

Eli Lundy Huggins

(1842-1929)

Compiled by Cynthia Jorgenrud – Anoka Chapter NSDAR

Born

August 1, 1842
Schuyler County, Illinois

Entered Service

Civil War & Indian Campaigns

July 5, 1861
Minnesota

Company E
Second Minnesota Infantry
Transferred
Second Artillery
Transferred
Second Cavalry

Died

October 22, 1929
San Diego, California



Early Years

Eli Lundy Huggins was born on August 1, 1842 in Schuyler County, Illinois. He was the son of Rev. Alexander Huggins and Lydia Pettijohn. Eli was one of eight children.

The family moved to Nicolet County, Minnesota, being one of the first settlers in the county. His father and mother served as missionaries assistants at the Dakota Indian Missions at Lac qui Parle and Traverse des Sioux.

At 18, Eli left Hamlin University to enlist during the call for troops at the beginning of the Civil War. He entered as a private and then corporal of Company E, Second Minnesota Infantry on July 5, 1861.

The War Years

The second Minnesota left the state for Washington on October 14. Corporal Huggins fought in the battle at Mill Springs, Kentucky on January 19, 1862. Here the Confederate army was completely overrun. The regiment was later involved with the siege at Corinth, Mississippi in May of 1862. In October of that year, Huggins fought in the battle at Perryville, Kentucky, under the command of Major General Alexander McDowell McCook against General Braxton Bragg.

In late March of 1863, Huggins participated in the two-day battle at Chapel Hill, Tennessee, and then at Chickamauga on September 10. At Chickamauga, Eli Huggins was wounded and captured by the Confederates. He was discharged from the army at Nashville, Tennessee on September 27, 1865.

He reenlisted in late February 1866 and received an appointment in the Regular Army as Lieutenant in the Second Artillery. He served several years on the Pacific Coast, Alaska, and later on the Atlantic Coast.

In 1867, after the United States purchased Alaska from Russia, Huggins was transferred to Fort Kodiak in Alaska. It is here that he met his partner, Aleksandra Kashevarova, in 1868. On October 5, 1869, his first and only child, Zinovil Zenoa Huggins, was born on Kodiak Island, Alaska.

Eli was transferred to the Second Cavalry on April 11, 1879, becoming captain of the unit later that month. The unit primarily served in Montana dealing with hostile Indians. Huggins was stationed at Fort Keogh through November of 1880.

On April 1, 1880, Captain Huggins was in command of troops in an engagement with Indians at O'Fallon Creek, Montana. He described the campaign, "in one of these pursuits in March of 1880 in the region between Missouri and Yellowstone, every member of my troop was frozen, some of them seriously...brought into Fort Keogh at different times more than a thousand Indians, who surrendered in the forks of the Missouri and Yellowstone. Among these Indians were Rain-in-the-Face, Spotted Eagle, and Iron Shield." It is for this that Captain Huggins was awarded the Medal of Honor in action against the hostile Ogallala Sioux at O'Fallon Creek.

General Philip Sheridan wrote on March 24, 1880, concerning Huggins, "A party of 30-40 Sioux ran off about 30 ponies belonging to enlisted Crow scouts at Fort Custer, Montana. Forty-four officers and men went in pursuit and they traveled sixty-five miles in eleven hours. They overtook and engaged the hostiles, recaptured sixteen of the stolen stock. Captain Huggins with Troop E of the Second Cavalry surprised the Indian camp on April 1, captured five Indians, forty-six ponies, and some arms."

The illustrious military career of Eli Huggins continued until his retirement in 1903. He served special duty for the Adjutant General's office in Washington until January of 1881. He commanded an escort for a surveying party in Montana from May through October of 1862.

At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898, Eli Huggins applied for and was granted an appointment as Colonel of a volunteer regiment composed of men immune to yellow fever. He was mustered out the following year and returned to the Regular Army as Major of the Sixth Cavalry.

In August of 1900, Huggins sailed to China to participate in subduing the Boxer Uprising. Through 1901 he served in the Philippines as Lieutenant Colonel of the Third Cavalry. On November 6, 1901, Huggins was transferred to the Thirteenth Cavalry and later that month, became Colonel of the Second Cavalry, stationed at Fort Meyer, Virginia. The day before his retirement on February 23, 1903, he was commissioned a Brigadier General.

The Post War Years

After his retirement, General Huggins and his sister, Jane Sloan Huggins Holtsclaw (1834 – 1920), moved to Muskogee, Indian Territory. He had invested heavily in real estate in the area.

In 1910, his residence was listed as Mission, San Diego, California. In 1920 he had moved to East San Diego, California. The 1920 census lists his sister Jane, a boarder, Cecile M. Alexander, and Eli's grandnephew, Alfred Alexander, living with him in East San Diego.

Throughout his life, Eli Huggins was a writer and published author. He wrote an article titled *Men and Things in Alaska* that appeared in the Minnesota periodical, *The Citizen Magazine*, in late November of 1874. In 1890, Huggins published his most famous work; a volume of poems called *Winona, A Dakota Legend and Other Poems*. In total, 31 works, categorized as Folklore, Poetry, History, Legends, Registers, Records, and Correspondence are attributed to Eli Lundy Huggins

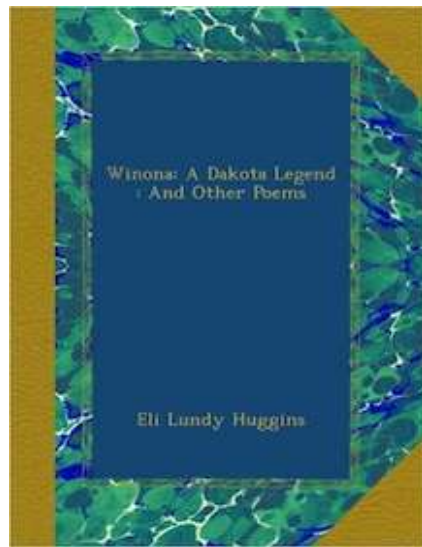
It should also be noted that he spoke French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian as well as being fluent in the language of the Sioux.

Eli Lundy Huggins died on October 22, 1929 and was buried in the Mountain View Cemetery, Oakland, California.

Upon his death, the Chief of Staff of the U.S Army, General C.P. Summerall, wrote of General Huggins saying, "the career of General Huggins, extending over a period of more than forty years, was distinguished by gallantry in action, devotion to duty, and efficiency and reliability in the performance of all tasks assigned to him.

The Medal of Honor awarded him bears ample testimony to his bravery and fearlessness as a soldier. His death marks the passing of another officer from the rapidly disappearing ranks of veterans of the Civil War."

Photo below of Winona, A Dakota Legend and Other Poems by Eli L Huggins. 1890.



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Note

Hunkpapa Chief, Rain-in-the-Face, fought at the Battle of Little Big Horn and is alleged to have cut out the heart of Thomas Custer, a feat that was popularized in the Longfellow poem, *The Revenge of Rain in the Face*. Later in life, he denied this.