

# **William Vance Hays, Cpl.**

3 May 1895 - 1 November 1918

Updated 2016





*Service record supplied to the Hays-Wesolowski Unit of the American Legion. There are several versions of his record, all prepared by his step-sister Nellie Hays Schall. His service record cannot be confirmed officially because a fire on 12 July 1973 destroyed most of the service records of the soldiers who served from 1912 to 1959. The first version below is an amalgam of the information from the three versions prepared by Nellie. The second version was found in the records of the Legion post and is likely more correct since it was prepared sometime after World War II when more information was available.*

#### Version 1

Corporal William Vance Hays	Serial No. 1,826,457
Born: May 3rd 1895 at Imperial, Pa.	
Parents: Emma Whetstone & Lewis C. Hays	Unmarried.

#### ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Mustered into service: Sept 8th 1917 at Coraopolis, Penna.  
Died of wounds Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 near Sommerance & Immacourt--Argonne Forest.  
Co. E., 319th Infantry, 160th Brigade, 80th Division.

#### OPTIONAL INFORMATION

Promoted from 1st Class Private to Corporal.  
Wounded in action Nov. 1st, died in Evacuation Hospital No. 14 Nov. 1st.  
Trained Camp Lee, Petersburg, Va.  
Overseas from May 30th 1918 until Nov. 1st 1918 when wounded going over the top.  
Aug 1st relieved English, Sept 26 Bois de Jure, Oct 4th Over the top at Nantillose, Oct 6th to 15th Bois de Ogon, Oct 26th at front until wounded Nov. 1st 1918.  
Citations: Good Marksman and carried automatic machine gun. He and one Patterson have been credited by Co. E men, who have even offered to take an oath on it, to be the first American soldiers of the A.E.F. to cross the Meuse River into German territory.  
"Hays and Patterson were sent out, under cover of darkness, to reconnoiter. They crossed Meuse River, saw German watchman asleep in his little house. Hays patted German's dog on head keeping it quiet. They returned and reported to Noone, then Co. E. Commander."  
I understand it was Sept 25 or 26th following capture of 2 Germans who gave false location of river. Hays and Patterson were sent out and crossed the river.

## Version 2

Corporal Wm. Vance Hays was the second soldier from Imperial to give his life for his country in First World War and the third member of 1917 class of Coraopolis H.S. from which he graduated. He left from RR station on evening of Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>, 1917 with the first contingent of men for Camp Lee, Va. and sailed overseas in May 1918.

Vance was a member of Co. E-319<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 80<sup>th</sup> Division and was with the British in Flanders. When wounded in action, he was serving under Gen. J.J. Pershing with the famous Blue Ridge Division of American Forces at the Meuse Argonne battlefield. His division was one of the few called up three times in last big drive.

Early on the morning of Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918 as he led a group of men across an open space-a German up in a tree shot him in the side – he died later that day in a hospital of shock hemorrhage. He was buried at Les Islettes, France – later his body was returned to Imperial and interred in family plot at Valley Church Cemetery.

Vance was born May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1895 son of Lewis C. Hays and Emma Whetstone – whose father Abraham Whetstone – an Iowa Volunteer in Civil War – died at its close and is buried in Spring Grove National Cemetery at Cincinnati, O. On his father's side he is descended from a soldier of the Revolutionary War – Moses Hays of Sussex Co. N.J.

A sister Margaret died when small – a brother died Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>, 1935. He is survived by two sisters, Mrs. Alma Hays McMichael and Mrs. Nellie Hays Schall.



1916 Coraopolis High School Football team. Vance is center right in the back row with his head near the door pull. While most of the other players are not known, the one to his left was Merle McConnell. The coach was Joseph Harper. He graduated on 21 June 1917.

Form 10.

I hereby certify that on the ..... 5 ..... day of Oct. ..... 1912  
 I vaccinated ..... Vance Hays .....  
 Age ..... 17 ..... Address ..... Coraopolis Pa. ....  
 and that on the ..... day of ..... 190 ..... I find a resulting  
 sore, which in my opinion means a successful vaccination.  
 S. A. Stahlman ..... M. D.  
 Address ..... Coraopolis Pa. ....

All certificates bearing date after Sept. 15, 1906, must be in above form.

## Prologue

On the eve of the Great War, my Mother's family was living quietly in the western corner of Allegheny County, just west of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It was a time of boom in the area because many of the local farmers were selling their rights to the coal on their land at what they thought was extravagant prices. Most of these farmers continued to farm the land for a while after the sale of their mineral rights. This was the case for my Mother's family. However, the mining companies would soon devastate the land by converting them into strip mines.

When war was declared, the Lewis Cass Hays family was living on a farm near Imperial, Pennsylvania. Lewis, whom everyone called L.C., was proud of his herd of Holstein dairy cows. He was prosperous from shipping his milk to the city on the local railroad. At the age of 57, he was in the process of retiring from farming and turned his farm over to his oldest son, Edward Hindman Hays. His wife wanted to move into town, and he was searching for a new home in the town of McDonald to share with his wife Emma and his youngest son, William Vance, and youngest daughter, Alma Estelle.

William Vance and Alma were the children of his second marriage to Emma Whetstone. He first met Emma, a distant cousin, when she visited his Father on a trip to the area in 1883. He did not court her then, but instead married Flora Hindman who bore him three children. His first two children were named Nellie and Edward. Sadly, he lost both his wife and third child when she died in childbirth in 1892.

With the loss of his first wife, he began to cast around for a second wife and, remembering Emma, started a correspondence and sent letter after letter to her at her home in Cambridge, Ohio. While L.C.'s letters were roughly written, they were sincere and eventually he worked up the courage to propose to her. She accepted. After their marriage in 1894, his new wife moved to Pennsylvania to be with him.

His new wife was a very independent woman. She already had enjoyed steady employment as a seamstress in Schaser's Tailor shop in Cambridge, where she was well known for her capacity to make high quality button holes, something that had to be done by hand at that time. Before she married L.C. she made it very clear that she was going to handle her own finances. She was also an ardent Prohibitionist and Suffragette. She was a very strong willed and independent woman.

After she moved to Pennsylvania, she and L.C. set up housekeeping in the original Hays log cabin. There she took on the care of L.C.'s two other children, who seemed to be relieved to escape L.C.'s sister Allena Hays Stewart who had cared for them

after his first wife's death. Allena was a demanding woman and Emma soon developed a quiet enmity toward her for because of Allena's condescending attitude. Her step children, however, quickly developed an affection for Emma.

Emma soon had children of her own. The first child was William Vance, named for his Grandfather. The second was my Mother Alma Estella, named after two of Emma's best friends. The third, Margaret died while she was still a very young child. When Margaret died, Emma clipped a lock of her hair and placed it in a small jar and pressed the flowers she that had been placed in her hands in the coffin.

So on the eve of the Great War, L.C. Hays' family consisted of his wife Emma and four children. Three of the children were still living at the farm. His oldest daughter, Nellie, had recently married Earl I. Schall, a school teacher at Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania and Nellie moved there to be with him.

The United States declared war on Germany and the other Central Powers on April 6, 1917. When war was declared, the United States Army barely had 120,000 troops. To raise enough troops for the conflict the Congress passed the Selective Service Act of May 18, 1917. This law required the registration of men for service in the armed services. There were several Categories of registration. The most likely to see service were those in Category I. This included young men without dependents. William Vance, who everyone called Vance, fell into this category and he registered in June of 1917, the same month he graduated from Coraopolis High School. He was inducted into the army on September 5, 1917. He was 22 years of age and still working on his father's farm.

The remaining course of Vance's life is described in the following letters that were lovingly preserved by his Mother. Her daughter, my mother Alma, passed them on to me. Except for a few clarifying notes, the letters bring Vance to life again and speak his tale.

John C. McMichael  
March 4, 2011

## Youthful attachment: Correspondence with Burretta Reed

Addressed to  
Mr. Vance Hays  
Coraopolis, Pa.

Chester, W.Va.

Dear Friend,

I'll bet you think I'm a Peach don't you? But truly I intended to write sooner but just put it off. This evening when I was just getting ready to write there was the strangest whistle blow and everybody ran to see what it was and it was a fire away down below Wellsville and all that running was for nothing.

I was at the Burgettstown Fair and had a dandy time. Mary Burns was there. I just talked to her a few moments. I saw lots of Clinton People. McCullough was there. I didn't see many Imperial people, but suppose they are building up for the Imperial. Are you going? I did think of going out for the fair but I guess I won't now. Save up for the next summer. If Clinton still stays there I am going out (next summer) a good while ahead. You said in a letter you wrote me about Charley W. being careful or someone else would cut him out. I see now who you mean. "Get me?" I was out at Hookstown last Sunday a week. A girl that works in the store beside me and I went out. Hookstown is some place. We went out with her friend and his name was Hays. Sort of funny wasn't it.

I looked at him real close to make sure it wasn't you, but it wasn't. Well it is almost midnight. I can hardly see. Guess I had better close. Hoping

you get this all right and I hear from you soon. Does that still go as Wilson Place.

Sincerely

Burretta

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Addressed to  
Mr. Vance Hays  
Coraopolis, Pa.  
Wilson Place

Chester, W.Va  
Jan 5/15

Dear Friend:

I suppose you think I have forgotten the people in "Penn." but never the less I haven't. I suppose you got a bunch of pretty things for "Xmas." McCullough's are having some time aren't they? Did Harold come back to school? We (in the store) are having some time taking stock. I never got into such a "dose." We were all home for the Holidays and it is sort of lonely now. How was the Entertainment at Imperial? Jeannette Patterson said she saw you while she was home. I was supposed to go to a class meeting (Sunday School) but I thot I would rather stay home and write to you (what an honor to you). Hey?

A bunch of the girls are going to have a cover dish party next Friday night. We expect some time. We made candy last night. We had Christmas tree and no one has had time to take it down yet. Think of it, almost two weeks since Christmas. I suppose you had big goings at "Corry." I hear someone on the porch

and I think I'll go. I am getting "frightened." I intended sending you a card tonight and had it all ready to send and forgot to send. Isn't that a shame. Answer real soon. Sincerely

Burretta

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Addressed to  
Mr. Vance Hays  
Coraopolis, Pa.  
Wilson Place

Chester, W.Va.  
Jan /15

Dear Friend--

Since you have been so good about going to church, I'll let the writing drop. Skating has simple been a dream down here, just great. I suppose you are enjoying school as usual. We, a bunch of girls from the store, had cover dish party. Talk about fun, we had a real circus. I was to a taffy pulling last. This staying up at night and working all day doesn't agree with me. Is Wilson Adams going to school at Corry yet? Is Charles Wilson going with Mary Burns yet? I should say I am glad it rained last Sabbath, and wish it would next too.

I might go up to Imperial sometime in the near future with Jeanette P. I'm not sure yet. Do you recognize the face at the top of the page? I thought perhaps you had forgotten. Did James Moody and that bunch of boys go back to school again? "How do you like your new girl?"

The train has just come in, "hear it whistle?" I am going to some kind of a Club meet tomorrow night: Fancy Work

Club and "Eats." How's Harold? Do you ever hear of Mary Cool? I have to make a hat this evening, so I had better get busy. Your (sic) getting to be quite a "Poet."

Sincerely

Burretta.

P.S. I would like to have a picture of you. Here's hoping to get it soon. B.



Burretta Reed

## The War Correspondence of William Vance Hays

These letters, with a few exceptions, were all written by William Vance Hays to different members of his immediate family. They are presented in the chronological order in which he wrote them, but some, especially those from Europe, may not have arrived in the same order. There is considerable duplication in what he wrote in his letters. This is because he was writing separate letters to different relatives.

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(Postcard dated Sept. 10, 1917)

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa  
R.F.D. #1

We are in Washington D.C. Red Cross has been feeding us. There are about 1400 soldiers on train here going to Georgia. 217 on our train. We got to Camp Lee about 1 o'clock this afternoon. The women of the Red Cross mail these for us. Will write later

Vance

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(No date)  
Miss Alma Hays  
Imperial. Pa.  
R.F.D. #1

Company # 319 Inf.  
Camp Lee  
Virginia

Dear Alma

We arrived safe at Camp Lee about two o'clock Sunday. Our bunch was physically examined, vaccinated and given a shot in the arm for typhoid fever.

This is some place. You can hardly see from one end of the street to

the other. There are over 50 cots in the room that I am in so there is lots of company. Our captain seems like a nice fellow. He is a southerner. His name is Arnold, but as one of the fellows says, he is no relation to Benedict Arnold.

We passed about 1400 soldiers at Washington. We did not get off except in the Rail Road yards. We could see the Washington monument, capitol building and several other fine buildings, but not the White House. The Potomac River is quite a large stream. We followed it for an hour or so. We didn't go thru Richmond, but we were not far from it. Petersburg is about two miles from camp. About 60,000 inhabitants in it. I will write later. I hope everybody is well. Be sure to put all the address on letters.

Vance Hays

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Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa  
R.F.D. #1

Camp Lee. Sept. 14, 1917  
Co. E. 319 Inf.  
Dear Mother and All,

I received Alma's and Nellie's letter this evening and a card from Earl yesterday. Nellie said something about a letter from you and her. None have come here yet. This is a large place and letters must have the complete address that is (Co. E. 319 Infantry) or it will not get to our barracks. There are about 2300 here now, but in about a week the next 40% will commence to come in.

We have not received our uniforms yet, but they are starting to give them out now. We will have them before bedtime (11:00) o'clock. Lights go out in bunk rooms at (9:15) in halls at eleven. We are always in bed by 8:30 or 9:00. We sleep in separate bunks but Walter Eissler<sup>1</sup> and I shared our bunks together and spread one blanket over the two cots. That leaves three blankets for covers. It gets cold here at night and we can keep warmer that way. Eissler is the nicest fellow in the bunch from Coraopolis. He and Stalman were appointed to handle tickets and everything else on the train coming down here.

It is raining here. We did not drill much today, but Captain Arnold gave us a talk or two. We had the rules read to us yesterday. One was about stealing fruit. We haven't done that unless watermelons are not vegetables.

We have to wash our own dishes. They consist of a combination plate, skillet and general frying pan, a cup, a coffee pot and a knife, fork and spoon, all made of aluminum. After awhile, we will have regular dishes in the mess room. Now they set the eats on the wooden tables and march us up to it. Some of the gang have been making

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Eissler was working for the Pressed Steel Car Company, when he was drafted. He survived the war and died in 1966.

hogs of themselves so the Captain administered a short lecture on table manners. They went slower this evening. Each one has to take his turn in the kitchen and two hours at fire patrol at night. My turn has not come yet. It will only come about once a month.

The captain told us today that our company would be divided up so that each man could do what he was best fitted for. They asked us what we could do and what we wanted to do, but I don't know what chance there is for transfer.

Our company has been complimented by the colonel twice, In drill and this morning our company was given first rank and asked to lead in singing at a little celebration in honor of the flag. Our Captain was as pleased as a boy with a new pair of red topped boots.

A collection was taken up in our barracks to buy a victrola and newspapers. The music box will come about tomorrow. Pittsburgh papers cost from 4¢ to 25¢ here and are always from one to two days old. Richmond papers don't have much news in them. The Y.M.C.A will furnish papers and amusement in a short time. The buildings are not complete yet. They have one tent not far from Co. E. We are not allowed to go to Petersburg until we get uniforms.

I am sending you a picture of part of the camp which I cut out of a paper. (We cannot use Kodacks (sic) here.) It will give you some idea of the appearance of the place. It is built in the form of a big horseshoe. We live about the middle of the camp. It is about a quarter of a mile wide, but I can't say how far around. The parade grounds will be in the middle between the two wings. The rail road runs around the outside. We have graded streets, post office, telegraph office and stores. The profits

from the store of the regiment goes to provide butter, or other extras in the eating line. We get butter about once a day, but I don't miss it much for everything is good. We don't get sugar except in rice of something like that so candy or cake is always in order down here.

How is everything at home? Is every one well? If we get sick we can go to the hospital. I am well and feeling fine. Some of the boys are a little sick from colds. Only one fellow was sent home from our company. None from Coraopolis. Take care of yourselves and don't work too hard. My watch isn't working very well so if the family wants to send a small wrist watch, I won't object. Don't buy anything expensive for this place.

Well goodnight,

Wm. Vance Hays

Tell Alma that her cake received some fine compliments. Someone says something nearly every day about it. Of course I shared up with about six of the Coraopolis draftees.

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(Postcard dated Sept, 1917, but day smudged)

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.F.D. #1

I got the box yesterday. Those peaches were fine. I gave most of them away yesterday and some of the cake. The bunch from Coraopolis were over getting the second inoculation this morning. Some of the boys who got theirs yesterday are sick today, but they went to bed right after they got it. We are going to stay up and try to beat them. I don't need any more clothes. The government is furnishing enough. We

are getting plenty of magazines and papers too just now.

Your son, Vance Hays

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Mr. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.F.D. #1

Camp Lee, Va.  
Sunday, Sept. 16, 1917

Dear Father,

How is everything going at home these days. Have you started to fill the silo yet or is it raining too much for anything like that. It has been raining for about three days here. It doesn't get quite so muddy down here as it does at home for the ground is all sand. It sticks to our shoes and we have to sweep about a bushel of it out every morning.

We are being entertained by a talking machine this morning. Someone took up a collection and bought it and a lot of papers and magazines.

We got out uniforms yesterday. One pair of shoes, have hob nail soles, but they are easy on the feet and not as heavy as they look. My outfit comes about as near fitting as it could. Some of the others got their stuff too large or too small.

I am sending my suit, shoes and a couple of shirts home. I found the pictures I wanted to send the other day. I hope all are well. The next 40% of draftees arrive this week.

Well goodbye for this time,  
Vance Hays

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Miss Alma Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.F.D. #1

Co. E. 319 Inf.  
Camp Lee, Va.

Sept. 19, 1917

Dear Sister,

Here are a few views of Camp Lee and a few of the inhabitants<sup>2</sup>. Place the three pictures on something about like this (*here he has a diagram on how to arrange them*) and you will have a general view of most of the camp. I live directly across from the first building in picture No. 2. They were our a real good picture which shows our barracks and gives a better view because it was taken from a water tank about one hundred feet up in the air. The two pictures show only about half of the camp. There are 15,000 horses and mules outside the camp about half a mile. The papers say that \$1,000,000 more will be spent here.

How are you getting along at school? Has Nellie gone to Punxy yet? My arm is not giving me any trouble. The Coraopolis bunch are all on their feet, but most everyone else is sick or stretched out on their bunks. They were more scared than hurt. Well I will stop now.

Your brother, Vance Hays

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Mrs. L.. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.F.D. #1

Co. E. 319 Inf.  
Camp Lee, Va.  
Sept. 23, 1917

Dear Folks,

How is everyone at home? Are you all well and not working too hard? I suppose you all went to church today? We have lots of church here on Sundays in the Y.M.C.A There will be eleven of them when all are finished. They have some sort of an entertainment nearly every evening. A music teacher from

Petersburg brought some of her pupils out last night and gave a recital. They are going to have moving picture shows after while. Camp Lee will be a regular city after while.

I saw the boys from Imperial when they came in and was over to their barracks a couple times. Some of the men over there can't talk English or understand it either. The officers will have their hands full training them. Some of the trains that come in have hardly any Americans on board.

There are only three or four foreigners in our barracks, but they are real decent fellows. One of them was fool enough to let the doctors give him a couple of shots in the arm when he was supposed to get only one. One doctor gave him a shot and told him to get vaccinated. Instead of that he went to another doctor who was inoculating. His arm was sore enough to make him remember the next time and do what he is told.

Is Carl Lewis still farming? Jim Ryan thinks that he will be in Camp Lee about the first of October. So he will have to get his farm in shape to leave before long. I think Mr. Burns, or who ever swore that he was needed was running a big chance. Whoever it was may have a fine time before it is all over.

Several men have disappeared from camp or tried to get away and some were missing when the trains pulled in. They will have a fine time when they are caught. It will be about as bad as training in Camp Lee..

Eissler and I had an invitation to go to church in Petersburg today but we were both working. He is working in the kitchen over in company M and I was on guard for a while.

There is a fellow here by the name of James S. Hays from around

<sup>2</sup> These are the post cards included later in this manuscript.

Pittsburg somewhere. He is just about my build, but two or three years older. He was on guard with me. He seems like a very nice fellow.

I haven't heard anything about the Regal<sup>3</sup> since coming down here. Has Tranter (sp?) collected it as damaged yet? How is the Overland running? Has anyone taken time to put water in the storage battery? If not, it should be done, or another new battery will be in order.

Achelsons and the boys sent me a box of candy yesterday.

Did the pictures get there?

Don't worry about me too much for I have everything that I need. The U.S.A. furnished us with a cake of soap and two towels one day last week and we have to take two baths a week. The Y.M.C.A. furnishes us with writing paper.

Write soon and tell me the news.

Goodbye for this time

Vance Hays

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Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa  
R.F.D.#1

Co. E. 319 Inf. Camp Lee  
Sept. 26, 1917

Dear Mother,

I just received a letter from Dad and yours was in the next mail. We get three or four mails a day here. I got the letters you and Nellie wrote. I don't suppose that a letter would get to me now if it was not completely addressed. When sending anything down here be sure to tie it up so that it will resist all sort of bumps. They don't take much pains with the mail. Most every package that comes in is dinged. The peaches you

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<sup>3</sup> The Regal was a brand of automobile and there are several mentions of it in these letters.

sent were bruised and didn't keep very well, but they didn't have much chance to keep.

Tell Bird Aten that it would be all right to send magazines to the Y.M.C.A. Just address them to the Y.M.C.A. Camp Lee, Va. As for bed ticks, we have them now and plenty of straw. The bunks have springs and so are right comfortable. We don't have any place as yet to put our extra dry goods. After while there will be some shelves put in for us. We are over crowded just now. They put about 40 extra men in with us for awhile.

Did Ed pass the examination? I suppose he would. They are keeping nearly every one that comes up here. They are sending a couple of Clinton fellows home. One of them is a McLaughlin and I don't know the other one's name but they are both about as little use as two people could be to the country. I haven't seen any of the last bunch for two or three days. They are never around when I go over to Co. M. I think Himie was transferred to another Co. for I can't find him in M. but he is in 319 Inf somewhere.

Co. E and Co. A had a football game this afternoon. Co. A won. Some of our fellows are sick from their vaccinations.

We are going to get our guns this evening. That only means more work for us. They will be all greasy. We will have to clean all the grease off of them this evening so that we can use them tomorrow in drill.

I don't know just what was the matter with the watch. The spring must have jumped loose. I thot that you might be able to get it fixed free, or make them give you another one.

I suppose that they are filling the silo this week. I don't know whether that is much harder than our work or not.

We cleaned up a field Monday for the new fellows to drill on. We had to carry three or four trees off and burn the weeds.

That sort of work goes against the grain when the pay is only \$1.00 for day. Especially with some of the men who have been making \$8 and \$10 per day.

Well I will have to quit and take this to the mail box. I will just have enough time to do that and get my gun.

I sent a picture to Nellie and Earl. They were taken at night and so were not as good as they might be.

Your loving son,

Vance Hays

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(Postcard dated Sept. 27, 1917)

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.F.D. #1

Dear Mother,

I got the watch, but it won't run. I am sending it home because there is no place around here to get it fixed. How is everyone at home? Is everyone well?

We have been drilling right hard this week and so have a half day off this afternoon. We will be measured for overcoats and will get out rifles sometime before bedtime.

Your son,

W.V. Hays

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Petersburg, Va., Lee Branch

Sept. 30, 1917

Mr. Edward H. Hays  
Imperial, Pa R.F.D.#1

Dear Brother,

This is the fourth Sunday in Camp Lee. It wasn't much like Sunday

here today for us. Drilled this morning and about an hour and a half this afternoon. Co. E and Co. A are having a contest to see which will go the Virginia State Fair at Richmond. If we get to go it will only mean more work for us. The Major General will inspect the two Co.'s Tuesday.

We signed the payroll yesterday. We haven't seen any pay yet, but they tried to encourage us by presenting us with overcoats.

I suppose you passed did you? You should see some of the human scarecrows they send up here. Last week there were about 40 men put in our barracks for a few days. One had some sort of a fit the first night. Some one walked down an aisle between the beds and stepped on his head. He got down on the floor somehow. Another one had heart trouble and fell over. I noticed that they were walking straight and seemed happy the morning that they started home.

Jim Ryan was in the hospital for couple of days last week. He was only homesick I guess. This is no place to be sick. At least not yet for they don't have any nurses yet.

I suppose that if some of the farmers in the county got exempted, you could. We got a lesson at gardening a few days ago when the major wanted a field cleaned up. We had to pull the weeds out of it and dig four or five stumps. Naturally, we didn't hurt ourselves by hurrying. We haven't been able to get away from the barracks in the evening all week. They have had something to do every evening such as issuing rifles, bayonets, measuring for overcoats and so on. There isn't any thing to go to but we can go visiting or something when we are not kept in.

I have had supper and about an hour of drill since writing the above. I am in the Y.M.C.A. just now listening and writing at the same time.

How are the Regals? Has Francis come across yet, or has he taken the Regal as damages? We were out on the road today marching. There were a lot of machines coming towards us when a guy in a big National tried to pass between the marching column and the other cars. He was trying to look in too many directions at once so he scraped another car and scraped some old ladies' arm. Our captain stopped the procession long enough to get the car's number. I suppose the fellow will get his pretty soon.

Is the silo filled yet? One of the companies cleaned out a field of corn in about two hours Friday. They didn't stop to husk it or any thing else. It is a good drill ground now.

Has Isadore come back to town since they chased him out, or is that a fake story? We hear all sorts of stories down here about affairs at home. How is every one at home? Don't let them work too hard. And you want to think a couple of times about how nice home is before you come down here. This place is alright but we have been tied down to work all the time. It won't be so hard in a week I hope. I expected to go to Petersburg to church today and then go out to dinner, but nothing doing today. Perhaps the invitation will be good for next Sunday.

Well be careful if you can't be good.

Your brother,  
Wm. Vance Hays.

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(No envelop)

Co. E. 319 Inf., Oct. 9, 1917

Dear Folks,

It is raining here today so we have a little time off. We have been drilling for our trip to the Fair at Richmond this week. Only about one hundred men will get to go. The captain lined us up yesterday and picked out about fifty to stay at home. It won't be much fun I guess. We will have to march for an hour or two.

A fellow by the name of Parsons and I went to church Sunday in Petersburg, We were invited out to dinner and naturally we went. Hoag<sup>4</sup> was the name of the people. They set us up a fine chicken dinner. They were real nice people. The grandfather was in the Civil War. He had to leave right after dinner, so we didn't get much out of him.

We were out on a march for two hours Sunday morning, but we got to church in time.

About sixty of us were moved into another building one day last week. About one hundred new men were put in our other home. That makes 250 in our company instead of 150 as it was at first. We have to go back there for our meals and everything else.

I got Alma's cake and the box of candy. The cake was fine. I was all gone by dinner time the next day. The candy lasted two days. I got the papers, but haven't had much time to read them.

Oct. 10. I will try to finish this today. We had to go to a lecture and then stay around until they issued winter uniforms. They are for our trip to Richmond. We may not get to keep them very long.

It is not very warm here this morning and I expect that it is sort of frosty around Imperial. We will get

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<sup>4</sup> Based on US Census data, this was probably the Irwin P. Hoag family.

warmed up this morning out on the drill field.

How is everyone around home?  
Does Ed have to come down here? I saw  
Al Doughty and Wayne Gould.

Well I have to finish later or  
write again sometime soon.

Goodbye for this time  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

(Postcard dated Oct. 13, 1917)

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.F.D. #1

I haven't gotten a sweater yet, so  
you can tell Agnes to send it on. It will  
be fine for the cold mornings. I got a  
letter from Nellie yesterday. They are  
still kicking I guess. I am sending Alma  
a little souvenir from the Richmond Fair.  
We had about an three hours to look  
around at the fair and drilled an hour.  
How is Harriet getting along with the  
Boggiter. Well I will have to go to  
dinner for if we don't get there on time  
we don't get any. I always get mine.

Goodbye, Vance Hays

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.F.D. #1

Camp Lee, Va.  
Oct. 19, 1917

Dear Dad,

How are you and all the rest of  
the family? I suppose that it has snowed  
some up there by this time. We are  
having real hot weather here this week.  
Even the nights are warm.

We have been having an easy  
time of it since last Thursday when we  
went to Richmond. We are supposed to

have every Wednesday and Saturday  
afternoons off. This week we really had  
Wednesday afternoon off and also we  
didn't have to do anything yesterday  
afternoon. They even had a show for the  
different regiments. There were several  
thousand men out on the field to see it.  
Five or six of the companies had some  
stunts to see who would get the prize.

Today, I am on as orderly at the  
overflow barracks. That is I am to see  
that it is swept out and scrubbed. I was  
only supposed to have charge of E  
company's room but the colonel didn't  
like the looks of the other three rooms on  
his inspection trip this morning so I have  
charge of the whole thing this afternoon.

The dust is blowing around  
something awful this afternoon. It is so  
fine that it will come thru the cracks  
around the windows. I have to keep them  
all closed so it is good and warm in here.  
The wind blows nearly all the time here.

Several if the boys got moved  
today to the hospital corps. They will  
have an easy time as long as they are in  
camp Lee, but a hard time if they ever go  
across to France. Four or five hundred  
from the lower end of the camp started  
for Georgia this morning. They will be  
used to fill up the 18th Regiment. About  
3000 are to go.

One of the boys just told me that  
there is a package for me up at the other  
barracks. I suppose it is something to  
eat. Again McCreay is sending me a  
sweater but I don't think it will get here  
for a day or two yet.

We had quite a fine time at  
Richmond. We had to march about six or  
eight miles and give a show on the  
grounds. We got there about 11:00  
o'clock and didn't have to drill any until  
2:30 so we had a chance to see the fair.  
They had some fine stock there, but I  
doubt if it came from Virginia. I haven't

seen a cornfield big enough to keep a pig for two months. Not because the land won't raise corn, but because the people are too lazy to plant it. I can't see how the people make a living.

There were some tractors and all sorts of machinery at the fair so I guess there are some farms around Richmond. Richmond is a fine town. They let us march past the Governor. Then we strolled out thru the finest street of the city, "Broad Street."

I got a letter from Emily<sup>5</sup> yesterday. She seems to be well. She said that they had all been trying to sleep but Elizabeth had kept them all awake.

I suppose you will be riding on the new railroad in a week or two. Which one is it? The high road or the low one?

How is Ed's courting coming on? Of course I mean the Regal case.

How are you getting along in the Overland, is it still going good? There are lots of Overlands down here.

How is Mamma? Don't let her work too hard, and take it easy yourself. People around here seem to be able to live without working at all. How does Harriet like Boggs by this time?

Heimie Silverblatt said to remember him to you folks when I wrote. He is Company Clerk for Co. B. 319 Inf.

Well that is about all I have to say just now so I will close till another time.

Your son, Vance Hays.

\* \* \* \* \*

Postmarked Oct. 28, 1917  
Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.D. #1

Sunday Morning, 1917

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<sup>5</sup> This is Emily Stewart, his cousin.

Dear Mother,

Breakfast is over and all is well with me. I don't have a thing to do today so I can go to church for the third time. Perhaps I can get invited out to dinner again.

I got a week end pass. It was supposed to let me off at 1:00 Saturday but we had to move again back to our old barracks, so the passes were not issued until evening. The guards around camp hardly ever look at the passes, but if anyone is found out after eleven o'clock without a pass he will find himself in the guard house.

I got the watch. It is fine and is going fine. The wrist band is just the color of my clothes. I got a loaf of nut bread, a cake and some butter from Nellie and Earl yesterday. If Nellie baked it herself she made a fine job for it tastes fine.

The reason that Alma never got her souvenir was that it was not sent until about two evenings ago. I am sending a couple more pictures that were taken at Hoag's where Parsons and I had dinner one Sunday. We were both invited there last Wednesday evening for supper but I couldn't go. I am holding a pair in my fist.

I had a letter from Meryl McConnell yesterday. He said that they had sold their coal for about \$30,000. That will be nice for them won't it.

