



## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 304

December 2022—January 2023

### **On This Date-160 Years Ago**

**A summary of the Battle of Stones River, Tennessee, December 31, 1862—January**

The Union squeaked out a victory in a bloody conflict at Stones River, which boosted morale in the North and gave the Federals control of central Tennessee. Of the major battles in the Civil War, Stones River had the highest percentage of casualties on both sides.

An uncoordinated attack by Gen. Braxton Bragg's Confederate Army of the Tennessee worked in favor of Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans's Union Army of the Cumberland. The Federals held their own but at a great cost. Rosecrans's men were so battered they would not campaign for another six months.

An extended lull fell over the western armies following the Battle of Perryville in the fall of 1862. Although victorious, Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell lacked the initiative to follow up on his victory and was soon relieved of command by President Abraham Lincoln. Major General William S. Rosecrans assumed command of the Army of the Ohio and reconstituted it as the Army of the Cumberland. On September 22, 1862, Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, and the president expected his generals to bring home as many victories as possible by January 1, 1863—when he would officially sign the act—to give this new measure backbone.

The day after Christmas 1862, Rosecrans's Army of the Cumberland departed Nashville with 44,000 men, marching toward Confederate general Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee at Murfreesboro, 30 miles to the south. The overly cautious and plodding Rosecrans left some 40,000 men in and around the Tennessee capital to guard his communication and supply routes, an advantage for Bragg.

Rosecrans and Bragg's forces clashed at Stones River as 1862 ended. Mistakes on the Confederate side led to a tactical Union victory, but casualties were high, and it was months before Rosecrans's Federals would be battle-ready again.

The Second Minnesota Battery participated in this battle, deep in the thick of the fighting.

### **Upcoming Events**

With snow on the ground and the temperature below freezing, we don't have any events upcoming anytime soon. Take advantage of the down time in the reenacting season to do some research and write an article for the newsletter or improve your knowledge on something Civil War—or both!

Please keep an eye out for events that could be considered for the 2023 season. We will be compiling a list to discuss and many events and sites are starting to put out information. Bring everything you find to a meeting or send it to Daryl, John or Ken to be put in the pile for consideration.

### **Dues are Due!**

The last page of this newsletter has the form to pay your 2023 Battery membership dues. Please fill out the form COMPLETELY so we have accurate cell phone, email and address information and return it with your dues.

### **Painting Party (when its warm!)**

After an inspection of our equipment in Perryville, KY, it was discovered we will need to schedule another “painting party” in the spring to touch up the gun barrel, gun carriage and limber. The limber chest is showing a lot of wear on the back of the chest due to exposure in transit. Measurements were taken and a “travel cover” has been designed. A seamstress willing to work with two-ply canvas has been located and will be working on a protective cover.

Watch for the painting date to be announced when the weather warms up.

### **Next Meeting**

**January 28, 2023**

Elks Club, 306 W 4th Street, Red Wing,  
Contact Ken Cunningham with questions or agenda items.  
651-388-2945.



# On Christmas Day 1862, a special feast for wounded warriors

From the website: <http://john-banks.blogspot.com/>

On Christmas Day 1862, a grateful nation showed its appreciation for the sacrifices of the U.S. Army with dinners for thousands of sick and wounded soldiers in military hospitals in and near the nation's capital. President Lincoln and the first lady attended the event—one of the most extraordinary of its kind during the Civil War.



A ward in Washington's Armory Square Hospital, where a Christmas dinner was held for patients in 1862

"Nowhere else in the world than in America," a New York newspaper wrote, "could have been the sight which has made this holiday in Washington remarkable and memorable — the banqueting of 35,000 wounded and sick soldiers upon a Christmas dinner, spread by the hands of individual benevolence."

Financial contributions for the event — organized by Elizabeth Smith, wife of the Secretary of the Interior — poured in from individuals, businesses and states. (Indiana contributed \$700, and \$2,500 was collected in Philadelphia.) "A grand Christian event," a newspaper called the dinner, greatly aided by



Elizabeth Smith, wife of the Secretary of the Interior.

contributions from other "noble ladies."

Food came from throughout the Union. Pennsylvania and Maryland shipped an "immense amount" of poultry. "Ever-generous" Albany, N.Y., provided 300 turkeys, "cooked and ready to eat." Four carloads of poultry arrived from Chicago. In total, 7,000 chickens and turkeys were consumed. Volunteers served the feasts in hospital wards decorated with Christmas trees, evergreens, green holly, crimson berries, wreaths and red roses.

