New Mexico in the Great War, IX: Life in Camp and Cantonment

Paul A.F. Hammond
NEW MEXICO IN THE GREAT WAR

(Continued)

IX  Life in Camp and Cantonment

Community life wanes in proportion to growth of community activity. The two manifestations, seemingly so closely related, hold each other in check or in balance, as it were. The more that the functions of social existence are assigned to community authority, the fewer and more formal the community gatherings and the more general becomes individualism, the tendency of "each man for himself." The result is that a few gather unto themselves the administration of community affairs, inevitable reaction sets in and the cycle begins again with a rebirth of community life which immediately sets to work to wrest power from the few who have usurped it and to restore community activity. That being achieved, the units of the community once more relapse into the individualism which permits the community to do everything for the group or individual but which at the same time stifles community life.

To the student of sociology, life in camps and cantonments during the Great War, was of intense interest. In this life, community activity had reached the stage where a few administered everything for the many, provided for their daily needs, their comforts, their play and even their religious needs. What was the reaction of the mass to this benevolent despotism created by the needs of Mars?

At first the mass liked it. Relieved of the necessity
of providing for themselves, of worrying about the to­
morrow or what to do next, it seemed like a great vacation,
a fine lark, such as many men dream of but seldom realize.
The mass was relieved of every responsibility for com­
munity activities and at the same time had no need of
worrying about individual needs. There was a manifesta­
tion of community life as a result such as America had not
seen since the days that town meetings and quilting parties
regulated life in New England. There was a joyous, good­
natured abandon and many men learned for the first time
what comradeship, “My bunkie,” and other terms met with
in literature really signify.

However, there were a few spirits in every camp and
cantonment who at once chafed under the restraint of even
the most benevolent despotism. Those inclined to lawless­
ness stole out of camp, overstayed their leaves of absence.
The charges of technical desertion were comparatively
many and insubordination was not rare. Those of con­
structive mind set to work to direct community activities
and there were such things as “round robins” pointing out
defects-real or imaginary-in camp management, suggesting
innovations or improvements, while there were organized
groups who initiated activities such as were not specifically
maintained by the benevolent despotism of camp authority.
How far this would have gone had the war continued or
had the same divisions and regiments remained in their
camps and cantonments for longer periods, is an interesting
speculation for students who may find material for their
research in studying what happened in Russia and later
sporadically in some of the other belligerent armies; or
they might consult the reports made to the governors of
middle western states on conditions at Camp Cody or in the
investigation of conditions at Camp Kearny by Governor
W. E. Lindsey of New Mexico.

However, the average recruit accepted unquestioning­
ly what authority prepared for him; he obeyed unhesitating­
ly the orders issued; readily adapted himself to the new
life; enjoyed it without reasoning very much about it, and caught a glimpse of phases of human existence that had been a closed book to him in his pre-war relations.

New Mexicans were to be found in nearly every cantonment and camp. They were scattered through some twenty divisions and possibly a hundred regiments. As all the camps and cantonments were built upon the same models and the regulations governing were made by the War Department at Washington without much consideration of environment, climate, or local conditions, life was very much the same in all of them except that climate and environment did assert themselves as they always do in the long run, and as one may learn by studying the health statistics and the death lists with the causes of death at the various sites. Whether one chooses therefore Camp Cody or Camp Kearny, Camp Funston or Camp Mills, for a description of the life of the men in training, the story is much the same. For the purposes of this chapter, a sketch of the life of the individual and of the group at Camp Perry, is perhaps, as typical and comprehensive as could be found.

Camp Perry is located on the shores of Lake Erie under the fitful skies of the Great Lakes region. It is pretty much isolated and far from the town and city life. Port Clinton is the nearest village and Toledo the nearest large city. It was quite inconvenient to reach either, involving a railroad or automobile trip with attendant money cost and loss of time. Drainage and sanitary conditions left much to be desired. On rainy days, and there were many such, some of the tents occupied by the men stood a foot deep in water or mud. Many tents had no floors and often leaked. The streets of the camp were almost bottomless when the downpour was heavy, and slippery and mucky for days afterwards.

Here was gathered every nationality and every stratum of society to be found in America. On one side of the camp were student officers selected from practically every camp in the United States, who had been commissioned and had
shown unusual fitness and who had been sent there for special instruction in small arms. On the other side of the Camp, were the Marines and the Sailors, each with their band, the civilian rifle teams representing every state in the Union, and squads of laborers of all nationalities and languages, organized into development battalions, to do "kitchen-police" duty and the menial tasks of the camp, to work the roads, tend the butts at practice, unload the freight cars and trucks, do the cleaning and the polishing, and whatever tasks required mainly muscular strength.

