OLLIS BRYANT FERGUSON

WW I VETERAN, VICE CONSUL & ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS FELLOW

Dorothea Amy Cornish & Ollis Bryant Ferguson.

OLLIS BRYANT FERGUSON was born on November 2nd of 1887 and was the 7th child of Thomas and Missouri Ferguson. He lived in Howell County, Missouri on a farm found about 7 miles from the town of Willow Springs. From humble beginnings, Ollis, or "Ollie", grew to manhood in the Missouri Ozarks. He learned how to hunt, fish, farm, and listen to the preacher on Sundays. He learned some trades in his youth. One such trade was in the postal service. For a time, Ollis served as assistant postmaster under the charge of his cousin, Charles Ferguson.

In 1892, when Ollis was about five years old, his father finished building the family home, and it was their home for the next 13 years. Unfortunately, the impressive 8 room Victorian home was destroyed by fire in December of 1905. This home was replaced with a log cabin until a permanent home could be built.

Before long, Ollis decided to set out on his own and joined the U.S. Army. The details about his time in the army before The Great War is not known; however, Ollis likely participated in the Mexican Border War.

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson called for a declaration of war on Germany.[1] A Time-Life book stated:

> "Every red-blooded American male was prepared to leap into the breach and every woman and child to back up the doughboys. But no one quite knew what to do. The United States had not fought a major war in over 50 years. The Army had a grand total of 208,034 men. The air service counted 55 rickety planes and 130 pilots."[2]

A recruiting poster.

[1] Korn, Jerry, ed., & Bowen, Ezra, series ed. This Fabulous Century, Volume II, 1910-1920, (New York: Time-Life Books, 1969), 208.
[2] Ibid.

On January 14th of 1918, Ollis was inducted into the U.S. Army at Kelly Field, Texas. His army serial number was 1,079,654. He attended aviation schools until May 10th of 1918. On May 15th of that same year the unit, apparently done with their training, had a panoramic portrait taken in front of a freight train. Ollis was with the 8th Detachment, June Replacement, Draft Army Air Service until July of 1918. Ollis served overseas from June of 1918 until September of 1919. At one point during the war to end all wars, he was shot down while working for the "British Air Service."[3]

In July of 1918, after months of training, the 8th Aero Squadron was ordered to the front. When Ollis left for France, he was still a part of the 8th. On June 21st of 1918, Ollis was in Memphis, Tennessee apparently on-route to France. He wrote a postcard to his mother and exclaimed, "Hello! Am O. K. Hope all is well at home, Love O." While the 8th was part of the American Expeditionary Force, the squadron became a part of the Corps Observation Squadron and Observation Groups. They performed short-ranged tactical reconnaissance over the IV Corp along the western front. Ollis unlikely participated with the 8th because he was only part of the unit for a few days, a few weeks at most. Ollis was transferred to the 47th Aero Squadron and was with the unit until September of 1918. The unit was a service squadron. He was again transferred but this time to the 806th Aero Squadron. He was with the unit until November of 1918. The 806th was a repair unit. Ollis's duties with both these squadrons are unknown; however, a newspaper article suggests he was an aviator.[4]

On November 11th of 1918, the armistice was signed, and The Great War ended. Later that month, Ollis became part of the 1107th Aero Squadron until his discharge which was almost a year away. The 1107th was a replacement squadron and was demobilized in July of 1919.

This January 1919 letter's return address is Regents Park, London. In it Ollis hopes the family doesn't eat all the squirrels and tells them to eat three "square" meals a day:

> One year ago today I left there for the army and it was some winter there. It's only been down to freezing once or twice here but the downpours makes it hurt worse than zero there. My sight is very good now, they of course a bit weak, yet improving. Don't eat all the squirrels up and I'll try one when I get there. Hoping you're all feeling extra well this winter and eating 3 □'s per day. I'll knock off now.

A good many of Ollis's letters had the following return address:

Sgt O. B. Ferguson, U.S.A.
1079654 Hqs. Prov. Det.
Prov. Dist. Of Gt. Btn.
London, England.

