

## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 227

June 2015

### On This Date-150 Years Ago

#### **What is Juneteenth?**

Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, with an effective date of January 1, 1863. It declared all slaves to be freed in the Confederate States of America then in rebellion and not in Union hands. It also announced that the Union would start recruiting former slaves and free blacks to serve in the military. Contraband camps were set up to house the freedmen temporarily, as well as start schools and put adults to work. Lincoln had urged the governments in the Border States, which had remained in the Union, to free their slaves under a system of gradual abolition and compensation, but none did so. Those slaves were not emancipated until the end of the war.

More isolated geographically, Texas was not a battleground, and thus its slaves were not affected by the Emancipation Proclamation unless they escaped. Texas slaveholders had migrated into Texas from eastern states to escape the fighting, and many brought their slaves with them, increasing by the thousands the number of slaves in the state at the end of the Civil War.

By 1865, there were an estimated 250,000 slaves in Texas. News about the end of the war moved slowly. It did not reach Texas until May 1865, and the Army of the Trans-Mississippi did not surrender until June 2. On June 18, 1865, Union General Gordon Granger arrived at Galveston Island with 2,000 federal troops to occupy Texas on behalf of the federal government. On June 19, standing on the balcony of Galveston's Ashton Villa, Granger read aloud the contents of "General Order No. 3", announcing the total emancipation of slaves:

*The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.*

Former slaves in Galveston rejoiced in the streets after the announcement, although in the years afterward, many struggled to work through the changes against resistance of whites. By the following year, freedmen organized the first of what became annual celebrations of Juneteenth in Texas.

Barred in some cities from using public parks because of state-sponsored segregation of facilities, across parts of Texas, freed people pooled their funds to purchase land to hold their celebrations, such as Houston's Emancipation Park, Mexia's Booker T. Washington Park, and Emancipation Park in Austin.

Juneteenth is a made up name meaning June 19th, the day of emancipation in Texas. It is still celebrated in many places in Texas yet today.

### Upcoming Events

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

72404 County Road 30, Fairfax, MN. This is the second year the Fifth Minnesota has hosted this encampment event at the historic site of the Fort.

**NOTE: This site is inside the state park and a park pass is required. Stop at the park entrance office and ask for a reenactor pass for the weekend, you will not have to pay! The site is open from 10-5 and we will be doing living history during these hours. We can set up as early as Friday morning, but we must be set up and ready for the public by 10 am Saturday.**

The organizers are providing all the meals for us for the entire weekend! Thank you to everyone for responding so we could give them good numbers!

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

This is the third year for this event in a large city park. For more info, check out this schedule that appeared on their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/200912290044998/photos/a.227901370679423.57728.200912290044998/633348476801375/?type=1&theater>

If you are planning to attend this event, please contact Ken Cunningham to get your name on the list for meal planning purposes.

#### **June 30, 1812 Overture, Menomonie, WI**

We will be joining Battery I for this event. It is a 90 minute event starting at 8, but the gun crew needs to arrive at 7 pm to prepare. If the ladies want to attend, they do NOT need to be in period dress. Contact John Cain for more information.

### Next Meeting

**June 27, 2015**

**11:00am**

We will meet at Marie's Underground Dining in Red Wing. Call John Cain if you need the address or directions, (651) 388-9250.



# **Battery Profile**

## **John O'Brien**

John was an Irish immigrant who managed to leave little about his life behind. He was born about 1834 in Kerry and came to America, settling in St. Paul, Minnesota, by 1860. He lived as a boarder in the household of Pat Keough and his family. Pat and his wife were both born in Ireland, as were three of the other boarders. John was working as a laborer.

When John decided to enlist in the Second Battery, he was living in Waseca County, still working as a laborer. He was mustered into the Battery on February 17, 1862, where he served as a private. He was single, had blue eyes, black hair and a sandy complexion. He stood 5' 5-1/2" tall.

John served in the Battery through the drills and marches, went south with them and was at the battle at Perryville, Kentucky. His bunkmate was Frank Lewis. Nothing extraordinary was noted about his service until the battle at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The battle there saw John killed in action on December 31, 1862. The entry on the Battery's muster role simply said he was killed in the field by a gun shot.

The battle did not end on the 31st, it carried over into the New Year and the confusion of battle may have been partly to blame for John's final resting place to go unrecorded. It is possible he is buried in the National Cemetery at Stones River, but if he is, he is one of the

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## **Baird Oleson**

Baird Oleson was an immigrant to Minnesota, having been born in Norway in about 1821. As with many immigrants, Baird was a farmer and he continued in that labor on the new lands in Spring Grove, Minnesota.

The 1857 census lists Baird (though it is spelled Bard) with his wife, Anne, a three year old son named Ole and a one year old son named Erik living in Township 101, range 6 of Houston County. All were born in Norway except Erik. Baird's occupation was farming. When the family came to Minnesota is unknown as is the connection they might have to the other two people living in the same household with different names.

Baird went to Rochester to enlist in the fall of 1864. The descriptive roll of the Second Battery showed Baird to be 5' 7" tall, with blue eyes, dark hair and a dark complexion. He was 43 years old.

A bounty was promised to the new recruits and Baird was given a third of his when he agreed to serve for one year. He got \$33.33 and was owed another \$66.67.

Baird caught up to the Battery outside of Chattanooga, Tennessee, where they were doing garrison duty during the final year of the war. The war was pretty much over when Baird became so sick he was taken to the hospital at Knoxville, Tennessee, on May 10, 1865. He was well enough to return to Minnesota and be discharged with the Battery at Fort Snelling on August 16, 1865.

