

# Who Was Barney Flood?

*By Master Sergeant Patrick V. Garland (Retired)*



The U.S. Army Military Police Corps Regimental Museum recently acquired a large collection of artifacts related to the service of Major General Harry Hill Bandholtz. While examining these new acquisitions, I discovered a medallion that had been presented to Bandholtz by Major Bernard A. Flood, commander of General Lafayette Police Post 460 of the American Legion, in 1920. There were several occasions when these two could have met.

Bernard Alexander (more commonly known as Barney) Flood was born to Irish immigrant parents in New York City on 2 October 1877. He had at least one sister, Florence, and a younger brother, John J.<sup>1</sup> The family resided in Manhattan,<sup>2</sup> and Barney attended parochial schools in New York City. He later enlisted in the U.S. Army and served during the Spanish-American War. On 3 March 1902, Barney Flood joined the New York City Police Department (NYPD). He was assigned Patrolman's Badge 4793<sup>3</sup> and served in the 3d Precinct, with duty at the District Attorney's Office.

It wasn't long before Flood proved his abilities. In 1904, he was cited for his bravery at a fire. He was promoted to detective and assigned to the detective bureau in Manhattan; he performed duties with the 19th Precinct and then returned to the District Attorney's Office.<sup>4</sup>

Detective Flood married Helen M. Hughes on 22 February 1906.<sup>5</sup> On 24 July 1907, Flood was promoted to detective first grade and issued Patrolman's Badge 18.<sup>6</sup> While still assigned to the District Attorney's Office, Flood was involved in many high-profile criminal cases. He gained notoriety for his uncanny ability to track down and arrest fugitives—often traveling around the world to do so. On at least a dozen occasions, he traveled to Europe in pursuit of fugitives, bringing them back to New York for trial.<sup>7</sup> During these expeditions, he made many contacts who would serve him well in future endeavors.

In August 1909, Flood was in London working on the extradition of a female swindler who was identified only as Ms. Beattie.<sup>8</sup> While the case was proceeding through the courts, the District Attorney's Office wired Flood, directing him to be on the lookout for Adelbert E. Hoyt, a fugitive real estate dealer who had "jumped" bail, was wanted on forgery charges, and had escaped to Europe. Flood tracked Hoyt from London to Scotland;

Amsterdam; Ostend, Belgium; and Dieppe, France—and then back to London. Accompanied by a detective from Scotland Yard, Flood confronted the fugitive at an American Express office.

When Flood informed Hoyt that he had a warrant for his arrest, Hoyt pulled a blade from a cane sword and threatened the British detective. Flood overpowered Hoyt and took his weapon, and the fugitive was arrested.<sup>9</sup> In another incident in 1913, Flood tracked down a fugitive in Valpariso, Chile, and transported him across the Andes Mountains to Buenos Aires, Argentina, for extradition.<sup>10</sup>

Flood also became active with the New York Division of the National Guard. He attended the first Reserve Officer's Training Camp at Plattsburg, New York, in 1917 and was then appointed second lieutenant. At that time, Bandholtz was the chief of staff of the New York Division. In September of that year, Second Lieutenant Flood was sent to France, where he was assigned to the recently formed Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI). His immediate supervisor was Major Allan Pinkerton (grandson of the famous Allan Pinkerton, Abraham Lincoln's chief spy during the Civil War),<sup>11</sup> who was president of the Pinkerton Detective Agency when he offered his services to the U.S. Army. He was accepted into the Army, commissioned as a major, and tasked to organize the DCI. However, a lack of centralized control and qualified personnel hindered their efforts. It was not until Bandholtz was appointed as Provost Marshal General that the DCI became a formidable investigative agency.<sup>12</sup>

While working for the DCI, Flood assisted French authorities in investigating the subversive activities of a man named Bola Pacha, a French businessman who received millions of dollars from German spies to purchase French newspapers that then printed articles favorable toward German war efforts. Pacha was tried and convicted by French courts and executed by a firing squad on 17 April 1918.<sup>13</sup>

In February 1919, "Captain" Flood returned to New York on a troop ship. In an interview conducted upon his arrival, he related, "The men who had been criminals and who got to France with the Army proved honest and patriotic in nearly every case. They made good. There is absolutely

no organized bandit gang in the whole American Army in France.”<sup>14</sup> While this may have been the case before he left France, the Provost Marshal General’s report for a later period in 1919 contradicts Flood’s statements.

