

# Nathaniel Stone Clifford

U.S. Marine Corps, Lieutenant Colonel

1906 - 1943

Written by Will Angus and Kylie Newlon

Instructed by Rebecca Bartlett

Nathaniel Stone Clifford was born on August 3, 1906, in the small town of Milton, Massachusetts. A close-knit, rural community, Milton had fewer than five thousand residents during Clifford's youth, but his family still possessed a certain prominence: his great-grandfather, John H. Clifford, had been governor of the state in the 1850s.



Clifford early in his military career.  
*FindAGrave*

Nathaniel attended Harvard University, where he excelled at hockey and football and participated in several clubs. If such activities weren't enough, on July 9, 1928, Clifford joined the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve (USMCR) which allowed him to remain in school and participate in military training on a part-time basis. During the spring of 1929, Clifford graduated from Harvard University and soon thereafter completed military training at Squantum Naval Air Station in Quantico, Virginia. By July 1930, Clifford was a commissioned officer with the rank of first lieutenant in the USMCR.

A year after completing officer training, Clifford married Jeanette Tiley Hume Sprague on May 28, 1931. He was 24 years old. Together they had two children, Nathaniel Jr. and Elizabeth, and continued living around Quantico. But in December 1940, as World War II raged in Europe and Japan continued its military expansion in the Pacific, the Marine Corps activated Clifford from his reservist status.



## CLIFFORD, NATHANIEL STONE.

Home Address: 203 School St., Milton, Mass.

College Address: Standish B 34.

Prepared at Milton.

Activities: All Dormitory Football.

Stone's photograph and information in Harvard's 1929 yearbook, which miscalculates his age as 19. *E-Yearbook*

## Nathaniel Stone Clifford

The family moved to Coronado, California to be close to the Marine Corps Barracks in San Diego in 1942 while Clifford underwent flight training. The Marine Corps soon promoted him to lieutenant colonel and made him executive officer of Headquarters Marine Air Group 21, attached to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. In late 1942, Clifford's unit deployed to the Russell Islands in the South Pacific.

The assignment proved tragically brief. Shortly after 8:00 PM on August 5th, 1943, Clifford and another pilot named Lieutenant William S. Devereaux were conducting a flight experiment in a Dauntless scout bomber (SBO 4 #06735), when their plane went down about four miles off the coast of Pavuvu. Clifford released a parachute flare, the canopy of which tangled in his plane's tail. He and Devereaux were both killed, most likely from their plane's impact into the Pacific Ocean. Their bodies were never recovered.

Nathaniel Clifford received the Legion of Merit Award, Commendation Ribbon, and Purple Heart for his service as a pilot during wartime. A marker was dedicated for Clifford at the West Virginia National Cemetery in Pruntytown on May 21, 1991. He also has a headstone in Milton Cemetery in Milton, Massachusetts, and is listed on the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial's Tablets of the Missing in the Philippines.



**An SBD Dauntless bomber of the same type as Clifford's plane flies over Wake Island in the Pacific during World War II. The Dauntless was one of the most important aircraft of the Pacific War, and nearly 6,000 were built. NARA**

# Nathaniel Stone Clifford

## Sources

Massachusetts. "U.S., Births Index, 1904-1938." *Birth Certificate for Nathaniel Stone Clifford*. FamilySearch, Salt Lake City, Utah. Access provided by ancestry.com. Accessed May 17, 2022, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/2631458:5062?ssrc=pt&tid=47621486&pid=6810931232>.

United States Census Bureau. *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*. Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed May 17, 2022, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/98762785:6224?ssrc=pt&tid=47621486&pid=6810931232>.

United States Selective Service. "Draft Card for Nathaniel Stone Clifford." *U.S. World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947*. Box 176, Folder 147, Group: Records of the Selective Service System. Saint Louis, Missouri: National Archives at St. Louis. Accessed May 17, 2022, [https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/13031260:2238?tid=&pid=&queryId=87405f9820568aeea396270347e8eafa&\\_phsrc=MTe445&\\_phstart=successSource](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/13031260:2238?tid=&pid=&queryId=87405f9820568aeea396270347e8eafa&_phsrc=MTe445&_phstart=successSource).

Tcshultz and Andy. "Lt. Col Nathaniel Stone Clifford." *FindaGrave.com*. Accessed May 17, 2022, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56759522/nathaniel-stone-clifford>.

"Milton Academy Had Big Year on Gridiron, Dropping Only One Game." *Boston Globe*, November 22, 1924, accessed May 17, 2022, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/430605341/?terms=Nathaniel%20Clifford&match=1>.

"Nathaniel S. Clifford." *Missing Marines*. Accessed May 17, 2022, <https://missingmarines.com/nathaniel-s-clifford/>.

Superior Court Office. *Marriage Records, 1810-1953*. Washington D.C.: Clerk of the Superior Court, Records Office. Accessed May 17, 2022, [https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/188535:61404?tid=&pid=&queryId=5e6857d0f207322a4c2a95ba5fcf1174&\\_phsrc=sOE1548&\\_phstart=successSource](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/188535:61404?tid=&pid=&queryId=5e6857d0f207322a4c2a95ba5fcf1174&_phsrc=sOE1548&_phstart=successSource).



# Nathaniel Stone Clifford

## Resting Place

West Virginia National Cemetery  
42 Veterans Memorial Lane, Grafton, WV 26354  
(304) 265-2044

Section MA  
Site 34

Date of interment: July 27, 1994

## About the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project

The West Virginia National Cemeteries Project is a program of the West Virginia Humanities Council, funded in part by the Veterans Legacy Program of the Department of Veteran Affairs and initiated in 2021. All biographies produced as part of this program are composed by West Virginia high school students, who conduct original research on veterans interred at the Grafton National Cemetery or the West Virginia National Cemetery, both of which are located in or near Grafton, Taylor County, West Virginia.

As home to one of the nation's earliest National Cemeteries, the community of Grafton has longstanding traditions of honoring America's veterans, including the longest continuously celebrated Memorial Day parade in the United States. The Grafton National Cemetery, located in the heart of the city and founded in 1867, is typically the endpoint of each year's parade. When the Grafton National Cemetery began to run short of space during the 1960s, the West Virginia National Cemetery was dedicated in 1987, just a few miles outside of Grafton in the community of Pruntytown. The same National Cemetery Administration staff cares for both facilities.

The West Virginia Humanities Council is proud to thank the following organizations for their participation in the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project: West Virginia Archives and History, the West Virginia University history department, Taylor County Historical and Genealogical Society, Taylor County Public Library, and Grafton High School.

**Please refer comments or questions to the West Virginia Humanities Council**  
1310 Kanawha Blvd E, Charleston, WV 25301  
[programs@wvhumanities.org](mailto:programs@wvhumanities.org)  
[www.wvhumanities.org](http://www.wvhumanities.org)  
304.346.8500