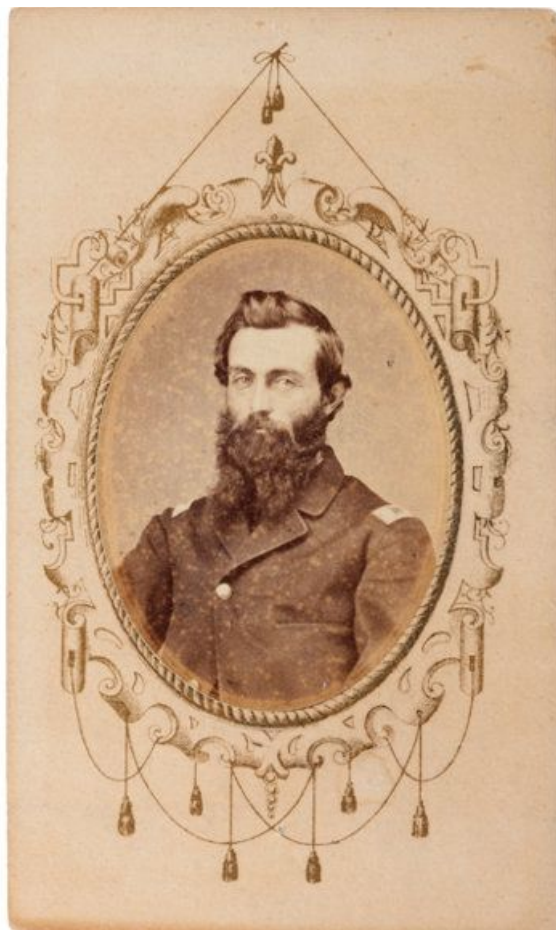


LIEUT. COL. PORTER C. OLSON,  
36th Illinois.



<sup>1</sup> findagrave.com/user/Tom Lawrence

<sup>2</sup> Accessed through

<https://historical.ha.com/itm/military-and-patriotic/civil-war/civil-war-carte-de-visite-of-lieutenant-colonel-porter-c-olson-field-and-staff-illinois-36th-infantry-/a/6124-38015.s>



### **Lt. Col. Porter C. Olson, F&S, 36th IL Infantry, USA**

- 1832 Apr 11: Porter Chamberlain Olson was born in Niagara Falls, NY to Ole and Sarah Olson.
- 1851 Jan 10: Land Grant Records show Porter C. Olson was granted ownership of forty acres of land in Illinois.
- 1860 Jul 7: The 1860 US Federal Census enumerated in Kendall County, IL listed P.C. Olson in the household of a hardware merchant named G W Winchell. Porter was listed as a thirty year old teacher.
- 1861 Aug 5: Enlisted in the US Army.  
Aug 20: Mustered into 36th Illinois Infantry as Captain in command of company F. Porter's brothers Soren and James were under his command in company F.
- 1862 Mar 7-8: 36th IL Infantry fought at the Battle of Pea Ridge, AR.  
Oct 8: 36th IL Infantry engaged at the Battle of Perryville, KY.

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<sup>3</sup> Image from *History of the Thirty-Sixth Regiment Illinois, Volunteers, During the War of the Rebellion* by Bennett, L. G. and William M. Haigh. Aurora, IL:Knickerbocker and Hodder, 1876. Accessed through <https://digital.lib.niu.edu/islandora/object/niu-civil:13947>.

All officers acquitted themselves honorably and bravely, so that all are entitled to consideration, as brave and efficient officers. I desire on my own part to thank Capt. Porter C. Olson for his daring and efficiency in aiding to command the regiment during the action, and acting Adjutant Biddulph, communicating with you and others during the heat of the contest. Appended 4

Dec 31: 36th IL Infantry was engaged at the Battle of Stones River as part of Gen. Sheridan's division. Porter's brother Soren was killed in action during this fight.

1863 Apr 8: A soldier in the 36th IL Infantry wrote an update on the activities in the regiment. He mentioned Porter's promotion from Captain of Co. F to Lt. Colonel.

**From the 36th Illinois Regiment.**  
**CAMP BRADLEY, TENN., March 29, 1863.**  
**EDITOR SENTINEL:**  
Once more I sit me down to pen you a few lines. Many changes have been made in the old 36th Illinois since my last.  
Major Silas Miller is now Colonel, or will be when he is exchanged. Capt. Porter Olson is to be Lieut. Colonel, and Capt. George Sherman now wears the yellow leaves. If ever the boys were were well pleased with their officers, they are now. If the 36th Illinois ever was manned with kind and obliging officers now is the time; they are young in years but old in experience. 5

May 11: Captain Porter C. Olson was promoted to Lt. Colonel.

Sep 18-20: 36th IL Infantry was engaged at the Battle of Chickamauga in north GA.

In the meantime the fiery conflict grew more desperate and deadly. Col. Miller, on whom the command of the brigade

<sup>4</sup> *History of the Thirty-Sixth Regiment Illinois, Volunteers, During the War of the Rebellion* by Bennett, L. G. and William M. Haigh. Aurora, IL:Knickerbocker and Hodder, 1876. Pg. 283-384.

