California Genealogical Society & Library

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WWI Ancestors Stories

California Ancestors:

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Marion and Alexine Mitchell in France in WWI

by Alexa Gregory

Before America joined the First World War effort, women in the U.S. became actively involved in organizations to support the French wounded and the displaced. Marion Mitchell (my greataunt), along with her sister Alexine (my grandmother), volunteered to go to France to work for the Motor Services division of American Fund for the French Wounded (AFFW). They drove, and repaired, their military supply vehicles and ambulances along the Western Front.

Their story of the two years spent assisting the AFFW (which later joined with the American Red Cross), was captured in letters sent home to their mother Lily (von Schmidt) Mitchell Tilden. Their accounts detailed riveting adventures and gave vivid descriptions of what WWI must have sounded, felt and looked like near the front.

for a continuation, see page 2



California Genealogical Society and Library

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Dear Readers,

This entire issue is devoted to WWI articles and stories. We are so pleased at the generous response from our readers who have opened their family archives. If you have a WWI story from your family, please consider submitting it to the *Nugget*.

Few women participated in WWI and even fewer wrote about their experiences. Marion Mitchell's story is unique and memorable. We are proud to feature this recollection in the *Nugget* and appreciate compiler Alexa Gregory's dedication to preserving these important family papers.

It is the correspondence that most of us have from our WWI ancestors, but few letters are as lively and descriptive in their first-person accounts as the missives written home by Arthur Elmer Herrill and Zalmon Reuben Orlowsky, who each had their own views of the momentous events they were experiencing.

Most soldiers were like Eugene Donald Robertson and John Francis Wagener: they served faithfully and without fanfare, and, when they were able to return home, wished only to take up their previous lives. Some, though, chose to stay on, finding the military life rewarding. David J. Goerss has diligently researched the entire history of his ancestor Glenn Alonzo Ross, whose service extended into WWII. Don't miss this account of a soldier whose long military odyssey started in the Pennsylvania Reserves.

Jane Hufft Editor

"Study the past if you would divine the future."

—Confucius

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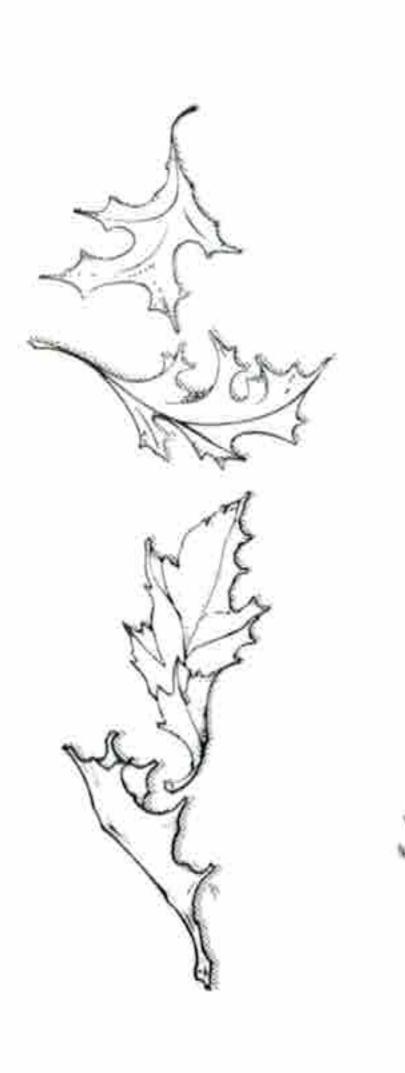
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CALIFORNIA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY & LIBRARY

FALL 2014



Glenn Alonzo Ross, WWI and a Lifetime of Service

By David J. Goerss

Colonel Glenn Alonzo Ross was a quiet man who rarely spoke about his thirty years in the U.S. Army. According to his youngest child, Betsy, he didn't discuss his career life with family. Betsy did recall that her father talked about losing his senses of taste and smell in World War I and receiving the French Croix de Guerre. She said her father was a complete gentleman, never cursed, and never had a drink before five o'clock. Practically all of Glenn Ross's career with the Army has remained an untold story.

