



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

James Hunter

James enlisted in the Second Battery on February, 5 1862, and was mustered in at Fort Snelling ten days later. One year to the day later, James received his discharge at Perryville, Kentucky.

It was probably not the way James imagined it would be when he enlisted. He was just 21 years old when he joined the Battery, 5' 9" tall, with gray eyes, light hair and a light complexion. He was born in Stormont County, Ontario, Canada, and had come to Faribault in 1861, taking up work as a blacksmith. Even though this skill was one the Battery needed, James did not serve as a blacksmith. He served on the front of one of the Battery's guns and it ended his military service.

Two of the Battery's guns were in the thick of the action at the battle of Perryville, Kentucky. The Union lines were being driven back toward the Second Minnesota Battery's position and they were ordered to withdraw. James was hit by a musket ball in the leg as they were pulling the gun from the line. Both bones in his right leg were broken. Another ball hit him in the abdomen and came out near his spine. With the Confederates less than ten feet from him, James urged his comrades to leave him and save themselves. James was quickly behind enemy lines. Left lying on the field, James later wrote that he watched the sunset and bid it farewell, thinking he would not be alive come morning.



James watched the moon come up and then saw Confederate soldiers moving across the field, "picking the pockets" of the dead. He called to them and asked to be taken to a surgeon. The soldiers relieved James of his hat, jacket, and boots with the less than encouraging suggestion that he would not be needing them for much longer anyway. They did call a surgeon who did what he could for James, then offered to take him to a hospital. James declined the hospital, instead convincing them to take him to a nearby house. He was left there with 17 other wounded Union soldiers for two days before Lt. Albert Woodbury of the Second Minnesota Battery came back looking for James. When Woodbury found him, James was one of only seven men left alive in the house.

James was sent to a Union hospital and he remained there until his discharge the following February. James went back to Faribault and his smithing.

He was not done with cannons, though, and cannons were not done with James. In April of 1865, the Union was celebrating the surrender of General Lee and the coming end of the war. Faribault, too, celebrated and James was on hand to fire ceremonial rounds. While acting in the same capacity as he had in with the Second Battery, James was loading a round when the cannon went off prematurely. It tore his left arm off just below the elbow.





The loss of his arm did not give James an excuse to withdraw from life. On April 25, 1866, he married Elizabeth F. Weatherston in Owatonna. The couple remained together for the rest of their lives, though they did not have children. James could no longer work as a blacksmith, instead he was the sheriff of Rice County from 1866 to 1872. He was the city justice of Faribault from 1877 to 1886, register of deeds of Rice County from 1887 to 1897, deputy county auditor 1898, judge of probate of Rice County 1899 to 1905, and from 1909 to 1911. He also served as chief of police of Faribault. He organized Company B, Second Regiment, Minnesota National Guards, August 15, 1877, was elected captain, and served until 1885. He was a member of the Faribault Commercial Club, Faribault Lodge of Elks, of the Knights of Columbus, and of Michael Cook Post, G.A.R., of which he served as a commander several times.

James and Elizabeth were actively involved with medicine in Faribault and in 1899, it was proposed that the city buy "Hunter's Hospital". The sale must have been completed as in 1906, the city contracted Elizabeth and James to operate the hospital. The facility was still known as Hunter Hospital in 1920 when it served as an emergency Influenza Hospital.



James and Elizabeth were visiting friends in Eagle Rock, California, when James suffered a heart attack. A doctor was called, but before help arrived, James was dead. He died on February 11, 1915, and was laid to rest in the Great Mausoleum of Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale California.

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.

Updated: 18 June 2013