



2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

“ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 243

March 2017

On This Date-155 Years Ago

March, 1862

Recruiting continued in the Battery in March of 1862, replacing a couple of men who transferred out to other units and continuing to fill crews for the guns. Lieutenants Dawley and Woodbury were recruiting in their home counties despite Hotchkiss' declaration of being at full strength at the end of February.

That might have been a bit of a stretch on the Captain's part as the morning reports show 23 more men were mustered in before the Battery was formally accepted in the service of the United States on March 21st.

One of the men who was mustered into the Battery on the same day it was accepted was Alfred Townsend. Alfred had not come to Fort Snelling alone, his wife, Sylvia, had accompanied him. She didn't want to wait on the farm where they were living in Rice County, so she went to Captain Hotchkiss and asked to be accepted as a laundress for the Battery. We don't know what that all involved for her, but she was accepted as the laundress on March 22, 1862. She stayed with Alfred at the fort, perhaps taking in washing from the men even before they left for the South.

The men were drilling daily, using guns that were at the fort, and according to reports, they were becoming “proficient” with them. A drawing from a period magazine showed the gun drills as taking place overlooking the Mississippi River below the cliff.

Next Meeting

April 1, 2017 11:00am

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



Upcoming Events

March 11-12 WORK DAY!! 10-4 each day

Our beloved Babs needs some work to keep her in good firing order. Meet at First Student Bus Garage, 714 Bench St., Red Wing. We will be sanding and painting on the gun and limber as well as cleaning the limber chest cooler and making minor repairs to all the above and the trailer. Bring rags, rubber gloves, and paint brushes if possible. **PLEASE help as much as you can whatever part of the weekend you can. Many hands make light work!!**

Contact John Cain (mowie@charter.net) with questions.

March 25 Civil War Symposium, Mankato, MN

<http://www.boyinblue.org/>

This is a day long Civil War workshop of lectures and demonstrations. There is a registration fee and you must register early if you plan to have lunch. Contact Daryl Duden (damdude1210@gmail.com) or John Cain (mowie@charter.net) if you plan to attend.

March 25 Heritage Arms Annual Gun Show

Held at the Eagan Sports Center <https://gunshowtrader.com/gun-shows/heritage-arms-society-annual-midwest-show/>

April 1 Annual Meeting and Elections

This is our Battery organizational “annual meeting” where officers are elected. This year, military officers are up for election.

You must have your 2017 regular member dues paid to vote in these elections. There is a membership form at the end of this newsletter.

Based on current eligible membership, **we MUST HAVE 21 ELIGIBLE MEMBERS present at the meeting to have a quorum. PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTEND.**

Military Officers:

Lieutenant (currently John Cain)
Quartermaster Sergeant (currently Ron Graves)
Sergeant (currently Daryl Duden)
Corporal (currently Ron Wendel)
Corporal (currently)James Livingstone

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

From the website of: Irish in the American Civil War, Exploring Irish Emigration & Irish Involvement in the American Civil War

The celebration of St. Patrick's Day dates back more than 1,000 years, and Irish soldiers and emigrants brought that tradition with them when they came to America. During the Civil War, soldiers on both sides joined in honoring Ireland's patron saint, regardless of their religion. The northern sector, still being in winter quarters, and little or no fighting going on, the day could become one of amusement and celebratory events, including horse racing. The old Irish song "Whiskey in the Jar" comes to mind!

(The following is an article titled: *St. Patrick's Day in the Army of the Potomac, 1863*)

The Irish units took the celebration of their national day seriously, and as 17th March neared, nothing was left to chance. The Irish Brigade was, at this point in the war, (1863) made up of the 63rd, 69th and 88th New York together with the 28th Massachusetts and 116th Pennsylvania regiments. They set to work preparing and marking out an elaborate race-course, and posted an announcement for the benefit of their colleagues in the Army of the Potomac:

GRAND IRISH BRIGADE STEEPLE-CHASE

To come off the 17th March, rain or shine, by horses, the property of, and to be ridden by, commissioned officers of that Brigade. The prizes are a purse of \$500; second horse to save his stakes; two and a half mile heat, best two in three, over four hurdles four and a half feet high, and five ditch fences, including two artificial rivers fifteen feet wide and six deep; hurdles to be made of forest pine, and braced with hoops.

