

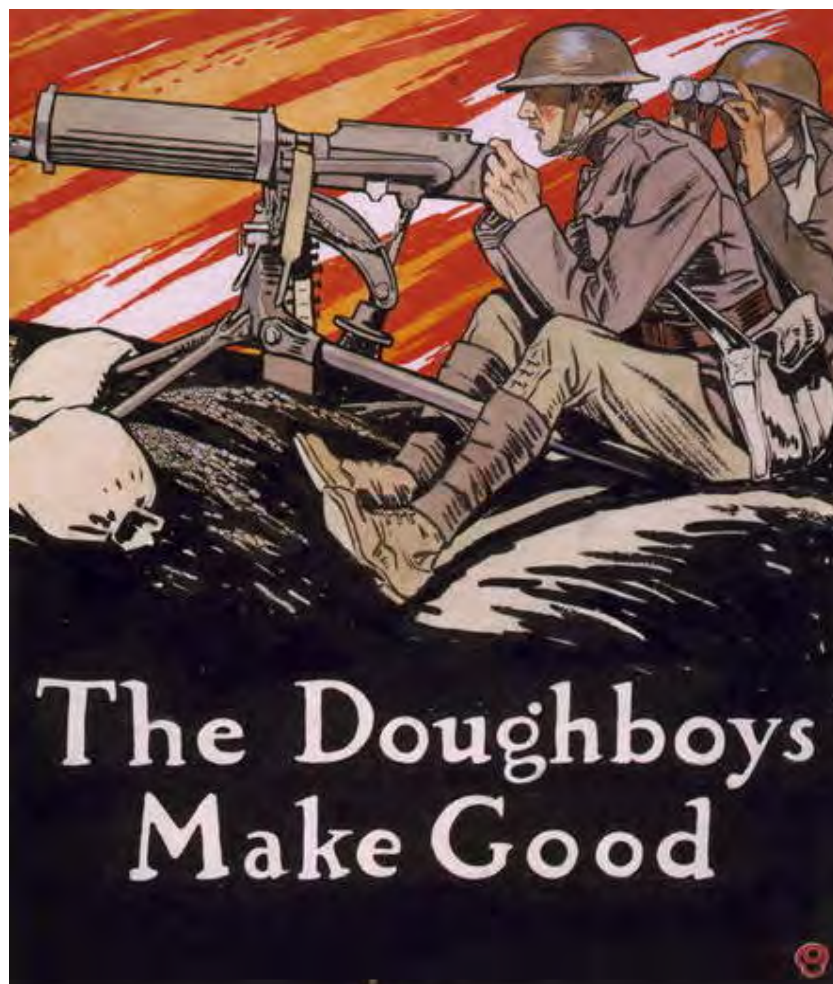
# Armistice & Aftermath

A WWI Symposium

Michigan Tech, 28-29 September 2018

## Proceedings

Edited by Patricia Sotirin and Steven A. Walton



## Introduction

We are pleased to bring together many of the papers presented at the Michigan Tech World War I symposium, *Armistice & Aftermath*. They provide various examples of how WWI affected the heartland, both during and after the war – a topic often missed in general histories, at least in the United States. American stories of WWI are relatively scarce in relation to general American military history, where the Civil War and WWII dominate, and in relation to WWI histories, which are dominated by the European combat experience. It is understandable that other countries have more robust histories and analyses of the Great War, mainly because it was so proportionally more devastating to their generation that fought: it is estimated that of the 15–19 million deaths in the war (and about 23 million wounded military personnel), France and Germany lost 4.25% and 3.8% of their entire population to deaths in the war, respectively, and two to three times more casualties who survived the war, while some other countries like the Ottoman Empire and Serbia lost 13–18% of their population; the U.S. suffered 117,000 deaths, or 0.13% of our population at the time.

This collection is not about the battlefield experiences of American troops in France, but about the hometowns, the families, wives, mothers, children, and society that was left behind while our boys (and girls: we must not forget the “Hello Girls”) were “over there”, and the effects of their return to the U.S. There are some stories that are not told in this collection, unfortunately, like the Red Summer of 1919, the violent backlash against returning African-American soldiers who were expecting more civil rights upon their return. Instead they met over two dozen riots against them across the country with hundreds killed. Instead, this volume looks at a view of how the war affected the homefront during 1918–19 and then during the roaring ‘20s that is seldom considered.

We would like to thank all the speakers who were able to contribute their papers, but also want to thank the speakers who were not able to because their papers are out for review elsewhere or otherwise committed. Our thanks also go out to the WWICC Committee members and student helpers, for helping to make this symposium a reality.

Financial support was provided by the Michigan Humanities Council,<sup>†</sup> Michigan Tech’s Institutional Equity and the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, and with support from the Carnegie Museum in Houghton and Finlandia University in Hancock, as well as the Departments of Humanities and Social Sciences here at Michigan Tech.

Patty Sotirin and Steve Walton

Houghton, MI, Dec. 2018

——— [wwlcc.mtu.edu](http://wwlcc.mtu.edu) ———

<sup>†</sup> WWICC is made possible in part by a grant from the Michigan Humanities Council, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities or the Michigan Humanities Council.



# WORLD WAR ONE & THE COPPER COUNTRY PRESENTS **ARMISTICE & AFTERMATH** A WORLD WAR ONE SYMPOSIUM

SEPTEMBER 28-29, 2018

MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY • HOUGHTON, MICHIGAN

The Armistice that ended the "Great War" remains a marker of hope, change, sacrifice, and struggle. In commemorating this marker, the Symposium features diverse reflections on the cultural, political, and technological experiences and legacies of WWI.

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

**1:00-4:00 PM** Registration and exhibits open at Michigan Tech, Carnegie Museum, Finnish American Heritage Center, and conference hotel. Exhibits open:

- Dug In: Experiential WWI Trench, Michigan Tech (41 & MacInnes)
- Town and Gown in the Great War: A Look Back at the Copper Country and Michigan Tech During World War I, Van Pelt & Opie Library, Michigan Tech
- World War I & the Copper Country Home Front, Van Pelt & Opie Library, Michigan Tech
- Reflections on Technologies of Warfare, Immersive Studio, EERC 510, Michigan Tech
- Shell-shocked: Footage and Sounds of the Front, Rozsa Gallery Lobby, Michigan Tech
- American and French Propaganda Posters, Rozsa Gallery, Michigan Tech
- Soldier Stories: The U.P. in World War I, Carnegie Museum of the Keweenaw, Houghton
- Copper Country Voices of Dissent in the Great War, Finnish American Heritage Center, Finlandia University, Hancock

**4:00-5:30 PM** "Local Theaters, Propaganda and WWI," Sue Collins (Michigan Tech University) Orpheum Theater, Studio Pizza appetizers. Shuttle available to this talk and back to Tech campus. Contact Symposium office, Datolite Room #100 Memorial Union or email [ww1cc@mtu.edu](mailto:ww1cc@mtu.edu)

**5:00-6:00 PM** Shuttle from Orpheum Theater to Rozsa  
Box supper available in Rozsa Lobby

**6:00-7:00 PM** "Europe, America, and the World: An Outdoor Concert," Michigan Tech Wind Symphony, Walker lawn, Michigan Tech (inside in case of inclement weather; check signs in Rozsa Lobby)

**7:30-8:30 PM** Keynote Address: **Dr. John Morrow Jr.**, "African American Experience in WWI and Aftermath," Rozsa Lobby, Michigan Tech

**8:30-9:30 PM** Shuttle from Rozsa Lobby to conference hotel Copper Crown Hancock

## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

**8:00–9:00 AM** Coffee and muffins, Alumni Room, Memorial Union

**8:45 AM** Welcome, Symposium Committee

### 9:00–10:00 AM

#### SESSION 1A Ballroom B2-3

##### CONTESTATIONS OVER LOYALTIES AND IDENTITIES

Conflicted Loyalties: Austro-Hungarian Immigrants in Michigan and the Great War – Robert Goodrich (Northern Michigan University)

A Tale of Two Principis: Contested Memory and National Identity in the Former Yugoslavia – Christina Morus (Stockton University) and Gordon Coonfield (Villanova University)

Population, the Lessons of War, and the Promise of Peace – Kathleen Tobin (Purdue University Northwest)

Chair: Patty Sotirin

### 10:15–11:15 AM

#### SESSION 2A Ballroom B2-3

##### BRINGING IT HOME TO THE MIDWEST

Oshkosh on the Home Front: Activities and Attitudes During World War I – Amy Fels (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)

'Lest We Forget': Remembering World War I in Wisconsin, 1919-1945 – Leslie Bellais (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Patriotic Acts of Copper Country Children in the Great War – Seth Dahl (Finlandia University)

Chair: Steven Walton

#### SESSION 1B Ballroom A1

##### THE ART AND LEGACY OF WWI PROPAGANDA

The Sights and Sounds of WWI Propaganda Posters – Jessy Ohl (The University of Alabama)

A Heartland Artist as Prisoner: The End Of Guy Brown Wiser's Air War – Doug Lantry (National Museum of the U.S. Air Force)

Propaganda as Public Relations Antecedent: The Complex Legacy of the Creel Commission – Christopher McCollough (Columbus State University)

Chair: Sue Collins

#### SESSION 2B Ballroom A1

##### DEPICTING WAR IN THE ARTS

An American Abroad: Perceptions of Americans in Buchan's WWI Thriller, *Greenmantle* – Peter Faziani (Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Jackson College, Michigan)

“Pour la France ! Pour ma famille !”: Haunting War Legacies in Rouaud's *Champs d'honneurs* -- Dany Jacob (Michigan Tech)

Art and Activism in Abel Gance's Film, *J'accuse*: Revisiting Anti-war Sentiment in French Art and Society a Century Later – Ramon Fonkoue (Michigan Tech)

Chair: Ramon Fonkoue

**11:30 AM–1:00 PM**

Lunch buffet and Keynote: **Dr. Lynn Dumenil**, "Women and the Great War"

Memorial Union Ballroom A2

**1:15–2:15 PM**

### **SESSION 3A Ballroom B2-3**

#### **SHIFTS IN TECHNOLOGY AND LAW**

Electrical Communications Impacts During the Great War and Impacts on the Interwar Period – Martha Sloan (Michigan Tech)

American Chemical Companies: World War I and Beyond – Jason Szilagyi (Central Michigan University)

Impact of the First World War on India – Imrana Begum (NED University of Engineering & Technology, Karachi, Pakistan)

Chair: Diane Shoos

**2:30–3:30 PM**

### **SESSION 4A Ballroom B2-3**

#### **TAKING THE LONG VIEW**

The Great War and Modern Homosexuality: Transatlantic Crossings – Chet DeFonso (Northern Michigan University)

Henry Ford's Dearborn Independent: A Reflection of Post-WWI Rise of Anti-Semitism in America – Catherine Wadle (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg, Germany)

World War One & Africa: Contesting History, Nation, and Identity in 'Western Togoland' – G. Edzordzi Agbozo (Michigan Tech)

'The War Has Ended; the Doors Are Open Again': Baha'i Western-Women Pilgrimage to the Holy Land After the Great War – Shay Rozen (Avshlom Institute)

### **SESSION 3B Ballroom A1**

#### **EXHIBITING WAR**

'Your Duty on Display': The Allied War Exhibition in Chicago, the State Council of Defense, and the Role of the State in Defining American Identity – Josh Fulton (Northern Illinois University)

The Allied Exhibitionary Forces: From Encouragement to Commemoration of WWI – Steven Walton (Michigan Tech)

WWI Propaganda Poster Fluidity – Sarah Price (The University of Alabama)

Chair: Steven Walton

### **SESSION 4B Ballroom A1**

#### **GENDER AND THE GREAT WAR**

Recalling the Trenches from the Club Window: Contrasting Perspectives in Dorothy Sayers and P.G. Wodehouse – Laura Fiss (Michigan Tech)

Men, Military, and the Law: An Examination of Conscription During World War I and Its Legal Challenges – Victoria Stewart (Northwest Florida State College University)

'This Mad Brute': Postwar Male Violence and the Pathological Public Sphere – Rebecca Frost (Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College)

Chair: Patty Sotirin

## 3:45–7:00 PM

Shuttles available between Michigan Tech and Hancock. Please check in the Symposium office, Datolite Room #100 or email [ww1cc@mtu.edu](mailto:ww1cc@mtu.edu)

Exhibits open at Michigan Tech, Carnegie Museum, and Finlandia University

Dinner on your own -- see the list of area restaurants in the Symposium folder

## 7:30–9:00 PM

"Copper Country at the Silver Screen in 1918"

Charlie Chaplin's silent film, *Shoulder Arms* (1918) with live musical accompaniment by organist Jay Warren (Chicago) Four-Minute Man performance

**Participation in all Symposium events is FREE and open to the public.**

For registration, information, meal tickets, and tours, visit the Symposium office, Memorial Union 106.

**HOURS** Friday, 1:00–4:00 PM, Saturday 8:00am-5:00pm

All presenters will receive a box supper on Friday evening and a buffet lunch (WWI recipes) on Saturday. These are available for a nominal cost to non-presenting participants.

Armistice and Aftermath Proceedings are available at the Michigan Tech Creative Commons: [www.mtu.edu/library](http://www.mtu.edu/library)

**State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECH) are available**

Three tracks: one on Friday and two on Saturday

Please register in the Symposium office, Datolite #100, MUB

Please complete the Michigan Humanities Council Heritage Grants Program Audience Survey



## CREDITS

Symposium Coordinators: **Patty Sotirin** and **Steve Walton**

Assistant: **Kikelomo Omonjo**

Symposium Committee: **Sue Collins, Stefka Hristova, Patty Sotirin, Steve Walton**

WWICC continues

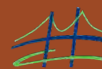
**WWI Remembered**

Exhibit by the Beaumier UP Heritage Center,  
sponsored by the Michigan Humanities Council



Michigan  
Technological  
University

Institutional Equity  
Diversity and Inclusion



Michigan  
Humanities  
Council

## KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

Dr. John Morrow, Jr.

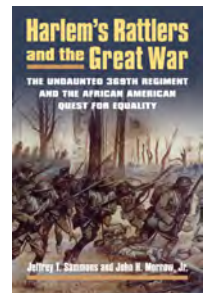
### African American Experience in WWI and Aftermath

FRIDAY Sept. 28, 7:30-8:30pm, Rozsa Center



The First World War occurred at the height of white supremacy, segregation, and lynching and race riots in the United States. Yet the wartime years appeared to offer African Americans the occasion to escape the oppression they suffered in the South for better jobs and living conditions in the North and West. African Americans further viewed the war as an opportunity to fight for their country again, as they had in all its previous wars, in order to prove to white Americans that they merited equal citizenship rights. When African Americans consequently participated in the war effort on the home and fighting fronts, how did white Americans respond to their efforts? Ultimately, how did the war affect race relations and the conditions of African American life in the postwar United States?

Dr. John H. Morrow, Jr. is Franklin Professor of History at The University of Georgia. He has authored seven books on war and air power, imperialism, and African American experiences including (with Jeffrey T. Sammons), *Harlem's Rattlers and the Great War: The Undaunted 369<sup>th</sup> Regiment and the African American Quest for Equality*.



Dr. Lynn Dumenil

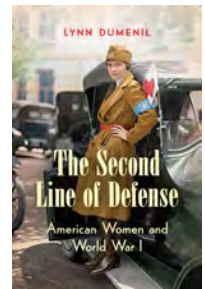
### World War I and Representations of the Modern American Woman

SATURDAY Sept. 29, Noon-1:00pm, Memorial Union Ballroom



A focus on popular culture images of women in World War I reveals that conventional notions of womanhood persisted suggests the continuing power of expectations about women's traditional roles in the family. The attention given to "modern" women's war service and heroic activism offered dramatic evidence of boundary crossing women. But the media's fascination with the novelty of women at war undoubtedly led it to exaggerate the degree to which American women challenged gender conventions and helps us to understand why many observers believed – inaccurately – that the war would prove transformative in reshaping women's lives.

Dr. Lynn Dumenil is the Robert Glass Cleland Professor of American History, Emerita, at Occidental College. She has authored four books on American history including *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017). Her current project is *The Women Behind the Men Behind the Gun: Working Women in World War II* (Bedford, 2018).





## Conflicted Loyalties: Austro-Hungarian Immigrants in Michigan and the Great War

Robert Goodrich

Northern Michigan University

On 1 July 1918, US Army PFC Mario Ruconich of 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, Company L was killed by German machine gun fire near the village of Vaux, France. He had volunteered for the US Army in January 1917, mustering at the Columbus Barracks in Ohio, where he listed his home as Michigan. His military service record listed his nationality as “Austrian.”<sup>1</sup>

Ruconich, though, had disappeared from the records in 1914. He had been a sailor, drawn from a nearby island to the booming industrial port of Trieste on the Adriatic in Austrian Istria. There, he served as a crewmember aboard the passenger steamship *Argentina* of the Austro-American Line, making runs from Trieste to North America. He was apparently a crewmember when the *Argentina* arrived in New York on 16 July 1914 with only 291 passengers. War fever had gripped Europe, and the crossing was the last for the Austro-American Line. Indeed, a British blockade, conversion of passenger ships to wartime use, and the rise of submarine warfare brought passenger service from the Central Powers and thus Austro-Hungarian immigration to a virtual halt. And when the *Argentina* eventually returned to Trieste, however, Ruconich was not on board.<sup>2</sup> The next time he appears on any known historical document came with his military induction. In effect, he was one of the last immigrants to the United States from Austria-Hungary.

Of course, this leaves open the question of how Ruconich made it to Michigan. As a young man seeing the writing on the wall for the coming war, he may simply have jumped ship and entered the US illegally (there is no record for him at Ellis Island), which was not hard for crew members, who generally were allowed shore leave. From there, he could have made his way to Michigan along with other Istrians looking for work, perhaps on the ships of the Great Lakes. As for joining the military, we have no idea of his motives, either. Certainly by 1917 the prospect of returning to Istria and inevitable conscription there could not have been appealing, but there was no draft in the US until later that year, and the US was still neutral when he joined. No other record exists, however, between his service in the Austrian merchant marine on the *Argentina* and his enlistment in the US military. The case of Mario Ruconich exemplifies how difficult documentation of an immigrant history in Michigan can be, especially given the transitional nature of many immigrants' tenure in Michigan and the chaos of Central Europe after 1914. Ruconich left no discernible mark

---

<sup>1</sup> For the family history, I am grateful for the personal correspondence with Renzo Rocconi, great nephew of Mario Ruconich, now living in Venice. Part of the story is available on-line: <http://www.worldwar1.com/itafront/rocconi.htm>, accessed October 2012.

<sup>2</sup> The *Argentina* found no further use as a passenger ship. However, it next saw service in April 1918, when it was requisitioned as a hospital ship (*Spitalschiff VI*) for evacuating the wounded from the Albanian front.





in Michigan, the state he listed as home in 1917. We find no further connection with Michigan from his family, either.

Yet does that make his story irrelevant for Michigan and our questions about World War One? Far from it. In fact, his story illuminates critical aspects of Austro-Hungarians and their relationship to Michigan. His life offers a picture of how random some events are that led immigrants to Michigan. The broader Ruconich family history also sheds light onto roads travelled by those who did not come to Michigan but came from the same background as those who did. And Ruconich, as a fallen US veteran and an Austro-Hungarian who listed Michigan as his home, explains questions about Austro-Hungarian identity and loyalty in Michigan during the Great War. But to understand, we have to step back into a now vanished and largely forgotten world of non-nationalist identity.

### Understanding the Austro-Hungarian Empire

For modern political sensibilities, Ruconich’s homeland is not easy to label, let alone define. He was from Istria, now part of Croatia, previously Yugoslavia until the 1990s, before that Italy until after World War II, and before that until 1918 part of the Austrian crownland of the Austrian Littoral in the Cisleithanian part of Austria-Hungary. And Austria-Hungary was not even the name of the state that provided his citizenship. Its official name is so long that no one ever used it: “The Kingdoms and Lands Represented in the Imperial Council and the Lands of the Holy Hungarian Crown of St. Stephen.” Despite its cumbersome nomenclature, and equally formidable bureaucracy, this hereditary, overarching entity had existed for six hundred years (in one form or another) under the same ruling family – the Habsburg dynasty – and was the largest land empire in Europe outside of Russia.<sup>3</sup>

In this complex multi-national empire, there was no single national majority. Neither Germans nor Hungarians were the largest group, and the more numerous Slavs were divided between half a dozen different groups—Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenians, Serbs, and Croats. Though German was the lingua franca of trade and bureaucracy and Roman Catholicism enjoyed the favor of the court, no single language or religion united the empire. In fact, the Habsburgs actively encouraged various groups to move and settle freely within their lands, leading to some of the most demographically diverse regions in Europe.

Among the lands that belonged to Austria-Hungary were Austria and Hungary, but also all of what are now the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It also included significant portions of what is now Poland (Galicia), Romania (Transylvania), Serbia

---

<sup>3</sup> Numerous histories of Austria-Hungary exist, but the complexity of the empire has daunted most historians from tackling it as a unified whole. The language requirements alone all but mandate a team effort. Nonetheless, for significant reappraisals of the empire see, Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Harvard: Belknap Press, 2016); or Mark Cornwall, ed., *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary: A Multi-National Experiment in Early Twentieth-Century Europe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002); or R.J.W. Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs: Central Europe c. 1683-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); for the dated seminal work on politics and diplomacy see, A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809–1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1964).



(Banat), and Ukraine (Bukowina), and lesser parts of Italy (Trieste and South Tyrol) and Montenegro. A large number of Jews, especially Hasidic Orthodox Jews, and Roma and Sinti came from those lands. These groups often went under names we rarely encounter today: Rusyns, Oberlander, Bohemians, Swabians, and many more.

Today, however, who identifies as Austro-Hungarian? Who hangs a picture of honor of Emperor Franz Josef on their living room wall or hoists the Black and Yellow flag of the House of Habsburg on August 18<sup>th</sup> to celebrate his birthday? Who advocates for the canonization of Charles I, last Habsburg emperor? Who even remembers that Austria-Hungary was until 1918 the leading and still expanding power in Central Europe? If we want to understand identity and loyalty for most of Central and Eastern Europe, we must first understand that our ancestors came from a world and mindset that was neither American nor nationalist. They came from multi-national empires with roots in the Middle Ages—a place and time when nationalism did not exist as we think of it and ethnicity was not even a concept. This heritage is almost entirely forgotten, or at best remembered in an utterly distorted fashion, even though millions of Michiganders are products of one of the most resilient states in European history that sent more immigrants to the US than any country except the British Isles, Germany, and Italy.<sup>4</sup>

Ruconich migrated to Michigan from this region during the peak of emigration from Central and Eastern Europe (1870–1920). This time period coincided with the last manifestation of the Habsburg Empire—the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1867–1918). Therefore, to figure out underlying assumptions of loyalty and identity for migrants such as Ruconich, we need to grapple with a confusing array of terms used to identify this monarchy and its components (territories, administrations, and languages) to underscore how fluid ethnic identities were during the era of mass immigration.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, the Austro-Hungarian Empire makes little sense without its medieval past. This is not to argue that it was anti-modern, hostile to all changes, rigid, medieval, or any other such thing. The fact that the Habsburg dynasty ruled for six hundred years meant that it had weathered every imaginable crisis: repeated sieges by the Ottoman Empire; international intrigue to unravel its possessions; the Reformation and the Thirty Years War; internal divisions within the dynasty that led to multiple branches; revolutions and rebellions; an intense rivalry with Hohenzollern Prussia and Bourbon France; the Napoleonic Wars; the dramatic changes in society and economy with the growth of industrialism; and every other stress to which a state was subjected since the Middle Ages. Few dynasties or states proved as equal to the task as the dynamic Habsburgs.

One need only think of the contentious history of two rival examples: France and Germany.

---

<sup>4</sup> For a historiographic review of the memory of the monarchy see, Jonathan Kwan, “Review Article: Nationalism and All That: Reassessing the Habsburg Monarchy and its Legacy,” *European History Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2011): 88–108. For a review of interwar Polish memory of the monarchy see, Adam Kozuchowski, *The Afterlife of Austria-Hungary: The Image of the Habsburg Monarchy in Interwar Europe* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press; 2013).

<sup>5</sup> For a broad survey of published sources on Austro-Hungarian population statistics see, Christel Durdik, *Bibliographischer Abriß zur Bevölkerungs- und Sozialstatistik der Habsburgermonarchie im 19. Jahrhundert* (Wien, 1974).



France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a multi-national dynastic state ruled by the House of Bourbon. That dynasty fell to revolution in 1792, replaced by the First Republic. That government reinvented itself numerous times before Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself Emperor of the French in 1804, which in turn was replaced in 1814 (and again in 1815 after Napoleon's brief return to power) by the restoration of the House of Bourbon. Soon, however, the July Revolution of 1830 ousted that monarchy for the House of Orleans, a dynasty that would only last until 1848 when a new revolution created the Second Republic. That republic, in turn, lasted all of four years until 1852 when Napoleon's nephew established the Second Empire. Not surprisingly, that empire soon collapsed and was replaced in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 by a Government of National Defense that lasted until it was drowned in blood and replaced with the Third Republic in 1871. That entity lasted until 1940. In effect, if we compare the 120 years of Habsburg vs. French history since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, we see that France experienced almost a dozen distinct governments, separated by coups, wars, or revolutions.

And Germany? No such state existed until 1871. Before that the territory was a collection of sovereign states (by some counts somewhere around 1,800 prior to the French Revolution), most, but not all of which, were under the umbrella of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, itself an elected entity, which coincidentally, was ruled almost uninterrupted since the 15<sup>th</sup> century by Habsburgs whose lands were deliberately excluded from the new Germany. Prussia was but one, albeit one of the largest, of these states. A centralized Germany finally came into existence only after the Franco-Prussian War as an attempt to prevent the spread of nationalism from overthrowing the Hohenzollern dynasty of Prussia. Even then, it only lasted two generations until 1918, collapsing at the same time as the Habsburg Empire.

In short, the Habsburg Empire, though ever changing, proved to be singularly stable and long lived. Ironically, however, the very success of the empire in adjusting to modernity meant that its pre-modern tendencies were able to survive. At the top, the royal court persistently believed in its divinely inspired purpose and in its patrimony for future generations of the dynasty, which placed strong limits on how far it could compromise. The nobles and most of the emerging middle-class elites, with whom the dynasty shared power especially at the local level, proved consistently loyal to the Habsburgs. Even among the commoners, support for the multi-national empire persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as evidenced by the willingness of its constituencies to fight for the empire until the bitter end in 1918. Thus, the national identities as understood in the era of nation-states of the 20<sup>th</sup> century made little sense to most Austro-Hungarians. Modern nationalism was simply not a lived experience for the overwhelming majority.

Perhaps, in part, we are blinded to this reality by subsequent history, a history that is inseparable from nationalism. The 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially the period 1914 to 1989, a time bracketed by the First World War and the Cold War, proved disastrous in many ways for Central Europe. Once known as a coherent *Mitteleuropa*, this region bore a heavy burden in the fighting of World War One, which concluded with the collapse of all the regional empires, resulting in decades of civil war and genocides.<sup>6</sup> All of the large multi-national empires of the region – Habsburg, Romanov, Ottoman, and even Germany – disappeared, to be replaced by a patchwork of small nation-states,

---

<sup>6</sup> For an engaging argument that treats *Mitteleuropa* as a coherent historical entity see, Lonnie R. Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).



most recently Kosovo, officially recognized in 2012. It is no coincidence that this region also was the epicenter of most of the horrors of World War Two, from the major battles to the Holocaust. Would it surprise us to learn that the 1993 film *Schindler's List* took place entirely in lands previously part of the empire (Krakow, Moravia, Auschwitz), and that almost all of the characters were prior to 1918 subjects of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy? The SS commandant Amon Goeth was from Vienna; Oscar Schindler was from Zwittau; Itzhak Stern and most of the "Schindler Jews" were from Galicia.

This area was then the frontline of the Cold War, including the redrawing of frontiers, massive ethnic cleansing, rebellions, the stationing of short range nuclear weapons, and generally accepted battle scenarios that, had they been realized, would have left Central Europe more destroyed than any previous war. Following the Cold War, the last spasm of war and genocide in Europe during the Yugoslav successor wars of the 1990s took place primarily on former Habsburg soil.

This history blinds us to the vitality of the Habsburg Lands before the bloody 20<sup>th</sup> century and the full unleashing of the now overwhelmingly dominant but all too often revanchist and racialized nationalism. At the risk of distorting the record of the Habsburg Lands into one of praise when compared to the past one hundred years, we nonetheless need to be aware of the relative peace and prosperity as well as immense creativity of this pre-nationalist area preceding World War One. The period around 1900 in fin-de-siècle Vienna especially has garnered an almost mythical quality.<sup>7</sup> Culturally, Vienna, as the heart of the Habsburg Empire and a crossroads of Europe, reached a degree of vitality that rivaled any other city of that epoch. It was the fourth largest city in the world with a dynamic multinational population. To name only a few of the creative minds in Vienna alone we must mention Sigmund Freud, Karl Jung, Gustav Mahler, Oskar Kokoschka, Egon Schiele, Richard Strauss, Anton Bruckner, Arnold Schönberg, Johann Strauss II, Gustav Klimt, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Adolf Loos, Otto Wagner, Stefan Zweig, Hugo von Hoffmansthal, Arthur Schnitzler. All came out of this Habsburg milieu that mixed religions and languages and cultures into a vibrant cocktail.

A unique artistic variation of Art Nouveau, Jugendstil, flourished outside of state sponsorship with its sumptuous art and architecture decorating not just public spaces but shaping the domestic sphere as well. At the same time, the Habsburg state continued to promote its skilled but staid craftsmen and artists in the Academic Style and Historicism, preferring grandiose buildings that glorified past achievements (Neo-Gothic, Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Classical). The creative energy was linked to an excellent education system that promoted scientific inquiry, particularly in the social sciences, and the arts, and a surprisingly tolerant culture.

In short, Austria-Hungary at the time of mass emigration and Ruconich's arrival in the United States was far from moribund. Certainly, it faced significant crises, but so did all of the Europe. That it collapsed was neither inevitable nor unique. Instead, it provided a viable alternative for confederative identities that deeply influenced those who emigrated from it prior to 1918 and even those who lived in its successor states, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia being the prominent examples.

---

<sup>7</sup> For a seminal work on this era see Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981).



## Emigration from Austria-Hungary to Michigan: Some Generalizations

With a few notable exceptions such as Bohemians, immigrants from the Habsburg Lands came relatively late to North America. They had no overseas colonies to encourage early emigration. Prior to 1790, virtually no emigration to the New World aside from certain Protestant groups and isolated individuals came from Central Europe.<sup>8</sup> For the future US, the demographic consequences were long lasting. Early immigrants came overwhelmingly from the British Isles, and Germans started to come from continental Europe in large numbers after the Thirty Years War and the ensuing economic dislocations. In 1709 alone, some 15,000 German peasants and artisans set out from Germany for the North American colonies so that by 1766 German immigrants in the English colonies numbered around 200,000 persons. The Irish came in large numbers in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to escape rural overpopulation and consequent impoverishment, greatly accelerated by the long-term consequences of the Great Famine of 1846–1847. As a result, these three groups—British, Irish, and German—made up the bulk of immigrants for over two hundred and fifty years and settled most of the farming land east of the Mississippi.

During this first period of immigration, official US figures in 1850 listed only about 1,000 “Austrians.” Between 1851 and 1880, only 2.5% of immigrants came from the Habsburg Monarchy. Mass migration from continental Europe shifted in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however. By the second half of that century, a “first wave” brought Germans and Scandinavians, mostly settling in the remaining farming regions of the Midwest. The “second wave” shifted geographic focus. Italy, Russia, and Austria-Hungary became the new source as these homelands suffered from a complex interplay of tradition confronting modernization—economically and politically. However, from the start we are confronted with the diversity of Austria-Hungary, and generalizations are dangerous for this eclectic nation.

The changes in Austro-Hungarian emigration to the US were dramatic over time. For example, in one survey of passenger lists, between 1876 and 1885, over half came from Bohemia. Yet by 1910, almost 70% came from Galicia (though mixed between Poles, Ruthenians, Jews, and Germans).<sup>9</sup> That sort of regional shift was also accompanied by demographic differences as well. For example, male and female Bohemians emigrated in roughly equal numbers, but around 70% were single, implying both a high number of families as well as well as young singles of both

---

<sup>8</sup> On early transatlantic migration from Habsburg Lands see, Michael Kurz, ““Nun ist die Scheidestunde da...” Die Emigration aus dem Salzkammergut im 19. Jahrhundert nach Nordamerika” (unpub. MA thesis, Salzburg, 1999); for religious fugitives see, Heinz Duchhardt, “Glaubensflüchtlinge und Entwicklungshelfer: Niederländer, Hugenotten, Waldenser, Salzburger,” in Klaus Bade, ed., *Deutsche im Ausland - Fremde in Deutschland: Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Munich: 1992); on political refugees after 1848-94 see, Gerda Neyer, “Auswanderung aus Österreich: Ein Streifzug durch die “andere” Seite der österreichischen Migrationsgeschichte,” in Traude Horvath and Gerda Neyer, eds., *Auswanderungen aus Österreich: Von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Gegenwart* (Wien-Köln-Weimar: 1996).

<sup>9</sup> Josef Ehmer, Annemarie Steidl, and Hermann Zeitlhofer, *Migration Patterns in Late Imperial Austria: KMI Working Paper Series: Working Paper #3* (Vienna: Kommission für Migrations- und Integrationsforschung: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003), 21.



sexes.<sup>10</sup> Galicians that same year were overwhelmingly single men. Bohemians were highly artisanal but Galicians were largely from agricultural laboring and servant groups.<sup>11</sup> Even by gender, we can discern that men tended to re-migrate but women to settle in the US.<sup>12</sup> The table below also exposes how variable immigration was based on national background.<sup>13</sup>

#### Austro-Hungarian National Groups and Immigration Rates, 1906–1910

	Absolute Numbers	Migration Rate per 10,000 People of a Given Group					
		1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1899–1910
Germans	12,085,447	29	34	23	17	22	221
Czechs	6,435,983	20	21	15	10	12	153
Poles	4,967,984	88	120	53	74	122	871
Ruthenians	3,948,301	40	60	31	39	70	369
Serbians	1,831,979	24	40	41	20	25	194
Italians	768,422	25	20	14	15	24	255
Hungarians	8,753,275	49	68	27	32	31	381
Croatians	2,935,044	147	161	67	66	148	1,148
Romanians	3,074,594	35	60	28	24	44	250
Slovaks	2,417,402	151	173	66	93	133	1,550
Jews	2,159,941	69	87	71	39	61	840
Total	47,218,431	56	72	36	36	55	492

Czechs stayed at home; Slovaks left. Yet they directly neighbored each other. The same difference applied to Italians and Croatians. Also, while Germans stayed, Jews left, even though both lived in scattered enclaves throughout the Monarchy. The table indicates that every national group in the Empire followed its own dynamic, though all were drawn into the process of migration.

Economically, modernization of farming, stimulated by the end of serfdom, and industrialization created surplus rural populations that could not be supported in the countryside but also were no longer either tied to that land or possessed the right to reside there. As late as 1869, up to 80% of the population of Austria-Hungary still possessed the right of residence in their home villages as a vestige of serfdom. That number had fallen to 65% by 1890 and would continue to drop.<sup>14</sup> Mass migration thus first occurred from the countryside to the cities, but the still developing industries

<sup>10</sup> Franz v. Meinzingen, “Die Wanderbewegung auf Grund von Gebürtigkeitsdaten der Volkszählung vom 31. Dezember 1900,” in: *Statistische Monatsschrift*, NF 8 (1903), 140.

<sup>11</sup> Richard v. Pflügl, “Die überseeische Auswanderung in den Jahren 1899-1901,” in: *Statistische Monatsschrift*, NF 8 (1903): 496-532.

<sup>12</sup> For a sampling from 1910 see, Josef Ehmer, Annemarie Steidl, and Hermann Zeitlhofer, *Migration Patterns in Late Imperial Austria: KMI Working Paper Series: Working Paper #3* (Vienna: Kommission für Migrations- und Integrationsforschung: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003), 17.

<sup>13</sup> Table from, Leopold Caro, *Emigracja i polityka emigracyjna ze szczeg?lnym uwzgl?dnieniem stosunk?w polskich* (Poznan, 1914), 26.

<sup>14</sup> Heinz Faßmann, “Migration in Österreich, 1850 - 1900. Migrationsströme innerhalb der Monarchie und Struktur der Zuwanderung nach Wien,” in: *Demographische Informationen* (1986): 23.



of Austria-Hungary could not absorb this migration.<sup>15</sup> Indeed the internal migration of Austria-Hungary most likely exceeded international migration. At the same time, though, larger and faster steam-powered transatlantic ships, with drastically lower fares, began to advertise aggressively for passengers, promising easy prosperity in new lands. With few prospects, millions migrated abroad. We should remember that the US was not the only destination. Migrants went wherever there was economic opportunity—a chance to escape the poverty of home, and hopefully return once enough money had been earned. Thus, it was not the promise of opportunity that in the first instance began to draw millions of Austro-Hungarians to the US. Instead, it was the push of rural poverty.

Politically, continental European states began to reconsider their previous restrictions on emigration at this moment. Contrary to Britain, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Austria had banned emigration in the spirit of mercantilism, which viewed the populace of a state as its backbone and the source of its welfare. The French economist, Jean-Baptiste Say, claimed, “If 100,000 persons leave a country with 10 million Florins, that is the same as if 100,000 fully equipped and armed soldiers go across the border and perish there.” In this spirit, Emperor Joseph II tightly regulated emigration in 1784 with what amounted to a ban. In 1832, Emperor Francis Joseph I issued another emigration patent that recognized “legal emigration” but with the loss of citizenship. However, the obvious economic success of liberal Britain, Belgium, France and the Netherlands by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century forced a sea change. Despite its deep conservatism, Austria-Hungary recognized that it could not compete militarily without a modern economy after a series of defeats in the 1850s and 1860s culminating in the loss of Northern Italy to the French and humiliation at the hands of the Prussians. The Imperial conclusion was that economic policies must be modernized. In 1867 freedom of movement was legalized; the only restrictions applied to conscripts.

The net result was a dramatic shift in immigration patterns to the US. At the start of the era, as the first tentative steps towards the deep changes in Central Europe were occurring in the 1860s, Josef Schmidt, Commander of Vis (Lissa), an island off the Dalmatian coast of the Adriatic, reported on 6 October 1860, “All the young people have left, more than a hundred to America and Australia, while many others are on the Lloyds and other cargo steamships...” Dalmatia proved the tip of the spear in the 1860s and the 1870s, even though emigrants from the Habsburg Monarchy still numbered only several thousand per year. By the 1880s, though, more Austro-Hungarian observers were aware of the extent of emigration. Yet there were no efforts to staunch it. Many regarded it as an essential part of economic liberalism that would strengthen the Empire, others as part of political liberalism that would lead to positive reform of the state.

Nonetheless, the extremely Slavic and Magyar nature of the emigration led many Magyar nationalist and Slavic Pan-nationalists to worry. In 1904, the Pan-Slavic people’s tribune and peasant leader, Stjepan Radić, wrote in *Modern Colonization and the Slavs*,

Under the circumstances, we should not dwell on theoretical questions about the pros and cons of emigration. Here I would like to reiterate and stress: recently, we, the Slavs, have not been

---

<sup>15</sup> For the similarity with developments in Germany see, Steve Hochstadt, *Mobility and Modernity: Migration in Germany, 1820-1989* (University of Michigan Press, 1999).



emigrating from our homeland, we have been fleeing from here in desperation. When I say ‘we,’ I have in mind primarily the backbone of our nation: our peasants and workers.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, the economic recession of the 1880s stimulated overseas emigration from the Austrian part of the Empire, rising sharply to 20,000 persons per year—a level below which it would never fall again. In 1892, the number of emigrants reached 50,000 and in 1904 as many as 100,000. In the Hungarian part of the Monarchy, the numbers were even greater. As late as 1890, 82% of immigrants to the US came from traditional areas of North and Western Europe. From 1891 to 1920, however, that number dropped to 25%, with a corresponding rise in immigrants from East, Central, and South Europe, who now made up 64% of immigrants. Between 1871 and 1915, emigration from Austria-Hungary totaled 4,383,000. For a country of forty million people, to have over four million leave in less than a single generation is staggering.

If we look at the extended era of mass migration, lasting from the Napoleonic wars until World War II (1815 – 1940), we see that one in ten European immigrants came from the Habsburg Lands. After Great Britain (11.4 million), Italy (9.9 million) and Ireland (7.3 million), this represented the fourth largest source of emigration. We should note, though, that almost all of the Central European immigrants came between 1880 and 1919, making this mass movement even more phenomenal. If we look at one dramatic year, 1907, we see that 338,452 Austro-Hungarians came to the US, almost a third of all US immigrants that year. If we consider one decade, 1901–10, we find that 2,145,266 Austro-Hungarians arrived in the US, 24.39% of all immigrants in that period, more than any other country. More than half of all emigrants from Habsburg territory who had emigrated during the century between the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War to the US arrived in America during that single decade.

This concentration, however, will allow us to make some generalizations since the compact time-frame meant many shared conditions despite the diversity of Austria-Hungary. We must be cautious about these generalizations, however. Consider education. Obligatory free public education had been introduced in the predominantly German-speaking crownlands and the Czech Lands by 1880 where 95% to 99% of school-aged children attended school. In the Kingdom of Hungary proper, the rate was lower at 82%. In Cisleithanian Dalmatia the number was 67%; in Bukovina 36%. In the Condominium of Bosnia and Herzegovina the rate was 15%. This educational gradient followed other economic developments. The peasantry of the east was still partially mired in debts to previous feudal lords (emancipation had only occurred in 1848 and under conditions favorable to the lords, not the peasants). Austria had exacerbated the problem by developing a conscious policy of not industrializing the largest and most populous state, Galicia, in order to keep it as a hinterland source of food and military recruits. Industry was concentrated therefore in the west or in a few select urban areas such as Trieste or Budapest.

Until the 1860s much of the east lived in conditions that would have been considered feudal. Even as late as 1897 one report made by a physician to the Hungarian Medical Society noted, “The elementary conditions of the lives of the working people in many parts of the country are below

---

<sup>16</sup> See, Mark Biondich, “Stjepan Radić, Yugoslavism, and the Habsburg Monarchy,” *Austrian History Yearbook*, 27 (1996): 109-131, doi:10.1017/S0067237800005841; Stjepan Radić, *Modern Colonization and the Slavs* (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1904).





the biological minimum necessary for survival.”<sup>17</sup> The grinding rural poverty and indebtedness of some regions meant that crime reached endemic proportions. Important roads, such as those connecting the center of Hungary with Fiume, remained under the watch of entire army companies in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Military courts, which summarily hung the guilty, operated in certain areas through the 1860s.

We should not, however, conclude that the poorest were the ones most likely to emigrate. In fact, the poorest stayed, lacking the resources or motivation to leave. Consider the statistics of Austrian Vice-Consul Jtizef Schwegel located in Cleveland for 1902–03 when he looked at the composition of Austro-Hungarian immigrants in the US:<sup>18</sup>

Poles	37,499	Rusyns	9,819
Slovaks	34,499	Czechs	9,577
Croats and Slovenes	32,892	Bulgars, Serbs, and Montenegrins	4,227
Magyars	27,113	Romanians	4,173
Germans	23,597	Italians	2,170
Jews	18,759	Dalmatians, Bosnians and Herzegovinians	1,723

His numbers were back of the envelope calculations at best and grossly undercounted, but they provided an impressionistic assessment from the point of view in the US of the Austro-Hungarian state.

Several aspects emerge by looking at the Vice-Consuls numbers compared to the earlier table. Firstly, the national terms, while similar, are not identical. The Vice-Consul counted numerous smaller groups separately, and used a different term for the Ruthenians; one links Croats, Slovenes, Dalmatians in one group; and Serbs, Bulgars, and Montenegrins in another; the other does not. These differences reflected clearly differing views of what constituted a national group.

Still, a comparison between the emigration of Magyars and other nationalities in the Hungarian-half of the Empire shows that most emigration occurred from non-Magyar areas. The tie between emigration and industrial development, as seen by comparing the agricultural Slovak (Upper Hungary) and industrial Czech areas (Bohemia) is clear. Approximately four times as many Slovaks emigrated as did Czechs. Magyars migrated more than Czechs. These differences become even more dramatic when one compares the total number of members of one group to another. There, a weighted comparison shows clearly that the less developed areas constituted a disproportionately high amount of emigrants in contrast to the industrialized areas.

In general, few migrated from the large cities, the neighboring villages, prosperous commercial farmlands, or industrial developed regions (largely in the Austrian parts). In contrast, the

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Ervin Dubrović and others, eds. *From Central Europe to America, 1880-1914* (Rijeka; New York: City Museum of Rijeka, 2012), 12.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in E. Wilder Spaulding, *The Quiet Invaders: The Story of the Austrian Impact upon America* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1968), 70; in Ervin Dubrović and others, eds. *From Central Europe to America, 1880-1914* (Rijeka; New York: City Museum of Rijeka, 2012), 27.



borderlands of the east (Galicia and Bukovina in Austria; Subcarpathia and Banat in Hungary) were over-represented. In fact, just five counties in Hungary from those regions accounted for one quarter of all Hungarian emigrants 1899–13.<sup>19</sup> Even without a listing of their occupations, we can conclude from their origins that they were largely hard-pressed peasants – most likely the younger sons unlikely to inherit or those seeking to pull themselves out of debt.

However, the fact that every national group participated in emigration brings us to the phenomenon of chain migration both within and between groups.<sup>20</sup> For example, about two-thirds of Hungarian emigrants to the US were non-Magyar (even though Magyars were over half the population). Certain regions suffered depopulation while others saw almost no impact.

Migration began on the western borders—Bohemians and Moravians followed the migrations of Germans; they were followed by Slovaks of Upper Hungary whose successes attracted Polish and then later Ruthenian Galicians, finally reaching all the way to distant Bukowina and the rest of Hungary. What must be understood, along with the more common use of chain migration to describe kinship networks drawn into migration, is that chain migration also worked inside Austria-Hungary across nationalities.<sup>21</sup> What we see in Michigan is a pronounced tendency of “neighbors” in Austria-Hungary to remain neighbors in Michigan. The Poles of Detroit set up their first homes with the Germans, even using the same parishes until their numbers had grown. Ruthenians and Hungarians then initially set up their homes amongst the Poles. Since Austrian Galicia and the Kingdom of Hungary were so diverse, even at the village level, such connections should not surprise us. However, the mistake is to assume that these neighboring ethnic enclaves were created in Michigan based solely on local conditions (cheap housing, proximity to employers, etc). Instead, they were as much predicated on the experiences in the homeland and the connections reinforced rather than eroded in the process of migration.

### Michigan as Destination

Naturally, neither the US nor Michigan were the sole destinations of emigrants from Austria-Hungary. Since the motives were economic, they went where economic opportunity was available. Many remained inside the Empire, usually in the cities or in sparsely populated regions where farmland was available such as Bosnia-Herzegovina; large numbers also went to neighboring countries for work, often seasonally, in Romania, Serbia, Germany and Russia.<sup>22</sup> The majority,

---

<sup>19</sup> István Rácz, “Attempts to Curb Hungarian Emigration to the United States before 1914,” *Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok / Hungarian Studies in English* 7 (1973): 8.

<sup>20</sup> See, Juliana Puskás, “Some Results of My Research on the Transatlantic Emigration from Hungary on the Basis of Micro- and Macro-Analysis,” in Juliana Puskás, ed., *Overseas Migration from East-Central and Southeastern Europe, 1880-1940* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Dorota Przaszłowicz, “Overseas Migration from Partitioned Poland: Poznan and Eastern Galicia as Case Studies,” *Polish American Studies* 60, no. 2 (Autumn, 2003): 59-81.

<sup>22</sup> As one example, in the years 1906-1911, nearly three million migrated from Austria for seasonal work in Europe. See, Ewa Morawska, “For Bread with Butter: Life-Worlds of Peasant-Immigrants from East Central Europe, 1880-1914,” *Journal of Social History* 17, no. 3 (Spring, 1984): 388. In another estimate, in 1910 alone the number of seasonal labor migrants from the Austrian part of the monarchy crossing state boundaries inside Europe was estimated at 330,000. See, Lars Olsson, “Labor Migration



however, crossed the Atlantic, though not exclusively to the US but also Brazil, Canada, and Argentina.

For Michigan, then, its ability to offer either income or land determined who came. The various waves of immigrants consequently largely followed patterns of economic opportunity beginning with the first French fur trappers, traders, and missionaries, followed by the homesteaders of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to those coming for the various mining booms and the industrial promise of the automotive industry. Even the aboriginal populations experienced migratory patterns of settlement and displacement prior to European contact and later settlement. Thus, Michigan has always been a land of immigrants. And therefore automatically one of emigrants, too.

Indeed, we cannot understand the problems in dealing with a history of immigration to Michigan without first understanding its necessary prerequisite—emigration. Every immigrant is ipso facto also an emigrant. And it is precisely the experience of emigration that ultimately draws our attention. Why? Because most of us who look at the history of immigration to Michigan are interested in our roots. We want to know who our ancestors were, which means their origins in some foreign land; why they came to Michigan, which means why they felt compelled to leave that foreign land; and what they brought with them as our heritage, which means their native culture founded in that foreign land. Michigan is about emigration from a specific place as much as immigration to this state.

The problem is that, generally, we tend to think that our ancestors had simple, even simplistic identities. We usually assume that their native language sums up who they were. They were Hungarians if they spoke Magyar, or Germans if they spoke German, or Italians if they spoke Italian, or Slovenes if they spoke Slovene, etc. And we then tend to identify that linguistic identity with a national identity—an identity tied to a modern nation state (for the examples just given, Hungary, Germany, Italy, and Slovenia). In fact, we make this identification even if no such nation state existed at the time of emigration or even exists today. We just assume that every linguistic group is a natural cultural community that instinctively wants to and ultimately succeeds at creating a nation state. But is this assessment fair? The question of loyalty, especially in a time of war, challenges this conclusion for Austria-Hungary.

### Austro-Hungarian Conscription of Emigrants

In Austria-Hungary's multi-national state, the military served as one of two key unifying institutions (the other being the monarchy itself).<sup>23</sup> Since the *Ausgleich*, it was one of the few K.u.K. ministries with jurisdiction throughout the entire Empire. All recruits took the same oath of loyalty to the Emperor, and the rank of officer served as one of the most important markers of social status for nobles and the middle class. The military's function for maintaining the Empire, therefore, was less about defense (or expansion) of the borders and more about social integration. Indeed, the military was one of the only means in which loyalty to the Emperor, and thus the

---

as a Prelude to World War I," in *International Migration Review* 33 (1996): 875-900; Franz Markitan, *Auswandererverkehrswege in Österreich* (Wien, 1912).

<sup>23</sup> For an overview of the military see, Richard Bassett, *For God and Kaiser: The Imperial Austrian Army, 1619–1918* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2016).



dynastic state, could find concrete expression.<sup>24</sup> No wonder, then, that Austria-Hungary engaged in all the pomp and circumstance of some of Europe's best uniformed troops. The Emperor himself, along with most social elites, rarely appeared in public without a military uniform, giving the Empire a highly militarized appearance. And compulsory conscription was a defining facet of life for the young men who made up the bulk of emigrants.

In many ways the military reflected the Empire. The officer corps, while dominated by Germans in 1900, nonetheless revealed no discrimination in its promotions, in fact being over-represented by certain groups such as Jews.<sup>25</sup> Promotion required mastery of more than one language spoken in the realm, with the assumption of fluency in German. By 1904, the bi-lingualism of the officer corps was considerable, and the General Staff kept close records on this development, showing its importance.<sup>26</sup>

#### Officers Able to Speak a Second Language in 1904

Reflecting the linguistic reality of the Empire, regiments were organized along those lines, though German was the language of command. The linguistic make-up in the enlisted ranks in 1906 broke down as follows: 26.7% German, 22.3% Magyar, 13.5% Czech, 8.5% Polish, 8.1% Ruthenian, 6.7% Croatian and Serbian, 6.4% Romanian, 3.8% Slovakian, 2.6% Slovene, and 1.4% Italian. Thus, the army roughly reflected the demographic make-up of the Empire. Even though the army sought to keep units linguistically homogenous, mixing inevitably occurred. The Army responded by creating a specialized language, Army Slav (German: *Armee-Slawisch*), as a vocabulary of about eighty words related to the most important commands. Even though many officers feared disloyalty and possible mutiny based on national divisions in the Empire, during World War One the forces of Austria-Hungary performed loyally and competently until the collapse of the Empire in the autumn of 1918.<sup>27</sup> For all the nationalist vigor of the Czech Legion that ended up fighting against Austria-Hungary, that unit proved exceptional rather than representative.

Language	Percentage
Czech	47.0
Magyar	33.6
Polish	19.3
Serbocroatian	15.3
Romanian	8.8
Italian	8.5
Ruthenian	7.8
Slovene	7.3
Slovak	6.9

<sup>24</sup> On state efforts to cultivate loyalty see, Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield, eds., *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present: Central European Studies* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2001); and Laurence Cole and Daniel L. Unowsky, eds. *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*. New York: Berghahn, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> For a study of Jews in the Habsburg military see, Erwin A. Schmidl, *Habsburgs Jüdische Soldaten, 1788-1918* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> On the officer corps generally see, E. Gunther Rothenberg, "Nobility and Military Careers: The Habsburg Officer Corps, 1740–1914," *Military Affairs* 40, no. 4 (1976): 182–186.

<sup>27</sup> For a review of the historiography of the war by German-speakers from the former monarch see, Hannes Leidinger, *Historiography 1918-Today (Austria-Hungary)*, in *1914-1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2014), DOI:



Unlike the US, which had a small military system in times of peace, Austria-Hungary followed the model of other European states and maintained a standing army and navy with compulsory service of three years (four in the navy) and ten years reserve. In practice, only about one in five young men were called into service; many were sent on leave after two years. Yet so many young men were leaving Austria-Hungary that military authorities began to worry. While it is not true that most immigrants were trying to evade conscription as their primary motivator, the resulting loss to the military was nonetheless significant. Hungarian authorities tightly regulated its port at Fiume to find draft dodging emigrants but could do little when its citizens easily crossed the border into more liberal Austria. Military authorities in Carniola noted the “disappearance into the thin air” of many military age men due for recruitment. In 1905 the Slovenian Carniolan politician Fran Šuklje informed the Parliament in Vienna about the disappearance of 5,240 recruits from just three areas. He cited a remark by a local official, “Our best bet would be to send the recruitment board to America. Our recruits are there and not here!”<sup>28</sup>

Austria-Hungary did try to summon men liable for military service from abroad, which proved ultimately unenforceable. In 1906, a Ferenc Schmal, a Magyar living in the US, wrote a letter to his draft board in Tolna County, Hungary: “Most Honored Sir, why did you even bother to send me a call-up? This correspondence is in vain: I do not intend to return because I feel fine in America...Thank you for your effort to turn me into a soldier, but I am totally indisposed to wearing the black and yellow uniform.”<sup>29</sup> The “black and yellow” refer to the Hapsburg colors used by the K.u.K. military. Without a coercive apparatus on the ground in Michigan, the state could only rely on patriotic appeals to citizens abroad. And we have seen that such appeals were of spurious effect.

Given the slowness of the Monarchy to recognize the importance of Michigan, its military recruitment efforts there began correspondingly late. The Cleveland consulate set up sessions to muster its citizens in Michigan, especially in the Delray district of Detroit, starting in 1912. During the registration sessions of 1913 in Delray, vice-consul Pelenyi noted that only Magyars showed up, not the more numerous Poles, causing the consul Ludwig to order afternoon sessions in Polish Hamtramck.<sup>30</sup> Still, only nineteen Magyars took the medical check-up at the 10 May 1913 session required for mustering. Nineteen Poles were mustered that afternoon in the *Polonia Hall*. All deemed fit swore their oath of allegiance to the Emperor on the spot. All told, then, on that one day sixty-one Austro-Hungarians registered: From Austria, 3 Germans, 19 Poles, 1 Czech (6 were

---

10.15463/ie1418.1032. See also, Alan Sked, “Austria-Hungary and the First World War,” *Histoire Politique* 1 (2014): 16-49.

<sup>28</sup> Unpublished text on Slovene emigration by Marijan Drnov, by Institute for Slovenian Emigration 33, no. 236 (14 October 1905), in Ervin Dubrović and others, eds. *From Central Europe to America, 1880-1914* (Rijeka; New York: City Museum of Rijeka, 2012), 139.

<sup>29</sup> Ferenc Szilli, letter published in Tolnavarmegye newspaper (11 November 1906), in Ervin Dubrović and others, eds. *From Central Europe to America, 1880-1914* (Rijeka; New York: City Museum of Rijeka, 2012), 139.

<sup>30</sup> The Poles were always a particular concern for Austria-Hungary, and many indeed ended up volunteering for the Entente. See, Joseph T. Hapak, “Selective Service and Polish Army Recruitment during World War I,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 10, no. 4 (Summer, 1991): 38-60.



deemed fit for service); and from Hungary: 19 Magyars, 9 Romanians, 8 Germans, 2 Serbs (16 were deemed fit for service). The numbers were disappointing given the estimate of up to 80,000 citizens in the area. Still, it was a start and served as evidence for the need to open a separate permanent consular office in Detroit.

The problem became acute with World War One, however. As the case of the Ruconich family (see below) reveals, Austria-Hungary soon conscripted every available son. For immigrants, fear of conscription was weighed against patriotic support for Austria-Hungary once war started. Here, in the last moments of the Habsburgs' multi-national empire, the results were at best ambiguous. Remembering that the US had a policy of strict formal neutrality and did not enter the conflict until the spring of 1917, Austria-Hungary had the formal right to call up its citizens living in Michigan. In practice, though, it could do little to reach them. Also, coordinating any large-scale return to its ports was all but impossible due to the British blockade which had bottled up the Adriatic and North Sea ports; France and Italy in 1915 were belligerents, cutting off all other possible avenues of return.

In 1914 Austria-Hungary nonetheless tried to call up its reserves abroad and offered immigrants in the US who had evaded military service full "rehabilitation" if they returned and served for the duration of the war. The US government interpreted this action as a violation of its neutrality policy, which forbade any US citizen, no matter how long they had resided in the US, from actively taking sides in the war.<sup>31</sup> Austria-Hungary, however, pointed to its 1871 treaty with the US that regulated matters of citizenship and specifically addressed the matter of draft dodging, precluding the right to claim that one had become a US citizen as a release from duty: "In particular, a former citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy who... is to be held as an American citizen, is liable to trial and punishment, according to the laws of Austro-Hungary, for non-fulfillment of military duty."<sup>32</sup>

The international court cases of Max Fox (formerly Fuchsbalg) and Alexander Tellech revealed the complexities of conscription and migration.<sup>33</sup> Each case reflected how fluid identities were, even at the formal level of citizenship. They also present an Austrian Czech and a Hungarian Magyar whose families moved back and forth between the US and Central Europe.

Fox sued the successor states of Austria and Hungary to recover damages alleged to have been sustained during his enforced military service in the Austro-Hungarian army during World War

---

<sup>31</sup> For a history of diplomatic relations between the US and the monarchy see, Nicole M. Phelps, *Sovereignty Transformed: U.S.-Habsburg Relations from 1815 to the Paris Peace Conference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> "Naturalization Convention between the United States and Austria-Hungary," Article II, September, 20 1870, in *Treaties, Conventions, International Acts and Agreements Between the United States of America and Other Powers 1776-1909*, compiled by William M. Malloy (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910).

<sup>33</sup> Max Fox (United States) v. Austria and Hungary, (May 25, 1928. Pages 73-74), in Reports of International Arbitral Awards, Vol VI (New York: United Nations, 2006), 249-250; Alexander Tellech (United States) v. Austria and Hungary, (May 25, 1928. Pages 71-73), in Reports of International Arbitral Awards, Vol VI (New York: United Nations, 2006), 248-249.



One. He was born in the US in 1896 to Magyar immigrants, but, like so many other Magyar immigrants, his parents returned to Hungary when Fox was three. His mother died in Hungary and his father returned to the US, leaving Fox in Hungary to be raised by relatives. At the outbreak of World War One, Fox, then twenty, was called up for military service. Fox's lawsuit claimed that he protested that he was a US citizen and therefore not subject to military services in Austria-Hungarian. Nonetheless, in May 1915 he was compelled to report for duty. He applied to the US embassy in Budapest for support but his application was denied. Serving on the Eastern Front, he was hospitalized for several months from a flesh wound in October 1916. His education, however, led to his promotion to lieutenant and he continued in active service until the Armistice was signed. He returned to the United States in 1920. Yet in 1928 he sued Austria and Hungary on the claim that he only took the oath of allegiance to the Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary under duress. He lost his suit on the basis that, according to Austro-Hungarian law at the time of his conscription and international treaty, he was also a citizen of that state by parentage and thus possessed "dual nationality," making him liable to all duties as a citizen.

