

William Edward Pipes

1922 - 1944

This brief article is my attempt to honor and preserve the memory of the short life of William Edward Pipes. He is a distant cousin of mine as we both descend from John Pipes Jr. (1739-1821) who was also a soldier in the American Revolution. William made the ultimate sacrifice while fighting an ugly 20th century ideology that destroyed his life and millions of others. Like so many of his generation he willingly took up arms and made the same fateful trip to France that previous generations had endured, not knowing his fate but like every soldier he was surely aware that it was a throw of the dice.

I intend to relate his father's Pipes family history and his military history as much as can be discerned from 20th century records.



William Edward Pipes' Family Lineage:

William was born April 17, 1922 on a farm on Leavenworth Road, near Brandenburg, Meade County, Kentucky. His father was William Nelson Pipes (1890 - 1945) and his mother was Nancy Jane Eldridge (1897-1934) who was referred to as "Janie" in some of his records. He was the oldest child with a brother and two sisters. We know nothing of his upbringing but it was probably typical rural, agricultural Kentucky of the 1920s. His education reached the 5th grade and when he was able to start working he was typically a construction laborer. He married in 1941 (exact date is not known) to Althea Dell Humphrey and a daughter was born in 1942 and another in 1944, all of that in Meade County. He was identified as being 5' 10" tall and 140 pounds when he registered for the draft in June of 1942 with blonde hair, blue eyes and a light complexion.

William's Father, William Nelson Pipes was born about 1890 but the exact date is not known and is given in three different places within a year or so of that date. William Nelson was the son of James Pipes and his mother is unknown so he may have been born out of wedlock. William Nelson's death certificate from 1945 lists James Pipes as his father but no name is entered for his mother. He shows up in the census records as living in the household of his grandparents until his marriage to Nancy Jane Eldridge in 1921. Nancy Jane died in 1934 and William Nelson married Frankie May Kendall (her previous married name).

James W. Pipes (1857-?) was the son of Daniel Pipes (1831-1894) and his wife Missouri Chaffin (1832-1894). Based on the death certificate and the dates involved it is almost certain that James W. Pipes was the Grandfather of our William Edward Pipes.

James W. had married Sallie Humphreys in October of 1887 and then had children. Sallie died sometime after 1882 and James W. married Mary Louise Durbin in August of 1887. She may have been the mother of William Nelson Pipes but there is no valid proof of that.

Daniel Pipes (1831-1894) was the father of James W. Pipes. Daniel's wife was Missouri Chaffin (1832-1894). They had 7 children in Meade County, 4 girls and 3 boys.

Windsor Pipes (1798-1860) and his wife Christina Sappenfield (1805-aft1880) were the parents of Daniel Pipes. They had 10 children. Windsor and Christina were the first Pipes family to move to Meade County from SW Pennsylvania. They were married in Indiana in July of 1828 during their three year migration period to Kentucky, arriving in Kentucky about 1829. Two of their sons, Alexander and Windsor (junior) served in the Civil War in the 12th Kentucky Infantry. Everyone in Meade County named Pipes descends from Windsor and Christina.

John Pipes (1767-1838)) and his wife Eleanor 'Nellie' Slater (1775-1831) were the parents of Windsor Pipes. This John Pipes was born in Morristown New Jersey, the second son of John Pipes Jr and Jemima Harriman. [We refer to him as John Pipes III (i.e. John Pipes Sr., John Pipes Jr. and John Pipes III)] John Pipes III left Morristown and relocated to Surry County N Carolina in about 1770 with his Grandfather and his Father and his Father's 2nd wife and their children . Twenty years later, in the 1790's, with two of his brothers, he moved to frontier SW Pennsylvania to join Hathaway relatives who had already settled there from Morristown. John III's children were all born in Greene and Washington County, PA., where he and Nellie both passed away.

John Pipes Jr.(1739-1821) and Jemima Harriman (1740-ca 1770) were the parents of John Pipes III and 4 other children in Morristown Pennsylvania from 1760 to about 1770. As mentioned above, in 1770 the entire Pipes family of John Pipes Sr. and Susannah Hathaway left New Jersey and moved to Surry County, N Carolina, including all of John Senior's sons and daughters, their wives, husbands and children. They settled in an area along the Yadkin River near present day Elkin and Jonesville, NC. When the Revolutionary war broke out in 1775, John Jr. returned to New Jersey and joined the militias there and eventually became an officer in the 4th New Jersey Regiment of the Continental Line. He married his second wife there in 1776. In 1778-79 he returned to N Carolina and joined the Militia of General Benjamin Cleveland. In 1795 John Jr. relocated his family to Kentucky and settled near Perryville in Mercer County (later Boyle Co.) where he remained for the rest of his life.

