

## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 269

July 2019

### On This Date-155 Years Ago Remarks for the Month of July, 1864

(Numbers indicate the day of the month)

- 1 Sergt G. H. Hamilton returned from Hospital at Chattanooga.
- 2 Wm. Costello and Thos. McInerny rept'd for duty. Command left of the front with horses
- 3 E. G. Bloomfield, transferred to V. R. C. G. O. No. 188. W. D. dated Apr 28, 1864.
- 4 C. P. Russell was enlisted & mustered into service at St. Paul Minn. as a recruit in 2d Minn Bty Dec 22 1863. March 1864 he was placed under command Capt. Woodbury. While enroute for the battery at Chattanooga, he was taken sick and left in hospital. Lieut. Dawley, then in command of the battery upon receipt of the muster & Deserter Roll failed to take him up on the morning report. An error was not discovered until July 4, 1864.  
John Ball on previous return reported as 2d Lieut awaiting muster, the Battery being below the minimum strength thereby declining him from muster he resigned his commission to the Gov. of Minn.
- 5 Ing. Olsen, Dischg. March 9th 1864. Cert. of Disability Notice rec'd from Col. J. L. Simonsen, Indianapolis, Ind. of date April 1st 1864.
- 10 Whitman, a recruit erroneously dropped and not taken up in Report. Corp. W. A. Spaulding reported for duty from hospital.
- 18 Returned to camp Shinger's Farm from 'the front' - Marietta, Geo.
- 23 Corp. H. W. Towle sent to F. Hosp No. 2 Chattanooga, Tenn.
- 30 Ed T. Tillotson -- joined from arrest for desertion. Rep't'd a deserter May 25, 1864. Apprehended in Chicago Ills. May 28, 1864 and for safekeeping was placed in the guard house, whence from some misapprehension, he was sent without the knowledge of his commdg officer to Camp Douglas. He should have been taken up May 28, 1864 on this Report and reported absent in arrest.
- 31 Ed Tillotson Under arrest and sent to Chattanooga T. under guard

### Upcoming Events

#### July Events

**CANCELED** July 13-14 Civil War Days  
Reenactment, Waconda, Ill

**July 20-21** Olmstead County Living History Fair & Reenactment, Rochester, MN

Some of our members are involved in the planning of this event, so we know it will be good! The battles are Franklin, TN, and they have been building some great props. The ladies of the Battery will be staffing the Oracle as part of the Third Minnesota's Sanitary Fair. Other ladies will be interpreting the home front at the log cabin on the grounds.

MEALS—breakfast will be made for those staying in camp. Lunch will be the usual sandwiches, etc. for everyone in the unit. **Supper will be ON YOUR OWN** with the suggestion of buying your meal from the Boy Scouts who will have their “café” set up on the grounds. The event website is [Olmstead County Living History Fair & Reenactment](#)

**July 27** Prospect House Museum, Battle Lake, MN.

We will set up stations and an encampment at this historic site, **BRING YOUR OWN BAG LUNCH.** If you have questions, please contact Daryl or John. This is a **paid event**, so we need a good showing. The museum website is <http://prospecthousemuseum.org/>

