

Brothers die while serving the country

The recent Fourth of July holiday is the catalyst for this story of yet another pair of Marshfield brothers who died serving their country far from home.

Not all dates align, but the facts are correct, although these are not the usual casualties of war that one normally sees.

On the census lists of the many children of John and Mary Arnett, 612 E. Third St., Marshfield, two of the older boys are listed as George and William. Little more than 10 months separated them in age.

Undoubtedly, the two grew up close, and when one headed out for battle during World War I, the other did likewise.

According to the Marshfield Times, it was March 1918, when a telegram came from General McCain of the war department in Washington, D.C., for John Arnett, telling him that his son George had died of homesickness "somewhere in France."

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The Grand Rapids Daily Leader carried a more detailed story. "I deeply regret to inform you that it is officially reported that Private George Arnett died of nostalgia (homesickness) March 15." He was at sea, on-board a ship to France.

A few days later, Mary received a letter dated March 8 from Brigadier General Edward McGlachlin in France.

Sending condolences, he went on to write, "I knew your son better perhaps, than most other men in the detachment, because he was connected with the officers mess.

"Although he never reached the front, he died as much in the service of his country as will those whom we must inevitably lose."

The Leader stated that

due to the date on the letter, obviously the telegram should have read February. Regardless, his date of death would stay on record as March, except for government records, which list date of death as Feb. 22, 1918.

Military records show George enlisted with Troop I, Wisc. Cavalry in Stevens Point, fall of 1917, serving with Battery E of the 120th Regiment and died at sea.

Born April 25, 1898, George was only 19 when he died. He was buried at Oise-Aisne American Cemetery in Picardie (northern) France.

William, born Feb. 21, 1899, was actually in France when he died.

The Times reported that a telegram from Washington, D.C., again arrived for the Arnetts. William's death occurred in August in a fall from a train in Alsace. His death and burial records all list August 16 as his date of death, but military records list Aug. 15, 1918. He was also 19 when he died.

William, a private with

Company A of the 127th Infantry, was interred at Suresnes American Cemetery, Suresnes, France.

The boys each carried \$10,000 in "soldiers insurance" which was paid out to their parents in installments.

Within a few short months, John and Mary had lost both of their sons.

There are memorial stones for the Arnett brothers in Hillside Cemetery, Marshfield, but somehow it seems fitting that the brothers who were so close in life, were buried close to each other in France.

—Rhonda Whetstone is a columnist for News-Herald Media, Stevens Point Journal Media and Daily Tribune Media. Rhonda's Twitter ID is TribRendezvous if you wish to follow her musings there. You also can get previews of upcoming columns by clicking "Like" on Back to the North Wood on Facebook. If you have story ideas of a historical nature, email her at Rhonda.Whetstone@gmail.com.

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