



## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 228

July 2015

### On This Date-150 Years Ago

#### Remarks for the Month of June, 1865

(Numbers indicate the day of the month)

- 1 Sidney G. Norris returned from Hospt.
- 5 C. M. Olsen dropped from rolls Mustered out for Disability May 29/65 from telegraphic order War Dept. dated May 3d 1865.
- 17 Lieut. Joel T. Davis absent with 68 men whose term of service expires on or before Oct. 1st at A. C. M. 4th Division D. C.
- 19 Detachment of men sent to Knoxville to be mustered out, returned to the comm'd, Fred Beebe returned to Com'd
- 22 Sergt. Geo. W. Tilton Mustered as 1st Lieut. to date June 15/65. Corp. W. A. Spaulding promoted to Sergt. to date June 15/65. Joseph L. Sargent promoted to Corp./vice W. A. Spaulding promoted, to date June 15/65.

#### Remarks for the Month of July, 1865

(Numbers indicate the day of the month)

- 3 Lt. Kinkead reported for duty, per S. O. A. 3. Maj. Gen. Thomas. Lt. Ayer reported for duty, S. O. No. 6 by Maj. Gen. Thomas
- 22 Rec'd notice of promotion of Pvt. E. T. Tillotson to 1st Lieut. in 65th U. S. C. T. dropped from rolls.

The war was indeed winding down for the Battery and These were the last two entries in their morning reports. July's reports were only written on two days. Once the Battery started for home, it probably didn't seem necessary to continue writing the reports.

### Next Meeting

**July 25, 2015**      **After the event**

We will hold our meeting at the event in Battle Lake since that is our regular meeting date and the next weekend is an event. Send any meeting items to Ken Cunningham.



### Upcoming Events

**July 11-12**

**Wauconda, IL**

This event is an invitation from our friends in Battery G. It is a well established event, going into its 25th year with lots of information on their website:

[http://www.lcfpd.org/html\\_lc/civilwardaysweb/main.html](http://www.lcfpd.org/html_lc/civilwardaysweb/main.html)

Directions and maps are available on the website. If you are planning to attend and have not contacted John Cain or Daryl Duden, please do so ASAP!

**July 25      Battle Lake, MN – Prospect House & Civil War Museum**

403 Lake Avenue, 10-5. We will set up our regular school stations and talk with the public as they come through. There will be NO COOKING, so you will have choices from five local restaurants, pack your own or dining at one of a few concessions located on or near the grounds for the event. Plan to arrive in the afternoon on Friday to help set up and check in before heading to hotels. Those with campers will be able to set up on an unused backlot in the northwest corner of the property. We will tour the Museum on Friday at no cost.

**July 26      Grave marker dedication, Maine Township, Otter Tail County, MN**

We will pack down our camp in Battle Lake and drive the approximately 20 miles to this site. We will off load the gun and prepare to do our grave stone dedication. There will be a brief tour of the cemetery led by the Otter Tail County Historical Society starting at 10:45 with the dedication of the grave stone for John Phelps. Following our dedication, the church will serve a lunch. A freewill offering accepted for the lunch.

**August 1-2      Boscobel, WI – 24th Annual Muskets & Memories Civil War weekend**

This is one of our favorite events all year—fun battle scenarios, lots of participants, and PIE! As discussed at the June meeting, this event usually draws a large number of our members and meal planning gets much more difficult. PLEASE RAVP when the planning email goes out whether you will be attending or not.

<http://www.musketsandmemories.net/sched.html>

# Battery Profile

## John Phelps

John was young when he enlisted in the Battery, being just 19 years. He was mustered in on February 20, 1862, at Fort Snelling where the Battery was forming up. The descriptive role showed John to have been born in New York, with blue eyes, light hair, and a light complexion. He was 5' 7-1/2" tall and listed his occupation as a farmer.

John served the Battery as a private. He was sent to a field hospital near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on June 24, 1863, and struggled with his health until he was transferred to the Invalid Corps on September 30, 1863. By January 31, 1864, John was transferred to the Veteran Reserve Corps. He was discharged in Chicago on March 20, 1865.

