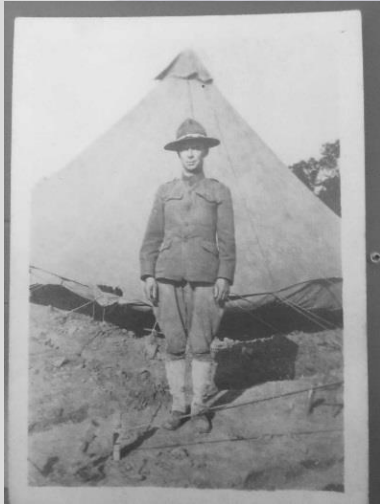


John Joseph Brannon, Jr., T-16

29 November 1898 – 8 March 1918

(aged 19)



The accidental shell explosion was on March 7, which killed five other Memphians with the American expeditionary forces in France, was also responsible for young John Joseph Brannon's death on March 8.

Brannon, who was a graduate of vocational high school, enlisted here last June at the age of 16 years.

As a tribute to Privates John J. Brannon and William J. Hayes, Memphis boys who were killed in action in France, the local council of the Young Men's Institute of which both were members, will receive holy communion in a body Sunday morning at St. Mary's Church at 7 o'clock mass, with Rev. Father Ewald, the pastor, officiating.

The two young men were the first members of the institute to die in action, though the local branch has over 10 percent of the membership in service, with a number already in France.

The memorial planned by the institute is the highest tribute that can be paid a Catholic. Members of the institute will assist in furnishing the special music, which will be rendered by the choir.

Information from The Commercial Appeal, Saturday, March 23, 1918.

MEMPHIANS KILLED TOYING WITH SHELL.

Had Found Unexploded Missile in Field While at Drill

TWO DIED INSTANTLY

Death struck down the Memphis boys killed in France two weeks ago while the young soldiers were enjoying their recreation hour in the afternoon.

An old unexploded shell which they had found in a field near the camp and which they were tossing about brought disaster to them.

Details of the accident were acquired by The Commercial Appeal.

Sections of the unit had been at drill during the morning of March 7, while in the field one of the boys, through often warned against collecting curious of a dangerous nature picked up an unexploded shell and placed it in one of the conveyances of the organization, in which it was carried back to camp. It lay in the stable, unthought of again until 2 o'clock that afternoon. The men were in their recreation when one of their number got the shell and began tossing it about. Suddenly a terrific explosion was heard, and the members of the unit rushed up to find their members stricken. Private Edwin L. Fitch and Private Fred R. McGill were dead. Private Joe D. Brakefield of Collierville died on way to the hospital. Private George Hovey, Private Thomas G. Bragg, and Private Willie Hayes died in the hospital. Corporal George S. Sanford of Crenshaw MS died the following day. Private John J. Brannon was operated on but died on the night of the eighth.

Little did the members of the organization think when they left Memphis that they would ever draw on their company fund to bury their comrades. But with money taken from that treasury Captain Perkins bought a lot in

the burying ground of the little French village in which the company is billeted.

On the morning of the eighth, services were held for the four Protestants and mass was said for the four Catholics after which the two processions united in the march to the graves, where the southern lads were given the honors of a military burial. The next day the unit followed the body of Private Brannon to the little cemetery.

*There they rest, under the lilies of France
Save for the gloom and sadness at the
death of their comrades, the others are
well and content.*

*Information from The Commercial
Appeal, Thursday, March 28, 1918.*

The American Legion drum and bugle corps will play. The Rev. William Baker will deliver the invocation. Color bearers will be Ross Click and John Akers. Mrs. Baird will present the flowers to the "gold star mothers."

Victims of the fatal ball game were: Joseph Brakefield, John Brannon, Guy Bragg, Frank Cockrell, William Hayes, George Sanford, Raymond B. Sutton, Edwin L. Fitch, George E. Hovey and Fred McGill.

Nine Young Men Who Lost Lives In France To Be Remembered Tomorrow

Twenty-four years ago today nine young men at Moyen, France, bored with the war, sought amusement by playing ball. Their "ball" was a dud French 75 shell.

They tossed it back and forth, from one man to another. Then a man missed and the dud hit the ground. It exploded.

Tomorrow at 3 p.m. at the Overton Park Doughboy statue, members of the 42nd (Rainbow) Division and the 166th Ambulance Corps will hold services in honor of those nine men. They were George Sanford, John J. Brannon,

Thomas Bragg, Joe Brakefield, George E. Hovey, Willie Hays, Frank Cockrell and Fred McGill.

Mrs. A. E. Hovey Sr., mother of one of the boys, and Mrs. A. E. Hovey Jr. will place a wreath at the base of the statue. Gold Star Mothers at the ceremony will be presented with flags.

Participating in the ceremony will be Howard M. Carson, master of ceremonies; Judge J. P. M. Hamner, principal speaker; Rev. Mark Fergis, invocation and benediction; Bugler Petroff of Second Army Headquarters, taps.

WAR MEMORIAL WILL BE HELD

Plans Made to Honor Men
Killed in Explosion in
France; Mothers Take Part.

Final plans have been completed for the memorial services at 2 p.m., tomorrow, at Overton Park, for 10 Memphis soldier boys who were killed in a "freak" explosion in France, March 5, 1918.

Mrs. Ollie Hovey, "gold star mother," will place a wreath on the Doughboy Statue. Roses will be presented all mothers and widows of the Memphians killed in the explosion.

The Memphians were killed while playing ball with a time explosion shell. One of the soldiers had found the shell on the drill field and had brought it to camp. They thought it was a "dud" and did not realize their danger. One of the players missed a catch and the shell exploded.

Walter Chandler will be the principal speaker. The services are being held by the Tennessee Chapter, Rainbow War Veterans' Association and the ladies' auxiliary. Alfred Baird, president, will act as master of ceremonies.

