



## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 295

February 2022

### On This Date-160 Years Ago

#### **February 1862**

Recruiting was still the main focus of the Second Battery-to-be. As more men were mustered in, the unit was entitled to officers and during the month of February, some 50 men were mustered, entitling it to a full compliment of officers. William Hotchkiss got his heart's desire on Valentine's Day when he was commissioned captain of the Battery. It was a goal he had been working toward since he enlisted nearly five months earlier. It was the Second Battery he was in command of rather than the First, but he was officially a captain in the Artillery.

It is likely Hotchkiss was no longer out recruiting, but rather staying at Fort Snelling to drill and train his fledgling artillerists. By army regulations, the Battery was considered “full” at 145 men, but it was effective at considerably less. Recruiting would continue to bring it to full strength and to replace men who were discharged for various reasons or transferred to other units. Morning reports were kept starting in January, but there is no detail of the daily activities other than who was mustered in. Interestingly, the dates of when a man mustered in according to his personal enlistment sheets do not often match the date the morning report says he was mustered in. What the reason for the discrepancy may be is unknown, but based on other “date” omissions and errors in the morning reports, personal papers of the individual soldiers are probably the more correct date.

On Friday, February 28, the following article appeared on the front page of the **St. Paul Pioneer & Democrat**:

**Fully organized.**--- *We are informed by the Adjutant General that the following named gentlemen have been commissioned to take command in the Second Battery Light Artillery: Captain-- W. A. Hotchkiss, Anoka 1st Lieutenants-- G. Rosenk, St. Paul; Albert Woodbury, Anoka. 2d Lieutenants-- Jackson Taylor, Wright County; Richard L. Dawey, Winona.*

*The company now numbers one hundred and twenty-five men, and are said to be of the best material in the State. The company is kept in constant drill, and are improving very rapidly. The captain says he is opposed to burning any more powder without affecting something, and is very anxious to get to the scene of the action.*

There is an error in the above article, Hotchkiss was not from Anoka. His home was Monticello, in Wright County.

### Upcoming Events

Discussion at the January meeting included events members had heard about or that we typically attend. A list of events discussed was included in the minutes (sent to all members).

Please be on the watch for other events as it would seem we might have a more “normal” reenacting season in 2022. Bring or send any information on 2022 events to the meeting or one of the organization officers.

We will continue gathering information and discussing the events, putting together a tentative calendar after the February meeting with a final calendar vote in March.

### Help Wanted

No events also mean it's harder to fill the pages of the newsletter. PLEASE look for articles or do some winter research and write up an article on something you are interested in. We all have such great knowledge, write it down and share it in the newsletter!

Your editor is running low on material—after all, this is the 25th year she has been writing it nearly every month!!



### Next Meeting

**February 26, 2022 11:00am**

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



# Battery Profile

## Sylvester Montour

The 1850 census showed Sylvester, called Sylvan, as being six years old living with his family in St. Paul, Minnesota, where his father was a blacksmith. The family had grown by the 1860 census and Sylvan had become Sylvester. He was living in St. Paul with his parents and five brothers and sisters. Sylvester was the third child, having an older brother and sister. It also said he was 12 years old in 1860, having been born in Prairie Du Chein, Wisconsin, in 1847. The census math is a little fuzzy on Sylvester's age. Four years later, Sylvester told a recruiting officer that he was 18 years old. By most calculations, four and 12 do not add up to 18, but if he was six in 1850, he should not have been 12 in 1860!

Still, it was the draft rendezvous in the late summer of 1864 and men were needed to continue fighting the Confederacy, so it is unlikely the recruiting officers would have cared what Sylvester's age may have really been. Sylvester said he was 18, that his occupation was boatman and he wanted to enlist. He even agreed to let his name be credited to Centerville in Anoka County for their draft quota. For his enlistment, Sylvester received \$33.33 up front with the promise of \$66.67 to be paid later. Sylvester had hazel eyes, a dark complexion, black hair, and stood 5' 6" tall. He was mustered into the Army at Fort Snelling on September 2, 1864, just two days after enlisting. His enlistment papers show that Sylvester made his mark instead of signing his name.

Sylvester arrived at the Battery while they were on garrison duty in Tennessee, so he did not participate in any major battles. His time was spent on garrison duties and scouting missions. He served as a private until the Battery was mustered out at the end of the war on August 16, 1865.

He moved around some after the war, making his home in St. Louis, Missouri; Savannah, Illinois; Davenport, Iowa; and St. Paul, Minnesota. Since all of these are river towns along the Mississippi, it might be that he continued his trade of working on the steamboats, though he did later say he also worked as a teamster and a laborer.

In Sylvester's defense for enlisting when he was not yet 18 years old, he may not have actually known when he was born. On his first application for a pension in 1900, he was still making his mark, so he had not learned to write his name. He told the Pension Department that he thought he was born about May 13, 1846, but qualified that statement with an "on or about" clause. On a subsequent pension document, Sylvester said he had been born about May 19, 1845. That page was dated 1912 and Sylvester was still not signing his name, so he probably never did learn to read or write and truly did not know how old he was.

It likely didn't help with record keeping that Sylvester had a Native American heritage. His mother was a Native American woman named Angelique Barrette and she was the great-granddaughter of Dakota Chief Wa-pa-shaw (Wabashaw). Sylvester and his brother, Joseph, were recorded as receiving an affidavit for land in 1856 as part of the 1837 treaty with the Dakota. The 1898 Indian census noted Sylvester was a member of the Medawakanton Sioux. Very few records make the connection to a Native heritage and it would appear Sylvester "passed" for white. The only census that noted his race as other than "white" was the 1898 census for Native Americans.