Exactly what turns John's life may have taken are almost unknown as John did not leave many records. One of the few he left recorded his marriage to Sarah Jennie Jefferson on October 26, 1889. The wedding took place in the St. John's Catholic Church in Mankato.

John and Jennie lived in Mankato until at least 1894 and two babies were born to them, Carlin in 1892 and Tommy in 1894. Then the family moved to Otter Tail County and were living in Maine Township by 1900. John was working as a farmer and was hired to drive a team there—when he could work as his health was not good.

John's application for a pension as an invalid was filed in 1898 and it was granted, a notation appearing on the application that he had been assigned to the Veteran Reserve Corps before being discharged.

Quite a number of depositions to the Pension Department detail the struggles John had trying to work and several were people who knew John before he enlisted. These stated John was healthy before his time in the army.

Death came to John on October 20, 1906. The cause was listed as "congestion of the liver." The funeral was held at the church in Maine and was "largely attended."

Considering the circumstances Jennie was in at the time of John's death, it is no surprise that she could not spend the money to have a permanent marker placed on his grave. Even a stone setting fee for a marker from the Veterans Administration would have been a hardship.

Jennie filed for a pension as John's widow and the Pension Department had to investigate her circumstances before granting her a widow's pension. This investigation turned up the total value of John's personal property—he owned no real estate—and put the value at \$53. It gave a list of his property at the

time of his death: two old horses, a cow, and two heifers, but the animals had all been sold to pay the expenses of his last illness and part of the funeral expenses, leaving Jennie nothing on which to live.

Jennie and the boys were destitute. The State of Minnesota paid \$35 toward the remaining burial expense of John's body. The County Agent in Otter Tail gave Jennie the \$8 a month she would get as a widow's pension payment until the filing was approved. The pension was granted and Jennie was able to get an additional \$2 a month for each of the boys as Carlin was only 15 and Tommy was 12. Minor children were eligible for a pension from their father's service until they turned 16.

Jennie and the boys left Otter Tail County and went to live with family in Minneapolis. Son Tommy, died following an operation in 1915. His obituary did not list any Phelps relatives, so Jennie may have not stayed in contact with John's family after his death.

Jennie lived until the age of 89. At the time of her death in 1944, she was collecting \$40 a month for John's pension. She died at the home of her sister and was buried in Pilgrim's Rest in Mankato.

John's grave remained unmarked as the years passed. When research led members of the Second Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery Reenactors to Silent Vale, they discovered the burial records for two years were missing—1906 was one of the missing years. Without burial records, all other possibilities were eliminated. John's body had not been moved, nor was he buried next to Jennie. After countless phone calls and contacts, and with the help of the Otter Tail County Historical Society, everything was finally put in place to order a veteran's marker for John's grave. The marker was installed and dedicated on July 26, 2015.

It is believed Phelps Mill, located just a few miles from the Silent Vale Cemetery, has a connection to John. The mill was built in 1889 by William Thomas and he named the town in honor of his wife's maiden name, which was Phelps. While records are a bit lacking, it is believed Nonie Phelps Thomas was John's sister.



## 8 Lessons on People-Skills from Victorian Ladies

First published in 1860 by Florence Hartley, *The Ladies' Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness* provided full directions for correct manners, deportment, and conversation. Much of this could be well applied today!

Here are the first four timeless nuggets of advice from a Victorian lady that could help you make more friends, earn more respect, and increase your social currency. The last four lessons will be in the next newsletter.

1. *Do unto others as you would others should do to you.* “politeness is goodness of heart put into daily practice; there can be no true politeness without kindness, purity, singleness of heart, and sensibility. Florence Hartley warned people against believing that politeness was merely a façade to hide the truth. She explained that extending courtesy to everyone takes effort and willpower. In other words, it isn't easy, but it is worth the effort.

Do's and don'ts from Florence Hartley:

Do try to set people at ease.

Do practice self-sacrificing, friendly and unselfish behavior. Be genuinely-in word & deed-polite.

Don't say things in public that may hurt others' feelings.

Don't make others feel uncomfortable by putting your own convenience first.

Politeness is a genuine desire to show neighborly love. Without a good heart, politeness is hypocritical and deceitful. “True politeness is the language of a good heart, and those possessing that heart will never, under any circumstances, be rude.

