



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Alonzo T. Keene

Alonzo was a good son according to not only his mother and father, but to the neighbors as well.

The family was living on a rented farm in Anoka County, Minnesota, before the war. Alonzo and his father worked the land together. Alonzo also worked around for others and his wages were used to support the family. One neighbor said he knew “positively that the said family were in a great measure dependent upon the said Alonzo T. for their support and were in a great measure supported by him.” The farm was probably not exceptionally profitable as Alonzo’s father said he owned “2 cows and a yoke of oxen and sled besides my household furniture” at the time they were renting the land in Anoka Township.

The Keene family consisted of parents and five children, but only Alonzo and Elenora were living with their parents in Anoka County. Two boys were in Illinois and the oldest daughter was married.

With this as a background, Alonzo may have agreed to enlist as a sure means of an income for the family. He probably knew the man who recruited him. Albert Woodbury was from a prominent family in Anoka and was a lieutenant in the Second Minnesota Battery. He was on a recruiting detail in Minnesota in the summer of 1862 when Alonzo enlisted on August 26th. Lt. Woodbury signed Alonzo’s enlistment papers.

Alonzo was 21 years old, 5’ 10-1/2” tall, with blue eyes, dark hair, and a fair complexion. His birthplace was Dead River, Maine. Alonzo’s muster sheet showed that he received a \$25 bounty for his promise of three years in the Army, but his father later said that Alonzo’s bounty was \$100 and that Alonzo had given it to the family for their support while he was in the Army.

Alonzo sent \$10 home from Fort Snelling as he was waiting to go south to catch up to the Battery. He promised to send \$10 from each month’s pay.

Lt. Woodbury took the 26 new recruits south and met up with the Second Battery on September 27th. The new men were with the unit less than two weeks when the Battery participated in their first real battle at Perryville, Kentucky. It was Alonzo’s baptism of fire and he came through the battle without injury.

A long life in the Army was not in Alonzo’s future. He became ill and died in camp near Nashville, Tennessee, on December 10, 1862. Army reports state Alonzo died of typhoid fever, but his mother simply called it camp fever.

His body was not sent back to Minnesota. Alonzo was probably buried on the field near the camp or perhaps in a local cemetery or church yard. The system of National Cemeteries was not yet fully in place. It is possible Alonzo’s body was removed to the National Cemetery at Nashville at some later time as so many men were. His final resting place “is known only to God.”

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 December 2020