Soldiers of Dixon
A Centennial Tribute
November 11, 2018 marks the centenary of the Armistice at the end of the First World War. It seems a fitting time to commemorate the war service of the men and women of Dixon, and the ultimate sacrifice made by fourteen men with roots in this city.

Approximately two million men were enlisted into the American Expeditionary Force and fought alongside the French, British, Canadian, and Australian armies during the Aisne Offensive in the summer of 1918 and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive later in the year. Some, including future Illinois Lieutenant Governor Sherwood Dixon, also served on the Italian Front. The AEF sustained 53,402 battle deaths, 63,114 non-combat deaths, and 204,000 wounded. More than 25,000 men of the AEF died as a result of 1918’s influenza pandemic with another 360,000 sickened.

All of these monumental events were reflected in the lives of the men and women from Dixon. Five of the fourteen Dixon soldiers died of pneumonia, which was often the cause of death for those stricken by the influenza and another from pyaemia, a terrible disease of the blood. Of the others, four were killed in action, one was listed as missing in action, and the other two seem to have died of wounds. Six of the men are buried locally; five at Oakwood Cemetery and one at Heckman Cemetery in South Dixon. Three others are buried or commemorated among over 15,000 comrades at the Meuse-Argonne Cemetery, and one more is commemorated at the Oise-Aisne American Cemetery, both in France.

There are many others from Dixon and further afield who served, and the focus on these fourteen men is not an attempt to exclude from memory the many other stories that could be told.

A main source for research was War History of Lee County, Illinois, 1917-’18-’19. The italicized portions of text below are drawn from this book. Dixon Public Library holds several copies of this which may be consulted. Two of the men are not mentioned in this book, Privates Grohens and Powell. If you are interested in further reading on this subject, the library also holds copies of Dixon, Illinois and the Great War, 1917-1919 by Duane Paulsen.

Findagrave.com was a very useful resource and the burials that have been identified of these men have been gathered together in a virtual cemetery which can be found at: www.findagrave.com/virtual-cemetery/978492. Three of the memorials were created specifically for this project and photographs of the local burials have been uploaded.

You might also be interested in seeing the collection of First World War era posters on permanent display at the library.

I would very much like to hear from anyone who has any information or photographs that would help further illustrate the lives of these men. Please feel free to be in touch.

Antony Deter, Director, Dixon Public Library
Lloyd Kaylor Bartholomew —Son of Eugene Albert and Emma Kaylor Bartholomew, was born at Dixon, Ill., Feb. 22, 1899. Before the war he was a Corporal in Co. F, Home Guards. He was inducted into the service October 1, 1918, and became a member of the Students Army and Training Corps at Illinois University, Champaign, Illinois. He became a Sergeant in Co. 4, and had passed an examination for 2nd Lieutenant when he was suddenly taken ill with pneumonia, on Oct. 4th, and died December 4th at the University Hospital, Urbana, Ill. On December 8th he was buried in Oakwood Cemetery.

From the Dixon Evening Telegraph, December 5th, 1918:
“Lloyd Bartholomew passed on last eve
Well Known and Beloved Dixon Young Man, Victim of the Influenza
Funeral on Sunday

Lloyd Kaylor Bartholomew, son of Mrs. Emma K. Bartholomew, 908 Second street, passed away at 11:30 o’clock Thursday evening at a hospital in Champaign, where he was taken last Friday for treatment for influenza, with which he was attacked while training with the Student Army Training Corps at the University of Illinois. The death of this sterling young man adds the twenty-ninth gold star to the Lee county service flag.”

While at Dixon High School Bartholomew, Class of ’17, served as Business Manager for the 1917 Dixonian Yearbook and was Full Back for the Football Squad and played basketball. “Lloyd is our widely celebrated heart breaker, especially so, in Sterling it seems. Girls take warning-do not leave your hearts carelessly about when he is in sight.” Prior to his induction, Bartholomew had worked alongside
Edward Bott—Sergeant, Son of Frederick August and Amelia Bott, was born in Dixon, May 24, 1889. At the age of 21, in 1910, he enlisted in the Federal Army at Fort Logan, Cal. After training, his first enlistment was ended by a two years service in the ice and snow regions of Alaska. His love for military life was shown by the fact that he re-enlisted after receiving his honorable discharge. After his second enlistment he was sent to the Mexican border at El Paso, where he experienced the trials of real army life. He was wounded in a night attack which laid him up for a few weeks, but again went on the firing line. After that event he was recommended as Orderly for Gen. Pershing, and served him faithfully. At Columbus, New Mexico, he was transferred to a very responsible position, having exclusive charge of all government supplies, and was given a Corporalship. From here he went to El Paso, Texas, and was attached to the 17th Inf. His next move was to Atlanta, Ga., his duty being the guarding of interned Germans. He was later sent to Chattanooga, Tenn., and was assigned to the 55th Inf. Next he was sent to Camp Dix, N. J., where he was appointed Traffic Officer and was advanced to a Sergeancy. He was then in the 311th Infantry, and they were called to France. He was on the Metz front twenty-one days, and the Verdun front, where he saw some terrible battles. He died at the American Base Hospital 103. Dojon [sic, should read Dijon] Cote D’or France, January 22 1919 at the age of 29 years.

Sergeant Edward (Eddie) Bott (serial # 1,745,813) of the HQ Company, 311th Infantry. Pvt. Bott died of pneumonia while serving with the AEF in France. Some of his letters from Flavigny in France to his sister were published in the Dixon Evening Telegraph on February 18th, 1919. His mother, Amelia, was notified of his death at her address, 811 College Avenue, on February 24. The Telegraph of February 28, 1919 says that he was buried with full military honors at an American cemetery at Dijon. According to the Card Register of Burials of Deceased American Soldiers, 1917 - 1922, this happened on January 23, 1919 when he was buried at grave #123 in the American section of the Des Pejosces Cemetery in Dijon. A memorial service was held at St. Paul’s Lutheran church on Sunday March 9th, 1919. His remains were disinterred on February 15, 1921 and shipped to Walter Preston of Dixon, arriving on May 28 1921.

Edward Bott
died January 22, 1919

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**Elijah Doan**

*killed in action October 17th, 1918*

*Elijah Doan—Son of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Doan of Dixon, was born August 28th, 1889. He was inducted into service May 28, 1918, and was killed in action in France Oct. 17, 1918. A brother, Jasper J. Doan, also saw service in France and was one of the last to be returned home.*

Private Doan was born on 16 December 1890, and died aged 27. His parents were William L. and Anna E. Doan (both buried at Oakwood Cemetery). He entered service in Minnesota and was with Co. A of the 11th Infantry Regiment, 5th Division, and later transferred from Detroit back to Dixon after his brother Jasper had also been called to the colors. They left as part of a contingent to Camp Gordon, GA, on May 25th. He was killed in action and is memorialised on the Tablets of the Missing at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial in Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, France. Further information can be found here: www.abmc.gov/node/324782#.W4b_qyZOL4

His mother, Mrs. Anna Doan of 318 E. McKinney St., received word of his death on November 17th; after the Armistice had been signed.

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**Sergeant Clayton Charles Elliott**

*died of pneumonia October 5, 1918*

*Clayton Elliott – Son of Amos and Mary E. Elliott was born at Rapatee, Knox County, Ill., October 20, 1894, and moved to Dixon in the year 1901. On June 23, 1918, he was called into service and was sent to Camp Sweeney, Kansas City, Mo. He became an instructor in auto truck driving and was made Sergeant of Training Detachment No. 1, 3 Co. A. U.S.A. On October 5th he died at Camp Sweeney Hospital from influenza and pneumonia, and was brought home to Dixon, and buried in Oakwood Cemetery, October 10th, 1918.*

Details of his burial can be found at: www.findagrave.com/memorial/104404935/clayton-charles-elliott
George C. Grohens
killed in action August 10, 1918

Private First Class Grohens served with Co. G, 47th Infantry, 4th Division. He is one of 241 soldiers commemorated on the Tablets of the Missing at Oise-Aisne American Cemetery in Seringes-et- Nesles, France. Details can be found here: www.abmc.gov/node/340431#.W4l5vS2ZOL4

Official notice of Private Grohen’s death was reported on October 16th, 1918 in the Dixon Telegraph.

Fred Oscar McWethy
died of pneumonia January 21, 1919

Fred Oscar McWethy—Son of Geo. P. and Mary A. McWethy, was born Dec. 8, 1896, at Eldora, Hardin Co., Iowa, and when a child moved with his parents to Dixon, and knew no other home. He enlisted at Oregon, Ogle Co., Illinois, June 15th, 1918, and on August 5th was sent to Chicago University to complete his training, which was finished October 12th. On October 15th he was sent to Camp Hancock, Ga., and after two weeks service was declared fit for oversea service. He was then transferred to Camp Johnson, Ga., where he secured his oversea equipment. He was in waiting when the armistice was signed, November 11, 1918. He was a member of the 16th Co. 161st D. B. He returned to Camp Grant, and on January 15th, 1919, received his honorable discharge. Returning to Dixon he was taken seriously ill with pneumonia, and was taken to the Dixon Hospital, where he died on January 21, and was buried at Oakwood Cemetery, January 23, 1919.

Private McWethy was a 1917 graduate in agriculture of the University of Wisconsin. He had been sent to Camp Hancock in Georgia and from there to Camp Grant in Rockford. On January 16th 1919 his sister and three other women were reported to be visiting Private McWethy as Rockford was to be giving a reception for the Black Hawk division. According to a report in the Dixon Evening Telegraph, McWethy died at Dixon Hospital at 6:30 on January 21st, 1919, his death resulting from influenza. He had already been unwell when mustered out of the service the previous week but reportedly was in a hurry to get home. His funeral service was held at the Baptist Church at 2pm on January 23rd and information on his burial at Oakwood Cemetery, can be found here: www.findagrave.com/memorial/128015375/fred-oscar-mcwethy
Horace Flint Ortt—Son of Rowley R. and Rachel P. Ortt, was born at Morristown, Pa., March 20th, 1895, and later moved to Dixon, Illinois. He left home in June 1917, with Co. G, of Dixon, for Rock Island, and from there went to East St. Louis on July 20th. From this city, on September 9th, he went to Camp Logan, Houston, Texas, and remained there until May 18th, 1918, then went to Camp Merritt, N.J., May 27th; sailed for Europe, and landed at Liverpool, England, June 7, 1918; then traveled to La Havre, France, arriving June 12. The St. Mihiel battle on September 11th, was his first battle. In this battle his Company, the 123d Field Art was cited for honors by Maj. Gen. Summerall, commander of the 1st Div. From there marched to the Argonne It was here that Horace volunteered to deliver a message, for his Captain of the Battery, through heavy shell fire, and was killed in the attempt. He was in Battery C, 33d Div., 123d Field Art. He was cited by Brig. Gen. Todd, on Dec. 31st, 1918, for extraordinary heroism and distinguished service; also on May 17th, 1919, by Maj. Gen. Bell for gallantry in action against the enemy; also the following citation:

Private Horace F. Ortt, Battery C, 123d F. A., for distinguished and exceptional gallantry at Very-Epinonville on 4th October 1918 in the operations of the American Expeditionary Forces in testimony thereof, and as an expression of appreciation of his valor, I award him this citation.

John J. Pershing,
Awarded on March 27, 1919. Commander-in-Chief.

Private Ortt was buried with military honors in a church cemetery in the town of Very, France. The American Legion Burial Lot in Oakwood Cemetery, Dixon, has a special marker bearing his name. A beautifully engraved certificate, issued June 1, 1919, by direction of the President of the United States, was received by Mr. Ortt, expressing his deep and sincere sympathy on the death of his son.

In the Spring of 1920 the Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to him, for bravery in action, and was sent by the War Department to his parents.

From the Dixonian, 1919

CLASS OF 1915:

As I turn backward in reminiscence to our happy high school days there comes at once a feeling of regret and of gladness, - regret that those times are gone and gladness because of memories which have remained undisturbed by the passing of the years.

In the interval of time war came, called to us, and the issue was met
squarely. We regret that one of our class, Horace Ortt was called upon to make the supreme sacrifice in the service of his country, yet realize that in him were embodied the sense of honor and duty and the ideals of which we were proud. We mourn the loss of a dear classmate and a true friend.

It is to be hoped that the pending plans for an Alumni Association will be speedily consummated and that the obvious benefits will soon be ours in the form of a not far distant re-union.

Greetings to you, Class of 1915! And my best wishes to you, individually, in whatever lines of endeavor you may have found useful outlets for your great energy and ability.

