

## WWI Veteran H.C. Lonergan

### From historian, Duff Green and a “County Flashback” in the Orange County Review:

“Henry Conway Lonergan, Sr., age 101, died Sunday, January 19, 1992 in a Charlottesville hospital after a brief illness.

“Mr. Lonergan was one of Orange’s leading citizens for over eight decades. He served on Orange Town Council for 42 years and as town mayor for numerous terms. He was active in practically every community organization here from World War I until his retirement from business in the mid-1970’s.

“ ‘Mr. Harry,’ as most local people knew him, was the last surviving Orange native veteran of World War I. Of the many offices he held, and the many honors he was given, Mr. Harry was most proud of his patriotism and military service to his country.

“He was a charter organizer of James Madison VFW Post 2217, Orange American Legion Post 156, and the Orange Volunteer Fire Company which got its start in January of 1921.

“Practically every award, certificate of merit, honor, recognition, office, and citation offered by local civic and service groups were bestowed on Mr. Lonergan over most of the past century.

“He was one of the town’s leading businessmen for over six decades. Files of **The Orange Review** contain many stories and pictures during his life as the number one town citizen.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Green then continued the story of Mr. Lonergan by reprinting the following article which had first appeared in the *Orange Review* on September 7, 1917 before the first group of Orange and Madison County soldiers departed for service in the Great War:

*A large crowd from all parts of Orange and Madison Counties assembled in Orange Courthouse last Wednesday noon to bid farewell to the 10 members of the first quota of Army volunteers from these two counties who left that day at 2:00 o’clock for Camp Lee. They will receive training at this military base for several months before going to France.*

*The 10 boys in this first quota were Harry Lonergan, James Sommers, Irvin Morris, Richard Gay, Claude Mickie, Oscar Smith, Robert Utz, Euin James, Gordon Tanner and Jessie Tanner.*

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<sup>1</sup> Duff Green. “Orange WWI vet, H.C. Lonergan, dies at 101.” *Orange County Review*. Thursday, January 23, 1992, 7.

*The roll was called and the recruits were seated in the courthouse jury box when exercises opened with the singing of 'America.' The Hon. George L. Browning presided over the ceremony.*

*Judge George S. Shackelford made the opening remarks. He told the boys of the great task they had been called upon to perform and he hoped they would return safely, crowned with glory, and that they should be proud to represent Orange County in this great war for democracy.*

*Mr. George Barbour, chairman of the local exemption board, made a few remarks and wished the boys Godspeed. Mayor A.J. Harlow was then called upon for his comments.*

*Mayor Harlow thanked the volunteers for their devotion to the country and concluded his speech by reading a message sent by President Woodrow Wilson to the soldiers of the National Army. This message was as follows:*

**To the Soldiers of the National Army. You are undertaking a great duty. The heart of the whole country is with you. Everything that you do will be watched with the deepest solicitude, not only by those who are near and dear to you, but by the whole nation besides.**

**For this great war draws us all together, makes us all comrades and brothers, as all true Americans felt themselves to be when we first made good our national independence. The eyes of the world will be upon you, because you are, in some special sense, the soldiers of freedom.**

**Let it be your pride, therefore, to show all men everywhere, not only what good soldiers you are, but also what good men you are; keeping yourself fit and straight in everything, and pure and clean through and through.**

**Let us set for ourselves a standard so high that it will be a glory to live up to it, and then let us reach that high level and add a new laurel to the crown of America.**

