

# If I were in Woodbridge, in 1918

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In July 1914, tensions were already high among different countries, but when the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary was shot, WWI started. Austria, Italy, the Ottoman Empire, and Germany(the Central Powers), had fought against France, Russia, the USA, Japan, and Great Britain(the Allied Powers). It wasn't until April 2nd, 1917 though that the US joined the war. This happened because Great Britain had captured a telegram from the Germans to the Mexicans asking them to join the Central Powers in return for the land that Mexico lost in the Mexican-American War. Before then, the US was in a self proclaimed state of neutrality.

When the US joined the war, the government needed as much help as it could get from the citizens of America. This meant that many able-bodied men over the age of 18 would get drafted. Because of drafting, the women of America had to take over many jobs that men would usually have. Other than fighting, Americans also knit, built bombs, took care of soldiers, and did much more.

One of the things that Americans did to help soldiers participated in "Knit Your Bit", a program sponsored by the Red Cross. In Knit Your Bit, people would knit socks for soldiers. There was also a Comfort Committee, which held carnivals and other fun activities to raise money for the war. The Comfort Committee also helped people forget about the war and know there was still hope. As much as programs and organizations tried to help people look at the silver lining of war, the citizens were still reminded about the tough times when they had to use food rations, lacked supplies, remembered their loved ones are fighting in the war, and be more careful of their actions. (*Woodbridge Pamphlet XIII*)

An idol for many people during the war was Dr. Fred Albee. Dr. Fred Albee was in charge of General Hospital #3 which was located in Colonia. Hospitals #1 and #2 were never built, but Dr. Fred Albee's neighbor, Mr. Charles D. Freeman, had offered his large estate as a location for Hospital #3. Construction started on February 2nd, 1918. The hospital opened in the summer of 1918 with 500 beds. The first patient was Private Charles Blalock, who was admitted on July 5th, 1918 with tuberculosis of the spine. General Hospital #3 had soon become known as the best hospital in the country, with departments such as orthopedics, general surgery, neurology, anesthesia, artificial limb

manufacturing, and a department for the eyes, ears, and throat. More people were admitted into the hospital as it expanded, having 2,000 beds and 110 buildings in the hospital. The complex also had a swimming pool, heating plant, kitchen, mess hall, laundry plant, fire department, phone network, and a chapel for religious services(built in 1919). Another reason why General Hospital #3 was known as the best hospital in America (at the time of World War I) because Dr. Fred Albee had also thought about the mental health of the patients as well as their physical health. This was important considering that the hospital was made for the war. War has a lasting impact on people with having to see their loved ones die in war and having a lack of supplies, as well as not being able to live their life the way they wanted to if the war hadn't started. War is the ultimate dream crusher for many. (Woodbridge Pamphlet XIII; "Two Hundred War Veterans At School; Room for More"- *Over Here* 1918)

Another way that citizens helped was by manufacturing bombs. In April 1917, the federal government had asked Terra Cotta factories, such as the one in Woodbridge (Federal Terra Cotta of Woodbridge), to manufacture dummy bombs for the Air Corps. These dummy bombs were made out of Terra Cotta clay from the factories. Other Terra Cotta factories also got converted into bomb-making factories, such as the factories in Perth Amboy(New Jersey Terra Cotta of Perth Amboy) and Staten Island (Atlantic Terra Cotta Company of Perth Amboy). On November 1st, 1918, the war was seen to be coming to an end and the Terra Cotta factories were asked to stop manufacturing dummy bombs. The leftover dummy bombs were eventually abandoned near a railway track close to the factory. These bombs were forgotten until October of 2001 when the Woodbridge Historical association uncovered 124 bombs. (*Woodbridge Pamphlet XIII*)

So how would I contribute to WWI? Well, my first option would have been to enlist in the army and help fight. I know that training would take a lot of effort and hard work, but I would not mind since I know that I am protecting my country and keeping others safe. The only reason I wouldn't be able to enlist in the army is because I am female. Women were not allowed to enlist in the army until 1948, which was 30 years after WWI had ended. So instead of enlisting, I would want to help cook food for soldiers. I wouldn't mind if it was hard work, since I know that I would be helping and I am the type of person that pretty much feels useless unless I am helping out more than required. Another reason I would want to cook is because I love cooking and baking. I enjoy the activity, even more, when I know people besides myself are going to be eating the food. I feel like being a chef for soldiers is the perfect job for me, since I don't do well

with seeing blood, which eliminates the idea of working in a hospital and I get impatient very quickly, which takes out the idea of becoming a teacher and knitting socks. In conclusion, I would help cook food for soldiers to help out during the war.

Sources:

**“Two Hundred War Veterans At School; Room for More”- “Over Here 1918”  
Historic Tour of Woodbridge Volume XIII  
“Bombs Away!”(Chipstone)**