

Corporal Montgomery Schuyler Batdorf

Supplement to *The Great War Touches The Church of St. Michael and All Angels*

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Some deeds must not die – some names must not wither

I could find only sparse information on Corporal Montgomery Schuyler Batdorf at the time I wrote The Great War Touches The Church of St. Michael and All Angels. As a result, the book did not give Cpl. Batdorf the amount of coverage he deserved. In late October 2018, I discovered additional information on Cpl. Batdorf at the Missouri History Museum's Library and Research Center. This supplement to the book documents for the record that additional information.

Early Years

HARRY BATDORF was born near Dayton, Ohio on 15 February 1868. He married Ellen Charlotte Rood (b. 29 May 1874, probably in Pennsylvania) in Saint

Louis, Missouri about June 1893. Harry was twenty-five years old, and Ellen was nineteen years old at the time of their marriage. Their only child, Montgomery Schuyler Batdorf, the subject of this paper, was born on 5 November 1894 in Saint Louis.

Ellen died 12 February 1897 of phthisis pulmonalis, a tuberculosis of the lungs with progressive wasting of the body. Montgomery was only two years and three months old when he lost his mother. The family was living at 914 Whittier Street in Saint Louis at the time of Ellen's death. The home still exists at the time of this writing.

Harry married Laura Dot Hoffman (b. 10 March 1881 in Richmond, Indiana) on 26 March 1900. Harry was thirty-two years old; Laura was thirteen years younger. The new nineteen-year-old bride inherited a five-year-old stepson with the marriage. They lived at 736 North Euclid Avenue in Saint Louis. The home still exists as of this writing. Harry was working as a building contractor.

Harry's and Laura's marriage apparently ended within months of its beginning, and the thirty-two-year-old Harry married a twenty-four-year-old woman named May (b. 1876 in Kentucky) immediately after his marriage to Laura had ended. (The 1910 census reports that Harry and May had been married ten years.) Sometime between 1900 and 1910, Harry and May moved from Saint Louis, for they were living at 415 Liberty Street in Morris, Illinois, about thirty miles southwest of Chicago, in 1910. The home no longer exists as of this writing. Harry was working as a traveling salesman for a leather distribution company. Harry's fifteen-year-old son, Montgomery, was not living with them. What had become of him?

Harry's third marriage to May ended sometime between 1910 and 1920, for in 1920 he was living with his fourth wife, Hettie (b. abt. 1871 in Pennsylvania), at 2506 Jefferson Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where Harry was working as a paperhanger. The home no longer exists as of this writing.

A Missouri Soldiers Biographical Questionnaire was created for each veteran of the Great War in 1919, and they are still maintained by the Adjutant Generals' office. The information on Montgomery's questionnaire includes a handwritten note that reads, "Adopted by aunt, mother's sister, Mrs. H. C. O'Rear; parents dead; 6105 Pershing Avenue [in Saint Louis]." Why had the O'Rears adopted Montgomery, and when?

The story above about Montgomery's father indicates he may not have been an ideal father. His life seems to have been unsettled. After the death of Ellen, his first wife and Montgomery's mother, Harry married Laura who had just turned nineteen years of age. Montgomery was only five years old at the time. The marriage ended after only a few months, and Harry immediately married his third wife, May, a woman eight years younger. The closeness in time of these two marriages implies the possibility of infidelity or some other serious problem in the relationship.

Montgomery's aunt, Julia *Rood* O'Rear (b. 6 January 1877 in Pennsylvania) was the sister of his mother, Ellen, who died in February 1897 when Montgomery was only three years old. Harry would not marry again for three years, and Julia may have kept Montgomery during the days while Harry worked. Julia and her husband, Henry Clyde O'Rear (b. 24 October 1876 in Linneus, Missouri and called "Clyde") may have approached Harry about adopting Montgomery for the

benefit of Montgomery as well as Harry. Or Harry may have broached the topic of adoption with the O'Rears, saying he was unable to provide adequate parental care and supervision for Montgomery. In any event, the O'Rears adopted Montgomery sometime after June 1900, probably late that year when Harry's brief second marriage to Laura ended and was followed immediately by his third marriage to May. Upon Montgomery's adoption, the O'Rears became his parents and raised him to adulthood.

