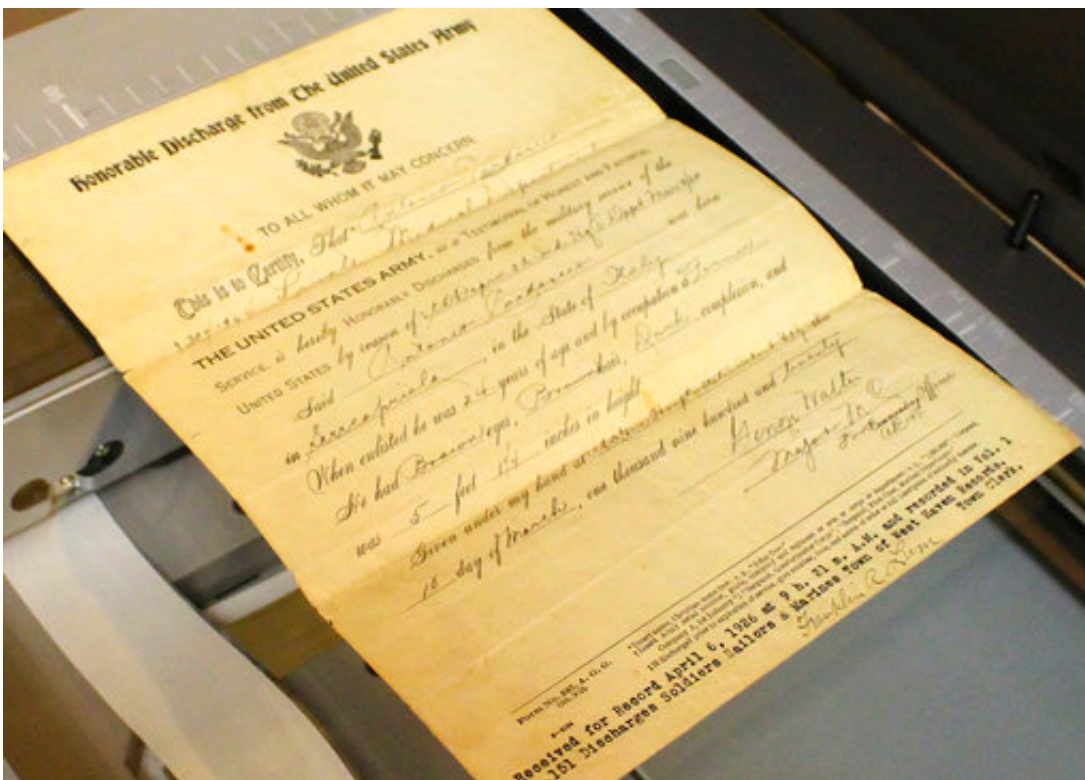


# Preparing artifacts of the 'Great War' for the digital age

April 10 2017, by Pat Eaton-Robb



In this April 6, 2017 photo, a World War I discharge paper awaits scanning at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford, Conn. The library is in the midst of a project to digitally preserve photos, letters, documents and other artifacts from the war, which the U.S. entered 100 years ago this month. (AP Photo/Pat Eaton-Robb)

Rick Maynard found the manila envelope containing letters from the battlefields of World War I while he and his sister were cleaning out the

basement after their father's death.

The more than three dozen letters were written, some in pencil, by Paul Maynard, Rick's great-uncle.

"He was on the front lines," said Rick Maynard, the parks and recreation director for the town of Guilford. "In one of the letters to his mother, he said he had not slept in 10 days. I can't imagine it. I can't fathom that."

Soon, letters such as those from 21-year-old Paul Maynard, who died in 1918 during the last day of battle, will be available for anyone to read, thanks to a project spearheaded by the Connecticut State Library to help mark the 100th anniversary of the U.S. involvement in the war.

The library is hosting events across Connecticut, inviting people to bring in photos, letters and any artifacts associated with the "Great War" to be photographed or scanned for posterity. Students and veterans also conduct interviews with the owners to get a history of the items and the people to whom they are linked.

The library says it has the largest World War I archive of any U.S. state.

Since the project began in 2014, about 130 people have come to events, resulting in the digital preservation of more than 600 items and the creation of about 150 profiles of people who took part in the war effort.



This undated family photo provided by Rick Maynard shows Robert Remington, of Hamden, Conn., who was killed in France in May of 1918 during World War I. The photo is among items that have been digitally archived by the Connecticut State Library as part of a program to preserve letters, photos and other artifacts from the war. (Rick Maynard via AP)

Similar preservation efforts are being done at some universities, some branches of the military and local historical societies, but nothing on the scale of Connecticut's project, said Chris Isleib, spokesman for the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission.

The preservation is funded in part by an \$11,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The New Haven Museum will host a major scanning event May 24. There are 16 others scheduled this year across the state.

"We can do high-resolution captures of anything that comes in, 3D objects, flat objects," said Christine Pittsley, the project managers for the state's Remembering World War I: Sharing History/Preserving Memories program. "All of that stuff is going to be online. It's being preserved in the Connecticut digital archive. So, even if that item disappears, there always will be a digital record of it."

