



Paul Olesen's presentation of the "Confederate Soldier"
given at the Pine County Genealogical Society's
April 17, 2013 meeting

THE CONFEDERATE ARMY IN MINNESOTA?

This year Minnesotans are joining the rest of America in commemorating the 150th anniversary of the U.S. Civil War. Our state was only 3 years young when Ft. Sumter SC was bombarded by southern secessionist forces and the War Between the States commenced. Patriotic Minnesota residents were the first citizens to respond to President Abraham Lincoln's call for volunteers to aid the Union cause.

Most Minnesota regiments served in the western theater of war. There was never a battle fought on the plains or in the pineries of our recently founded state. So how did a Johnny Reb sneak through enemy lines to his final resting place in Pine County Minnesota?

Askov resident Paul Olesen is a member of the local Pine County Genealogical Society and an admitted Civil War buff. Back in 2002 Paul was on an outing in the remote northeastern region of our county exploring a small country cemetery. Noticing an obscure tombstone, he looked closer and realized the engraved words included the abbreviation CSA. To Paul these three letters only had one interpretation – Confederate States of America. This realization intrigued Paul ; who was this person and why was the burial so far from the Confederate homeland?

It was a five year journey of genealogical and historical research to answer these two questions. More queries arose and were solved before Paul was satisfied that the full story had been told. Final details of the puzzle were revealed after a local journalism major at Bethel College asked him for permission to join the search and to use his mystery as a research project.

The article below was published in the Askov American, Askov, MN July 5, 2007

Local discovery rekindles Civil War story

New Dosey Cemetery preserves history of fallen soldier

Amanda Keillor

Three years ago, Paul Olesen found a piece of history with the help of modern technology.

The retired high school science teacher and Askov native was working as a gypsy moth trapper for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. He was using a Global Positioning System to mark his location and the distance between the traps he was placing along an overgrown road east of Askov.

As he was nailing a trap to a tree on the edge of the New Dosey Cemetery, he looked down and saw a gravestone with the letters CSA carved into it. "I know a lot about the Civil War, so I knew that stood for Confederate States of America," Olesen said.

The gravestone he saw then was a sandstone slab covered in lichen and moss, which caught his eye as signs of age.

The name, Elezabeth Coleman Austin, was inscribed along with the markings for 2nd Lt., Company C, 28th Regiment of the North Carolina Infantry, and the years 1827 to 1863. Austin died on July 3, 1863, in Pickett's charge, 144 years ago.

Alongside the memorial to Austin stands another stone with the names of his son and daughter-in-law, Sylvester and Galoma Austin, according to genealogical records.

After the initial surprise of finding the grave, Olesen was curious about why a Confederate Civil War soldier would be buried in a remote cemetery in eastern Minnesota, so he began to do some research.

Charles L. Rand III, a historian for the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), suspects the Austin family was one of many Confederate families moving north after a war that left much of the geological and economic structures of the South in shambles.

"With so much destruction of property, a lot of people found they needed to relocate to make a living," he said.

While many Confederate veterans have been buried above the Mason-Dixon line, in places as far north as Seattle and New York, usually those are veterans who survived the war and relocated, Rand said. Cemetery records confirm that the stone at the New Dosey Cemetery is a memorial stone and not an actual grave.

The memory of Austin is being actively preserved. When Olesen returned to the site this summer, the original stone had been replaced by a new, Veterans' Affairs-issued marker and flanked by two miniature Confederate military flags.

Often, members of the SCV,

•AUSTIN

Continued on back page.



This marker preserves the memory of a soldier killed in the Civil War 144 years ago this week. The marker replaced a stone Paul Olesen of Askov found three years ago. When Olesen went back to the site this summer, he found a new stone with a Confederate flag on either side.

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•Austin

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when they find old stones will replace them with a stone that will last and be legible for another 100 years, Rand said. Olesen said he suspects news of his finding reached a SCV group who likely replaced the worn stone.

Olesen has seen his share of Civil War monuments and markings. He and his wife, Marlys, have visited several Civil War battlefields in pursuit of an interest that began in high school when Olesen read Bruce Catton's Pulitzer Prize-winning account of the final year of the Civil War, *Stillness at Appomattox*.

"There are two places in this world where you can feel the ghosts walking around. One is in Shiloh (Tennessee) and the other is at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.," Marlys said.

Austin's individual involvement in the Civil War can be partially pieced together with the help of the company muster rolls, which Olesen found in his research.

Austin enlisted as a sergeant in the Confederate Army in August 1861, a blue-eyed, sandy-haired soldier, measuring 5-feet, 5-inches from hat to toe and referred to as E. Coleman or Elijah Coleman Austin, dropping the Elezabeth from his full name. Although it may seem strange now, in Civil War times a son might be named in

honor of a female relative, Olesen said.

The young sergeant was promoted to 4th corporal in February 1862, and a month later re-enlisted for two more years, receiving a bounty of \$50.

In May of the same year, he was captured by the Army of the Potomac in Hanover, Virginia. After almost three months of captivity, Austin was one of the Confederate prisoners exchanged for Union captives at Aiken's Landing, Virginia.

