

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"World War I Letters"

Carroll County Times article for 5 December 1993

By Joseph M. Getty

"The Christmas Holiday - The festival will be an especially joyous one for America this year. The shadow of a great and cruel war has been lifted from us. We look forward to an era of peace and prosperity."
Union Bridge Pilot, December 13, 1918.

Seventy-five years ago, the holiday season took on a special meaning for the citizens of Carroll County. The exhibition at the Historical Society about World War I provides many insights to the grim realities of modern warfare and the trying conditions on the homefront in Carroll County's communities.

The end of the war in November 1918 prompted a celebration of great joy, but it was mingled with sadness for those who lost their lives during the Great War for Civilization. Every week, the Union Bridge Pilot printed "Letters from the Front" that provide a rich perspective on the thoughts and emotions of the people of Carroll County.

Four days after the Armistice, Private Norman Henry Utz of New Windsor wrote to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel J. Utz, about his feelings at the end of the war and those who were killed during the hostilities. His comments are especially poignant because Utz had been wounded on October 23, 1918, and had also been gassed during his overseas service with the 112th Machine Gun Battalion:

"I am sitting on my cot writing this by the dim candle light, and wondering what you are all doing at home tonight. I am looking forward every minute to the day which must not be far off, when I will see you all again in your new home. The hardest times I have, are when I get to thinking of these things, and of the many, many homes that will be looking for someone who will never get there. I cannot help but feel that some one was taking care of me, for I had given up entirely several times and how I came out of it as well as I did I will never be able to tell. I have quite a lot to be thankful for."

In another letter, Utz adds humor to his regrets about not being home in time for Christmas:

"I think we would be home for our Christmas dinner but I suppose it will be later than that. We will have our dinner when I get there and If I am as hungry as I am now, it will take a big one."

Similar feelings were expressed by Private first class Raymond M. Brown, 79th Military Police Company, who served overseas from July 10, 1918, to May 28, 1919. Two photographs of Brown, a tinted individual portrait and a group photograph of his military police unit, were loaned by his son, Gary Brown, for display in the exhibition. The following is a letter from France dated November 18, 1918, to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John C. Brown, of New Windsor:

"I will write you a few lines this beautiful moonlight night to let you know I am still existing. I was just outside of my dugout and it is as clear as a bell out and feels pretty frosty. I thought of you all and said to myself, I bet you are husking corn, I guess I am right. I am now getting ready to turn into my bunk. I am in a cozy dugout about 25 feet under the ground, have a stove in it, seven other fellows and myself, and we can sleep in peace now as we don't have to worry about

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gas or shrapnel and high explosives coming our way. I guess you all heard the news of peace as soon as we did and guess there was some celebration back in the States. I hope you will read about what the old 79th did to the Huns. I would love to spend Christmas with you all, but we can all if separated thank God the fighting is over, and I will be home again possibly in a few months. I never want to see another war and go through what I have gone through in this war. I feel as good and sound as I was one year ago when I first became a soldier, it has been some experience and makes you know what roughing it is. I guess you read in the papers all about Verdun, well think of me when you do, I was there.

Well, you can tell mother not to worry and I will surprise you some morning like I did last Christmas. In a few months time I will walk in on you when you are not thinking of it. Ha. Ha.

A merry Christmas to you all. I am sending a piece of paper dropped by a German airplane some weeks ago, take care of it.

I must now close. Write a big long letter to me and tell all the news.

Love to all,
Your loving son,
Raymond"

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: Raymond M. Brown of New Windsor holds a souvenir pillow case with an embroidered inscription, "Camp Meade, Md., Military Police, Co. B." Letters written by Brown when he was in France were published in the Union Bridge Pilot.