

## W. KERR RAINSFORD

Walter Kerr Rainsford was born in 1882 or 1883. His father was The Rev. Dr. William S. Rainsford, who was Rector of St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church in New York City, and a big-game hunter who eventually bequeathed his collection of hunting trophies to Princeton University. Kerr Rainsford (as he generally preferred to be known) graduated from the Groton School, Harvard University (1904), and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris (1911). He was, in addition to being a soldier and architect, an avid horseman, canoeist and mountain climber, and also a painter, writer, poet and occasional historian.

For seven months in 1915-1916, Rainsford drove an American ambulance attached to the French Army. When America entered World War I, he returned to New York and enlisted in the U. S. Army. After training at the first Plattsburg Officer's Training Camp in 1917, he was commissioned as a Captain in the 307<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 77<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, which then was headquartered at Camp Upton, on Long Island, New York. When that regiment embarked for France, CPT Rainsford was in command of Company M. After additional training with the British Army, he took part in the defense of the Baccarat sector and the Oise-Aisne offensive, until he was wounded at Château-de-Diable in August 1918.

After being released from hospital in September, CPT Rainsford was placed in command of Company L, 307<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. The following month, he led his company in the first attempt to relieve the so-called "Lost Battalion" of the 77<sup>th</sup>, which had been surrounded by Germans in the Argonne Forest. During this action, he was severely wounded again, but was able to return from hospital to his regiment in December.

Immediately after the war, CPT Rainsford wrote *From Upton to the Meuse, With the Three Hundred and Seventh Infantry*, © 1920, D. Appleton and Company, New York and London, 298 pages, scanned .pdf copy (367 pages) available for download on Google Books. This important book is described in greater detail in another link on this web page.

After returning to New York, Kerr Rainsford pursued a successful career as an architect of buildings and public works. Among the earliest of these was the design and enhancement of the 307<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment Memorial Grove in Central Park, including the installation of the natural boulder monument and bronze tablet. The 1926 permits and blueprint for this are reproduced in another link on this web page.

His later architectural work (in collaboration with John A. Thompson and Gerald A. Holmes) included the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, a Romanesque Revival red brick and limestone building at 319 East 74<sup>th</sup> Street, with interior Byzantine mosaics and stained glass, completed in 1932, and Hunter College Uptown, now known as Lehman College, in the Bronx, which was built during the 1930s.

Kerr Rainsford continued his association with the 307<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment Memorial Grove. According to a contemporary news report, he was one of the speakers at a Memorial Service held there on 24 May 1942.

He resided for many years in Katonah, New York, at his estate, "Ethandune", which was named after the reputed location of an epic defense by the Saxon King, Alfred the Great, against a Viking invasion in 878 A.D. Kerr Rainsford died while vacationing with his family at Fisher's Island, New York on 23 July 1947. His funeral was in Bedford, New York at St. Matthew's Church, where he had painted the ceiling of a chapel two years earlier.

Other books by W. Kerr Rainsford include:

*American Ambulance Service at Verdun in World War I*, (originally published as a magazine article entitled "An American Ambulancier at Verdun" in *The World's Work*, Volume 33, No. 2, pages 183-194, December 1916), available on Kindle from Amazon.com (2012), 15 pages, with photographs. The entire Volume 33 of *The World's Work* is available for download at Google Books (881 .pdf pages); Rainsford's original illustrated magazine article is at .pdf pages 208-219.

*The Maid of Orleans*, published by Macmillan & Co., New York (1937), a narrative poem about the life of Joan of Arc, 79 pages.

*Harold of England*, written with Albert Edmond Trombly, published by Fine Editions Press, New York (posthumous, 1948), a drama about King Harold (c. 1022-1066 A.D.), 109 pages.