

REMEMBERING PRIVATE ENRIGHT

THE CONTEXT OF THE LAWRENCEVILLE DOUGHBOY

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ABSTRACT: For many among the thousands who attended its dedication in 1921, Lawrenceville's statue of a doughboy evoked the service and the sacrifice of their native son, Thomas F. Enright, perhaps the first American to be killed in World War I. **KEYWORDS:** Thomas F. Enright, Pennsylvania, Lawrenceville, World War I, World War I memorials

The first American casualty of World War I was probably a private from Pennsylvania¹ who was honored, as far as many of his contemporaries were concerned, with a statue that a United States congressman has called "one of the most meaningful World War I memorials in the country."² New York sculptor Allen G. Newman's bronze of a doughboy designed for a Pittsburgh neighborhood, Lawrenceville, evokes the service of nearly 300,000 Pennsylvanians who served in the Great War,³ as those who remembered would have called the conflict, but Newman's soldier at the time of its unveiling in 1921 conjured the sacrifice of one local hero, Thomas F. Enright, who was among the first three doughboys to be killed in the war and may have been the first to die. Both the soldier and the statue merit reexamination.

It is unclear how much or even if Enright was in mind during the planning for the monument, but a year after the war ended in 1918, Lawrenceville's Board of Trade established a memorial committee, with Lawrence W. Dunn, chairman, and it raised \$10,000 for the project. The City of Pittsburgh then commissioned Newman (1875–1940), a sculptor with a national reputation,⁴ to create a monument where Butler Street and Penn Avenue intersect at the entrance to Lawrenceville, long an important crossroads. From the early nineteenth century, that triangle of land, dubbed "the Forks in the Road,"

marked where the turnpikes to Butler on the one hand and Greensburg on the other converged.⁵ Strategically important, triangular “Doughboy Square,” then, would specifically honor those three thousand soldiers who served from wards within three of Pittsburgh’s neighborhoods, which included parts of Lawrenceville, Polish Hill, and the Strip District.⁶

Unlike many other war memorials that were mass-produced and marketed, Newman’s work was site-specific for Lawrenceville and was one of only three cast.⁷ This statue complements the site, said Michael Kraus, curator and staff historian at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum in Pittsburgh, who was interviewed for this article: “It’s so well placed in that intersection. The proportions are perfect for that spot. And the pose is dynamic.”⁸ (A second Newman doughboy was installed in Cliffside, New Jersey, in 1929; a third remained in the artist’s collection and was exhibited occasionally, but subsequently sold by the artist’s son to a private collector, who then gave it to Rhinebeck, New York, in 1973).⁹

The eight-and-a-half-foot Lawrenceville *Doughboy* stands atop a seven-foot pedestal on which bronze panels list both those who died in service and those who served and returned home. Newman’s soldier is caught in *contrapposto*, a classical innovation revived in the Renaissance to suggest dynamism, movement, life, the shifting of the subject’s weight onto one leg. The implied movement enacts a psychological state further suggesting an attitude or emotion in the static human form, thus demonstrating that representative figures, like statues, could articulate complex human emotions. (Michelangelo’s *David*, a most familiar seventeen-foot example of *contrapposto*, might easily have been an inspiration for Newman’s *Doughboy*, for the poses of the Renaissance master’s marble and the New York sculptor’s bronze bear a striking resemblance.)¹⁰

More than twenty thousand people participated in or witnessed the *Doughboy*’s dedication on the afternoon of May 30, 1921, Decoration Day Weekend.¹¹ While the throng surrounded the veiled statue, a parade formed at 2:30 p.m., ten blocks from the site, and marched through Allegheny Cemetery and Lawrenceville. Mounted police escorted the chief marshal, Maj. Clinton T. Bundy, the Pennsylvania National Guard, a color line and guard from the US Marine Corps’ recruiting office, along with members of the American Legion and Marine Corps veterans, among others. When they arrived at the site, as schoolchildren sang “The Star-Spangled Banner,” the 107th Field Artillery, twenty blocks away at the Allegheny Arsenal, was contacted by wireless and fired a twenty-one-gun salute. Col. Churchill Mehard, who served at the Battle of the Marne, Pittsburgh Mayor Edward V. Babcock, and



FIGURE 1 Doughboy Square at Butler Street and Penn Avenue in Lawrenceville. (Photo by Tom Powers, Lawrenceville Historical Society.)

