

**THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CON
JAMES BAKER**

Fred Greentree Baker, Ph.D.

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Printed in the United States of America
By: Create Space

For my parents and family

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PREFACE

The purpose of this work is to document the interesting life of my father through independent sources as well as from some of the stories that he related to me about his life. My father was a complicated man, and in later years, I began to realize that he had seen a lot during his life. I simply wanted to write down some of this information for future generations of Bakers so that it would not be lost.

Perhaps I also saw this undertaking as a bit of a challenge to set the record straight about some aspects of my father's life. Some in our family viewed him in less than favorable terms. They believed that most of his stories were nothing more than the rambling, or worse, fictitious ranting, of an old man who had not done most of the things he talked about. A few believed that he must have been a mobster because he went to Chicago in the 1920s. In my research and experience I have found that nearly all of the stories that he told us as children were accurate, although some details were embellished to improve the tale. Perhaps I listened to him better, or asked more questions. And I certainly spent more time with him so that I heard more of the stories and learned when he was telling a tall tale for our entertainment and when he was telling us something real. I also had the opportunity to know him as an adult for a few years, which changed everything from my perspective.

I have been lucky to find several documents that have helped fill in the blanks for some portions of his life that would have otherwise been only fleetingly represented here. For example, one of my cousins, the granddaughter of my uncle Gould, Con's brother, saved the journal that Gould kept during the First World War. This told me a great deal about where and when both Con and Gould were fighting or stationed while in France and Germany. The journal, accompanied by letters that they had written home from the Front, allowed me to reconstruct much of their war time experience. That provided me with a framework into which to place the stories of the war that my Dad had told me as a young man.

I have been able to find other official documents and reports that have allowed me to piece together the happenings during other periods of his life, such as his life in Chicago, before I was old enough to remember the context of events that had happened. In later years I was able to recall most of the events that shaped his and our family's lives, supplemented by family notes, photographs and letters.

My father lived a life worth living. As a young man he experienced one of the most gruesome of world wars in Europe. He saw the motor car replace horses in everyday transportation and saw the rise of science and technology in everyday life. He experienced the Roaring Twenties in Chicago, that great American city, and he rubbed elbows with notorious gangsters at the same time. He survived the Great Depression and supported our troops during the Second World War. His fascination with

science and technology led him to develop the skill of a master pressman with which he produced some of the premier publications in the world. He raised two families and instilled in his sons an interest in science that carried them onward to successful careers in science and technology. He succeeded in all these endeavors, but after a long fight, finally succumbed to cancer. This book serves as a partial record of his interesting life.

Fred G. Baker
Golden, Colorado,
July 2013.

1. DES MOINES, IOWA, 1898–1917

Con's life had been a happy one throughout most of his childhood. He and his brother Gould had enjoyed the many opportunities to hike, swim and play in Des Moines, both in the summer and in the winter. The secure family environment provided by their parents made Con's life and the lives of his four siblings secure and predictable. When Con was only fourteen years old his mother's untimely death changed the equation that balanced his life. He and his brother were now expected to follow the example of his father and older sister to keep the family moving forward together. He rose to the occasion, becoming an adult earlier than anyone had expected. As Con persevered, he must have wondered how things would turn out for his family. His optimism led him forward. He knew that great things could lie ahead in his life. Hope led him onward to see what the future might hold.

Con James Baker was born the son of Myer Greentree Baker and Sylvia Henrietta O'Gara on 5 February 1898 in Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa. His birth name was James Jewett Condyke Baker, which he changed later, through usage, to Con James Baker. Jewett was an old family surname that had been carried forward for three generations from his great-great-grandmother Mercy Jewett who married Con's great-great-grandfather, William Baker. Jewett was also his grandfather's

first name.¹ It is not known where the name Condyke came from, but it was recorded on a photograph of Con as a baby by his cousin, Susan Edith (Huston) Richardson. This name stuck with him at least until the 1905 Iowa State Census in which he was listed as James J. C. Baker. By the time of the 1910 Federal Census he was simply listed as Con J. Baker. As a boy Con was known as “Connie” and later just “Con.”

Con’s parents moved to Iowa in the early 1890’s, following other family members who moved there from Champaign County, Illinois. Con’s Aunt Ellen Mariah (Baker) Jones and her husband, Benjamin Franklin Jones, moved to Iowa in 1877 and, after two years of renting, bought a farm near Waukee, Iowa, a small farming town just west of Des Moines. Other family members visited them and some wound up moving there.

Con’s father, Myer Greentree Baker, was the son of James Jewett Decatur Baker and his wife Abbie Ann Hayden Miner, from East Haddam and Lyme, Connecticut, respectively. He was born on 12 March 1863 in Hensley Township, Champaign County, Illinois.² He was named after Myer

¹ The Jewett family was a prominent family in Rowley and Boston, Massachusetts, coming originally from Yorkshire, England. Another line from Mercy Jewett ascends to Thomas Lewis and Elizabeth Marshall, long-time residents of Shrewsbury, England and settlers of a plantation near Saco, Maine. Sylvia O’Gara was descended from George Soule of the Mayflower.

² 1870 US Census Paris Township, Edgar County, Ill., Roll M593_218, p. 159A, image 325, FHL film 545717,

Greentree, his uncle by marriage to his aunt Elizabeth Baker, who both lived in Rochester, New York. His name was written as Myer, or Meyer, at different times.

Myer grew up on the Baker farm in Hensley Township. He attended the Mt. Vernon School through eighth grade³ and the Mt. Vernon Methodist Church, both of which were attended by all of the children of the Jewett Baker and John Baker (his uncle) families. Myer's father, James Jewett, abandoned the family in 1872, leaving Abbie and the children to operate the farm. Con Baker was heard saying that, "He ran away with a red-haired woman." Jewett left the family to move to Missouri, and later to Arkansas where he married a woman named Martha E. Geer on 24 February 1873. Jewett was never again seen by the Baker family.

Myer lived on the farm with his mother, Abbie, and two siblings, Emiline (Amanda) and Andrew, during the 1880 census.⁴ He worked on the family farm until 1890 when the family sold the farm and

dwelling 215, family 197 ,taken 7 July, 1870; Edith Richardson Genealogical Notes, (Champaign, Ill., Personal Records of the Baker Family, made during the 1940s-1970s).

³ Iowa State Census Collection, 1836-1925, (Online database, Ancestry.com, 2007). 1915 Iowa Census.

⁴ 1880 US Census Hensley, Champaign Ill., Roll T9_179, FHL film 1254179, p. 145.1, Enum. Dist. 11, image 291, taken 7 June 1880.

moved to Champaign City. They lived at 728 North Neil Street for possibly a couple of years.⁵

Myer G. Baker may have moved to Waukee, Iowa, as early as 23 June 1890⁶ to work as a farmhand there, probably with the Jones and Shannon families. Myer's youngest sister, Amanda, came out to visit Ellen and Benjamin and met her future husband, Alfred Shannon. They married around 1890, in Waukee, and had a farm nearby the Jones' home in the 1890s. Myer also worked as a laborer on other jobs, including work on the new road leading to the Iowa State capitol building, which was completed in Des Moines in 1886.⁷

Myer returned to Champaign in August 1891 to marry his sweetheart, Sylvia Henrietta O'Gara, who was 24 years old (born 1 March 1865 in Paris, Edgar County Ill.). The O'Gara name was often misspelled as O'Gair, Garra, and with other variations. In fact, Henrietta's last name was spelled O'Gair on her marriage license. Myer listed Waukee, Iowa, as his residence on the marriage license. Her father was James O'Gara from Sligo, Ireland, and her mother was Angeline Howard of Silver Lake, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. Sylvia was a seamstress and had a small dress shop

⁵ Northwest Directory Publishers, Inc. *City Directory of Champaign and Urbana*. (Chicago, Ill., Northwest Directory Publishers, Inc., 1890.

⁶ Cecil M. (Baker) Lyon, Family History Notes, (Des Moines, Iowa, Personal Notes, made during the 1940s-1980s).

⁷ Fred G. Baker record of conversations with Patricia (Hutton) Harris, 2006 through 2008.

in downtown Champaign.⁸ Myer and Sylvia were married on 6 August 1891, at Urbana by Minister Frank C. Bruce.⁹ That autumn, Myer returned to Iowa to work. Sylvia stayed in Champaign for the winter.

According to Patricia (Hutton) Harris, Myer's granddaughter, Myer was working in Iowa and did not have a plan for when to bring Sylvia out to Iowa. Family legend has it that he was enjoying himself too much and was drinking away the money he was supposed to be saving. Sylvia grew impatient and, in early 1892, she packed her things on the family Conestoga wagon that the Baker family had used to come out from Connecticut to Illinois. She then drove a team of horses with the wagon out to Iowa to be with him. This is probably when Abbie, Amanda and Andrew came to Iowa as well, since it would be a huge effort for a woman alone, no matter how determined she was. In any case, they were in Iowa when Myer and Sylvia's first child, Mabel, was born in Des Moines on 23 July 1892.

Patricia (Hutton) Harris remembered the stories that her mother, Mabel, told her about Myer and Sylvia's early days in Waukee and Des Moines.¹⁰ In the early days they had a cabin at the edge of the woods. Myer would leave every day to find work,

⁸ Con J Baker, Genealogy Notes, 1960s. (Yuba, Wis., Fred G. Baker Compilation, 2007).

⁹ Champaign Illinois Marriage License No. 4767, dated 6 Aug. 1891. for Myer G Baker & Sylvia O'Gair (O'Gara).

