



From the Trenches

Cross-Campus Digital History Collaboration

Gettysburg College

Amy Lucadamo '00, Panel Chair

Ian Isherwood '00, R.C. Miessler, Jenna Fleming '16, Meghan O'Donnell '18

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#TeamPeirs

Dr. Ian Isherwood '00

Visiting Assistant Professor

Amy Lucadamo '00

College Archivist

R.C. Miessler

Systems Librarian

Jenna Fleming '16 (2014-2016)

Kevin Lavery '16 (2014-2016)

Melanie Fernandes '17 (2016-2017)

Meghan O'Donnell '18 (2016-2018)

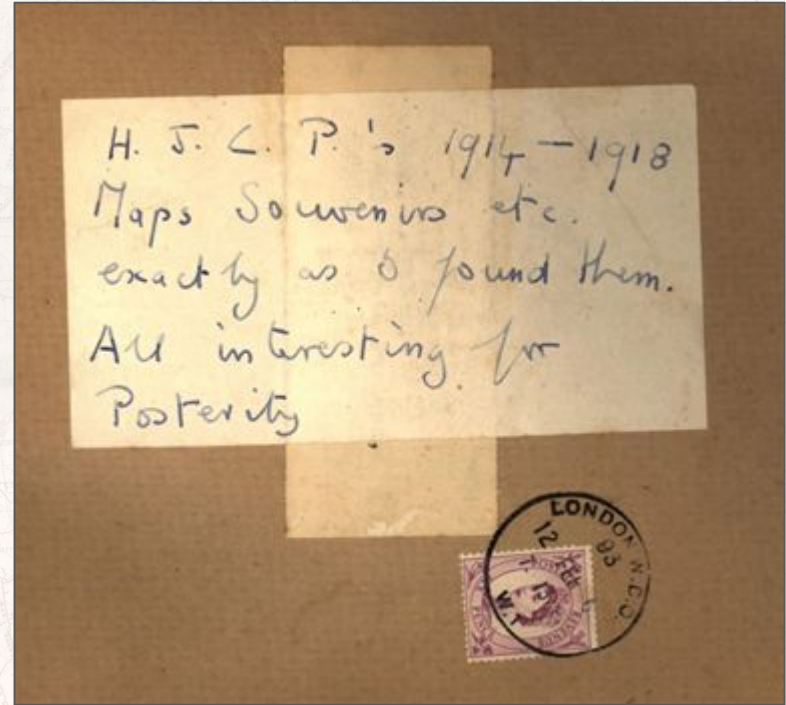
Jesse Campana '18 (2018)



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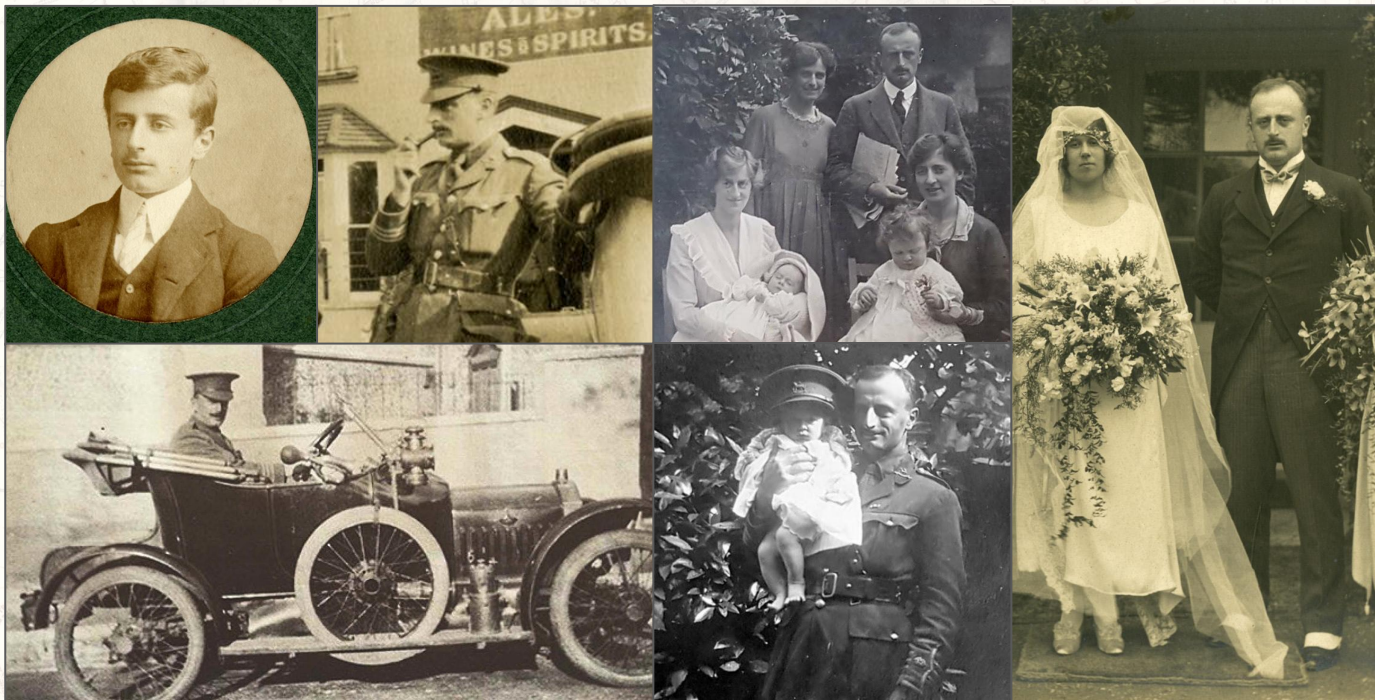
The First World War Letters of H.J.C. Peirs