Alexander Tellech was born to Czech immigrants in the US in 1895 and was thus a US citizen, but when he was five years old he accompanied his parents to Bohemia, where he continued to reside. In August 1914, the now nineteen-year-old had become involved in pan-Slavic politics. At the start of World War One he was arrested on the Galician border with Russia for spreading pro-Russian propaganda. He was sentenced to sixteen months internment, after which he was impressed into the Austro-Hungarian army after taking the obligatory oath of allegiance. He appealed in 1915 to the US for his release, but his application was denied. In July 1916, he deserted and escaped to Russia, where he was arrested and held by the Russian army as a prisoner of war. However, with the Russian revolutions of 1917, he was released and after the war returned to Prague, where he opened a medical practice. In 1928 he sued Austria and Hungary for time lost and for alleged suffering and privation. Similarly to Fox, the international court decided that he was an Austrian citizen accordingly to Austrian law, to which he had voluntarily subjected himself. The Austrian and the Austro-Hungarian authorities were therefore well within their rights in dealing with him as they did.

### World War one and The End of the Great Wave of Immigration

In the US, the Dillingham Commission, a bipartisan special committee of Congress operating 1907–1911, presented the best thinking of the day on immigration. Looking at records since 1819 through 1910, the Commission reached several empirical conclusions that then led to some rather unempirical conclusions. Firstly, it recognized a clear shift in immigration patterns. Prior to 1880, immigrants from Western and Northern Europe comprised more than 95% of all immigrants. In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, immigrants from Central, Southern and Eastern Europe amounted to 77% of all immigrants. Secondly, the Commission recognized that emigration had its source in economic rather than political or religious sources. Thirdly, the new wave of immigrants, especially those from Southern Europe, intended to return to their homelands rather than settle permanently. Fourthly, the Commission concluded that the US was attracting the healthiest, hardest working, and most enterprising from Central Europe, even if they faced greater difficulties in integrating.

With this baseline, the Commission then fit this data into the racially oriented Social Darwinistic paradigm of the times. Simply put, Central Europeans were deemed inferior to those of Germanic



stock. The Commission therefore made a single proposal to filter immigrants. To keep out poor Eastern peasants, literacy had to become a standard of admission.<sup>34</sup> But when it was recognized that literacy rates had been rapidly rising in Central Europe, new arguments were made to base immigration quotas explicitly on race, creating a new hereditary barrier that could not be overcome. Indeed, drawing upon legislative precedent in the Chinese Exclusion Act and the so-called "Gentlemen's Agreement" aimed at the Japanese, the Commission's overall findings were used a decade later to support the 1920s immigration reduction acts, including the Emergency Quota Act of 1921. The quotas of the 1920s were based on the percentage of each group in the immigration contingent of 1890, plotted against the number of immigrants in 1910. The year 1890 had been deliberately chosen. It represented one of the last years before the dramatic shift in origins away from Germanic north-west Europe. The result was a quota that set maximums as low as 3% for less desirable groups. In effect, the quota system, combined with dramatic changes in Europe ended mass immigration from Central Europe.<sup>35</sup>

By that time, though, Austria-Hungary had disappeared. Europe was entering the Great Depression and the era of chauvinistic nationalist warfare that culminated not only in civil wars and World War Two, but in relentless genocide and ethnic cleansing ranging across all of the former lands of the Habsburgs. World War One had effectively ended the Great Migration. Many who had planned to emigrate could not, and quickly became caught up in the dramatic events of war and its consequences. For Austro-Hungarians in Michigan, over half of whom had planned to return to the homelands, this option simply disappeared. Four years of war, intense US propaganda against Austria-Hungary, fear of conscription, and then the reality of political instability from 1918 onwards permanently altered the pattern of migration and return. The Austro-Hungarians in Michigan had lost their citizenship since their state no longer existed. Overwhelmingly they chose the easiest option and simply stayed in Michigan and became US citizens. Assimilation now became an even stronger imperative and the preservation of the old identities became hyphenated to American.

### Mario Ruconich: The Last Austro-Hungarian immigrant?

All of this leads us back to Ruconich. His narrative, and that of his family, exemplify these patterns. Ruconich came from a large peasant family (fifteen children) in Ossero, on the Adriatic islands of Cherso-Lussino, Istria in the Austrian Littoral.<sup>36</sup> His parents, Domenico and Caterina Gercovich-Gerconi, were illiterate Roman Catholics who spoke Istrian (the local Italian dialect)

---

<sup>34</sup> Immigration Commission, Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission, with Conclusions and Recommendations and Views of the Minority, Vol 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 48.

<sup>35</sup> See, Katherine Benton-Cohen, "The Rude Birth of Immigration Reform," *The Wilson Quarterly*, (Summer 2010); Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Inventing the Immigration Problem: The Dillingham Commission and Its Legacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); John M. Lund, "Boundaries of Restriction: The Dillingham Commission," *University of Vermont History Review* 6 (1994); James S. Pula, "American Immigration Policy and the Dillingham Commission," *Polish American Studies* 37, no. 1 (1980): 5–31; and Robert F Zeidel, *Immigrants, Progressives, and Exclusion Politics: The Dillingham Commission, 1900-1927* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004).

<sup>36</sup> Now Osor, Cres Island, Croatia.





as well as Croatian. Their children attended a compulsory state school but were free to choose from the Istriot, Croatian, and German schools. The family was relatively comfortable, having moved just before the war from the impoverished village of Trsich on the same island, owning sheep, goats, chickens and a horse and supplementing their diet and income as fishermen.

Mario was the third of the four oldest brothers (Domenik, Johan, Mario, and Anton). As citizens of Austrian Istria, the brothers were all liable for military conscription. They were loyal Austrians, showing no tendency towards any of the political currents undermining Habsburg authority. They were not attracted to Italian Irredentism, pan-Slavism, or socialism. When World War One began in August 1914, the family saw all of its military-age sons fight; all but the youngest died in combat. Mario, as we know, died in France in 1918 fighting the Germans as an American. Domenik, the oldest, was killed in action in 1915 on the Isonzo Front fighting the Italians—that is, fighting those who spoke his native language. Johan disappeared on the Eastern Front; there are no records of him as a prisoner of war or killed in action, but this was in the wake of the chaotic Russian Revolution. Anton also served on the Eastern Front but survived despite multiple wounds, being taken prisoner and a three-month odyssey that took him from Odessa on the Black Sea back to home.

The family that survived the war saw the nationalist consequences as Istria became a bone of contention between Italy and Yugoslavia. The family name was forcibly Italianized in 1926 by Italian Fascism to Rocconi.<sup>37</sup> After World War Two, though, the name was forcibly Slavicized by Communist Yugoslavia to Rukonic. The family now has relatives with all three versions. Almost the entire family ultimately emigrated. The Ruconich story is thus highly representative and simultaneously exceptional. It reinforces our understanding of some basic patterns of immigration and conflicting loyalties, but also cautions us against generalizations. While this paper turned several questions about migration on the axis of military service, we can draw numerous tangential conclusions.

Firstly, Mario’s roots as a farmer facing economic pressure from overpopulation and limited economic opportunity fits the most powerful “push” factor for Austro-Hungarians to migrate. However, his search for work initially in an urban part of the Empire (the bustling port of Trieste) was just as typical as emigration. Indeed, relatively few Triestine immigrated. The local economy was powerful enough to offer ample employment locally. As was the case elsewhere in Europe, when local industrial capacity could absorb the excess rural population, those people chose to remain in the cities of their homeland rather than leave. His older brothers also had not left the area, which is why they were caught up in military service.

Secondly, the Istrian family that stayed showed the demographic consequences of the collapse of Austria-Hungary. They lived in a mixed border land that Italian Irredentists claimed for Italy, annexing it after World War One but losing it after World War Two. Various waves of ethnic cleansing and mass migrations, especially the Istrian Exodus of the late 1940s, created a more homogenously Croatian population, including on the once predominantly Italian islands of Cherso-

---

<sup>37</sup> For the actual law see, Regio decreto legge 10 Gennaio 1926, n. 17: Restituzione in forma italiana dei cognomi delle famiglie della provincia di Trento.



Lussino.<sup>38</sup> Today, the demographic composition of much of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, including Istria, has altered considerably. The family, like the region, was forcibly Italianized and then Slavicized, in successive efforts to purge them of their multinational Habsburg identities. The only one to preserve the original family name was a younger brother who was a sailor in the 1920s and constantly at sea and thus avoided the forced Italianization before he later emigrated to the US.

Thirdly, migration was complicated, even in a single family. Different members often revealed divergent attitudes towards migration. Some refused to migrate, some left only once a family connection had been established. Some migrated with the intention of returning, others planning never to return. Mario presents yet another reason: contingency. Sometimes unusual and unpredictable circumstances determined migration. Indeed, the ending of the great migration came with World War One, a global event that few had predicted and that had dramatic consequences for emigration and immigration. As for the rest of the family, a few migrated to the US: a younger brother of Mario, Gaudenzio, migrated to New Jersey under the Italian fascists; and a niece, Janine, left for the US after marrying in the 1960s and settling first in New York and then California. The rest of the family, except one son, Joseph, left with the Istrian Exodus for Italy after the Communist took possession of the island.

Fourthly, Mario's apparently itinerant life was typical of the single young males who comprised the bulk of Austro-Hungarian emigrants. Michigan's mines, forests, and later industries of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century attracted young single men more than any other group. These men moved from camp to camp, or mine to mine as they heard of new opportunities. Most planned a return home; after 1914 most stayed, cut off from home by the war. These men often only appear in the records of the shipping companies and their employers, occasionally on the police records for drunk and disorderly charges as they celebrated after payday. The numerous Austro-Hungarians who fit this category in Michigan often did not set roots in the state, but they established Michigan's economic foundations nonetheless.

Fifthly, Mario's personal experience of immigration based on a likely illegal entry was certainly atypical. Entry to the US prior to the 1920s was well regulated but not prohibitive. Like Mario, all Austro-Hungarians came by ship, many using the same port and shipping company for which he worked. There was little reason for most immigrants to "jump ship." With \$20 in the pocket, an address of someone in the US, tolerable health, and a willingness to swear that one was neither a polygamist nor an anarchist, just about anyone who made it to a US port was admitted.

Lastly, on our question of identity, loyalty, and the important reality of compulsory military service, Austro-Hungarians seem to have reached a complicated equilibrium as long as external factors did not disrupt the delicate balance. While the monarchy stood, men overwhelmingly served loyally in the imperial army (Mario's brothers); some emigrated to avoid such service (perhaps the case for Mario); and a very few, under extenuating circumstances, served the enemy (certainly the

---

<sup>38</sup> Gustavo Corni, "The Exodus of Italians from Istria and Dalmatia, 1945–56," in Jessica Reinisch and Elizabeth White, eds., *The Disentanglement of Populations: Migration, Expulsion and Displacement in Post-War Europe, 1944–9* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 71-90; for a general discussion of ethnic cleansing in Europe after World War II see, Pertti Aho and others, *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe after World War II and its Aftermath* (New York: Berg, 2008).



case for Mario, though his motives are unclear). In any event, conscription was a factor in decision making about emigration for the young men of the monarchy, but there is no evidence that it made them either less loyal to their homeland or to their adopted homes. Only the unexpected convulsions unleashed by World War One forced immediate reconsideration of traditional loyalties and migration patterns.



## Bibliography

- Ahonen, Pertti, and others, *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe after World War II and its Aftermath*. New York: Berg, 2008.
- Bassett, Richard. *For God and Kaiser: The Imperial Austrian Army, 1619–1918*. Yale: Yale University Press, 2016.
- Benton-Cohen, Katherine. “The Rude Birth of Immigration Reform.” *The Wilson Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 16–22.
- Benton-Cohen, Katherine. *Inventing the Immigration Problem: The Dillingham Commission and Its Legacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018.
- Biondich, Mark. “Stjepan Radić, Yugoslavism, and the Habsburg Monarchy.” *Austrian History Yearbook* 27 (1996): 109–131. doi:10.1017/S0067237800005841.
- Bucur, Maria, and Nancy M. Wingfield, eds. *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present*. Central European Studies. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2001.
- Cole, Laurence, and Daniel L. Unowsky, eds. *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*. New York: Berghahn, 2007.
- Corni, Gustavo. “The Exodus of Italians from Istria and Dalmatia, 1945–56.” In Jessica Reinisch and Elizabeth White, eds. *The Disentanglement of Populations: Migration, Expulsion and Displacement in Post-War Europe, 1944–49*, 71–90. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Cornwall, Mark, ed. *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary: A Multi-National Experiment in Early Twentieth-Century Europe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002.
- Dubrović, Ervin and others, eds. *From Central Europe to America, 1880–1914*. Rijeka; New York: City Museum of Rijeka, 2012 (2016).
- Duchhardt, Heinz. “Glaubensflüchtlinge und Entwicklungshelfer: Niederländer, Hugenotten, Waldenser, Salzburger.” In Klaus Bade, ed. *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland: Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 278–286. Munich: Beck, 1992.
- Durdik, Christel. *Bibliographischer Abriß zur Bevölkerungs- und Sozialstatistik der Habsburgermonarchie im 19. Jahrhundert*. Vienna: 1974.
- Ehmer, Josef Annemarie Steidl, and Hermann Zeitlhofer. *Migration Patterns in Late Imperial Austria*, KMI Working Paper Series: Working Paper #3. Vienna: Kommission für Migrations- und Integrationsforschung: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003.
- Evans, R.J.W. *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs: Central Europe c. 1683–1867*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.



- Faßmann, Heinz. "Migration in Österreich, 1850–1900: Migrationsströme innerhalb der Monarchie und Struktur der Zuwanderung nach Wien." *Demographische Informationen* (1986): 23.
- Hapak, Joseph T. "Selective Service and Polish Army Recruitment during World War I." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 10, no. 4 (Summer, 1991): 38–60.
- Hochstadt, Steve. *Mobility and Modernity: Migration in Germany, 1820–1989*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999.
- Immigration Commission. *Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission, with Conclusions and Recommendations and Views of the Minority*, Vol 1. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911.
- Johnson, Lonnie R. *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Judson, Pieter M. *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*. Harvard: Belknap Press, 2016.
- Kozuchowski, Adam. *The Afterlife of Austria-Hungary: The Image of the Habsburg Monarchy in Interwar Europe*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press; 2013.
- Kurz, Michael. "Nun ist die Scheidestunde da..." Die Emigration aus dem Salzkammergut im 19. Jahrhundert nach Nordamerika." MA thesis, Salzburg, 1999.
- Kwan, Jonathan. "Review Article: Nationalism and All That: Reassessing the Habsburg Monarchy and its Legacy." *European History Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2011): 88–108.
- Leidinger, Hannes. "Historiography 1918-Today (Austria-Hungary)." In *1914–1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*. Edited by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2014. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.1032.
- Lund, John M. "Boundaries of Restriction: The Dillingham Commission." *University of Vermont History Review* 6 (Dec. 1994). <http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/histreview/vol6/>.
- Malloy, William M., ed. "Naturalization Convention between the United States and Austria-Hungary," Article II, September, 20 1870, in *Treaties, Conventions, International Acts and Agreements Between the United States of America and Other Powers 1776–1909*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910.
- Markitan, Franz. *Auswandererverkehrswege in Österreich*. Wien: 1912.
- Meinzingen, Franz v. "Die Wanderbewegung auf Grund von Gebürtigkeitsdaten der Volkszählung vom 31. Dezember 1900." *Statistische Monatsschrift*, NF 8 (1903).
- Morawska, Ewa. "For Bread with Butter: Life-Worlds of Peasant-Immigrants from East Central Europe, 1880–1914." *Journal of Social History* 17, no. 3 (Spring, 1984): 387–404.
- Neyer, Gerda. "Auswanderung aus Österreich: Ein Streifzug durch die "andere" Seite der österreichischen Migrationsgeschichte." In Traude Horvath and Gerda Neyer, eds. *Auswanderungen aus Österreich: Von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Gegenwart*, 13–29. Vienna: Böhlau, 1996.



- Olsson, Lars. "Labor Migration as a Prelude to World War I." *International Migration Review* 33 (1996): 875–900.
- Pflügl, Richard v. "Die überseeische Auswanderung in den Jahren 1899–1901." *Statistische Monatsschrift*, NF 8 (1903)..
- Phelps, Nicole M. *Sovereignty Transformed: U.S.-Habsburg Relations from 1815 to the Paris Peace Conference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Praszałowicz, Dorota. "Overseas Migration from Partitioned Poland: Poznan and Eastern Galicia as Case Studies." *Polish American Studies* 60, no. 2 (Autumn, 2003): 59–81.
- Pula, James S. "American Immigration Policy and the Dillingham Commission." *Polish American Studies* 37, no. 1 (1980): 5–31.
- Puskás, Juliana. "Some Results of My Research on the Transatlantic Emigration from Hungary on the Basis of Micro- and Macro-Analysis." In Juliana Puskás, ed. *Overseas Migration from East-Central and Southeastern Europe, 1880–1940*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990.
- Rácz, István. "Attempts to Curb Hungarian Emigration to the United States before 1914." *Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok / Hungarian Studies in English* 7 (1973): 5–33.
- Radić, Stjepan. *Modern Colonization and the Slavs*. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1904.
- Reports of International Arbitral Awards*, Vol 6. New York: United Nations, 2006.
- Rothenberg, E. Gunther. "Nobility and Military Careers: The Habsburg Officer Corps, 1740–1914." *Military Affairs* 40, no. 4 (1976): 182–186.
- Schmidl, Erwin A. *Habsburgs Jüdische Soldaten, 1788–1918*. Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2014.
- Schorske, Carl E. *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture*. New York: Vintage Books, 1981.
- Sked, Alan. "Austria-Hungary and the First World War." *Histoire Politique* 1 (2014): 16–49.
- Spaulding, E. Wilder. *The Quiet Invaders: The Story of the Austrian Impact upon America*. Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1968.
- Taylor, A.J.P. *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809–1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. London: Penguin Books, 1964.
- Zeidel, Robert F. *Immigrants, Progressives, and Exclusion Politics: The Dillingham Commission, 1900–1927*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004.



## Population, the Lessons of War, and the Promise of Peace

Dr. Kathleen A. Tobin

Purdue University Northwest

Nineteenth century Malthusian theory gained significant attention at the outbreak of World War I. Beginning with his 1798 book *Essay on the Principle of Population*, Thomas Malthus had argued that war served as a check on population when resources became scarce. His work gained a substantial number of followers. During the modernist era of science and progress that unfolded after 1900, neo-Malthusians observed real conditions leading to war, but they were now less willing to accept war as inevitable. They looked more carefully at Malthus's assertions that overpopulation would lead to competition for resources and hence into violent conflict, and noted that humankind now had within its hands the power to control births.

The scientific community added arguments of Charles Darwin, who, according to the prominent neo-Malthusian V. Drysdale, “has shown beyond the possibility of dispute that over-reproduction leads to a constant struggle for existence. Animal life is one perpetual conflict, and man too has been in a constant state of war—the impelling force being really, although not always ostensibly, the need for food.”<sup>1</sup> Opponents argued that birth rates in Europe had been declining and policy makers should instead address food supply and distribution, which would make the control of births unnecessary. Darwin, himself, did not condone family limitation and considered artificial checks to natural population growth as problematic and detrimental to healthy family life.<sup>2</sup> Yet, Malthusianism prevailed among intellectuals and the upper classes, drawing from the teachings of natural selection.<sup>3</sup>

Before the outbreak of the First World War and during its execution, observers also wrote on Malthusianism within a framework of militarism. The contemporary state of Europe drew significant attention from Malthusians, and in the United States, they argued that rational, progressive thinkers should view the Europeans' tendency toward war with disgust. In this “Progressive Era” it seemed unimaginable to them that self-proclaimed civilizations could not resolve their conflict without resorting to arms.

---

<sup>1</sup> V. Drysdale, *The Small Family System: Is It Injurious or Immoral?* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1917), pp. 174-176. Also see Adelyne More's chapter “Militarism and the Birth Rate,” in *Uncontrolled Breeding, or Fecundity versus Civilization, a Contribution to the Study of Over-Population as the Cause of War and the Chief Obstacle to the Emancipation of Women* (New York: Critic and Guide Company, 1917), pp. 64-71.

<sup>2</sup> Annie Besant, *Law of Population* (London: Free Thought Publishing Company, 1877), pp. 71-72.

<sup>3</sup> Eric B. Ross, *The Malthus Factor: Population, Poverty and Politics in Capitalist Development* (New York: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 58-60.



Edwin W. James described the increasing destructiveness of weaponry and war in “The Malthusian Doctrine and War,” published in the *Scientific Monthly* in 1916. Late nineteenth century technology that advanced transportation, industrialization, and economic expansion in Western Europe and the United States also contributed to innovations in warfare, he wrote, and nations with access to chemicals, explosives, modern steel-making processes, and mass production, applied them to war technology. Capitalist competition between and among nationalist economies added strong undercurrents to militarist preparations, creating an increasingly dangerous environment that many believed was sure to lead to war.

James described a world in which historical ills may have been eradicated while an inclination toward war was amplified. “In at least two of the great western nations compulsory military service has existed for many years; in several others large standing armies and powerful navies have been maintained in times of peace,” he noted. “While the public mind has been turned toward ameliorating the harshness of famine and pestilence, it has been accustomed to consider war as a possible contingency, not to be combated as undesirable but to be prepared for.” The preparations for war guaranteed an increase in intensity and destructiveness of human life when it did come. James argued that man had become desensitized to the military culture surrounding him, paying taxes to support it, always aware of army units and naval fleets nearby, his children playing on fortification ramps and slopes while vacationing at seaside resorts. In some cases, he served in militias or attended military school. “The individual mind finds no shock in considering a resort to war.”<sup>4</sup>

James reminded readers Malthus had argued that because resources multiplied only arithmetically while population multiplied geometrically, there would be shortages. If population were not checked through preventive measures such as delayed marriage, it would ultimately be limited through positive measures, such as famine, disease, and war. As famine and disease had been alleviated by modern man, the only positive check remaining was war. And because man had been so conditioned to accept war as inevitable—through “civilized” society’s creation of a military culture—he was accepting the only positive check left, according to Malthusianism, which could meet and temper the pressures of population.

There were aspects of modern society that Malthus could not have taken into account and the capacity for which transformed even further in the nineteenth century, creating an even wider chasm between his analyses and the world at the turn of the twentieth century. First, Malthus described what might be considered pre-modern societies where lack of food, for example, directly led to individuals turning on one another. In more modern economies and governing systems, however, the individual was more remotely and indirectly connected with military action. While individuals were recruited and assigned to engage in war, decisions to declare war were made at much higher levels. In addition, it was only necessary for governments to give the impression that there were economic pressures or scarcity of resources so severe as to make danger imminent.

Second, sensibilities regarding “necessities” had shifted through the nineteenth century. A growing middle class had become reliant on a certain standard of living which expanded their notion of essentials beyond food and water and engaging in war for the sake of protecting a certain standard

---

<sup>4</sup> Edwin W. James, “The Malthusian Doctrine and War,” *The Scientific Monthly* 2:3 (March 1916), p. 263.





of living against all others had become more likely. As modern war took place between and among nations, orchestrated by nations' leaders, it became more critical to look at unequal distribution of wealth in natural resources. The acquisition of petroleum and metals such as iron and copper needed for industrial strength and consequently increased accumulation of capital might occur because of an advantageous geographical position and chance location. While disadvantaged nations could practice conservation and frugality, there may come a day when they resort to war in order to forcibly share in the wealth denied to them by circumstance.

A consciousness of global inequity and the potential for war due to lack of accessibility of resources or perceived economic pressures inspired peace movements. However, an enlightened attitude toward international relations should not be comprised simply of propaganda in favor of peace for the sake of peace, wrote James. Rather, the causes of true economic pressures must be removed. Recommendations included advancements in science and rural development, making rural life more attractive, elimination of trade restrictions, agreements, and tariffs in order to permit free trade among all nations, the abolition of absolutism, and greater efficiency in republican forms of government. In addition, governments should legalize the dissemination of contraceptive information.<sup>5</sup>

The summer of 1914 had marked a peak in pacifism in the United States. The new century had ushered in progressive ideals of cleaning up corruption in government and business, implementing programs of economic justice, expanding democratic institutions including the right to vote for women, alleviating social ills through public health, nutrition programs, and child labor laws, and in essence eliminating many of what progressives termed the root causes of conflict. Peace would stem naturally from such an environment, they believed. By 1917, however, militarism became an integral part of culture. Pacifists did not see this as the exception; rather, an intensification of the norm. They strove hard to infuse the populace with pacifistic sensibilities, but the outbreak of the Great War and the Americanization of what was to become the First World War seemed to tear those efforts apart.

In addition, it became clearer that the U.S. was not, at its foundation, a peaceful nation at all. With the onset of war and eventual U.S. entrance in 1916, plans for international arbitration were dropped, as were movements toward toleration for minorities, greater freedom of conscience, and freedom of speech.<sup>6</sup> Elsie Clews Parsons explained why she believed the American public became acculturated so easily to recent militaristic patterns. She noted how Americans exhibited pre-existent resemblances which lent themselves to militarism:

Negro disenfranchisement, segregation and lynching suggested that racial discrimination is not altogether alien to American practice. A number of instances in the treatment accorded to Hebrews might also be cited in this connection, as well as certain attitudes towards immigrants, particularly immigrants from southern or southeastern Europe.

Americanization, whether conscious or unconscious, is characterized not only by racial discrimination, it insists on homogeneity, and the homogeneity or like-mindedness it

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 267-271.

<sup>6</sup> Elsie Clews Parsons, "Patterns for Peace or War," *The Scientific Monthly* 5:3 (September, 1917), p. 230.



demands permits of so little variation that we are led to question whether respect or tolerance for minorities in general is a notable American trait.<sup>7</sup>

Pacifists also warned that businesses and corporations benefited greatly from militarism; the buildup of armaments brought profits and replenishment after the use of those armaments brought even more profits. When society saw economic benefit in war, leaders were less inclined to address basic weaknesses that led to war. The price paid for this superficial boost to the economy was further human destruction, even more widespread and brutal destruction as advances in technology led to greater casualties. Further, corporations were exempt from regular taxes as they contributed to the war effort, placing increased burdens on the working class who sacrificed through their labor and increased taxes to pay for defense. World War I was referred to as a “rich man’s war.”<sup>8</sup>

At times, pacifists used terms such as hysteria and epidemic of fear when describing the newfound intensity of militarism in American society during the war. Columbia University Professor of Sociology and History of Civilization, Franklin H. Giddings, dismissed such rhetoric, arguing that it was reasonable to expect one percent of the male population to serve in the military. Adjusting for age and ability, a force of one million would represent five percent of the population, still realistic, though pacifists would consider it monstrous. The term militaristic might appropriately be used to describe Europe, he said, with German forces—those organized plus those trained but not organized combined—numbered 8,000,000 in a country of less than 70,000,000. Organized forces in the six greater nations of Europe—Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Russia, Italy, and Great Britain—totaled 25,000,000. He concluded a U.S. force of 1,000,000 should not be considered evidence of militarism.

In addition, the United States was comprised of significantly more territory than European nations, given the area of Alaska and possessions abroad. This gave the U.S. more coastline to protect and also a less dense population overall. The lack of population density would make any military presence less noticeable. A million-man force, supported by five million in reserves should have no effect on American domestic life. “It would be neither more nor less appreciable than a police force of 15,000 men in [the] city of Philadelphia, with its population of more than one million and a half inhabitants,” wrote Giddings.<sup>9</sup> Giddings argued that the democratic nature of military service requirements strengthened democracy, and that military training was beneficial in and of itself. It instilled discipline, responsibility, love of country, loyalty, and obedience in young men.<sup>10</sup> Throughout history, he contended, democracies and republics did not become militaristic, while monarchies always did, or tended to become so. Democracies had nothing to gain and everything

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 230-231.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 235-237.

<sup>9</sup> Franklin H. Giddings, “The Democracy of Universal Military Service,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Preparedness and America’s International Program 66 (July, 1916), pp. 173-175.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 178.



to lose by engaging in an aggressive war. But they placed themselves in danger by failing to protect themselves against aggression of the ruthless.<sup>11</sup>

While many intellectual leaders argued that fundamental tenets of modern civilization should prevent war, age-old connections between population, manpower, and military might did not die. The connections were rooted in biblical descriptions equating the bearing of sons as the increase of arrows in one's quiver. Some might expect that technological advances in weaponry would make such ancient connections irrelevant, but that was not the case. The capacity for destruction and lives lost only increased, and if a nation were to remain strong—in militarists' eyes, Malthusians feared—population should remain strong.

In addition, medical advances had contributed to rapid increases in population, and a higher standard of living created higher demands on resources in developed nations and their colonies. From 1800 to the onset of World War I, the world's population nearly tripled, from 640,000,000 to 1,693,000,000. The greatest growth occurred not in less developed regions, but in wealthier countries. While birth rates dropped alongside industrialization, so did death rates, with better health lowering infant mortality and extending longevity. Europe's population increased from 127,000,000 in 1741 to 452,000,000 in 1914, and similar growth appeared to take hold wherever there was British influence, or what was often termed Western civilization. Areas that exhibited tremendous population growth in the same period included the United States, Australia, South Africa, Egypt, Argentina, and the Philippines.<sup>12</sup> In addition to food supply, the British were also concerned about continuing increases in consumption of coal. Nearly all industries had become dependent on coal, either directly or indirectly. In addition, an abundant supply of coal was required to maintain Britain's position in global trade, and the export of manufactured goods was necessary for increased exchange of food imports. As Britain was importing a majority of its food, its coal reserves were diminishing by millions of tons annually. Very importantly, coal could not be regenerated and replenished as agricultural produce could. It was estimated that in 1801, Britain consumed more than ten million tons of coal per year and by the onset of World War I was consuming more than 263 million tons per year.<sup>13</sup> He referred to the classic work, *The Coal Question*, in which Professor W. S. Jevons warned in the 1860s, "We cannot long continue our present rate of progress. The first check to our growing prosperity must render our population excessive."<sup>14</sup>

In his 1917 work *Essays in Wartime*, Havelock Ellis criticized those who did not see a problem in recent trends in population growth. He was a friend and associate of Margaret Sanger, leader of the birth control movement, and a strong proponent of birth control himself. He was particularly

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>12</sup> O. D. Van Engeln, "The World's Food Resources," *Geographical Review* 9:3 (March, 1920), pp. 172-173; F. A. Ogg, *Economic Development of Modern Europe* (New York, n.p. 1917), pp. 177. Also see W. F. Wilcox, "The Expansion of Europe in Population," *American Economic Review* 15 (1915), pp. 737-752.

<sup>13</sup> C. Killick Millard, M.D., *Population and Birth Control, Presidential Address of the Leicester Philosophical Society, Session 1917-1918* (Leicester: W. Thornley & Son, 1917), p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 18.



hard on religious figures and condemned contemporary references to the biblical order to “increase and multiply,” describing it as an “authoritative command of a tribal God who was, according to the scriptural narrative, addressing a world inhabited by eight people.” The world of the early twentieth century was a starkly different place, he reminded. Still, some professed patriots held onto this notion in their “clamoring for plentiful and cheap men.” While it may have been considered a religious, moral, natural, scientific, and patriotic duty at one time, the earth could no longer withstand the practice of having as many children as possible. This, he said, set the stage for war.<sup>15</sup>

Ellis agreed that war may well affect the quality of the new race detrimentally, and there was no doubt of the effects—while perhaps temporary—on the quantity of men. While there may be a brief increase in birth rates once veterans returned home, the drafting of a large portion of young men in the first place diminished the population through the “pouring out [of] the blood of the young manhood of the race,” said Ellis.

The wars of a century spill 120,000,000 gallons of blood, enough to fill three million forty-gallon casks, or to create a perpetual fountain sending up a jet of 150 gallons per hour, a fountain which has been flowing unceasingly ever since the dawn of history. It is to be noted, also, that those slain on the battlefield by no means represent the total victims of a wary, but only about half of them.<sup>16</sup>

Ellis also looked more directly at the eugenic effects of war. “For war never hits men at random. It only hits a carefully selected percentage of ‘fit’ men. It tends, in other words, to strike out temporarily, or in a fatal event, permanently, from the class of fathers precisely that percentage of the population which the eugenicist wishes to see in that class.” He went on:

For, however an army is recruited, it is only those men reaching a fairly high standard of fitness who are accepted, and these, even in times of peace, are hampered in the task of carrying out the race, which the less fit and the unfit are free to do at their gowned good pleasure. At the time of the Napoleonic Wars, the age of conscription was lowered to eighteen and marriage was an exemption from service. This resulted in many young men marrying hastily to avoid the draft, certainly injurious to the race.<sup>17</sup>

Ellis blamed German militarists for advocating for war, in part, because they saw it as a regenerator—a process that would strengthen the hardiness of the future German population. According to Hegel, “War invigorates humanity, as storms preserve the sea from putrescence.” To Molke, “War is an integral part of God’s universe, developing man’s noblest attributes.” To Treitschke, “The condemnation of war is not only absurd, it is immoral.”<sup>18</sup> A recently unified imperial Germany adopted expansion as a primary foreign policy, coming comparatively late to the colonization process and thus turning its attention toward neighboring nations on the continent

---

<sup>15</sup> Havelock Ellis, *Essays in Wartime* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917), pp. 236-237.

<sup>16</sup> Ellis, *Essays in Wartime*, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.



of Europe. The *Geopolitiker* argued that nation-states were organically expansive and the obvious result of population pressure in a growing nation.<sup>19</sup>

Adelyne More disputed major claims against the use of artificial contraception, saying it was the most effective way to limit births and that limiting births had a number of advantages. First, it was the only way women could hope to attain independence and self-development, which were key to the progress of humanity as a whole. Second, it was the most effective way to alleviate infant mortality, as mothers would have more sufficient time and attention to devote to each child. Next, it was necessary to limit family size if one wished to better his or her economic situation. More also argued that modern prophylaxis (through the use of rubber condoms and diaphragms) prevented the spread of venereal disease. And very importantly the regulation of population was “the most effective way of ensuring the cessation of war.” She maintained that the feeling of expansion when brought up against geographical barriers acted blindly in the direction of conflict, whether in colonial rivalry or territorial “swarming.” In addition, the lowering of social conditions due to overpopulation made people long for a change of any kind, and at any price. They may not consciously desire war, but their resistance to the powerful interests which flourish on war was weakened to a dangerous degree.<sup>20</sup>

According to More, industrialization could not be considered a primary cause of a declining birth rate, as it fell rapidly between 1870 and 1900 in much of Europe and after 1900 in Germany, after industry began flourishing. She argued it was simply because women of the upper classes had decided not to have as many children. Though birth rates continued to decline during the first years of the war, More feared they might quickly rise once the conflict had come to an end. Militarists in Germany could appeal for more births once again on the grounds of patriotism, particularly if they viewed the Russians and English as producing too many babies. This appeal, she reminded, was the one remaining source of danger—the primary basis for wars in the past.<sup>21</sup>

Physician and birth control advocate C. Killick Millard acknowledged the militarist argument and fear of Germany among the British, noting that most nations have an “inherent desire to increase and become greater as compared with their neighbors, and if necessary at the expense of their neighbors.” This was often considered and taught as patriotism, but Millard described it as a pseudo-patriotism, which threatened world peace. “All through the world’s history, ever since the herdsmen of Lot strove with those of Abraham, one of the fundamental and predisposing causes of war, apart from immediate and personal causes, has been the pressure of increasing populations and the desire for national expansion.” He added, quoting a recent Birth Rate Commission report, “A pressure of population in any country brings as its chief historic consequence overflows and

---

<sup>19</sup> Alison Bashford, *Global Population: History, Geopolitics, and Life on Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 55. Also see William Mulligan, *The Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Robert Strausz-Hupé, *Geopolitics: The Struggle for Space and Power* (New York: Putnam, 1942); and Sebastian Conrad, *Globalization and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Adelyne More, *Fecundity versus Civilization: A Contribution to the Study of Over-population as the Case of War and the Chief Obstacle to the Emancipation of Women, with Special References to Germany* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1915), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 25, 51.



migrations into neighboring or other accessible countries, not only for peaceful settlement, but also for conquest and for the subjugation and exploitation of the weaker peoples. This always remains a chief cause of international dispute and wars.”<sup>22</sup> Millard contended that German dreams of national expansion and world supremacy were fostered and encouraged by the rapid growth in population, due primarily to its high birth rate in the late nineteenth century. Quoting from the first chapter of Prince von Bulow’s 1913 *Imperial Germany*, entitled “Germany’s Struggle for World Power,” which justified a shift from Bismarck’s Continental Policy to one of expansion, Millard wrote,

The course of events has long driven German policy out from the narrow confines of Europe into the wider world. It was not ambitious restlessness which urged us to imitate the Great Powers that had long ago embarked on world politics. The strength of the Nation . . . as it grew, burst the bounds of its old home, and its policy was dictated by the new interests and needs.

He also quoted from a 1916 *Berliner Post* opinion piece:

Can a great and rapidly growing nation like Germany always renounce all claims to further development or to the expansion of its political power? The final settlement with France and England, the expansion of our colonial possessions in order to create new German homes for the overflow of our population . . . these are the problems which must be faced in the near future.<sup>23</sup>

At the Fifth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference held in London in 1922, Swedish physician Anton Nyström reinforced the neo-Malthusian view that contraception could well act as a preventive of birth and consequently overpopulation in this modern century, so that “death-bringing” population checks of the past like wars and extermination of peoples might come to an end. He pointed to reckless killing in the past, with examples from wars between civilized states:

[F]or instance, when the Assyrian Empire was destroyed by the Medes and the Persians, nearly half the population perished; hundreds of thousands of Germans were killed by the Romans when they threatened the Roman Empire; when Carthage was taken and destroyed by the Romans, the greater part of its 700,000 inhabitants were killed . . . The crusades led to enormous losses of human life; the same was the case with the Europeans in the Thirty Years War. The witch trials and the cruelties of the Inquisition led to the death of innumerable persons, in total at least 1-1/3 million.<sup>24</sup>

Nyström warned that despite the practice of preventing births throughout history, overpopulation won out and contributed to pressures for territory and ultimate war. Significant growth in numbers and the need for new sources of food had driven the Germans to expand into the Roman Empire. The same was true of Asians moving west into Europe. Colonies had served as outlets for

---

<sup>22</sup> Millard, *Population and Birth Control*, pp. 19-20. See Birth Rate Commission Report, p. 431.

<sup>23</sup> Millard, *Population and Birth Control*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>24</sup> Anton Nyström, “Over-population of the Earth and Its Present Dangers,” in Raymond Pierpont, ed., *Fifth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference* (London: William Heinemann, 1922), pp. 172-173.



overcrowded European countries, and this was the case with the British colonies in North America. Throughout the process of expansion, European nations battled one another for possession of colonies and colonists devastated Native populations.

Germany based its military and colonial policies on the recent increase of its population, argued neo-Malthusians, for it saw strength in its own nation against others that did not experience so great an increase as its own. There was no question that this was a primary cause of the outbreak of war in Europe. If Germany had a population of 50 million instead of more than 60 million, “there would have been no world war.”<sup>25</sup> Social hygienist Max Gruber argued that the war was inevitable and unavoidable due to the recent growth in Germany’s population from forty million to eighty million. He called the war a “biological necessity.”<sup>26</sup> Ellis added that the belligerents responsible for initiating the war—Russia, Austria, and Serbia, in addition to Germany—had the highest birth rates in Europe. He noted that they had not yet experienced a lowering of their birth rates, as had occurred in other European nations in the previous century because they were among the most backward people in Europe.<sup>27</sup> Gruber estimated that if Germany’s population continued to grow at the same rate that it had between 1900 and 1905, by the end of the twentieth century it would reach 250,000,000, making it invulnerable to other nations. Ellis pointed out that Russia, with a growing population, could indeed be a threat to Germany, and also that Germany’s birth rate had begun to fall.<sup>28</sup>

Among the most gruesome of considerations regarding population and the categorizations of humans in the age of modern warfare, were those using the term “cannon fodder.” Societies of the past did argue extensively for the need to fight wars and that required military might in the form of manpower. Neo-Malthusians following World War I recognized that new technology had increased weaponry’s capacity for death, and maintained a modern, peaceful world should leave no room for the idea of children as future cannon fodder. Such a notion was deemed antiquated at best. In addition, methods of carrying out war were changing, particularly with the introduction of air attacks. Cicely Hamilton argued that should a nation be able to engage in air warfare, “a teeming population will be a real handicap to a belligerent nation’ and that military strategy and tactics of the future will be directed less towards the destruction of armies in the field than towards the terrorizing and stampeding of large masses of disorganized civilians.” She continued:

Cities and industrial districts stampeded will resolve themselves into hordes of famished nomads—men and women who are dangerous as well as useless because deprived of their means of livelihood. If sufficiently panic-stricken when they take flight, they will avoid railways and roads—which are likely to be targets from the air—and not only devour the countryside, but trample it beneath their feet. . . . In a day or two a vagrant and millionfold starvation—grown reckless, a widespread invasion by famished plunderers, more terrible by far than invasion by an army that is fed and disciplined.

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 177-178.

<sup>26</sup> Ellis, *Essays in Wartime*, p. 65.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, pp. 67-68.



Hamilton decried any continued consideration of population as backup support for a nation's military forces. While non-combatants may have served some purpose as an auxiliary force in the past, air warfare would instead work to destroy centers of production, sending civilians into a state of chaos. She warned that "starvation on the run" had become the military objective of the future, and "the aim and object of the 'scientific' soldier of the future will be to produce nomadic anarchy and break an enemy Government by burdening it with useless mouths." This would be more effective where populations were dense.<sup>29</sup>

The discussion of warfare continued. In her presentation "War and Malthusianism," the German feminist and pacifist Helene Stöcker reflected on the hope she and her Malthusian colleagues had held in 1911, before the outbreak of war, when the last international conference had been held in Dresden. Though the war had since brought disillusionment, skepticism, and despair, they had not been totally discouraged and she felt once again inspired by the London gathering. She acknowledged an intensification of their efforts due to the war, saying that its destruction served as evidence that population control was necessary. Various political parties in Europe were demanding legalized abortion by this time. Soviets, free from religious condemnation, were working to provide abortion access as a woman's right to equality and as a solution to poverty and Germans were considering the same. Stöcker reminded her audience that preventing conception was preferable to ending a pregnancy at the very least for health reasons, arguing for more widespread dissemination of contraceptives and contraceptive information. She also advocated for better protections for women in the workplace, so that they would not have to labor in factory environments proving dangerous to her health and to that of an unborn child. In addition, she pointed to the hypocrisy of condemning abortion—considering it murder—while believing the wartime murder of adult men natural and necessary.

For good reason, at the last German Conference of Pacifists, a Catholic chaplain received the greatest applause when he declared he had always pleaded the following point of view: . . . You have no right to proclaim the holiness of the unborn life of the human embryo as long as you have not secured the protection and the inviolability of human life against the murderous force of war.

Stöcker pointed to advances made in recognizing the benefits of birth control information since the war and again hoped leaders would acknowledge the truth of war, that it was unnecessary and a threat to human life and the progress of man. For those who had suggested the Great War was necessary in moving civilization forward to the goal of peace, she quoted Napoleon, who believed war itself did not lead to an eternal peace: "Someone said after a terrible battle, looking at the numerous dead: 'They will bring us through their deaths eternal peace.' Napoleon answered, 'I am afraid they will keep it for themselves.'" Stöcker added, "It is the Living's turn to make use of this knowledge so terrible confirmed by the last war."<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Cicely Hamilton, "The Cannon Fodder Argument," in Raymond Pierpont, ed., *Fifth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference* (London: William Heinemann, 1922), p. 185.

<sup>30</sup> Helene Stöcker, "War and Malthusianism," in Raymond Pierpont, ed., *Fifth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference* (London: William Heinemann, 1922), pp. 187-191.





So convinced were neo-Malthusians gathered at the Fifth International Conference that overpopulation contributed to war, that Harold Cox, president of the “National and International” session put forth the following resolution:

The Fifth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference calls attention now to the generally admitted fact that over-population due to high birth rates is the most potent cause of international rivalry and war. It also wishes to point out that mere numbers are not an effective protection to a nation in the event of war, as modern warfare is becoming more and more a question of science and engineering directed and carried out by highly trained individuals. The three conditions for securing universal peace and national security are (a) the limitation of the birth rate of each country to its area and resources, (b) increase of racial efficiency through abstention of reproduction of the unfit, and (c) development of international law and international co-operation in place of national rivalries.

It therefore calls upon the Governments of all nations to promote the extension of Birth Control knowledge, especially among their least efficient inhabitants, and urges the League of Nations to proclaim as a general principle that increase of numbers is not to be regarded as a justification for national expansion, but that each nation should limit its numbers to its own resources.<sup>31</sup>

The Fifth International Conference marked a notable intersection among the history of birth control, First World War, and peace efforts. It was there that leaders articulated, with a greater degree of evidence in their minds, the many ways in which population issues related to war in the modern era. Their case for wider access to contraception in both the developed and less developed world was fortified by world events, as tragic as they were. Though the League of Nations did not fully embrace birth control policies, the United Nations made them a key part of their efforts following the Second World War and into the twenty-first century.

---

<sup>31</sup> Raymond Pierpont, ed., *Fifth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference* (London: William Heinemann, 1922), p. 195.

## The End of Guy Brown Wiser's Air War:

### Notes on an American Airman's First World War P.O.W. Artwork<sup>1</sup>

Douglas N. Lantry

National Museum of the U.S. Air Force

Archival holdings at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force (NMUSAF), near Dayton, Ohio, include a small sketchbook of vivid, amusing watercolors describing a young American airman's brief captivity as a prisoner of war in Germany at the very end of the First World War. The paintings, by Lt. Guy Brown Wiser, are unusual and instructive. They stand out immediately because of their obvious artistic quality as a colorful tongue-in-cheek record of the American POW experience, and they are instructive because they offer unique insight into how a young American and his comrades interpreted what they did and what happened to them. This paper traces Wiser's path through the war by combining his artwork with his own verbal narrative explaining what he thought and saw, and offers arguments for what the work signifies and why it is important. The aviator's particular circumstances of combat, capture, captivity, and freedom in 1918–1919, and how the artist turned experience into pictures contemporaneously with a sense of humor and optimism, suggest a particularly American sensibility and attributes of personality that enhance understanding of the U.S. Air Service's WWI culture and heritage. Moreover, the paintings and the artist's story add to a broad appreciation of the American war experience overall.

#### Guy Brown Wiser's Story

Guy Brown Wiser was born in 1895 in Marion, Indiana, in the heart of the American Midwest. A talented artist, he graduated South Bend High School in 1912 and went off to study architecture at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. In college, "Bud" Wiser (the nickname says something about his sense of humor) put his visual ability to good use in several activities, including illustrating the yearbook as its artistic editor and drawing for the monthly humor journal *The Cornell Widow* as well as leading the staff of artists at the university's newspaper. He also joined the engineering society Tau Beta Pi and "Gargoyle," the university's architectural



Figure 1. Guy Brown Wiser as a Cornell student. (Cornell University).

<sup>1</sup> This is a work of the U.S. Government and is not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Foreign copyrights may apply. Unless otherwise attributed, all photos and illustrations are from the collections of the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.



society, as well as serving on various student boards, other organizations, and rowing on the crew team. Wisner graduated in 1917 (Figures 1 and 2).<sup>2</sup>

The U.S. having entered the war not long before his graduation, Wisner enlisted in Chicago with a desire to fly airplanes. He was sent to aeronautical ground school at The Ohio State University, Columbus, where he spent some free time drawing for Ohio State's *Sun-Dial* undergraduate humor magazine, then edited by James Thurber. As Wisner went off to war in November 1917, Thurber wrote that "...if he is half the aviator he is the artist, our worst fears and best hopes for him will be realized, which is circumlocution for saying that we are selfish enough to want him to 'stick around,' and ply ever an anon for our issues the pen and India ink on the Bristol board ... Our heart will be with a certain war plane every time it's in action bombing Kaiserism deader. So long, all luck, Guy, and our regards to Paree."<sup>3</sup>

And so, after much more training and travel, 2d Lt. Wisner, having been commissioned at Ft. Worth, Texas, and further trained in England, was posted to France. After yet more instruction there, he made it to the front as a pilot in the 20<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Day Bombardment Group, based at Amanty, and later Maulan, in early September 1918.<sup>4</sup>

He flew two-place, single-engine biplane De Havilland DH-4 bombers on combat missions during the late-war St. Mihiel and Argonne drives. His final mission took place during the Argonne effort, on September 26, 1918. Flying from Maulan to bomb Dun-Sur-Meuse in the company of aircraft from another squadron, the formation was attacked by seven German planes after dropping bombs, and was thereafter engaged, still over German territory, by a much larger enemy force. During the fight, five of the seven U.S. planes were lost, four airmen ended up as prisoners, and seven were killed in action.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 2. Guy Brown Wisner's cartoon style is evident in his illustrations for Cornell's 1917 student annual. (Cornell University).

<sup>2</sup> Cornell University, *The Cornell 1917 Class Book: A Record of the Class of 1917* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1917), 60-61, 208-368 passim; National Museum of the U.S. Air Force (hereafter NMUSAF), Research Division, archival resource 68-D21, Wisner, Guy Brown (Wisner's account); "Wisner '17 Missing," *Cornell Alumni News* 21, no. 6 (October 31, 1918): 62.

<sup>3</sup> *The Sun-Dial* 7, No. 2 (November 1917): 5.

<sup>4</sup> NMUSAF, Research Division, archival resource 68-D21, Wisner, Guy Brown (Wisner's account); Guy Brown Wisner, letter to Woodford Patterson, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, regarding service record, April 8, 1920 (Cornell University Archives).

<sup>5</sup> NMUSAF, Research Division, archival resource 68-D21, Wisner, Guy Brown (Wisner's account); Maurer Maurer, ed., *The U.S. Air Service in World War I*, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: USAF, 1978): 372; Sidney Howard, "The Raid on Dun," *The North American Review* 210, No. 769 (December 1919), 809-819. See also Caroline Ticknor, ed., *New England Aviators, 1914-1918: Their Portraits and Their Records*, Vol. 1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 113-114; Martin Matrix Evans, ed., *American Voices of World War I: Primary Source Documents, 1917-1920* (London: Routledge, 2001), 129-132; Mitchell



Wiser's observer, Lt. Glenn Richardson, found his twin Lewis machine guns jammed, and so emptied a revolver at the Germans, and finally threw cartridge cases and map boards at them. Meanwhile, a vulnerable main gas tank between Wiser and Richardson was punctured, along with a smaller reserve tank in the wing above the pilot, and fumes bathed the observer. Around 11:00 AM, main and reserve gas tanks wrecked, engine shot out, and radiator holed, the vital fluids leaked away and the DH-4's engine stopped at 13,000 feet over Conflans. Observer Richardson had been shot in the heel. Gliding and defenseless, Wiser tried for the front but was turned instead toward a German field by an enemy plane's warning bursts of machine gun fire across his nose; the German wanted to capture the men and the plane. Wiser could only obey.<sup>6</sup>

They landed and were unable to burn the DH-4 as they'd been taught to do—Richardson was much affected, "inebriated" Wiser wrote later, by gas fumes, and his revolver was empty in any case—though Wiser shouted "shoot the damned thing!"<sup>7</sup> (In later years, that exclamation would be a source of inside humor between the two men.) They were immediately surrounded and taken prisoner by *Jasta* (*Jagdstaffel*, or squadron) 12 at its airfield at Giraumont (Figures 3 and 4).<sup>8</sup> This is where Wiser's visual account begins.

### A Unique Sketchbook

About three weeks after being shot down, Wiser obtained art supplies and began his watercolor journal of captivity. He was a prisoner from September 26 through December 1, 1918, a total of only 67 days. But in that time, he managed to set down in color and line a unique record of his experience. Many years later, he gave a talk in which he explained the main incidents; this audio



Figure 3. Captured: Wiser (seated, center) Richardson (seated, left), and Jasta 12. Alfred Greven, who shot them down, is standing, center, without hat.



Figure 4. Damaged: Wiser and Richardson's DH-4 at Jasta 12's base at Giraumont.

---

Yockelson, *Forty-Seven Days: How Pershing's Warriors Came of Age to Defeat the German Army in World War I* (New York: Penguin, 2016); Mark Jones, "The Wild Blue Yesteryear of WWI Fliers," *Los Angeles Times*, (October 1, 1976):1, 4.

<sup>6</sup> NMUSAF, Research Division, archival resource 68-D21, Wiser, Guy Brown (Wiser's account).

<sup>7</sup> NMUSAF, Research Division, archival resource 68-D21, Wiser, Guy Brown (Wiser's account).

<sup>8</sup> NMUSAF, Research Division, archival resource 68-D21, Wiser, Guy Brown (Wiser's account; letter of Alfred Greven, April 22, 1963).



recording stored at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum adds detail and perspective to his watercolor diary.<sup>9</sup>

Humor is the hallmark of Wiser's work. For instance, he begins the book this way: "Note: We acknowledge our indebtedness to the Richtofen Circus, whose help has made this book possible," and "Preface: A modest account of the entertainment accorded us while guests of the German Government." Irony and sarcasm were never far from Wiser's brush.

The sketchbook itself, held in the NMUSAF's special collections, is compact and sturdy. It has 38 leaves and measures 9" by 5 1/2". Front and back covers are heavy paper-covered cardboard, and six stapled folios are bound at the top short end with fabric tape and a narrow glued-fabric outer covering. The bottom short edge has a small round metal clasp that once secured a leather closing strap, and rounded corners; the leaves likewise have rounded bottom corners. The book's manufacturer is unknown.

Wiser's work is pencil drawings with watercolor and ink, and comprises 41 single-sided plates (he used both sides of a few leaves). He decorated the outer cover with a "behind bars" self-portrait, the inner front cover with a fanciful personal coat of arms, and the back inner cover with a small cartoon about the book being "made in Germany" (Figures 5 and 6). He did the paintings, he notes in the book, between about October 20, 1918, and February 1919, when he finished the collection aboard the USS *Michigan* en route to the United States after the war.



Figure 3. Front cover of Wiser's notebook with self-portrait. Note that the mischief on his face contrasts with the halo on the "coat of arms" inside the cover.



Figure 4. GBW "coat of arms" and "made in Germany" label in the sketchbook. The KG stands for Kriegsgefangene or prisoner of war; the stripes reinforce the point. Wiser makes subtle sport of European traditions and pretensions with this coat of arms.

<sup>9</sup> National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, Archival Resource 1981-D11, Sketchbook, Guy Brown Wiser; Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Sound Archives (hereafter NASM), "After Dinner Conversation with Lieutenant Guy Brown Wiser (20<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron)," part 1, file xxxx-0139 (*sic*), May 20, 1966.



Figure 5. Making light of German versus American thinking while being taken to their first POW holding place.



Figure 6. Wisner's depiction of getting shot down on September 26, 1918.

Wiser excerpts the significant moments of his POW days with humorous sincerity. Air combat is a serious attempt by pilots and aircrew to kill one another and on Wisner's last mission several died. However, he painted the event in a wry cartoon spirit (Figure 7)—both he and “Rich” stare at individual bullets and one appears to be chasing Richardson. This casual humor in the face of danger is not an uncommon way of dealing with such events (compare with Bruce Bairnsfather's famous “Old Bill” WWI cartoons). What is uncommon is that this comic sensibility is set out in a cartoon POW diary, the only such record of the American WWI aerial and prisoner experience in the hundreds of collections in the NMUSAF's holdings.

Wiser made sure to contrast orderly German habits with the easy-going, casual attitude of American troops. On the car ride to their first POW quarters, a tiny house at Joeuf (Figure 8), the roads were rough, and the tires were fragile, and the car only had four seats—but there were five riders: Wisner, Richardson, the commandant, a driver, and a guard. The Germans just couldn't put five people in a four-place car. Wisner said “This was not to be thought of, with German efficiency, without a great deal of thought. I didn't know if they were going to shoot one of us to make the car balance.” Wisner ended up sitting atop the front seat facing rearward and claimed he was airborne for much of the trip. Richardson, with his wounded heel, got the back seat with the commander.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> NASM, “After Dinner Conversation with Lieutenant Guy Brown Wisner (20<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron),” part 1, file xxx-0139 (*sic*), May 20, 1966, 16:20.



Figure 9. Beer and cards with friendly German guards at Joeuf.



Figure 10. "Torture" involved getting a haircut from a truly unskilled barber.

This is not to imply that Germans were unfriendly or punctilious, though some were. When the airmen encountered some elderly men assigned as prison guards, Wiser and Richardson found them to be quite kind. One of them gave Richardson his cane because of his wounded foot, and the good-natured guards brought beer and taught them how to play German card games with an unfamiliar 32-card deck decorated with what Wiser thought were roses and cabbages instead of the usual clubs, hearts, spades, and diamonds (Figure 9). The closest Wiser and friends came to torture was getting a brutal haircut from someone that Wiser supposed had been trained by shearing sheep (Figure 10).

One German officer they came across, who escorted them via train to another camp at Karlsruhe, apparently was mean, or at least mean-looking. He was a classic type with dueling scars and struck fear into German soldiers they met along the way. He "made Humphrey Bogart look like Little Lord Fauntleroy," according to Wiser, so of course the artist made light of this character (Figure 11): At one stop, a night-time air raid "put the wind up" this officer, who took to his heels and sprinted in panic for the bomb shelter. "Our real hero captain, the tough boy," said Wiser, "He blasted off without a countdown. He just took off down the station platform and into an air raid shelter. He left the guards to take care of us."<sup>11</sup> Note in the painting of this brave flight that the crossed searchlights echo the famous insignia of the 9<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron, now 9<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, which specialized in night bombing, and this emblem is still used today (Figure 12). This may or may not have been intentional, but one hopes it was.

<sup>11</sup> NASM, "After Dinner Conversation with Lieutenant Guy Brown Wiser (20<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron)," part 1, file xxxx-0139 (*sic*), May 20, 1966, 22:25.



Figure 11. “Tough boy” runs for shelter at the Strasbourg station during an air raid.



Figure 7. Today's 9th Bomb Squadron uses an emblem introduced in WWI. Note the echo of this in Wisner's art. (U.S. Air Force)

The prisoners in transit locked this same officer in the restroom on the train by blocking the door with Richardson's German-gift cane. There was some commotion, but no punishment. Their captor, finally released, counted prisoners, sighed, and sat down (Figure 13).

Camp conditions where Wisner was held—Joeuf, Karlsruhe (the infested “Hotel d’Engleterre” and a larger main camp), Landshut, Villingen, Constanz—were unpleasant but not terrifying or deadly for Wisner and his comrades. Wisner managed to visually joke about many aspects of how camps were run. For instance, upon arriving at the main Karlsruhe camp, inspectors regarded an English flier's artificial leg as a notable challenge, certain that something was hidden inside it. They searched everyone vigorously, but took special interest in and a great deal of time with the leg (Figure 14). Near the end of his captivity, the terror of disease had crept into Landshut prison as one Italian orderly had died of flu. Wisner and the other flyers there were vaccinated many, many times for malaria, typhus, etc., and Wisner called it “branding” (Figure 15). While annoying, this was in fact health care. Food was a constant concern and it was often bad and even inedible by reasonable standards (Figure 16). However, Wisner noted their rations were not so different from German soldiers' rations. The very serious blockade of Germany was having its effect. Wisner described bread and thin soup as poor, short rations, but the Red Cross fortunately supplemented the fliers' diets. “Every ten days we had a shipment of Red Cross rations, and they were marvelous,” he recalled (Figure 17). They had rice, beans, tinned meat, cigarettes, and chocolate,





Figure 13. Locking their escort in the restroom on a train to Karlsruhe.



Figure 14. Inspectors at one camp made a special, long search of a British prisoner's artificial leg, sure that there was something nefarious to be found.



Figure 15. "Branding," or being vaccinated over and over again, at Landshut.



Figure 16. Food was not good, but fliers' rations were as good as Germans'. Applesauce was the culprit in this illustration.

and "the prize of all was Gail Borden's Eagle brand milk." They all swore when they got out they would buy it by the case, spread it on bread, and eat it because it was sweet and tasty.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 17. Red Cross packages included the much-loved Borden's condensed milk, seen here atop the pile.



Figure 18. Wiser was no fan of French popular music.



Figure 19. Itinerant photographers provided portraits to send home; Wiser wasted no time making fun of this.

