

Lydia Whiteside

Lydia Whiteside was born in Ontario, Canada on November 3, 1884 an Ontario woman and an Irish immigrant father. Lydia and her family, which consisted of six other siblings, moved to Duluth, Minnesota and soon after started to take an interest in the lumber trade. The lumber trade was very successful for the Whiteside family and they soon amassed a fortune. In 1908, she moved to Minneapolis and became a student nurse at the Asbury Methodist Hospital

After the US entered the war, Lydia volunteered for the Army Nurse Corps and was assigned to Base Hospital 26. Base Hospital 26 was formed in the Twin Cities area and was staffed by people from the Metro and Rochester areas. One of the biggest contributors to the base hospital was the Mayo Brothers, founders of Mayo Clinic. Lydia was sent to Fort McPherson, Georgia on December 28, 1917. The unit was shipped to France on June 4, 1918 aboard the ship the SS Baltic. After arriving in France, the final destination of the field hospital was Allerey in the area of Saone et Loire in eastern France. In July 1918, they received around 1,000 casualties in just one day. Lydia became a surgical nurse and was also assigned to a mobile unit that was sent closer to the front lines.

After serving in France for some time, she contracted the Spanish flu at the field hospital. She survived the flu, but could not survive the bacterial pneumonia that soon set in. She passed away in the field hospital she served in on October 21, 1918. Lydia became the only female casualty that lived in Duluth Minnesota. She was buried in France near the area where Base Hospital 26 was located. There was a service held for her at her initial burial and her casket was covered with daises and draped with an American flag. Lydia's body was exhumed on November 1921 and sent home. On December 20, 1921 she was finely laid to rest in American soil. She was buried with full military honors that included an honor guard of women from the American legion post that was named in her honor, a firing squad, and a bugler playing taps. She is buried on Victory Memorial Drive.

