Information Sheet

R  Hume, John Robert.
357 Papers, 1898-1919.
   Two folders, photocopies.

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

These are typescript copies of a World War One diary and poetry of John R. Hume, a native of Doniphan in Ripley County, Missouri, and captain of a U.S. Army medical detachment in France, 1917-1918.

The Hume family, which had antecedents in Scotland and Virginia, was among the earliest to settle along the Current River in Missouri. They located near Doniphan, in Ripley County, sometime around 1800. John R. Hume was a physician at Doniphan. Some of his poetry, dated 1898 at Jacksonville, Florida, and 1900 at Asheville, North Carolina, suggests that he may have been educated in those places. Hume entered the U.S. Army before World War I. He was surgeon of the 7th U.S. Infantry Regiment, serving with Pershing’s expeditionary force in Texas and Mexico in 1916-1917. He was captain with a field hospital detachment which landed in France in September 1917. The unit served variously at Bourmont, Goncourt, and in the Verdun sector, attached to the French 77th Infantry Regiment, the 23rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, and the 1st and 2nd U.S. Infantry Divisions.

Hume’s diary and most of his poetry concern his military experience in Europe. The diary entries begin on 8 September 1917, as the medical detachment sailed for France, and continue through 14 February 1918. The entries concern the movements of his field hospital unit and Hume's own hospitalization twice in four months. He was wounded while visiting British forces at Cambrai in November 1917, and developed pneumonia after prolonged exposure to chlorine gas in January 1918. Hume’s narrative ends during his second hospitalization, but the dateline of his poetry indicates he recovered and served in France through the summer of 1918. By November 1918, Hume was in Genoa, Italy.

Hume was particularly sensitive to the health and well-being of the troops he served. He was exceedingly disaffected with the quality of American leadership, especially that of Gen. Omar Bundy, who led the 2nd Division. He accused Bundy of precipitating many cases of exposure and death among soldiers who had fallen out of forced marches and who were ordered left along the roadside. The “Joseph Boyce Incident,” narrated in the diary, was a particularly disturbing example. Hume’s poetry describes the plight of the common soldier and the motives which sustained the troops in combat.


Index Cards

Boyce, Joseph, -1917
Cambrai, Battle of, 1917
Hume, John Robert
Ripley County (Mo.)
United States. Army. Infantry Division, 1st
United States. Army. Infantry Division, 2nd
United States. Army. Infantry Regiment, 23rd
Wedderburn Farm (Doniphan, Mo.)
World War, 1914-1918—Campaigns—Belgium
World War, 1914-1918—Campaigns—France