

Way We Were

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Title: From Our Boys in the Armed Forces

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### From Our Boys in the Armed Forces

With an almost eerie sense of foresight, David L. Darden is quoted in the Park Record from 1942 urging people to save letters from war as they could have great historical value in 100 years.<sup>1</sup> Though not even 100 years has passed, letters printed in the Park Record from soldiers overseas provide great insight into how different wars affected Parkites during those times.

Perhaps because his son was in the military, Sam Raddon, owner of the Park Record, received letters from enlisted Parkite boys and printed them in his paper. Raddon would then send the paper to any service member whose address he had as a way of keeping this tight knit community informed, whether at home or at war. Due to censorship regulations few details were written about the experiences of soldiers in battle, but one can gain a raw understanding of the desire for a connection to their life at home.

In a rare glimpse at life in France during World War I Chas McGill wrote his mother, "We were in the big drive somewhere in the forest of Argonne and the incidents that occurred form a part of a man's life that he would gladly make sacrifice in order to be a participant. The motion pictures we have seen, the stories we have read, pictures formed by our imagination all unrolled themselves the night of the bombardment and the morning of the attack. The bombardment [began] slowly at first as they began to unloosen far away, we knew the hour for the 'big noise' was drawing near. Soon close by, then beside us...the guns began to crack. It is sure gay to hear your own shells sailing overhead, but not near so pleasant to hear the whine of one of Jerry's. Some day, dear mother, I can tell you the details of that memorable morning..."<sup>2</sup> The letter, printed in the Park Record in December of 1918, likely describes a battle in the Argonne Forest in which 197 Americans were killed, 150 went missing or were taken prisoner, and only 194 were rescued.

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<sup>1</sup> Park Record, 12 March 1942, *Historian Urges Letters of Trainees be Saved*

<sup>2</sup> Park Record, 6 December 1918, *From Soldier Boys in France*

To survive such an event leaves no question as to why soldiers sought an escape through hearing from friends in other parts of the world or learning about life in Park City. Letters such as this gave hope to those at home that one day their loved ones would return, and letters from home boosted the morale of those at war.

From now through October the Park City Museum is hosting a Smithsonian traveling exhibit entitled Mail Call about mail and morale in the military. Stop on by to see more letters from war.

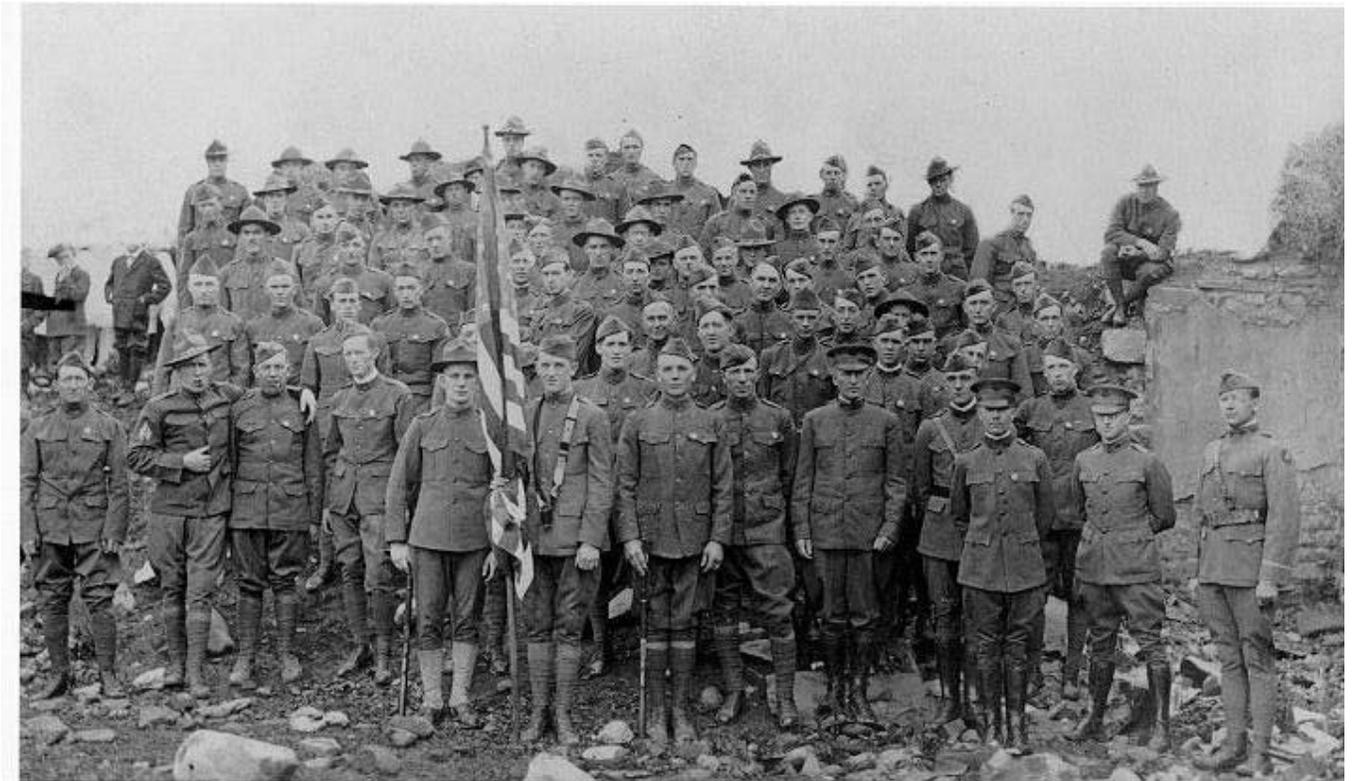


Image: 1990.38.1

Credit: Herbert Deighton Collection

Caption: November 11, 1919, 68 Park City soldiers from World War I pause for a photo op at the Marsac Mill Site.