

In the Trenches: Andrew Carroll WWI - Letter August 6, 1818

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Andrew Daniel Carroll - Letters Home During World War I

The following excerpts of Andrew Carroll's letters home capture life on the front as well as home during World War I. From the letters and photographs, you will learn about the life of an Oswego County man and his experience during World War I.

Andrew Daniel Carroll was born on May 11, 1890 to James and Margaret Carroll who had seven other sons and two daughters. The family lived at 168 West 2nd Street in Fulton and were devout Irish-Catholics who were members of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Fulton, NY and later the Holy Family Catholic Church.

Andrew enlisted in World War I on July 23, 1917 when he was 27 years old. He was first placed with the 74th Regiment from Buffalo and three months later was transferred to the 108th Machine Gun Company Infantry. At the outbreak of the war, Andrew's mother said that she would unfurl an American flag at the family's home to reach son who entered the service. Three flags hung outside the Carroll home for the duration of the war. One was for Andrew who was the first in the family to enlist and the others were for his brothers, Edward and Maurice. Andrew fought in several major battles in Europe during the war and was discharged on March 31, 1919.

What makes Andrew an "uncommon common man" is the fact that while he was stationed in Europe he wrote many wonderfully detailed letters to his family in Fulton, NY. These descriptive and moving letters have been wisely preserved by his family. These letters describe one man's experiences on the French war front in World War I. One major battle that Andrew took part in was the Battle of the Hindenburg Line in September of 1918.

Andrew Carroll died from a heart attack on January 18, 1939 at age 48.

Note: This information is based on the work by Judith Wellman for the Oswego County Historical Society.

In the Trenches: Andrew Carroll WWI

First excerpt of a letter dated August 6, 1918 from Andrew to his mother, father, and all.

In the trenches Somewhere in France
Aug - 6 - 18

Dearest Mother Father and all

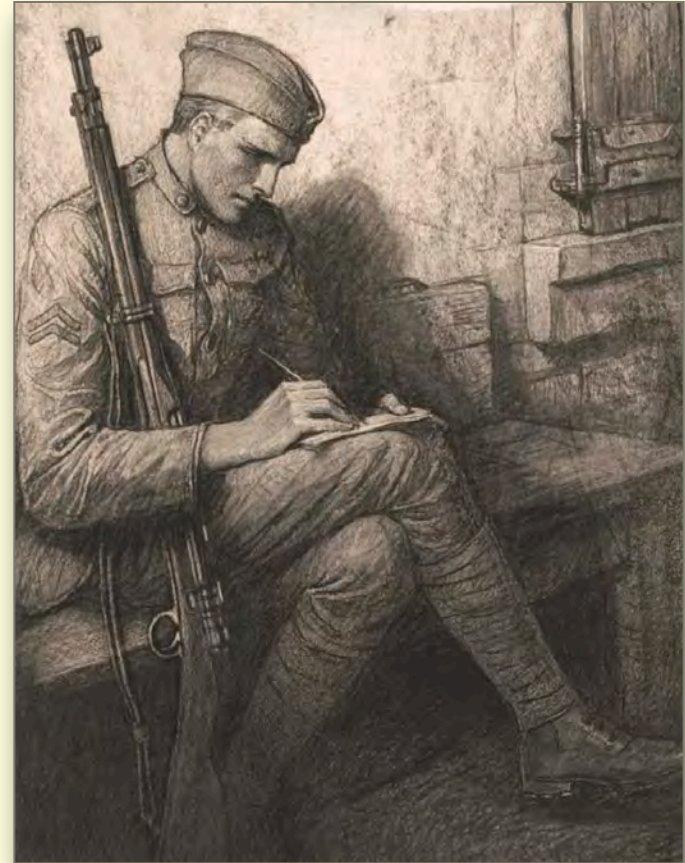
I have an opportunity to scribble a few lines and I am making the most of it as best I can under the conditions, it isn't often that we get these green envelopes, and you see they are censored at the Base. I received 2 or 3 letters from Father one from Mary and I assure you (one and all) that a letter over here is at the most welcome thing on earth and thoroughly (sic) enjoyed. About all the pleasure we get over here is a letter, even if it is only Hello, I am well, Good Bye. The letters you send are not censored. They all arrive safe and unopened. By the time this reaches you I will be out of the trenches and probably back again. We have great time ducking shells of every description, but where we are ducking one The Huns are ducking them by the hundreds, as yet there hasn't any come over with my name and address on. They say if ("Jerry" "Boche", "the Huns") has got your name and address written on one it will reach you.

Our Captain said one day: They haven't seen or got hold of our Company Roster as yet, so it is a cinch they haven't got our name and address. He is funny. We have got the greatest Captain that ever was and all of the lads swear by him. He is Captain C.S. Martin from Oswego. He is out for his Company at all times...

(end of this excerpt)

Questions for further research and discussion:

- What does Andrew say his great pleasure is?
- What are some of the names Andrew called the Germans?
- Andrew describes Captain Martin in this excerpt. Why do you think it's important for Capt. Martin to be "funny"?



