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Article Summary: Though many Nebraskans served in the Great War, we have few war narratives written by them. Fred Pickering was a farmer from Ulysses, Nebraska, who wrote a lively account of army life for the folks back home.

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Photographs / Images: "Travels of Main Units of 88th Div.," from E J D Larson, *Memoirs of France and the 88th Division*, 1920; wartime parade in Wahoo (Arthur Anderson photo); new recruits at the Saunders County Courthouse in Wahoo; cartoonists' scenes of life in the 88th Division (Larson); soldiers in the mess hall, from E D Zellner, *Souvenir of Camp Funston, Kansas*; soldiers drilling (Zellner); recruits arriving at Camp Funston, Kansas; officer reading camp rules to new recruits; Camp Dodge, Iowa (2-page spread); soldiers in line in the mess hall, *Our Sons at Camp Dodge*, n.d; soldiers filling their ticks with straw; Red Cross parade float in Wahoo; German propaganda leaflet, from *The 88th Division in the World War*; Dannemarie, France; a military burial in Wahoo; full military honors, Wahoo; a Nebraska war garden

Posters: United War Work Campaign (Pershing photo)

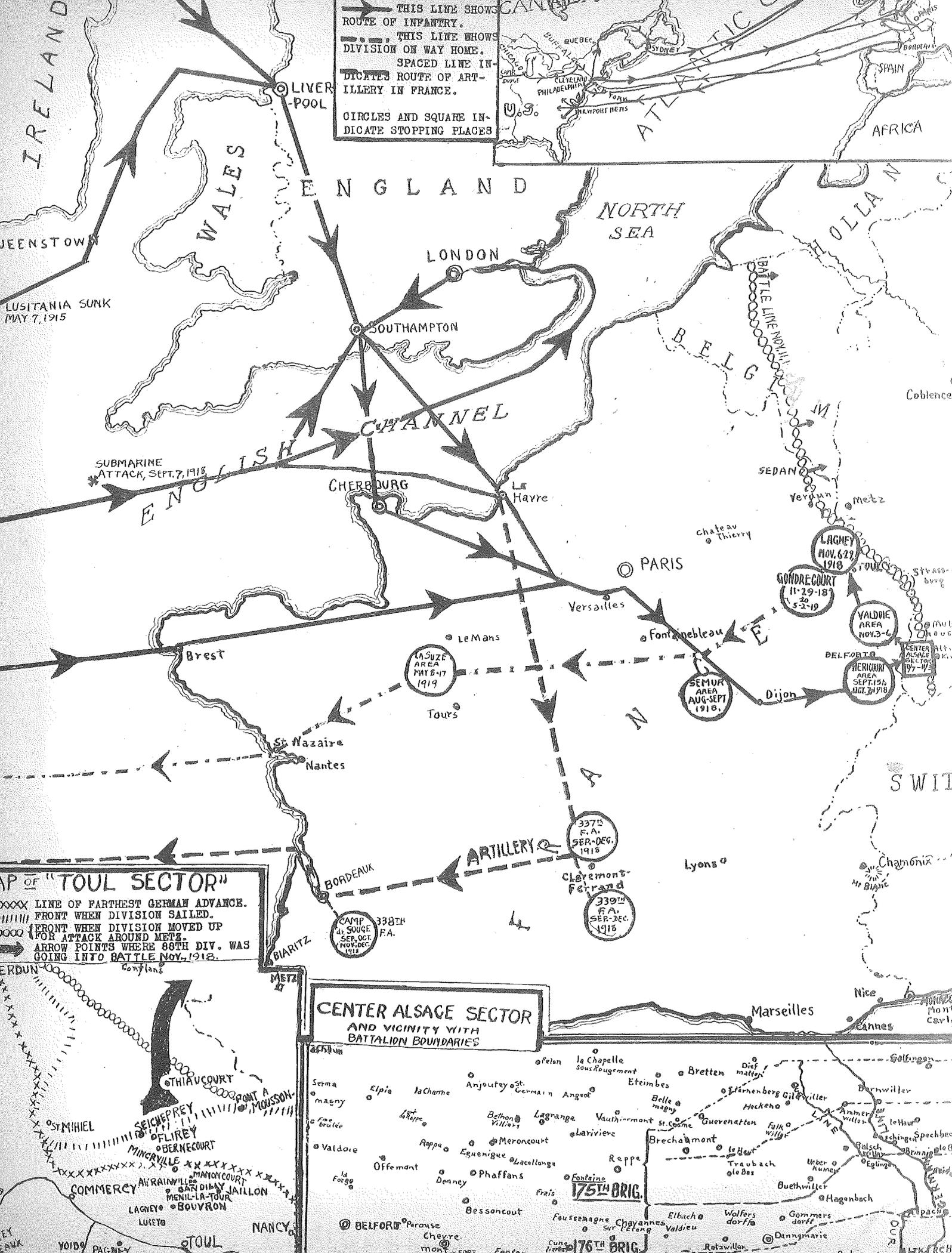
"What can I do to help my country win the war?"

"Halt the Hun!"

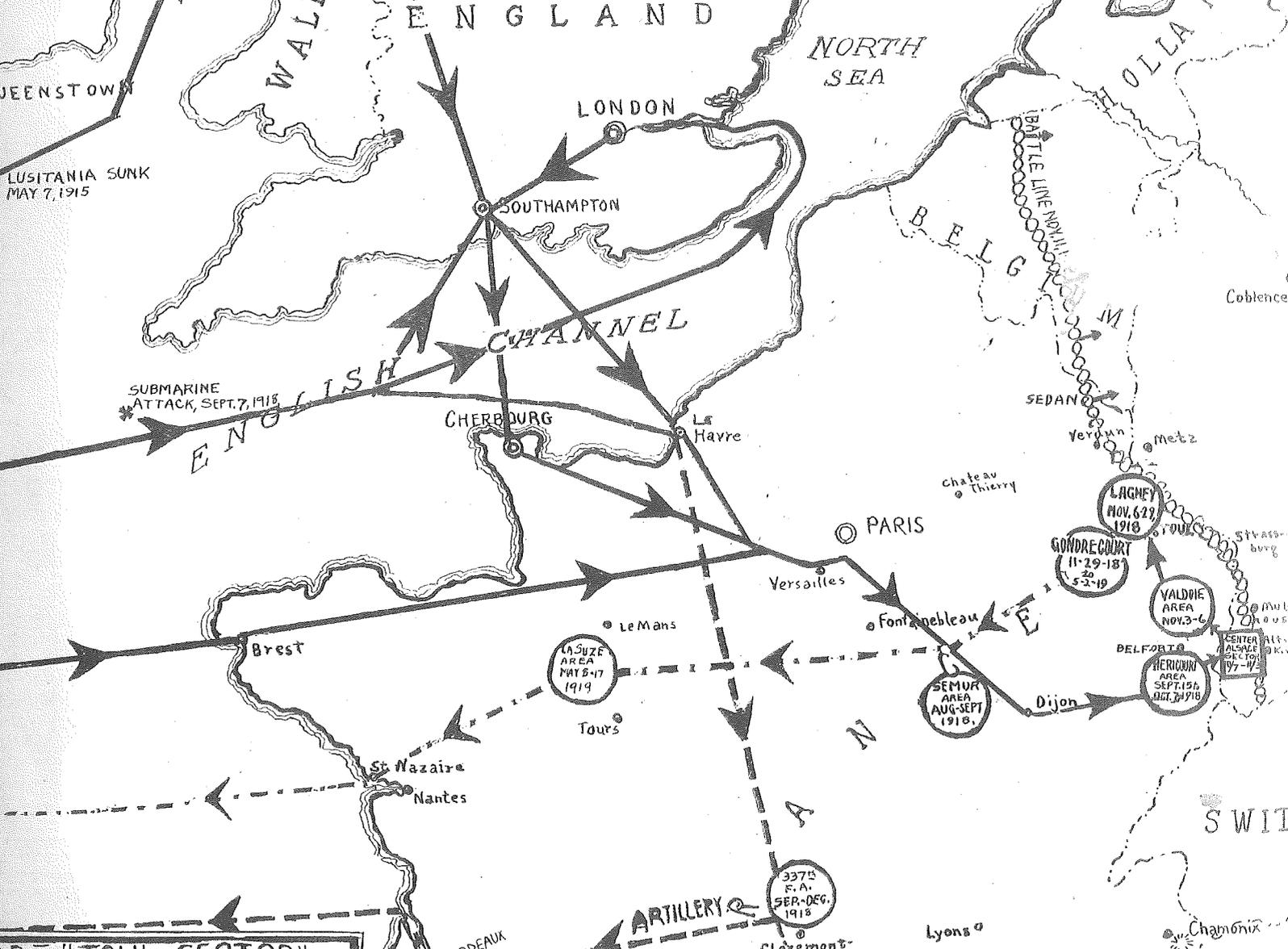
"Beat Back the Hun with Liberty Bonds"

"Keep these off the U.S.A."

"America Owes France"

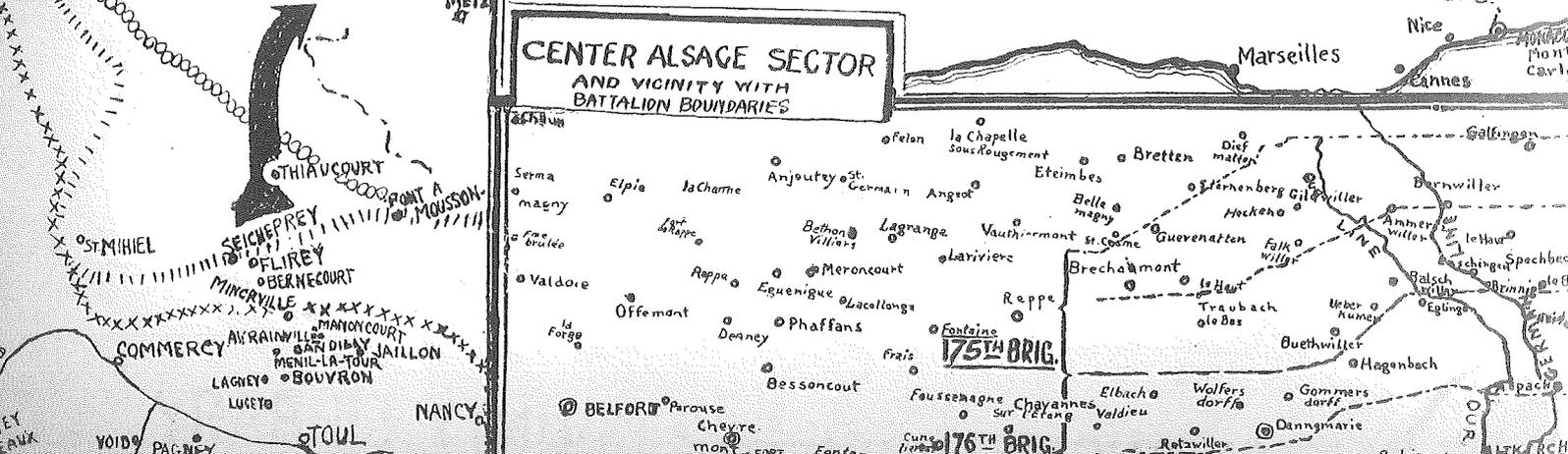


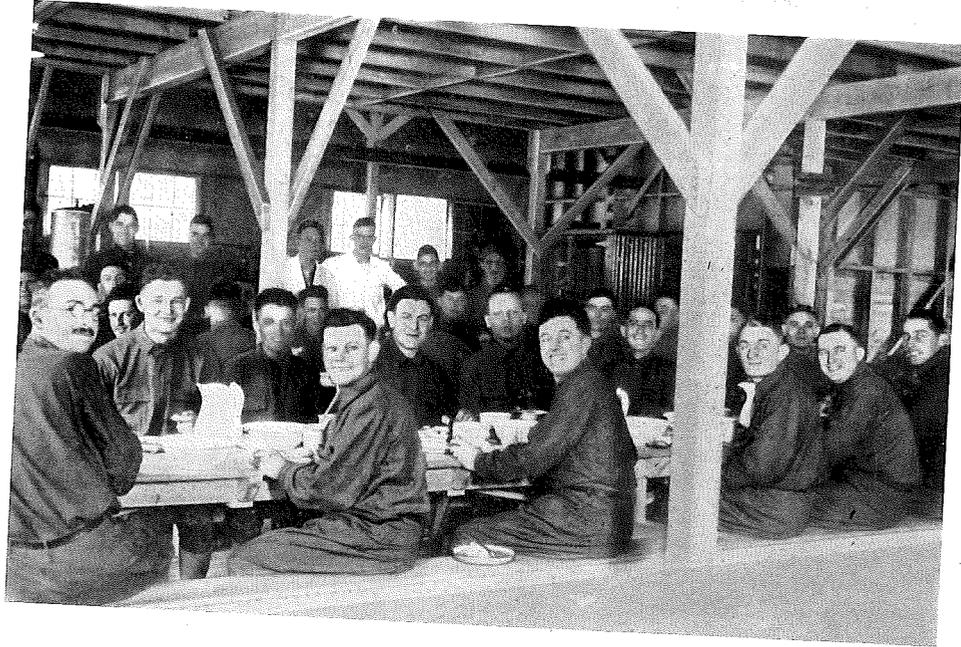
→ THIS LINE SHOWS
 ROUTE OF INFANTRY.
 — THIS LINE SHOWS
 DIVISION ON WAY HOME.
 - - - SPACED LINE IN-
 DICATES ROUTE OF ART-
 ILLERY IN FRANCE.
 CIRCLES AND SQUARE IN-
 DICATE STOPPING PLACES



MAP OF "TOUL SECTOR"
 XXXX LINE OF FARTHEST GERMAN ADVANCE.
 / / / / FRONT WHEN DIVISION SAILED.
 - - - FRONT WHEN DIVISION MOVED UP
 FOR ATTACK AROUND METZ.
 → ARROW POINTS WHERE 88TH DIV. WAS
 GOING INTO BATTLE NOV. 1918.

