

2nd MINNESOTA BATTERY

"ACTION FRONT"

Circular No. 325

January 2025

On This Date-160 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 Hospt.
- 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 detach 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 Hospt. Chatt. Tenn.
- 24 William S. Wardwell and Laurant Olsen artificer detailed in Q. M. Department since Jan 14" 65 to report to St. Kinkead A. A. Q.M. Arfy James Blair in Hospt. 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.

Events for 2025

Please watch for information on events that we may want to consider for the 2025 reenacting season. A list of these potential events will be compiled and discussed starting in February with a final vote on the 2025 calendar in March.

As of the October meeting, there are already 4-5 possible events for next year. It looks like more events may be on our calendar for the coming season!

Dues Are Due!

The annual membership dues for 2025 are due in January, so the form is attached to the last page of this newsletter. The treasurer would appreciate your prompt attention to the dues as he needs to be sure he knows who is a member in good standing. This is especially important as we come to the elections and decisions on events and expenditures.

Please bring your dues to the January meeting or send them to Dary Duden. His address is on the form.

Please do fill in the form on the last page to update your email, phone, or anything else that may have changed. We want to have accurate info to find our members if we need to.



Next Meeting

or
January 25th, 2025

Elks Club, 306 W 4th Street, Red Wing
Contact Ken Cunningham with questions or agenda items.
651-388-2945.



Battery Profiles

Ezra Jewel

By August of 1864, everyone knew the cost of the Civil War in terms of lives lost, so it might have been a comfort to enlist with a friend. That is what Ezra did. He and William Galespie were both living on the Wisconsin side of the St. Croix River Valley when they went to Taylor's Falls, Minnesota, to enlist. They joined the Second Minnesota Battery of Artillery and served together until the end of the war.

Ezra was born in Vermont on November 21, 1842. He began working as a lumber man, so he probably followed the wave of eastern lumber men who came to Minnesota and Wisconsin for the timber in the 1850's. When Ezra enlisted, he was 21 years old, stood 5' 6" tall, had gray eyes, brown hair and a fair complexion.

The Second Battery spent most of the last year of the war in garrison, so Ezra did not see hard fighting in major battles. He was sent off on detailed duty in the spring of 1865 and returned to the Battery on April 5. When the Battery was mustered out at the end of the war, Ezra went back to St. Croix Falls.

On November 11, 1866, Ezra married Henrietta Cooper, and the couple stayed in the area around St. Croix Falls. They had at least one son and one daughter.

Ezra was "in the woods driving a team" on January 29, 1885, when he fell from the sleigh. His left hand was "mashed" in the accident and had to be amputated about three inches above the wrist. Six years later when Ezra applied for a pension, the examining doctor noted it his arm was clean with no particular sensitiveness or pain. He added that Ezra had never had an artificial limb.

Ezra eventually went into farming from the lumber business and it was his last occupation. He was driving a wagon in the early fall of 1907 when the team ran away. Ezra was injured by the time the wild ride was over and he never recovered. In early December, he was moved to St. Mary's Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota, for treatment. It was decided that surgery might help him, and it was scheduled for the morning of December 24, 1907.

Henrietta and her daughter, married by this time, went to spend Christmas with Ezra and to be with him when the surgery was done. The operation was performed, but Ezra died that afternoon from complications of the original injury and the strain of surgery.

Ezra's body was brought back to St. Croix Falls and laid to rest in the city cemetery, his grave marked with a white military marker.

His death was not the only tragedy Henrietta would face in her last years. On September 19, 1919, a fire broke out in her home and destroyed almost all her household goods, including her widow's pension certificate. It was Ezra's longtime friend, neighbor and Battery comrade who came forward to help Henrietta. William Galespie signed the affidavits necessary for her to obtain new pension papers to claim her widow's due.



How Many Lives Lost?

(From: *Daily Dose of History* website)

It is impossible to know, of course, precisely how many lives were lost during the American Civil War. For many years the historical consensus placed the death toll at around 620,000. In recent years scholars have revised that estimate, with 750,000 now accepted as the best estimate. Even using the lower estimate, deaths during the Civil War exceed the total number of deaths in all other American wars combined.

