

PAUL C RHOADS



US ARMY 1918-1919

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Paul Cyrus Rhoads was born 13-MAR 1894, in Reading Pennsylvania. His father was Harry W. Rhoads (1864-1919) and his mother was Mary May (1867-1949). They had four sons (Walter, Ralph, Paul, and Raymond. They had one daughter, Eva May.

In the 1915 census, Paul was 21 and he lists his occupation as a Corresponding Clerk. When he registered for the World War I draft in 1917, he was 23. Paul’s draft registration states he had completed three years of high school.

Private First-Class Paul C. Rhoads served in the US Army during World War I as a Medic. Paul left for France on the troopship Northern Pacific on 3-AUG 1918 out of Hoboken New Jersey. During the war, Northern Pacific operated between the Army's Hoboken Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, New Jersey and Brest, France, making a total of 13 trips taking 22,645 troops and passengers to France and returning 9,532 to the United States. The influenza epidemic hit the ship hard in September 1918 en route to Brest. Cots were set up in the brig and in the open corridors. There were 7 deaths.



Paul returned home in late 1918 and left the service 10-APR 1919.

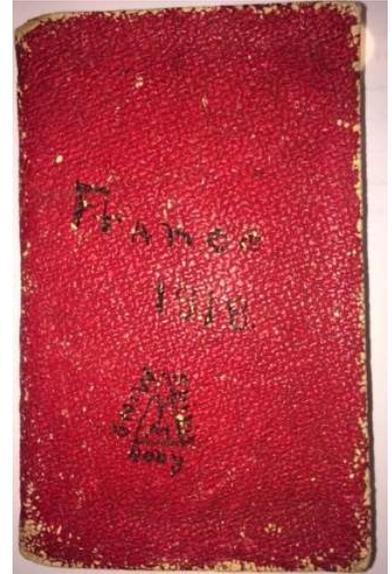
He was now 25 years old. Paul married Marjorie “Midge” Thropp (1897–1930) sometime in 1919. They would have one son: Paul Jr. and two daughters: Elizabeth and Martha in their brief eleven-year marriage. According to the 1930 census Paul was “Cost Clerk” with the Flint and Spar Company and later in the 1940 census, he is listed as sales manager.

In 1942, men of all age had to register for the World War II draft. Paul registered for the “Old Man’s Draft” which was held on April 27, 1942. The Old Man's Registration, sometimes called the “Old Man's Draft” or the “Fourth Registration” was used during World War II to gather data on the skills of men

considered too old for active military duty but potentially useful to the war effort. On his registration, Paul lists his home address as 410 S. Cook Avenue and employed by the Eureka Flint and Spar Company. According to the 1950 census, Paul was a ceramist with the Flint and Spar Company.

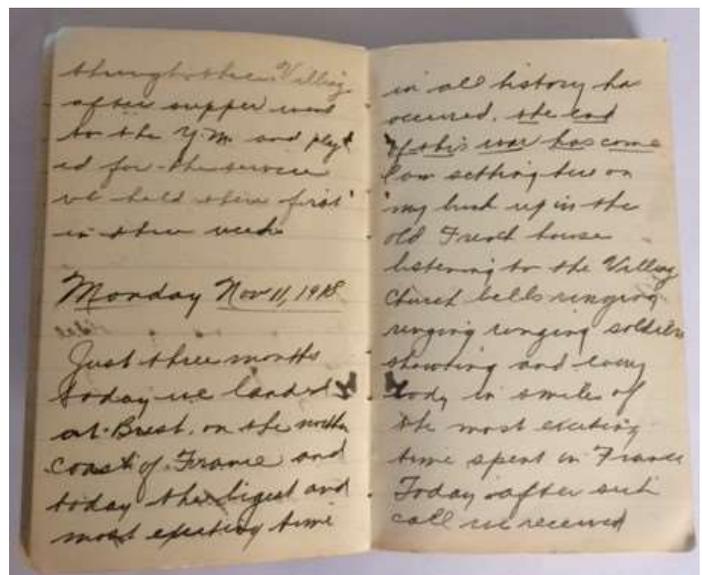
Paul Cyrus Rhoads died 1-OCT 1970 and is buried in Riverview Cemetery in Trenton New Jersey.

Paul Rhoads kept this pocket diary recording his experiences during his first three months in France, from October 12, 1918, until December 1, 1918. Transcribed here is his account of the day the Armistice was signed, and the war officially ended, on November 11, 1918. Through the diary, we learn first-hand about the joyous celebration experienced by our soldiers on the 11th hour, of the 11th day on November 11, 1918. Today we celebrate November 11th as veterans day.