- Around 300 letters, documents, artifacts, maps, and photographs from a British officer of the BEF
- All currently on loan to Special Collections and College Archives Gettysburg College
- Family requested that everything be digitized and made freely available without copyright restrictions
- The Peirs Project = blog + social media
- Engaging with WWI scholars, enthusiasts, genealogists, & students



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Hugh John Chevallier "Jack" Peirs



Photos of Jack and his pram, his sisters, and nieces appear courtesy of Will Hall.

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Collaboration



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Vision and Beginnings

- Classroom connection with student
 - Traditional research paper
 - Family support for new initiative
 - Assembling a “dream team”
 - No idea what we were doing
- #workedout



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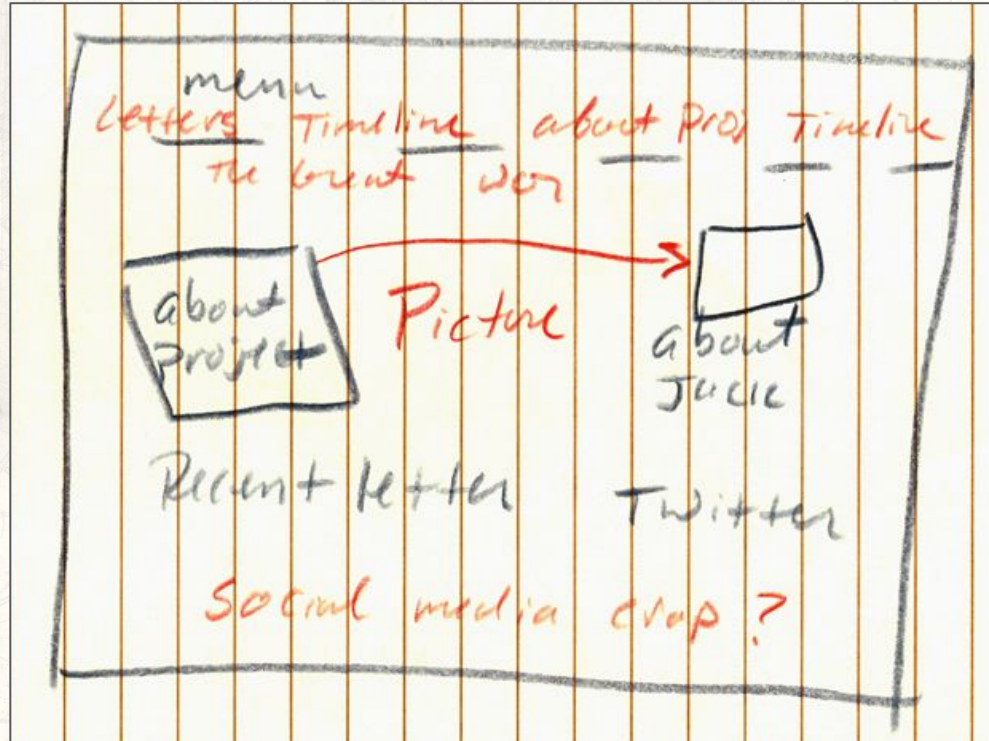
DH @ Gettysburg College

