

# Museum of North Idaho

Volume 29

Number 2

Quarterly Newsletter

Spring 2009



4505-11 U.S. FORESTERS IN FRANCE

*Steam donkey operated in France by U.S. soldiers in the Twentieth Engineer Regiment*

## Lumberjacks Go To War

**The Twentieth Engineer Regiment (Forestry) Answers The Call To Fight In WWI**

by Dennis Griffith

When the U.S. went to war against Germany in April 1917 General John "Blackjack" Pershing was appointed commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in France. He arrived in France in late May where he realized that before fighting troops could be effective great amounts of lumber and timbers would be needed to build docks, railroads, barracks and hospitals and to meet front-line construction of bunkers, dugouts, trench support and a great variety of other uses. Even coffin lumber would be needed.

Because of the great number of German submarines

prowlng the Atlantic it was impossible to move lumber by ship to France so it was decided to recruit a regiment of experienced loggers and sawmill men from the forested areas of the U.S. to produce the needed lumber from the forests of France. The U.S. Forest Service was given the job to recruit the men for the Twentieth Engineer Regiment (Forestry) which, with its 20,000 men, was to become the largest Army Regiment serving overseas during the war.

During mid-July 1917, most of the newspapers in North Idaho had an article similar to the one printed

in the Bonners Ferry Herald July 10, 1917:

**ASK FORESTERS FOR FRANCE**  
Government Asks Recruits For  
New Unit of United States Army  
Pay Up To \$100.00 A Month  
French Foresters to be Used in the  
Trenches at the Front

Forest Supervisors at St. Maries, Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint, Idaho and Newport, Washington have been instructed by the government to receive applications for the regiment of picked woodsmen being recruited for early army service in France. This regiment is being made up to work in French forests close to the fighting line, logging and manufacturing ties, trench timbers, bridge timbers and similar material needed for the fighting armies. While designed to act primarily as a mobile logging and lumbering unit, the regiment will be armed and drilled the same as the rest of Army and will be organized on military lines. It may be called to work within the danger zone.

The July 13, 1917 edition of the St. Maries Gazette reported:

The regiment will be made up of picked woodsmen... For the logging crew, skilled axemen, sawyers, tie hewers, skidders, teamsters and blacksmiths are wanted. Millwrights, sawyers and engineers are needed to man portable sawmills

Recruiting was brisk with several hundred men from north Idaho signing up immediately. They were sent to train at the American University in the District of Columbia. The regiment was made up of 25% forestry experts, 25% officers with prior military experience, and the remaining 50% logging and sawmill men.

Many of the officers were Forest Service men such as Colonel Henry Graves, chief of the Forest Service, Lt. Colonel William Greeley, who would become chief following Graves, and Major Evan Kelly who would become long-time regional forester for Forest Service Region One headquartered in Missoula, Montana. Lumbermen from the local area also served as officers. In August 1917 Lawrence McCoy of Coeur d'Alene, sales manager for the Rutledge Lumber Company, was appointed as a first lieutenant; Ralph Brockmeir of Coeur d'Alene, sales representative for Blackwell Lumber Company, was appointed second lieutenant; and Oscar Munson of a prominent lumber family in Potlatch was appointed first lieutenant.

By mid-September the first 1550 man unit had been trained. They arrived in France by troopship on October 7, 1917. They immediately set to work and by November 26, 1917 the first portable sawmill was in operation. The need for many more men was quickly

realized and a more intense recruiting effort was begun. Again the response from loggers in the northwest was overwhelming. By October 1918, 20,000 men of the regiment were operating 107 sawmills all over France. During the period December 1, 1917 to April 1, 1919 the men of the Twentieth regiment produced 222,444,000 board feet of lumber, 4,687,319 board feet of railroad ties, 2,025,204 board feet of round timbers and 1,271,161 board feet of fuel wood for the Allied Expeditionary Force.

Getting the regiment to France was no easy task in itself. All the men and their heavy equipment had to be transported on former commercial liners transformed into troopships. On February 4, 1918 the troopship *Tuscania* carrying the regiment's 6<sup>th</sup> battalion was torpedoed off the Irish coast by the German U-boat U-77. Ninety-five soldiers were lost including one from Potlatch, Idaho and one from Spokane, Washington.

Not all of the work was close to enemy lines but some was, and found to be very dangerous. In August of 1918 Captain Harry McPherson, Commanding officer of Company A of the regiment's Second battalion, was scouting locations for sawmills and was cut down by German machine gun fire. His medical officer Lt. William Fair attempted to rescue him and was also cut down. For his heroic actions, Fair was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the only man of the regiment to receive that honor. Over 375 men of the regiment were lost in the war.

