

## THE PLIGHT OF THE DOUGHBOY

WORLD WAR I AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES  
OF HAROLD W. PIERCE

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**ABSTRACT:** World War I was a catalyst, altering the world's political landscape and leading to advancements in weaponry and tactics shaping warfare through the rest of the century. Perhaps its greatest influence, however, was on the lives of the soldiers who experienced the cruelest manifestations of this conflict. Their accounts demonstrate the impact of war on the individual and give us a glimpse of an otherwise unimaginable reality. In "Diary of a Doughboy," by Pennsylvanian Harold W. Pierce of the Twenty-Eighth Division, we learn the emotional and psychological effects of war on one doughboy. Understanding these effects allows us to better understand humanity with regard to warfare.

**KEYWORDS:** Twenty-Eighth Infantry Division, "Diary of a Doughboy," Pennsylvania, Harold W. Pierce, Fismes, Meuse-Argonne offensive, World War I

### INTRODUCTION

The First World War was a conflict on a scale greater than any that came before, and it would leave a profound mark on the face of Europe and, later, America. The clash of empires marked a new era in the history of warfare and inspired new technologies and tactics that would shape warfare for the next century. The first practical and large-scale use of machines such as the airplane and the tank facilitated multidimensional warfare. Machine guns effectively ended the frontal assault as a viable tactic. The ensuing stalemate led to trench warfare and all of its horrors. The world watched as belligerents unleashed new levels of death and destruction on the continent. By 1917 Europe had been embroiled in the "War to End All Wars" for more than

three years, with no end in sight. President Woodrow Wilson that same year, prompted by the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare by the German empire, asked for and received from Congress a declaration of war against the Central Powers in April 1917. To this end, Wilson sent out a call to arms, taken up by many young Americans.<sup>1</sup>

German officials' decision to resume submarine warfare was a blessing in disguise for the Allies, as it prompted the United States to enter the war at a pivotal moment. The signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918, ended the war on the Eastern Front and allowed the Germans to redeploy a considerable number of troops to the west. After three years of bitter fighting, the depleted British and French armies, however, desperately needed reinforcements. Germany seized the initiative and, using new tactics developed on the Eastern Front, pushed the Allies back toward Paris by June of 1918. Fortunately, the arrival of fresh American troops halted the German advance and allowed the Allies to take the offensive.<sup>2</sup>

Some of these troops came from Pennsylvania and served in the Twenty-Eighth Infantry Division. Of all National Guard divisions mustered into service, few played as prominent a role as this Pennsylvania-based unit. Today, the Twenty-Eighth Infantry Division is the oldest continuously serving division in the US military, having been officially formed under the Act of 1878 with Major General John F. Hartranft as the first division commander. Thirty-nine years later, on August 5, 1917, the Twenty-Eighth was mustered into federal service and sent to Camp Hancock, Georgia, to train for its role on the Western Front. After months of stateside training, it arrived in France during the summer of 1918. The division took part in some of the greatest battles of the war including Château-Thierry (July 1918), Fismes-Fismette (August 1918), and the Argonne Forest: the Meuse-Argonne Campaign (September–November 1918). It was at Château-Thierry, during the Second Battle of the Marne, that the division proved itself in the face of great adversity. When Germans crashed through Allied lines on July 15, it was the Twenty-Eighth Infantry Division that stood its ground and successfully repulsed their last great offensive of the war. After this, the Twenty-Eighth became known as the "Iron Division" and continued to prove itself through the rest of the war, earning its place in history.<sup>3</sup>

To honor those serving in the Twenty-Eighth Division, Pennsylvanians built a shrine in Boalsburg shortly after the war. Years later, during the winter of 1967–68, the state Historical and Museum Commission established the Pennsylvania Military Museum at this site, dedicating it to all

citizen-soldiers of the commonwealth. A primary task of the museum is preserving information about the Twenty-Eighth Infantry Division.<sup>4</sup> The museum is home to numerous artifacts from America's wars, but the wealth of material dealing with the Twenty-Eighth is the most significant collection on this unit anywhere.

