

# PENNSYLVANIA

## A HISTORY

Editor-in-Chief

GEORGE P. DONEHOO

*Former Secretary of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission  
and State Librarian; Collaborator of the Hand-  
book of American Indians, Etc.*

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With Introduction by

THOMAS L. MONTGOMERY

*Librarian of the Historical Society  
of Pennsylvania*

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Lieutenant Alvin W. Splane, the elder son of Mr. and Mrs. William W. Splane, was educated in the Oil City public schools, and later went to Salisbury School, Salisbury, Connecticut, where he graduated in 1917. During that summer he attended the Curtis School of Aviation, from which he also graduated. In September of the

same year, he entered Cornell University, and while there enlisted in the United States Aviation Service, December 11, 1917, being first sent to Austin, Texas, then to Camp Dick, Dallas, Texas. From there he went to Wilbur Wright Field, Fairfield, Ohio. Following his training at the Wilbur Wright Field, Lieutenant Splane went to Brooks Field, San Antonio, Texas, and then to Chanute Field, Rantoul, Illinois, where he received his commission as second lieutenant and was made an instructor in aviation, later going to Payne Field, West Point, Mississippi, where he had been the instructor for a class of cadets. At the close of the war he applied for his release from active service with the hope of being placed in the reserve force as a patriotic duty, when, on December 16, 1918, at 11.50 o'clock, as he was flying from Bowen to Payne Field, in company with Lieutenant Synnestedt, of Pittsburgh, another instructor, and two privates, one of the airplanes flying one hundred feet over the other, got out of control and plunged into the second, killing all four men instantly. It had been his desire to return to Cornell University to renew his studies there, which was the reason for his applying for release from active service. Lieutenant Splane was one of the best as well as one of the youngest aviators in the service. He was an expert flyer, and during the Fourth Liberty Loan campaign assisted greatly in the campaign in Chicago, which was considered a great honor, and for which he received great praise. On Thanksgiving Day, 1918, at Payne Field, he participated in a wonderful aerial event when his machine was one of many electrically lighted and forming the letters to make the word "Victory" in the sky. But within a little more than a fortnight he was called to make the supreme sacrifice, amid aching hearts, but in the front rank of those whom men delight to honor. The body, accompanied by Lieutenant Frederick Whitehead, of the Aviation Corps, was brought to Oil City, where every honor that a community, inspired by esteem for a young man of greatest promise and sterling character, and the knowledge that he had died in the service of his country could show, was given in his memory. The funeral, which was of a military order, was held in Christ Episcopal Church, where Lieutenant Splane had been baptized in his infancy, brought up in the Sabbath School, instructed for confirmation, and received into all the rites of the church. A most eloquent tribute to

his memory was voiced by the Rev. J. E. Reilly, D. D., the rector of the church, and, if possible, a still more glowing tribute was silently given by the largest group of sorrowing friends that ever attended a like occasion in the city. Lieutenant Splane was a member of the Cornell Chapter of the Theta Delta Chi fraternity. He was also a member of a Sabbath School class composed of nineteen boys, all of whom were in the United States service. Although time may do much toward healing the deep wound inflicted by the death of this noble young man, yet the memory of him will not vanish, and in the generations yet to come the name of Lieutenant Alvin W. Splane will be honored and revered.