John Pipes Sr. (1712-1804) is the first person named Pipes that we can trace our Pipes family back to with certainty. He first appears in 1735 in Berkley County, Massachusetts when he marries Susannah Hathaway. We have not been able to trace him back to Europe but we assume he was from England. He moved with his new wife and her parent's family to Morristown, New Jersey in 1736. He and Susannah gave birth there to 6 children and in 1770 moved his entire family to Surry County, N Carolina. His family split and moved from there over the years and John Sr. moved in 1784 to Orange County S Carolina where he passed in 1804. His son John Jr was the last to leave N Carolina in 1795 when he moved to Kentucky. So this is as far back as we can go for now.

I have always wondered if the children and descendants of John Jr who lived in Meade County ever had contact with John Sr. or his relatives in Mercer and Boyle Counties Kentucky only a 100 miles or so apart.

William Edward Pipes' Military Record:



US 1st Army



US Army 7th Corps



30th Infantry Division



119th Infantry Regiment

At the time of his death on July 27, 1944 William and his unit were assigned to the 1st Army, 7th Corps, 30th Infantry Division, 119th Infantry Regiment and “G” Company, Second Battalion. We do not know at this time what Platoon or Rifle company he was assigned to. It is very difficult to obtain Archive Records right now. Much of the information that follows is from a book written by the 119th Commander, Colonel R. A. Baker. Portions are copied from the book and may have my edits inserted to make it more personal for William. Direct copied material is in Quotes.

For much of the war, the 30th Division was assigned to the 19th Corps but for a short 2 week period in late July of 1944 the 30th Division was assigned the 7th Corps.

William Registered for the draft on June 30, 1942 in Battletown and at that time he was working for the Sherry Richards Company as a contractor. His enlistment is dated 3 months later on October 6th, 1942 and he was assigned Serial Number 35496706 in the US Army. As war had already been declared, I do not know if he was sent to a special boot camp or sent directly to his regimental assignment. He was ultimately assigned to the 119th Infantry Regiment.

The 119th had only recently been activated. On September 7, 1942, it had been activated as part of the 30th Infantry Division, at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. It was a new regiment, with cadre drawn mostly from the 117th and 120th Infantry. So he may have been sent to Fort Jackson to join the unit. The three Infantry Regiments assigned to the 30th Division were the 117th, 119th and 120th.

On December 7, 1942, the 119th began the first phase of the Mobilization Training Program at Camp Blanding, Florida. The second phase of the training was completed at Camp Blanding and for the third phase the Regiment moved to Camp Forrest, Tennessee on June 1, 1943. The final phase of the training program lasted from September 4, 1943, through October, and consisted of Third Army Maneuvers around Murfreesboro, Tennessee. After that the Regiment moved to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, to pursue refresher training before going overseas. There it received replacements to bring it to full strength.

“On February 12, 1944, a cold and snowy day, the Regiment left Boston Harbor on the U. S. Army Transport ‘Brazil’. It docked at Liverpool on the 23rd and went by train to southeastern England, billeting in the towns of Rustington, Middleton, and Little Hampton, Sussex. There the Regiment had still further training in bayonet and knife fighting, in dirty fighting, in destruction of equipment,

and in chemical warfare, in aircraft identification, in squad tactics, mines, selection of observation posts, and so on. The Regiment was to be prepared for anything, and some of this training turned out to be invaluable.”

“On April 3, the Regiment moved to an area around Chalfont St. Giles and Stoke Poges, in Buckinghamshire, and continued to train. On April 15 it held a review for the English General, Montgomery, near Beaconsfield. His address won not only the admiration but the genuine liking of the American soldiers who heard him. The Regiment continued to train until it left Southampton for France.

The soldiers in the 30th “Old Hickory” Division were traditionally from the south but his time they came from all over America, were ready to engage in a major historical event, and individuals had different ideas about it. Some thought it was a job to be done. Some thought we were fighting England's war or Russia's war, or a war for imperialism. Some thought our war was exclusively in the Pacific. Some thought it was an opportunity to prove ourselves heroes. Most of them thought we were fighting for liberty.

The unit first touched French soil on Omaha Beach on June 13th, 1944, D-Day+7.

After landing, the Regiment gathered near the town of Isigny, organized, and waited for orders. Isigny was in ruins. On the march from the beach across Normandy, the Regiment observed its first German dead lying along the hedgerows.

