

## 2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

# “ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 258

July 2018

## On This Date-155 Years Ago

### Morning Reports—Remarks for the Month of July, 1863

(Numbers indicate the day of the month)

- 1 Left Tennis Hanson at Manchester. -- From Manchester to Tullahoma -- 13 Miles
- 2 From Tullahoma to Elk Creek 10 Miles
- 3 From Elk Creek to Winchester 6 Miles
- 6 Rec'd official Notice of the discharge of Privt. Chas. L. Noggle at Camp Dennison, Ia. June 27, 1863 -- by order of Military Cmd. &c. under G. O. 35 & 65 War D't Series 1862
- 8 Fired salute of 35 guns - on taking Vicksburg
- 13 Moved camp from W. side of Winchester to camp on Boiling Fork -- Elk River
- 14 Dinsmore del'd to P. G.
- 16 Dinsmore ret'd to duty
- 17 Jackins del'd to P. G.d.
- 18 " ret'd to duty ---- Charles Duffy (contraband) employed as Teamster
- 20 Privt Douglas del'd to Prov. M (brig) & charges preferred Privt P. E. Sargent del'd to Prov. M (brig) == Charles Porter (contraband) employed as Blacksmith
- 21 J. G. Sargent ret'd to duty
- 23 Rec'd pay from Feb. 28 to June 30 -- Maj. E. A. Truax ----- P. E. Sargent De'd to brig Prov. Marshall & charges preferred.
- 25 Charles Porter (contraband blacksmith) sick and disch'd
- 26 Warren Tally (contraband) employed as Teamster
- 27 John Dixon ( " ) " "

## Upcoming Events

### July 14-15, Rochester, MN Olmstead County Living History Fair & Reenactment

The featured battle is Vicksburg and some of our ladies will be living in caves portraying residents of the city. Others of our ladies have been requested for special projects on both days.

NOTE: The unit will NOT be providing any food for this event. ALL MEMBERS will be on their own for food which will be available for purchase on site or you may bring your own.

For more information, check the website:  
<http://www.olmstedhistory.com/going-on/142>

### July 17, Goodhue, MN Goodhue County 4-H (Tuesday) Rosie's Park near the Community Pool.

We are setting up learning stations much like our school events for this group of young people. They range in age from primary grades to mid-teens. Contact John Cain or Daryl Duden if you are planning to attend this event. BRING A BAG LUNCH.

### July 28, Battle Lake, MN Prospect House (Saturday)

This event will celebrates the Civil War history and collections of this site. It is a single day event and we are paid for it, so we need to have a good turn out. Besides that, it's a very nice event! It is also a chance to see some amazing artifacts in this special museum.

For more information, see their website at:  
<http://www.prospecthousemuseum.org/>

## Next Meeting

**August 4, 2018 11:00am**  
Marie's Underground Dining, Red Wing  
Call Ken Cunningham with questions or agenda items. 651 388-2945.



# Battery Profile

## Jacob Torkelson

Jacob was not a man to leave many records behind, so little is known of his life. He was born on May 14, 1838, in Norway and came to the United States. By the time he was 25, he was farming in Spring Grove, Houston County, Minnesota. He joined the Second Battery on September 2, 1864, during a flood of Norwegian immigrants who were signing up during the draft rendezvous that summer. Jacob was 5' 11" tall, with blue eyes, brown hair and a sandy complexion. He received \$33.33 bounty money when he agreed to serve for one year in the army, another \$66.67 was due him.

One of the reasons for few records may stem from the fact that Jacob made his mark on the enlistment papers rather than signing his name. Jacob's mark, never a signature, is found on what few records he did leave about his life, so he probably never learned to read or write.

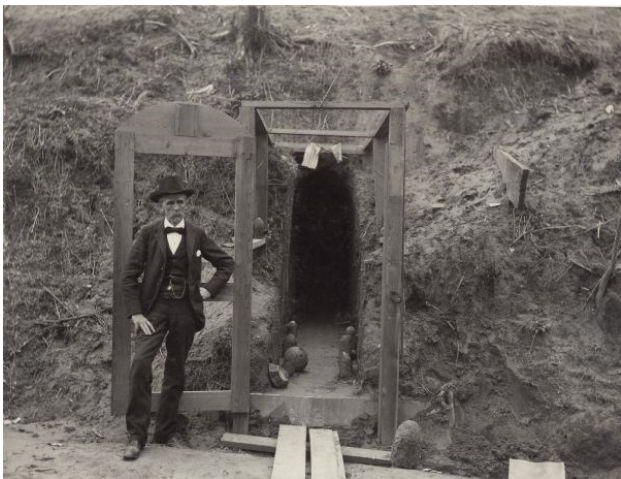
The last year of the war was spent in garrison duty near Chattanooga, Tennessee, for the Second Battery. Jacob never saw any big battles, just drill, guard duty, and a few scouting missions. He was mustered out at the end of the war at Fort Snelling.

