



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Ira Ellsworth

Ira's military service began as an answer to the call for a regiment of cavalry to aid in the defense of Minnesota's frontier against the Dakota Indians. It was believed that cavalry armed with more than the standard carbines would be necessary to put down the uprising and make the state safe for further settlement. Ira was among those answering that call when he went to Fort Snelling and joined Company E of the First Mounted Rangers on October 20, 1862. A history of the Rangers said many of those enlisting had lost family and friends in the initial Indian attacks and they "held no tender feeling for the Indians." Ira enlisted from Dodge County located in the south central portion of the state, east of the most fierce battles, but certainly close enough to worry residents. Whether Ira had lost family is unknown, but his enlistment came at a time in Minnesota when emotions were running high.

Ira said he was 18 years old when he enlisted, a farmer with blue eyes, dark hair, and what was described on his enlistment form as a "fresh" complexion. He stood 5' 9-1/2" tall. His birthplace was St. Lawrence County, New York.

Ira only enlisted for one year, but he did not serve that long. Only one company of the regiment left Fort Snelling before spring. Ira's company remained at the Fort. When spring arrived and General Sibley organized his campaign against the Indians, Ira had already been discharged for disability. The January/February muster roll noted him "absent sick since January 28--with leave." Ira had probably gone home to get well. Since his discharge came at the Fort in March, it is unlikely Ira ever went out with the Rangers further than the parade grounds at Fort Snelling.

The formal discharge said Ira was strong and healthy when he enlisted, but he had caught a "severe cold from want of blankets and proper bedding, then taken with mumps, recovered somewhat. Took another violent cold which settled on his lungs and is now turn blue with severe cough." A further explanation said Ira had "Phthises Pulmonalis, which disease is hereditary, but was excited by severe exposure in the line of his duty."

It is supposed Ira went home after his discharge, but no records have been found about him until September of 1864 when he enlisted once again at Mantorville, Dodge County, Minnesota. It was the draft rendezvous that fall when Ira joined the Second Minnesota Battery. He was given \$33.33 of his promised \$100 bounty for his enlistment of one year. He arrived in Tennessee with other new recruits for the Battery on November 11, 1864. It was the only notation about Ira in the Battery's morning reports. He served in the garrison duty the Battery did until the end of the war when they returned to Fort Snelling to be mustered out on August 16, 1865.

What happened to Ira after the war is a mystery. No records show him anywhere except for the death record of his son, Ira L., in 1931. The son died in Colorado, but nothing has been found to provide any further clues about Ira's life.

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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