

Who is Carlie?

Carl Beard Skidmore was the younger son of Morris Wellington Skidmore and Mary Catherine Beard. He was born on April 28, 1896 in Summit, NY in the house north of the Methodist Church "...the same house as Ashley"¹ his older brother.

The Skidmore family has long roots in Upstate New York (Schoharie County) at least to the census of 1820 in Broome Township (Peter Skidmore). Other Schoharie locations for the family were in Middleburgh, Richmondville, Summit and Jefferson. The Skidmores migrated to the North Shore of Long Island in 1667-68 from Massachusetts where they arrived in the early 1630's. They were in Connecticut in 1636 having joined John Winthrop the Younger.²

Carl and his birth mother, Mary Catherine Beard, are buried in the old Evergreen Cemetery in Jefferson. The Beards also appear in 1820 census rolls (Abram Beard). The Skidmores and the Beards were active in both the Episcopal Methodist Church and Working Lodge #554 F&AM, Jefferson, NY.

He was schooled in Summit, attended Albany Business College, moved to New York City to find work in 1916 and then moved back to Jefferson in 1917, where he registered for the Draft. In the Summer of 1917 he joined Working Lodge, #554 of the Masons in Jefferson along with his brother Ashley Skidmore. His father, Morris W. Skidmore, was already a member of that Lodge and his Grandfather, Charles E. Beard, was a charter member when it was founded in 1864.

Mary Catherine died on July 7, 1896 presumably as a result of child-birth. Shortly thereafter Carl and Ashley were left with their grandparents, George and Emma Fullington Skidmore in Summit while their father went to Worcester, NY to find work as a blacksmith, a trade he had learned apprenticed to his father.

In March of 1897 Morris began corresponding with Leona F. Tinklepaugh who was working as a housekeeper in Summit. They were married on August 4, 1897. It isn't clear from their correspondence when Morris moved back to Summit as he was still in Worcester in early September writing a letter to his sister Thelma.

Carl attended school in Summit and was listed in the program for the 1908-1909 class at District 2, Summit School along with his half-brother Morris Ernest Skidmore, who was born on August 5, 1902.

At the age of 16 Carl enrolled at the Albany Business College on September 3, 1912 and was taking Bookkeeping, Penmanship, Arithmetic, (Business) Law, Rapid Calculations, Communication and Spelling. On December 16, 1912 those records indicate "Left, Said to have gone to work NYC Hotel." The records also show he had taken one exam and received an 85 in Arithmetic.

On June 1, 1914 he was addressed as living in Slingerlands, NY by a letter from Albany Business College from Messrs. Carnell & Hoit requesting referrals for the college; offering assistance in his business pursuits or gaining employment and inviting him to the Annual Hudson River Excursion to Baerena Park on June 12.

On August 18th he received a Monthly Statement from Davis Baker, MD for operation for appendicitis in the amount of \$35.00. As Dr. Baker's address is 259 State Street it appears that Carl was in the Albany area. The bill was paid in three installments of \$15 on the 18th of August; \$12 on the 28th of September and final payment on the 26th of October, 1914.

On May 31 of 1916 a letter of recommendation was written on his behalf by William Sautter&Co, "Albany's Leading Druggists" located at 6&8 North Pearl St. It appears to be signed by Charles B. Krum who is listed on the letterhead. That letter was followed by a letter of recommendation from The Rural New-Yorker dated Oct 7, 1916 that "Carl B. Skidmore of Jefferson N.Y. RD3 has been in my employ since June 1916" The letter was signed by H. Elwell who is listed as Harrison Elwell, District Manager Central New York, Worcester, NY on the letterhead.

On June 5th, 1917 Carl registered for the Draft and was listed as living in Jefferson, NY working for Charles Berner as a farm laborer. At that time he resided with his step-mother and father at the Mattice Farm on Clapper Hollow Road.

On December 31st 1917 he was sent a letter from the US Civil Service Commission, Second Civil Service District, New York, NY with the address of 554 W. 181 St, NYC. It was rerouted to him in Jefferson, NY.