Where Jacob went after the army is not known, but by 1880, he was married and living in St. Olaf Township in Otter Tail County, Minnesota. His wife's name was Marie and they had no children.

Jacob applied for a pension in 1893. He said he had disabilities from rheumatism and a disease of the eyes caused by exposure and hardships of the service. The pension was granted.

It is the last known of Jacob until a letter was written about his estate and pension checks. Jacob died on May 23, 1895, and the Home Insurance Company was trying to find his next of kin. The only living relative the agent knew of was "an old brother" and the agent needed instructions on how to handle Jacob's case from the home office. Why a copy of this letter ended up in Jacob's pension file is unknown, but it is the last piece found there.

Jacob was buried next to Marie in the St. Olaf Lutheran Cemetery in St. Olaf Township, Otter Tail County. He has both the family stone and the traditional white veteran's stone.



## Bonus History on Vicksburg

The articles on the following pages were both written by a history professor and published online. They are well done articles that provide a capsule history of the military and civilian sides of the siege of Vicksburg. They are worth the read and should help all of us prepare to interact with the public at the event in Rochester.

The photo at right is of one of the cave entrances at Vicksburg taken in 1890. It is believed the man standing there was a resident in one of those caves in 1863, but that cannot be confirmed.

# ***The Fall of Vicksburg: Turning Point of the Civil War***

Written by Ronald E Franklin

In early July of 1863, the campaign that more than any other determined the outcome of the American Civil war was concluded. That campaign was not the battle of Gettysburg, fought during the first three days of the month, but Vicksburg, which fell to Union forces on July 4.

Vicksburg was a strategic point of the greatest importance. Situated on a high bluff overlooking a hairpin turn of the Mississippi River, it was known as the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy." Confederate President Jefferson Davis called it, "the nail head that holds the South's two halves together."

Recognizing its crucial importance, especially after two failed Union attacks on the city in May and June of 1862, the Confederates strongly fortified Vicksburg, providing it with 172 cannon and a defending army, under Lt. General John Pemberton, of more than 30,000 troops.

Union forces controlled both ends of the Mississippi River, having taken New Orleans in April of 1862, and Memphis in June of that year. But because of the powerful Confederate presence at Vicksburg, located on the river between the two Union strongholds, free navigation of the Mississippi was denied to the North for both military and commercial purposes. The big guns placed on the heights at the city gave the Confederate army total command of the river – any Union vessels attempting to navigate between New Orleans and Memphis risked being blown out of the water as soon as they reached the vicinity of Vicksburg.

By the same token, control of the river at Vicksburg allowed the Southerners free access from the west to the east side of the Mississippi for the passage of food, troops, and materials of war imported from Europe through Mexico. Having control of Vicksburg was truly a lifeline for the Confederacy.

President Abraham Lincoln considered the taking of Vicksburg, which would result in opening the Mississippi to Union river traffic while closing it to the Confederates, one of his highest priorities. "Vicksburg is the key," he said. "The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket."

The job of getting that key into Abraham Lincoln's pocket was entrusted to Major General Ulysses S. Grant, commander of the Union Army of the Tennessee.

Moving south from his base at Memphis, Grant began his campaign to capture Vicksburg in December 1862. The fortress, with the mile-wide Mississippi River to its west and impenetrable bayous and steep hills to the north and east, was well protected from direct assault. It was a tough nut, and it took Grant some time to figure out how to crack it. Over a period of four months, he tried a series of "experiments," as he called them, such as attempting to dredge a canal across the hairpin curve of the river that would allow boats to bypass the guns of the city. This, as well as at least four other attempts, failed.

With Grant seemingly getting nowhere, Northern newspapers and politicians began clamoring that he be replaced. But the President stood by him. "I can't spare this man," Lincoln said, "he fights. I'll try him a little longer."

Finally, Lincoln's confidence paid off. After all the misfires, by April of 1863 Grant had developed the plan that would carry his army to victory.

