

## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 233

February 2016

### On This Date-155 Years Ago

(From [http://americancivilwar.com/authors/Joseph\\_Ryan](http://americancivilwar.com/authors/Joseph_Ryan))

#### **The Confederate Government Is Formed**

February 6, 1861, the six seceded states—South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, soon to be joined by Texas—sent delegates to Montgomery, Alabama, to attend a constitutional convention. Two days later, a constitution was adopted which mirrored, in its language, the Constitution of the United States.

On February 9th, the convention chose Jefferson Davis as President of the Confederate States of America, with Alexander H. Stevens, of Georgia, as Vice-President. A week later, on February 18, Mr. Davis appeared on the steps of the Alabama State House and delivered his inaugural address, stating a hope for peace, and relying for it on a principle of nature, not of law:

*I enter upon the duties of the office with the hope that the beginning of our career, as a Confederacy, may not be obstructed by hostile opposition to our separate existence, which, with the blessing of Providence, we intend to maintain.*

*Our present political position. . . illustrates the American idea that governments rest on the consent of the governed, and that it is the right of the people to alter or abolish them at will whenever they become destructive of the ends for which they were established.*

In the case of the Union, of course, those “ends” were expressed to be: *to establish “justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves (not including African Negro slaves) and our posterity.”* The Constitution of the Confederacy embraced these same predicates as the basis of its government.

President Davis, in his address, explained the theory of American government as he understood it, this way:

*The right proclaimed at the birth of the United States. . . recognizes in the people the power to resume the authority delegated. Thus the sovereign States here represented have proceeded to form this Confederacy; and it is by abuse of language that their act has been denominated a revolution. They formed a new alliance, but within each State its government has remained, so that the rights of persons and property have not been disturbed. The agent through which they communicated with foreign nations has changed, but this does not necessarily interrupt their international relations. . . .*

*If we may not hope to avoid war, we may at least expect that posterity will acquit us if we fail.*

### Upcoming Events

#### **2016 Planning Meeting,**

We will be discussing and planning the events for the 2016 calendar. Please bring any information you may have on events that the organization may want to consider for the upcoming reenacting season.

Bring your calendars, too, as possible participation will depend on individual attendance plans.

By the end of this meeting, a tentative calendar will be established. That calendar will be included in the next newsletter and voted on at the March meeting.

### **2016 DUES ARE DUE!!**

Battery dues are due each year in January and must be paid before you are eligible to vote on the calendar and leadership positions in the Battery at the annual meeting in March. If you have not yet paid your dues, you may bring them to the February meeting or mail to Battery Treasurer, Daryl Duden, 1210 West 4th Street, Red Wing, MN 55066.

The dues schedule is on the contact form on the last page of this newsletter. EVERYONE is urged to update your information on this form to be sure we can reach you if needed.

Additionally, if you are not a regular attendee at the monthly meetings, consider joining at the ASSOCIATE membership level. This will help the legal issues of quorums at our meetings.

#### **Next Meeting**

**February 20, 2016 11:00**

Marie’s Underground Dining, Red Wing  
For more info or directions, contact Ken  
Cunningham, (651) 388-2945.



# “Biting the Bullet”

By George Wunderlich, Executive Director, National Museum of Civil War Medicine, Frederick, MD.

Nearly everyone has heard the story of “biting the bullet” where a soldier is given a bullet to bite on to keep from screaming while his wounds are operated on without anesthesia.

Recent research by a medical school in the Midwest that shows, in fact, some of the bullets that had been found on battlefields and claimed to have been chewed on by Civil War soldiers, in fact, were chewed on by Civil War soldiers. They were clearly made with human teeth. We also know from compression tests done on these bullets that, in fact, human teeth can bring enough pressure to bear to dent an original Civil War bullet.

What does this mean however? There are no medical accounts found to date that ever talk about using a bullet, or for that matter, using a rope or piece of leather within a surgical atmosphere. They simply don't exist. Now we're not saying that none can. It's just interesting with volume-upon-volume of work that has been written about Civil War medicine from the original practitioners that these items are never mentioned.



However, in many of the medical texts of the period used to train these surgeons, it was noted that the aspiration of foreign bodies that might be in the mouth was a distinct problem and possibility and could result in death. Why, then would any surgeon place an object into the mouth, having been warned of the possibility of aspiration? Why would he do that, especially knowing that the man might scream out in pain and swallow whatever was in his mouth? Whether it was a portion of a stick, a bullet, a piece of leather or even a piece of rope, it does not make medical sense.

