

Knud Otterson



Company A, 5th Minnesota Infantry

Volunteer 1862-1865

Cover: Undated photograph of Knud – possibly at a veteran’s reunion.

Knud Otterson

Company A, 5th Minnesota Infantry
Volunteer 1862-1865

Vernon Ege
and
Jane Otterson Miller

2013

KNUD OTTERSON's GEOGRAPHY, 1861-1885



Map by Eric Ege

O 5 Minn.
Knut Otterson
A 5 Co. 5 Reg't Minn. Infantry.

Appears on

Company Descriptive Book

of the organization named above.

DESCRIPTION.

Age 21 years; height 5 feet 5 1/2 inches.
Complexion Light
Eyes Blue; hair Light
Where born Norway
Occupation Farmer

ENLISTMENT.

When Jan. 7, 1862.
Where St. Melling, Minn.
By whom Capt. Nelson; term 3 y'rs.
Remarks: Wagon driver
before Corinth Miss. May 25/62.
Quincy Miss. Sept. 19/62.
By battle of Corinth Miss. Oct. 4/62.
Siege of Vicksburg from May 18 to July 4/63.
Mechanicsville Miss. June 4/63.
at Richmond Va. June 15/63 where
he was slightly wounded on foot.
Ours

(388g)

B. Taylor

Copies.

PREFACE

This booklet grew out of curiosity about big events that took place long ago and a desire to honor the memory of Knud Otterson who participated in those events as a United States Civil War soldier.

When my wife, Jane Otterson Miller, a Great-grand-daughter of Knud Otterson, and I were preparing to drive from Minnesota to Florida in the winter of 2010 we decided make a side trip to Nashville, Tennessee. We knew that many Civil War battlefields had been preserved and hoped that was the case at Nashville where Knud fought and was wounded in 1864. We discovered that very little of the Nashville battlefield had been preserved. Fortunately, the Battle of Nashville Preservation Society had identified key battle sites and had acquired ownership of Shy's Hill, one of the key geographical features of the battle. It was the place Confederates attempted to defend against Private Knud Otterson and his Company A, 5th Minnesota Infantry Volunteer Regiment and others on December 15-16, 1864. We found our visit to Shy's Hill to be very emotional and decided that we wanted to see more sites that Knud had seen.

In 2011 we went to Mississippi where Knud participated in the siege and capture of the river city of Vicksburg and was wounded at nearby Richmond, Louisiana. In 2012 we visited the Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee /Corinth, Mississippi area where Knud saw his first action in the Army of the Mississippi as it maneuvered to capture the railroad town of Corinth, Mississippi. We also obtained his service records from the *National Archives*.

It is difficult to comprehend what Knud saw and participated in. We are removed from those events by approximately 150 years, Knud has been dead 90 years and even his grandchildren who knew him have been gone for a long time. We know of no letters written by or to Knud and have seen no Civil War era photographs of him. The area around Shy's Hill in Nashville that was unoccupied, treeless countryside is now a wooded suburban neighborhood. Vicksburg and Pittsburg Landing /Shiloh battle grounds are manicured military parks. The original town of Richmond was destroyed during the war and no longer exists. Corinth is a sprawling city extending from the original town which was rebuilt after the war. The Mississippi River has even changed course dramatically in several places including at Vicksburg. There is very little record of Knud's experiences. Our trips and research were remote attempts to see and understand things that are no longer completely understandable.

This document about Knud Otterson's American Civil War activities was prepared for family members and casual readers. An attempt has been made to be as accurate as possible. If information could not be verified it is presented with qualification.

Hopefully some unknown descendent of Knud will see this document and add family remembrances to it; perhaps someone can even add a letter or Civil War era photograph.

Historical photographs were found in family collections, most of which were provided by Knud's Great-grand-daughter Jody Sorenson. Modern photographs were taken by Vernon Ege and Jane Miller.

Vernon Ege

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BACKGROUND

Knud was born on January 16, 1842, in Göl, Hallingdal, Norway, fourth of eight children of Ottar Ivarsen and Mari Engebretsdtr. Göl was a subsistence farming community in South Central Norway between Oslo and Bergen. Nothing is known of his life in Norway other than his baptism date of February 27, 1842. His family probably struggled with food shortages resulting from periodic crop failures, including during the years just prior to his emigration.

Knud's obituary stated that he emigrated by himself in 1861. However, records show he left Norway with his brother Engebret in late April, 1861 for what must have been a trip of more than 3 months on a wooden sailboat. At that time people were leaving Norway for America because of over population, food shortage, opportunity and just plain adventure. Estimated yearly emigration from Norway to the United States exceeded 8,000 before and during the early years of the Civil War. Some entered the United States through Castle Garden, New York but most probably entered through Canada and did not leave a record of their arrival.

Knud appeared to be in Kenyon Township, Goodhue County, Minnesota in late 1861. Minnesota had been a state for less than four years and was in the early stages of European settlement. It was on the edge of the frontier; the native Sioux population still considered it home. Minnesota had a few small villages, St. Paul and St. Anthony (Minneapolis) were just beginning to develop and most people lived on isolated farms. Fort Snelling, a recently deactivated frontier army post on the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers was less than 40 years old. Kenyon Township was organized in 1858. Many Kenyon area residents were from Norway and many of those came from near where Knud was born. They



Approach to Kenyon, 2012

"The Fifth Regiment numbered eight hundred and sixty men, rank and file, at the time of its organization...Like most regiments raised in Minnesota, the Fifth was recruited generally throughout the state, the nucleus of each company being from one of the more populous counties. The members of Company A were principally from Goodhue and Douglas counties."
General L.F.Hubbard

even established a Lutheran congregation that became the Göl Lutheran Church. It is not surprising that Knud would land in Kenyon which was populated in large part from his Norwegian home community.