¹⁰ Fred G. Baker record of conversations with Patricia (Hutton) Harris, 2006 through 2008.

leaving Sylvia at home to keep house. Sylvia was a small, but wiry and tough, no-nonsense woman who could look after herself. One day a black bear came to the house and tried to get in to look for food, while Sylvia and Mabel were inside. Sylvia tried to chase the bear away, but it would not leave, so Sylvia shot the bear with the family rifle, killing it right outside the cabin. When Myer came home from work that night he found that Sylvia had strung the bear up in a tree and was skinning it out for food. In another story it was said that Myer would often come home drunk after work and a few drinks at the bar. Sylvia had argued with him, prior to this, to stop drinking so much. One night, the argument was settled when she hit Myer on the head with an iron skillet. It knocked him unconscious, but, after that, he never came home drunk again.

The Myer Baker family might have moved first to the Waukee area where they had family. This may have been where the cabin was that Patricia (Hutton) Harris refers to, in her stories about her childhood. Soon after that, Myer moved the family to the west side of Des Moines, where they resided for many years. They lived at 632 Maple Street in Des Moines in 1893 when the Des Moines City Directory was published.¹¹ Myer worked a variety of jobs to support the family, including being a day laborer in 1893 and 1894, and as a trucker for the

¹¹ U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989, Beta, (Online Database, Ancestry.com, 2011). Des Moines Directory, 1893, 1894.

Des Moines Union in 1895¹², when the family lived at 1118 Third Street. Con's mother was a full-time homemaker. They moved around to several rental properties over the next few years, living at 934 Fourth Street in 1896 and at 1121 Second Street in 1900, while Myer was working as a laborer. By the time the 1900 Federal census was completed, the family consisted of Myer and Sylvia, with four children: Mabel Henrietta born, 23 July 1892; Myer Gould, born 4 January 1897; James J. C. (Con), born 12 February, 1898; and Cecil Mildred, born 2 November 1899, all born in Des Moines.¹³ In 1901, Myer became the custodian for the Des Moines Fire Insurance Company, a position he held for the next three years, while the family moved from place to place: 1172 Third Street, 3005 Fifth street, 221 Forest Street, and 1115 Cherry Street. In 1905 Myer worked for the Globe Coal Company as a driver,¹⁴ and later that year he worked as a carpenter.

In 1906 Myer recovered his position as custodian for the Des Moines Fire Insurance

¹² U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989, Beta, (Online Database, Ancestry.com, 2011). Des Moines Directory, 1893; 1895 Iowa State Census, (Online Database, Ancestry.com, 2003).

¹³ 1900 US Census Des Moines, Polk County, Ia., Roll T623_454, p. 6A, Enum. Dist. 82, taken 9 June, 1900; 1910 US Census Des Moines Ward 4, Polk County, Ia., Roll T624_420, p. 11B, Enum. Dist. 120, image 25, taken 27 April 1910; 1920 US Census Des Moines Ward 4, Polk County, Ia., Roll T625_509, p. 3B, Enum. Dist. 132, image 161, taken 14 Jan. 1920.

¹⁴ Iowa State Census Collection, 1836-1925, (Online database, Ancestry.com, 2007). 1905 Iowa Census.

Company, and the family settled into a new home at 1456 Bluff Street, near the Des Moines River. It was a small two-story house with wood siding and a small front porch. The family lived at that address for several years, bringing a feeling of stability to the family.¹⁵ On 12 April 1906, Abigail Ruth Baker was born, completing the family. (There had been three other children born to Myer and Sylvia. One child was born in 1894, named Myrtle, who died as an infant and a pair of stillborn twins in 1895). There is a photo (Baker photo B084)¹⁶ of Ruth and Cecil standing in front of that house which was identified by Patricia (Hutton) Harris as the family home. An additional photo shows all of the children posing in front of the family organ in the sitting room of the house. The organ was the family's most valuable possession and all the girls learned to play music on it, especially Mabel, who became an accomplished pianist. By 1910 Mabel had trained as a stenographer and began to work to supplement the family income.¹⁷

All of the children went to 8 years of grade school at the Henry Sabin School, on 5th Street and

¹⁵ U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989, Beta, (Online Database, Ancestry.com, 2011). Des Moines Directory, 1906 through 1912.

¹⁶ Fred G. Baker, *Baker Family Photograph Collection*, (Golden, Colo., personal collection, 2003). Photos dating from 1860's to 1984.

¹⁷ 1910 US Census Des Moines Ward 4, Polk County, Ia., Roll T624_420, p. 11B, Enum. Dist. 120, image 25, taken 27 April 1910.

College Avenue in west-central Des Moines.¹⁸ Some of them went on to complete further education in high school or in other training programs. Con and Gould did not finish high school, because they had to find work to help support the family. Con went on to become one of the charter members of the Boy Scouts in Des Moines.

The Baker family was of the Methodist faith and regular churchgoers. It is not known which of the area churches they attended in Des Moines. A search of historical church records of the Prospect Park Methodist Episcopal Church then on Eighth Street near Washington Avenue and the First United Methodist Church on Pleasant Street, the oldest churches in that area at the time the Bakers lived in Des Moines, indicated the Bakers did not attend these traditional churches.

Con grew up with and played mostly with Gould and Cecil, his closest siblings in age. He remained close to them most of his life. Mabel was six years older and Ruth eight years younger than he. Con and Gould worked with their father when they were old enough to help with some of the carpentry work. Con and his brother learned some of their carpentry, woodworking and routine repair of simple machines from their father.

On 10 June 1912, Sylvia, Con's mother, died, leaving Myer with five children to raise: Mabel,

¹⁸ Letter from Mabel (Baker) Hutton to her brother Myer Gould Baker, dated 20 May, 1951.

Myer Gould, Con, Cecil and Ruth. Mabel took the lead and largely raised the remaining children while continuing to work as a stenographer. Unfortunately, the family had to move from the home on Bluff Street. Myer, and most of the family, bounced from there to 835 9th Street in 1913, 1181 Seventh Street in 1915,¹⁹ and 1115 Ninth Street from 1917 through 1919.²⁰

Con grew up in Des Moines, when it was a small city. The population of the city was only 50,000 in 1893.²¹ The coal industry, which peaked in that year with 26 local mines, gradually declined as the economically viable coal was depleted. By 1908, most mining in Des Moines, Iowa, had stopped. The city began to grow as the state commercial and financial capital, having several universities, and pharmaceutical companies. Publishing and manufacturing also grew in importance during this period.

Con and Gould did a lot outdoors, helping with chores, working on relatives' farms on vacations, swimming in the Raccoon and Des Moines River and tinkering with cars and early radios. As a boy, Con built a Marconi-design radio from scratch in the family tool shed and used it to listen to news

¹⁹ Iowa State Census Collection, 1836-1925, (Online database, Ancestry.com, 2007). 1915 Iowa Census

²⁰ U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989, Beta, (Online Database, Ancestry.com, 2011). Des Moines Directory, 1913 through 1919.

²¹ *Des Moines Timeline*, (Online Database, www.desmoineslibrary.com/search/localhistory/timeline.html, accessed 14 Dec 2012).

from around the world. He liked cars and hung out around garages to see how the cars worked and to learn all that he could. As a teenager he got a job at a garage, helping around the shop.

The Baker boys were good swimmers and spent much of their summers with friends along the Des Moines River. They swam regularly, fished sometimes and explored the wooded areas along the riverbanks. In the winter, the river would usually freeze hard enough to skate on the ice. That was another sport that Con and his friends enjoyed. Con told a story about how he fell through the ice, one winter's day, and was swept along under the ice. The current was such that he moved many yards in a few minutes before he came to a hole in the ice near a small dam. His friends saw him go under and raced along to try to help him. He held his breath as long as he could. Somehow during the ordeal, he remembered reading that Houdini, when doing an escape event on the frozen Hudson River in New York, had survived under ice by breathing air held in pockets under the ice surface. Con managed to find an air pocket and was able to breathe once or twice under the ice, before finding an opening to pop up through to the surface. His brother and friends hauled him out and got him home to warm up. He was always afraid of drowning and falling through ice after that experience.²²

²² Fred G. Baker record of conversations with Con J Baker in the 1950s through 1973.

One of Con's favorite sources of entertainment from about 1915 until he left Des Moines was the Riverview Amusement Park built on an island of the Des Moines River. He, Gould and Cecil went there often to enjoy the roller coaster and other rides and games.

During his teenage years Con was very interested in automobiles, which were all the rage. He became an experienced mechanic while working on cars in his neighborhood. He also was an auto-racing enthusiast and went to horse races and auto shows at the County fairgrounds. There were a few places then where dirt track auto racing happened and Con and Gould went to the races frequently.

The Des Moines Speedway was built at Valley Junction, Iowa, just outside Des Moines, beginning on 1 June 1915.²³ The speedway was constructed of wooden 2"x 4"s laid tightly on edge to form the racing surface of the banked oval track. Construction was performed under the supervision of John L. (Jack) Prince, considered at the time to be a master of racetrack construction and design. The speedway was the latest in design, rivaling tracks in Culver City near Los Angeles, California and Sheepshead Bay, New York. The one-mile oval track featured banked turns at a 45-degree angle to accommodate very high speeds. On 26 July 1915, the day the track opened, the legendary racer Barney Oldfield set a new world record on the

²³ Iowa- 94 Years of Open-Wheel History in
<<http://oilpressure.wordpress.com/2009/06/17/iowa-94-years-of-open-wheel-history/>>.

track with a five-mile speed of just over three minutes, or just under 100 miles per hour²⁴. Oldfield also drove a 100 horse power Fiat around the track while racing with De Lloyd Thompson's airplane just keeping up, with the airplane only 25 feet over his head. Many open wheel racing events were held at the track over the next two years, drawing many of the fastest cars and racing teams in the country. Ralph DePalma and the Mercedes team, Eddie Rickenbacker and the Maxwell Motors team and Eddie O'Donnell and his Duesenberg race cars came for different events. There were nineteen entries for the 150-mile race on 23 June 1916, in which DePalma won the race with Henderson and Rickenbacker, finishing second and third, respectively. Rickenbacker later won the 50-mile race. Con met "Fast Eddie" Rickenbacker at the track between the races. Rickenbacker was Con's hero, even before Eddie became an aviation ace.

