

Private George Wayne Wynn©
Regimental number: 2138787
72nd Battalion, Canadian Infantry

born: 1898–died: 1918

George Wayne Wynn was born in Wise County, Texas, in December 1898, the son of George Washington and Maggie Wynn. His older siblings were Harry (b. 1883), Rolla (b. 1885), Roy (b. 1888), Floyd (b. 1891), Neva (b. 1894) and Ina (b. 1896),¹ while younger sibling Lonnie was born in 1902.²

George Washington³ was a farmer⁴ and also the editor of the local newspaper in Wise County, the *Decatur Weekly Post*.⁵ He married Maggie Beulah Raymer, a local farmer's daughter, in 1881.^{6, 7} In 1900, after all but their last child had been born, they moved to Oklahoma and lived on a farm at Rush Springs, near Marlow.⁸ In 1904 he was made a Justice of the Peace.⁹

In March 1906 Maggie died,¹⁰ but widower George did not stay single long. On 18 October of that same year he married Emma Phillips,¹¹ who had three children from her previous marriage in 1892.¹² He was still farming in Oklahoma in 1920, living with just his daughter Neva.¹³ His status is given on the census as widowed, though he was still married. He did not divorce Emma until 1922.¹⁴ Emma was living with her son and daughter in 1920. She is listed on the census as married.¹⁵ George died in 1927.¹⁶

Not much is known about George Wayne prior to his enlistment. There is a 1917 report in the local newspaper of a George Wynn who had been terrorizing his neighbourhood and spent a month in the county jail, but this may not have been George Wayne.¹⁷ Two months later, another local newspaper reported that George W Wynn was among 35 men recruited into the US Navy on 17 April 1917.¹⁸ This is likely to be him, as there is a photo in the family album of him dressed in a sailor's uniform.



George Wayne Wynn
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However, for whatever reason, young George did not end up staying in the US Navy. He must have been very keen to go to war, though, as in January 1918—while living in Seattle, Washington, at the Waldon Hotel—he took a ferry to Victoria, British Columbia, and enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force.¹⁹ As an American, he would not have been eligible to enlist in the Canadian forces;²⁰ however, he falsely reported his place of birth as Liverpool, England, which made him eligible. His name is reported as George Wayne Wynn and his occupation as labourer.



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Private George Wayne Wynn was assigned to the 72nd Battalion, Canadian Infantry; it was formerly the British Columbia Regiment and also known as the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada.²¹ He embarked on HMT *Scotian* at Halifax on 16 April 1918 and disembarked 12 days later at Liverpool, England. He was taken on strength by the 1st Canadian Reserve Battalion and sent to the Command Segregation Camp at Seaford, on the south coast of England. Segregation camps were designed to prevent new recruits from infecting more seasoned battle-ready

troops with infectious diseases.²² Basic training was conducted there. Private Wynn had two spells at this camp, in April/May and again in July 1918.

At the end of September Private Wynn proceeded to join the 72nd Battalion, arriving in France on 27 September 1918 and joining his unit on 2 October, one of 135 reinforcements, as recorded in the 72nd Battalion war diary.²³ The battalion was stationed at Queant, just south of Vimy and Arras in northern France. It had just participated in the highly successful Battle of the Canal du Nord, in which the Allies broke through enemy lines and advanced towards Cambrai.²⁴ During this action the battalion casualties were five officers and 66 other ranks (ORs) killed, six officers and 293 ORs wounded, and 17 ORs missing.

Over the next several weeks the battalion advanced to the east as the Germans retreated, without any major action. During this period, Private Wynn was sentenced to 14 days F.P. No. 1 for being drunk on 15 October. F.P. refers to field punishment, introduced following the abolition of flogging in 1881. In F.P. No. 1, soldiers were placed in handcuffs and fixed to a post or similar object for up to two hours a day.²⁵ On 21 October, while the battalion was stationed at Abscom (which it had entered the day before, to the delight of the inhabitants following the Germans' withdrawal) there was a visit from the Prince of Wales who was "greatly impressed with the appearance of this unit."²⁶

On 27 October the battalion moved into the front line to participate in the Battle of Valenciennes. The attack began on the morning of 1 November 1918, with the crossing of the Canal de l'Escaut, which was successfully accomplished. The battle continued for two more days and the town of Valenciennes was taken, with the loss of 18 ORs killed, and five officers and 67 ORs wounded. One of those wounded was Private Wynn, who was admitted first to No. 6 Casualty Clearing Station with gunshot wounds to his abdomen, then transferred to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, where he died of his wounds on 2 November 1918. He was buried that day in the Auberchicourt British Military Cemetery (Grave 1, Plot 4, Row B).²⁷ There is no inscription from his family on his grave.

Auberchicourt, a village about 12 km to the east of Douai, was occupied by Commonwealth troops in October 1918. The Auberchicourt British Cemetery, which is just west of the village, was set up at the end of October and was used until February 1919, while the 6th, 23rd and 1st Canadian casualty clearing stations were located nearby. A casualty clearing station (CCS) was a military medical unit behind the front lines, usually located near transportation.²⁸ Casualties who did not die or could not be adequately treated in the CCS were stabilized before being transported to a field or military hospital.