Pennsylvania Roots

Glenn Alonzo Ross was born in Waynesburg, Greene County, Pennsylvania on 28 January 1890.1 He was the first of five children born to Timothy Jefferson (T. J.) Ross (1870–1949) and Sarah Elizabeth Garner (1870-1917).2,3 Glenn's siblings were Pearl Ross Wolford (1892–1967), Ferne Ross Simpson (1894– 1972), and Paul Garner Ross (1897–1967).4

While still attending college, Vaun Evelyn Ross Glenn Ross enlisted underage (1899-1899), died as a private in local Company K from whooping (Waynesburg), 10th Infantry, infantum.5 The Pennsylvania National Guard Ross family was

A fifth sibling, cough and cholera well-known in Greene County. T. J. Ross was a successful farmer

and two-term Greene County Commissioner.6 Glenn attended Waynesburg Academy and Waynesburg College, graduating summa cum



laude with a B.S. degree in 1912. At Waynesburg College he was class treasurer, a varsity basketball and track star, manager of the football and baseball teams, and member of Union Roll Literary Club and Phi Sigma fraternity.7 While still attending college, Glenn Ross enlisted underage as a private in local Company K (Waynesburg), 10th Infantry, Pennsylvania National Guard (P.N.G.).8 Glenn steadily rose in rank, becoming a sergeant on 20 January 1913. Only two months later, he accepted a commission as Second Lieutenant, Infantry.9

In civilian life, Glenn accepted a position as a clerk in the County Commissioner's Office. By 1913 he was County Sealer, and later elected V.P. of Pennsylvania's Association of Sealers of Weights and Measures. In 1916, he accepted a position at Pittsburgh Model Engine Works, which he held for three months until the Pennsylvania National Guard was mobilized for duty along the Mexican border.10,11

Federal Service Along the Mexican Border

In June 1916, Lt. Ross was mustered into federal service and entrained with Company K for El Paso, Texas, arriving there 8 July. 12

Four days later the Third Battalion, consisting of Companies I, K, L, and M, was selected to help repel expected raids by Pancho Villa

and his bandits in the desolate region known as Big Bend country. Companies I and K journeyed farthest to Glenn Springs, Texas, where they were stationed on 21 July with regular U.S. Cavalry troops. The actual duties performed were not difficult: drills in the mornings and evenings, and short patrols around the valley.

AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES Corps Expéditionnaires Américains IDENTITY CARD CARTE DIDENTITE Name Stermaticas Rank 2 and fixet . Ing. U.S.N. S. Duly On Dity, 2" Brigade Machine Lun Dutter lion. Upon relief from duty with the A. B. F. the holder must turn in this card to the C. O. at the port of embarkation. Signature Llesmill/Col

Identity Card, 2nd Lt. Glenn A. ROSS, 2nd Brigade Machine Gun Battalion, First Division, A.E.F. (For clarity, the unit was later redesignated 3rd Machine Gun Battalion, 2nd Infantry Brigade, First Division).

never catches up with us.

The troops along the border had a quieting effect on the Mexicans and no trouble threatened after the Third Battalion's arrival. 13 In October, the 10th Infantry arrived in Pittsburgh to a hero's welcome and paraded from the train station to the Soldiers and Sailors War Memorial. After a grand reception, the various units separated to home stations. 14 Company K mustered out in Waynesburg 30 October 1916.15

Returning once again to physical director at School District #2, Ellenburg, Franklin County, New York, and the physical and military instructor at Plattsburgh High School, Plattsburgh, Clinton County, New York. 16, 17

The Great War: Call of the President

In July 1917, the P.N.G. was called into federal service by presidential proclamation and the 10th Infantry was ordered mobilized at home stations. 18 Lt. Ross reported once more at the Waynesburg Armory. But, this

time he was transferred to the newly formed 42nd "Rainbow" Division, marking the start of a two-year adventure of continuous move-

