

Home Away from Home: The *Camp Dodger* Newspaper and the Promotion of Troop Morale, 1917–1919

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CAMP DODGE, a military installation in Johnston, Iowa, which was originally conceived in 1907 as a place for National Guard units to train, assumed an iconic status in Iowa's military history as a regional training center, serving both world wars. During World War I, 111,462 soldiers, including 37,111 Iowans, entered the U.S. Army at Camp Dodge. To address the needs of those soldiers, camp leadership organized and published the *Camp Dodger*, a weekly newspaper.¹

The *Camp Dodger* first appeared on September 21, 1917, as an official publication of the 88th Infantry Division with Laurence R. Fairall, a former newspaperman, serving as editor. The quality and content of the *Camp Dodger* soon earned it a favorable reputation, and it became one of the "proudest boasts" of the 88th Infantry. By the end of the war, the editorial team was publishing two versions of the *Camp Dodger* at once, one out of Camp Dodge and a second version out of Gondrecourt, France; the latter allowed the newspaper to "bring the daily life of these men [the 88th in France] to thousands of homes in every part of America from which they came." The *Infantry Journal* referred to the overseas version of the *Camp Dodger* as the "most unique in the history of American newspapering."²

1. *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War (1917–1919)*, vol. 3, part 1 (Washington, DC, 1949), 405, 870.

2. "By Overseas Camp Dodger News Service," *Infantry Journal* 15 (June 1918–July 1919), 796–98.

World War I newspapers from individual training camps in the United States have received little scholarly attention, perhaps because of their fleeting nature.³ Individual camp newspapers were also overshadowed by *The Stars and Stripes*, an official organ of the U.S. military that started in 1861 and is still in existence today, including a modern electronic format. Historian Alfred E. Cornebise writes, "To the social and cultural historian, in particular, the paper is valuable help in conjuring up the spirit of its age in a most interesting and satisfactory fashion."⁴ That observation also applies to the *Camp Dodger*, which is worthy of close examination not only because it shows the "spirit of the age," but also for how it promoted and carried out the War Department's goals at a local level, while showing the relation of the camp to the surrounding region.

Historical analysis of the *Camp Dodger* reveals the unique qualities that allowed it to gain rave reviews, shows how it served as a network that linked the soldiers and their civilian families and fostered the re-establishment of social ties for the soldiers, and provides information about mobilization on the home front and, later, the organization of American soldiers on the front in France. Ultimately, such analysis supports the conclusion that America entered World War I slowly and cautiously. That slow and cautious approach is reflected not only in the United States' relatively late entry into the war in April 1917 but also in the meticulous process of mobilization. Despite French and English pleas to send American soldiers straight to the front lines under

3. A literature on trench newspapers exists, including Robert L. Nelson's comparative article "Soldier Newspapers: A Useful Source in the Social and Cultural History of the First World War and Beyond," in *War in History* 17 (2010), 167–91. Nelson has also extensively covered the importance of German soldier newspapers during World War I in *German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2014).

4. Alfred E. Cornebise, *The Stars and Stripes: Doughboy Journalism in World War I* (Westport, CT, 1984), xii. *The Stars and Stripes* did not have a continuous run between the Civil War and World War I, but rather re-established itself on February 8, 1918, for a 71-week run. Cornebise has also covered the history of Armed Forces newspapers throughout American history in *Ranks and Columns: Armed Forces Newspapers in American War* (Westport, CT, 1993); for his account of a specific paper in the post-World War I German occupation, see *The Aramoc News: The Daily Newspaper of the American Armed Forces in Germany, 1919–1923* (Carbondale, IL, 1981).

foreign command, the United States mobilized slowly and insisted that American soldiers serve under American commanders. Thus, the majority of American soldiers did not see action in the war until 1918.⁵

The unique and thorough quality of the *Camp Dodger* underscores the meticulous nature of American mobilization and sheds light on the values military organizers brought to the mobilization effort and care of American soldiers overseas, with soldier comfort and social engagement at the forefront of the organizers' goals. An analysis of the *Camp Dodger* also highlights the role of the various auxiliary and service organizations, along with private groups and individuals that were part of the process, including the YMCA and the Knights of Columbus, as well as athletes like world wrestling champion Earl Caddock and *Des Moines Register* employees Ruth Stewart and Irving Brant.

WHEN THE UNITED STATES ENTERED THE WAR, the War Department confronted a number of organizational and philosophical questions related to the recruitment and training of American soldiers. With little previous experience in the decades leading up to the war, "the U.S. Army was little prepared for the massive organizational and bureaucratic demands that President Wilson's commitment to an all-out war imposed upon them," according to historian Thomas M. Canfield. As a result, "proposals for improving the morale and fighting efficiency of the armed forces would languish unexamined and unexplored until these more immediate problems had been resolved."⁶

The moral conduct of soldiers received top priority. Although the authors of *Keeping Our Fighters Fit for War*, written with the cooperation of the War and Navy Departments Commissions on Training Camp Activities, argued that "the prevalence of disease that results from personal immorality has been a problem in hygiene as long as history has been recorded," the War Department focused on the lessons learned from two recent episodes. The

5. There were some exceptions. For example, the 1st Infantry Division occupied positions at the front during the fall of 1917, resulting in the first three U.S. combat deaths, including that of Iowan Merle D. Hay on November 3, 1917.

6. Thomas N. Canfield, "'Will to Win' – The U.S. Army Troop Morale Program of World War I," *Military Affairs* 41 (October 1977), 125.

most often cited recent episode was the American mobilization at the Mexican border in 1916, where “an ingrowing staleness and tendency to mental and moral disintegration” was soon apparent. Authorities also drew on action already associated with the European war, noting, “Since 1914 this casually evaded problem has been brought sharply to the front because of its vital bearing upon military efficiency. The devastating influences of venereal disease and alcohol upon the fighting effectiveness of armies in the past has been demonstrated in a pitilessly cold light by the figures of bulletless casualties of both Entente and Teutonic forces.” As a result, Secretary of War Newton Baker spoke of the importance not only of arming and clothing the soldiers but also of giving them “invisible armor,” namely “a set of social habits replacing those of their homes and communities, a set of social habits and a state of social mind born in the training camps.”⁷ Home and community were key concepts in Baker’s vision. To realize that vision, he would rely on welfare auxiliary groups.

