



## 2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

### Calvin C. Cowan

Calvin came into the war in the last year. He enlisted on August 18, 1864, at Taylor's Falls, Minnesota. He was paid a bounty of \$33.33, first payment on the \$100 he was promised if he would agree to serve one year. Calvin probably left at least some of this money with his bride, Elizabeth. They had been married less than a month earlier, July 15, 1864.

Calvin went to Fort Snelling to be mustered in and there he filled out the descriptive roll saying he was 5' 11' tall, had brown eyes, black hair and a dark complexion. He had been born in Pike County, Illinois, and was 21 years old. His occupation was farming in Amador, Chisago County.

The choice of enlisting in the Second Battery might have been easier for Calvin. His brother-in-law, Charles Martin, had served in the Battery. Calvin and Charles did not serve together, however. Charles had decided he'd had enough of the army and deserted in April of 1864.

The Battery did not see much fighting in the last year of the war, instead doing many different jobs including herding cattle, guard and scout duty, and some garrison duty. In December, Calvin was among a group of men detailed to cut logs for the garrison and he did this until April of 1865. The war was over, but the Second Battery remained in the south until ordered home. In typical army fashion, the Battery was ordered to Knoxville to be mustered out, but when they got there, the order was countermanded. They were ordered back to Loudon.

The trip on back on June 18th was an eventful one. The train cars were heavily loaded with soldiers. As the train approached the bridge over the Holston River from the north on a high embankment, the coupling between the tender and the forward car broke. Three or four of the forward cars "pitched over the right side of the embankment, at the same time, Calvin C. Cowan and many others jumped to the left side to save from being crushed under the cars on the right," said Jacob Staples, a Battery comrade. "(I) was further to the rear of the train, inside of a box car, and jumped to the left side, the embankment not being so high, was not injured."

Calvin wrote about the accident and what he remembered of it. "I was sitting on top a box car with my legs hanging over and I heard the boys yelling and waving for us. I looked, and before I had time to act, the car I was on went over and I was thrown and I probably tried to jump, and as it was a high embankment, I think perhaps 60 feet, I seemed to strike on the end of a plank bridge built over the ditch along side the track. I struck with my left hip apparently. I was knocked senseless and knew nothing about it, but I gather from what the boys told me, that I was so struck. It skinned my left hip and back and a sliver seems to have run into my left knee and up into my leg some six or eight inches. The boys told me about this afterward, and said one had to pull it out while another held me." Calvin was taken by rail road car to Philadelphia,

Tennessee, where he was treated in the hospital. Calvin was on crutches when he arrived back in Minnesota to be mustered out on August 16, 1865.

Elizabeth was waiting for him and in later years, she said he had gone to war a healthy, strong man, but he came home "a cripple". Elizabeth would have known as she grew up near Calvin and had known him since he was 13 years old.

Calvin and Elizabeth moved around a bit and they had several children. Not many years after the war, Calvin had to give up the farm they were living on as he could not work it. They took in boarders to make a living and Calvin had to use a cane to get around. For a while, they were living in St. Cloud, Minnesota, where Calvin sold wood. When this became too much for him, he took a job driving a team for the horse-drawn street cars in St. Cloud. By about 1880, Calvin was struggling with his health almost constantly and was using two canes.



Eventually, Calvin and Elizabeth moved to Oakland, California. In Oakland, Calvin joined the local GAR Post, # 88. It was known as the Lookout Mountain Post and he was an active member. Calvin and Elizabeth were not alone in California. Two of their children lived nearby as did Calvin's brother.

Calvin died on April 9, 1924, at the age of 79. He was laid to rest in the Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland.

*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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