



Doughboy Park
on West New Castle Street

CARY SHAFFER/BUTLER EAGLE

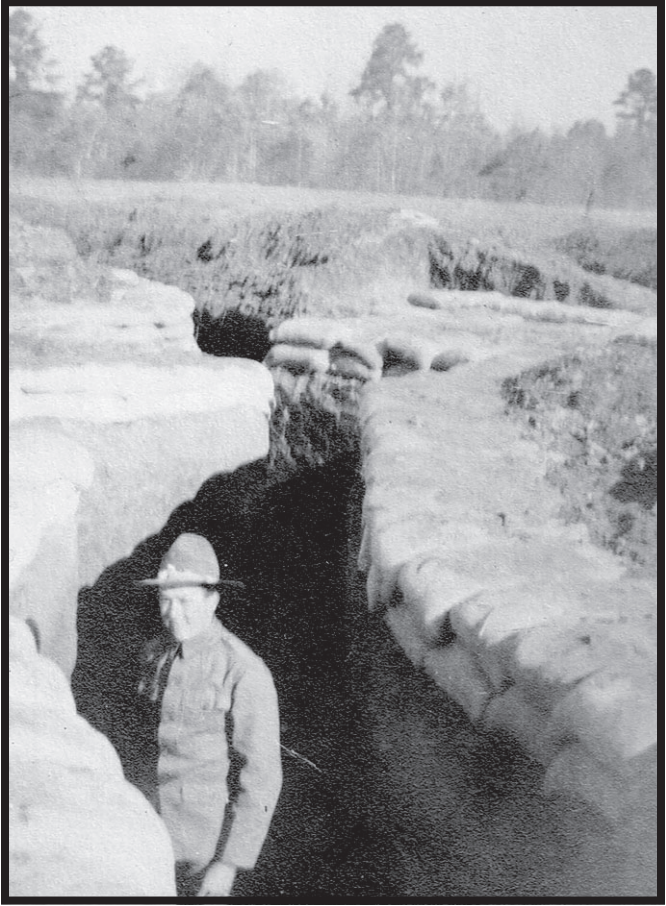
Keystone State plays key role in WWI

By Frank Garland

Situated just prior to two of the most cataclysmic events of the 20th century — the Great Depression and World War II — it's not surprising that World War I is a bit overlooked when the story of America is told. But for those who had a hand in it, as well as their descendants, the so-called "War to End All Wars" is anything but a footnote in our nation's history. That goes double for those who hailed from Pennsylvania, which played a key role both on the battlefields and on the home front. Nearly 300,000 Keystone State residents served in the U.S. Army during the Great War, most of them in the 28th, 79th and 80th Divisions. According to the United States World War One Centennial Commission, 10,278 Pennsylvania soldiers

were killed in combat — that's roughly 1 out of every 5 American soldiers who died in battle. Another 26,252 Pennsylvania soldiers were wounded, and 449 were listed as missing in action. And it wasn't just the men; many female nurses served in France, including the University of Pittsburgh's Base Hospital 27. Mercy Hospital alone sent 38 women. That's not all. Thousands more served in the Navy; in fact, the Centennial Commission estimated that 10,500 men and women from the Philadelphia area alone wore the Navy uniform during the war. At home, Pennsylvania residents were busy producing the materials needed to outfit, transport and arm the U.S. fighting forces and Allied troops before America's involvement. Of all the steel used by Allied forces during the war, Pittsburgh area mills produced

more than half of it. From the beginning of the war in 1914 to America's entry in the fray three years later, some 250 Pittsburgh-area war plants were in production nonstop, employing nearly a half million men and women around the clock. This led some to refer to Pittsburgh as the "Arsenal of the World." In Western Pennsylvania, Westinghouse, U.S. Steel and the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa) all were major contributors to the war effort, as were researchers at Pittsburgh's largest universities. Westinghouse alone produced more than 5 million shells for the British Army by the end of the war. Other Pittsburgh plants produced millions more bullets, shells and cartridge cases for the British navy. Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co., See **Keystone**, Page 2



Sam Marshall, serving during World War I, in a trench in France. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MARSHALL FAMILY

'The 'Y' ... did everything with the army except go over the top'

— 'Our Army at the Front' by Heywood Broun 1919

By Deborah Kruger

On Nov. 2, 1918, nine days before the end of the Great War, Nellie Geissenhainer of Zelienople, received a letter from her son Paul's commanding officer. The letter would solve a mystery that had been plaguing Nellie for two months. In August 1917, 23-year-old Paul Geissenhainer had enlisted in Pittsburgh and soon afterward his mother, Nellie, had started to receive letters telling of training camp antics at Camp Hancock, Ga., and his early days on the frontlines in France. But after August 1918 the

letters stopped coming. What had happened to her son? Searching for an answer she would turn to the organizations that were charged with serving the spiritual, physical, and psychological needs of the troops. Through communication channels the YMCA and Red Cross had established overseas she would eventually get her answer. The letter Nellie received was not on the YMCA stationery she had so often seen arrive in her mailbox with its red triangle emblazoned on the outside.



It was instead an official letter from the U.S. military. The letters usually provided hope and reassurance that her loved one was safe but this letter would be different. **The Great War** The Great War was fought in Asia, Africa, Russia, and Europe from 1914-18. The nations of Europe and their allies were

fighting the German, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian empires. The early years of the war had shown the world that the modern industries and technologies of the 20th century only led to unprecedented carnage on the battlefields. By 1917, the Allies were See **YMCA**, Page 3

Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 hits

By Bill May

It was 1918 and the dark clouds of World War I were raining bullets and shells over Europe — a conflict that would leave 20 million people dead over four years. Another more deadly war, with a cruel more lethal enemy, also raged across the world. No nation, state or small town — including Butler — had an army strong enough to keep it from invading its borders. The 1918 flu pandemic, also known as the Spanish flu pandemic, most likely began its unmerciful march in the United States and not in See **Spanish flu**, Page 2



Spanish flu

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Spain. Historians believe the microscopic killer's worldwide path of human devastation began at Fort Riley, Kan., on March 11, 1918.

