



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Alden C. Meed

Alden was 23 years old when he married Rebecca Jane Usher in Boston, Massachusetts on October 15, 1850. She was just 16. Both were natives of Maine, Alden having been born in Biddeford where he was living when they married. They had a daughter, Eva, and in later years, Eva explained what happened between her mother and father.

Eva said her mother went to Portland to visit her parents when Eva was just three months old. Rebecca decided she did not want to return to Biddeford. Eva's father sold his holdings at Biddeford and moved to Portland to join his wife and daughter. They lived there together until Eva was about a year and a half old when Alden left to go to work in Massachusetts. For a year and a half, Alden did not see his wife, but did occasionally go to see Eva. At his last visit there, Rebecca walked into the room where Alden and Eva were, then turned and walked out without speaking. Alden took Eva and went to his mother's home Biddeford. The issue Alden had with his wife was obvious as Eva said her mother gave birth to a baby girl the very next month.

In Eva's word, her father "stole" her and told his own mother that "they would have to walk over his dead body before they would get" her away from him. Alden never told his mother why he took his daughter away or that he knew his wife was "going around" with a man named Foster.

Alden decided to start over. He left Maine and took care of some business in Massachusetts before leaving for Minnesota to join his sister who had taken Eva on ahead of him. Eva was between three and four years old when she came to Minnesota and lived with her aunt in St. Anthony.

Once settled in Minnesota, Alden sent money to Rebecca to join him. She did not come, but Eva said her mother spent the money. Eva said her father's brother went to see Rebecca's mother and asked about the baby Rebecca had. Rebecca's mother said her daughter had married a man named Foster and that the baby was his. It was Eva's belief that Rebecca had not bothered to mention she was already married to Alden. Eva also said Foster was wealthy, hinting that was part of the problem. At some point after this, Eva said Rebecca's father wrote a letter to Alden saying Rebecca had been picked up on the street of Boston "insane" and had been taken to an asylum near Boston where she died a short time later.

Alden decided to answer the call to war, so he enlisted in the Second Minnesota Battery on December 9, 1861. He was one of the first to enlist in the still being formed Battery under William Hotchkiss. Alden said he was 30 years old, had dark hair, black eyes, a dark complexion, and stood 5' 7-1/4" tall. He made his living as a carpenter.

Since the Battery was just forming, Alden probably had some free time between training and duties at the Fort. It is doubtful Alden was bored during this time as a marriage certificate dated December 18, 1861 appears showing that he married Elizabeth Bidel of Wright County,

Minnesota. He may not have told Eva or his sister about this marriage as Eva remained with her aunt. Eva remembered going to Fort Snelling to see her father go off to the war.

Alden did go south with the Battery in April of 1862, but by May, he was sick and suffering. He did not improve and on November 15, 1862 he was discharged for dysentery and diarrhea. Alden blamed his illness on the long marches in the heat and on the climate of the south. His discharge noted Alden had not been fit for duty since the end of May, but with due care he might be able to recover his health.

Back in Minnesota, Alden did recover, and with his improved health, he decided to enlist again on August 21, 1863. This time he joined Hatch's Battalion of Cavalry. He received a \$25 bounty for his enlistment and again agreed to serve in the army for three years.

Alden's health again began to trouble him. He was given a furlough in July of 1864 and when he returned to his unit in August, he was sick. He did not return to active duty. His second disability discharge came on January 14, 1865. By this time, Alden had been sent back to Fort Snelling where he had only a short trip home.

Here, Eva picks up the story. She said Alden's new wife, Lizzie, appeared and told Eva that was going to go live with them on her father's farm in the "big woods" near Rockford, Minnesota. By this time, Alden and Lizzie had a little boy named Melvin Daniel. Eva said she cried because she did not want to leave her aunt and that it was the first she knew about her father's marriage or that she had a brother.

Confusion in records makes it hard to determine exactly what happened, but Elizabeth and Alden had two more children, Daniel about 1863, and Gertrude born in January of 1866. Eva was living with her aunt when news came of the birth of her "little sister", but by this time, Alden was dead. He died on May 24, 1865. Eva was with him when he died at the home of his sister. He had taken ill while living on the farm in Rockford and was convinced to go to St. Anthony. He died there a few days later. His final resting place is unknown.

Three months later, Eva was told her little sister had died, her step-mother had remarried and Eva lost all contact. She continued living with her aunt in St. Anthony.

Alden's tangled story does not end with his death and little daughter being raised by his sister, but continues for another 70 years. His second wife, Elizabeth, remarried three months after his death, so she was not eligible to apply for Alden's pension. Eva would have been eligible, as would Daniel and Gertrude. Daniel died at age 12 in 1875, and neither of the girls applied for a pension until 1896. Eva received a settlement from the Government for rations Alden had not received while he was on furlough and absent sick. She got a check for \$28 in November of 1896. It opened a set of investigation and even more confusion to Alden's life.

Eva applied for her father's pension which would have been due her if she would have applied for it as a child. The depositions were taken and all was well until 1901 when Gertrude appeared on Eva's doorstep. Gertrude had figured up how much money she would get from Alden's pension. Eva said she never questioned that Gertie, as she was called, was Alden's daughter, saying she looked like Alden. Eva explained that Gertie had found Eva through a client of Eva's. Eva also mentioned that she was in charge of a "million dollar stock company" in Minneapolis.

Then a third “daughter” entered the picture. Addie Bailey, the child Rebecca was pregnant with when Alden took Eva and went to Minnesota, appeared. She was applying for Alden’s pension. She said her mother called herself Bailey and used Jennie as a name to hid from Alden as she did not want him to find her or know anything about her. Addie stated that her mother had not ever married after Alden left her, nor had she applied for a divorce. Addie called Alden her father. Records do not indicate whether Addie ever received anything from the Pension Department.

More investigations brought to light a death certificate for Eva’s mother. Rebecca, then calling herself Jennie Bailey, had not actually died until August 4, 1880. This made Alden legally a bigamist since he married a second time without having obtained a divorce from a living wife. The fact that Alden was told she was dead and thus making him believe he was free to marry again did not seem to influence the Pension Department. In their eyes, Eva was the only one with a legal claim, though Eva never received anything beyond the \$28 owed her father for rations. The Pension Department decided Alden had not died as a result of an illness contracted in the service as the dysentery he was discharged with the first time was not the reason state in the second discharge, nor was it the cause of his death. They argued that he had not suffered with diarrhea after his first discharge, during the second enlistment, or after leaving the Army, so neither he nor his heirs were eligible to claim a pension.

It was Eva’s contention that Gertie had been enticed into going after Alden’s pension to divert Eva from seeking to inherit the land their father owned near Rockford. This land was being held by Alden’s second wife’s sister and she would not provide any information to Eva about the land or its value. Eva’s claims on the pension matter end in 1904, but Gertie was not yet ready to let the matter drop. In 1934, she wrote a letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt. She wrote that, “as one of your loyal supporters, I ask for assistance in obtaining the pension I have been trying to get for many years. I am now an old lady, with not many more years to live, but I do need the financial aid”. Gertie received a very nice letter back from the Pension Department saying that the President had not time to answer all the letters sent him, so they had taken the matter under special advisement. The President wanted to be sure that all who were due monetary benefits were granted them under the existing laws and regulations. It went on to say that because Alden’s first wife was not dead when he married Gertie’s mother, the marriage was not lawful and that made Gertie’s birth an illegitimate one. Therefore, the law said she was not entitled to any money from her father’s pension.

It was the final chapter on Alden’s life that appeared to be a short and troubled one, filled with confusion and poor choices.

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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