

Wake Up America!

Life at Home During the War, 1917-1918

A Whole-House Exhibit at the Trail End State Historic Site, April 2017 through December 2018

World War One, optimistically known as “The War to End All Wars,” began in 1914 as a dispute between Serbia and Austria. Because of a complicated maze of treaties, their small conflict soon engulfed most of Europe – along with parts of Africa, Asia and the Americas – in the flames of the most devastating war the world had known to date. America joined the fray in 1917, sending over a million soldiers, sailors and Marines overseas to fight.



“Civilization Calls Every Man, Woman and Child!”

Wake Up America Day, April 1917

For Americans left behind, this was no “background war” – one in which soldiers fought and died while life carried on as usual back home. Instead, the entire country was put on a war footing. Citizens in all walks of life – from housewives and school children to ranchers and tradesmen – supplied food, clothing, raw materials, ships, ammunition, medical supplies and – perhaps most importantly of all – moral support for the men fighting overseas. Fueled by a heady mixture of patriotism, propaganda and politics, the American public took to their duty with a vengeance. Through the purchase of government bonds, they even paid for the bulk of the war’s cost themselves.

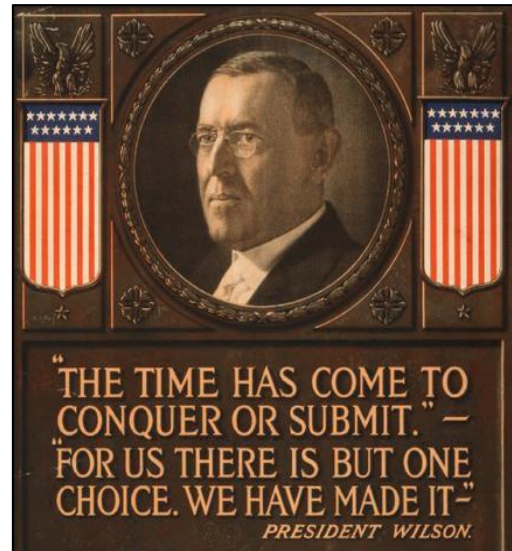


Wake Up America: Life At Home During the War, 1917-1918, examines how the average American – including those who lived in Sheridan and at Trail End – worked together to help America’s sons win the war.

GETTING THE NEWS FIRSTHAND

Since 1915, President Woodrow Wilson had kept America out of the war. Even though hundreds of Americans had died aboard British and Italian ships attacked by the German Navy, he saw the conflict as a European quarrel in which America had no direct concern.

In early 1917, however, tensions escalated: seven U.S. merchant ships were torpedoed in the North Atlantic and German submarines were discovered in the Gulf of Mexico. When Americans learned that Germany had tried to coax Mexico into invading the United States and reconquering her “lost territory” (Texas, New Mexico and Arizona) – that was the last straw.



In April 1917, before a special joint session of Congress, President Wilson signed a resolution declaring war against Germany (war with the Austro-Hungarian government came later). Among those signing the document was Wyoming’s newly-elected junior senator, John Benjamin Kendrick. Like most Americans, Kendrick was not keen on going to war, but he was determined that America would end it:

We did not have anything to do with going to war; the war was brought to us, and ... we propose, in no spirit of bombast or boasting, but in a spirit of grim determination, to help the other fellow finish it.

Kendrick’s Fact-Finding Mission

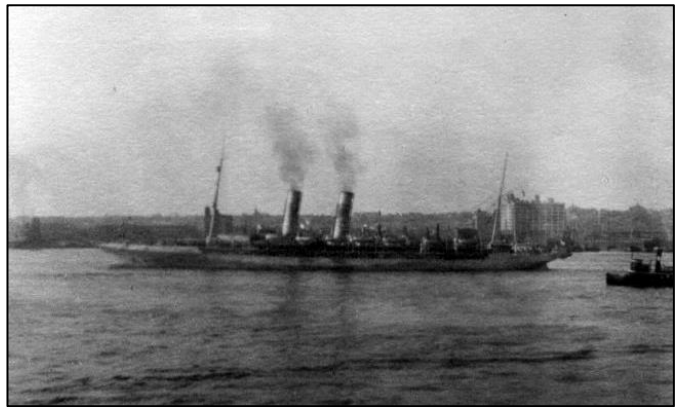
Without television, radio or social media, Americans had to get their war news from newspapers. Bulletins from Washington and the war zones filled the papers, keeping citizens updated on a daily basis.