Knud volunteered at Fort Snelling, Minnesota on January 7, 1862. At that time he had been in the United States for only a few months. When he

emigrated he may have known of the war and that he would receive a bounty and monthly pay, however no records have been found showing that Knud received a bounty when he volunteered. His Grandson Arthur Otterson was told that Knud received \$200 as a substitute for someone who had been drafted, but the Federal government did not have a draft until later in the war so he may have received a \$200 bounty. He did receive a \$400 bounty when he re-volunteered at Black River, Mississippi on February 12, 1864. At the end of the war he was being paid \$16 monthly.

Adjusting for inflation, an 1864 dollar equals about \$14 in 2013. At that rate \$16 equals about \$224, \$200 equals \$2,800 and \$400 equals \$5,600. Knud's pay would have been substantial for the time, especially considering that he probably had nothing when he left Norway. Even though Knud may have had a financial incentive to become a soldier, he may also have believed deeply in the Union cause. Grandson Arthur Otterson remembered his grandfather's commitment to that cause. He wanted the Union to be preserved and supported emancipation of slaves. His commitment led him to re-enlist in 1864 when he could have gone back to Minnesota. He must have had contact with many freed slaves and may have even been in battle alongside what at the time were called "Colored Troops" so it is understandable that he would have been offended by slavery.

Transportation during the Civil War, especially mass transportation was dependent upon water and newly developing railroads. The Mississippi, Cumberland, Ohio, Tennessee and Red (south) rivers and dirt trails were transportation routes that Knud was familiar with. Where possible war supplies were delivered by railroad but Knud probably never rode on a train during the war. Most communication was hand delivered after traveling on water or by horse. Permanent telegraph lines followed railroads and temporary lines were sometimes strung between army units and army headquarters. Army commanders could often, but not always communicate with Washington via telegraph lines.



Vicksburg cemetery 2011

Knud may have known Ole Otterson. Army records show that Ole Otterson, age 20 volunteered from Kenyon and served in the 5th Minnesota Volunteers at about the same time as Knud who was also 20. Ole died of disease at Camp Sherman, Mississippi near Vicksburg on September 1, 1863. He may have been Knud's brother but that is questionable as Ole's army records show he volunteered with the approval of his father named Oter Olesen. Census records show many Ottersons living in Southern Minnesota in the 1860's and 70's, most were not related to each other. In

addition to Knud and Ole, Albert Otterson age 22, who may have been Knud's brother Engebret, volunteered from Kenyon and served in the same company as Knud. At that time Norwegians were named at birth and were further identified as son or daughter of their father. The father's name often became an official last or family name in the United States. Ole's grave site is not recorded. He was probably initially buried near where he died, then re-interred after the war in one of more than 13,000 unmarked Civil War graves in Vicksburg National Cemetery. Albert is buried in the Göl church cemetery in Kenyon, Minnesota.

The Union and Confederacy both had many armies , not single armies. Depending on the date, Knud was in the Army of The Tennessee or the Army of The Mississippi as a member of the 5th Minnesota Volunteer infantry regiment. In preparation for battle officers of both sides preferred to line the soldiers shoulder to shoulder in several ranks, by company and regiment facing the enemy in an open field. At the direction of officers regiments would attempt to move as units filling gaps in the line when men were killed or wounded with men who were following the front line. After and during bombardment the attacking force would use their muskets and charge using bayonets to drive the enemy from the field. Opposing armies each often fielded 20,000 or more soldiers.

KNUD'S WAR

Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States in 1860 and inaugurated on March 4, 1861. Before inauguration seven Southern states, upset with Lincoln's election voted to secede from the United States and form the Confederate States of America. Ft. Sumter, a Federal or Union property in Charleston harbor was attacked by the Confederate state of South Carolina on April 12 and surrendered on April 13, 1861. Eventually four additional states joined the Confederacy. Responding to secession, Lincoln initially called for 75,000 volunteers for a *"militia to execute the laws of the Union"*. Knud Otterson, a very



Fort Snelling, 2012

recent immigrant from Norway, living in the newly formed state of Minnesota, responded to Lincoln's call and began service at Fort Snelling, Minnesota on January 7, 1862. On March 24, 1862 he was mustered into the 5th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment at Fort Snelling, Minnesota as a private in Company A. In addition to Knud eight hundred fifty nine other officers and men, many of them recent immigrants, were also initially mustered in.

At the direction of General Henry Halleck, under orders from Governor Alexander Ramsey, Knud boarded the riverboat Hawk Eye State on May 14, 1862. Seven companies, nearly 7,000 soldiers of the 5th Minnesota were destined for Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. Three companies stayed in Minnesota because of war with Sioux Indians. Traveling on the Mississippi, Ohio and Tennessee rivers he landed at either Pittsburg or nearby Hamburg Landing on the Tennessee River on about May 24, approximately 7 weeks after the bloody Battle of Shiloh near Pittsburg Landing. For 41 months he was a Civil War combat infantryman marching long distances while carrying up to 50 pounds of equipment, in good weather and bad, often foraging for food and almost always sleeping in tents or on bare ground. He saw and contributed to massive death and destruction.



Pittsburg Landing, 2012

"See what a lot of land these fellows hold, of which Vicksburg is the key...Let us get Vicksburg and all that country is ours. The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket."

President A. Lincoln

President Lincoln made a strategic decision to control the Mississippi River and its tributaries, to separate Texas and Louisiana from the rest of the Confederate States and to provide access to the Deep South. To Lincoln it was the key to victory. Knud's entire military career was devoted to Lincoln's decision to control the Mississippi River. He was a member of the 5th Minnesota as they participated in thirteen campaigns, five sieges and thirty four battles, skirmishes and minor engagements in

Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee. His officers claimed they were victors in every battle and all campaigns but one. He was wounded twice before ending his service occupying Alabama.