- Digital Humanities not generally a part of institutional culture
- “Mesh network” model for digital projects
- Collaboration built into the Peirs project from the beginning



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Getting Started



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In the Digital Trenches


	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	Year	Month	Day	Time	End Year	End Month	End Day	End Time	Display Date	Headline	Text	Media
1												
2	1915	9	14						<style "display:none">	14 September 1915	We have got a grenadier Corporal over here now, trying to teach us to throw bombs, but he is a priceless ass & we know as much about it as he does	http://jackpeirs.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Peirs_Lt_1915-09-14.jpg
3	1915	9	17						<style "display:none">	17 September 1915	I went to watch the to-day practising. They themselves a beautiful tunneller and reple hidden loop holes	
4	1915	9	19						<style "display:none">	19 September 1915	The Censoring of letters is the most unholy job. It takes their spare time and at any rate newspapers write reams daily which are censored by the Censor goes off.	
5	1915	9	21						<style "display:none">	21 September 1915	They had a respiration other day when one people came along Bosch gas & filled a then people walked came out coughing safe.	
6	1915	9	23						<style "display:none">	23 September 1915	While we have been we have had no change of letters.	
7	1915	9	28						<style "display:none">	28 September 1915	We went into action 20 officers and 100 quite all right, tho we touched I don't know	
8										30 September 1915	Just after leaving the trench came under machine	

The screenshot shows the WordPress interface. On the left is the dashboard sidebar with links to Dashboard, Posts, All Posts, Add New, Categories, Tags, Media, Links, Pages, Comments, Appearance, Plugins, Users, Tools, Settings, WP Lightbox Bank, Google Analytics, Twitter, and Collapse menu. The main area displays the 'Edit Post' screen for a post titled '21 March 1918'. The post content includes a transcription of a letter to 'My dear Mother,' dated '21. 3. 18.' The letter text reads: 'Many thanks for your last letter, also for others from Father Cecily Glad & Olive, also for a bottle of milk punch which arrived whole in spite of prognostications to the contrary. I have been rather seedy for some little time & am at the moment taking a few days off back in the Transport Lines, while the Battalion is in the trenches. I did not intend to go up all but I may have to go for a day or so. It is warm.' The post is published on March 21, 2018, at 10:00. The status is 'Published' and visibility is 'Public'. The format is set to 'Standard'.

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"My Dear Mother ..."

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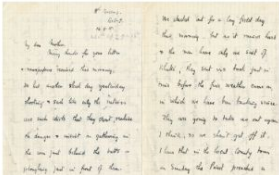


My dear family 11.8.1916.
Here I am again in the burrow + a pretty

[Home](#) > [Letters](#) > 14 September 1915

14 September 1915

[Ian Isherwood](#) [September 14, 2015](#) [0](#)



My dear Mother,

Transcription

8th Queens

B.E.F.

14.9.15

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Peirs 2.0

The First World War Letters of H.J.C. Peirs
a digital history

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About

Welcome to the First World War Letters of H.J.C. Peirs, a digital history project at Gettysburg College.

Jack Peirs was a British officer in the 8th Battalion, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regiment. For three years, Peirs served on the western front, fighting in every major campaign waged by the British Army from 1915 to 1918. During the war, Peirs rose in rank from Lieutenant to Lieutenant-Colonel and he was decorated with Distinguished Service Order (two bars) and named a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George at the King's Birthday Honours in 1919.