The library is building a website that will allow anyone to download the images. It also is working with schools across the state on ways to incorporate the stories and images into curriculum.

The project includes not only soldiers' stories, but also those of nurses, YMCA canteen workers, those who sold Liberty Loan war bonds or anyone else associated with the war.



This undated family photo provided by Rick Maynard shows a woman named Ethel Cooke with Robert Remington, right, of Hamden, Conn. Remington was killed in France in May of 1918 during World War I. The photo is among items that have been digitally archived by the Connecticut State Library as part of a program to preserve letters, photos and other artifacts from the war. (Rick Maynard via AP)

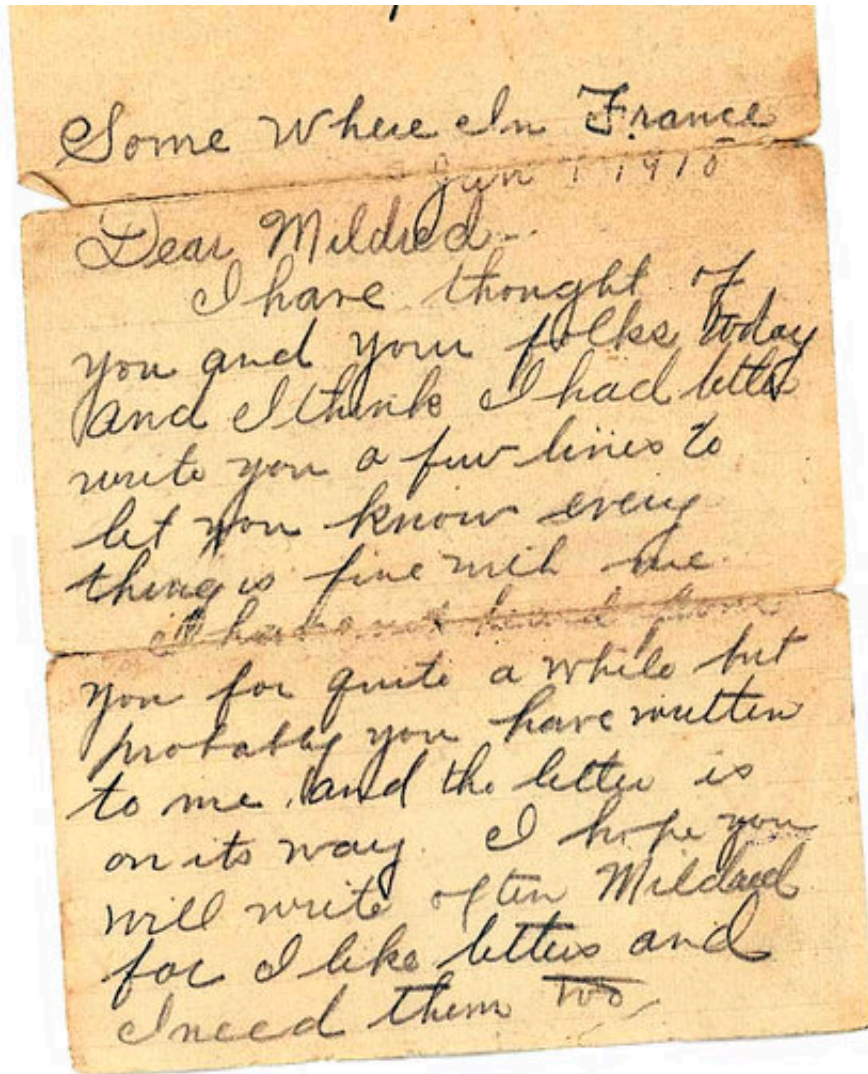
The project also allows those who own the objects to learn more about their relatives who served in the war.

In 1919, the state library also became the state's Department of War Records. Librarian George Goddard took that role very seriously, and began gathering everything he could get his hands on.

The library sent out questionnaires to every Connecticut resident who served in the war, recording their experiences and thoughts on war. Those are all on file with the state and those attending the digitization events can get help looking up the information.

The preservation efforts are important, Isleib said, because they put faces and personal stories to an abstract history lesson about a war that not many understand.

"This is our inheritance and our future generation's inheritance," he said. "These stories make up who we are as Americans."



This June 1918 photo provided by Rick Maynard of Guilford, Conn., shows a letter sent by his great uncle Sgt. Paul Maynard to his family from France during World War I. Rick Maynard found the letter in a basement and is having it and other World War I items he found digitally preserved with the help of the Connecticut State Library, which is in the midst of a project to archive artifacts from the war. (Rick Maynard via AP)

Bernice McNeil, of North Haven, said it was a way to make sure that when she is gone, others will remember the sacrifice of her uncle, Robert Remington, who was killed in 1918 at the age of 18 in

Seicheprey, France.

"These men and women should be recognized," she said. "He served our country and he died for this country, protecting our freedom."

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