



## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 297

April 2022

## On This Date-160 Years Ago

### April, 1862

While there were no morning reports filed for April of 1862 for the Battery, there were entries made in the “Battery Returns.” The single entry for April reads:

*Left Ft. Snelling, Minn. Apr 21/62 in obedience to orders from Maj. General Halleck Comdg. Dept. of the Miss. Travelling by steam boat to St. Louis, Mo. Arrived at this post Apr. 25/62. Distance traveled 800 miles.*

George Murphie, a private in the Battery wrote a letter to his father describing the trip down river.

*Dear Father,*

*We left St. Paul about four o'clock after leaving the Fort, and arrived at St. Louis the next Friday morning about sunrise and started immediately for this camp or barracks, which we reached about noon. We had as pleasant a passage down as could be expected with some 800 passengers. At all the towns on the river the people flocked to the banks as we passed, or stopped for a few minutes while our band struck up Hail Columbia, or Yankee Doodle, and cheer after cheer greeted us on landing and leaving. We met with no accident, except being blown ashore at Nauvoo, where we lay until morning. This life is new and exciting. We have drilled but little since coming here. Have received our horses 115 and 18 mules. Expect to get our cannon and the remainder of our outfit this week. We have just received orders to hold ourselves in readiness to go to Pittsburg Landing. It is thought we shall leave about Monday next, in five days.*

This is the last known letter George wrote before his death on June 27, 1862, from typhoid. He is buried in the National Cemetery at Corinth, MS.

### Next Meeting

**April 30, 2022 11:00am**

Red Wing Elks Club, 306 W 4th Street, Red Wing  
Contact Ken Cunningham with questions or agenda items.



## Upcoming Events

Your 2022 Dues are PAST DUE!! If you have not paid them, get them in to Daryl asap. Form follows the last page of the newsletter.

The calendar is on the last page of this newsletter. First event is in early May!

## Elections Results

The military elections were held at the March meeting and the following were elected:

### Military Officers:

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

## Happy Easter!

How are you spending the holiday? Here are three diary entries describing how soldiers from both North and South spent the holiday.



April 20, 1862 USA

*"This is Easter and a pretty day. We had 2 eggs a piece this morning" Written by Alexander Gwin (Campbell, Joseph, Judy Gowen. Marching Orders: The Civil War Diary of Alexander Gwin)*

April 5, 1863 CSA

*"The snow is about seven or eight inches deep. I don't think we will have a very gay Easter today, as game is scarce, and we can get no eggs." Written by Jer Coggins (Taylor, Michael. The Cry is War, War, War.)*

March 27, 1864 USA

*"The beautiful Easter Sunday finds us all O.K. for it is as pretty and warm day, but we have no eggs. We could have them at 40 cents per doz. but I guess we will do without this time" Written by Daniel Chisholm (Menge, W. Springer Menge, J. August Shimrak. The Civil War Notebook of Daniel Chisholm)*

# Battery Profile

## John C. Phelps

John was young when he enlisted in the Battery, being just 19 years old. He was mustered in on February 20, 1862, at Fort Snelling where the Battery was forming up. The descriptive role showed John to have been born in New York, with blue eyes, light hair, and a light complexion. He was 5' 7-1/2" tall and listed his occupation as a farmer.

John served the Battery as a private. He was sent to a field hospital near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on June 24, 1863, and struggled with his health until he was transferred to the Invalid Corps in September. By January of 1864, John was transferred to the Veteran Reserve Corps. He served with the Reserve Corps until his discharged in March of 1865.

What turns John's life may have taken are almost unknown the records about his life are few. It is known he married Sarah Jennie Jefferson on October 26, 1889. The wedding took place in the St. John's Catholic Church in Mankato.

John and Jennie lived in Mankato until at least 1894 and two babies were born to them, Carlin in 1892 and Tommy in 1894. Then the family moved to Otter Tail County and were living in Maine Township by 1900. They took up farming and John was hired to drive a team—when he could work as his health was not good.

John's application for a pension as an invalid was filed in 1898 and it was granted, a notation appearing on the application that he had been assigned to the Veteran Reserve Corps because of health issues while he was in the Army.

Quite a number of depositions to the Pension Department detail the struggles John had trying to work and several were people who knew John before he enlisted. These stated John was healthy before his time in the army.

Death came to John on October 20, 1906. The cause was listed as "congestion of the liver." The funeral was held at the church in Maine and was "largely attended."

Considering the circumstances Jennie was in at the time of John's death, it is no surprise that she could not spend the money to have a permanent marker placed on his grave. Even a stone setting fee for a marker from the Veterans Administration would have been a hardship.

Jennie filed for a pension as John's widow and the Pension Department had to investigate her circumstances before granting her a widow's pension. This investigation turned up the total value of John's personal property—he owned no real estate—and put the value at \$53. It gave a list of his property at the time of his death: two old horses, a cow, and two heifers, but the animals had all been sold to pay the expenses of his last illness and part of the funeral expenses, leaving Jennie nothing on which to live.

Jennie and the boys were destitute. The State of Minnesota paid \$35 toward the remaining burial expense of John's body. The County Agent in Otter Tail gave Jennie the \$8 a month she would get as a widow's pension payment until the filing was approved. The pension was granted and Jennie was given an additional \$2 a month for each of the boys as Carlin was only 15 and Tommy was 12. Minor children were eligible for a pension from their father's service until they turned 16.

Jennie and the boys left Otter Tail County and went to live with family in Minneapolis. Son Tommy died following an operation in 1915. His obituary did not list any Phelps relatives, so Jennie may have not stayed in contact with John's family after his death.

Jennie lived until the age of 89. At the time of her death in 1944, she was collecting \$40 a month for John's pension. She died at the home of her sister and was buried in Pilgrim's Rest in Mankato.