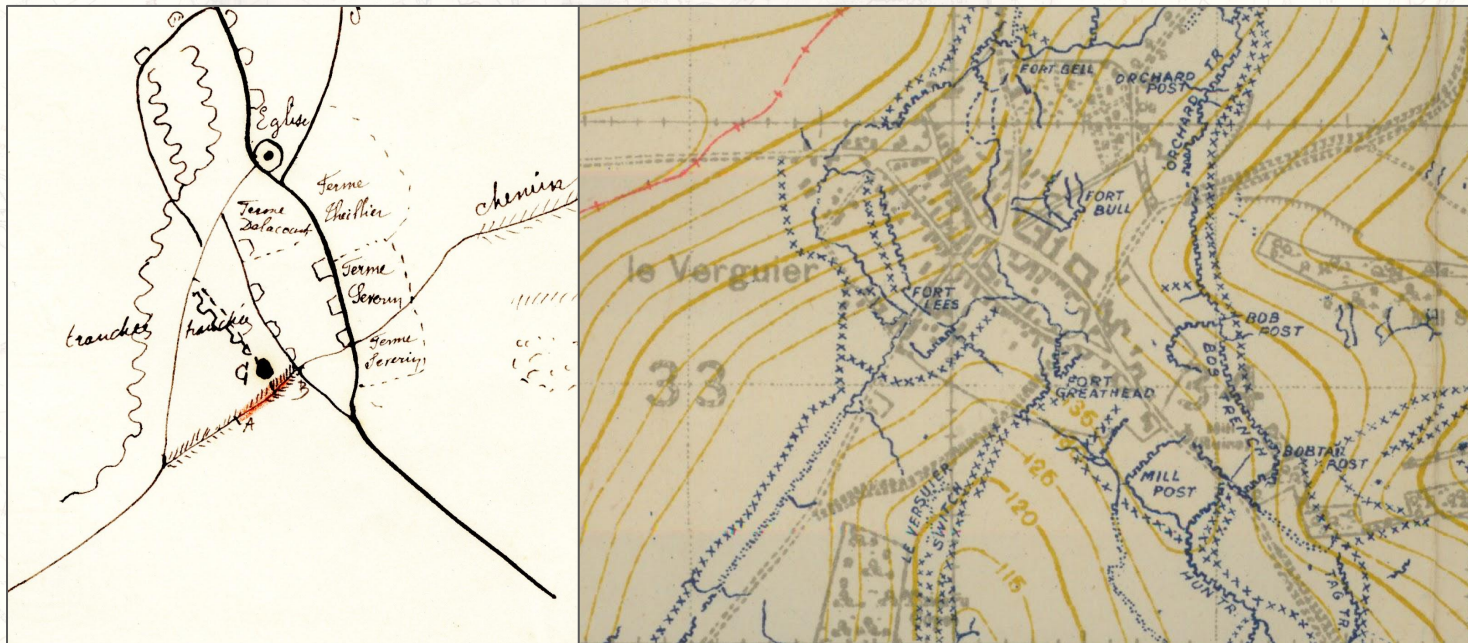
Jack Peirs saw hard service and he was a prolific correspondent. He wrote home weekly to members of his family of his experiences at the front. On the hundredth anniversary of the day in which Peirs composed each letter home, we will release his words here for you to read.

Please feel free to engage with the site. Use these letters in your research (properly attributed) and in your classroom. Bookmark our page, share our posts on social media, and follow H.J.C. Peirs on twitter and Instagram ([@jackpeirs](#)) and like our Facebook page.

[Twitter](#)

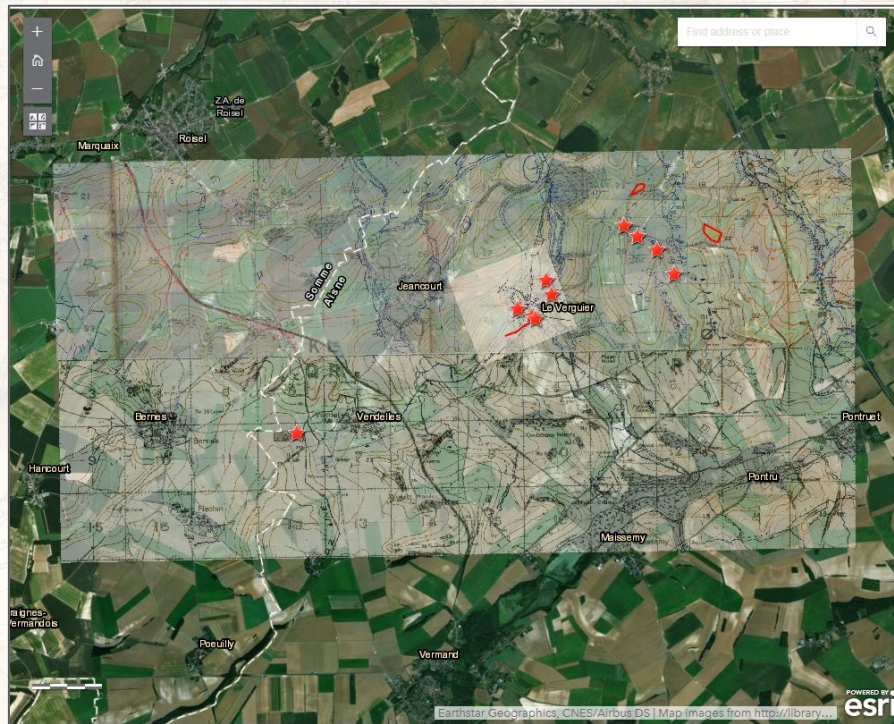
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Mapping the Great War (Then)