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[3] "Quarter century in U.S. service," El Paso Evening Post, June 14, 1930.
[4] Ibid.

This letter's return address is again Regents Park, London. In it Ollis's thoughts turn toward the future:

> Well I'm not busy this p.m. so will just drop you a line to let you know I'm in the best of health and enjoying my eats. Still rains here and if I'm any judge it will for several years to come. I haven't had a line from you in so long I am about to think you stopped writing when the Oroco sailed. But however I'll keep on keeping on and wait patiently. You know you must not expect me until you know for when I reach N.Y. I'll wire you. Which may be in one or 6 months. I'm here to see the thing thru and not kick. Hope you're all well and happy.

The following 2 paged letter was written on April 19th of 1919 while Ollis was in London. The letter was addressed to his younger brother John who had caught the Spanish Flu while he was in France. John, too, was in the army but discharged on account of the illness that made him weak. On the back of page 2 is a poem by Ollis:

> Glad your are out of it and home once more, but what do you think of it as a whole anyway? Gee! I wish I was there now we would take one good week on Indian Fishing then perhaps we could frame up something to start into. I really don't know what I shall do after it's over, sometimes I feel like going back to the Plains and punching cattle while I prove up a claim. Or go to Colo. and prove up one (homestead) where I could farm. I imagine now that all most all business is somewhat slack there now isn't it?
>
> There seems to be an awful lot of unrest everywhere at present. If I could re-enlist and keep my rank I should do so, but now one must go back and start over. By June or July we perhaps can tell more about what business markets, Politics + so on are going to do and I'll be coming along about June. In the mean time get all the dope you can on a few things and lets try some darn thing. We can't worse ourselves.

[back of page 2]

There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave.
There are souls that are pure and true;
There give to the world the best that you have.
And the best shall come back to you.

Give love and love to your heart will flow.
A strength in your utmost need;
Give faith and a score of hearts will show.
Their faith in your word and deed.

For life is the mirror of King and slave,
Tis just what you are and do;
Then give to the world the best that you have,
And the best will come back to you.

Apparently, Ollis was considered for a "big concerns" position in June of 1919. In his typed letter from London, he states, "I have had some fairly good offers to stay over here and work for big concerns …" But, Ollis, first, starts off with an interesting weather report:

> Well it's raining here today the first in a long time too. In fact this has been the longest drouth that they have on record, A great many attribute it to the war, saying that it rained so much extra while war was going on that now it must necessarly be dry …
>
> I have had some fairly good offers to stay over here and work for big concerns but I really don't think I would care to bind myself down for a year or two here with the present conditions prevailing.
>
> I shall come home and see what the soldiers land grant law looks like, perhaps Karl and I may both be able to get something good. If not tho theres one thing we do know, that is we can make a good living and have an independent life in the Ozarks …

Ollis was promoted to Sergeant 1st Class in July of 1919. As a soldier, he had worked in England, France, and Scotland. After Ollis served nearly a year and a half, he was finally discharged in September of 1919. Ollis wanted an independent life in the Missouri Ozarks, yet he eventually found work in Great Britain.

In September of 1920, Ollis was appointed as vice-consul with the American Foreign Service in England. The following article was reported in a home county newspaper:

> Mr. and Mrs. T.J. Ferguson of Willow Springs have just received a letter from their son Sergt. Ollis B. Ferguson, stating that he had had a cable from Washington announcing his appointment as a vice consul at London, England. Sergeant Ferguson is stationed at London with the American forces.[5]

While Ollis was in the Europe, he met Dorothea Amy Cornish of London. Her nickname was "Doris." They were married in Finchley, England at St. Paul's Church. A 1921 article titled "Wedding at Church End" found in the West Plains Journal printed some detail about the ceremony:

