

## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 236

May 2016

## On This Date-155 Years Ago

From the website: <http://www.historylearningsite>

Posturing by both sides made it clear neither was going to back down and events in May continued toward war.

**May 1:** Confederate troops sent to seize Harpers Ferry.

**May 3:** Lincoln called for 42,000 men to volunteer for three years service in the Federal Army and 18,000 men for the Federal Navy for three years. Federal General Winfield Scott announced his ‘Anaconda Plan’ to attack down the length of the River Mississippi to cut the Confederacy in two. He saw two main theatres of war – the Eastern and the Western. Scott believed the success of the naval blockade was vital in cutting off any form of foreign help to the Confederacy. There were also protests about an “unofficial” meeting held between the British Foreign Minister and Southern commissioners arguing for recognition of the Confederacy.

**May 7:** Tennessee formed an alliance with the Confederacy. While this was not an official secession from the Union, it was viewed as such by both sides.

**May 13:** Great Britain announced that it would remain neutral in the war.

**May 16:** The Confederate Provisional Congress authorized the recruitment of 400,000 volunteers. The state legislature in Kentucky announced that the state would remain neutral during the conflict.

**May 20:** North Carolina announced it would secede from the Union.

**May 21:** The Confederacy moved its capital to Richmond.

**May 23:** The people of Virginia gave their support, via a vote, to the state legislature to join the Confederacy. However, western Virginia had a large population that was pro-Union and there occurred a real prospect that the state might split in two.

**May 24:** 13,000 Union troops crossed the Potomac River and occupied the Arlington Heights – on the Virginia side of the capital. Elmer Ellsworth, the commander of the Zouaves of the 11th New York Regiment, was shot dead while trying to take down a Confederate flag flown outside a hotel in the city. The hotel’s owner, James Jackson, was in turn shot dead by troops. Both Ellsworth and Jackson became martyrs to their causes.

**May 29:** The expectation of a large number of casualties led to the Union setting up military hospitals under Dorothea Dix.

## Upcoming Events

**May 16 Calvin Christian School, Edina MN**  
**4015 Inglewood Ave. S, Edina.**

Arrive at 9:00 to set up, students arrive at 9:50. We will set up 5 stations and rotate students through. BRING A BAG LUNCH!

**May 30 Memorial Day, Red Wing, MN**

Arrive at Bay Point Park by 8:00 to set up. There will be a reading by one of our Battery ladies for the Memorial Day service and honor volleys from our gun. RSVP to Daryl Duden or John Cain.

## Congratulations, Graduate!

Our own Briar Golden will be graduating from Arcadia High School on May 27, 2016! Briar will



be attending classes this fall at the University of Wisconsin at River Falls where he plans to major in soil science.

We wish Briar all the best and great successes in college! We also hope we still see him in camp whenever possible, too!

## Next Meeting

**June 4, 2016 11:00am**

We will meet at Marie’s Underground Dining in Red Wing. Call Ken Cunningham if you need the address or directions, (651) 388-2945.



# Mail Service and the Civil War

From the U.S. Postal Service

Mail was a treasured link between Civil War camps and battlefields and “back home.” Recognizing its importance to morale, the armies assigned personnel to collect, distribute, and deliver soldiers’ mail; wagons and tents served as traveling Post Offices. Some soldiers wrote home weekly; some seemed to spend all their free time writing. A letter from home could be tucked into a pocket close to a soldier’s heart, to be read and re-read in moments of loneliness. Many soldiers carried letters in their pockets, to be forwarded to loved ones if they were killed in action. The U.S. Post Office Department introduced several improvements during the war which made it easier to send and receive mail. Since soldiers sometimes had trouble acquiring postage stamps. If they did get them, they had trouble keeping the gummed bits of paper from congealing into sodden lumps. Soldiers were allowed to mail letters without stamps beginning in July 1861 by writing “Soldier’s Letter” on the envelope; postage was collected from the recipient. In July 1863, postage rates were simplified and in some cases lowered when distance-based letter rate categories were eliminated and all letters given the lowest rate. That same month, free home delivery of mail was introduced in the nation’s largest cities. And in November 1864 the money order system began, making it safer for soldiers and citizens to send money through the mail.

