

RAMSEY COUNTY

History

A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Ramsey County's
Women Athletes And a
Win at Wimbledon

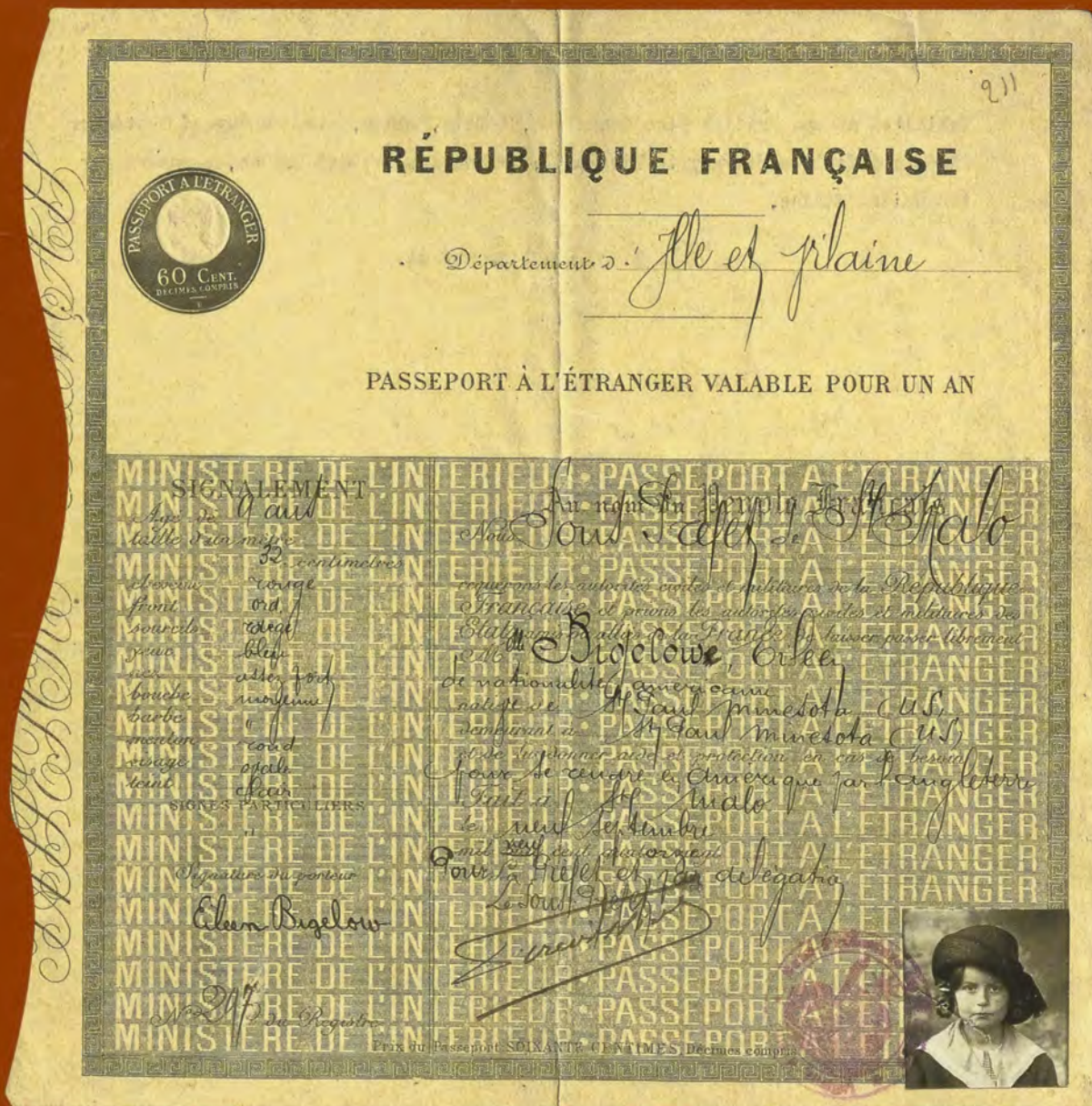
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Summer, 1998

Volume 33, Number 2

Money Belts Stuffed with Gold

F. R. Bigelow's Dash to France in 1914—Page 4



Eileen Bigelow's passport. A notation on the back states: "Exhibited at the British Vice Consulate, St. Malo, France, this 9th day of September, 1914, good for the journey, via Southampton and London, to embark for the United States. H.B.M.'s Vice Consul." Her father's account of his trip to France begins on page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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Volume 33, Number 2

