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## **“With Each A Cross To Mark His Bed”: West Virginia Goes to “The Great War”**

By  
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### **Introduction**

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow, according to the well-known poem. The orangish-red poppy becomes the symbol of the fallen—not only is it the color of blood, but the poppy metaphorically denotes burial and rebirth. It is quick to regenerate in fields of desolation, as is the case with battlefields. Less well known is R. W. Lillard’s response to “In Flanders Fields,” in which he promises: “And we will keep/ True faith with you who lie asleep/ With each a cross to mark his bed/ And poppies blowing overhead/ Where once his own life blood ran red!”<sup>1</sup>

From 1914 through 1918 the nations of the world were embroiled in a conflict the likes of which they had not previously experienced and for which they were ill prepared. For four years the life blood of more than 17 million souls ran red.

Although the United States, and consequently West Virginia, did not enter the conflict until the last year and one half, that brief period would profoundly change the face of the state. This investigation presents some little-known facts regarding the state’s preparation and involvement, examines West Virginia casualties and other effects of the war, and provides tools for those who wish to continue the research.

### **Prologue**

Throughout the months of June and July 2014, a flurry of retrospective articles announced the 100-year anniversary of the beginning of World War I. Notable among them is a *New York Times* series by Stephen Erlanger and others on June 26, 2014. Writing about American military cemeteries large and small, Erlanger speaks of first- and second-generation Americans, “their names redolent of the Europe their parents left to make a better life, who returned here to die,” buried at Flanders Field. By name, he mentions Angelo Mazarella, a private from West Virginia.<sup>2</sup> Though Private Mazarella remains an elusive figure, more details concerning the life of this soldier will unfold later. Thus begins the current investigation.

June 28, 1914: Only in retrospect would this day be noted as the beginning of the largest conflict the world had experienced up to this time. Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb, assassinated Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand and the wife of the archduke in Sarajevo. Such an act might have been

just a blip in the overall historical narrative. After all, Europe had become accustomed to the overthrow of powerful leaders. But this particular event, within five weeks, led that continent to a full-out war, eventually dubbed “The Great War” or “The War to End All Wars.” While most of the fighting took place on European soil, the involvement of nations from the Western hemisphere and Asia generated a truly global conflict, one that became termed “The World War” (at least from its inception through 1939), as though it would be the only conflict so named.

From 1914 through 1917, President Woodrow Wilson’s agenda was to avoid entering the war, although it was no secret that American sentiments lay with the French and English despite declared neutrality. Indeed, Wilson’s campaign slogan of 1916 was “He kept us out of war.” Not until April 6, 1917—nearly three years after the war commenced and only after a series of unforgivable provocations—did America declare war on Germany. Much of the lore we associate with World War I, such as the vivid descriptions of trench warfare in Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*, took place prior to American involvement. With this in mind, how can we define the role of West Virginia (and, more specifically, West Virginians) in this international panorama?

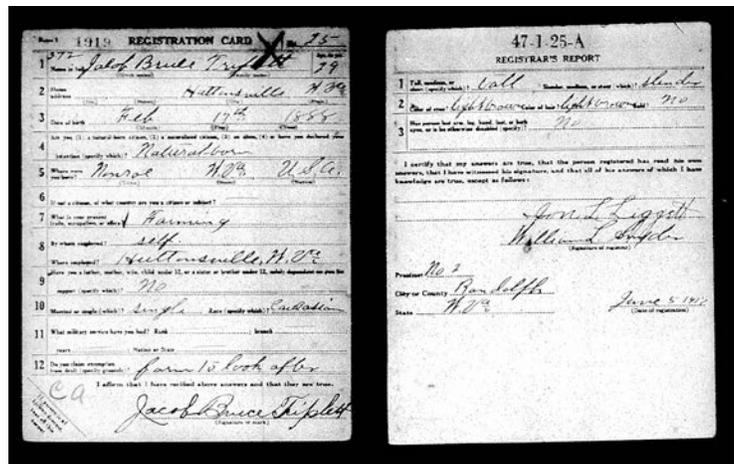
**The Draft: 1917-1918**

Isolated as the Mountain State might have been at the beginning of the century, the question of just when the U.S. might become involved in The Great War had to have been on the mind of the average native son. With the April 6 declaration of war, it wasn’t until May 18 that the Selective Service Act was passed “authorizing the President to increase temporarily the military establishment of the United States.” According to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA):

The Selective Service System was one of “supervised decentralization.” The office of the Provost Marshal General in Washington was responsible for formulating policy and transmitting it to the governors of the 48 states, the District of Columbia and the territories of

Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico..., [who were responsible for managing] the operation of drafting men for military service in World War I....

During World War I there were three registrations. The first, on June 5, 1917, was for all men between the ages of 21 and 31. The second, on June 5, 1918, registered those who attained age 21 after June 5, 1917. (A supplemental registration was held on August 24, 1918, for those becoming 21 years old after June 5, 1918. This was included in the second registration.) The third registration was held on September 12, 1918, for men age 18 through 45.<sup>3</sup>



World War I draft registration card for Jacob B. Triplett. National Archives and Records Administration

Earlier this discussion noted various tools for conducting further research. World War I draft registration records are one such tool that can aid in reconstructing the service of an individual soldier. In an era where birth-through-death photographs of individuals were not the norm and many communities, especially rural ones, did not routinely issue birth certificates, World War I draft registration cards provide a wealth of demographic and descriptive data. NARA, however, issues this caveat:

The registration cards [for the entire nation] consist of approximately 24,000,000 cards of men who registered for the draft, (about 23% of the population in 1918). It is important to note that not all the men who registered for the draft actually served in the military and not all men who served in the military registered for the draft.