Both Carl and his birth mother, Mary Catherine Beard, are buried in the old Evergreen Cemetery in Jefferson. He was raised by his step-mother, Leona Frank Tinklepaugh Skidmore, of Summit, from the age of 15 months. He not only called her Mamma or Mother in his letters but also designated her as the recipient of his government life insurance.

He is also memorialized with others from Schoharie County on a statue on the grounds of the Old Stone Fort in Schoharie, NY in honor of those who died in the Great War, World War II and Korea. There is a display regarding Carl on the second floor of the Old Stone Fort Museum.

¹ Genealogical notes made by Carl's grandmother, Emma Fullington Skidmore, wife of George Skidmore of Summit, NY.

² Early Skidmore family history from *Thomas Skidmore (Scudamore) 1605-1684...to the Ninth Generation*, Warren Skidmore, 1985 Privately Published in Akron Ohio.

CARL'S HOMECOMING

“When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again – Hurrah! Hurrah!” was a famous Civil War Song that has been sung for every war since involving US Troops and their homecoming. It was the hope of the family of Private Carl Beard Skidmore would come marching home. In fact he was mortally wounded on November 1st 1918 in France and died in the Second Mobile Field Hospital in Rarecourt France.

Often his step-mother mentioned in her letters such as “I can’t hardly stop saying come home”. On November 14th, 1918, not knowing that he had died she wrote “News has at last come that the War is over now – how are we going to wait until you are home?” But wait she did, as many families did, to receive news of his death and then the process by which his body would be returned to the United States. This is that story of his homecoming as well as the story of many others who came home to rest on American soil. It also tells a story about the care and communication provided by the various branches of the Armed Forces and other agencies such as the American Red Cross.

Carl Skidmore was a member of the First Battalion, 6th Regiment, USMC that was the lead battalion in the final great assault in the Meuse-Argonne campaign. He had survived two engagements as a member of the 74th company since August of 1918, first in the Defensive Sector as a runner, then at St. Mihiel (including Blanc Mont). His final battle was on November 1, 1918 as part of the Meuse-Argonne offensive where he died of gunshot wounds. His parents received official notification of his death in early December. There was much confusion as the 4th Marine Brigade pushed to the final victory over the Germans and the armistice on November 11, 1918. Private Skidmore’s service record was not updated until November 28th indicating that he had died of the wounds he received as a member of the 1st Battalion that led the Second Division in the final assault. Reports from other members of the 6th Regiment have reported that 100 men in the first battalion were killed or wounded in the initial artillery bombardment that came from both sides¹.

On December 28, 1918 US Army Graves Registration, Lieutenant Colonel Charles C. Pierce, sent a form letter to the Skidmores indicating that Private Skidmore was buried in the American Cemetery, Ville-Savoys, Coulonges En-Tardenois, Aisne, France. The letter was signed by someone other than Colonel Pierce and apologized for “... the use of a form letter such as we are sending you to-day...”. The letter went on to say “You will be comforted in knowing that his body has been recovered, that it lies buried in a spot which is under our care and control, and that there will be no danger of its loss or neglect.”

Anticipating that some families would be requesting that their loved ones be returned to the United States for final burial, a copy of GRS Bulletin #10 was attached that explained “The exhumation of bodies is absolutely prohibited during the continuance of hostilities, by the

laws of the countries in which we are operating. No exception can be made so long as war exists.” (We have to remember that the Peace Treaty was not signed until June 28th, 1919.) On December 30 of 1918 W. R. Castle of the National Headquarters of The American Red Cross wrote to Private Skidmore’s father in New York City advising him “We are writing our Paris office asking that they send us full particulars of the death and burial of your son We fully appreciate what these details mean to the bereaved family and regret that they cannot be secured for six or eight weeks. This delay is due to the congested mails and the time necessary to obtain this information abroad.” That information was not received until January. The details were provided from the American Red Cross “Searcher” Rose Peabody, of New York City who was with Private Skidmore when he died.

Meanwhile Private Skidmore’s Marine Corps Service Record indicates that he was originally buried in Grave 410 in Cemetery 559 Chateau de Salvage, Rarecourt, Meuse, France. This seems logical as the Second Mobile Hospital was operating in the Rarecourt area on the 1st and 2nd of November 1918. There is a note correcting the cemetery to 558 in that record. Graves Registration Form No 1 prepared on November 2, 1918 indicates the following coordinates on Map 51, NE (255.3N, 308.3E).