Unfortunately, in 1917 World War I was well under way and the United States became occupied with the situation in Europe. Resources were directed to supply material support for the British and French Allies in the war. The interest in racing fell, as many of the best-known racers of the day volunteered themselves for the war effort.²⁵ The Des Moines Speedway became a victim of the

²⁴ "One New Record at First Meeting on the Speedway" in *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, 26 July 1915, (Online database, www.iowalink.com/lball/trib23.htm, accessed 14 Dec 2012).

²⁵ Des Moines Speedway, 1915-1916, (Online database, www.iowalink.com/lball/trib23.htm, accessed 14 Dec 2012).

times, and was closed on 6 June 1917,²⁶ due to limited demand for the races and the mounting losses of the speedway company. The track was eventually dismantled and the wood was sold off to meet company debt.

Con and Gould did many things together as they grew up and began their adult lives. They often went out for the evening when they were able to frequent taverns and meet their friends for weekend evenings in town. Although little is known of their romantic endeavors, there were photos taken of one or the other of the boys in their evening best clothes. They were seen with girls they knew during their late teenage years. The names of the girls were not recorded.

Mabel continued to work as a stenographer, from 1911 through 1915, when she began a position as a clerk for People's Popular Monthly magazine in Des Moines. Gould worked as a waiter at the Jay Lunch and as a "sealer" for William Murphy at the Chicago North Western Freight House from 1915 until May of 1917, when he enlisted in the Iowa National Guard with Con.

Con learned from his sister, Mabel, about an open position at the People's Popular Monthly magazine in Des Moines. He was hired and worked as a pressman for the magazine from about 1915 until the summer of 1917. The magazine featured current local events and home topics of interest to

²⁶ "Annual Auto Races Will Not Be Held" in *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, 7 June, 1917, (Online database, www.iowalink.com/lball/trib23.htm, accessed 14 Dec 2012).

women in Iowa and the Midwest. It was supported by classified advertisements that were directed to women's household needs. This job introduced Con to the wonderful world of printing and publishing, which became his life-long career.

Myer married Thelma J. Beley on 19 May 1917, who had been born in Illinois of Swedish parents. Thelma had a daughter from her previous marriage, but had no children with Myer. In September, Myer and Thelma were at a farm northwest of Des Moines, possibly at Waukee, and decided to move there in the spring to operate the farm on a fifty-fifty shares basis for the year.²⁷ On 8 October 1917, Myer and Thelma were back in Des Moines, canning vegetables and fruit.²⁸ Ruth was living with them and going to school every day. Mabel was going to move in with them the following Saturday, according to Myer's letter. Myer was traveling to Council Bluffs, Iowa, for a week or so, to paint a house and barn for someone there. There was marital trouble in the Baker household and, by July of 1918, Thelma had moved out of the house.²⁹ It is not clear what happened to precipitate their separation.

Cecil married Lloyd Lester Lyon on 7 July 1917, in Des Moines and moved away. Lloyd had been born 1 December 1898 in Winterset, Madison

²⁷ Letter from Gould Baker in Camp Cassidy, Iowa to Cecil Lyon at Storm Lake, Iowa, dated 14 Sept. 1917.

²⁸ Letter from Myer Baker in Des Moines to Cecil Lyon in Storm Lake, dated 8 Oct. 1917.

²⁹ Letter from Gould Baker in France to Cecil Lyon in Des Moines, dated 9 July 1918.

County, Iowa, the son of William and Clara Lyon. Shortly after Cecil and Lloyd's marriage, they moved to Storm Lake, Iowa, where Lloyd had a job as a garage mechanic. They moved back to Des Moines in 1918, in time for their first child, Virginia, to be born there on 26 June 1918. Their daughter, Berniece, was born in Des Moines on 30 September 1919.

In October 1918, Ruth was living with Mabel Baker in Kansas City, Missouri. She was a senior at Northeast High School, studying Latin, psychology, typewriting, shorthand, English literature and geometry.³⁰ She was active in gymnastics and a school literary society. She attended the Budd Park Christian Church and was elected president of the Intermediate Christian Endeavor Society there. She was also involved with many other groups in her church and community. She mentioned in her letter which was dated 10 October 1918, that the school had been closed for a week, due to the influenza epidemic that was sweeping the nation. The influenza epidemic she mentioned was the widespread Spanish flu that was sweeping the world and leaving millions dead in its wake.

Mabel married Jesse "Jerry" Hutton on 11 October 1919 in Des Moines. Jerry was born on 27 September 1882, in Sigourney, Keokuk County, Iowa, the son of William and Sarah Hutton. Mabel and Jerry had two children: Robert James, born on 21 November 1921 and Patricia Beverly, born on 28

³⁰ Letter from Ruth Baker in Kansas City, Missouri to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 10 Oct., 1918.

January 1927, both in Des Moines. They moved to 515 East Locust Street in Des Moines. Mabel had a job as a bookkeeper for the Iowa Drug Company in 1921. Ruth stayed with her older sister, Mabel, and her husband, Jesse Hutton, until Ruth's marriage to Tedd Klinetobe in 1922.

Myer Gould (called Gould) and Con both joined the Army in 1917 and shipped out to fight in the First World War.

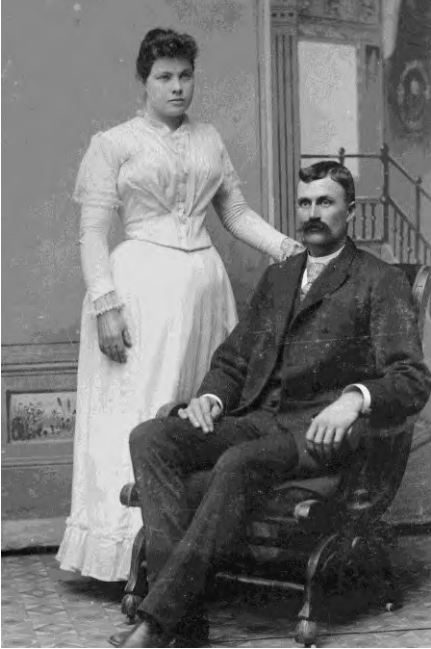


Figure 1. Myer and Sylvia (O'Gara) Baker in about 1893.



Figure 2. Myer Baker in about 1917.



Figure 3. The Baker children at home on Bluff Street, Cecil, Gould, Mabel, Con and Ruth in front in about 1909.



Figure 4. Mabel and Cecil Baker in front of the Bluff Street house.



Figure. 5.
Mabel Baker
in about 1912.



Figure 6. Myer
Gould Baker
in about 1920



Figure 7. Con James Baker in about 1920.



Figure 8. Cecil Baker and Lloyd Lyon in about 1917.

Figure 9.
Abigail Ruth (Baker)
Schmitt
in about 1967.



Figure 10.
Gravestone of Sylvia
(O'Gara) Baker
in Des Moines.

Figure 11.
Gravestone of Myer
Greentree Baker
in Des Moines.



2. OVER THERE: FRANCE AND GERMANY, 1917–1919

Con had some misgivings about going off to war and leaving his family behind. It was true that his brother was going to be by his side and they knew several friends who had also joined the National Guard, so he would not be lonely. They all viewed the coming fight in France as a great adventure and imagined themselves doing dangerous and daring feats with panache. Con was not sure what lay ahead for him, but he embraced the chance to get out of Iowa and see the world. He could not foresee how it would change his life, yet he knew that he would return a different man.

On 28 June 1914, in Sarajevo, Bosnia, a young Serbian student assassinated the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria.³¹ In response, the Austro-Hungarian government demanded that Serbia meet a number of strict conditions and not interfere with Bosnian affairs. When the Serbians did not agree to all demands, Austro-Hungary declared war on Serbia. The Russian empire was an ally of Serbia and, in turn, declared war on the Austrians. The Great War, the First World War, began in Europe as treaties and alliances required other nations to enter the conflict. France entered the war when German troops entered Belgium on August 2nd and attacked French troops

³¹ Martin Gilbert, *The First World War*, (New York, Henry Holt and County, 1994), 16.

before invading France itself. Britain declared war on Germany and Austro-Hungary on August 4th. The war expanded over the next two years to involve nearly all of the counties of Europe and the British Empire, with the British, French and other Allies pitted against the Germans and the rest of the so-called Central Powers.

Although the United States refused to join the war initially, and maintained a policy of non-intervention, American sympathies were with Britain, France and, for a time, Russia. On 7 May 1915, 128 American were killed when a German U-boat sank the British passenger liner the RMS Lusitania in the North Atlantic. President Wilson demanded that there be no further attacks on passenger ships and Germany agreed for a time. Meanwhile, Wilson tried to mediate a peace with the two alliances to no avail. Germany began unrestricted submarine warfare again in January 1917, endangering Americans and American shipping interests. At the same time, Germany made secret overtures to the Mexican government to attack the United States as Germany's ally, in exchange for German financial support to invade the USA, and take back the land of Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. That underhanded maneuver, and the sinking of seven American merchant ships by the Germans, forced the United States to enter the war on the side of the Allies. President Woodrow Wilson called upon Congress to declare war on the Central Powers. Congress complied with a Declaration of War on 6 April 1917. The Russian empire collapsed in March of 1917 and

withdrew from the war in October 1917, when the country was consumed by its own internal revolution.

The United States was ill prepared for a major war, having a small standing Army and limited recent experience in large-scale operations. The most recent action that the U.S. Army had seen was a response to Pancho Villa's cross-border attack from Mexico on Columbus, New Mexico on 9 March 1916. The US Army launched a Punitive Expedition into Mexico in pursuit of Villa and his army in 1916 that lasted until March of 1917. Villa was not captured, but several of his officers were taken and the army dispersed away from U.S. territory. General John Pershing was in charge of the expedition into Mexico, which involved the use of aircraft and motorized equipment for the first time by the U.S. forces. It provided useful combat experience for many of the officers who would soon be deployed to Europe with the U.S. forces, including John J. Pershing, George C. Patton, and others who participated in the expedition. It was widely followed by Americans in newspapers and on newsreels in theaters across America.

