



## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 318

May 2024

### On This Date-160 Years Ago

The men of the Battery who had reenlisted at the end of their term of service in March received veteran’s furlough. It did not begin until they were back at Fort Snelling, so it was May before they were to report back to Fort Snelling and return South. The following article about the send off the boys were given appeared in the *St. Cloud Democrat* newspaper on 12 May 1864.

**FAREWELL PARTY:—**A large and very pleasant party was held at Broker’s Hall, on Friday evening last, in obedience to “Military Order No. 600.” It was intended as a farewell party to Col. Thomas and staff, and to the members of the Second Battery who were in town and about to leave in a few days. All united in having a good time, and there were none but seemed to enjoy the occasion fully. The health of those in whose honor the party was given, was proposed in a toast by A. B. Curry, Esq., and responded to appropriately by Col. Thomas, who expressed the thanks of himself and staff for the many kind attentions they had received during their stay in St. Cloud. The company did not disperse until after two o’clock. There are few of those who were present but will be glad to call up recollections of that evening, passed so pleasantly, and with some whom it may perhaps be their fortune, through the uncertainties of war, never to meet again.

### Upcoming Events

**May 9 Old Court House Museum, 315 West Madison Street, Durand, WI.**

**Arrive by 7:30** to set up five learning stations and rotate students through them, about 18-20 in each group. Following the school groups, we will remain at our stations for members of the Historical Society and the public to visit. **Bring a bag lunch.**

**May 16 Avail Academy School, Edina**

4015 Inglewood Ave S, Edina, MN  
This is the school we knew as Calvin Christian School. **Arrive at 8:45** to set up, students arrive at 9:50. We will set up 5 stations and rotate 6th grade students through. **Bring a bag lunch.**

**May 27 Memorial Day, Red Wing, MN**

**Arrive at Bay Point Park by 7:30** to set up. There will be a reading by one of our Battery members for the Memorial Day service and honor volleys from our gun.

### Tweaks to the Calendar

Discussion at the April meeting took up one of the remaining questions on the 2024 Calendar, that of choosing to attend the event at Pilot Knob, Missouri, or to go to the event in Canton, South Dakota. After discussion, a show of hands indicated support for the event in Canton, South Dakota. This event is being run by the same people who used to organize the event in Pipestone. This event requires units to register in advance. Daryl will submit our unit registration. Please remove the Pilot Knob event from the official schedule. Members are welcome to attend on their own.

### Next Meeting

**June 1, Elks Club, 306 W 4th Street, Red Wing**

Contact Ken Cunningham with questions or agenda items. 651-388-2945.



# **Battery Profiles**

## **Henry C. Sykes**

Henry was born on June 16, 1826, in Holland County, Connecticut, and grew up on the east coast. On August 10, 1858, he married Eleanor Shepard at Bretterton, New York. The couple moved west almost immediately as they were living in Ripley Township, Dodge County, Minnesota, on August 15, 1859, when their first child was born. It was a boy and they named him after his father. It is believed little Henry died as a child as he no longer appears on the census with his family by 1870. Another son was born in 1860 and they had a girl in 1863.

This was the family Henry left when he decided to join the army on September 4, 1864. Henry was a one year man, enlisting during the draft rendezvous held late that summer in Minnesota. He was given a \$100 bounty, one third at enlistment and the other two thirds due at the completion of his time. Henry was a little older than many recruits, being 37 2/12 according to what he wrote on his enlistment papers. Those same papers showed him to have blue eyes, light hair and a light complexion. He was tall compared to many men in the Battery, standing 6' 1-1/4". Henry gave his occupation as that of farmer.

The time Henry spent in the army was unremarkable, the Battery doing mostly garrison duty during the last year of the war. Henry came home with the Battery and was mustered out in August of 1865. It was noted in his records that he chose to keep his knapsack, haversack, and canteen when he left the army and that he was owed \$5.40 in travel money to transport him from St. Paul to Owatonna.

Henry went back to his family in Dodge County and in 1868, he and Eleanor had another son. By the time the 1880 census was taken, the family was living in the Village of Dodge Center and Henry was no longer farming. Both he and their son, Frank were working in a meat market.

An application for disability pension Henry filed in 1888 was denied by the Pension Department for lack of sufficient evidence of Henry's army related claim. Henry said he had contracted typhoid fever at Chattanooga, Tennessee, during the winter he spent there with the Second Minnesota Battery. Three years later, the decision was reversed and Henry received back pay from the Pension Department to date from July of 1890. Proof of disability was no longer required, age was considered enough. Henry got \$10 a month until 1904 when it was raised to \$12 a month. By this time, Henry, Eleanor and at least some of the children were living in Rugby, North Dakota.