Summer, 1998

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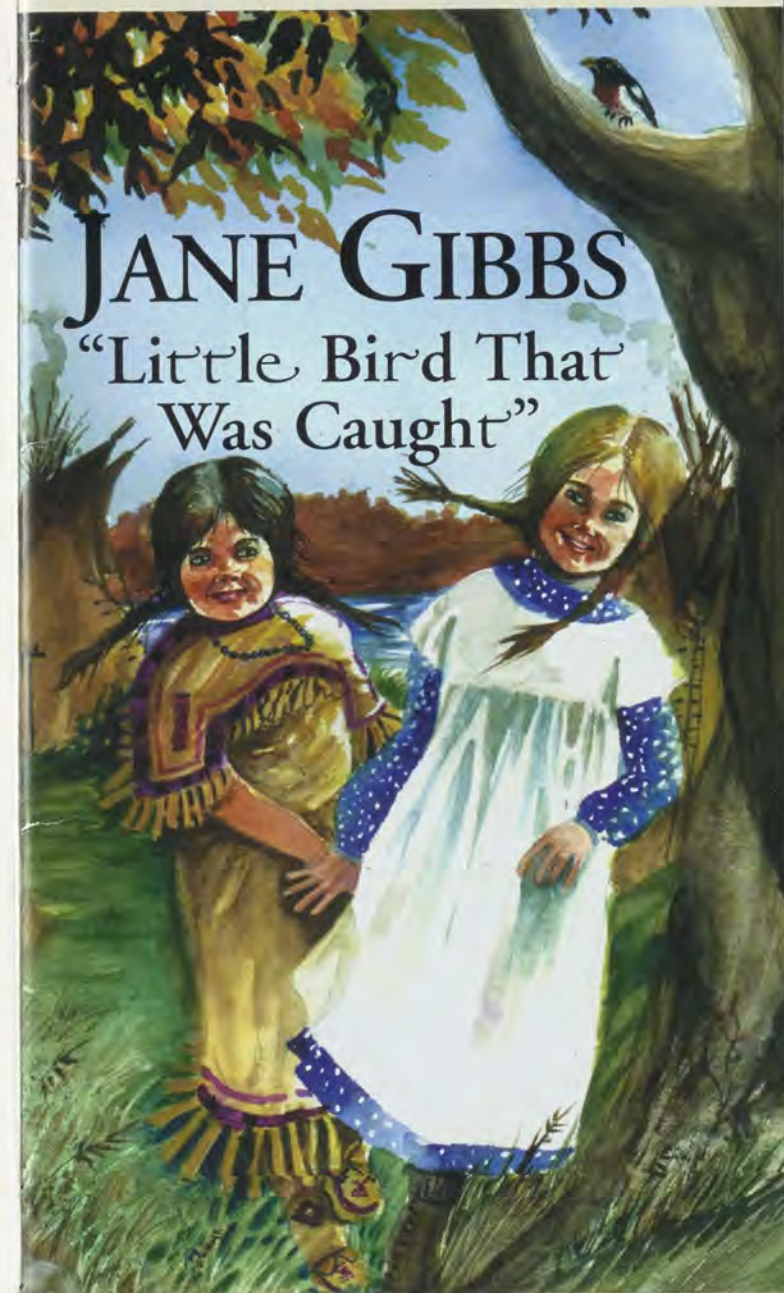
A Message from the Editorial Board

With the winding down of summer 1998 and the beginning of another school year, the lead article in this issue recalls the "Guns of August," F.R. Bigelow's account of his determined efforts in 1914 to join his wife and children in France and to safely leave that country ahead of the swift advance of the Imperial German Army in the opening days of World War I. Although the United States didn't join the war against Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary until 1917, Bigelow's story of how he was able to get to France via Spain, find his family in the maelstrom of a France caught up in fighting a powerful invader, and return to St. Paul in time for the opening day of school for his young children is not only compelling reading, but also persuasive of where the sympathies of many Americans would lean as the war went on year after year.

Equally as fascinating as Frederic Bigelow's account of the world in the summer of 1914 is Kathleen C. Ridder's examination of the notable success of some of Ramsey County's women athletes in the middle third of this century. Women such as Jean Havlish, Mary Meyers, Jeanne Arth, and Bev Vanstrum achieved prominence and public acclaim for their victories in softball, bowling, speed skating, tennis, and golf long before federal legislation prohibited discrimination based on gender in educational programs that received federal funds. From "A League of Their Own" to the Olympics, these women led the way for the next generation of women athletes in Ramsey County and Minnesota. Despite their pioneering efforts, few of these athletes are known today because all too often they and their achievements were regarded as exceptions (which they were for their times) rather than as role models for those young women who would come after them.

John M. Lindley, chair, Editorial Board

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and events that happened.

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A 'Wicked Looking Revolver' and \$3,000 in Gold

F.R. Bigelow's Dash to France to Rescue His Family from

Frederic R. Bigelow

Editor's Note: Sometime in 1914, Frederic R. Bigelow and his wife Alice decided the time had come for their two daughters to spend a year studying languages in France and Italy. Travel and study in Europe was considered "the thing to do" among wealthy American families, an important part of their children's educational and cultural development. The Bigelow family certainly qualified as wealthy. Frederic Bigelow had succeeded his father, Charles H. Bigelow, as president of St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company. Moreover, both he and his wife were well-educated, cosmopolitan travelers. Frederic was a graduate of Williams College in Massachusetts, his wife of McGill University and Radcliffe College, and they had met during the course of a round-the-world cruise. On May 23, 1914, Alice set off for Europe with their children, Eileen, who was nine years old; Hortense, seven, and Frederic, Jr., about five. A month later, the Austrian archduke and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo and by August much of the world was at war. Here is Bigelow's account, told in his own words and preserved by his descendants, of his frantic dash to France to find his family and bring them home.

The summer of 1914 seemed an opportune time for Mrs. Bigelow to take the children to Europe and get them started in on the French language, something which we were both very anxious that they should have. They left St. Paul May 23rd, and the original plan was that I should sail early in August to spend a few weeks with them and all come home together.

I had passage engaged on the *Empress of Britain*, sailing from Quebec Aug. 6th, and my plan was to leave St. Paul Saturday night, Aug. 1st, spend a day in Montreal and a couple of days with Mrs. Fraser,* and sail on the 8th.

On Thursday evening, July 30th, it became apparent that the already threatening affairs in Europe were apt to become acute. War had been declared by Austria on Serbia, and Russia, which of necessity had to support the interests of the Slav people, had in turn declared war against Austria. It appeared more than likely that

Germany would come into the fray in support of her ally Austria and declare war upon Russia. This would, in turn, involve France, and probably Great Britain.

