

LETTERS FROM THE WESTERN FRONT: THE CORRESPONDENCE OF
AMERICAN DOUGHBOYS AND AMERICAN CENSORSHIP DURING THE
GREAT WAR 1917-1918

A dissertation submitted to the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

Letters from the Western Front: The Correspondence of American Doughboys and American Censorship during the Great War 1917-1918

Doctors of Letters Dissertation by

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Censorship has always been viewed by the American military as an essential weapon of warfare. The amounts, and types, of censorship deployed have varied from conflict to conflict. Censorship would reach a peak during America's involvement in the First World War. The American military feared that any information could be of possible use to the German war machine, and it was determined to prevent any valuable information from falling into their hands. The result would be an unprecedented level of censorship that had no antecedent in American history.

The censorship of the First World War came from three main directions, official censorship by the American government, by the American military, and the self-censorship of American soldiers themselves. Military censorship during the Great War was thorough and invasive. It began at the training camps and only intensified as the doughboys moved to their ports of embarkation, and then to the Western Front. Private letters were opened, read, censored, and even destroyed. The doughboys themselves greatly aided the military by self-censoring their own writing. Few letters were ever discovered that contained information of a truly military nature.

Censorship on the homefront also reached unprecedented levels. President Wilson's Committee on Public Information waged a war against anything that it determined not to be "100% American." This new organization attempted to censor out of the public discourse any item that might be seen as pro-German. German literature, philosophy, books, music, newspapers, words, dog breeds, foods, and flags were all to be wiped from the nation. The C.P.I. enlisted an army of untrained volunteer foot soldiers, the American Protective League, to do its bidding. The APL wreaked havoc across the nation trampling the civil rights of any group that got in its way.

The censorship of wartime was then extended into peacetime, with devastating consequences. The Spanish Flu had begun to spread during the war, and the news of its very existence was determined to be a threat to the war effort. It was feared that news of the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans would embolden the Germans to keep on fighting, so President Wilson said nothing of it. Panic spread across the land. Over 675,000 Americans would die.

DEDICATION PAGE



I dedicate this project to the memory of my great-uncle Clayton C. Moore who fought and died on the Western Front and whose letters home to his family inspired this work.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: AMERICAN CENSORSHIP AND THE GREAT WAR.....	23
CHAPTER THREE: AMERICAN ARMY CENSORSHIP DURING THE GREAT WAR.....	65
CHAPTER FOUR: CLAYTON C. MOORE.....	106
CHAPTER FIVE: AMERICAN CENSORSHIP POST THE GREAT WAR.....	135
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	165
APPENDIX.....	171
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	173
VITA.....	190

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“A fellow can’t write much or they will censor it and there won’t be much of a letter left.”¹ The words of Clayton Moore, an American doughboy in France, who following his training, actively engaged in the self-censorship of his own writing. Two things make the level of censorship during World War One unique in America’s history. The vast and intrusive nature of said censorship, and the expansion of this censorship into peacetime America.

The Great War ended just over 100 years ago and a vast number of histories of World War One have been written. However, it would be an incorrect assumption to think that there are not still many stories of the Great War that yet wait to be told. The great battles, the new military technologies, leading political figures, heroes and even villains have been written about extensively but the voices of the millions of average men who fought and died in the “war to make the world safe for democracy” still wait to be heard.² Their stories are the ones that speak of the true sacrifices made to ensure victory

¹ Clayton C. Moore to Folks, 6 July 1918, in authors’ possession.

² On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson went before a joint session of Congress to seek a Declaration of War against Germany in order that the world “be made safe for democracy.” Four days later, Congress voted to declare war, with six senators and fifty House members dissenting. Robert H. Ferrell, *Woodrow Wilson and World War I 1917-1921* (Harper & Row Publishers, New York, NY 1985), 202.

for the United States and her Allies in Europe, and most of their stories still wait to be told.

Herein lies a problem, how do we tell these stories, what sources can be used to tell the story of the average soldier in the battlefield? Personal letters written by and to a soldier are most helpful but it turns out that they do not reveal the whole story. In fact, they can twist the truth and paint a picture that almost totally glosses over the true horrors of the First World War. Why would this be? In a simple word, censorship. In the case of American soldiers who fought in the Great War, this censorship came from three main directions: official censorship by both the United States government and the American military, and self-censorship by the soldiers themselves. The self-censorship freely practiced by most American soldiers during the war was key to the American military's ability to stem the flow of information from the Western Front, and maintain a high level of support for the war back on the homefront.

The object of this inquiry is to investigate the ways in which censorship by the American military and the American government affected not only the ways in which American doughboys communicated with their loved ones and families back on the homefront,³ but the ways in which the unprecedented wave of censorship during the war changed the nation as a whole and even threatened to undermine constitutional guarantees of free speech in America. The investigation of these issues shall begin with a review of the history of the growth of American censorship from the revolution, up to and including the period of the United States' direct involvement in World War One, in both

³Doughboy was an informal term for a member of the United States Army or Marine Corps. The origins of the term are unclear. One explanation offered for the usage of the term in World War I is that female American Salvation Army volunteers went to France to cook millions of doughnuts and bring them to the troops on the front line.

its legal and practical implications. Additionally, an examination will be conducted into the ways in which this censorship affected the writing of personal letters and the ways in which this censorship may challenge our ability to tell the whole story of the average soldier's experience in the Great War. The ways in which average soldiers attempted to circumvent the censor and the censor's attempts to prevent any objectionable information from leaving the American training camps and, more importantly, from the governments' point of view, the Western Front shall also be investigated. Turning back to the United States itself, the ways in which the American government and the American people widely supported this censorship and the ways in which the First Amendment came under direct attack by an overzealous population determined to defeat all enemies both domestic and foreign shall be investigated. The mass hysteria that censorship and war propaganda created on the homefront, and the fate of any one deemed not to be "100% American," during the war and in the period immediately after the war known as the First Red Scare will be further examined. It should be noted at this point that this is not a study of American propaganda during the Great War per se, however, propaganda is a secondary topic of this inquiry as censorship and propaganda are often closely intertwined and many times difficult to separate into completely different subjects.

Utilized sources will be both national and local in scope. National resources such as the Congressional Record, the Library of Congress, Supreme Court records, the speeches and the executive orders of President Wilson, the writings of Generals Pershing and O'Ryan, and the personal papers of the leader of the C.P.I., George Creel will be utilized. National, regional, local, and military newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *Omaha Daily Bee*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Jamestown Post-Journal*, the

army's *Stars and Stripes* and *The Wadsworth Gas Attack and Rio Grande Rattler* will be used extensively. The precious handwritten letters of American doughboys that exist scattered about our nation in peoples' attics (including the letters of my great-uncle), in local archives, in places such as Newark and Monmouth County New Jersey, and Bellefonte, Pennsylvania will be relied upon as local sources of information; along with additional correspondence found in national archives such as the Library of Congress, the National Postal Museum, and the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City.

While the topic of censorship by the American government was widely written about by scholars in the period just after the Great War, it has not been a major topic in recent decades. The two most significant studies were done in 1939 and 1941 by Dr. James R. Mock and his major focus was on the entire system of official government censorship that existed as public policy during World War One.⁴ He investigated army censorship only tangentially as he looked at its place in the overall larger picture. One great example of this is the way Mock mentions that "any one of 21 subjects can result in a soldier's letter being censored," however, he never proceeded to produce the entire list, explain its origin, nor does he cite his exact source for this information in either of his two books on the subject.⁵ Additionally, Mock is rarely critical of the actions of the American Government, although he does warn of possible government overreach in the period after the war's end.

⁴ James R. Mock (1872-1963), received the Ph.D. degree of the University of Wisconsin in 1930 and, after seven years as Professor of History at Findlay College, joined the executive staff of the National Archives as Historical Classifier, Division of Classification. Mock's first book. *Words that won the War* was co-written with Cedric Larson (1908/1996), a graduate of Stanford University and veteran of the Navy.

⁵ James R. Mock, *Censorship*, 110.

In the 1980's, author David Kennedy argued in his book, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*, that World War One and its unprecedented level of clearly un-democratic censorship was temporarily necessary and required in order to mobilize a traditionally isolationist nation for its role in the modern world, one that history and geography had spared them to that point.⁶ Recent scholarship by Donald Fishman of Boston College has centered on the role that George Creel played in curtailing free speech and the eventual effect on the American film industry.⁷ Fishman cites the work of Mock extensively, but he does not engage in any discussion of the direct censorship of the mails by either the Postmaster General or the American military.

Christopher Capozzola argues in his book, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the making of the Modern American Citizen* that the mass mobilization of the nation during World War One led to a significant increase in the power of the American federal government. However, the stressing of duty and responsibility over rights and freedoms unleashed coercion on a scale never before seen in our nation and in the end created a new federal state whose growing power threatened key American freedoms. While he does grasp the effects of American censorship, his book gives little insight into the inner workings of the system of censorship itself in the nation, or on the Western Front.

In his book, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information*, Professor Stephen L. Vaughn argues that the creation of the Committee on Public Information allowed the establishment of America's first major propaganda agency and encouraged the growth of the imperial presidency. The

⁶ David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford University Press: New York, NY 1980) 45-47.

⁷ George Creel (1876-1953) was a key figure in his role as the chairman of the Committee on Public Information, the propaganda origination created by President Wilson at the start of World War One.

CPI's seemingly high-minded goals, and resulting efforts to restrict First Amendment liberties would eventually threaten the very democracy they were attempting to protect from "German militarism." Vaughn argues that the actions and overreach of the CPI gave impetus to the view that American public opinion is quite irrational and events of the past nine decades clearly show that he was correct in this assumption. Again his book does not cover American military censorship or the actual operation of censorship on the homefront.

Information about censorship of the U.S. mail and the military's role in it must therefore be found in disparate sources as no one has yet tackled this topic head-on. A review of online dissertations on ProQuest has revealed no clear results, although the topic of United States troop morale on the Western Front was studied in both 1997 and in 2009.⁸

Journal articles will be of some help as many local and national journals have printed collections of soldiers' letters. For example John Okl's *A Keystoner in the Great War: The World War I Letters of Philip Shoemaker* provides a good bit of background information along with the letters themselves. Although none of these articles deals with the army's censorship system directly, many of the letters have been censored in places and some still contain original censor's marks. The lives of average men such as Maxwell Lyons (AK), Dinsmore Ely (PA), Lt. Paul Remmel (AK), Roscoe Conklin (MO), and Alan Seeger (NC) have all been documented in this way.

⁸ Vicky Ann Hatch, "A study of how letters to the editor published in *The Stars and Stripes* newspaper between March 1, 1918 and November 15, 1918 reflected the morale of the troops during World War One" PhD did. University of Wyoming, 2009 ProQuest (3387266). & Lon J. Strauss. "A Paranoid State; The American Public, Military Surveillance and the Espionage Act of 1917" PhD diss. University of Kansas, 2012.ProQuest 93509228).

Clearly the most important source of new information must come from primary source materials. Luckily, these are in abundance. A trip to the Library of Congress has revealed important material, such as the *Stars and Stripes*, the American military newspaper printed in France for members of the American armed forces. It surprisingly contains examples of unedited soldier's "letters to the editor" written by doughboys who fail to self-censor their true thoughts. Additionally, the Annual Report of the Postmaster General for 1917, 1918, and 1919 have yielded a good amount of information about the post office's major role in government censorship. The executive orders of President Wilson, in particular Orders 2594 [1917], 2604 [1917], 2605 [1917], and 2729 [1917], are of much importance as are the writings of George Creel and his Committee for Public Information. Supreme Court cases such as *Abrams v. United States* (1919), *Schenck v. United States* (1919), *Debs v. United States* (1919), *Whitney v. California* (1927), and *Stromberg v. California* (1931) provide a legal backdrop for analyzing the American government's actions and the battle over First Amendment rights that resulted from the censorship attempts during World War One. As stated earlier, the unpublished handwritten letters of American soldiers such as Jack C. Richer, Franciscum (Frank) Mueller, and Clayton C. Moore will play a key role in this project.

Investigating what happened to those who opposed George Creel's supposed 'voluntary' censorship, socialist publications such as *The Blast*, *The Masses*, and *The Toiler* will be reviewed, as will the works of socialist writers like Eugene Debs, and socialist cartoonists like Louis Raemaekers, and George Hecht.

This study's goals are two-fold; first, it will begin to fill a substantial historiographical gap that exists concerning the role that the United States Army's

ensorship plays on the historian's ability to tell the real life experiences of American doughboys serving on the Western Front. A better understanding of the role that such censorship had on the soldiers' ability to communicate their true feelings and emotions will allow for a more accurate understanding of their actual experiences and the overall morale of the American Forces in Europe (A.E.F).

Take, for example, a man like Franciscum (Frank) Mueller who joined the army at the age of twenty two and served as a private in Company C of the 312th Infantry, New Jersey Regiment. If we attempt to tell his story through his surviving letters we would find a very happy-go-lucky chap who had a wonderful time at the Western Front. On September 16, 1918, he writes home to his family thanking them for all the wonderful letters he has received and asking about the current events in "Dear Old Newark."⁹ "I was so overjoyed when I got so much good news from home, it was like a wonderful Xmas."¹⁰ Officially, Frank found the war to be a pretty mundane affair, "There is nothing new happened since I wrote you last...I'm pretty well taken care of."¹¹ Nothing for a censor to worry about in Frank's letters. Frank Mueller, however, like many doughboys, also kept a journal of his experiences and in it one finds a different view of the war. Upon his arrival in Europe, Frank mailed home the mandatory safe arrival card that stated "THE SHIP ON WHICH I SAILED HAS ARRIVED SAFELY OVERSEAS,"¹² with a place for him to sign his name and give his organization. In his journal entries we find a rather more interesting adventure,

⁹ Franciscum (Frank) Mueller to Family, 16 September 1918, File MG1517, Box 1 Folder 7, Mueller Family Papers 1885-1950, New Jersey Historical Society.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Franciscum (Frank) Mueller to Family, 7 August 1918, File MG1517, Box 1 Folder 7, Mueller Family Papers 1885-1950, New Jersey Historical Society.

¹² Mueller Family Papers 1885-1950, Ship Transport Card, Box 1, Folder 7, New Jersey Historical Society.

Sunday, June 2, 1918. Sunday we rose at 6 a.m. Did not eat any breakfast, went to Mass and Holy Communion at 11:20. There were about fifty soldiers who received, which was a pretty sight to see. We then had dinner at twelve. After dinner we drilled again until supper time. After supper we were on deck when we encountered a submarine, which set the whole convey on its feet. We sent several depth bombs; in fact every ship did. This lasted until about eight o'clock, with the final result that we sank two of the bunch of which there were supposed to be fifteen. After the shots everybody was busy talking. Some of the boys stayed awake all night. Nine o'clock came and most of us hit the hay. In the chase after the submarine we had about nine or ten torpedo boats, one having a balloon attached to it. We also saw a big dirigible.

Monday, June 3, 1918. One man died of the mumps. Monday we were drilling and while we were drilling we saw a dirigible and an aeroplane, which flew near our ship. We now are full of confidence. We stayed up until we were chased to bed, which was at nine.

Tuesday, June 4, 1918. Up at 6 a.m. We had to sleep with life belts and cartridge belts on, which was no cinch. Our canteens were full water, in case we got hit by a submarine. It was a fine morning. The water was very calm; one could almost walk on it. It was called the Thames River. We sailed along the Thames and passed dirigibles, torpedo boats, transports, sailing ships, fishing boats, in fact everything imaginable. The scenery along the Thames was great and the fields at Dover were one big mass of grass. There were several castles which shone out fine among the green grass. We picked up our pilot. He took us to Oberdutch.¹³ We were there all evening. In the evening, while one the ship, the sky was searched for enemy aeroplanes. We hit the hay at nine.¹⁴

Interestingly after arriving in France, Frank Mueller never wrote in his diary again. There could be several reasons for this, maybe he was no longer interested in it. The most likely reason would be that he worried about the Germans finding the diary on his body and being able to glean important military information from it. The doughboys were warned about this possibility and many took it very seriously. As we shall see, the doughboys' self-censorship would make the military's task much easier and much more effective. A

¹³ Oberdutch most likely refers to the region of French Flanders.

¹⁴ Franciscum (Frank) Mueller, Personal Diary, Box 1, Folder 13, Mueller Family Papers 1885-1950, New Jersey Historical Society.

recreation of just how this entire system of censorship operated on the ground is also important as it has been studied very little. This study also seeks to recreate and preserve the experience and military journey of one, as of yet, totally undocumented American doughboy.

Secondly, and of equal importance, this study will explore the ways in which this system of military censorship ballooned over the course of the war and soon enveloped the homefront and threatened American free speech not only in wartime but also in the peacetime that followed. The experience of censorship in World War One, although drastic, was not totally unique in the American experience. “100 Percent Americanism” and a willingness to blame “the other” led to acts of violence and hate against German-Americans during the Great War and would later be repeated against Japanese-Americans during World War II, against Iranian-Americans during the Iran Hostage Crisis of 1979-1981, against Arab-Americans in the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks, and against Chinese-Americans during the Covid-19 Pandemic.¹⁵

The echoes of this period in today’s America, where once again we find an under-informed American public on the edge of mass panic led by a leader who, like President Wilson, wishes to censor information during a national crisis to further his political and military goals, shall also be examined.

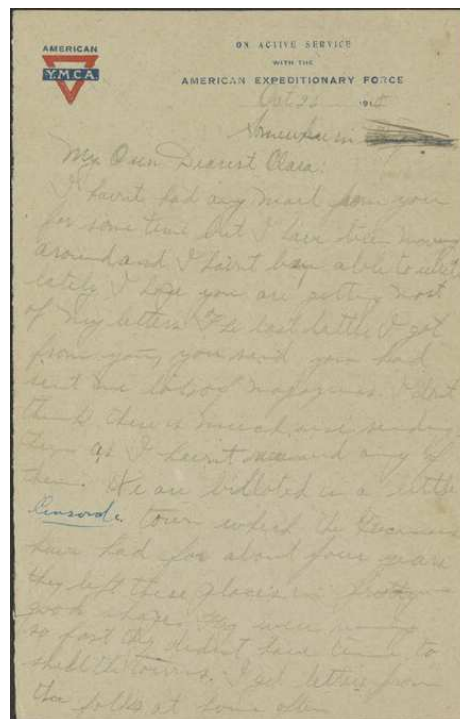
A common misconception is that the United States Army censored soldiers’ letters by blacking out restricted material, and while this did indeed occur, often times the censors were ordered to simply destroy the letters. Proof of this comes to us from the

¹⁵ 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*. Summer, 2002, Vol. 95, No.2.148.

personal letters of none other than future President Harry S. Truman, who as a sergeant during the war, assisted in censoring the letters of the men in his company. In a letter to his then fiancée Bess Wallace, Truman states “It is a good thing I didn’t

cancel Bill’s letter or I probably would have thrown it out. It was evidently not quoted correctly even as it is.”¹⁶ Other methods of letter censorship included cutting out information with a pair of scissors and, in the case of Private First Class John. M. Kennelly, simply using an eraser. Most doughboys wrote their letters in ink, however, Kennelly chose to write in pencil, which made the censor’s job easy. In a letter, dated October 26, 1918, Kennelly tells his wife that he has been “billeted in a little *censored* town which the Germans have had for about four years.”¹⁷ The censor had simply erased the name of the town and inserted the word “censored” with a blue pen.¹⁸

Examples of censors editing with a pair of scissors are numerous and this tactic seems to have been particularly annoying to the doughboys themselves. In a letter written by Dr. William T. Shoemaker, to his father in Philadelphia, we find this complaint, “Had a letter from Walter Rodman a little while ago. He is in France now. He



¹⁶ A. Scott Berg, ed. *World War I and America: Told by the Americans Who Lived It* (Literary Classics of America: New York NY, 2017) 623.

¹⁷ Private First Class John M. Kennelly to his wife Clara, 26 October 1918. John McRae Kennelly Collection, The Library of Congress: American Folklife Center <https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.64503/1>.

¹⁸ The same censor also objected to Kennelly’s salutation at the top of the letter “Somewhere in Belgium” and he crossed out the word Belgium as he must have decided it was valuable military information. Oddly the location is still quite visible on the letter.

didn't attempt to tell me any news at all until very near the end and then when he did, the censor thought it was too interesting and applied scissors! My but I was peeved!"¹⁹

Even the future president came under the censors' scissors. In a letter written on December 18, 1918 to his cousin Ethel, now Captain Truman attempted to give away a little too much information. While describing his post-armistice travels about France, he attempts to slip in some information about his future travels "We have rumors of going home and rumors of g [portion cut out by censor] and rumors of staying where we are until peace is signed."²⁰ Captain Truman clearly understood the rules of censorship and that he was stepping over the line. In a letter written to his cousins Ethel and Nellie Noland dated November 1, 1918, Truman pleads with his family not to give him away. "Say people. If the censor opens this letter or you let the contents of it outside the family, I'll be jugged or jimmied or bobtailed,²¹ to say the least. But I'm hoping he won't open it, and I've nothing worth writing about if I don't tell you some of the things I've seen."²²

The fighting men at the front were as well aware of these facts just as was Captain Truman. They attempted to self-censor their own writing to a great extent and sometimes they attempted to use code words in hope of having their letters passed intact back to the homefront.²³ The official policies of the American government during World War I were designed to stop information from falling into enemy hands while at the same time boosting American morale at home. As a result, these efforts seemed necessary for some

¹⁹ William T. Shoemaker to his father, 1 November 1917. *George J. Hill. War Letters 1917-1918: From Dr. William T. Shoemaker, A.E. F., in France, and His Family in Philadelphia* (Heritage Books: Berwyn Heights, Md., 2020) 83.

²⁰ Monte M. Poem, ed., *Letters Home by Harry Truman* (G. P. Putnam's Sons: New York NY, 1983) 63-64.

²¹ Jugged: thrown in jail. Jimmied: messed up as in his military career. Bobtailed: a bit vague, to have one's tail cut short.

²² Monte M. Poem, *Letters Home By Harry Truman*, 60.

²³ James R. Mock, *Censorship 1917* (Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ 1941), 102.

of the average fighting men in the trenches of the Western Front. The fact remains that most of the doughboys self-censored their writing and made the army's job much easier.

A good example can be found in the correspondence between Jack Richter and his father, Barnell. Jack Richter had dropped out of the New Jersey Law School (now Rutgers Law School-Newark) and enlisted in the navy in the summer of 1917 and was sent to Paris that November to work as a translator at the newly opened U.S. Naval Department Headquarters. On the first page of his first letter home, Jack explains in clear language the rules of military censorship that he obviously intends to uphold:

In the past you have known me to be a prolific and voluminous letter writer, I imagine, but now you will learn that I may be prolific and yet cautious at the same time. Altho [sic] in Paris now the greater part of a week; this is the first time I have dared trust myself to write a letter, and it is altogether probable that even this would have been considerably delayed but for the kindness of Ensign Vance Stewart, our Censor; who lent me his copy of the Censorship Regulations in order that I might become better acquainted with the kind of matter permitted and the kind prohibited. Until I had made a careful study of this pamphlet I feared I might unwittingly "spill the beans" or make a "faux pas" without knowing it, and therefore did not write at all. Knowing my own fondness for giving details, you will, I am sure, understand that much information may be omitted from my letters hereafter which you might ordinarily expect them to contain, but that these omissions will be intentional on my part for obvious reasons. In the most general of terms possible it may be said that nothing pertaining to naval or military matters is permitted. However, the Censor has large discretionary power and may permit a word here or a phrase there that seemingly has some military significance, but in reality not. So much by way of introduction. Never mind about the thrilling experiences of my trip across; or where we landed.²⁴

It is interesting that the censor is not seen as an adversary but as a guide and teacher to help servicemen follow the rules. Yeoman Richter had clearly bought into the system of self-

²⁴ Jack C. Richer to Barnell C. Richer, 18 November 1917, Jack C. Richer Papers, File 1, New Jersey Historical Society.

ensorship.²⁵ In a letter dated January 5, 1918, Richter goes so far as to defend the censors and to chastise his sister Jennie for asking too many questions about military matters and for the delay in receiving his letters which she blames on the censors.

On the level, Jen, I'm sure the delay isn't the fault of our Censor; he's really a peach of a chap and wouldn't do such a thing. I thought I explained carefully why I avoided making any mention of our trip across, despite what you say regarding its being uneventful. Indeed, I may say that the contrary was the truth, and I don't want to go through such another thrilling and exciting experience for quite a while yet. For your benefit, in case you did not grasp my full meaning auparavant,²⁶ I repeat that nothing savoring of military or naval matters, speaking in the broadest terms, is permitted by the Censorship board."²⁷

In Richter's correspondence with his sister, the question of whether censorship occurred in both directions is raised. The American military only censored letters back to the homefront, however, it would appear that this was not fully understood, at least not at the start of the war. In a letter dated October 20, 1917, Jennie Richer asks her brother "Are my letters censored?"²⁸ His response was that "Your letters are not censored...I am a little anxious to learn what my mail looks like when you receive it, after going through the censor. Is it stamped, or marked or what?"²⁹

In fact, Jack often wondered if his letters had made it back to his family in Newark. On September 27, 1917, he sends a letter home in which he lists the letters he has sent and then those he has received, and he questions why so many are missing.

²⁵ His exact position was Landsman for Yeoman, which was the lowest rate of the United States Navy in the 19th and early 20th centuries; it was given to new recruits with little or no experience at sea.

²⁶ French meaning "before," Jack spoke fluent French, hence his appointment to Navel Headquarters in Paris.

²⁷ Jack C. Richer to Jennie Richer, 5 January 1918, Jack C. Richer Papers, File 6, New Jersey Historical Society.

²⁸ Jennie Richer to Jack C. Richer, 20 October 1917, Jack C. Richer Papers, File 10, New Jersey Historical Society.

²⁹ Jack C. Richer to Jennie Richer, 24 October 1917, Jack C. Richer Papers, File 1, New Jersey Historical Society.

For the love of castor oil, don't ask me any more about my work and what I'm doing and what's this and that and the other. I've told you too much already for my own good. Here after I don't intend to say another word about the work over here...the censorship regulations are being tightened from day to day just because there are so many thoughtless chaps who write things without thinking or realizing its significance.³⁰

His sister Jennie responds on December 13, with a list of letters written and received and this response: "But really, I think it is your own fault, because you have so much description in that six page letter, that the censor undoubtedly wanted to read it over six or seven times to make sure that you had not underestimated the size and beauty of the Paris buildings."³¹ It would appear that despite his best efforts at least some of Yeoman Richter's letters ran afoul of the censor for giving away too "much description." While attempting to self-censor their letters, the doughboys always risked giving away too much information and finding that line would lead some doughboys to attempt to bend the rules a bit.

The use of codes, or of code words, to get information past the censors unveils a fascinating game of cat and mouse that some doughboys used to evade the rules. They could be quite simple and very ingenious. As it was forbidden to give away one's current location, one way to reveal one's position was to place a dot under a succession of letters to spell out your current location.³² Other codes have be found that appear so impenetrable that is doubtful that the reader could ever have unlocked the message.³³ How did the readers on the homefront know to look for such information? A great

³⁰ Jack C. Richer to Family, 27 September 1917, Jack C. Richer Papers, File 1, New Jersey Historical Society.

³¹ Jennie Richer to Jack C. Richer, 13 December 1917, Jack C. Richer Papers, File 10, New Jersey Historical Society.

³² Martha Hanna. "Communication between Front and Home Front" *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*. Accessed 9/12/2020, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/war_letters_communication_between_front_and_home_front. 5.

³³ Ibid.

example can be found in a letter written in 1915 by First Lieutenant Ottokar Hanzel to his wife,³⁴ “The following for the future: I will not underline anything in my messages. If anything is underlined, the opposite is true. Sections in brackets in my messages will be toned down as compared with reality.”³⁵ Even men like Jack Richer were not totally immune from the temptations of using a bit of code in their letters. In letters written to his sister Jennie he inserts codes such as Q.E.D. and Q.E.F. followed by “Savvy?”³⁶ As Jack and his sister had both been law students (and by this time his sister had her own law practice), it seems hardly surprising that they would choose Latin shorthand.³⁷ One can only wonder what the censor thought of this as he allowed it to pass. Still, the Army attempted to discourage these attempts, *the Stars and Stripes* put it bluntly “methods of conveying that precious information are so fatally simple that they’re caught in a minute...any member of his staff, with the aid of a phone book and a French atlas, could decipher this: ‘If you will take the first three letters of Pa’s name, add the last three letters of the name of our street, plus the middle two of our minister’s name, you will know where we are at.’”³⁸

³⁴ Ottokar Hanzel was a mathematics and descriptive geometry teacher from Vienna. During the First World War he was a captain in the Austro-Hungarian military fighting on the Italian front.

³⁵ Ines Rebhan-Gluck. “Circumventing the censorship and “self-censorship” *The World of the Habsburgs: The First World War*. Accessed 9/7/2020, <https://ww1.habsburger.net/en/chapters/circumventing-censorship-and-self-censorship>. 1. Letter, Ottokar Hanzel to wife, dated June 26, 1915.

³⁶ Q.E.D.: is an initialism of the Latin phrase "*quod erat demonstrandum*," literally meaning "what was to be shown." Traditionally, the abbreviation is placed at the end of a mathematical proof or philosophical argument in print publications to indicate that the proof or the argument is complete, and hence is used with the meaning "thus it has been demonstrated"

Q.E. F.: is an abbreviation for the Latin phrase "*quod erat faciendum*" "that which was to be done". It is a translation of the Greek words used by Euclid to indicate the end of the justification of a construction.

³⁷ Jack C. Richer to Jen Richer, 3 September 1917, Jack C. Richer Papers, File 2, New Jersey Historical Society.

³⁸ “Beating the Censor Still Popular Game” *The Stars and Stripes: The Official Newspaper of the A.E. F.*, Friday November 1, 1918. 6.

Another way in which soldiers attempted to avoid the censors, was to mail their letters while on leave and away from the front lines using either the French or British civilian postal systems.³⁹ This method did have severe limitations as leave was only granted every few weeks, it was forbidden by A.E.F. regulations, and the doughboys would have to avoid being seen by the American military police and they also had to pay the local postage to send their letters back to the states.⁴⁰ It is known that some doughboys did attempt to get away with this. The army's *The Stars and Stripes* newspaper ran an advice column called "Free Advice For Lovelorn Lads" written by the very mysterious "Miss Information," who assured the readers of the impartiality of the censors.⁴¹ One letter written to the column detailed the case of a doughboy who was having an affair with a local French woman. The soldier feared that his letters home would be read by the censor and that he would be caught breaking the A.E.F.'s strict non-fraternization rules.⁴² To avoid detection he had used the local French postal system, also forbidden. However, he was caught, and his mail was opened and read. Miss Information's response was that the doughboy in question "needn't have worried a bit. For the bogey-man isn't a likely rival of anyone. In fact, he isn't a man at all, but a system- just as impersonal as if he wrote his name, 'Base Censor Inc.'"⁴³ One might assume that the advice given was saying not to worry about personal matters, the army is

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ United States Army in the World War 1917-1919: Report of the Commander-in-chief Staff Sections and Services, Volume 13. *Center of Military History* United States Government Printing Office: Washington D.C., 1948. 111.

⁴¹ Miss Information. "Free Advice For Lovelorn Lads" *The Stars and Stripes*, March 29, 1918.5.

⁴² Mark Whalan. *World War One: American Literature, and the Federal State* (Cambridge University Press: New York NY, 2018). 73.

⁴³ Ibid.

only interested in the passing of military information that might be of use to the enemy.

Personal indiscretions it seems, might be ignored.

Another common ruse that was utilized to pass information was to write under the postage stamps or on the inside of the envelope itself, usually under the inside flap.⁴⁴ This rarely worked as, if the censor was doing his job, this would have been easily caught.

Army censorship rules clearly stated that:

The examiner has scrutinized the envelope, he next opens it by slitting along the left side with an X-acto knife or other sharp instrument, and removes the contents. Care should be taken not to mutilate the contents, postage stamps, or return address. He then removes all blank sheets of paper and tissue linings. By holding the empty envelope up to a strong light, it is possible to note if there has been anything written underneath the stamp, under the flap, or between the seams. The contents will then be further examined for violations of area censorship regulations.⁴⁵

What punishment might befall a doughboy caught attempting to sneak out such information? Well, it appears very little. This might seem surprising until one realizes that for all its efforts, the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.) never really found anyone attempting to pass on military secrets. For the most part they found complaints about the army and attempts to give their current location. In most cases these letters were simply seized and destroyed. In a review of 200 court-martial cases conducted at U.S. Naval Base Seven, located in Brest, France, not one was for censorship violations.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Myron Foxx. *Censorship!* Military Postal History Society Accessed 9/27/2020, http://www.shoppbs.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/warletters/sfeature/sf_censorship.html.

⁴⁵ Department of the Army. *Armed Forces Censorship (Army) Field Manual No. 30-28* (Department of the Army: Washington D.C., April 1955). 98.

⁴⁶ Jack C. Richer to Jennie Richer, 11 December 1918, Jack C. Richer Papers, File 6, New Jersey Historical Society.

Case were brought for drunkenness, insubordination, assault, sodomy, and even attempted sodomy, but none for breaking censorship rules.⁴⁷

During the Great War, censorship was viewed by the American government as an indispensable weapon of waging war. The government's task was to keep the American public in a state of near total ignorance while, at the same time, maintaining their unshaken confidence in the national government's ability to wage war. The Espionage Act of 1917 and its additional amendments, commonly known as the Sedition Acts, gave the United States Postmaster General the authority to ban any newspaper or magazine from the mails.⁴⁸ Additionally, these laws made it a crime to use "disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language" against the U.S. Constitution, the American government, or even the flag of the United States.⁴⁹

The American government and its newly created watchdog, the Committee on Public Information (C.P.I.), claimed that this censorship was to be voluntary and used only in "guarding military information of tangible benefit to the enemy"⁵⁰ Press censorship was to be limited to a short list of topics that were printed on a card that was handed to journalists.⁵¹ The list included the following topics of military secrecy:⁵²

1. Advance information of the routes and schedules of troop movements.
2. Information tending to disclose the numbers of troops in the expeditionary forces abroad.
3. Information calculated to disclose the location of the permanent base or bases abroad.

⁴⁷ After the armistice, Jack Richer served on the U.S.S. Prometheus based at Brest France. He mailed transcripts of the court martial cases conducted aboard to his sister Jennie who was a lawyer in Newark NJ. 11 December 1918, Jack C. Richer Papers, File 6, New Jersey Historical Society.

⁴⁸ Eberhard Demm, Censorship: International Encyclopedia of the First World War Accessed 2/17/2019 <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/censorship,3>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ George Creel. *Complete Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Public Information* (Washington Government Printing Office: Washington D.C., 1920) 10.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

4. Information that would disclose the location of American units or the eventual position of the American forces at the front.
5. Information tending to disclose an eventual or actual port of embarkation; or information of the movement of military forces at seaports from which inference might be drawn of an intention to embark them for service abroad; and information of the assembling of transports or convoys; and information of the embarkation itself.
6. Information of the arrival at any European port of American war vessels, transports, or any portion of any expeditionary force, combatant or noncombatant.
7. Information of the time of departure of merchant ships from American or European ports, or information of the ports from which they sailed, or information of their cargoes.
8. Information indicating the port of arrival of incoming ships from European ports or after their arrival indicating, or hinting at, the port at which the ship arrived.
9. Information as to convoys and as to the sighting of friendly or enemy ships, whether naval or merchant.
10. Information of the locality, number, or identity of vessels belonging to our own Navy or to the navies of any country at war with Germany.
11. Information of the coast or antiaircraft defenses of the United States. Any information of their very existence, as well as the number, nature, or position of their guns, is dangerous.
12. Information of the laying of mines or mine fields or any harbor defenses.
13. Information of the aircraft and appurtenances used at Government aviation schools for experimental tests under military authority, and information of contracts and production of air material, and information tending to disclose the numbers and organization of the air division, excepting when authorized by the Committee on Public Information.
14. Information of all Government devices and experiments in war material, excepting when authorized by the Committee on Public Information.
15. Information of secret notices issued to mariners or other confidential instructions issued by the Navy or the Department of Commerce relating to the lights, lightships, buoys, or other guides to navigation.
16. Information as to the number, size, character, or location of ships of the Navy ordered laid down at any port or shipyard, or in the actual process of construction; or information that they are launched or in commission.
17. Information of the train or boat schedules of traveling official missions in transit through the United States.
18. Information of the transportation of munitions of war material.⁵³

A thorough list no doubt, but one in which each item is clearly related to some aspect of the war effort. The new head of the C.P.I., George Creel, again emphasized that the

⁵³ Ibid, 10-12.

enforcement of these rules was a matter of voluntary cooperation for the American press itself and that he expected “unselfish, patriotic adherence.”⁵⁴ What would soon follow, however, would be an unprecedented expansion of government censorship never before seen in the history of the United States. Ironically, voluntary self-censorship would be forced upon the American press not only by an overzealous government but also by vigilante groups and an American public that strongly supported the government’s actions. The power of direct censorship was soon established and extended to the press, the regular mail, and to almost every aspect of American life itself.⁵⁵ At no period of American history before or since World War One has government sponsored censorship been as pervasive or threatening to American civil liberties.

But to illuminate our discussion, first a definition of censorship is needed. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, censorship is “the suppression of words, images, or ideas that are ‘offensive,’ happens whenever some people succeed in imposing their personal political or moral values on others. Censorship can be carried out by the government as well as private pressure groups. Censorship by the government is unconstitutional.”⁵⁶ This a good starting point from which to define the type of censorship experienced in America during World War One with one major exception. That exception being that censorship was clearly considered constitutional during the war and it would not be until the years following the war that the Supreme Court would address the issue of protecting First Amendment rights in both peace and war times.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 12.

