

A Letter from Walter J. Thoreson

The following is taken from a letter to his folks from Walter Thoreson, dated August 5th, and written from Camp Mills, N. Y.

Camp Mills, Aug. 5, 1918

I've changed my home again, or rather it was changed for me. We left Kearney Sunday morning, July 28, and arrived here yesterday afternoon, the trip taking us just a little over a week. We've been busy every minute since we came getting equipped and packing preparatory to going across. Last night we slept about three or four hours and I doubt if we'll get any sleep to-night. I'm writing this by candle light on a piece of board and expect to be called out at any time. We expect to leave here Wednesday, I think to Camp Merritt and then across. They have taken everything but what we can carry in our packs away from us. If we do get a chance to sleep to-night it won't be very comfortable, as we have only one blanket left. We sleep in tents as we did at Kearney but there are no floors in these. It has been raining almost all the time since we came.

Our food for the last three days has consisted of canned hash, hard-tack and coffee, as they've packed up all the kitchen tools. I'll send you a sample of our army hard-tack some time. It takes a real man to eat it as you can boil the stuff in water and it won't even soak up. It don't take very much of it to make a meal as it swells up so one or two pieces will make a fellow think he has eaten a big meal. I've always been under the impression that this was a model camp but Kearney has got it beat. It's not quite as warm but too damp.

We had quite a trip coming here, going up thru Canada. They're sending them all over different routes. We left Kearney on the Sana Fe, going thru California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Kansas. At Kansas City we were taken to some atheletic club and had a swim. From there we went on the Wabash going thru Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. At Detroit we took the ferry across to Windsor, Canada, and from there on to Niagara. We got into Niagara about two o'clock in the morning. The station was about a mile and a half from the Falls. One of the lieutenants offered to take all who wished to go to see the falls. We marched up but although it was pretty dark we could see it fairly well. It certainly is some sight.

From Niagara we took the Lehigh Valley going thru New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey to Jersey City. There we took a boat across the Hudson going under the Brooklyn Bridge to Brooklyn, a ride of almost an hour. From the boat we could see the Liberty Statue, the Woolworth Building, the Municipal buildings and many other things of interest. They were all pointed out to us. At the ship yards we saw all kinds of transports, also submarines.

At Brooklyn we got on a train again for the camp a distance of about thirty miles. We were treated fine by the Red Cross along the whole route, especially thru Canada. There was certainly some difference in the people coming from the States into Canada. They simply couldn't do enough for us. But the feeling was

Letter from Camp Custer, Michigan

The following are extracts from a letter to the editor from "Happy" Hagen and "Tud" Swingen, two local boys who left in the last draft:

How are you getting along? We are well and enjoy military life very much.

There are 10,000 "coons" in this camp, and believe us, there sure are some black ones in the bunch. We had watermelon for dinner but wish we could have been over to the negro's camp to see them eat watermelon.

To tell you something about our drilling. We get up at 5:45, are supposed to dress in three minutes and be ready for reveille at 5:48. Reveille over at 6:00, then we clean our barracks and go in to breakfast or "chaw" as they call it here. Then we drill from 7:30 to 11:30. Dinner or "chaw" at 12:00. Then we drill from 1:00 p. m. until 4:00 or 4:30. Then we have supper, or "chaw" at 5:30. The last thing is Retreat which is Roll Call. Then we are supposed to go to bed at 9:00 because the lights are turned out. If we wish we can stay out until 11:00 p. m.

We have not had a chance to get out because we have been quarantined for two weeks, and that time will be up next Saturday.

The first four days consisted in taking examinations and taking a shot in the arm and also being vaccinated. On the way to be vaccinated we passed a bunch of "coons" and they said, "Wait till you get dat shot, boys."

They figure on lynching a couple of "coons" next week for doing the same thing that those three did at Camp Dodge. The captain said we would be permitted to see the lynching.

Some of the boys don't seem to be able to stand at attention, which is to hold your body erect and not move a muscle. Night before last seven of our company fell down and did not come to for quite a while. Last night one in our company fell and seven in the next company to ours. One of the boys in the other company broke two or three teeth when he fell.

We were out to a Y. M. C. A. meeting this morning and heard some good singing and preaching. They told us if we were not good singers we would not be good fighters. When we got back to camp Swingen sang to the boys and they wanted him to sing more, but he told them he had mud in his throat and could not sing any more.

We must close for this time with the best regards to the boys up there.

H. H. Hagen and Alfred Swingen
24th Co., 160 Depot Brigade
Camp Custer, Mich.

noticeable all the way coming north. With the exception of Canada we were treated better at some of the small desert towns thru New Mexico and Arizona than anywhere else.

I just heard now that we leave in the morning. We're having inspections every day. I've kept my comfort kit out of sight so they wouldn't get a chance to turn it down, but think I can get by with it. I heard this morning that our transport is here now so we won't be here very long. It sure tickled me when I heard we wouldn't be sent to Russia.

Private Walter J. Thoreson.