

Clay County and the Great War: A Narrative History of the Contributive and Sacrificial Involvement of Clay County, Illinois in World War I

Ryan Herdes

The purpose of the project undertaken within these pages was to conduct an original research project in a local community. The research was to focus on the World War I years, particularly 1917 and 1918, in which the United States had declared war on Germany and had joined the fighting in Europe. The exact dates for the time frame for which this project ranged were from April 4, 1917 through June 30, 1919. The overall goal of the research was to produce a collective narrative of the involvement- both the contributions and the sacrifices- of a specific county within Illinois to the war effort. Such an analysis had to take into account not only the involvement of the soldiers from that county while serving abroad on the foreign front, but also that of the county as a whole on the domestic front.

The county I chose to focus on for my research was Clay County. Clay County was established by being merged from portions of Wayne, Crawford, and Fayette Counties. The county was named in honor of Henry Clay, who was a member of the U. S. House of Representatives and U. S. Senate for the State of Kentucky. He also served as the U. S. Secretary of State in the 1820s.¹ In addition, Henry Clay served three times as the Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives, authored the Missouri Compromise, and was a prominent candidate for the U. S. Presidency, which coincided with the year in which the county was established- December 23, 1824.²

The county consists of three main communities, which possess local high schools- Flora, Louisville, and Clay City. The county also consists of several other smaller communities that do not bolster high schools of their own, which include Hord, Ingraham, Iola, Oskaloosa, Sailor Springs, Wendelin, and Xenia. The U.S. Census Bureau claimed, in its 2000 Census report, that Clay County supported a total population of 14,560 people. The Illinois Census 2000 website listed the populations for six communities within Clay County. Flora was the largest community in the county with a population of 5,086 people. The other five communities followed as such: Louisville- 1,242 people; Clay City- 1,000 people; Xenia- 407 people; Iola- 171 people; and Sailor Springs- 128 people.³

In both 1910 and 1920, the population of Clay County was somewhat larger. The Real Estate Center at Texas A & M University reported on their website that, according to the U. S. Bureau of the Census, Clay County, Illinois had a population of 18,661 people in 1910, with a decline of a population of 17,684 people in 1920.⁴ The *Flora Journal-Record*, a newspaper issued twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays, reported on the census figures of the county by township for 1920. The results were as follows: Bible Grove Township- 980 people; Blair Township- 984 people; Clay City Township- 1,322 people; Harter Township- 4,811 people; Hoosier Township- 1,022 people; Larkinsburg Township- 1,400 people; Louisville Township-

¹ Clay County. "General Information." <http://claycountyillinois.org/index.aspx?page=72>, 2008. (accessed December 4, 2009).

² Illinois Regional Archives Depository. "Clay County Fact Sheet." <http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/irad/clay.html>. (accessed December 4, 2009).

³ State of Illinois. "Illinois Census 2000: Clay County." http://illinoisgis.ito.state.il.us/census2000/dplace_census.asp?theSelCnty=025&towns=147, 2005. (accessed December 3, 2009).

⁴ Real Estate Center at Texas A & M University. "Clay County, IL Population by Decades." <http://recenter.tamu.edu/Data/popcd/pc17025.htm>, 2002. (accessed May 8, 2006).

1,776 people; Oskaloosa Township- 944 people; Pixley Township- 1,458 people; Songer Township- 790 people; Stanford Township- 1,161 people; and Xenia Township- 1,036 people.⁵

The majority of the sources used within this project originated within and were collected from the boundaries of Clay County. They are limited mainly to newspaper articles and local history publications. A couple of other sources such as the *Honor Roll*, published by the Illinois Veteran's Commission, and the *Soldier's of the Great War* record, published by the Soldiers Record Publishing Association, were also consulted. The bulk of the information within this project was gathered from the *Southern Illinois Record*, the local Flora newspaper that was in print during the war years. The Flora Public Library received a grant a few years ago to place the newspaper on the internet. Still, certain editions of this newspaper are missing or incomplete. Local papers also existed within a minute number of the other communities within the county, unfortunately, they have not been preserved, and few references to them have been unearthed. It also should be noted that certain components of the information contained within this project are products of the time frame in which they originated, and are therefore solely contingent upon the accuracy and factual research of those who produced them at that time.

Part One: Gearing Up for War ***Securing Patriotic Support***

"War," stated the title of the article printed in the weekly Thursday edition of the *Southern Illinois Record*. On Wednesday, April 4, 1917, the U.S. Senate, by a vote of eighty-two to six, passed a resolution that placed the nation in a state of war with Germany. President Woodrow Wilson took immediate steps to put the country in a state of defense and to carry on war against Germany.⁶

It can be argued that almost immediately following the resolution from the U.S. Senate, Clay County began its involvement in the Great War. The Woman's Club and the Commercial Club of Flora jointly scheduled a meeting that requested all patriotic citizens to attend. The meeting, held at the Casino Theatre on Friday, April 6th, was called for the purpose of garnering volunteers for a Loyalty Meeting in the community. The Loyalty Meeting was scheduled to be held on the evening of Monday, April 9th.⁷

At the first public meeting on Friday, April 6th, the room was crowded. National airs were sung and short talks were given by a number of those present. An invitation to the public was extended by the Baltimore and Ohio railway boys to attend a flag raising ceremony that they put on in the round house at four o' clock the following evening. The meeting continued on until a late hour.⁸

The flag raising ceremony in Flora, which was held on Saturday, April 7th, was well attended. North Avenue, from the public square to the round house, was filled with people. The round house boys had erected a pole fifty-six feet high, upon which they raised an eight by twelve foot flag, while a band played *The Star Spangled Banner*. Hats were removed and, as the flag was unfurled, a mighty shout arose from those present. This was followed by a flag salute led by the master of ceremonies, W. D. Scudamore. It was reported that more than three thousand men, women, and children, waving flags, shouting, and singing, had made a scene that was inspiring and would not be forgotten.⁹

⁵ "Clay County's Census Returns." (*Journal - Record*: May 27, 1930), 1.

⁶ "War." (*Southern Illinois Record*: April 5, 1917), 4.

⁷ "Mass Meeting." (*Southern Illinois Record*: April 5, 1917), 1.

⁸ "5000 Attend Patriotic Meeting---Big Parade." (*Southern Illinois Record*: April 12, 1917), 1.

⁹ Ibid.

The big demonstration, referred to as the Loyalty Meeting, that was scheduled to take place on the evening of Monday, April 9th, was postponed on account of unfavorable weather until the following night. The night began with the raising of the American flag and a public program filled with speeches and singing. It was said that every speech was good, short, to the point, and breathed the true spirit of loyalty. This program was followed by a parade, and it was estimated that at least five thousand people had gathered in the streets for this event.¹⁰

Flora was not the only community in the county that showed its patriotism. According to Beryl Rinehart, who constructed a blended historical and fictitious narrative of Sailor Springs history:

While the boys were away fighting the war, the people who were left at home went all out for patriotism, and with the exception of maybe a slacker here and there, the majority were eager to do their bit. There were many members of the society who donated freely towards the cause.¹¹

Enlisting for Service

The purpose of the patriotic community meetings and events was twofold. First, was to increase favorable support for the war in the community. Secondly, was to propel individuals to action. It was not long until it became evident that these events were starting to have their desired effect. Men from the county began to enlist for service. It was reported in the April 26th edition of the *Southern Illinois Record* that the following Clay County men went to Olney and enlisted in Company L for service: Reed H. O'Haver, Gerald McKnight, Lloyd C. McCulley, and Ivan H. High of Flora; Joseph L. Wood and James R. Blair of Louisville; and Chester W. Cisne and Byron B. Caudle of Xenia. They were accompanied by Earl A. Ricketts of Flora, who had flight experience and went to Evansville to enlist in the aviation service.¹²

