



2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

“ACTION FRONT”

Circular No. 274

January-February 2020

On This Date-155 Years Ago)

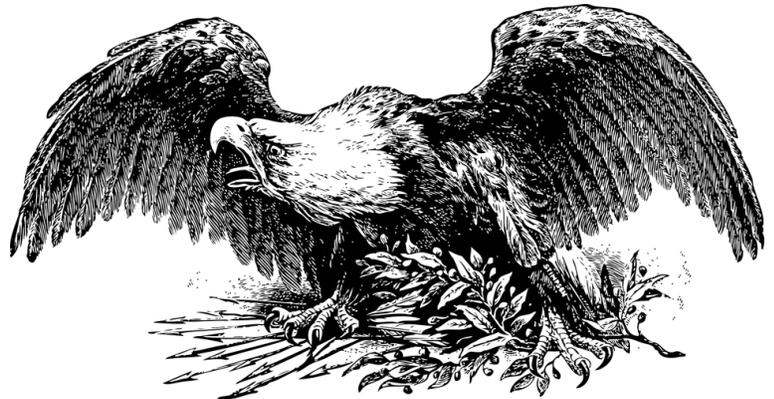
Remarks for the Month of January, 1865 (Numbers indicate the day of the month)

- 1 Corpl John S. White promoted to Sergeant. vice Burnham reduced. Promotions to date from Jan 1st, 1865. Sergt Ferdinand Burnham reduced from Serg't to Private at his own request to date from 1" 1865 Capt Wm Aug. Hotchkiss relieved from duty as acting Chief Artillery Dept - Etowa having reported to the Battery to assume Command
- 4 David Twiggs returned form Hosp't.
- 7 Private Hugh J. Latta detailed as teamster, in Q.M.D.J.O. No. 5 Maj Church. Private Edward T. Tillotson detailed for duty at Pm Marshalls. S. O. M6" by Order of Brig Gen Meagher.
- 9 John D. Miles returned from Hosp't
- 12 Private Ferdinand Burnham detailed to work in Ord. Dept.. S. O. #7 Maj Genl Thomas
- 13 Corp. Wm. S. Wardwell hereby reduced to date from Jan 4"/65 Corp. Bloomfield reduced, to date from 1st Jan 1865 Private John B. Talcott promoted to Corp. to date from Jan. 1/65. Private: Nelson H. Fulton promoted to Corp. to date from Jan 14/65. David Jarvis Reported from dtch service on Gunboat Silver Lake
- 16 Lieut Lyman W. Ayer detailed as assistant Adjutant, at Hd Qurs Port Arty Special Order No. 13" Maj Church Private W. H. Compton promoted to Corp. to date from Jan 17"/1865
- 17 Private James H. Longworth returned from detch Service and Private James Furguson detailed in Q.M. Department Special Order
- 19 Mark Kenney restored to duty
- 20 Christopher Anderson returned from Hosp. Chatt. Tenn.
- 23 Samuel Loudon returned from Hosp't. Chatt. Tenn.
- 24 William S. Wardwell and Laurtiz Olsen artificer detailed in Q. M. Department since Jan 14" 65 to report to St. Kinkead A. A. Q.M. Arfy James Blair in Hosp't. David Jarvis was reported in Remarks, but not changed on Report. Report him for duty Jan 24 " 65
- 25 Martin Hosli Descriptive List sent to Jeffersonville, Ind.

Upcoming Events

The January and February meetings are all about planning for the 2020 reenacting season. Please be on the look out for events that might be considered for our attendance. Anything can be considered at this point, so bring everything you know of so we can add them to the “possibilities list.”

We usually collect possible events for these two months, then narrow down which we really think we want to attend and vote on the calendar at the March meeting.



Bonus Issue!

This is a bonus issue of **Action Front**. It is both the January and February issues as the editor will not be in the same place as her research at the end of January and will not be able to get a newsletter out. Please watch your email for the reminder of the February meeting as there will be NO newsletter to provide that date.