Moreover these are not military service records. They end when an individual reports to the army training camp. They contain no information about an individual's military service.<sup>4</sup>

Taken as a whole, these documents provide a snapshot of the population of the young and not-so-young men of America in 1917-1918. If World War II was a young man's war, with the preponderance of fighting carried out by men barely out of their teens, World War I called on a somewhat older segment of the population to serve. Note that the first two general registrations called up men 21 years of age and over; it was not until the third registration in September 1918, near the war's end, that men aged 18 were called to register. A perusal of the cards of West Virginia draft registrants, though not a representative sample, supports this statement. The implications of this Selective Service action are manifold: First, men would be required to walk away from their already-secured employment. For West Virginia, still a largely rural state, this meant fewer farm hands (plus timber men and coal miners, vital industries at the time) to go around. Second, registering an older population meant taking them away from aging parents who might be reliant on the registrants to support them or carry on the family business. And finally, an older demographic meant that many registrants had dependent wives and children.

The management of the draft was a function of the state government. Thus specific data items on registration cards varied from state to state. That said, however, Item 9 on the West Virginia form asks: Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)? Also included were questions regarding the registrant's religion and race. Item 12 asks: Do you claim exemption from the draft (specify grounds)? Interestingly, it is not clear how frequently such claims for exemption were honored; in the case of casualties of the war, which have been studied, many did claim such exemptions, but they were not heeded.

Despite the brevity of these documents, several other important facts regarding individual registrants can be gleaned. The registrations verify the birth date, often for individuals whose only

record to date might have been in the family Bible, and go on to indicate the person's birth location. Although there is no record of educational status, several items refer to the person's employment. Some of the most interesting items—and these would have been filled out by the registrar—describe the physical characteristics of the registrant: Is he tall, medium, or short? Slender, medium, or stout? Color of eyes? Color of hair? Bald? While the writer attributes a degree of literacy to most registrants, i.e., most would have attended at least a few years of grammar school and be able to complete such a form, it appears that many draft registration cards were completed by a county registrar, with the registrant affixing only his signature. Such a practice would seem to be fraught with error.

A final word on the World War I draft registration cards. Note that NARA advises that they contain no information about an individual's military service. However, many service records for West Virginians in World War I do exist in the form of DD 214s from the Office of the West Virginia Adjutant General.<sup>5</sup> Thus the DD 214s become a second research tool in the investigation of the record of a specific West Virginia soldier. A glance at the service record of Pvt. Sherman Williams, for example, provides the following data: residence prior to service, place of birth, age or date of birth, organizations served in with dates of assignments and transfers (i.e., the soldier's unit), military rank, engagements, inclusive dates of overseas assignments, and name and address of the person notified in case of death.



Pendleton County's "Boys of '17." Courtesy Pendleton County Historical Society

So when the call to serve went out, the men of West Virginia responded. The photo of Pendleton County men shows the seriousness of the situation in which they found themselves, for, as the title of the picture suggests, they are the ones who registered in the first wave. Though the photo is entitled “Boys,” most assuredly they are men, as can be discerned from the worried, unsettled looks on their faces. One county history describes the process after registration as follows: “Then came the draft calls, when those selected were lined up on the court house square for roll call, had a group picture made, and boarded trains for the cantonments. The two largest calls in Tucker were the first and eleventh. Their group pictures hang in the lobby of the court house. The first call was on September 20, 1917, when 66 men were taken.”<sup>6</sup> One can assume that a similar process was followed throughout other West Virginia counties.

The overall cost of The Great War to the state of West Virginia is difficult to estimate. *The West Virginia Encyclopedia* indicates that the state mustered 58,000 soldiers for the war, with 5,000 casualties including dead and wounded: 1,120 killed in action, 691 killed in training, and many wounded. The encyclopedia article also mentions the many who died of influenza and other diseases—often on American soil, not having seen any combat.<sup>7</sup> Boyd B. Stutler’s 1924 compilation *West Virginia Casualties in the War with Germany* provides a comprehensive list of casualties by county, while putting the totals in the following perspective:

With a population of less than 1,400,000, West Virginia furnished approximately sixty thousand men to the army and navy for service in the war with Germany. Of this number almost two thousand died while in the service; 571 were killed in action, 194 died of wounds received in action, 356 died of disease and other causes overseas and 691 died of disease and other causes in the camps and cantonments in the United States.... One-twelfth of the whole number of West Virginians in service during the war period either became casualties at the hands of the enemy or died of disease or other causes—a very high percentage and one that places the soldiery of the Mountain State in the first rank in this respect.<sup>8</sup>

## Local Initiatives

R. J. Smith’s detailed account of the war effort in Marshall County provides insight into how communities rallied around the war effort once it became inevitable that the U.S. would enter the war. The degree of mobilization of ordinary citizens may be incomprehensible to 21st-century citizens; across the state, various communities held “loyalty meetings.” Service organizations and churches of all denominations raised funds, among them the Y. M. C. A, the Knights of Columbus, the Salvation Army, and the Jewish Welfare Board. Of particular interest is Smith’s story of the contributions of the inmates from the Moundsville state prison: “The inmates of the West Virginia Penitentiary supported all war work. Probably in proportion to their ability they made the best record in the county. The inmates of this institution, who at the best, can earn but a few cents a day, subscribed and gave the different calls for loans and gifts the sum of \$12,704.16.”<sup>9</sup>

Listed by name in Smith’s account are the county’s casualties: 2 killed in accidents, 30 killed in action, 2 missing in action, and 4 dead of wounds.<sup>10</sup> Worth mentioning is the contribution of Marshall County women to the war effort. Smith notes that 11 Marshall County women served as nurses during the war.<sup>11</sup>