When Knud landed in Tennessee he was most likely disoriented, dirty, hot and tired. Both temperature and humidity were high. Despite fatigue he was immediately thrown into the thick of war as a member of the Army of the Mississippi which was closing in on Confederate Corinth, Mississippi. The 5th Minnesota was sent on a forced march in pursuit of Confederates during which it suffered its first casualties. On May 28 Knud found himself in battle near Farmington, Mississippi, where the 5th Minnesota suffered 16 additional casualties. After Farmington Knud continued marching to intercept Confederates who had abandoned Corinth. About this time he must have had his first contact with escaped slaves who were gathering near Corinth. When the enemy temporarily left the area the 5th Minnesota camped near

"There were more deaths in the regiment resulting from the excessive effort required and the intolerable heat endured during these marches than it suffered in some of the most desperate battles in which it was subsequently engaged"

General L. F. Hubbard



Corinth rail crossing 2012,

Corinth at disease ridden Clear Creek where it suffered more casualties, eventually moving to a better camp near Tuscumbia, Alabama.

Knud was back in action in early fall when Confederates attempted to retake Corinth. Two railroads crossed at the edge of Corinth making it an important transportation hub for both the Union and Confederacy. Control of Corinth made it possible for Union armies to attack further South and the Confederate government was determined to prevent that. Confederate forces began their unsuccessful final push to re-capture Corinth on the hot morning of October 3. The 5th Minnesota was not directly involved in fighting on the 3rd and at the end of the day was posted in town, sleeping on streets ready to be reserves on October 4. In early morning October 4 they were bombarded by Confederate artillery. After a pause, artillery

bombardment resumed around 11 AM. With the temperature around 90°F a second bombardment was followed by a Confederate infantry assault which penetrated Union lines. Confederates entered Corinth near where two railroads crossed, exactly where the 5th Minnesota was positioned with Knud's Company A in front as snipers. At that critical time, when Confederates could have continued victoriously into Corinth, the 5th Minnesota fired several musket volleys and charged the enemy driving them out of Corinth into eventual defeat. They were credited with making victory at Corinth possible.

"Stunned by the terrible execution of the volleys poured into it, the confused mass of the enemy halted and fell back, closely pressed by the Fifth Regiment"

General L. F. Hubbard

After Corinth, where more than 6,500 Union and Confederate soldiers died in two days, the 5th Minnesota, joined by three companies that had been left in Minnesota, was assigned to General Ulysses S. Grant's Second Brigade Fifteenth Army Corps and began moving toward Vicksburg, Mississippi. When the army had a setback losing supplies and a communication line to Confederates it went into winter quarters near La Grange, Tennessee. While at La Grange, Grant assigned the Fifteenth Army Corps, which included the 5th Minnesota, to General William Tecumseh Sherman. Sherman commanded the Fifteenth Corps until after Vicksburg surrendered and was eventually given other commands while the 5th Minnesota remained part of the Second Brigade through the remainder of the war.

During winter 1862-63, as Grant prepared to move south to capture Vicksburg, Mississippi he directed Sherman and the 5th Minnesota to pursue Confederate

troops through west Tennessee. In early February they joined other units near Memphis. After traveling on the Mississippi River and marching through brushy, wet Louisiana lowlands west of the Mississippi, the 5th Minnesota arrived south of Vicksburg on May 2 where they were ferried across the river to Grand Gulf, Mississippi. Sherman's elite troops, led by the 5th Minnesota, then marched east to Jackson, the capital of Mississippi, with only weapons, ammunition and food that individual soldiers could carry. Their tasks were to control supply routes from Jackson to Vicksburg and prevent Confederates from reinforcing Vicksburg. After entering Jackson on May 14 they camped on the capitol grounds and set about destroying everything of military value. Knud was listed as present for May and June 1863 but may not have been on the campaign to Jackson as he was also listed as left ill at Duckport, Louisiana on May 2. It is also possible that there was confusion regarding which Private Otterson was left at Duckport as Ole Otterson's record also indicates he was left at Duckport on May 2.

Knud probably participated in an unsuccessful bloody Union assault on Confederate defensive lines northeast of Vicksburg on May 22. Positioned in a wooded ravine, the 5th Minnesota was not directly in the Confederate line of fire and did not suffer the large number of casualties experienced by other units. After the failed assault Grant concluded that Vicksburg could not be taken by assault and made preparations for a siege.

"The slaughter was simply horrible. The heaps of dead and wounded men of themselves formed an obstruction almost as effective as the abatis they were seeking to surround."

General L. F. Hubbard

During the siege, the 5th Minnesota participated in three separate outlying battles, including one at Richmond, Louisiana where Knud suffered a slight foot wound on June 15. Richmond was located west of Vicksburg on Roundaway Bayou which drained low, flat, wet cotton fields and brushy uncultivated land. The 5th Minnesota had passed through Richmond in May on their way to Grand Gulf. A Confederate force later occupied the town to

harass Union forces during the siege and the 5th Minnesota was sent with other units to eliminate the threat. While driving Confederates from Richmond they also carried out an order to destroy the town.

After months of fighting and more than 8,000 Union and Confederate deaths, Vicksburg

surrendered on July 4, 1863, the same day Confederates began retreating from battle at Gettysburg. The 5th Minnesota, having survived a horrific bombardment the night of July 3-4, was sheltered behind a West bank levy of the Mississippi as



Jane at Richmond, 2011

Grant and the 4th Minnesota entered Vicksburg on East bank bluffs high above the river. Soon after surrender many 5th Minnesota members were ferried across the river to inspect Vicksburg for themselves.

Part of the army that captured Vicksburg and its more than 29,000 Confederate soldiers stayed to occupy the city. Sherman's troops, including the 5th Minnesota known to Confederates as "hell snortn fellows" began pursuing Confederate forces that had tried to reinforce Vicksburg. The Confederates put up token resistance near Jackson and then rapidly departed. It was time for Knud and his companions to rest, which they did at Camp Sherman on the Big Black River. Fighting stopped for a time but dying did not. Some died from wounds and many others, including Ole Otterson perished from disease. Leaving no effects, Ole was buried in an unmarked grave and probably quickly forgotten by all but a few.

