



## 2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

### Christopher Blake

The call to serve an adopted homeland by enlisting may have been part of the reason Canadian born Christopher Blake chose to join the Second Minnesota Battery. He told the recruiting officers he was 44 years old, but that was not quite the truth. Even though 44 years was a little old by 1862 recruiting standards, the reality of war was coming home to the nation by February 12 when Christopher was mustered in. Many recruiting officers were not choosy and did little or no checking to verify information such as age.

A benefit Christopher brought with him to the Army were his skills as a blacksmith. Though he listed farmer as his occupation, he knew his way around a forge and those skills were valued in an artillery battery. Never officially listed on the muster rolls as a blacksmith or artificer, Christopher said he did some work as a blacksmith during his time in the army.



The descriptive roles show him born in Stukely, Canada. He had gray eyes, dark hair, a light complexion and was 5' 4" tall. He was married, his wife's name was Abigail (Smith).

Christopher went south with the Battery, but was taken sick at St. Louis. He stayed with the unit for a time, being cared for by comrades. He was admitted to the hospital on July 10, 1862, suffering with "Chronic Diarrhoea, General Debility and old age as he alleges Fifty years of Age, which his appearance fully confirms". It was only six months earlier Christopher had told the recruiting officers he was 44 years old.

Discharge came on October 3, 1862, and Christopher returned to Minnesota and his family.

That family was nine children ranging in age from Horace at age 22 down to Eugene at age 3. Horace was working as a blacksmith and Eugene had been born in Minnesota. Three more boys and four girls rounded out the family. Abigail died in September of 1868 and was buried in what was then called Layman's Cemetery in Minneapolis. She was buried near their son, William H., who died in the spring of 1867.

Christopher remained a widower and by 1890, he was living on Central Avenue in Minneapolis. A year later, when he made an application for his pension, his address was 1621 Portland Avenue, Minneapolis. On the application, Christopher said his hearing began to fail while he was in the army and it continued to get worse as the years went by. He also blamed his failing eyesight on an illness he contracted in the army, complicated by rheumatism that began when the Battery was in Alabama.

The Pension Department agreed with Christopher and he received a pension.

Christopher died on July 16, 1898, at the age of 85 years, making the year of his birth 1812. That would match what his disability discharge gave as his age. It would appear Christopher had been somewhat less than honest when he gave his age as 44 years to the recruiting officers in 1862.



Christopher was buried in Layman's Cemetery beside Abigail and William, but that is not the end of the story. Why is unclear, but in October of 1920, Abigail, William, and Christopher were all disinterred. Their cremated remains were combined into a single urn with those of Eugene Jordan and Henry Chase, then interred at Lakewood Cemetery on Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis. The graves are in the Chapel columbarium and the name on the door of the vault is "Chase". No relationship between the Blakes and the Chases has yet been found.

*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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