

# “Go West”

## Oscar May

– the “Fighting Bearcat”

### Men of 356th Praise from Over There

UPI – March 18th 1819

“Say Correspondent, slip something in about Lieutenant May, Will yuh?”

Bill Beneveuto, a wounded doughboy of the 89th Division, whose present address is Bed 47, Ward 3, U.S. Debarkation Hospital No. 3, sat straight up in his cot today as he vigorously press-agented his former commander.

Exactly what portion of the Middle-West Lt. May comes from Billy and his pals who clustered around the bed couldn't say. It was “St. Louis or Kansas City or Omaha or Denver or somewhere out that way anyhow” but from wherever he hails Lt. May who was with Company “M” of the 356th Infantry, was a “fighting bearcat” according to his admiring men who energetically demanded all possible credit for him.

The boys from the 356th are firmly convinced that the greatest mistake of Gener-



Oscar May's footlocker and all of his World War I gear, uniform and materials are on display in the Military Case in Atchison County's Museum - stop in and see it.

al Pershing's career was when he overlooked the Midwestern lieutenant for promotion. “Look at what he done at Beney Woods” they point out. “That was where we got gassed mighty bad, and what do you think he did? He says “We're not going to stay here and be gassed and the

fellows don't know what retire means, so we'll go ahead. He just advanced right there with the whole company, out of the gas and into No Man's Land almost out of the Jerry wire. It was so dark we had to do the shoulder-to-shoulder stuff

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## We're looking for some GREAT Volunteers!

Volunteer on your time schedule, as often or as little as fits, help Atchison County's Museum with projects, meet & greet visitors, Learn, Explore and Have Fun all while making a difference

Are you looking for something valuable to spend some of your time on? You can make a difference and spread the word about our county's heritage, help with youth education programs, add to the experience of exploring Atchison County's Museum for local citizens and visitors.

Want to spend one morning or afternoon a week - or does just once a month work better? Would you like to help the Museum move ahead with cataloguing the collection, or would you rather learn and explore and be that docent that makes a trip to Atchison County's Museum an even more amazing experience.

Or even if you would rather be an extra hand on those lazy winter afternoons when you might get more reading done than talking to visitors - we want you in Atchison County's Museum.

We will give you as much or as little to do as you like - and if you want to stretch your skill levels - we will provide training and include you when we have new things coming.

How do you get started?

Just give the Museum a call 913-367-6238, email Education Coordinator Darlene Mason-Taylor at [Education@AtchisonHistory.org](mailto:Education@AtchisonHistory.org) or check in on our Facebook page [Facebook.com/AtchisonHistory](https://www.facebook.com/AtchisonHistory)

**Don't Forget to Renew Your Membership**



## World War I Gas Mask

One of the three key pieces of equipment every American Soldier carried - the Gas Mask, the Helmet and the Shovel. The Gas Mask was the only protection against what may have been the most inhumane weapon used during WWI - poison gas - left many soldiers with horrible injuries.



### Atchison County Historical Society

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913-367-6238

GoWest@atchisonhistory.org  
Facebook.com/AtchisonHistory  
www.atchisonhistory.org

ACHS Museum hours - winter  
9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday  
noon -4 p.m. Sundays

Independence Creek:  
Lewis & Clark Historic Site  
sunrise to sunset - year round

#### ACHS Board - 2018

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## Oscar May - the "Fighting Bearcat"

to keep from getting lost from the outfit. Then he got us back without losing a man Pretty good, hey?"

"And then in the last few days up on the Meuse. That's where he and Lt. Mix took a patrol across the river to Pouilly in daylight. Did we follow him? I'll saw we did, we'd follow that bird anywhere. He sure had nerve."

Perhaps the Lieutenant of the 356th isn't bringing back a Croix de Guerre (ed. actually he was awarded the Croix de Guerre). Perhaps he didn't get a captaincy or a majority, but it's a certain he has something infinitely more precious, the respect and admiration of the men he led.