Grant realized that what he really needed was to get his army to the south of Vicksburg where he could attack the city from its rear. But the plan he devised to achieve that aim was so militarily risky that almost all his subordinate commanders, including his great friend William Tecumseh Sherman, strongly advised against it. In a letter to his brother, Sherman confessed his doubts about the plan. "I feel in its success less confidence than in any similar undertaking of the war," he said. And, writing to his wife he added, "I look upon the whole thing as one of the most hazardous and desperate moves of this or any other war."

The plan that aroused so much trepidation was simple in concept. Grant proposed to march his troops to the south of Vicksburg on the opposite side of the Mississippi from the city. The problem would then be how to get them back to the east side of the mile-wide river. That would require naval vessels to carry them across. But all the Navy's ships on the river were above Vicksburg. For the Navy to get in position below Vicksburg to ferry the troops across the river, ships would have to run the gauntlet of the fortress's big guns, which were poised to blast any vessel attempting such a feat to smithereens.

The final risk factor, and the weightiest, was that once Grant had his army on the east side of the Mississippi, with Confederate forces massing against them, their backs would be to the river. With no reliable supply line from the North, they would basically have to live off the land by foraging for food. And if the army should suffer a defeat, there would be no place to which they could safely retreat – victorious Confederates would drive them into the river.

In other words, Grant's commanders felt that he was putting his whole army at risk.

But despite their fears, Grant's generals had great confidence in him; and he certainly had unshakeable confidence in himself. The plan was set in motion. The result was a campaign commonly held



by historians to be one of the most brilliant of the war.

On April 16, 1863, the Navy, led by Vice Admiral David G. Farragut, "ran the batteries" (sailed past the guns) at Vicksburg with the loss of only one ship. They then successfully ferried Grant's army across the river, landing at Bruinsburg on the Vicksburg side. Writing his memoirs years later, Grant recounted what this achievement meant to him at the time:

*I felt a degree of relief scarcely ever equaled since. Vicksburg was not yet taken it is true, nor were its defenders demoralized by any of our previous moves. I was now in the enemy's country, with a vast river and the stronghold of Vicksburg between me and my base of supplies. But I was on dry ground on the same side of the river with the enemy. All the campaigns, labors, hardships and exposures from the month of December previous to this time that had been made and endured, were for the accomplishment of this one object.*

Grant then began a series of lightning fast attacks (often called Grant's blitzkrieg) that kept Confederate General Pemberton, charged with the defense of Vicksburg, guessing and always overmatched at Grant's point of attack. Over a period of 17 days, Grant's army marched more than 200 miles and won five battles at places such as Champion's Hill and Big Black River.

Pemberton, intent on employing the conventional tactic of attacking and cutting his enemy's supply lines to force him to retreat, remained befuddled throughout. He couldn't find Grant's line of supply to attack it because Grant had none. His troops had brought five days rations with them, and after that would be living off the land. Pemberton never quite understood what Grant was doing, and was never able to effectively counter the moves the Northern army made.



Admiral Porter's Fleet Running the Rebel Blockade of the Mississippi at Vicksburg, April 16th 1863.

Finally, Pemberton and his army were driven into the defenses of Vicksburg, and were pinned there as Grant besieged the place.

Once he had the Confederate army bottled up in Vicksburg, Grant twice launched assaults designed to overrun the city's defenses. Both failed. Grant then settled into a siege. With the rebels in the city cut off from supplies of food and ammunition, the end, however long it might take, was certain.

For weeks the Northern army, along with the gunboats on the river, subjected the city and its garrison to continuous bombardment. Vicksburg became a city of caves, as civilians who had failed to flee at the approach of the Northern army sought protection from the projectiles hurled by Grant's big guns. The rebel soldiers,

however, were required to stay in their trenches on a 24-hour basis. It was a miserable existence for both the civilian and military elements of the population.

After nearly seven weeks of being bombed every day, and having reached the point where both soldiers and civilians were reduced to eating dogs, mules and rats, Vicksburg and its garrison finally surrendered to General Grant on the 4th of July, 1863. That, coincidentally, was the day following Robert E. Lee's final defeat in the battle of Gettysburg.