To meet the new war effort, America's resources were mobilized by a series of actions across the nation. During 1916, the U.S. Government determined that it needed to increase the size of the standing army to prepare for possible conflict in Europe. The president called for the raising of a volunteer army to meet the demands of the upcoming war effort. But, by 1917, only about 120,000 volunteers had joined the army and only

about 80,000 men had joined the National Guard.³² Congress passed the Selective Service Act on 18 May 1917, and the President signed it the next day, enabling the government to raise an army using conscription. Local draft boards were created by the states and all young men of a certain age range were required to register with the board at their state offices. In all, some 24,234,021 men registered and, of those, over 2,800,000 men were inducted into the Army or the National Guard.³³ General John J. Pershing was selected to command the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) that would be sent to Europe to fight.

The United States needed to raise a large army quickly, but it would take some time before the Army was able to accept and train the large numbers of men it would soon need. Volunteers who wanted to join the war effort could immediately join their state National Guard unit. The Iowa National Guard began to recruit volunteers actively, soon after war was declared. The large number of volunteers was organized into several fighting units but, in general, they were called “The Iowa Volunteers.”

Con, like many young men of his age, was eager for adventure and a chance to prove his mettle. He enlisted as a private in the Iowa National Guard on 8 May 1917, at the age of nineteen, before the draft

³² Gary Mead, *The Doughboys, America and the First World War*, (New York, The Overlook Press, 2000), 69.

³³ Gary Mead, *The Doughboys, America and the First World War*, (New York, The Overlook Press, 2000), 71.

was declared. His Army discharge papers indicated that he had brown eyes and hair, a fair complexion and was five feet, six inches tall. His brother, Gould, enlisted the very next day at age 20 and a half. He was described on his Army discharge papers as having blue eyes, light hair, a fair complexion and was five feet, eight inches tall. Both Con and Gould were single at the time.

It turns out that Gould may not have been as eager as Con to join the Guard. Apparently Myer had asked Gould to join the army to look after Con.³⁴ Maybe Myer worried about Con because he was small for his age and because he took too many risks, but Myer had at least partly influenced Gould's actions.

Con and Gould were placed in the same Iowa National Guard field artillery unit - Battery F of the 1st Field Artillery (FA) - and they remained together for most of the war. They received their first orders on 8 May 1917, telling them to prepare to assemble in the next few days and to make arrangements as needed. On 15 May they received orders to assemble at the Des Moines Coliseum at 8pm Saturday, the 19th, for muster.³⁵ They would begin drilling on Monday and Thursday nights at the Coliseum. They received orders to report for mobilization on Saturday, 7 July at the Coliseum.

³⁴ Fred G. Baker record of conversations with Patricia (Hutton) Harris, 2006 through 2008.

³⁵ Special Order from Capt. G. W. Dulany, Jr., the Battery F Commander, to all men of the Battery, dated 15 May 1917.

They would all transfer to the State Fair Ground, which had been renamed Camp McKinley, to be quartered there and commence formal training. They were told to bring specific clothing and personal items in a trunk or suitcase that they could then ship home when they received all of their Army gear and no longer needed the civilian clothing and items.

On 18 July 1917, the Iowa National Guard and Guard Units from several adjoining states were merged into the new US Army 34th Division, the "Sandstorm Division". In order to accomplish this, both Con and Gould (and all the other men in the battery) received Honorable Discharges from the Iowa National Guard on 5 August 1917. The reason given for discharge was that the men were drafted the same day into the National Army. They still were called Battery F of the 1st Field Artillery of the Iowa National Guard for some time after that. Their unit soon became 34th Div., 59th FA Brigade, 126th FA Battalion, Battery F. That merger put the troops in the National Army and they remained in national units throughout the war.

The Iowa Volunteers trained for the summer in Des Moines at the state fair grounds and possibly at Camp Dodge, depending on the nature of the training. They drilled through basic training, learning to march and maneuver, did physical training, and learned the Army way of doing things. They became a unit that could perform under difficult conditions. The fact that so many of the men were from the Des Moines area helped create a camaraderie since many of them already knew each

other or at least they had a lot in common. Con and Gould were on guard duty some nights while the battalion was encamped near Des Moines. They were housed in a camp composed of large rectangular tents with high sidewalls and a tall central pole to support the canvass. Gould commented on September 14th that it was getting too cold to sleep outside.³⁶

On 24 September 1917 Con, Gould and their 126th Battalion (and possibly other battalions) packed their gear and loaded onto rail cars at the local train station. Myer mentioned that he could feel Gould's hands tremble when they shook hands goodbye at the train station when the boys shipped out to New Mexico.³⁷ Their train set off going south from Des Moines to Osceola, Iowa, where the train stopped briefly. They were met at the train station by a number of citizens and quite a few young high school girls who exchanged addresses with the soldiers, so they could become pen pals. After a short delay, the train continued south into Missouri. They went through Kansas City and across eastern Kansas to Muskogee, Oklahoma, arriving midday on the 26th.³⁸ They reached Fort Worth, Texas that night according to one of Gould's letters home. From Fort Worth they traveled west through western Texas oil country, probably via Abilene,

³⁶ Letter from Gould Baker in Camp Cassidy, Iowa to Cecil Lyon at Storm Lake, Iowa, dated 14 Sept. 1917.

³⁷ Letter from Myer Greentree Baker in Des Moines to Cecil Lyon at Storm Lake, dated 10 Jan., 1918.

³⁸ Letter from Gould Baker at Muskogee, Oklahoma to Cecil Lyon at Storm Lake, dated 26 Sept. 1917.

Pecos and El Paso, and then into New Mexico. There are photographs of their train climbing up a long grade that may have been where they entered New Mexico.³⁹ They continued on to Deming, New Mexico, which was the nearest rail stop to the new training site, Camp Cody.

The Battalion set up a tent camp on a street grid and had to do a lot of work to get everything in order. According to one of Gould's letters they arrived at camp on 27 September, after traveling 144 hours, or six days.⁴⁰ His math does not match with the dates that he mentioned in his letters, but he may have somehow miscalculated the number of hours. It is likely that they actually arrived in Deming late on the 28th or even the 29th based on the time needed to travel similar distances earlier in the trip.

Both Con and Gould purchased Liberty Loan Bonds with some of their pay, naming their sister, Cecil, as their alternate beneficiary. Gould also purchased life insurance through the Army, which cost \$.64 per \$1,000 of coverage per month.⁴¹ He bought \$10,000 of coverage for himself, enough to make the family well off, if he did not survive the war. He was very concerned for his father to keep up any payments on the bonds and insurance in case

³⁹ Fred G. Baker, *Baker Family Photograph Collection*, (Golden, Colo., personal collection, 2003). Photos dating from 1860's to 1984.

⁴⁰ Letter from Gould Baker at Camp Cody, New Mexico to Cecil Lyon at Storm Lake, dated 30 Sept. 1917.

⁴¹ Letter from Gould Baker at Camp Cody to Cecil Lyon at Storm Lake, dated 13 Nov. 1917.

he fell behind. Gould was apparently a more prolific correspondent than Con, if one could tell by the number of letters that each one sent home and which are still in the family records.

Con wrote that he had a nose bleed every day since their arrival at Camp Cody,⁴² due to the dry, thin air at the elevation of the camp. He complained about the heat and sand as well. He reported that the temperature was about 110 degree in the daytime and about 40 degrees at night. He called the surrounding country “God-forsaken”. He said that Deming was a small town like Sac City, but with more crowded streets. They had music in camp consistently for entertainment.⁴³ Gould sent a horned toad home in a box to his sister Cecil.

The Bakers did many things together since they were in the same Battery, such as guard duty and routine chores for the camp and horses. They learned a lot about horses during this time. They learned general care for horses, as well as how to treat minor ailments and shoeing, even though there were veterinarians and horse-shoers in camp. They learned to repair equipment - a useful skill to have on the battlefield. They learned horsemanship and general riding skills, including how to ride bareback at a gallop. They practiced with rifles and pistols in the desert and on the practice range. Neither Con nor Gould received a special firearms certification

⁴² Letter from Con Baker at Camp Cody to Cecil Lyon at 117 ½ Lake Ave., Storm Lake, Iowa, dated 7 Oct. 1917.

⁴³ Letter from Gould Baker at Camp Cody to Cecil Lyon at Storm Lake, dated 13 Oct. 1917.

but Con became an expert shot after that. In October, Con purchased a camera so he could take photos of their camp and the surrounding country.⁴⁴ Both Con and Gould took photos of their time in New Mexico. Gould kept a diary, which he maintained during the war period.⁴⁵ For entertainment outside of camp, they went into Deming and could take the train to El Paso for the day.

Con wrote that he went on a long horseback ride with a Lieutenant Mills on 17 November and that they climbed a mountain about 15 miles northwest of the camp. They shot revolvers at rabbits for sport,⁴⁶ and he helped a rancher round up a few cattle. He commented that cattle died often from lack of water in the desert and thin air. They also lost many horses due to the thin air. Con signed his letter to Cecil “Your Bro., Con” and he listed himself as C. J. Baker on his correspondence. Gould listed himself as M. G. Baker on documents.

⁴⁴ Letter from Con Baker at Camp Cody to Cecil Lyon at Storm Lake, dated 30 Oct. 1917.

⁴⁵ It appears the Gould kept two diaries during the war. He mentioned that he had a diary in one of his letters from Camp Cody. He began a second diary in June of 1918 when he was in France, writing in a bound notebook that he apparently found. The second diary had been used by the Germans to record the loaning of books from their camp library, as evidenced by the first few pages of the book. Gould must have filled or lost his first diary and continued in the second diary. The second diary survived the war and was used as one source for this work. The first diary has not as yet been found.