Four successive waves over the next two years would kill at least 50 million worldwide and 676,000 out of a 106 million U.S. population. Hundreds from Butler would, tragically, be included within these unimaginable statistics.

The effects of the deadly virus began to be felt in Butler on Oct. 1, 1918. Seventy-nine young "Doughboy" soldiers from Butler were ready to ride the rails on Oct. 7 and off to war. But, due to the flu spreading through the army training camps, the departure was postponed to a later date.

The first Butler flu victim was admitted to the Butler General Hospital that same day, and before the sun set again, six of its nurses were stricken, causing the nursing school graduation ceremonies to be indefinitely postponed.

On Oct. 14, after caring for a man who had died from the flu the previous week, Miss Sarah Karnes, a nurse at the hospital, was added to the rapidly growing death scroll.

The peak period of the flu epidemic in Butler would continue through the middle of November with a total of 7,877 cases of influenza and 260 deaths.

Unlike most flu, the 1918 Flu chose mostly young, healthy adults and not the very young or very old for its victims. The thousands who suffered at first experienced normal flu symptoms: sore throat, chills, fever and diarrhea.

But then could come the deadly twist — the virus ravaged its victim's lungs. Many developed severe pneumonia. Mahogany colored spots would appear on the cheeks and patients

would turn blue, suffocating from a lack of oxygen as lungs filled with a frothy, bloody substance.

Sometimes within hours, patients succumbed to complete respiratory failure. Autopsies showed hard, red lungs drenched in fluid.

Butler's City Council immediately authorized the health officer to have the authority to quarantine

ready to wear in the morning."

Regardless, 942 cases were reported in the first week of October, and as many as 15 people in Butler and Lyndora began to die daily.

Mrs. Howard Stibgen of 207 East Clay (Brady) Street was overcome with grief on Oct. 6 when her 23-year-old brother passed away in her

induced delirium inside her No. 6 Bredinville home was so extreme that it took "three men to hold her down!" She would eventually recover.

Inside Butler City, the Italian-born population residing in the East Jefferson to Center Avenue section of town, didn't fare much better than the foreign born of Lyndora.

France to an Italian father and Frenchborn mother, would leave behind two children for her husband, Charles, to care for alone. Ninety years later, during the last days of Angelo Monfre's life, his daughter, Fontaine Seezox of Butler, with emotion in her voice, told me he would "ask for his mother" that had been taken from him nearly a

moving picture shows and where people assembled to be closed indefinitely.

The closing of schools on Oct. 4 may have come too late for Miss Clara Bartley. Clara had graduated from Westminster College in 1913 and taught English alongside five other teachers who were already infected with influenza at the yellow brick Butler High School on North McKean Street.

It seems very likely the oldest of the three adult sisters living with their parents in a stately, white clapboard house on East Pearl Street had walked the virus home with her from school one fall afternoon. Clara's youngest sister, Mary Frances, died six days later on Oct. 10 at 1:30 a.m. in her upstairs bedroom.

One of Clara's students, Inez Dugan, immortalized the epidemic in a poem "The Flu" she authored for the February 1919 Butler High School Magnet: (The first and last stanza)

*Well, I got the influenza,
Say it is the darnesdest stuff,
Makes you feel so weak and wobbly,
No, I'm not a'pullin a bluff.*

.....

*You live on broth and medicine,
Your head's hot — and cold your feet,
You keep gettin' sicker and thinkin'
Saint Peter maybe you'll meet.*

Hundreds of Dugan's classmates had been infected and recovered from "the darnesdest stuff," but sadly Margaret Patterson, Francis Hutzley and Grace Criner would not survive.

The start of November had shown new cases decreasing to 300 and deaths had fallen to four during a 24-hour period compared to 15 deaths during the same 24-hour period the previous week.

The disappearing flu, along with approval from the state Commissioner of



Inez Dugan wrote "The Flu," a poem that was included in the February 1919 Butler High School Magnet. At right is a postcard of Butler General Hospital.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BILL MAY



cases and for doctors to report the number of cases and deaths to the Board of Health, as had been requested by the state.

Many of the recommendations given by the health officer for individuals to prevent the spread were like COVID-19, including wearing masks and not gathering in large crowds.

Other recommendations, however, strike an almost comical tone to the current day reader. A sample of these were to "chew your food well," "breathe through your nose as your mouth was not made to breathe through," "stay cool while walking and warm at night" and "upon retiring at night to keep all clothing worn that day in a room or closet with a cloth saturated in formaldehyde and close all doors and windows to disinfect your clothes so they will be

home while her husband lay dead from the influenza in another room.

Meanwhile in Lyndora's Red Row on Hansen Avenue, the daughter of Austrian immigrants, 14-year-old Annie Shinak, couldn't escape the flu's deadly grip that was hitting the nonnative population especially hard.

Many of these newly arrived workers for the Standard Steel Car Works (Pullman Standard) lived in unsanitary, crowded conditions in company-built housing with no indoor plumbing.

Across the Picklegate Crossing Bridge from Lyndora, along the banks of the Connoquenessing Creek in Bredinville, Slovak-speaking Josephine Sheptak lay in bed from influenza and was described in the Oct. 18 Butler Citizen edition as "out of her mind." Her flu

An Italian man with a wife and two children emotionally spoke to the Butler Citizen newspaper in broken English how this cruel virus had decimated his family. "Little guirl gone, motter, not know. Little boy gone, motter, not know. Wife sick. All me has!" Angelo Monfre, a lifelong Butler resident and well-known beautician, told me his touching personal story of the 1918 Flu Pandemic before he died in 2009.

He was just 1 year old when his 18-year-old mother, Clementino Monfre, gave birth to his little brother, Paul, on Oct. 10. Either during the last days of her pregnancy or just after delivering, she was attacked by the same influenza that had killed her mother two weeks before.