Shortly after the war historian Marcus Lee Hansen, best known for his work on the history of immigration and assimilation, published a book on welfare work in Iowa during World War I. In it, Hansen focused on the welfare agencies associated with Camp Dodge. “The presence of a National Army cantonment within the borders of this state,” he argued, “is the great outstanding feature in war-time Iowa. Everything that transpired within the lines of that camp is a vital part of Iowa’s war record.” “Indeed,” he pointed out, “when viewed as a concrete illustration of welfare activities in a typical training camp, the story of the welfare work at Camp Dodge has a national significance.” The *Camp Dodger*, he added, played an important role in that story, as it was “the one indispensable storehouse of current happenings at the welfare huts in the cantonment.”⁸

7. Edward Frank Allen and Raymond Fosdick, *Keeping Our Fighters Fit for War and After* (New York, 1918), 91, 191; Raymond Fosdick, “The War and Navy Department Commissions on Training Camp Activities,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 79 (1919), 130, 191; Newton D. Baker, *Frontiers of Freedom* (New York, 1918), 94–95.

8. Marcus Lee Hansen, *Welfare Work in Iowa: Iowa Chronicles of the World War* (Iowa City, 1921), x. Hansen established his reputation as a historian of immigration with his book *The Atlantic Migration, 1607–1860*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in history in 1941.

Echoing Baker, Hansen noted that as a result of the welfare work, soldiers “were protected from the evils of idleness and vice by an ‘invisible armor’ of social relationships and habits.” He underscored a key theme vital to the welfare agencies—the concepts of home and comfort. “The men in khaki and blue,” he wrote, “did not live by bread alone, nor were rifles and cannon their only implements in warfare. The knowledge that behind them was a nation interested in their comfort sustained them.”⁹

Such were the goals not only of the welfare agencies but also of the *Camp Dodger's* editor Laurence Fairall. Projecting a sense of home and comfort was the primary goal on the agenda of the *Camp Dodger*, which served as an intermediary between the welfare agencies and the soldiers of the camp and between the soldiers of the camp and the greater Des Moines community. As Fairall himself stated, “For those who do not come into the army versed in military things, the *Camp Dodger* hopes to be sort of a Big Brother, to help straighten out the hard knots.”¹⁰

THE *CAMP DODGER* was published weekly, beginning September 21, 1917. The first edition appeared as Camp Dodge was still under construction and housed only a few thousand men. The initial edition had a print run of only 1,000 copies, but soon the paper expanded as it became the official publication of the 88th Infantry Division.¹¹ Within a year of its initial publication, the *Camp Dodger* was printing 30,000 copies per week and appeared regularly as an eight- to twelve-page paper.

Laurence Fairall served as editor-in-chief. A graduate of the University of Iowa's class of 1917, he had honed his skills while a student working for the *Daily Iowan*, the *Clinton Advertiser*, and the *Hawkeye*, the latter a yearbook-like publication aimed at University of Iowa alumni. He also contributed to a weekly regimental newspaper while serving with an Iowa National Guard regiment in Texas during border trouble.¹² Following the war, Fairall combined his knowledge of the newspaper industry with promotional and

9. Hansen, *Welfare Work*, 1-2.

10. Laurence Fairall, “The Camp Dodger,” *Camp Dodger*, 9/21/1917, 2.

11. “How the Dodger Meets the Print Paper Situation,” *Camp Dodger*, 10/18/1918, 4.

12. “Camp Dodger Closes a Successful Year,” 9/13/1918, 1.

propaganda techniques learned while organizing the *Camp Dodger* to run a successful advertising agency in Des Moines.¹³

Early on, Fairall was aided by staff members who were also soldiers, splitting their time between work on the paper and their military duties. As the *Camp Dodger* expanded, Fairall called on a number of outside civilians, including *Des Moines Register* and *Des Moines Daily Capital* staff members Ruth Stewart, Dorothy Ashby, Irving N. Brant, and Edward S. Howes. Stewart's column, "Little Stories of Camp Dodge," featured the stories of individual men passing through Camp Dodge, such as the soldier who had already fought in four wars. Ashby, a reporter from the sob sister genre, covered masculine camp life from a woman's perspective, authoring articles such as "Building for Lady Visitors at Camp Dodge."¹⁴ The paper also used photographs and cartoons, with Sergeant R. H. Cook of Minneapolis snapping images throughout the camp with his camera. Fairall also relied on the sergeant-majors of regimental units who forwarded news from individual regiments. In addition, he regularly canvassed the offices of the division headquarters, visited the hospital and the various welfare buildings, and culled information from a variety of daily reports.

Within months of its first appearance, the *Camp Dodger* gained national attention and accolades. Writing in the *American Printer and Lithographer* in April 1918, H. Frank Smith referred to the *Camp Dodger* as the "first, biggest, and best of the army camp newspapers," noting that it "compares very favorably with the most efficient metropolitan papers." The *Army-Navy Defense Times* pointed out that "it has kept pace with the growth of the cantonment and today is probably the largest National Army newspaper in the country. In the few months it has been issued its growth has been equal to that requiring forty years in the case of a regular newspaper." While praising the *Camp Dodger* for its pro-

13. Articles related to Fairall's advertising agency are in box 1, Laurence Rankin Fairall Papers, Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City.

14. Dorothy Ashby, "Building for Lady Visitors at Camp Dodge," *Camp Dodger*, 10/19/1917, 2. For a biographical treatment of the career of Ashby, later Dorothy Ashby Pownall, and the sob sister genre, see Tracy Lucht, "From Sob Sister to Society Editor: The Storied Career of Dorothy Ashby Pownall," *Annals of Iowa* 75 (2016), 406-27.

fessional appearance, the professional journals also underscored its social significance, noting, "The new soldiers, especially some who had been separated from their friends and relatives for the first time on entering the Army, were lonesome, some homesickness prevailed." *The Fourth Estate*, a weekly trade journal aimed at publishers and advertisers, also highlighted one of Fairall's main goals, observing that the *Camp Dodger* "has served to cement more closely together the thousands of men in this big army division who at the start were strangers."¹⁵ In order to reach that goal, Fairall intentionally promoted re-establishing social ties throughout the camp.

