

**Benton County**

**Genealogical Society**

**NEWSLETTER**

Located in Philomath, Oregon

**Volume 43 No.2: November**

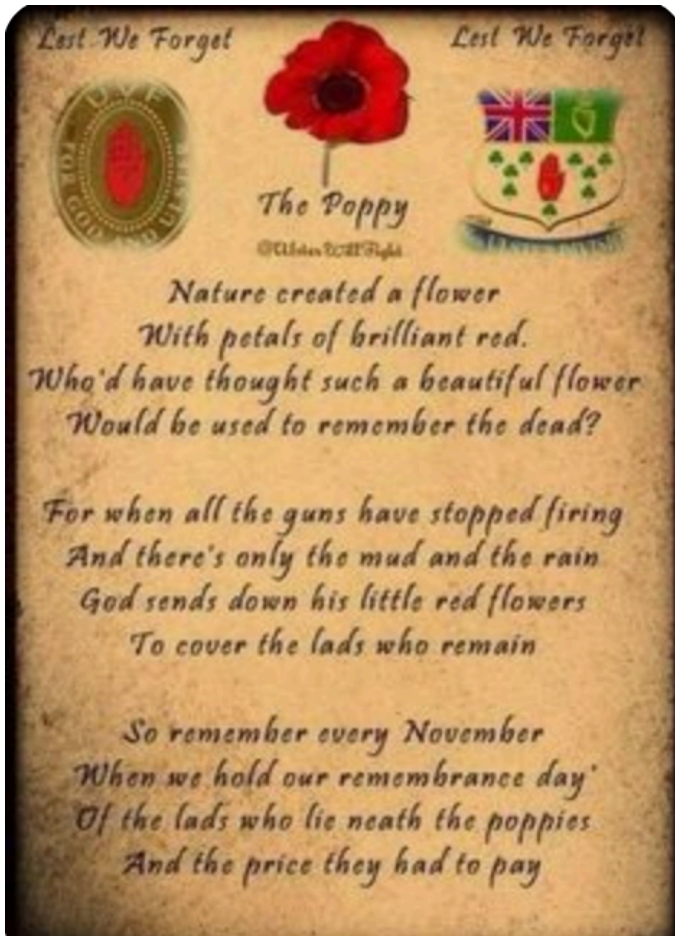
**December 2023**

Founded in 1971 in Corvallis, Oregon

**Hello fellow members,  
I hope you are enjoying  
the fall weather and  
colors.**

**May you have a  
wonderful  
Thanksgiving and get  
ready for Santa with  
your family and  
friends.**

**George**



Here we are in November already. One of the many things we can do is remember our veterans. November 11<sup>th</sup> is just around the corner. Do you remember the days that people sold poppies to help veterans? In my small town it was a big thing, and I remember vividly wanting to have a poppy for five cents. I was born during World War 2, so I was old enough at 10 years to know what the adults were talking about.

In our neighborhood there was a man who walked around all day talking to himself. Our parents explained that he had been in terrible things in the war and couldn't help it. I've never forgotten that man.

## A Tall Young Man from Oxford, Nebraska, Landed in France, 1918



At the **11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918**, the Great War ended. Earlier, the young man who had arrived in Le Harve, France on April 26, 1918, was my Uncle Lawrence Rankin. He was in the 341<sup>st</sup> Machine Gun Battalion of the 89<sup>th</sup> Division of the American Expeditionary Forces.

After the trying shipboard conditions, his Division traveled by truck, horse and rail to their training area. He was to be trained as a horse driver for machine-gun transport, which he trained for in two weeks. When he was back to his outfit, he wasn't needed in that particular job, so he was assigned to the Quartermaster where they needed "some strong backs." (Quartermaster officers are responsible for making sure equipment, materials and systems are available and functioning for missions.)

