

# Manson Park

## Letter from Rose Manson to Mrs Wheeler on 30 August 1944

*Dear Mrs Wheeler*

*I thought you would like to know, that someone as far away Australia is caring for your 'Loved' one's grave. Our garden overlooks the little Cemetery, and in appreciation for all your Boys have done for us - the token of flowers - is the least I can give to express my own personal gratitude. If you would care to write and ask anything - please do so. I would count it a privilege to be of service to you. Our best wishes.*

*Very sincerely yours*

*Rose Manson Mrs*

## USA newspaper article: Mrs. Manson, of Australia, visits at the Eugene Wheeler home

Many of our readers have no doubt read Associated Press articles or other writeups covering interviews with Mrs. Rose Manson of Ipswich, Queensland, Australia, who is touring the United States to visit the homes of over 1,500 American soldiers, who are or were buried in a cemetery near her home. Mrs. Manson tells us how she began her work of caring for these graves on a small scale and how, as the work grew in magnitude her strength to carry on grew accordingly.

Mrs. Manson visited last week at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Wheeler, whose son Robert was laid to rest in this cemetery until the remains were returned to his home here a few weeks ago. Mrs. Wheeler was one of over 1,500 mothers whom Mrs. Manson had corresponded with and as Mrs. Wheeler told us, had given her the detailed information about the funeral service, the cemetery, etc. that she never would have known otherwise.

Mrs Manson has been in the United States over eight months, visiting 2 to 3 days at each home with some exceptions. She left yesterday for western Montana, and will go from there to the west coast, where several homes in Washington and Oregon will complete her itinerary.

She had nothing but the best to say of the hospitality of the American home and said she hoped her experiences here would be the inspiration for a book upon her return to Australia.

Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler were among those who contributed to the expenses of Mrs. Manson's trip but she tells us that those who were not called on before her arrival in this country have assisted her since and many who made contributions have done more after meeting her here.

Following is a brief sketch of Mrs. Manson's experiences in her own words:

"I have 8 children, the youngest are 5 and 8. Three girls and one boy were in service. My husband is a disabled veteran. I came to Australia on a troop ship in 1919 as an English bride and one of my daughters married an American and is now living in Honolulu. I have one American grandchild, a boy. I am going to see them in May, before I return to Australia.

"Near my home in 1942 the Americans started a military cemetery. I had previously been caring for 98 Australian soldiers' graves, so it seemed quite natural that I do the same for the Americans. I used

to do 50 to 60 graves every Sunday, until the number grew to over 1,400, so I decided to place one bowl of flowers every night on the base of the flag pole as a memory to every mother's son. I wrote to the next of kin describing the cemetery and the burial, for I had seen from my home, every boy and girl laid to rest in that little valley. It was such a peaceful spot and as I looked over the valley at the blue hills beyond, it reminded me of God's healing acts. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

"Every one of the 1,400 next of kin have received a photo of the cemetery and on Memorial Day of 1946 I sent 1,800 newspapers with various accounts of the service and the Legion poppies from the grave. All the flowers I grew from American seed, sent from different states in the U.S. by the mothers.

"When Mother's Day came, I mailed 800 cards and on Christmas 1,000 letters. My incoming mail was equally as heavy. On Memorial Day I sent invitations to all parts of Australia and over 3,000 people came to that service. The hymns sung were chosen by the mothers of boys of every nationality resident there. Indians, and negroes, too.

"A mother in Wichita, Kansas, thought she would like to invite me to the United States so she wrote and asked me for 200 addresses. At the time I did not know why she had made the request. So I sent them to her. Mrs. Movetz then wrote to other mothers telling them that if each would be willing to contribute a little, they could by this means pay my return fare. So I came to America in August 1947.

"I have been through 45 states, traveling by truck, train, bus, mule, jeep and even hitch hiked. My only credentials are a reference from the mayor of my home town and the Salvation Army. I have had to find my own way from state to state, relying on each mother to feed, shelter and even clothe me, then see me on my way to the next place. I have lived in homes of poverty and wealth, but everywhere I have been treated with the same loving courtesy and kindness.

"In order to purchase stamps I cleaned my local post office every morning, while the little ones were still in bed. I may not be rich in earthly store, but I am rich in wonderful friendships that will live into eternity. I as an Australian have every reason to say, 'God Bless America.'"