

JOHN ALPHEUS GOODSON

FIRST AUTAUGA BOY TO BE LAID BENEATH EUROPEAN SOIL.

Touching Tribute Paid by His Officers

John Alpheus Goodson, son of Jesse Jones and Sarah Anne (Dismukes) Goodson, was the first Autauga boy to die in Europe during this great war. He sleeps today beneath French soil. He enlisted last July and went to Europe last fall. At the time of his death only a brief telegram to his father announced that sad fact. Last week the following letters were received from officers in France:

Somewhere in France
January 7th, 1917.

My dear Mrs. Goodson:

I have sent you today under separate cover a box containing some flowers, a ribbon; and an inscription that was taken off of the grave of John today. I wish that I could say some comforting words to you at this time as I know that your heart is heavy. Perhaps if I tell you of your son it will be of some help. He was working with me up to the time that he got sick. We are in the supply department and he was helping get the supplies. While doing this work I had the opportunity to know and study him better. He was always cheerful and was ready and willing to do what was told him. In fact we were just like a family as all of us pulled together. He complained of being sick one day, having a bad cold so we sent him to the hospital. There they gave him some medicine and he came back to the company. Here we watched him and did what we could. The next day he was no better and we notified the doctor. This time they took him to the general hospital and from there we carried him today and placed him in the cemetery. Of his death I cannot write you as I was not there and I understand that the Chaplain will write you the particulars, but as to his being buried I can write you so that you may know that we did well.

Captain Grafton, who up to a short while ago was the company commander, read part of the service assisted by the Chaplain. A portion of the Bible was read and prayers were offered. Then the escort fired three volleys over the grave and the musician sounded taps. As you know, this is the last call sounded at night calling the men to sleep. Nothing more impressive than this could possibly be, and then after placing the flowers which the company and others gave on the grave we marched back to the camp with the knowledge that our first buddy had been buried. It is needless for us to say how deeply we feel for you and that we miss him. I know too that you have a sore heart but you can feel proud to know that he died doing his duty. This he did just as much as if he were in the front line trenches. The young fellow with whom he slept is very much upset about his going as he was very close to him and both worked together. He often spoke of you and we would talk about the folks back home. So we placed him on a hill overlooking the bay out to sea. It is a quiet spot and he is



JOHN ALPHEUS GOODSON

First Autauga County Soldier to die in Europe during this great war. This picture was made a short while before his death. He was a young man of splendid physique and personal appearance.

sleeping there. We will watch his grave as long as we are here and visit it, thinking of him and you for I know how you must long for this opportunity.

I know that this is a miserable attempt to tell you of the funeral but we feel too deeply his death to do more now. May God in His goodness comfort you and heal the terrible wound that has been made in your heart. I sincerely hope that the flowers will arrive safely. Again assuring you of my sympathy believe me to be,

Faithfully yours
W. D. GEOGHAGAN.

France, January 8, 1918.

My dear Mrs. Goodson:

I wish to add just a word to what Sargeant Geoghagan has written.

To your sorrow is added that of his company and his officers. He was the first of the company to go and we grieve with you at his loss. You may have the consolation of knowing that his officers regarded him highly. He was straight forward and never in trouble.

When you have somewhat recovered from your sorrow you will be consoled with the thought that he died for his country. He has paid the big price and you, his mother, will feel pride in that you have given your all. What more can be given? France and America join hands over his sunny grave on the hillside which overlooks the water and he who has gone in his bright young years has done his full part to bring to you in America, and the world the liberty that he came here to uphold.

Very sincerely,
T. E. LAUREN.

1st Lieutenant Co E, 17th Enjns.

BURIED WITH FACE TOWARD THE COUNTRY FOR WHICH HE DIED.

Another Link Which Binds France and America Closer Together

American Base No. 1, France.
January 9th, 1918.

My dear Mr. Goodson:—

It becomes my painful duty to write to you the news which I wish I might not have to write. On Saturday, January 5th your son John, after an illness of several days first with measles and then with pneumonia, passed on closer into the keeping of the Master. During the last few days of his illness I had the privilege of being much with him. His one concern after his immediate family, was his company and the work his company was doing. He was keen to get back to it. His thoughts dwelt on it. But God had other work for him to do, and He took him—quite painlessly. On Monday, January 7th, he was given burial in that plot of ground recently given to the government of the United States by the French where lie buried a score or more of our boys with their faces toward the home land, overlooking the shores of the harbour of that city where they had come to succor the land and the principles for which we are fighting. A detachment from his company which he loved so well accompanied him to the side of the grave, along with two officers, one of whom was his former company commander, Capt. Grafton, who read part of the burial service. The firing squad which paid him the last military tribute was from the 17th Engineers and I, as Chaplain of the Regiment, gave committal of the body to the ground. A large wreath of flowers from his company mates was laid on the grave. A few of them along with the inscription will be sent to you and Mrs. Goodson.

There is little I can add but that little means much. Your boy was a good soldier, fighting for a fine cause. Could you in these times, ask anything more of the God who gave him to you. In him you have a rich prospect of the future, something more to look forward to. He did well what he had to do. And now all is well with him. You have but to wait the few years for that happy reunion which will bring you all together again. And in the meantime you have that precious memory to sustain you in that waiting. God give you grace to wait as well as your son worked.

Very truly yours
HENRY R. TALBOT,
Chaplain.

These comforting messages were received by the aunt of John Alpheus Goodson. His mother died in his infancy and is now "Somewhere in a more beautiful world." There has been a happy reunion away from wars and deadly diseases.