**My affectionate confidence goes with you in every battle and every test. God keep you and guide you.**

**Woodrow Wilson”<sup>2</sup>**

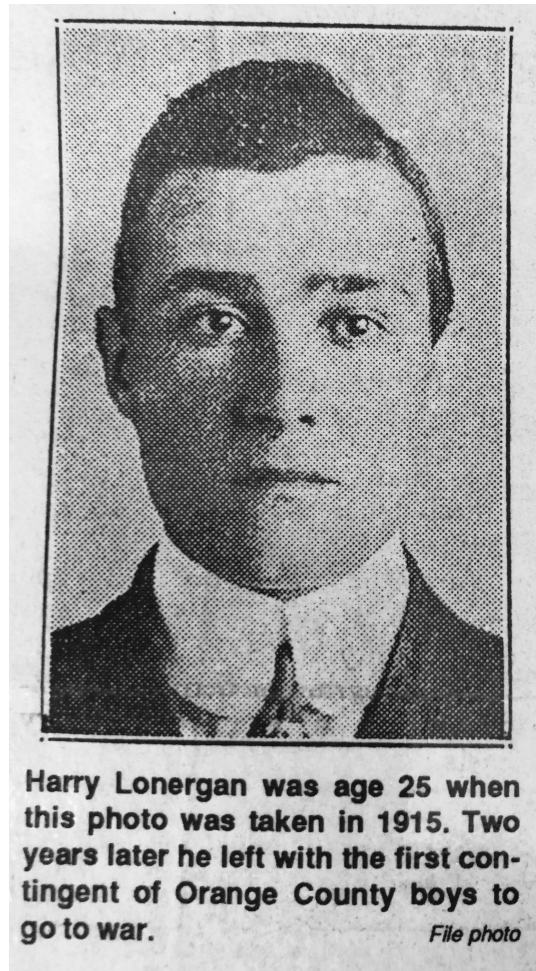
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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Mr. Green then continued telling his story of the first quota of Orange and Madison men about to go off to war:

*As the boys left the courthouse to attend a dinner across the street in the Coleman Hotel, each was given a kit with various useful articles such as toothpaste, buttons, pins, thread, etc., which had been gotten together by the local branch of the National League for Women's Service.*

*After dinner, a large crowd escorted the boys to Gordonsville where they caught the 2:45 train to Camp Lee near Petersburg.<sup>3</sup>*



When Mr. Green concluded the reprinted story from the 1917 article in *The Orange Review*, he continued to explain in his article what happened to that first quota of Orange and Madison men who had volunteered to serve their country in his 1992 article of Mr. Lonegran's death:

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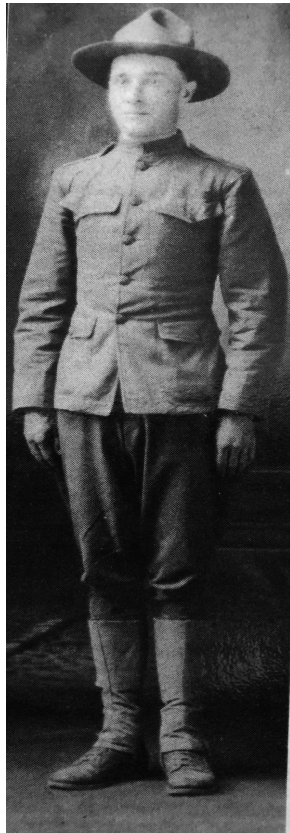
<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

“Of those 10 local boys, over half were wounded or suffered from the effects of gas. Two were killed on the same day, October 4, 1918. They were Robert Utz and Jessie Tanner, both in Harry Lonergan’s group, the 318th Infantry, 80th Division.

“Harry was wounded and gassed in the Battle of Argonne Forest. His unit was overrun by the Germans and he was separated from his company. For several weeks he was listed as missing in action. Through the help of a French Underground organization, however, he was able to return to his military unit and went on to participate in other battles.

“Although Harry Lonergan spent most of his life in the town of Orange, he was born in the Crooked Run section of Culpeper County on March 7, 1890, the oldest son of an Irish immigrant. His early schooling was at the now defunct Locust Dale Academy.

“Harry moved to Orange in 1907 when he accepted a job as clerk with the T.W. Hoffman & Son store. After three years, he joined the staff of Swan-Carpenter Implement Company from 1911 to September 5, 1917, when he volunteered for military service in World War I.



