

Downers Grove Reporter

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"And The Star Spangled Banner Forever Shall Wave, O'er The Land of The Free and The Home of The Brave."



LETTERS FROM DOWNERS GROVE SOLDIER BOYS

"BOB" DICKSON "LOVES" THOSE FRENCH RYS.

Paregne L. Eveque, France, Jan. 3, 1919.

Dear Jack: Well Jack, you bundle of papers came as a fine New Year's present, and it arrived on New Year's Day. It was no time and all the boys were around wanting to know if Chicago was still in the same old place. Some say they had thought that it was moved. At any rate the Post Office. We have not received any letters for three weeks. Hope that something comes along soon or we will be writing letters to ourselves.

We are in a little town of about 5,000 people and not very far from Le Mans, a city of 100,000. We go over on Saturday and Sunday to look the town over and to see what we can, which is not very much. But still it is the best place we have struck, and have seen them all. We saw England and France, and saw all of it. Oh, yes, we also rode on the wonderful Rail Roda. Everytime you get an American engineer you can get ready for a good fast ride. The French do not believe in going fast. You don't have to ask who is the engineer when you get in the box cars at night and the next morning you wake up to find yourself about the same place that you got on, you can hear the fellows say, "He is a Frenchman." Say those box cars are just fine for riding. You come marching along down the team track and a long freight, you know the kind that makes all the delays to a passenger train. Well, this one is waiting for men, not cows. Well, somebody comes along and says, "Well, boys, this is our train." In we go and if you get up the next morning and find that you have somebody's foot in your face and a sliver in your back, why then you have had a perfect night's sleep and can thank your stars that it was not a whole board in your back or that somebody did not use you for a pillow. Alright we are up now and wide awake. Somebody is over in one corner making a noise like a cow or a sheep, while eating bully beef which is held in one hand and some bread in the other. In the other corner is a fellow that did not have room and had to stand up all night. This fellow does not feel very good and wishes he was back home or at least had a plank to rest his head on. Oh, we have had some wild times, but every body eats three squares a day and did not get thin either.

The weather is warm. While I did see a flake of snow or two on Christmas Day, we go out every day without a coat or hat to play football, baseball or some other outdoor sport, and that combined with a little work helps to pass the time away until our boat steams up the harbor. I am very much obliged for the papers Jack, they were all read with eager eyes. With very best regards to you and your wife and all the fellows, I remain

Bob Dickson.

"HELL OF A RIVER TO COME THIS FAR TO SEE"

Hummerich, Germany, Dec. 16, 1918. My dear Wife:

Here it is only nine days from Christmas and it seems I am further away from home than I ever have been. I was in France so long that it got to be almost like home for me. But here I am a stranger indeed and in a strange land.

The larger towns are well built and well kept up but the smaller ones, like the one I am in now, are unbelievably dirty and unkempt. That such a people ever have thought they had any "Kultur" to pass on to the rest of the world or rather to impose on the rest of the world assumes the proportions of a monstrosity.

Since the first day in December we have been on the march most of the time. Marches long and short—mist, fog, rain, and always mud—sometimes the sticky kind, but generally seas and "slathers" of it but little thicker than water. I have gotten so I do not even mind it any longer but plow on through it without even a feeling of annoyance.

It seems that the sun never shines over here, at least at this time of the year. It has been so long since I saw some real sunshine that I have almost forgotten how it would seem.

When we are on the march, we usually have breakfast at 4:30 or 5:00 a. m. and get under way by 6 or 7 o'clock while it is still dark. Then we usually finish our march by 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

We get pretty hungry sometimes before the kitchens get set up again and working. I have "requisitioned" something to eat and some of the German parched grain "coffee" to drink many times. We always pay for what we get but I figure that they owe us a great deal for we are bringing to them the inestimable blessings of American culture.

When we have an unusually long march to make we usually issue a bacon sandwich for the men for the noon day meal. Otherwise they get only the two meals, breakfast and supper which is really not enough. Rations have been short at times but now they are better.

One of the greatest hardships of the march for the men has been the difficulty in getting shoes. I have seen many men actually walking with their feet on the ground, the sole or part of it being completely gone. The same old American grit I wrote you about in August which covers a multitude of sins.

One of the most astonishing things about this country is the swarms of children which greet us in every town, large or small. They are all dirty-faced and sturdy too. I have yet to see any evidences of under-nourishment or privation. The people seem to have enough to eat and are apparently in no danger of starving or anything approaching it. Perhaps it may be different in the large cities, I cannot say as to that as we have not passed through any of them.

