

YORK BIBLE SCHOOL
ALVIN C. YORK STATE PARK
Additional Research



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The story of Sgt. Alvin C. York is well known to World War I enthusiasts, Tennessee historians, and military veterans alike, but many areas of his life, such as his role in the creation of the York Bible School, have been left largely unstudied. This report begins to fill that gap in the historiography of Sgt. York and expands the existing scholarship about the York Bible School located just across the Wolf River from his former homestead.

Besides his military service, one of the most recognized aspects of Sgt. York's life was his religious devotion. On January 1st, 1915, just weeks after his twenty-seventh birthday, Sgt. York converted to Christianity and eventually joined the Churches of Christ in Christian Union (CCCU).¹ Prior to his religious conversion, Sgt. York led a hard and fast life of drinking, fighting, and gambling. However, he reached a tragic turning point in 1914 when a close friend died in a bar fight and he was tasked with returning the body from the bar on the Tennessee/Kentucky border to the deceased's family. This incident led Sgt. York to start reevaluating his life choices and begin attending religious services more frequently.² Although skeptical at first, after partaking in a series of revival meetings in late 1914 he "yielded to a divine influence."³ He recognized the sinfulness of his actions and pledged himself to the church, a pledge he kept for the rest of his life. Once the revivalist preacher left town, the local pastor, Rosier Pile, took Sgt. York under his wing and acted as his religious mentor.

Pastor Pile involved Sgt. York in numerous activities to foster his Christian faith, including teaching Sunday school.⁴ In the months following Sgt. York's religious conversion, Pastor Pile invited circuit preachers from the CCCU to preach in Pall Mall. A small

¹ Douglas V. Mastriano, *Alvin York: A New Biography of the Hero of the Argonne* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 2014), 1.

² Michael E. Birdwell, "Alvin Cullum York: The Myth, The Man, and the Legacy," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (Winter 2012), 320.

³ Page 33 of *The Literary Digest*, June 21, 1919, Box 1, Folder 12, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁴ Mastriano, *Alvin York*, 21-22.

fundamentalist offshoot of the Methodist church established in 1909, the CCCU focuses on pacifism, an avoidance of partisan preaching, and a strict adherence to the teachings of the Bible.⁵ Many of the locals in Pall Mall, including Sgt. York, were impressed by this recently established denomination and its literal interpretation of the Bible. A new CCCU congregation under the leadership of Pastor Pile was founded in Pall Mall shortly thereafter to which many local families joined, including Sgt. York and his future wife's family.⁶

Shortly after the United States joined World War I in mid-1917, Sgt. York registered for the draft as was required of all men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one. However, on his draft card, he claimed an exemption from the draft, writing "Yes, Don't Want to Fight." Because the CCCU is a pacifistic religion, it would go against his religious and moral beliefs to fight on the front lines should he be called upon for service.⁷ With the help of Pastor Pile, Sgt. York formally applied for conscientious objector status in the weeks following his registration because of his religion, but his request was denied because the CCCU was too small of a denomination and not officially recognized by the federal government.⁸ He was called up for duty in November 1917 and reported to Georgia for basic training.⁹

Throughout his time in basic training, Sgt. York struggled to reconcile his religion with the violent requirements of active duty military service. After discussing the matter at length with both his commanding officers and Pastor Pile back home, Sgt. York took a ten day leave to return home, pray, and come to a decision: whether to fight and protect his fellow countrymen on the front lines, or whether to take a non-combat position behind all the action. He hiked to a secluded area of the Cumberland Plateau that overlooked the Wolf River Valley in order to pray

⁵ Page 33 of *The Literary Digest*, June 21, 1919, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers.

⁶ Mastriano, *Alvin York*, 23.

⁷ Mastriano, *Alvin York*, 26.

⁸ Mastriano, *Alvin York*, 26-27.

⁹ Mastriano, *Alvin York*, 28.

for a divine answer to his dilemma. After three days Sgt. York hiked back down to Pall Mall, claiming to have received a divine message assuring him that his combat service would be approved by God and that, so long as he believed in Him, no harm would befall him in battle.¹⁰ Sgt York returned to his training camp and shipped off to the front lines in France just days later. Throughout his relatively short time on the Western Front, he kept his Bible nearby, reading from it whenever he got the chance. According to Sgt. York, it was “[his] rock to cling to” in good times and bad during his service.¹¹

Whether protected by a divine presence or not, Sgt. York did survive World War I unscathed and became a national hero for his capture of 132 German soldiers on October 8th, 1918. After his return to Pall Mall in 1919, he once again took up the mantle of church and community leader.¹² Realizing that the people of Pall Mall had been left behind as the world industrialized and modernized, Sgt. York sought to improve the quality of life in the valley and bring it up to the standards he saw across the world while in the Army. Most notably, he focused on two specific areas of improvement: expanding the availability and quality of public education and improving Christian teaching for youths and young adults.¹³

By the late 1920s Sgt. York had raised enough money from speaking tours and donations from various state bureaucratic agencies to open a public vocational high school in nearby Jamestown, Tennessee, for the benefit of all students in Fentress County. The York Institute still operates as a public high school today and serves as one of Sgt. York’s most noteworthy achievements.¹⁴ He originally wanted, with the encouragement of various spiritual leaders, to

¹⁰ Mastriano, *Alvin York*, 41.

¹¹ Page 6 of *The Christian Advocate*, April 9, 1942, Box 3, Folder 7, Sgt. Alvin C. York Papers, Sgt. Alvin C. York State Historic Park, Pall Mall, Tennessee.

¹² Birdwell, “Alvin Cullum York,” 318.

¹³ Mastriano, *Alvin York*, 162.

¹⁴ Birdwell, “Alvin Cullum York,” 326.

include religious teachings into the York Institute's curriculum. That desire, however, was incompatible with the school's designation as a public institution and was therefore never adopted by administrators.¹⁵ This failure to combine public education and Christian teachings may have been what led Sgt. York to establish the Alvin C. York Bible School, Inc. in 1939.

The idea to establish a Bible school seems to have occurred to Sgt. York during the spring of 1939 when a special committee of the Alvin C. York Foundation Board of Trust was assigned to find a temporary location for religious instruction while funds were raised to construct a permanent facility.¹⁶ During the summer of that same year Sgt. York, his wife Gracie, his mentor Pastor Pile, and two other unnamed people filed to incorporate, formally establishing the Alvin C. York Bible School, Inc. This undertaking was announced to the public the following year.¹⁷ By creating a Bible school, Sgt. York hoped to "give instruction in the Holy Bible and to teach the fundamental Christian religion as contained therein."¹⁸ One of Sgt. York's close religious correspondents, Reverend R.D. Brown from Ohio, envisioned the Bible school serving as a training facility for future Christian workers who could cater specifically to churches in the South. According to Rev. Brown, Northerners could not adequately provide for the spiritual needs of people residing in the South, and more homegrown, Southern soldiers of Christ needed

¹⁵ F.D. Swanson to Sgt. Alvin C. York, August 9, 1939, Box 2, Folder 10, Sgt. Alvin C. York Papers, Sgt. Alvin C. York State Historic Park, Pall Mall, Tennessee.

¹⁶ Report of Special Committee to the Alvin C. York Foundation Board of Trust, April 26, 1939, Box 2, Folder 23, Alvin C. York Research Collection, Tennessee Tech University Archives and Special Collections, Cookeville, Tennessee.

¹⁷ Howard Hardaway "Sergt. York Hollywood Got His Story Right" from *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky), December 14, 1941, Box 3, Folder 13, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

¹⁸ "Sergt. York Hollywood Got His Story Right," December 14, 1941, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers.

to be cultivated and educated.¹⁹ The York Bible School was originally intended to be a year-round religious institution training children and adults alike in the teachings of the Bible.

In 1940, Sgt. York estimated that the overall cost of building the Bible school would be between \$35,000 and \$40,000. The funds would be supplied from both private donations and the profits he would eventually make from the 1941 Warner Brothers film about his life, *Sergeant York*.²⁰ Some financial aid was also provided by the Alvin C. York Foundation, which was the organization originally set up to collect and manage donations for the York Institute.²¹ Sgt. York's optimism should be noted; he pledged to build a Bible school using the profits from a movie that was, at the time, most likely barely into pre-production.²² By 1940, Sgt. York told the press that he already had enough money to build a \$50,000 building for the Bible school without any of the film profits. Whether this assertion is true or not is debatable because construction on the Bible school did not begin for at least another year.²³

Sgt. York agreed to create a film detailing his life story in partnership with Warner Brothers in the late 1930s. Warner Brothers executives recognized early in the film's production process that the story of the York Bible School endeavor could be utilized in marketing *Sergeant York* to broad audiences. Jesse Lasky, one of the of Warner Brothers producers who worked to write the film with Sgt. York and his lawyer John Hale, hoped to incorporate Sgt. York's philanthropy into the end of the film. Lasky wrote to Hale about a poignant scene that would

¹⁹ Rev. R.D. Brown to Sgt. Alvin C. York, March 18, 1944, Box 1, Folder 7, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

²⁰ Nellia Kenyon, "York Prefers Congressional Career to Fame, Possible Hollywood Riches," *Chattanooga News Free Press*, March 20, 1940, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

²¹ Authorization of a Loan for the Bible School from the Alvin C. York Foundation, undated, Box 1, Folder 7, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

²² "Sergt. York Hollywood Got His Story Right," December 14, 1941, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers.

²³ "York Prefers Congressional Career to Fame, Possible Hollywood Riches," March 20, 1940, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers.

feature York detailing his Bible school dream to Gracie. Sgt. York's desire to "build schools for the young folks...so the mountaineers need not be confined to the hills" delighted Lasky and became a fitting conclusion to the studio's vision of Sgt. York's "marvelous story" that "everyone at the [studio] seems to be nuts about." Concluding the *Sergeant York* story in Alvin's educational philanthropy would allow Lasky and Warner Brothers Pictures to work with Sgt. York's desire to fund the York Bible School while also leveraging the emotional message of a hero returning to improve his home. While the film ultimately did not close with this scene but rather focused on his military exploits during World War I, Lasky's correspondence reveals that Sgt. York's philanthropic goals played a role in *Sergeant York's* production process.²⁴

Sergeant York premiered in July of 1941 and became the highest-grossing film of the year, winning two Oscars: Best Actor for Gary Cooper and Best Film Editing for William Holmes. The film was distributed and played nationally throughout World War II.²⁵ Reviews of *Sergeant York* noted the "suggestion of deliberate propaganda" apparent in the film (it was released prior to U.S. intervention in World War II and focused heavily on the theme that there are causes worth fighting for), but praised "the proud, industrious, honest, simple citizen who marches in the forefront of this nation's ranks" portrayed in Sgt. York's picture. Sgt. York, Gracie York, Warner Brothers representatives, and a delegation of Tennessee notables joined actor Gary Cooper for the film's premier, which was held at the Astor theater in New York City.²⁶ The film's success and profits fueled Sgt. York's Bible school project.

²⁴ Jesse L. Lasky to John Hale, September 25, 1940, Box 5, Folder 7, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

²⁵ "Sergeant York (1941)," the *American Film Institute Catalog* website, accessed November 16 2018, <https://catalog.afi.com/Catalog/moviedetails/27041>.

²⁶ Crowther, Bosley, "'Sergeant York,' a Sincere Biography of the World War Hero, Makes its Appearance at the Astor," *The New York Times*, July 3 1941.

Construction on the Bible school began in 1941 as profits from *Sergeant York* began to accumulate and ended circa 1944. An article from a December 1941 edition of Louisville, Kentucky's *Courier-Journal* documented the current construction of the school, which was described as moving swiftly. It also noted that the stone walls were already up and that the rafters for the ceilings were under construction.²⁷ However, nothing more indicates that construction of the school was finished and outfitted for classes until 1944. In March of 1944 one of Sgt. York's close friends, Rev. Brown, wrote to him about the influence wartime demands and manpower had on the initial operation of the school, stating that he hoped the Bible school could "get started off on its mission in helping prepare workers for the South."²⁸ Rev. Brown wrote again three years later, discussing the opening of a summer school at the Bible school.²⁹ These letters suggest that classes at the Bible school began sometime between 1944 and 1947. It is likely that in 1945, after the end of World War II, the Bible school saw its first session of summer classes. Indeed, evidence suggests that the Bible school only ever operated during the summer for vacation Bible school sessions.

