

# *Around* **KENNESAW**

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# At Home in K

BY ANDREW J. BRAMLETT

After the United States entered World War I in 1917, our nation became involved in a conflict that profoundly affected the 20th century. Life on the homefront, including in Kennesaw, changed drastically.

The most obvious effect of the war was the soldiers who went overseas to fight. More than 45 Kennesaw residents enlisted, and at least three didn't come home alive. Earle Dallas and Essie Roberts Thomas of Kennesaw had three sons who served in the war. Two, Edwin Dallas Thomas and Joseph Thomas, served in the Marine Corps and survived the war. Edwin lied about his age on his draft registration, claiming he was 18 instead of 16.

In late 1918, after Essie Thomas had died, word was received that her other son, John Harmon Thomas, had been killed, but soon afterward, a second message arrived saying that was an error. Four months later, however, it was confirmed that the first message was actually correct and that Thomas had been killed by a German sniper in July 1918. He was laid to rest in the Kennesaw City Cemetery in 1921.

Also tragic was the death of David Mark Hughes, who died from pneumonia at an Ohio training camp in 1918. And Pvt. Hency F. Hefner was killed in October 1918, but very little is known about his story. He was laid to rest at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial in France.

Charlie Jackson Guess was an auto mechanic before the war and joined the military in 1918. Despite having only an eighth-grade education, Guess developed mechanical skills that were famous in our area and were put to good use at Camp Gordon and Fort McPherson. He served overseas for several months as well and, after returning home, had a long career with the railroad.

Another Charlie, Charlie Brown, was believed, at the time, to be the most decorated soldier from Cobb County. He served in the military for seven years and spent 27 months in Europe. He died in 1921, and his tombstone proudly lists every battle he fought in while overseas.

Others tried to join the military but were unsuccessful. Rueben Leonard and Jackson Butler traveled to Atlanta to enlist in April 1917 but were turned down because "one was too light and the other one was not old enough," according to the April 12, 1917, edition of the Cobb County Times.



Joe Bozeman Sr. as Uncle Sam in 1918. Photo courtesy of Joe Bozeman.



Joseph Baldwin Thomas, left, served in the Marines, along with his two brothers. John Harmon Thomas, right, was killed by a sniper in Germany. Photos courtesy of Jana Davis.

# Kennesaw During World War I



*Many local women volunteered to become nurses. Photo courtesy of Joe Bozeman.*

At home, there was a surge of patriotism caused by the war. In August 1918, an event was held at the Methodist church on Cherokee Street to honor the 16 soldiers from Kennesaw who were fighting in the war as well as the one (Hughes) who was known to have died. According to newspaper accounts, Joe Bozeman Sr. dressed up as Uncle Sam, and Mary Lou Bozeman portrayed Miss Columbia. A photo exists from around this time showing the young Bozeman Sr. dressed as Uncle Sam, but it is unclear if it is from the same event. (Longtime residents may know his son, Joe Bozeman Jr.)

Though little documentation has been found, it is known that several local residents volunteered as nurses, as a photo shows them in their uniforms. Others supported the war financially through Liberty Loans. A list of Liberty Loan subscribers was published in the June 14, 1918, edition of the Marietta Journal and Courier. Kennesaw residents at that time had raised \$3,750 (or \$77,500, adjusted for inflation). The largest individual contributions came from J.W. Allgood and M.L. McNeel, who each gave \$500.

One surviving certificate belonged to Benjamin Carrie and is now part of the collection at the

Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History. Carrie also served on the board that sold the bonds locally. Though he was far too old to serve in the military, he still managed to serve his country. When the local mailman enlisted, Carrie took on his duties until the end of the war.

As the war was winding down, the Spanish flu came through Kennesaw and became “an epidemic here,” according to the Oct. 10, 1918, edition of the Marietta Journal. At that time, Kennesaw had seen around 200 cases.

Once World War I was over, life in Kennesaw returned to normal. The railroad and the Dixie Highway, which had opened in 1915 and is now Old 41 Highway, continued to bring commerce to the city. World War I has remained important for remembering the friends who were lost and the sacrifices that were made, and more than 100 years later, it’s fascinating to see how our community adapted.



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