The Confederacy established its own Post Office Department in February 1861, two months before the start of the war, with former U.S. Congressman John Henninger Reagan appointed Postmaster General in March. Reagan sent job offers to southern men in the Post Office Department in Washington; many accepted and brought along their expertise, as well as copies of postal reports, forms in use, postal maps, and other supplies. Prior to the war the cost of mail service in the South was more than three times its revenue. By raising postage rates, reducing service, and practicing strict economy, Reagan made the Confederate Post Office Department self-sustaining by the end of 1863. But blockades and the invading Northern army, as well as a scarcity of postage stamps, severely hampered operations.

The United States banned the exchange of mail between citizens of the North and South in August 1861, although smugglers often carried mail illegally across the lines. Prisoner-of-war mail was exchanged between North and South at designated points under a flag-of-truce. Citizens could also send letters via the flag-of-truce system, although like prisoners’ mail, their letters were read by censors and rejected if the contents were objectionable. Stamps and the Civil War In 1861, the cost of mailing a half-ounce letter up to 3,000 miles by the U.S. Post Office Department was 3 cents (77 cents in 2011 dollars). On June 1, 1861, the Confederate Post Office began charging 5 cents (\$1.30 in 2011 dollars) for mailing half-ounce letters up to 500 miles.

To prevent the fraudulent use of the large quantity of U.S. postage stamps held by postmasters in the seceded states, the U.S. Post Office Department redesigned its postage stamps soon after it suspended mail service to the South. The newly designed stamps were distributed to postmasters and customers beginning in August 1861, in

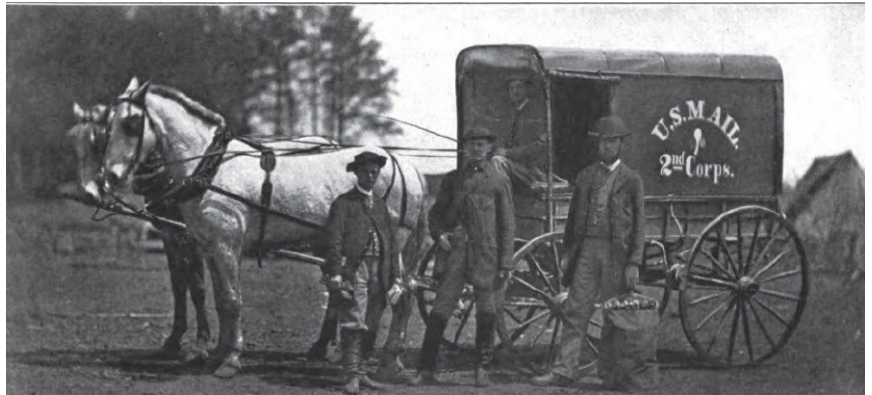


Photo from the Library of Congress

exchange for the old ones. Initially Postmasters were instructed to give customers six days following notification in which to exchange old stamps for new ones, after which time the old ones were demonetized (rendered valueless). But the time limit was stretched in some cases to accommodate customers. In New York City, citizens were given about six weeks to exchange their postage stamps. As the war progressed, coins, which were more highly valued than paper money, gradually disappeared from the marketplace. By the summer of 1862, the lack of coinage posed a serious hardship to trade. Merchants began issuing their own promissory notes, called “shinplasters,” and many people began using postage stamps as small change. Unfortunately, shinplasters were often redeemable only where received, and stamps were liable to crumple and clump together.

A law of July 17, 1862, authorized the use of postage stamps as currency, and beginning in August 1862 the Treasury Department issued special “postage currency” — reproductions of postage stamps on larger, thicker, ungummed pieces of paper, in denominations of 5, 10, 25, and 50 cents. Due to coin shortages the Treasury Department continued issuing paper notes representing fractions of a dollar through 1876, although beginning in October 1863 they were called “fractional currency” and did not feature reproductions of stamps.



