

2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

“ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 188

June & July 2011

On This Date-150 Years Ago

The battle of Philippi, West Virginia, took place on June 3, 1861, and resulted in a Union victory. It was part of a campaign by Maj. Gen. George McClellan, then commander of the Department of Ohio, to protect mostly pro-Union western Virginia and secure railroad bridges.

The Union victory in a relatively bloodless battle propelled the young General McClellan into the national spotlight, and he was soon given command of all Union armies. The battle also inspired more vocal protests in the Western part of Virginia against secession. A few days later in Wheeling, the Wheeling Convention nullified the Virginia ordinance of secession and named Francis H. Pierpont governor.

There were two significant Confederate casualties. Both were treated with battlefield amputations, and are believed to be the first such operations of the war. One of the soldiers was a Virginia Military Institute cadet, Fauntleroy Daingerfield. The other young Confederate was James E. Hanger, an 18-year old college student.

After recovering, Hanger returned to his hometown in Virginia. He made an artificial leg for himself from barrel staves with a hinge at the knee. His design worked so well, the Virginia State Legislature commissioned him to manufacture the “Hanger Limb” for other wounded Civil War veterans. Mr. Hanger patented his prosthetic device and founded what is now the Hanger Orthopedic Group, Inc. The Hanger Orthopedic Group is still a market leader in the manufacture of artificial limbs.

Another “Two-Fur”

Please note the upcoming events column and see that it covers both June and July. This two month issue of *Action Front* is necessary because the Wendels are going west to visit the Hawaiian contingent of the Battery when the next newsletter is due out/ Mrs. Wendel is not going to do a long distance issue! She is quite certain there are better things to do in Hawaii than write the newsletter!! Your regular issue will return in August.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place during the event at Wasioja, June 24-26.



Upcoming Events

June 11 Encampment & Quilting Bee, St. Francis, MN

This is a paid event! More help would be very appreciated!! Arrive in Woodbury Park on Bridge Street by 10:00 to be set up for the public at 11. The soldiers will fire the gun and do gun demos throughout the day. Battery ladies will be holding a quilting bee. Bring a bag lunch or plan to buy food from street vendors. The event closes at 4:00. If we can get a few more soldiers, we can have a color guard in the parade! Call John Cain if you have not confirmed your participation.

June 24- 26 Reenactment, Wasioja, MN

This is planned to be the biggest event in Minnesota during the Sesquicentennial!! We have registered two guns for this event, so let John Cain or Daryl Duden know you are planning to come. We need a good head count for meal planning purposes! Remember, if we don't know you are coming, we can't cook for you!! Check their website:

<http://www.civilwarmn.com/>

You don't want to miss this special event—and it's close to home!!

July 9- 10 Reenactment, Seminole Valley, Cedar Rapids, IA

This is an annual event on some nice ground in a park. For more info, check their website: <http://seminolevalleyfarmmuseum.net/id14.html> If you plan to attend, contact John Cain or Daryl Duden.

July 23-24 Encampment, Birch Coulee Battlefield, Morton, MN

We will be doing demos at this encampment and visiting with the public. More info to come later.

Battery Profile

Lyman Warren Ayer

Two Wisconsin missionaries met while teaching at the Mackinaw Congregational Mission School and soon married. They were Frederick Ayer and Elizabeth Taylor. After their marriage, they continued in the mission field and remained on the frontier. They were at the mission at Pokagoma Lake, in what would become Pine County, Minnesota, when their son, Lyman, was born on June 10, 1832. He is believed to be one of the first, possibly *the* first, white child born in the territory eventually called Minnesota.

Lyman grew up at Indian missions around Minnesota. He learned to speak the Native language of the Ojibwa people and it was said he spoke it as well or even better than English in his earliest years. His education was from his mother with the exception of a six month session with a "Scotsman" near the Red River area. Lyman learned more than just from books. His earliest occupations may have been influenced by the Native American culture around which he was raised. He hunted, trapped, and was a "bronco-buster" before he went into teaching at the seminary at St. Cloud. While there, a student at the seminary, Laura Hill, caught his eye. Lyman and Laura were married on July 25, 1859.

