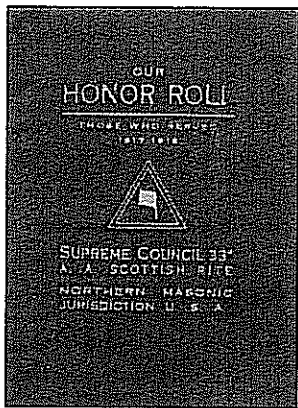


## John S. Winner - Scottish Rite Mason killed in action on the final day of WWI

Jeffrey Croteau



***Our Honor Roll: Those Who Served 1917-1919.***

**Boston, MA: Supreme Council, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, [1919]**

IN 1919, THE SUPREME COUNCIL PUBLISHED *Our Honor Roll: Those Who Served, 1917-1919*. The book contains a list of 14,843 Scottish Rite members from the 15 states that comprise the jurisdiction who "have gloriously served Our Country and the World in its hours of direst need, and have thus nobly assisted to fix the word American as a title of honor wherever courage and self-sacrifice are the cardinal virtues among men..." (The Supreme Council's Proceedings for 1919 noted that the list was incomplete, stating that "subsequent information indicates that the number of our Scottish Rite brethren of this Jurisdiction in the service exceeds 16,000.")

While browsing through the names, I was immediately struck by one entry in particular because of the death date:

**WINNER, JOHN SANFORD**

314th Inf.

(Killed in action Nov. 11, 1918)

The armistice-signing, which ended combat in World War I, took place at 5 a.m. on November 11, 1918. However, the armistice stipulated that combat would end six hours later – at the memorable eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. During the six hours between the signing of the armistice and the end of combat, a shockingly high number of deaths occurred as fighting continued, even with the knowledge that peace was coming at 11 a.m. Joseph Persico, in his book *Eleventh Day, Eleventh Month, Eleventh Hour: Armistice Day 1918, World War I and Its Violent Climax*, writes:

"According to the most conservative estimates, during the last day of the war, principally in the six

hours after the armistice was signed, all sides on the western front suffered 10,944 casualties, of which 2,738 were deaths, more than the average daily casualties throughout the war. Putting these losses into perspective, in the June 6, 1944, D-Day invasion of Normandy, nearly twenty-six years later, the total losses reported at 10,000 for all sides. Thus the total Armistice Day casualties were nearly 10 percent higher than those on D-Day. There was, however, a vast difference. The men storming Normandy beaches were fighting for victory. Men dying on Armistice Day were fighting in a war already decided."

Persico also notes that, of those 2,738 deaths, at least 320 were Americans.

Sergeant John Sanford Winner (1887-1918), a Scottish Rite Mason from Pennsylvania's Valley of Bloomsburg was among those killed on the final day of WWI. He was part of the 314th's Machine Gun Company and was killed alongside Private James Smith. At 9:15, on the morning of November 11, as the 314th Infantry attempted to take Côte de Romagne, Winner was killed, less than two hours before the cease fire. An account notes:

"At 9:15 A.M. Nov 11 1918 the company passed through the heaviest artillery it had ever experienced. The company had these casualties Sergt. John S. Winner and Private Harold Edwards killed, Corp. Roy Rinner, John Bremble, and Private Edwin Spaulding wounded."

According to Winner's WWI draft registration card, he was a 30-year-old unmarried barber from Danville, PA, before joining the 314th Infantry. We hope that further research will reveal more information about Winner, including when he joined the Scottish Rite.

*This article appeared in a slightly different form on the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library's blog. Find more at [nationalheritagemuseum.typepad.com](http://nationalheritagemuseum.typepad.com). The Van Gorden-Williams Library & Archives is located just off the main lobby of the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library and is open to the public 10-4:30, Wednesday-Saturday. Reference assistance is provided in person, by phone, or by e-mail. You may contact us at 781-457-4109 or [library@monh.org](mailto:library@monh.org).*