Judge Ambrose B. Reid spoke. Finally, two schoolgirls, Dorothy Ziegler and Isa Wolfe, unveiled the statue. Mrs. William J. Gilbert, whose son had died in service, placed a wreath at the foot of the monument. Rev. Leon Stewart offered an invocation, and Rev. Father B. McGuigan gave the benediction.

Many in that dedication crowd undoubtedly knew that in a few weeks Enright's remains would be exhumed in France and returned to Pittsburgh for reburial at his parish cemetery, ten blocks from Newman's statue. While not cast by Newman to catch Enright's likeness, the face of the soldier was a raw reminder of their lost son or brother, neighbor or friend. "For thousands in that dedication crowd," said Kraus, "that doughboy was Private Enright."

"What's really interesting about this doughboy, though, is how beat up he is. His clothing is torn; his leggings are sagging," he continued. "But he's very muscular, very hardened to combat. . . . Here is the common man in a heroic pose."



FIGURE 2 The face of Newman's *Doughboy*. (Photo by Tom Powers, Lawrenceville Historical Society.)

You can almost see the smoke of battle still hanging around him. He could have just walked out of a trench at the front to see the carnage.” Enright wasn’t as lucky. He was slaughtered in a trench east of Verdun, the first of 10,287 Pennsylvanians and perhaps the first American to die in the war.

He took a long road to that trench. Thomas F. Enright was born May 8, 1887, in Bloomfield, the Pittsburgh neighborhood just east of Lawrenceville, the last of seven children of Ellen and John Enright, Irish Catholic immigrants, and their first child born in the United States.¹² After attending St. Mary’s parochial school in Lawrenceville, he enlisted in the US Army on September 15, 1909, and served in China, the Philippines, and Mexico, before returning to Pittsburgh. In 1916, he reenlisted in the Sixteenth Regiment, Company F, and on June 26, 1917, under the command of Gen. John J. Pershing, was sent to France, where his company was moved into the trenches near Bathelemont and then into the middle of their darkest night.

On November 2, 1917, a wintery night in northern France, Enright slung a hundred-pound pack on his back, trudged through the mud, the rats, and the scattered shells, then slipped into a trench.¹³ A soldier in Enright’s company, Cpl. Frank Coffman later wrote: “All was quiet . . . except for an occasional rat-tat-tat from some nervous machine-gunner further down the line . . . Lured on by exhaustion and a sense of safety, we wrapped our blankets around us and prepared for a few hours of restful slumber.”¹⁴

World War I veteran and writer Laurence Stallings captured what happened to the men of Company F (and Enright) in his account, *The Doughboys*:

When night fell on November 2, [a German] Assault Company was brought into the German front line and sent to the deepest dugouts to await its hour. . . . Exactly at three o’clock in the morning all hell broke loose. Enemy guns spoke in chorus, tons of metal descended heavily along the Yank front, communicating trenches were plastered with mortar fire, machine guns sent their whispering streams of nick-eled steel over the heads of the Doughboys in the line. After a strident overture, with men for the first time knowing the bone-shaking, head-rocking effect of eight-inch mortar shells breaking nearby, the fire was concentrated, isolating in a box barrage F Company, 2nd Battalion, 16th US Infantry. The box soon closed in on one platoon front. There was nothing now, on the face of the earth, which could reach this chosen platoon. The Assault Company, facing it, leaped

from their trenches and started across the two hundred meters that separated Americans from Germans. Bangalore torpedoes blasted a path through the wire. The side of the box barrage nearest the Germans now vanished, the other three sides roaring with breaking shells. The platoon first knew of the Germans' presence when grenades burst among them.¹⁵

Two hundred battle-ready German soldiers from the Seventh Bavarian Landwehr Regiment had approached the trench to capture the green doughboys for interrogation. "But to the men of Company F it was all terrifyingly new," wrote historians Meirion and Suzie Harries. "Deafened, stunned, the survivors crawled out of their dugouts and hit back with rifle butts, fists, and bombs, killing two Germans and wounding several more."¹⁶

For the Americans, seven months after the formal declaration, the war was now on. But this time, the Germans prevailed. Eleven American men were taken prisoner, five were wounded, and three soldiers were killed: Pvt. Merle D. Hay, twenty-one, of Iowa, and Cpl. James B. Gresham, twenty-three, from Indiana, were shot dead. Pvt. Thomas F. Enright, thirty, of Pittsburgh, put up a fight, apparently determined not to be taken prisoner. He was found half in, half out of the trench with his chest opened and twelve bayonet wounds over his body. His throat cut, his head nearly severed, he guarded the trench with his life.¹⁷ (While accounts vary as to who was killed first, Kraus said that the positions of the bodies suggested to him that Enright was the first to die.)

