

William Henry Oliver

February 22, 1896 – January 10, 1988

World War I

VA



**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

National Cemetery
Administration



**Department
of History**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

William Henry Oliver (February 22, 1896–January 10, 1988)

Palma M. Ferraro Oliver (March 24, 1898–February 18, 1990)

By Diana Landa and Katherine Thurlow

Early Life

William Henry Oliver was born on February 22, 1896 in Albany, New York to Louis Oliver and Mary Oliver (née St. Onge).¹ Louis Oliver was born in May 1868 in Quebec, Canada.² He immigrated to the United States in 1880. Mary St. Onge was born in July 1871 in Quebec, Canada, and immigrated to the United States in 1884. Louis and Mary married sometime circa 1887, and had their first child, Georgiana, in January of 1889.³ They had two more daughters before William was born- Mary (1893) and Rosa (1894). William also had two younger brothers, Arthur and Raymond.⁴ By 1900, the Olivers lived in Albany, New York and rented a house.⁵ Louis Oliver worked as an iron moulder, and Mary Oliver worked at home. Both of his parents were literate.⁶ In 1905, William Oliver was about eight years old, and he attended school, as did his sisters Mary and Rosa.⁷ His sister Georgiana, who was sixteen in 1905, worked as a shirt maker.⁸ By 1915, William Oliver was nineteen, and worked as a printer.⁹

Life During Service

William Oliver registered for the draft for World War I, as seen here, in Albany on June 5th, 1917.¹⁰ He enlisted May 25, 1918 at the age of twenty-two.¹¹ Oliver started as a Private, leaving the US on June 30, 1918.¹² He was part of the 2nd Pioneer Infantry, serving with the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in Bordeaux, France.¹³ General John J. Pershing, the general-in chief of US forces, led 667,000 men in France by May 1918, when the AEF “began its first offensive engagements.”¹⁴ Pershing emphasized “open warfare” which entailed training inexperienced AEF troops to use modern warfare technologies.¹⁵ One of the largest and bloodiest battles the AEF fought in was the Meuse-Argonne offensive, in which more than one million AEF soldiers participated in 1918.¹⁶ While we are not sure what role Oliver played in Bordeaux, he received an honorary discharge June 5, 1919 when he returned to the United States with the rank of Corporal.¹⁷

After Service

By 1925, Oliver married Margerite Greagan.¹⁸ While there is not much documentation on his marriage with Margerite, in 1930 she resided with her mother and sisters despite being married to Oliver.¹⁹ She worked as a stenographer in a lawyer's office.²⁰ In 1940, Oliver was divorced, still working as a printer and living in a house that he owned.²¹ On February 3, 1943, Oliver announced his engagement to Palma M. Ferraro, who is buried with him in Florida National Cemetery.²² Palma had been a "superintendent and administrator of the Leonard Hospital since 1928" and planned to resign her position at that hospital on February 20, 1943, which was the date of their wedding.²³ Palma graduated from the Ellis Hospital School of Nursing in Schenectady, New York in 1921 and she did post-graduate work with pediatrics at the Boston Floating Hospital before going to Leonard Hospital in Troy, New York as an assistant in 1927.²⁴

In 1942, William Oliver registered for World War II at the age of forty-six, as seen here.²⁵ This was known as the "Old Man's Draft" for those who were born between April 28, 1877 and February 16, 1897.²⁶ These men were not expected to enter the military, but might have been asked to do national service, if needed.²⁷

Palma remained active in the nursing community. In August 1943, she helped supervise a drill with the members of the emergency hospital unit that set up casualty stations in which volunteers could practice in case of an incident such as an enemy bombing on US soil.²⁸ In September of 1943, the chief of the Emergency Medical Service of Rensselaer County appointed Palma as the head of the medical property office of the Emergency Medical Service of Civilian Defense.²⁹

William and Palma moved to Florida, probably at some point after 1969, when Palma was recognized for twenty-five years of work with the Rensselaer County Red Cross Chapter.³⁰ They followed a larger trend of sunbelt migration that "boomed in the decades after World War II."³¹ While we do not know much about their later life, they likely retired to Florida. William Oliver died on January 10, 1988 in Pinellas County, Florida.³² Palma Oliver passed away on February 18, 1990 in Pinellas County, Florida.³³ They are buried together in Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida.

