

2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

“ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 214

December 2013—January 2014

On This Date-150 Years Ago

The Second Minnesota Battery was camped outside Chattanooga, Tennessee, at the end of 1863 and beginning of 1864. It was winter and while there were military operations, most of their time was spent in camp and that time was hard.

Remarks for the Month of December, 1863

(Numbers indicate the day of the month)

- 6 Sergt. D. C. Munsey - gone to Nashville for the clothing of the company By S. F. O. No. 322 Maj. Gen. Thomas.
- 9 1 Horse died in camp
- 10 Corp. Obert and privates D. W. Coulthard, E. A. Furguson and Jas. M. Dinsmore returned from Stevenson where they were on detached service -- of 38 horses "Absent" 3 died and 35 turned in to Capt. S. S. Alshire by Order.
- 16 Sergt. D. C. Munsey returned from Nashville. Privates Fred. A. Leathers and McCrory detailed on daily duty as teamsters. Private Penwick relieved from duty as teamster. Contraband James Duffy left. Harry Akers dropped - the Q. M. having decided that he is not entitled to rations.
- 18 Private Ingebret Johnson returned to the Co. from detached service
- 22 One Horse died in Camp
- 24 One Horse died in Camp
- 25 Private Fordis Averill returned from hospt.
- 26 1 Horse died in camp
- 27 Corp. Oliver P. Brown detailed from Co. D, 34 Ills Vols. returned to his Co. One Horse died in Camp.
- 31 Nelson H. Fulton takes up on the report from which he was dropped by Error. Geo Townsend & Geo Tilton reported for duty heretofore reported on detached service at Div. Hd. Qrs. John C. Phelps transferred to Invalid Corps by Gen. Order No. 320

Remarks for the Month of January, 1864

- 1 Lieut Harder returned from leave of absence - Drew 30 Horses from Capt. Barrett Co. "J" 2 Ills Arty
- 3 One Horse Died in Camp
- 5 one Horse Died in Camp
- 6 one Horse died in Camp, Privates August Apple, Jesse Baker, Lorning Fletcher and Sam Wheeler details from 34 Ill. Vol. Inftry returned to their regt
- 7 Private Babcock, 34 Ill V. I. Returned to his Regt.

- 8 Private Peter Zimmer 34 Ill V. I. returned to his Regt. Tillotson returned to Company
- 9 One Horse died in camp
- 12 Two Horses died in Camp
- 13 Two Horses died
- 14 Two Horses died in Camp
- 15 Two Horses died in Camp
- 19 One Horse died and one taken up
- 20 John Craven returned from Hospital
- 23 Two Horses died in Camp
- 27 One Horse died in Camp
- 28 Right half of Batty started with the div. on an expedition toward the enemy's lines
- 29 Half Bty. returned from reconnaissance

Upcoming Events

January 25, 2014 Events Discussion

Many members are receiving information about events in 2014. Please bring all these ideas to the meeting so they can be discussed and added to the list of things to consider for the 2014 Calendar.

March 15, Civil War Symposium, Mankato

A full day of presentations, storytelling, interactive exhibits, costumed reenactors, authors, and much more with a focus on 1864. This is a fundraising event to restore a Civil War monument in Mankato. For more information, see their website: www.boyinblue.org

April 12, Rum River Library, Anoka

4201 6th Avenue, Anoka, 10:30-1:00

Civil War Camp and Ladies Aid Society

There are always two fronts in any war—the battle front and the home front. We will recreate what soldier's life was like in camp while the ladies hold an Aid Society meeting back home at the Rum River Library. Ladies will share their support efforts from the home front while the soldiers talk of the hardships, uniforms, and tools of war carried by soldiers. Ladies, bring your hand work! More info to come.

Next Meeting

January 25, 2014

11:00am

We will meet at Marie's Underground Dining in Red Wing. Call John Cain if you need address or directions, (651) 388-9250.



