

Otis James Fleming

BIRTH 5 Feb 1899

Lexington, McLean County, Illinois, USA

DEATH 2 Apr 1975 (aged 76)

BURIAL Floral Hill Cemetery

Lovejoy Township, Iroquois County, Illinois, USA

MEMORIAL ID 15185665



Photo added by RWCNAC

Biography compiled by:

Richard S. Clark

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James "Otis" Fleming Jr. enlisted on 7 June 1916, serving as a Private in the 14th US Cavalry, machine gun troop, and spent his first 15 months guarding the US border at Camp Del Rio, during the Mexican Revolution. He was given a short furlough in August 1917, and returned to Bloomington to visit. It was the last time he saw his father, as he passed away 6 weeks later, with his mother expecting their 4th child. On 2 April 1918, a week after his brother William was born, Otis set sail from the Port of New York aboard the "RMS Aquitania", as a member of the 30th Infantry machine gun company, on their way to fight in Germany. By October 1918, he was listed in the "US Roll of Honor", published nationwide, for having been "slightly wounded". He was reportedly wounded again on 11 November 1918, the last day of the war, then laid on the battlefield for 2 days before receiving assistance. He spent 3 months in the hospital, then was sent to Poland as part of a relief effort. The 1920 US census listed Private Fleming as a member of the Provost Guard Battalion, Army Service Corps, stationed in Coblenz (spelling changed to Koblenz in 1926). On 31 July 1920, Otis boarded the "USAT Pocohantas" at Antwerp, Belgium, and arrived at Hoboken, New Jersey on 12 August 1920 (the Pocohantas had been the German ship "Prinzess Irene" before it's capture). A few days later, he was given a furlough at Fort Slocum, New York, and returned to Bloomington to visit family for a short time. He reportedly had been decorated for bravery by the US, British, and French governments during the war.

Otis and his troop were then dispatched to Tientsin, China to protect American assets during the Japanese invasion of China. They remained there until 1922, when they were moved to Hawaii via the Phillipines. In 1924, he was transferred to California for 3 years, where he was a member of an army patrol fighting forest fires. He spent the following 2 years stationed in Texas.

The Sunday 27 October 1929 edition of "The Pantagraph" (Bloomington IL, pg. 25) announced that Otis had received a discharge from the United States Army on 21 September 1929, after 13 years of service. He may have intended to "settle down" and soon married "Sarah N.". However, the 1930 US census listed Corporal Otis J. Fleming, age 31 (and married at age 31), at Camp McCoy, Angelo, Wisconsin. In July of 1932, he was awarded the Purple Heart by Major General Frank Parker, during a military tournament and exposition at Soldiers' Field, Chicago, the proceeds of which were donated to charity. A month later, Otis was charged with desertion by his wife Sarah, who was granted a divorce at Gibson City, Illinois.

The 1940 census recorded that Corporal "James O. Fleming", was a member of Troop A, 14th Cavalry, US Army, and had been stationed at Fort Sheridan, IL since at least 1935. It also indicated he was married. Otis married Mrs. Grace Marie Burrell (nee Whitcomb, twice divorced then widowed) on 31 July 1937 in neighboring Lake county, Indiana. The 1941 obituary of Claus Hansen, his step-father, listed Otis as residing in Kansas. His WWII draft registration of 21 December 1944 gave his residence as Patagonia, Arizona, with his wife, Grace M., at the same address. Arizona newspapers show that Otis was a government customs agent at the Mexican boarder, and was the cub scout master of the Tubac, Arizona school. On 21 April 1954, Otis received a telephone call from the US consul at Guadalajara, Mexico, informing him that his wife had died there that morning of a heart attack, while visiting her granddaughter, Mrs. Barbara Seif de Martinez. Their address at that time was listed as Ft. Huachuaca, Arizona. Her remains were buried in Guadalajara, with the notation that her body could not be exhumed for 5 years, and then only with special local and federal permits from Mexico.

Following the death of his wife, Otis returned to Illinois. His twice-widowed mother and siblings had been living in Vermilion county no later than 1931 (death of sister Ruth Hansen, age 5, in Danville). Records of the Pape Family Funeral Home in Danville list that Otis married Meda Louise Moore in 1955; she also had a number of previous marriages. Otis was survived by his sister, Mrs. Catherine M. (Fleming) Correll of Danville, brothers Charles Benjamin Fleming and Clarence Samuel Hansen, of Ohio and Indiana, respectively. He

was preceded in death by his parents, his second and third wives, brother William Barber Fleming, and sister Ruth E. Hansen.

Family Members

Parents



James William Fleming
1880–1917



Ruth Juliette *Barber* Hansen
1880–1962

Spouse



Meda Louise *Moore* Fleming
1900–1967 (m. 1955)

Siblings



Catherine M. *Fleming* Correll
1915–1969



William Barber Fleming
1918–1927



Ruth E. Hansen
1926–1931

Half Siblings



Clarence Samuel Hansen
1923–1991

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