

2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

“ACTION FRONT”

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January 2018

On This Date-155 Years Ago

October, 2017—New Book Released

Dennis Gaffney offers a sneak peek into a new book, *The Seven-Day Scholar: The Civil War*, by Dennis Gaffney and Peter Gaffney. Here are 10 things you might not know about America's most devastating domestic conflict. (Continued from last month)

5. Before William Tecumseh Sherman became a great Union general, he was demoted for apparent insanity.

In October 1861, William Tecumseh Sherman, commander of Union forces in Kentucky, told U.S. Secretary of War Simon Cameron he needed 60,000 men to defend his territory and 200,000 to go on the offensive. Cameron called Sherman's request “insane” and removed the general from command. In a letter to his brother, Sherman wrote, “I do think I Should have committed suicide were it not for my children. I do not think that I can again be trusted with command.” But in February 1862, Sherman was reassigned to Paducah, Kentucky, under Ulysses S. Grant, who saw not insanity but competence in the disgraced general. Later in the war, when a civilian badmouthed Grant, Sherman defended his friend, saying, “General Grant is a great general. He stood by me when I was crazy, and I stood by him when he was drunk; and now, sir, we stand by each other always.”

6. General Ulysses S. Grant wasn't the bloodiest general of the war—Robert E. Lee was.

Mary Lincoln called Grant a “butcher” for the horrific losses sustained by his troops during the Overland Campaign in the spring of 1864—twice the number of casualties as Lee's army. But if casualties are counted proportionally, Lee's army suffered the most throughout the war because Lee relished the attack, a trait that won him key battles such as Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg but cost him heavy casualties—Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg is an example—and eventually decimated the Army of Northern Virginia.

7. Both before and during the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln pushed to send freed slaves abroad. The policy, called colonization, had been supported by Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay—a hero of Lincoln's—and even Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose protagonists in “Uncle Tom's Cabin” ultimately emigrate from the United States to Africa.

In August 1862, Lincoln brought five black ministers to the White House and told them that slavery and the war had demonstrated that it would be “better for us both, therefore, to be separated.” He wanted to send freed blacks to Central America, even calling for a constitutional amendment authorizing Congress to pay for colonization. But prominent abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison were appalled by the idea. Lincoln never succeeded at gathering support for the policy, and after he signed the Emancipation Proclamation he never mentioned it publicly again.

More next month

Upcoming Events

November 11, Winona, MN Veterans Day

This annual recognition in a beautiful park on the lake shore has includes a salute from our gun at the conclusion of the ceremonies. We will once again provide a gun crew for the day—weather permitting. Snow could preclude our participation if hauling the gun is a hazard. Those attending should arrive at the park by 9:45 to unload the gun and be ready for the program that starts at 11:11 am.

Events for 2018

Please begin gathering information on events that we may want to consider for the 2018 reenacting season. A list of these potential events will be compiled and discussed starting in February with a final vote on the 2018 calendar in March.

Did I miss something?

If you thought you missed the email with the December 2017 newsletter, nope. There was no December newsletter because the editor was extra busy with family and Christmas. With little happening in these “off” months, your editor did not get too bent out of shape over skipping an issue.

You can always fire her!

Next Meeting

January 27, 2018 11:00am

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



Battery Profile

James W. Johnson

James was without a doubt an honest man, answering every question put to him by the Pension Department with as much detail as he could. When the application form asked if he had any permanent marks or scars on his person, he wrote, "A mark from a scald on left Breast. tattoo--woman with Flag on left arm."

If the Pension Department had asked more questions, James might have told more of his story.

He was born on July 18, 1833, in Bucksport, Maine. By 1862, he was living in St. Cloud, Minnesota. He enlisted in the Second Minnesota Battery on March 10, 1862. He was 30 years old, stood 5' 9" tall, had blue eyes, dark hair and a light complexion. His occupation was that of laborer.

James joined the Battery as a wagoner, participating in the battles at Perryville and Stones Rivers. By spring, James was sick and was sent to the hospital at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. For a short time that spring, between when he left the hospital and when he was sent to the Second Minnesota Battery, James served on the river steamer, *Newsboy*.

He was back with the Battery in time to be with them at the Battle of Chickamauga, but went to the hospital at Chattanooga, Tennessee, on November 4, 1863. James stayed in the hospital almost five months, returning to duty just in time to reenlist as a veteran volunteer on March 31, 1865.

