



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Charles Nelson Earl

“Sir, I have the honor herewith to tender my unconditional resignation as 2nd Lieutenant in the 2nd Minnesota Battery Vol. Light Artillery on account of my inability to cooperate harmoniously with the commanding officer of said battery, and the desire to take a part with the troops being organized to defend my own State (Minnesota) against Indian depredations.”

The words were written by Charles Earl on March 30, 1864. From his enlistment in March of 1862, Charles had risen through the ranks to reach Second Lieutenant, but by 1864, he decided he had had enough. He was not the only officer to leave the Battery at this time because of conflicts with the commanding officer. At least two others resigned for that same reason.

Charles had been growing fruit in Bethel, Anoka County, Minnesota, where he was also the first Clerk of District Court. He held a teaching certificate in Anoka County, the date being June 21, 1861, though no record of him teaching has been found. Charles had come to Minnesota from New York where he had been born on November 28, 1833, in Troy. When Charles answered the call to defend the Union, he was 28 years old, single, had blue eyes, light hair, light complexion, and stood 5' 11-1/4" tall. He was not a wealthy man; his real estate taxable value in 1860 was \$100, his personal estate value was \$200.

The time Charles spent in the army was a series of ups and downs. After the Battery moved South in the spring of 1862, Charles caught a “severe cold.” A comrade called attention to Charles as he came out for roll call, the comrade thinking Charles had pneumonia. By the time it was determined that Charles should go to the hospital, he could no longer walk without help. Charles was admitted to the military hospital in Nashville on December 9, 1862, where he remained until February 13, 1864. Even then, Battery comrade Joel Davis thought it was too soon for Charles to be back on duty and noted that Charles was “not able at the time of his return to stand hard service and should have remained in the Hospital as he was very weak.” Charles did stay in the Battery and was promoted several times. The final promotion came from the Governor of Minnesota in the form of a commission making Charles a second lieutenant. This commission came on the recommendation of the then first lieutenant of the Battery, Richard Dawley, who was in command of the Battery as the captain was absent.

Charles served as second lieutenant until he resigned his commission. No records indicate he ever got any other service as he hinted he wanted in his resignation letter. By the spring of 1864, most of the Indian conflict had moved further west into the far western side of Minnesota

and the Dakota Territories. This, or his health, may have prevented Charles from joining another military organization.

Though his home was in Minnesota, Charles may not have gone back there right away. On November 3, 1864, Charles married Charity Outland Price in Spiceland, Henry County, Indiana. When their first child was born, Homer in July of 1869, the family was living in Minnesota. They were still living there when Anna was born on November 16, 1871.

When they left Minnesota is unknown, but the 1880 census shows the family living in Los Angeles, California. Charles was working as a laborer, Charity kept house, and the children attended school. The family stayed in Los Angeles, Homer became a journalist by 1900 and Charles changed jobs to be an inspector of concrete. Anna married Doctor F.W. Steddon and remained nearby.

In 1898, Charles was the victim of an attack he described to the Pension Department due to the effects it had on his health.

“About noon, on the fifth day of Dec. 1898, on Main Street near Fourth St. in the City of Los Angeles, Cal. a man named George T. Curran came up behind, and stabbed me in my left side and back, with a large pocket knife causing a profuse flow of blood....

I did not faint nor get ‘rattled’, until I reached the city Receiving Hospital, when I became unconscious from loss of blood. I lay in bed 14 days before I was strong Enough to stand and am now far from being as strong, or as well generally, as at the time of Curran’s assault.

They said Curran had asked alms of me, which I did not give him, neither did I speak unkindly or use any harsh words toward him. The assault was wholly unprovoked....

On Dec 6th 1898 the said Curran was complained against in Justices Court in the City of Los Angles, Cal, charged ‘Assault with intent to commit Murder’, and on Dec. 30, 1898, was examined and held to answer to the Superior Court of this County. Jan’y 27 1899 the said Curran was arraigned in the said Superior Court, tried by jury, who rendered a verdict of ‘Insane’, and sent to the Insane Asylum at Highland, Cal. until recovered--where he now is.”

Charles described in detail the effects of the stabbing on his health in an effort to have his pension increased. Existing records do not show if the Pension Department granted his request.

After Charity died on August 6, 1913, Charles went to live with his daughter and her husband. By 1922, Charles’ health was slipping and he suffered “from Aphasia, (can not talk, read or write) does not remember or recognize his friends or the members of his own family; That he wanders away from home and gets lost”. The words were written by his son-in-law, Doctor Steddon.



Charles was 90 years old when he died on October 31, 1923. Anna took care of his last arrangements. The funeral was held at the Inglewood Park Chapel and the remains cremated. The family waited almost two years before interring his ashes in the crypt with Charity in the Inglewood Park Cemetery Mausoleum.

In the final settlement with the Pension Department for Charles' last expenses, Anna's husband explained the lack of charges for his services to Charles. "I made no charge for my services," he wrote. "There was no money to pay any doctor, but as a member of the family, I did what I could to relieve his suffering."

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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