



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Ole Erickson

Ole was no help at all in determining how his name was properly spelled or even for certain what his full name was. His military papers show Erickson to be spelled with the double "rr" and Ole simply made his mark on the line indicated. By the time Ole filed for a pension in 1898, he could sign his name, but alternately spelled it Ericksen and Erickson. Furthering complicating his correct name is his obituary. It notes his name as Ole Erickson Renslo. His tombstone shows his name spelled with only one "r" and no mention of Renslo. What Ole wanted to be called will probably never be known.

Ole was born in Halingdal, Norway, on June 1, 1841. He came to the United States in 1861, and was farming in Houston County, Minnesota, when he decided to enlist with the Second Minnesota Battery on September 3, 1864. His enlistment was for one year. He was 22 years old, stood 5' 6" tall, had blue eyes, brown hair and a sandy complexion. Ole was probably promised a \$100 bounty to enlist; papers indicate he was owed \$66.66 when he was mustered out and other men who received a like amount in bounty at the end of the war had gotten a third of their pay up front. It also noted he kept his knapsack, haversack, and canteen as per government order #114 dated June 15, 1864.

Army life was not especially kind to Ole. After enlisting, he was sent to Fort Snelling where he came down with typhoid fever. He was in the fort hospital where he was said to be "out of his head" for quite some time. His recovery was slow and he lost so much weight that he could hardly walk. By January, he was found healthy enough to join the Battery camped near Chattanooga, Tennessee. The town they were quartered in was called Philadelphia and the men were staying in buildings rather than their tents. The barracks where Ole was staying was a large frame building and was "fixed with bed bunks one row above the other."

The Battery was ordered out on the morning of July 4th, 1865, to go up a hill and fire a salute in honor of the day. Ole participated in the salute. After the salute was over, the men were ordered to breakfast, so they went back to their bunks to get their cups. Ole said he was getting his cup when he slipped off the stoop and fell, breaking his leg at or near the ankle. Another man in the Battery said that it had been reported Ole broke his leg when he fell while getting something from the top bunk, so where exactly Ole fell is unclear, but he did fall and break his leg.

The Battery had no doctor, but another regiment quartered nearby did. The doctor arrived, agreed the leg was broken and proceeded to built a box that reached from Ole's foot to "some way up" on his leg. The doctor put bandages on the leg from the foot up onto the leg and packed the box with cotton. The description is hazy, but a rag drawn through a hole in the box was contrived in such a way that cold water could drip on the broken ankle.

Ole said, "Captain Hotchkiss and the officers and men were very good" to him and "did not send him to the hospital but kept him right in the company. At that time they had an idea the war was over and they would soon go home and for that reason kept him in the Company and before long they did start home." Ole described a sling made from sticks and cloth to keep his foot elevated on "the cars". When it was necessary to change trains at depots, four men carried Ole.

After the Battery arrived at Fort Snelling, Ole was tired and sick, so he was admitted to the post hospital for a few days. He was then given crutches and he practiced with them until he could walk at least as far as across the street. The ankle continued to give him trouble and Ole said it was hard for him to do any work for the first year after he returned home.

In 1867, Ole married Barbra Moen Olsen, a war widow, at Spring Grove, Minnesota, and they had five children. Barbra died on March 8, 1904.



Ole died of "chronic myocardites and bronchites" on May 13, 1915. He was 74 years, 11 months and four days old at the time of his death. He was buried in the Old Wilmington Church Cemetery in Spring Grove, Houston County, Minnesota. His military marker has his service with the Second Battery and the notation that he served in Company B.

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: 01 May 2013