



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

John McCausland

John was a skilled machinist working in the growing community of St. Anthony when the Civil War broke out. When he enlisted on December 4, 1861, the Second Battery did not yet exist. William Hotchkiss was organizing the Battery with intentions of commanding it and was recruiting men among his friends and acquaintances. John was one of the men who agreed to serve with Captain Hotchkiss.

John was 33 years old, born in Hallwell County, Maine. He had a dark complexion, brown hair, hazel eyes, and stood 5' 8" tall. He was single.

A machinist would have brought handy skills to the Battery and its equipment, so it did not take long until John was promoted to sergeant. Those same skills would have been valuable to other parts of the army as well, and on February 20, 1864, John was transferred to the Pioneer Brigade in charge constructing bridges, erecting fortifications, clearing roads and other such tasks.

John's abilities made him stand out even in the skilled ranks of the Pioneer Brigade. It was less than a month after his transfer that letters began flying between commanding officers. John's services were wanted on the riverboats and he wanted to serve on them. It was his prewar friend who wrote the final letter of recommendation for John to be sent to the boats.

Captain Hotchkiss wrote: *Sergeant John McCausland of my 2 Battery Light Artillery Minnesota Vols., a No. Steamboat Engineer and Machinist, is desirous of obtaining a position as Engineer on some one of the Steamboats running on the waters in this or other Department over which you may have controll. He is a reliable man and will not disappoint any reasonable expectations as an Engineer and Machinist. From my own personal Knowledge of him before his enlisting in my command I can positively state it as my belief that you could get no more through machinist or competent Engineer. He has run boats on the western waters with perfect satisfaction to the public and employers. If you can give him an Engineer position on one of your boats he will prove himself worth of your entire confidence. Hoping you will find a place for Sergeant McCausland, I am, Sir, Most Respectfully Yours.* The letter was signed by William Hotchkiss.

What happened next is unclear as no records yet found tell where John served. The next recorded event for John is the record of his death at the General Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on January 25, 1865. John had contracted small pox and the disease proved fatal.

Small pox was not understood and greatly feared during the Civil War. Those who were suspected of having the disease were sent to special small pox wards or hospitals. If they died from the disease, they were buried in separate cemeteries for fear they might still pass on the deadly disease. John's body was probably buried in

one of these small pox cemeteries and anything he had with him burned. Thus, he left no effects when he died. Most of the military victims of small pox were disinterred after the war and moved to the National Cemetery in Chattanooga. Unfortunately, the identities of many of these men were lost in the process. John probably lies under one of the many stones marked "Unknown Soldier" in the Chattanooga National Cemetery.

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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