

**The First World War Era Letters of
the Rogers Family**

INTRODUCTION

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In 1916, Henry Martyn Rogers and his wife, Alma Smith Rogers, moved their family to Hanover, Indiana, so that their three youngest children could attend Hanover College. Their home, lovingly nicknamed Bird Haven for the abundance of birds that frequently visited, became a focal point for family, friends and the local community. In 2016, the Rogers celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of the family's continued ownership of Bird Haven. During the celebrations, the family generously donated their family papers, including letters, photographs, and postcards, to the Hanover College Archives for future generations to study. The Rogers Family Papers are a remarkable look at the history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from the perspective of a single family living in the rural Midwest.

The collection primarily focuses on four individuals: Henry Martyn Rogers and Alma Smith Rogers, their son, Henry Carter Rogers, and his wife, Elizabeth (Bettie) Cray Warr Rogers. Henry Martyn Rogers (1852-1930) was born in Rockville, Indiana. After graduating from the Danville Theological Seminary in 1880, he served as a Presbyterian minister throughout Indiana, Ohio, Missouri and Oklahoma before finally settling in Hanover. Alma Smith (1858-1939) was born in Kentucky. After marrying Henry Martyn Rogers, she worked alongside him, assisting in his ministry; she was also an active member in the temperance movement. The couple had seven children, including Henry Carter Rogers (1899-1976). He began his undergraduate studies at Hanover College in 1916 but was drafted into the army during World War I. After completing his service, he graduated from Hanover in 1920. He later studied at the McCormick Theological Seminary and became a minister in the Presbyterian Church in 1923. He served in Tennessee, Indiana, and Ohio. He married Elizabeth (Bettie) Cray Warr Rogers (1901-1997) in 1923.

The materials in the Rogers Family Papers collection provide a glimpse into the thoughts and actions of various correspondents and convey their reactions to the sweeping cultural changes of the period. The content of the letters is broad, encompassing temperance, woman's suffrage, politics, religion, education, college life, and changing social attitudes. They cover major world events such as both World Wars, the Spanish flu outbreak of 1918, the Great Depression, and the assassination of John F. Kennedy, as well as technological innovations such as the invention of the automobile. Through the continued generous support of the Rogers family, the papers are available to the students and the public.

In the fall semester of 2017, Hanover students in "Search for Order, 1877-1945" used the letters to study Americans' experience of World War I. They transcribed letters that concerned the war, and the history department made those transcriptions available online (at <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/hc/rogers.php>). Later, they used some of the transcribed letters to write essays on the way ordinary Americans experienced World War I. In winter 2018, students in "American Women's History" pursued a similar project, transcribing letters from the

collection written by college-aged women, which the history department also made available online through the same URL. Later they used some of the transcribed letters to write essays about the experiences of college-aged women in the early twentieth century.

What follows is a sampling of letters from among all those transcribed this year. Archivist Jennifer Duplaga, Professor Sarah McNair Vosmeier, and students Caroline Brunner, Elizabeth Donaway, and Eric Woodruff selected the letters and contributed additional research. Sarah McNair Vosmeier wrote the editorial comments, drawing on this research as well as readings and research done for the classes.

Agnes Westfall, Letter to Henry Carter Rogers, 4 November 1916

H.C. (Carter) Rogers received this letter from his friend Agnes Westfall not long after his family moved to Hanover (town) and he started classes at Hanover College. In sharing news of their mutual friends, she reveals to us how ordinary young people reacted to the woman suffrage movement and to politics more generally.

Rogers and Westfall had gotten to know each other through a pen pal correspondence that started as a high school assignment. She was also his “first date” in high school, though the relationship did not go beyond that one date.¹

Westfall wrote this letter on the Saturday before Election Day (which was November 7 in 1916). The 1916 presidential election was between the incumbent Democrat, Woodrow Wilson, and the Republican Charles E. Hughes. Westfall’s father, Abraham J. Westfall, a Democratic Representative to Indiana’s General Assembly, was also running for re-election.²

Westfall refers in this letter to her brother, Morris, who was away from home taking a course to prepare for entering the U.S. Naval Academy. Like many other rural Hoosiers, working on the family farm had previously been more important than schooling – at the time of the 1910 census, Agnes was the only school-age Westfall child who was in school.³

Vincennes, Ind.

Nov. 4, 1916

Dear Carter,

Did I tell you that I would write again soon? Was it to you that I wrote a very short letter? I wrote someone a short letter and promised to write again soon but, for my soul, I have forgotten who it was.

I wrote Morris a letter, of eight pages, Thursday night. He answers so promptly that I have to write to him about twice a week.

¹Henry Carter Rogers, “A Journey into Indian Summer,” 1974, p. 109, SC44, Archives of Hanover College, Duggan Library, Hanover College (Hanover, Ind.).

²Abraham J. Westfall was first elected to the General Assembly in 1914: “Knox,” *Indianapolis Star*, 4 Nov. 1914, p. 12; W.H. Blodgett, “Around the Legislature’s Edges,” *Indianapolis News*, 11 Jan. 1915, p. 15.

