

# BADGER

## Artillerist

Captain William Zickerick  
12th Wisconsin Battery

Vignette by Michael Martin

"March 21 [1865], the [12th Wisconsin] battery aligned with the advance of the First Division and briskly engaged the enemy with but little cover; expending 222 rounds of ammunition. Firing continued during the night at intervals of fifteen minutes with each piece. Too much cannot be said of the conduct of this battery on this occasion. Within 100 yards of the main line of the enemy, with rude covering they fought with brilliant success, the enemy's works and dead demarking the fire of this battery."

So wrote the 15th Army Corps' Chief of Artillery, Lieutenant Colonel William H. Ross, in his March 25 report of the operations of the corps' artillery and the 12th Wisconsin Battery at the battle of Bentonville in North Carolina. Commanding this battery of veteran Badger artillerymen and their four 12-lb Napoleons was a 39-year-old Evangelical minister, Captain William Zickerick.

William Zickerick was born on September 8, 1825, in Greenrade Province, Brandenburg, Prussia. Though his father, Michael, was a civil official and exempt from military service, he was not. At the age of 20, William was assigned to the artillery branch of the Prussian Army. After training in a "school of instruction," he became a non-commissioned officer in the "flying artillery" and served three subsequent years in the Prussian Army. In 1848, Zickerick's entire family immigrated to America and eventually settled in Lomira, Wisconsin. William, who was forced to remain behind probably due to his Prussian Army service commitment, eventually joined his family on the Wisconsin farm in the summer of 1848. William toiled on his parents' farm and helped construct a sawmill near the Rock River. In 1853, he married Henrietta Zimmerman; the union yielded 4 children. William remained in the lumber business until 1854 when he became a pastor with the Evangelical Association of North America. With the exception of his wartime service he would remain an active pastor throughout most of his life.

On November 25, 1861, Wisconsin Governor Alexander Randall awarded Zickerick a commission for his





assistance in recruiting men for the 12th Wisconsin Battery. Because the number of Wisconsin troops recruited by Governor Randall far exceeded Washington's request for men, the battery, which was organized in the winter 1861-1862, was originally attached to the 1st Regiment of Missouri Light Artillery at Jefferson Barracks south of St. Louis and placed under the command of Captain William Pile, a minister from Missouri. Pile's command of the battery and its service with the Missouri Artillery lasted until July 19, 1862. On that date, Lieutenant Zickerick was promoted to captain and took command of the battery, which would henceforth be designated the 12th Wisconsin Battery, Light Artillery. To date, the Wisconsin men and Zickerick, had taken part in the investment of Corinth, Mississippi, and on May 29, 1862, a section under Lieutenant Zickerick destroyed a Confederate fort, which guarded the Memphis and Charleston Railroad.

Immediately following the battle of Iuka, Zickerick fell ill with typhoid fever and was sent to the hospital in Corinth. On "sick furlough" he returned to Wisconsin, rejoining the battery, on November 13, 1862, at Moscow, Tennessee. Assigned to Quinby's 7th Division, Army of Tennessee, Zickerick's battery participated in the Yazoo Pass Expedition and saw action at Raymond and Champion Hills during Grant's Vicksburg Campaign. While taking part in the siege of Vicksburg, Zickerick suffered two debilitating injuries. On June 17, according to battery member, Henry Laubenstein, he was injured while using a spaid "when his foot slipped and his foot and ankle were injured so that he could hardly walk." Two days later Zickerick was "hauling ammunition into Fort Boomer under heavy fire from the enemy and his sharpshooters" when he injured his right testicle on the pommel of his saddle while riding rapidly down a hill."

Detailed on recruiting duty in Wisconsin from November 1863 to early March 1864, Zickerick rejoined the battery at its winter encampment in Huntsville, Alabama. The 12th Wisconsin Battery was eventually sent south to bolster the garrison at Allatoona pass, Georgia. Zickerick was present at Allatoona throughout August and September during which time he aided in

the construction of the redoubts and fort. He was promoted to Chief of Artillery, 3rd Division, 15th Corps on September 24, 1864, consequently missing the October 5 battle of Allatoona and the heroic performance of his battery during the epic struggle. He would again command the 12th Wisconsin Battery during General William T. Sherman's march to Savannah, Georgia, and through the Carolinas. During an exchange of artillery fire on December 15 near Savannah, "a shell exploded overhead" wounding Captain Zickerick and three Badger artillerymen. Zickerick was "treated in the field by the surgeon...then treated for deafness in the hospital, the drum of the [left] ear being broken."

As part of Sherman's march through the Carolinas, Captain Zickerick and the battery took part in six engagements including the battle of Bentonville. Zickerick accompanied Sherman's Army to Goldsboro, then Raleigh and, finally, Durham's Station, where the latter

received General Joseph Johnston's initial surrender on April 18. On May 24, the 12th Wisconsin Battery, with Zickerick in command, fired the signal gun that officially started Washington's Grand Review of the Federal Armies. Captain Zickerick and his Badger artillerymen finally returned to Madison, Wisconsin, June 7. Though offered a post-war captaincy in the 2nd U.S. Artillery, Zickerick resigned from the army and resumed his pastoral avocation in Neenah and, eventually, Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Zickerick was troubled by the Vicksburg and Savannah injuries for the rest of his life. He suffered two strokes before "passing away about 9:30 o'clock" at his residence in Oshkosh on November 19, 1906. He was 81. ●



**Previous Page:** Captain William Zickerick, 12th Wisconsin Battery, wears "russian" shoulder knots, on his uniform jacket. **Above:** William Zickerick in latter years.  
(Both images, collection of the author)