Alma doesn't seem to think much of the Armour bus system. Does it not work at all times or what is the trouble. She talks about snow in her letter. We haven't seen a bit of snow yet. We have all the windows open this morning. It is nice and warm. It isn't always so nice.

I saw Carl Lewis's name in the paper at day or two ago. So I suppose he will be in Camp Lee before long. Isadore's name was in about a week ago.

The last bunch from Coraopolis are going to be sent further south. You should have seen the niggers coming in to camp yesterday. They were all shined up. One bunch had a band and a preacher to lead the procession.

Did you ever get my clothes that I sent home? I just want to make sure that they arrived for they were insured.

How is everyone at home? I am well and getting fat. I only weigh 150 pounds now so you see this life is not hurting me much.

Well, I will close now. Write soon and tell me all the news.

Your son,  
Vance

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(No envelop)

Nov. 6, 1917

My Dear Earl,

How are you and friend wife these beautiful, chilly November days? I suppose that there was a grand celebration on the first anniversary of your bondage, Nov. 4? I wonder which is worse, army life or married life?

I would have written Sunday but about forty of Co. E went on guard at 9:00 Sunday morning and didn't get off until Mon. evening at 6:00. It is some sweet job believe me. A guard stays on his post two hours and gets off four. That sounds good enough, but sleep is about out of the question. First, there are no cots in the guard house. Then, every two hours about a dozen go out to relieve the others. Naturally, there was some disturbance which was not meant to cause sleep. We had an extra long session. 32 hours in all. I was guarding a coal pile for twelve hours and prisoners for about an hour when I should have

been eating dinner. We all took a bath and hit the hay rather early last night.

There are six prisoners in the guard house. Three or four are deserters, one stabbed a fellow, and another one got pickled and tried to shoot out all the lights in B Co. barracks.

Two of our boys left today. They were transferred to the quarter master department somewhere in N.Y. They expect to sail for France in few days. Two left last week for the Aviation school in New Jersey. Sixteen were transferred to Co. C 319 Inf. Some have been moved from nearly all the Co.'s to others to fill them up and to get a few men that can understand English. Walter Eissler was one of the ones sent to Co. C but he is going to get a transfer soon which will eventually land him in France as high muckey muck in a spring repair station behind the lines. I wish that I knew enough to attract the eye of the war department along some such line as that. Eissler left a \$300 job to come here. He is on half pay now and gets a bonus besides. Isn't it nice to have brains.

Say son, if you get a chance take the examination for an aviator. The two fellows who were transferred took it sometime before they were drafted.

There was a detail out today digging a trench for us so I guess we will have some drilling in it soon. We are getting skirmish practice and scouting now. We flop down on the ground and run forward and flop again. Today we had to crawl.

Several of us are taking a try at the signal business, semaphore and Wigwag. It is quite interesting work and takes lots of practice.

I just witnessed a good movie picture in the Y.M.C.A. They furnish a picture about every other night and

sometimes have a regular show of vaudeville stunts in the big auditorium.

Please convince Nellie that I am warm enough. Heavy underclothes were handed out last week. They are fine in the morning and evening but about 80° too hot at noon. Also, we have overcoats and I can wear my sweater and two shirts if I feel so inclined.

I hope that you are both well and happy and not working too hard. I am alright and O.K. The folks at home say that they are well.

I am not worrying much about getting a furlough for Thanksgiving but I hope that I can get one for the Holidays.

Well I am sort of tired this evening from my two days on guard so I will go home to bed. 5:45 comes quickly when one is working hard so,

Good night,

Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

(No date, approximately Nov. 10.)

Miss Alma Hays

Imperial, Pa.

Nov. 4, 1917

Co. E., 319 Inf.

Dear Sister,

Today ends my second month in Camp Lee. I have a job today as is usually the case on Sunday. About forty of us are on guard today. We went on at 9:00 this morning and will not get off until 5:00 Monday evening. We are on guard two hours and off four. I go on again at three o'clock. I am guarding a coal pile to see that no one gets away with it.

Some of the fellows have to take the prisoners out for a walk this afternoon. No one likes that job. If any work is to be done they get a prisoner

out and make him do it. One of the prisoners was put in the guard house because he got drunk one night and commenced to shoot out all the electric bulbs in Co. B barracks.

I got your box of eats. It is not all gone yet, but is going. Everything was in fine shape when it arrived. Some of the boxes that came are all smashed out of shape. Nellie sent me a box of cake. It came on Saturday and your box on Sunday so I was well supplied.

I went to church social in Petersburg on Wednesday evening. They entertained us with games and fed us apples and cake.

Co. E. was honored one day this week by a visit from Major General Cronkite, Gov. Brumbaugh<sup>6</sup> and Gov. Stewart of Va., and several other big guys of the army. Sixteen from Co. E. were transferred to Co. C. Eissler was one of the ones transferred. Co. C. is mostly all foreigners who can hardly speak any English. The boys don't like it over there at all. No one seems to know just why they were transferred. I guess that they will put some more new men in our Co. The next gang is supposed to come in today.

We had quite a fine dinner today. Roast veal and potatoes with rice and raisin pie for dessert. This is the first time that we have gotten pie. We get cake sometimes but not very often.

Last Sunday I had dinner at Hoag's again. They are something like Ackelsons. One of them gave me a fancy work design for Mamma. I don't know whether I will get it into this letter or not. Mr. Williams, the brother-in-law, and Archie Hoag took Mr. Parsons and I thru a cotton mill where cotton is started in as a ball and comes out as cloth.

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<sup>6</sup> This was Martin Grove Brumbaugh, Governor of Pennsylvania.

How is school going? Do you have to work very hard this year, or are the (Seniors) not supposed to work? Does Harriet have much trouble with the Boggitic (sic)?

Well, I have to go out to my coal pile pretty soon, so I will stop for a while at least.

Your brother,

Vance

P.S. I suppose Earl and Nellie are celebrating today.

\* \* \* \* \*



Vance at ease. Photo from album of Elizabeth Bell, his Mother's best friend.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.

Nov. 12, 1917

Dear Folks,

How is everyone at home? I hope that you are all well at least. Nearly everyone around here has a cold. They bark at night and wake the rest of us up. I have escaped real well so far.

In some of our drilling we have to lay down on the ground. We go out on patrol work every afternoon and in that we may have to lay behind a timothy stalk for half an hour or so. They have given us overalls to wear so we roll around in all sorts of places.

I don't have a gun just now, so that makes it much easier. They gave some of guns to the new men.

There are several French officers here now training our officers. One of them was in the trenches for three years. They stay at Headquarters most of the time so we don't see them very often.

Grin(sp?) Stewart from Cliff Mine is in Co. F. He has been here about three weeks. He was drafted from Wilkinsburg I believe. Raymond Adams is in Headquarters Co. of our Regiment. I found him one day last week.

There have been several transfers from Co. E. About sixteen were sent to Co. C to help civilize some of the foreigners. Eissler has been sent to Washington and will soon be sent to France to take charge of a spring factory. Stahlman has gone to headquarters as clerk. Two others have gone to Fort Jay, N.Y. They expect to go across soon as clerks in the Quartermasters department.

There was an airship in camp yesterday but I didn't see it. About a dozen from Co. C. got week end passes and went to Richmond Saturday evening. I was one of the bunch. I went with a boy by the name of Sawhill who says that he is related to the Donalsons. Six of us met at the Y.M.C.A. in Richmond and hired an automobile to see the sights of the town. We saw

everything from the horse Stonewall Jackson rode to the church where Patrick Henry made his famous speech. The old caretaker delivered part of the speech for us. We were at the Confederate soldiers' home. The driver told us that the men were paid a dollar per month and pay day used to be celebrated by getting drunk. The state has gone dry, so they can't get drunk now.

Richmond is a fine city. The streets are wide and most of the buildings look new. The people are great for statues of the Civil War veterans.

I suppose you saw in the paper that Gov. Brumbaugh was in camp last week. Co. C. led the procession as usual. The 319th and 320th Regiments were on the job when he delivered his speech.

We had a smoker in the mess hall last Wed. evening. We had ice cream and cake and a regular supper. They are planning for a big dinner Thanksgiving. After supper we were entertained by songs, speeches and such dope as that. The Major and Colonel seemed to enjoy themselves, for they surely did eat.

I had a letter from Nellie yesterday. She said that Leroy Schall had taken a flying trip to N.Y. with some army aviators. I guess she meant by airship.

We were paid again Saturday. That is the reason that I went to Richmond. I only got \$20 for I bought a liberty bond on the installment plan. The money is taken out of one's pay so it is never missed.

I saw Rev. Gibson. He came into the barracks Wednesday. I happened to be in the kitchen that day so I didn't see him very long.

Well, I will close now or I won't have anything to say next time.

Vance

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(No envelop)

Co. E., 319 Inf. Nov. 18, 1917

Dear Alma,

Another week has passed and all is well. As usual, our Saturday afternoon holiday was busted. About forty of us went on guard yesterday at one o'clock and got off this morning at nine. It wasn't a very long job this time, but I am a little sleepy today. It seems sort of foolish to parade around with an empty gun on your shoulder. We use a bayonet on the gun and it would do more damage than a bullet at close range.

I stopped a little wop last night. He was scared so that he could hardly answer me when I asked him what he was doing out after 11:00 o'clock. A fellow has to keep his eyes open because the officers come around once and awhile to see how things are going.

We have a couple of trenches to jump into with a wire fence in front of them. The officers are taking lessons from the Frenchmen who are here and then they teach us the same stuff.

The whole regiment had their pictures taken one day last week. One of the pictures must have nearly 4000 in it. I guess some of the pictures men think that they will get our postal cards to send home telling the people to watch for Camp Lee pictures in the movies.

I suppose that if all stories are correct, Ed is married by this time. In that case, I suppose we have a sister-in-law as well as a brother-in-law. About half of the fellows down here have told me real confidentially that if they had not been drafted they would have been married by this time.

Have you had any rides on the new railroad yet? I suppose Harriet rides up to Bogg's on it every morning.

I guess that most all of us will have to stay in camp on Sundays hereafter because no more passes will be given out except to those who have friends or relatives in Petersburg, or somewhere near. Then passes will be hard to get.

Is the corn all cut yet? How are things in general? We have spoiled two or three corn fields by walking them in search of the enemy. We most always go out for about two hours in the afternoon on scouting expeditions.

There are quite a lot of visitors in camp today. Quite a lot of them are over looking at the trenches now.

Well I guess that I will quit now and go out for a walk. It is a fine summer day in every way even to about two inches of dust on the ground. It hasn't rained for about three weeks.

From your brother  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.

Camp Lee, Nov. 25, 1917  
Dear Folks,

This week has slipped away as if it had been greased. I don't know why but I guess that I didn't bother thinking about it. We are still drilling hard. Just now we are throwing hand grenades made out of cement. The officers are learning with dynamite bombs. There was quite a lot of noise Friday afternoon.

One day the French officers show our officers how the work should be done and then the next day we get the same things to do. We have a few little shelter tents that we set up and tear down about once a day. About the time they get enough of them for every one, we will have to go out on a hike for a few

days I presume. We may use them on the rifle range.

The 319th Regiment football team played the marines in Washington yesterday. Col. Cochen gave permission, or rather passes, to about three hundred and got a special train. I was lucky enough to get a pass so I have been in Washington D.C. We started at five o'clock Sat. morning and got there about half past eleven. The Red Cross fed us and after that, we paraded to the football field.

Our team got trimmed about 28-0. They have only been together about three weeks while the marines have played together for two years.

Washington is some city, but we didn't get to see much of it. I saw Eissler, but didn't get to talk to him. He told some of the other fellows that he expected to go to France soon.

President Wilson was to be at the game, but he didn't show up. General Cronkhite was there.

About every time the Camp Lee men turned a corner a moving picture machine snapped them. When they were thru, the newspaper men started in, so we ought to have our picture in all shapes.

I was too sleepy today or I would have gone to Hoag's again. Parsons came in about 11:00 o'clock and said that they had invited us again, but I didn't want to go this time. I think that he went by himself this time.

We are going to have turkey for Thanksgiving dinner and all the trimmings. The expenses will come out of the company fund, which everyone was supposed to contribute to. That is if we want something extra we have to help pay for it.

I suppose Nellie will have a fine feed. She sent me another box, so I will

fare pretty good even if I am away from home. I expect to get home for Xmas, but I am not sure that I will yet.

That will be all this time,

Vance

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Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.F.D. #1

Camp Lee, Dec. 1, 1917

Dear Folks,

Do you now that I have been away from home just three months today<sup>7</sup>. It has not seemed so very long for we have been going most of the time. This week has been easy. Wednesday afternoon it rained but we would have had it off anyhow. Thursday was a big day. We had turkey and lots of extra eats such as pumpkin pie and fruit cake all made by the Co. cook.

Thanksgiving was spoiled for some of our men for it was Co. E's time to go on guard. I didn't have to go on this time. Friday afternoon about fifteen of us were given the pleasant job of guarding prisoners and making them work. Most of them are tame enough and don't cause a bit of trouble. The guard must always stay behind his man and be ready to chase him at all times. They were carrying wood part of the time and every time that the prisoner carried a load to the pile I had to follow. They haven't given us any ammunition yet, only bayonets or it wouldn't be necessary to follow them each time. A prisoner is not allowed to have anything to read or write and he can't smoke. He is not allowed to salute an officer or talk to anyone, so a prisoner's life is not a bit nice.

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<sup>7</sup> This date, while close, does not square with other information.

I suppose that you and Alma went to Punxy for your Thanksgiving dinner. How are the Schalls progressing this year. Nellie sent me a cake and a jar of peaches a few days ago. There was a jar of pickles of something but it got completely wrecked.

How is Mr. McConnell getting along with his injured pedal extremity? What was he trying to do? Husk the corn off of his foot? What is he going to do now that he has sold his coal? Mr. McBride must be going to go some if he bought a Hudson and a tractor. I had a letter from Henry Wilson a couple of days ago and he said that Thamie had given the Maxwell to Carrol and he supposed that it would not be safe to go out on the road now.

I will get home about Xmas. Half of the Regiment will go home about Dec. 23, I don't know which day I will get. So far we are only promised five days. That will give only about three days at home. An extremely short time I must say, but I will write later when I get more information on the subject.

Vance

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Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Penna  
R.F.D.#1

Dec. 9, 1917

Dear Mother,

Only about two weeks till Christmas. That isn't very long, but I am sorry to say that my vacation doesn't start until Dec. 29. If there is no change in the schedule, I will be home sometime Sunday Dec. 30<sup>th</sup> and will only get to stay about three days. We may be able to get a little longer, but that is very doubtful.

The last part of the drafted men are coming in about ten days. I guess the trains that bring them down will take us back to Pittsburgh.

Nellie and Alma wrote to me a couple of days ago. Alma seems to like the change in scenery. Earl helps her where the work is a little harder than what she has been doing<sup>8</sup>. Nellie sent some pictures to me. Some of them were taken about three years ago when Wilber was there. I am sending the pictures to you folks.

In your last letter you said you couldn't make out whether it was an 'n' or a 'u' in Hoag. I thought it was spelled with a 'u' until last Sunday. The address is Miss Emma Hoag, High street, Petersburg, Va. Miss Emma Hoag seems to be boss; at any rate she is the older one of the three sisters.

I didn't go to church today but went on a hike with the others. We made about eleven miles this morning. It was so cold that we had to wear our overcoats. This was the coldest morning that we have had. Everything was frozen solid. I didn't believe sand could freeze so solid as it does. The cold snap follows the heaviest and blackest cloud that I have ever seen. It commenced to roll up from the South last night about six o'clock and in a very short time was spread all over the sky.

There was a big parade last Wednesday for Secretary of War, Baker. It took a little over two hours for the outfit to march by. About 172 men will pass a spot in one minute, if in regular marching formation.

I want to write to the Schalls and their boarder so I will quit now. I hope

this finds every one well and in good spirits.

Vance.

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(Postcard postmarked Dec. 13, 1917)

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa

Nov. 12, 1917<sup>9</sup>

The winter has arrived at last with about seven inches of snow. The weather has been cold enough for us to wear overcoats at drill. We haven't been doing much except hiking for a few days. We were on guard last night & this forenoon. We always seem to get the changes in weather such as rain on thanksgiving and snow this time. I had a letter from Nellie. Alma seems to be enjoying the new school life. How are you and Daddy getting along? Don't work too hard. I will be home New Years if nothing happens.

W.V.H.

\* \* \* \*

(No envelop)

Camp Lee  
Dec. 16, 1917

Dear Dad,

This is Sunday again. I came to Petersburg and am writing this in the Y.M.C.A. before church time. We have had an easy week on account of the snow here. The people of Virginia told us that they never had much winter here and only about two inches of snow. There is at least six inches on the ground now. This morning it is 26° above zero but this is the warmest of the week.

One of the Army wagons and four mules slid off the road yesterday morning. The wagon turned over and upset a couple of the mules. Mules are

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<sup>8</sup> His sister Alma was attending Paunxatauney High School at this time and stayed with her half-sister Nellie and her husband Earl I. Schall.

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<sup>9</sup> I think Vance misdated this card, since the postmark is clearly marked as indicated.

all the teams used. There are a bunch of horses for the cavalry and light artillery but they have not been used yet.

About ten men from Co. E were transferred Tuesday. I guess they will soon go to France as truck repairmen and drivers. About fifteen more got orders yesterday that they were to be ready to go to the regular army at any time. They will go about Monday. Several of the last bunch are fellows that are lazy, or all the time kicking about something. It wasn't very hard to figure out just why they were being sent away.

I have decided that the rest of us will be kept here for quite awhile yet, for the regiment is only about half as strong as it was. There are to be some new men sent in and it will take about four months training for them.

Now then, I suppose I might as well tell you one time as another that I will not be home at the holidays at all. Our furloughs will not be granted just now because the railroads refuse to haul so many at once. At least that is the reason given to us. I am not the only one disappointed of course, but they should not have told us that we could go home.

That is all this time for it is about time to go to church. How are you and Mamma getting along these fine cold days. Don't worry about me for I am well and have plenty of clothes. I just got a winter outfit a couple of days ago.

Well goodbye,  
Your son, Vance

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(Postmarked Dec. 22, 1917)  
Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Penna.  
R.F.D.#1

Dear Mother,

The papers seem to be right this time. I will get home sometime after New Years, as explained in Nellie's letter.

I just happened to think that the girls would be home by the time the letter would get home so I will put them both together.

Some one played a joke on one of the boys by sending him some candy filled with soap. Of course it was immediately passed around and I was one of those who bit. I wasn't long going to the kitchen for an onion. My mouth still has a rather queer taste in it. I had been cleaning the oil out of a new gun with gasoline and I thought that was on the candy, so I chewed a little longer than necessary.

We will have turkey for dinner Christmas, so we will fare well that way. It is about twenty degrees warmer than it was last week. We haven't done hardly a thing for two weeks except walk. Yesterday they sent us out after holly to decorate the joint. Well I will write again about Xmas day.

W.V.H.

Saturday, P.M.

Dear sisters,

I just received your letter and thought this would be a good time to answer it. If you haven't received my last letter, there is something the matter. If you have, it is very probable that you know that I will not be home for Xmas, or New Years. We will get furloughs, in fact, eight have gone home already. Eight more go before New Years. Christmas day the rest of us draw to see when our turns come. Only three will be permitted to go each day after Jan. 1. It will be about a month and a half before every one gets home at that rate. Let us hope that I draw an early trip home. I

think that we get seven days, so that wont be so bad. I will write home as soon as I find out just when I can come.

Tell Earl that the army isn't just as pleasant a place as some people imagine. It is all right but if a fellow has grounds for exemption I would say to try for exemption. For my part, I believe Earl has.

Stahlman is Sergeant Major in the Headquarters of Camp Lee. He is a clerk and a good one too I guess. He is in line field which is about the highest rank of a non-commissioned officer. Eissler must be in France. No one seems to have heard from him for some time. Gleason another Coraopolis man was sent to Georgia. He will go across in the truck service. I would sort of like to take a whirl at that. No one knows when he is liable to be transferred.

By the way, I would be quite well off if I could die and still live, for I took out a \$10,000.00 life insurance policy this week. It will cost me \$6.50 per month as long as I am in the army and will be good for five years after my discharge from the army. After that time it may be converted into a regular insurance of some kind as a reduced rate. This is promoted by the Government so it is O.K. If I should kick off, \$57.50 would be paid to Mamma each month for twenty years.

Well that will do for this time. I will write later in the week.

Vance Hays

\* \* \* \* \*



Postcard dated Dec. 26, 1917 addressed to his mother. The following is written on back:

I will try to make the best of it even if I am not going to be at home for turkey. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas.

W.V.H.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Postmarked Dec. 27, 1917)

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa  
R.D.#1

Thursday noon, 1917

Dear Mother and Everybody,

Your letter held a couple of real surprises. Now what is going to happen?

I am not sure yet just when I can come home. I would like to come home for the big event, but no one knows until the day comes when he will get home. All our names have been picked out but

not posted yet. If I get to go soon, I will send a telegram when I start. Don't look for it too hard tho.

You have asked me several times about Kaniete Bean. He is a real hard working young fellow. German I believe. He enlisted and is in Georgia I believe. He seemed to think Harriet was about it a couple of years ago.

I would like to get the prospective newlyweds<sup>10</sup> a present but my finances are not of sufficient size to do that and come home too, so I will postpone that until next payday.

We had turkey for dinner Xmas, two kinds of pie, fruit cake, plum pudding and ice cream also grapes and apples and bananas. Then that evening about twenty of us were invited to one of the rich joints in Petersburg for supper after that there was a Christmas tree in one of the parks. There was plenty of eats all around so I fared well enough.

To help the look on Xmas there was another snow. It has made life easy for us today so far. We have only lectures when the weather is too bad.

By the way your candy hasn't come yet. Packages seem rather slow in coming. Miss Emma & Nancy Hoag gave me a handkerchief for Xmas, Parsons gave them a box of candy and I will get them another one later.

How is everything going at home now? Is it very cold now? I came in here night before last and found about an inch of snow on my bunk so you see we have lots of fresh air at night.

One of our cooks had a rather sad Christmas. He got word that his sister had been killed in a streetcar accident in Pittsburgh. He started home Xmas morning. I will have to quit now, but I

wish you all a Happy New Year and many more of them.

May the bride and groom have a most happy married life.

Will write again soon  
Your loving son

Vance.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa  
R.D.#1

Jan. 10, 1918

Dear Mother,

I thot that it would be a little lonesome at home just now after so much fuss and excitement of the past week. Perhaps the new bride is keeping things lively so that the rest of the family is not missed.

I guess the pictures are going to start--They did. It was a love story with a honeymoon in an auto. I have heard of another one which started in a machine.

I got a sleeper on the B.&O. at 10:35 Sunday evening. I was at Ackelsons for supper. The boys went up with me to the train.

Earl and the girls didn't want to go to Ackelsons so I went down there and met them in the B.&O. station. Then train left at 10:15.

By the way, I got another sweater this evening. It is from the Red Cross. Everyone else was putting their names down for one yesterday so I did too. It is a real fine one knit out of brown yarn and by machinery I think.

Our company don't amount to much just now. Ten have gone to officers training school and some more have been sent to the machine gun company. There were only about forty out drilling today out of 250 that used to be here. With the ones who are home,

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<sup>10</sup> His stepbrother Ed married Mabel Anderson on 29 December 1917 while he was home on furlough.

the Co. only has about 110 men. The drill field looks deserted today.

I haven't sampled Sara's cake yet, but most of the candy has been put away. So if you see any of the donors tell them that I said they were fine cooks.

I suppose Daddy made a big sale of live stock on Monday. I suppose that about the time he was doing his selling I was seeing Washington, D.C.

I got into W. about 9 A.M. and didn't start to leave until 3:05 P.M. and didn't leave until 5:00 P.M. I saw all the Government buildings; White House included. I didn't get into anything, but the outside of the buildings all look as if the interiors would be quite interesting. Maybe Mabel can tell you more about Washington than I can, so I won't try to tell you anything about it. I had an upper berth coming from Pittsburgh. I didn't know just how to manage, but experience is a good teacher they say. The porter was a little slow with his ladder, so I performed a few acrobatic stunts and got in anyway. It wasn't very hard to get out in the morning. I think a lower one would be just a little more convenient but a fellow can try anything once.

I hope you folks are not the worse from the serenade and turkey. I am all right now for my cold left me about the time I hit Richmond.

Good night,  
W. V. H.

\* \* \* \* \*

(No envelop)

Camp Lee

Jan. 13, 1918

To the Schalls and their boarder<sup>11</sup>,

It has been one week since our combine departure from the scene of

latest excitement, namely the fireside of the Hays's. I presume you arrived safely at home.

My trip was uneventful except that I wasn't just all together at home in upper 9 seeing as how it was my first experience of the sort. But all in all I got along very successfully. The porter was a little slow with his step ladder, so I just naturally used my experience in climbing out of trenches on the affair and made a very successful entrance.

The train arrived in Washington about 8:30 Monday morning. I proceeded to eat and then started out to see the burg. I went out in a sightseeing bus. Being the forenoon, we didn't get into any of the nice looking joints, but we saw Ford's theater (not Henry Ford's), capitol building, white house, Washington Monument, etc., etc. And on the same trip we saw where all the big cheeses of the Government lived. I felt sort of slighted because the President didn't come out to see me, but I guess he didn't know that I was coming to town.

Co. E. looks as if a cyclone had hit it. 10 men were sent to officer training school, half a dozen more went to the machine gun Co. Six more went to depot brigade and three or four more went to different parts. There are still quite a few at home.

The day after I got back we had about 47 inspections. Even our feet were measured. Gee but I wouldn't have wanted the job. They are expecting some big inspection in a day or two by a big guy from Washington.

I wonder how the bride and groom are getting along after two weeks of married life. I haven't heard from home yet but I guess that they are busy getting adjusted.

I got another sweater last week from the Red Cross. they had a bunch of

<sup>11</sup> The boarder was Alma, Vance's sister.

them for us all that was necessary was to stick my name onto a paper and so I stuck it on with the others and I got a dandy light sweater.

Well I went to the catholic church this morning. I didn't know just how to perform and I didn't have any beads to count, but I got away with it all O.K. The priest talked to himself with his back to the audience and made all sorts of motions. I was all over before I knew what was happening. The priest announced a dance for Tuesday evening. I just naturally know that Rev. Snider would have been shocked at that.

Write when you get time. I have lots of time, but no pep for writing anymore.

From Seine bruder,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Penna

Thursday, Jan. 17, 18

Dear Mother,

I again take my pen in hand. Co. E is on guard today, so I have a little time between shifts. I have the best post in the camp. It is in a little box built on top of one of the buildings. I don't have to carry my young cannon after I get into the room. Just set it in a corner and proceed to look for fire. I can see the whole camp from one end to the other. I have a picture that I will send home in a day or two that will show you just what I am able to see from the tower. I was on from 1 to 3 Wed. afternoon & 7 to 9. 1 to 3 last night and will go on at 1 o'clock this afternoon again.

I just received a letter from Nellie. They got home about 4 in the morning and have been freezing ever since. She was raving about building me

a sweater and I don't know what else. I have two now and they ought to be enough. She said that you were going to knit a helmet for me. It will be all right, but if the weather stays like it is now I won't need it very bad.

You and Dad had better move to Florida until it gets warmer around your section of the world. Perhaps McDonald would be about as exciting a place to him as Imperial. I guess you wouldn't have much trouble getting acquainted over there. You know Mrs. Young and Daddy knows Mr. Peacock so what more would be necessary.

Mr. Englefield was up to see the fellows from Coraopolis Sunday. I was the only one at home so he stayed for about half an hour with me.

We have no more idea of when we leave than we had four months ago. For my part, I believe nearly all that are left in Co. E will stay here and direct the operations of the next bunch. There was a call for sergeants for the colored fellows who will go over soon. Only five men were recommended out of about fifty who asked for the job. There were over one hundred wanted. Our Captain told one of the fellows who wanted to go that he would get a chance here. I guess that I had better finish up pretty quick for it is nearly time to go out again. There are only five prisoners this time. The last time I was on there were 17 in the pen.

Ed Henry's socks are working fine. I will get three pair of heavy ones from the U.S. when ever I ask for them.

Don't work too hard and don't freeze if you can help it.

Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. hays

Imperial, Pa  
R.F.D.#1

Camp Lee, Va.  
Jan. 27, 1918

Dear Mother,

I suppose you are still at home. Have you started to build your new mansion in Imperial yet, or are you waiting for warmer weather? What street is it going to be located on? Will it have a brown store front and a sun parlor?

There have been a few notables here the past week. Miss Christine Miller held a singing fest at the Y.M.C.A. Friday evening. Ex president Taft was here Saturday. I was one of ten picked out of Co. E to hear him. He told us what the war was about. He talked for about an hour, and, in the afternoon, spoke from the steps of the Hostess House.

Taft looks just like his pictures. He is a good speaker and quite interesting. He is making a tour of all the different camps of the country. By the appearance of some of these Virginia boys, they need some one to tell them what the war is about. I believe that some of them don't know there is a war going on. That is the way they move.

Who do you suppose I got a letter from? Well I may as well tell you for you won't guess. From Uncle Joe<sup>12</sup>. I sent him a card about two weeks ago and he answered with a letter.

How are the newlyweds progressing? Is everyone well? That is all that I know now I guess.

Love to all, Vance.

\* \* \* \* \*

Miss Alma Hays

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<sup>12</sup> Uncle Joe was Joseph Parker Hays, his Father L.C.'s brother. He was the black sheep of the family and only wrote to his niece Alma and nephew Vance, and almost never to their parents.

212 E. Liberty St.  
Punxsutawney, Pa.  
c/o E.I. Schall

Camp Lee  
Jan. 27, 1918

Dear Sister,

I don't know how much I can write today. We were on guard 1st night. Go off at 9:00 this morning. Then we had roast pork, mashed taters, pumpkin pie and ice cream for dinner, so naturally I am a little sleepy. Also, I am gradually recovering from Hon. E.H. Taft's talk yesterday and Miss Christine Miller's singing. Friday evening I was one of ten picked from Co. E to hear Mr. Taft. Each Co. sent about ten I think. He told us what the war was about. "I don't know what this war is about, but I bet by gosh I'll soon find out." Goodbye pa, goodbye ma, goodbye mule with your old hee-haw.

Mr. Taft spoke to the common white trash from the steps of the Hostess House (Y.W.C.A.).

How are you progressing with your school work and Christian science. Oh! I mean domestic science. Perhaps you should use a little Christian science with domestic science so that you would not get indigestion from the results of domestic science for Christian science for Christian science is supposed to protect you from most anything including domestic science, so the science of Christian science should prove to all concerned with any kind of science that Christian science should be scientifically sifted into the scientifically prepared receipts for domestic science. Therefore, as I have said before that won't help the cost of stewed prunes used so extensively in army rations.

In other words just because the weather is cold, your thermometer is no reason why it is here. Why just the day

before yesterday I was wading around in snow water up to my shoe tops attired in a lieutenant's rubber boots. Now by the system of reasoning heretofore, and recently used, I would be a lieutenant, but by other reasoning I am not.

Received one loaf of nut bread, one package of butter for use on or about the same and several hundred camouflaged grapes. Said raisins were greatly but firmly put to route and destroyed while the party of the second part was standing guard in tower room.

What do you think, or are you a good soldier and don't think? I received one complete letter from non other than Joseph Parker Hays of Hotel Trolio, Miss.

Another surprising thing. Daddie stayed overnight at Culley's<sup>13</sup> not long ago, but wonders never cease. It even gets cold in Virginia when it isn't hot.

Wie geht es?  
Mit lieb zu alle  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

(Folding letter postmarked Feb 4, 1918.)

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa  
R.F.D.#1

Dear Folks, Sunday again. They come around pretty often it seems. We are not doing anything in particular, but time seems to go around right quickly. Our drilling is all inside just now. There is so little doing that I really don't have a thing to say.

I don't know whether to address this to Imperial or McDonald, but I will try Imperial this time. I think it will be a

<sup>13</sup> The Culleys were cousins.

lot nicer than Imperial. You won't have to splash around in the mud over there, nor look at a grave yard for pastime and amusement. You can go to the moving picture shows every night.

Nearly all the negroes left here last Thursday. I suppose they are starting for a salt water trip.