It was Mrs. Bigelow's plan to go, on July 31st, from La Trochoire** to Cabourg, a small watering place in Normandy near Trouville (not far from Havre). On Friday our papers were getting out exciting "extras" telling of the rush out of Paris on Friday, and as Mrs. Bigelow's trip to Cabourg would take her through Paris, I was very apprehensive all that day and thereafter.

I left St. Paul Saturday night and spent Monday in Montreal. Mobilization had been called both in France and Germany on Saturday afternoon, Aug. 1st. In Montreal I learned that the Steamer *Victorian* was to sail the next day, Aug. 4th, and therefore transferred my passage to that Steamer.

Next day, in Quebec, it was evident

that the stupendous conflict was on in Europe, and that France would be at once attacked by the rapidly mobilized German army. Everything was in suspense, awaiting the reply to the British ultimatum, which was to expire at midnight of Aug. 4th, and required Germany to respect the neutrality of Belgium. The general feeling seemed to be that Germany would not respect the neutrality of Belgium, and that therefore Great Britain would be involved, which seemed to mean a tremendous naval warfare.

That Tuesday, Aug. 4th, in Quebec, was a most anxious day. After long distance consultation with Montreal and New York, I finally decided that to go to England involved not only grave danger of capture at sea but that it was more than likely that the naval preparations or actual hostilities in the British Channel would come to a head about the date of my arrival, and that there was an even chance of my being bottled up in England without ability to cross to the Continent, perhaps for a long space of time. Consequently I gave up my passage, and as it was impossible to get to New York the next day, I ran down to Richmond† and spent Wednesday, Aug. 5th, there.

That evening I went to New York with the intention of going over on the United States Cruiser *Tennessee*, which was to sail that day with some \$8,000,000 of gold for the relief of Americans abroad. If this plan failed, I thought of trying to go to Spain or to some country which would put me within land communication of my family.

Although I had very powerful influences at work, it was soon evident that no outsider could under any circumstances get on the *Tennessee*. I went at once to Mr. McGee's office and asked him if

*His wife's mother

**Near Samur in northwestern France.

†Mrs. Fraser's home, a city south of Montreal.

the Guns of August

there was a steamer for Spain. Reference to his records found that there was a steamer sailing at ten o'clock that morning. I looked at my watch and found it was quarter to eleven. I telephoned the Steamship Company and found that the boat was delayed because of new Government regulations regarding manifests; that she would sail at two o'clock but was full.

I went at once to the Manager of the Steamship Company, who could not talk English, and, through his stenographer as interpreter, had a very stormy interview. While we were talking, two first class passages were given up, and it was, I think, almost as much to his relief as mine. I was immediately assigned a berth.

As early as July 28th, anticipating possible trouble, I had secured all the French and English gold that could be obtained in St. Paul—some \$500, and had also telegraphed to Montreal and engaged \$500 more. I could get no more French or English gold in New York and therefore took additional American gold to bring up the sum to something over \$3,000, which I carried all through the trip in two [money] belts, much to my discomfort.

It was about twelve o'clock when I closed the arrangement with the Spanish Line. I spent a very busy two hours up-town getting more money, sending a large number of telegrams, letters, &c., buying a few necessaries for the trip, and got back to the Steamer just before two o'clock, and finally, at 3:30 P.M., Aug. 6th, sailed on the Spanish Steamer *Buenos Ayres*, 5,000 tons, from New York bound for Cadiz and Barcelona.

The first impression of the Steamer was most unhappy. The odors and filth gave very poor promise. An interesting incident on the Bay was that we were the first departure under the new Government regulations, which provided that an officer of the Navy should inspect the manifest of every departing vessel. Offi-



Frederic R. Bigelow at his desk as president of St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company. This photo, from the St. Paul Companies' archives, was taken around 1924, when Bigelow was about fifty-four years old.

cers from the Battleship *Florida* came on board, and after a new moments we were allowed to proceed, passing close by the Cruiser *Tennessee*, upon which we could see a dozen or so men in civilian's clothes and a pile of trunks, which looked somewhat incongruous on a battleship. These men were accompanying the Eight Million Dollars in gold which was being sent that night for the relief of Americans abroad and who were unable to get

voyage they were most thoughtful and considerate in every way.

The Steamer got cleaned, the first night out, and while it was perfectly filthy in the third class quarters, yet the first class deck and rooms were reasonably clean. Every day of the voyage was more beautiful than the one before but in mid-Atlantic the ocean roll, which one hardly notices on a large ocean liner, had great effect on the *Buenos Ayres*. Our

The ninth or tenth day out, some 350 or 400 miles off the coast of Portugal, a black spot appeared on the horizon which rapidly became larger and larger . . .

money on their letters of credit, express checks, &c.

My roommates were a Dominican monk and a Spanish brandy drummer. My very first introduction to them was a most insistent invitation on their part to have a drink with them, and judging by the vigor of their motions their feelings of hospitality were most real. I lived in the same little room with these two men for twelve nights, and during the entire

course took us in the trough of the swell and the boat rolled back and forth slowly but tremendously, throwing everyone out of their chairs on the deck and necessitating the racks on the dining tables for several days. It seemed strange enough to have this motion without any wind or waves.

Although equipped with wireless, the Company—Compania Transatlantica—were not subscribers to the Marconi News

Bureau, so that while there were lots of wireless messages floating around, we were given no news whatever. Therefore, on the eighth day when we met the Steamer *Potsdam*, as soon as we had passed I asked one of the Spaniards to see the Captain to get the news. He returned shortly and said that the Captain had no news. Therefore I sent a wireless to the Captain of the *Potsdam*, telling him of our condition and of the fact that we had had no news for eight days, and urging him to send a reply. I stated that the answer was paid up to Fifteen Dollars' worth.