³On Morris Westfall, see *Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the United States Navy* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 271; Agnes Westfall, letter to H.C. Rogers, 20 June 1917, Folder 5, box 9, Rogers Family Collection. On the Westfall children in school, see 1910 United States Census, Johnson, Knox County, Indiana, digital image s.v. “Morris Westfall,” *Ancestry.com*.

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What do you know concerning politics? I feel very much that I would like to have some one disagree with me. I don't know what your politics is but I am sure you are not a Democrat. We girls had a great deal of fun at school the other day. Helen, Eva Mae, Ruth Alexander are Republicans and Ruby, Dora and I are, of course, strictly Democrats. We tried to quarrel (just in fun) but we finally "gave up" and decided that politics is all around rather crazy. There's nothing to it.

Father said that if he went back to Legislature this year he positively would vote against woman suffrage. Sad isn't it! Do you still think a Women's place is at home performing her domestic duties? That is the first thing every man or boy will say in opposition to woman suffrage. That's a rather new question but I'll leave it for the time being.

Several of us girls here made a resolution the other day concerning those long dresses. We are not going to wear our dresses longer than to our shoe tips if every body in Vincennes has them longer. A few years ago I wanted to wear long dresses fix my hair up on my head and be a lady. Now I want short dresses have my hair down and wear large ribbons.

How do you like college life by this time? You know I am taking book-keeping this year. I just love it. One of my main delights is to mess around with a lot of papers and junk, consequently I sometimes wish I could work all day on it. I wouldn't want to be a book-keeper but I like the work at school. Book-keepers are always tired looking. The work is very tedious.

A credit is given, this year for Bible work. It may be taken with or without a tutor. There are four examinations to be conducted the same as teacher's examinations, two on the old Testament and two on the new Testament, and a student who passes all examinations is given one credit. I think this something great. I don't think I will be able to take these examinations this term but I hope to do so sometime soon.

Did you know that Miss Cora is teaching in South Dakota this year? She says she just likes every thing fine. She boards five miles from school and rides back and forth on horse-back. Typical Western fashion! She sent Oscar a picture of herself. She was on horse back with her hair in two braids hanging over her shoulders and an old ugly hat almost like those the cow-boys wear. I think the picture is a "sight". She doesn't look like a dignified school teacher but rather like a course, uncultured western girl. She is sixty-five miles from the nearest railway station. She goes with one of the western boys. They have grand dances out there. Said she was the most awkward dancer on the floor. That's one accomplishment.

I am just beginning to think about the high cost of living. I am, as I said, a Democrat but if the election of Hughes can reduce the cost of, at least clothes, I am for his election. I want some clothes. I got a few the other day, but everything is so high that I will soon be entering the county house if something doesn't change. I don't see what real poor people are going to do this winter

in order to live.

I must close and study my Sunday school lesson.

Sincerely Yours,

Agnes.

P.S. Here's hoping you'll answer sooner than I did.

[Agnes P.?)

Days after Agnes Westfall sent this letter, her father won re-election to the Indiana General Assembly. The following February, the Maston-McKinley Partial Suffrage Act came before the General Assembly, proposing to grant Hoosier women the right to vote in most elections. Perhaps Agnes spent the intervening weeks lobbying her father on behalf of woman's suffrage. Despite telling her in November that he "positively would vote against woman suffrage," he voted for it in February.⁴

⁴"Vote May Tie Up Indiana Senate," *Indianapolis Star*, 10 Nov. 1916, p. 3; Indiana House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana during the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly* (Fort Wayne: Fort Wayne Printing Company, 1917), 536.

Agnes Westfall, Letter to Henry Carter Rogers, 20 June 1917

Carter Rogers received this letter from Agnes Westfall at the end of the 1916-1917 school year and only a few weeks after the United States entered World War I. In replying to his letter (no longer extant) and sharing news of their friends, Westfall reveals a bit about life at Hanover at that time, as well as young people's reaction to the World War.

Rogers had sent her copies of Hanover's school newspaper, the Triangle. He also seems to have participated in the college's annual oratorical contest, held on June 9 that year.¹

Westfall refers to her brother, Morris, who had just joined the Naval Academy. About twenty years old, he was two years her senior. Her sister, Ruby (also mentioned) was two years younger than she.²

The Miss Doup whom Westfall asks after must have been Hazel Doup, whose letters are included in the Rogers Family Papers. She was "the girl I went with the most in college," Rogers remembered later, and she remained a friend of the family for years.³

June 20, 1917

Dear Carter,

I have been so busy lately that I haven't written to anyone. You know I haven't even acknowledged your "Triangles." In spite of that, I enjoyed them very much.

I wish I could have heard your oration. I know it was just great.

You do certainly have an opportunity worth while. When do you go? I wish you would tell me more about it, (your trip), after you have gone, will you?

