GUY ARLEY SATTERFIELD

1887 – 1961, WORLD WAR I

U.S. ARMY, PRIVATE

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Guy Arley Satterfield was born in Fairmont, West Virginia, on October 28, 1887, to parents John Wesley Satterfield and Celia Mae (née Fowler) Satterfield. John was a coal miner who served in the Civil War as a bugler with the 1st West Virginia Light Artillery. Celia grew up in Fairmont with her sisters and her mother.

Celia and John married in 1880, and started a family in the small Marion County town of Paw Paw, where John farmed. The Satterfields mourned the loss of their first child, an unnamed baby girl who died in 1881, but went on to welcome four more children in quick succession. Guy had several siblings: Elsie, Glenn, and Harry. Guy remained close to these siblings all his life. By 1900, the Satterfield family had moved in with Celia's mother, while both John and the eldest son, Glenn, worked in the Marion County coal mines. Thirteen-year-old Guy may have contributed farm wages to the household.

Celia's mother left her estate and belongings to Celia upon her death in 1907. The inheritance provided some financial relief, since the family was able to buy their farm mortgage-free by 1910. John even left the mines and returned to farming full time. He left at an opportune time, as one of the worst coal mining disasters in American history occurred at the Fairmont Coal Company's Monongah Mine on December 6, 1907, killing more than 360 men. While the explosion at Monongah was one of the deadliest, everyday accidents still claimed hundreds of West Virginia miners' lives each year. The 1902 state mine inspector's report lists 16 deaths that fiscal year in Marion County alone, most struck by mine cars or falling slate.

All three Satterfield sons entered the construction business and avoided these subterranean dangers. Glenn worked in general home construction, Harry in plastering, and Guy as a lather. As the three Satterfield brothers settled into their 20s with stable jobs, however, tumultuous world events intruded on their lives.

After years of maintaining its isolationist neutrality as World War I raged in Europe, the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917. Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare against American shipping and a secret telegram asking Mexico to join the Central Powers as an ally—on the U.S.'s southern doorstep—pushed President Woodrow Wilson and Congress into the Allied camp with Great Britain and France.

Only 127,000 men comprised the armed forces of the United States, however, which could not sustain the fight in a war that had already cost tens of millions of lives. Troop mobilization began in earnest in May 1917 with the passage of the Selective Service Act, a measure that gave the President of the United States the authority to register available men for potential military service. Individual states were tasked with setting

Soldiers using Camp Sherman's YMCA library.

National Archives

up local boards to enroll men considered eligible by virtue of their age (21-31 in the first round of registration), medical fitness, and any special family considerations.

Guy Satterfield was 29 when the Selective Service Act became law, placing him nearly at the end of draft age. He dutifully registered on June 7, 1917, with Local Board No. 5 in Akron, Ohio, where he was working as a lather for E. B. McCormick. His previous work as a lather and plasterer might have set him up for an engineering role in the Army, but he ended up fighting in the infantry instead. Guy's younger brother Harry registered for the draft in Marion County, but may have been exempt due to poor eyesight and a need to support his family

Guy's first assignment was with the 158th Depot Brigade in July 1918, but depot brigades were mere temporary formations for organizing and dispatching men to permanent assignments. He quickly shipped out for training with Company F, 333rd Infantry Reigment, at Camp Sherman.

Located in Chillicothe in southeastern Ohio, 2,000 hastily-constructed buildings comprised Camp Sherman's sprawling campus. The camp included not only barracks and training grounds, but also a library, and 11 YMCA buildings to provide recreational options. Sherman's first group of drafted men arrived for training in September 1917, and the camp continued to expand.

The 333rd moved to New York City, then departed American shores on September 1, 1918, bound for France on a passenger-liner-turned-troop-transport named RMS *Carmania*. Less than a month after their arrival in France, however, the 333rd was no more. The regiment was "skeletonized" and its men were dispatched to new units in dire need of replacement soldiers. In most cases, this was due to losses at the front.

Satterfield found himself transferred to Company C, 364th Infantry Regiment, for the rest of the war. The 364th comprised part of the 91st "Wild West" Division, so named because many of its men were from western states such as Montana, Washington, Utah, Idaho, and Nevada.

The 91st Division was supposed to train for three months after its arrival in France before adding

its firepower to the Allied forces on the Western Front. Instead, barely a month elapsed before the unit was called up to the front lines and placed in the reserve during the Battle of Saint-Mihiel in September 1918, just as Guy Satterfield was landing in France on the *Carmania*.

On September 26, the 91st deployed in the costliest American operation of the war, the Meuse-Argonne offensive. Conceived as a sustained, war-winning push into German-held territory, the fighting ground relentlessly on through October and into November with 26,000 men of the American Expeditionary Forces losing their lives. It was this terrible attrition that forced the skeletonization of Satterfield's 333rd Infantry Regiment on October 7 and sent Guy to the badly hurt 364th.