If you haven't already gotten a letter inviting you to a Mother's meeting in Pittsburgh next Sunday, you will get one soon. Colonel Cochran is to be there and the 319th band I guess. They say it will be some show.

How is the rest of the family progressing? Did the ground hog see his shadow? I guess that I will say good night & go to bed.

Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa R.F.D.#  
Petersburg, Va.

Feb. 11, 1918

Dear Mother.

I received your letter yesterday written Feb. 3. Seven days on the road, that is some service I must say. As usual there is nothing exciting to tell. I wouldn't be supposed to tell it if there was. This is one of the finest spring days anyone could possibly wish to see. I saw some spots of green grass yesterday. There is none around camp but I took a little trip yesterday around Petersburg. I saw the insane asylum for the niggers. It has about 1800 inmates. After that, for a change of scenery, went to a violet farm. 100 violets \$3.00. I didn't invest in any.

Did you go to hear Col. Cochran and did you get an invitation from the 319 Regiment. There has been a night set

aside to write home. Thursday evening I guess, but this is Monday. There is a mark on the edge of that picture opposite our barracks. You might find it by comparing with one of those other pictures.

We are preparing for a party in Co. E tomorrow evening. The Y.M.C.A. is going to chaperon the affair so I guess there will be some girls here. I am mopping up in one room today. That is why I have time to write at this time. I have finished my job until after dinner, then I will have to sweep out one room and carry some coal.

Well I guess that is about all just now. How are things going around home? Who leaves for camp this week?

With love  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.F.D.#1

Feb. 19, 1918

Dear Mother,

I intended to write Sunday but went to church a couple of times instead. I was a Methodist this time. The Methodists seem to have a larger congregation than any of the other churches.

At our party the other evening there were a couple of girls by the name of Hays from Petersburg. I only met one of them and didn't get to talk to her more than a minute. Perhaps I can scare up a relationship of some sort.

We were requested to write home and tell our mothers to go to the meeting Feb. 22 at two P.M. at Memorial Hall, Pittsburgh, Allegheny Co., Pa.

I don't know all the officers you mentioned. Lt. O'Hara is from Co. A. I

think. Lt. Horne is in our Co. He has been promoted to 1st Lieutenant.

Olive Culley wrote me a letter and said she wanted to tell me you were there before you did. Your card came first. Mr. Culley gave her a smileage book<sup>14</sup> to send me. It contains \$1.00 of tickets for the Liberty Theater.

You asked if I received plenty of mail. I only have about fifteen letters to answer at present. I reckon if I don't answer them soon I won't be getting many for awhile. I guess I won't get this one finished until evening. We have to go out to drill now or in a few minutes.

6 P.M.

Our day's work is finished and now there won't be anything to do until 5:45 tomorrow morning. We have been having regimental parades in the afternoon so far this week. We get all dressed up and feel more like soldiers than when we drill in overalls.

Co. E. went on guard this evening and strange but true I was left out. I have been on three times in succession which is about three times too often. There are about 40 new men here now. Most all wops. A grand outfit. There is one of them working on the woodpile already. He knows entirely too much for his own good. In the army one is expected to have a weak mind and a strong back.

I got a letter from Nellie today. She started out by saying that Lincoln's birthday was over Alma's<sup>15</sup>, yours<sup>16</sup> &

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<sup>14</sup> A smileage book contained coupons to use in camp to purchase theater tickets and other items. Theater attendance was not free to the troops. Friends and family would buy these and send them to the soldiers.

<sup>15</sup> Vance's sister Alma was born Feb. 10, 1900.

<sup>16</sup> His mother was born Feb. 15, 1860.

Ed's, Emily's<sup>17</sup>, Jay's<sup>18</sup>, Agnes's,  
Valentine day and Groundhog Day.

The pictures were real good. I sent them on to Nellie. That is all but a couple which I kept for myself. You will find a couple of me in this letter. I was to get a picture of Co. E. but it got lost or something so the picture man offered to give each fellow his picture in place of Co. picture. Of course, we had all ordered one and made deposit. About half the Co. started after their cash one evening. I guess the guy got a little nervous, about time.

I understand that Walter Bell is going to depart for France in six weeks or so. Is that correct? I wonder what he is going to be? A major General, a something like that I guess. More than likely a second Lt. in quartermaster corps.

What is going on around home just now? Is the weather moderating any at home? It is regular spring here except for wintry feeling in the mornings.

I believe I mentioned that our teeth were examined. As a result, nearly every one has a pull with the dentist. I took the hint and made a date. When I went over to the Infirmary, he filled one tooth and in the process used a squirt gun to shoot some water into it. The second time he picked it up, he didn't do a thing but shoot some dope around two back teeth and proceeded to pull the remains of them out. It really didn't hurt a bit.

One thing that every one has to learn here is to wash or rather scrub his teeth about twice a day. We were even given tooth brushes.

Well that is all I know this time except that I was not sent away yet.

With love to all,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. L.C. Hays  
Imperial  
Pa

Feb. 24, 1918  
Co. E. 319  
Camp Lee, Va.

Dear Dad,

I suppose you folks have gone to church today. I would have gone but I was kitchen mechanic yesterday and waiter today so it is up to me to stay here. The kitchen is no fun anymore. They used to put eight men in but the captain thought they didn't have enough work to do so there are only four now.

Being in the company of the regiment is not half as much fun as you might think. We often have to work on our half days off. That is not even thought of in most of the other companies.

I guess we are going to lose about ten fellows this week. They are all mechanics of some sort or another. I think they will be sent to France to assemble and repair airships. There were a bunch sent to Camp Meade to learn how to run tanks. Co. E. didn't get a chance to volunteer for that at all. I don't know whose fault it was, but someone ought to be wrecked.

Our new recruits got their second shot yesterday. Some of them are not just as happy today as they might be. It didn't seem to worry one guy here in our room. We call him the Terrible Turk. He is some sort of a foreigner. He was a little too fast on the hash, so he has to eat by himself now. He carries a rabbit's

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<sup>17</sup> This would be Emily Nickel Stewart, daughter of his Aunt Allen Grace Hays Stewart. She was born Feb. 9, 1889.

<sup>18</sup> This was Jay Vance Stewart, son of his Aunt Allen Grace Hays Stewart. He was born Feb. 8, 1886.

foot for luck. It don't seem to bring him much luck for he has been on the woodpile already.

There will be a lot more in this week. I suppose Carl Lewis will have the pleasure of coming. It is about time. How about Hill, is he still official tester?

Have you sold all of your young livestock yet? I would sort of like to look at a cow once. We have to milk a can down here. It is pretty good at that.

I suppose the corn is all husked by this time, or has the weather been too bad? All the corn that I have seen down here could be husked in about two days.

I hear that Bert McCullough has gotten another oil well. Maybe there is some oil down there in our oil field too.

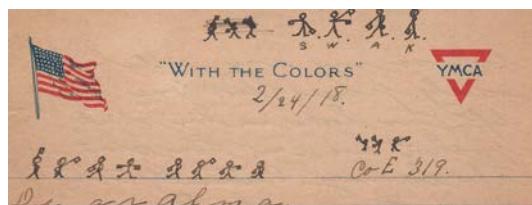
How soon do you expect to move to your city home. I thot people usually went to the city for the winter instead of the summer. I believe your house is located in one of the best parts of McDonald isn't it? You wouldn't want to be down along that car line. It wouldn't be so bad if the street cars went any place in particular.

Well I guess that will have to finish me for this time.

Your son,  
Vance Hays

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(Written same day as previous letter, but to his Sister Alma who was staying with his half-sister Nellie. He introduces the letter with semaphore figures that spell out "Dear Alma.")



Miss Alma Hays

212 E. Liberty St.  
Punxsutawney, Pa.

2/24/18  
Co. E 319

Dear Alma,

This is only a little semaphore that is all.

How is the Schall Family this week? I spose school is going along smoothly and without any thrills out of the ordinary.

I took my domestic science lesson in the kitchen yesterday on the business end of a broom, dish rag, as well as paring knife. Also likewise, I am a waiter today. Therefore, as before mentioned, my domestic science compels me to stay here today. For recompense, I will take myself to see Princess Pat at the Liberty Theater tonight. Oh yes, Sunday and all! Olive Cully sent me a smileage book so my way will be easily payed for. One boy left two books in his shirt pocket and sent the shirt to the laundry. Naturally, they did not come back again.

Do you not like to hear from Whiskey Ave. or is it just the address that doesn't appeal to you. Why that would be just set off an address about right. Once in awhile, when someone asks for a paper or something, someone else yells out. "Paper the dickens. It's whiskey you want."

Please tell Nellie to keep her shirt on. I haven't gone away yet, but would if I got a chance. Our Co. didn't even get a chance to volunteer for tank service. The order should have been read to us, but I suppose the skipper wanted his Co. I'll bet half of the fellows would have taken a chance at that. One of my best friends is going to get transferred to the engineers. He is mechanic of some sort.

There are 10 in all I guess. I wish that I knew something that they needed men for. The infantry doesn't appeal to me.

Some one is going to have to eat his meals off the mantle if my writing board doesn't show up in about four minutes. Some one has taken mine and left me one about one third as big as mine.

Dinner is over. We had roast veal, smashed spuds, peas and chocolate pudding. Not so bad. What do you think? Supper will be just a little under the standard I guess. Our eats are not always made up just for style.

How did you like the portrait? It might look better in a frame, but the picture man didn't have one. I am sending one of my house this time. The building on the left is the regimental infirmary and the small building is the headquarters. Co. E barracks is on the right. This is B Street.

It is a little windy here today and the dust is going some. About two days after a rain, the dust is about three inches deep. The wind does the rest.

That will be all this time I guess.

(Vance ends his letter with semaphore and Morse code.)

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(Fold letter)

Mrs. Emma Hays

Imperial, Pa.

R.F.D.#1

W.V.H. Co. E, 319 Inf. Com.  
Mar. 3, 1918

Dear Folks,

I am not doing anything in particular today, but I can't leave camp so it is a good time to write. Co. E went on guard today. I am on, but in a little different way than usual. One fellow is always picked out as orderly to Col.

Cochen, so I fixed up a little bit better than usual this morning and landed the job. I had to beat another candidate in the manual of arms, but I did. The Col. is not here today so my work won't start till he gets back tomorrow morning. I will be thru at 5:00 tomorrow evening and then they will give me a 24 hour pass. That is I can do whatever I please for the 24 hours. Pretty soft isn't it.

Major Babcock and some of his outfit were here from Thursday till Saturday. Of course, we had two or three parades for their edification and each Co. had to do some stunts. Friday afternoon there was some speech making. Only one said anything but there was good bit of talking. Mrs. Alderin spoke about the mothers meeting. She said that this must be something like college to us. Mr. Gumbert made a hit by saying that it looked like hard work to him.

Carl Sims and Bert Kelly arrived last Sunday. Carl has a job driving one of the supply wagons. They are in the 3rd Co. 1st Training Battalion if you know what that is. They may be transferred into 319 or 320 or they may stay there for sometime. It is very likely that 319 will be filled up soon with the new men from some of the training battalions.

I think I will go out on the target range this week, but am not sure. You should see the dust flying around here today. It is nice especially in the eyes. Otherwise, this is a fine summer day. How's things going at home? Every thing seems to be at a stand still here. Phillips was sent to the tank Co. at Camp Meade. He has been sick for nearly three months and could not drill. Rode a motorcycle too much I guess. We only have about 6 of the first Coraopolis boys now.

(signed off in semaphore)

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(Post card marked Petersburg)

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.F.D. #1

Mar. 6, 1918

Dear Mother,

I got your letter Monday. If you decide to come down here, go to the Petersburg Hotel. It is some distance from the station but the best hotel. Then I can meet you there. If you want to, you can stay at Hoag's I think.

Write and tell me when you are going to start. The B. & O. R.R. is about the best to Washington. Then you can get a train straight thru to Petersburg. Write and tell me when you intend to start, then I will know about what time you will get to Petersburg.

Vance.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa

Sunday, Mar. 7, 1918

Dear Mother,

This is the last Sunday of my seventh month of army life. I didn't go anyplace today. At least I haven't yet. I expect I will go for a walk somewhere.

The chief occupation of the boys around me since dinner has been tearing up each other's beds, throwing pillows and generally making things lively for any of the sleepy heads. Things have quieted down now except for a Jew's harp.

Most all of the second draft men have arrived in camp. Co. E got about 50 men from Bedford County. They seem

to be a little better class than the ones that have been coming. One of them weighs 257 pounds. He just about wilted when some one told him that we always drilled eight hours a day, or dug trenches. They described 18 mile hikes with full packs. One of them even asked me about furloughs. I told him that I had been home once in seven months. I guess they will learn after while. I reckon we were that way at first too.

I went down to Hoag's Wednesday afternoon. They are all well. Mr. Hoag was sick the first part of the week. Mr. Baloney has landed in Boston. He gave them a silver syrup pitcher before he left.

I got Alma's card yesterday. How does she like the McDonald High School. It is hardly as up to date as Punxy is it?

I suppose the new place is commencing to take on a home like air by this time.

Has the Overland and Sir been introduced into their new surroundings yet? I wish I had the machine here now. It is just like summer here except in the mornings. The trees are all in blossom.

We had ice cream for dinner and I think we are going to have some sort of fruit salad for supper. I saw a lot of bananas, pineapples and jello in the kitchen at dinner time.

How are Ed and Mable getting along since your departure? Well I guess that is all that I know this time.

From your son,  
Vance

P.S. Mrs. Hill is working in one of the stores.

\* \* \* \* \*

(The following two letters were written by Vance's parents when his Mother visited him at Camp Lee.)

\* \* \* \* \*

Emma W. Hays  
Nokesville, Va.  
Care A.J. McMichael<sup>19</sup>

Century Farm  
R.D.#2, Imperial, Pa.  
March 17

Mrs. Emma Hays  
My Dear wife, i wil (sic) try and write  
you a short letter to let you know how  
we are getting along.

i finished my jury duty. was over  
McDonald<sup>20</sup> yesterday. Saw Cambell. he  
said he would move this week of the 26  
at the longest. he wanted to sell the  
linoleum in the bathroom floor. he said 2  
or 3 dollars wood be all. Mabel had a  
letter from Vance Friday. Ed's suit  
comes up Tuesday the 19--. Crookses  
sale is Monday. Lewis's on Tuesday.

Try and see all you can and take  
a trip out to the ocean somehow. i think i  
will order the stove shipped pretty soon  
so it will be there on time. Tell Alax i  
shure would like to have went down  
along but maybe i can go some other  
time. it is cold but mice and clear today.  
well i guess this all. you can call when  
you come to town and can meet you.

Yours Dad

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Lewis C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa. R.D.1.  
Nokesville, Va.  
March 20th 1918

Dear Lew,

<sup>19</sup> This may be the Alexander James McMichael family that moved there from Robinson Township in 1898 that is distantly related to the compiler.

<sup>20</sup> The visit to McDonald was to check on the home they were moving to there.

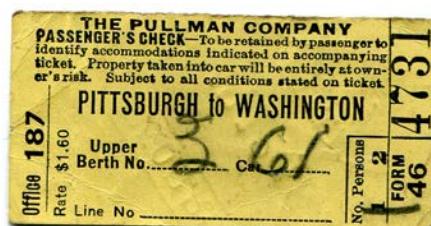
I am at McMichaels and will be  
here till Friday morning. I meant to leave  
here Thursday, but Mrs. McMichael  
seemed to want me to stay and go see  
May Thursday, so I staid. I am getting  
anxious to get home, but maybe you  
folks are not having as pretty weather  
there as they are having here. The  
mornings are frosty but it gets nice and  
warm during the day. I wish we could  
get our house<sup>21</sup> and get moved before  
Vance gets home. They think they will  
begin to leave for home the first of  
April.

I was down to see the Ocean, but  
was as calm as the Pacific the day I was  
down. Tell Ed I saw a gull like he found.  
There are lots of them on the Potomac. I  
met Raymond Adams on the street in  
Petersburg. Vance told me who he was. I  
never got my eyes on Carl Lewis nor  
anyone else I knew. I was only at Camp  
one afternoon. Those Hoags are fine  
people. I was at Petersburg Hotel one  
night & at Hoags the rest of the time. I  
may not get home till Sabbath morning.  
Will come to Pittsburg Sat. No more till  
I see you.

My Best to all,

Mother

Mr. McMichael's farm in nice.



This ticket is stamped B. & O. R.R., March 12  
'18 on the reverse side.

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>21</sup> The Hays family was in the process of moving from their farm in Imperial to a house in the town of McDonald.

Mrs. Emma W. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.

Mar. 24, 1918

Dear Mother,

I just got your card from Washington this morning. You must have stayed a little longer than you had planned. How were the McMichaels? Did you see much of Washington?

Mr. Stark is in camp today. A few of us met him this morning and had pictures taken as usual on such occasions. There were only seven of the first 570 there. Needless to say, they were the best looking part. I saw Al Doughty. He was home last week and sold his bus business to Alex Harper. Hymie Silverblatt is going home Tuesday for five days.

It seems that our parade in Pittsburgh has fallen thru. We should not worry about that, for a regular furlough will give us more time at home.

Mabel said that your new house might be vacant soon so I reckon that I will find you and Daddie in McDonald. That is if nothing happens to our passes. They may do as one of the colored soldiers said about their furloughs at Xmas. He said, "Dem furloughs come as far as Petersburg and did an about face."

Mr. McClure of McClures magazine gave a talk in the Y.M.C.A. this morning. He isn't much for looks but is great when it comes to talking. He talked for an hour and half and then one of the Y men had to tell him that it was dinner time. He has just returned from a tour of seventeen countries of Europe.

Well what did you think of Virginia in general and Petersburg in particular? I have been at Hoag's since you left. What did you think of them?

We had our first night work last week. We were out about an hour last Thursday evening and walked about four

miles on morning and carried full packs. I think that I will get a Ford, or a wheel barrow for mine. We got a lesson on cooking after we got back. I guess we will get a chance to cook our own dinner some of these days.

Is there anything exciting going on around the neighbor hood at this time? I reckon there isn't.

Tell Mabel that I got her letter all O.K.

I have to write to Nellie now so it is time to close this letter. Nellie would take a fit if some of them didn't get a letter just on the dot. She believes every thing that is in the papers and a lot more besides. As for me, nothing is so until it actually happens.

With love,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. 4th Street  
McDonald, Pa.

Camp Lee, Va.  
Mar. 31, 1918

Dear Mother,

I hope you and dadie are settled in your new abode by this time. I'll bet a month's salary you are both glad of it.

Nellie wrote that she and Alma were going to see you and help get things fixed up for Easter. Easter is no different than any other Sunday here except that we were on guard till 9:00 o'clock. After that, we were mustered in for our next pay and then our clothes were checked up. Our beds were all covered and we don't have everything yet.

Last Tuesday we went for an eighteen mile hike. We carried a bed and a house, or rather half a house and our dinners. We dug trenches on two other

days. The camp will be surrounded if we keep on digging.

The whole division paraded Saturday morning. I took most all morning for all to pass in review. I guess General Cronkite didn't think much of the show so it will have to be done all over again. The Officers Training School were considered best so 319 and 320 were second in the show instead of first as it was expected.

Our parade in Pittsburgh has been called off. There hasn't been anything in particular said about furloughs. If they are not started pretty soon I am going to ask for one in a week or so. I reckon you would be able to receive a visitor by that time.

I have not had time to go to Hoag's since you were there for we were out on short hikes on two or three evenings when I might have gone. We had to stay here today.

Mr. Watkins has been sent to a camp in New Jersey. I guess Mr. Hill is still in camp yet. There will be about 9,988 more draftees in camp this week. That will cause some excitement for a few days till they all get settled.

About eleven of us had planned to trip to the James River to some old fellow's home. He was to give us all the fish and corncakes we could eat. We were going to take our tents and stay till today and then come back to camp but the muster knocked our plan cold.

I guess that I will quit now and go and see if I can locate Carl Lewis. Just to see how he likes this life.

I suppose you have changed your clock? We changed last night at two o'clock.

Well write soon and tell me how you like your new location.

With love,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa.

Camp Lee, Va.

Apr. 14, 1918

Dear Mother.

I suppose there has been a little snow in McDonald. We had quite a lot considering the place and the time of year. Somebody made a mistake when they said sunny South. There is all manner and conditions of weather here. The snow wouldn't be very good for Daddies garden would it?

Our drilling has nearly all been done inside this week. The kits have to be shoved out of the way. A fellow is lucky to have any thing left after they have been moved two or three times. They make a shooting gallery in the barracks. Of course, the regular rifle is not used at that but one bored for .22 calibre shells. By the way, we all got new rifles last week. The ones we had were in the habit of breaking. The new ones are just the same only they are not supposed to break. You should have seen them when we got them. They were covered with grease and filled with grease and it took about half a day to clean them up.

Miss Alderdice and Christian Miller are to be at the Y.M.C.A. auditorium today. Everyone is supposed to go I guess, but if I can get out of it so much the better. Some one else can tell me what they have to say.

We have about seventy new recruits. Most of them are from Pa. but some came in yesterday who look like Virginia (Snakes). I don't know just where they got the name but that is the

name applied to all Va. and W.Va. soldiers. They are all lazy so I suppose that is how they got the name.

Northern men are being mixed in with the Va. regiments now. They are supposed to put a little pep into the easy going Southerners.

I believe that our furloughs will be held back until May. The Engineers are getting theirs now. I wish that I could get one now for we were paid last Tuesday. I got all the way to \$16.50. Which proves to me that I have been a first class private for a month.

How does Alma like the McD. High School? It hardly comes up to Punxy does it? I had a letter from Nellie shortly after she went home. She made a lot of fun of the Theater in McD. She said you could skate down the incline in it.

How are Ed and Mabel getting along? I hear that Ed is plowing with a double plow. That must be something new isn't it?

Well I will have to write to the rest of the Hays family so had better suspend operations on this letter.

With love to Daddie, Alma, and Mom,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

(Postmarked April 21, 1918)

Miss Alma Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa.  
Co. E 319th Infantry  
Camp Lee, Va  
Dear Sister,

And it rains on Sundays here. In fact, it seems to have a habit of raining here on all days off. I did the family washing this morning and had to hang it up in the latrine. I had to get up in time

for breakfast this morning for I am a waiter today. I was in the kitchen yesterday. All the profits were eaten up. The K.P. bunch had a can of pineapple and about half a bunch of bananas just as side dishes. We are going to have a dessert of jello sometime today and I think ice cream. We pared about three bushel and a half of potatoes yesterday. Some of them were for breakfast and a lot of them were for dinner today.

We must have about 250 men again. They have been coming in every day from different parts of camp. We have one conscientious objector. He wont do anything in the line of military work. They landed him in the guard house for a couple of days. He got two slices of bread and a cup of water for breakfast but he wouldn't eat it. He was brought over to the kitchen yesterday morning and given a bucket of water, a scrubbing brush and a cake of soap and told to scrub tables. He went to work without a word. Later his guard was dismissed. You should have seen him go to the beans at dinner.

Our terrible turk has landed in the guard house. He was working in the canteen and his fingers were too light for the job. He got three months. He is used to that I guess. He said his wife had him arrested six times in three months before he came to camp.

By the way, the army issued me a rain coat, a pair of leather gloves, a \$5 safety razor and a shaving brush last week. I will soon have so much stuff that I wont know what to do when moving day comes.

My little suitcase is on a furlough now. It was even going to Cleveland and McKees Rocks. I wish that I had been taking it myself.

I suppose there will be lots of letters when Daddie gets his typewriter. I

need something like that on Sundays. We have been teasing one of the men about his new false teeth. His old teeth were condemned and pulled out. They have made him a set of false ones for him. Every one has been trying to make him smile.

Well perhaps I had better suspend operations till another day. Write soon and tell me all the news. Is every one well? I am.

Your brother,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa.  
Co. E. 319 Inf.

Apr. 28, 1918

Dear Mother,

This is another kind of paper if you notice. The Army Club is about like the Y.M.C.A. It is located on the main street of Petersburg. I stayed in town all night and am waiting for church time to come around. I will be apt to stay here tonight again. You are wondering how I come to get all that liberty I reckon? Well Friday evening Co. E. went on guard and I got the orderly job again. The colonel sent me on only about four errands Saturday. When I asked for my pass I got two. Together they run from Saturday at 6 P.M. to Monday at 11 P.M. "Easy." I wish that they had handed me a furlough at the same time. I would take a trip to Norfolk, but they might take a notion to present us with furloughs and that would be to hard on my pocket book. Perhaps I will go yet. I am not sure.

Yes, I got the \$10 that you sent. I thot that it was mentioned in a letter once before. Having considered the

matter from all sides and insides, perhaps a cake would go pretty good. That is the trouble they always go too good.

Phillips was sent to Camp Meade for Tank service. He was sick for about three months and had an operation performed to straighten out his interior. He had a lot of smash ups on his motorcycle and that was what caused his trouble. His brother is down here but I don't know where.

They have taken our Wed. and Sat. afternoon holidays away again starting yesterday. That was tried once before but didn't last long. A full week of drilling without any rests is too hard on everyone concerned.

The second battalion is going out on a hike tomorrow. Each man will have to cook his own dinner. I won't be present. They were out once before but I wasn't along for some reason or other.

Tuesday we go out on the rifle range again.

It is nearly church time and I have about half a mile to walk so I had better close.

Your son,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

(Postmarked May 6, 1918)  
Co. E., 319th Infantry  
Camp Lee, Va.  
Dear Daddy,

This letter will be about a day later than usual. We have been going some lately and don't have much time for anything. We got up at about a quarter of four Sat. morning and went to the rifle range. Sunday was the same except we didn't get up quite so early. It was about eight P.M. when we got our supper.

The supply sergeant always has something new to issue in the evenings. I got a new overcoat, shoes and I really don't know what all. We had to get rid of everything except issued clothes. I had a satchel here and a box. Both had to be canned. The satchel is at the Hoag's, at least one of the fellows said he would take it to them for me. Really, I have more clothes than ever before and nearly every thing has to be kept in a bag about the size of a ham sack. I have two new pair of non-skid shoes. They will wear about six months each I hope. It won't be necessary to wear them out.

It looks like we were about to move. Everything is being packed up.

Harry Weir got a telegram that his cousin was dead. He couldn't get a pass to go home.

We are going out to the trenches the afternoon. The cooks have to cook supper in them. We will come back about eight o'clock.

I got Alma's letter just before dinner. She needs a little more practice on the typewriter, but the first trial was pretty good.

Well, I can't spend much more time on this letter. I hope every one is well? How is Agnes and what does she think of the new Hays ranch?

Your son,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa

Sunday, May 12, 18

My dear Mother,

We are still here in Camp Lee. There was an inspection of all our equipment out in the field this morning. Got up at five o'clock and packed up

every thing we wanted to take with us. Everything of value left in the barracks was collected and will be given to Red Cross. The barracks was a bare looking place when we got back in. I dumped my pack and barracks bag on my bed and beat a diplomatic retreat to the Y.M.C.A. They have a habit of wanting work of some sort done at times when a fellow should be writing letters. It is time for the new men to get in on that.

The fish eaters were let off as soon as possible this morning so that they could get their sins fixed up. Nothing was said about the rest of us going to church. I guess they would raise a howl if we wanted to go.

This is Mothers Day. There is always a short meeting on the second Friday evening of each month led by the Mothers Meeting committee. It seems that the movement was started by the 319 Regiment and has spread to all the other cantonments and to the forces now in France.

Mom, you are quite an expert on the typewriter. How do you like it? I will need one myself if we don't get a little more time off. I guess we will be free for the rest of the day. The evenings are rather short it seems. I generally have something to wash up for. I don't want to get orders to move and have a lot of dirty clothes.

Was it you or Nellie that asked for my number? Here it is. Just a minute till I look at it. 1,826,457. You may be able to remember it, I can't.

The officers are as an old hen with a lot of chickens. Preparing to move is about a much fun for them as it is for us.

Did the pictures of the camp arrive safely? I guess I forgot to tell Alma that I got the cake. It was real good, only it didn't last long enough. Is

Agnes still there? How does she like the new quarters? When does High School suspend operations?

My humor for writing seems to be on the decline this morning. Got up too early I guess. I wish we would get moved and settled once and get it over with. I am going to try to go down to Hoag's this afternoon. I may not succeed for passes are rather hard to get at present.

My next letter may be delayed. If it is, you will know that we have moved to parts unknown.

With love to all,  
Vance.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Postmarked May 17, 1918)  
Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa.

319the Infantry  
Camp Lee, Va.

Dear Mother,

I don't know when you will get this letter but it will likely get there in the near future. This outfit will have gone form here to parts unknown by the time you get this. Our extra baggage went this afternoon. From now till we get to our destination our packs will furnish all the comforts of life. Two blankets, shaving outfit, socks, and underwear. I was careful to pack up enough stuff to keep me going for sometime. Of course none of us know when we are going or anything of that nature and would be allowed to tell if we did. If we go overseas you will get a card about two days after we land. It will be written and left on this side. For some reason or other I doubt very much whether we go across or not. It is probable that we will embark on a ship

and be sent some where. You understand that is only my own idea.

Home seems to be out of the question now. In fact, I have known for some time that we wouldn't get a furlough.

The band seems to be happy this evening. They are administering a concert at present. It sounds fine but we are not allowed out. The Captain is rather excitable and seems to be afraid of loosing us, so no one is allowed out of this barracks.

Everyone seems as happy as a boy with a pair of topped boots. They are singing and carrying on high. I would like to go over to the Y.M.C.A. and call up Hoag's. I sent my traveling bag down there and I should tell them what to do with it. Also, say good-bye. We haven't been able to get passes for over two weeks. I will send a card to Nellie and you can call up Ed and Mabel and tell them the news. I don't want to write too many letters for I am going to give them to one of the cooks who is going to stay here. He will mail them when we are gone.

Now don't worry about me for I will be all right. I will write just as soon as possible.

With love to Papa, Alma, and  
Mamma, Vance.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Post marked May 31, 1918)  
Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa. U.S.A.

Co. E. 319th Infantry  
A.E.F.  
via New York, N.Y.

Dear Mother,

This is Sunday on the Ocean.  
The water just looks the same today as it

has looked for several days. So far we have had very smooth water [censor's cut] the sailors said it was smooth. Having never sailed the high seas before I have to take their word for it. Our ship has a disagreeable habit of rolling from side to side. If one wishes to stand up straight he has to keep time with his knees or he can hunt a sunny spot and let the waves rock him to sleep.

I can't say much about the trip for the censor might object. He often objects to the use of numbers so I will just say that there are several transports crossing with us. There [censor' cut] battleships and each boat carries guns for his own protection. Our gun crew showed that they could make it very unhealthy for a sub at target practice.

There was a little excitement a couple of days ago. A sailor fell overboard while we were having abandon ship drill. He was rescued and is on the job again as if nothing had happened. One of the other sailors who went out in a life boat to the rescue didn't fare so well. While trying to board one of the other ships he lost his balance and fell onto the propeller.

Our chief occupation on ship is getting into the grub line. We get only two meals a day, which is about enough. It takes nearly all forenoon to hand out dinner and nearly all afternoon to serve supper. In fact, for a few days eating was just a formality with a lot of the men. I have not been troubled with anything except dizziness and an inclination to feed the fish a couple of times. If the accommodations were a little better, the trip wouldn't be half bad. About one more across will be enough for me. I want that trip to be towards U.S.A. instead of away from it.

The pictures got to camp the day before we left so I have them with me.

The new residence must be about the size of the country house isn't it? Sounds real aristocratic doesn't it.

Well if I don't hurry up a little bit I never will get this letter written. This is the third day at it. I should be able to write about forty letters a day for the sun comes up about six in the morning and is still shining at ten o'clock in the evening. I have been hitting the hay at ten each evening. Our time has changed five hours so far so I guess there is something wrong with nature somewhere.

Mamma you can send this on to Nellie or write and tell her that I am feeling fine and expect to enjoy my new location wherever it may be. Don't worry about me the least bit for the army is pretty good place after all. Of course being at home with you and Daddy would be much pleasanter (don't cha know).

From all indications, our trip across the briny deep is about finished. I will write again just as soon as we get settled.