The Brigade Quartermaster had been sent to Washington in advance to secure all the necessities for the post race banquet, and his haul included no less than 35 hams, a side of roasted ox, a pig stuffed with boiled turkeys and countless chickens, ducks and small game. Alcohol was not forgotten, and to be safe—8 baskets of champagne, 10 gallons of rum and 10 gallons of whiskey were stockpiled. A bower was erected that could hold hundreds of guests, and a general invitation was issued to all officers in the Army of the Potomac. Determined to leave nothing to chance, a committee convened on 16th March to decide who was the best qualified to mix the punch. Captain Gosson and Captain Hogan were selected, and worked so hard at their task that they 'both felt overpowered by their labors and had to be relived from duty'; no doubt partly a result of frequent tests to ensure the concoction tasted just right.

Another green flag regiment, the 9th Massachusetts, were not left wanting when it came to their own preparations. Adjutant M.W. Phalen and Quartermaster Mooney were assigned by Colonel Guiney to make

ready for the day, and they secured 'goodies' from Washington for the occasion, which the entire division was invited to attend.



All drawings are by Edwin Forbes, artist for *Frank Leslie's Magazine* during the war.

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A week before St. Patrick's Day, the two men announced the schedule of events for the regiment:

Sack Race
Race for a Greased Pig
Climbing a Greased Pole
Jumping Matches
Refreshments
Horse Racing (afternoon)
Mock Dress Parade

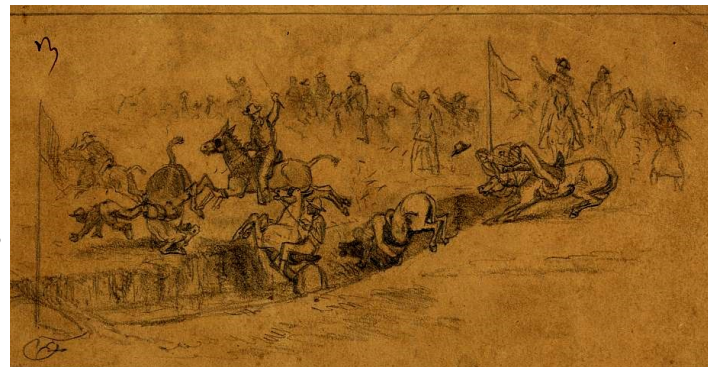
There was to be small amounts of money for the winners of each event, apart from the winner of the greased pig race, who instead got to keep the pig. In addition whoever managed to climb the fifteen foot greased pole would find at the top a pass for ten days leave. A green area opposite the regiment's camping ground was prepared, and the camp itself decorated with evergreens and mottoes.

When St. Patrick's Day finally arrived, the men were graced with fine sunny weather. The Irish Brigade started their day with religious ceremonies, after which the horse racing commenced. Each rider had dressed for the occasion, including one Galway native who was clad in scarlet with a green-velvet smoking cap, harking back to the colors of the Galway Blazers Club. Thousands of officers and men, including the army commander Major-General Joseph Hooker, were in attendance as the designated start time for the first race at 11am approached. A crack of a whip and note from the bugler and the six runners and riders were off. Appropriately enough, the winner was Brigadier-General Meagher's grey horse, Jack Hinton, ridden by Captain John Gosson (it would seem he was feeling none the worse for his 'diligence' in preparing the punch the night before). After lunch there was more sport, the line up being as follows:

