

Corporal Aaron “Harry” Yamin Collection

BINDER INVENTORY

- Gift Agreement
- Family Photographs (Siblings and parents)
- Photograph Allan Smith (Nephew of Yamin)
- Prints of Photograph of Yamin taken at Camp Upton
- Picture of Yamin’s Gravesite and listing of his location
- **2003.023.0002-0033:** Various War Documents Related to Correspondence Between War Department and Yamin’s Family
- **2003.023.0035-0036:** Postcards from Minnie and Harry
- **2003.023.0037-0073:** Letters from Harry to family
- **2003.023.0074-0075:** Postcards from Harry saying he arrived overseas safely
- **2003.023.0076-0110:** Letter from Harry to family
- **2003.023.0111-0112:** Letters from Lillie to Harry
- **2003.023.0113-0126:** Letters from Harry to Family
- **2003.023.0127:** Postcard from Minnie to Harry
- **2003.023.0128:** Letter from Cousin to Harry
- **2003.023.0129:** Newspaper Clipping about Yamin being awarded the DSC
- **2003.023.0130:** Postcard from Camp Upton of Corporal Yamin

THREE DIMENSIONAL OBJECT INVENTORY

- **2003.023.0004:** Money Belt
- **2003.023.0005:** Pipe
- **2003.023.0006:** Wallet
- **2003.023.0009:** Ingersoll Watch
- **2003.023.0010:** Notebook
- **2003.023.0011:** Pocket Knife with chain
- **2003.023.0012:** Distinguished Service Cross Medal
- **2003.023.0014:** Distinguished Service Cross Certificate
- Distinguished Service Cross Certificate Case
- Distinguished Service Cross Lapels and Box

Research Aides

Race Related References:

- Letter to Family From Harry; Dated Jan 19, 1918
- Letter to family and younger sister from Harry; dated Mar 18th, 1918
- Letter to Sister from Harry; Dated May 6th, 1918
- Letter to family from Harry; dated Aug 13th, 1918
- Letter to family; dated Aug 28th, 1918

Daily Life Doughboy:

- Letter to Family from Harry; Dated April 4th, 1918
- Letter to Family from Harry; Dated April 1918 “somewhere in the Atlantic”
- Letter to Sister and Family from Harry; dated April 25th, 1918 “somewhere in France”
- Letter to family from Harry; Dated May 18th, 1918
- Letter to little sister and family with letter to Ben attached; dated Jun 16th, 1918
- Letter to sister and family from Harry; dated July 12th, 1918
- Letter to Family from Harry; dated Aug 27th, 1918
- Letter to family from Harry; Dated Sept 3rd, 1918
- Letter to family from Harry with a second attached written three days later; dated Sept 16th, 1918

Battle References:

- Letter to Ben and Family from Harry; Dated Jun 25th, 1918
- Letter to family from Harry; Dated July 1st, 1918
- Letter to Sister and all from Harry; dated Aug 11th, 1918.¹
- Letter to Ben from Harry; dated Aug 18th, 1918
- Letter to Minnie, Ben, and Family from Harry; dated Aug 19th, 1918
- Letter to Minnie from Harry; dated Aug 25th, 1918
- Letter to family; dated Aug 28th, 1918
- Letter to Sister from Harry; dated Sept 15th, 1918
- Letter to family from Harry with a second attached written three days later; dated Sept 16th, 1918
- Partial letter pages 3, 4, 5; no date
- Letter to Sister from Harry; dated Sept 25th, 1918

Comradery:

- Letter to Family from Harry; dated Mar 3rd, 1918
- Letter to family from Harry; dated Mar 21st, 1918
- Letter to Family from Harry; Dated April 1918 “somewhere in the Atlantic”
- Letter to Family from Harry; Dated Jun 8th, 1918 (Someplace unknown)
- Letter to family from Harry; Dated Jun 13th, 1918 (somewhere in south of France)
- Letter to Minnie from Harry; dated Aug 25th, 1918

Training of Infantrymen in WWI:

Annex of the MS Yamin Letters
Evelyn Johnson Summer Intern 2020

- Letter from Harry to family; Dated Dec 19, 1917
- Letter to Family From Harry; Dated Jan 19, 1918
- Letter to Sister from Harry, Dated Feb 5th, 1918
- Letter to Sister from Harry; Dated “in the mud Tuesday evening”
- Letter to family from Harry; Dated Feb 15, 1918
- Letter to Family from harry; dated Feb 27th, 1918
- Letter to Harry from cousin Isidor Yamin; dated Oct 23rd, 1918

