

My Year in WW1 by Cecil Perth Pressley

Also known as Perth, Press, CP, or Mr. Pressley, or my father. He hated to be called Cecil.

I have no idea how long I have had this diary or how it came into my possession. My older sister Mary probably sent it to me years ago, it has resided in various junk draws most of the time.

I tried reading it, it was not easy to decipher the hand writing, I needed help to get it transcribed. A few years ago, I thought it might be fun for my grandchildren to take a look and see if they could read it. It seems they don't teach cursive writing in school anymore, none of the kids could make heads or tails.

My son Peter and his daughter Kerry took a crack at it and were able to transcribe about the first half. Since it is already over 100 years old it sat around another few years. Well now it is 2020 and we are dealing with the pandemic of the Corona virus and we are quarantine in our homes and looking for something to do. The diary seemed like a good project to finish. With the help of two friends we got the rest of the diary transcribed.

I don't remember my father ever talking about the war. He was, as I knew him growing up, a quiet respected man running a poultry hatchery in the town of Ithaca Michigan. He was a man of few words.

We have no real record of the four years after his graduation from the Michigan Agricultural College, when he was working in Ithaca, and what his job was. We know he was a county agricultural agent and that he registered for the military, as all men were required to, in 1917.

This is not an autobiography, but a record of what life was like as recorded by a soldier in the army during those years. It covers his army training in Michigan, his deployment to France, and then in his travels, after the Armistice Agreement, in occupied Germany. It concludes with this return to the United States and Ithaca.

The time frame also takes place in the time when the Spanish flu was decimating the population and indeed killed his sweetheart, Ester, while he was in Europe.

He was called up in April of 1918 and sent to France with the Fourth Division. The Fourth Division was basically a replacement division and its troops were used to both fill in for soldiers lost in frontline fighting as well as supplying a small military support group to Russia.

The typewritten text from his military diary is a best effort by readers Eileen Palmer and Kim Welty in transcribing his writings, some of which were obviously done under somewhat trying conditions. Some words, especially the names of towns and cities were not readable, these words are indicated by them color purple in the text.

This document is a reconstruction of the handwritten diary that CP carried with him during his years in United States Army with some supporting pictures and a few maps.

Bob Pressley, April 2020



Cecil P. Pressley



Ester Lewis

June 5-17

Registered at Saginaw W.S. for the draft into the National Army. All men in the U. S. Between the ages of 21 and 30 inclusive registered.

24 to 29

Week spent in the routine of drilling etc.

Sunday 6-30-18

Muster roll call.

Brown and I went over to Kalamazoo. Had some eats went to picture show and out to Oakwood Park. Danced and bummed around.

July 1-2-3 ordinary days.

July 4 Thursday

Mc Gowan and I went to Kazoo. Eat at Chop Suey and out to park. Had good time. Danced in eve and met Miss Stewart, a friend of Miss Hogues.

July 5

Hardly got to bed but they gave us an H of a long hike with heavy packs.

Saturday 7-6-18

Got pass to Flint at noon and so went over and got Esther. Both went home by Owasso train late as usual. Both tired but happy.

Sunday 7-7-18

Of course a good time and a fill of eats. Back to Flint with Ester in eve. where we had a fine time. Making some plans for the future

Monday 7-8-18

Back to camp for Reveille, camp closed and begins to look like a departure in near future.

Tuesday and Wed 9-10

Preparations continue.

Thursday 7-11-18

My birthday.

Finished preparations packing & sending out our bags. Rolled packs and slept on bare springs.

Friday 7-12-18

Stuck around until 2 PM when we boarded an M.C. troop train. We soon pulled out over M.C. to Detroit. At depot in Detroit, the Red Cross gave us papers, milk, candy cards, cakes and cigarettes. Had supper here. Went thru tunnel into Windsor. C___ where we were given cards to mail. Saw good until past St Thomas when it got dark. Crops looked fine and nice country. Corn much further along than in Mich. At St Thomas the Red Cross gave us more pills and also at Niagara. Went over suspension bridge and thru Buffalo in night and hit Syracuse early in the A.M.

Spent day traveling though New York state which was very interesting, as the scenery was fine in the valley we followed.

