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Fall 2017  
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**INSIDE: 2017 Kentucky Book Fair Catalog**





# LINDSEY WILSON COLLEGE THEATRE

## 2017-18 SEASON SCHEDULE

### Fall 2017

#### **The Importance of Being Earnest**

By Oscar Wilde

Directed by Robert Brock

October 31 – November 3 • 7 p.m. CT

November 5 • 2 p.m. CT

Phoenix Stage (Blackbox)

Reservation Only

#### **Jack and the Wonder Beans**

By James Still

Directed by Robert Brock

November 16 • 7 p.m. CT

(Free Public Performance of Children's Theatre Production)

#### **Songs for a New World**

Music and Lyrics by

Jason Robert Brown

Directed by Jeremy Cloyd

November 29 – Dec. 1 • 7 p.m. CT

December 3 • 2 p.m. CT

Lindsey Wilson students are taught basic knowledge of the main components of theater arts and an appreciation of the historical and present impact of theater on civilization. Students are given opportunities to experience theater arts through involvement in several major productions each semester.

### Spring 2018

#### **Student-Directed Plays**

March 29 – 30 • 7 p.m. CT

#### **And Then They Came for Me**

By James Still

Directed by Robert Brock

April 4 – 6 • 7 p.m. CT

April 8 • 2 p.m. CT

#### **Macbeth**

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Robert Brock

April 10 – 13 • 7 p.m. CT

April 15 • 2 p.m. CT

Phoenix Stage (Blackbox)

Reservation Only

#### **Children of Eden**

Music and Lyrics by

Stephen Schwartz

Book by John Caird

Directed by Jeremy Cloyd

April 25 – 27 • 7 p.m. CT

April 29 • 2 p.m. CT

All Performances in V.P. Henry Auditorium

All times Central

Robert Brock, Artistic Director

#### **Tickets:**

General Public - \$5

LWC Faculty/Staff - \$3

Students - Free

To make reservations or for more information, email [brockr@lindsey.edu](mailto:brockr@lindsey.edu) or please call 270-384-7382 or 270-590-4803.

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# Kentucky

Fall 2017

## humanities



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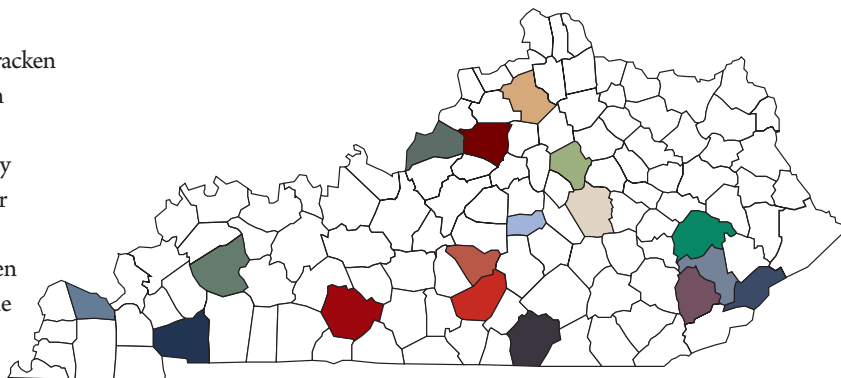
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# Return to World War I

**W**hen we decided to do a World War I issue of *Kentucky Humanities* magazine, we could not have imagined how many scholars, authors, and historians would submit stories of the brave and heroic Kentuckians who took part in the war to end all wars! We shared a number of those with you in the Fall 2016 issue, and have more World War I stories to share with you now.

A native of Whitesburg, Kentucky, Frank Litsey was a freshman at Transylvania University when war was declared. A letter from Litsey to his parents gives a glimpse of the college student's life at the start of the war. You can find his letter on page 8.

During World War I, the greatest loss of life did not occur on the battlefield. It was the Influenza Pandemic that took the lives of more than 600,000 Americans, including 16,000 Kentuckians. On page 14, Eric Christianson tells how the epidemic changed life throughout the Commonwealth, specifically on the University of Kentucky campus.

In 1939 Keene Johnson became Kentucky's Governor. Before that, he was a college student, football player, and World War I soldier. Margaret Spratt's photo essay chronicles the relationship between Keen Johnson and Eunice Nichols, a story similar to that of thousands of other couples who lived with World War I as the backdrop to their love story. Relive their romance on page 17.

Among the two million soldiers sent overseas was Hyden-native Sergeant Willie Sandlin. Sandlin's heroic assault on German troops resulted in the death of 24 and the capture of 200 more enemy fighters. But post-war life back home for Sandlin wasn't that of a revered hero as he lived in modest circumstances, poor health, and obscurity. James Gifford honors the Kentucky Medal of Honor recipient on page 20.

In our previous World War I issue, Brigadier General USMC Ronald R. Van Stockum recounted his father's service as one of the first to answer the call for volunteers by Britain's minister of defense. In this issue, Van Stockum shares his mother's wartime journal. Her participation in the Women's Royal Air Force is an incredible tale. You can read it on page 25.

Georgia Green Stamper tells us about her great-uncle Murf Hudson, who not only survived a mustard gas attack, but lived for 70 years following his discharge from the hospital. Hudson was a 25-year-old farm boy who had never been far from home when he was drafted and sent to fight in Europe. His courageous story is on page 30.

Once you have finished the trip back to World War I, flip to page 10 where Linda LaPinta examines three Kentucky cookbooks and the fusion between our history and our food.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Kentucky Humanities*. If you missed our first World War I issue last fall, you can find it and other past issues at [kyhumanities.org](http://kyhumanities.org). Do you have a World War I story to tell? Contact our editor, Marianne Stoess, [Marianne.Stoess@uky.edu](mailto:Marianne.Stoess@uky.edu), and we will share some of them on our website, [kyhumanities.org](http://kyhumanities.org).



**Bill Goodman**

*Executive Director  
Kentucky Humanities*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Goodman".



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On Thursday, September 21st at the Lyric Theatre Kentucky Humanities presented “Aunt Jemima and the Complexities of Race.” The event began with a shortened Kentucky Chautauqua® presentation of Kentucky-native Nancy Green (a.k.a Aunt Jemima) presented by Debra Faulk. Following the performance, KET’s Renee Shaw moderated a community discussion about stereotypes and race relations and how the humanities can help expose and shatter these stereotypes. The esteemed panel featured: Dr. Kelly J. Madison, Professor of Cultural Politics & Media Studies at California State University, Los Angeles; Ricardo Nazario y Colon, Chief Diversity Officer at Western Carolina University; Dr. Gerald Smith, Professor of African American History at the University of Kentucky; and John Schrader, practicing attorney and former Fayette County family court judge.

On Friday morning, September 22nd, the event moved to Frederick Douglass High School in Lexington, where nearly 400 Fayette County High School students gathered for the program. Students from Bryan Station, Carter G. Woodson Academy, Frederick Douglass, Henry Clay, Lafayette, Lexington Catholic, Lexington Christian Academy, and Paul Laurence Dunbar participated in an honest and thoughtful conversation with the panelists, sharing their thoughts and experiences.

These community programs were made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Panel members led the community discussion at the Lyric Theatre.



Debra Faulk presented Kentucky Chautauqua’s Nancy Green, *Becoming America’s Pancake Queen*.



Students from Carter G. Woodson Academy participated in the race relations discussion at Lexington’s Frederick Douglass High School.



## 2017 Kentucky Book Fair Seeks Volunteers



Kentucky Humanities presents

# KENTUCKY BOOK FAIR

Alltech Arena at the  
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Lexington, KY

Volunteers are needed for the 36th Annual Kentucky Book Fair! From set-up on the morning of Thursday, November 16th through the tear down on the afternoon of Saturday, November 18th we are seeking volunteers to assist with all aspects of the event. Descriptions of all volunteer positions and time slots available can be found at [kyhumanities.org](http://kyhumanities.org) or contact us at [kyhumanities@kyhumanities.org](mailto:kyhumanities@kyhumanities.org) or (859) 257-5932.

## #KBF17

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You can find episodes at [kyhumanities.org](http://kyhumanities.org), SoundCloud, and iTunes.



# Dear Mother & Father

**Below is the transcript of a letter from Frank Litsey to his mother and father, Lafe and Mamie Litsey, of Whitesville, Kentucky. Frank, born February 24, 1900, was a freshman at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky.**

*Lexington, KY  
October 20, 1918*

*Dear Mother and Father,*

*We received your letter yesterday afternoon, also the football clothes. The reason I didn't want my clothes was because I don't guess I will play anymore. You see there was six teams organized, and three games scheduled. My team was beaten when it played and it will not play anymore. I had my knee hurt before the game and didn't get to play. Allens team was supposed to play yesterday but on account of the rain was not played, guess they will play this week. Lieut. Meyer will represent the S.A.T.C. I don't guess I will try to get on this team for they are mostly large men on it. Lieuts. Meyer and Hauser are both going to be on the team and I think it is going to be a good team.*

*This is rather a gloomy day here, it rained yesterday and last night and is cool today. I am sorry about father having so much trouble with his side and hope he will be alright in a little bit. It certainly is bad about there being so much sickness and deaths in and around Whitesville, isn't it? We have several boys sick here now, but not bad. Dr Garick is the physician for the army men at Transylvania. He makes two trips here a day and comes any other time he is called.*

*We have had rather a hard weeks work this past week, hiking five or six miles every morning and then all the drilling. Two squads have to police the grounds and the buildings each day. There is ten squads. I am in the eighth squad and Allen is Corporal of the tenth squad. It certainly is a job to pick up all the paper and everything off the ground around the barracks and to clean the toilets and sweep the halls, & mop the floors. Our rooms are inspected daily and on Saturday*



Photo courtesy of Eric Frugé



is general inspection. The daily inspection is bad enough but the Saturday inspection is very strict. If on this Sat. inspection the least bit of dust is found in your room you are liable to get a week K.P. or your week-end pass taken away from you. Some of the boys have already gotten their passes taken for two weeks ahead. We have always had our room in good shape. The Lieuts. inspect the rooms.