A second letter which “supercedes the previous report” was received from Colonel Pierce sent on the 13th of May, 1919 indicating that Private Skidmore was buried in the American Cemetery, Froidos, Chateau Salvage, Meuse, France. Graves Registration Bulletin 10-B updates the section on disinterment to say that “No exceptions can be made (to the prohibition) until the War Department shall have completed its plans for the shipment of bodies to the States.”

The Skidmores had moved to Rhinebeck New York in the summer of 1919 to be near Carl’s older brother, Ashley, who was serving as the Methodist minister in Pleasant Valley and later in Rhinecliff, New York. In the spring of 1920 Carl’s Mother Leona Skidmore writes to her Mother-in Law, Emma Skidmore, “Carl has been taken up again and now he is in a National American Cemetery. I will send you...a picture as soon as we get some... Carl is disinterred and reburied in Grave #77, Section #66, Plot #2, Cemetery #1232, Argonne American Cemetery, Romagne-Sous-Montfaucon, Meuse, France. The other day we got a list of cemeteries from France that the bodies are going to be brought back, but Carl is in the National and will be left in France for the present.”

The actual movement of Private Skidmore’s body was recorded by Graves Registration Services (GRS) as being moved on the 16th of June, 1919 from Grave 301, American Military Cemetery at Chateau Salvange to the Argonne American Cemetery. According to records from GRS the family was notified on March 4, 1920 so this information took nearly a year to get to his parents. That report notes “Burial good; buried in blanket; body decomposed”. Private Skidmore’s body was buried a minimum of three locations and now the final move as he comes home.

Meanwhile on the 29th of October, 1919 the Army Chief of Staff received a proposal to follow the lead of the English and French to honor the WWI dead with a tomb of the Unknown.¹ He turned down the proposal on the grounds that Graves Registration was still in process and they might in fact be able to identify all the dead while the English and the French had many unknowns. In addition there was no place such as Westminster Abbey or the Arc de Triomphe suitable for such entombment and anyway it was the responsibility of the Congress to decide this issue.

On the 11th of November 1920 both the English and the French did honor their Unknown with ceremonies at Westminster and the Arc.

Representation Hamilton Fish Jr., congressman from upstate New York introduced into Congress, on the 21st of December, 1920, a resolution to identify an unknown who died in France and entomb that unknown at a new tomb at the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery.

Although there is no record of the request by the Skidmore family to return Private Skidmore's remains, his father advises GRS in March of 1920 that "we have moved ...to Rhinebeck, NY so if you have any letters to write me about the remains of Private Carl B. Skidmore...kindly address me at Rhinebeck, NY". The Homecoming begins to pick up speed in the Spring of 1921.

The 66th Congress approved Resolution 67, as Representative Fish had proposed, on March 4th, 1921.

Lt. Colonel H. Lay, USMC HQ, Washington DC on behalf of the Major General Commandant requested of the Chief of Cemeterial Division, Quartermaster General of the Army May 24th, 1921 that that the body of Carl Skidmore be returned to the United States to Morris W. Skidmore in Jefferson, New York. An acknowledgement of that request was posted on June 4, 1921. This appears to be the formalization by the Marine Corps as GRS had compiled information on the 14th of May, 1921 for the Disposition of Remains for Marine Carl Beard Skidmore, 166681, indicating that the remains are to be brought to the US, but not to be interred in a US National Cemetery.

In July of 1921 the Skidmores are notified by Lt. Colonel Hays that "...the remains of your son, the late Private Carl Beard Skidmore, Marine Corps have been disinterred and will be shipped to the United States in the near future. Usually a period of from one to three months elapses from the date of disinterment to the date of the arrival of the remains in the United States." The letter was incorrectly sent to the Skidmores' previous address in New York City. This was corrected by the Marine Corps on the 5th of August.