The three Americans were buried that afternoon with full military honors near where they fell.

The French government erected a monument at the site on which was inscribed: "Here lie the first soldiers of the illustrious Republic of the United States who fell on French soil for justice and liberty."¹⁸ It was destroyed by the Germans in World War II.¹⁹

The death of the doughboys shocked the country in general, the Commonwealth in particular, and the Bloomfield and Lawrenceville neighborhoods especially, said Kraus. "Pittsburgher Is First to Die Fighting with Pershing's Men in France" was a front-page headline from Pittsburgh's *Gazette Times*, announced on November 6, 1917. The three soldiers became symbols, posthumous celebrities, "something more than they could have ever imagined," wrote historian Williams.²⁰ Along with Hay and Gresham, Enright was emblazoned atop a Red Cross poster to raise money for its War



FIGURE 3 This duotone rotogravure was produced by the New York Times Company in 1919 in one of the paper's mid-week pictorials. The first three Americans to die on November 3, 1917, are pictured at the top; Enright is far left. Below are photos of the burial service and of Enright's and Hay's grave and memorial. (Enright's grave is in the background.) The item is now a part of the American Memory Collection in the Library of Congress, specifically in the War of Nations, a portfolio of rotogravure etchings. The photos of the soldiers are from International Film Series. The photos of the graves in France are from the Times Photo Service.

Fund Week: “The First Three! . . . Give till it Hurts—they gave till they died.”²¹ His early death made Enright a national hero.²²

The war ended in 1918, but Enright’s body was not returned to Pittsburgh until July 21, 1921, fifty days after the dedication of the *Doughboy* statue in Lawrenceville.²³ His flag-draped coffin lay in state in Pittsburgh’s Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall in Oakland. Pallbearers from Lawrenceville’s St. Mary’s School escorted it to a packed St. Paul’s Cathedral for the funeral Mass celebrated by Bishop Hugh C. Boyle. “Thousands Pay Tribute to City’s First Dead of War,” the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* headlined on July 21, 1921. He was laid to rest in St. Mary’s Cemetery in Lawrenceville. A wreath, sent by General Pershing, was placed on his grave.

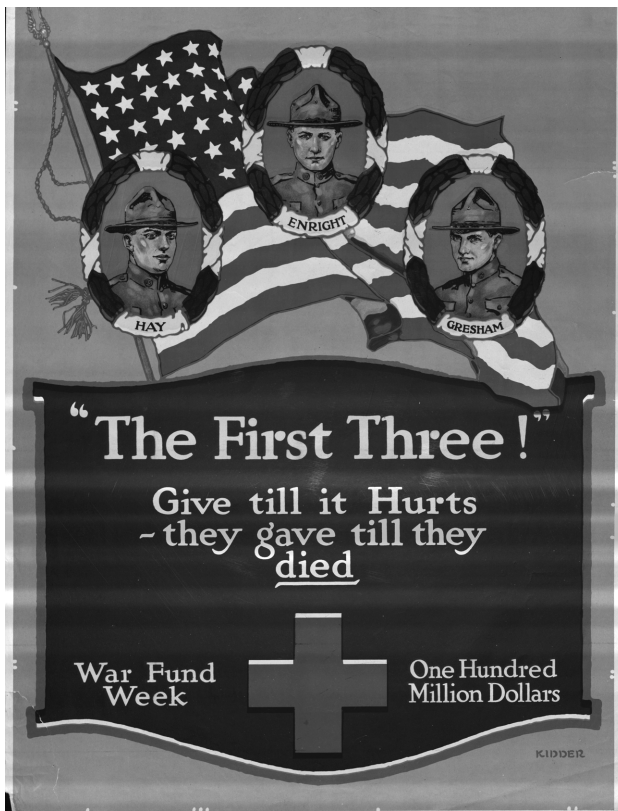


FIGURE 4 The Red Cross fund-raising poster *The First Three* featuring Enright at the top. (Image courtesy of the Pennsylvania State Archives, Poster Collection, MG-200, #191.)



