



2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

“ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 240

October – December 2016

On This Date-155 Years Ago

(From “On This Day in History” <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/>)

On November 7, 1861, Union forces under Ulysses S. Grant overrun a Confederate camp at the Battle of Belmont, Missouri, but are forced to flee when additional Confederate troops arrive. Although Grant claimed victory, the Union gained no ground and left the Confederates in firm control of that section of the Mississippi River.

This engagement was part of Grant’s plan to capture the Confederate stronghold at Columbus, Kentucky, just across the river from Belmont, by first driving away the Confederate garrison at Belmont. General Leonidas Polk, Confederate commander at Columbus, had posted about 1,000 men around Belmont to protect both sides of the river. On the evening of November 6, Grant sailed 3,000 troops down the Mississippi River from Cairo, Illinois. They landed early on November 7, just three miles above Belmont, and proceeded to attack. Upon hearing noise from the battle, Polk sent another 2,500 troops across the river to provide relief for his beleaguered Rebels. The Yankees routed the arriving reinforcements and scattered them along the river. At that point, the Union troops began to celebrate their victory and loot the Confederate camp.

Grant had ordered a small Union force under General Charles Smith to advance from Paducah, Kentucky, which lay to the northeast, to provide a diversion and keep Polk from sending any more reinforcements to Belmont. Grant hoped that Polk would believe that Smith’s advance was the primary attack and that Belmont was the diversion. Polk did not buy it, and he dispatched additional reinforcements to Belmont. Five Confederate regiments arrived as Grant ordered his men to return to the boats. Grant himself narrowly escaped capture, but was able to get most of his force back on the river. The Yankees retreated to Cairo.

Grant lost 120 dead and 487 wounded or captured, while the Confederates lost 105 dead and 536 wounded or captured. Although he gained no ground, Grant demonstrated that, unlike many other Union generals, he was willing to mount a campaign using the resources at hand rather than calling for reinforcements. This trait served Grant well during the war, and it eventually carried him to the top of the Union army.

The “Official” Thanksgiving

Nearly everyone has heard the stories about Pilgrims and Indians sitting together enjoying a harvest feast and giving thanks. Fewer know the background of the national Day of Thanks.

On October 3, 1863, expressing gratitude for a pivotal Union Army victory at Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln announced that the nation would celebrate an official Thanksgiving holiday on November 26, 1863.

The speech, which was actually written by Secretary of State William Seward, declared that the fourth Thursday of every November thereafter would be considered an official U.S. holiday of Thanksgiving. This announcement harkened back to when George Washington was in his first term as the first president in 1789 and the young American nation had only a few years earlier emerged from the American Revolution. At that time, George Washington called for an official celebratory “day of public thanksgiving and prayer.” While Congress overwhelmingly agreed to Washington’s suggestion, the holiday did not become an annual event.

Thomas Jefferson, the third president, felt that public demonstrations of piety to a higher power, like that celebrated at Thanksgiving, were inappropriate in a nation based in part on the separation of church and state. Subsequent presidents agreed with him. In fact, no official Thanksgiving proclamation was issued by any president between 1815 and the day Lincoln took the opportunity to thank the Union Army and God for a shift in the country’s fortunes in 1863.

The fourth Thursday of November remained the annual day of Thanksgiving from 1863 until President Franklin D. Roosevelt made a change in 1939. Hoping to boost the economy by providing shoppers and merchants a few extra days to conduct business between the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, FDR moved Thanksgiving to November’s third Thursday. In 1941, however, Roosevelt bowed to Congress’ insistence that the fourth Thursday of November be re-set permanently, without alteration, as the official Thanksgiving holiday.

Next Meeting

December 3, 2016 11:00am

Marie’s Underground Dining, Red Wing
Call Ken Cunningham with questions or agenda items. 651 388-2945.



