

# Somewhere Over There: The Letters, Diary, and Artwork of a World War I Corporal

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to budge, and it is clear that her instincts were correct. The efforts of both women combined to make the Little House books memorable.

Other groups of letters are also fascinating. For instance, Wilder wrote to her husband while she took trips to California in 1915 and 1925. Letters from the first trip were published by HarperCollins as *West from Home* in 1974, but letters from the second are published for the first time here. Imagining Wilder at 58 years old riding in a Buick through the mountains of Colorado, Nevada, and California is a treat. There are also multiple letters from Wilder to her literary agent and editors; she argues for more royalties, thanks them for the work they do, and shares news. Finally, the book reproduces dozens of letters she sent to fans of the books who wrote to her. During the last years of her life, she wrote to hundreds of these correspondents.

One wonders if the correspondence could have been organized differently to bring similar letters together. The chapters are also of uneven length; the shortest is only 22 pages, the longest is over 150. Finally, it is unclear why the correspondence between Wilder and Lane is divided into two different chapters.

These are minor concerns, however. This book is a must-read for Wilder scholars and for anyone who loves the Little House books.

*Somewhere Over There: The Letters, Diary, and Artwork of a World War I Corporal*, by Francis H. Webster, edited by Darrek D. Orwig. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016. xv, 277 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Matthew J. Margis recently earned a Ph.D. in history from Iowa State University. His dissertation focuses on the National Guard's development as both a social and military organization during the Progressive Era.

During World War I, a young corporal from Iowa personified the role of "embedded journalist" decades before that term existed. In August 1917 the U.S. Army officially drafted the National Guard into the American Expeditionary Force, and the Third Iowa Infantry Regiment became the 168th U.S. Infantry Regiment as part of the newly created 42nd Infantry Division. Francis Webster enlisted in the Iowa National Guard shortly after the United States declared war on Germany. He served as a bugler in the Third Iowa Infantry Regiment's machine gun company. In addition to drawing illustrations about life in the trenches for publication in an Iowa newspaper, Webster maintained an extensive correspondence with his family and friends, and he kept a detailed diary. For *Somewhere Over There*, Darrek Orwig painstakingly edited Webster's letters, diary, and artwork.

*Somewhere Over There* follows Webster's journey from his enlistment in the Iowa National Guard until his untimely death in October 1918. Orwig's edited version of Webster's writings and drawings offers valuable insights into an American soldier's life during World War I. Like thousands of other young men, Webster gave up his civilian life to serve his country in the trenches. His story reflects broader trends related to the World War I combat experience. Furthermore, Webster's service record closely mirrors the Great War's general combat narrative, and his artwork provides interesting and often humorous glimpses into the daily life of a National Guardsman who fought in the trenches, witnessed the horrors of modern warfare, recovered in hospitals from exposure to poisonous gas, and suffered a mortal wound during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. This book recounts Webster's experiences through his own words, illustrations, and private collection of watercolors within a historical framework.

Overall, Orwig does an excellent job of providing background information from both primary and secondary sources. Readers will appreciate the ways he introduces each chapter and provides historical context throughout the narrative. Orwig also meticulously transcribes Webster's writings in chronological order and uses Webster's own illustrations to give life to his words. Although the editor includes insightful letters Webster wrote to his family, he leaves out numerous letters between Webster and his friends and former fiancé. Orwig also omits letters written to Webster from his parents and brother. These omissions are understandable because including them would vastly increase the length of the book, but they could provide deeper looks into Webster's personality.

This book will be of interest to anyone looking for an American soldier's firsthand account of the daily life of an American soldier during World War I, as well as one soldier's political ideology and social sensibilities. As primary sources, Webster's letters, diary, and artwork are valuable for scholars looking to expand their collections or their own studies. Webster's story will also appeal to anyone interested in Iowa history. Webster spent his formative years in Iowa, graduated from Des Moines College, and served as a school superintendent in Deloit, Iowa, prior to enlisting in the National Guard. Webster carried a rural Iowa mentality with him into the war, and his letters and diary reflect his background. Webster's artwork also appealed directly to an Iowa audience and often contained elements of Iowa pride and humorous illustrations. Ultimately, this work offers a glimpse into the life of a National Guardsman during World War I, and the book places Webster's narrative in the larger context of American involvement in the war.