

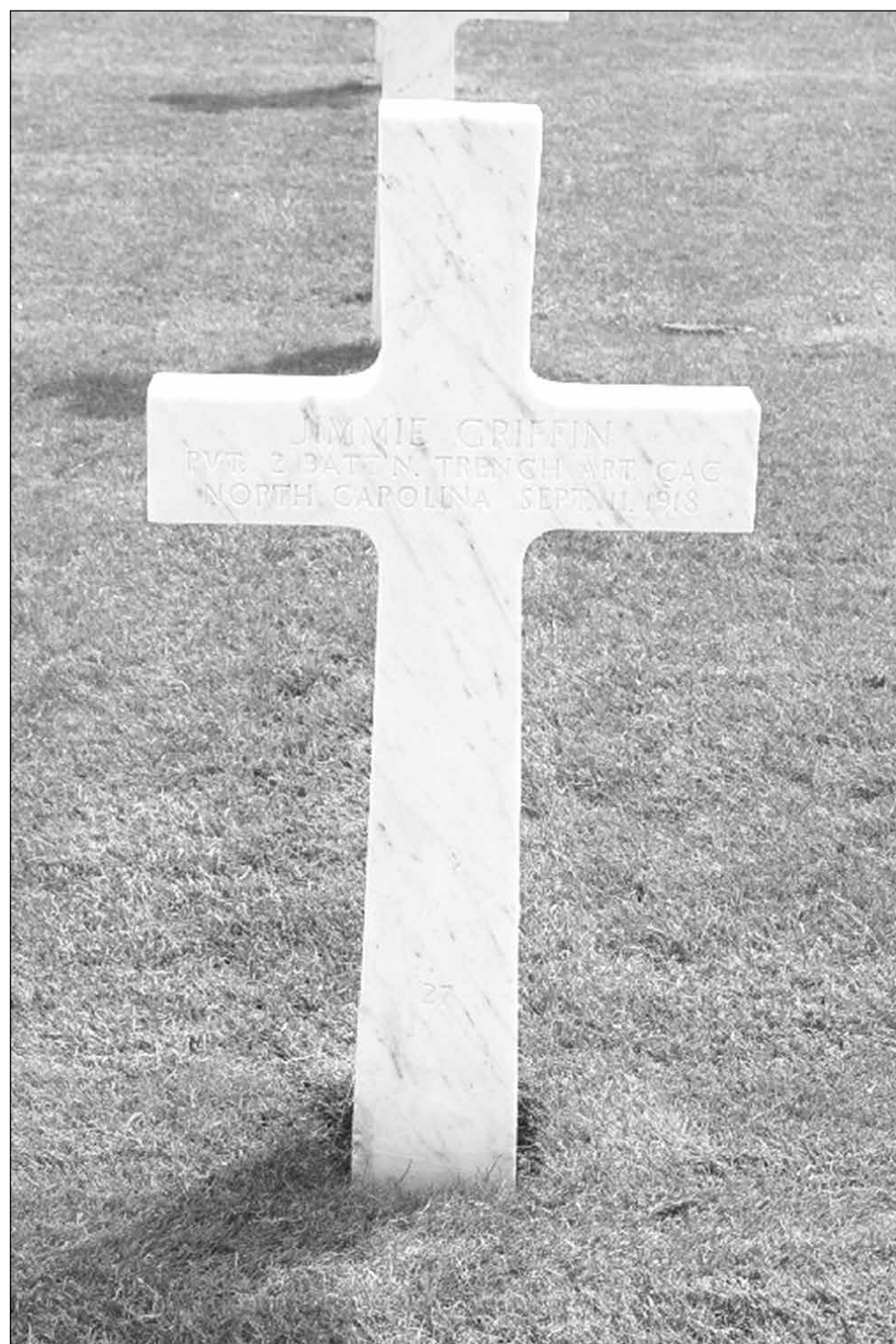


Coast Guard poster, 1917 (Source: Library of Congress).

Photos contributed



Ft. Caswell Parade Ground and Officers Quarters (Source: North Carolina Collection: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).



Jimmie Griffin headstone.

WWI Profile: Pvt. Jimmie Griffin 1899-1918

By NORMA ECKARD

Jimmie Griffin was born in Dunn, Harnett County, NC, in May 1899, according to the 1900 Census, and the youngest of seven living children.

The 1910 Census shows him in Harnett County. The family worked on the family farm. Jimmie (Young J) was 10 years old.

Jimmie had four known brothers; two served in WWI.

Pvt. Rufus A. Griffin enlisted in 1916, served in the 120th Infantry, and was severely injured on Oct. 20, 1918, in the days after he helped break the Hindenburg Line. This was the same operation that injured Brunswick County veterans 1st Sgt. Van Grissett Mintz of the 119th Infantry and Pvt. Jesse James Leonard from the 120th Infantry.