Sincerely Yours,
Thomas Donald Barry,
President, Class of ’15

Private First Class Ortt (serial # 1,377,601) was buried at Plot A, Row 19, Grave 14 at the Meuse-Argonne Cemetery in Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, France on November 4, 1921 having been reinterred from his original burial place in Very. Details can be found here: www.abmc.gov/node/326276#.W4cCWS2ZOL4
John Parsons enlisted in the Quartermaster Corps at the outbreak of the war, and served in Texas, where he was promoted to Corporal, Sergeant and Second Lieutenant. He went to France in 1918 and was promoted to First Lieutenant. While returning to the United States, he contracted pneumonia and died at sea.

First Lieutenant John Dement Parsons of Company A of the 301 QMC was the only son of Edwin C. Parsons and Christiana Dement, a sister of Colonel John Dement. He was born on January 1st 1873 in Burlington, IA. He lived with his parents in Dixon from the age of three. He was a graduate from the South Side High School and attended Lake Forest College and Peekskill Military Academy. After six months in South Africa where he contracted Dengue fever, he returned to Burlington to establish a realty business, which he ran until the war. He was married in 1905 to Luella Oettinger of North Dixon. They had a daughter named Harriet but were later divorced. Parsons later married a Ruth A. Schaeffer who had worked for him in the realty office. Parsons enlisted as Private in late summer 1917 but quickly received a commission. He was in New York when he was visited by his father on September 10th, 1918 when it was expected he would soon be sent to France. His father advised the Telegraph that Lt. Parsons had arrived “somewhere overseas” by October 22nd, having sailed on September 23rd from Newport News, VA. The Telegraph contradicts Lee County War History and states that his death was a result of an abscess of the gall bladder. His funeral service was held on February 18th 1919 at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. He is buried at Oakwood Cemetery. Details can be found here: www.findagrave.com/memorial/192721940?createdMemorial=Yes
William Powell
killed in action September 28, 1918

Private Powell (serial # 103819) had been an African-American resident of Dixon who had worked at the cement plant. Powell was single and lived at 1022 Madison Avenue with George Collins and his wife, Rose. Before the war he went up to Chicago and enlisted from New Jersey. The article about his death appeared in The Dixon Telegraph on January 3rd, 1919. At the time of his death Private Powell was with Co. F. 369th Infantry, 93rd Division. The Card Register of Burials of Deceased American Soldiers, 1917 – 1922 lists Mrs. Collins as his emergency contact and his mother, Mrs. Sarah Martin of Kiso, Arkansas as already being deceased. He was buried at Grave # 254, Plot J, Square 1 in the American Cemetery, St. Nazaire, France and reburied at Grave 7, Row 22, Block B at Oise-Aisne American Cemetery on September 14, 1922. Details can be found here: www.abmc.gov/node/342718#.W-XguqeZMZI

Ward A. Sindlinger
died 1917

Ward A Sindlinger – Son of Mr. and Mrs L. Sindlinger, was born at Mt. Carroll, Ill., July 12, 1886. In early life he, with his parents, moved to Dixon, which place remained his home until the time of his death. On September 29th he went to Jefferson Barracks, Mo., and joined the army (cavalry, Co. 27) and there remained three weeks. He, with his Company (Troop F, 4th Cav. U.S.A.) were then sent to Schoefield Barracks, Hawaiian Islands, and there remained until August 1917. The last year of his service he was Corporal of Troop F of the Fourth Regiment of Cavalry. He then returned to the United States with one of the Colonels, and brought back two valuable horses, taking them to Fort Ogelthorpe, Ga, and there died from the effects of gun wound. He was buried in Oakwood Cemetery, Dixon, August 22, 1917.

Details of his burial can be found at: www.findagrave.com/memorial/194399823/ward-a.-sindlinger.
Gilbert A. Stephenitch – son of John and Catherine Stephenitch was born May 17th 1896 at Sublette, Ill. He was called to Camp Grant, September 18th, 1918, and was a member of Co. M. From there he was sent to Camp Green, North Carolina, and at this time was transferred to Co. L, 7th Inf. From this camp he went to Camp Mills, N.Y., thence to France. He was wounded on Oct. 10th 1918, from the effects of which he dies October 15th. He was buried at Guillemont Farm Cemetery, near Ronsay (sic, should read Ronsoy), France.