It was a heterogeneous mass, yet community life flourished. It must be admitted, however, that there was no "melting pot" flavor about it. Each group kept much to itself. There were dances for officers, for instance, and dances for privates. There was an officers' mess hall and a mess hall for the others who were not commissioned. There were camp fires for marines and boxing matches for the sailors. The civilian rifle teams mingled freely with each group and therefore saw more of every aspect of camp life than did the average private or officer in military service.

The absence of women and "women's nursing" was a characteristic of camp life and gave it an aspect that was, an answer to the assertion that the American army was "woman-raised" and therefore effeminate. For the few dances given in camp, matrons and girls came over from Port Clinton. Only occasionally did a mother or sister or a sweetheart find her way to Camp and these happy ones for an hour or so marched proudly about the rifle range or sat with their escorts on a bench in the Y. M. C. A. hut, but had to leave camp by 10 P. M. There were no camp followers in the sense that [European] armies had known them from time immemorial. There never had been an army with such lofty moral standards. There was an evident absence of such scandals and gossip as mar social life in every community and even at army posts. The few
sporadic cases which occurred happened despite, rather than because of, camp conditions.

At Camp Perry there were from New Mexico several officers who had just come from the Presidio Training Camp, including Lieutenants Caldwell and Chaves, the Civilian Rifle Team, consisting of sixteen men, and a number of older officers who had been in New Mexico and were still interested in its progress.

The daily routine was simple and as a rule the men fell into it readily, even as to the early rising and the primitive life, cheerfully doing without many of the conveniences that ordinarily are deemed essential. A New Mexico writer in the Santa Fe Daily New Mexican of September 14, 1918, gives a pen picture of this life as follows:

“Democracy as it works out in the United States is exemplified daily in Camp Perry. Millionaire stands shoulder to shoulder with pauper, university graduate rubs against the self-made man, each with a tin dish and tin cup in his hand, each takes his place and turn in the lines that rushes hungrily into the mess hall at meal time, each sits on the rough board bench at the rough table and dips his beans or pudding out of the same huge tin dish. Enjoy it? You bet your life—the millionaire and highbrow, if anything, growl a great deal less than the “pobre.” At night, in the tepees on the iron cots with the tent walls flapping gaily like sails of a ship in a gale, how these same men sleep even though at home insomnia might have been their constant companion. Reveille at 5:10 A. M., sounds all too soon, but out and up they jump, shivering, but energetically taking their turns in carrying the buckets of water from the hydrants at street intersections and dashing the cold water into their faces, then drilling until breakfast at 6:15 A. M. These men wouldn’t miss the experience for anything that luxury had previously thrown into their laps. They thrive on it, gain in weight and health and exclaim ‘This is the Life’! And they mean it.

“What if the life is strenuous until 5 P. M., shooting
on one range after the other, lying prone in oozy mud or kneeling on a hard bank? The rapid fire, crackling like strings of fire-crackers, sounds all day from the lake front with the deeper, slower fire and the high-pitch of the revolver practice breaking out spasmodically in all directions. That the life agrees with the men, the ruddy faces, the sturdy stride, the good humor on every side, make apparent. Among 3,700 men thus far there are only five hospital cases and some wonder how these five broke into the 'sick list' class!

"Just before supper—and it’s breakfast, dinner, and supper in camp, no fashionable six o’clock dinner schedule—the Marine Band with an inimitable drum major at the head marches through the camp. It is followed by a ‘crack’ military band. At sunset ‘retreat’ is sounded as the flag goes down. Each and all of the 3,700 men drop whatever they may be doing and stand at ‘attention’ until the last strains of ‘The Star Spangled Banner’ die away upon the evening air. It is a thrilling moment, ever sacred to those who cannot help thinking of the men whose life-blood has been given to make those stripes so red, whose highest hopes went into those stars, whose sacrifice has made them so white, whose loyalty unto death has made holy the blue. Tears glisten in some eyes and souls are stirred with emotion. It is indeed a glorious privilege to be an American, either native-born or adopted.

"As darkness falls, lights gleam through hundreds of tents walls. From their interior come songs and laughter, tinkling mandolin with strumming banjo accompaniment. In the Oklahoma tents, next to the four tents occupied by the New Mexicans, a Kiowa war dance is being performed; the minister on the New Mexico team sings a Jemez Pueblo song. Other men are strolling down to the sandy beach, perhaps for a swim, and then to the Y. M. C. A. or the Knights of Columbus huts. There is always something doing, something clean, wholesome, something that cheers, something that recalls home, father, mother, wife, sweet-
NEW MEXICO IN THE GREAT WAR