FIGURE 5 After lying in state, Enright's body is carried from Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall in Oakland and taken to St. Paul's Roman Catholic Cathedral for a funeral Mass. (Image courtesy of Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall.)

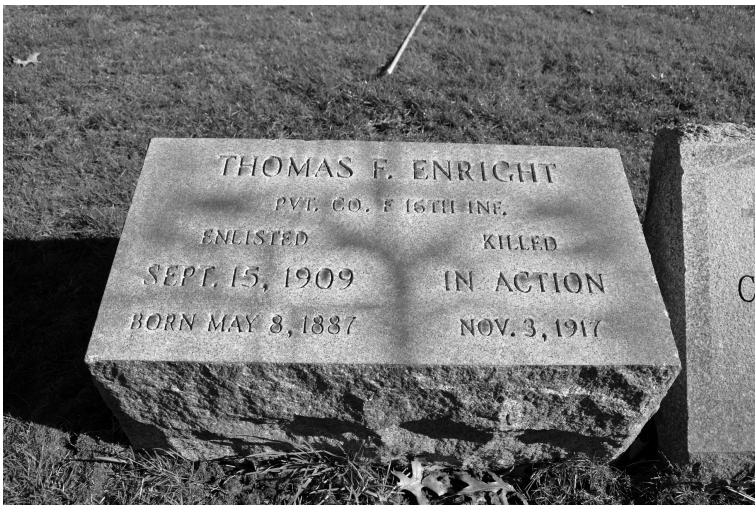


FIGURE 6 Enright's grave in St. Mary's Cemetery in Lawrenceville. (Photo by Tom Powers, Lawrenceville Historical Society.)

A century later, Enright's connection to the monument has been largely lost to history. Historian Budreau writes that he is "all but forgotten at home."²⁴ A theater named for him in the East Liberty neighborhood in 1928 was torn down in 1960; a "parklet," a site too small to be called a park, remains in that neighborhood and Enright Court, also in East Liberty, still carries his name. But Connors points out, "There is irony in the city having named a dead-end street for Enright."²⁵

Yet the landmark that once evoked him remains and is appreciated by its community, having been restored over the years with varying degrees of success.²⁶ In 1983, the statue was painted brown to suggest its original pre-patina surface. Community members and government officials are not restoration professionals; Kraus said, "They do the best they can with what they know and can afford."

Lawrenceville's *Doughboy* still stands, perhaps dominating the site more than ever for the work has lost little of its power, observed Kraus, also a sculptor who has worked in bronze. The triangular intersection is still called "Doughboy Square." The statue's image has become the logo of Lawrenceville (designed by Paul Shifino).²⁷ "The *Doughboy* is a real piece of that community," said Kraus. "That's what it was meant to do. It was meant for those soldiers to be remembered, for their time to be recalled . . . Lawrenceville's *Doughboy* does that . . . The most important thing is that the *Doughboy* is still there."

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NOTES

Thank you to Jeff Guterman, Joe Kelly, Michael Kraus, Chris McCarrick, Franklin Toker, Kim Whitney, and especially to Tom Powers of the Lawrenceville Historical Society.

1. Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919–1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 85–87. Michael Connors, "The Next Page: Finding Private Enright," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 11, 2007, <http://www.post-gazette.com/opinion/Op-Ed/2007/11/11/The-Next-Page-Finding-Private-Enright/stories/200711110239>. Newton C.