Pvt. Charlie D. Griffin (WWI Draft Registration) was called to duty in May 1918, and served overseas in the 168th Infantry with the 42nd "Rainbow" Division.

William Edgar Griffin (WWI Draft Registration) and Oscar E Griffin (WWI Draft Registration) were never called to duty.

On Jan. 3, 1918, when Jimmie was 18-1/2-years-old, he enlisted in the Regular Army at Fort Caswell, Brunswick County, NC.

He served in 1st Company Coastal Artillery Corps (CAC) until Feb. 15, 1918, when his unit became Battery B, 2nd Trench Mortar Battalion (2nd Division). Because The Fort Caswell Rifle Range was not completed until May 20, 1918, Private Griffin never used it for training.

The Coast Artillery provided units for heavy artillery, railway artillery, and anti-aircraft artillery. Jimmie boarded Cardiganshire on May 29, 1918, with the rest of the soldiers from the roster shown below, except Pvt. Cecil Smith Pierce, who had already passed away, and Cook Frank R. Proffitt, who did not join them until November 1918.

2nd Division, 2nd Trench Mortar Battery

- Pvt. Walter C. Bennett, Battery C
- Pvt. Paul W. Cable, Battery C
- Pvt. Jimmie Griffin, Battery B, KIA by a Sentry Sept. 11, 1918
- Pvt. Charles S. Haitcock, Battery C
- Pfc. Eugene B. Howard, Battery B
- Cpl. George P. McKeithan, Battery B
- Pvt. Cecil Smith Pierce, Battery B, died March 5, 1918
- Cook Frank R. Proffitt, Battery D
- Sgt. Charles F. Rich, Battery C
- Cpl. Archie F. Thompson, Battery B
- Pfc. Daniel R. Walker, Battery C

The 2nd Division lost more men, gained more ground, captured more guns and prisoners, and won more medals than any other American Division. The division was commanded by U.S. Marine Corps generals twice during WWI, the only time in U.S. military history when Marine Corps officers commanded an Army division (The history of the division is not available online. It was not published until 2007).

The 2nd Division Summary of Operations

- June 1-5: Aisne Defensive
- June 6-July 16: Chateau-Thierry Sector
- July 18-20: Aisne-Marne Offensive
- Aug. 6-17: Marbache Sector
- Sept. 9-11: Limey Sector
- Sept. 12-16: St. Mihiel Offensive
- Sept. 29-Oct. 14: Meuse-Argonne (Champagne) Offensive
- Oct. 24-Nov. 11: Meuse-Argonne Offensive
- Nov. 12-Aug. 1919: Army of Occupation

While the 2nd Division was in the Limey Sector (Lorraine), preparing for the St. Mihiel Offensive, Pvt. Jimmie Griffin was shot by sentry. The Division had just completed the move to the sector the day before, Sept. 10, 1918.

The front line of this sector on the south face of the St-Mihiel salient extends from 1/2 km southeast of Remenauville to 1 km north of Limey; 5th Div on right, 89th Div (IV Corps) on left. Sept 12, the Limey sector occupation merges into the St-Mihiel Operation.

The pictures of the terrain photographs and maps show the area where Pvt. Griffin was shot by sentry. Additional photographs may be found in The American Battle Monuments Commission.

Private Jimmie Griffin was laid to rest in the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial in France. He was 19 years old.

Sources:

The Regimental HQ, 2nd Engineers (1920), The official history of the Second Regiment of Engineers and Second Engineer Train, United States Army, in the world war. San Antonio: San Antonio Printing Co.

Center of Military History of the United States Army (1931) Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War, American Expeditionary Forces: Divisions, Volume 2. Washington DC: US Government Printing Office.

The American Battle Monuments Commission (2016) 2nd Division, Limey Sector, September 9-11, 1918, St Mihiel Offensive, September 12-16, 1918. Washington, D.C.: American Battle Monuments Commission.

Additional Sources:
 Clark, George B. (2007). *The Second Infantry Division in World War I: a history of the American Expeditionary Force regulars, 1917-1919.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

If you would like to help us honor Pvt. Jimmie Griffin or another Brunswick County WWI veteran, email ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com or go to www.caswellriflerange.com.

Another Roll Calling event will be Saturday, April 6, at the rifle range in Caswell Beach starting at 11 a.m. A future fundraiser is scheduled for Saturday, May 4, at the Caswell Beach Town Public Service Facility Building to raise funds to publish the book of Brunswick County men and women that served in

WWI and also to continue restoration on the rifle range memorial. There will be a dinner with jazz music by Three to Get Ready, a Churchill Downs Derby and dance with music by Trilogy. Call 278-7584 for tickets or information.