Clyde O'Rear was twenty-four years old and single in 1900. He was living as a boarder with the Adam G. Torrance family at 3676B Russell Avenue in Saint Louis (the multi-family building still exists) and working as a dry goods clerk. He married Julia in 1905 when he was twenty-nine years old and she was twenty-five years old. In 1910, they were living at 1339 Temple Place in Saint Louis (the residence still exists). Clyde appears to have been an industrious type, for he had risen in less than ten years from a dry goods clerk to the owner and president of the Myles Millinery Company located at 413 North Seventh Street and the millinery department at The Bedell Company's St. Louis specialty shop. He also had a connection with the Century Millinery Company located at 615 North Broadway Street. The fifteen-year-old Montgomery was living with the O'Rears in 1910.

Sometime between 1910 and 1917, the O'Rears and Montgomery moved to 6105 Pershing Avenue in Skinker-DeBaliviere neighborhood of Saint Louis. The building remains as a condominium complex as of this writing.

We saw above that Montgomery's father, Harry, was still living in 1930 (his eventual date and place of death is unidentified), yet the O'Rears were the source of information

in 1919 for Montgomery's Soldiers Biographical Questionnaire mentioned above because, as we shall soon see, Montgomery was killed in the Great War. They reported that both his parents were dead, implying his two parents' deaths to have been the reason for his adoption. It seems probable that they had no love or admiration for Harry and considered him dead as far as a being a father to Montgomery was concerned. Perhaps Harry had no further contact with Montgomery after Harry left Saint Louis between 1900 and 1910. The O'Rears no doubt perceived themselves as having been Montgomery's parents who had raised him, and reporting things this way simplified the information on the questionnaire without raising a topic that might have required a lot of explaining they wanted to avoid.

Clyde died 29 June 1930 and Julia died on 22 April 1939 in Saint Louis. Both are buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in the Kirkwood area of Saint Louis.

School Years

Montgomery began his schooling at the Eugene Field School located at 4466 Olive Street just east of North Taylor Avenue. The school, constructed in 1901, was designed by the renowned school architect William B. Ittner (1864–1936). It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992. The Saint Louis Public School System closed the school in 1995, but it was briefly reopened in 2001 to house students while air conditioning was being installed in their home schools. The school property was sold on 26 January 2005 to Central West End Revitalization for \$1.21 million and then redeveloped as the Field School Lofts containing thirty-six

apartments. It continues as an apartment building as of this writing.

Montgomery became a student at Soldan High School in January 1914. Soldan, constructed in 1907, also was designed by William B. Ittner and was located at 918 Union Boulevard about one mile north of the Jefferson Memorial Building that had been built the previous year in Forest Park. Today the Missouri History Museum occupies the building. The school was known during its construction as Union Avenue High School, but was renamed Soldan High School at its opening to honor Frank Louis Soldan (1842–1908), the superintendent of the Saint Louis Public School System from 1895 until his death. The land for the building cost \$10,000, and the construction of the building cost \$630,000.

The three-story building's design received praise from the United States Bureau of Education for its attention to detail and to the needs of students. The building had a capacity of 1,600 students and contained forty-one classrooms; twenty-three classrooms were each designed for forty-eight students, and eighteen classrooms were each designed for thirty-five students. The building had eighteen science demonstration rooms and laboratories to accommodate physiology, physiography, chemistry, botany, and physics classes. There were shops in the basement for woodworking, machining, and domestic science along with four art rooms with skylights for studio work and three mechanical drafting rooms. The auditorium was the largest in the Saint Louis Public School System up to that time, with a seating capacity of 1,750. The music room had a capacity for more than 300 students. There were two gymnasiums for physical education classes and activities. The school originally had two separate cafeterias for

male and female students. The practice of gender segregation at lunch would end in the late 1940s.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the school became widely known as the city's predominantly Jewish school, with students from several notable or wealthy Central West End families. Although the school remained open on Jewish holidays, it often had significantly lower attendance on those days.

