

U.S. Army Corporal Fred James Grant

Born: January 14, 1896 in Ogden, Utah

Son of: Frank Edward Grant and Margaret Thompson

Died – November 10, 1918 – Killed in action at Dun-sur-Meuse, France.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars honored his service by naming the VFW Post 1481 in Ogden after CPL Fred J. Grant, when it was mustered in December 28, 1926. A tree is planted in his honor along the Gold Star Driveway at Ogden City Cemetery along with trees to honor other Weber County men “who gave their lives in the cause of humanity in World War I.” He is buried in the family plot at Autorest on 36th Street in Ogden.

Fred Grant attended public schools in Ogden and graduated from West High School in Salt Lake City, where he was prominent in athletics. He entered Utah State Agricultural College along with nearly the whole West High School football team. For the next four years the Aggies made life miserable for the University of Utah. Fred’s younger brothers and sisters were really proud to watch their older brother play on the victorious Aggie team. Fred Grant also attended the University of Utah. He was listed on the Honor Rolls of both schools.

Fred Grant graduated from college just as World War I started. He enlisted May 11, 1917, at Ft. Douglas in the Second Engineers, sailing for France September 16, 1917. The 2nd Engineers along with the 2nd and 3rd Marines spearheaded many of the American Forces movements throughout the war. He was in the Aisne offensive, the Aisne Marne offensive, St. Mihiel, Argonne Chateau Thierry and Marbach offensive. After CPL Grant left for the war his parents moved to Ruth, Nevada.

On November 10, 1918, on a voluntary special assignment CPL Fred J. Grant died a hero’s death just twelve hours before the Armistice was signed ending the war. Grant had on four previous occasions volunteered for special assignments taking up rifles and acting as infantry. It was on this fifth voluntary assignment he was killed. A friend of CPL Grant’s, named George Baugh, wrote the Grant family: “The night of the tenth of November was a bad night for us. We put a floating bridge over the Meuse River under heavy shell and machine gun fire. The Marines crossed and took a big hill. It was there that Fred Grant was killed. He was a Utah boy and a good friend of mine. I worked for his father on the O.L.&I. He was killed at twelve o’clock at midnight.” George Baugh then moved on to Berlin.

In the final months of the war, the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) was succeeding in driving the German army East beyond the Meuse River on a wide front from Sedan North to Verdun South. Many units on both sides had received rumors of the impending armistice and had ceased fire. Some advanced units in the front lines had not received the news. Apparently CPL Grant’s Engineer Corps had not heard the rumors and proceeded to hasten the American assault eastward by building a pontoon bridge across the Meuse. It was in this region, near the town of Dun-sur-Meuse where it is believed he was killed. Today a new bridge has been built with a plaque that reads “The veterans of the Fifth Division of AEF have erected this railing to commemorate the crossing of the Meuse and the establishment of a bridgehead on its eastern bank by their division during the war.” On the eastern shore of the Meuse is a statue of a charging AEF infantryman and a commemoration. The town of Dun-sur-Meuse has become a lovely modern French town whose beautiful decorations show movingly how well its people remembered American soldiers and their sacrifice.

The Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. The local newspaper reported “Word that Fred Grant, formerly of Ogden, has been killed in action has just been received by his father Frank E. Grant, superintendent of the Nevada Consolidated Copper Company at Ruth, Nevada. The young man was killed in battle in France on November 10, 1918. He was 22 years old.” He is believed to be the last soldier from Ogden killed in combat in WWI, and perhaps one of the last American soldiers killed. He was the first killed in action to be returned to Ogden for burial.

Fred Grant was first buried in an American military cemetery in France. In March 1921, his body was shipped to the U.S. It wasn’t until April 1921 that CPL Grant’s body arrived home in Ogden to be buried in a family plot in Mountain View Cemetery (now Leavitt’s Autorest) on 36th Street in Ogden.

At Corporal Grant’s funeral, then Utah Governor Mabey delivering the eulogy said “the deeds of Corporal Grant upheld the best traditions of the United States and that he, with other Americans had won glory that had never been surpassed by valorous deeds of other days.” Said the Governor, “I have come to the services, a humble representative of the State of Utah, to pay respects to as brave a man as ever donned a uniform in the world.” According to Governor Maybe, “CPL Grant, with the Second Engineers, had to build a pontoon bridge across a river. The bridge was completed and Corporal Grant on the side of the river opposite the American troops was holding the last pontoon in place. The bridge parted in the middle. Separated from his companions by a wide expanse of water, Corporal Grant stayed at his post, held his pontoon in place, and through his bravery facilitated repair of the bridge.” The Governor said that Grant must have felt fear and anxiety as stood alone, waiting for the repairing of the bridge. “I respect his fear, he was normal and fear is a normal emotion. CPL Grant’s glory lies in the fact that his strength of mind forces his unwilling flesh to do his bidding.”

