

# A Proper Marker for a WWI Veteran

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I never meet my Great Uncle Bruce but I have discovered a few things about him. There are, unfortunately, some large gaps in my research. These are some of the things I know and have proven and some of the things that were told to me that I haven't been able to substantiate or prove. (Unfortunately, I do not have the original of the family photo or the photo of Bruce in uniform. They are copies and probably copies of copies but they are the best I have. The other photos were taken by me.)



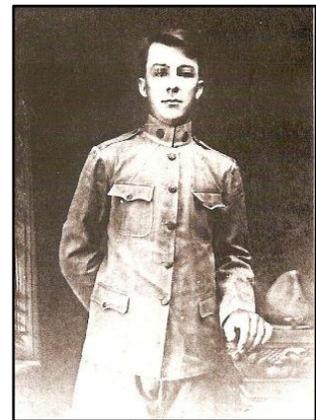
Bruce Albert Chance was born in Brownsville, Linn County, Oregon on 30 Oct 1893. I cannot 'prove' this but believe this date and place to be accurate. He was the youngest of four boys born to Edward Henry Chance and Martha Jane Carson. I knew and remember "Grandma MJ" as she was called but never asked her any genealogical questions (oh, to go back in time!). The four boys were (tallest to shortest in photo) Percy Eldon (my grandfather), Lester Carl (my "Uncle Carl"), Eddie Franklin (who I only meet a few times) and Bruce Albert. Percy was born in Russiaville, Indiana<sup>1</sup> and the other three boys were born in Brownsville, Oregon.

The family is recorded in the 1900 U. S. Census<sup>2</sup> in Tulare County, California and again in the 1910 U. S. Census<sup>3</sup> but in a different township in Tulare County. In the 1920 Census,<sup>4</sup> Bruce was recorded in Kern County, California and his occupation is listed as being a truck driver for the county. I have failed to locate him in the 1930 census.

Bruce served in the U. S. Army from 3 Jul 1916 to 10 Dec 1919 during World War I. I have a certified document (see footnote<sup>5</sup>) from the National Archives giving his service dates and service number.

About October 1948, Bruce started working on the Panama Canal and retired from there in January 1956. The local *Panama Canal Review* newspaper says that he was employed for a total of 7 years, 4 months, 24 days and retired to Auburn, California.<sup>6</sup>

My records show he was married four times but I can only document the last of these. If he did marry any of the others it must



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<sup>1</sup> Birth Record (Abstract) for Perry Eldo CHANCE (Percy Eldon CHANCE); Book H-2, Page 12, No. 15. Howard County Health Department, Kokomo, Indiana. (Certified copy in possession of Jay C. Wood, Fillmore, California.)

<sup>2</sup> 1900 Federal Census (population); California, Tulare Co., E.D. 62, Sheet 7B. National Archives Microfilm Publication T623, roll 115.

<sup>3</sup> 1910 Federal Census (population); California, Tulare Co., E.D. 190, Sheet 3B. National Archives Microfilm Publication T624, roll 110, n. 34b.

<sup>4</sup> 1920 Federal Census (Population); California, Kern Co., E.D. 112, Sheet 20A. National Archives Microfilm Publication T625, roll 100, n. 159.

<sup>5</sup> Military Record, "Certification of Military Service" National Archives Form 13038 dtd 21 May 2012 for Bruce A. Chance. (Certified copy in possession of Jay C. Wood, Fillmore, California.)

<sup>6</sup> "Retirements," *Panama Canal Review* (Balboa Heights, Canal Zone), 3 Feb 1956, page 15.

have been after the 1920 census. I have only first names for three of his possible wives: Dell, Leona and Betty. Again, I have found nothing to prove or disprove any marriage to any of these three. His will states, "I have no living issue."<sup>7</sup> (That's legalese for having no living children.)

His final marriage was to Edith Nettie Leonard (she was Edith Downing when they were married).<sup>8</sup> They married when Bruce was 81 on 16 June 1975 probably in Tulare or Dinuba, California. She was 78 when they married and a widow with two grown sons.

Bruce died in Fresno, California on 13 Apr 1981 and is buried in the Smith Mountain



Cemetery in Dinuba, California.<sup>9</sup> Edith died on 28 Feb 1982<sup>10</sup> and is also buried in Smith Mountain Cemetery. They are both listed as being buried in Block "C" Row "D" Grave 21. The grave site was marked with a strip of cement with their names stamped into it. (Note: This is the only



cemetery I know that provides a marker for each and every person buried there—nice touch.)

Bruce's will was probated on 4 May 1981 in Tulare County, California.<sup>11</sup> Basically, he put everything that was his alone into a trust fund for Edith. She received the income from this trust fund until she died.

After Edith's death, Bruce's estate of about \$52,500 was divided and distributed to eight of his living nieces and nephews. Of these I know that six are my consanguineous<sup>12</sup> cousins through Bruce's brothers Carl and Edward. There are two people listed in the distribution papers as nieces that I have no knowledge of or about.

I was among Bruce's living relatives at the time of his death, being his brother Percy's grandson, but was not included in Bruce's will or the division of his estate. Not being included really doesn't bother me all that much. But I am the one that located his burial site. I obtained and provided proof of his military service. I arranged for a Veterans Administration grave marker. I paid the cemetery's fee to set the marker.

My Great Uncle Bruce was a WWI Veteran and deserves more than just having his name stamped in cement! Now he has "A Proper Marker for a WWI Veteran."



<sup>7</sup> Probate Record for Bruce A. Chance; File No. 27828. Tulare County Superior Court, Visalia, California.

<sup>8</sup> "California, Marriage Index, 1960-1985," index,

Family Search <https://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.1.1/V6JR-XXF> accessed 24 Aug 2012), Bruce A Chance and Edith N Downing, 1975.

<sup>9</sup> Death Certificate for Bruce Allen Chance; 9 Apr 1981. California Department of Health Services, Sacramento, California.

<sup>10</sup> "California, Death Index, 1940-1997," index,

Family Search <https://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.1.1/VGTY-XYN> accessed 24 Aug 2012), Edith Nettie Chance, 1982; citing California Department of Health Services, Vital Statistics Section, Sacramento, California.

<sup>11</sup> Probate Record for Bruce A. Chance; File No. 27828. Tulare County Superior Court, Visalia, California.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consanguineous> : of the same blood or origin; *specifically*: descended from the same ancestor.