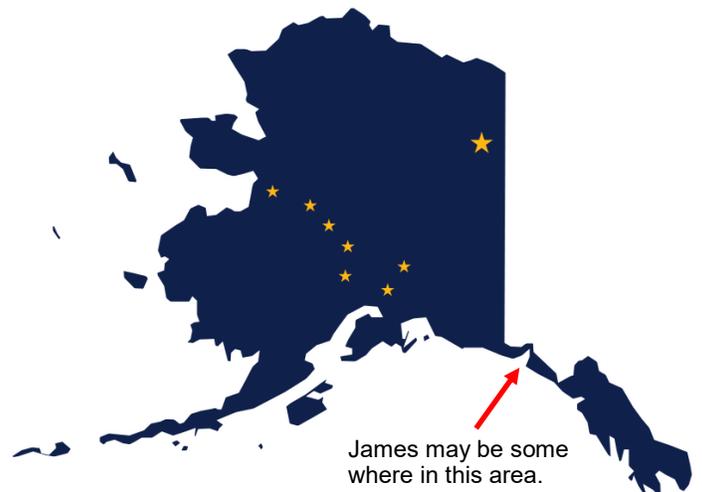
He received a veteran's furlough and went back to Minnesota to spend his 30 day furlough. When the Battery formed up to return to the war, James was with them. He served until the Battery was mustered out in August of 1865.

New horizons must have called to James as he moved between Clearwater and St. Cloud several times until 1875 when he moved back east to Bucksport, Maine. He stayed there only two years before moving to the Black Hills of South Dakota in 1881. In 1883, he moved again, this time further west to Colorado where he stayed another two years. Montana was his next home and that lasted until 1885 when he moved to Sitka, Alaska. At last, James had found a place where he would stay for more than just a few years.

James applied for his pension in December of 1901, still living in Sitka. He only collected his pension for a year. James died on November 13, 1902. Somewhere along the way on his travels, James married a woman named Gertrude and she applied, not for a widow's pension, but for any remaining pay due James. The Pension Department did not make a notation in James' file if they sent Gertrude anything. It is not known why she did not apply for a pension.

No records have been found in Alaska to show where James was laid to rest. His last known address put him on an island along the south coast of Alaska in Yakutat, an area accessible only by boat. *The Alaskan* Newspaper from Sitka carried a notice on November 15, 1902, "*Captain Johnson of Yakutat died of Thursday of dropsy He came down on the last Bertha to medical treatment.*" The *Bertha* referred to was a boat that ran on a regular schedule in the area.

Officials in Alaska suggested James may have been cremated since he died after the ground was frozen. This was a common custom in Alaska in 1902 and would leave no record of burial place. Where James rests may never be known.



Differing Viewpoints, Differing Reports

It is said that if three people standing on a corner witness an accident, there will be three different stories—sometimes only slightly different, sometimes different in major details. The stories can vary depending on what the witness paid attention to and how their personal background might color their opinions.

There are several reports on the Battery's role at the battle of Perryville including the official reports by the officers in command. There were at least three Second Battery men who wrote unofficially about the battle and their stories don't quite match. Their stories are printed here for you to compare.

The first is reprinted from the book, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*, an excerpt written by Private James Hunter. While the report states that it is part of a larger work by Hunter detailing his service with the Battery, that larger work has yet to be found. It is believed Hunter wrote his memoirs many years after the war was over. It is unknown if he kept a diary or journal to aid him as he wrote the memoirs or if he relied solely on his memory.