After his return to the 28th Regiment, Austin was quickly promoted to 3rd corporal and within a month elected to his highest rank of 2nd lieutenant, holding that post for almost seven months before his death at Gettysburg.

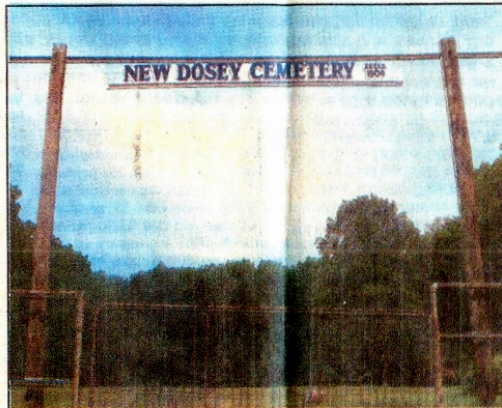
Brig. Gen. James H. Lane wrote a report on Gettysburg as it happened for his regiments, including the 28th.

His men reached Gettysburg on July 1, and participated in some confrontations that day and the following.

July 3 dawned on heavy skirmishes in front of the line where Austin's regiment was stationed, "requiring at times whole regiments to be deployed to resist the enemy and drive them back, which was always most gallantly done," Lane wrote.

Lane and his men moved forward, in what's now known as Pickett's Charge, through a mile-long open field under "murderous artillery and infantry fire."

They advanced to within a few yards of the stone wall



The New Dosey Cemetery, near Askov, is home to a Confederate soldier's marker.

protecting the Union's lines before a column of Union infantry thrust forward and raked gunfire lengthwise along Lane's diminishing lines. He then withdrew behind the Confederate artillery, ending the day's fighting for the 28th Regiment.

Austin died amidst the action Lane described, one of the men he praised profusely. "I cannot speak in too high terms of the behavior of my brigade in this bloody engagement. Both officers and men moved forward with a heroism unsurpassed," Lane wrote.

Austin's regiment suffered its greatest loss at Gettysburg: 230 of its 346 members were lost in the battle that would prove to be the war's turning

point, leading to the Confederate surrender at Appomattox.

The next entry in the muster rolls is Austin's name on the Roll of Honor with the concise praise, "a good officer."

Despite violence like that which Austin experienced and finally succumbed to at Gettysburg, something about the Civil War has always intrigued Olesen.

"War is death and killing, but maybe it's so far back that you don't think about that," he said.

His interest in the Civil War has not waned since it was sparked by Catton's book back in high school. Now, there is no need for a vacation to visit a memorial to the Civil War.

(Confederate.)

A | 28 | N. C.

E. Coleman Austin
Prvt, Co. B. { 28 Reg't North Carolina
 Infantry (State Troops).

Appears on
Company Muster Roll
 of the organization named above,
 for *dated Mch 1*, 1862

Enlisted:
 When *Aug 13*, 1861.
 Where *Newton*
 By whom *Thos E. Gore*
 Period _____
 Last paid:
 By whom _____
 To what time _____, 186 .

Bounty: Paid, \$ *50*¹⁰⁰; due, \$ *100*¹⁰⁰
 Present or absent *Present*
 Remarks: *Re-enlisted for two*
years 4 Corp'l^x

^x *taken from records of Events.*

Book mark: _____
J. Jacobson
 (642) Copyist.

(Confederate.)

A | 28 | N. C.

Elijah Austin
Corp'l 28 Reg't M.C.

Appears on a
Descriptive List
 of rebels captured by the Army of the Potomac
 at the battle of Hanover Court House, Va., and
 sent to Fort Monroe, Va.

List dated *not dated*, 186 .

Where born *N. C.*
 By whom captured *Genl. G. M. B. Porter*
 When captured *May 29*, 1862
 Where captured *Battle of Hanover Court*
 Age *35*; height *5* feet *5* in.
 Hair *sandy*; eyes *blue*
 Complexion *sandy*
 Remarks: _____

Number of roll:
 26; sheet // _____
 Virginia. _____
M. Russell
 (689b) Copyist.

(Confederate.)

A | 28 | N. C.

E. Coleman Austin

29th Co. C., 28 Reg't North Carolina Troops.

Appears on a
Roll of Honor*
of the organization named above.

County *Catamba*

Date of entrance into service *Aug. 13, 1861*

Age _____ Vol. or Conscript *Vol*

Died ~~at~~ *killed* and when *July 3, 1863*

Remarks: *at Gettysburg, a good officer*

* Compiled in the Office of the Adjutant General of the State of North Carolina in accordance with resolutions ratified by the General Assembly of that State on December 20, 1862.
This card was made from the original record borrowed from the Adjutant General of North Carolina.—M. S. 1049147.

L. E. Fehl

(868) Copyist.

(Confederate.)

A | 28 | N. C.

E. Coleman Austin

29th Co. C., 28 Reg't North Carolina Infantry (State Troops).

Appears on a
Roster
of officers of 28th North Carolina Troops, with alterations since first organization.

Roster dated *Ad. Drs. 28 N.C.T.*
Jan. 28, 1865

Date of commission *Nov. 18, 1862*

Remarks: *killed at Gettysburg, Pa. July 3, 1863.*

Book mark: _____

J. Sharin

(848) Copyist.