**CENTER ALSACE SECTOR
 AND VICINITY WITH
 BATTALION BOUNDARIES**





From Civilian Life to Army Life:

Fred Pickering's

WORLD WAR I

Narrative



EDITED BY JEFF PATRICK

Though many Nebraskans served in the Great War, we have few war narratives written by them. Fred Pickering was a farmer from Ulysses, Nebraska, who wrote a lively account of army life for the folks back home.

"Travels of Main Units of 88th Div." From E. J. D. Larson, *Memoirs of France and the Eighty-eighth Division* (Minneapolis: Scott-Mitchell Publishing Co., 1920)

Introduction

Nearly fifty-six thousand Nebraskans served in the U.S. armed forces during World War I. More than fifteen hundred became casualties. Despite this impressive contribution, few today know of the significant role played by the state's residents in the conflict. As one historian recently wrote, "Relatively little has been written on Nebraska's military participation in World War I." Compounding the problem is that surprisingly few detailed accounts by ordinary Nebraskans who fought in the Great War have found their way into print.¹

Although practically every American veteran from that war has passed from the scene, fortunately many unpublished soldier and sailor letters, diaries, and reminiscences from the period await publication. Hidden in attics, basements, or county historical societies, these materials collectively form a significant archive waiting to be utilized by those interested in exploring the military aspects of the conflict.²

Fred Pickering's narrative is one such previously unknown account from a Nebraska veteran.³ In June 1918, more than a year after the United States entered the war, Pickering left his father's farm near Ulysses, Nebraska, for induction into the U.S. Army, and soon became a member of an engineer regiment in the Eighty-eighth ("Cloverleaf") Division. Only six weeks after his enlistment, he boarded a troop transport for Europe. By the end of August Pickering had arrived overseas and joined nearly 1.5 million Americans deployed to the war zone.⁴

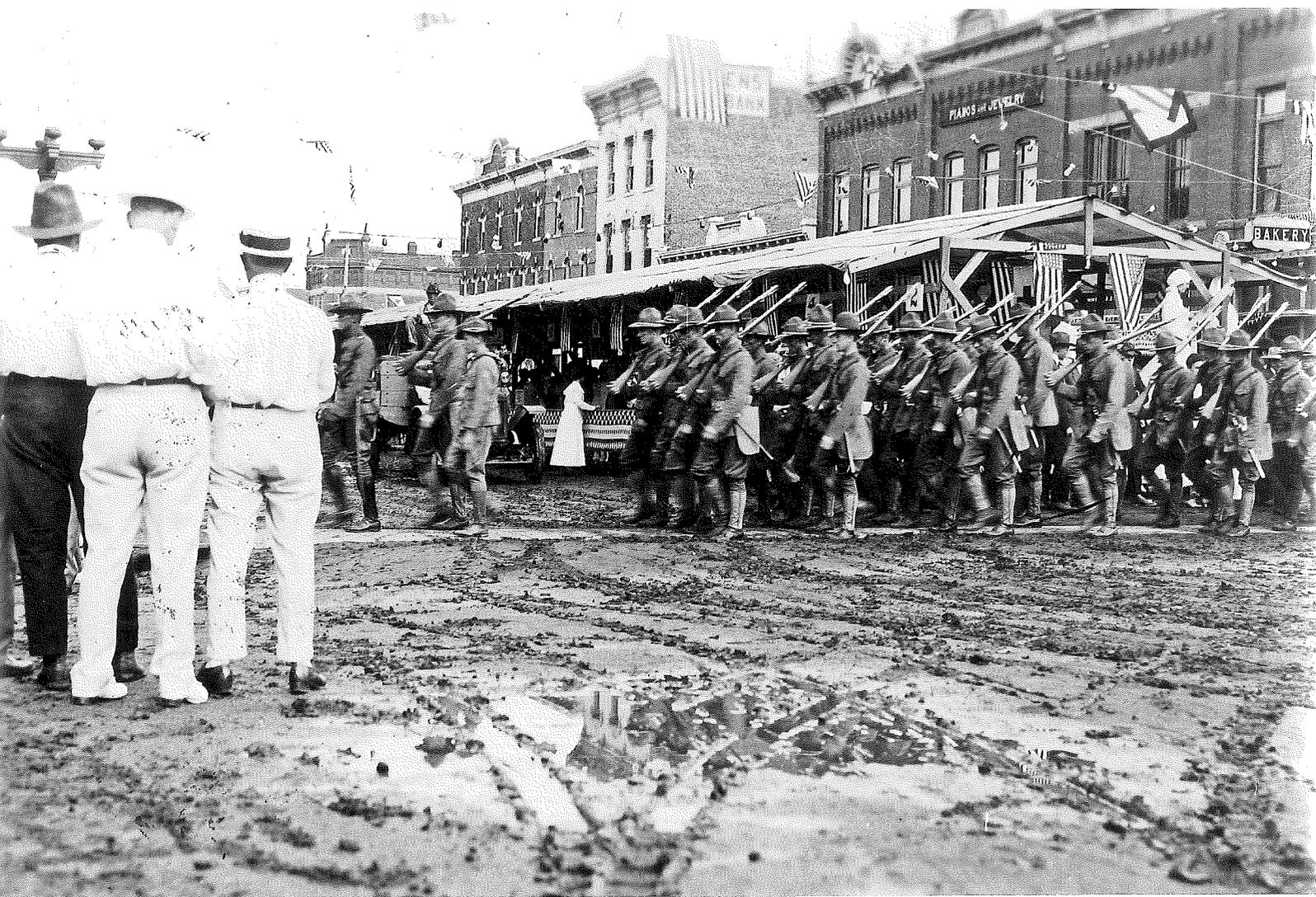
After arriving with his unit in France, Pickering and his comrades moved to the front lines in the Vosges region, where they came close enough to the fighting to hear artillery, machine gun, and rifle fire and come under aerial attack. The war ended before the young Nebraskan was involved in combat.

In early 1919, not long before he left Europe and returned to Nebraska, Pickering decided to compose a lengthy letter that detailed his army career to that point.⁵ Like many other "doughboys," Pickering realized that his service overseas was undeniably one of the most remarkable events of his life. His account, although relatively brief, is significant for several reasons. Pickering's "memoir" chronologically follows the journey of a typical young soldier from the training camps of the Midwest to England and France, documenting his transformation from civilian to soldier. It includes details of his voyage to Europe, observations on

the alien worlds he found there, his journey to the front, and his duties as he waited to enter the fighting. Pickering undoubtedly penned his account for his parents and not for publication, so his story is refreshingly honest and unpolished. Although he complained about some aspects of army life, Pickering was obviously proud of the role it played in Allied victory, and regarded his short military career as a positive experience. In addition, because he wrote immediately after the armistice, his writing is not tinged with the disillusionment that affected some later soldier-writers. Overall, this "common" Nebraska soldier's contemporary account of life in the U.S. Army helps add another dimension to our portrait of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF).

In addition, Pickering joined the fighting at a critical time for the Allied forces. In the fall of 1918, the Americans were prepared to launch their first operation with a complete army of their own, under the separate and independent control of AEF commander Gen. John J. Pershing. On September 12 Pershing's forces began eliminating a salient or bulge in the front around the town of St. Mihiel, and completed the operation in a matter of days. A much larger and far more difficult drive was launched in the Meuse-Argonne sector on September 26, as six hundred thousand U.S. combat troops and support personnel began making slow progress against some of the strongest German defenses on the western front. The fighting would continue until the armistice went into effect on the morning of November 11, 1918. About 1.2 million Americans were eventually involved in the forty-seven-day operation.

It was during the bloody Meuse-Argonne offensive that Pickering and his fellow doughboys in the Eighty-eighth Division officially joined the effort to destroy the armies of the Central Powers. Although the men of the division did not directly participate in this last major drive, they did contribute indirectly to the success of the campaign by keeping German troops, artillery, and aircraft tied to their defensive positions and unable to be moved to more threatened areas of the front. The Eighty-eighth's men were disappointed that they were not allowed to participate in such a large operation, but they could take solace that the decision "was not the fault or the desire of these citizen soldiers," and that by the time they would have entered combat, "they were full of the confidence and the spirit that simply will not acknowledge defeat."



Although the “Cloverleaf” soldiers of the Midwest were untested in the massive carnage in the Argonne, they still suffered from cold, hunger, fatigue, illness, long marches, and enemy fire. As one member of the division wrote, they “did not claim they won the war,” but for many “there was plenty of the terror that tries men’s souls.” For those who did not return, it mattered little to a soldier’s family whether he died in a “quiet” sector from a German trench raid, or “in a losing battle with the ‘flu’ in some cold dingy billet.”⁶

Fortunately for students and historians of the conflict, interest in World War I has been growing over the past several years, particularly in Europe, but also in the United States. As the centennial of the war approaches, the public is slowly rediscovering the fascinating story of Pershing’s doughboys and the civilians who supported them on the home front. Those who read stories such as Pickering’s

will discover that the complex life of the American soldier in World War I consisted of more than singing songs like “Over There” and “Mademoiselle from Armentieres,” enduring static trench warfare, going “over the top,” and facing machine guns, biplanes, and poison gas.

Pickering’s memoir appears here largely as written. He probably decided to use a typewriter at the company headquarters rather than write his lengthy missive by hand, but appeared to have had little experience using such a device. Because of his choice of writing tools, misspelled words and irregular punctuation abound in the original document. These errors have been silently corrected, along with non-standard capitalization. Pickering’s grammatical construction has been retained, with occasional words added by the editor enclosed in brackets.

Photographer Arthur Anderson provided one of the best visual records of the Nebraska home front during World War I, such as this wartime parade in Wahoo. NSHS RG2963-1-3

From Civilian Life To Army Life.⁷ A Trip Through Camps And Abroad.

My first experience with army life was on the morning of June the 28th, 1918, at 6:45 A.M. Roy Baumgardner, wife, and Gladys Hurt drove down in Roy's Overland to escort me to David City so I could catch a train for Camp Funston, Kansas, my future home.⁸ I as usual had been out late the night before so, of course, was a little behind in getting started. As it was I had to bid my mother and father a fare-you-well goodbye without eating breakfast. The roads were awful muddy as it had rained the night before so, of course, it was rather hard to stay in the middle of the road and right side up, but as we had a good driver we landed at our destination in plenty of time. My first stop was at the court house, as you had to go there to report present and ready for duty. In a few minutes we all fell in columns of twos and marched to the depot in regular army style but far from being regular soldiers, as we knew nothing of "Squads right or Left" or anything that goes to

make up the life of a real soldier.⁹ We arrived at the depot a few minutes before train time so spent it in a fare-you-well conversation. Finally the train came and I was kept busy in shaking hands and bidding my friends goodbye.