<sup>5</sup> *The Woodstock Sentinel*, Woodstock, IL, Wednesday, April 8, 1863, pg. 2.

devolved, gallant as ever; Lieut. Col. Olson, brave to a fault, and Major Sherman, true and unflinching, were everywhere conspicuous, encouraging the men by their example to wring from unwilling hands of fate the victory which was denied. Our

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Undated image of members of the 36th IL Infantry

1864 Feb-Mar: 36th IL Infantry given a six week furlough. The regiment returned home to much enthusiasm and fanfare. March 19th they loaded onto train cars and were transported back to the front.

Jun-Aug: Lt. Col. Porter Olson, absent from the ranks due to sickness since June, returned and took command of the 36th IL Infantry.

Nov 30: 36th IL Infantry fought at the Battle of Franklin. They were part of Col. Opdycke's brigade of Gen. Wagner's division. Positioned north of the Carter House, the 36th IL was part of a crucial counterattack that blunted the Confederate penetration of the defenses. *History of the Thirty-Sixth Regiment Illinois* gave an account that is unparalleled. The part regarding the 36th IL and Lt. Col. Porter Olson follows:

<sup>6</sup> *History of the Thirty-Sixth Regiment Illinois, Volunteers, During the War of the Rebellion* by Bennett, L. G. and William M. Haigh. Aurora, IL:Knickerbocker and Hodder, 1876. Pg. 469-470.

<sup>7</sup> [ancestry.com/user/hall51896](https://ancestry.com/user/hall51896)

Col. Olson was everywhere among his men with words of cheer and encouragement, and utterly regardless of his own life and safety. Shortly after reaching the works he was struck by a musket ball, which entered his breast and passed through his body in the region of the heart. He fell instantly, but in falling requested Lieut Hall, of Company E, to take him to the rear. Assisted by Sergt. Yarnell, of Company G, they carried him to the shelter of a brick house standing near the works, when, perceiving that he was failing fast, the Lieutenant called to Capt. Biddulph to attend to the regiment as the Colonel's wound was mortal. Yarnell wrenched a window shutter from the house, on which the bleeding body of their commander was placed and hurriedly borne to the rear, while musket balls and cannon shot were striking around them in fearful quantities.

Reaching the river, they were none too soon to secure about the last vacant place in an ambulance, in which he was tenderly placed by the side of a wounded color-bearer. Then, taking a last look of their dying chief, they hurried back to the trenches, resumed their position in the line, and fought bravely to the end. The Colonel's life rapidly ebbed away, and in a half unconscious state he feebly whispered, "Oh help me, Lord!" These were his last words, and then his heart was still. His noble spirit had taken its flight to that country where wars and battles are unknown. When brave Olson fell, a cold tremor thrilled along the line. At any other time than in the face of the enemy, and under a murderous fire, the men would have sat down and cried like children over his untimely fate. Brave, generous, earnest and faithful, none had stood by the men or been more true to the country than he. Always present in the perils and hardships of the 36th, he had shared them all and won his way into the hearts and affections of the men, making a record of glory that will never be closed up or forgotten, though his mangled remains may moulder and lay hidden from sight in an unknown and unmarked grave. The name of PORTER C. OLSON will live forever, and be handed down along the imperishable ages, indissolubly linked with the fame of the immortal THIRTY-SIXTH.

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<sup>8</sup> *History of the Thirty-Sixth Regiment Illinois, Volunteers, During the War of the Rebellion* by Bennett, L. G. and William M. Haigh. Aurora, IL:Knickerbocker and Hodder, 1876. Pg. 653-654.

Lt. Col. Porter C. Olson was killed in action on Nov. 30th, 1864 and his body was returned to IL for burial. He was interred at Millington Newark Cemetery in Millington, IL.

1865 As the war ended and the 36th IL was being mustered out and preparing to return home, Gen. William Sherman stated the following about the 36th IL Infantry:

Gen. Sherman never paid a more deserving compliment than when he penned the following : “ During the past four years, so eventful in the history of our beloved country, it has been my fortune to be associated with you and your gallant regiment. I know that the record made by you and your command is second to none in its devotion and loyalty to the cause for which you left your peaceful homes. The bloody fields of Pea Ridge, Perryville, Stone River, Chickamauga, Mission Ridge and the Atlanta campaign, together with the closing battles in the West at Franklin and Nashville, have shed undying glory upon the scarred veterans of your regiment. When I look back upon the past, the forms of brave and gallant men and officers who laid down their lives freely upon the altar of their country, arise before me so vividly that it is with feelings of pride and sorrow that I recall their names. Col. Silas Miller and Lieut. Col. Porter C. Olson should be household names amongst the veterans of the 36th, at whose head they yielded up their lives whilst leading them to victory.”

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1872 Oct 3: At the sixth annual reunion for the 36th IL Infantry, veterans first proposed the idea of a monument to commemorate Porter Olson and his service in the 36th IL Infantry. The idea gained traction but it was many years before the idea came to fruition.