**A picture of the new recruit, Mr. Lonergan, taken before he left by ship for France to serve with the American Expeditionary Force. The two articles of clothing that were typical of World War I soldiers were the campaign hat and the leggings.**

--Photo from the Orange Review article dated January 23, 1992.

“Mr. Harry returned from France with a hero’s welcome in Orange. Changes were in the wind and by 1919 there were companies selling automobiles, rather than carriages and wagons. On June 5, 1919 he was offered a partnership in the newly organized Ford agency with Baxter Roberts, W.D. Roberts and Billy Graham.

“Car sales did not go as well as expected and the company added farm machinery to its inventory. Then in 1928 the firm sold out to Young and Davidson.

“Another national change was in the making. Solid fuel (coal and wood) was being replaced by liquid fuel (gasoline and oil). Harry Lonergan believed this business had a future and with his old partners, the Roberts brothers, his group organized the Orange Gas & Oil Company. Local banker R. Carroll Slaughter joined the venture.

“The oil business became so successful ...it sold out to Continental Oil Company.” At that time Harry stayed on as manager of the company and later became the official distributor of Conoco products.”<sup>4</sup>

In his 1992 *Orange Review* article, Mr. Green continued with information regarding Mr. Lonergan’s service to the community, specifically with the Orange Volunteer Fire Department, Orange Town Council, and his stint as Orange’s first mayor under the town manager form of government.

In his term as mayor, Mr. Lonergan acquired 30 acres of land which became known as John Porterfield Park. In his article Mr. Green explained, “The Porterfield family wished to establish some type of memorial to a young son who died of pneumonia in 1916. At the same time, there was a settlement of the Harper family estate just west of Orange. The family donated \$10,000 for the town memorial, the council purchased the 30-acre Harper tract, and by agreement named the proposed park after John Porterfield.”<sup>5</sup> This deal was concluded in Rickett’s Drug store between Attorney V.R. Shackelford and Mayor Lonergan over a cup of coffee. The subject came up, and the two men struck a deal before they left.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



**A 1918 photo of Harry Lonergan standing in front of a relative's home on May Fray Avenue in Orange upon his return from "Over There". The photo shows his leggings had been replaced by "puttees" used by soldiers on the front line. His hat was called an "Overseas Cap".**

--Photo appeared in the January 23, 1992 *Orange Review* article of Mr. Lonergan

## **The 318th Infantry Regiment**

### **From “Summary History of the 318th Infantry Regiment”:**

“From the start, the 159th Infantry Brigade was known as a Virginia organization as all of its original enlisted personnel were drawn from the Commonwealth. The men of the 317th Infantry were drawn from the western counties of Virginia while the men of the 318th were drawn from the eastern counties of Virginia.

“The 318th Infantry Regiment was organized September 5, 1917, at Camp Lee near Petersburg, Virginia. The men arrived in allotments until full strength was achieved. Five percent the first week, 15% the second, 25% the third week and the remainder the fourth week. By October 1917 the 318th Infantry was at full strength. Company A was the first to be mustered into service followed by Company E. In November 1917 to bring divisions, about to leave for France, up to strength, 1,000 men were taken from the 318th.”<sup>6</sup>

### **From the Department of the Army:**

The 318th Infantry Regiment was constituted on August 5, 1917 in the National Army and assigned to the 80th Infantry Division. It was organized from August 22-27, 1917 at Camp Lee, Virginia and was demobilized after the war June 1-5, 1918 at Camp Lee. During World War I, the 318th Infantry fought in the Somme, Meuse-Argonne, and Picardy (1918).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Author unknown. “Summary History of the 318th Infantry Regiment.” *80th AEF, 318th Co. F Blue Ridge DoughBoys*, Google, Accessed June 20, 2021,

<https://80thaeef.com/summary-history-of-the-318th-infantry-regiment/>

<sup>7</sup>Author unknown. “318th Infantry Regiment.” Department of the Army Lineage and Honors, Google, Accessed June 20, 2021.

<https://history.army.mil/html/forcestruc/lineages/branches/regt/0318rgt.htm>