Morris is now in the U.S. Naval Academy. You know when he got the appointment he took a five months preparatory course for the examination. After he passed the mental exam, he came home and was here for about four months. He just went back to Annapolis the fifth of this month; passed the physical exam; was "sworn in" at the Academy and is now preparing to help Uncle Sam. I feel very proud of him. (I don't mean to be boastful.) It may not be so great after all

¹On the oratorical contest, see Hanover College, *Hanover College Bulletin, 1916-1917*.

²On Morris, Agnes, and Ruby Westfall's ages, see 1910 United States Census, Johnson, Knox County, Indiana, digital image s.v. "Morris Westfall," *Ancestry.com*.

³Henry Carter Rogers, "A Journey into Indian Summer," 140.

if he is needed in the war. Of course even there he'll have an honorable place. Fancy, Morris as a naval officer! I can't imagine him in that position.

Isn't the war terrible! When I stop and think about it I don't know what to do. The only thing I can do is to pray. That's noble even if it doesn't seem great. We women may have a chance to show our ability if the war continues. (I still have ideas of suffrage!)

Did you know? Miss Cora is engaged to a wealthy rancher from South Dakota. She has a beautiful ring. You know, she still talks a great deal, so she has told us all about him. His name is Peter Lenard [Monseru?], I don't know how to spell his last name but we girls laughed when she told us because it sounded so much like mushroom. It is a common thing to hear her speak of "Pete". He is coming in July, then Miss Cora is going away with him.

What is going on in Hanover? Things here stay just the same of course. I went to a patriotic party at Bonnie's last Friday night. Had a fairly good time. Had more fun coming home. Ruby and I went together. Well, unfortunately or fortunately however it was two fellows wanted to take us home. We insisted that we couldn't go because we had to take Old Dobin and the Sha [shay?] home. They said they were sure they could lead our horse. We had never tried anything like that and were rather doubtful but at last we decided to try it. My friend and I were in front, then our buggy and following Ruby and Ray. All, went well until we got about half way home and some way, heavens knows how, the line by which we were leading our horse broke. That tried we went ahead and had a tremendous time getting through our gate. Finally we reached our old post, very happy indeed. Next morning Ruby and I were about half scared stiff that father would say, "How did you break the line?" Nobody noticed it all day. About three o'clock I slipped out and patched it up. It has never been noticed and no one ever imagines that we had such a dreadful time. We learned that such performances won't work. Wasn't that thrilling!

Really, I must close for this time. I'm sorry. I waited so long to answer that, as before, I was almost ashamed to write.

When you write again tell me about your girl friends. Have you had any further associations with Miss Carson? Miss Doup? Such details make your letter more realistic.

Very sincerely yours,

Agnes.

Westfall's optimism about the war's effect on the suffrage movement probably concerned national efforts to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment. If her father shared the intricacies of

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Indiana politics with her, she might have been less optimistic about suffrage in Indiana. At the time of her letter, the state supreme court was evaluating the new suffrage law passed the previous February, and by fall they had declared it unconstitutional. Women would not vote in Indiana until the amendment was ratified. Fortunately, the war shifted opinion as Westfall expected. In September, Woodrow Wilson finally made a public statement in support of the Nineteenth Amendment, calling it “vital to winning the war.”⁴

⁴Peggy Seigel, “Winning the Vote in Fort Wayne, Indiana: The Long Cautious Journey in a German American City,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 102, no. 3 (Sept. 2006), 251-54; Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 296.

Dorothy Kitchen, Letter to Henry Carter Rogers, 11 January 1918

Carter Rogers received this letter from Dorothy Kitchen at the beginning of his second semester as a sophomore at Hanover College. In describing her activities, Kitchen reveals the ways girls could participate in the war effort.

Kitchen was about fifteen years old at the time of this letter, and her brother, James, was about nine.¹ It's not clear how she and Rogers knew each other.

Kitchen mentions "Hazel," who was probably Hazel Doup, whom Westfall also mentioned. "Miss O'Brien" was Dorothy O'Brien, whose letters are also included in the Rogers Family Papers. She and Rogers dated in high school, and he was the best man when she eventually married his college friend and seminary roommate.²

Carter Rogers

626 Pearl Street
Columbus, Ind.

Jan. 11, 1918.

Dear Carter:

I was so glad to hear from you and to know that you still remembered me.

I hardly saw Hazel while she was here Christmas vacation, so I missed a great deal of the Hanover news. However Martha tells me some of it and it was Betty Tech who told me about the watch party. She said it certainly was early -- in the morning -- when the party broke up. You must have had a fine time. I, also, had a good time New Years Eve. Mother, James, and I went to the late picture show which lasted until after the New Year had come in. Of course we had a wild time.

You are not alone in the misery of making low grades. I made a [illegible: 0?] in algebra last six weeks and a very weak E in History. I was disappointed but I don't worry so much as I used to.

During the holidays I led a most frivolous life and I even dared to keep it up during the first week

¹1910 United States Census, Columbus, Bartholomew County, Indiana, digital image s.v. "Dorothy Kitchen," *Ancestry.com*.