- 1st. A foot-race, one half mile distance, best of heats; open to all non-commissioned officers and privates, the winner to receive \$7, and the second \$3*
- 2d. Casting weights, the weights to weigh from ten to fourteen pounds; the winner to receive \$3*
- 3d. Running after the soaped pig- to be the prize of the man who holds it*
- 4th. A hurdle-race, one-half mile distance, open to all non-commissioned officers and privates; the winner to receive \$7, the second \$3*
- 5th. The wheelbarrow-race- the contestants to be blindfolded, and limited to six soldiers of the Irish Brigade; the winner to receive \$5; distance to be decided on the ground*
- 6th. Jumping in sacks to the distance of five hundred yards; the winner to receive \$5*
- 7th. A contest on the light fantastic toe, consisting of Irish reels, jigs, and hornpipes; the best dancer to receive \$5, the second best \$3, to be decided by a judge appointed by the chairman*

Meanwhile back at the 9th Massachusetts, the games were also in full swing. The greased pole, erected opposite the regimental headquarters, proved especially popular, no doubt a result of the prize to be gained at the top. Attempts to secure the pass commenced at 10am: 'One tall, stout fellow made a desperate effort to lift himself from the ground, and, after trying for about half an hour, was reluctantly compelled to give up, having in that time only achieved about an inch; he looked wistfully at the paper fluttering above him, and then turned away to give room to an ambitious youngster, who succeeded in getting half way up, when, coming to a spot greasier than the rest, he began to slip, and did not pause until he came to the ground, amid the roars of the crowd.' Try as they might, no-one succeeded in reaching the top of the pole. This disappointment was tempered somewhat at 11am when each man was issued with a gill of whiskey, which was shared with comrades from the 62nd Pennsylvania Regiment. Tragedy struck in the afternoon horse race when Quartermaster Mooney collided with Dr. Faxon of the 32nd Massachusetts while both were riding at full speed, with Mooney being knocked unconscious. The unfortunate Lieutenant died of his injuries a few days later. The final event was the mock dress parade, which had become something of a tradition for the 9th Massachusetts, having also been carried out the previous year. For the occasion, the men were allowed to elect their own officers, and thus the enlisted soldiers had full control over proceedings. The manual of arms was parodied, and one of the men in Company G, who was elected 'Colonel', managed to reduce everyone to laughter with his accurate imitation of Colonel Guiney's voice.

The evenings at both celebrations were spent in drinking and general merriment. Poems were read and songs sung, and for a day and a night the worries of the war were left behind. The day was long remembered by all who were present, especially the horse races put on by the Irish Brigade, which would pass into legend in the Army of the Potomac.



Battery Profile

William F. Silsbee

William's enlistment in the Second Battery on February 17, 1864, sent him south in time to be detailed away from the Minnesota Battery. The Second Battery was veteranizing and any new recruits, men not eligible, or those unwilling to reenlist were assigned to Battery I, Second Illinois Artillery while the Minnesota men went home on their veteran's furlough. William did not serve with the Battery he enlisted to serve until June 29, 1864.

When he enlisted, William was 43 years old, a farmer from Saratoga in Winona County, Minnesota, where he had preempted land in 1854. He had been born in Stuben, New York, on July 24, 1821, had brown eyes, black hair, and a dark complexion. He was 5' 8-1/2" tall. The bounty William was due totaled \$300 as he had agreed to serve for three years or until the end of the war.

The duty William drew when he served with the Illinois Battery was that of swing driver on the number 2 gun and that horse caused him trouble. The Battery was going into action at Buzzard's Roost in Georgia in May of 1864, and William's commanding officer described what happened.

"The near horse on which said private Silsbee rode, being a fractious, unmanageable horse, threw the said Silsbee back upon the saddle so as to permanently injure his back, because of which injury he was sent back to General Field Hospital at Chattanooga the following day; that subsequently he reported to me for duty in the 2d Minnesota Battery but was never fit for active hard service, though a willing and obedient soldier." Since Captain Hotchkiss had gone north with his men on veteran's furlough, it is unclear how he could have known the details of William's injury, but two other Minnesota men were with William and both filed affidavits that agreed with Captain Hotchkiss.

William was assigned light duty for the remainder of his time in the army and he was a member of the Battery's Bible Class. He was mustered out with the Battery on August 16, 1865, at Fort Snelling and went home to Saratoga. In 1869, William moved to Chatfield.