With love,  
Vance Hays

\* \* \* \* \*

## Local Regiment Arrives Safely On Other Side

The Three Hundred and Nineteenth infantry, which has been training at Camp Lee, Va., and which is composed of youths from Pittsburg and Allegheny county, has arrived safely in France, according to word received here yesterday afternoon by Lawrence E. Sands, president of the First National bank, whose son, Capt. John Sands, is commander of the headquarters company of the regiment. The message was sent by Mrs. Cocheu, wife of Col. Frank S. Cocheu, commander of the regiment.

The regiment is made up, to a large extent, of young men who were among the first selected for service last fall. The first of these men left this city on September 5 and the movement continued at intervals through several months. According to unofficial information the regiment left Camp Lee three weeks ago. Yesterday's message was the first authentic information of the Pittsburg soldiers' arrival in France.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa., U.S.A.

American E.F.  
via New York  
Somewhere in France  
June 7, 1918

My Dear Mother.

I came up to the Y. to write and found that my pen was dry, so here goes my first letter with lead pencil. I wrote a letter on the boat before we landed at [censor's black out] but none since, for we only stayed there long enough to get cleaned up and our clothes shined up a little. The clean up included a swim in the Ocean. The water was just about 47° colder than was necessary. We didn't get

to see very much of the town except in passing thru.

All the houses in France seem to be built of stone and covered with a thin layer of concrete. The barns are much too close to the parlor door to be real sanitary. The people don't seem to care much for water. That is for drinking purposes. The camps are just a little shy of that fluid too. We had all the water we wanted at Camp Lee, but now it is turned off for a while each day.

We rode in side door pullmans on our last trip. In other words--freight cars. Not the kind used in the U.S.A. but short form wheeled little toys.

The scenery is certainly fine. The country is moderately level. The country people all have little farms which they work by hand or perhaps they own a horse and a few cows. The fields are all divided by hedges and surely are beautiful just now. Once and a while you see a small river. The people around Pittsburg will have to go some if they want to beat the French gardens.

I can't say much about our trip you know. Just at present we are living in tents. A little different from our other homes believe me. We are expecting another move soon to a permanent camp. Then I guess our real training will start. We sure needed a rest after our boat ride and train ride. This evening is the first that I have felt in the writing humor for some time. Perhaps I can describe my trip better when I get home. I don't want to write any thing which would have to be cut out for that would only spoil the letter. None of us have received any mail yet.

Now Mamma, don't worry about me for I am O.K. I hope every one is well at home. If Nellie is not at home, you can just box up this letter and send it to her. There isn't much use in me

writing two or three all alike. How is  
Daddy and Alma?

I will write again soon and I hope  
this finds you all as well as I am.

With love to all  
W. Vance Hays

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays

201 N. 4 St.  
McDonald, Penna  
Petersburg, Va

June 11, 1918

Dear Mother Hays,

I have Vance's grip ready to send. We will mail it tonight. My flower you sent me has started to grow. It has one leaf on it. We are going to have a wedding in the family. Archie Hoag is going to be married. If he can get a furlough he will come home but otherwise she will go to him. I raised a racket at first, but we have gotten used to it now. Have you heard from Vance? We got a card from Frank Parsons saying that they had arrived safely.

Our raspberries are at their best now. We have not had as many as usual. We will not have as much fruit of any kind this year as we had last. Our garden looks fine. Papa has worked it almost all by himself. He is not so well today. Mamma has been dead one year last Sunday. It seems a very short year. I am sending you the last picture of Vance that we took. I am also sending one of Martin Hill & Boyd Adsit. I thought you would like to have them. We surely do miss the boys. It does not feel like Sunday not to have one or the other coming in. We only have one boarder. It is a Mr. Jones. He has such a peculiar name. Will close with love from all.

I am loving (adopted daughter)  
Emma Hoag

\* \* \* \* \*

Miss Alma Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa, U.S.A.

Co. E. 319 Inf.  
American E.F.  
via New York  
June 25, 1918

Dear Sister.

As usual, "Some where in la France." It would please me much better if it was a little nearer home for letters are too scarce in this part of the world. So far, I have gotten one. It was sent to camp Lee and must have landed there about the day we left.

We have heard various interesting rumors concerning the trip across the Atlantic. One was rather disheartening to the folks around Pittsburg if it was true. Did the newspapers say that most of the 319 Regiment had been sunk by a submarine? I heard last night that the flag was at half mast for three days in Camp Lee in honor of our regiment.

Take it from me Alma, we are still a very much alive bunch at meal times. The subs did try a few stunts very much to their sorrow. If you had been along you might have thought that Decoration Day was the Fourth of July.

Speaking of Fourth of July. I was celebrating mine today with an automatic rifle. Jerry will have to keep his head down when I get into action. An automatic rifle and a Ford are something alike for either one is liable to balk and have nothing in particular the matter with them.

I think I described the country in another letter so that ought to be enough. This is a grand place to spend money and not get anything to show for it. An

orange costs half a Frank, chocolate candy costs a Frank and a half per taste. The people around here seem to think we are all millionaires I guess. At present nearly every one is broke or badly bent. Payday will be along some day soon.

This is a poor excuse of a letter, but it will let you know that I am well. I hope this finds every one well at home. If there isn't much news in my letter I will have more to tell when this show is over.

Your loving brother,  
Vance Hays

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa, U.S.A.  
June 30, 1918  
Dear Mother,

I got a letter from you today dated June 10 and one a few days ago started June 3. If they just keep on coming like that, I will be satisfied. I got a letter from Nellie and a card. She asked all sorts of questions about this side of the earth. Most of them have been answered in my other letters I guess. I haven't written to her yet but will in a day or so if nothing interferes.

I had a letter from Meryle McCoy last week. It had been sent to Camp Lee. It was dated May 23 so they must not have known of our departure.

What sort of a celebration is coming off on the Fourth of July. We will not have much of a celebration unless we move to some other part of France before that day.

There isn't anything in particular to say, so I may as well quit. I am feeling fine so don't worry about me.

Love to all,

Vance



Detail of handkerchief sent home as souvenir.

Mrs. E.I. Schall  
117 Miller St.  
Latrobe, Pa.  
Co. E. 319 Inf.  
American E.F.  
via New York

June 30, 1918

Dear Sister,

Your letter came today and the card a couple of days ago. I have had two letters from home and will have two or three more by the time you get this. Your letter was only twenty-six days getting to me. I may not get this finished this afternoon for there is a very interesting ball game going on just now. Writing is not quite as interesting as a ball game you know.

No, we don't feel much more like dagoes here than we did before. There are so many in the Co. that we often think we are in the Italian army instead of the U.S. army. We manage to make ourselves understood most of the time. The French people can say "two Franks" or "five Franks," or some such price which is always about 100% more than

their junk is worth. Their principal commodities are figs, oranges, English walnuts, and a poor grade of chocolate candy. I was very much surprised yesterday when I received a donation of tobacco from the New York Sun. There was about \$5.00 worth of cigarettes. The package was hardly opened before I was surrounded by a bunch of regular wokes. No one cares much for the grade of smokes they have over here. They cost too much and besides that, we haven't been paid since leaving camp.

What is Earl doing? Does he still insist on taking a shot at the Kaiser? Well I wouldn't mind pointing an automatic rifle at him myself. I have been practicing nearly all week with one of those affairs. My instructor was the first U.S. soldier to get a German. He is all decorated up with war crosses. He is Lieut. Saye from Johnstown, Pa.

Well I may be able to find something more to say by next Sunday so I will suspend operations now.

Your loving brother  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

(Envelop missing) Co. E. 319 Inf.  
American E.F.  
via New York

July 5, 1918

Dear Sister.

Somewhere else in France. Fourth of July was spent on the railroad. You see we got tired of our last hotel and decided to try another for a few days. We are billeted in a little town with a name longer than the town.

I suppose you went to a picnic somewhere. What sort of a place is McDonald on the Fourth? Is there any excitement there? I guess I should have

said was there any excitement for this will not arrive until Aug. 4.

I got two letters from mamma this week. One had been sent to Camp Lee. One came from Nellie about the same time. It will likely be several days before we get any at the joint. Maybe McC. sent an invitation to commencement but it was only a month and a half behind time. I hadn't thot of going to see the boys graduate anyway. That is on that date at least for we were a couple of thousand miles to sea.

Sunday, July 7, 1918

Today finishes up my tenth month in the army.

I am trying to write under an apple tree. There are a bunch of aeroplanes flying around so they are of more interest than the letter. They rival Fords in number over here. It is a common thing to see fifty in one day. One sometimes flies low enough to be easily seen but usually they stay up several thousand feet.

Please send this letter to Nellie. There is no use of me writing the same dope over again and besides I don't know their address yet. I sent her last letter to Latrobe.

Well Siss, I guess that is about all this time. How are things progressing at home? Is every one well? Write soon for letters are worth more than a week's wages in this country.

Your loving brother  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. L.C. Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa U.S.A.  
Co. E. 319 Inf.  
American E.F.

July 14, 1918

Dear Daddy,

This is just to let you know that I am well and in no particular danger. Of course, the Bosche would just love to drop a few bombs on us, but we only stay in one place a little while and then hunt up a new boarding house. He only comes over at night so we don't worry about getting hit. The only war like things that I have seen are motor trucks and ambulances.

Mamma's letter of June 16 arrived yesterday. Tell her that the pretty things of France are limited. The country is real pretty, but I can't say that of the girls. At least I haven't seen any good looking ones yet. They have to work awful hard just now so that must be the reason. Everyone seems to have plenty to eat but if a soldier tries to buy anything, his salary takes some drop. They think we are all John D.'s I guess.

I suppose you are taking lots of joy rides this summer? How is the Overland performing? Mamma said your new garage was quite a fine affair.

If Nellie happens to be home when this lands, tell her that her letter dated June 16 arrived yesterday, also two cards from her and one from Earl. Tell them that I wish they would settle down some where once so that I would know where to send their letters.

The season here seems to be about a month behind. The wheat is still green but the clover and rye has been harvested already. You should see their two wheeled wagons. A load of hay makes about three good fork fulls.

Well I guess I will close now. I haven't written to Ed yet so guess I will now. I will write again soon.

With love to Mamma and Alma.

From your son

Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. E.H. Hays  
Imperial, Pa. U.S.A.

July 14, 1918

My Dear Brother.

Well old top, I guess you will be somewhat surprised to get this letter. I will begin as usual. I am well. I haven't shot any German yet and haven't been any place where they could shoot at me. Of course, they would like to spill a few bombs on us if they knew we were around. They do try a raid once in a while, but most always get chased back. Jerrie's aviators are getting cold feet I guess.

This is a fine country, but is in a deuce of a region. It would be O.K. in the U.S. Their houses and barns are built in the shape of a square. The lovely part of this scene is the manure pile in the middle.

They don't know what water is for. They wash in it once in a while and drink wine. Please excuse me till chow.

Well Ed, I suppose you are working hard just now? You should be over here a while just to see how the farm work is done. Nearly all the work is done with one horse and a dump cart. There are no large fields of grain. It is all in little patches.

One reminder of home being the Fords. I saw one being hauled in last night by a truck.

The aeroplanes attract my attention more than anything else over here. There were at least thirty across this town this forenoon. Believe me, they can travel faster than a Ford with ether in the gasoline.

How does Mabel like farm life at Century Farm? I should like it if I were

there just now. What is going on around Imperial? Is there anymore excitement than usual? I hear that Charley Wilson has taken up arms and Paul Burns has taken unto himself a wife. It must be great to be married. Maybe I will try it someday too.

There will be rejoicing here about Tuesday for payday is coming for the first time since May 3rd. Every one is as flat as a pancake just now.

Well my line of bull is running rather low, so I may as well quit while quitting is good. By the way, tell Henry Wilson that he will have to go to the races without me this year for I may be racing Jerry with an automatic rifle about that day. An automatic rifle compares favorably with what Mr. Bell said about the calf going around the straw stack.

Write and tell me how the family is getting along.

Your loving brother,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

(Envelop missing)

July 21, 1918

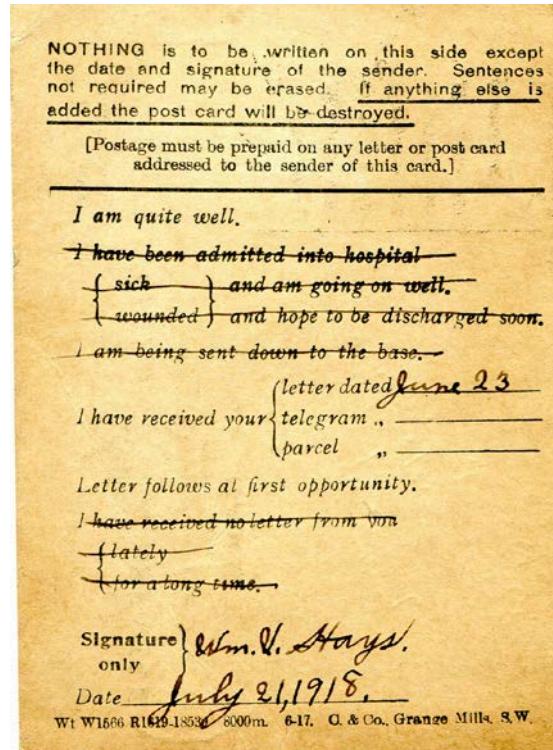
Dear Sister.

I am sending you a scarf. Souvenirs are hard to select so far from home, but I hope you will like this one. The handkerchief is for mamma.

Nellie's letter written June 23 arrived today. Are my letters arriving O.K.? The address is the same Co. E. 319 Inf. American E.F. If any one asks about me, tell them I am feeling fine.

Write when ever your can,  
With love,  
Vance Hays

\* \* \* \* \*



Field Service Postcard.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Envelop missing)

July 28, 1918

Dear Mother,

Well here I am somewhere in France enjoying the best of health and I hope that everyone at home are doing the same. We are now living in a little sheet iron bungalow. It is surrounded with apple trees only there are no apples. There is a hedge fence around our lawn which is a very fine clothes line. Clothes make very fine food for the two goats that inhabit our back yard. The next time we go on a hike, I am going to hitch them up and make them haul my pack.

We are not working very hard just now. The worst part of the drill is the walk to the drill field. Sometimes we spend the day in practice trenches. That is real soft believe me.

Well, there isn't much more to tell so I may as well quit one time as another. I haven't gotten a letter from

home for several days. I suppose there will be a big bunch soon.

Tell everyone that I am feeling fine and hope to be home for Xmas dinner.

With love,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

(Envelop missing)

August 1918

My Dear Mother.

Your fourth letter reached me about July 26th. I haven't been numbering mine, but have sent at least one each week and a few extras I think.

This letter may be rather a novel affair, for I am writing in a front line trench. We have only been in a few days and will go back to our billets again and then I guess move again. The front line isn't as bad as the support. Up here the shells go buzzing over head and most of them drop away back. Some of the shells sound just like a streetcar going down hill with the brakes on. At night they make nice fire works.

No man's land is a very nice peaceful looking place. There is a wheat field in it and a few other things which make it look like a nice quiet place. At night one can imagine more things than a few. A bunch of grass or a post makes a real natural looking enemy. None visited us so I don't know just what sort of a guy Jerry really is. I will say he is very playful at times. For instance, our machine guns go rum-te-tum-tum and then one on the other side goes bum-bum. I have been told that this is a very quiet sector. Maybe it is, but it is active enough for me. There isn't much sleeping done at night in the front line. It is about the only occupation in the day time except eating.

Aug. 8, 1918.

We are out of the trenches now and are doing some shooting on the range. There was a little excitement coming out. The Bosche decided to hurry us up a little so dropped about a dozen shells nearer to us than it was real nice of him to do. Luckily we got into a protected place along the road and waited for the show to end. No one was hurt there, or in the line. One of our corporals got a piece of shrapnel in the knee and elbow a week or two ago when he was in the line. He didn't seem to mind it much, but seemed to think it was too early in the game to get hurt.

There were five letters for me when I got back to the billets. Three from you, No.s 5, 6, and 7. One from Nellie and one from some one else.

While up in the front line we got an issue of cigarettes and tobacco. For my part I would prefer chocolate candy.

Yes, write American E. F. out in full for it might get mixed otherwise.

That is all this time, but will have some more to tell in a few days. It is supper time now anyhow.

With love to all,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

(no envelop) Aug. 25, 1918

Dear Mother.

It has been over two weeks since I wrote my last letter to you folks. In that time, five days were spent in the front line, and rest of the time we hiked and rode on a train. Our last hike was a record breaker of over twenty five miles in one day with full packs. We are now farther away from the lines than at any time since the middle of June. We are in a quiet little country village where the

people have not learned that the Americans will pay two prices for things. They will do any thing for us here. We are farther south of Paris than we were north of it. Of course, you don't know just how far north we were do you? Some parts of the country we passed thru was real pretty and everywhere the crops are fine. It looks sort of funny to see a man plowing with a tractor and another man in the next field using a cradle to cut his wheat.

I got a letter from Nellie one day when we were in the trenches. It will probably be several days before any more mail comes for it is always delayed when we move.

We got paid this evening. I got one hundred and seventeen Franks. My Liberty bond is all paid for now. I got the benefit of \$.50 worth of interest this time. I have a little more cash than I need so I may send some of it home. If a Y.M.C.A. man shows up anywhere near to our little burg. If you look closely, you will notice that this paper is a little the worse for wear. It has a reason for that. It has been rolled in a pack about fourty times and not always real gently. The less paper I use, the more I will have to tell when I get home. I suppose there are two or three people kicking because I don't write but I should worry for it would take some kick to reach me over here.

I believe you or Nellie asked about Harry Weir. He is getting along O.K. He has been a corporal for about a month.

Well if I can find an envelope now I will call this letter finished. My envelopes are all stuck together so I will have to go begging I guess.

The address is the same as before: C. E. 319 Inf. American Expeditionary Force via New York. I hope this finds

everyone real well and able to enjoy the nice hot weather.

Your loving son,  
Corporal Wm. V. Hays

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Earl I. Schall  
Imperial, Pa  
In care Mr. Ed Hays

Aug. 28, 1918

My Dear sister,

After so long a time I take up my pen to let you know that I am as well as usual and am able to eat more than I used to and I don't like to write letters a bit better. But tell your hubby that I like to get his letters. They bring so much news. I reckon after a hard day's work he don't like to wear out too many pens.

Well our vacation is over. We inhabited a front line trench for the second time. But not a single Bosche showed up within shooting distance. We got a shot at a few one morning, but they went on as if nothing had happened out of the ordinary.

The front line isn't a bad place to be as long as Jerry doesn't get angry. He might be able to make things rather interesting at times if he wanted to. His whiz bangs sound that way. We didn't stay as long as we had expected. We were relieved rather quickly one night and then we hiked for a couple of days and took a sight seeing trip on a train for a couple more days. Then we hiked for another day and now we are somewhere south of Paris in a small town among the hills. It is real nice here and the people treat us fine. They don't charge us very much when they do anything for us. In some other parts of France they soak the soldiers to beat the band.

We went thru Paris at night so couldn't see what it looked like. The

country around Paris is fine and the towns seem to be real lively. I hope I get a chance to visit there before we get shipped back to U.S.A. You suggested a visit to the Alps. That might be O.K., but when I am carrying a pack, a mole hill is enough like the Alps for me.

You're right about the one city we were in shortly after we landed. Since that, we have traveled quite a lot. Enough to get a few blisters on the feet. Of course they are about the same as those caused by a Sunday afternoon walk.

Well sister, it is getting too dark to see so I may as well quit until some other convenient date.

From your loving brother  
Vance

P.S. Sept. 3. Still the same only moved again.

W.V.H.

\* \* \* \* \*

(no envelop)

Sept. 3, 1918

Dear Mother.

You will notice that my letter has been delayed. We have moved again. That is the reason. I will send it thru the base censor and maybe it will go on its journey a little sooner.

Your letter No. 10 arrived last Sunday also another one from Nellie. Your letters most always come together. I always give the clippings out of the paper to John McMichael. He and I are about the only interested ones in our Co. He and I are tenting together just at present. We cut a lot of pine boughs for our bed. I don't know just how it will work.

I think I can write a book when this engagement with Uncle Sam is finished. I don't know what it will be called, "A Slow Train thru France" would do fairly well.

That is a good idea of yours about keeping my letters for they may recall a lot of novel experiences which I haven't told in my letters to you.

A few more days and my first year of soldiering will be over. I am not real anxious to spend another the same way. I don't believe it will be necessary, unless we have to police up Mexico after this is finished over here.

I suppose there are a lot of young men under twenty one who are expecting to take part in the school of the soldier this year instead of the other kind.

Well that is about all this time. The country we are in at present doesn't afford much news other than that of a military nature. You get enough of that dope in the newspapers. You likely read forty times as much war news as I do. I don't know where we are liable to be by the time this letter reached you. If it is very far, I hope they get me a horse and wagon for walking doesn't interest me anymore.

From your loving son,  
W.V.H.

\* \* \* \* \*

Miss Alma Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa, U.S.A.

Sept 12, 1918  
Dear Alma,

Since my last letter we have made about two more moves and are expecting another at any time. Lot of a chicken game with us.

Are you going to school, or has school not opened yet? I wouldn't mind

going a while myself. I don't think the schools are open here just now, but they were still going in July.

Daddy said it was a little too hot for comfort when he wrote. I wish some of that extra heat was over here. It has been raining right freely for a couple of weeks. A little too freely for comfort in fact.

How do you like McDonald? Is there any thing exciting going around there? You see I am after information. I want a little inside dope on the place before I land.

Tell Daddy his garage looks very nice. I don't think there is much danger of driving thru the rear end like the one at home. Nellie sent me some pictures of the house and garage. Her letter landed last Saturday.

How are Ed and Mabel getting along? Do they call on you folks very often, or are they rather busy just now?

It is about mess time so I quit for that. Write often even if I don't.

Your loving brother,  
Vance

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Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa.

Sept. 15, 1918

My Dear Mother,

The family washing is done so I can do a little scribbling now. Your letter No. 13 arrived yesterday. Alma's came at the same time and two from Earl and Nellie. With the Record news and French book my afternoon was very well occupied. Letter No. 12 came Friday. Do my letters come so close together? I guess they are rather far apart at times.

The souvenirs arrived at last. I was afraid they might not go thru in very good shape but took a chance.

How did you enjoy your trip, or did you not go? How is Alma getting along with the machine. She said Daddy wanted to know if she had the price for instructions. I think I'll get an aeroplane when I get back. They go faster than our Overland. Some of them can make about 140 miles and hour. I have been trying to get a ride in one but have not been successful yet.

When does Floyd Bell's lease on life come to an end? Where is his new house located? I guess there won't be many young fellows left around home pretty soon. They will all be married or in the army.

I seem to be running out of anything to say and I need a bath so as there is a canal handy why not? Sometimes we are not very close to such a convenient bathtub. I am not just sure but I believe we were here when I wrote to Alma a few days ago.

Write as often as you can and so will I.

Your son,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Earl Schall  
Imperial Pa.  
Allegheny Co., U.S.A.  
In care of Edw Hays R.F.D.1

Sept. 16, 1918  
Dear Sister.

I very seldom write on Monday, but this happens to be a very convenient time. It even seems foolish to start a letter any more for there is so little to say. I really should scribe a few extra letters to some of my old pals, but they

can wait a while longer. I don't always get my letters started on the day they are written. We usually move just about that time and they travel in my pocket to the new location. You never know just what is going to happen from one day till the next.

Tell Earl I liked his letter and now that I know he is still capable of pushing a pen, he will have to do better in the future. By the way, I burned your letters and also the picture that came about last Friday. I forgot the No.'s, but they were started about Aug. 18. We are commencing to travel as light as possible. Even a few letters fill a fellow's pockets. I used to carry a lot of useless junk but every time we go for a hike, I find something else that can go by the board. I heard one fellow in my squad say that he was going to cut the tail off his shirt for it weighed too much. Another wants to buy a goat and a body carriage for his automatic rifle.

We will have numerous and sundry stories to tell our great grandchildren in the years to come. Nothing particularly exciting as yet, but we have seen quite a lot of France.

Another fellow and I bought some meat and a bunch of junk one evening last week and got a French lady to cook it for us. We are great on the French fried potatoes. They sure can fix them up fine. While we were eating, the daughter of the family arrived, so we lingered a while and undertook to teach her a little of the English language. Between her English and our French, we managed to spend a very enjoyable evening. I had just gotten a little French book from Mamma so of course that was a fine time to break it in.

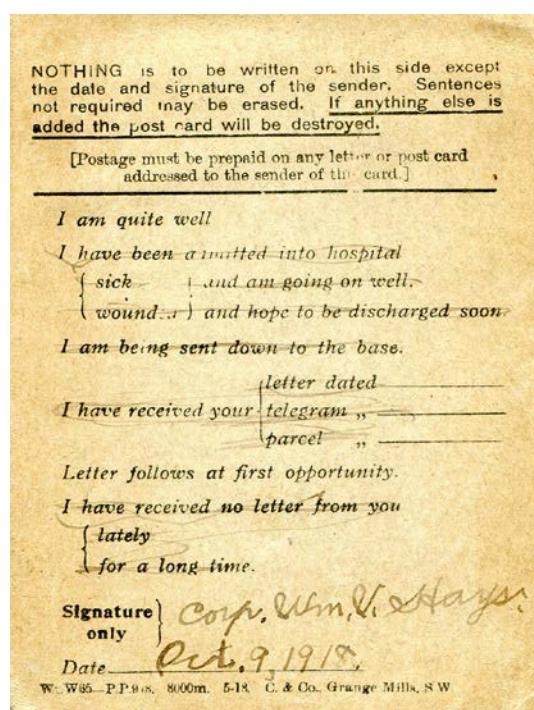
I suppose there is quite a lot of excitement at Purdy's now isn't there?

So Walter Bell has landed on this side has he? Well he has a bomb proof job I guess. I got a card from Mr. Snyder a few days ago. He was in London when he sent it.

If your questions are not all answered, just take every thing for granted for as I said before your letters went by the board.

Write toot sweet,  
Lovingly  
Vance.

\* \* \* \* \*



Field Service Postcard.

\* \* \* \* \*

Prof. E.I. Schall  
24 Clarion St.  
Westmont  
Johnstown, Pa

Oct. 10, 1918

Well Old Top,

How is every little thing going with you and friend wife? She talks like

as if you had to go over the top right often even in Johnstown. Letter no. 9 at hand also two of Sept. 9th and 13th. Clippings O.K. Say wait till I light my pipe. About said clippings, believe me they come in handy. Oh no gas, bombs, etc. Don't come much closer than the top of a trench Mostly there are no trenches. Some life kid. Over the top twice so far, but I believe a nice quiet spot way back in the Rocky Mts would be much easier on the nerves for when a nine point two lands alongside of you??

I had to stop to get the punk for the old squad. That is the life of a corp. He has to look out for the welfare of his little army. Up in front we sometimes fall back to hard tack. It is O.K. but nix on canned Willie<sup>22</sup>.

Go easy on those plums boy. Save some for me when I get back. Tell Nellie that Floyd Felix said to tell her that he has changed his mind quite a lot since writing that letter. In other words it was all krap. Those kinds of letters usually are that way.

Alma tells me she is learning to be quite a chauffeur. She only bumped a fender and busted off a grease cup getting into garage. I wish I was back doing a little of that myself or running an airplane. Only seventy-five went over in a bunch last night. Just like a flock of birds.

Kid hold it a minute. Lets go till supper is finished. By the way, this pencil which I am using, formerly was the property of one of Bill's obedient servants. He didn't object to being relieved of it.

Well I am about run out of gab, so may as well quit one time as another.

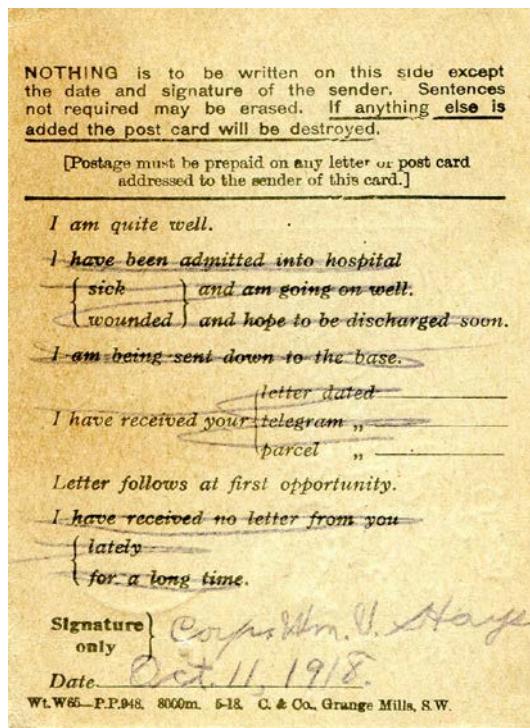
How about that auto you were going to invest in? Is it a success or not?

<sup>22</sup> Canned corned beef.

Write and tell me all the news and maybe the war will be over by that time. Here's hoping.

So long,  
Vance

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Field Service Postcard.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
#201 Fourth Street  
McDonald, Penna

October 14, 1918

My Dear mother.

The chief cause for this letter is the small slip which you will discover. It explains itself so there isn't much to say about it except you will have to pay the postage to Hoboken N.J.

I don't know what you will want to send but if you can buy, make or steal a solid block of chocolate candy of the proper dimensions and weight I believe

it would touch the spot. Fix it up to suit yourself and I will guarantee to be satisfied with the results thereof.

Got your 21st letter this morning. We took a little auto trip to the rear this morning so I think we will be out of it for a while. Perhaps if all rumors are correct the fun is about over. I hope it is. Letters 18 and 20 arrived several days ago about the time I sent the field cards. We are in a much nicer and quieter country than we have been in for several weeks. I hope Ed and Jay have great success in their new industry. Perhaps I will need a job before the winter is over.

Will write again soon,  
With love,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Miss Alma Hays  
201 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa.

Oct. 20, 1918

Dear Sister,

Here goes for a letter to sort of pay up for that long one you wrote to me. Of course it is for mom and Dad too. Got two letters from mamma yesterday, No. 24 and one before that without a number. Strange but true, mamma's writing paper came in awful handy. Paper is easy to get, but the envelopes are not much good. The ink isn't either.

There is a bird trying to entertain the crowd with songs this morning who is going to get a helmet on the bean in about a quarter of a second. Like singing but this it isn't. How is school going? What studies do you have? It is hardly as large a joint as Punxy is it? We are sort of going to school again. Our school consists of drill from 7:30 to 11:00 and from 1:00 to 3:00. I would about as \_\_\_\_

go to high school again. I haven't seen anything like a high school over here, but that is because we haven't been in many big towns. This town is so lively that we most always go to bed about seven o'clock just for amusement. A few of the boys are getting a seven day leave now. That is nice for them and believe me, I hope my turn comes pretty soon. We got paid about two days ago and will get another pay in a few days I think. About that time, I will send a few more Francs home for safe keeping.

I stopped for about an hour and went to a church service. Is that all right? Now it is nearly dinner time so I may find it necessary to postpone operations again.

So, the Imperial Fair came off as usual did it. I suppose it was quite a success. If it was as successful as the affair we took part in on that day it was some show. Our's lasted a day longer than the Imperial Fair and then we came back for a few days and then celebrated Nellie's Birthday with another little expedition of the same sort.

Tell mamma that I haven't taken a bath in the Marne, but have been to another river instead. We are now resting up and I hope we continue to rest for some time. Jerry isn't a nice play mate you know.

You are not thinking of getting married are you? I am just curious to know for all the youngsters seem to be taking the notion. Oh well, us guys wont have a frau when we come home. There wont be so many to pick from. I hope every one is feeling fine when this reaches you. Try your hand at another big letter some of these days. I think you can write one.

Lovingly,  
Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. E.I. Schall  
24 Clarion St.  
Westmont  
Johnstown, Pa.

Oct. 20, 1918

Dear Sister,

Your letter of Sept. 29 at hand so I may be able to manufacture a letter. Hope you are both well and enjoying the fall weather. It is taking a rainy notion over here, but that doesn't interfere much with our drill schedule. We are in a sort of a rest camp recuperating after our late expedition across no man's land. We started a few days before you wrote to me and finished up a few days after your birthday. Most of that dope is true that you asked me about, but I can't say that the prisoners looked so very hungry. Their clothes seemed good enough. Lots of fellows grabbed onto blankets and shelter halves. It was warm enough at times in some ways without any other cover than a shell hole.

