

## Casualties of WW I - Unheralded Heroes of Doddridge County

Over the past five months, I have shared with you the stories of 26 Doddridge County veterans who were casualties of World War I. For various reasons, some more understandable than others, there are four additional Doddridge County casualties of that war who over the years have not been included among listings of the county's war dead. The addition of these four, profiled below, brings the number of known Doddridge County casualties of World War I to thirty. My objective here is to give them now and for the future the recognition they deserve, and thus right a wrong that has existed for the past century.

### **Grover Ray Harbert (1889-1918)**

According to his birth record, Grover R. Harbert was born in Doddridge County on September 12, 1889, a son of John E. Harbert and Cora A. Hall. When the family was enumerated in McClellan District in 1900, it consisted only of John, Grover and another child, but not Cora. Four years later, the widowed John Harbert married Alverta M. Talkington, and the family eventually added three more children.

In the 1910 Census, the 20-year-old Grover was still living with his family in McClellan District. He was single and working as a farm laborer, probably on the home farm. When Grover registered for the draft with the Doddridge County draft board in June 1917, he was still single and working as a farmer. He gave his address as Folsom W.Va., and his birthplace as "Folsom R #1 W.Va." That probably referred to a part of McClellan District that received its mail through the post office in Folsom, Wetzel County.

A year later, an article titled "*Boys Leave for Camp Monday*" appeared in the West Union Record of Thursday, July 18, 1918, with the lead-in stating "*Following are the names of the boys who will leave here Monday for Camp Meade, Md., called for 2:00 p.m. at the court house.*" Among the 96 listed was Grover Ray Harbert, who soon found himself in Military Police training at Camp Meade, Maryland. But as happened to so many World War I soldiers, he contracted influenza and pneumonia, and he died on October 22, 1918. His obituary in the November 7, 1918 issue of the Doddridge County Republican, which identified him as Ray Harbert, included the following heart-wrenching detail:

*"A particularly sad feature in connection with the death of this young man was, his father hearing of his illness had started to Camp Meade Monday to see him, only to learn on his arrival that his son had passed into that Silent land from whose borne no traveler returns, and that the body was on its way back to the home."*

The name Grover Harbert is on the Doddridge veterans Honor Wall, but not denoted as a casualty of war. However, the West Virginia Archives Veterans Database lists Grover Ray Harbert among the World War I casualties from Wetzel County, clearly incorrect. It is known from the 1920 Census that the Harbert family home in McClellan District was located at Beverlin

Fork. Grover Ray Harbert was buried in the Lions Cemetery at Wallace, Harrison County, his military unit inscribed on his prominent civilian headstone.

### **James A. Garfield Hays (1893-1918)**

James A. G. Hays was born in Tyler County, a son of Christopher C. Hays and Savilla Pratt. James' mother died of "cancer & tumor" in early 1910, but she also was not with the family in the 1900 Census of McClellan District. James was raised by his father's first cousin Sophia (Harris) Dye and her husband John at Big Battle, Doddridge County. In the 1910 Census there, the 16-year-old James was listed as a farm laborer on the home farm.

When James registered for the draft with the Doddridge County draft board in June 1917, he gave his residence as "Salem R.3 W.Va," the mailing address for Big Battle. He was single and was working as a tool dresser at oil wells in Mt. Clare. On August 3, 1918, he traveled to Parkersburg and enlisted in the Navy. He was sent to Hampton Roads, Norfolk, Virginia for training. Six weeks later, the conditions he was subjected to led to a severe case of bronchopneumonia, from which he died on September 28, 1918.

James Hays' name does not appear in any form on the Doddridge veterans wall. The West Virginia Archives Veterans Database incorrectly gives his birthplace as Salem, Harrison County, and includes him among the World War I casualties from Harrison County, despite there being no evidence that he ever lived in Harrison County. James A. Garfield Hays was clearly a Doddridge County veteran and one of our casualties of World War I. Seaman 2 James A. G. Hays is buried at Pleasant Baptist Church Cemetery in Center Point. Inscribed on his civilian headstone is his military component "*U.S.N.R.F.*" and the words "*Died at Norfolk Va.*"

### **Salathiel E. Hyde (1887-1918)**

Born on Flint Run in Doddridge County, Salathiel E. Hyde was a son of Enoch S. Hyde and Flora B. Benedum. He had just one sibling, a younger sister. His father made his living as a merchant in 1900, but by 1910 had changed his profession to blacksmith. The family was enumerated in McClellan District in every census from 1900 through 1930. The location of the family home in 1930 was specified as Big Battle.

In 1910 the 22-year-old Salathiel was still single and living at home, his occupation listed as day laborer (working out). When he registered for the draft with the Doddridge County draft board in June 1917, he again was single, working for himself as a farmer, and residing at "Salem R #3 W.Va," which would have been the mailing address for Big Battle. On May 27, 1918, Salathiel E. Hyde was one of the 65 recruits who boarded the train at the West Union depot and departed for training at Camp Lee, Virginia. He was assigned to Co D, 2nd Development Battalion, 155th Depot Brigade. But like so many other soldiers in his situation at that time, he soon contracted a "lung disease," probably influenza or pneumonia. Salathiel died on October 2, 1918, his 31st birthday. He was buried at Big Battle Cemetery, near Welcome Baptist Church.

