



## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 191

October 2011

### On This Date-150 Years Ago

#### **The first 150th date for the Second Battery!**

For the first time, we can recognize an event associated with the Second Minnesota Battery to a 150th commemoration!

On October 18th, 1861, William Hotchkiss, a farmer, former editor, and possible land dealer from Monticello, Minnesota, went to Fort Snelling and was formally mustered into the Army. It was the first official step in the process he'd started several months earlier.

With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, William decided to use his experience gained in the Mexican War to lead an artillery unit from Minnesota. Years after the war, William wrote about his efforts at raising the first Minnesota light artillery unit.

*In the summer of 1861, soon after President Lincoln called for 300,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion, I went to St. Paul and, through Gov. Ramsey, telegraphed to the Secy of War a tender of a Bty of Light artillery from Minnesota. It was promptly accepted by telegraph and I commenced recruiting, mustering in as a private with my first detachment. After enlisting 47 men entitling me to a first lieutenants commission I allowed myself to be overreached and cheated of that battery.*

Command of the First Minnesota Battery went to Emil Munch, the unit mustering into U.S. service on November 21, 1861.

William was not made a member of that unit. He succeeded *“in getting recognized as the 2 Bty by the Secy of War and was commissioned Captain Jan'y 14, 1862.”* He finally had his commission and his command. He'd had to do a lot more recruiting to get 81 men enlisted for his Battery before it rated a captain. With help from two men, Richard Dawley from Winona County and Albert Woodbury from Anoka County, Hotchkiss was able to fill his Battery and see it mustered into service by March of 1862.

(See the next pages for the full story on Hotchkiss)

### Upcoming Events

#### **November 11, Veteran's Day, Winona, MN**

The Winona County (MN) Veterans Office on behalf of the Winona Veterans/Military Council has requested the Battery's participation in the Veteran's Day program on November 11. The program is held in Veterans Park by Lake Winona, starting at 11a.m., in memory of the end of WWI (11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month) The details haven't been finalized yet and more will be discussed at the October meeting.

#### **December 10, Rum River Library, Anoka**

**Civil War Christmas!** We will interpret the things soldiers in the field and those at home were doing to celebrate the season. Please be thinking about what you want to do—we want this to be different than the Winter Camp we did last March (we're doing that again in February), so start thinking about an 1860 holiday. Ideas for soldiers include writing/reading letters, making a gift from camp materials to send home, decorating a tree from things in camp, planning a camp Christmas dinner for the troops, singing Christmas hymns, etc. The home front activity ideas can include some of the same things as the soldiers, as well as packing Christmas boxes, planning special foods or clothing, traveling to visit family/soldiers, etc. Other ideas are encouraged! Please let Vickie know what you plan to do so she can coordinate the activities—we don't all want to be doing the same thing!

### Next Meeting

**October 22, 11:00 a.m.**

Maries Casual Dining, corner of 3rd and Plum (or Highway 58 and 63) in Red Wing



# **Battery Profile**

## **William A. Hotchkiss**

*The Governor's absence from the state embarrasses my plans and may frustrate them entirely.* William Augustus Hotchkiss wrote those words in a letter to Major Goddard, the chief of staff in the Army of the Cumberland, on March 10, 1863. William wrote them in reference to his plans to recruit enough men to fill his Second Battery of Light Artillery to full strength once again, but it may have described how William felt about a good many things in his military career.

He had been born in White Hall, New York, on February 2, 1823, and began an apprenticeship in the printing business at a young age. He continued in the printing business until 1846 when he volunteered to serve in the Army during the Mexican War. He was sent to Vera Cruz and was promoted to noncommissioned officer status under the command of General Winfield Scott near Mexico City. When the war was over, William returned to New York and again took up the printing trade at Albany, New York. He spent a year in the State Legislature as the assistant sergeant-at-arms.

During these years, William met Amanda Smith and they were married on May 27, 1851. The couple would eventually have seven children.

In 1854, William decided to move west and arrived in Minnesota in May where he began publishing the *Northwestern Democrat* in the fledgling city of Minneapolis. That community of less than 75 people stood on the west bank of the Mississippi River, making William's newspaper the first in the Minnesota Territory to be published west of the Mississippi. He continued his newspaper publishing for four years, then sold the paper and moved to a farm in Monticello, Wright County. By this time, William was involved in the buying and selling of several lots. A quit claim deed showed William and Amanda as living in Minneapolis and having sold a lot in the town of Monticello for \$150. In 1859, a mortgage note in the amount of \$200 described the property the couple owned. "One span of horses--one gray horse about 9 years old formerly owned by G. Brookins & Williams, the other a bay mare, white face about five years old, also a double wagon --light with iron ex--all the of crops now growing on the place now occupied by me in Monticello....consisting of about 8 acres of wheat, from ten to twelve acres of oats, about nine acres of corn, about an acre of potatoes and one half acre of beans, all owned by me" for a promissory note in the amount of \$158.25.

When the Civil War began, he planned to lead the first battery of artillery from Minnesota, but that didn't work out quite like he'd planned. (See page 1).

When he finally had his command, William recruited, trained, and drilled his men until the Battery was accepted into U.S. Service on March 21, 1862, and was sent south in May. He stayed with his Battery through their first battles, but by the spring of 1863, William was breveted a major and given command of an artillery brigade. Letters from William indicate he was back in Minnesota in March of 1863 looking to recruit men to refill his Battery. It was during this recruiting mission that he wrote of his frustration in his efforts on account of the governor's absence from the state.