While Smith compiled his data concerning Marshall County in 1919, a more recent work by Bob L. Vandelinde provides a retrospective account of Lincoln County’s participation in World War I, starting with the historical background, narrating several stories about its veterans, and finally listing known participants from that county in the war. Among those notables is Benjamin F. Baker, a World War I soldier who came home to father eight sons, all of whom served in the military, with a total of 91 years of service. Vandelinde writes also of Homer Hager, who was put in charge of driving mules simply because he said he could do so. Hager and a fellow soldier were passing through a field, pulling up some turnips to assuage their hunger when they were told to run for their lives. Within minutes, the field had been blown up.<sup>12</sup> In Kanawha County, nineteen Charlestonians, with recognizable names such as Timothy Lawrence Barber, John Morgan Brawley,

and Charles Albert Venable, lost their lives.<sup>13</sup>

Nor were these counties atypical. *The West Virginia Encyclopedia* confirms the assertion in the Marshall County discussion that a tremendous amount of organization took place over a short period of time: “On the home front, World War I mobilized citizens and industry at unforeseen levels.”<sup>14</sup> Before 1915, there was some pro-German sympathy, echoed in newspapers throughout the country as well as among many individual citizens. That began to change with the sinking of the *Lusitania*. In West Virginia, state colleges discontinued instruction in German language courses. Counties began holding loyalty meetings. Food and fuel rationing went into effect. An ordnance center was built at South Charleston, while a gunpowder plant was built in the western end of the county, thus giving the town of Nitro a major increase in population and a name. County and local histories, many of which are available in print edition at the West Virginia Archives and History Library, thus become the third research tool worth investigating, for they address the overall involvement of the county or locality and may include specific details regarding individual service members. It was not unusual for a county’s contingent of men to travel and serve together.

## Campaigns

A fourth research tool involves the work of the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). There were eight foreign burial grounds in 1923 when the ABMC was founded by Congress. (Today there are 25 burial grounds, including three in the U.S., as well as 27 separate memorials, monuments, and markers maintained by the ABMC.) The 1923 legislation establishing the ABMC charged the commission with oversight of construction of military monuments and markers in foreign countries, including operation and maintenance of World War I cemeteries in Europe and future permanent foreign American military burial grounds.

By the commission’s count, currently there are 30,922 World War I casualties interred in eight burial grounds established on foreign soil. If one is fortunate enough to visit an ABMC cemetery, interpretive programs exist to guide the visitor

through the experience. (All of the ABMC cemeteries have been beautifully designed and are immaculately maintained. Families who have visited the graves of their fallen soldiers, upon seeing the beauty and care that these cemeteries receive, often express satisfaction that their soldiers are interred in these overseas shrines.)

However, the commission also maintains an extensive online database where one can research any casualty buried or memorialized in an ABMC cemetery and visit many scenes that offer the viewer a chance to experience the cemetery. From the commission’s Web site, we learn that Private Jacob B. Triplett (whose draft registration we encountered above) is buried at Oise-Aisne American Cemetery (Plot A, Row 14, Grave 32) at Fere-en-Tardenois, France. Here too we find that he entered the service from West Virginia, served in the 166th Infantry Regiment, 42nd Division, and died on July 15, 1918.<sup>15</sup>

In 1938, the commission, chaired by none other than General John J. Pershing, published *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book*.<sup>16</sup> Although we have learned much about the war since its publication, this extremely comprehensive work is an invaluable tool in reconstructing those campaigns and battles in which West Virginians might have been involved. These include: Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, Champagne, Somme Offensive, Cambrai, Ypres-Lys, Somme Defensive, and Vosges. Chapter-ending tables summarize each division’s operations during the campaign detailed within the chapter. The reference book is not only a research tool but also a valuable artifact of the post-war era. The current discussion views the ABMC Web site (updated regularly) and the reference book (a static print publication) as companion tools—both of which were generated by the ABMC—that can serve widely different purposes.

Knowing that Jacob Triplett was in the 42nd (“Rainbow”) Division, this publication becomes immensely useful. The Champagne-Marne Defensive, in which Triplett lost his life, is detailed with photos. In summary, it informs that the division was sent to reinforce the French Fourth Army in early July as part of a plan prescribed by General Pétain to defend against an expected attack

by the enemy near Reims. Extremely accurate French intelligence indicated that the German artillery bombardment would start around midnight of July 14 and the infantry assault would commence several hours later. The history continues:

Thus forewarned, the French were able to complete their plans to break up the expected attack. They had previously moved a large quantity of artillery into the sector and, shortly before the German bombardment began, the French and American guns placed an intense bombardment on the German artillery emplacements and assembly points for troops. This caused severe casualties in the hostile ranks and resulted in the replacement of several German units before the infantry assault was even started....

The Germans also had concentrated a large battery of artillery and bombarded the French-American positions. The Germans suffered fewer casualties than in previous offensives because of the withdrawal of French troops. The Allied troops that did remain on the front line sent back a great deal of information by telephone, rockets, and flares regarding the heroism of men “exposed to almost certain death.... Among them was a group comprising one officer and 25 men of the 42d Division who were posted ½ mile in front of the main line of resistance to defend an anti-tank gun. This entire group was sacrificed, not one returning to the division after attack....”

Despite some initial success with the Germans’ initial infantry assault, the Allied and American artillery prevailed.

During this fighting six more American infantry companies were sent forward to the intermediate position, now become the front line, and the 150th and 151st Machine Gun Battalions and the artillery brigade of the 42d Division all actively participated in driving the enemy back.

The Germans continued their attacks on some parts of this front on July 16, but made no gains of importance....

