



## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 241

January 2017

## **On This Date-155 Years Ago**

From The History Channel

The U.S. Presidential Inauguration Day takes place at noon on January 20 following the that person’s election the previous November. If the 20th happens to fall on a Sunday, the oath is administrated at noon in private and a public inauguration takes place on the 21st. That date and time was not set until 1937.

George Washington was sworn into office on April 30, 1789, but all inaugurations after that first one were held on March 4—the day the Federal Government began operations under the Constitution. If the 4th was a Sunday, the inauguration was held on the 5th.

The change to 1937 came with the passage of the 20th Amendment in 1933 that moved the inauguration date as January 20. This was to avoid the long “lame duck” period.

1861, when Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office, Inauguration Day was March 4.

In his inauguration speech, Lincoln extended an olive branch to the South, but also made it clear that he intended to enforce federal laws in the states that seceded.

Since Lincoln’s election in November 1860, seven states had left the Union. In the process, some of those states seized federal properties such as armories and forts. By the time Lincoln arrived in Washington, D.C., for his inauguration, the threat of war cast a shadow over everything. Lincoln was cautious in his remarks, and made no specific threats against the Southern states. As a result, he had some flexibility to keep the states of the upper South—North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Arkansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware—in the Union.

In his inaugural address, Lincoln promised not to interfere with the institution of slavery where it existed, however, he also took a firm stance against secession and the seizure of federal property. The government, insisted Lincoln, would “hold, occupy,

and possess” its property and collect its taxes. He closed his remarks with an eloquent reminder of the nation’s common heritage:

*“In your hand, my fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath in Heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect, and defend it... We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”*

Six weeks later, the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, and the Civil War began.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **January 28—Planning Meeting for 2015**

Bring information for events to attend this season to the meeting for discussion. We will be putting a tentative calendar together to vote on in February and March, so get any possible events on the list for consideration.

## **2017 Dues are due! See the last page for renewal form.**

Please DO fill out and include the form so we have your most up-to-date contact information.

### **Next Meeting**

**January 28, 2017 11:00am**

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



# Battery Profile

## Ferris McKenney

From looking at his signature, it is easy to believe Ferris probably did not have much education. In the two places where his signature is found, neither are legible enough to read how he might have spelled his name. The handwriting is cramped and labored looking, and only the "K" in McKenney is capitalized. It is little wonder that the Army records have his name spelled many different ways, including one place where it appears as "Thomas".

Ferris joined the Second Battery on August 12, 1862. He was working as a carriage maker in Minneapolis when he accepted a \$25 bounty for agreeing to enlist with Lt. Albert Woodbury of the Battery. Ferris was 34 years old, was born in Hollis, Maine, had blue eyes, dark hair and a fair complexion. He stood 5' 7-3/4" tall.

The carriage making skills Ferris brought to the Army were soon put to use. His job was as a Battery artificer; artificers were mechanics who made repairs or replacements for Battery equipment. Still, Army life was hard on Ferris. He was only with the Battery two months when he was sent to the hospital in Chattanooga the first time. How long he remained for that stay was not recorded, but by October 28 of 1864, he was back in the hospital. This time, he was in Indiana at the Jeffersonville Hospital where he died from disease on November 28.

His remains were buried in the National Cemetery at New Albany, Indiana, where Ferris rests among hundreds of other Civil War veterans. His marker is very worn and difficult to read.



## Thomas Robb

Thomas Robb left little information about his life. He was born about 1833 in Scotland, came to the United States and by 1860, he was living in a settlement called Sargeant, in Rice County, Minnesota. He was farming and probably had taken a homestead as the taxable value of his land was noted as \$800 with additional personal property valued at \$250. At the time, he was living alone.

On March 31, 1864, Thomas enlisted and joined the Second Minnesota Battery. He agreed to serve for three years or the duration of the war, whichever came first. For his long term commitment, he was awarded a bounty of \$300. He was given \$160 up front and promised the balance at the completion of his service. The descriptive roll showed him to be 31 years old, with blue eyes, brown hair, light complexion, and 5' 7" tall. It took three days for him to reach Fort Snelling, then he was sent south to meet up with the unit. The Battery was doing garrison duty near Chattanooga, Tennessee, at the time and garrison duty was the army life Thomas experienced during his year and a half of military duty.