We thought for a while school would begin tomorrow but I dont guess it will. If it dont we will have another hard week of drill. Our rifles came Friday. They weight about twelve lbs, and have a bayonet on the end. They came in boxes and had grease all over them. We have a slip with fire regulations on it and on the bulletin board. In case of fire the bugler blows a long blast. We are supposed to dress as quick as possible and go down in front and fall in line and the roll is called. Now just to show you how prompt we have to be. Friday night the Lieuts. decided they would practice this fire drill. Allen and I promptly got "wind" of this but no one but the bugler was supposed to know about it. The bugle blowed at eleven thirty. Allen and I laid in bed with our clothes on till this time so we got down in time, so did most of the others but there was about ten that I dont suppose ever woke up. What do you think was the punishment for these fellows? They had to clean the grease off all these rifles (85). They had to take them apart and get all the grease off. You certainly have to be on the alert in the army. Seeing these rifles with the sharp bayonets on the end makes you feel a little funny, knowing what maybe you will have to use them for. There is some talk of us having to go to the rifle range near Boonesboro sometime this fall. They say they will hike us down there, it is about twenty five miles I believe.

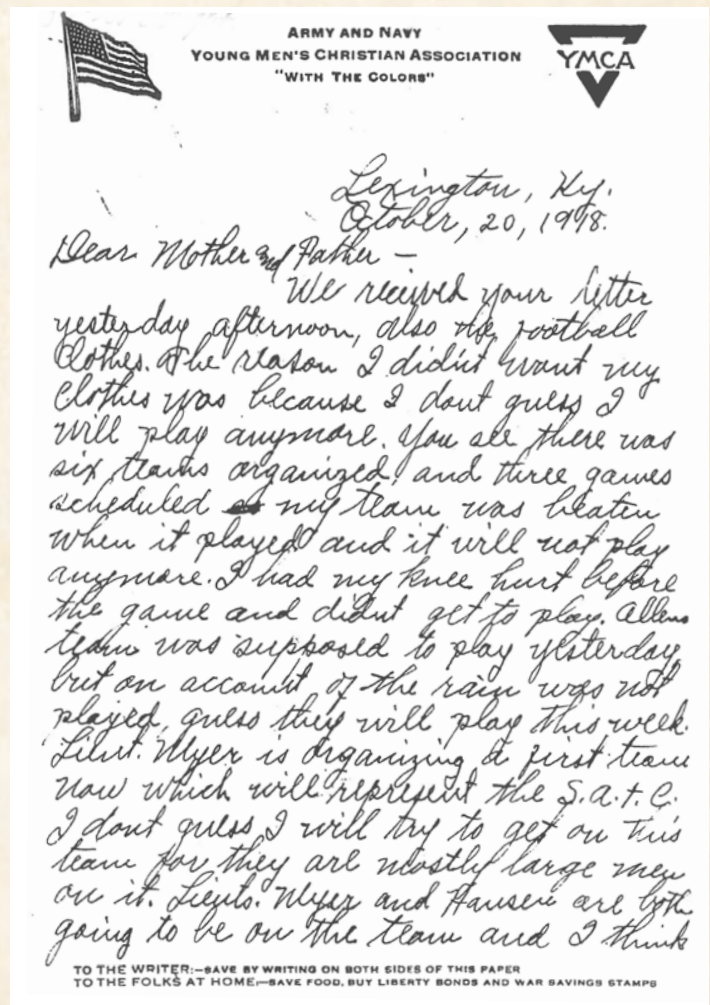
You asked in you letter if I was satisfied. I think of home so often and wish I were there but I know there is no chance now so I have to smile and make the best of it. We are both feeling fine. I dont know whether I have gained any flesh or not but will wright the next time I go down in town. We dont hardly have any time to go to town at all only on our pass. I reckon you all are still out home.

Lieut. Garrett requested that all men subscribe for at least one Liberty Bond. I took one and didn't know either whether I ought to have done it or not. There will be six dollars for insurance then out of our pay and five for a Liberty Bond if you subscribe.

The book we have to study in War Issues has come and they want us to get it and be reading. I wish you all would send me a little money. I tried to make that six dollars last as long as I could but it seems like I had to be buying something every little bit. We are learning to talk by signs and had to have flags. This is called the Semaphore. And then for Laundry stamps and such things it soon went. I will get about 19 dollars the first of the month. I think I will send most of this home and let father send it to me as I need it. I will write to Grandmama and Jopapa soon. I dont know much more news this time and will write again soon.

Your loving boy,  
Frank

Letter and photographs submitted by Eric Fugé





# Kentucky Cuisine & Culture:

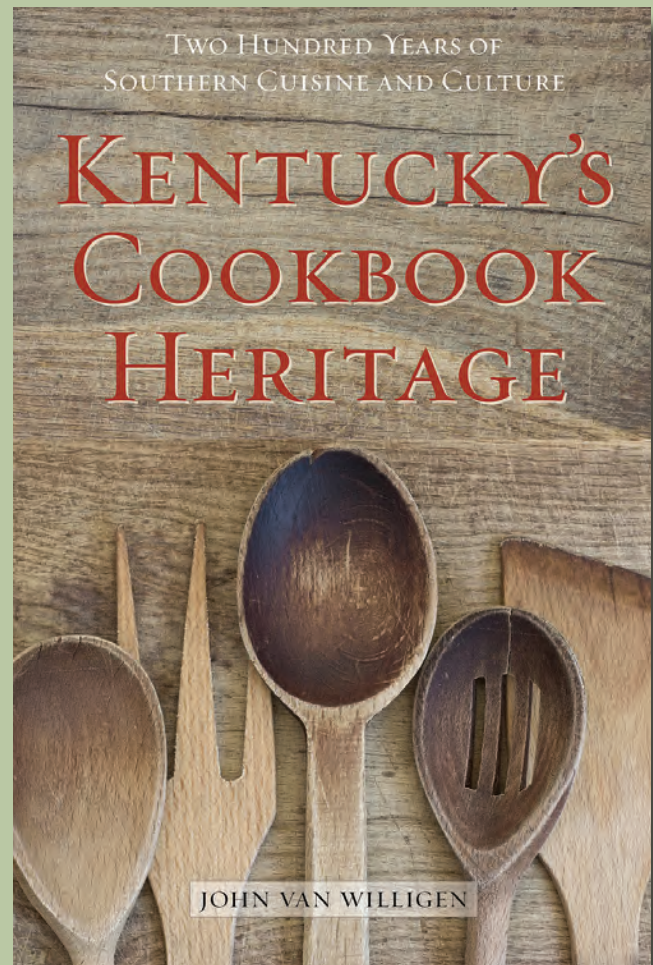
## Three Takes on the Fusion of History and Food

By Linda Elisabeth LaPinta

Few artifacts define us more than the foods that reflect our culture while centering family and friends at our tables. Whether we're cooks, connoisseurs, or scholars of social history, we're collectors of recipes and rituals that articulate our tastes, origins, and aspirations, even as they sustain us. And so it is apt that the University Press of Kentucky, the publisher whose mission includes "the publication of academic books of high scholarly merit" as well as "significant books about the history and culture of Kentucky" offers us three recent books that, respectively, highlight the Commonwealth's rich food heritage, flavorful culinary additions to our kitchens, and savory dishes brought to us by refugees from across the globe.

John van Willigen's *Kentucky's Cookbook Heritage: Two Hundred Years of Southern Cuisine and Culture* published in 2014 is still selling strong, primarily because its spot-on, meticulously researched and well-written cultural history of the Commonwealth's evolving tastes, meal preparation practices, and foodways complements the book's classic recipes. From the state's earliest-known cookbook, *The Kentucky Housewife*, published in 1839, to today's penchant for producing and consuming sustainable foods, van Willigen traces what we eat and why. For instance, prior to the advent of baking powder, a number of 1839 recipes call for beaten egg whites or "other chemical leavens" such as pearlash (potash) to lighten breads and cakes.

Similarly, the author offers thorough explanations of the social context of the cookbooks about which he writes. His discussion of *The Kentucky Housewife* as a treatise intended as a "cookbook for a supervisor of a large upper-class household with a kitchen staff, which often included enslaved persons" leads to a broader analysis of slavery in Kentucky and the significant roles African Americans played in the advancement of American food preferences and preparation. According to van Willigen, the increase in the number and type of cookbooks published after the Civil War occurred as a direct result of upper-class households losing "not only the physical help but also the knowledge of the formerly enslaved women, gained over years of service" and in response to substantial advances in cooking technology and in the availability of "mass-produced and affordable wood- or coal-fired cookstoves."



These factors, coupled with the advent of name-brand staples and improved cooking utensils, paralleled the publication of charity cookbooks compiled mostly by women's organizations to raise money for Civil War victims. Of particular interest is these recipe books' vague directions that include "limited descriptions of procedures, with no specific times and temperatures."

The 20th century in Kentucky, as elsewhere in the nation, developed a more complex attitude toward food and culture by simultaneously sentimentalizing recipes' storied pasts and standardizing measurements according to the health- and hygiene-based philosophy of the national domestic science movement that, as van Willigen notes, "resonated" with suffragettes. He writes, "The best culinary practices were thought to be within the purview of professionals and academics, rather than the



good cooks of the community. This is consistent with the proliferation of single-author cookbooks and the establishment of cooking schools and academic programs.”

From his description of the popularity of cookbooks delivered by pack horse librarians — women employed by the Work Projects Administration during the Depression to transport books by horse or mule to people in rural Appalachian counties unable to access public libraries — to his discussion of the revolutionary impact of World War II on food and its preparation, van Willigen’s rich anecdotes relay food-related facts in their broader social context.

The scholarship in *Kentucky’s Cookbook Heritage* sets the scene for Albert W. A. Schmid’s *Burgoo, Barbecue & Bourbon: A Kentucky Culinary Trinity* published by the University Press of Kentucky this year. As he relates in his preface, Schmid’s mission to “[explore] some of the main pillars of Kentucky cuisine” begins with burgoo and “[builds] around this important dish, expanding burgoo to a complete meal that includes barbecue, side dishes, bread, beverages, and desserts.” He states, “This is a cookbook to help preserve Kentucky cuisine.”

Like van Willigen, Schmid is a consummate researcher whose chapters delineating a popular dish or drink’s origins incorporate recipes that illustrate the preparation evolutions he describes. His book begins with burgoo, “a thin stew and/or ... a thick soup that is cooked for a long time and is almost like a ‘chowder’ in consistency.” Early burgoo recipes, created for large gatherings, must be modified, he notes, for most contemporary cooks’ purposes, but “are important because they

help us understand how they were once used to bring a community together (and how much that community is brought together) and how our society has changed over the years (requiring smaller recipes).” Schmid provides his readers with historic recipes that include burgoo’s original squirrel meat, as well as recipes more acceptable to the modern palate, such as Charles Patterson’s Taylor County Burgoo with its meat base of chicken, beef stock, and country ham.

