

## MAHANOEY CITY CHRONICLES

Friday, May 27, 1988

Written by Bill O'Brien, Herald writer

Researched by Lorraine Stanton

### THE WAR YEARS OF 1917-18.....

Memorial Day 1988 finds few, if any veterans of World War I still around in Mahanoy City.

Those war years of 1917-18 were times of great patriotic fervor in town. Flag raisings, patriotic programs and parades were held at practically every colliery. Each contingent of enlistees who left for military training camp was escorted in a parade to the railroad depot where throngs gathered to see them off.

Liberty Bond campaigns were conducted in every community to help the government finance the war. Additional drives were undertaken to collect tobacco and other sundries for the doughboys.

Those years leading up to World War I were the peak of the boom for Mahanoy. The population in the 1910 census was 15,936 and with the influx of immigrants still in progress, the number of residents undoubtedly surpassed 16,000 between 1910 and 1917.

Then came the war and the turning point. Hundreds of men left for the service and the downtrend began. By 1920, with the war long over and the soldiers mustered out, the borough had dropped 15,599 residents, a decrease of 335.

Since then, it's been a constant downslide. The 1980 census listed 6,167 and this had fallen to 5,650 by July 1, 1986, according to U.S. Census Bureau updates.

During the war years, some people kept scrapbooks with newspaper clippings of the happenings. It was a time unlike any other before it, with hundreds of young men marching away, soon followed by increasing telegraph messages from the battlefield of France reporting men dying in battle or from the staggering severity of the flu bug that quickly led to fatal pneumonia during worldwide Spanish influenza epidemic of that period.

It was a time when people wanted to keep memoirs so that their children and grandchildren would know what it was like. One such ledger (compiler unknown) is the

source of the following items which provide some idea of events that kept the people of Mahanoy City watching the front pages in 1917-18:

## 1917

March 29 – Mahanoy City Company E, Pennsylvania National Guard, commanded by Captain Abraham Hinch, officially assigned to 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment with presentation of regimental flag.

April 6 – United States enters war with Germany.

May 17 – 12,000 participated in borough's patriotic parade.

June 14 – County war bond campaign raises \$1,275,000.

July 11 – Cpl. W.W. Gipe decorated by France and United States for bravery.

July 29 – Harry Norris first local soldier injured.

Sept 12 – W.A. Dennis missing in action.

Sept 20 – M. Schierka killed.

Sept 25 – M. Lazar, U.S. Marines, killed.

Oct 8 – J. Tarquini wounded.

Oct 11 – William Karnaros wounded.

Oct 12 – J.J. McCall wounded

Oct 16 – I.M. Dresibach injured in action.

Oct 26 – J.J. Wargo died of wounds received Oct 20 while serving with field artillery.

Oct 30 – Sgt Ralph Roebuck wounded.

Nov 1 – Cpl Edward Browmiller wounded.

Nov 2 – Pvt Frank Wesner wounded.

Nov 4 – Francis McCullough and Anthony Kulinsky wounded

Nov 7 – Joseph Wassel wounded

Nov 13 – Charles Althoff wounded

Nov 12 – John B. Dempsey missing in action

Nov 15 – Angelo Consorte and Stiney Daniels wounded

Nov 20 – John Hoben wounded; Walter Jones taken prisoner

## **1918**

Jan 21 – Nationwide heatless Monday observed to conserve coal for war effort

March 5 – Pvt Michael Christoff died

May 28 – Pvt James Coleman killed

June 11 – Cpl W.E. Geise decorated by France and U.S. for Chateau-Thierry bravery

June 15 – Cpl George W. Reese and Pvt Joseph Hall killed in France

June 19 – Pvt Michael Andras killed

June 22 – Pvt Joseph Kaiser killed

Aug 6 – Mahanoy City ad Tamaqua boys in 108<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion taking casualties in heavy fighting

Aug 7 – Sgt Edward Romanosky killed

Sept 1 – Pvt Hayden Davis died at Fort Bank Hospital

Sept 5 – Pvt William Karnaros wounded last Oct 11, this time killed in action

Sept 15 – Pvt John J. McCall died in France

Sept 20 – Boatswain John Dodds died in New York Navy Hospital

Sept 28 – Pvt Harry T. Boyle killed

Oct 1 – Pvt Bart McCloskey died

Oct 3 – Pvt Joseph Kasparavich died

Oct 4 – Pvt Daniel McCullan killed

Oct 6 – Pvt Michael J. Lucyk died

Oct 7 – Pvt George Schlier died; Pvt John Gastager died; Pvt John Dolne killed

Oct 9 – Cpl Francis Weeks killed; Pvt Richard Sheehan killed; Pvt John Muldoon died of flu; Pvt William McLaughlin killed.