That's why Billy Benevauto got away with his first attempt as a press agent.

## Infantry in St. Mihiel Kansas Unit Goes Over The Top

Our terrific bombardment started at 1 a.m. before any platoon was in position, and lasted until 5 a.m., winding up with a magnificent ten-minute machine gun barrage. The German Artillery retaliated heavily but was soon silenced by our terrible bombardment.

One of the most remarkable incidents of the whole advance, was the coolness and orderly manner in which the platoons took up their positions of departure under our barrage as well as the heavy direct shelling of the enemy.

In the cold rain and mud knee deep, three officers of the four in the company including Company Commander, and the 1st Sergeant was knocked down by a direct hit of a German shell one half hour after the bombardment commenced, that killed two men and injured four severely.

Then followed two or three hours of somewhat uncomfortable frigid waiting in the cold muddy trenches, everyone felt a relief as the command "Over The Top, Boys!" was given at exactly 5 a.m.

The whole company under command of Lt. Charles H. Gunn started due North by compass - just to the left of the Filney (sic) Railroad Station with the 1st and 3rd Platoons commanded by Lieutenants Ralph E. Murray and Oscar P. May respectively leading off in the assaulting wave, with the 2nd and 4th Platoons commanded by 1st Sergeant Richard R. Nacy and Lt. John Miller respectively following at 200 yards in support echelon.

As the enemy's first line was reached the men had begun to warm up and many shedded their rain coats preparatory to fighting to the finish. Little resistance was met until the enemy's second line was reached when a Boche crawled out of a dug-out, presumably to man a machine gun about 10 paces to the right of it, and threw a grenade whizzing past Lt. May's head getting one of his men behind him. Lieutenants Murray and May closed in on him and he ducked back into his dug-

out followed by a few pistol shots by Lt. Murray and a couple of hot grenades on his heels from Lt. May and one of his men; while a fusillade of grenades were heaved into the machine gun emplacement, and Lt. May leaped forward grasping the machine gun by its muzzle slamming it back into the trench. A bunch of grenades were dropped into a square hole in the top of another dug-out about 10 paces to the right of the machine gun. The trench being clear - the assaulting wave passed on and as they pushed forward they saw the moppers-up take a goodly number of grenade shocked and wounded Boche from the dug-outs behind them as their first prisoners.

From that time on until we reached our objective hours ahead of time, it was a merry thrilling chase with every Boche to be seen either coming towards us with his hands up or else going over the next hill on high toward a cooler climate, leaving everything behind him. Our Company, well supplied with captured Boche overcoats and blankets marched into the town of Benay about 2:30 a.m the morning of the 13th and slept in the Beney Woods. We had no more than left the town until our own artillery began battering the town behind us, but a friendly plane appeared upon the scene at daylight and spied us, and immediately our barrage lifted into the woods in front of us. We reached our first objective in Benay Woods by noon of the second day but by night we were ahead of it and were ordered back at dusk.

We suffered comparatively few casualties and most of those were caused by our men running into our own barrage time after time in their mad determined onrush at the fleeing Boche. This was thought to be all a good thing as many a machine gun was taken unmanned, with their crew and dug-outs nearby waiting for the barrage to lift in order to come out and fire their deadly lead into us as onward we came.

Battle account as un-redacted by Lt. Oscar May

# Atchison County Historical Society Membership

## Atchison County Historical Society

### Membership Form

- Pioneer (Individual or non-profit org.) \$15
- Homesteader (Family) \$25
- Pony Express (Senior) \$10
- Overland Stage (Senior couple) \$15
- Gov. Glick Level (Civic/business) \$50
- AT&SF Level (Corporate) \$100
- Lewis & Clark Level (Life Member) \$1,000
- Senator J.J. Ingalls Level \$5,000+  
(Exhibit space naming-contact for opportunities)
  
