

Army Artillery Park in WWI

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson went before a joint session of Congress to request a declaration of war against Germany. Wilson cited Germany's violation of its pledge to suspend unrestricted submarine warfare in the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean, as well as its attempts to entice Mexico into an alliance against the United States, as his reasons for declaring war. On April 4, 1917, the U.S. Senate voted in support of the measure to declare war on Germany. The House concurred two days later. The United States later declared war on German ally Austria-Hungary on December 7, 1917. On 17 May, 1918, the Army Artillery Park was created with headquarters and training in San Francisco. On 17 December, Adolph Bakke, my father, entered the US Army and was assigned to the Army Artillery Park and sent to the Presidio, CA for basic and artillery training with battery C. . The batteries primary role was to construct ammunition dumps where ammunition was stored and then deliver it to the front lines where the artillery guns were. They loaded ammunition on and off trucks, delivering the ammunition within a mile of the front lines. They were also assigned spotter duty, watching for enemy troops.

Battery C left California on 15 August 1918, arriving in New York on 21 August after a train ride through several states and then crossing into Canada at Detroit, back in the US just below Niagara Falls. Battery C left New York on 1 September aboard the transport ship Anchises in a convoy passing Greenland by 30 miles through the Irish Sea and arrived at Liverpool on 12 September. At Liverpool each soldier received a card of thanks from King George which most of them mailed home. Battery C arrived in northern France on 20 September. Battery C soldiers saw action in battles at Lys, Aisne, Montdidier-Noyon, Champagne-Marne, Aisne-Marne, Somme, Oise-Aisne, Ypres-Lys, St Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne. Following the Armistice, Battery C had to hike for two days and spend a few days on a boxcar "side-door Pullman" until they finally boarded ship to return to the US. They took the southern route across the Atlantic of about 3,700 miles arriving in New York on 2 May. The Red Cross provided them with a wonderful thank you dinner on the docks of New York. Over the next several days, the soldiers were discharged. Adolph Bakke was discharged as Private First Class at Camp Dodge, Iowa on 16 May 1919 and returned to civilian life. My father never talked to me about his service even after I came home from the Air Force. It is rather common for soldiers who saw action first hand to not talk about the experience.

During WWI, over 4.7 million men and women served in the U.S. military, with about 2.8 million serving overseas. There were 53,402 killed in action, 63,114 deaths from disease and other causes, and about 205,000 wounded. It was also known as the War to End All Wars.