Senator Kendrick decided he needed more facts than those he could glean from the papers. On October 21, 1917, he and Iowa Senator William Kenyon boarded the steamship *Philadelphia*

and sailed out of New York harbor, bound for England and France. On their own initiative and at their own expense, the pair undertook an “unofficial” mission to study conditions in Europe, both on the battlefield and in the factories. As part of the trip they visited shipyards in Glasgow, munitions plants in London and hospitals in France – as well as both the British and French front lines. Kendrick said their motivation for the trip was the desire to be better legislators:

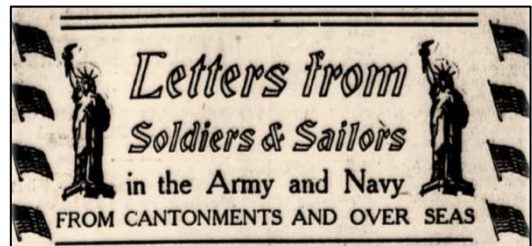
I am ... prompted by no spirit of curiosity but ... for the simple purpose of learning if possible more about conditions upon which I shall perhaps be called to pass judgment in the way of legislation and that I may be in better position to advise and confer with my people at home.

The trip made by Kendrick and Kenyon was not without its dangers: near the end of the outward-bound voyage, their ship was approached by a German submarine (the *Philadelphia's* gunners chased it off before it could launch a torpedo); while in London, they experienced two night air raids (they went to the roof of their hotel to watch bombs being dropped by German Gotha heavy bombers); at the British front, they survived close artillery and rifle fire (no one was wounded); on the trip back across the Atlantic, their ship was battered by high seas (the good news was that the rough waters kept enemy submarines at bay).



Letters Home

During the war years, Sheridan’s two newspapers, *The Sheridan Post* and *The Sheridan Enterprise*, donated considerable space to printing letters home from local soldiers and sailors serving both overseas and stateside. This public service was a great boon for all concerned:



- It increased newspaper sales (everyone wanted to read what Johnny was doing).
- It saved Johnny from having to write letters to everyone (friends and family could read the one letter printed).
- It increased awareness of what was really going on overseas (official dispatches were more timely, but were rather cold and impersonal).

NOTE: As part of the *Wake Up America* exhibit, Trail End reprinted dozens of these letters. They were released via social media (Facebook) at the rate of one per week through December 2018.

RATIONING FOR A CAUSE

Prior to his departure, Senator Kendrick had been appointed to the Special Livestock Committee formed to advise the government on ways to obtain, transport and distribute meat and other livestock products to Europe.

When it joined the war, America not only had to feed its soldiers and sailors, it became a major supplier of food to Europe's civilian population as well. Those items that could be shipped overseas relatively easily – beef, pork, wheat and sugar – were rationed stateside. Civilians were encouraged to consume more perishable foods, ones that couldn't be shipped without danger of spoilage. Fish, chicken, corn and dairy products, therefore, became much more prevalent in the American diet.

Meatless Mondays and *Wheatless Wednesdays* became the norm. To help the homemaker adapt, women's magazines published tips such as "How to Save Sugar" and "Making Meat Go Twice as Far." Manufacturers were eager to help as well. Through patriotic-themed advertising, they showed consumers how the use of their products could help win the war. Royal Baking Powder, for example, had this to say:



Doing Your Share At Home! Women's greatest patriotic service today is to heed the imperative advice of the National Food Administration. The wheat must be saved, and every housewife can do this by the use of baking powder breads made of corn and other coarse flours.

In 1918, relatively strict guidelines were enacted for restaurants and cafes: no bread could be served before the first course, and wheat rolls were limited to a one-ounce serving (those made with alternative grains such as corn or rye could be as large as two ounces). Sugar bowls were not allowed on tables; if customers wanted sugar for their coffee, they were limited to one teaspoon per person.