A puzzling fact arises in the spelling of Henry's last name. On his enlistment papers, Henry himself signed his name and spelled it "Sykes." When he applied for his pension, the spelling had changed to "Sikes" and he was making his mark rather than signing. Records where Eleanor signed or the children's names were recorded spell the name "Sikes."

Henry died on October 26, 1905, in Rugby. No record can be found to determine where Henry's final resting place may be. Records for the probating of their son George's estate were filed in Rugby, noting that the death had taken place in Chicago. At that time, Eleanor was living in Chicago with her son. No records have been found to provide further information on where any of the family was buried.

# **Gun Manufacturing**

From the Wikipedia site on 3 Inch Ordnance Rifles, verified with sources

The 3-inch ordnance rifle, model 1861 was a wrought iron muzzleloading rifled cannon that was adopted by the United States Army in 1861 and widely used in field artillery units during the American Civil War. It fired a 9.5 lb (4.3 kg) projectile to a distance of 1,830 yd (1,670 m) at an elevation of 5°. The 3-inch rifle was not as effective in firing canister shot as the heavier 12-pounder Napoleon, but it proved to be highly accurate at longer ranges when firing common shell or spherical case shot. There was only one reported case of a 3-inch ordnance rifle bursting in action. This was in stark contrast to the similarly-sized cast iron 10-pounder Parrott rifles which occasionally burst without warning, inflicting injury on the gun crews.

## **The Griffen gun**

By 1835, so many 6-pounder cast iron cannons had burst during proofing tests that the United States Ordnance Department decided to abandon cast iron and produce field artillery from bronze. The successful M1841 6-pounder field gun was the result of this decision. Gun founders had tried to produce cannons from wrought iron, but the material had not fulfilled its promise. In 1844, the 12-inch wrought iron "Peacemaker" cannon burst during a demonstration aboard the *USS Princeton*, killing the Secretaries of State and the Navy and others. The accident was caused by bad forging and burned metal.

In 1854, Safe Harbor Iron Works of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania produced high-quality iron rods used in lighthouse construction. The company's superintendent John Griffen proposed manufacturing a cannon by welding together a bundle of wrought iron rods and then drilling out the bore. Later, the process was refined by winding a bar spirally around the bundle. Two additional bars were wound around the bundle and then the mass was subjected to welding heat. Finally, trunnions were added and a bore was drilled out. Samuel J. Reeves, president of Safe Harbor's parent company Phoenix Iron Works, approved of Griffen's method and a cannon was manufactured in late 1854.

The approximately 700 lb (318 kg) Griffen gun was sent to Fort Monroe for trial but it was not immediately tested. Meanwhile, Griffen was issued a patent for the gun on 25 December 1855. Captain Alexander Brydie Dyer undertook proofing tests of the gun in 1856 with Griffen as a witness. The gun passed the proofing tests and when Dyer asked if he wanted to continue, Griffen challenged him to burst the gun. The Griffen gun was subsequently fired 500 times with no apparent damage. Then the gun was fired nine more times with increasing numbers of shot and heavier gunpowder charges. The gun finally burst on the tenth shot when the bore was filled to the muzzle with 13 shot and 7 lb (3 kg) of gunpowder. After Dyer's highly favorable report, four more Griffen guns were manufactured and sent to be tested.

## **The Reeves process**

The U.S. Ordnance Department requested four wrought iron guns of 3.5 in (89 mm) caliber on 21 February 1861. The government only bought two of these guns, paying \$370 apiece, but neither gun are known to have survived. Phoenix Iron Company also produced a few 6-pounders of 3.67 in (93 mm) caliber of which seven survivors are dated 1861 and have "PATENTED DEC. 25, 1855" stamped on one trunnion. On 24 July 1861, General James Wolfe Ripley of the U.S. Army ordered 300 wrought iron rifled cannons from Phoenix Iron Works. The U.S. Ordnance Department designed a gun that eliminated all decorations so that the gun barrel consisted of a "blended sweeping curve". The cost was between \$330[3] and \$350 per gun.