ALMOST FROM THE START, the *Camp Dodger's* staff addressed issues of homesickness. On October 5, 1917, for example, poet E. S. Howes, who contributed poems throughout the paper's existence, wrote,

Alone in his dark corner
Rookie Jones did softly cry
He was longing for his mother
You remember, you and I
Scorned him with our lips upturning
"Be a man, brace up," we said
"No use pining here neglected,
Bust around like you expected
Folks to be your friends," we said
Still alone in his dark corner
Rookie Jones did softly cry,
And our own thoughts turned to mother
You remember, you and I
Put your arms around the Rookie
And we call him our own pal,
For we knew we too were weaklings,
And we too had heartache feelings
For our mothers — you and I.¹⁶

15. H. Frank Smith, "Many Army Camp Papers," *American Printer and Lithographer* 66 (April 5, 1918), 44; "The Camp Dodger," *Army-Navy Defense Times* 63 (April 6, 1918), 448; "Camp Journalism Successful," *The Fourth Estate: A Weekly Newspaper for Publishers, Advertisers, Advertising Agents, and Allied Interests*, 7/20/1918, 12.

16. E. S. Howes, "Poem," *Camp Dodger*, 10/5/1917, 2.

Marcus Lee Hansen also picked up on the theme, noting, "There were city boys, and there were country boys, yet none in the first strange days felt at home."¹⁷ Enlisting had severed association between the soldiers and their families and also cut soldiers off from previous leisure activities and familiar institutions and organizations from their hometowns. Fairall and his coworkers used the pages of the *Camp Dodger* to re-knit social ties. First, however, they were cognizant of keeping lines of communication open between Camp Dodge and home.

The *Camp Dodger* published a number of articles highlighting the importance of letters as a point of connection between camp and home. Fairall quoted General Edward H. Plummer, Commander of Camp Dodge, who urged soldiers and families to establish and maintain a two-way communication flow through letters. Well aware that stress and homesickness might easily appear in letters from soldiers, Plummer urged both sides to maintain a positive attitude when putting pen to paper. "The soldier in a momentary fit of homesickness or after an assignment of detail work, will write, exaggerating the awful state of his work . . . leaving his family and friends with the impression that he is always downcast and downtrodden." On the other hand, "The right sort of letters from home will do as much toward making the kind of soldier we want as any other single thing. . . . If those at home could only sense the feeling of pleased anticipation that an unopened letter from the home town brings, they would be more careful of the contents. Many of the soldiers carry a message about with them for several hours in an effort to prolong the surprise."¹⁸

Plummer's directions suggest that there was an audience for the *Camp Dodger* outside the cantonment. So, too, does an item in the *Bismarck Tribune*, which noted that Thomas H. Jenkins, an accredited representative of the *Camp Dodger*, was quite busy as "a majority of all the Slope's select service men have been sent to Camp Dodge, and Mr. Jenkins' North Dakota subscription list is growing rapidly."¹⁹ The *Daily Gate City and Constitution Democrat*

17. Hansen, *Welfare Work*, 30.

18. Laurence Fairall, "Soldiers at Camp Dodge Enjoy Long Letters That Are Full of Pleasantries," *Camp Dodger*, 11/9/1917, 1.

19. "Slope People Will Read the Camp Dodger," *Bismarck Tribune*, 5/25/1918, 1.

of Keokuk ran a story about a *Camp Dodger* contest to name the 88th Division. Lieutenant G. D. Foster's suggestion of "Hun-Huskers" won the contest, which was wildly popular. "Besides the [hundreds of] names turned into the Dodger by the soldiers at the cantonment, were a number sent by civilians in Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, Illinois, the states from which the selected men in the camp are from."²⁰ Popular civilian suggestions included "North Star Division" and "Vikings," the latter a result of the large Scandinavian representation at the camp.

For those without family members to correspond with, Fairall devised a scheme that was equal parts successful and out of control. On October 19, 1917, a banner headline announced, "Thousands of Girls Are Awaiting to Adopt Soldiers at Camp Dodge." The *Camp Dodger*, working in cooperation with the *Minneapolis Journal* and its Fighter's Bureau, recruited thousands of young women to correspond with Camp Dodge soldiers who had no family members available to boost their morale. According to Fairall, "Tens of thousands of girls are waiting to adopt the soldiers at Camp Dodge this fall—waiting to write letters, send candy, sweaters, and anything that the new national army men want." Fairall followed his enticing offer with instructions. "All a lonesome Camp Dodge soldier need do is drop a line to the editor of the *Camp Dodger* and his name will be sent off to one of these ten thousand girls. He may even specify whether he prefers a blonde or a brunette." Fairall promised, "A reply in the young lady's own handwriting may be expected within a week and, thereafter, just as often as the soldier himself cares to answer the letters." He concluded, "By their pledge, the girls have signified that they will take care of their soldier 'adoptees' as long as the war lasts, whether the 88th be in the trenches, or in some cantonment this side of the water."²¹

Although Fairall was prepared to make the promise, he was not prepared for what followed. Within a week of announcing the program, Fairall reported that the number of willing female participants had increased to more than 15,000, as "letters poured

20. "Hun-Huskers—Name Adopted for 88th Division—Contest Brings Numerous Suggestions," *Keokuk Daily Gate City and Constitution Democrat*, 2/6/1918, 1.

21. Laurence Fairall, "Thousands of Girls Are Awaiting to Adopt Soldiers at Camp Dodge," *Camp Dodger*, 10/19/1917, 2.

in in a constant stream. . . . By Thursday night every mail was bringing in an average of 300 letters seeking to take advantage of the bureau's offer." More than 2,000 men had already signed up for the project, overwhelming supplies of paper and envelopes. In addition, the young women of Des Moines wanted in on the project. The *Des Moines Tribune* stepped up to advertise and help coordinate the recruitment of young, female letter writers.

