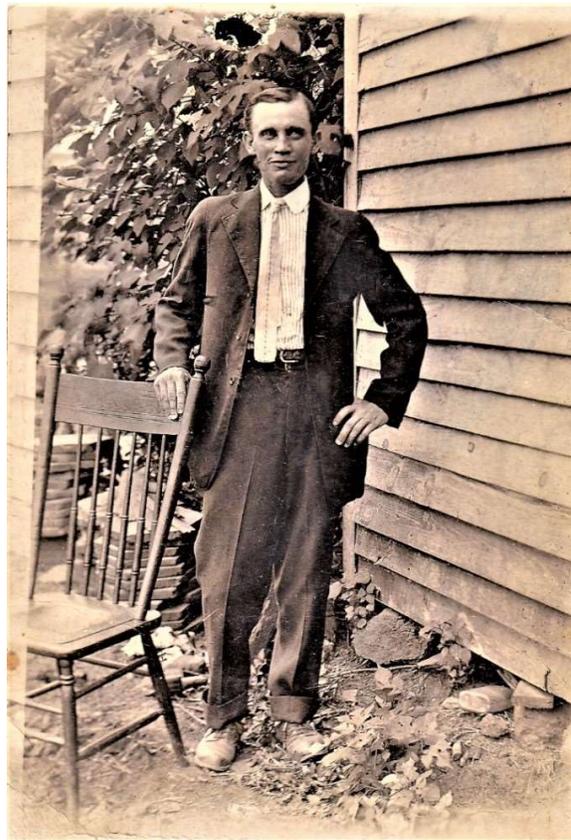


**JOEL TALBOT ARTHUR**  
**June 17, 1891 - November 5, 1918**

**J**oel Talbot Arthur was born June 17, 1891, in the Greshamville area of Greene County, Georgia. Named for both grandfathers, Joel Ruark (pronounced “Rooks” at the time) and Talbot Arthur, he was the fifth of seven children born to Seaborn Arthur and Mary Eugenia “Jennie” Ruark Arthur. Just three generations removed from a great-grandfather who had owned 900 acres in neighboring Oglethorpe County, Joel was born into the downtrodden, post-war South in which cotton was still king but little cash was in circulation. Sharecropping had evolved, whereby poor farmers, black and white, worked land owned by others in return for a place to live and a minor share of the harvested crop. Such was the plight of the Arthur family for several generations.



*Joel Talbot Arthur*

In 1900, the Arthurs lived on a rented farm in the Greshamville District. At that time, according to the census, nine-year-old Joel was not attending school and was unable to read or write. The cotton crop, a Georgia sharecropper’s sole means of survival, as well as other demands of the farm, rendered schooling an intermittent opportunity when there was nothing else to do. As with most sharecropping families, the Arthurs moved frequently, forever seeking to improve their lot in life. At some point during the time period 1901-

1902, Seab Arthur moved his family north, crossing over into the adjacent county of Oconee and settling on a tenant farm near the town of Watkinsville. Seab died there, January 31, 1906, leaving Jennie with 19-year-old Lenora, 14-year-old Joel, 10-year-old Grady, and 5-year-old Gladys.



*Sharecropper Family  
The Harvey "Doc" Arthur Family  
Nephew of Joel Arthur c. 1935*

In 1907, Lenora married and left home, and Jennie and the three youngest children moved with her oldest son, Wade and his family, north to the adjacent county of Clarke. The combined Arthur families sojourned in the Bogart area the next few years, sharecropping on two different farms.

By 1910, Jennie, Joel, Grady, and Gladys had left the household of Wade Arthur and moved to the Fairplay District of Morgan County, Georgia. They lived in a rental house on the Rock Spring and Madison Road next door to the rented "cotton farm" of her second oldest son, Clarence, and his family. According to the census, 17-year-old Joel had attended

school that year and, by now, could read and write.

Fairplay in the early 1900's was an agrarian society in an outlying section of Morgan County, overlain with dirt roads, woods, streams, and cotton fields. The land was dotted with the ramshackle houses of sharecroppers, interspersed with the larger farms of the land owners for whom they worked. At that time,

the Fairplay community also included two general stores, one run by the Ponder family, at the intersection of Fairplay and Prospect Roads, and Malcom's Store at Malcom's Crossroads. The cotton gin, sat catty-cornered across the intersection from the Ponders' store. Sandy Creek Baptist Church; Rock Spring Primitive Baptist Church; Prospect



*Malcom's Store at Malcom's Crossroads  
Fairplay, Georgia*

United Methodist Church; Prospect School, also known as Fairplay School; and Greenwood School were utilized by the white folks of Fairplay. Chestnut Grove Church and school served the black members of the community. There was no post office, so the Arthurs, and everyone else in Fairplay, received their mail from nearby Rutledge, RFD #2.

In 1914, the cotton fields of Morgan County, Georgia were a long way from Europe, both physically and in the minds of those who labored there. The first mention of the "European War" in the legal organ of Morgan County, the *Madisonian*, was an article in the Friday, August 7<sup>th</sup> issue of that year.<sup>1</sup> The essence of the article was the adverse effects that the war in Europe would have on the cotton economy of the South.

The sinking of the RMS Lusitania, May 7, 1915, which resulted in the loss of 128 American lives, was not mentioned in the *Madisonian* until August 20<sup>th</sup>, and then only in an editorial berating the British for having a "a naval strangle hold on our shipments and, therefore, on the world supply [of cotton]," thereby driving down the price.<sup>2</sup> The next year and a half was essentially business as usual in Morgan County.

In January 1917, the Germans resumed unrestricted submarine warfare on ships crossing the Atlantic. That same month the United Kingdom intercepted a message, which came to be known as the Zimmermann note, in which Germany invited Mexico to join the war as an ally against the United States. In return, the Germans would finance Mexico's war and help it recover the territories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. On February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1917, President Woodrow Wilson went before Congress and announced the break in official relations with Germany. After the subsequent sinking of seven U.S. merchant ships by submarines, President Wilson called for war on Germany on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1917, which was declared by the US Congress four days later. The war in Europe finally made the front page, and five out of seven of the following pages, of the Friday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1917 edition of the *Madisonian*.<sup>3</sup>

The Selective Service Act of 1917 was passed by both houses of congress on April 28, and signed into law by President Wilson on May 18, 1917. The first

Form 1		REGISTRATION CARD		No. 234
1	Name in full	Joel Arthur	Madison	Age, in yrs 27
2	Home address	Madison	Ga	
3	Date of birth	June 17	1891	
4	Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien (1) or have you declared your intention (specify which)?	Natural Born		
5	Where were you born?	Greensboro	Ga	
6	If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject?			
7	What is your present trade, occupation, or office?	Night Watchman		
8	By whom employed?	Empire Cotton Oil Co		
	Where employed?	Madison Ga		
9	Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)?	Mother & Sister		
10	Married or single (which)?	Single	Race (specify which)?	Caucasian
11	What military service have you had? Rank	No		
12	Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)?			
I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.				
Joel Arthur Madison				

draft registration of WWI occurred on June 5, 1917 for all men between the ages of 21 and 30. Joel Arthur, 27 at the time, registered for the draft that day in the town of Madison, the county seat of Morgan County. According to his draft registration card, he was of medium height and medium build with brown hair and grey eyes. He was employed by the Empire Cotton Oil Company in Madison as a night watchman. It was also noted that he was the sole support of his mother and sister. Joel

chose to affirm that the information on his draft registration card was correct by placing his mark, an X, on the signature line at the bottom.

