In Memory of Private Daniel Sylvester Thurston

1809 - 1863

(1st Wisconsin Cavalry)

Age: 54
Spouse: Matilda (Benjamin) Thurston
Conflict: American Civil War
Country Enlisted In: United States of America - Union
Country of Death: United States of America - Union
Relation: Husband of Maternal 1st Cousin 5X Removed

Private Daniel Thurston was fifty-four years old when he answered the call to serve in the Union Army — one of the older men to take up arms during the Civil War. He joined the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry, a regiment raised in 1861 that would see hard service across the Western Theater, fighting in Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi. The regiment rode long miles on rough roads, scouted the countryside, raided enemy positions, and guarded the fragile supply lines that kept the Union armies moving.

For Daniel, the life of a cavalryman was grueling. Days in the saddle stretched from dawn to dusk, with little rest at night. Rain turned the roads to mud, and the men often slept in the open with only their blankets for shelter. The cold dampness of camp, the constant strain of marching, and the poor food took a heavy toll on bodies already tested by age. While younger men often bounced back from illness, for Daniel the hardships proved too much.

In the crowded camps of the Civil War, disease was a more constant enemy than Confederate bullets. Pneumonia, dysentery, and other lung and bowel afflictions spread rapidly, felling entire companies. Daniel contracted a disease of the lungs that grew steadily worse. His strength ebbed away until he could no longer remain in service, and he was formally discharged, his body too frail for the campaign.

Soldier of the Union Army with 1st Wisconsin Cavalry
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He returned home to Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, but whatever comfort he might have found in familiar surroundings was short-lived. His health had been broken beyond repair, and only three days after arriving home, on April 9, 1863, he died.

He was laid to rest in Beaver Dam City Cemetery, his grave a quiet reminder of the cost of war. Though he did not fall in battle, his life was claimed by the same hardships that killed so many thousands of soldiers — cold nights in wet camps, long marches, and the spread of disease in crowded quarters.

Private Daniel Thurston's story is one of late devotion and sacrifice. At fifty-four, when many men might have stayed behind, he chose instead to take up the cause of Union, and he gave his life in that service. His name endures in the soil of Wisconsin, among the roll of those who wore the blue and paid the final price for the nation's survival.

Beaver Dam City Cemetery,
Beaver Dam Wisconsin, USA
Finda a Grave 61138874

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