Immediately, however, caveats appeared in the description of the project, reminding the soldiers and young women that "the true aim . . . is to cheer and help the soldiers of the 88th Division—to drive away the blues, and make life a little more interesting." The organizers warned, "We are particularly anxious to avoid any suggestions of the Matrimonial Agency idea." In the following weeks, Fairall repeatedly added disclaimers while reporting on the overall success of the "adopt-a soldier" program. "Through a misconception of the original article relating to the Fighter's Service Bureau in the Camp Dodger several weeks ago, it is necessary that an explanation be published for the camp clearing up several hazy points. Many men to whom the Bureau had no idea of catering have sought to take advantage of the service." Fairall stressed that the program was designed for those who had no friends or relatives. "The women and girls who have been enlisted in its service, numbering over 15,000 are in it for no frivolous purpose. . . . Patriotically they have volunteered to give time from pursuits to make things a little more pleasant for their country's fighting men. The *Camp Dodger* therefore trusts that no man of the 88th Division would seek to take advantage of the generous offer that these patriotic women have made merely for a whim of his own."²²

The *Camp Dodger* supported another project linked to the theme of "home" during the fall of 1917. In Ruth Stewart's weekly column, "Little Stories from Camp Dodge," she underscored the importance of home to the soldiers. "Of the relations from which these young men in training camps are cut off that of home is perhaps the most important. Frederick Law Olmstead, for instance, reported as his conclusion from his long and active

22. Fairall, "Over Two Thousand Camp Dodge Soldiers Want to Write Minnesota Girls," *Camp Dodger*, 11/2/1917, 1; Fairall, "Camp Dodge Soldiers Take Advantage of Journal Fighter's Bureau," *Camp Dodger*, 11/9/1917, 1.

work on the Sanitary Commission during the Civil War, that the two great influences in keeping men well were singing and letters from home." To address that need, Stewart called on the people of Des Moines to volunteer to adopt soldiers into their homes during weekends or times of leave. "A great many people in Des Moines have cooperated very loyally in trying to do something for the soldier boys and I hope the community will waken to its privilege, for when the soldier is giving his life, nothing else can be compared."²³

The *Camp Dodger* ran a number of stories promoting Stewart's call. Once again, a civilian stepped to the fore, offering organizational management. Louis Nash, a former military goods salesman, reported more than a hundred responses from Des Moines families one day after putting out a call for home hosts. In the pages of the *Camp Dodger*, Nash wrote, "Since my arrival in your city eight weeks ago, I have been brought into daily, nay, almost hourly contact with officers and enlisted men from Camp Dodge. I have chronicled their expressions of homesickness and loneliness times beyond question. Hundreds of them have left beautiful homes in every meaning of the word; loving mothers, devoted fathers, admiring sisters, and lifelong friends." Underlining the overwhelming nature of the transition, he continued, "They are here in the midst of strangers – the loneliest place in the word. They parade your streets when they come to town and never see a familiar face. Not one in a hundred has been inside a home since he left his own." Nash predicted great outcomes if soldiers could participate in home visits. "Let each Des Moines home adopt one of these young men during his leisure hours. . . . It would change their whole social aspect in two weeks' time if this suggestion were followed out."²⁴

The *Camp Dodger* also worked with welfare organizations to allow the soldiers to meet young women in and around the cantonment. This was a major policy change during World War I. Writing on the importance of the War Camp Community Service organization in 1918, its president, Joseph Lee, noted, "Another normal need of these young men is the society of girls. It has been

23. Ruth Stewart, "Little Stories from Camp Dodge," *Camp Dodger*, 11/23/1917, 2.

24. Louis Nash, "To Entertain Soldier Boys," *Camp Dodger*, 11/2/1917, 1.

assumed in the past that soldiers and sailors, unlike the rest of mankind, can have no relation with women except an immoral one, that there is no choice for them between the life of a libertine and that of an ascetic." Working through the concept of what Lee referred to as "a balanced ration," under the guidance of organized chaperones, proper social meetings could be arranged. In addition, Lee argued, "Besides bringing soldiers and girls together under good influences, a most important activity has been the organizing of girls into clubs, the purpose of which has been the creating of an *esprit de corps* among them with a high social standard and a high ideal of the part that the women of America are called upon to play in their relation to the soldiers."²⁵

Fairall endorsed the ideas laid out by Lee and the War Camp Community Service organization. Apparently, however, not everyone in the Des Moines area was on board. As Fairall helped promote what Lee referred to as "a balanced ration" between the sexes, he received a fair amount of criticism from concerned women's organizations. Using his editorial column to push back, he argued, "Several Des Moines women, foolishly have set about to start a movement to prevent Camp Dodge soldiers from meeting Des Moines girls. They claim it is 'dangerous.'" He countered, "If there is anything that will make for dangerous relations between the soldiers and the girls of Des Moines it is just such a movement." According to Fairall, it was natural for Camp Dodge soldiers to want to make the acquaintance of good, wholesome girls. When supported in the right manner, he reasoned, "any organization which will help introduce our soldiers to the right sort of girls is to be encouraged rather than opposed." He concluded, "The *Camp Dodger* is strongly in favor and will heartily support any agencies which work along these lines. With equal firmness it will oppose the foolish idea that men and women are acting properly only so long as they stay away from each other. If there is anything in the world which will bring about a condition of lax morality in this field it is just such a wild-eyed movement as this."²⁶

25. Joseph Lee, "War Camp Community Service," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 79 (September 1918), 193.

26. Fairall, "Dangerous Safety!" *Camp Dodger*, 11/9/1917, 2.

That was not the only time Fairall encountered a difference of opinion. While alcohol was strictly monitored within and surrounding the camp, the same was not true of tobacco. In fact, the *Camp Dodger*, working in conjunction with local welfare groups and the national "Smokes for Soldiers" program, promoted cigarette use as something that could relieve stress while also contributing to what Marcus Lee Hansen referred to as "inducements to conviviality." The Knights of Columbus organization was particularly active in this area, distributing 576 bags of Bull Durham smoking tobacco, 150 bags of Piedmont, 288 tins of Prince Albert, and 500 hundred pounds in bulk—in addition to 864 corn-cob pipes. When local and national women's group took umbrage at the practice, Fairall fired back, "They fail to take cognizance of the fact that relief must be given for the excitable mental state that accompanies the tedium of military life both in the trenches and in training. They do not realize that tobacco is a practically harmless mental sedative and easiest obtainable agent of relaxation that the soldier can appreciate."²⁷

The women behind the anti-smoking campaign were the exception rather than the norm as far as cooperation with the camp was concerned. The *Camp Dodger* lauded the women involved in the construction of the resident hostess house at the camp during the fall of 1917. The house was constructed as part of a nationwide movement supported by the government and organized by the Young Women's Christian Association. Historian Nancy K. Bristow cites the government-supported hostess houses at military camps throughout the nation as an example of defining women's wartime roles as traditional "domestic responsibility" and "natural moral superiority." Further stressing their social and cultural importance during the war, Cynthia Brandimarte argues that the hostess houses supported the Victorian notion of "home" that persisted on World War I military bases. As such, they represented the idea of home so important to Fairall and other *Camp Dodger* writers such as Dorothy Ashby, who praised the construction and use of the hostess house at Camp Dodge.²⁸