We crossed the Rhine on Friday the 13th of December and the day was surely miserable enough for even that unlucky combination. It rained the whole time, sometimes quite hard and sometimes a fine steaming mist which went through clothes almost as though they were not there. We crossed at Urzitz near the large town of Andernach.

The famous river looked dreary enough through the mist and there was no excitement or jubilation. The long columns of weary doughboys simply plodded on through the mud with maybe here and there a remark such as "That's a hell of a river to have come all this way to see."

And so we crossed and are now helping to hold a portion of the bridgehead flung around the city of Coblenz on the right bank of the Rhine.

I understand that the 32nd is the only National Guard Division on this side of the Rhine, and of course that is quite an honor.

The 32nd Division, by the way, has quite a reputation for its fighting qualities. The 63d Brigade, made up of the 125th and 126th Infantry was called by the French "The Terrible Brigade" because of the way they fought.

The actions which go on in the service records are "Trench Duty in Alsace," "2nd Battle of the Meuse," "Battle of Juvigny," "Battle of the Argonne"

and "Occupation of German territory." My service with the Division does not, of course, include "Juvigny" and the "Argonne" but I feel that I have seen some service at that.

This letter has grown to a considerable length and I must close. Although it will not reach you till long after the date I wish you and the children, again A Merry, Merry Xmas from Dad.

Lovingly, Harry (Slusser).

DR. WASHBURN, "Y" DIRECTOR, NOW AT BREST

December 29, 1918.

My dear ones at home:

Here I am at my destination at least for awhile.

I left Paris the 21st and arrived here in Brest, France, the 22nd on Sunday morning just a week ago today and reported to Mr. Taylor, our regional director. He said I better report myself in to the proper military authority which means one has to report to the Provost Marshal immediately upon arrival at the station and receive your permit otherwise if one did not have it he would be liable to arrest by the M. P. and they are very numerous everywhere. They are cordially hated by every soldier. When one starts from any place he has to report to the same authorities for a permit to travel.

As I said, Mr. Taylor said for me to get that attended to and then spend my time looking around Brest and report at the headquarters next morning prepared to come out here to Pontanezen, which is what we call at home, a suburb of Brest.

It is the location of the barracks of Pontanezen which were built by Napoleon and is the sight of the largest military camp in the world. It would be difficult to describe this camp. The thing that impresses one is the mud. It rains every day here—sometimes during the day. It is almost bewildering this constant marching and marching of men. Men, men, everywhere and now and then a bunch of German prisoners who are used for one duty or another.

One cannot help but wonder what their thoughts are as they march along with the eyes of their conquerors upon them. But I guess at that they are better off than under their own military system.

Well, I must tell you of my work. I came out here Monday forenoon and reported to the director who assigned me to this Hut Canteen.

It is just like any general store and we carry everything that the boys want but it is hard to keep the stock up.

You can judge the extent of the business we do. The Hut is open from two to five on Sundays and in that time five of us did over \$2,000 worth of business and it is sold at cost so we had to handle some goods. I am getting to be quite a store keeper. It bothered me first to make changes as some of it is American and some French money. But I am getting acquainted with it now so everything is going along fine.

I like it very much but it is hard work. We open in the morning at 9 o'clock and close at 12 noon and open again at 2 and close at 5 and then open in the evening at 6:30 closing up at 8 o'clock. So you see we don't have much time to ourselves when you consider that we have to be there and restock the shelves before opening each time.

I am learning something that I never had anything to do with before. Of course, we never know when we will be moved.

The weather here is quite mild but the dampness makes it necessary to wear warm clothing.

The men are changing all the time as this is one of the two embarkation points but this is a nearer one so that most of the boys will start from here when they go home.

Everyone is waiting for the order

to embark always and sometimes it comes in the middle of the night. But it doesn't make any difference when it comes, they always send up a yell that can be heard all over the camp and then pretty soon you will hear them going by marching and singing and yelling and all the time the band is playing. It is really wonderful the spirit the men display under the most adverse circumstances. I can't help but marvel at them all the time and it makes me feel that I want to share in some measure their hardships. They deserve the very best that Uncle Sam can do for them. But I feel that the most of them will go back with a larger outlook and on the whole will be bigger men than they otherwise would have been with out this expansion. And the country at large will be the gainer by it.

This is a beautiful country. But everything is done in a different way that what we are used to. The farms are cut up into small lots and most of the fences are made by building up walls out of stone or just making the wall of dirt and planting bushes or trees on it. There are about 45 "Y" men in this one division so you can see there is quite a family if us. We all mess together and have good food too. There are new ones coming in all the time and there are three Hats now and they are planning for ten. When you realize that there will be from one to one hundred and fifty thousand men here all the time during embarkation you can see the need of plenty of provisions to take care of them. They line up in front of our santeen sometimes so that the line is half a block long and stand there in the rain waiting to get in. There are nine of us men in a live or rather room in the back part of the Hut and we get together every night in one room and have a chapter of Scripture read and some one leads in prayer. I enjoy it and in fact we all do.