A brief advance by the Germans across the Marne toward Epernay was stopped on July 17. The history calls the German drive “powerful and

ambitious” but lacking the quality of surprise germane to previous attacks. The Allies, choosing their own position from which to fight, suffered fewer losses and inflicted heavier losses on the enemy as well as forcing them to retreat.

The 42d Division, which suffered more than 1,600 casualties [which would have included Jacob Bruce Triplett], was enthusiastically commended by General Gourard, commanding the French Fourth Army, for its gallant conduct in the defense. It was withdrawn from the line on July 9 preparatory to moving westward to take part in the Franco-American offensive against the Marne salient which had begun with great success the day before.<sup>17</sup>

Another print artifact that arose in the immediate post-war era is the three-volume work *Soldiers of the Great War*. This ultra-patriotic compilation is dedicated to American casualties of the war, whose portraits are included where possible. It also includes a listing of all casualties by state. West Virginia’s soldiers are portrayed or listed in Volume III, but Volume I includes a detailed time-line of events from 1914 through 1918. The Memorial Edition includes a supplement listing casualties not included in previous editions.<sup>18</sup>



*Soldiers of the Great War*, Vol. III

Earlier we mentioned Pvt. Angelo Mazzarella, who served in the 91st Division. Mazzarella is one of three West Virginians buried at Flanders Field, the others being Charles Asa Moffett and Sherman H. Williams, both of whom were in the 37th Division. Both the 91st and the 37th were in the Ypres-Lys Offensive, which took place from October 30, 1918, through the Armistice. *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe* details the offensive thus:

The two divisions, with a French division between them, went into the front lines near Waereghem on October 30. The 37th Division was in the French XXX Corps and its zone of action was along the railroad northeast of Waereghem, close to the town of Olsene. The 91st was in the French VII Corps and its zone of action was just south of Waereghem.

At that time this region, which had been well behind the German front line since the autumn of 1914, was little damaged and was still occupied by most of its civilian population. The terrain where these divisions fought was slightly rolling and broken by numerous houses, patches of trees, fenced-in small fields and ditches.<sup>19</sup>

Beginning on October 30, the 37th and 91st divisions participated in an attack toward the east toward the Escaut River. By November 1 it appeared that the Germans were retreating and the two divisions advancing. The 37th moved toward the Escaut, near Heurne, while the 91st advanced to Audenarde. Despite continued outbreaks from the Germans and occasional opportunities to regroup, the two American divisions were able to move forward. By November 9, the 37th was ensconced on the far bank of the Escaut, while the 91st was established four miles east of Audenarde on November 10. *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe* traces these movements in some detail. Knowing their divisions and that Mazzarella and Williams perished on October 31 and Moffett on November 4, it thus becomes possible to reconstruct their final hours.

## The Influenza Epidemic

The story of World War I does not lie entirely in the history of campaigns, battles, and casualties incurred in the fighting. More deadly worldwide than the machine guns and cannons was the influenza epidemic. The 1918 epidemic killed an estimated 50 million people, compared to the 16 million lives lost in the war. The virus attacked one fifth of the world's population (and more than 25 percent of the U.S. population). In its brief duration, the influenza epidemic killed more people than any other illness in recorded history, more than the estimates of deaths from medieval plagues.

The first phase of the pandemic occurred in the

spring of 1918. The “three-day fever” resulted in few deaths, and the ailing recovered swiftly. But in the fall, the same disease emerged as a more deadly strain, “eluding treatment and defying control. Some victims died within hours of their first symptoms. Others succumbed after a few days; their lungs filled with fluid and they suffocated to death.”<sup>20</sup> Not only could the spread of the disease be attributed to the deployment and return of soldiers from Europe (the disease sometimes being referred to as “the Spanish flu”), where it was thought to have originated, but the strain of flu encountered in the fall of 1918 was particularly virulent among young people, meaning that the soldiers were a more susceptible group. NARA calls the epidemic “a major disaster in world history.”

Had this disaster occurred in the current century, perhaps it could have been avoided. (Consider, for example, the Ebola crisis of 2014.) Modern medicine provides the following backward glance:

Influenza sailed with American troops across the Atlantic and when it exploded in late August and September in Europe and the United States, medical officers found themselves on the front lines of an epidemic worse than any of them had ever seen or imagined. Many were among the most knowledgeable and skilled physicians in the country and had just recently entered military service. They did their best to save those stricken by influenza, but could do little more than provide palliative care of warmth, rest, and a gentle diet, and hope that their patients did not develop pneumonia.

One of the tragedies of the influenza epidemic is that by the 1910s, the medical profession held many of the scientific and epidemiological tools to understand the nature and extent of the damage influenza and pneumonia were wreaking on their patients, but lacked the tools to effectively fight them.<sup>21</sup>

## Aftermath

**Burials.** Although the Armistice was reached on November 11, 1918, wars do not end with a cessation in fighting. Healing must begin. Burials must take place, and those left to mourn must begin

their lives anew. The remainder of this piece will describe the burial process both abroad and at home. Finally, it will briefly detail the story of some mothers and wives who participated in the Gold Star Mothers' (and wives') Pilgrimage to visit their sons' (and husbands') graves in Europe.

More than 116,500 Americans, including more than 1,800 West Virginians, lost their lives during the Great War. Many were buried where they fell on the battlefields, only to be disinterred and reburied in military cemeteries in France and Belgium, and finally returned to the United States for burial in national cemeteries or in hometown cemeteries near their families.