> ment, danger and constant change.19 He rendezvoused at Reading, Pennsylvania, and was assigned to duty as a machine gun platoon commander with Co. A, 149th Machine Gun Battalion—a component of the division headquarters troop of the 42nd Division. The battalion entrained for Camp Mills, Long Island, New York, for

basic training, arriving on 28 August 1917.20

Embarkation to France

In October, the 149th Machine Gun Battalion moved to Hoboken, New Jersey and embarked for France aboard troop transport USS President Grant, a converted German ocean liner. The voyage was aborted follow-

ing boiler trouble and the ship was ordered to turn about and I have received no news return to port unescorted.21 civilian life, Ross became the from anybody since leaving There was a second embarkation 16 November, this time to the U.S.A. I have been Liverpool, England, aboard the moving so much that mail troop transport H.M.S. Cedric, escorted by four torpedo boats. As the convoy neared the United Kingdom, a German submarine appeared in pursuit

and was eluded only when the ship raced under forced draft into Belfast Harbor, Ireland. The battalion landed at Liverpool, moving to Camp Winnall Downs in Winchester, England. The battalion then embarked at Southampton aboard the H.M.S. Prince George, finally landing at Le Havre, France, on 12 December 1917.22

The battalion moved across the French countryside, first by train, then by forced march through forty miles of deep snow and freezing temperature during three days of the worst winter on record. The battalion finally arrived late in December at a training area at Rolampont, near Neufchateau.²³

On 13 January 1918, Lt. Ross wrote a letter to his father, T. J. Ross, back home in Waynesburg:²⁴

I am getting along fine and am in school now taking special course in machine gun work. It is a five or six week course, and I have been here one week already and will be until the middle of February. We are having some real winter weather over here. It rains a day, then snows; thaws and rains again. The air is very damp, and if you are not most careful, you will easily take cold. I have received no news from anybody since leaving the U.S.A. I have been moving so much that mail never catches up with us... We had quite a hike the day after Christmas, a three day one. The first and second days were in a good snow storm, but we made about 40 miles in three days. You can certainly see the effects of war in this country. Every man and boy who is able to carry a gun has on his uniform. The women do all the work in the stores, on the farms, and on the railroads where it is possible. They have some very good and some very bad farming equipment, but there is nobody to use it...

Into the Trenches

By February 1918, having completed the machine gun course, Lt. Ross was transferred once again to the First Division, known as "Pershing's Own," for temporary duty as a machine gun officer. On 11 March 1918, Lt. Ross led the Third Platoon, Company D, Third Machine Gun Battalion, First Division, into the Bouconville trenches of Toul Sector, Meurtheet-Moselle. This is the sector where the First Division was bombarded by enemy poison gas for the first time. Of the sector where the First Division was bombarded by enemy poison gas for the first time.

U. S. ARMY FIELD MESSAGE

Third Platoon Co D 2d Bg M.G. Bn.

2 June 18 C.C. Co D 2d Bg M.G. Bn.

Platoon was in position at 2:30 A.M. 5th Section in Jumping Off trench No 1, Lt Markus in charge, oth Section in Jumping Off trench No 2, Lt Ross in charge oth Section on left flank of Co L 28 Inf. At Zero hour 5:45 both sections moved, 5th section in skirmish line and 5th section with Gun crews leading advanced in communication trench and reached of front line trench at the same time as the 5th section, oth section mounted guns one in a shell hole 10 Tis in front of old front line-and the other-in the old front line, both guns opened fire immediately on snipers and German front line, the gun in shell hole was placed in old front line as soon as an Emp. was made. Both guns remained in these positions until relieved by Co B Ist Bg M. G. Bn., at 4:00 A.M. May 31-1918. Pvts Galvin Strigle & Founds were wounded and Pvt Venderveer Co M 28 Inf killed. Pyt Knox Gunner, showed bravery and coolness under fire of enemy machine gun fire, killed or wounded several enemy enipers from trees and on the ground. 5th section after stting through the wire mounted guns and began firing. It Markus was wounded at this time. By orders of Lt. Markus Fins were dismounted and advanced to within 50yds of enemy front line. The entire 10th squad being killed or wounded firing the advance. The 9th squad after firing all their all in a shell hole. and returned to old front line during the night Corporal FIRE of 9th Squad displayed bravery and coolness in that It-Kept his squad intact and returned with the remainder is als squad and gun. Sgt Koon displayed bravery & coolness assisting Platoon commander after being wounded. He directed the fire until all ammunition was expended and crawled to old front line to report and all the time being under 11 to of enemy machine guns. Pvts Phelan, Plizza, Schaefer, Tere killed. Pvts Russell, Ballinger, Smith J.A., Rade, Tison O.D. Kahn, Shell, Markus Inf, Wynn Inf, McDonald Inf Lt Markus were wounded.

