

Treasures from the Sherman Room

An Introduction to Brimfield History from the Library's Historical Collections

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George Streeter



George Streeter was the only Brimfield native to lose his life in the service of his country while serving in World War I. The obituary and memorial service dated December 5 and December 16, 1918 and transcribed below tells the story of this brave young man.

FIRST BRIMFIELD MAN

Private Charles M. Streeter is Dead of Pneumonia

NEWS WAS RECEIVED LAST FRIDAY

Died Oct. 16. Native of Brimfield, His Loss Is Mourned by All in the Town

Sorrow has prevailed throughout the town of Brimfield during the week on account of the news of the death on October 16, from pneumonia of Private Charles M. Streeter in France. The official notice was received Friday evening by his mother, Mrs. Martha E. Streeter. This is the first such news to be received concerning a Brimfield soldier. Mr. Streeter was the first to be called from Brimfield, and the first to go overseas. He was a member of Battery B, 102d Field Artillery. The sympathy expressed for Mrs. Streeter is widespread, especially on account of her close association with the people in other towns as well as the residents of Brimfield, old and young, through her activity and leadership in Red Cross work.

Charles Marsh Streeter was born in Brimfield February 26, 1892, and was the son of George H. and Martha (Stone) Streeter. He graduated from the Hitchcock Free Academy in the class of 1909, and from the Massachusetts Agricultural College in 1913. He was the honor pupil for scholarship in his class in the Academy, and was distinguished in dramatics and baseball playing. He graduated from college with honors and won election to the Phi Kappa Phi society. He was also a member of the Beta Kappa Phi fraternity, in which he served as local treasurer. He was a member for a year of the college mandolin club. In his college course he majored in forestry, which he intended to follow as his profession and which he had begun to practice. He was a member of the Massachusetts Forestry Association, and of the American Forestry Association. He had done work in tree surgery in Brimfield and elsewhere, and when he entered the army he was serving his second year as tree warden in Brimfield.

Mr. Streeter was a young man and citizen whom Brimfield could ill afford to lose. He was a member of the Congregational church and the Christian Endeavor Society, and had been a teacher in the Sunday school. For a time he substituted as organist in the church. He was a friend of boys and was the leader of a group which he organized in Boy Scout activities. He had been an officer in the local Grange, and a member of committees of the Brimfield Community Council. He had done important committee work for the Hitchcock Free Academy Alumni Association, of which he is the first member in the service to be reported dead. Mr. Streeter possessed all-round ability, which added to his usefulness in the community. He had qualified as an electrician and had done practical work for people in Brimfield and elsewhere. His sterling character and friendly disposition won for him the esteem of all, and he had endeared himself to the circle of friends who knew him best.

Mr. Streeter left for Camp Devens September 6, 1917, and on the evening before his departure he was pleasantly surprised by a gathering of friends under the auspices of the Christian Endeavor Society, and was the recipient of gifts that he would find useful in the service. Private Streeter was transferred from the Depot Brigade at Devens to the Headquarters Company of the 102d Field Artillery at Boxford September 18, and left that camp for overseas in a few days. He was transferred to Battery B about November 1st, and later received advancement to become a cannonier. As a member of the noted 26th Division, Private Streeter saw continuous service for nine months, and he had the distinction of belonging to the division that had the longest and hardest service, as it was the first complete division in France, early took over a sector of the front, and did not have a rest period during its entire term of service, due to the calls upon it by the activities

of the enemy when, at three different times, it was ready to go into a quiet sector. In February the division was in training with the French troops and also in action with them in the Chemin des Dames sector. Later it was for three months in the Toul sector, where it took over nearly 11 miles of front. In the Chateau Thierry drive from July 18th to August 4th, when the 26th Division stood between the enemy and Paris, the artillery was highly distinguished for its valor, and it has received the praise of Gen. Edwards for its "glorious record" on account of its fighting qualities and its splendid support of the infantry. It also went forward with the infantry of two other divisions. It went over the top July 25, and again a little later.

Private Streeter was in the Sr. Mihiel drive in September, and with the troops that held the Troyon sector until October 5, and afterwards moved to the Verdun sector, where the regiment was engaged at the time of his reported death. The last letters received from him were dated during the second week in dated [sic] October 7th.