Detective Flood reported back to the NYPD, resuming his work in the District Attorney’s Office. However, he remained active in the Army Reserve and recruited many policemen as Reserve military police. About 1,200 members of the NYPD served during World War I—several as military police. In October 1919, these veterans were notified of an organizational meeting for an American Legion post for police veterans. The organization evolved into General Lafayette Police Post 460 of the City of New York.<sup>15</sup>

In October 1922, General John J. Pershing presented “Major” Flood with the Distinguished Service Medal for his actions with the American Expeditionary Force during the war. The NYPD published the following general order: “Acting Detective Sergeant Bernard A. Flood, Shield #18, Detective Division, for services in the World War while on leave of absence from this department, as expressed in General Orders #43, War Department, Washington, D.C., October 22, 1922, as follows: Award of Distinguished Service Medal—By direction of the President, under the provisions of the act of Congress, approved July 9, 1918, the Distinguished Service Medal was awarded by the War Department to the following named officer: Bernard A. Flood, Major, Military Police Officer’s Reserve Corps, then Captain, Provost Marshal General’s Department, United States Army. For exceptionally meritorious and distinguished services. As Chief Inspector of the Division of Criminal Investigation on the Staff of the Provost Marshal General, American Expeditionary Forces, he organized, coordinated, and directed this important office in a highly efficient manner. The successes achieved by this section are largely due to his sound judgment, untiring efforts, and exceptional ability and were of great value to the American Expeditionary Forces. Residence at appointment: New York, [New York]”<sup>16</sup>

In March 1927, after 25 years of service, Flood retired from the NYPD. In recognition of his service, he received honors from the police department and District Attorney’s Office. Shortly after his retirement, Flood returned to Paris, where he organized an international detective agency and joined an American Legion post. He died on 14 May 1933. Following a funeral mass in Paris (attended by American and French mourners), his body was shipped to New York City for additional ceremonies. Many high-ranking police and other city officials attended the services. The burial (with military and police escorts, firing parties, and buglers) took place



**Medallion presented to Bandholtz by Flood in 1920.**

at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Mount Pleasant, Westchester County, New York.<sup>17</sup>

In 1935, Flood was posthumously awarded the NYPD’s highest award—the Medal of Honor with Gold Bar. His wife, Helen, died 8 November 1936.

**Acknowledgement:** Special thanks to Mr. Andy Watson, U.S. Army Military Police historian, for his contribution of reference materials; the Military Police Corps Regimental Museum for permission to use illustrations of the Bandholtz medallion; and the Office of the Chief of Personnel, NYPD, for providing personnel records and other documents related to Barney Flood’s service.

**Endnotes:**

- <sup>1</sup>“John J. Flood Dies,” *New York Times*, 21 December 1932.
- <sup>2</sup>Completed *Application for Passport*, 1921.
- <sup>3</sup>*Transfer and Assignment Card* for B. Flood, Shield 4793, Office of the Chief of Personnel, NYPD.
- <sup>4</sup>*Special Orders 64*, 18 April 1905, NYPD.
- <sup>5</sup>*Marriage License Certificate 6322*, New York County Vital Records.
- <sup>6</sup>*Transfer and Assignment Card* for B. Flood.
- <sup>7</sup>“‘Barney’ Flood Decorated,” *New York Times*, 8 October 1922.
- <sup>8</sup>“Hart in Beattie Case,” *New York Times*, 8 August 1909.
- <sup>9</sup>“Hoyt, Wanted Here, Caught in London,” *New York Times*, 13 August 1909.
- <sup>10</sup>“‘Barney’ Flood Decorated,” 8 October 1922.
- <sup>11</sup>“Report of the Provost Marshal General,” U.S. Printing Office, 1942.
- <sup>12</sup>Patrick V. Garland, *A Forgotten Soldier: The Life and Times of Major General Harry Hill Bandholtz*, Infinity Publishing, March 2009.
- <sup>13</sup>John Price Jones and Paul Merrick Hollister; *The German Secret Service in America*; Small, Maynard, and Company; Boston, 1918.
- <sup>14</sup>“2,995 More Troops Home From France,” *New York Times*, 14 February 1919.
- <sup>15</sup>“Police Plan Legion Post,” *New York Times*, 5 October 1919.
- <sup>16</sup>“General Orders 14,” Office of the Police Commissioner, NYPD, 22 May 1924.
- <sup>17</sup>*Spring 3100*, Police Department, City of New York, June 1933.

*Master Sergeant Garland retired from the U.S. Army in 1974. During his military career, he served in military police units and criminal investigation detachments and laboratories. At the time of his retirement, Master Sergeant Garland was serving as a ballistics evidence specialist at the European Laboratory. He remained in this career field until retiring from civilian law enforcement in 1995.*