Battery Profile

John Wesley Mann

A draft rendezvous at Fort Snelling in the late summer of 1864 brought many men into the ranks of the Union Army, including John Mann. He enlisted on September 2, 1864, to serve one year. He enlisted at Mantorville, Minnesota, but his name was credited to Claremont, Dodge County, Minnesota, to meet its draft quota. He received a bounty of \$100 for enlisting. It was the second time he had enlisted in the Union Army. His first enlistment was on October 10, 1861, when he enlisted in the Third Minnesota Infantry, Company E. He had served in the Infantry less than a year when he was discharged for disability in July of 1862.

By the fall of 1864, the Union Army was drafting men to keep its ranks full and veterans were often sought after to return to the service. Cash bounties helped convince men to join up. There was also the added incentive of the Homestead Act amendment that allowed a veteran to deduct his time in the service from his proving up time on a homestead claim. What enticed John to return to the Army is unknown.

John was a farmer in Claremont, 31 years old, with black eyes, gray hair, a dark complexion and 5' 9" tall. He was born on October 29, 1832, in Claremont, New Hampshire. He married Delia Clary on July 5, 1858, at Wasioja, Minnesota. Their first child, Horace H., was born July 7, 1861, only three months before John enlisted for the first time. His second enlistment in 1864 left Delia and three year old Horace alone again. Delia was expecting their second child, Lucia, who was born on February 5, 1865.

John's second term of service didn't go much better than did his first. He suffered from illness throughout his year with the Second Battery and spent two months in the post hospital at Fort Snelling. He was discharged with the Battery on August 16, 1865, but records indicate he continued to struggle with his health the rest of his life.

At the time of his discharge, John decided to keep his knapsack, haversack and canteen as was allowed by Government order. A stop payment of \$5.40 was held from his pay to cover the cost of transportation from St. Paul to Owatonna, presumably as he was sent home.

John and Delia moved around some, but stayed within Minnesota and John continued to farm. They had been in the Fairbanks precinct of Crow Wing County for 11 years when John succumbed to heart trouble, Bright's disease, and "old age". He died on June 27, 1901.

His obituary noted him as "a beloved citizen of Crow Wing, and a Civil War veteran". He was 69 years old. The funeral was held at the Oak Grove school house and his remains were laid to rest in the Evergreen Cemetery in Brainerd.



Loaner Collection

The last few battery meetings have included discussion on starting a collection of clothing and equipment that could be made available to new members or guests/friends of the Battery. This collection would be made up of clothing/equipment that is no longer used by the owner and donated to the Battery. A receipt will be given to donors for tax purposes if requested. It is the policy of the Battery that we will not sell any item in the loaner program. This will keep the program simple and we don't want anything complicated. The firm policy will be "If we own it, we loan it."

The decision has been made to move forward with this loaner plan. Ron Graves is our quartermaster and will be in charge of the loaner items. We will operate this much like checking out a library book. The Quartermaster will maintain a list of all items available for checkout. Those interested in borrowing an item will check it out from the Quartermaster who will maintain a list of who has borrowed items. The list of what is checked out and to whom will be included in the Quartermaster's report given as a regular agenda item at each meeting. This report can be in person or by an email report to the President.

IF YOU HAVE ITEMS TO DONATE, please contact Ron Graves at 612-759-6617 or rgoland@hbc.com or Ken Cunningham at (651) 388-2945 or kecunningham@mail2web.com. **If you want to have your donation credited to the 2016 tax year, you MUST present the items before January 1** (legal issues, you know), so the opportune time to make the donation is the December 3rd meeting. If you plan to bring items to donate, let either of these people know prior to the meeting.

Santa Claus

From the *Anoka Star* newspaper, December 26, 1863

Was not that a happy winter night long ago, dear reader, when you closed your eyes with the glad anticipation that tomorrow's arms would be laden with stockingfuls of toys, and cookies, and nuts, and raisins, and candies, and what not? You fell asleep--didn't you?--uncertain whether Santa Claus did wear a furry coat and trousers, or smoke a pipe, or drive his team adown the chimney: it was not clear how he could get down the smoky flue, and somehow mother seemed to hold some undefined relation with the nocturnal visitor. With all this incertitude, there was enough of mystery in the matter to frighten you just a little,--not quite enough to hold your eyelids waking. Then you were but a little boy, and you need not be ashamed to confess that, when the morning brought a humming top and a whistle, you felt richer delight than a fat contract can yield you now. Ye men of gravity, pompousness and years,--ye teachers and preachers, ye governors and judges,--speak we not the truth? Certainly we do; though it does seem somewhat odd and preposterous that important personages such as you were once on a time but little shavers who were tickled with toys.



