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Folke Bernadotte Memorial Library  
Gustavus Adolphus College  
800 West College Avenue, Saint Peter, MN 56082-1498

### **Gustavus Adolphus College Archives St. Peter, Minnesota**

**Nelson, Olof. Civil War Letters of Olof Nelson and Family History  
Materials, 1864-1945.**

**CAMC Collection 86**

**Nelson, Olof. Civil War Letters of Olof Nelson and Family History Materials, 1864-1945. CAMC Collection 86. 42 folders.**

**ABSTRACT:**

The Olof Nelson Civil War Letters and Family History Materials collection primarily contains correspondence from Nelson to his family written while serving in the Union Army's 55<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry during the American Civil War from 1864 to his discharge in 1865. In Addition, there are muster Roll Calls from his enlistment, the pension and death records of Nelson and his wife Jennie, articles of his family history, and a photographic history of the Civil War. This collection gives insight into the lives of Swedish immigrants. Most correspondence is in Swedish, but translations exist for most letters.

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:**

Olof Nelson was born in Lyngby, Christianstad, Skåne, Sweden on 20 February 1843 (1842, 1845)

His daughter, Mary, wrote in 1955 that Olof grew up in a peasant home at Maltesholm estate, but that the local minister, Pastor Rodhe, encouraged his parents to send him to school in Göteborg. A letter sent in 1873 to Olof from Peter Wieselgren, renowned dean of the cathedral at Göteborg, scholar, and social agitator, seems to confirm this. Wieselgren says that Olof took the entrance examination for study for first communion (i.e. confirmation class) in Göteborg in May 1857, and that he did so much better than the other students that Wieselgren used him as a example to present influential educators of the need for good public education, as defined by the Royal Public School Law of 1842, which Wieselgren found to be unenforced. "Ole Nilsson from Efverod was thus an important person in the important battle which was intended to make the Royal Public School Law of 1842 a truth." That letter is included in the collection. Olof was confirmed in April 1858. He was a shoemaker's apprentice at the time. He emigrated in 1860.

Olof settled in the Chicago area, working for the Illinois Central Railroad. It appears that his parents joined him during this time. His older brother, Andrew, settled in Peosta, Iowa.

On 1 February 1864, after several earlier attempts, Olof enlisted in the 55<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry. He was mustered in on 8 February. Olof was discharged with the rank of sergeant on 14 August 1865, at Little Rock, Arkansas. His letters are written to his parents and brother.

After his discharge from the army, Olof went back to work for the railroad, this time at Peosta, Iowa, a tiny town nine miles southwest of Dubuque, where he was stationmaster. He married Jenny Bolander, a native of Stockholm, Sweden, in Chicago in 1871. In the late 1870's, Olof moved his family to a 160 acre soldier's claim in Polk County, Wisconsin, which he sold four years later. He then farmed at Charles City, Iowa until 1889. From there he moved to Tenhassen in Martin County, Minnesota, where he farmed until moving to Fairmont, then to Sherburn. Olof died in Fairmont on 21 August 1924, at age 82.

\* Possibly written by Edith Thorstensson

**RESTRICTIONS:**

There are no restrictions on use of this collection for research purposes. The researcher assumes full responsibility for observing all copyright, property, and libel laws as they apply.

Researchers must use collection in accordance with the policies of the College Archives, the Folke Bernadotte Memorial Library, and Gustavus Adolphus College.

**COLLECTION CITATION:**

Nelson, Olof. Civil War Letters of Olof Nelson and Family History Materials, 1864-1945. CAMC Collection 86. Gustavus Adolphus College Archives, St. Peter, Minnesota.

**ACQUISITION:**

Donovan Lucas, Douglas L. Nelson, and Warren O. Nelson donated this collection during 1991.

**TRANSLATED BY:**

Edith Thorstensson translated this collection during the 1990s.

**PROCESSED BY:**

Lacie Micek, student worker, processed this collection and developed the finding aid during November 2010.

**SUBJECT HEADINGS:**

Nelson, Olof, 1843-1926.

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Personal Narratives.

Swedish Americans.

<b>CAMC Collection 86</b>	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Poem, in Swedish, undated	1	1
Letter to brother, Camp Butler, Springfield, Illinois, 20 February 1864	1	2
Letter to parents and brother, Camp Butler, Springfield, Illinois, 28 March 1864	1	3
Letter to parents and brother, Louisville, Kentucky, 30 March 1864	1	4
Letter to parents, brother and sister-in-law, Larkins Landing, Alabama, April 1864	1	5
Letter to parents and brother, Larkins Landing, Alabama, 19 April 1864	1	6
Letter to parents and brother, Larkins Landing, Alabama, 27 April 1864	1	7
Letter to brother and sister-in-law, Georgia, 15 May 1864	1	8
Letter to parents, brother and sister-in-law, Kingston, Georgia, 22 May 1864	1	9
Letter to parents and siblings, Dallas, Paulding Co, Georgia, 1 June 1864	1	10
Letter to brother and family, near Lost Mountain, Georgia, 20 June 1864	1	11
Letter to brother, near Atlanta, Georgia, 5 August 1864, 15 August 1864	1	12
Letter to brother and sister-in-law, East Point, Georgia, 11 September 1864	1	13
Letter to brother and sister-in-law, East Point, Georgia, 17 September 1864	1	14
Letter to parents, East Point, Georgia, 17 September 1864	1	15
Letter to parents, East Point, Georgia, 23 September 1864	1	16
Letter to brother and sister-in-law, near Gaylesville, Georgia, 27 October 1864	1	17
Letter to parents, near Gaylesville, Georgia, 27 October 1864	1	18
Letter to brother and sister-in-law, Vining Station, Georgia, 9 November 1864	1	19
Letter to parents, Vining Station, Georgia, 9 November 1864	1	20
Letter to brother, In camp near Ft. McAllister, Georgia, 25 December 1864	1	21
Letter to parents, In camp near F. McAllister, Georgia, 25 December 1864	1	22
Letter to parents, Savannah, Georgia, 10 January 1865	1	23
Letter to brother, near Savannah, Georgia, 11 January 1865	1	24
Letter to brother, Fayetteville, North Carolina, 12 March 1865	1	25
Letter to brother, near Goldsboro, North Carolina, 3 April 1865	1	26
Letter to brother, Raleigh, North Carolina, 26 April 1865	1	27
Letter to brother, Alexandria, Virginia, 20 May 1865	1	28

Letter to brother, Louisville, Kentucky, 9 June 1865	1	29
Letter to brother, Louisville, Kentucky, 17 June 1865	1	30
Letter to brother, Dewal's Bluff, Arkansas, 4 July 1865	1	31
Letter to parents, Dewal's Bluff, Arkansas, 4 July 1865	1	32
Letter to brother, Little Rock, Arkansas, 7 July, 1865	1	33
Letter to brother and sister-in-law, Little Rock, Arkansas, 7 August 1865	1	34
Muster Roll Call, 1864-65	1	35
Letter from P. Wieselgun, 11 August 1873	1	36
Pension Documents, Death Certificates, and Obituaries 1890-1926	1	37
Wedding Anniversary, 1921	1	38
McGuffy's Reader story, 1937	1	39
Family Histories, 1945	1	40
Photographic History of Civil War	1	41
Translated Letters, 1864-73	1	42