⁵⁵ Eberhard Demm, Censorship: International Encyclopedia of the First World War Accessed 2/17/2019 <https://encylodedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/censorship>

⁵⁶ “What is Censorship?” American Civil Liberties Union, accessed November 7, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/other/what-censorship>.

Britannica defines censorship as “the changing or the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is deemed subversive of the common good. It occurs in all manifestations of authority to some degree, but in modern times it has been of special importance in its relation to government and the rule of law.”⁵⁷ This definition is a bit limiting as it only refers to the censorship of the spoken or written word and censorship can take many other forms. This definition does, however, note that censorship can arise from all manifestations of power be they federal, state, county, or local.

The esteemed Oxford English Dictionary defines censorship as “the suppression or prohibition of any parts of books, films, news, etc. that are considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security.”⁵⁸ For the purpose of this research, this is in some ways a more complete definition as it includes the fact that censorship involves far more than just the spoken or written word. During the Great War almost any aspect of American life was open to the reach of censorship: free speech, political speech, citizenship rights, medical knowledge, newspapers, magazines, books, tele-communications, personal mail, the use of foreign languages, the display of flags, street names, film, art work, music, the names of the food we eat, and even the naming of popular dog breeds. Censorship during World War One was intrusive and vast in ways that would shock many Americans today.

⁵⁷ “Censorship,” Britannica, accessed November 7, 2020, <https://Britannica.com/topics/censorship>.

⁵⁸ “Censorship” Lexico, accessed November 8, 2020, <https://www.lexico.com/en/defination/censorship>.

CHAPTER TWO

AMERICAN CENSORSHIP AND THE GREAT WAR

Censorship during wartime by the American government did not begin with World War One. In every armed conflict since the American Revolution, basic freedoms of speech and of the press have been curtailed to some degree.¹ Even the most vocal critics of the principle of censorship tend to agree that in wartime some form and amount of censorship may be a necessity, as it becomes not only a curtailment of individual liberties, but also a matter of national security.² During the War of Independence, Tories (British sympathizers) were beaten, driven from their homes, prohibited from voting or holding public office, and in the case of the governor of New Jersey, William Franklin,³ physically driven from office.⁴ Conscientious objectors to the war, such as the Quakers, were attacked by vigilante mobs and were even prohibited from holding religious meetings.⁵

The first formal restrictions to personal liberties in our nation's history were the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798.⁶ These acts were passed to strengthen national security

¹ James R. Mock, *Censorship 1917* (Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ 1941), 6.

² Byron Price, "Governmental Censorship in War-Time" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 36, No. 5 (Oct. 1942), 837.

³ William was the son of none other than Benjamin Franklin.

⁴ Joseph J. Ellis, *Revolutionary Summer: The Birth of American Independence* (Vintage Books: New York NY 2014), 49 & 126.

⁵ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 7.

⁶ Gordon S. Wood. *The Radicalism of The American Revolution* (Alfred A. Knopf Inc.: New York NY 1992), 362.

at a time when war with France seemed likely,⁷ and President John Adams used the powers of the Sedition Act to silence “libelous” editors and members of the rival Democratic-Republican Party.⁸ Armed with the Sedition Act, twenty-five political opponents of the President were arrested and ten were found guilty of:⁹

false, scandalous and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States, or either house of Congress...or the President...with the intent to defame the said government... they shall be punished by a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars, and by imprisonment not exceeding two years.¹⁰

A storm of protest followed the passing of these statutes,¹¹ and they were allowed to expire on March 3, 1801 after the passage of the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798 that declared that the states had the right to nullify acts of Congress.¹² These resolutions opened Pandora’s Box and the question of the supremacy of states’ rights would only be answered by the American Civil War.

Censorship has occurred in one form or another in every American armed conflict; during the War of 1812, a newspaper in Baltimore printed a headline stating that the conflict was unnecessary.¹³ A mob gathered and wrecked the offices of the *Federal American* and a month later, another mob returned and killed an editor who had dared to resume operations.¹⁴ Another case of censorship occurred near the end of the War of 1812 when the *Louisiana Gazette* published a story that General Andrew Jackson had

⁷ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 7.

⁸ From 1798 to 1800, an undeclared naval war occurred with France known as the Quasi-War.

⁹ James R. Mock, *Censorship 1917* (Princeton University Press: Princeton NJ 1941), 7.

¹⁰ Transcript of Alien and Sedition Acts (1778) Accessed March 31, 2019-www.ourdocuments.gov section 3 paragraph 2.

¹¹ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 8.

¹² Thomas Jefferson *Kentucky Resolutions of 1798* Accessed March 31, 2019 https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Kentucky_Resolutions_of_1798 Section 1.

¹³ Byron Price, “Governmental Censorship in War-Time” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 36, No. 5 (Oct. 1942), 838.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

received word that a peace treaty had been signed between the United States and Great Britain. Using his authority under martial law, Jackson, who was preparing for the battle of New Orleans, ordered the editor of the paper to seek his permission before printing such a story.¹⁵ Jackson then went on to court-martial and imprison a Louisiana state senator who dared to protest against his actions.¹⁶

The advent of new technologies has always infringed upon both the government's and the military's ability to censor the news during wartime. By the start of the Mexican-American War in 1846, the telegraph, the steamship, and the railroad heralded a communications revolution that allowed for news to travel much more quickly to newspaper editors and the masses of the American population. By this time, newspapers were becoming big business in the United States and large numbers of news correspondents had accompanied Major General Zachary Taylor's armies into Mexico.¹⁷ By the start of the war, a fast steamship could carry reports from Mexico to the city of New Orleans in as little as three days and from there correspondents' stories were telegraphed or carried by railcar to cities throughout the nation.¹⁸ This was far faster than official government communications and in fact, the news of a treaty ending the war had reached Washington through the press before the actual signed treaty had arrived.¹⁹ What is interesting is that in spite of this no widespread censorship took place on either the warfront or the homefront. The reasons for this seem rather simple, the war was rather short and highly successful (for the Americans at least.) Additionally, the American

¹⁵ Paul L. Aswell, "Wartime Press Censorship by the U.S. Armed Forces: A Historical Perspective" Master's Thesis, Fort Leavenworth Kansas, 1990. ProQuest (#9004622), 11.

¹⁶ Jackson was later forced to pay civil damages for his actions by a U.S. court.

¹⁷ Paul L. Aswell, "Wartime Press Censorship" 11.

¹⁸ Ibid, 12.

¹⁹ Ibid.

reporters, in an obvious display of self-censorship, never divulged any information that could be useful to the Mexican army so there was simply no need for the military to enforce censorship upon them. The correspondents even served as “honorary *aides-de-camp*” and they provided assistance and information to American forces in the field.²⁰ At times news correspondents would carry official military dispatches along with their own posts from the battlefield. The American military found this useful when their own couriers were either not available or had been killed in action.²¹ This unofficial service provided by these correspondents gave the U.S. military little reason to enforce wide spread censorship during the war.

The Civil War period saw more government censorship and many threats to the personal liberties of American citizens and to those who served in her armed forces. In many ways the Constitution was placed in what author, James Mock termed “cold storage”²² as the writ of habeas corpus was suspended in both the North and the South.²³ Under the leadership of President Lincoln the Confiscation, Conscription, Indemnity, and Treason Acts all eroded civil liberties and allowed for federal, state, and even local censorship.²⁴ In a pattern that we shall see repeated in World War One, the War Department established censorship over the nation’s telegraph system while the Postmaster General denied the use of the mails to anyone charged with being disloyal to the Union.²⁵ The erosion of civil liberties occurred on both sides of the Mason and Dixon Line as martial law was declared over large swaths of territory. At the outbreak of the

²⁰ Ibid, 13.

²¹ Ibid.

²² James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 10.

²³ James M. McPherson *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (Oxford university Press: New York NY 1991), 57.

²⁴ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 11.

²⁵ Ibid.

war, one of Commander-in-chief Lincoln's first orders was to suspend the right of habeas corpus in the state of Maryland, where pro-southern mobs were attacking outnumbered Union forces.²⁶ The mayor and police chief of Baltimore, plus thirty-one members of the Maryland state legislature, were locked up in prison without trial, their only crime being presumed as pro-Confederacy.²⁷ During the Civil War, upwards of 38,000 civilians were arrested and detained in jail without charge while military courts tried and convicted hundreds of others.²⁸ Some men were arrested merely for speaking of, or writing of, a desire to make peace with the rebellious South. One notorious case that exemplifies the violation of civil liberties occurred in the state of Ohio.²⁹ A military court convicted the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Clement Vallandigham, of treason against the United States for simply speaking out against the war.³⁰ President Lincoln would later commute his sentence to banishment and Vallandigham fled to Canada.³¹

Formal censorship, in the American military itself, did not occur before the Civil War.³² This changed within the first few months of the conflict. Shortly after the firing on Fort Sumter, Union military leaders learned that Southern generals were able to gauge the strength and disposition of Union armies by simply reading articles in leading Northern newspapers.³³ Realizing the threat that this information posed to the Union cause, the U.S. State Department held a conference with the leaders of the press corps in August

²⁶ McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*, 57.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 11.

²⁹ McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*, 58.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Quintus C. Wilson, "Voluntary Press Censorship During the Civil War" *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* Volume 19, Issue 3 (September 1942), 251.

³³ Ibid.

1861 to establish a series of rules for handling war related information.³⁴ The resolutions that came out of this meeting would set a basic pattern for voluntary press censorship that would be repeated in World War I by George Creel and his Committee on Public Information and again during World War II by Byron Price and the Office of Censorship.³⁵

The practice of censoring individual soldiers' letters also began during the Civil War; however, this practice was limited only to letters that crossed enemy lines.³⁶ The American government was determined to never act in a way that would recognize the legitimacy or sovereignty of the Confederate States and it therefore had refused to establish formal prisoner mail exchanges.³⁷ This situation changed on July 22, 1862 when both sides established a "prisoner exchange cartel"³⁸ that created a formal mechanism to allow for the exchange of prisoner mail via "flag-of-truce."³⁹ Once established, regular flag-of-truce mail exchanges continued until the end of the war. The regulations called for a soldier's letter to be enclosed in an unsealed inner envelope, which was then enclosed in an outer envelope that contained the required postage.⁴⁰ At the exchange point, this outer envelope was discarded and the unsealed inner letter was examined and censored by authorities from either the Union or Confederate Army.⁴¹ The military

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Robert Thomas, "The Unfolding Journey: Soldiers' Letters from the Front" Accessed 4/7/2019 legacysunfoldingjourney.blogspot.com/2012/02/soldiers-letters-from-front.htm paragraph 2.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Patricia Kaufmann, "Civilian Flag-of-Truce Covers" Smithsonian *Postal Museum* Accessed 4/6/2019 https://arago.si.edu/category_2028296.html 1.

³⁹ According to Merriam-Webster, a flag of truce is a white flag carried or displayed to an enemy as an invitation to conference or parley.

⁴⁰ Patricia Kaufmann, "Civilian Flag-of-Truce Covers", 1.

⁴¹ Ibid.

authorities of both armies were looking for any information that might be of interest to the opposing side.

Government censorship during the Spanish-American War was a rather more low-key affair and as James Mock notes “the public at large was hardly aware that any censorship existed.”⁴² Most censorship during the Spanish-American war centered on the transmission of information by the press and it should be noted that as it was the press that had played a large part in starting the war in the first place. This same press was determined to now report on it. Major American newspapers with war correspondents in Cuba hired small boats to carry dispatches directly across the water back to Florida.⁴³ This made it almost impossible for the American government to withhold information relating to the invasion of Cuba.⁴⁴ The American military responded to this problem by securing the cooperation of the Western Union Company, thus preventing the flow of uncensored information by telegraph.⁴⁵ Censors were placed at the telegraph offices in Tampa, Miami, and Jacksonville ensuring that uncensored confidential information could only reach the newspapers via boat or letter with the hope that by the time such information reached a major city like New York it was “old news.”⁴⁶ In an attempt to circumvent these new restrictions, the newspapers attempted to “encode” their dispatches.⁴⁷ However, this attempt proved to be useless as the censors simply stopped the transmission of any information that appeared to be in any sort of code and that were

⁴² James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 17.

⁴³ Byron Price, “Governmental Censorship in War-Time” *The American Political Science Review*, 839.

⁴⁴ G. L. A. O’Toole. *The Spanish War: An American Epic 1898* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York NY, 1984), 215.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 18.

⁴⁷ Paul L. Aswell, “Wartime Press Censorship” 43.

not "absolutely plain and explainable."⁴⁸ This same process occurred on the island of Puerto Rico where direct censorship of the telegraph system meant that any message deemed as detrimental to the American war effort was forbidden.⁴⁹ No formal censorship of soldiers' letters occurred on the Caribbean front of the Spanish-American War; however, there were charges of mail censorship in the Philippines. These charges were flatly denied by F. W. Vaille, the director of posts at Manila, who stated that no letters mailed back to the states had been opened by anyone under his jurisdiction.⁵⁰

During World War One, censorship was viewed by the American government as an indispensable weapon of waging war. The government's task was to keep the American public in a state of near total ignorance while at the same time maintaining an unshaken confidence in the national government's ability to wage war. The Espionage Act of 1917 and its additional amendments, commonly known as the Sedition Acts, gave the United States Postmaster General the authority to ban any newspaper or magazine from the mails and additionally made it a crime to use "disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language" against the Constitution, the American government, and even the flag of the United States.⁵¹ These censorship powers were soon extended to the regular mail itself.⁵²

The very mention of any one of twenty-one improper subjects in a soldier's letter might cause the detention or even suppression of said correspondence by American postal

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 18.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Eberhard Demm, *Censorship: International Encyclopedia of the First World War* Accessed 2/17/2019 <https://encylodedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/censorship>, 3.

⁵² James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words That Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information 1917-1919* (Princeton University Press: Princeton NJ 1939), 20.

authorities.⁵³ The levels of censorship varied greatly between differing local post offices as an untrained force of newly appointed postal censors took to its task with varying degrees of effectiveness. The twenty-one subjects open to the scrutiny of the postal censors included subject titles such as “Communications with the Enemy.”⁵⁴ The reasoning for that topic seems clear enough, however, it contained ten subheadings that included such detailed points as “all letters referring to (1) Chess problems (2) Chess magazines,” or, “all letters to persons with other than Spanish names at Vigo or others points in Spain (examine with care),...and transfer of money between Argentina and Sweden.”⁵⁵ On top of this it was reported that the overly zealous censors often interpreted the guidelines differently and went well beyond the limit of the twenty-one official subjects.⁵⁶

The violations of civil liberties and free speech during World War One were extensive and posed a serious threat to many long held democratic traditions in the United States. Efforts to curtail civil liberty came from so many different directions that most Americans failed to realize how close they came to losing their civil liberties altogether. Governmental organizations and private groups emerged who sought to criminalize any expression of dissent that could undermine the war effort or give any possible information to the enemy. The Committee on Public Information (CPI) was our federal government’s first wide scale attempt to create a national propaganda agency.⁵⁷ President Wilson formed the CPI by executive order just one week after his declaration of

⁵³ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 110.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 112.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ James L. Gilbert, *World War I and the Origins of U. S. Military Intelligence* (The Scarecrow Press Inc.: Plymouth U.K. 2012), 79. James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 111.

⁵⁷ Donald Fishmen. “George Creel: Freedom of Speech, the Film Industry, and Censorship During World War I” Free Speech Yearbook Volume 36, 1998-Issue 1, 35.

war on Germany.⁵⁸ Wilson's order simply stated that "I hereby create a committee on Public Information, to be composed of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, and a civilian who shall be charged with the executive direction of the committee. As civilian chairman of the committee I appoint Mr. George Creel."⁵⁹

The CPI was initially tasked with publicizing the Wilson administration's war aims and to censor any news reporting deemed as harmful to the war effort.⁶⁰ According to the CPI's chairman George Creel:

...what was needed, and what was installed, was official machinery for the preparation and release of all news bearing upon America's war effort – not opinion nor conjecture, but facts – a running record of each day's progress in order that fathers and mothers of the United States might gain a certain sense of partnership.⁶¹

The CPI was a vast expansion of the power of the American federal government and it had no direct predecessor in U.S. history.⁶² Additionally, the agency was created by presidential executive order without any congressional authority or approval.⁶³ Over time the CPI's mission grew rapidly and it soon sought to manage the flow of information in the entire nation, "cultivating and censoring the American press at an unprecedented scale."⁶⁴

Possibly even more threatening to American democratic freedoms were private citizens' auxiliary groups such as the American Protective League (APL) that by the

⁵⁸ James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words That Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information 1917-1919* (Princeton University Press: Princeton NJ 1939), 4.

⁵⁹ "Executive Order 2594 of April 14, 1917, Creating Committee on Public Information," accessed 4/15/2019 https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Executive_Order_2594

⁶⁰ Donald Fishmen, *George Creel*, 35.

⁶¹ James L. Gilbert, *Origins of U. S. Military Intelligence*, 105.

⁶² One possible exception would be the Sedition Act of 1798; however, it was repealed in 1801.

⁶³ Donald Fishmen, *George Creel*, 35.

⁶⁴ Mock and Larson, *Words That Won The War*, 47.

war's end had a membership that numbered about 250,000.⁶⁵ The APL's "agents" assisted overstretched federal authorities by keeping an eye on presumed disloyal Americans and immigrants. They happily spied on their neighbors, co-workers, and anyone deemed suspicious. Although government officials claimed that the APL was a "well managed, patriotic organization", the league was in fact an unruly posse that opened private mail, burglarized homes and businesses, committed acts of violent physical assault, and even went so far as to conduct "Slacker Raids" against suspected draft dodgers.⁶⁶ The censorship of the American mails was viewed as fair game by the APL. The "Confidential Constitution" of the league clearly stated that there should be "no mail for propagandists" and it demanded the immediate withdrawal of all postal privileges for any individual found violating the Espionage Act.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the APL believed that actual conviction of a crime was not necessary to censor someone's access to the posts and they charged the Postmaster General to close off mail service to anyone found to have "satisfactory evidence" against him.⁶⁸ As stated in their 'constitution':

When the United States is at war, the Postmaster General may, upon evidence satisfactory to him that any person or concern is using the mails in violation of any of the provisions of this Act, instruct the postmaster at any post office at which mail is received addressed to such person or concern to return to the postmaster at the office at which they were originally mailed all letters or other material so addressed, with the words 'Mail to this address undeliverable under Espionage Act' plainly written or stamped upon the outside thereof and all such letters or other matter so returned to such postmasters shall be by them returned to the senders thereof under such regulations as the Postmaster General may prescribe.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ David M. Kennedy. *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford University Press: New York NY 1980), 82.

⁶⁶ "Slackers" were young men who were suspected of being either draft dodgers or German sympathizers; the term's origin is unclear.

⁶⁷ Emerson Hough. *The Web* (The Reilly & Lee Co. Chicago Ill., 1919) 507.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 508.

The U.S. Post Office went so far as to provide the “agents” of the APL with the return and forwarding addresses of suspect’s incoming mail, advising local postmasters to provide such information to APL members upon request.⁷⁰ Author Bill Miles tells us that the “warrantless break-in and search of a suspect’s vacant room to obtain information was a common practice of APL operatives.”⁷¹ The very fact that the federal government allowed an unofficial group like the APL to exist at all shows the lengths that public officials were willing to go to in order to maintain strict social and media control during the Great War. The extension of this government based censorship into almost every aspect of American life was something never seen before in this nation.

On May 19 1917, President Wilson gave a speech concerning the need to control the nation’s food supply and he asked Congress for “very great powers” in regard to the nation’s food supplies.⁷² The president moved to appoint Mr. Herbert Hoover to undertake the “all important task of food administration.”⁷³ Hoover was given the title of Commissioner of Food Administration,⁷⁴ with the authority to establish crop prices with the aim of guaranteeing that farmers would receive a minimum price high enough to encourage them to plant more new crops while also protecting American consumers from “extortion” by intermediaries seeking unreasonable profits.⁷⁵ President Wilson referred to

⁷⁰ Bill Miles, *The League*, 114-115.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Woodrow Wilson. *In Our First Year of War: Messages and Addresses to the Congress and the People March 5, 1917, to January 8, 1918* (Harper & Brothers Publishers New York NY, 1918) 49.

⁷³ Ibid, 51.

⁷⁴ The future 31st president of the United States, Herbert Hoover at the outbreak of WWI became the head of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, an international relief organization that provided food to occupied Belgium. When the U.S. entered the war Hoover had hoped to join the administration in some capacity, and he obtained the position after lobbying several members of Congress to lead the Food Administration. Hoover became known as the country's "food czar".

⁷⁵ Woodrow Wilson. *In Our First Year of War*, 52.

these unscrupulous merchants as “some small and selfish minority ...unwilling to put the nation’s interest above personal advantage.”⁷⁶

These new measures were to be administered for the most part by volunteers and not require a “permanent bureaucracy” that might resemble a “Prussian autocracy” controlling American food production.⁷⁷ President Wilson stated that it would be “absolutely unnecessary to resort to the rigorous and drastic measures which have proved to be necessary in some European countries.”⁷⁸ Director Hoover was to undertake his task on a voluntary basis, receiving no salary and the force under him was also to be employed as much as possible on a volunteer basis.⁷⁹

This is where the American Proactive League was to enter the picture. One of the first regulations issued by Hoover was aimed at conserving both wheat and meat products to increase the amounts of both products that could be used by the American military.⁸⁰ These goals were to be achieved by using substitute grains in everyday products such as bread.⁸¹ Failure to use the required amount of substitutes in their bread and rolls cost the Atlanta Bread Company a fine of 1,000 dollars that they were then forced to donate to the American Red Cross.⁸²

To increase the supply of available meat, restaurants, as well as clubs and hotels, were ordered to observe a specific number of “meatless days” where all meat dishes were to be removed from the menu. The League was called upon to monitor public compliance

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 53.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 51.

⁸⁰ Bill Mills. *The League: The True Story of Average Americans on the Hunt for WWI Spies* (Skyhorse Publishing New York, NY 2013) 138.

⁸¹ Substitutes included: ground oats, rice flour, corn, barley, and potato flour.

⁸² James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 27.

with these new food regulations, its members checked dining rooms across the nation and reported any club, restaurant, or hotel found to be in violation.⁸³ Other violations that could be cited by the League included serving any wheat product that was not directly ordered by the customer. Additionally, any bread or rolls that were served could not be placed on the table before the meal was served and then only in individual portions of a mandated size.⁸⁴ No sugar bowls were allowed on the tables and sugar could only be served in individual portions. Furthermore, no public eating establishment was permitted to use “more than six pounds of wheat flour per ninety meals served.”⁸⁵ At times, the entire membership of a League’s division (who had little if any legal authority) would descend upon local bakeries, hotels, clubs, and restaurants to search for violations of Hoover’s regulations being committed by private American citizens.

The League would further its censorship powers with the establishment of the United States Fuel Administration in January 16, 1918.⁸⁶ The task of this new organization seems rather obvious, to control the nation’s fuel supply. Once the United States formally entered the Great War, demand for fuel skyrocketed dramatically. The expected coming fuel shortage was compounded by the fact that the winter of 1917-1918 was one of the coldest on record.⁸⁷ The Wilson administration expected coal consumption to rise from 650 million tons in 1917 to 735 million tons in 1918.⁸⁸ This goal could only

⁸³ Bill Mills, *The League*, 138.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 139.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

⁸⁶ *The Home Front Encyclopedia: United States, Britain, and Canada in World Wars I and II* Volume One: World War I edited by James Cimet (ABC-CLIO Inc.: Santa Barbara California 2007) 321.

⁸⁷ Bill Mills, *The League*, 138.

⁸⁸ National Service Handbook. *Issued by The Committee on Public Information* (Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 1917) 52.

be achieved by vastly increased production combined with government mandated public conservation. To curb domestic consumption several major steps were taken.

On each Monday, there was to be no heating in public buildings such as factories, retail stores, offices, saloons, taverns, and theaters.⁸⁹ On Thursdays and Mondays, all external commercial lighting was to be turned off. The Fuel Administration meant business, as J.M. Lieberman of Detroit discovered on the evening of October 28, 1918 when “he had lights burning in his show window in violation of the ‘light-less night’ order. He was instructed to appear before the Fuel Administrator for Detroit and pay the penalty, or the Detroit Edison Company was told to discontinue his lighting service.”⁹⁰

Elevators were limited to use only during certain hours and no automobiles were to be used on Sundays for “pleasure rides.”⁹¹ These new regulations were to be enforced by the American Protective League. Every Monday, members of the league would inspect hundreds of privately owned buildings, taking temperature readings and reporting those they found to be in violation of the new rules. On Thursday and Sunday nights, these same league members would roam the darkened city streets searching for violations of the public lighting rules.⁹² On Sundays, league members monitored the nation’s highways looking for “pleasure riders” who were violating the “gasless Sunday” regulation, as Louis A Koch of Detroit was to discover.⁹³ Mr. Koch and his wife were traveling to Cleveland with another couple on a “tour to Cleveland.” The trip was planned for Saturday morning, however, heavy rain forced a late departure. The group

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 27.

⁹¹ Bill Mills, *The League*, 138.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

reached Toledo by Saturday night and spent the evening there. The next morning Koch set out for Cleveland, but he was spotted by members of the American Protective League at the city of Lorain, Ohio. Koch was stopped by a member of the league who filed a report with the Michigan State Fuel Administrator. Koch was later fined fifteen dollars for driving his car on a gasless Sunday.⁹⁴

Any business or individual who dared to violate the orders of the Food or the Fuel Administration risked having their business closed for a period of one day or possibly the entire war. These new rules were being enforced by an unofficial unelected branch of the U.S. government, the American Protective League. Censorship soon drifted into almost every aspect of daily American life; even the most humble, but very German sounding, *sauerkraut* became “liberty cabbage” for the duration of the war.⁹⁵ *Hamburgers* quickly became “liberty steak,” *kaiser* rolls became “liberty buns,”⁹⁶ and *frankfurters* were renamed “victory sausage.”⁹⁷ Moreover, things were about to get worse.

The American flag soon became a symbol of this new censorship and intolerance during this era of near mass hysteria. President Wilson had used the occasion of Flag Day in 1917 to give a speech intended to whip up national patriotism,⁹⁸ using the stars and stripes as a symbol of our nation’s “unity, our power, our thought and purpose as a nation.”⁹⁹ Wilson’s stated goal was to “prepare hundreds of thousands, it may be

⁹⁴ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 28.

⁹⁵ Susan L. Carruthers. *The Media at War, 2nd Edition* (Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire UK 2011) 64.

⁹⁶ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 80.

⁹⁷ Paul Finkelman. “German Victims and American Oppressors: The Cultural Background and Legacy of *Meyer v. Nebraska*.” *Law and the Great Plains: Essays on the legal History of the Heartland*, ed. John R. Wunder (Greenwood Publishers Westport, Conn., 1996) 39.

⁹⁸ Flag Day is celebrated on June 14. It commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States on June 14, 1777 by resolution of the Second Continental Congress. It was established by proclamation by President Wilson in 1916.

⁹⁹ Woodrow Wilson. *In Our First year of War*, 64.

millions, of men...to go forth and die beneath it [the flag] on fields of blood faraway.”¹⁰⁰

The president was attempting to use this speech to explain why American action had been needed and he clearly laid the blame squarely at the feet of the German Government:

The extraordinary insults and aggressions of the Imperial German Government left us no self-respecting choice but to take up arms in defense of our rights as a free people and of our honor as a sovereign Government. The military masters of Germany denied us the right to be neutral. They filled our unsuspecting communities with vicious spies and conspirators and sought to corrupt the opinion of our own people in their own behalf. When they found that they could not do that, their agents diligently spread sedition among us and sought to draw our own citizens from their allegiance...And many of our own people were corrupted. Men began to look upon their own neighbors with suspicion and to wonder, in their hot resentment and surprise, whether there was any community in which hostile intrigue did not lurk.¹⁰¹

Wilson goes on to blame Germany for spreading sedition in America and for corrupting many otherwise innocent citizens. The results of Wilson’s speech were catastrophic for many American citizens. The very day after his speech, a mob of almost two thousand people swarmed the streets of Aurora, Indiana and forced the homes and business of pro-German sympathizers to display American flags.¹⁰² Police officials claimed that they were powerless to stop the mob as they marched from home to home dragging men out of the beds forcing them to place flags on their homes and to then stand there at attention and salute.¹⁰³ Homes of alleged pro-Germans were further searched for German flags, however, it was later reported that none were found.¹⁰⁴ The German tricolor was to be totally censored from public view.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 65.

¹⁰¹ Ibid 65-66.

¹⁰² James R. Mock. *Censorship 1917*, 35.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Encouragement from the president had allowed the average American citizen to become publicly intolerant. Any perceived lack of respect and love for the American flag would not be tolerated and any hint of dissent was to be censored out of public view. In a Pittsburgh theatre a man refused to stand during the national anthem, he was arrested, thrown in jail, and charged with disorderly conduct.¹⁰⁵ In Montana, a man described the flag as nothing more than a piece of cotton and stated that he would not kiss it as it might be covered in germs, he too was arrested, fined five hundred dollars and given a prison sentence.¹⁰⁶

Paranoia, reminiscent of the Red Scare of the 1950's and fueled by government propaganda, spread across the land. The following year a mob in the town of Staunton, Illinois was aroused into a state of fury on the occasion of Presidents Lincoln's birthday.¹⁰⁷ Citizens of the town rushed into the homes of suspected pro-Germans, dragged them from their beds, and forced them to kiss the American flag.¹⁰⁸ The town police force did nothing to stop the mob and allowed German-Americans who could play musical instruments to be forced to play "The Star-Spangled Banner" as their homes were ransacked by neighbors who were again searching for German flags.¹⁰⁹ None were found.¹¹⁰ In West Dover, Ohio a German-American farmer was accused of having torn

¹⁰⁵ Robert Ferrell. *Wilson & World War I*, 204.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Lincoln's Birthday is a legal, public holiday in some U.S. states, observed on the anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth on February 12.

¹⁰⁸ James R. Mock. *Censorship 1917*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

down an American flag from his home, a mob of neighbors forced him to kiss said flag¹¹¹ and purchase \$2,500 worth of war bonds.¹¹²

The high point of this flag induced vigilantism came on the night of April 4th 1918 when an angry, alcohol induced mob wrapped Robert Prager in an American flag and lynched him from a hackberry tree near the town of Collinsville Illinois.¹¹³ Prager was a German immigrant who had dutifully registered for the American draft in June 1917 and even attempted to enlist in the U.S. Navy.¹¹⁴ Rumors had spread around Collinsville that Prager was a German spy and that he had hidden large quantities of gunpowder in the local mine where he was employed and that numerous “incriminating” maps had been discovered in his home.¹¹⁵ On the evening of April fourth, a mob began to collect at a local saloon on the outskirts of the town. After several hours at the bar, the mob descended on Collinsville and at about 10 pm they circled the town hall where Prager had been taken for his own safety.¹¹⁶ The mayor of Collingswood, John H. Siegel, pleaded with the crowd to give Prager a fair trial, but he was ignored and the mob stormed the building finding Prager hiding in the basement.¹¹⁷ Prager was dragged barefoot from the town hall with an American flag draped around his body.¹¹⁸ Marched to the edge of town, Prager was hanged outside the city limits.¹¹⁹

¹¹¹ Robert Ferrell. *Wilson & World War I*, 204.

¹¹² \$2,500 dollars in 1918 is in 2020 dollars \$42,734.27, quite a hefty amount of war bonds. <https://dollartimes.com>inflation>year+1918> accessed 4-19-2020.

¹¹³ Christopher Capozzola. *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (Oxford University Press: New York 2008) 117.

¹¹⁴ “Investigation Waits on Inquest Monday” *The New York Times*, April 6, 1918.15.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ James R. Mock. *Censorship 1917*, 36.

¹¹⁷ Donald R. Hickey “The Prager Affair: A Study in Wartime Hysteria” *Journal of Illinois State Historical Society* Vol.62, No.2 (summer, 1969), 120.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 119.

¹¹⁹ “Investigation Waits on Inquest Monday” *The New York Times*, 15.

Eleven men were arrested for the crime and put on trial. In a total mockery of American justice they were all found innocent after just fifteen minutes of deliberation by the jury.¹²⁰ The jury claimed that as Prager had been murdered in a dark place, it was impossible to determine the identity of the mob members beyond a reasonable doubt.¹²¹ In his quest to rally the nation around his war effort, President Wilson had unleashed an unprecedented wave of xenophobia masked in the red, white, and blue of the American flag.

Soon anything German was viewed as part of the enemy's war effort and in need of censoring out of American life and culture. In 1917, a particular despicable act occurred in Columbus, Ohio when a vigilante group organized in the Germantown section of the city conducted the slaughter of "German canine breeds,"¹²² that were forcibly taken from their owners and killed.¹²³ A large number of dachshunds were killed and their bodies were thrown into a pit to celebrate the renaming of Schiller Park to Washington Park.¹²⁴



The card game of pinochle, which had been brought to America by German immigrants in the late 19th century,¹²⁵ was renamed the game of "Liberty" and was even

¹²⁰ Donald R. Hickey "The Prager Affair", 132.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² The breeds included German Shepherds and Dachshunds (which were quickly renamed "Alsations" and "Liberty Pups".)

¹²³ Christopher Capozzola. *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 185.

¹²⁴ Joe Blundo. "New book looks back at 150 years of Schiller Park" *The Columbus Dispatch*, December 19, 2017, <https://www.dispatch.com/entertainmentlife/20171219/joe-blundo-new-book-looks-back-at-150-years-of-schiller-park>.

¹²⁵ Robert Ferrell, *Woodrow Wilson & World War I 1917-1921* (Harper & Row Publishers: New York NY, 1985) 205.

outlawed in the city of Syracuse, New York.¹²⁶ The American stamp collecting community began “advocating that American philately decline forever to have anything to do with the stamps emanating from enemy sources.”¹²⁷ Patriotic collectors were urged to refuse to recognize all stamps issued by the Central Powers.¹²⁸ In fact any word with a German origin was hunted down and censored out of American life, even the German measles were renamed “liberty measles” in a bizarre attempt to Americanize them.¹²⁹

While most Americans today are aware of the internment of Japanese-American citizens during World War II, far fewer are aware of the internment of Germans and German-Americans during the Great War. Even before President Wilson’s declaration of war, the Federal Bureau of Investigation had begun to keep a watch on German nationals and German-Americans that they thought might be a danger to the nation in wartime. By March 1917, one thousand three hundred individuals were under surveillance and the bureau had compiled a list of ninety-eight names of those it wanted locked up on the first day of the war.¹³⁰

German nationals working in the port cities of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and on the Panama Canal, were quickly seized and placed under American “custody” not as prisoners of war but as “enemy aliens.”¹³¹ However, the federal

¹²⁶ Hart Cluett Museum “Gruss Gott”: *The Twentieth Century*, accessed 04/12/2020
<https://www.hartcluett.org/history-lessons/gr-gott-twentieth-century?rq=gott>

¹²⁷ Kevin Lowther. “For the World of Philately WWI was a shot in the Arm” *Kelleher’s Stamp Collector’s Quarterly*, 3rd Quarter 2020 Vol. Six, No. 3.40.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Frederick C. Luebke. *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb Ill., 1974) 248.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 186.

¹³¹ Richard Winter. “Hot Springs, North Carolina-A World War I Internment Camp” *NCPHS Postal Historian* Vol.27. No.1 (Winter 2008) 6.

authorities soon faced a problem as the number of internees quickly grew to over 3,600,¹³² far too many to be housed on Ellis Island as had been the original plan.¹³³

The Committee for the Internment of Alien Enemies was formed and quickly drew up plans for the mass internment of these and other German enemy aliens.¹³⁴ Former United States Attorney General George Wickersham oversaw the development of the plan and the committee as a whole issued a statement indicating that the internment would be for the Germans' own good, to safeguard them from attacks by the citizens of the nation.¹³⁵ This action may have actually been justified as stories had spread across the nation that the German Foreign Secretary, Gottlieb von Jagow, had stated that "If there is war between Germany and the U.S., you will find there are 500,000 German reservists ready to take up arms for [the] mother country and you will have civil war."¹³⁶ The plans drawn up by the committee were elaborate and detailed "going so far as to count out the total requisition of silverware an internment policy would require and to prescribe a bed time for potential internees."¹³⁷

The War Department initially objected to the plan, feeling that scarce resources would be better spent on the Western Front. However, having already seized the German naval crews and dock workers, the department realized that they would have deal with them. The German internees were assigned to one of four locations: Fort Douglas (Utah), Forts Oglethorpe and McPherson (Georgia), and the town of Hot Springs in North Carolina.¹³⁸

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ellis Island had room to house up to 1,200 detainees.

¹³⁴ Christopher Capozzola. *Uncle Sam Wants You*. 186.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 79.

¹³⁷ Christopher Capozzola. *Uncle Sam Wants You*. 186.

¹³⁸ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 122.

