

# Fort Mill's World War I effort

## ■ 124 fought; many were commissioned officers.

Fort Mill furnished 124 men to the U.S. armed forces in World War I. The total included a higher percentage of commissioned officers than any town in America — a lieutenant colonel, three majors, six captains and five lieutenants.



### Nearby history

LOUISE  
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that day were Sgt. Thomas Lee Hall, Clyde Stevens, Walter O. Leazer and Cpl. Harvey L. McManus.

The war ended on Nov. 11, 1918. On that day Capt. James D. Fulp, a member of the 321st Inf., 81st Division, wrote a long letter to the Fort Mill Times which included: "They (the Germans) certainly put up a stiff fight and nobody thought about peace . . . We all look like old men for the experience and so many of our good friends are gone."

In January, the first of the Fort Mill men returned. Some had been wounded before the end of the war and were the first to arrive.

Capt. Sam Parks was probably the oldest Fort Mill soldier. He had joined the Fort Mill Light Infantry in 1900 as a 2nd Lieutenant.

Parks became an expert rifleman and five times was a member of the S.C. team in national competition. When the Fort Mill Light Infantry

went to the Mexican border in 1915 to help chase Pancho Villa, Parks was appointed captain.

On that horrible day in France, Oct. 8, Parks was wounded in his right foot and ankle by the same shell that killed Walter Leazer. Parks was carried on a stretcher for 3 miles. Exactly 2 months later, on Dec. 8, Parks stood up for the first time.

Getting the soldiers home quickly was a problem. All were eager to get back as quickly as possible and every member of Congress seemed to be pressuring the War Department to get his constituents on the first ships. There weren't enough ships to bring all at once. The

round trip took from 14 to 20 days.

The first word was that the 30th Division would land in Hoboken, N.J., and that was changed to Norfolk and then to Charleston. The soldiers would be held in quarantine for eight to 14 days. They were also to be issued back pay and one new uniform. (Parks said that his battle uniforms were in tatters from barbed wire cuts.)

Two of the soldiers, Lt. James Dozier and Sgt. Thomas Hall, won the Congressional Medal of Honor (Hall posthumously). There were only 96 Medal of Honor winners in the U.S. The second highest honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, was won by Willie Nims and Callie Smith.

Fort Mill was bursting with pride. Plans were made to hold a big victory parade on April 10, 1919. The veterans gathered at the armory and marched to Confederate Park. The officers — Lt. Col. Thomas Spratt, Capt. Sam Parks and Lt. James Dozier — made speeches and nine memorial wreathes were laid for the seven men killed in action and the two who died of disease.

When the ceremony was over, the soldiers were served cake and ice cream and there was a dance in the armory.

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