

Bernard & Louise Knapp
Family History

Albert Knapp Booklet

FROM THE FILES OF BERNARD ELDEN KNAPP

A
Certificate of Commendation
from the U.S. Mormon Battalion, Inc.
Co. B Utah was presented to:

Verna Humphries
Lois and Larreau Woodland
Rick Woodland
Rev. Greg Roth

for assisting in the preparation
of the monument and engravings
at the gravesite
commemorating the life
of original U.S. Mormon Battalion member,
Albert Knapp of Co. E.

For more information on the Centerville Pioneer Cemetery
call (510) 793-3575



**THANK
YOU**

for your contribution and support to the "honorable remembrance" of

ALBERT KNAPP
2003

WHO IS ALBERT KNAPP?



Albert Knapp is Elsie May Knapp Larsen's paternal grandfather.

Albert, the oldest of five children, was born in Antwerp, New York, on July 10th, 1825. His parents joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1834. Then they moved to Nauvoo, Illinois in 1842 to be near the main body of the church.

Albert's father, Silas, died during very difficult days of persecution

against the church in Illinois. Albert's mother, Lydia, gathered her family and moved with the Saints to Council Bluffs, Iowa.

At the age of 21, Albert joined the Mormon Battalion. On July 16, 1846, the soldiers of this Battalion said goodbye to their families, shouldered their muskets and left to serve for a year in the Mexican-American War. Albert left behind his sweetheart, Rozina Shepard. He was a patriotic and hard-working man. After the required year of serving, having made his way over unmeasured wastes, unbridged rivers, and desert terrain with the Battalion he mustered out on July 16, 1847.



Rozina
Shepard

Albert stayed in California a year or so mining gold and building buildings in the communities there. When he had earned enough money to go to Salt Lake he lost little time meeting Rozina and getting married. They were wed on January 7, 1849 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Albert and Rozina moved with her parents to Famington, Utah.

WHAT WAS THE MORMON BATTALION?

In 1846 the United States declared war with Mexico. President Polk wanted to retain the loyalty of the Saints and have them assist the U.S. Army in fighting Mexico for territory extending the United States to the Pacific Ocean. He authorized the recruiting of 500 Mormon volunteers. The Saints needed money for and permission to establish temporary settlements on Indian lands during the winter to prepare for their exodus west. Even though church members were suspicious of the federal government's motives because of past persecution, five companies of one hundred men were gathered.

As the Mormon Battalion began to march west, their ecclesiastical leaders charged the men to *"remember their prayers, to see that the name of the Deity was revered, and that virtue and cleanliness were strictly observed. (The troops were instructed) to treat all men with kindness . . . and never take life when it could be avoided."*

The Mormon Battalion marched over 2000 miles, cut a wagon trail from Santa Fe to California, erected buildings, and dug wells—contributing significantly to the western movement of the United States and the establishment of San Diego. These tasks were accomplished in the face of severe illnesses, lack of water and food, an exhausting pace, difficult geography and extreme weather.



Verna Jean

WHERE DID THE IDEA FOR THE SERVICE PROJECT COME FROM?

Elsie May Knapp Larsen's daughter, Verna Jean Larsen Humphries, took her first genealogy class when she was 18. Elsie had actually signed up for the class but couldn't go and Verna went in her place. Verna loved

to listen to the wonderful stories Elsie and her sister, Mabel, used to tell about family ancestors. Verna's curiosity and willingness to organize things led her to record and distribute family histories, family group sheets and pedigree charts. After discovering all she could about her grandparents she moved on to her GREAT grandparents. In 1982 she visited Claudia Hess, a cousin, and came away with a copy of a handwritten letter by Albert Knapp. (A portion of that letter is printed in this booklet.) This began an odyssey of discovering who her great grandfather, Albert Knapp, was.

In 1988 while Verna was active in scouting and promoting Eagle Court of Honors she was presented with a book about the Mormon



Brigham Young

Battalion. In it was this promise by President Brigham Young to the men of the Battalion: *"The Mormon Battalion will be held in honorable remembrance to the latest generation; and I will prophesy that the children of those who have been in the army, in defense of their country, will grow up and bless their fathers for what they did at that time . . ."*

In the moment that she read this quote she had a strong urge to find Albert Knapp's gravesite and honor him. In 2002, another cousin, Melinda South sent Verna some more histories and pictures.

