



Photos contributed

American soldiers killed during the Hindenburg Line assault.

The World War I story of Army Pvt. Harry Pigott

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SPECIAL TO THE BEACON

Army Pvt. Harry Langdon Pigott was born and raised in Brunswick County. A partial family tree is in FamilySearch. His 1917 draft registration card shows he was married, farming, and living in Shallotte. He was married to Annie Eliza Milliken on Dec. 15, 1916.

Pigott was ordered to report to duty on Sept. 18, 1917. Records show his wife was pregnant at the time. He was assigned to Company M, 120th Infantry, 30th "Old Hickory" Division, and eventually began training at Camp Sevier, S.C., as reported in previous posts. In December, his daughter Rosalind Pigott was born.

Pigott, along with Pvt. Jesse James Leonard, were scheduled to depart for France on May 17, 1918, but did not board the USS Miltiades with their companies. Instead, both boarded Ascanius on June 5, with many other soldiers of the 30th Division who were detached from their units, for reasons unknown.

Soon after departing, Pigott's small daughter passed away. She had survived only five months, dying June 9, 1918, from whooping cough. She was laid to rest where her father would eventually join her at Gurganus Cemetery in Shallotte.

Multiple posts have included the horrific details of the Hindenburg Line and the many who were wounded or died during the assault. Pigott was killed in action Sept. 29, 1918.

Pigott gave his life for what has been called the turning point of the war. He and the courageous men of the 120th Infantry were the first Allied troops to break the line. It was also the Great War's deadliest day for North Carolina.

Between Sept. 29 and Oct. 1, 1918, the three days of the Hindenburg Assault, the following 120th Infantry casualties were reported: 202 killed in action, 759 wounded.

Pigott's remains were returned to the United States on April 3, 1921.

This concludes the Brunswick County soldiers who died or were wounded breaking the Hindenburg Line, the conflict that led to the end of the war.

These words were written in 1923: "The 2nd American Corps, under Maj. Gen. George W. Read, consisting of the 27th and 30th American Divisions, was not with the main American army at the Marne and St. Mihiel and in the Meuse-Argonne. It served throughout the war with the British armies. Consequently the work of the New Yorkers of the 27th and of the Carolinians and the Tennesseans of the 30th has been somewhat obscured in our histories.



The headstone of Harry Pigott

"The Canal Tunnel sector of the German line north of St. Quentin was tremendously fortified, with passageways running out from the main tunnel to hidden machine gun nests. Into these nests the German gunners returned after the American assaulting waves had passed, and poured a destructive fire into their rear. But through everything the men of the New York and the 'Old Hickory' divisions forced their way, supported by the Australians, until the fortified zone was conquered in one of the most desperate single conflicts of the war.

"In fact, in analyzing the records of our state's dead, we now know the Sept. 29, 1918, charge on the Hindenburg Line was North Carolina's deadliest of the war."

If you would like to help us honor Pigott or another Brunswick County World I veteran, go to caswellriflerange.com or email ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com.

A monument will be placed at the site of the rifle range in Caswell Beach Veterans' Day 2018 in honor of the men and women from Brunswick County who served their country. A book is to be published during 2019 containing all 725 names, as well as a historical overview of the 1918 World War I Rifle Range Target Pit Storage Room.

Norma Eckard of Caswell Beach is president of Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range Inc.