Schmid’s “Barbecue” chapter begins, “Cuisine is a language that speaks volumes about the people who prepare and eat the food of a dialect ... Barbeque is a common link between different cuisine languages ... because most cuisines include some type of barbecue.” Whether we’re searching for recipes for pork, mutton, chicken, or beef barbecue or hunting for how to prepare Derby or Lake Barkley barbecue sauce, Schmid offers us those and more.

As he promises in his preface, the author serves up the fixings too. The cooking instructions, accompanied by their provenance, include such picnic staples as potato and macaroni salads, as well as corn pudding. Kentucky bread favorites feature the buttermilk biscuit recipe concocted by Miss Kentucky of 1946; an adaptation of former *Louisville Courier-Journal* food critic Ronni Lundy’s recipe for Kentucky Cakes; and Thelma’s Rolls, a recipe created by Thelma Linton, known as “the best cook in Harrodsburg.” Of Thelma’s rolls Schmid remarks, “Thelma has said she makes 17 or 18 dozen rolls each week because people in the community would call or stop by and pay \$1 per dozen.”

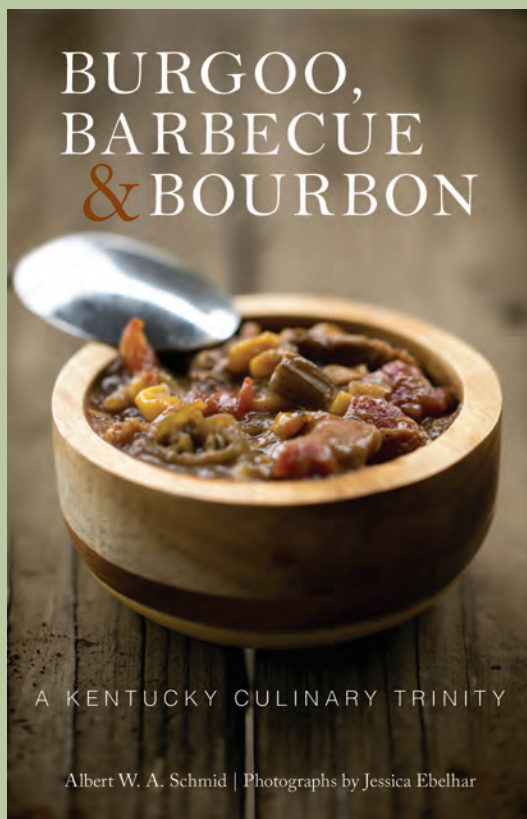
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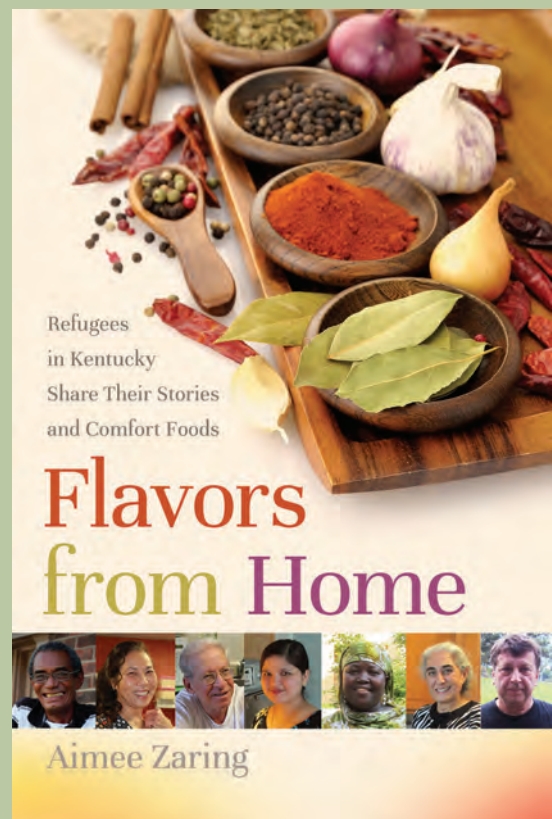


*Burgoo, Barbecue & Bourbon* concludes with bourbon cocktails that range from the purist's bourbon and branch to the Old Kentucky Toddy made with peach brandy and a curl of orange peel. Desserts include favorites such as Shelbyville Science Hill's Biscuit Pudding with Bourbon Sauce and blackberry jam-based Woodford Pudding.

These cookbooks reveal how our recipes measure our culture and find a contemporary complement in *Flavors from Home: Refugees in Kentucky Share Their Stories and Comfort Food* by Aimee Zaring. First published by the University of Kentucky Press in 2015 and released as a trade paperback in 2017, Zaring's essays about 23 refugees from across the globe who now call the Commonwealth home each include one or more recipes that reveal how our increasingly diverse population is expanding our cultural awareness, food choices, and tastes. The Kentucky frontier described by van Willigen boasts new pioneers; many of the refugees Zaring features now own restaurants in the state. Huong "CoCo" Tran, for example, who arrived in Louisville from Vietnam in 1975, has created several successful restaurants — among them Café Mimosa and Roots — in which she has introduced such delicacies from her homeland as green curry soup and soft spring rolls with peanut sauce.

Similarly, Ramin Akrami, the eldest son of Azar and Ata Akrami, who came to Louisville from Iran in 1979, opened Shiraz Mediterranean Grill, just as Dr. Mahn Myint Saing and his wife Chaveenwan who fled Burma (Myanmar) for Louisville in 1990, opened Simply Thai in 2006 and introduced Kentuckians to native comfort foods like khao soi (noodles in curry and coconut milk broth) and red curry.

In addition to telling her subjects' stories based on their oral histories, Zaring shares facts about ways in which foodways programs are



equipping our state's refugees. She describes the Refugee Agricultural Partnership (RAPP) as one of the first efforts of its kind in the nation "dedicated to empowering refugee families and communities through urban agriculture in Louisville." By offering classes in five locations focused on soil fertility, disease control, and planting, and by teaching refugees how to sell their produce to grocery stores and restaurants, as well as to farmers' markets, RAPP serves refugees who hail from the Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Bhutan, and Burma and is emblematic of van Willigen's discussion of our 21st-century determination to eat "locally and sustainably." As Zaring notes, "Just as refugees are reinventing their lives and homes in the United States, they are also contributing to the endless reinvention that is American cuisine."

She adds, "Foods that are considered 'southern' today were influenced by Native Americans, Spanish explorers, European immigrants (including the Scots-Irish, many of whom settled in Kentucky's Appalachian region), and African and Caribbean slaves," and observes, "Food and culinary traditions are like the Cliffs Notes to a culture. One dish can encapsulate the history, topography, climate, and even religious practices of a people and place." Her comment recognizes the books' common thesis: The fusion of culture and cuisine is as profound as it is inevitable.

## About the Author

Linda Elisabeth LaPinta directs Spalding University's doctoral program in leadership. Under her maiden name, Beattie, she published three books related to Kentucky writers and a fourth book about intimate partner abuse. In addition, she has published numerous book reviews and magazine articles in local and national newspapers, magazines, and journals.



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# During World War I the Dying was Not Just “Over There”: The Influenza Pandemic of 1918 in Kentucky

By Eric Howard Christianson

Only a month after epidemic influenza forced the closure of the University of Kentucky, on November 11, 1918, the campus newspaper, *Kentucky Kernel*, welcomed students back and celebrated the Armistice that concluded the war to end all wars. But a few days later the paper reported new cases of flu. Indeed, half of Kentucky’s 16,000 influenza deaths are recorded in the months after the Armistice. The Great War was over and yet the dying continued. How could this have happened?

World War I began July 28, 1914, with the United States joining the Allies on April 6, 1917. It was truly global and the numbers of casualties and deaths horrific. And yet, between the fall of 1918 and the spring of 1919, the mortality from the so-called Spanish Influenza exceeded combat deaths by millions. The world web of

commerce and communications grew to meet the demands of wartime economies and the incessant flood of troops and casualties. Movements over sea or land had guaranteed the spread of influenza.

Decades earlier, bacteriologists had identified organisms causing cholera and typhoid. And even before the advent of antibiotics, proactive public health measures such as clean water, sanitary sewers, patient isolation, and improved personal hygiene became increasingly effective in developed societies. But, unlike water or food-borne diseases like cholera and typhoid, influenza is an airborne disease highly contagious in groups of people. Also, flu was

---

*In May of 1918, enlistees arrived at Lexington’s Union Station for Student Army Training Corps held on the University of Kentucky Campus.*



caused by viruses that would not be imaged until the development of the electron microscope decades later. People were not strangers to influenza but there was something quite different this time around. Based on analyses of retrieved 1918 viral particles, modern researchers characterize it as a novel form of H1N1 unique to humans and especially lethal for the young and healthy.<sup>i</sup> While Spain can be ruled out, the exact origins of the virus remain elusive.<sup>ii</sup>

The war had so preoccupied the combatants that quarantine measures and travel restrictions were often delayed. The stalemate of trench warfare contrasted with the tempo of movement to and from the front and from city to city. Recruits and draftees by the millions occupied the seats of every available coach car of every railroad. They were quickly moved, assembled, and trained at camps especially in Kansas, Kentucky, and Massachusetts, then sent to ports on the Atlantic coast with orders to go “over there.” The necessities of war created the elements for a perfect biological storm.

In the U.S., this modern day plague spread rapidly on an extensive national railroad system. For Kentucky, major rail hubs in Cincinnati, Louisville, Memphis, and Chattanooga were linked to smaller facilities in Paducah, Danville, Lexington, and coal camps in the state’s Appalachian counties by the Louisville and Nashville, Southern, the Illinois Central, and Chesapeake and Ohio roads. Even in the Commonwealth, passengers and freight arrived anywhere the rails went in a day or less.