Only eight days after her baby's birth, Clementino, who had been born in

century before.

In 1918, the city implemented some drastic measures to fight the epidemic. They required that a police officer must go to the house after a death occurred and "prevent the congregation of people, both when the corpse remains in the house and during the hours of service."

The men who wore the badge were also instructed to strictly enforce the "spitting on the sidewalk" ordinance and immediately arrest the violator.

Understanding that the lack of ventilation spread the disease, it was suggested to break the windows of streetcars if they would not open.

But the most drastic measure was an order on Oct. 3 by the state Commissioner of Health ordering all saloons, schools, churches, places of amusement,

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Keystone

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meanwhile, produced an estimated 20% of the optical glass used in fire control instruments — mostly telescopic sights and rangefinders — utilized by the Army and Navy.

According to the Centennial Commission, Pennsylvania produced nearly half the munitions supplied to the Army, most of the ships that went to the Navy and a large portion of the coal that America utilized during the war.

On the eastern end of the state, Philadelphia tanners produced roughly three out of every four military boots and shoes. A rifle factory built and leased to Remington in Eddystone produced more than 2 million rifles, and Baldwin Locomotive Works — also in Eddystone — built more than 5,000 locomotives for the Allies. A former Ford automotive plant was converted to making machine gun trucks and more than 2.7 million steel Doughboy helmets, according to the Centennial Commission.

Lifetime bonds

All the soldiers who wore those helmets are gone now; the last living World



Sam Marshall

War I veteran — Missouri native Frank Buckles — died in 2011 at the age of 110. But they are far from forgotten. In fact, one organization — known as Descendants and Friends of the 314th Infantry Regiment A.E.F. — still assembles annually for a memorial program in Valley Forge. It's believed to be the only group of its kind that has met annually since what Joel Rentz calls "the Great War."

Rentz began attending the event with his father and grandfather, Irwin Rentz, the latter of whom served in the 314th, and he's been going ever since.

"It's more than a memorial service," said Joel Rentz, who fields queries to the group's robust website. "What it was really about

originally was a gathering of the veterans. Anyone who's served in the military together, you're friends for life after going through that kind of hell."

Originally the group was named the Veterans of the 314th Infantry Regiment A.E.F. — the abbreviation for American Expeditionary Force, essentially the U.S. Army in France during World War I. After all the veterans had passed, the group changed its name, but not its purpose.

Rentz, who grew up near Reading and now lives in Florida, said his grandfather never talked about his experiences with the 314th, which was part of the 79th Division and saw action in some of the war's bloodiest battles. Among them was the Meuse-Argonne, which involved more than a million American soldiers, more than 26,000 of whom never made it home. Another 95,000-plus were wounded in what historian Edward G. Lengel called the largest single battle in American military history in terms of size and cost.

"I've heard from a number of people whose grandfather or great uncle served and with almost all of them, it's the same answer — they weren't comfortable talking about the experiences,"

Rentz said. "I read about some of the battles — all the casualties and how they died. It was horrible — really, really horrible."

Foot soldier's journey

Former Cranberry Township resident Clark Marshall certainly can relate. Marshall's father, Samuel Francis Marshall, was drafted in 1917 and was discharged in early 1919, several months after the armistice that ended the war was signed on Nov. 11, 1918.

Samuel Marshall saw almost a year's combat as a foot soldier in the 80th Division, fighting in the Meuse-Argonne and at St. Mihiel in the fall of 1918. When the armistice was signed, Clark Marshall said, his father "was in a trench, getting ready to get out and go after them."

Clark Marshall, who grew up in West Deer Township like his father and lived in Cranberry for 17 years before moving to Oklahoma, said his father never talked much about his experiences in combat either.

"I asked him one time, 'How close were you to getting shot?' He said, 'I was lying on the ground, pointing my rifle and getting ready to shoot something, and the button was shot off

my shirt.' I would say that's pretty close. He also had a couple of dings where bullets bounced off his helmet.

"That was the last time I brought it up."

Prior to that, Samuel Marshall shared one other recollection with his son — a memory of a time where he and his cohorts were told to camp for the night in a wooded area on a ridge in France. He balked.

"He said, 'We're not going to sleep in those woods — the Germans are going to shell those woods and nothing will be left,'" Clark Marshall said. "So, they went down a ways, dug their foxholes and sure enough — boom, boom, boom. They went and looked the next morning, and all that was left of those woods were dead tree trunks sticking up in the air like matchsticks."

Although Samuel Marshall never took a bullet, he did receive what ultimately proved to be a fatal injury during his time in France, as he died in 1966 from lung cancer — the result of being exposed to mustard gas.

Not short on courage

The Butler area saw more than 2,600 of its finest serve in the military during World War I, including Ernest E. Hall. He stood just 5-foot-3½ and went by the

nickname "Shorty," but he was not short on courage.

According to his son, Mark Hall, a Butler resident and a retired teacher, Ernest Hall enlisted in the service, lying about his age to get in, putting lifts in his shoes to make himself appear taller and eating bananas by the bunches to pack on a few extra pounds before his induction.

Hall was luckier than many; he arrived in France on the day the armistice was signed. "There surely is a great celebration under way here," Hall wrote from Base Hospital 97 to his "Dear Ones At Home" in a letter published by a Butler newspaper. "I never saw people as exultant as these ones are now. It surely is a glad day for them, for they must have suffered untold agonies."

In addition to publishing letters like the one Ernest Hall wrote, local newspapers spotlighted some of the area soldiers during their training at home and ultimately on the battlefields of France. The Butler Eagle, in August of 1917, ran a photo of Clair S. Black, noting that he "abandoned the motion picture machine at the Lyric theater where he was

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YMCA

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locked in a stalemate with the Germans in France and Belgium, along what was called the Western Front. The soldiers were fighting in and out of trenches across barren wastelands referred to as “no man’s land.” The once lush farmland and forests of France were made into moonscapes after millions of shells were dropped repeatedly.