In the following edition of the newspaper, it was noted that Eugene Mitchell, James Higgins, and Joe Southwick, all of Flora, had reported for examination for the Officers' Reserve Training Camp in Fort Sheridan in Illinois. All three had been recommended by the examining board for entrance to the camp and were awaiting orders from the Central Department in Chicago to report. It was added that several other Flora boys were also interested in entering the camp, but had not as yet received instructions to report to an examining board.¹³ Less than a week later, Joe Southwick and Eugene Mitchell received notice to report to the Officers Citizens Training Camp at Fort Sheridan for service.¹⁴ Upon passing the examination at Fort Sheridan, both men were assigned to service in the regular army. Southwick was awarded the rank of captain and Mitchell the rank of second lieutenant.¹⁵

On April 30th, recruiting officer Fuqua of the U.S. station in Vincennes, Indiana paid a visit to Flora. While there, Fuqua secured the enlistment of George Bass, Fred Steel, John Lauderback, Cyrel Senters, and Lyal Prather. Also, Postmaster Wineland, of the Flora community, was sworn in as a recruiting officer. Wineland was quoted as stating that, "Those enlisting before the new selective conscription law takes effect will obligate themselves to service during the war only; after that seven years service will be the term."¹⁶ Following this

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Rinehart, Beryl. *Sailor Springs Story*. (Olney: Earl C. Taylor & Marie Reynolds. 1956), 139.

¹² "Clay County Boys Enlist." (*Southern Illinois Record*: April 26, 1917), 1.

¹³ "Flora Boys Are Ready For War." (*Southern Illinois Record*: May 3, 1917), 1.

¹⁴ "Go to the Training Camp." (*Southern Illinois Record*: May 10, 1917), 8.

¹⁵ "Flora Boys Honored." (*Southern Illinois Record*: July 26, 1917), 1.

¹⁶ "Recruiting in Flora." (*Southern Illinois Record*: May 3, 1917), 8.

visit to Flora, several men then went to Vincennes on May 8th to enlist in the U.S. Army. Of these men who went, only three individuals- Merrell Charleston, Henry C. Prather, and Leo P. Reed- passed the examination and were accepted.¹⁷

During the last week of May of that same year, another recruiter came to visit Flora. This time it was Lieutenant Lawrey of Morrisonville, Illinois. Accompanied by Acting Orderly Reed O'Haver, the two were recruiting for the Sixth Regiment, which was stationed at Camp Lowden in Springfield, Illinois. A total of three regiments of the Illinois National Guard were in the federal service- the First, Fifth, and Sixth Regiments. From these regiments, Flora had one man serving in the Fifth Regiment- Leslie Jones- and three men serving in the Sixth Regiment- Lloyd McCulley, Jack McKnight, and Reed O'Haver. The Sixth Regiment was expected to be ordered to a training camp in Texas and then to be sent to France with the First Division in the coming fall.¹⁸

Flora Organizes a Red Cross Unit

In the May 10th edition of the *Southern Illinois Record*, the Woman's Club of Flora announced its intention to organize a Red Cross Unit. It was desired that every man, woman, and child in the area should become a member. This was so all would do one's bit for the country by providing comforts for the soldiers. A membership fee of one dollar was required to join, while for a two dollar membership fee, new members could also receive the American Red Cross Magazine. Potential members, and the community as a whole, were informed that there would be work to do and probably materials to be donated with which to make garments.¹⁹

Clay County Fails to Raise a Company

In the early days of June 1917, an effort was undertaken to organize a company of sixty-five men for the Ninth Illinois Regiment. This was conceded as a failure. If successful, Flora would have become the location of an armory. However, Flora was only able to secure twenty-seven enlistments. As a result of its failure to organize a company, Clay County was passed up for Harrisburg in Saline County. Harrisburg was immediately able to enlist eighty-five men and received the armory that had been promised to Flora upon organizing a company.²⁰

Registering for the Draft

May 18, 1917 marked an important date in the history of the involvement of the United States in World War I. On this date President Woodrow Wilson signed the draft bill, calling up all men between twenty-one and thirty-one years of age to register for selective service.²¹ The date set for registration for the national draft within Clay County was June 5, 1917. This occurred as scheduled without any problems. A total of 1,350 men registered. The registration could be broken down by township as follows: Bible Grove- 78; Blair- 89; Clay City- 98; Harter #1- 156; Harter #2- 188; Hoosier- 85; Larkinsburg- 100; Louisville #1- 64; Louisville #2- 79; Oskaloosa- 74; Pixley #1- 60; Pixley # 2- 45; Songer- 77; Stanford- 93; and. Xenia- 62.²²

¹⁷ "Gone to the Front." (*Southern Illinois Record*: May 10, 1917), 1.

¹⁸ "Recruiting for the War." (*Southern Illinois Record*: May 31, 1917), 8.

¹⁹ "Red Cross Unit to be Organized." (*Southern Illinois Record*: May 10, 1917), 4.

²⁰ "Clay County Fails To Raise Company." (*Southern Illinois Record*: June 7, 1917), 8.

²¹ Haulsee, W. M., Howe, F.G., & Doyle, A.C. *Soldiers of the Great War: Volume 1*. (Washington, D.C.: Soldiers Record Publishing Association. 1920), 40.

²² "Registration Day." (*Southern Illinois Record*: June 7, 1917), 1.

The Draft in Clay County

On July 10, 1917, President Wilson called the National Guard into federal service. Exactly three days later, Washington formally issued the first draft call for 687,000 men.²³ On July 12, 1917, the draft was conducted for Clay County. Of the 1,350 men who registered within the county on June 5th, the names of 214 of those men were drawn to represent the county in the national draft. Ultimately, out of those 214 men, only 107 were actually conscripted from Clay County. A complete listing of those individuals called in the county draft appeared in the final July edition of the *Southern Illinois Record*. Charles Leroy McGrew, who resided three miles north of Flora, was the first man drawn in the county.²⁴

The Ninth Illinois Infantry Regiment and Company L

By July 20th, the national draft was completed and nearly ten million men had enlisted nationwide.²⁵ The Ninth Illinois Infantry Regiment, commanded by Colonel C. F. Ryman of Effingham, was made up largely of companies in Southern Illinois. The companies comprising the Ninth Regiment were made up of the following towns: A of Duquoin, B of McLeansboro, C of Golconda, D of West Frankfort, E of Harrisburg, F of Mt. Carmel, G of Lawrenceville, H of Carmi, I of Centralia, K of Mt. Vernon, L of Salem, and M of Fairfield.²⁶