Other matters also came to attention that probably frustrated William. A cover letter dated July 22, 1863, described the procedure preferred for convening a court martial to answer the "charges and specifications against Capt. William Augustus Hotchkiss".

Five separate charges were made against William. The first three charges dealt with making false provision requests, stating William drew provisions for more men than he had on the muster roles. The fourth charge stated he had "appropriated to his own use the provisions belonging to the Enlisted Men of his Battery." The final charge was appropriating Hospital and Sanitary items sent for his men to his own use.

William pleaded not guilty to all of the charges and specifications. The convening authority, Colonel W. P. Carlin, found William not guilty of all the charges "in consequence of the loss and death of one of its members and the absence of others Occasioned by Wounds and Sickness. With that of the Judge Advocate and the loss of the records of the court thereby preventing the continuation of the business that had been before it is hereby dissolved."





The charges and their outcome probably tarnished William's reputation with his men. He continued to have conflicts with his junior officers and letters from the men indicated a dislike for their commanding officer throughout the remainder of the war. Other letters indicate he was not a well loved commander before the charges, either.

Muster roles show William serving at the brigade level until December of 1863. At Chattanooga, Tennessee, he was ordered to take command of the artillery defenses and he had charge of 110 guns around that city. William and his Battery were then left as one of the rear units, protecting and guarding while the bulk of the Army of the Cumberland marched on Atlanta, Georgia, and then to the sea with Sherman.

When the Battery was ordered to Philadelphia, Tennessee, William was the commanding officer of the Battery once again and conflicts with his officers heightened. Several lieutenants resigned and William noted that often it was due to an "inability to cooperate" with him. This may have stemmed from William's penchant for volunteering his Battery for various details in the infantry, pioneer corps, cattle herding duty, and other tasks considered unpleasant by his men. In any case, it did not endear William to his men judging by the comments they made in letters and journals.

At the end of the war, William came back to Minnesota with the Battery and sent them off with a rousing speech at their discharge from the Army. His final words to his men were:

*Soldiers! You are about to return to the peaceful pursuit as citizens in which capacity I believe you will prove to be as true men as you have been soldiers. In the future remember what you did commissioned with the duty perpetuating an individual record unsurpassed by the heroes of any age, and that, what you have done in arms for the defense of law and order and good government is hereafter to be done by example and through the ballot-box. -- A chance for patriotic effort which ought to engage your most serious thought and noblest intentions(?)*

*Comrades! Cherish the memory of each other with a true soldier's love. Embrace the memory of those of our companions who have fallen by casualties in battle and disease in your most sacred affections.*

*As Soldiers, your commanding officer bids you an affectionate farewell hoping that in the future, happiness and prosperity may be the fruits of your labors.*

William went back to his family and in October of 1866, he bought the *Fillmore County Republican* newspaper and they moved to Preston. This was in partnership with his brother, Fred. William became the editor and publisher of that paper, Fred decided he was not a printer and would "do better in another trade" according to an article in February of 1867. William bought out his brother's share and in 1880, changed the paper's name to *The National Republican*. As its editor, he was noted as one of the "original progressives" and advocated the People's party in Minnesota.

The military once again frustrated William when he applied for a soldiers' pension in 1885. Confusion in the dates of his enlistment and rank provided him with a private's rate, based on his initial enlistment rank. A flurry of letters over the next nearly ten years eventually led to the correction of William's claim that he indeed had served as a captain.

In 1899, Amanda died. Their son, F. W. as he was called, took over the daily running of the newspaper in May of 1900. He promised the people of Preston a great deal on their subscription and expressed an desire to get to know them.

William remained in Preston and took up a life of ease. Then he went west to Kent, Washington, where he lived with his daughter.

William died on April 19, 1914, at the age of 92 years. He was laid to rest in the Kent Cemetery under a simple stone reading "Father," with his name and dates.





# Recap

## September 16,17,18, Parade & Ceremonies

(Submitted by Lt. Cain and Mrs. Overby)



September 16 and 18 brought members of the 2nd Battery together with two guns and crew from Battery I to the State Capitol grounds to fire salutes during ceremonies honoring veterans past and present as well as service personnel within the state. Battery I provided a Napoleon and a Parrott with full service charges on both days and when our time came, all of downtown St. Paul heard the sound. Although there was some drizzle on Sunday, spirits were high and among the spectators were about 10 tourists from mainland China who inquired if we were making a

movie and a young lady with a fellow student from Portsmouth, England, attending UWEC Eau Claire who were just out for a drive. Thanks to all who turned out for the weekend. Although this was not publicized as a major event, those in the reenacting community feel the turn out was a success.

September 17 was the parade part of the weekend long event. Marching in a parade was a bit

unusual for this unit, but it was a great deal of fun. Seeing two cannons and a caisson drawn by teams of horses down Nicollet Mall is a sight no one will ever forget! The finishing touch to the rather blustery day was the wonderful echoes off the buildings from the infantry volleys. All participants expressed a great deal of enjoyment at this parade event.



### September 24 — Kandiyohi County Historical Society

Battery members set up stations much like a school event on the spacious lawn of the Kandiyohi County Historical Society and started greeting the first visitors even before 10:00! There were people at our stations ALL DAY!

The turnout for this event was spectacular! There were several hundred people gathered around each time the gun was fired and they didn't just leave with the clearing of the smoke—they stayed! And talked and asked



questions and made our day just fly by! It was a very nice event and so well attended. Everyone had a great time under perfect blue skies!



***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 Cites Metro Area Contact**

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

Phone: (763) 754-2476

**E-mail: [momwendel@hotmail.com](mailto:momwendel@hotmail.com)**

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