



Private Arthur M. Miller, Distinguished Service Cross
Co. B, 47th Infantry, 4th Division, Allied Expeditionary Force
 by Dwight "Harry" Harrington, Cemetery Commissioner

Arthur Merrill Miller, 13 Oct 1895 – 1 Aug 1918

Early Life

Arthur Merrill Miller came into the world on October 13, 1895, the son of Arthur and Mary (Guy) Miller. His dad, born in Nova Scotia, worked as a quarryman. As with most children, not much information about their lives could be found, they wouldn't be in the newspaper unless involved in some event or had an accident. The same can be said about young Arthur.

Growing up in Westerville, Arthur had his early education there. When the time came, he chose to attend Spaulding High School. Despite having to walk back and forth to the school, three miles each way, Arthur rarely missed a day of classes. The newspaper ran a story about Arthur near the end of his senior year. The school principal announced that Arthur had won the "Improvement Prize," for 1914. The prize honored the winner for the greatest improvement in scholarship, preparation for a high school course, efforts to remain in school, and a "notable growth in manliness." The article pointed out he had begun at the school under the handicap of poor preparation, and through persistence, overcame that handicap and made fine progress for the remainder of the course. He made all his gains despite that previously mentioned daily walk. Arthur had concentrated on the English course at Spaulding.¹

A week later, the Times ran another article, this one concerned the graduation exercises for Spaulding High School, Class of 1914. At the top of the article, a list of the 33 graduates appeared including "English Course – Arthur Merle Miller." [Note the change in middle name.] The ceremonies took place at the Opera House to a standing room only audience. The guest speaker, a college professor, spoke about the principles and goals of the American educational system. George H. Gove gave the 1st Honoree's address, and he presented a narrative about wireless radio and the possibilities brought about by Marconi's invention. Exercises concluded with the singing of Spaulding's hymn, "Lead Kindly Light."²

¹ "Won Prize for Progress," The Barre Daily Times, Barre, VT, Friday, 5 Jun 1914, page 1

² "Diplomas as Their Reward," The Barre Daily Times, Saturday, 13 Jun 1914, page 1

Off to join the Military

As with all young men, Arthur registered for the draft prior to the Great War. An image of his card could be found on Ancestry.com and the front of the filled out card is shown at the right. When filling out the card, Arthur, age 21, identified himself as an alien born in Quebec and working as a ship fitter's helper at a shipyard in Philadelphia. On the back of the registration card, the registrar described Arthur as short and slender with brown eyes and sandy hair. Registration took place in Barre Town on May 31, 1917.

Sometime in 1917, Arthur also went to enlist. The World War hadn't yet involved the US directly, but it was coming, and in 1916 the Vermont National Guard spent the summer at Eagle Pass, Texas while the Army chased after Pancho Villa down in Mexico. The Army turned Arthur down as he weighed less than 100 pounds. Arthur returned to Websterville and went to work as a timekeeper at the Canton Quarry of E. L. Smith and Company. While home, Arthur tried to enlist in the Vermont National Guard as they tried to raise their numbers to full strength. The Guard took him in despite his small size and he enlisted on February 9, 1918.

On February 9th, seventy four new enlistees boarded the train to head for Camp Greene in North Carolina, temporary home of the 1st Vermont Regiment. Among those on the list, Private Arthur Miller of Websterville. Local citizens provided a meal for the men as they got organized for their journey. Some 500 residents and local officials attended the send-off. The train departed Montpelier at 2:55 in the afternoon with the soldiers aboard two regular passenger cars. Before leaving, the Red Cross gave the soldiers lunches for the trip, and each man received a sweater, two pairs of knitted socks, a helmet, and a comfort kit.³ A Barre Daily Times article from the same day stated Arthur walked from his home to the local train station to catch the 8:25 while accompanied by his father.

During the 1st World War, then known as the Great War, the 1st Vermont Regiment did not remain as a single unit. Instead, other units from New England raided the Vermont companies to fill out their own units. Once completed, the regiment became a skeleton of itself but provided training for incoming soldiers. The regiment finally became the 57th Pioneer Infantry and headed off to France, just in time for the end of the war.

