

CRITTENDEN COUNTY AND THE GREAT WAR

The fateful day that sealed the doom of more than two dozen Crittenden County men and 116,000 other Americans in World War I is often left to the forgotten pages of history.

April 6, 2017, marks 100 years since the United States joined what until that time had been known here as the “European War.” But when American “doughboys” began shedding their blood on the battlefields of central Europe, the term “World War” was soon adopted.

The brutal war sparked three years earlier by the assassination of Austrian royalty, had long before April 6, 1917, plunged the globe into conflict. It ceased only after claiming the lives of 27 local soldiers and sailors and another 17 million men, women and children from four continents. Another 20 million civilians and military personnel were wounded, many grievously.

The war whose battles were confined primarily to Europe and the Middle East was of little interest to most Americans until Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare in early 1917. When the empire once again began claiming American ships and lives, war became inevitable.

The Great War, as it was known before World War II, at its height was adding 10,000 Americans a day to the fight. In Crittenden County, an isolated corner of rural Kentucky seemingly unaffected by European matters, few volunteered for duty. Most of the men from here who served – many of them farmers or spar miners – were drafted into Army service. All told, 2.8 million American men were drafted.

When they left Marion for training, it was not without a grand sendoff. On Sept. 12, 1917, the community gathered at the courthouse and marched to the train depot to see off the first group of local draftees, all to the music of the Marion Orchestra.

“Everybody was there, feeble fathers, gray haired mothers, sisters, brothers and sweet hearts and not a few were the tears shed,” reported The Crittenden Record-Press.

The war would drag on another 14 months, ending on Nov. 11, 1918, a date marked each year by Veterans Day. But that war gave us much more than a November holiday.

Man discovered ever-better ways to kill his fellow man, mechanizing war with new weapons like, warplanes, submarines, tanks, flamethrowers, hand grenades and machine guns. It also gave us chemical warfare.

The “War to End All Wars” fueled the rise of an obscure German corporal nearly killed in the war to the most infamous man in modern history. He, of course, was Adolf Hitler, the architect of the Holocaust and another world war that would claim 60 million more lives. It fed the birth of communism in Russia and today’s unrest in the Middle East.

It spelled the end for world powers (Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires), the decline of others (Great Britain) and the rise of both America and Russia/Soviet Union.

The spread of disease through its global nature led to the 1918 “Spanish Flu” pandemic that claimed more lives than the war itself. As many as 40 million died, including Crittenden Countians not just in uniform, but those on the homefront.

There were notable figures like Lawrence of Arabia, the Red Baron and Gen. John J. Pershing. It introduced us to Winston Churchill and the grave of the Unknown Soldier.

But World War I also did some good. It helped to perfect blood transfusions, plastic surgery, telecommunications, prosthetics, mass production and psychotherapy. It gave us daylight saving time and an in-



creased role for women in America’s future. It introduced us to words and phrases like “shell shocked,” “dud,” “camouflage,” “souvenir” and “ace.”

This war changed everything. There is no one left today in Crittenden County to share firsthand accounts of World War I at home or abroad. We are left with only history books, newspaper clippings, ancestry records and secondhand stories to tell the tales and teach us the lessons learned in those two years.

But it is a mistake to look past this period in American history and a disservice to mankind to let April 6 go unnoticed.

Crittenden County men who gave their lives in World War I

Military and ancestry records from 100 years ago are not what they are today, with much of the information missing to time. What is found can often be contradicted in another place. This list of men killed in World War I was compiled by The Crittenden Press from local genealogical files; draft cards, birth files and death certificates accessed through Ancestry.com; and information gathered from local historians and descendants of the men in uniform.

Pvt. Edwin R. Baird

He died of disease at the age of 27 on Oct. 13, 1918, at Camp Zachary Taylor in Louisville, which opened in 1917 to train soldiers for the war. The Army soldier is buried in Crayne Cemetery.



Sgt. Maj. Freeda Ellis Baker

Jan. 28, 1894–Oct. 16, 1918
A physical disability claimed on his draft card didn’t save Baker from his fate at the hands of disease that thrived in the squalor of trench warfare in France. In fact, disease led to the deaths of 2 million men. As a single man living in Marion, he had been operating his own farm when he was called on by the Army. His body was brought home Jan. 10, 1921 and rests in Mapleview Cemetery.