The GRS Report of Disinterment dated July 23rd 1921 indicates that the “Body was badly decomposed. Features not recognizable. Body buried in burlap and pine box.” Furthermore great care was taken to ensure that the correct body was being disinterred “Body identified by tag taken from cross, originally attached to stake at head of grave. Bodies in Grave #76 and #78 identified.” Those “dog” tags are part of the records maintained by the National Archives.

On August 5th a follow-up letter from Headquarters US Marine Corps advises “Upon arrival of the remains at Hoboken, NJ you will be notified by telegraph. You will also be informed as to the date of shipment of the body from Hoboken, together with the route and train number and the scheduled time of arrival at destination.” On the 22nd of August Carl’s father was informed that “the remains of your son...are due to arrive in New York on board the transport “Wheaton”...” by the Headquarters, District of New York, US Marine Corps.

On the 30th of August, Graves Registration, Pier 2, Hoboken, NJ acknowledges receipt of instructions from Carl’s father and that they ...will ship the body of Private Skidmore to (him) at Jefferson, NY.”.

On September 6, 1921 Graves Registration sent a telegram to Private Skidmore’s father at his Rhinebeck, NY address as well as Jefferson, NY stating “Remains Private Carl Beard Skidmore leave Weehawken September seventh Ten Fifteen am Arrive Stamford, NY via Ulster and Delaware Railroad.” Special Orders were cut for “Private John E. Riley, 18th Infantry as escort (to) proceed from Hoboken, NJ to Jefferson, New York ... accompanying the remains of Private Carl Beard Skidmore”. Attached to the orders were routing directions for the Ulster and Delaware, West Shore Line in Kingston, New York to Stamford, New York as the nearest railway station to Jefferson, NY.

The final GRS report was an acknowledgement by Morris W. Skidmore of his son’s remains in a satisfactory manner and condition on September 7, 1921 and was cosigned by John E. Riley, Private, Company K, 18th Infantry on September 8, 1921.

On the 20th of October 1921 Armistice Day was declared a National Holiday and the burial of the Unknown would take place that day.

On the 24th of October, Sergeant E. F. Younger of the 50th Infantry was chosen to select one of four unknowns at Chalons-sur-Marne, France as America’s Unknown. After selection the chosen Unknown processed to the local train station under French military and civilian escort and on to Paris to spend the night under honor guard.

The body of the Unknown proceeded to LeHarve on the 25th to board what had been Admiral Dewey’s flagship, the cruiser USS Olympia, and left French territory under the escort of eight French naval vessels with a 17 gun salute.

The Olympia arrived at the Washington DC Navy Yard on the 9th of November and was piped ashore in accord with a full Admiral. Admiral Chandler, commander of the Olympia stood in full dress uniform with his hat held against his chest followed the casket.² The casket was taken to the Capitol Building by an escort of the 3rd Cavalry to lie in state. President and Mrs. Harding along with Vice-President and Mrs. Coolidge received the body there. The Capitol was opened on the 10th of November for the public to view the casket which rested on the Lincoln catafalque.

At 8:30 am on the 11th the procession to Arlington National Cemetery began. Among those in the procession were living Medal of Honors winners organized by the date of their awarded action with WWI winners at the end of that group. Just before noon that date the Unknown was laid to rest in a tomb that had French soil on the bottom and Representative Fish laid the final wreath on the casket.

The long journey home was complete and Carl Skidmore was buried in the Old Evergreen Cemetery in Jefferson, NY next to his birth mother, who died shortly after his birth and *America's Unknown, known only to God, was safely entombed on French soil and in America at Arlington National Cemetery.*

¹*Information regarding the State Funeral of the WWI Unknown Soldier comes from "The Last Salute" by Mossman & Stark, Department of the Army, Washington, DC 1971 (Fiftieth Anniversary of the Funeral)*

²*When you place your right hand over the left side of your chest to honor the fallen, you are not placing it over your heart - you are covering your medals, in a gesture which owes its origin to the ceremony in London's Whitehall on Armistice Day, 1920, to unveil the Cenotaph. A funeral procession accompanying the remains of the Unknown Soldier, which had arrived from France the previous day, was to march past the Cenotaph, then proceed to Westminster Abbey. The regimental sergeant-major of the Guards regiment conducting the ceremony decreed that all would salute the Cenotaph as they marched past by placing their hands over their medals.*