SERVICE FOR C. M. STREETER

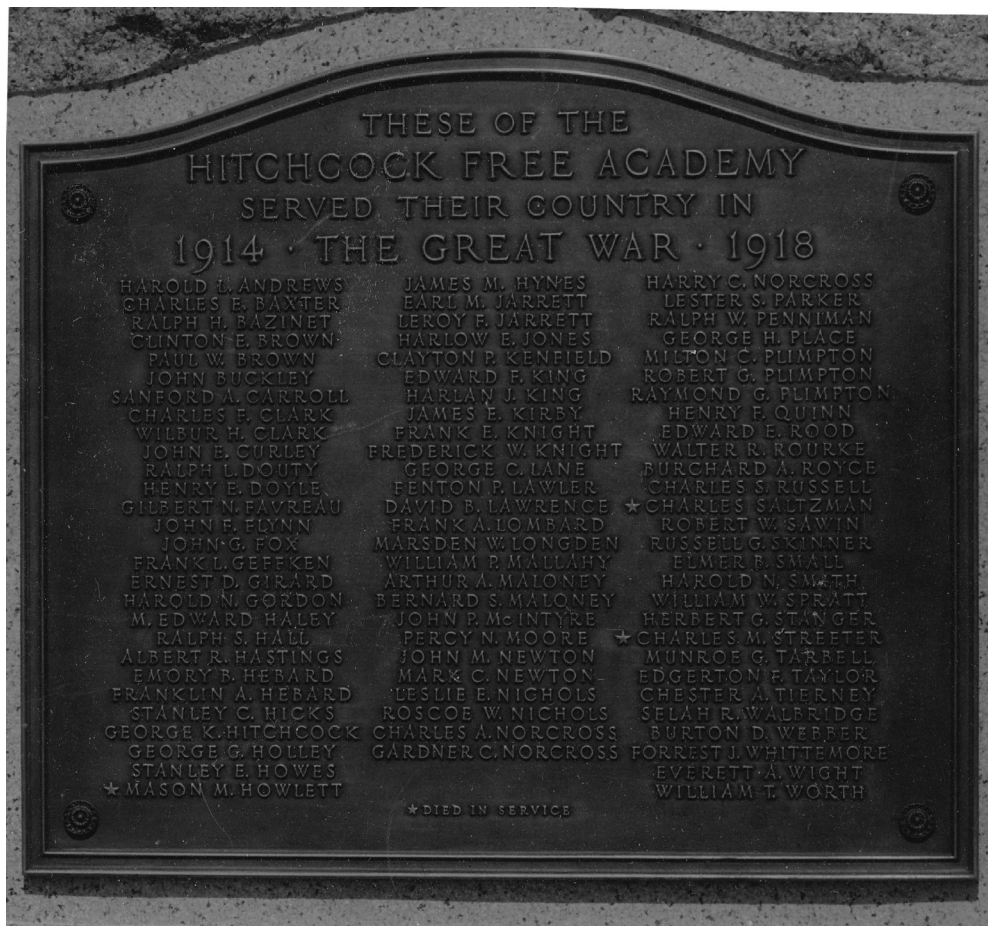
Memorial Event for Only Brimfield Soldier Who Died

A memorial service for Charles M. Streeter, son of Mrs. Martha E. Streeter, who was a member of battery B, 102d field artillery, and who died in France in October, was held in the Church Sunday morning instead of the usual service. Mr. Streeter was the only Brimfield soldier to lose his life among the 40 men who went from the town. The memorial service had been postponed until his mother received conclusive proof of her son's death. The whole firing battery of about 85 men was drenched with mustard gas on the night of October 9 and all but three, including the officers, were gassed, wounded or killed outright. Among the 34 who died from the effects of the gas were Streeter and two comrades who were assisting him in operating a machine gun. Streeter died on the morning of October 16 in base hospital 58 in Rimancourt, and is buried in the soldiers' cemetery there.

The audience included our [sic] 20 returned soldiers and sailors, most of who were from Brimfield and alumni of the Hitchcock free academy. The local grange, of which Mr. Streeter had been an officer, attended in a body, and there was a special representative of the class of 1909 of the academy. Other alumni and present members of the academy were in attendance. Friends were present from Springfield, Agawam and other places, and relatives came from Bernardston, Shelburne Falls, Easthampton and North Brookfield. The platform of the church was decorated with white flowers and the national colors, together with floral tributes from the Christian endeavor society, the class of 1909 of the academy, the local grange, and the Red Cross circle of East Brimfield. The flowers from the grange were placed against the service flag of that organization as a background. Back of the platform the town and academy service flags were hung on either side of the national flag.