2. Be a Good Listener. Unless you're with friends, focus your attention squarely on the person you're conversing with. Show genuine interest in what the other person is saying. Do not be distracted by anything said in another group. Remember, it takes two to make a conversation, so don't steal the spotlight. Give the other person an opportunity to speak, but avoid silence, or answering in monosyllables.

If your companion relates an incident or tells a story, don't interrupt with questions part way through—even if you don't understand something. Wait until she's finished, and then ask questions. There is nothing more annoying than being interrupted. Never break in upon another conversation. Wait until the conversation is finished before addressing the person you wanted to speak to.

3. Rudeness repels. Courtesy attracts. Never meet rudeness in others by being rude yourself; even the most impolite will feel more shame by your courtesy than by attempting to respond in kind. “The polished surface throws back the arrow.

Politeness forbids any display of resentment.

A favor becomes twice as valuable if granted with courtesy, and the pain of a refusal is softened when expressed with polite regret.

Never by word or action notice the defects of another; always be charitable.

Courtesy is genuine when delivered from the heart.

“True politeness is being polite at all times, and under all circumstances.

4. Put Your Audience First. People should not talk to please themselves, but to please those who hear them. This helps the speaker ask themselves some important questions:

Is what I'm saying worth hearing?

Is there sufficient wit or sense in what I'm about to say?

Am I adapting my conversation appropriately for the time, place, and audience?

Do's and Don'ts from Florence Hartley:

Do take care in conversation to avoid topics that might be painful for your companion to hear.

Do turn to another subject as quickly as possible if you perceive you have caused anxiety for your friend.

Don't hurt the feelings of another for the sake of appearing witty or smart.

Don't try to impress people with your knowledge, but listen as well as talk, and modestly follow their lead.

“Avoid affectation; it is the sure test of a deceitful, vulgar mind. The best cure is to try to have those virtues which you would affect, and then they will appear naturally.

# Recap

## June 6-7, Fort Ridgely, Fairfax, MN

This was an unqualified success according to the organizers and several hundred visitors came through the site during the weekend. We did experience that incessant prairie wind so often commented on by the inhabitants of the fort 150 years ago. Our camp was set up to replicate the way the fort was—the enlisted tents next to the enlisted man's quarters, the officers tents beside the officer's quarters and the laundress was right in the center of the original laundresses' area. Oncoming rain on Sunday afternoon drove away visitors and allowed us to pack down everything dry but one fly. The meals provided by the event organizers was amazing in both quality and quantity! It was a pleasant outing in every respect.



## June 12-13, Thunder in the Valley, Waukon, IA

This is a small event, less than 100 reenactors in attendance, but a very fun event. The park is pretty, the organizers extremely gracious and hospitality was abundant. With a smaller venue, it allowed our gun crew to rotate positions every two shots to better train our crew and give everyone a chance to play all the positions. The weather was wet—but not raining—on Saturday and cleared up on Sunday to a perfect afternoon. Lots of activities were around the park including a dance (Briar even got Mrs. Wendel out on the dance floor!!) and a night fire across a pond. One discovery Battery members made was the local Dairy Bar with the most amazing ice cream! The fact that it was only a block from the camp made it very easy to “sample” wares from the shop frequently! Though small, this event was a hugely fun weekend. We were without officers, so Corporal Ritchie admirably led the unit with his Keeper of the Key, Private Cunningham.



## June 30, 1812 Overture, Menomonie, WI

Submitted by Katie Demarco

It was a perfect summer evening and Mother Nature added to the show with an almost full moon. The band was quite good as they played their repertoire of patriotic songs and engaged the large audience in singing along. The cannons fired at the beginning of the program, but the main event was the accompaniment to the 1812 overture. Under the direction of one of the music conductors, the 6 cannons fired perfectly along with the overture. They ended the night with all 6 cannons firing at once. The crowd loved it. I overheard one couple saying the cannons were the best part of the show!

There were two coolers provided for the Battery boys. One had bottles of water on ice and the other was full of cheese curds—we could tell we were in Wisconsin!

**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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Ken found the ice cream stand!!



Bugler Bill has turned teacher, helping Boy Scout Cha Lee earn his bugling merit badge!