

Earl Markwick Ashton

Compiled and written by Judy Hansen
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Earl Markwick Ashton was born in Lehi, Utah on the 27th of January 1894 to Joseph Henry and Sarah Ann Ball Ashton. His siblings were Lester Clarence, Silvia Irene, and Eva May. He was a typical young man growing up playing and doing all the things a young boy does. In January of 1907 at the age of 13 he was out playing in the snow with several other boys snowballing. One of the boys picked up a ½ pound rock and threw it. He didn't mean to hit anyone but Earl raised up from behind a fence just in time to receive the blow. Dr. Holbrook and Dr. G.L. Stookey were both called and the wound was dressed. Earl's upper lip was cut and two teeth broken off. His lower lip was also cut and his jawbone fractured.

Deputy Game Warden J. C. Smith went for a 7 mile walk on Sunday April the 16th 1911. Earl was 17 years old and was arrested for shooting ducks while hunting. He did not hit or kill any of them but had to go to court to answer before a Judge. Seven others were also arrested that day for not being able to show a license.

What was not typical in Earl's life was that both his parents died while he was a youth. In 1910 we find him living in the Lehi home of his grandmother Caroline Ball. He was 17 years old and a graduate of Lehi High. His class colors were blue and brown and the class motto was "Upward as the years roll on."

After graduating from High School, Earl went to live in Shelley, Idaho where he was working on a farm. On June 5th 1917 he registered for the World War 1 draft while in Idaho. He enlisted in the United States Army in Utah County on the 27th of June 1918. Earl was described as a short, stout man with light blue eyes and light brown hair.

Earl was reported to have served at American Lake Washington which was renamed Fort Lewis. It was the largest military post unit in WW1.

From enlistment to July 11, 1918 he was assigned to the 49 Co 13 Bn 166 Dep Brig (deep brigade). He was then transferred to Amb Co (Ambulance Company) #55 Motor Cp (camp) Lewis, Washing until October 3rd, 1918. At that point Earl was transferred to the Amb. Co 252 Motor 13 Sn Tn (Sanitary Train) until his death. He went in as a private but had advanced to Sargent.

Earl was with the 13th Division and they were training to go overseas. None of them were sent however, because the armistice was signed November 11th, 1918 just prior to when the 13th Division was supposed to leave. Had Earl not died of the flu he would never have seen action.



The 252 ambulance company of the 13th Division was organized Oct 2, 1918 and Earl was assigned there Oct 3, 1918. The Spanish Flu epidemic was in full swing and in the month of October the 13th Division had 1,876 men sick with the flu – 88 of those men died. Earl was one of them. The month of October had the highest mortality rate for the 13th Division. In efforts to control the epidemic every man had 50 feet of floor space, every cot was in a cubicle, all men were clothed in woolen and new men were issued woolens immediately upon arrival. All mess kits and dishes were washed and sterilized by boiling for at least five minutes and then air dried. Drying dishes using dish towels were discontinued and not allowed. Men could not drill in the rain and special care was given to men returning from hospital duty. All indoor meetings were prohibited. Proper ventilation, airing and the sunning of beds and bedding and all floors oiled every two weeks. A quarantine was also placed on camp, limiting men to the barracks area. Face masks were also used and all men going into the infirmary for any reason were masked. If sent to the hospital men had to wear a mask until they were placed in a bed within a cubicle. All staff were required to wear masks.

Just prior to his death, his grandmother received a letter from him telling her how interested he was in his work and that he was looking forward to going overseas. He also noted in that letter he was “enjoying perfect health except for a slight cold.” It was shortly after this letter that Mrs. Ball received notice from the U.S. Army of Earl’s death. The disease took him suddenly. It was reported in the newspaper that Earl was the first Lehi man to die in WW I and he died of the Spanish Flu. He was 24 years, 8 months, and 28 days old at the time of his death. His body was brought back to Lehi accompanied by several soldiers. A bell was tolled and the flag was left at half mask until after his burial in the Lehi City Cemetery where a short memorial service was held. His name is honored on the Lehi Veteran’s Wall at the City Cemetery.

Sources:

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