While hundreds of thousands of men lost their lives on battlefields, it was disease, not combat, that claimed most lives during the war. Three-fifths of the Union dead and two-thirds of the Confederate dead lost their lives to infection or disease, with the deadliest killers being diarrhea (which accounted for 20% of the deaths by disease), pneumonia, typhoid, and dysentery. Unsanitary conditions were principally to blame.



FIGHTING WORDS

BY TRACY L. BARNETT

“Shebang”

The rise of a popular term used to describe certain wartime accommodations

SHE•BANG | *noun* | A strange word that had its origin during the late civil war. It is applied alike to a room, a shop, or a hut, a tent, a cabin; an engine-house.¹

“I hardly think there will be a fight here at Fredericksburg, as we have orders to fix up our tents as though we were expected to stay here some time. The rebels seem to be buisy, building breastworks, and preparing for us, but I should think it would not be much trouble for us to drive them out of Fredericksburg if we went about it,” wrote George Washington Whitman, an officer in the 51st New York Infantry, in a letter to his wife on December 8, 1862.² Yet five days later, Major General Ambrose Burnside led the Army of the Potomac in a series of futile attacks against fortified Confederate positions west of the city on Marye’s Heights. Leaden bullets fell like hail, cutting down the men in blue. The 51st New York “was ordered to support a battery” and the Confederates “completely swept the position with grape and cannister and our battery was soon obliged to haul off with nearly half of their men either killed or wounded.” Once again ordered to the front, the regiment marched “in line of battle over a plain about 200 Yards wide that was entirely swept by the enemys guns.” “We received the most terrific fire of grape, cannister, percussion Shell musketry and everything else, that I ever saw,” Whitman recalled.³ As the evening sun dipped below the horizon, dry grasses caught fire and screams of the dying filled the air as the Union army retreated across the Rappahannock River.

On the morning of December 16, the *New York Tribune* published a list of the regimental casualties

for 51st New York, and included among them was “First Lieutenant G.W. Whitmore [sic], Company D.”⁴ Without waiting to learn the extent of his brother’s battlefield injuries, poet Walt Whitman packed a bag, borrowed \$50 from their mother, and joined the throng of people rushing from New York City to Washington, D.C., to learn of their loved ones’ fates. After going from hospital to hospital without finding his younger brother, Whitman secured a pass granting him authorization to travel aboard a military train to Falmouth, Virginia, where the 51st New York was encamped. There was his brother, who had escaped the battle with only a gash on his cheek.⁵ “When I found dear brother George, and found that he was alive and well, O you may imagine how trifling all my little cares and difficulties seemed—they vanished into nothing,” wrote Whitman.⁶

Yet the journey changed Whitman. In the aftermath of the Battle of Fredericksburg, “one of the first things that met my eyes in camp, was a heap of feet, arms, legs, &c. under a tree in front of a hospital.”⁷ He witnessed, firsthand, “the way that hundreds of thousands of good men are now living, and have had to live for a year or more, not only without any of the comforts, but with death and sickness and hard marching and hard fighting.”⁸ Writing about his experiences in late 1862 or early 1863, he recalled the journey back to Washington. Before dawn, “the soldiers guarding the road came out from their tents or *shebangs* of bushes with rumbled hair and half awake look. Those on duty were walking their posts, some on banks over us, others down far below the level of the track.”⁹ Although applying a vernacular expression rapidly becoming commonplace among Union soldiers, Whitman’s wartime account was the first time *shebang* appeared in print.