On the other hand, Private Miller became a member of Company B of the 47th Infantry Regiment, a part of the 4th Infantry Division. In the March 11th edition of the Barre Daily Times, it became known that any new, self-inducted soldier transferred to the 4th Division could transfer back to the 1st Vermont, by then the 57th Pioneer Infantry. Governor Graham of Vermont spearheaded the policy change so Vermonters could go back to what they might regard as their own Green Mountain regiment. Arthur decided to stay with the 4th. Once overseas, the Army again raided the 57th Pioneers until just four Vermonters remained in the regiment. They gathered up and preserved regimental records and brought them home.

The 47th Infantry Regiment Heads for France

In May of 1918, the men of the 47th Infantry Regiment boarded a troop ship and went over to France. Company B departed Hoboken, NJ on May 10, 1918 aboard the "Princess

Form 1 10 33 REGISTRATION CARD 29684	
1	Name in full <i>Arthur Merrill Miller</i> Age, in yrs. <i>21</i>
2	Home address <i>Barre Town Vermont</i>
3	Date of birth <i>October 13 1895</i>
4	Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? <i>Alien</i>
5	Where were you born? <i>Shedden Mine Quebec Canada</i>
6	If not a citizen, in what country are you a citizen or subject? <i>United States</i>
7	What is your occupation? <i>Ship Fitter's Helper</i>
8	By whom employed? <i>Barre Ship Yard Philadelphia Pennsylvania</i>
9	Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 18, or a sister or brother under 18, wholly dependent on you (or support (specify which)? <i>no</i>
10	Married or single (which)? <i>Single</i> Race (specify which)? <i>Caucasian</i>
11	What military services have you had? Rank <i>no</i> : branch : years : Nation or State
12	Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? <i>no</i>
I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.	
<i>Arthur Merrill Miller</i> (signature of registrant)	

³ "Soldiers Leave to Join First Vt. Regiment," Montpelier Evening Argus, Saturday, 9 Feb 1918, page 4

Matoika.” On page 22 of the passenger manifest, and in 3rd Class, we find passenger No. 82. He is Miller, Arthur M., 557794, an infantry private of Company B, 47th Regiment. He listed Mrs. Mary Miller, his mother, of Websterville, VT as his emergency contact person. Word got back home in the May 29th edition of the Barre Daily Times that Arthur had arrived safely.

“Princess Matoika.”

Built in 1900, the ship began life as a German merchant steamship, the “Kiautschou.” She became the “Princess Alice” when sold in 1904, and became property of the US Navy in April of 1917 and used as a troop ship, USS Princess Matoika, ID 2290. After several more owners, the ship was sold for scrap in May of 1930 in Japan.⁴

The ship displaced 20,500 tons, had a length of 545 ft. and had a draft of 29’-6”. The ship’s compliment consisted of 449 sailors. Three double ended, three single ended boilers, and two vertical quadruple boilers provide propulsion and the ship could cruise at 15 knots. During her service, the Matoika had four 6”/50 mounts, two 1 pounders, and two machine guns. During World War 1, she transported some 21,216 troops.⁵

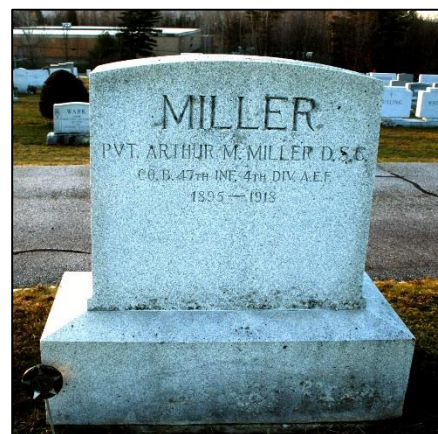


The Death of PFC Arthur Miller

The September 9, 1918 edition of the Barre Daily Times carried an article, “Spaulding Graduate Killed in Action – Private Arthur M. Miller, Whose Home was in Websterville, Gave the Supreme Sacrifice.” Word of Arthur’s death reached his parents on September 7th, Arthur had been killed on August 1st. The article became an obituary and described several aspects of his young life including his affiliation with the Sunday school at the Websterville Baptist Church. The list of survivors included his parents, brothers Harry, James, and Maurice, and sisters Irene, Annie, and Adelia. “It is realized that he died nobly for his country and loved ones at home.”