Next Meeting

January 25, 2020 11:00am

Marie's Underground Dining, Red Wing
Contact Ken Cunningham with questions or agenda items. 651-388-2945.



Disease, Hunger, Death & Boredom

By Gary Helm, American Battlefield Trust.

Only a tiny fraction of any soldier's time was spent in front line combat. Instead, the vast majority of his existence revolved around the monotonous routines of camp life, which presented its own set of struggles and hardships.

Once in the ranks, military life turned out to be far different than what the majority of Civil War soldiers had expected. Patriotic zeal blinded most of these volunteers to the realities and hardships they were signing up to experience. The passage of several generations had muted the country's memory of the deprivations of the American Revolution. Few had participated in the war with Mexico, which left a popular legacy of glorious victory. Certainly, argued the conventional wisdom, this sectional crisis would be resolved in a few short, painless months.

Volunteers viewed the battlefield as a great stage upon which they would either "secure their liberty" or "save the Union." While they acknowledged that losses would occur, no one envisioned their potential demise in any but heroic circumstances, but four years of the daily struggle to survive in military camps would prove otherwise. Twice as many Civil War soldiers succumbed to death from disease as from bullets, shells and bayonets. By varying estimates, between 400,000 and 500,000 soldiers lost their lives on this less gallant of stages. What was the basis of this noncombat struggle, and how did the common soldier cope? During the fair-weather campaign season, soldiers could expect to be engaged in battle one day out of 30. Their remaining days were filled with almost interminable drilling, punctuated with spells of entertainment in the form of music, cards and other forms of gambling. The arrival of newspapers or mail from home — whether letters or a care package — in camp was always cause for celebration. Despite such diversions, much time was still left for exposure to the noncombatant foes of poor shelter, unhealthy food, and a lack of hygiene, resulting in waves of sickness and disease.

After the first months of the war, the shelter half, or "dog tent," became the most practical means of overnight shelter. While portable and lightweight, shelter halves provided minimal protection for their two inhabitants. Sgt. Austin C. Stearns of the 13th Massachusetts described his shelter as "simply a piece of cloth about six feet square with a row of buttons and button holes on three sides; two men pitched together by buttoning their pieces together and getting two sticks with a crotch at one end and one to go across at the top and then placing their cloth over it and pinning it down tight." To protect the soldier from the damp ground, a tarred or rubberized blanket could be used. A stout wool blanket kept the chill off. Unfortunately, many soldiers discarded these heavy items on a long march or when entering combat, and lived (or died) to regret it when the weather changed. As the war moved forward, an exhausted soldier often merely lay on his blanket at night in an effort to simplify his life and maximize periods of rest. Such protracted exposure to the elements boded ill for his life expectancy.

Rations on the march varied from plentiful to scarce. On paper, the Union army enjoyed the best rations of any army in history up to that time, but logistical difficulties inherent in feeding armies of tens of thousands resulted in occasional shortages. The Confederacy, while fighting on predominately "home turf," often found it difficult to consistently deliver full rations to its troops on the march, largely due to procurement and transportation problems.

The full Union marching ration consisted of one pound of hard bread (the infamous hardtack), three-quarters of a pound of salted pork or one-and-a-quarter pound of fresh meat, along with coffee, sugar and salt allotments. At the beginning of the war, the Confederacy adopted the Union ration, but reduced it by 1862. Fresh meat and coffee became increasingly scarce. As fresh fruits and vegetables disappeared from military diets, soldiers' immune systems deteriorated and vitamin deficiency diseases such as scurvy proliferated. The Union army responded by issuing desiccated vegetables. As described by Corp. Joseph Van Nest of the 101st Ohio, these delicacies consisted of "a combination of corn husks, tomato skins, carrots and other kinds of vegetables too numerous to mention." This bounty had been dried and compressed into a sheet or block and, when boiled, expanded to many times its previous size. While denigrated as "desecrated vegetables" by the boys in blue, they consumed them with alacrity as a variation in an otherwise bland diet. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to the culinary science of the era, most of the needed vitamins disappeared during processing.