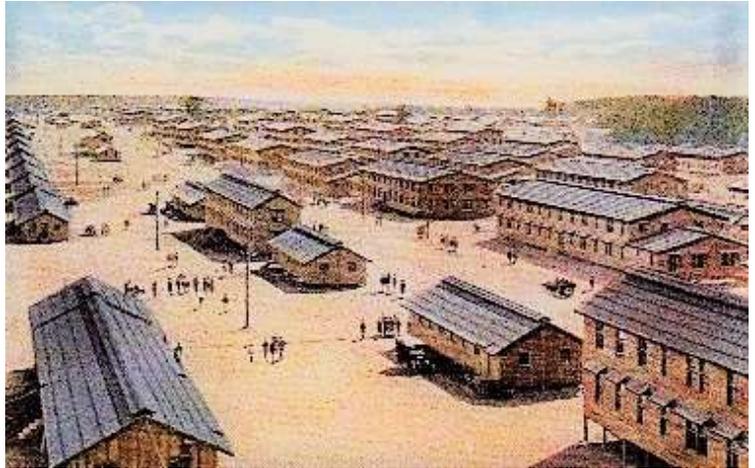
As the sole support for his mother and younger sister, Joel Arthur would have been placed in Draft Category III: temporarily exempted, but available for military service. This category included local officials, registrants employed in agricultural, labor or industrial enterprises essential to the war effort, and registrants who provide sole family income for dependent parents or dependent siblings under 16. Members of Class III were available for the draft only if the pool of all available and potential candidates in Classes I and II were exhausted.

In the General Organization Project of July 1917, commander in chief of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), General John J. Pershing, and his staff called for a field army of 30 divisions, about one million men, to be sent to France by the end of 1918. However, by June 26, 1918, the date of Joel Arthur's induction, about two million U.S. soldiers had already landed in France, with approximately 10,000 arriving every day. That same month, Pershing increased his estimate of needed troops to 66 divisions of three million men by May 1919. Shortly thereafter, his estimate grew to 80 divisions, and ultimately to 100 divisions.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time that whole divisions were being manned and trained to meet the increasing demand, replacement troops were needed to offset casualties and keep divisions already in France at their intended strength. The Great War resulted in 116,516 U.S. deaths, including those due to combat, accidents, and sickness. Thus, by June 1918, the draft registrants in Categories I and II were used up, and Joel Arthur was called up as a replacement.

In the Friday, June 28, 1918 issue of the *Madisonian*, the name "Joel Arthur" was one of twenty names appearing in a list on page 3 of "white registrants entrained in Madison on June 26." One hundred and eight names

appeared on the following list of “colored selectmen” that were entrained on June 21. There is no mention of a grand send-off or crowds at the train station, just the lists.



*Camp Gordon  
Chamblee, Georgia*

The destination of the train leaving Madison on that Wednesday afternoon was Camp Gordon, Georgia, not to be confused with the modern-day Fort Gordon, Georgia, both named for Confederate General and former Georgia Governor and U.S. Senator, John B. Gordon. Camp Gordon was established July 18, 1918 as a cantonment, or temporary infantry training and replacement camp. It was abandoned in September 1921. Fourteen miles from Atlanta, in Dekalb County, Camp Gordon was located on the current-day site of Peachtree-Dekalb Airport.

As with all inductees arriving at Camp Gordon, the first order of business for Joel Arthur was a bath. He was then given a physical examination and vaccinated for typhoid, paratyphoid, and small pox.<sup>5</sup> After a brief quarantine he was assigned to his barracks and the camp depot brigade for preliminary training: military discipline and courtesy; arms, uniforms, and equipment; personal hygiene and care of feet; infantry drill and the manual of arms.<sup>6</sup> During this period, trade testing was also conducted as a method of classification of inductees as to intelligence, occupational experience, and learning and vocational ability in order to provide the best assignment for each of them.

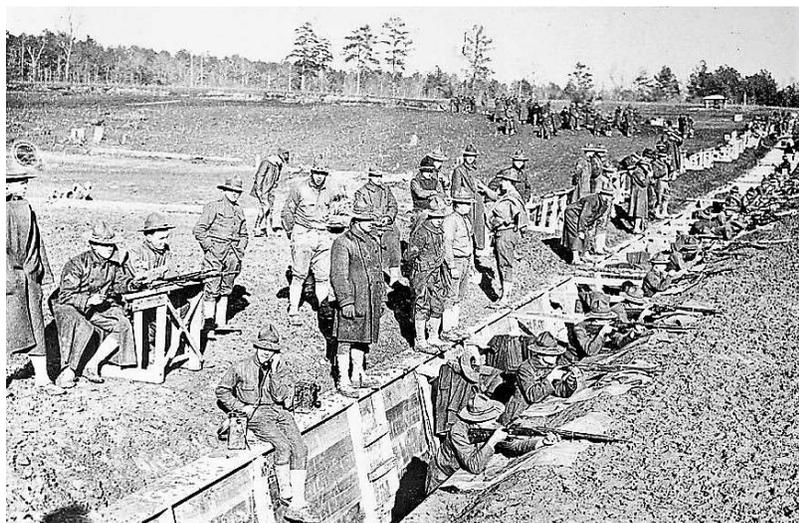
Time spent in basic training also afforded an education of the “outside” world for the men, many of whom had never been away from their hometown or the county in which they lived. They were exposed, for the first time, to things

like motion pictures, showers, and food from tin cans. They had to learn to cope with being confined to, and how to function, in a group possibly larger than the population of their towns or communities. Many also participated in organized sports for the first time, including baseball, football, volleyball and boxing.

Camp life also exposed soldiers to communicable diseases. The most feared at that time was influenza, due to the 1918 “Spanish” Flu pandemic. The Spanish Flu was responsible for 50 to 100 million deaths worldwide.<sup>7</sup> Outbreaks among soldiers occurred in the training camps, in Europe, and at every stop and on every means of transportation between them. Approximately 45,000 American Soldiers died of influenza and associated pneumonia by the end of the war, compared to 53,402 American combat deaths.<sup>8</sup>

While at Camp Gordon, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, Joel applied for \$10,000 War Risk Insurance Coverage, the maximum allowable: \$5,000 for his mother, Genia Ruark Arthur, and \$5,000 for his younger sister, Gladys May Arthur. A premium of \$6.70 was deducted from his monthly pay of \$30.00<sup>9</sup>.