Recap

August 13-14, Pipestone, MN

As always, this is one of our favorite events, this year with a bump up in attendance. It was nice to see more reenactors participating at this unique place. We had one of the largest attendance of Battery members of any



event all year. It was great to see so many faces we had not seen in quite some time as well as a couple of new faces. Our gun was placed on the Union line on the bluff overlooking the battlefield where the infantry fought it out with the nice additions of rail fences, brush arbors and defenses. A great deal of fun was had off the battlefield, too! The ladies all went shopping together and soon appeared with fine new hosiery in a rainbow of colors. Wrestling matches kept our younger members active, as well as some of their elders. Saturday night is, of course bath night and Master Tristan not only had the first bath, but shared the water with



Privates Bracy and Thomas. (Though Master Tristan did attempt to hold Private Schmit's head under water once or twice.) As not unusual, we had some rain at the event, but that brought out a stunning rainbow that arched from horizon to horizon over the camp!



August 27-28, Morristown, MN

Eleven members of the 2nd Minnesota Battery participated in Ahlman's Annual Shooter's Roundup. We conducted a firing demonstration of our 10 Pdr. Parrott Rifle at 10:00am, 12:00pm, 2:00pm and 4:00pm on both days of this two day event. We once again set up our tent camp on the grounds inside Fort Ahlman and were thankful that they came through and sprayed for mosquitos twice daily because they were plentiful if you ventured into the woods. A heavy rain just after 8:00am on Saturday turned a majority of the gravel roads and our firing station into a quagmire that effected attendance early Saturday, but by mid-afternoon the attendance picked up and we were greeted with full bleachers for our firing demonstrations the remainder of the weekend. Twice daily, Sgt Duden and Pvt Hoekstra participated in a uniform and equipment program representing Civil War infantry and light artillery soldiers. Other included in this program were WWI GI's, WWII Germans and 1830's US Garrison troops. Saturday evening we attended the Ahlman's appreciation dinner. In addition to a great pork tenderloin meal, we were entertained by Pistol Packing Paula, a world champion pistol spinner. Sunday we experienced "normal" Ahlman's weather and conducted all our firing demonstrations in shirtsleeves. The cooler weather on Saturday did not diminish the number of trips members made to our favorite shaved ice vendor during the weekend. This year, "on the beach", a mix of peach, raspberry and apple with cream was very popular with members. For our final firing demonstration on Sunday, Larry Ahlman, our host for the weekend served as #4 on the gun crew. His smile after he pulled the lanyard lasted until well after we packed up and left at 5:00pm. Battery members who attended this event were Bracy Bahm, Neil Bruce, John Cain, Ken Cunningham, Mike Cunningham, Daryl Duden, Bart Hoekstra, Cameron Larson, Becky Loader, Michael Ritchie and Thomas Schmit.

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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

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**Battery Website:
<http://www.2mnbattery.org>**



Recap (Continued)

SeptOber 24-25, Wabasha, MN

This SeptOber event was one weekend out of a seven weekend series of events hosted in the city of Wabasha. It was the first time for a Civil War event and a “grand experiment” in the eyes of many on the planning committee. All were incredibly pleased when more people attended on just Saturday than had been hoped for as a total attendance for the weekend, despite not-so-nice weather (cloudy, cool and occasional spits of mist) and a lot of flooding in the surrounding area. The park itself was flooding, the boys put stakes in to mark how high the water was every hour. From Saturday late afternoon to Sunday afternoon, the water had come up more than 16 feet over night! Good thing the Confederates had not come—they were to be camped where the flood water was rising! The ladies ran the SAS tent and talked to many people. Miss Lynn ran the fish pond and “fished” with about 150 kids over the weekend. The soldiers ran three gun drills each day, but ran them first on the Parrot rifle, then on the howitzer. We had very good crowds for every one of our gung drills.