In August the 89<sup>th</sup> Division moved to St. Mihiel Salient to replace the 82<sup>nd</sup> Division. This forward location on the Western Front pointed right at the heart of France. If the line was broken, it might have allowed a German victory. The victory at St. Mihiel led to the final battle of the war at Meuse-Argonne.



An American machine gun company passes through the ruins of a French village in advance of the Battle of Saint-Mihiel in September 1918. (U.S. National Archives)

**Uncle Lawrence's own words on page 3**

## TWO OF HIS “TIGHT SITUATIONS”

“We were stationed very close to the Front, [St. Mihiel], in a big building that we had taken over for barracks. The Germans sent out a huge barrage of mustard gas bombs, and one complete shell crashed into our sleeping quarters. I was only half asleep but even so I was blinded for a few moments. I reached down in to the bunk below me and got my gas mask and put it on. Then I ran for the guard outside and we were able to get most of the men out of the building without any very serious injuries.”

Germans had held St. Mihiel since 1914. This was the first time the US Army had a major battle in France. It lasted from September 12 –16, 1918 with victory.

“During the [Meuse-Argonne battle] word came to get ammunition up to the 341<sup>st</sup> at once. We took off in two big old trucks. The first truck got hit and put out of action. We went ahead on a road that led right down to the banks of the Meuse River. The Germans were on the other side of the river shooting at everywhere and anything that moved. At the river bank, the road took a sharp turn up a hill. Our driver didn’t put the truck in the right gear and we just couldn’t make it to the top. We had to coast down part of the hill. When we stopped we were in front of another 89<sup>th</sup> company. Their officers came out shouting that we would draw fire. That we did. But the other company had some little Fords that they took the ammunition up to the front and we escaped back to safety.”

The **Meuse-Argonne offensive** was fought from September 26 to November 11, 1918. More than a million American soldiers participated with over 26,000 killed in action and over 26,000 other casualties. The 89<sup>th</sup> had some 1,500 of their men killed in battle. Many of them still rest in the French countryside. After the war was won **Uncle Lawrence** stayed with many other soldiers in the Army of Occupation to keep the peace.

“We marched through Belgium, and I mean it was on foot. It was a better tour of Western Europe than you could buy then or now. The best ride down the Rhine River to Koblenz was the highlight of the trip.”

Coming home in April, 1919, he arrived in Oxford on a late night train. His family didn’t know he was home, **so as what any good Nebraskan would do: he just walked nine miles to his parents’ home. He said that after his hike through Europe, this was a short trip.**

**For the rest of his life, Uncle Lawrence was proud to have served in WW-!.**

We kids loved to go to Uncle Lawrence and Auntie Fern’s farm. We played outside and he let us try to get milk out of the cows ( never got the hang of it), watched him put the milk into a special machine that separated the cream and the milk, and in the morning we drank **“our” milk** for breakfast. We never saw him too busy to take us around the farm or answer our questions. He was liked by everyone. He had five names: Judge, Lawrence, Dad, Grandpa and Uncle. **Sue Van Laere**

## Which occupations were in your families?

- **brewster or maltster:** maker of ales, beers , and other alcoholic beverages
- **chandler:** candlemaker; or seller of provisions
- **cooper:** maker of barrels
- **crocker:** pottery maker
- **currier:** one who prepares or dresses leather for another trade; one who uses a curry comb to dress a horse
- **cutler:** one who makes or sells knives or swords
- **drugster:** a druggist or apothecary
- **farrier:** a horse doctor or one who replaces horseshoes
- **glass bender:** worker in a glassworks who forms glass into curved panel or tubes
- **joiner or joyner:** an expert in properties of wood who joins different woods with glue or special joints for cabinmakers
- **muleskinner:** a teamster (a driver of a team of animals, not always mules)
- **ordinary:** innkeeper
- **sawyer:** one who precisely cuts wood and makes veneers for cabinetmakers
- **slater:** roofer
- **snob or snobcat:** cobbler; repairer
- **turner:** one who uses a lathe to turn into wood for spindles, rods, decorative woodwork
- **vulcan:** iron worker; blacksmith
- **wainwright:** wagonmaker
- **webster:** operator of a loom
- **white cooper:** maker of barrels of tin or other light metals
- **whitesmith:** one who works with tin; tinsmith
- **woods rider:** a supervisor of a lumber operation

Ancestry magazine; Date : January/February 1010/ 2010 p.19

I found the word "Brewster" for one of my ancestors in the 1870 census.