During its early years, Soldan graduated several notable individuals, including William McChesney Martin Jr. (1906–1998), the longest-serving Chairman of the United States Federal Reserve, and Clark Clifford (1906–1998), a presidential adviser and United States Secretary of Defense. In 1922, Martin and Clifford were tennis doubles partners on the school's team. Tennessee Williams (1911–1983) attended the school during the 1920s, and Soldan received notability in the 1940s as the school attended by some of the characters in Williams's stage play *The Glass Menagerie* that premiered in 1944 and catapulted Williams from obscurity to fame.

In 1948, the school received students after the closure of nearby rival Blewett High School, which surprisingly was located only one block south of Soldan. After the merger, the school was briefly known as Soldan-Blewett; it returned to its original name in 1955. The school at this writing is a public magnet high school in the Academy neighborhood of Saint Louis that is part of the Saint Louis Public School System and is known as "Soldan International Studies High School."

During Montgomery's high school years, the Soldan yearbook, called *The Scrip*, was published by the students under the direction of the school's faculty. Montgomery's senior-year photo, shown on the next page, along with those

of other students, is on page 125 of Volume Eight, Number Three, published in January 1914, the month and year Montgomery graduated from high school. He had just turned nineteen years of age, a late age still to be in high school. It causes one to wonder if the seemingly unstable life of his early years and the circumstances of his adoption at a young age may have interfered with the normal progress of his schooling.



**MONTGOMERY
SCHUYLER BATDORF**
Sae gallant and sae gay a
swain

Class Play

There are two captions under each student's photograph in *The Scrip*, one saying something about the student's character or personal attributes, and one saying something about the student's school activities. The following two captions are under Montgomery's photograph shown above: "Sae gallant and sae gay swain," and "Class Play." The quote is the second line in Robert Burns's (1759–1796) song lyrics *Young Jamie, pride of a' the plain* written in 1794 and set to the tune *The Carlin of the Glen*.

Young Jamie, pride of a' the plain,
Sae gallant and sae gay a swain,
Thro' a' our lasses he did rove,
And reign'd resistless King of Love.

But now, wi' sighs and starting tears,
He strays amang the woods and breirs;
Or in the glens and rocky caves,
His sad complaining dowie raves:

“I wha sae late did range and rove,
And chang'd with every moon my love,
I little thought the time was near,
Repentance I should buy sae dear.

“The slighted maids my torments see,
And laugh at a' the pangs I dree;
While she, my cruel, scornful Fair,
Forbids me e'er to see her mair.”

Perhaps Montgomery's classmates saw him as one who
“Thro' a' our lasses he did rove / And reign'd resistless King
of Love.” He certainly had the good looks for it!

Civilian Work after High School

Montgomery graduated from Soldan in January 1914, about five months before war erupted in Europe. He went to work as an office clerk with the General Roofing Manufacturing Company in East Saint Louis, Illinois. The company, established in 1904, restructured, incorporated, and changed its name to the CertainTeed Products Corporation in 1917 and began trading on the New York Stock Exchange the following year. The corporation continues as of this writing as a North American manufacturer of building materials for

both commercial and residential construction and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Saint-Gobain SA, based in Paris.

Religious Affiliation

Montgomery may have been a cradle Episcopalian, or perhaps he became an Episcopalian at the time of his adoption if his adoptive parents were parishioners of an Episcopal church. We know he was a parishioner of The Church of St. Michael and All Angels at the time of his tragic death in September 1918, the circumstances of which we will review in the next section. It is possible he and the O'Rears were charter members of the church that had been founded six years earlier in 1912. Like his fellow parishioner Captain Alexander Rives Skinker (1883–1918) before him, Montgomery served as an assistant scoutmaster of the church's Boy Scout Troop 28. The story of Capt. Skinker is told in my book *The Great War Touches The Church of St. Michael and All Angels* self-published in October 2018.

The Great War

Montgomery enlisted in the Fifth Regiment of the Missouri National Guard in April 1917, the month that Congress declared war against Germany. He was twenty-two years old. He then enlisted in the army on 26 May 1917 and received his training at Camp Doniphan outside Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and then at Fort Sill.

Private Batdorf and Capt. Skinker trained at the same location at the same time. I do not know if the two men were in touch during their training. I would think fellow church

parishioners would have been aware or have been made aware by their families that they both were at the same training facility. The two men may have known one another as fellow parishioners of The Church of St. Michael and All Angels. However, they were separated in age by eleven years and their two families were not of similar financial means or prominence in the community, an indication that they may have socialized in different circles.

