

Battery Profile

William H. Wilber

William was an older than average soldier when he enlisted in the Second Battery on September 2, 1864. He was a 41 year old farmer from Carmonia in Fillmore County, Minnesota. He went to Rochester to be mustered in and was taken by lumber wagon with other recruits to Fort Snelling. William had blue eyes, dark hair, a sandy complexion, and stood 5' 10" tall. For his agreement to serve one year in the army, he earned a bounty of \$100, a third of which he was paid immediately. His name was credited to Winona County for the draft quota, and William signed his agreement to that change of credit.

William was well known in Carmonia. One witness said before he went into the army, William was "in the very prime of life and was uncommonly strong, powerful, athletic man; one of the most active and supple in the town of Carmonina." He was also married, his wife, Sarah A. Palmer, having come with William from his birthplace in New York State. They had been married on Christmas Day, 1844, in Auburn, New York.

The last year of the war was wet and cold according to many of the soldiers in the Second Battery. William was one of those who complained about the inadequate shelter they often had against the elements. William said he took "a severe cold by being exposed unnecessarily by order of his captain which cold resulted in a few days a severe fever which cased him great pain, he was so sick at that time with the fever" it was thought he would not recover at all. William was then sent to the hospital at Nashville by order of Captain Hotchkiss on the 15th of July, 1865. William never went back to the Battery for any kind of duty. He returned to Minnesota and was mustered out with the Battery on August 16, 1865.

A witness in Carmonia said when William came home from the war, his health was broken and he had "much trouble" with his legs and feet. It at times prevented him from doing any kind of work as he could not be on his feet for long periods of time.

The 1880 census provided information that William and Sarah had moved to Kansas and were living in Smith County. William was farming and they had one daughter, age 17, living with them at the time. In 1894, William applied for a pension. He said heart disease, sciatic rheumatism, varicose veins, and deafness in both ears were not allowing him to earn a living any longer. The pension was granted.

William was indeed suffering with poor health as three years later, a notice appeared in the *Smith County Pioneer* newspaper that he was "in critical condition with heart disease and la grippe. The doctor has little hope for his recovery." The paper was dated April 15, 1897. The paper came out

on the day William died. His funeral was held the next day and he was buried in the Reamsville Cemetery, Martin Township, Smith County, Kansas. He rests with a military stone marking his grave.

When Sarah applied for a widow's pension, she had to provide the Pension Department with documentation of her possessions. The county gave her a statement of values for her land and detailed what William had left her. She had 160 acres of land with a value of \$570. The horses had a value of \$40, cattle were worth \$15, \$10 for farm implements, a wagon worth \$5, and personal property valued at \$65.

What the county clerk did not note was what Sarah had to prove. The farm had a \$900 mortgage against it with interest due from 1896. She owed doctor and funeral bills of \$60, \$10 in taxes, and some other small bills totaling \$15. She also had a chattel mortgage of \$42 against the horses. Farming in Kansas must not have been very profitable for William and Sarah.



Some Quick Facts about the Battle of Perryville, Kentucky

October 8, 1862

Like many Civil War battles, this battle has more than one name, Perryville or Chaplin Hill. It takes its names from the nearby town of Perryville or from the stream that flows through the town, Chaplin River.

The Town

The history of this small town starts with a fort built on the banks of the Chaplin River. It was known as Harbeson's Station, settled during the final stages of the American Revolution. The fort was founded by James Harbeson and a group of settlers from Virginia. They strategically placed the fort near a cave and spring. When troubles with local Indians arose, they fled across the water and into the cave to seek shelter from attack. The cave, which can still be viewed today, formed the settlers' first line of defense.

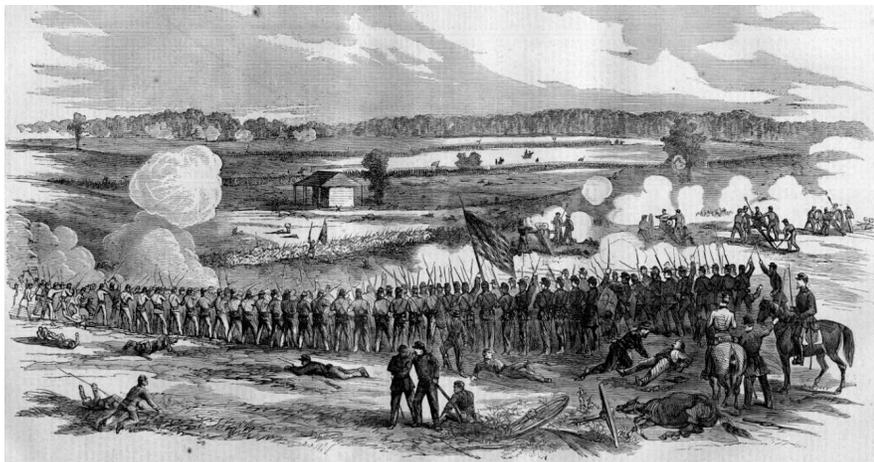
Shortly after the War of 1812, two men named Edward Bullock and William Hall organized plans to build a village along the river near the original fort. Bullock and Hall named the village Perryville in honor of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, hero of the Battle of Lake Erie. In the late 1830s, a line of buildings next to the Chaplin River formed the basis of the village of Perryville. Now called "Merchants' Row," these buildings still stand and house small shops and offices.