I tried back to 1820 on another ancestor the word "Vulcan" and it was still the word "Blacksmith" down to 1820. Several of my ancestors were blacksmiths. I looked up "Vulcan" and it's a very old word from Europe.

It makes me want to find something in other ancestors! You too?

Sue Van Laere

# Genealogists never die, they just lose their census!

If you would like to have some ideas for writing about your ancestors and yourself, you could try the Family Search website. There are lots of easy ideas to try.

Many of the ideas are “hands on” instead of writing. These could even help you to write in the future.

Ideas: [New Family Traditions](#)

Learn something about the day you were born.

Search the origin of your last name.

Spend some time looking at street views of ancestors

Write a little about a relative who influenced you.

There are many more ideas!

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog.family-history-month>

## **\*Hannah Allan's tips for the coming holidays\***

Hannah moved several years ago so we no longer get to hear her good genealogy ideas. However, she gave us some written tips about making upcoming days perfect.

**Stories, stories, stories:** tell children memories you have of certain holidays; put a little paragraph in the middle of the table about a family history story and read it before opening a gift

**Photos and camera:** look through family photos: use photos to decorate the table; take new pictures

Continues on page 6

**Celebrate your heritage:** use some traditions that your ancestors who came from outside of the US and probably has been lost through the years

**Eat family recipes:** use family recipes or recipes of a foreign heritage

**Thank you, Hannah, for some great ideas. We miss you and hope you are having fun!**

## DO YOU KNOW?

**Our library is open after our regular meetings on Saturday of the month! If you want help finding a book, there are people to help.**

**You also can call Lois Courtney at 541-760-0405 to access the library in other times in the month.**

**Thanks to LOIS FOR VOLUNTEERING?**

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Historian: OPEN

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Refreshments: Pegge Gee

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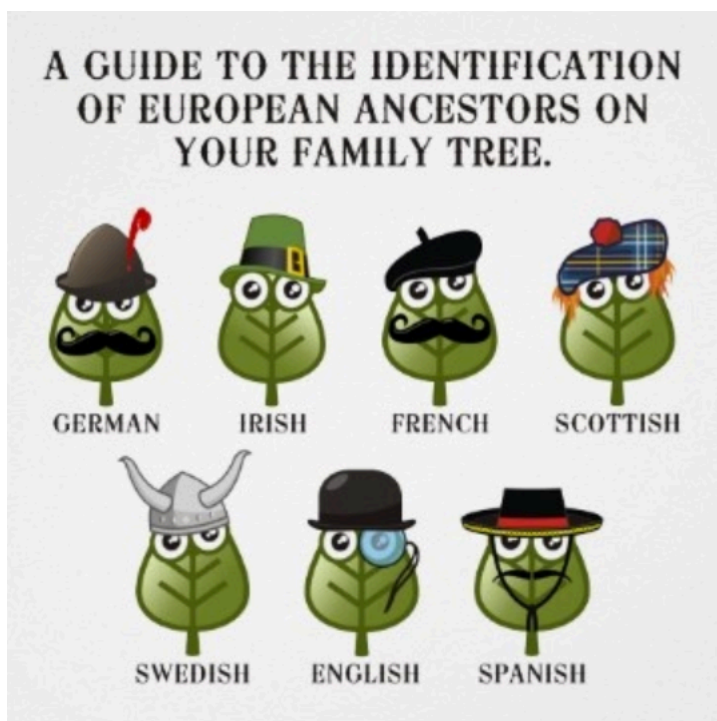
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