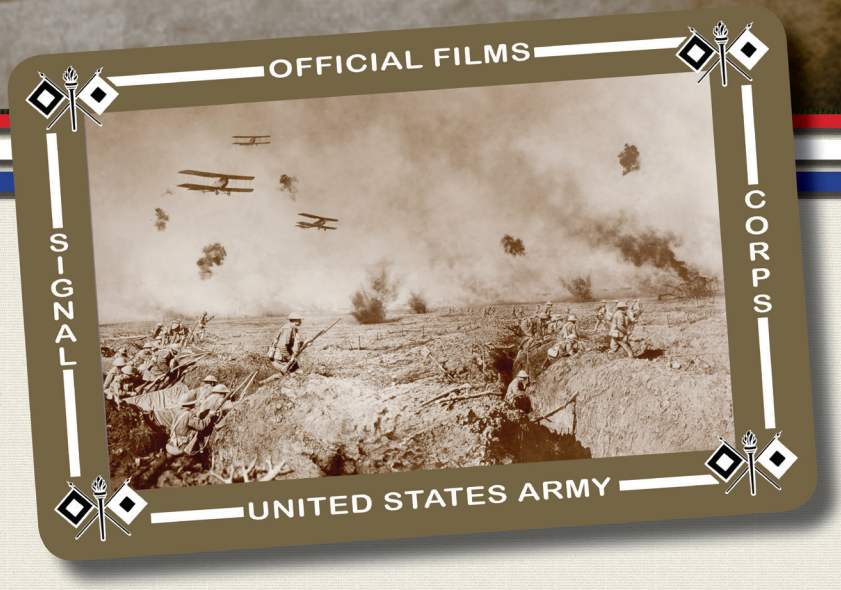
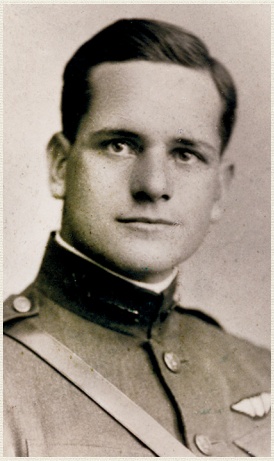
Honoring the Centenary of a Fallen Hero at Sharlot Hall Museum WWI Exhibit

Arizona and the GREAT WAR



The "war to end all wars" had been raging in Europe for years before the Yanks entered the fracas. Much has been written about the "Great War," but its local impact on Prescott has a quiet reminder with the airport field that bears the name of a local hero, **Ernest A. Love**.



1st Lt. Ernest A. Love

The hometown boy, football star and all-around local favorite had been raised in Prescott after he and his parents had moved here from New Mexico when Ernest was only three years old. After graduating from Prescott High School in 1914, Ernest was attending Stanford University and studying mechanical engineering when the U.S. entered the war in April 1917. Dropping out at the end of his junior year, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and entered officers' training in San Francisco.

Love successfully applied for pilot training in the Army's Signal Corps, attended ground school in Berkeley and flight training in San Diego. "It is not the least bit scary," Love wrote to his parents about the new-fangled powered flight. "I felt as safe up in the air, 1,500 to 2,000 feet, as if I was walking on the ground and a great deal safer than I have often felt in crossing some city streets."

Ernest "sent his watch" in January 1918 – code to his parents that he was being shipped off to Europe. Assigned to the 147th Aero Squadron, 1st Lt. Love was flying Nieuport 28 fighters from an airfield in France. By mid-September, Love was flying the new Spad biplane in support of American troops involved in the St. Mihiel offensive and had flown 21 combat missions. On Sept. 14, he was delayed in taking off with his squadron, and agreed to rendezvous with them near Verdun. He never arrived.

Two months later – the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month – the Armistice was signed that ended the "Great War." Ernest A. Love was listed as missing in action.

It would not be until February 1919 before his parents would be notified of his death, and would later learn he had apparently been shot down and badly wounded near Tronville and had died on September 16. Buried in a local cemetery, he was ultimately moved to Arlington National Cemetery in 1921 and honored for his service.

*– **By Fred Veil,** executive director of Sharlot Hall Museum, where the "Arizona & the Great War" exhibit is displayed. Learn more details about Love and other WWI heroes and experience the exhibit "trench" at the Museum's Theater Gallery.*