Battery Profiles

Alden C. Meeds

Alden was 23 years old when he married Rebecca Jane Usher in Boston, Massachusetts, on October 9, 1850. She was just 16. Both were natives of Maine, Alden having been born in Bidford where he was living when they married. They had a daughter, Eva, and in later years, Eva explained what happened between her mother and father.

Eva said her mother went to Portland to visit her parents when Eva was just three months old. Rebecca decided she did not want to return to Bidford. Eva's father sold his holdings at Bidford and moved to Portland to join his wife and daughter. They lived there together until Eva was about a year and a half old when Alden left to go to work in Massachusetts. For a year and a half, Alden did not see his wife, but did occasionally go to see Eva. At his last visit there, Rebecca walked into the room where Alden and Eva were, then turned and walked out without speaking. Alden took Eva and went to his mother's home in Bidford. The issue Alden had with his wife was obvious as Eva said her mother gave birth to a baby girl the very next month.

In Eva's words, her father "stole" her and told his own mother that, "they would have to walk over his dead body before they would get" her away from him. Alden never told his mother why he took his daughter away or that he knew his wife was "going around" with a man named Foster.

Alden decided to start over. He left Maine and took care of some business in Massachusetts before leaving for Minnesota to join his sister who had taken Eva on ahead of him. Eva was between three and four years old when she came to Minnesota and she lived with her aunt in St. Anthony.

Once settled in Minnesota, Alden sent money to Rebecca to join him. She did not come, but Eva said her mother spent the money. Eva said her father's brother went to see Rebecca's mother and asked about the baby Rebecca had. Rebecca's mother said her daughter had married a man named Foster and that the baby was his. It was Eva's belief that Rebecca had not bothered to mention she was already married to Alden. Eva also said Foster was wealthy, hinting that was part of the problem. At some point after this, Eva said Rebecca's father wrote a letter to Alden saying Rebecca had been picked up on the streets of Boston "insane" and had been taken to an asylum near Boston where she died a short time later.

Alden decided to answer the call to war, so he enlisted in the Second Minnesota Battery on December 9, 1861. He was one of the first to enlist in the still being formed Battery under William Hotchkiss. Alden said he was 30 years old, had dark hair, black eyes, a dark complexion, and stood 5' 7-1/4" tall. He made his living as a carpenter.

Since the Battery was just forming, Alden probably had some free time between training and duties at the Fort. It is doubtful Alden was bored during this time as a marriage certificate dated December 18, 1861, appears showing that he married Elizabeth Bidel of Wright County, Minnesota. He may not have told Eva or his sister about his marriage as Eva remained with her aunt. Eva remembered going to Fort Snelling to see her father go off to the war.

Alden did go south with the Battery in April of 1862, but by May, he was sick and suffering. He did not improve and on November 15, 1862, he was discharged for dysentery and diarrhea. Alden blamed his illness on the long marches in the

heat and on the climate of the south. His discharge noted Alden had not been fit for duty since the end of May, but with due care he might be able to recover his health.

Back in Minnesota, Alden did recover, and with his improved health, he decided to enlist again on August 21, 1863. This time he joined Hatch's Battalion of Cavalry. He received a \$25 bounty for his enlistment and again agreed to serve in the army for three years.

Alden's health again began to trouble him. He was given a furlough in July of 1864 and when he returned to his unit in August, he was sick. He did not return to active duty. His second disability discharge came on January 14, 1865. By this time, Alden had been sent back to Fort Snelling where he had only a short trip home.

Here, Eva picks up the story. She said Alden's new wife, Lizzie, appeared and told Eva that she was going to go live with them on her father's farm in the "big woods" near Rockford, Minnesota. By this time, Alden and Lizzie had a little boy named Melvin Daniel. Eva said she cried because did not want to leave her aunt and that it was the first she knew about her father's marriage or that she had a brother.

Confusion in records makes it hard to determine exactly what happened, but Elizabeth and Alden had two more children, Daniel about 1863, and Gertrude born in January of 1866. Eva was living with her aunt when news came of the birth of her "little sister", but by this time, Alden was dead. He died on May 24, 1865. Eva was with him when he died at the home of his sister. He had taken ill while living on the farm in Rockford and was convinced to go to St. Anthony. He died there a few days later. His final resting place is unknown.