Pvt. William Curry

Jan. 23, 1892–Oct. 20, 1918
He was single and farming his own land in Tolu when he joined the Army. While with the 326th Field Artillery Regiment, 84th Division, he died of pneumonia in a French hospital. His body was moved from its original resting place in France to the Suresnes American Cemetery there on Oct. 18, 1921. His family was sent multiple letters offering to send his body home for burial in Arlington National Cemetery, but they chose to leave him buried in France.

Pvt. Harvey Soloman Conger

June 8, 1892–Nov. 5, 1918
An unmarried farmer, he died of disease at Army Camp Zachary Taylor in Kentucky. He is buried in Pleasant Hill Cemetery.

Seaman 2nd Class Irving Davis

Dec. 16, 1895–Sept. 28, 1918
He died of disease at Great Lakes, Ill., as a member of the Navy. From Marion, he was single and a farmer. He is buried in Crooked Creek Cemetery.

Pvt. Robert M. Davis

Davis, an Army soldier, was killed in action at St. Mihiel, France, on Sept. 12, 1918, the day of the first standalone American offensive. He left behind his wife Georgia and is buried in Pleasant Grove Cemetery in a unmarked grave.



Pvt. John Everett Franks Jr.

Sept. 20, 1887–Sept. 14, 1918
Upon being drafted, Franks claimed exemption due to his dependent mother. His father had died two years after the boy’s birth, but with siblings left to care for his mother, the Army enlisted him on Oct. 2, 1917. A resident of Marion, Franks mined spar for Fairview Mining Co. in Crittenden County. He was single. He was sent to France where he died from a chest wound from machine gun fire from the Central Powers. His body was returned home in August 1921, and he was laid to rest in Union Baptist Church Cemetery.



Pvt. Oscar Wilborn Green

Oct. 14, 1886–Sept. 12, 1918
Green, a farmer from Dycusburg, was drafted into the Army. He was among the first soldiers to serve with “Red Star” 6th Infantry Division formed for the war. Green was killed in France in the waning days of the war, one of only 38 men killed in action during the division’s 43 days of combat. He was not married. His body arrived home Aug. 19, 1921, and is buried in Caldwell Springs Cemetery.

Samuel R. Haney

1894–Oct. 21, 1918
Though he is found in research as having a Crittenden County connection, his address was Fredonia at the time of his induction into the Army. He died at Camp McClellan, Ala. No cause of death can be found.

Pvt. Winstell Hearell

He was struck and killed by a train May 19, 1917, while guarding a bridge in Wickliffe. He was in the National Guard.



Pvt. James Guthrie Highfil

Feb. 4, 1896–Oct. 31, 1918
Highfil was working as a farm laborer on his father Lafe’s farm in Tolu at the time the Army drafted him. He served with the 125th Infantry Regiment, a unit of mostly Michigan National Guard soldiers mustered into federal service for the war. He was killed in action in France on either Oct. 21 or 31, as dates found differ. His body was returned home and buried July 30, 1921, in White Chapel Cemetery in the Irma community. He was single.

Pvt. Odie Holoman

Aug. 14, 1892–Oct. 27, 1918
Buried in the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery in France, no cause of death can be found. A Crittenden County native, he was a farm laborer living in Fredonia at the time he was drafted. A single man, he had sought exemption, claiming he supported his mother and sister. He was a soldier with the Army’s 38th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division. The unit still holds the nickname “Rock of the Marne,” earned while fighting German forces in its first battle of the war.

Pvt. Joseph Allen Hoover

From Tolu, he died of disease on Oct. 10, 1918, at Camp Zachary Taylor in Louisville, where most of the men from the county were sent to train. He was laid to rest in White Chapel Cemetery.

Pvt. Luther Horning

July 18, 1891–Sept. 14, 1918
He died of pneumonia in France, and his body was returned home for burial Nov. 19, 1920, in Love Cemetery. At least one record shows his date of death on Sept. 16. He came from a large family of 10 children. Single, he was a miner at Beard Mines. He is buried in Love Cemetery.



