

Way We Were
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Wednesday, August 13, 2013
World War I Centennial: Part II

Thank you for joining us for the second of a four-part series detailing Parkites' roles in World War I.

The introduction of widespread military use of airplanes, airships and observation balloons also characterized World War I. Without any standing air force, warring nations had to recruit and train aviators from scratch. In March 1918, a recruiter visited Park City in an effort to fill the Aviation Section. The recruiter inspired men with patriotism and promises of skills in the new industry that would offer good jobs after the war. Numerous Parkites enlisted in aviation during the course of the war: Henry Bircumshaw, Harry Raddon, Sterling Lewis, Lawrence Schaper, Arthur Stewart, Garvin Evans, Fred Woods, Roy Billings, Roy McCarroll and Jack Witherow.

A Parkite who was on the receiving end of the war's new aviation technology was Major R.E. Wight, a surgeon stationed in London repairing disfigured soldiers. While there, he watched an aerial battle with 30 German airplanes and three zeppelins that bombarded the city; he said that one zeppelin was shot down and plunged three miles. Major Wight also had the privilege of being flown across the English Channel to a new assignment in France.

The German U-boat was another new wartime technology used on a large scale in World War I. The Allies responded to this threat with escorted convoys to minimize the loss of cargo and troop ships. Bud Horan, a Parkite, was stationed on a convoy flag ship, the *USS Susquehanna*. In May 1918, he witnessed the sinking of the *USS President Lincoln*, the largest US naval vessel lost in the war, struck by three torpedoes. Bud had a lot of opportunity to wrangle with U-boats, as he crossed the Atlantic at least 14 times.

It is estimated that American casualties were 116,708 killed and 204,002 wounded during World War I. Summit County suffered its share of losses.

The wounded included: Clifford Dreitzler, in the Navy training to be submariner, deafened during gun firing practice in September 1917; Edgar McLaughlin, a miner in the Engineering Corps, at Belleau Woods, June 7, 1918; Corp Erno Backman, July 19 on the Western Front; Pvt William Graham, shot in his left thigh, September 3; Pvt Jack Welsh, three times, in Flanders, at the Somme, and finally shot in the leg as he sniped a German sniper; Alex McDonald in France, early October; James Knight, shot in the ankle, October; the Dority Brothers, Robert (October 1, by mustard gas) and Harold (October 2, by shrapnel), who fought less than two miles apart at the Argonne; Fred Thompson, arm shattered by shrapnel; Frank Collins, badly shattered arm, one hour before hostilities ceased, November 11, Armistice Day; and Clarence Payne, stricken with "shell shock".

In recognition of the 100th anniversary of World War I, the next two Wednesdays' *Way We Were* articles will continue the series highlighting the war-time sacrifices and experiences of Park City and Summit County residents. See you here next week!

The Park City Historical Society & Museum is celebrating 30 years of preserving, protecting, and promoting Park City's history and heritage.



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Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum

Caption: World War I soldiers marching down Main Street in a military funeral procession, possibly for Ray Peterson in March 1919.