Internment was no vacation for the internees, however, the conditions were deemed excellent by the Swiss Legation who inspected them in the fall of 1917.¹³⁹ The internees were allowed very little contact with the outside world and were forced to perform labor either in agriculture or working on road gangs. This labor was legally permitted according to the Hague Convention of 1907 to which the United States was a signatory and Secretary of Agriculture William B. Wilson clearly intended for the internees to earn their own keep:

Under the Hague treaty this government is empowered to work the interned men, or to farm them out to individuals or corporations. When worked by the government they will receive the pays of soldiers, and when farmed out will be remunerated at prevailing wage rates. After making deductions for their maintenance, the interned men will be given at the time of their discharge by the government whatever sums they shall have earned. The men in the camp in North Carolina will be used to cultivate the tract, and will be farmed out for lumbering and road building. In view of the necessity for guards these two latter occupations appear to be the only ones in which they can be conveniently worked by private capital. Arrangements have been made already with the department of agriculture for the employment of a number of men at road building on the Vanderbilt tract that adjoins the camp which has been taken over by that department as a forest preserve.¹⁴⁰

Of the four internment camps that were established, the story of the Hot Springs camp shows an interesting mixture of forced internment and rigorous censorship combined with a strikingly tolerant treatment of the German detainees. Hot Springs, North Carolina is located twenty six miles north-northwest of the city of Asheville, and the town itself was founded in 1831 due to its potential for tourism.¹⁴¹ A large hotel, the Mountain Park, was constructed and it contained two hundred guest rooms, a bath house, an eighteen-hole golf course and other amenities.¹⁴² However, by 1917 the hotel had

¹³⁹ Christopher Capozzola. *Uncle Sam Wants You*. 187.

¹⁴⁰ Richard Winter. "Hot Springs, North Carolina", 6.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 4.

¹⁴² *Ibid*.

fallen into disrepair as fewer and fewer people traveled to Hot Springs to “take the waters.” The hotel and grounds were eagerly leased to the federal government in hopes that the internment camp would bring about an economic revival.

The hotel grounds were quickly filled with “one story barracks, a mess hall, cook houses, bath houses, and a lavatory building.”¹⁴³ By June 1918, 2,314 German internees were transferred to Hot Springs from temporary internment stations across the country.¹⁴⁴ The majority of these internees were officers and crew taken from the ninety-one German flagged vessels interned in America’s harbors.¹⁴⁵ Not all of the detainees had come from American ports and among the foreign detainees were the thirty-five members of the German Imperial Band who had been seized by the Japanese at the German colony of Tsingtao in China.¹⁴⁶ Richard Winter, in his article “Hot Springs, North Carolina A World War I Internment Camp”, points out that the hostage band turned out to be a great benefit to the local townspeople. Each week the band gave free concerts for the other detainees and for the locals who the authorities permitted to listen from nearby.¹⁴⁷

The new camp did indeed bring economic prosperity to the town as one hundred civilian guards were employed along with additional messengers, motor mechanics, clerks, and various construction personnel.¹⁴⁸ Camp supplies were bought locally which further improved local economic conditions. Twenty seven wives of the German detainees along with nineteen children were allowed to move into the town so that they

¹⁴³ Jacqueline Burgin Painter. *The German Invasion of Western North Carolina, A Picture History* (The Overmountain Press: Johnson City Tennessee, 1992) 24.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 109.

¹⁴⁵ Richard Winter. “Hot Springs, North Carolina”, 6.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 7.

¹⁴⁷ Garrett Peck., *The Great War in America*, 121

¹⁴⁸ Richard Winter. “Hot Springs, North Carolina”, 7

might be near their husbands and fathers; these new families were quickly absorbed into the local community with the children even permitted to enroll in the local school.¹⁴⁹

It was, however, still an internment camp, access to the internees was strictly limited and all communications and mail were censored. Article sixteen of the Hague Convention of 1907 states that “Letters, money orders, and valuables, as well as parcels by post, intended for prisoners of war, or dispatched by them, shall be exempt from all postal duties in the countries of origin and destination, as well as countries they pass through.”¹⁵⁰ While the convention is silent about civilian internees, the same privileges were applied by the American government to the detainees at Hot Springs.¹⁵¹

Censored mail leaving the camp was stamped in two ways, first in the space where the postage stamp should be there is only a hand stamp that reads “Internment Camp” and these letters were allowed to pass with no U.S. postage. Additionally, a second stamp was applied that stated “Officially Censored, U.S. Department of Justice, Hot Springs N.C.” showing that the letter had been censored for any information that may have been deemed useful to the German authorities.¹⁵² Postcards were treated the same way as were pre-printed cards supplied by the Y.M.C.A which left a blank place for the



¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 8.

¹⁵² Ibid, 8.

name of the internee, his barrack number, the date, and the name of his internment camp.¹⁵³

President Wilson would go even further in November 1917 when he issued an executive order that demanded that all German aliens living within the United States register with the federal government.¹⁵⁴ Resident aliens were forbidden to, among other things, travel without permission, live in Washington D. C. or the Panama Canal Zone, or be within one hundred yards of any American port or railroad.¹⁵⁵

American cartoonists were now called upon to support government censorship efforts by producing the right kind of cartoons. The Committee on Public Information enlisted the effort of leading American cartoonists to “promote patriotism and de-humanize the enemy,” who in most cases was portrayed as a “Teutonic brute” quite often in the personality of the Kaiser himself.¹⁵⁶ Most American cartoonists eagerly accepted the chance to lampoon “the big, coarse German, who howled to heaven that the little fellow whom he was beating [i.e. the Belgians]¹⁵⁷ had stung him with a pebble from a sling-shot.”¹⁵⁸ Most American cartoonists saw the nation’s entry into the war as a great opportunity to do their bit for the war effort, but woe to any cartoonist who would dare not follow along and step in line with the war effort. They risked imprisonment under the provisions of the Espionage Act of 1917. Two leading cartoonists¹⁵⁹ for the New York newspaper called *The Masses* were to feel this wrath when they were indicted for

¹⁵³ Ibid.9.

¹⁵⁴ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 123.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Harold D. Lasswell. *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (Peter Smith, New York NY 1938) 198.

¹⁵⁷ Lasswell is referring to German complaints during World War One that they were being “Harassed” by Belgium snippers in the parts of Belgium occupied by Germany.

¹⁵⁸ Harold D. Lasswell. *Propaganda Technique*, 198.

¹⁵⁹ The Cartoonists were Arthur Henry “Art” Young & Henry J. Glintenkamp

“conspiring to obstruct conscription.”¹⁶⁰ The cartoon, which showed a skeleton sizing up a doughboy for a new coffin, was deemed as being detrimental to the war effort and of needing to be censored as free speech that did not also support the war effort was not to be tolerated. A further example of this sort of censorship came from a citizen in New Jersey who sent a letter to George Creel complaining about streetcar advertising which he believed to be harmful to the morale of the doughboys embarking from the Port of Hoboken. The advertisement was by the famous Dutch cartoonist Louis Raemakers and was titled “Gassed.” Raemakers’ attempt was to show the



horrors of German gas attacks on the Western Front, however, critics believed that the total helplessness of both the doctor and the nurse, plus the utter agony of the wounded soldiers, could affect the morale of young Americans about to embark for Europe.¹⁶¹ The writer went on to demand that the “better side of war” should be shown; suggesting perhaps an “illustration showing one of our boys trying to converse with a French lass thru [*sic*] the aid of a dictionary.”¹⁶² The realities of war were to be censored out of the sight and the minds of the American people.



The Committee for Public Information quickly realized the impact that cartoonists could have in shaping public opinion and support for the war effort. George Creel stated

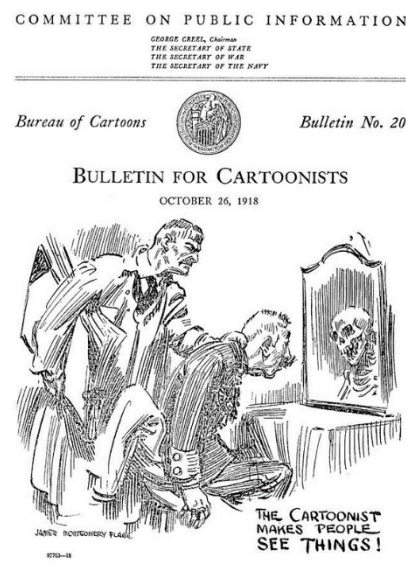
¹⁶⁰ Kevin Lowther. “For the World’s Cartoonists, World War I Could Very Much Have Been A Laughing Matter” *Kelleher’s Stamp Collector’s Quarterly* 4th Quarter 2019 Vol. Five No. 4 Whole No.20 (2019):33.

¹⁶¹ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 97.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

bluntly that “the value of a unified cartoon power, which will result in centering the minds of every community on the same subject is inestimable.”¹⁶³ The committee believed that American cartoonists could excite patriotism while also exposing the injustices committed by the German government. To get this message out the C.P.I. created the Bureau of Cartoons in December 1917 and its director, George Hecht, soon began to publish a newsletter called the *Bulletin for Cartoonists*.¹⁶⁴ The bulletin was intended to direct cartoonists’ attentions to subjects that the government deemed important. Hecht claimed that he and his committee were attempting to “convert public emotion into constructive patriotic action” and he believed that the cartoonists could be “powerful molders of public opinion.”¹⁶⁵

The Bulletin was mailed out to over 750 cartoonists across the country in the period between June and November 1918.¹⁶⁶ To entice cooperation and reward those cartoonists who self-censored their work to only topics deemed appropriate by the committee, cartoons selected by the bureau were syndicated and sent out across the nation.¹⁶⁷ This would be a powerful incentive at a time when most cartoonists saw their creations appear only in the local papers for which they were employed. Most cartoonists fully cooperated with the government’s attempts at



¹⁶³ Stephen L. Vaughn. *Holding Fast The Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information* (The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1980) 201.

¹⁶⁴ George J. Hecht. *The War in Cartoons: A History of the War in 100 Cartoons by 27 of the most prominent American Cartoonists* (E.P. Dutton & Company: New York, 1919) 1.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 3-5.

¹⁶⁶ Stephen L. Vaughn. *Holding Fast The Inner Lines*, 201.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

ensorship seeing it as their patriotic duty. This self-censorship meant that very little material was produced that could undermine the nation's war effort. The American cartoonists ruthlessly mocked the Germans, making them into the murderous *Huns* and monsters that fed on the children of Belgium. Cartoonist James Montgomery Flagg produced a cartoon showing a cartoonist forcing the German Kaiser to look into a mirror where his reflection was a human skeleton.¹⁶⁸ The caption proudly proclaims that the “cartoonists make people see things” and in this case it is the German leader's inevitable defeat.¹⁶⁹

Soon other government agencies began to request custom produced cartoons to further their own war aims. The Department of Labor realized that cartoons appealed to the average American factory worker whose reading skills may not have been above a grade school level. The department requested that the cartoonists produce cartoons that discouraged labor strikes and that would “equate the striking worker with the army deserter.”¹⁷⁰ In an eerie foreshadowing of both Roosevelt's New Deal and the Corporatist Movement of Mussolini, one of the *Bulletins for Cartoonists* called for a “new era of partnership among employees, employers, and the government.”¹⁷¹

The Bureau of Internal Revenue even went a step further requesting that the cartoonists create cartoons that would equate tax evaders with slackers (draft dodgers.)¹⁷² The bureau stated that they hoped the cartoons would “let our fellow citizens know that the man who reports his neighbor who fails to file an income tax statement is a real

¹⁶⁸ James Montgomery Flagg. “The Cartoonist makes People see Things.” Cartoon. From George J. Hecht. *The War in Cartoons: A History of the War in 100 Cartoons by 27 of the most prominent American Cartoonists* (E.P. Dutton & Company: New York, 1919) 2.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Stephen L. Vaughn. *Holding Fast The Inner Lines*, 202.

¹⁷¹ George J. Hecht. *The War in Cartoons*, 6.

¹⁷² Stephen L. Vaughn. *Holding Fast The Inner Lines*, 202.

patriot.”¹⁷³ The Department of Justice requested cartoons that would encourage Americans to spy on their neighbors and report anyone found to be spreading German propaganda.¹⁷⁴ Clearly the cartoons of the First World War were a far cry from the Mickey Mouse and Peanuts cartoons of later generations.

Deemed by the American government to be a far greater threat than cartoons were American magazines that did not “toe the line” and freely adopt the self-censorship rules that the Wilson Administration hoped would prevent the need for the outright censorship of a free press. Most socialist and left-leaning publications would come under the scrutiny of both the federal government and the Committee for Public Information during the war. Publications such as *The Blast*, a semi-monthly anarchist periodical published in San Francisco, which demanded American neutrality in the war and urged its readers to “Prepare not by making instruments to kill, but by refusing to make them. Build no battleship, make neither gun nor bayonet; let the grass grow over the fortress, and let the General go to work.”¹⁷⁵ Although President Wilson had previously declared that he was against the outright censorship of a free press, he did very little to stand up to the excesses of the C.I.P. and Postmaster General Albert Burleson as they clamped down on all dissent.¹⁷⁶

Many magazines found themselves under government inspection and perhaps none was targeted more than the New York City based *The Masses*. *The Masses* was a socialist political magazine that had begun publication in 1911.¹⁷⁷ Strongly in favor of

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 203.

¹⁷⁵ R. E. Bell. “Preparedness” *The Blast: Revolutionary Weekly*, Vol. 1 No.1, January 15, 1916. 5.

¹⁷⁶ Robert Ferrell, *Wilson & WWI*, 208.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas A. Maik. *The Masses Magazine (1911-1917): Odyssey of an Era*. (Garland Publishing Inc., New York NY 1994) 1.

American neutrality before the declaration of war, *The Masses* continued its firm opposition to the war and even went so far as to encourage young men to take “an anti-enlistment pledge.”¹⁷⁸ The Wilson Administration and the C.P.I., led by George Creel, took the opportunity to attempt to silence this then well-known magazine. On July 5 1917, the postmaster of New York City informed *The Masses* that he found the magazine’s August issue to be un-mail-able as it violated sections of the new Espionage Act.¹⁷⁹ In an era where mail was the only economical way to transport magazines in large quantities, this act was paramount to a death sentence for any publication.

The editors of *The Masses* quickly challenged the decision in court. The attorneys for the U.S. Post Office charged that *The Masses* had published items in their August issue that promoted “treason, insurrection, or forcible resistance to the laws of the United States.”¹⁸⁰ In specific they named four cartoons,¹⁸¹ four full length articles, and three editorials that they claimed directly violated the Espionage Act.¹⁸² One of the articles entitled *Conscientious Objectors* simply published a series of letters written by Englishmen who had been imprisoned as conscientious objectors in the United Kingdom. At the end of the introduction the writer of the article stated that:



there are some laws which the individual feels that they cannot obey, and which he will suffer any punishment, even death, rather than recognize as having authority over him...we recommend to all who intend to stick it out

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 195.

¹⁷⁹ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 149.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas A. Maik. *The Masses Magazine*, 195.

¹⁸¹ “Fattened by the Horrors of War” Cartoon published in the July 1915 edition of *The Masses*, one of the images that angered the American government

¹⁸² Ibid.

to the end, a through reading of the cases which follow, so that they may be prepared for what is at least rather likely to happen to them.¹⁸³

The United States Post Office attorneys held that the article commended the actions of British conscientious objectors and therefore encouraged the actions of Americans who felt similarly.¹⁸⁴ Additionally, the magazine openly mocks what it sees as the capitalist profit motives of “Woodrow Wilson’s and Wall Street’s war”¹⁸⁵ in a small blurb at the bottom of page thirty which simply states ¹⁸⁶ “Patriotic bargain hunters will be interested to know that at Barton & Reed, 5th Avenue jewelers, small American Flags of diamonds, rubies, and Sapphires may be had at the nominal price of twelve hundred dollars.”¹⁸⁷

For their part the lawyers for *The Masses* argued that the writers and artists of the magazine were only voicing their personal critiques and that the Espionage Act did not prohibit discussion or criticism of American government policies.¹⁸⁸ In what would turn out to be a landmark decision,¹⁸⁹ Federal District Judge Learned Hand ruled in favor of *The Masses* stating that :

Its cartoons and editorials ‘fall within the score of that right to criticize, either by temperate reasoning or by immoderate and indecent invective, which is normally the privilege of the individual in countries dependent upon the free expression of opinion as the ultimate source of authority. The expression of such opinion may militate against the success of the war, but Congress has not seen fit to exclude it from the mails, and only Congress has the power to do so.’ The pictures and text may tend to promote disaffection with the war, but they cannot be thought to counsel insubordination in the military or naval forces ‘without a violation of their meaning quite beyond any tolerance of understanding.’ The conscription cartoon may ‘breed such animosity toward the draft as to promote resistance and strengthen the determination of those disposed to be recalcitrant,’ but it does not tell people that it is their duty or to

¹⁸³ “Conscientious Objectors,” *The Masses*, Vol. 9 Number 11 August 1917, 29.

¹⁸⁴ Thomas A. Maik. *The Masses Magazine*, 196.

¹⁸⁵ Robert Ferrell, *Wilson & WWI*, 208.

¹⁸⁶ \$1,200 dollars in 1918 is in 2020 dollars \$20,557.19, quite a bobble.
<https://dollartimes.com>inflation>year+1918> accessed 3-14-2020.

¹⁸⁷ “Advisement,” *The Masses*, Vol. 9 Number 11 August 1917, 30.

¹⁸⁸ Thomas A. Maik. *The Masses Magazine*, 196.

¹⁸⁹ *Masses Pub. Co. v. Patten*, Postmaster 244F.535 (Southern Dist. NY.1917).

their interest to resist the law. The text expressed ‘high admiration for those who have held and are holding out from their convictions even to the extent of resting the law.’ But the expression of such admiration is not a violation of the Espionage Act.¹⁹⁰

The victory for *The Masses* would be short lived when only seven days later a United States circuit court judge ordered a stay of the execution of Judge Hand’s revolutionary decision.¹⁹¹ The attorneys for *The Masses* appealed the stay of execution, however, by the time the stay and the appeal could be heard it was simply too late to mail out the August edition of the magazine.¹⁹² The federal government and its C.P.I allies had won and now went for the jugular. On August fourteenth the United States Post Office proposed removing *The Masses*’ second class mailing privileges based upon the fact that since it had missed its August mailing that it was now to be classified as an “irregular publication” and therefore not entitled to second Class mailing privileges.¹⁹³

Stripped of its mailing privileges, *The Masses* could only be sold on local news stands and, faced with plummeting sales, the magazine ceased publication in December 1917.¹⁹⁴ The Espionage Act had given important economic powers to the Postmaster General of the United States and the act’s rules of procedure for the exclusion of “illegal publications” from the U.S. mails would be used extensively as a weapon to silence any dissent and to censor the written word.¹⁹⁵ By the end of the war, over four hundred different issues of American magazines were denied mailing privileges for their failure to self-censor information or opinions that the Wilson Administration found offensive.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁰ Thomas A. Maik. *The Masses Magazine*, 196-197.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 197.

¹⁹² It would not be until January 1919 that the charges against *The Masses* would be formally dropped, too late to save the magazine, James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 149.

¹⁹³ Thomas A. Maik. *The Masses Magazine*, 198.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 148.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

This is in spite of the fact that in April 1917 President Wilson had stated that he could not “imagine no greater disservice to the country than to establish a system of censorship that would deny the people their indisputable right to criticize their own public officials.”¹⁹⁷

However, President Wilson clearly believed that this right had its limits from the start, as he also stated that “there is such a thing as the indecent exposure of public opinion in public.”¹⁹⁸ The federal government and the U. S. Post Office would continue to censor American magazines until February 1919, a full three months after the war was won.¹⁹⁹

Of the twenty-one subcommittees created by George Creel and the C.P.I. one of the lesser known and rather more surprising ones was the Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation (D.C.E.C.),²⁰⁰ whose membership was made up almost exclusively of college historians. Creel hoped that this subcommittee would “straddle the chasm which separated propaganda from professional history.”²⁰¹ This organization of historians would come to be called the National Board for Historic Service and its leader was Professor James T. Shotwell²⁰² from Columbia University.²⁰³ Professor Shotwell had long urged for American entry into the Great War, and once war was declared he organized a conference in Washington D. C. on April 28, 1917, “respecting what History men can do for their country now.”²⁰⁴ The fifteen historians who gathered agreed that “they should cease being mere chroniclers of the past and should dare to use their talent

¹⁹⁷ Christopher Capozzola. *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 159.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 152.

²⁰⁰ George Creel, *Complete report of the chairman*, 29.

²⁰¹ George Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront*, 22.

²⁰² James Thomson Shotwell was a Canadian-born American history professor. He played an instrumental role in the creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1919, and is also credited for his influence in promoting inclusion of a declaration of human rights in the United Nations Charter.

²⁰³ Stephen L. Vaughn. *Holding Fast The Inner Lines*, 22.

²⁰⁴ George Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront*, 16.

and training for ‘Prophecy and actual guidance’.”²⁰⁵ Shotwell was elected chair and the new board circulated a letter on May 1, 1917 proclaiming its existence, its voluntary and unofficial status, and that it hoped to use the combined talent of the nation’s historians for mass education through pamphleteering, speaking tours, and revising college curricula.²⁰⁶ For his part, George Creel believed that the historians could reach people through their minds rather than through their emotions (something that the C.P.I. had already proven to be very capable of doing.) He believed that the historians could work on a “higher plain” than the other committees of the C.P.I. His new D.C.E.C. subcommittee needed a leader and Creel soon selected Guy Stanton Ford, a professor of history and the dean of the University of Minnesota graduate school.²⁰⁷ Creel boldly stated that: “this was a fight for the mind of mankind” and that what he needed was a:

“University man, the practiced historian, the writer skilled in investigation, one who knew America and Europe equally well. It was at this moment that there came into my hands a pamphlet containing a patriotic address given out in Minnesota by one G.S.F. I have rarely read anything that made a more instant impression, for it had beauty without sacrifice of force, simplicity, remarkable sequence, and obvious knowledge.”²⁰⁸

Shotwell urged Ford to accept the position, which he did. Ford encouraged the historians to work on projects from their home campuses. Ford believed that his group of historians could not only mobilize support for the war but also educate by informing the citizens of America of democracy’s advantages and possible weaknesses.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 17.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 21.

²⁰⁷ Stephen L. Vaughn. *Holding Fast The Inner Lines*, 40.

²⁰⁸ George Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 100-101.

²⁰⁹ Stephen L. Vaughn. *Holding Fast The Inner Lines*, 52.

The stated purpose of the newly formed National Security League (N.S.L.) was to emphasize the necessity of a “sound, well administered system of public education as a basis for democracy,” and to bring about a “closer union of the educational forces of the country with reference to the fundamental problems of popular government.”²¹⁰ While Creel called for “expression not suppression” when dealing with the censorship of history, the historians themselves would use both methods to achieve the results they desired.²¹¹ The members of the N.S.L. sought to censor, or at least suppress, ideas that they deemed as dangerous to America’s national security while at the same time promote materials that they deemed as proper and worthy of their crusade for “Democracy and Americanism.”²¹² Several of the historians connected to the C.P.I were interested in rewriting American history in a way that would stress the historical bonds between the United States, Great Britain, and France. They sought especially to censor out the long standing hostility between the United States and Britain as a way of solidifying our newfound alliance with our traditional enemy. Historians such as Frederick Jackson Turner,²¹³ urged that a new emphasis to be placed on the “new economic, social, and political conditions in England,” which made the country very similar to the United States.²¹⁴ A far cry from the traditional view of Britain as an overzealous imperialist power, and our main adversary, ruled by “mad” King George III and his descendants.

²¹⁰ Arthur L. Frothingham, appendix to *Handbook of War Facts and Peace Problems* (National Security League, New York NY, 1919) v.

²¹¹ George Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront*, 84.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Frederick Jackson Turner was an American historian during the early 20th century, based at the University of Wisconsin until 1910, and then at Harvard. He was known primarily for his “Frontier Thesis.” He trained many PhDs who became well-known historians. He is also known for his theories of geographical sectionalism.

²¹⁴ Stephen L. Vaughn. *Holding Fast The Inner Lines*, 91.

Britain and France were to now be seen as our democratic cousins and Germany as an undemocratic imperialist threat.

To ensure that properly censored information reached the student population of the United States, the National School Service was established and it produced a twice monthly, sixteen page paper that was sent out to “every one of the 520,000 teachers” in the nation.”²¹⁵ Creel praised the paper stating that it “was one of the most remarkable features of the war, for it gave to the schools the needs and messages of Government in concise and usable form” while praising Guy Stanton Ford for his devotion and achievements.²¹⁶

Voices of dissent would not be tolerated by the N.S.L. and any professor who would not “toe the line” one hundred percent was suspected of disloyalty to flag and country. The chair of the political science department at the University of Minnesota, Professor William A. Schaper had openly opposed American entrance into the war before April 1917.²¹⁷ Schaper had been born to German immigrant parents and this placed a target on his back the day the American Congress declared war on Germany.²¹⁸ Schaper was investigated by a hastily formed local *ad hoc* group of censors named the Minnesota Safety Commission.²¹⁹ The committee requested that Schaper be dismissed from the university, a request that was quickly granted by the university’s board of regents on September 13, 1917.²²⁰ The board never bothered to formally charge Schaper for his

²¹⁵ George Creel, *Complete report of the chairman*, 29.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ William E. Matsen. “Professor William S. Schaper, War Hysteria and the Price of Academic Freedom” *Minnesota Historical Society*, winter 1988. 131.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*132.

²¹⁹ George Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront*, 84.

²²⁰ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 33.

alleged disloyalty.²²¹ Schaper demanded a letter that would put the charges against him in writing, he simply received a telegram notifying him of his dismissal.²²²

The author George Blakey described the Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation “the least spectacular of the subcommittees of the C.P.I.”²²³ and in the end only a minority of the nation’s historians joined the ranks of C.P.I. and the N.S.L.²²⁴ There was great disenchantment among the majority of historians who were aghast at the very thought of combining censorship, propaganda, and historians.²²⁵

However, one major crusade carried out by the National Security League with assistance from the D.C.E.C. did achieve much success at censoring that terrifying scourge of Teutonic oppression, the German language. Prior to the start of the war, hundreds of colleges, universities, and public schools offered classes in German language and culture.²²⁶ The N.S.L. believed that “the use of the German language in America was tantamount to giving aid and comfort to the enemy.”²²⁷ The members of the N.S.L. further believed that the German language was a “harboring place for German propaganda and dangerous to American unity.”²²⁸ Many schools and colleges readily complied and by July 1918, twenty-five states had dropped the German language from their education programs.²²⁹

²²¹ William E. Matsen, *Minnesota Historical Society*, 133.

²²² In 1938, Schaper would be reinstated by the board of regents by a resolution drafted by Guy Stanton Ford. The board admitted to charging him falsely and reinstated him as a professor emeritus and paid him \$5,000, his salary for the 1917-18 academic year.

²²³ George Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront*, 22.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

²²⁶ Frederick Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 251.

²²⁷ George Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront*, 84.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ “Aim To Make America A Land Of One Tongue,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1918. 7.

Censorship committees were established in the states of California, Connecticut, and Minnesota and charged with the task of “ferreting” out German propaganda in the textbooks of their states.²³⁰ The state of South Dakota prohibited the use of the German language by groups of three or more people and totally banned its use over the telephone.²³¹ Soon local committees went even further, the town of Menard, Texas prohibited the use of the German language in both public and private settings, as long as the war continued.²³²

Guy Stanton Ford believed that the teaching of English instead of German would change the thinking of German-Americans and create a revolution in their thinking that would allow them to “embrace the democratic ideals of the United States, “whereas the German language was “being used as a way of Prussianizing the United States.”²³³ For his part, President Wilson stated that censoring the German language from America’s schools was “childish”, however, the purge continued.²³⁴ By the summer of 1918, dozens of states, counties, cities, and villages had censored the use of the German language in their schools, colleges, and even in public.²³⁵ In fact, by 1922 only one percent of American high school students were taking German language classes, down from twenty-four percent in 1915.²³⁶

Soon the war of censorship against the German language took a more serious turn as it was now applied to the written word through the burning of books. Most Americans associate *Bücherverbrennung* with the Nazi youth movement in Germany the early

²³⁰ Frederick Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 252.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 33.

²³³ Stephen L. Vaughn. *Holding Fast The Inner Lines*, 51.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ Frederick Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 252.

²³⁶ Christopher Capozzola. *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 192.

1930's,²³⁷ when in fact book burnings occurred in multiple communities across the United States during World War One as local vigilante groups took actions to destroy German textbooks, history books, songbooks, cookbooks, and other related materials. In North Platte, Nebraska,²³⁸ a vigilante group removed several hundred German textbooks from the local high school and burned them in a nearby vacant lot while singing a "Requiem of Kaiser Wilhelm."²³⁹ The same newspaper then published an editorial in which it praised the actions of the mob and stated that "they were to be commended rather than condemned," and that "This generation, and the next, and still the next will have no use for anything that has a German tinge, the books would have proven obsolete, better by far that they vanish and that their ashes be scattered to the four winds."²⁴⁰

The encouragement of such mob vigilantism quickly spread out of control as reported in April 1918 in the city of Marshalltown, Iowa.²⁴¹ It was reported that the local school boys had taken the law into their own hands, breaking into their school, gathering up German language textbooks, and burning them in the street in front of the school. The local paper reported that "no doubt elder persons were behind the youths with suggestions and encouragement."²⁴² The writer makes this important point as he then reports that this sort of mob violence can run out of control and that in the nearby neighboring town of Collinsville a man was:

²³⁷ English translation: Burning of Books.

²³⁸ "Sing Requiem to Kaiser While German Books Burn," *Omaha Daily Bee*, May 11, 1918. 4.

²³⁹ This most likely refers to "Hail to Thee in the Victor's Crown", literally: "Hail to You in a Victor's Wreath" the official national anthem of the German Empire from 1871 to 1918. Oddly the song was never popular in Germany as its melody was derived from the British national anthem "God Save the King."

²⁴⁰ Stephen Wesson. "Banned Books Week: News Coverage of Textbook Burnings During World War I" *Library of Congress*, accessed June 28, 2020, <https://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/2017/09/banned-book-week-news-coverage-of-textbook-burnings-during-world-war-i/>.1.

²⁴¹ "The Mob Suggester", *Evening Times-Republican* (Marshalltown, Iowa), April 11, 1918. 6.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

Hanged by a mob of lads yet within their teens and most of whom should have been in school... it appears to have been a terrible mistake on the part of the boys. To hang a man for alleged disloyalty and then bury him in the flag of his country after the mistake has been made clear is typical of what a mob on unformed youths and ignorant men is likely to do when stirred by older suggestion and urged on as the Collinsville mob was by the double intoxication of liquor and mob spirit.²⁴³

In some instances the book burnings were planned ahead of time and fully announced to the public. Indeed, the city of Cedar Falls, Iowa announced that they would host a “Liberty Day Celebration” during which the “*Kaiser*” would be hanged in public and German text books and literature would be burned in a “huge” bonfire.²⁴⁴ All of the cities businesses were to close at noon and the cities’ factory workers were to be given the day off so they could bring the entire family to join in and enjoy “the hate fest.”²⁴⁵

An even stranger prearranged book burning took place in Woodstown, New Jersey, when German textbooks were burned in a “monster bonfire” on the campus of the town’s Central High School.²⁴⁶ The event was held to “celebrate winding up the current school term” and to show “the loyalty of the mostly Quaker community (who were long known for their pacifist views) located in South Jersey.”²⁴⁷

Not every library in the nation burned its books, but those that chose not to often found themselves embroiled in high profile controversies. One such institute was the Newark Public Library whose head librarian, John Cotton Dana, came under fire for his refusal to even remove books deemed “unpatriotic” from the library’s shelves. Dana responded to War Department requests to remove certain books, such as those that

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ “Liberty Day Celebration,” *Evening Times-Republican* (Marshalltown, Iowa), April 25, 1918. 2.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ “Burn German Books,” *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria Virginia), June 17, 1918. 1.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

explained the process to manufacture explosives, but he refused to remove German language books.²⁴⁸ The *Vigilantes*, a New Jersey group of artists and writers who sought to suppress what they deemed as un-American points of view, attacked Dana for his refusal to also remove books that presented the German point of view.²⁴⁹ The group demanded the Dana remove eight specific books that they deemed “not only morally wrong, but seditious, and even treasonable, at this juncture in our history.”²⁵⁰ Dana refused, stating that “I came to the conclusion many years ago that liberty of thought is a very desirable thing in the world and that liberty of thought can only be maintained by those who have free access to opinion,” and the Newark Library’s Board of Trustees backed him up.²⁵¹ In the months that followed, Dana was continually attacked in the press and denounced for “aiding Germany’s propoganda,” the *Vigilantes* even attempted to remove the books themselves only to be stopped by Dana’s librarians.²⁵² Dana never backed down and he lamented later in life that “The war has shown us that we are quite uncivilized...When Mars is talking, books have to sit still. Librarians cannot prevent the breakdown of civilization!”²⁵³

Such government censorship would continue during World War Two, as once again the American government deemed censorship to be an essential tool to ensure victory. Byron Price, who served during the war as the United States Director of Censorship, stated that censorship was essential for two reasons. First, it prevents the

²⁴⁸ George Robb. “Propaganda, Censorship, and Book Drives: The Newark Public Library in World War I” *NJS: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, winter 2019. Accessed October 1, 2020.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v5il.150.107>.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 122.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 123.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Frank Kingdom. *John Cotton Dana: A life*. D.B. Updike, the Merrymount Press: Boston, 1940. 92.

enemy from knowing what is happening on the homefront, how many troops we have or bombs we can produce.²⁵⁴ Secondly, it allows our side to learn the same information about them, the examination of enemy mail can give us clues about their battle plans, war production efforts, and even troop morale.²⁵⁵ Price argued that in wartime censorship is simply by necessity a matter of national security and that any curtailment of personal liberty will be only temporary and end at the conclusion of the conflict. Less than two weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt established the Office of Censorship acting under the War Powers Act just passed by the United States Congress. The president authorized Price to “Censor, in his absolute discretion, communications by mail, cable, radio, or other means of transmission between the United States and foreign countries.”²⁵⁶ At its peak, the Office of Censorship would employ some 16,000 Americans with the bulk of its staff engaged in censoring the mail.²⁵⁷ Unlike during the First World War, the private mail of every individual was subject to censorship, not just the members of the military or those Americans whose names appeared on watch lists. Price describes the actual censorship process as: “One of several things may be done to letters which are not found acceptable. Sentences or paragraphs may be cut out with scissors; the entire letter may be suppressed; or it may merely be delayed until the information, which it contains, could no longer serve any dangerous purpose. Every letter passed by the censor is resealed with a slip of paper bearing the examiner's number, and then is placed once more in the mails.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Byron Price, “Governmental Censorship in War-Time” *The American Political Science Review*, 839.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 841

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 842.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 843.

Such invasions of personal freedom in war time were found officially acceptable, in the case of *Schenck v. United States*, the United States Supreme Court ruled that defendants who distributed fliers to draft-age men, urging resistance to induction, could be convicted of an attempt to obstruct the draft, a criminal offense.²⁵⁹ Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, writing for the majority stated that “When a nation is at war, many things that might be said in time of peace are such a hindrance to its effort that their utterance will not be tolerated so long as men fight.”²⁶⁰ This idea that no individual had the right to stand in the way of our nation’s war effort was further enhanced by the case of *Abrams v. United States* where the Supreme Court found that the First Amendment does not protect any speech that is designed to undermine the United States war effort by fueling sedition or disorder.

²⁵⁹ *Schenck v. United States*, United States Supreme Court Reports: vol. 249 47 (1919)

²⁶⁰ Byron Price, “Governmental Censorship in War-Time” *The American Political Science Review*, 837.

CHAPTER THREE

AMERICAN ARMY CENSORSHIP AND THE GREAT WAR

For the armed forces of the United States, censorship was a part of the official playbook long before the start of the war.¹ As early as 1916, the army was formally involved in censorship during General Hugh Lenox Scott's punitive expedition against Pancho Villa in Mexico.² General Scott created the Bureau of Information to prevent the spread of "fake news"³ detrimental to the actions of the United States Army.⁴ This new agency was headed by then Major Douglas MacArthur and it called upon the Secretary of the Navy to monitor all transoceanic cables and for the Secretary of War to monitor all telephone and telegraph lines.⁵ The Military Intelligence Service (M.I.S.) took charge of censoring all mail sent by prisoners of war and internees held in the United States.⁶ Later

¹ The "Punitive Expedition" was an unsuccessful military operation conducted by the United States Army against the paramilitary forces of the Mexican revolutionary Francisco "Pancho" Villa from March 1916 to February 1917, during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920.

² James L. Gilbert, *Origins of U. S. Military Intelligence*, 50.

³ The use "fake news" has been around at least since the 13th century BCE, when Rameses the Great spread lies and propaganda portraying the Battle of Kadesh as a stunning victory for the Egyptians. The first modern use of the term itself was by the New York Times when it reprinted a 1915 speech by Woodrow Wilson that popularized the phrase "America First," they also used the subheading "Fake News Condemned" to describe a section of his speech warning against propaganda and misinformation.

⁴ James L. Gilbert, *Origins of U. S. Military Intelligence*, 50.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶ *Ibid.*

the M.I.S. would also be assigned the responsibility for censoring the communications of American servicemen held as captives of war.⁷

One year later, President Wilson asked for a declaration of war against Germany and the Selective Service Act of 1917 required all American men between the ages of 21 and 30 to register for service beginning on June 5, 1917 and to enter hastily constructed training camps starting on September 18, 1917.⁸ From the moment these new recruits entered the training camps, they were told what to write and what not to write, and to whom they might write and to whom they might not. Not only was their writing censored, so was the news they received, and the books and magazines they were allowed to read.⁹

The U.S. War Department believed that the recruits being housed in the newly constructed camps needed to be protected from all possible forms of corruption that might harm the morals of the newly drafted doughboys. The war was to be a crusade for freedom and democracy, and the crusaders being sent from America had to be pure not only in thought, but also in deed. No possible cause of moral degradation was to be overlooked. To this end, the military wanted to ensure that the evils which are traditionally associated with training camps (such as prostitution and gambling) would be abated, so they created the Commission on Training Camp Activities (C.T.C.A.). This new commission was headed by Raymond Fosdick who had been a student of President Wilson when he was a professor of political economy at Princeton University.¹⁰ Fosdick

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 94.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History* (Penguin Books, New York NY 2004) 127.

stated that the commission had two goals, first to build up positive recreational facilities in the training camps, and secondly to protect the troops “directly from the evils to which they have been exposed for years and years.”¹¹ Fosdick further stated that “these men should be returned to their homes just as clean and vigorous as when they went out,” and that all aspects of army life would be open to examination.¹² He also encouraged the censorship of any idea that might hurt the morale of the troops.