Sugar was tightly rationed – it was expensive and had to be imported on ships needed for troop transport. In addition, ice was needed for the export of food to Europe. To help, consumers

were urged to cut soft drinks and cold desserts out of their diets. Unfortunately, this economy resulted in the closure of ice cream parlors and soda fountains across the land – including several in Sheridan.

“Hooverizing” For the Good of the World

Because America’s voluntary food conservation program was led by Federal Food Administration Secretary Herbert Hoover, the practice became known as “Hooverizing.” The goal of the program – which operated under the twin slogans Waste Nothing and Food Will Win the War – was to reduce America’s domestic food consumption by fifteen percent or more. It proved highly successful.

With a few exceptions, most restrictions were voluntary, but they were followed by the vast majority of Americans. Hoarders – people who kept “unreasonable amounts” of rationed goods for private use – were subject to fines of not more than \$5,000 and/or imprisonment for not more than two years. As Wyoming Federal Food Administrator Theodore Diers of Sheridan noted in June 1918, “To hoard food is to give aid and comfort to the enemy!”



GROWING INSTEAD OF BUYING

In order to allow companies to send most of their manufactured products overseas – items such as tinned fruits and vegetables, boxed cookies and cereals, dried beef and so forth – everyday Americans were encouraged to grow, preserve and prepare most of their own foods. In April 1918, Sheridan County Agriculturalist C. A. Marks reminded residents of their patriotic duties along these lines:

The war garden is very essential this year as the farmers have cut down on truck farming and because of the high prices on food that are bound to come. Enough vegetables can be raised in these war gardens to supply the family throughout the summer and by using the cold pack method [of canning], fresh food can be placed on the table in midwinter.

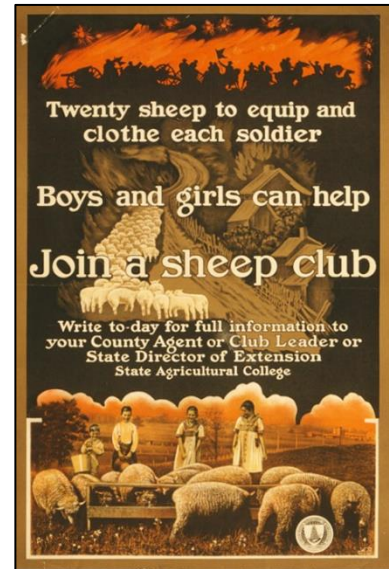
Sheridan established a number of community gardens (the gardens actually didn’t have to be large; a few tomatoes grown in a clay pot were enough for some fresh salads or a few cups of tomato sauce). Unfortunately, drought combined with neglect resulted in few of the crops coming to bear in 1917. Therefore, Marks said, most gardens in 1918 would be planted in backyards, where people could keep better track of weeds and watering.

Child Labor in Wartime

American children had a role to fill during the war. Just because boys and girls were too young to go to either front or factory, that didn't mean they were too young to help with the war effort. They could knit mittens or purchase war stamps with their allowance; they could even eat the right thing – corn meal mush, for example – willingly! Children were not supposed to whine or cry about shortages of their favorite things; they were supposed to remain cheerful and give their fathers on the front something to fight for.

One of the most important tasks for children was to grow fruit, vegetables and livestock for domestic use (so manufactured goods could go overseas). In 1918, clubs were formed at Sheridan County schools and over three hundred students participated with stunning results: One boy grew seventy-five bushels of potatoes on a one-eighth acre plot of land; another boy raised twelve lambs that sold for \$275 (about \$4,000 in today's dollars); a high school girl canned over 250 quarts of locally grown fruits and vegetables.

Children also found themselves in demand in Wyoming's agricultural industry. For the state's livestock producers, the war was a time of mixed blessings. On the one hand, they were prosperous years: cattle production almost doubled between 1914 and 1918 and thousands of horses were needed for the army. On the other hand, many of the experienced men that the ranches relied upon – cowboys, hay contractors and fencers – went overseas to fight. Others went north to take high paying jobs in the Canadian wheat fields. As a result, much of the day-to-day work had to be done by old men, women and teenage boys.



DONATING TIME & MONEY

As another part of their patriotic duty, private citizens were asked to contribute money to the war effort through the purchase of Liberty Bonds – so named because the money was “devoted to the establishment of liberty in Europe and on the high seas.”