In spring of 2016, as an undergraduate student at Penn State University Park, I interned at the Pennsylvania Military Museum. I was tasked with writing short biographies about some of the men who served in the Great War. During the course of this work, I came across a diary written by a soldier named Harold W. Pierce, who served in Company A, 112th Infantry, Fifty-Sixth Brigade of the Twenty-Eighth Infantry Division. My professor and I agreed that a textual analysis of this diary would be an excellent means of fulfilling my academic requirements, and so I reviewed the document in order to identify its unique qualities. The task of writing this analysis, though daunting, was a thoroughly enjoyable and educational experience. I remain grateful to have undertaken it. I chose to focus mainly on Pierce's text, "Diary of a Doughboy," because there has been no extensive scholarly analysis of this diary.<sup>5</sup> The text itself is quite remarkable, and I selected a few quotes I felt best depicted Pierce's emotions. This article is the result of my analysis.

Pierce's diary is a captivating and moving account of his war experience. By closely reading and researching his diary, it is possible to catch a glimpse of a soldier's life in the trenches and forests of France. Pierce's work is an excellent resource for gaining insight into how soldiers experienced the war, both physically and emotionally. "Diary of a Doughboy" illustrates some of the ways soldiers cope with the stress of combat. The horrors the doughboys witnessed quickly changed them, and Pierce's writing manifests this transformation. Analysis of his text shows the transformative effects of war on a soldier's psyche, as well as examples of the various means by which a soldier coped with the burdens placed on him.<sup>6</sup>

### "THE GREAT ADVENTURE"

Not much is known concerning Pierce's childhood. Born September 24, 1898, in Clarendon, Warren County, Pennsylvania, he was the son of Levi and Edith Pierce. His father was a lumberman; his mother worked at home. He had an older brother, Hugh, and a younger brother, Reid. By 1917 Harold Pierce lived in nearby Youngsville.<sup>7</sup> At this time, he was a junior in high

school, but he considered himself a failure because of his perceived academic shortcomings. He confessed just before the United States became involved in the war that he was very distracted by everything that was going on at the time and felt compelled to contribute in some way:

I am now eighteen, big for my age and feel like a man, but the enlistment age is still twenty one. I know I will not get my mother's consent so if I go I will have to lie about my age. My problem now is to decide whether I will tell a lie or stay at home and feel like a slacker. My school work is a failure and I have no other trade so I may as well be a soldier.<sup>8</sup>

Pierce decided that if America declared war on Germany he would enlist. Although they anticipated it, many men like him may not have thought the United States would declare war on Germany so quickly. When Pierce heard they were at war on April 6, 1917, it forced him to make a final decision. He grappled with his tough choice:

Expecting the news as I have, still it is a great shock. War at last and I said I wanted to go. The truth is I don't want war and I hate to go to it. I am young and I do not want to sacrifice my life. Eighteen has plenty ahead and little behind. (April 6, 1917)

On April 21, he wrote:

I have thought it over for fifteen days and today I have decided to go. Mother has refused to sign the enlistment papers. My arguments were of no avail. It has been a trying time for us. I am certain I should go. But I hate to kill and I hate to be killed. Could I shoot a man or run a long bayonet in him and hear his screams? Could I go where some man could do the same to me? But I feel I must.

Pierce was terribly conflicted. However, he felt that he must go, or he would never be able to respect himself or be respected by others. Fortunately for Pierce, the Army lowered the age limit from twenty-one to eighteen, and he enlisted without his mother's permission. He thought that his mother would be upset, but found the opposite to be true. She did not necessarily support his decision, but understood why he had to go. When it came time

for the men from his hometown to report for duty, Pierce's mother remained quite composed. Pierce remembered this with an air of admiration. "Mother does not cry, rather she is smiling cheerfully. I notice that most of the crying comes from those whose boys are not going. Our mothers are braver" (July 15, 1917).

By early September, Pierce and the rest of the Twenty-Eighth Infantry Division arrived at Camp Hancock, Georgia. He spent eight grueling months drilling for eight hours every day. They finally boarded the RMS *Aquitania* in New York on May 6, 1918, and sailed for Europe. Ten days later, when Pierce and his comrades arrived in Calais, their earlier excitement about their overseas service dampened when they saw their living conditions in France.<sup>9</sup> While their camp was far from the frontlines, they still found the sanitation and food quality to be atrocious. Seeing this, Pierce wanted to return home. He also noted that British soldiers at the camp and the Americans got along poorly, and neither had much respect for the other. His adverse opinion of the British changed the first time he met wounded soldiers returning from the front.