What one might regard as “regular” infantry boot camp training began the third week. On week days, when the trainees were awakened at 5:45 A.M. by the bugler blowing reveille, they could expect to be involved in such activities as



*Rifle Practice*  
*Camp Gordon, Georgia*

physical fitness training, marching, bayonet exercises, target practice, gas warfare instruction, entrenching, and drills in trench and open warfare, all of which also fostered discipline in general.

Joel Arthur received his basic training at the most opportune time during the

war in order to receive its maximum benefit. Early in the war, inductees arrived at training camps before equipment such as uniforms, boots and weaponry. The first inductees trained with wooden rifles in hodge-podge uniforms of civilian and government issued clothing. A completely new training methodology had to be devised and refined because of the vast number of raw inductees needed in a short period of time, and innovations that American troops had never before faced, such as trench warfare, grenades, machine guns, and poison gas.

Toward the end of the war, the length of time soldiers spent in training depended more on the need at the front rather than the readiness of those being trained. By September and October, 1918, American troops had become so involved in the fighting that the replacement system could not keep pace with the demand caused by casualties. In October, replacements were being drafted and sent almost immediately to France. Many arrived with no equipment and very little military training, to their own detriment and that of the units in which they served.<sup>10</sup> Joel was at Camp Gordon for ten weeks.

Destined to be a replacement for a battle casualty from the day he was drafted, Joel was caught up in the September Automatic Replacement Draft of 1918. Automatic Replacement Drafts resulted in a predetermined number of men being sent from the training camps to France based on War Department estimates. Joel was assigned to the Camp Gordon September Automatic Replacement Draft, Company No. 18, Infantry, which headed north by train Friday, September 6, 1918. Their destination was Camp Merritt, near Tenafly, New Jersey, about 10 miles north of Hoboken.

Camp Merritt was one of two embarkation camps established to support troop movement through the New York City Harbor, and was the largest and busiest embarkation camp during the war. One quarter of all U. S. service men going to Europe, about half a million men, passed through this camp. Its

capacity of 35,000 transient troops went through a complete turnover almost three times every month.<sup>11</sup>

While bottlenecked at Camp Merritt, awaiting their turn to be shipped to Europe, the Doughboys went through final preparation for overseas service. Upon arrival,

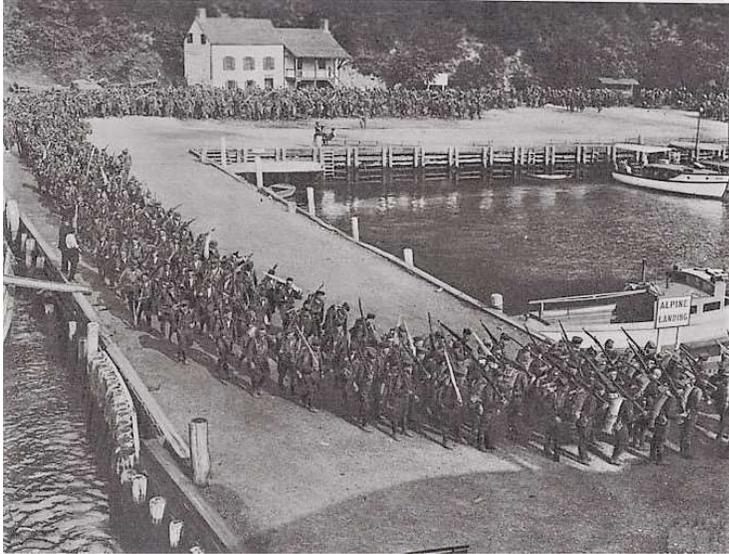


*Troops Arriving at Camp Merritt by Train*

*Cresskill, New Jersey*

troops went through a thorough clothing inspection. They were issued new uniform items to replace any that were worn or damaged as well as any gear that would be required overseas, such as gas masks and “tin-derby” combat helmets.<sup>12</sup> Since Camp Merritt was merely a stopover and not a training camp, Doughboys waiting there could enjoy some leisure time. They could obtain twenty-four hour passes, and many visited New York City, just 12 miles from camp. Entertainment from the city also made the trip to the camp and held performances at the Y.M.C.A.

On September 11, 1918, less than a week after arriving at Camp Merritt, the name “Joel Arthur,” Army serial number 3497169, appeared on the U.S. Army Transport Service passenger list for embarkation from Hoboken, New Jersey. The list included 232 other men also assigned to the Camp Gordon September Automatic Replacement Draft, Infantry Company No. 18. By that time, departures from Camp Merritt were taking place every forty-eight to



*Troops from Camp Merritt Loading the Ferry  
Boats at Alpine Landing*

seventy-two hours. A single embarkation involved 8,000 to 12,000 soldiers and required about five hours. Beginning at 1:00 AM, columns of 2,000 to 3,000, the capacity of one of the ferry boats that awaited them at Alpine Landing, were started on the three to four hour march to get there. Once packed onto one of the boats, they endured a two

hour, twelve mile trip down the Hudson River to the lower Manhattan piers.<sup>13</sup>

Upon arrival at their assigned pier, and after company roll call, the men were allowed to avail themselves of the goodies at the refreshment tables set up by the Red Cross. Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. workers meandered through the crowd passing out “safe arrival” cards which read: “The ship on which I sailed has arrived safely overseas.” Each man was allowed to sign and address as many cards as he desired. He later deposited them in the mail bag as he headed up the gang plank. Upon receipt of a cablegram that the ship had safely reached Europe, the cards were forwarded as addressed through the regular mail.<sup>14</sup>

Many, if not most men leaving New York Harbor aboard troop transports were like Joel Arthur; they had never seen an ocean, much less crossed one. Now, as almost two million Doughboys had done previously, they slowly passed by the skyline of one of the largest cities in the world, beneath the Statue of Liberty, and watched it get smaller and smaller as they continued through the Narrows and headed out to sea.

This was Joel's experience on September 14, 1918, when he set sail from New York Harbor aboard the RMS Olympic, the lead ship of the White Star Line's Olympic-class liners which included sister ships, Britannic and the ill-fated Titanic. On that day, the Olympic was the only troop ship that sailed from New York, her