Company L of the Ninth Regiment of the Illinois National Guard was mustered into service on Friday, June 22, 1917, when Major Claud E. Smith of Flora arrived in Salem in Marion County. At that time the men underwent the necessary physical examinations, which were performed by Assistant Surgeon J.W. Wells, who served as the medical examiner.²⁷ After visiting Salem, Major Smith also visited Fairfield, McLeansboro, and Harrisburg to muster in the companies organized in those places.²⁸ The July 19th edition of the *Southern Illinois Record* reported that the Ninth Regiment had been ordered to mobilize at Camp Lowden in Springfield at once. It also listed the following men as having been recently recruited with Company L: Gerald J. McKnight, Ivan H. High, and Earl A. Rickett of Flora; Orville R. Able, Victor A. Cleveland, Joseph L. Woods, James R. Blair, Archie Green, and Oliver Hord of Louisville; and Hazle I. Caudle, Jesse A. Holloway, Oscar Anderson, Chester W. Cisne, Bryan B. Caudle, Ernest B. Shadden, and Cecil C. Young of Xenia. All of these new recruits were ordered to report to Sergeant Lester in Olney on July 25, 1917.²⁹ It was likewise noted that the boys from Xenia, who were serving with the Fourth Regiment, were also to report. They were expected to soon be moved to the Mexican border.³⁰

The following month, Sergeant Harry Keith of the Ninth Illinois Infantry spent some time in Flora for a brief visit with his father. Keith was a sergeant-major with the Third Battalion of the Ninth Infantry. This battalion was comprised of companies from Salem, Centralia, Fairfield, and Mt. Vernon, and had been placed under the command of Major Claude

²³ Haulsee, W. M., Howe, F.G., & Doyle, A.C. *Soldiers of the Great War: Volume 1*. (Washington, D.C.: Soldiers Record Publishing Association. 1920), 40.

²⁴ "How Draft Frawing Passed Off." (*Southern Illinois Record*: July 26, 1917), 8.

²⁵ Haulsee, W. M., Howe, F.G., & Doyle, A.C. *Soldiers of the Great War: Volume 1*. (Washington, D.C.: Soldiers Record Publishing Association. 1920), 40.

²⁶ "Ninth Illinois Infantry Ordered to Mobilize." (*Southern Illinois Record*: July 19, 1917), 3.

²⁷ "Co. L To Be Mustered In By Major Smith Of Flora." (*Southern Illinois Record*: June 21, 1917), 1.

²⁸ "Purely Personal." (*Southern Illinois Record*: June 28, 1917), 5.

²⁹ "Some of Our Boys Who Are Going to the Front as Volunteers." (*Southern Illinois Record*: July 19, 1917), 3.

³⁰ "Xenia." (*Southern Illinois Record*: July 26, 1917), 2.

E. Smith of Flora. During his visit to Flora, Keith observed that, "The regiment is standing up to the strenuous work of army drill like old veterans, and making fine progress."³¹

The Work of the Local Federal Board

With the completion of the draft in Clay County, the work of readying the soldiers began. The 214 individuals whose names were drawn were ordered to report for a physical examination on the 6th, 7th, and 8th of August at nine o' clock in the morning. Order numbers one to seventy-one were to report on the 6th. Order numbers seventy-two to one hundred forty-two were to report on the 7th. Order numbers one hundred forty-three to two hundred fourteen were to report on the 8th.³²

The Local Federal Board for Clay County began examining these men on Monday August 6, 1917, as scheduled, with the goal of securing 107 able-bodied men, between twenty-one and thirty-one years of age, to fill Clay County's quota. The physical examinations were conducted by Dr. E. C. Park Jr. and Dr. George W. Campbell. Dr. W. F. Fairchild served as the re-examining physician. Up to Wednesday evening of that same week, 145 physical examinations had been completed. Of those examined, 105 men had passed, leaving forty disqualified. From the 105 men who passed the examination, twenty made no claim for exemption and entered service. The eighty-five who claimed exemptions had ten days to file affidavits to substantiate their claims. All but a few of these exemptions made were claimed on account of dependents. The Board hoped to complete the examination of the 214 men notified to appear, by noon on Friday of that week at the latest.³³

On August 13th, the Exemption Board for Clay County undertook the task of examining the proofs filed by 122 men who, in the first call, passed the physical examination, but claimed exemption on account of dependents. After the proofs had been considered, the Board certified, from the proofs, the following men for service: from Clay City- John W. Duff, Frank Dugan, George F. Hardy, Harry Nugent, Harry Powell, and Charles E. Lindsey; from Flora- William Lewis Devore, R. G. Gibson, Harold M. Hogan, Wayne V. McVeigh, James McCommons, William F. Malinsky, and Arthur Craft; from Ingraham- Walter G. Murvin; from Iola- Roy Krutsinger, G. H. Colclasure, and Thomas E. Williams; from Louisville- William H. Burton, Benjamin H. Crouse, John R. Fry, Jacob V. Bryan, Earl Nettleton, Robert Holaday, and Oscar E. Rogers; from Wakefield- Adolph I. Disch; and from Xenia- Cyrus L. Howard, John W. Lawson, James Corbett Anderson, Reuben B. Woomer, and Hoda Smith. On August 15th, the Board issued its second call for 125 additional men for examination in order to obtain the county's quota. This included those men with order numbers running from 215 to 339.³⁴

The new call for additional men also produced mixed results. Of the 125 men that were examined by the Local Exemption Board, eighteen were physically disqualified and another sixty-eight men claimed exemptions. Six of the men that were called had previously enlisted and two men failed to appear all together. Thirty-one men from the list were certified for service.³⁵

The Local Exemption Board was once again in session on August 27th and 28th, passing on claims for dependents. At the end of that time, all proofs were in, with the exception of seven cases. In order to provide ample time for the filing of proofs, the Board adjourned until the 30th. However, Mrs. E. C. Park and Mr. Cressy Russell, who were acting as clerk and stenographer,

³¹ "Ninth Infantry Making Good." (*Southern Illinois Record*: August 16, 1917), 1.

³² "Notice of Call and To Appear For Physical Examination." (*Southern Illinois Record*: August 2, 1917), 1.

³³ "Clay County Soldier Contingent." (*Southern Illinois Record*: August 9, 1917), 1.

³⁴ "Thirty More Men Added to the Roll. New Call Issued." (*Southern Illinois Record*: August 16, 1917), 1.

³⁵ "Soldiers Of The Republic." (*Southern Illinois Record*: August 23, 1917), 1.

remained at the office each day to meet anyone wishing information. The *Southern Illinois Record* published a breakdown of the official results of both the first and second call for men in its August 30th edition. Concerning the breakdown for the first 214 men called: three were exempted as municipal and county officers; fifty-four were discharged for physical disability; sixty-six were passed and exempt on dependent claims; eleven enlisted or failed to appear for examination; twenty-three were passed and then appealed to the District Board; four filed a claim but made no proof; fifteen filed a claim and made proof; one had or made a claim for discharge on military service; and thirty-seven were passed and claimed no exemptions. Concerning the breakdown for the second 125 men called: forty-six men passed and claimed exemptions that were granted; twenty-three were physically disqualified; eleven passed and claimed exemptions that were denied; thirty-one passed and claimed no exemptions; two failed to appear for examination; two were examined by other boards; one was previously enlisted; and nine were continued for proof.³⁶

The *Southern Illinois Record* also explained that the government had appealed all cases to the District Board that had been discharged by the Local Exemption Board. It was anticipated that the Local Board would receive, by September 1st, final orders relative to the assembling of the first five percent that were now ordered to entrain for Fort Taylor. Also, the following names of those men who had been examined and accepted since the last report were given: from Bible Grove- Charles J. Farris, Otto Schneipp, Richard F. Webster, and John Fred William Stork; from Clay City- George E. King and William Hopkins; from Farina- Robert F. Turberville; from Flora- Earl Elmer Slade, Luke E. Pixley, and G. E. Halterman; from Ingraham- William W. Knowles, Curtis A. Lewis, and John A. Nix; from Mason (not in Clay County)- George C. Poehler; and from Xenia- William E. Jones and Frank E. Randall.³⁷