The first stop was at Lincoln, Nebraska, at 10:45 A.M. I bummed around until noon and then was invited over to the Lincoln Hotel to eat dinner, which went mighty good as I, not eating any breakfast, was somewhat hungry. Along in the afternoon we again entrained and were soon on our way to camp. We were met at Beatrice and other towns by Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. workers, who treated us to sandwiches and pop to our heart's desire. After thanking them we again left and finally arrived at the camp at 2:30 in the morning. We were met by a sgt. who led us to our beds, which was not very much like the ones we were used to at home. The sgt. was kind of a sassy sort of a fellow for after showing us our beds he bellows out, "There are your bunks now get into them and get to sleep as the lights will go out in five minutes." Most of us were tired after spending a sleepless [night] on the train so was glad to lay down most anywhere. Some, of course, weren't ready to go to bed yet

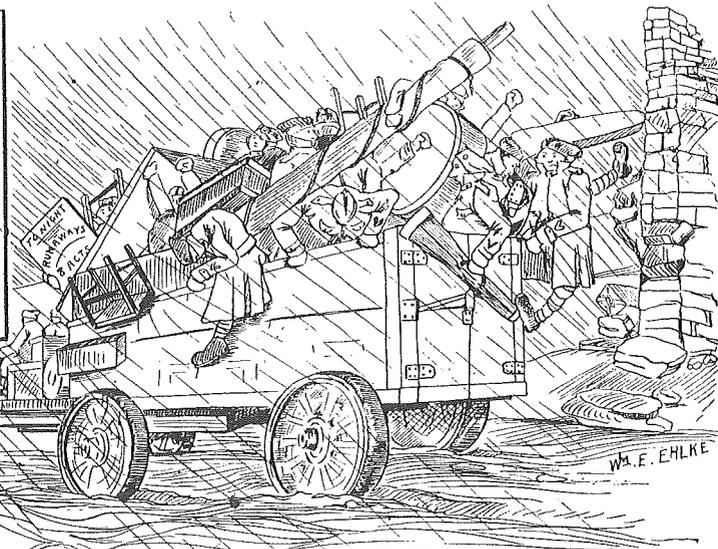
New recruits at the Saunders County Courthouse in Wahoo, ready to depart for Camp Funston, Kansas. Like Fred Pickering, many Nebraska soldiers received their military training at Camp Funston and at Iowa's Camp Dodge. NSHS RG2963-3-2



CLOVERLEAF
ARTISTS
RECORD
PET
MEMORIES

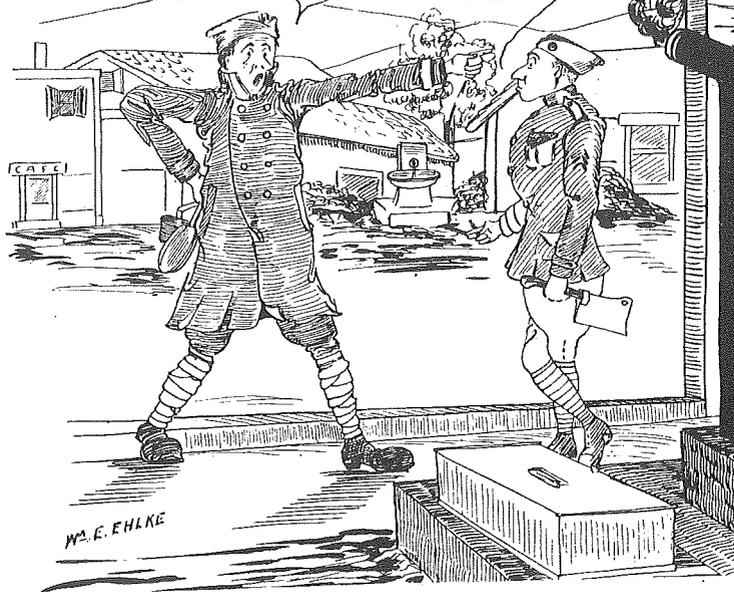


THE BUST OF A CORPORAL



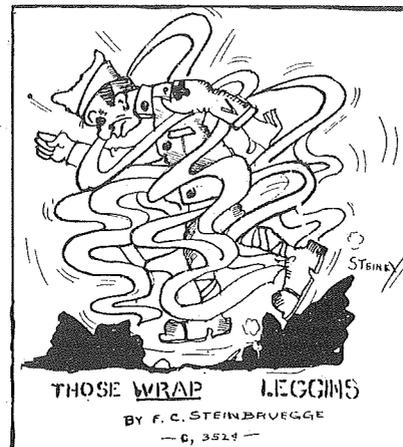
AW! COME ON SARG.
HOW DO YOU GET THAT WAY?
THATS THE LINE THIS SHAWTROOP
ALWAYS GETS. WE COULDN'T HELP IT,
THAT WE DIDNT GET HERE SOONAR
WE GOT STUCK IN THE MUD.
COME ON SARG, YOU WEAR THE SAME
UNIFORM I DO. WHAT ABOUT FIXEN UP
A BUNCH OF NICE STEAKS FOR THE TROOP.

YOU HEARD' ME
SUPPER IS ALL OVER
WITH.



TROUBLES
OF THE
175TH
INF.
BRIG.
SHOW
TROUPE
EN ROUTE.
(GEN.
"BAPE"
STEWART'S
"RUNAWAYS")

GOUNDE COURT
17 KILO'S.



as they were feeling pretty good so started to talk and laugh, but back came the sgt. again and after giving them a couple of callings they hit the hay. Getting bossed around in that manner all at once didn't go very good towards some of the boys, but as the thought came to their minds that they were in the army now so must get used to that line of talk, so took it good natured. I was sure passing the time away in a nice peaceful slumber and thought I had only been in bed a few minutes when in came the sgt. again and bellows, "Every body out!" We jumped up to dress in a hurried manner, just like we do back on the old farm when the cattle gets out in the corn about midnight or the horses get to kicking down at the barn. While I was dressing I looked over a couple of bunks from me and there was a big fat fellow still in bed. It was a criminal offence to awake him in his home town but I thought

it best. After some shaking I finally woke him, and you sure would of laughed until you were sick to of seen him climb into those clothes. He thanked [me] for getting him up for "He didn't want to get in bad the first morning and also spoke of getting court marshal [sic]." So of course we all joined in a hearty laugh. Well our next move was to breakfast and here again we all joined in another laugh as we were issued our new fanadangle eating utensils including a mess kit, knife, fork, spoon, and cup. Of course we didn't know how to use them but after spilling our eats a few times, we finally got seated at a table.

After breakfast we were run through the receiving station or, in other words, it is known to the soldiers as "The Mill." It's where you get the real fast treatment in getting fitted out in army clothes so you will look more like a soldier. Anyway it

Soldier cartoonists sketched scenes of life in the 88th Division. From Larson, *Memoirs of France*.

consisted of a good bath, a strict physical examination, and all other things they see fit to give you. In taking baths the older ones had lots of fun with the recruits for they would play all sorts of tricks on them, such as pour salt in your hair, make you eat soap, turn on the cold water after you had gotten used to the warm, and then probably would finish by giving you a good spanking with a board. These tricks were played more severe on the ones who got a little hot headed or those who didn't believe in war and wouldn't fight for their country. In taking your examination you had to pass about thirty or forty doctors, each one having his particular part to look over and if you pass them all in good standing you were marked o.k. and was Uncle Sam's boy from then on. In getting fitted out in clothing we were first given a so called "barrack bag" and started down the aisle. It was my first experience in getting rigged out from head to foot in such a short time for believe me, they sure drove us down the lane like we drive hogs to the stock yards. They

The boxcars being of a very small kind, you can imagine how about forty of us in there with heavy packs could rest or get any sleep at all

gave you your stuff in the manner of something like this, "What size shirt, socks, pants, underclothes and & [etc.] do you wear?" If we didn't answer them in a second they would grab up the stuff and throw it down the aisle yelling at the same time, "Put one on and the other in the bag." I remember on one occasion when we stopped to get our hats, the fellow behind me hadn't shaved for about three weeks and after he got his hat he looked just like "Buffalo Bill." It sure was comical and I have to laugh; anyway I suppose we all looked like a bunch of wild men just getting in off of the range. We were rushed through so fast that when we came out the real in[?] we were only partly dressed with our shoes unlaced, pants, shirt unbuttoned, and other clothing just barely hanging. To top that off we were dragging our barrack bags behind. It must have been a laughable sight to see us, anyway I was laughing all of the time as it was a real treat to see

the others. Well we just got [out] side and we were rushed into large army trucks and hauled to the detention camp, our future home. On arriving there we were divided into different companies. I was placed in Co. 10, 164th Depot Brigade.

While at this camp we were treated to three inoculations which were to prevent us from catching diseases. It consisted of three shots in the back just below the left shoulder and were given to us one each week. It made some of the boys terribly sick and were in bed a couple of days, some only felt a slight touch of it, while others even went as far as to faint.¹⁰

I spent about three weeks in this camp, drilling and getting used to the ways of a soldier's life. I was put in the 13th squad and was acting corporal in learning the different forms you had to go through in getting prepared to fight for Uncle Sam. The time fairly flew, for every evening we would play games after "retreat" and on one Sat. afternoon we had a ball game between the 10th Co. and the 32nd. We had lots of fun as most of us didn't have any suits and we even played in our heavy shoes so the game was rather slow, anyway I had the chance to bat against Mr. Barnes of the New York Giants. The game finally ended in our favor by the score of 6 to 4.¹¹

On the morning of July the 18th I got a notice to pack up and be ready at 7:30 A.M. as I was transferred to Camp Dodge.¹² I hurried along and got ready but didn't leave until 3:30 P.M. It was a special train and it carried about 300 in all. We spent another sleepless night but the next morning at 10:30 we arrived at Camp Dodge. I was met here by another officer from the 88th Div. who led us to another receiving station and after telling them my past experience for the last few years, I was placed in the engineers. It was about 2:30 P.M. when we left the station bound for the engr. headquarters and it was some walk, about thirty blocks in all. After arriving there I was put in Company E, 313th Engrs., 88th Div. and then escorted to their dinner room to get a lunch as it was now near 3:30 and we were somewhat hungry.¹³ After the lunch we had a rest period in waiting for our barracks bags to come, which arrived by truck at 5:30 P.M. We were then shown our bunks and a place where we would get some straw to fill our ticks. As it happened my resting place was in the middle of the floor among a complete bunch of strangers. My next few days were spent in drilling and bugle school and at the latter we sure had a fine time for we went through a corn field, crossed a pasture, and finally landing under a nice shady oak tree to do our practicing.



From *Souvenir of Camp Funston, Kansas*, published by E. D. Zellner, Junction City, Kansas, n.d. Author's collection.

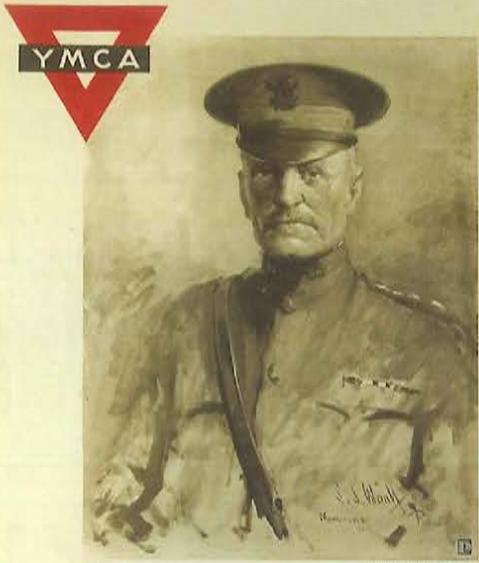


Upper Left: Nebraska State Historical Society, Source: G. H. Graham, Lincoln

Upper Right: "What can I do to help my country win the war?"
8660-28 Nebraska State Historical Society, Source: V. E. Friend, Lincoln

Lower Left: "Halt the HUN"
4541-45 Nebraska State Historical Society, Source: A. E. Sheldon, Lincoln.

Lower Right: "Beat back the HUN with Liberty Bonds"
4733-10 Nebraska State Historical Society, Source: Estate of Don L. Love, Lincoln



YMCA

"A sense of obligation for the varied and useful service rendered to the army in France by the Y. M. C. A. prompts me to join in the appeal for its further financial support. I have opportunity to observe its operations, measure the quality of its personnel and mark its beneficial influence upon our troops, and I wish unreservedly to commend its work for the Army."
Pershing

UNITED WAR WORK CAMPAIGN
NOVEMBER 11-18, 1918

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY COUNTRY WIN THE WAR?

I WILL Loyalloy support the boys at the front by my best efforts at home.

I WILL Be true to my Country in thought, word and deed.

I WILL Help make Nebraska a brilliant example of service to my country.

I WILL Support the Red Cross to the best of my ability.

I WILL Carefully conserve and prevent waste of food.

I WILL Assist to the utmost of my ability in the production and harvesting of food stuffs.

I WILL FROWN upon and RESENT any conduct which will interfere with the efficiency of the Nation.

I WILL Subscribe generously for Liberty Bonds and help provide the money necessary to successfully carry on the war.

I WILL Knit, sew, make bandages and give home relief.

Nebraska State Council of Defense

HALT the HUN!



**BUY U.S. GOVERNMENT BONDS
THIRD LIBERTY LOAN**



Beat back the **HUN**
with
LIBERTY BONDS



Above, recruits arrive at Camp Funston, Kansas, where Pickering began his army life. Below, an officer reads camp rules to new recruits. From *Souvenir of Camp Funston, Kansas*. Author's collection.





keep
these
off
the U.S.A.
Buy more LIBERTY BONDS

© D THE STODOLSKY LITHO. CO. CINCINNATI & NEW YORK

Left: "Keep these off the USA"
4541-83 Nebraska State Historical Society,
Source: A. E. Sheldon, Lincoln

It was far from camp so we wouldn't bother them with our queer noises and our charming tunes, which also made the birds feel ashamed of themselves who were singing to their hearts' content in the trees above us. However our good times soon ended, for on the morning of August the 6th, we got our orders to be entrained by 10:30 A.M. bound for an eastern camp.

We left on a special train which had guards at every door so there was no getting off or on. We were met at every station by the best organization we have ever seen and that will always have a warm spot in the soldier's heart. It was the "Red Cross Workers" and they had plenty of eats for us, which went mighty good as we were always hungry after riding on the train. They sure won a home with our bunch of boys and after thanking them for their good work, a few of the pretty girls were invited to go along with [us] but that, of course, was impossible. We passed through a few good sized towns including Des Moines, Ia., Chicago, Detroit, Niagara Falls, up into Canada, back into the good old U.S.A. along the Hudson river, through Utica and stopping at the large city of New York. Here we were put on a steamship and on our way across the Hudson and up the North River we passed the Statue of Liberty, the Flat Iron building, Times building, and all the rest of the sky scrapers. On a little farther up we went under the world's largest bridge, "The Brooklyn" and it was some structure. The water was just full of boats of every description running up and down the stream doing their daily jobs in carrying joy riders, provisions, and large ships into their docks.

