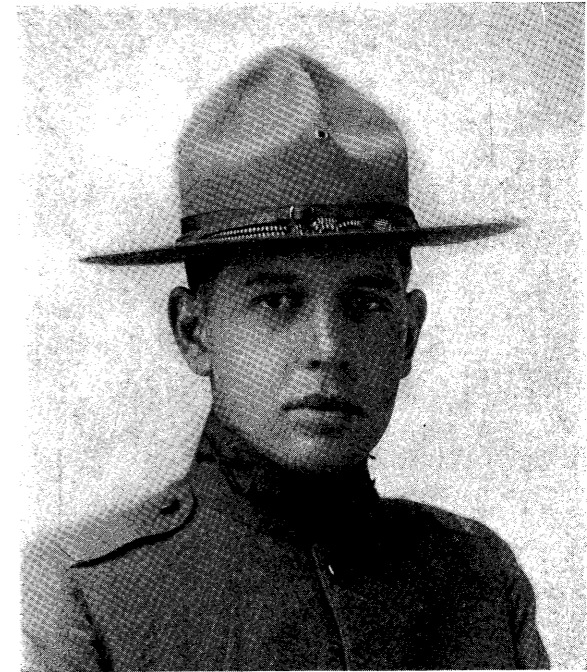


## ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL

Thus died a gallant American and a worthy Alumnus of his school and college and a man who, by his death, added honor to his family name. Captain Sercomb was survived by a widow and a brother, Henry H. Sercomb, who was at St. Paul's School in 1907-1911.



ALFRED WILD GARDNER

1908-1914

ALFRED WILD GARDNER was born August 29th, 1895. He entered St. Paul's School in the fall of 1908, graduating six years later with highest honors. He was always a leader but he confined himself to no one branch; he led in everything he did. He excelled each year in studies, as in sports, and he worked hard as an officer of many of the School activities. Throughout his career at St. Paul's he showed the leadership which won for him in his last year the Frazier Prize, "to the boy who attains the highest distinction jointly in scholarship and athletics."

Entering the Freshman class at Harvard in the fall of 1914, he continued to lead both in athletics and studies. He became a member of most of the prominent clubs, such

as the D. K. E., Institute of 1770, Stylus, Hasty Pudding, Phoenix, S. K. and A. D. The Regiment, formed during his Sophomore year, gave him his first military training.

At the Plattsburg Camp, during the summer of 1915, and the R. O. T. C. at Cambridge, in the Fall, he was a Sergeant. His hard work was rewarded, for about a month after war was declared he was appointed a 2nd Lieutenant, Infantry, O. R. C., and was ordered to Plattsburg to help instruct other student officers.

Three months later he was assigned to Co. H, Three Hundred and Fifth Infantry, 77th Division, then forming at the vast new Camp Upton, Yaphank, L. I. Within a few weeks he was made a First Lieutenant, National Army and Adjutant of the Second Battalion. His division left Camp Upton April 16th, 1918. After a hard voyage, during which an enemy U-Boat was sunk, his battalion arrived at Liverpool, sailed from Dover to Calais and soon found itself at Audrehon, a typical little French village in the training area.

But, Alfred was not satisfied with his job as Adjutant; he wrote, "I'd rather be in the line with the men." As a first step he went to the British Scouting, Observation and Sniping School, at Aix-le-Château. He was always a beautiful shot with the army rifle, so he must have thoroughly enjoyed this training. On rejoining his regiment he again sought to be put back in his old company with his men. He had met with no success, however, when on June 6th the regiment started for the front, receiving further training en route. Returning from a tour of observation in the Migneville sector, then held by the 42nd Division, Alfred was, to his delight, assigned to Company E, the night after his battalion took over the front line, July 2nd-3rd. He was once more a "line soldier" and, knowing his character, I know what keen joy it must have given him.

He always felt his job as adjutant was too soft; he longed for a chance to do a real soldier's work and he now had that chance.

The sector was fairly quiet and the battalion was moved from place to place for some weeks, gaining all the time, however, more experience with the Bosches. After a short time at the Gas School, at Chaumont, Alfred rejoined his company in support on the Vesle. Here, under orders, he led his men a thousand yards in plain view of the Bosches, under bright moonlight, to a sunken railroad cut and later evacuated them without a single casualty. This action gained for him more than ever the utter devotion of his men and the unstinted praise of his fellow officers. Further fighting followed at the Vesle and on the Aisne, and always without the support of our aeroplanes, which had not yet begun to arrive in numbers.

Soon after the start of the Argonne offensive, September 26th, Alfred, now in command of his company, found himself with his men at the bottom of a ravine, with the Bosches in strong, well concealed machine-gun positions along the top of the hill. A frontal attack, regarded as suicidal by company, battalion and regimental officers, was ordered and Alfred, knowing it was sure death, advanced at the head of his company. Encouraging and urging his men forward he was shot through the head and instantly killed by machine-gun fire before he had gone seventy-five yards. His Division citation reads:

"First Lieut. Alfred W. Gardner, Co. E. Three Hundred and Fifth Infantry—who in the *Argonne Forest* on the afternoon of October 3rd, 1918, in an attack on a series of strong German machine-gun nests, with utter disregard of his personal danger, led his company up the steep slope of a ravine in the face of murderous machine-gun fire, and was himself killed in the action. In so doing he afforded the

men of his command an example of exceptional devotion to duty and bravery and self sacrifice, and in his life and death has been a constant inspiration to his men."

In March 1919 he was posthumously awarded the D. S. C. for: "extraordinary heroism in action in the Argonne Forest, France, October 3rd, 1918. Attacking enemy machine-gun nests, he displayed the highest courage when he led his company up a steep slope in the face of murderous fire. Before he could accomplish his objective he was killed."

He died as he had lived, like all true leaders, thinking not of himself but of others, respected and loved by officers and men alike. After Alfred's death his colonel wrote, "I think he was without doubt the most beloved officer in the regiment." This is the soldier's highest compliment, "for a company knows what its leader is made of." "His course was right and he fought to the end."

In his life and in his death Alfred Gardner typified the very best of young American manhood, alert, eager, kindly, thoughtful of others and full of that courage which finally gave us the victory in this Great War. In the words of his striker we find the key to Alfred's whole career, "His course was right and he fought to the end." Who can say more?