²Henry Carter Rogers, "A Journey into Indian Summer," 140, 120-21.

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of school. I am dreadfully ashamed to say that I went to the picture show every night for a week – in war-times. But so long as someone asks you to go, you might as well go. Sergeant Duncan, a friend of mine and the local recruiting officer, took me part of time and the rest of the time I went with some of the girls.

Last Friday night the basket ball team here played the Franklin team. Everyone was excited for up to that time, neither of the teams had been defeated and Franklin had a very strong team. C.H.S. won, of course, though. We have some team. Tonight is to be the game at Seymour and quite a bunch is going down there. I would like to go but I won't get to this time.

Do you wear a uniform? If you do I would like to see you for I am sure you would look fine in one. I belong to an auxiliary to the Red Cross and we girls have military training every two weeks. I think it is very interesting and since Serg. Duncan drills us and he and I usually go to the show or some place else after drill, it makes it more interesting.

Last night the Sergeant brought me home from a meeting and stayed till almost eleven o'clock. That left very little time for me to get my lessons and this morning I had to rake up an excuse for not having my Latin lesson.

I think I'll have to tell him about it. Sunday afternoon we are going to Mildred Davisons to spend the afternoon and hope to have a good time

Please tell Hazel that I will write to her soon.

I have such a nice new girl friend – that is, I've seen her since school began. She is a dandy girl from Pennsylvania and we are certainly close friends.

Later -- I am in the post office now trying to finish this letter, I wrote the rest in school. Virginia, my friend, is with me.

How are you and Miss O'Brien? I suppose you are just as good friends as ever.

Well, I must go down town and get home before dark. You know I'm afraid of the dark.

Sincerely yours,

Dorothy Kitchen

Byers Burlingame, Letter to Alma Rogers, 10 August 1918

Alma Rogers received this letter from Byers Burlingame, a close family friend, in the summer of 1918; by then, Burlingame and both her sons were in the military. His letter reveals the huge effort needed to train and organize the fighting force headed for Europe.

Burlingame had become friends with Carter Rogers when they were both in high school. Orphaned before he was a teenager and in the care of his uncle and grandmother, he became almost a member of the Rogers family. He moved in with them for the 1917-1918 school year so that he could attend Hanover College, but after war was declared, he left Hanover to join the Navy.¹

He was writing from Camp Paul Jones within the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, north of Chicago. This center was accommodating a huge influx of new sailors. Before the war, it had housed about a thousand recruits, but by the time of Burlingame's letter, it held 68,000. As the men arrived, their first stop was a three week "detention" to begin their training and to quarantine any of them who might be contagious. Part of the men's training responsibilities included building camps and infrastructure to accommodate even more men to come. Those (like Burlingame) who qualified went to "special schools" for advanced training.²

Among the amenities at the training station were what Burlingame described as "really fine" YMCA buildings, which provided recreational space for the men, as well as writing space and supplies. Burlingame's letter is on YMCA stationery. At the top of each sheet is an American flag, the YMCA symbol, and "Army and Navy Young Men's Christian Association, 'With the Colors.'" At the bottom of each sheet is "To the writer: Save by writing on both sides of this paper. To the folks at home: Save food, buy Liberty Bonds and War Savings Stamps."

Burlingame describes being filmed for a movie, which was released as America's Answer. It was the second feature-length "official United States war picture." Burlingame expected the film to be released in Europe first, reflecting the "educational" purposes the government intended for it and its requirement that foreign film distributors include such films when they distributed commercial films.³ Burlingame asked to be remembered to Jane and Sallie – the Rogers daughters, who were still living at home. "Francis" may have been one of Jane's sorority friends, who treated the Rogers's house as a "second home."⁴

¹Henry Carter Rogers, "A Journey into Indian Summer," 105-8, 139.

²Francis Buzzell, *The Great Lakes Naval Training Station: A History* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1919), 4-5, 90.

³*America's Answer*, movie poster, 1918, reproduced by the Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/93517440/> (accessed 23 Apr. 2018); David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 353.

Note that a version of the film without the shot Burlingame describes was screened even before he wrote this letter; see "'America's Answer' Stirs War Spirit," *New York Times*, 30 July 1918, p. 9.

⁴Henry Carter Rogers, "A Journey into Indian Summer," 134-35, 141.

Camp Paul Jones

Aug. 10, 1918

Dear Mother Rogers,

I received your letter about a week ago and was certainly glad to hear from you. I saw Carter the Sunday afternoon after he came and we had a nice chat for about an hour or two. I haven't seen him since then as each of us I think have liberty only once a week and we never happen to see each other.

Wens, afternoon I had some visitors from home, Lula Catt, Edna Bell and Mrs. Willhiatt are on a two weeks trip so they stoped off to see me.

I have been here nine weeks tonight but it don't seem near that long to me. Almost every day since detention has been a busy one and have failed to do a great deal of writing but from now on will do better for you. You must know it is rather hard since detention to find time to write or if we do have time it sometimes happens am to tired to do so.