The Americans and other aviators were able to cobble together entertainment and even to have their pictures taken and sent home to loved ones (Figures 18, 19, and 20). These aspects of camp life may have relieved boredom and Wiser certainly made use of them for joshing. He described and painted his least favorite act, a French singer: “I think the worst was the French, I’d still put the French popular song of 1918 against anything in the world for tunelessness...it goes on by the hour...give a Frenchman a guitar, and he hits those five notes endlessly.”<sup>13</sup>

Despite diversions to fill the time, the airmen still were in prison, and



Figure 20. The reality of portraits for hire: American fliers at Karlsruhe, Wiser on the far left and Richardson on the far right, still with cane.

<sup>12</sup> NASM, “After Dinner Conversation with Lieutenant Guy Brown Wiser (20<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron),” part 1, file xxxx-0139 (*sic*), May 20, 1966, 29:00.

<sup>13</sup> NASM, “After Dinner Conversation with Lieutenant Guy Brown Wiser (20<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron),” part 1, file xxxx-0139 (*sic*), May 20, 1966, 32:35.



Figure 21. *Escape was verboten. Though it was probably a bit funny, the man went to solitary confinement.*



Figure 22. *When a friend thought lost showed up, Wiser was ecstatic. Though a cartoon, this painting depicts real affection.*

escapes were contemplated. One attempt was made during Wiser's captivity and it failed. Three men found a washed-out hole under the three-layered barbed wire fence, and one of them, a rather big man, tried to get through it. He got stuck, as the hole wasn't as big as it looked. The other two saw this happening and melted away; the would-be escapee spent some time in solitary confinement (Figure 21). And of course, they were still at war and people were still dying in the thousands not very far away. One of Wiser's dear friends, who they had thought dead and of course hadn't heard from, showed up several days after their September 26 battle as if risen from the grave. Lieutenant Ed Leonard personified a miracle: He'd been shot through the neck and the bullet entered and exited in such a way as to narrowly miss killing him; the round was so hot it cauterized the wound and after ten days' recovery Leonard joined his mates in prison. Wiser's depiction of Leonard's return is perhaps the most touching plate in the sketchbook, the most illustrative of friendship and affection among the American fliers (Figure 22).

Landshut, one of the last places the fliers were imprisoned (and where they got vaccinated so many times), was most interesting. The prisoners' quarters were a huge stable adjacent to one of the oldest castles in Germany, Burg Trausnitz, atop a very tall hill. Wiser painted the arduous trek up the hill and decades later returned and had his picture taken next to the stable. By the time they moved to Landshut, Wiser recalled, "We'd collected quite a lot of cooking utensils and food and



Figure 23, *The climb to Burg Trausnitz from Landshut's railway station, with burdens.*



Figure 24, *Wiser at the giant Landshut stable in 1963. It is atop the hill adjacent to the castle.*

junk of all kinds, all in a box; it was quite a job carrying it from the railroad station up all those steps to that castle.” (figures 23 and 24)<sup>14</sup>

The end of the war was a cause for joy for the American fliers and for continued humor in Wiser’s sketchbook. When the news came through at Landshut, where they could and did order food, writing checks on a Paris bank (!) for whatever they wanted, there was a drunken celebration (Figure 25). Wiser remembered “We were there when the armistice was signed; the boys went and sent out for a lot of Rhine wine. I couldn’t stand the stuff, it was too bitter, or too something for me, fortunately, because all of the rest were terribly plastered.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> NASM, “After Dinner Conversation with Lieutenant Guy Brown Wiser (20<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron),” part 1, file xxxx-0139 (*sic*), May 20, 1966, 39:00.

<sup>15</sup> NASM, “After Dinner Conversation with Lieutenant Guy Brown Wiser (20<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron),” part 1, file xxxx-0139 (*sic*), May 20, 1966, 43:45.



Figure 27. At Villingen, a bar of soap would net nearly any souvenir from defeated Germans. (National Museum of the U.S. Air Force)



Figure 28. Wiser's visual journal triumph: the shower of luxuries at Bern, and the return of the Stars and Stripes. Note the well-wishers and historical figures in the background. (National Museum of the U.S. Air Force)

Shortly thereafter, they walked out through Landshut in confident style (Figure 26), only to be stymied by administrative delay and having to hang around a more southerly camp at Villingen awaiting transport to Switzerland. While in this curious middle zone of not-freedom, Wiser and his mates encountered a strange phenomenon: Germans would trade anything for soap. “I got a first-class Iron Cross for half a stick of shaving soap,” said Wiser, “And one fella took his whole jacket apart. Took all his decorations and buttons and everything, and was trading every part of it, pockets, epaulettes, everything, he was just tearing them off and trading them in for any kind of soap. Cuckoo clocks, briar pipes, meerschaums, Dachshunds, anything you wanted, for soap” (Figure 27).<sup>16</sup> Finally the erstwhile prisoners made it to Bern, Switzerland, and enjoyed a scene that inspired the best painting in Wiser’s remarkable sketchbook (Figure 28). At Bern, they met an American diplomatic delegation and were absolutely deluged with luxuries: “They just descended on the train; we had twenty-six different brands of cigarettes given us, just showered with everything—oranges, letter paper, stationery, everything they could think of including old G.I. overcoats. We all got them, but no one got one that fit him. We spent the rest of the time trading overcoats trying to get one to fit. But that was the first time we’d seen the stars and stripes....”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> NASM, “After Dinner Conversation with Lieutenant Guy Brown Wiser (20<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron),” file xxxx-0139 (*sic*), May 20, 1966, 45:50.

<sup>17</sup> NASM, “After Dinner Conversation with Lieutenant Guy Brown Wiser (20<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron),” part 1, file xxxx-0139 (*sic*), May 20, 1966, 47:30.



Wiser's war story ends shortly thereafter. He spent some time being evaluated with others at a French hospital, and visited his friend, and aerial observer whose place Richardson had taken on the fateful day, and who had lost a leg in later combat. Wiser was assigned to help gather the history of the war for the Air Service for a short while, then tried unsuccessfully (too much Army bureaucracy) to remain in France to attend more college, and finally went home aboard the USS *Michigan*. He was discharged at Garden City, New Jersey, on March 17, 1919, and returned to South Bend to begin a career as an architect and illustrator. (Fig. 29) "I just consider that I'm one of the luckiest guys alive," he said to a WWI history audience decade later, "And I've been through some fairly lively experiences, and I just thank the good lord for keeping a hand on my shoulder when I needed it."<sup>18</sup> Wiser married and went on to a notable career teaching and studying art, illustrating science textbooks and children's books, and becoming a modernist painter. He eventually contacted Alfred Greven, who shot him down, and they reunited as friends in the 1960s. For many years, he celebrated September 26<sup>th</sup> with Glenn Richardson and friends as "Our Shootin' Down Day." Guy Brown Wiser passed away in 1983 in California.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 29. Returning home in 1919, Wiser continued drawing and painting as a successful illustrator and artist.

<sup>18</sup> NASM, "After Dinner Conversation with Lieutenant Guy Brown Wiser (20<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron)," part 2, file xxxx-0139 (*sic*), May 20, 1966, 2:25.

<sup>19</sup> NMUSAF, Research Division, archival resource 68-D21, Wiser, Guy Brown (Wiser's account and various other documents); "Alumni Notes," *Cornell Alumni News* XXIX, No. 17 (January 27, 1927): 213; Edan Hughes, "Artists in California, 1786-1940," *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 1924, reprinted in "Biography: Guy Brown Wiser," [www.askart.com](http://www.askart.com), accessed January 9, 2018; Farhat Art Museum, "Guy Wiser (1895-1983)," <https://farhatculturalcenter.wordpress.com>, accessed January 9,



## Links, Connections, and Meaning

What do Wisner's whimsical paintings and his explanations of them mean for the heritage of the U.S. Air Force in the history of the First World War? Foremost, they represent a unique record of a rare experience. They preserve events that otherwise would probably have been forgotten had not a keen and comic eye transferred them to paper. Compared to later wars, not many American aviators—only 153—were taken prisoner, and those who were, like Wisner, were not held long before the war ended. Overall, 123 U.S. Air Service fliers and one balloonist were forced down and captured, along with 19 Americans flying with the British, 10 with the French, and one with the Italians. The Air Service was still small, fielding at the end of the war 45 squadrons at the front, with 38 seeing combat, and a total of 767 pilots, 481 observers, and 23 aerial gunners.<sup>20</sup> For those captured, their experience was relatively humane compared to later wars, as Wisner's chronicle shows.<sup>21</sup> Kindness and respect was evident, along with a degree of freedom unknown in later conflict. Germany's dire circumstances near the end of hostilities may have played a part in this, as other prisons at other times and places during the war were far less hospitable.<sup>22</sup>

So, while Wisner's small slice of experience was but a tiny part of a gigantic and horrible war, its evidence preserved in art is precious to the U.S. Air Force. It demonstrates qualities the USAF values, including courage, resourcefulness, and calm in the face of danger, that are unaltered by time. This heritage is both educational and inspirational. Of his humor in the midst of war, and the loss of several men on his last mission, Wisner wrote later that "Only because the whole action seems unreal, because we had been conditioned to accept death lightly, and because we were still alive, are we able to joke about such a tragedy."<sup>23</sup> One quality in particular, that of "wingmanship," is evident in Wisner's experience: the USAF wants its airmen to look after and care for one another the way Wisner shows in his greeting of the friend they thought was killed. Being able to point to a real-life example through the medium of firsthand artistic witness from the earliest days of air power is invaluable to USAF heritage.

One can argue that Wisner's art, while demonstrating his own personality and perspective, also suggests a particularly American sensibility. Though this is hard to test or prove, Americans seen through Wisner's lens seem easy-going, open, optimistic, perhaps a little loud and mischievous—or in other words, typically American, in the way we might feel others see Americans and especially American soldiers in Europe. This may have been especially true as confident, well fed, well-equipped, motivated, and surely somewhat innocent and naïve U.S. troops arrived in 1917 and 1918. In this way, art's ability to transmit feeling, atmosphere, and nuance, where bare facts may not, enhances its value as historical interpretation.

---

2018; "Alumni Notes," *The Cornell Architect* 4 (June 1919): 52; Guy Brown Wisner, "Our 59<sup>th</sup> Shootin' Down Day, 1918-1977," Invitation, September 25, 1977, Van Nuys, CA (Cornell University Archives).

<sup>20</sup> NMUSAF, "Meuse-Argonne Offensive," fact sheet, [www.nationalmuseum.af.mil](http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil).

<sup>21</sup> NMUSAF, "WWI Prisoners of War," fact sheet, [www.nationalmuseum.af.mil](http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil).

<sup>22</sup> For further information on other POW experiences, see United States Air Force Academy, *The American P.O.W. Experience*, Special Bibliography Series No. 96, November 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Guy Brown Wisner, typescript photocopy attached to sketchbook, n.d. (Cornell University Archives).



And as historical record, Wisser's art vividly demonstrates both change and continuity, the foundations of meaning and significance. The machines and clothing, the structures of authority and manner in his work, are clearly of another century, but the concerns of daily life remain unchanged. That soldiers relish Red Cross and other "care" packages, play jokes, obey and persevere is as true in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as it was then. And an American serviceman making fun of his daily life is definitely nothing new. Guy Brown Wisser simply did it very well in a very rare circumstance and we are the beneficiaries of his generous and perceptive talent. Through his little sketchbook of a century past, he lets us peek into a vanished era and see its echoes in the present.





## Propaganda as Public Relations Antecedent: The Complex Legacy of the Creel Committee

Christopher J. McCollough

Columbus State University

Wars are not won on battlefields alone. Logistics, strategy, resources, force strength, and technology have all played critical roles in determining outcomes in major conflicts throughout history. Yet, there are still two related factors that have much to say about the outcome of major conflicts: propaganda efforts to sell the war effort to the nation states that are a part of the conflict and its impact on public opinion around the participation of those nation states among its citizenry. History offers us some prominent examples that reinforce this point, and they consistently revolve around the ability of parties involved in the conflict to effectively leverage contemporary communication outlets to effective ends in order to shape and manage public opinion.

Walter Lippmann's iconic *Public Opinion* (1922) provides his perspective as a newsman and as a member of Woodrow Wilson's collection of journalists, advertisers, early public relations practitioners, and education philosophers who worked from the United States' involvement in World War I in April of 1917 through the effort to promote the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. He warns of the potential for manipulation of information to cultivate and maintain support for military and political action, and the need for objectivity in journalism and a refined study of public opinion to counter its effects.

The father of modern public relations, Edward Bernays, offered two texts on the subject of propaganda and its effectiveness in shaping public opinion on behalf of organizations. In *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923), Bernays establishes his understanding of public relations counsel, public opinion, its formation, how one shapes it, and its necessity for achieving public action. In *Propaganda* (1928), Bernays offers some perspective on the practice, its role in public relations, and its value to many facets of society. Many found Bernays to offer a manipulative perspective on the discipline, and a reading of both texts leaves this author sympathetic to their perspective. Bernays opens *Propaganda* with the following Machiavellian perspective in reference to democracy in propaganda:

The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. ...We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society. ...In almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons...who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind. Bernays, 1928, p. 1.



While much of both texts give a reader a window into the modern intellectual evolution of the practice of public relations, it is segments like this that left Bernays with a dubious reputation among prominent members of society, and further damaged the initial reputation around the professional practice of public relations. While it is clear that the work of the Creel Committee and its membership helped solidify and advance the practice of public relations past its early publicist origins into matters of shaping public opinion and behavior to establishing and managing relationships, what is not clear is how early we see the elements of modern best practices in public relations practice in play. The purpose of this study is to examine the execution of the Four Minute Men Speech campaign, using the ROPES PR model (Kelly, 1998) to determine the overall adherence of the campaign to modern best practices. In the examination of the Four Minute Men, the author will draw parallels to specific strategies and tactics, content choices, and selection of speakers to illustrate how much of the work of the CPI set early precedents for modern public relations practice. Further, the paper will demonstrate how the actions of the Creel Committee established a baseline for scholarship that developed theories of practice that would achieve effective, ethical approaches to public relations practice.

## Context

### American War, Public Opinion, and Communication

In the case of American conflicts throughout its first 242 years, we see a country that wins or loses its battles through effective management of the public mindset, often through the communication modes of the day. During the American Revolution, the colonists made the most of the early postal service and the printing press to shape and manage public opinion during a challenging conflict with a British force superior in size and early strategy, providing enough public support to enable colonists to outlast Britain's patience and budget to earn independence. The American Civil War illustrated the power of the telegraph and modern photography to permit war correspondents to bring the horrors of the battlefield into the American home (Lewinski, 1980). The Spanish-American War was the product of Yellow Journalism's sensational efforts to cultivate support among the American citizenry to support a conflict between the nations, exemplified by William Randolph Hearst's infamous remarks about providing war if his staff provided the pictures (Wilkerson, 1967). Newsreels first utilized during the Great War (Creel, 1920), were perfected during World War II as a means of bringing news around the world and about conflict home. Radio, still in its adolescence, took on an essential role for political leaders and broadcast correspondents like Edward R. Murrow in bringing news from the front home, and in shaping the public's perspective on the actions of Axis powers, as well as in sharing the struggles and triumphs of Allied forces (Cozma, 2010). Propaganda in film also found its stride during the second world, as Leni Reifenstahl and Frank Capra both elevated the art form to shape public opinion and mobilize support for their respective countries, Germany and the United States (Kelman, 1973; Xifra & Girona, 2012). The Vietnam War brought network news to the forefront as correspondents brought the quagmire into American homes and elevated the reputation of CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite to be able to decry the efforts of the Johnson and Nixon administrations, ultimately undermining the war efforts (Gitlin, 1980).

In modern conflicts, the Department of Defense has effectively managed modern communication to create the public images that generate support for military efforts, with a helping hand from lessons learned from cable television. Cable News Network's (CNN's) Bernard Shaw, John



Holliman, and Peter Arnett made the decision to stay in Baghdad the night of January 16, 1991 and captured U.S. airstrike coverage on the scene, in spite of every other news organization's decision to leave under the threat of the attack issued from the U.S. embassy. The coverage earned critical acclaim for then upstart CNN, as well as for 24-hour cable news, while also sanitizing modern warfare for the American public, often drawing comparisons to watching video games.

Always apt to learn from innovation in communication, on the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Pentagon announced it would embed journalists with military units to provide access to the invasion. What was not a part of the dialog was the strategic placement of journalists away from the most severe aspects of the action in order to control the narrative of the conflict. Journalists themselves came away with the impression that they did well, but acknowledged they had a much narrower view of the conflict than if they had a wider access to the invasion (Fahmy & Johnson, 2005).

The impact of mass communication to shape public opinion and the outcome of warfare in American history is clear. It is unsurprising then that Woodrow Wilson would seek to leverage mass communication strategically to shape public opinion and align public thinking with the shifting perspective of the United States' involvement in World War I. This becomes essential when considering where public opinion was on the War, and how Wilson had positioned himself during his first term in office and successfully earned re-election.

#### “He Kept Us Out of War”

In the summer of 1914, the United States had no interest in the conflict brewing across Europe. Aside from the geographic barrier of the Atlantic, the United States held none of the binding treaties that drove 11 nations into the fight by September of 1914, and would have maintained that distance if the country had been left to do so (Axelrod, 2009). Over the first two years of war, submarine attacks on American shipping and civilian vessels (most notably the deaths of 128 Americans on the British *Lusitania*), pleas from allied nations, and rumors of German spies and plots to attack the United States created a growing pressure to join the fight and support the allied effort. This was balanced against a pacifist movement from Jane Addams and the American Union Against Militarism (Badertscher, 2014), the National Women's Party, along with a consistent public outcry from the then popular Socialist Party of America's Eugene V. Debs, as well as progressive Republicans in Congress, among them Wisconsin Senator Robert La Follete. This was reinforced by general anti-war sentiments from German-Americans, Jewish-Americans, Irish-Americans, Wilson's own base of southern whites, who feared unrest among immigrants in border states like Missouri, and prominent American industrialist Henry Ford. Wilson even saw pressure and criticism from his own party as his Secretary of State and fellow progressive Democrat William Jennings Bryant stood in opposition to war and resigned in protest over Wilson's use of a warning against the German government if they persisted in submarine warfare against American civilian vessels following the attack on the *HMS Lusitania* (May, 1966). These competing pressures were set against the backdrop of Wilson's campaign for re-election.

In 1916, Wilson faced a challenge from popular Supreme Court Justice Charles Evans Hughes, who ran on the Republican ticket with heavy support from former President Theodore Roosevelt (Pietrusza, 2018). The Democrats built their campaign around the slogan, "He Kept Us Out of War," saying a Republican victory would mean war with both Mexico and Germany. Wilson's



position was probably critical in winning the Western states (Cooper, 2009). Charles Evans Hughes insisted on downplaying the war issue, while advocating a program of greater mobilization and preparedness. Wilson had successfully pressured the Germans to suspend unrestricted submarine warfare, making it difficult for Hughes to attack Wilson's peace platform. Hughes, instead, criticized Wilson's military interventions in Mexico, where the U.S. was supporting various factions in the Mexican civil war, and his progressive positions on labor. His criticisms gained little traction, however, especially among factory workers who supported such laws. Hughes was helped by the vigorous support of popular former President Theodore Roosevelt, and by the fact that the Republicans were still the nation's majority party at the time.

Wilson's campaign advanced the idea that entrance in the war created the potential for a conflict on two fronts with Mexico's relationship with Germany still in question, as well as the native presence of immigrants from both sides of the conflict living throughout the continental United States. These concerns in no small part led much of the electorate in the western United States to support Wilson, bringing the previously Republican stronghold of California into question. Hughes made a key mistake in California. Just before the election, Hughes made a campaign swing through the state, but he never met with the powerful Republican Governor Hiram Johnson to seek his support. Johnson, in turn, never gave Hughes his full support. Wilson carried California by 3,420 votes (0.3%) and with it the presidency. With his re-election campaign won, Wilson would now have to put his focus back on America's position on World War I.

#### A White Hot Mass of Support

A confluence of factors finally led Wilson to determine it was necessary to enter the war in support of the allies. Over the course of the first two years of war, America's neutrality was grounded in staying off the battlefields, but maintaining open business practices with nations willing to pay for goods and resources. Due to the heavy blockades, which limited commerce with the central powers, this led to a heavy bias in commerce with Great Britain and France.

In 1917, Germany decided to resume unrestricted submarine warfare against any vessel approaching British waters in an attempt to starve Britain into surrender. Their desperation to gain a strategic advantage came with the knowledge that it would almost certainly bring the United States into the war. Germany also worked through diplomatic backchannels to bring Mexico and Japan into the fight. Germany offered to help Mexico regain territories lost in the Mexican-American War in an encoded telegram known as the Zimmermann Telegram, which was intercepted by British Intelligence. British intelligence, showing strategic prudence, held this intelligence for the right time to get the desired response from Wilson. Publication of the telegram outraged Americans just as German U-boats started sinking American merchant ships in the North Atlantic. Wilson then asked Congress for "a war to end all wars" that would "make the world safe for democracy," and Congress voted to declare war on Germany on April 6, 1917 (Link, 1972).

While it was clear Wilson's decision to take the United States into war came with a split public perspective on the decision, there were indicators among members of the public that there was sound support behind the decision. In 1914, there was a healthy base of support for the war among Americans who sympathized with France, Great Britain, and Belgium. Progressive politics had also brought much of its support base to the idea of being "citizens of the world." Civic organizations had cropped up all over the United States with the expressed mission to support the war effort.



The Committee for Relief in Belgium negotiated relief efforts for civilians on both sides of the fighting in Belgium. The committee also sowed the seeds for national concern by advancing the principle of America generosity. African-Americans open outrage with the central powers' actions in the Congo prompted them to push to volunteer in opposition to the Germans and Austrian-Hungarian governments. The Jewish community in the United States worked actively with other Jewish relief groups around the world to support those in the faith in peril in the region (Axelrod, 2009). In short, there were pockets of support to be leveraged in the same way Wilson leveraged pacifists to win election in November of 1916 as he came to address foreign policy in April of 1917.

Former political opponents became a resource as focus turned from neutrality to mobilization. Teddy Roosevelt's preparedness movement opened the door for Wilson to more easily bring in early volunteers prior to pushes for the draft. When it was clear war was imminent, and Wilson needed to have a moral argument for shifting his position, he leveraged the Progressive drive for preparedness and these pockets of support to achieve the change in opinion he sought. His argument: Democracy needed to be the model for benevolent world citizenship to avoid future wars, and America needed to drive this change through action to preserve freedom for the world (Axelrod, 2009).

Popular forms of modern mass communication had already begun influencing public opinion in advance of the turn to the CPI to drive the action, demonstrating the power of mass communication in contributing to shaping public opinion. Filmmakers had begun telling the story of the German assault on Belgium. Editorials had called for American support. Artists and political cartoonists had driven the dialog around American support for the war since 1914. Finally, sheet music and early recordings from Tin Pan Alley had been a forum for dialog from both camps on matters of American involvement and neutrality, respectively (Axelrod, 2009; Creel, 1920).

Knowing that he had made the request and gathered solid support for entry into war, Wilson was keenly aware that he would have to change public perceptions of the war and the United States' participation in it. Given the split in American public opinion, Wilson understood that he needed to get a unified public position that would support his push into the war effort. To achieve this, he reached out to his supporter, political operative, and former journalist George Creel. Wilson issued Executive Order 2594 mobilizing the Committee of Public Information (also known as the Creel Committee) on April 13, 1917. Creel was a true believer in Wilson's doctrine, and had been so since meeting him as a Governor in New Jersey. In his conversations with Wilson, Creel stated that they needed to achieve a monolithic, "white hot mass of support" (Axelrod, 2009; Creel, 1920).

The committee consisted of George Creel (chairman) and as *ex officio* members the Secretaries of State (Robert Lansing), War (Newton D. Baker), and the Navy (Josephus Daniels). The CPI was the first state bureau covering propaganda in the history of the United States. Creel urged Wilson to create a government agency to coordinate "not propaganda as the Germans defined it, but propaganda in the true sense of the word, meaning the 'propagation of faith.'" He was a journalist with years of experience on the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* before accepting Wilson's appointment to the CPI. He had a contentious relationship with Secretary Lansing (Axelrod, 2009; Creel, 1920).



Wilson established the first modern propaganda office (Creel, 1920). Creel set out to systematically reach every person in the United States multiple times with patriotic information about how the individual could contribute to the war effort. The Committee also worked with the post office to censor seditious counter-propaganda. Creel set up divisions in his new agency to produce and distribute innumerable copies of pamphlets, newspaper releases, magazine advertisements, films, school campaigns, and the speeches of the Four Minute Men. CPI created colorful posters that appeared in every store window, catching the attention of the passersby for a few seconds (Adams, 1999). Historians were assigned to write pamphlets and in-depth histories of the causes of the European war (Blakey, 1970; Committee on Public Information, 1920).

In spite of the tensions, a rapid growth in the CPI illustrated the priority on influencing American public opinion, and Creel's ability to recruit and attract talent to the effort. From the original handful of cabinet members and Creel, the CPI grew to a staffing population of over 100,000 members. The large membership included a diverse population of artists, journalists, advertising executives, political scientists, the famous educational philosopher John Dewey, and some of the early forefathers of modern public relations, including Carl Byoir and Edward Bernays (Axelrod, 1920; Creel, 1920). In putting the committee together, Creel married the most innovative journalists, public relations practitioners, advertising professionals, and other key social scientists to achieve the aim of the organization. In the process, they set a foundation for modern practices in public communication and public relations.

The CPI used material based on fact, but spun it to present an upbeat picture of the American war effort. Creel claimed that the CPI routinely denied false or undocumented atrocity reports, fighting the crude propaganda efforts of "patriotic organizations" like the National Security League and the American Defense Society that preferred "general thundering" and wanted the CPI to "preach a gospel of hate" (Committee on Public Information, 1920).

The CPI staged events designed for many different ethnic groups, in their languages. For instance, Irish-American tenor John McCormack sang at Mount Vernon before an audience representing Irish-American organizations (Fleming, 2003). The Committee also targeted the American worker and, endorsed by Samuel Gompers, filled factories and offices with posters designed to promote the critical role of American labor in the success of the war effort (Axelrod, 2009; Fleming, 2003).

The CPI's activities were so thorough that historians later stated, using the example of a typical midwestern American farm family, that every item of war news they saw—in the country weekly, in magazines, or in the city daily picked up occasionally in the general store—was not merely officially approved information but precisely the same kind that millions of their fellow citizens were getting at the same moment. Every war story had been censored somewhere along the line—at the source, in transit, or in the newspaper offices in accordance with 'voluntary' rules established by the CPI.

The CPI could not escape charges of censorship and presenting a false presentation of the war effort. The most common example was the critique of the organization's perceived role in censorship. While it is well established that they influenced news coverage through promoting self-censorship with news organizations as a function of patriotism, and by issuing press releases that presented Wilson's perspective on the war (Axelrod, 2009), Creel took offense that his agency was responsible for censorship. Creel said of the critique in his memoir:



In no degree was the Committee an agency of censorship, a machinery of concealment or repression. Its emphasis throughout was on the open and the positive. At no point did it seek or exercise authorities under those war laws that limited the freedom of speech and press. In all things, from first to last, without halt or change, it was a plain publicity proposition, a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world's greatest adventures in advertising.... *We did not call it propaganda, for that word, in German hands, had come to be associated with deceit and corruption. Our effort was educational and informative throughout, for we had such confidence in our case as to feel that no other argument was needed than the simple, straightforward presentation of the facts.* Creel, 1920; emphasis added.

It was clear the public criticism was taking its toll on the efforts of the CPI. By 1917, the term propaganda had already become toxic enough that Creel himself worked actively to distance CPI work from the characterization. With a background on the development of the broader set of tools and practitioners employed to re-shape public opinion around the Great War, the attention now shifts to the strategy that is the focus of this study, the Four Minute Men Campaign.

### Speaking Tours For the People, Of the People

The Four Minute Men were a group of volunteers authorized by United States President Woodrow Wilson, to give four-minute speeches on topics given to them by The Committee on Public Information (CPI). In 1917-1918, around 7,555,190 speeches were given in 5,200 communities (Creel, 1920). The effort began when William McCormick Blair approached Creel with an idea about how to make one more point of contact with American citizens to generate support for the war effort. Blair recognized that there was an opening during the four minutes between reels changing in movie theaters across the country, where films and news reels in support of the war were already playing. In time, the four-minute speeches allowed for presentation at town meetings, restaurants, and other places that had an audience. This is an instance of "viral marketing" before its time (Mastrangelo, 2009).

For his idea, Blair was appointed as director of the Four Minute Men by the CPI. Blair appointed state chairmen of the Four Minute Men, who then would appoint a city or community chairman. Each of these appointments needed to be approved in Washington. The local chairman would then appoint a number of speakers to cover the theaters in the city or community for which he was responsible (Creel, 1920).

With many millions of German-Americans in the United States, as well as Irish-Americans and Scandinavian-Americans and poor rural Southerners, with strong isolationist feelings, there was a strong need for a propaganda campaign to stir support for the war. This effort had many unique challenges to meet to address the existing political climate. Wilson needed to speak directly to the fragmented and spread-out audience in the United States. He had to address the country's self-perception to generate support for the war. The Four Minute Men provided an answer to these challenges (Mastrangelo, 2009).

In addition, the Four Minute Men urged citizens to purchase Liberty Bonds and Thrift Stamps. The CPI trained thousands of volunteer speakers to make patriotic appeals during the four-minute breaks needed to change reels. They also spoke at churches, lodges, fraternal organizations, labor unions, and even logging camps. Speeches were mostly in English, but ethnic groups were reached in their own languages. Creel boasted that in 18 months his 75,000 volunteers delivered over 7.5



million four-minute orations to over 300 million listeners, in a nation of 103 million people (Axelrod, 2009; Creel, 1920). The work of the Four Minute Men continued beyond the Armistice, as the speeches turned towards generating support for the Treaty of Versailles at the community level in an effort to gain support for Congressional endorsement (Axelrod, 2009).

The Four Minute Men idea became a useful tool in the propaganda campaign because it addressed a specific rhetorical situation. One of the challenges of the effort was the fragmented audience of the United States. Many different heritages were represented in the country, and the president needed their support for the war. To address each group's specific needs, the Director of the Four Minute Men, William McCormick Blair, delegated the duty of speaking to local men. Well-known and respected community figures often volunteered for the Four Minute Men program. This gave the speeches a local voice. Further, the Four Minute Men brought in movie celebrities of the day like Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks. Even Woodrow Wilson engaged in the campaign.

The Four Minute Men were also given general topics and talking points to follow and rotated among theaters to help the speeches seem fresh, instead of generic propaganda speeches. They were encouraged to improvise and be extemporaneous, within the bounds the strategic aims of the campaign. These speeches usually celebrated Woodrow Wilson as a larger than life character and the Germans as less-than-human huns. The speakers attended training sessions through local universities, and were given pamphlets and speaking tips on a wide variety of topics, such as buying Liberty Bonds, registering for the draft, rationing food, recruiting unskilled workers for munitions jobs, and supporting Red Cross programs (Mastrangelo, 2009). It becomes clear to modern practitioners on first blush that some essential elements of public relations work come through in the discussion of Wilson's management of public perception before and after the United States entering the war, reflected in the operations of the CPI and the Four Minute Men. This raises a key question: To what extent does the Four Minute Men campaign adhere to the steps of modern public relations practice?

### Learning the ROPES

Initially conceived of as a viable model for conducting public relations work focused on fundraising and development, Kelly (1998) devised the ROPES model as a means of refining the long-established RACE (Research, Action, Communication, Evaluation) model of public relations campaigns. The ROPES model consists of the following steps: Research, Objectives, Programming, Evaluation, and Stewardship. The following presents Kelly's advice to the practitioner.

Before beginning a campaign, Kelly urged practitioners to understand the background behind it. The research stage of ROPES has three elements to help a practitioner do this. First, you identify the opportunity or problem that forms the basis for your campaign. Then, you ensure that you have a solid knowledge of the organization you represent, understanding its history, current position and future objectives. Finally, you should research the company's audiences, taking time to investigate past public relations initiatives and the way that external stakeholders, such as customers, feel about the organization.

In the second stage of the ROPES formula, you set one or more clear goals, which you can assess through establishing measurable objectives for your campaign based on the opportunity or problem





identified in the research stage. Typically, objectives are outputs, outtakes or outcomes. For example, an output objective might focus on achieving media coverage, an outtake on changing audience awareness and an outcome on an action, such as an increase in sales or web traffic. Your client may not be specific about what he wants from the campaign, but you should be. Over time, ROPES scholarship has improved, and scholars have adopted a principle of best practice from management literature to suggest public relations objectives should be specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-based, or follow the SMARTS model (Doran, 1981).

Once you understand where your campaign should go, you must plan how to get it there and launch it. In the programming stage, you decide which public relations communication tools to use to meet your objectives, taking into account the messages you need to convey, the audience you are targeting and the media you need to use to reach this audience. During this stage, you also set your budget. It is important that as you engage in programming and execution, you have chosen strateg(ies) and tactics that align with your stated goals and objectives. Your preliminary research should inform your goals, objectives, and strategic approaches.

Stewardship (Kelly, 2001) has become a trending practice for public relations professionals because it allows them to establish and maintain relationship-building efforts with stakeholders who should be included in everyday communication. Practicing relationship cultivation strategies is important to solidify ongoing relationships with your organization's publics in order to maintain a strong and trusted brand. Since it is important for public relations practitioners to foster relationships with clients, partners, journalists and key audiences, scholars posit four dimensions of stewardship: reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing.

**Reciprocity.** Recognizing stakeholders and demonstrating gratitude for their involvement with the organization is always important. Treat stakeholders to dinner or send them a company newsletter. Reciprocity will create the ultimate “win-win” situation for both stakeholders and your company.

**Responsibility.** Being responsible means keeping promises to stakeholders while achieving high standards of organizational management and decision making. In order to ensure a trusted brand, company representatives need to make sure they meet client deadlines and put client needs first – that way there is no discernible gap between promise and delivery.

**Reporting.** Organizations should communicate internal developments to their publics when they can. For instance, in a crisis communication, it is extremely important to report to publics what is actually happening. A more in-depth explanation about the crisis and how the organization will address it is better than an unclear response.

**Relationship Nurturing.** Organizations will be most successful when they focus on both taking care of existing stakeholders and fostering relationships with new stakeholders. Customer appreciation events are a great way to show existing stakeholders that an organization cares. By employing these four elements in interactions with current clients, partners, reporters and key audiences, organizations not only build a trustworthy business, but also find management valuing strong relationships with those people who work for the company.

These five dimensions are one common form of assessment for an organization's adherence to best practices in public relations practice. While this author is aware the modern public relations



was still in its infancy or adolescence, it is of value to see how the practices adopted in this early stage of public relations may have ultimately shaped modern practices and set the foundation for how public relations are now practiced a century later. With the theoretical basis for assessing public relations practices in the Four Minute Men campaign identified, the method by which the Four Minute Men Campaign will be assessed.

## Method

### Method of Study

To answer the two questions posited in this study, the author performed a case analysis of scholarship and reporting on the work of the CPI's Four Minute Men Bureaus to document the daily operations, decision making, and execution of the campaign process. This is particularly valuable for determining organizational commitment to each step in the ROPES model (Kelly, 1998). In addition, the author reviewed electronic archives of the Four Minute Men Bulletins from 1917-1919. They are housed as part of the University of Colorado Boulder's Department of Archives World War I Pamphlets Collection and open to the public. The author used the bulletins to ascertain what evaluation was in place for the Four Minute Men membership and how they may have used that evaluation to adapt practices throughout the 18 months of work to shape public opinion. While the author would have liked to also review existing copies of Four Minute Men speeches as part of his analysis, it quickly became clear how fundamentally committed to extemporaneous speech the organization was, as only a few sample speeches appear to have survived.

### Method of Analysis

The researcher employed a hybridization of Berkowitz's (1997b) approach to qualitative data analysis, facilitated with NVivo 9 qualitative analysis software. Using Nvivo, the researcher loaded the pool of data into the software and performed the coding process using Berkowitz's (1997b) approach: each piece data file was read twice carefully, audio recordings were played while reading through each of the transcripts, and a broad initial coding of emergent themes was performed. NVivo expedites the process by permitting consolidation of large bodies of diverse text-rich research data into one central location where the researcher can more efficiently classify, sort and arrange information; examine relationships within the data; and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching, and modeling (Nvivo 9, 2011).

## Result

In this review of the documented practices of the Four Minute Men, the results present a mix of practices that reflect an early interpretation of public relations work. The following will provide analysis of each step in the ROPES model of public relations practices (Kelly, 1998) to facilitate a clear breakdown of practice.

Research Stage: Kelly (1998) advocates the use of research to better understand the organization, to identify publics, opportunities, and stakeholders associated with the organization and the opportunities associated with the campaign. What is clear about the approach of the CPI and its Four Minute Men is an absence of primary research prior to action. Decisions were largely based on inferential logic and the collective wisdom of journalists, advertisers, public relations practitioners, politicians, and social scientists (Axelrod, 2009). That said, the team working to



develop the plan for the Four Minute Man campaign made sound decisions on audience based on what they knew about the American public. This is not inconsistent with many modern practitioners who have to engage in strategy and tactics with minimal research due to a lack of resources (Kelly, 1998). In short, there is limited evidence of advanced research in practice, which doesn't reflect the modern definition of best practices in public relations.

Objectives Stage: As is the case in examining research, there is limited data suggesting a clear set of goals and objectives that reflect best practices in public relations. While there is a broad goal or objective behind the Four Minute Men campaign, there is no clear articulation of a particular goal, followed by the use of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely, and sufficient (SMARTS) objectives (Ledingham, 2006). This poses problems later when we get to the evaluation step in the process. While there is clearly a logic to the strategic approach, and the desired end is clear, the approach of the Four Minute Men and the CPI is one that remained largely inferential.

Programming Stage: A consistent theme in the foundation of the CPI is the cooptation of good ideas that can be of potential service to the war effort. It is apparent in how George Creel gets support from Wilson to establish his committee, how Creel adds new areas of focus to his propaganda effort, and in how Creel embraces the Four Minute Men campaign as part of the CPI's function (Axelron, 2009; Creel, 1920). While a reflection of the desperation to shape public opinion, it is clearly not a decision couched in research. It is clearly not a plan devised of a body of research devoted to the war effort. In this regard, WWI practices are not in keeping with the modern definition of programming in public relations (Kelly, 1998).

This step does, however, help modern practitioners see a targeted approach to connecting with necessary audiences, to tailor messages to those audiences, to utilize community leaders and celebrities to deliver the message, and to see a more effective impact than other approaches. Inasmuch as the decision-making and actions of the Four Minute Men lack the research to drive the decision, the antecedent provided an effective example that set the tone for modern best practices in programming, with the benefit of time and additional scholarship. In fact, the approach of the Four Minute Men was a clear example of opinion leader theory and the two-step flow of communication (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) at work in influencing opinion and behavior.

Evaluation Stage: Kelly (1998) identifies multiple means of evaluation in public relations work. Summative evaluation offers an examination of the effectiveness of the campaign after the work is complete. In reviewing the work of the Four Minute Men campaign, it is clear that nothing summative was planned or conducted to allow for a review of outcomes. The possible exceptions to this are Creel's (1920) reflections on the work of the CPI and the Four Minute Men campaign, and the direct report of the Committee on Public Information (1920). It is clear in reflection that Bernays (1923; 1928) offered his own anecdotal evidence of the successes of the CPI, as well.

Kelly (1998) is also clear that effective evaluation should be aligned with a clear set of measurable objectives. As noted previously, the work of the Four Minute Men campaign lacked objectives that met this standard, so it falls short of best practices in modern public relations.

An interesting element of the Four Minute Men campaign that points to a clear precursor to incremental evaluation (Watson & Noble, 2007) are the Four Minute Men Bulletins published and distributed throughout the life of the campaign. The updates on achievements provided early justification of effectiveness of the campaign process. The bulletins also offered examples of



rhetorical approaches from members that both succeeded and failed. In the process of offering these examples, the bulletins also offered advice on how to adapt messages and approaches to leverage those successes and avoid the failures. In this way, as in incremental evaluation, the Four Minute Man worked to help practitioners improve and adapt messages to each public effectively over the life of the campaign. In addition, the bulletins provided notice of emerging concerns, akin to boundary scanning (Fearn-Banks, 2016).

Stewardship: In this final regard, it is clear that stewardship is not the focus of the campaign. This is understandable given public relation's relative infancy. The work of the CPI reflected a top-down, one-way approach to communication that emphasized pushing out messages and information in an effort to influence the public without regard to the interests of audience. In many respects, this is largely due to the fact that modern public relations did not think in terms of relationships until the work of Ferguson (1984), Grunig & Hunt (1984), and Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), which emphasizes enduring, mutually beneficial relationships in public relations work. Interestingly, given the volume of Four Minute Men campaign messages around Liberty Loan drives, rationing, donor drives, and other philanthropic efforts, the campaign could have benefitted from Kelly's (2001) emphasis on effective development strategies and its added dimensions of stewardship.

## Discussion

Literature already tells us that the CPI was an engine for modernization of practices and a better understanding of the potential influence of journalism, advertising, and public relations on the individual mindset and actions of citizens (Axelrod, 2009; Mastrangelo, 2009). While the present paper draws connections to practices adopted by the CPI and Four Minute Men that helped set the foundation for modern public relations practices, it is clear that the evolution of best practices is the result of study of adopted practices during public relations infancy and adolescence. Additionally, reflecting on modern campaigns has ensured the continued progression of modern professionalism.

The need for this approach to study the discipline and refine practice becomes clear when one considers the darkest consequences of the writings of one CPI member: Edward Bernays. In *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923) and *Propaganda* (1928), Bernays offered a callous picture of the public and the ability of mass communication and persuasion to manipulate public opinion to meet a government's needs. These texts proved to be the stars of Joseph Goebbels personal library, and he leveraged the lessons learned to instigate a shift in public opinion that gave rise to fascism in Germany, dehumanization of ethnic groups and minorities, and the impetus for the Holocaust (Bernays, 1965).

Deep reflection on this led Bernays to work to professionalize the discipline and push for greater rigor in education and practice. His efforts in the discipline and in the classroom also helped give rise to the Public Relations Society of America and the Public Relations Student Society of America. His commitment to professionalization set in motion the fields of study in best practices, ethics, and philosophy that strive to make perceptions of the field more positive.

While the Four Minute Men campaign offers an example of a clear public relations antecedent, like most antecedents, it offers glimpses of best practices to be institutionalized, but not the whole picture (Cutlip, 2013). This could only come from the continual self-reflection on practice that



enables modern practitioners to better themselves and the practice as individuals and as part of the larger discipline. Without this self-reflection, the practice of public relations runs the risk of future grave consequences. As such, it is worth looking back at these examples and at current work to assess not only effectiveness of practice, but the integrity of each action.



## References

- Adams, K.H. (1999). *Progressive politics and the training of America's persuaders*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.
- Badertscher, K. C. (2014). Addams, Jane. In U. Daniel, P. Gatrell, O. Janz, H. Jones, J. Keene, A. Kramer, and B. Nasson (Eds.) *1914-1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin.
- Berkowitz, S. (1997). Analyzing qualitative data. In J. Frechtling, L. Sharp, and Westat (Eds.), *User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed Method Evaluations* (Chapter 4).
- Bernays, E.L. (1965). *Biography of an idea: Memoirs of public relations counsel Edward L. Bernays*.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. (1923). *Crystallizing public opinion*. Brooklyn, NY: IG Publishing.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. (1928). *Propaganda*. Brooklyn, NY: IG Publishing.
- Cooper, Jr., J.M. (2009). *Woodrow Wilson: A biography*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Cozma, R. (2010). From Murrow to mediocrity? *Journalism Studies*, 11(5), 667-682.
- Creel, C. (1920). *How we advertised America*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Cutlip, S.M. (2013). *Public relations history from the 17th to the 20th century: The antecedents*. New York: Routledge.
- DeSanto, B.J. (2000). Public affairs: An American perspective. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 1(1), 38-43.
- Doran, G. T. (1981). "There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives". *Management Review. AMA Forum*. 70 (11), 35–36.
- Fahmy, S., & Johnson, T. J. (2005). 'How we performed': Embedded journalists' attitudes and perceptions towards covering the Iraq War. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(2), 301–317.
- Fearn-Banks, K. (2016). *Crisis communications: A casebook approach*. New York: Routledge.
- Fleming, T. (2003). *The illusion of victory: America in World War I*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P.F. (1955). *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications*. New York: Free Press.
- Kelly, K.S. (1998). Learning the ropes. *Currents*, 24(6), 26-28, 30-31.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. (2001). Stewardship: The fifth step in the public relations process. In R.L. Heath (Ed.). *Handbook of Public Relations* (pp. 279-290). Sage Publishing Inc.
- Kelman, K. (2003). Propaganda as vision: *Triumph of the will*. *Logos* 2(4).



- Ledingham, J.A. (2006). Relationship Management: A general theory of public relations. In C.H. Botan & V. Hazelton (Eds.) *Public Relations Theory II* (pp. 465-484). New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Lewinski, J. (1980). *The camera at war: a history of war photography from 1848 to the present day*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Link, Arthur S. (1972). *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910–1917*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Mastrangelo, L. (2009). World War I, public intellectuals, and the Four Minute Men: Convergent ideals of public speaking and civic participation. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 12(4), 607-634.
- May, E.R. (1966). *The World War and American isolation, 1914–1917*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Myers, C. (2015). Early US corporate relations: Understanding the ‘publicity agent’ in American corporate communications, 1902-1918. *American Journalism*, 32(4), 412-433.
- Oukrup, C. (1975). The four minute men became a national network during World War I. *Journalism Quarterly*, 52(4), 632-637.
- Pietrusza, D. (2018). *TR's last war: Theodore Roosevelt, the Great War, and a journey of triumph and tragedy*. Guilford, CT: Lyons Press.
- Steele, R.W. (1985). News of the ‘Good War’: World War II news management. *Journalism Quarterly*, 62(4), 707-783.
- Sweeney, M.S. (2001). *Secrets of victory: The Office of Censorship and the American press and radio in World War II*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Watson, T., & Noble, P. (2007). *Evaluating public relations: A best practice guide to public relations planning, research and evaluation (2nd. Ed.)*. London: Kegan Paul.
- Wheeler, T. (2008). *Mr. Lincoln's t-mails: How Abraham Lincoln used the telegraph to win the Civil War*. Glasgow, Scotland: Collins.
- Wilkerson, M.M. (1967). *Public opinion and the Spanish-American war: A study in war propaganda*. New York: Russell & Russell, Inc.
- Xifra, J., Girona, R. (2012). Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* and film documentary discourse in public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 38(1), 40-45.



## Oshkosh on the Home Front: Activities and Attitudes During World War I

Amy Elizabeth Fels

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

The outbreak of World War I not only ushered in a new era of military technology and strategy, but introduced the notion of a total war as well. For the first time, citizens' contributions away from the front lines were just as vital to victory as the direct actions of soldiers and military personnel engaged in combat. In both Europe and the United States, home fronts developed and stood as testament to citizens' voluntary and government-imposed adjustments to life during the war. While such activities are often discussed on a broader, national scale, local impacts were also significant. Once the United States joined the war in 1917, for example, home front activities in the city of Oshkosh, Wisconsin dramatically increased and reflected a committed desire by a vast majority of community members to promote a strong sense of patriotic duty and support the war effort through a wide variety of direct and indirect activities that became part of their everyday existence.

While by no means entirely exhaustive, the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* serves as the foundational source for generating a comprehensive understanding of the atmosphere of Oshkosh's home front during WWI. Founded in 1860 and published daily from 1868 onward, the *Daily Northwestern* soon developed a reputation for being the city's largest and most respected paper for local, national, and international news.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the end of the nineteenth century, the paper became the first in Wisconsin outside of Milwaukee to have a direct connection to the Associated Press over its news wires, which published a 12,000 to 15,000 word report each day. The *Daily Northwestern* was under the trusted leadership of O.J. Hardy come the beginning of WWI in 1914; Hardy began his career with the paper as a carrier while still a boy and continued to advance his position until he was placed in charge of the entire paper in 1905.<sup>2</sup> Given that the *Daily Northwestern* was Oshkosh residents' primary newspaper, in conjunction with the fact that it was regarded as a credible source of information, its coverage of WWI events abroad likely influenced the city's overall attitude toward the war. Conversely, the *Daily Northwestern* thoroughly reported the home front activities that occurred in Oshkosh during WWI and thus provides a uniquely direct perspective in regards to understanding the attitude of the city's populace throughout the duration of the conflict.

Although interest in the European conflict seems to have been relatively high prior to the United States entering WWI, evidence of widespread home front activity in Oshkosh is minimal in comparison. The headlines of the *Daily Northwestern* are filled with updates concerning the

---

<sup>1</sup> Oshkosh Centennial, Inc, ed., *Oshkosh: One Hundred Years a City, 1853-1953* (Oshkosh, Wis, 1953), 222.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.





tenuous conditions in Europe and almost immediately present a negative characterization of Germany as an aggressor. Following Germany’s declaration of war in August 1914, the *Daily Northwestern* featured an image of Kaiser Wilhelm II on the front page under the caption “Europe’s War Lord Strikes,”<sup>3</sup> though the paper “refrained from running the lurid and false portrayals” of the Kaiser or other Germans that were common among WWI propaganda.<sup>4</sup> Yet beyond the first page, discussion of the war is almost entirely subsumed by articles of both serious and frivolous domestic concerns, like changing campaign laws for Wisconsin congressmen and senators or a trip taken to Madison by a team of Oshkosh sailboat racers.<sup>5</sup> The one column of interest regarding local reaction to the outbreak of the war is found near the end of the August 3rd issue. In light of what was likely to be a deadly war, several local Protestant pastors offered prayers and hopeful sentiments that peace may be reached before any real fighting need occur, while the pastor of the city’s Christ Lutheran church expressed hope that “victory would again be given to Germany” without “the causing of too much suffering.”<sup>6</sup> This article presents a twofold interest. One, it provides evidence of early sympathy among the extensive German-American community in Oshkosh; Winnebago County, in which Oshkosh is located, had the third-highest concentration of German-born citizens in 1920.<sup>7</sup> The sympathetic sentiment is then contrasted with the paper’s description of Wilhelm II as a “war lord” and lays the foundation for nuanced ethnic tensions within the city’s population exhibited later in the war. Two, it indicates a local desire to avoid conflict that will also further manifest itself later during WWI as the possibility of the United States entering the war became more likely.

Further evidence of an active German-American population present in Oshkosh is also seen a few months after WWI began, indicated by a local chapter of the German-American Association’s call for donations for “the relief of widows and soldiers in Germany and Austria” in December 1914.<sup>8</sup> Beyond this, however, the absence of advertisements or articles in the newspaper issues asking for donations toward war relief efforts suggests that Oshkosh’s home front was generally nonexistent during the beginning stages of the war. Although reports of the European conflict in the *Daily Northwestern* became commonplace as the fighting overseas escalated and continued, they retained a fairly objective tone before 1917. Instead, greater concern was often directed toward the Mexican border conflict that occurred in 1916, as the Wisconsin National Guard was

---

<sup>3</sup> *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), August 3, 1914, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Michael J. Goc, *Oshkosh at 150: An Illustrated History of Oshkosh*, (New Past Press Inc, 2003), 117.

<sup>5</sup> *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), August 3, 1914, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> “Prayers for Peace,” *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>7</sup> Paul W. Glad, *The History of Wisconsin: War, a New Era, and Depression 1914-1940*, ed. William Fletch Thompson, vol. V (State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1990), 13.

<sup>8</sup> “War Relief Fund Grows,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), December 3, 1914, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 14.



mobilized in June and sent south to take part in the fighting.<sup>9</sup> Disappointment was even felt in Oshkosh when it was announced that General C.R. Boardman, a native of the city who took part in the 1898 Spanish-American War, was not to be placed in charge of the newly mobilized troops.<sup>10</sup>

However, as the conflict in Mexico ended with the close of 1916<sup>11</sup> and the threat of entering the world war became more prominent in the opening weeks of 1917, the individuals behind the *Daily Northwestern* became more vocal in their desire for neutrality, writing that “it [the United States] safely may pass through this crisis without becoming involved in the war maelstrom is the sincere hope of every patriotic citizen.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, while the paper does not outrightly criticize President Wilson’s plan to “establish world peace on a permanent basis,” its tone suggests a subtle reluctance to “abandon its [the United States’s] time-honored policies of isolation and rejection of tangling alliances.”<sup>13</sup> The limitations of the evidence provided by the *Daily Northwestern* must be acknowledged since it offers merely one perspective and is therefore not exhaustive, but it nevertheless suggests that the city of Oshkosh and its citizens, at least in part, were in no rush to join WWI. Such an apparent commitment to neutrality in January of 1917 is starkly contrasted by the explosion of home front activities in support of the war effort that occurred once the United States formally entered WWI in April and perhaps makes Oshkosh’s significant efforts all the more noteworthy.

To better understand Oshkosh’s extensive home front activities, the city is best considered as a microcosm of enthusiasm within an equally active state. By April 12, 1917, less than a week after the United States declared war, Wisconsin became the first state in the country to organize a state council for defense in accordance with the federal government’s request.<sup>14</sup> Not only was Wisconsin’s state council extensively praised and its organization recommended as a model for other states, Wisconsin was also one of the first states to create additional county and city defense councils.<sup>15</sup> In several other instances, Wisconsin proved itself to be a banner state in regards to successful home front activities. Not only did Wisconsin institute a number of liberty loan drives in which quotas were greatly exceeded, but it also became the first state to organize “state and county history commissions to preserve records” of the wartime activities. Furthermore, Wisconsin

---

<sup>9</sup> Vaughn Larson, “Wisconsin Guard Protected Mexican Border a Century Ago,” *Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs*, June 24, 2016, <http://dma.wi.gov/DMA/news/2016news/16063>.

<sup>10</sup> “Soldiers Are Sorry. Boardman In Favor,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), June 23, 1916, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Larson, “Wisconsin Guard.”

<sup>12</sup> “The Crucial Year of the Great War,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), January 23, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> “President Proposes Peace Plan,” *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> William J. Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federalism, and the Council of National Defense 1917-1919* (Greenwood Press, 1984), 71.

<sup>15</sup> Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 74-75.



introduced the now-familiar ideas of ‘wheatless’ and ‘meatless’ days that were later adopted and instituted nationwide.<sup>16</sup>

However, there also existed a darker side to Wisconsin home front activities that must be addressed in addition to the state’s more positive war effort contributions. Increased Red Cross donations or other volunteer activities cannot erase the existence of anti-German sentiment or nearly fanatic patriotism that prevailed in many areas across the state and manifested itself through organizations like the American Protective League and the Loyalty Legion. The A.P.L. was technically a vigilante organization operated by volunteers but was given official consent by the Department of Justice to take action against individuals thought to be pacifists, German sympathizers or spies, or harboring anti-war ideas that posed an apparent threat to the American war effort. Members often intimidated, harassed, or spied on their suspects, a vast majority of whom were perfectly ordinary and innocent citizens.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the Loyalty Legion, another voluntary patriotic organization, also sought to eliminate disloyalty during WWI and punish those found guilty in addition to promoting more innocuous activities like Red Cross efforts or Liberty Loan drives.<sup>18</sup> Altogether, the broader themes that seemed to characterize Wisconsin’s statewide home front, both the genuine and the ethically questionable, also occurred in Oshkosh and thus creates a multifaceted image of the city’s WWI home front efforts.

Returning then to the specific home front sentiments and activities within the city of Oshkosh that contributed to the greater state atmosphere, the world war that was once to be entirely avoided if possible suddenly became a “fight for all humanity” in which the “democracy of the world [was] to be vindicated” after the United States declared war on April 6, 1917.<sup>19</sup> Patriotism no longer meant hoping to maintain neutrality. Instead, it meant mobilizing the home front as quickly as possible so as to provide the greatest contributions to the American war effort. The people of Oshkosh responded with a similar level of urgency found at the state level and held a large parade in a show of “intense patriotism” on April 27, 1917. Approximately 15,000 people participated while others watched the paraders march through the city streets.<sup>20</sup> A few weeks later, by the middle of May, the *Daily Northwestern* featured an intensely patriotic poem titled “The Voice of Washington” that called for Americans to “strike for the altars of freedom” and “strike at barbarian coils.” to “finish the work” George Washington had begun in the American Revolution.<sup>21</sup> The

---

<sup>16</sup> Fred Holmes, *Wisconsin’s War Record* (Madison, Wis: Capital Historical Publishing Co, 1919), 16, <http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/tp/id/56153>.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Inman, “Spies Among Us: World War I and The American Protective League,” *The New York Public Library*, accessed November 1, 2016, <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2014/10/07/spies-among-us-wwi-apl>.

<sup>18</sup> Glad, *The History of Wisconsin*, 36.

<sup>19</sup> *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), April 6, 1917, Accessed November 14, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> “Oshkosh Rises En Masse In Support of Nation.” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), April 27, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), May 14, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 1.



same issue also published advertisements urging Oshkosh citizens to “Do your bit” and join the expanding Oshkosh chapter of the Red Cross that had been formally organized in October of 1916.<sup>22</sup>

The Oshkosh chapter of the Red Cross was one of the city’s most active home front groups on the during the war. On July 14, 1917, the Red Cross presented 371 comfort kits to members of the local National Guard companies soon to go into federal service. These kits consisted of cloth bags sewn by Oshkosh women and were filled with personal items such as toothbrushes, writing paper and envelopes, and soap.<sup>23</sup> Nearly five hundred more of these kits would be sent out just before Christmas of the same year.<sup>24</sup> Later into the summer, the Red Cross also established itself inside a local school and continued to knit and sew items for soldiers or hospitals from scraps of yarn and cloth. Women of all ages were involved in the work, and young children were often assigned to sorting the pieces of fabric, indicating that Oshkosh’s home front efforts were not confined to one age demographic.<sup>25</sup> In addition to creating tangible aid for soldiers, local Red Cross members also hosted fundraisers to finance their activities. One such reception hosted in Omro to celebrate New Year’s Day raised nearly one hundred dollars for the Red Cross fund<sup>26</sup> and highlights the dual purpose of social interactions that emerged as part of the war effort.

Social events during WWI were no longer simply recreational gatherings; they also became an additional way for individuals to show their support for their country and local servicemen, as evidenced by a local dance advertised as a “Patriotic May Ball” a little more than a month after war was declared.<sup>27</sup> A variety of dances, concerts, and parties continued to be promoted in the *Daily Northwestern* under the auspices of patriotism throughout the war. These dances and concerts were hosted by both organized groups and individuals, further indicating that the desire to contribute to the home front effort was widely disseminated among Oshkosh citizens. The July 3rd issue of the paper, for example, features an advertisement for a “Patriotic Ball” hosted by the “Co. B Boys” at one of the city armories.<sup>28</sup> By comparison, in May 1918, tickets were sold to the public for a concert held in the home of Edgar Sawyer, a prominent and wealthy Oshkosh citizen,

---

<sup>22</sup> Oshkosh Centennial, Inc, 128.

<sup>23</sup> “Comfort for Guard.” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), July 14, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> “More Comfort Kits.” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), November 20, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> “Use Up All Leftovers.” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), August 30, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> “Reception By Red Cross.” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), January 5, 1918, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), May 14, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), July 3, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 3.



to raise money for overseas hospitals.<sup>29</sup> A large number of such patriotic dances or concerts took place in Oshkosh during WWI, particularly around holidays, and suggests that they were both popular forms of entertainment and effective means to raise funds for the war effort.

In addition to the familiar notion of hosting an entertaining event to raise money or the recognizable name of the Red Cross, several other groups emerged during WWI that played a significant role in forming Oshkosh's homefront, both in terms of attitude and activity. In July 1917, the *Daily Northwestern* featured a lengthy column calling for the teenage boys of Winnebago County to join the Boys' Working Reserve, a national service organization designed to give boys at home the chance to "show their loyalty" and feel "they have done their part in these strenuous times." The column does not detail the type of work the boys would do but instead emphasizes the privileges of gaining accredited membership, like receiving awards and badges.<sup>30</sup> Girls in Oshkosh were also active on the home front and given recognition for their efforts. The Oshkosh Girls' Club, according to the local paper, worked closely with the Red Cross and hosted classes to teach girls to knit and make surgical dressings.<sup>31</sup> The presence of both the Boys' Reserve and the Girls' Club in Oshkosh indicates that community members of all ages were involved in the war effort. Additionally, the newspaper's attention to their activities suggests that the city was proud to publicize their work and strengthens the notion that a strong patriotic sentiment prevailed throughout Oshkosh even as the war continued with no real end in sight.

