



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Jesse F. Byam

Jesse was born in Canada, but he was the son of an American born Methodist minister who had been sent as a missionary to Lyon's Creek, Welland, Ontario. As such, Jesse, too, was an American citizen, born on August 14, 1827.

The family remained in Canada for some years and Jesse grew up there. On August 2, 1849, he married Adeline. In 1853, their first son, Charles, was born while they were living near Belleville, Canada.

By March 1, 1860, when daughter Carrie was born, the family was living in Wright County, Minnesota. Jesse was a farmer and had been elected as Justice of the Peace for that year and the next. In January of 1862, Jesse went to Fort Snelling to enlist. He was mustered into the Second Minnesota Battery on January 7, 1862, and agreed to serve three years. He was 34 years old with dark hair, blue eyes, and a light complexion. A farmer by occupation, Jesse stood 5' 6 1/2" tall.

What prompted Jesse to enlist is unknown, but he left Adeline with Charles at nine years old, Carrie at two and Adeline expecting their third child in April.

Jesse did not serve his three years in the army. He was discharged for disability on August 25, 1863, at Louisville, Kentucky. The examining surgeon said the cause was "chronic pleurisy of the left side with Pericarditis." Jesse was deemed unfit for the invalid corps and sent home.

Jesse went back to his farm and family in Wright County. They added another child to the family in 1864 for a total of four; three boys and one girl. Jesse was elected coroner for the county and began keeping a store in addition to farming.

In 1867, Jesse took the family and headed north. They settled in Bellfountain, Canada, where they lived until 1873 when they moved to Toronto. Health problems made it hard for Jesse to work enough to support himself and Adeline, so he applied for a pension in 1890. It was granted and he began receiving \$8 a month. In 1902, the elections for officers of the Armstrong Lodge Grand Army Post # 37 were held and Jesse was elected as treasurer.

At least some of Adeline and Jesse's children stayed near them in Canada as a granddaughter's birth announcement appeared in the Toronto Daily Star on April 2, 1903. Another granddaughter was listed as living with Jesse and Adeline in 1901, but the child's parents were not. That same 1901 survey noted a maid living in the household, so the Byams were at least financially able to afford hired help.



Their third child, Fremont, advertised to sell his farm in 1905. It did not sell quickly as the same ad ran frequently for almost a year until, in June of 1906, it carried an additional line stating Fremont would trade the farm for “city property” in Toronto.



In May of 1904, Jesse applied for an increase in his pension, but it is not known if he received it before his death on December 8, 1906. He was 81 years old and the cause of his death was attributed to heart disease and bronchitis. Adeline wrote that he had “died suddenly in his sleep.” He was laid to rest in the Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Toronto, Canada.

Adeline’s first letter to the Pension Department was to ask for the forms to allow her to cash the last pension check Jesse received two days after his death. She also asked for the forms to apply for a widow’s pension.

There was no obituary placed in the Toronto Star for Jesse when he died, but the report of his will was published on January 18, 1907. Jesse’s estate was valued at \$13,642. Most of his wealth was in houses and lots he owned. There were eight properties, six in Toronto and two in Bellfountain. The entire estate was left to Adeline. At her death, Jesse’s will directed the estate to be divided equally between his living children and grandchildren.

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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