It was into this war, what had become the most destructive war in history, that America reluctantly entered in 1917.

Not only would involvement be against the American tradition of staying out of European affairs but Americans were aware from the propaganda in movies and newspapers of the vast devastation from this modern industrialized war. They did not want their sons and husbands being machine gunned, blown up by artillery, or gassed.

Yet during the winter of 1917 — after renewed German submarine warfare sank five United States merchant ships and the Germans offered American territory to Mexico through the notorious Zimmerman Telegram — President Woodrow Wilson felt he had no recourse except to ask for a declaration of war.

Wilson hoped that if America became involved we could turn the tide of the war in favor of the Allies and help shape the peace. Once war was declared by Congress on April 6, 1917, Americans such as Paul Geissenhainer and many of our established social organizations such as the YMCA immediately answered the call to help the American military make this the ‘war to end all wars’.

Supporting the soldiers

It was into this fray that America’s volunteer organizations stepped up and filled a huge gap that the American military rapidly trying to train and deploy the troops was not in a position to manage.

These organizations included the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the

Knights of Columbus, the Jewish Welfare Association, the American Library Association, and the YMCA and YWCA, who according to primary accounts were responsible for meeting 90% of the “welfare” needs of the troops overseas.

While these organizations were civilian they did operate under the general supervision of the War and Navy departments: Commissions on training Camp Activities.

President Wilson stated “I do not believe it an exaggeration to say that no army ever before assembled has had more conscientious and painstaking thought given to the protection and stimulation of its mental, moral, and physical manhood. Every endeavor has been made to surround the men, both here and abroad, with the kind of environment which a democracy owes to those who fight in its behalf....”

The YMCA utilized more than \$300,000 (which would be approximately \$6 million today) contributed by the American people to answer Wilson’s call.

The Young Men’s Christian Association was founded on the eve of the Civil War and became a support for the America military in both the Civil War and the Spanish American War.

Already aware of the vital need to support the American soldier’s “welfare” as soon as war was declared in 1917 the YMCA immediately established facilities to work with the training camps and send resources and personnel to France. The speed and scale with which these organizations set up their operations overseas was remarkable.

By the time the American Expeditionary Force was arriving in France the “Doughboys” were being greeted by coffee, a doughnut, and a postcard to send home.

According to “Our Army at the Front” by Heywood Broun published in 1919 “the ‘Y’ huts — the combination shop, theater, chapel, and reading rooms, coffee-stall and soda fountain, baseball-locker and cigarette shop, post-office and library are run by the YMCA from coast to



Paul L. Geissenhainer of Zelienople and other WWI soldiers used YMCA stationery postcards like the one at right.

battle-line — are packed by soldiers every hour of the day and evening.”

Before the second day of the First Divisions landing there was a circus banner across the foot of the main street stating “This is the way to the Y.M.C.A. Get your money changed, and write home.”

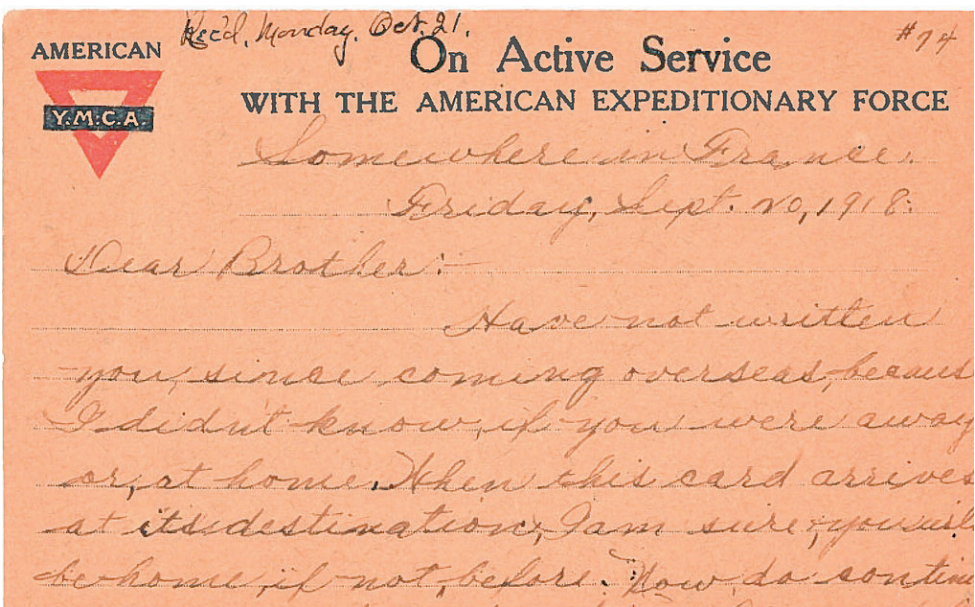
The YMCA built over 1,500 canteens in Europe each equipped with reading and writing, and recreational facilities for the soldiers. They also had 4,000 “huts” or tents serving the front lines.

They operated 44 factories for the production of cookies and chocolate, set up entertainment for the troops with over 1,400 performers sent overseas (a precursor to the USO of WWII). They also provided over 3,000 movie or theatrical shows a week and set up over 300 athletic events for the troops.

The Over-There Theatre League attracted many actors and actresses who volunteered to go to France and perform for three month tours. In addition, 35,000 volunteers and 26,000 paid staff were involved in the war effort; 286 were wounded and six men and two women were killed in action on the Western Front. A member of the “quartermasters” corps said, “How do these ‘Y’ fellows do it—I can’t turn without falling over a shack.”

Impact of letters home

The organization had tasked itself with providing for the welfare of the troops and yet it also bridged a



need in facilitating correspondence across the Atlantic.