Pvt. Amplias Marble Moore

Jan. 4, 1894–Oct. 8, 1918
When he was drafted into the Army, Moore was farming his own land in Tolu. He died of wounds received in battle in France. He was never married and had eight siblings. He is buried in Watson Cemetery.

Pvt. Lonnie Moore

From Repton, he died of disease at a U.S. Army hospital in North Carolina.

George Bassett Newcom

Dec. 28, 1897–April 2, 1917
He died at the Great Lakes, Ill., naval hospital of measles and is buried in Mapleview Cemetery. This was nearly 50 years before the measles vaccine was discovered. The disease was a deadly U.S. military epidemic during the war.



Ellis B. Ordway

Aug. 18, 1895–July 26, 1918
As the first Crittenden Countian killed in America’s foreign wars of the 20th century, Ordway was recognized by his community when American Legion

Post 111 was formed in 1924 and named in his honor. He volunteered for the Army in June 1917 and left Crayne to join the Allies as a soldier in the 16th Infantry Division, the first “Doughboys” thrown into battle. In France, he was injured twice in the leg on July 17, 1918, and died nine days later, one of 1,037 men from the division killed in the war. Ordway’s body was not returned home until April 1921. He was from a family of nine children and a large funeral was held at Crayne Presbyterian Church, where he had been a member. His body was wrapped in the 48 stars and 13 bars of Old Glory and rests in Crayne Cemetery.

Ellet Newton Pace

Sept. 24, 1897–Sept. 22, 1918
Buried in Salem Cemetery, he was serving as a landsman machinist’s mate in the U.S. Naval Reserve when he died of influenza on Sept. 21, 1918, at the naval hospital in Great Lakes, Ill.

Pvt. John Elmer “Frankling” Samuel

Unmarried, he died at the age of 31 of disease on Sept. 26, 1918, in France. He had mailed home a letter a week before his death, but the letter did not arrive to his family until Oct. 24, 1918.

Pvt. Sheffer S. Sullenger

Sept. 22, 1894–Oct. 4, 1918.
Born in Marion, he was working as a miner at the Rosiclare Lead & Fluospar Mining Co. across the river in Illinois, where he was living when he was drafted. He was interred at the Oise-Aisne American Cemetery and Memorial in Fere-en-Tardenois, France. He died of pneumonia.

Pvt. Charles Eugene Threlkeld

Aug. 11, 1895–1917
From Tolu, he died sometime in 1917 of measles and pneumonia at Camp Zachary Taylor in Kentucky. He was not married and was in the Army’s 36th Infantry Regiment of the 84th Infantry Division.

Harry Worten Threlkeld

June 22, 1893–Dec. 12, 1918
He died of pneumonia in St. Florent, France. His body was brought home to be buried in Mapleview Cemetery in November 1920. Born in Lola, he was living in Marion at the time he was drafted and was working as a miner at the Pigmy Mining Co. in Mexico.

Cpl. Clarence Lonnie Turley

Nov. 13, 1894–Aug. 30, 1918
Born in Marion, Turley was a single man working as a car inspector in Pasco, Wash., at the time he entered the Army. He was killed in France and his body rests there in the Oise-Aisne American Cemetery and Memorial. He served in the Army’s 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Division and has a memorial marker in Piney Fork Cemetery near the rest of his family.

Pvt. James Cecil Turner

Oct. 30, 1893–Oct. 20, 1918
He died of disease in France. From Marion, he is buried in Union Baptist Church Cemetery. Unmarried, he was a farmer.

Pvt. Edgar Sherman Wofford

Aug. 12, 1893–July 16, 1918
According to his death certificate, he died of complications from appendicitis. He was a farmer from Sheridan and was not married. He is buried in Dunn Springs Cemetery.

Seaman 2nd Class Winston Woodson

From Repton, he died of disease at the Navy’s hospital at Mare Island, Calif. No dates or additional information could be found.

There is no monument in Crittenden County to the individuals or collective group of local men who died in The Great War.

World War I Casualties

U.S. servicemembers (worldwide).....	4,734,991
Battle deaths	53,402
Other service-related deaths	63,114
Non-mortal woundings.....	204,002

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs