



South Brevard Historical Society, Inc.

Founded 1966

E Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2020

DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS,

This month provides two opportunities to celebrate Our Nation. The first, our opportunity to vote in the presidential election of 2020. As we await the final, end of all votes counted, tally I am reminded of a Yogi Berra quote, “it ain’t over til it’s over”. (I did fact check that and it was credited to his words of encouragement to the Mets in the 1973 pennant race.)

The origin of another phrase that came to mind seems forgotten in time but I suspect is echoed by many, “it’s all over but the shouting.”

The quote that is my prayer and hope for our country is from the poem “America the Beautiful” by Katherine Lee Bates.....”and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea”. May we remember that we are the UNITED States and let us “move on.com”.

November also provides VETERANS DAY a special time to honor all who have served in the military. Originally called Armistice Day, the holiday celebrated the agreement to end the fighting of WWI on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918. Following WWII and the Korean War, the name was changed to Veterans Day and the purpose expanded in the U.S. to honor all who serve in the military.

During this “time of difficulty” many of us have begun to research and write our family histories. So, it is appropriate that our special feature this month is an essay written in 2008, the 90th anniversary of the end of WWI, by SBHS board member Nancy Grout about her grandfather, Sidney Emerson Grout, a veteran of WWI. Thank You for sharing this with us Nancy.

Please feel free to contact the Society or myself via the internet: contact@southbrevardhistory.org, or phone me at 725.4115. The SBHS and I welcome your comments.

Stay Well...Carol

Meetings and Programs

We’ll resume our programming as soon as the usual venue is deemed safe. In the meantime ideas for “safe” program activities and events are being explored. This is a time to be cautious as well as creative. We hope to resume our get togethers, even if unconventional, after the holidays.

The Collection

Collection items of our large museum style artifacts have been successfully deaccessed. Some were given to the Heritage Park project. Heritage Park was initiated and led by Roz Foster and the North Brevard Heritage Foundation. Heritage Park will interpret through preservation of historic structures and exhibits, the history of Brevard County from the time of the Native Americans through the early development of Brevard’s agriculture and industry. For more information go to: <https://nbbd.com/npr/preservation/>

We have retained artifacts that can be used in small display areas such as standing display cases and display window spaces such as you find at a library. The paper archival materials will eventually be available online.

Things to Do

Green Gables

Visit the Green Gables website for preview of the exciting December calendar of events. Activities include a Renaissance Fair and participation in “The Holiday Tour of Homes”.

go to: <https://greengables.org/>

Cape Canaveral Light House

This information is copied from the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation website found at <https://canaverallight.org/>

“The Cape Canaveral Lighthouse has stood on the Cape for over 150 years. Situated amidst America’s Premier Gateway to Space, the lighthouse is owned by the United States Space Force and maintained as an active aid to navigation by the United States Coast Guard.

We are now officially open, again! Please see our Visit page for tour information. Members of the public can only visit by taking a tour. Since we are located on an active military installation, you cannot drive your own vehicle onto the facility.

We are doing everything we can to create a safe environment, including frequent sanitizing and enforcing social distancing guidelines. Face masks are required to be worn by all staff, volunteers and visitors, over the age of 2.” (Tours are limited to 10 participants.)

TO ARRANGE A TOUR OF THE LIGHTHOUSE AND SURROUNDING FACILITIES:

ContactUs@Canaveral.Tours

OR

phone 321-307-2900

For the Reader

Check out the November Senior Scene Magazine article, “Play Ball! Batter Up!” written by SBHS Vice President Diane Barile,. The magazine also features articles of “senior” interest on health, housing, finance and community services. It’s difficult to find a physical copy at this time. If you know where copies are available on a regular basis, please let us know.

ONLINE GO TO <https://seniorscenemag.com/november-2020/>

VIDEO OF THE MONTH JOE WICKHAM

from the archives of the BCHCommision:

Joe Wickham was born in 1911 in Iowa and came to Brevard County in 1926. He lived in Eau Gallie and graduated from Eau Gallie High School in 1928. During World War II he served in the Pacific and was in a CB (construction battalion). Upon returning to Brevard, he owned and operated a construction company and saw the area grow. In 1952 he was elected to the Brevard County Commission and served 3 terms. He then took time off for eight years and ran for Commissioner again serving another three terms.

There are three interviews with Joe online. We recommend the first interview of 1995. It is about an hour and a half in length. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jruXPfuV_4&feature=youtu.be

If you enjoy this interview, you may wish to view the other two.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjDr7rxmD10&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gpk5X6F-qlg&feature=youtu.be>

(the third features general early Brevard history)

NOVEMBER SPECIAL FEATURE:

TWO VETERANS OF WORLD WAR I

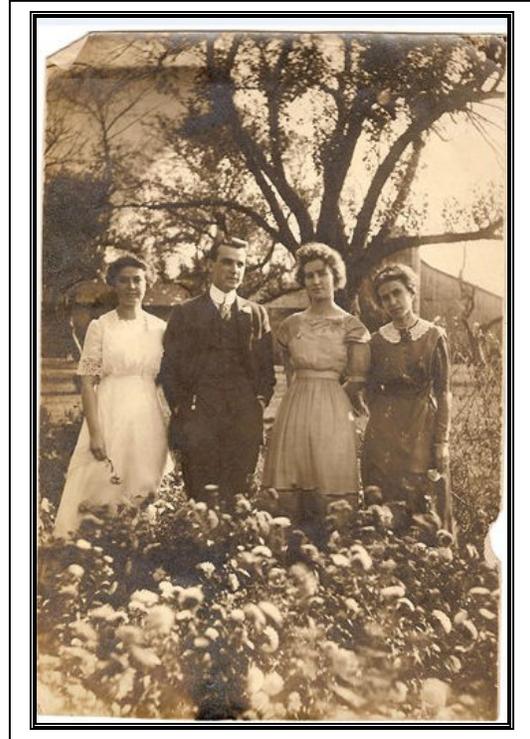
My grandfather, Sidney Emerson Grout and local Brevard County veteran, Frances Arthur LaRoche

By Nancy Grout

The 90th anniversary of the end of World War I, once called the war to end all wars, will be celebrated Nov. 11, 2008, a day we now call Veterans Day. This day started out being called Armistice Day as it was the day of the cessation of hostilities of World War I. The holiday was established in 1938 to honor those war veterans.

