

WWI Letter

"It Has Been a Long Time Since We Have Heard From You"

by Lynne Belluscio

Terry Krautwurst was in town for Memorial Day. He stopped by for a visit and to loan us some things that belonged to his grandfather for the World War I exhibit. His grandfather, Stanley Crocker, served in World War I, and when Terry was small, he remembered seeing a long panoramic photo on the wall in his grandfather's house labeled, "Battery D, 307th Field Artillery, Camp Dix, NJ." "As kids, we used to point and laugh at some of the men in the photo—there was one with a bulldog face, another that resembled Goofy, and so on. " After his grandfather died, Terry inherited the photo and other mementoes and he became interested in learning about his grandfather's service in the war. As Terry said, as a kid he never thought to ask him and his grandfather never talked about the war. While searching for his grandfather's story, Terry became interested in the county records about the men and women who died in the war. After a six-year odyssey, Terry donated all of his research to the Genesee County History Department, and a copy of the LeRoy research to the Historical Society. Terry will be back in LeRoy (he lives in North Carolina) for the dedication of the WW I monument on Trigon Park,

One of the most interesting things that Terry has loaned us for the exhibit is his grandfather's wallet that he carried with him in service, including a wonderful letter from his mother.

November 25

My dear Stan It has been a long time since we heard from you and we are watching the mail every day hoping to get news soon. Have you thought that thanksgiving is almost here. How glad I should be if you could only walk in as you did last year. Do you remember you

came about eight o'clock and no one knew you were coming. I guess it is too much to ask or expect but if you get back well and good we certainly can thank god for it. For so many others never will see their boys again. It is getting cold here now and I guess it is where you are. I was glad to hear you had new underwear so you would be warm and I hope you can get enough to eat even if it is plain. I wonder if you have gotten either box that Stella and I sent and I hope you may have it by now The boys have about all the work done now except wood cutting. I don't know as we will be able to get any coal this year. As they are thinking and talking of having those that have wood burn it and give the coal to those ones that have no wood. I hope you and Howard are both well. His mother was down the other day. She is anxious. Good bye Stan from mother.

Terry told me, that when his grandfather received this letter, he was in the hospital, with pneumonia and suffering from a gas attack. He was close to death, but he slowly recovered and returned home. In 1979, students from the high school interviewed a number of people from LeRoy and Stanley Crocker's tape is in our library.

" I am Stanley M. Crocker, the son of Edgar M and Alice Russell Crocker. I was born here in LeRoy one of seven children and have lived here all my life with the exception of Army service. I'm one of the 10th generation of Crockers in America, my ancestors having come from England in 1639 . . . they came to LeRoy in 1816." "world War I come on, and my friends were, many of them, enlisting and going into the Army and I wanted to go but I told my dad I'd stay till fall and help him with the crops, and then I would leave and my two brothers were getting along in years so they could finish up. Well then the draft come



along in September and it was so near a time that I turned over my share of the crops, I was working the farm on shares, to my two younger brothers, Dwight and Clarence and the equipment and I went into the service. I went overseas in, I think it was in March of '18 and I served over seas with the 42nd Division all during the war, and by the time the armistice come around why my health seemed to give out. We had a lot of the last couple of months, a lot of exposure , and some gas, and hard work keeping in range of the Germans who were falling

back, retreating so fast that our food couldn't; keep up with us. We just had the canned food, cold, and the weather was getting cold, we were sleeping out under a pup tent set up against a caisson wheel, and often in the mud, and so moving up, after the armistice, in the army of occupation into Germany, I just couldn't keep going any more and went to the doctor and he sent me right to the hospital. And I was in the hospital, different hospitals all over France from then on until I started back for home in June 1919."