

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"World War I Christmas Cards"

Carroll County Times article for 12 December 1993

By Jay A. Graybeal

While researching the Historical Society's current exhibition and companion publication, both entitled "Carroll County and the Great War of Civilization, 1917-1919," I found numerous postcards related to the war. Illustrated here are three examples sent in 1917 from Pvt. Raymond E. Rhoten, Supply Company, 313th Infantry of Westminster, to his future wife Miss Nola M. Heagy, also of Westminster. Pvt. Rhoten mailed these cards while training at Camp Meade, Maryland. He later served overseas with his regiment, a unit of the 79th Infantry Division. The cards are part of a large collection originally saved in postcard albums by Miss Heagy.

Two Christmas cards sent to Pvt. Harry C. Hunter, Company C., 311th Machine Gun Battalion, of Westminster, are preserved in the Historical Society's manuscript collection. Pvt. Hunter also served overseas with the 79th Infantry Division. These cards and other papers related to his service were donated by his daughter, Mrs. Audrey Selby.

Each of these cards was saved as a memento of a happy moment in a time when loved ones were far from home. In addition to revealing the popular designs of that era, these cards serve as reminders of sacrifices made three-quarters of a century ago.

The special exhibition "Carroll County and the Great War for Civilization, 1917-1919" continues on display in the Historical Society's Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 E. Main St., Westminster. The exhibit is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Sundays, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Admission is free. A companion publication to the exhibit is also available. For information, contact the Historical Society at (410) 848-6494.

Photo Caption 1: A "Christmas Greeting" published by the Illustrated Postal Card and Novelty Co. of New York City, featured an American soldier, wreath and a rural scene. The verse was well chosen by Pvt. Rhoten since he wrote that he had not received a Christmas pass to come home. Courtesy of Gwen Rhoten Welty.

Photo Caption 2: "Christmas Cheer," also by the Illustrated Postal Card and Novelty Co., shows an American soldier and a tent scene ornamented with holly branches. Pvt. Rhoten wrote that the soldiers were "still having real winter down here" and also noted that he probably would not get home for Christmas. Courtesy of Gwen Rhoten Welty.

Photo Caption 3: Santa Claus and a soldier exchange greetings on this card, also published by the Illustrated Postal Card and Novelty Co. Pvt. Rhoten may have been referring to a rival suitor when he wrote to Nola, "I certainly hope they send one of those three down here that you say have been called [drafted] You know the one I mean." Courtesy of Gwen Rhoten Welty.

Photo Caption 4: Pvt. Harry C. Hunter, Co. C, 311th Machine Gun Battalion, received this card from his sister Emma in 1918. The inside page included a Christmas verse and an illustration of a Christmas tree. Gift of Mrs. Audrey Selby, 1991.

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Photo Caption 5: Major General Joseph E. Kuhn, commander of the 79th Infantry Division, sent this card to each member of his command in 1918. The cover featured the division's Cross of Lorraine insignia and recent campaigns in which the division fought. On an inside page, Gen. Kuhn noted that it was their second Christmas away from home and thanked his men for their gallant service. Gift of Mrs. Audrey Selby, 1991.