

## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 237

June 2016

### On This Date-155 Years Ago

From the website: <http://www.historylearningsite>

**June 1:** Union and Confederate forces met at Fairfax Court House, Virginia. Some of the earliest battle casualties took place here with one soldier killed on both sides.

**June 2-3:** 3,000 Union troops commanded by General McClellan advanced on Philippi in western Virginia to confront a Confederate cavalry force out recruiting for volunteers. McClellan’s men caught the Confederates by surprise. The Confederates made a hasty retreat in what became known as the ‘Philippi Races’. The ease of victory convinced many Union officers that the war would not last long. McClellan shared this view.

**June 8:** The Federal government established the United States Sanitary Commission that was tasked with overseeing the health of Union troops. Its creation is considered a major military innovation.

**June 10:** Approaching Little Bethal at dawn, Union soldiers identified other Union soldiers as Confederate troops. They fired on their own men. They also alerted the Confederates of their approach and lost any chance of a surprise attack. Sixteen Union soldiers were killed in this attack while the Confederates lost just one man killed.

**June 11:** Counties in western Virginia set up a pro-Unionist government that was recognized by the federal government in Washington DC.

**June 14:** Confederate troops abandoned Harper’s Ferry in the face of a two-pronged Unionist advance.

**June 17:** Professor Thadeus Lowe demonstrated to President Lincoln his hot air balloon. The president’s military advisors considered the balloon had advantages with regards to battlefield reconnaissance.

**June 19:** Francis H Pierpont was elected governor of what would eventually become Western Virginia.

**June 29:** Field command of the Union army was handed to General Irwin McDowell. His first order was to march on Richmond. While this was very popular with the public, those in the Union army were less than convinced that it was a good move.

**June 30:** CSS *Sumter* broke the Unionist blockade of New Orleans. Commanded by Captain Raphael Semmes, over the next six months the *Sumter* captured or destroyed eighteen Unionist ships.

### Upcoming Events

#### **June 11-12 Waukon, IA**

3rd Annual Allamakee County Thunder in the Park. This is a smaller event, but very well organized and lots of fun. (And there is a fantastic ice cream shop very near the park!) If you have not replied for the meal counts, do so ASAP!!

#### **June 23 (Thursday) Goodhue County Historical Society/Red Wing YMCA Civil War Learning event**

This is a one-day event, similar to our school visits. Expect about 90 upper middle grade ages. There will be 8 stations – 5 provided by our unit, 2 provided by the 3rd MN, and an 8th station for 1860’s baseball by the YMCA sponsor. The program is 9:00am – 4:00pm, **arrive by 8:00am for setting up. Bring your own lunch.** This is a PAID event. Contact Ken Cunningham ASAP if you can attend this event and have not yet told him of your participation

#### **June 28 Menomonie, WI – Wilson Park Concert, Ludington Guard Band, 8:00 pm**

Tuesday, evening. James Livingstone will provide his Howitzer cannon for this event where a line of guns will add dramatic effect to the patriotic music. Members of the Battery have participated in this event in the past and assure everyone that it is an evening of stirring music and a great time. (We’ve also heard good things about the ice cream availability in the area....)

**Contact Ken Cunningham or John Cain if you can attend this event ASAP so gun crews can be assigned.**

Everyone is welcome to attend, though only soldiers will have an active role.

### Next Meeting

**June 25, 2016**

**11:00am**

**Due to construction in Red Wing, the meeting location is changed!**

**Kings Bar & Grill Restaurant in Miesville**

14460 240th St. E., Miesville, MN

<http://www.kingsplacebar.com/>

Call Ken Cunningham with questions (651) 388-2945.



# Battery Profile

## Henry St. Cyre

War can so dramatically change the course of anyone's life and, from what few records are left to tell the story, it appears to have changed Henry's life for the worse.