Only a day east from Haskell County, Kansas, resided Camp Funston at Ft. Riley. In January and February 1918 one Haskell County physician became alarmed by a virulent flu-like illness always accompanied by severe pneumonia and sent a report to the U.S. Public Health Service that at the time was not yet concerned about influenza.<sup>iii</sup> Ft. Riley swelled with recruits in training and by March hundreds of troops were ill and scores died. Encampments all over the nation received endless train loads of troops and were soon devastated by the puzzling disease. By August at Camp Devens, Massachusetts, sailors and soldiers returning from Europe, and recruits from around the states became gravely ill. By September, 20 percent of the camp was infected as were a growing number of civilians in nearby Boston.

At about the same time, a Louisville and Nashville troop train from Texas stopped at Camp Big Red in Bowling Green, Kentucky. While they stretched their legs they also “infected a few of the citizenry, got back on the train, and went their way.”<sup>iv</sup>



*Because of the rampant spread of sickness throughout the state, Camp Taylor’s Liberty Theatre was among the many facilities closed to the public.*

That community was only hours south of Louisville and the nearby burgeoning Camp Zachary Taylor. By September 20, Louisville may have already had a dozen or so cases, but military and civilian leaders simply could not imagine a crippling flu epidemic and did not initially require state boards to report isolated cases to the U.S.P.S. Four days later more than 100 soldiers reported to the Camp’s infirmary, and by the 28th perhaps as many as 2,500 more. The base was placed on isolation but 1,500 would perish, or three times the number in Louisville. Influenza spread so fast that quarantine measures came too late for effective implementation.<sup>v</sup>

Newspapers played an important, yet time-delayed role in keeping the public informed. The September 26th *Lexington Leader* proclaimed “Influenza Widespread” in 26 states, and within a week reported six local cases and 31 more on October 4 when the *Mt. Vernon Signal* warned its readers that influenza was “As Dangerous as Poison Gas Shells.” Finally, alarmed by the unanticipated rapid spread the State Board of Health on October 7 issued a general prohibition for most public gatherings including schools, churches, and entertainment venues. Quarantine policies were posted a few days later. By October 11, Lexington had least 221 cases and UK President Frank L. McVey ordered students away from classes. However, the university’s contract with the U.S. Army allowed the Student Army Training Corps (SATC) to remain active on campus, thus assuring the possibility of influenza transmission when students returned on Armistice Day.<sup>vi</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Jeffrey K. Taubenberger and David M. Morens, “1918 Influenza: the mother of all pandemics.” *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 2006 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) 12 (1): 15-22.

<sup>ii</sup> Nancy Disher Baird, “The Spanish Lady in Kentucky,” *Filson Club Historical Quarterly* 48 (July 1974): 290-291.

<sup>iii</sup> John Barry, *The Great Influenza. The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History* (London: Penguin, Ltd., 2004), 94-95.

<sup>iv</sup> Alfred W. Crosby, *Epidemic and Peace 1918* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 62.

<sup>v</sup> Jacob Deweese, “War on the Homefront: Fighting Influenza” (History 499 Senior Seminar Paper, University of Kentucky, 2015), 17-18.

<sup>vi</sup> Rachael Ann Hogg, “‘Flu-like Hair most everyone has it’: Kentucky, Lexington, the University of Kentucky and the 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic” (Master’s Thesis, University of Kentucky, 2010), 49-51.





*Many of those suffering from the influenza were treated at Alumni Gym-Camp Buell on the University of Kentucky campus.*

There were at least 5,201 October influenza deaths in Kentucky, and the eastern coal camps were hit hard. Mine operators could not send the miners home, nor would trains cease delivery of troops and war materials. On the 17th the *Hazard Herald* reported that the extensive “Death’s Harvest” in the area meant that smaller communities were no longer isolated. Hazard had more than 700 cases, Breathitt more than 2,000. To the west, Danville reported 700 cases, and Madisonville at least 600. By then the infection reached all communities served by railroads throughout the state, and mail delivery routes by the postman helped fill in many of the remaining areas. On October 30, the *Adair County News* continued to warn residents that non-compliance to state quarantine guidelines could bring prosecution. The following month another 3,468 perished. The *Wayne County Outlook* summed up the state-wide situation by stating on December 5 that the “Death Angel Visited” communities daily but fewer were dying. No county escaped the infection but most residents did not become victims of the deadly harvest.<sup>vii</sup> Nonetheless, from December 1918 to March there were more than 5,000 additional deaths. Christmas 1918 and New Year’s Day 1919 were for many neither merry nor happy.

Kentucky shared in the nation’s victory in World War I and the staggering death toll from influenza as well. Virtually every aspect of domestic life was challenged first by the war effort and then tested also by the contagion. In many significant ways individual freedom of movement and association had been interrupted. Timely quarantine measures in peacetime could have reduced the losses. The decisions made by President Woodrow Wilson and UK leader Frank L. McVey exemplify those made by others everywhere. Aware of the science and common sense behind quarantine, Wilson asked an aide if he had heard a children’s jump rope rhyme: “I had a little bird, his name was Enza, I opened up the window and in flew Enza.” And yet, Wilson felt compelled to order millions of often ill troops to Europe, because those already over there were incapacitated by bullets, gas, and influenza. Likewise, McVey closed the school for a

month, but had no choice but to accommodate hundreds of the STAC adjacent to the city’s civilian inhabitants.

The closing of schools, churches, movie theaters, businesses, taverns, and sports venues came too late in Kentucky and everywhere else. The Armistice came just in time because influenza had begun to force temporary closures of some recruiting and training facilities.

Hospitals, like military camps were over-crowded and understaffed. Doctors and nurses were in short supply because of overseas deployments. No doubt the actions of caring medical personnel would have offered comfort to the sick. But there were no antibiotics to treat the pneumonia nor vaccines to prevent the influenza and lessen the dying.

Including military and influenza deaths, the loss of life during World War I was numbing. Combat deaths for Kentucky totaled 2,400 and for the U.S. 112,432. In the U.S. more than 600,000 perished from influenza and Kentucky’s 16,000 fatalities were nearly eight times more than combat deaths. Claiming from 50 to 100 million lives during its remarkably brief duration, the 1918 Influenza Pandemic remains the greatest natural disaster in human history.

Iconic Memorial Hall on the University of Kentucky campus was completed in 1929 to honor the state’s military service personnel who gave their all in World War I. To help us appreciate the centennial of the nation’s entry into and the resolution of that great conflict, Memorial Hall is undergoing extensive refurbishment of the exterior and the frontal interior area. The names of those who died in the war are solemnly recognized on several wall plaques. While we will not find their names on plaques, we might take a moment to reflect on the contributions of the diverse citizenry of the Commonwealth who succumbed to influenza while trying to keep the farms, factories, mines, the trappings of civil life, and the home fires going. We should learn more about these individuals in their time of war and disease. Just waiting for future researchers in the abundant archives of Kentucky are the stories of those extraordinary experiences.

## About the Author

Eric Howard Christianson pursued undergraduate studies at the University of New Mexico and the University of Southern California. Before receiving his doctorate in 1976 from USC, he worked as a diving technologist for the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History and spent a year studying for a Diploma in the History of Medicine at St. Catherine’s College, Cambridge University. He currently teaches U.S. history, and post-1700 history of science, health, technology, and environment at the University of Kentucky.

<sup>vii</sup> William Burton, “A Visit from the Angel of Death’: A Local Account of Events in Rockcastle County and South Central Kentucky during the Spanish Influenza of 1918” (History 499 Senior Seminar Paper, University of Kentucky, 2015), 1, 10.



# Love in a Time of War

By Margaret Spratt, Ph.D.

For a young couple in love, wartime is not only a hindrance but an obstacle so large as to become almost insurmountable. It occupies every waking moment and the yearning for its end is poured out in countless letters that are shipped back and forth over long distances. World War I was the backdrop for millions of love stories; for the middle-aged officer and his wife of many years, the young doughboy and his high school sweetheart, the second lieutenant who realized almost too late that he couldn't risk his life without having first proclaimed his undying love to the woman he planned to marry.

The love story of Keen Johnson and Eunice Nichols was not extraordinary. Theirs was not filled with intrigue or scandal. Rather, their courtship, marriage, and wartime romance was played out with slight variation in hundreds if not thousands of other lives. They were young and they had their whole lives ahead of them. But there was one major issue, the war. How to survive the tedium, the distance separating them, the worry; these are the themes that run through their letters. They did not speak of death or other atrocities of war. Instead, they dreamed of their futures together and of a better world. Keen was an exceptionally observant writer and seemed to embrace all that was around him. He described the foreign landscape and his new life with the knowledge that he had a reader eager to share in his every experience.

Time was almost as frustrating as distance to the young couple, however. Letters were delayed and irregular. One could go for days and weeks without a word, and then a packet would arrive. Eunice would write pages about a problem she was having, asking for Keen's advice, and then noting at the end that she would have to make a decision on her own anyway, because the mail was too slow and unpredictable. Although the distance was great and the time of separation seemed interminable, letters were the lifeline of this relationship. We have all viewed scenes of mail call in numerous depictions of wartime, but we forget that writing that letter and receiving a reply was also what made life bearable for the sweetheart or wife left at home.