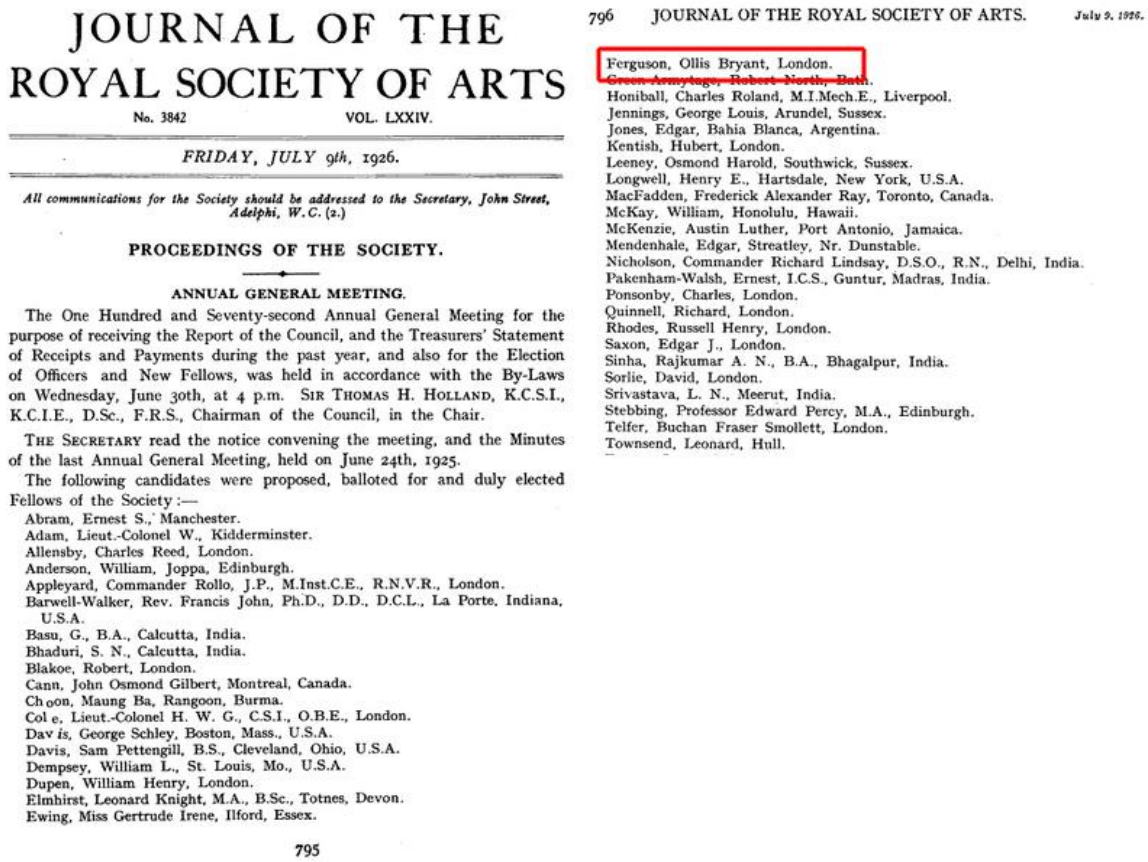
> A pretty wedding took place at St. Paul's Church, Finchley, the contracting parties being Miss Dorothea A. Cornish, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G. Cornish, of East Finchley, and Mr. Ollis Bryan[t] Ferguson of North Finchley, vice-consul. The bride, who was given away by her father, was attended by the Misses B. Stanbridge and M. Lucey, as bridesmaids, and Mr. Cornish (brother of the bride) acted as best man.
>
> The Rev. S. B. Mayall (Vicar) officiated in the presence of a large assemblage of relatives and friends, including representatives from the American consulate. The bride looked charming in a dress of charmeuse and Georgette, trimmed with pearls, and she wore a bracelet, the gift of the bridegroom, and carried a bouquet tied with stars and stripes ribbon. The bridesmaids wore dresses of pink and blue shot taffetas, with black picture hats and gold

[5] "Howell boy honored abroad, O.B. Ferguson vice consul," West Plains Journal, September 30, 1920.

brooches (the latter being the gift of the bridegroom). They carried bouquets of pink chrysanthemums tied with American ribbon.