Arriving on the other side we again entrained and headed for the camp where we were placed in tents until our [time] came to move again.¹⁴ Our time here was spent in getting new clothing and receiving inspections so we would be fit for overseas service. We also [had] the pleasure of going to New York, Rockaway Beach, and a few other places of interest. In the camp we had canteens and could buy almost any thing we wanted, such as ice cream, candy, pop, and etc. Our orders came on August the 15th to move so we all hurried and marched to the train, from there we marched to the docks and boarded the English transport, "The Plassy," about 4:30 P.M.¹⁵ We pulled away from the dock in the evening and anchored out in the harbor. Here we stayed until 2:30 on the afternoon of Aug. the 16th when we pulled out under full steam

for our future duties on foreign soil. Everybody was happy, some singing, others yelling at the top of their voice bidding the good old U.S.A. a fare-you-well good bye until we could see her again.¹⁶

Our overseas equipment consisted of four pair of socks, two pair of shoes, two o. [live] d. [rab] shirts, two blankets, one cap, o.d., pants & blouse, puttees, two suits of underwear, canteen and cover, cup, mess kit, knife, fork, spoon, belt, denim suit, gloves, collar ornaments, overcoat, slicker, condiment can, bacon can, and etc., altogether it is plenty for one person to carry.¹⁷ Maybe this isn't all but it's all that I can think of just now. They say we will have more to pack around when we get to France but I don't see what it can be, for it looks as though we have about all we need.¹⁸

It has been some time since I last wrote but as letter writing does not seem to be in the schedule of an every day's work and added to that is the scarcity of writing material which is more or less a temporary shortage felt just now.

In looking back it seems like a long time since leaving the States and maybe it is by the experiences covered. One of the most vivid ones for us all was the trip across the big pond. The weather being ideal and even though our sojourn on the steamer was rather prolonged, most of us were kept busy enough not to become bored. Some engaged in friendly games of cards and checkers, while others passed the time away by singing and telling stories, still others kept the canteen clerk busy buying candy, fruit, crackers, cheese, cookies, tobacco, and etc.

We were quartered throughout the steamer and for most of them it was their first experience in trying to sleep in the hammocks, which swung to and fro to the tune of the ship and the waves of the deep blue. We had our mess at tables fastened to the ship's side and they ranged from eight to sixteen men at a table, three were detailed from each to bring down the food from the kitchen, which was situated on the forecastle of the ship. One man was to bring bread, the second to bring meat, and the third to bring what ever else was being served including dessert which, of course, was thin and far between. It also fell to this lot of men to clean up the tables and the table dishes but each man was to take care of his own dishes. This job was a permanent one throughout the trip and I was lucky enough to land it. Others, of course, had their regular work to do, some scrubbing the decks, others policing, while others were put on their turns at guarding. Even the bugler had his regular calls to sound at the specified time.

Every morning we assembled on the top deck and took our daily exercises and boat drill. Some of the boys had a hard time in standing up while taking them as the ship would rock to and fro when cutting through a large wave, so it caused a general laughter throughout the company.

There were some of the men who preferred sleeping on the ship's deck to the hammocks below and each night took their sleeping paraphernalia, which consisted of a blanket, coat, [and] shelter half and made down a place to sleep. Some even slept with their overcoats on so as to keep out the chilly air. On several occasions during the night they were fairly drenched with water by the waves splashing over the top. Those who stayed below had lots of fun trying to stay in the hammocks as they too would swing back and forth. However after a few spills they finally got used to them and spent the remainder of the nights in peaceful slumbers.¹⁹

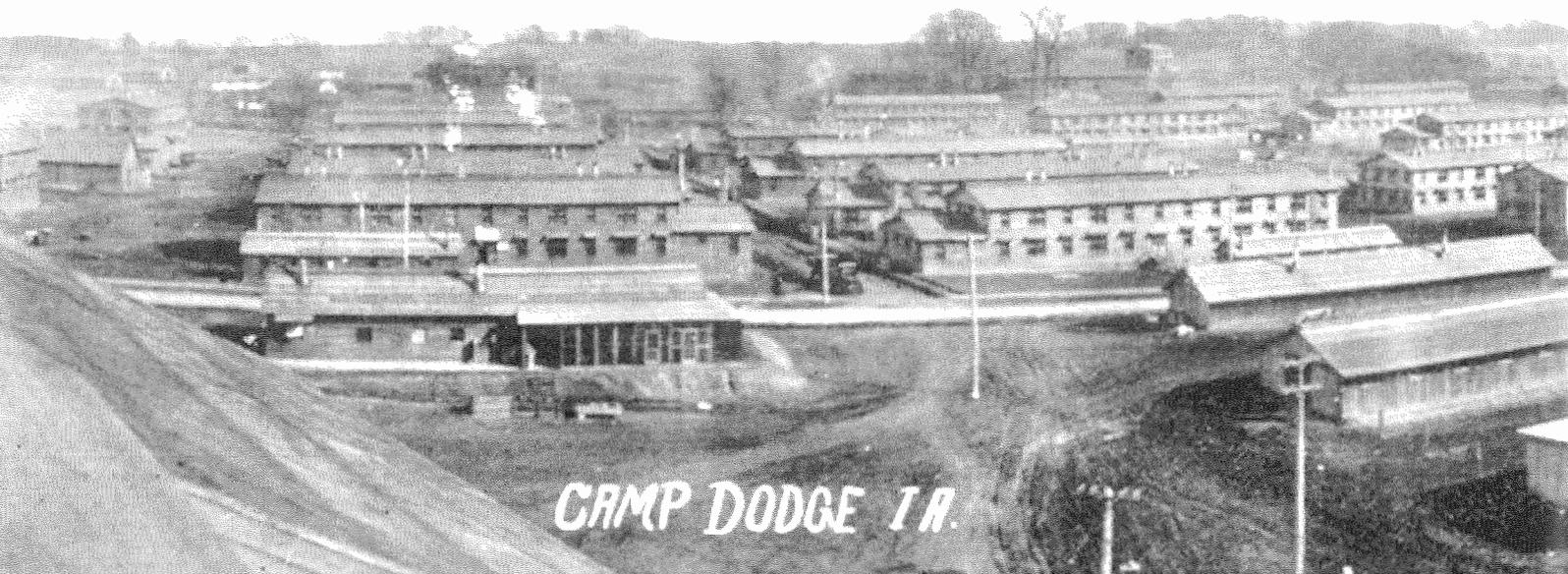
Our days were spent mostly on the deck watching the fish, which were quite numerous and so many different kinds. We saw porpoises, schools of whales and flying fish. We all thought how it would be to have one of those big fellows on a hook and line and being in a little row boat it probably would be some job to capture him. The flying fish were a sight to behold for they would come out of one wave, fly to another, dart under, come out on the other side, fly to the next one, and so on. Some of the larger kinds would swim along the side of the boat for a great distance and then go away.

Our trip on the water lasted a long time owing to the course we took to avoid the submarines, which were quite thick and were patiently laying under the water and watching for us to come along so they could send us to the bottom of the sea. A few

times the signal was given that they had sighted a sub, anyway we were rushed upon deck, fell in our regular places, and stood anxiously waiting for the order to come for us to jump overboard. After ten or fifteen minutes if nothing would show up we were turned loose and we could go about as before. Once or twice during the night they shot a couple of times at what they supposed was a sub but the next morning they said it was nothing, only an iceberg. Well by this you can plainly see that they were continually on the watch day and night. After outguessing the subs a long time we finally landed on the thirteenth day of our trip, August the 28th, in the port of Liverpool, England.²⁰ We were lucky in getting into port early in the morning for the tide was in at that time so we could get through the large gates, otherwise we would have to lay in harbor all day and come in about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It was a sight to see those little boats tow those large ships up to the docks with such ease and accuracy.

The sailors and the rest of the ship's help got busy at once to unload our belongings. The large steam derricks were a big factor in lifting and carrying our heavy luggage from the ship to the dock and there they were carried away by huge army trucks. While waiting for our orders to disembark I started a conversation with a few English lads who had gathered at the docks to see the American soldiers off. I threw down a nickel to one of the boys and told him to get me some gum. It was a long time before I could convince him that it was real money but after talking to some of the other boys, he finally went away. In a few minutes he was back again bringing with him one stick of gum and the next thing was how was I going to get it? As the derrick started to raise he put it in among the ropes

After induction into the army at Camp Funston, Fred Pickering was sent to Camp Dodge, north of Des Moines, Iowa. From Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, *The 88th Division in the World War, 1914-1918* (New York: 1919).





From *Our Sons at Camp Dodge: A Book of Pictures* by the *Des Moines Register and Evening Tribune*, n.d. Author's collection.





Arriving at Camp Dodge, Pickering writes that "we were then shown our bunks and a place where we would get some straw to fill our ticks." From *Our Sons at Camp Dodge* Author's collection.



A Red Cross parade float in Wahoo. NSHS RG2963-11-22

and I got it as soon as it came on deck. Anyway I had the first chew of gum on this side of the big pond. In a few minutes orders came for us to disembark, which we were all glad to do as we were getting tired of seeing nothing but water and were anxious for something new and exciting. After falling in columns of twos we marched to a rest camp known as Knotty Ash. On our way we saw quite a few things of interest such as walled-in yards, brick houses for most of the dwellings, and crooked narrow streets as a general rule. We also passed a sign which read, "Heaven, Hell or New York by Xmas" and it was received by a loud applause. Age certainly had taken the hard lines out of the places that otherwise would have been barren and unsightly. The vine-covered walls and the moss-covered roofs of some of the real old places are pictures that we will always have of England. Each yard, park, and even along the street had its share of the beautiful flowers which goes to help perfume the air and to give the soldiers a refreshing smell while traveling along the dusty roads with their heavy packs. The streets were just full of inhabitants, mostly children, who were yelling all along the line, "Give me an American penny for a souvenir." It was a long tiresome march to the camp but we finally got there about 10:30 A.M. and we were billeted in tents. The camp was fenced in by a large rock wall and we weren't allowed to go outside or anyway it was a very hard job to get out without the guards seeing you, so we just had to grin and bear it even if it was a hard task to turn down the invitations the girls were sending to you by their little flirting eyes. All we could do was to stay inside and pass them all up just like we were in prison. The camp also contained a few canteens and other amusements so we could pass the time away. After spending one cold night here we were again entrained bound for South Hampton on the 29th.

Our company was unusually fortunate in having a daylight railroad trip, which will never be forgotten. The rolling hills with many-colored fields, the harvest partly gathered, gave a general impression of a wonderful thrifty country. The crooked stone fences caused much comment, the general question being why make the fields so queer shaped for no apparent topographical reason? One peculiarity of these European railroads is having the road beds below the level of the surrounding country and only once in awhile getting upon a grade where the countryside can be seen.²¹

The railway carriages, as they are called in this country, were another curiosity, as well as the peculiar method of coupling them together, the coupling

being by means of hooks on cars and it was iron eyelets with a turnbuckle between them and spring bumpers on each car, which was used to take up the slack when going around a curve. The carriages, themselves, are divided into compartments across the width of the car and these are fixed up and finished inside according to the class of passenger it is to carry. There being 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class railroad

Everybody was happy, some
singing, others yelling at the top
of their voice bidding the good
old U.S.A. a fare-you-well good bye
until we could see her again.

transportation in times of peace, but at the time we were traveling we rode from boxcars up to first class so we had a taste of them all. The boxcars being of a very small kind, you can imagine how about forty of us in there with heavy packs could rest or get any sleep at all and we spent a few of just such times.²²

We were fortunate when we left Knotty Ash for South Hampton to get to ride in first class passenger [cars] and also was given a little token of greetings and welcome from King George.²³ All the people seemed glad to see us by the way they gave us a send off at the depot, as the English band gave us a few good selections and the rest of the crowd showed their appreciation by waving their hands and hats. After an all day travel on the train we arrived at South Hampton late in the evening and detraining, we started at once for another rest camp. After marching through the main part of the town and taking in the sights of the town we landed at the camp at 10:31 P.M. Here we were put into tents without any bunks so had to sleep on the hard floor and believe me it was somewhat crowded, but as we were tired we were glad to rest any place, even if we had to go without any supper. This city sure was a beautiful one with its flowers, shade trees, parks of every description, and the streets were kept right up to first class shape. In every park there was two or three lakes which were used for fishing, boat riding, and swimming. The park where we stayed was a fine one with two beautiful lakes, which had swans swimming in them and they would even come right

"America Owes France"
 Nebraska State Historical
 Society, Source: A. E. Shel-
 don, Lincoln.

1778. 1783. America owes France the most unalterable gratitude



Imp. H. CHACONNE Paris
 1917-
French Comrade your children shall be as our children
AMERICAN OUVROIR FUNDS. 681, FIFTH AVENUE. NEW-YORK
 Annual Allowances for support and education of French War Orphans
 Official Representatives of Following French War Orphan Societies: Association Nationale Française pour la Protection des Familles des Morts pour la Patrie 21 Assistance Médicale des Veuves de la Guerre
 2. Adoption des Orphelins de la Mer 14) La Saint-Cyrenne 15) La Bretagne 16) La Réunion Américain 17) Œuvre des Bourgeois 18) Œuvre Catholique de l'Éducation Supérieure des Orphelins de la Guerre 19) Union Lorrain

up and eat out of your hand so the soldiers had something to pass the time away, besides a few of them went swimming.