In early fall the 5th Minnesota was back in action participating in two expeditions and four fights, eventually finding themselves back in winter camp at LaGrange, Tennessee. In early 1864, they moved by riverboat to Vicksburg and then marched east to again camp on the Big Black River. While at camp Knud's original enlistment expired and he and almost all of his remaining fellow volunteers reenlisted and became official army veterans. Along with approximately 10,000



Black River, 2011

others he was temporarily transferred to the Sixteenth Army Corps commanded by General A. J. Smith under General Banks to head west in the Red River Expedition while Sherman and his troops prepared to march eastward through the South. The Red River Expedition was their first campaign under Smith and their first and only unsuccessful campaign.

On March 12 they began marching up the Red River Valley into Louisiana to destroy a Confederate army of estimated 25,000 to 40,000

men. Moving west the 5th Minnesota defeated Confederate defenders at several sites, but on April 9 found themselves in rear guard defensive duty when commanders ordered a withdrawal. As the army moved back toward the Mississippi, the 5th Minnesota was in almost constant action until they reached the Mississippi River on April 21. Fifth Minnesota officers were proud of their part in the Red River Campaign; a campaign described as a military failure resulting from misconduct by superiors.

"...hardly a day passed that the regiment was not in some form under fire."

General L. F. Hubbard

Around the end of May, Knud was issued new clothing and equipment before moving north on the Mississippi River in anticipation of his promised veteran's 30 day furlough. Along the way he was in another fight when the 5th Minnesota suffered additional casualties. He boarded a riverboat bound for St. Paul, Minnesota on June 17 to begin his furlough.

"Their uniforms had been through several campaigns and were soiled and much worn...its tout ensemble was positively shabby..."

General L. F. Hubbard

The 5th rejoined the war in August near Holly Springs, Arkansas on the Tallahatchie River. Through-out August and September Knud was on a near

"It was tough. There were little things. They made regular twenty-five mile marches...shoes...weren't left foot and right foot, they were the same foot."

Shelby Foote

continuous march in pursuit of Confederates through Tennessee, Arkansas and Missouri. One march went from Kansas completely across Missouri ending at St. Louis. General Hubbard who had direct command of the 5th Minnesota later recalled that they marched over 700 miles through difficult conditions in all kinds of weather with few supplies and moldy food, making foraging a necessity.

In early November, still under Smith's command, the 5th boarded the W. L. Ewing, part of a riverboat fleet bound for Nashville. The Ewing sank without casualties near St. Louis on November 24 and Knud was transferred to a second boat before arriving at Nashville at the end of November while Sherman's troops were on their notoriously destructive march through Georgia. A claim has been made that Knud deserted on November 24, the day the Ewing sank. It is very likely that he was only briefly missing in confusion following the sinking. *National Archive* documents and his presence at Nashville in mid-December indicate he was with his company in all of November and December, 1864.

Knud was assigned defensive duty south of Nashville. During a sleet storm 26,000 or more Confederates prepared to attack and retake Nashville which had been a Union supply center since the early days of the war. On December 15, as weather improved Knud was sent on attack. After fighting for a day he slept in the field on the cold wet night of December 15-16. On the afternoon of December 16 the 5th Minnesota attacked and routed Confederates from Compton's Hill, now known as Shy's Hill for a Confederate officer who died there. The Confederate army that attempted to take Nashville suffered more than 6,000 casualties, was destroyed and never returned to war.



Shy's Hill, 2010

Knud was one of the 106 - 5th Minnesota casualties at Nashville, wounded near Shy's Hill on December 16 from a shell fragment in his left hip. He probably received minimal treatment where he was injured and then taken to the Cumberland Hospital in Nashville. On January 9, 1865 he was one of the first patients admitted to Jefferson General Hospital at Jeffersonville, Indiana which held 2,400 other soldier patients. Initial records indicate his wound was severe, hospital records indicate it was slight.

Knud returned to duty on March 16, 1865. He must have then participated in the capture of Spanish Fort and Fort Blakely before participating in the capture of Mobile, Alabama on April 12. This was the last fighting Knud saw. He was in route to Montgomery, Alabama when Robert E. Lee surrendered his army to General Grant at Appomattox effectively ending the war. Knud was probably in Montgomery on April 14 when President Lincoln was assassinated. At the end Knud was stationed near Demopolis, headquarters of the force occupying Alabama. In late August he learned that his services were no longer needed. Along with other 5th Minnesota Regiment survivors he returned up the Mississippi River to Minnesota and was mustered out at Fort Snelling on September 6, 1865. Two hundred forty eight members of the 5th Minnesota were killed in battle or died from disease. Only three hundred seventy of 1,163 total members were mustered out with the regiment. Less than half who volunteered for Knud's Company A in 1862, including Albert Otterson, returned to Minnesota in 1865.

Total Civil War Casualties

Deaths 624,726 Wounded 486,259

AFTER THE WAR

Knud returned to Minnesota, mustered out at Fort Snelling and became a civilian in the fall of 1865. Had he returned home? Who did he know in Minnesota? Were there friends from Göl, his brother, a cousin or other relatives? Other than his uniform, what belongings did he have? He left a disciplined life shared with and directed by others, large numbers of whom did not survive. He had seen and participated in extremely grueling, violent, dangerous and destructive activities interspersed with long periods of boredom. In Minnesota he left his comrades in arms and was free to come and go as he pleased. There was no one to account to or to pay him, circumstances that could have been very disorienting.



Minnesota property, 2013

He purchased property from Halvor Rosmusson in Richland Township, Rice County near Kenyon in October, 1865. He retained ownership of that property until an 1883 sheriff's sale. He mortgaged the property in 1869, lost it to foreclosure in 1877 and recovered it in 1878. After recovery he engaged in confusing financial and property transactions ending with an 1883 sheriff's sale.

It is possible that he had financial difficulties resulting from the *Panic of 1873*, an economic depression following the panic and a series of grasshopper infestations. His financial health probably was not helped when he was denied a veteran's pension from the state of Minnesota in 1883.

In the 1880 census three of his children, Ole, Marie and Otin were in Rice County with Knut and Julia Otterson. Julia was probably his wife Annie (Unni Baardsdtr in Laerdal, Norway) who may have used the name Julia Benson when she immigrated to the United States. She was Annie Otterson in June, 1885 when they purchased land in Barrie Township, Richland County, Dakota Territory

"Judging from the many bleaching bones of the buffalo scattered over the plains it is evident that the very nutritious grasses of this country afforded fine pasturage..."