After the ceremony a reception took place in the Wesleyan Hall, Ballard-Lane, where there were 40 guests present, including Col. and Mrs. R.H. Rolfe and Col. MacDonald of the U.S. Army, the Hon. and Mrs. R.P. Skinner, etc. Later the happy pair left for the south coast, where the honeymoon is being spent. The bride and groom were the recipients of many and valuable presents.[6]

Found in the July 9, 1926 issue of the Journal of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), Ollis Bryant Ferguson of London was proposed, balloted for and duly elected by the fellows of the society. The society is a "British organisation committed to finding practical solutions to social challenges."[7] Past fellows of this prestigious society included Charles Dickens, Benjamin Franklin, and Adam Smith. Charles Dickens is the well-known author of A Christmas Carol. Benjamin Franklin was a founding father, among other things, of the United States. Adam Smith wrote the Wealth of Nations. The post-nominal letters for the RSA is FRSA. In Ollis writings, he could have appended FRSA to his signatures: Ollis Bryant Ferguson, FRSA.



JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS

No. 3842 VOL. LXXIV.

FRIDAY, JULY 9th, 1926.

All communications for the Society should be addressed to the Secretary, John Street, Adelphi, W.C. (2.)

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The One Hundred and Seventy-second Annual General Meeting for the purpose of receiving the Report of the Council, and the Treasurers' Statement of Receipts and Payments during the past year, and also for the Election of Officers and New Fellows, was held in accordance with the By-Laws on Wednesday, June 30th, at 4 p.m. SIR THOMAS H. HOLLAND, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., D.Sc., F.R.S., Chairman of the Council, in the Chair.

THE SECRETARY read the notice convening the meeting, and the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, held on June 24th, 1925.

The following candidates were proposed, balloted for and duly elected Fellows of the Society:—

Abram, Ernest S., Manchester.
Adam, Lieut.-Colonel W., Kidderminster.
Allensby, Charles Reed, London.
Anderson, William, Joppa, Edinburgh.
Appleyard, Commander Rollo, J.P., M.Inst.C.E., R.N.V.R., London.
Barwell-Walker, Rev. Francis John, Ph.D., D.D., D.C.L., La Porte, Indiana, U.S.A.
Basu, G., B.A., Calcutta, India.
Bhaduri, S. N., Calcutta, India.
Blakoe, Robert, London.
Cann, John Osmond Gilbert, Montreal, Canada.
Ch oon, Maung Ba, Rangoon, Burma.
Col e, Lieut.-Colonel H. W. G., C.S.I., O.B.E., London.
Dav is, George Schley, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.
Davis, Sam Pettengill, B.S., Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A.
Dempsey, William L., St. Louis, Mo., U.S.A.
Dupen, William Henry, London.
Elmhirst, Leonard Knight, M.A., B.Sc., Totnes, Devon.
Ewing, Miss Gertrude Irene, Ilford, Essex.

795

796 JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS. July 9, 1926.

Ferguson, Ollis Bryant, London.
~~Green-Armytage, Robert North, Bath.~~
Honiball, Charles Roland, M.I.Mech.E., Liverpool.
Jennings, George Louis, Arundel, Sussex.
Jones, Edgar, Bahia Blanca, Argentina.
Kentish, Hubert, London.
Leeney, Osmond Harold, Southwick, Sussex.
Longwell, Henry E., Hartsdale, New York, U.S.A.
MacFadden, Frederick Alexander Ray, Toronto, Canada.
McKay, William, Honolulu, Hawaii.
McKenzie, Austin Luther, Port Antonio, Jamaica.
Mendenhale, Edgar, Streatley, Nr. Dunstable.
Nicholson, Commander Richard Lindsay, D.S.O., R.N., Delhi, India.
Pakenham-Walsh, Ernest, I.C.S., Guntur, Madras, India.
Ponsonby, Charles, London.
Quinnell, Richard, London.
Rhodes, Russell Henry, London.
Saxon, Edgar J., London.
Sinha, Rajkumar A. N., B.A., Bhagalpur, India.
Sorlie, David, London.
Srivastava, L. N., Meerut, India.
Stebbing, Professor Edward Percy, M.A., Edinburgh.
Telfer, Buchan Fraser Smollett, London.
Townsend, Leonard, Hull.

