

“World War I was a war of trenches”. This specific phrase is a common one when discussing World War I and its severity. The expression may sound like an exaggeration to many, however, the Great War truly was a war of trenches. In the late summer of 1914, when the war had just begun, heavy weapons and artillery compelled soldiers and armies to dig trenches as a form of protection. Trench warfare crafted catastrophic results. After only a few months of fighting, an estimated 4 million men who’d fought in the trenches were killed or wounded. World War I would last just a few more years, and later come to end in 1918. By the time the war ended, a further estimated 13 million civilian lives were ended. The causes of these nearly 20 million deaths varied from military combat, starvation, and disease. Despite these millions of lives lost, the Allied Powers (Italy, Japan, Britain, Russia, United States, and France) won the four-year battle against the Central Powers (Bulgaria, Germany, Ottoman Empire, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire). The United States' military success would likely not be possible without the township of Woodbridge and its residents.

The township of Woodbridge was a large source of war supplies and was home to many volunteers who eventually fought overseas for the United States. Woodbridge housed some of the richest deposits of clay in the area, including terra cotta. Terra cotta is a type of unglazed or glazed clay that is most often used in pottery, specifically to make vases and pots. As specified by Page 3 of the Historic Tour of Woodbridge Vol. XIII, four terra cotta plants in Woodbridge merged in 1906-07. The four plants became Atlantic Terra Cotta, one of the most successful terra cotta producers in the country. During World War I, the Army Air Corps requested that Woodbridge terra cotta manufacturers, along with other nearby sites, make 500,000 “dummy” bombs. Dummy bombs, also known as practice bombs, were filled with bombs that would

explode following impact and show the precision of the practice drop when used. Apart from natural resources, Woodbridge was home to thousands of servicemen who eventually fought in the war. About 130,000-150,000 New Jerseyans signed up to serve the country in 1917. “In Woodbridge, male residents between the ages of 18 and 26 registered for military service . . .” (Historic Tour of Woodbridge Volume XIII, Page 2.) Several other Woodbridge residents who were unable to partake in military affairs, such as women, did whatever was possible to help the country in the war. Women ineligible for combat worked in schools and factories, or knitted socks for servicemen to participate in the Red Cross-sponsored “Knit Your Bit” campaign.

Woodbridge greatly aided the United States during its time in the Great War by earning funds to support the country. Woodbridge and its residents took a common and effective approach to fundraise for the war: selling Liberty Bonds. Liberty Bonds were bonds distributed by the United States government in order to “persuade Americans to save rather than spend curbing inflation during the wartime economy” (Historic Tour of Woodbridge Volume XIII, Page 2.) The bonds were sold with the promise that the money, including some interest, would be paid back to the purchaser at a different date. Residents of Woodbridge were highly encouraged to purchase Liberty Bonds and participate in cordial competitions to find who could sell the most bonds. The bonds were also promoted by posters with the slogan, “If you can’t enlist, INVEST”, printed on them. Other forms of advertisement for the bonds, as stated on Page 2 of the Historic Tour of Woodbridge Vol. XIII, were World War I propaganda campaigns with phrases such as “Beat back the Hun”, and images exhibiting the AEF saving people from the brutality of the Great War. A lesser-known way Woodbridge earned money to support the nation’s war efforts was by creating a “Comfort Committee”. The Comfort Committee raised

funds by hosting local block parties and carnivals. The proceeds of these events were used to purchase cigarettes to send overseas to Woodbridge servicemen fighting in the war.

The final way, likely the most significant, in which Woodbridge played a major role in the United States' success in World War I was the healthcare and aid it provided for servicemen. Woodbridge was home to U.S. General Hospital #3. Dr. Fred Houdlett Albee, a bone graft trailblazer and an orthopedic surgeon, who had previously spent four months in 1916 France. According to the United States World War I Centennial Commission, it was "at the request of the French war office" that Dr. Albee teach bone grafting and different medical techniques used to recover limbs in hospitals. Upon returning from France, Dr. Albee took the responsibility of arranging and beginning the construction of U.S. General Hospital #3, and on February 2, 1918, the building of the establishment began. By the summer of 1918, the hospital was complete, and the estimated complete cost of construction was between \$2.75 and \$3.5 million. Hundreds of beds were opened, and admissions skyrocketed to the point where the hospital opened 2,000 beds and additional hundreds of buildings. The General Hospital provided patients with several indulgences, including a swimming pool, a heating plant, mess halls, kitchens, and an entire telephone network. A year later a chapel in which religious services were held was built. In addition, the establishment provided medical services such as neurology, prosthetic limb production, anesthesia, and orthopedics. The hospital was amongst the best in the country, providing the most military orthopedic services at the time. Despite Dr. Albee's requests to keep the hospital open, U.S. General Hospital #3 was shut down in October 1919, after just 15 months of service (Historic Tour of Woodbridge Volume XIII, Page 4.) During these short 15 months, however, thousands of patients and wounded servicemen were treated and able to recover from injuries, many of which could have been fatal if it weren't for Dr. Albee.

Being a resident of Woodbridge at the time would come with several opportunities to help during World War I. If I were a Woodbridge resident at the time of the war, I would choose to support it by purchasing Liberty Bonds. Liberty Bonds came with many advantages, benefiting everyone involved. By purchasing a Liberty Bond, I would be providing funds and aid to the United States for the war. Not only would I be contributing to the United States' war efforts, but I, too, would be benefitting. The government would be paying me back the money I spent on the Liberty Bonds, along with interest. Although I would be paid at a later date, buying Liberty Bonds seems like a win-win situation.