故事由 Amanda Kay Gustin/照片由Vermont Historical Society提供

弗朗西斯·凯勒赫的战争大时代

"告诉每个人我喜欢这第一流的。"

在1917到1919年，超过10,000名佛蒙特州人正式入伍征战第一次世界大战。他们包括士兵、水手和护士，他们的故事异常多元。

弗朗西斯·埃德华·凯勒赫是这样的一名士兵。1891年9月19日出生的他在蒙彼利埃市，是九个孩子中最小的——五个男孩和四个女孩，出生在迈克尔和玛丽（达根）·凯勒赫。他的父母均从爱尔兰移民至美国，在新罕布什尔结婚，那儿的前几个孩子出生。他们于1870年代末迁到佛蒙特，1880年时他们已住在柏林，迈克尔的职业是“花岗石工人”，根据1880年的人口普查。

在他出生时，这个家庭已搬到蒙彼利埃市的考特街，他们会在此居住数十年。他父亲去世时他还是个孩子，但考特街的房子是这个家庭的家，一直到20世纪中叶。他的兄弟姐妹以银行出纳员、裁缝、秘书、花岗石工人、出租车司机的身份工作，整个家族完全融入当地生活，与当地居民结婚，并在蒙彼利埃及该州其它地方定居。

弗朗西斯在蒙彼利埃高中毕业，并顺着他父亲的足迹，于毕业之后在巴瑞的Boutwell, Milne, and Varnum Company（现为Rock of Ages）找到一份工作。他在那儿工作了两年，然后在内森·利夫人寿保险公司的人力资源和采购部门找到工作。要么是在高中要么是在第一份工作时，他遇到了一个年轻的女子，叫Maizie Rumsey。她是詹姆斯·麦德·布特维尔的侄女，是弗朗西斯·凯勒赫的第一任雇主的合伙人。他最终成为该公司采购和人力资源部门的负责人。

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弗朗西斯·埃德华·凯勒赫于蒙彼利埃高中毕业，并在父亲的 footsteps after graduation with Boutwell, Milne, and Varnum Company in Barre (now known as Rock of Ages). He stayed there for two years and then took a job as a mailroom clerk in the personnel and purchasing department of the National Life Insurance Company. Either in high school or through his first job, he met a young woman named Maizie Rumsey. Maizie was the niece of James Meade Boutwell, co-owner of Francis’s first employer.

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They quickly became a committed couple. When he registered for the draft in June 1917, he described himself as “medium” in both height and build, with fair hair and blue eyes. Later Army paperwork gives his height as 5 feet 7 inches. He was not a large or physical man—his talents lay in more cerebral directions. He was inducted into the United States Army on May 16, 1918 at the University of Vermont and trained as part of the mechanic’s detachment there until July 13, when he was moved to what would become his regular assignment through the war: the 312th Supply Train.

The 312th Supply Train was part of the 87th Division, which had been established in August 1917 with initial drafted men from the Deep South. Under the command of Major General Samuel D. Sturgis, the division added troops from the Midwest and Northeast, and moved to Camp Dix in New Jersey to await final embarkation. Francis and members of his training detachment arrived at Camp Dix together, but were quickly split up and assigned to several different companies and regiments to continue training.

Francis wrote more than 150 letters to Maizie Rumsey during the course of his service in the war, starting the day he arrived at UVM for training—that’s a letter roughly every two days. He documented nearly every moment of his service, describing his training at UVM (lots of marching) and his experiences of “city” life while at Camp Dix. (He was horrified to pay 25¢ for a slice of apple pie with a scoop of ice cream: “they charge for everything in the cities.”)

He missed Maizie desperately, even while stationed at UVM. Nearly every single one of his letters home begins in the same way as this one from June 18, 1918:

“Here I am many miles away from you, isn’t bearable. I only wish that I could be near you, it would seem so good. How are you standing it anyway. Pretty lonesome, I suppose. Keep up Maizie, this war is not going to last forever. Someday I hope we can all be happy again. Everybody is having hard times. I mean people that have relations or sweethearts in this war.”

For her part, Maizie kept up work on the home front, writing Francis nearly as frequently as he wrote to her, raising money for the war effort, and spending time with Francis’s sisters and mother to knit socks and sweaters and gather other supplies to send to the front.

Francis was a highly verbal, confessional writer. He did not enjoy being in the army and had no desire to cover himself in martial glory. He wrote of his hopes that most of the fighting would be over before his regiment shipped out. As part of his training, he took endless tests to determine his aptitude for various tasks related to supply train work: oral examinations, equipment tests, and driving tests on a variety of vehicles. “So I guess I am a driver now,” he wrote wryly to Maizie. “It was very tiresome for me because I was so much nervouser than any one else, but I did better than a whole lot.”

Perhaps the more common portrait of a soldier is one who is keen to ship out, homesick but patriotic, stoic, and uncommunicative. Francis’s letters certainly contain all of those elements, but when he wrote to Maizie he felt no need to be performative. He trusted her implicitly and had no hesitation about sharing a
Postcards of Paris that Francis sent to Maizie in November 1918, shortly after he arrived there the day Armistice was signed; there was great celebration, and he noted: "There is a bar every other door in this city" in his correspondence to her.

complete picture of his life and emotional state, and his hundreds of pages of neatly written letters provide an extraordinary complete picture of one man's more nuanced experience of war:

"Of course it is nice to be patriotic. But it is much nicer to be home and to be your own boss. I am in it so I won't crab. Tell everybody I like it first rate."

From context clues, it seems clear that Maizie wrote back just as frequently as Francis wrote to her, but her letters did not survive—nor did any of the Kelleher family letters, which were also apparently frequent. His writings indicate that he received a letter just about as often as he sent one—every day or every other day, barring delivery complications when his regiment was on the move.

Life at Camp Dix was unlike anything Francis had experienced before. July in New Jersey was considerably hotter than Vermont, for one thing, and for a young man who had not been particularly inclined to physical exertion, the long marches and rifle training were exhausting. He detailed to Maizie how
Somewhere in France, Oct. 11, 1918

My precious one:

I received your letter to day, oct. 11, and how happy it made me feel to learn that you were feeling well and that you were not worrying as much about me.

You said in your letter that there was a fever raging in the united states, called the spanish influenza. I sure have heard about it over here.

I have just returned from downtown, I went down to get an identification bracelet that I had bought, and that the jeweler was engraving for me, you probably have seen then, I think they are pretty nifty, so thought I would invest in one. I had a bottle of beer and returned home, arriving at 8.30 p.m. I keep pretty good hours over here, and am growing fat for that reason. I am leading a pretty quiet life and intend to continue. I am complying with your wishes in every respect and how could one do otherwise when they have such a wonderful little girl as you waiting for them in the good old U. S. A. It is a rainy night and how lonesome I am for you, if I ever get home again with my dear little girl I will be the happiest boy in the world. I sure miss my evenings that I used to spend with you in that cozy little parlor on main street. Those were the happy days, I will never forget them.

I am happy dear to think that I am over here doing my bit, and that I did not remain in the states at some camp. I am not any more lonesomer over here than I was at Camp Dix, even if I am a great many miles away. How happy I will feel when I get home again and can say that I was in this war. I am glad that you are proud of me.

This war will be over soon and I will again be home with you. I sure will do what I would have done before I left the states. Then Mais, you knew I wanted to marry you, but thought it would be much better for us both to wait until I returned home again. I certainly want less any time when I get back in old Montpelier.

I am anxious to learn about the boys that left the school at Burlington. I am wondering if Pratiti left and to what camp they have all gone to. I am sure they will find it much harder than they did at Burlington. They probably will get over here in a couple of months, they need all the automobile men they can get. I am sure they will like the branch of service. It will seem pretty hard for Tate, for a while, he will have to get used to it the same as the rest of us. I consider I have been pretty fortunate, I have not had a sick day since I enlisted, I make it an appoint to take pretty good care of P. E. X. I surely have a good job now. I am writing this letter beside a good fire and as comfortable as I could ever expect to be. I knew things would break for me after a while.