27. Fairall, "The Makins," *Camp Dodger*, 11/23/1917, 6. The tobacco statistics are found in Hansen, *Welfare Work*, 35.

28. Nancy K. Bristow, *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering during the Great War* (New York, 1996), 49–50; Cynthia Brandimarte, "Women on the Home Front:

After observing the contributions of regional and local women to the soldiers of Camp Dodge throughout the fall of 1917, especially in connection to the concepts of comfort and home, Fairall was full of praise. In an editorial in the *Camp Dodger* he wrote, "A great, invisible force, nationwide in their organization, these women of America have already become a powerful factor in the lives of soldiers. No single element is exerting so much influence today. The only regrettable thing is that there is no way of totaling the immense work already accomplished by these 'home soldiers.'" Once again, he underscored the importance of home and a link to home via correspondence, with women playing a key role. Fairall pointed out that "three-fourths of the letters to which soldiers look forward for daily encouragement in their work come from women. Three-fourths of the letters sent out from the cantonment in which these soldiers unburden their troubles and tell of their achievements go to women. And it is an established fact that these letters form one of the most vital factors in an army man's daily life."²⁹

WHILE THE FALL OF 1917 saw the *Camp Dodger* promoting letter-writing campaigns and a number of other projects to support the social atmosphere for new arrivals, the paper also underwent tremendous growth. By the third week of November, it announced that it was expanding from 8 to 16 pages weekly. In reality, the *Camp Dodger* averaged 12 pages over the next few months before returning to 8 as a result of a government-imposed paper rationing. Nevertheless, the increased coverage allowed the paper to add more writers and features. The staff was also able to address the backlog of material awaiting publication.³⁰ The increased coverage also allowed more room to feature music, entertainment, and athletics — all with the aim of building social connections.

Throughout America's mobilization, a number of commentators pointed to the importance of music, in particular singing. Owen Wister, a member of the War Department's national music

Hostess Houses during World War I," *Winterthur Portfolio* 42 (2008), 202; Ashby, "Building for Lady Visitors."

29. Fairall, "The Women," *Camp Dodger*, 3/2/1918, 4.

30. "Camp Dodger Remarkable Growth," *Camp Dodger*, 11/23/1917, 1.

committee, was quoted in the *Camp Dodger* as arguing, "Music is as necessary to the soldier's heart as bread is to the body. It is often spoken of as a luxury, even in time of peace. It is probable that no battle was ever won by soldiers who did not sing." Fred Haynes, in his summary of welfare work at Camp Dodge itself, noted, "Singing in the army has a distinct military value. Emphasis is not laid upon it in military textbooks; but a good deal is said about morale and esprit de corps, upon both of which singing has a great influence."³¹

In early October the *Camp Dodger* reported that Dean Holmes Cowper, from the Drake University School of Music, led the first class in camp singing, working with Company E of the 350th Infantry.³² Camp officials later determined that singing classes were most effective when organized along the lines of smaller companies or batteries. The *Camp Dodger* supported adding daily singing drills to the soldiers' schedule. Apparently, there was plenty of talent to draw from. Ruth Stewart observed, "Not silence but music is golden at Camp Dodge, especially when there are so many trained musicians at the cantonment. It is almost impossible to walk past the barracks without hearing the joyous tune or cry 'Goodbye Broadway, Hello France' or a plaintive voice singing 'Dearest, My Heart Is Dreaming, Dreaming of You' or a line cornetist playing 'Farewell to Thee.'"³³

Marcus Lee Hansen pointed to the importance of both continuity and the construction of new traditions. "Whenever the men of a nation are called into military service," he wrote, "they fall heir to the songs sung by their predecessors in the country's service, but they are not long content with merely adopting the songs of other wars."³⁴ With that idea in mind, the Commission on Training Camp Activities issued a recommended "best of" *Army Song Book* in the fall of 1917. Still, the *Army Song Book* spoke to national spirit, not to the spirit of the division, regiment, or company, so the *Camp Dodger* sponsored a contest to express the ideals of the

31. "Music Helps Win Battles," *Camp Dodger*, 6/7/1918, 9; Fred Emory Haynes, "The Social Work at Camp Dodge," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 16 (1918), 487.

32. "Music," *Camp Dodger*, 10/12/1917, 1.

33. Ruth Stewart, "Little Stories at Camp Dodge," *Camp Dodger*, 9/28/1917, 1.

34. Hansen, *Welfare Work*, 30.

88th Division, offering a well-advertised \$50 prize to the author of the best marching song. Dean Holmes Cowper, John Alden Carpenter (a theater critic from Chicago), and Walter R. Spaulding from the Harvard music department served as judges, selecting "Old 88," submitted by L. C. Currier.³⁵

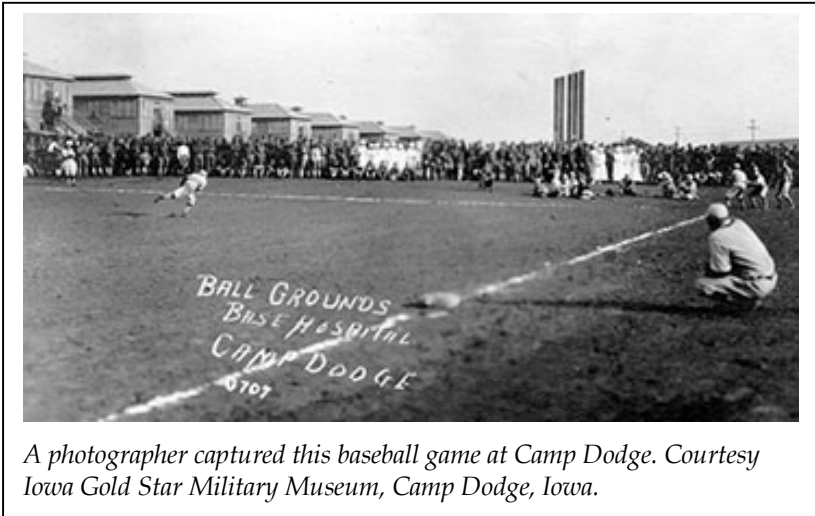
Other forms of entertainment were also well represented in the pages of the *Camp Dodger*. Drama expert William W. Kane served as the editor of the entertainment page. He previewed and reviewed motion pictures and live entertainment appearing at the Liberty Theatre, which opened within the camp on December 2, 1917.³⁶ In addition, he covered a full range of artistic happenings outside the camp and recruited artistic talent to perform within the camp. Various welfare buildings, including the YMCA building and the Knights of Columbus Hall, served as entertainment venues. In June 1918 YMCA camp secretary Fred W. Hansen reported that in the past week more than 80,000 feet of film had been projected in YMCA buildings located in Camp Dodge. He predicted that this would amount to 800 miles of film for the year. He also reported that 101 entertainments were held on the camp grounds during the previous week. "What the soldier needs after being under military discipline all day," he noted, "is relaxation." Hansen included additional cumulative figures for the period through May 1918, underscoring the role of welfare organizations and the *Camp Dodger* in promoting social interaction through entertainment. Hansen reported,