This new scrutiny included both singing and recorded music. From the start, Fosdick stated that he was very interested in developing singing in the U.S. Army, claiming that he wanted to “send to France a singing army.”¹³ He believed that songs could have a positive effect on the overall morale of the troops. The C.T.C.A. arranged to have a song coach sent to each and every training camp, and according to Fosdick, “it was the most popular thing we have tried thus far, the men are crazy about it and the officers too.”¹⁴ Fosdick then laments that some of the songs “can hardly be called decent” and to correct this issue the C.T.C.A. undertook the creation of an official handbook that included all the songs that the commission deemed to be acceptable, and those that did not “leave the poison of discontent and worry and anxiety in the minds of the soldiers and cause them to fret about home.”¹⁵

The Songs of the Soldiers and Sailors U.S. was printed by the American government and contained 70 approved songs, introduced by a quote from Walt

¹¹ Raymond B. Fosdick. *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science in the City of New York*, Vol.7, No.4, Economic Conditions of Winning the War (The Academy of Political Science, New York NY Feb. 1918) 169.

¹² Ibid, 170.

¹³ Ibid, 168.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 128.

Whitman: “I see America go singing to her Destiny.”¹⁶ The commission censored out many popular songs of the time such as the well-known and chart topping *I Wonder Who’s Kissing Her Now*.¹⁷ A song that had been re-released in 1910,¹⁸ and was sung by Billy Murray, one of the most popular singing stars of the day, known to his millions of fans as “The Denver Nightingale.”¹⁹ The song’s lyrics seem simple enough:

You have loved lots of girls in the sweet long ago.
 And each one has meant heaven to you.
 You have vowed your affection to each one in turn.
 And have sworn to them all you'd be true.
 You have kissed neath the moon while the world seemed in tune.
 Then you left her to hunt a new game.
 Has it ever occurred to you lately, my boy?
 That she's probably doing the same.

I wonder who's kissing her now.
 Wonder who's teaching her how.
 Wonder who's looking into her eyes.
 Breathing sighs, telling lies.
 I wonder who's buying the wine.
 For lips that I used to call mine.
 Wonder if she ever tells him of me.
 I wonder who's kissing her now.²⁰

Perhaps the song’s overall tone of possible promiscuity was deemed simply too much for the virginal ears of America’s new crusaders who were dedicated to “our sacred honor.”²¹ Another popular song to feel the military censor’s axe was titled: *Who Paid The Rent For*

¹⁶ Songs of the Soldiers And Sailors U.S. *Commissions on Training Camp Activities of the Army and Navy Departments, First Edition* (Washington Government Printing Office: Washington D.C. 1917) 3-5.

¹⁷ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 128.

¹⁸ *Who’s kissing Her Now* was written in 1909 by Harold Orlab who was a major composer and lyricist for Broadway theatre productions.

Gerald Bordman, Richard Norton. *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle* Fourth Edition (Oxford University Press: New York NY 2011) 293.

¹⁹ Ryan Barna. *The Victor Talking Machine Company: A Comprehensive and Annotated Discography of Billy Murray’s Victor Recordings Part I: 1903-1913* Accessed 03/15/2020
<https://web.archive.org/web/20120406111126/http://www.denvernightingale.com/discogr...1>.

²⁰ *I Wonder Who’s Kissing Her Now* has gone on to be rerecorded many times by stars as famous and diverse as Perry Como, Danny Kaye, Bing Crosby, Bobby Darin, Dean Martin, and Anne Murray.

²¹ Raymond B. Fosdick. *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, 170.

Mrs. Rip Van Winkle While Mr. Rip Van Winkle Was Away. Sung by another mega star of the time, Al Jolson (in black face no less), the song's lyrics seem to imply infidelity on the part of a married woman.²²

To control which books could be read at the training camps, the American Library Association was recruited by C.T.C.A. to build well-equipped libraries in every National Army and National Guard training camp.²³ These libraries, were to be stocked full of “well-selected books” that, as Fosdick put it, “were to give them all the books they want, and of the kind they want.”²⁴ In actuality this meant only the books that passed the censorship of the American military. Books that were not to be included ranged from *Reflections on War and Death* by Sigmund Freud (too pro-German), *The Bolsheviki and World Peace* by Leon Trotsky (too pro-peace), and *The War in the Air* by H. G. Wells (too everyone dies on both sides).²⁵ Over time, a formal list of objectionable books was built up and by the end of the war this list would contain almost one hundred titles.²⁶

In general, the list contained works that were by German authors, works with pacifist or socialist sympathies, or those that objected to war on religious grounds. The list of unacceptable books became known as the Army Index and it was formalized by the aptly named Department of Military Censorship.²⁷ One of the books to be banned was titled *Two Thousand Questions and Answers about the War* and the book's preface had been written by none other than George Creel.²⁸ American Newspapers reported on this

²² John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 128.

²³ Raymond B. Fosdick. *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, 166.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 154-157.

²⁶ Ibid, 160.

²⁷ Ibid, 162.

²⁸ The reason for the banning of *Two Thousand Questions and Answers about the War* was that Creel's Committee on Public Information felt that the book did not find that Germany was entirely responsible for the start of the war.

fact with “considerable satisfaction” at the time.²⁹ Not surprisingly, another interesting book to be banned at this time was titled *Understanding Germany* by Max Eastman, the aforementioned publisher of *The Masses* magazine.³⁰ At the very start of the war the intent of the C.P.I. and the American military had been to only censor information that involved the “movements of troops, the arrival and departure of ships, location of the fleet, and similar matters obviously secret in nature.”³¹ However, in what could best be described as “Mission Creep” this censorship rapidly expanded to include what the doughboys read and thought.

The censorship at the training camps was strict but it would prove not to be nearly as rigorous as the scrutiny they would face after their embarkation to the front lines in France, where the army had much greater control over access to all types of information.³² Members of the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.) would have every letter and printed publication censored by army surveillance.³³ From the American army’s point of view they needed to achieve two major goals. The first was to prevent any valuable military information from ending up in enemy hands. The second was to boost the morale of both the American troops overseas and the citizens back on the homefront.³⁴ Army military intelligence was assigned the task of censoring the cantonments (training camps) inside the United States. As many of these bases were located near populated areas, it was therefore impossible to keep an airtight lid on all

²⁹ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 163

³⁰ *Ibid*, 165.

³¹ George Creel. *How We Advertised America; The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe.* (Harper & Brothers Publishers: New York NY, 1920) 18.

³² James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 94.

³³ James L. Gilbert, *Origins of U. S. Military Intelligence*, 79.

³⁴ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 95.

communications entering and leaving the camps. A soldier on a weekend pass could easily post a letter from town or buy a local newspaper.³⁵

Increased scrutiny of the doughboys' personal mail began even before their embarkation to Europe. By the order of Brigadier General David C. Shanks, embarkation commander at Hoboken New Jersey, all personal mail was to be deposited at the office of the quartermaster for inspection.³⁶ All mail that arrived sealed would be held and released after the soldiers' arrival in France; however, unsealed letters would be censored at once and mailed home.³⁷ According to General Shanks, this was "to prevent any information reaching the enemy which would endanger your lives while in-route, and therefore nothing should be said as to where you are sailing from or when, or where to."³⁸ The army's official view was that as postal letters passed through many hands there was always a chance that sensitive information could fall into German hands and risk the lives of American troops being transported in convoys to France. General Shanks ends his memorandum by stating that "the object of censorship is to protect your country, your comrades, and yourself."³⁹ Therefore, as far as the United States Army was concerned, censorship was to be simply portrayed as a benevolent force meant to protect the lives of American doughboys.

The entire story of what is today known as "Embarkation Censorship" at the Port of Hoboken brings to light many interesting aspects as to just how military censorship

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "Censorship 2 Order," *The University of Michigan and the Great War*, accessed April 14, 2019, <http://michiganintheworld.history.lsa.umich.edu/greatwar/items/show/96>. Paragraph 3.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

actually worked during World War One.⁴⁰ In the first place the whole system was invented on the spot with very little legal or official authority. The story of just how “off the cuff” this censorship was comes to us from a firsthand account written by Captain A. C. Townsend who had been placed in charge of the Military Post Office, Mail Censorship Bureau, Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, New Jersey.⁴¹ Townsend found the post office in “an astonishing state of affairs” as the port of embarkation was in an early formative state and far too understaffed to deal with the deluge of mail that the Hoboken post office had begun to receive.⁴² This is hardly surprising, as the German owned port facilities at Hoboken had been seized by President Wilson just days after the declaration of war and were being hastily repurposed as the major launch site for American troop transports.⁴³ Upon Townsend’s arrival the Hoboken postmaster turned over some three thousand letters that had been building up in piles in his office, many simply addressed to a specific soldier at the Port of Hoboken.⁴⁴ Townsend and his small staff took over the delivery of this mail to the piers which soon amounted to over 20,000 letters a day.⁴⁵

As the doughboys were forbidden to write home directly from the ships, for fear that any leaked information might lead to the ship being sunk by the Germans, the Hoboken officials came up with their own plan to censor the mail themselves.⁴⁶ Signs were placed on each ship that informed the men that they could write home to their

⁴⁰ Hennen M. Sanford. *The Mail of the A.E.F.: American Expeditionary Forces 1917-1921* (J.W. Stowell Printing Company: Federalsburg Maryland, 1940) 31.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Captain A.E.Townsend “The A.E.F. Mail” *Linn’s Weekly Stamp News: A Weekly Newspaper for Stamp Collectors* (Linprint, Columbus Ohio, November 26, 1932) 33.

⁴³ Christopher Capozzola. *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (Oxford University Press: New York 2008) 189.

⁴⁴ A.E.Townsend, “The A.E.F. mail” 33.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 34.

⁴⁶ In another attempt to prevent any information from leaking out of the Port of Hoboken, the authorities forcibly shut down all 237 of the city’s bars and saloons.

friends and family if they agreed to refrain from giving any information about their ship, its destination, or time of departure. Letters were to be placed unsealed in special mailbags that were collected just before the ship sailed.⁴⁷ At the height of the operation over 50,000 sacks of mail a week were being handled by Townsend's staff which had grown to include 21 officers, 99 enlisted men, and was supported by a staff of newly hired civilians who worked up to fifteen hours a day.⁴⁸ These numbers are not surprising when considering that 1,656,000 soldiers embarked from New York Harbor in a period of just 18 months.⁴⁹ The unsealed letters were inspected for any information that might be of value to the enemy. The civilian work force consisted mainly of female censors who were mostly the wives of men who had already shipped overseas.⁵⁰ Townsend notes, with a bit of glee, that "Some of you fellows would not have written what you did, had you known that a woman was going to read that letter!"⁵¹

To further expedite the process, Townsend teamed up with the local Red Cross to preprint cards that simply stated "The ship on which I sailed has arrived safely overseas."⁵² The doughboys simply wrote their names and home addresses on these letters which were then presorted by state and city and, according to Townsend, "they were mailed within ten minutes" of word that a ship had safely reached its port in Europe.⁵³ According to the National Service Handbook, "the American Red Cross was authorized to act as a medium of communication between the people of the United States

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ *The Postal History of the AEF, 1917-1923*, second edition, edited by Theo. Van Dam (Fishkill, New York: War Cover Club, 1990) 145.

⁵⁰ A. E. Townsend, "The A.E.F. mail" 34.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² National Service Handbook. *Issued by The Committee on Public Information* 101.

⁵³ A. E. Townsend, "The A.E.F. mail" 34.

of America and their Army and Navy,”⁵⁴ This was a very efficient form of censorship that allowed little information to leak out, and one that the doughboys themselves participated in. Captain Townsend concludes his story with a great tale concerning the Christmas package mail. Hundreds of the care packages flowed into the post office at Hoboken and, despite specific instructions given to the American public, all sorts of prohibited items had to be censored out of the packages, including “baked chickens, fresh fruit, and bottles of liquor stuck into loaves of bread.”⁵⁵ Townsend goes on to note that all the packages were opened, censored for prohibited items, repackaged, and shipped to the Western Front in plenty of time to be distributed by Christmas.⁵⁶

All of this activity at the Port of Hoboken was supposed to be kept a secret and Townsend is quick to point out the utter nonsense of such as premise when he states that:

There was supposed to be absolute secrecy at Hoboken as to the sailing of troops. The fact that the transports loaded with men could be plainly seen from the ferry and by any vessel in the Hudson simply didn't count. The troops were officially invisible, and when transports sailed the men were herded below and kept out of sight until the transport was out of the harbor, so no one knew they had sailed!⁵⁷

The story of embarkation censorship is a fine example of the ways in which censorship during the Great War spread so quickly, armed with only a vague guideline, men and women on the ground simply made up the details as they went along. These actions were fully accepted by both the military and the American government. Additionally, the doughboys assisted in the process by self-censoring their letters, leaving them unsealed, and willingly allowing them to be read.

⁵⁴ National Service Handbook. *Issued by The Committee on Public Information* 101.

⁵⁵ A. E. Townsend, “The A.E.F. mail” 34.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

This censorship went both ways. The rules for posting letters to our forces in Europe were printed in the *National Service Handbook* issued by the Committee on Public Information in July 1917. It states the following:

Mail for the forces in Europe. Mail addressed to members of the expeditionary forces should bear the complete designation of the division, regiment, company, or other organization to which the addressee belongs. *Under no circumstances should the location or station of a military organization be included in the address on a letter for a person or organization in Europe.* In the upper left-hand corner of a letter should be placed the usual form of return request and the name and address of the sender. Postage should be fully prepaid. The rate on letter mail to our military forces in France is 2 cents the once or fraction thereof. Newspaper mail is carried for 1 cent for 4 ounces. No other than United States postage stamps are available for prepayment of postage... To comply with European censorship regulations all messages must be written in plain language (English or French), or in an international code, and must be intelligible to the censors. The use of two codes or two languages or the combinations of code and plain language in the same message are forbidden. Code language may be used only in full-rate messages.⁵⁸

The possibility of the use of “codes” is most interesting and the handbook goes on to list the acceptable codes. They included: A.B.C. 5th, Scott’s 10th, Western Union, Lieber’s, Bentley’s, Complete Phrase Code, Broomhall’s Imperial Combination Code, Myer’s Atlantic Cotton Code, and the Riverside Code.⁵⁹ Just what were all of these codes? In the simplest explanation, they were telegraph codes designed to simplify and shorten the numbers of words needed to transmit information by telegraph and therefore save the user money. The Western Union Code, for example, promised to its users that “Of primary importance is the fact that it includes five-letter words which, of course, assure an initial reduction of fifty percent. In the cost of transmission of messages, and this economy is in addition to the great saving affected by thy superior facilities afforded

⁵⁸ National Service Handbook. *Issued by The Committee on Public Information*, 116-117.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 117.

for the original ciphering of messages.”⁶⁰ These codes were in common usage, were widely published, and were easily accessible to censors in Europe and the United States.

Once posted overseas, army censorship increased markedly and the soldiers were ordered to give no information about their destination, any references to military matters, or their current location. General Orders number thirteen, which was issued by the A.E.F. on July 13, 1917, clearly stated the military’s objectives in regards to censorship: “The sole object of field censorship and all other steps taken to prevent the leakage of military information is to secure success of our own and allied operations with the least possible loss. By the collection of details which are apparently unimportant and disconnected, enemy agents may obtain important information.”⁶¹ Troops were forbidden to carry on their person any letter, order, map, or private paper bearing military information that might be of interest to the enemy.⁶² The main fear being that such information might be gleaned by the Germans from the body of a dead soldier lying in the trenches. Although all types of communication were watched, the army censor’s chief worry was still the soldiers’ letters.⁶³ A company officer was assigned to censor all the outgoing mail of his command.⁶⁴ If the letter passed requirements, the examining officer would sign his name and rank on the lower left hand corner of the envelope.⁶⁵ The letter was then sent to regimental command, where it received the official army censor stamp if it passed the inspection of the regimental officer. There was one interesting exception to

⁶⁰ International Cable Directory Company. *Western Union Telegraphic Code: Five-letter Ed.* (New York, NY 1917) III.

⁶¹ United States Army in the World War 1917-1919: General Orders, GHQ, AEF Volume 16 *Center of Military History United States Army* U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington D.C. 1948, 27.

⁶² James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 100.

⁶³ James L. Gilbert, *Origins of U. S. Military Intelligence*, 79.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 100.

this rule, “the blue envelope.” In order that the men could write letters of a very personal nature, one “blue envelope” was issued per week to any doughboy who requested it.⁶⁶ The outside of the envelope held a certificate that was signed by the writer stating that the letter related to personal family matters only. Interestingly, the envelopes themselves were not blue, they were white, with the lettering printed in a medium blue ink to make them stand out from ordinary correspondence.⁶⁷ The “blue envelope” letters were not read by the local company censor and were passed directly to the base censor for examination.⁶⁸ The reason for this system was to protect the privacy of the average soldier from the censor in their company with whom they were well acquainted.⁶⁹ One interesting exception to this rule occurred in areas where Americans were serving under the direct command of the British Expeditionary Forces (B.E.F.). In these zones, the doughboys used the British honor envelope, or the so called “green envelope.”⁷⁰ Additionally, the B.E.F. envelopes had slightly different wording than those of the A.E.F. and the writer had to sign the certificate on the envelope’s face which eliminated the need for the unit censor to sign on the cover.⁷¹ The letters were then transferred to the base censor and processed in the same way as the “blue honor” envelopes.⁷²

The use of the “blue envelopes” was not without its detractors. The staff of the base censor complained that the blue envelopes were subject to abuse by the men in the field and a large portion of them were therefore examined by the base censors before

⁶⁶ Ibid, 101.

⁶⁷ Frank Martin to his mother, 31 March 1919, File MG1524, Box 1 Folder 1, Frank Martin Correspondence, New Jersey Historical Society.

⁶⁸ James L. Gilbert, *Origins of U. S. Military Intelligence*, 79.

⁶⁹ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 100.

⁷⁰ They were called “green” to the color ink used to print the envelopes.

⁷¹ James N. Boyden. *AEF in the BEF: A Military Postal History of American Forces that used British Mails during World War I-1923* (Military Postal History Society, Bremerton WA, 1996) 126.

⁷² James Boyden, *AEF in the BEF*, 127.

being shipped back to the homefront.⁷³ Few examples of prohibited military information were ever found, however, there were complaints of doughboys using the blue envelopes to mail restricted items such as postcards.⁷⁴ The base censors also accused the officers in the field of encouraging their men to send all of their letters in blue envelopes to relieve themselves of having to spend the time and effort to censor the soldiers letters themselves, a charge that was never officially proven but hardly surprising given the amount of effort that was spent on letter censoring.⁷⁵ Base censors even found one unit of army engineers who printed up their own counterfeited “blue envelopes” to avoid having their own officers censoring their letters, and when caught they stated that they preferred to have the anonymous base censors do it.⁷⁶

The supposed anonymity of the “blue envelope” seems to have been quite reassuring to the doughboys themselves. In a letter written by Platoon Sergeant Charles S. Stevens to his family on July 12, 1918, one sees that he feels both emboldened and also totally committed to the rules of self-censorship that have been imposed upon him. He explains to his family,

Once a week we get what is known as a “blue envelope.” Into this envelope we may put letters referring to personal or family matters on the condition they contain no reference to matters forbidden by censorship regulations. These “blue envelopes” cannot be used for anything but letters. They are not to be censored by our officers, but are liable to be censored by the base censor. . . . It allows much more freedom of expression than letters which are censored by our own officers.⁷⁷

⁷³ United States Army in the World War 1917-1919: Report of the Commander-in-chief Staff Sections and Services, Volume 13. *Center of Military History* United States Government Printing Office: Washington D.C., 1948.111.

⁷⁴ Regulations clearly stated that letters and letters only could be mailed in side of a “blue envelope.”

⁷⁵ United States Army in the World War 1917-1919: Report of the Commander-in-chief, 111.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Sergeant Charles S. Stevenson to Family, 12 July 1918. Stevenson Family letters, The National WWI Museum and Memorial Achieves, St. Louis. 1.

So how does Sergeant Stevenson use his newly acquired freedom, well to brag about how important he is and how quickly his leadership abilities have been noticed by his superiors. His letter is so refreshingly human, revealing a young man who wants to let his family know that he is doing fine even if it involves a bit of bragging that would surely not have gone down very well with his colleagues. Sergeant Stevenson continues:

So first, I shall tell you just what a share I have in this Army. Immediately after our arrival at this camp I was officially made a “platoon” sergeant. A platoon sergeant is one who is second in command of a platoon of men. The sergeant ranks next to the lieutenant commanding the platoon. He lives with the men and is the high mucky-muck over them. In the case of the death of the lieutenant commanding the platoon, the sergeant is in charge...I tell ‘em what to do. ...The sergeants are given more privileges here than the other enlisted men. We eat at a separate table and are quartered in one part of the barracks alone....There are a couple of other things I wanted to tell you, but I have forgotten them-evidently they were not very important.⁷⁸

At no point in his letter does Sergeant Stevenson even attempt to give out any information about his location or make any references to military matters, he self-censors as he has been instructed. In fact, the only hint of any possible problems comes when he seems to complain about the amount of food available: “Arrangements are underway for us to pitch in about five dollars a month to get a few additional eats...I hope we succeed in putting it over - the food is not at all bad, but any additional things help.”⁷⁹ This is clearly worded as to not alarm the folks at home and it does not amount to an outright attack on the American army’s ability to feed its troops.

This bragging about one’s supposed heroism in battle was a common theme found by many of the censors, a great example is a letter written on November 10, 1918 by Captain Harry S. Truman to his fiancée Bess Wallace:

⁷⁸ Ibid, 1-5.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 3-4.

I have been censoring letters today and it is some job. I had no idea that there were so many accomplished liars in any organization on earth as I have in mine. They are eternally trying to get by the censor with some big talk of their heroism and accomplishments in this war and they do it too sometimes, especially if they put in something nice about their commanding officer and the part he took in the tale. Usually though I have to tear' em up or send them back when they tell too much or stretch the truth even beyond literary license. Some of them write very good and very interesting letters and some of them do not. It is a job to censor them and when Lts. get too far behind I help them out.⁸⁰

Captain Truman even notes that he has possibly been guilty of such exaggeration when he states that “I hope the base censor doesn't laugh at mine as I sometimes have to at theirs.”⁸¹ Once again we see that the doughboys continue to self-censor and they seem to make little attempt to include information that might be of use to the enemy. What is most interesting in Truman's letter is that he notes the fact that he is willing to simply “tear' em up” any letter he finds too objectionable.⁸² Truman himself believes that letters are indeed being destroyed, in a letter to his entire family dated August 5, 1918 he complains:

I wrote you a nice long letter from Angers⁸³ and told you all about my having been made a captain and a lot of other irrelevant and unimportant details of things I'd been doing and [am] expected to. They had a box-headed censor over there and I am morally certain he destroyed that concient (can't spell it) effort of mine to be interesting and let you know what I was and had been doing...⁸⁴

One can only wonder how many of the doughboys' letters meet this same fate, and how much the fear of having their letters destroyed coerced their compliance with the army's censorship rules. Captain Truman shows a clear disdain for the censors themselves in a

⁸⁰ A. Scott Berg, *World War I and America*, 622.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Monte M. Poem, *Letters Home By Harry Truman*, 52-53.

⁸³ Angers is a city in western France on the Maine River about 190 miles southwest of Paris.

⁸⁴ Monte M. Poem, *Letters Home By Harry Truman*, 52-53.

letter he wrote to his fiancée Bess Wallace on May 12, 1918: “I could tell you lots and lots of events, but the devilish censor would only tear it up and you wouldn’t get any letter.”⁸⁵

These facts raise an interesting point, if censorship prevents a soldier from telling their actual experiences in the First World War, historians and other writers must find a way to “fill in the gaps”. Luckily, the restrictions on writing did not extend to personal journals which may contain a vast amount of detail to fill in the gaps left by letter censorship. Journals are not a complete answer, however, as many doughboys also self-censored their diaries in fear that detailed accounts containing valuable military information could be of use to the Germans should a soldier be killed or captured. Some soldiers did, however, use their diaries to maintain detailed notes about their locations, their movements, the conditions they fought in, and their overall experiences at the front. Men such as Roy Evans Thompson, who was drafted into the American military in November 1917 and served as a sergeant in the Thirteenth Company of the 1st Motor Mechanical Signal Corps.⁸⁶ He was one of those doughboys who keep both a diary and the letters he had sent home to his family during the war. Like most of the doughboys, Roy was careful to self-censor and to carefully select his words so as not to alarm his family over his personal safety. Roy’s diary and his letters differ in his telling of events. For example, while sailing to France he writes “We had a fine trip; I wasn’t sick at all. We had splendid weather the last few days; warm clear days and moonlight [sic] nights. Nothing exciting happened the whole trip.”⁸⁷ His diary entries tell another story:

⁸⁵ Ibid, 48.

⁸⁶ Roy Evans Thompson, Dale Thompson, ed. *Dear Homefolks: A Doughboy’s Letters and Diaries*. (Regent Press: Berkeley, California. 2009)12.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 49-50.

Sat, Feb, 9: Got up at 8:00, but no breakfast. Cold snowy rain all day. Boat left dock at 4 p.m. everybody, including myself, has a headache due to overcrowding and poor ventilation. Mon. the 11th, Physical drill 9:30, Sub drill 2:00. Feeling slightly under the weather, but able to navigate. Lights out at 4:30, much to our disgust. Wed. the 13th, high wind and rather rough sea. Ship pitching a good deal. Ate supper, but no breakfast or dinner. Not sick but feeling rather bum, headache all day.⁸⁸

Clearly Roy was not sailing on the QE2, but he did not want the true conditions of his voyage to worry the folks on the homefront. In another great example of the way in which official censorship and self-censorship combined to dictate the behavior of the doughboys, from his diary entry of Sunday May 12, 1918, Roy notes “Mother’s Day. Everyone had to write a letter home before they could get a pass.”⁸⁹ That same day he dutifully writes home, “this is Mother’s Day and the boys have been requested to write home today.”⁹⁰

All letters, regular and “blue,” were then sent to the Base Censor for a final inspection before leaving France.⁹¹ It is not surprising to learn that this whole process really slowed down the rate at which mail moved back to the United States.⁹² Complaints were common on both sides of the Atlantic about the apparent slowness with which letters sometimes took to arrive at their destinations. Tess Saalmueller of Newark, New Jersey complained of such delays in a letter dated September 25, 1918 sent to her fiancé Frank who was stationed at the Western Front. “The mailman brought another letter yesterday from my soldier boy. But this one I should have had a few weeks ago. It was dated the 16th of August and was almost six weeks on the way.”⁹³

⁸⁸ Ibid, 48-49.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 67.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 68.

⁹¹ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 101.

⁹² James L. Gilbert, *Origins of U. S. Military Intelligence*, 80.

⁹³ Tess Saalmueller to Franciscum (Frank) Mueller, 15 August 1918, File MG 1517 Box 1 Folder 3, Mueller Family Papers 1895-1950, New Jersey Historical Society.

The Base Censor in Paris was understaffed, but still managed to process over thirty million letters during the war, six million of which it directly censored.⁹⁴ In July 1918,⁹⁵ the Base Censor was equipped with a new chemical laboratory that was used to scan letters for hidden messages.⁹⁶ The army had heard tales of doughboys attempting to evade the censors by using secret writing on the paper with substances ranging from vinegar, onion juice, milk, lemon juice, salvia, urine, and even semen.⁹⁷ With the use of this new technology, 53,658 suspect letters were tested and 428 were found to contain some form of secret writing.⁹⁸ None were found to be attempting to send war secrets from the front to the enemy, and almost all of them contained complaints about army life and the terrible conditions the doughboys were forced to endure in the trenches of Northern France.⁹⁹ This was information that the army clearly did not want making its way back to the homefront. Only two letters were ever found that contained sensitive information and they were both written by the same soldier to his family in an allied nation, Italy.¹⁰⁰

The A.E.F's overblown fear of secret messaging is hardly surprising given two earlier, widely reported cases of German spy rings attempting to send "invisible" information through the mails. The first case was of the so-called "Lemon Juice Spies" which occurred in Great Britain at the start of the war. As war was declared across Europe, German agents recruited spies throughout both allied and neutral nations (including the United States). Men such as Carl Fredrick Muller, who was born in Libau, Lithuania to

⁹⁴James L. Gilbert, *Origins of U. S. Military Intelligence*, 80.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 81.

⁹⁶ The lab was run by Lucien J. Desha, Captain Sanitary Corps and four enlisted men under his command.

⁹⁷ Kristie Macrakis. *Prisoners, Lovers, & Spies: The Story of Invisible Ink from Herodotus to al-Qaeda* (Yale University Press New Haven, 2014) 138.

⁹⁸ United States Army in the World War 1917-1919: Report of the Commander-in-chief, 111.

⁹⁹ James L. Gilbert, *Origins of U. S. Military Intelligence*, 81.

¹⁰⁰ United States Army in the World War 1917-1919: Report of the Commander-in-chief, 111.

German parents, and who had lived in several nations and spoke multiple languages.¹⁰¹

After his recruitment in Belgium in 1915, the German secret service sent Muller to live in England where he was to report on British troop movements.¹⁰² Muller attempted to contact his handlers, who posed as his employers in Belgium, using a real letter written in black ink. Between the written lines of the letter, Muller had written secret messages about British troop movements using lemon juice. What Muller was unaware of was the fact that the British Postal Censorship Agency had the address in Belgium under surveillance and intercepted Muller's letter.¹⁰³ The secret information was discovered by running a heated flatiron over the intercepted note revealing "information of military and naval importance."¹⁰⁴

Investigation officers from Scotland Yard showed up at Muller's apartment, with a search warrant, and found a whole lemon in Muller's overcoat.¹⁰⁵ When questioned, Muller claimed that the lemon was "for cleaning his teeth," however, the agents did not buy this story and further investigation uncovered ballpoint pens with dried lemon acid on them.¹⁰⁶ Muller's spy trial was kept secret, and due to this fact the German secret service was unaware that Muller had been caught and they continued to send him payments. This allowed the British to start sending false information back to Germany using forged letters under Muller's name.¹⁰⁷ For his spy role, Muller was executed at the tower of London, by firing squad, at 6 a.m. on the morning of June 23, 1915.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Kristie Macrakis. *Prisoners, Lovers, & Spies*, 128.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁰⁵ Said lemon is today to be found in the British National Archives.

¹⁰⁶ Kristie Macrakis. *Prisoners, Lovers, & Spies*, 129.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ "Execution of Carl Muller, a German spy" *The Daily Telegraph*, June 24, 1915. 9.

A second, and far more serious, case involved a German spy ring based in New York City. In September 1916, just months before direct American involvement in the Great War, German secret service officers, headquartered in Manhattan, sent a young American journalist, who worked for the film tabloid *Photoplay*, to the Netherlands in order to pass secret information between the United States and Germany.¹⁰⁹ The journalist's name was George Vaux Bacon, and unknown to Bacon, was the fact that the Dutch address in the city of The Hague to which he was to report was under surveillance by MI5, the new British secret service department.¹¹⁰ Bacon was placed under surveillance and apprehended upon his arrival in England.¹¹¹ British censors found suspicious underlining on a letter carried by Bacon. As a result of the British investigation, the existence of an "important gang of American spies"¹¹² was discovered along with the identities of their German spy masters in New York, namely, Albert O. Sander¹¹³ and Charles Wunnenberg.¹¹⁴

Sander and Wunnenberg ran a company known as the Central Powers Films Exchange,¹¹⁵ which claimed to import films made in Austria and Germany, but in fact, mainly recruited spies to work for the German intelligence agency.¹¹⁶ Although the United States was still officially neutral at the time, this spy ring was discovered, and the

¹⁰⁹ Kristie Macrakis. *Prisoners, Lovers, & Spies* 153.

¹¹⁰ Kristie Macrakis, "Invisible Ink War: How Chemists Revealed Germany's Secret WWI Writing," *Scientific American* (April 5, 2014): 2, accessed January 26, 2020, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/invisible-ink-history-wwi/>

¹¹¹ Kristie Macrakis. *Prisoners, Lovers, & Spies*, 156.

¹¹² Sander and Wunnenberg would eventually be caught and arrested as dangerous enemy aliens. Pleading guilty to working for the German Government. "Seek Men Higher Up in German Spy Plot," *New York Times*, Sunday, July 14, 1918, 9.

¹¹³ In 1933, Albert Sander would be named the foreign press chief of the Nazi Reich Film Chamber (the *Reichsfilmkammer*) under Joseph Goebbels.

¹¹⁴ Kristie Macrakis. *Prisoners, Lovers, & Spies*, 156.

¹¹⁵ Located at 150 Nassau St. in lower Manhattan.

¹¹⁶ James W. Castellan. *American Cinematographers in the Great War: 1914-1918* (John Libbey Publishing: New Barnet Hertfordshire U.K., 2015) 164.

American government became aware that Germany had plans to launch a sabotage campaign against the United States in hopes of blocking the delivery of war supplies to Great Britain.¹¹⁷ These efforts were based in lower Manhattan, and in the city of Hoboken, New Jersey, and were led by men such as Dr. Walter Scheele, a chemical specialist who was behind the infamous Black Tom Island explosion in July 1916,¹¹⁸ that totally destroyed a major munitions transportation center in Jersey City.¹¹⁹ Scheele's saboteurs are also suspected of having blown up a munitions plant at Kingsland,¹²⁰ New Jersey destroying half a million three-inch high-explosive shells and completely ruining the factory.¹²¹

Sander had employed Bacon for the princely sum of 125 dollars per week,¹²² and sent him off, first to Great Britain to report on allied anti-aircraft defenses, naval ship technology, and on the general morale of the British people.¹²³ When Bacon inquired as to how he was to send this information back to the United States, as he was certain that the British censors would discover him, Sander replied that he was not to worry as "I will give you the secret of fooling the censor."¹²⁴ This secret would turn out to be a whole new generation of invisible ink developed by German chemists who wanted to "up their game"

¹¹⁷ Kristie Macrakis, "Invisible Ink War" 2.

¹¹⁸ Dr. Scheele and his group of saboteurs, led by the German master spy, Captain Franz Johannes von Rintelen, were responsible for the destruction of the munitions depot located on Black Tom Island—a thin peninsula that jutted into Upper New York harbor from the shore of Jersey City. So powerful was the blast of the exploding munitions that a vast number of windows were shattered in Lower Manhattan, the sound was heard as far away as Maryland, and even the Statue of Liberty sustained shrapnel damage. At first it was thought to be an accident but later investigations proved that it to be an act of German sabotage.

¹¹⁹ H. Keith Melton, et al. *Spy Sites of New York City: A Guide to the Regions Secret History* (Georgetown University Press: Washington D.C., 2019) 59.

¹²⁰ Kingsland is today a part of the town of Lyndhurst N.J.

¹²¹ Ian Sayer & Douglas Botting. *America's Secret Army: The Untold Story of the Counter Intelligence Corps* (Grafton Books: London England, 1989), 16.

¹²² A hefty \$ 3,212.18 per week in 2020 dollars.

¹²³ Ibid, 63.

¹²⁴ Kristie Macrakis. *Prisoners, Lovers, & Spies*, 154.

in the aftermath of the British having discovered the rather primitive lemon juice system, which they had deployed at the start of the war. Bacon was instructed by Sander to go out and purchase some black woolen socks.¹²⁵ Upon his return, Wunnenberg took out a “toothpaste like” tube and proceeded to smear a thick brown paste around the tops of the socks.¹²⁶ Wunnenberg told Bacon that the substance was “a secret ink which the English will never discover.”¹²⁷ He further instructed Bacon to “soak the top of the socks in water, squeeze them out and use the liquid as a secret ink when he wrote letters.”¹²⁸ Bacon was also instructed to use a ballpoint pen (which were rare at the time) and rough paper so that the ink could be easily absorbed.¹²⁹

After Bacon’s arrest, British chemists determined that the brown substance was a chemical called Argyrol, a silver salt protein mixture, sold as an antibacterial and antiseptic, that was used to combat gonorrhea in the era before the development of antibiotics.¹³⁰ The Bacon episode marked a rapid improvement in German technology, and with this discovery, soon the British were able to detect secret inks concealed in such everyday objects as soap, perfume, scarves, and even shoelaces.¹³¹

The British investigations into these new German spy techniques were led by the British Postal Censorship Department headed by Dr. Stanley W. Collins, a secret ink specialist, who would soon be sent by British authorities to New York to assist the Americans in setting up their own chemical testing lab in Lower Manhattan.¹³² With the

¹²⁵ Kristie Macrakis, “Invisible Ink War” 3.

¹²⁶ H. Keith Melton, et al. *Spy Sites of New York City* 63.

¹²⁷ Kristie Macrakis. *Prisoners, Lovers, & Spies*, 155.

¹²⁸ Kristie Macrakis, “Invisible Ink War” 3.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Kristie Macrakis. *Prisoners, Lovers, & Spies*, 157.

¹³¹ Kristie Macrakis, “Invisible Ink War” 3.