Ollis Bryant Ferguson, a fellow at the Royal Society of Arts, found in a journal.

[6] "Wedding at Church End," West Plains Journal, February 10, 1921.
[7] RSA about us page: https://www.thersa.org/about-us

After Ollis had several eventful years in England, he was assigned, in 1927, to Ciudad Juárez, México as vice-consul. He later resigned in 1932 and became a private accountant in El Paso, Texas. It is not known why he resigned from his position. The following article states his replacement:

> The state department announced today the following changes in the American Foreign Service: Albion W. Johnson of Texas, vice consul at Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, appointed vice consul at Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. The resignation of Ollis B. Ferguson of Willow Springs, Mo., vice consul at Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, is accepted effective Nov. 30.[8]

Dorothea filed a divorce in the 1930's and apparently stayed in El Paso, Texas until her death in April 19, 1963. She worked as a stenography for the U.S. Boundary Commission for many years. As far as we can tell, Ollis & Dorothea had no children. Ollis worked as an accountant and lived in various states like California, New Mexico, and Texas. Ollis died on July 26, 1963. The Willow Springs Missouri News reported his death in their August 8, 1963 issue:

> Ollis Bryant Ferguson, 75, brother of J. Carl Ferguson and Oscar J. Ferguson, both of Willow Springs, died Friday, July 26, at a V.A. Hospital in Fort Lyon, Colo. The Rev. George Turner conducted funeral services for Mr. Ferguson at 2 p.m. Tuesday, July 30, in the Burns Funeral Chapel. Burial was in the Pine Grove Cemetery. Mr. Ferguson, an accountant, was an Albuquerque, N.M. resident prior to his illness. He was born Nov. 2, 1887, in Willow Springs to Mr. Thomas J. Ferguson and Mrs. Missouri Ann Harris Ferguson. He was a veteran of World War I.[9]

Ollis was buried in Willow Springs, Missouri. He left a wealth of personal information in the form of letters, and, luckily, we still have a few in our family's possession.

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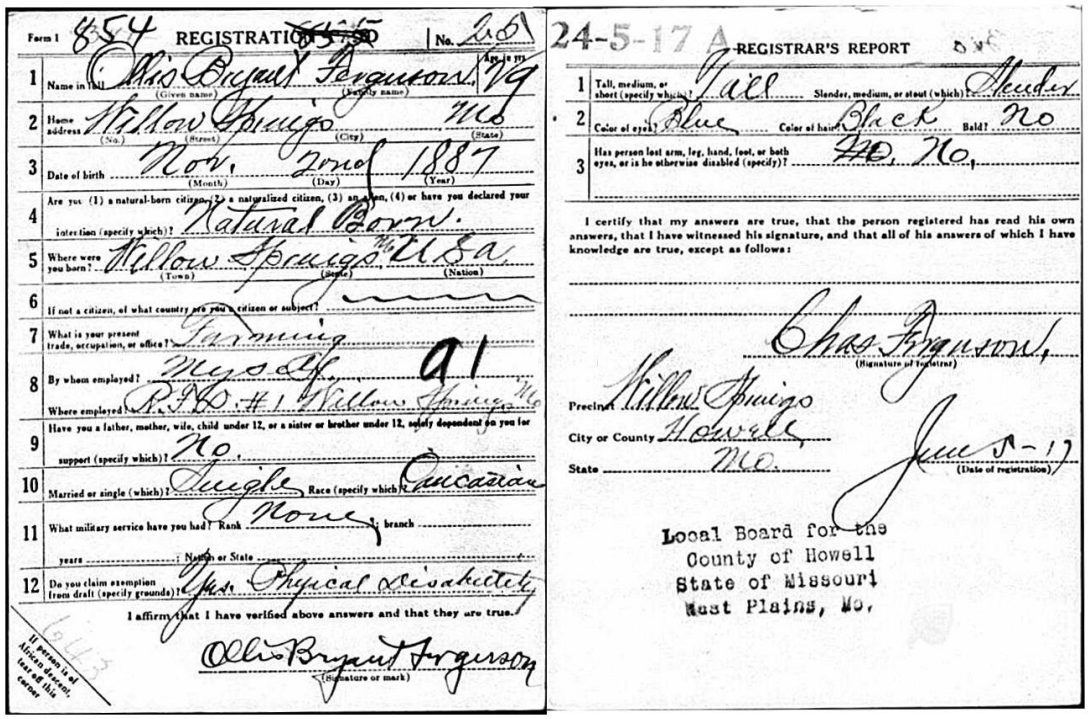
[8] "Texan in consular service transferred," Fort Worth Star-Telegram, November 18, 1934.
[9] "Ollis B. Ferguson funeral services held here Tuesday, July 30," Willow Springs Missouri News, August 8, 1963.