heart, sister, brother, son, or daughter. Both places are always crowded. There is music - lots of it. There are books, magazines and papers, and high class entertainment. Wednesday is 'movie' night. Tonight at the 'Y' is a concert by a professional company. Last night the fun opened with a 'community sing.' It is a veritable revelation to hear hundreds of lusty, masculine voices join in 'Smile, Smile!' or in the gospel and the army songs. Last night they tried a new one, 'Ohio,' a state song that has a fine swing to it. Other state songs were called for and 'Miss Garrett's 'Oh, Fair New Mexico,' as well as Mrs. Bartlett's tuneful 'New Mexico Song,' caught the fancy of the crowd. After the 'sing,' a noted elocutionist recited 'Strong Heart,' which too had its special New Mexico appeal because of its Indian motive. But for a few officers' wives in the front seat, the elocutionist would have been the only woman in that hall so crowded with men that they sat and stood on the writing tables ranged along the four walls of the room. Except during the thunderous applause there was the closest attention, the deepest silence, no coming late or leaving early. The speaker declared that never had any audience in America or Europe so thrilled her.

"At the Knights of Columbus hut which is kept neat as a pin and most inviting all the time, with a hearty welcome for every one, a candlelight dance was the feature. A few young women from Port Clinton chaperoned by wives of officers had been drafted but furnished far too few partners so that many of the men danced with each other. Candles sputtered on the writing tables around the walls and every once in a while some fun-loving soldier would seize a candle and make the rounds of the girls, lighting up their faces, in order to detect his promised partner. The music was martial and included many of the newest war songs woven into dance music, so that dancers and spectators would join in singing them, the effect being inspiring and unforgettable.

"At the same time, the Marines had a camp-fire at
which the commanding officers of the camp and the New Mexico team were the guests of honor and squatted on low folding stools in the first circle around the burning logs. The entertainment was surprising because of its character. The reputation of the Marines as indomitable fighters so justified by subsequent events, led the crowd to expect something real wild and wooly. Instead, the opening number was a recitation by E. J. Feemster, a mild-spoken, mild-mannered, and mild-looking New Mexico crack-shot of the U. S. Biological Survey. He recited "When Ruby played the Piano." No one present seemed to think the number incongruous. The crowd followed every word and sentence with evident interest. The men laughed, shouted and applauded the clever impersonation. Even the Colonel wearing the Croix de Guerre and other decorations, laughed until tears rolled down his cheeks. Then came a sailor with an accordion. He played not war songs, but ballads of home and mother. The marines and the rest of the crowd took up the songs with vigor. The favorite seemed to be "Silver Threads among the Gold," for it was called for again and again and each time it was sung with increased verve. Surely an inexplicable revelation of American character but that somehow fitted into sentimental traits that manifested themselves unexpectedly on all fronts during the war! As stated editorially in the Los Angeles Times:

"In the finals it appears that the favorite hymn of the trenches was 'Abide With Me.' 'Tis a grand old hymn and the wide love of it shows there's a strain of reverence at the bottom of every careless and impulsive heart. It will be with us long after the jazz stuff has been pigeon-holed in the musical morgue."

"In another part of the camp, the sailors had put on a boxing bout and a jiu-jitsu exhibition. The affair was conducted with the orderliness of a prayer meeting. At 9 o'clock 'taps' and by ten 'lights out.' Guards paced to and fro and their challenges sounding through the night air proclaimed eternal vigilance whether earth is fair with moonlight or shrouded by storms."
Another letter by a New Mexican in a New Mexico paper describes his first impressions as follows:

"The recruit is handed an Enfield rifle out of 'cosmol- ine' pickle. It oozes and drips grease all over. It is his task to clean the gun and it's sure some fun to watch how gingerly some men grasp the gun and to witness their evident agony in cleaning it, a good two or three hours job. Incidentally the recruit is learning more than perhaps he ever knew before about guns. Woe to him if at inspection he hasn't cleaned the rifle 'in'ards' and 'out'ards, and the inspecting officer finds as much as a tuft of lint in the bore. The recruit's next experience is at the commissary where he is doled out an aluminum kit of cup, fork, knife, spoon, patent plate and a tin wash basin. That is his entire eating and washing outfit and he sometimes failed to get the latter. At first it takes some resourcefulness to make these few utensils suffice for a bountiful breakfast like that of this morning which consisted of the following menu, all served at once however and not in courses, so that you had to pile it all on the plate, the lid, and in the cup:

Grapes. Dried Apricots.
Corn Flakes, Milk, Sugar.
Shirred Eggs. Hamburger.
Jam.
White Bread, Butter.
Coffee, Milk, Sugar.