¹³² Kristie Macrakis. *Prisoners, Lovers, & Spies*, 147.

assistance of Dr. Collins, the American lab was assembled and fully operational by July 1918, with a similar labs built in Washington D.C.,¹³³ and the Base Censor lab in France.¹³⁴ Technicians at the labs examined some two thousand suspect letters each week and reported finding some type of hidden communication on fifty of the two thousand letters, or 2.5 percent.¹³⁵

It is therefore, not surprising to find that the A.E.F. was determined to identify any secret writing that might be contained in doughboy letters from the Western Front. What is even more astonishing is that American soldiers' letters from the Western Front contain little information as to troop positions, military maneuvers, or even predictions about the outcome of the war. The vast majority of letters contain little detail about the bombing, the gassing, or any direct accounts about the battles at the Western Front. American soldiers did not dwell on such topics, as they did not dare do so. As ambulance driver Kenneth A. Easlick put it: "there is a whole mess of stuff to talk about, but I'm afraid to open my mouth for fear the censor's foot will get in it."¹³⁶ Instead, American doughboys made a concerted effort to discuss more pleasant aspects of their experiences such as the people they met, the new foods they encountered, and their travels behind the lines in France. One reason most soldiers went along with these rules, was that they did not wish to alarm their families back home and they even hoped to reassure their families of their overall safety and their likelihood of surviving combat.¹³⁷ A letter written on July 31,

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ John Patrick Finnegan. *Military Intelligence* (Center of Military History United States Army U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington D. C., 1998) 36.

¹³⁵ Kristie Macrakis. *Prisoners, Lovers, & Spies*, 162.

¹³⁶ "Censorship 2 Order," *The University of Michigan and the Great War*, paragraph, 4.

¹³⁷ Ibid, paragraph, 5.

1918 by Private Varnie T. Lindstadt, of Burlington, Iowa to his father Elmer, is quite typical of this self-imposed censorship:

Just a few lines to tell you I arrived safely somewhere in France and am in the best of health. I want to say that this is a pretty Country, and the Climate is about the same as Iowa. Things are somewhat dearer here on account of the war but they are alright: There is lots of things I could tell, about the sights I have seen, but the censor will not permit us to write anything about it, which is a good thing for us, and bad for the enemy, so I will close for this time, hoping to hear from you soon.¹³⁸

Clearly, by not giving away his location or port of arrival, Private Lindstadt had bought into the American army's tagline that any information in a doughboy's letter could be of use to the Germans. Additionally, he seems proud to be self-censoring and doing his part to prevent the *Bosch* from getting any information from him.¹³⁹

Varnie's younger brother Robert arrived in France just two months later and in his letter to his mother, dated September 9, 1918, one sees the same self-censoring practiced by his brother, "I certainly saw some pretty places since I left home and could tell you many things if I was allowed to write about it but we dare not say anything that might help the enemy."¹⁴⁰ As with many doughboys, Robert clearly does not want his family to worry about his well-being and he tells his mother that he is fine even though he is in the hospital with "mumps" that he contracted upon his arrival in France.¹⁴¹

Government imposed censorship, along with the self-imposed censorship of the doughboys themselves, gives us a very one-sided version of the actual experiences of the

¹³⁸ Varnie T. Lindstadt. "1918-07-31, Varnie to Elmer" (1918). *Lindstadt Brothers First World War Correspondence Collection*. 45. https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/lindstadt_brothers_collection/45, 2-3.

¹³⁹ The term Bosch is a French slang word for "rascal" and was applied to German soldiers at the start of World War One, first by the British and then by the Americans.

¹⁴⁰ Lindstadt, Robert, "1918-09-19, Robert to Mother" (1918). *Lindstadt Brothers First World War Correspondence Collection*. 62. https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/lindstadt_brothers_collection/62. 2-3.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 4.

members of the A.E.F. had while they were in France. The one-sidedness of our view of the war can perhaps be demonstrated by Frederick Palmer, a war correspondent who served as a press censor for General Pershing and who also followed the A.E.F. into the trenches of Northern France. Writing after the war had ended, he relayed stories that he dared not write during the conflict itself. Palmer, like the doughboys around him, willingly self-censored, seeing it as his duty to his country. Still he was never all that comfortable with doing his duty, bluntly stating that “There, in obedience to regulations, one must suffer agony as he strangled the truth and squirm with nausea as he allowed propaganda to pass.”¹⁴² Once the war had ended, and a couple of years had passed, Palmer attempted to set the record straight by writing a book in which he revealed his actual experiences during the war. Palmer was clearly no longer so proud of his wartime duties as a censor:

How the single minded forthright nobility of the fighting men and of the women who were knitting, sewing, and scrubbing, and urging their men on to death contrasted with the banal mouthing’s of the Greek Deputy type and of the other types of slacking intriguers and with the petty selfishness of some leaders who saw the war as a source of glory, promotion, and profit, and whom the regulations of the censorship had to protect! I commend all to the censor’s office who would like to taste the distilled broth of the folly of nations. It revealed humanity magnificent in sacrifice and betrayed by its own emotions and self-destruction.¹⁴³

Palmer goes on to admit that he was strongly encouraged to report supposed atrocities committed by the Germans that he knew must be false. He had been informed by “higher ups” that the Germans had made a nighttime raid upon the American trenches and that *the Boche* had “wantonly cut the throats of our men who had already expired.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Frederick Palmer. *The Folly of Nations* (Dodd Mead & Company: New York NY, 1921) 316.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 317-318.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 321.

Palmer refused to believe these stories as his own experiences had taught him that the Germans,¹⁴⁵ on a secret night raid, would have been in too much of a hurry to waste time mutilating dead men even if it “suited their inclinations.”¹⁴⁶ In an interesting example of censoring information he knew to be false, Palmer refused to submit the reports of German mutilations despite pressure from his commanding officers to do so. Palmer references a memorandum he had received that reminded the correspondents that “Hate was a most important factor in promoting morale.”¹⁴⁷

Palmer goes on to further defend his actions stating that “I had prevented their [the doughboys] reading a piece of news which would ‘blood’ them against the enemy and make their thrusts against the dummy bag more savage.” He continues with a slap at President Wilson’s stated war aims: “It had seemed to me that if we were really making an idealistic war to end war, the inculcation of hate to fester in the minds of future generations was a poor way of attaining our object.”¹⁴⁸ Oddly perhaps, but not surprising all together, Palmer does seem to support the use of censorship during wartime overall. He states that it was necessary to “keep our determination steeled to our task” and that, despite his regrets, he was still only performing his official duties by encouraging “the war spirit” and that he found it necessary to rejoice in the brutality of our own soldiers while accusing the enemy of atrocities for the same behavior.¹⁴⁹

Stories of improper behavior by Allied forces did make it past the censors, if written about in a lighthearted manner. We see this in a letter written by Captain Harry

¹⁴⁵ Palmer’s experiences at war were substantial, as a war correspondent he had covered the Greco-Turkish War of 1897, the Boxer Rebellion, the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War, the Balkan War of 1912, and the American occupation of Veracruz in 1914.

¹⁴⁶ Frederick Palmer. *The Folly of Nations*, 321.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 323.

Truman. The letter, dated November 1, 1918, tells of the American obsession for collecting war souvenirs at all costs. Truman writes:

A Hun aeroplane observer fell down behind my battery yesterday and the observer sprained his ankle. The pilot wasn't hurt. The machine was wrecked. The French and Americans proceeded to pick them [over] for souvenirs, even taking the boots of the one with the sprained ankle. I guess they'd have carried the plane away piece by piece if they hadn't put a guard over it. Someone said the other day that Germany was fighting for territory, England for the sea, France for patriotism, and Americans for souvenirs, and I guess it's so.¹⁵⁰

A thirty two year old colonel, by the name of George S. Patton, also managed to get such information past the censors in a letter to his father where he wrote that "I lost my sack chasing a *boshe*, I got some crackers off a dead one... The dead were about mostly hit in the head. There were a lot of our men stripping off buttons and other things but they always covered the face of the dead in a nice way."¹⁵¹

For their part, the British handled the issue of censorship even more sternly. The British government passed the Defense of the Realm Act in 1914, which ordered that all letters written by members of the armed forces to their families were to be read and censored by the authorities.¹⁵² Unlike their American counterparts, who simply had their letters censored, punishment for Tommies writing about the war could include imprisonment without trial.¹⁵³ Still, like the doughboys, British soldiers were encouraged by their government to write home, but to also conceal the horrors of war.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Monte M. Poem. *Letters Home By Harry Truman*, 60.

¹⁵¹ George S. Patton to his father, September 20, 1918. George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Box 21.

¹⁵² Robert Thomas, "The Unfolding Journey: Soldiers' Letters from the Front" Accessed 4/7/2019 legacysunfoldingjourney.blogspot.com/2012/02/soldiers-letters-from-front.htm paragraph 3.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

One of the more brazen and insidious forms that military censorship took during the Great War involved that most basic of American rights, voting. The issuance of war ballots to be more precise. War ballots are a form of absentee voting used by the American military and they have a long history of use in the United States military. War ballots were first adopted by the state of Pennsylvania in 1813, followed by the state of New Jersey in 1815.¹⁵⁵ These war ballots predate civilian absentee voting by over seven decades.¹⁵⁶

The issue of military absentee voting has long been a contentious issue and it stems from the simple fact that there are no constitutional federal voting rules and that as a result each state determines how its own voting is conducted.¹⁵⁷ Only a few states ever allowed for war ballots, and it was not until 1916 that the state of Virginia allowed for overseas voting by mail, provided that the soldier could physically make it to an American mission or consul.¹⁵⁸ Another odd fact about military voting, was that each state could have any rules it wished and in some states, such as Tennessee, voting rights were given to those who volunteered for service, but not to those who were drafted.¹⁵⁹

Traditionally military absentee ballots were collected “on the spot” by state voting officials who would not only accept the completed ballots in the field, but would then tabulate the results and send their tally sheets along with the original ballots back to their home state.¹⁶⁰ This system was much more practical in the era before World War One. At that time, state militias made up the bulk of American military forces and it was rather an

¹⁵⁵ Russ W. Carter. *War Ballots: Military Voting by Mail from the Civil War to WWII* (Military Postal History Society: Cypress Texas, 2005) 1.

¹⁵⁶ Vermont became the first state to allow civilian absentee voting in 1886.

¹⁵⁷ Russ Carter, *War Ballots*, 1.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

easy task for voting officials to travel to their state militia's main camp and organize the vote.

This process was not so straight forward by the start of the Great War as the American government had federalized the state militias and for the first time officers and replacements came from differing states. State voting officials could no longer find all of their voting citizens located together in specific groups. As American troops began to be shipped in large numbers to Europe, the issue of voting became a hot topic for the United States War Department. The War Department's General Order 144 of November 16, 1917 set out guidelines for proper procedures for voting should the nation still be at war by the next election:

Upon application by the secretary of state, or other proper officer of a state government, to the commanding officer of a department or division for permission to take and secure the vote of officers and soldiers of said state serving in said command and within the borders of the United States, for either a primary or general election of said State, such commanding officer shall specify a place or places where all such officers and soldiers in such command may exercise their state franchise, and shall allow the properly qualified election officers of such state the opportunity to secure the votes of its citizens in such command at the place or places designated, and at or during such specified period or periods of time, and conforming as near as may be to the request of said State officer in this respect as shall not interfere with military efficiency. The place or places so designated shall be in proximity to each other and all sections of the troops as will permit them, under the regulations prescribed, to make deposit of their several ballots. Such election officers shall be permitted, if they desire, to erect at said place or places such inclosures as may be necessary for the conduct of such election and at said place or places, but not elsewhere, to disseminate information and literature for the instruction of the voter as to the method to be pursued by him in the marking and casting of his ballot, but this latter privilege shall not be construed to permit the dissemination of information or literature calculated to influence the voter in the exercise of his franchise.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ United States War Department, *General Orders, No.144. November 16, 1917* (Government Printing Office Washington D.C. 1918) 1-2.

There were no state or federal elections in 1917, however, New York State held mayoral elections. Over 20,000 New Yorkers were in basic training and located with the 27th Division at Camp Wadsworth,¹⁶² South Carolina so arranging “on the spot” voting was not such a difficult task.¹⁶³ In fact, New York State election officials held voting in an additional sixteen training camps in the United States and also sent officials to collect ballots in both England and France.¹⁶⁴ Once the votes were taken, the ballots were all shipped back to New York State for tabulation.¹⁶⁵

However, by the spring of 1918, the situation had changed dramatically as vast numbers of doughboys had left their training camps and were now stationed in several European nations. As 1918 was a general election year, several states wanted to send election commissioners to Europe, however, the American War Department refused them permission and would not allow any “on the spot” voting.¹⁶⁶ General Pershing strongly objected to his soldiers voting “on the spot” as he believed it would interfere with military readiness and operations.¹⁶⁷ Pershing’s position was backed up by the Committee on Public Information, whose National Service Handbook clearly stated “When drafted into the Federal service the National Guard becomes part of the armed forces of the United States, and while in service is outside the control of the States ...and is subject to the same laws, regulations, and discipline as the Regular Army.”¹⁶⁸ This was in spite of the fact that the proxy voting by mail, which had been proposed by several of the states,

¹⁶² Russ Carter, *War Ballots*, 19.

¹⁶³ Included in this group was my Great Uncle, Clayton Moore. However, at the age of 19 he would have been ineligible to vote.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ At the then astronomical cost of six dollars per ballot (\$102.20 in 2020 dollars.)

¹⁶⁶ Russ Carter, *War Ballots*, 19.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ National Service Handbook. *Issued by The Committee on Public Information*, 139.

would avoid this problem and was no different than mailing any other letter.¹⁶⁹ The War Department was still adamant in its refusal to allow any voting to take place as it believed such voting would interfere with the conducting of the war effort and it was at this point that the issue of censorship took center stage.

The army refused to allow any mail to leave the Western Front unless it had been properly censored and state election officials back in the states refused to accept any ballot that had been open as it violated “the sanctity of the secret ballot.”¹⁷⁰ The whole process was at a stalemate. For its part, the A.E.F. proposed a new plan that would allow for said voting, however, the Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, refused to send it to congress for approval. Baker had selected Pershing to head the A.E.F. in May of 1917 and had described the General as “the only combination of telescope and microscope I know” and he no doubt supported Pershing’s concerns about allowing the war ballots to take place.¹⁷¹ In fact, General Pershing became infamous for the tight control he maintained over even the most minute details of his command even while in charge of the single largest military force the United States had ever mustered.¹⁷²

For their part, numerous states refused to back down and five states demanded that the federal authorities allow voting by mail.¹⁷³ Led by officials from the state of Nebraska, they developed a plan where 1.5 million specially marked envelopes would be printed so that the ballots would not be censored by the army.¹⁷⁴ General Pershing and the army again refused to take part in the plan. Still refusing to be bullied by the A.E.F.

¹⁶⁹ Russ Carter, *War Ballots*, 19.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Robert Ferrell, *Wilson & World War I*, 52.

¹⁷² Mitchell A. Yockelson. *Borrowed Soldiers: Americans under British Command, 1918* (University of Oklahoma Press Norman OK., 2008) 35.

¹⁷³ The states were Connecticut, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New York, and Rhode Island.

¹⁷⁴ Russ Carter, *War Ballots*, 19.

several states began to mail their absentee ballots to their registered military voters in France. Many of these special war ballots were never sent by U.S. postal authorities and of the ones that were mailed to the Western Front many were returned opened and censored as was regular army procedure.¹⁷⁵ The example below shows one such returned ballot from the state of South Dakota, note the signed censor's mark on the lower center of the envelope.¹⁷⁶

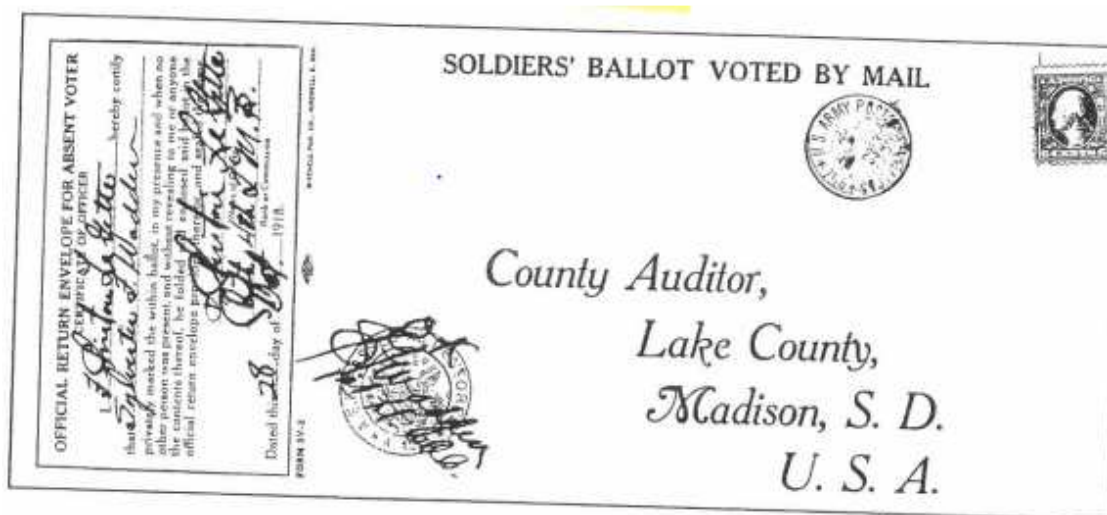


Figure 12: censored preprinted South Dakota envelope (Courtesy of James Boyden)

One would think that the opening of soldier's ballots would have created a firestorm of protest, but as the war came to end just a week after Election Day 1918, little seems to have been made of the army's decision to censor the war ballots. A review of the army's *Stars and Strips* shows no mention of the ballot controversy, most doughboys were likely totally unaware of it, and censorship once again worked in the army's favor. Interestingly, however, as Russ Carter points out in his article on war ballots, in their attempt to increase the participation of soldiers in the 1918 election, many of the states

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 20.

simplified their own laws regarding absent voting, and in the long run they made the process of voting easier for the American public as a whole.¹⁷⁷

During the Great War, military censors faced many new obstacles created by the advancement of modern technologies. Take for example the Kodak Vest Pocket Camera. First manufactured in April, 1912 by the Eastman Kodak Company of Rochester, New York.¹⁷⁸ These marvels of modern photography would prove to be another test of the military's ability to control information leaving the Western Front and making its way, uncensored, back to the homefront.

Battlefield photography was not a new phenomenon. The first war photography occurred during the Mexican-American War of 1846, and the photos taken by Mathew Brady during the American Civil War captured much of the gruesomeness as the armies of both the north and south slaughtered each other.¹⁷⁹ However, these older technologies required large cameras that used "wet plates" and required long exposure times.¹⁸⁰ Additionally, these cameras were very expensive and required trained photographers to operate them. The Kodak Company's revolutionary new vest pocket (VPK) technology changed everything. Small and lightweight, VPK cameras could be carried and operated by average people who required little training to achieve quality results. Thousands of allied troops marched off to the Great War with VPKs packed in their kit bags.

¹⁷⁷ These states included: Kansas, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

¹⁷⁸ Jon Cooksey. *The Vest Pocket Kodak & The First World War* (Ammonite Press: Lewes, East Sussex, UK 2017) 8.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ The wet plate process required the photographer to coat and develop the image before the plate dries. Historically, this led to somewhat of an inconvenience requiring photographers to develop on the spot by utilizing a portable darkroom.

These new cameras weighed only 9 ounces and cost just six dollars,¹⁸¹ making them affordable for many average doughboys.¹⁸² Over 200,000 of these first generation cameras were manufactured between 1912 and 1914.¹⁸³ An additional 1,750,000 second generation VPKs were produced between 1915 and 1926.¹⁸⁴ These new and improved VPKs were marketed by Kodak as the “Soldier’s Camera” and they contained a newly patented special film that allowed the user to lift up a flap at the back and “autograph” information directly on to the negative using a special stylus.¹⁸⁵ The VPK had been an immediate success in the United States, and its popularity had quickly spread to the United Kingdom when King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra were seen using them in public.¹⁸⁶ Kodak sold over 5,500 VPKs in Britain in 1914 alone, and when the first shots of the world war were fired that summer, many an enlisted man slipped a VPK into his uniform hoping to capture important moments during his service. In 1915, an additional 28,000 cameras were sold in the UK and it is reported that as many as one in five British officers took a VPK with them to the Western Front.¹⁸⁷

British newspapers quickly realized the value of “real war photographs” and they began to offer large cash prizes, of between 600 and 1000 pounds, to any Tommie who sent them a battlefield photo.¹⁸⁸ The Kodak Company also saw the great potential to

¹⁸¹ Six dollars in 1914 is about 150 dollars in 2019. <https://dollartimes.com>inflation>year+1914> accessed 9-29-2019.

¹⁸² Jon Cooksey, *Vest Pocket Kodak*, 10.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 12-13.

¹⁸⁴ Colin Harding, *The Vest Pocket Kodak was the Soldier’s Camera* accessed 10/6/2019 https://blog.scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk/the-vest-pocket-kodak-was-the-soldiers-camera/#js-searchmenu__panel paragraph. 2.

¹⁸⁵ Jon Cooksey, *Vest Pocket Kodak*, 13.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 22.

¹⁸⁷ Colin Harding, *the Soldier’s Camera*, 8. Jon Cooksey, *Vest Pocket Kodak*, 27.

¹⁸⁸ Jon Cooksey, *Vest Pocket Kodak*, 27.

both document the war and to sell a lot of cameras. The company launched its own magazine called the *Kodakery* and the following article appeared in its May 1915 edition:

The war is establishing the Kodak amateur in a brand new field of usefulness. From a popular pastime, his Kodak turns to chronicle world events. From romance of the summerwood, it turns to tell the romance of war. And it is doing this work of recording with graphic realism, absolute impartiality and splendid pictorial charm. In the hands of War Correspondents and more or less expert war photographers, the Kodak, of course, has long ago seen active service...used in the last Balkan war, and is using it in this. The present, however, is probably its first war experience in the hands of Amateurs. Thousands of Kodaks are in the kits of soldiers at the front. ...And the shutters of all these are busy “getting” the story of the greatest of all wars, as only pictures can...With the Kodak in our Hands the past can never get very far away from the present again. This is photography’s incalculable service to mankind.¹⁸⁹

For its part, the British War Office had given little thought to this new technology and had not even considered the wisdom of allowing soldiers to carry their own cameras to the Western Front.¹⁹⁰ With its cost of £ 1.50,¹⁹¹ the VPK was beyond the reach of many enlisted men, but was affordable to most British officers who documented the early months of war from the first battle of Mons to the quick retreat to the river Marne.¹⁹²

The first uncensored war photo appeared in a new weekly newspaper called *The War Illustrated* on November 21, 1914, just three months into the war.¹⁹³ The now infamous photograph depicted a British military transport column under German artillery attack complete with several wounded British soldiers. The War Office in London finally realized the potential for anti-British propaganda, and a rise in defeatist sentiment on the homefront, and quickly issued a General Routine Order that stated that:

¹⁸⁹ Jon Cooksey, *Vest Pocket Kodak*, 31.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ 1.50-pound sterling in 1914 is about 150 dollars in 2019. <https://dollartimes.com>inflation>year+1914> accessed 9-29-2019.

¹⁹² Colin Harding, *the Soldier’s Camera*, 5.

¹⁹³ Jon Cooksey, *Vest Pocket Kodak*, 40.

The taking of photographs is not permitted and that the sending of film through the post is prohibited. Any officers or soldiers (or the persons subject to military law) found in possession of a camera will be placed under arrest, and the case reported to the General Headquarters as to disposal.¹⁹⁴

However, by this point, the genie had been let out of the bottle and a tide of “uncensored photographs” continued to reach the press. Most famously, were the photos of British and German troops fraternizing with each other in no man’s land during the infamous unofficial Christmas truce of 1914.¹⁹⁵

In March of 1915, a stronger British war office instruction was issued again banning the possession and use of cameras at the battlefield.¹⁹⁶ The photos nevertheless continued to flow back to Great Britain. These photographs would have their impact on this side of the Atlantic also. In March 1915, the British steamship *Falaba* was sunk by a German U-boat. An officer on the British ship grabbed his VPK and took photos as the ship sank and the crew of the German U-boat lined up on deck to watch it sink beneath the waves.¹⁹⁷ One hundred and three passengers and crew died, including one American, an engineer named Leon C. Thrasher.¹⁹⁸ These photos appeared in the New York Times on March 31, 1915.¹⁹⁹ The death of Thrasher led to demands by the American public that the United States respond by declaring war against Germany.²⁰⁰ Less than two months later, another German U-boat would sink the R.M.S. *Lusitania* with the loss of over 1,000 souls including 120 Americans.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 41.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ The British officer, Charles Lacon was paid £200 by the Daily Mirror and later he was awarded an additional £1,000 of the best war picture.

¹⁹⁸ Jon Cooksey, *Vest Pocket Kodak*, 52.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History* (Henry Holt and Company, New York 1994) 157.

Two years later, when the United States had formally joined the war effort, photography had become an even more pervasive threat to the controlling of information flowing from the war fronts. As the A.E.F. landed large numbers of doughboys in Northern France, orders followed in an attempt to stem the flow of uncensored photographs. General Order No. 146, published on September 1, 1918, attempted to tackle this issue head-on.²⁰² This order forbade all members of the American Expeditionary Forces from taking photographs unless “photography is a part of their official duties.”²⁰³ Clearly many Americans had already brought VPKs with them to France, as the order also permitted doughboys who already possessed cameras to keep them provided that they were not loaded with film and that they were kept in their baggage.²⁰⁴ The order went on to state that all official photographers of the A.E.F. were required to carry a written permit issued by unit G 2 D²⁰⁵ of the General Headquarters of the A.E.F.²⁰⁶ All photos taken by these official photographers were to be sent directly to GHQ in Paris for development where they would be censored by the press officer of the Intelligence Section. Only photos released by the censor were to be printed, and they all had to contain his censor stamp. Furthermore, the American Government reserved the right to make copies of all photographs for “official and historical purposes.”²⁰⁷ One interesting regulation noted that personal photographs were permitted if the background of the image gave no indication of having been taken in any particular place. All photos

²⁰² United States Army in the World War 1917-1919: General Orders, GHQ, AEF Volume 16 *Center of Military History United States Army* U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington D.C. 1948, 433.

²⁰³ Ibid, 440.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ G N 2, or the second section, was the Intelligence branch of the General Headquarters of the A.E.F.

²⁰⁶ United States Army in the World War 1917-1919: General Orders, 441.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

that did not pass the censor became the property of the United States Government and would be “disposed of as may be directed by the commander in chief.”²⁰⁸

As the war came to an end so too did the American military’s need to censor every letter mailed by every doughboy. Just eleven days after the armistice was signed, censorship rules officially began to be relaxed.²⁰⁹ New rules were adopted, doughboys were permitted to give their exact location, the name of their company, and regiment.²¹⁰ In a letter sent just seven days after the armistice, Frank Martin of Newark wrote to his mother, “so will open up a bit and give you an idea of the whereabouts of yours truly. Am in Verdun and it is sure one well shot up place-looks like a movie western town after a raid by “bad” men.”²¹¹ Additionally, the doughboys were free to “discuss the activities and locations, past and present, of the organization of which you are attached, with, of course, due regard to accuracy.”²¹² Not all of the censorship rules were dropped immediately, soldiers were still forbidden to list casualties by name,²¹³ mail postcards that had “immoral images,” and the rules “prohibiting the taking of photographs by any member of the A.E.F. not specially authorized to do so remains unchanged.”²¹⁴ As late as December 15, 1918, post cards were still being censored.²¹⁵ The use of local mail

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 441.

²⁰⁹ “Letters Home Now May Mention Town and Give All News” *The Stars and Stripes*, Vol. 1, No.42, November 22, 1918.1.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ “Letters Home Now May Mention Town and Give All News” *The Stars and Stripes*, Vol. 1, No.42, November 22, 1918.1.

²¹² Frank Martin to mother, 18 November 1918, MG1524 Box 1 Folder 1, Frank E. Martin correspondence, New Jersey Public Library.

²¹³ “Lid off Censorship for Father’s Letter: New Rulings Announced in Time to Allow Family to Know Whole Story of Your Life in France” *The Stars and Stripes: The Official Newspaper of the A.E. F.*, November 22, 1918.1.

²¹⁴ “Letters Home Now May Mention Town and Give All News” *The Stars and Stripes*.1.

²¹⁵ Frank Mueller to Robert Mueller, 12, December 1918, censored 15, December 1918, MG1517 Box 1 Folder10, Mueller Family Papers 1895-1950, New Jersey Historical Society.

systems was permitted by the spring of 1919, however, this did require the purchase of local postage to be paid for by the sender.²¹⁶

Strict military censorship, to some degree, did follow the A.E.F. as it occupied parts of Germany following the signing of the armistice. The American Third Army became an army of occupation of the Rhineland, and the censorship of civilian mail in Germany was established.²¹⁷ One major reason of the need to censor civilian mail was reported in the *New York Times*: “to prevent the wholesale exportation of German money and securities by persons wishing to dodge the impending capital levies and property taxes of various kinds...the censorship of mails and telegrams going abroad will continue in full force.”²¹⁸

Under General Perishing’s direct orders, public gatherings of German citizens were banned and telegraph and telephone communications, outdoor photography, and the press were all censored.²¹⁹ This level of strict censorship even required “detailed reports from the owners of carrier pigeons.”²²⁰ The censorship of the press was most strict as all newspapers and magazines published within the American occupation zone were to be reviewed by the local military commander, and any actual or perceived appearance of anti-American sentiment would result in the suppression of said material.²²¹ The censorship of the mail itself was increasingly relaxed and soon only performed on a spot

²¹⁶ Frank Martin to mother, 2 May 1919, MG1524 Box 1 Folder 1, Frank E. Martin correspondence, New Jersey Public Library.

²¹⁷ Ed Dubin, Al Kugel. “WWI 100: Philately Tells the Story of U.S. Centennial in the Great War” *The American Philatelist: Monthly Journal of the American Philatelic Society* Vol. 131 No. 4, April 2017.353.

²¹⁸ *The New York Times* “Germany Keeps Mail Censorship” October 12, 1919. 5.

²¹⁹ Alexander F. Barnes. “Representative of a Victorious People: The Doughboy Watch on the Rhine” *Army History*, No. 77 (fall 2010),pp.6-19.<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26296804.11>.

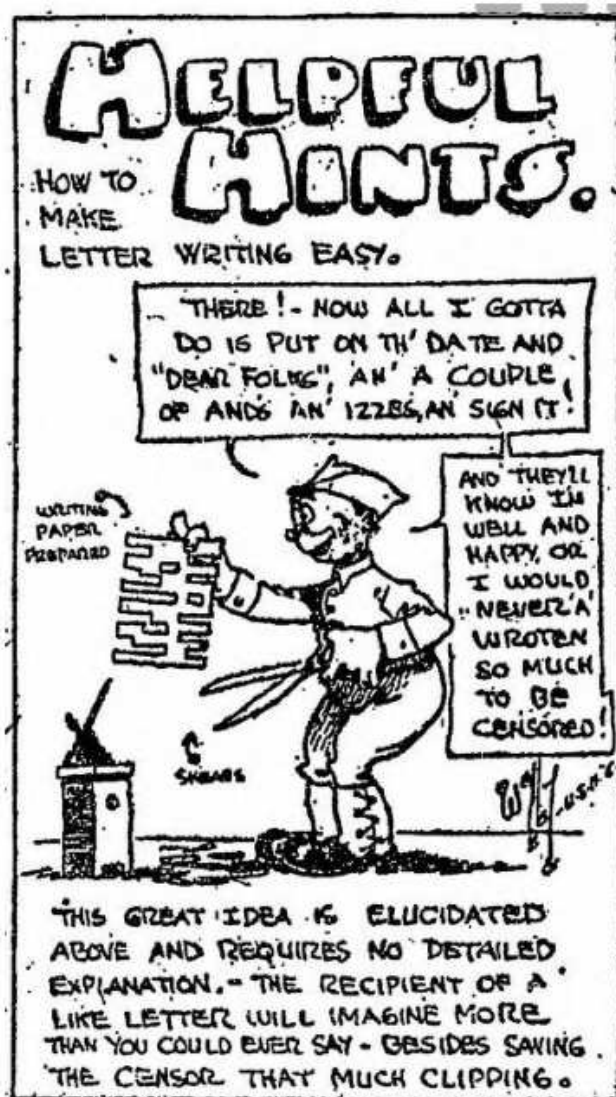
²²⁰ *Ibid*.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 12.

check basis.²²² This official censorship would continue until January, 1923 when the last of the American occupation forces withdrew from Germany and their zone of occupation was turned over to French occupation forces.²²³

²²² Dubin, Kugel. "WWI 100: Philately Tells the Story," 354.

²²³ Ibid.



224

²²⁴ Wallgren, "It's Not What You Mean, It's What They Think" *The Stars and Strips; The American Soldiers' Newspaper of World War I* (Paris, France) August 16th, 1918 p.7.

CHAPTER FOUR

CLAYTON C. MOORE

Given the amount of government, military, and self-censorship that went on during World War One it is not surprising that we know little about the actual experiences of many a doughboy. Take the case of Clayton C. Moore, the author's great uncle, who died on September 29, 1918,¹ as allied forces attempted to break the German Hindenburg Line in northern France.² His story is not unlike that of thousands of other young American men who answered the call of duty and gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country. What did Clayton think of the war and his experiences during it? His letters can only tell us so much as he did not keep a personal journal and he was careful to self-censor his own letter writing. To trace the steps of this young American doughboy from his home in western New York, to a training camp in South Carolina, across the Atlantic to Northern France, and back to the village of Randolph, New York where he rests today, it will require the use of not only Clayton's letters, but the firsthand accounts of many others who experienced the events that led up to the battle of the Hindenburg line (see Appendixes A&B).

¹ "Over the Top with Company E," *Jamestown Post-Journal*, November 25, 1918.6.

² The Hindenburg Line (German: *Siegfriedstellung*, Siegfried Position) was a German defensive position built during the winter of 1916–1917 on the Western Front during the First World War. The line ran through Northern France from Arras to Laffaux, near Soissons on the Aisne River. The Hindenburg Line was attacked several times in 1917, notably at St Quentin, Bullecourt, the Aisne, and Cambrai and was broken in September 1918 during the Hundred Days Offensive.

Growing up the author knew very little about this soldier of the Great War, only that his mother's younger brother Clayton Waddington, had been named in honor of this rather mysterious figure. This changed upon the passing of Private Moore's last remaining sibling in 2003.³ Among his sister's estate was found a trunk that had belonged to her older brother that very likely was returned to the states with Clayton's body after the conclusion of the war in 1925.⁴ The trunk contained his personal effects, citations, newspaper clippings, photos, and most precious of all several hand written letters sent home to his family and signed "Cash" at the bottom of each one.⁵ Using these admittedly limited resources it is still possible to recreate the steps of Clayton Moore, attempt to understand his motivations, and compare his experience with that of thousands of other average American doughboys, thereby adding his voice to the collective memory of the War to end all War.⁶

Clayton C. Moore was born in January, 1898 in the little town of Onoville in Cattaraugus County, New York.⁷ He was the eldest of five siblings.⁸ Little of his early life is recorded other than that he lived in a rural area of upstate New York near the city of Jamestown, and attended a one room schoolhouse.⁹ Clayton's family was of modest means, and he came from quite ordinary American stock apart from the fact that his

³ Velma Anderson (Moore) was Clayton's third sister and lived from 1903 to 2003, passing away at the very respectable age of 99.

⁴ "Body of a Veteran to be Shipped Here: Son of Mr. and Mrs. Moore," *Jamestown Post-Journal*, 18 May, 1925.

⁵ "Cash" seems to be a nickname given to Clayton by his father who he refers to in his letters as "The Old Man". His father, B. T. Moore passed away in 1963 and who the author remembers as a very stern man, terrifying to a four year old.

⁶ In August 1914, immediately after the outbreak of the war, British author and social commentator H. G. Wells published a number of articles in London newspapers that subsequently appeared as a book entitled *The War That Will End War*, the term became associated with Woodrow Wilson although he is known to have used the phrase only once.

⁷ The population in the 1910 national census was 487.

⁸ Clayton had four younger sisters: Irma, Velma, Mable (the author's maternal grandmother), and Mildred.

⁹ Mable Waddington, personal interview with author, November 4, 1979.

ancestors had arrived from Great Britain in 1643 settling in the New Haven Colony.¹⁰ Clayton first appears in the official military record on March 31, 1917 when he enlisted in Company E of the 74th Infantry of the New York State National Guard.¹¹ This was two full days before President Wilson declared war on Germany and it tells us something about young Clayton. He did not wait to be drafted and joined up before hostilities had even been declared. What were his motivations, was he looking to escape life in rural up-state New York, was it the military pay, escaping a bad home life, or seeking adventure and military glory? It is quite likely that Clayton, like many other young American men had come to the conclusion that war with Germany was inevitable, and that it would be better to enlist than to wait to be drafted.

Clayton was most probably motivated to sign up because by 1917 American public opinion had already swung against Germany and the Central Powers. The United States had maintained an official policy of neutrality since the beginning of the conflict in 1914, however, by 1917 events had shifted public opinion into not what should be called an all-out “pro-Allied stance,” but rather an all-out “anti-German one.” From the start Americans viewed the war as the fault of Kaiser Wilhelm and his thoroughly undemocratic regime. American war correspondents like Frederick Palmer placed the blame for the war squarely on the “goose-stepping, alert sprout of German militarism.”¹² American attitudes toward Germany itself had been a mixed bag long before the start of the war; on the one hand Germany was seen as a cultured, educated, and industrious

¹⁰ Scott L. Kent, *Kent-Waddington Family History*, unpublished-in the author’s possession.

¹¹ Colonel Edgar S. Jennings. *A Short History and Illustrated Roster of the 108th Infantry United States Army*. Accessed 10/13/2015, www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nycayuga/veteran/108thinf/.59.