No. 1 CCCS, originally designated as No. 2 Clearing Hospital, was organized at Liverpool, Nova Scotia, and at Valcartier, Quebec, in August and September 1914. It was part of the first contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force sent to Europe, arriving in England in October 1914. Casualty clearing stations were not stationary: after being first established at Aire, France, in March 1915, No. 1 CCCS moved 12 times to various locations in France, Belgium and finally, Germany. It ceased operations in February 1919. The unit was shelled at least three times in 1916 and 1917. At the conclusion of the war, it was one of the foremost medical units on the advance into Germany. An incomplete record of the unit's operations underestimates a total of 42,489 admissions to the unit, of which 37,546 were transferred to other hospitals, to base, or returned to the field. At least 879 servicemen died at No. 1 CCCS.²⁹

Private George Wynn received posthumously the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918).

George Wayne's oldest brother was **Harry**, whose full name was Benjamin Harrison.³⁰ In 1900 he was a farm labourer, probably working on his father's farm.³¹ The local newspaper reported in 1905 that he was arrested for stealing a small sum of money.³² In 1907, he married Nora Henderson,³³ the daughter of a white farmer living on the Chickasaw Nation Indian Territory.³⁴ They moved into the family home in Oklahoma, where Harry helped his father with the farming.³⁵ However, by 1920 they were living in Lawton City with their two young children, and Harry was working as a barber.³⁶ In 1940 he is recorded as widowed, no longer working, and living with his son Rolla and his family.³⁷ Harry died in 1956.³⁸

Rolla's life is shrouded in mystery. In 1900 he was working on his father's farm,³⁹ and in 1907 he is recorded in the local newspaper as having eaten "o'possum" with his brother Roy and others.⁴⁰ After that, there are no further records for him by that name. According to information gleaned from family members, he got into trouble with the law, moved to California and changed his name, to Thomas Jackson Burke.⁴¹ Under this name he submitted a Draft Registration Card in 1917 in which he claimed exemption from the draft due to "Religious scruples, Church of God."⁴² The date and place of birth on the card match those of Rolla in the family bible. Also, his death certificate gives his mother's maiden name as Raymer, which is correct for Rolla.⁴³

As Thomas Burke, he did serve in World War I, as a chauffeur with the 1st Aviation Section at Ellington Field in Texas.⁴⁴ Ellington Field was used as a base for advanced flight training for the United States Army Air Service.⁴⁵ There is no evidence that he went overseas.

By 1927 Thomas Burke was living in San Diego, California, according to his father's obituary (ref. 16 above). The 1940 Census shows him still living there and practicing law.⁴⁶ He was married to a woman named Regina; the census gives her birthplace as Massachusetts, whereas her death certificate states that she was born in Canada.⁴⁷ Rolla/Thomas died in San Diego in 1961.⁴⁸

Roy married, in 1909, Ora M. Howry,⁴⁹ the daughter of a farmer, James Howry, with whose family the couple were living in 1910 in Eldorado, Oklahoma.⁵⁰ Three years later he was the assistant miller at the Lawton Mill and Elevator Company in Lawton, Oklahoma.⁵¹ In this position he was involved in a scheme to steal feed from the mill in late 1913,⁵² a charge to which he pleaded guilty.⁵³

There is no evidence of any military service for Roy. In 1920 he was still in Lawton City, with his wife and three young children, but he was now a driller in the oil industry.⁵⁴ This line of work had led him and his family to Lincoln, Kansas, by 1930,⁵⁵ and he remained in Kansas until his death in 1949.⁵⁶

Floyd married, in 1914, Ola Rena Henderson,⁵⁷ the younger sister of Harry's wife Nora.⁵⁸ His 1917 Draft Registration card indicates that he had 1 year and 9 months of previous military service but had received a dishonourable discharge.⁵⁹ Floyd and Ola had a son, Earl, born in 1915,⁶⁰ but the marriage did not last more than a few years; in 1921, Ola married G. C. Burk.⁶¹ No further record has been found for Floyd until 1950, when he was living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with son Earl and his family. Earl owned several restaurants, and Floyd was working as a supervisor in the restaurant business. His marital status is listed as widowed.⁶² Floyd died 5 years later, in 1955.⁶³

Neva was the older of the two daughters. In 1913 she was working as a machine operator at the Crystal Laundry in Lawton, at age 19.⁶⁴ In 1920 she was the only one of George Washington's

children still living at home with him.⁶⁵ The following year she married A. J. Cox,⁶⁶ a truck driver whose wife Sally had died the year previously at the age of 23, leaving him with three small children.^{67, 68} By 1940 they had added two children of their own.⁶⁹ Neva died in 1970.⁷⁰

The younger daughter, **Ina**, was working as a machine operator in the Lawton Steam Laundry in 1913, at age 17.⁷¹ In 1925 she married Herbert Forrest Wandke,⁷² a labourer in the dairy industry.⁷³ By 1930 he was working as an assembler in the auto industry, while she was a stenographer for an insurance company.⁷⁴ In 1940 they were back in Oklahoma City after spending some time in Maine, where Herbert was born. They now had two children.⁷⁵ By 1950 they were both working at Air Service Command, part of the US Air Force base at Tinker Field just outside Oklahoma City,⁷⁶ he as a cylinder inspector and she as a secretary.⁷⁷ Ina died in 1971.⁷⁸

We have no information on the youngest child, **Lonnie**, except his date of birth in the family bible. In all likelihood, he did not live long.

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¹ "1900 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 17 December 2025), entries for Harry, Rolla, Roy, Floyd, Neva, Ina and George Wynn

² Name and date from family bible (no official records found). Personal communication from Christina Russell, direct descendant of George Wayne's brother Roy

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