"You get all you can grab and pile on your dishes. The men, it is certain, often gorged themselves, and that without suffering any discomfort. Because of the 'nippy' air at 6 a. m. the hot coffee is poured down by the pints. As each man finishes, he takes his dirty dishes and joins a line outside to take his turn at the out-of-doors dish-washing contrivance, consisting of three huge galvanized iron tubs placed on a primitive brick oven heated by wood-fire. Two of the tubs are filled with soap water steaming hot, while the middle tank has luke-warm rinsing water. After each
man has swung his dishes in the hot soap water several times and rinsed them he lets them dry in his tent.

“Tonight both the ‘Y’ and the ‘K. of C.’ huts were jammed to the doorknobs. A Toledo orchestra and ‘jazz’ band rendered a program at the former that pleased the men. At the latter there was an officers’ dance in honor of the hundred and more men who had been commissioned that day. At the ‘K. of C.’ hut all the dances take place, averaging three or four a week, while the ‘Y’ is the center for music, lectures, and motion pictures, both huts being thronged all day with men writing home or reading the magazines and books. At both there are religious services every Sunday. Three thousand letters were mailed at the ‘Y. M. C. A.’ yesterday. Nine of every ten were addressed to women, one half of them to ‘Mrs.’ and the other half to ‘Miss.’ The ‘Y’ Secretary made the actual count. Draw your own conclusions, but it is evident that mother, wife, sister, daughter and sweetheart are mighty near to the men’s minds while they are at the ‘Y’ and in the ‘K. of C.’ hut.

“In the Officers’ Auditorium above their mess hall, there are lectures of a technical nature every evening. Attendance is compulsory. Military discipline is enforced and yet, before the lecturer appears on the platform, the men frolic and sing. Some one has said that Americans unlike other peoples do not sing, but in the camps there was singing at work, at play, and on the march. It did one’s heart good to listen to those young officers singing the college and war songs and at times gospel hymns, with a vim that was overwhelming in its appeal. Tonight, a British officer lectured on ‘Front Line Intelligence,’ revealing an intricate and scientific system of gathering information about the enemy that requires long and careful training of men with special qualifications. Last evening, a French officer lectured on ‘Scouting,’ and disclosed that there is a good deal more of science and technique in modern warfare than there was in the wars of other days. In fact, the fighting forces are learning new wrinkles continually and
the reconnaissance scout is becoming a highly trained specialist. An American lieutenant-colonel gave an interesting lecture on ‘sighting,’ ‘windage,’ and other phases of rifle practice. Like all the other lecturers he had been in the actual fighting on the western front. A staff-officer, America's greatest authority on the rifle, the author of several books on rifle practice, spoke on his specialty. This morning in a group, the New Mexicans listened to a thorough explanation of the 22- and 45- automatic revolvers, wicked-looking and dangerous weapons at short range. As a matter of fact, the officers had much more of a grind each day than the privates. They had to conform to many a tradition that the privates had left behind them in civilian life, and they had in consequence much less fun out of camp life than did their men."

Merely another impression of Camp Perry as described in the Santa Fe New Mexican of September 17: "Today is a gloriously sunny day and many were the visitors to the rifle range, which is a vast, lush-green meadow, bounded on the north by the waters of Lake Erie and rimmed on the east and west with groves of trees and fertile fields. Above head circled one of the new battle planes from Camp Wright. She is a beauty with speed of 150 miles an hour and altitude record of over 10,000 feet. To the fore and to the aft, Lewis machine-guns are mounted. The whirr of the engines made a weird accompaniment to the uninterrupted fire on the various ranges. On the west of the field a nest of trenches, sand-bag embankments and concrete defense works had been built for instruction purposes. One force of infantry was trying to hold them, while another force was attacking. Nearby is a ruined ‘French farmhouse,’ while clumps of trees, windbreaks, stumps, towers, tanks, shell-holes, etc., give temporary cover to the attacking infantry. To the south, the rows upon rows of tents reflect the rays of the setting sun. Verily, one has ‘seen the Glory of the Lord,’ in this martial scene that symbolizes the might of a great Nation enlisted in a righteous cause."
The nerve center of the camp was in a modest two story frame building that served as camp headquarters. It was as busy as a beehive with clerks, and orderlies dashing to and fro, and typewriters clicked in every room. Regimental and company headquarters were in tents. The telegraph offices adjoined the headquarters building. Then came the postoffice handling as vast a volume of mail as big city offices but without near the facilities and but a fraction of the room and comfort to be found in any second class office. Next in line, on the main street, was the canteen and it was thronged all day long. It was a typical country department store, in which one could buy ice-cream cones and soft drinks and it was astounding how much of these were consumed daily. In the back was a short lunch counter and it simply coined money despite the liberal mess. The Knights of Columbus, the Y. M. C. A. huts, the railroad station, the officers' mess hall and auditorium,—a substantial concrete building,—were all on this street. The camp was adequately policed and there was a noteworthy absence of crime or even petty offences. It is a high tribute to American manhood, that there was a striking camaraderie, an avoidance of petty meanness, a punctual compliance with the rules for the welfare of the camp. How much of this spirit the men took with them into civil life when they were mustered out it is, of course, hard to estimate, but it justified perhaps, some of the extravagant predictions one heard of the change that the War would bring to community life and community activities.

