



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Frank Lewis

"I certify that my correct name is Frank Larson, and that at the time of my enlistment I assumed the name of Frank Lewis for the reason that many other men were enlisting under assumed names and "Larson" being a very common name I felt that "Lewis" would be easier and more separate and distinct from that of "Larson", and I have always retained the name of "Lewis" and am now known as Frank Lewis."

The young man who had enlisted in the Second Battery under the assumed name of Frank Lewis was just 18 years old when he signed up for the Army on February 21, 1862. He and his father had come to Minnesota from Illinois in 1855. They both worked odd jobs as the family was by then scattered. Frank lost his mother shortly after coming to the United States. A brother died when they were living in Illinois. Frank and his sister were sent out to do what work they could and eventually, Frank and his father came to Red Wing, Goodhue County, Minnesota. Frank described their home as a "shack" about a mile and a half east of Red Wing.

Frank was born in Sweden on July 30, 1843 at Elsberg. After coming to America in 1851, his first name was Americanized from Frans to Frank. He later wrote, "I was picked on and made fun of, and spoken of as green Swede, and I took the name Lewis which was a kind of Americanized name for Larson." Frank didn't run into problems with using two names until after he returned from the Army when his father objected. His father used the name Larson and it confused people when Frank used Lewis. For a time, Frank went back to using Larson, but after his father died in 1873, Frank went back to Lewis.

Frank enlisted with another Swede from Red Wing, Anders Bergman. The two went off to Fort Snelling together to enlist. Frank carried with him a note of permission from his father to enlist as that was necessary if a young man were under the age of 21 years. Frank was 5' 8" tall, hazel eyes, light hair and a light complexion. He said by the time he left the service, he had grown an inch and so stood 5' 9" tall in 1865.

Army life seemed to agree with Frank as he was never in the hospital or listed on the sick rolls during his service. When asked what his service had been in the Army, Frank was quick to provide details.

"I was in the army that held Chattanooga against the attack of the rebel armies led by Gen'l Hood, while we were holding Chattanooga Sherman and Grant came from Mississippi and Hooker and Howard came from Virginia to our relief and we started from Chattanooga to Knoxville to route the rebels who were to attack Burnside who was holding Knoxville at that time, but did not reach Knoxville as the rebels were routed and our services were then not needed. I was also in a small skirmish in Kentucky under the command of Gen McCook. I was in battles at Stoneriver, where my mess-mate John O'Brien was shot and killed and Chickamauga, Mission Ridge when Sherman, Grant and Hooker and Howard came to our relief."

Frank's job in the Battery was that of driving the lead team on the caisson throughout his time in the Army except for a detail to the Quartermaster Department in March of 1865.

After his first three years were complete, Frank reenlisted and served until the end of the war, being mustered out with the Battery back at Fort Snelling on August 16, 1865.

After the war, Frank returned to Red Wing and work around some, mostly as a farm hand. After the death of his father, Frank wandered, never staying too long in any one place. Still he said Minnesota was always his home. He wrote, "I always had my home in Goodhue County Minn and always kept my personal belongings with a family by the name of Carl Frederickson and among my personal possessions I had our old family bible."

In 1914, Frank settled down, going to live with his sister in Stromberg, Nebraska. She cared for him and encouraged him to apply for his veteran's pension, which Frank had never thought of doing. As long as he could make his own living, he didn't think he had any need to receive a pension. When he applied, he provided great detail about his time in the Battery, listing events, places, and comrades with great accuracy.



Frank died at the age of 79 years on Christmas Eve in 1922. His obituary was lengthy and included the following paragraph: *"He took great pride in serving his country, and was 100 per cent American. He was very quiet and reserved in manner, but was much loved by those who knew him well and they feel the loss of a brother, uncle and friend."*

Frank was laid to rest in the Hoffer Cemetery some six miles east of Stromsberg

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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