



2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

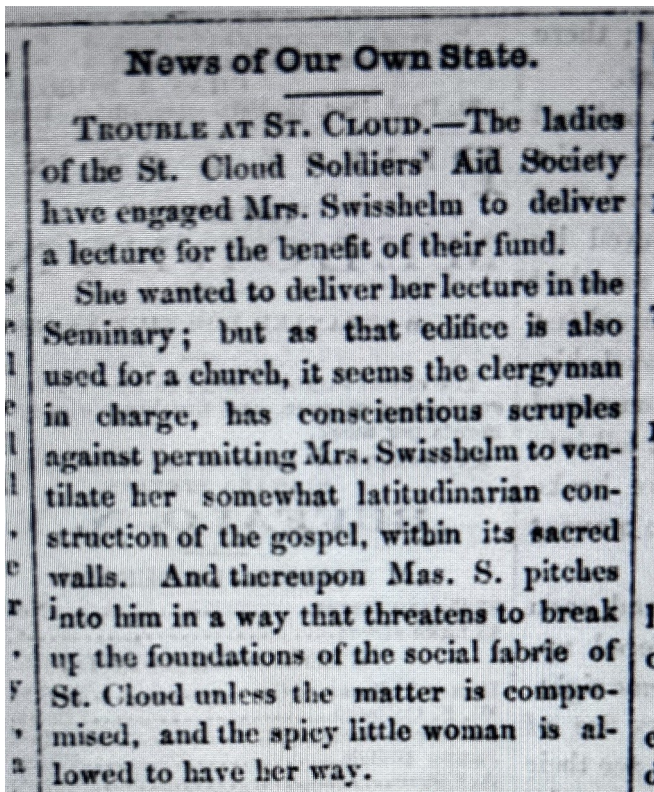
“ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 324

November-December 2024

On This Date-160 Years Ago

This article was copied from the St. Paul Daily Press Collection, undated beyond 1861-1864, Minnesota Historical Society. Other sources indicate it was a “fall” lecture.



If you have not read about Jane Grey Swisshelm, she is a subject worthy of research! She ran her own newspaper in St. Cloud, MN, prior to and during the Civil War. She was a very outspoken journalist and she rankled a lot of people. At one point, her writing prompted angry people to break into her offices, smash her press and throw the type into the Mississippi River!

Upcoming Events

November 11, Veterans Day, Winona, MN

This annual recognition in a beautiful park on the lake shore includes a salute from our gun at the conclusion of the ceremonies. We will once again provide a gun crew for the day. Rain/snow will NOT preclude our participation! If hauling the gun is anticipated to be a hazard, the gun will travel to Winona BEFORE the snow arrives and be stored there until after the event and the roads are clear. Those attending should arrive at the park by 10:30 to unload the gun and be ready for the program that starts at 11:11 am.

Events for 2018

Please begin gathering information on events that we may want to consider for the 2025 reenacting season. A list of these potential events will be compiled and discussed starting in February with a final vote on the 2025 calendar in March.

As of the October meeting there are already 4-5 possible events for next year. It looks like more events may be on our calendar for the coming season!

Next Meeting

or **January—Maybe 25th, 2025??**

The date will be emailed to all members! Once it is confirmed.

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



Battery Profiles

Warren S. Gordon

Warren was a farmer working on his land in Wright County, Minnesota, when the war broke out. He left his wife, Ellen, to enlist on December 21, 1861. He had married Ellen Miller in Monticello, Minnesota on October 6, 1858. Warren was one of the earliest recruits to join the Battery. The descriptive role showed him to be 5' 8-1/2" tall, with hazel eyes, brown hair, and a dark complexion. His birthplace was New Hampshire.

As one of the early recruits, Warren was promoted to corporal, but he was reduced in rank to private again before his three-year term of service was up. It is not known what prompted the reduction in rank.

Warren's time in the service took a toll on his health. Near Corinth, Mississippi, he contracted chronic diarrhea and a disease of the kidneys in June of 1862. He was sent to the field hospital near Farmington, Mississippi, and then up river to Keokuk, Iowa. It was there the kidney disease was diagnosed. Warren improved with the treatments he was given and he returned to the Battery in time to participate in the Battle at Stones River near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. At that battle, Warren was riding a horse when it jumped and threw him forward onto the pommel of the saddle. The injury caused a rupture of his right side.

It wasn't the last attack on his health that Warren suffered. He held the position of #1 man on the gun. His job was that of putting the charge into the muzzle of the cannon and ramming it to the back of the barrel. This placed Warren at the front of the gun, the place where it was most likely to be injured and the guns did just that. Warren lost most of his hearing from the concussion of the gun going off. Warren blamed the battle at Mission Ridge for the loss of his hearing.