Battle of Cantigny Field Message. United States Army, First Division. World War Records; First Division, A.E.F., Regular, Volume XV, Operations Reports & Field Messages (Washington: 1928); U.S. Army Field Message, 2 Jun 1918, from Lt. Ross, Platoon Commander, Third Platoon, Co. D, 2nd Brigade Machine Gun Battalion, to Commanding Officer, Co. D, 2nd Brigade Machine Gun Battalion.

Sgd. Lt Ross

Platoon Commander.

During the 245 days between 11 March and the Armistice on 11 November 1918, Lt. Ross participated in 126 days of active combat with the two most active American infantry divisions in the American Expeditionary Forces. He served with the First and Second Divisions, successively, participating in a lengthy list defensive and offensive operations. This includes the first American-led offensive operation of the war at Cantigny. (see Field Message above)

On 10 June 1918, two days into the Mont-didier-Noyon Defensive, Lt. Ross was ordered to "proceed without delay" to the Second Division who had been rushed into the line along the Paris-Metz highway in the Chateau-Thierry Sector (including Belleau Wood) to frustrate the German advance on Paris—the prize now only forty miles away. Upon reporting, Ross was assigned to the Regimental Machine Gun Company, 23rd Infantry.

The California Nugget

Following the Aisne-Marne campaign (aka Soissons, 18–22 July 1918), Glenn had written a letter home to his father, T. J. Ross, revealing his calm nature against the backdrop of violent war:²⁹

France, July 28, 1918 Dear Father—

I received a letter from you dated June 11 yester-day, the first one for at least a month. We are now in rest billets and taking things easy so far as war is concerned for a few days, but I guess we will be moving to a quiet sector in a few days. Things have been very lively since the first of May and too lively since I came to the Second Division. I suppose you read about the attack at Cantigny long ago, on May 28. I was in that one and went over the top for the first time and here is hoping it will be the last time, as my desire for going over the top has been fulfilled...

Just prior to the Battle of Blanc Mont (Champagne, 2–10 October 1918), 2nd Lt. Ross was the only officer still on duty with the Machine Gun Company, 23rd Infantry, from among six present when he first reported for duty in June. On 28 October, he was promoted to 1st Lieutenant and appointed Regimental Munitions Officer, 23rd Infantry.^{30, 31}

By 11 November 1918, the United States Government had sent forty-three infantry divisions to France, over one million officers and

men. Among these fortythree divisions, the Second Division—to whom
Lt. Ross was attached the
longest by far—ranked
fourth in number of days
of active battle, but first
in prisoners taken, first in
materiel captured, second
in kilometers advanced
against the enemy—and,
first in casualties.³²