On the afternoon of the 30th we again left camp and marching to the pier we embarked on the good U.S. ship, the Yale.²⁴ It sure seemed good to step on to something that belonged to us, as we had been riding on French and English trains and ships so long that it looked like United States didn't have any thing but as the time passed, we saw that she was the largest factor in the war later on. While standing on the deck I had the chance to see the large ship. After it got dark we steamed out of the harbor, guarded by a few little torpedo boats and started across the English Channel for Le Havre, France. While going across I got acquainted with one of the sailors, he was a fireman and was good enough to take me around to see how the large engines worked and the amount of coal they used. He also told me that the Yale was used before the war along the coast of California as an excursion boat to take joy seekers on their tours. This boat was exceptionally fast, for it could just simply run right away from those little torpedo boats and often on the way back it would do it.

The English Channel was considered as a dangerous place for the subs to do their nasty work and it was only the day before that they sank a hospital ship and crippled a soldier transport. Things of course didn't look so bright to us after hearing those stories but we landed safe at Le Havre about 4:30 A.M. on the 31st of November.²⁵

We debarked at 9 A.M. marching up a long winding hill to another rest camp, No. 1. On our way up one of our lieutenants was presented with a beautiful bunch of flowers by a little girl and her gray haired father as a token of friendship and how well pleased they were to have America enter the war and to help save their country from ruin. We were put into tents to rest and believe me we had some rest too, for they had us policing the whole camp while [during] our short stay there. Sunday morning we got off to go to church but in the afternoon we were again put back to driving new stakes around the tents and other odd jobs. Here we were given very strict instructions to keep a good lookout for aeroplanes as they very recently visited the town and were also shown the dugouts which were to be our protection. As it happened though, we were lucky enough that we didn't have to use them and after spending a day and a half in what you called a rest camp (but very little rest) we got our orders to move at 4:30 Sunday morning, September, 2nd. We had to roll our packs the night before so, of

course, it was somewhat cool sleeping and most of us spent a good share of the time in running up and between the tents to keep warm. We also spent a good deal of the time by playing kids' games such as Pump-pump-pull-away, Duck-on-the-rock, and a few others just to pass the time away. At 4:30 A.M. we were all up and marching towards the depot with our heavy packs bearing down on our shoulders as to make the hob nails put out a glitter of fire as they struck the stones along the road. On arriving at the station, the little car that about 40 soldiers including myself was billed to ride in was completely covered with white lime on the floor, it was about two inches thick. Some of the boys got right in and laid their heavy packs down while others were hunting for something to clean it out. After a little difficulty we finally convinced a Frenchman what we wanted, so he gave us a lot of hay and using a part of it for a broom we kept the rest for bedding, which sure came in good as we were on the train for a day and a night. We were somewhat a tiresome bunch, after being crowded in there that long and sure was glad when the time came for us to detrain.²⁶ This happened at a little town called Les Laumes at 8:30 P.M. on Sept. the 3rd.²⁷ From the train we marched out to a vacant pasture and put up our pup tents and as it was, the ground had been plowed late[ly] and our stakes wouldn't hold so it took considerable longer in getting them in shape. After a few good words of encouragement, those kinds the soldiers most generally use and with the aid of darkness, we finally got them up. Very little sleep that we got, for on that damp ground and the night being the coldest we had struck so far, so we again spent most of the time in running races around the camp. Early the next morning we ate breakfast, packed up, and marched about three kilos to a little [town] [called] Venarey.²⁸ Here we were billeted in barns, chicken coops, and everything imaginable. I with the rest of the buglers spent most of the time out under some shade trees practicing and learning the semaphore and wig-wag. Blackberries were quite plentiful and on Sundays and the rest of our spare moments we would spend in gathering them, sometimes taking a cup along and bring back enough for dinner. It sure helped out as our rations were very slim just then and besides they seem to hit the right spot after eating hard-tack and other army food. Just north of town was a large canal where we did our bathing and washing. Great loads of stuff would pass daily up and down this canal on boats pulled by little mules or oxen. The canal gatekeeper was a lady by the name of Madame Gabrielle Thorrey and

Soldiers of the U. S. A.!

As we hear from your comrades seized by us, your officers say, that we kill prisoners of war or do them some other harm.

Don't be such Greenhorns!

How can you smart Americans believe such a silly thing!

German airplanes dropped propaganda leaflets over Allied front lines. From *The 88th Division in the World War*.

each day took her turn in opening and shutting the gates. She was doing her share at home (as most of the women do a greater share of it) while her husband was at the front fighting to save his country from disaster.

In England we lived in rest camps while in France we lived in villages and of the two, the men much preferred the latter since there were very little rest and eats to be found in the rest camps.

When it comes to seeing things of interest, France is just a little bit ahead of any thing I have seen so far. The inhabitants have, to a large extent, got away from the very pronounced costumes, but wooden shoes for everyday wear is usual and the boys seem to wear a black slip-on apron similar to a kitchen apron worn in [the] U.S.A. with the exception that it was only knee length. A little touch of military creeps into the children's dress by so

many of them wearing the cast off puttees and caps of their relatives in the service.

The homes of these people are even more interesting than their owners because of the evidence of age everyplace a person looks. It seems as that a residence a hundred years old is comparatively modern when put up against the dwellings that go back to the thirteenth century and about the time the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth. To the most unprogressive American in our bunch the manner of living here is a curiosity. The idea of cattle, horses, pigs, chickens, and their stores of grain all in the same dwelling where the people lived was a little bit more than they cared to experience for a steady diet.

Nearly all of the buildings and structures that would be of wood at home are of stone here and the better finished ones are covered with stucco.

The workmanship shown is often so fine as to cause a favorable comment by our men who have done such work in the States. It is a sure thing that these people must be natural born masons or such stone work could not of been accomplished. At every village there were large troughs made of solid rock, some to water the stock and others for the people's private use, these were kept full by the constant running of water from a large fountain stationed near the troughs. These places also furnished excellent places for the soldiers to do their washing as they always have a lot to do, especially after a long march. The French are always glad to see the Americans come to town and try their best to make it pleasant for them. We also can often hire some French women to do our washing at a very small cost and we do so as long as those little Francs last.

The country is generally rolling and is covered with trees and green grass. There are also quite an abundance of fruit near the villages which can be seen generally situated on the side of hills. Since the roofs of all of these buildings are of red tile it makes a very interesting picture for the one who is standing on top of a mountain. Every once in a while you can see a woman driving a team of oxen to a plow or wagon. Instead of using yokes for their oxen, they strap a very odd looking neckyoke to the animal's horns and start on their way at such a pace that they would have a hard time in passing up a snail, which also are quite plentiful here.

The machinery used here also is a sight to behold. Even the plows are of an eight or ten inch lay and the mow [mold] boards are twice as long as the ones we have in the States. Horses when used are hitched in single file and they have as many as three or four in this manner. While out on our daily hikes we were lucky enough to witness a runaway with one of these plows and those horses being strung out in that manner made things lively for awhile. While speaking of machinery, we don't want to miss the thrashing machines, which was some rig I'll have to admit.²⁹ If some of the real farmers of [the] U.S. could just step over here and see one of those little playthings run they sure would laugh and wonder why this country don't come up to the times. Anyway, they consisted of a real small separator and engine. The grain is put in on top of the separator at about the middle and when the straw comes out the rear it is bound up something like we bind the grain when we cut it. The straw is then put on two wheelbarrows and wheeled to a barn by two little boys, where it is stored away for the winter. The grain on the other

hand comes out in front and runs into sacks which, when full, are carried to a scales and weighed by a French soldier and is also stored away in the barn or is sometimes carried to the house for better protection, for grain in this country is worth a good deal at the present time. The engine, which was of an old make [and] was also very small, steamed away at its usual gait trying to do its duty. The flywheel, which was an unusually large one, being about six or eight feet in dia. ran backwards fanning the air at about fifty revolutions per minute. The engineer was very busy carrying water and coal so as to keep up steam so he could keep the rest of the crew at work. As it happened I had a chance to see one of these rigs run so of course stopped and took in the sights. After watching it for awhile, I made motions to a Frenchman to let me use his fork, which was mostly made of wood and about seven feet long, to pitch a few bundles. This was great sport for the boys as having an American help them thrash was quite a treat to them. They are always glad to have you around and try their best to talk to you but we have to go mostly by signs.

Our army life now is just about as picturesque as the country we are living in and the men are ready for something new and exciting. There is not much to be said now but there will be lots to tell when we next stroll down the avenue.

Well I must get back to my story. After spending a very busy time here we were ordered to leave on September the 16th, we marched back to Les Laumes and entrained about 9 o'clock in the evening.³⁰ Riding all night in boxcars we arrived at Hericourt at 10 A.M.³¹ After two hours of marching with heavy packs we were halted for one hour for rest and lunch. About 1 o'clock again found us hitting it down the road and after a long tiresome march of 19 kilos, including a few rests in between times, we landed at the little town of Villiers.³² Here we were somewhat tired and hungry but as the fruit was plentiful, we made ourselves known among the trees until we had all we cared for at the present time. Those large blue plums was the favorite among the boys for they were just ripe and would melt in your mouth. We were billeted in our usual places such as barns, pig pens, and etc. At this place orders came to drill in rain or shine and as it rained most of the time we had very nice weather for out of door sport. The results were that most of the engr. was sick from three days to three weeks with a cold which later turned into the fluenza.³³ I spent most of my time out with the other buglers learning the semaphore and wig-wag as the buglers

were laid aside for we were closer to the enemy's lines so, of course, didn't want to give out anything that might attract their attention as aeroplanes were flying every day over us. I also spent about five days in the hospital but wasn't very sick as I had a wonderful appetite and ate every thing they would give me and half what the rest of the sick boys were under [unable?] to eat. I was able to get out on Friday after noon and on the following day we got our orders to be ready for a long march by 5 P.M. Those who thought they were strong enough to make the trip could go and the others could stay and rest up, then follow later. As I had only gotten out the day before I didn't know whether I could make it or not but rather than to take a chance of losing them I was game enough to try it.

There were about one-third of the co. stayed behind and rejoined us later on and they seemed to be mighty glad to get back, as most generally when they leave the co. they very seldom get back. Some of the boys got so bad they had to be sent to the base hospital, some returned to us, but others got so bad they either died or were transferred to some other organization. We lost from our company alone thirteen of our good friends that had to fall [out] on account of that terrible disease, the fluenza. It wouldn't of seemed half as [bad] to of lost them in real action but to have them die before they had time to see real action it was a hard blow for the whole co.³⁴ This village was the worst one we have had for sickness, for we were wet most of the time and no chance to dry our clothes during the night.

Well everything was ready promptly at 5 P.M. and owing to the lack of horses it was up to the men to pull the wagons. We had something like fifty men on each wagon, most of them pulling while the others were pushing and the rest that had been sick were trailing along behind without a thing to carry as their packs were put on the wagon so as to make the trip as easy as possible for them. We marched and marched up and down hills, through valleys and woods, and over plains thinking we would never get there. We also passed through villages that were completely shot to pieces and every indications were showing that we were getting closer to the front lines. Every hour we marched forty-five minutes and rested fifteen, and as the time drifted by our feet and bodies became tired, so at every rest period we would drop down anywhere, even in the muddy road, just so we took the strain off of our limbs.³⁵ Now and then you could see large flashes of light break through the darkness in the distance and these were known

as signals which the soldiers use on the front line trenches. After a long tiresome march we finally pulled into a little [town] called Essert at 3 o'clock in the morning.³⁶ Here we were billeted in barns and etc.

Getting our beds made in the dark was some task without any lights but after a long stagger [?] we finally got settled in our new homes at about 4 A.M. As the next morning was Sunday and we weren't going to move until in the evening, we were allowed to sleep as long as we wanted to. I managed to roll [out] about 9 A.M. and I was so sore that I couldn't hardly walk or get my shoes on but after a little work and exercise I was ready for breakfast. It was at this meal that we saw our first aeroplane battle. We sure did enjoy it and all yelled give it to him. After spending the day in rest and visiting a few dugouts and wire entanglements, we were again on our way but this time without our wagons as they were taken over by French trucks in the afternoon. Some [of] the boys rode on the trucks and wagons but I still stayed with the company. This was the longest and hardest march we had taken so far as we left at the beginning of darkness and landed at the little town of Wolfersdorf, Alsace Lorraine, at 5 A.M, twenty miles from our starting place.³⁷ All along the road we could again see the flashes of light as they were the night before, also passed miles and miles of wire entanglements and dugouts. We were now beginning to realize what war was and also was getting into dangerous places, especially once when we got lost and started down the wrong road straight for the German trenches. However a Frenchman, who was riding along on horseback, stopped us or we might of had a lovely time for awhile. Most of the roads were camouflaged but we had to do our traveling at night owing to the aeroplanes.³⁸ Well we finally got to Wolfersdorf and was billeted in French barracks. Talk about tired. I thought I was tired the night before but that was only a small matter as to this time, for when we took our little rest along the road my feet were just as sore and tender as they could be. We were now up nearer to the front as this very night, or rather morning as it happened to be, anyway we were still in bed, an aeroplane battle took place right above us and in a few minutes the shells were bursting right close to the barracks, one finally hit the barrack and came down on to one of the bunks that was unoccupied. Pretty lucky again and the same thing happened a few days later, only we were outdoors playing ball when we heard a shell come buzzing by and planting itself about three feet in the ground. When we heard it coming

maybe you think we didn't duck behind the trees but at that, it lit about four feet from one of us. From then on we kept a good lookout for planes and hit for shelter as soon as possible. It was the shells from the [anti] aircraft guns that came back down which were dropping near us. Of course every thing was new to us and we were going to be on the watchout from then on.³⁹

After sleeping in the barracks a few nights I was ordered to move my sleeping quarters over with the sgts. and also with the office. Every day you could see the aeroplanes sailing around and hear the big guns roaring in the distance. Finally one night we got our real first experience of war life, for about eight o'clock in the evening on Oct. 13th they let out one continued roaring of artillery, rifle, and machine gun fire. It sure was some doings and it sounded like they were going to tear our little town all to pieces any minute. Some of the boys were almost scared to death as they ran in every direc-

tion, even knocking down the guards as they came in their way. As I was in bed when the fun started, I just said let her come as I was here first. The big fireworks lasted an hour and twenty minutes and believe me they kept things lively. The next day the tales got out about the boys running into the guards and of course we had something to tease them about just to pass the time away.