In New Mexico, Camp Cody, with more than 30,000 men at one time, revealed other angles of communal life. The men coming from certain states being grouped together were more homogeneous. They came mostly from sections of the United States which in topography and climate, differ very much from the country round about Deming. There was some complaint about dust storms, about climatic rigors that the men had not expected to find so far south. There were delays in providing equipment at first, and
there was a lack of ordinary comforts, all of which was reflected in the camp life. There were occasional incidents that are not pleasant to record and which made work for the federal courts. There was much grumbling, so much so, that investigations were made personally by governors or delegations from middle western states. The New Mexico men stationed at Camp Cody were much more pleased with the Camp than were the middle westerners. In most respects, camp life at Cody, however, was very much as it was elsewhere, with the United War Work organizations looking after the welfare of the men, providing for them amusements and comforts. The State turned over to the Camp Community Service the national guard armory at Deming which was transformed into a club for the men. Dr. Walter H. Macpherson in charge of it visited cities in the Southwest to interest the public in his work. At Santa Fe he made a stirring address at the New Museum and there inaugurated a movement to send out traveling art exhibits to Camp Community Clubs, the Museum dispatching one of the first of such exhibits to Deming, whence it went to the Kkâki Club at El Paso. Camp Cody had its hostess houses with the Y. W. C. A. in charge, and also an A. L. A. library with several branches. New Mexico libraries contributed thousands of volumes for this work, the Camp Cody library being assigned to them especially.

Wherever troops were stationed, the men made themselves felt in the life of nearby communities. In New Mexico, for instance, hundreds of officers and men from Camp Cody made the pilgrimage to Santa Fe to take the higher degrees of Scottish Rite Masonry and then to Albuquerque to be initiated into the Shrine.

Camp Kearny was classed as, perhaps, the most desirable camp of all. While it had its troubles too, and worked for the first few months under decided disadvantages, toward the end of the war it became a model camp, and from coast to coast probably nine out of every ten men would have chosen it in preference to others. Many of the New Mexico
men were at this camp, and here especially, development battalions, improvement and Americanization classes, and welfare work reached a high level.

At Camp Kitchener, Albuquerque, established by the State early in the War to receive the recruits for the federalized New Mexico national guard, camp activities were on the most primitive basis. It was before the days of Y. M. C. A. and other United War Work on the elaborate scale which it assumed later. The buildings and equipment were of the crudest, although the best that could be provided on so short notice and with inadequate means. Still the men enjoyed it and retain pleasant memories of their sojourn there.

New Mexico had its student army training schools at the University, at the State College, mechanical training classes at the latter also, and of course, capacity work continued at the Military Institute. At those institutions, life kept much of the aspect of college days, liberalized at one extreme by the military training, and made more rigid at the other by military discipline, but flowing on from day to day as in time of peace.

There were isolated posts and camps along the Mexican border, especially at Columbus and at Hachita, where many of the agencies that made life pleasant at the larger camps and cantonments were not at work and where life at times grew monotonous, but even there the community spirit asserted itself in various and pleasant forms.

As one reads the columns of "Trench and Camp" published in the larger camps and cantonments, or talks with the men who have been mustered out, or recalls days even amidst the discomforts and terrible scenes at the front, there is apt to be born the wish that the country might retain something of the community life that was fostered under the aegis of war; that even in days of piping peace, and feverish reconstruction, there might be an annual gathering of men in camps and cantonments to lead the life of the open under the discipline and with the simpli-
city of camp and trench. Among the right sort of men,—and
it is certain that most men are of the right sort,—there was
developed something fine in spirit, something big in out-
look, which in New Mexico as elsewhere should become per-
manent in community activities and that should be made
a part of the training of every youth before he essays in-
to life. If the training was good for the rigorous demands
of war it certainly would be beneficial in preparation for
the multitudinous tasks of peace.