Soldiers killed during combat were hastily buried by their comrades in communal or individual graves. Some were marked with a simple cross. However, the type of warfare practiced in World War I resulted in burial areas being crossed many times by opposing combatants, resulting in obliteration of grave markers. In addition, the bodies of many soldiers were not recovered because they drowned in water-filled craters or deep mud holes created by artillery shells and bombs.

The Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919, provided for land in France to be set aside and designated as military cemeteries, leading to reburial of those who were buried on the fields of battle. Soldiers who died in hospitals behind the lines of battle were usually buried in small village cemeteries near the hospital. Many were moved from other small cemeteries in the region. Still others who were discovered during the clearing of battlefields of ammunition, equipment, and debris were reinterred in military cemeteries. It is worth noting that road building and other construction nearly 100 years later unearthed the corpses of fallen soldiers, who were then reburied in the new cemeteries.

Identification of many of the dead was hampered by extensive decomposition or extensive wounds. These were designated "Unknown but to God," and their crosses were marked as such. Our own Unknown World War I soldier entombed in Arlington National Cemetery was one of these.

The disposition of identified casualties became a subject of debate. Should the fallen be buried close to where they fell, or should they be

repatriated to the U.S.? Despite efforts to relocate graves to military cemeteries, some families of those soldiers who died in combat in Europe chose not to disturb the remains as they lay buried in local or private cemeteries. These isolated graves are located in town cemeteries, the war cemeteries of our allies, or in the fields where they fell throughout Europe.

That said, other families of America's war dead petitioned the government to have the bodies of their loved ones returned to the U.S. for reburial. Repatriation of the dead was at first opposed by General Pershing and other military leaders. They felt that no greater honor could be afforded to those who served than to be buried where they fell in the cause of freedom. They also desired to spare families the experience of viewing the mutilated corpses of their sons. France and Great Britain also voiced their opposition to digging up the bodies of soldiers and sending them back to the United States.

In 1919, a compromise was reached with France, and the U.S. War Department sent out a survey to families of over 76,000 identified soldiers buried in Europe to provide them the choice of repatriation or allowing their loved one to remain in European graves. Nearly 44,000 families chose repatriation. These soldiers were returned at a cost of over 30 million dollars. The first of America's war dead arrived aboard ship in Hoboken, New Jersey, on July 10, 1921. Others would soon follow. Many were buried in a special section of Arlington National Cemetery designated as the European Section. Others were reinterred in cemeteries near their hometowns or in family plots.<sup>22</sup>

For the researcher interested in military history, it should be noted that tombstones often identify the unit to which a soldier was attached. Web sites such as those of Arlington National Cemetery or *Find A Grave* may have a photo of the desired tombstone.

The families of soldiers whose remains were repatriated are thus able to remember their dead by being able to visit the local cemetery. However, those buried on foreign soil are honored by citizens of other countries where numerous grave adoptions have taken place. For example, three West Virginians are buried at Flanders Field American

Cemetery; all three have been adopted by Belgians grateful for their service: Moffett by René Caers, Mazzarella by Tamara Ardenoy, and Williams by Danny Demeulemeester and Dorine Allegaert.

**Gold Star Mothers' Pilgrimages.** Constance Potter, in her articles "World War I Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages, Parts I and II," states: "As soon as the AEF landed in France in June [1917], the problem of caring for the dead became an immediate concern." In August a general order of the War Department authorized the organization of a Graves Registration Service (GRS). The GRS was not responsible for the original battlefield burial previously described. However, the GRS eventually moved the bodies to an American military cemetery or shipped them back to the U.S., meticulously identifying them and carefully keeping records. After the war—through 1919—the Office of the Quartermaster General asked families if they would like the body to remain in the European cemetery or be returned to a family plot, nonmilitary stateside cemetery, or national military cemetery, such as Arlington. It is worth repeating that both the French government and General Pershing himself originally opposed repatriation of soldiers' remains, and indeed many families chose to leave their loved ones with their fallen comrades in arms. However, the Gold Star mothers actively petitioned Congress to enable them to visit their sons' (or husbands') overseas graves, and in 1929 Congress authorized the secretary of war to arrange for pilgrimages to European cemeteries, organized by the Office of the Quartermaster General. In Part I, Potter writes:

Between 1930 and 1933, many of the eligible mothers and widows of U.S. soldiers who died overseas during World War I sailed to Europe to see the graves of their sons and husbands. The federal government paid the expenses of these

Gold Star Pilgrims. The Gold Star Pilgrimage files are among the records of the Graves Registration Service (GRS) in the Records of the Quartermaster General (Record Group 92). The GRS files, which contain information on men who died overseas during World War I, are arranged alphabetically by the name of the soldier. The records of each Gold Star mother or widow are in the folders of her son or husband.<sup>23</sup>

Potter's articles are particularly relevant in this investigation because they highlight the pilgrimage of Katherine Brown Holley, widow of Pvt. Lewis Holley, a West Virginian and member of Company B, 542nd Engineers, U.S. Expeditionary Force. Private Holley had died on October 4, 1918, just two months after his enlistment.

