



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

James W. Clark

James was one of the early recruits to the Second Minnesota Battery, enlisting on Valentine's Day in 1862, more than a month before the unit was official accepted into U.S. service. James was living in Waseca County, Minnesota, when he left his occupation as a mechanic to join the army. He had been born in "Canada West" about 1837, stood 5' 11 1/2" tall, had hazel eyes, sandy hair and a light complexion.

When the Battery left Fort Snelling to go south in May, Private James Clark was with them. The Battery's first duty station was Benton Barracks, Missouri, where the unit was outfitted with horses and guns. It was as far south as James would get with the Army.

On May 15, James was thrown from his horse and injured. The muster sheets indicate he may have spent some time with the Battery, though injured, before he was taken to the hospital at Jefferson Barracks. Exactly when he went to the hospital is unknown, but he remained for more than two months before he was honorably discharged for disability on September 15, 1862.

A letter from the Battery's lieutenant, Richard Dawley, said he was well acquainted with James and knew that when James enlisted, he was in good health. Dawley wrote, "He (James) enjoyed good health and always was prompt and ready to do his duty as a good and faithful Soldier."

This letter was required by the Pension Department as James first applied for a disability pension already in 1862, as soon as he was discharged. The form filed by the examining surgeon said James suffered with heart disease, severe hemorrhoids, and more. He was "unable to do any duty." It is not clear if James received any pension from this application.

What happened next to James is unknown as he left few records about his life from the time he was discharged until he sent in another application for a disability pension in 1882. He was living in Onondaga County, New York, at the time.

James is listed in the 1890 Veterans Census and it notes his service with the Second Minnesota Battery. He was living in Onondaga, New York at the time of the census. It also noted that he received a disability discharge.

More correspondence with the Pension Department began when a neighbor filed a deposition for James, stating that James was often unable to work at all and had to remain in bed for days at a time with a physician in attendance. The surgeon who examined James agreed James was in very poor health, stating that, "he cannot lace up his shoes, dress or undress himself unassisted. The surgeon said James had a heart murmur, disease of the rectum, rheumatism, and was very deaf in his left ear. The right ear was not much better, only able to hear ordinary conversation at closer than six feet. For each, a degree of disability was assigned: Heart disease 17/18; for disease of the rectum 14/18; for rheumatism 12/18; and for "slight deafness in the left ear" 4/30. The conclusion was that James should get a raise from the \$17 a month he had been received to \$30 a month for a disability pension starting on May 6, 1903.

That date is very questionable as a death certificate for James W. Clark of Onondaga, New York, with a death date of January 26, 1902. Burial records place James in Calvary Cemetery in Woodside, New York, who died on January 26, 1902. The death certificate also stated James was single, had been born in the U.S., and his last place of residence was a "tenement" at 7 Mary Avenue, Onondaga, New York. James died in the hospital from pneumonia.

It seems likely the pension date is the incorrect date, though no records in James' pension file refer to his death or mention a date.

Correspondence with and a visit to the cemetery verify James is buried there, but in an unmarked grave. Efforts to work with the cemetery to get a marker for James have been unsuccessful.



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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