Horace B. Crandall

Knud and Annie had 14 children, were farmers who may have raised and sold horses. They and 5 of their children probably moved from Minnesota in 1885. They settled on

160 acres of hilly land in sight of the village of Kindred, Dakota Territory about the time a railroad was built in the area. Kindred, is a community that was then and still is largely populated by people with connections to Göl, Hallingdal Norway. A deed shows he bought most of his land from the Northern Pacific Rail Road. He and Annie eventually accumulated over 240 acres.



Dakota property, 2012



Knud, ca. 1920's

His Granddaughter, Nettie Otterson Peterson wrote about seeing him shortly before his death. She remembered him as a thin man with a grey beard. She also recalled that he would become quite agitated, talk loudly and pace when discussing his Civil War experiences.

GÖL, HALLINGDAL NORWAY



Knud's home community, 2013

Knud's Norwegian home site is currently owned and occupied by members of the Jorde family who are descendents of Knud's brother.



Google Earth image



Print of Göl area by Jeanne Olson purchased in Bergen, Norway



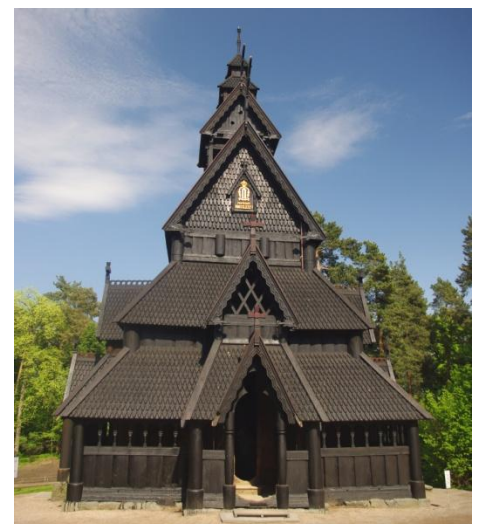
Jerde home, 2013



Jane and Jordes at stave church site, 2013



Oslo folk museum 1800's Hallingdal farm

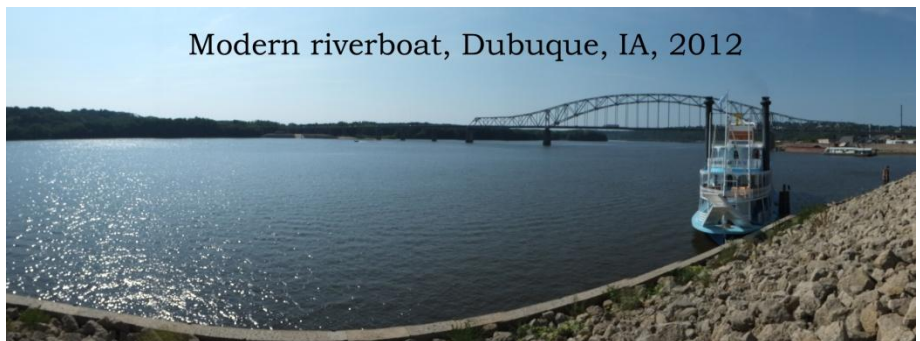


Church, moved to Oslo in 1880's

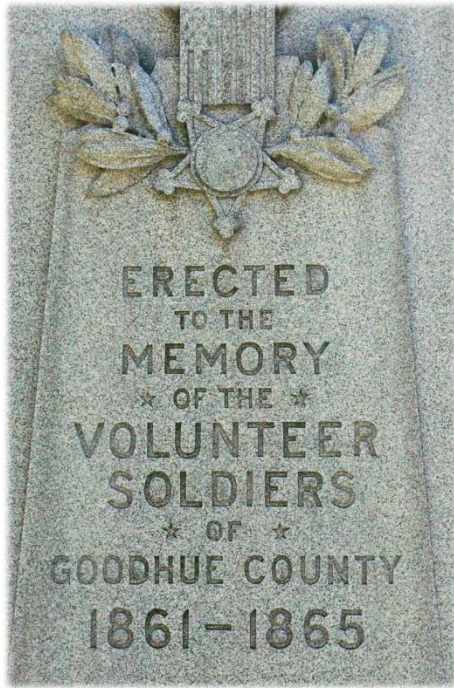
MISSISSIPPI RIVER



Adapted from Wikipedia

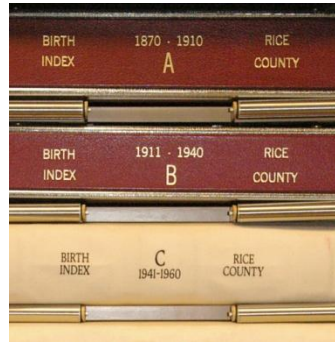


KENYON, GOODHUE COUNTY MINNESOTA



Monument at Red Wing, 2012

Kenyon Township, Goodhue County (county seat Red Wing) received credit for Knud when he volunteered for the Union army. When he returned from war he bought acreage in Rice County near Kenyon. Family records indicate he and Annie were married at Faribault, county seat of Rice County. Census records show 3 of their children living in Rice County in 1880.