*From the Keen Johnson Papers, Eastern Kentucky University Special Collections and Archives.*

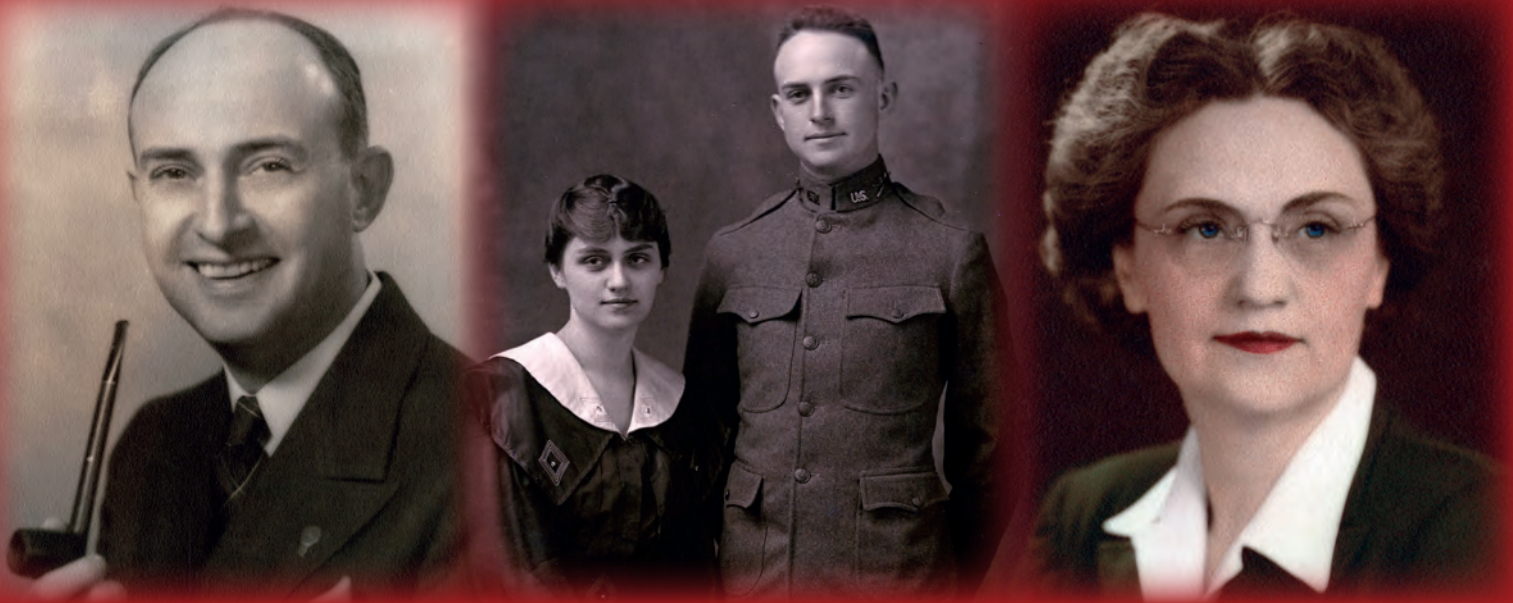


When Keen Johnson left his rural Kentucky home in 1914 to attend college in central Missouri, he knew his life was about to change. Full of optimism and adventure, he got on well with his classmates, joined the Central College football team, played tennis, and enjoyed a busy social life. He dated a number of young women but soon began to favor Eunice Nichols, a student from nearby Higbee, Missouri. From similar rural small town backgrounds, they shared friends and activities and wrote long letters when separated. Soon after the U.S. declared war in April of 1917, Keen decided, without Eunice's knowledge, to sign up for Reserve Officers Training. He had not graduated and he was delaying the life they had planned together, facts Eunice was quick to remind her sweetheart. Keen traveled to Fort Riley, Kansas for training camp beginning on May 15, 1917. A little more than a month later, Eunice took the train to Fort Riley and on June 23, they were married.

Keen did well at Officer's Training and was promoted to second lieutenant in the Infantry. He did not go overseas until June of 1918 when he was enrolled at the Army General Staff College in southern France. In the November 9, 1918 issue of *Colliers*, an article entitled "The C.O. Goes to School" explained: "Running an army is much like running a big business. Just as a corporation trains young men to be heads of departments, office managers, traffic managers, sales manager, and so on, so the Staff College trains men to do the thinking and planning upon which the officers in the field act." Keen spent the remainder of the war as a student at the "School of the Line." Meanwhile, Eunice stayed in central Missouri where she worked at a bank and took a position as an elementary school teacher. Each day she wrote a letter to "Buddy" who then became "My dear Lieutenant" and waited for the packet of letters from France. She searched the "Stars and Stripes" for news of the war, and she eagerly listened for any news of friends and acquaintances overseas from her neighbors. But mostly, she waited.







Most soldiers of the American Expeditionary Force were not sent home immediately at the end of the war in November 1918. Logistics were a nightmare. Although as Keen remarked in an October 24, 1918 letter, “France is a very pretty country, but I’ve been looking at it long enough,” due to delays of his embarkation date, he was able to leisurely travel across southern France, stopping in Monte Carlo, Marseilles, and other sites along the way. Finally, Keen and his “dear brave soldier wife” Eunice were reunited in April of 1919.

Keen and Eunice moved back to Kentucky after the war, and Keen enrolled at the University of Kentucky where he received a degree in journalism in 1922 while working as a reporter for the *Lexington Herald*. A few years later, they moved to Richmond when Keen became the editor and co-publisher of the *Richmond Daily Register*. His involvement in state politics led to his nomination as a Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor in 1935 which he won handily. While campaigning for the governorship in 1939, he unexpectedly succeeded to the office before the November election. Governor Albert Chandler resigned the position to be appointed to a vacant senatorial seat, thus making Keen Johnson Kentucky’s governor. He served from 1939-1943 with Eunice at his side. Little did they know 20 years earlier while writing of their plans for a life together after World War I that they would lead their state during another great war.

A.O. 714  
Nov 7, 18

Eunice, my sweet  
I love you with my whole  
life. I'm dreadfully lonesome  
for you. It just seems to  
keep getting worse. But I'm  
coming too you soon, dear  
brave soldier-wife of mine  
and then how happy  
we shall be. The indications  
at present are that "the quick-  
est time" or will "time be-  
st" it won't be long 'til I  
shall come to you. Be  
sure, I think, will be  
over by the time you  
get this letter. True true  
that it is going to take  
some time to get us  
home but I'm hoping that



High No. Oct. 23, 18

My dear Lieutenant—  
you  
now a very lonesome  
wife back in the state  
this cold, rainy, dreary  
night. I can't help but feel  
this is only the beginning  
of so many long lonesome  
evenings left to come this  
winter. This is the first  
pneumonia weather we  
ever saw. I surely am  
being careful with your  
wife. I have been thinking  
influenza was dying  
down but reports I hear  
today show it worse than  
ev. I'm getting scared  
it'll be a pain. It is damn



# SERGEANT SANDLIN

VALOR

## MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT

By James M. Gifford

**I**n 1917, after several years of provocation, America declared war on Germany. By November of the following year, the United States had sent two million men overseas.

In the bloody fighting that took place in the Meuse-Argonne Forest in the fall of 1918, thousands of Americans distinguished themselves, including two young men from central Appalachia who received the Medal of Honor. On September 26, 1918, Sergeant Willie Sandlin, acting alone, attacked and disabled three German machine gun nests. During his heroic assaults, Sandlin killed 24 German soldiers and assisted in the capture of 200 more. Less than two weeks later, Corporal Alvin York led an attack on a German machine gun nest, taking 35 machine guns, killing at least 25 enemy soldiers, and capturing 132. Sandlin was from Hyden in Leslie County, Kentucky, and York was from Pall Mall, Tennessee, a community just across the Kentucky line. Although York and Sandlin shared the same military distinctions and emerged from similar Appalachian communities, their lives after World War I were remarkably different. York acquired

money and fame and became a national icon and an international celebrity. Sandlin lived in modest circumstances, ill-health, and purposeful obscurity until he died of war-inflicted gas poisoning at age 59.

If war is a rich man's war and a poor man's fight, then Willie Sandlin represented millions of poor men who became soldiers during World War I. Born into Appalachian poverty, on January 1, 1890 on Long's Creek in Breathitt County, Kentucky, Sandlin's parents were John "Dirty Face" Sandlin (born March 17, 1867) and Lucinda Abner Sandlin (born December 1870). John and Lucinda had five sons: Willie, Charlie, John, Elihue (Sonny), and Mathew (Mathy). When Willie was a boy, his father was imprisoned for murder, and Willie's mother and father divorced in 1900. Lucinda, who was half Native American, died in childbirth in 1900, so Willie and his motherless siblings were divided among relatives, as was the custom of the day. Willie and his brothers Charles and John were raised by his father's relatives in Leslie County.

Sandlin enlisted in the Army on April 16, 1913, and served under John J. Pershing on the Mexican border. He re-enlisted in

