



Spruce Production Division

Harold James McKinnon, the son of James Edward and Mary S. McKinnon, was born on January 14, 1896, in Huntington, Baker County, Oregon. He was originally assigned to the 346th Machine Gun Battalion of the 91st Division. He was then transferred to the Spruce Production Division which was under the command of the United States Army Signal Corps in World WWI.

He died of bronchial pneumonia on December 14, 1918, and was buried in the Pine Heaven Cemetery located in Halfway, Baker County, Oregon. At the time of his death, he was survived by his parents.

The United States Army Signal Corps was established in 1860. The initial responsibility was for communications. It used signal flags and developed the “wig-wag” system of communication. The use of telegraphs, radio, and signal mirrors were added to the methods of communicating information to troops. The Corps was charged with military intelligence and it created a congressionally mandated weather service which was later transferred to the Department of Agriculture. The "Crossed flags" have been used by the Signal Corps since 1868, when they were prescribed for wear on the uniform coat by enlisted men of the Signal Corps. In 1884, a burning torch was added to the insignia and the present design adopted on 1 July 1884. The flags and torch are symbolic of signaling or communication.

To meet the need for spruce by the French, English, and Italian air forces, the private sector began production in the North West at the start of World War I. The Sitka spruce, which was the best type of wood for building an airplane was found in Oregon, Alaska, Washington and Vancouver. In addition, it provided fir for ships.

The Spruce Production Division was established to increase production. Approximately 60 military logging camps were built throughout the Pacific Northwest, usually near existing privately owned sawmills. These mills, while privately owned, were operated under the direction of the Army. There were about 10,000 troops in the division and the remaining men used to provide the timber were civilian. The Division also created 19 railroads that would later be used to establish timber companies in the Northwest. The Division lasted only 15 months. The trees on the patch designate the logging of trees. The airplanes and ship represent the use of the timber. The 4Ls represent the union that was formed for civilians and was called the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen (LLLL).