Our rooms are about twelve feet square, two of us in a room. We sleep on cots. It is like we used to do out in South Dakota when we start on our claims in shares. But its alright we get along fine. I hope you are all well. I am alright but have not been able to get into touch with Gale yet. Bye Bye.

Lovingly, Dad.

FRANK H. CRAMER DIED SUDDENLY EARLY YESTERDAY

Frank H. Cramer, long a resident of this township, dropped dead at his home south of the village, early yesterday morning.

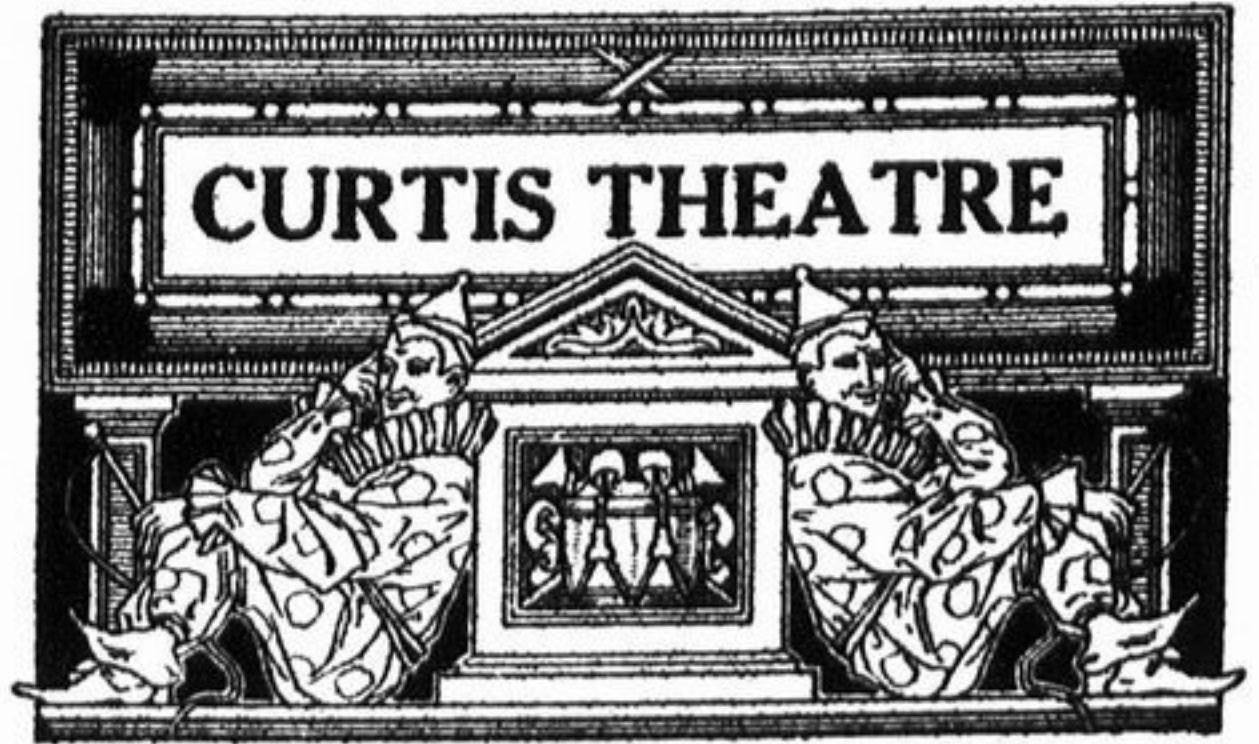
He had gone to bed Wednesday evening feeling about as usual and about 5:00 a. m. yesterday morning he arose telling his wife he didn't feel very well. Mrs. Cramer also got up and attended him and about a half hour later he said he was feeling better and thought he would go back to bed again. As Mrs. Cramer was helping him to the bed room he fell and died a few minutes later.

It is thought heart failure, from which he had suffered for years, was the cause of his death.

For many years Mr. Cramer has been a Downers Grove Township member of the County Board as assistant Supervisor. He was always active in the affairs of the County and watched the interests of his constituents particularly.

From present plans funeral services will be held Sunday.

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Laid in a stock of whisky—
Stolen a dog or his friend's wife—
Committed suicide, or murder—
Fallen from an airplane or—
Fallen into a coal hole or—
Fallen into a legacy?

That's News!

Phone or mail it to the DOWNERS GROVE REPORTER 37 N. Main St. Phone 188