American soldier writing a letter, charcoal drawing by Wladyslaw T. Benda (1873-1948), 58x45 cm., 1919. Published in "A Soldier's Valentine", Cosmopolitan, March 1919. Library of Congress, no known restrictions.

Second excerpt of a letter dated August 6, 1918 from Andrew to his mother, father, and all.

... We are getting good eats, each week we are issued 3 & 4 pckgs of Cigarettes & matches & Tobacco. But they are the English issue and while we are beginning to enjoy them, still they do not come up to our American tobacco & cigarettes.

Our Billets as you know are barns and sheds etc. one day we were marching to another place and all that day it poured with rain and we were soaked clear thru. We stopped at some barns to rest for the night before going on. Part of our Company had a band with straw scattered around and we entered and it was just like entering to a grand Hotel to us. On entering we saw a great Pig laying there comfortable and we, at once proceeded to kick Mr. Pig out into the rain so as to give us a chance. We thot it was rather hard on Mr. Pig to drive him out of his own home, but we figured we were entitled to the barn as well as he so Out went Mr. Pig and he could consider himself lucky that We didn't cut off some Pork Chops from him...

(end of this excerpt)



Questions for further research and discussion:

- Why did they enter the barn?
- Ask a current soldier if it's permissible to stay in a person's barn while on a mission.

During World War 1 there was a huge effort to supply the troops with cigarettes and tobacco. The postcard above was published by A. Vivian Mansell & Co., London. The postcard was sent on July 24th, 1918 to an address in Cumberland, England. Image used with permission of World War 1 Postcards: <https://www.worldwar1postcards.com/smokes-for-the-troops.php>

Third excerpt of a letter dated August 6, 1918 from Andrew to his mother, father, and all.

...The water over here is very poor and every drop has to be chlorinated or boiled. This is a very pretty country here in the summer. There is hardly an inch of ground that isn't utilized you see no bare spots anywhere. Rows of trees all along the roads, Hedges everywhere. Some spots are beautiful, little towns everywhere, but they are all old-fashioned all painted with whitewash, Straw & thatched roofs, they are made of (in most cases) mud & plaster, Sticks etc. Over here you see Old Men, Old Women, girls & little kids all busy from morning until night, they never stop. It seems if the women do more work than the men. They can tell a German Plane miles away and they will remark in a rather half scared whisper that one word: "Bosche". We are all picking up the French language pretty good. Bon jour, Madam, ave vous du last pair Amerique Soldat? (2) Donne maw one glass du lo Sul vous plait. This much means Good Morning Madam have you some milk for an American soldier. (2) Give me some water if you please. Merci Beaucoup means thanks very much. I am getting so I can spell the French out good. There are Three of four sentences or words that we hear everywhere we go such as: "Finis" which means a hundred things. We see a French girl and say: Madamselle vous maw Fiancee? and we get back: "apree la Guerre" which means: after the war. Everything is agree la guerre. They all tell what they will do or where they are going "after the war". Apree la guerre departee Amerique which means: after the war I am going to America. All the kids all over France holler as you go by "Amerikan Souvenir". every little kid ou see is asking for souvenirs & cigarettes and they all smoke too. They also ask for "Buscuit" they mean the "hard-tack" we are issued...

(end of this excerpt)



British enter Lille, France, October 1918. Lille had been occupied for four years by the Germans. Source: Library of Congress.

Questions for further research and discussion:

- How does Andrew describe the French country side?
- How does Andrew describe the French people?
- In the photo above, what is the mood of the group?
- Describe the little boy's appearance.

Fourth excerpt of a letter dated August 6, 1918 from Andrew to his mother, father, and all.

...One day we passed some German Prisoners and I hollered: "Bosche" at them and one stuck his tongue out at me and then he turned quick to see if his guard saw him. The German Prisoners seem to think that the war will end in October and they say there are no hopes for them to win. They are also very much surprised to see & hear of so many Americans over here. Yesterday was the beginning of the 5th year of the war. Well Mother Dear & Father & all I haven't much time to write any more so will close with the best of wishes to all and hope that I will soon be back in the good old states safe & sound While I am writing this there are all kinds of Guns & shells exploding all around us. But we should worry. We are going to make "Jerry" swallow iron & steel and we have been doing it too.

Goodbye all
and God bless and keep you
all

as ever
Andrew

Please forward this to my Maggie

Questions for further research and discussion:

- How many years had the war been going on?
- When did the United States enter the war?
- From his letter, when did the Germans think the war would end?
- Who did they think would win?



Allied soldier watches as German prisoners are escorted along a path beside the trench in which he is standing. Several of the prisoners are carrying a wounded man on a makeshift stretcher. The tank in the background shows that this took place after September 1916, when tanks were first used, and most probably 1917 or 1918. The Press stamp on the photograph indicates that it is Canadian, a reminder that each of the Allied armies had their own photographers. It is not clear from the photograph if the Allied troops escorting the prisoners were Canadian. Date: c. January 1918, National Library of Scotland. No known copyright restrictions.