According to the blueprints, a man named O.P. Pile designed the York Bible School. Otis Proctor Pile (also listed as Oties, Otus, or Odius on various documents) was a railroad engineer born and raised in Fentress County, Tennessee. Since he was one of Pastor Pile's four brothers and Pastor Pile was heavily involved in the creation of the Bible school, it would make sense for Sgt. York to have asked his mentor's brother to design it. Whether O.P. Pile ever saw the Bible

²⁷ "Sergt. York Hollywood Got His Story Right" December 14, 1941, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers.

²⁸ R.D. Brown to Sgt. Alvin C. York, March 18, 1944, Box 1, Folder7, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

²⁹ R.D. Brown to Sgt. Alvin C. York, February 27, 1947, Box 1, Folder7, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

school completely constructed is unknown. He died in Cowan County, Tennessee, in 1953, and it is not clear when he moved away from Fentress County.³⁰

While the York Bible School blueprints clearly indicate O.P. Pile as the designer, the name of the builder underneath is illegible. However, according to a contract signed by Sgt. York, Pastor Pile, John Hale, and Gracie York, the Alvin C. York Bible School, Inc. hired a man named Grover Crouch to construct the Bible school on June 18th, 1941. Grover Crouch was born in Fentress County, Tennessee, in 1888. Crouch's occupation is listed in the 1920 federal census as "farmer," in the 1930 census as "stonemason," and in the 1940 census as "stonemason" specific to the building industry. Crouch's oldest son, Dimmer Crouch, was listed in the 1930 census as a farm laborer and in the 1940 census as a truck driver. This census data suggests that the Crouches operated a family farm while also practicing stonemasonry under the mantle Crouch & Son, and that, as the stonemasonry business increased during the 1930s, Dimmer shifted to truck driving to support the growth of the family business. Grover Crouch would have then focused on managing Crouch & Son contract projects like the York Bible School.³¹

In the 1941 agreement between Crouch and the Alvin C. York Bible School, Inc., the two parties split who supplied certain construction materials. Crouch was contracted to supply the stone, cement, sand, and labor for the building of the school, and the Alvin C. York Bible School, Inc. promised to provide the windows, doors, and opening frames. Crouch was paid

³⁰ "Sergeant Alvin C. York Bible School, Pall Mall, Tennessee" blueprints, East Tennessee Regional Maintenance Office, Tennessee State Parks; 1910 Census of Fentress County, Fentress County Public Library, Jamestown, Tennessee; Pile Family Group Record, Fentress County Historical Society, Fentress County Public Library, Jamestown, Tennessee.

³¹ "Sergeant Alvin C. York Bible School, Pall Mall, Tennessee" blueprints, East Tennessee Regional Maintenance Office, Tennessee State Parks; United States Federal Census (1920), civil district 2, Fentress, Tennessee, T625_1739, 5B, enumeration district 18, image 616, accessed via Ancestry.com, November 29, 2018; United States Federal Census (1930), civil district 2, Fentress, Tennessee, roll 2247, page 3A, enumeration district 4, image 72.0, FHL microfilm 2341981, accessed via Ancestry.com, November 29, 2018; United States Federal Census (1940), Fentress, Tennessee; roll T627_3891, page 12A, enumeration district 25-4, accessed via Ancestry.com, November 29, 2018.

\$2,000 for his work, and the contract states that grading and building were to commence immediately.³² While Sgt. York professed a desire to build living quarters for potential boarding students in addition to the main instructional building, no plans were drawn up for them and they were never erected.³³

Although the Bible school was designed by O.P. Pile and the construction contract was given to Grover Crouch, there remains a possibility that the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) played a role in its creation. In the fall of 1939, Sgt. York was appointed as superintendent of the CCC camp at Cumberland Mountain State Park in Crossville, Tennessee, about fifty miles south of Pall Mall.³⁴ The camp of men was assigned to construct a bridge that expanded the length of the lake in the park. The architecture of the bridge is consistent with the architecture of the Bible school. Both the bridge and the school have large arches that are focal points. Both are made from native Crab Orchard stone. Additionally, both have stones that are carved in the same manner.³⁵