Paul A. F. Walter

X At the Front

Twenty miles north of Toul, France, is the little village
of Roulecourt. There it was my privilege as a Red Cross
out-post Canteen worker to see a number of our New Mex-
ico boys in their first introduction to the front. It was a
so-called quiet sector, the Kindergarten of war in France.
There the 1st Division and the 26th made their debut; then
the 82nd, whose officers were almost entirely made up of
men from Georgia and Alabama,—ideal, brave Southern
gentlemen, whose men were from the South and East. Then
to my delight came the 89th — so many of whose officers
were from the West — Gen. Wood’s division, compelled,
however, to serve without him — trained at Camp Funs-
ton, Kansas, and in the main composed of farm boys from
Kansas, Iowa and Missouri — wonderful men. To my sur-
prise, there were many boys from New Mexico mingled with
these. To see the Mexican boys in that far away country,
so far removed from the quaint little villages from which
the greater number of them had traveled scarcely fifty
miles before, and in this land of chilling rain — a desperate
contrast to our almost perpetual sunshine — gave a little
stronger tug at my heart strings than the sight of our
other American boys. To have seen those faces light up
at the familiar sound of "Como Esta, Amigo" sprung unawares at them while patrolling a lonesome dark road in the beating rain, is never to be forgotten. There were boys from Mora, Las Vegas, Santa Fe, Las Cruces — every place in New Mexico seemingly represented in that one regiment in my district.

Will they ever forget the towns of Roulecourt, Bouconcville, Rombecourt and Xivray? Will the members of each battalion of the 356th regiment forget the first dark night when it formed in Roulecourt, the position of support, to march up to Bouconville and Rombecourt from which they entered the front line trenches for the first time — muddy, wet, chilled through, not knowing how far the German trenches were away (only 560 yards)? Can they forget the first daylight which revealed Mt. Sec a little more than a half a mile away — the supposedly impregnable position of the Boche? Those first eight days in the trenches! What a relief it was to march back to the town which was the position of rest six miles back of Roulecourt! I hope, too, they have not forgotten the hot chocolate it was my privilege to hand out to them as they passed back through Roulecourt at two in the morning — tired and sleepy from the strain of those first days and nights in the trenches. And the six military police stationed in the French town of Brussy — three of them New Mexico boys — can they forget that battered village and the picturesque old French fireplace over which they cooked their meals?

One can imagine the natural feeling of timidity with which those boys first entered the dark, muddy ditches, but it is almost impossible to realize the change in them after the second time in, the confidence and then the eagerness with which they awaited the final step in their war training — going over the top. This they did with all the bravery we had expected of them on Sept. 12th, the start of the San Mihiel drive. Part of this Division, in which were a number of our New Mexico boys, was the 342nd Machine Gun Company, stationed in the woods to the right of Roulecourt,
located at intervals in little groups, each group with a machine gun, waiting for many days, totally ignorant of what the next move would be, shelled at intervals with gas and shrapnel. Many of these little machine gun posts contained one or more boys from this State. In those dismal woods was their first introduction to the war, and although tame in comparison to the real hell they went through later, those first impressions must ever remain with them. Further to our right other regiments of the 89th Division, the 353, 354 and 356, were badly gassed in similar woods. Eight hundred men were victims of it, among whom were many New Mexico boys. All this was before the beginning of their real work on September 12th.

The little town of Xivray — it was a town once but then only picturesque ruins — was located about three hundred yards out in “No Man’s Land,” and used only as an observation post where five men of the 356th were kept posted to guard against surprise attacks. Tobacco, sweet chocolate and magazines looked awfully good to whatever men were sojourning there for the three day watch. On one trip there I was accompanied by Marion Barker of Las Vegas of the 356th and to our surprise we found one of the five guards was a Pueblo Indian from Laguna, while the sergeant was also from New Mexico. So in that little out-post in “No Man’s Land” that day, out of seven men, there were four of us from New Mexico.

I must not forget the 21st Regiment of Railway Engineers who had worked so faithfully in that sector from January until Sept. 12th, doing much of their work in the same interesting woods to the right of Roulecourt, in which the 342nd Machine Gun Company was located. Many of these men were former employees of the Santa Fe Railway. Many had pulled trains through our New Mexico mountains. Oh, the pleasure and pride to see them in that ever dangerous, man’s work, night and day, subject to aeroplane bombing, and artillery fire! The derailments on that happy-go-lucky but all important little narrow guage rail-
way were much more frequent than on our dear old Santa Fe system. Those of us from New Mexico all longed for a Harvey House meal occasionally!

At Boullionville, quite near Metz, where I moved to after Sept. 12th, a small flat field in front of my canteen was occupied by the supply company of the 353th regiment, 89th Division. Being invited to eat with a small group about a cheerful looking camp fire I was delighted to find a Spanish-American boy cooking the first meal I had with them. They took turns at this, however. Later they were forced to abandon this field as a picnic ground because the Boche formed an unpleasant habit of dropping a shell or two on the flat promptly at meal times.

