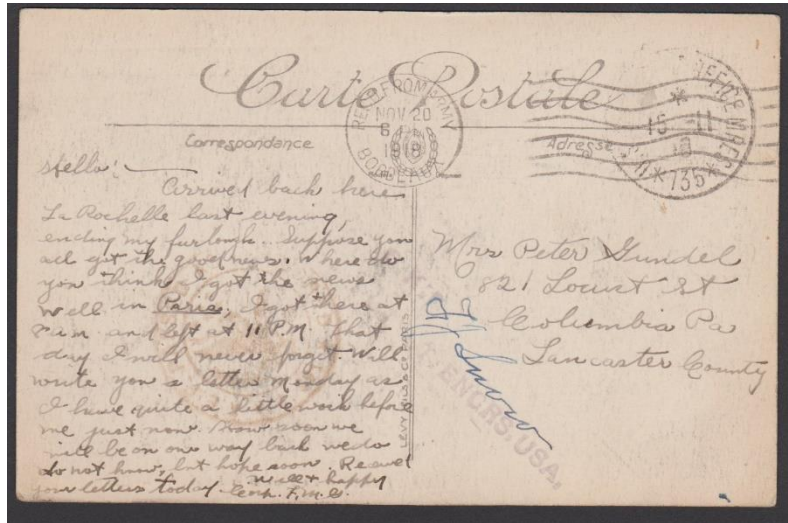


That Day I Will Never Forget

By Patrick Crosby

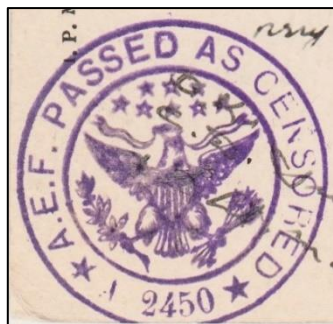
On the “eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month” in 1918 a ceasefire was declared to end the hostilities of World War I. The formal end to the war with Germany was June 28, 1919 with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. But on that November day people filled the streets of Paris as in other Allied Powers cities (like New York City) in celebration. On both sides of the conflict there were over 17.6 million deaths, over 43% of which were civilians. France alone lost over 1.4 million soldiers, about 4% of their population, and areas were heavily damaged or destroyed.



Caught up in the excitement of the day was U.S. Army Corporal F.M.G. and when he returned to where he was stationed in the French seaport city of La Rochelle he wrote:

Arrived back here La Rochelle last evening ending my furlough. Suppose you all got the good news. Where do you think I got the news Well in Paris. I got there at 8am and left at 11 P.M. That day I will never forget.

Corporal F.M.G. chose a picture postcard (right) of the Place de la Republique, a square in Paris which features a 31' bronze statue of Marianne, considered the personification of the French Republic. She is holding an olive branch in her right hand. Below her are three statues that represent liberty, equality, and fraternity. At the base is a lion guarding a ballot box.



Sample censor handstamp.

After the corporal’s message was written it was read and approved by a U.S. Army censor (appears to be T.J. Snow with the army engineers) and a typical “A.E.F. Passed As Censored” double ring circle handstamp with eagle was applied, which is indistinct on this card. The card was put into the military mail system and a postmark for November 15, 1918 from APO (Army Post Office) 735 was applied which also reads “U.S. Military Post Office MPES” (MPES = Military Postal Express Service). No postage was necessary since letters and cards mailed between the U.S., its possessions, and the American Expeditionary Forces at this time were allowed free of postage. Corporal F.M.G. should have included his name and organization in the upper left, but the U.S. Post Office

Department didn’t mind minor infractions by our service personnel. When the card arrived in the U.S. a

machine postmark was applied whose circle date stamp reads “Rec’d From Army, Bordeaux, Nov 20 1918”. Bordeaux is the regional capital of the area in France which includes La Rochelle.

Today large gatherings are suspect because of Covid. The 1918 influenza pandemic was in full swing in November of that year. As is today, there were safety precautions circulated to prevent the spread of this flu, and I hope those who were celebrating were careful. One of the reasons Germany determined their chances of victory were poor in the end was because so many of their soldiers were unavailable and dying from this flu.

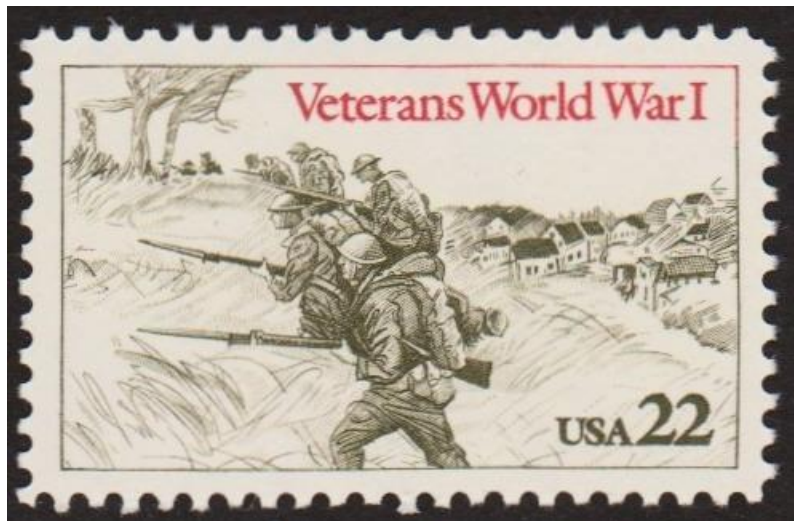
Also, not to be forgotten are all our veterans who have served and preserve our country. Thank you! On the first anniversary of Armistice Day, November 11, 1919, President Woodrow Wilson eulogizing fallen Allied soldiers wrote in part:

Out of this victory there arose new possibilities of political freedom and economic concert. The war showed us the strength of great nations acting together for high purposes, and the victory of arms foretells the enduring conquests which can be made in peace when nations act justly and in furtherance of the common interests of men.

In 1938 Armistice Day, November 11th, became a federal holiday in the United States dedicated to the cause of world peace. In 1954, 9 years after a World War II veteran Raymond Weeks from Alabama started promoting the idea of including all veterans on this day, Armistice Day was renamed Veterans Day intending to honor all members of our armed forces either living or dead.



Left – France Sc #895, Soldier’s Grave in Wheatfield.



U.S. Sc #2154, depicting the Battle of Marne, France

Patrick Crosby is a member of the Nevada Stamp Study Society and collects U.S. postal cards, especially used, including first days; the 1886 Grant Letter Card (or Sheet); UC16, the first U.S. aerogram; and postal history on business or picture post cards.