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The Family of Francis Marion Shaw Newsletter

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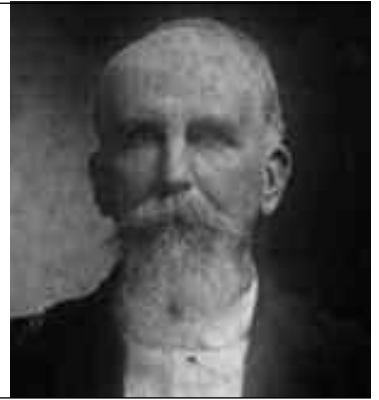
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THE FAMILY OF FRANCIS MARION SHAW AND RACHEL MOORE ALLEN



T H E G R A N D C H I L D R E N

ROSSIE O. KNIGHT *Soldier of Misfortune*

There is a certain conflict of emotions when a young man feels it is his

patriotic duty to serve his country. At the same time, he knows that the decision could affect him the rest of his life. Circumstances most often beyond his control are the deciding factors. In the case of Rossie O. Knight, such factors did create his life's great misfortune.

Rossie Knight was the seventh child of eleven born to Sovin and Eliza Allen Knight. He was born August 28, 1892, at the family farm on the bank of Cat Creek in Berrien County, Ga. He most likely received his early education at the Indian Camp two room school.

In 1909, disaster struck the Knight home when a fire broke out while the family was attending a funeral. An account in the January 6, 1909 issue of the Valdosta Times detailed the events surrounding the tragedy:



RAYS MILL HOME
BURNED
RESIDENCE OF
S. J. KNIGHT
CONSUMED WHILE
HE WAS AT FUNERAL

Milltown, Ga., Jan. 6.
— Tuesday morning while Mr. S.J. Knight and family of the Rays Mill district were at the burial of Mrs. Geo. W. Knight, his home and smokehouse burned down. One of the two sons, who did not go to the burial, was at work in a back field and saw the flames coming from the direction of his home. He was quickly on the scene and with

the assistance of the neighbors, who joined him, and succeeded in saving a portion of the furniture, and most of the meat from the smokehouse. It is not known what started the fire, unless it was rats, as the fire seemed to have started in the upper part of the house. It is not known whether Mr. Knight carried any insurance.

Sovin may have had insurance as he continued to farm and was able to sell the house and farm to Dr. Pleasant Askew for a nice sum of money in 1910. He then pur-

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The Family of Francis Marion Shaw is a non-profit newsletter published semi-annually, or more frequently, for the benefit of the descendants of Francis Marion Shaw and his wife, Rachel Moore Allen Shaw.

Historical contributions are requested. Your family histories including character traits, religious affiliations, professional pursuits and vital information such as birth dates and places, marriage dates and places, and death dates and places, are all welcome. Photographs help make the newsletter come alive. If you have some special photos of your ancestors which you would like to share with all of the family, please make a copy print of it and send it on to the address below. If original photos are sent, they will be carefully handled and returned, but editor cannot be responsible for loss or damage. Send your manuscripts and photo submissions to:
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Nashville, GA 31639
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Bryan Lee Shaw, Editor



Nixon Nitration Works,
New Brunswick,
New Jersey.,
March 28th. 1917.

Mr. T. L. Knight.

Dear Brother. I will write you a few lines to let you know that I am still living and to find out how you are getting along I am getting along fine expecting to have to go to war every day I am expecting to be called back to the army.

Congress will meet the second of April which is next Monday and I think that war will be declared and if it is I will be called back to the service if I am called back I am going home for a few days before I go back to the army, so you need not be surprised to see me coming to your house in a few days. I will only have a few days there but that will be better than not going at all.

say do you remember how we used to scrapp. I often laugh about it that was the happiest day after all was it when we would get off Saturday at noon and all day Sunday off that is the best life after all back on the farm for mine after this year. I have been working here seven months and I haven't lost a day not one and I have worked seven days a week no Sundays off. I am allowed one day a month off and that is all I get, and I get that off with pay that is why I say I haven't lost a day.

and I have just been making a good living and that is all if a man is making a living any where these days he is doing fine I think but I am getting in a position now that I think I can save a little money if I stay here.

if I am called back to the army and don't have a chance to go home I will let you hear from me.

Give my best regards to all the people I know.
Respectfully.

