



World War I from an American in Paris

Ohio Memory Interactive Lesson—www.ohiomemory.org

The selected passages below, which date from August to September 1914, come from the diary of Mary Miller. Miller was the wife of Colonel Webb C. Hayes and the daughter-in-law of former U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes. Miller and Colonel Hayes were visiting France during the start of the hostilities of World War I. Her diary entries offer insight into the situation in Europe at the start of the war and her own personal experiences with the war.



This postcard shows Mary Miller Hayes walking in Nice, France, with her nephew Dalton Smith Hayes, who was recently discharged from an American hospital there.





Activity

As you read the selected diary passages think about how the descriptions of the war in Mary Miller's diary match up to the events that were actually happening, based on the timeline below. Remember that as Mary Miller was writing her diary, she was staying in France and was only exposed to French media and what she learned from the other Americans staying in France at the time.

Answer the questions given for each diary passage.

Selected Events of World War I: August – September 1914*

- Aug. 1 Germany declared war on Russia.
- Aug. 3 Germany declared war on France.
- Aug. 4 Great Britain declared war on Germany. Mary Miller often refers to Great Britain and France together as "the allies."
- Aug. 23 Germany invaded France. The initial drive of the German Army, which lasted until September 5 (see below), forced the French Army to retreat deep into northern France.
- Aug. 24 The Russian Army launched a massive offensive against the German Army located in East Prussia (a former German State located in what is now modern day Poland and Lithuania). After initial success, the Russian offensive ultimately ended with a complete German victory on August 31, 1914.
- Sept. 5-10 First Battle of the Marne—the combined French and British forces stopped the German Army before they reached Paris.
- Sept. 9-12 The French and British pushed the Germans back to the Aisne River in northern France, where the Germans established defensive positions for the rest of the war.

*Remember that the United States was a neutral nation until 1917.





Selected Diary Passages from Mary Miller Hayes: August – September, 1914

Page 008 – August 14, 1914, onboard the *S.S. St. Paul* docked outside of Liverpool, England

- i. What happened to the telegrams received by the passengers of the *S.S. St. Paul*?

- ii. What was the purpose of doing this?

Page 017 – August 25, 1914, Paris, France

- i. Do the events that Miller writes about in this passage match up with what was actually happening according to the war timeline?

- ii. What types of images did Miller see at the moving picture show? Why do you think those particular images were shown at the moving pictures in Paris?

- iii. Based on the war timeline do the images of the moving picture show tell the true story of what was happening in the war?





Page 025 – September 5, 1914, Le Havre, France

- i. In the diary, Miller describes the lack of news coming from the warfront. Why is this a problem according to Miller? Consider that in September 1914, the war was the biggest concern of most French citizens.

- ii. Think about the ways we receive news today. Do you think you receive a well-rounded account of current events? Why or why not?

- iii. How do you think technology influenced the ways people received news? How does technology affect sharing news today?

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