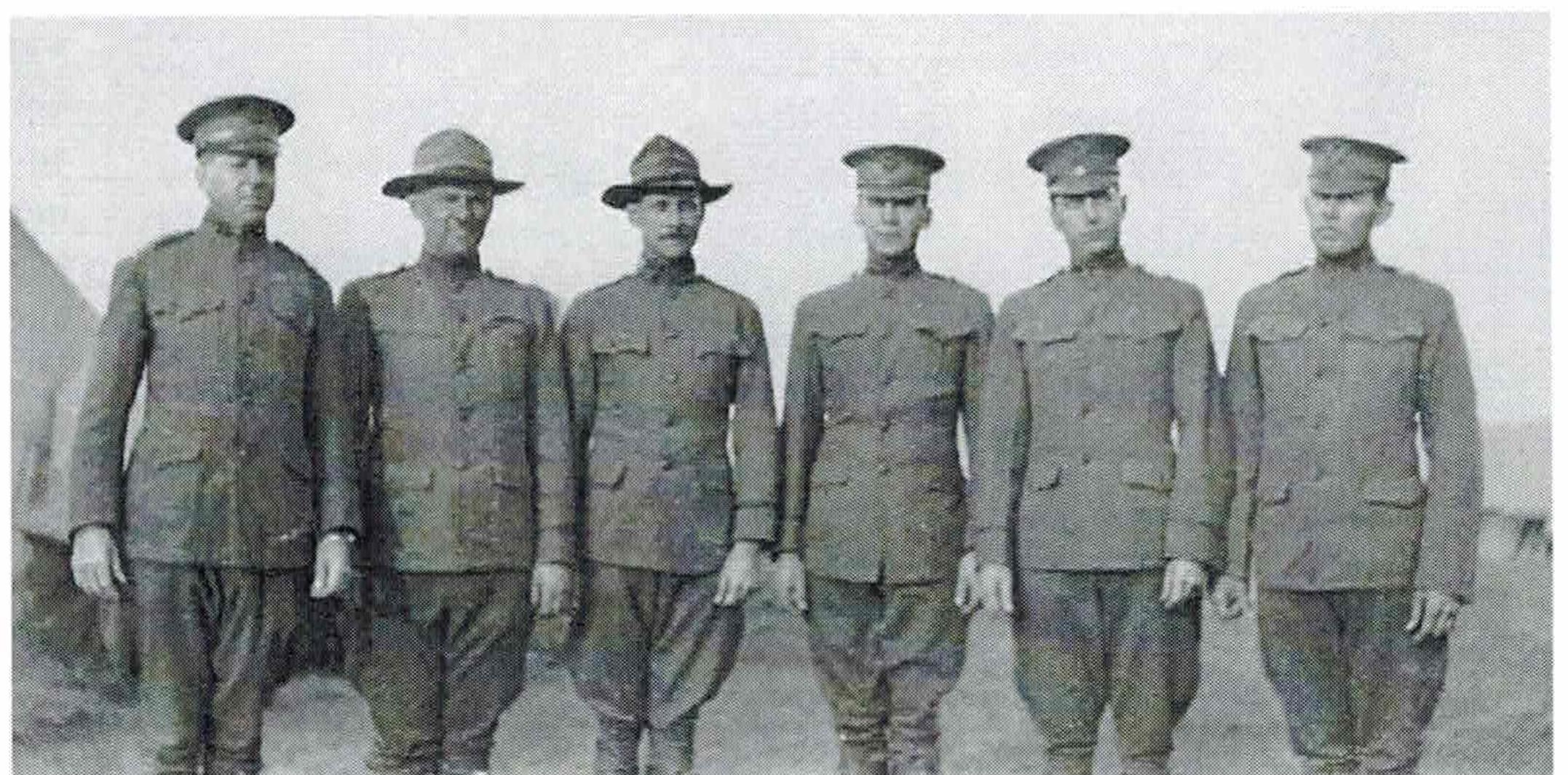
The End of the War

Following the Armistice in November 1918, the Second Division was attached to the new Third U. S. Army who, between 17–30 November, marched from Yoncq, France, across Belgium and Luxembourg, to the German border. On 1 December 1918, Lt. Ross crossed the German border at Remagen with the 23rd Infantry, and on 20 December went into permanent billets at Vallendar, Germany, as a component of the U.S. Army of Occupation of Germany.³³