These men were different than the ones we had argued with before. They were quiet and reserved men and much easier to agree with. We did not remind them that our forefathers licked England twice, rather we assumed the air of respect a veteran is entitled to from a recruit. I began to feel more respect for the English people and ashamed of our actions for truthfully some of our men had been quarrelsome. I felt more respect for them as ambulances driven by tired looking English girls drove by loaded down with other wounded soldiers for the base hospitals in Calais. (May 19, 1918)

After training with the British army, the Twenty-Eighth Infantry Division started its long march to the frontline. Marching across France wearing a thick woolen uniform and weighted down with a pack and rifle was difficult; it was June, and the heat enough to make a man delirious. Pierce described his feelings on this, sparing no details, conveying the utter exhaustion the doughboys felt as they marched toward their destination.

The day wears on and the weariness grows worse. Legs are tired and the shoulders ache from that heavy pack. We move with that automatic movement of tired marching men. The sweat pours off my forehead and a steady stream runs off my nose. I crave water, but experience has

shown that it is not good to drink the lukewarm water in my canteen on a hike. (June 9)

As they neared Paris, the men's spirits rose. With a slight tone of disgust, Pierce recorded how some of the men drank to excess and caused a terrible ruckus. He, on the other hand, seemed to have been too caught up with the beautiful women he found in Paris to participate in his fellow soldiers' binge drinking. Pierce frequently commented on Parisian women and seemed quite enamored with French women altogether. At this point, he had not experienced the horrors of the front, and his writing reflected this innocence:

The Mademoiselles, stenographers and clerks in Paris, are usually waiting for a train. About all I can do is look but that is a pleasure for they are remarkably easy to look at. I resolve to spend more time learning to speak French, not only to help our allies win the war either. (June 20)

Leaving Paris behind, Pierce faced a much more sobering view of France. On his march toward the river Marne, he beheld countless refugees struggling to haul what little of their possessions they were able to save in wake of the German onslaught. As they neared the front, they heard the steady rumble of artillery (June 24). Pierce complained of feeling completely empty as he trudged toward the noise and the flashes; he saw and heard the horrors he was approaching. By July 3 Pierce and the rest of the Twenty-Eighth Infantry Division arrived at the estate of Alexandre Dumas, the famous novelist, pitched their tents, and went to sleep. The next day was July 4 and they anticipated a lively celebration.

**“TO ARMS! TO ARMS!”**

At 2 a.m. on July 4 Pierce awoke to a call to arms accompanied by the shrill notes of the bugle. He explained, “There is no call so dread, so fearful, so thrilling and so dangerous.” These words chronicled the whirlwind of emotions he felt facing imminent danger. Trouble was stirring on the frontline, and the division moved forward to give support. Reaching Château-Thierry by July 7, Pierce, who was a scout, spent the next few days making maps and gathering information about the surrounding area (July 7–14). On July 15 the Germans

began the Second Marne Offensive with a massive bombardment, followed by a charge against Allied positions.<sup>10</sup> For men who had never experienced combat, this bombardment was the most terrifying experience they had ever had. Pierce described the manner in which he was awoken by the German attack.

I have bad dreams in which lightning is flashing and there is a great roaring sound. I awaken gradually and the lightning is real and the roar genuine. At first I am dazed by the noise and flashes, then as my senses clear I know I am surrounded by a German barrage. A continuous series of explosions so fast that they cannot be counted are ahead of me on the trenches. (July 15)

He ran for his brother Hugh's foxhole for cover. Hugh was in the same unit, which must have been difficult for the family at home. As he peered from his position, Pierce saw a landscape of explosions accompanied by a rain of steel, dirt, and debris. As he explained, he and his fellow soldiers were "being baptized by the heaviest concentration the Germans ever put over." Eventually the fire slackened, and Pierce observed the carnage wrought by the German artillery. He saw numerous men with gruesome injuries, and provided one particularly graphic description: "A French artilleryman, caught by the barrage on the road, is carried by on a stretcher with the top of his head blown off and his brains dripping out. He is unconscious and cannot live long" (July 15).