We are going to get seven day passes in the near future. Half a dozen men have gone already. We had pay day a couple of days ago and expect another in a few days. We will have lots of Francs. Then also lots of seam squirrels<sup>23</sup>.

Well that is enough this time,  
more later,

Vance

\* \* \* \* \*

Oct. 27, 1918

Dear Father,

I am writing this letter in a perfectly good dugout. It is equipped with a stove and open fireplace. We have been enjoying the fireplace in the

evening. It is fine until we run out of wood and then like everything else, everyone waits on the other fellow. The French are very particular about how much wood the people burn. In the towns we have to use boxes or depend on the supply Co. for wood, but in a woods there is always some sticking around the edges. There is no coal in this part of the country, but stones are rather numerous. Another thing that surprised me are the rivers. They hardly deserve the name. Most of them are less than a hundred feet wide. Usually there is a canal along each river. The boats are hauled along with a team of horses.

We started up to the front yesterday and much to our delight they told us we were not needed. We about faced and marched right back to our little dugout. I suppose we will get another summons in a day or two. We have a good name now so of course we will have to go up front once in a while just to prove that our brigade can live up to its name.

The Y.M.C.A. man was around this afternoon so I sent \$25 home. It is not much use to me here and if it is in the U.S. I wont be apt to spend it. Three Francs was all that could be spent at the Y. by one person. They want the supply of candy and cakes to go around.

Wait a few minutes we have to fall out for some sort of formation. It is over now so I will finish up.

I hope this finds every one real well. I am feeling fine but am just a bit weary from yesterday's hike. Another good night's sleep will fix me up O.K. It is getting dark early now, it is only about five o'clock. We are having beans for supper. What are you folks going to have this evening? Eat some cake or something of that sort for me.

<sup>23</sup> Lice.

Will write again as soon as  
possible,

Your loving son,  
Vance.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. E.I. Schall  
24 Clarion St.  
Westmont  
Johnstown, Pa.

Oct. 28, -18

My Dear Sister,

Your card of Oct 3 came  
yesterday. Needless to say that I was  
much surprised to hear of Mabel's  
death<sup>24</sup>. It must have been very hard on  
Ed. What will he do now?

Of course, I can hardly realize  
how you folks feel because I knew  
Mabel such a short time. You know they  
were only at home one day while I was a  
home.

Emily wrote me a letter a few  
days ago and she said everyone was well  
and getting along just fine. A letter of  
that sort gets knocked cold when one  
like yours comes along.

We were expecting a call to the  
front and may have to go yet. Things  
look a lot better now. Austria has caved  
so perhaps the German people will stir  
up a rumpus and declare the show over.  
I would be satisfied to stay right in our  
little dug out for a month. We have a  
stove and an open fire place so we don't  
have a bit of trouble keeping warm. Our  
fire makes nice toast bread in the  
evenings as well as cheering up the  
place. Of course, no one likes to carry  
wood but it has to be done at times.

I am going to school again. We  
are studying a new automatic rifle. I will

know all the shooting irons ever made if  
this war keeps up. Also, I will look like a  
walking arsenal the next time over the  
top. I hope there are no more times over  
the top for us.

Well, I'll write again some day  
when there is something to say.

With love  
Vance.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Eightieth Division Wins Commendation

CAMP LEE, Va., Dec. 9.—Work of  
the Eightieth Division, in the heavy  
fighting that immediately preceded the  
signing of the armistice, won for it the  
highest commendation of the corps  
commander, as well as Major General  
Cronkhite, who organized and led the  
division to France from this camp.  
Three-fifths of the division is made up  
of Pennsylvanians, principally men from  
the western part of the state. One  
regiment, the Three Hundred and  
Twentieth, is composed almost exclu-  
sively of Pittsburgh boys.

The Thanksgiving dinner was eaten  
in peace, as Major General Cronkhite  
predicted, but before that day the  
Eighth had covered itself with still  
greater glory by its fighting in the Ar-  
gonne forest region.

James Andrew Russell, aged 21 years,  
son of D. M. and Mary Proudfit Russell,  
died at his parents' home near Candor  
on November 14, 1918 at 8:30 a. m.  
His death was caused by pneumonia  
following an attack of influenza. He  
was a member of the Raccoon Presby-  
terian church. Besides his parents, one  
brother, the Rev. W. P. Russel of Dun-  
bar, survives. Funeral services were  
held at one o'clock Saturday afternoon  
conducted by Dr. G. M. Kerr. The in-  
terment was in Candor cemetery.

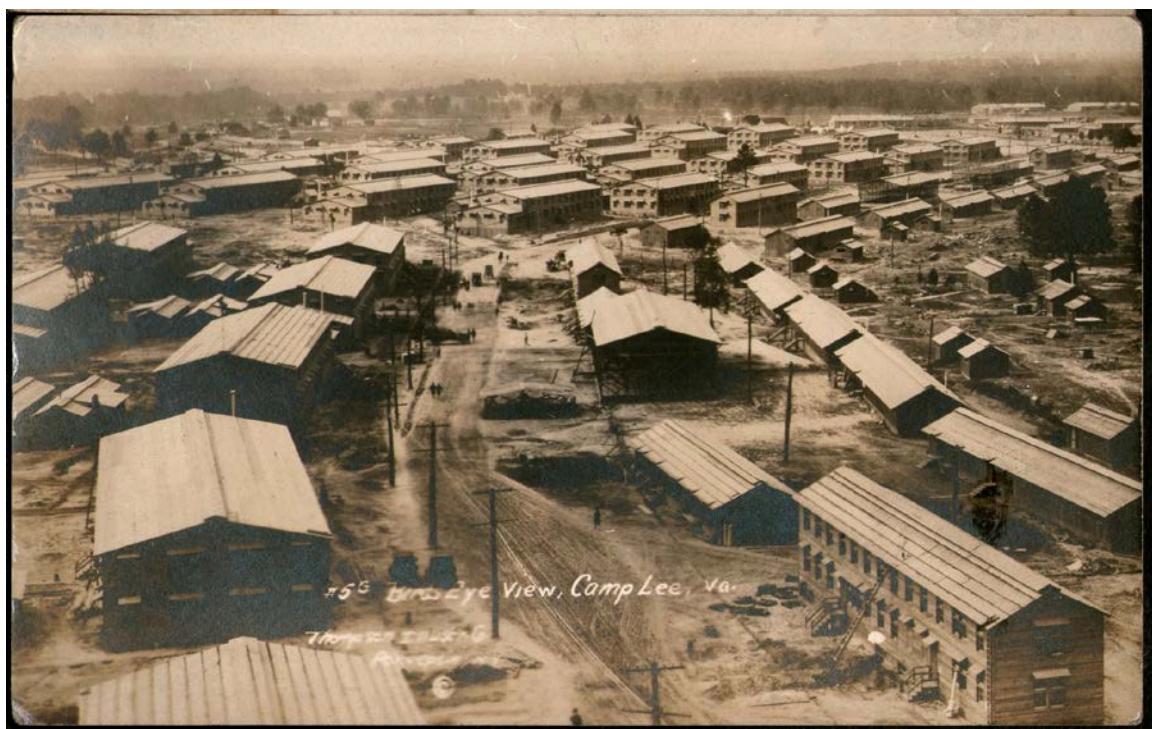
Obituary of cousin who died of influenza same  
month as Vance

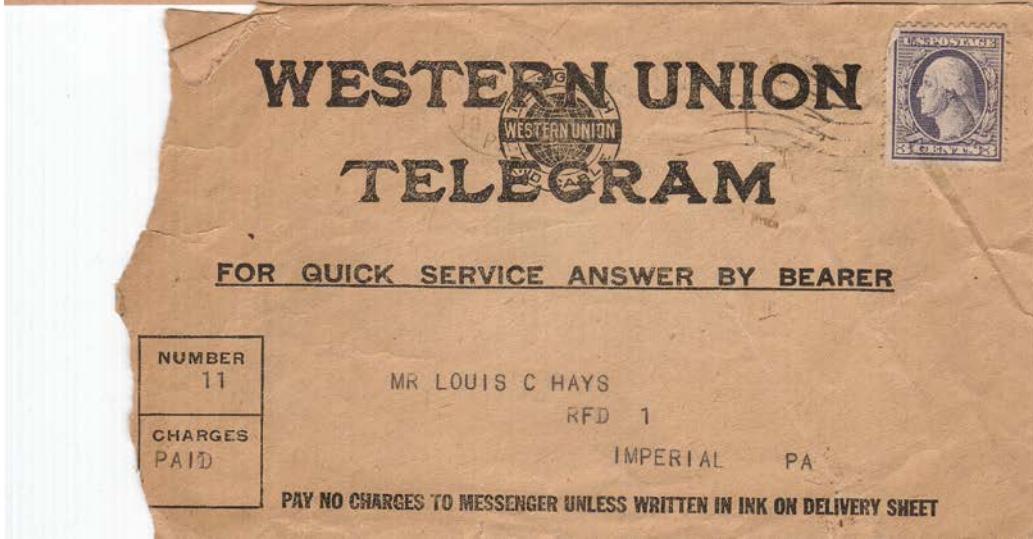
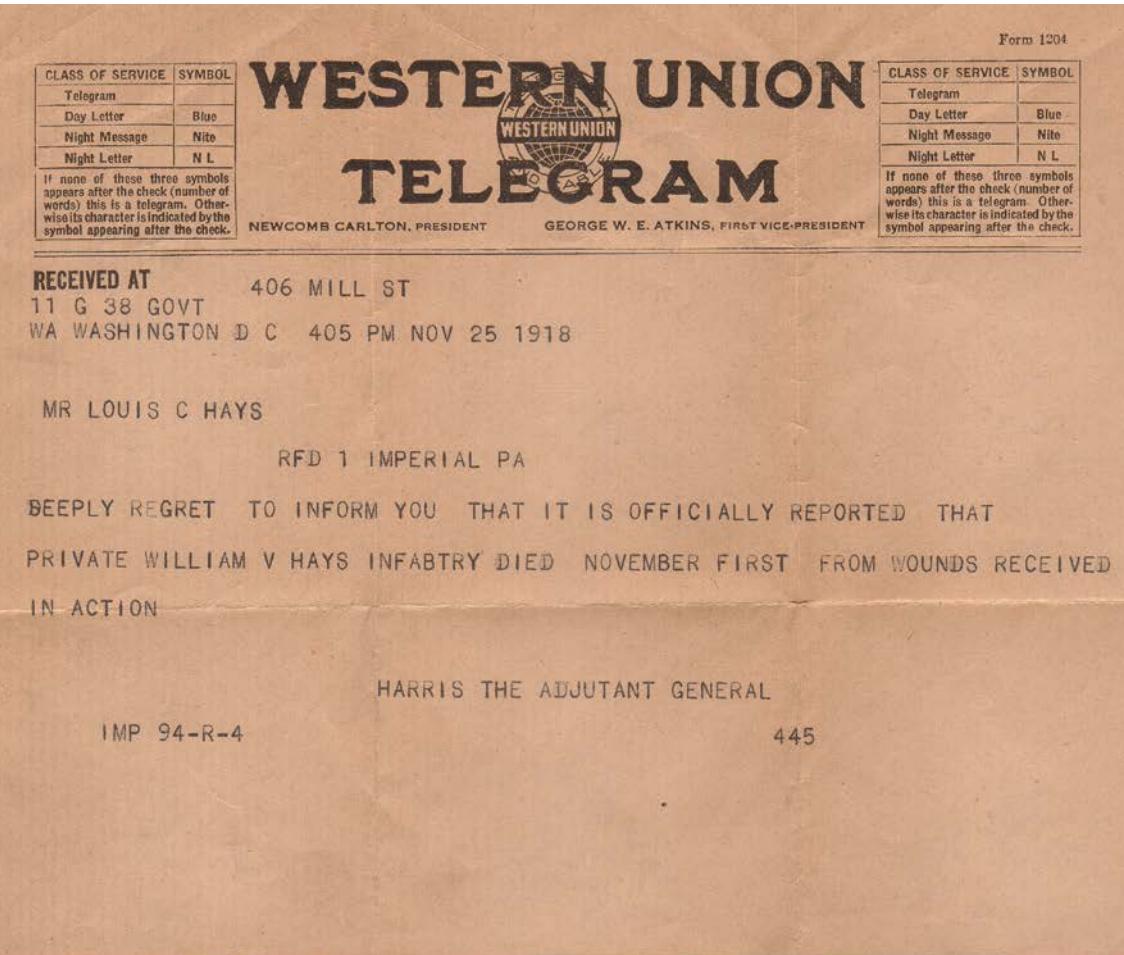
<sup>24</sup> Mabel, Edward Hindman Hays' wife whom he  
had just married, died in childbirth probably  
exacerbated by the pandemic influenza.



BARRACKS 319TH INFANTRY, CAMP LEE, PETERSBURG, VA.

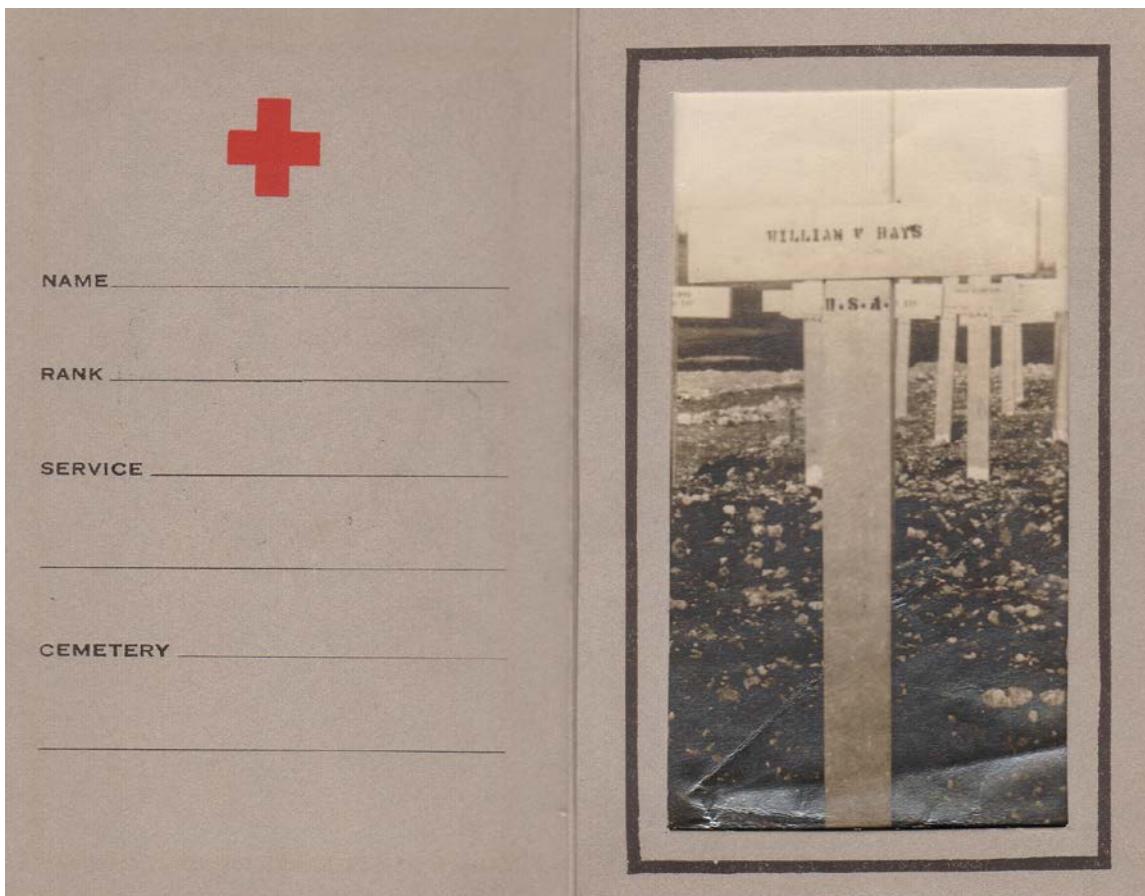




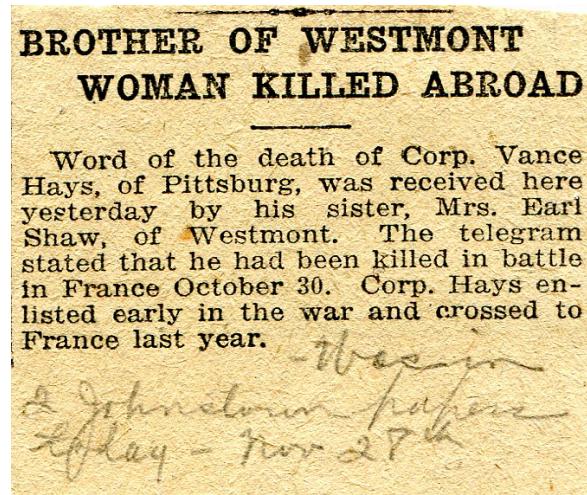




"C" FORM. MESSAGES AND SIGNALS.				Army Form C. 2126 (In books of 100)
				No. of Message.....
Prefix .....	Code .....	Words <b>107</b>	Sent, or sent out.	Office Stamp.
Received from .....	By .....		At ..... m.	
Service Instructions			To .....	
<b>TOURS</b>			By .....	
Handed in at .....		Office .....	m. Received .....	m.
TO		Lt. Robert M Kellerman Ass't G.R.O. H.Q. 33rd Division		
* Sender's Number.	Day of Month.	In reply to Number.	A A A	
Retel G.R.O. 177 period		Records show Pvt. 1st class		
Wm V Hays 1826457 Co. E 319th buried in grave #204 plot 4 sec. L Amerian Battle Area Cemetery Lesislettes Meuse period		Unconfirmed information shows Chaplain Michael Keith 11th Infantry buried in grave #545 American Cemetery Suresnes Paris Seine.		
FROM	Carson			
PLACE & TIME				
* This line, except <b>A A A</b> , should be erased, if not required. (287) Wt. W54/P738. 691,000 Pads. 3/18. A.P. Ltd. (E2012)				



Photograph of Vance's grave marker in France. The family had his body brought home and had him interred in the Valley Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Imperial, PA.



HEADQUARTERS 160TH INFANTRY BRIGADE,  
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES.

France, 18 March, 1919.

Mrs. E. I. Schall,  
126 Clarion St.,  
Westmont, Johnstown, Pa.

My dear Madam:-

Your letter dated Feb. 18th asking information concerning your brother, Corporal William Vance Hayes, Company E, 319th Infantry, was received by me sometime ago, but an answer to it delayed until exact information could be received.

I regret exceedingly to state that there appears to be no doubt whatever but that your brother was wounded in action and later died of wounds. Information received from the Central Records Office states that "Corporal William Vance Hayes, 1826457, Company E, 319th Infantry, died as the result of wounds November 1, 1918, at Evacuation Hospital No. 14. His death was officially reported to the War Department, Washington by Cablegram 310". From the Graves Registration Bureau information has been received that Corporal Wm. Vance Hayes is buried in Grave 204, Plot 4, Section L, American Battle Area Cemetery, Les Iselettes, Meuse, and that his grave is marked with his identification tag and with his name.



L. M. BRETT,  
Brigadier General,  
Commanding.

After the war, relatives were given the opportunity to bring home the bodies of their loved ones. L.C. and Emma decided to do this. The 15 inch long aluminum band shown to the right (reduced in size to fit page) was tacked to the shipping box along with the shorter aluminum box number band shown in actual size below. They had Vance's body reinterred in the Valley Presbyterian Cemetery in Imperial, PA.

## GOVERNMENT TO BRING BACK BODIES OF DEAD SOLDIERS, IF REQUESTED BY NEXT OF KIN

New York, January 25.—Bodies of all officers, enlisted men and civilian employees who died overseas will be brought to this country at government expense if the person legally entitled to the disposal of the body so desires, according to a communication received yesterday by the Jewish Welfare Board, 149 Fifth avenue, from Capt. Harold A. Zillman, liaison officer of the Commission on Training Camp Activities.

The War Department desires to have on record the wishes of the representatives of the deceased in every case, and request that such information be directed to the adjutant general. The communication reads as follows:

"For your information it is announced that the Secretary of War

has directed that the information be sent to 'person to be notified in case of emergency' for all deceased members of American Expeditionary Force, except where representatives of deceased soldiers have already expressed their wishes to the adjutant general, that the War Department will bring to this country at the government's expense bodies of all officers, enlisted men and civilian employees who have died overseas unless specific request to the contrary is made, and will deliver the body at the home address of the deceased to the person legally entitled to the disposal of the remains. The War Department desires to have on record in every case the expression of wishes of representatives of the deceased and requests that you write at once to the adjutant general stating your desire."



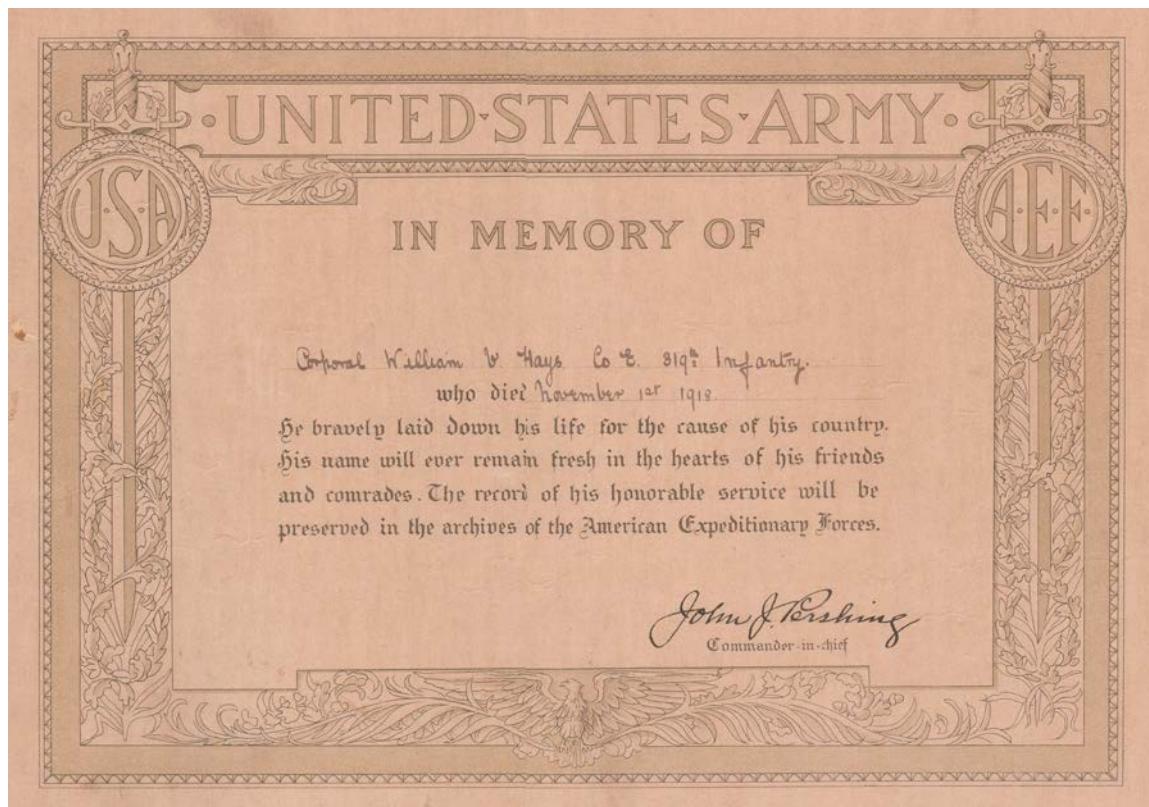
HAWKS, WILLIAM V. 1826457 PVT 3/C CO. E 319TH INF. REG. 103 SFC 33 PTE 2 GEM. 1232

From McDonald Record, 30 September 1921:

"Corp. William Vance Hays, the son of Mr. and Mrs. L.C. Hays, was buried in Valley Presbyterian Cemetery on Saturday afternoon with military honors. It was the largest funeral ever held in the church, not half the crowd being able to get inside. The funeral addresses were made by the Rev. R.M. Kiskaddon, pastor of the congregation and by the Rev. W.J. Snyder, former pastor. Vance Hays was killed in France on November 1, 1918. He is survived by his parent, one brother Edward, and two sisters Mrs. Earl Schall of Johnstown and Miss Alma at home."



Vance with his sister Alma.



Vance (very front) at McNall School, 19 January 1903.

The Army returned the following letters sent by the family after Vance's death. These are especially poignant. At first, family members continued to write letters not knowing of Vance's death. They tell about the death of his half-brother Ed's wife in childbirth, and the malformation of the stillborn child. They also describe how the great influenza pandemic affected the community and how Vance's half-sister, Nellie, contracted it and recovered.

Corp. Wm. Vance Hays  
Co. E. 319 Infantry  
American E.F.  
via New York

Imperial, Pa  
Oct. 6th 1918

Dear Vance,

I see by the papers the 80 Div. is up front. I am surely anxious to hear from you. I do hope this will find you all right. Of course, if you should not be I will know it before this reaches you. You will see I am out at Ed's. Am awfully sorry to have to write bad news to you. I wrote telling you of Mable being so sick & of their baby being born dead. The baby was born on Oct. 2 at 3 o'clock P.M. Mable had uremic poisoning & she too died but not till 1:20 A.M. She was buried on Sat. at 2 o'clock. There was a large funeral. The house was full & lots, both women and men, had to stand out in the yard. They told me there were about five hundred here. Everything was done for Mable that was possible to do for her & what made it seem so strange was that she has had such excellent health. Don't know what Ed will do. I am going to stay this week, but don't see how I could stay longer. He is going to fill silo this week. Earl & Nellie are here but Earl has to go back to his school. Nellie is celebrating her birthday in bed with a light attack of grippe. The Spanish influenza has struck U.S. Churches, places of amusement & saloons are closed in some places. I see by paper today Germany, Austria &

Turkey would like to talk peace. I think you will all be getting home soon. Can't think of more now, but will write soon again.

Hoping this reached you all right.  
I must close.

Lots of love from  
Mother

\* \* \* \* \*

Corp. Wm Vance Hays  
Co. E. 319th Infantry  
via  
New York  
American E.F.

(Written on the envelop is "Wounded 11/1, CRO Tours" which is crossed out and then i9s written "Died of Wounds 4/3/19")

McDonald, Pa  
Oct. 11, 1918

Bonjour Monsieur Vance,

Comment etes-vous? Well I got my report card at school today and I got 85 in French, 89 in American History, 80 in typewriting and 90 in shorthand. I got 90 in chemistry and 79 in both mathematics and solid geometry. I hated to put the last mark down but it's what I got. If I had lots of time I could get more. If I don't go below 70 I'll be satisfied.

Did Mama tell you that both Wilson and Bob Gordon were married? One to the Maloney girl, the other to Beatrix Wilson.

Elizabeth Bell is teaching school. The school board asked her and she is going to try for a month or two. She took an examination. Hamilton or some one gave it in Pittsburgh. It is the school back in near McMinn's and Fisher's. I'd like to visit her. It seems funny to me for Elizabeth to teach. She told me she would have some seventh grades. Emily Stewart said to me that E. Bell would have to put her hair up. E. Bell you know nearly always wears her hair down her back. If it is the school Grace McCormick taught in, some of the kids had lice. So I expect she would be on the safe side to wear her hair up.

Did I ever tell you I had made a sweater for myself and I have it on now. It is real dark old rose trimmed with black. Its nice and warm. I want to knit socks but haven't had much time yet. The hardest part in knitting socks is the heel and toe.

There's a good bit of Spanish influenza around or gripe. The saloons have been closed and schools and churches are left to local authorities to decide whether they are to be closed or not. The churches in McDonald are all closed, but the schools are not. People are asked not to congregate in crowds at stores, houses, etc., places of amusement are closed. There are only two or three cases of grip in McD.

Jim Campbell and Jim Bamford were home on a 72 hr. furlough.

Hazel Weir inquires about you quite often, and lots of other people too.

A great many boys from McD are going into Pittsburgh to school. They are in the service of Uncle Sam when they go to most of these big schools now.

We have ordered our rings at school, but they haven't arrived yet.

I had a letter not long ago from Uncle Joe. He was well and getting along fine. He had shipped a lot of popcorn to Chicago, and had raised a lot of other grains.

I suppose Mama has told you that a new railroad is being made up the valley towards Lawrence McMichael's. Its aim is to get the coal.

Mr. Craig has retired. Bought property at Ingram or Crafton and has an income of twenty-five (\$25) dollars a day, so he was telling Papa. He has been a slick old codger in his time and still is.

I can't think of any more news, so I'll say Au revoir.

With love

Alma

Write when ever you can.

Bob Young was saying it is a \$400 fine if you don't sneeze into your handkerchief in Pittsburgh on account of the 'Flu' or gripe. The cost of existing is certainly advancing.

\* \* \* \* \*

27th letter  
Oct. 14-1918

Imperial, Pa.

Dear Son,

Here we are out at farm yet. I came out Wed. Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> the day the baby was born. I was going to stay a few days with Ed until he would get some one to stay with him. Earle, Nellie, Papa, Alma & I had to stay over Sabbath with Ed. When I had breakfast ready, Earl told me Nellie was not well & would not come down, so she has been right sick but is much better now. Papa & I had to stay right here & Earl was here too as his school is closed on account of the Influenza. Alma is over home going to school & staying at night at Young's. Don't think it will be many days now till

we can go over to McDonald & take Nellie. Our church in McDonald is closed on account of this Influenza. Also, all places of amusement & the saloons. Hope the saloons never will open again. It seemed dreadful about Mable for she was so well & strong. But that uremic poisoning set in about noon of the day the baby was born & she was blind. That was when the poison began to develop they think. Baby was born at 3 in afternoon & Mable lived till 1:20 Wed. night.

The funeral was 2 o'clock on Sat.  
Ed will try to get some old couple to stay  
with him. I don't want to leave  
McDonald if I can help it. Guess if  
papers have it correct, you will be home  
before very much longer. The Germans  
are going to talk peace in earnest now.  
But they are such fly up the creeks, you  
never know what they will do next.

Am very sorry to have to write a letter like this, but I knew you would have to know it sooner or later so am writing, but think my next letter will contain only cheerful news. The trees & everything is so pretty out here now the frost caused the leaves to turn & a good many trees have shed their leaves. The sassafras is beautiful, so red & pretty & the two trees in the front yard just below the terrace are green & yellow--lower part green & top yellow.

Ed filled silo last Wed. afternoon & Thursday Mrs. Riggle & Mrs. Cooley helped Wed. & Mrs. Wilson Bell & I did it all Wed. Well I must get to work.

from Love from all. With a bushel  
Mother.



Corp. William Vance Hays  
Co. E 319th Infantry  
American E.F.  
Via New York

28th letter

Imperial, Pa.  
Oct. 20, 1918

My dear son,

Well Alma got form letter on the 12th and I got the one you wrote in Aug. the one you started in the front line trenches. I sure will keep it as long as I live. No man's land don't have a bad look from the description you gave of it, but I guess at times it gets pretty rough. You say in the front line trenches you don't do much sleeping. When do they do their fighting at night or do they fight night & day when there is a big drive on? So

Aug. 8 you were out of the trenches were you. Well I guess you have been in and out several times since writing that. By the time this reaches you, you will know I am out at the farm and why. Expect to be here a week or ten days yet may be two weeks. Nellie is not able to sit up yet. The nurse props her up on three pillows & that is all she can stand so far, but she, the nurse, expects to have her sitting up in a few days. Soon as she sits up & gets stronger, we will take her to McDonald. More than likely we will keep her there till January by that time she will be strong enough to go to her home in Johnstown. She had a bad attack of Pneumonia. Influenza has struck U.S.A. & lots of people are having it. Alma & papa are over at McDonald & I am housekeeping here till Nellie gets well. Ed does not say what he is going to do, but he is going to start tomorrow for northern Ohio with some of Stewarts & I don't know who else. I heard him telling Mrs. Riggle over the telephone he & Stewart boys were going to buy a bull together so that sounds like he was still going to farm. I don't think daddy is going to hold out long in McDonald. I like it there. I can get to Sabbath School, Church and pray meeting so nicely & I sew at Red Cross and have a busy time. I told papa I would have to teach him to knit, but I think papa will never be contented there. So if he insists in getting to country again I will not say anything against it. All I hate is the moving, but maybe by spring papa may have become taken by McDonald and we could not coax him away. Glad you found so many letters when you got back to the billets. 3 from me, one from Nellie & 1 from someone else. My but I would like to know the someone else was, but I would not ask for anything. Was talking to Ida Ackelson yesterday. She told me

to ask if you had gotten their letter yet? Like you I write every week & sometimes twice, but they seem to reach you slowly, but if they reach you three at a time that is good. Did you ever get my box I sent you? I sent it through Kaufmanns. They were to send it from their Paris store. It was July or Aug, I forget which. There was to be 1/2 lb chocolate in it & 1 lb candied fruit & 10 pk chewing gum. Would have sent all chocolate but they would not sell me but 1/2 lb. Am going to send some Xmas to you. Ed filled his silo the first week I was here. Guess I told Mrs. Riggle & Mrs. Cooley came over on Wed. & helped & Thursday Mrs. Wilson Bell & I did the honors. He cut his corn & dug his potatoes last week. There are no apples to pick, so it would look a though his fall work was almost done. He is getting 37 cents per gal. for milk. Oct. has been beautiful till today we are having an ugly cold sort of rain. The roads were fine for autos. Must close now.