Guy's first several days with the 364th Infantry were filled with marching on muddy roads—including 25 kilometers on October 12 alone. The veterans of the unit were disheveled, tired, and dirty. On October 17, the regiment boarded trains and departed the Meuse-Argonne front, heading instead for Belgium and the English Channel coast. Beyond the train windows, the soldiers glimpsed "barracks, stables, huge [supply] dumps, warehouses, aviation fields, hangars, hospitals and cemeteries lined the railroad on either side, with here and there a prison camp crowded with Boche [Germans]. The huge cemeteries near each hospital mutely told their tales of thousands of lives given up for the cause."

When they disembarked and began the march northward through Belgium, even grizzled veterans of the Meuse-Argonne were shocked. American troops were rarely deployed to Belgium, so few had seen for themselves the killing grounds like Paschendaele or Ypres. The years of war prior to U.S. involvement now struck them full in the face:

> **Everywhere there had been an upheaval of the earth. Shell-hole overlapped shell-hole for a distance of twenty miles. Everywhere was mud—mud, that resembled gravy in its consistency. Men could not move without splattering themselves. Shoes were hidden in mud, wrapped leggings turned into spirals of caked mud, clothing was smeared and caked with it. Trenches crossed and re-crossed, cutting the earth in every direction as far as the eye could see.**

Though war's destruction was all around them, the 364th did not make contact with the enemy again until October 31. Marching up to the front that night, two companies were struck hard by German artillery, inflicting over 50 casualties. Early in the morning, 1st Battalion (including Guy's Company C) kicked off an attack on Spitaals Bosschen, a wooded position near the present-day Belgian town of Waregem, as part of the Ypres-Lys Offensive.

Company C was in the 364th's first wave as the regiment assaulted heavily fortified German positions on the hillsides. Casualty counts are not exact, but it was the regiment's bloodiest day in Belgium. The 1st and 3rd Battalions pushed doggedly into the wood and engaged German machine gun nests in a close-quarters battle that lasted eight hours. Regimental officers later wrote of Belgian civilians intermingled in the German positions, and Company C men recalled nearly shooting a little girl and her family after mistaking them for enemy soldiers in the confusion. For a recruit like Satterfield, who had missed the regiment's prior fighting in the Meuse-Argonne, it must have been a terrifying baptism of fire.

LEFT: 364th Infantry graves in France.

OPPOSITE: Scenes of the devastation the regiment encountered in French and Belgian towns.

National Archives

The Germans managed to withdraw from Spitaals Bosschen intact. In the ensuing days, there were many more close calls for the 364th, but no pitched battles. A night attack across the Scheldt River was abandoned. By day, the soldiers tried to stay out of sight of German aircraft. Placed briefly in reserve, the 364th was called up to the front again on November 10, but plans for a renewed attack were abandoned when the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918.

Satterfield's division remained in France for postwar duties after the Armistice. On March 25, 1919, portions of Company C, including Private Guy Satterfield, boarded the USS *Orizaba* at St. Nazaire, France, and sailed across the Atlantic to Hoboken, New Jersey, where they arrived on April 2, 1919. Guy Satterfield was honorably discharged on April 24.

Guy went back to living with his mother and sister. He never had a wife or children. During the Great Depression, he found work on Works Project Administration (WPA) projects through President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program. Men employed by the WPA built roads, hospitals, schools, and national parks. Guy worked as an unskilled laborer on numerous such projects in Fairmont between 1936 and 1940, including Benton's Ferry Bridge, the Fairmont General Hospital, and making various repairs to the city's streets.

His mother passed away on January 24, 1937. When his sister Elsie died on May 12, 1941, Guy went to live in a boarding house, but continued working. Through World War II, he was an employee of Westinghouse Electric in Fairmont. By 1950, he was back to the construction work of his early life, as a lather and plasterer.

On March 25, 1961, Guy collapsed outside the Fairmont Post Office and died of coronary thrombosis at the age of 74. He is buried in the Grafton National Cemetery.

PLACE OF INTERMENT:
Grafton National Cemetery
SECTION A
SITE 153

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

As home to one of the nation's first national cemeteries—founded shortly after the Civil War—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. Since 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.

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, Grafton High School, and University High School, among many others.

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Veterans Legacy Grant Program
Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington D.C.

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For readability, bibliographies have been omitted from this publication. Student research for these biographies relies heavily on primary sources—census records, city directories, draft cards, muster rolls, and more—made available digitally through Ancestry and Fold3. Yearbook repositories and the digitized collections of many universities and archives have been invaluable resources. Most newspaper research was conducted digitally via Newspapers.com, NewspaperArchives, and the Library of Congress's *Chronicling America* database.

Servicemembers' Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs) and Individual Deceased Personnel Files (IDPFs) are another essential part of project research, provided free of charge in most cases by the National Archives through standard records requests.

As the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project has grown and matured, the team has found that new sources sometimes surface for veterans researched in prior project years. To better maintain a "living bibliography" of all its veterans, a single master document is kept up on the project's webpage under the "Programs" tab at **www.wvhumanities.org**.

Views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Archives of the United States, or any other federal agency. For more information about the Veterans Legacy Memorial and the Veterans Legacy Grant Program, visit **www.vlm.cem.va.gov**.

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