

DAILY TRIBUNE, WISCONSIN RAPIDS

RECOLLECTIONS

TUESDAY, AUG. 3, 1999 3B

INDIAN STONE

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hunt deer a few days this fall, but I don't believe I will be as fond of a gun when I get back as I was before. We get kind of sick of them over here. We can't go to sleep unless we got our rifle where we can put our hands on it any minute.

"I would like to send you a German pistol but we are not allowed to. We get a hold of lots of them over here.

"I am writing this letter with a German pen and ink and I will enclose a German button they wear on their cap. You can keep it as a souvenir from no man's land."

W.J. Pasch wrote to Tribune editor Mr. Drumb Sept. 30, 1918. It was published Nov. 21, 1918.

"We have figured in every drive so far and believe me our division is well known. Our guns have fed the Germans well. We have showered them with good hot iron rations at will.

"At the front there is fun and many dangers and one often hates to think back of certain days when he has had his narrow calls. I know personally I can recall quite a number. Yet there is always some excitement to help pass away the time, and that the best of it all. I have been over the battlefields where thousands of 'Bologna Bill's' men met their masters — the American Do-boys and artillery, and I have seen hundreds of them lying in shell holes, trenches, in the woods,



TOM CHARLESWORTH/Daily Tribune

The "Indian stone" bears the names of seven men who died during World War I. Each was a member of the Winnebago tribe, hailing from the central Wisconsin area. This stone, recognizing their loyalty and patriotism, was dedicated in 1923. Although faded, the inscription can be seen by passersby at Veterans Memorial Park.

along the roads. It should be a saying where the American wends his way, his path he can always make."

Private Ernest Matthews wrote to his sister and her family ("Mr. and Mrs. Aug. Lentke and baby") Sept. 26, 1918. It was published Oct. 31, 1918.

"I was wounded the 4th day of August as we were driving the Huns back and one of their shells burst at my feet and shattered my left foot quite bad and the doctors amputated it between the ankle and the knee. The wounds are healing

up fine. You see if I get a good artificial foot I will be able to walk just as good as before because I got the full benefit of my knee. Of course it will never be like a real foot but what can a fellow do. If its got to be that way we'll have to take it. Well they got me booked for the United States so you see I will probably see you in a short while. I hate to come back with one foot off but then there are fellows here with both legs and arms off and blind in both eyes. So you see I am not so worse off after all. I really consider myself

lucky if I look around and see some of the other boys."

Some boys, including local ones, were not so lucky. Charles Robert Hagerstrom, 23, was the first Grand Rapids man to die in the war.

"Word was received in this city on Monday evening to the effect that Charles Hagerstrom had died in France from wounds which he received on the 9th of August," the Grand Rapids Tribune reported Oct. 3, 1918. "It was about this time that a large number of the Wisconsin boys were in the thick of the fighting, and about a month after this word was received by his father that he had been wounded. At that time there were no particulars of the matter and all that could be done was to surmise as to how it had happened and as to what the outcome would be.

"Charles was the son of Wm. Hagerstrom of this city, and was a member of Battery B of Milwaukee, having been transferred from Troop G soon after leaving the city.

"Charley was one of the bright young men of Grand Rapids, and had filled several positions here before enlisting in the army, and had many friends among the young people who were shocked and pained to hear of his death. He is the first Grand Rapids man to die in France, in defense of his country."

Later that year, on Dec. 12, 1918, readers of the Tribune learned Fred Bruderli, son of

Mrs. G. Bruderli, had died while serving in France. Private George Harvey of the British Expeditionary Forces in France was with Bruderli at the time he was killed and wrote to Mrs. Bruderli with the news.

"This is not a very pleasant task to undertake, but as your son Fred was a very dear chum of mine, having known him for some time, I felt it my duty to inform you that he was killed instantly on the 29th of September, 1918. I can honestly say that your son never suffered any pain for he was killed instantly. Fred is very much missed by his comrades in the battalion where he had a great many.

"Now if there is anything concerning his death or burial that you would like to know I will be glad to give you any further information upon hearing from you."

Bruderli was killed the day the Allies broke through German fortifications at the Hindenberg line. Peace was official only 12 days later.

The Grand Rapids Tribune on Nov. 14, 1918, wrote of the second, official celebration at the war's end. The city had celebrated the previous week, after a false report caused residents to imagine the war was over.

"The news of the kaiser's abdication (Nov. 9) and the probable surrender of the German army reached this city at an early hour Monday morning

and at seven o'clock the whistles were blowing and the bells ringing and everybody knew that the long hoped for event had occurred ...

"It may have been that some people in the excitement of the moment and the general jollification lost sight of the fact that they were celebrating one of the greatest events in the history of the world, but that is undoubtedly a fact just the same. There never has been such a war on this earth that involved so many people or in which there were so many casualties, and it may take some time for people to realize just what has happened.

"There is some talk of making Nov. 11th, the date of the close of the war, a national holiday in this country and have it observed every year in a fitting manner."

For many years, the area at the west end of the Grand Avenue bridge where the Indian stone was installed, was the site of Veterans Day and other patriotic ceremonies. But no ceremonies were held there after the creation of Veterans Memorial Park. So in 1993, 70 years after its dedication,

plans were made to move the stone to Veterans Memorial Park, where it rests today. You can see it as you pass by on the sidewalk, its face turned for all to read and remember those who gave the greatest sacrifice for their country — their lives in the "Great War."

Clipped By:



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Tue, May 25, 2021