Estimated attendance at buildings 278,225; 46 lectures with attendance of 7,321; 1,048 educational classes, with attendance of 55,948; 6,845 books circulated; 35 educational clubs, with attendance of 862. 84,665 men participating in sports, 91,247 men spectators at recreative games; 343 religious meetings with attendance of 40,969; 236 Bible classes, with attendance of 5,586; 483,939 letters written and \$40,044 worth of money orders sold.³⁷

35. *Camp Dodger*, 12/14/1917 and 1/11/1918.

36. Liberty Theatre seated 5,000 and even had its own "soldier orchestra." The venue was located in Camp Dodge, but there was also a Liberty Theater in Dodge City, a small community that popped up just outside the post's eastern border. To avoid confusion, the latter was renamed the Trilby Theater.

37. Fred W. Hansen, "Y.M.C.A. Report," *Camp Dodger*, 6/14/1918, 1.



A photographer captured this baseball game at Camp Dodge. Courtesy Iowa Gold Star Military Museum, Camp Dodge, Iowa.

Hansen's statistics reveal the importance of athletics for both participants and spectators at Camp Dodge. As it did for entertainment and the arts, the *Camp Dodger* ran many stories on athletics at the camp. John L. Griffith, former athletic director at Drake University and founder of the Drake Relays, served as camp athletic director. The army brought in experienced athletic directors to serve as civilian aides in U.S. Army camps and later granted them commissions in the army as "physical training" officers. Griffith, for example, was commissioned as an army captain in January 1918. Months later, he was sent to a number of camps to replicate the program he had started at Camp Dodge for the 30,000 soldiers in training. He finished the war in Washington, D.C., where he was promoted to major and charged with physical education training for the entire U.S. Army.³⁸

As reported in the pages of the *Camp Dodger*, Griffith had arrived at Camp Dodge with a clear vision, one supported by both conviction and creativity. The plan involved making the best use of actual physical training, using athletics to support social fellowship and to promote pride in the 88th Division. Griffith

38. "Statement for the Press on Appointment of Commissioner," n.d., box 5, Board of Control of Intercollegiate Athletics, Bentley Archives, University of Michigan.

noted, "The War Department has found out after much experience that athletics is the one thing to keep the mind and bodies of the soldiers in good condition." In contrast to the Germans, who taught the slower arts of gymnastics and wrestling, Griffith looked to involve soldiers in boxing, football, bayonet training, baseball, basketball, track and field, and a number of mass participatory events best described as modified track and field, citing both the scientific movement behind the choices and the opportunities for social networking and morale building. He explained,

We have recreation hour from 4 to 5 o'clock every day, and all that time all the men in the camp who are not on special duty take part in the prescribed games and sports. When the recruits first come in we give them simple games, such as three deep and center ball. Later we give them the work that they do not get in their physical education period and later give them contests, simulating war conditions—for instance, races and jumping contests in full packs, races through shell holes and through barb wire entanglements. In other words, we give them as much military training in the guise of games as possible.³⁹

During the fall of 1917, Griffith, with the help of one officer in charge of each company, organized dozens of camp football teams, promoting intracamp rivalries. Each company also selected a boxing leader who learned directly from Mike Gibbons, a Camp Dodge soldier who had been world lightweight champion. During the winter, Griffith worked closely with the Knights of Columbus, organizing dozens of intracamp basketball tournaments. By June 1918, Camp Dodge fielded more than 160 baseball teams. It was, however, under the catchall phrase of "athletic meets" that Griffith was the most creative. On January 26, 1918, soldiers from Camp Dodge traveled to Kansas City to take on Camp Funston. A rematch occurred at Camp Funston's home base in Omaha. Events included the 50-yard rescue race, bayonet drill exhibitions, stretcher races, a shuttle race, and hand grenade throwing. The *Camp Dodger* enthusiastically reported, "The Camp Dodge athletes showed their superiority over Camp Funston by winning

39. John L. Griffith, "Athletics Have Taken Definite Form at Camp," *Camp Dodger*, 10/26/1917, 4; "John L. Griffith: Former Drake Coach at Camp," *Camp Dodger*, 9/28/1917, 2.



Members of the football team from Supply Company, 350th Infantry Regiment, 88th Division posed for this image in November 1917. Courtesy Iowa Gold Star Military Museum, Camp Dodge, Iowa.