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Mapping the Great War (Now)



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LE VERQUIER - 21-22 MARCH

Trenches - Bombardment of positions with regular and gas shells commenced at 4:30 AM. The Headquarters is moved again to a sunken road on the southwest corner of Le Verquier.

The dugout was on the buried cable route, but by 7 AM all telephone communications with the forward companies was lost.

At 10:30 AM Companies A and C were cut off from retreat by the enemy. A Company's Lance Corporal John Sayer showed incredible resistance for which he later received the Victoria Cross.

At 3 PM Peirs arrived to take over command and attacks on the village begin. Throughout the night Peirs leads counterattacks.

On the morning of the 22, only Fort Greathed and the Battalion Headquarters remain and Peirs ordered a retreat, against his orders to hold the town.

German Assault on Le Verguier, March 21-22, 1918

The First World War Letters of H.J.C. Peirs: A Digital History

A time-based map of the German assault on the French village of Le Verguier, March 21-22, 1918.

Bombardment Begins: Graham Post and Molly Post, March 21, 1918, 4:30am-6am

Bombardment Begins: Graham Post and Molly Post, March 21, 1918, 4:30am-6am

Notes from Diary: Bombardment begins of town and back areas. Lasts for eight hours. Shells of all calibers and gas. Lt. Field returns from NML and alerts Graham and Molly groups.

Image: The remains of a farm at Le Verguier. Taken by Charles Severin, mayor of Le Verguier, 1919.

1

Report of Naiser Ascension Wood, March 21, 1918.

2

Bombardment Begins: Graham Post and Molly Post.

3

Battalion HQ Moved to Sunken Road. March 21.

4

Telephone Lines Severed: Shepherd's Copse (Company)

5

Runner Sent from Ding Post to Shepherd's Copse: March

6

German Attack Begins on Priel Farm Posts: March 21.

