



Samuel Woodfill (January 6, 1883-August 10, 1951)

Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, Samuel Woodfill was a veteran of the Philippine–American War, World War I, and World War II. As one of the most celebrated American soldiers of the early 20th century, Samuel, along with his wife, Lorena Wiltshire, called the city of Fort Thomas their home.

Born in Bryantsburg, Indiana, Samuel Woodfill enlisted in the United States Army in 1901. On his first deployment abroad, he would spend several years in the Philippines fighting Filipino guerilla forces before being transferred to Alaska in 1910 due to a border dispute with Canada and Great Britain over a portion of the Yukon Territory. In 1912, he would arrive at the Fort Thomas Military Reservation.

A year later, Woodfill would be promoted to lieutenant, and spend the next four years protecting the Mexican-American border against cross border attacks. In 1917, he would marry Lorena Wiltshire, and buy a home in the city of Fort Thomas.

At the outbreak of World War I, Woodfill's regiment, the 60th Infantry, attached to the Army 5th Division, was dispatched to Europe as part of the American Expeditionary force under the command of General John J. Pershing. Woodfill's regiment would be placed in the defenses between Meuse and the Argonne in France.

During an offensive in October of 1918, Woodfill and his men would be stationed near Cunel when they would be attacked by German held positions. Advancing in heavy fog, Woodfill and his men would walk into a fortified position. While others took cover, Woodfill singlehandedly took out 3 German machinegun emplacements while suffering under the effects of mustard gas.

On his third advance, Woodfill had entered a bunker; emptied his revolver to disable 5 Germans, and clubbed two men to death with a pick axe. Then while suffering from the effects of mustard gas he would lead his men back to American lines without casualties.

Receiving many awards for his actions that day, his accolades would be second to none. In a ceremony at Chaumont, France on February 9, 1919, General Pershing presented Woodfill the Medal of Honor.

As one of the country's greatest living heroes, Woodfill would be one of the most decorated soldiers of World War I; Pershing called him the most outstanding soldier in the war. Shunning the national spotlight, he would return to Fort Thomas only to become a local celebrity for the rest of his life.

In 1921, Woodfill served as a pallbearer, along with Alvin York and Charles Whittlesley, for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. In 1924, a life-size painting of him was presented to Woodfill Elementary School, in Fort Thomas, by his wife, Lorena, to hang in the school to honor Woodfill's achievements.

Woodfill apparently struggled financially after the war. He once worked hard trying to make an orchard into a paying business, but never quite succeeded. By 1929 Woodfill found himself in debt. To keep from losing his farm, the 46-year-old Woodfill took a job as a watchman in Newport.

In May 1942, Woodfill and Alvin C. York, another decorated World War I veteran from Tennessee, were commissioned Army majors... Woodfill was 59 years old. The Army commissions were part of a public relations campaign to boost morale and recruiting. His wife Lorena died March 26, 1942. In 1944, Woodfill again resigned from the Army, and he retired to a farm near Vevay in Switzerland County, Indiana. Woodfill died August 13, 1951, at the age of 68. Originally buried in the Jefferson County Cemetery near Madison, Indiana, through the efforts of Indiana Congressman Earl Wilson, Woodfill's body would be removed and reburied at Arlington National Cemetery in August 1955. His grave can be found in Section 34, Grave 642.