We were now on the Alsace Lorraine sector but this one was considered a mighty quiet one besides that of Toul, Verdun, Argonne, and St. Michael.⁴⁰ While [on] our stay in this little burg we had our first experience in the Y.M.C.A. and it sure was some Y, believe me. Of all the Y's us boys have seen so far [this one] doesn't amount to very much in our minds and for a fact wasn't of any use to us. They might of been better on other sectors but we can't give them a good word. If any donations was coming from the 313th Engrs. the organization that would get it would be "The Red Cross Girls." They

Dannemarie, in the Haute Alsace Sector, where Pickering and his comrades were quartered in a hog pen with a leaky roof. From *The 88th Division in the World War*.



In all it seemed
as though one
big dark cloud
had passed
by and a new
and brighter
one had taken
its place.

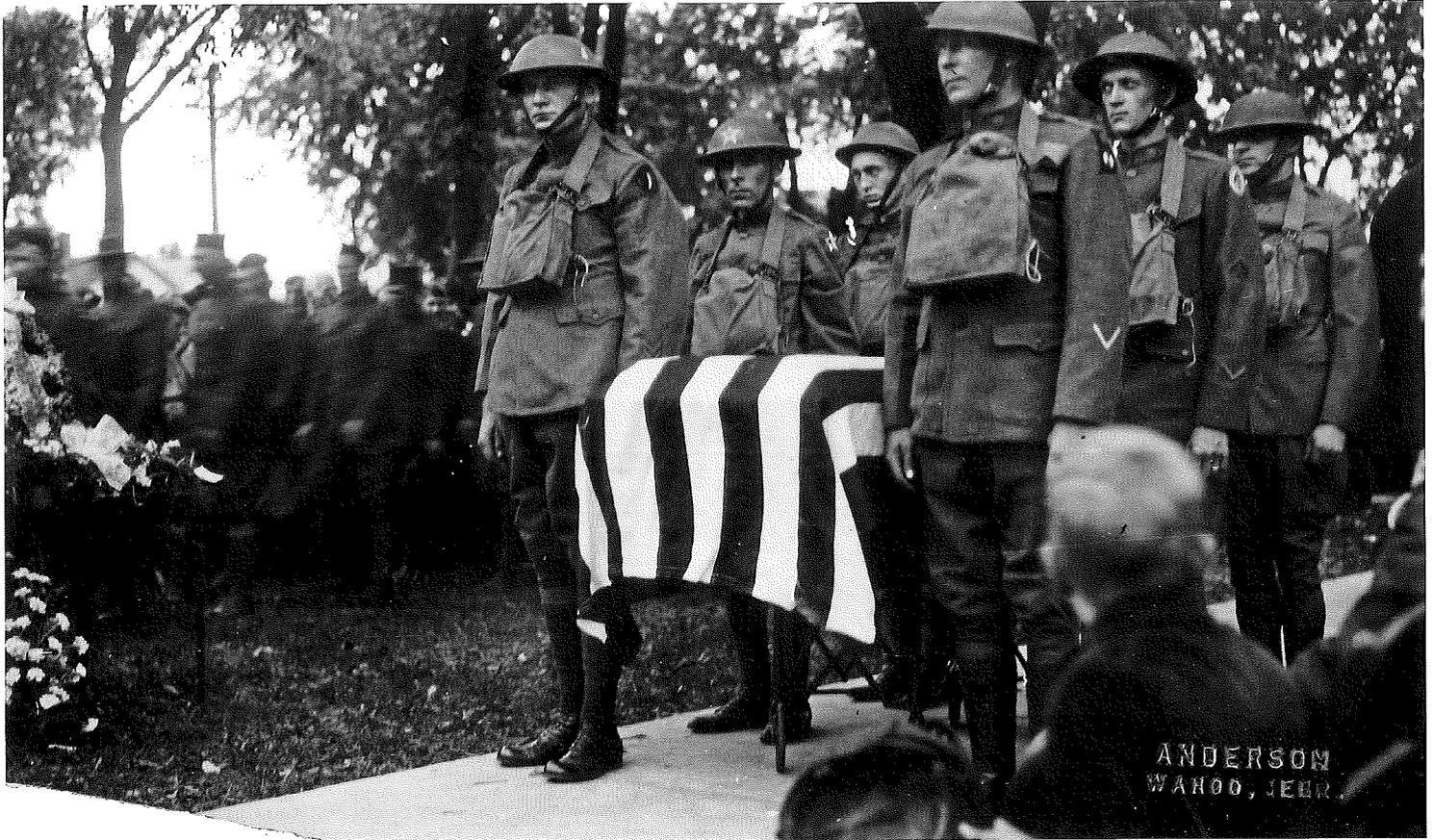
were the ones who helped many a wounded and hungry soldier. If you were broke and step[ped] into a canteen run by the Red Cross Girls for something to eat you could have anything they had and it wouldn't cost you a cent and they were always glad to wait on you [and] try their best to please you. It was different in the Y.M.C.A., they had a special order and you had to buy the whole bill-of-fare in order to get what you really wanted. You see if you didn't smoke or use tobacco in any form you could bring it back the next day and they would return your money.⁴¹

After spending thirteen days in this little burg we got our orders to move on Oct. the 20th. Of course that day fell on our regular rest day but we were quite used to that. Our new home was a much larger town by the name of Dannemarie, but our sleeping quarters were lots worse, as we were over a hog pen and the roof over us was just sticking together and that was all.⁴² On one occasion during the night while we all [were] passing the time away in a peaceful slumber we were awakened by the water pouring in on us. On investigation we found it was raining outside and, for a fact, most of it was coming in on us, pulling our shelter halves up over our heads we just turned over and let her rain.

While [on] our stay in this burg I was appointed liaison agent and took my daily rides out to the dugout and the front lines. One trip in the A.M. and one in the P.M. These were made on a bicycle through mud, rain, rocks, and woods. This sector that [we] were now holding was known as the Haute Alsace Lorraine and my work was very interesting, as I was taking orders to and fro from the office to the dugout. On several occasions during my trips I could see all kinds of aeroplane battles and even seen some of them brought to the ground disabled. I remember one time well, as I was just about half way out and I was whistling away while pumping the old bike with my mind away back in the old U.S.A. when all of a sudden there came a few bullets buzzing through the air and planting themselves in a nearby field and when they exploded, I thought they took the hind wheel right off of the bike. That no doubt stopped my little tune and also made me think I was nearing the front lines and to put my gas mask at alert position as they might be sending a few gas shells at us any time. Nothing like being ready for the worst to come, but there was one time I left the office in a hurry and went out and forgot my mask. Of course I made my trip as short as possible and didn't lose any time in getting back to the office.

It was about seven miles from the office to the dugout and the first half was along a well camouflaged road, while the other half was through a dense forest of tall trees and brush. The first half of the road also ran through a couple of towns and I would make daily stops and buy candy and cigars for the boys and they sure was glad to have me come as I also had the mail and believe me, they were glad to get that. After making a few successful trips my luck changed. I had been getting back rather early in the evening, but one night I was a little late in leaving the dugout on account of they not having the orders ready. As usual it was raining and dark was no name for it as you couldn't see a hand before you. I had to leave the bike quite a ways from the dugout and you had to go the rest of the way on foot down a long winding trail over dugouts and cross trenches. Well I finally reached my bike and after mounting it I thought I would soon be home but knew it would be some task to ride in the darkness through the woods, in the mud and over the rocks. However, my task was soon ended by running over a large rock and cutting [a] hole in the rear tire. Now, of course, I had to walk and push the wheel. This sure was a very unpleasant moment in my mind just then but had to go through and do the best of it. I finally arrived at the office wet with sweat and rain and too late to get any supper. On Nov. the 1st I took orders out to bring the co. in as we were going to move the next day. It was a lucky thing we did for the Huns let loose [in] the afternoon and shelled the same trenches and dugouts. They also shelled the road that I had to go over and at the very place I would of been going along.

We had a very good time during our little stay in Dannemarie and on Nov. 2nd we were ordered to be ready at 6 P.M. to march with light packs. Of course it was raining and dark, making the march as disagreeable as it could.[be.] I was used as a liaison agent between the two companies as it was terrible dark and we were supposed to stay a certain distance apart. On getting farther away from town and coming closer to the woods we [were] obliged to use more men at the liaison and station five more about five steps apart and between each platoon. We finally arrived at Denny about 10:30 and after eating supper which con[sisted] of a cup of coffee and a slice of bread, we were ready for bed.⁴³ This time we found our bunks in regular barracks and even if they were on the boards, we spent a few good nights in sleeping. Here the co. spent most of the time in drilling and resting but on Nov. 9th we got orders to move and carrying heavy



A military burial in Wahoo.
NSHS RG2963-19-4

packs we started out for Belfort, about 5 Kilos. Here we entrained bound for who knows where. There is one thing sure in the army, a person don't know what is coming the next minute. We rode all that night and the next day in boxcars, landing at the town of Pagny-sur-Meuse, marching to the town of Troussey with heavy packs.⁴⁴ Here we were billeted in barns with lots of hay to sleep on and I must say I spent one night in real rest. The next day we got our orders to be ready any minute to march to the front but as that day was the one that the Allies gave Germany a chance to sign the armistice and if they didn't they sure was going to get one fine reception, as [we] were ready with twenty fresh divisions to make a drive on Metz and in this vicinity. I guess they realized it and signed at the first opportunity. At the specified time, which was Nov. 11th the 11th hour, 1918, they put their signatures to the little slip of paper and everything was off. It just seemed as though there was a new world dropped in and took the place of the old one, for flags were raised, bells ringing, and people yelling at the top of their voices, in all it seemed as though one big dark cloud had passed by and a new and brighter one had taken its place.⁴⁵

We were enjoying the time too, but we got orders to move at 1:30 P.M. so spent the rest of the day in hiking down the road, arriving at the little town of Pagny-de-Barine near Toul.⁴⁶ It was situated about 15 kilos and down in a low valley and believe me it was some hill to go down. Here [we] were billeted in an old deserted French Y.M.C.A., about 155 in all, and we were sure some crowded for at bedtime we had to wait until one made his bed and then start down the line. When we all got to sleep and started to snore it sounded like a bunch of hogs in a pen. We spent four days in this town and on the 15th of Nov. we left at 4:30 A.M. and marched to Pont-a-Mousson, a distance of 25 miles, arriving at 6:30 P.M.⁴⁷ We were some tired and after eating a little bully beef and hard tack, we started to find a suitable place to sleep and after a little time we decided to bunk in a large cement building, which also had cement floors. These were somewhat cold as it was, the night was a little colder than usual, and being on the cement still made it colder. Early next morning Nov. 16th after eating a little breakfast we started out [for] the town of Norroy.⁴⁸ Arriving at 10:30 A.M. we found that this burg was pretty near shot to pieces and also the people who lived there



Full military honors, Wahoo.
NSHS RG2963-19-5

had just left everything and beat it when the Huns came. However there were a few buildings standing and in them there were even the tables set and everything was just as though they were keeping house and were living happy but now things were completely shot to pieces and their homes ruined.