- Contribution to Endowment Fund \$   
as we build for the future of your  
Historical Society
  
- ANNUAL FUND CONTRIBUTION \$   
A donation beyond basic membership  
to support Educational Programming,  
Exhibits, or Artifact Conservation  
- this donation should be tax deductible  
eg. \$75 covers one child for a year  
of storytime and museum programs

NAME - please print

Mailing Address

City, State, Zip

email address - please print

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Make checks payable to the

Atchison County Historical Society  
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# Christmas Gift Offer 2019 Membership

Signup for a new or renewing  
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For you today only - signup to join YOUR Atchison  
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Enter Gift Membership(s) to the person listed below

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with a card.

# Atchison County Historical Society

## 2018-2026 - future Plan of Action

### Featured recurring programs and/or exhibits – most years

Kansas Archeology Month exhibit – April

Burial Practices with changeable updates/additions – Sept/Oct

President's Day & Constitution Day

Amelia Earhart expansion topical temporary exhibit - July

Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> – Jesse Stone Day – Anniversary of Birth

Atchison County Veterans – their story in uniforms and photos

Periodic series of rotating history/heritage programs – popup exhibits at rotating sites including the County Fair & others

## 2018

•**Atchison County Men in the Great War** – Commemoration of the Centennial of the US in World War I – exhibit – programming – Social Media event marking events as they happened 100-years-ago-today – October – November 2018 and beyond – follow us on Facebook 100 years to the hour of events of Atchison Men & US Troops as the “Great War” comes to its conclusion

•**What is an Artifact – 2018 Holiday Season Exhibit the Bob Staley WhatIsIt Collection** opportunities for programs on preserving your Family Heirlooms

•**Walter Yost : True to His Roots** – exhibit continues with new artwork –gathering project of Artwork continues.

## 2019

•**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Apollo 11 Moon Mission – Fritz Widick** – Atchison native & member of NASA who was part of the engineering team for Apollo 11 – the Lunar Rover Test Specialist and later served as the lead investigator for NASA in the Challenger Shuttle explosion.

•**160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 16<sup>th</sup> President Abraham Lincoln in Atchison** – program and dedication of bronze statue - Abraham Lincoln Arriving in Atchison Wrapped in a Buffalo Robe – Dec. 2019 – Lincoln spent 8 Days in Kansas while campaigning for the Republican nomination for the Presidency – sculpture by Aleda Haug

•**100<sup>th</sup> Year of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment – Pop-Up Exhibit from the National Archives** – ACHS has been awarded this Pop-Up Exhibit – beginning in 2019 as a lead in to the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Women Getting the Right to Vote in 2020. We plan to display this exhibit in Atchison County's Museum and then rotate it to other locations – school – libraries – etc. to spread the word and gather feedback leading to 2020's Celebration of WOMEN and the VOTE – also a Presidential Election Year.

•**William “Deafy” Boular Sesquicentennial Year** – (1869-1953) 150<sup>th</sup> of his Birth

**2020 •WOMEN and the VOTE** – Centennial Celebration of Women, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the VOTE

**2021 •Founding of Effingham, KS – the 2<sup>nd</sup> PLAT** – the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plat created the shape of Atchison County's 2<sup>nd</sup> City – and built on the initial development of 1858

•**100<sup>th</sup> of the Building of the Lincoln School in Atchison** – ATCO's Brown v. Board Site

**2022 •150<sup>th</sup> of the AT&SF connection to its Namesake City - May 16, 1872**

**2023 •125<sup>th</sup> of Bert Jones** – Last African American Baseball Player (Played in Atchison as the Yellow Kid) BEFORE the Professional Baseball Color Line Went Up

**2024 •Tricentennial of The deBourgemont Expedition (1724-2014)** – The Kanza 300 Years Along Independence Creek

**2025 •150<sup>th</sup> of the Atchison Bridge** –Bridge for Railroads and All Crossings -50 Years of Crossing the Big Muddy & Keeping Your Feet Dry

