



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Silas Augustus Howard

Silas was a Scottish immigrant, coming to America with his two brothers and widowed mother. They landed in New York, but Silas did not stay in that state. He set out for Pennsylvania where he took up farming. In October of 1848, Silas married Rebecca Ann Carpenter. They had two children when Silas decided to move the family further west to Minnesota. They arrived in Saratoga, Winona County, and began farming once again.

Then the Civil War broke out and men from Winona County were recruited heavily. Silas was 37 years old when he decided to enlist. He joined the Battery on January 28, 1862, along with several other men from Winona County. Silas was 5' 7" tall, had blue eyes, auburn hair and a light complexion.

Military service was something that might have been familiar to Silas as his father had been a soldier and given his life in that calling. Silas fell victim to another type of enemy when he joined the Army--disease. Silas began battling chronic diarrhea in March of 1862 and was still fighting with that disease when he was thrown from a horse. The fall injured his back and hip, causing some paralysis. On the 28th of October, Silas was given a disability discharge and sent back to Minnesota. His military service had lasted about nine months.

Back in Minnesota, Silas and Rebecca continued to live on the farm with a side interest in trading horses. In 1869, they moved to Sabula, Iowa.

It was in Sabula that Silas decided to apply for a pension based on his disability discharge from the army. He hired a pension notary to help with the claim since Silas could not write his name, only make his mark. The statement made by Silas at that time might indicate why there were no further records in his pension file about his actually receiving the pension. The statement he provided reads: *He was thrown from his horse while engaged in Battle at Shilo Tenn on Sunday April 7th 1862 Said fall from the horse having broken my hip bone on the right Side Causing me to be a cripple for life and rendering me unable to perform manual labors for my support also is still affected with Chronic direahea caused by hardship and exposure while in the line of my duty in Said 2nd minnesota Battery* (The spelling, punctuation and capitalization are just as they appear on the pension form.)

What may have given the Pension Department cause to question this application was the date of the Battle of Shiloh, Tennessee. It was indeed fought on April 7th, but the Second Minnesota Battery was still in Minnesota in April. The Battery did not move south until the first week of May and then remained in Missouri for a time to be outfitted with guns and equipment before moving into Tennessee. The Battery was not engaged in the Battle at Shiloh. They did pass over the battlefield in the

summer of 1862 and it is possible Silas was thrown from a horse at that time, so his injuries could have happened there, but not during the actual battle.

In Silas' defense, his discharge signed by Captain Hotchkiss on October 28, 1862, describes a fall from a horse and injuries that match what Silas told the Pension Department. Since Silas couldn't read, he might not have been aware of the pension notary adding a bit of drama to the injury or perhaps it was a simple misunderstanding. Indications are that Silas did not receive the pension he was seeking.

Silas and Rebecca moved again and finally landed in Royal, Nebraska. Along the way, the couple had a total of 13 children.

Silas died on January 20, 1906 and was buried in the Royal Cemetery. Rebecca filed for a widow's pension and received \$8.00 a month, signing her application with a mark rather than being able to write her name.



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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