After spending my 3 weeks detention in Decatur I moved to Dewey for another week. These two have been sure good camps but since then the others I have been in are entirely different. From Dewey I went to New Aviation 1 wk then to Out Going Detention for 10 days and now nearly three wks in Camp Paul Jones. During this time we have worked seven days a week and instead of 12 hrs liberty a week and getting 12 noon sat. they made us work sat. afternoon's till 4:00 and then we could clean up and go on liberty. We all sure thot it was the limit the first wk, but each week we became more used to it and although our company should have gone to school some time ago we haven't given up but are sticking. The only reason we have been put here is to help make the new camps and a big athletic field and coming out of detention at the right time they took us. Others have gone to school ahead of us because after getting used to the labor they kept us rather than let us go to school and break in another bunch. I have quit working in the field (on the firing line we call it) the last week as have been appointed a regimental guard and guard nights.

There are now 11 camps on the station holding 68,000 men and work will be started at once on 4 more. Their aim is to have this a training camp of 100,000 in a short time. I like the place fine and I surely will get to school in the next week as their are only 160 radio men outside of the school left. One way this camp is different from army is because [by?] volunteer men are always coming and going while in the army camp for the most part one bunch is in training together.

They have been receiving recruits on this station nearly all summer at the rate of 2,000 a day which means they send out nearly as large a bunch each day. Although it is so large and handles the men so rapidly it is the most sanitary camp in the U.S. but everything that is done here is with the one purpose of making it the largest and best station army or navy.

We jacks are now posing before the movie camera each morning until all the flags of the allied nations have been formed. It certainly will be some wonderful pictures and I will be anxious to see them but they are to be shown in England and France before being shown in the U.S. The other morning, 40,000 posed for "America's Answer" 8,000 in white forming the letters and 32,000 in blue making the field. In the morning another is to be formed (I don't know which yet) and our bunch will be in whites but there won't be nearly so many as in the one big one.

Every Wens. afternoon is review day and 21 Battalions pass in review. After review they have drill exercise under arms and also sing for visitors in battalion square formation. We have 16 complete bands of about 70 pieces each besides one complete band battalion of over 300 pieces. They all are usually playing from early until late so we have plenty of good music. Another feature for the visitors is to watch the hydroplanes in practice flight. The people here surely deserve credit for they [do] everything in the world for us and never tire in it. On Wens. reviews from 20,000 on up to 50,000 people attend and instead of decreasing the crowds increase so you can well imagine the interest of the people.

The YMCA has some really fine buildings here and is establishing more and it is easily taking care of the men and doing fine work. Especially so in the detention camps where the fellows must get used to camp life. They have entertainments every night and usually it is the cleanest and best. Even people in nearby towns try to come to some because great actors come here for practically nothing to entertain us which civilians would pay \$5 dollars and up for same things.

If I ever get through school will get a 10 day leave and if I do I want to get back to Hanover and see you all. I would like to be back with you all again and go to school this winter but as that cannot be I will live in hopes I can in a very few winters. I like it very well the life, but am anxious to get to radio school so can leave for sea, and do something active in the war for up here so far and in some forms of work we feel like it isn't helping very much to end the war. Everything is so different in our new life that I feel even now that it will have a tendency to change us all.

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I feel like I have strung out quite a lot in this letter so had better stop. Give my love to all, Jane, Sallie, Francis (likely she doesn't remember me) Mr. Rogers and yourself.

Sincerely

Byers

Will be more than glad to hear from any of you quite often.

Byers A Burlingame

USN RFLER

Co 27 7 Batt 12 Reg

Camp Paul Jones

Great Lakes, Ill

Burlingame survived the war but did not come back to Hanover. Instead, he returned to live with his family and worked in a nearby factory for a while before moving to Detroit and working for the Studebaker Corporation. He eventually became its president.⁵

⁵Henry Carter Rogers, "A Journey into Indian Summer," 139; 1920 United States Census, Petersburg, Pike County, Indiana, digital image s.v. "Byers A Burlingame," *Ancestry.com*; 1940 United States Census, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, digital image s.v. "Byers Burlingame," *Ancestry.com*.

Irene Rogers, Letters to Alma Rogers, 25 and 27 August 1918

Alma Rogers received this letter, from her daughter-in-law, Irene (Russell) Rogers shortly after the one from Burlingame. Irene Rogers's letter reveals the stress and heartbreak of the war for soldiers' loved ones.

James Speed Rogers, who went by "Speed," was the oldest son of the family. He studied at Hanover for three years, but transferred to the University of Michigan to complete his education. After teaching for a year at Guilford College in North Carolina, he returned to Ann Arbor to marry Irene Russell on April 22, 1918. He joined the army shortly after that and was overseas by August, working as a chemist in an army hospital.¹

Meanwhile, Irene's brother, Edward Harris Russell, who had joined the army in June of the previous year, was already in Europe.²

Ann Arbor, Mich.,
August 25, 1918.