A couple of hours later I was sitting up in front on the deck when I saw one of the wireless operators coming rapidly toward me, and it seemed as though every man on that ship was following closely behind him with wide-open eyes. The *Potsdam's* answer was quite long and very satisfactory. It told us that there had been no large naval engagement whatever but that there was an army of 800,000 Germans advancing rapidly through Belgium.

The Spaniards were very much excited and the message was quickly interpreted by a man standing on a chair, first standing on one side of the deck and then on the other. It was then translated into Spanish and several typewritten copies posted all over the ship. The Spaniards seemed to appreciate this very much. The idea that anybody would spend \$15.00 on a telegram seemed to appeal to them greatly. If possible, the courtesy with which I was treated on board was somewhat pronounced after that.

Out of 650 people on board, I was the only Anglo-Saxon excepting, possibly, a girl who claimed to have been born in Virginia, but she did not look the part. Many of the passengers were Mexican refugees. There were five or six of Huerta's* Cabinet, three of his generals, and one of his sons. They were an astonishingly decent lot of people. Some of them talked a little English and I had a good many interesting conversations with them.

The ninth or tenth day out, some 350 or 400 miles off the coast of Portugal, a black spot appeared on the horizon which

* Mexican army general and, briefly, Mexican president during the Revolution of 1910.



Bigelow's journey from Cadiz, Spain, to St. Malo in France where the family finally embarked for England and home. Map by Mark Odegard for the Ramsey County Historical Society.

very rapidly became larger and larger, and soon everyone was crowded on deck to see what was going to happen. Very soon the exclamation was in everyone's mouth—"Bateau de guerre, Bateau de guerre." The last newspaper extra we had seen before leaving New York stated that a flock of Zeppelins had caused tremendous damage to the British fleet by dropping bombs, and we also knew that if Spain were to become involved in any way, it would be on the side of France, so we all had visions of the Germans having been successful on the sea and Spain involved in the war, and we knew not what complications would ensue if we were held up by a German war vessel.

I hunted up the Purser and told him that if it was a German war vessel I wanted my gold, because I thought I would feel safer to have it on me than to

have it in his safe, which likely would be opened right away by the Germans. A gentleman with a very fine pair of glasses handed them to an old sailor, who took a long, careful look at the craft. Soon he handed back the glasses with an air of conviction, pronouncing the single word, "Anglais," whereat a sigh of relief went over the whole ship.

We lost all the old-time picturesque hailing and calling back and forth because she wirelessed from about a mile distant, asking who we were, whereupon she replied that she was the British Cruiser *Amphytrite*. She came rapidly and closely alongside, turned behind us and steamed for some moments alongside of us. We could plainly see the officers measuring our length from her bridge. Then she steamed ahead and across our bows very slowly and mea-

sured our beam. All this, I suppose, to check us up to see if we really were the *Buenos Ayres*, as we said. Being satisfied, she doffed her pennant and steamed off. The whole incident was very interesting and very picturesque. She looked more like a big black bulldog charging down out of a driveway than like anything else. The next afternoon we went through much the same performance with a French Cruiser but she did not come nearly so close.

After twelve nights on board, we steamed very slowly and very early on the morning of Aug. 18th into the Harbor of Cadiz. I got up at half past four and shall never forget the picture. The water was blue and the town, with its Moorish pinnacles, as white as whitewash could make it, the many lighthouses blinking in the early dawn, the mist rising slowly along the green hills, and the myriad of little red lateen sail fishing boats all made a most beautiful picture. Someone has said that to describe Cadiz, one must write the name with white chalk upon a blue blotter.

As I had both cabled and wirelessly to Mrs. Bigelow to communicate with me in care of the Steamship Company at Cadiz, I was very impatient to get up to the City office. My Spanish friends were very very kind; one of them took charge of the baggage and another one took me off in a cab to the Steamship Company's office. There was no word there, mail or telegraph, and the next hour was a very anxious one, but I finally learned that no mail and no telegrams were being delivered with any sort of speed. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Bigelow had telegraphed twice and also written two or three times, none of which reached Cadiz within ten days from the time they were sent.

We got through the customs and took a long ride around town. It was pretty hot for much of a walk, and I invited my Spanish friends to "*dejeuner*" with me at the Hotel. There were several Spaniards on the Steamer who spoke English. They were very agreeable companions and anxious to do everything they could to help me. There was a Spanish lumber dealer from Barcelona named Carras Ferrer who was anxious to select the place where we should have our lunch.



The three Bigelow children: Frederic, Jr., Hortense and Eileen. They were with their mother in France when World War I broke out in 1914. Photo from Constance Bigelow Kunin.

He suggested that we have our coffee out in the court garden, which we did.

After I had finished my coffee, I turned to one of the men and asked him to tell the waiter to bring some more of that coffee—not a cup but a pot, remarking that it was about the best coffee I had ever tasted. Old Mr. Ferrer was too delighted. He got up and put his hands on my shoulders, exclaiming in an impassioned way, "Ah! It has not been wasted, it has not been wasted," and then proceeded to tell me that the coffee at that particular place in Cadiz was supposed to be the finest in Spain, if not in the world.

At 4:20 in the afternoon, Mr. Torres, Mr. Ferrer and I left for Madrid. At Seville we changed to a fine sleeping car and a really magnificent dining car. In the morning we arrived a little late in Madrid, and my two companions, with a good deal of running and hustling got their baggage and caught the train for Barcelona. This left me for the first time absolutely on my own resources, in the huge railway station at Madrid.

