



## 2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

### Nathan Hamilton Baker

Nathan Baker's service with the Second Battery as a transfer man to help fill the ranks of the Battery in 1863 is a tangled story with few clear answers. Complicating the sparse record keeping is Baker being a fairly common name. There are two men by the name of Baker who served in the Battery and the morning reports uses only their last names. Sorting which is which is confusing at best, especially since the listing of where these men, as transfers, came from is not consistent. Nathan's records in the National Archives, both pension and compiled service, are missing. The most compelling piece of evidence that Nathan H. Baker served at least some time with the Battery comes from the inclusion of his name on a list of veterans of the Second Battery at a reunion held in 1897. Since the veterans of the Battery themselves included Nathan as a fellow member of the Battery, his biography is included here.

Nathan was born on February 4, 1842, in Harrison County, Ohio. He was 19 when he enlisted in the 98<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry, Company F, on August 9, 1862. His enlistment was for three years or the duration of the war. He was said to be one of twenty men who enlisted from "a small community in Ohio."

For Memorial Day in 1929, the *Fairfield County Register*, a newspaper in Iowa, interviewed Nathan. He told the story of his first battle, though he did not name it. Based on other research, this was likely the battle at Perryville, Kentucky, where the 98<sup>th</sup> Ohio fought (and withdrew) very near the position of the Second Battery's guns by the Russell house.

*"The first battle he ever took an active part in was his worst, he says. The company was practicable without command, as an incompetent, and stupid officer was in charge, who through his ignorance caused a terrible slaughter throughout the ranks of the Federal soldiers. Mr. Baker was twice wounded here, but kept up the fight, his injuries being of such nature to cause much pain but not complete disability. Men fell dead all around him and a sharpshooter all but killed him, but he was spared to tell the tale."*

It is unknown when, but perhaps after Perryville where Nathan said he had been twice wounded, but he recounted a story when he was in the hospital in the same article.

*"He and a friend were arguing about whether Hood or Thomas was the better general, at last, fifty cigars were agreed upon to be paid by the loser, after the deciding battle was fought. Thomas won, and Mr. Baker received his fifty cigars."*

It is unclear which battle this may have been as Nathan said he participated in the battles at Perryville, Chickamauga and Kennesaw Mountain.

The morning reports of the Second Battery list “Baker” as one of six men detailed to serve in the Battery on November 7, 1863. There is no notation of when he went back to his regiment, but his name on the 1897 reunion roster seems to indicate the men in the Battery remembered him well.

By February of 1865, Nathan was back in Columbus, Ohio, and was discharged for disability. He managed to reenlist in an unknown unit and served until the end of the war.



After the war, Nathan moved to Iowa. It was 1865 or 1866, and he settled in Jefferson County, though he did note that for four months, he lived in Van Buren County. He married Kate in 1866. The 1880 census lists Nathan as working as a clerk in a store in Fairfield, Iowa. He is listed with his wife, Kate, and four children, two girls and two boys. By the 1910 census, Nathan was still living in Fairfield, but living in the home of his son. His occupation was listed as “salesman” which makes sense as his son was a merchant who owned a retail drug store.

When Nathan died in 1933, he was laid to rest in Evergreen Cemetery in Fairfield, Iowa, beside his wife.

*Researched and compiled by the reenactors of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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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