



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Jesse Baker

Jesse was born in August of 1838 in Epsom, England, and eventually made his way to Illinois. He was farming near Mt. Morris in 1861 when the Civil War began. He enlisted on September 7, 1861, joining Company H of the 34th Illinois Volunteer Infantry. He was 23 years old, with blue eyes, light hair, and a fair complexion. He stood 5' 7-1/2" tall. For his agreement to serve three years, Jesse was given a bounty of \$100.00.

The regiment was in the western theater of the war by the summer of 1862, and Jesse was left in General Buell's Hospital near Corinth, Mississippi, on June 10th. The rolls of August to December still record Jesse as "absent, sick", but note that he was in the hospital at Louisville, Kentucky, until April 10, 1863. It is likely Jesse was sick, but remained with the regiment in May and June. The roll says he was still sick, but now he was at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The roll remained the same until September when a correction noted he was "present" in May.

More confusion appears in the next roll when it states Jesse reported to his company for duty from the hospital on October 28, 1863. Whether he returned to the regiment and took sick again or never returned at all until October is unclear.

In any case, Jesse was with his regiment less than a month when he was sent on a detail to help bolster the ranks of the Second Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery. Jesse served as an artillery man with the Battery from November 21, 1863, until January 6, 1864. Jesse had to go back to his own regiment that first week of January as his term of enlistment was up and he was either to be discharged or reenlist. Jesse chose to reenlist and agreed to serve another three years or the duration of the war. This also gave him a 30 day furlough, which, with travel time, took the veterans of the 34th away from the front from January 8 to March 7, 1864.

Their arrival back in the South put the 34th Illinois squarely into what was called the "Georgia Campaign." The struggle to take the southern city of Atlanta lasted for months as it covered the distance between Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia. Somewhere on this campaign, Jesse was wounded, but his casualty sheet only noted that it happened on the first day of September. This would have been during the final day of the battle for Jonesboro, not far from Atlanta's outskirts. The nature of Jesse's wound was not given. Even Jesse did not mention it in his pension application years later, so it was probably a minor wound that did not put him under a doctor's care.

At some point during his service, Jesse was promoted to corporal. His rank on the last rolls of the regiment note he was a sergeant, but Jesse said he was only a corporal in his pension papers, and that it was the highest rank he had held.

The 34th Illinois was discharged on the 15th of July, 1865, and the men were civilians again. Jesse stayed in Illinois and on the 10th of October, 1865, he married Julia Barbara Wirt. The couple lived in Whiteside County, Illinois, until 1866 when they moved to Butler County in Iowa. They lived there until December of 1873 when they moved to Columbia County, Washington

Territory. They didn't stay there long before they moved to Astoria, Oregon. They stayed less than a year, then moved to Gray's River in Washington where they finally settled down in 1876. Along the way, their family grew to include nine children. Throughout this time, Jesse worked as a laborer. He also was seeing doctors because of failing health. When he applied for a pension in June of 1885, Jesse could name the doctors and treatments they had prescribed all along their many moves around the country. Jesse said bad drinking water and exposure were the causes of his broken health. The Pension Department agreed and Jesse received his pension.



Jesse died on June 4, 1903, while they were living in Grays River, Washington. He was laid to rest in the Greenwood Cemetery in Cathlamet, Wahkiakum County, Washington.



Researched and compiled by the reenactors of the 2nd Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery. Visit our website at <http://www.2mnbattery.org> for more information about our soldiers and our organization.

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