

## Pneumonia Victim

George W. Hairston of Whitmire attended Clemson College only for his freshman year, 1909-1910. A mechanical engineering major, he was also a member of the Newberry County Club.

Hairston joined the Army and during World War 1 was assigned to the Quartermaster Corps. The Quartermasters were the Army's supply and logistics managers, keeping the soldiers clothed, fed, equipped, and supplied—no mean feat when the battlefield was 3,500 miles from the United States.

According to the Imperial War Museum, a division in the field in 1918 needed about 1,000 tons of supplies every day, the equivalent of two supply trains fifty cars long. When an offensive was planned, even more supplies had to be stockpiled. Once supplies from the United States reached French ports, railways were the main way of moving them on to the front. When the trains reached to within seven miles of the front, they were subject to shelling by German artillery.

From mid-1918 on, supplies weren't the only thing moving by train toward the front. Soldiers in increasing quantities were arriving from the United States—and bringing with them the pandemic known as the Spanish Flu. In the United States, the flu was first detected among Army soldiers. Moving with soldiers from post to post, both in the States and to battlefronts overseas, the disease spread rapidly. One of its distinctive characteristics was that mortality rates among 20 to 40-year-olds—the age range of most American soldiers—were very high.

Pandemic historians estimate that one-third of the world's population was infected with the Spanish Flu and that 50 million people died from the illness or related pneumonia.



*The Newberry County Club of 1910. Hairston is on the top row, second from left.*

George Hairston died from pneumonia in Germany on February 18, 1919. His body was returned to the United States and buried in the Shady Grove Presbyterian Church Cemetery in Clinton.