After his training, Pvt. Batdorf was promoted to the rank of corporal and transferred to Company M of the 138th Infantry Regiment of the 35th Division. Capt. Skinker was the commanding officer of Company I in this same Regiment, so the two men were closely associated organizationally although not by military rank.

On 3 May 1918, the entire 35th Division started across the Atlantic in sixteen transports, guarded by torpedo-boat destroyers and other naval vessels. A sharp lookout was kept, and no German boats attacked the fleet of transports.

After sixteen days at sea, the fleet passed around the north of Ireland and docked at the port of Liverpool, England. The men then went by rail to a camp at Winchester that is sixty-eight miles southwest of London and near the port at Southampton. There the Division rested two days and then crossed the Channel to France where it was first assigned to a position at Eu near the Channel coast in Normandy and then to a position in the Vosges Mountains in eastern France near its border with Germany.

The 138th Infantry Regiment was at St. Mihiel in northeastern France near its border with Belgium and Germany where a major battle was fought 12–15 September. This battle marked the first use of the terms “D-Day” and

“H-Hour” by the Americans. The battle was depicted in the 1927 silent film *Wings* that won the first Academy Award for Best Picture at the first annual Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences award ceremony in 1929. The Regiment was held in reserve and took no part in the battle.

The Regiment was then transferred a short distance to the region of the Argonne, a long strip of rocky mountain and wild woodland in northeastern France near its border with Belgium. The Regiment marched principally by night through wooded country to avoid enemy airplanes. Capt. Skinker’s Company I and Cpl. Batdorf’s Company M of the Regiment were assigned to lead the attack of the 35th Division in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, better known today as the Battle of the Argonne Forest, which began on 26 September. The battle would be the largest frontline commitment of troops by the American Expeditionary Forces in the Great War, and also the deadliest. It would prove to be one of the decisive battles that produced the war’s eventual outcome.

At 5:30 in the morning on 26 September, the battle began as the Regiment rose out of their trenches and “went over the top,” led by Cpl. Batdorf’s Company M and Capt. Skinker’s Company I, with Capt. Skinker giving the order to advance. It was reported after the war to Capt. Skinker’s father, Thomas Keith Skinker (1845–1924), that Capt. Skinker gave the order in the same steady tone that he used on military parade.

Cpl. Batdorf’s Company M advanced farther than was expected, capturing Vauquois, Cheppy (where Capt. Skinker was killed), Very, and Charpentry. Company M next initiated an attack on Exermont, a commune in the Ardennes department in northern France near its border with Belgium. The Company advanced to near Bois de Montrebei three days

into the battle on 29 September where it encountered a heavy barrage of artillery fire. Cpl. Batdorf had just gone to the rear of his column to see that his men were safe and was returning to lead them when a shell burst only a few feet away, killing him instantly.

He met his death fighting with the same courage he had always shown as a soldier. One of his comrades wrote: "More than once he surmounted the many obstacles which he had to meet, sacrificing his own safety for the sake of the men under him. He made the supreme sacrifice that those whom he loved might have a better world in which to live."

Cpl. Batdorf's burial office, using the liturgy in the 1892 *Book of Common Prayer*, was conducted at The Church of St. Michael and All Angels at four o'clock on Sunday afternoon, 1 December 1918. One week earlier, at four o'clock on Sunday afternoon, 24 November, a burial office for Capt. Skinker had been conducted at the church. The two closely-spaced funerals must have added to the devastation felt at the simultaneous loss of these two young men of the parish.

Like many of his fallen comrades, Cpl. Batdorf's body was never returned home. His body and thousands of others were buried hastily where they had fallen in battle. Frank H. Simmons wrote a newspaper article published on 26 May 1919 that described the post-war preparation of military cemeteries in France as the final resting places for the bodies of fallen Americans. Mr. Simmons's article follows. I have taken a few minor editorial liberties.

