

## **AOI Finalizes Efforts to Identify 22 of the 23 Remaining Unknown Veterans Added to the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Tree Memorial on February 6, 1922**

The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants (AOI) of D.C. has long been dedicated to preserving the history and honoring the memories of the city's past residents. Among their many initiatives, the efforts of Past-President Bill Brown and Past-Director Barbara Bates to identify the remaining 23 of the 530 D.C. World War I veterans added to the 16th Street Tree Memorial on February 6, 1922, stand out as a testament to their commitment and perseverance.

The 16th Street Tree Memorial, established shortly after World War I, serves as a living tribute to the brave men and women from the Washington, D.C. area, who served in the Great War. Each tree planted along this historic avenue represents a veteran, creating a poignant and enduring reminder of their sacrifices. However, over the years, the identities of some of these veterans had become obscured, with 22 of 23 names remaining unidentified among the 530 total commemorated.

Bill Brown and Barbara Bates took on the formidable task of uncovering the identities of these forgotten heroes. Their efforts involved meticulous research, combing through historical records, military archives, and personal documents. This painstaking work required not only a deep understanding of the historical context but also a relentless dedication to ensuring that every veteran's story was brought to light.

In 2023, their attention was directed to one copper shield that emerged via an online inquiry to the AOI revealing the heretofore unknown name of Daniel Bensinger, USA Army who was not among any of the lists compiled by Brown and Bates over their many years of research. With the discovery of the Bensinger shield, it was surmised that his was among the 23 added to the 2-mile-long tree memorial on February 6, 1922. The complete list of the vetted names was provided to the Costello Post of the American Legion, according to articles in both the "Washington Times-Herald" and "Washington Post" on February 6, 1922 but has never been found. The American Forestry Association, now simply American Forests, was cited in a similar article with one of their employees unfurling a long

scroll of all 530 names then contained along the memorial but research has proven unable to locate that scroll or the names.

Their work was not just about filling in the blanks of history; it was about restoring the honor and recognition that these veterans deserved. By identifying the remaining 23 veterans, Brown and Bates ensured that each tree on 16th Street could be properly attributed, allowing families and descendants to connect with their ancestors' legacies. This act of remembrance also served to educate the public about the contributions and sacrifices of D.C.'s World War I veterans, fostering a deeper appreciation for the city's rich history.

On Memorial Day, May 30, 2022, the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia unveiled and dedicated a new interpretive wayside at 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Alaska Avenue, NW which details the history of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Tree Memorial and those who are memorialized there.

Brown and Bates have surmised that the names of the unknown 22 (in addition to Daniel Bensinger) might be among those they have compiled over the years from various sources such as “Soldiers of the Great War,” “National Capital Press,” those inscribed on “The Supreme Sacrifice” sculpture located in the John A. Wilson (District) Building and other sources. Among these sources, 22 names (listed below) which are not among those on the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Tree Memorial, or the DC War Memorial on Ohio Drive, are being “suggested” as possibly those 22 of the 23 added in 1922.

In conclusion, the efforts of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants exemplify the mission of the organization to honor and preserve the history of Washington, D.C. Their members’ dedication to identifying the remaining 23 World War I veterans added to the 16th Street Tree Memorial is a powerful reminder of the importance of remembering and honoring those who have served. Through their work, they have ensured that the legacy of these veterans will continue to be recognized and celebrated for generations to come.

<sup>1</sup>Narrative supplemented by Microsoft CoPilot 2024-11-16

**Alphabetical List of DC WWI Veterans Not Included on Memorials but believed to be those added to the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Tree Memorial in February 1922**

First Name	Last Name	Sex	Race	Rank	Branch
Harry Houston	Chinn	M		Private	1st. Co., 1st Regiment
Howard O.	Cook	M		Capt.	US Army, Quartermaster Corps
Albert G.	Fischer	M		Private	6th Heavy Mobile Ordnance Repair Shop
Amel	Frey	M		Capt.	US Army - 26th Infantry, 1st Division
Francis D.	Gavin	M		Civilian	Postal Clerk
Kirt	Green	M		Capt.	USMC 5th Regiment
Sherman R.	Green	M		Private	USA, Co. B, 324th Machine Gun Battalion
Edward Claypool	Gwynn	M		2nd Lt.	Aviation Instruction Center
Oscar Lloyd	Housel	M		Captain	Co. A, 38th Engineers
Henry W.	Hyland	M		Lt.	US Army
Edwin Richardson	Kimble II	M		Maj.	US Army
Joseph James	Kinyoun	M		Major/Dr.	US Army
Clarence Edwin	Lilly	M		Sgt.	USMC, 47th(M) Co., 3rd Batt, 5th Regiment
Henry	Logan	M	Black	Private	US Army, 808th Pioneer Infantry, Co. C
Charles Arliss	May	M		Sgt.	12th Machine Gun Battalion, 4th Division
Nelson A.	Miller	M		2Lt.	US Army, Co. B, 360th Inf., 90th Div.
Albert	Nantz	M		1Lt.	US Army, Co. A, 2nd Pioneer Infantry
Lester E.	Potterfield	M		Corp.	US Army, Co. D, 116th Inf., 29th Div.
Richard Wigley Perrot	Rose	M		Corp.	USMC
George Victor	Rowbottom	M		Sgt.	USMC
William Fitzhugh Lee	Simpson	M		Maj.	US Army Infantry
Daniel E.	Southard	M		Priv.	3rd Machine Gun Battalion, 1st Division