2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

"ACTION FRONT"

Circular No. 232   January 2016

On This Date-155 Years Ago
(From *The History Channel*)

On January 5, 1861, the *Star of the West*, a Union merchant vessel, left New York with supplies and 250 troops to relieve the beleaguered Fort Sumter at Charleston, South Carolina.

The vessel's departure came during the sensitive days following the secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1860. The primary cause for secession was the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln to the U.S. presidency the month before, but it was President James Buchanan, a Democrat, who had to deal with the first crisis after South Carolina's secession. Inside of Fort Sumter were Major Robert Anderson and 80 Federal soldiers surrounded by hostile South Carolinians, who were demanding evacuation by the Yankees. Anderson informed officials in Washington, D.C., that he needed supplies within a few weeks. Buchanan was reluctant to make any provocative moves but felt that some attempt to save Sumter should be made.

The *Star of the West* was chosen because a civilian vessel was less likely to agitate South Carolinians. The ship left New York on January 5, but it did not complete its mission. Arriving on January 9, the *Star of the West* encountered an alert South Carolina militia. Word of the mission had leaked to everyone, it seemed, except Anderson. He had received no notification of the mission and was surprised when cannon from the shore opened fire on the approaching ship. One shot hit the *Star of the West*, and the ship turned around before taking any more damage. Anderson withheld his fire on the hostile shore batteries, and the standoff in Charleston Harbor continued until April, when the South Carolinians opened the massive bombardment that started the Civil War.

Next Meeting

January 23, 2016   11:00
Marie's Underground Dining, Red Wing
For more info or directions, contact Ken Cunningham, (651) 388-2945.

Upcoming Events

2016 Planning Meeting,
Yes, it is time to start planning our calendar for the coming reenacting season! Please bring all events you may have heard of to the January meeting for initial discussion. A list will be put together and we will start shaping it into a calendar in February.

A Special Retirement

While members fo the Second Minnesota were not able to attend the retirement celebration for Major Wayne Henson, we did send our best with Battery friend, Tim Tedrick. The ladies of the Second Minnesota made a replica Sanitary Commission quilt and had Tim present it to Major Henson in recognition of his retirement. The following is a message from Wayne:

Please let the members of your Battery know I said Thank You so very much for the beautiful Quilt you sent me on my Retirement. I really appreciate it. Thanks again, Major Wayne Henson, Battery G, 2nd Ill. Lt. Artillery

Civil War Medicine

(From Civil War Trust website, http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/civil-war-medicine/civil-war-medicine.html)

From the stench of putrefying flesh wafting through unsanitary and crowded camps to the unglamorous illnesses of syphilis and dysentery, our modern disgust toward Civil War medical practices is generally justified.

However, while "advanced" or "hygienic" may not be terms attributed to medicine in the nineteenth century, modern hospital practices and treatment methods owe much to the legacy of Civil War medicine. Of the approximately 620,000 soldiers who died in the war, two-thirds of these deaths were not the result of enemy fire, but of a force stronger than any army of men: disease. Combating disease as well treating the legions of wounded soldiers pushed Americans to rethink their theories on health and develop efficient practices to care for the sick and wounded.

At the beginning of the Civil War, medical equipment and knowledge was hardly up to the challenges posed by the wounds, infections and diseases which plagued millions on both sides. Illnesses like dysentery, typhoid fever, pneumonia, mumps, measles and tuberculosis spread among the poorly sanitized camps, felling men

A field hospital in Virginia after the Battle of the Wilderness. (Library of Congress)

already weakened by fierce fighting and meager diet. Additionally, armies initially struggled to efficiently tend to and transport their wounded, inadvertently sacrificing more lives to mere disorganization.

For medical practitioners in the field during the Civil War, germ theory, antiseptic (clean) medical practices, advanced equipment, and organized hospitalization systems were virtually unknown. Medical training was just emerging out of the "heroic era," a time where physicians advocated bloodletting, purging, blistering (or a combination of all three) to rebalance the humors of the body and remedy the sick. Physicians were also often encouraged to treat diseases like syphilis with mercury, a toxic treatment, to say the least. These aggressive "remedies" of the heroic era of medicine were often worse than patients' diseases; those who overcame illness during the war owed their recoveries less to the ingenuity of contemporary medicine than to grit and chance. Luck was a rarity in camps where poor sanitation, bad hygiene and diet bred disease, infection, and death.

Fairfax Seminary, Virginia, 1864. (Library of Congress)

The wounded and sick suffered from the haphazard hospitalization systems that existed at the start of the Civil War. As battles ended, the wounded were rushed down railroad lines to nearby cities and towns, where doctors and nurses coped with the onslaught of dying men in makeshift hospitals. These hospitals saw a great influx of wounded from both sides and the wounded and dying filled the available facilities to the brim. The Fairfax Seminary, for example, opened its doors twenty years prior to the war with only fourteen students, but it housed an overwhelming 1,700 sick and wounded soldiers during the course of the war.