"Decoration Day [now called "Memorial Day"] for Americans in Europe this year [30 May 1919] will have new

meaning. More than 50,000 of our soldiers are buried on French battlefields, and there is perhaps no American activity since the war which will more commend itself to the American people than the care and thought that have been expended in the preparation of American cemeteries in France. On this Decoration Day, the greatest military cemetery, so far as our country is concerned, will be opened with appropriate ceremonies in the very heart of the Kriemhilde Line at the little town of Romagne, memorable for the many divisions which fought in the Meuse-Argonne battle. There a cemetery will be dedicated where 26,000 Americans will be buried.

“For many months thousands of men have been engaged in preparing this cemetery. The great Meuse-Argonne battle of September last year [1918] covered an area of nearly 1,000 square miles. There nearly 30,000 Americans were killed or subsequently died of wounds. They were buried hastily on the field of honor, and one may still find American graves scattered over this country. As I traveled the other day from Stenay to Varennes across many miles of American front, I saw scores and scores of these scattered graves, one of the clear evidences of our victory and of our sacrifice.

“After the armistice was signed on 11 November 1918, the army adopted the wise policy of concentrating its dead, and in the little town of Romagne preparations were made for gathering all Americans who had fallen over the vast area between Argonne and the Meuse. Within a few months the task will be completed, and on a pleasant hillside on the ground which they won, and in the midst of what was for Americans the greatest battle in her history, 26,000 soldiers will be buried.

“On this Decoration Day, 30 May 1919, Romagne Cemetery is to be opened and, with the aid of French inhabitants in many adjoining villages, the graves of the American soldiers in all the various battlefields are to be decorated.

“In making the cemetery at Romagne, work has included not merely the moving of 26,000 bodies, but also the task of identifying many hastily buried bodies where they fell in the press of battle. Almost without exception, thanks to the devotion of the officers engaged in the task, identification has been made, and for the future the graves of these men will be marked.

“Romagne Cemetery in the future, like those in St. Mihiel and in Chateau-Thierry, will be a place of American pilgrimages. Today, one can reach these American cemeteries only by car, but in all areas where American soldiers fought and fell, American units are stationed and are working carefully and successfully. Neither the French nor the British, in the main, because of the greatness of their task by comparison, have yet been able to spare men for their graveyards, and so the care of the graves of the soldiers has in a very large degree fallen upon the people of the regions in which the fighting took place. All over France, no matter how devastated the region, one will find American, British, and French graves cared for with equal tenderness by the people of the countryside.

“It is the plan and hope of Americans in France that no grave of an American soldier will remain undecorated on this Decoration Day. Thanks to the French peasants, this result will probably be achieved. But I know of no more moving or perhaps saddening impression than one may still have in

riding along the remote roads of the Argonne and Meuse country and seeing the scattered graves of so many soldiers on the shell-torn hillsides. There is a certain loneliness almost impossible to describe, a loneliness which in a sense has been the portion of American soldiers in Europe from the beginning, a loneliness shared only by the Australians and Canadians.

“It will be impossible, now or hereafter, to reproduce in France the moving ceremonies that will take place in every American city and village on Decoration Day this year. The American dead in France are not to be forgotten, and for the future they are to sleep in cemeteries which will have all of the appeal and something of the beauty of Arlington.”

Today, Cpl. Batdorf is buried, along with 14,245 of his fallen comrades, at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery near Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, France in Plot E, Row 3, Grave 32. This is the cemetery described by Mr. Simmons as the “Romagne cemetery” in his newspaper article above. It is a stark reminder that many families did not have the emotional closure of a burial at home for their loved ones lost in the war.

A plaque in memory of Cpl. Batdorf is affixed to the south wall of the nave of The Church of St. Michael & St. George and is shown on the next page. The plaque notes that he fell at Exermont in northern France, not far from where Capt. Skinker fell just three days earlier. The plaque also notes that he was “a gallant soldier” and a “Christian gentleman.” A photograph of Cpl. Batdorf in uniform is on the last page of this paper.

Honoring the Veterans and the Fallen after the War

Extensive efforts were undertaken to honor the veterans of the war, with special attention given to the men who had paid the supreme sacrifice. The United States Congress passed an act in July 1919 providing that a record of service for each soldier, sailor, and marine who served between 6 April 1917 and 11 November 1919 be created and furnished to the adjutants general of the individual states. Other ways of memorializing the veterans quickly materialized.



