



2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

“ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 313

November 2023

On This Date-160 Years Ago **November/December 1863**

The Second Battery was in camp near Rossville, Georgia, in December of 1863 and there they would remain until March. Now that the Confederates had been driven back and the Union Army was no longer bottled up in Chattanooga, life was getting easier. Sergeant Munsey had gone to Nashville to bring back new uniforms for the men in November and his return was greeted with relief.

Francis Flint wrote home that “Until yesterday, I have had but one shirt and that had no sleeves to it. When I wanted to wash I had to wait for it to dry before I had one to put on, but yesterday I was fortunate enough to get a couple so I’m all O.K. now.” He also wrote about a detail of men who had been sent out on a march toward Knoxville. Flint said they had a “pretty hard time of it as some of them were barefoot.” Munsey arrived at the Battery’s camp on the 16th and it was the 20th when Flint got his shirts.

The men of the Battery were faring better, but the morning reports indicate the horses were not. The report lists one horse dying in camp on each the 9th, 22nd, 24th, 26th, and the 27th. On the 19th, 38 horses that were “absent” were turned in to Captain S.S. Alshire, but three of them were dead.

Most of the remaining activity in the morning reports detail men returning from the hospital, detached service, or special details. Some book keeping matters were taken care of and noted in the reports as well as action on their contraband teamsters. One “contraband” left and the quartermaster decided another was not entitled to rations, so he was dropped from the role.

Upcoming Events

November 11, Winona, MN Veterans Day

This annual recognition in a beautiful park on the lake shore has includes a salute from our gun at the conclusion of the ceremonies. We will once again provide a gun crew for the day. Those attending should arrive at the park by 10:00 to unload the gun and be ready for the program that starts at 11:11 am.

The event goes on rain or shine and is a honor to participate in. If you have not attended this event before, it is both an honor and an incredible experience to hear the gun volleys echo off the river valley’s bluffs.



Planning Ahead

Please be on the watch for potential events the Battery might consider attending in 2024. A number of the traditional events the Battery has attend in the past have ended, so our event list is shrinking. Gather as much information as possible to present at the January meeting for consideration.

Next Meeting

There are no meetings in November or December due to the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Enjoy these special days! January’s meeting will be announced once we get a little closer.



Battery Profile

George Hitchcock

George appeared to be a man who had a hard time staying in any one place. By the time he was 23 years old, he had lived in three different states. He had been born in Perry, Wyoming County, New York, then moved to Illinois. By 1860, he was living in Minnesota on a farm in Elmira Township, Olmsted County. He was working as a farm hand. While he didn't own any land, he did have a personal estate valued at \$200.

It was early in the Second Battery's formation that George decided to enlist. He joined the Battery on February 20, 1862. He was 5' 8" tall, had gray eyes, sandy hair and a sandy complexion. He was single.

George enlisted to serve three years and when the time came to reenlist, George said no. When the men who did reenlist went home on veteran's furlough, George and about 22 other men from the Battery were detailed to serve with Battery I of the Second Illinois Artillery. This placed George in the battles for Atlanta and he saw some heavy fighting with his adoptive unit. After serving with the Illinois Battery, George was sent back to the Second Minnesota Battery on the 9th of November, 1864. The Battery was on guard duty near Chattanooga, Tennessee, at the time. When George's three years were up in March of 1865, he was discharged honorably at Chattanooga. He went home to Minnesota and went back to farming.

On March 30, 1869, George married Edna Eliza Gould in Fillmore County, Minnesota. The two did not remain in Minnesota. They moved first to South Dakota. In 1890, their home was in Sherwood, Franklin County, Tennessee. By 1912 when George applied for a pension, they were living in Seattle, Washington.

What prompted the moves is unknown. Seattle, though would finally be the place George would stay. He died at the Washington Veterans Home in Retsil on February 11, 1919. He was laid to rest in the Greenwood Memorial Park in Renton, Washington. The marker over his grave was a poured concrete square with his name stamped in the wet cement. It was meant only as a temporary marker until a permanent marker was installed. This permanent marker was never ordered or installed.

Through the years, the temporary marker sunk, grass encroached over it and there was no sign of the maker when Battery members tried to find it. After searching with map provided



by the cemetery office, no marker was found. Then a helpful maintenance man appeared with a long piece of rebar and he began stabbing it into the grass. It only took a few pokes before he found the marker. He used a shovel to dig it out, put dirt in to raise it up and reset it.

The temporary concrete square marking George's grave is now weathered and broken, cemetery rules prevent anyone but family from placing items on a grave. Our reenacting Battery members cannot place a veteran's stone for George. Notations were made in the Cemetery records that George is a veteran so he will receive a flag each Memorial Day.



Another Letter from the Battery

Richard Bloomfield wrote letters regularly to the St. Cloud newspaper. The following article appeared with his report about life in the Battery in December of 1863.

FROM THE ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND
Chattanooga, Tennessee, December 15th, 1863

Editor DEMOCRAT:

Since my last noisy clangor of battle has subsided and the town has assumed a quiet matter of fact aspect very unlike the din and preparation which proceeded the brilliant operations that resulted in the defeat of the rebel army and their retreat to a point a short distance from this side of the Atlantic Ocean; adding much to the discomfiture of the whole conthievocracy, and causing the editorial ears of the capital to set up a prolonged howl – a preliminary death knell – which reverberates throughout the Confederacy starting all the minor, insignificant curs to snapping, snarling, barking and howling. The famous dog, Bragg, is no longer to be pitted against Holdfast, thus verifying the old adage.

