

Thomas Lyle Russell



Thomas Lyle Russell was born 27 March 1895 in Minneapolis, Minnesota to Abraham T. "Tom" Russell, a native of England, and Eleanor Ruth Mentz Lyle, who was born in Ohio. They lived in Minneapolis and St. Paul. At around age 10, due to the illness of his mother and his parents' eventual divorce, Russell was sent to live with cousins Agnes, Stella and Elizabeth Teleford of Hastings. He was a 1913 graduate of the Hastings High School and attended Carleton College for one year. He then attended Mankato Business College.

By June 1917 when he registered for the draft, Russell was working as an assistant bank cashier at the Reservation State Bank in Makoti, North Dakota. He enrolled in the second officers' training camp at Fort Snelling on 5 August 1917, and was commissioned a 1st Lieutenant and called into active service on 27 November 1917, initially assigned to the 338th Infantry Division.

He married Elsie Featherstone at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Featherstone, in Hastings on June 10, 1918.

Russell went through training at Camp Custer, Michigan, before shipping overseas on 4 July 1918. Russell served in Europe from July 22, 1918 to October 4, 1918. On 8 September he was reassigned to the 47th Infantry Division. He was involved in the fighting at St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne, where he was killed in action on 4 October 1918 at Bois de Briulles. William



T. Teachout, 1st Lieutenant of the 47th Infantry, Company L, wrote in January 1919 to Russell's widow to explain that on October 4, the allied line in France advanced to the woods called the Bois de Septsarges. The enemy offered very strong machine gun resistance and artillery fire. Later, the line was pushed forward to a distance of about a thousand yards from the edge of the woods near an old German shack that had been damaged by previous shell fire. Here, the line was halted to await the morning's light.

1st Lieutenant Russell and the Company First Sergeant were in the shack to plan the next day's work and fell asleep on some cots located there. About midnight, the artillery fire became heavier, increasing to a barrage at about 4 AM. One of the shells hit the shack, demolishing it and instantly killing Russell and the First Sergeant. Russell's remains were later reinterred to Plot F Row 3 Grave 29, in Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery in France.

The first VFW Post in Hastings was organized on June 1924, with the name selection of the Lyle Russell VFW Post 1210. It was officially chartered in 1929.

The widowed Elsie Featherstone Russell became a schoolteacher. She remarried Charles Franklin Ortt and lived in Indiana, where she died in 1965.