Endnotes

- 1 “U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918”, database, Ancestry.com, <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 19, 2017), entry for William Henry Oliver.
- 2 “1900 United States Federal Census”, database, Ancestry.com, <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 19, 2017), entry for William Oliver.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 “New York, State Census, 1905”, database, Ancestry.com, <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 19, 2017), entry for William H Oliver.
- 5 “1900 United States Federal Census.”
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 “New York, State Census, 1905.”
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 “New York, State Census, 1915,” database, Ancestry.com, <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 19, 2017), entry for William Oliver.
- 10 “U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918,” database, Ancestry.com, <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 19, 2017), entry for William Henry Oliver.
- 11 “New York, Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917-1919,” database, Ancestry.com, <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 28, 2017), entry for William H. Oliver.
- 12 “New York, World War I Veterans’ Service Data,” database, Ancestry.com, <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 10, 2017), entry for William Henry Oliver.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Mark Ethan Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 25-26.
- 15 Ibid., 31.
- 16 Ibid., 3.
- 17 “New York, World War I Veterans’ Service Data.”
- 18 “New York, State Census, 1925,” database, *Ancestry.com*, <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 19, 2017), entry for William W Oliver.
- 19 “1930 United States Federal Census,” database, Ancestry.com <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 19, 2019), entry for Margerite Oliver.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 “1940 United States Federal Census,” database, Ancestry.com <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 19, 2019), entry for William H Oliver.
- 22 ”Miss Palma M. Ferraro to Wed W. H. Oliver.” *The Times Record*, February 3, 1943, p. 6, database, Newspapers.com, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/56330922>, (accessed July 24, 2017).

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 “U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942”, database, *Ancestry.com*, <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 19, 2017), entry for William Henry Oliver.

26 “World War II ‘Old Man’s Draft’ Registration Cards,” *Fold3.com*, last modified June 15, 2017, https://www.fold3.com/title_765/wwii_old_mans_draft_registration_cards#overview.

27 Ibid.

28 “First Aid Group Conducts Drill at Grafton.” *The Troy Record*, August 28, 1943, p. 2, database, *Newspapers.com*, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/58973286>, (accessed July 24, 2017).

29 “Mrs. Oliver Named to Civil Defense Post.” *The Troy Record*, September 27, 1943, p. 14, database, *Newspapers.com*, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/58974113>, (accessed July 24, 2017).

30 “County Red Cross Chapter Elects Bentley Chairman, Presents Awards.” *The Troy Record*, November 25, 1969 *Newspapers.com*, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/58895175>, (accessed July 24, 2017).

31 Edward Glaeser and Kristina Tobio, “The Rise of the Sunbelt”, *Southern Economic Journal* 74 (2008): 611.

32 U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014,” database, *Ancestry.com*, <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 28, 2017), entry for William H. Oliver.

33 U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014,” database, *Ancestry.com*, <https://www.ancestry.com/>, (accessed July 28, 2017), entry for Palma M. Oliver.



ORIGINAL Page 12
State of New York June 1, 1925
Enumeration of the Subscribers of Book No. 1, Election District No. 8, Ward No. 1, City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York
Assembly District No. 127
Name of Institution: USA

| PROPRIETOR'S SIGNATURE | NAME | BIRTHDAY | EDUCATION | CITY | CITIZENSHIP | OCCUPATION | RESIDENCE |
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✓ Oliver, William Henry

3181279

222 Kent Street, Albany, N.Y.

Born February 21, 1896 ? - Albany, N.Y.

Printer

Enlisted - May 25, 1918, Albany, N.Y.
Age at entrance - 22 years

Private

2d Pioneer Inf.

Served with A.E.F. - Bordeaux, France
: Left U.S. June 30, 1918
Rank at discharge - Corporal : Ret. June 5, 1919

Discharged June 5, 1919.

2d Pioneer Inf. Mitchel Field, L.I.

416
1

Oliver, William H 3,181,279

* White * ~~Colored~~

(Surname) (Christian name) (Army serial number)

Residence: 1 Zoor Ave Albany Albany NEW YORK
(Street and house number) (Town or city) (County) (State)

* Enlisted * R. A. * N. G. * E. R. C. * Inducted at Div 3 Albany N Y on May 25, 19 18
Albany N Y Age or date of birth: Feb 21/1896

Organizations served in, with dates of assignments and transfers: Co A 2 Pion Inf to disch

Grades, with date of appointment: Pvt 1cl Oct 17/18; Corp May 1/19

Engagements:

Wounds or other injuries received in action: None.

Served overseas from July 1 /18 to June 5/19 from to

Honorably discharged on demobilization June 12/19, 19

In view of occupation he was, on date of discharge, reported 0 per cent disabled.

Remarks:

Form No. 724-1, A. G. O. * Strike out words not applicable. † Dates of departure from and arrival in the U S

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

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|--------------------------------|---|--------------|
| SERIAL NUMBER U 1864 | 1. NAME (Print) William HENRY Oliver (First) (Middle) (Last) | ORDER NUMBER |
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2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)
CROSSVILLE RD #1 **Grafton** **REN** **NY**
 (Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]

3. MAILING ADDRESS
same
 [Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same]

| | | |
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| 4. TELEPHONE <i>none</i> | 5. AGE IN YEARS 46 | 6. PLACE OF BIRTH albany (Town or county) |
| (Exchange) (Number) | DATE OF BIRTH Feb 21 1896 (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.) | ny (State or country) |

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS
Raymond Oliver - Crossville RD #1

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS
Troy Record newspaper Co.

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS
5th & Broadway **Troy** **Ren** **ny**
 (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. Form 1
 (Revised 4-1-42)

(over)

16-21630-3

William H. Oliver
 (Registrant's signature)