County records, 2012



Mississippi River at Red Wing, 2012



Rice County farm land, 2013



Approach to Faribault, 2012



Göl Lutheran Church Kenyon , 2010

CORINTH, MISSISSIPPI



Union re-enactor, 2012



Oak Home ca: 1856, 2012



Contraband (freed slave) Camp, 2012



Confederate re-enactor company, 2012



Civil War Interpretive Center, 2012



Battlefield grave, 2012

CORINTH BATTLE LETTER

My dear Aunt Mary

“...In the early part of the action I was posted in town as a reserve, to be used at any point where most needed. The reserves in every fight are always selected from the best troops, as they are brought into action when the battle becomes most desperate, and used at those points most hotly pressed by the enemy. The battle was raging with terrific fury along the entire extent of our lines. The rebels were fighting with a determination that could not be excelled. They outnumbered us greatly and it seemed at one time as though all was lost. They charged in heavy columns against our lines, and succeeded in breaking through on the right of where my regiment lay. Our troops became scattered and retreated in confusion, leaving a gap in our lines several hundred yards in length, through which the enemy boldly pushed and in large numbers entered the streets of Corinth, capturing one of our batteries in their progress. In the meantime I had moved my Regiment into a position to secure them, and as they reached the heart of town, I poured into them a dozen volleys in rapid succession, which terribly decimated their ranks. They fought desperately to break through the position I had taken, but my gallant boys would not give an inch. The position my regiment occupied gave me a great advantage, which the rebels could not overcome, and they soon gave way and began to retreat. I followed after at a run...”

Yours truly

L. F. Hubbard
Col. Comg 2nd Brigade
2nd Divsn
Army Miss.

RICHMOND, LOUISIANA (VICKSBURG)



Vicksburg's 1850's Courthouse, 2011



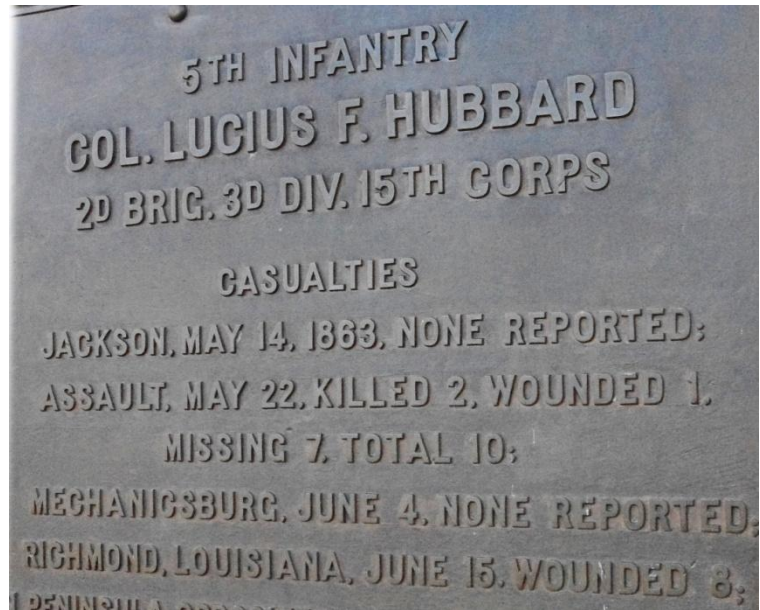
Richmond battle site, 2011



Current town site, 2011



Roundaway Bayou, 2011



Monument to casualties (Knud included) 2011



Aimed at Vicksburg, 2011

BURNING OF RICHMOND

During the second week of May, 1863, the Federals abandoned their supply line connecting Milliken's Bend with Hard Times. On June 4, the Confederates reoccupied Richmond. From Richmond, Gen. Dick Taylor launched an offensive to destroy the Union bases at Lake Providence, Milliken's Bend, and Young's Point. When these attacks failed, Taylor hastened to south Louisiana. Gen. J. J. Walker was left in charge of Confederate efforts to relieve Vicksburg from the west. Before Walker could act, the Federals sent a strong force, led by Gen. J. A. Mower, into Madison Parish. On June 15, the Federals moved against Walker's command. Following a brief rear guard action fought about three-quarters of a mile north of this point, the Confederates evacuated Richmond. Before returning to his base, Mower had his soldiers burn Richmond. The town was never rebuilt.

RICHMOND BATTLE REPORT

Headquarters, 5th Reg. Infantry, Minn. Vol's.
Young's Point, Louisiana
June 20, 1863

"...I was ordered by General Mower to deploy six companies of my regiment as skirmishers, using the remaining four as reserve, and move forward, ascertain more definitely the position the enemy occupied and his probable strength. The approach to the locality in which the enemy was posted led across a smooth open field, which afforded no cover for the skirmishers whatever, hence the men were greatly exposed and their movements fully apparent to the enemy. Through this open field, about a half mile in front of the main body of the enemy, and running parallel with my line of skirmishers, was a deep ditch, skirted by a thick growth of bushes and small timber, under cover of which the rebel skirmishers supported by a regiment of infantry were posted. When within thirty yards of this cover and in point blank range of the enemy's guns, we received a heavy volley from his skirmishers, and the regiment in reserve. The men at once fell flat upon the ground, the weeds and tall grass affording them partial protection. A sharp skirmish fight ensued of perhaps twenty minutes duration, during which a charge of the enemy made with a design of capturing the skirmishers was repulsed. By this time our main column had formed line of battle and advanced to within supporting distance of the position we occupied. The rebel skirmishers now retired upon their main body, which had also fallen back and taken position on the opposite bank of a bayou, that separated us from the town.

I again advanced, moving in the face of a fire of grape and canister, from a battery the enemy had in position on the bank of the bayou, and when within easy range of his sharpshooters, halted. Two batteries of artillery were now brought forward and opened upon the guns of the enemy. A sharp artillery fight followed, lasting more than an hour, during which the enemy effected an evacuation of the place retreating on the road to Delhi..."

