



## 2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

### Albert Woodbury



*"Thus in the prime of life, in the very morning of his usefulness, has been stricken down one, than whom our community has but few who could not be better spared. Small as is our town, we are making most fearful sacrifices in our country's cause. This case numbers four of our noble hearted young men who have sacrificed their lives and brought sadness to our homes in the defense of all we hold dear. But this cup of sadness is not unmingled with satisfaction, when we remember that each and all have fallen at their post, with their country's armor buckled about them. Nobly have they met the danger, nobly have they paid the terrible price of liberty for those they have left behind, and most nobly will their memories live and be cherished in the hearts of all who can appreciate sterling worth."*

These words appeared in the November 7, 1863, *Anoka Star* Newspaper reporting on the news of the death of Albert Woodbury. The report continued, lamenting the earlier reports of his expected recovery and imminent arrival home. Albert's body did arrive in Anoka the following week. His funeral was held with great ceremony, presided over by the Masonic Lodge of which Albert had been a member before going to war. Following the funeral in Anoka, Albert's body was sent to Charlton, Massachusetts, to be buried beside his mother in the old family plot.

Albert came to Anoka, Minnesota, in 1853, and invested in real estate and the water power for milling operations in St. Francis. Anoka had just been opened for settlement two years before and the area was ripe for developing into a major community in the soon-to-be state of Minnesota. Albert wrote such glowing reports of the infant town at the junction of the Rum and Mississippi rivers that his father and brothers moved to Anoka to explore the new prospects it offered. In 1859, Albert's step mother and step sister arrived in Anoka. The older Woodbury bought a prominent house on the west bank of the Rum River for his family in 1860. The house was home to several generations of the Woodbury family and stands yet today, though Albert did not live there, always keeping his own house.

By September of 1857, Albert had moved the 15 miles south from St. Francis to Anoka and started the "highly respectable firm of Smiley and Woodbury." Both men were listed as "bankers" on the 1857 census and were sharing a house.

The Woodburys were among the wealthy in early Anoka. The 1860 census states Albert's occupation as a dealer in real estate. He had a taxable real estate value of \$6,000 and a personal estate valued at \$1,150. Albert was active in the Masonic Lodge and was named the Anoka Lodge's first Grand Master. He was also a collector of taxidermy birds. One bird in his collection was a wild pigeon and many years after Albert's death, the bird created quite a stir since so few had ever been mounted and by then, the wild pigeon was extinct. Albert had brought a case of the stuffed birds to Anoka, said to be "the work of an expert Taxidermist" and

displayed them in his home. After his death, the birds were taken to his father's house where they remained for many years before being donated to the Anoka City Library where the birds remained until 1965. When the new library was built, Albert's bird collection was disposed of, but the pigeon was given to Anoka High School where it remained for many more years. In January of 1860, a murder suspect was put on trial in the Fourth District Court in Anoka. There were to be 18 jurors, Albert Woodbury among them. For reasons unknown, he did not "answer to his name" when the jury members were called, so he was fined for not appearing that day.

An ad appeared on the front page of the *Anoka Republican* on September 14, 1861. It read: "Smiley and Woodbury, Brokers. Buy and sell, Exchange Land Warrants, State and County Scrip. Collections made and funds remitted at current rates of exchange. Taxes paid by any county in the state." Their office was in Anoka.

When the Civil War broke out, seven men from Anoka were the first to volunteer to help put down the rebellion. They served in the First Minnesota Infantry. Albert assigned "his commercial responsibilities to his brother", Charles, and began trying to raise a company for the First Infantry. That unit, however, had filled up almost immediately after the call was issued and had an excess of their number. Albert's efforts did not come to completion until he met up with William Hotchkiss. Hotchkiss wanted to raise a battery of light artillery and Albert joined him in the effort. It was February 24, 1862, when Albert enlisted and began working to recruit men for an artillery battery. As a result of his efforts, Albert was commissioned a lieutenant in the Second Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery on March 1, 1862.

Albert probably went south with the Battery when they first left Minnesota in early May, but his stay in the south was short. His muster sheets for May and June of 1862 have "not stated" on the "present or absent" line. In July, his muster sheet notes that he was "absent" on "recruiting service in Minnesota by order of General Halleck." Illness had already taken a toll on the men of the Battery by this time and they were no longer at full strength. Being well known in the Anoka and northern Hennepin Counties, sending Albert home to recruit made a good deal of sense. He did his job well as more men from his home area served in the Battery than from any other county in the state. When he reported back to the Battery on September 27, he brought 26 new recruits with him.

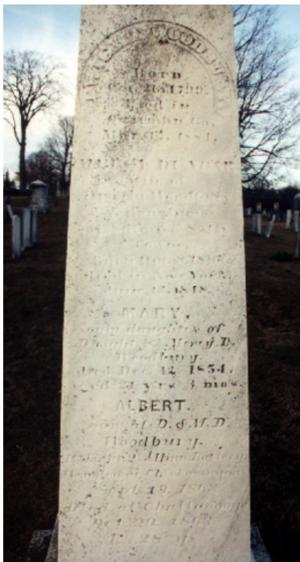
Albert and the Second Battery had their baptism of fire at Perryville, Kentucky, in the battle on October 8, 1862. A private in the Battery, James Hunter, credited Albert with saving his life. Hunter was wounded during the battle, his leg broken and in the confusion of retreating, he was left behind at his own insistence for the rest of the men to get the guns to safety. Hunter was soon in the Confederate held portion of the field. When the Confederates came over the field the next morning in search of their wounded and whatever they could pick up for their own use, Hunter was found. Eventually, he was carried into a house where he was left with 17 other wounded Union men for two days. Hunter said there were only seven men left alive when Albert found him. Albert had ridden back some 20 miles to search for Hunter. Albert took Hunter to the hospital where he made sure Hunter would be taken care of before he left him. Hunter believed if Albert had not found him, he would have died in that house.