Issued in eight denominations from \$50 to \$100,000, the bonds were sold during four nationwide Liberty Loan campaigns. Competitions sprang up between towns as to who could sell the most bonds. In the last campaign,



concluded in October 1918, Sheridan County alone raised nearly a million dollars in donations ranging from five to five thousand dollars.

Although prosperous residents like the Kendricks gave thousands of dollars, bonds weren't just for the wealthy. War Thrift Stamps were for those who couldn't afford to give more than a few cents at a time. Sixteen of the 25-cent stamps could be exchanged for a \$4 War Savings Stamp (called a Baby Bond). Twenty of these could then be converted to a War Savings Certificate worth \$100 at maturity (after the war was over).

The voluntary fundraising effort was a tremendous success. Well over \$21 billion dollars – nearly two-thirds of the cost of the war – was pledged between April 1917 and October 1918.

The American Red Cross

Voluntary service was an important way to contribute to the war effort. There were several organizations devoted to helping soldiers and sailors at home and overseas, among them the YMCA and YWCA, the Liberty League and – the biggest of them all – the American Red Cross. Between 1916 and 1919, some eight million volunteers were mobilized under the auspices of this nationwide health care organization.

With her husband serving in the U.S. Senate, Eula Kendrick spent the war years in Washington, where she volunteered with the Red Cross:

Nearly everyone [in the capital] is contributing his bit, either at home or in clubs, meeting in church parlors, club buildings, or as we, the Ladies of the Senate do, at the headquarters of the Red Cross. It is here the boxes are packed and shipped to the front.

Sheridan's Red Cross volunteers had a variety of committees on which they could serve: the Hospital Garment Committee, the Surgical Dressing Committee, the Knitting Committee and – perhaps the one with the highest visibility – the Canteen Committee.

Opened in August 1918, Sheridan's Red Cross Canteen was located at the Burlington Depot on Broadway. The 12' x 20' building was built entirely by volunteer labor using donated materials and was staffed by unpaid workers serving food prepared and donated by local businesses. Every single meal was free.



One of 700 such operations located across the nation, the canteen's "clients" were soldiers and sailors traveling by train to training camps, embarkation points and military outposts. Because there were no dining cars on the troop trains, the men really appreciated the coffee, doughnuts, sandwiches, fruit and other snacks provided by the canteen. As the men of Montana State College's Officers' Training Corps noted in October 1918,

We sincerely and gratefully thank you and all personnel connected with the organization for the warm welcome and glorious repast and will do our best to repay you by worthy deeds "over there."

It didn't matter if it was day or night, sunny or snowing: everyone got fed. By war's end, the Sheridan canteen had served over 7,300 soldiers, sailors and Marines.

CONSERVING & CREATING

Recycle. Conserve. Donate. These were the watch-words of life on the home front during World War One. Recycling old tires and scrap metal, donating books and records, conserving ice and coal – in these ways and more, Americans helped the war effort at the most basic level: the local one.

Clothing had to be conserved as well. In 1918, the National Organizing Committee for War Savings made an appeal against "extravagance in women's dress":

Many women have already recognized that elaboration and variety in dress are bad form in the present crisis, but there is still a large section of the community, both amongst the rich and amongst the less well-to-do, who appear to make little or no difference in their habits. New clothes should only be bought when absolutely necessary, and these should be durable and suitable for all occasions. It is essential, not only that money should be saved, but that labor employed in the clothing trades should be set free.

Rather than encourage women to make new clothes, homemaker magazines such as *Needlecraft* and *Modern Priscilla* offered ideas on makeovers for old favorites:

OLD RUBBER DRIVE
— FOR —
Benefit of Red Cross

We are attempting to collect a carload of old rubber to be sold for the benefit of the Red Cross.
Anyone having any old automobile tires, tubes, garden hose, rubbers, overshoes, etc., will please leave them with us. We will use every effort to obtain the highest market price.

The Entire Gross Proceeds Will Be Turned Over to The Red Cross

IF IT'S RUBBER, BRING IT IN!

RILEY MOTOR CO.
One Block South of Post Office

An excellent suggestion for making over a dress which has seen better days is to use one of the new long tunic-blouses.