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Fighting Words

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Distinguishable from a permanent dwelling, a *shebang* was a poorly made hut or shanty, oftentimes a temporary accommodation. During the war, Mary A. Livermore, a leading member of Chicago's Northwest Branch of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, traveled south to provide care to Union soldiers hospitalized at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana. While in the vicinity, she journeyed inland to visit the soldiers of the Chicago Mercantile Battery, and "the boys swarmed from tents and 'she-bangs' ... all shouting a hearty welcome." For her overnight accommodations, Livermore received the "best shebang of the encampment." "Everything in the way of shelter, in camp parlance, that was not a tent, was a shebang," she explained. "Mine was a rough hut made of boards, with a plank floor, roofed with canvas, with a *bona fide* glass window at one end, and a panelled door at the other. The furniture consisted of two bunks, one built over the other.... There was a rough pantry with shelves, holding rations, odd crockery and cutlery, ... a home-made rickety table, a bit of looking-glass, sundry pails and camp-kettles, a three-legged iron skillet, and a drop-light, extemporized from the handle of a broken bayonet, and a candle, the whole suspended from the ridge pole by a wire."¹⁰ In 1877, linguist John Russell Bartlett updated his *Dictionary of Americanisms*, adding myriad terms arising from "the late civil war."¹¹ One of those additions to the fourth edition was *shebang*: "a strange word that had its origin during the late civil war. It is applied alike to a room, a shop, or a hut, a tent, a cabin; an engine-house."¹²

Shebang entered into common usage during the war as thousands of Union and Confederate soldiers found themselves sleeping in these

shanties, but the term's prewar origin is complex. Some linguists trace the term to Ireland where a *shebeen* or *shebang* indicated "a place where unlicensed liquor is sold."¹³ Maximilian Schele De Vere's *Americanisms: The English of the New World* (1872) attributed it to the French term *cabane*, claiming, "*shebang* ... used even yet by students of Yale College and elsewhere to designate their rooms, or a theatrical or other performance in a public hall, has its origin probably in a corruption of the French *cabane*, a hut, familiar to the troops that came from Louisiana, and constantly used in the Confederate camp for the simple huts, which they built with such alacrity and skill for their winter quarters."¹⁴ Publishing their *Dictionary of Slang, Jargon & Cant* in 1897, two British linguists traced the word's origin to Hebrew: "*Shebang* (American), a shanty, or small house of boards. No one has ever explained the origin of this term, but it may be noted that there are exactly seven board-surfaces in a shanty, the four upright sides, the two sides of the roof, and the floor, and that the word *shebang*, in Hebrew, means seven."¹⁵ Or, as others claimed, "any shanty where they play [gambling] at seven up."¹⁶ American Freemasons attributed more symbolism to the number seven. "Among the Hebrews," claimed *A Lexicon of Freemasonry*, in the 1850s, "the etymology of the word shows its sacred import; for, from the word עֶבֶשׂ (*shebang*) *seven*, is derived verb עָבַשׂ (*shabang*) *to swear*, because oaths were confirmed either by seven witnesses, or by some victims offered in sacrifice."¹⁷ In 1854, a Pennsylvania newspaper, likewise, referred to an Odd Fellows Lodge as a "*chebang*."¹⁸

The meaning of *shebang* expanded after the Civil War. In *Roughing It* (1873), Mark Twain wrote, "Say, Johnny, this suits *me*!—suits yours truly, you

bet, you! I want this *shebang* all day. I'm *on* it, old man! Let 'em out! Make 'em go! We'll make it all right with you, sonny!"¹⁹ Twain was referring not to a hut or shanty but to an omnibus or carriage. By the 1880s and 1890s, *shebang* referred to even more than a shack or vehicle. Published in 1914, Henry Bradley's *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* provided not one but three possible definitions for this "U.S. slang" term: 1a) "A hut, shed; one's dwelling, quarters"; 1b) "Applied to a vehicle"; and 2) "More widely, almost any matter of present concern; thing; business; as tired of the whole *shebang*."²⁰

Since the 1990s, the word has added yet another definition—one that would have been unfathomable to Whitman and Twain. In Linux script, the *shebang* or *hashbang* ("#!") character combination is currently used on the very first line of computer coding script to indicate which interpreter can process the commands in the digital file.²¹ This technical term is probably alien to most Americans today, who will instead hearken to the late-19th-century usage "the whole *shebang*," when referring to the entirety of something. Although far from the soldiers' shanties immortalized by Whitman, the Civil War-era usage of *shebang* lives on in conversation and of course in commerce. It is a branding tool to sell an array of spice mixes, hot sauces, and potato chips marketed as "The Whole Shabang Super-Seasoned Snacks." 