The circumstances are unknown, but that move may have been connected to a notice found in the December 13, 1870, *Winona Daily Republican* newspaper. It appears that William had a mortgage on a 40 acre parcel of land on which he did not make the payments. The land was being sold at auction by reason of default the following month. The amount owed was \$497.32.



At some point in his life, William married and they had at least two children. He was active in the E.L. Kenny GAR post.

In 1891, William decided to take a trip to Ames, Iowa, to visit his mother. She was 90 years old and living with William's sister. While he was there, William suddenly dropped dead to the complete shock of his family. It was April 12, 1891, and he was almost 70 years old at the time of his death. His body was brought to Chatfield by train and he was buried in the Chatfield Cemetery in Fillmore County, Minnesota. A family stone and a head stone that reads "Father" marks his final resting place.

Recap

February 15, 2017 – Red Wing Twin Bluff Middle School

Sgt. Duden was in Ms. Sara Shannon's classroom speaking to six sessions of sixth grade students and one session of seventh graders. Each session was 42 minutes from bell to bell. The 2nd Minnesota Battery received an honorarium for this appearance and three days later Sgt. Duden received in the mail hand-made thank you cards from some of the students. Included in the 68 thank you cards was this thoughtful response that I want to share with you all. I believe it is a great reminder that all of our efforts to educate are worthwhile. (Submitted by Sgt. Duden)

Dear Mr. Duden,

Thanks for teaching our class about the Civil War. I appreciate that you set aside a lot of your time to educate us about our country's history. I think it's important for us kids to learn stuff like that early on. I truly did learn a lot, and my favorite part was the "test" you gave Ryan to get into the army. The actual war must have been pretty darn gruesome, but I think it is all very interesting when you get down to the meat of it all, Er, salted pork fat, technically. Anyway, I think it's great that you are sharing your knowledge with students and others across the country. Thank you again for coming!

Sincerely,

Hannah

P.S. You've even inspired me to find out more about the Civil War and such.

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

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

2017 Event Calendar—TENTATIVE

The list of events was discussed at the February meeting. While some decisions were made, we were missing critical information about others. No decision was made on these and they are marked as TENTATIVE on this list. No vote was taken at the meeting. More information is hoped for by the next meeting (April 1) and with that, a vote to approve the 2017 calendar will be accepted. If you cannot be at the meeting, please send your thoughts/events you want to attend/any other comments to Ken Cunningham or Daryl Duden prior to the meeting.

For those events with a website, that has been included if members are seeking more information about that event.

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May 15 Edina, MN Calvin Christian School, 5th grade; 9:50am – 2:35pm

May 29 Red Wing, MN Memorial Day Observance

June 10-11 Elgin, IL 1st Annual Civil War Weekend. Reenactments and encampment. <http://9thvirginiacavalry.com/elginscivilwarexperience.html> • Registration by May 1. TENTATIVE pending additional event information

July 4 Menomonie, WI Wilson Park, Ludington Guard Band Concert. Note date change from June 27. TENTATIVE

July 8-9 Wauconda, IL, 26th Annual Civil War Days Reenactment; Lake Co. Discovery Museum. <http://www.lcfdp.org/education/events/civilwar/> Registration by June 1. TENTATIVE

July 15-16 Rochester, MN, 1860's Living History Fair; Olmsted Co. History Center. Saturday reenactment will be Battle of Perryville

July 29 Battle Lake, MN Prospect House & Civil War Museum. Grand Opening celebration of renovated Museum. (PAID event)

Aug 5-6 Boscobel, WI. Reclaiming Our History – Living History Timeline; Kronshage Park. TENTATIVE pending additional event information

Aug 11-12 Arcadia, WI. 2017 Ashley for the Arts. TENTATIVE pending additional event information

Aug 26-27 Morristown, MN Ahlman's Shooter's Roundup

Sep 23-24 Pilot Knob, MO. Battle of Pilot Knob; Fort Davidson Historic Site <http://www.battleofpilotknob.org/reenactment.html>

Nov. 11 Winona, MN. Veteran's Day Tribute; Veteran's Memorial Park

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:

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