- Parke, *Pittsburg Press*, November 17, 1917, 1. "Pittsburgher Is First to Die with Pershing's Men in France," *Gazette Times*, November 6, 1917, 1. Elizabeth Williams, *Pittsburgh in World War I: Arsenal of the Allies* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013), 117–21, <http://www.worldwaricentennial.org/competition-overview/memorial-context-world-war-i.html>. "Local Man Slain in Battle," *Pittsburg Press*, November 5, 1917, 1.
2. Leonard J. Lance, US representative from New Jersey, has said that the Lawrenceville *Doughboy* is arguably the greatest World War I sculpture in the nation. He wrote to the author: "The Doughboy statue in the heart of Pittsburgh is one of the most meaningful World War I memorials in the country. The statue tells the story of the patriotic citizens summoned to service in the 'War to End All Wars' and its placement in western Pennsylvania has for nearly 100 years been a commentary on how warfighters sacrificed from all across the country. It is an important piece in the history of our Nation and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania" (email to the author, September 8, 2016).
 3. "More than 297,000 Pennsylvanians served as soldiers in the Great War, with 10,287 deaths, and more than 26,252 wounded," <http://www.worldwaricentennial.org/index.php/pennsylvania-wwi-centennial-home.html>.
 4. Marilyn Evert and Vernon Gay, *Discovering Pittsburgh's Sculpture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), 298–99. Newman's obituary in the *New York Times* on February 4, 1940, lists some of his accomplishments: "Among his best-known works are the figures 'Night and Day,' at the former Harriman Bank in New York; the Henry Hudson Monument, at 72nd Street and Riverside Drive; 'Triumph of Peace,' in Atlanta, Ga.; 'The Hiker,' in Providence, R.I., . . . and a World War monument, 'Doughboy,' in Pittsburgh."
 5. Evert and Gay, *Discovering Pittsburgh's Sculpture*, 298. Franklin Toker, *Pittsburgh: A New Portrait* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 203–4.
 6. The Lawrenceville Historical Society, "Ask a Historian," <http://lawrencevillehistoricalsociety.com/articles/>.
 7. Jack Conklin, "Rhinebeck's 'Doughboy' Carries Impressive Pedigree," *River Chronicle*, August 20, 2014, http://www.columbiagreenemedia.com/river-chronicle/article_65afdef6-289d-11e4-a64e-0019bb2963f4.html.
 8. Interview with the author, August 1, 2016.
 9. Conklin, "Rhinebeck's 'Doughboy.'"
 10. Fred S. Kleiner, Christin J. Mamiya, and Richard G. Tansey, *Gardner's Art through the Ages*, 11th ed. (New York: Harcourt, 2001), 122, 647–48; Henry M. Sayre, *A World of Art*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice-Hall, 2007), 307. H. W. Janson, *History of Art: A Survey of the Major Visual Arts from the Dawn of History to the Present Day*, rev. ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1970), 102–3.
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12. Connors, "The Next Page." Williams, *Pittsburgh in World War I*, 118–19.
 13. Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 85–87. Connors, "The Next Page." Williams, *Pittsburgh in World War I*, 118–19. Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 372–73. "Pittsburgher Is First to Die Fighting with Pershing's Men in France," *Gazette Times*, November 6, 1917, 1. Meirion and Susie Harries, *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War, 1917–1918* (New York: Random House, 1997), 3–9.
 14. Harries, *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War*, 4.
 15. Laurence Stallings, *The Doughboys: The Story of the AEF* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 51–52.
 16. Harries, *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War*, 4.
 17. Connors, "The Next Page." Harries, *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War*, 5. Williams, *Pittsburgh in World War I*, 119.
 18. Connors, "The Next Page."
 19. Military History Forum, <http://www.militarian.com/threads/the-first-american-soldiers-killed-in-action.6763/>.
 20. Williams, *Pittsburgh in World War I*, 119.
 21. Ibid., 120. "Arts of the Great War," <http://artofthegreatwar.info/articles/the-first-three/>.
 22. Alvin M. Josephy Jr., *The American Heritage History of World War I* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 217.
 23. Connors, "The Next Page." Williams, *Pittsburgh in World War I*, 119–22. "Multitude Mourns at Funeral of Thomas F. Enright, War Hero," *Pittsburgh Press*, July 16, 1921, 1. "Thousands Pay Tribute to City's First Dead of War," *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, July 17, 1921, 1.
 24. Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 85.
 25. Connors, "The Next Page."
 26. In 1947, the statue and site were refurbished to include an honor roll of 3,100 Sixth Ward (Lawrenceville) residents who served in World War II. The statue was restored again in 1983 in a controversial manner utilizing a dark brown coating on its surface to simulate its original bronze color. Joe Borkowski, letter to the editor, *Pittsburgh Press*, April 26, 1983, 16. "Sixth Ward Unveils Its Honor Roll," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 5, 1947, 1. Sylvia Sachs, "Doughboy Square to Be Rejuvenated," *Pittsburgh Press*, July 8, 1977, 12. *Pittsburgh Press*, June 19, 1983 (photo/cutline of dedication ceremony), 18.
 27. Williams, *Pittsburgh in World War I*, 130. "The Neighborhood," <http://lvpggh.com/explore/the-neighborhood/>.