TRACY L. BARNETT WILL RECEIVE HER DOCTORATE IN AMERICAN HISTORY FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA IN DECEMBER 2024. RIFLES—THEIR MEANING TO MEN AND THEIR AVAILABILITY IN 19TH-CENTURY AMERICA—ARE AT THE CENTER OF HER SCHOLARSHIP. WITH HER FELINE FAMILIAR, SHE LIVES IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Crossroads

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in "the event of any reverse" that might befall the Union army.²

Tactically, however, the Dyer ridge position had fatal problems. The clear fields of fire forward of the proposed gun line afforded a spectacular view that terminated in lines of timber. Any Confederate attack would need to pass through those trees in order to reach Mendenhall's guns. But the distance across the Dyer fields from the cover of the tree line was barely 400 yards, which was not nearly enough to permit even seasoned Union gunners the time needed to repulse a determined enemy assault—at least not without infantry support to protect the gun crews.

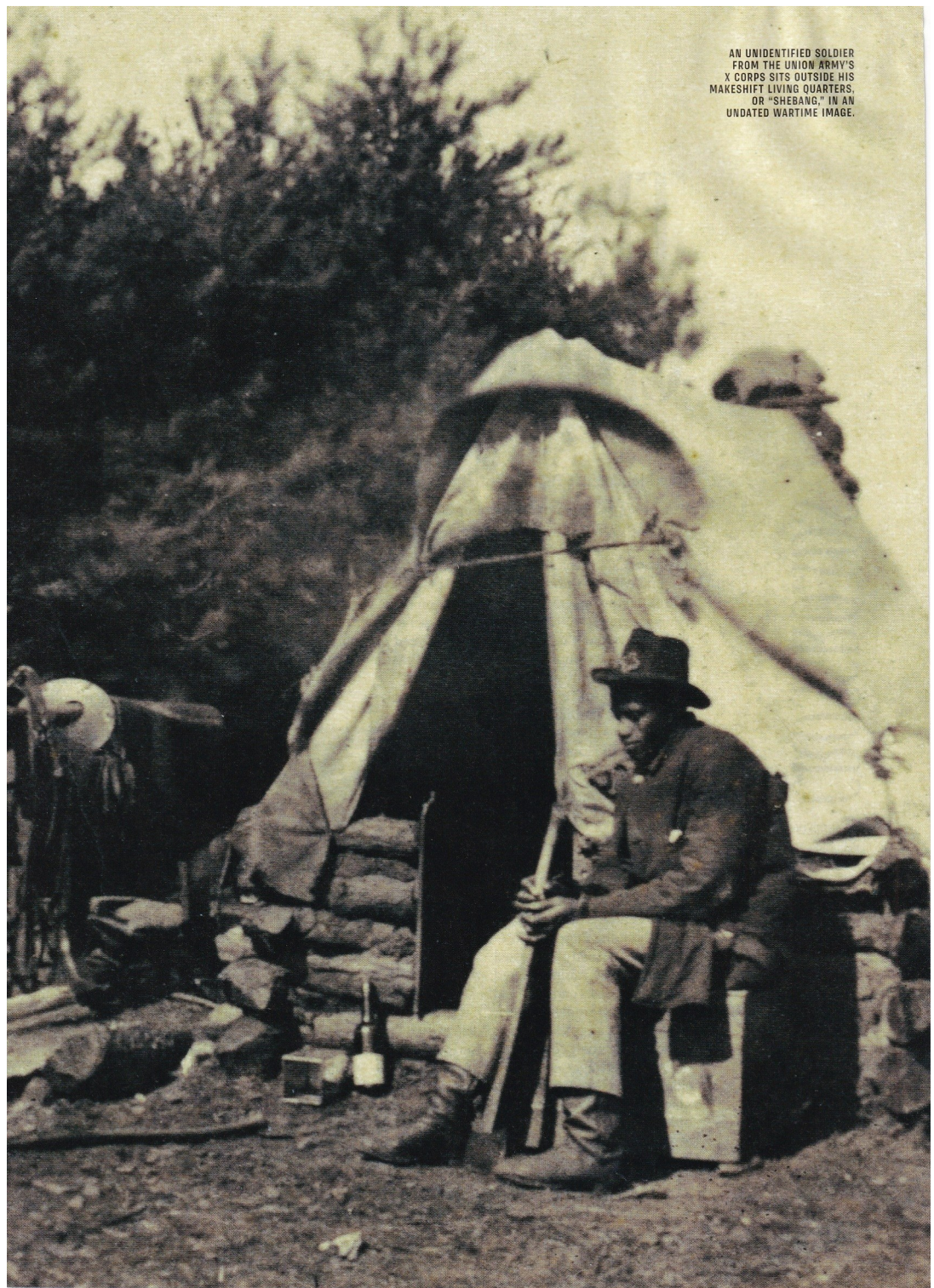
It is unclear whether Mendenhall and Crittenden disagreed at any point in their planning. Certainly Mendenhall, a young major, would have found it politically difficult to raise any serious objection with Crittenden, a corps commander. Moreover, time was of the essence as the Confederate breakthrough had unleashed the start of an unfolding disaster. Both officers understood the situation was dire, and with the decision made, Mendenhall leapt into action.