Lots of love to you, Mother

\* \* \* \* \*

(In same envelop as above)

Century Farm  
Oct. 21, 1918

Dear Vance:

The top of the morning to you and how are you this beautiful sunny day? We had a rain yesterday it drizzled all day but there is quite a difference this morning. The roads got quite muddy but will soon dry up now. I expect you have seen some mud roads in France.

"X" See Nellie's mark? she is in bed and I am sitting by her side. She is getting along fine now. We expect her to sit up within 3 or 4 days. She is beginning to look like her old self once more and is beginning to take notice of

things again. She is getting quite funny this morning and I guess I'll have to take her down a peg.

The Johnstown schools have been closed since Oct. 5th because of the influenza epidemic. They will be closed indefinitely but our pay goes on just the same. I understand too that the city is quarantined now so that no one can go in or come out. It is lucky I am out.

This is the first day of squirrel season and early this morning we heard guns in all directions. Thot the Germans were coming, but I guess you fellows have them going the other way now.

Was much interested in your letter and about your being in the front line trenches. It must be great to be up there amid all of that action to see those star shells and lights at night and to be on the lookout for Germans.

Daddy Hays and Alma are staying at McDonald. Mother Hays is here. Edward has gone away this week, went to Ohio with some neighbor boys who are buying cattle.

Nellie says she will be writing to you again in about a week and for you not to get what she has--pneumonia.

And I hope too you keep well and feel fine and that all goes well with you.

With love from everyone, I am

Your brother  
Earl

\* \* \* \* \*

Corporal William V. Hays  
Co. E. 319th Infantry  
Amer. Ex. Forces  
France

October 23rd 1918  
Wednesday P.M.  
Imperial, Pa

My dear dear brother:

How are you today and I wonder where you are. Your letter to Mamma dated Sept 15 arrived today. That makes about 4 in last week. So you see, like you, we sort of get our mail in bunches, but we sure are glad to get it. Its the 3 week wait between mails that gets our goats and we like to get your letters within 3 weeks of writing. See your last one is over a month old and this old fighting around Argonne Woods is sort of getting on our nerves. Saw where Pennsylvania troops pulled Kansas & Missouri out of a hole they been in 5 days--and Oct 4th or (5th it was) saw where 80th Division was fighting but that all we saw.

Papers are full of Germany's peace notes, but I guess their not fooling anybody but themselves. Last note said they'd never shot at life boats & weren't doing any thing inhuman or vs. international law in battle fields, & here in today's paper they'd shelled a hospital again near Verdun and they took 15000 women and girls from Lille, etc. Some reasoning power they have. Some liars, one editorial says. Do you ever get to talk to any of the prisoners?

There is an awful epidemic of Influenza on here in U.S.A. 15000 died in Pa alone already--awful in Pittsburg places and has been at Camps but they're getting straightened out. All theaters, school, churches, saloons & all public meetings stopped. Earl hasn't had any school since Oct 11th so he has been out here with me. He, mamma & I are all alone here on the farm now. Ed went with some fellows, Jay & Hill, some Donaldson & some others were going to Ohio & Mich to buy a bull. So I think they got Ed to go to help get his mind off Mabel. I think it will help him. Seems bad Mabel died, for they were getting along so nicely and had house fixed nice,

a nice bedroom suit, lovely dining room set and Mabel had canned peaches and made jelly, etc. And not being sick or never thinking she wouldn't get along it seemed harder.

Ed's got 12 cows. Young Cheesbrough is milking them while he's gone & Earl is chore boy. 5 little pigs arrived last night, but 4 are dead, and they are worth \$20 a pair in 3 or 4 weeks. Earl's been running Ed's Ford and having the time of his life, except he's about run his legs off today. Getting the cows, succoring the dying piglets, lifting me around, and when he gets rested he pumps 3 or 4 cans of water from deep well--as water is dry everywhere. So see he's living the simple life, but maybe it isn't so simple.

Well brother I hope you're well and safe and that we will hear from you soon. Don't get this letter too close to breath, and tear it up right away. Don't carry it around for I guess the folks have told you I had pneumonia and I'm still in bed. Earl put me in chair awhile today but I can't step yet. Don't know how I got it, sure got it without trying, but everybody had it & I may have just picked it up coming on train, but I don't want you to get it so be careful.

Earl's going to add a line to you brother.

I am as ever  
Nellie

Hello Vance: How are you today? Hope all is well with Corporal Hays; that you're are getting good rations and not working too hard. I am getting to be quite a farmer since Edw. has gone away. I see Nellie has told you about all the news, but I just wished to say Good Morning to you & let you know I am still alive and everything is going good here with everyone. I am going to try

and get a rabbit before long. Have some apples to pick also but that is about all. Take good care of yourself and remember we have not forgotten you if letters do not come.

Your brother Earl.

\* \* \* \* \*



Vance, second row right, has his right hand on the sailor's shoulder.

\* \* \* \* \*

Corporal William Vance Hays  
Co. E. 319th Infantry

(On envelop is written "Wounded 11/1/18, C.R.O Tours," and "Died of Wounds, 11-1-18, Vfd. C.R.O. 2-15-19")

29th letter

Imperial, Pa  
Oct. 27th 1918

My dear son Vance,

We were all so glad to get your letters. Nellie got one from you yesterday, it was forwarded to her from Latrobe. I was glad to hear your French book reached you, but that was a gift from Alma. Mine was a box of sweets which does not seem to have reached you yet. I hope you do get it soon. Guess you can find enough French in Alma's book to help you get enough to eat. Glad the French Woman was so good to you two boys & gave you French fried potatoes & cooked your meat for you. Am glad you found some nice people. I have heard of some of the other boys "overthere" who had found nice French women who would cook, wash & patch for them and do it a reasonable price. McDonald school closed Thursday at noon & Alma came out on Friday to stay with Nellie, Earl & I. Ed got home last night at 12.30 from his Ohio trip. He seems to have enjoyed it. Well Floyd Bell & Francis Purdy are to be married Nov. 9th. They are having a large wedding and it is only relatives. If this influenza don't soon stop they might not have a crowd for there is a quarantine in our state for influenza and large gatherings are not permitted. Churches, schools, places of amusement & saloons are all closed & all funerals are private. In Coraopolis, Lawyer Thompson or Thomas, I don't know which (you will know), has given his home as a hospital for influenza patients. In 24 hrs, one undertaker had 16 funerals all were not influ deaths though. Ida Ackelson told me & she was wondering if you had gotten their letter yet. Mr. Cheesbrough, who bought Meloney's place, has sold it & cleared something like two thousand on it. He is going back to his small farm again. You knew Mary Cool, she has had quite a time with

influenza, but is better now. She was Mabel's nurse & began to nurse Nellie, but went away to take an examination to enter a camp as nurse & then expected to be sent overseas, but this sickness will be apt to keep her back. A Miss Genvieve South took Miss Cool's place & was with Nellie till Tuesday evening Oct 22nd & now she is nursing Miss Cool. Nellie was down to dinner today, but was hardly strong enough to come. Do think the next trip down stairs will wait for a few yet. Wed. the 30th I have been out at farm one month. This month has been fine. Yesterday thermometer reg. 70° degrees on back porch. Last I looked today it was 68°. I think from appearance of things we will have rain tonight. I am in hopes we will get home to McDonald this week. I told Earl & Nellie when Ed went away I felt like Robinson Caruso, only Earl wasn't right for Friday. And when the nurse left & only Earl, Nellie & I were left, I felt more like Robinson than ever. You know Ed & Mabel had the house only partly furnished. It seemed so empty with so few of us here. But Ed is home & Alma is here now. I sometimes think maybe I tell you the same things so often you will know my letters by heart before you get them. So you had a card from Rev. Snyder. I hear he is going to go to France & be with you boys. Can't think of anymore news, only Imperial will look strange to you when you get home with the new R.R. running all along it up to Burns School house & out back of school house.

Whole lot of love from,  
Mother

\* \* \* \* \*

(included in same envelop)  
Sabbath afternoon

October 27th  
1918

Dear brother of mine:-

Your letter written Mon Sept 16th arrived yesterday and I was so glad to get it. Mail times without a letter when you're lying around is sort of dull, but I put on some clothes yesterday and stay up most of the day. I'm up again just now and dressed and am going to try to go downstairs for dinner. It's after 1 o'clock, but this is the day the clocks go back 1 hour and mine hasn't been given its set back as yet. I'm pretty weak, but have walked with only 3 days practice, and Earl will help me down so I think I'm right smart.

We are going to McDonald soon as nice day comes and roads are good. Had 2 hard rains Fri night & Sat night. I feel we have been burden enough on Ed in his trouble, altho we will pay him.

Ed got back sometime last night from his trip. They were beyond Detroit, Mich, but I guess Mamma will know more of his trip for I haven't talked to him yet. He has gone to Riggles for dinner. Our folks were sort of disappointed, for they are having a fine chicken dinner, but Mrs. Riggle thot be nice to do same as planned.

Earl sent for his little gun and is going to try and get a rabbit these few days we stay. He's walked to Boggs to get a Sunday paper so you know how anxious we all are to see how you fellows are coming along. Yesterday's papers said Americans were about to start something. It seems you chaps have the hard end of it just now down there around that Argonne Forest. I said to Earl surely you'd try to go around someway to Metz & not strait thru. So many defenses there and Earls says he's going to send my orders to Foch. We are real anxious tho about you brother for

it's sure some hard fighting down there and we won't feel good until we get a letter dated Oct 25 anyhow.

I'm glad you got the pictures. I wanted you to see them & we all laughed at your description of your traveling light. Cutting your shirt tails off might help some, but if it got cold you might wish you had them back. Can't you get your extras checked somewhere. I know Ben had his knitted stuff kept somewhere for him and was to get it and his valuables later.

So a French woman cooked you up a good meal. I bet their potatoes would be fine and how did the English & French class progress. You know dear their most important phrases are "Sil vous plait" said like "sil vu pla" & means if you please and Merci is "marche"-thank you, and oui is "we"--yes. Bon jour = good day or howdy. Bon soir, pronounced like "bon swaw" is good evening. Cer|ta|ment = certainly, sure. Cher is dear masculine, Chere is the feminine, Chere Marie, for instance and "Ju vous adore," is way Earl always says I love you. Je = I, vous = you -- see.

Yes! The Purdys are planning quite a wedding for Nov 9th, but maybe it can't come off for no crowds are allowed to assemble anywhere until the Influenza gets more under control. Everyone of Stewarts are invited. McMichaels, McBrides, and when they get there and see all the Bells and Purdys and Atens there will be about a mob I'd think.

Sara, John, Dell, and Margaret were here a little while. Dell is so pretty and they seem to be all well.

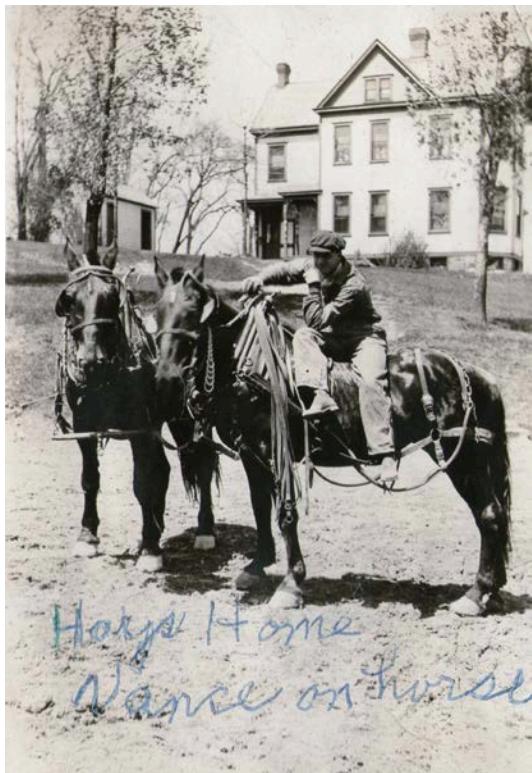
Earl brot up the three little kittens for me to see. A week ago they were so afraid of him and now they tag after him every where he goes. Mamma's going to

write some and Earl's going to write the middle of week.

Now Vance, be real careful of yourself. Don't go bathing in no man's land with snipers 100 yds away. I read some fool American did that. We don't want you to try any such stunt. Write soon, with words of love,

Nellie

\* \* \* \* \*



\* \* \* \* \*

30th letter.

(Written on envelop "Deceased" and stamped "Deceased verified by Statistical Division H.A.E.F.")

Imperial, Pa  
Nov. 3, 1918

Dear son,

Here I am yet but think it won't be many days not till we go home to

McDonald. Nellie is down stairs sitting at one end of table in living room writing & I at the other writing. We have a nice coal fire but I see it won't be long unless I put on some coal so wait a minute till I do so. This is Sabbath so papa came out. Alma has been here since Friday week ago. I went home on Tuesday & stayed till Thursday & papa lived alone till this morning he came out. Papa brought a rib roast, and we were going to have-guess what-take a sniff-well rabbit. Mike C. borrowed Ed's gun & he sent him a rabbit. Earl had been trying to get one, but had not been successful. You see we are being extravagant today, but I did not think the rabbit would be enough for six so I am having a small roast too. I try to conserve & do so, but feel guilty when I serve two kinds of meat. Daddy, Earl, Ed & Alma have gone to Uncle Levi's<sup>25</sup>. The boys John<sup>26</sup>, Jay & Ed have bought a head for their herds. Have not met him yet, but am told he is almost white<sup>27</sup>. He cost only \$1,000. Going some ain't it in Wartime? The folks have just returned so I will hear what Father thinks of the new animal. Alma says papa thought it had cooties & it had. It was right cold and frosty here his morning. The ground was frozen yet, when daddy came out. The ther. registered 32° & it was not early when I looked. Earl & Alma have laid in some walnuts, and are talking of getting more.

Johnstown is quarantined for flue, so Earl<sup>28</sup> has no school. It suits him fine to be off now. Nellie is nearly well

<sup>25</sup> This was Levi James Stewart, husband of Lewis Hays' sister Allen.

<sup>26</sup> This was John Hays Stewart, son of Allen and Levi.

<sup>27</sup> Edward H. Hays was very active in breeding pure bred Holsteins.

<sup>28</sup> Earl I. Schall, Nellie's husband, was a school teacher in the Johnstown schools and in other school districts.

again, oh she is not strong, but is up and around so when he has to go he can leave feeling she will soon be able to go too, but I know daddy won't hear to her leaving till after Thanksgiving. Daddy came in and says he has been as far west as Omaha & as far east as Buffalo & he never saw "his equal finest he ever saw" & finally he said it was a nice bull. Nellie's tongue has completely recovered and she is talking so I can't think, so I better quit.

Saw 90 division was doing wonders in the Argonne Forest, so I am looking every day to hear from you telling us what a real battle is like. I hope no one was seriously hurt, but in the nature of things, I know that is almost impossible. But our boys do seem to have miraculous escapes. I am hoping all this peace talk may amount to something & that this cruel war will soon be over and that there never will be anymore war. If I get an Xmas box label (there is much red tape about it) I will send two pair warm socks. I have one pair pretty well on the way. I only began them Thursday afternoon & have one done & have about an inch to knit on other one till I am ready for heel. Will put in a pair of wristletts too & candy. I do hope you have gotten the box I sent about the time we sent the French book. It was sweets only. Must see to dinner now. Hope you had a fine one.

Hosts of love from,  
Mother

P. S. Had a letter from Ola Melony. She clerks in a store in Knoxville. It is five miles from Fountain City where they live, to heart of Knoxville & they go by streetcar. Did I tell you Elizabeth Bell was teaching at Fisher's School. Has taught a month.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Enclosed in same envelop)

November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1918

Out on farm.

Dear, dear brother:

How are you these days and how did your crowd come out of the scrape in Argonne? Yesterday and today papers both said the 319th and 320th were in it and we saw where word had come to some parents of boys in 317 -18- 20th and one boy a Matthew Doubt of McKees Rocks of 319th is first casualty we've seen from 319th so Vance we are very anxious about you and hope & pray you're safe and escaped bombs, shells, etc. Let us know right away how you are. Looks as if Germany would soon be down and out. Turkey sure collapsed in fine shape and Austria on verge.

Well brother, we are all here on farm today, but you and we miss you and guess what we're going to have for dinner. Something you used to get us more than anybody else a rabbit. Little Crotchett boy borrowed Ed's gun to hunt and Ed told him he could have it if he brot them a rabbit for its use. Earl, Mammy, and I have been here everyday since I was sick, except two days Mammy was back at McDonald when Alma came over and she's been here too this week. Daddy's been batching this week at McDonald, but this morning Sabbath about 8:30 in comes daddy in Overland and he said it wasn't working very good. Didn't seem to have much power as it should. Roads are bad tho, it's rained every day this wk almost and roads were frozen this A.M. I suppose you know about rain tho. I read some soldiers letter where it said it had rained every day in Sept. and how ugly and muddy it was over there.

Earl and Ed husked a load of corn yesterday P.M. and hauled in Ed's Ford which got limp in action about 100

yds from our lane. Fri. Earl and Alma went up on hill and got 2 bl walnuts and Earl carried them down too. They were sweet and juices ran over him till he looked like a coon, but that was some load. He picked apples, only about 2 barrels and a few in trees yet, but he brot them in.

Fri. Ed and Stewart Morgan went to a sale at Caste's. It was real cold and we started a fire in living room. We had supper partly eaten when telephone rang and Seabright told Ed the new bull they bot in Mich was on platform at Imperial on milkstand. Mind they just set him off and would have left him there all night on that high place. Ed & Earl drove Doe(?) down and Jay and John went and they gathered up 6 or 10 town guys and all together they got him lifted down, but mamma's telling you about him I guess, so I'll talk about something else.

I hope you get the letter we mailed middle of week with the items in and the funny letter, we thot it was pretty funny. did

We ever tell you that Mary Cool, who nursed me first took pneumonia and later pleurisy and is still in bed having quite a time of it.

Oh, the Bell-Purdy wedding is to be next Sat. Nov 5th. There are to be 60 Aunts and Uncles alone. I guess 100 or so altogether. Floyd's house is a ready cut one and is just about finished. Mrs Wilson Bell was over the other day. Sila is at school and its about only one not closed and they've had 2 deaths in Dorm and Sila was sort of scared Mrs. Bell thot.

Well brother, I'll add more in middle of week, have you been getting 2 a week? I have tried to send 2 ever since in June. With lots of love

Nellie

Every precaution is being observed in Imperial and Findley township to prevent an epidemic of Spanish influenza. Our health officers are closing schools and prohibiting gatherings of all kinds where there are more than six persons. The merchants and druggists were notified to not allow more than six persons in their stores at one time. Persons selling ice cream and soda waters are forbidden to allow any one to eat ice cream in their places of business. Customers can buy ice cream and take it to their homes. It is hoped that every loyal citizen will abide by these orders.

Mrs. Earl Shawl of Punxsutawny, who is ill with pneumonia at the home of her brother, Edward Hays, is improving.

Clippings enclosed in Nov. 3, 1918 letter

\* \* \* \* \*

Corporal Wm. Vance Hays  
Cc. E. 319 Infantry  
American E.F.  
Via, New York

(Written on the envelop is "Wounded 11 | 1 | 18, C.R.O Tours," and at another place "Died of wounds, 11- 1 -18, via. C.R.O., 2- 15 -19.")

36 letter. 201 N. 4th Street

McDonald, Pa.  
Nov. 8, 1918

My dear son,

Home at McDonald again. Came home Wed. evening the sixth. Ed had no one to keep house for him yet, but I hope he can find some one soon for I did hate to leave him alone. He did not seem to want dad & me to stay with him. If Alma had been through High School, I would have felt there would have been nothing to hinder us from going. I think papa would have gone anyway & paid Alma's board, but Ed seemed to want to try having some old couple to stay with him

& where he is to get them is more than I know. (Perhaps you can send him a French couple.) Ed's farming amuses me of course he is doing something, but there is so much hurrah & fuss about it. He wants to do so much more than he is able to do, raising pigs & no fences to keep a pig in. Having a man hauling on the new R.R. with one of his teams, running a dairy & farming. And when I was there, he was talking of contracting to haul lumber from McNall's woods to Boggs. (W.W. McNalls I mean. )

As mother used to say, he has "too many irons in the fire," but I really hope he may succeed. His wheat looks fine. He has the big hill top by Bell's in wheat & the hill field next to Bailey's thicket. Well we were on the hill top of excitement yesterday. We got news Germany had signed for peace and McDonald blew whistles & celebrated with a parade 1<sup>st</sup> night. And this morning the paper says Germany has not signed yet. It is sort of a wet blanket on our enthusiasm, but I don't think is will be long till they do. Nellie is fine now, but Alma is off a little with a cough. I think it may be a mild form of "flue." We have been having beautiful weather. My breakfast dishes are waiting on me. So good bye till the tenth. Hope by then the war will be all over & you & all the boys will be rejoicing as we sure will be.

Lots & lots of love to you,  
Mother

\* \* \* \* \*

Corporal Wm. Vance Hays  
Cc. E. 319th Infantry  
American E. F.  
via New York

(Written on envelop "Wounded 11/1/18,  
CPO Tours," then "Deceased,

Verified 1/10, #320," and stamped as above .)

37th letter 201 North 4th St.

McDonald, Pa.  
Nov. 10, 1918

My dear son Vance.

We sure were glad to get you letter yesterday written Oct 14th. Also the service card dated the 11<sup>th</sup>. It and letter got here at same time. We knew you were up front at the time Mable died and as it was in such a hard place we were very anxious to hear from you. Before we got your letter we saw in the paper what Col. Cocheu had written to Mayor Babcock. Will enclose it. We did not know, but you might be one of the 400. Hope that will be your last time up front and the next time will be towards home. We got the slip for Xmas box & we will try to get in some chocolate. Soon as you get one of my letters telling of the box I sent through Kaufmanns to be sent from their Paris store to you. It has never come, let me know & I will go after them. Ed was in today for dinner. When he drove up in his auto, Rover the dog was sitting up in back seat & he got in there when Ed went home. He looked cute. He seemed glad to see us when he came. The "flue" has been rampant all around & seems to be at its worst here now. At Oakdale they are using one of the churches for a hospital & there are 400 patients some one told papa, but not all from Oakdale but from our around. Ed said at Imperial some man & his wife died 15 min apart & left four children. I hope it and the War will soon run their course. Guess the 11<sup>th</sup> of Nov. will be the end of the war or else the beginning of the end. But I hope those old Huns sign the Armistice. Don't know whether school will begin tomorrow or not.

Pitt and W. & J. had a football game yesterday & W. & J. was beaten 34 to nothing. You ought to see old Dock. He has gotten so fat & sleek he is pretty. Well am run down so good bye for this time. Oh, forgot Floyd Bell & Frances were married yesterday. Don't know whether they took a trip or not. Rev. Thome has gone to a training camp.

Love from all & a generous lot from you Mother,  
Lovingly Mother.

\* \* \* \* \*

Corporal Wm. Vance Hays  
Cc. E. 319th Infantry  
American E.F.  
Via. New York

(Written on envelop "Wounded 11/1/18, CPO Tours," which was struck out and "Deceased 11/1/18, verified by Brynes 1st Lt." Also stamped as above.)

201 N. 4th Street  
McDonald, Pa.  
Nov. 17, 1918

My dear Son Vance.

Well it is over, all but the disposing of Keiser Bill. Hanging is too good for him. A good steady job at hard labor would be better for him. I sure am glad the war is over & hope the boys will soon be coming home. I suspect it will take some time to get things in shape to let them off. I guess after the strain of excitement which all have been under, you will be dead tired and be glad to rest. Hope you can get to see some places worth seeing if any are left to see. But whatever you do, keep up your morale & abide your time for coming home. It may be time will hang heavy and seem long, but keep cheery &

try to help some homesick boy to make the best of things.

Some people think the boys will be more homesick now than they were, but I am trusting to you to improve your time in such a way that you will be leaning something & not making yourself miserable over what can not be helped & we will be ready to throw up our hats when we see you coming home. It might be our bonnets, but anything so we see you. Did you get any souvenirs or was your pack enough for you to manage?

We have celebrated twice here once too soon & the last time when we knew for sure the war was over. The "flue" is bad here now so many people are dying. One day there were five funerals. Two & sometimes three in one family die. At Imperial, it has been bad, but it is worse among the foreign people. There were seven buried there in one day & still more at the place Barnett keeps them, some place about Armours Livery barn. It is as bad as war. We are having rain today and the air feels so pure. I think the "flue" will be washed out. Guess Nellie told you of James Russet dying just 24 hr from when he was taken ill he was gone. Jim Young is in a hospital at Washington with pneumonia, but not serious. Enough of this, I feel all will be well soon. Nellie is getting along fine & we are all well. Dad was out Friday & Sat till noon with Ed helping finish his corn. It was not a big crop this year. His wheat looks fine & I hope he will have a great crop next harvest. So far, he has no one to keep house, but hope he may find some soon. Of course I will go out as often as I can & red up for him. I saw a rabbit trespassing on our lot. If I see it again, will get the Hays bunch out & we will surround it & there will be a rabbit short

in McDonald or else one more out in the country.

There was preaching today for the first time in six weeks. Your Xmas box is on its way. Daddy thought you must have socks so I knit you two pair & we put in all the chocolate we could. Hope it is the kind you like. Left out the wristletts so we could get in more candy. Got a card from Kaufmanns saying you had gotten the box I sent. How was it? Did you like it? I see some one advising the boys to keep up their insurance. You be sure to keep yours up for I think it is a good investment for you & while you are able to work it will be easy to keep in up & it will be a nice sum for you when it is paid up. Am sending a clipping that will explain itself. Neelys are having a sale Nov. 21 of dairy cows, not quitting but going to invest in thorough bred stock. Was it your French girl who wrote to Mayor Babcock to find out the standing of her husband to be? Nellie says if you are in Germany we won't stand for any German girl. Alma says good American would suit us better, but that none is the best. Well I have covered a good bit of paper a nothing to it so better close. Lots of love & hope you will get home soon.

Lovingly Mother.

(added on last page)

One of Adah Wilson's jokes.

Ester was knitting socks or attempting to for the soldiers, but she never got but one knit so Adah told some one "Ester was knitting but she never knit but one so she thought she was knitting for Sam Purdy."

Aunt Hannah<sup>29</sup> is sending us a bushel of sweet potatoes. Got bill yesterday. Express prepaid.

\* \* \* \* \*

Corporal Wm. Vance Hays  
Cc. E. 319th Infantry  
American E. F.  
Via New York

(Written on envelop "Wounded 11/1/18,  
CPO tours," then "D. of W. 1 1 -l -18,  
Verified 408 2/ 1 1," also stamped as  
above. )

39th letter

210 North 4th Street

McDonald, Pa  
Nov. 24, 1918

Dear Son Vance,

Here it is almost Thanksgiving, time gets away somewhere. Time seems to go fast but your letters seem to come slow. Have been hoping we would get one since peace was declared, but one would not have time to be here yet only 13 days since peace. Won't you be able to tell us more now of what you are doing & seeing? Do you know yet whether you will get home or not? I have seen some lists of who were to get home but failed to see anything of the 80 Div. I am afraid the Bolsheviks will have to be put down before the thing is over with. I got the card saying you had received my first box, the one sent Aug 15th. Hope you won't be so long getting your Xmas box. I guess my letters are just repetitions for I forget from one time till the next what I have written. Nellie went to Johnstown Friday the 22nd of Nov. We were going to keep her till after Thanksgiving, but the folks sold their house. I mean the folks where Earl and Nellie had their rooms & so they are going to have to hunt new rooms about the time you find what their Johnstown address, but guess it will reach them any way. Nellie seemed to get along fine

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<sup>29</sup> This was Hannah Whetstone Groom, Emma's sister and Vance's Aunt. She lived in Princeton, Kentucky.

though if she don't get cold going home. She thought Earl could not pack her dishes & fancy things so she went home to pack. They have to be out by Dec. 2nd. We are having sunshine today, the first for about a week. We had a little snow on Friday night, but not enough to cover the ground. So far, we have not had any weather you could call cold. How is weather "overthere?" Flue caught our town again & schools & churches are closed. We are to have some sort of patchy prohibition, but just so we get it. I think if once we get a little, it will be apt to stay and I hope it will to we are told liquor kills more than war & the dear knows war is terrible. So it is high time to have whiskey & beer, also wine, take a back seat. Maybe I told you, Floyd Bell & Mrs. Floyd went over to Purdy's last Sat. to stay over Sabbath & were there with the flue. We had the best chicken for dinner. Alma called Ed up to come over, but he was having beef steak & onions so did not come today. I made some soup of broth & rice. Alma took a bowl to Janette and Ferny Young. Both have flue & I sent enough over to Collins for 3 youngsters who are recovering from "influe." We have plenty broth & chicken left. We had some nice beets, turnips & a few carrots to put away. Sweet potatoes Aunt Hannah sent came. They were fine so sweet & good. We are all well. Daddy goes to sales with Mr. Peacock, only went to one last week, but there are two or 3 he wants to take in this week. No more now, write often as you can. there doesn't seem to any news.

Mrs. Neal was here yesterday & they have not heard from George since Sept. 22nd. John Glass's have a son & Will Glass's have a daughter.

Love to you from  
Mother.

\* \* \* \* \*

Corp. Wm. Vance hays  
80 Div. Cc. E. 319 Infantry  
American E.F.  
Via New York

Hospital

(Written on the envelop is "Deceased 11/1/18, verified by John J. Noone, Captain 319th Inf. )

Imperial, Pa.  
Dec. 29, 1918

My dear dear boy,

I do wonder where you are and how badly you are wounded? John McMichael wrote his mother you were wounded & Henry Robson of Coraopolis wrote his sister he & you were in a hospital wounded but he gave no dates. I hope you are able to be up when this reaches you & that you will soon be home. I only wish I could have gone to you. Am so glad this war is over & I hope there never will be another war. Hope you will be so you can answer this, but if not, don't fret. Just try hard to keep in good spirits & get able to come home soon. Ed has a little flue but not in bed. Just can not go out of room, & must take care of himself. Estella Patterson spent Xmas with us. She teaches in Tippacanoe, Ohio. Daddy, Alma & I are well. Did you get your Xmas box & did you like the chocolate?

Hoping this reaches you. I must close. Lots & lots of love and hope you soon get home. I am anxious to see you.

Lovingly Mother.

\* \* \* \* \*

Corporal Wm. Vance Hays  
Cc. E. 319 Infantry, 80 Div.  
American E. F.  
Via. New York

Hospital No.

(Written on the envelop is "Deceased  
11/1/18, verified by, Thos. Byrnes, 1 st  
Lt. ")

201 North 4th St.  
McDonald, Pa.  
Jan. 5, 1919

Hope this finds you  
feeling fine, perhaps  
on your way home.