The 1892 Victorian home that Ollis's father completed.
From l. to r. Missouri, Old Dog Bounce and Thomas.

The Ferguson Family in the Missouri Ozarks.
From l. to r., John, Ollis, Ernest, Missouri, and Thomas.
Just below Thomas is old dog Bounce.



Form 1 854 REGISTRATION No. 26

1 Name in full: Ollis Bryant Ferguson (Given name) (Family name) Age in yrs. 19

2 Home address: Willow Springs (No.) (Street) (City) Mo (State)

3 Date of birth: Nov. (Month) 2nd (Day) 1887 (Year)

4 Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? Natural Born.

5 Where were you born? Willow Springs (Town) Mo (State) USA (Nation)

6 If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject?

7 What is your present trade, occupation, or office? Farming

8 By whom employed? Myself. 91

Where employed? R.F.D. #1 Willow Springs Mo

9 Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)? No.

10 Married or single (which)? Single Race (specify which)? Caucasian

11 What military service have you had? Rank None; branch ..... years ..... ; Nation or State .....

12 Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? Yes. Physical disability

I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.

Ollis Bryant Ferguson (Signature or mark)

If person is of African descent, tear off this corner

24-5-17 A REGISTRAR'S REPORT

1 Tall, medium, or short (specify which)? Tall Slender, medium, or stout (which)? Slender

2 Color of eyes? Blue Color of hair? Black Bald? No

3 Has person lost arm, leg, hand, foot, or both eyes, or is he otherwise disabled (specify)? ~~No.~~ No.

I certify that my answers are true, that the person registered has read his own answers, that I have witnessed his signature, and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

Chas Ferguson, (Signature of registrar)

Precinct Willow Springs

City or County Howell

State Mo.

June 5-17 (Date of registration)

Local Board for the
County of Howell
State of Missouri
West Plains, Mo.

Registration for the draft.

Quarter Century In U. S. Service

Ollis B. Ferguson, United States vice consul in Juarez, Saturday, completed 25 years in the service of the government.

Ferguson was formerly stationed with the consulate general in London, and flew as an American aviator in the British air service during the World war.