The early nineteenth century brought an interest in classical education for the small town. Many institutions of higher learning, mostly all-women's colleges, were established, including the Ewing Institute, the Elmwood Academy, and Harmonia College. One of Harmonia College's graduates achieved national prominence—she was Carrie Nation, the national temperance leader, who boarded at the Karrick-Parks house while living in Perryville. As Nation "cleaned out" a number of local spots, it is believed that Perryville became the first location in the United States to exercise Local Option laws. A "local option" is the ability of local political jurisdictions, typically counties or municipalities, to allow decisions on certain controversial issues based on popular vote within their borders. In practice, local option usually relates to the issue of alcoholic beverage sales.

In October 1862, the fields west of town were where Union and Confederate forces clashed. The Perryville Battlefield is preserved as a state park. In 1961, Perryville and the surrounding area was made part of a National Historic Landmark area. In 1973, the entire town of Perryville, because of the contribution the village has made toward American history, was put on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2012, the population of Perryville was 751.

The Battle

Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg's autumn 1862 invasion of Kentucky had reached the outskirts of Louisville and Cincinnati, but he was forced to retreat and regroup. On October 7, the Federal army of Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell, numbering nearly 55,000, converged on the small crossroads town of Perryville, Kentucky, in three columns. Union forces first skirmished with Rebel cavalry on the Springfield Pike before the fighting became more general, on Peters Hill, as the Confederate infantry arrived. The next day, at dawn, fighting began again around Peters Hill as a Union division advanced up the pike, halting just before the Confederate line. The fighting then stopped for a time. After noon, a



Confederate division struck the Union left flank and forced it to fall back. When more Confederate divisions joined the fray, the Union line made a stubborn stand, counterattacked, but finally fell back with some troops routed. Buell did not know of the happenings on the field, or he would certainly have sent forward reserves. Even so, the Union troops on the left flank, reinforced by two brigades, stabilized their line, and the Rebel attack sputtered to a halt. Later, a Rebel brigade assaulted the Union division on the Springfield Pike, but was repulsed and fell back into Perryville. The Yankees pursued, and skirmishing occurred in the streets in the evening before dark. Union reinforcements were threatening the Rebel left flank by now. Bragg, short of men and supplies, withdrew during the night, and, after pausing at Harrodsburg, continued the Confederate retreat by way of Cumberland Gap into East Tennessee. The Confederate offensive was over, and the Union controlled Kentucky.

The battle at Perryville was considered a Union strategic victory. There were 7,407 casualties of which 4,211 were Union soldiers.

(This description is from the CWSAC Battle Summaries)

Recap

August 20 Kandiyohi Historical Society, Willmar



This was a super well attended event with more than 400 people attending in the six hours we set up at the County Fairgrounds! The ground was wet and the clouds thick when we were setting up, but by noon, the sun was out and so were the crowds. Our stations included the cannon, shells and artifacts, apothecary, toys and quilts. Members were all kept busy as people were very engaged and interested in the history. Miss Mandy got a two page spread in the Spicer-New London newspaper about her apothecary and leech tin! The Willmar paper also had a nice article with photos about the highly successful event.



August 27 Last Man Ceremony, Brainerd, MN

This was a very last minute notification, but three members of the Battery attended the Last Man Ceremony for Second Minnesota Battery member, Elias Fenstermacher. This ceremony was done by



the Sons of Union Veterans who placed a special Last Man marker on the grave. They are searching for the last Civil War soldier in every county and our own Elias was the last man in Crow Wing County. The ceremony was very dignified and hosted 12 of Elias' descendants ranging in age from 5 to 95! The Brainerd newspaper covered the event with photos and brief article.

Aug 27-28 Morristown MN– Ahlman's Annual Shooters Roundup.

Despite some extenuating circumstances that left us with a diminished gun crew, members of the 2nd Minnesota Battery were able to conduct cannon firing demonstrations at 9:30am, 11:30am, 2:00pm and 4:00pm on both Saturday and Sunday during the 2022 Ahlman's Shooters Roundup. Because spectators have annually voted our firing demonstrations as one of their favorite stops during the event, Mike Ahlman asked us to provide an additional firing demonstration at 1:00pm on Saturday. Although the 9:30am firing was only a half hour after the gates opened, we managed to have people in the grandstands at every firing, Saturday evening we were invited to the pork tenderloin dinner at the Lucky Lady Dance Hall. Prior to the food being served there was a moment of silence in honor of Larry Ahlman, who passed away September 19, 2021. Under Larry's leadership Ahlman's Gun Shop grew from a one man business to a business with 46 employees. His

idea to conduct an annual shooter's roundup produced what has become the largest two day gun show in Minnesota. Despite the steady rain that began Saturday evening and continued into Sunday morning, our camp inside Fort Ahlman stayed relatively dry and we only packed damp canvas for the trip home. A huge thank you to the following members that participated in this paid event: Teresa Bergdale, Vince Bergdale, John Cain, Daryl Duden, Bart Hoekstra, Jim Morgan (Sat), Michael Ritchie and Ron Wendel (Sun).

Respectfully submitted,
SGT Duden



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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