



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

Edwin D. Rodgers

Edwin was the only child born to John and Mary Rodgers of Newport, New York. His birth was on January 29, 1831. When Edwin was six, the family moved to Kirkersville, Ohio where his father continued his trade of making shoes. At the age of 16, Edwin was apprenticed to a blacksmith. After two years, he went to Brighton, New York to complete his education and then returned to Ohio. Edwin traveled around the upper Midwest, taking jobs as a blacksmith, until he decided to settle down in Freeborn County, Minnesota in 1857. He was one of the early settlers in the town of Freeborn where he built a blacksmith shop. Edwin also sold agricultural implements in his shop.

On December 27, 1860 Edwin married Helen Scovelle, but it was not to be a long marriage. Helen died less than a year later on September 27, 1861.

According to local history, Edwin "left his anvil" on February 14, 1862 to join the Second Minnesota Battery. The descriptive roll showed him as 30 years old, 5' 9" tall, with blue eyes, light hair and a sandy complexion. Edwin's skills were put to use as his position in the Battery was that of blacksmith.

Keeping the shoes of the nearly 100 horses in the Battery at any given time would have been a steady job. When the Battery was in camp near Iuka, Mississippi in August of 1862, Edwin was shoeing a horse when he was overcome by heat stroke. Other members of the Battery said Edwin became dizzy and blind, so that he had to be carried into a tent for shade. Edwin struggled with the heat stroke and the captain of the Battery, William Hotchkiss, said Edwin never fully recovered from it. Hotchkiss felt he could no longer count on Edwin to be able to do the duty of a blacksmith, so Edwin was promoted to corporal and became an artificer – a military mechanic.

Edwin did recover enough to return to duty and was with the Battery as they participated in the battle at Perryville, Kentucky on October 8, 1862. Another Battery comrade, Austin Peck, said Edwin volunteered to go with the two howitzers. The guns were in action near the Miller house where the fighting grew hot for the Battery. Edwin was between the guns when they were fired and the concussion damaged his hearing permanently. One source said Edwin stepped in to take the place of an injured gunner during the fighting, but no official records of any action like that have been found.

After that battle, Edwin was almost deaf, but he continued to serve in the Battery as an artificer until more health problems began. Captain Hotchkiss called it "jaundice and general disability" and said he frequently needed to send Edwin to sick call.

Edwin was discharged for disability at Murfreesboro, Tennessee on April 2, 1863. Included in the reasons for discharging him were "chronic diarrhea contracted at Columbus, Mississippi on July 9th 1862 from bad food, water and exposure".

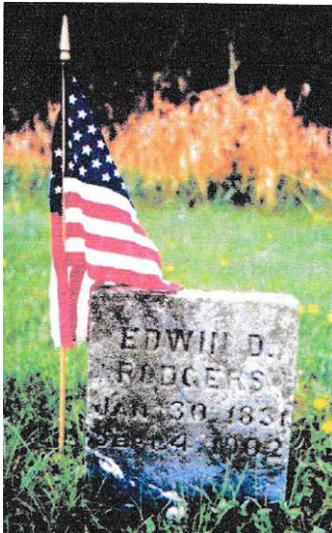
Back in Minnesota, Edwin went back to his implement selling and blacksmithing. In 1864, Edwin married a second time. His bride was Rose Bromwich, a young English born immigrant. The couple had seven children, but the twin of one child died after only a few minutes of life. In Freeborn County, Edwin held several public offices and was elected to the State Legislature, serving two terms. One of his accomplishments was to serve on a Roads and Bridges Committee and he helped pass a new set of road laws for Minnesota.

In about 1877, Edwin moved the family to Wells where he continued his blacksmithing business until 1882. At that time, Edwin and Rosa sold their shop and house and moved to Minneapolis.

Rosa had only lived in Minneapolis for two years when she died just before Christmas in 1884. Edwin and the children stayed in Minneapolis for a few years, but in 1887, they moved to Michigan. This move was because Edwin had married a third time to a widow by the name of Julia Case. She also had four children, though hers, like Edwin's, were mostly grown by the time they married.

Julia had land from her first husband in Michigan and it was to this land that they moved in 1887. The following summer, Edwin found himself preparing yet another funeral a family member. This time it was his 18 year old son who drowned while swimming at a nearby lake. Edwin buried two wives and two sons.

Edwin was a member of the Grand Army of the Republic and had been elected to the state legislature on the Republican ticket, but had since changed parties to the Prohibitionist Party. Both he and Julia were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Edwin was a Class Leader in the society nearest his home. He also had served as a superintendent of the Sunday school.



Heart trouble took Edwin from his earthly toils on September 4, 1902. He was laid to rest in the Lacey Cemetery in Calhoun Count, Michigan. It is interesting that Julia sued Edwin's estate for \$200, saying it was owed her from an agreement made before Edwin's death. What the agreement may have been is unknown, but the courts did give her the \$200. According to records, she had a house with a mortgage, some land, and a savings account of \$500. Her total income for a year did not reach \$85 according to the application she filed as Edwin's widow.

Edwin kept a diary for several years, both before the war and after he was serving. We are fortunate enough to have a copy of the known diaries. The war-time year is 1862 and, unfortunately, Edwin used a pencil when he wrote in this little book. The copy is not the best as a result, but most of what he wrote can still be read. One page is a drawing of a cannon with the major parts labeled. Might this be Edwin's notes to help him when he first joined the Battery?

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: 7 March 2014