"... the whole was prepared in a style to please the most epicurean taste," a newspaper wrote about the fare served at College Hospital in Georgetown. Topped with flowers, a pyramid of seven large cakes stood near the door of the hospital near the Potomac River. Desert included ice cream.

Volunteers decorated hospitals with patriotic touches. At Dumbarton Hospital, patients found red, white and blue ribbons displayed in "lavish profusion," and the motto "Union" prominently displayed. At Presbyterian Church Hospital, crossed muskets on each side of the altar gave the room "somewhat of a military appearance." A large American flag "gracefully festooned" another part of the room. "Union" and "Constitution" formed in cedar twigs appeared beneath it. Mini-national flags decorated the Finley Hospital dining hall.

Apparently with no regard for soldiers' suffering, senators, congressman and members of President Lincoln's cabinet "made speeches happily fit for the occasion." Then they mingled with soldiers. Entertainers serenaded soldiers with songs of home or country. At Stone Hospital, music by a glee club of patients enlivened the dinner.

Abraham and Mary Lincoln appeared at at least two hospitals. "In one or two the President found time to bring excitement and sunshine with him among the bandaged and becrutched revelers," according to a newspaper account. "Mrs. Secretary Smith," the event's organizer, visited at least a half-dozen hospitals.

At Judiciary Square Hospital, which accommodated 500 patients, the scene was especially impressive. In the dining hall, portraits of George Washington and Secretary of the Interior Caleb Blood Smith hung on the walls. "Merry Christmas" in blue letters appeared on a large banner. "The Union must and shall be preserved," read another sign near the dinner table, which was "furnished in a style of actual magnificence." Stacks of chickens and turkeys formed "perfect" pyramids — one of the gobblers reportedly weighed 25 pounds. The fare also consisted of roast beef, mutton, hams, oysters, chickens, "side dishes of all sorts" and pies.

As Lincoln was about to depart Judiciary Square Hospital, a short carriage ride from the White House, an elderly gentleman approached the president. "Notwithstanding your extensive public duties," the man told the president, "you managed to hold your own."

"Yes," Lincoln replied with a laugh, "but I have not got much to hold."

Volunteer waiters eagerly served wounded warriors. They first fed soldiers too injured or sickly to be moved to a dinner table. "The feasting of this army," according to an account, "was a touching sight."

In two editions after Christmas, the *Evening Star of Washington* published detailed, hospital-by-hospital reports of the festivities:

At Trinity Church Hospital, a small Christmas tree rested on each of the four tables in the dining area. The air was fragrant with flowers and cedar, and an organist played *The Star-Spangled Banner* and *Gloria In Excelsis*, surely inspirational songs for all in attendance.

At Stanton Hospital, wives of Indiana's two senators supervised the dinners. "They had the assistance of a large number of other ladies, whose beauty and smiles were enough to gladden the hearts of the brave men who are amongst the unfortunate of those who have volunteered to sustain the nation and its honor," a newspaper reported.

At Douglas Hospital, only 100 of the 280 patients were well enough to eat at the dinner table. Wounded from the Battle of Fredericksburg, fought two weeks earlier, had arrived there only recently.

At Emory Hospital, the 1st Michigan Cavalry band played "eloquent music," and the sick and wounded who couldn't eat at the table were "bounteously supplied by the ladies — those angels of mercy who ever to delight to soothe the sufferings of our honored soldiers."

At Camp Parole in Alexandria, Va., across the Potomac River from Washington, nearly 15,000 convalescents and paroled prisoners were served. A toast to the men and women who provided the meal was "appropriately responded to."

At Union Chapel Hospital, the gathering asked Dr. Hubbard of the National Observatory to speak. Apparently uncomfortable as a public speaker, he refused. "Doctor," the patients shouted, "tell us about the stars!" He complied.

At Fourth Presbyterian Church Hospital, 50 of the 150 patients could not leave their beds. Every sick and wounded patriot, however, received a pint of ale. So, too, did each of the 500 patients at Finley Hospital. Christmas cheer, indeed.

Not all the dinners went smoothly, unsurprising given the scale of the event. At Convalescent Camp, near Alexandria, soldiers did not eat until late in the evening because food was delivered late. And at Armory Square Hospital, tables in the wards were "devoid of all attractive embellishment." Worse, the meal was served first to hospital attendants and nurses, who ate off "china plates."