My dear Mother:

This is a beautiful Sunday morning and if I could go to church without crying all over everything, I would surely go. I have thought of you all in your preparations for the morning. We are very depressed and anxious over Brother; an official telegram came yesterday, telling of his being wounded severely. That happened August 3 and we are only now being notified -- it is hard to explain the delay. At times we think he is in the Base Hospital and out of danger and then again we fear he is not getting along well or they would not notify us now. Several others were hurt -- one Lt. lost his foot, another Corporal his hand -- but we do not know the nature of Harris' wound. We are still hopeful and trusting, and Mother is particularly brave.

I received two letters from Speed yesterday -- none, the day before, so that accounts for the two - He is very restless because of the delay and absence from work but he realizes how much worse off he could be and doesn't complain.

Your letter for me came last week with the card enclosed. You see every soldier is compelled to make an allotment to some of his people; if he doesn't do it the government takes some of his pay and keeps it until the war is over. The privates who get \$30 a month, allot \$15 to their wives or mothers or others; if to a wife, the government puts an additional \$15 with it and sends it all to

¹"Michigan, Marriage Records, 1867-1952," digital image s.v. Irene Russell (22 Apr. 1918), *Ancestry.com*. Henry Carter Rogers, "A Journey into Indian Summer," 105, 205.

²"U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010," s.v. "Edward Russell" (1896-1981), *Ancestry.com*.

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the wife. As a soldier's pay increases he can make larger allotments. This card that came to me merely explains the delay in the payment of this money; the draft should come along soon & it will also be send to Hanover. Speed gave my address as Hanover, as my own address at the time was not steady. I will write to the Treas. Dept. to have the address changed as you do not want the bother of forwarded that letter to me every month. Speed and I are planning on saving this money. i.e. I will save and it will be a start toward our home, when he comes back. I can live very nicely on what I receive from the University and all of this gov't money can be kept. Speed has probably told you who will get some of it. We think some of it goes to you.

Aug. 22 -- my fourth anniversary of Apr. 22 -- I received a lovely gift from Aunt Bessie -- Aunt Beet I believe you all call her -- and her daughter, Sara Goodloe. She said she wanted to give me something I wouldn't get for myself and she certainly did -- a flower basket of silver is about the last thing I would get for myself but it is so acceptable as a gift. I love to look at it and think of the message which preceded it -- "that as I filled it with flowers to remember it was already filled to overflowing with love. You have all been so kind to me, I would have to love you, even if I hadn't before I knew you.

One year ago next week I began my school in Owasso; it is good not to think of leaving my happy home again this year especially when conditions are so uncertain with our loved ones. I like my new work so well & it keeps me in touch with Speed & his work -- it seems the working out of Divine Will that I can be hired. And soon things will be better for the war cannot last many years longer and then our boys will be back.

Did I understand you to say that Carter was to go? He sent a card to me to tell me he would write later so maybe I will hear directly from him. His summer training is almost over, now and you can have him with you for a while anyway. You will enjoy having just your own family once again.

= It is 8:30 Sunday evening now and I have only a few minutes before the mail goes out. We have had company all day but I have been very lonesome -- the more company the "lonesomer" I am because when so many are talking I can't keep with those I want to be with.

No further word has been received from Brother but when we do hear from him I will write to you. It is a great comfort for me to think of you and your faith and you all are a help in this time of anxiety even tho you, perhaps, do not realize it. We do not need to worry about Speed just yet and I do hope he can be spared the suffering that some experience. He is a very brave, noble man and will do his best, I am sure; it is hard to think of your loved ones suffering -- that's why we at home must keep brave and well in order not to add to the worries of the boys --

Goodnight to all with all love from

Irene

Aug 27 -- 1918

Dear Alma, All those letters came today. Mr Lawson will bring you from Lexington for \$2.00
Rained again today [Heavy?]

Harris Russell survived the war, returning home to live with his parents and to work as a stenographer in the zoology department at the University of Michigan.³

³1920 United States Census, Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan, digital image s.v. "Edward H. Russell," *Ancestry.com*.

H. C. Rogers, Letter to Alma Rogers, 12 October 1918

Alma Rogers received this letter from her son Carter only a day after he joined the army as a second lieutenant in the Student Army Training Corps. In describing his circumstances, he reveals the toll the Influenza Epidemic of 1918 took on the army as well as how newly commissioned officers experienced military service.