Reeves soon discovered that using Griffen's original technique produced only one good gun out of three attempts. A modification to Griffen's process still resulted in 40% of the gun barrels being unusable. A frustrated Reeves then invented an entirely new method of production. He started with a hollow tube or solid bar of wrought iron and wrapped it with sheets of iron until the pile was the diameter of the gun's bore. [5] Sheets of iron were wrapped around the pile and forged and welded to the pile. The finished gun block was then bored out, removing almost all of the original pile. Reeves filed for a patent for his new method and convinced the examiners that it was different from a process described in an earlier patent granted to David T. Yeakel. His process received a patent on 9 December 1862.

Phoenix Iron Works produced 1,100 wrought iron 3-inch ordnance rifles during the war. Singer, Nimick and Company manufactured 6 rifles with a profile identical to the ordnance rifle, but they were made of steel and much more expensive. Three are known to have survived. One surviving 3-inch wrought iron Wiard rifle exists, but it has an unusual band across the trunnions. The Confederate States manufactured an estimated 84 cast iron 3-inch rifles, at least 61 of them at the Tredegar Iron Works; several appear to be imitations of the U.S. Ordnance Department design. However, the Tredegar guns were manufactured with cast iron and earned a bad reputation for bursting in action.



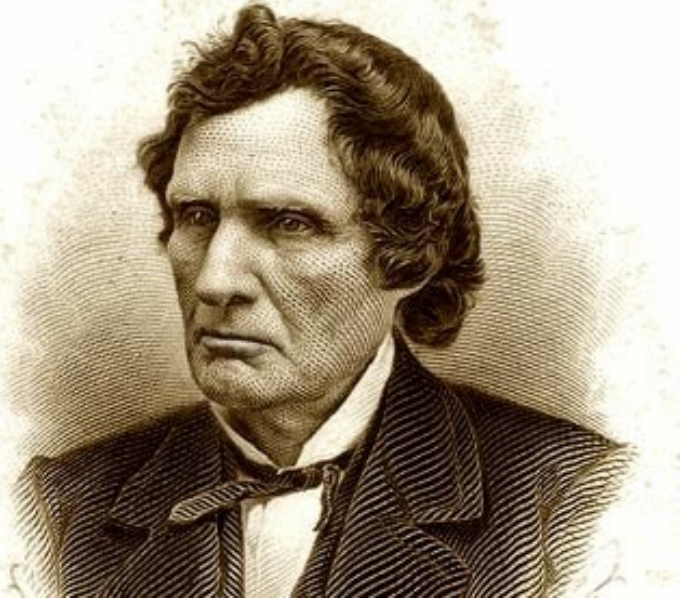
# Gettysburg Thaddeus Stevens Museum opens

April 1, 2024 by Gettysburg Connection News Team (Article submitted by Becky Loader)

The first stand alone museum about Thaddeus Stevens held its grand opening at 46 Chambersburg Street in downtown Gettysburg, PA on Thursday, April 4, from 5 to 7 p.m. The date is also the 232nd birthday of Stevens and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Thaddeus Stevens Society.

**Our fathers repudiated  
the whole doctrine  
of the legal superiority  
of families or races,  
and proclaimed  
the equality of men  
before the law.  
Upon that,  
they created a revolution  
and built a republic.**

*Thaddeus Stevens*



Gettysburg Mayor Rita Frealing and other local officials spoke at the event. Tom Jolin, Civil War period musician, provided entertainment at the event.

Stevens was the most powerful congressman during and after the Civil War. He helped to persuade Abraham Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation and was instrumental in the passage of the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery. He is the father of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, the single most important amendment requiring equal treatment under the law and extending the Bill of Rights to the state level.

The 815 square-foot space features the Thaddeus Stevens Society's extensive collection of Stevens artifacts including Stevens letters, period newspapers and stoves made at iron mills owned by Stevens. There are also numerous books and documents available for research on Stevens.

***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:

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

The storefront is across the street from where Stevens's home was located at 51 Chambersburg Street until it was torn down a hundred years ago. Stevens lived in Gettysburg from 1816 to 1842. While there, Stevens became a prominent anti-slavery and pro-education state legislator and owned two iron mills in the area. He then moved to Lancaster, PA in 1842 where he was elected to Congress and was instrumental in the legislative destruction of slavery.

The Thaddeus Stevens Society has over 300 members across the county and six in foreign countries. In 2022 it installed a statue of Stevens in front of the Adams County Courthouse on Baltimore Street in Gettysburg.

\*Watch the movie *Lincoln* with Daniel Day Lewis and Tommy Lee Jones for a refresher about Thaddeus Stevens' role in passing the 14th Amendment. It is pretty well done for a movie based on history. Your editor didn't throw anything at the screen when she watched it!