Furthermore, groups like the Oshkosh Food Conservation Committee published recipes in the *Daily Northwestern* and hosted educational events regarding the importance of not wasting food in wartime or how to go about substituting ingredients that were in short supply.<sup>32</sup> The local chapter of the Loyalty Legion held meetings and organized door-to-door pledge drives designed to generate patriotic support and determine who in the city posed an anti-American threat to the war effort. Individuals who refused to sign the pledge or give money to the various war efforts in Oshkosh were summarily characterized by both the *Daily Northwestern* and local citizens as "exhibiting socialistic tendencies" or "disloyalty and pro-Germanism."<sup>33</sup> In a similar vein, the Oshkosh chapter of the American Protective League consisted of over one hundred men determined to eradicate local German propaganda and sympathizers. Between 1917 and 1918, more than three hundred reports were filed with the national government, but the overwhelming majority of these accusations were unfounded and unfruitful.<sup>34</sup> The simultaneous existence of

---

<sup>29</sup> "For Overseas Hospital." *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), May 1, 1918, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), July 14, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> "Girls' Club Notes." *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), January 5, 1918, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), July 2, 1918, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> "Many Sign Pledge Of Their Loyalty." *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), December 24, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Oshkosh Centennial, Inc., ed., *Oshkosh*, 123.



these three groups exhibits the wide range of war effort activities that occurred in Oshkosh during WWI and contributes to the complexity of the overall image of the city's home front. The Food Conservation Committee, on one hand, discouraged wastefulness and encouraged resourcefulness, a mentality that would still be considered positive and beneficial for a community today as it was thought to be in Oshkosh during the war. Conversely, though the Loyalty Legion and the American Protective League were heralded as patriotic during WWI, their actions were in reality discriminatory and their methods often invasive. It is important to note this dichotomy, because to celebrate the aspects of home front efforts that generate a positive image of Oshkosh but ignore the darker, more uncomfortable activities would be revisionist and dishonest.

Apart from highly publicized social events and larger group contributions, a variety of other home front activities occurred in Oshkosh that indicate how support for the war effort also became ingrained into the community in smaller, less ostentatious ways. The Oshkosh Normal School raised several hundred dollars from within its own student body for the local YMCA chapter's war work and unveiled a service flag commemorating the seventeen students and two teachers who had left the school to join the military.<sup>35</sup> The Oshkosh Equitable Fraternal Union dedicated a similar commemorative flag in July 1918.<sup>36</sup> Able-bodied men who remained in Oshkosh registered for volunteer farmwork positions outside the city that had been vacated by men leaving for military service.<sup>37</sup> A local department store yarn advertisement featured an offer for a free booklet of knitting patterns to encourage women to make sweaters or other articles of clothing for army and naval servicemen.<sup>38</sup> The wide variety of the events covered and advertisements published in the *Daily Northwestern* suggests that the opportunities offered to contribute to the war effort or the patriotic mentality that was advanced to encourage such contributions were made accessible all members of the community, which is perhaps what made Oshkosh's home front so active and effective, whether positively or negatively. The city's mobilization of its home front was thorough and its calls to support the war effort omnipresent.

On the whole, therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the entrance of the United States into WWI catalyzed the emergence of intense patriotic sentiment and a flurry of home front activity in Oshkosh that persisted throughout the remaining duration of the war. Though by no means exhaustive, the extensive coverage and promotion of these home front efforts by the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* suggests that they were widespread and affected the entire Oshkosh community. Whether through direct work with organizations like the Red Cross and the Loyalty Legion or more subtle efforts such as planting gardens and attending fundraising parties, the people of

---

<sup>35</sup> "Get Money Quickly." *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), November 20, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> "Flag Is Dedicated." *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), July 2 1918, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), July 1, 1918, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p.4.

<sup>38</sup> *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), June 18, 1917, Accessed November 13, 2016, Access Newspaper Archive, p. 10.



Oshkosh, whatever their motivations, proudly committed themselves to supporting American victory in World War I.

### Works Cited

- Breen, William J. *Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federalism, and the Council of National Defense 1917-1919*. Greenwood Press, 1984.
- Glad, Paul W. *The History of Wisconsin: War, a New Era, and Depression 1914-1940*. Edited by William Fletch Thompson. Vol. V. State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1990.
- Goc, Michael C. *Oshkosh at 150: An Illustrated History of Oshkosh*. New Past Press Inc, 2003.
- Holmes, Fred. *Wisconsin's War Record*. Madison, Wis: Capital Historical Publishing Co, 1919. <http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/tp/id/56153>.
- Inman, Michael. "Spies Among Us: World War I and The American Protective League." The New York Public Library. Accessed November 1, 2016. <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2014/10/07/spies-among-us-wwi-apl>.
- Larson, Vaughn. "Wisconsin Guard Protected Mexican Border a Century Ago." Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, June 24, 2016. <http://dma.wi.gov/DMA/news/2016news/16063>.
- Oshkosh Centennial, Inc., ed. *Oshkosh: One Hundred Years a City, 1853-1953*. Oshkosh, WI, 1953.
- Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*. 1918 1914. Access Newspaper Archive. Accessed November 13, 2016. <http://access.newspaperarchive.com>.



## ‘Lest We Forget’: Remembering World War I in Wisconsin, 1919-1945

Leslie A. Bellais

University of Wisconsin–Madison

Within months of America’s entrance into World War I, Wisconsin became labeled the “Traitor State,” an epithet it did not manage to shake while the war was being fought. The editor of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* (Kentucky) may have been the first to describe the state in such a way, when in a July 17, 1917 editorial he asked, “Will Wisconsin be known when the war is over as the Traitor State?”<sup>1</sup> The national belief in Wisconsin’s disloyalty peaked in the Spring of 1918, at the time of a contentious state election. Evidence of the state’s position could be seen in comments from the *Montgomery Advertiser* (Alabama) describing the state as “the American hotbed of disloyalty,” the *Los Angeles Times* declaring, “There is probably more disloyalty per square foot in Wisconsin than anywhere else in the country,” and the *Washington Post* thinking, “There may be few spots as intensely pro-German as there are in Wisconsin.”<sup>2</sup>

Those who held the view that Wisconsin had a loyalty problem usually cited three reasons for their perception. First and foremost were the state’s national representatives, who had overwhelmingly voted against America’s entrance into the European War. When Congress voted on April 6, 1917, one of Wisconsin’s two senators and nine of its eleven representatives voted to keep the United States out of the war, a stance many viewed as unpatriotic. The state’s senior senator, Robert M. La Follette, continued to irritate self-described patriots by maintaining America should have stayed out of the war even after the vote. By the end of 1917, he had become identified as the most disloyal, unpatriotic American in the nation. Secondly, Wisconsin had an active Socialist party, which, like La Follette, had not supported America’s entrance into the war. Finally, Wisconsin had a large, vocal, and politically-active German-American population, who did not want the United States to go to war with its homeland.

In response to this perception of Wisconsin as a place rife with treason and disloyalty, a number of citizens throughout the state, but mainly in Milwaukee, made a concerted attempt to change the message. Historians have called those who pushed an extreme version of patriotism during World War I “super patriots” or “hyper-patriots,” my preferred term. In Wisconsin, hyper-patriotic groups generally consisted of those who identified as Stalwart Republicans (rather than Progressive

---

<sup>1</sup> “The Traitor State,” *Louisville Courier-Journal* (Kentucky) as published in *Princeton Daily Democrat* (Indiana), July 17, 1917, 2.

<sup>2</sup> “The Situation in Wisconsin,” *Montgomery Advertiser* (Alabama), April 19, 1918, 4; “The Heroic Hour,” *Washington Post*, May 18, 1918; “Wisconsin’s Bolsheviki,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1918, II, 4.





Republicans, La Follette’s party), had a New England or New York pedigree, and considered themselves business or professional men. In 1917, Wisconsin’s hyper-patriots formed the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, a voluntary organization created to clear Wisconsin’s name, primarily by replacing disloyal national representatives with loyal ones.

In March 1918, the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion created a map showing “Where Disloyalty in Wisconsin Chiefly Centres.” This “Sedition Map,” which was published in the New York Sun, used statistics from the U.S. Senate primary held on March 19, 1917. The shaded areas refer to places that voted for a candidate supported by La Follette. Besides using shame and embarrassment to control wayward Wisconsinites, hyper-patriots also used coercive tactics to bring the disloyal into line and became more violent as the war progressed.

After such a tumultuous experience and charged atmosphere, how would the war be remembered, commemorated, and acknowledged by Wisconsinites during the interwar years?

While Wisconsin’s World War I story may have been unique, the desire by powerful Wisconsinites, usually the hyper-patriots, to control war memories in the succeeding decades was probably duplicated in many states around the country. Americans tended toward three main sites of war memory: publications, monuments & memorials, and Armistice Day events. One message repeated throughout each of these forums: “Lest We Forget.” World War I saw more death than any previous conflict. All this death had to mean something. As a result, Americans were exhorted not to forget the sacrifices made for the war’s purposes as stated by President Wilson, specifically to make the world safe for democracy and to make this the war to end all wars.

### Publications

Wisconsin’s leaders made every attempt to help Wisconsinites remember or at least not forget. On July 22, 1919, Wisconsin’s governor authorized



Figure 1. The Kaiser pinning Robert La Follette with Iron Cross Medals. (Cover of Life Magazine, December 13, 1917. Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID 3272)

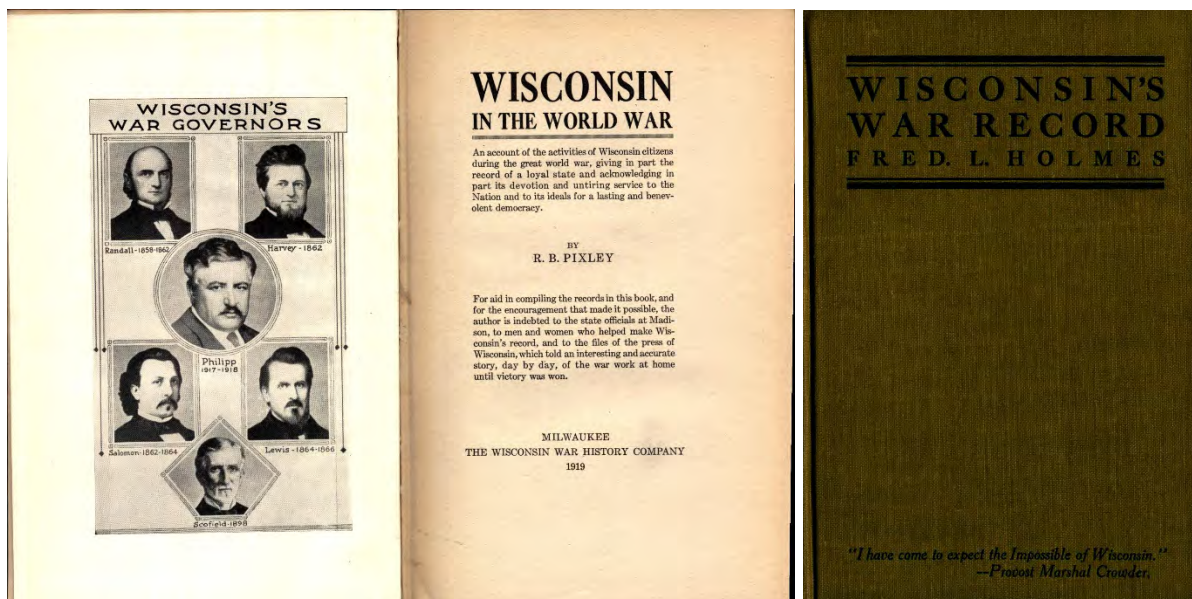


Figure 2. Sedition Map created by the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion. New York Sun, March 21, 1918



the creation of the Wisconsin War History Commission with the purpose “to provide for a memorial history of the part taken by the State of Wisconsin and its citizens” in the Great War.<sup>3</sup> Legislation for this commission required that it publish two books: one on the homefront and another on the state’s soldiers, sailors, and marines.<sup>4</sup> The Commission actually produced three books: one on the military and two “designed to give a general historical survey of the part taken by the state and its citizens” during the war. Wisconsin journalists R.B. Pixley and Fred Holmes wrote the latter two books, which were mainly descriptive and avoided mentioning Wisconsin’s disloyalty issues, except in the subtitle of Pixley’s book, *Wisconsin in the World War*, where he noted he was “...Giving in Part the Record of a Loyal State...” Pixley and Holmes downplayed the disagreements and divisiveness that pervaded the state during the war and instead portrayed Wisconsin as having a unified mission. Holmes in his book, *Wisconsin’s War Record*, even wrote that the war years were a time when “men of all racial [ethnic] extractions coalesced and became one.”<sup>5</sup>

Milwaukee’s hyper-patriots did not believe the state-produced books went far enough, so they published their own book, *Wisconsin in the Great War*, to leave a record of the disloyalty, treason, and lack of patriotism they had been up against. Wheeler Bloodgood, a lawyer and leading



<sup>3</sup> *Minutes of the Wisconsin War History Commission, 1919-1922*, Series 1692, Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS).

<sup>4</sup> “Proposed Program for Organizing War History Committees and Collection Material,” Wisconsin War History Commission (WWHC), general correspondence, 1918-1925, Series 1693, Box 1, Miscellaneous folder, WHS.

<sup>5</sup> Fred L. Holmes, *Wisconsin’s War Record* (Madison, WI: Capital Historical Publishing Co.), 180.



Milwaukee hyper-patriot dispensed with the sense of unity mentioned in the official state books and wrote that Milwaukee had been “a hotbed for German propaganda...and an active field for Socialist agitators and haranguers.”<sup>6</sup> Another contributor spoke of the “notable strides [made] in the eradication ...of strong, deep-seated racial ties.” Although, he did not mention how this was done.<sup>7</sup>

A manuscript, “War Hysteria,” written in the early 1930s by a friend of Senator La Follette, attempted to correct the history of Wisconsin’s war years as provided by the state and hyper-patriots with information about the ugly tactics used to eradicate ethnic ties and bring those perceived as disloyal into line. The author left money in his will to have it published, but that never happened.<sup>8</sup>

### Monuments and Memorial Buildings

Mass-produced memorial statues had “cluttered” town squares and battlefields after the Civil War and government officials around the country wanted to avoid this mistake after the Great War ended. The question became what should a fitting monument or memorial be? In February 1919, the Wisconsin War History Commission may have been the first to publish a document on this matter, the pamphlet “Concerning War Memorials.”<sup>9</sup> Historian G. Kurt Piehler in *Remembering War the American Way* has suggested that the rush to build monuments may have been the method local leaders used “to camouflage the divisions created by the war. They wanted Americans to expiate their doubts, and sometimes their guilt, about this ambiguous conflict.”<sup>10</sup>



Figure 3. Wheeler Bloodgood, Milwaukee Hyper-Patriot. August 13, 1921. Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID 60818.

<sup>6</sup> Wheeler P. Bloodgood, “The Wisconsin Defense League,” *Wisconsin in the Great War* (Milwaukee: Press Publicity Bureau, 1919), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Wheeler P. Bloodgood, “The Wisconsin Defense League,” *Wisconsin in the Great War* (Milwaukee: Press Publicity Bureau, 1919), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Henry A. Huber, “War Hysteria,” unpublished manuscript, 40-41, Henry A. Huber papers, Box 15, WHS.

<sup>9</sup> Wisconsin War History Commission, “Concerning War Memorials, Bulletin No. 4” (Madison: The Committee, 1919). The pamphlet mentions “the experience we have had in connection with our memorials of the Civil War affords numerous illustrations of the pitfalls which lie in the path of the American community which resolves to erect a memorial to its soldier dead” (p. 1).

<sup>10</sup> G. Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 94.



Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has suggested that monuments and buildings give permanence to important, but fleeting events, like wars.<sup>11</sup> World War I monuments were also closely tied to the idea of American heritage and mythmaking. Their main story focused on the war as an American victory and the American military as saviors of a victimized Europe. Europeans were generally left out of the story. Wisconsin's war monuments fell into this mold by centering on a mythologized patriotic story of soldier bravery and citizen unity, and on an American democratic narrative. At the unveiling of the Soldier-Sailor Memorial in Manitowoc, a speaker noted that the monument "will be... a shrine at which every lover of his country may kneel and worship."<sup>12</sup>



Figure 4. Soldier-Sailor Memorial, Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Courtesy of Manitowoc County Historical Society.

Many of Wisconsin's World War I monuments were built during the 1920s with 1923 being the peak year. In every case their stated purpose was to honor the war dead. At the unveiling of the Merrill cenotaph, for example, one speaker noted the monument allowed Merrill to show "its appreciation to our war heroes" better than Memorial Day, which was only once a year, while the cenotaph "will carry the observance 365 days in the year." At the public event for the Manitowoc monument, another speaker stated its purpose was to remind the public "of the soldiers who went forth to battle and the sailors who faced both battle and storm to preserve this constitutional government."<sup>13</sup>

Communities around the country wanted to do more than build statues and monuments that commemorated the war dead. They wanted to express its ideals and purpose by building memorial buildings dedicated to servicing the community, veterans in particular, and promoting humanitarianism. Historian James Mayo has noted that the best memorial buildings were places

<sup>11</sup> James M. Mayo, *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1988), 11.

<sup>12</sup> "Memorial Dedicated," *Manitowoc Pilot*, November 15, 1923, WWHC, Clipping files, 1917-1945, Series 1701, Box 5, folder 1/2, WHS.

<sup>13</sup> "Lest We Keep on Forgetting," *Manitowoc Herald-News*, May 26, 1923, WWHC, Clipping files, Series 1701, Box 5, folder 2/2, WHS.



“where people can conceive that human betterment be presented.”<sup>14</sup> A number of Wisconsin communities created war memorials for the improvement of humanity, primarily humanity living nearby. Parks were popular, since they improved the urban environment. Of the Menasha Community Building, the *Milwaukee Journal* wrote, it was not just “a statue of a soldier...but a community building dedicated to the soldiers and sailors of the World war and established for the use of citizens of today.”<sup>15</sup> Planners of other buildings, like the University of Wisconsin’s Memorial Union, quickly learned they could raise money more easily if they labelled it a “memorial” building.



Figure 5. University of Wisconsin Memorial Union, 1932. Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID 57993.

### Armistice Day Events

With the announcement of armistice on November 11, 1918, spontaneous parades, celebrations, and parties occurred throughout America, including Wisconsin. The *Milwaukee Journal* described the day as one when “the pent-up feelings of the people broke loose in a celebration



Figure 6. World War I Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Building, Menasha, 1985. Wisconsin Historical Society Architecture and History Inventory, #60669.

---

<sup>14</sup> Mayo, 7-8.

<sup>15</sup> *Milwaukee Journal*, 1928.



that is unforgettable.”<sup>16</sup> For the next eighteen years (1919-1937), Americans often celebrated and honored the anniversary, even though it was not an official holiday. Armistice Day anniversaries not only provided Americans with a chance to remember the sacrifices of the country’s soldiers and sailors in a public and interactive way, they also became a forum where the meaning of the war could be discussed. Over time a fitting and proper format evolved that included blowing whistles and ringing church bells in the minutes before 11:00am when



Figure 7. Armistice Day Parade in Menomonie, Wisconsin. November 11, 1918. Wisconsin Historical Society, Image ID 102411

activities suddenly ceased and quiet reigned for one to two minutes. Followed by singing, parades, and speeches. In 1938 Armistice Day became an official federal holiday.

The year 1921 may have seen the peak of unofficial Armistice Day celebrations. In any case, it was definitely memorable. President Harding declared Armistice Day 1921 a national holiday in observance of burying the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. The American



Figure 8. Presidents Harding and Wilson honor the Unknown Soldier grave in Arlington, Virginia, November 11, 1921. *Literary Digest*, November 26, 1921.

<sup>16</sup> “Armistice Day,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 8, 1919, 6.



Legion noted that year “that interest in the proper observation of the new American holiday is widespread.”<sup>17</sup>

After 1921, a fear arose that Americans were forgetting war sacrifices. A speaker at the 1922 Armistice Day celebration in La Crosse, for example, spoke of the “dangers of forgetfulness.” “Last year,” he continued, “Armistice Day meant something... Beautiful exercises were held over the body of the Unknown Soldier... This year is somewhat different.”<sup>18</sup>

Armistice Day, because it was ephemeral, could be molded to new societal needs, political situations, and community desires. The rhetoric spoken around this day revealed how discussion of war memories changed over time, especially as the world’s political climate changed. In 1922, the *Beloit News* noted, “We have descended from the high peaks into the valleys of disappointment and indifference. This is the fault of the cynics and the scoffers. Let us highly resolve today that [our soldiers] did not die in vain.”<sup>19</sup> But by 1930, the *Milwaukee Journal*, a major voice of the hyper-patriots during the war years, wondered, “Where are we after twelve years? Alarmed by world depression in a world we fear may catch fire. . . . Afraid and more than half convinced that all these dead died in vain.”<sup>20</sup> Finally in 1945, the *Milwaukee Journal* believed, “This is not a day of rejoicing. This day marks the anniversary of broken promises and shattered dreams.”<sup>21</sup> As World War II ended, Armistice Day reminded Americans of failure, not of a proud heritage. Many thought the glories previously celebrated on Armistice Day were best forgotten along with the war. To help forget its existence, the federal government changed its name to Veterans Day in 1954.

In Wisconsin there was little connection between the way the war was experienced and the way it was remembered. Once the war ended, the hyper-patriots tried to control the war history narrative. They managed, as much as possible, to expunge any blemish of treason or un-American activities from the record. Yet in the end it was all for naught. World War I became the “forgotten war.” Despite the constant repetition of the words “Lest We Forget” in memorial publications, on monuments, and in Armistice Day speeches and editorials, Wisconsin and America did forget.

---

<sup>17</sup> “Legion Posts Plan to Observe Armistice Day,” *Marshfield News*, October 27, 1921, 2.

<sup>18</sup> “Rev. Dudley Speaker at the Theatre,” *La Crosse Tribune*, November 11, 1922, WWHC, Clipping files, Series 1701, Box 5, folder 3, WHS.

<sup>19</sup> “The Fourth Armistice Day,” *Beloit News*, November 11, 1922, WWHC, Clipping files, Box 5, folder 3, WHS.

<sup>20</sup> “Armistice Day, 1918-1930,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 11, 1930, 6.

<sup>21</sup> “Armistice Day Volleys Fired,” *Milwaukee Journal*, November 12, 1945, 15.



## An American Abroad: Perceptions of Americans in Buchan's WWI Thriller, *Greenmantle*

Peter Faziani

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

John Buchan is widely considered to be the father of the spy thriller, and in some respects, there's no argument against it. Through the development of a character that offers no specialized training and little by way of skills in espionage and warfare, John Buchan's Richard Hannay represents a form of British ideology that focuses on the strength and perseverance of a common man that is thrown into and subsequently overcomes adverse situations. In Buchan's first Richard Hannay novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, Hannay is a marked man because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time as a German plot to start the first world war unfolds. Because he is a man of no special talents, when he teams up with other, more experienced people on his mission in the second Hannay novel, *Greenmantle*, Hannay challenges the perception of foreigners. Although Hannay has several companions on his mission, this talk will focus specifically on John Blenkiron, an overweight American of somewhat ill health. While Blenkiron only appears in two of Buchan's Richard Hannay novels, he also appears in two novels outside of Hannay's adventures. For the sake of time and relevance, I'll limit my evaluation of Blenkiron's presentation to his role in 1916's *Greenmantle* as it is the first Richard Hannay novel to feature Blenkiron as well as being set during World War I.

Because of the imminent threat and sheer danger of the mission into Turkey to decipher the secret three-word code hastily scribbled on a scrap of paper, Hannay has, by way of Sir Walter, been teamed up with an old friend, Peter Pienaar, and the American John Blenkiron. While Blenkiron becomes a trusted associate of Hannay as the novel progresses, he is first described as "a sleepy Yankee" who "suffer[s]...from dyspepsia—duodenal dyspepsia. It gets me two hours after a meal and gives me hell just below the breast-bone. So I am obliged to adopt a diet. My nourishment is fish, Sir, and boiled milk and a little dry toast" (Buchan 29). Although Blenkiron's weak disposition limits what he can eat, readers are encouraged to believe that it is his American ideology that prevents him from serving war efforts. However, he is vocal about his unique desire to participate in the glory of battle: "but these eyes have seen nothing gorier than a Presidential election. Say, is there any way I could be let into a scene of real bloodshed?" (Buchan 29-30). Although Blenkiron plays a significant role in the novel as an expert in espionage with experience and an ability to travel freely through enemy territory, Hannay's continuous evaluation of his behaviors and actions suggest that, like adventure novels in themselves, Buchan is critically disguising Blenkiron as an American that puts the group and mission at risk with his casual attitude toward the plan because of his American neutrality. Furthermore, while Hannay is skeptical of Blenkiron's abilities, he is also threatened by them because Hannay is an amateur whereas Blenkiron is not.

Interestingly enough, I'm not the first to suggest that Blenkiron's presence in the novel is meant to catch the attention of readers. In a 2005 article in the *Telegraph*, Charles Moore writes,





The book appeared in the middle of the First World War, and one of its propaganda purposes was to get America in on our side (which happened the following year, 1917). This explains the otherwise superfluous presence of a character called Mr. Blenkiron, a fat, brave, dyspeptic American, who joins the heroes' clandestine struggle against Germany.

Moore's casual assessment of the novel never fully ascertains the full scope of Buchan's understanding of America's would-be role or addresses just how Blenkiron's appearance would usher America into the war. Indeed, it is my argument here that the introduction of Blenkiron suggests that America's complacency was a cultural code to be unconsciously read into the text while also framing British fears of being overshadowed by that very intervention.

Blenkiron's portrayal of an American operative without real war experience represents Americans at large, however, the importance of that representation depends on, as Allan Hepburn recognizes, an understanding of spies that "challenge narrow definitions of political agency. Ideology produces spies, but spies...temper ideology" (xiv). If Blenkiron is the representation of tempered American ideology, the issue of authentic ideology cannot effectively be raised. Throughout the novel, Blenkiron is the only American with a real role in the plot, however, he is painfully clear that his actions are his own and do not reflect those of his countrymen. As a result of Buchan's narrative, Blenkiron is less of a manifestation of ideologies because his character is not an average American in the same way Hannay is an average Englishman. Instead, Blenkiron can be read as a tool to evaluate British ideological perceptions of Americans. This critical evaluation, according to Michael Denning's work on ideology in spy thrillers, "formulates a theory of disguise, an explanation of impersonation," that spy novels engage in an attempt to mask the code of ideology (45). After the initial introduction to Blenkiron, mentioned earlier, the novel demands, according to directions of Sir Walter Bullivant, that Hannay must form his own opinion of Blenkiron before learning what others believe: "His name is Mr. John Scantlebury Blenkiron, now a citizen of Boston, Mass., but born and raised in Indiana. Put this envelope in your pocket, but don't read its contents till you have talked to him" (109). Although instructed to form his own opinion, Bullivant's mere recommendation suggests a skillset that can be *helpful* to the mission, but skillset is never in question when it comes to Blenkiron.

Bullivant and Hannay's concerns lie within Blenkiron's ability to mesh or blend with the group cultural dynamic as well as Blenkiron's perception of current war effort. Although confronted with existing American war involvement, Blenkiron dismisses it as "some belligerent stunt," and then goes on to add,

But I reflected that the good God had not given John S. Blenkiron the kind of martial figure that would do credit to the tented field. Also I recollected that we Americans were nootrals—benevolent nootrals—and that it did not become me to be butting into the struggles of the effete monarchies of Europe (Buchan 110).

Although Blenkiron's assessment of the larger US mindset was not far from reality, the way Buchan frames Blenkiron as a character on the edge of action is a facet of the thriller genre in itself.

In Denning's *Cover Stories*, the study of the genre focuses on the perception of reality from within the actions and descriptions of the characters, and although Denning's work focuses primarily on Cold War era spy fiction, Buchan's construction of Blenkiron through the lens and perception of Hannay is suggestive of a much larger view of American involvement. In an analysis of Lukacs'



work, Denning suggests “the spy novel, despite its preservation of plot, has a strategic containment of realism in its short-cut to the totality...its focus on the world of espionage does not necessarily make it about spies” (29). The question is then, what if any, is the historical context of Buchan’s inclusion of Blenkiron as a player in the novel? In the planning of their quest, Blenkiron’s longwinded decision to hide in plain sight as he traveled through Germany alone demonstrates an awareness of the tension between America and Europe about their position of neutrality:

If I were to buy a pair of false whiskers and dye my hair and dress like a Baptist parson and go into Germany on the peace racket, I guess they'd be on my trail like a knife, and I should be shot as a spy inside of a week or doing solitary in the Moabite prison. But they lack the larger vision. They can be bluffed, Sir. With your approval I shall visit the Fatherland as John S. Blenkiron, once a thorn in the side of their brightest boys on the other side. But it will be a different John S. I reckon he will have experienced a change of heart.  
(Buchan 117-118)

Certainly, Blenkiron’s position as ruffled traveler suggests a tension from the authorial perspective. Indeed, although Buchan’s portrayal of Blenkiron as trustworthy and engaged is never questioned throughout the novel, it is his appearance and acceptance as an American that exists outside of the realm of other Americans that fosters an underlying commentary about the American position in war. This suggests that Buchan is, in essence, writing a novel of encoded meaning in the writing of *Greenmantle*.

As I mentioned earlier, Hannay’s entire adventure is built from three hastily scribbled words on a scrap of paper. Those three words, “Kasredin', 'cancer', and 'v. I,” represent an encrypted message that acts as the key to the entire plot (Buchan 107). Using this novel as an example in demonstrating the qualities of code breaking in espionage and thriller novels, Hepburn suggests that “breaking a code ushers a reader or a spy over a threshold of ignorance and into the domain of knowledge” (50). If the novel’s plot can be read as an attempt to bring a resourceful American into the fold to help break the code, and therefore to bring him over that threshold of ignorance and into knowledge, then perhaps, to dwell on and expand Charles Moore’s assertion that the novel was an attempt to draw the US into the conflict, it was more to suggest to readers that the American neutrality could be an advantage if played from the right perspective. The novel confirms this advantage when, in a conversation between Sir Walter and Hannay, Blenkiron’s effectiveness is called into question: “Our friend's motto is ‘Thorough’,’ he said, ‘and he knows very well what he is about’” (Buchan 121). Indeed, by effectively playing his part well and hiding in plain sight after the plan has been set, Blenkiron disappears from the novel for nearly one hundred pages only to reappear in the company of the German officer, Stumm, who has detained Hannay, who is disguised as a South African Dutchman. While Hannay’s narration conveys a sense of surprise at Blenkiron’s appearance, the thoroughness of Blenkiron’s attitude never seems to waver.

Blenkiron’s skills in deception play an important role in understanding Buchan’s larger encoded understanding of the American issue (or lack thereof) in the first World War. While Buchan has until this point in the novel framed Blenkiron as an American of different pedigree than other, conventional Americans, the more frequently Blenkiron pops up in the novel without revealing his mission, the more Hannay has to adapt or change his identity to remain hidden. Perhaps this is a genre feature, one such as Allan Hepburn notes: “Spy fiction emphasizes problems of racial integration, threats from other nations, and armament” (52). Even if that emphasis is squarely



placed on Blenkiron's ability to integrate himself into German society, the problem is that his status as an American has prevented him from working in the right circles when later talking.

I was too high up and refined. I've been processing through Europe like Barnum's Circus, and living with generals and transparencies.... But the thing I was after wasn't to be found on my beat, for those that knew it weren't going to tell. In that kind of society they don't get drunk and blab after their tenth cocktail (Buchan 204).

It is at this point in the novel that readers are finally able to crack Buchan's code because the problem for Hannay was not that he had been unsuccessful in getting through Germany and into Constantinople, but that he was concerned that Blenkiron would be successful; "I was mean enough to feel rather glad. He had been the professional with the best chance. It would be a good joke if the amateur succeeded where the expert failed" (Buchan 205). Although Blenkiron's success would have been helpful to the mission, because Hannay views him as a professional, or at least a trained spy, the perception of success is different. Because Hannay's experience as a spy is fundamentally limited, whereas Blenkiron's is not, the novel's race to the finish line can be read as a comment on the difference between American experience and politics as set against those of the British in the war.

If Buchan's novel is to be read as a critique of American involvement in the First World War, then Blenkiron's role in the novel should also be read as an example of changing evaluations of general involvement. Although Blenkiron is considered to be a parallel figure to the company throughout the first part of the novel, by the climax he is the only one to get hurt and rescued by his fellow British counterparts: "Blenkiron got hit in the leg, our only casualty" (Buchan 287). Because the relationship between Hannay and Blenkiron is strengthened by the experience of violence, the novel suggests that the perception of Americans in the First World War depended on the understanding of neutrality as a concept rather than location. In an article that examines the sportsmanship of spying, Thomas Hitchner reasons, "The chief ideological difference between the genres of counterspy fiction and spy fiction, then, is not over whether or not England is in conflict with its neighbors and rivals, but the nature of that conflict" (421). Hitchner's claim suggests that the perception of conflict in spy fiction does not depend on the establishment of an enemy to unify allies, instead that it depends on an understanding of the role each other plays in stopping the enemy.

This paper set out to present and understand the perception of Americans in the First World War through the characterization of John S. Blenkiron in John Buchan's novel *Greenmantle*. Although Blenkiron appears in other subsequent novels by Buchan, this novel introduces readers to this American for the first time. Through the conventions of the genre, Buchan disguised and encoded Blenkiron as a character that could blend in because of the American neutrality. This was, however, both an advantage and disadvantage for himself and Hannay as they made their way across Europe because although he could blend in, he was only privy to an upper echelon of information. While the argument has been made that Buchan used Blenkiron as a way to draw Americans into the conflict, it seems more likely that Buchan's characterization and implementation of an American operative among Hannay's untrained team is geared at unifying an already existing set of peoples.



## Works Cited

- Buchan, John. "Greenmantle." *The Complete Richard Hannay Stories*, Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2010, pp. 101-302.
- Denning, Michael. *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.
- Hepburn, Allan. *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture*. Yale UP. 2005.
- Hitchner, Thomas. "Edwardian Spy Literature and the Ethos of Sportsmanship: The Sport of Spying." *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*. Vol. 3 No. 4, pp. 413-430.
- Moore, Charles. A Warning from the Past that the BBC Does Not Want Us to Hear. Telegraph, 16 July 2005. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3618396/A-warning-from-the-past-that-the-BBC-does-not-want-us-to-hear.html>



## Communication Technologies During World War I and the Interwar Years

Martha Sloan

Professor Emerita, Michigan Technological University

Technologies often change more rapidly during wars than during peacetime, as evidenced in the first half of the twentieth century. While the nineteenth century saw major developments in mechanical engineering with the steam engine and its impact on industries and transportation, the twentieth century became the electrical century, notably for improved communications. Telephone and telegraph, established in the nineteenth century, were effective in WWI, a static war in which fixed lines and telegraph sufficed for connections between trenches, while telegraph, telephone and radio served for status reports or orders among military organizations. As the role of aviation changed from spotting to fighting and bombing, communications had to change. Other technologies, such as radar and sonar, with more direct military impacts, blossomed during the war for both offensive and defensive purposes. These affected both aviation and submarines as war changed from a surface phenomenon to three different spheres—below sea, ground or sea, and the sky.

This paper looks at communication technologies developed by the three major combatants for both world wars—the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States of America—as they grew during WWI, languished during the early interwar years, accelerated in the late interwar period, and exploded during WWII. Developments by the three countries varied according to their technological strengths and weaknesses, their military strategies (especially during the interwar years), and the degree of coordination between military units and developers.

Communication technologies can be classified in two basic ways. Wired technologies require a physical wired connection; wireless technologies connect through the air or water. Early communication technologies used simple on-off signals that were soon standardized into Morse Code. In contrast, voice-based technologies required more advanced methods to convey the complexity of human voices. Telegraph was the original wired, Morse code technology. Telephone was the first voice technology; it began as a wired technology. The telegraph network connected post offices, government agencies, and major corporations. To send a telegram, one had to appear at a telegraph office and give the clerk a written message. The clerk sent the Morse-coded message on a telegraph line to the next office where it was stored and then sent to another office until it reached its destination. This repeated storing and forwarding took time. If the same message was to go to multiple recipients, each message was sent individually. However telegraphy did have the advantage of security; it could be intercepted only by physically tapping the telegraph line.

### World War I

At the start of World War I, the dominant communications technology was telegraph, a mature technology that had been used in several wars dating back to the American Civil War. In military use, each army would set up its own telegraph network, which required horse-drawn wagons to



carry the heavy equipment. While cables were originally available just on land, by 1900 undersea cables made near world wide telegraph messages possible. This led to the single most importance impact of communications technology on war, the Zimmerman telegram.

Britain had guaranteed Belgium's neutrality since 1839. Thus, when Germany invaded Belgium in August 1914, the British gave the Germans an ultimatum to get out of Belgium with a deadline of 4 August, midnight, German time, 11:00 pm, British time. As Winston Churchill described, when time expired, the Admiralty's windows were thrown open and the sounds of a huge throng singing "God save the King" wafted in. The war had officially started.

Hours before, a British ship had sailed toward the location of five German cables linking Germany to North America at the western tip of England. Once authorized to proceed, the ship pulled up the cables and destroyed them. This limited Germany to wireless communications that could easily be intercepted or to working with the two neutral countries that had cable access—the U.S. and Sweden. Germany pleaded to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who saw himself as a peacemaker, to allow them to send messages via U.S. lines. Wilson agreed, thinking that this would help a peaceful resolution, but required that all messages be "in the clear" meaning unencrypted.

Two-and-a-half years later both the Allies and the Central Powers were devastated after millions of casualties, billions of dollars, and thousands of assets had been lost. Wilson's peacemaking efforts were unsuccessful as the two sides were stubbornly too far apart. Germany was drafting 15-year-olds while civilians starved from shortage of food due partly to the British blockade of German ports. Britain, while waiting for the miracle of America's entrance to the war, fared better as long as it could continue importing food. Seeing the discrepancy in access to food by the two sides, Germany decided to resort to unrestricted submarine warfare announced on 1 February 1917. However, Germany feared the announcement might lead the U.S. to enter the war. Throughout the war, Germany had hoped that Mexico would distract the US. from the European conflict by attacking the southern U.S. Thus Germany devised a plan to entice Mexico to do so by promising that Germany would support Mexico with substantial funds and reward it with the formerly Mexican-owned parts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

Thus came the Zimmerman telegram, a message from Arthur Zimmerman, a high German Foreign Office official, to the German Ambassador to Mexico to be sent through U.S. diplomatic cable. The telegram instructed him to pass the message of a proposed German-Mexican military alliance on to the Mexican president if the U.S. appeared to be about to enter the war. Obviously, this message could not be sent in the clear. So Zimmerman persuaded the U.S. Ambassador to allow sending it enciphered.

On 19 January 1917, well before the German announcement of unrestricted submarine warfare, Zimmerman sent the telegram to the German embassy in the U.S. for retransmission to Mexico. The telegram flowed through American diplomatic lines until it reached the cable to the U.S. Before it could proceed further a copy was intercepted at a relay station near Land's End on the westernmost coast of England and sent to the British intelligence at Room 40 of the Admiralty, the British cryptography center. Room 40, whose name was selected for its apparent unimportance, received copies of all traffic through Land's End and had been analyzing up to 200 messages a day since the start of the war. British codebreakers had been aided by captured copies of the German diplomatic and naval ciphers but even more by their knowledge of German behavior. Germans liked order, and hence were predictable on their daily change of keys. Moreover the Germans'



justifiable pride in their superior technology meant they believed their enemies could not read their codes. In fact, in both World Wars Germans believed their codes were secure when actually the Allies read nearly all their messages.

Room 40 immediately identified the Zimmerman message as critical. Within hours the British had a partial decryption and soon a complete one. Then the British had problems on disclosing the message. They did not want Germany to know that Britain had broken their codes. They did not want the U. S. to know that it was eavesdropping on American diplomatic messages as it continued to do for the next quarter century. They did want to convince America that the message was genuine. Handing it over directly to the Americans risked the U.S. thinking it was a hoax. The British needed a cover story.

They knew that the Mexican Embassy would relay the Zimmerman telegram by Western Union to Mexico. So the Mexican telegraph office would have the ciphertext. They bribed an employee of the Mexican office to steal a copy of the message, which they then showed to the Americans on 10 February. The Americans were first unbelieving and then outraged. They thoroughly verified the telegram's authenticity from Western Union files. The telegram read:

We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support, and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to conquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace. Signed, ZIMMERMAN

All doubt about authenticity disappeared when Zimmerman himself called a press conference on 3 March where he told American journalists that the telegram was his and real, followed by a speech to the Reichstag on 29 March. He hoped to convince Americans that Germany would support a Mexican war against the U.S. only if the U.S. entered the war. President Wilson was informed. He released the text to newspapers on 28 February. (Meanwhile, the president of Mexico, on advice from his generals, decided to ignore the German offer.)

On 1 February Germany started unrestricted submarine attacks on all U.S.-flagged ships in the north Atlantic. Germany sunk two American ships in February, causing most American shipping companies to avoid the Atlantic. Wilson asked the Senate for authority to arm merchant ships, but the Senate denied it. On 2 April Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany. Four days later it did. Thus cutting German cables at the start of the war led to America's entry into it in the most significant impact of communications on the war.

Routine use of telegraph in World War I was much less dramatic. As the war quickly settled into static trench warfare, both sides learned to maintain their telegraph networks well back from the trenches to minimize destruction of lines. Generals preferred to locate their command posts at the hubs of several interconnected lines to maximize information from their troops and to command



them. Moving command posts was difficult due to the need of horse-drawn carts to carry the heavy equipment.

As the war proceeded, there was more demand for voice capability, for wireless, and for smaller, lighter equipment. Aviation was becoming more important, first with zeppelins and later with fixed-wing airplanes. Zeppelins could easily afford the room and weight for wireless Morse code even though the equipment weighed a third of a ton and required at least one signals specialist to operate. However, the first airplanes were single-seaters and it was not possible for the pilot to send and receive Morse code messages and still fly the plane, not to mention the weight of the equipment. When larger planes became available, these limits were less important but made voice capability even more important.

America led in telephone networks, but wired telephone networks were as vulnerable to enemy attack as were telegraph networks. Germany was more motivated for military wireless voice communications. Wireless communications allowed for simultaneous sending of the same message to multiple recipients, allowing Germans to send the same orders more quickly. However, they were unsecure as anyone could listen to them. This meant sending Morse coded messages wirelessly as the Germans were confident their codes were safe. Voice wireless meant even lower security so was reserved for emergencies.

Germans made the most use of radio for both land and sea usage during the war. They relied on encryption rather than radio silence to conceal their intentions, not realizing that British intelligence was quite effective in direction-finding. British success in detecting the sailing of the German fleet from its ports in May 1916 led to the Battle of Jutland and the near destruction of the German fleet. This was the second most successful use of communications in the war.

Wireless voice communications, called radio, was still in its infancy but had been used successfully in wars before World War I, including the Boer War, the Balkan wars, and the Russo-Japanese war. Radio, especially, needed a way to amplify signals so they could be heard from further away. This spurred work on vacuum tubes that were introduced midway through the war.

These difficult improvements of radio had tremendous civilian impact after the war. By 1920 radio stations playing music and offering news swept across America. Somewhat later, after Hitler came to power in Germany, the German government sponsored the development of inexpensive “peoples’ radios” so that German citizens could more easily listen to Hitler.

WWI showed slower development of another wireless technology, radar and its underwater cousin sonar. Germany led in submarine development and in sonar used to find underwater submarines. Radar detection and later location of above ground objects was in its infancy. It was used primarily for finding airplanes as ground use had too many objects to separately locate.

### Interwar Period

After the war, Germany, Britain, and the U.S. chose independent paths in military technologies. Germany knew there would be a war in the near future. Therefore, Germans planned offensive uses of technology; they focused on communications (and submarine) technology nearly continuously from WWI through the interwar period because they planned war despite sanctions from the Versailles treaty. The UK feared there would be another war soon despite all the Versailles Treaty had done to limit Germany. Therefore, the UK focused on defensive





technologies. The British had learned during the Great War that the English Channel was no longer nearly impenetrable; they'd experienced the damage of submarines and could see that airplanes threatened invasion. Hence, they focused on defense with strong interconnections of their defensive units, such as the network of their radar stations (and later planes). America, for most of the period, displayed strategic indifference. Americans had learned different military and political lessons and famously preferred to ignore both German and Japanese efforts that threatened the end of their previous oceanic isolation.

### The Germans

The overall German policy focused on airplanes, tanks, and submarines as the most effective offensive weapons from the war. Radio communication, generally, and encryption, specifically, enhanced the effect of these weapons by facilitating their command and control across great distances. They continued their WWI preference for radio telegraphy at sea and ensured voice radio in airplanes and tanks. Because they saw radar as a mainly defensive technology, they did little with it until late in World War II.

Germany produced the best radar systems in the interwar period. Their equipment had the farthest range, the most rugged construction, and the greatest flexibility. However, they overemphasized technical strength while taking operational usage for granted. They also had too many competing research centers that did not communicate well with each other. And they became complacent, believing in their own superiority, thus becoming a victim of their own success.

They made a major breakthrough mechanizing encryption with the German Enigma machine. It had three—later four—rotating discs with the letters of the alphabet. Transmitting a letter meant sending a current from the letter to be sent to different letters on the other rotors and then back. After each letter was sent, the discs were rotated, ensuring that each succeeding letter was enciphered in a different alphabet. The number of possible encryptions of a given message increased exponentially with the number of rotors even before other complexities were added. The Germans felt confident that their coded messages could not be broken, but thanks to some Polish mathematicians and the British codebreakers at Bletchley Park, they were.

### The British

At the end of World War I, the British could see that their island isolation was under threat from both submarines and airplanes. Submarines threatened to isolate Britain while bombers threatened to attack both Britain and its ships from overhead. German bombs from dirigibles and bomber planes had killed almost 1500 persons and injured more than 3000 people inside the UK during WWI. The British thus assumed a grand strategic defensive that emphasized signals intelligence that had been so effective during the war. They considered radar to be the most effective form of defensive intelligence and the best response to German technology.

The British lagged the Germans in most communication technologies throughout the interwar period. However, they more than made up for their poorer equipment by the way they used them. As Churchill explained,

The Germans would not have been surprised to hear our radar pulses for they had developed a technically efficient radar system which was in some respects ahead of our own. What would have surprised them, however, was the extent to which we had turned our discoveries to practical effect, and woven all into our air defense system. In this we



led the world, and it was operational efficiency rather than novelty of equipment that was the British achievement.

This is an outstanding example of the difference between novelty of equipment contrasted with adapting military thought to less advanced devices.

Their master plan became the Chain Home radar defense system. Interlinked radars at each site covered the main approaches to Britain. In addition, they developed radar systems small enough to be in fighter planes. They selectively drafted ham radio operators to service the radar sets rather than training their own technicians.

### The Americans

Americans lacked both the offensive motivation of the Germans and the defensive fears of the British. Hence, they lagged both technically and operationally, though not by a lot. Once Americans could see the war was coming, they stepped up their pace and often surpassed the Europeans. One historian explained with regard to radar that in Britain the development of radar was “a definite solution to a pressing problem” while in the U.S., it was only “a vague answer to uncertain threats.”

American work in radar more closely resembled that of the Germans than of the British. In both the U.S. and Germany, technical work was dispersed with notice of advances moving upward to decision makers with little interaction among the developmental groups. In contrast, the British effort was top down. In addition, the British “old boy” system cut through institutional boundaries.

Another way of looking at the situation is the following. Technical advances were similar in all three countries. However, the British gained operationally because they saw a need to adapt to a situation they had not caused and could not control; the Germans thought they could control events; and the Americans saw no need to control far off events that did not concern them.



## American Chemical Companies in the First World War

Jason Szilagyi

Central Michigan University

The outbreak of the First World War caught America in a situation where American companies and consumers were threatened by a shortage of chemical materials. German chemicals were a major factor in food production and consumer goods throughout the industrialized world. Whether these American chemical companies were producing dyes for the production of paper, clothing, fertilizer, or munitions, the lack of imported German component chemicals threatened to drive prices to exorbitant levels or stop production altogether. In order for the American economy to not come to a halt during the course of the war, American chemical companies worked tirelessly to create their own chemical formulas, expand their production base, and gear towards full war production as the United States was slowly pulled into the conflict.

The United States initially had no interest in involving itself in a European war. In theory, the decision to remain neutral kept America out of the direct line of fire, and allowed it to sell to and buy materials from both warring sides. American companies sought to make profits by selling war materials, as well as civilian goods, to both the Entente powers, Great Britain, France, and Imperial Russia, as well as the Central Powers, Germany, and Austria-Hungary. Munition export sales created a massive boom in American business, though these were protested vigorously by pacifists, clergy, and nationalist groups within the United States.

However, the actual physical geography of the warring nations and military mastery of the sea by the Entente Powers quickly ensured that German chemicals could not reach American plants. The British Grand Fleet and French Navy had slowly been establishing a naval blockade to anything going into or out of Germany. Initially the British and French blockades enraged Americans: British and French warships could, and would, stop American merchant ships heading for Central Power ports. In the process of these stops, British and French sailors would search the ships for contraband and if this was found the ship and cargo were impounded. This was seen by Americans as a violation of their neutrality: in their view they should be able to trade anything with anyone as they were not a combatant nation. However, the United States shifted to more trade with the Entente Powers, as export to these nations was easiest.

### Potash Fertilizer

Some of the most critical materials that were denied to American consumers involved the chemicals needed to create fertilizers. One of the most missed chemical compounds blocked from Americans was German potash. Potash is an alkaline potassium compound that can be used as a highly effective fertilizer. It is an essential ingredient of commercial fertilizer, which was



increasingly necessary for long-used fields.<sup>1</sup> And since potassium is essential to plant life, without this central ingredient chemical fertilizers cannot effectively increase the yields of crops planted.

At the outbreak of the First World War, the best fields for this material were found in Germany and it had been a major source of their export wealth. European and American farmers used the potash as a way for plants to retain water, grow larger, and generally increase the productivity of their fields. American farmers had become quite reliant on German exports as the American chemical industry did not have an existing domestic source of potash.

Large German chemical corporate conglomerations, or better known as cartels, were not keen to share the formulas with foreign competitors and buyers. They jealously guarded their secrets and had a virtual monopoly on the production of potash. With the outbreak of war, German potash could no longer be exported to meet the demand. German cartels had for decades refused to manufacture their chemicals in American plants because the monopoly on those formulae and shipments was a major source of wealth for German owners, investors, and the German Government.

Due to the British blockade, supplies of potash and other chemicals could not be sent to the United States. In order to crush the German economy and military, Britain expanded its list of items that were deemed contraband. Any merchant ships going to Germany carrying foodstuffs, medical supplies, and an exhaustive list of other items, could be seized. In 1915, Germany, facing the reality that their merchant ships could not sail to America, initiated an embargo on potash. The logic behind the move was to prevent their potash from going to America and then being exported from there to England. Historian William Haynes, writing about the situation after the war, states:

Even if our Government [United States] should obtain from the British free passage for this essential fertilizer material through the blockade, it was recognized that both English munition plants and farmlands were in as dire need of potash salts as ourselves. Under the circumstances, Germany would no doubt be as rigid in her embargo as was England in her blockade.<sup>2</sup>

German potash stocks were used by Germany and Austria-Hungary to try and fend off famine in those empires during the war. Later, those same stocks of potash would be used to make up for the loss of imported sources of nitrate for making munitions. The potash was chemically altered, by the Haber synthetic-ammonia process, in order to make explosives for artillery shells and bombs, as well as propellants for bullets. Germany, along with most other countries in the world, received most of its salt-peter and nitrogen supplies from Chile. The British blockade prevented that supply from reaching Germany, prompting the need for other processes to obtain the materials. Haynes explains:

In Germany this problem had a double meaning. To the Kaiser's militaristic clique, which foresaw a British blockade of Chilean salt-peter, nitrogen was as important for explosives as for fertilizer.

---

<sup>1</sup> Edwin J. Clapp, *Economic Aspects of the War: Neutral Rights, Belligerent Claims and American Commerce in the Years 1914-1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915), 239.

<sup>2</sup> William Haynes, *American Chemical Industry the World War I Period: 1912-1922* (New York, D. Van Nostrand, 1949), 2: 31.



So while Wilhelm II rattled his sword noisily for several years, he did not throw away the scabbard until the Haber synthetic-ammonia process and its companion, the Ostwald process for the conversion of ammonia to nitric acid, had been perfected and tested.<sup>3</sup>

Starting in September 1914, American newspapers, politicians, and scholars quickly sought to assuage concerns from farmers about the loss of this core fertilizer component. An article published by *The New York Times* on 18 October 1914 discussed the issue: “A practical monopoly [sic] in the potash market has been maintained in America by German syndicates. The war’s embargo has brought a complete severance between supply and demand.”<sup>4</sup> The reality of having almost no readily available large stocks of potash had the potential to drastically reduce American food supplies. American chemists were charged with finding an alternative compound to keep crops growing.

The lack of German potash forced American chemical companies to develop American potash or to find an alternative fertilizer to make up the shortfall. In an interview with the *New York Globe*, Dr. William H. Nichols stated “Stassfurt (Germany) potash supply, upon which the world depends, is, of course, entirely cut off. The American farmer may have to get along for the time being without potash fertilizers; but other substitutes will take their place for the present.”<sup>5</sup> At the time Dr. Nicholas was Chairman of the Board of General Chemical Company and also the president of the Nichols Copper Company. His expertise was sought out in order to assure Americans that the shortages of potash would not cripple farmers. His advice in 1914 was simply that these vital chemicals could be obtained from alternate European or South American sources or could be lived without altogether.

By 1915, the lack of German potash and limited success of American chemists and chemicals to fill the gap was beginning to be felt. Prices of the remaining stock of potash soared and became increasingly cost-prohibitive to the average farmers. According to Corda (qtd. In Jenson) “the price remained fairly stable at about \$8 to \$10 a ton until 1911-12 when it began to rise, perhaps because of the unsettled political situation in Europe.”<sup>6</sup> Measures needed to be taken to ensure that American farmers would be able to fertilize their fields. The price of potash would jump to nearly \$150 per ton by 1917, an exorbitant cost that was prohibitive.

Suitable alternative sites for the production of potash inside American borders were in some cases found in the most unlikely of circumstance. Richard Jensen describes a perfect example of this process, by which the small towns of Antioch and Hoffland, Nebraska, became boomtowns because of the potash industry. “Early in 1917 several potash lakes were discovered on state-owned

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>4</sup> “Foreign Purchases of American Products,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1914, p. 119 [From Library of Congress, World War History, [www.loc.gov/item/2004540423/1914-10-17/ed-1/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2004540423/1914-10-17/ed-1/), accessed Aug. 28, 2018].

<sup>5</sup> “Effects of the War on Chemical Trade,” *The New York Globe*, Sep. 1, 1914, p. 110 [From Library of Congress, World War History, [www.loc.gov/item/2004540423/1914-08-31/ed-1/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2004540423/1914-08-31/ed-1/), accessed Aug. 28, 2018].

<sup>6</sup> Richard Jensen, “Nebraska’s World War I Potash Industry,” *Nebraska History* 68 (1987), 29.



school land, and a company was quickly formed to lease the mineral rights.”<sup>7</sup> These chemical companies had to quickly establish rights to take over the lakes, build the factories necessary to create the potash, and finally have transportation systems that would allow for the finished product to hit the market. The population of the towns swelled as workers and chemists swarmed in to build and labor in the plants.

Nebraska became a center of potash production, but it was by no means an easy process, nor was it the only state to have the rare materials. Twenty-one states in total would find the means to build 128 plants to create an American potash industry. The massive price of building these facilities was only exacerbated by the inflation that the original shortages of potash caused. J. W. Turrentine, writing in 1950, also describes the difficulty that American chemical companies had when confronted with creating the potash industry from the ground up:

The critical nature of the emergency did not permit technological research. On the contrary, potash was being extracted in many instances by main force and awkwardness. As a result, with the reappearance of German potash on the American market at a carefully regulated descending scale of prices, the wartime domestic industry faded away, with only three units surviving to recent years.<sup>8</sup>

The completion of the factories and the economic boom to those states lasted only two years: by 1919, the cheaper German potash began to become available again. Those newly built chemical potash factories ended up closing during and after 1919 as the profits of companies plummeted.

While potash fertilizer was important to food production inside the United States, it was also needed for non-food agricultural work. Cotton production in the Southern states also required fertilizers. The lack of German potash saw a precipitous fall in the amount of fertilizer available for Southern farmers. The lack of fertilizer had the potential effect of producing poor cotton crops, thus reducing the amount available for the export market. Edwin J. Clapp sums up the situation:

As a result of these conditions the use of fertilizer in this country for the agricultural season of 1915 was greatly curtailed. This was especially true of the cotton states, where a reduction of 40 to 50 per cent was reported. Such fertilizer as was used contained less potash than usual. The effect on the cotton crop may not be noticeably great for the year 1915; but if the war continues and in 1916 no more potash is available than this year, the results, according to agricultural experts, will be very marked.<sup>9</sup>

The United States produced far more cotton per year than its own industry consumed. This had been the case since cotton had become the major crop of the South during the nineteenth century. With the outbreak of World War I, the demand for additional supplies for textile industries all over the world had the potential to boost a slumping pre-war American economy. But if the lack of cheap, available chemical fertilizer could not be found, then cotton crops would fail and Southern farmers faced economic collapse. Over the course of the war, the cotton that was grown in the United States shifted away from export and was used instead domestically by American textile

---

<sup>7</sup> Jensen, 28.

<sup>8</sup> J.W. Turrentine, “The American Potash Industry,” *The Scientific Monthly*, 70, no. 1 (1950), 41.

<sup>9</sup> Clapp, 243.



manufacturers. The lack of fertilizer, as well as foreign markets, saw the American cotton farmer drastically lose economic power.

The lack of potash affected the growth of crops on the Pacific coast of the United States as well. California had, and still has, a tremendous ability to grow foodstuffs that can be either consumed domestically or abroad. In order to keep those vast fields productive, scientists in California turned to a truly unique solution to the fertilizer shortage: seaweed would be a new major chemical component. As Peter Neushul states, “Responding to this wartime opportunity, enterprising American businessmen built a new industry designed to extract both potash and acetone from California’s giant kelp. Although short-lived, California’s World War I kelp industry was the largest ever created in the United States for the processing of plants from the ocean.”<sup>10</sup> Initially harvesting the kelp was hazardous and exhausting work for the people involved in the process. The earliest version of harvesting the plant was to physically haul the kelp out of the water and onto the ship, a difficult practice as the crew had to physically secure the kelp underwater and then hoist it up. This method was detrimental because the kelp stalk itself was displaced from the seabed and could not be regrown. Between 1917 and 1918, the kelp harvesting industry lined up its technological issues and began producing a vital alternative to German potash

A vast kelp harvesting and processing industry was born along the California coastline in order to boost domestic potash production. Factories, ships, and railway lines were laid in order for the kelp to be harvested, dried, and finally processed into potash for use either in the United States or to be exported abroad. The kelp potash was used to supplement the fertilizer industry and in the application of munitions manufacturing.

### Potassium Nitrate as a Weapon

Potash was an essential component in the manufacture of chemical fertilizers, but it can also be a key in the creation of munitions. A different blend of potassium and other chemical elements similar to potash is known as saltpeter, or potassium nitrate, an essential piece in black powder production. Saltpeter can be found in several varieties each of which has different applications.

The most soughtafter version, before and during the First World War, was Chilean sodium nitrate. This version of saltpeter comes from the deserts of Chile and was a major source of wealth for that South American country. By the end of the nineteenth century, the last major supplies of naturally occurring Chilean nitrate lay in the Atacama Desert.

By 1911, Chile was supplying the majority of the entire world in nitrates. European powers sought to have close ties to Chile hoping that favorable diplomatic relations would lead to a steady supply of nitrates. As mentioned above, Chilean nitrate was used to produce not only fertilizers, but propellants used for bullets, explosives used in artillery shells and bombs. According to Manuel Bastias Saaverda, “Before 1914, only one-fifth of all Chilean nitrate exports were consumed in the powder and explosives industry; almost four-fifths of all nitrate exports were used for military

---

<sup>10</sup> Peter Neushul, “Seaweed for War: California’s World War I Kelp Industry,” *Technology and Culture* 30, no. 3 (1989), 561.



purposes thereafter.”<sup>11</sup> Without the supply of this rare mineral for continuous manufacturing of munitions, a long war would be out of the question for potential combatants.

Germany had a massive advantage over the Allied Forces during the early years of the war due to stockpiling the Chilean nitrates in anticipation of war. It also had an additional edge because most of the enemy European nations needed German chemicals to manufacture their own munitions. This initial lack of extra nitrates to manufacture new munitions was a terror for both those Allied soldiers fighting in France and the people at home. This early German advantage was also tied to the fact the Britain and France had to switch their industries over to the large-scale manufacture of war goods, something that did not come into full effect until 1916.

