

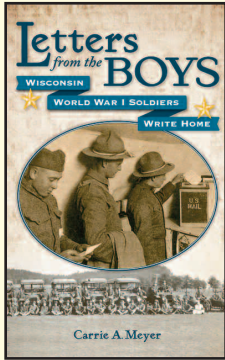
Excerpt from Carrie A. Meyer's book, 'Letters from the Boys'

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from the book, "Letters from the Boys: Wisconsin World War I Soldiers Write Home," by Carrie A. Meyer, published by the Wisconsin Historical Society Press. It is reprinted here with permission from the publisher.

On the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the flood of American troops in Europe that would shift the tide of World War I in favor of the Allies, author Carrie A. Meyer, shares stories from the trenches as told by the Wisconsin men who fought in them, including this description from her Wisconsin Historical Society Press book, "Letters from the Boys," of the Wisconsin National Guard troops from Green County as they left home to train for, and eventually fight in, the "war to end all wars."

While Camp MacArthur was under construction, the Wisconsin National Guard began training at Camp Douglas. The National Guard was called into federal service on Sunday, July 15. On that day about twelve thousand Wisconsin men reported to the armories of their local company to be sent to Camp Douglas, the state military reservation, about ninety miles northwest of Madison. For the Green County boys, this was not so far from home.

Reuel Barlow was among the young men who went to Camp Douglas that Sunday in mid-July. The Monticello Messenger reported that he had surprised his friends in Monticello by getting married the previous Thursday to Ruth Leitzell of Freeport, Ill. Barlow was a journalism student at the University of Wisconsin and already had newspaper experience. He joined the



Wisconsin National Guard training in Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas. (Photo credit: Wisconsin Historical Image ID 74802)

Field Hospital Corps of the Wisconsin National Guard. During the next two years, Barlow would write many letters home to his family that would appear in the Messenger and other local papers.

Barlow and the other National Guard troops spent several weeks at Camp Douglas before moving on to Camp MacArthur. The number of men ultimately assembled at Camp Douglas rose to 15,256, including infantry, field artillery, cavalry, engineers, field hospitals, and ambulance companies. A few Wisconsin guardsmen did not make it to Waco. Three companies of men from Fond du Lac, Oshkosh, and Appleton were transferred to the 42nd "Rainbow" Division, so named because it was assembled from National Guard units from twenty-six states. The Rainbow Division trained in New York and arrived in France several

weeks before the other Wisconsin guardsmen.

The majority of the Wisconsin National Guard troops, including those from Green County, began traveling by train in September to Waco. The Brooklyn Teller ran an article on September 26 that reported on the movement of the Guard troops:

Five trainloads of troops, on their way from Camp Douglas to Waco, Texas, passed through here on Monday, but made no stops between Madison and Janesville. Eight Brooklyn boys—Ben and Einar Johnson, Thorwald and Bernie Christensen, Otis O'Brien, Frank Milbrandt, Albert Weisser, and Melvin Berger, members of Co. M, 1st regiment—were on the second train; and many relatives and friends went to Janesville to bid them farewell. Several thousand people took part in the demonstration both at Madison and Janesville. The railroad grounds and nearby streets being thronged with people anxious for a parting word and hand clasp.

Some of the first letters published "from the boys" were those written home from the train. Wilbert Murphy wrote to the editor of the Brodhead News, explaining that the troops mailed letters by throwing them out the car windows as they passed by a station. "Someone is sure to see them and pick them up and mail them." He described their breakfast of corned beef hash and potatoes and the progress of their trip:

We are in Illinois now, about 190 miles from St. Louis and 100 miles or more from Chicago. We reached Milwaukee last night about 6:30 and were given a grand reception. It sounded like all the factory whistles were blowing. Reached Chicago at 11 p.m. and stayed in the yards until 1:30 this morning. Then we must have stopped about fifty times before we got out of the "Windy City." Just looking out of the windows I notice all kinds of corn fields. The land is level and all a person can see in places is corn.