Private James Hunter

At the request of the commission, Mr. James Hunter (now register of deeds for Rice county) has given a statement of some of his experience in the battle of Perryville, which is as follows: "While on the march from Louisville to Perryville, Oct. 7, 1862, we could hear skirmishing in front during the whole afternoon with Bragg's rear guard, and the members of the Second Minnesota Battery, together with Buell's entire army, were in high spirits at the prospect of a battle after our long and tedious forced march after Bragg, commencing from Jacinto, Miss., Aug. 14, 1862. At gray daylight, Oct. 8, 1862, we were aroused by the bugle, and howitzers Nos. 1 and 2 of our battery were ordered to the left of the line, about half a mile distant, to support General McCook, and became immediately engaged on the skirmish line in dislodging some rebel sharpshooters who were secreted in an old barn about 1,000 yards to our left front, which we soon succeeded in doing, and then advanced down near the creek, near the old barn, and shelled the rebel position in a point of woods on our right front until our spherical case was exhausted and another battery relieved us (I think Loomis' Michigan Battery). We were then ordered to retreat to a point of timber on our left rear and left, of our first position, to await the time when we could use our grape and canister, which soon came, but during the hour or so that we stood there we had a good opportunity to witness the commencement of the terrible battle that raged all the afternoon over the ground we had lately traversed. At about half-past twelve, from the point of woods on our right front, the enemy began to pour, at double-quick, in great numbers, and formed line of battle about half-way down to the creek, and the battle then commenced, as the boys said, red-hot; but our force was largely outnumbered, and was slowly driven back, although every foot of the ground was stubbornly contested. The rebels, flushed with success, were coming on, yelling, when an orderly rode to where we were and ordered our guns to the right, across a double lane worm fence in front of a white house near our position in the morning, to check the enemy's advance, and the rails of those fences flew as if struck by a cyclone to let our guns through and into position, each gun squad being anxious that its gun should have the honor of speaking to the enemy first. We flew into position, and for two or three hours sifted the canister into their ranks and held them in check in front; but they were slowly driving the infantry back on both sides of us, until we were nearly surrounded, when an orderly from General Rousseau rode in and shouted: 'Get out of there! Your battery is lost!' We had

a load in No. 1 at this time, but having held up for a few seconds during this order, the 'powder monkey,' as we used to call No. 5, who carried the ammunition, had got there with another, and we cut the powder from it, and as a parting gave them a double-header, when we sprang for the trail ropes and lost no time in getting to the rear. This was about 5 p.m., and although five of us were wounded they got the other four on the guns and took them off, while I, who was at the front of the gun and nearer the enemy, had my leg broken by a gunshot, and they could not get me. One noble fellow, John Kimball, ran back to help me. I begged him to leave me and save himself, which he finally did, shaking hands within ten feet of the rebel bayonets and promising to meet in Minnesota, which we have not yet done. The rebel line swept over me while I lay resting upon my elbow to see if my comrade got safe to the rear, which he did, and shortly afterward the rebels came back over me again, pell-mell, and made a stand, and I lay between two fires, when a second ball passed through my body, and I turned to take a last look at the setting sun and bid good-by to this world, thinking I was mortally wounded. Again the rebels swept over me and I was far into the rebel lines, and darkness ended the strife. The moon came up in great splendor, and men could be distinguished for half a mile, and presented a real panorama of a battlefield, which, once witnessed, could never be forgotten. The cries for help, for water, the curses and prayers of the wounded as they sat up or reclined upon their arms in the beautiful moonlight, when all nature seemed hushed again to rest after the strife and carnage of the day, presented a picture that no painter's brush could reproduce, and for the time I forgot my own terrible extremity while gazing upon the scene. But my reverie was soon broken by the approach of a squad of the enemy who were picking the pockets of friend and foe alike. I called to them and asked them to send me a surgeon, which they promised to do, and treated me very kindly, although they took my hat, jacket and boots, with the encouraging information that they did not think I would need them. They then brought a surgeon, who did what he could for me, and offered to take me to their hospital at Harrodsburg, which I declined with thanks, and at my request they carried me into the white house mentioned, where I found seventeen other wounded in, the same room, where we lay and rolled in each other's blood for forty-eight hours, when but seven of us were still alive, and when our lamented Lieutenant Albert Woodbury of Anoka (who was afterward killed at Chickamauga), rode back some twenty miles in search of me, and had me taken to hospital, where I remained until discharged the following February. Shortly after being carried into the house before mentioned, a general (who, from pictures I have since seen of him, I am satisfied was General Bragg) and staff came in and had a fire built in an open fireplace in the room, and they discussed the battle, the tenor of which was that they had a pretty hot afternoon's work, but they had better not risk an engagement next day, but get as far away as possible before daylight, rejoin their train, and get out of the state without any more fighting if possible."