This lack of munitions caused a number of issues for both the British and French militaries. Between 1914 and 1915, the rapid consumption of shells by artillery pieces on the Western Front meant that rationing of those munitions needed to take place. Allied forces that went onto the offensive and those launching counterattacks had strategically used their limited shell supply to maximum effect. Even the vaunted British and French fleets had to keep a close eye on the amount of heavy ammunition their ships used until newly implemented war production could match demand.

Initially the British government was quick to dismiss the shortfall of chemicals needed to replace munitions used on the frontlines. In addition to a lack of chemicals, some newspapers actually mentioned the lack of British chemical engineers to manufacture them. This issue was rather eloquently addressed by a *Times of London* article from 18 August 1914:

We ought, however, at once to admit the real, if unpalatable, fact that we have not encouraged the technical side of chemical education, which is so necessary for the manufacture of fine chemicals, and that as a consequence we lack men with the necessary practical knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

This practical viewpoint on the lack of chemists in Britain skilled at replicating many of the imported chemicals from Germany during 1914 was lost over the course of the war. Instead of focusing on the need to train the existing and new chemical engineers to help the war of munitions, the British government sought out other reasons for early shortfalls.

During 1914 and early 1915, the British government repeatedly claimed that the issue was not so much one of lack of supply or technical skill, rather they attributed it to a lack of will-power on the part of the workers in the existing plants. The government insisted that strikes organized by industrial workers consistently held up production rather than a lack of vital chemicals. In discussing a strike of engineers at Clyde, in *The Times* the Chief Industrial Commissioner for the British government, Sir George Askwith, said “I am by the Government that important munitions of war urgently required by the Navy and the Army are being held up by the present cessation of work.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Manuel Bastias Saaverda, “Nitrate,” *International Encyclopedia of World War I, 1914-1918*, 8 Oct. 2014, <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/nitrate>, accessed Sept. 1, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> “Imports from Germany.” *The Times* (London, England), issue 40,608, Aug. 18, 1914, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> “A Call to Work,” *The Times* (London, England), issue 40,789, Feb. 27, 1915, p. 9.





This lack of chemical components for the British, as well as the French, left the Allies in a precarious position for resupplying their armies fighting the Central Powers. If the British couldn't produce their own domestic supplies of munitions, another source of those rare chemicals needed to be found. One solution was to buy completed munitions from the United States. This was a risky move to undertake for both the British and Americans, as the sale of munitions to only select warring countries would technically violate American neutrality. The Allies could also not be one hundred percent sure whether that American munitions would go only to themselves and not be sold to the Central Powers.

The question of what exactly could be shipped to warring or neutral nations became a topic of great concern. The biggest initial concern for American companies, government officials, and private citizens was whether items deemed contraband would result in American ships being seized and impounded. Since the British Grand Fleet controlled the Atlantic Ocean and access to Continental ports, American ships were routinely stopped and searched by British warships. Those heading for German ports were seized while those heading to British or French ports were allowed to conduct their business. Americans did not see the war as a reason for their ships to be seized, as they believed that free trade with all parties should not be impinged upon.

This issue of arms sales led to great tensions between the American government and those governments of the belligerent nations. In 1915, Austria vehemently denounced the expansion of munitions plants inside the United States for the express purpose of manufacturing arms. Austria demanded that the United States stop the possible planned industrial expansion that would see new plants built alongside the already existing factories to supply weapons and ammunition. In a response piece to that focused on Austrian demands printed in the *New York Times*, the author lays out the Austrian argument succinctly:

It [the Austrian Government], however, did protest against the creation of new and extension of existing plants for the manufacturing of and exporting of war materials to such an extent that the economic life of the United States has practically, so to say, become militarized...the concentration of a large part of the American working power toward one goal, namely, the supply of munitions...invalidates any reference to previous wars.<sup>14</sup>

The issue was not that American munitions were reaching Britain and France and not Austria; rather the Austrian government was arguing that if American industry started to focus strictly on the production of war material, the United States was no longer a neutral country. The Austrians knew that American arms and munitions would not be able to reach their ports but they did not demand a complete embargo. That type of demand would have also forced the Americans to violate their neutrality. If the Americans were forced by the Central Powers to enact an embargo, Britain and France would suffer for lack of those vital missing chemicals for munitions. The laws of war would dictate that the United States had chosen one side over another. American neutrality meant that some war materials would reach the Allies and not the Central Powers.

As more and more munitions were shipped from American ports, the awareness of just how much was being sent to the battlefield was realized. Regular reports discussing monthly shipments of munitions dawned on American public awareness. This awareness did raise questions among

---

<sup>14</sup> "Arms Sales too Big Austria Repeats," *The New York Times*, Nov. 3, 1915, p. 10.



Americans of whether they were actually neutral. The Austrian demands also raised a number of economic and moral issues. The pre-war American economy had been relatively weak; with the war, the economy was booming and items not available for manufacture in Europe ensured American prosperity and expansion. But what was the ethical cost of this war-material export industry?

Americans themselves were concerned about the legality, as well as the morality, of selling munitions to warring nations. Numerous letters to the editor and opinion pieces were printed discussing this topic between 1914 and America's entry into the war in April 1917. The Atlantic Conference of German Baptists stated their moral objections and their desire to keep America from exporting any arms: "We therefore earnestly protest against any exportation of things which kill any of the warring nations of Europe."<sup>15</sup>

The *New York Times* published several op-eds by Professor Theodore Woolsey, a former International Law lecturer from Yale University, which discussed the legal and ethical morality of American munition sales. He argued that the United States treated both sets of belligerents equally which ensured American neutrality. His argument rests on the fact that both sides have equal access to buy U.S. arms, but that Germany cannot carry this out because of a lack of transportation across the Atlantic. He stated:

She [Germany] cannot transport, because she does not care to contest the control of the seas with her enemies. Have we [The United States] ought to do with that? To supplement her naval inferiority by denying the Allied the fruits of their superiority would be equivalent to sharing in the war on the German side...notice no complaints of our exports of munitions have come from the German Government."<sup>16</sup>

Later in the same article, Professor Woolsey pointedly expressed who he blamed for such complaints reaching the United States Government: "The opposition to the trade seems to come from two classes: 1) German sympathizers...and 2) those who are governed by their emotions rather than reason and respect for law."<sup>17</sup>

The flow of munitions from the United States to European battlefields did not slow down because of the arguments and protests against their sale; rather every month saw orders from Britain, France, and even Russia increase as the massive battlefield expenditures of ammunition swelled. The *New York Times* reported on 14 June 1915, "It was said yesterday that the serious shortage of ammunition by the British, French, and Russian armies has spurred manufacturers in this country to extraordinary efforts to forward supplies in the shortest amount of time."<sup>18</sup> It was reported that around \$30 million worth of supplies went to the Allies that April. The *New York Times* in

---

<sup>15</sup> "Oppose Munitions Exports: German Baptists Resolve against Selling War Supplies to Europe," *The New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1915, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> "Upholds Our Trade in War Munitions: Prof. Woolsey, Yale Authority Find no Legal or Ethical Objection to it," *The New York Times*, July 23, 1915, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, page 2.

<sup>18</sup> "Brisk Trade in Munitions of War: About \$30,000,000 Worth Was Shipped During the Month of April," *New York Times*, June 14, 1915, p. 13].



September reported “that shipments of horses, mules, automobiles, aeroplanes, and explosives all classed as war supplies, aggregated nearly \$50,000,000 in July.”<sup>19</sup>

The monthly exports of munitions and other war supplies only increased in volume after 1915. The quantity of bullets and shells used in Europe, and further afield, grew as major land battles increased during 1916. The Battles of Verdun and the Somme alone consumed hundreds of thousands of heavy shells and millions of bullets. All of these munitions needed to be replaced and new stockpiles established. American industry increased by expanding existing plants and building new facilities.

Chemical companies inside the United States needed to increase their own production in order to fill the requirements of the ammunition plants. The manufacture of existing types of bullets and shells continued throughout the war in order to fulfill the orders sent from Allied governments. In addition to the older models, new types of weapons were also produced. Dow Chemical, based out of Midland, Michigan, invented a magnesium bullet, known today as a tracer bullet, which allowed soldiers to track where their bullets were traveling. “Dow was a major source of explosives and other chemicals, devoting 90 percent of its production to war material such as phenol and magnesium.”<sup>20</sup> With nearly 90 percent of Dow Chemical’s production switched to war-materials, Austrian fears of American industrial expansion were confirmed.

In addition to magnesium production, Dow Chemical also received orders to begin production of mustard gas. Mustard gas is a chemical weapon that was developed late in the First World War. Germany was the first to use this weapon in 1917; before this the majority of chemical weapon attacks consisted of chlorine gas that suffocated the victims. Mustard gas was a new substance that could not only cause death by asphyxiation, but also painful blisters on any exposed tissue.

The U.S. Army requested that Dow Chemical produce the compounds necessary to create an American version of mustard gas. Dow Chemical produced and shipped out more than 100 tons’ worth of mustard oil. This mustard oil could then be added into specially designed artillery shells. Once those shells were fired and exploded, the mustard oil went from a liquid to an aerosol form which permeated the battlefield. Even with gas masks on, soldiers were not necessarily spared: the aerosol would land on uniforms and then soak into the material. The soaked uniforms would then transfer the oil onto skin and cause painful blisters to spread.

The U.S. Army deemed it necessary to have its own chemical warfare program to create new protection techniques for its soldiers as well as to produce its own chemical weapons. Since this was a new type of warfare, the United States had to build its resources almost from the ground up. Gas masks, antidotes, and chemically treated uniforms (to provide additional protection from attack) were just some of the things that American chemists needed to perfect. They had to

---

<sup>19</sup> “Big Munitions Exports: Nearly \$50,000,000 worth Left the United States in July,” *New York Times*, Sep. 9, 1915, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> “Midland, Bay City major producers of World War I chemical weapons, books purports,” *Midland Daily News*, 23 June 2014 [<https://www.ourmidland.com/news/article/Midland-Bay-City-major-producers-of-World-War-I-6934626.php>, accessed on 1 September 2018].



decipher reports from the Allies as to what elements comprised the German chemical weapon compounds and experiment to see how to protect soldiers against them.

The U.S. Army used controlled exposure to tear gas in training (another chemical weapon developed early in the War) to give American soldiers a better understanding of how to prepare and defend against chemical attacks. This gave the soldiers a firsthand experience as to the effects of the chemical without a gas mask, allowing them a personal example of how quickly these chemicals can be debilitating. In 1917, American soldiers were given additional training as they arrived in France by British and French officers who had survived German chemical attacks.

## Conclusion

American chemical companies during the First World War proved to be essential to the victory of the Allies. Without American munitions and fertilizer flooding into Britain, France, and the United States itself, the early German advantage in chemical production may have given victory to the Central Powers. The millions of rounds of ammunition that were ordered and delivered to the Allies during the period of America's neutrality helped to keep the British and French militaries fighting. By the time the United States entered the war in April 1917, the expansion of the American chemical companies in the immediately preceding years ensured that ammunition and chemical weapon production could match demand.

In addition, American efforts to create its own synthetic fertilizers from local products and chemicals gave the United States the ability to meet not only the needs of its own people, but those of the Allied nations as well. The ingenious use of either seaweed off the California coast or the exploitation of salt lakes in Nebraska gave a new source of potash. While prices of these artificial fertilizers were high, they did provide American farmers with a means to continue producing food and not bankrupt themselves. For many of the new fertilizer companies, the end of the war meant the closure of the plants that required so much time, money, and effort to build.

Once hostilities ceased, the American chemical companies were prepared to receive the cheaper, more plentiful German chemical compounds they expected. But they did not completely abandon the cooperation they had gained with the United States military. Instead, American chemical companies kept contact with the US Army and continued to develop new weapons and protection equipment. That relationship established in the First World War would be used again in World War II, Vietnam, and beyond. American chemical companies were, and continue to be, a two-edged blade: they have the ability to provide either life-giving or life-taking products depending on who makes the order.



## Works Cited

- “A Call To Work.” *Times* [London, England] 27 Feb. 1915: 9. The Times Digital Archive. Web. 13 Sept. 2018. [http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=lom\\_cmichu&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=CS153027675&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0](http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=lom_cmichu&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=CS153027675&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0)
- “Arms Sales too Big Austria Repeats,” *The New York Times*, November 3, 1915, p. 10,
- “Big Munitions Exports: Nearly \$50,000,000 worth Left the United States in July.” *New York Times*, Sep 9, 1915, p. 12.
- “Brisk Trade in Munitions of War: About \$30,000,000 Worth Was Shipped During the Month of April,” *The New York Times*, Jun 14, 1915, p. 13.
- Clapp, Edwin J. *Economic Aspects of the War: Neutral Rights, Belligerent Claims and American Commerce in the Years 1914-1915*. New Haven : Yale University Press, 1915.
- “Effects of the War on Chemical Trade.” *The New York Globe*, Sep. 1, 1914. [*World War History*. (New York, NY) 31 Aug. 1914, p. 110. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/item/2004540423/1914-08-31/ed-1](http://www.loc.gov/item/2004540423/1914-08-31/ed-1)].
- “Foreign Purchases of American Products.” *The New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1914. [*World War History*. (New York, NY) 17 Oct. 1914, p. 119. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/item/2004540423/1914-10-17/ed-1](http://www.loc.gov/item/2004540423/1914-10-17/ed-1)].
- Haynes, Williams. *American Chemical Industry*. New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1949.
- “Imports From Germany.” *Times* [London, England] 18 Aug. 1914: 3. The Times Digital Archive. Web. 13 Sept. 2018. [http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=lom\\_cmichu&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=CS51053330&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0](http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=lom_cmichu&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=CS51053330&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0)
- Jenson, Richard E. “Nebraska’s World War I Potash Industry,” *Nebraska History* 68 (1987): 28-42.  
<https://history.nebraska.gov/sites/history.nebraska.gov/files/doc/publications/NH1987Potash.pdf>.
- “Midland, Bay City major producers of World War I chemical weapons, books purports,” *Midland Daily News*; 23 June 2014, <https://www.ourmidland.com/news/article/Midland-Bay-City-major-producers-of-World-War-I-6934626.php> accessed on 1 September 2018.
- Neushul, Peter. “Seaweed for War: California’s World War I Kelp Industry.” *Technology and Culture*, vol. 30, no. 3, 1989, pp. 561–583., doi:10.2307/3105951.
- “Oppose Munitions Exports: German Baptists Resolve against Selling War Supplies to Europe,” *The New York Times*, September 26, 1915, p. 3.



Saaverda, Manuel Bastias “Nitrate,” *International Encyclopedia of World War I, 1914-1918*, 08 October 2014, <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/nitrate>, accessed on Sept. 1, 2018.

Turrentine, J. W. “The American Potash Industry.” *The Scientific Monthly*, vol. 70, no. 1, 1950, pp. 41–47. .

“Upholds Our Trade in War Munitions: Prof. Woolsey, Yale Authority Find no Legal or Ethical Objection to it,” *The New York Times*, July 23 1915, p. 2.



## Your Duty on Display': The Allied War Exhibition in Chicago, the State Council of Defense, and the Role of the State in Defining American Identity

Josh Fulton

Northern Illinois University / Moraine Valley Community College

They have Chicago sweethearts—until said C.S.'s see them in German uniforms. Then the stuff's off. They just won't be seen strolling around the place with German soldiers and the first thing the poor make-believe boche knows, his girl is strolling with some soldier in O.D.<sup>1</sup>

War trophies from the battlegrounds of the Western Front dominated the Allied War Exposition, which was held in Grant Park on Chicago's lakefront from September 2 to 15, 1918. Demonstrating the "realities" of war for some 100,000 onlookers daily, army units from nearby Camp Grant performed re-enactments of trench warfare while faux artillery sounded and new-fangled warplanes flew overhead. In an article on September 6, 1918, the *Chicago Daily News* pointed out the displeasure of some participants. Six hundred enlisted men from Camp Grant had to play the role of the "Fritzies," and the women of Chicago wanted nothing to do with them as a result.<sup>2</sup>

Publicly emasculated for appearing in German uniform, the men from Camp Grant and the Allied War Exposition symbolize Chicago's and Illinois' engagement with the public in a display conveying the meaning of the government's war effort. The Exposition was a joint venture between federal, state, and local officials originating with the U. S. Committee on Public Information (CPI), overseen through the State Council of Defense of Illinois in conjunction with a committee of prominent Chicagoans. The event and its leaders instructed visitors that their visit represented their assent in an ongoing conversation between allied governments and publics on the purpose of the war. Speaking at the exhibition's opening, Samuel Insull, chair of the State Council of Defense of Illinois noted the event offered "a better understanding of the needs of your Government and above all for a better understanding of your duty."<sup>3</sup> Insull and Illinois' State Council of Defense (a branch of the National Council) worked tirelessly beginning in 1917 to oversee those needs, and to instruct the citizens of Illinois on how to carry out their duties in support of the war. The former's efforts reflected the centralizing efforts of the U. S. government

---

<sup>1</sup> "Nobody Loves a Fritzie! Chicago Lassies Scorn Even Make-believe Heinies at War Show," *Chicago Daily News*, September 6 1918, 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> "Mr. Insull, Opening of War Exposition, September 2, 1918," series 6, folder 20-5, Papers of Samuel Insull, Loyola University Chicago Archives, 6.



to define the mission of the war (a “civilized” allies defeat of the “barbarous” Germany and its supporters), and balance between coercion and vigilantism in support of the cause.<sup>4</sup>

Speaking at another event on February 23, 1918, Insull articulated a “civil” American war effort as anti-German by definition. He proclaimed “those who question the righteousness of America’s cause...speak with a German accent,” and “there is no god but power, and Prussia is his profit” remained the creed of Germany.<sup>5</sup> Thus, public and private groups at the exhibition hoped visitors would view their displays as defense of that “righteousness.” The YMCA, YWCA, Training Camp Association, and other voluntary organizations had booths at the exhibition to model their contributions to the allied war effort. “Appendages of the nation-state,” these organizations aligned their war efforts with reflecting the civilizing mission of the U. S. in the war.<sup>6</sup> Their stalls featured young women in service roles like YWCA hostesses, Red Cross nurses, and Food Administration/Women’s Committee workers; juxtaposed against the efforts of male soldiers reenacting battle scenes of the western front, their positions reinforced the message that the natural innocence of those soldiers through the horrors of war was preserved through their volunteering. Representing the “voluntarism” that President Woodrow Wilson demanded, these organizations segregated members and thoroughly supported the gendered notions of the war’s objectives.<sup>7</sup>

A vast historiography exists on a variety of aspects of the Great War, with recent forays into the American home front experience emphasizing anti-Germanism, forms of violence, and the relationship between the citizen and the state in the process of the war (mainly David Kennedy and Christopher Capozzola).<sup>8</sup> Scholars have examined Great War commemoration and cultural

---

<sup>4</sup> For more on coercive American U. S. homefront efforts, see David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (1980); Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (2008); Gerald Shenk, “Work or Fight!” *Race, Gender, and the Draft in World War One* (2005) Susan A. Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (2009). On coercive homefront efforts laced with anti-labor and anti-Germanism in Illinois, see Tina Stewart Brakebill, “From ‘German Days’ to ‘100 Percent Americanism’: McLean County, Illinois 1913-1918: German Americans, World War One, and One Community’s Reaction,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 95, no. 2 (Summer, 2002): 148-171; David Dechenne, “Recipe for Violence: War Attitudes, the Black Hundred Riot, and Superpatriotism in an Illinois Coalfield, 1917-1918,” *Illinois Historical Journal* 85, no. 4 (Winter, 1992): 221-238.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Insull, “Speech of Samuel Insull: Offsetting German Propaganda,” February 23 1918, series 6, folder 20-4, Papers of Samuel Insull, Loyola University Chicago Archives, 1, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Chris Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 92.

<sup>7</sup> Capozzola, 88-93.

<sup>8</sup> For more on America’s conduct in the Great War and the political homefront, see Ronald Shaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (1994); John Keegan *The First World War* (1999); Jennifer Keene, *Doughboys: The Great War and the Remaking of America* (2001); Bill Mills, *The League: The True Story of Average Americans on the Hunt for WWI Spies* (2013); Stephen J. Gross, “‘Perils of Prussianism’: Main Street German America, Local Autonomy, and the Great War.” *Agricultural History* 78, no. 1 (Winter, 2004): 78-116; Matthew Pratt Guterl “The New Race Consciousness: Race, Nation, and Empire in American Culture, 1910-1925,” *Journal of World History*





reclamations of memory in earnest since Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), and since the same period scholars have more frequently included gender in the analysis of those memories.<sup>9</sup> While scholars have examined commemoration, home fronts, gender and the state—such examinations in the United States are lacking. This paper seeks to fill that gap, placing the process of the Allied War exhibition within the context of these discussions of masculinity and state authority in the U. S. Voluntarism and vigilantism intersected at the exhibition, demonstrating an America committed to war with its allies, and prosecuted by a “civil” man committed to maintaining a civilized anti-German world.

The pageantry of the fair offered its sponsoring organizations daily opportunities to engage in a patriotic outreach effort to Chicago and the Midwest on the objectives of the war. In the posters, art, singers and dancers, re-enactors, speeches, trophies and philanthropic displays, American “masculinities” emerged in the service of that mission. Exhibition organizers gendered the war’s objectives on display at the fair, “effectively embodied in the identity of the individual soldier as a national masculinity that attenuates masculinities of class, region, and ethnicity.”<sup>10</sup> Discrimination and at times violence plagued Germans living in Illinois during the war. The State Council of Defense worked during the period with the American Protective League (APL) to observe German organizations and monitor their loyalty. Volunteer groups that worked with the government to sponsor the exhibition (members of the APL gave four minute speeches across the Chicago area advertising the event) created a culture in the state whereby “many Germans experienced nearly as extreme a form of racialized disadvantage as African Americans did in Georgia. In particular, they might be lynched merely for having a German surname.”<sup>11</sup> Illinois’ home front culture during the war constructed an ideal of manhood dependent on many factors--one’s ethnicity (race) especially; you could not be a “hyphenated” American.<sup>12</sup> The rhetoric of the

---

10, no. 2 (Fall, 1999): 307-352; Michael Willrich, “Home Slackers: Men, the State, and Welfare in Modern America,” *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (September, 2000): 460-489.

<sup>9</sup> For more on war, memory, and masculinity see Michael J. Lansing “Salvaging the Man Power of America’: Conservation, Manhood, and Disabled Veterans during World War I,” *Environmental History* 14, no. 1 (January, 2009): 32-57; Robert A. Nye “Kinship, Male Bonds, and Masculinity in Comparative Perspective,” *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 5 (December, 2000): 1656-1666. Nye’s construction of masculinity as a synthesis of varied identities reflects constructions of gender in the historiography of the Great War, and this paper examines the nature of those masculinities at the exhibition. On masculinity, gender, and the Great War, see Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975); George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (1996); Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (1996); Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur, eds. *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Nye, “Western Masculinities in War and Peace,” *American Historical Review*, 112, no. 2 (April, 2007): 417, accessed October 6, 2014, <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/4136608>.

<sup>11</sup> Gerald E. Shenk, “*Work or Fight!*” *Race, Gender, and the Draft in World War One* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 51.

<sup>12</sup> German-Americans, along with immigrant groups nationwide in 1917 faced a campaign to “remove the hyphen.” However, such groups did not dictate the terms of removal, and German Americans still faced daily discrimination. In the case of Robert Prager, a Collinsville, IL miner lynched in April, 1918,



Governor of Illinois “appealed to current ideals of racial purity, notions of women’s proper function in society,” and constructed masculinities for American men to embody, demonstrating an objective of the government’s collective war effort meant to denude Americans of their European racial or ethnic heritages (German especially).<sup>13</sup> Through the platform of the exhibition and its sundry media, visitors to the exhibition saw war duties differentiated by gender and a masculinity that embodied a variety of images--virile, civil, and anti-German--for the American serviceman.

While this conversation with the public to convey “proper” patriotism and American manhood did not begin until entry in the war in April 1917, its start reflected the core conflicts in prewar society and demonstrated that Americans would need to assent to a vision of unity conveyed in many forms. Since the 1890s, progressives had given federal, state and local governmental authorities an increasingly activist approach to legislation. Americans grappled with immigration and nativists, ethnic and racial division, economic downturns, labor unrest, and periodic imperial conflicts (the Spanish American War of 1898) that furthered masculine ideals in the years before the Great War.<sup>14</sup> Historian Christopher Capozzola argues that such themes articulated a spectrum of vigilance and vigilantism Americans already were familiar with when President Wilson called for a declaration of war on April 2, 1917.<sup>15</sup> Wilson articulated his call for war in terms of reluctance, and historian David Kennedy notes many Americans did not feel a threat of “imminent peril of physical harm.”<sup>16</sup> Couching the US effort in the rhetoric of progressivism and the necessity of unity in the cause of international peace, the President proclaimed “The world must be made safe for democracy,” and “we have no selfish ends to serve.”<sup>17</sup> Wilson portrayed a civil collection of allies seeking to halt the expansion of a barbarian power.

---

civilians demonstrated the acceptability of communal violence to enforce the boundaries of American identity.

<sup>13</sup> Shenk, 50.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Capozzola, “The Only Badge Needed Is Your Patriotic Fervor: Vigilance, Coercion, and the Law in World War I America,” *Journal of American History*, 88, no. 4 (March, 2002): 1357, accessed March 5 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2700601>. For more on the prevalence of nativist responses to these categories, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (1963); John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (1987); James Barrett, *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City* (2013). For more on the connections between such imperial conflicts and masculinity in the U. S. and U. K. , see Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting For American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (1998); John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (1999).

<sup>15</sup> Capozzola, 1357.

<sup>16</sup> David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 46.

<sup>17</sup> President Woodrow Wilson, “Transcript of a Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Germany (1917),” <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=61&page=transcript>, accessed 10 April, 2015.



In order to halt that power however, federal authorities needed to work with state and local governments, and numerous voluntary organizations to “create a ‘correct’ public opinion in 1917-1918.”<sup>18</sup> Created in Chicago in April 1917, the Committee of Public Information served President Wilson’s administration as its propaganda arm. Led by George Creel, it disseminated the administration’s war message through advertisements, artwork, posters, even a corps of public speakers known as the “Four Minute Men.” Its Division of Films sponsored the war exhibitions, and in Chicago worked with state and local officials, the State Council of Defense of Illinois, the American Protective League (APL) and branches of national and state aid organizations. Each group espoused the Wilson administration’s message of a conflict to preserve liberty against a savage enemy. The rhetoric of masculinity and manhood permeated the speeches of the Four Minute Men, and the government’s message of a war preserving an ideal America and its gender roles was displayed at the fair.<sup>19</sup> A spectrum of prewar movements that had advocated “muscular Christianity” and an ideal male who reflected a Victorian image of medieval chivalry characterized the images on advertisements, posters, and overall exhibition experience.<sup>20</sup> Chivalry, constructed by Allen J. Frantzen in *Bloody Good*, took many forms. Sacrificial chivalry, for the nouveau knights of the allies engaged in its practice, involved “use of force as revenge for Christ’s death,” volunteering “to suffer,” and education.<sup>21</sup> The images of the exhibition reflected an intersection between such sacrificial chivalry and George Mosse’s “hegemonic masculinity,” an ideal of masculinity “as of one piece from its very beginning: body and soul, outward appearance and inward virtue.”<sup>22</sup> Soldiers, aid/reform societies, and public officials’ constructed an ideal of manhood as naturally polar—boyish yet virile, civil yet martial, American not German.

---

<sup>18</sup> Kennedy, 46.

<sup>19</sup> Ernest Palmer, “To All Four Minute Men,” undated, folder 517/025, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information Four Minute Men Scrapbooks, State of Illinois Archives.

<sup>20</sup> For more on “muscular Christianity,” and the continuity of prewar constructs of manhood to the war effort, see Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (2001); Jonathan Ebel, “The Great War, Religious Authority, and the American Fighting Man,” in *Church History* (March, 2009): 99-133. On masculine constructs, civility, and chivalry, see Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War* (2004). On the conflict as a transformative event for western masculinity, see Michael Roper, “Between Manliness and Masculinity: The ‘War Generation’ and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950,” in *Journal of British Studies* (April 2005): 343-362. While the message of the exhibition was unity of effort, Ebel’s work asserts such unity amongst soldiers and reformers/aid workers in constructing wartime masculinity did not exist. Soldiers sought to define manhood on their terms, in spite of clergy and reformers.

<sup>21</sup> Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and The Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004), 77-78.

<sup>22</sup> George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.



“Of course, to make a perfectly good war of it, there must be Germans.”<sup>23</sup>

Illinois’ responses to the outbreak of war in the summer of 1914 varied depending on community ethnicity and labor alliances, and anti-Germanism exploded after America’s entry in the war. A sizeable minority of Chicago’s two and a half million residents in 1914 identified as first or second-generation German immigrants (nearly 400,000), and communities of more than 100,000 Poles, Irish, Russians, Czechs and Serbs existed in the city.<sup>24</sup> Many first and second generation German immigrants actively supported the German war effort from the outset of the war until 1917, holding public rallies, raising aid funds, and offering volunteers for the German army and Republican mayor Bill Thompson “urged traditional American isolationism, the kind favored by his core of supporters in the Protestant middle class.”<sup>25</sup> Thompson supported a preparedness movement in the city during 1916, but his opposition to American troop deployment to France in 1917 garnered him widespread public disapproval with most of the city embracing the war.

Most municipal and state government officials in Illinois did not follow Thompson’s approach after entry in the war. Governor Frank Lowden created the State Council of Defense of Illinois to coordinate home front activities from aid organizations, state harvests, and social hygiene, to liberty loan drives. The State Council “was intended to be, The Government of Illinois in relation to all matters affecting the state and its citizens, directly or indirectly, in connection with support and prosecution of the war from every conceivable angle.”<sup>26</sup> While a single woman held a leadership position with the overall State Council, there was a separate Women’s Committee to coordinate home front programs related to women for the war and reinforce roles as dutiful housewives (ranging from educational outreach in homemaking activities to social hygiene exhibits and lectures—a thousand lectures between July 24-August 24, 1918).<sup>27</sup> The executive committee, based in Chicago and led by Samuel Insull coordinated statewide efforts, but county councils coordinated many local wartime efforts (sometimes with disastrous results). According to Tina Brakebill, the State Council worked within individual counties “to remedy this perceived lack of war enthusiasm,” and “acted as an agent for some of the larger national groups, such as the American Protective League.”<sup>28</sup> County councils responded to local dictates on the war, supporting anti-Germanism or anti-labor (IWW) efforts and vigilante citizens groups that forced citizens to

---

<sup>23</sup> “Nobody Loves a Fritzie! Chicago Lassies Scorn Even Make-believe Heinies at War Show,” 1.

<sup>24</sup> Dominic A. Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 191.

<sup>25</sup> Pacyga, 192.

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Insull, “Samuel Insull and The State Council of Defense of Illinois in the World War of 1917-1918,” 1919, series 5-D, folder 19-5, Papers of Samuel Insull, Loyola University Chicago Archives, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Dr. Rochelle S. Yarros, Report of the Social Hygiene Committee, Original Minute Book From August 27, 1918 to November 5, 1918, August 27, 1918, 4. Book 9, Folder 517/018, State Council of Defense (WWI): Women’s Committee Minutes and Proceedings, April 23, 1917-January 10, 1920, State of Illinois Archives.

<sup>28</sup> Tina Brakebill, “From ‘German Days’ to ‘100 Percent Americanism’: McLean County, Illinois 1913-1918: German Americans, World War One, and One Community’s Reaction,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 95, 2 (Summer, 2002): 158.



swear loyalty oaths publicly, and seeking to abolish the use of the German language in schools, churches or the press.<sup>29</sup>

With the German offensives in the spring of 1918, and the resulting allied counterattacks that summer and fall, Illinois' war government agreed to the Committee of Public Information's efforts to host an Allied War Exhibition in the city of Chicago. Planning for the exhibition began in late July, with the beginning of the fair to coincide with Labor Day celebrations in the city.<sup>30</sup> In collaboration with Insull and the State Council, a local Citizens Committee put up initial funds of over \$125,000 for the exhibition, and donors from across Chicago's business community pledged funds.<sup>31</sup> Eventual receipts of the fair totaled \$577,693. 24, with \$388,506. 65 in pre-exhibition ticket sales of 1,570,877 tickets.<sup>32</sup> A further 255,132 tickets were purchased at the gates during the exhibition, and additional funds from boat excursions, meal tickets to a soldier's mess, parking, programs, and a French war photograph catalogue contributed to an operational profit of \$305,524. 11 after expenses.<sup>33</sup>

Ticket sales took place across Chicago, available at post offices, businesses, and through the public schools. Twenty-five cents paid admission for one adult (or two children), and the organizers made discount tickets of fifteen cents available for "poor dependents" and to the Chicago Public Schools.<sup>34</sup> Daily events for ticket sales en masse occurred; as when the beef packers Armour & Company and Swift & Company used exhibition trucks and women as ticket hawkers to sell thousands. Covering the event, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* included a photograph of a fresh-faced young soldier, J. Ogden Armour, and three "war dogs" named Medusa, Terval, and Vulcan to convey the martial nature of the upcoming fair.<sup>35</sup> In a separate story, the paper highlighted the efforts of the

---

<sup>29</sup> On coercive patriotism in Illinois, Brakebill and Dechenne point out the role of the State Council as a conduit for disseminating the mission of the war to the public, but reflecting and facilitating the violation of civil liberties and the use of violence against suspected IWW members or would be German-Americans.

<sup>30</sup> George Creel, Chairman Committee of Public Information, Letter to Samuel Insull, State Council of Defense of Illinois, July 27, 1918, series 16, folder 87-1, Correspondence of Chairman SI, 1918, Papers of Samuel Insull, Loyola University Chicago Archives.

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Insull, Chairman of State Council of Defense of Illinois, Letter to George Creel, Chairman, Committee of Public Information, August 1, 1918, series 16, folder 87-1, Correspondence of Chairman SI, 1918, Papers of Samuel Insull, Loyola University Chicago Archives.

<sup>32</sup> Arthur Young and Company, Statement of Receipts and Disbursements to October 23, 1918, United States Government War Exposition, 1, series 16, folder 87-6 U. S. Government War Exposition in Chicago-Guarantors, 1918, Loyola University Archives. (hereafter cited as Arthur Young and Company, Statement of Receipts).

<sup>33</sup> Arthur Young and Company, Statement of Receipts, 2-4. The French catalogue corresponded with an exhibit of war photographs held at the Art Institute simultaneous to the exhibition.

<sup>34</sup> Arthur Young and Company, Statement of Receipts, 2.

<sup>35</sup> "Dogs of War Are Unleashed: J. Ogden Armour Frees Famed Canines Which Will Serve in the Drive for War Exposition Tickets," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 28, 1918, 3. <http://0-search.proquest.com.library.morainevalley.edu/docview/174395215?accountid=1977>, accessed 13 January, 2015.



foreign language press in the city to support ticket purchases and the exposition.<sup>36</sup> Highlighting “tenacious England with hard hitting Canada, indomitable France, spectacular Italy, and martyred Belgium,” the rhetoric in support of the event drew on themes of innocence and unity in the face of the “Hun.”<sup>37</sup>

“ALL MEN must harken to my message ... My appeal inspired the Great Crusade ... I breath the flame of true American Patriotism ... I am a Soldier ... I am the Mouthpiece of Democracy ... I am a Four-Minute Man.”<sup>38</sup>

Backed by its gendered creed that advocated a chivalric link between crusading and 20<sup>th</sup> century democracy, the “Four Minute Men” advertised for the exhibition throughout Chicago. According to its own postwar history, the “Four Minute Men” originated in Chicago in the march towards war in March-April, 1917. Led by Donald M. Ryerson and supported by Senator Medill McCormick, the group wanted to “send speakers to motion picture theatres to urge upon the public an appreciation of the importance of military preparedness.”<sup>39</sup> Folded into the US government’s Committee of Public Information on June 16, 1917, the organization claims its speakers provided over 750,000 speeches during the war—on numerous topics nationwide.<sup>40</sup> The Chicago branch operated on local funds, and worked in concert with the State Council of Defense of Illinois to project the message of the war.

Speaking topics were directed nationally and distributed across the country to each branch for use. “Four Minute Men” applied for the volunteer position, and went through an evaluation process. Speakers were taught to keep to four minutes, and “speak with earnest conviction” while recognizing “you are the Government’s man; speak as if with this backing.”<sup>41</sup> During the period of the exhibition, national speech topics were “Where Did You Get Your Facts?” and “Register,” an exhortation on Selective Service.<sup>42</sup> In the period leading to the fair however, they incorporated attendance at the fair as part of the exhortation of patriotic duties they provided to Chicagoans. George R. Jones, a Chicago branch leader in July 1918, was invited by State Council Chairman

---

<sup>36</sup> “War Exhibition Ticket Campaign Off with Rush,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 18, 1918, C5. [http://0-search.proquest.com.library.morainevalley.edu/docview/174388794?accountid=1977](http://0-search.proquest.com/library.morainevalley.edu/docview/174388794?accountid=1977), accessed 13 January, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, C5.

<sup>38</sup> Fred A. Wirth, “The Part of the Four Minute Man,” in *The Four Minute Men of Chicago*, ed. The History Committee of the Four Minute Men. (Four Minute Men of Chicago: Chicago, 1919), 24-25.

<sup>39</sup> History Committee of the Four Minute Men, *The Four Minute Men Of Chicago* (Four Minute Men: Chicago, 1919); 11.

<sup>40</sup> History Committee, *The Four Minute Men*, 7.

<sup>41</sup> R. L. Lyman, “Seven Characteristics of An Effective Four Minute Speech,” *The Four Minute Men of Chicago*; 8, folder 517/025, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information Four-Minute Men Scrapbooks, 1918, State of Illinois Archives.

<sup>42</sup> History Committee, *The Four Minute Men*, 17.



Samuel Insull to serve on the local War Exposition Committee.<sup>43</sup> Four Minute Men included information on the exhibition with their bulletin speech on “Where Did You Get Your Facts,” imploring attendance at the fair.<sup>44</sup> The bulletin’s rhetoric offered instruction on forms of German propaganda, and the benefits of rumor avoidance. Counseling the public on vigilance against Germans and German culture in American society and playing on the gendered nature of the war, it dispelled a rumor that the U. S. engaged in “drafting of ‘dancing partners’ for the soldiers in training,” and confirmed “Germans have acted as leaders in Sunday school and Bible classes, with the sole intent of sowing dissension.”<sup>45</sup> The Chicago branch estimated that at the end of the war, they had reached an estimated 25,000,000 people with 50,000 speeches and 451 speakers at countless venues.<sup>46</sup>

With the opening of the exhibition September 1918, the Four Minute Men shifted their focus to incorporate the new topic of selective service registration. Proclaiming the war a gendered struggle between the manhood of nations and arguing that American men would voluntarily register for the draft (unlike Prussia), the new bulletin noted “the manhood and practical sense of American citizenship is now going to match itself against the Prussian military detective system.”<sup>47</sup> In service of advertising the war exhibition and the government’s war mission, the Four Minute Men actively characterized the civic duty of American citizens during the Great War through a gendered lens—patriotism’s cheerleaders, they constructed an ideal innocent American male. He was devoid of Germanness, and on display for the Midwestern viewing public at the fair.

---

<sup>43</sup> Samuel Insull to George R. Jones, July 20 1918, file 517/026, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information Four-Minute Men Bulletins, 1917-1918 State of Illinois Archives.

<sup>44</sup> Ernest Palmer to Four Minute Men of Chicago, August 1918, folder 517/025, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information Four-Minute Men Scrapbooks, 1918, State of Illinois Archives.

<sup>45</sup> William McCormick Blair, Four Minute Men. “Where Did You Get Your Facts? Bulletin 35” Government Printing Office, Washington, 1918; 2-3, folder 517/025, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information Four-Minute Men Scrapbooks, 1918, State of Illinois Archives.

<sup>46</sup> History Committee, *The Four Minute Men*, 20.

<sup>47</sup> William McCormick Blair, Committee of Public Information, Four Minute Men. “Register: National Registration Day, Bulletin 37.” Government Printing Office: Washington D.C., 1918; 8, folder 517/025, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information Four-Minute Men Scrapbooks, 1918, State of Illinois Archives.



Newspapers like the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, along with the *Chicago Daily News* and other dailies in the city represented a key advertising platform for the exhibitors. Along with the speeches of the Four Minute Men, the rhetoric and images of the papers before and during the exhibition reinforced to the public the German savage “ideal,” and the civil/chivalrous yet virile American manhood ready for war. “If you can once get yourself around to the point of view of the Prussian mind you will have no qualms about tossing a bomb into an orphan asylum on your way home from church.”<sup>48</sup> A chivalrous American could not conceive of such an act.

In an article titled “Hun Kultur and American Antidote” on September 1<sup>st</sup>, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* included photographs of preparation for the exhibition that reflect the many masculinities of the allied war mission. One with a subtitle of “Youthful Patriot with Signal Gun” featured a young boy named Harold LaRue dressed in a Navy Uniform, looking ready to fire the weapon.<sup>49</sup> Another featured a church cross from Revigny, France. “Desecrated by Germans,” and surrounded by youthful looking American sailors, the image of the damaged cavalry suggests the mission of American men in the war as necessary to prevent such atrocities from occurring further.<sup>50</sup>

Reflecting the veneration for youth, male camaraderie and discipline of the chivalry movement in the years before the war, the image supports Allen J. Frantzen’s definition of chivalry as a process that exists in many forms, of which the anti-sacrificial variety “seeks to bring the cycle of violence to a halt,” and is evident in the photograph.<sup>51</sup>

When a bomb exploded at the federal building on September 4<sup>th</sup>, two days after the exhibition’s opening, the press seized on the event with by now established anti-German and anti-International Workers of the World (IWW) tropes. Suggesting blame lay with the IWW, the *Chicago Daily*

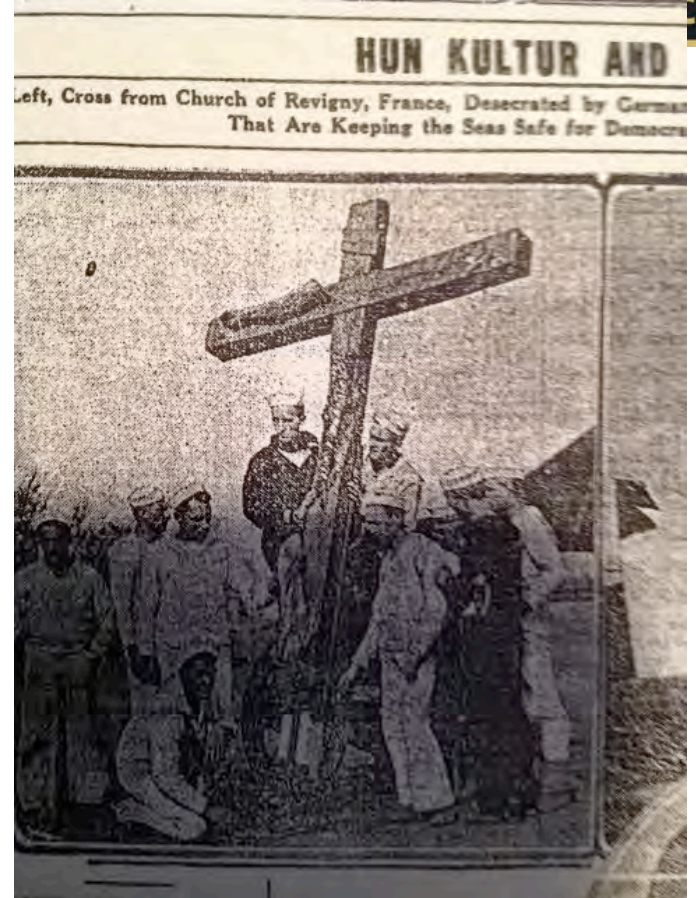


Figure 1. “Hun Kultur and American Antidote,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 1, 1918, 3.

<sup>48</sup> Frank Crane, “The Prussian Mind. How it Has Driven a Nation Mad,” *Chicago Daily News*, September 6, 1918, 8.

<sup>49</sup> “Hun Kultur and American Antidote,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 1 1918, 3. <http://0-search.proquest.com.library.morainevalley.edu/docview/174371700?accountid=1977>. Accessed 8 May, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Frantzen, 3.





*News* also included a cartoon on page one the next day titled “The Enemy at Home.”<sup>52</sup> It depicted someone climbing in a window in a brick wall, with “Loyal America” emblazoned on the wall, “Anti-American” on their suit, a blue star in the window, and a bomb in their brutish left hand.<sup>53</sup> One story from September 3, 1918, lamented the failure of the Chicago Public School District to fully end the teaching of German, and school curricula now embraced preparation for war according to prescribed gender roles. “Vocal drills for boys will give way to drills with guns. Color studies for girls will be replaced by practice in making doughnuts and coffee.”<sup>54</sup> “Militant Mary” appeared as a cartoon figure, prim with glasses and lecturing “I will not purchase German goods when this mad conflict’s O’ER. No cash of mind shall help the HUNS TO PLAN ANOTHER WAR!”<sup>55</sup> Such cartoons and anti-German rhetoric reinforced the State Council of Defense’s mission of a civil, loyal man and industrious woman doing their duty for America.

“It is an exhibition planned to interest and educate, and, we hope, to inspire.”<sup>56</sup>

Intended as “inspiring” images for the fair, war exposition posters played on themes of battle, loss of innocence in war, and the angelic phoenix emerging. “THOUSANDS of GERMAN TROPHIES FROM THE FRONT at the US GOV’T WAR EXPOSITION” offered attendees the thrill of viewing “ACTUAL Army and Navy Battles, Tanks in Action, Flying Battle Planes, Trench Warfare, Captured German Aeroplanes and Guns” while showing a drawing of a young soldier with a cigarette, sitting and holding a German helmet.<sup>57</sup> The soldier looks longingly to one side

---

<sup>52</sup> “The Enemy at Home,” *Chicago Daily News*, September 6, 1918, 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>54</sup> “Schools Reopened; German Class Back: Board’s Failure to Act Leaves Teaching of Language Undisturbed,” *Chicago Daily News*, September 3, 1918, 3.

<sup>55</sup> E. FitzHugh, “Militant Mary,” *Chicago Daily News*, September 9 1918, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Samuel Insull, “Opening of War Exposition,” September 2, 1918, 1, series 6, folder 20-5, Papers of Samuel Insull, Loyola University Chicago Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Poster Image, “Thousands of German War Trophies from the Front at the US Gov’t War Exposition,” poster image, file 517/028, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information/Special Citizens’ Committee of Chicago Photo Album, September 2 1918, State of Illinois Archives. (hereafter cited as “Thousands of German War Trophies”).



amidst the material of war, with “HOW THE MIGHTY HAVE FALLEN” written across the bottom of the poster.<sup>58</sup>

“See Our Boys in Action at the U. S. Government WAR Exposition” shows three well supplied soldiers manning a machine gun post, helmets and gun gleaming, poised for combat.<sup>59</sup> In a poster with no clear title, just “U. S. Government WAR EXPOSITION” along the foot of the image, an angel rises looking upward from the fire of the tools of modern warfare.<sup>60</sup> The posters conveyed haughty American manhood experiencing war’s transformative nature. Gendered newspaper rhetoric, image advertisements in the press, and posters fair-goers encountered collectively reinforced masculinity as martial, chivalrous and not German in wartime.

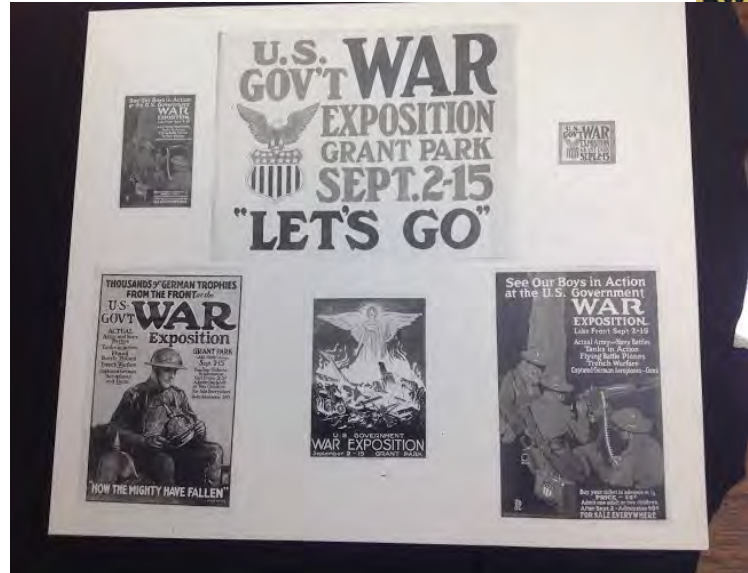


Figure 2. Poster images, file 517/028, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information/Special Citizens’ Committee of Chicago Photo Album, September 2 1918, State of Illinois Archives.

Chicagoans immersed themselves in marches and celebrations for the war effort on September 2, 1918, the day the exhibition opened to the public. It coincided with the city’s Labor Day activities, and a grand labor parade down Michigan Avenue next to the fair occurred—with an estimated 250,000 people participating as marchers or spectators.<sup>61</sup> A 1,300 piece band played patriotic music for the unveiling of a giant memorial arch near Michigan and Monroe Avenues, an experience the *Chicago Daily Journal*’s coverage noted caused a woman to faint but demonstrated Chicago’s unity in the war “to a man.”<sup>62</sup> Parade spectators could then head to the exhibition grounds in and around Grant Park (east of Michigan Avenue and overlooking the lake), where a wealth of war ephemera awaited them. After passing through one of the entryways, visitors encountered a scene designed to place them in either a vigilant America preparing for war (complete with a mock soldier’s mess hall, soldier’s camp, and a towering replica of the Statue of

<sup>58</sup> “Thousands of German War Trophies”

<sup>59</sup> Poster Image, “See Our Boys in Action at the U. S. Government WAR Exposition,” file 517/028, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information/Special Citizens’ Committee of Chicago Photo Album, September 2 1918, State of Illinois Archives.

<sup>60</sup> Poster Image, “U. S. Government WAR EXPOSITION,” poster image, file 517/028, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information/Special Citizens’ Committee of Chicago Photo Album, September 2 1918, State of Illinois Archives.

<sup>61</sup> “‘Win the War’ Is Import of Labor Parade,” *Chicago Daily Journal*, September 2 1918, 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.



Liberty), or a conceptualized France through a “no-man’s land” and war relics. Using rail to transport the war trophies, “seventeen carloads of it at least,” from “wherever the rugged fighters met the Hun” immersed visitors in the ephemera of the war.<sup>63</sup> In surveying the breadth of “trophies” and “booty,” the *Chicago Daily Tribune* remarked on the French shrine to be displayed “remembering their beloved cathedral of Reims,” and firmly placed the conflict in chivalric tones.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the efforts reflected the government’s gendered war mission in a transnational conflict seeking through the exhibition to excite the public to its “civilizing” mission.

Attendees could purchase programs or a souvenir collection of war photography selected from an ongoing exhibit of French war art and Italian photography at the Art Institute (a ticket to the war exhibition included admission to the Art Institute’s collection).<sup>65</sup> A long series of exhibit halls dominated the Western areas of the exhibition, each for the allied nations participating (Belgium, France, Britain, Canada, and Italy) with the American armed forces, government and volunteer organizations that aided in the war effort. These organizations included the Commission on Training Camp Activities, the YMCA and YWCA, the American Red Cross, the Liberty Loan Committee, the War Recreation Board of Illinois, the National War Savings Committee, the Illinois Tuberculosis Association, the Woman’s Committee Council of National Defense, the U. S. Food Administration, the Knights of Columbus, the Fort Sheridan Association, the Western Relief Fund, the American Fund for French Wounded the Fatherless Children of France, the Daughters of British Empire War Relief, and the Salvation Army.<sup>66</sup> The State Council of Defense of Illinois operated the exhibition under the aegis of the Chicago organizing committee. Branches of the Committee of Public Information, Women’s State Council of Defense, American Protective League, and other agencies (government or auxiliary) also attended the event. The center of the exhibition grounds resembled a “no-man’s land” in miniature, with the ground built up around it to provide a viewing area for daily reenactments. Southern areas of the exhibition grounds provided bivouac for soldiers participating in the exhibition, and parking for spectators. The southwest portion of the grounds contained a pavilion known as the “Liberty Forum” for speeches and concert performances near a statue of an angel in a ship’s bow armed with a sword in one hand and a dove in the other.<sup>67</sup> The statute symbolized the justice of the allied cause through a feminine

---

<sup>63</sup> Charles Lee Bryson “Chicago to Have Most Complete War Exhibition,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 4, 1918, D3. <http://0-search.proquest.com.library.morainevalley.edu/docview/174452520?accountid=1977>. Accessed 13 January 2015.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> United States Government War Exposition, “Labor Day: Program for September 2, US Government War Exposition Chicago,” September 2 1918, United States Government War Exposition Photograph Album, Research Center, Chicago History Museum.

<sup>66</sup> United States and Allied Governments War Exposition, *Souvenir Program U. S. Government War Exhibition: Sept. 2-15, Lake Front, Chicago* (Washington, D.C.: Committee on Public Information, Division of Films, 1918) (Chicago: Poole Bros. ), 26-9. Newberry Library. (hereafter cited as United States and Allied Governments War Exposition, *Souvenir Program*).

<sup>67</sup> Photo Album Image, file 517/028, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information/Special Citizens’ Committee of Chicago Photo Album, September 2 1918, State of Illinois Archives.



angel, yet also the duality of America's image of its own war efforts as the statue is depicted gliding across a body of water flanked by two more angelic figures kneeling—one with its outstretched hand downwards to suggest aid.<sup>68</sup> The spatial experience constructed by the exhibition organizers intended to overwhelm their visitors in their projection of this gendered war effort.

Each day of the exhibition offered spectators a bevy of tours and reenactments, along with a variety of participatory experiences around a common theme—many of which linked civilians directly to the war effort, and reflected the gendered nature of the allied mission. Opening day of the exhibition began at 12pm, after the



Figure 3. “One of the Statues U. S. Govt War Exposition,” file 517/028, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information/Special Citizens’ Committee of Chicago Photo Album, September 2 1918, State of Illinois Archives.

Labor Day festivities, and included a community sing, band concerts, tours of exhibit halls, an afternoon and evening reenactment, and a speech from Simon O’Donnell (in charge of the Labor Day parade).<sup>69</sup> Speaking at the opening, Samuel Insull noted the exhibition represented “the brutality and destructiveness of war waged by a ruthless conscienceless nation, thereby compelling better peoples to emulate their destructiveness.”<sup>70</sup> For Insull, the “better peoples” of the U. S. , its allies, and their advocates in the form of government, auxiliary, and volunteer organizations were not naturally violent. Nations of “conscience” were compelled to war and the exhibitors projected this duality. In an image from the opening day of the exhibition titled “A Pageant of All Nations,” the allies take the form of young women or boys— some holding flags, and dressed in a variety of ethnic ensembles standing in a pyramid at the base of the replica Statue of Liberty.<sup>71</sup> The pyramid, capped by a youthful and innocent American soldier and sailor with a feminine figure of justice

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> United States Government War Exposition, “Labor Day: Program for September 2, US Government War Exposition Chicago,” September 2 1918, United States Government War Exposition Photograph Album, Research Center, Chicago History Museum.

<sup>70</sup> Insull, “Mr Insull, Opening of War Exposition, September 2, 1918,” 1-2.

<sup>71</sup> “A Pageant of All Nations,” file 517/028, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information/Special Citizens’ Committee of Chicago Photo Album, September 2 1918, State of Illinois Archives.



in-between, signifies the nature of the allied war mission—youth at a war not of their choosing, nations represented in feminine figures offering innocent men in their defense.

Following the opening, the exhibition offered days devoted to the major participating allies, and core themes of the war effort. On Children's Day, the exhibition featured a special parade of children (some in baby carriages), organized by their families' connections to military service.<sup>72</sup> Major allies typically sent diplomatic or military envoys who spoke on their day, and musical performances centered around specific nations.



Figure 4. "A Pageant of All Nations," file 517/028, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information/Special Citizens' Committee of Chicago Photo Album, September 2 1918, State of Illinois Archives.

September 3<sup>rd</sup>, Belgian Day, included speeches from diplomatic minister E. de Cartier de Marchienne, a Belgian envoy; and Belgian Major Leon Osterrieth.<sup>73</sup> They praised the American effort in the war, and the next day visitors witnessed aerial combat reenactments overhead from U. S. military pilots and the International "Flying Circus."<sup>74</sup> British day included speeches from Geoffrey Butler (Director of the British Information Bureau) and Lord Reading (Britain's U. S. Ambassador). Each cemented the relationship between the U. S. and Britain in their speeches, with Butler noting "that the Declaration of Independence 'has been adopted into the British Constitution'."<sup>75</sup>

French Day coincided with the anniversary of the Marquis de Lafayette's birthday, and featured a poetry reading that highlighted the gendered nature of the war. The *Chicago Daily News* included a photograph of a French "High Commission" of officers and the French Consul M.A.

<sup>72</sup> Helen Wethrell, "Women's Varied War Duties," *Chicago Daily Journal*, September 9 1918, 11.

<sup>73</sup> United States Government War Exposition, "Program for September 3, US Government War Exposition Chicago," September 3 1918, United States Government War Exposition Photograph Album, Research Center, Chicago History Museum.

<sup>74</sup> "Battles' in Air Will Thrill War Exposition Crowd Today," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 4 1918, 3. <http://0-search.proquest.com.library.morainevalley.edu/docview/174397798?accountid=1977>. Accessed 8 May, 2015.

<sup>75</sup> "War Show Talk Links Britain and U.S. Closer: Geoffrey Butler Declares Union of Two Peoples Must Never End," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 5 1918, 17. <http://0-search.proquest.com.library.morainevalley.edu/docview/174416145?accountid=1977>. Accessed 8 May, 2015.



Barthelmy.<sup>76</sup> The *Chicago Daily Journal* described “girls gathered en masse” not for one of the day’s speakers, William Jennings Bryan, but besmitten by the Legion of Honor on the chest of twenty-three year old French Lieutenant Marcel Levie, a wounded combat veteran and former prisoner of war.<sup>77</sup> The admiration for Levie shows the desire to construct such a masculine glory across the boundaries of the allied nations against Germany. The day included constant singing of “La Marseillaise,” and the paper noted public admiration for French officers—soldiers of America’s “most dramatic ally.”<sup>78</sup> Scheduled just after 2pm, a reading of Dr. Henry Van Dyke’s “The Name of France” contextualized the mission of the war in a tone of chivalric masculinity. Read by Donald Robertson, the poem highlighted France’s leadership

of the human race to win its way  
From the feudal darkness into the day  
Of Freedom, Brotherhood, Equal Right...  
A name that speaks of the blood outpoured  
To Save mankind from the sway of the sword—  
A name that calls on the world to share  
In the burden of sacrificial strife.<sup>79</sup>

Van Dyke’s words reflect the forms of chivalry within the mission of the war for the allies, and one of the versions of masculinity on display at the exhibition. Coupled with a host of images (including the desecrated cavalry) and Frantzen’s conceptualization of the sacrificial nature of some chivalric responses, visitors to the fair saw an allied war effort of culturally ennobled 20<sup>th</sup> century “knights” arising to righteous service against a barbaric German foe.

Speaking at Canada Day on September 10, 1918 Samuel Insull placed the service of the Canadians in line with the gendered themes of the overall allied war mission. Stressing the voluntarism of a nation that committed to the war before asked by Great Britain, Insull painted a gendered rhetorical portrait of a U. S. neighbor doing more than its part in the conflict. A nation built in wilderness, he noted that “the able bodied Canadians have gone to the war and the weak and the women are carrying on the struggle, uncomplainingly, at home.”<sup>80</sup> Insull and the exhibitors projected an image of necessary and industrious women, but mostly bordered by the home front in their ability to serve unless with an organization like the Red Cross. Over 100,000 spectators turned out on Red Cross Day, which featured a parade of more than 12,000 Red Cross workers (the *Chicago Daily Tribune*’s photo covering the exhibition that day included two innocent and young-looking women

---

<sup>76</sup> “French High Commission Here,” *Chicago Daily News*, September 6 1918, 3.

<sup>77</sup> “Today’s Programs at War Exposition,” *Chicago Daily Journal*, September 3 1918; 4.

<sup>78</sup> “French are Heroes of Day at War Fair,” *Chicago Daily News*, September 6 1918, 3.

<sup>79</sup> Dr. Henry Van Dyke, “The Name of France.” [https://archive.org/details/name\\_of\\_france\\_librivox](https://archive.org/details/name_of_france_librivox), accessed 18 April 2015.

