



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

William A. Spaulding

We, the undersigned father and mother of William A. Spaulding, minor, hereby give our consent for our son William A. Spaulding to muster into the United States service. The note was signed by both John Spaulding and Emeline B. Spaulding. The note had to be witnessed and the witness was William Wardwell. Wardwell was 39 years old and may have been connected to the family in some way. He and the Spaulding's son were mustered into the Second Battery together on January 16, 1862.



William was only 19 when he enlisted. He had been born on March 7, 1842, in Stedsen, Maine. The family moved to Monticello, Wright County, Minnesota, in 1856. William was working as clerk in a store when he decided to enlist. He had dark eyes, brown hair, a sandy complexion, and was 5' 8" tall.

William was promoted to corporal on April 5, 1863. On June 17th, he suffered an injury to his eye and was sent to the hospital. The Battery moved on, leaving him behind, but only for a short time as William reported back to the Battery on July 10th.

In an effort to keep men in the Union Army, bonuses were offered to men if they would reenlist when they approached the end of their second year in the service. An added incentive was a 30 day veteran's furlough. William decided to take up the army on its offer and he reenlisted. He went home on his furlough in May of 1864 and was one of the Battery's veterans when they returned south that summer.

That fall, several men in the Battery decided to form a Bible class to study and pray together. William joined it and was a member until it was disbanded in the spring of 1865 because church services were available to them at that time. It was noted that the men attended the class whenever they could, but no attendance was taken. It is unknown how much William attended, but he was always kept on as a member in good standing even when he was detailed away from the Battery. It may be that he was close enough that he could still attend.

It would seem William had a knack for clerical duties as he was detailed for that job to the Chief of Artillery at Chattanooga, Tennessee, in December of 1864. It was at this time that William obtained a hardbound copy of the official U.S. Artillery manual, the 1864 printing. He signed his name in the front cover of the book with "Chattanooga, Tenn." William remained a clerk with the Chief of Artillery until the Battery's captain made a formal request to have William returned to the Battery in May of 1865. Even then, William did not go back to his home unit without controversy. A letter was written by the Chief of Artillery at Chattanooga requesting that William stay as his clerk. Lt. Colonel Baxter wrote, "Corporal Spaulding has been on duty as Clerk as this Office for the past four months and is thoroughly acquainted with the duties of the Office and I cannot find a man to fill his place." He went on to note that the Second Battery, though ordered to Tennessee to guard a railroad, still had 150 men present for duty. The implication was that William would not be missed as the Battery was at full strength.

A letter requesting William's return was signed by the lieutenant of the Battery in April. He repeated the request to have William sent back to the Battery, but it took a letter from the Battery's captain to get William reassigned.

Hotchkiss wrote, "Corporal Spaulding is the only man left in the Command of sufficient clerky ability to be of any service to me in closing up my returns and other official papers in the event of musterout of my Battery, indeed it will be very difficult almost impossible, for me to close up my papers now due within the present month without him." Hotchkiss underlined those words in his letter. He also explained that he had need of noncommissioned officers and that he would be promoting William to the rank of sergeant should he be sent back to the Battery.

William was sent back to the Battery and Hotchkiss promoted him to sergeant on June 13, 1865. Two months later, the Battery was mustered out at Fort Snelling and William went home.

Education was William's next challenge. He attended school to become a dentist, but he did make time for other things. In 1866, he married Jerusha Johnson in Minneapolis. They had a son in 1867 and a daughter in 1871.

William graduated from the Ohio College of Dental Surgery in Cincinnati in 1875 and returned to Minneapolis to practice. Life should have been smooth for him, but it was not. Jerusha died in November of 1882 while they were living in Minneapolis. William continued to practice dentistry. Caroline Knowles came into his life and they were married in Farmington in 1884. They added to the family with two more children, both girls. William continued in his profession and became dean of the dental facility in the Minnesota College Hospital in 1886. This became the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry in later years.