Confederate soldiers usually had to forage for fresh vegetables. During the deprivations of the 1864 Atlanta Campaign, one Johnny Reb wrote, "Our men get a vegetable diet by cooking up polk, potato tops, May pop vines, kurlip weed, lambs quarter, thistle and a hundred kind of weeds I always thought poison. I thought it trash...but the boys call it 'long forage'..." On the march, "foraging" — a convenient euphemism for theft — would be employed by both sides in an attempt to improve the daily diet. Despite orders to the contrary, some Confederates liberally practiced this thievery during their forays into the North and even when marching and camping in friendly territory.

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The commissary took a back seat on the march to the needs of the ordinance department, but still trumped the quartermaster, whose top priority was to provide forage for draft animals, not replacing uniform components. Threadbare patriots consequently appeared, particularly in the Confederate armies, and the “battlefield requisition” became a prime means of supply for the South. As Sgt. John Worsham noted at the end of the war:

“Nearly all equipment in the Army of Northern Virginia were articles captured from the Yankees.... Most of the blankets were those marked ‘US,’ and also the rubber blankets or cloths. The very clothing that the men wore was mostly captured, for we were allowed to wear their pants, underclothing and overcoats. As for myself, I purchased only one hat, one pair of shoes, and one jacket after 1861.”

Soldiers North and South also shared in the infestation of body lice in their clothing and bedding. Due to constant outdoor living, often under poor sanitary conditions, the “grey back vermin” became a visible manifestation of all of the invisible bacteria and germs whose presence was unknown to mid-19th-century science.



Winter camp, Brandy Station, Va. Library of Congress

The seasonal movement to permanent winter camps would simultaneously improve and harm the physical condition of the Civil War soldier. While the men remained in one place, the supply chain of wagons and railroads caught up to their daily needs. Union logisticians employed their superior resources in overcoming commissary and quartermaster problems, but the Confederates also managed to supply their men in winter camp under more challenging conditions.

Periodic shortages did exist, but were vividly remembered by the Southerners. Both sides shared the difficulties that emerged from remaining in one place for an extended period of time. The majority of soldiers, being from rural backgrounds, had not been exposed to such a wide cross section of the human population and its communicable diseases. When accumulated in camps of tens of thousands, soldiers without natural immunities would succumb to the likes of measles and chickenpox. Those same large numbers, residing in one spot for more than a month, caused horrendous situations in relation to sanitation. The use of “sink pits” as latrine mechanisms ultimately led to the presence of human fecal bacteria in the water supply. That water supply, in many instances, did not need much help in the area of contamination. Swift running, clear water would be the exception more often than the rule. These conditions created the greatest killer of the war: amoebic and bacterial dysentery.

Whimsically called a case of the “quickstep,” dysentery did more damage than the infernal killing creations of man. The creation of penicillin and other antibiotics was still decades away, leaving medical staffs of the Civil War few tools to combat the war’s greatest killer. By the end of the war, the Union Sanitary and Christian Commissions made great strides in improving camp hygiene and clean water. The Confederacy had nothing on such a scale, although experience also improved camp conditions for the boys in gray.

After four long years of war, the military encampments had taken their toll. Although the 2:1 rate of death from disease over combat may seem alarming to us today, it represented a significant improvement from earlier conflicts, like the American Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, when that number was closer to 5:1. Not until World War II did the number of battle casualties approach the losses from disease.