Verna found out that Albert had died and been buried in Centerville, California. She called her niece, Lois Woodland (daughter of Sylvia Ricks, Elsie's oldest daughter), who lived in that area of California and asked if she'd like to help find Albert's grave. Lois was excited to assist.

HOW WAS ALBERT KNAPP'S GRAVESITE LOCATED?

Lois Woodland's description of events: "We (Lois and her husband,

They lived there for about twenty years, farming. They were thrifty and, comparatively speaking, quite well-to-do. Six children were born to them: Azilka Patenia, Lydia Malinda, Sara Armina, Silas Albert, Justin Abraham (who became Elsie May Knapp Larsen's father) and Morgan Alonzo.



Justin Abraham
(Elsie's Father)

Albert's "standing" among his associates was reported to be very good. He was kind, generous, and always willing to work his full share with those with whom he worked. He loved his wife and family and they loved him.

Twice he left Famington to fill two two-year church missions among Native Americans on the Colorado River at Las Vegas.

One night Albert was awakened by fire. His sheds were burning. Several cattle and sheep were lost as well. Three times, during that awful night, the house caught on fire and three times it was put out. The fire left the Knapp family in a state of poverty.

Albert had made money as a miner in California and he resolved to do it again. Six weeks after the fire Albert left for California. He wanted to take his family or at least part of his family with him but the times were too hazardous. The family chose to remain with the main body of the church in Utah. He left his family in the care of a Bishop Hess and a close friend. The night of parting was very dark and sad. After "tendering" each member of the family a parting kiss he rode away on horseback. He never saw any of them again.

Communications at that time were very slow and sometimes even got lost. A long letter to his son, Morgan, told of the sorrows of his westward journey and of how he had almost perished before finding a mine which made him relatively wealthy. (He and John Hess discovered the first gold and silver leads in Eldorado Canyon. They

formed a company which was financially successful.)

However, death came too soon for him to enjoy a happy life from his financial efforts. Albert Knapp died late in 1864 at the home of his sister, Emma, in Sunol, California as a result of having, sometime before, been kicked by a mule.



Albert Knapp in his later years.



Lydia Malinda

Soongob, Valley, Dec
the 11th, 1863,
Dear Daughter
I received your kind
Letter last Saturday while
on my way to the City
on Business, it found
me in better health than
I have been since last
January, the cause I will

This is part of a letter that Albert wrote to his daughter, Lydia Malinda, in 1863.

that this is an unknown, buried there in 1864. There are some other "strangers" in the cemetery, but none were buried there in 1864, the year Albert died. For all the other unknowns or strangers, there are recorded dates and circumstances, such as drowning, etc, that do not match what we know about Albert. By a process of elimination, this "unknown", buried in Lot 22 in the year 1864 can be none other than Albert Knapp. The Pastor was just as excited as we were to identify the person in that grave."

THE PLOT THICKENS!

Lois researched the cost of a simple but adequate stone marker. Verna told the Woodlands that she also wanted to put a Mormom Battalion Historical Plaque on the marker. Now it was time to broaden the base of the children that would hold "in honorable remembrance" their fathers. One hundred and forty two letters were sent out to the Larsen Family and extended family explaining the project and asking for donations toward a stone marker.

The family responded with great love as well as funds through letters, at the Bi-Annual Larsen Reunion and at Sylvia Rick's funeral.

THE REST OF THE STORY:

Larreau Woodland's description of events, October 27, 2003: "We met the work crew and Pastor Roth of the Presbyterian Church at 10:00am and watched and assisted as the crew set the headstone on Albert's grave. Around 11:00am cars began to arrive and Daughters from two of the local DUP camps



Rev. Roth (center) watches workmen set the headstone.



The group that gathered for the dedication and committal of Albert Knapp's gravesite.

arrived. I didn't do a headcount, but I think there were around 25 people showed in all . . .

The program consisted first of Pastor Roth telling of some of the other people buried in nearby plots including some family names from Sam Brannon's company of Mormons that came by ship (instead of crossing the plains). He pointed out John Horner's family buried just one plot away who settled and started farming in that area instead of going on to Utah. Horner built a little school house and the Mormons used it for Sunday as well. The next settlers in the area were Presbyterians, and Horner let them use the school house for their services as well. Then Horner moved a few miles toward Oakland, at Union City and did the same thing there. So going back to the 1860s and before, there is a history in that area of Mormon/Presbyterian cooperation that continues today. He pointed out the several LDS families buried in this pioneer cemetery. Then

Larreau) started in the summer of 1996, were sure we found the cemetery, but were very uncertain as to the exact location inside that cemetery. Our son, Rick Woodland, took up the cause in year 2002 and was successful.