At Russia the Red Cross gave us fruit. Got off from train on New Jersey side of harbor across from N.Y. city and got on ferry for Long Island. While waiting for the ferry the Red Cross served cake, milk and oranges. Could see the big city across the river and later passing out saw the Statue of Liberty. Got off on Long Island about 10 PM and after much waiting got on a train and took out about 20 miles to a camp at about 3:30 A.M. Here we got tents each holding a squad. This is a mammoth camp. Known as camp Mills and used principally for concentration purposes. Not much place to drill. A number of aviation fields are near and Curtiss plant is next to it. We saw lots of planes. We got more equip here and had numerous injections.

Wednesday 7-17-18

After a few quiet days, Koehler Bruson and a bunch of us got in a big car in eve and took us to Rockaway beach. Was a nice ride out on the roads are fine and lots of beautiful homes and scenery along the way. At the beach we found the usual stunts in progress and about the only people present were jews.

Thursday 7-18-18

Quiet day. A feature at this camp was the pies we got to eat.

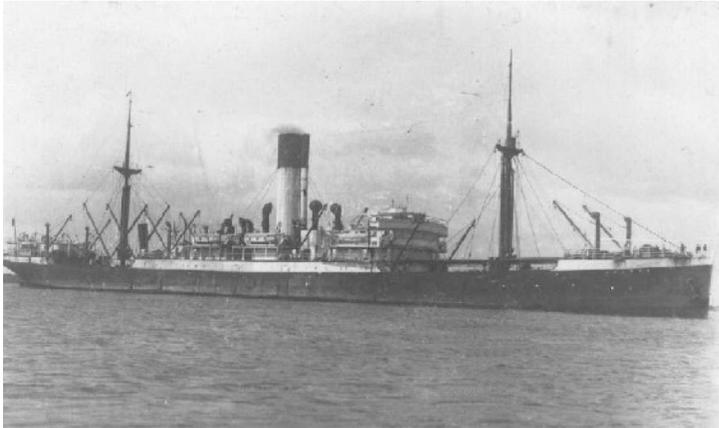
Friday 7-19-18

Not allowed out of camp.

Spent most of night issuing clothes.

Saturday 7-20-18

All set to move again. Koehler, Pete Ben, Shrig, Sully & I ducked into city. Had quite an exciting time and saw some of the interesting sights in city. Was on Wall St, Times Square, saw a number of buildings. "Got stung"



Sunday 7-21-18

Took train from Mills to dock and ferry across. The Red Cross gave us cards, ice cream, & cookies and we loaded onto the boat. Neleus where we spent the first night. Will always remember the boat.

SS Neleus

Monday 7-22-18

Pulled out into harbor where the 16 transports formed surrounded by a convoy of sub chasers, a battleship ballon etc.

July 23-18 to August 1

Continuous ocean.

Cool weather and rained last part of trip. Suspected subs a couple of times and chasers did some shooting a couple of days off English coast. Saw some porpoise and sharks. Also a funeral. Were on British rations and near starved. But got some from cooks and chinks. A little excitement when wave came over deck one night and were nearly rammed in the fog.

Friday 8-2

Still on boat, but convoy with us. They had a skirmish with subs. Saw land and light in eve.

Saturday 8-3

Pulled into harbor at Liverpool on high tide in morning. Left boat in P.M. for short hike in town then entrained after an issue of cig. tea & biscuits. Sent King George message from here. Spent night on train going south thru Crewe, Oxford, Chester etc.



Sunday 8-4

Detrained about 3:00 A.M. at Winchester and went out about 2 mi to rest camp. Spent day here. Beautiful hills here. Down town in eve. but a holiday, everything closed.

Monday 8-5

Took train to the docks at South Hampton. Spent day on dock and about 4:30 got on boat expecting to go to France. Had boiler trouble just out of harbor and returned. Next morn. On dock saw them unloading hospital ships. Filled up on pork pies and coffee. So crowded on boat spent some weary night.

Got off boat Tuesday noon and went to next camp. Another beautiful place. N.C.O's got passes in eve so went down town. Saw an old arch in center of town and Titanic monument. Tried some beer and wine.