A Memorial Tablet Honor Roll Committee of St. Louis and St. Louis County and a Mortality Committee of the Missouri Historical Society were formed. The two committees joined to work as one committee to compile a record of all the sons of Saint Louis and Saint Louis County who had given their lives in the service of the country and allied nations. The committee pledged to continue the work until the last man was home and mustered out of duty.

The name, age, title, and service records of each man were to be placed on tablets. Photographs and detailed records

were to be the property of the Missouri Historical Society for future reference.

The committee sent a personal card of sympathy to every mother or near relative of those who had died. The note bore the following words:

Memorial Tablet Honor Roll Committee of
St. Louis and St. Louis County
extend their sincere sympathy
to

in their great sorrow.

MRS. BEN F. GRAY, Chairman

A simultaneous request was sent asking the near relative to write the full name of the man who had died, whether he was enlisted or drafted, when and where, his title, his branch of service, where he was trained, whether or not he went overseas, the date of his wounds or death, and the name and address of his next of kin. These cards have been retained by the Missouri Historical Society along with a more detailed biography and service record for each man.

A memorial service for soldiers of Saint Louis and Saint Louis County who died in the war was held on Art Hill in Forest Park at 1:00 o'clock on Sunday afternoon, 15 June 1919. The program included music and brief addresses. The city was represented by Mayor Henry W. Kiel (1871–1942). The Very Reverend Carroll Max Davis (ca. 1858–1932), Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, delivered the invocation. He had served in France during the war as a chaplain for the Red Cross. Rabbi Leon Harrison (1886–1928) and the Rev.

Thomas D. Kennedy (b. 1884), a Roman Catholic priest and the 138th Regiment's senior divisional chaplain who had gone to Europe with the Regiment, also were present. The Jefferson Barracks Band played, and there were solos and community singing.

Volume Nineteen, Number Three of *The Scrip* published in June 1919 was devoted to the students of Soldan High School who lost their lives in the Great War. The extensive coverage is indicated by the Contents page of the publication that is shown on the next page. The names of twenty alumni are listed, arranged as was common in the day in the chronological order of their deaths, without regard to their military or social rank.

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A page was given to each of the school's twenty alumni who lost their lives in the war. Cpl. Batdorf's page follows.



Montgomery Schuyler Batdorf



MONTGOMERY SCHUYLER BATDORF was born in St. Louis November 5, 1894. In January, 1910, he entered Soldan, graduating in January, 1914.

At the outbreak of the war in April, 1917, he enlisted in the old Fifth Regiment and received his training first at Camp Doniphan and then at Fort Sill. He was transferred to Company M, 138th Infantry, and promoted to the rank of Corporal. In April, 1918, he was sent overseas.

On September 26, his company went over the top in the battle of Argonne Forest. The advance was far beyond expectations and after capturing Vauquois, Cheppy, Very and Charpentry, the attack was begun on the town of Exermont. As the company was advancing just before the Bois de Montrebeau, on September 29, it was necessary to cross through a terrific barrage of shell fire. Corporal Batdorf had just gone to the rear of his column to see that his men were safe and was returning to lead them, when a high explosive shell burst only a few feet from him. His death was instantaneous. He met it as he had fought, squarely facing Germany, with the high courage which he had always shown as a soldier. One of his comrades wrote: "More than once he surmounted the many obstacles which he had to meet, sacrificing his own safety for the sake of the men under him. He made the supreme sacrifice that those whom he loved might have a better world in which to live."

At Soldan he is remembered for his quiet and courteous bearing, his fine instinct, and his direct, manly character. His life was worthy of the cause for which he died.

—Rosalind Isaacs.

The last paragraph of Cpl. Batdorf's page in *The Scrip* reads:

At Soldan he is remembered for his quiet and courteous bearing, his fine instinct, and his direct, manly character. His life was worthy of the cause for which he died.

Soldan High School soldiers who donned the khaki of the army or the blue of the navy during the Great War were honored at memorial exercises on Thursday morning, 29 May 1919, in the school auditorium, the day preceding Decoration Day. A memorial tablet, on which was inscribed the names of the twenty Soldan alumni killed in the war, was unveiled at the ceremony.

The program, held under the auspices of the school's senior class, was extensive and consisted of twenty music numbers and addresses. Soldan students currently serving in the military or who recently had been discharged were invited to attend the program in uniform. Mr. John Rush Powell (1874–1951), the school's principal, offered an address.

