

Leon Dudley Kirkham

Leon Dudley Kirkham was born 15 December 1895 in Luverne, Rock County, Minnesota to James Philander Kirkham, Sr. (1843-1941) and Isabella Becker (1862-1933). Leon's father, James Philander Kirkham, Sr., was a captain of the Union Army during the Civil War. Leon's brother, James Philander Kirkham, also served during WWI, but did not have any apparent Dakota County connection.

Prior to the War, Leon worked on his father's farm in Farmington, Dakota County, Minnesota. He registered for the draft on 5 June 1917 at age 21.

Leon served as a private in the U.S. Army, Headquarters Company, 519th (Heavy) Field Artillery Battalion, 82nd Division. That is what is engraved upon his grave marker. He enlisted on 21 September 1917 at Hastings in Dakota County, a resident of Farmington, and was mustered out of service as a private first class on 21 May 1919. The Minnesota WWI records database shows that he also served with Company A, 313th Ammunition Team, 88th Division. A military service card says he was assigned to Casual Detachment No. 513, 163rd Depot Brigade.

After the War, Leon lived with his father in Empire Township, Dakota County, and worked in farming. It appears that his parents had divorced by 1920. During the 1920s and 1930s, Leon worked as a salesman. On the 1930 census, Leon's occupation is listed as elevator man for an insurance company, and he was living with his divorced mother and his brother, James P, in Minneapolis. Sometime after that, Leon returned to farming in the Farmington area.

In 1840, Leon was living in Farmington when he wrote to the *Minneapolis Star Journal* to point out that his father, who was 96 years old, was missing among the list printed by the newspaper of Civil War veterans now alive in Minnesota. He wrote, "... You had 45 names, but you missed one. My father, who is 96 years old, served throughout the Civil War with the 1st, 5th and 11th Minnesota infantry. He has lived in and around Farmington since 1914."

Leon D. Kirkham died 8 June 1942 in Minneapolis and is buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota.

Note: There are both a bonus application file and a military service record at Minnesota Historical Society for Leon Kirkham. These records were not consulted and may provide additional information about service.