*Up the Gangplank*

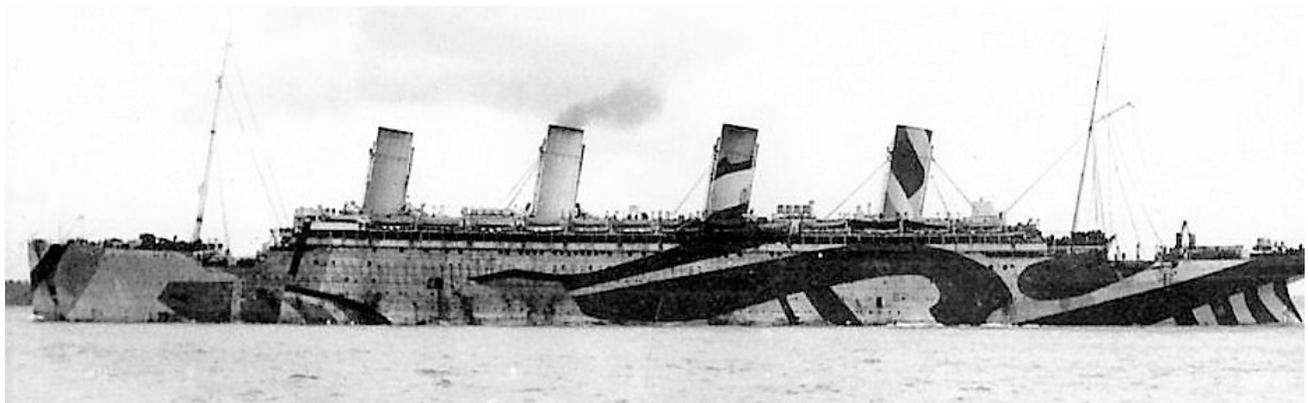
strength being 147 officers, 5,471 men, 306 nurses, and 38 civilians for a total of 5,962.<sup>15</sup> Typically, troop ships crossing the Atlantic did so in a group escorted by naval cruisers and destroyers. This convoy system, in conjunction with such tactics as zigzagging, confusing but well-thought-out crossing routes, and smoke screens, was employed to guard against the threat of German U-boats. However,



*Off to France*

a ship's best defense against torpedoes was speed. The Olympic, like other passenger ocean liners used to transport troops, most often made the transatlantic voyage unescorted, because, with a service speed of 21 knots per hour (24 knots per hour maximum), she could easily outpace any U-boat.

During the early years of the war in Europe, the Olympic had been refitted as a troop transport and carried Canadian soldiers to France. Beginning in January 1918, the British government allowed the United States use of her to move American troops out of New York. With Joel Arthur as passenger, she crossed the Atlantic in just six days. The average crossing time for troop ship convoys was fourteen days.<sup>16</sup>



*RMS Olympic painted in dazzle camouflage as a WWI troop transport ship  
Joel Arthur's transportation to Europe*

Despite being transported by a luxury liner, Joel's transatlantic trip was no luxury cruise. All the normal passenger decks, accommodations, and all unused holds on the Olympic were crowded with berthing, as were passage and companionways, and even mess halls. It was quite possible that the men shared bunks and had to sleep in shifts. Gone were the squash racquet court, gymnasium, dining saloon and the á la carte restaurant. Gone from the daily bill of fare were the Filet de Mouton á la Francais Pommes Olives, Petite Bouchées de foie Gras and Trifle d'Orleans Meringues glacée Pralinée. However, there were few complaints about the food that was provided, and the Doughboys could eat all they wanted. Mess lines were typically short the first two or three days at sea, courtesy of mal de mer.

The tedium on this transatlantic voyage was interrupted by abandon ship drills at least once a day for the entire crossing. A bit of excitement was

generated by firing practice for the Navy's six-inch gun crews. Likely, many hours were spent gazing over the vastness of the boundless ocean, a new and fascinating experience for most, and perhaps being the first to spot an enemy periscope.

At night, total darkness was essential. No lights were permitted above decks, not a single match or cigarette. Below decks, there was an occasional dark blue bulb in the berthing areas and passageways.<sup>17</sup>

Just over half of American troops crossing the Atlantic went directly to France. Most of the others were landed in Liverpool and traveled by train over two hundred miles through the scenic English country side to a rest camp near the channel port of Southampton. However, since Southampton was already the home port of the Olympic, she sailed directly there, and, with Joel Arthur on board, docked there on September 20, 1918.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to ferrying soldiers to Europe, the overcrowded troop ships also served as incubators for the Spanish Flu virus and pneumonia. A severe epidemic of the flu broke out on board the Olympic during the last days of Joel Arthur's voyage. Though quarantined in the harbor for 24 hours, the flu quickly spread through the rest camps at Southampton and nine miles away at Winchester. The camp hospitals, already filled with battle casualties, were overwhelmed, and before it was over, hundreds of soldiers were dead.<sup>19</sup> Of the 45,000 soldier deaths attributed to the Spanish Flu during World War I, 30,000 occurred before the victims even reached France.<sup>20 21</sup> Joel was apparently unaffected by the flu, since his stay at the rest camp was less than two weeks, one week shy of the typical quarantine period.

Southampton was the main port for soldiers leaving Britain for France, and for those returning. Rest camps in the area were supposed to be places where they could recuperate after battle or traveling long distances. Wait times in the camps were often prolonged by equipment staging, reorganization of

troop units, and waiting for orders. Of the Southampton Rest Camp, one soldier remarked, “ ‘The bird that named that ‘Rest Camp’ would call hell an icebox...We got up very early the next morning and started doing a great many unnecessary things that we had no chance of finishing - just something to keep us busy.’ ”<sup>22</sup>



*The American Camp Headquarters  
Southampton Common Rest Camp  
Joel Arthur waited here before embarking to France.*

During Joel’s stay at the Southampton rest camp, the Allies began the Meuse-Argonne Offensive on September 26, 1918. This battle raged for a total of 47 days until the Armistice on November 11. The Americans having been late comers to the war, relatively few U.S. soldiers saw any action at all before 1918. The Meuse-Argonne became the principal engagement of the AEF during World War I. It also became the largest single military operation in United States military history, involving 1.2 million U. S. soldiers at the front, as well as the bloodiest and deadliest battle in U. S. Army history with 26,277 men killed and 95,786 wounded.

On Thursday afternoon, October 3, 1918, Joel Arthur was among those who were marched to the docks to cross the English Channel to France. There, Joel would have had the opportunity to mingle with British soldiers, as well as many from former territories of the British Empire, going to France for the first time or returning there after leave. Channel crossings took place overnight to reduce the possibilities of U-boat attack. The boats used were much smaller than the troop ships and ocean liners that brought American soldiers across the

Atlantic. There were no sleeping quarters, and the conditions were even more crowded.<sup>23</sup>

“ ‘Massed on the stairs, choking the passageways, huddled on top of, around, and under every fixture in the lavatories, every post, every wall, every railing, either suffocating inside from the heat of [their] breath or chilled to the bone on the cold steel decks, were entangled legs, arms and bodies.’ ”<sup>24</sup> The “ ‘air could not have been staler or viler, without passing into the category of solid substances.’ ”<sup>25</sup> And, if it happened to be stormy during the crossing, “ ‘the men who had stood the trip across...were almost to a man violently sick....’ ” “[E]very bit of floor space was nothing but a slippery mess.”<sup>26</sup> During his trip across the English Channel, Alvin York became sea sick and later recalled that it was like being on something “more like a bucking mule than a boat.”<sup>27</sup> The channel crossing boats usually reached France about dawn.