In 1954, the name of this holiday was changed to Veterans Day to also honor the veterans of World War II and the Korean War.

For many of the past Veterans Days I have bought a red poppy from veterans standing outside of a retail store. I was familiar with the meaning of the poppy and the poem about the poppies in Flanders Fields, written by a Canadian soldier, Lt. Col. John McCrae, a doctor who was so affected by the deaths of soldiers that he composed the poem. McCrae later died the way most of the soldiers did from that war; not from wounds but from pneumonia.



Sydney Grout with his sisters

I didn't know a lot more about this war until, talking with my mother about my Dad's father who was a soldier in the American Expeditionary Service, she told me she had a postcard that he had sent to his family on the exact date of the armistice, November 11, 1918. He was in Paris and he wrote on this momentous occasion, "There will be hell to pay in Paris tonight." Certainly the people of France and the American soldiers who were there celebrated that day! Mom later sent me a copy of the postcard and looking at the picture of soldiers with the Eiffel Tower in the background got me thinking even more about this war.

As I continued to do research on the war, I discovered that I could read every issue of the Stars and Stripes newspaper from February, 1918 until June, 1919 on the internet. This newspaper was published by men from the ranks of the American Expeditionary Forces as a morale booster. My husband was astonished to see how much time I could spend reading issue after issue of this newsletter and get excited by bits of information that made the war seem more real to me. I read articles about battles and the heroic efforts of our soldiers, but I enjoyed even more the poems written by the servicemen. The advertisements for chewing gum, razor blades and coats and boots gave the war an added dimension for me. After my mother told me that my grandfather's service had something to do with the delivery of mail to the soldiers, I looked for any information about the Postal Express Service.

Then, one day on the database Ancestry.com, I discovered that World War One draft registration cards are available. Typing my grandfather's name in the search field I quickly get a match, click on the icon and view the handwritten two-page draft registration form. Reading the dark ink script of his script I see that he was employed by a cigar store in Chicago. Questions quickly pop into my mind for as far as

everyone knew he had lived all of his adult life in Springfield MA. Why was my grandfather working in Chicago and why did he return to the Springfield MA area to register for the draft?

One day I am browsing the internet and using search terms to look for any information about my grandfather's service and I find the Florida Memory Project, the digitalized database of service records for all Florida World War One veterans. I search by town, Melbourne and county, Brevard. Names come up including that of Stanford Wells, son of Mrs. Nora Wells who along with her husband W. T. Wells were early Melbourne settlers. They were instrumental in getting the first Melbourne Library built. Clicking on the name of Mr. Wells, up comes his service record. He was a Chief Machinist in the Navy. Looking over several service records of men who registered from Cocoa and Merritt Island I find a record that shows a Navy Service Cross awarded for meritorious service. This record is for Francis Arthur LaRoche. The record reveals that Mr. LaRoche was born in Courteney, Florida in 1887, graduated from the Naval Academy in 1910 and served on several ships receiving promotions along the way. By the start of WWI he is a seasoned Naval Officer in charge of the Monaghan. Promoted in February, 1918 he is given command of the Sultana and then in June, 1918, the Flusser. At the bottom of his service record it states, "Awarded the Navy Cross for distinguished service as Commanding Officer of the USS Sultana and the USS Flusser, engaged in the important duty of patrolling the waters infested with enemy submarine and mines." I have found a local war hero!

Two months ago my Mother calls and says she has found letters that my grandfather wrote in 1917 and 1918. She bundles them up and mails them to me. Two days later they arrive. I am in awe of these letters linking me to my grandfather who died when I was a little girl. I spend several hours reading them. Some questions I had earlier are answered. My grandfather traveled to Chicago to see a friend who told him it was easier to get a job out west. His letters report back home that his job search is fruitless for several months, then he gets a job in the cigar store. Predicting that the United States of America will join the war he returns home to Springfield and registers for the draft.

He reports to Camp Devens, MA in the fall of 1917. His letters say the food is good and he thanks his family for sending donuts and socks. Then in the midst of the letters I find a mess ticket from the U.S.S. Maui, March 1918. He has been shipped overseas on a once private vessel, now being used to transport troops. Arriving in France he is amazed that the weather is so mild almost like spring. Unfortunately, my grandfather does not write a lot of details about what he does overseas. His letters often thank his sister and mother for their continued efforts to keep in touch. His jobs are all in support of the troops on the front lines of the war.

On Armistice Day he is in Paris ready to celebrate like all the troops. Many of the front line soldiers are quickly shipped home. He stays in France until the following spring serving now to support the peace effort. Letters and postcards sent home tell of his travels to Monte Carlo and friendships he develops with soldiers from both the United States and France.

So as we celebrate Veterans Day this year, the 90th anniversary of the end of the Great War, let us not forget that it was first called Armistice Day. I will not forget my grandfather, Sidney Emerson Grout, and as citizens of Brevard County, let us not forget our World War One veterans, Stanford Wells, Francis Arthur *LaRoche* and many others, who served in the war to end all wars, World War I.

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Visit us on:

www.southbrevardhistory.org

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8HAaqqBGAbz_GHMC3TZe-Q