Wednesday 8-7

Back to dock in P.M. and got on another boat. Pulled out in eve and crossed channel. Another packed night and slept on floor.



Thursday 8-8

Left boat and stepped on French soil at the Le Havre. Walked thru town, along beach, and up a young mountain to next camp. Corp. of guard here. Heard some cannons here and place subject to air raids.

Friday 8-9

While inspecting rifle, tried to remove a shell and discharged gun. Left camp around noon and entrained

in cattle cars. Went south through Reims. This is a beautiful city in a valley between some high hills. Country also looked pretty good in this part of France. Were just cutting wheat and oats. Spent night on train.

Saturday 8-10

Got off train in P.M. at Cosne Co. Lg. were set in a school house and co spread out. Billited in a barn near center of town. It is a town of about

Sun-8-11

10000 in the river Loire and looks like a fair place to stay. Spent day looking around and trying some drinks. No candy or tobacco obtainable.

Aug 12-17

Back drilling and hiking again and getting back in condition from trip. Saturday about 90 men picked from Co. Climes and Roderick from my squad.

Sunday 8-18

Day of leisure so put in a very quiet Sunday as I was broke.

Monday 8-19

Drill again. Men left from Company. Went on guard at bridge in eve. as Sgt. of guard.

Tuesday 8-20

Still on guard. Read 4 letters and first mail. Bruns guard so was called on carpet before Captain Skeggs and ask a lot of ?. Did not CM tho as it happened.

Aug-21-23

Drill, Hikes etc.

Saturday 8-24-18

No drilling but as I was still busted, another quiet day. 68 more men picked to leave including Smith, Elkins & Hamilton.

Sunday 8-25-18

Another quiet day

Men left.

Monday 8-26

Usual drilling and hikes. Lt. Ward and Sheldon left.

Friday 8-30

Bat. out on a 20 mi hike east of Cosne. Paid in eve so a bunch of us went out for a real time and stirred up about all the excitement in town.

Saturday 8-31

Inspection in the morning and then laid in some tobacco & supplies from the commissary. Wrote some letters.

Sunday 9-1-18

Perfectly agreeable day. Plenty of eats and real smokes. Lt. Prison left. Wrote some letters. Went on quarters guard in eve.

Monday 9-2-18

On guard which is pretty easy so slept and wrote letters.

Tuesday 9-3-18

Drilled out at grounds east of town. Went on quarters guard in eve.

Wednesday 9-4-18

On guard. Lt. Kierham and 8 men left. Rumor they went to Russia.

11-1

Left Cosne by train. Whole bunch

11-2

Detrained at Marou and out to camp.

11-5

Hurriedly packed up to leave

11-7

Finally left by truck to a camp near Rimbeaux in pup tents and rain. News of Sudan victory reaches us next day. Also A. H. collapse. Here where we run into 4 Div. Saw first trenches dug out and reserve lines.

11-10

Left this camp by truck to town and from there up to about 8-10k off front. Joined Co G 47 Inf. Put up in tents in the woods. Plainly hear guns. Plane dropped flare. Camp near Hendievurt in St Micheal sector.

11-11

Still in woods waiting to see if Armistice goes thru. Heavy barrage and at 11 A.M. guns ceased. Some joy. Had camp fires for first time in eve. Co. organized and I had 2nd squad 1st Pt.

Tuesday 11-12

Drilled a little as Rt guide. In charge of Reg. Patrol in P.M.

Wed. 11-13

Out early for hike from woods. Saw a lot of battleground thru Gironville to Vignot where we went into billets. More replacements come here.

Thurs. 11-14

At same place cleaned up and some new clothes. Also organized squads. I got 5th sq. 1st platoon

Friday 11-15

Drilled a little. On Corp of guard at night. One H of a cold job.

Sat 11-16-18

guard.

Sunday 11-17

Got some clothes and layed around.

Wed 11-20

Left Vignot headed for Germany. Went thru Boucourt, St Agnut, Apermont, Woiuville and encamped in field. Towns are shot to pieces.

Thursday 11-21

Started our hike at noon thru Buxieres Buxraulles, Hendiervurl Billey Vigneulles and camped near Brainville about midnight. Dropped roll near Biely but it was some hike.

