

WARREN ONAN
1818-1910

" Col. Warren Onan, a highly esteemed citizen of Moorhead, Minnesota, who now lives a retired life, is a native of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, born July 20, 1818. His parents were James and Mary (Collins) Onan , natives of Ireland and Wilmington, Delaware, respectively. The father was a boot and shoe manufacturer the first fifty years of his life, when he turned his attention to farming in Cattaraugus county, New York, where he died in 1858. The mother died in 1868. They had a family of eight children, four of whom are now living - Charles, John, Marcus H. and our subject, Warren; who was the eldest of the children.

Our subject, Warren Onan, was reared to farm life and attended school until he was twenty-one years of age and then began farming for himself in the county in which his father lived. He continued seven years upon the place he bought when eighteen years old. He then sold out and went into the limber business on the Alleghany river, which calling he followed until 1860. He then helped raise a company of 104 men, who were taken to Washington, District of Columbia, and made one of the ten companies which constituted the One Hundred and Fifty-fourth New York Infantry Volunteers. After going to Washington, District of Columbia, he designed returning home, but found it was expected of him to remain and help 'fight it out on that line.' He consequently accepted the office of second-lieutenant. His regiment was taken into the Eleventh Army Corps, and after arriving at the city of Washington our subject was detailed as a brigade quartermaster for the Second Division of said corps. He held this place a year, and was promoted to chief of ambulance and quartermaster of the Second Division, Eleventh Army Corp. After one year in this position, in September 1864, at Atlanta, Georgia, he was detailed as quartermaster and commissary of the Twentieth Corps Hospital, which gave him the rank of colonel, which he held until the close of the rebellion. He was wounded in Georgia and had a severe attack of typhoid fever. He saw many hard-fought fields, participating in the historic battles of Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Wauhatchie, Chattanooga, Ringgold, Dalton, Kenesaw Mountain, and the battles fought en route to Atlanta, Georgia. He accompanied Sherman on his famous 'march to the sea', and his -- Second Division -- received the surrender at Savannah. After the war ended he came to Allegany, New York, and engaged in the oil business some three years, and was associate judge of Cattaraugus county, New York, for four years, and justice of the peace twelve years, coroner six years, besides many offices of a local nature. While he lived in Allegany, New York, he served as postmaster two years under President Pierce, and eight years under president Grant. It may be said that his home was in Allegany, New York, from 1846 until 1879.

In 1879, during the month of June, he came to Minnesota as agent for the New York Mills [Minnesota] Land Company, settling at Moorhead, transacting business in Otter Tail county. He has been city justice of Moorhead for four years. After coming to Moorhead he took a soldiers homestead in Ransom county, Dakota. This he improved and still owns. He has done a general land business for the Northern Pacific Railway Company, and has identified himself with Moorhead in buying and selling property. He built on the corner of Sixth and Garoway streets, and owns two hundred acres of land in Otter Tail county, Minnesota.

He was married in 1842 to Miss Margaret Austin, a native of Scotland, and a daughter of Adam Austin.

Mr. and Mrs. Onan are the parents of five children -- Elizebeth, died when aged eighteen years; Elzora, now Mrs. Charles H. Sikes, of Dakota, who has one child -- Maud; Vina M., died at the age of twenty-five; Clara C., wife of Charles W. McKay, died at Fergus Falls in 1888, leaving a family of three children -- Grace, Blanche and Georgia; and Edward M., now married to Miss Ella Morris, who has three children -- Samuel, Warren and Morris.

Our subject is a strong believer in republican principles, belongs to the Grand Army of the Republic, and also is a member of the Odd-Fellows Order at Tartville, New York. He is a thorough temperance advocate, also."

Source:

"Illustrated Album of Biographies of the Famous Red River Valley of the North and Park Regions" by Alden, Ogle, & Co., Chicago, 1889. Minnesota Historical Society call #F605.129 page 393.

Edited from BIOG0004 on 21 July 1997 by David W. Onan II

Epilogue:

Warren was my great, great, grandfather. He died 26 April 1910 in Moorhead MN. He is buried there in the Prairie Home Cemetery. He outlived all his 6 children except the daughter Elzora, who cared for him in his later years.

Warren's only son, Edward, died in Wahpeton ND in 1900. His wife, Ellen took her four children to Buffalo NY where she raised them. One child, David Warren, moved to Minneapolis MN in 1905. He raised a family and created a very successful business building engines and electrical equipment.

NOTE: There is no official record that Warren attained the rank Colonel during military service. He seems to have acquired it either as honorary or self declared due to distance from the scene of battle.

21 July 1997

David Warren Onan II