



Submitted photo

BACK FROM OVER THERE: This photograph shows Company F of the 108th Infantry, believed to be upon their return to Orleans County at the conclusion of World War I.

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Overlooked Orleans: Recalling the sacrifices of our veterans

By Matt Ballard

Orleans County Historian

A day to remember those soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice over the last 239 years, Memorial Day serves as an occasion for each and every citizen to reflect on the freedoms that we enjoy.

“Decoration Day,” as it was called, has its roots in the Civil War when loved ones decorated the graves of their dearly departed soldiers. Today, we continue that tradition by adorning the graves of our veterans with flowers and flags.

Over the next four years we will commemorate the passing of the centennial of the First World War. A horrific and deadly conflict that was said to be “the war to end all wars,” took the lives of several dozen Orleans County citizens over the course of nineteen months. Our families sent over 1,000 young men to face the horrors of war and upon their return, the physical and emotional scars would remain for the rest of their

lives.

This photograph depicts Company F of the 108th Infantry. Originally believed to be a 1917 image showing men preparing for their departure from the Medina railroad station. Instead, the image appears to show the men of Company F upon their return to Orleans County at the conclusion of the war. With medals pinned to their chests, the soldiers paraded along the streets of Medina amidst a crowd of teary-eyed onlookers lining the roads adorned with flags and patriotic bunting.

The Battle of St. Quentin Canal was still fresh in their minds – the day Medina’s own Company F broke the Hindenburg Line. Orleans County lost 12 men that day, Sept. 29, 1918, including James Clark, William Collins, Frank Bloom, Walter Gaylord, Cecil Green, Albert Coon, Walter Lindke, Fred Hellert, Leon Clark, Alex Wilson, Egbert Sheret, and James Sheret.

Capt. John S. Thompson recalled the bravery each

man from Company F exhibited as they went over the top at 5:50 a.m. that Sunday morning. They sang cheerful melodies as they advanced to the front line and continued to carry their tune as they advanced on the German line. Such heroism should forever be remembered.

The Orleans County Department of History continues to accept contributions of photographs, both originals and duplicates, as well as documents, records, and other items relating to the history of the area.

If you have materials you would like to share, please contact Matthew Ballard at Matt.Ballard@orleanscountyny.gov or 585-589-4174. In conjunction with “The Lost Generation” exhibition set to open at the Cobblestone Museum in early July, the Department of History is working towards assembling a detailed record of Orleans County’s 20th century military history and needs help from the community.