

MAJOR GENERAL ASHER MINER

CITIZEN-SOLDIER WORLD WAR 1

WHEN?
1860-1924

VOCABULARY
Artillery battery, Victory gardens, Kaiser, trench warfare liberty bonds



EVENT
World War I

WHERE?
Wilkes-Barre to France

The driver made a left when he should have turned right to get to his destination. Simple mistake but the driver's car had the Archduke Franz Ferdinand heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne and his wife as passengers. When the driver pulled to stop in front of a small shop in Sarajevo, Gavril Princip stepped out from the shop, walked up to the car and shot the Archduke. Over four years of war engulfing the nations of Europe, Middle East, and the United States resulted. It was 1914, twenty million people would die in the conflict.

President Woodrow Wilson had been elected in 1912 and knew this conflict would be protracted and costly. He sent emissaries to the various countries to try to work out a peace agreement but to no avail. The Austro-Hungarians wanted to make the Serbians pay dearly but the treaties with Russia, Great Britain, and France pulled against the agreements between the Germans, Turkish Ottoman Empire, and the Austro-Hungarians. Peace was swept aside.

Wilson's two-year effort to avoid war ended as the new German weapon—the Unterseeboot—the U-boat or submarine began to take a terrible toll sinking millions of tons of shipping threatening the food and supplies lifeline to Britain from the U.S. Russia had been knocked out of the war, France had fallen to the powerful German army and Britain was alone. That forced Wilson and Congress to declare war—the War to End All Wars—the fight to save democracy now included the U.S. in April 1917.



Our allies, Britain and France needed food so we planted victory gardens to raise food for ourselves so that 20 million tons of processed foods could be sent overseas by 1919. Liberty bonds were sold to raise money and 6,000 men from Luzerne County volunteered. When the draft was enacted, 22,000 more signed with some branch of the military (Harvey 2214).

One of the local units organized was the 109th Field Artillery. It had a long service since it started as the 24th Connecticut Regiment

formed 17 October 1775--before the American Revolution. Miner was appointed as commander of the unit about to be sent to war.

Miner was born in 1860 in Wilkes-Barre to Charles Abbott Miner and Eliza Ross Atherton. He graduated from Wilkes-Barre Academy, then Willison Seminary in Massachusetts (Archives) finishing at the Harry Hillman Academy in Wilkes-Barre. (Both the Wilkes-Barre and Harry Hillman Academies became part of Wyoming Seminary.) He followed his father's lead into business and became the president of the Miner-Hillard Milling Company. The company was founded in 1795 making it the oldest in the area, and it was also the largest grain milling and cereal production company in Pennsylvania. It was located in Miner's Mills (adjacent to Wilkes-Barre) which is named for the family (WB Preservation). He married Hetty McNair Lonsdale in 1889 and the couple had five children.

When the Spanish-American War broke out, he led the 7th Infantry Regiment of the N.G.P.—the National Guard of Pennsylvania into the fray. Later he served as the commanding officer of the 3rd Field Artillery under General Pershing along the Mexican border during the hunt for Pancho Villa. He continued his service as leader of the 109th Field Artillery in France during World War 1.

The conflict in Europe would be larger in scope than what any of the men had seen before. The men boarded the "Justica" arriving in France in early June of 1918 (Harvey 2213). Though the war would end in November the men saw combat at Oise-Argonne, Ypres-Lys, Meuse Argonne, Champagne, Lorraine. Originally the unit was infantry, but it was converted to horse-drawn artillery as the U.S. entered the war. During a battle near Apremont, Ardennes, one of the batteries under Miner's command was ordered to move forward which they did but suffered from heavy shelling from the enemy. The intensity of the fighting was such that Colonel Miner personally went to the unit and directed them to a new position. He was wounded numerous times during this assault on his position. One shell blew off the lower portion of his right leg. He continued to direct his men until he lost consciousness. That ended his wartime service.



However, that did not end his ventures into business. He served on the board of directors for numerous organizations and business including Wyoming National Bank and the Matheson Motor Car Company located in Forty Fort. He also served in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from 1907 to 1909 (Archives). On September 2, 1924, Miner died at age 64 after an operation for a ruptured appendix. He was buried in Hollenback Cemetery.

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