#### Next Meeting

**August 3, 2019 11:00am**

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



# Battery Profile

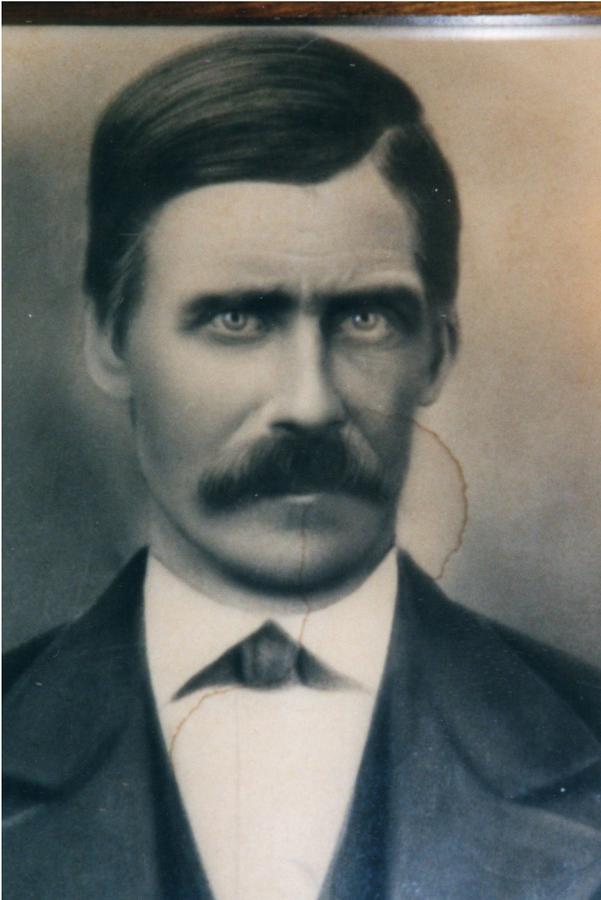
## Nils Christopher (a.k.a. Nils Christopherson)

Nils was no stranger to hard times long before he joined the army. He was born in Hadeland, Norway May 5, 1844, and was still a baby when his father died. As was the custom at the time, Nils was declared an orphan. It is unknown if his mother was still living or not, but the label of orphan would have been applied to any child whose father had died. Nils was sent to his grandfather and traveled to America when his grandfather immigrated to Iowa a few years later. They settled in Lansing, but Nils was alone at the tender age of 10 years when his grandfather died.

Nils took up working as a farm hand in Spring Grove, a community just north of the Minnesota/Iowa border. By the 1860 census, Nils was living with another family, working as a farm laborer. It noted that he had attended school that year and said he was 16 years old. His obituary credits Nils with being especially frugal with his earnings, saving up to buy 40 acres of land and a yoke of oxen before he was 20 years old.

Nils left his land in the fall of 1864 to join the Second Minnesota Battery during the draft rendezvous that summer. He enlisted at Rochester, Minnesota, and saw his name credited to Spring Grove. He received \$33.33, a third of the \$100 bounty he earned by agreeing to serve one year in the army. The descriptive roll showed Nils to be 5' 7 1/2" tall with a light complexion, brown eye and a light complexion.

Many of the records for Nils, especially his military records, call him Nels Christopher, the "son" part was dropped. Which was most correct is unknown.



Nils joined the Battery in the South and was soon serving garrison duty, guard and picket duty and doing more battle with dirt and disease than with Southern troops. The Second Minnesota spent most of the last year of the war in garrison duty near Chickamauga, Georgia. Though he was listed as present for duty, later depositions when Nils was applying for a pension indicate he had been ill while he was serving with the Battery. Nils had some trouble with "diarrhea and a bad stomach" when stationed near Chattanooga. His dysentery that lasted two months after he was home from the war was blamed on "bad river water." Nils was injured once during his time in the army, but it was not Southern bullets, it was a Union train. The train was filled to overflowing with soldiers being moved between Knoxville and Philadelphia, Tennessee, when a number of cars jumped the tracks. Nils was riding on top of one of the ill-fated cars and was forced to jump to avoid being crushed beneath it. The fall was some 30 feet according to what Nils told the Pension Department, stating that he injured his right side.

When the war was over, Nils came back to Minnesota with the Battery and was officially discharged from the army on August 16, 1865. Just over two weeks later, Nils married Carrie Ellingson in a ceremony held at her father's home. The couple settled down to farm in Houston County, Minnesota, near Black Hammer.

Nils sold that farm in 1869 and moved to Cottonwood, Minnesota, traveling there in a lumber wagon pulled by his yoke of oxen. His obituary described life there quite colorfully. *"There he homesteaded for four years, braving the dangers of frontier life and the hords (sic) of Indians which roamed over Minnesota at that time."*

Nils moved back to Spring Grove in 1873 where he bought a farm. He and Carrie, also spelled Kari, raised ten children before Nils retired from farming in the spring of 1907. Nils and Carrie didn't get to spend their retired years together, Carrie died in December of 1907.