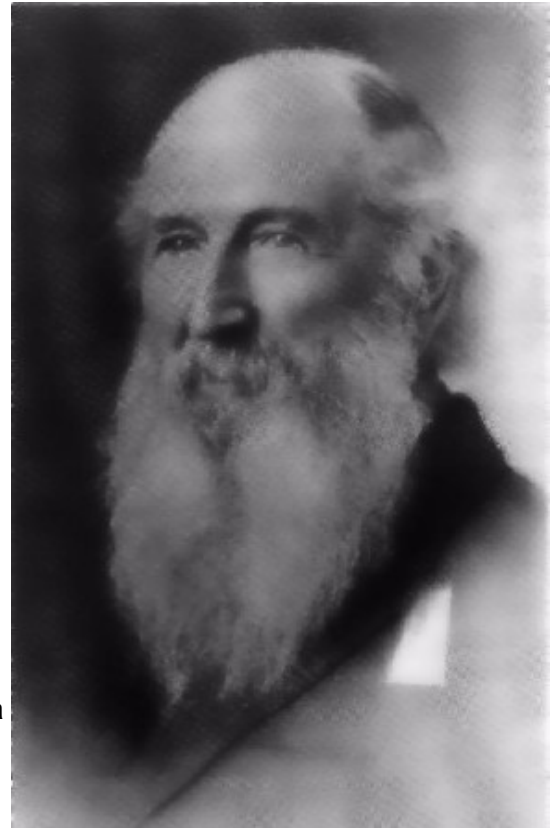
Recruiting for the Second Battery was well underway when Lyman decided to enlist in February of 1862. He may have enlisted with Laura's brother, Henry, who enlisted at about the same time. Lyman eventually rose to hold the rank of second lieutenant by the end of the war.

That may not have been quite as high of rank as Lyman aspired to. In December of 1862, he wrote a letter to Laura asking her to encourage his father to talk to the Governor of Minnesota about Lyman raising his own company of artillery. Lyman and another Battery member, Alexander Kinkead, wanted to raise a four gun Battery in Minnesota for service within the state. This was probably in response to the Indian conflict in the fall of 1862. Lyman indicated that he had written his father, but Laura's urging was important to get the elder Ayer to act. Lyman wanted his father to go in person to see the governor, that a letter just would not do. He mentioned that Kinkead had also written the Governor about the Battery they wanted to raise. A letter in Governor Ramsey's papers from Frederick Ayer did make the request, but by letter only. Whatever efforts were made on Lyman's behalf went unanswered as he remained with the Second Minnesota Battery throughout the war.

Lyman wrote a very different kind of letter to his parents than to his wife. Letters to his parents were filled with news of the battles, movements and actions of the Army. Laura's letters were more personal. He encouraged her to improve herself through music, painting, drawing, and to always "employ your time to the best advantage". He softens the "self improvement" tone of his letters by reminding her, "Though I think you one of the best of women yet you know I believe no one is so perfect that they cannot improve." Letters from Laura, his parents, other family and friends were very important to Lyman and in every letter he wrote, he pleaded for those at home to write to him more often. This was even more pronounced in letters to Laura. In one, he responded to her news of accomplishments in music, then continued to encourage her to other artistic pursuits, especially "scraps and pictures for a scrap book. Save all your pieces of music, etc., etc., Curiosities-flowers, socks". He missed his family.

As the war went on, Lyman was detailed to various duties in the Battery. He served as a clerk for Captain Hotchkiss in 1863, and as Ordinance Officer in 1864. In the last months of the war, he was detailed to the headquarters at Chattanooga as the assistant adjutant, a post he held until the Battery went home to Minnesota to be mustered out.

An odd twist in Lyman's tale is the comment he made to Laura in a letter dated April 5, 1864. Many of the men in the Battery were due to reenlist or be mustered out at the time. Lyman wrote, "I would have been glad to have reenlisted had not you and father not seemed so opposed to it--I think I would be good for three years more." He made it sound as though he was not going to reenlist, but he signed his Veteran Volunteer Enlistment papers on March 26, 1864, more than a week before he wrote that letter to Laura. Lyman did reenlist and served until the Battery was mustered out on August 16, 1865.



Lyman Ayer, ca. 1900

The descriptive role shows Lyman to have been 5' 7" tall, had blue eyes, sandy hair, and a sandy complexion.

As soon as his time in the Army was over, Lyman went back to Tennessee. Laura had followed him south near the end of the war and was teaching school in Loudon County, Tennessee. Lyman took a job in a lumber yard for a while, then went into teaching. They moved from Tennessee to Atlanta, Georgia, where they continued teaching. In one of his letters, Lyman expressed his opinion that "if one tenth of the labor bestowed upon the indians were spent in trying to elevate the Negro that far greater results would ensue". Since Lyman's father had been sent to Atlanta to take charge of the freedmen's bureau, Lyman and Laura may have been working with freed slaves. Lyman also served as the deputy county auditor for 18 months.

After a time, the Ayers returned to Minnesota and lived for two years near St. Cloud where Lyman clerked for the Hill Brothers in their general store for about a year. The Hill brothers were Layman's brothers-in-law.