The Soldan Orchestra played and the Soldan Glee Club, together with other soloists, rendered a variety of vocal selections appropriate to the occasion.

Mr. Lloyd J. Speed (b. ca. 1900), who had been a member of the 128th Infantry Regiment, unveiled a memorial tablet that was designed by Ms. Rose Evelyn Fitch (b. 1878), an art teacher at the school. Ms. Fitch was a graduate of Washington University's School of Fine Arts and had been recognized "with honors" in the category of Life Class in

Black and White while a student in 1898–1899. The tablet’s words and format are depicted below:

IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY
THESE BOYS OF SOLDAN HIGH SCHOOL
DIED FOR LIBERTY □ JUSTICE □ AND
PEACE □ □ □ ERECTED MAY □ 30 □
1919

ROBERT MARSHALL CUTTER	GUY WENTWORTH SELDEN
CHARLES CABANNE CRAILIE	HAWES DENZIL DAVIS
JOHN FRANCIS QUINN	OLIVER CARTTER SHANDS
RUSSELL RIGGS	ORVILLE CHARLES TRITSCHLER
DAVID KENNETT PEERS	MONTGOMERY SCHUYLER BATDORF
EDWARD POWELL THOMAS	EATON WALTER BLICKHAHN
MILTON GRAHL MILLER	EDWIN ALFRED RUWELER
MAURICE DOUGLAS CLASSEN	DAVID SUSMAN
STIMSON WEBB GODDARD	CHARLES HARRELL HEWARD
CHARLES O’NEILL	HENRY MURRAY WILLIAMS

ONCE MORE WE SHALL MAKE GOOD WITH OUR LIVES
AND FORTUNES THE GREAT FAITH TO WHICH WE
WERE BORN, AND A NEW GLORY SHALL SHINE IN
THE FACE OF OUR PEOPLE □ □ □ WOODROW
WILSON

I suspect the tablet remains affixed today to the school’s interior wall where it was initially mounted. If not, I hope it is in the possession of the Soldiers’ Memorial Military Museum in downtown Saint Louis that originally opened on Memorial Day, 30 May 1928, to honor the veterans of the Great War.

The museum reopened on 3 November 2018 after an extensive \$30 million renovation and restoration, just in time for the commemoration of the centenary of the signing of the armistice on 11 November 1918 that ended the Great War.

Some deeds must not die – some names must not wither

Epilogue

Cpl. Batdorf had an uncle—the brother of his father, Harry—named Edwin Batdorf (1853–1927). His colorful military career is told by P. Åmick, a military historian.¹

The Missouri National Guard has struggled with its unique politics due to a blending of both state and federal authorities. The organization has labored to maintain its distinction as the state militia, which has led to some curious situations. It is evident in a conflict between a former state governor and the late Colonel Edwin Batdorf during the Spanish-American War.

Born near Dayton, Ohio on 4 October 1853, Batdorf moved to Kansas in 1871, where his father operated a hotel. Years later, the 28 July 1898 edition of the *Newton Daily Republican*, published in Newton, Kansas, reported that the young Batdorf had moved to Saint Louis to clerk in a hotel and “afterward engaged in the commission business.”

In addition to working fulltime, Batdorf became a private in the Missouri National Guard’s First Regiment located in St. Louis and quickly rose through the ranks to become an officer. The budding officer soon discovered, however, that military organizations were subject to funding uncertainties originating from the state capitol in Jefferson City.

“On 23 May 1887, the First Regiment was disbanded owing to the fact that the State Legislature failed to provide for its support,” notes the 1934 book titled *History of the*

¹ <https://www.warhistoryonline.com/guest-bloggers/battles-batdorf-career-late-national-guard.html> (accessed 25 October 2018).

Missouri National Guard. The book adds, “In the late summer of 1887, through the efforts of Lieutenant Edwin Batdorf, a battalion was organized, which was later expanded into a regiment and became the First Regiment, National Guard of Missouri.”

After becoming colonel on 21 June 1893, Batdorf (who is pictured at the right) did not enjoy a peaceful tenure in uniform and his reputation was scarred by altercations with the state leadership over his vocalized concerns, the most notable relating to the formation of the Missouri National Guard Association.