Cambridge Hot Spots & Happenings

Compiled by Jason Francis

Hot Spots

Built in 1906, the **Cambridge Historic School** (213 South St.) is now a museum. It was once home to eight grades as well as the four-year high school. When a new middle school opened in the city in the early 1990s, a citizens group organized to turn the historic school into a museum, and in 1997 the Cambridge Historic School Foundation, Inc. opened its doors to the public and later that year the building was accepted and listed on the Wisconsin Register of Historic Places. Today the museum houses seven rooms of historic collections, including a Far East exhibit, Cambridge and surrounding area artifacts, an African collection, farming community collection and a room dedicated to the school history of Cambridge. The museum is open May-Oct., Wednesdays and Saturdays, 12:30-3 p.m. Admission is free. 920-563-9095, www.cambridgehistoricmuseum.org

Covering 422 acres, **Cam-Rock Park** is located in eastern Dane County along Koshkonong Creek between the villages of Cambridge and Rockdale. This park has three separate use areas with shelter facilities and play areas. Section 1 is found at 68 Cty. Hwy. B, Cambridge; section 2 at 136 Cty. Hwy. B, Cambridge, and section 3 at 2334 Highland Rd., Cambridge. The trails are suitable for hiking and cross-country skiing. Cam-Rock Park III has a single-track mountain bike trail. 608-423-4438, www.countyofdane.com/lwrp/parks/cam-rock.aspx

Encompassing 420 acres of sparkling waters,

Lake Ripley offers fine fishing for panfish, largemouth bass, northern pike and walleye. Accessible by taking Park Road east of Cambridge's downtown, the lake also features a public beach, a playground, concessions, two tennis courts, a basketball court, volleyball courts, disc golf and more.

Happenings

Fridays-Cambridge Open Air/Farmers' Market: Held on Fridays in downtown Veterans Park, 100 E. Main St., from June through September. In addition to the fresh fruits and vegetables, you'll find artists, crafters and entrepreneurs. 8 a.m.-1 p.m. 608-423-3780, www.cambridgewi.com

Select Fridays-Summer Concert Series: The Cambridge Arts Council presents the free concerts from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in downtown Veterans Park, 100 E. Main St. This summer's dates and acts include The June 8, June 22, July 6, July 20 and Aug. 3. enjoyjefersoncounty.com, www.cambridgewiarts.org

May 28-Cambridge Memorial Day Parade & Firemen's Breakfast: Memorial Day starts with the annual Firemen's all-you-can-eat breakfast at the fire station, with the annual parade down Main Street at 10:30 a.m. followed by a Memorial service downtown in Veteran's Park after the parade. www.cambridgewi.com

June 3-Battle at Cam-Rock WORS Bike Race: Enjoy a day of off-road racing competitions, picnics and fun events at Cam-Rock Park. The trails are waiting. Cam-Rock Park III. wors.org/schedule/camrock

July 14-Cambridge EMS Cannonball Run 1M, 5K & 10K: Run, jog or walk the family-friendly Cannonball

Run, which winds through Cam-Rock Park along the Rock River Cannonball rail bed. Cambridge EMS Station (271 W. Main St.). Registration starts at 6:45 a.m., Fun Run at 8 a.m., 5K and 10K at 8:30 a.m. 608-423-3511, caemscannonballrun.com

July 28-29-Midwest Fire Fest: Demonstration-heavy celebration of all things created with fire, heat, and smoke including but not limited to clay, metal arts, welding, forging, hot glass, food, and performance. Attractions for the weekend include on-site firing and hot reveal of a clay sculpture, community iron pour, fire dancers, Saturday night's Fire Feast, and smoking hot music all weekend. The event includes a VIP dinner and sales, music, fire performers and concessions. West Side Park and around Cambridge. Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. (times subject to change). 608-423-3780, www.midwestfirefest.com

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