The initial orders for the 30th Division were to clear and hold a line from Isigny south along a line paralleling the Vire River. The Vire is upstream south from that area until it reaches St-Lo where it swings south west. The area was filled with German troops holding defensive positions that were well established and shielded by impenetrable hedge rows. On the 15th they had their first encounter with live fire and took one German prisoner who surrendered because he was wounded. The Village of Airel, which is directly south of Isigny, was cleared and taken but with little resistance from the Germans.

For the next two weeks until the end of June the regiment did patrols and had small engagements with the enemy and remained in place with some slight movement south towards the village of La Meauffe where they cleared the village of German Infantry. The countryside had been mostly evacuated of civilians by the Germans and the villages and homes were empty with the exception of snipers, the wounded and entrenched German Infantry.

In July the 30th Division would push south, staying west of the Vire River except for a brief assignment for William's Second Battalion when they crossed the Vire River with another regiment to clear the town of Airel on July 7th.

The Second Battalion returned back across the river to their home regiment on July 8th and was involved in heavy battle for the next 24 days as the Germans began to defend and slowly pull back to a defensive line just north of St-Lo. They continued south, fighting day by day with many casualties under heavy artillery and several German counter attacks.

On the 9th the villages of Cavigny and La Coquerie on the west side of the Vire River were cleared and taken with casualties. The 35th Division joined the offensive there. William's unit, the Second Battalion was heavily involved in the fighting there and endured heavy artillery fire from the Germans, then tank assaults and close infantry fighting. From the 10th to the 12th William's Battalion and many others were involved in very heavy fighting in and near the village of Belle Lande. Heavy casualties and deaths were inflicted.

Heavy fighting continued for the next 6 days and on the 18th The Division was near a place called Le Mensil Durand. On the 19th the objective was the bridge over a stream near a village named Rouloux

Godard where they remained tied town until the 22th because of poor weather. On the 23rd they pushed further south toward a village named Hebecrevon and waited for the weather to clear.

The 24th of July found the Division and the regiment near the village named Hebecrevon (renamed in 2016 to Thereval). The village was cleared and new orders were received from command. The Orders received were the plans for Operation Cobra, proposed by General Omar Bradley of the First Army and his Staff. The operation was to start on the 24th and last until July 30th and was meant to propel the US Forces thru the German defenses and “break out” of the seeming stalemate in the Normandy hedge rows. A false start because of poor weather and terrible communications resulted in bombs being dropped early on the 24th with some falling on the 30th Division, killing some 150 men and wounding several more. The general intent of the operation was to bomb the hell out of the German front lines, throw heavy artillery at them and then charge into them from the west with overwhelming force and numbers. The goal was to get to the flank of the German forces who were facing the city of Caen and the British and Australian Forces near there.

The 25th of July was designated as the day to restart the postponed Operation Cobra and again the Air Force managed to drop bombs on their own troops as well as the enemy. The descriptions told by the men who endured the enormous amount of air bombardment and the artillery fire from both sides are difficult to read. The world had never seen such destructive force. When the bombing stopped, the ground forces somehow gathered themselves up and began their movements forward. The 119th Second and Third Battalions were to move south to a point east of Hebecrevon and the First Battalion with the 120th Regiment were to pass thru Hebecrevon from the west, take it and be prepared to move east in to the “loop” formed by the Vire River just west of St-Lo. The object was to weaken or open the German defenses there for an attack by the 2nd Armored Division. All wounded and those requiring medical attention were to be transported back to a village to the North called Pont Hebert where field hospitals were set up. At the end of this days fighting the battalions were dug in around Hebecrevon with William’s Second Battalion just south of the village.

The 26th, a Thursday, brought new orders for the First Battalion to advance 500 yards to an area near LeGros Cailloux with tanks in the lead and the Second and Third Battalions to follow in Column. At 7:35 in the morning the tanks and battalions assembled at Hebecrevon and started heading east and entered the town with the goal of meeting up on the eastern side with other tanks and troops. From the Regimental History:

“It was common German tactics during this campaign to withdraw from a town and, after our troops had entered it in some force, to pour artillery in. Though the bombing had destroyed much of their equipment and personnel, and the persistent attacks by our tanks and infantry had disorganized any concerted resistance, they were able to maintain artillery barrages on Hebecrevon through the late morning and most of the afternoon. One barrage landed in the orchard where the Second Battalion was digging in and caused a number of casualties from tree bursts. As the barrage continued, those who could withdraw did. The wounded were left in the area. The Battalion medics tried to get back into the orchard, only to suffer casualties themselves, among them the Assistant Battalion Surgeon and the Section Leader. Rescue squads were organized by T/Sgt. Rex Lunsford and T/4 Frank J. Olivero, a clerk in the aid station who was himself wounded. One squad after another ventured again into the bursting orchard, all led by Technical Sergeant Lunsford. Thus all the wounded were finally carried to safety. The barrages inflicted many casualties in the other areas around Hebecrevon, particularly in the Regimental CP (Command Post) and the First Battalion CP.