Layman's parents had taken a homestead near Belle Prairie of 600 acres and when Layman's father died, Lyman and Laura moved to the farm. While he called himself a farmer, Lyman took a job in 1873 to work for the Northern Pacific Railroad collecting indemnity lands, surveying and timber cruising. He remained at this job for 12 years, then went to the Mesaba range to work for the company that opened the iron mines of Minnesota. Finally, Lyman was working for the state of Minnesota taking the Indian census, cruising and surveying.

In 1881, Lyman was paid for his services as a county commissioner of Morrison County, Minnesota. He received \$4.00.

The State of Minnesota appointed Lyman the state forest ranger in 1904. Lyman had to ask for a leave of absence from those duties to attend the State Fair. The *Little Falls Daily Tribune* noted him to be one of the attractions of the fair as the first white child born in the state. It went on to list him as having built the first saw mill in Morrison County and in later years of having an interest in "blooded stock" cattle, specifically a breed of shorthorns.

The *Duluth News Tribune* ran an article about Lyman on December 26, 1906. It described Lyman as one of the oldest living pioneers of Minnesota and who was known "all over the northern part of the state as one of the veteran lumber cruisers. The article read, "Mr. Ayer is well along in the seventies, and has spent the greater part of his life in the woods, but in spite of his age he can carry as heavy a pack as he could 40 years ago, and write a clear-cut, almost stereo-typed hand that would put to shame a majority of the common school pupils of the state."

"Cruising is not what it used to be," Mr. Ayer told a reporter. "The railroads have nearly spoiled the grand old game. Now very few long tramps are necessary, and the dangers and hardships of the business have been almost entirely removed. But it will always be good enough for me." The reporter went on to write that it was nearly train time, so Mr. Ayer "waved on his big black slouch hat, buttoned up the heavy duck coat and slipped underneath the huge pack which would have staggered the ordinary man in half a dozen blocks."

That story was given creditability in another newspaper article where a young man was walking with Lyman and felt guilty at not carrying anything while the older man with white hair and beard had a huge pack. It was to that young man's chagrin that, after taking the pack, he found he could not carry it more than a block.

Lyman and Laura had two daughters, Ina and Agnes. Agnes died at the age of 17 years. Ina married, had four children and survived both her parents.

Lyman did apply for a veteran's pension, but confusion in his claim brought a scathing letter from him to the Pension Department. It is unknown if he ever received the pension. After his death on April 20, 1929, Laura applied for a widow's pension. Her application noted that she was blind and in frail health at the time. If the Pension Department did not expedite the process, she would never see the benefit of the claim.

Lyman was laid to rest in Oakland Cemetery just outside of Little Falls, Minnesota. His stone provides his name, birth and death dates, and the epitaph "First White Child Born in Minnesota". Laura rests beside him. Nearby are other family members and in the next plot are the Hills, Laura's family.



Recap

Schools!



May 13, Eagle Point Elementary

We had a great time at the schools this year, with an outstanding teaching crew! The five stations at each school varied slightly depending on who was there, but all around, these were good days. The weather only caused an issue on May 13 when we moved three stations inside due to temps in the low 50s. Thanks to everyone who was able to attend and make these events work so well.



May 16, Calvin Christian School

May 26, Oakdale Elementary

May 18, State Capitol, St. Paul

Civil War units around the state were invited to participate in an informational fair at the State Capitol on "Blue Book" Day. A special ceremony at noon in the rotunda was sponsored by Secretary of State, Mark Ritchie, and announced a committee to coordinate sesquicentennial Civil War events around the state of Minnesota.



May 21, Rum River Library, Anoka, MN

This event is batting zero for two—two straight years of rain!! We set up in the rain and it just rained harder as the day went on. We had a had few visitors, but more drove by slowly in their nice dry cars. The rain finally let up—about ten minutes before the event ended. Still, the library people were grateful we had stuck it out despite the weather and we did have a chance to visit with each other a bit.



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:

President

John Cain
1640 Woodland Drive
Red Wing, MN 55066

Phone: (651) 388-9250

Treasurer

Daryl Duden
1210 West 4th Street
Red Wing, MN 55066

Phone: (651) 388-6520

Twin Cities Metro Area Contact

Ron & Vickie Wendel
12419 Redwood Street NW
Coon Rapids, MN 55448

Phone: (763) 754-2476

E-mail: momwendel@hotmail.com

Battery Website:
<http://www.2mnbattery.org>

At right is Mrs. Wendel's laundry demo—that turned into



iron soup!



The rain is clearly visible in the picture of our valiant soldiers under their fly. It rained enough that Corporal Overby washed the sponges in the downspout off the library and Mrs. Wendel filled her laundry tubs!

May 31 Memorial Day, Red Wing, MN

Our own Sgt. Duden was the keynote speaker this year and Mrs. Graves read Logan's Proclamation, a fitting way to honor those who have served.