Family life for Sylvester was not all rosy. He married Mary Cherrier in St. Paul in 1868. They had seven children before she divorced him and remarried. Sylvester left no record of him ever remarrying.

The disabilities listed on the pension application for Sylvester included "asthma, short-windedness, a running sore on his left leg, obesity and heart trouble," so the pension was granted.

By 1912, Sylvester was living in the Old Soldier's Home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His rate of pension \$15.50 a month. The records indicated he would have seen increases to \$22.50 in May of 1920 had he lived that long.

Sylvester died on October 31, 1913, at the Old Soldiers Home and was buried in the Wood National Cemetery next to the Home. His final records indicated he was a widower.

Sylvester was the last of three men from the Battery who lived their last days at the Milwaukee Old Soldier's Home. David Twiggs lived there until 1893 and Adam Eppinberger until 1887. Sylvester and David enlisted and were mustered in together, Adam had enlisted a few months before them.



Old Soldiers Home, Milwaukee, WI



# “DON’T FORGET YOUR SOLDIER LOVERS!” A STORY OF CIVIL WAR VALENTINES

By Angela Esco Elder, *From the Journal of the Civil War Era*

Is materialism ripping out the heart of Valentine’s Day?

Every February, thousands of Americans lament the commercialism of this holiday with critical articles and tweets about modern consumerism. Some blame the pressures of social media on the rise in spending. And it is definitely rising; the National Retail Federation estimates that more than \$20 billion were spent on 2019’s Valentine celebrations.

The creativity of advertisers is not to be undersold, of course, as enterprising executives have discovered how to widen the consumer market to include those who are currently unattached. “*After the chocolates have been eaten and the flowers wilt, roaches remain thriving and triumphant. Give the gift that’s eternal and name a roach for Valentine’s Day.*” That’s right, for fifteen dollars, you can name a roach after your ex and send them a digital certificate from the Bronx Zoo.

Valentine’s Day advertisement in *The New York Herald*, January 27, 1863.

enough to suit the tastes of all.” Immediately beneath this bulletin was a notice to the recently wounded and those in mourning: “Disabled soldiers applying for pensions, and the widow or heirs of soldiers who have been killed, or died in service, should call” began the section, followed by another notice related to “troops moving.” This newspaper column, flowing from one topic to the next, provides powerful insight into the daily experiences of the homefront. Yes, the war was about troop movements. Yes, the war included wounds, death, and pensions. But even as wives worried ceaselessly about the loss of husbands, scanning the papers for news, they also read advertisements and planned for their Valentine’s celebrations. Life did not stop in the midst of war. Neither did holidays. And advertisers knew it.

Some may be surprised to learn that St. Valentine’s Day, and all its commercialism, was alive and well during the bloodiest war of our nation’s past. Much like today, nineteenth-century advertisers and newspapers relentlessly warned their patrons that the holiday loomed. On February 11, 1864, the *Holmes County Farmer* newspaper in Ohio read, “We are reminded that Valentine Day is approaching. Tuesday next, the 14th inst., is set aside as the carnival of lovers. It is said the birds choose their mates on that day, and, it being leap year, it is expected all the marriageable girls will select their mates.”

During the war, companies ran a number of Valentine ads that targeted women with loved ones off at battle. “Don’t forget your soldier lovers. Keep their courage up with a rousing Valentine. All prices. Six cents to five dollars each,” advertised Strong’s Valentine Depot in 1862. In 1863, New York City’s American Valentine Company promoted “soldiers’ valentine packets,” “army valentine packets,” and “torch of love packets.” In Washington D.C., Shillington’s likewise advertised packets specifically for soldiers, which “contains two superb sentimental valentines and elegant embossed envelopes; also comic valentines and beautiful valentine cards in fancy envelopes.

In some cases, this collision of holiday and war was quite jarring. For example, in February 1862, Indiana’s *Evansville Daily Journal* described Main Street bookstores filled with card displays “large and varied

Valentine’s Day advertisement in *The Evansville Daily Journal*, Feb. 11, 1862.

Soldiers at war also remembered Valentine's Day. Though they appear less likely to purchase formal Valentine's stationery, original poetry and letters of love came home in abundance. One particularly special valentine came from Confederate soldier Robert H. King, who created a paper heart with a pen knife for his wife, Louiza. When opened, the seemingly random holes in the paper reveal two people separated from one another, crying.

On November 8, 1861, Robert had written to his wife, "it panes my hart to think of leaven you all" and signed his letter as many soldiers did, with "yours til death." Ultimately, this would be true, and all Louiza would be left with was this paper heart. Robert died of typhoid fever near Petersburg, Virginia, in April 1863. She kept this valentine until her own death decades later, perhaps believing there is more heart in handmade.



Robert H. King's valentine for Louiza. Courtesy of the Library of Virginia.

To return to our original question, are our contemporaries correct in their claim that materialism is ripping out the heart of Valentine's Day? Perhaps not. At least in the nineteenth century, materialism was part of the holiday all along. When Sarah Woif married Sylvanus Emswiler of Shenandoah County on Valentine's Day 1861, she likely was not thinking about advertisers, but rather, the love associated with the holiday. She certainly was not thinking about the fact that she, too, would become a widow in 1863 when Sylvanus died of pneumonia, fighting with the Second Virginia Infantry.

Love, loss, celebration, heartache – they all swirled together in the Civil War. And the newspapers certainly reflected it.

**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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Left: Valentine from the collection of the Kansas Museum of History, mailed during the Civil War by Joseph Forrest to his sweetheart in Kansas.

The poem at the bottom reads:

*Fondly I gaze in  
Thy sweet face,  
And clasp thy little  
Hand in mine,  
Love swiftly speeds  
Us to the place  
Where I shall claim  
My Valentine.*