When the Battery was mustered out on August 16, 1865, Thomas was mustered out with them. He went back to Rice County and it was noted that he kept his knapsack, haversack, and canteen as allowed by special government order.

Since Thomas was alone, there was no one to record details of his life. He died about 1869, before Minnesota required formal death records. He was laid to rest near the front gate of the Oak Ridge Cemetery in Faribault, Minnesota, with a soldier's white marble marker. The newspaper noted his grave was remembered as a soldier and decorated in 1887, but it was the last mention of Thomas Robb found.



## **Loaner Collection Update**

The plan to have a collection of "loaner" articles for new members or guests to borrow for a weekend is well underway. At the December meeting, it was announced that a small enclosed trailer has been donated in which to store and transport the Loaner Collection items. It will fit in our current storage garage with the guns. Members of the Loaner Collection committee will be working on shelving, bins or other modifications to the trailer to best serve our needs.

A budget of \$1500 was passed to maintain this collection or to purchase items for it.

Several articles have already been donated and more are expected/promised. The coordinators of this program are finalizing the forms and details, so all should be ready by the first event of the year.

IF YOU HAVE ITEMS TO DONATE, please contact Ron Graves at 612-759-6617 or [rgoland@hbc.com](mailto:rgoland@hbc.com) or Ken Cunningham at (651) 388-2945 or [kecunningham@mail2web.com](mailto:kecunningham@mail2web.com). If you plan to bring items to donate, let either of these people know prior to the meeting.

Remember, the Battery is a 501 ( c ) 3 organization, so donations are tax deductible. Please note that BY LAW, the Battery or its members CANNOT provide a value for any donated item. Setting that value is the responsibility of the donor.

**"Seeing the Old Year Out" from Harpers Magazine, January 5, 1861**



# Life in a Winter Camp

From the reminiscences of Frank S. Roberts, Confederate soldier in the Second Georgia.  
Reprinted in the *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. XXVI

Our brigade, Gen. John K. Jackson's, Maj. Gen. William H. T. Walker's division, Lieut. Gen. William Hardee's corps, was encamped about two miles east of Dalton on a slightly elevated plateau sloping generally in every direction, thus affording good drainage. Our cabins were built of split logs, the cracks being "chinked" during the severest weather with red clay, thus making a very comfortable house indeed. An ample chimney was constructed of sticks "chinked" in the same manner as the house; and when the fireplace was piled up with wood and set going, we had as comfortable quarters as to warmth as one could wish. Our bedsteads were four posts with end and side pieces nailed to them, and boards were placed so as to give us room to fill in with straw, and over this our quilts and blankets were spread.

I occupied a cabin with my brother Charlie, who was adjutant of the sharpshooters, 2d Georgia Battalion. We were as comfortable as the proverbial



"bug in a rug." Our mess was composed of Adjutant Roberts, Color Sergt. (afterwards Orderly Sergt.) William Mulherin, Sergts. Martin V. Calvin and Henry Miller, Corps. Charlie Cheesborough and Mike Roulette, and Privates Tommy Brennau, Jimmy Robinson, and myself. Being a very large mess, our ration came in a good-sized chunk, especially beef. Sergeant Miller was an excellent cook, and he could bake or roast our ration of beef to "a turn," and, believe me, it was good. At times we had potatoes, which were "powerful" good with the savory gravy he made. Corn bread was

our stand-by in that line. This was baked in a big old Dutch oven about fourteen inches in diameter, two bakings of three ponies each being required at each of our three meals per day. He used liberally of the little Mexican red peppers for seasoning, which was a most healthy tonic for us. (Just here I shall digress to say that when we passed through Dalton in October, 1864, on our way into Tennessee, the previous winter's camps could be located by the sea of pepper plants full of peppers that covered the country from the seed that had fallen on the ground.) Occasionally bacon, with some kind of green vegetable, varied our bill of fare. We ordered a five-gallon keg of Georgia cane syrup (it cost us only \$300), which went splendidly with our corn bread for dessert. I can now hear dear "Billy" Mulherin say: "Please pass me those molasses." He was a noble fellow, as true as steel. In fact, you could hardly get together a nobler band than our mess at Dalton was.

**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>**

**Your Country Needs You!**  
**And so does the Battery!**

**2017 dues are DUE!!** 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:

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