



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Harris Harrison

Exactly when Harris Harrison arrived in Minnesota is unknown, but he was born in Agerhauss, Telemarken, Norway April 13, 1835. He was part of a wave of immigrants coming to the new lands that were just opening up in the young state of Minnesota. The 1860 census showed Harris living with his parents in Leon Township, Goodhue County, where Harris was farming.

When the Civil War broke out, Harris decided to enlist. He was mustered into the Second Battery of Light Artillery on March 13, 1862. He was 26 years old, 5' 6-1/4" tall, had gray eyes, light hair, and a light complexion.

Harris had other skills and some sources say he was a blacksmith. Harris himself noted he was a blacksmith at his enlistment, so he may have practiced that trade in connection with farming as the 1860 census indicates. Skills as a blacksmith would have been valuable to the Second Battery and some records note that he used those skills as one of the Battery artificers. Other sources indicate Harris was the Battery's bugler. Neither position gave him rank and Harris remained a private throughout his army service.

Harris served the Battery faithfully and chose to reenlist when his first three years were over. This earned him a furlough back to Minnesota in the spring of 1864 and it was an eventful leave. Harris and Jane Chilson were married in the Church of Holden in Goodhue County that May.

But the war was not over and at the end of the 30 days, Harris reported back to Fort Snelling and returned to the South. On August 29, he was sent to the hospital in Chattanooga for an illness. He spent less than a week in the hospital and returned to the Battery on September 2. It was the last time he was away from the Battery until the unit was mustered out at the end of the war.

Harris returned to his bride and they settled down to raise a family. Their first child was born in 1866, and by 1881, they had added seven more children to their flock.

The Homestead Act would have given Harris the right to deduct his time in the Army away from his time to prove up on a homestead and this may have been the incentive for him to move to Day County, South Dakota, where he took a homestead on 160 acres in Wheatland Township. He moved his family to the new land in 1882. Two more children were born, making for a total of ten.

By 1898, when Harris applied for a pension, Jane had died, and Harris was still living in South Dakota. In 1912, a guardian had been appointed for him as he was no longer able to take of his own affairs. The guardian's name was A. Chilson, leading to speculation that the guardian was a relative of Jane's. The pension Harris was receiving at the time was \$40.00 a month.

At some point, Harris was moved to the Soldiers' Home in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he died on May 2, 1919. His body was sent to South Dakota for burial and his final rest, though his story is not yet finished. Research turned up a grave plot owned by Harris in the Wheatland Township Cemetery. Records indicate he bought a plot of eight graves and it was first believed Harris was resting there without a marker on his grave. The cemetery had been part of the Methodist Church in the area, but that church closed and the township took over ownership of the cemetery. When Harris bought the plot is unknown, but no one is buried there. The lawn mowing crew were the ones to tip researchers that Harris was not really buried in Wheatland, but that he was in a cemetery some five miles south. A fun name like Harris Harrison was one they remembered from when they cut the grass in that cemetery.



Harris and at least one son are buried in a family plot next to the Goodhue Lutheran Church in Eden Township, five miles almost directly south of the Wheatland Cemetery. There, Harris has a magnificent family stone that records his service with the Second Battery as a bugler.

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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