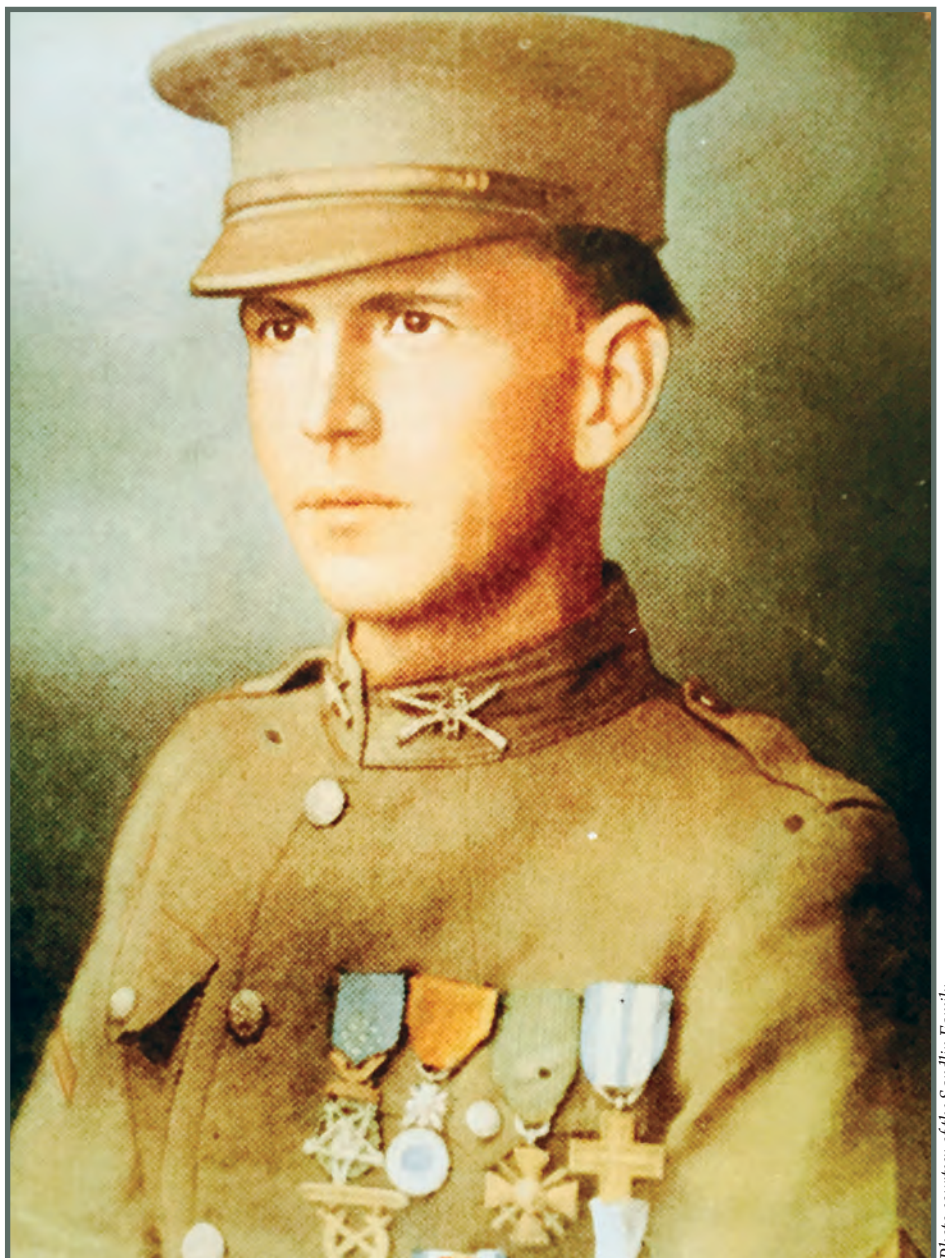


1917 and was soon on his way to Europe as part of the American Expeditionary Force. Sandlin arrived on France's bloody Western Front in time to take part in the Battle of the Argonne Forest, the massive Allied offensive that finally defeated Kaiser Wilhelm's war-weary German army. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive, also known as the Battle of the Argonne Forest, was a major part of the final Allied offensive of World War I that stretched along the entire Western Front. It was fought from September 26, 1918, until the Armistice of November 11, 1918, a total of 47 days. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was the largest in United States military history, involving 1.2 million American soldiers.

Sandlin and his men were in several battles during the summer of 1918. Then at Bois de Forges, France, on September 26, 1918, Sandlin emerged as one of the greatest heroes of World War I. He was in charge of a platoon of 59 men when the day began. Following an all-night artillery barrage, Sandlin's platoon was ordered to advance that day toward a specific, important military objective. The line had been fighting for hours, advancing slowly, when the doughboys were stopped by withering fire from carefully placed machine gun nests, two guns to each nest. At 7 a.m., orders were given to "halt and lie down." While others were trying to stay below the hail of deadly gunfire, Willie Sandlin had a rendezvous with destiny that changed his life forever. Sandlin observed a narrow lane between the firing line of the two guns. Arming himself with four hand grenades, an automatic pistol, and a rifle, he charged the

nests alone. Advancing within 75 yards of the guns, he threw his first grenade, which fell short and exploded without effect. He raced forward while the enemy emptied two automatic revolvers at him. When he was less than 50 yards away from the intense machine gun fire, he threw his second grenade, which struck the nest. He then threw two more grenades, charged the nest, and killed three more German soldiers with his bayonet, making a total of eight enemy combatants that he killed there.

Sandlin's platoon advanced and he again took command of his men. The Americans moved forward and flanked another machine gun nest and Sandlin dispatched it in the same way, utilizing grenades. When his grenades were spent, four men still defended the nest. Sandlin had killed them all with his bayonet



*Willie Sandlin was one of America's bravest and most highly decorated soldiers. He was the only native Kentuckian to receive the Medal of Honor during World War I.*

Photo courtesy of the Sandlin Family

by the time his platoon arrived. The line continued to advance and at 2 p.m. Sandlin destroyed a third German machine gun nest and its occupants in similar fashion. His heroic assaults resulted in the death of 24 German soldiers and the capture of 200 more German soldiers. Sandlin's commander, General John J. "Blackjack" Pershing, praised him for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty" and recommended him for the Medal of Honor, detailing his heroic actions and praising the 28-year-old Sandlin's "splendid example of bravery and coolness to his men." Pershing personally presented the Medal of Honor to Sandlin in February of 1919 at Chaumont, the general headquarters of the AEF. Pershing would later describe Sandlin as the outstanding regular army soldier of World War I.



When the war ended, Sandlin returned home to Leslie County for six months. In December, 1919, because of his exemplary military record, he was appointed special escort for the bodies of soldiers who had died overseas. Sandlin left for France in January 1920. Later that year, Sandlin returned home and married the former Belvia Roberts, a woman he began courting at a box dinner social after he first returned from Europe. Their happy marriage produced one son and four daughters who reached adulthood: Vorres, born in 1921, followed by Leona, Nancy Ruth, Florence, and Robert E. Lee Sandlin. Cora and Rose died of childhood diseases before their fourth birthdays.

Like his more famous counterpart, Tennessee's Alvin York, Sandlin returned home with a heightened commitment to education and community service. In the years following WWI, eastern Kentuckians were working to improve the quality of life in their mountain homeland. Two of the region's greatest leaders were Mary Breckinridge, founder of the Frontier Nursing Service at Hyden in 1925, and Cora Wilson Stewart, founder of the "Moonlight School" program to promote literacy. Newspapers reported that Willie Sandlin, "Kentucky's greatest hero" had joined the crusade "to help stamp out illiteracy in Kentucky." Sandlin toured the state with Stewart and spoke in hundreds of towns and villages. He was so devoted to Mrs. Stewart and her campaign that he and Belvia named their second child after her — Cora Wilson Stewart Sandlin.

Willie Sandlin never presented himself as a celebrity. He was too modest to seek public adoration and too shy to enjoy the attention of the media, but he did, on several occasions, attend local and national meetings where he was recognized as a Medal of Honor recipient. Throughout the 1920s, Sandlin continued to attend Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) meetings in the hope that the VFW could help him receive additional benefits as a wounded, injured, and disabled veteran.

Like many wounded veterans, Sandlin wasted no time in pursuing benefits. In 1921, government physicians at a Veterans Center in Richmond, Kentucky, examined Sandlin and reported that he was "suffering a serious lung infection as a result of gas inhaled" in the Battle of the Argonne Forest. To make a claim for increased compensation, in 1925 Sandlin appeared before the United States Veterans' Bureau in Lexington. Sandlin was only receiving \$10 a month compensation for being a Medal of Honor recipient, a reduction from the \$40 a month he was receiving when he was "invalided home." In 1928, at age 38, Sandlin should have been in his physical prime when he moved back to a house on his father-in-law's property. Instead, according to some newspaper accounts, he was very ill. Sandlin "coughed and wheezed a great deal," especially in the winter. By 1928, Sandlin had spent time in hospitals in Chillicothe and Cincinnati, Ohio, and "other places." An old army buddy encouraged Willie to move to Colorado because he thought "the dry air and high altitude" would help him. But Willie would not leave his eastern Kentucky homeland, and he didn't have enough money to travel if he had wanted to. "I'm not one-third the man I used to be before the war," he observed without complaint. "If I take 25 steps up the hill, I'm done for. My wind's gone." In 1928, Indiana Senator Arthur R. Robinson and others presented a bill to Congress which "would enlist and retire as a captain Willie Sandlin, Kentucky hero of the world war, who is now destitute." The whole unproductive process of seeking the benefits he deserved became exhausting and demoralizing to Willie Sandlin, yet he had no choice but to continue.

Aware of Sandlin's financial difficulties, Senator Hiram Brock, who represented Leslie County in the state legislature,



Photo courtesy of the Sandlin Family

*Willie Sandlin was a man of honor. He returned to Hyden after the war and supported his family as a subsistence farmer and a supervisor on a WPA road project. "When I was in the fields of France," he said, "my heart was in the hills of Kentucky."*



continued his efforts to get funds from the state government to purchase a farm for Sandlin. Senator Brock's efforts had been inspired by the American Legion's efforts to raise money to provide a home for Sandlin and his family so they could "live with the common comfort of life." During the 1920s, the VFW had established a "Hero Fund" and called upon "all patriotic citizens, along with members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars" and "others throughout the country to mail in their contributions to the VFW, McClelland Building, Lexington, Kentucky." VFW leaders said there would have been no need to raise funds to buy a home for the Sandlins if Willie had been willing to "sell his birthright for a mess of pottage." According to VFW leaders, a "celebrated moving picture concern" had offered Willie \$500 a week to re-enact his heroic deeds, but "Sandlin refused to capitalize on his war records" and turned down "other offers to profit from his patriotism."

Life after the war was just one medical examination after another for Willie. He was examined at Cincinnati in 1928 and given a 69 percent disability rating, which would have entitled him to a fair compensation. But the Louisville Veterans' Bureau, which had jurisdiction over Sandlin, appealed that rating to the Bureau of Appeals at Chicago and the bureau then placed the case before the Veterans' Bureau in Washington. Bureaucracies do not always yield justice, and technicalities blocked compensation for him, making a special action by Congress necessary. Despite his continuing efforts, Sandlin, who had been wounded twice and gassed twice, never received any disability compensation from the Veterans Bureau, and he never received a penny of the money that was donated by private citizens to purchase a farm for him and his family.

By the beginning of the Great Depression, Willie Sandlin realized that he would probably not receive any money from the Veterans Administration Bureau to compensate him for his war-sustained injuries. So the Sandlins did what tens of thousands of Appalachian families did: "they hunkered down" and "did the best they could with what they had." They became subsistence farmers. Drawing on practices that were more than a century old, subsistence farmers, like the Sandlins, produced almost everything they needed from their farms and nearby fields and forests. They raised cows, hogs, and chickens for meat, which



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was supplemented by food from vegetable gardens and orchards. During the Depression, Willie and Belvia both worked extremely hard to make a good life and a good home for their children. During those years, Willie also worked as a supervisor on a WPA road project.

Although Sandlin's health continued to worsen, he still had a large family to support. So, in 1941, for the first time in his life, Willie sought political office and ran unsuccessfully as an Independent for Leslie County jailer.

In December 1941, a journalist called on the Sandlins at their home. Willie, Belvia, and their guest sat comfortably in "a long living room" and talked about "a number of things," but soon





*Willie Sandlin was extremely shy and modest, but, on one occasion, he was persuaded to re-enact his heroics of September 26, 1918.*

the conversation turned to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and America's entrance into another world war. Willie refused to talk about his heroics in World War I, but he told his visitor that if his health were better and if "the navy would take [me, I would] join tomorrow." In the early spring of 1942, the old warrior, who was 52 years old and in very bad health, went to Hyden and registered for the draft.

