



## 2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

### Alfred Colburn

Alfred Colburn was already a veteran when he enlisted in the Second Battery of Light Artillery. His first enlistment was with the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, the first unit tendered to President Lincoln after Fort Sumter was surrendered. Alfred joined the First Minnesota in November of 1861. He was living in Isanti County, Minnesota, at the time and where he had held the position of county surveyor.

While serving in the Army of the Potomac, Alfred participated in the Valley Campaign and the Peninsula Campaign. Just after the battle of Fair Oaks in May of 1862, he was detailed to cut some trees in the front of the First Minnesota's lines. The skirmishing was still going on, but the trees needed to be gotten out of the way. While working, a tree cut by other members of the detachment fell, striking Alfred on the head. He was knocked unconscious and carried from the field to the hospital where he remained for four or five days. Because the fighting was so nearby, Alfred was moved to a hospital near Harrison Landing where he stayed for a couple weeks. Finally, Alfred was put on a hospital ship, the *Daniel Webster*, and sent to New York where he was discharged on August 8, 1862. The discharge said his disability was from "compression of the brain" and he was entitled to  $\frac{1}{4}$  pension.

Alfred went back to Spencer Brook in Isanti County, but he did not apply for the  $\frac{1}{4}$  pension his discharge said was due him. Instead, he decided to enlist again. On August 30, 1864, the Army accepted him into the Second Battery of Light Artillery. He was 30 years old, stood 5' 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " tall, had gray eyes, sandy hair, and a fair complexion.

The rank of private was as high as Alfred got during either term of service. In March of 1865, he was once again detailed to cut logs for a Major Church, but this time he managed not to get hit on the head. Alfred was discharged with the Battery on August 16, 1865.

Alfred's personal life also had a few bumps. He was born in Lyme, New Hampshire, on March 25, 1834. By 1852, he wanted to move west and was making preparations to leave when his parents decided they would go with him. They arrived in Wisconsin where Alfred began working on the river. He managed to buy a piece of property that he deeded to his parents. While in Wisconsin, Alfred married Adamantine Butterfield. In 1858, Alfred and Adamantine moved further west to Spencer Brook, Isanti County, Minnesota, where he was elected the county surveyor and served in that position until he enlisted.

Alfred came back to Spencer Brook after his disability discharge from the First Minnesota Infantry. In July of 1864, he was in court with a divorce petition against Adamantine. The divorce was declared final on August 5, 1864, by the district court in Anoka and Alfred almost immediately enlisted to serve the last year of the war with the Battery. When the war was over, he went back to Spencer Brook and was elected county surveyor again, a post he held for 16 years.

In May of 1866, Alfred was married a second time to Mary M. Henry. They had two daughters before Mary died on February 8, 1871. In November of 1873, Alfred was married a third time to a widow with four children of her own. Cassandra Whitaker Morton lived in Spencer Brook and had lost her husband to death a year before.

The lure of the west again called Alfred, so their blended family moved to Slayton, Oregon, where Alfred operated a sawmill and later built a flour mill.

In 1878, Alfred was on the move again, this time with a herd of 500 sheep. He and several others, with their families, were heading for land in Idaho. Their timing was not the best as conflict with the Nez Perce Indians was at its height. Everyone but Alfred decided it was too risky to continue and took refuge at Dalles. Alfred and his family, with their sheep, kept going and made it to Latah County, Idaho, without incident. There he took a homestead and made improvements to his land until he had a prosperous farm. He raised sheep and cattle, grew various kinds of crops and had an orchard. Alfred and Cassandra also raised children; they had three more daughters, but only one lived to adulthood.

Alfred was elected the county surveyor once again in Idaho, a position he "filled well." He was active in the local GAR Post and they attended the Baptist Church. It was said that "In political matters, Mr. Colburn always took the part of the intelligent citizen, and is ever found registered on the side of progress and good government."

Alfred died June 12, 1903, at the age of 69 years. He was buried in the church cemetery in Freeze, Latah County, Idaho. The church and cemetery stand at the top of a tall hill, surrounded by wheat fields in all directions.

The will Alfred left was very specific. His two living daughters each received \$1.00. Everything thing else he owned went to Cassandra. While she had the land and buildings, the value had decreased with age and her deposition to the Pension Department spelled out what she paid in taxes on the land, what it cost to have crops put in and harvested, expenses associated with the crops, and all of the income she had from the land and crops. At the end of the year, she showed a profit of only \$11.54, reason enough she believed, to apply for a widow's pension. Cassandra died in 1937 and was laid beside Alfred in the church cemetery.



*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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