Pierce's imagery illustrates the dark side of warfare. Though it may be easy to picture warfare simply as glorious charges and acts of heroism, his diary reveals the harsher truth. Pierce and his brothers-in-arms were forced to sit and watch as their friends were maimed and mutilated by weapons against which they were powerless. Rather than glory, Pierce stressed a life of helplessness and fear.

The Twenty-Eighth Division held the Germans on July 15, and for the rest of the month Allied forces followed the Germans as they began to withdraw. The enemy retreated, but had not given up by any sense of the word. Like a wounded beast, the German army continuously turned to attack its aggressor as it pulled back. Pierce noted the carnage left in the wake of the German retreat with gruesome descriptions of injuries throughout the text. On July 24–25, Pierce was gassed for the first time, which made him "Weak, sick, and scared" (July 25).

At this point in the diary, two trends appear. First, his entries for days when there was a lot of action, on average, were significantly larger than the entries he made on days when there was relatively little to do. For example,

his entry for July 15, the start of the Marne Offensive, is quite long, and in it he describes constant fighting and movement. Entries for the next five days, however, are much shorter and do not allude to any kind of fighting. The second trend is subtler. Before Pierce experienced battle, we see no mention of his brother Hugh, who also served with him. However, after the bullets started to fly, Pierce latched onto his older brother as a source of comfort and support. Hugh surfaces many times in the text, and Pierce provides moving descriptions of how the brothers cared for each other in the face of danger. "But my brother has saved half his breakfast for me though, small though it is. I am thankful for even that. . . . Small though the chocolate is I give half to my brother for did he not save half his breakfast for me?" (July 22).

Pierce's entry for July 25 begins his first signs of despair and negative sentiment about the war. He had witnessed a great deal of bloodshed, images that he was able to recall with great detail, like a sergeant he saw walk by, who had a severed arm. Each time he took a step his wound would open and close. Shortly after writing this, Pierce admitted his total disgust with the war, and the utter futility of the conflict. "I am sick and disgusted with this business. Nothing but terror, horror, and misery all day and not even a chance to shoot. There is not even a thrill as I had expected. So far, all it seems to be is waiting till someone plants an explosive near enough to kill you."

#### FISMES: FROM RECRUIT TO SOLDIER

For most of August, Pierce and the men of his company held the town of Fismes. The Germans were just across the Vesle River, and were not willing to give up control of that area so easily. They made constant attempts to retake Fismes, and when they were not infiltrating the town, they were bombarding it with heavy artillery. Pierce changed from a fresh recruit during this time to a hardened veteran. All of his illusions about war vanished as he grappled with the harsh reality he faced every day. Pierce found strength in his brother, while at the same time wishing for some kind of wound that would get Hugh off the frontline.

Hugh and I lay in our hole and talk. Brothers, we are very dear to each other now. I secretly wish he would be wounded, not seriously but enough to get him out of this mess. As for me I would welcome a wound, even a foot or hand off, just so I am not going to be horribly



mangled. It is not that I fear death or the beyond for I have always lived a good life but it is that awful sock you get before you die. I can understand now why a man is so happy when a bullet hits him in the arm or leg. (August 8)

After a short rest, Pierce returned to the frontlines, and was absolutely horrified by what he now witnessed. Across the Vesle from Fismes is the town of Fismette. Fighting there essentially leveled the town and destroyed all that was in it. Pierce called Fismette “a city of the dead” (August 21). He saw bodies and skeletons piled on top of each other, and everywhere he went there was a pervasive and sickening stench. He noted that he and his fellow soldiers were “experienced veterans” now. They had acquired instincts necessary for survival—automatic reflexes in response to sights or sounds, which he believed would remain with him for years to come (August 23). Throughout this time, Pierce sought solace in religion. There are many instances in his diary when he cited the comfort he derived from prayer or reading the New Testament. The text does not tell us what particular Christian denomination he belonged to, but Pierce is quite open about his reliance on God for comfort. “A great wave of homesickness overcomes me and I roll over on my side fearful lest I cry. In my New Testament maybe I can find comfort” (August 27).

