for the veterans and allow visitors to get a good look, but there were no visitors who stayed, so neither did our crew.

As soon as the gun was loaded onto the trailer, we all retired to the local Perkins where we warmed up with hot coffee and a meal.

While the weather was unpleasant, our tribute to veterans and the opportunity to be together made the day much better.



**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.

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