A picture of what life was like in the forests of France for the patriotic woodsmen during the early part of America's involvement in the war is reflected in a letter from Charles Grodeski a private in Company C of the 10<sup>th</sup> Engineers to his previous boss Ranger Ed Pulaski of the Coeur d'Alene National Forest and re-printed in the May 31, 1918 edition of the Wallace Press-Times:

**RUNS SAWMILL IN SUNNY FRANCE**  
Wallace Boy Writes of Forestry Divisions  
Work in Getting Army Timbers

My Dear Mr. Pulaski:... We are having some real nice weather. And have had for the last two months. Most of the fruit trees have been in bloom for the last two weeks. The days are very warm and the nights are rather cool. About the same way as Wallace.

We have moved to a new camp since I wrote you last. It used to be a big sand plain some 75 years ago. And now it is a big pine forest. In fact it is the biggest pine forest in France. The country we are in is in the southwest part of France, within walking distance of the ocean. Instead of being near the front we are as far away as we can get.

The pine here is called the Martine pine. Looks like our bull pine in the west. Makes



*Sawmill in France during WWI*

very poor lumber, as at the age of 26 it is tapped for pitch.

Our big sawmill is now working full blast. Our Company put out the biggest cut of any American sawmill in France. Our mill is a 20 thousand mill for ten hours. And we made a cut of 28,261. Later on it will run day and night. As at the present time we have a large order for piling. The piling is going to some large port in France to build her large docks so that America can handle her large boats that come in. A great number of the piles also go for America's railroad here in France...Most of our lumber goes right to the front.

We have a very nice camp with nice regular army tents. There are six of us in each tent. We have electric lights, a big Y.M.C.A. tent, and one of the best baseball teams in France.

But by the war's end on November 11, 1918 the enthusiasm of the men had been somewhat dulled by the constant work, wet-cold weather, homesickness and the realization they would be spending their second Christmas away from home. This mood is reflected in the letter written by Corporal Earl Campbell of Company E 20<sup>th</sup> Engineers on Christmas Eve to his parents in Coeur d'Alene and re-printed in the February 4, 1919 edition of the Coeur d'Alene Evening Press:

#### TIMBER WORKERS IN FRANCE

Two thousand miles from home and two Christmases in the army makes a man think there is no Christmas...I saw Thy Stoa street last week and he said they were leaving on the 26th for the States, so we will be the next home.

We are still putting in logs. We had one big piece of timber that made all of us Westerners homesick. It runs five and six logs to a thousand. We snowed the mill under and they haven't caught up yet.

Sam Smith brought in four hundred pounds of turkey for Christmas dinner, and we are going to have some feed. George Handley is woods-boss and he is the best man I ever worked for. It has been raining steady since the first of the month and there is three to six inches of water everywhere.

By the end of June, 1919 the members of the Twentieth Regiment (Forestry) nicknamed "The Lumberjack Regiment" had returned home to resume their work in the white pine forests of north Idaho, the Midwest and New England.

# Museum News

## Message From the Board



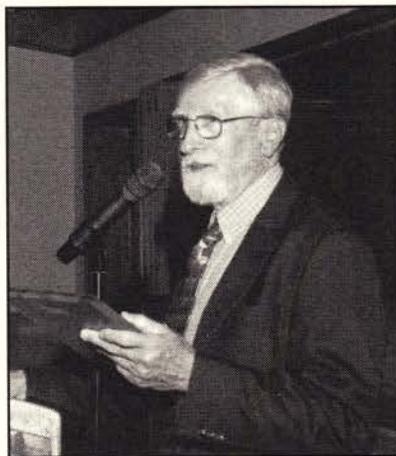
*Museum Board President Kathy Arneson addressing members at the annual meeting and banquet at the Country Club April 21.*

Thanks go to the many of you who support the Museum and attended the annual banquet, witnessing the award of "The Friend of History" to Robert Singletary. Robert graciously shared his gratitude for the invaluable research opportunities afforded by the Museum and encouraged others to share their stories in support of the Friends of History's *Museum Moments*, informational meetings about our capital campaign for new facilities.

Kudos also go to Steve Matz, Idaho Panhandle National Forest Archaeologist, who presented *The Archaeology of Lumbering in the Coeur d'Alenes* that gave an overview of lumbering on the Coeur d'Alene and St. Joe National Forests, what archaeology has to tell us about that history, and what the future holds for these precious sites.

As our deadline of October 2011 approaches for having something 'concrete' in the works for a new museum building, we call on our members for their support by attending or hosting a *Museum Moment*, either by sharing their story at an event or simply offering their presence to the community invitees. Remember that the gatherings are an hour or less, no solicitation is involved, and wine and other refreshments will be served. Meeting the members that support the Museum and its programs is key to engaging the larger community in our efforts to make the vision of a new facility a reality.