The "invalid soldiers were obliged to wait until a long while after before they were supplied," the *Evening Star* reported, "and then the dinner was served to them on tin plates, and in such a manner as to convey with it no pleasing thoughts whatsoever." (Surgeons, attendants, clerks, wardmasters and others at the hospital complained the account was fake news, but the newspaper stuck by the story.)

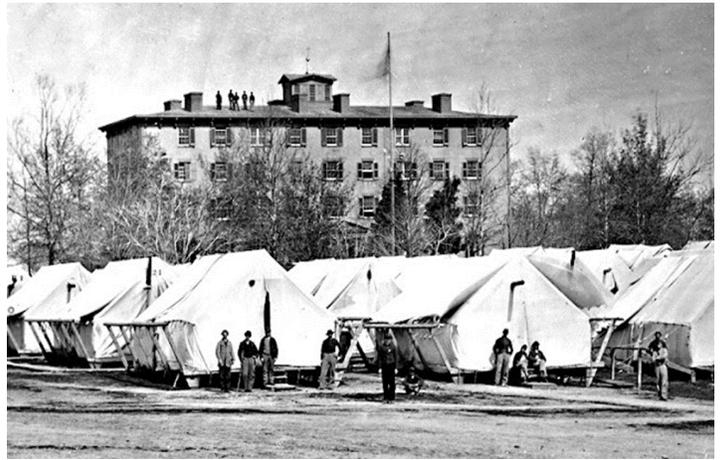
At 2 p.m., volunteers served Christmas dinner at the Contraband Camp at 12th and Q streets, the temporary home of about 500 escaped slaves and other African Americans. The feast included turkey, chicken, roast beef, boiled ham, vegetables and candy, mostly contributed by Mary Lincoln. Afterward, each child received a toy. Earlier that morning, volunteers distributed clothing to grateful adults and children.

Soon after the Christmas dinner, soldiers and others sought contributions to buy Elizabeth Smith a "magnificent present" for her excellent work. They quickly raised several hundred dollars.

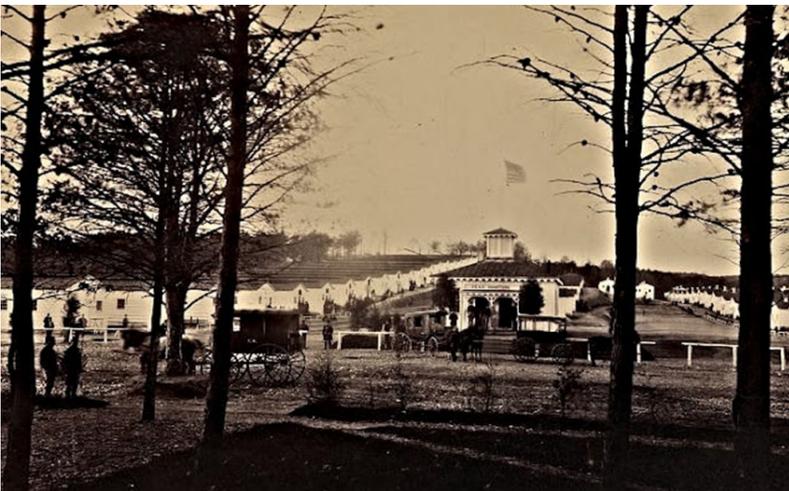
Ah, this holiday certainly was a extra-special.

Wrote a reporter for the *Evening Star*: "It was a bright day for all, and which will always bring pleasing thoughts to both those who donated and those who were recipients of the dinners. The main credit is due to Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Secretary Smith, who in a measure supplied all the hospitals; but the grateful soldiers will not forget soon the kind ladies who by their presence and smiles added sunshine to the gloomy hospital cots."

Perhaps another Washington newspaper summed it up best: "This war," the *National Republican* wrote, "will develop a great many manly, Christian and noble qualities in our people that the times of peace can never bring out."



Only 100 of the 280 patients were well enough to eat at the dinner tables at Douglas Hospital in Washington on Christmas Day 1862. This is an undated wartime image.



At Convalescent Camp, near Alexandria, Va., the Christmas Day dinner was delivered late.