Battery Profile

Charles Silas Waldron

Charles was born in Cannan, Maine, about 1829. He was living near Mankato, Minnesota, in 1860 when his wife went to court. Lydia wanted a divorce. Charles at the time was using his middle name and the documents call him Silas. He did not appear in court as he had been ordered to do. The judge ruled that since Charles did not appear, the charges against him must be held as true. The complaint against Charles said they had been living in Minnesota for about one year. It called Charles a "habitual drunkard and has abused and neglected his said wife, and that it was and is impossible for the said plaintiff and said defendant to live together as husband and wife in peace and happiness, but that in consequence of the drunkenness and neglect and abuse of said defendant, the life of the said plaintiff is rendered miserable and unhappy." The judge ruled that Lydia got custody of their son, Allen Julius Lovilo, because "the father is an unsuitable person to have the care and custody control and guardianship of said son." The divorce was granted on Christmas eve, 1860.

Charles left the Mankato area and was working as a machinist in St. Anthony, Hennepin County, in 1862 when the Second Minnesota Battery was forming up. Charles was mustered in on January 11th as a private. It was a rank he held throughout the war.

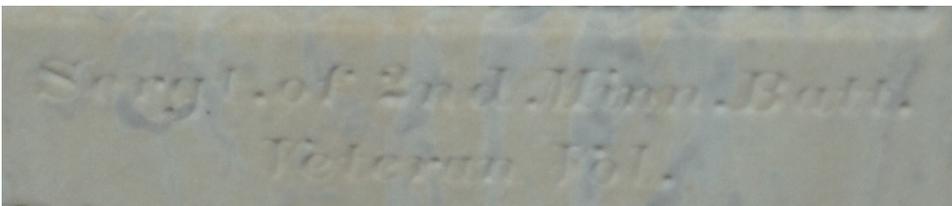
The first mention of Charles in the morning reports of the Battery was to note him as a deserter on October 1, 1862. The last anyone had seen of him was in camp near Louisville, Kentucky. Also missing was Wolfgang Presinger, another private in the Battery. Wolfgang's reason for deserting was worry about his family. Word had reached the Battery of the Indian uprising in Minnesota and some of the men were from areas where there was heavy fighting. Wolfgang's family was in New Ulm and he simply decided to go home--with or without permission--to see about them. Charles left no record of why he went missing, but he may have gone back to Minnesota with Wolfgang to see about his own family. Mankato was not that far from New Ulm and that had been Charles' home. Charles reported back to the Battery in March of 1863 and was accepted into the unit again without remark in the records other than noting he owed \$19.12 for "his arrest and delivery to his company." The charge of desertion was later removed from Charles' record and changed to read "absent without leave."

Charles continued to serve in the Battery. In March of 1864, the men were asked to reenlist for three more years or the duration of the war. If they did, they earned a 30 veteran's furlough and a bounty. Charles agreed to stay in the army for another three years. Charles was one of seven men who left early, departing from the command on April 18th. Why these men left a day early is unknown, but it is clear that Charles did not go back to Minnesota. He had been born in Cannan, Maine, and family there might have been why he went to Maine on his furlough. While there, he married Mary Emily Athinson on May 15, 1864, at St. Albans, Maine.

A doctor wrote a letter for Charles and dated it May 23, 1864, written from Newport, Maine. He explained Charles was home on a veteran's furlough, but had become too sick to travel. His lungs were "inflamed" according to the doctor, and he estimated 20 days before Charles would be ready to return to duty.

Charles did return to the Battery and continued to serve, though he was sick a great deal of the time. In May of 1865, Charles sent "My Dear Mary Emily" a letter in which he explained that he was too sick to write, but "though you have been a worrying about me on account of not gitieing letters no oftener but Emily not unless I was dieing should I ask N.D. Merrill to write for my reasons will be made known when I come home if you dont all ready know at the present." Neimiah Merrill was another private in the Second Battery. Charles also alternated between calling his wife Mary and Emily, and sometimes used both names. He described how sick he was with "the feaver and ague so very bad that it had all most Shook the Soles off from my boots, but I am all over it now." Charles described the town, the lack of duty the Battery had just then, and his hopes for a discharge. He cautioned Mary not to get her hopes up too high about his coming home, as he was not sure if he should expect a discharge in the next days or not until fall. Charles concluded the letter with, "Emily bee a good girl and put your trust Ever in god as I always lay you in his protection and Care. write Soon and often Ever Beareing in mind, that our Seppreation from each other is now to bee Short this is from your true and Loveing Husband, Charles S. Waldron."