<sup>80</sup> Samuel Insull, “*War Show September 10, 1918*,” September 10 1918, series 6, folder 20-5, Papers of Samuel Insull, Loyola University Chicago Archives, 3.



as Red Cross workers).<sup>81</sup> News of American success in the St. Mihiel salient dominated coverage of Pershing Day (September 13<sup>th</sup>) at the exhibition. Speaking at the event, General Pershing's brother James noted according to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, “When heaven gets ready to make peace with hell, then it's time for us to begin making peace with Germany.”<sup>82</sup> The paper's coverage of the day included a photo of a resolute James Pershing with two young girls who marched in a parade at the exhibition, holding a banner with a star titled “Fathers in Service.”<sup>83</sup> On All-America Day (September 15<sup>th</sup>), the program featured folk songs, dancing, and speeches from contingents of Lithuanians, Lettonians (Latvians) Poles, Russians and Ukrainians. Most evenings featured films in no man's land, but All-America day included a “Living Picture” from the Foreign Language Division of the Liberty Loan Committee titled “The Nations of the Earth Paying Homage to Liberty.”<sup>84</sup> With the use of “homage” marking the reliance on feudal rhetoric, the picture represented another manner in which the exhibitors sought to define the mission of their war in chivalric terms.

The exhibit halls for the volunteer organizations and government auxiliary agencies offered opportunities for these groups to project an image of support for the war mission placed firmly in gendered terms of men volunteering to fight and women aiding their effort at home and abroad. The military's Commissions on Training Camp Activities incorporated work from the YMCA, Knights of Columbus, Jewish Welfare Board, American Library Association, YWCA, and War Camp Community Service. At the Commissions exhibit, a frieze from artist Willy Pogany titled “The Spirit of the Commissions” hung. It “portrayed America as a beautiful young woman sending out a soldier with fixed bayonet and a sailor carrying a magnificent flag—fit to fight for the freedom of the world.”<sup>85</sup> That fitness, according to the Commissions, improved measurably by the environment they provided for soldiers and sailors in new camps for the war. Visitors entered a model of a Mexican town, designed to replicate the perceived immoral social position men faced while on the Punitive Expedition to Mexico in 1916. Passing through the model to examples of current accommodations soldiers and sailors had, the goal “to surround the men with an environment clean, wholesome and inspiring” occurred.<sup>86</sup> Visitors could eat in a military mess, view a Liberty Theater, see a camp library, athletic facilities, and club rooms for letter writing.

---

<sup>81</sup> “Nurses Parade on Red Cross Day at the War Exposition,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 6 1918, 3. <http://0-search.proquest.com.library.morainevalley.edu/docview/174421077?accountid=1977>. Accessed 8 May, 2015.

<sup>82</sup> “Yanks in France Make Music for Pershing Day: Friday the Thirteenth for Huns' Celebrated at War Show,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 14 1918, 3. <http://0-search.proquest.com.library.morainevalley.edu/docview/174441359?accountid=1977>. Accessed 8 May, 2015.

<sup>83</sup> “Daughters of Stars,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 14 1918, 3. <http://0-search.proquest.com.library.morainevalley.edu/docview/174441359?accountid=1977>. Accessed 8 May, 2015.

<sup>84</sup> United States Government War Exposition, “All America Day Program for September 15, US Government War Exposition Chicago,” September 15 1918, United States Government War Exposition Photograph Album, Research Center, Chicago History Museum.

<sup>85</sup> “Untitled,” *Chicago Daily Journal*; August 31, 1918, 3.

<sup>86</sup> United States and Allied Governments War Exposition, *Souvenir Program*, 26.



With hostess houses to provide “for the soldier’s visiting mother, sister, wife or sweetheart,” the Commissions felt they properly aided a new model army of men “untainted by vice or liquor.”<sup>87</sup> Such Commission models demonstrate the manner in which organizers of the exhibition presented America and the allies as gendered societies immersed in a Great War. Wholesome men served on the battlefield for civilization, women acted to facilitate their innocence.

Viewed against the fair’s many evident masculinities, roles constructed for women emphasized voluntarism, and either service to the process of sending men to war, or acting industriously to preserve the home front. In a Salvation Army dugout with a sign “Soldier’s Rest Room” across it, a woman pours what appears to be coffee in a fresh-faced soldier’s mug while another soldier holds a plate of donuts and looks on.<sup>88</sup> A local Khaki and Blue Club worked with the Camp Commissions to host dances for soldiers and sailors, and coordinate with Soldiers and Sailors clubs in the Chicagoland area. Women’s clubs in Chicago in September 1918 announced a new initiative to create a cohort of young hostesses available for such dances. Restricted to women already in volunteer organizations (such as the YWCA) and over eighteen years old, they were “required to take a pledge ‘to treat every young man in the uniform of the United States as a brother in the service, to honor him for his gift to his country, and not to lower his ideal of womanhood by frivolous or insincere conduct.’”<sup>89</sup> Manhood at the exhibition thus linked with womanhood by association: women must preserve the expected social ideal to appropriately “honor” the service of men and maintain men’s “fitness” for war. As a component of that “fitness,” the U. S. Food Administration and the Women’s Committee of the State Council of Defense of Illinois had a joint exhibit of a model kitchen to demonstrate proper conservation efforts during the war in the household.<sup>90</sup> Industrious canning and refashioning of clothing efforts projected women’s commitment to preserving the gendered household ideal in wartime, an ideal that called men to service in the public sphere.

Over 100,000 people turned out daily to witness the exhibition from September 2-15, 1918 and its efforts to excite citizen morale behind the war succeeded, but did not constitute the only goal. The Chicago Citizens Committee and State Council of Defense of Illinois worked in collaboration with the U. S. military, federal agencies, voluntary organizations, and government/military contingents from Great Britain, Canada, France, Belgium and Italy to put on the event. It featured reenactments, performances, exhibit halls of relics and trophies of war, and demonstrations of the missions of a variety of organizations committed to allied victory. A victory of civilization over barbarism, liberty and Christianity over “kultur,” and innocence over savagery—the organizers placed the war in overtly masculine terms, constructed daily through the ephemera of the

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>88</sup> Photo Image, file 517/028, State Council of Defense (WWI): Committee on Public Information/Special Citizens’ Committee of Chicago Photo Album, September 2 1918, Illinois State Archives.

<sup>89</sup> “News of the Chicago Women’s Clubs: Women in Wartime,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 1, 1918, C6.

<sup>90</sup> Lucy Calhoun, “Women in Wartime,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 3 1918, 14. <http://0-search.proquest.com.library.morainevalley.edu/docview/174439073?accountid=1977>. Accessed 8 May, 2015.





exhibition. That masculinity took many forms, reflecting the chivalric nature of the allies' view of the war. American soldiers existed as innocents; virile certainly, but thrust into a war and willing to sacrifice for civilization. War's violence did not hold glory for the Americans engaged in it—the act of participating in the service of that effort constituted both a glorious and masculine act. For the “fritzies” of the exhibition's reenactments, voluntary sacrifice for the nation (and civilization) in battle remained the only avenue for them to reclaim their masculinity in a state that could not equate it with Germanness.



## Works Cited

### Archival Materials

- Samuel Insull Papers. Series 16: State Council of Defense of Illinois, 1917-1918. Loyola University Chicago Library. University Archives and Special Collections. Chicago, IL.
- United States and Allied Governments War Exposition. *Souvenir Program, U. S. Government War Exposition: Sept. 2 to 15, Lake Front*. Chicago: Poole Bros, 1918. Newberry Library. Chicago, IL.
- United States, Committee on Public Information, Division of Four Minute Men, Chicago Branch. *The Four Minute Men*. Chicago: History Committee of the Four Minute Men, 1919. Newberry Library. Chicago, IL.
- United States Government War Exposition, United States Government War Exposition Photograph Album (September 2-15, 1918). Research Center. Chicago History Museum. Chicago, IL.
- State Council of Defense of Illinois (WWI) Collection, 517. State of Illinois Archives. Springfield, IL.

### Newspaper Collections

- Chicago Daily News*, August-September 1918. Chicago Public Library, Newspaper Collections, Microfilm Archives at Harold Washington Center, Chicago, IL.
- Chicago Journal*, August-September 1918. Chicago Public Library, Newspaper Collections, Microfilm Archives at Harold Washington Center, Chicago, IL.
- Chicago Daily Tribune*, August-September 1918. Moraine Valley Community College Library, Palos Hills, IL.

### Published sources

- Barrett, James. *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City*. New York: Penguin Press, 2013.
- Bodnar, John. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Bourke, Joanna. *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Brakebill, Tina Stewart. "From 'German Days' to '100 Percent Americanism': McLean County, Illinois 1913-1918: German Americans, World War One, and One Community's Reaction." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 95, no. 2 (Summer, 2002): 148-171. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40193520>.



- Brewer, Susan A. *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Capozzola, Christopher. "The Only Badge Needed Is Your Patriotic Fervor: Vigilance, Coercion, and the Law in World War I America." *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 4 (March, 2002): 1354-1382. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2700601>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Dechenne, David. "Recipe for Violence: War Attitudes, the Black Hundred Riot, and Superpatriotism in an Illinois Coalfield, 1917-1918." *Illinois Historical Journal* 85, no. 4 (Winter, 1992): 221-238. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/40192899>.
- Ebel, Jonathan. "The Great War, Religious Authority, and the American Fighting Man." *Church History* 78, no. 1 (March, 2009): 99-133. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20618649>.
- Frantzen, Allen J. *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004.
- Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. London: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Gross, Stephen J. "'Perils of Prussianism': Main Street German America, Local Autonomy, and the Great War." *Agricultural History* 78, no. 1 (Winter, 2004): 78-116. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3745091>.
- Guterl, Matthew Pratt. "The New Race Consciousness: Race, Nation, and Empire in American Culture, 1910-1925." *Journal of World History* 10, no. 2 (Fall, 1999): 307-352. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078783>.
- Habib, Douglas F. "Chastity, Masculinity, and Military Efficiency: The United States Army in Germany, 1918-1923." *The International History Review* 28, no. 4 (December, 2006): 737-757. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40109812>.
- Higham, John. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*. Rutgers, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1988.
- Hoganson, Kristin. *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Keegan, John. *The First World War*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999.
- Keene, Jennifer D. *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
- Kennedy, David M. *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Lansing, Michael J. "'Salvaging the Man Power of America': Conservation, Manhood, and Disabled Veterans during World War I." *Environmental History* 14, no. 1 (January, 2009): 32-57. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25473327>.



- Mills, Bill. *The League: The True Story of Average Americans on the Hunt for WWI Spies*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2013.
- Mosse, George L. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Nye, Robert A. "Kinship, Male Bonds, and Masculinity in Comparative Perspective." *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 5 (December, 2000): 1656-1666. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2652036>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Western Masculinities in War and Peace." *American Historical Review* 112, no. 2 (April, 2007): 417-438. Accessed October 6, 2014. <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/4136608>.
- Pacyga, Dominic A. *Chicago: A Biography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Pearl, James, ed. *Picture This: World War One Posters and Visual Culture*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2009.
- Putney, Clifford. *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Roper, Michael. "Between Manliness and Masculinity: The 'War Generation' and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950." *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (April 2005): 343-362. Accessed May 6, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/427130>.
- Saunders, Nicholas J. "Crucifix, Calvary, and Cross: Materiality and Spirituality in Great War Landscapes." *World Archaeology* 35, no. 1 (June, 2003): 7-21. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3560209>.
- Shaffer, Ronald. *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Shenk, Gerald E. *"Work or Fight!" Race, Gender, and the Draft in World War One*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Tosh, John. *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Van Dyke, Henry "The Name of France," online at [https://archive.org/details/name\\_of\\_france/librivox](https://archive.org/details/name_of_france/librivox); accessed 18 April 2015.
- Willrich, Michael. "Home Slackers: Men, the State, and Welfare in Modern America." *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (September, 2000): 460-489. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2568760>.
- Wilson, Woodrow, "Transcript of a Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Germany (1917)," online at <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=61&page=transcript>, accessed 10 April, 2015.
- Wingfield, Nancy M. and Maria Bucur, eds. *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.



## The Allied Expositionary Forces in WWI: From Encouragement to Commemoration of War

Steven A. Walton

Michigan Technological University

It is common to see a cannon in front of many courthouses or city halls, town squares, or cemeteries across America. Similarly, military planes are often on display at airports (often on a stalk to simulate flight) and tanks and helicopters can be seen at Veterans of Foreign Wars or American Legion posts as well. But the display of the military hardware at each of these sites carries a different valence: civic honor at a government building, remembrance at a cemetery, or sacrifice at a veteran's post. Inquiring how this diverse use of commemorative weaponry came to be is more complex than may at first appear, and when our attention is narrowed to World War I and its immediate aftermath, even more interesting situations of display become apparent.

This paper explored the *other* "AEF" during WWI—the Allied *Expositionary* Forces—and the interest in displaying war relics and trophies back at home. In particular, it asks how and why this was done, and how the attitude and meaning of these objects changed from wartime to the postwar period.

### Introduction – the Local Story

In August 1919, local Houghton County papers recorded the arrival of a captured German field piece with great ceremony.<sup>1</sup> Captured by the 32<sup>nd</sup> "Red Arrow" division made up of Wisconsin and Michigan recruits, the gun, it was said, was taken at the [Second?] Battle of the Marne. When it arrived, the locals beheld a quite pristine example of a camouflaged Prussian 77mm Feldkanone, that resembled the French 75mm gun of the day with which American doughboys would have been very familiar, as we mostly used French guns once we got "over there."

The gun arrived at the Copper Range station drawn by one of the fire teams of the Village and was escorted to the college by the soldiers themselves, some of whom had served in Europe during the conflict, as well as local Civil War Veterans and the home guards, and led by the Houghton Band conducted by Maj. Ralph Loveland of Calumet as Marshall. All members of the 107<sup>th</sup> Engineering battalion, which was raised and based at the then Michigan College of Mining, were asked to report to campus by 1:30, and then all veterans were to assemble at the Amphidrome [now Dee Stadium] at 2:00pm. Interestingly, the assembly was largely in civilian garb, the veterans being explicitly told not to trouble with their old uniforms, it being "more convenient for them to get away from their work in civilian clothes."

---

<sup>1</sup> From 4 newspaper articles from unidentified newspapers dated 26, 27, 29, and n.d. Aug. 1919 [Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Houghton, MI, vertical file: "World War One"]. Subsequently, it was confirmed that these were from the *Daily Mining Gazette* [Houghton, MI] and the *Calumet News* [Calumet, MI].



*Figure 1. German FK16 77mm artillery piece on display on the Michigan College of Mines Campus. Source: 1924 Keweenaw Yearbook, pp. 6 and 147.*

When it arrived on campus, Capt. Andrew T. Sweet, MCM Class of '16, professor of metallurgy, and until recently the head of the 107<sup>th</sup>, received it on behalf of the college. C. Harry Benedict (1876-1963) of Lake Linden, representing the Board of the Federal Reserve of the Northern District, gave a speech at 3pm. After Sweet spoke about the struggle in Europe, the band struck up "The Star-Spangled Banner."<sup>2</sup> Although the newspapers note that the gun was placed on its "final resting place" that afternoon, to later be made permanent by the installation of a concrete base, there is no indication where it actually was displayed. Further research has found that it was installed on the lawn in front of the Metallurgy Building, though it had been (re)moved by 1930 and its subsequent history is unknown. (Figure 1)

As to why it was displayed here, the immediate and obvious answer is that the 107<sup>th</sup> Engineers were raised and trained here and took part in a number of significant actions during the war. In addition, MCM provided considerable vocational training in mining and mine rescue for the Committee on Education and Special Training throughout 1918. At the dedication, John W. Black of the Ninth District of the Federal Reserve in Minneapolis, who was instrumental in the distribution of trophies in 1919, sent a letter for the dedication (See Appendix A). He wrote that the MCM gun "will rest fittingly upon the side of the engineers training camp and upon the grounds of an institution that was devoted unreservedly to the winning of the war." He added the commonplace that such a trophy would be "a constant reminder of the sacrifices that the U.P. made of her sons to the mighty struggle overseas." But Black went further and politicized it to say that the gun stood for "Hun domination, Hun principles of government and a Hun attitude towards the peoples of the world, should hereafter control the nations of the earth" and that "It represents right which is conquered might. It represents the preservation of democracy, liberty, freedom and opportunity, through a crisis that but for a victory, might have engulfed these precious heritages and forever buried them under the heel of the Prussian war god." (His comments are made with no sense of the fact that we and the Entente powers, of course, used virtually the same hardware).

<sup>2</sup> This song had only become the most widely-recognized patriotic song in America during WWI, being officially recognized by President Wilson in 1916 but only made the official National Anthem in 1931.



On the other hand, C.H. Benedict, a local metallurgical engineer for Calumet & Hecla mining company<sup>3</sup> but also on behalf of the Ninth District, gave a presentation address that offered a different perspective (See Appendix B). He emphasized that,

the past war was above anything else a technical and scientific one. Not only was soldier pitted against soldier, nation was pitted against nation and for every warrior on the firing line there were 10 civilians at home striving with the implements of the arts of peace to forge a more effective weapon for the sterner art of war. And if there is to be no next-door as all the peoples hope and pray it will be because science and engineering and industry has constructed a weapon so destructive of life and property to invoke its use as an arbiter of national dispute is to imperil the very foundations of civilization itself.

Further, he took the high road and noted that “the world needs production and producers, and not destruction and destroyers.” His speech continues in the sort of laudatory campus commencement speech style you would expect, but closes, “though it stand here a thousand years may it never behold an American sword drawn, save in a righteous cause, nor if drawn, sheathed unless the cause be victorious.”

Ultimately this local story raised a number of questions. First, there is the question of how is it that the MCM received a gun in August 1919, when the general distribution of war trophies after WWI did not happen until the first half of the 1920s. But the contrasting yet not conflicting approaches of Black and Benedict raise the question of what sort of rhetoric surrounded a war trophy, and, in particular, an artillery piece, at the time. More broadly it raises the question of why we display military hardware, whether our own or captured, at all.<sup>4</sup>

### Displaying War Trophies

There were examples of the Allies exhibiting captured German war materiel as early as November 1914 and the Canadians, as part of the BEF with more immediate access to trophies, began collecting objects from the French as early as Spring 1916; the first show back at home was mounted in Halifax in October 1917 and later in Toronto in late 1918.<sup>5</sup> Some war trophies were sent for their sheer novelty—such as the “strange... crude, but ... effective” German water purifier

---

<sup>3</sup> C. Harry Benedict (1876-1963) was chief metallurgist for the Calumet & Hecla mining company for 47 years and published *Red Metal: The Calumet and Hecla Story* (1952) and *Lake Superior Milling Practice: A Technical History of a Century of Copper Milling* (1955). See MS-043, *Keweenaw Historical Society Collection*, Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Houghton, MI.

<sup>4</sup> What became of the gun remains a mystery. It most likely disappeared in a scrap drive for World War II, yet if that was the case, it is strange that there are no other pictures of it in the 20+ years it would have stood on campus. It is also possible that the gun was recalled and redeployed to some other city considered more deserving, although this last possibility seems unlikely given the Michigan College of Mines’ participation during the war and its links to the 107<sup>th</sup> Engineers.

<sup>5</sup> See Michael J.K. Walsh and Andrekos Varnava, *The Great War and the British Empire: Culture and Society* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016), 186-188. Catalogue of war trophies captured by Canadian Forces on the Western Front ([Toronto?]: n.p, 1918?), but title page notes, “Shown in the Armouries, Toronto, November 2 to 9, 1918.”



discovered near the town of Jaulney<sup>6</sup>—and others taken for what appears to be spite that still carry tense resonances—such as the three church bells from the Balangiga Massacre during the Philippine Insurrection on 28 Sept. 1901.<sup>7</sup>

In one sense, the Michigan Tech gun was simply a tiny example of a much larger phenomenon. Consider the scene in Boston in May 1919, when the city hosted the “artillery train”:

On a month-long tour of the country, the train comprised seventeen cars loaded with thirty pieces of artillery and other military equipment. A military band led the procession of cannons, trench mortars, anti-aircraft guns, and eight-inch howitzers through the business district, attracting large crowds. Individual guns were exhibited at prominent locations, along with other war gear, such as a thirty-six-inch spotlight, a field radio outfit, ambulance, and a carrier pigeon vehicle. Fifteen of the heavy guns went on display on Boston Commons, making frequent firings that reverberated throughout the city.<sup>8</sup>

Because World War I was at such a scale and because it dragged on well beyond that hoped-for Christmas by which everyone would be home, all the Allied nations had to turn to fundraising to continue fighting. And in that era where radio was in its infancy, and the newsreels that accompanied silent films still relatively rare, the display of captured enemy equipment aroused great excitement throughout the land. Local shops would often mount a small window display of war relics in order to both lure in customers and to sell Liberty Bonds, but the more novel and considerable the hardware, the better.

For example, there were already subs on display in 1917—captured by the British and sent to the US (in this case on display in Central Park and ceremoniously rechristened from “UC-5” to “U-Buy-A-Bond”)<sup>9</sup> and then also displayed alongside a British tank that had supposedly seen action in France to raise money—and they played on the novelty of their technology to lure visitors. At the close of the war, the U.S. received a considerable share of the now forfeit German war equipment that included 161 submarines. Eight of these “Hun devil boats” came to the U.S. in 1919 and considerably advanced American submarine engineering.<sup>10</sup> The captured subs also toured the country as both curiosities and profit engines for the government. One, the German UC-97, even came into the Great Lakes (getting as close to Houghton as Escanaba on July 30-31, 1920)

---

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Army Engineers Regiment, *History of the Twenty-Sixth Engineers (water supply regiment) in the World War, Sept. 1917- March, 1919* (N.p.: Published by the Regiment & New England Water Works Association, 1920), 41.

<sup>7</sup> Alton Latson, et al., “The Philippine Insurrection. ‘US retaliates,’” USASMA Digital Library, 2005, p. 12, online at <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/utills/getdownloaditem/collection/p15040coll2/id/5185/filename/5186.pdf/mapsto/pdf/type/singleitem>, accessed 2 May 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Chris Dubbs, *America's U-Boats: Terror Trophies of World War I* (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 103-04.

<sup>9</sup> Emily Nonko, “100 years ago today, a German U-Boat submarine ended up in Central Park,” *6sqft* [blog], Oct. 25, 2017, online at <https://www.6sqft.com/100-years-ago-today-a-german-u-boat-submarine-ended-up-in-central-park/>.

<sup>10</sup> “Japan Sends for Hun Submarines as War Trophies,” *The Honolulu Advertiser*, 18 Dec 1918, p. 1.





on her way to Chicago and the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. Audiences thrilled at the “German sea murderer . . . menacing in aspect with her decks almost awash, her steel, gray conning tower rising high above the water and the four-inch gun forward,” as she sailed into various ports from April to August 1919.<sup>11</sup> She was sunk by gunnery practice on June 7, 1921 and still lies on the bottom of the lake, somewhere off Kenosha, WI.<sup>12</sup>

Even more substantial was the Allied War Exposition (AWE), which toured two dozen cities in 1918 and 1919.<sup>13</sup> (Fig. 2) The Committee for Public Information (CPI) was organized in April 1917 by Wilson’s Executive Order No. 2594, empowering the Secretaries of State, War, and the

---

<sup>11</sup> “German U-Boat Arrives Here,” *Detroit Free Press*, 30 Jun 1919, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Dubbs, 162-67, 98-200.

<sup>13</sup> Although the AWE was widely noted in papers of the day, there are but four archive holdings about it in all of *ArchiveGrid* and none of note in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, DC. The only consolidated holdings of AWE material is at Norwich University: <http://archives.norwich.edu/digital/search/searchterm/Allied%20War%20Exposition%20Photographs/field/all/mode/exact/conn/and/order/nosort/page/1>.

In 1943 there were 3ft. of records in the National Archives, but the finding aid for RG63 compiled in 1962 no longer includes them, noting, “Transfers of records to other agencies and disposals of useless papers have resulted in a reduction of the records to less than one-fourth of the volume that the Council for National Defense reported to be in its custody in 1920.” However, the finding aid for RG 63 in the Research Consultation room at Archives II at College Park, MD has penciled annotations of current recorded locations for the items in the 1938 classification scheme noted, and shows that the entire subseries on the Expositions Bureau (CPI 10B) had been *discarded by 1962*. It is also worth noting here that when the record group was organized in the National Archives in the 1930s, the catalogers were also unable to locate any records of the Division of Exhibit at State Fairs run though the CPI. Quote from *Handbook of the Federal World War Agencies and their Records 1917-1921* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1943), p. 95. See Council for National Defense, “A Report Concerning Papers, Files, Records, Public Property, Assets and Liabilities, etc. of the Committee on Public Information” June 9, 1920, (manuscript in the files of the Committee); Roscoe R. Hill and Frank Hardee Allen, *Classification Scheme: Records of the Committee on Public Information, 1917-1919* (Washington, DC: National Archives Division of Classification, 1938), 32-34; *Handbook of Federal World War Agencies and Their Records 1917-1921*, National Archives Publication No. 24 (Washington: USGPO, 1943), 610; and Janet Weinert, *Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Committee on Public Information, 1917-19 (Record Group 63)* (Washington, DC: The National Archives, 1962).



Figure 2. Covers of catalogues from various stops of the AWE: Cincinnati (poster), San Francisco (program), Chicago (poster), and Chicago (program). Sources (L to R): Cincinnati Museum Center; eBay; Chicago History Center; author's collection.

Navy to work with George Creel, formerly an investigative journalist, who promptly asked for \$100,000 directly from the White House to run numerous projects under five divisions: External Communications, Publicity, “Vise” (*i.e.*, vice, that is, for its suppression), Pictures, and Foreign Affairs (*i.e.*, what we would today call “soft power” through public information [propaganda]). Creel initially assumed that most of the outreach to the public would be through the monthly (and ultimately) daily printed, subscription-based, *Official Bulletin*.<sup>14</sup> At first he neglected to consider the power of film, though he included “photo plays” in his initial request, and he had to modify the organization as 1917 went on. The CPI’s most well-known contributions were the organization of the “Four-Minute Men,” propaganda posters, and considerable censorship enforcement—or “to make the fight for public opinion both in this country and in other countries of the world” as their charter proclaimed.<sup>15</sup>

The War Expositions Bureau (WEB) was set up in May 1918 under the CPI films division to arouse the interest of the public in the war through exhibits showing armaments and captured war trophies. Chester I. Campbell, a major New England commercial exposition planner, served as its

<sup>14</sup> The CPI *Official Bulletin* was issued daily from 10 May 1917 – 31 Mar. 1919 and amounts to 12 linear ft. in the National Archives and was followed by the weekly *United States Bulletin* from 3 Apr. 1919 – 14 Feb 1921 (NARA, RG63 E49 and E50).

<sup>15</sup> NARA, RG 130, Records of the White House Office, E 18 Records Relating to the Committee on Public Information (hereafter CPI-WH). Alfred Emile Corneise, *War as Advertised: The Four Minute Men and America's Crusade, 1917-1918*, Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society 156 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984) and J. Michael Sproule, “The Four Minute Men and Early Twentieth-Century Public Speaking Pedagogy,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 13, no. 2 (2010): 135–147. The Committee also issued *How the War Came to America* in 1917 (and printed it in multiple languages, including 100,000 copies in German, 75,000 in Bohemian, 50,000 each in Polish and Italian, and 15,000 in Spanish) to sway public opinion (see orders from Thomas K. Claffey, Chief Clerk of CPI to the U.S. GPO in CPI-WH).



first director.<sup>16</sup> It absorbed the Bureau of War Photographs on September 1 and was discontinued on June 30, 1919. The WEB organized the expos but did so with the direct involvement of the various host cities who had to post a very large bond to get the travelling show to come to their city, provide the venue, and most of the helpers to pull it off. While some towns had it in their fairgrounds, others brought it inside. Cincinnati, for example, held it at the Music Hall and the Chamber of Commerce posted a \$25,000 bond against losses on the event. So sure were they of the appeal of the event, local businesses posted a total of nearly \$200,000 in bonds to bring the AWEs to their towns. Although attendance was depressed by the influenza epidemic, Cincinnati, for example, did manage to attract 160,000 visitors and posted a small profit for the government over and above this amount.<sup>17</sup> In other cities, an advance agent from the CPI engaged local bankers to distribute and pre-sell tickets. In Cleveland, for example, fifty men from the American Institute of Banking marshalled twenty-five motor cars to deliver tickets for sale to 600 stores across the region, netting sales of 75,000 tickets and a profit of \$7,500.<sup>18</sup>

The WEB spent just over \$1 million to mount the shows, and gate receipts alone totaled over \$1.4 million (Fig. 3), a clear profit for the government. Samuel Insull, the electrical systems magnate, oversaw the most successful stop in Chicago and it alone *netted* nearly \$584,000 from over two million visitors (with a quarter million in one day alone!). “Parades and other special events helped stir enthusiasm, and there was a daily sham battle on land and in the air, employing the services of 3,000 soldiers, sailors, and marines, and a British-American squadron of fourteen war planes.”<sup>19</sup> In most cases, the central government exhibition was augmented by local and regional attractions. Cincinnati added displays by the Commission on Training Camp Activities and the Commission on Volunteer War Agencies, band concerts by the men of Great Lakes Naval Training Station, motion pictures (still quite a rarity in 1918), and even speeches by various foreign representatives. Other societies like the Knights of Columbus, the American Library Association, the Red Cross, and even the Humane Society mounted booths to both encourage and capitalize on the war fervor.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> “Chester I. Campbell,” *The Boston Daily Globe*, 10 August 1926; “Death Claims C. I. Campbell,” *The Boston Daily Globe*, 21 Jan 1933.

<sup>17</sup> Seventieth Annual Report of the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce and Merchants’ Exchange for the Year Ending December 31, 1918 (Cincinnati: The Robert T. Morris Printing Co, 1919), 57–58.

<sup>18</sup> Frank B. Mellen, “Cleveland Chapter,” *Bulletin of the American Institute of Banking* 1, no. 3 (Jan. 1919): 276–277.

<sup>19</sup> James Robert Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War; The Story of the Committee on Public Information, 1917-1919* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939), 69-70.

<sup>20</sup> “Our Field Correspondents,” *The National Humane Review* 7, no. 4 (April 1919): 76, noting that a quarter million visitors saw the Red Star Animal Relief Society booth in Cincinnati, distributing thousands of leaflets and “tagging” nearly 11,000 children(!).



City	Receipts	City	Receipts
Chicago, IL	\$583,731.24	St. Louis, MO	\$23,570.40
Cleveland, OH	167,355.51	Houston, TX	22,684.05
Pittsburgh, PA	147,804.16	Waco, TX	16,904.70
Cincinnati, OH	66,541.10	New Orleans, LA	14,439.20
Los Angeles, CA	65,875.75	St. Paul, MN	8,986.65
Detroit, MI	63,470.74	Oklahoma City, OK	4,236.43
Buffalo, NY	60,354.27	Jackson, MI	2,946.48
San Francisco, CA	54,274.80	Little Rock, AK	1,595.14
Toledo, OH	50,003.02	Waterloo, IA	983.93
Kansas City, MO	28,646.20	Great Falls, MT	977.53
<b>TOTAL: \$1,385,381.30 [Approx. \$22.7M today]</b>			
<small>SOURCE: Complete Report of the Chairman of the Committee for Public Information, 1917:1918:1919 (Washington: US GPO, 1920), 59-60.</small>			

Figure 3. Allied War Exhibition 1918 Receipts.

The exhibition hit the major cities from Los Angeles and San Francisco to Chicago, Cincinnati, and Cleveland, but also stopped in convenient places like Waco, TX and Waterloo, IA when the Des Moines show fell through. It is also clear, given the expositions’ dates, that the show divided itself into two parallel expos. (Table 1 and Fig. 4) The expos were marketed with such slogans as, “Like going over the battlefields of Europe. Like visiting the War Museums of Paris, London and Rome,” and exhortations to

Go to the War Exposition as a matter of interest. You may never have another chance! It will give you several of the most interesting hours of a lifetime. But go, primarily, to learn more about the war and the things you can do personally to hasten our inevitable victory. The admission price is fifty cents. You can buy your tickets at half price in advance from your employer, drug store, department stores, banks, clubs, theaters, in fact almost anywhere. Don’t miss having the children see the war exposition.<sup>21</sup>

The core of the objects on display were captured war materiel, and some stops included a British tank and a battle re-enactment. Some cities like Cincinnati posted nearly 6,000 photographs of the men who were serving—or by the time the Expo there actually happened, had served—in Europe.<sup>22</sup> Other eclectic war trophies were sometimes included, though it is not clear whether these

<sup>21</sup> “Like a Trip Into ‘No Man’s Land’” [advertisement], *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1 Dec. 1918, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> Margaret Breidenbaugh, “Ludlow Luther: Cincinnati Area’s First African American Casualty of WWI,” *Off the Shelf!* [blog], Cincinnati Museum Center, 28 June 2017, online at <https://www.cincymuseum.org/blog/ludlow-luther-cincinnati-area’s-first-african-american-casualty-wwi>, accessed 20 May 2018.

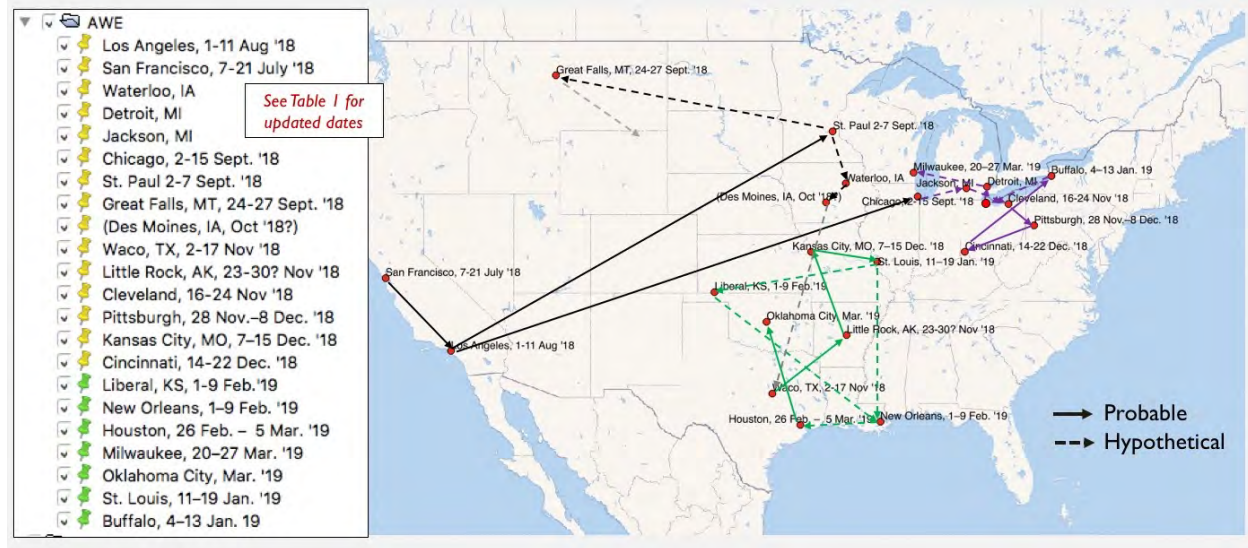


Figure 4. The Travelling Road Show of the A.W.E.

came via the CPI or other sources: Cincinnati displayed a bronze statue of St. John the Baptist as a child “which the Germans in their haste had to leave behind, but attempted to destroy by heaping rubbish upon it and setting fire to it.”<sup>23</sup> In Kansas City the American war dog brigade made an appearance where cross-breeds of an Airedale and an English sheep dog were shown that had been taught not to bark but were “taught to hate the Germans” (“in the course of their training German uniforms have been put on dummies and the uniforms saturated with a ... disagreeable [odor that] they will associate [with] a German soldier”).<sup>24</sup>

Whether one sees the AWE as propaganda or entertainment is a matter of perspective. Creel, head of the CPI, argued that,

Disunity and disloyalty tear at the very heart of courage. The Committee [for Public Information] fights ignorance, misunderstanding, and disaffection. It works for the maintenance of morale by every process of stimulation. We do not call it propaganda, for the word in German hands has come to be associated with lies and corruptions. Our work is educational and informative, for we have such confidence in our case that we feel that no more than a fair presentation of its facts is needed to win the verdict.<sup>25</sup>

Much like air shows today, the line between displays of military hardware being marketing and diversion gets rather blurry. It is, however, no coincidence that the AWE opened in San Francisco

<sup>23</sup> A picture of the statue and this text featured prominently on the cover of *Souvenir Catalogue. United States and Allied Governments War Exposition*, price 10 cents, clearly playing on the emotions of how horrible the Germans must have been to do this (and note that if they were retreating, it was probably in a French or Belgian church before they took it).

<sup>24</sup> *United States and Allied Governments War Exposition at Convention Hall Kansas City* (Kansas City, MO: n.p., 1918), 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.



in direct and planned conjunction with the annual conference of the Associated Advertising Club of the World.<sup>26</sup>

*Table 1: Tracing the Allied War Exposition Across the U.S.A.*

**Cities** in red indicate simultaneous expos. **Dates** in purple and green are what appear to be a Midwestern and Great Plains traveling circuits, though there is no necessary reason to think that they remained entirely insulated from one another as cars could be shifted at will and newly captured materiel from Europe could be added or exchanged.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Location</b>
July 7–21, 1918	San Francisco, CA	Golden Gate Park?
Aug. 1–11, 1918	Los Angeles, CA	Exposition Park, 18 carloads
Sept. 2–7, 1918	St. Paul, MN	MN State Fair, big steel machinery bldg. (came from LA and arr. 24 Aug.)
Sept. 2–15, 1918	Chicago, IL	Grant Park
Sept. 24–27, 1918	Great Falls, MT	Milwaukee Depot
Oct. 1918 (Not held)	Des Moines, IA	Planned for Coliseum or Auditorium. Initially planned for 14 carloads filling a 400x250 ft. space in mid-August; then shifted to begin on 6 Oct but was postponed so as not to conflict with the 4LL, held there from Sept. 28–Oct. 19 <sup>1</sup>
late Sept.– early Oct., 1918	Waterloo, IA	At the Dairy Cattle Congress. 5,300 attendance on opening day.
Nov 2–17, 1918	Waco, TX	Texas Cotton Palace
Nov. 3–17, 1918	Jackson, MI	Four carloads of recently returned materiel plus existing carloads.
Nov. 16–24, 1918	Cleveland, OH	Wigmore Coliseum? Originally scheduled for Nov. 9-17, but postponed a week due to influenza. 47 car loads.
Nov. 23–[30?], 1918	Little Rock, AK	Municipal Auditorium / Board of Commerce Bldg. Delayed until 25 Nov due to transport delays.
Nov. 28–Dec. 8, 1918	Pittsburgh, PA	Exposition Building at the point
Dec. 7–15, 1918	Kansas City, MO	Convention Hall
Dec. 14–22, 1918	Cincinnati, OH	Music Hall
Jan. 4–13, 1919	Buffalo, NY	Broadway and Elmwood Music Hall
Jan. 11–19, 1919	St. Louis, MO	Coliseum Building
Feb. 1–9, 1919	Liberal, KS	Heineman Ball Park
Feb. 1–9, 1919	New Orleans, LA	Heinemann Park. 25 carloads.
Feb [5?]-12, 1919	Toledo, OH	
Feb. 20–[27?] 1919	Detroit, MI	Wayne Gardens and Arena
Feb. 26–Mar. 5, 1919	Houston, TX	
March ? 1919	Oklahoma City, OK	“At Third and Elgin”
March 20–27, 1919	Milwaukee, WI	Civic Auditorium

<sup>26</sup> “Ad Men Will See Allied War Show,” *The Atlanta Constitution* [Atlanta, GA], 7 Jul 1918, p. 12.



Returning to our initial topic of this paper, the local Chicago paper headline blazed, “Go and see the ‘German 77’s,’ the favorite field piece of the Hun army, captured in battle, battered and made useless by allied shells.”<sup>27</sup> After enticing readers to see the torpedoes (“mate to the one with which the Germans sunk the *Lusitania*”), a 3-ton anti-aircraft gun, “official French photographs of Hun atrocities” (“official photographs,” they repeated, “which cannot be denied”), and the mockup of the trenches, the paper pronounced:

Go down to the War Exposition and picture to yourself that hail of shell, that smudge of poison gas, that shower of machine-gun bullets, all the atmosphere of treachery and hate and unfair fighting our boys had to face.

When you get that realization you will be readier to do your full share here at home. And THAT is the sole reason for the exposition.

After the AWE wrapped up, there were also “special war trophy trains” that travelled the country as part of the Third Liberty Loan campaign in mid-1918,<sup>28</sup> and then the Victory Loan program—that is, the fourth Liberty Loan—to continue raising money for the money we had already spent on the armed forces.<sup>29</sup>

### War Trophies for Sentiment

The AWE maintained a strong theme of the sacrifice of the soldiers in France. The great triumphal arch that was constructed in Chicago (Fig.5), for example, read, “Our Heroic Dead. There is no death. They all survive,” and listed the major offensives of the war. The Kansas City program proclaimed it was for “the members of the ‘Army at Home’ who through days of toil and nights of anxiety pray for the safe return of those who ‘Over There’ have been fighting humanity’s battle,” and added that “Surely no one can witness these priceless trophies bought with the blood of those who have died in the Battle for Humanity without being stirred to the depths of his heart and aroused to a determination to do all in his power ‘over here’ to bring victory to America and her Allies ‘over there’.”<sup>30</sup> The back of a ticket for the Cincinnati show read “Do not pass lightly by these trophies; study them, and when you leave the Exposition Buildings, do so with your heart filled with gratitude for the brave men who have fought, and are fighting your battles, for THIS IS YOUR WAR.”<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> *Herald and Examiner* [Chicago], 1 Sept 1918.

<sup>28</sup> *The Daily Ardmoreite* [Ardmore, OK], 7 Apr 1918, p. 1. “War Exhibits in Green Bay Tuesday Noon,” *Green Bay Press-Gazette* [Green Bay, WI], 23 Sep 1918, p. 1, which was also accompanied by a lecture by Prof. Kowaike on “Science and the World War—Wisconsin’s Contribution,” at the Bijou theater.

<sup>29</sup> “Local Briefs,” *Medford Mail Tribune* [Medford, OR], 29 Mar 1919, p.2. “War Trophy Train Will Open Fourth Liberty Loan Campaign in Indiana,” *The Indiana Gazette* [Indiana, PA], 26 Sep 1918, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> United States and Allied Governments War Exposition at Convention Hall Kansas City (Kansas City, MO: n.p., 1918), cover and p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ticket stub, in “Remembering Those Who Served: The WWI Servicemen Portrait Collection,” *Off the Shelf!* [blog], Cincinnati Museum Center, 19 April 2017, online at <https://www.cincymuseum.org/blog/remembering-those-who-served-wwi-servicemen-portrait-collection>, accessed 21 May 2018.

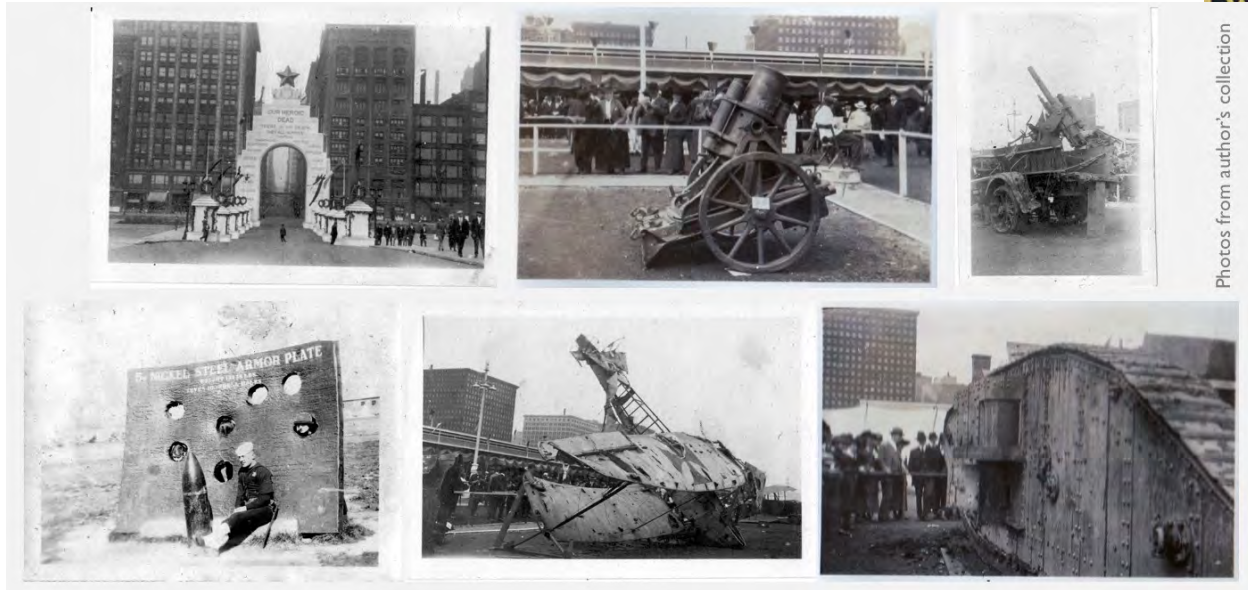


Figure 5. Example tourist snapshots from Chicago A.W.E. Source: Author's collection.

Today, of course, war equipment on display tends to be associated with war memorials and cemeteries, not fundraising. This shift from one to the other is not as straightforward as one might expect. After the war, local garrisons that had received both our own war surplus as well as captured German materiel for training purposes would occasionally bring it out for public viewing, and small local exhibits of trophies brought home by troops also seem to have remained in fashion into the mid-1920s.<sup>32</sup>

This shift from fundraising to memorialization began in 1921. In the spring of that year, the Senate passed a bill (S.674) and the House a resolution (H.R. 3160) that facilitated the equitable distribution of war trophies across the country, apportioning them according to the number of men from each state and territory that served, and appropriating \$400,000 to facilitate the process.<sup>33</sup> When the bill went to the floor in August of that year, it was objected to on two grounds: the Secretary of War said it was his right to distribute the war trophies, and the amount of the appropriation was considered far too high in its sum or too low in its estimate (initial discussions had proposed a \$1 million appropriation), as well as that receiving sites had to pay the transportation costs for their trophy. The bill then stalled for six months.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Camp Grant in Rockford, IL provided exhibits for the Mc Henry Co. Fair: “New Features of 1919 Fair,” *Marengo Republican-News* [Marengo, IL], 14 Aug 1919, p. 1. Classified Ads, *The Dayton Herald* [Dayton, OH], 7 Jun 1924, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the information on the life of this bill comes from “Equitable Distribution of Captured War Devices and Trophies,” 76<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess., U.S House of Representatives, Report 171 [H.R. 171], 13 June 1921 and “A Bill to Provide for the Equitable Distribution of War Devices and Trophies to the States and Territories of the United States and to the District of Columbia,” 76<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., U.S. House of Representatives, Bill S.674, 29 Aug. 1922 [this is the House reading of the Senate Bill]. See also H.R. 979, H.R. 14105, and bill S.643.





*Table 2: WWI War Trophies for Distribution.*

Guns and Howitzers		Trench mortars	
77 mm	404 (+83)	76 mm	418 (+34)
88 mm	10 (+15)	170 mm	141 (+15)
100 mm	3 (+6)	240 mm	10 (+10)
105 mm	449 (+702)	245 mm	161 (+9)
120 mm	7 (+1)		730 (+68)
135 mm	10 (+9)		
150 mm	427 (+72)	Total captured guns, howitzers and mortars:	3,206
210 mm	144 (+43)		
4.2 in.	13 (+10)	Other vehicles	4,000
Total:	1,467 (+941)		
<i>Source:</i> House Report 171 (1921), pp. 4-5			

*Note:* numbers in parentheses are the number of additional guns issued to the service and retained by the Ordnance Dept.

Although a great deal of materiel was captured (Table 2), the competition between the 11,000 American Legion posts (who argued that it was their members who captured the guns, after all), parks, museums, and public squares, left the Committee on Military Affairs at loggerheads. In fact, when the bill went to the House, they so seriously rewrote it that in effect nothing survived. Part of the objection was that to display war materiel was tantamount to encouraging war, and some member(s) wanted to recall all materiel already on display throughout the country and destroy it: The Socialist Representative from New York, Meyer London, wanted to put it all on a battleship and scuttle the lot at sea.

On the matter of transportation costs, state leaders of the American Legion appealed to their governors, but only three of the forty-five that replied said that their state was willing to pay those costs, noting the inherent unfairness of, say, California having to pay ten times as much for the same number of trophies as New Jersey (captured materiel was stored at the Raritan Arsenal and Fort Newark) due solely to transport costs. In addition, at least half of the captured materiel, especially the wheeled pieces, were in such a state as to be unfit for outdoor display. Most needed to be painted (“The cannon, carriages, and vehicles are all stored in the open and are rapidly deteriorating, and present an unsightly appearance and, to avoid undue criticism or unfavorable comment, should be painted before distribution is made”)<sup>34</sup> but even the Legion realized that this would destroy their historic state at the time of capture (“will spoil their effect as trophies”)<sup>35</sup> as well as cost the government another \$30,000-60,000 (depending on whose estimates one accepted). It was estimated that they could reduce the overall cost to only \$250,000, but that would still leave the trophies to each state to distribute from their capitols.

<sup>34</sup> H.Rep. 171, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> S.674, p. 5



Part of the problem lay in the geography of the situation. As early as 1919, Congress had acted to get trophies of the war to various localities around the country, though how certain smaller towns were favored with such actions while larger cities might be ignored is a curious question of influence. Rep. John Gordon Cooper (R-OH), for example, introduced three separate resolutions (H.R. 4409–4411) to have the Secretary of War donate a German cannon each to the small Ohio towns east of Cleveland of Mesopotamia, Andover, and Orwell. Rep. Joseph Wellington Byrns (D-TN), not to be outdone, introduced five resolutions to donate 12 captured German guns to Stewart, Springfield, Clarksville, Cheatham and Nashville. Rep. Thomas Sutler Williams (R-IL) was modest in his resolutions, requesting only one for Norris City, IL, a farm town in the southern part of the state which still only has a population of 1,244 (in 2016), while Andrew James Hickey (R-IN) proposed eighteen separate resolutions for towns and especially colleges in Indiana. Edward Campbell Lyttle (R-KS) was much more efficient, proposing a single resolution (H.R. 4388) to seven cities and the University of Kansas. And so on.<sup>36</sup>

As John Franklin Miller (R-WA) argued on the floor of the Senate on August 3, 1921:

We realized, as every Member of this House must realize, that some of the congressional districts and some of the States are situated near the source of supply, near where these war trophies are stored. ...Are you going to take the State of California, which was exceeded by only eight States in the American Union in the number of soldiers contributed to the war [applause], and force its citizens to pay the cost of the transportation of these war trophies to the Pacific coast? ...Can you conceive of a man being in favor of this bill, knowing that these war trophies are stored in the eastern part of the United States, who pretends to be honest with himself and with the American people, saying that the folks of this country shall not receive these war trophies unless they go down into their pockets and pay the expense of having them sent to the places where the people live? ...Out yonder in Utah and California and Oregon and the Pacific Northwest, and down in New Mexico it is not fair to expect those people to pay for the transportation of these war trophies, because the cost would be so great in comparison to the transportation cost in the States nearby where the trophies are stored.<sup>37</sup>

Localities, too, took it in their own hands to demand—well, formally and politely request—trophies from the newly-created War Distribution Board [WDB], as when Staunton, VA resolved “Whereas, Staunton furnished over four hundred volunteer troops to the war, in addition to her draft quota, etc.,” therefore “the War Distribution board be requested to recognize [its] claims and award Staunton a fair share of the war trophies allotted to the state of Virginia.”<sup>38</sup>

Debates continued in Congress in 1921, 1922, and 1923, under CMA secretary John W. Weeks (R-MA; Wikipedia calls him a “competent, honest, and respected administrator and adviser who guided the Department of War through its post-World War I downsizing”) and it was not until May 1924 that an act was passed “To provide for the equitable distribution of captured war devices

<sup>36</sup> All of these are from one day in the *Congressional Record* for the House, June 2, 1919, pp. 546-547.

<sup>37</sup> *Congressional Record*, House, 3 Aug 1921, p. 4616.

<sup>38</sup> “Chamber of Commerce is after Hotel,” *The News Leader* [Staunton, VA], October 10, 1922, p. 1. “Show 13 Reasons for War Trophies,” *Reading Times* [Reading, PA], 19 Aug 1920, p. 5. “Relics of War to be Distributed,” *The Bee* [Danville, VA], 4 Oct 1922, p. 7.



and trophies” across the country.<sup>39</sup> In it the simple solution turned out to be that the captured guns, howitzers, machine guns, and the like—other than those reserved by the U.S. military for use or experiment—should simply be apportioned by the relative number of men who served from April 11, 1917 to Nov. 11, 1918 from each state or territory. Congress appropriated only \$39,000—“or so much thereof as may be necessary,” and they added a proviso that that money could not be used for “Cleaning, etc.,” apparently leaving that problem to the states—for the distribution of the materiel, however. Within a month the House had to amend the act to put the decision more firmly in the hands of the Secretary of War and extend the period in which all this was to happen from one year to approximately three. In theory, then, by July 1, 1928, all the material should have been distributed, sold or destroyed. Still, Congress had to pass yet another separate resolution in 1926 to explicitly order the Secretary of War to deliver examples of captured materiel not yet distributed to the national museum of the American Legion in Indianapolis.<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusion

Which brings us back to the German 77 that arrived in Houghton in the summer of 1919. Why did we get one? Part of it is clearly a matter of connections. There were only three distributed to all of the Ninth Federal Reserve District from Montana to the UP that summer, one to us, one to Montana and one to South Dakota, though who was directly responsible for these choices has yet to be determined. But as our speech-givers here said, one can claim a war trophy as a symbol of power or a symbol of loss; of power or of humility. During the war they were clearly symbols of might—either ours if it was our equipment running about in mock battles in the local arena or park, or

---

<sup>39</sup> Public Law 68-234, ch. 312 (amended in ch. 362), 68 Congress, Session 1, An Act: To provide for the equitable distribution of captured war devices and trophies to the States and Territories of the United States and to the District of Columbia, U.S. Statutes at Large vol. 43, no. Main Section (1924): p. 597-599 [43 Stat. 597]. HeinOnline, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.statute/sal043&i=631>.

See further:

- 61 Cong. Rec. 402 (1921) legislation dealing with pensions, private claims, distribution of war trophies, etc.
- 62 Cong. Rec. 354 (1922) Res. 1-Providing that legislation dealing with pensions, private claims, distribution of war trophies, etc., be initiated by petition on suitable furnished forms.
- 63 Cong. Rec. 31 (1922) Res. 247-Providing funds for the maintenance of public order United States certain war trophies captured by or surrendered.
- 63 Cong. Rec. 32 (1922) Res. 244-To donate to the American Legion certain war trophies.
- 63 Cong. Rec. 37 (1922) Res. 398-To donate to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States certain war trophies captured by or surrendered to the armed forces of the United States in the World War.
- 64 Cong. Rec. 190 (1923) Res. 250-To donate to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States certain war trophies captured by or surrendered to the armed forces of the United States in the World War.

<sup>40</sup> Public Resolution 69-19, ch. 187, 69 Congress, Session 1, *Joint Resolution: Directing the Secretary of War to allot war trophies to the American Legion Museum*. The Senate actually made more or less the same resolution in 1922 (Senate Joint Resolution 244) for the American Legion, and a parallel one (S. J.R. 250) for the VFW, but they must never have come into effect.



theirs if it was the twisted wreckage of captured equipment—and they were explicitly displayed to get Americans to support the war. After the war Congress sent them across the country (and this is a poorly studied process) to recognize the sacrifice of towns to the horror that is war.

Whether war trophies can have other valences is a broader question that cannot be dealt with here. On one hand, it is clear that trophies after WWII were quite different in their associations, given the values for which the Axis stood (attempts to dehumanize the Germans in WWI notwithstanding, the propaganda of suspected “German atrocities” could never equal the clear atrocities of the Nazis or Japanese).<sup>41</sup> Personal war trophies are another element of the question which reminds us that there are personal values and societal values that come into play in the repatriation of war trophies. But since individuals can’t repatriate a 77mm German field gun, that does not play into our story here. Still, it will be interesting to find out what happened to the trophies on display at the AWEs as they travelled around the country, just as it will be interesting to try to find out what happened to Michigan Tech’s German 77.

---

<sup>41</sup> Lyneyve Finch, “Psychological Propaganda: The War of Ideas on Ideas During the First Half of the Twentieth Century.” *Armed Forces & Society* 26, no. 3 (2000): 367–86.



## Appendix A.

Letter of John W. Black as reported in “Captured German Gun Escorted to College by Soldiers,” *Daily Mining Gazette* [Houghton, MI], Aug. 28, 1919, p. 2.

“Only three of these guns are to be placed as permanent memorials in the Ninth Federal Reserve District. One is to signify Montana’s support for its government in the recent conflict, one will remind South Dakota of its part in the war, and one will rest fittingly upon the site of the engineers’ training camp and upon the grounds of an institution that was devoted unreservedly to the winning of the war, as Northern Michigan’s constant reminder of the sacrifices of her sons, and their valiant and heroic part in the mighty struggle overseas for the right.

“I trust that every man who looks upon this captured trophy in the future, will remember that it is not simply an evidence of the conquering power of a free army, fighting for the maintenance in the world of the right of men to be free and equal, and for the preservation of the ideals which are the present hope of humanity, but will reverently recall the heroic devotion, the hardships and the sacrifices of our men who insofar as their part went, did their full measure of service and helped make victory possible. This gun represents not military power, but the triumph of free government over the most terrible autocracy with which civilization in its history has had to contend. It represents right which has conquered might. It represents the preservation of democracy, liberty, freedom and opportunity, through a crisis that but for our victory, might have engulfed these precious heritages and forever buried them under the heel of the Prussian war god. It presents to us a permanent reminder that power that is not based on right principles, justice and equity cannot permanently endure in the world. It recalls many of our bravest and best, who lie under the flowered fields of France and did not come back, because they believed in these things. I am thankful for my life among such men. Their record in the war will be an inspiration so long as we shall live.

“We might have placed a shaft, or a skillfully wrought bronze memorial, in the place of this weapon. I think, however, that this captured trophy is the best and the most fitting reminder of Northern Michigan’s sacrifices and of its devotion to government and the principles upon which this great nation was founded. This mechanism of iron and steel meant to the men who designed it, to those who fabricated it, and to those who took it into action, that Hun domination, Hun principles of government and a Hun attitude towards the peoples of the world, should hereafter control the nations of the earth. Its very efficiency as an agency of destruction marks how great was the fall of the German empire, and how terrible a fate the world has been saved. It is therefore a proper memorial and I think that we shall not forget its great significance.”



## Appendix B.

“Address of C. H. Benedict at Presentation of German Gun,” *Calumet News* [Calumet, MI], 28 Aug. 19, p. 3.

On the occasion of the presentation of a captured German cannon at the College of Mines yesterday afternoon, C.H. Benedict, on behalf of the Federal Reserve of the Ninth district, spoke as follows:

“As I understand it this cannon is one of many others captured by American forces and now distributed to various localities in further recognition of the part they played in the great war. If each locality that did its part were to have one there would not be found enough in the whole German line from Antwerp to the Argonne and so Houghton is very fortunate to be able to claim one of these pieces for its own. Its resting in this city and on this campus can be justified only if Houghton shall truly represent the progressive spirit of the upper peninsula and if this campus, and this college shall truly exemplify all that is best in the industrial and the technical life of this district.

“For the past war was above anything else a technical and a scientific one. Not only was soldier pitted against soldier but nation was pitted against nation and for every warrior on the firing line there were ten civilians at home striving with the implements of the arts of peace to forge a more effective weapon for the sterner art of war. And if there is to be no next war as all the peoples hope and pray it will be because science and engineering and industry has constructed a weapon so destructive of life and property that to invoke its use as an arbiter of national dispute is to imperil the very foundations of civilization itself.

“Who shall say how close to the brink of destruction civilization was on November 11 last or how much we have moved away from that brink since that date? Consider Germany in 1914 and then consider her again in 1919. Let the mute brass lips before us have the power of speech and what a tale they could tell of a flourishing people on that earlier date, alive with industry and filled with hope and then on that later date fallen so low that none could do it homage. And what about Austria and Bulgaria and Turkey? These fell from their highest state you may say because of the enemy without. Who shall say there is less danger now to us from the enemy within? Not the traitor, nor the pro-German do I mean but that more insidious enemy called ease or sloth or luxury; the desire to reap without having sown; the desire to consume without having produced; the desire to enjoy without having labored. ‘As ye sow, so shall ye reap’ is as true now as it was 2,000 years ago and it is just as true physically as it is spiritually. If you do not produce you may not consume and you may consume only as much as you produce.