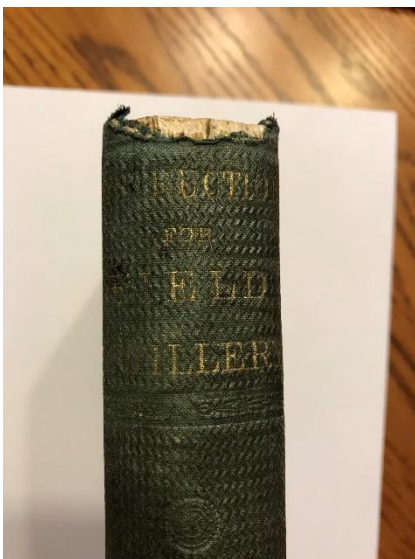
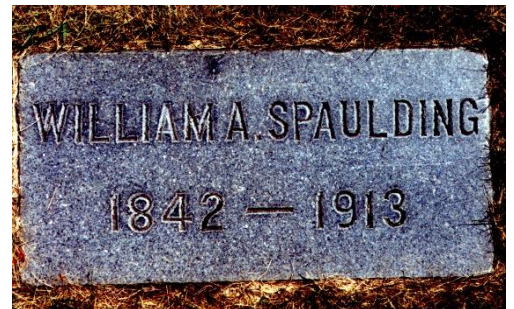
The trials of age were beginning to catch up to William. He blamed the hard life in the army for his aches and rheumatism that were continually getting worse. Changing climate was a popular idea for health reasons and William decided to try it. The family moved to Paris, France, in 1891. They spent their summer in Paris and winter in Switzerland for a year before they came back to Minneapolis. By 1893, they moved back to Europe where they lived in Hyenas, France, in the summers and either Hamburg, Germany, or Switzerland in the winters. This pattern continued to 1905 when William applied for a veteran's pension. His address at the time of application was Hyenas, France.

William moved back to Minnesota for the last time in 1912 and found a place to live in Farmington. In the process of all the moving he had done, he lost his pension certificate and discharge papers, so he wrote several letters to the Pension Department to get everything cleared up. He and Caroline, thought she was often called Carrie, settled down for good. Their children were all grown and William, Junior, was a dentist in France just as his father had been.

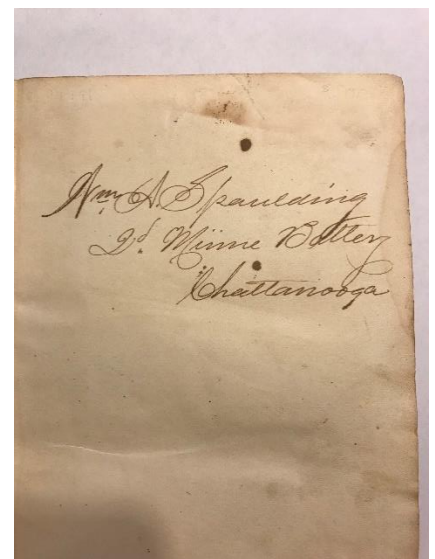
Exhaustion and "pernicious anemia" came to visit William and he could not win that battle. He died on October 17, 1913. News of his death was carried in the Minneapolis Journal newspaper with his photo and the headline, "Dr. W.A. Spaulding, Famous Dentist and Civil War Veteran, is Dead."

William was laid to rest in the Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis with a large family stone and an individual foot stone. Carrie survived him and applied for a widow's pension which she was awarded each month until her death on November 5, 1948.

For at least some of the time William spent in the army, he kept a diary. The diary was written in small books, mostly in pencil on darkening paper. William may have been a clerk, but he seemed to have an aversion to punctuation, using mostly dashes instead of periods and capital letters appear randomly throughout his writing. While hard to read, William did leave his thoughts and observations on the war on the pages. Two of the books are in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society. The whereabouts of the remaining books is unknown.



William's Artillery manual surfaced on EBay in 2018 and was purchased by the Second Minnesota Battery Reenactors. It is unknown why William needed the manual, how he might have used it, if he bought it or if it was issued to him. There is no evidence to indicate how the book ended up in an Ithaca, New York, bookstore where it was bought by an antique dealer in Ohio. The antique dealer listed the book on EBay where it was purchased by the Second Minnesota Battery Reenactors for \$395. The manual remains with the reenactors.



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: 2 January 2019