Little is known about Henry before the war. His name cannot be found in the 1860 census, but marriage records indicate he married on June 1, 1850, in St. Paul, Minnesota. His bride was Marie Hermione Lemay, born in Canada in 1834. They began a family and records indicate there were at least five children, all born in St. Paul.

Henry's time in the Army began when he enlisted during the draft rendezvous at Fort Snelling in the late summer of 1864. He enlisted on August 31 and was mustered into the Second Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September as a private. He received \$33.33 as his enlistment bounty with the balance of \$66.67 to be paid at a later date. On his muster sheet, Henry said he was born in Crawford County, Wisconsin, was 36 years old and was a farmer. The official description said he had hazel eyes, black hair, dark complexion and stood 5' 4" tall. Though he likely never set foot in the place, his name was credited to the town of Centerville in Anoka County for the draft quota.

Two other men enlisted in the two days before Henry. They were brothers Louis Lemay on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August and Ferdinand on the 30<sup>th</sup>. They all lived near Mendota and it is believed that Henry's wife, Marie, was their sister. So, Henry did not enlist in the Second Battery without knowing at least two of his comrades.

There was not a lot of hard fighting while Henry served with the Battery as the unit spent most of their last year of the war doing garrison duty. That did not mean it was easy service, nor was it without risk. Records from the Battery show Henry was among those injured in a train accident in Tennessee. The Battery was moving north from Knoxville to Loudon, Tennessee, when several train cars derailed near the bridge crossing the Tennessee River. Some of the men riding in them jumped, fearing they would be crushed or drowned if they rode the car off the rails. Henry jumped and broke his ankle. He did not go to the hospital, instead being cared for by men in the Battery. He never returned to active duty. When the Battery was ordered to Minnesota to be discharged from Fort Snelling, Henry was with them. His discharge came on July 13, 1865.

Where Henry went or what he was doing after the war is unknown as he left few records. By 1870, Henry was living alone in Wadena, Minnesota, working as a laborer. The two youngest of his children were living with their maternal grandparents in Eagan, Minnesota. No record has been found for Marie.

The pension papers filed on Henry's behalf in 1880 briefly mention that he was injured during the war and focus on his being declared "insane." His sister, Julia Brown, filed an affidavit stating she had been caring for him since his discharge in 1865 and that she was his legally appointed guardian. This conflicts with the census records, but there were fifteen years between these events and memories may have been confused about the dates. She also stated that Henry had been declared "insane" during one of the battles the Battery participated in. No Battery records note this, but the officers of the Battery were notoriously bad at keeping records.

Henry was committed to a state hospital by a judge of probate in Morrison County on October 15, 1881, having been judged insane. A letter to the pension department stated that Henry was sent to the hospital at St. Peter, Minnesota.

Conflict arose in 1882 as Henry's daughter, Marie, appeared before the pension board stating that she was the proper guardian for her father. Subsequent pension papers indicate Charles Barnhart, Henry's son-in-law took over as Henry's guardian in 1887. Other children, especially his daughters, continued to be involved in Henry's welfare throughout his life.

The commitment papers for Henry provide a few more details about his life. He was Roman Catholic, was a widower and was the father of six children. He also said he had been born in Wisconsin and was a "half breed." One question asked about Henry's habits and it was answered that at times, he had been "intemperate," but no longer. More questions indicate that this commitment in was at least the third time he had been sent to a hospital for his condition, the first being in 1875. The condition was diagnosed as "manic." He suffered from "delusions of pride and grandeur, has interminable wealth and vast armies at his command." In describing Henry's condition it was stated that he had suffered "abuse by others," had "exalted delusions and hallucinations." Another time, it was said Henry believed he was 300 years old and that he was "commander of a large army that is to conquer ¼ of this continent for him." That was followed by a notation that Henry was "sincere" in his confusion.

Henry, however, appeared to be a model patient. He was noted as "very neat and careful" of his person. He had never tried to harm himself or others, though his "countenance was dull and depressed." He was described as having strong likes and dislikes, "is harmless and is quiet if he has a pencil and paper. Escaped twice, but not for three years."