Rossie O. Knight

This 1917 letter from Rossie O. Knight to his brother, Thomas Leland Knight, reveals a young man resigned to the fact he was going to be called up to war. He also expressed his hope that his job at the Nixon Nitration Works would help him save some money.

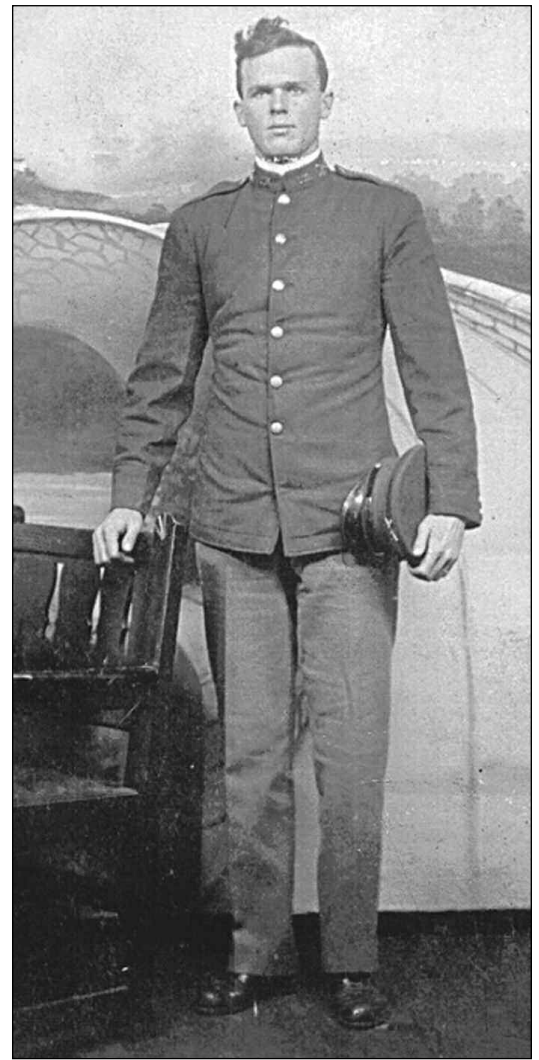
Young tousled-hair Rossie, seems almost too innocent to be going off to war, but shortly after the above right photo was taken, he found himself on a troop ship sailing for France and his life-altering fate.

chased a farm in the Barney Community of Brooks County.

Just 26 days after Sovin moved his family to Brooks County, on April 16, 1911, Sovin suffered a severe heart attack and died at the age of 52. Eliza took the two youngest children and moved in with her parents, Marion and Rachel Shaw in the Lois community near Ray City. Evidently Rossie stayed on at the Knight home in Barney, along with his brothers, Mansfield and Leland.

However, the farm was not successful enough to support the two families of Mansfield and Leland, let alone Rossie too. On August 31, 1913, Rossie enlisted in the army at Fort Slocum, New York, just two days after his 21st birthday.

After training at Fort Slocum, Rossie O. Knight was assigned to Fort Hancock, NJ for duty with the Coast Artillery Corp,



Third Company. Fort Hancock, situated on the island of Sandy Hook, was a coastal artillery base defending the Atlantic coast and the entrance to New York Harbor. Fort Hancock was operated in conjunction with the US Army's Sandy Hook Proving Ground, where newly manufactured artillery was tested.

It was in 1914, when Rossie was stationed at Fort Hancock, that hostilities broke out in Europe. Americans were largely ambivalent about the war in Europe. But on May 7, 1915 a German submarine torpedoed and sunk the RMS Lusitania in route from New York to Liverpool, causing the death of 1,198 passengers and crew. America began to prepare for war.

Rossie O. Knight took a job at the Nixon Nitration Works in September, 1916 although his service record does not indicate any break in his enlistment. It appears that the U.S. Army was helping out with the labor shortage by placing soldiers on reserve status so they could be employed at the Nixon plant.

In a letter he typed March 28, 1917 to his brother Leland, Rossie states, "I am getting

along fine expecting to haft to go to war every day. I am expecting to be called back to the army."

He was correct in his predictions. On April 6, 1917, the United States Congress formally declared war on Germany and its allies. By August 7, 1917 he was serving overseas with the U.S. First Division .

From August 22 to October 18, 1917 the 1st Division Ammunition Train and Rossie Knight were attached to the Scottish 15th Division at Le Valdahon, France. An Ammunition Train consisted normally of four wagon companies and four truck companies. This very important unit carried rifle ammunition to the Infantry, and shells to the Artillery. Usually, the moving of ammunition is accomplished under cover of darkness, but in the big offensives the ammunition trucks are kept going day and night.