In one revealing entry, Pierce mentioned that he has not yet killed a man in action. We know that he was a scout, and thus he might have had less occasion to shoot an attacking enemy. We are left wondering whether his religiosity prevented him from taking life, even when the opportunity presented itself. Pierce himself alluded to his distaste for killing in his diary. “Although I pretend to Bill that I am greatly chagrined over our failure, secretly I am glad the enemy escaped. Sniping is a dirty business but then all war is that way” (August 29).

After a month of fighting in and around Fismes, Pierce joined his brother on the Vesle River front, nicknamed “Death Valley.”<sup>11</sup> Up to now, he had withstood an incredible amount of stress and danger; constant bombardment and dodging machine-gun fire frayed the nerves of even the toughest men. Shortly after Pierce arrived in Death Valley, he was settling into a foxhole with his brother when the Germans sent a thunderous rain of artillery down on them. Here Pierce documents his mental breakdown, and he gives a lengthy and detailed description of his emotions:

I am soon a nervous wreck. I lose control as the bombardment wears on into hours. The strain of the last week with this added is too much.

I cannot lie still. I want to scream and run and throw myself. My gas mask irritates me and I am on the verge of tearing it off, gas or no gas. . . . My body is trembling all over like St. Vitus dance, tense when they come, rolling and turning between shells moaning and groaning. Can't the Germans see I have had enough, they can have France, America, the whole world if they want it. I am licked. (August 30)<sup>12</sup>

On September 7, he and his company were finally relieved and able to rest far from the constant din of battle. For Pierce, this was a much-needed reprieve. He and Hugh enjoyed a few weeks of relative quiet before going back into harm's way for one final push. As mentioned previously, Pierce's diary entries shortened when he was off the frontline and resting. His entries from September 7 to September 25 stayed true to this trend, and reflected a period of relative quiet, during the preparation for the coming Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

#### THE ARGONNE

On September 26, Allied forces launched the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. It was the largest assault that American soldiers had participated in up to this point; the high command hoped that it would succeed in driving the Germans out of France. The American and French forces attacked the German positions in the Argonne forest bordering Belgium. Fighting here was intense; the Battle of the Argonne Forest proved to be one of the costliest engagements (in terms of human life) of the war. As soon as the soldiers began their attack, they found themselves pinned down by some of the heaviest machine-gun fire they had ever experienced.<sup>13</sup> Pierce's entries for the first few days of the offensive constantly referenced the steady stream of bullets flying through the air as the Allies doggedly slugged their way forward, paying for each inch of ground with many dead and wounded (September 26–28).

Fortunately for the doughboys, one of the new inventions of the war came to their rescue: tanks. On September 28 Pierce mentioned them for the first time in his diary, describing these as blessings from God; many Allied soldiers were saved by these modern war-machines.

Another note to the orchestra, the clank of tanks, the sweetest, softest music of all. I lie down in my hole with a sigh of relief and relax, it's all over but the shouting and I thank God fervently . . . undaunted

they plod on, slowly through our lines and lumber on into the woods.  
(September 28)

As the battle stretched into days and weeks, Pierce showed increasing signs of mental and physical duress. He worried more and more about his brother being hit, and thus losing his greatest source of support (October 1). The constant pounding of the artillery and rattling of the machine guns had worn him down. He complained that he could no longer sleep, and prayed that God will end his horror:

My nerves are too bad for sleep. . . . If I could only run away from it all. The night is dark and fearful, there is no safety anywhere. Nothing in life is safe but I do not want to die. But life like this is no pleasure dreading every day a horrible death or mangling that will leave me a broken thing to live on in misery for years. I pray as I often have on the front, to God for help and that this cruel war might end but there seems little use. (October 1)

Pierce was no longer the fresh recruit just off the boat eager to fight for his country. He had lost all sense of purpose and felt that nothing could be worth the constant death and destruction he experienced. He admitted he felt like a coward sometimes, and lonely, afraid that God had abandoned him. He fell into total despair, and he hoped for an injury that would take him off the frontline, away from constant rattling of the machine guns and the stench of rotting corpses. He saw no end in sight and began to slide downward into greater depths of sorrow. He thought he would never again experience life as it was before all of this. "Sometimes I wish it had been me and I would know now the 'Great Mystery' (death). Away back in the dim ages, before the age of shells, bullets, bayonets and gas, I can remember faintly an age of comparative safety that I am afraid I will never see again" (October 3).