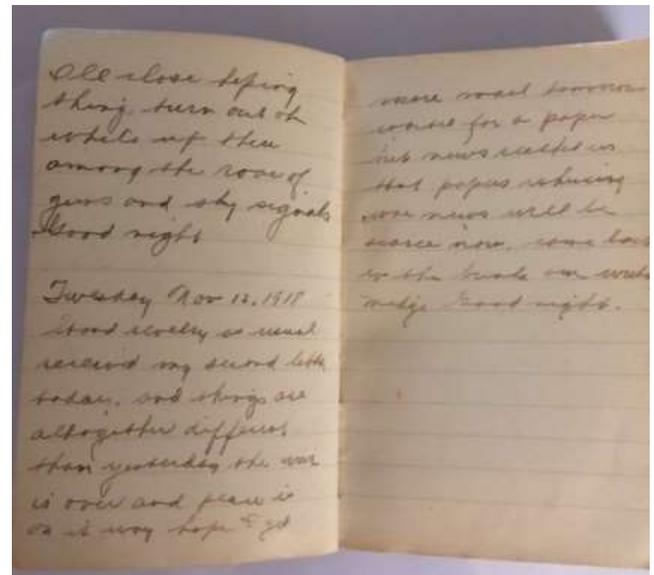
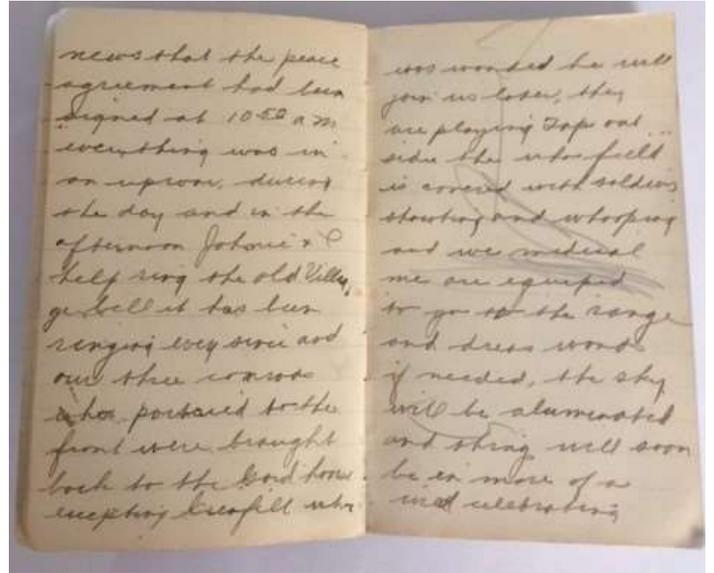


Monday, November 11, 1918...

just three months today we landed at Brest on the northern coast of France and today the biggest and most exciting time in all history has occurred. The end of this war has come. I am sitting here on my bunk up in the old French house listening to the village church bells ringing, ringing, ringing. Soldiers shouting and everybody in smiles of the most exciting time spent in France. Today after sick call we received news that the peace agreement has been signed at 10:50 a.m. Everything was in an uproar during the day and in the



afternoon Johnny and I helped ring the old village bell. It has been ringing ever since and our three comrades who portered to the front were brought back to the Gord house excepting Grenfill, who was wounded he will join us later. They are playing taps outside the whole field is covered with soldiers shouting and whooping and we medics are equipped to go to the range and dress wounds if needed. The sky will be illuminated, and things will soon be in more of a wild celebration. I'll close hoping things turn out okay while up there among the roar of guns and sky signals. Good night.



About Medics in World War I

The First World War was fought largely in the trenches of the Western Front. Trench conditions were miserable from a military standpoint, but a disaster for public health. Sanitation was so bad that after a week or two in the trenches, troops had to be rotated back of the lines to be deloused, thoroughly cleaned, and provided with fresh clothing and equipment. Even so, disease was common, and wound contamination universal.

Wounds were usually contaminated with the mud of the trenches. Tetanus immunization was available, and wounded soldiers were routinely given tetanus toxoid. Wound care was much better than during previous wars. It emphasized debridement of devitalized tissue and thorough cleaning with antiseptic solution. Aseptic technique was (usually) used in operating rooms. General anesthesia was available. Bowel injuries could be routinely repaired. Intravenous fluids were available, as were blood transfusions (sometimes). Radiography had only been invented some 16 years before but was deployed on the battlefields by 1914. As an index of how much things had changed, mortality following amputation had been 25% in the American Civil War, and was 5% in World War I. Deaths from wounds dropped, but deaths from disease dropped even further. Far fewer soldiers died of disease as a percentage of total deaths than ever before. And this was despite the influenza epidemic of 1918-19, which claimed many victims at the end of the war.

Even acknowledging all the difficulties imposed by trench conditions, the casualty care system was still much better than in any previous war. Specialized military units, called ambulances were charged with picking soldiers from the battlefield and transporting them to aid stations, and then to field hospitals. For further evacuation, hospital trains were staffed with nurses and orderlies, and equipped to care for even difficult wounds. There were base hospitals and convalescent facilities both on the French coast and in England. As the American Army deployed to Europe in 1917-18, hospitals, doctors, nurses, and ambulances went with them.