

World War I: Osterville People Remembered

by Paul Chesbro



Standing upper left - PFC Malcolm (Uncle Max) Crosby. Seated lower right - PFC Carroll Parker Crosby. The outstanding records on the battlefields of France of these two Osterville brothers along with two others will begin in our next series. Others in picture are all unknown. All were members of the 26th Yankee Division.

Editor's Note:

Since November we have been featuring a series of articles on World War I and its relationship to the village of Osterville. Photographs and records have been featured of those who served and records of others who had no military photo. There have been recollections of the war of those who could remember Osterville during the World War I years. Also letters to home from the men and women who served here at the home front, in the Navy and behind the lines in France.

However, our next series of articles on World War I will feature four men from Osterville who went to the front during the great war. All were native-born sons and all served with the 26th Yankee Division. Three were gassed and one served

at the front during the entire involvement of the Yankee Division and also participated in a raid on a French village held by enemy forces. There will be letters from the front, excerpts from a diary written at the front while under enemy gas attack, artillery barrage and machine gun crossfire. The living conditions of these men will also be featured. The rats and mice they had to put up with, all of this plus maps of where they served and actual photographs taken at the front.

The title of our next series will be World War I - "Osterville at the Front - The Yanks Enter In."

Letter-to-Home

Letter written by Pvt. William T. Whiteley to his sister Mrs. Rose (Whiteley) Crocker.

July 5, 1918

Dear Sister,

Just a few lines hoping you had a good 4th. I had a very good time myself. We had a nice dinner. We had steak and mashed potatoes and peach pie and all the cherries we could eat. You see, they raise a lot of them over here. Everywhere you go, it is cherries they grow, just like our wild cherries do over home. That is the way it looks but I suppose they set them out. They have them all along the road for shade trees and they sure are dandy good big ones.

Well, Rose, we are having very good weather. Once in a while a day that is cloudy and a kind of foggie but not very bad. I suppose it is kind of dull home this summer where all of the fellows are away and I suppose it makes quite a lot of difference to the summer people about coming. I guess that the hotel won't be quite rushed up this summer as they have been.

Well, it will seem good to get some mail. I haven't had any since I have been over here, some difference than in the States where I had mail about every day from someone. I suppose when I do get it I will get five or six. That is the way the fellows have been getting their mail.

I would like to run into Max and Carroll. We sure would have a good time but I can't seem to find out just where their regiment is at, but I suppose they are up quite near the front by this time.

I wrote a letter to Henry yesterday. I suppose it will be a year before he will write by the way he wrote to me at Camp Gordon.

I hope that you have a good garden this summer that will save you quite a lot, also the folk at home.

Well, Rose, as there isn't anything more that I can think to write this time, I will close.

From your loving brother,
Bill



Pvt. William T. Whiteley served in Co. E 307th Engineers 82d Division. Enlisted October 4, 1917 at Fort Devens. Trained at Camp Gordon, Georgia. Spent 2 1/2 months in France where he was accidentally gassed (see Recollections of War). Returned to this country and spent eleven months in U.S. Army hospital in New Haven, Conn. Discharged May 16, 1919.

Recollections of the war

by Grace (Crocker) Chesbro

I recall the day when my mother's brother left for France. The Whiteley's at that time lived in the home now owned by Howard Sears on Pond Street. Uncle Bill came down to my

mother's home which was further down Pond Street to say goodby. We four children were all sick with the flu so we all went to the front bedroom window and waved goodby. Mother and grandmother Whiteley were very upset and had planned to accompany him to New York. But the Army has a way of changing things so they didn't go. After my uncle's arrival in France, something happened to his gas mask while in training. The mask was defective or came off. Whatever, he received an awful dose of gas which affected him the rest of his life.

Then there was the victory celebration. As I recall there were two celebrations. The first one was a false alarm. The news came that Germany had surrendered. This was several days or maybe a week or more before the actual Armistice. Someone got an old casket from the village undertaker, Mr. Sam Ames, and we burned the Kaiser in a hollow behind the block of stores on Main Street in the vicinity of Sunset Lane. Then when the real Armistice came, we burned the Kaiser again.

By the time of the signing of the Armistice, I was a teenager and a student in what is called today junior high school. We were taught in school that this was the last war that would ever be fought. These are a few of the things I recall about World War I.



Uncle Bill, in Osterville, just before he left for France.




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