The Battery's muster roles show Warren "absent" in September and October of 1864 as he was serving on detached duty with the Second Illinois Battery. Men who chose not to reenlist were assigned to another unit while those who had reenlisted went home for a veteran's furlough. Warren returned to the Minnesota Battery on November 9th and it was noted that he owed 67 cents to the government for "one haversack" though it is not clear why. At the next muster role in January, Warren was charged for 1/2 shelter tent--\$2.30--and the haversack again.

Since Warren had not reenlisted, he was discharged on March 28, 1865, after having served three years and three months.

Returning to his farm in Wright County, Warren settled down with his wife and daughter. Four more children were added to the family for a total of two daughters and three sons.

The health problems from the Army came back to haunt Warren and, in 1888, he applied for an invalid's pension. It was granted and he drew it until his death on May 6, 1898. He was walking in front of his house when he suddenly dropped dead from heart failure. He was 69 years old. He was laid to rest in the Lakeview Cemetery in Maple Lake, just a short distance from the farm where he had lived and worked for over 20 years in Silver Lake Township. His grave marker simply calls him "Father".



Devil or Angel

The following is from an online article excerpted from a book Gate of Hell. Campaign for Charleston Harbour by Stephan R Wise with photos courtesy of the National Archives. Submitted by John Cain

In 1863, the tide of the Civil War was turning in favor of the North with Union victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg. In the South along the Carolina Coast was Morris Island and Fort Sumpter which had been bombarded into rubble for two years with no end towards the capture of Charleston.

Union General Quincy A. Gillmore and his troops on Morris Island could not range the city wharves with the guns he had in the several forts along the island and he resolved to find a location in which he could reach Charleston to force its surrender. On July 18th, General Gillmore Instructed Colonel Serrell to find a suitable location between James and Morris Islands for construction of a battery which ended at a point in the salt marsh. The responsibility of constructing the work fell to a young engineer lieutenant who, upon surveying the location, reported that the work could not be accomplished without finding twenty men eighteen feet tall for work in the marsh. The lieutenant was relieved of duty.

Colonel Serrell took charge of the project and seventeen days later presented the plan to General Gillmore who approved it post haste. The work of gathering materials began immediately by cutting 123 pine timbers 15 to 18 inches in diameter and 45 to 55 feet long then floating them to the site (I would guess in the form of a raft as loggers in Minnesota were already doing). Next was 5,000 feet of 1 inch Board, 9,500 feet of 3 inch plank, 1200 pounds of spikes, nails, and iron for construction plus 450 feet of 3 inch thick rope. A board causeway 2 to 4 feet wide was built over 1700 yards from dry ground on which work teams from the 17th New Hampshire would transport 13,000 sand bags to the site. A round trip would take an hour—plus time to fish soldiers out of the water who had fallen off the board walk! Work began on earnest on August 2nd, 1863.

The battery was designed and built in three parts. First, sheet pilings were laid to form a three sided area on which to build a layered grillage of pine logs. On top of this, 13,000 sandbags were carried in by the 7th Regiment over a few days completing the parapet. Next the platform or gun deck had to be built in the interior so it could “float” on the marsh in equilibrium. Marsh grass was gathered and packed down into a tight mass then covered with canvass. Then sand bags were brought in and dumped deep enough to support a close fitting plank platform. By August 17th, the battery was ready for occupation.

The gun had to be moved in to the battery in two parts. First, the 8000 pound carriage was ferried to the site and assembled on the transom (track) to allow left and right movement. Then a specially constructed boat was brought in to ferry the 200 lbr Parrott barrel with an 8 inch bore weighing 16,300 pounds and, when loaded, brought the freeboard to 5 inches above the water. During transport, water was constantly being pumped out. Upon arrival, the barrel was unloaded, then mounted on the carriage four days later.

On August 21st, Lt. Charles Sellmer's Detachment from Fernandina, Florida, experienced in heavy artillery was assigned to take over General Gillmore's Marsh Battery and the “Swamp Angel,” named by the previous work crew was ready for duty. Captain Nathaniel Edwards took a compass reading on St. Michael's church steeple in downtown Charleston, a first for firing artillery using an azimuth. The range was 7,800 yards or 4.8 miles at an elevation of 35 degrees, using 17 pounds of powder. In addition to solid bolt ammunition, Robert Parrott had created a new shell that used “Greek Fire”, a chemical mixture using a time fuse.

At 1:30 AM, August 22, Lieutenant Sellmer fired the first round into Charleston. Before daylight, the Swamp Angel would send 16 shells into the city, ten of which were Greek Fire. During this time, the gun had slid out of position and the coming day was spent correcting the problem. While work was being done, Confederates were



shelling the position with fair aim, but faulty fuses. There were no casualties, just splashes of mud and water. On the 23rd, The Swamp Angel resumed firing on the city. Some of the Greek Fire reached its destination causing some fires that were hastily put out. Some of the ammunition blew up in the barrel causing parts of the swamp to catch fire. After the sixth round fired that night, Lt. Sellmer found the breech band to be moving on the barrel. Concerned the piece would burst, he ordered his men to move around the end of the parapet once the gun was loaded. Tying two lanyards together, the gun fired 13 more times when, on the 36th round, the gun exploded, blowing off the breech, launching the barrel onto the parapet and up ending the carriage to its front. There were minor injuries to Sellmer and three other crew members.