On the morning of October 4, 1918, having crossed the Channel to the Normandy Coast, Joel Arthur disembarked at Le Havre, the main port for receiving troops and supplies arriving from England. Marching in formation past the bustling dockyards, the Doughboys entered the cobblestone streets of Le Havre to greetings in a language they could not understand and signs they could not read. They marched four miles through the cramped confines of the center of the city, along the shore, and up a steep slope to the British Rest Camp No. 1 near the village of Sanvic. The elevation of the camp provided a beautiful view of the city of Le Havre, the harbor, and the Channel. However, adequate sleeping accommodations for the number of soldiers there were not



*Doughboys Marching out of Le Havre*



*The Rest Camp at Sanvic*

provided, and bathing facilities were few and far between. The war and what lay ahead for the replacements began to become more of a reality at Sanvic. There, trains carrying wounded from the fighting at the front frequently passed through the camp on the way to Le Harve. Columns of German prisoners were marched to the

docks on their way to one of the many internment camps in England, and, in the still of the night, the Doughboys were able to just make out the pounding of heavy guns in the distance.<sup>28</sup>

From Sanvic, Joel was soon transferred to the “Intermediate Section” behind the lines where supplies and material were stockpiled, and where men were quartered, all awaiting their time to be sent to the “Advanced Section” and the front. Initially, he was assigned to Company B, 49<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, which became absorbed into the 83<sup>rd</sup> Replacement Division, which, in turn, was designated the 2<sup>nd</sup> Depot Division. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Depot Division was concentrated in the Lemans area in various camps. While awaiting assignment to a permanent combat unit, replacements were given last second training, such as the six-second gas mask drills, to increase their chances of survival. During the month of October, 1918, the time of Joel Arthur’s stay there, the camps in this area reached a maximum size of 45,000 replacement troops.<sup>29</sup>

On October 16, 1918, Joel was given his final organizational assignment: a replacement for Company E, of the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, at that point assigned to III Corps, First Army, AEF. The 5<sup>th</sup> Division, which had arrived in France as a unit in May 1918, was also known

as the “Red Devil” or the “Red Diamond,” because of its distinctive red diamond shoulder sleeve insignia. Since replacements were not transferred to units in action, Joel had to wait for the 5<sup>th</sup> to come off the front lines before joining them.

At that time, the 5<sup>th</sup> Division was involved in intense fighting, clearing out the machine gun infested Bois Des Rappes (Woods of Rappes) north of the town

of Cunel. The attack in itself, on October 12, incursion into the Argonne Offensive. constituted some of the entire war. After more battering German again with bayonets



the vicinity of Cunel was the 5<sup>th</sup>'s first fighting of the Meuse-Rappes Wood roughest fighting of the than a week of positions again and fixed, the woods were

finally cleared on October 21. In ten days of fierce fighting, the 5<sup>th</sup> Division had sustained 4,449 casualties of whom 779 were killed in action.

The next day, the 90<sup>th</sup> Division relieved the 5<sup>th</sup> Division, which was sent back to the corps reserve in the vicinity of Montfaucon for much needed rest and replenishment. On October 24<sup>th</sup>, the 5<sup>th</sup> received about 3,000 replacements, among them, Private Joel T. Arthur of Fairplay, GA, marking the end of his four-month circuitous journey from the cotton fields of Morgan County to the battle fields of France. Time being of the essence, many of these replacements were ill prepared and ill equipped, some having been in the Army only six to eight weeks.

After four days of “rest” behind the lines, in wet, muddy conditions and under sporadic German artillery fire, orders came down for the 5<sup>th</sup> to relieve the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division at the front on October 26. The mission of the division was to attack to the east, force a crossing of the Meuse River, and to capture the railroad at Sedan, a vital German communication and supply line. The troops started from the Malancourt-Avocourt area shortly after noon, moving into position

throughout the night of October 26<sup>th</sup> - October 27<sup>th</sup>. On the 5<sup>th</sup>'s left was the 90<sup>th</sup> Division, still holding that portion of the sector from which they had relieved the 5<sup>th</sup>, four days previously. To the right of the Red Diamond was the Fifteenth French Division, facing, but unable to cross the river.<sup>30</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade, including the 11<sup>th</sup> Regiment took up a reserve position at the rear of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division. Thus, Joel Arthur was still somewhat insulated from the fighting. This alignment remained relatively unchanged through the end October.

On Friday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, the newly reorganized 1st Army of the AEF began its final push. That night, patrols were sent out to scout for a place to cross near Brioules, but the few crossable sites found were heavily guarded. The mission given to the 5<sup>th</sup> division was to cover the ground north of its lines and then move eastward to the river. The right flank of the 5<sup>th</sup>, which was the right most division in the attack, was already on the river just south of Brioules, and acted as a pivot point around which all other divisions rotated in a clock-wise motion toward the river. With moderate enemy resistance, the Meuse River was reached by November 3, on a front extending from Brioules four miles north to Dun-sur-Meuse.

Crossing the Meuse presented the Americans with three formidable obstacles over terrain that was decidedly better suited for a defensive stand. First was the steep-banked river itself, twenty meters wide and five to ten feet deep. All bridges in the area had already been destroyed by the retreating Germans who had now taken up positions on the Meuse Heights to the east of the river. The current rendered the river not fordable in most places, and the few fords that did exist were strongly defended. Second, a canal ran east of and parallel to the river. About 20 meters wide, with about 5 feet of water, the canal's stone walls were vertical, about 3½ meters in height. Such canals, which started at one point on the river and exited at another point downstream, were common in areas where the river was winding, or shallow, or otherwise unnavigable. The

canals also facilitated river traffic to and from adjacent towns. Third, as previously mentioned, the opposite bank of the river was dominated by the high hills which rose sharply from the canal. German artillery and machine guns were entrenched on the heights with a clear line of sight to the river, the canal, and the exposed “no man’s land” between the two.

The Tenth Brigade of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division, which included the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment and Joel Arthur, was ordered to put patrols across the river and canal during the night of November 2<sup>nd</sup>, in order to prepare the way for the crossing of the entire 5<sup>th</sup> Division. At midnight, in the cold, pouring rain, army engineers began the construction of a footbridge across the Meuse. This bridge was completed just at dawn, and as equipment was being carried over it to construct a subsequent bridge across the canal, German machine guns and artillery released a torrent of bullets and shells blanketing the area. Unable to cross the canal and move forward, and realizing the foolishness of trying to move single file back over the footbridge to the west side of the river, the Doughboys and engineers could only hug the side of a berm adjacent to the canal to stay out of the line of fire. There they remained for the rest of the day, Sunday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>. That afternoon, all available artillery was brought up to enable it to fire as far as possible into the enemy positions. As soon as nightfall came, a company of Doughboys stole across the Brioules footbridge to reinforce the engineers and soldiers who had been penned down under the canal bank the previous day and night.

Attempts to complete a crossing and establish a bridgehead on the opposite shore continued hurriedly and undetected through the night of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Two new footbridges were started across the canal just under a half mile north of the bridge laid across the river the night before in order to escape the intense artillery fire. One bridge was completed shortly after midnight, and the other was finished about 2 am. A patrol of eight soldiers had just made it across to the

German side when a burst of machine gun fire from both flanks and directly in front swept the bridges and canal bank. The Doughboys remaining on the bridge were forced back by the hail of bullets.