Friday 11-22

Continued hike to Conflous where we had lunch. City decorated. Continued to Briey a rather picturesque town in valley. Country looked better.

Saturday 11-23

Started early to Avril and followed valley to Heyingen and stopped in theatre at Algringe. In mining section in Lorraine and things looked very prosperous. Lots of factories and almost continuous town in valley. Looked around town in eve but had to carry arms. Freed some snops, biere, and [leruonades](#).

Sunday, 11-24

Still in town visiting a little which is sure welcome. Looked around town a little and tried talking German. Huns left on 3 or 4 days ahead of us.

Monday, 11-25

Checked equipment and inspection.

Tuesday, 11-26

Some close order drill.

Wednesday, 11-27

Some more drill. Made Sargent.

Worked out some some dope for Thanksgiving program.

Thursday, 11-28

Thanksgiving day at Algringeu, Lorraine. Had program and Eden Theatre and about a day at our leisure. Sang in chorus. Had good dinner. Best available.

Friday, 11-29

Started our hike 8A.M. Went 14 miles to Rultgue, six miles south of Luxembourg border. Billeted in a barn.

Saturday, 11-30

Little drill in A.M. Reg. review in P.M. Man decorated for bravery. Not much of a town.

Sunday, 12-1

Looked around all day. Rumors persistent we are on way home to be in States New Years.

Monday, 12-2

Left burg and crossed into Luxenburg. Across corner to town 2k south of Remich. Look across Moselle River into Germany. Quite a prosperous looking little country. Billeted in house.

Tuesday, 12-3

Crossed Moselle into Germany at Remich. Country closely cultivated. Some beautiful scenery along the way but had hills. Stopped at town 1k north of Soarburg. On Lorre.

Wednesday, 12-4

Crossed river on hike to Franzenheim. Plenty of hills and held up badly. Sergeant of guard at this place. Billeted in barn.

Thursday, 12-5

One hell of a hike all up and down and lots of mud. Final hill a shortcut and **Fieree**. Billeted in a house and used **fine** at Osburg.

Friday, 12-6

Left about 9 am and took longest hike of all, between 40-50k. Passed through couple large towns. **Sch** stopped at Novien and had good billet. Got in about 11 pm.

Saturday, 12-7

Hiked again to **Co**____. Not so far but a long hill from Berncastel. Put in little dump of a town and packed in barn.

Sunday, 12-8

Day of rest devoted to inspections and cleaning up.

Monday, 12-9

Took about 11k hike to
Just a small dump of a place. Forest plots noticeable.

Tuesday, 12-10

Hiked about 27k to Reich, another small dump and lots of mud. Feather bed and room. Not very good country but lots of forest reservations.

Wednesday, 12-11

Checked up equip. And exited in the burg. Had supper with Germans of bread apple butter, coffee and spuds.

Thursday, 12-12

Still in town. Drilled a little dinner with German of real sausage spuds cabbage and soup.

Friday, 12-13

Left Reich to **Fries** quite a good sized burg and stayed in an opera house. Got in late as we hiked about 35k.

Saturday, 12-14

Short hike of 15k to Dunkenhein. A hard hike mostly on poor muddy routes. Billeted in house.

Sunday, 12-15

Hiked about 30k to Nurburg then split up about 1 Co to town. Stayed in hotel but no heat. Expect to stay here several days. Some big hills.

Monday, 12-16

Still in town. Cold rain and very disagreeable. Only inspections.

Tuesday - first snow. Sgt. of guard. Still in same town with prospects of staying all winter. Following week spent at town with little drill etc.

Wednesday, 25

Xmas. Spent day writing and trying to keep warm. Had plenty of eats but not Xmas character. Officers gave chocolate cookies, cigars and **frills**. On **buns** in evening.

Thursday, 26

Drill A.M. until New Year's.

Friday

Co went to Adenau for parade. I stayed in quarters as still feeling **fevers**.

Saturday, 28

Left Nurburg and hiked about 25k to Bruck thru Adenau. Town a nice place on RR we were billeted in depot.

Sunday day of rest.

Monday, 30

Sgt. of guard.

Tuesday spent on guard.