The SATC allowed college men to be drafted into a military training program within a university, where they would take both academic courses and military instruction. Byers Burlingame and Irene Rogers allude to Carter's previous summer training at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, and there was a SATC program there, but when he signed up officially it was with the SATC on the campus of Texas A&M. With all the emotions associated with new surroundings, new responsibilities, and fears about the future, Carter would have had some confidence about graduating from Hanover. The college president had officially announced that men who were drafted or volunteered in their senior year would graduate on time, despite any classes they might miss. The student newspaper encouraged him to extend the offer to undergraduates like Carter, giving them credit for the remainder of the school year they missed; "The experience of the training camps and service would more than be equivalent in broadening influence" to those missed classes, the paper's editors argued.¹

Like any son protecting his mother from worry, Carter seems to be painting a rosier picture than he was seeing himself. For instance, his letter does not convey the "serious housing crisis" caused by the university having to accommodate so many student-recruits, most of whom were apparently housed in tents. More seriously, he seems to have hidden from his mother just how dire the influenza epidemic was there. A Texas A&M historian reports that, taking into account students, faculty, and soldiers, "as many as five or six persons were dying each night. The local undertakers ran out of caskets and started using long wicker baskets for the dead." Although the infection rate was much lower in the Madison area than on the Texas A&M campus, public health measures instituted that month must have affected Carter's parents. For instance, if Carter's father (a Presbyterian minister) officiated at any Madison funerals they would have been much smaller than usual as the city government banned all but family members and close friends from attending funerals.²

The "Julia" whom Carter visited was Julia Daughy, an orphan Carter's parents had taken in

¹"U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010," s.v. "Henry Rogers" (1899-1976), *Ancestry.com*. "U.S., Sons of the American Revolution Membership Applications, 1889-1970," p. 4, digital image s.v. "Henry Carter Rogers," *Ancestry.com*; David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 57-59; "College Spirit," *Hanover College Triangle*, 6 Apr. 1918, p. 2. Thanks to Baylee Roach for the lead to this article.

²Dethloff, *Texas A&M University*, chapter II (n. p.); Will Werner-Wilson, "The Looming Spectre of Death: The Town of Madison and the Influenza Epidemic of 1918-1919," p. 62 above.

before he was born and who stayed with them for years. By the time of this letter, she was living in Oklahoma City with her husband and son (Henry Martyn Daughty), whom they had named after Carter's father. His cousin Catherine Manchester had been part of his childhood but was then living in Oklahoma City with her father and mother (Nell).³

"Benjie" was Carter's family nickname, a teasing allusion to the relationship between the biblical Joseph (with the coat of many colors) and his youngest brother, Benjamin.⁴

Oct. 12th

Company Office Sat PM 1918

Dearest Mother;

Am fairly well settled now except for quarters, we are being moved around a little but hope to be settled soon. Am now in the office or a little corner set aside in the barracks for the use of the officers. Am not very busy now as quite a few of our men have the "Flu". Fifteen are in the hospital and several in bed here in the barracks. About fifty are on detail of various sorts and the rest for the most part are not in the best of shape so we are not drilling them now. I have drafted men under me and most of them are much older than I and half probably married. It seems strange for me to be ordering men around who are from twenty five to thirty and having them pay me all kinds of respect. And when this morning I went thru the quarters with the other two officers (2nd Lts) I couldn't get very fierce especially when so many of the fellows were sick. It hasn't been long enough since I was in their place. I never smiled nor even looked friendly but I couldn't "cuss 'em out". It will come I reckon though with a little experience.

All the officers mess to-gether at a little cottage called the officers Club but the mess is all there is to it. We get good grub and all the sugar we can eat. I ate bread and sugar last night for the first time since the war.

I might as well tell you that they have the "Flu" here pretty badly among the men though I know of only one officer who has it. You need have no fear for me though for it is so warm here we have everything open, clean quarters and sulphur water to drink, and use. It is so warm here I go around in my shirt sleeves even at night. The trees and cotton fields are green and birds sing so sweetly out on the campus. It rained quite hard yesterday but today has been beautiful.

³Henry Carter Rogers, "A Journey into Indian Summer," 36, iii, 111. 1920 United States Census, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, digital image s.v. "Catherine Manchester," *Ancestry.com*; "U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007," s.v. "Catherine Manchester Rowe," *Ancestry.com*.

⁴Henry Carter Rogers, "A Journey into Indian Summer," 75.

The Rogers Family Letters

I went over to Bryan or Brien last night for an hour or so. It is the nearest town boasts 4,500 and they call it a city here. Most everything in Texas is closed to soldiers but we found the drug store open though they couldn't sell us sodas or anything of the kind. In fact had I not been an officer I could not have gotten out of camp but quarantine of soldiers doesn't effect officers, except as pertains to attendance upon public gathering. The City of Bryan is about five miles distant and one reaches it by a trolley in about fifteen minutes for so many cents. It has several drug stores three or four picture shows one or two hotel and the other stores that go to make up such a town. I couldn't see much of the town last night.

Well I must not tell to much about the place or I won't have anything to tell next time.

We took the prescribed picture at Julia's. She surely did things up in style for me. Cousin Nell and Catherine were there to dinner which was a swell one. Martyn drove us all over the city and though only there for a few hours I saw the whole works. Gee but it was great though the parting was most unpleasant. Will send the pictures when I get the prints. Will have a good picture taken when I can find time.

Nothing was said to me about being late. I just explained and no questions were asked. Officer's words good you see.

Must close now.