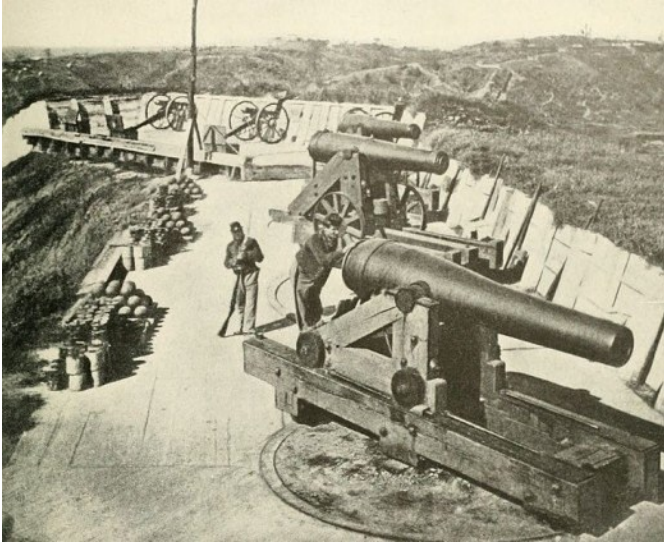
The results of Grant's victory were far-reaching. He had captured an entire army, removing more than 31,000 men from the Confederacy's fighting force. (Grant received the surrenders of three Confederate armies during the war. No other general, North or South, captured even one).

On July 8, just four days after Vicksburg fell, the river boat *Imperial* left St. Louis with commercial cargo, bound downriver for New Orleans. She arrived there safely on the 16th, not having been fired at from the banks of the river, or molested in any way. President Lincoln exulted that, "The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea."

With the Union now patrolling the entire length of the river, the Confederacy found itself essentially cut in half. Its western area, called the Trans-Mississippi, was almost totally cut off from the east. Never again would great shipments of cattle and grain, munitions of war, and above all troops, pass from Texas and Louisiana to the battlegrounds of Georgia, Alabama, and Virginia. The Union would basically ignore the Trans-Mississippi half of the Confederacy for the rest of the war, and that vast region would contribute little to the Southern war effort. With the closing of the Mississippi to Confederate passage, the strangulation of Jefferson Davis' rebel kingdom had begun in earnest.

# Civilians in the Siege of Vicksburg: Living in Caves, Eating Rats

Written by Ronald E Franklin



The big guns of Battery Sherman in 1863 just after the siege of Vicksburg.

Vicksburg, Mississippi, situated on a high bluff that allowed the big guns placed there by the Confederates to interdict Union navigation of the Mississippi River, was considered by both North and South as a major key to victory in the Civil War. The Confederates had it; but U. S. Grant, at the head of a formidable Union army, wanted it, and was coming to take it if he could.

Even though every attempt Grant had made so far to achieve that objective had failed, nobody really expected him to give up. So, civilians were warned that a siege was a distinct possibility—they should either prepare themselves to withstand, or they should get out before the storm broke.

That was the warning Dora Miller recorded in her diary on March 20, 1863. Miller was a Northern-born, pro-Union woman living with her lawyer husband in Vicksburg. Her diary entry notes that in view of expected military operations against the city, non-combatants were being ordered by authorities to “leave or prepare accordingly.”

Two months later, the storm of war did break over Vicksburg. Landing his troops at a point below Vicksburg

and on the same side of the Mississippi River, General Grant fought a brilliant series of battles against Confederate Lt. General John C. Pemberton, who was responsible for defending the town. Badly beaten, Pemberton’s army was forced into the defenses of Vicksburg where, by May 18, Grant had them bottled up and under siege.

Now those civilians who had chosen to remain in their Vicksburg homes, as well as the slave population that had no choice in the matter, began to experience the harsh reality of life in a besieged city.

Residents quickly found themselves confronted with two major threats. First was the fact that no further supplies of food, clean water, and medicine could be expected in Vicksburg while the siege lasted. Although the army had accumulated some supplies of these items in the city in anticipation of a possible siege, those stockpiles were necessarily for the sustenance of soldiers. Civilians would basically be on their own.

It didn’t take long for the shortages of basic necessities to be felt. Dora Miller was soon lamenting in her diary, “I think all the dogs and cats must be killed, or starved, we don’t see any more pitiful animals prowling around.”

The reality was more stark than she imagined. Many of those former pets eventually showed up, not under the dinner table to be fed scraps, but on the table as meager meals for families pushed by hunger to the edge of desperation.

One story, told by Richard Wheeler in his book, “The Siege of Vicksburg,” shows just how bad it got. A mother wrote of the day when her little girl was sick, and a soldier gave her a bluejay he had caught for her to play with. After playing with the bird for a while, the child lost interest. She probably never knew that the next time she encountered that little bluejay was in the watery soup she had for dinner that evening.