The next account is from Sergeant Alexander Kinkead. He was from St. Cloud, Minnesota and he wrote letters to his hometown newspaper frequently. The following is the letter he wrote describing the Battery's role—as he saw it—in the Battle at Perryville. Kinkead was a sergeant during the battle, but just a few days after it, he was promoted to Lieutenant. It was published in the *St. Cloud Democrat* on November 6, 1862.

Sergeant Alexander Kinkead

[The following private letter, received by W. B. Mitchel, of this place, from Lieut. Alex. Kinkead, of the Second Minn. Battery, gives so vivid and interesting an account of the part taken by the Battery in battle of Perrysville, that we cannot forbear laying it before our readers.]

CAMP NEAR PERRYVILLE, KENTUCKY, Oct. 9th, 1862.

DEAR FRIEND. I had intended to keep you posted as to the movements of that portion of the Grand Army of the Union of which we are a part but after quitting Murfreesboro, Tenn., our marches were so arduous and my time so occupied that I could not write. Suffice to say that with all our forced marching we failed to bag Bragg's Army or even being on engagement. Our whole force, to the number of seventy thousand men, were marched into Louisville, much to the satisfaction of the inhabitants who were seriously alarmed at the near approach of Bragg. There were not less than fifty thousand troops in Louisville before our grand entrée. Though no General, I would, were it safe to do so, give such an expose of military incompetency as would surprise you.

On the morning of the 4th of October the different Divisions of the Army of the Ohio moved out of the city by different avenues, presenting a splendid array of national greatness and "with all the pomp and circumstance of glorious war." As usual, for weeks past, we made forced marches and overtook the retreating forces under Gen. Bragg just beyond Bardstown. For two days our front harassed the enemy's rear, until Perrysville was reached where from necessity the enemy formed in line of battle extending over five miles of country. On the afternoon of Tuesday, the 7th of October we formed in line of battle corresponding to that of the enemy, our (Mitchell's) Division occupying a position in the center and on to the extreme advance. We formed in Battery on a hill from which with a glass the enemy could be distantly seen. Our orders from Gen. Buell who was near us with his staff, was to not bring on an engagement that day. The next morning one section of our battery under Lieut. Woodbury was ordered to advance upon the immediate control of Gen. Gay, Chief of Cavalry. Our captain accompanied the section and took position about one and half miles in advance of the main lines. We opened with the howitzers throwing shells, and drove the enemy's skirmishes and scouts back upon their lines; other sections from other batteries, occupying different points, operating at the same time and under the fire of which the cavalry advanced cautiously. We had a fine position for the howitzers and the sights of the time was grand. We shelled the enemy's advance for two and a half hours and with such accuracy that one of Gen. Buell's staff rode up and complimented the men very highly upon the rapidity and correctness of their shooting. The cavalry near wanted to know if we were not regulars. Indeed we were all surprised and delighted. Our shot fell with telling effect upon the rebels and I was especially pleased with the coolness

and courage of both officers and men. We had never been in action and as some of the men were new recruits I felt a little nervous lest want of faith in themselves might not operate to our disadvantage – one half hour dispelled all such thoughts.

The fight was as yet conducted entirely by the artillery and as the enemy retired the artillery moved forward until at last the rebel horde could be seen in line and with artillery in view to the naked eye – indeed, but for the woods, all this might have been seen much sooner. Almost immediately after taking the second position the rebels opened with their artillery, and had it been as well served as ours half our men would now sleep the sleep that knows no waking. They fired wildly, while with the same determined coolness our men handled their howitzers – now knocking a rebel gun from position – now sending rebels to their long account. At noon on the eighth the fight grew hot, but as yet the artillery alone had participated and with so splendid success that Gen. Gay rode in person to cheer the men and to speak complimentary words. "Men," said he, "I never saw such shooting." Here let me say that with those howitzers were St. Cloud men who did their duty like men – like soldiers – fresh as they were from their citizens' homes. All praise to David Jarvis, the Bloomfields, Will Kinkead and, indeed, all.

At this time, 2 P. M., the rebels were suffering severely and had as yet done us no significant damage. They could stand it no longer. Like rats driven into the corner they must fight. And fight they did. What they lacked in courage, whisky and gun powder did for them. One main line had been moved forward, throwing our howitzers into Roseau's Division with the other two sections on the right of that Division under Mitchell.