During the meeting that formed the association in January 1897, Adjutant General of the Missouri National Guard, Brigadier General Joseph Wickham, became the



1 Lt. Edwin Batdorf, early in his military career
organization’s chairman. As noted in the 3 January 1897 edition of the *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch*, it was proposed that the colonels of the state’s (then) four regiments and the captains of the two artillery batteries serve as vice-presidents.

Col. Batdorf “at once took violent objection to it on the grounds that Battery A, which had only seventy members, was awarded as great a representation as the First Regiment,

with its membership of 700,” the newspaper explained. Following this incident, Batdorf and many officers of the First Regiment chose to boycott the newly formed association.

The expression of Batdorf’s concerns certainly did not endear him to state authorities but the arrival of a major mobilization of troops the following year would provide him yet another opportunity to distance himself from any favor with both the adjutant general and governor.

As noted in the 1939 edition of the *National Guard Historical Annual, State of Missouri*, during the Spanish-American War, Missouri was given the allotment of 5,000 volunteers as part of the president’s call for 125,000 volunteers on 22 April 1898, one day following Congress’ resolution of war with Spain.

The First Regiment became one of six Missouri regiments along with a light battery of artillery mobilized during the conflict. Col. Batdorf and the men of the First Regiment mustered into federal service at Jefferson Barracks on 13 May 1898 and then left their St. Louis assembly site on 19 May 1898, bound for Camp George H. Thomas at Chickamauga Park, Georgia.

Despite the rather lackluster circumstances the regiment experienced while at camp in Georgia, any privations they were forced to endure were overshadowed in the newspapers by altercations between Batdorf and Missouri Governor Laurence “Lon” Vest Stephens (1858–1923).

Appointed as an acting brigadier general during the greatest part of his Spanish-American War service, Batdorf and several officers of First Regiment quickly drew the ire of

the Missouri's governor when they refused to accept officer commissions issued by the governor.

Gov. Stephens received more unwanted news when Secretary of War Russell Alexander Alger (1836–1907) submitted a ruling essentially nullifying the state commissions and affirming “the regiments were to remain as mustered in from the Stated Guards,” as reported by the *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch* on 16 June 1898.

Months later, the First Regiment returned to Saint Louis, never having left the United States during the brief war. It was at this time Gov. Stephens gained somewhat of a victory over Batdorf when he reorganized the regiment and excluded Batdorf from the new command structure.

Batdorf again set the newspapers abuzz when he filed suit against the governor, seeking \$50,000 in damages because of a “number of interviews with Gov. Stephens printed in various newspapers of Saint Louis reflecting [unfavorably] upon Col. Batdorf as an officer and a gentleman,” wrote the *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch* on 21 September 1899.

The lawsuit was later dismissed and the colonel faded from public light until 1903, at which time Adjutant General W. T. Dameron, following the expiration of Gov. Stephens's term, added Batdorf's name to the honorary roll of retired officers of the Missouri National Guard.

In the years after his release from the National Guard, Batdorf's life gained some semblance of normalcy as the married father of one son served as treasurer for the former Forest City Building Company in Saint Louis.

The retired colonel received further recognition in 1920, seven years prior to his death, when Adjutant General Harvey C. Clark (1869–1921) issued him a special medal authorized

by the Missouri Legislative Assembly for the state's veterans of the Spanish-American War.

Col. Batdorf died at the age seventy-three on 14 January 1927 at the Westgate Hotel in Saint Louis (the hotel no longer exists) and was laid to rest in his native state of Ohio. Though much of his embattled service with the National Guard has been forgotten, the words of another Missouri governor twenty years following Batdorf's death stressed the importance of preserving the state's military legacy, however controversial.

In a letter to the 49th Annual National Encampment of the United Spanish War Veterans in 1947, Gov. Phillip Matthew "Phil" Donnelly (1891–1961) stated, "We revere the memory of the men who volunteered in Missouri Regiments in the Spanish-American War," adding, "[and] I am sure the pages of history will record your services, and the campaigns in which you engaged."



1894 Montgomery S. Batdorf 1918
Cpl. Co M 138 Inf 35 Div