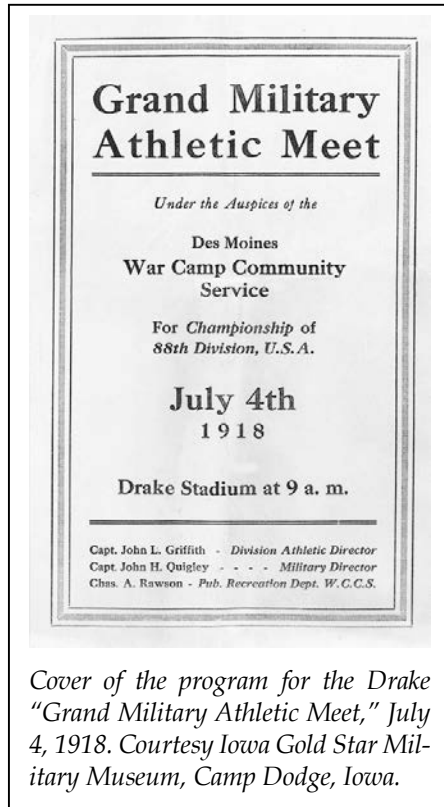
five of seven events and tying with the Funston athletes in two others.”⁴⁰

In the spring of 1918, Griffith sent a contingent of Camp Dodge soldiers to the Drake Relays, where he had a hand in adding a heavy equipment march race, rescue races, and wall scaling to the program.⁴¹ In May 1918 he invited a large number of camp athletes to compete in a “telegraph meet” against the University of Illinois track and field team. Events included the 100-yard dash, the high jump, and the grenade throw. Averages were taken for all the events in order to support mass participation, teamwork, and pride in the 88th Division. Although the University of Illinois won the 100-yard dash and the high jump, the *Camp Dodger* reported that the Camp Dodge soldiers dominated the hand grenade throw.⁴² On July 4, 1918, thousands of Camp Dodge soldiers either took part in or were spectators in a

40. For reports on the January and February “Athletic Meets,” see *Camp Dodger* issues of February 1, 8, and 15, 1918.

41. “Camp Athletes in Drake Relays,” *Camp Dodger*, 3/16/1918, 4.

42. “Dual Telegraph Meet,” *Camp Dodger*, 5/10/1918, 4.



Cover of the program for the Drake "Grand Military Athletic Meet," July 4, 1918. Courtesy Iowa Gold Star Military Museum, Camp Dodge, Iowa.

massive athletic carnival held at Drake stadium. The event included cavalry displays, multiple racing and field events tailored toward combat training, and even a faux battle complete with smoke.⁴³

Although mass participation played a big role in Griffith's vision, he also used the status of elite athletes and teams to build pride in the division, connect the division to the greater Iowa community, and provide an opportunity for social engagement through spectatorship. Shortly after his arrival, he had announced, "Camp Dodge could put one of the strongest football teams in the middle west on the field inside of a few days' notice. . . . There are in camp some of the greatest football players in the country and before Thanksgiving Day rolls around, no doubt a number

43. "Thousands at Stadium See July 4 Show," *Camp Dodger*, 7/5/1918, 1.

of new stars that the sport world has never heard of will have developed.”⁴⁴ Griffith organized the top talent into a camp all-star team, while the *Camp Dodger* drummed up enthusiasm. The Camp Dodge eleven took to the road, with their biggest triumph a 3-0 win over Camp Funston. The contest took place during the third week in November 1917 after a big buildup of enthusiasm. With the help of the *Camp Dodger*, additional soldiers, including a 43-piece band, were sent to support the “Hun-Huskies” of the 88th.⁴⁵ Additional pride from the contest resulted as Camp Funston went on to capture the championship title of the American Expeditionary Forces after going otherwise undefeated both on American soil and abroad.

In addition to the elite gridiron traveling team, Griffith used the reputation of additional professional athletes. World light-weight boxing champion Mike Gibbons enlisted at Camp Dodge, serving as the lead boxing instructor while also putting on a number of well-advertised boxing exhibitions held within the camp as well as in Des Moines and around Iowa.⁴⁶ Griffith also hoped to obtain the services of Frank Gotch, former world champion in wrestling. Gotch, however, was sick in the fall of 1917 and never arrived at Camp Dodge (he died on December 16). Instead of Gotch, Earl Caddock, who also laid claim to the world title, served as an elite athlete capable of generating pride through his craft. Caddock, a native of Huron, South Dakota, who had spent his formative years on his uncle’s farm in Anita, Iowa, was one of the biggest draws in the wrestling world between 1915 and 1922. Shortly after marrying Grace May Mickel of Walnut, Iowa, on July 21, 1917, Caddock chose to enlist in the U.S. Army. After he incurred an infection during recent tonsil surgery, however, the local draft board denied him for service. In September he visited the Mayo Clinic and, after corrective surgery, received military clearance. He enlisted at Camp Dodge as a private, but also as a world champion, the latter touted in the pages of the *Camp Dodger*.⁴⁷

44. “Noted Football Players among the Soldiers Here,” *Camp Dodger*, 9/21/1917, 3.

45. “CD Football Drums Funston in Hard Contest,” *Camp Dodger*, 11/23/1917, 8.

46. See *Camp Dodger*, 10/5/1917, 10/12/1917, 11/23/1917, 12/28/1917, 2/15/1918, 4/5/1918, and 4/20/1918.

47. Nat Fleischer, *From Milos to Londos* (New York, 1936), 188–94.

Officially an enlisted soldier, Caddock was granted special status by the authorities at Camp Dodge. He was the star attraction in a number of matches that received quite a bit of publicity and provided live entertainment for the soldiers who attended the matches. In October he defeated Lorenz Ryder of Minnesota as part of an athletic carnival in Des Moines attended by thousands of Camp Dodge soldiers. Thousands were on hand again in December to form a large cheering section when Caddock defeated Yussif Hussan. Afterward, the *Camp Dodger* announced Caddock's retention of the world wrestling title. On February 8, 1918, Caddock defeated Wladek Zbyszko via referee's decision in a two-hour contest. He was given a leave to take on the giant Pole in a rematch held in Chicago in May, emerging victorious once again. A victory over Ed "Strangler" Lewis in Des Moines in June 1918 completed his string of victories while serving at Camp Dodge. Underscoring the pride Caddock brought to the 88th Division, the *Camp Dodger* remarked, "On the night of Friday, June 21, the Dodge mat marvel proved to the world at large and particularly to Ed 'Strangler' Lewis that any claims to the title Lewis may have put forth were absolutely unfounded."⁴⁸

THE *CAMP DODGER* also covered religious activities. Religiously based organizations such as the YMCA, the Knights of Columbus, and the Lutheran Brotherhood, organized activities in many of the auxiliary buildings. The U.S. Army had handed down strict rules that supported inclusion rather than division. According to the army, when those buildings were used for social gatherings that were not official religious services, the pulpit or altar area must remain concealed by sliding doors. Proselytization during non-religious social gatherings was also forbidden. A handful of religiously based organizations were given the privilege of helping with the welfare work in the camps. Despite the pretense of inclusion, those organizations did not represent the

48. "Many Soldiers Attend Athletic Carnival in Des Moines," *Camp Dodger*, 10/5/1917, 4; "Earl Caddock Retains World Wrestling Title," *Camp Dodger*, 12/14/1917, 1; "Earl Caddock and Wladek Zbyszko, Who Wrestle for World's Championship in Des Moines," *Camp Dodger*, 2/8/1918, 4; "Believe Lewis Has a Chance to Throw Caddock," *Camp Dodger*, 6/21/1918, 11; "Caddock Keeps Mat Title Within the 88th Division," *Camp Dodger*, 6/28/1918, 11.

entire spectrum of religious backgrounds found within Camp Dodge. A *Camp Dodger* census in early February 1918 found that the 12,625 men who answered the survey cited 58 different religious backgrounds in their self-identification.⁴⁹ The *Camp Dodger* therefore supported religious gatherings by including notices of religious services both within and outside of the camp.

