

Lester Allen McPheron

Lester Allen McPheron was born June 14, 1889 in Mattoon, Illinois and the only child of Oscar and Mary “Mollie” (Hart) McPheron. After the death of his mother in 1899, his father brought him to South St. Paul, Minnesota to live near maternal family members. In 1906, his father Oscar married his second wife, Nettie Fagen, who had two more children. Lester married Julia Robinson, the daughter of a South St. Paul policeman. They had one daughter. Lester and Julia divorced, and he married Irene Schmidt on June 21, 1917 in Hugo, Minnesota.

Lester registered for the draft on June 5, 1917 in South St. Paul, Minnesota. At this time, he worked as a shipping clerk in the smoked meat department at Swift & Company. He served as a private in the Minnesota National Guard and was exempt from the draft because of a physical condition. According to records, he had fallen arches and defective eyesight. Despite the exemption, Private First Class Lester A. McPheron was drafted into the United States (U.S.) Army on June 15, 1918. He arrived in France on September 23, 1918 with L Company, 336th Infantry Regiment. On October 12, 1918, he was transferred to E Company, 360th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division. McPheron participated in the Meuse-Argonne Operation from the end of October until November 11, 1918, and he records his experiences in detail in his journal. He left France for the U.S. on April 16, 1919.

He returned to South St. Paul, Minnesota and lived at 604 12th Avenue N at the time he registered for WWII. He died in Ramsey County, Minnesota in May 1970 and is buried in Elmhurst Cemetery in St. Paul.

Irene & Lester McPheron at right, with maternal 1st cousin Forrest (Curry) & Leonard Derr; taken in South St. Paul, MN circa 1918 (photo from Vicki Albu personal collection)