Three months later, Eva was told her little sister had died, her step mother had remarried and Eva lost all contact. She continued living with her aunt in St. Anthony.

Alden's tangled story does not end with his death and little daughter being raised by his sister, but continues for another 70 years. His second wife, Elizabeth, remarried three months after his death, so she was not eligible to apply for Alden's pension. Eva would have been eligible, as would Daniel and Gertrude. Daniel died at age 12 in 1875, and neither of the girls applied for a pension until 1896. Eva received a settlement from the Government for rations Alden had not received while he was on furlough and absent sick. She got a check for \$28 in November of 1896. It opened a set of investigations and even more confusion to Alden's life.

Eva applied for her father's pension which would have been due her if she would have applied for it as a child. The depositions were taken and all was well until 1901 when Gertrude appeared on Eva's doorstep. Gertrude had figured up how much money she would get from Alden's pension. Eva said she never questioned that Gertie, as she was called, was Alden's daughter, saying she looked like Alden. Eva explained that Gertie had found Eva through a client of Eva's. Eva also mentioned that she was in charge of a "million dollar stock company" in Minneapolis.

Then a third "daughter" entered the picture. Addie Bailey, the child Rebecca was pregnant with when Alden took Eva and went to Minnesota, appeared. She was applying for Alden's pension. She said her mother called herself Bailey and used Jennie as a name to hide from Alden as she did not want him to find her or know anything about her. Addie stated that her mother had not ever married after Alden left her, nor had she applied for a divorce. Addie called Alden her father. Records do not indicate whether Addie ever received anything from the Pension Department.

(Alden Meeds, continued)

More investigations brought to light a death certificate for Eva's mother. Rebecca, then calling herself Jennie Bailey, had not actually died until August 4, 1880. This made Alden legally a bigamist since he married a second time without having obtained a divorce from a living wife. The fact that Alden was told she was dead and thus making him believe he was free to marry again did not seem to influence the Pension Department. In their eyes, Eva was the only one with a legal claim, though Eva never received anything beyond the \$28 owed her father for rations. The Pension Department decided Alden had not died as a result of an illness contracted in the service as the dysentery he was discharged with the first time was not the reason stated in the second discharge, nor was it the cause of his death. They argued that he had not suffered with diarrhea after his first discharge, during he second enlistment or after leaving the Army, so neither he nor his heirs were eligible to claim a pension.

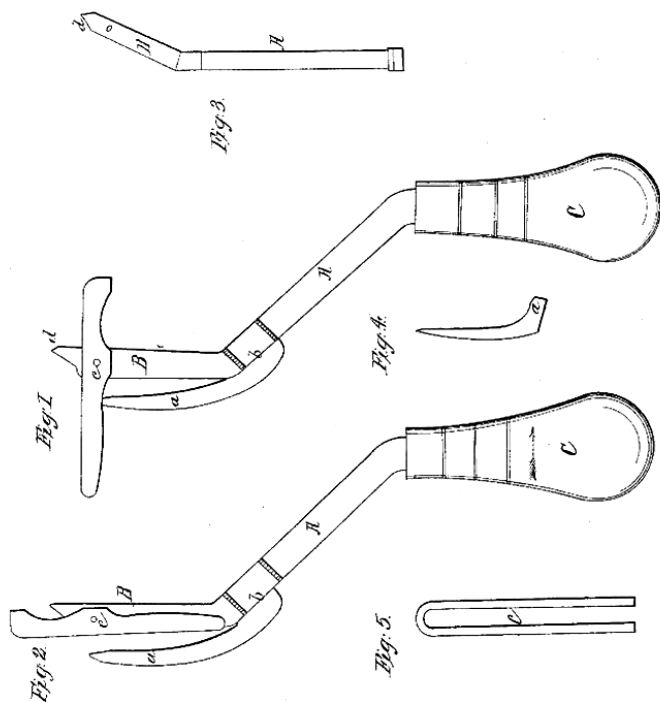
It was Eva's contention that Gertie had been enticed into going after Alden's pension to divert Eva from seeking to inherit the land their father owned near Rockford. This land