But by July 3, the day before the city finally surrendered, Miller noted that her servant Martha “says rats are hanging dressed in the market for sale with mule meat - there is nothing else.” It was said that when the rats were properly fried, they tasted like squirrel.

The Shirley family’s home was inside Union lines at Vicksburg. Removed from the dangerously exposed house, family members found shelter in a cave.”

The stockpiles stored up for the army proved to be entirely inadequate for a long siege, and the soldiers, too, were pushed to the brink of starvation. Rather than the military supplying the civilians, it often worked the other way around. To Dora Miller the starving soldiers were “like hungry animals seeking something to devour.” She goes on,

*Poor fellows! My heart bleeds for them. They have nothing but spoiled, greasy bacon, and bread made of musty pea-flour, and but little of that. The sick ones can’t bolt it. They come into the kitchen when Martha puts the pan of corn-bread in the stove, and beg for the bowl she mixed it in. They shake up the scrapings with water, put in their bacon, and boil the mixture into a kind of soup, which is easier to swallow than pea-bread.*

Ultimately it was the looming specter of starvation that led to the final capitulation of the city.

But there was another, more immediate danger that made the siege of Vicksburg a time of dread for soldiers and civilians alike.

In their determination to force the surrender of the town, General Grant’s forces subjected Vicksburg to



constant bombardment every day during the seven weeks of the siege. And the shells couldn't distinguish between soldiers and civilians.

At first the advent of the Union army on land, and especially the gunboats on the river, was seen as something of a spectacle. But that changed quickly when the firing started. Lucy McRae, the young daughter of a Vicksburg merchant, described some residents' reaction to the first shells lobbed into the city:

*One bright afternoon, men, women and children could be seen seeking the hill-tops with spyglasses, as from the heights could be seen a black object slowly approaching along the river. Suddenly a shell came rattling over as if to say 'Here I am!' ... Another shell, and still another, and the hills began to be deserted.*

Still, residents professed that they would not be intimidated by the shelling. Dora Miller overheard a woman make this defiant speech to one of the Confederate officers:

*It is such folly for them to waste their ammunition like that. How can they ever take a town that has such advantages for defense and protection as this? We'll just burrow into these hills and let them batter away as hard as they please.*

And burrow they did.

The civilian population quickly learned to respect the destructive power of the missiles that were poured relentlessly into the city. Lida Lord, daughter of an Episcopal minister, recalls her family's first introduction to the reality of being on the receiving end of a bombardment:

*Before sunset a bombshell burst into the very center of the dining room ... crushing the well-spread table like an eggshell, and making a great yawning hole in the floor, into which disappeared supper, china, furniture... and our stock of butter and eggs.*

It soon became apparent to residents that even their basements offered little protection against the devastation an exploding shell could cause. So every family that had the means to do so began to dig themselves caves in the sides of hills to serve as (hopefully) bomb-proof shelters.

More accurately, they usually had their slaves or hired workers do the digging for them. According to David Martin in his book, "Vicksburg Campaign: April 1862 - July 1863," cave making became a thriving business, with black laborers offering to do the excavations for \$30 to \$50 each. Opportunistic capitalists even became cave realtors, either selling the dug-outs outright, or leasing them for \$15 a month.

Caves came in all shapes and sizes, from the most basic single-family space to some large enough to shelter up to 200 people.

Some well-to-do families tried to make their caves as home-like as possible, complete with closets, shelving, and carpets. Patricia Caldwell, author of "'I'se So 'Fraid God's Killed Too': The Children Of Vicksburg," tells of some of the better equipped caves that had furniture and books, along with the family's household goods.

An example of one of the more elaborate cave sites was reported by Lida Lord:

*The cave ran about twenty feet underground and communicated at right angles with a wing which opened on the front of the hill, giving us a free circulation of air. At the door was an arbor of branches, in which, on a pine table, we dined when shelling permitted. Near it were a dug-out fireplace and an open-air kitchen, with table, pans, etc.*

A major drawback with even this well-appointed cave was that the Lords shared it, as was common, with eight other families (including



servants), making for extremely crowded conditions. There was one night when there were 65 other people lodged in the cave, "packed in, black and white," Lida Lord remembered, "like sardines in a box."

And those were not the only inhabitants. Lida recalls, "We were almost eaten up by mosquitoes, and were in hourly dread of snakes. The vines and thickets were full of them, and a large rattlesnake was found one morning under a mattress on which some of us had slept all night."