Many families back home received their first communications from their loved ones on a YMCA postcard simply stating “I have arrived safely overseas.” Considering the dangers of German submarines sinking American troop transport ships during the Atlantic crossing this postcard was met with relief.

Because they filled such a significant need that the military was not equipped for the government quickly responded to all requisition requests of the YMCA and they were not required to follow the rationing expectations of non-military organizations. Therefore, the stationary and services they provided helped to facilitate communication and provide comfort to soldiers and their families through the uncertainty of war.

In the early fall of 1918, Paul Geissehainer was swept up in was the Meuse Argonne offensive on the Western Front.

A Franco-American offensive that put over 1 million American troops into battle. By August 1918, Paul’s letters home had ceased and his family was informed that Paul was missing and considered AWOL.

Through the records left behind it is known that his mother, Nellie, spent two months desperately trying to determine her son’s fate. She likely utilized the services of the YMCA and Red Cross to get her inquiries to

Paul’s commanding officers.

On Nov. 2, 1918 a reply was sent to Nellie Geissenhainer from France. Colonel Shannon of the 111th Infantry wrote “Replying to your letter of October 25, 1918, I regret to advise you that your son Paul L. Geissenhainer, Company H, 111th infantry was killed September 7th 1918 near Fismette by machine gun fire.

“At the time of his death he was in a small dugout ... he rose up to remove his canteen from his belt when a machine gun sniper shot him in the forehead killing him instantly.”

Paul Geissenhainer had survived one of the most significant encounters during the Meuse Argonne offensive at Fismette. It was one of the bloodiest engagements participated in by the “Iron Division” of Pennsylvania.

The town was lost and recaptured five times against a German unit that fought with flamethrowers and desperation. It was during a lull after the month-long battle that Paul was killed.

The communication networks established by the YMCA and Red Cross allowed Nellie Geissenhainer to finally learn the fate of her son and clear his name. Col. Shannon had also noted in his letter; “His company commander and the balance of the company praise him highly and state that his services were honest and faithful. So far as official records of his regiment are concerned he is cleared... he served his

country and gave his life to the cause of liberty.”

YMCA praised

After World War I the military officially incorporated many of the services that organizations such as the YMCA had provided. The example set by the YMCA had paved the way for a paradigm shift in how the military served the needs of their troops.

But the world would always remember how the American organizations stepped up to fill the needs of the soldiers and families during one of the most devastating wars in history.

According to former President William Howard Taft in his 1922 publication “Service with Fighting Men: An Account of the Work of the American Young Men’s Christian Associations in the World War,” “The American Young Men’s Christian Association in its welfare work served between four and five millions of American soldiers and sailors, at home and overseas...

“It conducted nine-tenths of the welfare work among American forces in Europe ... It may be questioned whether in all time a human society has ever brought its helpful ministry to such a vast number of men and over such wide areas, under varying conditions, and in so short a time.”

Deborah Kruger is an assistant professor of history at Butler County Community College.

Clara Barton visits Butler during typhoid fever epidemic

By Bill May

It was Saturday, Dec. 12, 1903, and a devastating typhoid fever epidemic had been leaving death at the doorstep of dozens of homes throughout the small communities of Butler and Lyndora for a month.

One out every 13th person, from a combined population of 18,000, were fighting for their lives from the effects of a disease caused by Butler’s contaminated water supply.

According to 1909 History of Butler County, the water had become infected from a family stricken with typhoid. They had unknowingly allowed their human waste to drain into a small creek that fed the Thorn Run Reservoir. These waters, containing the deadly typhoid bacteria, flowed into the Connoquenessing Creek that provided Butler with its water supply.

Beginning in November and until the epidemic was officially declared over, 127 people would die, and typhoid did not discriminate among its list of victims based on age.

Just a week before, 48-year-old Father Daniel Walsh from Cork, Ireland, and pastor of St. Paul Catholic Church, had died after a three-week battle with typhoid.

A desperate cry for funds and volunteers to provide care for the sick had been issued by Butler’s Burgess (mayor) to newspapers around the nation. Pittsburgh industrialist Andrew Carnegie sent a \$5,000 check and in her home in



Clara Barton in 1902. She is wearing the amethyst pansy and Red Cross pin and the Imperial Silver Cross of Russia given to her by Czar Nicolas. The photograph was retouched with color.

Glen Echo, Md., Clara Barton saw Butler’s cry for help.

The 81-year-old president of the American Red Cross immediately met with two of her colleagues, Dr. Julian B. Hubbell and Gen. W.H. Sears, and they decided to pack their bags and board the morning train to Butler.

As Barton listened to the sound of the rails passing under her feet that Saturday on her way to Butler, my then 15-year-old grandfather A.J. Kemper was lying deathly ill at his family’s Franklin Street home.

He eventually gained enough strength to rise from his sick bed. Hearing his friends playing in the street, he went to his bedroom’s window. Down below his friends spied my grandfather’s emaciated figure staring back at them.

So frightened by their friend’s ravaged appearance, he said they quickly turned away and escaped down the street. A.J. went on to recover from the fever.

Barton, Hubbell and Sears arrived at Butler’s Western Pennsylvania Railroad Station on East Jefferson Street on Saturday, Dec. 12, and immediately traveled up its long hill to get accommodations at the three-story Lowry Hotel at the corner of North Main and Jefferson Streets. Then Barton and her group arrived unannounced at the borough council chambers and met with Burgess (Mayor) William M. Kennedy, who arranged a meeting with the Relief Committee to discuss what efforts had been undertaken.

Sunday evening Barton addressed an awestruck crowd of 1,000 at the United Presbyterian Church, now Saint Andrews, telling the audience the history of the Red Cross and her personal relief efforts during the Civil War, the Johnstown Flood of 1889 and the Galveston Hurricane of 1901.

According to the Dec. 17, 1903, Butler Eagle, Barton’s arrival had “made the local situation look brighter . . . [and] has been cheering to all those she had come in contact with!”