Potter continues:

Holley's burial was not typical. Because Lewis Holley was a noncombatant and died on a naval base rather than in a combat zone, he was buried

within four days of his death in an American cemetery. When the GRS first reburied the body on October 25, 1921, they found it buried in a pine box but under a cross marked "Paul Schur." The identification tag on the body, however, identified it as Lewis A. Holley. When the GRS moved Holley's remains the unit found the correct identification disc on both his body and grave marker. The GRS also found a

reburial bottle in the coffin that gave Holley's name, service number, rank, and unit. Because the bodies were usually "badly decomposed, features unrecognizable," the examination report included detailed dental records.<sup>24</sup>

The decision to leave the fallen in cemeteries abroad versus the repatriation of their remains has been a point of discussion at the end of each of our conflicts on foreign soil. In the case of World War I, why would families choose to leave their loved ones buried in European cemeteries? Some, like



1930 Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimage; Alice Williams is presumed to be the third from the right in the front row. Courtesy Danny Demeulemeester

Katherine Holley, first asked for them to be returned, then changed their minds. Some left the remains buried overseas with the intent to visit those graves at a later date, although many would find that they could not afford the trip. Some families left the body “as a reminder to the Europeans of the sacrifice their son or husband had made.” Several West Virginia women who made the journey, in addition to Holley, were Viola B. Robson (mother of James P. Robson), Viola Smith Louk (widow of William Fred Louk), and Alice Williams (mother of Sherman H. Williams). The Viola B. Robson Collection at the West Virginia State Archives contains the papers of this Gold Star mother with numerous artifacts pertaining to her trip, such as her diary, baggage tickets, and identification certificate.

Some interesting—and strange—facts regarding these pilgrimages have emerged: Only one person per soldier could make the trip. Thus, Katherine Holley’s daughter, born in 1919, was not permitted to go despite her mother’s request. If there were both a mother and a widow wishing to make the journey, the mother’s wishes took precedence. Private Holley’s mother had died in 1919 making it possible for Katherine to go. The land portion of the trip lasted approximately two weeks (beyond the sea travel), causing some difficulty for these primarily older women in terms of adjusting to the accommodations, food, and customs of a foreign country. Holley’s case is of particular interest, because as an African American woman, her accommodations were decidedly different than those of white women. Segregation was the order of the day, and the white women traveled via luxury liners, while African American women rode commercial steamers.<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusion

West Virginia has always provided an inordinate number of soldiers, whatever the war, and World War I was no exception. A large number did not return. Some died in battle, on foreign turf. Others died from disease, such as influenza or pneumonia, either stateside or overseas. As always it is the human capital that is the greatest loss in any war, and West Virginia lost a great deal of its capital in The Great War. Those

“Boys of ‘17” who did return were about to witness social, industrial, educational, and occupational changes in their state.

World War I was not the war to end all wars. For the people of the United States, however, it did mark an end to the isolationism they had long proclaimed. West Virginia’s economy had been dependent on farming and timbering. Now it was opening up to more mining and industrialization. Many, if not most, hailed from large families that essentially worked the family farm. When they returned, they found they must leave the farm, perhaps moving to a larger city or even another state, taking a job in a factory. New systems of transportation would evolve. Where people and goods had moved via railroads, rivers, and country roads, paved highways would gradually become the norm. The opening up of the state also meant change for the educational system. One-room schools would decline, giving way to larger consolidated schools. More young people would go on to high school and even college. Mountaineers, while still free, would find that they needed to be even more connected to the outside world; no longer were they merely West Virginia, or even U.S. citizens, but citizens of a truly global society.

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  9. *War Work of Marshall County, West Virginia: The Fighting Forces and the Inner Lines*, 2nd ed. (Marshall County, WV: War Activity Committee, 1919), 71-72.
  10. *Ibid.*, 21-22.
  11. *Ibid.*, 46.
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  13. D. D. Sprague, *Charleston's Roll of Honor* (Charleston, WV: Charleston Printing Company, n. d.), n. p.
  14. Leatherwood.
  15. American Battle Monuments Commission, "History," <https://www.abmc.gov/about-us/history> [accessed July 30, 2015].
  16. American Battle Monuments Commission, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book* ([Washington, DC]: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1938).
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  18. Haulsee, Howe, and Doyle. Several well-maintained print copies of this work are housed in the library at West Virginia Archives and History.
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## New Database Illuminates Early Years of West Virginia State Police Organization By

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*The Fall 2015 issue of West Virginia Historical Society Magazine featured an article by Merle T. Cole on the presence of the West Virginia State Police in Beckley from the time the agency was activated until 1950. New information has come to light using which Mr. Cole provides expanded detail about the earliest days.*

In my July 2015 article, I wrote: "The State Police presence was established in Beckley in the first week of February 1920." Recent discovery of a set of primary documents sheds heretofore unavailable detail on the earliest months of the West Virginia State Police (WVSP), or Department of Public Safety (DPS) as it was originally designated. It also requires revising information in the article.

First Sergeant Jay C. Powers in WVSP headquarters brought to my attention a collection of muster and pay roll records spanning September 1919-December 1924, which were fortuitously saved from destruction around April 2011.<sup>1</sup> At his request I scanned each of these documents into image (jpeg) format and returned the originals to him. The resulting collection, which I have labeled "West Virginia Department of Public Safety Pay and Muster Roll Database," consists of some 270 folders containing over 2,000 files, and totals nearly 9 GB in size. The database does have some limitations for the researcher: The reports do not break data down to sub-patrol station—what is currently called "detachment"—level, nor does it contain any reports on headquarters staffing. But these are comparatively minor shortcomings in an incomparably valuable research tool. A copy of the database has been provided to West Virginia Archives and History.

Until January 1920, monthly pay roll forms are incomplete, and lack entries for such data as company commander's name, station, or other details in blanks provided on the form. This is probably because the two companies authorized by the Creative Act of 1919 had been designated on paper but not actually been formed at that time. Captain John W. Esque was the commanding

officer, assisted by Lieutenant Joseph Clark Berry and Sergeant Clarence M. Jones, the senior noncommissioned officer.<sup>2</sup>

The first element of organizational sophistication appears in the January 1920 pay roll when the DPS field force is a single unit. It is designated “Provisional Company” and stationed at Nitro, west of Charleston. Captain Grover C. Rippetoe was in command.<sup>3</sup> The Charleston Industrial Corporation, which had purchased the Nitro reservation (Explosive Plant C) from the Federal government in November 1919, made available “excellent quarters... in one of the big barracks” there to house the men. Corporation advertisements touted the town’s numerous virtues to attract new industries to their site. Notably one

segment ended, “Nitro is also the home of the State Constabulary of West Virginia.”<sup>4</sup> The designation of the field force as “Provisional Company” accounts for the otherwise mysterious title “Beckley Sub-station, Provisional Company, Department of Public Safety,” cited in my original article.