Throughout the next day, Monday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, the engineers and soldiers, now accompanied by the eight infantrymen that had made it across the river the night before, stayed fast at the canal bank where they had been ensconced since early Sunday morning. The trajectory of the U.S. Artillery, which had been shelling the ridge of the Meuse Heights, was now brought down the slope to fire at the water's edge. At 5 pm, just after dusk, the barrage suddenly lifted; the two infantry companies which had been stranded in no man's land rushed the bridges across the canal with a salvo of gunfire. The machine gun nests were all wiped out, nine prisoners were taken, and a bridgehead was finally established.

Joel Arthur along with the entire 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade were across both the river and canal shortly after midnight, Tuesday, November 5<sup>th</sup>. They immediately pushed northward toward Liny-devant-Dun, their left on the canal bank and their right passing beneath the heights. The right flank was held by the second battalion, Joel's Company E, along with Companies F, G, and H of the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. As the First Battalion moved ahead to assail Liny, taking over fifty prisoners, the second and third battalions swept up the valley of the Stream of Doua to the northeast of the village along the road to Fontaines. They slowly advanced up the heavily fortified southern slope of Hill 260, driving the Germans northward and off of the heights.

Shortly after 8:00, the 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade, was given a change of orders to strike for Dun-sur-Meuse, which was four kilometers to the north. At Liny-devant-Dun, Colonel Robert H. Peck with the Eleventh Infantry turned the regiment from the east to north and started the advance on Dun. By 1 pm, the

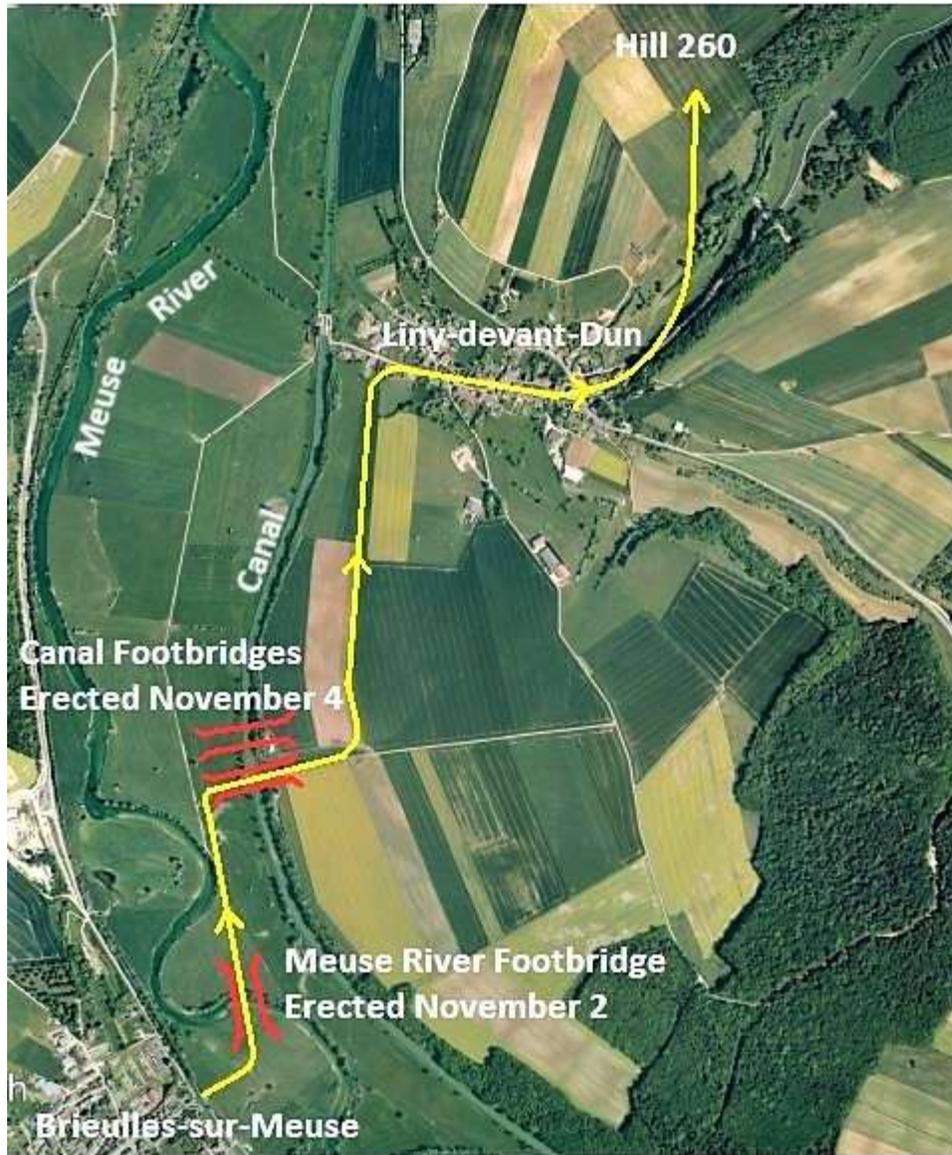


*One of two possible footbridges over which Joel Arthur crossed the Meuse River Canal.  
One footbridge was constructed on either side of the iron bridge destroyed by the Germans.*

demoralized and scattered enemy defenders had been driven from the town, and Colonel Peck then reformed the 11<sup>th</sup> regiment and turned it eastward.

The first battalion marched on Murvaux, but, by dusk, was forced to stop on the eastern edge of Bois de Dun (Woods of Dun) by heavy machine gun fire, two kilometers due east of Dun. The second battalion took position in Bois de Chenois (Woods of Chenois) for the night, while the third battalion was in reserve on the eastern end of Hill 260.

Tuesday, November 5, 1918 could very well have been Joel Arthur's first day of actual combat, and, along with 124 other Doughboys killed in action that day, it was also his last. He died near the village of Liny-devant-Dun, during the assault on Hill 260 in the predawn darkness. Based on the nature of his wounds, the cause of death was most likely an artillery shell hit closeby. Artillery accounted for more than "two-thirds of all deaths and injuries on the Western Front."<sup>31</sup>



*The Path Taken by Joel Arthur and Company "E" of the Eleventh Infantry Regiment on November 5, 1918*

After crossing the Meuse and clearing the heights east of the river on November 5<sup>th</sup>, the 5<sup>th</sup> Division continued their attack for the next five days over the heights and eastward, liberating eleven villages, advancing eighteen kilometers beyond the river, and taking nearly two hundred square kilometers of territory before the hostilities came to an end at the eleventh hour, of the

eleventh day, of the eleventh month, 1918. By Armistice Day, the 5<sup>th</sup> had reached a position just south of Marville. The Red Diamond had advanced further to the east than any Allied division.

According to General John J. Pershing, Commander-in-chief of the AEF, "The feat of arms, however, which marks especially the Division's ability as a fighting unit, was crossing the Meuse River and the establishment of a bridgehead on the eastern bank. This operation was one of the most brilliant

military feats in the history of the American Army in France.” Thenceforth the 5th Division was not only known as “The Red Diamond,” and the “Red Devils,” but now, also “The Meuse Division.”