Salathiel Hyde's name does not appear on the Doddridge veterans wall. The West Virginia Archives Veterans Database includes him among the World War I casualties from Harrison County, probably from misinterpretation of his 1917 mailing address. But Salathiel E. Hyde never resided in Harrison County. He was a Doddridge County veteran and one of our casualties of World War I.

### **Clyde Robinson (1901-1918)**

Clyde Robinson was born in Harrison County in 1901, a son of Bertie Robinson (b. 1881 in Marion County), who was not married. She had another son, Herald, five years later, but still was not married. In the 1910 Census, Bertie and her two sons were residing in Mannington District, Marion County. Bertie was still single, had no occupation, and was unable to read or write.

In October 1914 Bertie married Lewis A. Swiger (1868-1939), a widower from Center Point who had five children by his first wife, Rachel Stoneking. Bertie, Clyde and Herald thereupon moved to McClellan District, Doddridge County, and became part of Lewis Swiger's household.

Over the next couple of years, Clyde succeeded in finishing his common schooling. In March 1917, Clyde enlisted in Co K, West Virginia National Guard. From there he was mustered into Federal Service and trained at Camp Shelby, Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He embarked for France in early 1918. On July 21, 1918, as a member of Co B, 102nd Infantry Regiment, 26th Infantry Division in France, Private Clyde Robinson was killed in action at age 17. Astoundingly, his obituary in the [Doddridge County Republican](#) of September 12, 1918 referred to him twice as Clyde Roberts, rather than Robinson, before getting it right in the last paragraph. Private Clyde Robinson is buried in France in the Oise-Aisne American Cemetery.

Having lived with his family in Doddridge County for the three years preceding his enlistment, and being a product of Doddridge County schools, Clyde Robinson was clearly an established Doddridge County resident at the time of his enlistment. Yet his name is not found on the Doddridge veterans Honor Wall, and the West Virginia Archives Veterans Database counts him among the World War I casualties from Harrison County. But the evidence shows that Clyde Robinson was in fact a Doddridge County veteran and one of our casualties of World War I.

### **The War Comes to an End**

One hundred years ago this month, on November 11, 1918, the Great War in Europe, which we now know as World War I, mercifully came to an end with the signing of an armistice agreement between Germany and the Allied powers. Nine million soldiers of all nationalities were left dead, and 21 million wounded, with another 5 million civilian casualties from various causes such as disease or starvation. After four brutal years, it was the infusion of American manpower and resources in late 1917 and early 1918 that finally turned the tide and led to Allied victory.

The people of Doddridge County were not oblivious to those distant events. Many of their sons, brothers or husbands, having answered the call to duty, were there to witness them firsthand.

But some of those loved ones were destined never to return to tell of what they had witnessed, as they fell victims to enemy weapons or the scourge of disease.

And then, suddenly it seems, with the signing of a document, it was all over. The November 14, 1918 issue of the West Union Herald announced the news with a huge headline spread across the full width of the front page:

*GREAT WAR PASSES INTO HISTORY.*

And how did the people of Doddridge County react to the news? The same issue of the Herald tells us in great detail, including a false alarm before the actual announcement was made:

**WEST UNION HAS TWO CELEBRATIONS**

*Last Thursday when the word reached here that Germany had signed the armistice, West Union proceeded to celebrate, and crowds were out early on the streets parading, horns and everything poundable to make a noise. When the evening train arrived here bearing the evening papers stating that armistice had not been signed, the crowds quickly dispersed in mad disgust.*

*Then again on Monday, all business in West Union took a half holiday, after the word reached here that the armistice had been signed.*

*To hear the bells ringing, one could almost imagine that it was Sunday, for indeed everyone here were at peace. Folks stood around on the street corners in small groups discussing some phase about the war.*

*It was funny to pass the different business houses and read the signs hastily written and tacked upon their doors. Some were written on order blanks, cards, letterheads and statement blanks.*

*Monday night crowds gathered again in a joyful mood and once more the parade was in full blast, which lasted until very late. Fireworks, red fire and several shots of dynamite were shot off.*

**Last Article in Series**

This marks the fourteenth and final article in my series telling the stories of Doddridge County's thirty known casualties of World War I. I want to once more acknowledge the major contributions made to this project by my collaborator Rennie Brown, who took his usual role as proofreader to a whole new level, and without whose help this series would not have been possible. Additional information about all of Doddridge County's war dead from World War I to present can be found on his website at [www.doddridgecountyroots.com/military/casualties.pdf](http://www.doddridgecountyroots.com/military/casualties.pdf). For myself, as interesting, enlightening and sometimes poignant as the stories of those soldiers of a hundred years ago can be, I'm happy to be turning my focus back to the Doddridge County of an earlier time, where I actually feel more at home.

=====  
© 2018 by Jennifer Wilt. Originally published in The Doddridge Independent, 23 Nov 2018.