¹² Michael S. Neiberg. *Diplomatic History, Vol.38 No.4* (Oxford University Press, New York NY 2014).801.

nation, however, on the other hand Germany was viewed as a despised autocratic state ruled by a militaristic dynasty. Eventually, many Americans came to see two separate Germanys, as they had much in common with the German people but loathed the German government.

Not that the average American had any great love for Great Britain, which was viewed as the world's expansionist imperial power ruled by a monarchy that was not much less desirable than the one ruling in Germany. For young Clayton Moore this attitude would have been tempered by the fact that his family, and upwards of forty percent of the American public, was of British descent.¹³ Additionally, the population of the southern tier of New York contains a very small German population many of whom belonged to the so called "Amish" community of the Pennsylvania Dutch.¹⁴ A group that young men like Clayton would have undoubtedly viewed as "the other."¹⁵

American newspapers were generally pro-British and followed the events of the war closely and generally offered devastating criticism of Germany's behavior in the war. The April 4, 1917 edition of the local *Post* newspaper carried the story of a "War against Mankind:"

The present German warfare against commerce is a war against mankind. It is a war against all nations. American ships have been sunk, Americans lives taken, in ways which it has stirred us very deeply to learn of, but the ships and people of the neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and

¹³ Abstract of the United States Census, 1900, accessed 11 November 2015, <https://www.census.gov/overview/1900>.

¹⁴ Estimated to have been about 9 percent of the population in the southern tier of New York, as the most recent wave of German immigration had been to the nearby city of Buffalo. Frederick C. Luebke. *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War One*, 30.

¹⁵ The Amish are a group of traditionalist Christian church fellowships with Swiss German origins, they are closely related to, but a distinct branch off from, Mennonite churches. The Amish are known for simple living, plain dress, Christian pacifism, and are slower to adopt many conveniences of modern technology, most Amish speak Pennsylvania Dutch, and refer to non-Amish people as "English", regardless of their ethnicity. The largest Amish communities exist mostly in western New York, primarily in Chautauqua County.

overwhelmed in the waters in the same way. There has been no discrimination. The challenge is to all mankind. Each nation must decide for itself how it will meet it.¹⁶

The American Public never viewed the war with entirely neutral eyes and saw Britain and France as the defenders of democracy, and the victims of naked German aggression. Germany's shocking behavior at the start of the war was eagerly exposed by British propaganda efforts and stories of the atrocities committed against neutral Belgium allowed for American public sympathy to swing further toward both Britain and France. The people of Belgium were viewed as the innocent victims of the worst types of aggression by a despotic German state. It is difficult to know just what percentage of the American public was pro-Britain before the start of the war as modern polls did not yet exist; however, a survey of 350 American newspapers in the fall of 1914 revealed that 46 percent were pro-Britain and only 5 percent were pro-German, the rest remained staunchly neutral.¹⁷ Clayton Moore's attitudes would have clearly been influenced by the media and society around him, bolstered perhaps by the local press and his ancestral heritage, long before war was formally declared.

The sinking of the Lusitania in May 1915 clearly demonstrated too many that neither distance nor neutrality could prevent the United States from feeling the effects of an ever widening war. Americans were outraged by the sinking of the Lusitania, some public figures like Theodore Roosevelt even called for a declaration of war.¹⁸ Few Americans shared this viewpoint in 1915, however the sinking of the Lusitania no doubt

¹⁶ "War Against Mankind: Ships of Friendly and Neutral Nations Sunk Indiscriminately" *The Post* (Ellicottville, N.Y.) 4 April 1917.1.

¹⁷ Michael S. Neiberg. *Diplomatic History*, 804.

¹⁸ H. C. Peterson. *Propaganda For War: The Campaign Against American Neutrality, 1914-1917* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1939) 170.

began to turn public opinion against Germany and her Allies.¹⁹ While the sinking of the Lusitania in itself did not get the United States directly involved in the Great War,²⁰ it did begin a lengthy debate in the nation about preparing for an oncoming conflict that many in the Wilson administration now believed was only a matter of time.²¹

President Wilson maintained his official policy of neutrality, but his actions spoke quite differently. In late 1915, he announced that he intended to seek funding for major increases in the size of both the navy and the army.²² Wilson ordered a vast increase in the size of the national army to 140,000 active duty troops and an increase in the national reserves to 400,000 men.²³ Additionally, the 1916 National Defense Act authorized the National Guard to grow from 100,000 to 400,000 men, and the act also provided funds for their training and equipment.²⁴ This massive build up was presented to the American public as the only way to keep the United States out of the widening world war; however, events on the world stage began to move quickly and drag the United States only deeper into the conflict. Wilson attempted to build up American forces while he still sought to keep America officially neutral and out of the war. Running for re-election in 1916, Wilson's campaign slogan was that "He keep us out of war."²⁵ Wilson's eventual re-election could not prevent the rising tension with Germany that escalated on March 23,

¹⁹ By 1915, Germany's allies included Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire.

²⁰ Few people remember that the German government had taken out ads in American newspapers warning Americans not to travel on the Lusitania as it was secretly carrying arms to Great Britain and was therefore a legitimate target for attack. "German Embassy Issues Warning" *The New York Times* 1 May 1915, 3.

²¹ Woodrow Wilson. "Address to Naturalized Citizens at Convention Hall," in *World War I and America: Told, by the Americans who Lived it*, ed. A. Scott Berg (Literary Classics of America, New York, N.Y., 2017), 102-103.

²² "Governors Wire Wilson Support: Finds Strong Sentiment for Increasing National Defenses" *The New York Times*, 25 August 1915.2

²³ Michael S. Neiberg. *Diplomatic History*, 806.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ H. C. Peterson. *Propaganda For War*, 279.

1916 when a German submarine sank the *Sussex*, an English Channel ferry, taking the lives of eighty Americans.²⁶ This event marked the start of a new German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare and the end of German attempts at diplomacy. The sinking of the *Sussex* alongside the publication of the Zimmerman telegram, on March 1, 1917 was the final straw for the American public;²⁷ Germany was now seen clearly as an enemy plotting with the Mexican government to invade American territory. Congress began a debate on a bill to arm American merchant ships on the high seas, a step that the German government said it would treat as an act of war.²⁸ Clearly, neutrality would no longer be an option for the United States and thousands of young American men began enlisting in the various armed services to defend their country. These newly enlisted doughboys signed up for many reasons beyond just patriotic duty, for some it was to make some money and for others to have an adventure in far off France.

Private Moore, soldier #1.214.476, was called to active duty on October 20, 1917 and sent to the newly built Camp Wadsworth in Spartanburg, South Carolina.²⁹ The average American soldier who fought in Europe received six months training in the United States and an additional two months upon their arrival in France.³⁰ Ultimately over two million men, organized into forty-two divisions, would arrive in Europe to take on the Germans and their Central Power allies, most of them serving in northern France.

²⁶ “Break is Likely if Sussex Blame Rests on Germany” *The New York Times*, March 31, 1916.1.
Martin Gilbert. *The First World War*, 236.

²⁷ The Zimmermann Note (or Telegram) was a secret diplomatic communication issued from the German Foreign Office in January 1917 that proposed a military alliance between Germany and Mexico. If the United States entered World War I against Germany, Mexico would recover Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. The telegram was intercepted and decoded by British intelligence.

²⁸ Martin Gilbert. *The First World War*, 236.

²⁹ Colonel Edgar S. Jennings. *A Short History and Illustrated Roster of the 108th Infantry United States Army* (Edward Stern & Company Inc., Philadelphia, 1918), 4.

³⁰ Private Moore would receive six months training in South Carolina and an additional three months in France. Clayton C. Moore, personal correspondence in author’s possession.

To train this vast force, the American government announced that it would build thirty-two cantonments (training camps) and asked for bids from cities across the nation that were willing to host these camps.³¹ This resulted in an intense competition between American towns and cities throughout the country. Securing a cantonment would bring tremendous economic benefits and national recognition to the winning communities, and one such city was Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Spartanburg had a number of advantages over other locations; it was located in the Deep South and seeing that the plan was to house the troops in tents, it made an ideal location for year-round training. Spartanburg was also a small city set in a rural location that ensured plenty of vacant land available for both the building of the camp and area for military training and maneuvers. The city's remote location also allowed the army to better control all information going into and coming out of the camp.³² Additionally, the citizens of Spartanburg raised a 200,000 dollar fund to attract the federal government's interest.³³ The construction of Camp Wadsworth and the other cantonments were carried out at a frantic pace; the plans for Camp Wadsworth called for the construction of 915 wooden structures and needed to be completed by end of September 1917 when the first trainees were scheduled to arrive.³⁴

The hasty pace at which the camps were built can be attested to in a letter that Private Moore sent home to his family in western New York shortly after his arrival where he complained about the administrative problems of the new camps:

³¹ Leonard P. Ayres. *The official Record of the United States' Part in the Great War* (United States Government Press, Washington D.C. 1919), 48.

³² Jonathan Brooke. *City of Success-Spartanburg, S.C. In The Early 1900's* Accessed December 13, 2020, <http://www.schistory.net/campwadsworth/chapter2.html>. 1.

³³ *Ibid.* 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, chapter 3. 4.

I received your letters in pretty close order, I don't see why you didn't get my letter sooner for I wrote as soon as I was sure what our address was. I had begun to think you all had forgot me when you didn't write. There seems to be something wrong with our mail system down here cause we don't get our mail right.³⁵

In a later letter sent from Camp Wadsworth the mail problems seem to continue:

I thought I would write + find out what the dickens is the matter with you people up there, I wrote two letters in the last three weeks and haven't got an ans. from any of them. What is the matter, you all sore about something?³⁶

The problems with Clayton's mail could have been multi-faceted, the camps were not yet fully functional and their mail facilities were in a state of chaos. Officially there were six mail deliveries to the camp per day with mail arriving by train to Spartanburg four times per day.³⁷ Letters were not yet being directly censored so it is unlikely that any of Clayton's letters were seized for improper content.

Aside from the mail problems, life at Camp Wadsworth appears to have been rather routine and the war in Europe rarely seems to have entered into the conversation. Packages from home were of great interest and seem to have arrived more regularly than letters from home:

The other day I rec. the box you all sent me two days ago and I sure appreciated it very much, the doughnuts were fine and that what you call it in the jar was just fine, tell Irma (his younger sister) she sure made some dandy fudge...³⁸

Clayton's only reference to the war comes from a letter dated December 12 when he states "I wish this dam war would let me get at them or end and let me get around and

³⁵ Clayton C. Moore to family 17 October 1917, in authors' possession.

³⁶ Clayton C. Moore to family 12 March 1918, in authors' possession.

³⁷ "Arrival and Departure of Mails at Camp Wadsworth" *The Wadsworth Gas Attack and Rio Grande Rattler*, Spartanburg S.C., November 27, 1917. 13.

³⁸ Clayton C. Moore to family 17 October 1917, in authors' possession.

shake a leg.”³⁹ This silence about the war may seem strange, however, the doughboys were told that their letters would be routinely censored and that they had to be careful about what they wrote for information might fall into German hands. The doughboys bought this story and it is rather remarkable when you consider that they were still in training camps in rural South Carolina. The stories of a vast German spy network in America were clearly working in the favor of the American military. Unlike earlier American wars, such as the Civil War, letters from the Great War contain little content about the war itself. This makes it difficult to know the true thoughts the doughboys had about the conflict, however, it helps to explain why soldiers like Private Moore write about such trivial matters as “but that isn’t what worries me most, I am wondering if “Jeff” will ever grow as tall as “Mutt”, Ha, Ha.”⁴⁰ In fact the only fighting ever mentioned by Clayton was among the doughboys themselves:

I don’t know as you can read this letter or not, for about an hour ago I had a little run in with a fellow named Homer, you have heard me talk about him, he is in our squad and I am still heated up a little I have been trying to get a crack at him for months and the only regret I have, I knocked him down on my bunk and broke it and I will have to sleep on the floor for a couple of days.⁴¹

While the war was not a main topic of conversation, Private Moore spends a great deal of time writing about his training in South Carolina, “first it is throwing bombs, then automatic machine gun, then trench mortar, patrolling, bayonet work, jiu-jitsu, wrestling, boxing” which is not surprising as training ran from dawn to dusk and at least for ten

³⁹ Clayton C. Moore to family 12 December 1917, in authors’ possession.

⁴⁰Mutt and Jeff was a long-running and widely popular American newspaper comic strip created by cartoonist Bud Fisher in 1907. It is commonly regarded as the first daily comic strip. Clayton C. Moore to family 12 December 1917, in authors’ possession.

⁴¹ Clayton C. Moore to family 12 December 1917, in authors’ possession.

hours per day.⁴² One of the most notable features of Camp Wadsworth, one that Clayton dwelled upon in his writing, was its extensive recreation of the system of trenches that existed in northern France; allowing the American trainees to practice in the “real thing” and prepare themselves for life on the battlefields of Europe. This realism was further strengthened as the training included instruction by both British and French military officers who had been stationed at the Western Front.⁴³ Clayton expends a great deal of his letter writing time to describing his extensive training and the time spent in the “trenches” of South Carolina:

I hiked 25 miles the last day and some tired we were. I had good luck on the rifle range I made sharpshooter and just missed making expert riflemen if I hadn't brock [*sic*] the front sight on my own rifle I would of made them two easy but I had to use a new gun and I had to waste a couple of shots to find where to hold it, it was a hard course to shoot it was made in three heats one at 1+2+3 hundred yards out. Bulls eyes that was easy I got (a score of) 162 out of a possible 175 + the next was harder, it was just the head of a man painted the color of our uniforms and you could hardly see them but I got a good score the last was a darn hard one, they used the same head target at rapid fire 15 shots in one minute believe me that made me [*sic*] shot. But I am feeling all wright [*sic*] at being a sharpshooter that means 2 dollars a month more for me. We have been having it darn hard the last week. The next day after we had to go in the trenches and live for 24 hrs. and when you go in them you live there you can't step out of them a minute nor get your head above the ground it was below zero 2 degrees, 2 men froze to death and 3 more came pretty near it, they are in the hospital now believe me we were some sick of trench work but you can bet your sweet life this boy went in them trenches to meet the north pole, I had two suits of wolling [*sic*] underwear on and two wolling pants.⁴⁴

Such realistic training was deemed necessary by the American military knowing the existing conditions on the Western Front. However, news of men freezing to death while

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division, Vol. 1* (Wynkoop, Hollenbeck, Crawford Co., New York N.Y., 1921) 117-119.

⁴⁴ Clayton C. Moore to family 12 December 1917, in authors’ possession.

training was another matter. The military believed that it needed to censor negative information coming out of the training camps can be clearly demonstrated by its reaction to stories that men were freezing to death in the training trenches of South Carolina.

The commander of the 27th Division, John Francis O’Ryan,⁴⁵ had put out a statement that “the training period here under favorable climatic conditions of this section of the country will prove most valuable” and that the training in the trenches “must produce an obedience so prompt and unquestioned that the act is preformed subconsciously.”⁴⁶ As this was before the period of time that the soldier’s letters were being directly censored, O’Ryan worried that such rumors/information might hurt the war effort. In his final report on the war effort he would state that:

The conditions, however, were carefully observed so that the degree of discomfort or hardship might not be out of proportion to the value to be derived from the experience. The practice periods in the camp trenches furnished some incidents which illustrated the extent to which rumors are circulated in a war army, and as well the credulity of people in relation to such rumors. Undoubtedly numbers of the younger men wrote home stories of their trench experiences and such accounts probably lost little in the telling...At one time rumors were circulated in New York that one or more soldiers had been frozen to death while on duty in the camp trenches. Finally, by division order the men were warned that the spreading of any rumor tending to injure the morale or efficiency of the army or any of its units would be very summarily dealt with, and it became the duty of all to report the names of those who repeated rumors...In any future mobilization on a large scale, it might be well for commanding officers of troops to anticipate the abuses in relation to rumors which were so general in our army, for a time at least, by pointing out the evil effects of rumors and the obligation of officers and men to avoid transmitting them.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ John Francis O’Ryan was a New York City attorney, politician, government official and military officer. He served as commander of the 27th Division during World War I. During World War II he was New York State Civil Defense Director.

⁴⁶ Major-General John O’Ryan, “To the Men of the 27th Division,” *The Wadsworth Gas Attack and Rio Grande Rattler* (Spartanburg, S.C.), December 15, 1917.2.

⁴⁷ Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*. 111-112.

Here we can clearly see the military's belief that it needed to both censor the doughboys' letters outright and also to convince them that it was of paramount importance for the doughboys to self-censor their letter writing in support of the war effort. Two goals that the American military would ultimately be very successful at.

To stop the spread of these rumors, O'Ryan enlisted the camp newspaper *The Wadsworth Gas Attack and The Rio Grande Rattler* who's next issue ran a scathing attack on the spread of rumors:⁴⁸

Yet, the next day, the camp was regaled with a series of those remarkable rumors that are never true and always uncomplimentary in that they reflect no credit upon the intelligence and gameness of the originators. We were told that seven (or was it eleven) poor, ill-treated soldier boys (they are always soldier boys in such yarns) were carried out of the trenches frozen quite stiff. All of them dead, either in the trenches or soon after being removed therefrom. Headquarters was covering up the truth-denying the facts. It was outrageous! Of course nothing of the sort occurred. Colds, some heavy and some otherwise, have resulted from trench occupancy. What did you expect? Steam heat and velour cushioned firing steps? What do you fellows think this affair is; a clambake? Men have died since the camp opened and more will follow.⁴⁹ But the percentage of deaths here is no greater than it would have been anywhere else where 30,000 men might be mobilized-in civil or military life. Quit beefing! Nobody was frozen to death in the trenches despite the fellows who saw the funeral of the man who, someone told them, had been frozen to death in the trenches. Such bleating cannot be classified. The boy scouts are too game to be used by way of comparison. As a matter of fact the greatest suffering settled in the feet of the rumor mongers. It's a bit pathetic to realize that you huskies stand for these raw fakes. If you are going to lay down now- GOOD NIGHT.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The *Rio Grande Rattler* was published by the New York National Guard while they were stationed on the Mexican Border in 1916 -1917. After August, 1917, the *Rio Grande Rattler* became the *Wadsworth Gas Attack and the Rio Grande Rattler*, which eventually became just *The Gas Attack*.

⁴⁹ Fatal accidents were indeed reported in the camp newspaper, the December 15th edition of *The Wadsworth Gas Attack* reported "A board of officers, to consist of Col. James R. Howlett, 14th infantry; Maj. Lyman A. Wood, 74th infantry; Maj. R. W. Hinds, 106th field artillery, is appointed to investigate the railroad accident at Woodruff, S.C., on December 1, resulting in the death of Private Charles Martin and Joseph F. Curti, 47th infantry." "Will Investigate Two Fatal Accidents," *The Wadsworth Gas Attack and Rio Grande Rattler*, Spartanburg S.C., December 15, 1917.27.

⁵⁰"Nothing Worse Than Cold Feet: But General Rumor Made It Rigor Mortis" *The Wadsworth Gas Attack and Rio Grande Rattler* (Spartanburg, S.C.), December 22, 1917.3.

The point was made, rumor mongering would hurt the war effort and the doughboys should watch what they write in their letters. Although not determinative of its effectiveness, Private Moore would never again write anything in his letters home that might be interpreted as gossip or anything that might be of use to the enemy. The army's message of self-censorship was sinking in long before the doughboys sailed for France. Was the news of the deaths of frozen doughboys censored by the army or were they just rumors as claimed? No deaths by freezing were ever recorded by the military at Camp Wadsworth, either in the official records or in the *Wadsworth Gas Attack and The Rio Grande Rattler*.⁵¹ The army medical corps records do report that:

A mild type of influenza was prevalent at Camp Wadsworth from the first. These were two waves of incidence, the crest of the first being 124 cases in December, 1917, that of the second being 779 cases in April. The epidemic in the fall of 1918 began September 24 and was largely over by October 10.⁵²

It would appear that in this case the army was not censoring information and was telling the truth.

After just six months of training, large numbers of American troops were being prepared for transport to England and France. While some might question if six months of training was sufficient, it appeared to be in the minds of at least some of the doughboys. Private Moore wrote home that "You wouldn't hardly know me now days, I am leaner than a rat and sunburnt to a crisp, believe me I feel healthy and I can run a mile

⁵¹ The official record does list the deaths of 3 men in December 1917 due to "disease" no details are recorded. ⁵¹ Major General John Francis O'Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*, Vol. 2 (Wynkoop, Hollenbeck, Crawford Co., New York N.Y., 1921) 1065-1090.

⁵² U.S. Army Medical Department: Office of Medical History, *Chapter V: National Guard Camps*, accessed 12/21/20, <https://history.amedd.army.mil/booksdocs/wwi/wwivoliv/chapter5.htm>.230. *Report of the Surgeon-General of the Army to the Secretary of War 1919* Vol. I, (Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1919) 594.

and not feel it.”⁵³ Despite the American military’s best efforts could this rather brief training have fully prepared the doughboys for the carnage that lay ahead of them in Europe? Clayton seems to have believed so and clearly the training camps had boosted the self-confidence and moral of the troops. Corporal Edwin S. Schreiner, also in the 108th, stated that:

We have taken a wonderful sprint this past few weeks in the final round of our extensive training, and Capt. Taggart seems to be well pleased with the showing of his company. In the early part of our training Co. M had been seriously handicapped due to the unpleasant visit of Mr. Quarantine who had been quite prominent, but now that this streak of “hard luck” as the boys call it, has passed the company is ready to complete against any in the Division for superiority upon both the drill fields and in the sport circle. We are anxiously awaiting the orders to vacate this Burg, so that we may show our many admirers at home what we have been doing and can readily assure them that we will give an account that all can be proud of.⁵⁴

A sense of urgency had set in during the spring of 1918 with the defeat of Tsarist Russia that allowed the German military to begin to move large numbers of troops from the Eastern to Western Front and made a German breakthrough to Paris seem ever more likely. The success of the German spring offensive of 1918 meant that every ship that could be secured by the allies was quickly pressed into service. During the nineteen months that America participated in the Great War no less than two million soldiers were carried to Europe.⁵⁵ 500,000 were transported during the first thirteen months, and an astonishing 1,500,000 were transported during the final six months of the war.⁵⁶ This transportation marathon occurred mainly between May and October 1918, with July being the peak month when over 306,000 men and their equipment were carried safely to

⁵³ Clayton C. Moore to family 12 March 1918, in authors’ possession.

⁵⁴ Co. M, 108th Infantry” *The Wadsworth Gas Attack and Rio Grande Rattler* (Spartanburg, S.C.), May 4, 1918. 32.

⁵⁵ Leonard P. Ayres. *The official Record of the United States’ Part in the Great War*.35.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

European ports.⁵⁷ One reason for this success was due to a new American naval tactic, the convoy. The idea of the convoy was strongly backed by the Admiral William Sims and the United States Navy and involved the use of smaller and more maneuverable destroyers and submarine-chasers instead of the much larger battleships.⁵⁸ This new tactic greatly reduced the number of Allied ships sunk by German U-boats.⁵⁹

The Imperial German government had taken a huge gamble when they decided to resume unrestricted warfare on the Atlantic Ocean, believing that the United States could never build, train, and deliver an army to Europe before 1919. It turned out that they were very much mistaken and it was about to cost them victory in the Great War. Most doughboys left the great port of New York, but many, like Private Moore, disembarked from the port of Newport News, Virginia.⁶⁰ In early May, 1918 elements of the 27th division moved to Camp Stuart in Newport News Virginia to await their transport to Europe.⁶¹ The information about which ship would leave which port and when was kept under strict secrecy and the doughboys were forbidden to give away any information in their letters home. This was made easier due to that fact that they did not know this information until the last day before departure. Still the doughboys had a sense that they would not sail the day after they arrived, "I thought I would write seeing it is payday and send a dollar to get me some snuff, I guess you will have time to get it here before we start out on our big maneuver I guess it is going to last about a month so there are [*sic*] a

⁵⁷ Ibid, 38.

⁵⁸ William Sowden Sims was an admiral of the United States Navy who fought during the late 19th and early 20th centuries to modernize the American navy. During World War One he commanded all United States naval forces operating in Europe. He also served twice as president of the Naval War College.

⁵⁹ Frank Freidle. *Over There, The Story of America's First Great Overseas Crusade* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1990) 16.

⁶⁰ Major General John Francis O'Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*. 146.

⁶¹ Clayton C. Moore to family 4 May 1918, in authors' possession.

lot of hard work ahead of us so I will have something to keep up my ambition.”⁶² Clearly rumors and gossip were still a part of everyday life for the doughboys. Private Moore would spend only 13 days in Virginia before he disembarked on May 17, aboard the *U.S.S. President Grant*.⁶³

Despite increased German U-boat activity, no American troop transports carrying the 27 Division were sunk on the eastward voyage.⁶⁴ The threat of the German U-boats was clearly on the minds of the doughboys as they sailed toward Europe. Private Moore wrote this description:

It is about time I wrote a letter to let you know I landed in France all O.K. and glad of it, it was easy like nothing to get here, the subs have not got anything on the old U.S....coming over here it was calm sea all the way but one day it got pretty rough, I didn't get sick for a wonder but you had ought to have seen some of the boys feed the fishes overboard they didn't have any lunch left or wish to have any.⁶⁵

Clayton has clearly gotten self-censorship down, he never mentioned the ship he sailed on, the dates he sailed, his port of embarkation or the fact that on May 29th near the end of his voyage, the *President Grant* was attacked by a German U-boat. According to the official army report “President Grant, and several other smaller ships was [*sic*]

⁶² Clayton C. Moore to family 6 May 1918, in authors' possession.

⁶³ Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*. 146.

Originally christened as the SS *Servian*, and built in 1903, the German owned and operated SS *President Grant* took refuge at New York City when the outbreak of World War I made the high seas unsafe for German merchant ships. She was interned at Hoboken, New Jersey and remained inactive for nearly three years until the United States entered the war in April 1917. The ship was seized when the United States officially declared war against Germany. Turned over to the Navy, she was commissioned USS *President Grant* on 2 August 1917, and she made sixteen round trips between New York and ports of France, carrying a total of 40,104 servicemen on her eastbound passage, and a total of 37,025 servicemen on her westbound returns to New York.

⁶⁴ Leonard P. Ayres. *The official Record of the United States' Part in the Great War*. 47.

This was not the case for all transport ships returning to America, most notably the U.S.S. *President Lincoln* which was sunk off the French coast on May 31, 1918 after being struck by three torpedoes from the German submarine *U-90*, and sank in just over 20 minutes. Of the 715 people aboard, 26 men were lost with the ship.

⁶⁵ Clayton C. Moore to family (?) June 1918, in authors' possession.*

*Letter is missing an exact date.

attacked at 5:20 p.m. by an enemy submarine. The guns of the transports as well as those of the U.S. Cruiser *Huntington* went into action and the destroyers circled about and dropped depth bombs. The submarine was reported sunk.”⁶⁶ Surely Private Moore was aware of this action, however, in his letter home not a word about it. The army had achieved its goal in convincing many of the doughboys to self-censor, however, it must be noted that this is also the first of Private Moore’s letters that also contain a censor’s mark. Was this compliance to the rules fear of censorship, belief in censorship, or a combination of both?

Upon their arrival in Europe, the American forces were put through another three months of training before their deployment toward the front lines.⁶⁷ This time allowed the doughboys to acclimate to France and it even allowed for some sightseeing:

Everybody works here, women do about all the work in the fields, it is sure tough on them, but they do it cheerful. We have traveled around France quite a lot since we landed but it will be a good while before we see any fighting given we have about as much to learn here as we did in the first place...we stopped in the city where Joan of Arc was burned and saw her tomb⁶⁸, it is a beautiful one.⁶⁹

The effects of the prolonged war in France were quite evident even in the reserve training areas. For the first time we see Private Moore begin to question the justice of this long and protracted conflict:

This is a great country more beautiful than I ever thought it would be, we have landed some time ago but I couldn’t get any paper to write with. Everything is scarce over here you can’t get any tobacco nor anything you want. Believe me France has suffered in the war...some of the things I have seen that he (the Germans) has done would make you wonder if they

⁶⁶ Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.147.

⁶⁷ Frank Freidle. *Over There, The Story of America’s First Great Overseas Crusade*.67.

⁶⁸ Most likely the Cathedral Notre-Dame in Rouen, France. Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.181.

⁶⁹ Clayton C. Moore to family (?) June 1918, in authors’ possession.

could really be sane, I doubt it. Nine tenths of the storys [*sic*] you hear about him are true...a fellow can't write much or they will censor it and there won't be much of a letter left.⁷⁰

Clearly, Private Moore has additional thoughts and personal observations on the direct effects the Great War was having on France, he also clearly feels that he cannot fully express/describe then in his letters for fear of the censor's pen. The doughboys are careful not to make any statement about their current location or write any statement that might even hint at questioning the validity of the war effort or that might be considered politically subversive. Many letters that did not pass the censor's muster were never delivered as they were simply destroyed. Clayton may have written additional letters that simply never made it back to New York State, "You want to write every week don't wait for my letters for they are lost sometimes,"⁷¹ followed by this complaint in a subsequent letter, "I rec. your letter yesterday, and will try (to) send one back today. I guess a fellow has to write every day to get one home."⁷²

The American 27th Division was assigned to a sector behind the British front lines in northern France and they began their European training attached to English troops in the line. The Americans did not always get along with their British allies and complained bitterly about the rations they received. British rations were smaller than the Yanks were accustomed to and, heaven forbid, they included *tea* and not *coffee*.⁷³ The Brits found this attitude to be quite "whinny" and it did not mesh at all with their stereotypical view of the

⁷⁰ Clayton C. Moore to family (?) June 1918, & (?) July 1918 in authors' possession.

⁷¹ Clayton C. Moore to Folks, 6 July 1918, in authors' possession.

⁷² Clayton C. Moore to Folks, 11 September 1918, in authors' possession.

⁷³ Mark A. Snell. *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance* (Kent State University Press, Kent Ohio, 2008) 104.

American cowboy.⁷⁴ One British soldier quipped “They don’t like tea but they always seem to make time for a tea break.”⁷⁵ Nor did Private Moore seem to agree “We are feeding good here and don’t let anyone tell you different, I assume you heard about the evils of France, well the worst thing I have been able to find is red wine and weak beer.”⁷⁶ The division was also largely instructed/trained by British Dominion troops, particularly the Australians. The Yanks and the Aussies seemed to have had a natural affection for each other and the “diggers” served as mentors for the newly arrived doughboys.⁷⁷

General Douglas Pershing, the commander of the American forces in France, had long insisted that the U.S. forces in Europe form their own army under direct American command. However, by the summer of 1918 the situation for the British on the Western Front had become so critical that Pershing reluctantly agreed to allow two American divisions to operate under British command. The 27th and 30th divisions were requested as they had performed quite well during their European training.⁷⁸ This transfer to British command is attested to in one of Private Moore’s letters, not in what he writes but by the fact that that it is written on stationary that is headed “On Active Service With British Expeditionary Force.”⁷⁹ The doughboys seem to have embraced this decision about as well as General Pershing did making it, Private Moore crossed out “British” and wrote

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Clayton C. Moore to Folks, 6 July 1918, in authors’ possession.

⁷⁷ The term digger was used for troops from both Australia and New Zealand during WWI and it is thought to have been born during the disastrous Gallipoli Campaign where the modern national identities of these two nations were born.

Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.219.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 152.

⁷⁹ Clayton C. Moore to family (?) June 1918, in authors’ possession.

“American” on each page of his letter.⁸⁰ Could this be Clayton’s attempt at writing in code, as he never mentions the transfer to British command in this letters?

The American 27th Division had a unique military experience compared with the other divisions that were sent to France as they served directly with the British Forces. Serving under British command may not have been a very popular decision with the Americans but getting into the action was. Private Moore now makes an ominous statement:

The only thing we are worrying about is that they will have licked them (the Germans) before we get a crack at them...I don’t believe I will ever smell powder, I think I will be home to eat Chris. [sic] dinner with you.⁸¹

Despite the deteriorating conditions for the Allies at the Western Front, this extended period of training for the doughboys was still deemed necessary as General O’Ryan explained:

The explanation for this is to be found in the condition already mentioned, that the American troops arrived in France short of much of the *material* requisite not only for combat, but for training. It was necessary, therefore, that upon receipt of machine guns, Lewis Guns, Stokes mortars, one pounders, grenades, wireless, sanitary and engineering equipment, the men should be trained in the use of this British type of *material* and armament.⁸² Furthermore, it has been found during the war that progress was so rapid in development by both sides of new methods and material, that it was essential for troops to be keep up to date by constant training when they were out of the line... There was much in the British army that differed from the American army, and the period of training with the British was not only essential for the reasons mentioned but was, as stated, one of the most interesting phases of the service abroad.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The Lewis automatic machine gun was a First World War–era light machine gun. Designed privately in America and widely used by troops of the British Empire during the war. The Stokes mortar was a British trench mortar, this 3-inch trench mortar was a smooth-bore, muzzle-loading weapon used for high angles of fire. The QF 1 pounder, universally known as the pom-pom gun due to the sound of its discharge was used initially during the war as an infantry gun and later on as a light anti-aircraft gun.

⁸³ Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*. 161.

Private Moore is basically silent on his period of training in France, noting that “You don’t want to expect to hear much of the war from me, you can hear more about it over there we hardly ever have a paper here.”⁸⁴ However, we can retrace his steps through General O’Ryan’s detailed account. The 108th infantry arrived at the French city of Noyelles-sur-Mer⁸⁵ by train on June 5, 1918, moving west by foot to training bases southwest of the city of St. Valéry on June 16.⁸⁶ Of this extensive training Private Moore only notes “We are getting a devil of a lot of hiking since we struck this country. When I get back home I don’t intend to pay any more railroad fares, start out and walk to Buffalo just to settle my breakfast.”⁸⁷

Clayton’s Company E appears in the official record again on the 16th of July:

General Plumer,⁸⁸ the Army Commander, made a personal inspection of the 54th Infantry Brigade, while in the vicinity of Abeele and Beauvoorde Wood.⁸⁹ There was no shelling there on this occasion and in field defiladed from enemy observation. Captain Sandberg’s company of the 108th infantry gave a demonstration of a company in attack. This company, always noted for its excellence, and as well for the exceptional physique of the young giants who constituted it, made a most favorable impression upon the Army Commander.”⁹⁰

Captain Charles Sandberg was indeed Private Moore’s commanding officer and he would write a personal letter to Clayton’s mother describing her son’s death just two and one

⁸⁴ Clayton C. Moore to Folks, 6 July 1918, in authors’ possession.

⁸⁵ Noyelles-sur-Mer is a small town in northern France situated on the coast, facing the English Channel.

⁸⁶ Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*. 181.

Saint-Valery-sur-Somme, is a seaport and resort on the south bank of the River Somme estuary, lying to the west of the battlefields of the Somme.

⁸⁷ Clayton C. Moore to Folks, 6 July 1918, in authors’ possession.

The distance from Onoville to Buffalo is 78.3 miles.

⁸⁸ Field Marshal Herbert Charles Onslow Plumer, 1st Viscount Plumer, was a senior British Army officer of the First World War. He later served as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army of the Rhine and then as Governor of Malta before becoming High Commissioner of the British Mandate for Palestine in 1925 and retiring in 1928.

⁸⁹ Abeele and Beauvoorde are two small Belgian villages in West-Flanders near the French border.

⁹⁰ Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*. 211.

half months later;⁹¹ as for “the exceptional physique of the young giants who constituted it,” Private Moore stood no more than five foot seven inches.⁹²

Despite his fears that the war would be over before he got to the Western Front, Private Moore’s 27th Division entered service on the British Sector of the Western Front in mid-August and was involved in their first combat near the Belgian city of Ypres, where they had assisted in the construction of new defensive trench works.⁹³ Private Moore gives nothing away noting only that “I see by the evening journal that we are going to the border, but they heard something we don’t know anything about, you don’t want to pay any attention to what the papers say”⁹⁴ On August 31, 1918 the 108th division engaged the Germans in the successful Ypres-Lys Operation,⁹⁵ to drive German forces from Mount Kemmel.⁹⁶ Although a minor action of the war, the Americans had proven themselves to their British allies. The battle had cost the 27th Division one officer and seventy-two enlisted men.⁹⁷ Without giving a date or a location, Private Moore notes that “Our Company was pretty lucky this time, didn’t get only one killed and four wounded.”⁹⁸ What direct role did Clayton play in this battle, we may never know, however it seems likely that he played some role as he states “Tell the Old Man I don’t know if I have bagged a Jerry for him yet or not...had a dual with a Jerry machine (gun)

⁹¹ Chas A. Sandburg to Mrs. Bayard Moore, 15 December 1918, in author’s possession.

⁹² Five feet seven and three quarter inches to be exact. *N.Y.S. Abstracts of World War One Military Service*. 1918 Accessed November 11, 2015 www.Ancestry.com/ClaytonC.Moore

⁹³ The Ypres-Lys Offensive of World War I, part of the larger Hundred Days Campaign, was launched in August 1918 to liberate Belgium and parts of northeast France. The offensive involved Australian, Belgian, British, Canadian, French, and American forces, and inflicted heavy casualties on the Germans opposing it. This forced a German retreat, and furthered the attrition that brought the war to an end.

⁹⁴ Clayton C. Moore to Folks, (?) August 1918, in authors’ possession.

⁹⁵ Mark A. Snell. *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance*. 107.

⁹⁶ “Mount Kemmel “is a hill formation, raising just 400 feet, in Flanders, Belgium.

⁹⁷ Mark A. Snell. *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance*. 107.