Those of our New Mexico boys who return from the front — many will not — have endured what is impossible to describe adequately to those who had not the privilege of seeing them there — the danger of the submarine and that of the ever present German aeroplane, the terrors of the awful gas and the discomfort of being wet and chilled through, week after week, and more than once advancing through dark forests with a rain of machine gun bullets pattering around them. While viewing the daily aerial combats and when looking up at some allied plane hovering above us for our protection, we could not help wondering if among those aviators there might not be a New Mexico boy. Without doubt many a time there was one of them hovering 15000 feet up, helping protect, among others, boys from his own state.

Let us never forget those of them who lie buried in France. Let us never cease to honor those who return. I shall never forget the one or cease to honor the other, for I have seen them at their work.

ASHLEY POND

NOTE. It would please the writer greatly to hear from or see any of the boys he met who may remember him as the Red Cross Lieut. in charge of out-post No. 2 first located at Roulecourt and later at Boullionville. Those who
may remember my fellow worker, Lieut. Fred Barker, will I know grieve to learn that he was killed by a shell.

XI The Cost and the Gain

A final appraisement of either the cost or the gains of such an enormous enterprise as the late war, is impossible at the present time. Decades must elapse and conclusions must be reached in the calm reflection of the years. However it will be of interest and possibly profit to those who study the Great War in future time to have at hand the impressions of those who lived in the great years of 1914-18. This brief chapter will merely seek to reflect what appears to be the sentiment of thinking people at this time.

What the war cost us in effort, in time taken from our customary occupations, in money contributions directly and indirectly, has been to some extent set forth in previous chapters. In material possessions our people in New Mexico are not affluent. The average wealth per capita is low. The great majority live by simple industrial pursuits — small farming, stock raising, and various forms of wage earning.

Nevertheless, it has always been a matter of note that when it came to charity, to education or other public enterprises, taxation was never withheld and always popular subscription yielded surprising results. When the time came to raise the large sums necessary to meet the quota imposed by the various war services, it required something more than blind optimism, it required downright faith in our people; and that faith was justified. The promptness and excessive measure with which each call was met should stir the pride of every New Mexican. And when one thinks of the actual privation that was necessary in thousands of instances in order to share in the various patriotic services,
one must feel that the finest and noblest in all our national life is not to be sought in far and exceptional places, but is right here in the humble homes of our own communities.

However gratifying it may be to recall the liberality of our material contributions, it must be remembered that this was comparatively insignificant. War's imperative call is for men, and New Mexico responded with her full quota. Over seventeen thousand lives were tendered and of these five hundred and one were given up in the service of the country. These are New Mexico's immortals. "To-morrow shall be the flower of all its yesterdays" runs the Spanish proverb. Truly, the tomorrows that we shall enjoy will be fragrant with the memory of the true and faithful sons of New Mexico who joined the almost innumerable company who died in these years of struggle.

And be it not forgotten, as we immortalize the heroes whose lives were accepted in the great sacrifice, that nearly seventeen thousand more freely made the same offer and went into the conflict with every reason to expect the same sacrifice. These met, like true men, the supreme crisis in our history. To them, sobered by heavy responsibilities and broadened by the vision of wider horizons, we of the older generation can, with the utmost confidence, submit the civic duties of the future. What greater safe-guard could there be of the people and of the state than this body of men disciplined to prompt and effective action, already tried and proven in a great crisis?

When we count the cost of the war, we may write off as of little consequence, all save the lives that were given. These were beyond price. No one can estimate the value of a life just ready to face the duties and opportunities of the world. What futures awaited some of those who sleep on European battle fields, who went down at sea, or who died in preparation for the day of action, no one need speculate, for no greater honor could have come to any one of them, no greater service would have been possible. Through all the ages, and doubtless it will ever be so, death on the
battlefield in defense of right has been esteemed the supreme glory to which men could attain.

In this connection there is one glorious fact which should be known in every home in this land. The Board of Historical Service for New Mexico received hundreds of letters from the parents, wives, and sisters of the young men who died in service and among them all, no matter how awful the loss, how great the deprivation, there is not a single instance of complaint that the nation asked so much, nor of regret that the cherished one went to the duty that claimed his life. On the contrary, in the words of deepest grief one invariably detects the note of exultant glory in the life bravely given for country and humanity.

In all the records of this war there will be none more precious than the letters above referred to, answering our inquiries concerning the boys killed in action or who died in service from other causes. The note of modest affection and pride, and that of restrained religious feeling is noticeably prevalent. "He was just an honest, sober Christian boy who loved his home and was good to all of us. Everybody liked him. He was so anxious to go that he could hardly wait to be called. We are very proud of our soldier boy." These words epitomize these letters. They reveal the fact that there were spiritual forces in this war that are vital to its history which may not be overlooked in writing the record for posterity. If America had the finest, cleanest army ever put into the field, it was because her soldiers had the finest, cleanest homes of the world in which to develop their manhood.