Sometime on Dec. 14 or 15, Barton toured the South McKean Street home of Lela and Bertha Wagner, who because the Butler General Hospital was filled to capacity, had donated the use of their red brick, mansard roof residence as an emergency hospital.

Other similar hospitals were opened to serve different neigh-



borhoods throughout the town. Serving Butler’s West End, Earl Clinton donated his Standard Hotel on the southwest corner of Fairground Avenue (modern day Hansen Avenue) and Pillow Street.

Lastly, the “Lyndora Hospital” was located in the Smith Building on Pierce Avenue and staffed by several bilingual nurses from St. Joseph’s Hospital in Pittsburgh to care for Lyndora’s largely immigrant population.

Believing the efforts being made in Butler were exemplary and having coordinated the efforts between the local relief committee and volunteers from the Pittsburgh Red Cross, Miss Barton planned to return to her home in Glen Echo, Md.

Before leaving on Dec. 16, she explained in an interview with the Butler Eagle the reason for only staying a few days, “There is not much for me to do; the relief work is moving along nicely, but I will tell the people of the world of the exact conditions I found in Butler and state that in my belief \$75,000 and \$100,000 is needed to carry on the relief work.”

Just before stepping on a train for her return trip, she pinned on Mrs. Jennie Graham, her daugh-

ter, Mabel, and Mrs. William M. Kennedy with Red Cross badges to begin the Butler Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Donations poured in from across the nation exceeding the town’s financial needs. The relief committee even politely turned away the \$2,000 donation from America’s first billionaire John D. Rockefeller.

History would record Barton’s visit to Butler as her last relief trip on behalf of the organization she had founded in 1881. She did, however, continue to follow Butler’s typhoid fever epidemic until it had ceased to claim victims by the end of March 1904.

What her visit meant to Butler when death from typhoid was its constant companion can best be described by an unknown borough resident who poignantly reflected, “We pictured the light of the lantern going on and on through the night until it should stop over the stricken town of Butler, and the suffering people there would look upon it as the light of a great soul that came to them out of the darkness, bringing comfort, healing and the calm spirit that banishes all fear.”

Bill May is a local historian, speaker and guide.

Butler Twp. fueled by oil, gas, glass, steel

Eagle Staff Report

Butler Township took its name after Gen. Richard Butler, an Irish aristocrat who had distinguished himself with the Continental Army during the American Revolution, according to Butler County Historical Society.

Butler was a contemporary of George Washington, who admired Butler's skill as a military officer and his "familiarity with Indian life and affairs," according to 19th century historian William H. Egle.

Throughout the 1700s, Delaware and Shawnee tribes populated hunting camps or villages within the county, according to Butler County Historical Society. The Iroquois — which consisted of the five allied tribes: Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas — also lived in the region at that time.

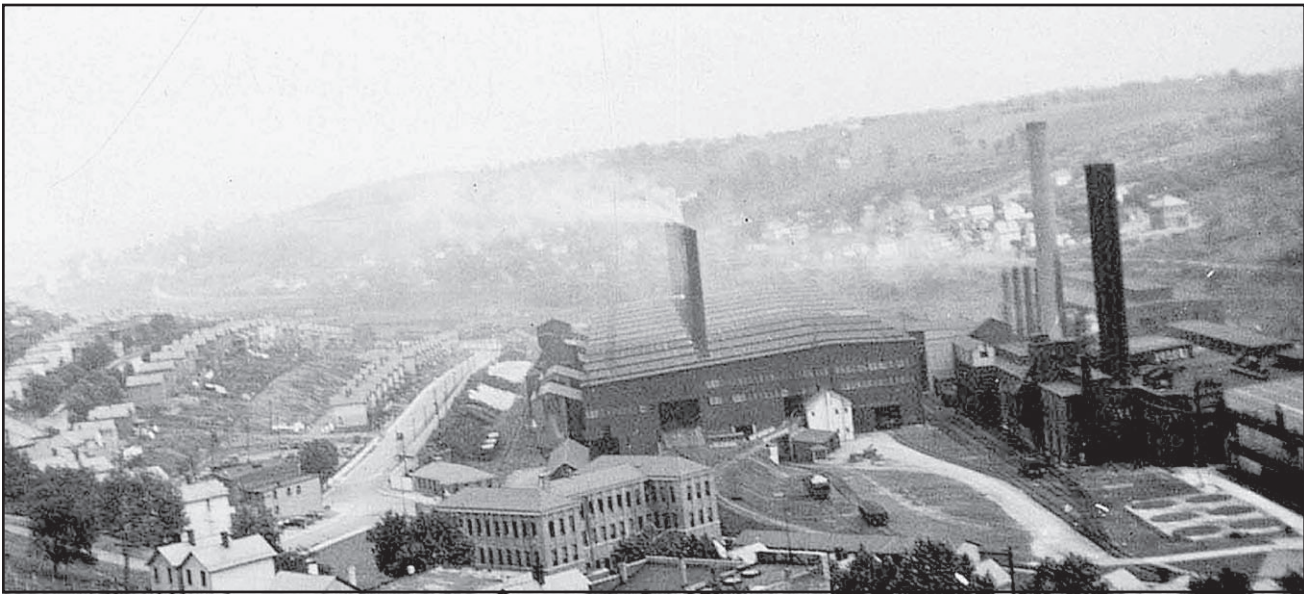
The French made up the first white men to settle in the county, according to authors Stephen M. Pozar and Jean B. Purvis. These early settlers, and claims by France to what was then known as the Ohio Valley, ultimately led a 21-year-old George Washington through Butler County in 1753.

Virginia Gov. Robert Dinwiddie had tasked Washington with delivering a letter to the French-held Fort LeBoeuf, one which demanded France relinquish its claims to the Ohio Valley in the name of British sovereignty, according to Butler County Historical Society.

