

## Herman August Otto



Herman August Otto was born 9 December 1892 in Eagan, Dakota County, Minnesota to Herman Otto, Sr. (1857-1933) and Carolina Hoepfner (1852-1927). His parents were both born in Germany, but married in Eagan in 1886. Herman registered for the draft on 5 June 1917 at Mendota, while working there on his father's farm. He was single.

Otto enlisted 28 May 1916 at Hastings. During his service, Herman was a private, first assigned to Company H, 160<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 40<sup>th</sup> Division when he shipped out to Europe in August 1918. He was transferred to Company I, 308<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 77<sup>th</sup> Division A.E.F., and served on the front lines in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in France.

What happened to Herman Otto remains unclear. Some accounts, including an American Battle Monuments Commission online memorial, report that he was killed in action in October 1918. However, State Department investigative files reflect that he was reported missing in action on 20 October 1918. According to State Department files, Otto's family received a postcard from Otto in Germany dated 4 October 1918 informing them that he was captured and was being held prisoner. As of November 1920, the State Department had not received confirmation of Otto's capture or whereabouts.

State Department records said Otto was first buried under the incorrect name of Private Otto Hermann in Isolated Grave #1, in Sedan, Department of Adennes, and his remains were disinterred and reburied on 3 April 1919 in Sedan American Cemetery at Letanne, Department of Ardennes, Grave #25, Section #3, Plot #1. This seems incongruous with an investigation that was yet ongoing in 1920. Additionally, there exists a Find a Grave memorial to a Private Herman A. Otto who died 4 October 1918 and is buried in Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery. The fate of Private Herman A. Otto of Mendota remains a mystery.