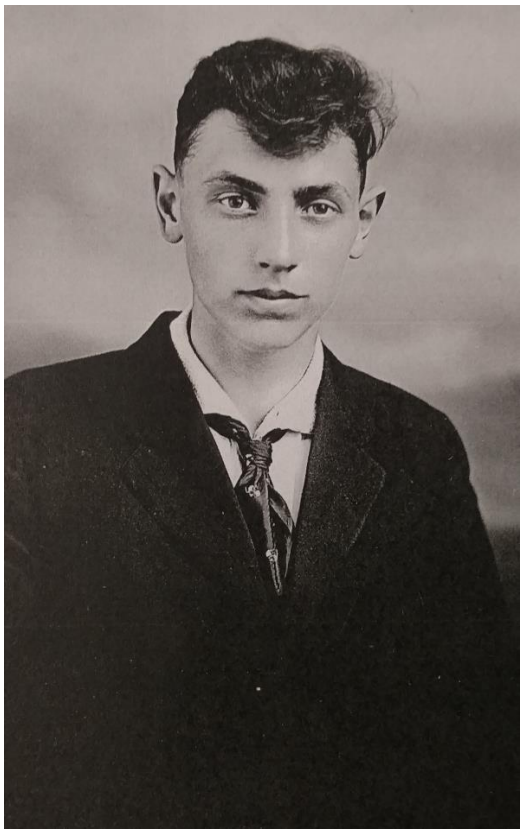
Earl McKinley Bratt

Earl Bratt was born in Illinois on 4 July 1899, the only son of Alexander & Mary Bratt. They also had three daughters: Ellen, Hulda and Nellie. Earl attended Lincoln Elementary School in South Park (South St. Paul). His father Alexander died of a heart attack at age 42, while working at Swift & Company, on 16 February 1916. Earl was then 16 years old. Before entering the service, Earl worked the scales at Swift & Company from 1915 to 1917.

Family member Laura North wrote, “Earl had enlisted in the Navy so that he could help with the ‘war to end all wars’ and to make a better world for his mother and sisters, and to help support them. Great Aunt Nell lived to be 101 years old; she died in 2004. The loss of her brother a year after their father died was something Nell never quite got over, but she always said a prayer to God thanking Him that her brother never had to see the horrors of war. It changed the family in many ways that I have posted about before. Mary and the girls moved from South St. Paul to 224 Pleasant Ave. in St. Paul.”

Earl died 18 December 1917 of pneumonia at Great Lakes Naval Hospital, just 18 years old. He was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in South St. Paul, escorted by Marines from the Dunwoody Training Station at Minneapolis. The Parents' League (about 30 women) attended the funeral.

Note: The family of Earl Bratt donated a number of letters, photos and memorabilia to the Minnesota Historical Society. Included in Earl’s WWI military service questionnaire is the last letter he wrote home to his mother on Thanksgiving Day, 1917.

Some information provided by Laura North.