

HISTORY MINUTE

Presented by Edward Spannus

October 4, 2015



Our Gold Star Soldier Found

On June 14, David Whipple presented the History Minute on the Gold Star flag, the service flag that we flew in the vestibule during World War II. There are many blue stars—each representing a member of New Jerusalem who served in the United States Armed Forces during the Second World War. But there is only one gold star—for a serviceman who died in the war—but we didn't know who the gold star represented.

Now we do know, and we also know how the gold star was placed there. It was in honor of **Raymond Luther Cooper**, who died in Italy on April 23, 1944. We first got information on Raymond Cooper's death during the war from the diary of Mrs. Tobler, which we've previously discussed. I asked her granddaughter Donna White to look for any entries in the diary that might shed light on a soldier who died in World War II, and she found an entry concerning Raymond Cooper. From that, we were able to trace it out, and to document that indeed, he was the soldier represented by the gold star.

Raymond Cooper served with the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division, in the 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion. His battalion was part of the invasion at Anzio, Italy in January–March 1944, which may have been where he was wounded. Before that, the 82nd Airborne was part of the landing in Sicily in 1943, and then at Salerno.

According to a letter sent to his parents by a Lutheran military chaplain, Raymond was wounded on April 12, 1944, and succumbed to his injuries on April 23. However, some local newspaper accounts say he was in the hospital for a couple of months. He was buried in Italy, and today rests in the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and Memorial, which is near Anzio and not too far from Rome.



Raymond was the son of Harry J. Cooper and Viola Compher Cooper. Just yesterday we found a clipping in a scrapbook downstairs, an article about their 65th wedding anniversary, which mentions Raymond's death in Italy during the war. Raymond's parents were members at New Jerusalem for most of their lives, the article said.

Raymond was born on January 4, 1917, and was baptized here on December 3, 1920 by Pastor Meyer. He attended Lovettsville High School, and his trade was that of a brick and stone mason. He was married to Marian Deavers, of Berryville.

A memorial service was held here on Sunday, September 3, 1944, after the regular Sunday services, according to an article in the *Blue Ridge Herald*. The chaplain's letter was read by Pastor Tobler. The chaplain said he had visited Raymond eleven times in the hospital, and that Raymond died in the Faith, giving his life for his fellowmen and his country.

He said that Pvt. Cooper was given a religious burial on April 25, 1944, and that his remains lie in a beautiful well-kept cemetery in Italy, protected by our Allies.

The article in the *Blue Ridge Herald* concluded by reporting that, "The blue star, representing Pvt. Cooper on the service flag in the church, was covered by a gold star by his father, H. J. Cooper."