

John Francis Dordan



John Francis Dordan was born 13 June 1887 in Cascade, Dubuque County, Iowa to Irish immigrant parents Francis “Frank” Dordan (1861-1938) and Anna Casey (1861-1905). His parents were married in 1887 in Jones, Iowa. John was the oldest child; siblings were Mary, Frank, James, and Margaret. Likely the Dordans were related to another Dordan family, Andrew and Margaret, who were in Randolph as early as 1885.

By 1900 the family lived in Randolph, Dakota County, and by 1918 his wife had died and father Frank Dordan had moved to St. Paul in Ramsey County, Minnesota. Not much is found about John Dordan until he registered for the draft in June 1917 in Moore, Montana. He said he was born 13 June 1888 (actually it was 1887) in Iowa and was working as a ranch hand for Jack Hicky near Moore. He was 28 years old and single.

The next record of John Dordan shows his transport to Europe on 6 July 1918 aboard the *SS Empress of Russia* as a Private with Company A, 162nd Infantry, U. S. Army. A published history of the 362nd (by the 362nd Infantry Association, available online via Google Books) describes in detail the experiences that Dordan and his colleagues would have lived through, from training camp to fighting “over the top” with bayonets on the front lines in France.

Dordan’s unit had fought at St. Mihiel and spent some time in Paris before being sent to fight in the Argonne Forest. On 29 September 1918 the 362nd suffered some of its heaviest losses. Dordan was killed in combat by a shell in the woods south of Ivoiry, France. Some accounts give his death date as 1 October 1918, and one newspaper reported that he was missing in action since 29 September. Many of the casualties had to be left on the field until fighting had subsided. The remains were buried near Argonne until 1921, when they were returned to the U. S. aboard a funeral ship.

Dordan had two brothers who also served during WWI: Frank Dordan served in the aviation service and Leo Dordan served in the infantry at Camp Dodge.

Because Dordan lived in many places including Iowa, Minnesota and Montana, he is “claimed” on the Honor Rolls of several institutions. The 362nd Infantry Association book says he last resided in Lewiston, Montana. His name is listed on a memorial there. His father was residing in St. Paul, Minnesota, and son John is listed among the Ramsey County War Dead. Some local newspapers called him a “Minneapolis man.” John Dordan’s remains were returned to the U.S. in 1921 and interred in St. Agatha’s Cemetery in Coates, Dakota County, Minnesota. His grave marker shows his name as “James A. Dordan;” however his birth record gives his middle name as Francis.