# Battery Profile

## John Flynn

*I, Edward P. Flynn, do hereby give my consent for my son John Flynn to enter the United States Service.* The note was signed Edward Flynn and was witnessed by A. D. Merrell.

Would Edward have been willing to sign the note allowing his 20 year old son, John, to join the Second Minnesota Battery if he had known John would never return to Minnesota?

The Second Battery was just forming in January of 1862 when John Flynn received the note of permission from his father. John was mustered into the Battery on January 23rd at Fort Snelling. John had hazel eyes, light hair, light complexion, stood 5' 3 ¾" tall, and was single. His occupation was listed as a laborer from Wright County. He lived there with his parents, a brother and two sisters.

John served as a private in the Battery. At the Battle of Stones River, Tennessee, on December 31, 1862, John was riding the lead team on one of the guns when he was shot through the head. He died on the field where he fell. His body was not returned to Minnesota, instead being buried near the battlefield. Many soldiers buried in such circumstances were later disinterred and reburied in National Cemeteries when they were established. Unfortunately, many of these graves were only marked with temporary identifications that did not stand up over time. The men were moved to rest beneath markers that read simply "Unknown". It is believed John is one of these unknowns.



The National Cemetery at Stones River. The short markers are for the unknowns. John Flynn's grave likely beneath one of those "unknown" markers.

John's story does not end here as he had sent money home to help support the family while he served in the Army. His mother, Jane, applied for and received a mother's pension of \$8.00 per month. In 1874, a neighbor wrote a letter to the Pension Department complaining that Mrs. Flynn received this pension unjustly and wanted an investigation.

The Pension examiner interviewed neighbors, witnesses, and the Flynn's. Edward was nearly blind, suffered with rheumatism, and was only able to do limited odd jobs. One daughter was married and expecting a child, the reason the examiner could not interview Jane as she had gone to be with her daughter. The other daughter was working on a sewing machine in St. Paul to help support the family. A son had built a small, rough board house for his parents, described by the examiner as plain, very simple, but neat and tidy. Records told the examiner that several times help from the county had kept the Flynn's from starving and several neighbors said they had helped with food and wood. At the end of the investigation, the examiner decided the Flynn's needs did indeed indicate they were deserving of John's pension and recommended the \$8.00 a month continue.

## National Event at Perryville, Kentucky

For those interested in attending the national event at Perryville this coming October, **each participant MUST REGISTER ONLINE**. Here is the link to the registration page: [http://www.perryvillebattlefield.org/html/registration\\_2016.html](http://www.perryvillebattlefield.org/html/registration_2016.html)

You may pay the \$20 registration fee with a credit card or a PayPal account. KEEP the number you are given with your receipt as this will be what gets you onto the battlefield site. The Battery will reimburse the registration fee to those who attend the event.

Please register as Second Minnesota Battery, Federal Artillery and **MIXED CAMP**.

There will be a convoy traveling to Kentucky. If you are interested in joining the convoy group, contact John Cain, Battery coordinator for this event.

As of the April meeting, only eight Battery members had registered. **If you are planning to go, you must register on your own!!**



## Harriet Tubman on the \$20 Bill

From The History Channel

With all the news lately about putting Harriet Tubman on the \$20, it is good to look at some of what she did.

Harriet Tubman was the first woman to lead a raid to free slaves during the Civil War. She was an escaped slave who led others to freedom on the Underground Railroad before the war. During the war, she arrived at the Union camp at Port Royal, South Carolina, in the spring of 1862 to support the Union cause. She began teaching freed slave women skills that could earn them wages with the Union Army. Soon she was gathering intelligence about the countryside from the freed slaves and taking river reconnaissance trips.

On June 1, 1863, Tubman and Union Colonel James Montgomery steamed into the interior with

***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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300 black Union soldiers. The troops swept through nearby plantations, burning homes and barns as Union gunboats sounded their whistles. Slave men, women and children came streaming from the countryside, reminding Tubman of "the children of Israel, coming out of Egypt." More than 720 slaves were shuttled to freedom during the mission. In the first raid led by a woman during the Civil War, Tubman liberated 10 times the number of slaves she had freed in 10 years on the Underground Railroad.

