

## **Moorhead American Legion's First Commander**

Earlier this summer, I did research on the past commanders of the Moorhead American Legion Post 21. A magazine with that information plus other bits of history was produced and distributed at the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration in June. Since then, I've done some additional research on a couple of the commanders including the first commander, George M Comstock. Since Comstock was the son of Solomon and Sarah Bell Comstock who were very involved with the early development of Moorhead. Solomon was a lawyer, businessman and state legislator. He donated land to start Moorhead Normal School, now Minnesota State University Moorhead. Sarah was a teacher, the first president of Moorhead's library board and a founding member of Moorhead's women's club. Their home on Eighth Street and Fifth Avenue is now the property of the Minnesota Historical Society. The couple had three children, Ada, Jesse May and George. All had very successful careers. Ada served as President of Radcliffe. Jesse May was a teacher and ran the family business. George was named after his grandfather, Solomon's father and was born into a family of wealth and respectability in a Moorhead that was changing from a railway outstation to a civilized town. The family was apparently rather close, George and Ada make a trip to England together in 1910. George attended the Moorhead Normal Model School, later known as the Campus School, then went to Hills Preparatory School in Pottstown, PA. He enrolled at Harvard and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1909. While at Harvard, George was on the football team. George began his career working in the lumber business on the west coast but returned to Moorhead in 1915 stating "I guess that didn't go too well." Upon returning to Moorhead, he was employed by First National Bank. On 11 October 1917, he married Frances Frazier of Fingal, ND who attended Moorhead Normal School. She was an actress, a singer and sorority member. She had a nickname of "Babe". George and Frances had one child; Susan.

In April 1918, George Comstock enlisted in the US Coast Guard and served as first lieutenant until his discharge following the war in December 1918. George was elected as the first commander of the Moorhead American Legion in 1919 and served one term. George and his sister Jesse managed the Comstock Realty Company with land near Moorhead but also in Montana and Texas. George was an active community member as well. He was chairman of the Moorhead Charter Commission, served on Moorhead Public Service Commission. In 1943 he was appointed to the Minnesota State College board. George was on the Clay county draft board during WWII. George died on 25 August 1966 and was remembered by former MSUM president Snarr as a "great public servant." George's grave is in Prairie Home Cemetery.