



Edward E. Potter

Edward E. Potter was born 3 September 1891 at Windfall, NY, St. Lawrence County. He was the son of Frederick B. Potter and Rose Eldred Potter. He grew up in rural St. Lawrence County and lived a few years in Canada. Potter graduated from the Campus High School of Plattsburgh State College in 1912. He excelled in industrial arts and for a time taught this subject in Glens Falls, NY.

In the fall of 1914 at the age of 23, Edward Potter was granted a scholarship to Union College, Schenectady. He attended classes until late November at which time he withdrew from the college for unknown reasons.

The following spring, Potter enrolled at New York State College for Teachers at Albany (NYSCT). He pursued his studies there until May of 1917, when he enlisted in the Army. While assigned to Madison Barracks, Sacketts Harbor, NY, for basic training, he chose to enter the aviation branch of the service.

After receiving pre-flight training at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, Potter left for France in October 1917. There, he underwent flight training. In May 1918 he received his pilot's wings and was commissioned a 1st Lieutenant.

Potter was assigned to ferry various aircraft from and to airfields within France and possibly England. On 1 August 1918 while delivering a de Havilland DH-4 bomber/observation plane to Orly Field, Paris, the aircraft developed mechanical trouble. On approaching the landing field, Lt. Potter noticed civilian workers on the airstrip. Rather than possibly hitting them he managed to turn his plane and crashed causing his death.

Lt. Potter was interred at the permanent American War Cemetery at Suresnes near Paris; along with 2,500 other American soldiers. His mother, Rose Potter, took part in the Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimage to France in June 1930 and was able to visit her son's grave.

At the Union College Commencement, June 1919, President Charles M. Richmond bestowed a college medal to Potter's mother along with the families of 25 other Union students who had given their lives in the Great War. In the same year at the New York State College for Teachers commencement, Potter was awarded the degree Bachelor of Science, *Pro Honoris Causa*, posthumously.

The Edward Eldred Potter Club

In 1931, thirteen years after Lt. Potter's death, a group of State College students organized a social club to provide an opportunity for them to socialize and also keep in touch with alumni. This group was open to all regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity. By contrast, the existing fraternity on campus was part of a national organization that limited membership to white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants.

When NYSCT President Abram Brubacher heard of the proposed group, he suggested they might want to name their club after Lt. Potter. After learning of Potter's character and heroic death in the Great War, they felt that he was "a man of stature and someone they could emulate". Thus was born the Edward Eldred Potter Club.

The Club was active on campus for about 50 years; with its dissolution c.1982. However, in the 1940's the Edward Eldred Potter Club Alumni Association was incorporated.. This organization was formed to keep in touch with Potter Alumni as well as supervise the then Club's residence hall on State Street in Albany.

Currently active, the Potter Club Alumni Association has several hundred members throughout the country. Since the 1980's the Association has held annual reunions as well as regional luncheon meetings. A decade ago several thousand dollars were raised to establish the "Edward E. Potter Memorial Room" at the Alumni House on campus. Recently members pledged sufficient funds to completely renovate the room. Established as a general meeting room, it contains memorabilia of Lt. Potter as well as of Potter Club.