On November 19, Albert was sent on detached service to Colonel Carlin's staff. His duties included acting as the brigade inspector. It did not keep Albert from participating in the battle at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on the last day of 1862. Colonel Carlin commended Albert for his "zeal, fidelity, and courage" during the battle.

In February of 1863, an order was issued that all artillery officers on duties away from their batteries were to immediately be returned to their artillery units as their experience was needed. Albert returned to the Second Minnesota, but he had been noticed for the "promptness and fidelity" with which he had performed his duties as brigade inspector. His name was submitted for promotion.

A unique duty fell to Albert and two other lieutenants from the Second Battery in March. They were appointed to a "council of administration" and were to oversee the prices and articles offered for sale by the sutler of the Battery. Albert was the "chair" of the committee and wrote to the sutler requesting a list of all articles the sutler wanted to sell along with their prices.

That spring, Albert submitted a letter of resignation of his commission, but it was denied. Instead, he was told he could have a 20 day furlough for which he then applied. The furlough was granted and Albert went home to Anoka, Minnesota. The *Anoka Republican* newspaper of May 9, 1863, carried a line that read: "Lieut. Albert Woodbury, of the 2d Battery, arrived in town to-day." It also carried an advertisement still listing Albert as an agent for the Merchant's Insurance Company of Hartford. No record has been found to explain why Albert requested the furlough or why he tried to resign his commission.



Albert was back with the Battery in Tennessee by June 1, 1863, and he was given command of the Second Battery. Captain Hotchkiss was away from the Battery serving as the chief of artillery on the staff of division General Davis, so the mantle of command went to Albert.

The Army of the Cumberland was moving southward and on September 19, they ran into the Confederate army on the banks of Chickamauga Creek. Captain Hotchkiss placed the batteries of the division and coordinated their movements and Albert commanded the Second Minnesota. The Second Minnesota Battery prevented Confederate attacks three times, but the Union lines were being pushed back. Just before the order came to withdraw, another battery panicked and ran their limbers and caissons through the Second's gun line, but the Second Minnesota did not falter. Albert's men held their ground until ordered to withdraw. Just after they reached their new position, a "rebel sharpshooter sent a musket ball into Lieutenant Woodbury's left arm, just above the elbow, and broke the bone," wrote Hotchkiss.

The casualty sheet filed said Albert was wounded "severely" and after the battle, he was sent to a hospital in Chattanooga. Private George Townsend was detailed from the Battery to act as a nurse for Albert while he was in the hospital. Evidence suggests that Albert was expected to make a full recovery and messages to that effect were carried to the Battery and sent to his family in Anoka. The exact cause of death is not known, but infection is a strong suspect. It claimed Albert's life on October 29, 1863.

"Thus terminated the life of an accomplished young officer, much beloved by his commander and the men of the battery," wrote Captain Hotchkiss.

Hotchkiss himself took Albert's body back to Anoka for the funeral. Following the funeral, Albert's remains were sent to Charlton, Massachusetts, for burial beside his mother.

Settling up Albert's affairs in the camp of the Battery fell to fellow lieutenant, Charles Earl. Earl used some of Albert's possessions in "settlement of claims during the last illness." One item mentioned was the uniform greatcoat of the "infantry" style that was given to "Mose, Colored servant". It is unclear who this servant was or why Albert's coat was given to him. Some of the articles Albert had with him in the army are quite interesting. He had 11 pocket kerchiefs, all linen; 27 collars; civilian clothing in addition to his military uniforms; four photographs; a package of private letters; four blankets and a quilt; a sewing kit; a horse; a camp chair; a saber and belt; and a pocket book containing \$46.35. The total value of his camp possession was \$116.98.

Back in Anoka, Albert's estate was taken care of by his brother, Charles. Albert had not left a will, so everything was handled in probate court in Anoka. There, Albert left a gold watch valued at \$65 and the chain worth another \$10, along with various pieces of furniture including a stove, office chairs, two washstands, bed and bedding, two compasses, and a double barreled shotgun. He also left a library of books ranging from poetry to history, to surveying techniques. There were books in Latin, books by Hawthorn, Melville, and Thackeray, and miscellaneous magazines. The value of Albert's library was \$89.80. The most expensive book on the list was a *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* valued at \$10. Most books were valued at \$1 or less.

The real value of Albert's estate came from the property he owned. He owned nearly 1,000 acres of land in Anoka and Mille Lacs County and the value of it was placed at \$2,323.42. The land was left to Albert's father, Dwight.

Charles was also responsible for paying all of Albert's debts with the money from Albert's estate. One of the bills he took care of was \$71.90 Albert owed the sutler back in Chattanooga. There was a burial expense of \$162.15, mostly for transporting the body. The editor of the *Anoka Star* newspaper was paid \$6.75, perhaps for the obituary and the ads that were run in the settling of the estate. There were two "notes" that needed to be paid and taxes on some land in Mille Lacs County. The total debt owed was \$540.16.

Albert's promotion to captain was authorized by the legislature and announced in the March 12, 1864, newspapers. It was backed dated to September 3, 1863.

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*Researched and compiled by the reenactors of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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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