

The Preparatory Department

Clemson College at the end of its first decade was far different than the institution we know today. The campus was rural, served mainly by railroad and telegraph. There were few academic buildings and dozens of private homes on the grounds. The costs of attending Clemson were also slightly less in the early years of the last century. Tuition was \$40 per year with room, board and books totaling another \$102. Students who could certify their inability to pay, were relieved from the tuition expense. Student enrollment for the 1903-04 academic year was just 539 cadets—all male and all white. Ninety-seven percent were from South Carolina and 102 were enrolled in the College's Preparatory Department. John Fairly Arthur of Kershaw was one of these students.



The Preparatory Course was intended for students not academically ready for college level courses. According to the College Catalogue, the “course is designed to meet the needs of young men, particularly farmers’ sons, who have not had the advantages of the thorough and systematic training afforded by many of the town and city schools.” Preparatory students were expected to keep to a rigorous course of study which included five hours per week of arithmetic, algebra, grammar and composition, reading and spelling. In addition, five hours of geography were scheduled for half the year and five hours of history for the second half. Students who satisfactorily completed the work were advanced to the Freshman class.

We don't know how well Fairly Arthur did in his studies, only that he found time to participate in the tennis club and that he didn't return to campus the following year. At the approximate age of 20, Arthur left South Carolina and entered the Army. He served for four years, including a tour of duty in the Philippines. After the Army, he made his home in Philadelphia and joined the Pennsylvania National Guard. His guard unit was called to federal duty along the Mexican Border in 1916.



Soldiers from the 18th Infantry Regiment man an observation post near Exermont, France, October 1918.

When the United States entered World War I, Arthur returned to the regular army. After reaching France, he attended officers' training school and was commissioned a second lieutenant. He was assigned to the 18th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Division. The division took part in the war's first offensive by an American army in September 1918 when it helped clear the Germans from the Saint-Mihiel salient.

In late September, American, British, and French forces launched the Meuse-Argonne offensive. It was the largest offensive in US military history, involving 1.2 million American soldiers. The fighting continued into October and lasted until the November 11 Armistice. On October 6, Second Lieutenant Fairly Arthur was killed in action.

John Fairly Arthur was survived by two sisters, both living in Camden. His body was never recovered. He is memorialized on the Tablets of the Missing at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery near Romagne, France.

Photo: The National World War I Museum and Memorial,
<https://theworldwar.pastperfectonline.com/photo/82360D1C-2FB7-4CBD-9ECD-012123072214>