But it also does not meet with the historical record that exists. Going back to anesthesia, one more thing comes to mind – why would they do that when they had anesthetics to relieve the patient's stress? Why wouldn't they use anesthesia? According to the *Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion*, published by the Surgeon General's office after the Civil War, we know that actually anesthesia was quite commonly used probably in 95% or more of the operations.

There are two reasons that anesthesia may not have been used. The first occurs when the airway's impaired or when the patient is so depressed in his breathing that the giving of anesthesia would be considered fatal. Also possibly in maxillo-facial injuries, it's highly corrosive and may not have been given in those instances.

The other reason would be if the anesthesia ran out. For instance, at Antietam, we know the anesthesia on the Union side was very short. They simply didn't have enough supply. In these cases, the surgeons declared very clearly that they delayed operations until supplies could be found, meaning they stopped operating at that point. The fact is, there may have been some cases that came through the hospitals which were so severe and so intense when it comes to time that they had no choice but to operate immediately to save the life, and we know that in some cases this certainly occurred.

In general, anesthesia was available. It was common, it was common on both sides. And, no, soldiers didn't bite on bullets for pain.

So why did they bite on bullets? That is another issue. We don't know. The fact is, we're simply unsure. However, there is a theory that soldiers did – pardon the use of the term – “silly” things in camp. They made lead cannons and tried to shoot them off. We have the remnants of some of those pieces. They had louse races. They raced cock roaches and bull frogs and everything else they could find. They also challenged each other to do stupid things. This is not uncommon in the young male population. It is certainly possible that men chewed on bullets either because they felt at the time, it would relieve moisture problems in the mouth, specifically causing salivation. It was believed this quenched one's thirst. We know that is, in fact, not the case. The second reason may have simply been “on a bet.” “Watch this!” or “Can you do this?” We don't know, but research is certainly going to continue on this highly challenged aspect of Civil War medicine.

## **Battery Profile**

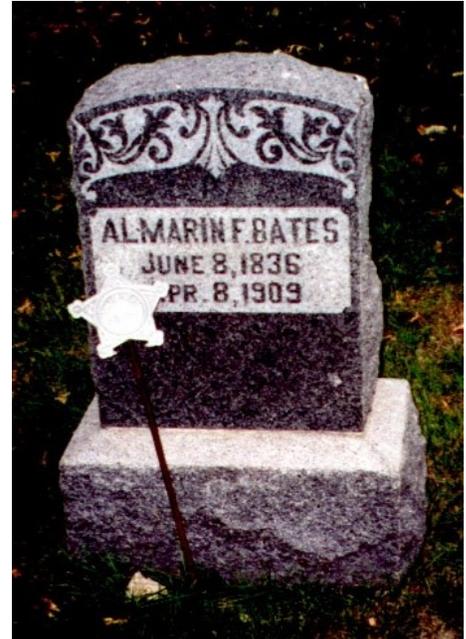
### **Almarin F. Bates**

Almarin Franklin Bates was born on June 8, 1836, in Goshen, Massachusetts. He came to Minnesota and was credited to Harmony, Fillmore County, when he enlisted in the Second Battery on September 3rd, 1864. He enlisted for one year and received a bounty of \$100. He had blue eyes, dark hair and complexion. He stood 5' 3" tall.

Almarin served his year with the Battery as a private and it is known he was a member of the Battery's Bible class. Almarin returned to Minnesota when the Battery was mustered out in August of 1865.

One of the pioneers of Faribault County, Almarin first settled on a farm in Seely Township. During his first years there, he lived in a "frame shack" which was destroyed by fire during a "terrible blizzard." The newspaper reported that while Almarin went to a neighbor's for help, his wife and the children took shelter in a straw barn. Mrs. Bates froze to death, as did several of the children before Almarin was able to get back with help. Two children survived as they were lying close to the cattle in the barn.

Almarin moved to a new place near Wells after that and later remarried. He received a pension in his later years and was a member of the G.A.R. Post. He had a stroke, then a second stroke which ended his life on April 8th, 1909. The cause of death was noted as a cerebral hemorrhage. He was laid to rest in the Rose Hill Cemetery in Wells, Faribault County, Minnesota.