was being held by Alden's second wife's sister and she would not provide any information to Eva about the land or its value. Eva's claims on the pension matter end in 1904, but Gertie was not yet ready to let the matter drop. In 1934, she wrote a letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt. She wrote that, "as one of your loyal supporters, I ask for assistance in obtaining the pension I have been trying to get for many years. I am now an old lady, with not many more years to live, but I do need the financial aid." Gertie received a very nice letter back from the Pension Department saying that the President had not time to answer all the letters sent him, so they had taken the matter under special advisement. The President wanted to be sure that all who were due monetary benefits were granted them under the existing laws and regulations. It went on to say that because Alden's first wife was not yet dead when he married Gertie's mother, the marriage was not lawful and that made Gertie's birth an illegitimate one. Therefore, the law said she was not entitled to any money from her father's pension.

It was the final chapter on Alden's life that appeared to be a short and troubled one, filled with confusion and poor choices.

The Humble Can Opener

*E.J. Warner,
Can Opener,
No. 19,063.
Patented Jan. 5, 1858.*



It takes very little Civil War reading to find references to canned foods, especially milk. After all, it was the Civil War's demand for canned milk that boosted sales of Gail Borden's unappreciated product into history and almost every kitchen yet today.

Canning foods for preservation goes back to 1810 when Peter Durand of England patented a can made of wrought iron with a tin lining. The iron could be as thick as 3/16th of an inch, so recommendations were to use a hammer and a chisel to open them.

On January 5, 1858, Connecticut native Ezra J. Warner invented the first US can opener. Ezra Warner's practical can opening tool came on the scene just as the iron cans were just starting to be replaced by thinner steel cans.

Warner designed a pointed blade that, when pressed into the can, was prevented from penetrating too far into the contents by a guard. The guard then swung out of the way and a second curved blade (or sickle) cut around the top of the can with a saw-like action. The device left a deeply jagged sharp edge.

Though never a big hit with the public, Warner's can opener served the US Army during the Civil War (1861-1865) and found a home in many grocery stores where clerks opened cans for customers to take home.

Another plus to Warner's design was that it consisted of several parts which could be replaced if worn out.

Recap

November 11 — Veterans Day in Winona

Thanks to Private Tomashek, the 2nd Minnesota Battery once again had the honor of providing a three round artillery salute during the Veteran's Day Ceremony in Winona, MN. This event, held in Veteran's Memorial Park in the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month, honors all veterans. Battery members volunteering to participate were Privates Tomashek, Hoekstra, Arnoldy, Golden and Crowder, Corporal Ritchie and Sergeant Duden.

Bugler Bill played "To the Colors" to begin the ceremony



and when the speechifying began, joined the other "B boys", Brian, Bart, Bruce and Briar, on the gun crew. The gun crew performed admirably under the direction of Corporal Ritchie. As the smoke from the third round swirled in the air, Bugler Bill sounded "Taps", indicating the ceremony was concluding. It was a cold, brisk morning, but those spectators who lingered watched battery members limber up the gun and march it down the street to prepare for its journey to winter camp.

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>

2014 Dues are due!

Your dues to remain an active Second Minnesota Battery member with full voting privileges for 2014 are now due.

Dues for associate members dues are also due. Both levels of membership receive the monthly (most months anyhow) newsletter, Action Front.

Please send your dues, along with the form on the next page, to Daryl Duden, 1210 West 4th Street, Red Wing, MN, 55066.

The form is requested to be sure we have all of your contact information up to date with correct email and cell phone numbers.

Thank you!

Your Country Needs You!

And so does the Battery!

2014 dues are DUE!! To remain on the active member list, your dues are:

Civilian Member	\$12.00
Military Member	\$12.00
Associate Member	\$ 6.00
Junior Member (14-17)	\$ 6.00
Junior Member (under 14)	Free

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

E-mail address: _____

Please send this form and your check to:

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