⁹⁸ Clayton C. Moore to Folks, (?) August 1918, in authors’ possession.

there is no way to tell whether I got him or not but he stopped shooting and didn't hear from him again that night.”⁹⁹ On September 3, 1918 the 27th Division was withdrawn from the front and placed in the reserves for additional training near the French town of Beauquesne which lies seventeen miles north of the city of Amiens.¹⁰⁰

It is during this period of training that we last hear directly from Private Moore. Reflecting upon his involvement at the battle of Mount Kemmel he notes that “We have been up to the trenches since I wrote last and are back for a rest, but I can't see the rest part of it, we have to drill everyday they don't believe in letting a fellow get stale over here.”¹⁰¹ Again Private Moore self-censors his letter giving away no information on where he has been or the location of battle he fought in, however, we do know what he has come to think about the war and the Germans in particular:

None of us got knocked off. The last trick in the trenches. I guess Jerry was too busy retreating that he couldn't take the time, he is sure getting all and more then he gave the Allies last spring. I think he is about ready to receive his damage checks and he sure has got a lot to pay, I have seen town after town that hasn't got a house any taller than I am. I remember one city that hasn't got a wall standing and before the war they said it was one of the most beautiful in France. Jerry seems to take delight in destroying everything he can, he will shell churches that would do him no good but to waste his ammunition, I have seen a lot of German prisoners and they are sure a goofy looking bunch, I have seen a few of them wonderful Prussian Guards and I don't see as they look much different from the rest.¹⁰²

On September 20, 1918 the entire 27th Division was placed under the direct command of the British Fourth Army,¹⁰³ and it was assigned to operate in conjunction

⁹⁹ Clayton C. Moore to Folks, (?)August 1918, in authors' possession.

¹⁰⁰ Mark A. Snell. *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance*. 107. Major General John Francis O'Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*. 253.

¹⁰¹ Clayton C. Moore to Folks, 11 September 1918, in authors' possession.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid. Major General John Francis O'Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*. 254.

with the Third and Fourth Australian Divisions taking part in a major offensive against the *Siegfried Stellung*,¹⁰⁴ known to the Allies as the Hindenburg Line.¹⁰⁵ The Hindenburg line was a series of three separate trench systems that had been strengthened by the addition of concrete machine-gun emplacements, observation posts, and dugouts. These German trenches were so advanced that many of them even contained electric lighting.¹⁰⁶ The goal assigned to the 27th Division was to break through this main German defense line and cross the St. Quentin Canal¹⁰⁷ near the small French town of Bellicourt.¹⁰⁸ Additionally they were to spearhead the assault against the western end of the six thousand yard long Bellicourt tunnel,¹⁰⁹ backed up by the Australian Divisions.¹¹⁰

The Americans entered the British front line trenches on September 25, relieving a British Division.¹¹¹ On the morning of September 27, the 108th Infantry marched from its bivouac camp at the town of Ronssoy, eight and one-half miles to a point west of Templeux le Geurard.¹¹² That same evening they marched the remaining six miles to the Western Front “over roads and trails subjected to very heavy enemy shell fire and gas concentration.”¹¹³ The 27th Division was to first attack the outer defenses of the

¹⁰⁴ Field Marshal Hindenburg and the German command referred to this newly fortified defensive line as the Siegfried Position.

¹⁰⁵ Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.251.

¹⁰⁶ Mark A. Snell. *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance*.108. Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.248&255.

¹⁰⁷ The *Canal de Saint-Quentin* is a canal in northern France connecting the Escaut River to the river Seine, it has a length of 57.5 miles and was opened in 1810.

¹⁰⁸ Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.251.

¹⁰⁹ The *Riqueval Tunnel* is a 3.52 mile long tunnel on the St Quentin Canal, close to the town of Bellicourt, in the department of Aisne, France. It connects Bellicourt with the town of Bony. It was constructed as part of the St Quentin Canal between 1801 and 1810, on the orders of none other than Napoleon.

¹¹⁰ Nick Lloyd. *Hundred Days: The Campaign that Ended World War I* (Basic Books: Philadelphia, 2014) 144.

¹¹¹ Dale Van Every. *The A. E. F. in Battle* (D. Appleton and Company: New York, NY, 1928) 267.

¹¹² Ronssoy is a small town in the Somme department in northern France, it is situated 11 miles north-west of the city of Saint-Quentin. Templeux le Geurard is a small village, south of Ronssoy and due east of Bellicourt.

.Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.302.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Hindenburg Line just to the west of the entrance to the Bellicourt tunnel.¹¹⁴ Before the start of the assault, an intense artillery bombardment occurred with over 750,000 shells poured down upon the line's German defenders.¹¹⁵ The British also unleashed mustard agent,¹¹⁶ their first use of this chemical agent during the war.¹¹⁷ The ground assault began at 5:30 am on the 27th of September with the main attack coming during the morning of the 29th despite reports of heavy fog and low visibility.¹¹⁸ To ease the nerves of the American doughboys, the British issued each one a half tumbler of rum,¹¹⁹ a common practice for the Brits, but a custom that horrified the conservative straight-laced General Pershing.¹²⁰

The main attack on Sunday September 29th was launched at 4:50 am with Private Moore's Company E of the 108th Infantry passing the junction of "Paul Trench and Quennemont Pit" at 7:00 am and crossing the Hindenburg line at 8:10 am,¹²¹ but suffering heavy losses due to a counter barrage by the Germans and from machine gun fire emanating from the abandoned Guillemont Farm, southwest of their main position.¹²² To further add to the confusion, at 9:10am pockets of German troops began to appear

¹¹⁴ Major General John Francis O'Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.255.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ The common name of "mustard gas" is inaccurate because the mustard agent is not actually vaporized, but dispersed as a fine mist of liquid droplets. Mustard agent was originally assigned the name LOST, after the scientists Wilhelm Lommel and Wilhelm Steinkopf, who developed a method of large-scale production for the Imperial German Army in 1916.

¹¹⁷ The Germans had been using against the Allies for some 15 months. Major General John Francis O'Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.256.

¹¹⁸ Dale Van Every. *The A. E. F. in Battle* (D. Appleton and Company: New York, NY, 1928) 269. Major General John Francis O'Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.278.

¹¹⁹ Mark A. Snell. *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance*.109.

¹²⁰ Pershing wanted the A.E. F. to be the "Cleanest Army in the World" and ordered that saloons in France be surrounded by military police to reduce the drunkenness of doughboys on leave in French cities. Allan M. Brandt. *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880* (Oxford University Press: New York NY, 1987) 103.

¹²¹ Major General John Francis O'Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.284.

¹²² Nick Lloyd. *Hundred Days: The Campaign that Ended World War I*, 183. Major General John Francis O'Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*.307.

behind the Americans,¹²³ reportedly emanating from “secret tunnels dug off of the main Bellicourt tunnel which was filled to the brim with German soldiers.”¹²⁴

Due to the fog and the poor visibility it was reported that the 108th Infantry was being “mowed down like pins in a bowling alley.”¹²⁵ At that moment, volunteers were requested to take out German machine gun nests, Private Moore stepped forward to volunteer and was killed instantly. According to his commanding officer, Captain Charles A. Sandburg:

...he lost his life while voluntarily advancing upon a hostile machine gun post so that his comrades might better locate its position. His brave action won the highest commendation... He died as he had lived, splendidly: a gentleman and a soldier to the end. His death was instantaneous.¹²⁶

A report at 10:35 am showed that the “leading battalion of the 108th Infantry was then in the (main) Hindenburg Line.”¹²⁷ The 27th Division was unable to advance beyond the main Hindenburg Line, but they were able to hold it until reinforced by their Australian comrades. The American attack had softened German resistance and by October 1, the Hindenburg line had been broken and the Americans had the honor of making the first breach. They would eventually push the Germans back twenty-one miles and capture 5,946 prisoners.¹²⁸

The 27th Division suffered 1,829 battle deaths, with 6,505 wounded, in their successful attempt to break the Hindenburg Line and shorten the war.¹²⁹ Private Moore

¹²³ Dale Blair. *The Battle of Bellicourt Tunnel: Tommies, Diggers and Doughboys on the Hindenburg Line, 1918*. (Frontline Books: London, UK, 2011) 62.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Dale Van Every. *The A. E. F. in Battle*. 278.

¹²⁶ Chas A. Sandburg to Mrs. Bayard Moore, 15 December 1918, in author's possession.

¹²⁷ Major General John Francis O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*. 307.

¹²⁸ Dale Van Every. *The A. E. F. in Battle*. 278.

¹²⁹ Mark A. Snell. *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance*. 117.

had been correct as the war ended long before Christmas Day 1918, some of his last written words were;

Tell the boss (his father) to get things set for he can figure on this here baby to come home all in one piece because Jerry has got to see faster than I can to get me. And believe me I will be willing to come home, I have had a belly full of roaming around, this little old war is no picnic... Your loving son, Cash.¹³⁰

Clayton Moore's body was first buried at the Benjamin Post Military Cemetery in the village of Ronssoy, France.¹³¹ His body was returned to the United States in the spring of 1925 for internment in the cemetery of the village of Randolph, New York, a mere seventeen miles from his birth place. His funeral was conducted with full military honors and members of his company and regiment were present.¹³²

Private Moore received a citation for courage, issued by Major General John F. O'Ryan, a citation for bravery issued by General John Pershing, an accolade signed by President Woodrow Wilson, and a tribute signed by Raymond Poincare, the President of France.¹³³ His funeral program contained the following poem:

He heard humanity's clear call,
And knew the voice divine;
He gave his life, he gave his all,
In deadly battle line,
The silent stars in love look down.
Where lies this loyal son;
In frost and dew they weave a crown.
Of honor he has won.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Clayton C. Moore to Folks, 11 September 1918, in authors' possession.

¹³¹ Chas A. Sandburg to Mrs. Bayard Moore, 15 December 1918, in author's possession.

¹³² "Tribute to a Soldier" *The Jamestown Post-Journal*, February 4, 1925.

¹³³ In author's possession.

¹³⁴ "In Memoriam" Certificate, in author's possession

Private Moore, like tens of thousands of other doughboys had answered their countries' call and had given the ultimate sacrifice. They died "to make the world safe for democracy," such an irony that the doughboy's efforts in the Great War failed so miserably. The United States had won the war but would fail to win the peace leading to the deaths for tens of thousands of more young Americans only twenty-three years later.

Had Private Moore's death been in vain? In the grand scope of the Great War it might seem so, however, in the terms of the battle of the Hindenburg Line perhaps not. Company E of the 108th Infantry had found itself in a grave position with the Germans firing on them in the fog from both the front and from behind, Private Moore sacrificed himself that his comrades might survive and break through the Hindenburg line, hastening the end of the war. His sacrifice was not unlike that of thousands of other doughboys; their brave acts and determination would eventually tip the scales and result in victory against the Germans. The failure to win the peace after the war rests on the heads of short sighted politicians. Private Moore's self-censored letters still speak to us across a century of time, shedding some light on the journey that so many young Americans took to defend their nation and then NOT write about it at their government's request. Private Moore is remembered today by his extended family and his great nephew, who is most indebted to him for his story.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Clayton Moore was survived by four sisters, nine nieces and nephews, twenty-four great nieces and nephews, and a still growing number of third and fourth generation descendants.

CHAPTER FIVE

AMERICAN CENSORSHIP POST THE GREAT WAR

American censorship did not end with the signing of the armistice in November, 1918. Even before the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month, the A.E.F. and the American government were engaged in the censoring of non-military information that they believed could still be harmful to the war effort, even as the war itself was winding down. The censorship of the previous eighteen months had placed both organizations into a mindset that allowed them to believe that most information needed to be controlled and doled out to the American public in the proper manner. Far from shying away from the censorship of the war era George Creel, in his final report on the Committee of Public Information, crowed that “The Committee supervised the voluntary censorship of the newspaper and periodical press and established rules and regulations for the cable censorship with respect to press dispatches.”¹ This time, however, the government’s censoring of information would be instrumental in causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans.²

The inaccurately named Spanish Influenza most likely began in the cantonments of the American Midwest, receiving its very moniker due to the ongoing censorship of

¹ George Creel. *Complete report of the Chairman*, 14.

² According to John M. Barry in his New York Times bestseller *The Great Influenza*, the lowest estimate of the great pandemic of 1918-20 is twenty one million. He further states that Epidemiologists today estimate that this influenza caused at least fifty million deaths worldwide, and it is possible as many as one hundred million.

the American government and the A. E. F.³ Being a neutral nation during the Great War, the Spanish government did not censor the news coming out of Madrid and it was here that the first reports of the pandemic were actually published. The A.E.F. was certainly aware of the pandemic, however, and even reported that this new “flu” as a “fulminating pneumonia, with wet hemorrhagic lungs’--i.e., a rapidly escalating infection and lungs choked with blood--‘fatal in from 24 to 48 hours.’”⁴ Although this new “flu” had killed few men in the spring and summer of 1918, in the autumn of the same year it would return with a vengeance.

Americans on the homefront were also clearly aware of the spread of the influenza within the United States as witnessed by a letter sent from Tess Saalmueller to her fiancé Frank Mueller in September of 1918:

Had to do the dishes alone as mother went to see my uncle Mr. Mohr,⁵ who is very sick. Phil phoned this evening from camp [Camp Dix] asking how his father is, and to send a telegram in case he gets worse for that is the only way he can get off as the place is quarantined on account of this Spanish influenza. Until yesterday there was 144 deaths down at Camp Dix...he [Phil] did not know if he could come home as it was something terrible the way the fellows were dying away down there from the Spanish influenza.⁶

Military censorship prevented news of the pandemic on the Western Front from getting back to the states, however, the doughboys were clearly aware of its spread at home.

³ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History* (Penguin Books: New York NY, 2004) 172.

⁴ Ibid, 173.

⁵ Uncle Mohr survived the Spanish flu, Tess Saalmueller to Franciscum (Frank) Mueller, 2 October 1918, File MG 1517 Box 1 File 3, Mueller Family Papers 1895-1950, New Jersey Historical Society.

⁶ Tess Saalmueller to Franciscum (Frank) Mueller, 27 September 1918, File MG 1517 Box 1 Folder 3, Mueller Family Papers 1895-1950, New Jersey Historical Society.

For President Wilson, George Creel, and General Pershing the control of information about the new influenza was just as important as the effects of the disease itself. The censorship of, and tight control of, information about the war effort, now spilled over into censorship and tight control of information about the new pandemic and the possible threat it might pose to the overall war effort. Little consideration was given to the lives of the doughboys themselves. Reports of death on the Western Front due to the Spanish Flu began in June of 1918, just as large numbers of Americans were moving into positions on the front lines.⁷ By October, General Pershing noted that there were 16,000 cases per week.⁸ The General himself would catch the Spanish Flu, and be reduced to giving commands from his personal train car parked near the French town of Souilly.⁹ In fact, the general became so sick that for a couple of days he was confined to his bed unable to talk.¹⁰

By late August, ships carrying wounded and infected doughboys had brought the Spanish Flu back to America. These infected soldiers quickly spread the influenza to the sailors aboard their ships, who then carried the pandemic with them as they left their ships at ports of call such as Boston, New York, and New Orleans.¹¹ Medical men, such as Lieutenant John J. Keegan, sounded the alarm bells, writing to the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and warning that this new plague “Would spread rapidly across the entire country, attacking between 30 and 40 percent of the population and running an acute course.”¹² The Wilson administration and the American military did not

⁷ Martin Gilbert. *The First World War*, 437.

⁸ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 190.

⁹ Souilly is a small town in north-eastern France due east of Paris, and it served as Pershing’s headquarters during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive between September and November 1918.

¹⁰ Donald Smythe. *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1986) 221.

¹¹ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 175. John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 198.

¹² John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 192.

act. The end of the war was only weeks away, Bulgaria had already surrendered to the Allies. President Wilson was portrayed as being “laser focused” on total victory over Germany and the deaths of a few doughboys to a mysterious “flu” was seen by his administration as just another cost of winning the war. In fact, President Wilson would make no public statements about the Spanish Flu, and his administration would fail to make any real attempt to manage or control the pandemic.¹³

The A.E.F. on the other hand, did make attempts to control the spread of the pandemic as it soon realized that it could not continue to fight the war with masses of sick or dead soldiers. The army had quickly understood that confining large numbers of even healthy young men in the cantonments would surely spread the disease. One out of every four men in the camps came down with the influenza, one of every twenty four men got pneumonia, and one out of every sixty four men died in the camps.¹⁴ By late September, the Spanish Flu had spread between many of the military camps and tens of thousands of doughboys were already dead or dying.¹⁵ The situation became so dire that the American military cancelled the next scheduled national draft,¹⁶ as officials realized the nightmare that would be caused by sending an additional one hundred forty-two thousand men to the already infected cantonments.¹⁷

In spite of the infection rate and the many deaths that had occurred, the military did continue to pack large numbers of new trainees aboard troop transports bound for France. Dire warnings from the army medical corps were ignored and only those men

¹³ Ibid, 302.

¹⁴ James H. Hallas, ed. *Doughboy War: The American Expeditionary Force in World War One* (Lynne Rienner Publishers: London UK, 2000) 293.

¹⁵ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 303.

¹⁶ There were three scheduled drafts during the war, June 1917, June 1918, and September 1918.

¹⁷ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 303.

who were physically too ill to walk were removed before embarkation.¹⁸ Men such as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt who was on board the transport ship the *Leviathan*,¹⁹ which had just arrived from France and had brought the influenza back to the states after a voyage in which many of the crew and passengers had died.²⁰ The future president came down with double pneumonia on the voyage and he would never fully recover.²¹ This information was censored from the American public, and it was reported that Roosevelt's case of pneumonia was "a light one and Mr. Roosevelt's condition is not regarded as serious."²² These troop transports became what historian Garrett Peck has called "floating caskets" and necessitated mass burials at sea.²³

Stories of the horrors of the troop transports were kept from the public, but men like Captain Ernest W. Gibson of the 57th Pioneer Infantry Regiment of Vermont, recorded their experiences shortly after the war. "9,033 officers, men, and 200 nurses were jammed onto a ship whose conditions were such that the influenza bacillus could breed and multiply with extraordinary swiftness."²⁴ Gibson claimed that Washington had been apprised of the situation, but he was informed that the need for men was so great that the ship needed to sail to France at any cost.²⁵ Gibson's firsthand account of the conditions on the ship would horrify anyone. Gibson notes that even before boarding the *Leviathan* men were getting sick, and those men who had fallen out of the march from

¹⁸ A. Scott Berg. *World War I and America*, 590.

¹⁹ *SS Leviathan*, was originally built as *SS Vaterland* and was the largest passenger ship in the world upon her completion. As an ocean liner she regularly crossed the North Atlantic from 1914 to 1934. She was seized by the United States Shipping Board when the United States entered World War I, and was turned over to the custody of the U.S. Navy in June 1917.

²⁰ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 304.

²¹ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 175.

²² *New York Tribune* "F.D. Roosevelt Has Pneumonia After Influenza Attack." September 20, 1918.9.

²³ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 175.

²⁴ A. Scott Berg. *World War I and America*, 591.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 592.

Camp Merritt,²⁶ were ordered to resume the march but without their gear.²⁷ Ambulances were sent to pick up those men who were unable to walk and transport them to the ship.

Gibson goes on describes conditions aboard after sailing:

The conditions during the night cannot be visualized by anyone who has not actually seen them. Pools of blood from severe nasal hemorrhages of many patients were scattered throughout the compartments, and the attendants were powerless to escape tracking through the mess, because of the narrow passages between the bunks. The decks became wet and slippery, groans and cries of the terrified added to the confusion of the applicants clamoring for treatment, and altogether a true inferno reigned supreme.²⁸

By October, death from the Spanish Flu had spread across the Western Front and the cantonments back in the United States, and still the Wilson administration said nothing. As noted, General Pershing came down with a bad case of the “grippe” and was confined to his bed, news that was, of course, censored from both the army and the American public.²⁹ According to Margaret Hall, a nurse of the Red Cross who served at the Western Front, the numbers of the dead in France from the flu can only be estimated due to “the strict wartime censorship guidelines.”³⁰ Officials in Washington feared that if they stopped sending fresh troops, German morale might soar. General Peyton Conway March, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, stated that “Every such soldier who has

²⁶ Camp Merritt was a military base located in the towns of Dumont and Cresskill, in Bergen County, New Jersey, that was activated for use in World War I. The camp had a capacity for 38,000 transient troops and was one of three camps directly under the control of the New York Port of Embarkation. From this camp troops marched to board ferry boats at the Old Closter Dock, at Alpine Landing, that took them to the piers at Hoboken, New Jersey to board troop transports for Europe. Approximately four million troops were sent to the Western Front during World War One, about one million passed through Camp Merritt. Camp Merritt was decommissioned in 1919.

²⁷ A. Scott Berg. *World War I and America*, 590.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 591-592.

²⁹ Donald Smythe. *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington IN., 1986) 221.

³⁰ Margaret R. Higonet, ed. *Letters and Photographs from the Battle Country: The World War I Memoir of Margaret Hall* (Massachusetts Historical Society: Boston, 2014), 79.

died just as surely played his part as his comrade who died in France...the shipment of troops should not be stopped for any cause.”³¹

The Wilson administration had proven that it was willing to do nothing to stop the spread of influenza in the military, and it would prove to be just as willing to do nothing about its spread among the civilian population. In a bizarre mirroring of the actions of the Trump administration, one hundred and one years later, Surgeon General Rupert Blue took no action stating that the Spanish Flu “was influenza, only influenza...It would be manifestly unwarranted to enforce strict quarantine against influenza.”³² However, this new “flu” proved to be lethal mainly to young adults who “turned blue, coughed up blood, had their eardrums rupture and could die in just half a day.”³³

By September, a quarantine would have most likely been ineffective as the virus was spreading quickly in the states.³⁴ The most serious outbreak was at Camp Devens in Boston harbor, where thirty-five hundred influenza cases had now spread from the camp to the city beyond.³⁵ As late as the end of September, the Americana military attempted to censor information about the seriousness of the pandemic, a report issued by Lieutenant Colonel C.C. McCornack, the division surgeon at Camp Devens, stated that “the influenza epidemic was on the wane. New patients admitted yesterday numbered 600, while 300 were discharged.”³⁶ The epidemic is under control when twice as many people are getting sick as are people getting well?

³¹ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 307.

³² *Ibid*, 310.

³³ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 175.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁵ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 310.

³⁶ *New York Tribune* “F.D. Roosevelt Has Pneumonia After Influenza Attack.” September 20, 1918.9.

The epidemic then swept through the naval installations near Philadelphia. The news of the pandemic was censored from the public. Wilmer Krusen, the director of public health in the city of Philadelphia, publicly stated that the influenza posed no threat to the city.³⁷ Krusen even went so far as to tell local reporters that the dead were not victims of a pandemic and that they had simply died from “old-fashioned influenza or grip.”³⁸

The city’s *Evening Bulletin* assured its readers that the “new” influenza posed no real danger and that it was “as old as history, and was usually accompanied by a great miasma, foul air, and plagues of insects, none of which were occurring in Philadelphia.”³⁹ The city’s board of health announced that the Great Liberty Loan Parade, which had been scheduled for September 28th, would be allowed to take place as there was a dire need to raise a million dollars for the war effort.⁴⁰ It was to be the largest and greatest parade in the history of Philadelphia, stretching over two miles long, with thousands taking part and hundreds of thousands of spectators crowded onto the city streets.⁴¹ Krusen’s advice to avoid the influenza, “stay warm, keep the feet dry, and the bowels open,” he also advised people to avoid crowds while at the same time not attempting to stop the parade.⁴²

But the government could not censor all news of the epidemic within the United States, and warnings were published around the nation. On the morning of the parade the

³⁷ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 202.

³⁸ The term *grip* is a long used term for the common flu, it comes from the French term *la grippe* which translates as ‘seizure’ and has been used in the United States since at least 1776.

³⁹ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 204.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 205.

⁴¹ Walter Schapiro, “How America’s Newspapers Covered up a Pandemic,” *New Republic*, March 31, 2020, <https://newrepublic.com/article/157094/americas-newspapers-covered-pandemic.4>.

⁴² John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 205.

New York Times reported that “tens of thousands of people in New England are affected, with hospitals full to overflowing, no nurses available, doctors worked as many twenty four hour shifts as is humanly possible.”⁴³ That same day the *Times* reported that for the last week of September, the death rate was 4.4 percent which was double what it had been the preceding week and it warned of a further spread of the epidemic.⁴⁴ Oddly, another story appearing the same day and on the same page of the same paper seems to play down the epidemic, “apparently the situation at Camp Devens, Mass., has been gotten into hand, with a decrease in new cases for a second successive day” the writer then goes on to mention that influenza has appeared at Camp Dix, New Jersey with merely 1,049 cases.⁴⁵ How could there be such a disparity in points of view, perhaps while one writer wishes to get important information out to his readers, another writer is more hesitant and is continuing to self-censor believing that he is helping the war effort. Newspapers across the nation reported the news of the Spanish Flu with half-truths and distortions of what was actually occurring in the nation. Many times these warnings were “buried” in the back pages of the newspaper and not on the front page, where news of our glorious victories in Europe were being touted.

Two weeks after the grand parade, 4,597 Philadelphians had died from the Spanish Flu and the pandemic then exploded across the nation. In scenes reminiscent of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cities’ hospitals were overwhelmed by the sick, the cities’ morgues ran out of space and coffins. Mass graves were used to bury the dead, and scores

⁴³ *New York Times*. “Help Rushed to Boston: Doctors and Nurses from Many Quarters to Combat Epidemic.” September 28, 1918. 10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

⁴⁵ *New York Times*. “Asks For \$1,000,000 To Fight Influenza.” September 28, 1918. 10.

more were buried at sea.⁴⁶ Rupert Blue still reassured the people of Philadelphia that “there is no cause for alarm if precautions are observed.”⁴⁷ For its part, the Federal Government said and did nothing as the American public began to panic.⁴⁸ The ensuing pandemic killed at least 675,000 Americans.⁴⁹ Conflicting information abounded as government officials censored vital information from the public. The director of public health in Los Angeles stated that, “If ordinary precautions are observed there is no cause for alarm,” two days later he ordered the closure of all schools, churches, movie theaters, and he forbade all public gatherings.⁵⁰

News of the seriousness of the situation at home spread back to the Western Front in letters written to the doughboys that went uncensored, as outgoing mail was never checked. In a letter to Frank Mueller from his fiancé Tess Saalmueller, of Newark, “Frank this influenza which is another name for the grippe is around,⁵¹ They are going to try to stop it by closing churches, saloons, soda fountains, and all public places.”⁵² At no point does Tess ask Frank about the pandemic situation in France, and she appears to be fully unaware of the situation in Europe. For his part Frank does not mention it either, and one wonders if this is due to fear of breaking censorship rules, his own understanding of self-censorship that forbids sending bad news home, or a combination of both.

⁴⁶ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 175.

⁴⁷ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 335.

⁴⁸ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 175.

⁴⁹ A. Scott Berg. *World War I and America*, 590. Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 176.

⁵⁰ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 336.

⁵¹ In the fall of 1918, the Spanish influenza pandemic hit New Jersey, killing thousands of people across the state. The City of Newark in particular was greatly affected, with over 2,000 flu related deaths between the months of September and December of that year.

⁵² Tess Saalmueller to Franciscum (Frank) Mueller, 9 October 1918, File MG 1517 Box 1 File 3, Mueller Family Papers 1895-1950, New Jersey Historical Society.

Continuing their self-enforced self-censorship efforts, many of the nation's newspapers claimed that there was nothing to fear but fear itself, and that panic was the real problem. In statements that mirrors today's Fox News Channel, the *Albuquerque Morning Journal* proclaimed "Don't let the flu frighten you to death" and "Don't panic."⁵³ The American press was, however, clearly aware of the gravity of the situation. As early as the beginning of December, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was reporting that the Spanish Influenza had killed more Americans than had World War One.⁵⁴ The paper goes on to warn that "Our greatest danger now, declare authorities, is the great American tendency to forget easily and to believe the peril is over. Competent authorities claim that the coming cold weather is very apt to bring a return of this disease."⁵⁵

However, an uninformed public that lacked guidance from its federal government and honesty from its "free press," soon panicked and sought out scapegoats to blame. Just as President Trump blamed the Chinese government for Covid-19, the American public of 1918 quickly blamed Germany for the Spanish Flu. Dr. M. G. Parsons, a United States public health service officer in the state of Mississippi, informed Surgeon General Blue that he had "succeeded in getting local newspapers to run stories he had made up that aid in forming a proper frame of mind."⁵⁶ Parsons claimed that the Germans were behind the outbreak of the Spanish Flu and that "the Hun resorts to unwanted murder of innocent noncombatants...he has been tempted to spread sickness and death through germs, and has done so in authenticated cases."⁵⁷ For his part, Blue took no action against Parsons

⁵³ Ibid, 337.

⁵⁴ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "Spanish Influenza More Deadly Than War" December 8, 1918.

⁵⁵ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 337.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 343.

⁵⁷William Brooks, Christina Bashford, and Gayle Magee, eds., *Over Here Over There: Transatlantic Conversations on the Music of World War I* (University of Illinois Press: Chicago, 2019) 215.

and permitted the ferment of fear and public outrage at German-Americans.⁵⁸ Wild rumors spread that the influenza was brought to Boston in glass vials, carried by secret German U-Boat missions, and then spread by German agents in Bayer Aspirin.⁵⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Philip S. Duane, head of the New York City Health and Sanitation Section of the Emergency Fleet Corporation,⁶⁰ fueled the flames when he reported to the *New York Times*, “It is quite possible that the epidemic was started by Huns sent ashore by *Boche* submarine commanders.”⁶¹ Amazingly, in the same interview he then later admits “Of course, there is no way of proving that the disease was started here by German submarine agents, but it is well within the range of possibility.”⁶²

This spreading of “fake news” would have dire consequences for one H. M. Thomas, a traveling salesman for the Bayer Company, who was arrested while traveling in Alabama on suspicion of being a German spy, and for acts of sedition. Thomas was then released from custody, however, his body was later found in a local hotel room with both his wrists cut and his throat slit, the local police simply ruled it as a suicide!⁶³ The Bayer Company itself would have its factory and assets seized by the American government, but no evidence of tainted aspirin was ever found.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 343.

⁵⁹ Neil Swidey, “The Boston outbreak that turned into the deadliest pandemic in modern history” *Globe Magazine*, October 9, 2018, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/magazine/2018/10/09/why-deadly-flu-pandemic-began-boston/XkerFVbsIAfzBqGURPhtMI/story.html>. 1.

⁶⁰ The Emergency Fleet Corporation, was established by the United States Shipping Board on April 16, 1917 to acquire, maintain, and operate merchant ships to meet national defense, foreign and domestic commerce during World War I. The Board and Corporation were abolished October 26, 1936.

⁶¹ “Think Influenza Came In U-Boat: Federal Health Authorities See Possibility of Men from Submarines Spreading Germs” *New York Times*. September 19, 1918. 11.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 344.

⁶⁴ “Holds \$700,000,000 of Enemy Property: Custodian Palmer’s report shows cost of His Office Was ‘Less Than Nothing.’” *New York Times*. March 10, 1919. 13.

The government's attempt to censor news about the pandemic, and the Wilson administration's total silence about the Spanish flu, left each state and city government to fend for itself, allowing misinformation and distrust to spread almost as fast as the influenza itself. Medical authorities began to urge the wearing of face masks as a way to slow the spread of the disease. In 1918, as in 2020, the issue of wearing masks in public stoked political divisions in the nation. Face masks became scapegoats for what many people came to see as an overreach by the government into the average American's life. Much of the activity, of what would become known as the Anti-Mask League, centered on the city of San Francisco. By October 1918, the city was suffering from over seven thousand cases of the Spanish Flu.⁶⁵ To combat its rapid spread, the mayor of San Francisco, James Rolph Jr., passed a mandatory mask ordinance on October twenty-second which would come into effect five days later on the twenty ninth,⁶⁶ making San Francisco the first city in the nation to do so.⁶⁷

Violation of the new ordinance could bring a fine of up to ten dollars and/or ten days imprisonment.⁶⁸ On the very first day of enforcement, one hundred "Mask Slackers" were charged with disturbing the peace.⁶⁹ An even larger sweep, conducted on the ninth of November, saw over one thousand people arrested.⁷⁰ At times resistance to the new ordinance turned violent. On October twenty-eight, a blacksmith named James Wisser began urging a crowd of bystanders to dispose of their masks, which he described as

⁶⁵ "Influenza Ordinance Adoption Thursday" *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 29 1918.9.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Christine Hauser, "The Mask Slackers of 1918", *New York Times*. August 3, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/03/us/mask-protests-1918.html>.

⁶⁸ 172 dollars in 2020. Accessed 9/5/2020, <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com>.

⁶⁹ "Influenza Ordinance Adoption Thursday" *San Francisco Chronicle*.9.

⁷⁰ Christine Hauser, "The Mask Slackers of 1918".

“bunk.”⁷¹ When confronted by a San Francisco city health inspector, Henry D. Miller, Mr. Wisser struck Mr. Miller, who pulled out a gun and fired at Mr. Wisser four times.⁷² Mr. Wisser and two innocent bystanders were injured, both men were arrested and charged with assault.⁷³

The continuation of the mask ordinance into the winter of 1919, as a second wave of the pandemic struck San Francisco, led to the creation of the so called “Anti-mask League” by suffragist, socialist activist, and political critic of the city’s mayor, Mrs. E. C. Harrington.⁷⁴ Mrs. Harrington called her group “Sanitary Spartacans” and she publicly declared that masks were both “insanitary and useless.”⁷⁵ Mrs. Harrington stated that there was no scientific evidence that masks worked and that forcing people to wear them was unconstitutional.⁷⁶ The first meeting of the league was attended by over four thousand members and they drafted a petition demanding that San Francisco’s mask ordinance be dropped immediately.⁷⁷ Mayor Rolph refused to comply with the demands and today medical historians partly attribute the rapid decline in death to the Spanish Flu in San Francisco to the mandatory mask policies of Mayor Rolph.⁷⁸

The rise of the anti-mask movement, and random attempts to censor medical information, was not unique to the post World War One era, as the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 has seen similar opposition to the wearing of masks in spite of scientific evidence

⁷¹ “Three Shot in Struggle with Mask Slacker” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 29 1918.9.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Anti-Mask League in San Francisco” *Perth Truth* (Perth, Australia), April 27, 1919.11.

⁷⁵ “Sanitary Spartacans’: Name of Anti-Mask League in Frisco” *Long Beach Daily News*, January 21, 1919.2.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “Big Mass Meeting Condemns Masks” *Logansport Daily Tribune* (Logansport, Ind.), February 14, 1919.8.

⁷⁸ Christine Hauser, “The Mask Slackers of 1918”.

that the use of masks prevents the spread of disease. Just as in 1918, a lack of leadership from the federal government, the rapid spread of misinformation, the censorship of facts, political and culture wars, flamed by conspiracy groups such as QAnon have led to the rise of a new anti-mask phenomenon.⁷⁹ Former President Trump's refusal to follow his own medical experts' advice, led by example, and encourage the wearing of face masks in public has led to the same leadership vacuum created by President Wilson and his total silence about the Spanish Flu. Wilson feared that speaking up about the pandemic could harm the war effort, for President Trump it seemed to be for a more personal reason, his presidential reelection efforts.

The lack of presidential leadership has fueled conspiracy groups such as the aforementioned QAnon who believe that the president is "waging a secret war to save trafficked children from a cabal of Satan-worshipping baby eaters who control the United States government."⁸⁰ If the president refuses to wear a mask, then mask wearing must be a plot by the "Deep State" to control the nation,⁸¹ all leading to a general distrust of science and resulting in acts of resistance ranging from the destruction of face masks on sale at Target (James Wisser would have approved,)⁸² to the fatal shooting of a security guard in Flint, Michigan in a Family Dollar Store after the guard informed a customer that her daughter needed to wear a mask while shopping inside the store.⁸³ In the Flint

⁷⁹ Ben Collins "How QAnon rode the pandemic to new heights- and fueled the viral anti-mask Phenomenon" *NBC News*, accessed 8/17/2020, https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/how-qanon-rode-pandemic-new-heights-fueled-viral-anti-mask-n1236695?utm_source=pocket-newtab.2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 3.

⁸¹ The Deep State is a conspiracy theory which suggests that collusion and cronyism exist within the US political system and constitute a hidden government within the legitimately elected government. The term was originally coined to refer to a relatively invisible state apparatus in Turkey.

⁸² Ben Collins "How QAnon rode the pandemic to new heights", 2.

⁸³ Christopher Mele. "2 Fugitives Arrested in Fatal Dispute Over Mask at Family Dollar Store" *New York Times*, May 15, 2020. Accessed 8/8/2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/08/us/coronavirus-masks-dollar-store-shooting-flint-Michigan.html>.

case, the customer, Sharmel Teague, was forced to leave the store whereupon she called her husband who returned to the store and shot the security guard in the head.⁸⁴ Just as during the Spanish Flu pandemic one hundred years ago, the simple act of wearing a mask in public has become a political/cultural battlefield fueled by a lack of leadership in Washington and the manipulation of information to suit personal/political goals.

In an eerie repeat of the earlier events in Columbus, Ohio, rumors began to spread in Phoenix, Arizona that dogs carried, and were spreading the influenza. The police began killing every dog they could find on the streets of the city.⁸⁵ Citizens began to kill their own dogs, and if they could not come to kill their own beloved pets, they turned them over to the police to be killed.⁸⁶

The spreading of wild unfounded rumors was nothing new in the United States and it continues to this very day. On May 31, 2020, during the Black Lives Matter protests, wild rumors spread in the city of Klamath Falls Oregon that the anarchist group ANTIFA⁸⁷ was sending busloads of protesters ‘hell bent’ on burning down the largely white majority city.⁸⁸ Local social media sites were swamped with posts such as “Antifa members have threatened our town and said that they’re going to burn everything and kill white people basically” and “There are two buses heading this way from Portland, full of ANTIFA members and loaded with bricks. Their intentions are to come to Klamath Falls,

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Lizabeth Hardman. *Influenza Pandemics* (Lucent Books: Farmington Hills MI, 2011) 55.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Antifa is an anti-fascist political movement in the United States comprising a diverse array of autonomous groups that aim to achieve their objectives through the use of both non-violent and violent action rather than through policy reform.