The entrance to the arcade of the Bible school did not need to showcase three arched doorways, and the stone did not have to be the same specific kind as that used at Cumberland Mountain State Park. Sgt. York may have taken inspiration from the CCC bridge and asked O.P. Pile and Grover Crouch to integrate it into his Bible school. These similarities, however, may also have been complete coincidences. Sgt. York resigned as superintendent at Cumberland Mountain State Park in early May 1940, at least a year before construction commenced on the

³² Construction Contract between Alvin C. York Bible School, Inc. and Grover Crouch, June 18, 1941, Box 3 Folder 23, Alvin C. York Research Collection, Tennessee Tech University Archives and Special Collections, Cookeville, Tennessee.

³³ "York Prefers Congressional Career to Fame, Possible Hollywood Riches," March 20, 1940, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers.

³⁴ Representative Albert Gore to Sgt. Alvin C. York, October 26, 1939, Box 1, Folder 15, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

³⁵ "York Named," *The Tennessean*, October 11, 1939.

York Bible School.³⁶ The connection between the CCC and the Bible school needs to be researched more thoroughly in order to confirm or deny the direct aesthetic influences.

In the years following *Sergeant York's* initial commercial success, Sgt. York became embroiled in a series of disputes regarding intellectual property rights and capital gains taxation that ate away at the profits being directed toward the Bible school. These disputes are detailed in letters written by various parties between 1943 and 1945 that alluded to Sgt. York's "income tax problem," requested his 1942 financial information, and fought to secure copies of the paperwork that transferred Sgt. York's intellectual claim to *Sergeant York: His Own Life Story and War Diary* to Warner Brothers (that book was to be the basis of the film's script, but the author's widow claimed to own the copyright). John Hale contended in a 1945 letter that "Sgt. York sold to Jesse L. Lasky and Warner Brothers, Inc. a capital asset and that what he has derived therefrom should not be treated as ordinary income as the Government is now trying to do," typifying the confusing patchwork of ownership that characterized the rights to Sgt. York's story.³⁷

It should be noted here that Sgt. York's financial literacy was relatively low; he relied heavily on John Hale and his secretary Arthur Bushing for much of his bookkeeping and financial needs. Because twentieth century tax law governing capital gains and intellectual property required specialized knowledge, Sgt. York's attitude towards administering to his own intellectual property was rather informal, and Sgt. York likely relied on Warner Brother's

³⁶ Mrs. J. Atwood Maulding, Director of Personnel for the Department of the Interior, to Sgt. Alvin C. York, May 7, 1940, Box 1, Folder 15, Alvin C. York Project Tennessee Historical Commission Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

³⁷ Requests for Sgt. York's 1942 financial information: Letter addressed to Sergeant Alvin C. York, January 27 1943, Box 5, Folder 8, Tennessee Historical Commission Alvin C. York Project, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee. Requests for transfer of intellectual property: John S. Hale to Walter Bruington, July 18 1945, Box 2, Folder 13, Tennessee Historical Commission Alvin C. York Project, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

representatives to sort out financial details, it is possible that no one in Sgt. York's trusted circle was able to help him untangle these issues. As World War II ended, audiences began to tire of *Sergeant York's* militaristic messaging, and financial pressures mounting in the late 1940s and early 1950s caused the largely-informal frameworks that supported Sgt. York's Bible school dream to begin to crumble.³⁸

Sgt. York suffered a massive stroke in 1954 that left him bedridden and suffering from failing eyesight. This dramatic loss of mobility and health problems compromised his ability to spearhead fundraising for the York Bible School and led to significant financial problems for the institution. Additionally, the school's financial situation likely deteriorated because of Sgt. York's tax issues, the Bible school's isolated location, and an overall decline in individual donations as the memory of Sgt. York's World War I heroics began to fade from the public consciousness. As his health continued to decline, the York Bible School ceased its summer sessions in the late 1950s, and the land changed hands multiple times before reaching its current owner, the State of Tennessee.³⁹

The Alvin C. York Foundation originally purchased the land on which the Bible school sits in early May of 1939 from Sgt. York's brother, George Alexander York, and his wife, Avo York. George York sold roughly eight acres of land to the Foundation for an undisclosed price, and this tract would change hands multiple times before coming under its current jurisdiction.⁴⁰ The land seems to have first been transferred from the Alvin C. York Foundation to the Alvin C.

