



## 2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

### Leicester B. Goodell

Leicester Goodell was born in East Aurora, New York, on December 21, 1833. When he was 12 years old, he began working in a box factory, then a lath mill and ship yard. When he was 18, he moved to Illinois and worked on a farm for five years. He then went to work at the trade of masonry.

In the spring of 1857, Leicester, who also went by the name "Lester", married Mary Shorrett. She died three months later. Leicester was married a second time to Martha Leland on November 29, 1859. They had three children, Rosie, Elmer, and Frank. The family was living in Prophetstown, Whiteside County, Illinois, where Leicester continued at his trade of masonry.

When the war broke out, Leicester enlisted for three months in November of 1861 to serve in Company B, 34th Illinois Infantry and quickly reenlisted to serve three years. At some point, Leicester was detailed to the 78th Illinois Infantry for a short time, but he never considered himself a member of that unit. He was eventually transferred to the Second Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery and in March of 1864 when the Battery was reenlisting, he reenlisted again to stay in the Second Battery. He was given a furlough on April 18th, 1864, a reward for reenlisting.

Leicester was detailed as an orderly at Headquarters during some of his time with the Battery and a letter formally asking for his return to the Battery was signed by Captain Hotchkiss. Leicester returned to the Battery and served there until it was mustered out at the end of the war.

One of the taller men in the Battery, Leicester stood 6' 2" tall. He had gray eyes, black hair, and a light complexion.

When the war was over, the Battery went back to Minnesota and they were discharged on August 16, 1865, from Fort Snelling. Leicester went home to Illinois and his family.

In the spring of 1883, they moved to South Dakota and took up residence in Howard where he worked as a stone mason with a side business in scrap-iron. A few years later, they moved into Sioux Falls where he began "city farming". People in the Sioux Falls area noted Leicester as "an independent, positive character" and that he freely expressed "his opinion upon public matters, and is an honest and upright citizen."

Leicester outlived all of his children and Martha. After Martha's death in 1903, Leicester married again in the fall of 1908. Little is known about this third wife. Leicester reported her name to the Pension Department as Mary Archer and said he was legally divorced from her. The divorce documents note her name as Elizabeth Goodell, but Leicester only called her Mary. The court records dated April 7, 1919, state that she had been found guilty of desertion, having "absented herself from the family dwelling place for more than one year without the consent and against

the wishes of the plaintiff” (Leicester). The divorce was granted and Leicester later wrote that he “had no wife”.



After the divorce, Leicester moved to Excelsior Springs, Missouri. It was a popular place to go for health reasons and this might have been what brought Leicester there. He was living in a hotel under the constant care of a nurse when he died on May 3, 1923. He had no family, so the nurse, Jessie Gray, filed his final papers with the Pension Department to report his death and receive payment for his last expenses. The undertaker charged \$105.00 and the livery was \$5.00. The cemetery charge was \$10.00 when Leicester was buried in the Salem Church Cemetery near Excelsior Springs. Perhaps because there was no family, the grave went unmarked until November of 2003 when members of the Second Minnesota Battery of Reenactors placed a veteran's stone for him in the cemetery. Since Leicester had reenlisted to remain with the Second Battery, it was decided to put that unit on his stone.

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*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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