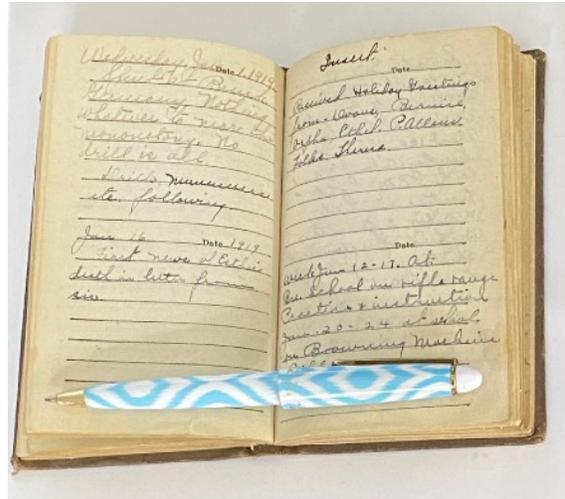
1919

Wednesday, Jan 1, 1919

Spent at Bruck Germany. Nothing whatsoever to **near** the monotony. No drill is all. Drills maneuvers etc. following.

Jan 16, 1919

First news of Esther's death in letter from sis.



Insert

Received holiday greetings from Duous, Bernice, Orpha, Ethel, P. Allen folks, Theresa.

Week Jan 12-17

At Bre. School on rifle range. Practice and instruction.

Jan 20-24

At school on Browning Machine Rifle.

Saturday, Jan 25

Took truck to Bad Bertrieh to try out for Divisional football team. About 100 officers and men.

Sunday

About 1/2 sent back. P.M. light practice on hill.

Monday

2 practices. Big feeds of eggs, meat, spuds, gravy, crout + waffle.

Feb. 5, 1919

With football squad to Cobleuce. Looked over city. Saw Rhine. Kaiser's monument and other points of interest.

Thursday Feb 6, 19

Team played 42 Div and beat them 7-0 in a pretty good game. Loafed around Fnt Hall in eve and came back to Bad Bertrieh next morn Feb 7.

Sunday, 2-9-19

Excused from Div. team.

Monday got transportation to Bruck. By foot thru Cochun. _____ich to Ad_____ and train to Bruck. Had short visit with Koehler.

Tuesday back to old grind in P.M.

Saturday played half our co team against H co score 0-0 field very muddy. Captain gave feed In eve.

Wednesday the 12 bunch went by truck thru Adenau, May___ to Cobleuce to see football game, 4 beat 2nd 10-7 in a very good game. Back to Bruck in eve.

Thursday went on in charge of quarters for 24 hrs.

Saturday stood inspection. Wet ground prevented football game. On as Sgt of guard.

Spent Sunday policing up town.

Sunday, Mar 16

Our hike to Div. Insp. by Gen. Pershing. Went to Urlebenburg.

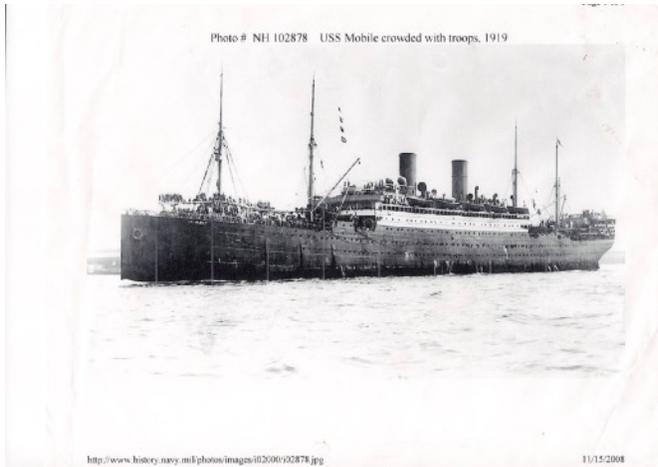
Ist day Monday went about 20k and pitched tents in woods toward Bad Bertrieh. Had about 2 in. snow.

Tuesday stood out in cold most of day and Gen. inspected us and then passed in review. Wed back to first stop & Thurs to Bruck. Rest of week a vacation. Saturday played foot ball with F Co. Beat them 12-3. Got game knee sooner L 19.