Know also that we are actively pursuing many diverse funding sources for



*Robert Singletary receiving the Friend of History Award.*

this effort, but we do encourage pledges of support from the membership. These are very important in leveraging support from philanthropic groups, governmental entities, corporations and foundations.

Kathryn Arneson, Board President

## Welcome New Board Members

Wayne Sweney and Kathy Arneson were elected to continue serving on the Board. Judy Stebbins and Dennis Liming join the board. Joy Porter resigned allowing Dennis to fill out her term until 2011. Joy will continue to volunteer weekly at the Museum. Only a few votes separated the candidates and we thank Doug Miller for running. Officers will be elected in mid-May.

## Building Fund Donations

Shirley Smalley  
John Harreld  
Dick & Shirlee Wandrocke  
Nancy Decker  
Don Shriner  
Denny & Kathy Arneson

## Other Donations

John Shovic updating our computer network system.

Melissa Guy made a donation in honor of Gene Hyde's 80th birthday.

Web site hosting by Group Argia SA at [www.argia.net](http://www.argia.net).

## Please Keep Your Address Current

If your address is changing or has changed please be sure the Museum has your correct address. We are charged a fee, sometimes as much as \$1.00, for any undeliverable or forwarded mail. Because of this you may no longer be receiving the newsletter if you have not renewed your membership or verified your address. If you received a renewal notice, your name is not on the paid membership list or the date on the mailing label is near or past please send in your membership today to continue receiving the newsletter and supporting local history.

We could not operate without our member's support, so thank you. Increasing our membership is vital to the health and growth of the Museum. This is a great way to show your support for local history. Numbers count! Ask your friends to join or give a membership as a gift.

The date on your mailing label is when your membership is due for renewal. If there is not a date please send in your membership today.

### Artifact Donations Since February

Peggy Cameron: Cd'A High School Commencement program, 1942.

Gilbert Lazich: Farragut Hospital newspaper, 1945.

Bonner County Hist. Society: Photos of activities at Arrow Boy's Camp.

Frank Cozzetto: Aerial photos of the North Shore and Marina, 1982.

Harry & Mary Winkler: Leaflet on the Winkler's Little Logger communication system, write up on the Winkler logging operations and a photo of the Winklers.

Tim Beale: Kellogg Miner's Picnic posters, 1940s.

Lorraine Polonis: Catholic sick call kit.

Beverly Roussos: Photo of a Beta Sigma Phi group in the early 1960s.

North Idaho College: Book *The Gathering Place*.

Jim McKahan: framed photos of Lieberg splash dam and Lavin Cr. flume from the Northwest Timber office.

Alan Robertson: Ohio Match Burnt Cabin Creek operations.

### Photos Copied

Ray Hart: Blackwell Lumber Co. operations.

US Forest Service: 1933 aerial view of Winton logging operations on the Coeur d'Alene River.

Tim Morgan: Edith Morgan Reel logging operations.

### Easy Duty at Fort Sherman Museum

We need volunteers at the Fort Museum. Visitation is often only a few people a day but those that come enjoy it very much. It is a good place to get work done, read or just have some quiet time. In the last few years we have lost several dedicated Fort volunteers. If we cannot replace these volunteers the Fort Museum will have to be closed. Please contact the Museum if you can help. Hours are Tues. through Sat. 1 to 4:45.

### Scandinavian History Needed

Scandinavians played a major role in the settlement of the Coeur d'Alene Region. We are seeking information, photos and artifacts to illustrate the history of Scandinavians in the region for the 2010 feature exhibit. If you have items to loan or donate or would like to work on the project contact Dorothy at 664-3448 or dd@museumni.org.

### Museum Open For The Season

The Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. The feature exhibit *Observing North Idaho's Forest Dynamics* explores the role of the Western white pine in bringing timber companies to our region, logging and milling activities along with natural and human forces that shaped our forest. The exhibit includes various types of saws and logging equipment, a slab from a giant ponderosa pine, stories of women who worked in the woods, tree identification samples and the last 2 x 4 produced at Northwest Timber Company with crew signatures.

Karen DeSeve, Simone Kincaid, Don Fabian, Dick and Cami Whitney and Dennis Griffith were of great help getting the exhibit ready. Joe Sharnetsky made and donated two photo enlargements. Frame of Mind, Joy Porter, Jack Finney and Bill Turner also contributed. We had 37 visitors on opening day April 1 despite cold and snow. Our Museum Store manager Helen Naslund did a great job getting the store set up. Come in and see our regional books and gift items. The Museum is located in front of Coeur d'Alene City Park at 115 NW Blvd. Call 664-3448 for more information.