“Ninety per cent of the ills that inflict us now as a nation would disappear within a fortnight if we each of us practiced the homely virtues of thrift and hard work, practiced them ourselves, mind you, and did not preach them for the other fellow. What the world needs is production and producers, and not destruction and destroyers.

“And so the lesson of this brass instrument of war placed upon this spot must come by contrast. As surely as it stands for desolation and destruction so surely shall this school stand for peace and construction. More iron and more copper, therefore more plows and more thrashing machines and more motors, therefore more food stuffs and more of all those products that go to make up modern human life.



“I have met many of the young men within the last fifteen years who have graduated from this institution and I do not know which is the cause and which is the effect—whether this institution has in the past attracted men of high calibre or whether it has attracted the average run of students and has molded them into a finer form. But this I do know, that the men who left this institution have been men who have been able to take a leading part in the mining industry and its allied branches and so it is not at all strange that the engineering companies which may claim the School of Mines of Houghton County and the Upper Peninsula as their training ground should have played a distinctive part in the struggle now happily passed. And so to the perennial youth that may come to this institution in the future this bronze cannon may stand as a symbol of the valor of American manhood in 1918, the year in which it was wrested from the Germans.

“May it forever give mute testimony to the noble type of men who made possible its capture and though it stand here a thousand years may it never behold an American sword drawn, save in a righteous cause, nor if drawn, sheathed unless the cause be victorious.”



## Boy that's the Girl: The Androgynous Nature of WWI Propaganda Posters

Sarah F. Price

University of Alabama

During World War I, propaganda posters played a major role in perpetuating national unity and pride, while simultaneously dictating cultural norms of wartime practices. Martha Banta explains that these propaganda posters were the “single most important visual means for promoting national values during the war” (560). The posters visually represented and structured the rules by which society should function, incorporating themes of nationalistic pride, guilt, and responsibility to coerce citizens to contributing to the war effort either through enlistment, buying government bonds, food conservation, volunteering, monetary donations, etc. These images represented what was culturally acceptable and expected within American society during 1917-1918, and therefore the figures within the posters became emblematic of what was expected from men, women, and children of the era. These figures were an inescapable element of life during the war, and covered all surfaces: glanceable material infiltrating the psyche of all Americans. Carolyn Kitch explains that, “During 1917 and 1918, the two years of American involvement in the war, more than twenty million copies of some 2,500 recruitment and home front-fundraising posters were displayed in stores, at theaters, in train stations, and at post offices” (102). Throughout these posters, gender is simultaneously portrayed as fixed and fluid. With the development of women’s rights and women’s suffrage campaigns, as well as a need to incorporate women within the war effort, these posters create an androgynous approach to gender through visual representation of men and women, as well as shifting the expected roles of men and women at the time.

During this era, gender began taking on new shape as women began entering the workforce and asserting their rights outside of the home. Kitch explains,

At no time did lasting change in gender roles seem more likely than in the 1910s, the final decade of the suffrage drive. The vote was not the only potential gain for women during this era: radicals who called themselves "feminists" pushed for reforms in the institution of marriage, the American popularity of the works of Freud prompted a public acknowledgement of women's sexuality, and a new birth-control movement enabled woman to express that sexuality more freely and safely (1).

Leading up to World War I, women began asserting themselves into the public sphere, creating a shift in the traditional gender roles. This movement was met with resistance by the patriarchal dominant culture, and WWI created an opportunity for the reassertion of traditional gender roles. Michele Shover states that, “In the World War I posters, the combatant governments attempted to expand the feminine role to meet the wartime needs of public policy. At the same time, governments attempted to preserve the traditional passive feminine role. This poses a neat and revealing contradiction to current studies of how government policies affect sex roles” (Shover 460). In other words, the beginning of the women’s rights movements prior to WWI created a shift in the understood roles of men and women. Throughout WWI, these posters both attempted to





reassert strict gender roles while encouraging both men and women to actively engage in the war effort. While these posters often emphasize the traditional role of women as situated solely in the realm of the home, to be protected and defended, they simultaneously defy this traditional categorization of women in the need to encourage them to join in the war effort either by volunteering for the Red Cross, providing supplies, and generally engaging in practices that place them in the direct sphere of warfare. Cléménine Tholas-Disset states that, “The propaganda campaigns portrayed female characters endowed with a double identity, both masculine and feminine” (Tholas-Disset 67). This double identity can be seen through the androgynous nature within many of these posters. Numerous scholars acknowledge an androgynous component to WWI imagery, but it is underthought and often mentioned as an aside or brief observation rather than a point of interest or study (Alonso, Bockting, Banta, Capozzola, Craig, Foreman, Gubar, Havelock, Kitch, Moore, Patterson, Roberts, Schreiber, Segal, Shover, Snider, Tholas-Disset).

In this paper, I first ask the question, “How is androgyny portrayed in these posters?,” and then, “How do these posters portray the shifting gender roles throughout WWI and beyond?” In answering these questions, I will first discuss the definition of androgyny with regard to this paper, and how androgyny was at play in World War I; then I will discuss how the portrayal of androgyny was emblematic of larger cultural shifts. Lastly, I will analyze a number of these posters looking at androgynous representations of men and women, and how they impacted the understanding of national engagement in the war effort. In representing the shifting of gender through androgynous appearance and agency, these posters reinforced and re-instilled androgyny within the quotidian life of World War I.

### Androgyny Defined

Images in day to day life inform cultural norms and help create our social reality. WWI posters both reinforced and deconstructed gender norms, as they forcibly placed women within the roles assigned to them, yet due to wartime necessities, these roles became grounded in the grotesque landscape of death and destruction. Carolyn Heilbrum states that androgyny “seeks to liberate the individual from the bounds of the appropriate” (xi). Ellen Lenney explains that,

A very common flaw in androgyny research, . . . is that many researchers and writers make the dubious assumption that androgyny is a single entity with one agreed-upon definition and, further, many tend to fall prey to an ‘overinclusion of meaning’ in that definition. Instead, there are several overlapping, but far from identical, operational definitions currently in use, and each of these definitions has a more limited meaning than is often attributed to it. (708)

Within this paper, I will focus on androgyny from a socially constructed standpoint meaning that the social environment and depictions of androgyny created the cultural impact of the gender roles and power dynamics of the era. In this respect, personality and identity are made up of different aspects of masculinity and femininity. They are not therefore opposites, but rather parts of a whole. As a practice and discourse, androgyny incorporates, shuffles, and blends gendered attributes commonly associated with masculinity and femininity (Lenney). This is not to say gender identity is entirely socially constructed, but for the purposes of this paper, the definition of androgyny will focus on how cultural depictions influence gender roles and power dynamics, and thereby the simultaneous rejection and reassertion of strict gender roles through androgynous imagery. In this regard, Havelock Ellis states that “human identities are social constructs that are not only defined



differently but also experienced differently, depending on historical and sociological forces. Biological underpinnings may be influential but do not necessarily determine directionality, and they are always mediated within social milieus” (Ellis and Baldwin 115). With regard to the WWI propaganda posters, Bockting asserts, “If challenging gender stereotypes is a major component in theorizing about androgyny, then few events provide a more concrete and historical instance of such need for revisioning than the Great War” (21). In this respect, the propaganda posters of WWI allow us to see the ways in which physical representations of androgyny served ironically to inadvertently undercut strict gender roles of the era while attempting to re-solidify the gender binary.

### Gender in Context

By 1910, a crisis in gender identity had reached a fevered pitch as women were beginning to make considerable inroads in places historically reserved for men. Women were attending college, earning wages, receiving access to birth control, and demanding the right to vote. WWI was promoted as a chance to reassert traditional gender norms and elevate the importance of masculinity through combat. Androgyny was one strategy used by modernist authors to subvert traditional representations of gender difference. Bockting makes the point that male violence at the time was rooted in Darwinism. Men were said to be naturally more courageous and powerful than women, and war was a way to encourage these tendencies (Bockting). When early feminists challenged these sentiments, they were widely villainized, as doing so was thought to make victory in war less likely. In many of these discourses, killing was the mark of manhood, and thus, a threshold of exclusion for women. Men had to kill to prove that they were not women Lynne Segal explains that gender analysis can be an

indispensable tool for critiquing militarism and its endless cycles of war ... Both the rhetorics of domination, and the training in the uses of coercion necessary for producing military cadres, still connect us almost immediately with images of men and masculinity. It is men who are associated with all that is tough, assertive, stoical, obedient and heroic. Moreover, men's traditional monopoly of institutionalized force, whether in the military or the police, has helped secure men's dominance both over women, as well as securing existing hierarchies between nations and differing classes and ethnic groups. (30)

Kitch furthers this understanding in that, “World War I poster imagery presented a rejuvenated American masculinity while naturalizing various ideals for womanhood through exaggerations of them: beckoning beauty, angelic healer, avenging warrior, sacrificing mother, supportive wife” (120). In regard to gender within WWI, Christopher Capozzola asserts that women were essential to the war campaign through their contributions in food conservation and administration, fundraising, and working directly within the differing campaigns, often on the frontlines with the soldiers. Women were themselves warriors on the homefront even if they were not directly able to enlist. And thereby through their contributions, they forced their way into the political sphere (Capozzola).

Before the start of the war, gender roles were beginning to shift and become less rigid through women’s assertions into previously male dominated publics. Prior to the United States entering WWI, women had already begun the fight for equal rights and suffrage. The women’s liberation movement “called into question the role divisions of male and female, stating that the differences between males and females were culturally determined, not bound by either biology or theology.



Feminism embraced the ideas of social leaning theorists and used them as underpinnings to examine the institutionalization of sexism” (Ellis and Baldwin 126). Popular portrayals of women were already beginning to shift. Publications called *Little Magazines* were published in the 1894-1898 to reject mainstream culture and art posters as a rejection of then mainstream literary culture. Disassociated from middle class concerns, the portrayals of women within these magazines were both empowering and demeaning. Women were portrayed as sexually liberated and independent, yet had no real economic or political power. Their sexuality was their power, and the beginning of this empowerment was visually portrayed through the images within the Little Magazines, depicting the independent and liberated woman (Knight). Rachel Schreiber explains that women’s suffrage publishing used representations of men and women as equals and working within the same environments (Schreiber). Images of women’s empowerment often depicted them as larger than men in order to establish a sense of power and dominance (Bocking). Therefore, in advocating for equality, women’s rights advocates depicted women as equal or more powerful than men, often framing them in an androgynous light through physical appearance as well as in action and agency. In response to these depictions of women as strong and independent, anti-suffrage supporters depicted suffragette women as overtly mannish and unattractive, often with Adam’s apples and harsh thuggish features. Those who opposed women’s rights defined suffragettes “in their fundamental challenge to femininity and the traditional ideals of womanhood, [as] socially deviant,” if not sexually suspect: all “...large handed, big-footed, flat-chested and thin-lipped,” as one anti-suffragist declared” (Moore 231). Kitch expounds that “women were drawn to be not only ugly but also unfeminine, as signified by their masculine Adam’s apples and thick necks” (Kitch, 83). President Woodrow Wilson was in direct opposition to women’s suffrage, and used masculinity as a way to undermine their credibility. Capozzola states, “As late as 1913, Woodrow Wilson openly opposed women’s suffrage, and a journalist close to the president recalled that Wilson thought, ‘the only women interested in woman’s suffrage were aggressive and masculine with harsh voices’ (Capozzola 108).

The Gibson Girl became a popular image throughout this era, as an ideal of the new kind of independent woman. This iconic figure embodied many of the dichotomous issues of femininity versus power and independence as she was “one of the first representations of the independent woman, her independence was frequently presented in the form of cold and cruel power over men. Gibson’s beauties quite literally played with men” (Kitch 3). The Gibson Girl was simultaneously an embodiment of women’s fight for independence, while continuing to constrain the independence to that of acceptable femininity. The Gibson Girl fought against the suffragette image of the New Woman as an unattractive and masculine figure. Martha Patterson explains that

As a suffragette, the New Woman might be called unattractive, barren, and manly, doomed to the rank of spinster or shrewish wife. Working as a self-professed artist, the New Woman might be found wanton and a traitor to the delicacies of her sex, or subject to the same criticism as the suffragette. If she advocated female sexual expression and freedom, she might be accused of being licentious and immoral. As a college student, the New Woman might be accused of exercising her mind at the expense of her reproductive capabilities. Active in women’s clubs or social reform movements, she could be found guilty of disavowing the heterosexual union by forming lasting alliances with other women... Not only did the "New Woman" risk becoming "unbalanced," she also risked becoming an androgyne, a manly woman continually brow-beating her husband (if she had one) into docile submission. (Patterson 1)



The Gibson girl then became the attractive and feminine response to this masculine figure of the suffragette. Patterson further articulates that the “Gibson Girl images embodied the values necessary to sustain a consumer-based economy--discernment, purchasing power, and insatiable demand--thereby harnessing and transforming the "New Woman's" desire for social and political change into a desire for new goods” (Patterson 3). The Gibson Girl thereby became both a symbol for women’s independence while further confining them to the defined spheres of acceptable for women. Androgyny then appears as a response and symptom of early 20<sup>th</sup> century gender battle.

Women’s rights advocates of this era “were among the first American women to grapple directly with a central feminist paradox of the twentieth century: how to rationalize the creation of groups that exclude men while simultaneously advocating the removal of gender barriers preventing equality” (Craig 374). In trying to break down gender roles and gain political rights and power, feminists of the era drew upon the traditional roles of mother and nurturing in order to argue for equal rights and peace... while trying to break down their barriers, they were reinforcing traditional gender tropes (Craig). Though women’s rights activists were establishing themselves within this era, they were simultaneously asserting themselves within the confines of traditional gender roles while attempting to break into traditionally male dominated spaces.

Differing factions within the women’s movement created different approaches to feminism and gender fluidity, often working against each other while trying to advocate for similar goals (Alonso). Peace advocacy became one of the primary means for women to enter into the discussion of war. Peace advocacy developed as a form of feminism, allowing women to enter into the national debate on war, arguing that once women have the right to vote, war will no longer exist as women will never choose to send their loved ones to their deaths. In this assertion, there developed a redefining of the mothering image, expanding from that of the single home and mother of one into a mother of society. This imagery both reinforced gender roles while trying to gain more ground and political power for women. During WWI the rhetoric and propaganda of the era reinforced and reiterated this female identity as mother of all. Red cross nurse imagery defined women as the mother of all soldiers and the ideal female embodiment for the wartime campaign. Furthermore, male soldiers were bred and trained to be subservient and obedient to orders, simultaneously reasserting the manly virility in volunteering in the army, while instilling a sense to subordination, servility, and “blind obedience.” Thereby peace advocacy groups argued that becoming a soldier was in fact demasculinizing: “Don’t be a soldier! Be a Man!” (Snider). These cross gendered assertions of masculinity and femininity are portrayed throughout the war campaign, as women worked to assert their strength and independence, while men were forced into roles of fragility and subservience.

The introduction of WWI into American society allowed for the reassertion of gender specific roles of masculinity and femininity. Elizabeth McKillen asserts that it was “the outbreak of World War I that afforded those concerned with deteriorating gender mores their most promising opportunities” (394). Kitch points to the publication of magazines at the time and their shift from pre-war to wartime publishing, explaining “Though suffrage and sex-role-reversal imagery continued to appear in American media through the end of women’s drive for the vote, the more radical messages [disappeared] ... in 1917, the year the United States entered World War I. Throughout popular culture, the emergency of war prompted a return to more traditional images (101). The war then created an environment in which men could reassert their masculinity through



hardship and physical prowess, while preserving women in the home. Conversely, Schreiber explains,

After the US entry into the war in 1917, the most common theme used in the suffrage press to argue for the vote built on the fact that, rhetoric aside, women's wartime roles, both at home and at the front, did sideline the tired dictum that enjoined women to remain in the home and obliged women to take over many male roles (49).

The war called for more than simply male contribution within the fight. Women were called into the war through the need for female dominated roles such as the nurse and care-giver, directly calling them to the frontlines of battle and placing them within the realm of physical hardship and virility. Many of the ideologies behind the images of the WWI propaganda posters began with an attempt at reasserting femininity as a fragility in need of protecting, calling men to enlist and be *manly men*, strong and battle-worthy, yet as the campaign went on, women were called upon as saviors and protectors of men, entering the very same battles as nurses and leaders, while men were placed in situations of fragility and subservience through their need of protection and guidance as well as their training in obedience. These shifts are readily represented through the images portrayed in the war posters as the figures are both feminine and masculine, often interchangeable and undifferentiated at first glance.

Androgyny during this era of gender upheaval is not simply represented through the women's liberation movements and popular images, but through the literature and dress of the era as well. In her war novel, *One of Ours*, Willa Cather depicts a male protagonist (Claude) suffering from a crisis of masculinity due, in large part, to the independence of his female love interest. Cather's character Enid is paradigmatic of the "New Woman," whose independence was understood as threatening to men. Pearl James asks why writers such as Cather were less dismayed by the violence done by men, or the woman who stayed home, than newly independent women, many of whom participated in the war. James states that,

What is most curious... is that her narrative frames the fight against modernity as a war between the sexes, as a fight for sympathy between Claude and the New Woman. *One of Ours* conflates a nostalgia for 'natural' preindustrial frontier life with a nostalgia for traditional femininity and a traditionally heterosexual union and division of labor. (103).

Similar to Cather, Virginia Woolf's work *Orlando* plays with the shifting of gender definition. *Orlando* is celebrated as one of the most important literary works on gender and androgyny. In the book, Orlando experiences a sex change when he wakes up as a she. Woolf states, "Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above" (189).

As it permeated the literature of the time, androgyny was also present within shifting fashions and clothing styles. Because women began to work in previously male-dominated field during the war, "the issue of work, specifically war work, is what first signal[ed] the significance of men's clothing for women" (Gubar 480). Fashion began to shift as raised hemlines, utility wear, and short hair became increasingly common. Due to shortages, color was muted and accessories were distasteful. When the war ended, women were reluctant to return entirely to the former way of dress (Foreman). Androgynous representation allowed for the permeability of traditional gender roles, while also reinforcing them. Androgyny brimmed with emancipatory potential (Heilbrum). It was



a tool for female empowerment as well as a for those fighting to reinforce traditional gender roles. At the end of the war, the discourse focused on these shifts in gender. Mary Louise Roberts states that, “One striking characteristic of this post-war discourse on civilization was the way in which gender was used as a central metaphor for cultural crisis” (52). Shifting gender roles represented through androgynous imagery and agency played a vital role in United States culture during WWI. These shifts allowed for the entrance of women in previously male dominated spheres and ultimately began the fight for the equality of genders that is still at work today.

### Propaganda’s Visual Representation

The shifting gender dynamics and attempts to reassert the strict gender binary are nowhere more present than within the WWI Propaganda posters themselves. Recruitment posters “sought to exploit viewers’ feelings of insecurity about sexual identity. A number of posters constructed the war as a male initiation rite or the defense of helpless women and children” (Bockting 25-26). They created images of hyper-masculinity and femininity while also being forced to allow for changes in gender in needing to appeal to both men and women in recruitment to new spheres of work. Given the need for more women nurses within the Red Cross, these posters were tasked with making the position seem both appealing and necessary, while appealing to gender-specific markers. This meant that the images of nurses especially called upon women to both welcome entering into hazardous and strenuous spheres generally reserved for men, while also keeping the women within the role of fragility. Similarly, in recruiting men to join the army, posters spoke as well about women socially pressuring young men to enlist. Tholas-Disset explains, “The image of the ‘she-soldier’ was present in war propaganda... in the United States, enrollment in the Navy or in the Marines was propelled thanks to young women dressed in uniforms, often rather androgynous and resembling young determined soldiers” (67). Both men and women thereby were portrayed as androgynous in order to allow for their recruitment in differing areas and to increase social pressure by questioning the sexual identity and strength of both genders. These posters “were the product of a stereotyping process that had begun in an established mass medium and that was played out against the historical backdrop of first-wave feminism. They were a powerful invocation of visual icons whose meaning was *already* in place” (Kitch 102).

Furthermore, rather than simply personifying shifting gender relations at the time, the androgyny within these posters, despite their intention, actually worked to further deconstruct gender roles within society itself. Dwight Brooks and Lisa Hébert explain that, “Media are crucial in the construction and dissemination of gender ideologies and, thus, in gender socialization” (298). John Sloop develops this idea, stating that, “Mainstream discourses illustrate the rhetorically material ways that those who do challenge dominant ideology are ideologically disciplined, the ways gender normativity is upheld” (169). Within this understanding of cultural media, it is clear that the gender dichotomy at play within the posters furthered the gender dichotomy of the era. These images reinforced the fluidity of gender while working to re-instill strict gender norms, thereby further confusing the debate. Capozzola explains that within the era, American citizens were inundated with these images:

The visual media environment of 1914-1918 was, like our own, revolutionary in the way it changed and expanded over a short period of time. We live in an era of media saturation in which many previously blank surfaces ...have been transformed into display spaces and in which public screens proliferate..., subjecting us to images out of our direct control. (45)



This led to an inescapable climate of visual patriotism and identity through association with these media. Because of the necessary roles of both women and men within the war effort, the posters propagating American pride and recruitment inherently delved into the necessary shifting representations of gender and androgyny as a means to enforce participation and contribution by all. McKillen furthers this notion stating that “Gendered images ... can be a particularly effective form of propaganda during times of relative gender consensus because they persuade by symbolic association” (393). That being said, these posters create a space for the existence and perpetuation of androgyny within gender identity and gender roles, allowing for the shifting gender binary through physical appearance as well as agency and action.

### Gee!! I wish I was a Man: Propaganda’s Androgyny at Work

Within these posters, androgyny was not simply portrayed from the angle of women as men, but as well in the portrayals of men as women. The masculine and the feminine intermix and mingle through both physical representation, action, and environment within these images. The figures within these posters depict a mixing of the gender roles and identifications. As the artists attempt to identify women’s roles within the war, they end up placing women in armor and battlefields, and men as effeminately bright eyed, and rosy cheeked. James explains that “Questions about women’s proper sphere repeatedly find their way into war posters, many of which provide far from simplistic messages.”

For example, in Howard Chandler Christy’s poster, “Gee!! I Wish I Were a Man,” there is the figure of a young woman wearing a naval uniform, exclaiming that she wishes she was a man so that she could join the navy (Christy). Ann Heinrichs describes this image as “a boyish, playful young lady in a sailor outfit with plunging neckline wishes she could enlist. She seems to challenge men with her androgynous, cross-dressing look and the hint that she might take a military role” (8). Not only is the woman dressed as a man, her cropped haircut and noticeably flat figure imply that she is more than able to join the navy herself. Kitch explains, “By putting young women into men’s clothes, the artist *suggested* the boldness of the modern woman, while also making reference to the gender-identity anxieties in popular culture of the years just before the war. Yet these images did nothing to contradict the wartime norms that placed women in inspirational or supporting roles” (113). The young woman in this figure shifts from a sexual recruitment tactic for men to join the navy to that of questioning her own identity as female as she physically represents the short hair, flat figure, and confident stance of a young man joining the navy. This shift further questions not only the agency of the woman in the picture, but the sexuality of the men being recruited, as Gubar explains, “Such seductive cross-dressers can function as sex symbols for men, reflecting masculine attitudes that range from an attempt to eroticize (and thereby possess) the independent woman to only slightly submerged homosexual fantasies” (482). She becomes a symbol of both sexuality and androgyny as she characterizes the desires and agency of gender fluidity. James explains that, “Christy’s female figures flirt with androgyny. Christy’s posters work primarily through an erotic charge generated by woman-as-object, but they also allude to female independence. This contradiction generates the posters’ success” (James).

One of the most important elements in the analysis of these posters is the importance of the *first-glance* factor. These posters were designed to be eye-catching and informative, but the majority of the time, passersby would merely experience the posters at a glance, rather than focusing on them in the same manner that a scholar might in trying to find new elements within them. This is



significant as many of the images become recognizably male or female upon closer inspection, but many of them are androgynous and discernable from the first glance. Going back to Christy's image, from a distance or from first glance, the short-cropped hair, lack of curves, and naval uniform would indicate that the figure is in fact a young man, and it is only through inspection of her posture that the viewer is able to see that it is in fact a young woman. The text itself could further imply that the figure is a young boy wishing he was old enough to join the Navy like his father. In attempting to create an essence of sexual appeal to naval enlistment, this image creates an all-encompassing androgynous figure whose sole desire is to enlist in the navy. Furthering the idea of the *first-glance* is the *double-take*, as the viewer then turns something familiar in passing into something different and new. These posters would be images seen over and over again, becoming part of the norm and cultural psyche. Accordingly, the *double-take* is the realization of something new that was previously unrealized or unrecognized.

Androgyny representation in these posters can be placed in two main categories: women as masculine and men as feminine. Within the category of women as masculine, this masculinity is portrayed through agency, physicality, and environment, as women are inserted into spheres previously reserved for men. The artists attempt to both empower and restrict the women within these spheres in making them both appealing to women in order to encourage them to contribute, while also placing them in masculine spheres of agency and power. Within the category of men as feminine, this femininity is portrayed through physical personification as well as a lack of agency in relation to the female figures. In placing these themes in dialogue, androgyny is personified through the simultaneous masculinization of women and feminization of men.

### Woman as Man

Within many of these propaganda posters, the female becomes a figure of independence and strength as she enters into the war campaign. Tholas-Disset states that "Far from defeminizing women, the propaganda campaigns portrayed female characters endowed with a double identity, both masculine and feminine" (67). In this dichotomy of masculinity and femininity, physical representations of these genders manifest themselves through the feminine figures. In becoming masculine-esque warriors, these women defy the elements of seduction that may have been their original intent and rather become military images of honor and strength (Tholas-Disset). In general, women were often portrayed in these posters as broad shouldered with larger hands, short-cropped or hidden hair and stern angular features, dressed in male attire, armor, and weaponry. These figures are often placed within the environment of battlegrounds and darkness. Women are often drawn as larger than the men in the figures, dominating the frame and indicating the action and agency within the image.

These figures of female masculinity were frequently portrayed in the Red Cross propaganda posters geared towards recruiting women to become Red Cross nurses. James states that, "During the war, the profession of female nursing confounded gender difference by merging categories of soldiers and civilians and by reversing its opposite, the other popular plotline in propaganda: women in need of male rescue." In Milton Herbert Bancroft's poster, "WANTED- 25,000 Student Nurses," the poster is taken up completely by the image of a nurse. This nurse has large hands, broad shoulders, a strong brow and nose, and can be conceived at *first glance* as having an Adam's apple, based on the shading of the image. This figure is surrounded by the silhouette of bayonets and soldiers, presumably rushing right into battle, as the nurse looks calmly at the viewer. The





black and white shading of the image creates a dichotomy of action in the poster, as the nurse stands strong, calling to the viewer, and the background moves onwards into battle.

The jawline, hands, shoulders, and neck of this image, paired with close-cropped, largely hidden hair, indicate strength and masculinity in its composure, while the background of war implies that this figure is indeed on the frontline and in the midst of battle (Bancroft). Without the habit of the nurse, this figure could easily be construed as male by both physical attributes as well as placement in battle. It is only at the very base of this image, in small hidden text that there is any reference to woman or femininity at all. Even within this text, “Enroll at the nearest recruiting station of the Woman’s Committee of the Council of National Defense,” there is little reference to the need for the volunteer to identify as female. Nursing was a definitively female role within this era, yet this poster portrays the nurse as a strong masculine warrior on the forefront of battle.

Similarly, Albert Sterner’s poster, “We need you,” also focuses on women as nurses for the Red Cross (Sterner). As in Bancroft’s image, the nurses in this poster are depicted in black and white androgyny. The image shows one nurse sitting over a wounded soldier in the forefront, and another nurse standing, pointing down to the soldier while directing a young woman into the frame, presumably as a new recruit. The two nurses tower over the other two figures, of both the wounded male soldier and the young woman new recruit. The attire of the standing nurse erases all features of femininity in her figure and face, hiding her hair and any curves she would presumably have as a woman. Further, the standing nurse holds her arms open at her sides in a welcoming, Christ-like image of acceptance and grace, bringing the new recruit into the fold. This tall figure is the director of the image as her gestures indicate the direction of the viewer’s eye in first looking towards her, and then down to the nurse and wounded soldier at the base of the frame. Both of the nurses share the same heavy brow and sharp nose of the wounded soldier, with large strong hands directing and protecting the other two figures in the frame. The nurses are framed by a dark and smoky background, where the flames of battle can be seen between the two of them. Susan Zeigler expounds upon this idea of the woman in the battlefield stating, “Women’s work at the front was much more than a simple extension of their participation in the civilian labor force. It was also military or quasi-military service and therefore had profound implications for a society grappling with questions about the nature of women and their place in the public life of the nation, in war and peacetime” (3-4). In framing the nurses as the larger and directive figures, Sterner places them in the position of strength and power. He names them as the protectors and saviors in battle, as they stave off the darkness and smoke of war.

Beyond Red Cross images of nurses as physically masculine, the iconic forms of Columbia and Joan of Arc present the viewers with a new element of female androgyny through both their masculine dress, as well as their placement as warriors and leaders in battle. Images of Columbia in particular are often hyper-feminine verging on the sexual. Columbia may be framed as an enfeebled woman in need of protection by the strong efforts of her soldiers, but she is also portrayed as an inspiration for strength and direction as she sounds the war-cry and calls upon American soldiers to join her on the battlefield. Schreiber claims, “In keeping with the ways that the socialist press tended to use normative gender roles in its arguments against capitalism, here we see a world turned upside down, where skeletons are reaped from the earth, and woman must perform men’s work” (52). These figures took on not only the appearance and attire of men, but the roles generally reserved for men of leader and warrior in battle.



In “Over There,” another poster by Albert Steiner, Columbia directs a young man in a navy uniform to battle. At the center of the image, in a white uniform, a young man stands holding an American Flag that billows darkly behind the two figures. To his right, and leaning over his shoulder is the figure Columbia pointing, sword drawn in her right hand, her left hand pointing him towards the battle. These two figures are surrounded by smoke and fire, as a battleship smokes ominously on the horizon. At the bottom of the image are the large words “OVER THERE” indicating Columbia’s direction and voice guiding the man into battle. The image of Columbia is dark and foreboding with a heavy brow shielding her eyes and strong muscular arms engaging in the fight at hand. She towers over the man, dressed in armor, with feet that dominate the bottom right corner of the image (Sterner). At first glance, she is portrayed as a male soldier, through her armor, agency, and the sword in her muscular hand, but on closer inspection she has a slight feminine figure and is clearly the iconic female character Columbia. Each of her features engulfs the features of the man, as he stands at the forefront of the image, small in comparison to her presence. Her large hands direct the movement and eyeline of the frame, as she holds a giant sword in her right hand and points towards battle with the other. This figure is clearly dominant within the image, both physically imposing as well as giving direction and portraying agency. Columbia moves both the eyeline of the soldier as well as the eyeline of the viewer with her left hand, creating the movement of the image and harkening to battle. She takes on the masculine qualities of strength and physical prowess, as well as the masculine role of leader and commander within this battleground.

On the other hand, the figure of Joan of Arc brings together softer boyish qualities within her role as soldier and guide. In Haskell Coffin’s poster, “Joan of Arc Saved France,” Joan of Arc is depicted front and center in her armor, raising her sword up in front of her towards the heavens. Helmeted and depicted on a vibrant blue backdrop, Joan of Arc’s head is framed in a beam of light descending from above (Coffin). Unlike the Red Cross nurses and Columbia, Joan of Arc is portrayed with a distinctly female figure, however the softness of her face and short cropped hair are marked by armor and framed by her sword. Joan of Arc in and of herself inherently represents androgyny in her history and action, as she died for the right to dress and fight like a man (Wilchins, Bowen and Ellis). At *first-glance*, this figure of Joan of Arc can be seen as a young boy in armor raising his sword high, calling others to join him in the fight. Joan creates an androgyny of agency and action as she fought alongside men in battle and the depiction of this figure implores women and men of the United States to similarly join in the fight, in this case by buying U.S. savings bonds. Her action and warrior imagery are intrinsically androgynous in their strength and direction.

Although these are by no means the only images portraying female androgyny, these specific propaganda poster figures illustrate an array of androgynous elements within the posters. Placing women into previously defined male environments and roles and developing them as images of strength, command, and virility, depict the shifts in gender roles and expectations of the period.

### Man as Woman

Although androgyny is strongly depicted through the female figures within these posters, potentially more important are the ways in which these posters depict the male as feminine. Although women were beginning to enter into the spheres of men, the male was still dominant and directing the rules of society. This is referenced in the fact that almost all of these propaganda posters, even the ones meant to appeal to and recruit women, were designed and created by male



artists. Therefore, the femininity and androgyny within the male figures becomes more significant as it represents the ways in which androgyny and shifting gender roles was becoming an inherent and subversive element of the era's psyche.

Men were largely depicted as feminine in two ways: 1) through their fragility and lack of agency and 2) through soft feminine features. Male fragility and subservience are often clear within the Red Cross nurse images. In contrast to the large, strong masculinized female nurses, the men are pictured as enfeebled and in need of protection, aid, and guidance. As previously stated in Sterner's "We Need You" poster, the female figures are all large protectors of the wounded soldier in the image. The male is seen as unconscious, with his features almost completely obscured by bandages and the kneeling nurses' arms and hands (Sterner). Similarly, Gordon Grant's "What Are You Doing to Help?," a young nurse leads a heavily bandaged man by the hand. The soldier's head is completely ensconced in bandages, wrapping around his eyes and head, leaving only his nose and mouth open. Further, his arm is in a sling and bandage that covers the majority of his body. The soldier in this image fades into the background behind the young nurse leading him forward and imploring the viewer. He is clearly unable to conduct himself and has lost all agency and direction without the aid of the female. These soldier figures, along with other images of wounded soldiers, shift the masculine role from that of strength, action, and leadership, to that of the feminine attributes of fragility, seeking guidance, and in need of direction. One of the major themes of these propaganda posters as a whole is the effort to save those serving overseas, as they are the damsels in the distress of war.

Within the realm of the physical, men in these images were often depicted with soft figures and features, curly showy hair, round faces, and full lips. These physical elements were often synonymous with the female figures featured in similar posters. Whether this points to a lack of ability to differentiate figures by the artist or it was an intentional action is unknown, but regardless it points to male femininity and shifts of gender dynamics. One of the most notable examples of this gender shifting is George M. Richards' poster, "Oh, Boy! That's the Girl!" (Richards). Within this image, a young man takes up the forefront of the image, smiling and holding a donut in one hand, while the other hand points behind him at a young woman holding a plate of the donuts. The young man in the forefront, helmeted and dressed in his green army uniform, looks directly out at the audience while gesturing back to the girl. The girl is similarly helmeted and wearing a green army uniform, with a very similar large smile on her face. The two visages mirror each other as they both look out at the audience from dark eyes and shadowed, but happy facial features. Their large rosy-lipped smiles invite the viewer to share in their happiness and cheer. One of the only differences in the depiction of the two visages is the short-cropped hair peeking out from underneath the female's helmet. At first glance, it would likely be unclear as to which character was the "boy" and which was the "girl." This physical androgyny is further confused by the text itself, as the phrase "Oh, boy! That's the girl!" can easily be read as a statement of disgust or confusion at which figure represents the female. The next text of the image, "The Salvation Army Lassie – Keep her on the job" continues the gender confusion as it frames the face of the male figure, either implying that he is the lassie needing to stay in work, or that he is the speaker asking the audience to keep the other figure employed. From a distance, the only text of the poster that would be easily read would be the phrase, "Oh, Boy! *that's* the Girl!," placing the term boy on top of the term girl, lining up the identification with boy as the higher figure in the image and the word boy with the lower figure in the image. The colors and figures themselves become completely



incongruous with one another from this distance, as the colors and markings meld in the blurred shapes of two people, clearly smiling from large rosy lips. James draws upon this gender equivocation as becoming a game of interpretation for the viewer to discern the masculine from the feminine (James). Within this image, both female and male become fluid and interjoined as neither figure necessarily portrays one gender or the other, rather drawing and confounding gender identification through the text in relation to the image.

### Looking Forward

In focusing on specific World War I propaganda posters, a clear theme of androgynous visual rhetoric appears throughout the images. Many of these posters were originally designed to make clear individual gender roles within the war, but through the androgynous imagery of physical representation as well as agency and action, these gender roles become further confused and intertwined. Within female representations, clear elements of masculine physical appearance including strength and rigidity become apparent. Women were by necessity placed within roles upon the battle field, directing and leading the soldiers into war, or otherwise caring for and saving fallen soldiers. Within male representations, there are clear elements of feminine appearance and fragility, both through the portrayals of softness and weakness, as well as a loss of agency and power through military service and by extension subservience. Through the pervasiveness of these posters, these images became ensconced within the dominant psyche of the era, forcing a representational shift of gender dynamics and identity within hegemonic culture. The pervasive androgyny of these posters becomes apparent in the literature, styles, and actions of the time, as women continued to figure out their fight for equal rights and reinforce their place in male-dominated spheres.

These propaganda posters became emblematic of shifting gender roles and the ways in which androgyny is used as a tool to both break down as well as reinforce a gender binary both then and now. McKillen asserts that, for the era,

The debate over gender and citizenship also helped lay the intellectual groundwork for labor party activists and Socialists to develop alternative visions of how to make diplomacy more democratic, which competed with Wilson's international reform agenda during the postwar period. The successes and failures of labor and Socialist dissidents in counteracting the gendered propaganda of pro-war activists and in developing alternative models of citizenship offer a rich intellectual legacy for today's peace activists. (418)

World War I created an environment for the war over gender rights and identity that is still manifested in our society today. Androgyny continues to represent the ways in which gender can be rejected and redefined as incorporating all gender markers or none. The androgyny of WWI thereby opened the doors to gender fluidity within American culture, pulling it out of the closet, as it were. In relating the images as either masculine or feminine, we are inherently reinforcing the gender binary as the overall construct, yet in placing these gender roles within the realm of androgyny of the era, we are able to reject that binary as androgyny breaks free of the confines at work within the period culture. We must thereby encourage the incorporation of androgyny as a tool for deconstructing societal definitions of gender in order to develop a more equal and encompassing understanding of gender identification and fluidity.



## Bibliography

- Alonso, Harriet Hyman. "Gender and Peace Politics in the First World War United States: The People's Council of America." *The International History Review* 19.1 (1997): 83-102.
- Bancroft, Herbert Milton. *WANTED- 25000 Student Nurses*.
- Banta, Martha. *Imaging American Women: Idea and Ideals in Cultural History*. New York: Columbia UP, 1987.
- Bockting, Margaret. "The Great War and Modern Gender Consciousness: The Subversive Tactics of Djuna Barnes." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 30 (1997): 21-38.
- Brooks, Dwight E. and Lisa P. Hébert. "Gender, Race, and Media Representation." Wood, Ed. Bonnie J. Dow & Julia T. *The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Communication*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc., 2006. 297-317.
- Capozzola, Christopher. *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Christy, Howard Chandler. *Gee!! I Wish I were a Man*.
- Coffin, Haskell. *Joan of Arc Saved France*.
- Craig, John M. "The Women's Peace Party and Questions of Gender and Separatism." *Peace and Change* 19.4 (1994): 373-398.
- Ellis, Havelock and James Baldwin. "Etiologies: Causes and Categories." Lev, Arlene Istar. *Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines for Working with Gender-Variant People & Their Families*. New York: Routledge & Francis Group, 2004. 113-146.
- Foreman, Liza. "How World Wars Made Females More Androgynous." *Daily Beast* (2014).
- Grant, Gordon. *What are You doing to Help?*
- Gubar, Susan. "Blessings in Disguise: Cross-Dressing as Re-Dressing for Female Modernists." *The Massachusetts Review* 22 (1981): 477-509.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn. *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*. New York: Norton, 1993.
- Heinrichs, Ann. "Women in World War I: Propaganda, Persuasion, and Patriotism." (n.d.).
- James, Pearl. "The 'Enid Problem': Dangerous Modernity in One of Ours." *Cather Studies* 6 (2006).
- Kitch, Carolyn. "Destructive Women and Little Men: Masculinity, the New Woman, and Power in 1910's Popular Media." *Journal of Magazine and New Media Research* 1 (1999): 1-20.
- . *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*. University of North Carolina Press, 2001.
- . *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*. University of North Carolina Press, 2001.



- Knight, Melinda. "Little Magazines and the Emergence of Modernism in the "Fin de Siècle"." *American Periodicals* 6 (1996): 29-45.
- Lenney, Ellen. "Androgyny: Some Audacious Assertions Toward Its Coming of Age." *Sex Roles* 5.6 (1979): 703-719.
- McKillen, Elizabeth. "Pacifist Brawn and Silk-Stocking Militarism: Labor, Gender, and Antiwar Politics, 1914-1918." *Peace and Change* 33.3 (2008): 388-425.
- Moore, Sarah J. "Making a Spectacle of Suffrage: The National Woman Suffrage Pageant, 1913." *Journal of American Culture* 20 (1997): 89-103.
- Patterson, Martha. "'Survival of the Best Fitted': Selling the American New Woman as Gibson Girl, 1895-1910." *ATQ* 9.2 (1995-1910).
- Richards, George M. *Oh, Boy! That's the Girl!*
- Roberts, Mary Louise. "The Civilization No Longer Has Sexes: La Garçonne and Cultural Crisis in France After World War I." *Gender & History* 4 (1992): 49-69.
- Schreiber, Rachel. "'She Will Spike War's Gun': The Anti-War Graphic Satire of the American Suffrage Press." *Modern Print Activism in the United States*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013. 43-65.
- Segal, Lynne. "Gender, War and Militarism: Making and Questioning the Links." *Feminist Review* 88 (2008): 21-35.
- Shover, Michele J. "Roles and Images of Women in World War I Propaganda." *Politics & Society* 4 (1975): 460-486.
- Sloop, John M. "Disciplining the Transgendered: Brandon Teena, Public Representation, and Normativity." *Western Journal of Communication* 64.2 (2000): 165-189.
- Snider, Christy Jo. "Patriots and Pacifists: The Rhetorical Debate about Peace, Patriotism, and Internationalism, 1914-1930." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 8.1 (2005): 59-83.
- Sterner, Albert. *Over There*.
- Sterner, Albert. *We need you*.
- Tholas-Disset, Cléménine. "Unexpected Heroines in French and American Patriotic War Films: Une page de gloire (1915) and The Little American (1917)." Block, Marcelline and Barry (Eds.) Nevin. *French Cinema and the Great War: Remembrance and Representation*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. 59-75.
- Wilchins, Riki, Gary Bowen and Havelockian in History Ellis. "The Legacy: Gender Variance in History." Lev, Arlene Istar. *Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines for Working Gender-Variant People & Their Families*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 55-77.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando*. New York: Harcourt, 1992.
- Zeiger, Susan. *In Uncle Sam's Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917-1919*. Ithica, NY: Cornell UP, 1999.



## The Great War and Modern Homosexuality: Transatlantic Crossings

Chet DeFonso

Northern Michigan University

In June 15 1918, Captain Edward Brittain was killed at Asiago, on the Alto-Adige front in northern Italy, leading a small number of British troops in what appeared to be a hopeless, full-frontal attack upon numerically superior Austrian and German forces. Just the day previously, Brittain had been informed by his superior officers that he was being investigated on account of allegations that he had engaged in sexual relations with men under his command. Edward Brittain was the beloved younger brother of Vera Brittain, the remarkable young woman whose service in the war as a VAD nurse formed the core of her remarkable and successful memoir, *Testament of Youth*. Later in her life, Vera Brittain would wonder if her brother had purposely exposed himself to reckless danger as a way of courting death, in effect committing suicide, in an effort to avoid the disgrace and shame that would come to him—and to his family—were his homosexuality to be publicly revealed (Bishop and Bostridge).

Brittain's experience as a soldier whose life was shadowed and ultimately darkened by society's rejection of his sexual orientation was not unusual. For the most part, early twentieth century European and American societies rejected the concept that same-gender sexual orientation should be regarded as a normal, healthy, moral, legal, and acceptable mode of existence. Queer individuals paid the price by being forced to live hidden lives, often with the guilt of censure and rejection weighing heavily upon them. Only in Germany did a nascent legal and cultural rights organization for these people exist. There, in the lands of the social and medical scientists who had coined the very term homosexuality, a small but growing number of men and women worked to achieve legal rights for homosexuals, believing strongly that once official governmental discrimination ended, cultural and social acceptance would soon follow. (See the discussion of early twentieth Century homosexual rights activism in *Gay Berlin*, Robert Beachy, especially Chapter 3, 88-119).

World War I had a deep impact upon the development of gender relationships in the Western World, and was especially significant in the way that it fostered the development of homosocial and homosexual identities among its participants. Many men and women who were involved in the war effort formed profoundly deep emotional and physical same-gender relationships. Observers and participants alike have attested that World War I encouraged a kind of incipient "gay solidarity" among some of its survivors—for example the British war poets such as Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfrid Owen, as well as the German-American Henry Garber, founder of the first American gay rights organization in the 1920s. At the same time, however, the war inspired intense concerns about policing same gender desire. In the United States, there were several large scale incidents where dozens of inducted soldiers were suspected of engaging in homosexual activity, resulting in mass trials and convictions of those accused. In Britain, likewise, "homosexual panic" manifested itself through the demagogue Pemberton Billing's insistence that the German military command possessed a "Black Book" of 47,000 Britons who were homosexual and thus subject to



blackmail and betrayal. In both countries, some homosexuals were regarded as “sick” and were treated accordingly in various mental health facilities; others were regarded as “criminal” and were subject to punishment in civil or military prisons.

By contrast, in Germany homosexual rights activists were inspired by the war effort to work at increasing the visibility of homosexuals. Military experiences of homosexual soldiers led to homosexual rights activists strengthening their efforts to accomplish war reforms. But anti-homosexual writers blamed the community for weakening the fiber of German masculinity, presaging the line of attack that would be employed in the terrible NAZI-era persecution of homosexual men in the 1930s. In Britain, the USA, and in Germany, the experience of World War I played a formative role in helping shape later twentieth century gay attitudes and identities.

In the United States, the relatively late entry of the country into the conflict meant that anti-homosexual purges of the military did not really have a full opportunity of developing on a widespread scale. But especially in urban areas, the effort to recruit and enlist hundreds of thousands of healthy men was accompanied by a general campaign directed at “cleaning up” what was perceived to be rampant “vice” and immorality in America’s urban centers. These “morals” campaigns had the effect of making homosexuality—like venereal disease and prostitution—seem to be a factor in an underlying social malaise. As George Chauncey writes in his masterly account of *Gay New York*,

World War I was a watershed in the history of the urban moral reform movement and in the role of homosexuality in reform discourse. The war embodied reformers’ darkest fears and their greatest hopes, for it threatened the very foundations of the nation’s moral order – the family, small town stability, the racial and gender hierarchy—even as it offered reformers an unprecedented opportunity to implement their vision. It also led them to focus for the first time on homosexuality as a major social problem (141).

One of the best examples of the new kind of “moral crusade” directed against homosexuality in the United States was the “purge” of homosexual sailors in Rhode Island, in 1919 and 1920. In March 1919, the Office of Naval Intelligence created a new task force consisting of 14 recruits—volunteers—based in Newport Rhode Island. Their mission was to entrap other sailors who were suspected of being guilty of a variety of homosexual acts. Not quite a month after the task force was commissioned, 20 naval personnel were arrested and detained pending trial and a nearly guaranteed conviction. Naval historian Sherry Zane notes, “Anxious and afraid, the suspects remained in solitary confinement for three months and 21 days before they received official charges of sodomy and scandalous conduct” (Zane 280). Ultimately, all of the accused were court martialed, found guilty, and sentenced to maximum sentences of between three and ten years of hard labor.

Having suffered the shame and humiliation of courts of inquiry, unfair and misguided court-martial proceedings, and severe prison sentences, they were finally released and dishonorably discharged between December 1921 and March 1922. Their lives would never be the same. They did not receive any military benefits, nor were they buried with the honor of military funerals (Zane 305).

Zane concludes that,

World War I, not the Cold War, marked the beginning of a national security state that grew out of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Great War provided government officials





new opportunities to expand notions of America's core values as national security concerns, and the Newport scandal demonstrated the extent to which the construction of gender and sexual norms shaped national interests in the development of a security state (306).

The Newport scandal also inspired a general re-evaluation of the entire American military's treatment of those deemed "sexually deviant." Some American political leaders were themselves sympathetic to the new, scientific understanding of same-sex desire, even while this did not lead them to advocate for it being accepted or even tolerated. Perhaps it was true that homosexuality was a disease, and not a crime. It was still a condition that needed to be isolated, treated, and repelled from the official military organism, much like a dangerous disease or ailment. Henry Keyes, Senator from New Hampshire, was one who adopted this view: "Perversion is not a crime, but a disease that should be properly treated in a hospital." The idea was flatly rejected by the new Naval Secretary, Edwin Denby. Sexual dissidence was too dangerous for the survival of the race for it to be accepted as a mere health-released variety of human life. Only through stern vigilance and adherence to god-given and long-accepted social norms could the moral rot of relativism and decadence be extirpated from the social discourse. The Secretary expressed his satisfaction at knowing that the fall of morality in the USA would not occur under his watch (Zane 305-306).

By contrast, Great Britain, America's close ally in World War I, did not use professional "decoys" to entrap homosexual soldiers. Individual soldiers might be "noticed" and then made subject to the strict discipline of the armed forces, but their superiors did not devise elaborate internal sexual policing units such as those which existed in the American services. Still, in Britain not only was homosexuality illegal, strong social currents as well as the lingering memory of the famous trials of Oscar Wilde meant that homosexuals were much on the mind of some social leaders, especially among those in the moralistic middle class opposing same sex relationships. Moreover, during wartime, at least 230 British soldiers were court-martialled, convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment for contravening military discipline with homosexual acts OR behavior (Harvey).

Strong emotions targeting men suspected of "effeminate loving" motivated harsh attacks on known and suspected homosexuals. One British MP, Noel Pemberton Billing, served as the most vocal scourge of homosexuals. In an article in the appropriately named *Vigilante* magazine, he claimed that the German secret intelligence possessed a list of 47,000 blackmail-able British individuals, men and women from high ranks of society, including even members of the Cabinet and the high military command. They were "perverts" of "moral and sexual weakness" whose lack of human decency reflected the utter degeneracy of the governmental elite:

. . . incestuous bars were established in Portsmouth and Chatham. In these meeting places, the stamina of British sailors was undermined. More dangerous still, German agents, under the guise of indecent liaison, could obtain information as to the disposition of the Fleet. . . Wives of men in supreme positions were entangled. In Lesbian ecstasy the most sacred secrets of State were betrayed. The sexual peculiarities of members of the peerage were used as a leverage to open fruitful fields for espionage (Hoare).

Strict moralists and public adventurers like Pemberton Billing used the prospect of blackmail and the vague sense that homosexuals were anxious to betray their own country to unleash a frenzy of innuendo and scurrilous gossip in his news magazine, *The Vigilante*. At the same time, however, it was certainly true that in the modern metropolis of London, some homosexuals and lesbians were indeed taking advantage of wartime license to lead their lives more freely than any previous



generation. One Captain of the Flying Corp, Leo Charlton, was especially emblematic of a new spirit of liberation that was stalking the land. He opened his sumptuous London home for parties that attracted airmen of all nations who were stationed in or near London, as well as officers from the other branches of service, and an interesting array of cultural leaders of all generations. His parties witnessed officers flirting with other officers, enlisted men flirting with other enlisted, and perhaps most shockingly, officers flirting with enlisted men. “It cannot be claimed that the scenes which were enacted late at night were uniformly decorous. Much license was allowed, especially to those who had just come from, or were immediately returning to, an agony of life at the war” (Charlton).

Another angle of attack upon these queer Britons was that they failed the nation and the race by entering into liaisons that could not bear offspring. To be a homosexual was not only illegal and immoral, it was also a patriotic shirking of the responsibility for all good Britons to “go forth and multiply.” Some Britons took pride in perceptions of their nation’s moral rectitude, as evinced by the continued strength and glory of the British empire. Contrasts were also drawn with the perceived effeminacy and lack of manly convention found on the continent, especially among the German military leadership, whose espousal of bright shiny metallic helmets and fascination with elaborate displays of courtly etiquette were suspect. Popular novelist John Buchan exploited this view in his wartime novel *Greenmantle*, originally published in 1916. The hero Richard Hannay “penetrates” Germany, posing as a Boer from South Africa. He enters Germany via the Netherlands, posing as an anti-British exile itching to fight for the Germans. He meets the powerful and sinister Colonel Ulric von Stumm, and persuades him he can help persuade the Muslims to join the Germans' side. Von Stumm is an overweight voluptuary, addicted to scented cigarettes, French perfume, and purple linens. “At first sight, you would have said it was a woman’s drawing room. But it wasn’t. I soon saw the difference. . . I began to see the queer other side to my host, that evil side which gossip had spoken of as not unknown in the German army” (Buchan 217-18; see also Robb).

Things were indeed quite different in Germany. There, sexologist Magnus Hirschfield cited the positive contributions of homosexuality to the German war effort. He praised the patriotism and loyalty of German homosexuals, who he claimed served in large numbers and were frequently to be found in the most dangerous and exposed positions. In Hirschfield’s view, modern homosexuals were the equivalent of the Spartan band of brothers. Hirschfield and his followers were much more organized, much more involved in public discussion and debate than their counterparts in Britain or the US. They argued that modern war actually demonstrated the fitness and appropriateness of homosexuality, and that therefore homosexuals should be “legally emancipated” from the shackles of social disapproval and legal harassment. But after Germany faced defeat and occupation in 1918 into 1919, forces opposed to homosexuals became louder and more organized. On the far right of the political spectrum, some journalists grouped homosexuals along with “greedy Jewish bankers” and “rabid socialist agitators” as prime culprits in their conspiracy theories of “stab-in-the-back” and internal betrayal. One writer, H.A. Preiss, published a small book, entitled “The Sexual Cruelties of Love-Crazy Men,” in which he argued that certain coteries of homosexuals in high position had consciously undermined the proper masculinist foundation of German society. Memories of a notorious sex scandal which had touched the inner circles of the Kaiser in 1908, the Eulenburg affair, were raked over once again to re-familiarize German readers with the pernicious treachery of the homosexual elite. Writers for the “Die Freundschaft,” (The Friend), a



newspaper that supported homosexuals in Berlin and other large German cities, countered the stab-in-the-back claim. “Homosexuals were exceptional only in their goal to emancipate themselves from legal discrimination. Otherwise they were committed to protecting the nation, as evidenced by their war experience” (Crouthamel).

Given the fact that Germany was at the forefront of sexual liberation, that German speakers had invented the word homosexual, and that the world’s first organized homosexual rights organization was based in Berlin, it is not surprising that the first US rights organization was founded by a German immigrant living in Chicago, Henry Gerber. Gerber was a Bavarian by birth, but he and his family had moved to Chicago before World War I, when Gerber was still in his 20s. In 1917, he did not have US citizenship—or even permanent resident status—when the United States declared war on his home country, so he was effectively forced to enlist and seek work in the US Army. Ultimately, he was found to be in possession of excellent reading and writing skills and was trained as a journalist and printer, skills which he would later put to use as an activist in the 1920s.

In 1919 and 1920, Gerber was part of the US Army of Occupation in western Germany, based in the industrial city of Coblenz. There he came to terms with his own homosexuality, but also became familiar with that town’s community of homosexual rights activists who urged him to regard his own sexual orientation not as a burden but as a gift. On leave, Gerber and his friends went to Berlin where they were exposed to what was then the most active and vibrant homosexual culture in the world. When, in the early 1920s, Gerber returned to the United States and the restrictive sexual regime of Midwestern America, he was determined to share with his neighbors and friends in Chicago the liberated experiences of living in a relaxed and more tolerant society.

Gerber found employment as a clerk with the US Post Office, and support from a network of moral reformers and social activists. Some approached issues from the perspective of socialist thought, other were inspired by religious zeal, some by a desire to improve the condition of life for Chicago’s large immigrant population. All were united by a shared critique of the existing complacency and intolerance which they found in many areas of American life. Gerber made allies with a small but well-experienced group of locals who were like-minded and persistent, some of them sharing a homosexual orientation but not all. He created an organization which he called “The Society for Human Rights,” and he became its secretary and publicist. He filed an application with the State of Illinois to register the group as an officially recognized non-profit community group. The Society for Human Rights, he wrote, sought,

[T]o promote and protect the interests of people who by reasons of mental and physical abnormalities are abused and hindered in the legal pursuit of happiness which is guaranteed them by the Declaration of Independence and to combat the public prejudices against them by dissemination of factors according to modern science among intellectuals of mature age. The Society stands only for law and order; it is in harmony with any and all general laws insofar as they protect the rights of others, and does in no manner recommend any acts in violation of present laws nor advocate any manner inimical to the public welfare.

Illinois officials granted a charter to the Society on December 10, 1924, and so it has appropriately been recognized as the first documented and recognized homosexual rights organization in the Western Hemisphere (Sprague).

The Society for Human Rights lasted for only a year, and its story and legacy in Chicago, Illinois, and the United States, is outside the purview of this paper. But it is entirely relevant to the story of



homosexuality and World War I that this pioneering group in the Midwest was the result of the experience of an American soldier in wartime, and not surprising either to find that many of its first members and supporters were either themselves veterans in the war, or they possessed family members whose lives had been altered or ended by American participation in the conflict (de la Croix).

World War One was a shared experience for those who lived through it and the middle decades of the twentieth would witness its continuing effects upon the lives of those who fought in the war, those who sent relatives to die in the conflict, and the civilians at home who worked to make their communities suitable for the survivors. Both for better and for worse, World War I caused public attitudes about homosexuality to shift, as the “Great War” created a mind-set of danger, decadence, and determination which would alter the lives of queer people irrevocably.



## References

- Austin, Jill, and Jennifer Brier, Eds. *Out in Chicago: LGBT History at the Crossroads*. Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 2011.
- Beachy, Robert. "The German Invention of Homosexuality." *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 82, No. 4, 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Gay Berlin*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2014.
- Bishop, Alan, and Mark Bostridge, editors. *Letters from a Lost Generation: The First World War Letters of Vera Brittain and Four Friends*. London: Virago, 1998.
- Buchan, John. *Greenmantle*. Hodder & Stoughton, 1916.
- Campbell, James S. "For You May Touch Them Not: Misogyny, Homosexuality, and the Ethics of Passivity in First World War Poetry." *English Literary History*, Vol. 64, 1997.
- Charlton, L.E.O. *Charlton*. London: Faber & Faber, 1931.
- Cocks, H. G., and Matt Houlbrook, Eds. *The Modern History of Sexuality*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Cohler, Deborah. "Sapphism and Sedition: Producing Female Homosexuality in Great War Britain." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2007
- Crouthamel, James. "Sexuality, Sexual Relations, Homosexuality." *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*. (accessed on-line).
- de la Croix, St. Sukie. *Chicago Whispers : A History of LGBT Chicago Before Stonewall*, Chicago: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012.
- Ellis, Havelock. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*, London: University Press, 1897.
- Harvey, A. D. "Homosexuality and the British Army During the First World War." *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 79, No. 320, Winter, 2001.
- Hoare, Philip. *Oscar Wilde's Last Stand*. Arcade Publishing, 1998.
- Merrick, Jeffrey, and Bryant Ragan, Eds. *Homosexuality in Modern France*. Oxford, 1996.
- Mosse, George. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. Oxford. 1996.
- Oroszvary, Chandra. "Official Responses to Homosexuality During World War I." *Undergraduate Journal of Humanities*. Spring, 2006.
- Robb, George. *British Culture and the First World War*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Sternweiler, Andreas. *Self-Confidence and Persistence: The Permanent Exhibition in the Schwules Museum*. Berlin: Schwules Museum, 2008.
- Zane, Sherry. "I Did it For the Uplift of Humanity and the Navy: Same-Sex Acts and the Origins of the National Security State, 1919-1921," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 91, No. 2, June, 2018.



## Recalling the Trenches from the Club Window: Contrasting Perspectives in Dorothy Sayers and P. G. Wodehouse

Laura Kasson Fiss

Michigan Technological University

British cultural historians often cite World War I as a pivot point in the advent of modernity and Modernism. Despite pre-war works of Modernism (and Virginia Woolf’s famous tongue-in-cheek statement that “On or about December 1910 human character changed”), World War I is a clear landmark that seems self-evidently an event after which Nothing Would Ever Be The Same. In fact, many works on the Victorian period use 1914 as a bookend when defining the period by broad-reaching political events rather than a change in monarch. (You may have noted that this makes the period longer—Victorianists like to colonize things.) The other end of this period is often the 1832 Reform Act, which began an extension of the franchise to middle-class men. In fact, universal male franchise only came to Britain at the close of the war in 1918, with the same Representation of the People Act that began enfranchising women. While it is undeniable that the First World War had a resounding impact on Britain, its effects, particularly on the literary scene, can be overstated. The Victorians did not just go away in 1914. Particularly in middlebrow culture, much stayed the same—which itself constitutes a response to the war.