The protection and privacy provided by even the best caves was far from adequate. Once a shell exploded so close to the Lords' cave that it caused a landslide that buried little Lucy McRae alive. Even as Dr. Lord, himself injured, was successfully digging the bloody but still living child out of the dirt, a baby boy was being born in another part of the cave.

Dora Miller recalled that many of those who did not have caves found refuge in churches. It was thought that places of worship were less targeted for shelling. Besides, the buildings were well built and the pews good to sleep on.

Still, there was no place in the besieged city that was really safe. According to the U. S. Army's "Staff Ride Handbook for The Vicksburg Campaign," the Union Army and Navy hurled a total of 16,000 artillery rounds into the city during the 47 days of the siege. About a dozen civilians were killed, including several children, and there were something less than 50 wounded.

At the beginning of the siege, not only the residents of Vicksburg, but the vast majority of people throughout the Confederacy were totally confident that the city would be able to hold out. General Joseph E.

Johnston had been charged by Confederate President Jefferson Davis with assembling an army to come to the relief of the city. Johnston's arrival with a force that would annihilate Grant and keep Vicksburg in Confederate hands was expected every day almost to the end.

But, of course, that didn't happen. The Confederacy simply could not provide enough soldiers to allow Johnston to even challenge Grant's far stronger army. Despite pleas from the government in Richmond that he strike a blow to relieve the besieged city, Johnston refused to waste his men in a foredoomed attack on a dug-in enemy that outnumbered him significantly.

Not knowing of Johnston's plight, the Confederate citizens of Vicksburg lived in daily hope that he would soon arrive to deliver them from the Yankees.



Cave life in Vicksburg as depicted in an 1863 etching.

On the 4th of July, 1863, those hopes were cruelly disappointed. That morning General Pemberton, the Confederate commander, surrendered his famished army and the city to General Grant. After 47 days of defiance in the face of starvation and constant shelling, Vicksburg residents watched as Union soldiers marched into their town as conquerors.

And they never forgot that day.

The memory of the humiliation of that 4th of July in 1863 would stay with Vicksburg residents for almost a century and a half. The next 81 years would pass with no official acknowledgement of Independence Day by the city. It would not be until 1945, amid the patriotic fervor that surrounded the nation's victory in World War II, that Vicksburg would finally once again celebrate the 4th of July. But even then, the memories of 1863 were so painful that the observance wasn't called a 4th of July or Independence Day celebration, but rather a "Carnival of the Confederacy."

Even as late as 1997 a check of the city's events calendar showed that Vicksburg had not planned any official Independence Day observance.

However, Vicksburg seems finally to be getting past the trauma suffered by its citizens in 1863. The 4th of July is back on the community's calendar!

A local newspaper, *The Vicksburg Post*, reports that in 2013, the 150th anniversary of the city's capitulation and reincorporation into the Union, "Tourists and locals alike crowded downtown Vicksburg...not only to celebrate the Fourth of July, but to commemorate the sesquicentennial anniversary of the end of the Siege of Vicksburg." There were fireworks, band concerts, and American flags decorating a large number of both businesses and residences in the town. Vicksburg, at last, celebrated the 4th of July in style!



# Recap



## June 16, Galesville, WI, Arnold House/Eastside Farm

It was a very warm day to set up our stations including the gun, small arms, SAS, and laundry, but the welcome we received from the site people made up for the high



temperatures. The heat and other events nearby took a toll on the number of visitors who came to the site, but we had a good time and had the time to talked in depth to the interested visitors who did come. Not being as busy with visitors did leave time for Private K. Cunningham to get a lesson on how to wash clothes!



## June 30-July 1, Wauconda, IL, Civil War Days Reenactment

It seems the extraordinarily high temperatures are falling on weekends, especially those with events. Heat indexes reached more than 100 at this event, so keeping cool and hydrated was imperative. The heat and the 155th Anniversary at Gettysburg both took their toll on the attendance by both reenactors, sutlers and visitors. The battles were shortened on both days because of the dangerous heat, but everyone made the best of it and stayed safe.

Our camp was teeming with children for this event with the Watkins family attending—it was great to have them in camp. They, along with 14 other Battery members had a wonderful time at this very family friendly event.



**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

Ken Cunningham  
1170 Golf Ridge Circle  
Red Wing, MN 55066

Phone: (651) 388-2945

### 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>