My dear dear son Vance,

I wonder where you are on this fifth of Jan 1919. Do you remember we were all on the farm last year Jan fifth which came on Saturday & what a fine time we all had. Our turkey this year was chicken & we had it Xmas. Estella Patterson<sup>30</sup> was here with us. I hope your Xmas box reached you & you liked what you found in it. What did you have for Xmas dinner? Am so glad war is over & hope when another Xmas comes we can all be together & have a good turkey dinner. Wouldn't it be the best Xmas ever? Ed had a touch of flue. I told Nellie & Earl it was because they sent him slippers for Xmas & he was sitting around with them on. He really was sick, but could be up in room most of time. With flue a light attack may prove serious if you don't take good care of yourself. We are having our first real winter now. I came home from Ed's yesterday morning & the thermometer was two degrees above zero. This morning was colder here, but it seems

nice to have some genuine winter. While we were at Ed's, papa, Jay & Tom Shemile butchered three hogs. I fixed Ed's share up in all styles so he & Tom could keep house easy. Guess you would not know who Tom Shemile was. His folks live where Lewis' lived & he is staying with Ed. I sent buckwheat for them. Baked the first cakes for them the morning I left. Don't you have a life sized picture of them making and baking buckwheat cakes. There is a new milk tester on the job now. His name is Miller & he talks all the time. He is fair & has taffy colored hair, the kind of taffy that has light streaks in & Ed says he has a back action in his speech, but he has that under control for when he finds he is going to backfire, he stops & takes a new start so you can scarcely notice anything wrong. He is quite nice though. To make a long story short, he came to Ed's when I was there & I did the cooking for his first trip, but he told me he could cook so guess they will get along fine next time without me. Oh forgot to tell you Ed's cows are doing fine. His last month's milk came to \$375. Isn't that fine or him? You must hurry up & get well & come home so you & papa can get our on a farm. Papa is not much taken with town life. I like it, but I can live just where ever the rest are happy & contented. Now dearie, when this reaches you, if you have gotten able to write, do write & tell us all about yourself. We have heard of course you were wounded & in hospital, but we don't know No. of hospital and don't know whether our letters ever get to you. Tell us everything, don't forget mother loves you and is so anxious to get you home again. Have you any idea when you can come home? If you are not able to write, Is there not some one who would write a few lines for you. If I

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<sup>30</sup> Estella Patterson was Emma's best friend when she lived in Cambridge, Ohio.

could get to you I would come instead of  
this letter. I send you all the love it is  
possible for one letter to hold.

Lovingly Mother

\* \* \* \* \*

Baby born dead Oct 2nd 3 o'clock

Mable died Oct 3rd  
1.20 Thursday A.M.  
Buried Sat. 5th.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
New Moon 3d	First Quarter 11th	Full Moon 18th	Last Quarter 25th		Vance died 1	
3 10 17 24	Will Stewart died 4 11 18 25	5 12 19 26	6 13 20 27	7 14 21 28	8 15 22 29	9 16 23 30
	Telegram came to Coraopolis					Laura McKalian died.

NOVEMBER — ELEVENTH MONTH

The tragic months of October and November 1918. Not only did Vance get killed in France, but the flu was rampaging on the home front. His mother Emma recorded the tragedies of the family on this calendar. Because it may be difficult to decipher, I have transcribed her notations below.

"Baby born dead Oct 2nd 3 o'clock" He was her stepson Ed's child. This would have been Vance's nephew or niece. It was born deformed.

"Mable died Oct 3rd, 1.20 Thursday A.M. Buried Sat. 5th." This was Ed's wife Mable Anderson. She and her baby were among the first victims of the pandemic flu.

"Vance died." Emma enclosed this date in a box. She did not know this immediately.

"Floyd Rogers' wife died" This is marked by an X over the 3rd. This was a cousin.

"Will Stewart died" This is marked by an X over the 11th.

"Laura McKalian died" This is marked by an X over the 23rd.

"Telegram came to Coraopolis" This is marked at the 25th.

"Mrs. Young told us about Vance & brought notice" This is marked on the 27th.

"Ed came & brought official notice." This is marked on the 29th.

*This is a selection of sympathy letters Emma and L.C. Hays received. I discovered forty-three sympathy letters. Almost all were very similar in tone and content and I only transcribe a few here.*

Princeton, Ky, Nov. 29, 1918

Dear Sister:

Received your card today and was sorry to think that possibly some harm might have come to Vance. He was a good, loveable boy--but oh, Emma, how many mothers have lost darling boys "over there."

If he should have been wounded or killed, you would have or will receive notice from the government. Sometimes reports get started that are not true. This summer one of our Princeton boys was reported dead, but when we read the truth in a letter from him, we learned that he was well--in fact had not even been sick or has not even a scratch in action and he had gone to France Nov. 1917. Had seen a good deal active service, but was in the artillery. Now, Honey, keep a brave heart and whatever comes, remember the thousands of other afflicted mothers in America, some of whom have given not one only, but several sons.

Take time to write me how you got you news. Indeed, K known all about the Argonne battle. Our boys were given a good many forests to clean up, which was dangerous work. You wrote in your letter about Vance coming out of Argonne and I hoped would not have to go back, but if you have bad news (even if not true) it proves that he returned to that front again.

We are all well and I hope you are all well and keep well and that you can write me some good news soon.

With lots of love for all and many prayer for you and yours, I am your loving sister,

Hannah

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Emma W. Hays  
201 N 4th St.  
McDonald, Pa

Saturday Morning  
Nov. 30, 1918

My Dear Cousin,

Your card reached me last eve. Oh how sorry I feel for you. I cannot find words of comfort to extend to you other than in the good book. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform, he knows the end from the beginning.

I will with you that you may get better news yet for sure it might be a mistake.

We have lost a great many boys from our immediate neighborhood. So many died in the Camps with the influenza, and it is raging just now in Cambridge. From 6 p.m. on Thursday till 6 p.m. Friday 24 deaths were reported in Camb. There are few deaths in the country, but not many.

You have heard of Willie Stewart's death. He died with the influenza. I didn't go to the funeral, I was afraid to go. Also Laura Hoech McMahan is dead. She died for some sort of an operation. Brot(?) to Martha S interment in North Ward. I did not attend that funeral either. You'll think I am a heathen, but I was so fearful of the influenza for it is so bad in the town and so fatal.

We are both well. Hope you are. Write me again if you get other word about Vance. Dear boy, he was a good boy. So many were called away. No doubt they were not prepared. Again, I extend my sympathy to each of you.

With love,  
Your Cousin Amada<sup>31</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. & Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Fourth Street  
McDonald, Penna.  
215 S. Thayer St.  
Ann Arbor, Mich.  
Dec. 1, 1918

Mr. & Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Dear Friends

It was just yesterday that I received a letter from home saying that Vance had succumbed to wounds received Oct. 28, 1918. I do not know how to express to you how sorry I was to hear of it for Vance was one of my very best friends and one whom I'll always remember as long as I live because of his sincerity, clean cut character and disposition. When he and I went to school in Coraopolis we were together a great deal and got to know each other very well. He was well liked by all who knew him and was noted in his school work for plugging at a thing until he mastered it. While he was at Camp Lee, we corresponded but he never wrote to me after he went across but I have often thought of him & wondered how he was. It seems too bad when war so nearly over that he could not be spared to see the end accomplished of such a noble cause as he was fighting for. You have my most sincere and heartfelt sympathy in your bereavement, but there is one consolation you can always look back upon and that is that he was one of the finest clean cut noble soldiers that ever wore the kahki.

Sincerely  
Eugene Aten

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>31</sup> This was Amada Eagleton Mawhorr.

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa.

Princeton, Ky  
Dec. 8, 1918

My Dear Folks,

What can I say to ease the pain of your sad affliction?

We have o fears for his future happiness but, oh, to be taken so young just on the threshold of life and in such a way. I had comforted myself with the thought that he would not take part in the fiercest fighting and felt sure he would return home, but some of the hardest fighting of the war came just at the close and he was in it, the dear boy.

Oh, how I prayed for his return it it be God's will, if not, that strength might be given to you all to bear it.

Write as soon as you can and tell me all you can about the circumstances of his death if you know or learn anything or it.

All the family joins me in this and send much love and tender sympathy.  
Your affectionate  
Sister Hannah

\* \* \* \* \*

My dear Mr. and Mrs. Hays,

As Secretary of the Class of '17 of Coraopolis High School of which Vance was a member, I wish to give you our deepest sympathy. I am sure that the sacrifice seems harder almost than you can bear, but it is comforting to know that he gave his life in a most honorable and glorious way and is perfectly happy now.

Our Class is proud to have had such splendid men in it as Vance and the other two, David Pugh and Arthur Holmes who gave up their all for their country.

We think and pray for you during  
this your great sorrow.

Very Sincerely,

J. Lucille Mercer  
Sec. of Class '17

Murrysburg, Pa  
12/10/18

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. 4th St.  
McDonald, Pa.  
Aviation Reg. Unit S. Co 1107  
U.S.N.O.B.  
Hampton Roads, Va.  
Dec. 15, 1918

Dear Folks,

I've just learned through Mother  
that Vance was one of those to make the  
supreme sacrifice for God and humanity.

We are all sorrowful and share  
the grief with you for like you we were  
hoping and praying for his safe return.

Through pride in his manhood  
and the spirit in which he went forth into  
the great struggle, the greatness of the  
cause in which he fought and died, nor  
even the knowledge that he is but  
waiting you in the great beyond, sure  
and happy therein, cannot still the ache  
in the hearts of loved ones left behind,  
yet these are, I'm sure, a great  
consolation to you all and tempers the  
great grief you now undergo.

I would that there were  
something I might say or do that could  
make it easier for you, but save that all  
of us have that same desire to lessen the  
pain if we might there is nothing beyond  
telling you how deeply we feel with you  
the loss.

With much love for all,  
Stewart<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> This was Stewart B. Groom, Vance's cousin,  
son of Hannah Whetstone Groom.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Cor. Washington & Fourth Sts  
McDonald, Pa.

Sab. eve 3/16/19

My dear Mrs. Hays,

I rushed off today and didn't get a  
chance to say goodbye, but I meant to  
just the same. Mother had been sick & I  
wanted to run up home to see her before  
going away again. Those were surely  
impressive services and brot many a  
thing together at Ackelsons and  
Coraopolis High School.

I wonder if I would be asking too  
much should I ask for a little picture of  
him to keep m providing you have one to  
spare. I surely would like one for "old  
times sake" because I always considered  
him a close "pal" of mine.

With deepest sympathy &  
warmest personal regards, I am sincerely  
yours,

S. Harold McCullough  
1205 Palo Alto St.  
N.S. Pittsburgh

\* \* \* \* \*

(This letter from his stepsister Nellie was  
written not long after she recovered from  
pneumonia resulting from the influenza.  
Sorry for all the run on sentences!)

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 North Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa.

November 28th -18  
24Clarion St.

Dear, dear Mamma, Papa and Alma,

I wanted to write to you last  
night, but just couldn't, then Mrs. Cass  
came up and talked most of evening, and  
this being Thanksgiving Day, we have  
no delivery, etc. So, I'm afraid it will be  
Sat. when you get this, but I feel better

since I talked to Alma and am anxious for a letter from you telling me everything. Somehow I can't believe Vance is dead. I just can't believe it and hope and pray he isn't. I thought Alma said he had been in hospital and after heard that I was afraid maybe it was so, but there are 2 cases in today's papers--I will enclose--where gov. notified people and it was wrong. I was just heart broken when I heard it. Mr. Hamilton told some fellow to come up by and tell Earl or told Earl to call him. The Chief of Policy and Burgess of Westmont it was. Came up around and stopped machine out front & told Mr. Cass to have Earl call Mr. Hamilton. Earl went to do so. The men told Mr. Cass what the message was and Mrs. Cass at 1 P.M. or 1.30 and no one would tell me until Earl came about 3 and then he just looked sorry at me--that I asked what was wrong and he just picked up Vance's letter that came that morning at 9 A.M. and I knew. Earl, Mr. & Mrs. Cass just won't let me think about Vance, but I know I didn't sleep last night hardly and how I wished I could be with you folks and put my arms around you Mamma and Daddy and tell you how my heart ached for you and Alma--and you especially Mamma for you've had to stand so much and it seems almost too much to bear, but you mustn't forget how much we all depend on you, Mamma, for if anything would happen to you it would be harder to bear than anything that has ever happened to any of us, for we all love you so and you've cared for us all our lives. I can't see why if Vance is really gone why God took him and left me when I was sick. It would have been so easy and spared Vance, for he was so young--so good and we all love him so and if it was Oct. 30th we were all there on the farm and together--or the 3rd of Nov we were too.

You saw the clipping I'm enclosing. I expect that given location of division on Nov 7th. The 80th Division was at Sommantyhe and St. Dizier, and St. Dizier is not more than 30 mi straight north of Chaumont (about 25 mi) from Jim Bell's Y.M.C.A. is. I'm going to write Margaret a note & ask her to have Jim find out all he can about Vance. He would know the 80th Div went in their (sic) or were there and what hospitals they sent wounded to and where boys were buried. He could go on his motorcycle to any place around where Vance's Division fought in an hour or two at least. So if you get any more news about Vance from Ackelson's letter or anyone that would help Margaret any, let her know. I figured the distance out on a Nov 30th Literary Digest and St. Dizier is just about 30 mi South of Argonne Forest & I am having a map of French Front sent to you<sup>33</sup>. It's one I'd never gotten, but am sending for two. It gives every little town etc. right in where our boys were. I don't know just how you'd go about getting Pittsburg Red Cross to look up Vance, but Mrs. Miller ought to know and I feel sure they would do it better than Wash. D.C. Hdq for they get so many and Pittsburg people would push inquiries faster because he is an Ally Co. boy. They would cable I imagine. I know they get it quick as possible and I think their services are free and unless you get some word from boys or someone in France, I'd like the Red Cross to make sure, and if you don't feel like it Mamma, let me know and I'll try it from here, and let me know all about Vance as soon as you can.

I was so glad Tues. A.M. a paper came from Leroy telling all about the fight in Argonne. The Stars and Stripes

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<sup>33</sup> This map is among the Vance Hays papers, but is too large to include it in this document.

(Margaret B gets them) and I knew mail had come from France. The you'd hear from Vance and a letter came Wed. A.M. written Oct. 20th but not postmarked until 28th and I felt something was wrong soon as I read it, and I told Earl & Mrs. Cass it was the smallest bluest letter he'd written me and I was afraid he was sick, or all done up over fight in Argonne. He said some of boys were getting 7 day furloughs, but poor dear boy, he evidently didn't get one, for in ten days he was in fighting again. Literary Digest (Nov 30) says 9 American Div went in Sept 26th and staid 3 weeks. That would make it over 14 and 14th to 17th, but Vance was out then and they fought against 36 German Divs, and that Nov 1st Germans threw in 14 more German Div and Americans had all they had in 35 Div or so, and that day, Nov 1st, they struck the death blow to German army and Nov 6th they broke Germans in two and got Sedan, which was their finish, and that's why terms came 11th etc.

I wonder if Vance would get letters mailed about Mabel. They left here about Oct 3rd or 4th and if he went up about Oct 24th, leave 25 days. I sort of hope he didn't. Poor child, he had enough, then when we got those letters the 11th of November, Earl came about it was after he was hurt and your letter too with the label and just think you glad we all were. I can't realize it that he may not be living . I told Earl I was going to write one more letter to him anyhow for fear he was hurt and waiting still for letters.

Maj. Cronkite piece in Weds paper said the 80th Div. had been resting in Argonne Forest and part of them had gone to another rest camp 100 miles South. In that case they were below Jim Bell's "Y."

Well Mamma, I must stop and you take too dare of yourself. You and Daddy & Alma and I will have to love each other more than ever and live for each other and then more things that happen and older I get I feel more that you 3 are all that counts for anything and all we have to hold to. Don't fret, and let's hope he will come back and if he doesn't, we need never fear but he died one of finest, best, dearest lads that ever lived. Just as he was with us and as he went away and that he was no slacker and did more than any other boy his age or many for miles around our home and he will be honored and loved and remembered as long as anyone is around there that knows or him and there never was, not ever will be stood above the Burns, Gordons, Bells and all boys for character long before he ever left and I would rather have things as they are than have him ever like them or changed, altho it hurts terrible to think we may have to give him up. I can see him yet as we (Alma & I) kissed him goodbye on train last Jan. and as we were at school, home & all and every picture is just Vance & and his little smile.

But its time I moved around a little. It's quit raining here. Surely been an ugly dark day here. Earl found lovely place up this street so we just go up street about as far as from 201 to Peacocks, so 126 Clarion St will be our new address & we have a big bedroom, a den with Davenport and Kitchen and clean place, lovely furniture, etc. I want you, Daddy & Alma to come up soon as you can--right away Mamma if you feel it would help you any. We will move some tomorrow and Sat or we could have come down to you today. We thot we could maybe for a few days soon or would you rather we'd wait till Xmas. Earl's school is closed, but his salary is

going on and he expects to be a guard for Influenza- \$5 a day. That would make his salary \$12½ dollars a day with school wages of course while it lasted. Daddy better persuade McDonald to take on guards, stop all special sales, keep anyone under 12 off streets, etc. He may get work at steel mill. He was expecting word from there & when Mr. Hamilton's message came, thot it was about that as Mr. H called from Steel Mill. He must be connected with it some way.

I have so much to enclose in this letter. I will have to close. Earl may add a little, and Mamma write and take good care of yourself. and Daddy is to help you and Alma and see you are alright

With Worlds of Love, Nellie

(On same page)

Friday Morning

Dear Mother: We thot we'd get a letter from you this A.M. and it came. So will mail this now and enclose prices. I want to keep Vance's letter. How did Alma's sound? Somehow I think he might have gone to Hospital after Oct 15th from Argonne fight, for he said they rode back & then his 20th letter is so solemn. How was Alma's? So keep my letter safe for me. I wish you'd get Mrs. Miller to send message to Pitts Red Cross & let them look up about Vance. If they charge, I'd be willing to pay for it, and then we'd know all about him. Has Harry Wier written lately home or to Wiers. Well, I'm writing a card to Margaret Bonard and she will come and see if you've heard any more. Tell Daddy he mustn't get sick. Earl says if weather clears up, it's so rainy now that one can't get out much, that we could come down a few days next week. We will be moved and all, but to ask you when you'd rather have us a few days next week or Xmas time, because we couldn't come both

times. So tell us in Sabbath's letter and take good care of yourselves and maybe good news will come like these clippings I have enclosed.

With Worlds of love--Nellie

*(Continuing on same sheet of paper, is this.)*

Dear Daddy Hays, Mother Hays and Alma:

I had come to regard Vance as a real brother and these days have been the saddest I have known since the death of my Mother seemingly a short time ago. Vance has been especially dear to me because he was dear to Nellie and she loved him so much.

But no one can know of your great love for Vance or realize how great is your bereavement except you yourselves and in times as this, we wonder why the Good God so wills it. It surely tries our faith and we are told to look to him for comfort; that he takes those He loves and whom we love to Himself so that when our time comes we would rather be with Him than stay here.

I received the message, and it was with a sad and heavy heart I told Nellie; I was over town and got the message on the telephone and when I came back, Nellie said I looked so gloomy, had I heard bad news? I told her, yes, and at once she asked if it was Vance.

It rained all day yesterday, was cold, and so we called up instead of coming home. Nellie seems to be alright today, that is she is not saying much and is about as usual, but I'd not like to take her out while this weather prevails. But it only lasts a day or so, I hope. We saw several accounts where boys reported killed were not and some in hospital were well. I fear it is a forlorn hope.

Please do take good care of your health, each one, and do not get sick. I hope Edward is well and that everything is going fine for him.

With love  
from Earl

\* \* \* \* \*

(This was loose among the letters and may have been enclosed with the letter above.)

For  
Mamma

Only

Well Mamma, this is for you and I hope you're the one who opens this letter and gets this. Maybe I don't need to hurry up so about writing this, but I wasn't to tell you. Don't you dare go & get sick or anything because if you do I'll be scared to death for there is a young Schall on the way we think. I haven't been sick since I left home--Nov 22 or 23, and already I'm all out of shape. Girls couldn't get over how stout I looked & then I was sick for 3 weeks every day at stomach and felt bad. Earl got MD and he said my busts looked like I was more'n two months on the way, but I couldn't be for no one would go through pneumonia and stay that way. But I'm so big I think maybe there might be enough Irish in me that I did that I did come thro that way. He gave me pills & I haven't been sick at stomach since & said all we could do was wait couple of months. Then we'd know. I'm feeling fine now, but I sure was miserable for awhile. I don't want you to worry or anything maybe if we don't get any good news from Vance by Feb. and there is Memorial services, I can come home for a week, of if we have good news you can come up. don't say anything about it

outside for it would be some joke if a mistake, but I hardly think so judging from appearances. I haven't any appetite except for sour things. I could eat tomatoes & vinegar every meal and oranges & banana. I don't know whether sour things are allowed or not. MD said my heart was fine. 72, good as a man's and I was cooking when he came, and that was unusually good and a woman generally runs 84. Lungs alright too he said. So guess I'm \_\_\_\_\_ only I wanted to tell you then if anything should happen you'd know & then it's been so long since Alma was little that I've forgotten all about babies. So all information would be thankfully received. Earl says if it's a boys he's going to buy him a dog. He wants a girl tho. I say it's got to be a boy. When I see my shape, I think it will be both.

(Compiler's note: Nellie had a healthy baby girl on 9 September, 1919 and they named her Elsie Efflie Schall.)

IN REPLY  
REFER TO

WAR DEPARTMENT  
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE  
WASHINGTON

STATEMENT OF THE MILITARY SERVICE OF

William V. Hays, Army Serial No. 1,626,457,  
Corporal, Company E, 319th Infantry.

The records of this office show that William V. Hays, Army Serial Number 1,626,457, a resident of R. F. D. No. 1, Imperial, Pennsylvania, was inducted September 6, 1917, at Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, Sailed for overseas May 18, 1918; participated in the following engagements: Offensive Sectors, Meuse-Argonne, Somme Offensive; Defensive Sectors, Artois, Bellincourt, and died of wounds received in action on November 1, 1918, while serving as a corporal in Company E, 319th Infantry.

Official statement furnished to Mrs. L. C. Hays,  
R. F. D. #1, Oakdale, Pennsylvania, January 9, 1932.

By authority of the Secretary of War:

C. H. BRIDGES,  
Major General,  
The Adjutant General.

*This is a collection of correspondence from writers with knowledge of Vance's death in the Battle in the Argonne Forest.*

(No envelop)

Oakdale, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> 1918

Mr. and Mrs. Hays,

Dear friends. We had a letter from our boy in France on the 11<sup>th</sup>. He had written in on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nov. In it he said he had lost two of his best friends. One of them he did not name and the other one was your boy. His exact words are "Since I wrote you last I have lost a couple of my best friends, one of them was killed and the other severely wounded. I just can't get as good a fellow to pal with as Vance Hays. However he was not killed but severely wounded." So you see John did not know that he had died and Mrs. Hays, there may yet be some mistake as it is hard to trace all the boys. I know that your boy and ours had been very great chums. They had at one time built a bed of pine boards for themselves to sleep on.

I do wish I could tell you more of the particulars and with them some comfort for we too at one time thought ours had been killed. So we can sympathized with you to the full. May the God of comfort and consolation comfort you in your sorrow, the weight of which is so great on account of the distressing circumstances attending it.

If we hear anything, we think will comfort you in any way, we will write and tell you all we can fine out either by John or in any other way.

Yours in love and sympathy  
Mrs. J.C. McMichael

\* \* \* \* \*

(No envelop)

Arthonnay, Fr

Jan. 2, 1919

Dear Mrs. Hays,

I believe you expressed a desire to hear more about the action in which your son took part in on Nov 1 and in which he was wounded.

We went over the top in a big attack and the first few minutes over the company ran into a nest of German machine guns. Vance has charge of the automatic squad of fourth platoon. The fourth platoon was making a sort of flanking attack. Vance's squad was picked to advance along an old road. The whole party consisted of a sergeant a corporal and five men. They were to advance and fire whenever possible. While advancing, two of the party were killed and the rest were wounded except two who got off unharmed. Vance was among the wounded, being hit a little above the hip on the right side by a machine gun bullet.

About twenty minutes later he was carried off to the dressing station on a stretcher and was able to talk. No one in the company has heard anything from him since except what comes from you.

I could tell you many things about how we lived together for Vance was my best friend here in France. But certainly all that can wait till a better time comes.

Know that these are very poor words to a mother, but I can do no better than tell you what I know. You have my deepest sympathy for I in some measure share your grief.

Respectfully yours,  
Jno McMichael

\* \* \* \* \*

*(The following letter was sent by the pastor of Clinton Presbyterian Church who went to Europe with the Y.M.C.A. to serve the troops.)*

Mr. L.C. Hays  
Fourth Street  
McDonald, Penna., U.S.A.  
Diekirch, Luxemburg  
Jan. 16, 1919

Mr. L.C. Hays and Family  
McDonald, Pa  
Dear Friends,

Have just learned with sorrow that Vance had made the supreme sacrifice. Words are not sufficient to express to you all that I would like to say in this time of great sorrow. Death under the circumstances would seem doubly hard to bear. We always desire to be present when our loved ones are laid to rest. If there is anything I can do, let me know and I will do all in my power. Would like to visit his burial place if you will tell me the location.

Will be in the region of the Argonne Forest when I return from here. Was sorry to hear that Edward's wife had died and that Nellie had been seriously sick. You have all been passing through dark days. May you have found the Great Comforter your stay and comfort in the most trying time.

Sincerely your friend  
W.J. Snyder  
12 Rue D'Agriesseau  
Paris, France

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. 4th Street  
McDonald, Pa., U.S.A.  
Arthonnay, France  
Jan 18, 1919

My dear Mrs. Hays,

I hope you will pardon my forwardness in writing you, but I feel I can give you the information you desire in regards to Vance. I became acquainted with Vance on our arrival at Camp Lee in September 1917. And on our arrival n France, being in the same platoon, we were very seldom separated. We had gone thro' two previous drives together Sept. 26-30 and Oct. 4-12 without either of us receiving a scratch. On the morning of Nov. 1 we went over the top at 5:40 A.M. near the town of Apremont. From the start, we ran into very stiff machine gun opposition and had not advanced far until we were forced to seek cover. Vance and I were lying alongside of each other and were not satisfied with the cover we had selected, so we decided to move to our right. We commenced crawling in that direction and had not proceeded far until Vance was wounded. I removed his "combat pack." from his back and got him into a nearby "shell hole," where he was safe from further bullets.

He told me he was hit in the leg. Altho I did not see the wound, I could see it was in the vicinity of the left hip.

Vance was perfectly sensible when I left him. Neither he nor myself considered the wound as serious. We received first aid attention and was taken back to the Aid station, probably about an hour after being hit.

I am sorry this is all the information that I can give you, but hope this clears up a few points for you.

Our company Headquarters has received no official notification of Vance's death and it was a great shock to me when Sergeant Robson showed me your letter. I can scarcely realize it, and refuse to believe that Vance is dead until I see the official notice from the hospital to which he was admitted.

You know Mrs. Hays, the War Dep't at Washington, D.C. often issues casualty reports that are not true. I fervently hope there is some mistake in the telegram which you received.

Vance was well liked throughout the company and I'll say he was one of the whitest, cleanest, squarest boys who ever drawed breath. He was a good soldier and I'm sure he was a worthy son. I sympathize with you from the bottom of my heart and I express the sentiments of the company.

Hoping my letter has enlightened you on a few facts you were anxious to learn.

May God bless and keep the Mother of Vance Hays.

I am sincerely,  
Sgt. William T. Purdy  
Co. E 319th Inf.  
A.P.O. #756

\* \* \* \* \*



\* \* \* \* \*

(No envelop)

Arthonnay, France  
Jan 20, 1919

Dear Mrs. Hays:

I received your letter dated Dec. 26 and I am very sorry that I can not give you any information concerning Vance., but I saw Serg't Purdy of the 4th Platoon and I let him read your letter and I told him to write you a letter in his own words of how Vance was wounded and also the date.

He wrote the letter and then gave it to me to read. He told you about all the information anybody in the company knows.

But as far as I know and through a mistake of my sister's, Vance was not in the same hospital with me, but if Vance were living you would of heard form him before this time, because there are special Red Cross nurses that go through each ward and to each patient in the wards asking them if they would like them to write home to their parents telling them how bad they are wounded and how they are getting along. The patient can either have the news sent home by mail or by telegram.

But Mrs. Hays, I do hope & pray that Vance has not died of his wound.

Vance was well liked by all of the boys in our company and as for me, I never met a better friend than Vance.

You have the sympathy of the whole Company, that is if the news is true, but I do hope it is a mistake.

I was wounded lightly in the right cheek Nov. 1 and I was sent to the hospital, being there for 14 days. Then I was discharged and sent to a convalescent camp where I was one month. I got back with the company Dec 15 and I sure was glad to get back with

the boys. This is the first time I heard of Vance being wounded.

But it was a wonder that there was any of us left in that last drive we were in Nov. 1 because it was the hottest and hardest front I believe of any.

I received my Xmas box and enjoyed it as much as I could. We are all hoping to be back soon.

Any time you are in Coraopolis Mrs. Hays, and I am home, stop in at my sister's residence.

Yours truly,

Serg't Henry S. Robson  
Co. E. 319 Inf.  
A.P.O. 7516  
A.E.F.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Adams  
57 Union Ave.  
Ingram, Pa.

Mr. & Mrs. L.C. Hays

My Dear Friends. Although my heart went out to you in sympathy when I heard of the death of your dear son, I felt there was nothing I could write that would comfort you. But now I am enclosing a letter from Raymond which was received yesterday and hope the tribute of love and esteem to your son from a comrade in arms may be some slight comfort to you in your sorrow. I grieve with all the mothers whose sons have given their lives in the cause of liberty and humanity, but more especially do I grieve with you, whom I know, and my dear friend and neighbor Mrs. Kirk whose big handsome son Lieut. Frank Raymond Kirk lost his life in the last drive, indeed on the last day November eleventh and who as Raymond says of Vance that he was doing his share and little more. I realize more fully than many people that life

will never again be just the same to you, but hope that in Gods own good time your sorrow may not be so hard to bear and that it was a glorious death to die. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The last letter my brother John McBride had from Paul (his son) was dated November third. They are very much worried about him, but there is so little a person can do to find out anything in a case of this kind, and they expect every day to have their worst fears confirmed. Would like very much to go out and see you, but am a very busy woman with a house full of roomers and boarders, so perhaps you could come to see me. I would be glad to have you come anytime you could do so--

With love to both, I am  
your friend,

Delphine Adams  
57 Union Ave.  
Ingram

Jan 30, 1919

If you will be so kind, you may return Raymond letter some time when it suits you.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
210 N. Fourth St.  
McDonald, Pa., U.S.A.

Arthonnay, France Feb. 3, 1919  
My dear Mrs. Hays:

Your letters to Lieuts. N.P. Ray and F.N. Cummings have been referred to me for particulars. Both lieutenants were wounded on the same day, but before Vance. So you see they did not even know that Vance had been wounded.

On the morning of Nov. 1 at 5:40 A.M. we went over the top near

Sommerance and Fleville, on our last Argonne offensive. Despite the fact that during the early hours of the morning our artillery had put over a wonderful barrage, we had very rough sledding from the start. The resistance we encountered was the most stubborn and furious we had ever met. A great many of the boys were placed on the casualty list. Not being with the fourth platoon myself at the time, I was forced to interview one of my sergeants for particulars concerning Vance. He was with your son continually up to the time he was wounded and also states he has written you full particulars a few weeks ago.

Vance was wounded in the left thigh by a machine gun bullet. He was administered first aid and was taken back to the Aid Station about and hour after being wounded. He was conscious and perfectly rational when taken to the rear, and did not consider his wound as serious.

We are not kept informed relative to the condition of the boys who go back to the hospital, so I have received no official notice of Vance's death. Your inquiry for particulars came as a distinct shock and surprise to me.

His personal effects go with him to the hospital and are taken care of by the hospital authorities.