By early November, Pierce's spirits improved slightly. On November 1 he made one last entry referencing God's help. The statement demonstrates his reliance on his faith as a means of enduring war's horrors. His religion, as well as his brother's support, explained Pierce's resilience. The following excerpt shows just how strongly Pierce felt about the presence of God in his daily life.

If it was not for the help of the New Testament I believe I would be a nervous wreck. There have been too many instances of God helping

me, shifting me from the death spots and allowing me to go unscathed. If he will only continue his protection but what if he decides not to any more. It is not the hereafter I dread, that would be a sweet release, it is that awful sock you get when you are hit and the misery before you die. (November 1)

The last sentence of this statement is one that has been repeated many times throughout his diary; Pierce seemed more afraid of pain than of death itself. As a soldier, he witnessed the gruesome deaths of many of his friends, and these images constantly haunted him. Although he clearly viewed death as a means of escape from the horrors of war, his fear of pain prevented him from completely giving up.

By early November, there were rumors of a possible armistice. Pierce was extremely skeptical of this news, but when the guns stopped November 11 he came to the realization that the war he hated so much had finally ended. After the armistice, his diary abruptly ends. As a result, it does not record his life after the war. However, the November 17, 1938, issue of the *News-Herald* of Franklin, Pennsylvania, reported that Pierce took an active role in the police force after the war. He became a sergeant and then instructor in the state police.<sup>14</sup> During much of this time, he and his wife, Fern, resided in Hershey, Pennsylvania. After his death on August 30, 1983, he was buried in the Newton Cemetery in Grand Valley, Warren County, PA.<sup>15</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Though Pierce dropped out of high school and claimed to be a poor student, his diary reflected a sophisticated style and prose. As some of the quoted passages illustrate, much of his writing goes beyond simply recording events and feelings, and describes emotions and sights with a poetic quality I have not found in many other accounts. While reading this diary, I was quite moved by numerous passages and found it easy to connect with Pierce on an emotional level.

One question I asked myself while reading the text: how was Pierce able to write such a detailed account while going through all of the events he describes? Logically, I thought he must have written it after the war. After closely reading the text, however, I do not believe this to be the case. The character development and psychological shifts occurring within Pierce as

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documented in the diary seem to be recorded as they are happening. These entries do not seem to be written by someone based on their reflections or looking back in retrospect. It is my belief that Pierce wrote his diary during, and not after, the war.

Unfortunately, archival sources give little to no information about Pierce’s childhood or adult life other than his career in the police force. The time frame I was working with did not permit me to find and contact possible living relatives for the purpose of conducting an interview. Further research may shed light on more information. For example, his state World War I Compensation Application at the Pennsylvania State Archives contains an interesting note that he was absent without leave from November 21 to December 4, 1918. His brother Hugh’s bonus form states he also was absent those same dates.<sup>16</sup> This occurred after the diary ends. What happened? We may never know the reason. I feel like this work will not be truly complete until it is possible to tell this soldier’s full life story, and not just the few months he spent as a soldier in France. As Pierce himself, notes, the events he witnessed and took part in would forever shape his very being. Thus, to truly study how war affects a soldier, it is necessary to look beyond the war, and investigate how it affected quality of life afterward (see fig. 1).