The services of a public interpreter enabled me to get quickly to the Palace Hotel, where several porters spoke English. I went at once to the American Consul, Mr. Robertson Honey, who told me that the Embassy was closed but that an attendant would give me any mail or telegrams. I took a cab at once for the Embassy, and found three telegrams, two

from the Office giving figures of cash on hand &c., which greatly relieved my mind, and the third was from Mrs. Bigelow. It was sent from Pornichet, and said that she was staying at La Trochoire.

I returned at once to the Consulate, where Mr. Honey was snowed under with telegrams and cablegrams regarding hundreds of stranded Americans in Spain, and just as I entered the room he received a message that the United States Government had chartered the *Infanta Isabel*, to sail from Barcelona in five days and then to touch at Cadiz.

I at once sent a long telegram to Mrs. Bigelow, suggested that she meet me in Bordeaux but so worded the telegram that she could use her judgment in the matter. This telegram was sent to La Trochoire, and I requested her to answer both at a Hotel in Bordeaux and also in care of the American Ambassador. I found that practically every telegram which mentioned, either in the body or the address, the words "American Embassy" or "Ambassador" went through with little delay while all other telegrams were quite uncertain. My idea was that if Mrs. Bigelow was not comfortable, or if passage from England were difficult, we could go home at once on the *Infanta Isabel* and would have time to catch the Steamer if she could come at once with the children to Bordeaux.

Having left New York without a pass-

port, I got what is called an "emergency passport" at Madrid to which was attached a photograph, and had it visad by the French Ambassador at Madrid. Everyone had been suggesting that I would have great difficulty in getting into France, and I was much comforted to have the Secretary of the French Ambassador tell me that he thought I would have no trouble whatever.

I was in no mood for sightseeing and paid little attention to what interests the ordinary tourist. I was fortunate in coming to Madrid on the first fairly cool day in two months. Up to that time, no one had been able to walk a block in the sun. In the matter of passports and telegrams and steamship passage, railroad tickets, &c., I was busy all day long until five o'clock, although it seems difficult now to know just why it should take so long. At that hour I went around to the Embassy again and was greatly pleased to receive another telegram from Mrs. Bigelow, sent from Saumur (near La Trochoire), stating that she was staying at La Trochoire. The dates were a couple of days apart, so I knew perfectly what she was doing. She had stayed at Pornichet for two weeks and was getting back to La Trochoire as best she could.

The feeling in Spain, as far as I could understand it, was strongly in favor of the Allies. The Sud-Express left about eight o'clock in the evening and is a famous train in Europe, made up of magnificent sleeping cars and first class coaches. I learned that it had left the night before for the first time in two weeks. In other words, had I been in Madrid several days earlier I could only have saved one day in getting into France. There was no use of running trains from Madrid to the French border if there were no trains to connect with them on the other side. The train was fairly well filled and it rather impressed me that going into France was rather an ordinary thing, after all.

I had heard a man speaking English on the platform and after the train started I spoke with him and found he was an Englishman named Smithers, who was the Manager in Spain for the Agency of the Gresham Life Insurance Co. of London. His wife and children were near Southampton and he was trying to rejoin

them via Paris. He spoke Spanish perfectly and was of great assistance to me.

After a very comfortable night, the early morning ride was beautiful, through Spanish watering places and approaching the Pyrenees. People kept getting off at these watering places, and when we came to Irun, the last station on the Spanish frontier, they told me that I would not be allowed to take any baggage into France. As my trunk had been registered to Irun, I let them take it off the train. Another reason I made no great effort to take the trunk along was that I expected it more than likely I would return the same way with the family a little later on.

After a few moments at Irun the train pulled across to Hendaye, the French frontier station. The reassurance which the presence of a large number of people on the train had given melted rapidly when I found that Mr. Smithers and myself were the sole two individuals to pass the gendarme when we stepped from the train at Hendaye, the only two persons entering France, and each one of us entering purely for the purpose of rejoining his family.

The French officials were very polite and very quiet. Our passports seemed to satisfy them, the contents of our handbags apparently caused no suspicion, so we were allowed to enter. It was our first

view of a country at war. Even in that very sparsely settled community, soldiers were everywhere. The station was full of them, and practically everyone of military age on the street wore a uniform. We were told that all these men were reservists being drilled preparatory to going to the front.

Mr. Smithers expected that some English friends of his were at a hotel on the seashore about two miles from the station, and as our train did not go into Bordeaux until two o'clock, we walked up there. (My two gold belts emphasized their presence on that walk that hot morning.) We found there quite a group of attractive English people, none of whom had a cent, but as they were quite comfortable they seemed content to wait until their letters of credit could be used.

On the way to the station we bought a large quantity of crackers and chocolate, and the train finally started at a little after two o'clock. The railway runs along the coast for quite a while and we passed through many well-known watering places. Of course what impressed us was the number of soldiers. It impressed me in two ways. In the first place, why were they there? Why were they not at the front? In the next place, it was evident that every man of military age wore a uniform. The fact was that they were all



Frederic Bigelow and his bride, Alice Fraser, after their 1903 wedding. Photo from Constance Bigelow Kunin.



Angers in northwestern France. The Bigelow family passed through here as they made their way to St. Malo on the Brittany coast. Ramsey County Historical Society photo.

reservists, who had been called to the colors but required a large amount of drilling and organizing before being ready to be of any use at the front. But it was soldiers, soldiers, everywhere.

At Bayonne we had to show our passports, and away off in that remote corner of France we were told that there were over 10,000 men being prepared for the front. After a very long and exceedingly tiresome trip the train pulled into Bordeaux at a quarter before one at night. Passports were demanded, and the whole place had a great air of excitement. It seems that seven spies had been shot there that afternoon.