The May 1920 pay rolls reflect activation of the two companies authorized by the Creative Act, and their physical dispersion. Company A is commanded by Captain Thomas W. Norton, and is stationed at Elkins, Randolph County, with 25 noncommissioned officers and privates. Captain Rippetoe commands Company B, stationed in Beckley, assisted by Corporal Oscar Spencer. Listed as privates in Company B were:

Charles N. Adkins	William K. Davis	Alfred Jones	John W. Rogers
James A. Allen	Carl A. Dodge	Oscar Kincaid	Doc Rose
Robert A Bailey	Hugh M. Dyer	Clarence E. Milber	Fulton Spears
James A. Bowles	Jake B. Greever	Arthur D. Myers	Sam Taylor
Thomas M. Chapman	William Harrison	Waldo R. Noffsinger	Robert J. Terrell
Azel L. Cook	Charles H. Jefferies	Goodykoontz O’Brien	Boyd Watts
Elmer Cubine	Silas P. Jennings	Nye G. Rodes	Luther Wheatley
			Chester D. Bodimer <sup>5</sup>

Because records are not broken down to sub-patrol station level, we cannot tell how these men were distributed within the company’s geographic area of responsibility. But beginning in 1920, there was always a sub-patrol station in the city even during periods when no company headquarters was situated there. We do know that at this point the entire DPS field force consisted of two captains, three sergeants, two corporals and 51 privates. This total of 58 men was the maximum DPS field strength since its activation.<sup>6</sup>

Recurring violence in Mingo County arising from unionization efforts and the resulting strike, required concentration of DPS manpower in that county off and on over the next few years. Company B moved from Beckley to Matewan in

June 1920, returned to Beckley in July, then relocated to Kenova, Cabell County, in September.<sup>7</sup>

Company A headquarters moved from Elkins to Borderland, Mingo County, in January 1921. Implementing the DPS expansion approved by the legislature in 1921, Captain Norton was sent to Red Star, Fayette County, to organize a brand new unit in August. This was initially activated as “First Provisional Company” in July, with 61 men on board—captain, first sergeant, sergeant, two corporals and 56 privates. In August the unit was redesignated Company C, and in September relocated to Beckley. At that time, it aggregated 47 men, as shown below:

**Company C, West Virginia Department of Public Safety, Beckley, September 1921**

<b>Captain:</b> Thomas W. Norton	<b>First Sergeant:</b> Vacant	<b>Sergeants:</b> Jack Kings Lloyd Layman Clete W. Smith	<b>Corporals:</b> John C. Belcher Charles T. Reynolds Carl A. Dodge
<b>Lieutenant:</b> Mack B. Lilly			
<b>Privates:</b> Edward M. Adkins Troy Alkire James R. Bane Frank C. Bennett Carl W. Broyles Gail B. Busch William H. Caplinger Russell Carte William H. Chrisley Robert Cochran	Claud C. Conway Grade Cook Joseph J. Cook Charles H. Dawson Joel F. Easter A. L. Fifel Victor Fluharty Lawrence F. Funk Frank H. Gibson Arlie F. Grimes	Emmet C. Hall Robert A. Hazlett Clarence H. Hinchman Charles C. Hopkins R. E. Hypes Homer J. Keenan James Keplinger Leamon Martin James K. Murray Lee F. Myers	James F. Morris Franklin D. Patrick Henry E. Pomroy Lawrence E. Proudfoot Milon M. Rardon Doc Rose Alda E. Stine William Swift Lloyd L. Waugh <sup>8</sup>

At this point the thread of my original narrative resumes.

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1. First Sgt. Jay C. Powers, WVSP, to author, 4 and 14 August 2015.
  2. West Virginia Department of Public Safety Pay and Muster Roll Database, Muster and Pay Roll, Department of Public Safety, West Virginia, Forms No. 10-D.P.S., September–December 1919 (hereafter Muster and Pay Rolls by company and month).
  3. Muster and Pay Rolls, Provisional Company, January–April 1920.
  4. “Capitol Gossip,” *Charleston Daily Mail*, 11 November 1919:10; “Nitro, West Va. Ideal Factory Locations,” *Charleston Daily Mail*, 27 February 1920:13.
  5. Muster and Pay Rolls, Company B, May 1920.
  6. Muster and Pay Rolls, Companies A and B, May 1920.
  7. Muster and Pay Rolls, Company B, June–September 1920.
  8. Muster and Pay Rolls, Company A, January 1921; First Provisional Company, July 1921; and Company C, August–September 1921.
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**West Virginia Historical Society:  
A Message from the Past**

Following is an excerpt from the report given by then president of the West Virginia Historical Society Delf Norona at the annual meeting on November 8, 1947.

Last year the Society saw fit to elect me as its president. This was certainly not of my seeking. It now devolves upon me to make a report of our activities during the past year, to outline our accomplishments, to acknowledge our weaknesses and failures frankly, and to make suggestions and recommendations based on observation and experience gained during the past eleven and a half months.

At the 1946 meeting a number of resolutions were adopted which are discussed briefly:

A resolution recommended that the law regulating the Department of Archives and History be amended to provide for the creation of a board to set up policies for the Department. In accordance with the resolution a bill was prepared after careful consideration and presented to the Legislature. Unfortunately, the bill died in committee. I urge that the matter again be given

consideration at the next legislative session.

