

(from the Tell City News, January 31, 1974)

WWI hero dies at 87

Funeral services for Henry Alois Strobel, sr., 87, Perry County World War I hero, were held at 9:30 a.m. Wednesday at St. Paul's Catholic Church. Burial was in St. Mary's Cemetery. A rosary was said at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Zoercher-Gillick Funeral Home.

Strobel, who was decorated for bravery and heroism by both the American and British governments, died at 12:50 p.m. Sunday, January 27 at Perry County Memorial Hospital where he had been a patient since December 17.

The Tell City man was a farmer when he entered service and eight months later embarked at Boston for Europe with hundreds of other American doughboys.

Strobel, with the 30th Division, landed in England where it was trained and then assigned to fight with the British 2nd Army and sent to the Ypres salient, where the British had held on for four bloody years. The 2nd Army relieved the British 33rd Division and the bloody salient was then defended by Americans.

Launch gas attack

The Yanks launched a gas attack on August 26, 1918 and broke out of the area and established a new line in five days. The American 30th Division, along with the British, were then given the honor of breaking the Von Hindenburg line which was stretched across northern France and Belgium by the Germans.

The line they faced included three rows of heavy barbed wire, woven so thick as to resemble a mass of vines or briars. Each row was 30 to 40 feet in depth. Beyond the wire were three rows of trenches. The backbone of the system was the St. Quentin Canal tunnel which passed 6000 yards underground and in some places was 193 feet deep.

The Germans believed this fortress, guarded by thousands of machine guns could not be taken, but the Yanks and British prepared to take it

On a Sunday, before dawn, the Americans and British moved out of their trenches to escape and expected barrage.

Fight hand to hand

They plunged forward through the trenches and fought hand to hand in the smoke of firing guns and the fog. Strobel fought his way to the tunnel where he found a ventilator and dropped smoke bombs. He then ran to the

other side of the embankment, German soldiers were pouring out. Strobel spoke in German. In the fog and smoke they thought he was one of them. He ordered them to surrender. Eight other Yanks came up. The nine Americans disarmed this group; kept on cleaning out dugouts; captured 242 prisoners. That's how Strobel won the Distinguished Service Cross and the British Military Medal. He was also awarded the Purple Heart, the Service Medal with three bars and three stars for battles at Canal d'Ypres, Ypres-Lys and the Somme.

Wounded October 10

He was wounded at Vaux Andigny October 10, 1918 when shrapnel had shattered his arm. He was found by stretcher bearers; hospitalized in France and England and was returned to America in December. He was discharged in April 1919. He was one of three Hoosier heroes who represented Indiana at the burial ceremony for the unknown American soldier in Arlington national cemetery, near Washington, D.C., Armistice day, November 11, 1921. The three men from Tell City, Kentland and South Bend, were appointed by Governor McCray in response to a request that he send three Hoosier represents lives. After his return to Tell City, while visiting the local Red Cross office he met Miss Catherine Eberle, who was employed in the office of the late Chris Zoercher at that time. They were married February 26, 1924 in St. Boniface Catholic Church, Lafayette, Ind. He was born July 18, 1886 in Perry County near St. Meinrad to the late Clement and Elizabeth VonLahr Strobel.

Mr. Strobel attended Oakland City College for two years, then transferred to Purdue University, where he studied dairy manufacturing and production. He and Mrs. Strobel were married there before his graduation. They lived in Indianapolis where he worked for a dairy. They came to Tell City in 1925.

Their home at Eleventh and Rubens streets was then located in the rural area but is now completely surrounded by the city. They owned 20 lots there, they also rented farm land to the east where residences now stand. He was a grain farmer when he left for service but he spent a year studying how to grow vegetables. He and Mrs. Strobel were hard workers, up at 4 a.m. plowing, planting, weeding, cultivating and harvesting. They became famous for their vegetables and fruit, people asked for Henry Strobel produce in the stores. They practically supplied all the fruit and vegetables served in the once-famous dining room of the William Tell Hotel when it was operated by the late Fred Heubi and Mrs. Heubi of Main and Humboldt streets. Catherine prepared the produce for the market and prepared hundreds of quarts each year for their own consumption as their family was

coming on and growing and they needed a lot for their own use. They were always hard-working and frugal people, the top citizens of the community.

In later years, when Henry was unable to work as hard as he had earlier, they raised flowers in addition to their fruit trees, especially many arbors of grapes. They had a profusion of magnolias on that corner, the back yard was filled with lilies, mums, roses, cone flowers, peonies and zinnias. There were many magnolias, pink, purple and white. People came to their place to buy flowers and they had so many that they sold them to greenhouses and dealers.

Modest man

Henry Strobel was a modest man. It was difficult to get him to talk about his bravery of World War I. He kept his medals and wore them when requested but he never tried to impress anyone with them. On the walls of their parlor are framed certificates signed by Woodrow Wilson, General John J. Pershing, Secretary of War Dwight Davis. However, their proudest possession are their children and grandchildren who survive along with their mother. There are six daughters, Mrs. Ray (Frances) O'Brian and Mrs. S. Vincent (Mary Rose) Beavin, Indianapolis; Mrs. Dominic (Dorothy) Ferrando of Butte, Montana, Mrs. Levinus (Rita) Brockman of St. Meinrad, Mrs. Michael (Ann) Wirthwein of Newburgh, Mrs. Donald (Carol) Dauby of Tell City, two sons; Henry A. Jr., of Fairfax, Calif., and Paul J. of Tell City, one sister, Mrs. Catherine Greulich of Evansville, one brother, Frank Strobel of Tell City and thirteen grandchildren.

(Editor's Note — When Mrs. S. and this writer were married we were nearby neighbors of the Strobel family and better neighbors were impossible to find. They were always doing something for us. Henry had a good disposition, so does Catherine, and although they had many hardships during married life, they never complained. They had great joy in rearing their fine family. They also were, very devout members of St. Paul's Catholic Church and attended services regularly whenever possible. Their flowers were ever evident in their church, they saw to it that the church came first always, especially when and where flowers were concerned. They lived their lives close to the teachings of their chosen religion. Henry has gone on but Mrs. Strobel is still in fair health and she will carry on for him. Great people! — E.W.S.)