



2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 225

March 2015

On This Date-150 Years Ago

A listing of events from March of 1865.

- 2 - Freedman's Bureau founded for Black Education, 1865
- 2 - Confederate General Early's army is defeated at the battle of Waynesboro VA
- 3 - US Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, & Abandoned Lands established by Abraham Lincoln to help destitute free blacks
- 4 - Confederate congress approves final design of "official flag"
- 4 - President Lincoln inaugurated for his 2nd term as US president
- 6 - Battle of Natural Bridge, Florida
- 7 - -10] Battles round Kinston NC
- 8 - Battle of Kingston, NC (Wilcox's ridge, Wise's Forks)
- 10 - Battle of Monroe's Crossroads, NC
- 11 - General Sherman's forces occupy Fayetteville, NC
- 13 - Jefferson Davis signs bill authorizing use of slaves as soldiers
- 16 - Battle of Averasboro NC (1,500 casualties)
- 18 - Battle of Wilson's raid to Selma, AL
- 18 - Congress of Confederate States of American adjourns for last time
- 19 - Battle of Bentonville-Confederates retreat from Greenville NC
- 21 - Battle of Bentonville ends, last Confederate effort to stop Sherman
- 22 - Raid at Wilson's: Chickaswas AL to Macon GA
- 23 - General Sherman troops reach Goldsboro NC
- 25 - Battle of Bluff Spring, FL
- 25 - Battle of Fort Stedman, Petersburg, VA
- 25 - Battle of Mobile, AL (Spanish Fort, Fort Morgan, Fort Blakely)
- 25 - SS *General Lyon* at Cape Hatteras catches fire & sinks, killing 400
- 27 - Siege of Spanish Fort, AL-captured by Federals
- 29 - -Apr 9th], Appomattox campaign, VA
- 29 - Battle of Quaker Road, VA
- 30 - -4] Battle at 5 Forks Virginia
- 31 - Battle of Boydton, VA (Dinwiddie C H)
- 31 - Gen Pickett moves to 5 Forks, abandoning the defense of Petersburg

Upcoming Events

Springfield, IL - 150th Lincoln Funeral Train May 1-3, 2015

The arrival of a replica full size historic Lincoln Funeral train and funeral car will highlight this 150th Anniversary event. There are many events planned around this anniversary. Some are TICKETED events and will need advance purchase to attend. There is also walking venues of Receiving the Train & Coffin (Saturday – one mile) and The Oak Ridge Procession (Sunday – 4 miles).

Federal artillery will fire at two ceremonies during the weekend, about 6 shots per gun. **Those members wishing to participate will need to register individually on the website.**

<http://lincolnfunealtrain.org/>

The 2nd Minnesota Battery will reimburse each member who attends this event the \$20 participation fee. The registration fee will be used to pay for the amenities and the re-enactor shuttle buses to get folks to other venues and historic sites. Reenactor camp will be in Lincoln Park along with the sutlers, but the firing will take place at the Old State Capitol and the cemetery as it did 150 years ago. We will need to trailer the guns through the city streets.

March—Elections!

Attendance at this meeting is VERY important as we will be voting on our military and organizational leadership positions. **We need a candidate for organizational president!** John Cain is stepping down and we need a new president. Remember, your membership must be current to vote. **Have you paid your 2015 dues? See page 4.**

Next Meeting

March 21, 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.



Double Barreled Cannon

From the website: <http://www.americancivilwarstory.com/double-barrel-cannon.html>

A double barreled cannon was forged in the spring of 1862 in Athens, Georgia, designed by John Gilleland. He was a private in the Mitchel Thunderbolts, a homeguard unit for men too old for active duty. He was 53. The \$350 needed to fund the manufacture of the cannon was raised with a subscription fund.

The cannon itself was roughly 13 inches wide and 4 feet 8 1/2 inches long. It had two, three-inch barrels with a three degree divergence. It was also equipped with three touch holes—one for each barrel and one that would allow both barrels to be fired simultaneously.