### Memorials

For **Jim Yates** From Magnuson, McHugh & Co., Daniel & Sally Blair, Tom & Sue Thilo and Edward & Susan Leach

For **Robert Wilbur** from Yvonnee Wilbur, Gene & Bev Hyde and L.M. Landes

For **Floyd F. Young** from Rosalyn Young

For **Jayne Schmidt** from Stan Schmidt

For **Chuck Vedder** from Gene & Bev Hyde

### Memorials to the Museum

Remember your loved ones and friends with a memorial to the Museum of North Idaho. Your cash donation builds the Museum's endowment fund. The name of the deceased is placed on the memorial plaque at the Museum.

Memorial For \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Whom to notify \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Amount \_\_\_\_\_

# Museum of North Idaho Annual Report 2008

The Museum of North Idaho grows and thrives thanks to the support of its members and the community. Founded in 1968 it is governed by a membership-elected nine-member Board of Trustees. Vicki Roberge went off the board and we welcomed new board member Marlene Herby in 2008. Officers from April 2008-09 were President Kathy Arneson, Vice President Wayne Sweney, Secretary Scott MacPhee and Treasurer Larry Strobel. Board members included Robert Singletary, Paul Vilandre, Denise Clark and Joy Porter. We thank Robert for his service on the Board from 1994 until his resignation due to family obligations in May 2008.

## *Education and Outreach*

The Museum at 115 NW Blvd. was open April 1 to Oct. 31 and the Fort Museum on the North Idaho College Campus was open from May 1 to Sept. 30. 2008 attendance was 5,282 for both museums including 527 school kids. In 2008 38% of our visitors were from Kootenai County compared to 32% in 2007. The Museum opened April 1 despite snow on the ground and morning temperatures around 20. The Fort Sherman Museum was opened two weeks late due to cold weather. The free day on April 5 drew 241 visitors despite snow most of the day. We participated in the Smithsonian Museum Day Sept. 27. Out of 78 visitors 51 visited in response to the Smithsonian free admission. The Oct. 25 free day drew over 360 people with 322 from Kootenai County

We co-hosted the North Idaho College historic lectures. Skip Kuck organized the programs. Since May 2007 we have presented the weekly Picture Puzzler series in the Coeur d'Alene Press.

Our feature exhibit *Wings Over North Idaho* came together with the help of Dennis Griffith, Gene Soper, Mike Kincaid, Bill and Betty Bailey, Carolyn Hambridge, Karen DeSeve and Don Fabian. Gene Soper installed an aviation wind sock in front of the Museum. J.P. Stravens provided a map of aviation crashes. The Frame of Mind and Commercial Printing provided discounted services.

The eighth annual banquet at the Hayden Lake County Club was attended by 110 people. Gene Soper presented Coeur d'Alene Air Terminal history. Skip and Dick Kuck received the Friends of History award.

## *Publications*

The Museum of North Idaho's Press continues to grow and includes 16 titles. We reprinted Art Randall and Jerry Dolph's *Wyatt Earp and Coeur d'Alene Gold*. Clive Carter's book *Inland Empire Electric Line: Spokane*

to Coeur d'Alene and the Palouse is expected out in fall 2009. We have published a quarterly newsletter since 1980.

## *Collections*

Fifty-six people donated more than 450 artifacts, photos, and archival materials to the Museum. Volunteers contributed hundreds of hours sorting, cataloguing and scanning historic photographs. With over 27,500 images, the Museum's photo collection is the largest and best-organized source of photos for the Coeur d'Alene Region.

Over 100 people used the archives and photograph collections. In addition there were many e-mails and telephone inquiries. We worked with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe to scan our Native American photos for an internet project the tribe is doing. In exchange they converted over 26,000 of our PICT photo files to JPEG.

## *Buildings*

North Idaho College donates the use of the Powder Magazine for the Fort Sherman Museum and the City provides our main facility next to the City Park rent-free. The Museum uses half of the building at 705 Lincoln Way for storage and rents the front half to North Idaho College to cover the Burlington Northern Railroad land lease and other expenses. The County waives the property tax for the storage building and the Chapel.

We preserve the Fort Sherman Chapel with help of volunteers, donations and rental income from an AA group and weddings. The Coeur d'Alene Athletic Charitable Trust makes an annual donation. There are many unseen volunteers that come by the Chapel and lend a hand when needed. The community support is greatly appreciated.

## *Staff*

We operate with the help of many volunteers and one professional staff, Director Dorothy Dahlgren, who has been with the Museum since 1982. In July we hired Sandy Visnack as a part-time development officer to assist in raising funds for the new building. Susan Taylor who worked as our part-time paid bookkeeper since May 2002 moved to Boise in Oct. and Kathy Arneson took over the bookkeeping duties.

Sixty-one volunteers donated over 1,700 hours making possible the preservation, exhibition and interpretation of our region's history. Helen Naslund has donated her time as Museum Store manager since 1990. Kathy Arneson and Simone Kincaid helped Helen with the store. Dean Thie manages our website