The porter who took our baggage had to report at the *Sortie*, where our passports were again shown, and we gave the number of pieces of baggage, and our destination. And then when we got to a cab we were checked up again, our passports demanded, and the number of the porter, the number of the cab, and our names were put on another officer's sheet. We were stopped twice more before getting to the Hotel. The last two times we were placed separately facing an officer, each with two soldiers with fixed bayonets on either side of us. I was quite anxious, not but what I could estab-

lish my identity and get through all right unless they got in too much of a hurry. Then, too, I was apprehensive of anything which might tend to delay my trip.

On finally arriving at the Hotel, I found another telegram from Mrs. Bigelow, stating that she had just gotten to La Trochoire after a very tiresome trip, and really could not go to Bordeaux unless it was absolutely necessary. So of course I decided to go right on to her.

Passports were demanded, and the whole place had a great air of excitement. It seems that seven spies had been shot there that afternoon.

We got up at half past four that morning, and when I went down the stairs I noticed a French soldier standing at a stone gate in the alley. When we got downstairs the Hotel Manager seemed very anxious to get us out of the building and, when we left, there was another French soldier on guard out in the front. We got into a cab, and as we turned the corner the soldier in front of the Hotel also called a cab. It is quite likely that we were under surveillance from the time we came into Bordeaux until the time we got

out.

In going down to the station we drove through a park, and on either side of the road were encamped Algerian soldiers. Many of them were still asleep, and a few getting up and starting to cook some kind of a breakfast. They were a dirty looking lot. No tents—all sleeping in their clothes. We saw in the railroad yards trains which were all ready to take soldiers to the front, so that doubtless these Algerian troops were in the midst of the fray very soon afterwards.

When we came to buy our tickets there were at least three thousand people in many lines running up to the various ticket windows. We had first to go to an officer and show our passports and get permission to buy a ticket. The officer, after looking at the passports, threw them on a table and asked us to step to one side. Evidently, here was more trouble. Pretty soon he beckoned us to follow him, and took us down to the other end of the station before a gentleman covered with gold lace, whom we found to be the Commissioner of the Military Police. Mr. Smithers showed his passport, said he was bound for London, and got through at once. The Commissioner, however, asked me a lot of questions, and my French was severely taxed. He seemed particularly anxious to know how I happened to get a passport in Madrid if I had just come from America. We were stumbling along when suddenly I pulled out

the three telegrams signed "Alice" which concurred with the name in the passport (my passport was for myself, wife and three children). This seemed to help the matter very much and he marked the passport good for the trip to Tours.

Then we went back to buy our tickets and were standing aghast at the length of the lines before the windows, fully realizing that we could not join those lines and get away on a train which left in thirty minutes. And there was not another train until afternoon. Suddenly a French sol-

dier came up and asked us where we were going, in French. We told him, and he said that if we would give him our passports and money he could get us tickets. He was a bright young fellow and acted, to me, a good deal as though he had been a porter in some hotel.

I gave him my passport and four gold pieces, Smithers did the same thing, and he disappeared like a shot through the gate between two soldiers. I started to follow him but the soldiers stopped me. I told Smithers frankly that I thought he was the biggest fool in the whole continent of Europe, to give his passport and several gold pieces to a stranger and even expect to see them again. He replied that he was quite willing to admit that he was the next biggest fool in Europe, but as Americans had the reputation of possessing quicker wits than the English, he insisted on resigning first place to me.

Well, we certainly were staggered, and I think we would have had a pretty hard time without our passports in that military city. However, he appeared in a few moments with our tickets, and I never gave a fellow two dollars for five minutes' work as cheerfully as I did then.

There was something exciting going on that day, the nature of which I never learned. In my efforts to send a telegram I was met with the curtest kind of refusal, whereas during all the rest of my time in France nothing of that sort occurred. From noon of the day before, we had subsisted on our crackers and chocolate. As we went to the Hotel at one o'clock and left at 4:30 in the morning and were busy every minute up to train time getting our tickets, we had no opportunity even for a cup of coffee, so that when the train started we commenced again on our crackers and chocolate.

A Frenchwoman in our compartment had two sons at the front. She was bright as a dollar, chattered all day long, and was on her way to Paris to turn over her private house, which evidently was quite a mansion, for the use of the wounded. There were a few things in the house that she wanted to bring away with her but everything else that she had was at the disposal of the hospital authorities.

All that day for fourteen hours we saw nothing but soldiers and more soldiers.

Every culvert, every bridge, every tunnel had an armed guard, and in every village, town and city men were drilling and the streets were full of evidences of the activity of the Commissary Department.

We reached the junction outside of Tours at a little after six o'clock and got a ticket to Saumur without any trouble. Was very lucky, as a train was ready to start which had been held up for over an hour on account of military trains. I saw here one train of over thirty cars, every car filled with carts or wagons, horses, shovels, and even gasoline dredging machines—all sorts of paraphernalia apparently for the making of defenses. This train was headed for Paris. I walked up to the other end of the station after looking this train all over, and soon it started, and I believe that when the last car passed it was going fifty or sixty miles an hour. I fancy that this train was destined either for work on the defenses of Paris, or perhaps for the frontier near Belgium.

With all my gold I had started off with a very wicked looking revolver, and I do

family, having been unable to telegraph them from Bordeaux, or to telephone or get to them from Saumur. Therefore, after some beer and cheese, I went to bed in the Hotel and had a good rest. After a second day of crackers and chocolate I was ready for something decent to eat but all the cafes were closed.