Occupation Duty

While on occupation duty in Germany, Lt. Ross applied for permanent appointment in the Regular Army, receiving endorsements from his regimental commander and Major General John A. Lejeune, U.S.M.C., Commanding General, Second Infantry Division.³⁴ At this point, with a wife and new son to consider and unknown post-war employment prospects back home, it is possible his decision was aimed at supporting family during the peaceful years ahead. He remained on occupation duty with the 23rd Infantry in Vallendar, Germany until his return to the U.S. with the regiment in July of 1919.³⁵

On 7 August 1919, the entire Second Division paraded down Fifth Avenue in New York City, Lt. Ross marching with the Supply Company, 23rd Infantry. In August, the regiment moved from temporary billets at Camp Merritt, New Jersey, to Camp Travis, Texas—



Officers of Co. A, 149th Machine Gun Battalion, 42nd Division wearing new officer uniforms.

(L-R) Capt. Edward V. KESTNER; 1st Lt. Victor GARMAN; 1st Lt. Henry M. GROSS; 2nd Lt. James W. MACKALL; 2nd Lt. David N. TRAPNELL; 2nd Lt. Glenn A. ROSS; not shown, 2nd Lt. Alfred O. ARSENEAU.

one of only three *complete* American infantry divisions to be kept on postwar active service.³⁷

A Decorated Soldier

For his service in the Great
War, First Lt. Glenn Ross earned
three overseas service chevrons and
was awarded the Victory Medal
with six battle clasps: MontdidierNoyon, Aisne, Aisne-Marne, St.
Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, Defensive
Sector; the Army of Occupation of
Germany Medal; and, the French
fouragère, colors of Croix de Guerre,
as a permanent individual decora-

tion.³⁸ More recently, the memory of Lt. Ross's World War I Service has been honored by the mayors and officials of the French cities of Verdun, Chateau-Thierry, Soissons, and Saint-Mihiel.³⁹

Post-War and Return to France

Following the war, Lt. Ross remained on extended federal service with the Second Division while awaiting a decision on his application for appointment in the Regular Army. His commanding officer found him to be "a young man of excellent character and habits. He is conscientious and reliable and will develop." Eighteen months after applying in Germany for permanent appointment in the Regular Army



establishment, 1st Lt. Ross was appointed to the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps.⁴¹

On 22 October 1920, 1st Lt. Glenn A. Ross received War Department Special Orders directing him to proceed to Washington, D. C. for a course of instruction with view to a future assignment to foreign service with the Graves Registration Service in France.^{42, 43} Only one year and eleven days after that tremendous victory parade in New York, First Lt. Glenn Ross was preparing to return to the American battlefields

of France, this time to care for and honor the fallen.

His Family and Descendants

Glenn married Susan Miles Brooks (1892–1932) on 2 April 1913, who was born in Columbus, Ohio, and raised by her grandparents in Carlisle, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. Sue and Glenn had four children in all: Timothy Glenn Ross (1917–1990), Helen Sue Ross (1921–1999), Josephine Brooks Ross (1924–1995), and Elizabeth Ann Ross (b. 1930). On 1 May 1935, Glenn married second to Bertha Forsberg (1895–1987), a native of Ironwood, Gogebic County, Michigan.

Elizabeth Ann Ross married on 3 Octo-

ber 1954 to Ronald George Goerss (1929-2013), who was born in Tonawanda, Erie County, New York.48 Betsy and Ron had three children, including David, born in Santa Monica, Los Angeles County, California.49 David Goerss married on 2 October 1993 to Monica Delgado de Rueda, a native of Clapham, Wandsworth Borough, London, England.50 Monica and David have one son, Justin.51 You may reach the submitter at david.goerss@PatriotGenealogy.com.



Lt. Ross with Machine Gun Section, Co. I, 149th Machine Gun Battalion, 42nd Division. (Caption on reverse side) "Men with Lt. Ross. They say he is best drill officer in the Co., or any where in the world. Formerly 10th Penna. Nat. Guards." Author of notation not known. Lt. Glenn A. ROSS is back row, fifth from left. Names of men and the woman in picture unknown.