His interest was fueled, in part, by **Lois, Rick and Larreau Woodland** ancestral linkage and . . . his preparation to teach church history to High School Seminary students in the Saratoga, Calif. Stake. He was particularly attracted to the fact that Albert Knapp was part of the famous Mormon Battalion.

The information sent to us by Verna indicated that Albert Knapp . . . was buried in a small, community/church cemetery, Lot 22, at Centerville, Calif. Centerville is separated from the Sunol Valley by a small range of mountains and is about 30 miles from our home in San Jose. Today, it has been entirely engulfed by the expansion of Fremont City. We spent a day at the Fremont City Library, reading their information on pioneer settlement of the area and studying their maps and locations of cemeteries. We decided the most probable site was a small cemetery started on a 2.5 acre plot in 1858 by early Presbyterian settlers and whose ownership had passed to the St. Innocent Greek Orthodox Church.

We located the cemetery easily and found it in total disrepair. The church that stood there had burned down in 1993. The grounds were covered with thick, dry grass, waist high. Although we searched valiantly through the weeds using the info provided, we were not able to identify anything specific to Lot 22. We did find some headstones with dates close to Albert's. The info showed a small map going North from the church. We searched north until our clothes

were filled with burrs and found nothing that seemed to connect with the map. We then tried for several months to contact someone at the Orthodox Church that would have info about the cemetery and who was buried there. The names we were given either knew nothing, had no records, didn't return our calls nor answer written requests. Discouraged, we gave up the pursuit for a better day.

That better day came when our son, Rick, visited the cemetery in the fall of 2002. He found that the Presbyterians had repurchased the cemetery and he was warmly greeted by Pastor Greg Roth. In cooperation with a very active Daughters of the Utah Pioneers unit in Fremont, the Pastor had cleaned up the property, erected a large sign identifying it as the Centerville Pioneer Cemetery, provided a plot map at the sign, carefully researched all available records,

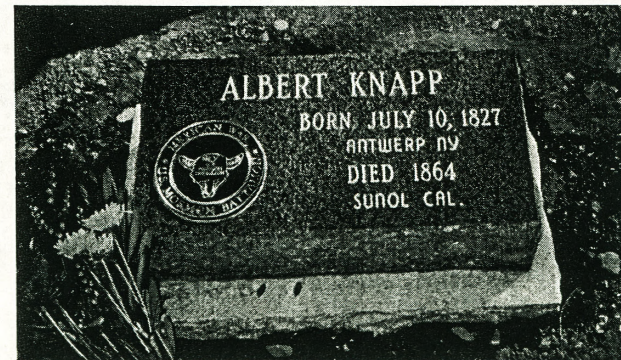


Rick Woodland at unmarked gravesite.

identified every grave in every plot, and matched names to graves. Albert's grave may have been marked initially, but the practice then was to make wooden markers, all of which were destroyed in this cemetery by subsequent grass fires. After passing of years, memories dimmed and graves got remarked only if there was interested family living nearby. It turns out that Lot 22 lies more Easterly from the church than Northerly. In Lot 22 there is one unmarked grave. The oldest pioneer records now existing say

he gave an invocation on the ceremony, thanking God for knowing where this man was buried and letting it be known again. Next, I told what I understood of Albert's Mormon Battalion involvement, and his life, and how he came to be buried there at Centerville. Then Rick dedicated the grave in a very beautiful prayer. Finally, I asked Pastor Roth if he had anything else to say, and he said, "If Pastor Brae of the 1864 Presbyterian Centerville congregation happened to be present when Albert was buried there, he would have read the Presbyterian 'committal' which commits their faithful to the Lord and to their resting place." He went ahead and read it for all of us, and it sounded a very lot like the grave dedication just rendered by Rick Woodland, except it did not refer to the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

It was really a nice event, had a great feeling of warmth. The marker with the medallion on it is just plain beautiful. Pastor Roth now knows many of those DUP ladies well as they have worked with him over the past few years to get the cemetery a bit cleaned up and sort through the records, making this discovery of Albert's location possible."



Headstone and historic plaque over Albert Knapp's gravesite. Service Project complete. A good man honored.

Booklet prepared by: Dilleen Marsh