The next morning the tram car started at 8:30, and as the mail address was "La Trochoire par Fontevrault," I naturally went to Fontevrault. When I got off the car and inquired for La Trochoire, they all got quite excited and evidently knew who I was. They told me I should have gotten off four miles back, at Montsoreau, as there I could have gotten a horse to take me to La Trochoire, while now there was nothing to do but to wait until 1:30 and go back to Montsoreau on the tram, or else to walk. Here was where my good French came into play, and I finally got a boy to agree to walk with me over the "mountain," as they called it. It was a hot, hard climb, and through the worst kind of prickly bushes, and after

It was a hot, hard climb, and through the worst kind of prickly bushes, and after about an hour we came to a stone wall and gate which the boy said was La Trochoire.

not know which was the greatest care, the gold or the revolver. At the customs stations in Spain and France I hid the revolver in the inside pocket of my mackintosh, and every time our passports were called for I was afraid they would go through my satchel and arrest me for carrying a revolver, as the rules regarding the carrying of firearms in France were very severe. In all those three weeks in France I never saw or heard of a disorderly act, so that a revolver was superfluous.

The train from Tours was crowded and I indulged in a first class compartment all to myself. On arriving in Saumur, about 8:30, I tried to telephone out to La Trochoire and found that neither day nor night was it permitted to use long distance telephones. I then sought to get an automobile, and was informed that no vehicle of any nature was allowed to be on the country roads after six o'clock. So there I was, within eight miles of my

about an hour we came to a stone wall and gate which the boy said was La Trochoire.

There was the greatest kind of noise and confusion going on, and when I went into the gate I found that a threshing crew were busily at work. Indeed, 79 people had dinner at the place that noon. I went into the courtyard and in a minute saw little Hortense's face in an upstairs window. I shall never forget the look on her face. She gave a glance in my direction, then leaned forward and gave a quick, hard look, said not a word but turned like a flash and ran away, and I heard her calling, "Poddy is here; Poddy is here;" and in a minute from at least four different doors people began to pour out to see what the excitement was all about.

Aside from the fact that the little boy had a temporary upset, from which he soon recovered, they were all well and happy. Everything was so comfortable,

the Germans were still in Belgium, and as I was afraid to take the family on that long railroad trip back down into Spain, and even more afraid of the food on Spanish steamers, and on the other hand, England was still crowded with American tourists trying to get home, we felt that there was no wisdom in moving just at the moment.

The Gouteix family were very cordial and very glad to have us stay, as the whole household was under a great deal of strain, and we Americans were a diversion. Mrs. Gouteix had two brothers at the front, the butler had a brother, and the little maid who took care of our rooms had a fiance, all in the army, and news was anxiously awaited. I sent to a Spanish forwarding agency for my trunk and, much to my surprise, it came along in about seven or eight days by fast express. The children were making excellent progress in their French, and all together the purpose of the summer was being fulfilled, and so we did not hurry. Then Hortense had a bronchial trouble, which laid her up for two or three days.

All of a sudden, on Friday, Sept. 4th, I discovered from a map that the Germans were coming down on to Paris like an avalanche. I went into Saumur and, after considerable difficulty, arranged for an automobile to take us to St. Malo. Mr. Gouteix agreed to take our baggage in his little Ford. During these days, Saumur and the main roads were crowded with fleeing automobiles, people and baggage of every description and in every amount. We were told that there were two thousand automobiles on the roads leading west from Paris, broken down through being overloaded. It was a rush of people from all Northeastern France as well as from Paris. The numbers in this flight must have been three or four million people, as Paris, a City of 3,600,000, had in it but 1,600,000 people when the Germans reached the nearest point.

One curious thing was the number of birds. The long line sweeping through the Ardennes and other forests had driven all the birds west and south, and the country was simply alive with them.

The man owning the automobile wanted one thousand francs to take us 168 miles. I waited a few moments so as

not to appear too anxious, and then gladly took him up. The earliest day that he could take us was the next Tuesday, Sept. 8th. Saturday, Sunday and Monday were pretty anxious days, as I felt that if the Germans surrounded Paris, marauding parties might easily reach out as far as La Trochoire, and I felt that I had no business to wait so long in a country at war, with my wife and children. However, the situation relaxed very much on Monday when we found that the whole German army had turned eastward, having given up any immediate attack on Paris.

We bought six or seven wicker trunks and bags, left all the somewhat worn clothing to be given to the Belgians, and also left everything that we did not absolutely need, in a large trunk, which is still (Nov. 19th) at La Trochoire and has not been shipped yet. The necessity for taking all the gasoline required by both automobiles to St. Malo and return added very much to the load, and then Mr. Gouteix had a mechanic with him.

We started off bright and early on Tuesday, Sept. 8th—a beautiful day. We went into Saumur, then up to Angers through Chateaubriant, and when we were within twenty-five miles of Rennes, just after we had turned a sharp corner I heard a tremendous report, and turning around quickly saw the little Ford practically standing on its nose and all the trunks and gasoline cans and everything tumbling out into the road with a tremendous racket. I jumped out of our car before it had stopped and started to run back and had gone but a few steps when I saw the second man get up off the ground. It was a tremendous relief as I had visions of going back and finding one or both seriously hurt, and perhaps worse. Mr. Gouteix had landed on his shoulder and had a pretty severe bump which, I fancy, was very lame for a long time, but nothing worse happened.

We dragged the automobile to the side of the road, piled up the trunks and bags, left the mechanic on the scene, took Mr. Gouteix, and rushed on into Rennes. This City was full of Belgian and French refugees. Practically all the conversations in the dining rooms and in the lobbies were concerning searches which

people were making for various members of their families from whom they had become separated.

