



Fog and smoke from a cannon covered part of the Park Hill Cemetery where a ceremony marking the final resting place

of Pvt. Albert Woolson was held. (Submitted)

TRF family shares ties with last Union Civil War veteran



Pvt. Albert Woolson

by David Hill
Editor

Last June, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War honored Pvt. Carl Fromm, who according to their records, was the last Union Civil War veteran to die in Pennington County.

There have been a lot of these ceremonies across Minnesota this summer. Beginning in 2003, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) embarked on the Last Soldier Project, now the Last Union Veteran

Project. The purpose of the project is to locate and appropriately mark the final resting place of the last Civil War soldier buried in each county/parish and in each state of this great country.

It was around this time they were honoring Pvt. Carl Fromm in Pennington County that Sherry Sorenson of Thief River Falls learned that one of her relatives, Pvt. Albert Woolson, would be honored as the last Union veteran buried in St. Louis County. Woolson was the last Union Civil War soldier buried in the U.S.

On Aug. 12, two ceremonies were conducted in St. Louis County, one at Park Hill Cemetery in Duluth, and a second ceremony at the St. Louis County Depot where a statue stands honoring Pvt. Albert Woolson.

Sorenson, an amateur family historian, said she had been aware of Pvt. Woolson. She never met him, but added that her mother did when she was pregnant with her. Sorenson traveled to the events in August with her sister Marie Sorenson Bregier of West Fargo, N.D., and Iris Chapman, who grew up in Thief River Falls, but lives in Hillsboro, Ore. Chapman's

mother is a sister to Sorenson's mother.

According to what Sorenson knows, Woolson was born in 1850, but told recruiters his birthday was 1847 so that he could join the 1st Minnesota. He was 14. Someone may have figured it out as Woolson was assigned to be a drummer in the 1st Minnesota Heavy Artillery Regiment. The 1st Minnesota had a cannon, which is why a cannon was fired during the ceremony. Sorenson said she also believes Woolson learned to play the fife, a kind of flute with six finger holes.

In 1956, a monument of Woolson was erected in Get-

tysburg as a memorial to the Grand Army of the Republic. A twin statue is on display outside the St. Louis County Depot in downtown Duluth, which is where the second ceremony was conducted.

According to records, Woolson was born in Antwerp, New York, to Willard P. Woolson (1811-1862) and Caroline Baldwin. He claimed to be born on Feb. 11, 1847, but his entry in the 1850 United States census lists him as born in 1850. He returned to Minnesota where he was a carpenter. He died on Aug. 2, 1956, making him 106 at

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This is the statue of Pvt. Albert Woolson, the last Civil War soldier buried in the U.S. It is located at the St. Louis County Depot. (Submitted)



Marie Bregler, Iris Chapman and Sherry Sorenson attended ceremonies honoring Pvt. Albert Woolson in August. (Submitted)

Union Civil War veteran/Continued

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the time of his death.

Sorenson said Woolson was married twice. With his first wife, Sarah Jane Sloper (1849-1901), he had nine children. With his second wife, Anna Haugen (1884-1949), he had four children.

Sorenson said he didn't have any direct relatives present at either ceremony, and she's not aware of any. She said she was told she's a fourth cousin, three times removed. While at the ceremony, Sorenson did meet Scott Roen, who she believes is from Two Harbors. She said his grandmother was a sister to Anna Haugen, Woolson's second wife. Sorenson said she was un-

aware of Roen until that event, but was pleased to meet him.

Sorenson said the ceremonies were very well planned and the weather could not have been more perfect. At the first ceremony in Park Hill Cemetery, reenactors from Battery 1, 1st Regiment of the U.S. Light Artillery, fired a cannon. A benediction was given by Father John Petrich, and there were a couple of speakers. There were several dignitaries in attendance, as well as representatives of Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Camp 56 in Minnesota.

Sorenson estimated there were 50 people in atten-

dance, and during that event the three were presented corsages, which was nice. Sorenson said they were each presented a vase of red, white and blue flowers to place at the gravesite and also again at the statue at the Depot.

At the second ceremony, located at the St. Louis County Depot, Ronald Hein, board of governors president of the St. Louis Historical Society, spoke, and there was a wreath laying at the Woolson statue. Sorenson said there were a lot of reenactors and special guests at the event and it was very impressive.

She said a representative from Prairie Public TV was there filming it as part of a documentary. She said she was told it will be on YouTube in January 2024, and on Public Prairie TV North in March of 2024.

Following the ceremony, they went to a reception in the Depot where there was a historical society display about Woolson.

She said she also got to meet a President Lincoln reenactor. He gave the Gettysburg address during the ceremony. During the ceremonies, they also had an actor performing as a drummer.

Sorenson said the ceremonies and experience more than lived up to her expectations.



At a ceremony in August honoring Pvt. Albert Woolson, reenactors from Battery 1, 1st Regiment of the U.S. Light Artillery, fired a cannon. (Submitted)