The coverage of African American soldiers in the pages of the *Camp Dodger* sent mixed messages. Historian Bill Douglas addresses African American soldiers' experiences at Camp Dodge in his article "Wartime Illusions and Disillusionment." Douglas opens with the disturbing story of the hanging of three African American soldiers found guilty of raping a white woman; all white and black soldiers were required to witness the hanging. Douglas argues, "The event was a tragic culmination of an experiment in race relations that had begun with high hopes."⁵⁰

Douglas makes three valid points concerning the white press of Des Moines and the surrounding area. First, he argues that the local press reflected pride in the African American soldiers and the fact that they were treated better in the North than they had been in the South. Second, although there was a sense of pride, paternalism and misunderstanding were also pervasive features of the press coverage of African Americans at Camp Dodge. Third, there was evidence that camp officials cast aside any articulation of dissatisfaction by African American soldiers, leading to the illusion that everyone was satisfied with the existing state of race relations.⁵¹

Douglas's assessment certainly applies to the *Camp Dodger*. It complimented the new arrivals from the South but often struck a paternalistic tone. Its top-down approach to coverage of African American soldiers meant that news was funneled to the paper from African American officers, thus missing the opportunity to hear from a wider variety of voices. Douglas also highlights the ultimate crux of the matter by pointing out that "segregation limited interracial encounters within and outside the walls of the camp." The welfare organizations and the *Camp Dodger* applied

49. "Census Results," *Camp Dodger*, 2/1/1918, 1.

50. Bill Douglas, "Wartime Illusions and Disillusionment: Camp Dodge and Racial Stereotyping, 1917-1918," *Annals of Iowa* 57 (1990), 112.

51. *Ibid.*, 111-34.

the same goals of creating social networks for the African American soldiers within and outside the camp, although they were ultimately limited within the bounds of segregation, resulting in the major juxtaposition of the Fourth of July holiday in 1918: For the white soldiers, the giant carnival at Drake stadium provided a massive event of social engagement through spectacle and entertainment. One day later, as Douglas points out, "The horror of sharing the forced witnessing of a triple hanging created—at least momentarily—a bond of common humanity."⁵²

AS THE SUMMER of 1918 progressed, soldiers from the 88th Division, including Laurence Fairall, were sent to France. The original *Camp Dodger* continued under the direction of managing editor Lawrence H. Martin. Under him, the paper struggled as Camp Dodge housed fewer men. In addition, social activities, a vital part of the paper's coverage, were curtailed as a result of the influenza outbreak.⁵³ The paper reduced its size several times, and the final issue appeared on January 31, 1919. That was not, however, the end of the *Camp Dodger*.

Fulfilling an earlier pledge to connect the soldiers of the 88th at home or abroad, Fairall, still in France, was tasked with reviving the paper. Backed by division command, who worried about a lapse of morals and troop morale following the conclusion of the war, he was placed in a subsection of Division Intelligence and instructed to devote full time to the paper.

Fairall rode horseback around the area near Gondrecourt, recruiting staff members, some from the previous American operation. The editorial offices remained in Gondrecourt, but he located a small print shop at Bar-le-Duc, where the task of printing the paper was impeded by a lack of electricity and a hole in the roof courtesy of previous German bombing. Nevertheless, Fairall supervised three editions—February 3, 10, and 17—before operations were moved to Paris and printing was subcontracted to the Parisian firm *Société Anonyme des Imprimeries Wellhof et Roch*. All profits were funneled back into the 88th Division, adding to

52. *Ibid.*, 113.

53. For the influenza outbreak's impact on training camps, see Carol R. Byerly, "The U.S. Military and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1919," *Public Health Reports*, vol. 125, supplement 3 (2010), 82-91.

the Division Athletic Fund and helping to finance the camp variety show "Who Can Tell?" Once in Paris, the overseas version of the *Camp Dodger* extended its reach, adding a Paris Shopping Service, a Soldiers' Service Bureau for postwar employment, and an Overseas News Service for American newspapers. Above all, Fairall continued to underscore the theme of connectedness. "What a city newspaper is to the civilian," he wrote, "the Overseas Camp Dodger is to the soldiers, — and more, for it not only furnishes the main link which ties the thoughts and activities of more than 30,000 men into one, but it reaches even farther and brings the daily life of those men into thousands of homes in every part of America, from which they come."⁵⁴

The overseas version of the *Camp Dodger* came to a close on May 5, 1919, amid plans for demobilization. Fairall eventually returned to Iowa and became a successful advertising executive. With the *Camp Dodger*, he left behind an exemplar for military camp newspapers. He was not necessarily original in honing in on the importance of home to the "homesick" soldiers or the importance of re-establishing social connections for the soldiers who had left their homes behind. He did, however, oversee a newspaper that transmitted those themes to the soldiers of Camp Dodge, serving as a communication network linking the War Department, Camp Dodge administrators, auxiliary welfare groups, the greater Des Moines community, and the soldiers. Lauded throughout its run, the *Camp Dodger* also stayed true to Fairall's goal of establishing a "public forum . . . to mirror the desires, work, and history of the men of the 88th." "As long as this unit of troops carry arms in the present war," he wrote in 1917, "whether it be in some desolate line of trenches or the edge of No Man's Land or across the Rhine itself, the *Camp Dodger* will aim to stay with the men whom it represents."⁵⁵

54. Laurence Rankin Fairall, "Overseas Camp Dodger News Service," box 1, Fairall Papers.

55. Fairall, "The Camp Dodger," *Camp Dodger*, 9/21/1917, 2.