Mr. Gouteix and our chauffeur had great trouble in getting an automobile to go back after the baggage but they finally succeeded in sending someone off. We were unwilling to go on from Rennes without the baggage, and our chauffeur was unwilling to wait after half past four, and I could not blame him much, as he had agreed to return the next day and take a party the following morning. It was a long and anxious afternoon. I felt very sorry indeed for Mr. Gouteix. He had gone to a great deal of expense in having four new tires on his car and fixing up his engine and employing this mechanic to go with him.

I had been in doubt all the while as to what I ought to pay him, and after the accident I took \$200.00 in gold and pressed it on him. The poor fellow did not want to take it at all, but I knew he was hard up, and practically forced it on him. It would be impossible to exaggerate the attention and courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Gouteix and all the other French people that we met. Even with all the anxiety and strain that they were under, their only thought seemed to be for our comfort.

After getting the weight divided up between the two automobiles, we left Mr. Gouteix at Rennes, started on for St. Malo—a beautiful and interesting trip through Brittany—and finally reached there and the Hotel Franklin about 6:30 p.m., all comfortable and not very tired. Every city through which we passed was full of soldiers. St. Malo seemed to have seven or eight thousand of them around, besides the Casino and other buildings, turned into hospitals, full of wounded. The next morning I started investigating steamers and found that one of the old style boats was to cross that night, but as she was very small and old, and all the men had to be in one cabin and all the women in another, we decided to wait until Friday night, when one of the newer, larger and faster boats was scheduled to cross.

We then set to work getting our passports and documents, which was a long and trying proceeding. We had first to go to the police, where we were all weighed

and measured, and described in a blank filled out for each one, even my little boy. Then we had to go and have our pictures taken, then back to the military, where we went through a long performance. We had a scare in that the first man told us that no passports into England would be given, but finally we saw some higher officer, explained to him that we were simply going through England en route to America, whereupon the red tape of getting the military passports was proceeded with, and it took a long time.

After the passports had all been made out, photographs attached and the signatures, even of the little girls, placed, they were discussing the necessity for a passport for little Frederic. He did not know what was going on and we had had great difficulty in keeping him quiet for so long a time. He was sitting on his Mother's knee, and all of a sudden threw back his head and in a loud voice shouted "*Conspuez Guillaum*,"—which means "Spit on Wilhelm." This was an expression which he had heard the French children use at La Trochoire. The French officers readily understood it, went into roars of laughter, and said that he did not need any passport. This performance took pretty much all day but as it was rainy and we could do no sightseeing, it made little difference.

All the days here were rainy, and beyond watching the soldiers drill and wandering around the very quaint town we did not do much, simply waiting until the *Princess Ena* left on Friday, the 11th, when we sailed, in very comfortable rooms, at eight o'clock in the evening. It was very wild and rough but all hands went right to bed and had no discomfort.

In the morning when we got on deck early we were just going around beyond the Isle of Wight. As we approached, we saw a great number of vessels, chiefly smaller warships, The most interesting were three pairs of steamers sweeping for mines. They were a little less than a quarter of a mile apart with a huge chain running from one to the other. We understood that they had been constantly at it for a long time. Pretty dangerous work!

After quite a wait, the pilot went aboard a private yacht, then followed another private yacht, and we came last. In



Journey's end. F. R. Bigelow's house, left, was built in 1909 on Portland Avenue in St. Paul. The family returned here just in time for school. Charles H. Bigelow's house, also built in 1909, is on the right. Both houses are still standing. Minnesota Historical Society photo.

groups of three, they bring all steamers into Southampton. We went a long and devious roundabout route. Were much interested to see two French destroyers guarding the waters, and in every direction all along the coast were a great many warcraft of various types.

We finally landed, a little after noon. There was quite a large crowd on the steamer, people of all nations, especially Russians, who had a long trip before them to go north in England and then across to Norway, over to Stockholm, and then across the north of the Baltic, &c., to get back.

With all our pieces of baggage we had quite a time of it but a man, who was evidently a Scotland Yard man, took charge of us and called out to "let these children go by." This brought us up to the barrier very quickly. Mrs. Bigelow, who was in front, did the talking with the English officer, and finally we were conducted into a pen and told that we would have to see the American Consul. He came along very quickly and we had no difficulty satisfying him, whereupon, after getting our trunks through the customs, we got into a special train for London, and after a rapid trip reached the Hotel Somerset, bag and baggage, about six o'clock Saturday night.

Sunday morning while Mrs. Bigelow and the little girls went to Westminster Abbey to church, I took the small boy and had a very interesting morning watching the enlisting at several different points. And a clean looking lot of young fellows they were. We went up and saw an inspiring "guard mount" at Buckingham Palace, and then over to the Wellington Barracks, where we talked a long time with recruits about to start for the front.

Monday I interviewed the steamship offices and found that we could not get anything for some three or four weeks, and then a very poor inside room. I appealed to Mr. Sedgwick and finally, on Tuesday, secured two very fine rooms on the *Olympic* (for which the price was as fine as the rooms). We sailed on Wednesday, Sept. 16th, from Liverpool, which was the very day we had planned to sail, originally. The voyage to New York was uneventful, and after a couple of days in Richmond we arrived in St. Paul the morning of Sept. 28th at 9:25, the day school opened, and the day we had planned to get home when arranging the trip more than four months before. We reached St. Paul with everybody happy and well, and the children were in school by ten o'clock.



She did it! Bev Vanstrum's victory jig at the 1968 State Match Tournament at Edina Country Club. See article on Ramsey County's women athletes, beginning on page 13.

R.C.H.S.
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