The Legislature, however, did increase the appropriation for the Department and provision was made for microfilming. The total amount voted, however, is still grossly inadequate, and it is useless to expect too much from the Department of Archives and History until it has adequate funds.

The Society last year also went on record in connection with highway markers, and it is pleasing to note that as a result of the activities of some of our members the Highway Markers Commission has been reestablished.

The resolution calling for more aggressive interest in collecting manuscripts pertinent to the history of the State may be carried out in part by the provision for microfilming just mentioned. As the State Society has no funds, all that can be done is to give moral support to the efforts of the West Virginia University and the Department of Archives and History in their program in that regard. Members are urged to collect historic manuscripts, old newspapers, and the like, and to provide that after their death items of this sort in their estates will be placed in either of these two state institutions.

The preservation of our records cannot be too strongly stressed. A case was reported during the past year where a state official—possibly acting within his legal rights—ordered a quantity of historical material thrown away! Many of the courthouse records stored at the University are in a deplorable physical condition and should be microfilmed before they literally crumble to dust. The same applies to many records in the State Auditor's office and probably elsewhere.

Two other resolutions adopted last year, that "scientific exploration be made of the Catawba mound" and that "a study be made of the early French explorations on the upper Monongahela River valley," may be commented upon in connection with what follows concerning the *Horn Papers*:

A Mr. W. F. Horn, formerly from western Pennsylvania, at one time reported the existence of a prehistoric mound at Catawba near Fairmont; on the basis of his report the resolution was probably adopted. On examination the mound was found to be a natural elevation with a distinct shale strata and obviously not man-made.

. . . . A committee headed by the Archivist of the United States, was formed under sponsorship of The Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg to study and report on their status and your president was asked to represent West Virginia on the committee.

The Committee's report has just been made public and appears in the current issue of the *William and Mary Quarterly* together with an explanatory article by its executive secretary. I quote from the official statement of the Committee: "It is our opinion that the primary material in *The Horn Papers* is a fabrication."

. . . .

The growth of the Society has been another matter of consideration during the past year. We cannot secure prestige and be a power in the State without an active membership, not primarily large in numbers but composed of active and capable workers together with business, professional, and cultural leaders of West Virginia, even though the latter merely lend their moral support to the Society's activities.

. . . .

Unfortunately I must comment on the general apathy prevailing not only among many of our members but also among officers as well in matters pertaining to the advancement of the Society. I hasten to explain, however, that in many cases this has been due to lack of suitable time to devote to society business. . . .

Once in a while some individual without training or experience in the difficult art of scientific historical writing aspires to write a local history, and another atrocity comes into existence. Several publications have appeared in recent years in which much good material gathered at considerable effort is put together badly garbled, with numerous errors of omission and commission due to editorial ineptitude, and with mistakes that can only be detected by one familiar with the subject matter.

One such book was published during the past year. I regret to note that a reviewer congratulates a local society for "sponsoring the project."

Fifty years from now books of this sort will still be on library shelves, discrediting not only the local societies sponsoring publication but the State Society as well. I believe we should speak up in

condemnation in no uncertain terms of poorly written history and seek to prevent the publication of additional material of that sort. It should certainly be our aim to maintain the highest possible standards in the publishing of West Virginia history.

....

The general tendency on the part of the non-professional is to stress genealogy and pioneer history to the exclusion of other really more important branches of history. I express the hope that greater consideration will be given to such topics as the industrial development of West Virginia, our social and economic history, and the history of West Virginia's participation in World War II.

We owe a duty to the younger generation to stimulate their interest in West Virginia history. One or two members appear to be making a good start locally in this direction, and I trust that as we grow in numbers and strength as an organization that the Society will reach out and take an active lead in work of this sort.

In conclusion, this has been a happy year on my part. Many friendships have been made both in and out of the State as a result of serving as your president during the past year. I ask forgiveness for mistakes which have been made, which I can assure you have been those of the head and not of the heart.

Delf Norona

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### News of Upcoming Events

Mining Your History Foundation and West Virginia Archives and History are once again sponsoring Hoot Owl, this year scheduled for April 1-2. The all-night research event, which runs from 6:00 p.m. on Friday the 1st to 8:00 a.m. on Saturday the 2nd, takes place in the West Virginia Archives and History Library in Charleston. The cost is \$25 per person if registration is postmarked by March 18 and \$35 if postmarked after that date. The registration form is available on the Archives

and History Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org/history> or by calling Archives and History at (304) 558-0230.

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### West Virginia History Day

The West Virginia Historical Society, one of the sponsors of West Virginia History Day at the Legislature, again had a display at this year's event, held January 29, 2016. The historical society was one of 56 groups that had displays in the Upper Rotunda of the capitol. In addition, 50 individuals that had been nominated by groups from around the state, the largest number in almost ten years, were recognized as History Heroes in a ceremony held in the Culture Center.

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### Submissions

The West Virginia Historical Society magazine welcomes manuscript submissions for publication consideration that deal with state or local history-related topics. Submissions, which should be of a length suitable for publication in the magazine and include footnote/ endnote citations of referenced materials, should be sent to the editor, West Virginia Historical Society, P.O. Box 5220, Charleston, WV 25361.

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Membership is available at the cost of \$10 per year for individuals and \$15 for institutions. Members receive the society magazine, which is published two times a year. Dues should be sent to West Virginia Historical Society, P.O. Box 5220, Charleston, WV 25361.

*If you are moving, please send us your new address so that we can update our records.*

**West Virginia Historical Society**

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