Gilleland's intention was for the cannon to fire mostly chain shot. Two six pound cannon balls were connected by ten feet of chain. The divergence of the bores was to allow the shot to extend the full length of the chain as it sped towards the target. It was designed to be used against infantry with the intent to mow down swaths of soldiers as wide as the chain would reach.

Mr. Gilleland took his new cannon north of Athens to a field near Newton Bridge for the initial test fire on April 22, 1862. A crowd of people gathered to see the new "secret" weapon in action. That was when things got interesting.

When Gilleland touched the cannon off the first time, the two barrels did not fire simultaneously (no surprise) which caused the load to take a wild and erratic course across the field, missing the posts that had been erected as targets, but wreaking havoc nonetheless. According to one account "It [took] a kind of circular motion, plowed up about an acre of ground, tore up a cornfield, mowed down saplings, and [then] the chain broke, the two balls going in different directions."

A second shot tried to get both barrels to fire simultaneously. This time the shot flew off into some pine saplings leading an eyewitness to report that, "[The] thicket of young pines at which it was aimed looked as if a narrow cyclone or a giant mowing machine had passed through." On another attempt, the chain broke and each ball took its own course. One hit a nearby cabin and destroyed its chimney while the other veered off and struck an unwary cow, killing it instantly.

While it caused wholesale destruction and slaughter, the test was a failure. If the barrels didn't fire together, it was impossible to know where the shot might go and if the barrels did fire together (rare) the chain always broke.

Gilleland declared the test an unqualified success and he was supported by this article in the April 30, 1862, issue of the Athens newspaper, *Southern Watchman*:

Double-barrelled Cannon. - MR. GILLELAND has invented a double-barrelled cannon for throwing chain shot, which has been tested and found to work satisfactorily. Two shots are confined to the end of a chain and one placed in each barrel of the gun, the bores of which diverge slightly, and cause the balls to separate the full length of the chain - cutting down everything in their path. Of course, the barrels are fired simultaneously.

The cannon was sent to the Confederate arsenal in Augusta, Georgia, for further testing. The commandant there, Col. George W. Rains, tested the weapon extensively and reported that it was not usable due to unpredictable rates of powder burn and barrel friction which led to unpredictable performance. The cannon was then sent back to Athens.

This outraged Mr. Gilleland and he wrote angry letters to both the governor of Georgia and to the Confederate government in Richmond. The double barrel cannon was never adopted by the Confederate army.

Still, it was taken into battle. When the gun was returned to Athens, it was placed in front of the town hall to be used as a signal gun in case of attack. There it remained until August 2, 1864, when it was hauled out of town to the hills by Barber Creek to meet the approach of Brig. Gen. George Stoneman and his Union troops. The double barrel cannon was positioned on a ridge along with several other conventional cannons. Both barrels were loaded with canister shot. The homeguard units were heavily outnumbered, but as the Union troops approached, the Athens homeguard fired a four shell barrage including the double barrel cannon. Against such stiff resistance, the Union troops withdrew.

There were a few more minor skirmishes around Athens, but the city escaped Sherman's march to the sea and the double barrel cannon was moved back into town.

After the war ended, the city of Athens sold the double barreled cannon. It disappeared for many years, then restored, and returned to the city in the 1890s. Now it sits in downtown Athens in front of city hall.

It can be viewed as it guards the corner of Hancock and College Avenues where it points north...Just in case!



Battery Profile

William Pressey

The draft rendezvous in the late summer of 1864 was when William enlisted in the Second Battery. He was living with his wife and infant daughter in Spring Grove, Houston County, Minnesota when he decided to join the army. William's occupation was that of horse farrier, a skill that would have been needed in the Battery. William enlisted on September 2, 1864, at Rochester and was paid a bounty of \$33.33 with a balance due him of another \$66.67 at the end of his one year obligation.

William was 29 years old, had black hair, dark eyes, and a dark complexion. He stood 5' 9" tall, and was born in New Hampshire.