Off to Camp Taylor

On Saturday, September 1, 1917, a farewell banquet was held in Louisville to honor the men of the county who were soon to be transported to one of the various training camps. There they were drilled, hardened, and prepared for active and serious fighting. It proved to be both a joyful and a sad day for many in the county.³⁸ The men were sent to Camp Taylor, located near Louisville, Kentucky. It had been determined that Camp Taylor would be the training ground to which all Southern Illinois soldiers were to be sent.³⁹

The date for the second increment of soldiers to leave for Camp Taylor came on Wednesday, September 19th of that year. (Information on the first increment of soldiers to leave for Camp Taylor has yet to be obtained.) Forty-three men, representing all sections of the county, were marshaled in Louisville for the last time as civilians. They marched from the County Court House to the railroad, where they entrained for Flora. At about eleven o' clock that morning the men reached Flora. Waiting to welcome them were thousands of people crowding the platforms and all of the vacant places surrounding the depot. From there the men joined up with others arriving from Marion, Clinton, and St. Clair Counties, and boarded a train to Camp Taylor. While in Flora, the men were given a patriotic reception. There, each of the soldiers was presented with a basket of lunch and served with fresh apple cider and Jonathan apples by uniformed members of the Red Cross. The apples were a gift from Colonel Tanner and Senator Dunlap. The following individuals composed the county's second offering of forty-three soldiers: from Clay City- James Mitchell, Albert R. Glascoe, William Holman,

³⁶ "Work of the Exemption Board." (*Southern Illinois Record*: August 30, 1917), 4.

³⁷ "Work of the Exemption Board." (*Southern Illinois Record*: August 30, 1917), 4.

³⁸ "Farewell Banquet To Soldier Boys." (*Southern Illinois Record*: September 6, 1917), 1.

³⁹ [No Title] (*Southern Illinois Record*: August 30, 1917), 4.

William A. Dean, Fritz Schnautz, Alvin R. Tucker, and Thomas J. Dougherty; from Flora- Raymon G. Gibson, Clarence L. Boyd, George O. Crabtree, L. E. Kellums, Robley V. Stephens, Harry W. Gill, Cletus Campbell, Silas Shriner, and Earl Hall; from Iola- Orin C. Colclasure, Glenn Taylor, John Sphinner, Virgil C. Smith, and Glenn Gullett; from Louisville-Sewell Smith, Clifford C. Cannon, Earl Nettleton, Clarence R. Howard, Clover Landreth, Charles T. Gabbert, Andrew H. Speaks, Benjamin H. Britton, Ocie Tolliver, and David Dillman; from Mason- Theodore Bartles and Charles L. Snyder; from Noble (in Richland County)- Joe Buerster; from Sailor Springs- Harry Fleener; and from Xenia- James G. Weaver, Mark Middleton, Aaron M. Kagy, Carl O. Leathers, Forest J. Anderson, Elmer E. Clinton, Arthur Craft, and William J. Smith.⁴⁰

Two weeks later, on October 3rd, the third increment of men from Clay County's selective soldiery left Louisville and passed through Flora, bound for Camp Taylor. Twenty-three men were entrained in Louisville at 10:24 a.m. and reached Flora at 10:45 a.m. Once there, they switched trains, and, in less than thirty minutes, were on their way to Camp Taylor. Sergeants William Floy Malinski of Flora and Jacob V. Bryan of Louisville were selected to take charge of the squad until they had reached their destination. The following are the names of the soldiers who entrained in the third increment: from Bible Grove- Otto Wyatt and Fred Faeder; from Clay City- William B. Hopkins, Frank Dugan, and Charles L. Lindsey; from Edgewood- Floyd R. Dyer; from Flora- Winfield Koontz, James McCommons, William Floy Malinski, Earl Elmer Slade, and Harry B. Wright; from Iola- Norris Pickle, Olsie R. Fitzgerald, Roy Eckle, and Seth T. Devore; from Louisville- Jacob V. Bryan, Murvin Crouse, and Arvin R. Cotterell; from Noble- Owen L. Hasler; from Sailor Springs- Rudolph Hilderbrand; from Wakefield (not in Clay County)- Adolph Rudolph; and from Xenia- Ruben B. Woomer. It is worth noting that while the *Southern Illinois Record* stated that twenty-three individuals were entrained from Louisville, only twenty-two names were recorded.⁴¹

An enormous crowd of people attended both the assembly and departure of the third increment in Louisville. A short program was held at the Clay County Courthouse prior to the departure, which was directed by Captain Culbertson. The program featured stirring patriotic speeches by Colonel Randolph Smith and Judge A. M. Rose. In addition to the program, the Louisville chapter of the Red Cross presented each of the soldiers with a pillow. At Flora, hundreds of men, women, and children waited to greet the soldiers. The soldiers were given a generous basket of lunch, which had been prepared by the ladies of St. Stephen's Church.⁴²

On October 13, 1917, a letter written by William Floy Malinsky of the Medical Department of the 334th Infantry Regiment, stationed at Camp Taylor, was printed in the *Southern Illinois Record*:

All of our boys are enjoying camp life and are in good health. We are drilling every day for a few hours. Our officers are kind to us and our eats are good.

Transferring has caught all but Charles Lindsey. His address is the same as it was. The boys who transferred to the Medical Department of the 333rd Infantry Regiment are Jacob V. Bryan, Murvin Crouse, Seth Devore, Henry Dougherty, Frank Dugan, Alvin Cotterell, S. Pickle, and Floyd R. Dyer. Those transferred to the 334th Infantry Regiment, Medical Department, are Roy Eckle, William B. Hopkins, Olsa Fitzgerald, Fred Fader, Winfield Koontz, Owen Hasler, Rudolph Hilderbrand, and Floy Malinsky. Those transferred to the 335th Infantry

⁴⁰ "Great Day At Louisville & Flora." (*Southern Illinois Record*: September 20, 1917), 1.

⁴¹ "Preparing For Grim Business Of War." (*Southern Illinois Record*: October 4, 1917), 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*

[Regiment], Medical Department, are Harry Wright, Earl E. Slade, James McCommons, Adolph Rudolph, Otto Wyatt, and R. Woomer. All mail will reach these boys at these addresses, and friends, news is welcome.

We are about one-half mile from the other Clay County boys. We all spend our leisure hours at the Y.M.C.A., a place where we get real rest, and there is a good entertainment at each Y.M.C.A. every evening, a moving picture show two nights each week, and church services on Sunday. Some of the boys are planning on seeing the sights in Louisville [Kentucky] next Wednesday afternoon.