After the Armistice, the 5th Division became part of the Occupation Army, stationed in Luxembourg and southeastern Belgium. During the summer of 1919, the 5th returned to the United States and was inactivated October 4, 1921, at Camp Jackson, South Carolina.

It took five days after his death for Joel Arthur to be officially declared Missing in Action. His status remained so from November 10 to November 18, when it was changed from MIA to KIA. Initially, his date of death was listed as November 1, 1918, likely a date chosen for convenience until the actual date could be determined. By April, 1919, the actual date and cause of death was still “to be determined.” According to a memo, added to his file and dated September 20, 1920: “Upon investigation it has been ascertained by the War Department that Private Joel T. Arthur...was killed in action November 5, 1918”.<sup>32</sup>

Soon after Joel had left for the Army, his mother, Jennie, and younger sister, Gladys Mae, moved into the town of Madison to be near another of Jennie’s sons, Grady. As a beneficiary of Joel’s life insurance under the War Risk Insurance Act of 1917, Jennie began to receive a monthly check for \$28.75 soon after his death. This continued for ten years until November 5, 1928. In January and February of 1920, she applied for, and received, an additional monthly payment of \$20.00 as a dependent parent of a soldier killed in action. In 1933, her monthly payment was designated as a War Time Service Connected Pension, and was increased to \$45.00 per month, which she received until her death, March 28, 1949.<sup>33</sup>

Since Joel’s younger sister Gladys May was also a dependent of his at the time of his induction, she also received the \$28.75 monthly payment as a beneficiary of his life insurance. Because she was a minor, however, a guardian

had to be appointed to whom the check was made payable. D. P. Few, President of the Morgan County Bank of Madison, acted in that regard until May 12, 1920, when Gladys turned 21, and the monthly payments ceased.

By the end of the war, over 70,000 American soldiers lay in isolated or small clusters of graves scattered across the battlefields of Europe. As a necessity, they were initially interred in temporary graves, close to where they had fallen, by the combat units to which they belonged. After the war, units of the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps Graves Registration Service scoured former battle sites to locate, and hopefully identify, the hastily buried remains. Ideally, one of two dog tags issued to the soldier would remain with his body when buried, and the other would be attached to some sort of makeshift marker, identifying the location of the grave.

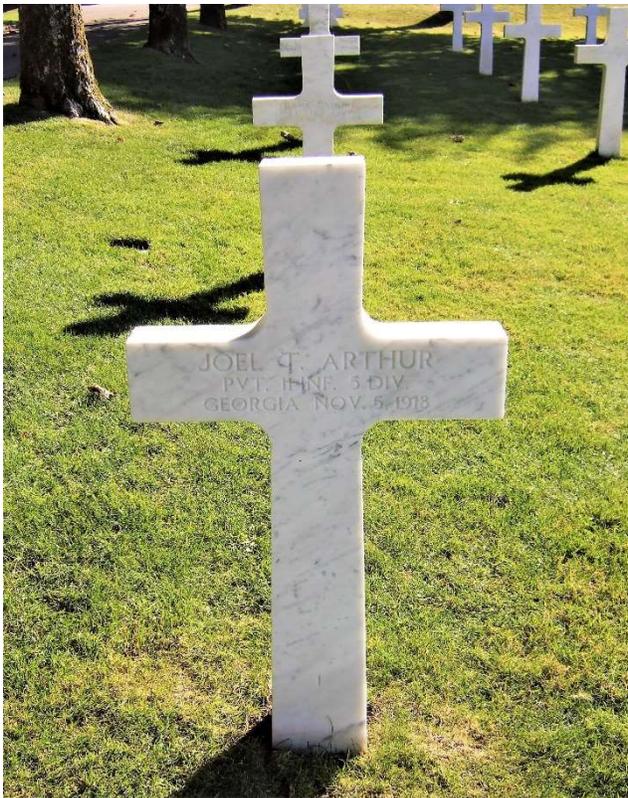
The remains of Joel Arthur were located in an isolated grave near the village of Liny-Devant-Dun, in the vicinity of four other graves of soldiers of Company E of the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. The grave and his remains were identified by his dog tags. He was buried only in his uniform, and the fact that his body was badly decomposed was noted. The remains were disinterred on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1919 and reburied in grave 153, section 110, and plot number 3 of the Argonne American Cemetery near Romagne, Meuse, France.<sup>34</sup>

Beginning in mid-October, 1918, as scattered and isolated graves were discovered, the remains they contained were identified, if possible, and relocated to larger, temporary cemeteries, on land provided by the French government, in order to facilitate their care while awaiting final disposition. The Argonne American Cemetery at Romagne was one such cemetery. The vastness of rows upon rows of so many grave markers also served to reveal the magnitude of America's sacrifice.

In the spring of 1919, President Wilson signed into law legislation that would allow surviving family members to decide whether to have their war dead

permanently memorialized at an American military cemetery in Europe, or returned home at the U.S. Government's expense. Surveys were sent to almost 80,000 families. Nearly 46,000 of them chose to have the remains of their loved ones returned stateside and, over the next three years or so, ships bearing the flag-draped caskets made their way across the Atlantic.

The removal of 46,000 bodies from the temporary American cemeteries necessitated a massive reconfiguration of the remaining graves that were destined to remain permanently on French soil. Joel Arthur's remains were disinterred for the second time on September 26, 1921 and buried for the third time on September 30, again in the Meuse Argonne Cemetery. Conditions noted at this disinterment were that he had been buried the second time in his uniform,



*Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery*

*Block G, Row 35, Grave 1.*

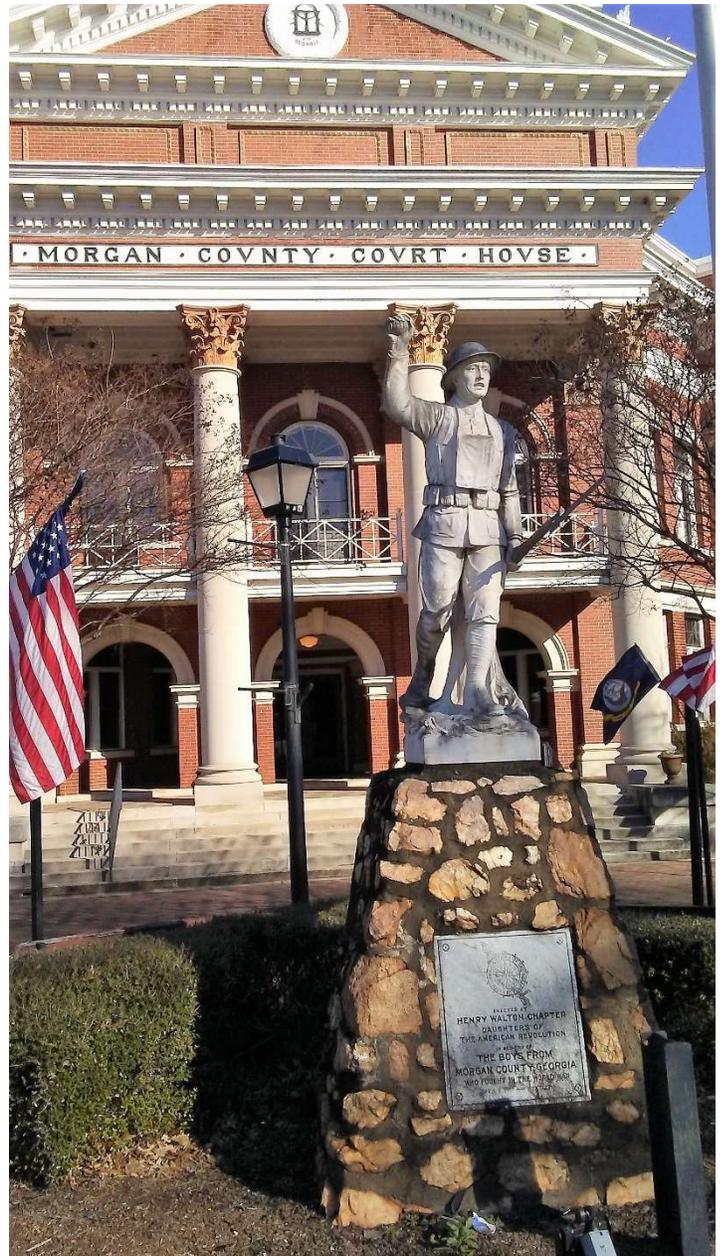
wrapped in burlap, in a pine box, “decomposed, . . . features unrecognizable.” A dental examination was performed and recorded as well as the fact that Joel had suffered a fractured left femur.<sup>35</sup> The right side of his face and upper jaw were also fractured, wounds indicative of a violent death, most likely the nearby explosion of an artillery shell. Artillery had developed rapidly during the war, firing more explosive shells faster and farther, resulting in 50% to 80% of all combat casualties.<sup>36</sup>

The American Battle Monuments Commission, founded in 1923, created seven permanent centralized cemeteries

in France and Belgium. The Meuse-Argonne cemetery, finally dedicated on May 30th, 1937, was the final resting place of Joel Arthur: Block G, Row 35, Grave 1.

Back home in Morgan County, Georgia, the post World War shift to a peacetime economy led to a collapse of cotton prices, which, in conjunction with the bowl weevil and soil depletion, caused farm income to sharply decline, and the number of farmers forced into tenancy to rise. In the May 2, 1919 issue of the *Madisonian*, the Editor urged its readers to purchase “Victory Bonds” in honor of Joel Tolbert [sic] Arthur and seven other men from Morgan County who lost their lives in the War.<sup>37</sup>

Even as the Great depression approached, members of the Henry Walton Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution were able to raise funds to acquire and erect a statue of a Doughboy in front of the Morgan County Courthouse in downtown Madison. The “Spirit of the American Doughboy” sculpture, designed by E. M. Viquesney to honor the veterans and casualties of World War I, was mass-produced, primarily from pressed copper, during the 1920s and 1930s for communities throughout the



*“The Boys from Morgan County  
who fought in the World War”*

United States. The Morgan County Doughboy, dedicated Sunday, May 4, 1930 to “The Boys from Morgan County who fought in the World War,” is one of only three stone versions known to exist.

A memorial brick walkway between the Doughboy and the Courthouse steps, and sponsored by American Legion, Calvin George Post #37, contains bricks with the names of individuals from Morgan County and the wars in which they served. A section of the walkway is devoted to those who died in service to their country. In this section there is a brick inscribed:



the only physical testament to his life and sacrifice that exists on his native soil.



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- <sup>1</sup> “The European War,” *The Madisonian*, 7 August 1914, p. 6, col. 2.
- <sup>2</sup> R. C. Duff, “On Cotton as Contraband,” *The Madisonian*, 20 August 1915, p. 6, col. 3.
- <sup>3</sup> “Use Tour Head,” *The Madisonian*, 13 April 1917, p. 1, col. 6.
- <sup>4</sup> Richard W. Stewart, *American Military History: The United States Army in a global era, 1917-2003* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2004) 14.
- <sup>5</sup> “Morgan County Boys off to the Army,” *The Madisonian*, 7 September 1917, p. 6, col. 2.
- <sup>6</sup> Benedict Crowell and Robert Forrest Wilson, *How America Went to War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), p. 72.
- <sup>7</sup> Eric Rangus, “Fighting the Flu,” *Georgia Magazine*, Fall 2018, p. 28.
- <sup>8</sup> Eric Durr, “Worldwide flu outbreak killed 45,000 American Soldiers during World War I,” U. S. Army, Last modified August 31, 2018, <https://www.army.mil/article/210420>
- <sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, *Deceased Veteran Claim File XC 181 364*, Arthur, Joel T. (Washington, D. C.).
- <sup>10</sup> Lt. Colonel Leonard L. Lerwill, *The Personnel Replacement System in the United States Army* (Department of the Army: Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-211, 1954), p. 209.
- <sup>11</sup> Crowell and Wilson, p. 176.
- <sup>12</sup> Mark D. Van Ells, *America and World War I* (Northampton, MA: Interlink, 2015), p. 79.
- <sup>13</sup> Crowell and Wilson, pp. 206-207.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 269-270.
- <sup>15</sup> Mark Chirnside, *RMS Olympic, Titanic's Sister* (Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2015), p. 559.
- <sup>16</sup> Crowell and Wilson, p. 422.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 402.
- <sup>18</sup> Chirnside, p. 435.
- <sup>19</sup> Van Ells, p. 130.
- <sup>20</sup> Carol R. Byerly, PubMed Central, “The U.S. Military and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918–1919,” Accessed January 24, 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2862337/>
- <sup>21</sup> Peter C. Wever, and Leo van Bergenc, PubMed Central, “Death from 1918 pandemic influenza during the First World War: a perspective from personal and anecdotal evidence,” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4181817/>

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<sup>22</sup> Douglas V. Mastriano, *Alvin York: A New Biography of the Hero of the Argonne* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), p. 47.

<sup>23</sup> Van Ells, pp. 131-132.

<sup>24</sup> Van Ells, p. 132.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Mastriano, p. 48.

<sup>28</sup> Van Ells, pp. 132-133.

<sup>29</sup> Lerwill, p. 221.

<sup>30</sup> The Society of the Fifth Division, *The Official History of the Fifth Division in the World War 1917-1919* (Washington DC: The Society of the Fifth Division, 1919), p. 179.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Bull, *Trench: A History of Trench Warfare on the Western Front* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2010) p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, *Deceased Veteran Claim File XC 181 364*, Arthur, Joel T. (Washington D.C.).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> National Archives, Suitland Reference Branch, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Record Group 92.9.1, *Records of the Graves Registration Service*, Arthur, Joel T. (Washington D.C.).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> John Horne, *A Companion to World War I* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012) pp. 173-187.

<sup>37</sup> "When We Meet Them Face to Face," *The Madisonian*, 2 May 1919, p. 1, col. 4.