³⁸ Letter addressed to Sergeant Alvin C. York, January 27 1943, Box 5, Folder 8, Tennessee Historical Commission Alvin C. York Project, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee. Regarding York's financial pressures: Milton Shufro and Associates press release, October 1960, Box 3, Folder 14, Tennessee Historical Commission Alvin C. York Project, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

³⁹ Regarding Sgt. York's health: Lee, David D., *Sergeant York: An American Hero* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985), pp. 127, 133-134. Regarding Bible School: York Bible School historic marker, October 15 2018, Alvin C. York State Historic Park, Pall Mall, Tennessee.

⁴⁰ Land Deed Between George Alexander York and the Alvin C. York Foundation, May 3, 1939, Fentress County Register of Deeds, Jamestown, Tennessee.

York Bible School, Inc., because the next deed concerning the land on which the Bible school resides (dated May 20th, 1964) details a sale between said Alvin C. York Bible School, Inc. and Trustees of the First Wesleyan Methodist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.⁴¹ One of Sgt. York's sons, George Edward York, was a member of First Wesleyan Methodist Church, and the sale occurred just months before Sgt. York's passing in early September of the same year. Evidence suggests that the Bible school was no longer in operation by the early 1960s, so the land may have been sold to an outside party in order to lessen the strain of death taxes the York family was bound to incur upon Sgt. York's death. Alternatively, the York's may have decided to sell the land to a well-established church with the hopes that they would be able to reinvigorate the Bible school and see it used to its full potential.

The land changed hands once again just four years later. On February 12th, 1968, the Trustees of the First Wesleyan Methodist Church sold the tract of land on which the York Bible School sat back to Gracie York, by that point Sgt. York's widow, for \$300.⁴² The Bible school would finally reach the hands of its current owner on December 9th, 1974. On this day, Gracie York sold all the land she and Sgt. York had owned at that time, including the York Bible School's tract, to the State of Tennessee for the establishment of a state park after her eventual passing which would occur ten years later.⁴³ The State of Tennessee retains ownership of the land today, and the Bible school is maintained by Sgt. Alvin C. York State Historic Park.

Despite the York Bible School's short period of activity, it remains today a cherished piece of Pall Mall, Tennessee's community history. Bob and Linda Pile, longtime residents of

⁴¹ Land Deed Between Alvin C. York Bible School, Inc. and Trustees of the First Wesleyan Methodist Church, May 20, 1964, Fentress County Register of Deeds, Jamestown, Tennessee.

⁴² Land Deed Between Trustees of the First Wesleyan Methodist Church and Gracie York, February 12, 1968, Fentress County Register of Deeds, Jamestown, Tennessee.

⁴³ Land Deed Between Gracie York and the State of Tennessee, December 9, 1974, Fentress County Register of Deeds, Jamestown, Tennessee.

the Wolf River Valley and descendants of Pastor Pile, remember attending the York Bible School's summer classes in the late 1950's, in what must have been one of the last summers of activity for the school. Bob recalled that classes at the Bible school were taught by local attendees of York Chapel, and this involvement by "local folks" demonstrates the historic roots of community investment in York's project. The couple now own Wolf River Valley Growers on Pile family land just down the road from Sgt. Alvin C. York State Historic Park and were instrumental in unraveling the Center for Historic Preservation's search for the identity of O.P. Pile.⁴⁴ Other residents have used the York Bible School recently as a site for senior year photoshoots, and the community is in solid agreement regarding the school's architectural beauty and cultural value.⁴⁵ These memories add meaning to the story of the York Bible School, a philanthropic project that enriched the lives of Wolf River Valley residents and demonstrated the decorated war hero's lifelong commitment to the community that raised him and the religion that saved him.

⁴⁴ Bob and Linda Pile (Wolf River Valley Grocers), discussion with Max Farley, October 15 2018, Pall Mall, Tennessee.

⁴⁵ Unknown, discussion with Max Farley, Casey Swank, and Savannah Grandey, October 15 2018, Jamestown, Tennessee.