Thus while in a very real sense we find the cost of the war immeasurable, there is that incalculable compensation in exalted patriotism and consciousness of noble sacrifice that is beyond price.

Turning to the immediate gains, we are first struck with the fact that from the standpoint of material profits, we return from Europe empty handed. Former foreign wars have yielded us enormous possessions. From
this one we do not expect a dollar of indemnity for the billions spent, nor would we accept the cession of a square-yard of territory. It would seem at first thought an enormous adventure resulting in total loss.

But money is not everything. Its limit as a measure of value is soon reached. Ultimate worth must be expressed in other than monetary terms. There is a set of values that are both economic and moral. Of this class were the various conservation activities. In addition to the economic considerations, the war taught us that waste, improvidence, is downright immorality. It is a substantial gain to a people to experience the satisfaction of laying something by, of owning something that will safeguard the future. Investments in Liberty Bonds and thrift stamps and the conservation of food and other materials for the general good, are potent factors in character making.

Closely related to economic conservation is the question of human improvement. Never before have we had a thorough appraisement of our human resources. For years systematic evaluation of economic resources has been customary. The prospective crops, of grain and live stock, are estimated and reported months in advance, but there has been no exact knowledge of the available man power of the country. No one could give much information as to the condition of the children or their prospects for reaching useful maturity. The unnecessary loss of children was appalling; the amount of preventable disease and consequent misery and poverty among adults no less so. Of a million men in the prime of life, sacrificially half were fit for duties requiring high efficiency.

The war brought these questions to the front and in such an imperative way that they at once ceased to be debatable and commanded instant action. The army called for men of maximum power; men free from disease, clear eyed, alert in all their senses. Health was promptly made obligatory. Army traditions of long standing were swept away wholesale; the moral code of the soldier became higher
than that of the college student of past years. Army life was freer from vice than civilian life. Eagerly our young men obeyed the call to physical and moral cleanliness. It became the pride of the soldier. It seems a bit strange that it was not to the colleges and universities that our young men went to learn and prize the highest attributes of manhood, but to the training camp. What university executive will take the lead in demanding that student life shall be as clean as soldier life is now required to be?

The prospect of huge losses of the male population turned attention to the saving of infant life, and from one end of the country to the other the physical and mental examination of the children was started. As a result, childhood is in a fair way to get a square deal. The right of the child to a clean ancestry, to a wholesome birth, to protection from infection, to freedom from physical, mental and moral contamination during the period of helplessness, to sanitary food and clothing and shelter, and to education is a mandate of our time. The state that lacks child conservation laws will soon be considered uncivilized. Banish the handicaps of childhood — bad heredity, infections, malnutrition, ignorance, and the fight against poverty and crime is won.

Women gained in four years what they have been struggling centuries to obtain. As the women of the country silently stepped into place in every line of activity, short of actual battle, and with marvelous devotion and unsuspected endurance stood up to the hardest tasks, it became obvious that here was a line of defense not to be ignored. In every sense they were fighters. They fought to send subsistence to the front. They fought disease. They fought for the lives of the wounded. They toiled with needle and sewing machine until they were ready to drop, but none ever fell. If called to danger they faced it boldly, for the risk of life is no new experience to them. Courageous, determined, quick-witted—they were from the first like veterans in the promptness and precision with which they
went to their tasks. They did not wait to be mobilized. "Drives" were not necessary to spur them to action. They reached to the uttermost limits of the war; not a returning soldier but testifies that whether in camp or cantonment, on land or sea or in the air, in front line trenches and in the valley of the shadows, he was never beyond the reach of what women were doing for him. In the fires of this conflict mens' souls have been purged and the New Chivalry is born. Count this among the supreme gains. It is safe to say that henceforth no civilized country will underrate the worth of its women in public affairs, and even in war their place will be as important, as honorable, as that of the men.

Accompanying the rapid development of the human welfare movement, it was inevitable that the question of state, and ultimately of national prohibition, should come to the fore. It was met by the State of New Mexico a few weeks prior to our coming into the war with a state prohibition law, to be followed up, as everyone knows, in the early days of 1919, with a nation wide prohibition amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Looking back over the ages of self-destruction, of inhuman abuse of women and children, of crime in every form, of waste and disease and degeneracy chargeable to the liquor business, it seems unbelievable that the fight should have been so long a well nigh hopeless one. That the sudden ending of this vast curse was contemporaneous with the great war was no mere chance. It required the discipline of that vast conflict to plant the idea of race preservation in the public mind. The victory of prohibition equals the triumph over the enemy. In material gains alone it has already paid the cost of the war.

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