# Battery Profile

## John C. Stockton

John came to Minnesota with his family from New York and arrived in Champlin, Hennepin County, in 1855 or 1856. His father settled on farm land where he and his sons began working the land. When the war broke out, John and a neighbor decided to enlist in the Second Battery. Champlin was a short ferry boat ride across the Mississippi River to Anoka and Albert Woodbury was the Second Battery's lieutenant. He was well known and recruited heavily in the area, so it is very likely the men knew each other prior to their military service.

John and his neighbor, John Kimball, enlisted on the same day and were mustered in at Fort Snelling on January 25, 1862. The descriptive roll showed John not a farmer by occupation, but as a carpenter. He may have been working at this in addition to farming. John was 22 years old, had hazel eyes, dark hair and a light complexion. He stood 5' 6-1/4" tall.

Army life started out with a bump for John. Before he ever left Fort Snelling, he came down with the measles and spent time in the fort's hospital. He was well enough to go with the Battery when they were sent south in May, but his health may still have been compromised according to his mother. She believed he was still weak and that was why he got sick again in luka, Mississippi.

The casualty sheet for John said he died of typhoid fever on August 31, 1862, in the hospital at luka.

John's mother, Catherine, applied for a pension as she said John sent whatever he could to help support his parents while he was in the army. She described how they learned about their son's death in a deposition to the Pension Department.

*I can't say just what was the immediate cause of death except what John Kimble told me. He saw my son in the evening before he died. I think he was on a boat and sick with diarrhea. Mr. Kimble saw him and he was in bed, but was sitting up at the time he just bid my son good-bye and that was the last I know of him alive. The first we heard of his death was a man in Anoka Minn told my husband that he had received a letter from his son telling him that my son was dead by he did not say what he died of. About 8 weeks afterward we received a letter from the commander telling us of the death of John. He had the measles at Ft. Snelling and I guess he was not very strong when he went south and the change of climate affected him and this is all I ever knew of his death. We wrote to the regiment for full particulars of the death but never received any answer. He died at luka, Miss. He was perfectly sound when he left me for the army.*

By this time, Catherine was a widow with little means and she was asking for help from John's pension.

John Kimball filed an affidavit in Catherine's behalf and agreed with her story, adding that John had a fever when last visited. Kimball explained that he was not with John when he died as the Battery was moving out and he had to go. Another comrade, James Lane, was left behind and was with John. From Lane, Kimball reported, they had expected John was getting better when he suddenly had a relapse and died. Lane was with John at the time of his death, the only Battery member to be there.

John's body was not returned to Minnesota. He was buried in Mississippi in a soldier's cemetery that became the Corinth National Cemetery. In 2003, members of the Second Minnesota Battery Reenactors visited John's resting place and brought some Minnesota dirt and water from the Mississippi River to sprinkle on his grave, reminders of the home John never returned to.



# Recap

## November 11, Winona, MN Veterans Day

On Veteran's Day, there was a cold brisk wind blowing off Lake Winona as members of the 2nd Minnesota Battery Light Artillery rolled their 10 Pdr. Parrott Rifle and Limber into the parking lot at the Winona Veteran's Memorial. Once the gun and limber were in place, battery members were invited down the stairs behind the bandshell and were treated to coffee and donuts. As the clock approached 11:00am, members ventured back outdoors wearing greatcoats, gloves and scarves.

There was a nice crowd that braved the cold to attend the ceremony including students from Winona High School who were bused to the event. This year's ceremony honored the Cold War Veterans, March 12 1947 –



***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: [2mnbattery@gmail.com](mailto:2mnbattery@gmail.com)**

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

December 26, 1991. Gerald L. Balko, Commander American Legion Post 190 of Saint Charles, provided the Main Address. Following his remarks, our three round salute was fired. The sound of the cannon fire bouncing off the bluffs across Lake Winona was again incredible. Following the closing prayer, I believe we may have set a record for the shortest amount of time it took to load the cannon and limber back on the trailer.

Battery members participating on the gun crew this year were Neil Bruce, Bruce Arnoldy, Michael Ritchie, Brian Tomashek, James Livingstone, Ron Graves, Daryl Duden and John Cain. Tanya Graves and Mardelle Arnoldy were also in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sgt. Daryl Duden

# **Battery Dues are Due!**

Civilian Member	\$12.00
Military Member	\$12.00
Associate Member	\$6.00
Junior Member (14-17)	\$6.00
Junior Member (under 14)	Free

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Cell (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form and your dues to:

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