Physically, Henry was in good health, though he had lost toes to frost bite and eventually, he had one foot amputated. Detailed notes were made about the size of his head, the shape of his head, or any lumps or protrusions on it.

Henry's last home was the Asylum at Fergus Falls, Minnesota. He died there on January 25, 1893, and was laid to rest in the Asylum cemetery.

What had Henry experienced that broke his spirit in such a painful way? We will never know, but the bits and pieces of his story seem to indicate he may have suffered from what was then called "soldiers heart." Today we call it PTSD.

Perhaps in death, Henry found the peace he could not find in life.

Sandy F., A volunteer searching through the names of those buried in the hospital cemetery at Fergus Falls found a reference in Henry's file to his military service with the Second Minnesota Battery. She contacted the reenacting group who portrays the Second Minnesota Battery and together with the Otter Tail County Historical Society, they were able to order and set a military marker on Henry's grave in the summer of 2016.

# The Balloon Corps

From: <https://www.gcv.org/Historic-Village/The-Intrepid/Army-Balloon-Corps>

Shortly after Civil War broke out, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase and Joseph Henry, the first Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, suggested that the United States establish a balloon corps under the command of Professor Thaddeus Lowe. This corps would provide aerial reconnaissance for the Union armies. Secretary Chase arranged a meeting between Lowe and President Abraham Lincoln on June 11, 1861.

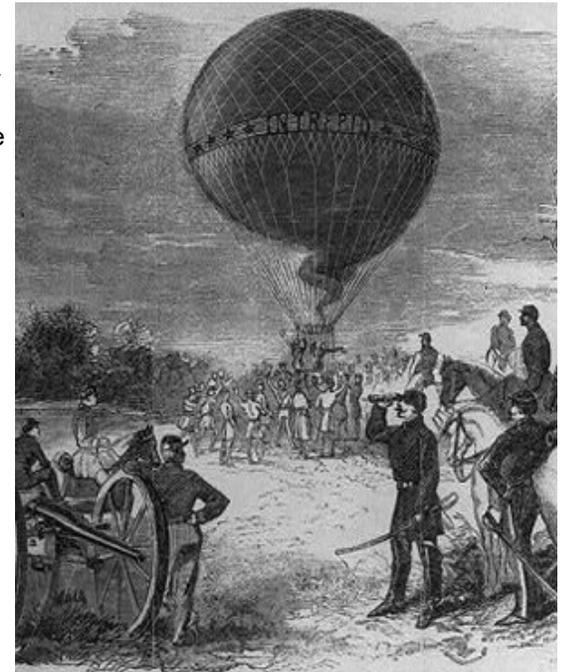
On June 17, 1861, after meeting with the President, Lowe demonstrated his balloon. He lofted upwards to a height of 500 feet in his balloon—the Enterprise—from the Washington Mall in the vicinity of where the National Air & Space Museum now stands. The balloon was filled with “street gas” [methane] from the city’s natural gas supply. In a stroke of genius Lowe took a telegraph up with him in the balloon and sent Lincoln the first-ever aerial telegram.

The President immediately invited Lowe back to the White House and spent the evening with him, after which he gave him a note of introduction to General Winfield Scott, Commanding General of the United States Army. When Lowe presented the note to Scott the next morning, Scott’s staff stonewalled him. Later that day Lincoln personally intervened and introduced Lowe to the General.

Lowe received funds to build the government’s first balloon on August 2, 1861 and continue demonstrating military usefulness of tethered balloons. The first U.S. balloon designed for military use—the Union—was ready for action on August 28. Because he was forced to inflate the balloon with natural gas from municipal lines, the balloon could not be moved far, which limited its operating radius to Washington D.C. and a few miles from the Potomac in Virginia.