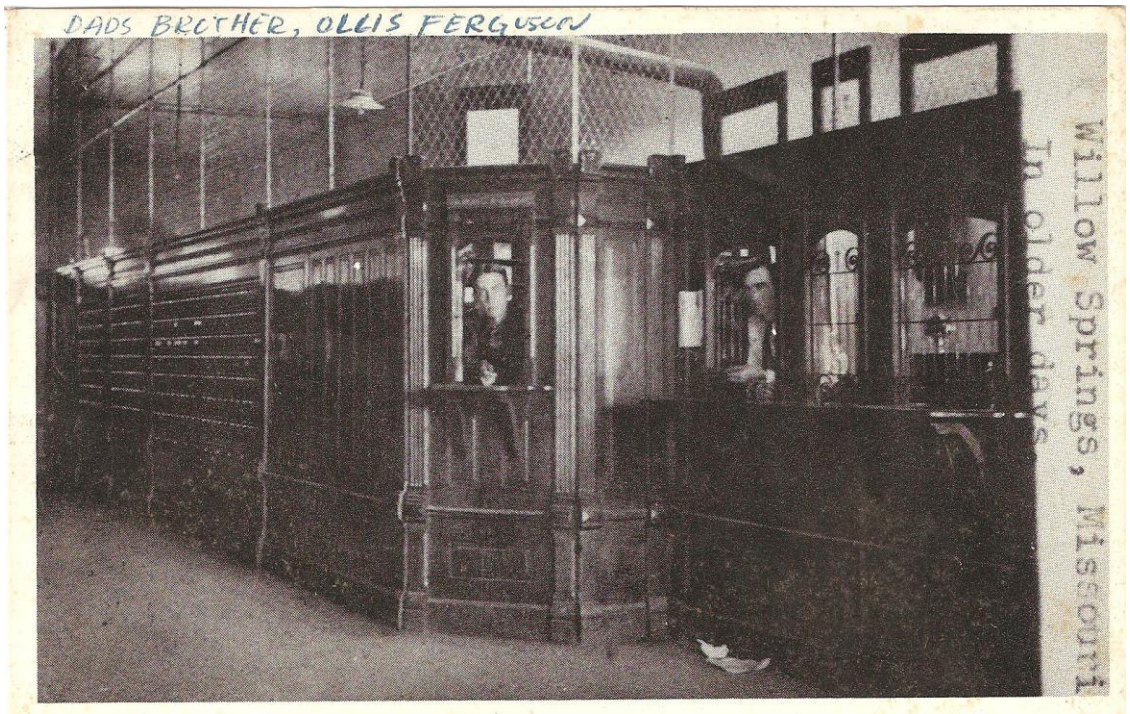
He was shot down, and narrowly escaped death in the crash.

Ferguson has been in the consular service for 10 years, and at Juarez since Jan. 31, 1927.

This El Paso Evening Post article was printed in 1930.

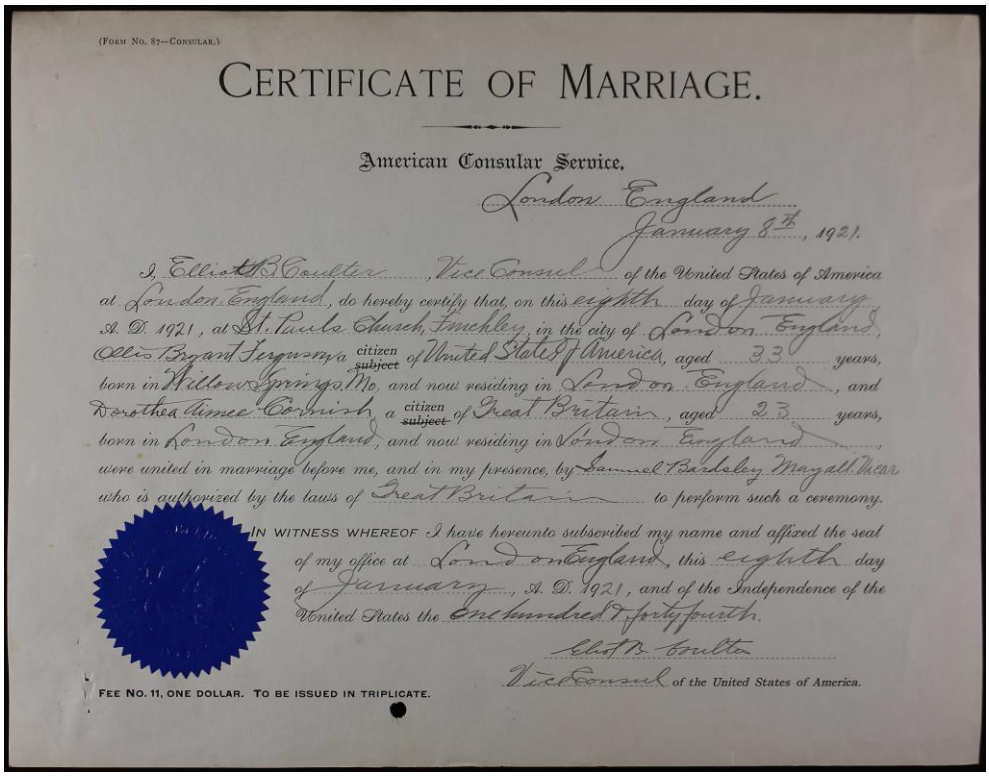
Ollis's mother plays the banjo and a little relative dressed as a nurse during World War I.
The two stars on the flag represents Ollis and John at war in France.
Notice the photos on the porch.

