

# War Effort at Home in Groton

*Somewhere in France April 14 [1918]*

*Dear Friend—Will write you a few lines before going to mess. I got your box Friday and believe me was some pleased with it. Ralph Lawrence says he is going to write you soon. We both thank you and all the Willing Workers for the good things in it. There is not much I can write, but we are having plenty of excitement now. The papers probably tell you more than we know of what is going on. Let's hope this is the beginning of the end and everything will soon be righted . . .*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Private Leroy Johnson*

*Co. B. 101<sup>st</sup> U.S.A.A.E.F.*

[Part of letter written from Private Leroy Johnson to Miss Josie Gainey, President of the Willing Workers. Published in *Turners Public Spirit*, May 18, 1918.]

During World War I, while soldiers trained on American soil and went on to battle in Europe, the citizens left at home worked on their own war effort. The *Groton Town Diaries* reveal various organizations in town doing their part to support the United States in the war. A War Savings Stamp Committee urged people of Groton to purchase savings stamps, and Liberty Loan rallies were held at the Town Hall to motivate people to invest in government bonds. The Groton branch of the Red Cross sent socks, sweaters, and gauze strips by the thousands to France each month. The Groton Fuel Committee managed the rationing of coal in town. The Willing Workers, a club organized in October 1917, sent supplies to American soldiers as well as boxes containing tobacco, cigarettes, candy and other comforts.

This massive town-wide support even included school students in town. In the 1918 Groton Town Report, the School Superintendent, Edward P. Fitts, notes:

“One not in close touch with the schools can hardly realize what a number of calls are made upon the time and strength of the teachers and pupils for work outside of their regular school duties. They are asked to sell War Savings Stamps and keep record of the number who buy and the amount in dollars, to sell Liberty Bonds, to do Red Cross work, to make card catalogues of enlisted men and going to Ayer on Saturdays to do this service, to have Humane Day exercises, Bird and Arbor Day exercises, to canvass farmers for amount of food production, to enroll boys for farm labor during the summer, to encourage home gardens, to form pig clubs, to manufacture tables and chairs for camp use, to urge and encourage military drill, to carry out a Thanksgiving Peace program, to give and urge others to give for the United War Work campaign.

“In all these and other ways we have gladly responded so far as we have been able and so have helped on the cause dear to our hearts.” ■