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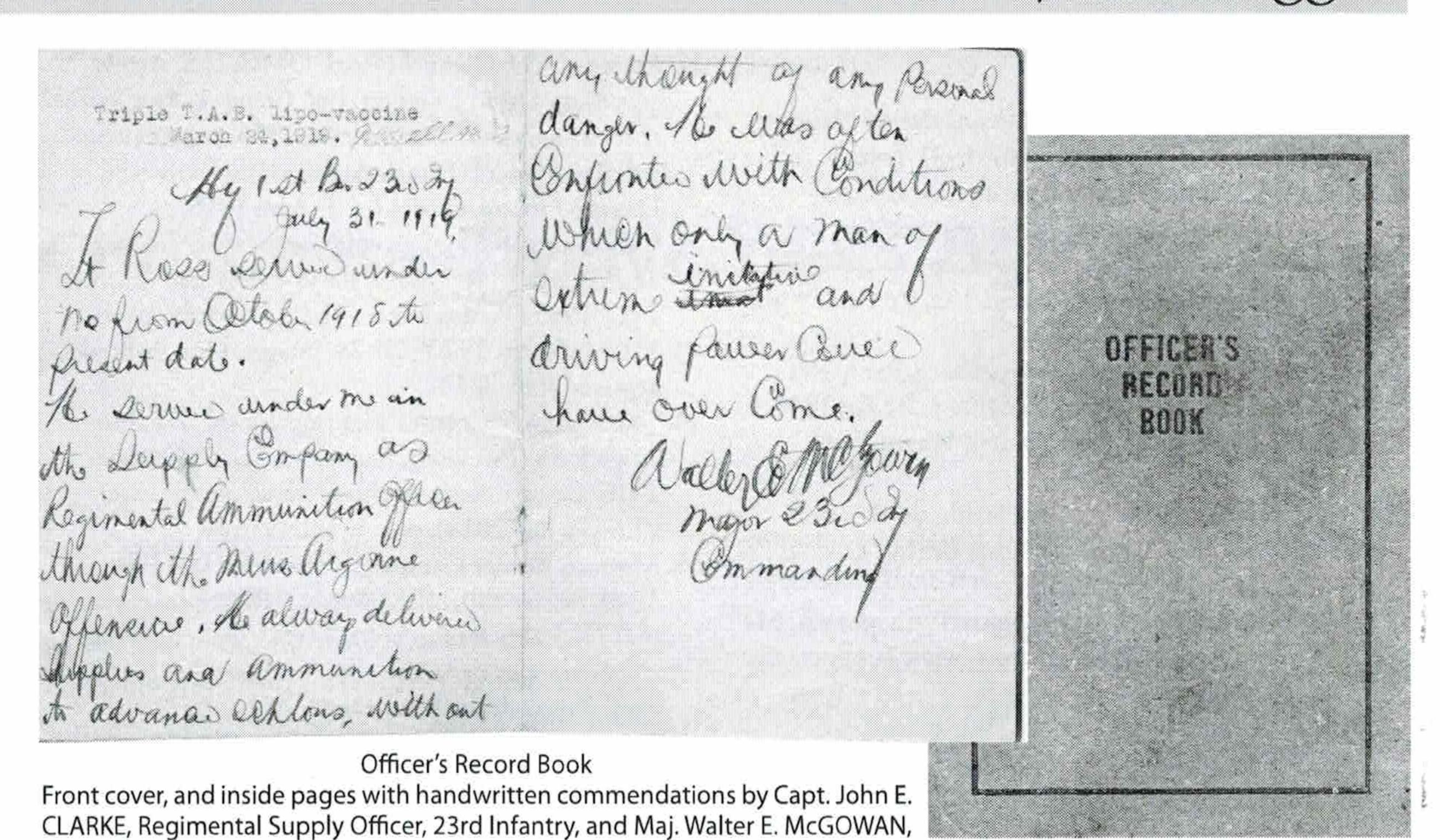
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