Here [we] got busy and policed up a stove, a feather bed, a nice room, and were just thinking what a dandy night's sleep we would have. The sad news came to us just after we had everything in fine shape – and in came the orders to be ready at 6 P.M. to move. We couldn't hardly see through it, for making us move like this after the armistice was signed it was too deep for us to figure out, but afterwards we found that the Huns had blown the railroad and also the bridges that led into Metz and they wanted that line fixed in the greatest possible speed obtainable. So of course it was up [to] the engs. to repair it.⁴⁹ Gee, we sure hated to leave, but promptly at 6 P.M. we were on our way for who knows where. As it was rather cool we made fine time and arrived at Jaulny at midnight.⁵⁰ This town was shot to pieces lots worse than the one we had just left and it took us quite a while to find a suitable place to make a bed but finally came across some boys from a machine gun co. and a few of us rolled in with them. This little shack was just stand-

ing and that is all you can say, for it only it had one side shot off and was patched by standing a few boards up to break the wind. As we were pretty cold the other boys got up and built a fire and we spent the time in telling our experiences until we got warm, then making our beds on the floor we hit the hay about 2 o'clock. Of course, it wasn't hardly worthwhile to get in as we were ordered to get up at 4:30 A.M. and be ready to march at 5 A.M. but then again, a little sleep might come in handy. Promptly at 4:30 we got up and ate breakfast. Soon as we were through eating we built large fires in the middle of the street as orders had changed and we didn't know when we would leave. The old saying [is] "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." However it was somewhat different with us, "Late to bed and early to rise makes a man feel like he didn't care to be alive." Well at 9:30 A.M. we were hiking down the road in great shape, passing a railroad and ammunition dump all blown to pieces and on nearing the hills, we saw where some poor soldiers had dug themselves in the rocks and made them a bed, probably to be protected from gunfire and at the same time catching up on their lost sleep. As Sherman said, "War was hell" and we had just begun to realize it as the conditions the boys had to go



through was some awful. I believe our boys were a little under more difficulties than those of the Huns as they were here first and of course had their dugouts all in first class shape, while we had to fight in the open and had to drive them out of their cement dugouts and well built trenches. For a fact we didn't have time to build any, for when we got started at the Huns [we] wouldn't stop to fix them as the Huns started to retreat and kept the Sammies busy trying to catch them.⁵¹ They were mighty glad to sign the piece of paper that was offered them and jumped at the first opportunity and everybody will remember the great day as it will go down in history as one of the greatest days that was ever known, the 11th hour on the 11th day of Nov. 1918. It sent home the glad news which secured more than one mother's aching heart and put a happiness there that will never be forgotten.

After traveling some distance we came to the town of Rembre-court, which was situated on the bank of a small stream and had also seen its best days of the war.⁵² Here the road was completely blocked with debris and it took us some time before we could get it cleared so we could pass. The water also had been dammed by the Huns and it was now flooding the city and in among the trees we found lying in the water nothing else but an American soldier and on looking over his tags we

found that his name was McDonald, but that [was] all we could make out. A detail was set to work right away to dig a grave for him and give him as good a burial as we possibly could.

We also found several German helmets, guns, ammunition, and etc. Even they had mines laid along the road and under the railroad bridges. After leaving here we had not gone but a little distance when we ran on to three mines which was waiting for us to come along. After a little careful digging we finally got them up and everything cleared away so we could move on. Every now and then along the way we had to make several stops and throw trees out of the way as the roads were just full, which were cut down by the bullets. We landed at the little town of Waville about 4:30 P.M. and were billeted in houses.⁵³ Here we had [a] fine place to sleep and also a nice fireplace to keep warm and to sit and write letters to our dear ones at home. We spent all the time in repairing the railroad which leads into Metz, they wanted to get this built as soon as possible so they could [get] connected with Germany. On Nov. 20th we got orders to move so at 10:30 A.M. we pulled out bound for Arnaville.⁵⁴ Here we lived high with feather beds and electric lights and also a good stove so as to keep warm, in all it looked more like we were at home and was passing the time in great shape.

A Nebraska war garden.
NSHS RG2963-20-5

On one Sat. the co. issued passes for Metz and [I] for one was lucky enough to get one. It was about ten miles to this city and as the transportation was poor it was up to us to walk or catch a Frog train which, of course, ran awful slow and you could make better time in walking. I finally got there by walking half of the way and jumping on a freight, rode the other half after a few stops. Metz is quite a large city besides the ones we were used to and the stores made us think we were in a city in [the] U.S.A. The street cars were of the small type, while the streets were very narrow and crooked and after a car passed you it was only a few seconds until it was out [of] sight. We had our most fun in the stores shopping as we couldn't make the clerks understand what we wanted by talking so had to go by signs, such as for handkerchief we acted as though we were blow[ing] our nose. The girls, however, were a good bunch and took things in fine spirits and seemed to enjoy waiting on us. It seemed as though they sure liked butcher shops and jewelry stores, as about every fourth store you came to it was one of the two. The children took great delight in standing at the windows and looking at their Xmas toys.

After spending a very busy day we started for the depot as we had decided to try the train on our return trip. We got out of town about 6:30 P.M. and only went a short distance and we stopped and it kept this way until we finally got disgusted and got off and walked home, arriving at in time for me to blow Taps.

Well Xmas was here and I spent my first one in the army and in France. We had a very fine meal [and] a little entertainment in the evening, which was enjoyed by us all.⁵⁵ Time fairly few and it wasn't until Jan. 7th when we got our orders to move to Bayonville, which was only a short distance from Arnaville.⁵⁶ Here we were billeted in a large factory and also had nice rooms and good beds to sleep in. Our stay here was very short as on Jan. 10th we all got into auto trucks and was hauled to Boviolles.⁵⁷ It sure seemed funny to ride as that was a very seldom occasion for us to come across in the army. After passing a lot of towns just shot to pieces and miles and miles of dugouts and trenches we pulled into this little burg and talk about a homesick bunch, we sure was one or wishing we had never left our good places in Arnaville or Bayonville. Here we were put back into the old barns and over hog pens and everything else. Talk about cold places to sleep we sure got it here and as the doctor said, "Plenty of fresh air is good for you" and believe me we sure have got plenty of it. The office is situated

back through two rooms and in the dark. For example it is like the places I have visited in California down in China town.⁵⁸

To-day is Sunday and tomorrow at 5 A.M. there are eighteen out of this company who are going on a seven-day leave and I am just lucky in getting [one] of them. It is snowing out now and as our passes calls for Monte-Carlo, which is situated down in southern France, we may get down where it is warm so will enjoy the sunny France.⁵⁹ I must close now and will tell you all about the trip and the remaining time I spend in the country, which I hope won't be very long. Good-bye until we meet again.

Sent to you from Boviolles, France, Jan 27th 1919.⁶⁰ There are lots of mistakes and also other little things you must overlook, Ha. Ha.

Epilogue

The 313th Engineers rejoined the rest of the Eighty-eighth Division at the First Training Area around Gondrecourt on January 10, 1919. "Cleaning up France," the building of barracks, hangers, and roads, organized athletics, schools, and entertainment filled the next several weeks as the men waited for a transport ship to "the States" to become available. Finally, the welcome orders arrived and the anxious engineers of the 313th reached St. Nazaire on May 20. The unit sailed from France on board the USS *Madawaska* on May 24, the last unit of the Eighty-eighth Division to leave Europe.⁶¹

After landing at Newport News, Virginia, the members of the division traveled to camps near their homes or place of enlistment or induction for discharge. Fred Pickering ended his military service on June 15, 1919, likely at Camp Dodge, Iowa, and the following day returned to his farm in Ulysses.⁶² His homecoming was probably similar to those summarized by the editor of a local newspaper: "[T]here has been joy unspeakable[,] for to the parents and son this reuniting has been the ending of a perfect day. A thrill was experienced, one which they had often wondered would they ever experience again, and to the soldier this joy of returning was a recompense for all the hardships and deprivations endured." Now, those families fortunate to have a son return enjoyed a day that had been "looked forward to, dreamed of and planned for" for months, with a family reunion, favorite meal, and a soldier who "never looked as brave and handsome as on his return from service." With the fighting in Europe at an

end, this editor believed “life takes on a new significance and the accomplishment of greater things will be enacted.”⁶³

Greater things were indeed in store for Fred Pickering. On March 25, 1920, he married Gladys Cornelia Hurt, the young lady who had “escorted” him to David City nearly two years before when he began his military career. The “well known” and “industrious” Pickering continued his career as an “agriculturalist” and died in Ulysses on February 12, 1964, at the age of seventy-two. He rests in the Ulysses Township Cemetery.⁶⁴

Fred Pickering likely never believed that the letter he wrote from France was historically significant, but merely a simple account of one soldier’s travels to fight in World War I. But thanks to the foresight of this ordinary Nebraska soldier, we are reminded that rich literary treasures await those who research the Great War and document the men and women who suffered and died, as President Woodrow Wilson said, to champion the “rights of mankind.”⁶⁵ 

NOTES

¹ This figure includes 47,976 soldiers, 6,973 sailors, 547 marines, and 375 nurses. James C. Olson and Ronald C. Naugle, *History of Nebraska*, 3rd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 285, 473.

² One of the better recent attempts to tell the story of the U.S. Army in France by using extensive quotes from memoirs, diaries, and unit histories is James H. Hallas, ed., *Doughboy War: The American Expeditionary Force in World War I* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000).

³ Pickering was born on Dec. 29, 1891, at Surprise, Nebraska. He graduated from Ulysses High School in 1916 and was apparently working on his father’s farm when he entered the army two years later. Undated Pickering obituary furnished by Hruska Memorial Public Library, David City, Nebraska; Internet list of Ulysses High School graduates, 1889-1925, at www.rootsweb.com/~nebutler/ulyssesgrads.htm.

⁴ Despite the slow process of training and transporting troops at this time, by Aug. 31, 1918, a total of 1,473,190 American Expeditionary Forces military personnel had arrived in Europe. By the time of the November 11, 1918, armistice, that figure had swelled to just over two million. American Battle Monuments Commission, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1938), 502.

⁵ Strict censorship rules applied to all personal correspondence written by members of the AEF. Soldiers were required to have personal letters examined for sensitive military information, then approved by an officer. Letters were also subject to be opened en route. Although these rules remained in effect until July 1, 1919, the regulations were relaxed following the armistice, allowing men like Pickering to freely discuss their movements during the war. E. J. D. Larson, *Memoirs of France and the Eighty-eighth Division* (Minneapolis: Scott-Mitchell Publishing Co., 1920), 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 16, 52.

⁷ Under the provisions of the Selective Service Act of May

18, 1917, all males between the ages of twenty-one and thirty, whether married or single, citizens or aliens, were required to register for the draft on June 5, 1917. Those in the Ulysses precinct registered at the town’s Odd Fellows’ hall before a two-man board. Pickering registered but claimed an exemption from the draft because his parents were dependant upon him for support. Local draft board officials denied his claim stating, “It may be true but it dont [sic] look that way to us.” Fred Pickering Registration Card, June 5, 1917, at www.ancestry.com; *Butler County Press* (David City, Nebr.) June 14, 1917; *Ulysses (Nebr.) Dispatch*, May 30, 1917. Draftees made up about two-thirds of U.S. forces during the war. Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 357.

⁸ Pickering’s memoir is in the possession of the editor. Although unsigned, Pickering is most certainly the author. The roster of Company E, 313th Engineers, lists him as the only soldier in the company from Ulysses, Nebraska. Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, *The 88th Division in the World War of 1914-1918* (New York: 1919), 214-15. In addition, the federal census of 1910 places Pickering in the household of James Pickering in Ulysses Township, Butler County, Nebraska (221), with Roy Baumgardner also in Ulysses Township (227) and Gladys Hurt in adjacent Read Township (in the household of Ben Hurt, 179). Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, National Archives and Records Administration, Microcopy T624, Roll 839. Named for Philippine Insurrection hero Maj. Gen. Frederick Funston, Camp Funston was located on the Fort Riley, Kansas, Military Reservation. The camp was established on July 18, 1917, to serve as a training center for the Eighty-ninth Division. U.S. Army Center of Military History, *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War*, vol 3, pt. 2, Zone of the Interior: Territorial Departments, Tactical Divisions Organized in 1918, and Posts, Camps, and Stations (Reprint, Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1988), 884, hereafter cited as *Order of Battle*, with the volume and part.

⁹ Pickering was part of a group of twenty-six men who left for camp on Friday, June 28, 1918. Pickering was the only one in the group from Ulysses. *Ulysses Dispatch*, June 26, 1918.

¹⁰ Hypodermic injections of a prophylactic against typhoid fever were supposed to be given at intervals of not over ten days until three had been taken. Typhoid had been a major killer of soldiers during the Spanish-American War, so the army took steps to prevent a recurrence of the disease during World War I. George H. English, Jr., *History of the 89th Division, U.S.A.* (Denver, Colo.: The War Society of the 89th Division, 1920), 24.

¹¹ Jesse Barnes (1892-1961) joined the New York Giants in early 1918, but spent most of the year in the U.S. Army. He returned to professional baseball the following year. David Pietrusza, Matthew Silverman, and Michael Gershman, *Baseball: The Biographical Encyclopedia* (New York: Total Sports Illustrated, 2000), 59.

¹² Camp Dodge was established on June 18, 1917, and was located twelve miles north of Des Moines, Iowa. Named in honor of Civil War Maj. Gen. Grenville Dodge, it was the training camp of the Eighty-eighth Division, and more than seventy-five hundred Nebraskans trained there. In July 1918 Camp Dodge contained more than forty-six thousand officers and enlisted men. *Order of Battle*, vol. 3, pt.2, 870-71.

¹³ The Eighty-eighth Division was officially created at Camp Dodge, Iowa, on Aug. 5, 1917, from men drafted from Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, and Illinois. Later, when these men were transferred to other camps and divisions, new draftees from these states, plus Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota brought the division back up to authorized strength. The 313th Engineer Regiment consisted of six lettered companies (A through F), a medical detachment, an engineer “division,” and a headquarters company. Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, *The 88th Division in the World War*, 15, 206-16; *Order of Battle*, vol. 2, *American Expeditionary Forces: Divisions*, 395.

