

George E. Leach

George Emerson Leach was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa on July 14, 1876 to Mary Leach, a native of Michigan, and William Leach, a native of New Hampshire. Leach's father attended the University of Vermont, but later made it to Minnesota where he passed the bar exam. His father served during the Civil War and fought with distinction and bravery at the Battle of Bull Run, with the First Minnesota Infantry Regiment. After the Civil War, William went on to serve in the Iowa Legislature, in the Iowa Superior Court, and also as the mayor of Cedar Rapids Iowa. In 1884 the Leach family moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota. George graduated from Central High School in Minneapolis and attended the University of Minnesota Law School. He graduated with his degree in 1897 and took up numerous occupations, such as grain bin inspector, insurance agent, and the banking business. George's first military service came in 1905 when he joined the Minnesota National Guard. He was assigned to Battery B of the First Minnesota Artillery. He proceeded up the ranks during peace time and went from second to first lieutenant, and then was promoted to captain in 1908. In 1916, George's National Guard unit was called into action against Poncho Villa along the Mexican border. During his time along the Mexican border, he served as Major of Second Battalion of the First Minnesota Field Artillery Regiment. At the end of his command on the boarder, he was promoted to colonel of the entire regiment.

Upon entering WWI, George's Frist Military Regiment became the 151st Field Artillery and was merged with other regiments to make up the 42nd Division, also known as the famed "Rainbow Division". February 20, 1918 marked the first day that George met the front lines. His regiment did not see serious action until March 9, 1918, when George's men fired 5,422 artillery rounds. On March 19th, 1918, George received shrapnel wounds to his hand after he was forced to dive for cover after German shelling attacked his position. On March 14, 1918, George and his unit saw some of the heaviest fighting to date. The Battle of Champagne had just started by a German offensive when George's unit returned fire of 54,000 rounds, to which they lost 45 men. Later on July 15, the 151st supported the advancement at Chateau Thierry with great success. During their advancement against the Germans, it was George's regiment that discovered the remains of the American pilot Quentin Roosevelt, the son of the famous Theodore Roosevelt. George and his unit participated in the battles of Saint Mihiel, the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. After the war, George stayed overseas as part of the occupying force and ruptured back to Minnesota on May 8, 1919. In total, George spent 19 months overseas. He served honorably and with distinction that earned him the Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished Service Medal, the Purple Heart, and the Legion of Honor among others. His final rank was Major General and in 1934, he was given command of the 34th Division.

After the war he came back to Saint Paul and went back into the insurance business while founding some businesses of his own. He ran for mayor in 1921 and served until 1929. In 1924 he managed the US Olympic Ski Team and was elected to the National Ski Hall of Fame. In 1937, he ran for mayor again and served until 1941. In 1931, he served as Chief of the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C. until 1935. During his time in office, he was a staunch

supporter of military readiness and believed in universal military service. He died in Los Angeles in 1955 at the age of 79. George E. Leach was buried with full military honors at Fort Snelling Cemetery, which included a 13 gun salute and three artillery volleys.

