



## 2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

### Newbry Briggs

Newbry Briggs came to Minnesota with his parents and siblings in 1856. There were five children, two more were born after arriving in Benton County, Minnesota. Not long after, Newbry's father left the family, heading west to look for gold in Montana. Neighbors said he was a "disreputable" person and provided little or no support toward the family after he left. By 1881, Newbry's mother had filed for divorce.

Newbry, or Newb, as he was often called, was born in Freedom, Waldo County, Maine, on March 1, 1844. At the time of his enlistment, he was not quite 18 years old, though that is not what he told the recruiting officers. To them, he was 19. Newbry stood 5'10" tall, had blue eyes, light hair and a light complexion. He went to Fort Snelling to enlist in the Second Battery on January 14, 1862. He went with his brother, Evander, who was almost two years older than Newbry.

Newbry served as a private in the Battery and was the tent mate of Francis Flint. Francis frequently mentioned "Newb" in his letters and had great fun teasing Newbry about being "my old woman" as Newb did most of their cooking.

While in Tennessee, Newbry's brother, Evander, became ill and died in the hospital near Jackson. Newbry continued with his service and participated in the battle at Perryville, Kentucky. After that battle, he was detailed to remain with the wounded men.

Where Newbry went after his detail with the wounded was over is unclear as no records indicate his capture, but a prisoner of war sheet appears in his military file. It indicates he was listed as an exchanged prisoner in March of 1863. The Battery's morning reports show him returning for duty on April 6th.

Newb continued to serve in the Battery, but decided not to reenlist when the time came to veteranize in March of 1864. Since he not chose to stay with the army another three years, he found himself serving with the Second Illinois, Battery I, while the reenlisting men went home on a veteran's furlough. Newb served with the Illinois Battery in the battles for Atlanta and returned to his Minnesota Battery in October of 1864.

He was discharged on the 28th of March, 1865, and went home to Benton County. On July 26, 1868, he married Barbara Fabina in Little Falls, Minnesota. Together, they had two children. Their daughter, Mary, died as a child. Nicholas was born a few years later and continued the family name.

Newbry farmed for some 20 years, raising grain, vegetables and corn. At one time, he owned 440 acres in Buh Township and another 40 in Hillman Township. It was said he had a fine racing mare who once won him \$300. She was believed to be the fastest horse in the entire area.

After renting out his farm, Newbry took his wife and son on a six month visit east, but returned to build a house on Third Street in Little Falls. He worked as a policeman for a few years and then went back to the farm. In 1895, Newbry left the farm for good and moved into Little Falls with his son who was living on Second Street.

One story about Newbry created quite a stir as the Pension Department was told he was drawing a pension for injury or loss of his hand in the war. Newbry did have his arm amputated and told in the newspaper about the excellent care he received from the hospital and doctor. That was in January of 1897. A year later, the Pension Department investigated him and a letter in Newbry's file states how the hand was injured. The pensioner "was under the influence of liquor at election, got into a fight with a man whom he struck on the teeth, cutting his (the pensioner's) hand, blood poisoning set in and as a result the hand had to be amputated." What really happened may never be known, but it seems Newbry lived a colorful life!



Newbry died at the Old Soldiers Home in Minneapolis from acute meningitis on April 13, 1917. His body was returned to be buried beside his wife in the Belle Prairie Cemetery, but his grave went unmarked.

In the spring of 2002, members of the Second Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery reenactors found Newb's grave. Finding the unmarked resting place proved challenging, but the final testament to Newb's colorful life came after a stone was set from the Veterans Administration. A mistake put a Confederate style stone with a pointed top over Newbry's final resting place and assigned him to an Alabama Artillery unit! Newbry's name was the only correct line on the marker he had waited nearly 90 years to get. This marker was quickly removed and another corrected stone ordered. This second stone was set in May of 2003 and dedicated a month later by members of the reenacting group that portrays the unit Newbry served in.

*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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