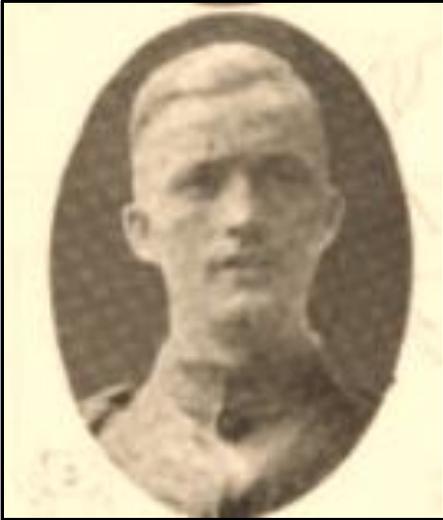


## William Christ Edward Nelson



William Christ Edward Nelson was born 1 February 1887 (or 1889) in Sweden and came to Hastings with his parents in about 1891. His parents were Peter Nelson (1862-1933) and Matilda J. Nelson (1863-1930), both buried in Lakeside Cemetery. Their other children were Abbie (Mrs. George Wood), Fred (also a WWI veteran), Viola (Mrs. Herman Stoltz) and Goldie.

William Nelson was raised in Hastings and then found employment as a street railway conductor in the Twin Cities, and in 1912 he went to Montana where he took up a homestead and operated a ranch. He registered for the draft in Fergus County, Montana in 1917.

On 24 June 1918 he, in company with a friend, Henry Lee, enlisted in the 77<sup>th</sup> Division and was sent to Camp Lewis, Washington, being later transferred to Camp Kearney. Lee told newspaper reporters that in late July 1918 he and Nelson were sent overseas in Company H, 307<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and arrived in France. (Nelson's grave marker in Lakeview Cemetery says Company K, however.) Almost immediately they found themselves at the front. On 28 September 1918, during the fierce fighting in the Argonne sector, Nelson was wounded. According to Lee, he and their sergeant were right alongside of Nelson when they charged the German trenches about a hundred feet away. The firing was very heavy; William was wounded in the leg but refused assistance. After the German trench had been taken, Lee and the sergeant returned but could find no trace of Nelson. "Lee seems positive that Nelson was picked up by the Germans and taken to one of their hospitals and died there, and that is the reason why Washington has no record of his death," read a 1921 news article. The circumstances around William Nelson's death remain unclear. One researcher reported that he died 19 November 1918, after the War had ended, but did not say how or where he died.

Nelson's remains were initially buried in the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery in France, but were repatriated in 1921 and he was reinterred in Lakeside Cemetery in Hastings. The American Legion Post of Hastings coordinated a military funeral "by largest attendance in history of Hastings," according to a newspaper story. The body lay in state at the courthouse and was given a salute by a firing squad from the Twin Cities. The Boy Scouts, ladies of the Red Cross, and other community groups took part in the funeral procession. The services were held from St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Hastings.