

The War To End All Wars

by Lynne Belluscio

On August 4, 1914, the German Army marched into the Belgian city of Liege. Days earlier, the Germans had asked permission of the Belgian king to enter Belgium on its way to France. The king refused, so the Germans invaded the neutral country and the "War To End All Wars" had begun.

It would be another three years, in April 1917 before the United States would enter the European war. President Wilson had tried to keep the country out of the war but it became evident that if the United States wanted to participate in world affairs, it would have to come to the aide of its allies in Europe. Within months of the declaration of war, LeRoy's young men were signing up to enlist.

One of those men was Stanley Crocker. Five years ago, Crocker's grandson, Terry Krautwurst, began searching for his grandfather's war records. Little did Terry imagine that his search would lead to an odyssey that has resulted in a most remarkable project.

Although Stanley Crocker survived the war, Terry noted that the Genesee County honor rolls of soldiers who died in the war were not consistent. Frustrated by the discrepancies, Terry decided to set the records straight. This led to five years of intense research that took him to the National Military Archives Personnel Center in St. Louis, Missouri several times.

Terry has given the Historical Society his research pertaining to the twelve LeRoyans who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country during World War I. Each file contains copies of the records from the National Archives as well as any newspaper clippings that Terry could find. He includes a note to the families: "A sincere attempt has been made to present, to whatever extent is possible, an accurate portrayal of each person profiled here. ...Piecing history together from scattered bits of information often requires educated guessing, and always requires obsessive attention to detail and accuracy. " The list of

twelve LeRoyans includes some very familiar names.

George Botts was a Private in Company G, 7th Infantry, 3rd Division. He was killed in action near Fossoy, France on July 15, 1918 at the age of 23. He is buried in the Oise-Aisne American Cemetery in Fere-en-Tardenois, France.

Leo Fiorito was a Private in Company I, 108th Infantry, 27th Division. He died of wounds near Poperinghe, Belgium, August 25, 1918 at the age of 25. His body was returned to LeRoy and he is buried in St. Francis Cemetery.

Errol D. Crittenden was a Private, HQ Company, 312th Engineers, 87th Division. He died of pneumonia at Camp Grange-Neuve, Bordeaux, France, on October 15, 1918 at the age of 31. In 1920 his body was returned to LeRoy and he was buried at Machpelah Cemetery

Thomas Illes was a Private in Company 6, 74th New York Infantry. He was the first soldier from Genesee County to die in service after the United States entered the war on April 6, 1917. Illes was struck by a trolley car in Buffalo while on training. He is buried at Machpelah Cemetery.

Edward Kane was a Private in Company B, 59th Infantry, 4th Division. (Terry Krautworst notes that there are many different spellings of Kane ie. Kain, Cain, Caine, etc. which made it difficult to trace his records. Edward Kane died of pneumonia in a hospital at Aix-les-Bains, France on November 9, 1918 at the age of 27. He is buried in St. Francis Cemetery.

Percy Luttrell was a Private in Company A, 108th Infantry, 27th Division. Luttrell was wounded in the leg and was in a hospital in Rouen for "about a week" when he succumbed to pneumonia on November 4, 1918. The war ended one week later. In 1936, twenty-five area veterans formed the Percy A. Luttrell Post # 355



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THE BASE HOSPITAL

THE Yanks nearest approach to "Blighty"—because here are young women who speak your language and whose efficiency is forgiven for the sound of their voices. Usually a cold, old building with thick masonry walls, but cheerful because there are no top kick's whistles nor reveille.

Image taken from "Inked Memories of 1918" published by the Jell-O Company for American Legion Posts in 1924.

Veterans of Foreign Wars. The organization was active through the early 1970s. He is buried in the Somme American Cemetery, Bony, France.

Patrick Molyneux was a Private in Company A, 59th Infantry, 4th Division. He was killed in action near the Bois de Briouilles, France, September 30, 1918 at the age of 29. There is some question about exactly when and where he was killed. His body remains in Romagne, France in the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.

George Ripton was a Private in Company C, 3rd Provisional Battalion, Engineers. He was stationed at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana. He died on October 10, 1918 at the peak of the national pandemic of Spanish influenza. He is buried in St. Francis Cemetery.

Alvin A. Smith was a Private in Company A, 108th Infantry, 27th Division. He was killed in action near the Hindenburg Line, east of Ronssoy, France on September 29, 1918. He was

only 17. He was buried in the Morganville Cemetery on March 20, 1921.

John Wider was a Sergeant with the 50th Aero Squadron, U.S. Signal Corps. He died on January 11, 1918 of pneumonia at Fort McHenry, in Baltimore days before he was to leave for Europe. He is buried in Machpelah Cemetery.

Edgar R Murrell was a Private in Battery D, 307th Field Artillery, 78th Division. He died of pneumonia and diphtheria in a military hospital near Winchester, England, on March 29, 1918 at the age of 27.

Cecelia J. Cochran Nurse Volunteer, U.S. Public Health Service, died of influenza and pneumonia in a military hospital camp in Huntsville, Alabama October 15, 1918, age 24. She is buried at St. Francis Cemetery.

If any of these people are part of your family history, you may want to stop by to see the information that Terry has collected, and perhaps share some that you have.