When the wounded could not be evacuated, Captain Ferrier moved under the fire into the open fields to administer first aid and blood plasma.”

“About 2100 (9 PM) the Regimental CP was set up in an area between St. Gilles and Le Bas Mesnil, and the battalions were slightly to the south. The rear elements, however, were still back at Hebecrevon or even at Le Mesnil Durand, where most of the vehicles were. A patrol of the I & R Platoon was dispatched to guide the rear of the Regimental CP forward, and at same time to turn in to the PW cage at Les Mesnil Durand two French Fascists in civilian clothes who had been caught sending up flares.”

So from the paragraph above you can see where William was located on the evening of the 26th.

On Friday the 27th the regiment moved south again. The First Battalion, followed by the Second Battalion, used the main road south towards the Village of Gourfaleur with the objective of clearing the area west of the Vire River and protecting its crossing bridges. The Third battalion did likewise only traveling closer to the River.

Early afternoon found the First Battalion moving up a hill about 400 yards northwest of Gourfaleur. Serious enemy resistance and continuous small arms and mortar fire kept them pinned down all afternoon but by 3:30PM the Battalions had reached their objective of clearing the area and securing the bridge at Pont De Gourfaleur.

William was wounded somewhere between the Village of Gourfaleur and the Bridge over the Vire River. The distance from the village to the bridge is about 1.25 Miles. It is not clear from the regimental history where exactly the Second Battalion was during the afternoon but it was in that small area.

Records that we found indicate that he was wounded and then taken to a hospital where he died from his wounds. During the day on the 27th the regiment had 24 Killed In Action, 116 wounded and 29 missing. It is also possible that he was wounded on the 26th but we do not know except that he was admitted to the Hospital on the 27th. The closest medical facility was apparently at a place called Pont Hebert, about 12.5 miles north of the location of the regiment.

(Note: the word Pont in French is bridge.)

So if you know more about this story or someone who does, then please have them contact me. I have not been able to communicate with his grandchildren in northern Kentucky who may have more info such as papers or memories, but I am still working on that.

Other things I would like to know:

What Platoon and Rifle Company he belonged to.

Was he interred in France before being moved to the USA? If so Where and when?

Is there additional personal information about William and his service? Photos, Letters, Records?

The path of the 30th Infantry Regiment can be followed from Omaha Beach to Isigny and then due south thru all the villages mentioned in the text until reaching Gourfaleur, which is west and a little south of St-Lo.

This entire story including the further fighting and travels of the 119th Infantry Regiment is available on line in digital form. Just search for it. The author is Colonel R. A. Baker.

The Queen of Battle

The Infantry has been called "The Queen of Battle" for hundreds of years. It may have roots in the game of Chess, but has been used in ancient times as well. The infantry are the most essential component of any military and just as the queen piece on the chess board, the infantry are the most powerful, decisive, and important part of the act of war.

THE QUEEN OF BATTLE ...
G1 JOES WITH RIFLE, BAYONET;
TOPPLING VAMPIRE NATIONS AND DICTATING HISTORY
WITH DOUGHBOY SWEAT AND BLOOD IN THE CARNAGE OF THE VIRE,
SIEGFRIED LINE, THE BULGE, THROUGH THE PLAINS AND MOUNTAINS OF EUROPE.
SHELLED, BOMBED, STRAFED, BLITZED,
STILL THE INFANTRY, U.S.A., MOVES ON:
NO RIVER TOO FORMIDABLE - NO TANK TOO MONSTROUS
NO LINE TOO STRONG - NO PILLBOX TOO SECURE
NO FOE TOO TREACHEROUS
NO DAY TOO TEMPESTUOUS FOR THE FOOT SOLDIER,
SOVEREIGN OF THE BATTLEFIELD.

The above words were found in the front pages of the 119th Regimental History.

The words are not attributed and may be the words of Colonel Baker.

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*Marve Bennett Cemetery
Battletown
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