Thomas and Missouri's home during World War I.



Ollis, on the left, working for the postal service.

Dorothea and Ollis's wedding day.
From l. to r., bridesmaid, Richard John Cornish, Ollis, Dorothea, bridesmaid.



(Form No. 87—Consular.)

CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE.

American Consular Service,

London England

January 8th, 1921.

I, Elliott B. Coulter, Vice Consul of the United States of America at London England, do hereby certify that, on this eighth day of January, A. D. 1921, at St. Paul's Church, Emchley, in the city of London England, Ollis Bryant Ferguson, a citizen ~~subject~~ of United States of America, aged 33 years, born in Willow Springs, Mo. and now residing in London England, and Dorothea Aimee Cornish, a citizen ~~subject~~ of Great Britain, aged 23 years, born in London England, and now residing in London England, were united in marriage before me, and in my presence, by Samuel Bardsley Magall Mear who is authorized by the laws of Great Britain to perform such a ceremony.

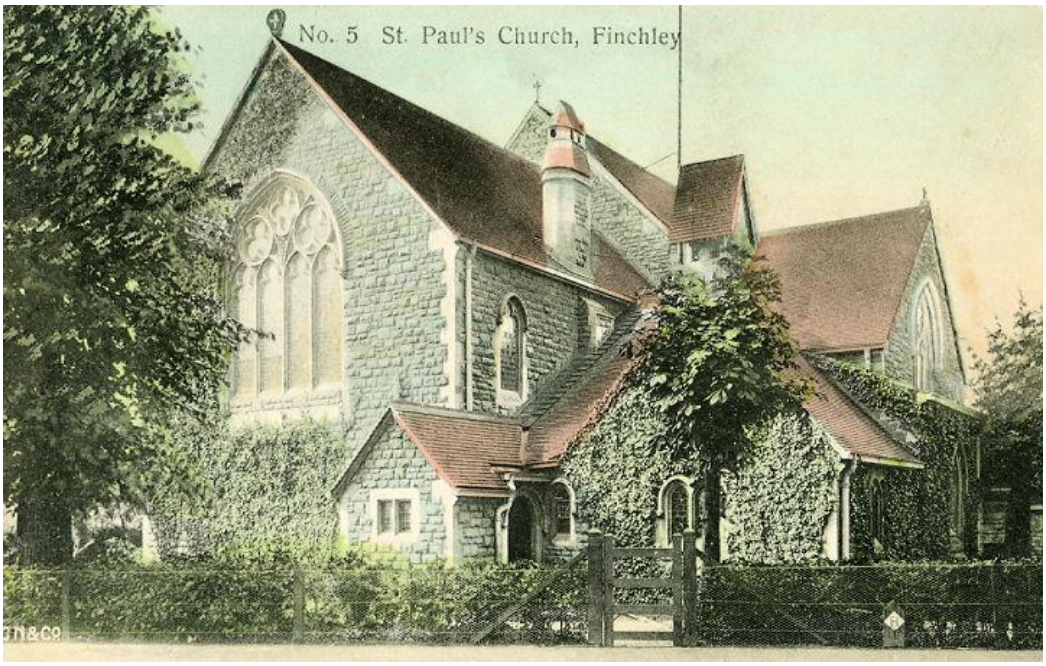
IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed the seal of my office at London England, this eighth day of January, A. D. 1921, and of the Independence of the United States the One hundred & forty fourth.

Elliott B. Coulter

Vice Consul of the United States of America.

FEE No. 11, ONE DOLLAR. TO BE ISSUED IN TRIPLICATE.

Ollis marries Dorothea in England, January 8, 1921.



The English church where Ollis and Dorothea were married back in 1921.

Dorothea “Doris” Amy Cornish, Ollis’s lovely English wife.

By Robert Bruce Ferguson, 2020. Ollis Bryant Ferguson is Robert’s great-uncle.