According to *Needlepoint*, one could also add new collars or cuffs:

A frock of serge or silk or the “war dress” of gingham takes on a gala appearance by the addition of a pretty collar.

Nearly everyone practiced these recommended economies and did without much in the way of new clothing. Simple dresses, blouses and skirts of cotton and wool were the norm, dressed up as much as possible with a variety of homemade collars and cuffs, handmade sweaters and recycled belts.

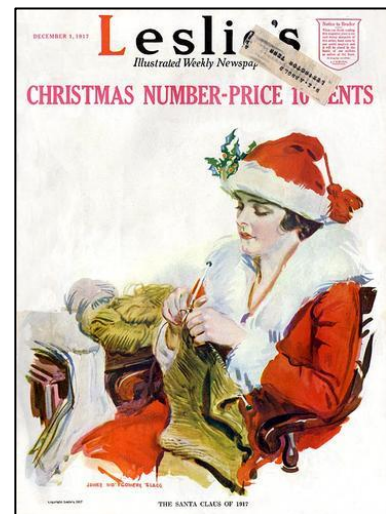


Non-Stop Knitting

From the onset of hostilities, America’s fabric manufacturers turned their efforts away from fashionable silks and satins and toward the production of uniform components and other military requirements. Even so, the army and navy were short of the many scarves, mufflers, mittens, socks, vests and caps needed for the thousands of soldiers and sailors being sent from cold barracks to cold trenches on even colder ships. Therefore, it fell to American women to make up the difference.

In response to a request from the U.S. Government, a giant “Knitting Brigade” was formed with chapters located in towns and villages all over the country. Popular women’s magazines printed patterns for the needed items, while the American Red Cross provided part of the yarn. Women took to the project with a vengeance. As *Needlepoint* noted in August 1917,

Everywhere women are knitting, knitting, knitting; we see them on the trains, the streetcars, in the waiting-rooms, wherever there is a spare moment to be utilized outside the home. And in the home, the busy needles are never idle. Every stitch counts.



The Sheridan Knitting Unit was organized by the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The S.K.U. immediately pledged to make 1,500 sweaters, caps and scarves for the 1,000 men serving on the battleship Wyoming, cruising in the frigid waters off the coast of Great Britain. Starting with twenty-five knitters, the S.K.U. soon grew to include over two hundred area women. Working only in their spare time, they completed their ambitious project

within six months. One knitter made over two hundred pairs of socks herself – quite a feat for an elderly blind woman!

Women who pretended to be working for the war effort but who were actually working for themselves were considered the lowest of the low. They even had special names. A pig-knitter, for example, was one who appeared in public places devoted to work for the soldiers (such as Red Cross sewing circles), seemed to be working hard for the cause, but was in reality working on projects for herself – using time and materials intended for the benefit of the men overseas.

SLACKERS & WORKERS

If a man was disabled or suffering from a chronic physical condition, he was exempt from military service. There was no shame in such an exemption and many of these men served honorably in the Home Guard, Liberty League or Red Cross instead of the military.

For healthy men who just didn't want to serve, however, life quickly got complicated. Because all men had to register for the service, there was a public list of who was eligible and who was not. If an eligible man didn't show up when his number was called, the newspapers printed his name under the heading of "Slacker." If he didn't have a good excuse for not serving, he faced not only public humiliation but fines and jail time as well.

Work Or Fight

In May 1918, the government enacted a rule called *Work or Fight* in which two classifications of employment were identified: essential and non-essential. Either a man worked in an essential job – food production, mining, transportation or industrial construction, for example – or he had to join the army.

The most essential jobs during the war were in transportation, construction and mining. If a man got a job in one of these fields, he would be exempt from the draft. In Sheridan County, thousands of coal miners and railroaders did not serve in the military because their work was too important to abandon.

Non-essential positions – office clerks, food service providers, ushers and the like – were ordered to be filled by women. If a man stayed in such a job, he could be arrested. As the head of the Sheridan labor board said in July 1918, "No man shall occupy a position which a woman can fill."

This was an astonishing declaration for the time!



Women in the Workforce

Before the war, most women did not work outside the home; cooking, cleaning and childrearing filled their days instead. Those who did work were generally limited to low-paying jobs as maids, cooks, seamstresses, teachers or factory workers.