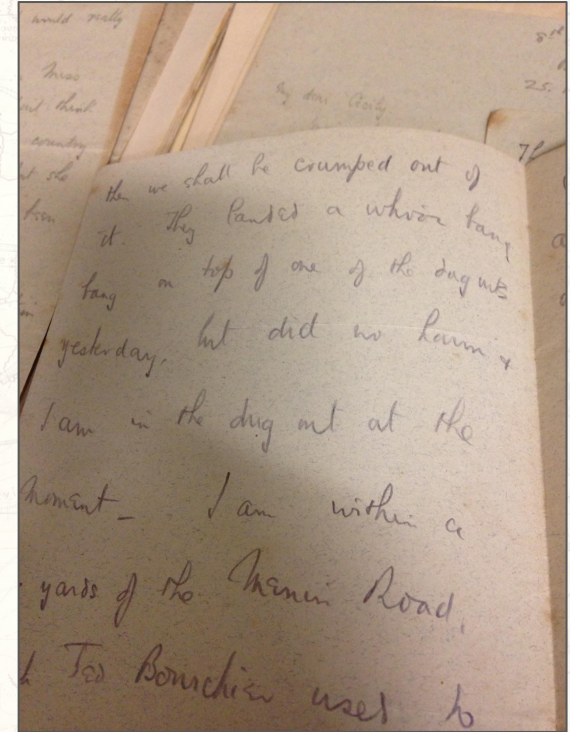
7

Withdraw to Orchard Post: March 21, 1918. 10:30am

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Student Roles

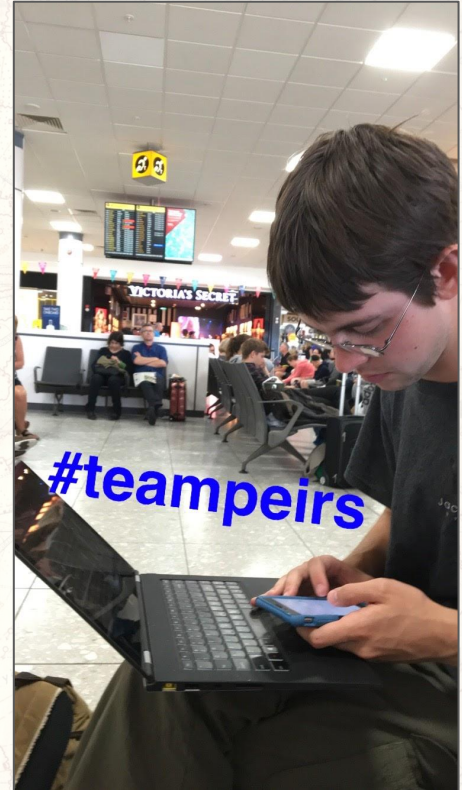
- Starting with a student
- Working as a library intern
- Guidance vs. freedom
- Collaboration from the start



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Moving Forward

- Developing our goals
- Actually working “from the trenches”
- Making the project better
- Research is truly a process



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Controlling the Vocabulary

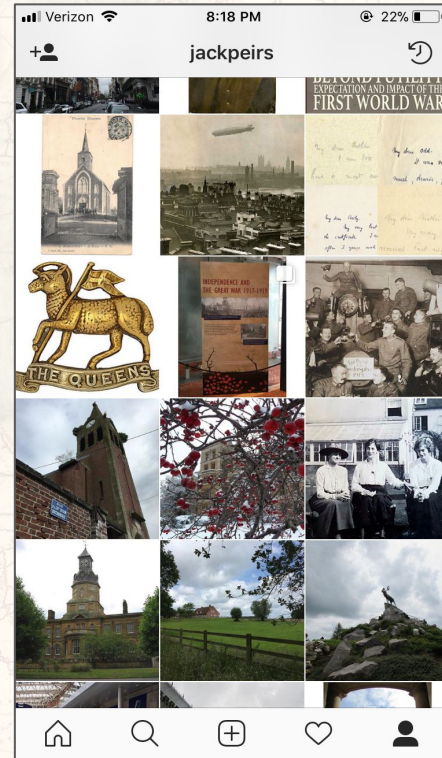
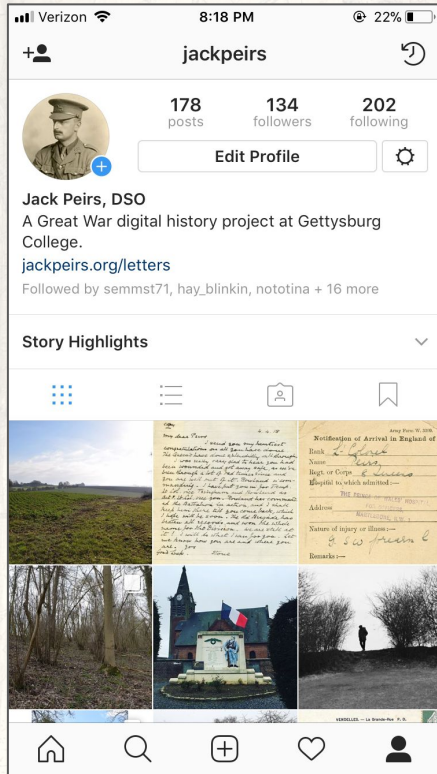
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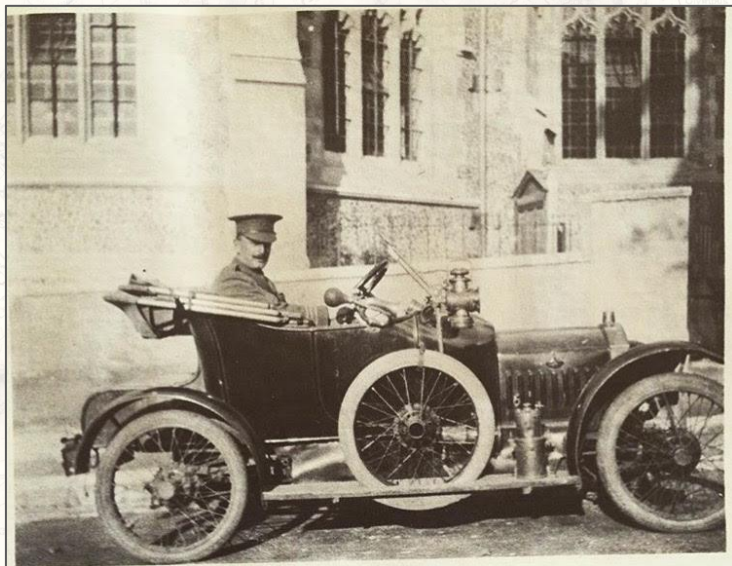
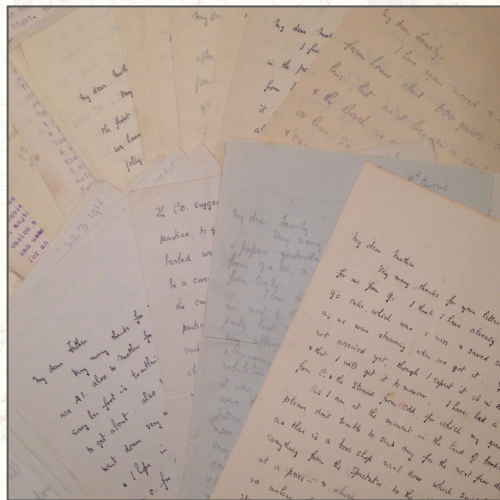
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New Territory



