Ralph Brownson Jr

Ralph Brownson Jr was born October 25, 1887 in St Paul Minnesota to Ralph Brownson Sr (1850-1937) and Theresa (Teresse) Minerva Fox (1852-1893). Both parents were born in New York. Ralph Senior owned a successful manufacturing business in Hastings Minnesota and was famous for his many inventions. His father was a shoe maker and this is where Ralph Senior learned to work with leather. Orphaned at age fifteen when most of his family died of Typhoid Fever he learned quickly to survive on his own. He built his factory in Hastings in 1915. They produced the special version of the horse harness that he had invented. Rumor has it that he made a lot of money during the War when he secured a contract with the United States Government to make harnesses. He was married four times. Ralph's mother was his second wife. She died when Ralph was just seven. He was raised by his father's new wife, Margaret Kane.

Ralph Junior attended school in Hastings and one year of military training at the University of Minnesota which started because of WWI. He registered for the draft on June 5, 1917 in Hastings. He was 29, single and working at his father's factory. He enlisted on September 21, 1917 in the Army. He was assigned to the 163rd Depot Brigade, Company C, 7th Division. He reported the same day and trained as an officer at Camp Cody, New Mexico. He served just under 15 months but did not go to France. The following is a list of his promotions:

Corporal November 22, 1917

Battalion Sergeant Major March 7, 1918

Sergeant June 5, 1918

Second Lieutenant Infantry August 26, 1918

When the rest of his company returned home, Ralph received a special order on September 5, 1918 to report to the Development Battalion. He was discharged on December 14, 1918 from Camp Dodge Iowa. He received a tuition bonus in the amount of $225 and a bonus of $222.

He returned to Hastings and worked and lived with his father until he was married on June 3, 1922 to May Irene Wilde, his first cousin. She was the daughter of a Duluth Minnesota Railroad Family, her father owned part of the Iron Range Railway. They had a daughter Louisa May who died at birth in 1934. They adopted a daughter born in Illinois, Susan Brownson Bower. Ralph and his wife had a strong connection to the Episcopal Church in Hastings, where they both served in several leadership roles. In 1932, his father died and passed the business on to his two sons, Ralph Jr and Percy to manage. They continued to operate the company after his death until 1954 when they sold the business to the Smead Manufacturing Company. After the sale of the business the couple moved to Tucson Arizona to be near their adopted daughter. Ralph died there on July 3, 1971. He is buried at St Philips in the Hills Church Cemetery in Tucson.