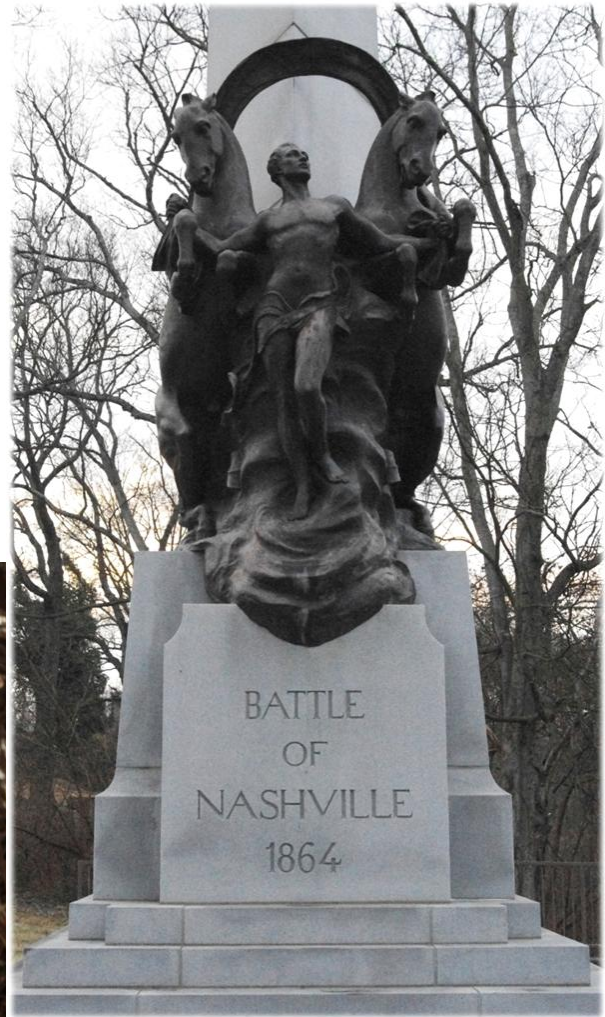
Respectfully, your ob't servant
L. F. Hubbard
Colonel Commanding Regiment

(among 8 listed as casualties: Company A, wounded – Private Knut Otterson, in foot with grape shot.)

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE



Minn., US and Confederate Flags on Shy's Hill, 2010



Battle monument, 2010



Battle location sign, 2010



Confederate battle headquarters, 2010

NASHVILLE BATTLE REPORT

Nashville, Tennessee, December 18th, 1864

“...At eight o'clock on the morning of the 16th, I was directed to form my Regiment on the left of the 9th Minnesota, outside the works constructed the night previous, and to deploy a line of skirmishers in my front. As soon as the line was formed the order to move forward was given and our line was advanced, under heavy fire, nearly a mile and to within about one hundred rods of a strong line of entrenchments occupied by the enemy in large force. Here the line was halted and the brigade formed in two lines, the 5th Minnesota on the left, and in the front line, the 3rd brigade being on my left. Entrenching tools were sent to the regiment and I caused temporary breastworks to be constructed to protect the men from the enemy's sharpshooters. About three o'clock in the afternoon I received orders from the Colonel Commanding, to be in readiness to charge the enemy's works in our front, at a moments notice, and at a quarter past four p. m., the order to forward was given, which being repeated along the line, the 5th Minnesota, with bayonets fixed, moved over the breastworks in their front, into the open field which lay between them and the enemy's works, and at a double quick rushed forward under the most terrific and withering fire of musketry and artillery, it has ever been my fortune to behold or encounter, yet forward our line pressed, and soon the colors of the 5th Minnesota, were planted, the first in the brigade, upon the rebel entrenchments, and the enemy were driven from their fortified position. The regiment pursued, capturing hundreds of prisoners, among whom was Brigadier General Jackson, and many officers.”

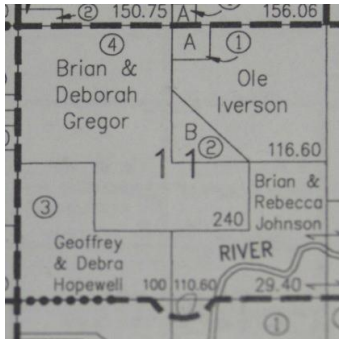
Respectfully submitted

WILLIAM B. GERE

Lt. Col. Comdg. 5th Regt. Minn. Vet. Vol. Infy

(among 106 listed as casualties: Company A, wounded – Private Knut Otterson, in left hip with shell fragment.)

KINDRED, NORTH DAKOTA



1997 plat map



1897 plat map

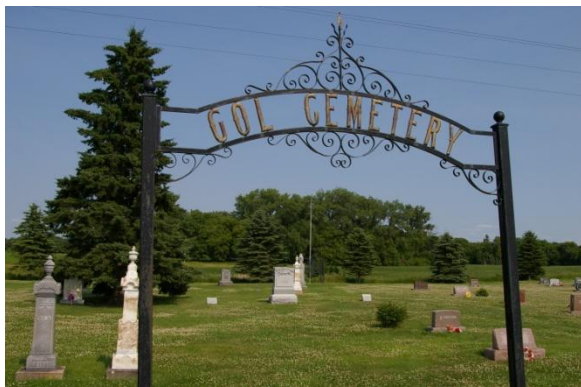
The Otterson farm was in Barrie Township, Richland County within sight of Kindred in Cass County. It is not currently under cultivation. Part of the property was in Annie's name and Knud eventually owned an additional nearby parcel.



Entrance to Knud's home site, 2012



Business district, 2012



Church cemetery, 2006



Former NPRR line, 2012

KNUD OTTERSON FAMILY

Knud Otterson Annie Benson
 b 1/16/1842 b 3/3/1854
 d 6/28/1923 d 10/20/1944

Ole
 b 12/23/1875 d 6/9/1937
 Marie(Mary)
 b 12/9/1877
 Otin K
 b 1/24/1879 d 2/2/1937
 Anetta A.
 b 4/2/1880 d 5/28/1903
 Birgit Oline
 b 11/25/1881 d 12/23/1936
 Boletta
 b 12/26/1883 d 10/24/1972
 Edward
 b 11/23/1884 d 11/13/1968
 Anna Marie
 b 4/1/1886 d 1974
 Albert K.
 b 1/2/1888 d 8/15/1959
 Oscar
 b 12/6/1890 d 8/17/1984
 Henning Knut
 b 9/8/1891 d 12/27/1971
 Tilla
 b 7/7/1893 d 11/26/1990
 Iver K.
 b 9/16/1895 d 7/5/1960
 Fred Arthur
 b 1/7/1897 d 9/17/1897



Knud and Annie



Ole



Anna



Ottine



Birgit



Henning



Marie



Edward



Tilla



Oscar



Albert



Iver



COMMENTS

We only know a broad outline, none of the details of Knud's time as a soldier, and even less about his life before and after the war. Information about him was difficult to find; it would have been almost impossible to search for Knud before computers and the internet which made it possible to do much of the search from home.