Charles was mustered out on August 16, 1865, and he went home to Mary Emily in Augusta, Maine. Little more is known until his death on August 31, 1881. A guardian filed for a pension for Mary as she had been declared "insane" and could not apply for herself. Charles died from "malarial poisoning and resulting disease of the liver" according to the pension records and it was deemed service related. Mary received her pension of \$8 a month.



Those Pesky Laundry Problems...

Originally published on BUST.com December 6, 2017; MimiMatthews.com November 26, 2017

In the Victorian era, women's clothing was just as likely to spot, stain, and soil as it is today. For fine fabrics, this posed a particular dilemma. Ladies couldn't simply throw their printed muslin dresses into a washing machine or send their silk ball gowns to the dry cleaners. Instead, they relied on their lady's maids to keep their clothing clean and in good order. Not only would a competent lady's maid know how to sponge and press a gown for wear, she would also know precisely how to wash a delicate muslin or remove an oil stain from silk.

Washing Printed Muslin (Cotton)

Dresses of printed muslin were very popular during the nineteenth century. These dresses could be washed, but if the fabric was patterned or printed, great care had to be taken to preserve the colors. For this reason, it was inadvisable for a muslin dress to be washed in hot water. Soap, when applied directly to the fabric, was equally harmful. Instead, the 1856 edition of Godey's Lady's Book recommends that a lady's maid: "Make a lather by boiling some soap and water together; let it stand until it is sufficiently cool for use, and previously to putting the dress into it, throw in a handful of salt."

After soaking, the muslin dress would go through a double rinse in "clear cold water" and salt. The dress was then carefully wrung out and hung to dry with the folds spread "as open as possible" so that no part of the dress was lying over another part.

Removing Ordinary Stains From Silk

The process of cleaning silk dresses was a bit more complicated than simply washing the fabric in soap and water. To remove ordinary stains, a lady's maid generally employed some variety of spot solution. The 1861 edition of Godey's Lady's Book describes one such solution comprised of:

"Quarter of a pound of honey; quarter of a pound of soft soap; two wineglasses of gin; three gills of boiling water."

These ingredients were mixed well and left to stand until the solution was "bloodwarm." It could then be applied to the silk with a small brush, with special attention to stains or spots of dirt. A lady's maid would next use a sponge to "wet the whole breadth of fabric" and to rub gently over the soiled areas. With the cleaning completed, the silk dress could be rinsed in "cold soft water" and hung up to drain. As for drying, the 1861 edition of Beeton's Book of Household Management states that: "Silks, when washed, should be dried in the shade, on a linen-horse, taking care that they are kept smooth and unwrinkled."

As a final step, a lady's maid would iron the dress while it was still damp. However, if the dress was black or dark blue, Beeton's advises that, once dry, the dress should be spread out over a table and "sponged with gin, or whiskey, or other white spirit."

Removing Oil Stains From Silk, Satin, And Velvet

Stubborn stains, such as those from oil, could be treated with a number of substances, depending on preference. These substances included turpentine, benzene, gasoline, magnesia, French chalk, chloroform, pipe clay, and even the yolk of an egg or the juice of a raw potato. The 1909 edition of Household Discoveries advises that a lady's maid:

"Lay the stained article flat on a smooth surface and apply the cleansing fluid with a small sponge, toothbrush, or nailbrush, unless otherwise directed, until the stain is removed."