Although the enemy is back from our immediate front, yet the never ceasing work of strengthening our fortifications steadily continues. Fatigue parties are at work daily and guns of heavy caliber are being mounted upon the works. The pioneers are engaged in cutting a fine, military road around the slope of Lookout Mountain and repairing the railroad which runs around the base of the slope. By the first of the year it is hoped we will have direct communication by railroad with Bridgeport, the completion of the bridge at Running Water, a stream emptying into the Tennessee fourteen miles from here, being now the chief obstacle; the large bridge over the Tennessee at Bridgeport being already finished. Then, we will not be obliged to depend upon three small steamboats, wagon trains, and the four pontoon bridges which have to be crossed in going to and fro.

Happening to go to the Ordnance Office a few days ago, I was astonished to see such large quantities of the spoils of war. Guns of every pattern, accoutrements of all kinds, swords and pistols were there in heaps, and piled up in order.

In the open space directly in front of General Brannan's Chief of Artillery, are parked fifty-two cannon, captured from the enemy in the recent battles. All but two of three have limbers and caissons complete. There were six pounders, howitzers, Napoleons, twelve pounders, ten pounder Parrott's and two large siege pieces, thirty-two pounders, which were captured at Chickamauga Station, the carriages having been burnt by the rebels in their hasty retreat. A few of the Parrotts and Napoleons were guns captured from us at Chickamauga. Many were of rebel manufacture and were stamped, "Macon Arsenal, GA," "Memphis," and "New Orleans," a few were recognized as guns stolen at the breaking out of the rebellion. Two guns were marked "Lady Buckner" and "Lady Breckinridge," and were captured by Hazen's gallant brigade, in their grand charge on the left center of the enemy. Most of their guns bore the marks of having been used, their muzzles being blackened and showing that blue whitish appearance apparent after vigorous firing and the use of the swab.

The impression gains ground that this army, now composed of portions of the right, left and center of the grand army of the United States, will suspend operations for this winter. In the few months of inactivity before us our communications will be strengthened, and supplies accumulated in such quantities that when the favorable season for military operations arrives we can advance on the enemy with this strongly fortified place as a base; and let the long, uncertain line of railroad which is our life now, take care of itself. To say that the rebellion is now showing signs of "grogginess" and that next spring and summer will wind it up, is but to express the opinion of many who look at the situation intelligently. General Grant by successful combinations and maneuvers has secured East Tennessee forever, raised the siege of Chattanooga and compelled Bragg to fall back to back with Lee. These results would have been still more fruitful to the national cause had we a sufficiency of rations, animals, transportation and material to follow up the advantage gained. Pursuit was impossible; hence, Longstreet marches his discomfited troops by, to him, an unexpected route to Virginia, and Hardee gathers the fragments left of the Army of the Tennessee, after we had the terrible least at Mission Ridge and Lookout Mountain, near Dalton, Georgia, his cavalry pickets, extending to within five miles of LaFayette. We form our line of battle from Cumberland Gap to

Continued on back page

Knoxville, then to Chattanooga, via Cleveland and on to Bridgeport extending it along the Memphis and Charleston Railroad to Corinth, Mississippi. General Foster will occupy the left, covering Knoxville. The old Army of the Cumberland will hold from Foster's right down along the railroad to Chattanooga and also this place. General Hooker with his valiant Eastern boys will attend to the railroad between here and Bridgeport, and Sherman will no doubt continue in the work he commenced of opening up the M & C Railroad from Corinth.

The 2d and 4th Minnesota and 2d Minnesota Battery are now in this department (of the Cumberland). The 2d Minnesota Regiment is here in town. The 4th Regiment and two guns, a section of the 2d Battery went to General Sherman's command to the relief of Knoxville and have not yet returned. The remaining portion of the Battery, four guns is at the old camp four miles up the Tennessee River. They have a fine encampment and warm, snug, roomy, log houses affording good winter quarters. The vacancy in the command caused by the death of 1st Lieutenant Albert Woodbury has been filled by regular promotion. C N Earle of Anoka, being promoted to 2d Lieutenant, vice Harder, promoted, and L A Ayer, of St Cloud is promoted Orderly Sergeant, viz Charles Nvice Earle, promoted. Lieutenant Alex Kinkead is at the Officers Hospital, Nashville. His health continues bad and it is thought he will not be able to take the field again; but, rather than embarrass the command will be assigned to the Invalid Corps. Will Kinkead is at Annapolis and not in very good health. The health of the battery boys is good, a proof of our friend Gowdy's skillfulness as a doctor. Just now, many artillery commands, which have become inefficient by reason of exigencies of the service are being sent to Nashville to recruit in horses and material, and rumor has it the 2d Battery will be ordered there before spring for a new outfit of horses, harness, etc.

We have the usual varieties of southern weather. An Indian summer day proceeded by a foggy, misty one, and followed by a sharp, cold day, with raw chilling winds from the east, causing a continuous, drenching rain on the morrow.

The Tennessee is booming high, yet with the aid of a very fine pontoon and a swing ferry that works charmingly, we have no difficulty in going to and fro.

We have a daily mail. Get New York papers in six days. Cincinnati and Louisville in three and four days and Nashville papers in two days. The DEMOCRAT of November 26th came to us as fresh and welcome as an old friend in a new and tasty dress. The paper enlarged, and with its new heading is a decided improvement.

DIXIE (Richard D Bloomfield)

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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A throwback photo from the event with Battery G in Chaplin Creek, Illinois, 2010.