Monday. Not much doing rest of week as it was stormy.

March 29 Saturday

Saw Koehler at station and headed home.



Wed. April 9
Received orders to move up to
Reuragen.

Thurs. left Bruck and hiked to
Derrian about 12 K. stayed in
house and next day went on into
Reuragen and quartered in Hotel
Central.

Next week spent on range.

Saturday had 1 day pass to Cobleuce.

Easter Sunday a.m. on range. Co. shot record course next week
About 27. I became Acting Supply Sgt.

April 30 went on a 3 day pass to **Neuauah** and had a very good time.

About the middle of May we began making preparations to go home and
were all set but something went wrong and the Regt. was all split up.
The 22 Co. G. went to Wittlieb by rail thru Cobleuce. Co. billeted in a
General **pers**. And evidently detailed to clean up the ration dump.

Around 4 of June moved from Wittlieb by rail to Rendorf. Here we had
barracks and a fair town.

June 8. Went to Neuwied for a day with Mike. Found him, all ok and had
good time.

Monday left Co. and crossed river to Neundorf on Reg Tug-of-war.

Spent Tuesday in Cobleuce. Rest of week loafed around yors banks of
Rhine.

Friday morning went with team to **Neuauah** and **Ahrweiler** for Field day.
Friday night at **Ahrweiler** with 13th field. Quite a meet Saturday. Returned
to Neundorf in eve,

Sunday 10th returned to Co. at Brudorf

June 20 moved to Vallendar as REg. was assembling again.

Next week preparation to move to front on Tuesday and d___ equipment etc. Later turned it back expecting to leave June 29th.

Saturday June 28th at 3 pm. Peace was signed at Versailles. Spent next few days waiting

July 4, 1919

Spent day at Vallendar, Germany. Troops put on a parade. Had special dinner. Watched fireworks at Fort E_____



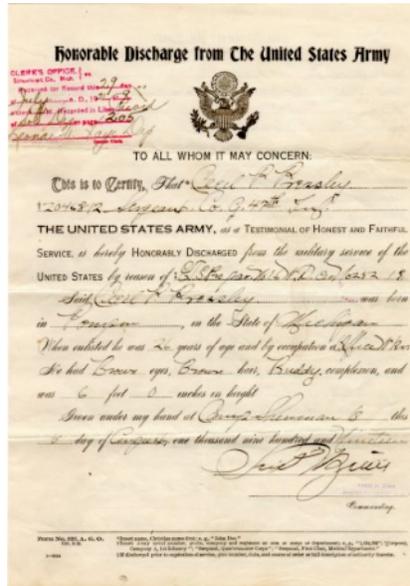
July 9

Went to Coblenz and loaded on train for Brct. Left 7:00 pm down Rhine through Runogen and Bonn to Cologne. Next morn went thru Aix Le Choffale. Thru Naiuur + Mous and left Valinciues at dark. Town very badly shot up. Thru Arkas in night. Got to Brest Sat about 4:00 pm. Went out to ___f Pont— —

Sunday started thru night and all ready to pull out Monday eve.

Hiked to Brest Wed. am and loaded on U.S.S. Mobile about 6000 packed on including 100 war brides + welfare workers + Casnuls. Left Brest 6:45. Got along very well until Monday when hit a storm and waves washed decks most of day. Next few days weather was fine except for little storm Thursday. Arrived in Quarantine in harbor Saturday eve and anchored about 10:00 pm. Held up from docking until noon Sunday as one of crew

had smallpox. Finally got off and beat it to Camp Mills and vaccinated in eve.



July 31st
Left Mills on special
train for Camp
Sherman Ohio.
Arrived about 4:00
am Saturday.

Went thru Harrisburg, Altoona on Penn. thru mill and got discharged August 5th. To Toledo in evening. Met dad at AA Depot and got home noon August 6th.

THE END

Note: the words in purple, mostly towns or cities, are words we couldn't decipher from the handwriting. Some we found on the map, some we didn't.

In the diary the town Cobleuce when found on today's map seems to have changed the spelling to Koblenz

The town of Bruck, which is clearly written in the diary - when located on today's map is so far from the other towns mentioned that it does not seem possible that the current Bruck is the same one visited in 1918.