The war changed all that. With all able-bodied men leaving civilian life to enter the service, thousands of jobs were suddenly available. In larger cities, women went to work in munitions and arms factories. In Sheridan, women got work as store clerks and stenographers; even positions in sugar beet processing at the Sheridan Sugar Company were opened to women.

Many people were shocked. It had long been thought that a “woman’s place is in the home.” The pressure of war, however, soon made outside work a necessary and acceptable patriotic duty, one fully sanctioned by the government.

Working class women weren’t the only ones taking these jobs. Unmarried daughters, traditionally expected to live at home and care for their aging parents, were attracted to the chance to get out and see the world. In addition, early feminists saw such work as a way to prove that women were equal to men and should therefore be allowed to vote. No matter the motivation, many women enjoyed the independence which came with their paycheck – an independence that would not be forgotten once the war was over.

Women could join the military and serve stateside as clerks or stenographers. They could join the Red Cross or Salvation Army and go overseas to serve in hospitals and aid stations. But one thing women couldn’t do was put on a uniform and fight. That was left up to the me.



SOLDIERS IN THE FAMILY

In May 1917, fearing that there would not be enough volunteers to fight, Congress passed the *Selective Service Act*, which allowed for the involuntary recruitment of all able-bodied men aged twenty-one to thirty (in August 1918, the age limit was extended to include those between the ages of eighteen to forty-five). All men were required to register for the draft. In all, some 24

million men filled out the registration form; 2.8 million of these were drafted into service. An additional two million volunteered.

On October 15, 1918, eighteen year old Manville Kendrick – a freshman at Harvard – was selected for immediate military service and ordered to report to Division Four, Cambridge, Massachusetts, to begin active duty. Like many young men his age, Manville wanted to join the fight overseas. Long interested in flying, his dream was to join the Army Air Service as a fighter pilot. Via telegram, he begged his parents for permission to apply:

Aviation Corps open for short time only. If accepted would enter officers training camp immediately. May I try. Wire immediately.



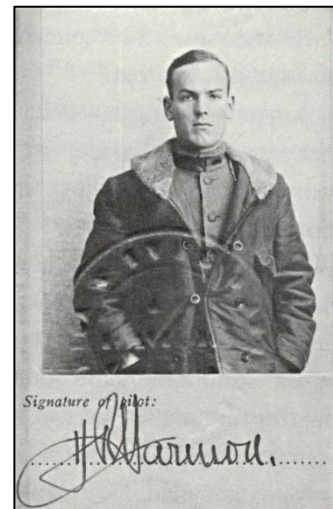
The elder Kendricks were appalled to think their only son might join the most dangerous branch of the military; the life expectancy of a combat pilot could be measured in terms of weeks rather than years. To Manville’s dismay, they resisted so effectively that the war was over before he could work his way around their arguments.

Instead of heading to training camp, he was assigned to Company D of Harvard’s Student Army Training Corps, where he served for the remainder of the war. He actually spent much of this time at the college infirmary, suffering from the effects of Spanish Influenza.

Hubert Reilly Harmon

Manville wasn’t the only Kendrick family member who spent the war in bed rather than in a cockpit. Just after the outbreak of World War One, Manville’s future brother-in-law, Hubert Harmon, became an Army pilot. His goal was to become a pursuit (combat) pilot, but it was not to be.

In September 1918, on a ship headed to France, he contracted a nasty case of Spanish Influenza. Although he recovered from that ailment long enough to “win his wings” at a French training camp, a near-fatal case of double pneumonia took him out of action almost before his last training flight was over. He was still in a convalescent hospital when the armistice was declared on November 11, 1918.



PROPAGANDA WINS THE WAR

Americans were not eager to enter the European war; in fact, during his reelection campaign in 1916, President Wilson ran on the slogan, “He Kept Us Out of War.” Once war was declared in early April 1917, however, things had to change. The government’s first task was to convince citizens that they must support the war effort without reservation. Propaganda – defined as “information used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view” – was its primary weapon in this phase of the war.

Some historians claim that World War One was won by propaganda. It was certainly the first war in which (a) mass media kept Americans informed about what was occurring on the battlefields, and (b) propaganda was used systematically as a way to significantly impact public opinion.