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Simply A1



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Field Research & Archival Research (2016)

- Internal grant funded
- France, Belgium, & England
- 100th anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of the Somme
- Visited battlefields, archives, cemeteries, & monuments
- Peirs-specific sites in/near London



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Field Research & Archival Research (2018)

- Crowdfunded
- France & Belgium
- 100th anniversary of the defense of the town of Le Verguier (German Spring Offensive)
- Live broadcasts to classes in Gettysburg & on Facebook Live
- Connected with local people



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Back in the Trenches



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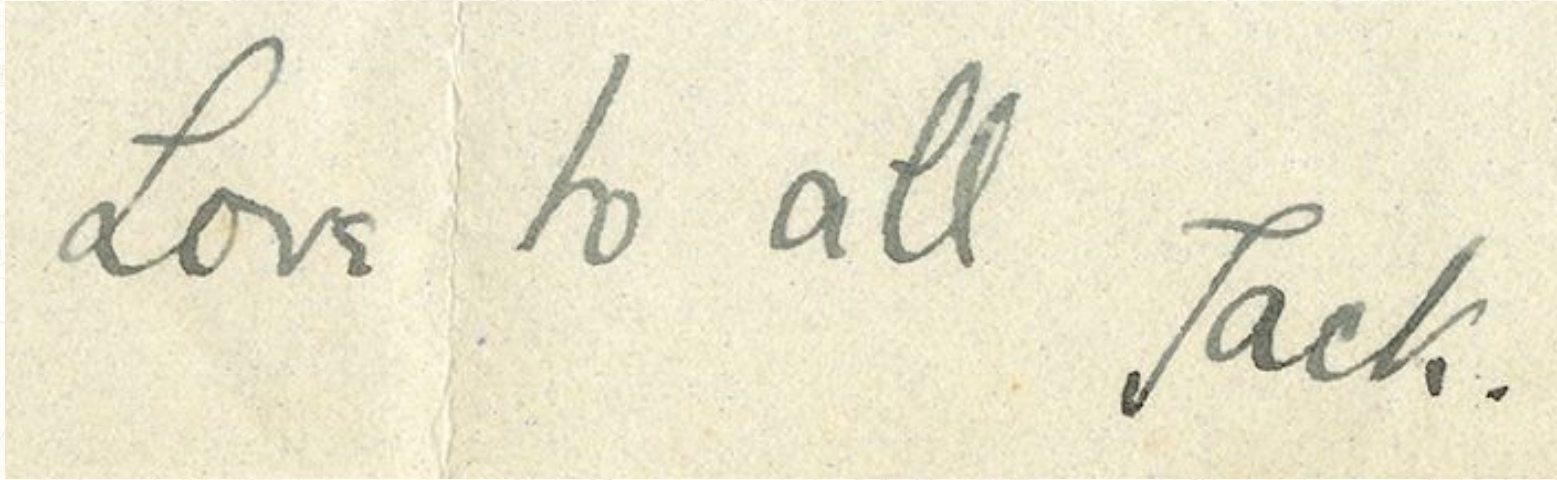
#TeamPeirs Reflections and Evolution



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Thank You!

<http://jackpeirs.org> // jack@jackpeirs.org // [@jackpeirs](#)



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