⁴⁶ Letter from Con Baker in Camp Cody to Cecil Lyon at Storm Lake, dated 17 Nov. 1917.

The Battalion trained at Camp Cody through the fall of 1917. They drilled on foot and with the horses, training to be mobile and efficient. They made marches out into the “desert” with full artillery gear and support. They had trouble with the horses at the higher altitude and with the intense heat at first. Many horses died of exhaustion and disease from the rugged conditions and work. They received small arms training as well as how to use heavier machine guns and mortars. A French officer trained them in the use of field artillery, since it was used in modern warfare. They had a separate camp for the artillery training where they had an open range for live ammunition training. They operated 75mm (3-inch) cannon that were mounted on a single axle carriage and was attached to a single axle caisson during transport. The caisson carried some ammunition and other gear that they needed in the field. These lightweight artillery pieces were maneuverable and relatively easy to set up and tear down for rapid movement. They practiced packing up the artillery pieces and moving to a new location at a gallop and then setting the battery up again, ready for action. This training was necessary, in order that they could rapidly respond to any counter artillery shell or gas attack on their position. The Battalion passed a major review in mid-November.

The battalion had a Thanksgiving celebration with a huge feast for the troops. Gould was so impressed that they had had such a good meal that he sent one of the menus home to his sister, Cecil. Shortly afterwards, both of the Bakers, along with

their entire battery, were sent back to quarantine because one fellow got measles. Gould described the “contact camp” as follows: “One of the boys got measles and they sent him to the base hospital and the rest of us they sent to contact camp. It sure is a fine place here. It is just like prison.”⁴⁷ The entire battalion was quarantined for measles in November 1917. They were quarantined for 16 days. By December there were 13,000 men at Camp Cody with men coming and going all the time. Fortunately, for Gould, he received a big box of cookies and cake from a girl in Osceola with whom he had been corresponding since passing through her town on the train ride south. Gould had been promoted from Lead Driver to Scout in November and had been assigned to the Headquarters Section. Con was promoted to Wagon Mechanic, referred to as a “Wagoner”. He was trained to maintain and repair the wagons, caissons and other machinery.

In December, the weather had turned cold and windy. All the men could think about was getting more blankets and wool socks. That month, the battalion built a building for the YMCA, which played a big part of the men’s lives while in the Army. The Army and Navy Young Men’s Christian Association, “The Association Follows the Flag on Land and Sea”, was always present at the camp for the troops. They provided stationary, books to read, helpful advice, a place to hang out

⁴⁷ Letter from Gould Baker in Camp Cody to Cecil Lyon at Storm Lake, dated 2 Dec, 1917.

and a range of other services to the men. The YMCA and Red Cross made sure that people back home sent their boys letters and packages often to help keep their morale up. They recruited high school girls especially to write to the troops and encouraged them to collect goodies like butter, candy, jam, cookies and cakes to send to “the boys”.

In January the battalion was involved in a heavy training and review schedule. They were on maneuvers and had inspections often. At one of the reviews, a moving picture crew filmed their dress parade for the whole 59th Field Artillery Brigade and Con and Gould were in the review.⁴⁸ The men were on guard duty, rotating guard duty one night in eight, and it was getting tiresome. There was concern that German agents could be observing the camp, stealing across the border from nearby Mexico.

The men were waiting to hear when they would be going overseas to France. It was clear to them that they would soon go. They prepared their personal trunks to send them home when they got their final field equipment and supplies. The idea of travel by sea was not encouraging to the boys, who had never been on the ocean before. This was a special concern because a friend of theirs was on a ship that was sunk by a U-boat, even though their friend survived.

⁴⁸ Letter from Gould Baker at Camp Cody to Cecil Lyon at 4317 Pleasant St., Des Moines, dated 25 Jan. 1918.

In March, Con and Gould were selected by their Captain along with 10 other men for special detachment.⁴⁹ They were not sure exactly what they had volunteered to do. They were possibly going to be in a group to train for the new large self-propelled, armored tanks but were unsure. They received their new gear, including complete new clothing. The weather was warming up and winter was finally over. The Bakers found out that their group of 12 men was an advance team for the Battalion and would leave for France in a few days.⁵⁰ They were sent to a separate contact camp to prevent them from contracting measles or some other disease that would upset the schedule. Finally, they received orders to travel by train to the East Coast.

On April 3rd, Con and Gould were already at Camp Merritt, New Jersey.⁵¹ They were to receive final equipment and side arms there before catching their ship. They arrived in France several days later after an unpleasant ocean crossing. Most of the men and equipment shipped to France at that time was landed at the large ocean port of Brest. From there, most troops were sent to a camp behind the lines to get organized and to do additional training that was more specific to being in France. In April they began a brief orientation and training period

⁴⁹ Letter from Gould Baker at Camp Cody to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 9 March 1918.

⁵⁰ Letter from Gould Baker at Camp Cody to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 21 March 1918.

⁵¹ Letter from Gould Baker at Camp Merritt, N.J. to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 3 April 1918.

near Baracourt, France. It was rainy weather and mud was becoming their new friend in camp, replacing their old friends, sand and dust. They did hikes every day, organized their equipment, and trained on the use and maintenance of gas masks and new weapons.

On 23 April, 1918⁵² Con and Gould and other men were reassigned from Battery F of the 126th Field Artillery, 34th Division to Battery E of the 147th Field Artillery, 66th F. A. Brigade, 41st Division of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF).⁵³ They were apparently replacement troops for the 147th F. A. They traveled to Montigny-sur-Aube,⁵⁴ southwest of Chaumont for artillery training. That was a training area just behind the lines, in the Toul Sector of the front. They conducted field artillery practice using live ammunition. Gould commented in a letter that they had just missed seeing their Cousin Jesse,⁵⁵ who was at the same camp when they first landed in

⁵² Form Number 724-1 ½ A.G.O., *Service Record for Con J. Baker*, on file in the Archive at the Gold Star Museum, Camp Dodge, Johnston, Iowa.

⁵³ Letter from Gould Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 26 April 1918.

⁵⁴ Peter Norbeck, *Record of Service of 147th Field Artillery (Formerly Fourth Infantry, S. D. N. G.) in France to 11th November 1918*, (Pierre, South Dakota, Office of the Adjutant General, 1919).

⁵⁵ This appears to be Jesse George Shannon, who had served in Company B of the Second Regiment of the Iowa National Guard during Pershing's Incursion into Mexico in the pursuit of Pancho Via in 1916. He apparently reenlisted or was drafted for the war in Europe.

France.⁵⁶ In May, Con was under the weather for a few days getting used to the new food and flora of the country.

They finished training with the 147th Field Artillery but on 11 June the men transferred to Battery E of the 150th Field Artillery (FA)⁵⁷ of the 67th FA Brigade, 42nd Division, which was now part of the 2nd Army, A.E.F.⁵⁸ Apparently, they volunteered to transfer to the 150th because their friend Harold Magee was in that unit. The 150th needed trained replacement gunners at that time, so it was easy to transfer. The 147th moved out to a location on the Alsace Sector the same day. Con and Gould moved over to the 150th, which was already at the Baccarat Sector, southeast of Luneville and Nancy and had already seen a lot of action on the front. Con and Gould were to stay in the 150th F. A. for the remainder of their time in Europe.

The 150th F. A. Battalion was composed of batteries of 155 mm (6 inch) field pieces. These were much heavier guns than the 75 mm (3 inch) cannon that Con and Gould had trained on at Camp Cody. The guns required the use of larger 6 inch shells that weighed about four times as much as the 75 mm shells they had trained with. The men

⁵⁶ Letter from Gould Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 26 April 1918.

⁵⁷ Form Number 724-1 ½ A.G.O., *Service Record for Con J. Baker*, on file in the Archive at the Gold Star Museum, Camp Dodge, Johnston, Iowa.

⁵⁸ Letter from Gould Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 11 June 1918.

received extra training on how to handle the larger ammunition and to otherwise manage the new equipment. Extra horses and men were required for transport and management of the equipment.

On June 20th, Battery E moved to a new position on the Baccarat Sector of the Alsace-Lorraine Front.⁵⁹ They began to bombard German positions in the afternoon at a rate of ten rounds per minute, firing 00 charge high explosive, shrapnel and gas shells. Soon they were engaged in an artillery duel with a German FA unit that was firing high explosive and gas shells at them. Battery E was able to counter with heavy fire and the Germans withdrew. They had to move out of that position at midnight and hiked all night. After resting and refitting for a few days, the battery moved 16 kilometers on 24 June to a railroad center and loaded onto boxcars. They traveled all night and unloaded next day and hiked 18 kilometers to a so-called “rest camp”. There they reorganized their equipment and cleaned it all up. They ran telephone lines to the Battery Office and prepared other communications.

The Battery relied on telephone lines and runners for communications. They had to be in touch with the Divisional headquarters, the front lines and with the observation post at all times in

⁵⁹ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal of Myer Gould Baker, June 20, 1918 through April 21, 1919*, as transcribed by Fred G. Baker, (Golden, Colo., Other Voices Press, 2007).

order to know what locations the Division or the individual battalions wanted them to fire on. They also needed to hear from the observers how accurate their fire was and how to correct their aim to hit a given target. Therefore, the phone lines had to run to several locations on the ground surface or in trenches to keep in contact. If the wires were cut by moving machinery or by incoming artillery fire, they had to repair the lines immediately, even if they were under fire at the time. If the battery came under fire by counter-battery artillery, they often had to move their position and then rerun new phone lines. They also used runners and messengers on horseback when the phone lines were down. Con rode as a horseback messenger many times during the war. He said that they also experimented with transmitting radio signals through the wet ground, using bayonets stuck in the ground as antennas. It worked over short distances but did not replace the need for phone lines and riders.

