

“The Great Crusade”: Ike and the Men of D-Day

Activity E: Soldier Discovery Activity

Historians use many tools and resources to learn about those from the past. The most useful tools are primary source records, which are first-hand accounts or documents from history. In studying World War II soldiers, some primary sources that are helpful include Census records, newspaper stories, registration forms, and even cemetery records. Today, you will have the chance to be a historian and piece together the story of a soldier who was killed fighting during the D-Day invasion of France in 1944 using actual primary source documents.

For this activity, students can work individually or in groups (if working in groups, designate one student to write down the answers and report them to the class during the ranger program). Each student or each group will be assigned a soldier who was killed on D-Day and is now buried in the Gettysburg National Cemetery. More than one student or group can be assigned a soldier. Each soldier will have an accompanying set of documents that students will use to answer as many of the following questions as they can. Note: some students groups will not have enough information to answer each question.

1. What is your soldier's name?
2. How old was he when he died?
3. When was he buried in Gettysburg?
4. What unit was he in, and what role did his unit play in the D-Day invasion?
5. What was his hometown?
6. Do you know any details about his personal life?
7. Did you learn anything about his family members? If so, what were their names?
8. What was his job before the war?
9. What questions do you still have about this soldier after going through the documents?
10. Which records did you find most helpful? Were there any that were not helpful at all?

National Cemetery Background Information

Following World War II, the United States government gave families who had lost loved ones in the war the choice of where they wanted their loved ones to be buried. Over 170,000 families chose to have their loved ones' remains brought back to the United States, many to be buried in national cemeteries. Here in Gettysburg there are 590 soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen who were killed during World War II, who are now buried in the Gettysburg National Cemetery. Twelve of these soldiers were killed on D-Day.

- **William C. Laffin**, SSgt., Company B, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, Section 1, Row 1, Grave 2
- **Howard Nutt**, 146 Engineer Combat Battalion, Section 1, Row 3, Grave 3
- **William J. Copeland**, 18th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, Bronze Star, Section 3, Row 9, Grave 12
- **Frank John Kvansnosky**, PFC, Military Police, 1st Infantry Division, Section 3, Row 3, Grave 19
- **Forrest Rice**, PFC, 1st Infantry Division, Section 3, Row 2, Grave 14
- **Alfred Augustine**, 146th Engineer Combat Battalion, Section 2, Row 5, Grave 34
- **Joseph Fedish**, Tec/5, 29th Field Artillery Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, Section 2, Row 4, Grave 33
- **Elmer Warman**, Private, 1st Infantry Division, Section 2, Row 5, Grave 4
- **Richard Brandtonies**, Company A, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, Section 2, Row 4, Grave 1
- **Clairus Riggs**, PFC, Company B, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, Section 2, Row 2, Grave 41
- **Byron Leonard Stanton**, PFC, Company B, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, Section 2, Row 2, Grave 50
- **George Allen Hawn**, PFC, Company B, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, Section 2, Row 5, Grave 9