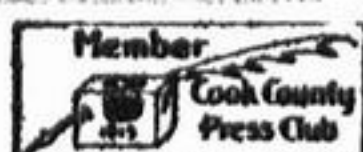


# Downers Grove Reporter

Issued every Friday morning from the office of the Downers Grove Publishing Company, Belmont and Forest Avenues, Downers Grove, Illinois.

C. H. STAATS, EDITOR

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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

### WARREN WELLS WRITES ABOUT "OVER THERE"

Somewhere in France July 11th, 1918.

My Dear Dad: Our mail service seems to be somewhat unsettled still and we are getting mail written way back in May. Mother's of May 21 came in night before last and last night we received a batch of papers.

There were four Reporters for me, May 10, 24, 31 and June 7 and believe us all they were good to see. They were the first ones we had seen since the middle of April and I have read them all thru from top to bottom. Was much surprised and pleased to see the great number of new names on the Honor Roll, 188 in all now. Goodness but the old burg must surely be dead now.

Last Sunday was a glorious warm day and really enjoyed it. Saw and learned more than any day since we have been in France. Another fellow and I started out for a hike about 8:30 that morning. No place in particular to go but just out to see the sights. We cut across the fields and followed the river for several miles. Finally turned away from the stream and followed an old railroad track for awhile. It had not been used for some months and the telephone and telegraph wires were broken and scattered in all directions. Here and there one of Jerry's shells had struck the road bed and split a rail in two and splintered a few ties into kindling wood. Well we soon tired of walking the track, so took to the road and headed off toward a once happy and thriving little French town and located on a hill and buried in a patch of beautiful timber. While making our way up the hill we stopped twice to look over aeroplanes or better say the twisted and battered remains of what had once been planes. There was very little left, however, to identify them as such and we could not even tell whether they had been Allied or Hun machines. While looking at the second one lying beside the road, a sudden whistle warned us of the approach of an invisible messenger of steel, and we turned in time to see two of Jerry's well known 5.96 explode in an empty field at the bottom of a hill a scant 300 yards below us. The bang and smoke had scarcely cleared away when others followed and fell in the same vicinity.

Well we just sat down at the edge of the road and watched them explode. They were doing absolutely no damage and I remarked to Watta that I would like to see him dump his old 5.94 in that field for the rest of the summer. About 25 shells fell there in less than five minutes and then the bombardment ceased as suddenly as it began. Don't know what his target could have been as we were the only ones any where near where the shells were falling. Must have been trying to locate a well hidden battery of .75 or 18 pounders I guess. We then proceeded on our way to the town which we had started for and about which we had heard many an interesting tale.

I have often tried to imagine what one of these places looked like after being under shell, machine gun and rifle fire for several months but I never could imagine such a scene of destruction and absolute desolation as we witnessed in the two hours we spent there among the ruins of that once beautiful little town. Great trees had been splintered and lay scattered in all directions.

The many pretty chateaus scattered thru out the town were masses of ruins and even the brick walls sur-

rounding the grounds were nothing but heaps of debris. Here and there a single shell had hit one corner of a building tearing it away completely and leaving the remainder untouched. But usually what the shells had failed to demolish, fire had finished and finished well. The business district lay mostly in the middle of the street and was here that the destruction seemed greatest. Even the cemetery had been torn to pieces and fragments of tombstones and vaults were scattered to all parts of the grounds.

An awful picture to paint to you but only typical of what has happened to hundreds of these beautiful and quaint little French towns that have been strafed by the Hun since the war began.

Two hours of wandering among the ruins was plenty and we started for our camp about 3:30 P. M. Stopped for a few minutes to glance over the remains of an abandoned prison camp. It was merely a barbed wire enclosure of about 300 by 300 feet square. It was just a temporary prison where the captives had been kept over night on their way back from the battle front. Thought we might find a souvenir or two among the rubbish but had no luck so started on our way again.

