



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Christopher Johnson

Christopher Johnson was an immigrant from Christiana, Norway, who arrived in Minnesota before the outbreak of the Civil War. He took land and was farming Utica, Winona County, when another man from the area was recruiting for the Second Battery at the outbreak of the war. Richard Dawley lived near Utica and it is possible Christopher may have decided to enlist because of his acquaintance with Dawley. Christopher was 21 years old when he was mustered into the Battery on March 13 of 1862. He was 5' 8 1/3" tall, had gray eyes, light hair and a light complexion.

Life in the army seemed to agree with Christopher as he was never sent to the hospital for any illness. He was promoted to corporal and was serving as the driver on the swing team on the center section of the Second Battery's guns during the battle at Stones River, Tennessee. It was a fight the men remembered well, including Edward Pratt who described what happened to Christopher in the battle.

"Christopher Johnson and myself (Edward Pratt) wer in the same detachment of 2nd Minn Battery at the battle of Stones River Tenn. on the morning of Dec 31st 62 and wer ordered to retreat and went back across a corner field into the edge of the timber and there unlimbered and fired a few shots with the enemy in close pursuit and wer then orderded to move back soon after striking a shell burst over head killing lead driver and his Saddle Horse and disabled his other horse. I came forward and helped Johnson off his horse he (Christopher Johnson) was driving the swing teem he was then bleeding from Ears Nose and Mouth. I then unhitched from lead teem and came back and forcably put Johnson on his horse and saved the gun.

He was very deaf for a long time and has never recovered"

The spelling, grammar, and lack of punctuation are Pratt's.

The account by Captain Hotchkiss agreed with Pratt's tale, stating that Hotchkiss had been a witness to the shell that damaged Christopher's hearing.

How long Christopher may have been out of action, if he even was out, is unknown, as records do not indicate him absent from the Battery at any time during the war. When their enlistments were up in March of 1864, Christopher was one of the 46 men to reenlist, earning him a furlough home to Minnesota that spring.

When the war was over, the Battery went back to Fort Snelling to be mustered out and Christopher was still with them. He received his final pay and went home to southern Minnesota.

On October 8, 1865, Christopher married Inger Steensgard at the home of John Lemgoord in front of two witnesses. Reverend Jenson officiated at the ceremony in Norway Township, Fillmore County, Minnesota.

The couple soon began a family and had five children. The first, Hanna Marie born in 1868, died young. The other two girls and two boys were born from 1870 to 1882 and all survived to adulthood.

Christopher and Inger moved around some. In 1883, they were in Albert Lea and Christopher was receiving a pension of \$2.00 a month for an injury to his hand, though no military record indicates any such injury in the army.

By 1890, they were calling Grand Forks, North Dakota, home, but they did not remain there. In 1891, while they were living in Le Roy, Minnesota, Christopher applied for a pension, citing his loss of hearing as his disability. He blamed the action at Stones River for his deafness. In 1898, the disability claimed on the application was for "rheumatism and disease of heart". The final pension claim, filed in 1900, said Christopher needed a pension due to his "inability to earn support by manual labor." The pension he received was \$8.00 a month with periodic increases. In 1916, the amount Christopher received was \$30.00 a month for his pension, this increased to \$50.00 in 1920.



At some point in his life, Christopher had given up farming and was working as a "common laborer" according to records. His death certificate stated he died in Minneapolis at the Soldier's Home and he was considered a nonresident of Minneapolis. He died on May 14, 1920; the cause of death was a cancer in his bowels.

Christopher's body was taken to Le Roy, Minnesota, where he was buried in the Lutheran Church Cemetery, but his grave was not marked with a permanent marker. In 2004, a marble marker from the Veteran's Administration was placed on his grave by the Second Minnesota Battery of Reenactors.

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