Take, for example, humorist Jerome K. Jerome, whose 1889 hit *Three Men in a Boat (To Say Nothing of the Dog)* has never been out of print. He continued writing until his death in 1927, including a World War I novel, *All Roads Lead to Calvary* (1919). The novel contains a scene in which a conscientious objector is killed by a mob, and Jerome drew on his own experience driving an ambulance in the war (being too old for traditional service). Yet his *Times* obituary marked him as irrevocably dated: “He had not, in fact, kept pace with the changes of public taste, and remained to the end in the naïveté both of his laughter and his tears a typical humorist of the ’eighties.”<sup>1</sup>

Jerome and his close contemporaries, centered around the *Idler* magazine, established a mode of joking about late-Victorian changes to the social landscape that relied on the club as exemplar of the best and worst of Victorian sociability: convivial on the one hand and exclusive on the other. I discuss this phenomenon elsewhere, but here I’d like to focus on the two youngest subjects in my study: Dorothy Sayers and P.G. Wodehouse. Each employs jokes about the club in a post-war context, but Sayers emphasizes the generational gap the war created, whereas Wodehouse emphasized continuity. Nevertheless, both ultimately rely on the structures of the club, particularly when cultivating a relationship with their own readers.

“Club” in this context has a fairly narrow definition: a social club for men in London’s West End, known as “Clubland” for the proliferation of these institutions. The club in this sense originated in the late seventeenth century but saw its high-water mark in the Victorian period. In the twentieth century, the clubs saw a decline, although many exist to this day—and some continue to exclude

---

<sup>1</sup> “Mr. J. K. Jerome,” *The Times*, June 15, 1927.



women. Beyond their physical and historical presence, however, these clubs loomed large in print culture, fictional and non-fictional. Fictional clubs in particular, I argue elsewhere, offer an imagined community whose essential fictionality means that common readers have as much of a right to belong as anyone else.

Dorothy Sayers's *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928) renders a Victorian joke horribly real: that a member has died behind his newspaper and no one has noticed. The club and its rules, written and unwritten, become a synecdoche for the pre-war social order. Lord Peter Wimsey, Sayers's detective, navigates a range of social contexts, using detection as therapy for his shell-shock. The structure of the mystery, now well established, imposes a sense of order for both Wimsey and perhaps also his readers, yet *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* also suggests the limits of this kind of containment.

The joke practically opens the novel: the club is called a “Morgue” in the opening line, and Wimsey's friend George Fentiman, a First-World-War veteran with wounds visible and invisible, follows the reference up: “Place always reminds me of that old thing in ‘Punch,’ you know—‘Waiter, take away Lord Whatishisname, he's been dead two days.’”<sup>2</sup> Yet the joke is fulfilled: Fentiman's grandfather is discovered, behind a newspaper where all thought he was sleeping, in full rigor mortis. When they discover the body, Fentiman hysterically recalls the joke:

Fentiman laughed. Peel after hysterical peel shook his throat. All round the room, scandalized Bellonians creaked to their gouty feet, shocked by the unmannerly noise.

‘Take him away!’ said Fentiman, ‘take him away. He's been dead two days. So are you! So am I! We're all dead, and we never noticed it!’<sup>3</sup>

The club is figured as the bastion of conservatism, the representative of the Old Guard—the previous generation who doesn't understand the young men who have fought in the war. On the one hand, it's an “old” joke—the age and reference to *Punch* makes it seem Victorian, at very least pre-war. But the joke has changed: to the younger Fentiman, his grandfather's death is indicative of a larger social problem: “We're all dead, and we never noticed it!” As an absurdist postwar sentiment, this recalls T. S. Eliot's evocation of malaise in *The Waste Land*: “Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?”<sup>4</sup> The body behind the newspaper becomes just that: not merely a body from whence the mind engages in imaginative journeys of reading, but a corpse.

Indeed, the club is so ossified that George's joke registers on a level comparable to his grandfather's death: “It is doubtful which occurrence was more disagreeable to the senior members of the Bellona Club—the grotesque death of General Fentiman in their midst or the indecent neurathenia of his grandson. Only the younger men felt no sense of outrage; they knew too much.”<sup>5</sup> If the other young men, presumably who had also been in the war, don't share George's hysterical laughter, they “get” his joke. The discovery of the body takes place on Armistice Day: the murder of one old man contrasts darkly with the war deaths of millions of young men on all sides of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928; reprn. New York: Avon, 1963) 7.

<sup>3</sup> Sayers, *Bellona* 10.

<sup>4</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1922; reprn. New York: W. W. Norton, 2001) 126.

<sup>5</sup> Sayers, *Bellona* 10.



conflict. For much of the novel, George appears guilty of his grandfather's murder, both to a reluctant Wimsey and ultimately to himself: in the throes of a post-traumatic episode, he even falsely confesses.

In fact, the novel itself turns on the joke that nothing changes in the club. After both Fentiman brothers have been suspected of the murder, Wimsey proves that Robert tampered with the body after death in search of an inheritance but that the doctor who examined the body—also a member of the club—committed the murder. Wimsey encourages him to write a confession, and another club member provides him a pistol with which to shoot himself in the club library. The novel closes with Wetheridge, a longstanding member, complaining about a slew of troubles, culminating in corked wine, crying, “My God! I don't know what's come to this Club!”<sup>6</sup> The dark joke, after all, is what has not changed—both what has not materially changed after the war and also the changes that clubmen refuse to acknowledge. Wetheridge blames the War, but more as an indication of a social and cultural shift.

Meanwhile, in the writings of P. G. Wodehouse, the war makes much less of an impact. Some critics claim neither World War registers in Wodehouse's fictional world.<sup>7</sup> Literally, this is only a slight exaggeration: in an oeuvre of about a hundred books, one has to hunt pretty hard for direct references to the war (I've found about a handful). References to Hitler and Mussolini are more common (especially in the inter-war period). But none of Wodehouse's characters—certainly not his main characters—are said to have served in either war. Certainly Wodehouse's world, which centers on the fictional Drones Club, is a far cry from Sayers's, in which Wimsey's war experience defines him as a character and a detective. In fact, Sayers uses Wodehouse in her characterization of Wimsey: in *Murder Must Advertise* (1933), when Wimsey goes undercover at an advertising agency, his new colleagues describe him as “like Bertie Wooster in horn-rims.”<sup>8</sup> But while Wimsey's frivolous exterior conceals a razor-sharp intellect, Bertie Wooster's....does not. Wodehouse does write clever and/or impecunious characters, but mainly in his pre-war fiction.

The name of the Drones Club suggests a bee metaphor, implying that these upper-class men idly profit from the labor of others while waiting around to serve their only essential function: mating. This reads like quite stark political commentary, but the Drones's silliness makes the whole thing seem more like a joke. In the Drones Club, members perpetually chuck dinner rolls at each other, play practical jokes, and call each other by absurd nicknames. These antics often appear as parenthetical asides leavening a moment that threatens to verge on the serious, such as the threat of a renewed engagement with Madeline Bassett: “Only once in my career had I experienced an emotion equally intense, on the occasion when Freddie Wigeon at the Drones, having possessed himself of a motor horn, stole up behind me as I crossed Dover Street in what is known as a reverie and suddenly tooted the apparatus in my immediate ear.”<sup>9</sup> The Drones exaggerate some of the real

---

<sup>6</sup> Sayers, *Bellona* 192.

<sup>7</sup> “the often observed fact that Wodehouse's mature stories take place in a world where time has basically stood still ever since ca. 1920” Robert A. Hall, Jr., *The Comic Style of P.G. Wodehouse* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1974): 51.

<sup>8</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, *Murder Must Advertise* (1933, reprn. New York: Avon, 1967): 11.

<sup>9</sup> P. G. Wodehouse, *The Mating Season* (1949, reprn. New York: Overlook, 2001) 113.





qualities of West-End clubs, such as absurd bets, including wagering on matrimonial prospects or playing golf through the streets of London.<sup>10</sup> An element of Thomas Hobbes’s “superiority theory” of humor may be at play here. Yet I doubt most readers feel unmitigated “scorn,” as Hobbes has it.<sup>11</sup> The Drones’ general affability mitigates this effect. Bertie in particular goes to great lengths to help his friends and relations, frequently putting himself into ridiculous situations. Of course, one can never completely generalize about readers’ feelings, but I suspect most readers feel fond of Bertie, even as they laugh at him.

In one instance from *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* (1939), Wodehouse writes directly against the characterization of “post-war youth” as fundamentally troubled. After nerve specialist Sir Roderick Glossop meets Pongo Twistleton in a railway carriage, “Sir Roderick carried away with him an impression of a sombre and introspective young man. He mentioned him later in a lecture to the Mothers of West Kensington as an example of the tendency of post-war youth towards a brooding melancholy.”<sup>12</sup> Pongo is, in fact, afflicted with a classically convoluted comic plot. His Uncle Fred delights in involving him in outrageous schemes, for which Pongo lacks the constitution. In this case, Uncle Fred is attempting to insinuate himself, his nephew, and Polly Pott into Blandings Castle under assumed identities. To make matters worse, these identities hinge on Uncle Fred’s impersonation of Sir Roderick Glossop—yes, the same Sir Roderick that they meet in the railway carriage. Pongo thus has an obvious reason for appearing brooding and melancholy, but by its nature he must keep it concealed from Sir Roderick.

Furthermore, Pongo has a host of other problems. His customary “anemia of the exchequer”<sup>13</sup> has been exacerbated by a series of bad bets, leaving him £250 in debt and in danger of both bodily harm and expulsion from the Drones Club (one of the original purposes of clubs was as a group of men whose bets could be depended on). Moreover, he has fallen in love at first sight—as he is wont to do—with Polly Potts, who is engaged to someone else. To make matters worse, the very scheme that brings Pongo and Uncle Fred down to Blandings is designed in part to facilitate Polly’s engagement. But ultimately Pongo’s troubles are laid squarely at Uncle Fred’s door. When he meets Polly, she “laughed--the gay, wholehearted laugh of youth. Pongo remembered that he had laughed like that in the days before he had begun to see so much of Uncle Fred.”<sup>14</sup> In this case, the generational gap is ascribed to disposition rather than circumstance: no evidence suggests that Pongo has been influenced directly by the war.

Wodehouse and Sayers each also depict an influential relationship between an upper-class clubman and his valet, or “gentleman’s personal gentleman.” Jeeves, who fills that role for Bertie Wooster, is Wodehouse’s best-known character [More recently, a search engine was named for him]. Jeeves serves as a “Mayfair consultant,” extricating Bertie and his friends from scrapes, often in ways that make them look ridiculous, and frequently for explicit compensation, monetary or

<sup>10</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, *Young Men in Spats* (1936, reprn. Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2002) 147. See Milne-Smith, *Clubland* 23; Graves *Leather Armchairs* 5.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Michael Oakeshott (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1962) 52.

<sup>12</sup> P. G. Wodehouse, *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* (1939; reprn. Woodstock: Overlook, 2004): 108.

<sup>13</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, *America, I Like You* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956): 104.

<sup>14</sup> Wodehouse, *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* 79.



otherwise.<sup>15</sup> Bertie, who narrates their “saga,” hyperbolically describes Jeeves as almost inhuman, particularly in the display of emotion: “One of his eyebrows had risen about an eighth of an inch, and I knew he was deeply stirred, because I had rarely seen him raise an eyebrow more than a sixteenth of an inch.”<sup>16</sup> Even the verbs ascribed to Jeeves’s motion make him sound other-worldly; in one early story alone he “float[s],” “flit[s],” “filter[s]” and “shimmer[s].”<sup>17</sup> Although Jeeves has several romantic entanglements (his elaborate plot in *The Inimitable Jeeves* extricates Jeeves himself from one of two simultaneous “understandings”), he remains fundamentally apart from his fellow characters. (I should note that Wodehouse has a range of valets and butlers throughout his canon, many of whom are quite different from Jeeves.)

Lord Peter Wimsey’s valet, Bunter, on the other hand, is far less distant from his employer. They have several overlapping roles in relation to each other. Bunter served under Wimsey as his sergeant during the war, and he continues to assist Wimsey’s detective “hobby,” principally as a photographer. Furthermore, Bunter helps nurse Wimsey through his shell shock, as seen in *Whose Body* (1923):

Lord Peter allowed himself to be dosed and put to bed without further resistance. Mr. Bunter, looking singularly un-Bunterlike in striped pyjamas, with his stiff black hair ruffled about his head, sat grimly watching the younger man’s sharp cheekbones and the purple stains under his eyes.... He peered at him anxiously. An affectionate note crept into his voice. ‘Bloody little fool!’ said Sergeant Bunter.<sup>18</sup>

Bunter steps outside his valet role here, appearing “un-Bunterlike” and as a sergeant, regarding the sleeping Wimsey with almost parental affection. The war makes the crucial difference here. Not only did it create Wimsey’s shell shock, but it gives Bunter the role of “Sergeant Bunter,” who can view his employer and superior officer with familiar affection—and common sense.

Wimsey solves crimes as direct therapy for his shell shock: both a productive use of his horrific wartime experience and a way of making himself useful as a minor member of the aristocracy. Wimsey’s actions are full of purpose, but what of his readers? In consuming middle-brow fiction, they are, perhaps, as idle as a clubman (except, of course, those of us who read for Serious Work). In her other writings, Sayers depicts Wimsey as thoroughly enjoying his membership of other clubs, particularly the Egotists’. Despite their differences, Sayers and Wodehouse both use the club and upper-class masculinity as an aspirational model for readers—even as both also critique the club (Sayers directly, Wodehouse through gentle humor). In this way, they serve as less of a break from their Victorian predecessors than the conventional narrative of the war’s effect would imply. But in following their Victorian predecessors, especially the New Humorists, in humorously re-defining the club space as one imaginatively accessible by readers of wider class and gender backgrounds, these twentieth-century, middle-brow novelists were radical in their own way.

---

<sup>15</sup> P. G. Wodehouse, *The Mating Season* (1949, reprn. New York: Overlook, 2001): 245.

<sup>16</sup> P. G. Wodehouse, *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen* (1974; reprn. London: Arrow/Random House, 2008): 30.

<sup>17</sup> “Jeeves and the Hard-Boiled Egg,” in P.G. Wodehouse, *My Man Jeeves* (1919; reprn. Woodstock: Overlook, 2006): 59, 56, 63, 68.

<sup>18</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, *Whose Body?* (1923, reprn. Harper-Bourbon Street Books, 2014): 134.



Rather than completely rejecting Victorian spaces of exclusivity, these novels re-define them—and open them up to common readers.

---

This paper is an extract from:

Fiss, Laura Kasson. *Clubs for the Unclubbable: Humor and Mass Readership from Jerome K. Jerome to P. G. Wodehouse*. Book MS in progress.



## Men, Military, and the Law: An Examination of Conscription During World War I and Its Legal Challenges

Victoria Bryant Stewart

Northwest Florida State College

As noted in the case syllabus for the *Selective Draft Law Cases* 245 U.S. 366,

Compelled military service is neither repugnant to a free government not in conflict with the constitutional guarantees of individual liberty. Indeed, it may not be doubted that the very conception of a just government and its duty to the citizen includes the duty of the citizen to render military service in case of need and the right of the government to compel it.<sup>1</sup>

Mandatory military service, called conscription for the rest of this paper, was first used during the American Civil War. It became clear that reliance upon volunteerism and the existing militia system would not serve the military needs of the Union beyond 1862. Decades later, as the United States again needed to quickly amass and maintain a sizable military, conscription was used to quickly increase the size of the standing military through a federal form of conscription. Similar to the American Civil War, the US Congress responded with a conscription bill in 1917 to create another federally controlled system of manpower procurement.

Republican Representative Julius Kahn introduced the Selective Service Act. The members of Congress, supportive of conscription, believed that men were required to serve the nation during its times of need. They argued further of the need for an effective plan to muster and train the requisite number of men into the military. In their view, reliance upon volunteerism would not ensure the military would expand to the size required to participate in this current conflict. Opponents of conscription expressed their concerns regarding the growing expanse of the military within American society. In their view, conscription represented yet another extension of power beyond what is granted in the US Constitution. David Hollingsworth (R-OH) was vocal regarding his concerns of conscription since he viewed conscription as a step toward militarism within the United States. Hollingsworth said, “I would rather resign and let the people back home send to Washington a more subservient tool of militarism.”<sup>2</sup> According to Hollingsworth, conscription and its large standing military represented

The end of free institutions in America, destructive of that form of government which Lincoln in his inspired words at Gettysburg said our forefathers had brought forth on this

---

<sup>1</sup> *Selective Draft Law Cases* 245 U.S. 366 (1917).

<sup>2</sup> Representative David Hollingsworth, speaking on Increase of the Military Establishment: Extension of Remarks, 65<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1st sess., Congressional Record (April 28, 1917): HR: 155.



continent and which he and other sturdy, unflinching American patriots have ever since maintained without foreign cooperation or entanglements.<sup>3</sup>

Hollingsworth's caution was shared by other members of Congress since they feared conscription created military fervor.

Despite its critics, President Woodrow Wilson supported the measure, then signed the bill into law on May 18, 1917. Wilson additionally issued a proclamation on that same day. This proclamation, Proclamation 1370, restated the requirements of self-registration of men, penalties for those that did not register and comply with conscription, and penalties for men that committed fraud. Wilson, in a similar tact to that of President Abraham Lincoln, made pleas to a man's patriotism to encourage compliance. Both of these presidents used patriotism to measure and determine loyalty and obedience among the American male population. Wilson, however, took this idea a step further, knowing that conscription was an unpopular policy. He discussed how compliance for conscription represented unity within the United States. He likened obedience and compliance with conscription to that of service in the military since the United States now united service of soldiers and actions by civilians around compliance. While conscription had been used before, Wilson explained the uniqueness of this time since it fostered a new requirement of service to the nation and a duty for all Americans. Previously, Americans (including civilians) were not united around a common purpose of service to the state and toward compliance for conscription law.

Assignment into their proper roles of service, according to Wilson, would take place through this new legislation by the US Congress. "Congress," as Wilson explained, "has provided that the Nation shall be organized for war by selection, that each man shall be classified for service in the place to which it shall best serve the general good to call him."<sup>4</sup> Wilson emphasized the significance of this moment since "it is a new manner of accepting and vitalizing our duty to give ourselves with thoughtful devotion to the common purpose of us all"; further, "it is in no sense a conscription of the unwilling" because it represented "selection from a Nation which has volunteered."<sup>5</sup> For Wilson, this time represented "the day which the manhood of the country shall step forward in one solid rank in defense of the ideals to which this Nation is consecrated" since it was vital "that there be no gaps in the ranks."<sup>6</sup> Wilson, in an effort to again stress the new requirement of self-registration of men, referred to registration day "as a great day of patriotic devotion and obligation" for America's men.<sup>7</sup> Registration, once completed by provost marshals in districts at the state level, was called a man's individual responsibility and deemed his "duty."<sup>8</sup> While this sense of duty was reserved for the draft eligible male population, all Americans were expected to participate since the success of conscription relied on total cooperation and participation of Americans. As Wilson explained, every man was being called on "whether he is

---

<sup>3</sup> Representative David Hollingsworth, speaking on Increase of the Military Establishment: Extension of Remarks, 65<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1st sess., Congressional Record (April 28, 1917): HR: 155.

<sup>4</sup> Proclamation 1370 – Conscription, May 18, 1917

<sup>5</sup> Proclamation 1370 – Conscription, May 18, 1917

<sup>6</sup> Proclamation 1370 – Conscription, May 18, 1917

<sup>7</sup> Proclamation 1370 – Conscription, May 18, 1917

<sup>8</sup> Proclamation 1370 – Conscription, May 18, 1917



himself to be registered or not, to see to it that the name of every male person of the designated ages is written on the lists of honor.”<sup>9</sup>

The Legislative and Executive Branches, as detailed in the US Constitution, are allocated different powers regarding the militia. The militia system had been the primary system since militia units were permitted to be federalized for specific objectives. According to Article I, Section 8, the Congress has the right “to provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the union, suppress insurrections and repel invasions.”<sup>10</sup> Congress, additionally, was permitted “to provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the militia, and for governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the United States, reserving to the states respectively, the appointment of the officers, and the authority of training the militia according to the disciplining proscribed by Congress.”<sup>11</sup> As per the duties outlined in Article II, Section 2, “The President shall be commander in chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the militia of the several states, when called into actual service of the United States.”<sup>12</sup> As shown through the US Constitution, the raising, arming, and training of the militia was the power of the Congress. Control of troops in active service of the United States was then the power of the President. This demonstrates and affirms this separation of powers between the branches regarding the militia or military.

The existing militia system and volunteerism were effective to provide for the military needs of the nation until 1862. Several militia acts changed the requirements of presidents to require court orders to summon militiamen for federal service, changed the requisite size of the standing military, and expanded the president’s ability to federalize militiamen. In 1862, to compensate for the small size of the Union military during the American Civil War, the Militia Act of 1862 lengthened the terms of service for militia. President Lincoln was then able to summon an additional 100,000 militiamen for federal service by requiring states to muster in different quota of men for federal service based upon their state’s population. This proved difficult since many state governors often intentionally disrupted this process or did not supply their state’s mandated quota. The US Congress responded with the Enrollment Act in 1863, which created a federal system of conscription that was overseen by a network of federal agents. Opponents of the Enrollment Act echoed concerns around its perceived abuse of personal liberty, that it violated freedom of choice, and disagreed that the Congress had the ability to raise armies outside of using the existing militia system. The creation of this federal system of conscription then drastically changed notions of service to the federal state as it also changed notions regarding the requirements of citizenship.

During the American Civil War, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania heard a case of challenge regarding a draft summons. Conscription calls took place within districts of limited volunteerism. The complainants of this case questioned Congress’s ability to bypass enrollment into state militias by permitting men to be enrolled into the regular army. This raised questions about whether men in militia units were to wait to be federalized rather than be directly conscripted into a federal

---

<sup>9</sup> Proclamation 1370 – Conscription, May 18, 1917

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Const., Art. I, Sec. 8.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Const., Art. I, Sec. 8.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Const., Art. II, Sec. 2.



system of manpower procurement. While the US Congress had the authority to use the militia, Justice C. J. Lowrie wrote, “it is apparent that it is not founded on the power of ‘calling forth the militia,’ for those who are drafted under it have not been armed, organized, and disciplined under the militia law, and are not called forth as militia under state officers, as the constitution requires.”<sup>13</sup> These justices in Pennsylvania ultimately placed an injunction against further conscription from taking place in the state. Despite these efforts to curb and restrict conscription in the state of Pennsylvania, the injunction was soon lifted following a motion by the US government. This turn of events resulted in part because the composition of the justices had changed by the time the motion was received. These new justices determined that “the state court could not interfere by injunction, even if the draft law were unconstitutional.”<sup>14</sup> This remains the only time when conscription was reviewed by the courts at this time. The US Supreme Court did not hear a case on the legality of conscription during the American Civil War.

Despite the efforts of President Wilson to eliminate resistance, resistance against conscription persisted during World War I much as it had during the American Civil War. While the tactics and means of resistance differed, conscription remained a detested policy. Legal questions were raised during World War I regarding the use of conscription to increase the size of the military at this time of war and national emergency when troops would be sent overseas. Could the Congress create another or new system of federal conscription? Would this violate provisions regarding the Congress’s responsibility to the notion of militias? Would this mandatory military service violate a man’s personal liberty? Does a man have a requirement of service to the federal state in this time of war and national emergency?

By the end of 1917, just months after Wilson signed the Selective Service Act into law, the US Supreme Court decided a case that dealt with many of these legal questions. This case, known as the *Selective Draft Law Cases*, addressed legal issues from conscription cases in the states of New York and Minnesota. According to the case, “The service which may be exacted of the citizen under the army power is not limited to the specific purpose for which Congress is expressly authorized, by the militia clause, to call the militia.”<sup>15</sup> As Chief Justice White explained in the opinion,

It is said, the right to provide is not denied by calling for volunteer enlistments, but it does not and can not [*sic*] include the power to exact enforced military duty by the citizen. This however but challenges the existence of all power, for a governmental power which has no sanction to it and which there can only be exercised provided the citizen consents to its exertion is in no substantial sense a power.<sup>16</sup>

Chief Justice White provided a historical explanation of how military expectations and regulations had changed through history, which included a survey of military rules and regulations before American independence. In this survey, White exposed the expectations of military service for all

---

<sup>13</sup> *Kneedler v. Lane*, 45 Pa. Stat. 238 (1863) 241, 242.

<sup>14</sup> J.L. Bernstein, “Conscription and the Constitution: The Amazing Case of *Kneedler v. Lane*,” *ABA Journal* 53 (August 1967): 708. In 1917, the US Supreme Court drew on *Kneedler* to declare the World War I era draft constitutional.

<sup>15</sup> *Selective Draft Law Cases* 245 U.S. 366.

<sup>16</sup> *Selective Draft Law Cases* 245 U.S. 366.



citizens “wherever the public exigency exacted, whether at home or abroad.”<sup>17</sup> Following independence, the Articles of Confederation rendered minimal powers to the unicameral legislature. At this stage of American political development, “Congress had no such power, as its authority was absolutely limited to making calls upon the States for the military forces needed to create and maintain the army, each State being bound for its quota as called.”<sup>18</sup> Despite this limitation upon the legislature as designed by the Articles of Confederation, “The duty of the citizen to render military service and the power to compel him against his consent to do so was expressly sanctioned by the constitutions of at least nine of the States.”<sup>19</sup>

Justice White wrote,

We are unable to conceive upon what theory the exaction by government from the citizen of the performance of his supreme and noble duty of contributing to the defense of the rights and honor of the nation, as the result of a war declared by the great representative body of the people, can be said to be the imposition of involuntary servitude in violation of the prohibitions of the Thirteenth Amendment, we are constrained to the conclusion that the contention to that effect is refuted by its mere statement.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to legal issues being raised in relation to the Thirteenth Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment was also mentioned in the opinion. As White wrote, the Fourteenth Amendment “broadened the national scope of the Government under the Constitution by causing citizenship of the United States to be paramount and dominant, instead of being subordinate and derivative, and therefore, operating as it does upon all the powers conferred by the Constitution.”<sup>21</sup>

There were several cases during the American Civil War, in the Confederate States of America, that sought to determine the legality of conscription. The state supreme courts of Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia, in contrast to the state of Pennsylvania, upheld the legality of conscription. In the state of Georgia, the court argued that the Confederate Congress had been afforded the authority to require the service of men, and men were then expected to serve.<sup>22</sup> Unlike the case in the state of Pennsylvania, the courts in these Confederate States affirmed their Congress’s ability to introduce a new federal system of conscription. It is worth noting that service within the Confederate States of America’s conscription system was restricted to white male citizens between a certain age range. In contrast to this, conscription in the Union did not bear this same citizenship restriction. In the Union, by contrast, those that had begun the process of naturalization were liable for service. This raises significant legal questions regarding the requirements of service to a federal state devoid of citizenship.

We see the affirmation of requirements of mandatory service in the *Selective Draft Law Cases* opinion. According to the Court,

---

<sup>17</sup> *Selective Draft Law Cases* 245 U.S. 366.

<sup>18</sup> *Selective Draft Law Cases* 245 U.S. 366.

<sup>19</sup> *Selective Draft Law Cases* 245 U.S. 366.

<sup>20</sup> *Selective Draft Law Cases* 245 U.S. 366.

<sup>21</sup> *Selective Draft Law Cases* 245 U.S. 366.

<sup>22</sup> *Barber v. Irwin* 34 Ga. 28.





The seceding States wrote into the constitution which was adopted to regulate the government which they sought to establish, in identical words, the provisions of the Constitution of the United States which we here have under consideration. And when the right to enforce under that instrument a selective draft law which was enacted, not differing in principle from the one here in question, was challenged, its validity was upheld, evidently after great consideration.<sup>23</sup>

This ruling reaffirmed the Confederate States of America state courts' decisions from the American Civil War. By upholding these earlier rulings, the US Supreme Court reaffirmed the authority for the Congress to implement conscription. This text from the opinion showcases that the rights and powers of the Confederate Congress are identical to those of the Congress in the United States. Given that these branches of government were identical in structure and responsibility, the US Supreme Court used these state cases to justify conscription during World War I. While the US Supreme Court would hear other cases upon issues related to conscription beyond World War I, the *Selective Draft Law Cases* opinion affirmed the legal grounding of conscription in the United States.

---

<sup>23</sup> Selective Draft Law Cases 245 U.S. 366.



## “This Mad Brute”: Postwar Male Violence and the Pathological Public Sphere

Rebecca Frost

Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College

The act of serial killing, in which a perpetrator—usually a male—murders more than one victim at different times in different places with a “cooling off” period between them, is highly prevalent in popular culture of the twenty-first century. From shows like *CSI*: and other police procedurals both factual and fictional, to popular fiction novels and true crime books, the character of the serial killer draws audiences and ensnares their attention. Serial killers are often thought of as modern figures, usually American, with a handful of historical examples treated as outliers. An examination of violent activity following World War I, however, indicates that more research is needed to examine causes and instances of serial killing in the interwar period.

### The Modern Serial Killer

The term “serial killer” was not coined until the late twentieth century, although credit for the invention is generally disputed. American FBI special agent Robert Ressler is most often given credit, dated to the 1970s (Seltzer 64). Even with a specific term, however, the definition was not static. In general, a serial killer was thought of as someone who killed for personal pleasure or excitement—as opposed to hit men who made money off of murder—with multiple victims in multiple places. This helped to distinguish from other categories of killer, such as “mass” murder in which multiple people were killed in a single location at the same time. A serial killer was so threatening because he was able to engage in normal, everyday life and go unnoticed between the murders.

The FBI and especially its Behavioral Science Unit—now the Behavioral Research and Instruction Unit—positioned itself as expert on the subject of serial killing and thus took control of the serial killer narrative, especially through their testimony to the Attorney General’s Task Force on Violent crime in the early 1980s. Through multiple interviews with various violent offenders, special agents Ressler and John Douglas had compiled a general biography of such types of criminal. Although this was meant to assist agents in arresting violent offenders who had not yet been caught, Mark Seltzer argues that this list of common traits was in fact “something like a job description, a sort of ‘most wanted’ ad” for upcoming offenders (14). Instead of—or perhaps alongside—allowing law enforcement officials to theorize about and therefore identify current offenders, the creation of this category of serial killer allowed newly arrested suspects to craft their own autobiographies around what was already known to those who had arrested them.

The term quickly permeated popular culture as well, likely assisted by what investigative historian Peter Vronsky terms the “golden age” of serial killers (*Sons of Cain* 314). Famed true crime author Ann Rule published her first book in 1980 documenting her now-infamous coworker Ted Bundy, although the original text does not in fact refer to him as a serial killer. The figure of Bundy—charming, good-looking, well-spoken, and intelligent enough to serve as his own defense lawyer—



introduced the wider public to the idea of the serial killer who did not, in fact, appear to be dangerous. While others who came after him were boring, or plain, or perhaps a bit stupid, Bundy set the bar for serial killers. As Vronsky observed, “All roads in the empire of serial killers lead to Ted Bundy,” although any factual serial killer seems to shrink when compared with this original archetype (*Serial Killers* 102). Such descriptions of Bundy often, however, overlook the most grisly details of his more than thirty murders, since this would mean acknowledging that such an attractive all-American young man was capable not only of killing women, but of repeated acts of necrophilia.

Where true crime might fail, however, crime fiction has risen to address this gap, further developing public expectations surrounding the serial killer. *The Silence of the Lambs*, written by Thomas Harris in 1988 and made into an Oscar-winning movie directed by Jonathan Demme in 1991, introduced audiences not only to the job of the criminal profiler, but also to Hannibal Lecter. As an imaginary serial killer who cannibalized his victims—and invited others to dinner parties where they partook of the same meals—Lecter was charming, good-looking, well-spoken, and intelligent: a fictional rival for Ted Bundy who debases the bodies of his victims through cannibalism instead of postmortem rape. In this way Lecter is also able to share the fun, so to speak, and create more living victims in his dinner guests and therefore increase the horror in the revelation of his crimes.

The collapse of the real and the fictional occurs not only in the presentation of characters within the narrative, but in the plot points themselves. In *Silence of the Lambs*, Lecter has already been imprisoned, but he is still useful to the Behavioral Science Unit. Another slew of murders, perpetrated by someone who has been nicknamed Buffalo Bill, has stumped the agents to the point where Jack Crawford—John Douglas’ fictional counterpart—sends someone to ask for Lecter’s help on the case. In this interaction, Lecter fully becomes Ted Bundy, who willingly gave interviews to Robert Keppel during the search for the Green River Killer. Keppel documented these interviews and the process in his 1995 book *The Riverman*, which was later given the subtitle *Ted Bundy and I Hunt for the Green River Killer*. Life and art intertwined until the point where Michael Arntfeld and Marcel Danesi felt compelled to declare that, in their book dedicated to what they call *literary criminology*, “we find it irrelevant to distinguish between a Ted Bundy (a real serial killer) and a Hannibal Lecter (an imaginary one)” (140). The twenty-first century popular perception of a serial killer, then, is based in both fact and fiction, often without the desire—or even the need—to separate the two.

In the twenty-first century, audiences are accustomed to these intertwined representations of serial killers and, according to Vonsky, “their novelty has worn thin” (*Cain* 302). The serial killer is more likely to appear on an episode of a crime procedural during sweeps week than he is on the nightly news, and those same television series including *CSI*., its spinoffs, and those that jumped on the popularity bandwagon have produced viewers who believe that they can not only identify a serial killer at a glance, but also are capable of committing the perfect crime. Armchair profilers who can quote serial killing statistics abound.

The innocent are not the only ones who have inundated themselves with crime narratives both factual and fictional. Seltzer argues that “[s]erial killers read many books about serial killing” and thus the tales they tell after their capture will likely align with what has already been learned and disseminated (114). Criminal justice professor and author Steven A. Egger goes further to argue



that, “when those interviewed have provided information inconsistent with already established theories, the information obtained is dismissed as unimportant or irrelevant”; in other words, the serial killer narrative has not been allowed to change even with the passage of time or the collection of more data (39). The serial killer origin story, as it were, appears to be a modern tale set in stone and requiring a setting of the late twentieth or early twenty-first century.

### Labeling Historical Figures

The narrative of the common serial killer profile has even been accepted and used to explain crimes and criminals of a prior century. A series of murders that occurred in London’s Whitechapel district in 1888 and attributed to Jack the Ripper has led to numerous theories about the killer’s true identity with the resulting biographies based largely on twentieth and twenty-first century profiling. Often given the further sobriquet “the world’s first serial killer,” the Ripper made an impact not just on the women he killed, but on the expected interaction of such a murderer with the press. His influence came both through the headlines that reported the discovery of murdered and mutilated women, and also because the killer, or at least various authors pretending to be the killer, sent letters to various newspapers claiming responsibility and making threats of further violence. It is one of these letters that led to the now-infamous nickname of Jack the Ripper.

Although the Ripper’s victims were confined to the lower classes and were all identified at the time as prostitutes, the newspapers meant that the crimes not only “created a state of alarm in the East End but also promoted a kind of moral panic among the upper social classes about the effect of crime reporting on the young and on the working classes” (Tatar 23). The violent acts themselves, especially if reduced to the Canonical Five victims, were restricted to a small geographical area and a specific victimology, but the reporting meant that the panic spread beyond the East End and beyond what was considered to be the lowest class of sex workers. This terror means that, even though he went unidentified, Jack the Ripper has become the subject of over one hundred nonfiction books, many of them focused on uncovering his identity.

Even though such psychology did not exist in the late nineteenth century, authors of the twentieth and twenty-first are more than willing to use the psychological profile of the serial killer in order to explain the Ripper murders and also to make the case for their chosen suspects. All serial killing roads might lead to Ted Bundy, but it is Jack the Ripper, still unidentified more than a century after his crimes, who is “the Mount Everest of serial killers” (Vronsky *Cain* 223). Reporters of the day simply did not have the language to describe him, nor the psychological tools to understand his actions. This lack of language has played a role in the Ripper’s designation as “world’s first.” Since the term was only coined in the last quarter of the twentieth century, earlier criminals could not have been branded as such in contemporary reports. It is thus impossible to identify serial killers by looking for that specific designation prior to Vronsky’s “golden age” of serial killing.

There are multiple theories as to why the Ripper is often pegged as the “world’s first” and why the twentieth century then experienced a veritable explosion of such criminals. As already mentioned, the Ripper murders occurred at a time when mass media had recently expanded and played a large role in the average person’s life. Thanks to the telegraph and the steam engine, both ideas and people could cover distance at a much faster rate than previously. The combination of increased literacy rates and lowering prices for newspapers, especially the penny press, meant that groups of people might convene in order to purchase a single copy that one member read to the rest if they could not afford or read their own. Although Vronsky made his observation about twentieth



century crime, the Ripper murders are a prime example of the fact that “[s]erial murder ‘epidemics’ are as much about reporting as they are about killing” (*Serial Killing* 31). Newspaper headlines carried tales of the events throughout the world when they might not have reached much beyond Whitechapel if only passed along by word of mouth. Mass media documented the events as they happened and then preserved them for future audiences to examine through new lenses.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries also saw changes in the class system that likely effected how crime, especially serial murder, would have been presented. Within the heavily stratified system of Feudalism, those who were titled were nearly untouchable so long as they did not enact their violent whims on their own class. Even if peasants believed that a lord or lady was murdering servants, it would have been impossible for them to have spoken up in the name of justice. Elizabeth Báthory de Ecsed, also known as the Blood Countess, is rumored to have murdered hundreds of young girls in order to bathe in their blood so that she might keep her youthful beauty. Since her initial victims were servant girls of the lowest class, their disappearance and likely deaths went uncontested. It was only when Báthory was accused of killing daughters of the lesser gentry that she was put on trial (Telfer 12). The dissolution of such class systems meant that it was more difficult for one individual to be at the center of so many disappearances without others taking notice and thereafter taking action, although, as Jack the Ripper’s victim selection demonstrates, there is always a class of victims whose deaths produce less outrage than others.

The changes in population also included a shift in location as many moved to cities. Instead of being located in a town where everyone knew everyone else and was dependent upon each other for survival, many now lived in cities among the masses who had no impact on their daily lives. Not only do “we have little control over these strangers,” but we no longer depend on every person we meet for our livelihood (Egger 41). This works in two directions, assisting serial killers by providing a larger pool from which to choose victims and also ensuring that not every person would be immediately missed. The more time that passes between a person’s disappearance and the discovery of that disappearance, the more likely it is that a serial killer would be able to escape without being identified.

The increase in public transportation also helped in this shift. First, it meant that serial killers would be able to remove themselves from the immediate area after they had committed a murder so that any subsequent crimes would not be connected. This would be a problem that would follow those attempting to track down Ted Bundy since his crimes occurred not only in different police jurisdictions, but also different states. Without cooperation between various law enforcement agencies, the fact of a serial killer might never be discovered since each discrete entity would be confronted with a single crime. Again, this is a change that allowed for a serial killer to operate with less fear of identification and also impacted his possible pool of victims, since a larger transient population meant that others did not take as much notice when people came and went. An absence no longer meant someone was dead or missing, since it could easily mean that someone had simply moved on.

All of these factors lead to an increase in the population that Steven Egger has termed “the less dead,” indicating victims whose “demise is experienced as the elimination of sores or blemishes cleansed by those who dare to wash away these undesirable elements” (80). Egger’s examples include the homeless, hitchhikers, runaways, and sex workers, although the designation of less



dead stretches across race, gender, class, sexuality, and other factors. Historical categories include servants and peasants, such as those Elizabeth Báthory was accused of having murdered. Every time period and culture have categories of less dead that make up groups of people whose absence is not only desired, but also somewhat encouraged. Letters to the editor in 1888, for example, praised the Ripper for helping to clean up the streets.

One final theory as to the rise of serial killing since the end of the nineteenth century is simply a question of time. As Vronsky points out, “[o]ne of the early terms used for serial killers was ‘recreational killers,’” and a recreational activity requires a man to find the hours in which to engage in it (*Cain* 74). When every waking moment of existence was devoted to tasks that worked toward continuing that existence, one man could not murder another not only because of how much every member of a community depended on each other, but because his days were full and he ended them exhausted. Since “there is no documentary evidence of boredom until the nineteenth century,” it seems that men were not left with too much time on their hands prior to that period (Arntfield and Danesi 47). This is not to say that serial killers engage in murder simply because they are bored, but that changing class structures, population densities, and working conditions allowed serial killers the freedom and conditions in which to enact their murderous urges.

While these theories may in part explain the apparently sudden appearance of murderers such as Whitechapel’s Jack the Ripper in 1888 or “America’s first serial killer” H. H. Holmes, perhaps better known as the Devil in the White City, in the 1890s, they do not clarify why there then seems to be such a lull between the end of the nineteenth century and Bundy’s launching of the “golden era” of serial killers near the end of the twentieth. There seems to be a lengthy gap or lag time between cause and effect, or between the changes that allowed for the birth of the “first” serial killer and the prevalence of such a figure that required specific terminology in order to name him.

### *Serienmörder* and the Weimar Republic

It is partially the continued popularity of the Ripper murders and the lack of identification of the murderer himself that has allowed the Whitechapel case to eclipse so many other historical examples. The fact that the FBI has taken on the role of the expert within serial killer narratives also positions serial killers themselves as somehow uniquely American and situates the term firmly within the English language. However, the term “*Serienmörder*”—German for serial killer—was first used in print in the 1930s as a description of Peter Kürten (*Cain* 13). Kürten himself was more often known as the Vampire or Monster of Düsseldorf, although clearly the fact that he perpetrated a series of crimes had enough of an impact on the Berlin chief of police in order to lead to the use of *Serienmörder* in an official description.

Peter Kürten went on record as having committed more than nine murders and attempted more than thirty. He is said to have drunk his victims’ blood and even to have once decapitated swans in order to drink theirs as well. Like the Ripper a few decades prior, Kürten saw his crimes written up in various newspapers and even wrote to these papers himself in order to continue stirring up fear in the readers. Since a reward was offered for his capture, Kürten confessed to his wife and then told her to go to the police so she might collect it. While he did not deny having committed the various murders and attacks, Kürten also made no attempt to explain his actions. Without the psychological understanding of serial killers that was developed fifty years later, Kürten remained inexplicable and quickly disappeared from the papers once he was captured and executed.



Although he was the cause of the first known printed reference to *Serienmörder*, Kürten was not the only serial killer to emerge in the Weimar Republic. To name but three more, there was Fritz Haarmann in Hanover who assaulted, murdered, and mutilated at least twenty-four boys in a six-year span; Karl Denke, who killed and cannibalized dozens of vagrants and travelers, recording their names in a ledger; and Carl Großman, who sold meat on the black market and had a large number of constantly changing female companions of which he murdered more than twenty. Haarmann was executed, although Denke and Großman both hanged themselves in police custody before they could offer excuses or explanations. They, like Kürten, received large amounts of attention from the press concentrating on their crimes but not, it seemed, on the murderers themselves once they had been identified.

In her investigation into the Weimar Republic and its relationship with *Lustmord*—murder for pleasure, a term that has also been considered to be interchangeable with “serial murder”—Maria Tatar emphasizes the role that the press played in all of these cases. “Again and again,” she writes, “newspapers served up phrases about serial murderers as ‘beasts,’ as victims of the desperate postwar conditions ..., as persons tainted by their heredity ...or as ‘mentally and morally defective’” in their attempts to explain not only the series of murders but the fact that these men engaged in vampiric or cannibalistic acts with their victims’ bodies (Tatar 44). Haarmann, Großman, and Denke were also rumored to have processed the corpses and sold human meat on the black market. They apparently found this a successful means of supporting themselves through the economic depression and because the agricultural situation meant that there was little meat to be had.

Although the newspapers across the Republic certainly capitalized on the public’s fear following the murders in Kürten’s case or the discovery of Haarmann, Großman, and Denke’s crimes, they did not in fact demonize the criminals or represent them as monstrous or Other. Instead of fixating on the mental conditions of these men, Tatar argues that the fear was “focused on the pathologies of the general population” as the public responded to the threat within their midst, since this meant that those articles did not have to confront the issues of cannibalism and serial murder (46). Assisted either by suicide or the court systems, the accused murderers were quickly apprehended and no longer a living threat to the already terrorized reading public. The men themselves were dead either through execution or their own hand, and, with the cause of the fear and panic eliminated, the papers could move on without discussing the cases further and prolonging, perhaps, the anxiety that another such a figure might exist among them, unidentified.

This approach was, in fact, unusual. “In nearly all instances the killer is asked why” he committed his crimes especially when elements such as vampirism or cannibalism are involved and, when the man himself is not available to answer, speculation is still the order of the day (Egger 18). All the same, Tatar reveals that she found only two reporters who attempted to address the reason behind these killers’ cannibalistic bent. They focused on the contemporary economic situation that meant so many members of the German population were facing starvation, although they “had evidently never stopped to ponder the fact that numerous other victims of the German inflation had not turned to murder and cannibalism to ensure their physical survival” (Tatar 44). Even though so many were starving, only a handful of men were willing to commit murder in order to fill their stomachs and, possibly, their pockets.



## Murder with a Purpose

In their amusingly—or possibly horrifyingly—titled book, *Eat Thy Neighbor*, Mark P. Donnelly and Daniel Diehl discuss practices of cannibalism both historic and contemporary. Although they acknowledge that cannibalism has had a welcome and expected place in many cultures throughout history, of interest here are their observations about the practice of cannibalism within societies that do not allow for the eating of the dead as a respectful and respected occurrence. A bit flippantly, perhaps, they observe that “in times of need, any meat is better than none” (Donnelly and Diehl 11). This may be a comfort to those who unwittingly ate their neighbors through the purchase of black-market sausage, but Denke and Großman, the chosen focus points in Donnelly and Diehl’s chapter on the Weimar Republic, willingly committed murder in order to procure their wares.

Many examples of cannibalism throughout history, when enacted by members of a society who would not normally eat their dead, do not also involve serial murder. In the famous example of the Uruguayan rugby team stranded in the Andes after a plane crash, the resistance to eating their already-dead fellow passengers was so strong that the choice was nearly in favor of starvation. The majority of people, even the majority of those in such dire economic straits as those in the midst of the German depression, resisted knowingly eating other human beings. Although Donnelly and Diehl allow for such desperation to break down the normal morals of a society, Denke and Großman stand in their text as outliers who have refused to offer explanation for their acts.

The pair chosen for the case study seem to be near opposites, since Denke was gregarious and a respected member of the community while Großman “neither cultivated nor wanted friends” (Donnelly and Diehl 86). Denke carefully recorded the names of all of his victims in a ledger, which meant that the police who looked through his house were able to feel confident in their statement that he had murdered thirty people. There were thirty-one names in that ledger, but Denke’s crimes had only been uncovered when his final intended victim escaped. Großman, on the other hand, was discovered to have four victims in various states of “preparation” when he came under suspicion, and the true number of women he managed to entice into his home and then murder is unknown (Donnelly and Diehl 87). Each man, of his own accord, had decided to supplement his income and likely his own diet with the meat he procured from these murdered men and women, in spite of the social and moral taboos against cannibalism.

Like the two reporters Tatar mentions, Donnelly and Diehl attribute Denke and Großman’s acts of murder and cannibalism to the economic and social conditions of the Weimar Republic. Yet, again like the contemporary reporters, they do not address why the number of cannibalistic serial killers that arose within such conditions was in fact so small. If desperation drove Denke, Großman, and some of their contemporaries to both murder and cannibalism, it certainly did not have the same effect on the vast majority of residents in the Weimar Republic. Cannibalism was not normalized, and yet those who chose to treat human beings as livestock were allowed to quietly disappear from the newspaper headlines instead of being subject to further examination.

In her study of sexual politics during the Weimar Republic, Maria Tatar examines the contemporary situation in Germany as she asks why so many paintings, photographs, plays, and even movies represented the murder and mutilation of women. When the murderer is depicted, the figure is represented as male. Although not all of the people murdered by the previously mentioned vampiristic and cannibalistic serial killers were female, those responsible for killing, eating, and





distributing the flesh of the victims were indeed male. Tatar argues that the interwar years were especially trying for the men in the Weimar Republic, whether they were former soldiers or not, due to the “the asymmetrical effect of the war on men and on women” (12). The role of the man during the war was one of protection and sacrifice as he offered himself on the front lines or otherwise worked to preserve the home life of the women and children, but this position collapsed after armistice.

Tatar points out that the German term *Opfer* is translated into English as both “sacrifice” and “victim” and suggests that, after the end of the war, German men, especially the German soldiers, traded being one form of *Opfer* for another (67). Those who had been asked to sacrifice limbs and even their lives for their countries during the war now became victims because they had been defeated. They were asked to return home where the visual and physical aftermath of the war was much more clearly inscribed on masculine bodies than on feminine. This imbalance, then, shifted the man from sacrifice to victim and caused a movement during the Weimar Republic in which male artists therefore turned to make women their own victims, either embodying or depicting the soldier who “recovers his full powers by marking the bodies of women with the sign of mutilation” (Tatar 175). The same socioeconomic situation that caused reporters to dismiss cannibalism also made this space for the representative murder and mutilation of the female body in order for men to feel a restoration of power in the social order. Depicting women as segmented, murdered bodies was a tactic used by artists to manage various anxieties about being a man in the period after the war, and thus those who resorted to murder and cannibalism in order to manage their own lives in fact fit into this coping mechanism in real life instead of on canvas.

### This Mad Brute

Although there was no English language counterpart to *Serienmörder* in the postwar period, and although American men were not coping with the same situation of having lost a war fought on their own soil, the United States had its own run of serial killers and at least one infamous cannibal in the 1920s and 1930s. Earle Leonard Nelson, also known as the Gorilla Killer, was a prime example of the argument that mass transportation aided a serial killer in fulfilling his murderous urges, since Nelson took advantage of freighthopping in order to leave one town after he had committed a murder and resurface many miles away. Of his twenty-two known murders committed between February 1926 and June 1927, two were committed in Canada, where he was apprehended and then executed. The fact that he was referred to as a Gorilla references both Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” a short story in which the violent and brutal murders were in fact committed by an orangutan instead of a man, and also the belief that, the less evolved and more apelike a man was, the more violent he would be.

Shortly after Nelson’s execution, Carl Panzram was arrested for burglary and began a confession that started with three murders and ended up encompassing more than twenty murders and over a thousand acts of sodomy against boys and men. Panzram’s alleged murder spree began in 1920 and ended during his imprisonment when he beat the prison laundry foreman to death. Panzram was hanged in 1930, although not until after he had written of his crimes and made it clear that he wished to have no appeals and felt no remorse about any of his actions. A more colorful character than Nelson, Panzram may be best known for taunting the slowness of his executioner.

Along with Panzram and Nelson, Albert Fish generally receives a brief mention in histories of serial killing but, like the others, he is also no Ted Bundy. Fish was, in fact, an older man who



seemed almost grandfatherly to those who had met him, a trait that likely allowed him to get away with the kidnaping and murder of children. He was arrested under suspicion of having murdered ten-year-old Grace Budd and later confessed to also killing two boys. In two of these cases, including that of Grace Budd, Fish also admitted to having cooked and eaten parts of his victims' bodies. He had even written a letter to Budd's mother informing her of her daughter's fate, echoing the taunting letters sent to the newspapers under the name of Jack the Ripper. Fish's cannibalism, unlike that of the German cannibals, was never attributed to starvation, but rather to Fish's religious mania (Donnelly and Diehl 89). Again, these are just a handful of examples of the violent crimes enacted by men in the interwar period.

Peter Vronsky labels 1916-1934 as the Serial-Killer "Interlude" (*Cain* 283). When America was involved in WWI, he argues, the number of sexual killings dropped as young men were given a state-sponsored outlet for their violent urges. This contrasts with his declaration that murders in the United States rose a full 77% from 1920 to 1933 (Vronsky *Cain* 283). Although not all of these were cases of serial murder, male violence was no longer given a conduit to be directed overseas at the enemy Other. During the war, the enemy had been depicted as inhuman, monstrous, or as animals, such as in the 1918 propaganda poster that orders its audience to "Destroy this mad brute." Said "brute" is a gorilla, baring its teeth as it wears a German helmet labeled "Militarism" and holding a bloody club inscribed with "Kultur." Its other arm encircles a swooning, half-naked blonde maiden as the gorilla steps upon the shore labeled "America." This enemy brute is clearly foreign, and the threat is that it will leave its homeland and invade our own.

When this monster surfaced in America in the form of Earle Leonard Nelson, he was still labeled a gorilla, although his victims were not nearly so young as the woman depicted on the poster. The imagery that had so recently been applied to a supposedly less-developed foreign people in order to create the argument that the Germans were less evolved than Americans—and therefore not to be considered human—was now employed to describe an American citizen. The atavisms attributed to the Germans were recycled and redirected toward Nelson. Just as the "discursive strategies developed from reflecting on killers like Kürten and Haarmann did not need to be invented by the [German] press," neither did the American reporters need to create a new narrative for its own murderers (Tatar 56). The threat of violence from the under-evolved male figure remained the same, but the origin of the man shifted. It would seem that the socioeconomic situation in the Weimar Republic was not solely responsible for the postwar increase in male violence.

### Postwar Serial Killers and the Pathological Public Sphere

Mark Seltzer has theorized serial killing and the reporting of serial killing as having to do with intersections between the public and private sphere. Seltzer sees media representations of violence as evidence of "*wound culture*: the public fascination with torn and open bodies and torn and opened persons" (1). For Seltzer, wound culture exists within what he calls the pathological public sphere, which complicates the public/private divide and turns private lives and private bodies into the spectacle. Mass media plays a crucial role in identifying and directing this spectacle and, although Seltzer was writing at the end of the twentieth century, changes in mass media and reporting during and after the First World War show evidence of this same fascination.

The first recorded instance of murder inviting the public into the private sphere has been named as "A Narrative of the Life of William Beadle," published in 1783. This pamphlet, which presented



readers with the sermon preached at the funerals of Beadle's wife and children, whom he had murdered, also introduced the idea of the "body discovery scene" to the crime narrative. Because all members of the Beadle family were found dead inside their home, the retelling of the crime "opened up the Beadle home and its operations for popular inspection," inviting readers inside (Halttunen 138). The twentieth century, then, did not invent this intersection of the private and the public sphere, but changes in media production and distribution allowed for wider audiences and more intimate access.

The act of serial killing itself, due to the fact that the killer "intentionally chooses a stranger as his victim[,] threatens our very social order" (Egger 4). The mediation of this act is thus able to invite audiences to participate in the spectacle of the pathological public sphere and feeds wound culture with words and images. Seltzer goes so far as to describe the mutilations inflicted by a serial killer as being not only violence against the individual body, but also "an idealized and intact American culture" (6). Once again, the threat against American culture and all that America is meant to stand for has shifted from across the ocean in the form of the German enemy to being locally cultivated in the minds and bodies of American men. Even though the war was over, America had emerged victorious, and the media was no longer full of updates from the front or propaganda about the war effort, the threat of violence still endured.

The media plays no small role in the representation of murder, especially serial killers and their victims, as spectacle. In order to sell more newspapers or ensnare more listeners or viewers, the press capitalizes on "the excitation in the opening of private and bodily and psychic interiors" as murder victims are discovered, the frenzy of the chase is reported, and the serial killer is then identified and studied (Seltzer 253). Even though the United States of the postwar period was not experiencing the same cultural stresses as the Weimar Republic, the pathological public sphere and its presentation of wound culture evolved with changing technologies in order to keep the world's dangers in the public eye. It was just that those dangers were no longer in uniform and no longer engaged in this battle across the ocean.

### Postwar Male Violence

Although serial killing has been marketed as overwhelmingly American and a product of the late twentieth century, the economic, social, and political situations of both the United States and Germany after the end of World War I created a space in which individuals committed a series of stranger murders. This interwar period has not previously been a focus of the history of serial killing, partially because of the lack of contemporary terminology within both the criminal justice and psychological fields, but also because the figure of Ted Bundy and other "golden age" serial killers from fifty years later have eclipsed the crimes of the 1920s and 1930s. With Bundy as the idealized serial killer, the focus has largely been on the ways in which the economic, social, and political climate of the 1960s led to the development of such serial murderers.

Discussions of the apparent rise of the serial killer in the twentieth century have already addressed such possible causes and influences as the rise of mass media; changes in class structure; shifts in population, including moving toward cities and having more access to transportation; and the increase of free time available for recreational activities. These theories are applicable across the twentieth century, although the specific circumstances surrounding a particular decade or historical event should augment them. In this instance, the Great War and its aftermath must be considered, since multiple cases of serial killing emerged on both continents after the declaration of armistice.



Consideration must be given to the war experience for men and boys at home both during and after the war. Although it seems to be a near-universal conclusion that “males may feel impelled to control women sexually and through violence,” this gender-directed attempt at maintaining power seems to have increased after the end of the war (Artnfield and Danesi 256). Men who had previously been allowed and even encouraged to direct their frustrations publicly toward the enemy in times of war were then denied that outlet after its end. Public displays of anger and violence that were previously couched as patriotism no longer existed as channels through which men could vent their personal and private frustrations.

Further, the war effort saw an increased visibility of the gendered struggles that faced men and women of the early twentieth century. “Historically male-dominated society is marked by the male aspiration to somehow tame and control that daunting female sexual power,” and the war years saw an increase of women visibly working within the public sphere (Vronsky *Cain* 119). Recruitment posters invited women not only to volunteer within traditionally feminine positions such as Red Cross nurses, but also to work alongside men in roles that took them to the front lines. With the threat of such a gendered power shift, the other changes that resulted from the end of the war meant that men who had once occupied firm positions within society found those positions either changed or under threat of change. The Great War did not create this threat, but it did highlight the issues already at hand.

Men in Germany were further affected by the fact that the war ended for them in a loss. The German “notion of the war effort as one great act of martyrdom was so pervasive that it easily effaced the reality of agency, turning the German soldier into a man prepared to sacrifice himself, but also a man who, in defeat, quickly slides into the role of victim” in which he is free to act without guilt (Tatar 182). The effects of armistice in Germany allowed for not only an artistic movement in the Weimar Republic in which male artists constantly repeated the theme of mutilated and segmented female bodies, but also created the space for men to enact that violence on real others. Although the occurrences of serial killing connected with cannibalism—and an income from selling such meat on the black market—were dismissed in contemporary reports as being a response to the economic depression, the fact that these instances were both few and notable demonstrates that even the threat of starvation is not the sole cause of these murders. There was something about these specific men that pushed them to resort to homicide, and something about the culture that allowed these cases to be pushed aside.

In the United States as well as in Germany, men were faced with a great many changes as a result of the First World War. Media had brought violence into their homes whether or not that violence was being enacted on their own soil or far away, and the war effort had once again caused shifts in population and individuals’ roles within society. Maria Tatar argues that, for the German serial killers who arose within the Weimar Republic, “the *Lust* in *Lustmord* had more to do with the retaliatory pleasures of an aggressor who perceives himself as victim than with sexual desire,” but it was not only the German man, robbed of his opportunity to be a sacrificial soldier, that responded with violence (Tatar 182). American men, having been exposed to the idea of war through news reports and propaganda events, also found themselves with a sudden change in expectation and a lack of outlet for their aggression. All of these factors must be considered when addressing the *Serialmörder* that emerged in the aftermath of World War I, long before Ted Bundy ushered in the “golden age” of serial killing.



## Works Cited

- Arntfield, Michael and Marcel Danesi. *Murder in Plain English: From Manifestos to Memes – Looking at Murder Through the Words of Serial Killers*. Prometheus Books, 2017.
- Donnelly, Mark P. and Daniel Diehl. *Eat Thy Neighbor: A History of Cannibalism*. Sutton Publishing, 2006.
- Egger, Steven A. *The Killers Among Us: An Examination of Serial Murder and Its Investigation*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Prentice Hall, 2002.
- Halttunen, Karen. *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination*. Harvard University Press. 1998.
- Keppel, Robert D. *The Riverman*. Constable and Company Ltd., 1995.
- Seltzer, Mark. *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture*. Routledge, 1998.
- Tatar, Maria. *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany*. Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Telfer, Tori. *Lady Killers: Deadly Women Throughout History*. Harper Perennial, 2017.
- Vronsky, Peter. *Serial Killers: The Method and Madness of Monsters*. Berkeley Books, 2004.
- Vronsky, Peter. *Sons of Cain: A History of Serial Killers from the Stone Age to the Present*. Berkeley, 2018