On September 24, 1861, Lowe ascended to more than 1,000 feet near Arlington, VA, across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., and began providing intelligence on the Confederate troops located at Falls Church, VA, more than three miles away. Union guns were aimed and fired accurately at the Confederate troops without actually being able to see them—a first in the history of warfare. Soon after this event, General McClellan, believing in the balloon’s potential, established the “Aeronautics Department” or Balloon Corps under the control of the Topographical Engineers. This triumph led the Secretary of War Simon Cameron to direct Lowe to build four additional balloons. Two more followed shortly. The fleet now consisted of the Intrepid (a first-ever replica of which will fly at Genesee Country Village & Museum beginning July 2012), Constitution, United States, Washington, Eagle, Excelsior and the original Union. The balloons ranged in size from 15,000 to 32,000 cubic feet. Each had enough cable to climb 1,000 feet. Lowe continued providing tactical reports to the Union troops. He supplied information during the Peninsula Campaign, where he transmitted regular—sometimes hourly—reports on Confederate movements. During the battle of Fair Oaks, VA, Lowe continually telegraphed information on enemy troop positions. Arguably observations made during this battle may have been crucial to the Union victory.

Gas was plentiful in Washington, D.C., but after inflation transporting the balloons to the battlefields was too dangerous and time consuming. Thaddeus Lowe set out to invent a portable gas generating device that could be used anywhere. He invented a copper-lined wooden tank, mounted on a wagon filled with water and iron filings. When sulfuric acid was added, lighter-than-air hydrogen gas was produced, thereby allowing the balloons to be inflated near any battlefield.



Thaddeus Lowe balloon ascension in Vienna

The horse-drawn wagons were large and rectangular and each weighed about 1,000 pounds. Twelve of these wagons were built to service the balloons

Unfortunately, the Balloon Corps did not last until the end of the war. General George McClellan was relieved of his command in 1863 and replaced by General Joseph Hooker. Captain Cyrus Comstock, who was assigned to oversee the Corps, cut its funding and thus its effectiveness. Lowe was also accused of financial impropriety, and his pay was reduced. Lowe resigned from the Balloon Corps on May 8, 1863. By July 1863, without Lowe to promote it, the Balloon Corps had disbanded.



Inflating a Civil War balloon using portable hydrogen-generating equipment.

# Recap

## May 16 Calvin Christian School, Edina MN

It was a cool start on the day, but it warmed up quickly, especially with the warm welcome we received from students and staff. We set up our usual five stations and shared history with the students. While the groups were a little smaller than in past years, but the questions and attitude of these kids is top notch!

Two of our junior members, Miss Riley and Master Tristan, also participated in this school

event, much to the delight of the students (and teachers!)



## May 30 Memorial Day, Red Wing, MN

The 2nd Minnesota Battery Light Artillery was well represented during the Red Wing Memorial Day Observance. The one hour event took place at 8:45am in East Bay Point Park. Daryl Duden served as Master of Ceremonies. John Warne read *Logan's Proclamation* and John Cain commanded our gun crew for a three round salute to our departed comrades with our 10 Pdr. Parrott Rifle. Other Battery participating as members of the gun crew were Neil Bruce, Bruce Arnoldy, Michael Ritchie, Briar Golden, Ken Cunningham, Ben Norman, and James Livingstone. The 434th Chemical Company, Minnesota Army National Guard, led the entrance parade and raised our National flag. The Red Wing High School Concert Band and Ovation Choir provided musical interludes. In addition to *Logan's Proclamation*, we heard Lincoln's *Gettysburg*

**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 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>**

*Address* and remarks from the Mayor of Red Wing. USAF Chief Master Sergeant (retired) Bud Stolpa Jr. provided a patriotic and poignant Main Address. The names of the fifty-one veterans from Red Wing who had passed since last Memorial Day were read followed by an artillery salute, floral tribute, all-veterans firing squad salute and *TAPS*. It was a bright clear morning and 550+ citizens of Red Wing were in attendance on this National day of remembrance, **LEST WE FORGET.**