Most of Knud's experiences described here occurred 150 years before this document was written. Knud was a private; much has been recorded about and by officers but little about or by individual privates. He appeared to never have been able to read or write English and left no known personal record of his experiences. No family record of his experience has been found and many descendents do not even know that Knud was a Civil War soldier. Documentation used here included Knud's service records available from the *National Archives*, the original and reprinted versions of *Minnesota in the Civil War and Indian Wars* and the *Annual Report of the Adjutant General to the Legislature of Minnesota Session of 1864*. Additional information was found in documents held by the Minnesota Historical Society and property, marriage, birth and death records maintained by Minnesota and North Dakota counties. Information was also obtained from census reports of Minnesota, North Dakota, United States, and Norway. The areas surrounding Corinth, Mississippi, Vicksburg, Mississippi and Nashville, Tennessee, Kindred, North Dakota and Göl, Norway were visited and photographed.

Knud's grandson Arthur Otterson thought that his grandfather had fought at Gettysburg. He might have been disappointed to find that he had been at Vicksburg, not Gettysburg. Art need not have been disappointed as Vicksburg was as important to the eventual Union success as Gettysburg. In some ways it may have been more important as the North defeated and captured a Confederate army at Vicksburg. At Gettysburg the North only prevented a Confederate victory and was not able to defeat and capture a Confederate army.

One original source recorded a desertion by Knud on November 24, 1864 near St. Louis, Missouri. That accusation is repeated in some later Civil War accounts including in the book *Ole Goes to War-Men From Norway Who Fought in America's Civil War*. It is a serious charge that appears to be unjustified. In November, 1864 members of the 5th Minnesota were transported by boat to Nashville, Tennessee. On November 24 – the reported day of Knud's desertion - the W.L. Ewing, the boat they were on sank near St. Louis. The soldiers were rescued and transferred to another boat to continue their journey to Nashville. It is likely that Knud was briefly missing in confusion that must have surrounded the sinking. It is known that Knud was with the 5th Minnesota at Nashville soon after the sinking as he was wounded in battle there on November 16, 1864. In addition, his pay records for

November-December 1864 show that he was paid for service during that entire time. Someone wrote in Minnesota pension application records that war records showed he was a deserter and someone else appeared to note that Lucius Hubbard, the commanding officer of the 5th Minnesota during much of the war, corrected Knud's record. Knud was denied a pension because there appeared to be no effects from his wounds, not because he was a deserter. He may have received United States pension benefits late in life and Annie received a widow's pension after Knud's death, benefits that probably would not have been granted had Knud deserted. Finally his *National Archive* record, which does not include a reference to desertion, and other sources show that he mustered out with the 5th Minnesota in September, 1865.

For several months in mid 1865 Knud was stationed near Montgomery, Alabama to help maintain order in a formerly belligerent community which was expected to integrate people who had until recently been slaves. During the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's, including intense activity in the Montgomery area, descendants of those slaves finally began to experience the results that Knud had fought for in the 1860's. It took more than 100 years to begin a final resolution of one of the major issues of the Civil War; guarantee of civil rights for people who had no rights prior to the war.

Knud was an immigrant during a time when immigration was a national issue, much as it is in 2013. His brother Engebret, who probably was Albert Otterson Company A 5th Minnesota, and four of his siblings also appear to have immigrated leaving two siblings and their parents in Norway. In the years before the Civil War many wealthy land and slave owners in Southern states were opposed to immigration and immigrant settlement of the American West. Knud and his fellow recent immigrants from various European countries constituted a significant percentage of the Northern troops, usually serving as privates. Those immigrants gave the North a personnel advantage over the South.



Engebret's grave, 2013

Many questions remain about Knud. Why and how did he leave Norway? How did he travel to and when did he arrive in Minnesota? Why did he volunteer, how did he feel about being shot at and about shooting at others and what were his emotions at and after the end of the war? What happened from the time he mustered out in 1865 to the time he purchased property in Dakota Territory in 1885? Why did he buy property instead of homesteading? Did Knud become United States citizen?

This project set out to document Knud's Civil War service and photograph the current appearance of some of his battle grounds. His life before and after the war was investigated to add context to his war experiences. Questions that remain

about those parts of his life will have to be answered by others, assuming they can be definitively answered!

Knud and Annie, along with others who also had roots in Göl, Norway, appear to have been members of the now disbanded Göl Lutheran Church near Kindred. He died in 1923 and is buried with Annie, who died in 1944, and several of their descendents in the Göl Lutheran Church Cemetery near Kindred.



NAME VARIATIONS

Knud	Otterson
Knut	Oterson
Knutt	Ottenson
Knute	Otterdon
Kent	Ottoson
Canute	Otson
Newt	Olson
Newton	Auterson

SOURCES

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Donna Jerman	Otterson genealogy.
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Jackie Marler	Otterson genealogy
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Jane Otterson Miller: Daughter of Arthur Otterson and Bessie Martin Otterson, Granddaughter of Ole Otterson and Alma Kallendar Otterson, Great granddaughter of Knud Otterson and Annie Benson Otterson.

Vernon Ege: Lives with wife Jane in Anoka, Minnesota near the Mississippi River and BNSF railroad (formerly NPRR) – both of which were important to Knud's life in the United States.



Annie, Alma, Arthur and Jane Otterson ca 1942

We thank many individuals who helped us uncover information presented here, most of whose names were lost with a notebook containing their names: interpretive staff at Vicksburg and Corinth military parks, recorder's office staff of Goodhue and Rice County, MN and Richland County ND, staff of Minnesota Historical Society and North Dakota State University archives, volunteer genealogists, interpretive staff of Borgund and Göl stave churches and Hallingdal Museum, the Jansen family of Eggum Gaard, Laerdal, Norway, the owner of the Solstad motel in Göl and the Jorde family of Rotneim, Göl Norway.