In the evening, our Lieutenant and Sergeant as well as our ladies participated in the candlelight tour, a completely first person mini-play for visitors to watch from the darkness. Sunday saw our only casualty of the event, the death of Ron Grave’s dear friend, Manny. Battery members paid our proper respects and Mr. Graves took the loss well—especially after we propped Manny back up in the corner once again!



November 7, Lions Club, Eden Prairie, MN

Ken Cunningham and Daryl Duden travelled in uniform to Camp Eden Wood in Eden Prairie, MN, to present a program about the 2nd Minnesota Battery to the Eden Prairie Lions Club. We departed Red Wing at 4:30pm with plans to arrive during the 5:45pm social. One missed turn and heavy traffic on Highway 494 delayed our arrival until 6:15pm. Our host, Mike Gruidl, and fifty anxious Lions Club members greeted us at the door. We quickly set up a display of Civil War issued equipment and took our seats at the head table when Battery members, the Scurek family (Steven, Susan, Jackson), joined those in attendance. Following the Chinese buffet dinner, our President, Ken Cunningham was the first to speak. He provided information about our organizations’ history, members, events and corporate mission. Then Sgt. Duden, speaking in first person, shared his memories of those years from 1861-1865 as a member of the 2nd Minnesota Battery; beginning with a copy of the December 20, 1861 recruiting poster and ending with the muster out of service at Fort Snelling on August 16, 1865. Although a few Lions in the room indicated “we didn’t look that old”, they still said it was one of the best Lions Club meetings they had ever attended, because everyone in the room left wanting to hear more.

November 11, Veteran’s Day, Winona, MN

At the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, the 2nd Minnesota Battery was, once again, in Winona, MN to celebrate Veterans Day. Under clear skies with plenty of sun, great coats were not required. This year in addition to the VFW, AMVETS, DAV and American Legion members with family and friends attending, the Winona High School Band led their senior class into Veterans Park to attend the ceremony. Following the main address, the Battery fired its three round salute to honor our veterans. The acoustics were incredible firing across Lake Winona towards the bluffs. Battery members who participated in the ceremony were Brian Tomashek, Michael Ritchie, Bruce Arnoldy, Ben Norman, John Warne,

Ken Cunningham, James Livingstone, Daryl Duden and John Cain. Mardelle Arnoldy and Miss Riley Warne, in a beautiful period dress, also attend the event.



October 7-9, Perryville, Kentucky

Eleven members of the Battery traveled to Kentucky to take part in this national event, joining some 5,000 reenactors on the actual ground the battle had been fought on 154 years to the day earlier. Being a state park, the reenactment takes place on the actual ground. We arrived on Thursday afternoon and found ourselves lucky enough to get a choice spots for our camp. It was on what is probably the only flat ground in the park, next to a dried up creek and shaded by tall trees. Porta potties and water were close, as were the sutlers (what few there were) and the museum.

The weather was beautiful sunshine and clear skies all weekend, though the nights did get a bit cool—42 degree on Sunday morning! The great coats and capes were all in use!

Saturday's battle had our gun on the top of Parson's Hill with the infantry



battle ranging over the hill and through the corn field. The sound of troops fighting through the cornfield was AMAZING! While "dead" and "captured" on top of the hill, our boys heard a familiar voice remark about recognizing our gun. It

was Bruce Fraiser, the original owner of Babs! It was

fun to have a moment in the middle of the battle to reconnect.

The battle on Sunday was on a new piece of property



recently acquired by the park and featured the Fight for the Bottom House. A

reconstructed barn was the centerpiece of the battle. The position of the Union gun line put us in a great position to see the grand movement of troops around the fields from very near the vantage point the original Battery members would have had.



We had an opportunity to spend time at the Russell House site where we know our boys stood. What a feeling to stand on the very ground where they saw their first battle! Our Lt. also had a chance to visit with administrators at the park about the possibility of placing a special marker for



our Second Minnesota Battery. There is a lot involved with getting a marker, so more discussions will be taking place in the future.

This was an awesome event for those who were fortunate enough to attend.