Though William only enlisted for one year, it was too long. He died of chronic diarrhea on July 30, 1865, while he was in the hospital at Louisville, Kentucky. A letter addressed to Captain Hotchkiss read, *Sir, I have the honor to report that Private Wm. W. Pressey of 2nd Minn Battery died of Chronic Diarrhoea July 30th, 1865 and has been buried at "cave hill" Louisville, Ky. enclosed inventory of his effects. It was signed by the "surg U.S. Vols in charge"* and dated from the U.S. Hospital Steamer "Ginnie Hopkins" at Louisville, Kentucky.

The list of effects showed that William had little more than the clothes on his back. His effects included: one pair of trousers, one blanket, three shirts, a jacket, two hats, a knapsack, one pair of boots, a canteen, a portfolio, and a handkerchief. Whether this was sent to his widow in Spring Grove, Minnesota, is not known.

The cemetery William was buried in was a private cemetery just outside of Louisville, Kentucky, but so many soldiers were buried there during and following the Civil War that a portion of the cemetery was made a part of the National Cemetery system. William rests beside many hundreds of other soldiers who fought during the Civil War. His grave number is 3550.

Ellen Pressey had married William in July of 1861 while both were living in Minnesota. Their first child was named for his father, William, and died when he was just two weeks old. A second child, this time a girl named Ellen (her mother's name), was born on April 7, 1863. Whether William knew it or not when he enlisted, there was to be a third child, another son whom Ellen would again name William, born on April 9th, 1865. It probably pleased William that he had a son born on the very day Confederate General Robert E. Lee signed the surrender at Appomattox, but William did not live to ever see his son. William died three months later without having returned to Minnesota and his family.

Ellen applied for a widow's pension and filed for a pension for her two minor children. The pensions were granted. In 1873, an amended pension was filed stating that Ellen had died on March 17, 1873. Ellen's daughter, Ellen, was still eligible to claim her father's pension and it was filed in her behalf, but it made no mention of her brother, William. It is assumed that William, Junior, had also died.

Little Ellen continued to receive the pension from her father's service until she turned 16 years old in 1879.



2015 Event Calendar

This is the 2015 Second Battery calendar as approved by the membership at the February meeting. Please mark your calendars for a great season of reenacting!

- April 25 Rochester, MN – Gamehaven Council BSA, Civil War Learning Experience
- May 1-3 Springfield, IL – 150th Lincoln Funeral Train historic event (We are attending this event as a Battery, see Upcoming Events on page 1 for details.)
- May 11 Edina, MN – Calvin Christian School (9:50am – 2:35pm)
- May 25 Red Wing, MN – Memorial Day Observance
- June 6-7 Fairfax, MN – Historic Fort Ridgley Civil War Weekend
- June 13-14 Waukon, IA – 3rd Annual Allamakee County Thunder in the Park event
- June 30 Menomonie, WI – Wilson Park Concert, Ludington Guard Band, 8:00 pm
- July 11-12 Wauconda, IL – 24th Annual Civil War Days reenactment/Lake County Discovery Museum
- July 25 Battle Lake, MN – Prospect House & Civil War Museum, 403 Lake Avenue
- July 26 Grave marker dedication, Maine Township, Otter Tail County, MN
- August 1-2 Boscobel, WI – 23rd Annual Muskets & Memories Civil War weekend
- August 15-16 St. Paul, MN – Historic Fort Snelling, Civil War Muster Out Day, **TENTATIVE**
- August 22-23 Morristown, MN – Annual Shooter's Roundup event (10:00, 12:00, 2:00, 4:00)
- September 26 Willmar, MN – Kandiyohi County Historical Society (This is a paid event)
- November 11 Winona, MN – Veteran's Day Tribute

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

Dues are PAST Due!

To remain on our mailing list, we need to hear from you immediately. Please let us know if you want to continue your association with the Second Minnesota Battery.

Dues are:

Civilian member	\$12.00
Military Member	\$12.00
Associate Member	\$ 6.00
Junior Member (14-17)	\$ 6.00
Junior Member (Under 14)	Free

Send your dues with your name and address to:

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