¹⁴ The 313th Engineer Regiment was sent to Camp Albert L. Mills

in order to embark for Europe. Camp Mills was located on Long Island, about ten miles from the eastern boundary of New York City. *Order of Battle*, vol. 3, pt. 2, 753-54, 757.

¹⁵ The *Plassy* was launched on Nov. 23, 1900, by Caird and Company in Greenock, Scotland, for the P&O Steam Navigation Company, and delivered on Jan. 9, 1901. Although designed to carry 114 first class and 87 second class civilian passengers, it was used almost exclusively as a troop transport and hospital ship. For ten years before the start of World War I, the *Plassy* made numerous trips hauling British troops to India. By the time Pickering stepped on board, the 7,500 ton ship had served for four years as a hospital ship with the British Grand Fleet and was making her second crossing as a transport for American troops. The ship was sold and scrapped in July 1924. The Ships List at www.theshipslist.com/ships/descriptions/ShipsP-Q.html; *The Transit*, (313th Engineer Regiment newspaper), May 10, 1919, collection of the National World War I Museum (Liberty Memorial), Kansas City, Missouri.

¹⁶ The average U.S. soldier who went to France received six months of training in the United States although many others, such as Fred Pickering, received far less. In his case, a mere six weeks had passed between his induction and the start of his journey to Europe. Col. Leonard P. Ayres, *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1919), 25, 34.

¹⁷ One soldier in the division estimated that the packs weighed about eighty pounds, on average, and "we often thought that they weighed twice that much after we had them on for a few hours." Larson, *Memoirs of France*, 20.

¹⁸ The foregoing section has an immediacy that suggests it was written in New York before Pickering embarked for England. Perhaps he retained a copy of a letter or notes that he later incorporated into his Jan. 27, 1919, letter.

¹⁹ In a letter published in his local newspaper, Pickering wrote that a few of the men fell out of the hammocks as soon as they climbed into them, and "the [rest] of us enjoyed a hearty laugh, and were ourselves, more cautious in getting in." *Ulysses Dispatch*, Dec. 5, 1918.

²⁰ About 49 percent of the U.S. soldiers who served in France landed first in England, mainly in Liverpool, before being transported by train to the English Channel and then by boat to northern France. Battle Monuments Commission, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe*, 505.

²¹ As historian David M. Kennedy explained, American fighting men in Europe were, in fact, "as much tourists as soldiers." In their letters home, American soldiers frequently commented on the people, architecture, and physical beauty of England and France. David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 205-9.

²² Pickering also noted that in large cities there were "double deck street cars running on a very narrow gauge track," with the upper deck for second-class passengers and the lower for first class. "Their trucks were also steam," he wrote, "and they sure looked funny to us." *Ulysses Dispatch*, Dec. 5, 1918.

²³ King George V of Great Britain did not welcome the Americans in person, but via a mass-produced facsimile letter written in April 1918. The letter stated that the people of the British Isles welcomed the American soldiers, and George wished he could shake the hand of each man and wish them "God speed."

²⁴ The *Yale* was a steamer built in 1906 and purchased by the U.S. Navy in March 1918. The *Yale* left the United States in a convoy bound for Europe that July. After the convoy arrived in Brest, the *Yale* was assigned to duty as a cross-channel transport. For the remainder of the war the ship made regular trips carrying troops between Southampton, England, and Brest and Le Havre, France. James L. Mooney, ed., *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, 8 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center,

Department of the Navy, 1981), 8:506.

²⁵ Pickering actually meant Aug. 31.

²⁶ These were the famous "40 and 8" boxcars that transported so many American soldiers in France. The eight-foot by twenty-four-foot, side-door boxcar could haul forty men or eight horses. As one Eighty-eighth Division doughboy wrote, "Box cars! Oh, horrors! But we read about them and had seen them in pictures so we were rather anxious to try them out." *The Transit*, Apr. 19, 1919. A fellow member of the division recalled that the train cars were so full that the men could not lie down, and "it seemed that all the wheels of the car were flat from the noise it made and the way it was bouncing over the narrow track we were hard put to stay in the car, let alone trying to get any rest." Larson, *Memoirs of France*, 21.

²⁷ The town of Venarey-les-Laumes.

²⁸ Venarey was located a few kilometers south of Laumes. *The Transit*, May 17, 1919.

²⁹ Pickering also noted in a newspaper letter that women were driving teams because their husbands had probably fallen in battle. He related that the French threshing machines were like "playthings besides ours." *Ulysses Dispatch*, Dec. 5, 1918.

³⁰ Activities at Venarey consisted of "making the village habitable," along with extended and close order drill. *The Transit*, Apr. 5, 1919.

³¹ About ten miles southwest of Belfort.

³² On Sept. 14, 1918, the Eighty-eighth Division began moving to the Training Area at Hericourt, assigned to the French Seventh Army. *Order of Battle*, vol. 2, 396.

³³ Another Eighty-eighth Division veteran wrote, "Many times I have heard France spoken of as 'Sunny France' but every day that passed the less I thought that the sun ever shone in France." When it did not rain it was either cloudy or foggy, so the ground could not dry sufficiently. Men with wet clothes and shoes were unable to dry out, leading to sickness. Larson, *Memoirs of France*, 22.

³⁴ On Sept. 20, 1918, an influenza epidemic struck the division, and in eight days there were more than thirteen hundred cases reported in one regiment alone. The epidemic grew worse, and a total of 6,845 cases of influenza and 1,041 cases of pneumonia were reported in the division, with 444 deaths. Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, *The 88th Division in the World War*, 16. One veteran believed that the division lost more men from influenza than any other division in France, with as many as eighty men dying in one day and "whole companies were paralyzed at times." He also bemoaned the fact that hospital facilities were cold and damp, and the number of nurses inadequate to deal with the crisis. Larson, *Memoirs of France*, 12. Influenza caused staggering losses in the army as a whole. Although nearly forty-nine thousand men died in combat during the war, more than sixty-three thousand were listed as non-battle deaths, many due to influenza. Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 437.

³⁵ Each platoon had been equipped with the "limber type tool wagon," which was piled high with packs, office equipment, kitchen, and mess supplies. *The Transit*, Apr. 5, 1919.

³⁶ Located approximately three miles southwest of Belfort.

³⁷ Located approximately twenty miles east of Belfort.

³⁸ The Germans constantly observed the sector by airplane, fearing that the arrival of the Eighty-eighth Division in the area meant an Allied attack was imminent. Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, *The 88th Division in the World War*, 51.

³⁹ Company E's activities while billeted at Wolfersdorf consisted of work on a nearby strong point at Hagenback. Two platoons went to the front lines to gas proof the dugouts, clean andrevet the trenches, and lay duckboards. Some of their work was de-

stroyed by German shells soon after completion and had to be done again. The men at the front experienced many close calls, particularly from German aircraft. *The Transit*, Apr. 5 and May 17, 1919.

⁴⁰ Pickering actually meant St. Mihiel. Officially, from Oct. 7 to Nov. 4, the Eighty-eighth Division was stationed in the Center Sector of the Haute-Alsace, Vosges region, a section of the front line that was actually not in France but just across the border in Germany. The sector extended north from the Swiss border and controlled the Belfort Gap, a valley about fifteen miles wide between the Vosges Mountains and the Jural Alps. The fortified town of Belfort guarded this strategic gap. For the first ten days French troops occupied the trenches jointly with the Americans, but on Oct. 15 the French withdrew and the sector came under complete control of the Eighty-eighth Division. On Oct. 24 the three-kilometer-long Fulleren subsector to the south was added to the Eighty-eighth's responsibility. The total division front was approximately nineteen kilometers in length, with "No Man's Land" ranging in width from a kilometer to less than three hundred meters. Although the area had seen heavy fighting early in the war, both sides had gone on the defensive in the region by this time. The area was described as rolling country with considerable wooded areas. As the defenses in the sector had fallen into disrepair, the 313th was assigned the task of rebuilding and strengthening the defensive system. *Order of Battle*, vol. 2, 397; Battle Monuments Commission, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe*, 421-25; Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, *The 88th Division in the World War*, 42-50, 59, 63-66.

⁴¹ Doughboys in France both praised and damned the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Some soldiers heaped unfair scorn on the organization because they believed the YMCA was selling items that were supposed to be given free of charge to the troops, or were engaged in price gouging. Others thought that association members were reluctant to serve near the front. On the other hand, some soldiers freely praised the work of the YMCA and similar social welfare associations. James J. Cooke, *The Rainbow Division in the Great War, 1917-1919* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994), 79, 94.

⁴² About two miles south of Wolfersdorf, or twenty miles east of Belfort.

⁴³ About four miles northeast of Belfort.

⁴⁴ On Nov. 4 the division was relieved and began moving north to Toul to support an offensive by the American Second Army, which was to act in concert with the French to encircle the fortress city of Metz. The attack began on Nov. 10, but was halted the next day due to the signing of the armistice. Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, *The 88th Division in the World War*, 42-50, 59, 63-66. Pagny is about eight miles west of Toul, while Troussey is about two miles northwest of Pagny.

⁴⁵ According to one source, the men of the Eighty-eighth Division greeted the news of the armistice with mixed feelings. Although casualties in the upcoming battle for Metz would probably have been high, the troops were disappointed that their extensive training would not be tested in a major offensive. Larson, *Memoirs of France*, 15.

⁴⁶ About three miles northwest of Toul.

⁴⁷ While most of the remainder of the division was ordered to Gondrecourt (the First Training Area) for further training, the 313th was sent to Pont-a-Mousson and reported to the chief engineer, Second Army, for reconstruction work. During this period, the 313th built and rebuilt railroads, repaired roads, installed telephone lines, and operated electric light plants. Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, *The 88th Division in the World War*, 78. The regiment remained detached from the division and with the Second Army and Ninth Army Corps from Nov. 15, 1918, to Jan. 10, 1919, then rejoined the division at Gondrecourt. *Order of Battle*, vol. 2, 393, 397. Pont-a-Mousson is about eighteen miles northeast of Toul.

⁴⁸ The town of Norroy, about two miles north of Pont-a-Mousson. Larson, *Memoirs of France*, 15.

⁴⁹ According to the regimental newspaper, the Nancy-Metz railroad line (which had been damaged by German and American artillery fire) was to be repaired as soon as possible in order "to permit the triumphal entry of the French" into Metz. *The Transit*, Apr. 12 and May 28, 1919. In addition to this work, the engineers were tasked with policing the area and salvaging "every piece of military equipment." The men were at work on Thanksgiving Day 1918 "cleaning up the country and removing some of the signs of more than four years of war." Larson, *Memoirs of France*, 15.

⁵⁰ About nine miles northwest of Pont-a-Mousson.

⁵¹ A nickname used in U.S. popular culture (a derivation of "Uncle Sam") for American troops.

⁵² Rembreourt was about two miles northeast of Jaulny.

⁵³ Waville is about four miles northeast of Jaulny.

⁵⁴ Arnville is ten miles southwest of Metz, and four miles east of Waville. Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, *The 88th Division in the World War*, 78. A member of Company C believed this was the regiment's best billet in France, with four or five men to a room, passes to visit Metz, and plenty of stoves and wood, in addition to the use of a rifle range. *The Transit*, May 10, 1919.

⁵⁵ The 313th was also complimented by French officials "on the efficient work of the men who had labored so willingly in an almost continual downpour of rain." *The Transit*, Apr. 12, 1919.

⁵⁶ Bayonville-sur-Mad is about two miles west of Arnville, or about halfway between Arnville and Waville.

⁵⁷ Boviolles is about thirty-eight miles southwest of Bayonville.

⁵⁸ The work of "cleaning up France" began again in Boviolles, including erecting barracks and hangers and repairing roads. *The Transit*, Apr. 12, 1919.

⁵⁹ During the winter of 1918-19, many officers and men of the AEF were granted "leave trips" to various locales, including the Riviera (Nice, Monte Carlo, and Cannes). Those fortunate enough to be granted leave were "kept in good hotels with real beds and excellent food free of charge." Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, *The 88th Division in the World War*, 89-90. Pickering and three comrades enjoyed a three-day leave to Paris in April 1919, where they found "too many wild women roaming at large." *The Transit*, Apr. 26, 1919.

⁶⁰ Pickering had apparently sent other letters home, but probably not one this lengthy. In October 1918 he mailed at least two letters. In one he stated that he "likes the [army] work fine" and had visited the grave of Napoleon III, while the other was a more lengthy description of his voyage overseas and some of the sights of England and France. *Ulysses Dispatch*, Oct. 24 and Dec. 5, 1918.

⁶¹ Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, *The 88th Division in the World War*, 104-5. According to Herschel Brown, another Nebraska doughboy, the *Madawaska* was an interned German ship originally named *Crown Prince Wilhelm II*. *Out of Old Nebraska*, Nebraska State Historical Society, June 8, 1983.

⁶² E-mail communication from Denise Sanders, Nebraska State Historical Society Library/Archives Division, Oct. 16, 2003; *Ulysses Dispatch*, June 19, 1919.

⁶³ *People's Banner* (David City, Nebr.), June 12, 1919.

⁶⁴ www.rootsweb.com/~nebutler/utwpcem.html#P (Ulysses Township Cemetery); Undated Pickering obituary furnished by Hruska Memorial Public Library, David City, Nebraska; *Ulysses Dispatch*, Apr. 1, 1920.

⁶⁵ Battle Monuments Commission, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe*, 13.