

Anniversary: ‘Thousands of soldiers were sent into the woods’

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“Hurrah!! Hurrah!!,” his diary from Nov. 11, 1918, reads. “The war is over at last. Hurrah!!!!!! (Hostilities) ceased at 11 a.m. and we all quit work and went to town. The French people went crazy with joy. Anti-aircraft guns popping. A big time in Chatillon (France) for everybody. Hurrah!!!!!!”

Chapman has been organizing her dad’s materials to add to the American Legion’s collection and for the National Archives and Records Administration.

“I just want him to be known for doing so much for our country, and for me, because I miss him every day,” she said.

Aside from people, Clatsop County provided spruce trees to build airplanes for the Allies.

In 1917, there was a general strike among the Industrial Workers of the World for better working conditions, creating work stoppages that slowed the flow of timber out of the Pacific Northwest just as the U.S. was entering the war. In response, the Army created the Spruce Production Division, based in Portland.

“Thousands of soldiers were sent into the woods to build mostly temporary logging railroads and plank roads, operate the latest in trucks and other vehicles,” wrote David Lindstrom, a member of the Friends of Old Fort Stevens, in the group’s most recent summer newsletter. “They innovated the fastest way to cut logs, then loaded them on railroad cars for daily shipment to the Army depot at Vancouver, Washington, for final milling. Then the lumber was shipped to airplane factories at home



Clatsop County Historical Society

The Army’s Spruce Production Division harvested trees in local forests for airplanes during World War I.

and abroad.”

The division grew to 30,000 members laboring in more than 200 camps along the Oregon and Washington state coasts, including about 750 troops locally. They worked alongside civilians, producing an estimated 23 million board feet of spruce a month for the war effort.

“The whole enterprise lasted 15 months,” Lind-

strom wrote. “Once the armistice ending the Great War was signed on Nov. 11, 1918 production abruptly stopped. The camps were taken down, railroads were dismantled, equipment including locomotives, rail cars, rails, railroad ties, donkey engines, vehicles, rigging, cables, etc. were taken to the Vancouver, Washington, Army depot and sold off as surplus.”



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Ardi Chapman has been transcribing the World War I diaries of her late father, William Carl Urell, who served in the Army’s 157th Aero Squadron repairing airplanes.



American Legion Clatsop Post 12 James Goodwin was an able seaman and part of the gunner crew on the SS Mongolia when it became the first vessel to fire on Germans after the U.S. entered World War I.

Monument: ‘It was a lot of shuffling’

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The city’s restoration, overseen by former City Planner Rosemary Johnson, involved Clatsop Community College’s historic restoration program, Tongue Point Job Corps Center and local contractors.

“It was a lot of shuffling and coordination to make sure it got done in the right order,” Johnson said.

The city received a state Historic Preservation Office grant for \$12,000, along with a local match of \$10,000, to restore the Doughboy Monument, which includes the first public bathrooms added to the National Register of Historic Places. But before the work could be finished, a driver plowed his truck into the eastern flank of the structure, setting back the restoration while the city sought insurance reimbursement and assessed any structural damage.

With the help of outgoing City Councilor Cindy Price, the city later received \$5,000 from the Samuel S. Johnson Grant



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Repairs to the Doughboy Monument are nearly complete.

Foundation, named after the father of state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose. The grant provided the local match for a second State Historic Preservation Office grant of more than \$17,000 to replace the terracotta roof above the restrooms.

Using the nearly \$47,000 from the two preservation grants and an estimated \$160,000 in insurance payout, the city and

partners were able to restore the monument and bathrooms, repair the damage from the crash and re-anchor the bronze statue.

The city still needs to finish work on the terracotta and flat roofs as weather permits, replace railings and finish painting and weatherization, said Jonah Dart-McLean, interim director of the city’s Parks and Recreation Department. The Uniontown Association will help fill planter boxes around the monument, while the city will handle ground landscaping. The city has also installed new outdoor lighting and doors that automatically lock in the evening to help deter vandalism.

“We’ve got a janitorial service contracted out to do other parks bathrooms, and they’ll start servicing these when they’re open as well,” he said. “Hopefully that frequency during the evening and night hours will help.”

HONORING THE FALLEN

At 11 a.m. Sunday, Dart-McLean and Johnson will lay a poppy wreath from the United Kingdom at the foot of the Doughboy Monument. Joining them will be Adjutant Mike Phillips from American Legion Clatsop Post 12 and fellow member Charles Parker, a Vietnam veteran whose great-uncle Freeman Parker died in World War I.

The Bells of Peace, including an American Legion bell at the Doughboy and others at local churches and the Astoria Fire Department, will ring in honor of the end of the war.

At 1 p.m. Sunday in the Astoria Public Library’s flag room, Lucien Swerdlow and John Goodenberger from the college will detail the Doughboy Monument restoration. Library Director Jimmy Pearson, a historian for the American Legion, will speak about U.S. involvement in the war.

Phillips will read the names of the 34 county residents killed in World War I. Parker rings the bell after each name, and poppies will be placed on the names of the fallen.

The American Legion Clatsop Post 12, chartered in July 1919, will celebrate its 99th birthday and Veterans Day on Saturday. The events begin with a 10 a.m. brunch. A Veterans Day program at noon will include presentation of colors, the National Anthem, displays, guest speakers, patriotic music and ceremonies for prisoners of war and those missing in action. The American Legion will host a prime rib dinner from 4 to 6 p.m. and music by Theory of Relativity from 6 to 10 p.m.

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