



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Ole E. Henderson

Struggling to fit into a new culture must have been difficult for many immigrants to Minnesota in the 1850's and 1860's and so it probably was for Ole. Norwegian traditions for names differed from American traditions and this likely accounts for the variations in Ole's last name. When he enlisted in the Second Battery on September 2, 1864, he said his name was Ole E. Henderson. In 1870, when Ole was married to Pauline Knudsdatter, Ole said his last name was Helgasen. Two friends signed the marriage certificate as witnesses, both also had the first name of "Ole" with last names ending in "sen". Family papers indicate there were some occasions where Ole used his father's name of Ellingsbratten as well. It is not surprising that names with a heritage such as this were confusing.

When Ole enlisted, he was 33 years old, and had only been in America three years. He was born in Ringerke, Norway, stood 5' 9" tall, had gray eyes, light hair and a light complexion. His home was a farm in Spring Grove, Houston County, Minnesota, and he received a bounty of \$100 for enlisting. He got \$33.33 at the time of enlistment with the balance due at a later date.

Ole served as a private during his one year term of service, though the war ended and he was discharged just a few weeks short of completing that year.

Ole went back to Spring Grove and in 1870, married Pauline Knudsdatter Blexrud. Their first child, Maren, was born in 1872. A son arrived in 1874, but he did die at age eight. Pauline and Ole eventually had five children: Karen, born in 1876; Anna, born in 1879; and Oline, born on September 23, 1881--six weeks after her father died.

How active in the community Ole was is unknown except for the notation in a county history that he was elected treasurer of the "Fremad" of Spring Grove in 1880. The Fremad was a literary society organized "in the basement of the church," the name said to mean "progress, onward and excelsior." The group was just getting organized, but planned to host lectures, essays, readings and music. Ole was not there to see very many of their events as he died in 1881.

Ole's death was caused by "cholera morbus" according to his death record. He was 47 years old when he died on August 9, 1881.

Pauline filed for Ole's pension to help support the girls, but never filed a widow's claim for herself. She remarried in 1889. The children rated a pension under their father's service, so the three of them collected \$12 per month--\$8 for the first child and \$2 each for additional child. Their step-father petitioned for their guardianship and it was granted in 1890. The family stayed in Houston County.

Ole was buried in the Norwegian Ridge Cemetery in Spring Grove. Perhaps it was a matter of money, perhaps some other reason, but Ole's grave was not marked. In the fall of 2002, members of the Second Minnesota Battery of reenactors requested a military marker for Ole in the Norwegian Cemetery. Through a loss of records due to time and fires, the exact location of Ole's grave could not be found, but permission was granted to place the white marble marker in the cemetery in honor of Ole and his service in the Second Battery.



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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