Rossie's service records show he participated in four major 1918 offensives of World War I: Montdidier-Noyon, Aïnse-Marne, Saint Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne.

Sergeant Knight and the U.S. 1st Division were assigned to the Montdidier-Noyon sector when the Germans made an offensive there on June 9-13, 1918.

The battle was opened by an intense German artillery bombardment, with an extensive use of gas, both chlorine and mustard. The Germans attempted to neutralize the Allied artillery batteries by firing on them with phosgene and mustard gas. Along the roads shrapnel was used and the front positions were shelled with gas and high explosives. The assault continued during the next five days. Though the U.S. 1st Division was not directly engaged, it was subjected to continuous heavy shell fire, with gas attacks and many raids, though successfully repulsed.

For Rossie Knight personally, the Montdidier-Noyon Offensive was up and down. He started out the battle as a Sergeant, but on June 11, 1918 he was busted down to the rank of Private for some unknown infraction.

By the end of June, Rossie O. Knight had at least regained his status as PFC. He continued to serve with the 1st Division Ammunition Train, keeping the front lines supplied with ammunition through the Allied counter-offensive known as the Aisne-Marne Campaign.

On September 12, 1918, the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) launched its first major WWI offensive operation as an independent army.

(Surname)	* Knight, Rossie O		208,709	white
(Christian name)			(Army serial number)	(Race: White or colored)
Residence:	Barney	Georgia		
(Street and house number)	(Town or city)	(County)	(State)	
* Enlisted in	SA at Ft Slocum NY	Aug 31/15		
† Born in	Washville Ga	22 yrs		
Organizations:	OAC 3 Co Ft Masebrook NJ to June 11/17; 3 Co Ft Masebrook to July 20/17; 5 Mtr Trk Co 1 Div to Sept 21/17; 3 Co 1 Div Am Tr Co Aug 6/19; 3 Co B 7 Mtr Bn to discom pvt 1st Mon 20/18; Sgt Mon 20/18; pvt June 11/18;			
Grades:	pvt 1st July 1/18; corp Aug 1/18; Sgt Sept 1/19			
Engagements:				
Wounds or other injuries received in action:	None.			
† Served overseas:	Aug 7/17 to discom in Germany			
‡ Hon. disch.	Oct 20/19 to reenlist			
Was reported	U per cent disabled on date of discharge, in view of occupation.			
Remarks:				
Form No. 724-214, A. G. O. *Insert "E. A.", "N. G.", "E. R. U.", "N. A." as case may be, followed by place and date of enlistment. † Give place of birth and date of birth, or age at enlistment. ‡ Give dates of departure from and arrival in the United States. § Give date and cause.				



The attack began with the advance of Allied tanks across the trenches at Saint Mihiel, followed closely by the American infantry troops. Foul weather plagued the offensive as much as the enemy troops, as the trenches filled with water and the fields turned to mud, bogging down the tanks.

The ammunition convoys to which Rossie, now a corporal, was assigned worked around the clock for 80 hours to keep the advancing American troops supplied. By September 16, 1918, Saint Mihiel and the surrounding area were free of German occupation.

The German troops stubbornly held on in the Argonne Forest for another month before beginning their final retreat. With arriving fresh U.S. reinforcements, the Allies had time to advance some 32 kilometers before the general armistice was announced on November 11, bringing the First World War to a close.

Though being bombarded with gas and chemical weapons, and suffering emotional trauma and respiratory ailments, Sergeant Knight's service record, above, at discharge indicated that he had no "wounds or other injuries."