Early westward expansion

Washington's expedition, now commemorated with a self-guided driving tour known as Washington's Trail, would place him in the line of fire of an Indigenous man allied with French. It's not clear whether the man targeted Washington himself or his guide, Christopher Gist, when he fired, but he missed.

After capturing the man, Washington and Gist released him, according to



Above is the Armco Butler Works in 1931. Four years earlier, the American Rolling Mill Company, or Armco, an Ohio-based company, bought patents and a plant in Butler from the Forged Steel Wheel Company, according to the Butler Eagle.

BUTLER EAGLE FILE PHOTO

Washington and Gist's journals. A historic marker near present-day Evans City commemorates the encounter.

The French ignored Washington's letter, according to military historian Edward G. Lengel. The French and Indian War and then the American Revolution would eventually grant the U.S. some control over certain areas in Pennsylvania.

But it wasn't until the end of the Northwest Indian War — when the U.S. faced off against an alliance of Great Lakes tribes and British soldiers — that Americans would consider the Ohio Valley safe for settlement, wrote Pozar and Purvis. U.S. Major General "Mad Anthony" Wayne routed these communities from the region following the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers, an event which propelled Indigenous displacement further west and led to the formation of the new state of Ohio, according to Encyclopedia Britannica contributor Michael Ray.

Irish-born settler William Kearns became the first documented resident of what would become Butler Township in 1795, according to Butler County Historical Society.

Butler County first formed

as a municipal body in 1800, then was divided into 13 separate townships, including Butler Township, in 1804. Property lots laid out for the borough of Butler first sold at auction in 1803, wrote Pozar and Purvis.

Two major waves of immigrants populated Butler County in the following years, according to Butler County Historical Society. The first, which consisted mostly of people from Ireland, Scotland, other parts of the British Isles and Germany, generally sought land and entered the U.S. before the 1820s, according to the Population Reference Bureau.

The second wave, which generally sought jobs, came spurred by the tide of the Industrial Revolution during the 1840s and '50s.

An oil rush and growth spurred by railroads

Sawmills, gristmills and other enterprises figured substantially in the township's early industrial history, according to historian C. Hale Sipe. The first successful oil drilling operation in U.S. history, which happened just north of Butler County in 1859, ignited a boom that eventually swept the region, wrote Pozar and Purvis.

"The wealth brought to

the county by the oil industry had a dramatic effect on the borough of Butler," wrote Pozar and Purvis. "Unlike the boom towns of the oil regions, which often disappeared overnight, the county seat grew, prospered and stayed. It became the county's center for transportation, industry and commercial activity. Banks, hotels, stores and a new county hospital would be erected to meet the demands of the borough's new, ambitious role."

The arrival of the railroad in 1871 and the establishment of the Standard Plate Glass firm, which used natural gas from the region to produce sheet glass, also contributed toward the township's rapid growth, according to the Butler County Historical Society.

Between 1870 and 1900, the township's population would explode from 1,933 to 10,853, wrote Pozar and Purvis.

20th century institutions and beyond

In 1902 engineer John M. Hansen, president of the Standard Steel Car Company, established a plant to produce steel railroad cars in the township, wrote Pozar and Purvis. A real estate boom followed,

bringing with it the formation of communities such as Lyndora and West Butler, wrote Sipe.

The company took inspiration from a rapid transformation in the railroad car industry. Steel rail cars demonstrated greater reliability amid safety concerns, such as fire, than wooden rail cars, and they were steadily replacing wooden cars, according to historian John H. White.

In 1930 the Standard Steel Car Company merged with the Pullman Car and Manufacturing Corporation to become the Pullman Standard Car Company, then one of the largest builders of steel freight cars in the United States, wrote Pozar and Purvis. The Butler plant continued operating until 1984, when Dallas-based Trinity Industries purchased the plant, according to the Butler Eagle. The site was demolished in 2005, according to the Butler Eagle.

In 1927 the American Rolling Mill Company, an Ohio-based company, bought patents and a plant in Butler from the Forged Steel Wheel Company, which by then made up part of Columbia Steel, according to the Butler Eagle. Patents and production methods included in this deal "revolutionized the

steel industry and was considered one of the greatest inventions of its time," said author David E. Todd.

"At that time, the plant employed about 1,600 employees," Todd added.

The American Rolling Mill Company, or Armco, would operate the Butler Works, known by many residents as "The Mill," until the U.S. steel industry's decline and the 1999 sale of the site to AK Steel, according to Butler Historical Society.

In 1936, six years after Butler entered the stainless steel market, Butler Armco launched the world's first continuous zinc-coating line, writes Todd, a former "Mill" employee. "Following this achievement, the Butler Works became the first plant to coat steel with aluminum in 1939," Todd wrote. "About this time, Butler started the production of silicon steel for the electrical industry."

1936 also saw the formation of the American Bantam Car Company, which would design the first Jeep for U.S. military use during World War II, according to the Butler Eagle.

Bantam had initially built economy cars, but switched course after the U.S. Army requested prototype reconnaissance cars in 1940, according to the Butler Eagle. Bantam's life span as a company proved brief and hard, with the company closing down for good in 1956, but the Jeep would claim its place as one of the most popular and enduring inventions to emerge from Butler Township, according to the Butler Eagle.

Today's township

Butler Township's population numbers 17,223, as of the 2020 U.S. Census. Major institutions within the township today include Butler County Community College, the Cleveland-Cliffs Butler Works, much of the Butler Area School District and Butler Memorial Hospital, owned and operated by Butler Health System (which merged with Excelsior Health in 2023).

Keystone

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operator and on April 10, just eight days after the United States declared war upon Germany, enlisted in the service of Uncle Sam The accompanying picture is a splendid likeness of the Butler patriot."

Not all the newspaper stories were as uplifting. One story noted the death of Sgt. Howard H. Bradshaw, son of a former pastor of the West Sunbury Presbyterian church, from wounds received in action. In the same Oct. 16, 1918, edition, the Butler Eagle reported that Mrs. Annie Fleischer of Lincoln Avenue had received word regarding the death of her son, Pvt. George W. Fleischer, on the battlefields of France. The story noted that while Mrs. Fleischer mourned the loss of her son, she "wished

she had 10 sons to give for the great cause of world democracy."