On 29 June, they received orders to move out and the battery traveled for four days. Con and Gould were assigned to the B.C. detail on 3 July, and rode all day on horses to the site of their new position on the Champaign Sector. The Bakers celebrated July 4th at the Champaign Front with their battery.⁶⁰ They spent the next day's running telephone lines to the Observation Post (O.P.) at the second line trenches and setting up equipment.

⁶⁰ Letter from Gould Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 9 July 1918.

They had a couple of gas alert scares but nothing came of it. They had some time to rest at camp, where they cleaned equipment and groomed horses. They were able to go to the YMCA for cocoa and mint drinks for four cents a cup. Music was provided by the 165th Infantry from New York, which were part of the 42nd Division.

The Battalion had a chance to prove their metal in the Champaign Sector, where they were confronted by the Prussian Guard of the German Army.⁶¹ The Prussians were considered one of the best German Regiments. On 13 July, the front lines were attacked in their sector and they went on alert. The Germans used tanks in the attack and Gould had been able to see them maneuver from the hill he was on.⁶² Near the second line (behind the front trench line), a wagon broke through their telephone line, which needed an immediate repair. Gould noted in a letter that he worked with a Frenchman by the front lines.⁶³ The next day Battery E opened up on the German positions with a four-hour bombardment. Fighting went on into the 16th of July, when the Germans retreated to their old positions. They had penetrated only to the second line trenches of the 42nd Division before backing off. Battery E relocated their picket line for the horses, because the Germans had started to bombard

⁶¹ Letter from Con Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 12 Sept., 1918.

⁶² Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 16 July, 1918 entry.

⁶³ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 13 July, 1918 entry.

them with artillery and the battalion had lost a few horses in the fire.

Gould was the forward observer on 17 July, located near a small grove of trees. A German airplane flew overhead, spotted his position and made a strafing run at him with its machine gun. Gould said that he had to run and hide behind a tree to avoid the dozens of rounds hitting the ground around him.⁶⁴ The German plane was chased off when 18 machine guns from the American lines began to pepper him with fire. Gould did not have a steel helmet of his own, so Con loaned him his. Gould held out at the O.P. station for two days. They were surrounded by mustard gas, when the nearby English 117th Infantry trenches were gassed by German 77 mm rounds of this lethal agent. Gould spent the night in his gas mask and did not sleep at all. He was recalled the next day when his unit had to relocate.

About the same time, Con was caught out in the open near the second line, as incoming artillery rounds came in around him. He had to dive into a bomb crater for safety and landed on a dead soldier already in the crater. Con said he always looked where he was diving after that.

Con's unit moved 18 kilometers to a new camp near Chalons on the 18th of July. They were bombed by German aircraft that night. No one was hurt. The entire division was ordered to the Aisne-

⁶⁴ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 17 July, 1918 entry.

Marne Salient on 20 July 1918.⁶⁵ On the 21st of July, they marched to Chalons and boarded a train in the afternoon, leaving Chalons after dinner. They boarded the familiar French boxcars called “40 and 8’s”, because they could hold 40 men or 8 horses.⁶⁶ They were transported to the Chateau-Thierry Sector.

The 42nd Division replaced the American 26th Division on the Front on about 26 July 1918. They were passing through the city of Chateau Thierry on late July and were impressed by how heavily it had been destroyed by shellfire.⁶⁷ Dead bodies lay everywhere: German, French and American. While moving into position, part of the Division was surprised by German machine gun fire that mowed down many of the Doughboys before the Germans could be dislodged. The 42nd Division moved into position and the fighting continued throughout the rest of the day. They were bombed by German aircraft and lost a few men and six horses. The Aisne-Marne offensive lasted from 26 July through 3 August.⁶⁸

Con and Gould were glad that they did not have to spend much of their time in the trenches. They were always wet, muddy and unsanitary. Trench

⁶⁵ James J. Cooke, *The Rainbow Division in the Great War, 1917-1919*, (Westport, Conn., Praeger Press, 1994), 113.

⁶⁶ James J. Cooke, *The Rainbow Division in the Great War, 1917-1919*, (Westport, Conn., Praeger Press, 1994), 20.

⁶⁷ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 28 July, 1918 entry.

⁶⁸ James J. Cooke, *The Rainbow Division in the Great War, 1917-1919*, (Westport, Conn., Praeger Press, 1994), 120.

rats were a constant threat, hiding in bedding, under the wooden mats the soldiers had put down to walk on, behind the wooden shoring that held back the trench walls and in the shacks the men lived in underground. Some of the rats could grow to be the size of small dogs, and, having lived around men for months, they became bold.

The water in the trenches, in ditches, streams and everywhere was contaminated from years of blood, death and waste from men and animals. All water had to be boiled before use to avoid disease.

On 29 July, Gould became sick from the bad water in camp. He was so weak from the illness that it took him eight hours to walk back to the picket line four kilometers behind the front lines. The doctors said they couldn't do anything to help him and he languished in camp for days, hardly eating. Con and their friend, Browney, brought him food each day, but he couldn't eat much more than soup. They helped him pack up his gear each time they had to move the battery. He lost 30 pounds over a three-week period, due to dysentery and dehydration. He finally set up his tent near the camp kitchen. There he saw lots of wounded men pass through the picket lines on their way to the base hospital. The injured would always stop by the kitchen to get something to eat. The kitchen boys would always give them food until, on 1 August, they ran out of food. Even then, men from the battery would find personal food to give them, if they had it.

On 1 August, Con wrote his sister that all was well and quiet for a few days at camp.⁶⁹ He noted that he had not needed to wear his glasses since he left Camp Cody. He questioned whether his little sister, Ruth, was living with Cecil instead of with Mabel. He also commented that the great aviators there were fighting for the Allies. The men had daily opportunities to watch German and Allied (mostly American) flyers fight overhead. Eddie Rickenbacker became an aviation hero, during those months of 1918, as he became the top American Flying Ace for shooting down the most German aircraft (26). Con told his fellow soldiers that he had met Rickenbacker back in Des Moines during his racing days.

Con and some of the other men had a chance to swim in a small lake one day. They were not far from the Front but it was a quiet day and they had a chance to wash some clothes on the lake embankment. As they were fooling around in the water, they saw some other men doing the same things, washing and swimming on the other side of the lake. The groups of men waved at each other. Con and a friend swam out to the middle of the lake to see what unit the other men were in and a man from the other bank swam out to meet them. When they got close to each other, they hailed each other. Con said "Hello!" and the other man saying "Wie gehts?" (This is German for, "How's it going?") Both of them were surprised. The German soldier

⁶⁹ Letter from Con Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 1 Aug., 1918.

smiled and shrugged and Con smiled back. Then they swam back to their respective shores. Nothing happened, but both groups of men soon finished their wash and waved as they left the lake.

The 3rd of August found the German Army on the retreat. The American battery moved forward into a new position only to find that the Germans retreated again out of the battery's range. So, on 6 August the battery moved forward about five miles to a new position up against a big hill. On 8 August, the Germans counterattacked with a huge artillery bombardment and an infantry assault. The Americans took shellfire all through those days and the picket lines were hit hard. Con was caught in a gas barrage and was badly injured by mustard gas before he could get his protective gear on. He was sent to hospital to recover. On the 10th they were under heavy attack by artillery fire as they attempted to move camp. Gould noted, "I was trying to make my roll and the shell was humming every two minutes. It kept me busy diving in my hole, and the dirt and steel was thick and fast and hard."⁷⁰ They moved to a new position in the Chateau-Thierry Sector that night. Con wrote that he spent two days off to do sightseeing in Chateau-Thierry and Langes, one of the oldest towns in France.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 10 August, 1918 entry.

⁷¹ Letter from Con Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 12 Sept., 1918.

Con's gas injuries were worse than originally thought. He was sent to a hospital in Bordeaux for treatment, crossing France twice on the way to and from the hospital. He had a chance to see parts of Tours, Bourges, Chaumont, Dijon and Paris, en route.⁷² Con traveled by train to a field hospital at Bourmont on 31 August.⁷³ He later received a Purple Heart Medal for the injury in combat. In all, Con was gassed three times but the August 8th incident was the most serious.

From 30 August until 1 September, the battery was constantly on the move. They finally had a break at a town called Landaville.⁷⁴ Everybody was exhausted, especially the horses from pulling heavy loads over such long distances. There was a lot of concern about working the horses too hard. The horses were viewed, by most of the men, as part of the battalion and they were treated very well, considering the conditions that they all had to endure at times. Horse casualties were listed along with the human casualties in most units, since they were a part of the team. They needed a few days of rest to recover their strength. The men were able to buy food and have the local people cook meals for them, so they could have better meals than the Army provided. Con was apparently suffering from another gas injury at that time. He had been (and

⁷² Letter from Con Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 12 Sept., 1918.

⁷³ Ordre de Transport for Private C. Baker from Langres to Bourmont, dated 31 Aug., 1918.

⁷⁴ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 1 Sept., 1918 entry.

still was) in a field hospital near Bourmont on 2 September and Gould planned to go to see him.⁷⁵ They stayed in Landaville until the 4th or longer before again moving to their new position on the St. Mihiel Front.

Years later, Con remembered that a soldier quickly learned to tell the difference between the sounds of incoming artillery shells. He could tell if a round was going to land close by from the whistling sound as it approached. He could also tell what kind of incoming round it was by sound. The German 88 mm shells had a particularly lower “note” that everyone grew to recognize. The gas canisters wobbled in flight, making a distinct oscillating sound, so it gave you an extra couple of seconds to react. This gave him time to grab his gas mask as he headed for the foxhole, right before the canister landed. The Germans used phosgene and mustard gases, but they used mustard gas most often. The problem with this was due to it being heavy and would settle into low places on the battlefield, such as trenches, foxholes and bomb craters. The soldiers had to be aware of this (especially after a gas attack) before jumping into any holes. The gas masks worked generally well, but were difficult to wear and made a person feel claustrophobic. When the masks were wet, it made it difficult to breathe. Mustard gas also permeated wet clothing and irritated the skin.

