

## Ralph William Burch

Ralph Burch was born on December 17, 1892 in Prairie Island, Minnesota (Welch) to Albert Robert Burch (1862-1944) and Anna DeLucia Jackson (1862-1905). Both were born in Wisconsin. Anna became sick early in their marriage with five young children. The family moved to the West Coast with the hope that the climate would improve the situation but unfortunately she died in 1905. The family returned to Hastings, Minnesota where Ralph attended high school and was part of the 1914 football team. The next record that we can find, is Ralph's registration for the WWI Draft. He is a patient at the Southern State Hospital for the Insane. The registration is completed by someone else on behalf of Ralph in 1918 (month and date unknown). Ralph returned to Minnesota July 1, 1918 and he signed on with the United States Navy Reserve Force in Minneapolis on July 17, 1918. He left for training at the Naval Training Station in Great Lakes, Illinois the same day. The only clues to why he spent time in a hospital in California come from his post war bonus application. The explanation given was that he went to California to visit an uncle named N.J. Argentsinger. Also that he worked for a while as a Telegraph Operator for Great Northern Railroad and was stationed in North Dakota for a time. The only records that can be found regarding his service is that he was stationed on the USS Philadelphia, a protected ship that was re-designated from a prison ship to a receiving ship in 1916. A protected ship was a ship with an armored deck that offered protection for vital machine operation from fragments caused by shells exploding above them. We find no combat records for this ship during WWI. Ralph was discharged on March 14, 1919. He applied for and received a bonus in the amount of \$120, most likely for travel money from the West Coast.

Ralph returned to Minnesota and worked at odd jobs. He lived with his father in the family home located at 741 West 7<sup>th</sup> in Hastings until he died from a heart attack on July 15, 1965. He is buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis. He never married.

Ralph had a younger brother, Leslie Joseph Burch that also served in WWI. He was part of the United States Marine Corp, Company H, 11<sup>th</sup> Regiment.