Brief Biography of Corporal Aaron “Harry” Yamin

Corporal Aaron “Harry” Yamin was an infantryman in Company B of the 306th Infantry Regiment in the 77th Division of the American Expeditionary Forces. He was born in Russia in roughly 1896 to his parents Hilda Shapiro Yamin and Louis Yamin. The Yamin family immigrated to the United States in early January of 1905 when Corporal Yamin was only nine years old. Corporal Yamin had six siblings. He was the second child and his brother Isadore preceded him as the oldest. Sequentially, the other children were Benjamin, Minnie, Samuel, Leo, and the youngest Lillian. The family settled in New York City and when Yamin had completed high school he became a U.S. railway mail clerk.

Yamin was drafted in 1917 and was assigned to the National Army’s 77th Division at Camp Upton, Long Island, New York, in September of 1917. He spent the next few months in training at Camp Upton and was promoted to Corporal on April 4th, 1918. He was overseas until his death on September 29th, 1918. The 306th joined with the Meuse Argonne Offensive. His division was in the vicinity of Abri de St. Louis and St. Hubert’s Pavilion. The offensive started on September 26th. He was shot six times trying to cut through barbwire with a Private First-Class Carl Johnson in his platoon under heavy German artillery fire on September 27th, 1918. He was shot just as he had cleared the wire and was calling to the rest of his platoon to advance. Both died two days later from the wounds they had sustained. As a result of his bravery by volunteering to cut the barb wire, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by the War Department in 1919. He was interred at the Commune in La Chalade Muese, France. He was later reinterred at the U.S. Cemetery at Romagne, France, Grave 34, Sec. 111, Plot 1.

Unit History

Company B of the 306th Infantry Regiment was shipped overseas on April 6th, 1918 on the “Victoria”. He arrived at a port in Liverpool, England on April 19th, 1918. The 306th then continued to the port in Calais, France on April 21st, 1918. The 1st Battalion was then assigned to the British Rest Camp at Bonningues, France for training. They were supposed to remain there from April 23rd to June 6th. He trained with the British Army’s 39th Division. The 1st Battalion of the 306th Infantry Regiment, 77th Division was ordered to Rambervilles on June 13th, 1918 to the area where the French VI Army Corps were located. They were to join the French 61st and relieve the U.S. 42nd Division. The French Division withdrew in from the sector in mid-July 1918 and the 77th took command. They remained in action on the front lines until August 4th. They are accredited with success in the Baccarat Sector from June 19th to August 4th, 1918.

They were then ordered to move to the U.S. 1st Army’s Corp area on August 11-12th to relieve the 4th Division and French 62nd Division in the Vesle sector. They remained there until August 17th, when they merged with the Oise-Aisne operation. They were relieved on September 15-16th by the Italian 8th division.

On September 19-20th, the division was moved to area of U.S. Corps to relieve the French 120th Division in the Foret-d Argonne Sector to prepare to enter into the Meuse Argonne Offensive. The 306th entered front lines on September 19th and remained in line until they were able to merge with the Meuse Argonne Operation on September 26th, 1918.

The 306th was in line when the offensive began. The field orders dated September 25th, 1918 stated that the men would “drop pack” and shift to combat only gear. The battalion was moved forward in front of Route Marchand on the evening of September 25th. H Hour for the battalion was 5:30 am and they attacked with the 3rd Battalion as close support. An advance of two kilometers was made. The line was reestablished just north of Four de Paris-Barricade Pavilion Road.

As the Battalion regrouped, it was discovered that two companies were missing, and Colonel George Vidmer sent officers and aides to find the two lost companies. The attack on September 27th resulted in the battalion facing German soldiers of the 2nd Landwehr Division. The Battalion held their ground during several heavy counterattacks.

Battle Analysis

World War I began in the summer of 1914 as the result of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which set off a scale of events that quickly drew Europe into full scale war. The Central Powers made up of Germany, Austria Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire fought against the Allies led by France, Great Britain and Russia. The U.S. remained neutral until the German resumed unrestricted submarine warfare against ships in the war zone. The U.S entered the war shortly after subsequent event on April 6th, 1917. Over four million Americans were quickly drafted and formed the force that would travel overseas. General Pershing led the efforts to muster a force to quickly defeat the Central Power. The Allies at this point in 1917 were quickly running out of resources and credit in order to support their own troops, so the U.S. needed to overcome the Central Power's forces swiftly. The Germans launched a series of attacks on the Western Fronts in order to break the stalemate of trench warfare in the Spring of 1918. The U.S troops were thrown into action and helped to push back the German assault.