Richland County men here are worked up over the report that they may be transferred to either Camp Pike at Little Rock or Camp Shelby at Hattiesburg, Mississippi. According to the understanding published here, a transfer of troops will be made, [with] 6,000 men going to Camp Shelby and 2,000 [men going] to Camp Pike. Best wishes for all our friends and the Record.⁴³

Another letter written by William Floy Malinsky, and published in the November 8th edition of the *Southern Illinois Record*, related the events that took place during Illinois Day in Camp Taylor:

Today is Illinois Day in the camp. Governor Frank O. Lowden addressed about five thousand Illinois soldiers Saturday morning at 10:30 a.m. in one of the Y.M.C.A.'s buildings. Harve Shriner, of Flora, is visiting his son, Silas, today. Frank Smith, who is well known in Flora, is in Company L of the 334th Regiment, and Walter Pourchot is in the 333rd Regiment, Machine Gun Company. We drill a few hours each day and also study first aid work, which is very interesting. We will take up litter drilling soon. All the boys send their best wishes to their friends and the Record.⁴⁴

The Local Federal Board Continues Its Work

A sufficient number of men had yet to be accepted out of the 389 originally called to complete Clay County's quota of 107 men. (Information has yet to be obtained on the calling of order numbers 215-389.) On Monday, the 8th of October, notices were mailed to 100 additional men to appear for examination. The list began with order number 390 and ended with order number 489. Fifty of the men were examined on Saturday, the 13th October, the remaining fifty men were examined on Monday, the 15th.⁴⁵

When the Local Board completed most of its classification of registrants from Clay County, it released the findings to the *Southern Illinois Record*. According to the Board, 811 married men had registered for the draft. Of these men, 293 were called, but only twenty-four were accepted for service. There were a total of 557 single men who had registered for the draft. Of these men, 108 were accepted for service and eighty-eight were rejected. Additionally, five immigrants were called, but none of them were accepted. Of these, one was English, two were Greek, one was Russian, and one gave Central America as his home.⁴⁶

The findings added that there were 843 farmers who registered for the draft. From these 523 were not called; 233 were called, but not accepted; and eighty-seven farmers were accepted. The number engaged in other occupations such as forestry, animal husbandry, mining,

⁴³ "From Camp Taylor." (*Southern Illinois Record*: October 18, 1917), 3.

⁴⁴ "Camp Taylor." (*Southern Illinois Record*: November 8, 1917), 8.

⁴⁵ "Local Exemption Board News." (*Southern Illinois Record*: October 11, 1917), 4.

⁴⁶ "Draft Disclosures In Clay County." (*Southern Illinois Record*: November 22, 1917), 1.

manufacturing, food industry, steam railways, telegraph and telephone companies, transportation, trade and merchandise, professional, and domestic and manual service and labor numbered 525 men.⁴⁷

A Clay City Doctor Gets Commissioned

In its October 25th edition, the *Southern Illinois Record* ran an article that had originally been printed in the *Clay City Advocate*. It explained that while in Chicago, Dr. E. W. Chrisman, of Clay City, received a telegraph wire from the war department, stating that he had been commissioned as a first lieutenant in the dental reserve corps.⁴⁸

Part Two: Soldiers of the Western Front

Overview

The purpose within this part is to highlight the lives of those soldiers from Clay County who fought on the Western Front. Unfortunately, it is not possible to discuss each and every soldier that served from Clay County. Those that are chosen for discussion are done so due to the availability of resource materials concerning their involvement in the Great War.

Elias Barker

The October 10th edition of the *Southern Illinois Record* printed a story which had first been printed in the *Louisville Republican*. The *Southern Illinois Record* was honored to learn that Elias Barker, who was born and raised in Ingraham, was the first Clay County soldier to receive a medal for bravery while in action. Elias' father, Tobe Barker, had received a letter the week prior from his son, who was stationed in France, stating that he had been in several engagements and had just been decorated for distinguished services in battle. Although it was not known at the time just what Elias had done, the newspaper that Elias Barker had made his mark and was deemed worthy of decoration for some brave act at a time of great peril. The letter had stated, that Prime Minister Lloyd George, had personally pinned the medal on Elias, and that, during the ceremonial, Elias had shaken the hand of General Pershing and other distinguished officers of the allied forces.⁴⁹

Carmichael

Early in 1917, Carmichael enlisted in Battery E of the 124th Field Artillery. On July 23rd he was made second lieutenant. Later, at Camp Logan in December of that same year, Carmichael was promoted to first lieutenant and placed in charge of calisthenics for the entire 124th. He held that position until being transferred to France to the 108th Ammunition Train. He remained in that service until the last great drive, in which he was wounded. On September 28, 1918, a German shell busted his left ear drum and rendered him with shell shock. He developed influenza, which induced cerebro-spinal meningitis. The meningitis caused his death on November 4th, just twenty-three days prior to his twentieth birthday. At the time that his death was reported, Carmichael was believed to be the only commissioned officer that Clay County had lost in the war.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Clay City Advocate." (*Southern Illinois Record*: October 25, 1917), 8.

⁴⁹ "First to be Decorated for Bravery." (*Southern Illinois Record*: October 10, 1918), 4.

⁵⁰ "Only Commissioned Officer Clay County Lost In War." (*Southern Illinois Record*: December 26, 1918), 8.

Victor Arkell Cleveland

On November 23, 1918, Mrs. Silas Steele received notification from the war department that her son, Victor Arkell Cleveland had been killed in action in France on October 12th. No word of the safety of Bob Abell, Jim B. Blair, Arch Green or other Louisville boys in Company L had been received at the time of the notification of Cleveland's death.⁵¹

The December 5th edition of the *Southern Illinois Record*, which printed the above story that had originally come out of Louisville, went on to add that several letters had been recently received in Flora from Clay County soldiers who were in the battle in which Victor Arkell Cleveland had been killed. It was reported that the balance of the soldiers had come out without a scratch. In fact, Archie Green, who lived north of Flora, was said to have been at the side of Cleveland when he fell. According to Green, Cleveland had received two wounds, one in the arm and the other in the stomach. The latter proved to be fatal, from which Cleveland died in about two hours' time.⁵²

Raymond Gauger

On September 26, 1918, the *Southern Illinois Record* reported that Raymond Gauger had been seriously wounded in France. Raymond had been among the early volunteers to offer his services to his country and had been stationed in France in active service as a member of the Ambulance Corps for more than a year. Word of Raymond's injury had been received by his uncle, B. M. Maxey, and his wife.⁵³

Charles Grimes

Charles Grimes enlisted in Flora on May 29, 1918. The *Southern Illinois Record* reported that Mr. and Mrs. John Grimes of Flora received official notification in January of 1919 that their son, Charles Grimes, had been killed in the Argonne battle on November 11, 1918; the day that the armistice had been signed. On March 3rd of that year, Charles' mother wrote a letter requesting information about her son's death. A letter of reply crafted on March 23, 1919, by Hal C. Head, a chaplain with the 111th Infantry, was sent in response to Mrs. Grimes' letter. It was printed in the May 1st edition of the *Southern Illinois Record*:

Your letter of March 3rd, asking about your son's death came to me yesterday. Corporal Charley S. Grimes, formerly of Company C of the 111th Infantry, was killed November 4th on the Thiancourt front. He was on a patrol with one platoon of his company, when some machine guns fired on them and killed about twenty of them. Your son was killed instantly by German machine gun bullets. We buried him there with the others in neat graves with crosses at each head. We had what ceremony we could under the circumstances. It wasn't much, because the Germans were still pretty active with shells and machine guns. My heart was heavy and sad for the mothers at home who had given their noble sons in the war. Your son was a fine man and a good soldier. He was well liked by his company and by all who knew him. He was noble and gave everything, even his life, for what he knew was right.⁵⁴

⁵¹ "Co. L Boy Killed in France." (*Southern Illinois Record*: December 5, 1918), 2.

⁵² "Louisville." (*Southern Illinois Record*: December 5, 1918), 4.

⁵³ "Raymond Gauger Wounded." (*Southern Illinois Record*: September 26, 1918), 1.

⁵⁴ "Chaplain Head Confirms News of Private Grimes' Death." (*Southern Illinois Record*: May 1, 1919), 1.

