



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

John Hovey

The image of people in the 1800s often staying within a single county for their entire lives certainly does not apply to John. He moved his home at least seven times covering six states and that did not include his Civil War service.

John started out in Bath, New York, being born there on October 31, 1838. Other sources provide varying years of his birth, but never more than a year or two in either direction. A letter John himself wrote in 1910 about the confusion in his age provides the year 1838. By 1858, he had moved to Minnesota and taken up farming in Saratoga, Winona County. It appears John did not come to Minnesota alone. Jerry Hovey was most likely with him. The men were both living in Saratoga in Winona County before the war. They were both born in Bath, New York. It is possible they were cousins since it is known they were not brothers.

The Second Battery was just forming up when John decided to join the Army. He was mustered in on January 28, 1862, the same day Jerry mustered in. The descriptive role showed him to be 5' 9" tall, single, with blue eyes, light hair and a light complexion.

Less than a month later, John came down with the measles. The Battery was still at Fort Snelling, so he was sent to the Fort hospital. John stayed there for at time, but he was still sick when he went back to the Battery. Jerry Hovey was detailed as the company nurse and helped care for John. Jerry seemed to think the severe cold and the living conditions of an old warehouse may have played a part not only in John's illness, but in as many as 15 or 20 others in the Battery who were sick.

Though still not well, John remained with the Battery and went South with them. It wasn't until after they were in Missouri that John was finally well enough to be considered fit for duty. He did spend more time in the hospital at least once during the winter of 1862-3.

John campaigned with the Battery throughout his first term of service and reenlisted as a veteran in the spring of 1864. John was mustered out of the Army on August 16, 1865, at Fort Snelling with the Battery.

On Christmas Eve, 1865, John married Betsey Ann Sergeant in Fairbault, Minnesota. The next years would see their family expand to include three sons and two daughters.

The family moved to Wisconsin in 1869, then to Iowa in 1872. The next stops were several places in Nebraska and Montana, and by 1878, they were living in South Dakota. The last move came in 1902 when they moved to Idaho and settled down in the town of Kooskia.

John opened a hotel in Kooskia and after a few years, opened a livery stable. He lost both to a fire, but rebuilt quickly and continued to run his businesses in “an improved manner” according to a local newspaper account.

In the spring of 1920, John fell ill, but there was little concern over his health. He seemed to be recovering, so much so that he was at his hotel working on the night before he died. The cause was listed as heart failure when John died on April 17, 1920. He was laid to rest in Kooskia’s City cemetery at the south edge of town.



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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