His discharge is the last known record of Baird. The only other mention made of him appears in a list of Battery members compiled for a reunion and it was noted Baird had died on February 22, 1872, but nothing further about where he lived or how he died. It is possible Baird changed his name to something that sounded more American as was common to do and this may be the reason no further records can be located. What became of Baird and where he is buried remains unknown.

Research is, as always, ongoing in the hope of someday finding Baird's final resting place.

# Commemorating Lincoln's Funeral

Springfield, Illinois, May 1-3, 2015



The old Illinois State Capitol where Lincoln served in the legislature. It is a museum now. Battery ladies were quite excited to see the SAS displays inside!

Battery members with the "First Family" at the Lincoln Museum.



Abe and Mary Lincoln's House



The old train depot Lincoln used.



An original mourning ribbon worn at Lincoln's funeral.

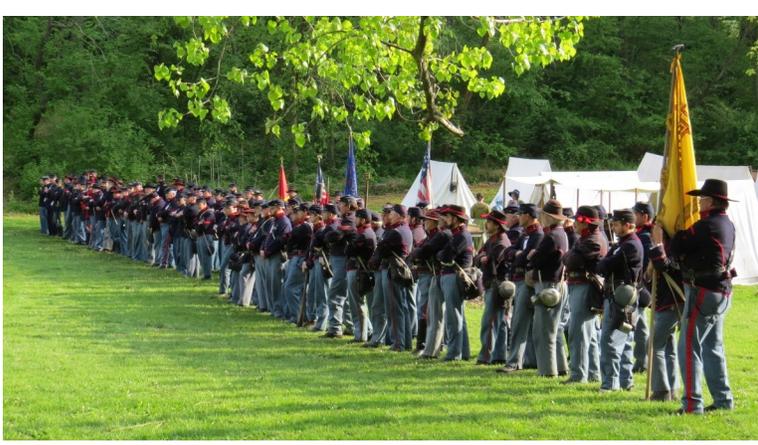


Lincoln's Tomb in Oakland Cemetery. This was only a short distance from our camp.



Some of the Battery boys outside Lincoln's Tomb, Bugler Bill played Taps here beside the Tomb. Every tourist and visitor stopped still to listen.





There was a lot of down time between firings.



Morning formation in the artillery camp.

Guns were fired by sections.



Some of our ladies.



The funeral parade, the coffin and the hearse. Our gun was in the cemetery to fire honor volleys.



# Recap

## April 25, Gamehaven Council BSA, Rochester, MN

.This event was probably one of the COLDEST events we've done! The morning temperature was 37 and it didn't go up much, partnered with a stiff wind and spits of rain from time to time. It was far from an ideal day to spend outside! However, the welcome from the scouts and their leaders was very warm and we set up our stations for the scouts to visit. We saw over 100 scouts and their leaders that day! We had a great turnout from Battery members and each one of us got our Spring Camporee patch, designed for the event, just like the scouts.



## May 1-3, Springfield, IL - 150<sup>th</sup> Lincoln Funeral Train

.This final 150th event was very demanding of the artillery, requiring our boys to be on the guns a great deal for the time. Despite being on the gun line, there was not a lot of firing as there was as much as 30 minutes between guns firing. With 12 guns in attendance and each taking their turn to fire, it provided a lot of down time without giving the gen crews time enough to go do anything else. The artillery camp was beautiful and we were very well cared for in terms of wood, water, clean porta-potties, etc., but we were dependent on a somewhat sketchy shuttle bus system to see anything in the downtown area—which is where most of the activity except for the parade and interment ceremony were held. Still, arriving a day early let members get to the Lincoln Museum which everyone agreed was fantastic, as well as some of the other Lincoln sites in Springfield. In all, it was a good event, but from our perspective, could have benefitted by better communication on the parts of the organizers. See the previous page for photos.

## May 11 Calvin Christian School, Edina MN

Rain has been our nemesis this spring for the educational events! It was raining hard all night before this school event and threatened to continue with the wind and cold temps, so the school moved all the stations except the cannon inside the building. It made for interesting set ups, but we managed and had a great time with these exceptional kids. The groups were small, they were well prepared and had outstanding questions. We love visiting this school!



**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:

### President

Ken Cunningham

Red Wing, MN 55066

Phone: (651) 388-9250

### Treasurer

Daryl Duden

1210 West 4th Street

Red Wing, MN 55066

Phone: (651) 388-6520

### Twin Cities Metro Area Contact

Ron & Vickie Wendel

12419 Redwood Street NW

Coon Rapids, MN 55448

Phone: (763) 754-2476

E-mail: [momwendel@hotmail.com](mailto:momwendel@hotmail.com)

Battery Website:

<http://www.2mnbattery.org>

## May 25 Memorial Day, Red Wing, MN

The 2015 Memorial Day Observance in Red Wing MN was well attended by members of the 2nd Minnesota Battery. Although the threat of rain diminished attendance, an estimated crowd of 550 attended the 8:45am Observance in Bay Point Park. Ms Tanya Graves read Logan's Proclamation as part of the ceremony. The 2nd Minnesota Battery fired a three round salute to honor all of our fallen comrades. This year there were sixty names on the list of Our Departed Comrades, veterans from Red Wing who passed since last Memorial Day. Battery members participating in the gun crew were 1st Lt John Cain, Cpl Ron Graves, Cpl Michael Ritchie, Pvt Bruce Arnoldy, Pvt Neal Bruce, Pvt John Crozier, Pvt Ken Cunningham, Pvt Mike Cunningham, Pvt Briar Golden and Pvt Ben Norman. A number of members of the 2nd Minnesota Battery in civilian clothing were also in attendance. Sgt Daryl Duden is chairman of the Red Wing Memorial Day Association.