

Letter written by Gertrude Lillian Smith to her mother while stationed at  
Base Hospital Camp Mills Mineola, Long Island, New York (1918)  
National Museum of Health and Medicine  
Otis Historical Archives (OHA308-00002)

Base Hospital Camp Mills  
Mineola L. I. N.Y.  
November 9-1918

Dear Mother:

I suppose you think I am sick again but I'm not. I've been busy at one thing or another and the time has passed so swiftly that I did not realize how long it was since I had written.

We are pretty well settled in our new quarters now and it does seem so good. As fast as the new hospital is ready patients are being moved over and they tell us that in another month we will all be over.

I am back on duty in my old surgical ward where I started and it sure seems like home. I have about thirty patients but none who are very ill. But I am the only nurse so I keep pretty busy. My wardmaster is "Smith" also.

Last Wednesday night Captain White took me to Jamaica for an Oyster Stew - no other kind. We can't get in any show this side of New York on account of being in uniform, people are still afraid of the Influenza. So we contented ourselves with the "Stew". You should eat the oysters we get here - real ones! I never knew how good they could be before and I have always

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been fond of them. Do you remember, however, how you  
tried to get me to eat a raw one once when I was a kid?  
Now they are my favorite dish.

The next day I had to go in to N.Y. to get my coat etc.  
Frances Smith went in with me and as we walked up  
34<sup>th</sup> St. to Broadway we both said how quiet New York  
was. We went to Weltman's and while we were there  
we heard four little newsboys blowing horns in the  
street below, shouting "Uxtry!" In less than thirty  
minutes New York was crazy mad. The streets were  
ankle deep with torn papers thrown from the  
windows of offices and roofs of sky scrapers. Looking  
up you would almost believe a heavy snow storm  
had begun. ticker tape, telephone directories, old music,  
the entire contents of thousands of scrap baskets,  
confetti, torn newspapers - everything which came  
to hand was tossed out on the mob below.

All the bells, sirens, anti air craft guns and  
auto horns in the city were in full swing while the  
mob did its best with horns, rattles, revolvers,  
and kitchen bands which included tin kettle covers  
used as cymbals and dust pans as drums.

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Early in the afternoon the bands had not had time to organize but later they too added to the noise.

We went down to 18<sup>th</sup> street and it took almost an hour on the car. Everyone was decorated with flags of the Allies, bunting, long streamers of colored paper and ribbons. Out in the street were hundreds of small parades, several were headed by the sign "I'm going to the Kaiser's funeral" and then followed a small rough box labeled "Kaiser Bill's Coffin!"

One group carried a thirty foot flag pole with a flag about 6 in. square on top. Another carried a crutch labeled "Made in U.S.A. for the Kaiser".

Cartoons appeared like magic in dozens of shop windows and as far as the eye could see every window was filled with hilarious people waving flags and shouting.

The papers said it was the greatest mob and riot in history and I believe it. I think every able bodied man, woman and child in New York City was on the streets. We walked up Fifth Avenue to 39<sup>th</sup> street and met dozens of nurses in full uniforms.

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We went to Riggs for supper and from there to the Strand.  
Was in the Waldorf and also the Mc Alpine.

At the Strand we had a most exciting time. It was like  
going to a ball game - everyone cheered everything. We  
came out of there about eight o'clock and started toward  
the Penn. Station. The Strand is up around 46<sup>th</sup> st and the  
Penn. station on 34<sup>th</sup>. Ordinarily it takes about ten minutes  
- fifteen at the longest, to walk that but that night it  
took over an hour. We got home about ten - excited and  
happy - and cold.

Friday night some very swell society people who  
had been acting as nurse's aides gave a dance at the  
Woodmere Club - over by Far Rockaway. We all went over  
in Liberty Trucks filled with straw - about 150 of us - officers  
and nurses. We got lost twice going over and missed  
quite a few dances. Of course I went with the Captain.  
We had the honor of leading the Grand march and  
the supper march and sat at the head of the table. We  
had a wonderful supper - Chicken salad, sandwiches,  
coffee, ice cream and cake. I have never seen such a  
hilarious supper party in my life. We started home  
about three o'clock and twelve of us managed to grab  
a truck with out a chaperon.

Saturday night Credo and Major Dyer and Captain  
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Am in a surgical ward now - head nurse.  
Like it first rate.

Had a box of candy from Helen and one from  
Grace this week. Have not had time to acknowledge  
them yet. You can see I have been busy.

Well I ~~must~~ get to bed. Give my love to  
all and tell K. how busy I am. You can  
burn the next to the last page and read  
the rest to anyone Love from  
Gertrude

Have not heard one word from Seward.  
Can't you send me some of his letters?

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