

Fort Taber Flag to honor 2LT Alfred Standish Milliken WWI Veteran KIA

During the month of February, the 30th Lights for Peace flag to fly at the Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum honors the memory of Alfred Standish Milliken, a New Bedford veteran killed during WWI.

Milliken was born in New Bedford on May 1, 1891 to Frank Milliken and Susan B. (Crowell) Milliken. He attended New Bedford High School and went on to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1910. He graduated with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1914. While attending the Institute, he was a member of the Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity, Freshman Tug-of-War Team and manager of the Sophomore Tug-of-War Team.

According to an undated newspaper article, Milliken entered the second Plattsburg training camp from which he graduated and was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant, Engineers O.R.C., and was assigned to Co. D., 6th Engineers, 3rd Division. He was sent overseas on Dec. 5, 1917.

During the German offensive of March 21, 1918, the 6th Engineers were sent into the line near Villers-Bretonneux, France and Lieutenant Milliken, who had charge of a section of Company D, defended the trench in front of the village of Warfusse-Abaucourt.

On March 21, 1918, near the Somme River in France, the German army launched its first major offensive on the Western Front in two years. According to History.com, “the attack came as a relative surprise to the Allies, as the Germans had moved quietly into position just days before the bombardment began. From the beginning, it was more intense than anything yet seen on the Western Front. German commander Erich Ludendorff had

worked with experts in artillery to create an innovative, lethal ground attack, featuring a quick, intense artillery bombardment followed by the use of various gases, first tear gas, then lethal phosgene and chlorine gases. He also coordinated with the German Air Service, to maximize the force of the offensive.

Winston Churchill, at the front at the time as the British minister of munitions, wrote of his experience on March 21: There was a rumble of artillery fire, mostly distant, and the thudding explosions of aeroplane raids. And then, exactly as a pianist runs his hands across a keyboard from treble to bass, there rose in less than one minute the most tremendous cannonade I shall ever hear. It swept around us in a wide curve of red flame."

All German assaults were driven back, but during the afternoon of March 30, the position was subjected to heavy bombardment, during which Lt. Milliken was killed.

According to his Gold Star Record, Milliken was awarded the Silver Star citation "For distinguished and exceptional gallantry at Cambrai on 30 March, 1918, in the operation of the American Expeditionary Forces." A battery of coast artillery guns at Fort Rodman is named in his honor.

Linda Ferreira, of **Empire Ford of New Bedford**, researches the life histories of area residents. American flags are provided by Empire Ford of New Bedford. Flags are raised by the staff at Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum. Those who would like to honor a local veteran in the future can contact Ferreira at lferreira@buyempireautogroup.com.