⁸⁸ Brandy Zadrozny, and Ben Collins. “In Klamath Falls, Oregon, victory declared over Antifa, which never showed up” *NBC News*, June 6, 2020, <https://news.yahoo.com/klamath-falls-oregon-victory-declared-205641562.html.2-3>.

destroy it, and murder police officers.”⁸⁹ Hundreds of local residents gathered in the local business district, many dressed in military fatigue and armed with shotguns, baseball bats, and axes.⁹⁰ No busses ever arrived, as no protest by ANTIFA had ever been planned.⁹¹

President Wilson’s silence and inaction would come back to haunt him personally as he travelled overseas in April 1919 to attend the Paris Peace Conference.⁹² According to Dr. Cary Grayson, Wilson’s personal White House physician and trusted confidant, the onset of the Spanish Flu came on very suddenly and within just three hours he witnessed the president “seized with violent paroxysms of coughing, which were so severe and frequent that it interfered with his breathing.”⁹³ The news of the president’s grave illness was censored from both the American people and Wilson’s government. Dr. Grayson released a statement that noted that the president had simply acquired a severe cold and that the doctor had ordered him to bed.⁹⁴

This rouse seems to have been quite effective at the time, according to the diary of Ray Stannard Baker,⁹⁵ who served as the press secretary to the American delegation to the peace conference, “April 3--The President fell ill today just after the Council of Four meeting and Admiral Grayson put him to bed. He has a severe cold with fever.”⁹⁶

⁸⁹ Ibid, 3-5.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 2.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 176.

⁹³ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 383.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ray Stannard Baker was an American journalist, historian, biographer, and author. He is also known by his pen name, David Grayson. In 1898 Baker joined the staff of *McClure's*, a pioneer muckraking magazine, and quickly rose to prominence. In 1912 Baker supported the presidential candidacy of Woodrow Wilson, which led to a close relationship between the two men, and in 1918 Wilson sent Baker to Europe to study the war situation. Baker served as Wilson's press secretary at the Versailles peace negotiations.

⁹⁶ A. Scott Berg. *World War I and America*, 652.

Greyson even went so far as to tell Baker that “the President had probably contracted his cold from contact with [French prime minister] Clemenceau, who coughs fearfully.”⁹⁷ On April 4, Baker notes that “The president was in bed all day,” and on April 5th, he notes that “Wilson is still in bed.”⁹⁸ At no point, does Baker note that he finds anything odd about this. In fact, the President was very ill with a fever over 103 degrees, and he was suffering from “profuse diarrhea.”⁹⁹ For several days, President Wilson lay in his bed unable to move and only on the fourth day was he able to sit up in bed.¹⁰⁰

The President’s illness had been so severe that senior officials in his administration later noted that Wilson, “was never the same after his little spell of sickness.”¹⁰¹ The world would pay an enormous cost, as Wilson suddenly abandoned the main principles of his thirteen points and gave in to President Clemenceau on most matters, including the vast amount of war reparations the French president was demanding from Germany. So vast was this encumbrance placed upon Germany that it would bankrupt the German state and the German economy in 1923, become a major cause of the Great Depression in 1930, and led to the rise of the Nazi state in 1932.

With his health in such poor condition, all President Wilson wanted to do was sail back to the states. The truth of the matter was censored from the public, with the *New York Times* stating that the purpose for the President’s hasty return being, “Failure to reach an agreement by the time the *George Washington*¹⁰² arrives would enable the

⁹⁷ Ibid, 653.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 654-655.

⁹⁹ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 383.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 385.

¹⁰² SS *George Washington* was launched in 1908, she was the largest German-built steamship and the third-largest ship in the world at the time of her launching. At the outbreak of World War I, the *George Washington* was interned by the then-neutral United States. In April 1917, SS *George Washington* was seized by the United States and taken over for use as a troop transport by the U.S. Navy.

President to leave France without delay, should he feel the uselessness of continuing negotiations.”¹⁰³ Four months later, the President would suffer a major stroke.¹⁰⁴ In a now well established pattern of government censorship, the news of the President’s stroke was kept not only from the American public, but from most of the government in Washington itself. For 180 days, our nation’s highest officials knew nothing about the nature of the President’s true condition.¹⁰⁵ Dr. Grayson issued daily notices on the President’s health in which his actual condition was not mentioned. On October 4th it was announced that the President was suffering from “Nervous Exhaustion” and that “For a man of his years, however, Mr. Wilson’s general physical system is said to be in good condition . . .and [Dr. Grayson] found the President very much in need of rest: He is very cheerful, and takes an interest in what is going on. This is an encouraging indication.”¹⁰⁶ In fact, the President had lost the use of his left arm and leg, he could not stand, his voice was weak, and he had gone blind in his left eye.¹⁰⁷

Rumors spread that Mrs. Wilson was the “real President of the United States” and that she was making all decisions while refusing others access to the President. White House correspondents went so far as to refer to the “Mrs. Wilson regency,” but only in private, of course.¹⁰⁸ Amazingly no one acted, the Democratic Congress refused to intervene as they feared a major scandal that would hurt them in the upcoming national elections. Wilson’s cabinet members covered up the fact that they were simply making

¹⁰³ *New York Times*. “Wilson Cables The Navy: Directs Preparation of His Vessel for Quick Return to Europe.” April 7, 1919. 1.

¹⁰⁴ John M. Barry. *The Great Influenza*, 386.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Ferrell, *Wilson & World War I*, 171.

¹⁰⁶ *New York Times*. “President Wilson Better, Sleeping Naturally Once More; Treaty Defenders Must Continue Fight Without His Aid” October 4th, 1919. 1-2.

¹⁰⁷ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 273.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Ferrell, *Wilson & World War I*, 170.

their own decisions, Dr. Grayson refused to certify that President Wilson was incapacitated, Vice President Marshall stated that he would not assume power while Wilson was still alive, and the press continued to self-censor their suspicions.¹⁰⁹ The stroke effectively ended Wilson's presidency and led to the defeat of the Treaty of Versailles in the United States Senate. The League of Nations, which with the United States' participation could have possibly prevented World War II, was doomed to failure. The censorship of information would set the world on its path to another world war.

Even as the war ended and the Central Powers had been defeated, the need to engage a new enemy appeared on the radar of government officials in Washington. Socialists, Communists, and Anarchists on the homefront were now viewed as being every bit as dangerous as the Kaiser's armies had been in Europe. The "Forces of Democracy" and of "100% Americanism"¹¹⁰ believed that they had to take this new threat head on, using every weapon at their disposal including the censorship of any philosophy that might threaten the "American way of life."¹¹¹ It had been clearly stated by the Wilson administration that at the end of the war, censorship would end and a free press and free speech would quickly return as the norm in American life.¹¹² In fact, on November 27, 1918, President Wilson ordered an end to American wartime

¹⁰⁹ Garrett Peck. *The Great War in America*, 272-273.

¹¹⁰ One hundred percent Americanism was a common phrase/philosophy to come out of WWI, after the war it was enshrined in the constitution of many organizations, in particular the newly formed American Legion. The preamble of their constitution reads: "For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes: To uphold and defend the Constitution on of the United States of America: to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our association in the Great War; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

¹¹¹ "The Legion and Politics," *The Daily Ardmoreite* (Ardmore, Oklahoma), November 7, 1920.13.

¹¹² Donald Johnson. "Wilson, Burleson, and Censorship in the First World War," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 28, No. 1 (1962):56.

ensorship.¹¹³ This did not turn out to be the case, however, as those government forces that had used censorship so successfully during the war now wanted to continue its use to fight any newly perceived threat against the nation. Postmaster Burleson continued to withhold mailing privileges until the summer of 1919, as his local postmasters continued to send “suspicious material” to Washington for inspection.¹¹⁴ The censorship of the wartime Wilson administration would continue in varying degrees until the start of the administration of Warren Harding in 1921.

While it is widely understood that the Red Scare of the late nineteen forties and early nineteen fifties was a result of the unfolding Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, most Americans today are unaware that this was in fact the Second Red Scare to sweep the nation, and that its predecessor had occurred more than twenty-five years earlier between the years of 1919 and 1920. The First Red Scare grew partially out of the censorship permitted by the Sedition Act of 1918 which forbade “uttering, writing, or publishing any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the United States government.”¹¹⁵ President Wilson had stressed that the Sedition and Espionage Acts would never be used to suppress the civil liberties of the American public, stating that “I can imagine no greater disservice to the country...than to establish a system of censorship that would deny to the people...their indisputable right to criticize their own public officials.”¹¹⁶ Yet members of his administration would now attempt to suppress any ideology that they believed to be a threat to the “American way of life.”

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 57.

¹¹⁵ Sedition Act of 1918, Pub. L. No. 65-150, (1918). Section 3.

¹¹⁶ Donald Johnson. “Wilson, Burleson, and Censorship” 47.

Even before the armistice had been signed with Germany, a fear of the bolshevist revolution in Russia had spread across the United States. Leading American officials like the newly appointed Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer¹¹⁷ came to fear a revolution of socialists and communists, who they believed were determined to overthrow the government in a violent revolution. Palmer described the threat as follows:

The blaze of revolution was sweeping over every American institution of law and order...eating its way into the homes of the American workmen, its sharp tongues of revolutionary heat ...licking at the altars of the churches, leaping into the belfry of the school bell, crawling into the sacred corners of American homes, seeking to replace marriage vows with libertine laws, burning up the foundations of society.¹¹⁸

Domestic unrest had indeed raged across America in the period of time immediately following the end of the Great War. In 1919 alone there were over 3,600 labor strikes¹¹⁹ in the United States as unemployment surged as hundreds of thousands of doughboys returned from Europe and sought hard to find jobs.¹²⁰ Inflation spiraled out of control,¹²¹ as the American economy endured a “wrenching conversion” from wartime to peacetime production.¹²² What seemed to go unnoticed in Washington was the fact that worker discontent stemmed not from revolutionary ideology, but from high inflation and unemployment, and that most of these “revolutionaries” were in fact mostly veterans of

¹¹⁷ Alexander Mitchell Palmer became Attorney General under President Woodrow Wilson in 1919. During the summer of 1919, the United States experienced numerous race riots and labor tensions. In reaction to this domestic unrest, Palmer created the General Intelligence Unit and recruited J. Edgar Hoover to head the new organization. Beginning in November 1919, Palmer launched a series of raids that rounded up and deported numerous suspected radicals. Though the American public initially supported the raids, Palmer's raids earned a backlash from civil rights activists and legal scholars.

¹¹⁸ Robert Ferrell, *Wilson and World War I*, 210.

¹¹⁹ Christopher M. Finan. *From the Palmer Raids to the Patriot Act: A History of the Fight for Free Speech in America* (Beacon Press: Boston, 2007) 3.

¹²⁰ Unemployment rose from 1.4% at the start of 1919 to 11.7% at the start of 1922. Source: Christina Romer. “Spurious Volatility in Historical Unemployment Data” *Journal of Political Economy* Volume 94, Number 1 (February 1986): 1-37.

¹²¹ Inflation rose from 7% in 1916 to 18% in 1918 and remained at double digits until 1922. Source: US Inflation Calculator: Coinnews Media Group LLC.

¹²² Christopher M. Finan. *From the Palmer Raids*, 2.

the Great War, who now found themselves unemployed in the very nation they had fought to defend.

Large riots broke out in several American cities on May Day (May 1, 1919)¹²³ resulting in many governmental voices demanding a continuation of the censorship of the war years and the suppression of radical speech.¹²⁴ The states of Oregon and Oklahoma both swiftly passed laws that made it a crime to “advocate unlawful acts as a means of accomplishing... industrial or political revolution for profit.”¹²⁵ The Congress in Washington debated a law that provided for ten years imprisonment for anyone who “encouraged resistance to the United States,” a phrase so vague that any act of protest could be considered a federal crime.¹²⁶

The Red Scare itself was launched on the night of June 2, 1919 when eight bomb blasts occurred in eight different American cities, including one in front of Attorney General Palmer’s home in Washington.¹²⁷ The so-called Red Scare would lead to a series of raids by federal and state authorities that would trample the First Amendment rights’ of trade unionists, socialists, anarchists, communists, and their supporters. On the evening of November 7, 1919 agents of the Department of Justice arrested over one thousand people in eleven cities; many people were arrested with no warrants issued against them, as the police simply raided homes and took everyone they found into custody.¹²⁸ The infamous Palmer Raids had begun. Almost seventy-five percent of the

¹²³ The largest riots occurred in Boston, New York, and Cleveland.

¹²⁴ Ann Hagedorn. *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America 1919* (Simon and Schuster: New York NY, 2007) 185.

¹²⁵ Christopher M. Finan. *From the Palmer Raids*, 28.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 29.

¹²⁷ Ann Hagedorn. *Savage Peace*, 218.

¹²⁸ Kenneth D. Ackerman. *Young J. Edgar: Hoover, the Red Scare, and the Assault on Civil Liberties* (Carroll & Graf Publishers: New York NY, 2007) 118-119.

people arrested in the initial Palmer Raids were found to be guilty of only being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and were quickly released.¹²⁹ Many of the arrested were denied access to a lawyer and were never informed of the charges brought against them.¹³⁰

The American public cheered the first Palmer Raids, fearing the perceived danger that “foreign radicalism” was having on the nation.¹³¹ Additionally, many American newspapers cheered the government’s trampling of the First Amendment, “Palmerites had done their work completely, perfectly. This country was immunized from the “red” terror--the terror which haunts the world.”¹³² The American government, and many American business leaders, had chosen the threat of the “red menace” as cover for the unrest caused by the end of the war-economy, and the deep recession that had followed.¹³³ Encouraged by the mass support, and the good press, the Justice Department conducted an even larger and more aggressive series of raids the following January, arresting over three thousand members of the communist and communist labor parties, hoping this time to expel them all to Soviet Russia.¹³⁴ Most of these deportations would later be rescinded as a backlash ensued against a federal government that seemed determined to disregard the First Amendment, even in peacetime. Although the Supreme Court had upheld the Espionage Act and the curtailment of free speech in wartime (in

¹²⁹ Christopher M. Finan. *From the Palmer Raids*, 2-3.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³¹ Christopher M. Finan. *From the Palmer Raids*, 2.

¹³² “Communist Labor Party and Majority of Communist Party Unite Through Secret Convention” *The Toiler* (Cleveland, Ohio) June 25, 1920. 4.

¹³³ The Post-World War I recession lasted from August 1918 to March 1919 and saw a decline of economic activity of 14.1 % and it was followed by an even worse recession between January 1920 and July 1921 that saw a drop of 28.6%, Victor Zarnowitz has called this second post-war recession an actual economic depression. Source: Victor Zarnowitz. *Business Cycles: Theory, History, Indicators, and Forecasting* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1992) 24.

¹³⁴ Ann Hagedorn. *Savage Peace*, 422.

three landmark cases,) allowing such curtailments in peacetime was viewed as another matter altogether as first federal, and then state governments, pushed censorship too far in peacetime America.¹³⁵ In early 1920, the state of New York pushed the bar even further when its legislature expelled five of its duly elected members, simply because they belonged to the Socialist party.¹³⁶ Considered as one of the most outrageous acts committed during the Red Scare, the speaker of the New York State legislature, Thaddeus Sweet, accused the assembly's five socialist members of "being unfit to serve in the legislature because they belong to an organization that was committed to the overthrow of the government."¹³⁷ He then called for a vote, and the socialists were unceremoniously tossed out by a vote of 116 to 28.¹³⁸ This act of the New York State legislature created a firestorm of protest across the country as leaders of all parties realized that allowing one political party to ban another would lead to the end of democracy itself. The censorship of political views had gone too far, and the panic of the Red Scare would be replaced by the fear of creating a dictatorship. The broader concept, that outright censorship can only be permitted during wartime, would win in the end as peacetime Americans began to demand their individual liberties be returned to them.

This return to "prewar" freedoms was, however, a slow and sometimes incomplete process. The threat of censorship always loomed in the distance as many state and local governments in the United States sought to continue the censorship of the war years to fight the "Red Menace," and fears of revolution. Just as during World War One, the targets of this censorship covered a wide range of issues and often seemed rather

¹³⁵ The three cases were: *Schenck v. United States*, *Frohwerk v. United States*, and *Debs v. United States*.

¹³⁶ Robert Ferrell, *Wilson and World War I*, 212.

¹³⁷ Christopher M. Finan. *From the Palmer Raids*, 34.

¹³⁸ "Oust Five Socialists; Will Compel Party to Purge itself", *The New York Times*, April 2, 1920. 1.

petty. During 1919, and into 1920, the censors found a new target for their attacks, the Red Flag. A red banner had long been a symbol of revolution,¹³⁹ and rising fear of communism led several state legislatures to pass laws banning the display of red flags. Somehow it would seem that censoring out the physical symbols of revolutionary thought would also eliminate the revolutionary ideas behind them. The so called “Red Flag Laws” would spread to thirty states,¹⁴⁰ and to this day remain on the books in three.¹⁴¹

The laws varied by state, in North Dakota for example, “an act regulating the display of flags, ensigns, banners and standards within the state of North Dakota; making the display of said flags, ensigns, banners and standards a misdemeanor and providing a penalty thereafter.”¹⁴² The law forbade the display of any red or black flag that had upon it any inscription that “opposed the United States or State Government or the use of which would tend to occasion a breach of the public peace.”¹⁴³ Such vagueness in a law was bound to bring about abuses, and could also bring about a sentence of thirty days in jail, a one hundred dollar fine, or both.¹⁴⁴

Things were worse in California, where a conviction could bring up to fourteen years in prison.¹⁴⁵ In one case, a woman was convicted for having attended a meeting in which the American flag had been draped with a red flag. Her crime was not that she had organized the meeting, nor draped the flag, but that she was guilty of associating with

¹³⁹ The red flag has been associated with left-wing politics since the French Revolution (1789–1799).

¹⁴⁰ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 216.

¹⁴¹ Idaho, Oklahoma, West Virginia. “Flag Laws of the United States,” last modified March 25, 2016, <https://crwflags.com/fotw/flags/us-law.html>. Section 6.

¹⁴² ¹⁴² *Laws Passed at the Session of the Legislative Assembly of the State of North Dakota*. (The Normanden Publishing Company: Grand Forks, North Dakota), 1921. 253-254.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Alma Reed, “Case Against Anita Whitney for ‘Syndicalism’ Up to Supreme Court” *The New York Times*, September 17, 1922.93-95.

those who had.¹⁴⁶ Miss Charlotte Anita Whitney was accused of having supported “criminal syndicalism” simply by her attendance.¹⁴⁷ Arresting someone for simply listening to the speech of other Americans in peacetime time was going too far. The censorship of free speech during war time, acceptable, during peacetime, not.

The conviction of Anita Whitney marked a turning point in public opinion, even though her case would be unsuccessfully appealed up to the Supreme Court. The decision in *Whitney v. California* unanimously upheld the governments’ right to “in exercise of its police power, has the power to punish those who abuse their rights to freedom of speech ‘by utterances inimical to the public welfare, tending to incite crime, disturb the public peace, or endanger the foundations of organized government and threaten its overthrow.’”¹⁴⁸ However, peace time attitudes were changing and violations of the states’ draconian red flag laws would soon no longer be tolerated. Ms. Whitney’s lawyers pointed out that it was never proven that she had committed any act of violence, had never advocated violence, had never “talked violence, advised violence, aided in violence, or had any knowledge of violence.”¹⁴⁹

In the summer of 1929, a young college student named Yetta Stromberg was arrested and charged with violating California’s red flag ban for performing a daily ceremony at a summer camp for the members of the Young Communist League.¹⁵⁰ Her offence was the daily raising of a red flag, to which the children saluted and pledged

¹⁴⁶ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 216.

¹⁴⁷ According to the British historian Eric Hobsbawm, syndicalism could be described as a radical current in the international labor movement that was most active in the early 20th century. Its main idea is the establishment of local worker-based organizations and the advancement of the demands and rights of workers through strikes against the owners/management.

¹⁴⁸ *Whitney v. California*, United States Supreme Court, 274 U.S. 357 (1927).

¹⁴⁹ Alma Reed, “Case Against Anita Whitney for ‘Syndicalism’”, 93.

¹⁵⁰ Christopher M. Finan. *From the Palmer Raids*, 125.

allegiance.¹⁵¹ The government of California considered such an act to be “as a sign, symbol, or emblem of opposition to organized government” and sentenced Stromberg to five years in prison.¹⁵² In a legal reversal, the Supreme Court ruled to protect free speech, and in a seven to two decision ruled California’s Red Flag Law unconstitutional on the grounds that the law violated both the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution.¹⁵³ *Stromberg v. California* was a landmark decision that expanded free speech, stating that it is essential to liberty and protected by the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.¹⁵⁴ Chief Justice, Charles Evans Hughes, wrote the majority opinion and stated that the law was, “A statute which upon its face, and as authoritatively construed, is so vague and indefinite as to permit the punishment of the fair use of this opportunity is repugnant to the guarantee of liberty contained in the Fourteenth Amendment.”¹⁵⁵

The official censoring of soldiers’ letters ended at the start of the Korean War, the military deemed that the time and effort needed to censor military mail was just not worth the effort.¹⁵⁶ Little damaging information had ever been found, and as forms of modern communication changed letter writing simply became less and less important to the military. Do, less formal, forms of military censorship continue to this day? One example is the story of Mr. Paul Anderson Ray, who in the spring of 2008 enlisted into the United States Army, and who was sent for basic training to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.¹⁵⁷ In

¹⁵¹ James Mock, *Censorship 1917*, 217.

¹⁵² Christopher M. Finan. *From the Palmer Raids*, 125.

¹⁵³ *Stromberg v. California* United States Supreme Court, 283 U.S. 359 (1931).

¹⁵⁴ Christopher M. Finan. *From the Palmer Raids*, 125.

¹⁵⁵ *Stromberg v. California* United States Supreme Court, 283 U.S. 359 (1931).

¹⁵⁶ Myron Foxx. *Censorship!* Military Postal History Society Accessed 9/27/2020, http://www.shoppbs.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/warletters/sfeature/sf_censorship.html.

¹⁵⁷ Paul Anderson Ray (CAO, Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner), in discussion with author, August 24, 2020.

April of 2008, Private Ray was approached at the shooting range by his Master Sergeant and asked “Who do you like in the [upcoming] election, Clinton or Obama?” Before private Ray could respond, the Master Sergeant said “McCain will take care of us, you must vote for McCain”¹⁵⁸ Private Ray was not permitted to have any discussion and stated that he believed this advice was given as a direct order. Ray further stated, that he believed that if he spoke up he would be deemed a “smart one” and it was well understood that “smart ones” would be singled out for harsher treatment, and were much less likely to achieve advancement through the ranks.¹⁵⁹ Information about the upcoming election was censored out of the camp to the point that Private Ray came to believe that “everyone in the army was a Republican” and that it was essential for their own well-being to vote as they were told. It would seem that at least subtle forms of censorship still pervade the military. One fact that makes this story even more interesting, is the fact that Private Ray is a native of the island of Barbados, and had not yet achieved his American citizenship, making him ineligible to vote in the upcoming presidential election.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Censorship in the United States has existed almost as long as the republic itself. The amount of censorship that has been tolerated wanes and waxes, and has most often been dictated by periods of war and peace. In the most general terms, censorship in the United States is permitted in times of war and sharply curtailed in times of peace. The amount of censorship permitted during wartime grew slowly from the time of the American Revolution to the First World War, when our nation experienced a level of censorship unprecedented in American history. Censorship, during post-First World War conflicts, has never again risen to the level experienced during the Great War.

The censorship of the Great War era found its way into almost every aspect of American life, and was openly supported by the great majority of the American public. So convinced that censorship was a proper tool of waging the war, our own soldiers aided the military in censoring their own writing. Few examples of doughboys attempting to smuggle out military information have ever been found. This self-censorship by the soldiers themselves greatly improved the militaries' ability to control information leaving the Western Front and was seen by the A.E.F. as a key to its successful conduct of the war effort.

Two things make the level of censorship during World War One unique in America's history. The vast and intrusive nature of said censorship, and the extension of

this censorship into peacetime America. Never before, had our government intended to keep censorship in place during peacetime. Censorship came to be viewed as necessary to meet any new, or perceived, threats to the nation. This attempted expansion of censorship into the post-war period would have devastating consequences, not only to our First Amendment rights, but to the wellbeing of the entire nation, leading to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans. The censoring of information about the severity of the Spanish Flu led to mass panic and many additional deaths. Deaths that could have been prevented, had the Wilson Administration spoken up and led efforts to control its spread. The nation's war effort was simply deemed to be more important than the nation's health. In a series of landmark decisions, the nation's courts would eventually beat back this threat to free speech. However, as we have seen in recent American history the threat always remains when "well meaning" groups attempt to achieve their goals through censorship in any of its various forms.

This inquiry has sought to investigate the ways in which the forms of censorship engaged in by the American government, and the American military, starting with the American Revolution, have been conducted over time and how they have varied in intensity. World War One marks the high point of these censorship efforts, and a detailed explanation of the American militaries' processes has been documented. This system of censorship came from three different directions, the official censorship of the American government, the American military, and the self-censorship of the doughboys themselves. The efforts of the doughboys to self-censor their own writing made the militaries' job much easier and much more successful. Convincing the soldiers to fully buy into the government's plans was a byproduct of a successful campaign of propaganda launched

by President Wilson through the Committee on Public Information (C.P.I.). Headed by George Creel, this propaganda wing of the federal government was a vast expansion of American federal power and it had no direct predecessor in American History. The C.P.I. looked at every aspect of American life and spread anti-German propaganda from coast to coast. No topic was deemed to be too unimportant for examination by the C.P.I. Draft dodgers (slackers), German-Americans, books, magazines, movies, music, cartoons, food, flags, dogs, outdoor lighting, and language all came under its microscope. With an army of volunteer foot soldiers in the American Protective League to do its' bidding, the C.P.I. struck terror into those it opposed, while at the same time gaining the support and cooperation of the majority of Americans who wholly bought into their concept of being "100 percent American."

Clearly the vast majority of America's men under arms also bought into this propaganda frenzy and happily self-censored their writing to the folks at home. They did this for two reasons. First, so as not to give away any information that might be of use to the "Hun," but also as to not unduly worry their families back home. Few doughboys wanted those who they loved to know what the Western Front was really like. They would keep the horrors of the trenches to themselves. The practice of self-censorship was a great advantage to the American military, however, it was not something the military was going to rely solely upon. The official censorship of doughboys' letters began even before they left the states.

Embarkation censorship at ports like Hoboken were meant to ensure that no helpful information could fall into the hands of a vast multitude of alleged German spies, believed to be combing the cities of the East coast. The direct opening and reading of the

doughboys' letters had begun. Army censorship vastly increased as the doughboys arrived in Europe. Every letter was to be scrutinized for any information that could be useful to the enemy. Even chemical labs were installed to discover "secret" writing hidden between the lines of script. In spite of reading hundreds of thousands of letters, little was ever found. Was this due to self-censorship, the destruction of any letter found to be in violation of army rules, or the doughboy's fear of being caught and punished? This research concludes that it was a combination of the three, which from the A.F.E.'s point of view, was a great success. Few examples of doughboys being punished for breaking censorship rules exist.

New technologies such as the portable camera (VPKs,) the radio, and later television and satellites, would soon make the censoring of slow moving personal mail obsolete. By the Second World War, the American Office of Censorship largely concentrated its efforts on the printed press, international telephone calls, overseas cables, telegrams, radio broadcasts, and motion pictures.¹ The censoring of personal mail was mostly limited to those on a blacklist under the direction of the Chief Postal Censor of the War Department.² As during World War One, this censorship system was largely considered "voluntary" and officially ended just after the defeat of the Japanese in August 1945. Self-censorship was to be relied upon once again. Unlike the post-Great War Era, no major effort was made to extend censorship into peacetime.³

¹ Susan L. Carruthers, *The Media at War*, 72-80.

²"Civilian Agency Records: Records of the Office of Censorship (RG 216)" National Archives and Records Administration, accessed March 3, 2021. <https://www.archives.gov/research/holocaust/finding-aid/civilian/rg-216.html>.1.

³ At least not until the passing of the McCarran Internal Security Act of 1950 and the Communist Control Act of 1954, during Americas' Second Red Scare.

Research for this project has had its limitations and challenges. The largest roadblock has been the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic that has shut down museums and archives across the planet for over a full year. Some local archives have been made accessible by requesting special permission, and much related material has been scanned and is viewable on the internet. Unfortunately, much undocumented information is still unavailable. In particular, censored letters of American doughboys that were seized and not destroyed, along with those letters found to have been chemically altered by the Base Censor in France, may still exist in the National Archive located at College Park, Maryland.⁴ A request for this material yielded this response from the National Archive, “It appears that there are records relating to your World War I research in the Office of the Chief Military Censor series, https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=*&f.allAuthorityIds=10495860 held in Record Group 165 Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, 1860 - 1952, which are unfortunately not well-described or accessible online. They can only be accessed in person at the National Archives at College Park, MD.”⁵ Requests to search have been denied since March, 2020 due to the federal governments’ ongoing Coronavirus shutdown.

Further research possibilities lay farther afield at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri, which also awaits reopening at the end of the pandemic. An even more important opportunity lies at the battlefields of Northern France where a few more of Clayton Moore’s footsteps may be documented through a

⁴ Myron Fox, a past vice president of the Military Postal History Society, claims that over 500 confiscated and condemned letters exist at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

⁵ Eric Van Slander, email message to author, October 14, 2020.

thorough retracing of his known steps. Funding has been requested and approved for this endeavor and only awaits the opportunity for European travel.

The doughboys of World War One have all passed from this nation, many of their personal stories are told through their letters, but only partially, as they willingly self-censored their writing to support their government's war effort.

Appendix A
The European travels of Clayton C. Moore:



- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. May 31 st 1918 | Arrive Brest, France. |
| 2. Early June, 1918 | Sightseeing Rouen, France. |
| 3. June 5 th , 1918 | Arrive by train at Noyelles-sur-Mer. |
| 4. June 16 th 1918 | Move to training base at St. Valery. |
| 5. July 16 th 1918 | Training at Beauvoorde Wood, Belgium. |
| 6. August 1 st 1918 | Camped at Saint-Omar, France. |
| 7. August 31 st 1918 | Battle of Ypes-Lys, Mount Kemmel Belgium. |
| 8. September 3 rd 1918 | Training at Beaquesene, France |
| 9. September 25 th 1918 | Arrive at the Hindenburg Line, Ronssoy, France. |



- 10. September 27th 1918 March to Templeux le Geurard, France.
- 11. September 29th 1918 Pass junction of Paul Trench and Quennomont Pit-5am.
- 12. September 29th 1918 Cross Hindenburg line at Guillemont Farm-8am.
- 13. September 29th 1918 Killed east of the village of Ronssoy, France.
- 14. October 1st 1918 Buried at Benjamin Post Cemetery Bony, France.
- 15. Spring, 1925 Body shipped to the port of New York, NY.
- 16. Spring, 1925 Reburied at Randolph, New York.

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ACADEMIC PREPARATION

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Doctor of Letters –History, May 2021

Currently enrolled, third year Doctoral student. Current G.P.A.:4.03

Dissertation Title: *Letters From the Western Front: The Correspondence of American Doughboys and American Censorship during the Great War 1917-1918.*

Rutgers University & New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ

Federated History Department

Master of Arts Teaching - History, January 2010

Masters Essay: *A Short History of Greco-Roman Egypt*

Edinboro University, Edinboro, PA

Bachelor of Arts, December 1982

Major: Political Science

Double Minor: German Language, History

Jamestown Community College, Jamestown, NY

Associate of Arts, June 1980

Major: Political Science

TEACHING APPOINTMENTS

- Adjunct Professor of History 2010-Present
 Federated History Department, New Jersey Institute of Technology –Rutgers University, Newark, NJ Courses: “History of the 20th Century World”, “History of the 20th Century World-Honors” “Britain in the 20th Century”
- Part Time Lecturer 2019-Present
 Rutgers University, Newark NJ Course: “Ancient Greek Civilization”
- Adjunct Professor of History 2010-2016
 Essex County College, Newark, NJ Course: “History of World Civilizations I”, “History of World Civilizations II”
- Adjunct Instructor/Tutor 2010-2012
 Hudson County Community College, Jersey City, NJ Courses: “Western Civilization”, “English as a Second Language” Tutor: English, Writing, History, Social Studies.

HONORS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- NJIT College of Science and Liberal Arts: Excellence in Teaching by Adjunct Faculty Award May 5th, 2016.
- Albert Dorman Honors College of NJIT: Outstanding Faculty Award, May, 2015 and May 2020.
- University Excellence in Teaching Award: NJIT Excellence in Instruction by Adjunct Faculty, May 2018.
- University Excellence in Teaching Award Nomination: NJIT Excellence in Instruction by Adjunct Faculty nominated six years; 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18.
- Elected Senator to the NJIT University Senate, three two year terms, September 2014 to present.
- Elected Vice-President/Treasurer of NJIT Lecturers & Educators Congress, three year term beginning January 2016
- Elected Treasurer NJIT Lectures & Educators Congress, three, three year terms beginning January 2014.
- Elected as the Adjunct Representative of the NJIT Lecturers & Educators Congress, September 2013 to present
- The National Tutoring Association, certified National Tutor, 2011-2012
- Greater Newark Conservancy Garden Contest, placed third (best home garden) June, 1998.
- County Seat Stores Inc.: Nominated Store Manager of the Year: 1986, 87, 88, 90.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

Transatlantic Connections 5: A Drew University Conference in Ireland, Bundoran, Donegal, Ireland, January 10-13, 2018.

Presentation: *Celt vs. Crown: The Largely Unrecognized but Critical Irish Contribution to the American Revolution.*

RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Digitization Project: Digitize the annual newsletter of the *Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society: 1987-2019*. Provide a searchable copy of the society's annual newsletter posted on the organization's website,

Editorial & Review Work: Text book review: *Primary Source Readings in Psychology* (Stevens Institute of Technology) May, 2011.

Text Book Review Committee: Select new college wide history text book, Essex County College, spring 2012.

College Course Development:

Essex County College: Created Regular Session course, A History of World Civilizations to 1500, August 2010. Created Winter Intersession course, A History of World Civilizations to 1500, December 2015. Created Summer Session course, A History of World Civilizations 1500 to present, May 2016.

NJIT: Created Winter Intersession course, A History of the Twentieth Century World, December 2010. Created Summer Session course, A History of the Twentieth Century World, May 2010. Created Regular Session course, A History of the Twentieth Century World Honors Level, January 2011. Created 300 level Regular Session course, Britain in the 20th Century, January 2016. Created Federated History's first fully online course, A History of the 20th Century World, January 2017.

Rutgers University: Created Regular Session course, Ancient Greek Civilization, August 2019.

ACADEMIC SERVICE

- Appointed member of the NJIT Pandemic Recovery Subcommittee: Human & Fiscal Resources, 2020 to present.
- Appointed member of NJIT University Senate Subcommittee: Finances, January 2018 to present.
- Appointed member of NJIT University Senate Subcommittee: Facilities, January 2015 to present.
- Appointed to the Executive Board of the NJIT University Senate 2017-18 academic year.
- NJIT Commencement Faculty Marshal, College of Science and Liberal Arts, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019.

- Appointed adjunct member of the Faculty Council Ad-Hoc Committee on Non Tenure-Track Instruction, October 2013 to 2014.
- Founding member of the NJIT Lectures & Educators Congress Steering Committee, September 2012
- Evening Administrator for Academic Support Services Hudson County Community College, 2011-2012
- Recruiter, Edinboro University Northern New Jersey District, 1995-1998
- Elected to Student Government Association, Edinboro University, served as Elections Director 1982-1983.
- Nominated and selected to represent the student body on the Edinboro University Student/ Faculty Senate 1982-83.
- Chosen to serve as a Judge on the Edinboro University Judicial Affairs Board, 1982-83.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

NJIT Federated Department of History- Administrative Assistant
08/2017 to present

Senior Store Manager – District Visual Manager

Wilsons Leather, Wayne, NJ
to 09/08

03/99

- Supervised visual standards and training for 14 stores in the Metro NY district
- Managed the #1 volume store in the Northeast Region
- Trained and developed new store managers
- Ran the #1 most profitable store location in the Metro NY district for 5 consecutive years (2003 to 2008)
- Consistently administered strong inventory control standards
- Maintained strong visual merchandising presentations and exceptional store standards
- Performed outstanding customer service – customer service scores consistently over 95%
- Annually supervised company yearly warehouse sale in St. Paul, Minnesota

Training Store Manager
06/1993 to 04/1999

County Seat Stores, New York, NY

- Instructed newly hired Store Managers on company policies and procedures through an intense 6 week training program

Area Manager/Store Auditor/Store Manager

County Seat Stores, New York, NY
04/1999

06/1980 to

- Ran company flagship store in Manhattan on 34thstreet – 5 million dollar 2 floor location with 100 employees
- Acted as Company Trouble Shooter, resolving issues at the store level to improve sales, and profit margins
- Supervised the turnaround of the most troubled locations
- Coordinated the openings of over 50 new stores
- Team Player – member of the Managers Advisory Committee

SKILLS

- Proficient in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint)
 - Conversational understanding of German
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References

Academic:

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