**2026 •250<sup>th</sup> of the USA (1776-2026)**– 50 Years Since the Bicentennial That Changed the USA

•**Jesse Stone Day – 125<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Atchison's Rock'n'Roll Hall of Famer**

The Atchison County Historical Society is preparing for and developing partnerships & planning groups for upcoming significant anniversary events - which will culminate in 2026 with the USA 250th. We will begin community planning for what the 250th will mean in Atchison and have already joined the National planning process through the American Association of State and Local History in gearing up for America's 250th Birthday. The Independence Creek: Lewis & Clark Historic Site will be key component in our location's celebration as this was the first spot the celebration of American Independence was observed in the American West (and of course what would become Kansas).

# May Cited Three Times for Valor and Leadership in France-WWI

Second Lt. Oscar P. May, 356th Infantry, 89th Division has been cited for extraordinary heroism in action near Bois de Mort Mare, France, Sept. 12, 1918. Without assistance, Lt. May attacked and captured a machine gun which threatened to wipe out his platoon.

Lt. May has also been recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross for leading a company out of gas at night through shell fire by compass and memory of the map over ground without previous daylight reconnaissance.

He has also been recommended for the Belgian Cross for leading a daylight patrol across the Valley of the Meuse through shell-fire and in face of fire from snipers and machine guns.



## NEWS OF ATCHISON BOYS IN FRANCE

First hand news of several Atchison County boys in France was received yesterday by Mrs. J.M. Bader, from her husband, who is doing army YMCA work over there. It follows:

Guy Berridge was gassed a little, not much, and was out of the lines only two days. He looked fine, and is now a stretcher bearer.

Sam Miller is O.K. He drives a major's car. Mr. Bander sees him several times every day and eats at the same mess.

Frank Lane was the first man in Company F, 137th Infantry to bring in eight prisoners. Later he helped bring in about 80...

### HOMEFRONT

A young matron living between Huron and Lancaster, who has two brothers on the firing line in France, became so excited when she read that Austria-Hungary sued for a separate peace, she forgot to put the egg in her lemon pies.

### Sugar Allowance Up to Three Pounds

Beginning today, three pounds a month to a person. The sugar allowance of two pounds monthly a person for householders has been increased to three pounds monthly by Food Administrator Hoover, effective today. The sugar regulations also are revised to permit the purchase of the entire month's supply for a family at one time.

### Nov. 1, 1918 - Atchison Daily Globe

From France Charlie Page, colored, has received word of the safe arrival of his son, Lucian Page, overseas. Charlie Page a Civil War veteran...has only two sons, both are in the army. The other son, Ulysses...is at Camp Grant, expecting overseas duty shortly....

### VICTORY GIRLS OF ATCHISON COUNTY

A meeting of the working committee of the Victory Girls of Atchison County will be held Saturday night at the home of Mrs. Alva Clapp. The Victory Girls are interested in raising money for the coming war funds drive.

### MUSCOTAH SOLDIERS BOYS WOUNDED IN FRANCE

The war is being more keenly felt as time wears on that mails bring their message of sorrow. Muscotah has been singularly fortunate that none of her sons have been killed in battle but letters arriving now tell of wounds received. Sergeant Kenneth Roach, Company B, 137th Infantry was wounded in the side September 28, and was in the hospital.

Dick Rivers, Headquarters Company, 137th Infantry, received a bullet. It entered the arm pit and lodged against the breast bone. He has the bullet and will have it made into a watch charm. Charles Murrow was gassed Sept. 30. He was a sergeant in Company G, 139th Infantry, and it is feared his condition is serious. He is in the hospital back of the lines and an unofficial report has it that he will be sent home for further treatment.

### Captain Courtney Turner

Confirmation has been received from France of the elevation of Lieutenant Courtney Turner to a captaincy.