It is worth noting that there seems to be a discrepancy in the date that Charles Grimes was killed. According to the chaplain, Grimes died on November 4, 1918, while the *Southern Illinois Record* had reported that he had died on November 11, 1918. According to the *Honor Roll*, from the State of Illinois, Charles Grimes was killed on November 11, 1918, the last day of the Great War.⁵⁵

Clarence H. Grimes

A letter from October 24th of 1918 was received from Clarence Grimes, written from somewhere in France. It was previously reported that Clarence had lost a hand from a shrapnel shell wound. According to the letter, this seemed to be a mistake. Clarence explained that he was in a hospital and would soon be out. He went on to add that he and his brother, Charley, had been over the top four times and had hand-to-hand encounters with the Huns, "whipping them like the pups they were."⁵⁶ It was later reported that Clarence had been severely wounded on October 17th in the fight at Chateau Thierry and was still convalescing in a French Hospital.⁵⁷

Mason P. Harbin

Mason P. Harbin, whom settled in Clay City some years after the conclusion of the Great War, was a private with Battery D of the 185th F. A. A. E. He wrote a letter to his parents recounting his journey from Camp Upton in New York to Liverpool Harbor in England. This letter, along with a photograph of Harbin, was published in the *Clay City Sesquicentennial*. It began with the title phrase, *On our way across June 26, 1918*:

We are leaving Camp Upton this a.m. June 26th. We left there at 9:30 a.m. on the Long Island railroad. When we got to New York [City], we took the boat down the Hudson River, and on the way down on the ferry boat, we went under the Brooklyn Bridge, saw the Singer Building, the Statue of Liberty, and a lot of the skyscrapers.

When we got to the dock we got on our transport. The Red Cross women of New York gave us ice cream and cake. It sure tasted good, for we knew it would be the last we would get in the good old U.S.A. until we came back.

Well, when it was time to go to bed, you ought to have seen the bunch swinging in their hammocks. There was not room for all of them on the hooks, so, of course, some of them had to hang theirs on the floor. But any how, they all slept some way. On the morning of the 27th, we pulled out of New York Harbor. There were about eight or nine transport ships of soldiers and U.S. submarine chasers and destroyers who went with us for safety.

On the same night, the 27th, we got behind the rest. We couldn't keep up with them, so we had to go by ourselves. The reason we could not keep up was [that] the coal we had wasn't any good. It wouldn't make any steam, so the only thing we could do was to go to shore.

⁵⁵ Illinois Veterans' Commission. *Honor Roll*. (Illinois Veterans' Commission. 1956).

⁵⁶ "Baltimore & Ohio News: Happenings Among the Railroad Boys." (*Southern Illinois Record*: December 5, 1918), 1.

⁵⁷ "One Brother Killed- the Other Wounded." (*Southern Illinois Record*: January 23, 1919), 1.

On Monday morning we pulled into Halifax, New Brunswick Harbor. We took on coal here and fresh water to drink.

It is now Wednesday, July 3rd. It is raining, and what time it isn't raining, there is always a heavy fog.

They say they haven't seen [the] sun shine bright since March. But I couldn't swear to it. But [we] haven't seen any sun ourselves on one day since we left New York City. That was the first day out at sea.

It is now 8:00 p.m., [and] time for us to go off deck and go to bed.

Thursday, July 4th, [we are] still in Halifax Harbor.

To pass the time away, we have boxing bouts at 9:30 a.m. and biscuit eating contests.

The morning passed very merrily. In the afternoon at 3:30 p.m. we pulled out of [the] harbor with about four other ships. One of them was an English cruiser.

On the second day out we saw some fish out ahead of one of the other boats, jumping up. They were dolphins. They looked like little fish jumping through the fence.

It is Sunday, July 7th. We had services on the boat this morning at 10:30 a.m.

Well, it is Saturday, July 13th, at 6:00 p.m. The submarine chasers that are with us dropped some depth bombs and got a submarine that had been following us all day; but they finally got it. We are in Liverpool Harbor. We came this a.m. at six o' clock. We are on the boat, but I don't know when we will get off. It was a tiresome trip. [We were] on the boat eighteen days, but we got here okay.

Well, I will write you again when we get to our barracks, so answer soon. Love to all. I remain your son.⁵⁸

Harlin Henson

Harlin Henson, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Lynch Henson, died on October 20, 1918, from spinal meningitis while serving in France. He had grown up six miles south of Xenia.⁵⁹

Homer S. Jarvis

Homer S. Jarvis, the son of Mrs. Young, enlisted in Boise, Idaho and trained at the Boise Barracks. He was stationed in Bordeaux, France. While in France he was gassed and wounded twice. Jarvis was promoted from corporal, to sergeant, and then to second lieutenant. Finally, he was promoted to first lieutenant. He was even personally honored by General Pershing and recommended for the position of captain.⁶⁰

According to the *Southern Illinois Record*, Lieutenant Jarvis was born and raised at Xenia, and was the brother of Mrs. N. T. Peirce, also of Xenia. A story from the *Payette Independent*, out of Idaho, was printed in the February 13, 1919 edition of the *Southern Illinois Record*:

Among the names of the soldiers honored by General Pershing for heroism, appears the name of First Lieutenant H. S. Jarvis, [of the] 11th Machine Gun Battalion, for extraordinary heroism in action near Vantillois, France, on September 26th [1918]. Lieutenant Jarvis captured Maxim guns, pushed forward to a heavily shelled area from which the infantry had withdrawn, and by their accurate fire kept groups of

⁵⁸ Bissey, Doris. *Clay City - Our Hometown: Sesquicentennial, 1855-2005*. (Effingham: Ad Works Publishing, Inc. 2006), 101.

⁵⁹ "Xenia." (*Southern Illinois Record*: November 28, 1918), 8.

⁶⁰ "Clay County in the War." (*Southern Illinois Record*: February 20, 1919), 1.

the enemy from occupying advantageous positions. He withdrew when it became too dark to see. Lieutenant Jarvis is well known in this city, having lived here before he went to France.⁶¹

Glen E. Leathers

Glen E. Leathers wrote the following letter home to his mother from a hospital in France on August 12, 1918:

Will endeavor to write you a few lines again this afternoon to let you know I am still among the living, but just a little out of commission. Trust this finds you all [as] well as when I last heard from you. Well, Mother, I met with a little accident Wednesday, August 7th, and as the result, I am now lying in the hospital taking life easy. On that morning, we went after the Dutch at four o'clock, and at seven o'clock, I got a bullet through my knee. I got medical attention at once and am getting along fine. Of course I will be out of commission for quite awhile, for the bone was broken, so it will take quite a while to heal up. But Mother, don't worry about me for one minute, for I am getting along the finest on earth, and consider [that] I am a lucky boy to get off so well as that, for some of them do not.

And Mother, the best part of it is [that] the Huns could not stop our advance. The boys drove them back a long way, and believe me, "Old Jerry" is beginning to realize now where he is. I only wish I might be with the boys when they hit Berlin, which is not far off, I hope.

Mother, I just got your letter and picture the day before I was wounded, and believe me, I am proud of it. And a man never realized the real worth of the Red Cross until he gets in the hospital. Believe me, they are sure a God send to us over here. Now Mother, I would write more this time if I could, but can't. So you will have to excuse me this time. But I do hope and pray this finds you all well and happy, and let me beg of you once more not to worry about me, for I am getting along just fine, and am glad that I had one opportunity to go to the front. My only regret is [that] I didn't get to stay longer.

Address my letters to Glen E. Leathers, Base Hospital #17, A. E. F. [American Expeditionary Force], and don't use my old company and regiment.