Another story noted the death of W.C. Duffield, a 35-year-old Butler resident killed in action in the "famous Marne-Soisson's drive." And yet another article reported the death of Pvt. Carl Hovis of Butler, killed in action during the Marne fighting just five months after leaving for France. Eerily, Hovis' mother, Elizabeth Hovis, was informed of her son's Oct. 4 death and then received a letter from him dated Sept. 21 just a few days later.

Victory parades

In the end, when the armistice was signed and fighting came to a halt, locals gave thanks in what the Butler Citizen described as "victory parades," which featured thousands of par-

ticipants, including 5,000 to 6,000 employees of the Standard Steel Car Works and the Forged Steel Wheel.

The newspaper characterized the celebration as "a sort of Fourth of July, Hallowe'en and victory celebration all in one, which made up for many previous holidays observed in a half-hearted way owing to the general depression cast by the shadows of war, famine and pestilence stalking through the world."

Parade watchers lined the sidewalks, oblivious to the November cold, holding their children up to see the "passing show, seeming to realize that these would soon be historic scenes — a part of one of the greatest days in the history of the world."

No doubt some of those parade participants and observers ended up with

a memento or souvenir from the Great War. Clark Marshall, for instance, had some of his father's war mementos for years before donating them to the Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum in Pittsburgh. Among the mementos were parts of Samuel Marshall's uniform and some letters that were written to him while he was overseas.

"I had no need for it," Clark Marshall said of his decision to donate his father's war-related material. "I didn't need to carry it around. I have my memories of my dad — that's all I need."

Frank Garland is a retired college professor, freelance writer and coordinator of the Pittsburgh Media Partnership, based at Point Park University's Center for Media Innovation.

Gathered here are suggestions where history can be experienced. Information was gathered from the museums' websites.

Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum

Address: 4141 Fifth Ave., 3rd Floor, Pittsburgh
Phone: 412-621-4253
Open: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Saturday
Of Note: The marble tiled floors of Soldiers & Sailors lead visitors on a pathway of discovery with a timeline of themed displays ranging from the Civil War through the United States' most recent conflicts.

The North Hall brings visitors into the 20th century beginning with exhibits featuring World War I and continuing through World War II. Rare uniforms, helmets and other objects tell the stories.

Pennsylvania Military Museum

Address: 51 Boal Ave., Boalsburg, Pa.
Phone: 814-466-6263
Open: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday and 12 to 3 p.m. Sunday
The Pennsylvania Military Museum is a community gathering place welcoming audiences to explore the story of the Commonwealth's men and women serving in the Armed Forces, civilian activities on the home front, and Pennsylvania's contributions to military innovation.

World War I Memorial

Address: The memorial is located at the former Pershing Park, 1.76-acres along Pennsylvania Avenue NW between 14th Street NW and 15th Street NW, across from the White House Visitor Center, Washington, D.C.

Phone: 202-426-6841
Open: 24 hours daily
Of Note: The American flag was raised over the World War I Memorial for the first time on April 16, 2021 over the memorial that honors the 4.7 million Americans who served their nation in World War I, including 116,516 who made the supreme sacrifice.

Built by the United States World War I Centennial Commission and designed by architect Joseph Weishaar, the new memorial incorporates the existing memorial to Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces during the war. The memorial also includes the Peace Fountain, a cascade of water behind an excerpt from the poem "The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak" by Archibald MacLeish; engraved quotes and references to theaters, campaigns and battles in which American forces participated; and exhibits about the role of the United States in World War I.

The National World War I Museum and Memorial

Address: 2 Memorial Drive, Kansas City, Mo.
Phone: 816-888-8100
Open: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday
Of Note: Included with admission, the Main Gallery of the National WWI Museum and Memorial holds the permanent exhibition, "The World War, 1914-1919."

Through first-hand accounts, engaging exhibits and informative films, the Main Gallery guides visitors through a comprehensive journey of the Great War. Diverse collections from all the belligerent nations help tell the story of this cataclysmic event of the 20th century.

Spanish flu

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Health granting permission for towns to lift the "lock-down," allowed schools and theaters to reopen Nov. 11, 1918. Theater owners were required to remove "sneezers and coughers."

Nov. 11 was truly a day to celebrate! The day began at 4 a.m. with the sounding of the fire whistle by Mayor Heinenman announcing the long-awaited news of the signing of the Armistice creating a truce between the Allies and Germany ending fighting on the Western front of World War I. Now with the town re-

opening and knowing the boys would be coming home from war, a parade was needed to celebrate. The largest parade in Butler's history was held that evening at 7 p.m. Young women marched using pots and pans they clanged together like cymbals while young boys dragged pots and kettles by strings behind them to bang out the good news!

Six-thousand workers from Standard Steel Car Works (Pullman Standard) and Forged Steel Wheel (Armco Steel) marched by departments pulling floats

beginning at Broad Street and continuing to Penn Street, and turning south on a Main Street. The route was lined with thousands of flu and war weary families ready to celebrate their newfound freedoms.

A diminished toll from the 1918 Flu would continue for most of the next year throughout the United States and Butler County, with pockets of outbreaks lasting into 1920.

A permanent reminder of Butler's 260 deaths is a roadside historical marker just north of West Winfield Township explaining

the burial site of several hundred mostly Polish and Slovak immigrants who worked in the nearby limestone mines, brick works, and sand and tile plants. There was reportedly as many as 20 mostly single men per grave.

Father O'Callahan of nearby St. John's Catholic Church in Coylestown had a large wooden cross erected from railroad ties to mark the grave site of the nameless victims in what has been forever known as the Wooden Cross Cemetery.

Bill May is a local historian, speaker and guide.