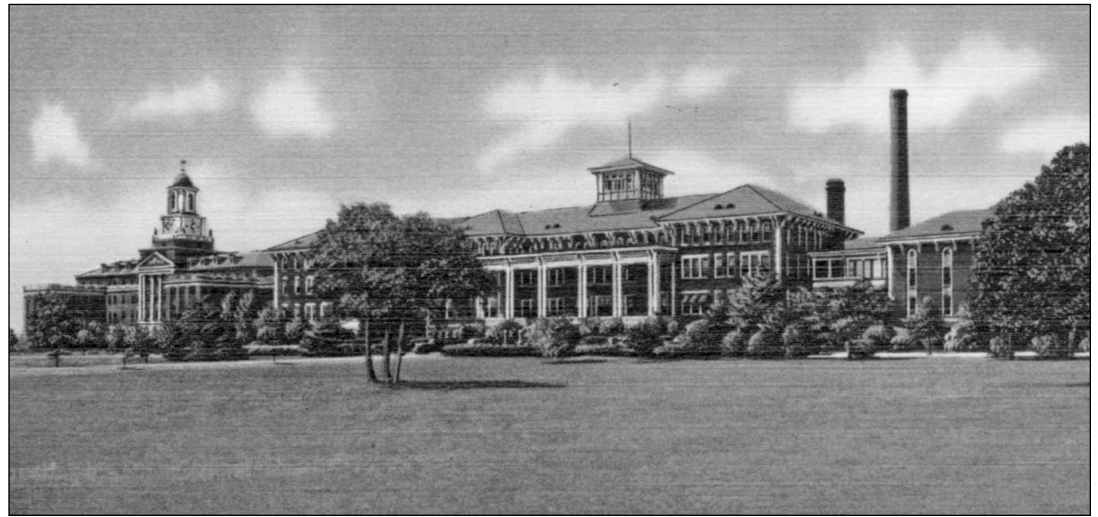
WWI material and armament transport was in the transition between horse or mule power to engine power. But both found mud to be a challenging conditions for man, beast, and machine.



WW1 Victory Medal of the type awarded to Rossie O. Knight. The five clasps signify his battle involvements.



Rossie Knight, above, during one of his home retreats from his life-long stay as a patient at the U.S. Veterans Hospital, above right, in Augusta, Georgia. The anxious pose here is in stark contrast to the self-confident pose he struck as a young soldier going off to war.



After the Armistice was declared on November 11, 1918, Knight served in Germany as part of the Army of Occupation. On August 6, 1919 he was transferred from the 1st Division Ammunition Train to Company B, 7th Machine Gun Battalion, and on September 17, 1919 he finally got his sergeant's stripes back.

He must have felt that the military was his future, as he reenlisted on October 23, 1919. For the next 18 months, Sergeant Knight was stationed with his company at Ehrenbreitstein Fortress, Koblenz, Germany. On February 14, 1921, the 7th Machine Gun Battalion ceased to exist pursuant to War Department orders.

Sometime between 1920 and 1930, Rossie Knight entered the U. S. Veterans Hospital in Augusta, Georgia. According to extended family members, he was suffering from the affects of war-time trauma from being gassed repeatedly.

The 1930 and 1940 U.S. Census records list him as an "inmate", which may have been the official yet insensitive term referring to a patient at the hospital. He was able to occasionally visit his family in South Georgia, so was not restricted in that sense of the word.

However, he was always on edge and the least bit of disturbance or noise would make him anxious and would have to leave the room. This condition persisted throughout the remainder of his life.

One curiosity in both the 1930 and the 1940 Census, Rossie is listed as being married. The extended family has no knowledge of him ever being married. However, according to his niece, Carolyn Swindle Monroe, she recalls that a lady from New York occasionally would come down to visit him at the Veterans Hospital.

Rossie remained a patient at the hospital for the rest of his life. He died there on

November 16, 1963. He is buried in the Pleasant Cemetery, at New Lois, Georgia. He is honored with a military marker.

Rossie O. Knight lived in a time of adverse circumstances. His home burned down as a young child, lost his father at the age of 19, joined the military during hard economic times and was greeted with a world war. He was exposed to the most horrific tools of warfare known at that time, and suffered the affects of it the rest of his life. But all of that being said, he was a soldier like so many other soldiers before and since—a soldier of misfortune. —BLS

Editor's Note: Many of the excerpts pertaining to Rossie O. Knight's military activity comes from Jon Sizemore's Ray City blog: raycityhistory.wordpress.com

22nd Annual Shaw-Allen Reunion Sunday, September 20, 2015 Nashville Community Center

**CELEBRATING THE FAMILY OF
CLYDE C. AND GOLIE GASKINS SHAW**

Plan now to attend the 22nd Annual Shaw-Allen Reunion starting a 10:00 a.m. A video presentation on the life of Clyde Chester Shaw and live musical selections by Clyde Thomas Shaw, Jr. will highlight the program starting at 11:00. Then followed by the One-Arm Corn Husking Contest for the youngsters. And of course, we finish with the pot luck covered dish luncheon. Come early, stay late.