### **Christopher Anderson**

Christopher was a Norwegian immigrant to Minnesota when he decided to enlist in the Union Army in the fall of 1864. His name was credited to the town of Spring Grove in Houston County for the draft and Christopher did live there after the War. At the time of his enlistment, he was 25 years old, had hazel eyes, brown hair, and a light complexion. He stood 5' 10" tall. He was a shoemaker by trade.

Though Christopher had enlisted to serve in the Second Battery, he was not with them very much during the first few months. He enlisted on September 2, and by the 17th, he was sent to the hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Battery was in garrison there for most of the last year of the war, so it was a short trip for him to rejoin his unit on Christmas Day. It may have been a case of leaving the hospital before he was ready as Christopher was sent back to the hospital just a few days later. This time, he stayed in the hospital until January 20th when he finally was able to take up his duties with the Battery. While no records tell of Christopher's exact duties, his knowledge of shoemaking would have been a good skill to use with all the leather goods the Battery maintained.

When the war was over, the Battery returned to Minnesota and Christopher was mustered out on August 16, 1865. He went back to Spring Grove and his shoemaking. By the time of the 1870 census, Christopher was still working as a shoemaker and had married a woman named Julia. She was also a Norwegian immigrant.

The census record of 1870 is the last known record of Christopher. By 1880, Julia was still living in Spring Grove, but she is living alone. No records have been found to tell what happened to Christopher, if he died, moved away, changed his name, or what else may have become of him.

# ***Your Country Needs You!***

## **And so does the Battery!**

**2016 dues are DUE by January 31!!** To remain on the active member list, your 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

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State and Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

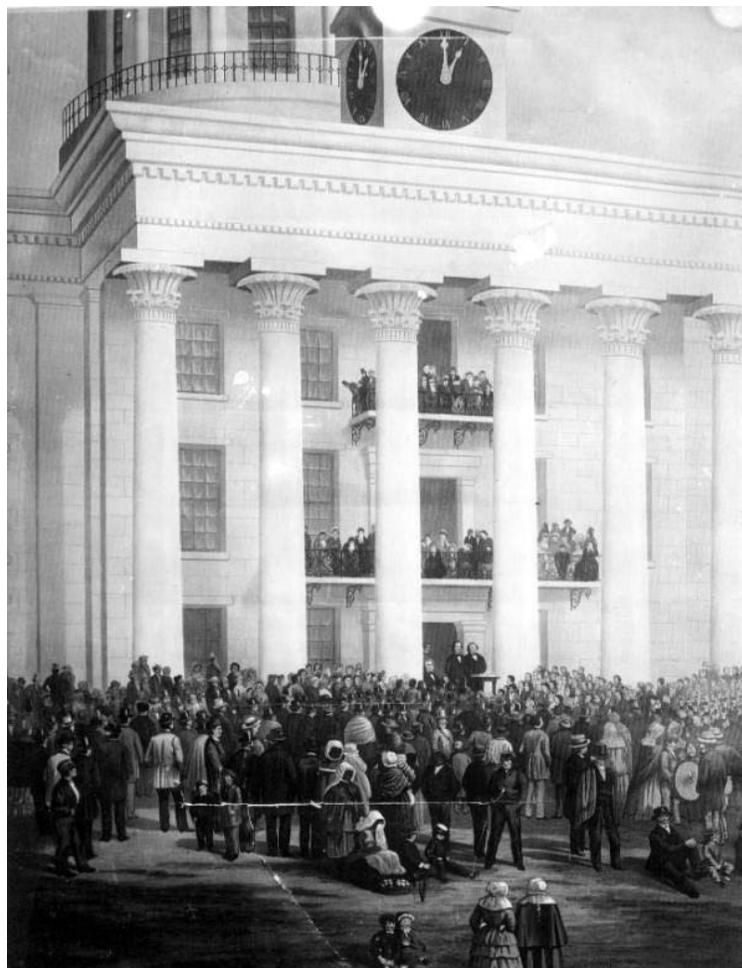
Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form and your check to:

Daryl Duden  
1210 West 4th Street  
Red Wing, MN 55066

This image depicts Jefferson Davis giving his speech to accept the presidency of the Confederate States of America, February, 1861.



***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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