

Alexander R. Bell, World War I soldier

Around 1919, the Kansas State Historical Society and the American Legion solicited biographical information from returning veterans (primarily members of the 35th and 89th infantry divisions) and the families of those who died in service, notably from the Gold Star Mothers. Each veteran or family member was asked to provide letters, photographs, a biography, and military records. This file contains information on Alexander R. Bell, Company A, 110th Engineers, 35th Division.

Creator: Bell, Alexander R.

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A. R. BELL, JR., MAY BE HOME SOON; WAS BADLY GASSED

The following letter was received this week by A. R. Bell from his son, A. R. Jr., who is an engineer with the American army in France:

Dear Dad: This day, November 24, has been designated as the day on which all the members of the American Expeditionary Forces should write to their fathers, and, as most of the censorship bans have been taken off, tell them what we have done and where we have been. I will start in at the beginning and try to picture for you in as few words as possible the where and what of my stay in France.

We sailed from New York May 2 on the U. S. S. Great Northern. Nothing of any consequence happened on our trip over and we were left pretty much to ourselves except for the continual life boat drills. We landed in France about 11 o'clock on May 10, having made the trip in a little less than eight days.

We landed in Brest, a very dirty city, which we did not like in the least. Happily we stayed there only two days, going from there to La Harve. Our trip to La Harve was certainly a new thing to all of us, if it was not very pleasant. We were loaded into French box cars, 41 men to a car, not to speak of 41 packs, guns and rations for that number of men sufficient to last four days. Well, I see this is liable to develop into the proportion of a book if I don't cut it short, so I will just tell you the names of the places we have been in and very few details.

At La Harve we were relieved of our American equipment and given British. From La Harve we immediately joined the British forces holding the line from Amiens to Albert; that is, we were held in reserve behind that sector of the line. We remained with the British for three or four weeks, perhaps more, and then we were moved clear to the other end of the line, down in Alsace. While we were with the British we received our baptism of shell fire and real trenches and, believe me, it made one think of home and mother.

Well, in Alsace, we were assigned a section of the line running from somewhere in front of the city of Thaun to the city or rather up in the mountains in front of the city of La Bresse. We stayed there until the first of September, when we moved out, going up behind the St. Mehiel salient. Of what we done at that place you know more than I, because a soldier's knowledge of a battle is limited to his own little area. We left there about September 19 or 20 and moved up in the woods behind the Verdun sector, where we started our drive September 26. It was there that we engineers got our real taste of battle. We went "over the top" with the "doughboys" at 5:26 o'clock the morning of September 26. On September 30 I was gassed pretty badly owing to the fact that a piece of shrapnel had pierced the canister of my gas mask and rendered it useless. I was ordered to the rear by Captain Hudson, then acting major, about 1 o'clock in the afternoon, and by 9 o'clock I was comfortably in bed in a field hospital.

I am still in the hospital but am getting better every day and hope that it may be possible, if I am real lucky, to beat this letter home.

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A. R. BELL
AGENT

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ASSETS \$ 13,632,344.
RESERVES \$ 8,566,917.
CAPITAL & SURPLUS \$ 5,065,427.

(JANY 1ST 1918)

CHETOPA, KANS.

Kansas Historical Society

1/2/19

Topeka

Gentlemen.

Kansas

At your request I send you herewith data with reference to Alexander R Bell Jr
Private CO A 110th Engineers; A.E.F

Alexander R Bell Jr, was born in Chetopa Kansas Nov 19th 1895;
He attended the commons schools and High school of his native city, graduating
from the High School in 1914; From About August 1st 1914 to June 1st 1915
he was in the employ of the Union Meat Company of Portland Oregon;
In the fall of 1915 he entered the Law Department of Kansas University at
Lawrence Kansas, and had about finished three years of his law course when
he enlisted in the 110th Engineers, in May of 1917
His camp training was at Camp Funston and Camp Doniphan;
He sailed for France about May 1st 1918 and has seen much active service
in the front in France; on the 30th of Sept 1918 in the Argone Forest drive
he was severely gassed, was taken to the hospital and was still in the
hospital as late as Nov 24th 1918
He was married about Mch 1st 1918 to Miss Ruth Marie Christy of Lawrence
Kansas; *He was a member of the S. P. S. W.*

This in brief is a short biography of this young man.

Respt



P.S.

I herewith enclose you a copy of a letter written to his father.