On his many tours of these improvised hospitals, the great American poet and Civil War nurse Walt Whitman noted in his *Memoranda* during the War the disorderly death and waste of early Civil War medicine. At the camp hospital of the Army of the Potomac in Falmouth, Virginia in 1862, Whitman saw "a heap of amputated feet, legs, arms, hands, &c, a full load for a one-horse cart" and "several dead bodies" lying near. Of the "hospital" itself, which was a brick mansion before the battle of Fredericksburg changed its use, Whitman observed that it was "quite crowded, upstairs and down, everything impromptu, no system, all bad enough, but I have no doubt the best that can be done; all the wounds pretty bad, some frightful, the men in their old clothes, unclean and bloody." Of the division hospitals, Whitman noted that these were "merely tents, and sometimes very poor ones, the wounded lying on the ground, lucky if their blankets are spread on layers of pine or hemlock twigs or small leaves."

However, the heavy and constant demands of the sick and wounded sped up the technological progression of medicine, wrenching American medical practices into the light of modernity. Field and pavilion hospitals replaced makeshift ones and efficient hospitalization systems encouraged the accumulation of medical records and reports, which slowed bad practices as accessible knowledge spread the use of beneficial treatments.

Ambulance Corp drill near Brandy Station, VA, 1864. (Library of Congress)

Several key figures played a role in the progression of medicine at this time. Jonathan Letterman, the Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac, brought "order and efficiency in to the Medical Service" with a regulated ambulance system and evacuation plans for the wounded. As surgeon general of the Union army, William A. Hammond standardized, organized and designed new hospital layouts and inspection systems and literally wrote the book on hygiene for the army. Clara Barton, well-known humanitarian and founder of the American Red Cross, brought professional efficiency to soldiers in the field, especially at the Battle of Antietam in September of 1862 when she delivered much-needed medical supplies and administered relief and care for the wounded. Disease and illness took a heavy toll on soldiers, but as these historic characters show, every effort was made to prevent death caused by human error and ignorance through the development of organized and more advanced practices.

The sheer quantity of those who suffered from disease and severe wounds during the Civil War forced the army and medical practitioners to develop new therapies, technologies and practices to combat death. Thanks to Hammond's design of clean, well ventilated and large pavilion-style hospitals, suffering soldiers received care that was efficient and sanitary. In the later years of the war, these hospitals had a previously unheard of 8% mortality rate for their patients.

Though the mortality rate was higher for soldiers wounded on the battlefield, field dressing stations and field hospitals administered care in increasingly advanced ways. Once a soldier was wounded, medical personnel on the battlefield bandaged the soldier as fast they could, and gave him whiskey (to ease the shock) and morphine, if necessary, for pain. If his wounds demanded more attention, he was evacuated via Letterman's ambulance and stretcher system to a nearby field hospital.

Under Hammond and Letterman's encouragement of triage organization that is still used today, field hospitals separated wounded soldiers into three categories: mortally wounded, slightly wounded and surgical cases. Most of the amputations performed at field hospitals were indeed horrible scenes, but the surgery itself was not as crude as popular memory makes it out to have been. Anesthetics were readily available to surgeons, who administered chloroform or ether to patients before the procedure. Though gruesome, amputation was a life-saving procedure that swiftly halted the devastating effects of wounds from Minié balls (which, by the way, not many "bit" to fight the pain—the chloroform usually did the trick).

In field hospitals and pavilion-style hospitals, thousands of physicians received experience and training. As doctors and nurses became widely familiar with prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, anesthetics, and best surgical practices, medicine was catapulted into the modern era of quality care. Organized relief agencies like the 1861 United States Sanitary Commission dovetailed doctors' efforts to save wounded and ill soldiers and set the pattern for future organizations like the American Red Cross, founded in 1881.

Death from wounds and disease was an additional burden of the war that took a toll on the hearts, minds, and bodies of all Americans, but it also sped up the progression of medicine and influenced practices the army and medical practitioners still use today. While the Union certainly had the advantage of better medical supplies and manpower, both Rebels and Federals attempted to combat illness and improve medical care for their soldiers during the war. Many of America's modern medical accomplishments have their roots in the legacy of America's defining war.

From Civil War Trust website, http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/civil-war-medicine/civil-war-medicine.html

Battery Profile

Charles Ford

Charles Ford was a 19 year old farm boy from St. Francis in Anoka County, Minnesota, when he obtained a note of permission from his father to enlist in the Second Minnesota Battery. It was early August, 1862, and the Battery was already serving in the South.