Oct 10 – Pvt Joseph Donahue killed

Oct 11 – Pvt William Harris died; Pvt Edward Dreisbach died

Oct 14 – Pvt John Telesky died; Pvt Florinde Deliska died

Oct 15 – Pvt John Bedding killed; Pvt Mike Floor died

Oct 16 – Pvt Patrick Doris killed

Oct 19 – Pvt John Burke died

Oct 22 – Pvt Angelo Consorte died of wounds

Oct 25 – Pvt Frank Dochney died

Oct 28 – Pvt Guiseppe DiBenedetto died of wounds

Oct 29 – Austria surrenders

Oct 31 – Turkey surrenders

Nov 5 – Pvt William Barbaris died of wounds

Nov 6 – Pvt Leo Raczkowski killed; Sgt Stephen Walk died

Nov 7 – Germany surrenders; Pvt John Cooper died

Nov 8 – Pvt Claude Wertz died

Nov 11 – Armistice signed. War ends.

One of Mahanoy City's fallen sons was buried at sea: Joseph F. Donahoe. Fourteen others rest in the soil of France: Matthew Andruscavage, Harry T. Boyle, Joseph DiBenedetto, Angelo Consorte, John Muldoon, William McLaughlin, Richard Sheehan, George Reese, David Yourosky, Garrett English, Daniel McCullough, George Kropp, John Cooper, Patrick Doris.

Four local women served their country as military nurses. Mary Williams saw duty with the AEF in France, Ida May Davies, Camilla Dilibio and Mary Thomas served in stateside hospitals.

Songs of war were the most popular melodies on stage and in the music stores during the two years that America was in the conflict.

May folks today remember the more familiar tunes of World War I such as “Over There”, “Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag”, “Til the Clouds Roll By”, and “Hinky Dinky Parlez Vous”.

But how about these ditties which have been long forgotten during the 70 years that have elapsed since that first Armistice Day:

“Good-bye Broadway, Hello France”

“Bing! Bang! Bing ‘em on the Rhine”

“Dear Old Pal of Mine”

“I’m Gonna Pin My Medal on the Girl I Left Behind”

“I’d Like to see the Kaiser with A Lily in His Hand”

“If He Can Fight Like He can Love”

“We Don’t Want the Bacon – What We Want Is a Piece of the Rhine”

“When Alexander Takes His Ragtime Band to France”

“When You Come Back”

“Would You Rather Be a Colonel with An Eagle on Your Shoulder or a Private with a Chicken on Your Knee?”

“Au Revoir But Not Good-bye, Soldier Boy”

“Bring Back My Daddy to Me’

“Good-bye, Ma! Good-bye Pa! Good-bye Mule!”

“I Don’t Know Where I’m Going but I’m on My Way”

“I May Be Gone for a Long, Long Time”

“Lorraine – My Beautiful Alsace Lorraine”

“Meet Me At the Station, Dear”

“Send Me Away with a Smile”

“We’re Going Over”

“When the Boys Come Home”

“When Yankee Doodle Learns to Parlez Vous Francais”

“Whose Little Heart Are You Breaking Now?”

“Sound Off”

“Singing Soldiers”

“Dear Little Boy of Mine”

It’s a long way to Tipperary, says another song of World War I. It’s also a long time since the days when all these events made the somber headlines. How many Mahanoy residents of today ever stop to remember the men and women who served in 1917-18?

Also forgotten by most is the fact that during the 1930s the churches and lodges of Mahanoy paid tribute to the town’s fallen heroes of 1917-18 by planting trees at the East End Park, one for each Gold Star.

This Memorial Day would be an appropriate time to think about those long-ago heroes who marched away to help make sure Mahanoy City would be around to celebrate its Quasquicentennial.

Transcribed by:  
Shirley E. Ryan  
January 24, 2005

Remember Your First Thrill of  
AMERICAN LIBERTY



**YOUR DUTY-*Buy***  
United States Government *Bonds*  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Liberty Loan of 1917**



**BOYS OFF TO WAR** - This was the scene at the Reading Railroad Depot in Mahanoy City on May 28, 1918, when a group of men left for military service. The troop train is standing on the eastbound track. At right is the freight station and just below it the passenger station, both now gone from the scene, as are the doughboys who marched away to fight the Kaiser on that May morning 70 years ago this weekend.