And now the storm commenced. Some of the enemy's best regiments under Hardee, broke impetuously from their cover and for three hours a sanguinary a conflict as has occurred as yet in this war was enacted for the numbers engaged – say twenty thousand. Fifty thousand men in reserve never fired a gun – Why? Echo answers, "Why?"

The second Tennessee Regiment charged our guns like devils incarnate, as they were; what else could man be in battle inflamed with whisky and gunpowder? On, on, they came to within five rods; our guns throwing the canister and doing fearful execution. Now came the order for the infantry to advance – Kentucky and Michigan troops – which they did in good style, but on firing the first volley, the Michigan troops broke; the enemy still advancing and making fearful work amongst the Kentucky troops who stood their ground on the left of me. It was with difficulty our howitzers were saved. The fighting on that part the field was terrific. Our troops suffered severely and at nightfall were in possession of that ground where in the afternoon our howitzers stood. While all this was going on our other two sections were doing splendid work under Carlin and Mitchell, both of whom, as did Gen. Gay, complimented our men on their bravery and good shooting. On that part the field the enemy's line was broken and retired in disorder. Why this success was not followed up is more than I can tell. Why Bragg's whole army was not completely routed – why the enemy was allowed to retreat in the night I cannot say. Certain it is, the fight is barren of resolve. The enemy no doubt suffered more than we, as the number wounded now in our hands show, and by the dead left on the field. We took but few prisoners; but with the exception of keeping the enemy on the move and busting him out the State, nothing

was gained. Our Battery shelled the enemy next morning after the fight – their rear guard – and our men were the first to enter the village of Perryville. Our troops acted well, except in the single instance of a Michigan Regiment before named. You will get full accounts of the fight from Official sources, and I am not afraid that Minnesota will not be proud of the 2d Battery. We had four wounded. That so many escaped is to me a miracle. I can only account for it is this way – the enemy hot over us. Certainly, their artillery practice was not good.

You never saw a battle field, and ought never wish to. It's horrible. The groans of the dying; the mutilated dead; the butchery of the surgeons fills me with dread. After the battle I visited that portion of the field occupied by the enemy in the morning and in range of our guns. We killed many with our artillery and injured much property. A great many sheep and cattle were killed. The enemy in their flight left all their wounded and buried but few of their dead. You can imagine our feelings – one portion of the battery knew nothing of the other until next morning after the battle. LATER Oct. 10th – I have had no opportunity to mail the above until now. Since writing the above we have had our battery in action twice – shelling the enemy's rear guard with success – none of our men injured. The wounded in the Perryville fight are, James Hunter, Faribault (dangerously); George Tilton, Anoka; Tennis Hanson, Winona; Daniel Fry, Anoka.

In Haste, ALEX.
P.S. – I learn from Rebel sources that the celebrated Washington Battery was one of the Rebel Batteries that was opposed to us, and also the Louisiana "Wild Cats".

The final report—for this newsletter— is from Private William Kinkead, brother to Alex Kinkead who wrote the above letter. On the 27th of November, William had his letter to the St. Cloud newspaper published. The following is a transcription of a portion of that letter that speaks to the battle at Perryville.

Private William Kinkead

I was all day in the Battle and many a cannon ball went rushing by me, sometimes striking the ground near enough to throw the dirt into our faces. I must explain that the Battery was divided during the day, one section (the howitzers) to which I am attached, was under the immediate command of Gen. Gay, "Chief of Cavalry" and were ordered to the front at four o'clock in the morning and at that early hour commenced shelling the scouts and skirmishers of the enemy. Our ambulances had already begun to carry the wounded to the rear. In about two hours, we were ordered to move further to the front, the enemy's advance immediately in front of us having retreated a considerable distance. We had scarcely got into battery in our next position, when the enemy, for the first time, engaged two of our regiments, a brisk fire being kept up for fifteen minutes. Artillery and Infantry were engaged. A few well directed shots from the howitzers assisting materially in forcing back the enemy, and we immediately afterwards commenced shelling the rebel battery which we succeeded in silencing. We again, under orders, moved forward about half a mile. The fight up to this time had been principally confined to artillery. At this hour (1:30p.m.) there was a lull, a few regiments of infantry now advanced in front of us. Rosseau, McCook's and Mitchell's Divisions having come forward and formed a line of battle. With Mitchell our other two sections got into position about a mile and a half to our right, and in the