⁷⁵ Letter from Gould Baker in France to Myer Baker at Des Moines, dated 2 Sept., 1918.

On 10 September, the 42nd Division was dug in at St. Mihiel and were making a strong assault on the German lines.⁷⁶ Thirty-six hundred Germans were captured in that attack. The battery-men gained a lot of food from the overrun German lines, and were able to acquire shoes and beer from the German trenches. The American soldiers collected souvenirs, such as pocketknives and lighters from Germans corpses. The German infantrymen were dressed in rags, seemed poorly outfitted and some were teenagers. That seemed to be a sign that they were in desperate straits, after so many years of war. The weather had turned to frequent rains in September and deep mud was everywhere. At that location, the picket lines were placed in a forest to hide the horses from observation balloons and airplanes. The men built some wooden shacks out of wood from the German lines. This allowed them to keep a little drier than they had been in their waterlogged and muddy tents. The fighting continued but the battery didn't move for several days.

On 24 September, the Germans began a large offensive with a huge, nighttime artillery barrage. The offensive stalled out quickly and the Americans held their lines. Gould was sick again and Con and others took care of his horses. Con brought him soup while he was laid up in his tent. Gould was sick for about 12 days and confined to camp. Con and his friends loaded him on a wagon when the

⁷⁶ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 10 Sept., 1918 entry.

battery had to move. He was simply too weak to walk along.

On 29 September, the 42nd Division was ordered to move to the Argonne Forest, or to what was left of it.⁷⁷ Con and a man in their unit called Browney missed a detail on 30 September and were punished for it with a rock pile detail. Between that day and 7 October, the battery was on the move each day and night, traveling more than 100 kilometers into a new position in the Argonne Forest.⁷⁸

The Bakers were then on the famous Meuse-Argonne Front. They were involved in fighting nearly every day in October, being bombarded by artillery and aircraft. They lost one man and several were injured by an aerial bomb on the 8th of September, while the Bakers were on guard duty. On the 10th, a German plane shot down a barrage balloon, but, in turn, was shot down by ground fire from the Allied forces. The men slept in foxholes every night due to the nighttime shelling of their camp and picket lines. On the 12th, the picket line was hit by a bombshell and two horses were struck. One was killed and one wounded. Con went out to bring in the wounded horse but it was too injured to make it back to safety. Con had to shoot it with his .32 caliber revolver to put it out of its misery.

⁷⁷ James J. Cooke, *The Rainbow Division in the Great War, 1917-1919*, (Westport, Conn., Praeger Press, 1994), 163.

⁷⁸ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 7.Oct., 1918 entry.

On the 13th of October, the Battalion moved about 40 kilometers to the right flank of the Verdun Front and set up operations. On the 14th, the 150th F.A. and the rest of their Brigade and several other artillery units began a massive bombardment of the German lines and artillery positions. Several French and American divisions moved forward for the attack. On 20 October, the German artillery hit Battery E's position with 69 gas shells, which flooded their little valley in a gas cloud.⁷⁹ One shell came within 10 feet of Gould's foxhole but did not explode. Fortunately, he had spent the night up at Con's and Browney's foxhole to avoid the shrapnel. The continuous rain and frequent bombardment was making the landscape around them a sea of mud and the men slept in muddy foxholes. During the night they had to bale water out of their foxholes. One night, while several men were sleeping in a ditch to avoid artillery shrapnel, a rainstorm came and flooded them out. It took two days to dry out their blankets.

Con was at the gun positions much of October and Gould was assigned to the picket line area.⁸⁰ Con, Gould and Browney moved across the creek to take up housing in an abandoned German billet, in an attempt to stay dry. They had to evict two dead,

⁷⁹ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 20 Oct., 1918 entry.

⁸⁰ Letter from Con Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 20 Oct., 1918.

decomposing Germans from one room, before they were able to breathe fresh air.⁸¹

Shortly thereafter, Con witnessed a German airplane fly over them, as the 42nd was moving into a new position. He watched the plane get shot down by the battalion's men. The plane was hit by some of the gunfire, and crashed near him. Two German soldiers were captured from the wreckage. Con said he felt sorry for the men in the plane, and that they didn't have a chance under that kind of fire. He took a souvenir from the plane and sent it to Cecil in a letter.⁸²

On the 27th of October, the battery moved past a town called Fle'ville, moving right up to the front line. They took shellfire the next day, which killed three of their men. While in Fle'ville, a man was arrested as a thief. He was caught stealing from the Lieutenant's baggage, and was taken to the picket line under guard. As the thief's guard was being relieved by a second, a German shell landed on them. Two men were killed and the third man lost a leg. On the night of the 29th, a German shell hit the camp kitchen and blew bags of flour and other food all over the camp. The following day, flour bags were pulled down from the tree branches.

The battery moved every day from 30 October through 9 November, trying to keep in close

⁸¹ Letter from Con Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 20 Oct., 1918.

⁸² Letter from Con Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 20 Oct., 1918.

proximity to the German lines.⁸³ Con was up at the forward gun positions for several days.⁸⁴ The Germans were in retreat and kept on the move. They were blowing up bridges and mining roads as they retreated, making it difficult for the 42nd Division to keep up. The battery exchanged fire with some German troops, but didn't settle into more than an overnight camp. The Germans were moving constantly in the direction of their homeland, perhaps knowing that, for them, the war was over. The area around the trenches had been completely destroyed by artillery fire from both sides and no French buildings remained. Whole forests had been blown into little sticks. When they progressed farther into the areas previously occupied by the Germans, French civilians came out to surrender and got down on their knees, begging for mercy. They were happy to find that the new soldiers were Americans and that they could go home.

During this period, Gould became separated from the battery for four days, hiking around trying to find out where they had moved each day.⁸⁵ He said in a letter that he kept on the move, hiking from dawn until dark every day, but he did not know where the battery had gone. He finally caught up with them late on 1 November, a hungry man.

⁸³ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 30 Oct., through 9 Nov., 1918 entries.

⁸⁴ Letter from Con Baker in France to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 2 Nov., 1918.

⁸⁵ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 14 Nov., 1918 entry.

The division kept on the move until the 9th of November, when they stopped to wait for replacements and supplies. They had moved so quickly that they had outrun their ammo and supplies. The men of the battery wound up feeding captured German flour to the horses because they had run out of grain and animal feed.

On the 9th the battery was told to pull back to a town called Fanny, where some of the men were billeted with families. The next day they moved back to the town of Harricourt near Buzancy, arriving there at 7 p.m. They were still in Harricourt on 11 November 1918, when (at 11 a.m.) the war ended. The men celebrated by firing flares and shooting in the air, relieved that the fighting was over. The battalion stayed in Harricourt until the 14th. Years later, Con would remember that the artillery along the front line began to go silent that morning, but a few shots continued until 11 a.m. After that, there was an eerie silence. They thought this lack of noise strange, due to the fact that they had been used to hearing consistent gun and artillery fire. All of a sudden, it was quiet. On the 13th, they heard the rumor that they would be going to Germany.

After the Armistice took effect on 11 November 1918, the 42nd (or Rainbow) Division was joined with the new 3rd Army. They were sent to Germany as part of the Army of Occupation for several months. The men from Iowa had no idea when they enlisted that they would march into Germany as part of that force.

The battery moved out from Harricourt on 14 November traveling east. They marched 16 to 25 kilometers per day for the next several days. They reached Brachville on the 19th and went to Montmedy on the next day. They reached Etche on the 21st, after a 20-kilometer hike. They marched 30 kilometers to Guirch the next day and arrived in Saeul, Luxembourg on the 23rd.⁸⁶ The local citizens were afraid of the new soldiers and hid themselves until they were told that the war was over. Con and Gould were placed on MP (Military Police) duty for several days. The battalion was in Saeul on the 24th for Thanksgiving and had a meager meal. They rested in Saeul for a few days.

On 1 December 1918, the battalion moved 22 kilometers to Imbringen, where the men of the battery slept in a barn for the night. The following day, they marched 40 kilometers to the city of Steinheim, Luxembourg, on the banks of the Rhine River, with Germany in sight on the other side. Con and Gould slept in a woman's living room by a fireplace. The local people were very happy to see the Americans and to know the war was over. They gave the men hot food, a real treat after months of Slumgullion stew, or "slum", as they called it. Slumgullion stew was made from canned corned beef or "Corned Willie," as the soldiers called it. To make the stew fit to eat, the cooks would add onions, carrots and whatever other vegetables were available at the time.

⁸⁶ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 23 Nov., 1918 entry.

On 3 December, they traveled into Germany and camped at the little town of Netenheim near Neiderweis. Con and Gould were still on MP duty as the battery moved to Masholder, near Bitburg, on the 4th. All the American soldiers were required to wear their side arms while in Germany.⁸⁷ There was some rivalry between the regimental MPs and the battery MPs because the battery guys marched and slept with the battery in the field and the regimental guys rode in a truck and could commandeer warm housing.

The regiment moved on to Gerolstein on 7 December, and then to Neiderexe, where they stayed for three days. They were about 60 kilometers from Koblenz. There was a one thousand year old church in the town, which impressed the Iowans. Con, Gould and two other MPs slept in the dining room of a local German family's home.

The rainy weather led to very muddy country roads, which were knee deep in places. The men had worn out their boots with all the marching, and had holes in the soles. They found the rock-paved roads hard on the feet after so many kilometers. The men were drenched to the skin the majority of the time. Gould calculated that they had hiked more than 300 kilometers in a period of 10 or 12 days.

On 16 December they settled into the town of Bad Neuenahr in western Germany on the Mosel

⁸⁷ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 4 Dec., 1918 entry.