Arthur began to appear in other papers, including the Barre Times, in the casualty lists for the war. The casualty list released on September 14 in Washington DC had 258 names of those killed, wounded, or missing in action. The Barre Daily Times singled out Arthur while publishing the entire list of 20 killed in action.

Page 885 of roster: * MILLER, ARTHUR M., s/n 557,794. Age: 22 – 4/12 years. Resided in Websterville. Born at Thetford, Quebec, Canada. Enlisted Feb. 14, 1918, Camp Greene, NC. Organizations: Company “B”, 47th Infantry to Aug 1, 1918. Grades: 1/c Private, Jun. 17, 1918. Overseas: May 10, 1918 to Aug 1, 1918. Killed in Action, Aug 1, 1918. Place of burial: Wilson Cemetery, Barre Town.⁶ [The asterisk signifies someone Killed in Action.] Arthur M. Miller can be found in Old Yard 2, Lot 341.



⁴ “Princess Matoika, ID 2290,” US Navy’s NavSource Online website

⁵ “Princess Matoika, ID 2290,” US Navy’s NavSource Online website

⁶ “Roster of Vermont Men and Women in the Military and Naval service of the United States and Allies in the World War 1917 – 1919,” Hebert T. Johnson, Montpelier, VT, 1927.

Miller's Return to Vermont

After the death of Miller, his body had been interred in a cemetery in the village of Nesles, France. Then, in July 1921, the Barre Daily Times reported Arthur would be coming home to Vermont. He would be arriving in New York via ship on July 15 and immediately brought to Websterville for funeral services. A few days later, in the Saturday, July 16 edition of the Barre Daily Times, a news note stated he had arrived. His funeral would be held on Monday afternoon at the Websterville Baptist Church with burial to follow at Wilson Cemetery.

The Barre Daily Times carried details of Miller's funeral in a story with the headline, "Hero of Sergy Given Honor," in the July 19, 1921 edition. Many friend, family, and comrades attended the services. Miller lay in his casket, flag draped and guarded by fellow servicemen from the Barre area. They brought him to the church and a crowd so large, not all could be accommodated inside the church. Rev. Christian Peterson, a former pastor of the Websterville church, officiated the services. Once the church service concluded, a procession led by some 25 American Legion members, brought Miller to Wilson Cemetery and another large gathering of mourners. Max Fisher read the committal service and Mario Barberi sounded Taps.

Burial information;

-- Book 1920/25, page 99. Certificate 108 issued to M. J. Whitcomb for Arthur M. Miller, killed in action 1 Aug 1918 in France at age 19 years, 11 months, and 22 days. Buried at Wilson Cemetery on 18 Jul 1921. W. F. Shepard. (*Note: born in 1895, Miller would have been 23 years, 11 months, and 22 days old at the time of his death.*)

A Bit about the 47th Regiment

The 47th Infantry was constituted on 15 May 1917 as a unit of the regular Army and organized in Syracuse, New York on 1 Jun 1917. Officials assigned the unit to the 4th Division on 19 Nov 1917. They served until deactivation on 22 Sep 1921 at Camp Lewis, Washington. Between the wars, the 47th changed from the 4th to the 7th Division, and came back on line for World War 2 as part of the 9th Infantry Division. They also participated in operations during the Vietnam War. During PFC Miller's war, the 47th has credit for operations during the Aisne-Marne; St. Mihiel; Meuse-Argonne; Champagne 1918; and Lorraine 1918 campaigns. The 47th later became a part of the Army Training and Doctrine Center.¹⁰