Vance was a cool, steady, reliable boy and could be depended upon in any emergency. He had proven it many times. He did great work during our great offensives of Sept. 26th to Oct 12th. His squad of "automatics" were always on the job. His men would swear by and stick to Vance through thick and thin. They respected his every command for they knew they could depend on him. He was a good soldier and a very efficient one. His death is lamented by

all his surviving comrades and myself, who appreciated his untiring efforts and comradeship.

He is a son of whom you may well be proud. He realized his duty and did it regardless of consequences. The whole company shares your grief and extend to you their heart felt sympathies.

His death shall not be in vain. There are millions of other red-blooded American boys who share the same fate rather than see their ideals and standards for which Vance fought crushed by the Iron Hand of Autocracy.

I beg to remain  
Very sincerely yours,  
John J. Noone  
Capt. 319th Infantry

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Fourth St  
McDonald, Penna., U.S.A.

Coblenz, Germany  
Feb 28, 1919

Dear Friend,

Your sad and most welcome letter rec'd. I am so glad you thought to write me about this matter, but I can't tell you anything definite about Vance Hays. It was a mistake about me seeing his grave. I wrote and told Mother about Vance being killed and also that told here about the soldiers' graves being so nicely fixed up, which they are. I guess she thought I meant just Vance's grave, but I know his Co. went into the fighting on Nov 1st until Nov 6th, and a little later I saw in a Paris paper a list of the boys that were killed out of the 80th Division and Vance's name was among the first, and several of the boys knew Vance told me that he got badly wounded in the side of the hip the first

morning of the fight they were in and he died shortly after, but I do not know if he died the same day or not or if he was able to talk or not, but I will try and find out all about his death that I can. I feel sure I can find out how long he lived after being wounded. As I feel sure he is dead, do you know his serial No. is? It will be something like this (this is my No. 2440622). If I had that No. I could find out about him pretty easy. I will try to find out all I can about this matter at once and let you know as soon as possible, but if you have his No. please send it to me.

The last time I saw Vance was a day or so before he left Camp Lee. He came to France about a week before us.

If I find where Vance's grave is at, I will try to get to see it while over here. I know it is well taken care of. At least all I have seen are in fine shape and well cared for. There sure was a lot of our boys got killed over here, but I was very lucky. I was in France 7 months and never got a scratch, but one has some pretty hard times. I have been in Coblenz, Germany since Jan 1st, over on the Rhine still baking bread. We are with the Third Army. I don't think we will get home till about fall. We have had real nice winter, only a little snow and not very cold.

Will close for this time  
Your Friend  
Alvin Daughty  
O.K.  
Wm. L. Atwell (the censor)  
2nd Lt. Q.M.C.

\* \* \* \* \*

(No envelop)

Cuzy-le-Chatel, France  
March 24, 1919

Dear Mrs. Hays,

No doubt you will be surprised at receiving this letter but I have just received your address from Miss Nancy Hoag, of Petersburg, Va., and thought I would write a few lines to you in regard to the death of your son Vance.

No doubt you have heard Vance speak of me in his letters and as we were about the first to strike an acquaintance after our entry into the army and the friendship has lasted all through our experiences in the army.

Vance and I left Coraopolis at the same time and our friendship dates from that train ride to Camp Lee, Va., in September 1917. We were assigned to the same company and the same platoon and were always together until I was transferred to the Medical Department of this regiment. After my transfer had gone thro, our friendship did not weaken, rather it grew in strength. We in due time became acquainted with the Hoag family at Petersburg and it certainly proved a grand acquaintance for us, as you know from having visited the place. In our leisure hours, Vance and I would be found together, no matter where it might be. Our evenings were almost always spent with each other, either in the company barracks or in the Y.M.C.A hut or possibly we would go to Petersburg together and one would not go any place without asking the other to go along. With very few exceptions, our Sundays were spent at the Hoag place and we indeed were as thick at two brothers and the people there often remarked that we were more like brothers than friends.

After our sailing to this country we were often separated by two to five miles, yet every chance we had we were together and talked of our various experiences throughout. During our intensive training period with the British,

Vance and I had gone to the front for the first time together and spent our first night in the trenches only a short ways apart. After our training was considered completed we were moved to the sector occupied by the Americans at the time and from there we went into our first grand action a little north of Verdun in the Argonne Forest.

We were in the action almost continuously for a period of seventeen days and had some very severe casualties as well as the severest kind of fighting to go thro as, you perhaps have read in the papers. It was the most strongly fortified section of the famous Hindenburg line. Allow me to say here that any line they could have constructed would have been smashed by the tremendous onslaught of our troops. Vance and I both came thru this drive in very good health and un-injured although we were almost worn our with our exertions. We rested for a period in a little town some ways back from the scene of the action and were then sent up again as a reserve unit for a period outside a rest area but still not in action. This was the last place I saw Vance on the twenty eighth of October, 1918. We were together for an hour or so and then I having some work to do, I had to be moving about my business. We knew we were going into action again on the next morning so bid each other goodbye saying we would soon have it finished and were talking about spending a few days with the Hoag family after the war was over. Of course, at that time we did not have any idea that the armistice would be signed. We were all in good spirits and the boys all went in like true Veterans that they were. We had a march of thirty four kilometers to make before we got to the front line and that was a very hard march and was made over

military roads and in good time. That was on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October and done the same night, we took positions of support and the next day, the 31<sup>st</sup>, we moved into the front lines. At this time I was in charge of the AID STATION at Sommerance about one-half mile behind the actual front and it was in shell fire for the three days we were there. On the morning of November 1<sup>st</sup> our barrage started at 3:30 A.M. and we knew we would be going over at dawn. I was on duty the day previous and that night also and in the morning when the wounded began coming thru our station I was still there. Had been on duty for forty eight hours without any rest at all.

About 9:30 A.M. when the first rush of wounded was taken care of, I went forward for the purpose of locating a place for another station closer to the boys in order that they might have the best treatment. I was caught in a heavy counter fire of the Germans while hunting a suitable place and that necessitated my being away for a period much longer than I anticipated. I returned to the station about 12:00 Noon and found they were still having a few men come thru the station. I took steps immediately to have out aid station moved up and had moved forward before I looked at records of the men having gone thru the station and that was the first I knew of Vance being wounded and on inquiry I found he had received a machine gun bullet thro the right side but the men in the station told me it was not very serious and that they had evacuated him to the rear.

After we had finished our duties and had been returned to a rest area I inquired of his platoon Sergeant, Sgt. Purdy of Company "E", and he told me of his injury and evacuation to the rear.

After coming to this area I heard thru Miss Nancy Hoag of this death from the wound received and it certainly had a depressing effect on me for a few days as I had been waiting patiently to hear from him as to how he was getting along and even anticipated a letter from him telling me that he has arrived in the States again, as they began to send casualties home as soon as the armistice was signed. I could not understand why he did not write me as we had agreed that if either of us were wounded and sent to a hospital that we would write as soon as possible and let the other know how he was.

As to his burial place I can tell, as he had been evacuated from this area before dying and in all probability had died in some hospital some distance from the scene of action. If I could possibly do so, I would visit his grave but it is a very difficult matter to obtain the necessary information and I have no idea as to its location

I do not know of any further particulars that I can tell you about his injury and subsequent death Mrs. Hays, but I can tell perhaps better than any other man with whom he was associated with as to his character, habits and principles.

Of all the time I knew him, his character was spotless and nothing that I know of can be said against him. Faithful and obedient to all orders and commands as well as being a fine companion and in every respect a gentleman to be looked up to by all his associates and friends. I perhaps knew Vance better than any of his associates insofar as we had been together all the time since our entry into the service. It is with great admiration for him that I can say he gave his life in a very courageous manner and his associates in

action say he had not the slightest sign of fear on him when things were at the worst but always maintained a calm, collected frame of mind that had a very encouraging effect on the men of his squad with whom he was in action and every one has expressed the deep regret his death caused. Every man in his squad is now expecting to be sent home in the month of May and just as soon thereafter as I can get things straightened out at my home, I shall visit you in order that I may not only fulfill a promise to Vance, but in order that I may tell you personally of the actions of your Brave and Noble son who has given his life for the sake of his country and whose names will be added to roster roll of the American Immortal Dead in France.

Hoping that this letter will find you in very fine health, I will close this letter for the time.

VERY SINCERELY,  
A COMPANION OF YOUR SON

Sgt Francis W. Parsons  
Medical Detachment, 319<sup>th</sup> Infantry  
HOME ADDRESS

37 Frazier Avenue  
McKees Rocks, Penna.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. L.C. Hays  
4th Street  
McDonald, Penna. U.S.A.

Diekirch, Luxembourg  
March 28, 1919  
Mr. L.C. Hays and Family,  
Dear Friends: I was through the Argonne last week, and went to the American Cemetery at Les Islettes where, I was informed, Vance's body was buried. I found the grave marked with a wooden cross with an identification tag attached bearing

Vance's name and identification number. The bodies of one hundred and twenty others lie in the same little plot of ground just outside the village cemetery. A fence has been placed around this little plot of ground made sacred by the bodies of our hero soldiers.

The sun was just setting behind a bank of gold as I stood there in that little burying ground. It would be hard to describe my thoughts as I thought of Vance as I had known him and then again as I thought of his home across the sea, filled with sorrow because a beloved son had been called upon to make the supreme sacrifice. This is in a part of France torn by shot and shell. Vance must have fallen some distance north east of where his body lies. I understand he was wounded and carried to a field hospital which may have been in this village.

A map in the Literary Digest of Feb. 22 indicates that the 80th Div. was six miles northeast of Grand Pre on Nov. 1st. As far as I can learn, the 80th Div. had gone into the front lines that day (Nov. 1st) After being out from Oct. 14th. The 80 Div. was in the lines from the time the big drive began Sept. 26 to Oct. 14. when the Div. was relieved and rested till Nov. 1st. If I can do anything further to give your aching hearts any comfort, do not hesitate to call upon me. Hope to return to Imperial by June 1st.

Sincerely yours

W.J. Snyder  
12 Rue d'Aguesseau  
Paris, France

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
201 N. 4th St.  
McDonald, Pa.  
149 Deer Hill Avenue

Danbury, Conn.  
May 8, 1919

Dear Mrs. Hays:

I served with Evacuation Hospital No. 14 while over seas and I regret very much that I cannot give you any information about the death of your son, as the nature of his wound would not bring him under my care.

The records of the hospital should give the information you desire, the nature of his wound, his death and the place of his burial. Also the name of the surgeon who attended him.

By writing to the Commanding Officer of Evacuation Hospital No. 14 now located at Coblenz, Germany, you should be able to get detailed information.

All patients admitted are given a Red Cross bag in which to put all their personal effects. This they keep with them. In case of your son, his personal effects would be turned over to the Registrar for safe keeping.

Will be in Greensburg shortly and will be very glad to give you any aid I can.

Respectfully  
Joseph A. Boarts

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. L.C. Hays  
Imperial, Pa.  
R.D.#1

East Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Sept. 14, 1921

Dear Mrs. Hayes,

Just a line in acknowledgement of your letter received this morning and to thank you for not having forgotten me at this time, a time which I am sure is a sad one for yourself and family.

No one in this world knows better than I what a great loss you

suffered when Vance was taken away. I knew him probably better than any of his friend and was with him under some of the most trying circumstances and hardships that soldiers ever have to face. His manly conduct and bearing, his absolute confidence and cool headedness at all times and under all conditions was an inspiration to his companions. He commanded my respect and admiration when he was living and he has left a memory of friendship in my heart which I can never forget.

Words cannot express the pleasure I feel over this opportunity to

be pressed and pay my last respects to my late comrade.

I can be reached by calling on the Bell phone Valley 120 during the day or Valley 264-R in the evenings. If I do not happen to be present when you call, you can leave a message with either party.

I wish to remain

Sincerely yours

William T. Purdy

P.S. Mother sends her deepest sympathy and best wishes. W.T.P.

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*From: McDonald-Record Outlook*  
*Friday, December 6, 1918*

**Made the Supreme Sacrifice**

Mr. Mrs. L.C. Hays of Fourth street, McDonald formerly of Imperial, R.D.1, have been notified of the death of their son, Corporal William Vance Hays, Company E, three Hundred Nineteenth Infantry, who died overseas November 1, 1918 of wounds received in action. He graduated from Coraopolis High school in the class of 1917, went to Camp Lee September 8<sup>th</sup>, and left for overseas May 1918. He was with the British in Flanders, but at the time of his death was with the American forces on the Argonne forest battle front. In the last letter received from him under date of October 27<sup>th</sup> he said he expected to be called out any time.

\* \* \* \* \*

*From: McDonald-Record Outlook*  
*March 14, 1919*

Memorial services will be held in the Valley Presbyterian church, Imperial, Sunday, for Corp. William Vance HAYS, who died November 1, 1918, in France, from wounds received in action.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Clipping from unknown newspaper.*  
*March 20, 1919*  
*In section titled "Out the Pike."*

In the Valley Presbyterian church at Imperial last Sabbath afternoon, memorial services were held for Vance, son of Mr. and Mrs. L.C. Hays, who died from wounds received in Co. E. 319<sup>th</sup> Infantry. The church was crowded to the doors.

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*From: McDonald-Record Outlook*  
*Undated clipping.*

Deaths of the Week  
Corp. William Vance Hays.

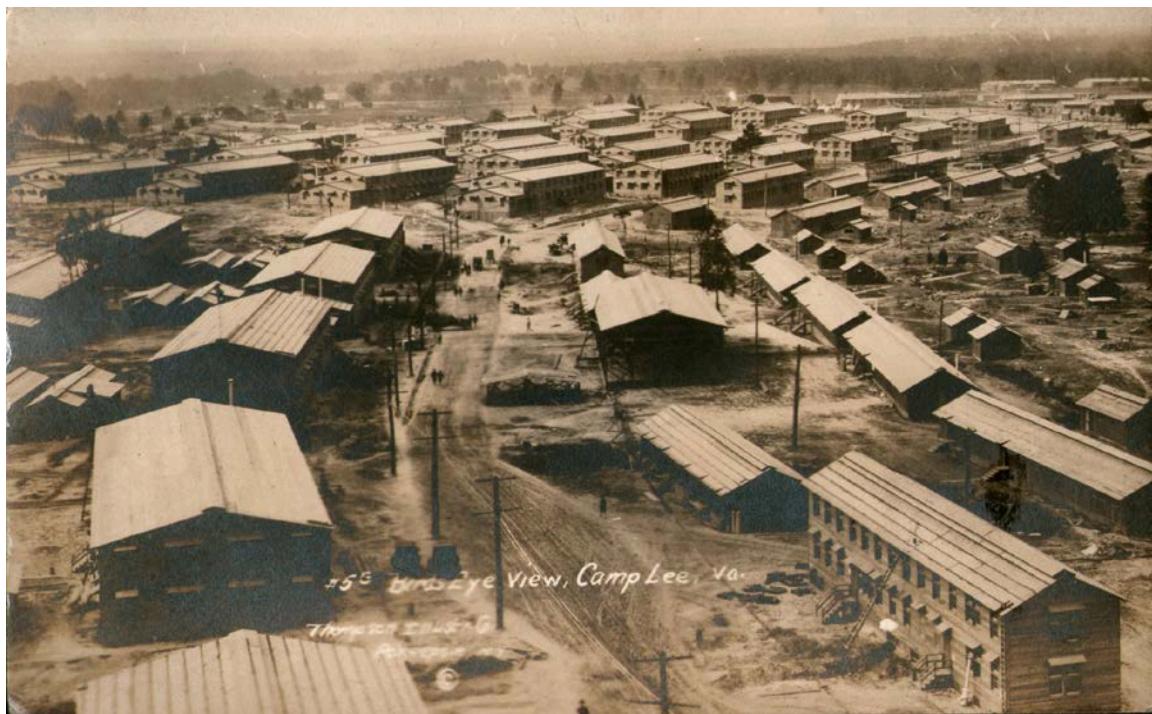
The body of Corporal William Vance Hays, son of Lewis C. and Emma W. Hays of Imperial, was returned Wednesday. Funeral services will be held Saturday afternoon at the two o'clock slow time, in the Valley Presbyterian church. Corporal Hays died of wounds November 1, 1918, received

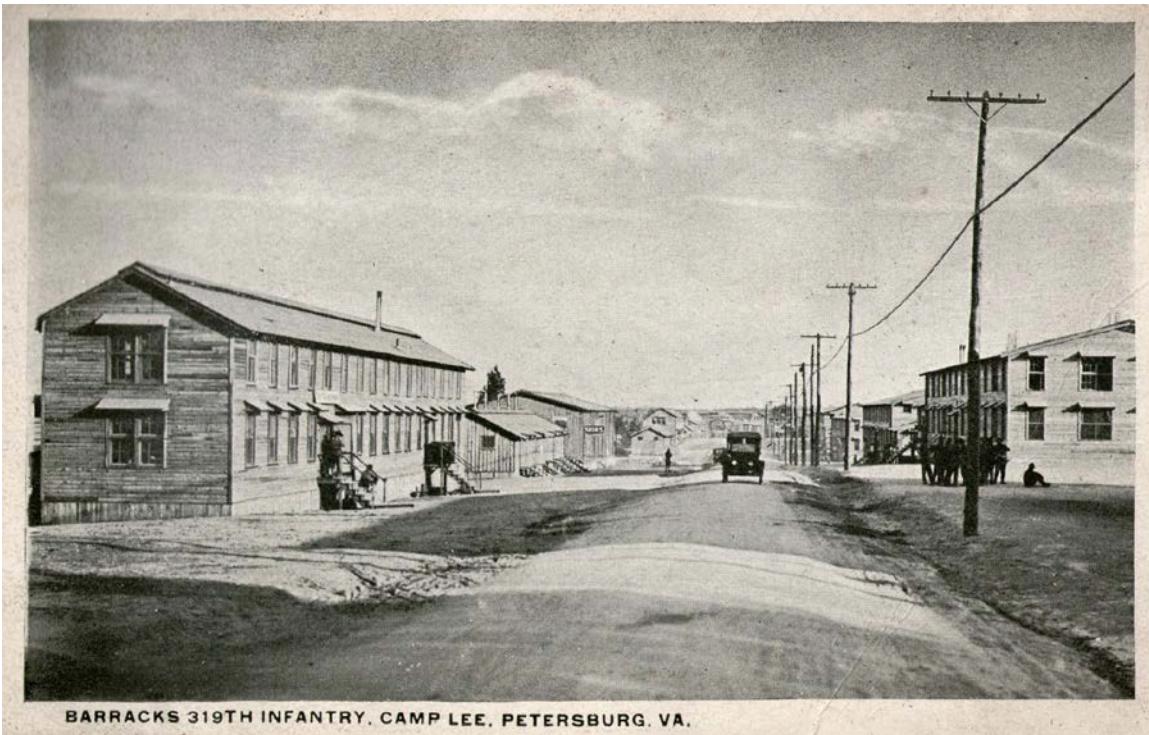
in the Argonne Forest on that day while serving with Co. E, 319<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 80<sup>th</sup> Div. Besides his parents he leaves one brother, Edward Hays, and one sister, Alma, both of Imperial, and one sister of Johnstown.



Photo of Vance taken September 1895 at age 4 months.  
He was born on 3 May 1895

Postcard pictures of Camp Lee





BARRACKS 319TH INFANTRY, CAMP LEE, PETERSBURG, VA.



Snapshot of family on Vance's last visit home. Mother, Emma; Father, Lew; Sister-in-law, Mable; Stepbrother, Edward; Stepsister, Nellie; Brother-in-law, Earl Schall; Vance; Sister, Alma.

## Our Service Flag

There's a little flag—the service flag—  
Which hangs in our homes today  
With its stars of blue or its stars of gold  
Which tell of loved ones away.

This little flag—this silent flag  
Tells more than words can say  
Of the solemn pride of folks at home  
Who but can work and pray.

Oh, may these stars—these service stars—  
Not change from blue to gold,  
Yet well we know our country's pride  
These boys will now uphold.

For love of that flag—that service flag—  
There is work for each to do.  
Let's all do our bit, let's all do our best  
Is the motto for me and for you.

For love of our homes and our native land  
Let each of us here decide.  
We will gladly respond to our general's call  
From the front on the other side.

For that service flag—that prized home flag  
With stars of whatever hue—  
Means our men are guarding our Nation's  
flag,  
The Red, the White, the Blue.



Small pin showing service flag with blue star. This one was probably worn by Vance's Mother while he was still alive.

A service flag was a little flag that the parents hung in their windows to indicate that one of their sons was in the service. In the center of the flag was a star or multiple stars if more than one son was in the service. A blue star indicated a son was in service and still alive. A Gold one indicated that a son had died.

## Gold Stars

**By RUTH WINSLOW GORDON, Brown Co., O.**

Eve'y month I gets my money,  
Uncle Sam is mighty kin'.  
But I tells you truly, honey,  
Dat ain't lak dat boy o' mine.  
Co'se I lives a whole lot bettah  
Dan I evah did befo',  
But I che'ish eve'y lettah  
Jim done sent me fum de wah:  
An' he sleeps in France, I reckon,  
Jes' as good as he would heah,  
But it's hahd to keep fum mohnin'  
Even aftah all dese yeah.  
An' Ise glad he went with honah  
Fightin' fo' de flag we love—  
But I wish dat Peace had happened  
'Foh my boy was took above.



Two small gold star pins worn by Vance's Mother after his death.

## AWARD TO BENEFICIARY

To: **Mrs. Emma Whetstone Hays,**  
**201 Fourth St.,**  
**McDonald, Pennsylvania.**

You are hereby notified that, as the person named as beneficiary by  
**William Vance Hays, Pvt. 1/c, 319th Inf.** -----  
to whom insurance in the amount of \$ **10,000** was issued by the United States under  
the Act of Congress of October 6, 1917, and the amendments thereto, you are entitled  
to receive insurance in payments of **fifty-seven and 50/100** -----  
dollars per month from the **2nd** day of **November**, 19 **18** to the **2nd** **xxxxxx**  
day of **November**, 19 **38.**

In the event of your death prior to the date last mentioned, the remaining  
payments of insurance will be paid to those persons within the permitted class of  
spouse, child, grandchild, parent, brother, and sister of the deceased soldier, as would  
under the laws of the State of his residence be entitled to his personal property in  
case of intestacy, provided, however, that if the insured designated an alternate  
beneficiary or beneficiaries, the remaining payments will be paid to such person or  
persons.

### IMPORTANT PROVISION OF THE ACT

Sec. 28.—That the allotments and family allowances, compensation, and insurance payable under Articles II, III, and IV, respectively, shall not be assignable; shall not be subject to the claims of creditors of any person to whom an award is made under Articles II, III, or IV; and shall be exempt from all taxation: *Provided*, That such allotments and family allowances, compensation, and insurance shall be subject to any claims which the United States may have, under Articles II, III, and IV, against the person on whose account the allotments and family allowances, compensation, or insurance is payable.

The initial payment check pursuant to the award approved in your favor will  
be dispatched to you at the earliest possible moment. If you should change your pres-  
ent address, the Compensation Claims Section, Bureau of War Risk Insurance, Washing-  
ton, D. C., must be immediately notified. All future communications with reference to  
this case must bear the Compensation number C - **108898.**

Authorized by the Bureau of War Risk Insurance.

This **13th** day of **March**, 19 **19.**

HENRY D. LINDSLEY,  
Director.

Approved.

CARTER GLASS,  
Secretary of the Treasury.

Per *C. D. G.* c 2-8552

In the last year of Vance's Mother's life, her life-long friend Estella Paterson wrote this letter. In it, Estella writes of her memories of happier times when both of Emma's son, Vance, and her step-son, Edward, were alive and looking forward to life. Emma died 13 December 1941, right after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

201 Walnut Street  
Barnesville, Ohio  
May 27, 1941

My dear Emma,

It was too bad our letters had to pass, yet it may be a good thing in some way we do not see. I've lived long enough and fought through enough to have learned that things which seem out of line are best for us in ways we do not see for perhaps a long while.

Have you tried Maca yeast? Someone is talking about it over the radio. I put it on because I want to hear the Sohio news and was afraid I'd forget it when writing, for I so often get interested and do forget.

Well, I heard it. I suppose we shall both be listening to Roosevelt tonight. I've never known such excitement over a president's speech. I dread to see us more into war, but if without America, England fails-then America will later go to war when Hitler decides the time for us to be going. Personally, I think it wiser for us to help England out now rather than face the Axis alone later on. Meantime, I'm earnestly praying God to deliver Europe out of Hitler's power. If only the world could see that the one great thing it needs is the religion of Jesus Christ. That is the one great great thing we need to save us. Sometimes I feel that this dreadful condition is being allowed to teach us that.

Well, I got my breakfast, attended to some business affairs, and went down town, clear away down S. Chestnut St. to Pure Oil station and got

Kaltenborn's "Mary" book--wanted a can of their household oil, but they were out of it. Can get it later. Was so glad I took so long a jaunt and stood it so well. I owe it to that tasty but expensive tonic. I am so thankful I'm stronger. Before I went, I brought in two white peonies and three iris of those lovely pale tan and red brown which I brought from your "farm" after Alma was married. They are right beside me as I write and close to Mother's picture. Someway no other place seems "your home" to me as that farm does. Do you remember things in pictures? I do. I can see the spring wagon and Lew as he met mother and me the first time we came up after you were married. Can see you as you came in with Vance in your arms. Can see the little gingham dresses you had cut and mother and I finished up. See Nellie in one you had bought for her which was too big for her and we did not get it fixed even. The next time we were up--see Vance with us at the zoo in Pittsburgh--see us at the U.P. church, Nellie and Ed driving "Mack." Then the winter when mother was no longer with me. Ed bursting into grab ginger cakes. Vance coming down from my room with a twinkle in his eye because he found the hidden cakes. See Ed standing beside me when Alma and Paul were being married. I was so disappointed that I did not get to the farm when I was last in Pa. I so wanted to go there and to the cemetery. I'm glad I have the flowers from there. Memory is wonderful. Its pictures can please, and they can bring tears.

I'm glad Alma is well and has so good a baby. John Calhoun<sup>34</sup> is a fine name, upstanding, and worthwhile. Help the other children up to its height. Both he and other boys have good names. Why should not this one have a good one. I'd call him John of Johnnie while he is little. Do not spoil his name with "Jay Cee." That is what it sounds like<sup>35</sup>.

Well, I'm sorry Estelle Mitchell did not stay with college until she graduated. Then I should have liked to see her teach at least one year, better two, and then get married. By that time she would be surer of having chosen aright and would have been well provided to make a way in this turbulent world if ever she needed to do so. I'm glad Estelle is happy and hope she has married well and it may continue. She had mostly fared well since she lost her Mother, but yet has not had a truly "home of her own." She may have wanted that. I've known children to have that feeling even when very young. "There's no place like home" is a deep down in the heart sentiment that holds even when the home is very humble. Daisy Clark Hilles has it. She is staying alone in hers. A courage I did not gain for a long while after mother went away. Daisy said over the phone to me just a day or so ago, "There is no place like a home of your own." May Hilles, Wilber's sister, had her foot turn under her and splintered a small bone in her ankle last Saturday. It is taped and she can hobble around on two canes. I'm so sorry for her. Her family are all gone now except one brother who is in the insane hospital in Columbus. One could

not but think, "Why was he not taken and Wilber spared."

Mame Miller is not getting well fast. She is out of cast, but cannot do very well walking. She is so heavy on her feet.

Littleton Groom has not written me for long while and I should have written Margaret long time ago. But, as I said in other letter, the winter has been so hard on me that I'm so behind on everything. I've just pegging along trying to do best I can.

I had an errand next door this morning. Mrs. Stephens' daughter is there. She was sitting at dining table feeding what I took to be a rat with milk out of a bottle with little nipple. The animal was a little ground hog, quite tame. Let me stroke its head. One of her brothers found it out in the woods. They said they make nice pets. What pets do your children have? Does Alma have young chickens and turkeys? How are your bees?

And how is you gardenia? Mine had two beautiful blooms. I repotted it and have it now out in the sun. More buds are coming

When I began this, I thought I'd just write a beginning and finish again. I'd only got rested a little after going down street but I've kept on. Which is the better way to get work along? To do the thing you want to do, or the thing which you think ought to be done? One woman where I boarded when teaching said she thought work went along faster when you took the thing you wanted first. Hers seemed to go all right. But I have always rather held to doing the thing that ought to be done. What is your idea? Now, my present situation stands thusly--There are few others which I'd like to do. Now, what is a fellow to do with such a situation as this?

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<sup>34</sup> This is John Calhoun McMichael, the compiler. Despite the exhortation, my family did call me "J.C.," and my family still calls me that.

I suppose Mr. Davidson will be obliged to leave us before long as his enemies keep on the job. I'd about be willing to guarantee that we shall not get as good a minister, and it is also likely the same people will fuss with whomever we do get after awhile. Whom do you have at Imperial? Is he liked and likely to stay? I thought of it or somewhere else in Pa. for a chance for Mr. Davidson? A splendid man, Rev. Chestnut went to Bellevue from Fairmont, West Va. not long ago. I heard him often over radio when I was housed this winter. He was then in Fairmont.

Now I must quit, change duds, make bed, wash breakfast dishes and get dinner. I'll try to get this ready for the postman to take. And won't you be "surprised" to get another letter so soon. And if I have to let it go without every bit of paper written on, I'll be regretful, won't I?

I was sorry to hear of Nola Cartright's death. Am glad you sent me Laura's address. I'll try to write to her soon. She is the youngest one, but it is hard for her to be left all alone. Such a big family to be all gone. I can just see the jolly crowd of them which used to be out on those steps. Excuse these bad blots below. (*transcriber's note: ink blots on the paper*) The whole business slipped and fell off the corner of the table, pen and all. Fortunately the pen is not hurt. But I do not want to rewrite this sheet. You'll not care, I know. You sill understand. I wondered if Nola had wanted to be taken back to Old Washington (*Ohio*). All but Amice and Job are laid there. I've always felt that Nola's marriage did not count for much to her in real values. so she might long to be back where her life meant more to her. Did I tell you that Geo. Henry was

living in Washington in East side of Anne Griffith's house? I think I did.

Urge Alma to get to doctor. A good one. After my operation, I felt like a new person. Mine were burnt off by electricity. If Alma's are bleeding piles, she does not want to let them go until they bring on anemia. That is what I did, and pretty nearly did not get over it.

Love to Alma and Nellie. Tell Elsie to teach or do some other paying thing for a year or two before she gets married. Also warn both Nellie and Alma not to work themselves to death for their kids. It does not pay. Neither for them nor the kids. Tell them to put every kid on the job of helping except John Calhoun.

Much love to you yourself--  
Estella Patterson

P.S. Before long I think good sized houses will be travelling along the roads. Just as finished this, one affair larger than a good sized smoke house, went sailing past. The world does change for sure.

(*The following was written on the vertical edge of the last sheet of letter.*)

Now, see, I've not left any paper bare, so I feel good and now you owe me two letters--Bye.



Vance on far left. To his right is his sister Alma Estelle. The two younger children are Martha and Sam Scott. This picture was taken at Cambridge, Ohio.

## Epilogue

Vance's Mother, Emma Whetstone Hays, died at the home of her daughter Alma near Clinton, Pa. on December 13, 1941 at the age of 81.

Vance's Father, Lewis Cass (L.C.) Hays predeceased his wife in 1936 at age 76, less than a year after his oldest son Edward committed suicide.

Vance's stepbrother, Edward Hindman Hays, who lost his first wife Mabel to the influenza epidemic as recorded in the letters, courted and was engaged to another girl named Klingensmith. Unfortunately she died before he could marry her. He did marry again, a Miss Elizabeth Patterson, sadly she also died in childbirth in 1930. On 9 December 1935, he died of a shotgun wound. His parents said it was an accident that occurred while he was cleaning his gun after returning from a hunting trip. However, my older brothers and sisters always believed it to be a suicide resulting from the depression he suffered from the loss of the three women he loved.

Vance's stepsister, Nellie Hays, who married Earl I. Schall before the start of the war, survived her bout of influenza. She bore three children. Her first was born 8 September 1919. One of her children is still living. She had numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Vance's sister Alma Estelle Hays attended Indiana Normal School and became a school teacher. She married Paul Littell McMichael, brother of his war time buddy, John Clive McMichael. They had six children, two of whom are still alive. The compiler is one of her sons.