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— Stafford Rossiter, September 21, 1917

In 40 degrees of sparkling frost, and icy wind cutting like sharp steel blades in the foothills, I am cuddled up in my little shack as close to a roughly constructed fireplace as possible... Stillness rules tonight. Not a “Hun” flies, nor is there a flickering star shell in the sky. The batteries in yonder hills are at rest and I sit here in silence. Have finished reading the (Glen Cove) Echo, and it has started me thinking. I picture myself back in the grand little city. I can see the narrow and crooked Glen Street, that winds itself from the station to the corner and the flat wheel trolley (George Dursey’s Rolls Royce) pounding along. I hear Bart Dunning arguing the city’s politics and fancy myself listening to the war talk around the post office...

— F. Darius Benham, January 16, 1918

I was sitting on my cot on the evening of February 5th, and I heard my name called. I made a wild dash out of my tent because it was the first mail I had received from home. I was disappointed because I thought it was a letter, but I was surprised to get a package. It sure was a great present. I opened it and found some good old chocolate. Well, it sure was good, because us boys never get any candy. The rest of the boys nearly killed me for the candy... If I remember, it lasted about 3 seconds, and all the boys of C Battery thank the people of Glen Cove, and so do I...

— Pvt. Reginald Green, 1918

“SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE...”
Glen Cove’s W.W.I Soldiers Write Home

by Daniel E Russell
City Historian
City of Glen Cove, New York

Throughout the period of the United States’ involvement in the “War to End All War”, many of the nearly 600 Glen Cove men serving with various units of the American Expeditionary Forces (as well as those who had joined other nation’s armed forces prior to U.S. intervention in the war) wrote home to tell family and friends of their experiences overseas. Almost universally, the letters were censored of any references to locations and unit designations, to prevent the enemy from acquiring important information regarding troop dispositions; the letters, instead, were simply dated “somewhere in France”.

Because of the widespread interest in “first hand” information regarding the progress of the war, the Glen Cove Echo regularly published the letters of Glen Cove servicemen. Excerpts from some of these letters are offered below:
I joined the Foreign Legion and have been sent here to learn the art of killing wholesale — Field pieces and trench mortars...Out of five hundred here I am the only American. But about every nation on the globe can boast of at least one representatives. The other evening I got three hours leave and went in the city of Carn for dinner. On the table I saw a basket of bread. I gave my order and while it was in the making grabbed two pieces and stuck them in my shirt. That’s how scarce bread is in this country. I get two small pieces a day here, both together making half a loaf. For breakfast a cup of milkless and sugarless coffee; for lunch — soup and the bread; supper the same. My dish towel is my two hands and some dirt...

— F. Darius Benham  
February 11, 1918.

I had a very pleasant suprise yesterday. We were unloading a truck load of supplies and it was about time for lunch and all hands working fast. Someone hit me on the shoulder and said “hello Blake” and when I turned around, who was there but Charles Dyer from Locust Valley. You don’t know how good it makes a fellow feel to meet and old friend over here .... we have been living only a mile apart for nearly four months and have never seen each other before...

— Edward Blake  
February 2, 1918

We have been much annoyed the last few nights by the air raids, the first one landing three in our courtyard here, into which my window faces. We, of course, all hustled into our cave, four cellars below ground, and upon returning after the first attack I found the windows in my room all smashed. Glass had blown over everything ... We found the holes the next morning to be about 12 ft deep and 15 ft across. Trees were broken and a great stone wall completely smashed... The big guns are booming again today...Things seem ominous and the atmosphere is tense. It is hard to think of anything but in terms of war and hard to think that anything else is going on in the world but war. One wonders what its all about and if life can ever go on again in the same channels. The whole fabric of civilization seems so twisted and crushed ....

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1918

Am including a souvenir from “No Man’s Land”. Its a German identification tag. One thing is sure. When they call his name, he will be among the missing...

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1918

Our boys have been fighting side by side with French and English the past few days and they are wonders, fighting like wild men. I saw a field of dead Germans yesterday. They covered the ground for a few miles. It was a sea of dead. The worst sight I ever saw in my life... No lights at night and no water of course this is expected with the planes flying over us day and night trying to get a target so they can drop a bomb ....

— Frank Johnson  
April 7, 1918

In the night we generally go up on the hill near some trenches and watch the star shells and hear the guns roaring. This very minute they are pounding away like a heavy thunder storm. All night long they pound away. I’m getting used to it now .... Right near our camp the Lafayette Escuadrille is located. They are one daring set of fellows. I am going to take examinations for the Escuadrille next week. The Lafayette fellows have two cub bears for mascots. We have a cat named Carman and a tame jay named Jocko....

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“Somewhere in France” - Glen Cove’s WWI Soldiers Write Home

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July 4th, 1918

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