

## Harry LeRoy Hawthorne

11/27/1859-4/10/1948

Compiled by June Gossler Anderson, Anoka Chapter DAR

**Born:** November 27, 1859, Minnesota

Entered Service: October 30, 1884 Kentucky

**Branch:** U.S. Army

Organization: 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Artillery

Appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Artillery, 30 Oct.1884

First Lieutenant, 4th U.S. Artillery, 28 Aug.1891

Transferred to 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Artillery, 27 Apr.1894

Transferred to 6<sup>th</sup> U.S. Artillery, 8 Mar.1898

Major, 29<sup>th</sup> U.S. Volunteer Infantry 5 Jul.1899

Captain 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Artillery 18 Jun.1900

Artillery, II Corps, February 1901

Honorably mustered out of Volunteers 10 May 1901



### War: Indian Campaigns

Action Date: 1890 Dec. 29

Action Location: Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota

Presentation Date: 1892 Oct. 11

**Died:** April 10, 1948, Pasadena, California

Buried in Section 3 of Arlington National Cemetery

### Early Years

Harry LeRoy Hawthorne was born in Minnesota to LeRoy Hawthorne from Morgantown Virginia (now West Virginia) and Louise Tate Smith of Boone County, Kentucky on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1859. Although not stated, his probable birthplace was in or close to Winona as his father ran a hotel in that city during the 1850s, and his only sibling was a sister named Winona born in 1856. Due to hard times in the hotel business, LeRoy moved his family back to his previous home in Newport, Kentucky in 1861 where talk centered on the prospects of war.

Harry's inspiration for a career in the military may have come from his father who was an early Kentucky volunteer in the Union Army, serving in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment which later became a part of the Army of the Cumberland which joined the troops of General William Tecumseh Sherman for his infamous "March to the Sea." In 1868 when Harry was nine years old his father, LeRoy Hawthorne, left the army as a brevet major.

Appointed from Kentucky to the U.S. Naval Academy, Harry LeRoy Hawthorne served as a Midshipman from 1878 until graduation in 1882; then as a Cadet Engineer until 1884 when he

took a commission in the U.S. Army serving in the Second U.S. Artillery. According to the *Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, “Minnesota born Col. Harry LeRoy Hawthorne was stationed for a time at the Newport Barracks and his parents lived nearby in the City of Newport....”

### **The War Years**

The year after LeRoy Hawthorne left Minnesota for Kentucky, trouble was brewing back up in the north country. The Sioux, as their enemies called them, or Lakota, their preferred name, after losing their lands to coerced treaties and facing starvation from non-forthcoming annuities promised by the U.S. government, staged a bloody but short-lived uprising in August of 1862. The defeated Lakota were banished from Minnesota and pursued by the U.S. military for the next thirty years. The *Military Times* sets the scene for the final event: “On the morning of December 29, 1890, the Sioux chief, Big Foot, and some 350 of his followers camped on the banks of Wounded Knee Creek, a tributary of the White River. Surrounding their camp was a force of U.S. troops charged with the responsibility of arresting Big Foot and disarming his warriors. In a frantic attempt to return to their glory days, many Sioux sought deliverance in a new mysticism preached by a Paiute shaman called Wovoka, and fought fiercely believing that their “Ghost Shirts” would protect them from the bluecoats’ bullets. In the savage battle twenty soldiers distinguished themselves to the degree that they were awarded the Medal of Honor....” (Official reports listed 25 U.S. soldiers killed, 34 wounded.)

Thirty-one year old Harry was there, fighting in the Indian Wars at Wounded Knee, South Dakota as the Second Lieutenant of A Battery, Second U.S. Artillery. Attached to Captain Capron’s Light Battery E, First Artillery Harry was commanding a platoon of two Hotchkiss steel mountain rifles when he was severely wounded. He was awarded the Medal of Honor on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October, 1892 for “gallantry, coolness, discretion and effect in handling and serving the guns of his command in action against hostile Sioux Indians on Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December, 1890.” Harry’s Medal of Honor citation reads “for distinguished conduct in battle with hostile Indians.”

Three hundred Sioux--men, women, and children--caught by surprise in the crossfire, were killed in this battle which has later been deemed a massacre. The Lakota, in an effort to correct this tragic history, have embarked on a campaign to rescind the medals of the twenty U.S. soldiers who were awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions in the Wounded Knee Massacre.

### **Post War Years**

Harry LeRoy Hawthorne was a career military officer and was promoted through the ranks to Colonel. After the Battle of Wounded Knee he attended the War College and served during the Spanish American War, as a military attaché to Japan from 1909-1911. Retiring as a Colonel in 1914 he was recalled to serve during WWI as Inspector General in the Panama Canal Zone and

was awarded the Purple Heart and a Silver Star. An expert in military weaponry, there is some evidence to suggest that he lectured and possibly taught classes on this subject.

Little note has been made of Harry's personal life other than he had a daughter, Marion M. Abbate, born in 1906, and his wife's name was Elizabeth.

Harry died on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1948 and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Nearby are the graves of his father, LeRoy R. Hawthorne, Brevet Major U.S. Army, his mother Louise Hawthorne, his sister Winona Hawthorne Buck and her husband William Langdon Buck, Colonel, U.S. Army.

In addition to his military career, Harry LeRoy Hawthorne had the soul of a poet. His poem, *Song of the Bullet*, was among the second place prize winners published in *Munsey's Magazine*, Vol. 15, p. 254.

### **Song of the Bullet**

In the crystal crevice deep  
When the plastic world was cold  
While the peopled cycles rolled  
Formless lay I, dulled in sleep  
Chaos born and old.

Then the battle's trumpet blare  
Echoing through the woody glen  
Woke me in my rock clad den  
Strode I forth in upper air---  
Arbiter of men.

In the fierce tumultuous fray  
Never a recreant I, nor slow;  
Eager I rush to meet the foe,  
Swift along my pathless way,  
Singing as I go.

Whose the fate that with me flies?  
Neither know I, aye nor care  
Haply a courtier debonair  
Haply only a drummer dies,  
Sobbing a childish prayer.  
*Harry LeRoy Hawthorne*



## Bibliography

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