While still about four miles from camp a truck came along and we very gladly accepted a lift. Got to talking to the driver and he invited us over to his camp for supper and spend the evening. It was only a couple of kilns beyond our camp so we went with him. After our supper which consisted of bully beef (corned beef) bread butter, jam and tea he took us to what the Australians call a concert but in the U. S. is called a vaudeville show. And it was good. Positively the funniest thing I ever saw and only cost a franc (20 cents). They had a dandy string orchestra which played many pretty pieces from some of the old comic operas. A stage had been built in one end of an old frame building about a hundred feet long and thirty feet wide, seating capacity of about 300. They had real painted scenery for their acts and had rigged up a set of acetylene footlights. There were several acts consisting of comical sketches, a fine quartette, a one act skit called, 'Dress Rehearsal', and some solos. One of the fellows took the part of a girl and was dressed in a beautiful silk gown. The men all wore full dress suits and looked just like professional actors. The show ended with the song we all know so well, 'Over There' and was sung by an 'Aussie' dressed in a Yankee uniform. The final pieces of the orchestra were, 'The Star Spangled Banner' and 'God Save the King'.

I have made a very poor attempt to describe this concert but just try and picture in your mind our rough surroundings, our dugouts banked with sand bags. The big guns booming from among the hills on all sides. The aeroplanes over head and the occasional rat a tat tat of their machine guns as they battle with the Jerry's.

Then the remains of the railroads, the deserted and demolished towns, thousands of acres of slowly ripening oats, wheat and rye which are being trampled down and will never be harvested, and in the midst of all this above this little theatre with its little audience of nearly 300 men who are trying to forget for the moment at least, everything of what is going on outside. Can you imagine full dress suits, starched collars, silk gowns, the string orchestra and the footlights among surroundings such as I have described above? It really seemed like another world to me and I have never enjoyed two and a half hours any more than I did that night.

Well we finally got back to our camp about ten o'clock and believe me I was tired. Had walked about fifteen miles and enjoyed the happiest day I have known for some time. Am afraid I have not used the best of grammar in this letter, Dad, so please don't put it in the paper will you? I started this at noon and have had to stop several times since then, once to eat, once to drill and again for retreat, so it is quite a patched up affair. Hope you will be able to wade thru it though and will understand most of what I have scribbled.

It is impossible just at present for me to send requests home for packages of any kind. A change in the system of handling these requests is the cause of it but as soon as possible I shall send to Mother for some woolen socks and another sweater like she made for me before. I also want to send to Mr. Rice for a comfort kit which he has offered to send. They say it is a dandy and worth about 7 dollars.

Thanks very much for the bill you enclosed in your letter. Did not need it very badly so you must please not send any more. Have very little opportunity to spend money and the 62 francs I draw every payday is more than enough to last me thru. (Time for mess again so shall resume later) Have had supper and find that I am on guard tonight. From 9 to 11 and 1 to 3 the same hours tomorrow.

Good many of the D. G. fellows are somewhere in the vicinity now but as yet I have seen none of them. Shall undoubtedly run across some of them tho, very soon. Am going to write Harry E. and find out where he is located. May get a chance to see him some of these days.

Believe we shall move before very long. Our preliminary training is a bout complete and we are ready to take up our regular work. Don't know as yet what that work is to be but here's hoping for a regular job.

Have made this a terribly drawn out and splotchy letter but it will have to do for this time. Shall try and write again in a few days altho its hard work to make a letter out of what we are usually allowed to write. Even some of this letter will probably be censored but we hope not enough to really spoil it.

Been having some queer weather all this week and just now had to duck into my dugout to avoid a shower. Rains for about 15 or 20 minutes and then clears up for a couple of hours and does the same thing over again.

Am glad that Mother sent to addresses of the folks in England. Had told the ones Grandma sent me. Hope I have a chance to use them some of these fine days.

Tis after 8 o'clock and have another letter to write before I go on guard. For goodness sake Dad, don't work to hard this summer. I know work is one of your failings and you can't keep away from it but you must take care of yourself. Am feeling fine and dandy and getting tanned up something fierce.

Hope I can get hold of a souvenir from some dirty Boche soon to send to you.

Heaps of love to you Dad, oodles to Mother Dear and gobs of love to the kiddies.

The U. S. boys are "Yanks" to all of our Allies.

As always,  
Your "Yank" Son  
Warren (Wells)

### ADOLPH WINTER TELLS OF BEING UNDER SHELL FIRE

July 16th, 1918  
Somewhere in France.

