Welter, Edward Leo, 1894-1975. Diary, 1918-1919. One folder, photocopies

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This is a diary of overseas service by a native of Kelso, Scott County, Missouri, and an enlisted member of Co. F, 110th Engineers, 35th Division, U.S. Army. E. L. Welter served in France along the Somme River and in the Vosges Mountains, was part of the reserve during the St. Mihiel offensive, and came under fire during the Meuse-Argonne offensive.

Edward L. Welter was born in Kelso, Missouri. He attended St. Augustine Catholic Church and school, and was employed by the Kelso Milling Corp. when the United States entered World War One. He had been married only three weeks to Caroline Pfefferkorn when he was inducted into the U.S. Army. Welter trained at Camp Funston, Kansas, and Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where he was assigned to the 110th Engineers.

The 110th Engineers were shipped to France as part of the 35th Division. Arriving at Brest on 10 May 1918, the engineers spent the first month in France in a quiet sector along the Somme River. They were transferred to the Vosges Mountains sector in July. The engineers were part of the reserve force during the St. Mihiel offensive, and followed in support of the infantry in the drive through the Argonne Forest, the last major thrust of the war. Although they were pinned under fire for two days in the Argonne, the men were more commonly occupied by repairing roads, rebuilding collapsed trenches, and stringing barbed wire. The unit camped near St. Mihiel after the armistice was signed. The unit left for the seaport at Brest in February 1919, and sailed for New York on 11 April 1919. The men landed at Hoboken, New Jersey, on 19 April.

Welter returned to the Kelso Mill after he left the army. He became manager in 1919, and sole owner in 1937. He retired in 1959, and lived in Kelso until his death in 1975.

Welter’s diary of military service begins on 10 May 1918, when the 110th Engineers landed in France. The brief entries record the unit’s transfers from one sector to another, observations on life in the trenches, and a brief description of Welter’s baptism of fire in the Argonne Forest. The diary continues through April 22, 1919. The last entries are followed by copies of miscellaneous patriotic verse and army ballads.
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