

The House That Westerns Built: 2121 North Flower

by Dylan Almendral



The early ranch style home on Flower Street with American Colonial flair was built in 1936 for writer Allan Vaughn Elston (1887-1976) who chose Santa Ana as a place to settle down, raise a family and write westerns, mysteries and the occasional movie and early television script.

Allan Vaughan Elston was born on July 28, 1887 in Kansas City, Missouri. Elston studied engineering at the University of Missouri where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering in 1909. After college he worked as a transit man for railroads in the West and Midwest, a resident engineer, a cattle rancher and a consulting engineer. In 1917, Elston could be found in Balera, Colorado where he was drafted into the National Army and ranked as a 1st Lieutenant in "D" Company 314th Engineer Battalion of the 89th Infantry Division. Training would take him from Colorado to Kansas and finally to New Jersey for embarkation aboard to the Carpathia as part of the American Expeditionary Forces. The 89th Division saw action at Lagney, France where they were baptized with mustard gas

from the other side of no-man's land. The 89th would take part in the battles of St. Mihiel and in the Argonne. The responsibilities of the engineers would be that of construction and destruction, improving roads for convoys, constructing barbed wire entanglements, pill boxes, trench systems, telephone and telegraph lines as well as acting as shock troops during major offensives to cut through wire and obstacles of the enemy. Elston would return to the United States in 1919 a Captain.

Upon arriving back in the US, his first published article in Munsey's Magazine titled "American Soldiers and the Women of France" was published in 1919. It detailed local customs and daily life, friendships and courtship between the two cultures. Afterward he began a small engineering firm in Tulsa, Oklahoma and wed Kathleen Chestain of Tulsa. Their first son, Allan Jr., would be born in 1920. He began work as a free-lance writer of western fiction and mystery stories in 1924 and became well known for his western novels and stories for pulp and men's magazines like Argosy, Detective Fiction Weekly, Ellery



Queen's Mystery Magazine, Adventure, and Zane Grey's Western Magazine.

In the mid-1930s, Allan and family would move to Santa Ana, California, Allan had written a few successful stories that were adapted for film and bought the family home at 2121 N. Flower Street. Between 1937 and 1956, Allan would be credited as a writer of original stories for 10 productions including "Alfred Hitchcock Presents", "Schlitz Playhouse", "The Pepsi-Cola Playhouse", "City Detective", "Robert Montgomery Presents", and films "Isle of Destiny", "Paradise Isle" and "Paradise Express".

Elston's petitioned the United States Army for re-enlistment at 56 years old and won that fight, receiving a commission as Major at Camp Hood, Texas as part of the Tank

Destroyer Training Corps. But he was not the only Elston to fight for his country: Junior flew a P-38 photo reconnaissance plane with the 8th Air Force out of England before being shot down and being held a prisoner of war in November of 1944.

After the war, Elston continued his successful writing career which includes novels Roundup on The Picketwire (1952), Long Lope to Lander (1954), Showdown (1956), and Saddle Up for Steamboat (1973).

Allan Vaughan Elston, a veteran of both World Wars, his wife Kathleen and their children Allan Jr., daughter Magene and son John William, enjoyed their home at 2121 N Flower until he passed away on October 21, 1976 and the home was sold to Ed and Karen Athey in March of 1977.