Dear Mother:

I am now sitting in a small Australian Y. M. C. A., writing you a few lines. It is a very interesting place. I will try and describe it to you. A Hut with a few wooden tables, an old piano and a few benches. Around the piano we have a Tommy playing, and among those singing a Scotty, three Tommies and several "Aussies" and two Yankies, my partner and myself. Could you guess the songs? "My Mother's Rosary", "Ten Baby Fingers and Ten Baby Toes". While outside Jerry is merrily sending over head a few shells, as if he is jealous of our "We should worry spirit."

I had today off because of being on guard all last night. It was a great night to be on guard. On the front I could see the battle raging, for the ridges ahead of me were just clothed with fire and with the steady rumble of the guns it sure was interesting. Above you could see the pale moon now and then thru the clouds. Then suddenly the great searchlights began to send their flares up into the heavens. I could hear the "Bu" "Bu" of the Jerry machine. Then I saw a sight I'll long remember, for the searchlights had found Jerry. He seemed like a white ghost, dipping first one way and then the other, trying to dodge the searchlights, but every where he went they followed like little devils. Finally he turned and beat it for the German

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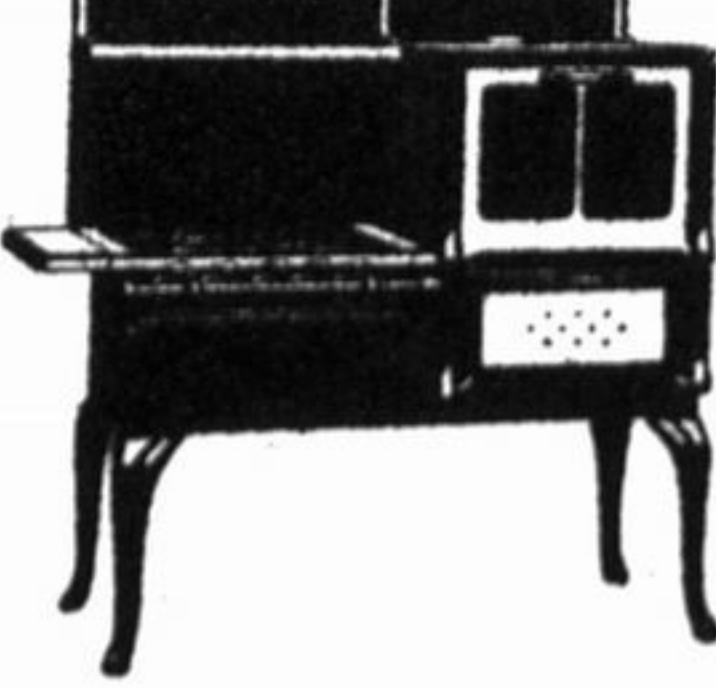
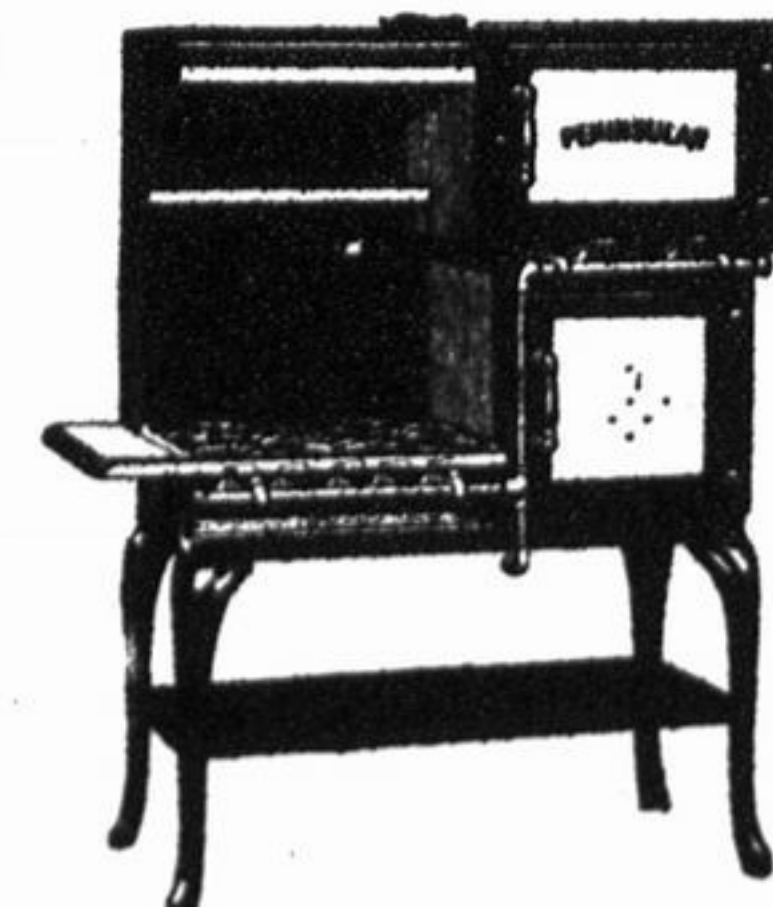
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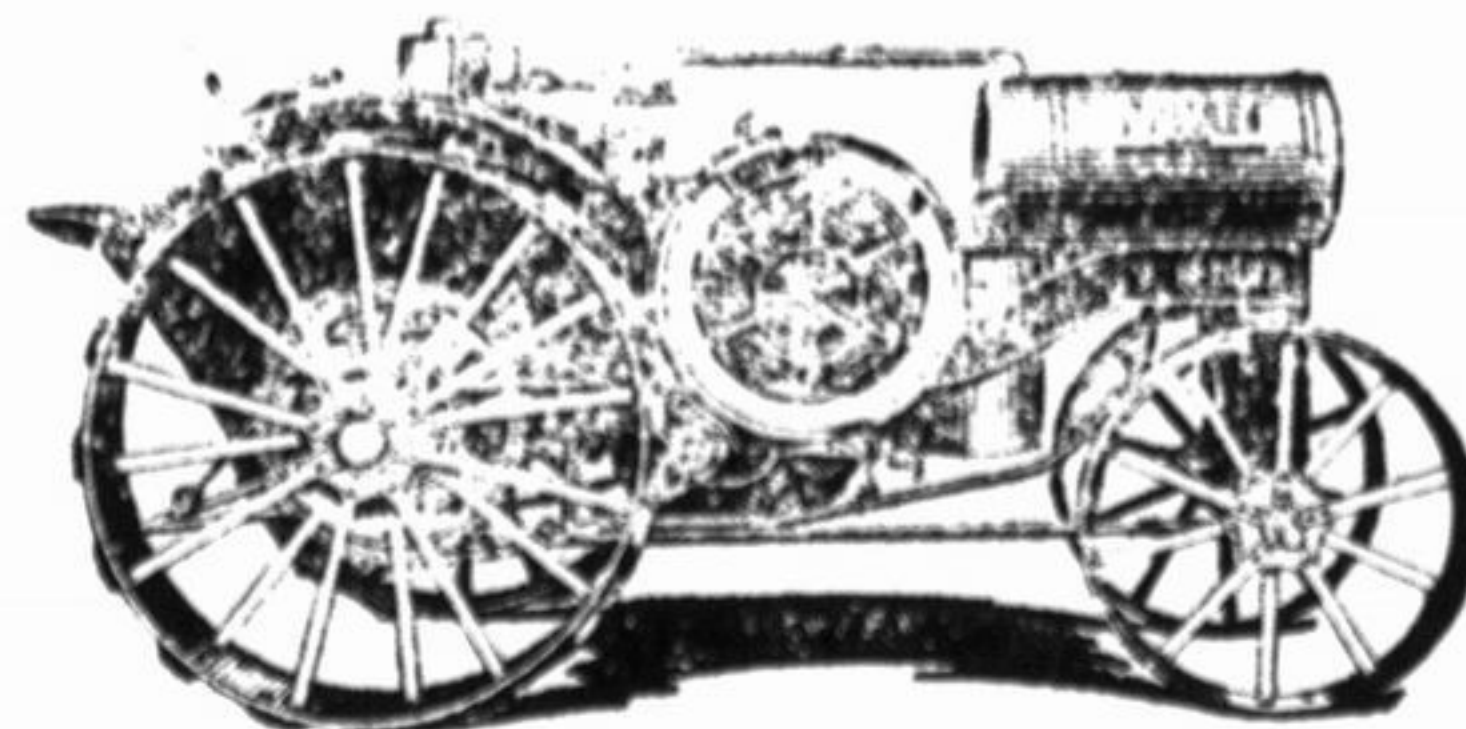


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