Early in May 1949, Willie's breathing problems grew much worse. Belvia took him to the hospital in Hyden; two days later he was transported by ambulance to the Veteran's Hospital in Louisville. Belvia went with him and stayed in the hospital room for the next three weeks, along with her daughters, Florence and Vorres. One of them was always in Willie's room.

In the early morning hours of May 29, Belvia and Vorres had gone to the lobby to rest while Florence remained in the room with her father, sitting next to Willie's bed and holding his hand. Doctors had advised Willie to move to Phoenix. They thought the climate and environment there might improve his health. He squeezed his daughter's hand and said, "We missed the train [to Phoenix]." And then he was dead. He went easy, with a smile and a sigh. He was originally buried in the Hurricane Cemetery in Hyden; however, in September 1990, Sandlin's widow had his remains re-interred in the Zachary Taylor National Cemetery in Louisville. When Belvia died in 1999, at age 98, she was buried next to her husband.

Now he belongs to the ages. He had been raised in poverty and had grown into a quiet, resolute man of courage and honor. Willie Sandlin spent a lifetime accepting adversity and inequity and meeting life's challenges with a smile and a "can do" attitude. All he wanted from life was to serve his country, build a home, and enjoy his loving family, and he achieved his goals through hard work. Only death can stop men like Willie Sandlin.

## Author's Afterword

On September 26, 2018 – exactly 100 years after Willie Sandlin's Medal of Honor heroism — I plan to present a book that will honor Kentucky's forgotten hero of World War I. Toward this end, I invite the assistance of Kentucky's historians, archivists, and genealogists. If you have photos, letters, manuscript material, or documents that reference Willie Sandlin, please send them to me at the Jesse Stuart Foundation in Ashland.

The author gratefully acknowledges the following persons who assisted with research on this article: Wayne Onkst, John Trowbridge, Dieter Ulrich, Stephen Bowling, Shelby Street, Judith Kidwell, Diane Blankenship, Florence Muncy, Daniel Weddington, David J. Bettez, Walter Bowman, and Jennifer Patterson.

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## About the Author

James M. Gifford is the CEO & Senior Editor of the Jesse Stuart Foundation, a regional press headquartered in Ashland for the past 32 years.



# A Short Resume of My Services in the Women's Royal Air Force WWI



By Florence Van Stockum

Introduction by Ronald Reginald Van Stockum

**O**n July 1, 1916, the first day of the great Battle of the Somme, 19,240 British soldiers were killed during a single day. Shortly afterward, letters filtered back to my mother Florence Bareham reporting that her husband, British Sergeant Reginald Bareham had not returned from the attack and was “missing in action.”

*A week later, on July 8, when I was born, she didn't know whether or not my father was alive.*

*She then frantically searched nearby hospitals, hoping to find him wounded, but unable to identify himself. Her hopes were finally shattered on January 14, 1917, when she received official notice that his body had been identified as one of those who had been killed on that tragic first day of the battle.*

*Later in 1917, she placed me, not yet two years old, in the care of her nearby Bareham relatives and joined the newly-formed Women's Royal Air Force. This is her story, which she typed herself at the age of 95. I have condensed it for publication, without changing a word and only correcting the few typographical errors it contains. I have used ellipses to indicate where portions of her original manuscript have been omitted. A few subheads have been added.*



## My Mother's Story

In the mid years of World War I, England was in extreme shortage of fighting men. The tragic battle of the Somme, where 200,000 British soldiers died, to say nothing of the wounded thousands who could never return to the trenches, was one of the main contributors to this condition. [My mother refers to the casualties of the entire battle, not just the first day when nearly 20,000 were killed.] Many wounded men who were not completely healed were often sent back, sometimes more than once to the front lines to do whatever they were able to. Women, then, were called upon to take, if possible the places of men at home. They did farm work, office work, mechanical repairs, and other work which would release a man for the trenches. Soon it became necessary to send out a call to the women of the country to join the military forces.

Feeling, as all girls did, a great sense of patriotism and concern for the welfare of my Country, I volunteered to go.

A Royal Air Force training station was being organized at Fowlmere near Cambridge, close to my home, and since I could drive I applied for service in the Transportation Division.

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## Primitive Aeroplanes

The aerodrome was large, where aeroplanes were built, and where cadets were trained to fly them. In those early planes, there were no harnesses, merely seat belts. There were no brakes on those planes either. There were no run ways, and the planes were brought down in the fields. If there was a convenient ditch to stop them it helped, or perhaps there was a convenient hedge, but the plane had to run till it stopped by itself.

Barracks at this training station were hurriedly put up for women. They were bare of comfort and miserably cold and damp. There were also eight separate cubicles at the end for transportation girls. These were set apart so that all the other girls might not be disturbed when call for transportation came in the middle of the night. There was one round stove in the middle of this dormitory. There was a recreation room which had a few chairs, a piano, billiard table, and another round iron stove. It was also miserably cold and damp.

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## The Transport Girls

The first morning we were up at six, then lined up shivering for prayers and roll call, and to be introduced to Mrs. Hall who was in charge. Mrs. Hall looked us over, introduced herself, and made it very clear that she was all for discipline and more discipline. She plainly showed her dislike for young girls, and I had a feeling that her eyes too often rested on me, so I decided from that time on that I would stand behind a nice fat girl whenever we had to



line up for anything. Our judgment of her soon proved correct, for we soon discovered that she acquired a great satisfaction in nagging girls until they cried. That, I am sure she felt, was her duty and gave her a sense of dominion.

We were assigned to our different duties, dismissed, and struck out for our new adventure. Some of us went to the kitchen, some to offices, and the transport girls to their sheds. I never found out whose assignment it was to light the stove in the dormitory, but it was never lit.

My assignment for my first day was to take my ambulance out to the landing field and watch for crashes, which were almost inevitable. The planes were so fragile and smashed like match wood. We had a crash that day and a handsome young cadet was killed. It was a shocking and frightening experience for me and that night I was ill and couldn't sleep. I dreaded my next assignment for the field.

Although our eight transport girls had to take their turns on the landing fields, our main task was to carry supplies or personnel to and from the railroad stations of Cambridge and Royston, which was a small town close by. During the long dark winter months this often caused problems. The country roads were not paved, and deep ruts would form from rain and slushy snow. We were not allowed to use lights on our vehicles, in order not to guide the enemy to our installation, and sometimes we took the wrong road in the dark, and had to get down and stoop to see if we could find some landmark such as a house or hay stack that we were familiar with by silhouette.

Motor cycling was even harder because not only was it harder to keep the tires out of the ruts, but we had no shelter from the mud that was constantly flying into our faces. We were also exposed in that way to the freezing wind and rain that beat down on us, and we would be spattered with mud from head to foot and our clothes would be soaked through.



## The Caxton Gibbet

One lonely road that I frequently had to take was through the village of Caxton. There was a mound at the cross roads there, and on that mound stood a gaunt and ghostly gibbet. The ropes were all rotted and gone but that long naked arm stood out straight and strong, and it always conjured for me a gruesome picture of some dead body swinging in the wind. I had bad dreams after that, especially if I saw it in a fog.

## Looping the Loop

We had little variety on occasion, however. One day while walking to my shed I met an American pilot who asked me if I would like to go up for a spin. I told him that we girls were not allowed to go up. He said “I am sure that if I put a helmet and goggles and a long leather coat on you no one would ever know that you were a girl” (and me only five feet one inch)! So I walked to his hangar with him and he fitted me out with the coat coming down to my feet and we walked to his plane hoping no one would see this dwarf pilot. Nobody did. It took three steps of a ladder to get me into the plane’s front seat, and he scrambled in behind. Soon the ‘joy stick’ began to wobble, and I thought we were falling apart before we had even got off the ground. He told me not to touch the joy stick and soon we were off. When we were well up in the air, he shouted to me asking if I would like to do a stunt. I said, “yes,” not knowing what a stunt was. In a moment the engine zoomed, the nose tipped skyward and very soon I was upside down in the plane. He had looped the loop.

When my stomach had returned to its proper place, he asked me if I would like to do another stunt. I vigorously shook my head, but he still did the stunt by bringing me down in a tailspin. When I left that plane I was green, and I staggered back to the barracks and went to bed as sick as could be. I had to stay in bed for the rest of the day afraid to tell anyone what was wrong for I knew that if it were ever known that I had been up it would have meant court martial for me and also for Henry Clay Brown, the pilot.

*[Note: My mother had informed me that this pilot was from Kentucky, but I have been unable to identify him or his family.]*

Since there were no entertainment facilities in the Camp, a dance now and then was improvised, and some of the men who, were by that time, mostly Americans, were invited to come over from their side of the installation to dance with us. The choice of partners was always eeny, meeny, miny, mo on both sides, but that is where we in England learned to do the fox trot. We had never seen it before, and we thought it was the weirdest thing we had ever seen. However we straddled and dipped and rocked to the tune of Alexander’s Rag Time Band. I could never master it, but I split my sides watching others try to do it.

Now after all these goings on Mrs. Hall saw that we really did need some discipline, so she immediately arranged through the Base

Commander to have a Disciplinary Sergeant Major to come and drill us. He came over to our quarters, slapping his thigh with his swagger stick. He lined us up, looked us over, didn’t know what to do with us and couldn’t believe that he had sunk so low. He took a minute to return to himself, then he high stepped us around the court for a while — no doubt to get used to the sight. Then he right dressed us, barked orders at us of which we could not understand a word, but fell all over each other trying to execute. Then he started us on calisthenics. By that time our backs were aching so badly that we could hardly stand, and I asked him how much longer we had to do this because I couldn’t stand any more. He said “If that’s the case we’ll dismiss.”

After the drilling had proved a failure Mrs. Hall said that we must have some outdoor sport. We knew nothing about baseball, football we couldn’t play, and since you can’t bounce a tennis ball out of a mud puddle, hockey had to be it. So one afternoon I was told that I was wanted on the hockey field right away. I hurried to my barracks for a pair of sturdy shoes which I knew were under my bed, but found that they were not there. I enquired about them and was told that Mrs. Hall had impulsively given the order that all shoes found under the beds were to be picked up and locked in the store room.