No one knows why John's grave remained unmarked as the years passed. When research led members of the Second Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery Reenactors to Silent Vale, they, with the help of the Otter Tail County Historical Society, placed an order for a veteran's marker for John's grave. The stone was dedicated in July of 2015.

It is believed Phelps Mill, located just a few miles from the Silent Vale Cemetery, has a connection to John. The mill was built in 1889 by William Thomas and he named the town in honor of his wife's maiden name, which was Phelps. While records are a bit lacking, it is believed Nonie Phelps Thomas was John's sister.



## **The Letters of Francis Flint**

"Frank" as he called himself, enlisted in the Second Minnesota Battery on January 14, 1862, reenlisted in March of 1864 and served until the end of the war when he returned to Minnesota.

He wrote many letters to a neighbor, Jennie Russell, while he was serving with the Battery. Jennie was Jennie Russell of Langola, Minnesota. The letters Frank wrote to Jennie are copied from the typed transcripts in the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society. Only the portions referring to the war were typed; the original letters contain other information of a family nature. In most cases, the letters discussed the war as their major topic and little was left out. Jennie saved the letters and it is clear from their content that she answered them. Her letters are not in the collection.

It is not known for what purpose the letters were typed or who made the hand written corrections and additions to them. The original handwritten letters are also in the Minnesota Historical Society's collections.

The intent is to publish Frank's letters in this newsletter over the next several years in the order that he wrote them 160 years ago.

*Fort Snelling, Minn.  
March 10, 1862*

Dear Jennie,

*I have a few minutes that I cannot better spend than in writing to you. I am well and hope these few lines will find you the same. I am not sorry that I am a soldier yet and do not think that I shall be though many are. Such fellows are to be pitied as they can't get away. There are a great many sick here, there have been four deaths since I have been here. Two died the night before last and will be buried today. There are about eight sick in our Co. in the fort. Your uncle George is in our Co. The Briggs boys are well and seem to enjoy themselves.*

*We haven't got any money yet nor all of our clothing. I have been to the State House in St. Paul and seen all the big folks of Minn. The Gov. was in our house today. He said that he thought that we should have a chance to go to the south when the river opens which will be soon as the snow is going off very fast.*

*I have a very poor opinion of Charley Tuttle. He came down here to enlist and staid here a couple of days and backed out and went home.*

*I haven't seen a pretty girl since I left Platte River. There were some at the fort today but none that are to be compared with the girls at Langola.*

*Don't tell anybody that I had to beg this sheet of paper because I didn't have any money. I have had my picture taken but can't send it until Uncle Sam. gives me some money.*

Frank

*Camp Benton, St. Louis, Mo.  
April 27, 1862*

Dear Jennie,

*Had a pretty good time coming down. I think that this is as pretty a place as I ever saw. It is far enough from the city to make it healthy and about three miles from the river. The water comes from the Missouri and is not the best but we do not drink any except for what we use for coffee. It was owned by Gen. Price. The camp is large enough to hold 35 thousand men, there are 6 here now.*

*I should like soldiering better if the girls could go along too. Am not sorry that I enlisted yet and not many in the Co. are. Newb is as happy as a king. I call him my "old woman." She don't mend my clothes though very well and I talk some of getting a Bill of Divorce. We get our horses tomorrow.*

Frank

# 2nd Minnesota Battery Light Artillery 2022 Schedule

Voted on and approved at the March 26, 2022, membership meeting.

May 17	Durand, WI	Pepin County Historical Society Expressed Interest in a Civil War Learning Experience for students	Contact: Bob Zika
May 30	Red Wing, MN	2022 Memorial Day Ceremonies	
Jun 18	Galesville, WI	Founders Day A.A. Arnold House	Contact: Chris Otzelberger Encampment
Jun 28	Menomonie, WI	Concert In the Park	Battery I 1st US Artillery
Jul 7	Mazeppa, MN	Mazeppa Daze Field of Flags Thursday Opening Ceremony	Contact: Wes Voeltz
Jul 9	Red Wing, MN	Goodhue County History Center, Family Fun Day	12:00pm – 3:00pm
Jul 23	Lake City, MN	150 Anniversary Celebration at Camp Lakeview,	9:00am – 5:00pm
Jul 30	Elba, MN	Whitewater River Fest Honor volleys	
Aug 12-14	Canton, SD	Civil War Days Organized by the 13th U. S. Infantry Regiment – Company D	(TENTATIVE pending more information)
Aug 20	Wilmar, MN	Kandiyohi County Historical Society, Anniversary Celebration Contact: Jill Wohlnoutka	Encampment
Aug 27-28	Morristown, MN	2022 Ahlman's Shooters Roundup	Contact: Mike Ahlman
Oct 8-9	Perryville, KY	160th Anniversary Battle of Perryville	(Under discussion, see below)
Nov 11	Winona, MN	2022 Veterans Day Honor volleys	

*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  
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## Treasurer

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

## Perryville, Kentucky

It has been a long time coming, but we have permission to go ahead with the historical marker we have wanted to place on the battlefield at Perryville, Kentucky. Discussion is ongoing as to a timeline for installation and a possible dedication for this marker to the original Second Minnesota Battery on the ground where they fought their first battle in October of 1862.

A number of members have expressed interest in attending the 160th anniversary of the battle reenactment if we can also have the dedication of this marker. More information will be coming to all members as soon as we have solid dates and information. Keep watching the meeting minutes as they are emailed to you for official information. This information will also be in future newsletters.

Mark your calendars!!

## **Your Country Needs You!**

### **And so does the Battery!**

**2022 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: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form and your check to:

Daryl Duden  
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