River. Con and Gould were on guard duty the next day and had to keep Germans away from the gun park where the field artillery was stored. The battery was billeted in the local citizens' houses. It was nice to have a warm, dry bed to crawl into at night and to have indoor showers with warm water. They were told by the battalion chaplain that they were to go home on January 10th of the following year. They were excited to hear this, but it turned out to be incorrect information.

On 24 December, Christmas Eve Day, Gould got in trouble because he failed to salute three officers he met on the street. He said he just did not see that they were officers because they were coming around a street corner, but one of them had him arrested. He was confined to quarters, put on K.P. (Kitchen Patrol) duty and then put on stable duty for ten days to suit an officer named McCord. That did not keep him from sneaking out from quarters to watch movies at night. Gould was released from arrest on 3 January 1919, the day before his birthday.

January passed uneventfully with normal duties and more free time than the men had enjoyed for many months. Con and Gould were often selected for guard duty throughout the month of January. The battery underwent several reviews and paraded often for the division officers, probably as a means to keep the troops busy.⁸⁸ On 27 January, Con and Gould were part of a group of 70 men who got

⁸⁸ Letter from Gould Baker in Germany to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 12 Jan., 1919.

passes to visit Koblenz.⁸⁹ The Red Cross met their train when it came in and gave the men coffee and sandwiches for lunch. They were provided meals by the YMCA while there and had a wonderful time wandering about the city. They took a ferry ride on the Rhine River for fun and visited the old fort that overlooked the river.

During February, the battery began to decommission some of its equipment and they had to turn in horses for disposal at sale. That was because the Army could not bring home all the material and animals that they had in Europe. They sold off their horses, which were in short supply in Europe because of the war. Part of this process was depicted as a horse auction in the 2012 movie, “War Horse.” Gould, who had spent a great deal of time caring for the horses, was glad that the battery was letting the horses go. He would have been happy to not see another horse for years. Con had been working with the tractors that the battery then used to move the heavy equipment around.⁹⁰

From January through March 1919, the entire 42nd Division was overcome by the Spanish flu.⁹¹ Thousands of men became ill, and many required hospitalization. It appeared that when the troops were ensconced on the battlefield and in the trenches, they did not interact with civilians who

⁸⁹ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 27 Jan., 1919 entry.

⁹⁰ Letter from Gould Baker in Germany to Cecil Lyon at Des Moines, dated 12 Jan., 1919.

⁹¹ James J. Cooke, *The Rainbow Division in the Great War, 1917-1919*, (Westport, Conn., Praeger Press, 1994), 214.

had the flu. But when they moved into the occupation role, where they were billeted with local families and interacted with the public more frequently, they were more widely exposed to this disease. The same could be said for the sudden outbreak of venereal disease, which sidelined many of the troops. It is not known whether Con or Gould had caught the Spanish flu or not.

The troops were very anxious to return home. There were a few controversies stirring among Army soldiers in the AEF and on the bases back in the States. There was a movement in the Army and Congress to provide gold-colored chevrons for soldiers who had served overseas and silver ones for men who remained Stateside in training. The Stateside troops rejected the idea, because they argued that they had wanted to go to war, but circumstances had prevented them. Why should they be looked down upon for accidents of timing?

In March of 1919, the men had a considerable amount of time to do local sightseeing and to keep busy. They climbed Berg Neuenahr to see the castle there that was 700 years old.⁹² They also visited the local cemetery. On 16 March, the battery as part of the 42nd Division was sent to Remagen for inspection by General Pershing. At the ceremony, one of the men of the Division, Dudley Gibbs, received a Distinguished Service Citation for his valor at the Verdun Sector. They received immunization shots on the 18th and all of

⁹² Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 9 March., 1919 entry.

the men had sore arms for a couple of days thereafter. On 24 March, they turned in their rifles and disposed of any equipment they did not need, in preparation for their trip back to the States.⁹³ All of them loaded up on souvenirs.

On 8 April 1919, the battalion left Bad Neuenahr and marched to Sinzig.⁹⁴ They had a few hours before continuing on to the rail-yard. The soldiers loaded onto boxcars and left Sinzig at 7 a.m. the next day. Con and Gould were on guard duty during this trip. They passed through the towns of Brahl, Anterach, and Koblenz, crossing the Mosel and Rhine Rivers there. Then, they moved on to Muden, and crossing the Meuse River to Cochem and Neef. The battalion went on to Urzig, Ehrang and Dalluin, stopping for supper at Trier. On the 10th, they passed through Iany, St. Cyr, Trappes, Epernon, Maintenon, St. Pait, Chartres, Ponlgouin, Lafreta Bernard, Quai, Conlie, Sille Le Guillaume, Morlaix, Rens, Landerneau, and Lerody finally arriving in Brest, where they de-boarded from the train and had dinner. Afterwards, the battalion hiked five miles to a tent camp for the night.

At Brest, the men had several days to kill before their ship was ready to transport them home. The Army, of course, found plenty for them to do. They loaded 100-pound boxes onto a ship and unloaded

⁹³ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 24 Feb., 1919 entry.

⁹⁴ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 8 April, 1919 entry.

another on the 14th. During their work, it rained continuously.

On 17 April, the battery went to the dock and took turns riding a small shuttlecraft out to the Leviathan, which was 950 feet long, one of the largest transports afloat. Harold McGee, an old friend, was also aboard for the trip back to the States. They became aware that there were many shell-shocked troops onboard, held in confinement. The ship left port on the 18th in the evening.⁹⁵ The trip home was uneventful, with good food, music and entertainment every day. On the 20th of April, they were 762 miles from Brest and 2377 miles from New York City. One of the battery-men, named Rocco, participated in a boxing match with one of the ship's sailors and won, upholding their honor. They were to arrive in New York Harbor on the 23rd. All of the men looked forward to getting home to Iowa.

The Iowa troops traveled from New York to Chicago, and then on to Des Moines by train. There was a huge celebration and a parade was held for them when they returned home to Des Moines. The grateful people of Iowa sent a group to New York to meet the ship when it came in and brought money to give to the soldiers that were broke. They even sent a special train to Chicago to bring the soldiers home

⁹⁵ Myer Gould Baker, *The World War One Journal...*, 18 April, 1919 entry.

to Des Moines.⁹⁶ They all reported to Camp Dodge to await their formal discharge from the Army. Both Con and Gould were honorably discharged from the Army on 12 May 1919 at Camp Dodge, near Des Moines, Iowa.

After the end of the war Con received a medal for his overseas service, a Victory Medal. He received service bars on it for each of the Fronts on which he had fought: Baccarat, Aisne-Marne, Champagne, Meuse-Argonne and St. Mihiel. He also received a medal for being part of the Army of Occupation in Germany. He received a Purple Heart for his combat injuries. In addition, he received a Citation Star, which was issued to many combat troops for valor. The Army replaced the Citation Star with the Silver Star in later years. In addition, he received a service medal from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). He was also eligible in later years for service medals for Combat Service, Army Service and Honorable Service. It is not known what medals Gould may have qualified for. Unfortunately, records of Con's and Gould's service in the war were lost in a major fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. Only a few documents and the medals themselves remain.

The men had the honor of serving under several officers who would become well-known in later years. They served under John "Black Jack"

⁹⁶ Letter from Myer Greentree Baker in Des Moines to Con and Gould Baker at Bad Neuenahr, Germany, dated 5 March, 1919.

Pershing, who was in command of the entire AEF in Europe. They served under Douglas MacArthur, for a period in the autumn of 1918, when he commanded the 42nd Division. They met George C. Patton while training on the 155 mm guns in France.

During the war Gould picked up the nickname “Machine Gun Baker.” This came about because his initials were “M. G.” identical to that of the machine gun battalions which were abbreviated M. G. battalions. The name stuck with him for many years with his old army buddies. In later years there was confusion about which of the Bakers was “Machine Gun”. In 2007, one of Gould’s own descendants claimed that Con Baker was the Baker that “went to Chicago, became a gangster and killed lots of people with a machine gun.” Apparently, some people in the family got Con’s move to Chicago, Gould’s nickname and the facts confused.



**Figure 12.
Con Baker
in 1917.**

**Figure 13.
Con Baker
in about 1921.**



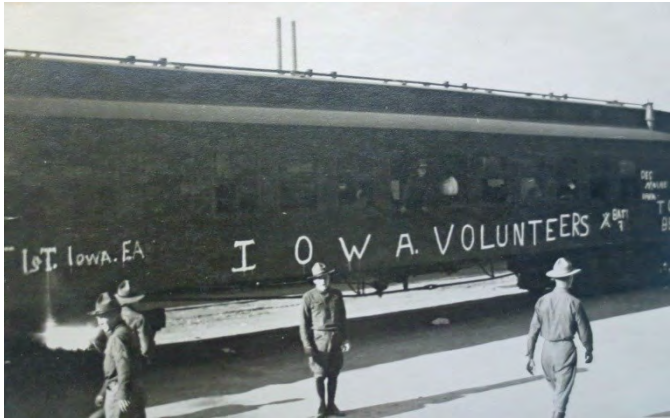


Figure 14 . The train that took the National Guard to Camp Cody, New Mexico.



Figure 15. The train carrying troops to Camp Cody in 1917.



Figure 16 . Setting up camp at Camp Cody, New Mexico.



Figure 17. Company F at Camp Cody in 1917. Gould was second from left, standing. Con was third from right in second row, with cocked hat.



Figure 18. Artillery training at Camp Cody.



Figure 19. A 75 mm field piece.



Figure 20. Field artillery training at Camp Cody.



Figure 21. The 150th Field Artillery passing through Chateau-Thierry, France on 25 July 1918. (National Archive photo).



Figure 22. The 150th Field Artillery billeted in this church in Bar, Ardennes, France on 5 November 1918. Con is near the bottom center in turned down Garrison cap, facing left. (National Archive photo).