



## 2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

### Ferdinand Burnham

Ferdinand was born on the 6th of January, 1833, in Garland, Maine. He grew up in Maine and married Mahala B. Strout. They had two children, a boy and a girl.

Then, for reasons unknown, Ferdinand left his family in Maine and went west, ending up in Minnesota by 1862. He enlisted in the Second Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery in January of that year. The Battery was just forming and Ferdinand was one of the early recruits. He enlisted to serve three years. The descriptive rolls show him to be 5' 9" tall, with hazel eyes, light hair and a sandy complexion. His occupation was listed as mechanic.

Ferdinand didn't leave any record to speak of problems he and his wife may have been having, but problems were clearly there. Mahala filed for a divorce and it became final on August 26th, 1863. She was living in Bangor, Maine, at the time and Ferdinand was with the Battery in Tennessee, just before the battle at Chickamauga. The children remained with Mahala and in later years, Ferdinand could only give estimates of their birthdays.

When the time came for the men of the Battery to reenlist, Ferdinand chose not to stay in the army more than his three years. He had been promoted to corporal and then to sergeant, but he did not reenlist. While the men who had reenlisted went home on their veteran's furlough, Ferdinand and other Battery members not going on furlough were detailed to serve with the Second Illinois Battery I. It was from duty with that unit Ferdinand claimed his disability. The Battery was near Resaca, Georgia, about the 15th of May in 1864. They were in line of battle against the Confederates when the men were ordered to sleep by their guns. Ferdinand caught "a severe cold which settled on his lungs and caused a weakness of the lungs which has troubled him since that time."

After treatment by army doctors, Ferdinand returned to duty. When his Minnesota Battery returned from their furlough, Ferdinand went back to continue serving with them. On January 1st, 1865, Ferdinand was reduced from sergeant to private at his own request. A few days later, he was detailed to work in the Ordinance Department where he remained until his discharge on March 28th.

Ferdinand did not go back to Minnesota after he received his discharge. He remained in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and worked as a civilian employee in the Armory until the 1<sup>st</sup> of July in 1865. From there, he went to Michigan to work as a gunsmith for a short time, then back to Minnesota where he continued as a gunsmith in the town of Buffalo. He stayed there three years, then moved to Monticello where, on October 11, 1869, he married the sister of one of his Battery comrades, Martha McCrory.

The newlyweds stayed in Monticello a few months before moving to Saginaw, Michigan, where they lived for seven years. Ferdinand continued working as a gunsmith, but his health was poor. At some points, he could do little more than to assist his wife in her job. Martha was the cook for Eddy, Avery & Company, of East Saginaw.

In 1888, they moved west to Skamokawa, Washington. Again, Martha found a job as a cook. Ferdinand helped her and did what light work he could find. Then they went to Oregon and remained there only a short time before trying out life in California. By 1891, Ferdinand and Martha were back to Skamokawa, Washington.



Throughout the years, Ferdinand struggled with lung problems, at various times under a doctor's care or in the hospital. In 1890, while working for the Columbia River Lumber and Manufacturing Company in Oregon, he was hurt while helping to turn a fly wheel on a large engine. He said he "had a huge lever, and reached up too high and jerked down on the lever, thereby injuring" himself and causing a rupture. He detailed his health problems in his application for an invalid pension.

Ferdinand received the pension. He and Martha remained in Skamokawa, Washington. On June 21, 1908, Ferdinand died from heart disease. He was laid to rest in the Fern Hill Cemetery near Skamokawa. The cemetery is a small country cemetery at the very top of a high hill with a view between the trees for many miles in all directions.

*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.*

*Updated: 30 July 2017*