Throwing any available piece and crew into the line, Mendenhall personally assembled a formidable row of 26 guns. Among them was Captain Alanson J. Stevens' 26th Pennsylvania battery (notably, Stevens was the nephew of the famous Radical Republican U.S. Representative Thaddeus Stevens). As Mendenhall rode to and fro marshaling batteries, Crittenden tried to scrape together whatever

er infantry he could find.

Mendenhall and his makeshift gun line watched for about an hour as the ominous roar of the approaching storm echoed through the woods beyond the Dyer field. Behind them, thick timber and a rocky drop led to a road that might promise an avenue of retreat to the fortifications of Chattanooga. Unfortunately, the Federal gunners would have to negotiate tangled thickets and trees to get there—all without benefit of infantry support to cover their possible escape. A few infantry units took up defensive spots on the slope, but they were not enough to reassure the nervous Federal gunners. For the moment, Mendenhall could only wait and hope that the decision to make a stand would not prove disastrous.

It was a vain hope. A strong force of multiple Con-



AN UNIDENTIFIED SOLDIER FROM THE UNION ARMY'S X CORPS SITS OUTSIDE HIS MAKESHIFT LIVING QUARTERS, OR "SHEBANG," IN AN UNDATED WARTIME IMAGE.



This is a view of Andersonville and the shelters the prisoners built for themselves. The National Park Service website is adamant that the prisoners there did NOT call these shelters "shebangs." In 1200 pages of post-war testimony, the word shebang is only used four times and very rarely appears in the letters and diaries of the prisoners writing while living in Andersonville.

Was there some distinction between shelters built in open camps and those in a prison yard that has been lost over time?

Recap

2024 Veterans Day – Winona, MN

Once again, members of the 2nd Minnesota Battery travelled to Winona, MN to participate in their 11-11-11 Veterans Day Observance. This year the temperature was in the 30s and there was no snow on the ground. For a change, great coats were optional.

Our gun and limber were stationed at the entrance to the parking lot and the crew was in position when the program began with "To The Colors" played while the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post No. 1287, Winona raised the National Flag.



Chaplain Mel Bailey of Post 1287 provided both the opening and closing prayers. Richard McCluer, Jr., the son of a World War II veteran provided this year's Main Address, "Honoring the 1944 Allied Offenses of World War II". Following his remarks the Battery fired its three-round salute. The heavy air dulled the usual retort off the river bluffs this year.

Battery members participating on the gun crew were Michael Ritchie, Bruce Arnoldy, Ben Norman, Mikaela Livingstone, John Cain and Daryl Duden with James Livingstone commanding. Brian Tomashek and two of our ladies, B-J Norman and Mardelle Arnoldy, were part of the large group of citizens in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,
Sgt Duden

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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Your Country Needs You!

And so does the Battery!

2025 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: _____

Phone: _____

e-mail address: _____

Please send this form and your check to:

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

PLEASE fill out this form to be sure we have the most accurate contact info for members, especially if you have changed addresses, emails, phones, etc.