1882 Sep 22: An article appeared in the Chicago Tribune that noted the sixteenth annual reunion of the 36th IL Infantry. It also stated that this reunion was special because the monument to Porter Olson was being unveiled.

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<sup>9</sup> *History of the Thirty-Sixth Regiment Illinois, Volunteers, During the War of the Rebellion* by Bennett, L. G. and William M. Haigh. Aurora, IL:Knickerbocker and Hodder, 1876. Pg. 718-719.

**Sixteenth Annual Reunion of the Thirty-sixth Illinois Regiment at Millington—Unveiling of the Olson Monument.**

*Special Dispatch to The Chicago Tribune.*

MILLINGTON, Ill., Sept. 21.—The scarred and honored veterans of the patriotic Thirty-sixth Illinois, that typical regiment of the State, and the one whose daring exploits and brilliant achievements at Pea Ridge, Perryville, Stone Ridge, Chickamauga, Mission Ridge, Resacca, Pleasant Hill, Kenesaw Mountain, Peach-Tree Creek, Atlanta, Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville form an immortal series of exploits to be traditional in the history of the Union, reassembled today at Wilmington to hold their sixteenth annual reunion. A large ratio of the remnant of the regiment formed into line and once again, keeping step to fife and drum, marched through in winnowed ranks under the shredded and bullet-pierced first flag of the regiment, with the now gray-haired veteran, Col. N. Gensel, at their head. This reunion was anticipated to be of particular interest because of the unveiling of the monument to the memory of Lieut.-Col. Porter C. Olson. Fully 2,000 people flooded the grounds. The reunion was peculiarly hearty and sincere, and hand grasped hand with that warmth and pressure which only a soldier feels.

The dedicatory address upon the unveiling of the monument was delivered by the patriotic J. L. Dryden, and universally pronounced a most scholarly and eloquent oration. The shaft of the monument is of gray

granit, surmounted by a marble eagle with outspread wings. Upon the base in bold letters is the name Olson, and above the inscriptions of birth, enlistment, and of the fatal wound at the battle of Franklin. Around the monument ninety of the regiment formed a circle, and with manly tears and impressive ceremonies for the departed dead, and with fervent well-wishes for those yet living but now scattered to the four winds of the Union, closed the most successful and solemn reunion ever held by the Thirty-sixth.

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<sup>10</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, Chicago, IL, Friday, September 22, 1882, pg. 6.

**"Render Unto Cæsar the Things which  
are Cæsar's."**

One of my competitors represents himself or is being represented as having carved the eagle ornamenting to Porter Olson's monument in the Millington cemetery. I hereby defy any one to substantiate any claim to that effect. I have carved said eagle from my own model in clay from nature. E. KUYL,  
Proprietor Ottawa Marble Works.

1884 Oct 4:

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1892 Feb 16:

death at Atlanta, and then turned north to help beat back Hood's invading army in Tennessee. On that famous march of a night and a day, between Columbia and Franklin, when Hood at times held both sides of the road in sight of the Union column and harassed the march at every step, the Thirty-sixth was in Opdycke's brigade, first in advance, cutting a road through, and then rear guard, buffeting the impetuous pursuit. Opdycke and his men covered the retreat so well that the troops on ahead reached Franklin and hastily ran up log and earth breastworks to defend the crossings of Harpeth river. Late in the day the rear guard filed in past the lines of battle and halted for rest and supper. Startled in a twinkling by the ominous "yell" of the enemy, they looked backward to see his gleaming banners and bayonets moving up in a charge, and to their amazement the advance Union regiments were quickly crushed and scattered, and the second line at the breastworks soon met the same fate. Leaving their coffee untasted, Opdycke's men seized their muskets to recover the lost ramparts. "Fall in, Thirty-sixth! Forward to the trenches!" were the rapid orders of Col. Porter C. Olson, another man graduated from the ranks to be ruler over the Fox River heroes.



<sup>11</sup> *The Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, IL, October 4, 1884, pg. 1.



Opdycke was speedily unhorsed and fought on foot. Col. Olson forged ahead, cheering his men up to the parapet, where he fell shot through the heart. Two color-bearers of the regiment fell, and a third carried the banner, minus its staff, over the bloody course from the bivouac to the ramparts, and at last unfurled it above the parapet, with the enemy on the opposite side clutching at its folds and demanding its surrender. Words cannot picture the awful scene—the savage fury of the repeated Confederate onslaughts and the lionhearted tenacity of the heroes who repelled them. Opdycke's men bore the brunt of the terrific struggle, and pluck and daring finally won the day.

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<sup>12</sup> *Harrisburg Telegraph*, Harrisburg, PA, Tuesday, February 16, 1892, pg. 2.

<sup>13</sup> [ancestry.com/user/TJernagelQuam](https://ancestry.com/user/TJernagelQuam)



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<sup>14</sup> findagrave.com/user/Anne Sears

<sup>15</sup> findagrave.com/user/Anne Sears

<sup>16</sup> findagrave.com/user/Bev

<sup>17</sup> findagrave.com/user/Amber Rose