I managed to find someone who could get the store room unlocked and I saw a huge pile of shoes tangled together on the floor. I knew at once that I would be late for hockey. I hurriedly dug into that pile of shoes turning them all over, but I could not find my shoes. I found lots of lefts and rights belonging to the other girls, but not one of my own. Finally I found somebody’s right that would fit, and then later I found somebody’s left that I could wear, so I put them both on and hied myself off to the hockey field. The game was in progress, but they found my place and I started to



*Florence, in 1915, as Secretary of the Cundall Folding Machine Company in Orwell, which manufactured machines for the folding of newspapers and had a contract to sell its products to East India. This was a position she really enjoyed, because she was able to employ her writing skills to good advantage.*



play in my un-matched shoes. Now I knew absolutely nothing about hockey, but I saw what the other girls were doing so I grabbed a stick and started to hit (and miss) that puck. I didn't know whose side I was on but I did justice to the game as I saw it. I swatted that puck all over the place in every direction with such vigor, that everyone thought I was a good player. But that was, you see, because they knew nothing about hockey either.

The whole aerodrome itself was well conducted, every one I am sure being fully aware of the perilous condition of the country. There was no rowdiness and I never saw any one the worse for drink. It was perfectly safe for any girl to walk out by herself at night and we girls found the men of the Air Force courteous and kind.

As a young girl I learned a lot about life from my experience in the Air Force, and I principally liked what I found. Time passed, and Mrs. Hall became more of a tyrant. The cold wretched weather, inadequate heating, damp beds and surroundings began to make their effects shown on our health by way of constant colds and other difficulties, so as soon as the war was over we applied for our discharge which was mercifully granted.

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## *Afterword by Ronald Réginald Van Stockum*

### Coming to America

One day in early 1918, Florence, while serving with the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) at Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire, England, cycled out to nearby Duxford Air Field, then being used by the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). Here she met Sergeant Anton W. Van Stockum, native of Holland, who, after emigrating to the United States, had volunteered for the U.S. Army Air Corps.

Van Stockum later went to France with his unit, remaining there during the final months of World War I. He and Florence carried on a correspondence, which continued after he had returned to America.

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### Florence's trip to America in 1920

In the spring of 1920 Florence decided to visit Van Stockum, then working as a grader in a lumber mill in Seattle, Washington. She took me across the Atlantic by steamer and across Canada by rail, met Van Stockum in Vancouver, British Columbia, and married him in Victoria on Queen Victoria's birthday, May 24, 1920. Then we all proceeded to Seattle by ferry boat.

Florence's boldness, even audacity, in taking me on a trip of more than 6,000 miles is impressive.

Early in 1987, my mother, then living in San Diego, informed me that Dad was failing and difficult for her to look after. I



persuaded them to come to Shelby County to live with us, which they did with reluctance, leaving many close friends in California.

Late in 1988, Dad died at the age of 98. In concentrating on my remarkable mother, I don't want to overlook Dad, a handsome, hard-working Hollander whose devotion to me as his adopted child was exceptional.

On May 2, 2005, Florence's resolve not to "go gently into the night," was overcome and she died, lucid to the end, at the age of 110 years and six months, the oldest person ever to have lived in Shelby County, Kentucky, and one of the oldest residents of Kentucky.

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### About the Author

Brigadier General Ronald R. Van Stockum, U.S. Marine Corps (retired) served for 30 years in various positions of responsibility in war and in peace. In 1970, he settled with his family at his wife's historic Shelby County, Kentucky farm, Allen Dale, and commenced a second career as an administrative officer at the University of Louisville. A past president of the Filson Historical Society, he has been active in community affairs. He is the author of five historical books that have been sold at the Kentucky Book Fair: *Kentucky and the Bourbons: The Story of Allen Dale Farm*; *Squire Boone and Nicholas Meriwether: Kentucky Pioneers*; *Remembrances of World Wars*; *Coming to Kentucky*; and *My Father: British Sergeant Reginald G. Bareham (1894–1916)*; and *The Battle of the Somme*. His new book, *La Maison de Charette de la Contrie*, will be available at the 2017 Kentucky Book Fair. He continues to write a historical column in the Shelbyville *Sentinel News*.



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# Uncle Murf

By Georgia Green Stamper

**M**y Great-Uncle Murf Hudson made the best brown sugar fudge I ever ate. He also cheated death on the Western Front in World War I, and decades after the war, he stood trial in Owen County, Kentucky, for attempted murder. My family didn't talk about any of that. And so, I was a middle-aged woman before I learned that Uncle Murf's quiet, simple life on the farm had not been as quiet and simple as I thought.

A good-hearted and obedient boy who didn't mind hard work, his youth was unremarkable. At age 25, however, Uncle Murf became the archetypical American soldier in the First World War. A farm boy who'd never been more than a hundred miles from home, drafted but patriotic, he was sent to fight the Kaiser in Europe. He did his duty without glory, but without complaint.

Though World War I did not officially end until June of 1919, when the Treaty of Versailles was signed, the fighting ceased in 1918 "in the eleventh hour of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month." The "war to end all wars" was over, and the world exhaled and began to dance in celebration.

Except Uncle Murf. In a hospital somewhere in France, he lay waiting to die. He'd been gassed.

World War I, called our first modern war, introduced chemical warfare to humankind. Alas, a modern battlefield death proved to be no less ghastly than the old-fashioned kind. Mustard gas, a slow and excruciating killer, took five weeks or longer to claim its victims. Giant blisters formed on the skin, inside the throat and lungs, in the genitalia, and in the stomach where they caused hemorrhaging and vomiting. Blindness, severe headaches, a sensation of choking, and respiratory ills like pneumonia were typical. Those who did not die were scarred for life, subject to recurring respiratory ailments, especially tuberculosis.

By divine providence, or maybe stubbornness, Uncle Murf survived. Still very ill, he was discharged on April 9, 1919. He was granted a military disability pension "for life" which the United States Army doctors assured him would not be very long, a matter of weeks, if not days.

He would live until 1989, two weeks shy of 96.

To the Army's credit, they continued to pay his disability check for the intervening 70 years. Late in his life, they even gave him an unexpected raise because someone noticed that he was drawing less than the lawful minimum.

In the decade or two after the war, he was often sick for long stretches. Over time, though, his respiratory ailments receded, until he was bothered by no more than the occasional cold. Until the end of his life, however, he remained bone thin, a six-foot-tall arrangement of sharp angles.

Today, somebody would write a book about his rehabilitation, call it *The Murphy Plan to Reclaim Health*. Uncle Murf, the original "Quiet Man," simply lit in doing what had to be done on the farm to survive, working any day he could walk. He kept at it until he was about 90, hoisting tobacco upward into barn tiers, plowing, baling hay, whatever needed to be done.

He probably would have kept on if his son had not insisted they sell the farm. By then, he agreed to quit, figuring he'd done well enough for a man with a seventh-grade education. He reminded himself that he'd bought a new Buick whenever he needed one, owned a brick house, owed a dollar to no one.

By the time I knew Uncle Murf, he was in his 50s, a kind, affable fixture at all our holidays passing out his homemade, brown sugar fudge. He always wore a near-new suit and tie, and when he arrived, his red hair was neatly held in place by a good-quality, felt Stetson.

He was in his 80s before I had sense enough to ask him about his experience in the Great War. I could never get him to talk about his being gassed, though, or what it felt like to be drafted off an Owen County farm and shipped to Europe, which might as well have been the moon, I suspect, in 1917. All he would share were a few bits and pieces that amused him.

He would laugh out loud remembering their orders to put gas masks on their cavalry horses before they put them on themselves. The foolishness of saving horses before men sill seemed ridiculous to him a lifetime later.

He remembered that a well-to-do local businessman, J. A. Lee, gave a silver dollar to him and every Owen County soldier who left for the war from the Sparta train station. The largesse of that gift resonated through the decades to a frugal man like Uncle Murf.

And he told me about a pretty girl he'd courted briefly who tried to kiss him good-bye at the train station. "But I'd heard she'd gotten engaged to another man, and I wasn't about to get mixed up with her again." He chuckled, remembering her.

That was all I could ever pull from him about the war. Whether it was all he would let himself remember, or all he thought I should hear, I cannot say.

However, I think that seeing “Par-ree” when he was 25, as the song predicted, made him more adventuresome than his stay-at-home siblings. All I know is that my grandfather never went anywhere while Uncle Murf and Aunt Bessie would climb into their Buick every few years to visit exotic-sounding places like California or Canada.

A steward in the Methodist Church, he was generous to the poor, sober, and ethical to a fault. But those who knew him well also knew not to push him. He had a peculiar temper, the out of nowhere kind that takes you by surprise. I wonder now if it could have been a form of PTSD related to his experiences in the war.

That brings us to the day that Uncle Murf shot an unarmed man. In fairness to Uncle Murf, the fellow outweighed him by a hundred pounds and had a reputation for being a bully. But even as I reconstruct the story, I have difficulty understanding how this disagreement escalated into a shooting.

It seems “bully” had rented a house and lot that his landlord later sold to Uncle Murf. The sale required “bully” to move out of the house, which he did, but for reasons lost to history, he left behind a huge woodpile. Uncle Murf — remember he was ethical to a fault — would not burn or sell the wood because that would be stealing another man’s property. Instead, he politely asked “bully” week after week to remove it. Finally, he issued an ultimatum. “Move it by noon on Friday or else —”

The deadline passed with the woodpile untouched. As he’d said he would do, Uncle Murf confronted “bully” at high noon.

Like a scene in an old movie, the two men faced off in the lane. One step, then another and another, “bully” moved closer to Uncle Murf, taunting him as a fellow ready for a fight will do. Then, without a word, Uncle Murf went mad, and his “or else” exploded. He pulled out a pistol no one knew he had and shot the unarmed man.

Fortunately — oh, thank God — “bully” did not die, and a jury of his peers acquitted Uncle Murf of all charges. They cited Uncle Murf’s good character and ruled that he’d acted in self-defense against a much larger man who had a reputation for being — well, a bully.

Mostly, though, I think they acquitted Uncle Murf because he was a WWI veteran who had managed to live in spite of the Kaiser’s best efforts to kill him.

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## About the Author

Georgia Green Stamper is a seventh generation Kentuckian. A graduate of Transylvania University, Stamper is a former high school English and theater teacher and speech team coach. Her published works include *Butter in the Morning* and *You Can Go Anywhere*. She also writes a bi-weekly column, “Georgia: On My Mind,” for *The Owen-ton News-Herald*. She has been a regular commentator for NPR member station WUKY affiliated with the University of Kentucky and a popular member of the Kentucky Humanities’ Speakers Bureau.

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