The Meuse Argonne Offensive was a part of the final Allied offensive of World War I. This massive attack was part of the reason the war was brought to an end when the Armistice was signed on November 11th, 1918. The Meuse Argonne Offensive was the largest attack made by the American Expeditionary Forces. Over a million American doughboys participated in the offensive. It was not only the largest campaign in the United States' military history, it was also the deadliest. The Meuse Argonne Offensive took the lives of 26, 000 soldiers (KIA) and led to over 120,000 total casualties, but overall successfully pushed the German back on the Western Front and the surrender of Germany on November 11th, 1918.

The battle of Meuse Argonne spanned a large portion of the front line. From west to east the division that participated were: I Corps- 92nd, 77th, 28th and 35th Divisions; V Corps- 91st, 37th and 79th Divisions, and III Corps- 4th, 80th and 33rd Divisions. These divisions led the first attack on September 26th, 1918. In the area of Abri de St. Louis and St. Hubert's Pavilion the 77th division received their H Hour of 5:30am on September 26th, 1918. The 1st Battalion attacked with the 3rd Battalion for support and followed a rolling barrage at the rate of 100 yards in five minutes. The battalions advanced a total of two kilometers in that day and the line was reestablished just north of Four de Paris-Barricade Pavilion Road.

At 3:00 am Colonel George Vidmer and his staff reorganized on the front line and sent aides and officers to find two lost companies. As daybreak approached the enemy came into eyesight across the valley immediately to the front of the line. The enemy were soldiers of the German 2nd Landwehr Division. There was a half hour for artillery preparation and then the attack on September 27th was underway. This was where Corporal Yamin and Private First-Class Carl Johnson volunteered to cut a strip of barbed wire that was preventing Company B from continuing forward. Under heavy German artillery fire, Yamin cut the wire and motioned for the rest of the platoon to move through. Both him and Private Johnson were shot and wounded. Yamin was shot six times as he was signaling to his platoon. A red flare and bugle call from the German side caused the 2nd Landwehr Division to fire trench mortar shells, grenades, and machine guns towards Company B. They were pinned for fifteen minutes before they were able to find the gap in the wire and moved ahead. Company K and B took the trench and held it through several German counterattacks. Nine men were killed in the battle.

The Meuse Argonne Offensive would ultimately become one of the final pushes to victory by the Allied forces. It was fought until the armistice was signed on November 11th, 1918. The massive loss of life for the American forces represented the effect of mustering a

fighting force in just a few months. Most of the soldiers, including Corporal Yamin, had only fired a rifle a few times in training and were not issued rifles until they reached the front. The officers leading the troops were also green and equally unprepared for war. The tactics that were used were largely carried over from the Civil War. Attacks were head on into machine gun fire. Pershing's order to break the stalemate "come hell or high water" was taken seriously and resulted in heavy loss of life. After the war, air support and chemical warfare became focal points for preparation for future conflicts. Communication was also improved, as during the war communications were often blocked or rendered useless. Permanent Divisions were also established to help better prepare for future combat as well. Machine power also came into being over human and animal power with the introduction of tank warfare. Three-dimensional warfare (meaning land and air war) tactics began to be developed and implemented in training and war.

Distinguished Service Cross

In 1919, Corporal Aaron “Harry” Yamin was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his bravery and sacrifice in battle. His actions during the Meuse Argonne Offensive on September 27th, 1918 were the cause for the award. Corporal Yamin volunteered to breach the top of a trench and cut down the barb wire, under heavy German artillery, so that the rest of Company B could crest the trench and move forward. He was shot six times after successfully cutting the wire in the process of signaling to his platoon to move forward. He survived those shots only to die two days later on September 29th, 1918 from his wounds. The Distinguished Service Cross is the second highest military decoration that can be awarded to a member of the United States Army. It is awarded for extraordinary heroism while in engaged in action against the enemy of the United States, or an ally of the United States. These actions are above those required for all other U.S combat decorations, but do not merit the awarding of the Medal of Honor. It is the equivalent of the Navy Cross and Air Force Cross.