Now good bye, good luck, and God bless you all is my prayer. Your loving son,
Glen E. Leathers.⁶²

E. E. "Bud" Lee

E. E. "Bud" Lee arrived in Clay County, back from France, on Wednesday, January 22, 1919. He served with Company L of the 130th Infantry. Lee had been both gassed and wounded during the great battle at Chepilly Ridge, and was in poor health upon arrival. He was met at the depot by a reception committee and welcomed home. His Illinois Division had been decorated by the British, French, and Belgians for bravery. Lee was the first wounded Flora soldier to return home.⁶³

⁶¹ "Another Clay County Hero." (*Southern Illinois Record*: February 13, 1919), 1.

⁶² "News from the Soldier Boys." (*Southern Illinois Record*: September 26, 1918), 2.

⁶³ "First Wounded Flora Soldier Arrives Home." (*Southern Illinois Record*: January 23, 1919), 1.

Leslie M. Marshall

On September 26, 1918, the *Southern Illinois Record* reported that a Clay County soldier might be lost at sea. Leslie Marshall, the son of Charles Marshall of Flora, was a radio operator on board the *Buena Centura*. The vessel was torpedoed off the Spanish coast on September 20, 1918. It was reported that twenty-one individuals lost their lives in the attack. The parents were said to be greatly distressed and feared the worst.⁶⁴

Perley Roscoe Marshall

The following is a paraphrase of an obituary that appeared in the *Southern Illinois Record*: Perley Roscoe Marshall, the son of Charles S. and Belle A. Marshall, was born near Rinard, Illinois on March 16, 1888. He departed this life on September 27, 1918, at the age of thirty, after an illness lasting nine days. He was thirty years old. He enlisted in the service of his country as a wireless operator. He was placed in the radio school at Minneapolis, Minnesota before being transferred to Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was there only a short time before he was taken sick with influenza, which developed into pneumonia.⁶⁵

Glen Miller

On Tuesday, September 24, 1918, the father and mother of Glen Miller of Xenia received a message notifying them that Glen had been killed in an air raid in France on August 13th.⁶⁶

Roy Lyle Pearce

Roy Lyle Pearce, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Allison Pearce of Stanford Township, died of pneumonia, which was induced by influenza. Roy was the eldest of three Pearce children, there being two sons and one daughter. He died in France on September 21, 1918, at the age of twenty-eight.⁶⁷

Bert Pruitt

On January 9, 1919, the *Southern Illinois Record* announced that Bert Pruitt was coming home from the war in France. Pruitt heralded from the community of Iola in Larkinsburg Township. He had been decorated with the French Medal of Honor, the Croix de Guerre. However, it was not known for what action he had received the medal. Pruitt was a member of the famous Rainbow Division, principally made up of soldiers from the southern states. He had been the commander of this division, who had wired his superior officer during the Argonne fight, exclaiming that his boys would not understand an order to retreat.⁶⁸

Virgil D. Smith

Sergeant Virgil D. Smith of Flora was killed in action on the battle front in France. He was a nephew of Mrs. Etta Perine of Flora.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ "May Be Lost At Sea." (*Southern Illinois Record*: September 26, 1918), 1.

⁶⁵ "Obituary." (*Southern Illinois Record*: October 10, 1918), 4.

⁶⁶ "Killed in Action." (*Southern Illinois Record*: September 26, 1918), 1.

⁶⁷ "Buried in France With Military Honors." (*Southern Illinois Record*: October 31, 1918), 1.

⁶⁸ "Iola Has a War Hero." (*Southern Illinois Record*: January 9, 1919), 1.

⁶⁹ "Killed in Action." (*Southern Illinois Record*: November 21, 1918), 1.

Todd Whitney Snyder

Private Todd Snyder, of the H.D.O. Company of the 147th Infantry, wrote the following letter home to his sister, Rosemond Snyder, from somewhere in Belgium on November 29, 1918:

As I have not written to you for so long, I thought I would drop you a line.

The armistice was signed on John Lloyd's birthday. I sure will have many things to tell you when I return. The morning before the armistice was signed; we moved our stakes by motor to the front, while the machine gun bullets were falling thick as hail.

It was on Sunday night, and I sure did think of church and home. I have not been able to attend church since I left home, like I would have liked to.

The Sunday you were at the association, I was dodging shells that, when they struck the ground, made a hole large enough to bury a horse in. They fell close to me. Then, dear sister, is when you think of home and how to pray. So many boys have come to me since and have said they prayed there that day and were going to continue to do so.

But do not worry about me now, for I am fine. Like the poem I sent to you, 'when guns are stilled and strife is past,' I am living to be the boy you and mother expect to see.

We were in the trenches several nights in water and slept right in it, and had only a can of corned beef and two boxes of hard tack in seven days. I think I will not be so choicy about my food when I get back.

All of this may not pass the censor. What was so bad [was that] you could hear and see boys, with their arms and legs blown off by these large shells, and they would be calling for their mothers and God.

What makes me feel bad [is that] a boy in Company L, by the name of Amos McDevitt, was wounded and died. The other boys told me [that] he called for me in his last hours.

I received a fine letter from C. C. Markham. He surely is a man of God. From what Mr. Markham says, Clyde McGrew has been able to put more of what he has been doing in his letters than I have ever been.

I received a letter from Charles dated November 11th, the day the armistice was signed. Rose, that was the happiest day of my life.

I have been in 'No Man's Land' many times. There have been times since I came across that I did not know one hour if I would be living the next. But all is safe now.

Rose, I used to think it was bad to see a dead man, but I have gotten over that.

Rose, I know you folks read of the drive of the American troops, led by Colonel Galbraith, through the Argonne Forest. I was one of them. We had to use our gas masks pretty often then.

Hoping this finds you as well as this leaves me, I am, as ever, your loving brother.⁷⁰

Leo Stanford

Leo Stanford left Clay County with a contingent of soldiers on May 29th of 1918 for Fort Thomas, Kentucky. Later he was transferred to Camp Custer, Michigan. On October 8th, his

⁷⁰ "Clay County Boy in the Argonne Fight." (*Southern Illinois Record*: January 9, 1919), 3.

parents, Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Stanford of Clay City, received a message stating that Leo was dangerously ill. He had contracted influenza, which had resulted in double pneumonia. They left that day to visit their son at Camp Custer, but Leo passed away prior to their arrival. Leo died early Wednesday morning at the age of twenty-one. His remains were taken to the home of his parents on the evening of October 10th.⁷¹

Charles Workman

Charles E. Workman was the son of Mr. and Mrs. James E. Workman of Flora. He enlisted in Flora and was in the ammunition train service in France. He trained at Camp Taylor, Kentucky and in Shelby, Mississippi. He escaped without injury when a shell fired at his train caused a great explosion and the loss of life. Charles was honorably discharged January 3, 1919.⁷²

On January 10th, Charles' parents received a telegram from New York, containing the news that Charles had arrived safely within the city after having crossed on the *U.S.S. North Carolina* from overseas. They also learned that while with the army in France, Charles had narrowly escaped death. According to the telegram, he had been caught in a wreck in which thirty of his comrades had been instantly killed and about twice that many had been severely wounded. Charles had escaped without a scratch or bruise. Upon returning, it was expected that Charles resumed his job as machinist foreman in the Baltimore & Ohio shops in Washington, Indiana.⁷³

Clarence Workman

Clarence A. Workman was another son of Mr. and Mrs. James E. Workman of Flora. He enlisted November 27, 1912, as a storekeeper in the U.S. Navy and was trained in Chicago. He died on board the *U.S.S. Princess Matoika*, while near the French coast, on October 5, 1918. Clarence was twenty-five years of age at his time of death.⁷⁴

A message was received on Sunday, October 13th to Mr. and Mrs. James Workman, informing them that Clarence, one of their three sons in the service, had died of bronchial pneumonia while in foreign-service as a marine. The following day they received a telegram, stating that Clarence's body was en route to the United States, and that a letter would follow. The last time that the parents had received word from Clarence was in August, at which time he was in Norfolk, Virginia, waiting to embark.⁷⁵

The remains of Clarence Workman arrived in Flora on Saturday, October 26th. The next day his remains were interred at Elmwood Cemetery in Flora. He was reported to be Flora's first gold star in the Navy's Honor Roll.⁷⁶

Ollie Woods

The March 27th edition of the *Southern Illinois Record* proclaimed that Private Ollie Woods, of Flora, had returned from France. He had reached his home in Flora on Tuesday of that week. Woods had been in some of the serious fighting of September and October of 1918.