Charles had been born on November 7, 1843, and moved with his family to Minnesota in 1854. His father, also named Charles, took land in the township of St. Francis. Ford Creek in Anoka County is named for the Ford family. Charles, Jr., was the middle child of five, having two older and two younger sisters. His youngest sister, Philoma, married Joseph Varney, who also served in the Second Battery, and the families came to Anoka County together.

Charles and his brother-in-law, Joseph, enlisted in the Battery, mustering in on the same day.

The descriptive role for the Battery showed Charles to be 5' 9" tall, with gray eyes, dark hair and a fair complexion. His birthplace was Carrol, Penobscot County, Maine.

The time spent in the Battery was anything but dull for Charles. He arrived at Louisville, Kentucky, in a group of new recruits for the Battery on September 27th. The Battery marched out from Louisville on the 1st of October. On the 8th of October, the battle at Perryville began. Charles was serving one of the Battery's guns during the battle when a "24 pound shell exploded so near the hip...as to burn the clothing on said hip." The injury did not keep Charles away from the war. He continued to serve and was with the Battery three months later at the battle of Stones River on December 31st.
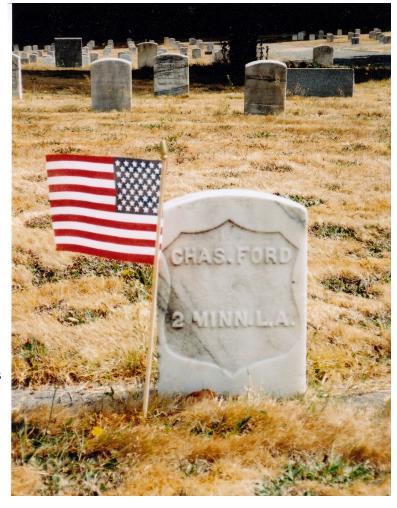
The battle of Stones River saw Union guns moving all around the battlefield. When the order came to mount and move on the double quick, Charles was struck on the same injured hip by the axle of the gun carriage. He was left behind, unable to walk. Somewhere in the chaos of the battle, Charles received another wound, this time a gun shot through his left wrist.

Charles was sent to the hospital at Nashville after the battle was over and he remained there until January 12, 1863. Two months later, he received his discharge from the Army due to disability. The injury to his hip forced Charles to use crutches as he could bear no weight on one leg.

Charles came back to Minnesota and may have moved around the state some as he married Violet Ann on October 2, 1876, in Wadena, Todd County. One year later, Violet and Charles were the parents of twin girls, but only one of them survived. Six more children were born to them by 1895, one more of whom they buried.

In 1910, Charles and Violet moved to Washington State and were living on a rural route near Vancouver in Clark County. Charles stayed at his home until October of 1920 when he went to the Washington State Veterans Home in Retsil, Washington. It was a short stay as he died 20 days later on October 24, 1920. He was laid to rest in the Veteran's Home Cemetery.

Recap

November 11, 2105 At 11:00am a crowd of over 100 citizens gathered at Lake Park in Winona to celebrate Veterans Day. The weather forecast indicated it would be a cool dry morning and thankfully it was.   The theme of the program this year was to honor those men and women who fought "behind the lines". The sound of our three round cannon salute was still ringing off the river bluffs when *TAPS* was sounded to conclude the ceremony. 2nd Minnesota Battery member John Cain was part of the military honor guard. Members Bruce Arnoldy, Ken Cunnngham, Daryl Duden, Ben Norman and Brian Tomashek provided a gun crew for this event. Respectfully submitted, Sgt. Duden

November 12, 2015 Members of the 2nd Minnesota Battery fired a three round salute during a ceremony to honor the Southeast Technical College in Red Wing being designated a Yellow Ribbon company. Letters of congratulations from Gov. Dayton, Maj. Gen. Elicerio and Sen. Franken were read. The Red Wing Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting ceremony for a veterans lounge dedication in the commons area and a cake was cut to celebrate the birthday of the United State Marine Corps. Battery members participating in this event were John Cain, Ken Cunningham, Daryl Duden, Bart Hoekstra and Ben Norman.

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
1170 Golf Ridge Circle
Red Wing, MN 55066   Phone: (651) 388-2945

Treasurer
Daryl Duden
1210 West 4th Street
Red Wing, MN 55066   Phone: (651) 388-6520

Twin Cites Metro Area Contact
Ron & Vickie Wendel
12419 Redwood Street NW
Coon Rapids, MN 55448   Phone: (763) 754-2476

E-mail: momwendel@hotmail.com

Battery Website:
http://www.2mnbattery.org