

Please Note: These original documents are the personal property of Janice Brown (e-mail janicebr@earthlink.net). You are not authorized to copy, reproduce, distribute, publicly perform, publicly display or modify these photographs or documents in any way, without my written permission. Copyright 2003. All rights reserved.

=====

Pageant June 30, 1946
Compiled and Narrated
by
Mattie Kilborn Webster for
The Two Hundredth Anniversary
of the
Town of Merrimack NH

EPISODE 18 - Presented by Horace Patterson

WORLD WAR I

1917-1918: In 1917 when the War began the mothers who have sent their sons to World War II were sending their brothers and sweethearts to World War I.

We as a people had been living under the comforting delusion that "it could not happen here" and forthwith had elected as our President, that great "Idealist" Woodrow Wilson on the slogan "He Kept Us Out of War."

But soon the United States was to learn one of its most valuable lessons -- that any nation founded on Democracy cannot indefinitely sit back and see that Democracy threatened and assailed in any other part of the world.

And so, after War was declared, we find the "youth" of this Town rising to the occasion and answering "The Call to the Colors" with the same enthusiasm and patriotism as they had always exhibited in previous wars.

They went to Milford to enlist, Charles Emerson being one of the Recruiting Officers. We women played our part as we are doing in the recent war. We hung a service flag in the window with its stars 1-2-3, and the Red Cross flag beside it. We sewed for the destitute of Europe particularly the Belgians. A large number took courses in home nursing sponsored by the Red Cross. We raised our Victory Gardens and conserved our food - that was the beginning of the cold-pack method of canning for the home, and the University sent out instructors to teach us how to do it, so that we might save much of the garden we had tended. In that War we had to learn to use substitutes, although we were not rationed, in that we were short of sugar, wheat flour and many other things. We had our Thrift stamps and our Liberty Bond drive. It was the last Bond drive (I believe) which subscribed was raised in full, in about 20 minutes from the time it was opened in the Town Hall. Merrimack being the first Town in New England to report having "Gone over the top." How proud we were the next morning when we read about it in Headlines of the daily paper.

They ("The Boys") went from this Town 47 strong, won high praise for their gallantry and high qualities. It was largely a "Yankee Crew," a name with a good reputation of long standing for good military conduct with a rich heritage of martial tradition. Time and again in the field of action, they achieved what the Veteran French has thought to be impossible. In mud and water-filled trenches, amid cloud of poison gas, struggling through barbed wire entanglements, they performed their duties with skill and endurance. Many came back home with bravery citations, bearing the scars of many wounds and some with the Cross-de-guerre.

They add another chapter to the military history of this Town and their deeds rank well with those who fought in the Civil War and at Bunker Hill.

The two who made the supreme sacrifice were James Ferguson and Duncan Fraser.

I remember Jimmy well. He went to school with me. He was the little boy who sat in the front seat, freckle-faced with a shock of red hair that was always combed but never stayed that way. Jimmy was so responsive, with a warm heart and a ready smile. Whenever I gave Jimmy an assignment he would look up and say "But Miss Kilborn, you know very well that is altogether too hard for me." I would always reply, "Yes, Jimmy, but one can always try." And Jimmy always tried. Our ways parted and I forgot about Jimmy until some time later I met him one day. Uncle Sam had made a fighting man out of him. He had straightened Jimmy's thin shoulders, filled out the hollows in his cheeks. He had put a new firm spring in his step, and a new gleam of confidence in his eye. He went to War and word came back that he would never return. Once more Jimmy had tried, and he had performed the biggest task. He had given his life to this Country that last deep measure of devotion that Democracy might live.

Then there was Duncan. He had the making of a good service man from the start. In school Duncan's mind ran clear and true; orders never had to be repeated and never any confusion when he carried them out. Duncan had a sharp, orderly mind. He could think accurately and also had a great capacity for work. He was trustworthy and careful about all he did. One day, one unfortunate day, he was spotted by the enemy and shot down by a machine gun in the Belleau Woods.

From a report of the battle of Belleau Wood by George Pattulip as published in the Saturday Evening Post, August 31, 1918:

"Early in the fighting of June 13th
Pvt. Gilbert D. Fraser, 18th Co.,
5th Reg., U.S. Marines was shot
through the stomach. In spite of
the agony he suffered he kept up
a steady fire against a machine gun,
yelling lustily the while for more
ammunition until he dropped unconscious."

The stone on the family lot in the Cemetery yonder bears this inscription:

Gilbert Duncan Fraser
18th Co. 5th Regiment
Shot Down in the Battle of Belleau Woods

Two trees were set out on our Church lawn; one for Duncan and one for Jimmy; and Fraser Square on the lower part of the Village was named for Duncan.

They may sleep in hallowed graves, which are carefully tended by the grateful French women who breathe a prayer with every flower they lay on their last resting places.

IN FLANDERS FIELDS the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place, and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

[By: *Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, MD (1872-1918)*
Canadian Army]