So ended the “siege” of Charleston. The only success General Gillmore had was starting a few fires and causing very few casualties. It would take General Sherman to solve the problem.

Today the Swamp Angel resides on a stone pedestal in a city park in Trenton, New Jersey, and efforts have been made to restore the monument.

The Marsh Battery, after a century of storms, tides, and hurricanes still exists!!!! Google Earth will take you right to the site and the pile of earth the remains resembles a horse shoe. It does have status as a National Historic Site.

Not to be forgotten, the battery still exists ----- in miniature. It is nearing completion with the marsh being the big challenge while I keep slipping off the boardwalk.



Images of the Swamp Angel as a monument and the satellite view of the Marsh Battery are taken from Google.



Another Viewpoint of the Swamp Angel

From: [The Swamp Angel Terrorizes Charleston – The Civil War Months](#)

From the Southern side, the Swamp Angel was seen as practically immoral. When Beauregard rejected Gillmore’s surrender demand, he protested the firing of “a number of heavy rifled shells into the city, the inhabitants of which, of course, were asleep and unarmed.” Beauregard condemned Gillmore for waging war against innocent civilians: He wrote:

“Among nations not barbarous the usages of war prescribe that when a city is about to be attacked timely notice shall be given by the attacking commander, in order that non-combatants may have an opportunity for withdrawing beyond its limits. Generally the time allowed is from one to three days; that is, time for a withdrawal, in good faith, of at least the women and children. You, sir, give only four hours, knowing that your notice, under existing circumstances, could not reach me in less than two hours, and that not less than the same time would be required for an answer to be conveyed from this city to Battery Wagner. With this knowledge, you threaten to open fire on the city, not to oblige its surrender, but to force me to evacuate these works, which you, assisted by great naval force, have been attacking in vain for more than 40 days.

“It would appear, sir, that, despairing of reducing these works, you now resort to the novel measure of turning your guns against the old men, the women and children, and the hospitals of a sleeping city; an act of inexcusable barbarity from your own confessed point of sight, inasmuch as you allege that the complete demolition of Fort Sumter within a few hours by your guns seems to you a matter of certainty; and your omission to attach your signature to such a grave paper must show the recklessness of the course upon which you have adventured, while the fact that you knowingly fixed a limit for receiving an answer to your demand, which made it almost beyond the possibility of receiving any reply within that time, and that you actually did open fire and threw a number of the most destructive missiles ever used in war into the midst of a city taken unawares, and filled with sleeping women and children, will give you a bad eminence in history—even in the history of this war.”

On the morning of the 23rd, the British consul in Charleston went to Gillmore’s headquarters to officially protest the use of such a harsh weapon on a civilian population. Gillmore refused to meet him. The Spanish consul protested as well, but the bombardment continued as the war entered a new, more brutal phase, with civilians now becoming legitimate targets.

Recap

October 15, 2024 Providence Academy in Plymouth, MN

Although it was not on our 2024 schedule, on Tuesday October 14, Sgt Daryl Duden and 1st Lt John Cain were at Providence Academy in Plymouth MN, providing a lecture with "Show & Tell" for the 5th Graders at this impressive PK-12, 1,000 student, private Catholic academy.

In late September, Daryl Duden received an email from Mrs. McElroy, one of their four 5th grade teachers, inquiring if anyone from the 2nd Minnesota Battery would be able to provide a classroom lecture during the month of October, which is when their 5th Grade students study the Civil War. Daryl Duden responded he would be happy to accept the invitation and a date was determined. We arrived at the school at 10:15am and after a brief inspection of the two swords, two pistols and Springfield rifle we brought with us, we were led to their amazing Lecture Hall.

Lt Cain assisted in setting up the front row table with all the items for the "Show & Tell". Sgt Duden



provided a thumb drive for their laptop so photographs and maps could be displayed on the large screen behind the podium during his lectures. At 11:00am, the four classes of students and their teachers began to arrive. Each class occupied their own row in the amphitheater designed hall. 68 students and 4 teachers attended this learning experience. For the next hour, alternating between lecture and "Show & Tell", a wide range of topics were presented.

Of course, the students got really excited seeing the US Regulation Uniform & Equipment, Marching Rations, Civil War Currency, Confederate Uniforms, Flags and Weapons. But they were equally interested in the lectures which included Events leading up to the War, Lincoln's call for Volunteers, Minnesota's Response, the Theaters of the War, Generals of the North and South, Women's Roles (Nurses, Laundress, Spies, Fighting "Men") and Causes of Death. The experience ended shortly after noon and by 12:30pm we were all packed up and on our way home. An honorarium of \$350 for the 2nd Minnesota Battery was received.

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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