Rev Samuel Eaton of Avoca, N. Y., formerly pastor of the Brimfield church, and Rev William Estabrook, the present pastor, officiated. Mr. Eaton dwelt upon the nobility of Mr. Streeter's character and his excellence in his home, in his school and college life, and in the church and community, and showed that the honor paid to a noble life is a greater memorial than any monument reared by human hands. Mr. Estabrook read a portion of a letter written to Mrs. Streeter by Capt page of the 102d field artillery, expressing his affectionate regard for her son and his pride in his courage and devotion to duty. He also read letters from two members of battery B which testified to their dead comrade's bravery and faithfulness to duty. In closing his remarks Mr. Estabrook made an appeal for sustaining in every way the world-wide cause of humanity hallowed by Mr. Streeter's death as a soldier, so that he and the others who have made the supreme sacrifice shall not have died in vain. A quartet composed of George W. Spaulding, Lieut G. Clyde Norcross, Lieut Harry Norcross and Roy Norcross, sang two selections, "I Cannot Always Trace the Way" and "When the Roll is called Up Yonder." Charles L. Peirce of Springfield and Brimfield sang "Beautiful Land on High."

A tablet was dedicated on the grounds of Hitchcock Academy on August 29, 1930 during the 17th reunion of the Alumni Association. It was placed there to honor the alumni of the Academy who participated in the First World War. Charles Streeter's name is marked with an asterisk noting those who lost their life in the service of their country.



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Charles M. Streeter sent his mother a number of letters from overseas. The two below were both published in the Palmer Journal, the first on December 13, 1917 and the second on September 17, 1918 (it was written on August 10).

France, October 18 – Nothing of importance has happened since I wrote last. We still do about the same amount of drill, although now I am on the telephone squad and am learning how to install lines used at the front. We have for instructor a regular army officer and have both lectures and real work. It's like going to school over again, and more interesting than just drill.

We received our pay last Sunday and I am sending some of it home so I shall not spend it. Money is easily lost, spent or stolen here, so it's best to have as little as one can get along with. We have just put stoves in our barracks, and today has been the first really cold day. I believe the French are trying to get along without furnace heat until November 1st. I guess there is no really severe weather here and little snow. Some

kinds of flowers are still in blossom in the woods and there is a lot of holly around. There are not many berries on it though.

If anyone thinks it queer that I don't send him a card, you may tell him that picture postcards are forbidden and the other kind unobtainable, and letters can be written only two a week, unless we send them to the Base Censor in a special envelope which will hold only a few. I should like to see an American newspaper once a day for we here all kinds of rumors and have no quick way of finding out whether they are true or not. It is no wonder the German soldiers know nothing except what the officers tell them.

I am glad your potatoes and beans yielded so well. Those are two things that we are sure of having here also bacon, which is a regular breakfast dish. The French bread is all brown in color, but very good. However we have some white bread. The flour is not all wheat but mixed with rye meal, I guess. One thing that is quite a luxury and that we are having fairly often, is doughnuts, and they are good doughnuts, too. If you send anything to eat, make fudge or fruit-cake that won't dry up. Peanut butter is good, too, and there is none to be had here.

I expect mail comes here quicker than it goes back, on account of the censorship, so there is no telling when you will get this.

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Dear Mother: Since last I wrote we have been going through quite new and interesting experiences, and no doubt you have already guessed that we have been in the big drive. It meant lots of hard work, changes of position every few days and always being out in the open air in our shelter tents which we always carry in our rolls. But when the Huns are on the run everybody is willing to work hard to keep them going and you know by the papers how successful we have been in that respect. The experience has been new in that we have seen the results of our work as we moved forward over the battlefields, and we have seen just what a battlefield looks like. Of course there was a chance to pick up all kinds of souvenirs, but so far I have not taken any, not caring to be bothered carrying them along and expecting that there will be plenty of time later to make a collection.

Now we are back for a rest, and from now on I probably will be able to write more regularly. I haven't heard from you for some time, but received several papers during the past week. Also received a letter from Marjorie King telling something about graduation and the Fourth of July exercises.

I almost saw Russell Skinner a little over a month ago. His regiment was located within an hour's walk from us, so I went over one Sunday, but when I got there found that his company was in another village, and so I didn't have time to go there. I missed seeing him. That is as near as I have come to seeing anyone from home.

I wonder if the frosts hurt the garden this summer? I guess when I get back I will like all the different vegetables, for here in the army we eat anything they have, whether we like it or not. I even eat stewed tomatoes though I can hardly claim to like them. I should like some raw fresh ones from the garden though with vinegar and sugar. I did have some fresh lettuce once. One of my chums, who likes greens, and I got some lettuce from a French woman, took the vinegar from a pickle bottle and sweetened it with grated lump sugar. But it was real lettuce and tasted good.

Well, the summer is almost over, and it will soon be a year since we landed in France. Of course everybody hopes that we may go back soon, but no one can tell when that will be. This is poor paper, but the only sheets I could find, but I know you will excuse that this time.

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Marsh-Streeter House – 149 Brookfield Road