



## 2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

### Halvor Evenson

Halvor was a part of the wave of immigrants who came to America in the mid 1800s looking for a better life and opportunity. He and his wife, Johanna, had been married in Norway in 1860 and came first to Wisconsin, then to Minnesota, where they settled in Fillmore County. Their first child, Olav, was born in January of 1861. By the time Aasne was born in October of 1862, the family had moved to Eureka Township in Dakota County. Their third child, Eivind, was born in August of 1864, just a month before Halvor decided to enlist in the Second Minnesota Battery.

The draft rendezvous was going on in Minnesota that late summer and the bounties promised could be very enticing to a man with little means. Halvor signed the enlistment papers on August 26, 1864, and was mustered in at Fort Snelling on September 10th. The muster sheet said he was 5' 7-1/2" tall, had blue eyes, light hair and a fair complexion. He was a farmer, was 34 years old, and made his mark on the papers rather than signing his name. Whether he really could not write or just could not write in English is unknown.

Halvor's time with the Second Battery was uneventful. He arrived at the camp outside Chattanooga, Tennessee, where the Battery was doing garrison duty. He saw no hard fighting and few long marches. Halvor was discharged at the end of the war with the rest of the men in the Battery on August 16, 1865.

Going home may not have been easy for Halvor. Even though he was only gone one year, his wife and baby Eivind had both died. Halvor took charge of his two remaining children and it is believed he went back to farming. The following spring, Halvor married Gunlaug Pederson. She was another of the immigrants that had all come together from Norway when Halvor came. Her husband had died and left her with their two children. Since Halvor and Gunlaug had known each other in Norway, it was not unreasonable for them to marry.

The couple remained in the Eureka Township area and added another three children to the family. Counting Halvor's children, Gunlaug's children, and the three they had together, there were eight.

Halvor's health may not have been good as he mentioned to others that he should apply for a pension from the "liver disease" he contracted while serving in the Union Army. Halvor never got around to applying. He died on November 3, 1870, and was laid to rest in the East Christiana Norwegian Lutheran Church Cemetery in Eureka Township.

The pension application Halvor never filed for was filed for Gunlaug. She was desperately poor and had to depend on the help of neighbors for them to get by. The County Poor Fund also stepped in for a time to help the family. It is no small wonder that Halvor's grave was not marked with a stone as Gunlaug already had her hands

more than full. One more child died in 1873 and was buried near Halvor. Gunlaug took the remaining children and moved to North Dakota where she lived out the rest of her life. For a time, it was said she had a “French lover” with whom she lived and had a child with, but never married. She may well have been desperate for help raising her family.

Even though she moved to North Dakota, Gunlaug was not alone. There were a good many Norwegians who were living there, many from Minnesota and the communities Gunlaug lived in before moving. There were also several men who had served in the Second Battery with Halvor living near her new home and it was one of these men, Kittel Torgerson, who signed the pension papers for Gunlaug to continue getting her widow’s pension. What eventually happened to her is unknown.

Halvor’s grave remained unmarked until 1999 when members of the Second Minnesota Battery of Reenactors placed and dedicated a new veteran’s marker for him.



*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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