Nils visited among his children until he decided to settle down once more. A new wife, Elsie Nelson, probably had a lot to do with settling down! They were married in Maddock, North Dakota, in 1919.

Nils and Elsie had 13 years together before Nils suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died the next day, September 19, 1932, at the age of 88 years. He was buried in the North Viking Lutheran Cemetery in Rugby, North Dakota.

## *Nils Christopher (continued)*

The obituary for Nils took up nearly two columns in the *Spring Grove Herald* newspaper, listing his many children, grandchildren and great grandchildren as well as waxing poetic about Nils and his military history.

*“One of the last survivors of the Civil War Veterans of Benson County, North Dakota has fought his last battle. He always said that God had been very good to him and carried him thru the hardships of an orphaned childhood, thru the dangers of the Civil War with its many narrow escapes and finally blessed him with many temporal blessings and a fine large family, a pleasant home, a devoted wife and loving care during the evening of his life.”*

The article went on to report the military funeral held for Nils and made his connections to people in Spring Grove. Nils left the property in the town of Maddox and \$1500 to Elsie, the rest of his estate was divided between his children and grandchildren.

Elsie, as Nils' widow, applied for a pension in 1939. At the time, the city auditor who was helping her with the application stated that she had been trying to get the pension for some time already, was totally blind and 75% deaf. The Pension Department the law quoted back to Elsie and denied her claim. Women who married a veteran after 1905 were not entitled to a pension after their veteran husbands died. Elsie and Nils had married in 1919, so she was not eligible.



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## ***A Few Random Statistics of the Civil War***

From Smithsonian.com

One-third of the soldiers who fought for the Union Army were immigrants, and nearly one in 10 was African American.

The Union Army was a multicultural force—even a multinational one. We often hear about Irish soldiers (7.5 percent of the army), but the Union's ranks included even more Germans (10 percent), who marched off in regiments such as the Steuben Volunteers. Other immigrant soldiers were French, Italian, Polish, English and Scottish. In fact, one in four regiments contained a majority of foreigners. Blacks were permitted to join the Union Army in 1863, and some scholars believe this infusion of soldiers may have turned the tide of the war.

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. cBut if casualties are counted proportionally, Lee's army suffered the most throughout the war. This is 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.

Privates weren't cannon fodder during the Civil War—generals were. Robert E. Lee's impulse to personally lead a counterattack during the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864 (his troops held him back) would not have surprised his men if he were a bit lower in rank. That's because many top officers, including generals, literally led their troops into battle, a rare occurrence in modern wars. For this reason, generals were 50 percent more likely to die in combat than privates. At the Battle of Antietam alone, three generals were killed and six wounded—on each side. At the Battle of the Wilderness, Confederate General James Longstreet took a bullet to his shoulder and throat, though he would be one of the lucky few: He returned to command and outlived many generals and privates, dying in 1904, just short of his 83rd birthday.

# Recap

**June 16, Galesville, WI, Arnold House/Eastside Farm**

We set up our learning stations on the lawn of this historic house and talked with visitors as they came. It was a lot cooler than last year, though the dark clouds were rolling in just as we were packing up. With those clouds and confirmation of approaching rain from a weather rock, we packed up in record time, taking everything home dry!

There were good groups at each of the three firings throughout the day and lots of questions from visitors who spent a fair amount of time at each



station. One gentleman was especially appreciative. He had attended last year, came back to see us again this year and gave the Battery an donation for our work to make history alive and relevant.

In addition to the Soldiers' Aid Society display, the ladies served tea, much to the delight of several visitors and especially one of our youngest ladies.



This was the first event for one of our new members, Jim Morgan, who trained on the gun and had the chance to hear all the positions, how they worked and why they did what they did. This laid back style event was a great chance for him to learn.

In talking with the organizers, they were pleased with how the day went and were happy with the number of people who visited the site, saying they had given more house tours than last year.

***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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