### WANT TO READ MORE DETAILS FROM 100 YEARS AGO FOLLOWING ATCHISON COUNTY "BOYS" IN WORLD WAR I ?

Follow us on Facebook - as we look back to 1918 and 1919 as the "Great War" wound to an end.

## Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy by "Buck Private" McCollum

### Up There

From two short words, "Up There" we glean,  
All that war can really mean,  
Sounds perhaps not much to you,  
Entire volume, what we've been thru.

Telling many brave and dare tale,  
Of Chateau-Thierry and the Vesle,  
Or Argonne Woods, that death strewn hell,  
Where hordes of our brave comrades fell.

Who gave their all, as men have done,  
Ever since wars first begun,  
Their blood enriching vale or hill,  
Patriot's promise, or God's will.

They fell for a cause just and true,  
Undying tribute is their due,  
"God rest their souls," our humble prayer,  
For those who gave their all - "Up There."

Dedicated to "My Buddies" who gave their all "Up There"

The Lost Battalion were members of nine companies of the US 77th Division who during the course of an American attack into the Argonne Forest in October 1918 became surrounded by German Forces. When both US & French Divisions on their flanks became stalled the 77th unknowingly pushed forward beyond the Allied Lines. Their successful push left them isolated - 554 men were trapped - 197 would be killed in action - 150 more missing or taken prisoner. For six days the remaining 194 under the command of Major Charles White Whittlesey fought a fierce battle trapped in the Argonne Forest. Food became scarce, the only water was from a nearby stream that could only be accessed by crawling - under heavy fire. Ammo ran low and every runner dispatched by Whittlesey either became lost or was captured or blocked by German patrols.

The only method of communication was by carrier pigeon - when inaccurate coordinates brought the Lost Battalion under fire from their own artillery a pigeon known as Cher Ami saved the unit delivering this message:

WE ARE ALONG THE ROAD PARALELL 276.4. OUR ARTILLERY IS DROPPING A BARRAGE DIRECTLY ON US. FOR HEAVENS SAKE STOP IT.

After six long days - US troops broke through and forced the Germans to retreat - rescuing the 194 survivors.

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AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite nonprofit every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) you'll find the same prices & selection as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of your purchase to the Atchison County Historical Society.

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**Bob Staley What-Iz-It-Collection on exhibit for Christmas Season**

Test your knowledge of the odd and unusual tools, gadgets - things Bob Staley collected through his auctioneering years.

When you get the Atchison County's Museum pick up an answer sheet - but don't cheat - wait until you make a guess to check and see if you were correct. The Staley collection is spread through the Museum - just look for the LOGO - shown at left and there are objects there for you to check out. We will also be putting these up on Facebook through December and January - so you can join in online too - [Facebook.com/AtchisonHistory](http://Facebook.com/AtchisonHistory)

Do you know what the two objects shown at left? - Do you have a group that needs a program - the Artifact and Heirlooms and Staley What-Iz-Its are available just contact Chris Taylor at Atchison County's Museum.

Answer: Horse Curry Combs & Mane/Tail Thinning Comb

**WANT MORE ATCHISON COUNTY HISTORY?**

**Facebook.com/AtchisonHistory**

Follow us on Facebook or when you update your membership make sure and add your current email address. We post regular Atchison County History information and photos on Facebook and starting in 2019

there will be monthly email newsletters. With the high cost of printing we will print fewer paper newsletters - but if you HAVE to have it in print - mark that box on the enclosed membership and we will mail sets of the monthly info to you.

**How to read your Mailing Label to know your membership status**

If you want to know your current member status - here is how to read your mailing label below. Beside your name will be one of several things.

**2017** or earlier - your last paid membership year - membership is due  
**LIFE** -you are a life member - you may still make an Annual Fund Donation if you wish

**2018** - your membership is current or you may pay ahead for **2019**  
**Comp** -you are on the complimentary mailing list  
**nothing** -you received the mailing as a potential member.

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