I received my pay to day, the most I have ever received in the army. I received one hundred and five francs, which is equivalent to twenty dollars in American money. I was just beginning to need some. Did not receive corporals pay for the month of August, and the fact that I spent quite a little money on the way over I was crazy for oranges and they asked us twenty cents a piece for them, it was the same for everything. I have plenty, so do not worry about that.

I hope that you do go over home and spend a long visit with your mother and sister. It would be a change and do you good. I am sorry that Mrs B., is again sick. I am very sorry about Mrs Standish also. It must be pretty discouraging to your aunt. I suppose it will be your turn next and then Mrs B.'s.

I will now bring this letter to a close dear. and ask that you convey to the folks my love. I hope your aunt is again well. With kind regards to your aunt and uncle, I remain,

censored by, as ever,
your one, Francis

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Maizie Rumsey and Francis E. Keller enjoy a lighthearted moment circa 1917, prior to his induction into the United States Army and service in the 302nd Supply Train, 87th Division.

many miles they traveled each day, how early in the morning they woke up, how many rounds he fired at the range, and the unfamiliar mass-produced camp food.

The 87th Division, including the 312th Supply Train, shipped to France in mid-August 1918, and Francis in particular arrived in France on August 23. Correspondence slowed, but Francis’s spirits lifted now that he was in Europe and doing what he had trained for. Days were long—it wasn’t unusual for him to travel as many as 18 hours in a day as part of the supply convoy—but he thought the French roads were good and that driving the huge supply trucks “sure is a lot of fun.” He also expanded his social circle and made friends with soldiers who were not from Vermont. “There is a bar every other door in this city,” he confessed. “Soldiers are allowed to go on in. Things are a whole lot different in these foreign countries.”

His new situation on the active front lines meant that his letters were now subject to censorship, and Francis wrote far fewer details back home, talking generally about the roads, the driving, the other soldiers, but giving his location only as “someplace in France.” We know that the 87th Division spent September 1918 getting into position along the front lines, spread largely through central and southern France. The 312th Supply Train headquarters settled into position at Saint-Nazaire, a port town in southern Brittany, and on October 1 Francis was assigned to headquarters as a statistical clerk.

Although now lacking in precise details, his letters continued to be self-reflective and showed a gradually increasing confidence and pride in his new independence and skills. “It makes me laugh sometimes when I am doing my washing. I say to myself, if mother could see me now. It is a lot different when you have to do these things for yourself. It does not hurt anyone to get used to different things. All I had to do at home was to put on my stuff. Everything was always ready for me. It was hard at first but now I am an old veteran at these things. I sure will be worth a lot to anyone. When I am married I will have to do the washing,” he boasted to Maizie. He no longer described himself constantly as “lonesome” and did some sightseeing, enclosing postcards of France.

Francis was generally careful to keep details out of his let-

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Francis’s wool jerkin (uniform) survives today as a museum exhibition and reflects changes to uniforms dating back to the Spanish-American War mandated by General Order 81 in 1902 and in place in April 1917 when the United States entered the war.

The acorn is the symbol of the 87th Division, and the wheel with the crossed key and sword indicates the Quartermaster Corps, which oversaw Supply.

The rest of the war seemed to pass quickly for both Francis and Maizie; he was promoted two more times, and mustered out of the Army as a Sergeant, First Class, on June 9, 1919, after shipping back from France the previous month. He returned to Montpelier immediately, and on October 22, 1919, he and Maizie were married. They had one daughter, Patricia, and built a house at 143 Main Street in Montpelier that is still standing today.

He also returned to his previous job at National Life and worked there until his death in 1956. When he passed away, he was head of supply for purchasing and personnel—surely something his wartime experiences in the 312th Supply Train prepared him for. The Vermont Historical Society purchased his letters, photographs, and World War I uniform from the estate of his daughter, Patricia Kelleher, in 2014.

Amanda Kay Gustin is the public program manager at the Vermont Historical Society, where she plans statewide history engagement and programming. She holds degrees in history and museum work from both Tufts University and Middlebury College.