Corporal Stanley Sofolo (serial # 2661383) was born in Chicago and moved to Dixon with his parents in 1905. He was called to the colors with the 40th Co., July Automatic Replacement Troops. He left Dixon with other men of Co. L, 107th Infantry and was sent to Camp Gordon, GA on May 22nd 1918 and sailed to France in August, arriving around the 20th. Sofolo was killed on September 29th, 1918 while fighting in the Meuse-Argonne offensive. His mother Mrs. B. Lena Sofolo of 618 Peoria Avenue received word of his death in November 1918 after the Armistice. In April 1919 Mrs. Sofolo received a letter from Salvatore Scarandino of New York who had been with Corporal Stanley when he died. He described how he found Sofolo in the German trenches after they had retreated with a machine gun bullet below the heart. Scarandino then carried Sofolo two miles to the first aid station, but by then it was too late. The letter was published in the Telegraph on April 12th. According to the Dixon Evening Telegraph of April 18th, 1921 he had been buried at Guilemont Farm cemetery near Ronsay, France until his remains were disinterred and reburied at the American Cemetery in Bony, France on May 31, 1919. In 1921 his remains were then sent to Fred Decola, undertakers of Chicago for reburial with full military honors at Mt. Olive Cemetery in that city.

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Theodore L. Trouth
died of pyaemia June 25, 1918

Theo Trouth—Son of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Trouth, was born in Dixon, July 14th, 1888. On September 5th, 1917, he was called to service at Camp Grant. He remained there but a short time before being sent to Camp Logan, Houston, Texas, thence to New York, and from there to France. He belonged to Co. A, 132 Infantry, A. E. F. The following letter received by Mr. Trouth from John R. Weaver, Captain of 132d Infantry, will show the esteem the young soldier was held in by his officers and comrades:

My Dear Sir:

I regret to inform you of the death of your son, Private Theodore L. Trouth of this company, who died at Casualty hospital No. 53, June 25, 1918, at 10 p. m., of Pyaemia.

About two weeks ago, to be exact, June 11, Private Trouth was taken ill and sent to the hospital by the regimental surgeon, where he remained until the time of his death.

Private Trouth was an excellent soldier, who was universally liked by his officers and fellow soldiers, and his death is a source of genuine sorrow to all of us.

Sincerely yours,
John R. Weaver, Captain 132nd Infantry.

Private Theodore L. Trouth (serial # 2078128) served with Co. M, 342nd Infantry and later Co. A, 132nd Infantry. Pyaemia is an infection of the blood which, before the invention of antibiotics, was always fatal. His father Jacob Trouth of 116 Noble Ave received word of Private Trouth’s death on July 29th 1918. The letter from the War department lists cause of death as lobar pneumonia. Having been buried at the American Cemetery in Vaux sur Somme, France, his remains were disinterred and shipped back to his father, Jacob, arriving in December 1920.
Ralph Otto Will
died of pneumonia September 27, 1918

Ralph O. Will, son of Charles I. and Marietta Mossholder Will, was born Aug. 3, 1886, in South Dixon township. He was inducted into service September 1918 at Camp Grant. He was in camp, but three weeks, when he was taken sick with influenza and died of pneumonia Sept. 27, 1918. He was buried at Heckman cemetery, South Dixon.

Private Ralph Will of Company E, 5th Limited Service regiment, 161 Depot Brigade died at Camp Grant and his death was registered in Winnebago county, Rockford Township on September 30th. He was buried with military honors on that date after funeral services at his father, Charles Will’s home in South Dixon. Details of his burial at Emmanuel (Heckman) Cemetery on Pump Factory Road can be found at: www.findagrave.com/memorial/23505174/ralph-otto-will
Further Reading
https://tinyurl.com/warhistoryleecounty

https://tinyurl.com/dixonandthegreatwar

Other Sources Consulted
Print
Dixonian Yearbooks for 1917 (picture of Bartholomew) and 1919 (Ortt).
https://tinyurl.com/dixonianyearbook

History ’19 - ‘37, Dixon Post No. 12, The American Legion Department of Illinois.

Online
1929 Illinois Roll of Honor database.
https://tinyurl.com/1929illinoishonor

Find a Grave. https://www.findagrave.com