When using gasoline or benzene, the cleaning solution was applied not only to the spot, but also to "a rather large circle around it." A lady's maid would then "rub outward from the center with quick, firm strokes." If the benzene left a stain, it could be held under the steam of a teakettle until the stain disappeared.

Grease spots could also be rubbed out with "a lump of wet magnesia." When dry, the magnesia could be dusted off the fabric. Another alternative, was to cover a grease spot with a liberal application of French chalk. Brown paper was then placed over the chalk and smoothed with a hot iron. According to Household Discoveries, "the iron will melt the grease and the chalk and paper will absorb it."

In a slight variation of the above, the 1869 edition of Godey's recommends that French chalk and lavender water be mixed together to form a thick paste. The paste was applied to the stain and rubbed gently into the fabric with the fingers. It was then covered with "a sheet of clean blotting-paper and brown paper over it" and smoothed with an iron. When dry, the remaining chalk could be dusted off with "a white handkerchief."

Pipe clay was another method for removing oil stains from fine fabric. The powdered clay was moistened with water until it formed a thick cream. The 1863 edition of Godey's Lady's Book reports that it was then: "...laid on the stain, and left to dry some hours, then lightly scraped or rubbed off with a knife or flannel, so as not to injure the surface."

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If the pipe clay dried to a light color, it meant that the oil stain had been removed. Pipe clay was safe to use on most fabrics and, according to Godey's, "will not injure the most delicate tints of silk or paper."

Removing Stains from Mourning Dresses of Crape and Bombazine

When cleaning dark fabrics, like the black crapes and bombazines used for mourning dresses, a lady's maid often employed a solution made of fig leaves. The 1869 edition of Godey's reports that this solution could be obtained by boiling "a handful of fig leaves in two quarters of water until reduced to a pint." This solution was then applied to the fabric with a sponge.

Washing Lace Collars, Cuffs, And Trim

On a Victorian lady's gown, the collar and cuffs were generally soiled long before the rest of the dress. When made of cotton or muslin, it was easy enough to remove them and have them laundered. However, when collar and cuffs were made of lace, the process for washing them was a bit more difficult. For this reason, the 1861 edition of Godey's Lady's Book advises that every lady "should know how to wash her own thread lace."

The first step was to remove the lace from the gown. According to Godey's, a lady must then "roll the lace very smoothly and securely round a clean black bottle" and "tack each end of the lace with a needle and thread to keep it smooth." Once the lace was on the bottle, it was thoroughly sponged with "sweet oil" and then soaked in a wash kettle containing "clear water and white Castile soap."

Godey's recommended that a lady leave the lace to boil in the sudsy water for "an hour or more" until the lace was "clean and white all through" The suds were then drained off and the lace was left to dry in the sun. Once dry, the lace—depending on its size—could be wrapped around a ribbon-block or placed between two sheets of white paper and pressed flat in a large book.

A few final words...

There was no single way to spot clean a Victorian gown. Many lady's maids had their own special mixtures, perhaps some secret combination of turpentine, benzene, or chalk. Caring for the fine fabrics of their mistress's gowns was as much a part of their job as knowing the latest hairstyles in which to style their mistress's hair. I hope this article has given you some little insight into how they did it.



From Godey's Ladies Book, January 1860

A New Years' Eve Letter

(From the *Civil War Monitor*)

On New Year's Eve 1862, 24-year-old William Thompson Lusk, a captain in the 79th New York Infantry—a regiment known as the "Highlanders" for its predominantly Scottish-American makeup—penned the following letter to his sister Lillie at the family home in Connecticut. In his ambivalence about the year gone by and the one to come, Lusk was not unlike countless thousands of other Civil War soldiers, North and South, who took time for reflection that day.