direction of the town of Perryville, where they afterwards did good execution as will be seen by the report of acting Brig. Gen. Carlin. We did not see anything of them until the next morning. While lying in wait, the enemy opened on us from a masked battery with Parrot guns; being unable to reach them with our howitzers, we were ordered to fall back, and a section of Loomis' Parrotts took our place. We remained in a piece of the woods on the right of McCook's Division. Looking on, until near sunset when we were again ordered forward a short distance by the side of a house for the purpose of breaking the rebel lines. The action had become general along the entire line, the enemy forcing McCook's Division back, while Mitchell in turn was driving them to the right. This was a critical moment, and here it was that forty thousand men who lay in our rear from half to four miles back might have been used with telling effect. For three hours the fight raged with fury. The long lines of infantry swaying to and fro as each regiment in turn drove the other. On the left at nightfall the enemy occupied our ground having forced McCook back about three quarters of a mile. The 27th Regiment of Mississippi troops charged upon the howitzers and forced us from our position because the 15th Kentucky broke and ran, leaving us unsupported, but before quitting our ground and while alone we fired sixteen rounds of canister with murderous effect, the enemy near enough for us to plainly distinguish amid the smoke their peculiar butternut dress. There were twenty-six men with the two pieces, twelve of the number being drivers; out of that number we had only four wounded, one horse killed and five wounded. Three of our men we got off the field, the other had to be left being shot twice through the body. The rebels after carried him into the house with their men and gave him water to drink, we found him there the next day. It is surprising to me that we were not all killed. The musket balls passed over and around us keeping an incessant whizzing noise. Our carriages were struck a number of times, the spokes and fellows carry the marks of the battle. Cannon ball passed so near to one of our driver's heads as to give him a very painful headache for several days. In fact the "hair breadth escapes in the imminent deadly breach" are too many to particularize.

Which story is the most accurate? What details are true? How much should we trust the official reports published by the commanding officers of the army when written when they were only able to view a small part of the battle or perhaps wrote their reports with an eye to enhancing their own reputations or covering mistakes? Some officers probably wrote very true and accurate accounts—and yet always from their own perspective. While the *Official Records* are an excellent source for Civil War research, the circumstances under which they were written must be considered.

Research is all about comparing resources, validating—to the extent possible—the writer and making informed conclusions. Research is also always open to new information that may reinforce or destroy previous conclusions.

On with more research!!

Recap

November 11, Winona, MN Veterans Day

An appearance at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in Winona, Minnesota has become an annual tradition for the 2nd Minnesota Battery and this year was no exception. Members were watching the weather forecast all week for potential travel conditions. Since the forecast for Saturday looked unfavorable, Brian Tomashek picked up the gun on Friday and stored it in his garage so it would be available for the ceremony. On Saturday morning, as John Cain, Daryl Duden and Ken Cunningham drove to Winona, the roads were dry and clear until they reached Wabasha, where the conditions changed to a light mist of freezing rain. When they arrived at Veterans Park in Winona, Brian Tomashek and Bruce Arnoldy greeted them as they drove in and we had our gun crew for the day. The freezing rain continued and although it was definitely great coat weather, the parking lot at Veterans Park was full of hearty spectators waiting for the ceremony to begin. The city of Winona does an excellent job of honoring its veterans and the ceremony, from the flag raising to TAPS, was exceptional. Of course, the sound from our three-round artillery salute bounced off the bluffs and was again well received. The *Winona Daily News* and Winona State University had correspondents covering the event. After the ceremony, we loaded the gun and limber back on the trailer and it stayed in Winona until Tuesday when Brian brought Babs "home" on dry roads.



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.

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Dues are Due!

Please find a membership renewal form on page 7 of this newsletter. Your 2018 dues are due now.

The organizational officers of the Battery are requesting that you please fill out the form completely. We need to have an accurate and up to date contact list for all members in case of last minute changes in meetings or events or if there is an emergency. Cell phones and emails change fairly frequently, so be sure your contact information is accurate.

Your Country Needs You!
And so does the Battery!

2018 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

Please do fill out the form completely and return it with your dues as email addresses and cell numbers change. We need an accurate contact list in case of last minute event changes or emergencies.

Thank you!