⁷¹ "Victims of Spanish Influenza: Leo Stanford, Also a Victim, Brought Home Today." (*Southern Illinois Record*: October 10, 1918), 1.

⁷² "Clay County in the War." (*Southern Illinois Record*: February 20, 1919), 1.

⁷³ "Flora Boy's Narrow Escape." (*Southern Illinois Record*: January 16, 1919), 1.

⁷⁴ "Clay County in the War." (*Southern Illinois Record*: February 20, 1919), 1.

⁷⁵ "Gave His Life for His Country." (*Southern Illinois Record*: October 17, 1918), 1.

⁷⁶ "Died in Foreign Service." (*Southern Illinois Record*: October 31, 1918), 1.

He had been gassed, but otherwise had escaped without a scratch. He was reported to be well and hearty upon his return.⁷⁷

Part Three: Soldiers of the Eastern Front

Overview

In this part, I highlight the lives of those soldiers from Clay County who fought on the Eastern Front. The involvement of Clay County soldiers on the Eastern Front differed quite dramatically from that of the Western Front. According to information obtained from the Clay County Genealogical Society, there may have only been two soldiers from Clay County to have fought on the Eastern Front: Norris Pickel and Otto Wyatt.

Both Pickel and Wyatt served in medical support and fought on Russian soil against the Bolsheviks in the war. The 339th Infantry Regiment, with support from the 337th Ambulance Company and Field Hospital, arrived in Northern Russia on September 5, 1918, and were back in the United States on June 30, 1919.⁷⁸

Part Four: The Great War Draws to a Close

Armistice

On November 7, 1918, the *Southern Illinois Record* stated that General March had announced that the 33rd Illinois Division was in action east of the Meuse River, northwest of Verdun, and close to the Belgian border. Approximately ten or twelve Clay County soldiers were in Company L of Olney, a unit within the 33rd Division.⁷⁹

On that same day, Germany sent for armistice terms. The following day, a great sensation in the United States, caused by an unfounded report that the armistice had been signed, led to wild peace celebrations held all over the country. However, the armistice was not signed until November 11th, when Germany accepted the terms of the armistice. On that day, President Wilson read the terms of the German armistice to the U.S. Congress in a joint session which announced the end of the war. Similar declarations were made to the British Parliament, the French National Assembly, and at other Allied capitals.⁸⁰

The November 14th edition of the *Southern Illinois Record* captured the reaction of the Flora community and of Clay County:

We thought it a big jubilee- an enthusiastic overflow of joy in Flora last Thursday night [7th] when our people let themselves go in their gladness over the good news that peace had come to the world, but it was only a mild breeze before the storm compared with what happened in Flora Monday night [11th], when all doubt as to peace being declared was assured. With unanimous accord everybody joined in the jubilee and rejoiced that the end of the war had been reached in a complete and overwhelming victory for the forces of right and justice.

At three o' clock a.m., mill and factory whistles begun blowing forth the glad tidings, the church bells joining, and thus everybody in Flora was awakened with the news of peace and victory. There was no more sleep in Flora that morning, and we doubt if any one wanted to sleep any more. The news brought so much of gladness and joy to us and all the world that no one wanted to miss one moment of the glorious thrill.

⁷⁷ "Local Street Echoes." (*Southern Illinois Record*: March 27, 1919), 5.

⁷⁸ Clay County Geological Society. [No Title] *Clay County Geological Society Quarterly*, Fall 1999: 38.

⁷⁹ "Clay County Boys at Front." (*Southern Illinois Record*: November 7, 1918), 1.

⁸⁰ Haulsee, W. M., Howe, F.G., & Doyle, A.C. *Soldiers of the Great War: Volume 1*. (Washington, D.C.: Soldiers Record Publishing Association. 1920), 56-59.

Early in the forenoon a meeting was called at the Prince Drug Store and a program was arranged to have all the people in Flora and the surrounding country join in one big parade and jubilee of victory that night- and they came by thousands, and at seven o' clock, North Avenue was packed with the largest and happiest crowd of one hundred percent Americans ever brought to this city at any one time.⁸¹

Part Five: Clay County Bound

Welcoming the Soldiers Home

In a December 1918, edition of the *Southern Illinois Record*, it was announced that a Welcome Home Committee was created in Flora to give a suitable welcome to soldiers returning home from service. The cooperation of the Commercial Club and the local churches was requested. The intent of the committee was to have an organizational body to initiate plans and arrangements for Home Coming events. A meeting was to be held for Friday, the 6th, at 7:30 p.m. at the Red Cross room in the City Hall. A full attendance by the committee members was stressed. All interested citizens were invited to attend and participate.⁸²

On New Year's Day, the Welcome Home Committee gave its first celebration for the soldiers who had returned from service. The event took place at the library, in the reading room, and opened with a reception and entertainment.⁸³

The Return of Company L

On Tuesday, May 20, 1919, the *Sibony* arrived in New York, which carried thousands of returning soldiers. Among these soldiers was the 33rd "Prairie" Division, which contained the 130th Regiment, all Southern Illinois soldiers including those of Company L. Sixteen Clay County soldiers returned with Company L.

Upon arriving, the Division was first taken to Camp Mills in New York, which was then transported to Chicago. While in Chicago, a grand parade was held. The Division was finally sent to Camp Grant and was honorably discharged. On Sunday, June 1, 1919, the area soldiers from Company L reached their homes in Flora, Olney, and Sumner. They were joyfully welcomed by hundreds of relatives, friends, and admirers. The sentiment of the event was captured and expressed a few days later in the *Southern Illinois Record*, "Back from France, praised by the governor, the Prairie Division of Illinois, with Company L, is home at last!"⁸⁴

Conclusion

In this project, I sought to produce a collective narrative of the involvement- both the contributions and the sacrifices- of Clay County, Illinois to the American World War I effort. Under no circumstance was this project ever claimed to be a complete history. It is with regret that I must concede that a more thorough examination was not, and could not, be prepared. Rather, it is my hope that this project may serve as a foundation to be consulted when future research of Clay County, Illinois and its involvement in World War I is undertaken.

⁸¹ "Another Independence Day." (*Southern Illinois Record*: November 14, 1918), 1.

⁸² "Welcome Home." (*Southern Illinois Record*: December 5, 1918), 1.

⁸³ "First Welcome Home Entertainment." (*Southern Illinois Record*: January 2, 1919), 1.

⁸⁴ "Company L Arrives Home." (*Southern Illinois Record*: June 5, 1919), 1.