Pierce Harold W 1848575		S.A.	RANK	ARM OR STAFF ORGAN	DETACH	REGIMENT	COMPANY
Pierce Harold W (Military Name)		S.A.					
Home Street Address Youngsville Penna		S.G.	Corp	Infantry	28	112	A
Name of Mother Mrs Edith Pierce Mother		D.R.G.					
Home Street Address Youngsville Penna		S.A.S.C.					
(Date of Commission) Youngsville, Pa.		(Date of Enlistment) Apr 21st 1917					
(Place of Enlistment)		(Date of Birth) Sept 24th 1898					
STATION		DATE	No. of Card				
		Nov 16th 1918	291	Photograph, Diagram or Description of Face of Medal			
*RECORD OF TRANSFERS AND CHANGES		Allotment					
Assigned to Co 16th Penna Inf. Apr 21/17 aptd prt		101 01 A B E					\$15.00
Apr 15/17 aptd Corp Apr 20/18, AWL Nov 21/18, to Dec 4/18.							Insurance Premium \$10,000.00 \$6.40 Application made Feb 9th 1918
*To include transfers, changes, promotions, captured, missing, leave, furlough, and A. W. O. L., together with date of change.							A. S. G. S. A. E. S. Form No. 4

FIGURE 1 A card among Pierce’s World War I State Bonus Application noting his absence without leave in November/December 1918. Courtesy Pennsylvania State Archives, Records of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, World War I Veterans Service and Compensation File (RG-19.91).

## CONCLUSION

“Diary of a Doughboy” is an invaluable resource for investigating the life of a typical infantryman during World War I. In it, Pierce succeeds at conveying not only the sights, sounds, and smells of war, but also the innermost thoughts that plagued a man who faces death on a daily basis. While reading his words, the reader gradually becomes caught up in the experiences described therein: the brutal existence of a combat soldier. Graphic detail transports the reader to the trenches and forests of France. It is the author’s honest and simple, yet vivid, passionate description of his innermost thoughts that makes this work unique. We must remember that history is so much more than a mere record of an event, and that in order to fully grasp its significance we must also study the memories and emotions tied to it. The “Diary of a Doughboy” successfully reveals the painful events Pierce experienced, and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of “The War to End All Wars.” It is my great hope that “Diary of a Doughboy” will eventually be published online so that the general public can read and appreciate the trials endured by America’s soldiers in World War I and in all wars.

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## NOTES

1. Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 6–9. For a broader examination that includes European military experience, see G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914 to 1918* (New York: Delacorte Press, 2006).

2. Vincent Esposito, *A Concise History of World War I* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), 103–14, 159.
3. Charles Clement et al., *Pennsylvania in the World War: An Illustrated History of the Twenty-Eighth Division*, vol. 1 (Pittsburgh: States Publications Society, 1921), 99–100, 132, 149, 240.
4. *History of the Pennsylvania Military Museum and Twenty-Eighth Division Shrine*, 2016, <http://pamilmuseum.org/discover/museum-and-shrine-history/> (accessed April 2016)
5. Pierce and his diary are mentioned in two sentences in Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), 196. He is also mentioned in a few paragraphs in Sebastian Hubert Lukasik, “Military Service, Combat, and American Identity in the Progressive Era” (PhD diss., Duke University, 2008), 68, 411, 414.
6. The whereabouts of the original diary are unknown. “Diary of a Doughboy” was originally published as a series in the *Titusville Herald* in the autumn of 1979. Offprints were made from it, and the offprint at the PMM, which was accessioned September 10, 1980, is what the author used. Another is at the US Army Military History Institute in Carlisle, and a third with the Titus County (Texas) Historical Commission. [*Editor’s note:* It is possible that James B. Stevenson, owner of the *Titusville Herald* and member of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, may have facilitated publication of the diary.]
7. For background information on Pierce see 1910 US Census, Warren County, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Youngsville, Roll: T624\_1425, p. 1A, dwelling 5, family 5, Harold Pierce; digital image, Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed June 8, 2017); and *Pennsylvania, WWI Veterans Service and Compensation Files, 1917–1919, 1934–1948*, Harold Pierce (database on-line) (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2015).
8. Harold Pierce, “Diary of a Doughboy,” April 6, 1917, Pennsylvania Military Museum, Boalsburg, PA. Dates for all diary entries appear in the text.
9. Clement et al., *Pennsylvania in the World War*, 142.
10. Edward Martin, *The Twenty-Eighth Division: Pennsylvania’s Guard in the World War*, vol. 1 (Pittsburgh: Twenty-Eighth Division Publishing Co, 1923), 71.
11. Coffman, *War to End All Wars*, 258.
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