In 1936, well after PFC Miller, the 47th received its distinctive unit insignia shown here. As part of the 9th Infantry Division, a division associated with wars in China circa 1900. The dragon in the upper left corner if from that division. The four leaf symbol at the center depicts the 47th's belonging to the 4th Division during the 1st World War in France.¹¹

[*"Keep Up The Fire!" Because I can't resist; the motto of the 9th Infantry Division are the last words spoken by their commander at his death in a battle at Tientsin, China in 1900. He was Colonel Emerson H. Liscum of Huntington, VT, buried at Arlington National Cemetery.*]



A Bit About the Battle for Sergy

Below is a portion of the description of the battle for Sergy from the point of view of the 47th Infantry Regiment over the last few days of July and August 1st. The description is from a book put together by order of the 1919 session of the Vermont Legislature. The description is somewhat difficult to follow as the text moves back and forth, day to day, and unit to unit.

¹⁰ "47th Infantry," US Army Center of Military History, from their website, 22 May 1997

¹¹ "The 47th Infantry Regiment "The Raiders"," Sergt William Shemin, US Army Medal of Honor website

Chapter IV, Sergy and the Ourcq

Near the beginning of the Aisne-Marne Campaign, the 4th Division entered the battle against a well-seasoned German Army defensive line. The area near Sergy was natural for defense and the Germans added in machine guns and artillery, two weapons they had great skill in using. The line also had plenty of infantry troops for backup and added together, the line could inflict very heavy damage on any attackers. The 4th Division, including the 47th Infantry, fought alongside the 26th Yankee Division and the 42nd Rainbow Division. On July 29th, the 47th went into action with other units in an attempt to take the village of Sergy from the enemy. The 42nd had entered the village the day before but had been pushed out by the Germans with their artillery barrages. The 47th took the Foret de Nesles after much fierce hand-to-hand fighting. They resisted counter attacks and occupied the site throughout July 30th. German counter attacks changed the fighting to house to house, and the survivors of the 47th still held the village while others of their soldiers were pushed back to the river. The US soldiers endured heavy machine gun fire, artillery barrages, mustard gas, and attacks by German aircraft. Despite all the attacks, the soldiers rallied and pushed ahead. The US held on to the village, but the Germans could not be driven off. Slowly, the soldiers did push the Germans back. During the night of the 31st, the 168th Infantry relieved the 47th and they were able to withdraw from the village to the Bois de Beuwardelle. It must have been around this time period that PFC Miller lost his life while on his message mission.¹²

Distinguished Service Cross

General Orders Number 6 from the War Department promulgated the Distinguished Service Cross on 12 Jan 1918 and formalized by the US Congress on 9 Jul 1918. The effective date for the awarding of the cross reached back to 6 Apr 1917. The award is made to persons serving in the Army who distinguishes themselves by extraordinary heroism while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States, or in an action against an opposing foreign force on foreign soil. The act or acts of heroism must be notable and involve extraordinary risk of life. The award is just below the Medal of Honor and above all other decorations. The ribbon has a one inch wide blue field at the center and outlined with a thin white stripe and an outer red stripe on each side. The medal has a flat cross topped with an ornamental cross. An eagle with displayed wings is centered on the cross with a circular laurel wreath behind it. The original design had a diamond at the center rather than the laurel wreath. The scroll at the bottom of the wreath is inscribed, "FOR VALOR." The obverse side of the medal shows the back of the eagle's wings and also has a laurel wreath. There is a rectangular plaque on the back for the engraving of the recipient's name.¹³



Some sources:

Ancestry.com for the many vital records reviewed and/or summarized.

Newspapers.com for the many newspaper articles summarized within this document.

Barre Town Clerk's Office

Soldiers of the Great War, Volume 3, Soldiers Record Publishing, 1920, for opening portrait of Miller

Find-a-Grave website

¹² Cushing, John, et. al., "Vermont in the World War, 1917-1919, pps 199 - 201, Free Press Printing, 1928

¹³ "Distinguished Service Cross," rollofhonor.org/public/ website