Lovingly,

Lt. Bengie

A few days after receiving this previous letter, Alma learned firsthand the toll influenza took even on those who survived it. Byers Burlingame was recovering from it and sent a letter describing his recovery: "I was in the hospital three weeks and I have lost about 25 lbs My face is so hollow and I have lost my tan and I guess I can't get that back till next summer. I think the second week was my worst as was out of my head most of the time and the second wire they sent grandmother said [not] expected to live, but I wasn't ready to die so it seems. I said I kind of hated to come home a skeleton but . . . am sure will get along alright." ⁵

⁵Byers Burlingame, letter to Alma Rogers, 19 Oct. 1918, folder 7, box 5, Rogers Family Papers Collection, Duggan Library, Hanover College (Hanover, Ind.).

H. C. Rogers, Letter to H. M. Rogers and Alma Rogers, [December? 1918]

H.M. and Alma Rogers received this letter from their son Carter late in the year, after the war was over. In describing his recent experiences, he reveals medical practices of the time, the way the war seemed to end before it began for many recruits, and the way an individual's death can be more shocking than reported deaths of many more people.

The man whose funeral he attended was Lieut. Ralph Emerson Rollwage, of Forest City, Arkansas. Of German ancestry, he joined the war effort despite knowing that his grandparents had been German subjects and that he might be fighting against German cousins.⁶

On the Post
Saturday

Dearest Folks,

You write to be about not writing and I haven't missed a week while! You did miss one week writing to me. You never have told me whether or not you received the seventy five dollars for the bank. I know it's a trivial sum but one must watch the little things to get along in this world.

Quite a sad thing happened here on Thanksgiving day. Lieut. Rollwage (the fellow whom you all took to be me in the company picture) died. He had not been the least bit sick but simply went over to the hospital to have his tonsils removed. The second injection of cocaine affected his heart before the operation was ever begun and he died in spite of the attention of three or four doctors. Quite sad in that it was so sudden, so uncalled for. I saw the major shortly after Rollwage died and he said when he went over to look at the body, he thought it was I. Such things make one a little more thoughtful.

We had a military funeral Fri. afternoon which was very impressive. I shall never forget the occasion, the march down to the station where the body was to be shipped. Down the military road (see picture) (The two out side lines) stood the soldiers of the post, in two batallion-front formations facing each other, at present arms, the salute for such an occassion. In front walked the band playing a military funeral march. (I made a mistake on the picture and got the dot in front of the band) after the band came the chaplin on foot followy by an army truck with the body (four soldiers standing in the truck to steady the coffin) Next the officers of the post followed in a column of two in order of rank. We marched from the building "A" to the Depot.

⁶"Texas, Death Certificates, 1903-1982," digital image s.v. "Lieut Ralph Ennerson Rollwge," *Ancestry.com*; 1910 United States Census, Forest City, St. Francis County, Arkansas, digital image s.v. "Ralph Rollunge," *Ancestry.com*.

The Rogers Family Letters

We were told the other day that we would begin mustering us officers out on the tenth of Dec. However I don't hope to get out before Jan. or Feb. for I have applied for the officers reserve and they will be kept in the army some longer than the ones who asked for immediate discharge. I wanted to stay in the army long enough to pay off my debt is the main reason why I asked for a place in the reserve. Of course asking for it doesn't mean I'll get it. If I don't I want to get a job some place until next fall for it won't pay me to start in school this year and I want to get that debt off my mind.

I spent a very quiet Thanksgiving here on the post. I didn't accept any of my three invitations to Colvert for various reasons. We had quite a good turkey dinner at the officers mess. To-day Lieut B.C Rogers and I ate dinner with Mr. & Mrs. Firtle (with whom we are rooming) we had a regular Thanksgiving dinner, turkey 'n everything.

Wednesday I received the candy. Thanks so much, it was fine. Also on that mail I got a box of candy from Dorothy and yesterday some from my girl friend at Calvert. All my good luck comes at once.

To-day is perfectly beautiful, warm and sunshining brightly. The last few days have been so cold. A few nights ago we had such a heavy frost it killed the sweet potato vines though the Irish potatoes are still green. Will enclose a few pictures I printed. Fri. night I got my printing outfit fixed up as good as new.

From now on will be very busy helping demobilize the men here. Our orders are to have it done by the 20th Dec. It's quite a job and will keep us all pretty busy .

My board is real good for an army boarding place. You see I board at the officers mess, run by a sergeant and room about a square away at Mr. Firths; a might nice place. It won't be necessary to send the down comfort as it doesn't get so very cold here. Julia did not send me a sweater but I hardly think I'll need any more for one of my girl friends is knitting one for me.

Lovingly,
Your Bengie

P.S. Why not send some of Speeds letters or does he still write by hand?

Carter's prediction was nearly right: he was released from the military on December 30, 1918. The college must have given him credit for his military experience, for he graduated on time in 1920.⁷

⁷“U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010,” s.v. “Henry Rogers” (1899-1976), *Ancestry.com*.