

George Nolan

George Lloyd Nolan was born in Wayland, Massachusetts on August 30, 1890 to Patrick and Margaret Nolan, both immigrants from Ireland¹. Patrick came to the United States as a small child in 1865, while Margaret arrived in 1878 at 13 years old. The Nolans lived on a farm on Old Connecticut Path, a road surrounded by rural land. George had an older sister, Alice, an older brother, William, and a younger brother, Frank.² Growing up in the 1890s, George may have enjoyed reading Sherlock Holmes stories, playing baseball with siblings and neighborhood friends, or joking about a popular children's poem of the era by Gelett Burgess which read, "I never saw a purple cow/I never hope to see one/But I can tell you anyhow/I'd rather see than be one."³

As a child, Nolan attended Wayland's schools, which were consolidated into one in 1897. This school had trouble keeping all of its younger students in class, and Cochrute children had a notably better attendance rate than those from northern Wayland, but the local government appeared to value education and increased school funding. High school students took courses in grammar, history, civics, physiology, and languages,⁴ but did not have the variety of elective choices that Wayland High School's students do today. Nolan made honor roll at WHS in 1905,⁵ probably while working on the family farm in his spare time. His younger brother, Frank, delivered a speech about his class's future when graduating from grammar school in 1907, and it is likely that the Nolan family valued

¹ Ancestry.com. Massachusetts, Birth Records, 1840-1915 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013.

² Year: 1910; Census Place: Wayland, Middlesex, Massachusetts; Roll: T624_607; Page: 19B; Enumeration District: 1060; FHL microfilm: 1374620.

³ Poem.

⁴ 1912 Town Reports.

⁵ 1906 Town Reports.



academics as much as their children’s school did. After graduating high school, George Nolan worked on the family farm full-time.

In 1917, when the United States joined World War I, George enlisted in the U.S. Army and was

inducted on June 5 of that year at Fort Slocum in New York.⁶ He began serving overseas on July 14, 1918, as part of the Support Troop 20th Cavalry in the

Nolan, George L.		1,403,985 white	1.00
(Surname)	(Christian name)	(Army serial number)	(Race: White or colored)
Old Conn Path		Wayland	MASSACHUSETTS
Residence:	(Street and house number)	(Town or city)	(County) (State)
*Enlisted in	RA Ft Slocum N Y	June 5/17	
†Born in	Wayland Mass	26 9/12 yrs	
Organizations:	Sup Tr 20 Cav (Sup Co 78 FA) to disch		
Grades:	Wag June 16/17		
Engagements:			
Wounds or other injuries received in action:	None		
‡Served overseas:	July 14/18 to July 2/19		
§Hon. disch.	July 10/19	on demobilization	at Cp. Devens, Mass.
Was reported	0	per cent disabled on date of discharge, in view of occupation.	
Remarks:			
TESTIMONIAL ISSUED			
Form No. 724-1½, A. G. O. March 12, 1920. *Insert "R. A.", "N. G.", "E. R. C.", "N. A.", as case may be, followed by place and date of enlistment. †Give place of birth and date of birth, or age at enlistment. ‡Give dates of departure from and arrival in the United States. §Give date.			

Support Company 78th Field Artillery.⁷ WWI was the beginning of the end for traditional cavalry units in militaries because of the advent of modern weapons, such as machine guns and poison gas. These new war technologies made cavalries much more vulnerable as they made it much easier for horses to die in battle. George’s unit was probably affected by this. He was not wounded or reported at any time in his year overseas, and was honorably discharged on demobilization on July 10, 1919 at Fort Devens, Massachusetts.⁸

When George Nolan returned from the war, he continued living and working at his family’s farm. His father Patrick had died in the previous decade and his mother Margaret

⁶ Nolan’s Service Card (Concord National Guard Archives).
⁷ Nolan’s Service Card (Concord National Guard Archives).
⁸ Nolan’s Service Card (Concord National Guard Archives).

ran the farm and the house. His sister Alice had taken a job as a stenographer, and she and brother William still lived on the farm.⁹ By 1930, William had moved out and George and his mother were running the farm, which was noted on the census as a “general farm.”¹⁰ This probably meant that the Nolans kept livestock and grew crops. Later in the 1930s, Margaret died, leaving the farm to the remaining two siblings, George and Alice.

In the late 1930s, Nolan took a job as a watchman at a post office in Worcester,^{11,12} probably because of the economic difficulty the United States still faced. Nolan was a farmer and the Great Depression had a massive impact on agriculture, so it is likely that he began working another job in order to keep the farm afloat. He was listed in the 1940 census as having worked every week of 1939,¹³ meaning he probably had a strong work ethic and was not given to taking extra time off. He was paid an average of about \$26.15 per week and \$1,360 for the entire year,¹⁴ which is equivalent to \$451.08 per week and \$23,459.42 total in today’s money. The post office job did not bring in much money, but he continued to work there for some years afterwards. He also received over \$50 in outside income, which probably came from the farm.¹⁵ An additional laborer, 45-year-old Albert

⁹ Year: 1920; Census Place: Wayland, Middlesex, Massachusetts; Roll: T625_720; Page: 5A; Enumeration District: 521; Image: 544.

¹⁰ Year: 1930; Census Place: Wayland, Middlesex, Massachusetts; Roll: 932; Page: 1A; Enumeration District: 0528; Image: 3.0; FHL microfilm: 2340667.

¹¹ Year: 1940; Census Place: Wayland, Middlesex, Massachusetts; Roll: T627_1621; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 9-608.

¹² The National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; Draft Registration Cards for Fourth Registration for Massachusetts, 04/27/1942 - 04/27/1942; Record Group Title: Records of the Selective Service System; Record Group Number: 147.

¹³ Year: 1940; Census Place: Wayland, Middlesex, Massachusetts; Roll: T627_1621; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 9-608.

¹⁴ Year: 1940; Census Place: Wayland, Middlesex, Massachusetts; Roll: T627_1621; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 9-608.

¹⁵ Year: 1940; Census Place: Wayland, Middlesex, Massachusetts; Roll: T627_1621; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 9-608.

Lenard, and maid, 60-year-old Irish immigrant Catherine Murphy, now worked on the farm as well. Both were uneducated and received very low wages.¹⁶

When war broke out again in 1941, Nolan registered for the draft, as all men over the age of 18 were required to do. His draft card, filled out in April 1942, lists his sister Alice as his most important contact. Although his brother William did fight in World War II, George himself was never drafted.

Nolan died on March 3, 1966, having never married. He is buried in St. Zepherin's Cemetery outside St. Zepherin's Church in Cochrane.¹⁷ Above all, George was a good citizen and hardworking fellow, likely the typical "everyman" who composed the large majority of doughboys during the Great War.

¹⁶ Year: 1940; Census Place: Wayland, Middlesex, Massachusetts; Roll: T627_1621; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 9-608

¹⁷ National Cemetery Administration. U.S. Veterans Gravesites, ca.1775-2006 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006