*Camp near Falmouth, Va.
Dec. 31st, 1862.*

My dear Sister Lillie:

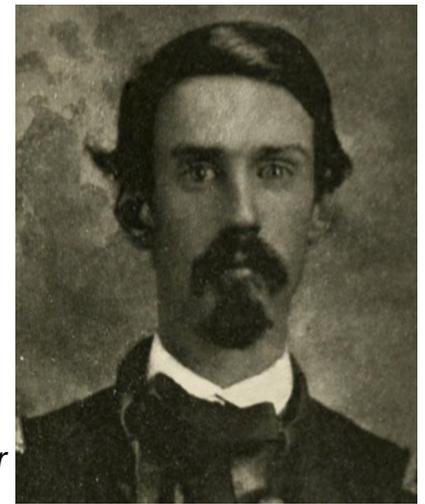
I have just received your letter, and am much troubled to hear that mother has been ill. As you were intending to write me on New Year's eve, I have concluded to write you in turn, knowing it to be all one, whether I write you or mother. I am specially disposed to write to-night as I feel very good-natured. I am not troubled for the moment, either with the goadings of disappointed ambition, the peculiarities of Scotchmen, the inclemency of the weather, or even with "the unfortunate Abraham Lincoln." In a word, I am determined to be good-humored in bidding farewell to the old year, notwithstanding it is responsible (either it, or the aforesaid Abraham) for so many disasters. If all the hopes so fondly entertained at the beginning of the year have not been realized, we know at least that Providence doeth all things well, if not exactly as man would have it.

The Highlanders mean to celebrate the New Year, as the accompanying card will show. Turkeys, hams, tongues, bread and butter and a bowl of punch will be furnished to visitors, and we hope they may be many. But pleasantest of all, [Rev. William K.] Hall [chaplain of the 17th Connecticut Infantry] is coming to visit me, bringing with him a Dr. Hubbard of his regiment—an Uncle of pretty little Mary Chittenden. If we don't have a good time, then I'll hang up my sword on a willow tree, but you will have to wait until the second inst. for particulars. I had a good time Christmas too, and only regret you should have spent it so quietly. You see I raised a pair of ducks and rode up with them tied to my saddle to Stafford C. H. (Ten miles), found Hall, eat the ducks (with Hall's assistance), gossiped, and made very merry, though I had so recently written home representing myself so very miserable. Yesterday I made Major Crosby of the 21st C.V. a visit, and found that I used to go to school with him to old Peltis up-town. We had a right good time of it. His heart so warmed toward me finally, that he brought out a loaf of cake made by his wife's fair fingers—good cake it was too. Speaking of cake reminds me that the Chaplain, my tent companion, has just received a cake from his sweetheart. Oh these sweethearts! Chaplain receives every mail pretty pink notes which he likes to be joked about. He likes the cake too.

Hall thinks I have grown dreadfully unrefined. I smoke a pipe and eat onions. Horrible, isn't it? Would you really like your brother at home, who can do such dreadful things? I can't come. I've tried, but Rhadamanthus, that is Old Bull Sumner, is adamant, and bids me wait until I catch swamp fever or lose a leg, when I will be able to return with flying colors. I tried in fact to take the Bull by the horns, and that's what I got for my pains. Dear me, I'm growing older every day, so you can imagine how old I shall be when I get home.

Well, sister Lillie, I would try and be sentimental in view of New Year's Eve, but that could hardly be looked for in a man that eats onions. But may many blessings rest on both my sisters, my mother and the little ones that are dear to us all. True love between you and Tom, between Hunt and Mary, deepening not weakening at each successive return of the New Year.

*Had I my six months' pay, and twenty days to spend at home, how I would make things fly around. Again love to mother, Uncle Phelps, Aunt Maria, Nellie, Tom, friends individually, collectively, and in bulk. Affec'y. your brother,
Will.*



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.

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

Your Country Needs You!
And so does the Battery!

2020 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

UPDATE YOUR MEMBERSHIP RECORDS!

Cell phone numbers and email address change, so be sure we have
your correct information to be included in all vital communications
(especially emergency situations).

Thank you!