President Wilson’s Committee on Public Information – comprised of the Secretaries of State, the Army, and the Navy – produced films, commissioned posters, published books and pamphlets, purchased newspaper advertisements, and recruited business men, preachers and professors to serve as public speakers at the local level. The committee emphasized the message that America’s involvement in the war was essential in order to save the world from certain destruction. Every message was anti-German and pro-American.

Wake Up America Day

New York City came up with its own way to wake up its citizens from their complacency: they combined *Wake Up, America Day* with *Patriot Day* (a holiday honoring the Revolutionary War) on April 19, 1917. The event began at midnight when a woman dressed as Paul Revere rode through the streets on horseback summoning “the men of America to take up arms in the new strife for human liberty.”

One of the biggest backers of *Wake Up, America Day* was artist James Montgomery Flagg. He designed two posters for the event: one featured a sleeping Lady Liberty clad in stars and stripes, and the other sported a female Paul Revere-like character. Flagg also designed all the floats for the *Wake Up, America Day* parade, which was viewed by over 60,000 spectators).



A Revitalized Uncle Sam

Flagg was one of the most influential men in America during World War One. Take his reimagining of Uncle Sam, for example. According to legend, the use of the term Uncle Sam to denote America and/or its government came into use during the War of 1812 (he was supposedly based on a Troy, New York, meat packer named Samuel Wilson). Afterwards, Uncle Sam was popularized in the 19th century by political cartoonist Thomas Nast, considered by many to be “The Father of the American Cartoon.”

The colorful Uncle Sam we know today, created by James Montgomery Flagg, appeared in 1916 on the cover of *Leslie's Weekly*. Thereafter, he seemed to be everywhere: on the covers of magazines and sheet music, in product advertisements and – of course – on propaganda posters.



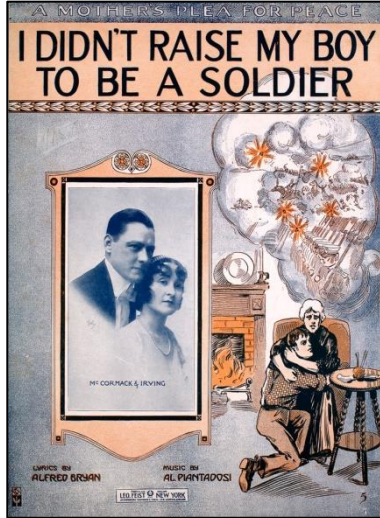
MUSIC & THE ARTS PLAY ALONG

As bad as it might sound, the war years were good for musicians and artists. There was a seemingly endless market for popular music addressing war themes, and the government kept illustrators – both the popular and the unknown ones – busy creating propaganda posters.

Thousands of patriotic songs were published between 1916 and 1919. Few of them sold more than a couple of hundred copies, but two of America’s most popular tunesmiths of the early 20th Century had massive hits with war-themed songs. While *Over There* was George M. Cohan’s patriotic tribute to the thousands of soldiers heading overseas to fight, Irving Berlin’s plaintive song, *Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning*, accurately told the tale of a raw recruit getting used to the rigors of army life:

*Oh! how I hate to get up in the morning.
Oh! how I'd love to remain in bed.
For the hardest blow of all,
Is to hear the bugler call;
You've got to get up, you've got to get up,
You've got to get up this morning!*

In 1915, neutrality was popular in America, and so was the hit song by Bryan and Piantadosi, *I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier*. After America went to war, however, such pacifist sentiments were scorched by the flames of patriotism that lit up the land. As a result, the original tune was replaced by multiple versions of *I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Slacker*.



Wartime Illustrators

While making and listening to music were considered recreational activities, reading was an essential pastime and Americans had scores of magazine titles to choose from. Some, like *The Literary Digest* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, provided solid reporting about war conditions.

Many others were aimed toward homemakers and contained recipes and tips on how to run a household. Before the war, most were illustrated with idealized images of women. During the war, covers became much more patriotic. Some were still illustrated with beautiful women, but these women were dressed in Red Cross uniforms or performing patriotic duties.



Four of the most popular magazine illustrators at this time were Howard Chandler Christy, James Montgomery Flagg, J. C. Leyendecker and Norman Rockwell. They also created some of the most influential propaganda posters of the era.



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