



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

John Henry Dederick

John was born January 2, 1832, in Prussia, the son of a “hunter to the King.” Hunting for the King had been a way of life for the Dedericks for generations until the German Revolution of 1849 broke the traditional restrictions nobility had on the forests. With that loss, hunters could no longer make a living and the Dederick family migrated in search of new opportunities. The family came to the United States in 1852 when John was 20 years old. John’s father took a job in a furniture store, but he did not stay at that job. He moved the family west, passing by wagon train through St. Louis, Missouri. From there, two of John’s brothers went south to settle in Tennessee and Georgia. The rest of the family went north to Wright County, Minnesota, where they settled on the Buffalo River.



Ring worn by John. This ring is still with the family.

When John enlisted in the Second Battery on January 23, 1862, he noted his occupation as farming. He had just turned 29 years old, had blue eyes, dark hair, and a light complexion. He was 5’ 6 1/2” tall. He was not married.

It was during John’s time in the army that the spelling of his name changed. Prior to the service, it was spelled Dederick--with two e’s. In the army, the second “e” was dropped, making the name Dederick. John probably did not accept that spelling as his own. When he filed for a pension in the late 1880s, he signed his name Dederick.

John’s service with the Battery was as a private and he was with the unit when it went into battle at Perryville, Kentucky. It was there while John was serving on his gun that he suffered an injury that would haunt him for the rest of his life. The battle was raging and John, from descriptions in later reports, was probably serving on the front of one of the Battery’s guns. The fighting was heavy and John was standing between two guns about ten feet apart when both fired at the same time in a section fire. The blast deafened John in both ears completely for several weeks and only partial hearing ever returned. Battery comrades Orestes Dudley and John Craven were serving on those two guns and described John’s loss of hearing and how it only slowly--but not completely--came back.

Stories in the Dederick family say at some time during the Civil War, John met up with his two brothers who had gone south when the family split in St. Louis, Missouri. Both were serving in the Confederate Army and it was during a lull in the fighting that the three brothers were able to meet under a flag of truce. It was said the family stayed in contact with these brothers after the war and remained on friendly terms until death.

The initial enlistment papers John signed were for three years and when that time was up, John decided he had had enough of army life. Instead of going home on

the veteran's furlough given to those who reenlisted, John was detailed to serve with the Second Illinois, Battery I. This put John into heavy fighting as Union General William Sherman marched and fought his army to Atlanta in the summer of 1864. During this time, John said he developed rheumatism. It was another reminder of his time in the army that would never leave him.

After John was discharged, he returned to Minnesota and took a homestead near Melrose. On February 13, 1866, he married Gertrude Hellman. They settled on their farm to raise crops and children. They eventually had seven children. Gertrude died on November 7, 1885, probably resulting from childbirth. The baby died a short time later and both were buried in the St. Mary's Cemetery in Melrose.

John stayed on the farm a few more years, then moved into the town of Melrose where he was listed as a "landlord" and part-time gardener. He was active in the G.A.R. chapter and was well known in the community.

On February 12, 1901, John died from pneumonia. He was laid to rest beside Gertrude in St. Mary's Cemetery. The spelling of his name on the grave marker is "Dederick," John's way of spelling it, not the army way.

John's great-grandson, Matt Dederick, contacted the reenacting Battery and provided many family details and stories about John. One story was that John had taken a ring from the finger of a dead Confederate officer somewhere in the battles before Atlanta. John kept the ring and it was passed down in the family to Matt. He shared the story and a photo of the ring, a ring with an elaborate letter "D," perhaps the reason the ring was so enticing to John.



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.

Updated: 23 March 2021