



## 2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

### Henry Harder

Henry was one of the earliest members of the Second Battery. He was 23 years old when he joined the army on December 7, 1861. He was single, stood 5' 8-1/2" tall, had hazel eyes, light hair and a light complexion. He was born in Conklin, New York and was working in Hennepin County, Minnesota, as a lumber man when he decided to enlist. His early enlistment put him in place to take a rank in the Battery and he was made a sergeant.

Henry was a sergeant when the Battery went south in May, but by July 16, 1862, a letter from his captain would end that rank. From their camp in Jacinto, Mississippi, Captain Hotchkiss wrote, *Please find a 2 Lieutenants' Commission for H.W. Harder, Orderly Sergeant of 2 Battery Light Art. Minn. Vols. I need his service as a commissioned officer very much indeed as I have but one Lieutenant with me. Upon your order 1st Lt. Albert Woodbury is in Minnesota on recruiting service to fill my Battery up to the maximum, and will not be long in accomplishing the object for which he was sent home.*

*1st Lt. Gustave Rosenk is spending his time in St. Louis on the plea of a contusion of his ankle bone. As the Battery will soon have the Maximum number of men, and there being but one Lt. present for duty, I respectfully ask you that Sergeant Harder, the bearer hereof, be immediately mustered upon the commission herewith transmitted.*

The request was granted and Henry began his duties as a second lieutenant, the promotion granted by the governor of Minnesota. Those duties put Henry in action with the Battery at Perryville and Stones River, some of the hardest fighting the Battery was involved in. In April of 1863, the Captain sent another letter to headquarters asking for permission for Henry to "visit Nashville" to complete some business for Captain Hotchkiss. Permission was granted.

The battle at Chickamauga, Georgia, in September again put the Battery and Henry in the thick of the fighting. By October 21, the strain was starting to show on Henry. He had a surgeon's certificate to support his request for 20 days leave. The request was passed up the chain of command with a notation from Captain Hotchkiss. *Lieut. Harder has been constantly with his command since its organization and has won the enviable reputation of a good officer. He behaved gallantly on the fields of Perryville, Stone River and Chickamauga and has always discharged the duties devolving upon him with energy and promptness. His health now demands a change of climate and diet and as I know that the favor of a leave of absence would not be abused by a tardy return to duty as soon as he is able to do so, I most earnestly urge that a leave of absence be granted him.*

Henry's accompanying letter assured his commanding officers that he was owed no back pay, had no charges pending against his pay, and had no government property in his possession. He reminded them that he had never been absent from his command without leave and provided them with his post office address while he would be gone. Henry was going home to Dayton, Hennepin County, Minnesota.

When the leave of absence was granted is unknown, but on December 3, 1863, a letter was sent from St. Paul to Captain Hotchkiss detailing the poor health of Henry Harder. The letter said Henry was too sick to travel, was unfit for duty for at least 15 days and was signed by the Army Hospital doctor at Fort Snelling.

An article in the *Goodhue Volunteer* newspaper from Red Wing, Minnesota, described a duty Henry was to undertake during the first week of January, 1864. It stated that the commanding officer at Fort Snelling was sending a group of twenty "convalescents" south under Lt. Harder of the Second Battery. To be included with that group were ten "deserters" that were noted as eight from Minnesota units and two from other states. The deserters were to be returned to their units for court martial. It appears that Henry did not actually leave Minnesota in early January as the news indicated. Another letter, arriving nearly a month later, came to Fort Snelling requesting that Henry be sent back to his unit and end the recruiting duty he was supposed to be doing. It stated, "These officers have not been successful in obtaining Recruits and would be of more service with the Batteries." It was signed by the Chief of Artillery for the Department of the Cumberland. Henry left to join the Battery on January 26, 1864.

Upon Henry's return south, he took command of the Battery since Captain Hotchkiss was then acting as Chief of Artillery for the second Division, 14th Corps.

Henry's next action was a letter of resignation dated March 1, 1865. He wrote, *I have the honor to tender my unconditional resignation as 1st Lieut. in 2nd Minnesota Battery Vet. Vols. for the following reasons.-- I. My private business and private reasons imperatively demand that I should leave the service. II. I have aged parents that require my immediate attention at home.*

Two days later, Captain Hotchkiss forwarded Henry's resignation with a recommendation for approval, though the approval cast a suspicious light on the affair. *Owing to the habits of intemperance I am sorry to say this officer is no longer fit for the service. In the battle of Perryville, KY., at Stone River and as Chicamauga he handled his section with coolness and gallantry, and but for his habits would not have the entire confidence of his superior and commanding officer. In view of past good services I earnestly ask for Lieut. Harder an honorable discharge.*

Henry's resignation was final on March 12, 1865. Where he went or what his urgent business may have been is unknown, but he was in Tennessee in December of 1865 and it is believed that he died in Chattanooga. His final resting place has not been found and may be one of the "unknowns" in the Chattanooga National Cemetery.

Records only hint at a relationship between Henry and another man detailed to the Second Battery for a time, Cornelius Harder. A family record lists the children of John and Rebecca Harder. Failing Cornelius was the oldest, Henry was four years younger. With a first name like Failing, it would be little surprise if he went by his

middle name. While the family record dates do not correspond exactly with the ages the boys said they were when they enlisted, the locations of birth do match. Henry's apparent downturn in his behavior—according to Captain Hotchkiss—coincides with the departure of Cornelius from the Battery. Henry's urgently needed leave also matches close to the dates Cornelius was in the hospital in Nashville. Were they brothers who managed to connect during the war? The sparse records leave room for guessing, but provide few answers.

*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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