



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

John A. Kelley

John was born in Broom County, New York, on December 13, 1839, the second of six children. About 1848, the Kelley family moved west and settled in Illinois where they farmed until 1855 when they moved in a prairie schooner to a farm near Fremont in Winona County, Minnesota.

A young lady by the name of Lucy M. Johnson living in Fremont caught John's eye and the two were married on February 1, 1863. John continued to farm, working on the land until he decided to enlist. John went to Rochester to enlist and later wrote about the "thorough physical" he was given that included being stripped naked to stand before the examining surgeons. John commented on the fact that even after this close of an examination, he still had to be examined when he reached Fort Snelling and again was stripped naked.

John was mustered into the Second Minnesota Battery on September 2, 1864. He was 24 years old, had blue eyes, dark hair, and sandy complexion. He was 5' 9" tall. John served as a private throughout his army service.

When John went to enlist, he went with a friend, John Handy. The pair had known each other since 1855 and were good friends. Both enlisted in the Battery and they were bunk mates during their time in the service.

John said he had always been healthy and could not remember going to a doctor before his time in the Army. He went to sick call once for diarrhea, but he remained with the Battery rather than go to the hospital. John did not seem to have much liking for doctors, but that did not stop what happened in the winter of 1864-5.

John was not feeling well the last night he stood duty with the Battery. He had been excused from duty for the week prior, but when so many of the men were sick, the sergeant asked John to stand the duty. John stood the guard duty, but was very sick most of the night. It was the night he broke out with the red spots of measles, especially on his face, and it put him in the hospital where he would remain for five months. It was not a regular army hospital, but an old building where the Battery men took care of each other. John couldn't remember events that occurred while he was sick, but knew he was for a time unable to leave his bed. He only knew there were Battery comrades detailed to care for him because they told him they had. John spent his last five months in the army trying to recover from the measles and the effects they left on him.

In late July of 1865, the Battery went north to Fort Snelling to be mustered out, John went with, expecting to be discharged. When the men arrived at the Fort in St. Paul, there was not enough money on hand to pay the men off, so they were given ten days leave. They were free to do as they pleased as long as they were back in ten days to collect their pay and discharges. John was still sick, so he decided to go

home. After his arrival back in Utica, he grew worse until a doctor was called. John never did go back to Fort Snelling to be discharged. He received his formal discharge by "correspondence."

John believed his heart was affected by the measles and it continued to trouble him throughout his life. When asked by the Pension examiner what treatments John had received for the heart trouble, John was honest. He did not go to a doctor when he felt short of breath or had a pain near his heart, but administered himself a dose of brandy. He also admitted to using tobacco for both smoking and chewing, habits he picked up while in the Army.



John tried to farm for a while after leaving the army, but his health did not allow for such work, so he went into business with his brother, Murray. They decided to build a store that would be closer to the people in the Fremont area and provide mail service to them. It took two years to get an official post office established, but the Kelley brothers established both their store and post office at what would become known as Fremont Corners.

The pair worked the store together for over 20 years before Murray sold his share to John's son-in-law. This lasted for four years before John had a new partner and the store became known as Kelley and Selvig.

John's health did not prevent him from being active in the community. He served on the school board for many years and was a member of the G.A.R. Post. He and Lucy had four children, three girls and a boy. Their son died at birth. Lucy noted on the application for a widow's pension that one of the girls had been a "cripple from birth."

On February 13, 1903, John finished his duties at the store, locked it up and went home. He was settling down for the evening when the trouble he always said his heart gave him reached the end. John died "instantly," death coming "without a struggle."

John was laid to rest in the Fremont Cemetery, Fremont, Winona County, Minnesota.

Lucy survived John and had to go through the probate process after his death. The estate was settled with her as his heir in the August following John's death.



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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